Syllabus: Aegean Trade with the East in the Early and Middle Bronze Ages

Spring Semester, 2005
Instructors: Prof. Philip Betancourt and Prof. Holly Pittman

First day of class: Friday, January 14

Class meets 10:00-12:00 on Fridays

This team-taught course will explore the interactions that moved east and west between cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Asia in the period from ca. 3000 BCE to ca. 1500 BCE. The first half (managed by Betancourt) will look at trade and interactions from an Aegean perspective, and the second half (managed by Pittman) will explore trade and interactions from a Mesopotamian viewpoint.

An important aspect of the course will be the opportunity to handle objects from the Museum collections that help contribute information on subjects covered by the course. The class will consist of lectures by the Instructors, student reports, guest speakers, and museum visits to the University of Pennsylvania Museum to examine ancient objects in the Museum collections.

The first guest speaker will be Prof. Albert Leonard, Professor at the University of Arizona, author of Index to the Mycenaean Pottery of the Eastern Mediterranean. He will speak to the class in late February.

At the end of the semester, the course will conclude with a Graduate Student Conference “Land and Sea” in April. Students in the course are encouraged to prepare a contribution for oral presentation at the Conference. In connection with the course and the conference, George F. Bass, Professor Emeritus from Texas A & M University and excavator of the Cape Gelidonya and Ulu Burun shipwrecks, will present the inaugural lecture for the conference.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE

1. Two seminar reports as oral presentation
2. A written research paper on a topic dealing with trade or interaction between the Aegean and Western Asia, Egypt, or Anatolia
3. Class participation in discussions and museum visits

Note: this course has no examinations. Grades are based on participation in discussions and on the oral and written papers.
SCHEDULE FOR THE FIRST FEW WEEKS

Jan. 14. Introduction to the course (Betancourt)
Topic: The Early Cycladic History and Foreign Contacts (Betancourt)

January 21: Middle Bronze Age Aegean History and Foreign Interactions (Betancourt)

January 28. Meet in the University of Pennsylvania Museum to see the gold jewelry from the Troad. The Museum owns the only hoard of Trojan Early Bronze Age gold jewelry outside of Russia. It is stylistically similar to the jewelry excavated by Heinrich Schliemann at Troy in the 19th century and captured by the Soviet army during World War II. The Philadelphia hoard has not been on display for decades. This will be an opportunity to examine it closely. A microscope will be available for study.

February 4. Begin student reports.

STUDENT REPORTS

The Kastri Group

In the second half of the third millennium BCE, a group of cultures called the Kastri Group appears in the Aegean. This group is still somewhat controversial. The sites have fortification walls with towers. The artifacts include bronzes made with tin, pottery with Anatolian connections, and other signs of contact with Anatolia. The reports will be on the same day, and they will be followed by a general class discussion.

Topics: 1. The Kastri Group pottery  
2. Other artifacts

Aegean Connections with Egypt in EM-MM

Connections between the Aegean and Egypt gradually increase between the late Early Bronze Age and the Late Bronze Age. It is often difficult to decide if these connections are direct or through an intermediary location such as Syria.

Topics:
1. Egyptian Stone Vases in Crete
2. Hippopotamus ivory in Crete, especially the stamp seals of cylindrical shape
3. Cretan pottery in Egypt
4. Other connections with Egypt

Administrative Practices

Cretan administrative practices using seals adopt a widespread Western Asian and Egyptian system during the Middle Minoan period. The reports will take place the same day, and they will be followed by a class discussion.
Topics:

1. How did the Eastern system work?
2. The Minoan development—what was it like before the adoption of the Eastern system and how did it develop? Include the Phaistos sealings in the report