



THE SPHINX AND GRIFFIN AS A POLITICAL-RELIGIOUS SYMBOL IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

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FACTS & HYPOTHESIS

- ❑ Composite creatures (in this case sphinxes and griffins) are known in all regions of the Ancient Near East.
- ❑ In Egypt they seem to be mainly political, while they chiefly represent the Pharaoh.
- ❑ In Mesopotamia they often appear with gods so it seems they are generally used in a religious context.
- ❑ In Anatolia most sphinxes (bull- and lion-sphinxes) act as guards at doorways of temples, palaces, ..
- ❑ In the Aegean the Theban sphinx is known best, so it seems the mythological context prevails.

➔ **Is it possible that, despite the differences, there are general similarities between the meaning and function of the sphinx in the different regions?**

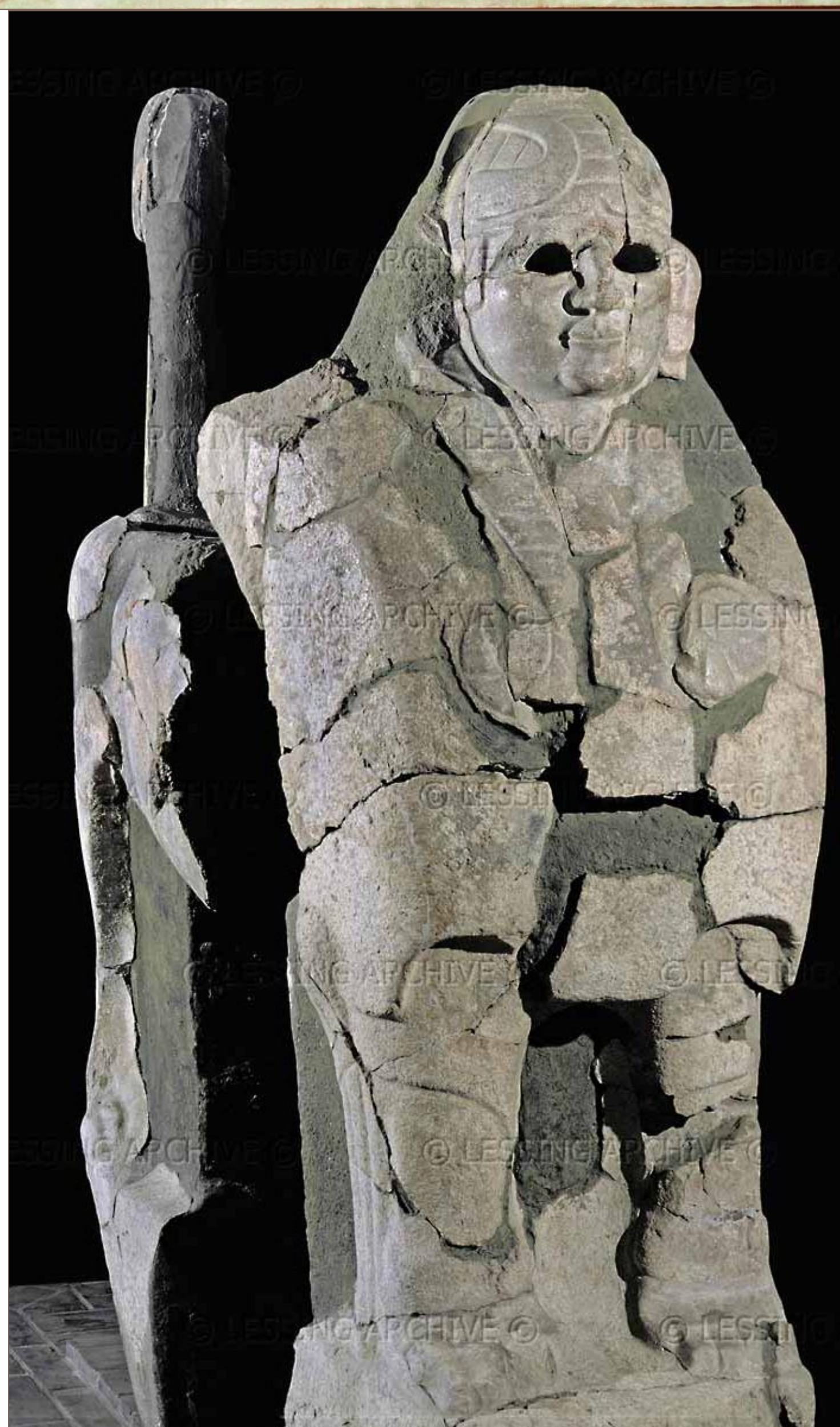
EGYPT



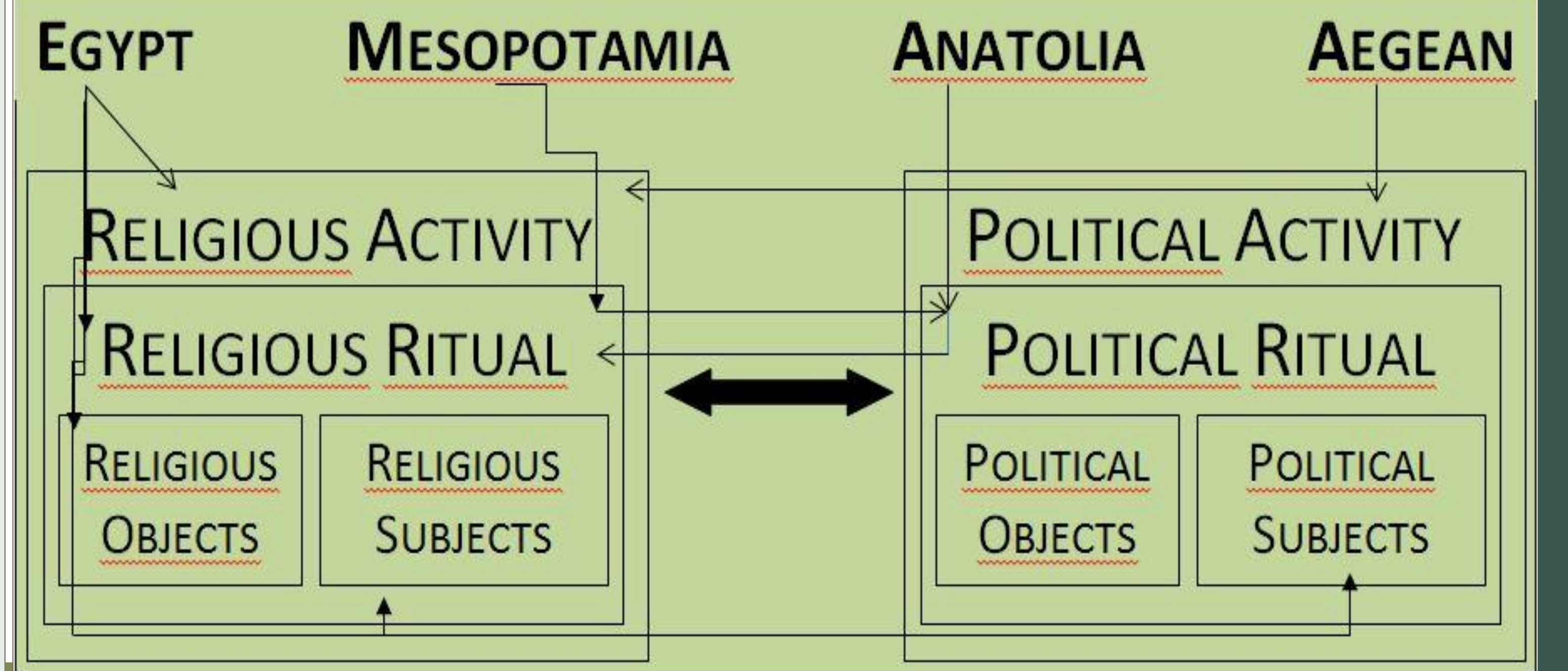
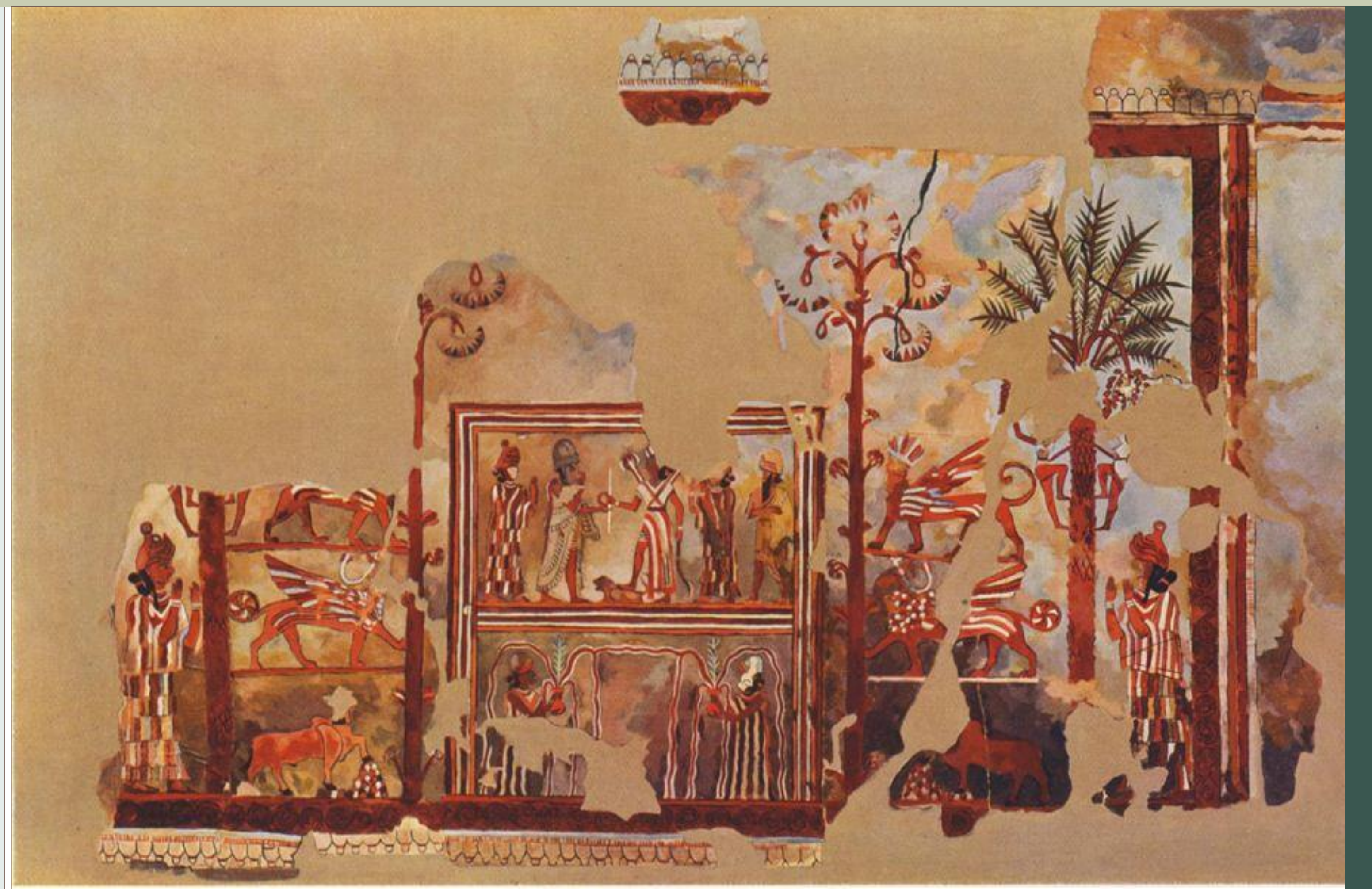
THE AEGEAN



ANATOLIA



MESOPOTAMIA



FINDINGS

- The *Lying Sphinx of Giza* (ca. 2600 BC), an image of the pharaoh, was used in religious rituals and was known from the NK onwards as the God Harmachis (Horus on the Horizon).
- On the *Investiture of Zimri-Lim* (2000-1975 BC), the sphinx watches the goddess giving the tokens of power to the king.
- The *Griffins Flanking the Throne* (ca. 1450 BC) in Knossos Palace are not the only ones in the Throne Room, a second pair flanks a door to a shrine.
- The *Gate-guards* of Hattusha (14th C. BC) stood next to images of gods, goddesses and religious rituals and overlooked ritual proceedings (both religious and political).

The sphinx has gone through a dynamic process through different cultures but the motif seems to have common essential features, although there exists a great diversity of meanings, according to region and period.