

A SURVEY OF EVIDENCE FOR FEASTING IN MYCENAEAN SOCIETY

ABSTRACT

The study of feasting on the Greek mainland during the Middle and Late Bronze Age provides insights into the nature of Mycenaean society. Grave goods demonstrate changes in feasting and drinking practices and their importance in the formation of an elite identity. Cooking, serving, and drinking vessels are also recorded in Linear B documents. Feasting scenes appear in the frescoes of Crete and the islands, and the Mycenaeans adapt this tradition for representation in their palaces. Feasting iconography is also found in vase painting, particularly in examples of the Pictorial Style. Mycenaean feasting is an expression of the hierarchical sociopolitical structure of the palaces.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I survey the artifactual evidence for Mycenaean feasting, including pottery, bronze vessels, frescoes, Linear B ideograms, and painted representations on pottery and other terracotta artifacts.¹ There is no generally accepted definition of feasting: some scholars prefer a definition that encompasses most occasions of the consumption of food and drink; others argue for a more restrictive one.² For the purposes of this investigation, I define feasting as the formal ceremony of communal eating and drinking to celebrate significant occasions. I exclude the quotidian partaking of food and drink that is carried out for biological or fundamental social reasons, such as eating with family or casually with acquaintances, friends, and colleagues—activities that do not include any perceived reciprocity. Material evidence for either eating or drinking may indicate feasting, but one must scrutinize the evidence closely to determine whether the remains are the result of formal and ritual activities not involving feasting. For example,

1. I am indebted to the two *Hesperia* reviewers, Brian Hayden and Jeremy Rutter, for their sharp-eyed criticism and many excellent suggestions for changes and improvements. I thank

Lyvia Morgan for insightful comments and useful bibliography, and Maria Shaw for comments and encouragement and for providing Figure 8. I am also grateful to Elisabetta Borgna,

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2. Dietler and Hayden 2001b, pp. 3–4; Clarke 2001, pp. 150–151.

people frequently use vessels to make offerings to deities or perform rituals, such as toasting or leaving food remains for the dead, and these vessels are not *a priori* evidence for feasting, unless the remains are so substantial that they indicate unusual consumption of food or drink.³ I intend to argue closely on the basis of good evidence for feasting as a common but variably performed ritual, remains from which are recoverable by archaeologists.

It is not my purpose to examine the organic residues and archaeological deposits of feasts, especially since that is the subject of two other articles in this volume.⁴ Instead, the information collected for this research is that which to our eyes presents consistent patterns of form and decoration, of assemblage, and of context and deposition, evidence that represents a style peculiar to the practice of feasting and formal drinking during the era we define as Mycenaean. By “Mycenaean” I mean the assemblage of artifacts that constitutes the characteristic archaeological culture that originates on the mainland of Greece in the late Middle Bronze Age, finds its fullest expression in the palaces during Late Helladic (LH) IIIA–B, and can be traced through the postpalatial LH IIIC period.⁵ Different scholars will define differently the chronological and geographical range of this culture, but probably will not disagree that it takes recognizable form about 1600–1550 B.C. and ends about 1100–1050 B.C.; is characterized by settlements with palaces and writing in Linear B; and in its broadest extent encompasses coastal Thessaly, central Greece, the Peloponnese, Crete, the Aegean islands, and perhaps some settlements on the western Anatolian coast.

In this article I necessarily consider evidence from Crete and the Aegean islands, since much of what we characterize as Mycenaean is derived from the earlier palace-based societies of Middle and Late Bronze Age Crete and the island cultures of the Aegean. Identifying the formative processes through which these were incorporated into Mycenaean culture, however, has proven difficult and confusing.⁶ The essays by Borgna and Steel in this volume treat the subject of the Mycenaean feast on Crete and Cyprus, where previous indigenous traditions of feasting can be documented. The authors confront the problem of the adaptation of distinctive, perhaps essential, elements of the Mycenaean feast during periods of strong Mycenaean influence on these islands. These discussions consider the feasting tradition as an elite one, and that is no less the case for this study. One can argue that the consistency of the elite practice of feasting creates a richer and more patterned material record than that produced by nonelite practice.

Feasting, by virtue of its bringing people together in the biological act of eating, is a social activity that binds a group through sharing. Feasting is also a formal ceremonial practice that differentiates host from guest, and youth from elder, and affirms other status distinctions. As a social practice feasting is dynamic, and archaeologists attempting to reconstruct a feasting tradition must also pay attention to the sociopolitical trajectory of the society under study. I argue here that feasting is an important ceremony instrumental in the forging of cultural identity. Most explanations of the

3. Although, as a number of the authors in this volume argue (see esp. the articles by Borgna and Palaima), libations and offerings to deities and mortuary rituals involving drinking vessels may not be distinguishable from the practice of feasting, in either the artifactual record or texts. See below, n. 59.

4. See the articles by Stocker and Davis; and Dabney, Halstead, and Thomas.

5. There is a long history to the term “Mycenaean,” from Furtwängler and Loeschcke’s use of it (1886; Furtwängler 1879) to Davis and Bennet’s recent examination (1999, p. 112). For its origins, see Dickinson 1977, pp. 15–16; the issue was also recently reviewed by Bennet 1999.

6. See Vermeule 1975, pp. 1–6, 50–51; Dickinson 1977, pp. 15–16, 107–110; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1986, pp. 159, 196–198; Kilian 1988, pp. 292–293; Wright 1995b.

formation of pre- and protohistoric Aegean cultures are based on assumptions of degree of interaction, particularly through modes of production and exchange, including exchanges of information.⁷ Hodder, however, argues that in general such interaction models have been used mechanistically and that the concentration on economic transactions has resulted in an inadequate account of cultural formation and change.⁸ He maintains that models of social identity and interaction better explain the sources of and processes behind cultural formation and change. Through ethnoarchaeological studies he demonstrates that expressions of group identity as manifest in material culture are highly variable and subject to many different impetuses, particularly social strategies and conceptual frameworks that range across various orders of sociopolitical integration.⁹ These identities are manipulated and mutable and result in material expressions that are ephemeral, yet loaded with meaning. Consequently, the degree of consistency and distribution of material assemblages cannot be assessed merely according to mechanical articulations of economic interactions, but instead have to be understood as the material displays of other kinds of social activity, many of which relate to the expression and reaffirmation of individual identity and membership in groups. Feasting is one such activity.

