



GREECE AND EGYPT
3500 YEARS OF REAL DIPLOMACY

Frederick Lauritzen

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Every culture is as old as others. There has been change and evolution, but they are equally old. The crucial point is writing. Few cultures have left any ancient trace of their thoughts, words, or deeds. Countries which wish to rise above others often claim they are older. Some have evidence others just make it up.

Two cultures were effectively in touch for 3500 years: Egypt and Greece. The Egyptian pharaoh Amenophis III (1391-1353) knew and wrote about Greece. He was the father of Akhenaten and probably the grandfather of Tutankhamon. Amenophis III (or Amenhotep) had a statue of himself created with a list of subject peoples. These form the famous Aegean place names from the 14th century BC:

	kftjw <i>Κρήτη</i> Crete	(accadaian Kaptara, bibl. Kaphtor)
	tinayw <i>Δαναοί</i> Danai	
	imnyša <i>Ἀμνισός</i> Amnisos	(Linear B 𐀀𐀃𐀆𐀇 a-mi-ni-so)
	bayšatj <i>Φαιστός</i> Phaistos	(Linear B 𐀁𐀃𐀆𐀇 pa-i-to)
	katwnay <i>Κυδωνία</i> Cydonia	(Linear B ku-do-ni-ja)
	mwkinw <i>Μυκῆναι</i> Mycenae	
	dyqaias <i>Τεγέα</i> Tegea	
	miḏania <i>Μεσσήνα</i> Messene	(Linear B 𐀎𐀆𐀇 me-za-na)
	nwpray <i>Ναυπλία</i> Nauplion	(Linear B 𐀎𐀆𐀇 𐀎𐀆𐀇 na-u-pi-ri-jo)

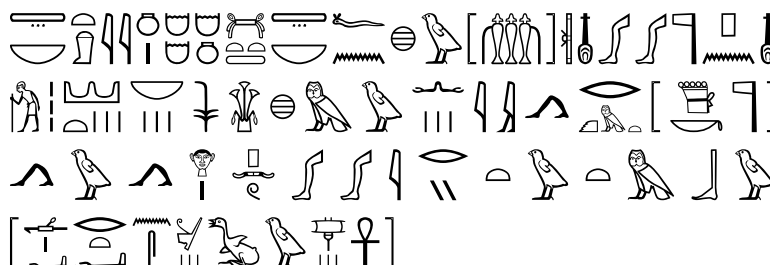


	katyra <i>Κύθηρα</i> Cythera	(linear B $\text{𐀓} \text{𐀓} \text{𐀓}$ ku-te-ra)
	wajwry Ilion?	
	kanywša <i>Κνωσός</i> Cnossos	(linear B $\text{𐀓} \text{𐀓} \text{𐀓}$ ko-no-so)
	rykati <i>Λύκτος</i> Lyctus	(linear B $\text{𐀓} \text{𐀓} \text{𐀓}$ ru-ki-to)

These place names indicate that during Amenophis III's reign Greek cities and places were known. The spelling in middle Egyptian reflects that employed in Linear B script (the oldest form of Greek). Mycenaean culture in Greece and Crete wrote in linear B.

Egypt and Greece knew and wrote about each other at the same time. This is not a work of fiction. It is scientific and independent proof of direct contact between Mycenaean and Pharaonic cultures in 1400BC. This may be the oldest written acknowledgement between Africa and Europe.

The diplomatic exchanges found in the Amarna letters (reign of the pharaoh Akhenaten 1353-1336) reveal problems and differences between Mesopotamian and Egyptian relations. The inscription of Amenophis III, not only lists different Greek cities with their Greek names, but also indicates what he thought of them:



(Statue base of Amhenotep III found at the Temple of Amenhotep III Kōm/Kaum al-Hīṭān. My transcription based on analysis of Edel Görg 2005)

*t3w nbw štzy [nw] pḥw nw stt. t3w nbw [f]nḥw [hnt-ḥn]-nfr r rdwy ntr pn nfr.
 wrw ḥ3swt nbw rsywt mḥtywt ḥmw ii[t r] kmt [dr r]k [ntr]
 iw ḥr pdwy iry twt m bw [w^c] r rdt n.sn t3w n ḥn in[w.sn ḥr psdw.sn]*

All the difficult lands north of Asia. All the lands of the north and the south are at the feet of this pharaoh.

All the great ones of the southern and the northern foreign lands, who did not know to come to Egypt [since the god's time],

come on their knees united in one place, so that the breath of life



Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890), the German businessman turned archaeologist, claimed that Mycenae was a real place and not a literary fiction. He did so because he read and knew the ancient texts. He started digging. He discovered Mycenae in Greece in 1876 (he found Troy in 1873). Without the ancient texts Schliemann would not have discovered neither Mycenae nor Troy. Fast forward: now we have an inscription on a statue of Amenophis III near the Colossi of Memnon in Egypt which mentions Mycenae in hieroglyphs. A scarab has been found at Mycenae which bears a hieroglyph inscription with the name of Tiye, wife of Amenophis III.

Fiction has become scientific reality: diplomatic relations have existed for at least 3500 years between Egypt and Greece.