Archaeologists attempt to define a culture by “reading” the material remains of groups who have adopted a stylistic vocabulary representing their common social customs.¹⁰ This material expression comes into being largely as a social process that evolves as it is practiced. Feasting is a fundamental social practice that marks most celebrations of life stages and natural cycles when people gather and in varying ways display, reaffirm, and change their identities as individuals and as members of groups. It is an integral part of ritual and religious practice, occurring nearly universally as a component of other activities; the universality of its practice underscores its importance in the formation of identity.¹¹ Wiessner has provided insight into the process of identity formation in several ethnographic studies that examine the social meanings and uses of style.¹² Particularly useful is her distinction between two forms of display that lead to the formation of identity: “assertive” and “emblemic.” Assertive display represents the active process of identity formation and is concerned with the activities of leaders, or individuals competing for leadership, who use objects as a part of their competitive display. Emblemic display results when a common set of symbolic expressions is achieved and becomes an expression of group identity.¹³

Identities are formed, expressed, affirmed, and changed through many social activities, especially those that bring groups together for celebration, which are usually accompanied by feasting.¹⁴ As Wiessner points out:

Feasting involves food sharing and food distribution. Food sharing appears to have its roots in the parent-child relationship and thus can be a way of expressing affection and extending familial behavior to distant or non-kin in order to bond larger groups. By contrast, food distribution, which often requires returns at a later date, creates temporary imbalance between food donors and recipients and permits the construction of inequality.¹⁵

7. Dickinson 1977; Cherry and Davis 1982; Bennet and Galaty 1997, pp. 90–96; Bennet 1999.

8. Hodder 1982, pp. 8–9, 185–190, 202–203; cf. Earle and Ericson 1977; Plog 1976; Wobst 1977.

9. See, e.g., Hodder 1982.

10. Hodder 1978, pp. 185–229; and see, e.g., Baines and Yoffee 1998.

11. Other activities that relate to identity formation and often incorporate feasting include hunting, warfare, craft activities, worship, agriculture, and animal husbandry.

12. See, e.g., Wiessner 1983, 1989.

13. Wiessner 1983, pp. 257–258.

14. On ways that cuisine expresses cultural identity, see Elias 1978; Loraux 1981; Goody 1982; Murray 1990, 1996; Schmitt Pantel 1990; Dietler 2001; Hayden 2001a.

15. Wiessner 2001, p. 116.

Identity, difference, and obligation are primary social manifestations of cuisine, and, as many scholars have observed, the construction of rules of etiquette further refines these distinctions.¹⁶

Davis and Bennet have recently recommended that to answer the question of who the Mycenaeans are, we examine “the mechanisms that lay behind the creation of the Mycenaeans.”¹⁷ Their conclusion is that “the formation of a Mycenaean material culture appears to have been the result of a process, whereby specific regional traditions achieved supra-regional prominence and were elevated gradually to a status as the dominant styles accepted by the elite who governed Mycenaean kingdoms.”¹⁸ Missing from this observation, however, is a specific anatomy of this process at work. Feasting is a very significant activity in the formation of Mycenaean culture because, as noted above, it is nearly always linked to other social activities, whether hunting or harvesting, worship or initiation. Feasting as a preeminent social celebration consistently provides an arena for the display of styles. In part this is because it is effective in encompassing all members of a social group and even those outside it, while still reserving special places for subgroups (especially elites) to differentiate themselves. In other words, feasting allows for the reinforcement of egalitarian horizontal relationships while simultaneously facilitating the construction of hieratic or hierarchical and vertical ones.¹⁹

As Hayden points out, feasts have many practical benefits: creating cooperative relationships, alliances, and political power; mobilizing labor; and extracting and investing surpluses.²⁰ All of these activities of feasting are instrumental to the formation of complex societies. The communicative aspect of this process of social formation involves the creation and reproduction of styles that symbolize the dominant group, not merely through monosemic emblems but also through polysemic ones that represent salient activities and structural relations of the group. These styles are expressed iconographically and are part of the construction of a society’s cosmology, of the proper relationships among people, society, and nature.²¹

The process of identity formation is an act of recording and, in stylistic terms, of constructing an iconographic synthesis, as Panofsky defined the phrase.²² Such a synthesis necessarily excludes certain information, particularly aspects of activities not selected for inclusion in emblematic display, since recording is a proprietary act governed by social custom, by sociopolitical and ideological hierarchies, and prescribed by convention, tradition, dogma, and ritual action. In this way, as Davis and Bennet note, “specific regional traditions achieved supra-regional prominence,”²³ though the resulting “dominant styles” are not merely passively accepted, but rather utilized and actively practiced, and hence inherently mutable. Consequently, what the modern observer can hope to achieve through the analysis of the archaeologically recovered material and written record of feasting is an

16. See, e.g., Elias 1978; Douglas and Isherwood 1979; Goody 1982; Wright, forthcoming a.

17. Davis and Bennet 1999, p. 113.

18. Davis and Bennet 1999, p. 114; cf. Baines and Yoffee (1998, pp. 233–236), who argue that elites control cultural reproduction through the

creation and reproduction of style.

19. Feinman 1998, p. 107; Dietler 1999, pp. 141–142; Hayden 2001a, pp. 28–42.

20. Hayden 2001a, pp. 29–30. For a thorough analysis of the ethnographic evidence, see Hayden 1995.

21. Turner 1967; Bourdieu 1980,

pp. 52–79, 122–134. For a critique, see Bell 1992, pp. 187–196; for a discussion of the role of style in states and civilizations, see Baines and Yoffee 1998, pp. 252–259.

22. Panofsky 1939, pp. 3–17.

23. Davis and Bennet 1999, p. 114.

understanding, however imperfect, of an iconography characteristic primarily of Mycenaean palace society. Aspects of feasting that are not specifically controlled or influenced by the palaces might also be apparent, but they are harder to discern, in large part for lack of redundancy in the archaeological record. A good example is provided in the article in this volume by Dabney, Halstead, and Thomas concerning a deposit at Tsoungiza, the interpretation of which depends in part on the artifactual connection with objects known primarily from palatial contexts. The variability and ubiquitous nature of feasting in any society means that feasts will leave variable archaeological traces; only those that are created through repetition and the relatively consistent utilization of identifiable remains are left for us to interpret with a high degree of probability.²⁴

Representation of feasting may be understood as part of the very practice of feasting. It is also a part of the tradition that the Mycenaeans drew upon from Neopalatial Crete and the islands of the Aegean. An iconography of feasting in the palaces may have developed by LH IIIA but is only fully developed in the LH IIIB frescoes of the main building at Pylos (see below). By examining the development of this iconography, we will understand better the processes through which, over generations of interaction, elite groups came to control and administer the palace centers. As Davis and Bennet state, "Mycenaean material culture came to define the elite of those palaces and of the territories they controlled and influenced."²⁵

Largely missing from this analysis is evidence for the multiple forms of feasting, and the social and ritual nuances of the practice of feasting that transpired during the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean. Such information will probably be better preserved in feasting deposits, as Pauketat and his colleagues have recently demonstrated for feasting at Cahokia in the lower Mississippi Valley.²⁶ But it may well be that by sketching the outlines of feasting as a general phenomenon of Mycenaean palace society, directions for future research will be indicated that may lead to a more detailed and subtle understanding of this fundamental social act.

DRINKING RITUALS

The evidence for drinking rituals is preserved in archaeological contexts where an abundance of drinking vessels or the deposition of special vessels indicates extraordinary activity, for example, cups and chalices from the sanctuary at Kato Syme on Crete (Fig. 1).²⁷ Special vessels, some of which are for drinking, were found in the mortuary context of the Shaft Graves at Mycenae. Their intended function, however, is not clear, since their deposition may be attributed to a number of intentions, including the request of the deceased to inter them, the fulfillment of ritual obligations associated with the afterlife, or as tokens given by the burying group, perhaps representing the deceased's status. There are two ways to decide among these possibilities: to establish whether the deposition of drinking vessels (or other vessels associated with feasting) was a customary mortuary practice of the group being studied²⁸ and to search for possible symbolic meanings of the vessels, both as iconographic conventions and as icons within a particular cultural activity.²⁹ A suitably large and chronologically broad set of comparanda is necessary to determine customary mortuary practices,

24. See Clarke 2001, pp. 158–162; Knight 2001, p. 321.

25. Davis and Bennet 1999, p. 115.

26. Pauketat et al. 2002.

27. Lebessi and Muhly 1987; 1990, pp. 324–327.

28. Hamilakis 1998.

29. Panofsky 1939, pp. 3–17; on the symbolism of drinking, see Jellinek 1977; Dietler 1990.



Figure 1. Pottery chalice from Kato Syme. After Lebessi and Muhly 1990, p. 325, fig. 11:a

and their variation over time. The discovery of symbolic meaning is complicated both by the fragmentary preservation of representations and by the probability that vessels are part of a variety of practices with different meanings, not all of which involve drinking and eating.

To identify a customary set of artifacts, I restrict myself here to the examination of a Mycenaean drinking service formed at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. Its appearance is marked by the merging of indigenous pottery forms with exogenous ones, and by a shift from pottery to metal. The acquisition of imported pottery, especially drinking vessels, is a sign of differentiated social status. The acquisition of exotic items within Mycenaean society was centered primarily on sources in the Aegean, especially Crete. Even before the onset of the Middle Bronze Age, imported cups and jugs appeared at settlements such as Lerna. The preference for drinking vessels in these contexts might have resulted from practices of competitive drinking in which display would have enhanced social standing.³⁰ The data unfortunately provide neither quantitative measures nor consistent contexts to demonstrate this case.

In mortuary contexts of the later Middle Bronze Age, drinking vessels predominate (Table 1). Because of the heterogeneity of local customs during this period, numerous morphological and decorative variations can be identified, but the predominance of cups and jugs and the preference for specific drinking vessels (kantharos, straight-sided cup, and goblet)

30. In the settlement of Lerna, abundant evidence exists for exotic drinking and serving vessels from the very beginning of the Middle Helladic (MH) period, significantly from the House of the Post Holes, with six Minoan imports (Zerner 1978, pp. 60–62); and deposit D 602, outside this house, contained Minoanizing cups and a Minoan jug. Deposit D 597, which is described as a street outside house BS, disclosed a fine Minoanizing cup with barbotine decoration, while house BS itself contained a Minoanizing angular

cup, three Minoan imports of Middle Minoan (MM) IA date, and two Cycladic imported bowls (Zerner 1978, pp. 66–74). Floor 2 of house BS contained both Minoanizing and Minoan imports—mostly cups, but also a barbotine jar and a notable number of other craft items (Zerner 1978, pp. 75–81; see also the finds from the courtyard and street, pp. 88–94). The various MH I occupation levels of house 24 revealed a variety of Minoanizing and Minoan pottery along with other craft items (Zerner 1978, pp. 99–109).

Rooms 44 and 45 within the complex of house 98A date to MH I and contained Minoan imports (Zerner 1978, pp. 121–126), while house 98A of late Lerna VA contained a Minoan collar-necked jar in room 1 and a Cycladic bowl in room 2 (Zerner 1978, pp. 112–119). Unfortunately, there is insufficient published information about the domestic deposits of the later phases of the Middle Bronze Age to ascertain whether this fondness for exotic items continued within these household areas or in the settlement in general.

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF MH VESSELS AT SELECTED MAINLAND CEMETERIES

Site and Burial	Open Forms						Closed Forms		
	Generalized cup	Straight-sided cup	Shallow cup	"Paneled" cup	Goblet	Kantharos form	Jar form	Bridge-spouted jar	Jug form
Asine									
B12						●			
B15	●					●			
B30	●								●
B32	●					●			●
LT-18	●								●
1971-2									●
1971-10						●			
1971-15	●					●	●		
1971-3	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
Argos									
Gamma 82	●					●			●
Delta 161	●					●			●
Delta 1, 132	●	●							●
Delta 1, 137	●					●			●
Gamma 22	●					●			●
Gamma 61	●	●							●
Gamma 2	●	●				●			●
Gamma 27	●								●
Gamma 29	●	●	●		●		●		
Prosymna									
I	●						●		●
III						●			
IV	●					●			●
XIII	●					●			
XVI	●								●
XVII	●								●
XVIII	●								●
XIX	●	●							●
XX	●	●							●
XXI	●	●	●				●		●
XXIV							●		●
XXVI									●
XXVIII						●			
XXXI	●					●			●
Corinth									
1	●								●
2	●								●
3							●		
5	●					●	●		●
6									●
7	●								
8	●					●			●
9						●			●
10		●							
11	●								●
13	●								●

Sources: Asine: *Asine* II, pp. 33-63; Nordquist 1987, pp. 128-136; Argos: Dietz 1991; Prosymna: Blegen 1937, pp. 30-50; Corinth (North Cemetery): *Corinth* XIII, pp. 6-12.



Figure 2. Gold kantharos from Mycenae, Grave Circle A, shaft grave IV. Photo A. Frantz (AT 308), courtesy American School of Classical Studies at Athens

probably indicate a concern to provide the deceased with vessels needed for drinking.³¹ In burial assemblages at the end of the Middle and beginning of the Late Bronze Age, such as grave 1971-3 at Asine and the Shaft Graves at Mycenae, these indigenous forms are increasingly standardized morphologically and decoratively, and imported vessels as well as vessels influenced in shape and form by foreign ones are also found (Tables 2, 3). This transition is accompanied by a replacement of pottery in high-status burials by luxurious vessels made by specialized craftspersons working in gold, silver, and bronze, as indicated in Tables 4–6. Examples include a gold kantharos (Fig. 2) and “Nestor’s cup” from grave IV of Grave Circle A at Mycenae,³² the latter combines the Vapheio cup shape, the chalice stem, and the handles of a kantharos. From the same tomb comes a composite Helladic-Minoan silver goblet, with its carinated shape and a Minoan niello floral scene (Fig. 3).³³

I addressed this phenomenon in an earlier study, in which I emphasized that this shift reflects

an amplification of traditions which were already a part of indigenous behavior; thus, foreign objects are introduced alongside prestigious items of local origin. Accompanying these objects must be a change of behavior that explains their presence. . . . The prestige enhancement that accompanies the introduction of foreign but not altogether new ceremonies of drinking, and the social distance expressed by the luxurious vessels used in the ceremonies are fundamental aspects of the emergence of chiefly groups at developing Mycenaean centers. Hybrid vessels incorporate all these elements and document the syncretistic nature of early Mycenaean social and political ideology.³⁴

I was concerned in that paper to show that the emergence of a service of this type resulted from the desire of elites to display their elevated status and from efforts to consolidate power, and I compared this process to the adoption of Greek and Etruscan drinking customs by the Celts as demonstrated by Dietler and Arnold.³⁵ This issue has also been explored by Clark and Blake in a study of the adoption of foreign ceramics by aggrandizing elites in Lowland Mesoamerica during the Early Formative period.³⁶

31. Wright, forthcoming a.

32. Davis 1977, pp. 183–186, cat. no. 63.

33. Davis 1977, pp. 208–220, cat. no. 83; for gardens, see Shaw 1993.

34. Wright 1995a, pp. 294–295; see also Palmer 1994, 1995.

35. Dietler 1990, pp. 375–380, 382–390; Arnold 1999.

36. Clark and Blake 1994.

TABLE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF POTTERY IN GRAVE CIRCLE B

Burial	Open Forms									Closed Forms														
	Cup forms						Kantharoi			Jar forms						Jug forms								
	Generalized cup form	Straight-sided matt-pid	Straight-sided "Minoan"	Conical/paneled	Semiglobular matt-pid	Semiglobular "Minoan"	Goblet	Shallow w/o foot matt-pid	Carinated with foot	Generalized jar form	Plain jar	Hole-mouth and spouted	LH I jar	"Cycladic" jar	Hydria & stamnos	Amphora	Amphoriskos	Generalized jug form	LH I squat	Spouted jar/jug	"Cycladic" spouted jug	"Minoan" spouted jug	Cut-away spout matt-pid	Askos
Z male weapons						●																		
H male weapons	●					●																		
I early		●																						
I late male weapons						●					●			●										●
A 2, S. side																								●
A 2, N. side	●								●															
E early																								
E late																								●
P	●																							
B male weapons											●		●			●								
E fill																								
A fill			●																					
A male weapons	●				●																			
N roof													●								●			●
Y female														●			●							●
MYC 58 female		●			●	●																		●
A fill	●																							
A male weapons																								●
E inside, later																								
K																								●
A 1																								●
N later male																								●
Π																								●
K-112																								●
M early	●									●	●	●												●
N																								●
Γ male weapons		●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●				●		●				●	●	●	●	●
Δ													●	●										●
O												●	●	●		●								●

Sources: Mylonas 1973; Graziadio 1988.

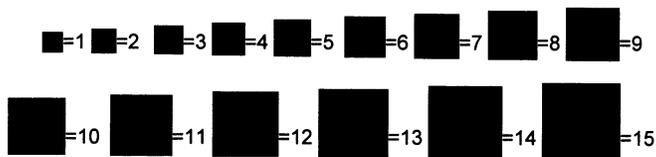
TABLE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF POTTERY IN GRAVE CIRCLE A

Burial	Open Forms							Closed Forms														
	Cup forms					Kantharoi		Jar forms						Jug forms								
	One-handed carinated	Straight-sided	Conical/paneled	Semiglob., everted rim	Goblet	Shallow without foot	Carinated with foot	Carinated with pedestal	Hemispherical	Hole-mouth	Krater	Spherical bridge-spouted	One-handed squat	Alabastron	Piriform	Hydria & stamnos	Amphora/amphoriskos	One-handed	Spouted jar/jug	Cut-away spout	Askos	
I	●			●		●			●						●						●	
II										●				●							●	
III				●								●							●		●	
IV															●						●	
V														●	●						●	
VI	●	●			●						●	●			●	●					●	●

Source: Karo 1930-1933, pp. 41-165, 251-258.

TABLE 4. GOLD AND SILVER VESSELS FROM THE SHAFT GRAVES AT MYCENAE

Burial (circle and grave number)	Open Forms					Closed Forms				Misc.	
	Basin	Cup	Goblet	Kantharos	Krater	Amphoriskos	Jug	Jar	Pyxis	Rhyton	Situla
A I	■	■					■				
A II		■									
A III		■	■			■	■		■		
A IV		■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	
A V		■	■				■				■
A VI		■									
B I 327		■									
B A 325							■				
B Δ 326		■									
B Γ 35		■									
B N 325		■									



Source: Davis 1977, pp. 125–251.

They too emphasize that in order for the symbolic meaning of foreign items to be transferred to a community, it must be expressed in a familiar material code. In the case they study, the foreign technology of ceramics is introduced by clay vessels imitating the shape of gourd vessels current in the community. Significant to the present study, the vessels introduced through this transference of medium were those used for serving and drinking liquids. Rising elites at Early Mycenaean centers must similarly have expressed new customs through familiar forms (for example, the use of the kantharos—a two-handled carinated cup—for serving wine)



Figure 3. Niello goblet from Mycenaean, Grave Circle A, shaft grave IV. After Marinatos and Hirmer 1973, pl. 186, courtesy Hirmer Verlag

TABLE 5. DISTRIBUTION OF GOLD AND SILVER VESSELS IN MAINLAND GREECE

	Context	Open Forms										Closed Forms				Misc.	
		Stemmed shallow cup	Shallow cup	Semiglob. cup	Stemmed Vapheio cup	Cup, Vapheio	Cup, conical	Goblet	Kantharos	Krater	Amphorskos, lidded	Jar, miniature	Jug	Pyxis, cylindrical	Rhyton	Misc.	
MH III	B, A 325					●									●		
LH I	B, I 327					●											
	B, A 326					●											
	B, Γ 357					●											
	B, Γ 358					●											
	B, N 389					●											
	A, II					●											
	A, III					●											
	A, IV					●											
	A, V					●											
	A, VI					●											
LH II	A, I					●											
	Tholos					●											
	Tholos III					●											
	Kazarma					●											
	Marathon					●											
LH IIIA	Koklia					●											
	Tholos					●											
	Tomb 12					●											
	Tholos					●											
	Tomb 10					●											
	Tomb 9					●											
	Tomb 2					●											
LH III	Acrop. Treasure					●											
	Tomb 78					●											
	Tomb 24					●											
	Palace					●											
LH III	Pylos					●											
	Patras					●											
	Pherai					●											
	Kalamata					●											
	Mycenae					●											
Routsi	Tholos					●											

Source: Davis 1977, passim.

TABLE 6. DISTRIBUTION OF PRIMARY DEPOSITS OF BRONZE VESSELS IN THE AEGEAN

		Open Forms										Closed Forms			Misc.			
		Cup	Cup/bowl, broad rim	Kylix	Bowl	Basin	Lekane	Krater	Pan	Cauldron/kettle	Tripod kettle	Ladle	Pitcher	Hydria	Amphora	Lamp	Brazier	Sieve
LM I-II	Mallia, Grammatikakis		●			●			●	●		●	●					
	Knossos, basement cell by Stepped Portico		●		●	●						●						
	Mochlos		●		●	●												
	Knossos, house SE of South House								●	●			●					
	Kato Zakros, palace, room 45a					●				●		●		●		●	●	
	Knossos, NW Treasure House		●									●						
	Thera Δ 3	●				●						●	●					
	Thera Δ 16							●									●	
	Knossos, Unexplored Mansion	●				●											●	
	Tyissos	●							●									
MH III-LH II	Mycenae, B, grave E					●		●					●					
	Mycenae, A, grave VI					●						●						
	Mycenae, A, grave V		●		●	●		●		●		●	●					
	Mycenae, A, grave IV	●				●		●	●	●			●					
	Mycenae, A, grave III	●	●		●			●	●	●								
	Mycenae, A, grave I					●						●						
	Vapheio										●						●	
LH IIB-LH IIIA	Dendra tomb 2				●	●	●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Asine tomb I,5		●			●	●		●		●	●	●					
	Tragana tholos I,1				●		●				●							●
	Nichoria tholos				●	●	●					●		●				●
	Dendra tomb 12					●	●					●	●					
	Mycenae tomb 47	●					●		●			●						●
	Tragana tholos I,2				●		●		●		●			●				
LM II-LM IIIA	Sellopoulo 3				●	●	●				●					●		
	Sellopoulo 4.III	●	●			●	●			●		●				●		
	Archanes A	●					●		●	●	●	●	●	●				
	Zapher Papoura 14		●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		●		●	●
	Phaistos 8						●		●	●		●						●
	Zapher Papoura 36						●		●				●					

Source: Matthäus 1980, pp. 63, 65, 69, 70, figs. 5-8.

while introducing new forms (Minoan shapes and decorative schemes, for instance) in rare materials. In this fashion these elites adopted Minoan luxury items while adapting them for their own social ends.³⁷

Tables 5 and 6 display the wide distribution across mainland Greece of vessels of gold, silver, and bronze that were produced at specialized workshops on Crete, the Cyclades, and the mainland and can reasonably be associated with drinking.³⁸ It is also clear in comparing Tables 2-6 that,

37. On Minoan feasting, see Moody 1987; Hamilakis 1999; Rutter, forthcoming.

38. Davis 1977; Matthäus 1980; on metal drinking vessels in the Near East, see Moorey 1980.



Figure 4 (top). Silver vessels from Dendra tomb 10, shaft II. After Persson 1942, p. 88, fig. 99; courtesy Swedish Institute at Athens

Figure 5 (bottom). Set of “tinned” pottery from Dendra. After Persson 1942, p. 92, fig. 103; courtesy Swedish Institute at Athens

while the earlier Grave Circle B at Mycenae contained large numbers of ceramic drinking vessels (especially goblets), in the later Circle A where bronze, silver, and gold drinking vessels are common and widely distributed, ceramic ones are less well represented. The preference for metal Vapheio cups among open forms is notable (Table 5).

In Mycenaean society, drinking rituals achieved standard expression through certain vessel shapes, beginning with the Vapheio cup and shallow cup, both of which were popular ceramic shapes during LH II and IIIA, also appearing in gold and silver (Table 5).³⁹ These were replaced by the kylix during LH IIIA.⁴⁰ Particularly worthy of notice is a set of LH IIIA silver drinking vessels (shallow cup, small and large goblets) found in tomb 10, shaft II, of the cemetery at Dendra (Fig. 4, Table 5). In the contemporary tholos at Kokla another set of silver goblets, along with a silver shallow cup and three silver conical cups, was found, while the Acropolis Treasure from Mycenae contains four golden goblets and a semiglobular cup (Table 5).⁴¹ Sets such as these were emulated in clay and “tinned” to resemble silver or gold; these appear at Dendra (Fig. 5), in the Athenian Agora, and elsewhere.⁴² The appearance of these sets coincides significantly with the ascendance of the kylix form.⁴³

39. See discussion in Davis 1977; Wright, forthcoming a.

40. In pottery as well as metal: Mountjoy 1986, pp. 64–66. The notion of potters producing matching sets of vessels for use as a service has been little explored (see MacGillivray 1987 for examples from protopalatial Crete). Thus, the producers of Ephyraean ware

made matching goblets and pitchers (Mountjoy 1983; 1999, pp. 57–58) and one can speak of sets of Zygouries pottery of LH IIIB1 date. I thank J. Rutter for advice on this point.

41. Persson 1942, pp. 87–95; Demakopoulou 1990, 1993, 1997; on the Acropolis Treasure, see Davis 1977, pp. 291–296.

42. Immerwahr 1966; Gillis 1991, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1997; other examples come from Athens, Knossos, Mycenae, and Ialysos.

43. Matthäus 1980, p. 340; Mountjoy 1986, pp. 64–66. The changing composition of these sets is part of the process of the establishment of an etiquette; see Wright, forthcoming a.

FEASTING EQUIPMENT

If the sets of drinking vessels described above are presumed to have been used in feasting ceremonies, it would be profitable to survey primary deposits of bronze vessels in domestic and mortuary contexts, for these deposits present a wide array of vessels associated with the cooking and serving of food. Their distribution is presented above in Table 6, which includes vessels from selected contexts dating between Late Minoan (LM) I and IIIA and MH III–LH IIIA. The following tombs consistently provided the broadest groups of vessels: chamber tomb 14 at Zapher Papoura, near Knossos (Fig. 6);⁴⁴ tholos A at Archanes;⁴⁵ Asine chamber tomb I, 5;⁴⁶ Dendra chamber tomb 2;⁴⁷ and the tholos tomb at Nichoria.⁴⁸ The groups included vessels that we would expect were used for feasting: tripod and cylindrical kettles, lekanes (convex conical, spouted bowls), lamps, basins, bowls, cups, pitchers, pans, hydrias (water jars), and amphoras (two-handed storage jars for liquids). Overall the morphological variation among shapes is considerable. Some variation can be attributed to the production of different workshops and to the presence of heirlooms,⁴⁹ but it may be due in part to their uses for different types of preparation or, perhaps, for particular occasions (see below).

The Shaft Graves at Mycenae represent a special case. Few graves (B epsilon, and A I, III, IV, V) contained any quantity of bronze vessels (Table 6), and their concentration reflects a selective gathering from different producers throughout the Aegean.⁵⁰ The people who deposited these vessels showed a particular preference for kettles, pitchers, hydrias, pans, and kraters (large mixing bowls for liquids). This collection differs from other contemporary assemblages, admittedly less well known, that come largely from Minoan domestic contexts. Although the difference may be primarily one of context, it could suggest that the Shaft Grave assemblages manifest a developing Mycenaean taste, especially since, as we shall see, they relate to peculiarities in fresco painting that Morgan has attributed to nascent Mycenaean preferences.⁵¹

Many of these vessels show signs of wear and repair, and, therefore, cannot have been made expressly for the mortuary rite but were either owned by the deceased or given by the mourners. Either way these culinary items symbolize the feast and announce the significance of feasting to the burying group. The combination of these vessels for use in drinking and preparing and serving food—in ceramic, bronze, silver, and gold—demonstrates a dramatic increase in feasting equipment beginning at the end of the Middle Bronze Age, focused on a small group of high-status burials. This indication of feasting continues but is represented more widely in wealthy burials among the many chamber tombs throughout the mainland and on Crete (LM and LH II–III). These developments are accompanied by an elaboration of shapes and forms. Although it is difficult to quantify a specific service of vessels, by LH IIIA the following appear together most frequently: kettles, lekanes, basins, bowls, pitchers, pans, hydrias, amphoras, and cups (see below, Fig. 7:226, for an ideogrammatic representation of a service). This integration of drinking vessels and equip-

44. Evans 1906.

45. Sakellarakis 1970; Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1991, p. 84.

46. Frödin 1938.

47. Persson 1942.

48. Wilkie 1992.

49. Matthäus 1980, p. 66; Palaima 2003.

50. Matthäus 1980, pp. 341–342.

51. Morgan 1990, pp. 257–258.



Figure 6. Bronze vessels from tomb 14 at Zapher Papoura. After Evans 1906, pl. 89

ment for feasting in the deposition of metal vessels with the deceased is not necessarily proof that the two activities were bound together; there could always have been a distinction between feasting and drinking. Feasting can be either an inclusive or an exclusive activity, as we know from many sources from classical antiquity and modern ethnography.⁵² The presence of feasting equipment in a tomb no doubt represents the ability of the deceased to sponsor feasts, and may also indicate memorable occasions of sponsorship and a reputation for hospitality. Drinking is a specialized and often exclusive activity that occurs either in the context of feasts (consider the difference between *deipnon* and *symposion*⁵³) or on an individual basis. The presence of drinking vessels in a tomb, especially of silver and gold (but also of bronze or “tinned” clay), may refer to the status of the deceased as one who shares drinks with special companions.

The practice of depositing valuable metal vessels in tombs from the late Middle through the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean indicates the value attached both to the objects and to the activities they symbolize. Their significant early appearance in elite burials on the mainland and their continuing predominance, especially in the Argolid and Messenia, suggest a Mycenaean custom. Attention has been given to the appearance of similar burials on Crete, primarily around Knossos, and, even if not the burials of occupying Mycenaean overlords, they strongly indicate the

52. See Murray 1996 for discussions of Dark Age, Classical, Hellenistic, and royal Persian feasting; for the Near East in general, see Dentzer 1971, esp. pp. 240–256; for Macedonia, see Borza 1983; for Hallstatt, see Dietler 1999.

53. Murray 1990, p. 6.

acceptance of Mycenaean customs for elite burials at this time.⁵⁴ As status markers these assemblages denote what Dietler and Hayden term the “diacritical” feast, i.e., one that is marked by sumptuary display.⁵⁵ Metal kettles and basins found in these deposits are larger than their ceramic counterparts and therefore may indicate the ability of the occupant to sponsor substantial feasts that would have served sociopolitical as well as economic purposes.⁵⁶ As durable goods of high value they record a personal and social history and can be the source and inspiration for narrative. Caution is recommended in our chronological and typological examination of these deposits, since they may contain heirlooms or objects acquired outside the network of generally recognized exchange. Given their value and utility, these mortuary objects were often inventoried while they were in use,⁵⁷ a topic pursued in the following section.

LINEAR B EVIDENCE

In the Linear B records, vessels are recorded and denoted by ideograms representing a wide range of shapes and types (Fig. 7, Table 7). The ideograms are a shorthand designation accompanying written text, which often includes the vessel name. Not every mention of vessels in the tablets can be associated with feasting. Some—MY Ge 602–604, KN K 773+1809—are concerned with activities of production.⁵⁸ A long list of tablets record offerings to deities of amphoras filled with honey (KN Fs 8v; KN Gg 10, 701–711, 713+994, 995+7370, 5007, 5184, 5548, 5637+8243, 7232, 7371, 7372, 7792), which may be exclusively a dedication but could also be used in feasts.⁵⁹ Other texts with vessel ideograms provide no clear textual context (KN K 774–776, 778; KN K 829+874, 877[+]1052, 7353, 7363; KN U 521+712, 7501), though some are associated with things sacred (KN K 875) or are perhaps simply inventories (KN K 700).

Not all ideograms of drinking vessels found in Table 7 are concerned with feasting. For example, the ideograms for chalice, goblet, and bowl on Tn 316 from Pylos record offerings to deities on a tablet that is strictly

54. Preston (1999) compares LM II monumental burials to burials of LH I–II; see also Popham 1973; Popham and Catling 1974; Matthäus 1983; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1985; and Löwe 1996.

55. Dietler 2001, pp. 85–88; Hayden 2001a, pp. 35–42.

56. The largest kettles are as much as 0.50 m in diameter, although they average about 0.30 m; ceramic examples range from 0.12 to 0.20 m (see n. 177, below). In volumetric terms the clay tripods, if they average 0.15 m in diameter and are 0.075–0.10 m in depth, would hold between 1,237 and

1,767 cc, while the average bronze tripod (diameter 0.30 m, depth 0.15–0.20 m) would hold between 10,603 and 14,138 cc, an eightfold difference in capacity. The tripods may be important for differentiating between large-scale feasts, such as those at Pylos (discussed by Stocker and Davis, this volume), and more restricted feasting for a privileged group that may have enjoyed special foods. Bronze tripods may have been used for such special feasting, but also as part of the activities of larger feasts. The problem here is determining what the tripods were used for, a question discussed below in the

context of their representation in frescoes.

57. Cf. Hayden 2001a, pp. 40–41.

58. Bennett 1958, pp. 79–82; 1962; Shelmerdine 1985, pp. 49–50, 117.

59. Y. Hamilakis (pers. comm.) points out that it is difficult to distinguish offerings from feasting items; see also Hamilakis and Konsolaki 2004, pp. 143–148. See also Sacconi 2001. B. Hayden notes (pers. comm.) that in contemporary Buddhist temples “offerings are often made to Buddha, but they are actually used by the priests for their upkeep and perhaps for feasting.”

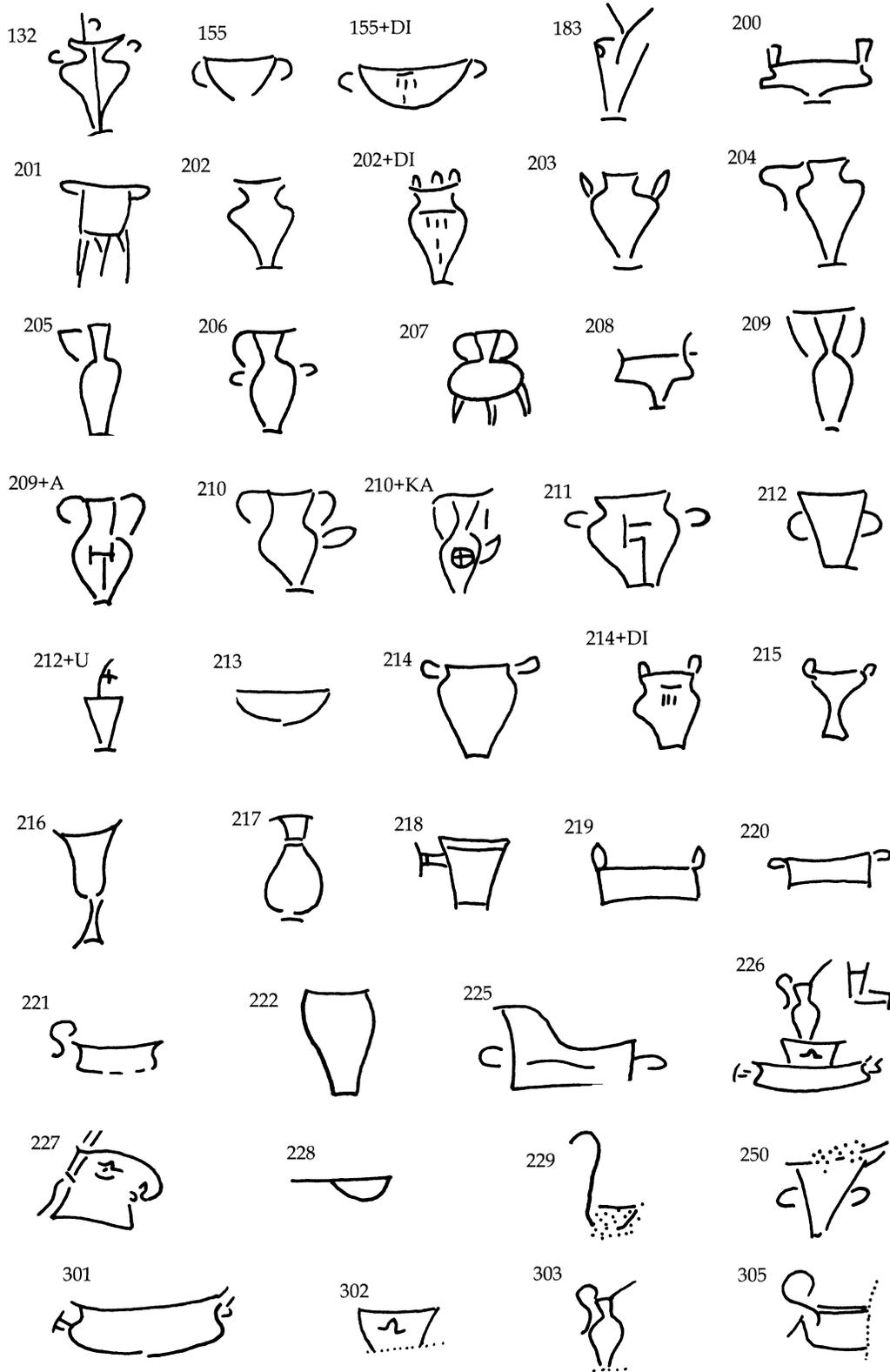


Figure 7. Ideograms of vessels in Linear B. Adapted from Vandenameele and Olivier 1979, *passim*

religious.⁶⁰ The appearance of the chalice and goblet ideograms on Tn 316 is unique, and the bowl ideogram appears only infrequently. These ideograms do not appear on tablets associated with feasting (e.g., Ta 709 and Tn 996). The Ta series from Pylos, Killen has suggested, “record an audit of the palace’s equipment for banqueting.”⁶¹ He believes that they mark the appointment of the important magistrate, the *da-mo-ko-ro*.⁶² The audit includes lists of vessels such as tripod kettles, amphoras, kraters, basins, bowls, and jugs, among other forms and variants, especially on tablets Ta 641 and 709. To these we should also add tablets from Knossos that denote special vessels or even sets of them (KN Gg 5637+8243, Uc 160, K 93, K 740, and K 872).⁶³

As an economic activity feasting drew heavily on the resources of the palace and required considerable logistical planning, as Killen points out in his article on state-sponsored banquets, in which he analyzes sealings from Thebes and their relationship to tablets from Pylos and Knossos.⁶⁴ In these documents Killen argues that cattle, pigs, and goats/sheep, which were requisitioned and fattened, were intended for feasts, and that other documents record the preparation of equipment for a state-sponsored feast. In advance of any large-scale feast, palace officials must have had animals brought in from distant grazing and foraging areas and penned up where fodder was provided before they were taken for slaughter.⁶⁵ Similarly, vessels for the preparation of the feast would be readied for use, checked for condition, and defective ones noted. Stores of pottery vessels also would be inventoried or requisitioned.⁶⁶ In addition, as Killen and Palaima note, other tablets in the Ta series record items such as furniture and instruments probably used for slaughter (axes and swords or knives).⁶⁷ A tablet especially indicative of the collection and recording of feasting equipment is KN K 93, with ideograms *219, *226, *301, *302, and *303 (Fig. 7:219, 226, 301–303), which records a service of vessels that were kept together.⁶⁸

The ideograms on these tablets relied on shorthand for noting items. For the archaeologist who collects artifacts from domestic and funerary contexts, a disjuncture exists between the Linear B ideograms and the range of objects known to us. The ideograms for vessels do not lend themselves to a literal reading as they were strongly modified by textual description and vary both in execution and type.⁶⁹ How, then, can we relate them to the many artifacts we find in the palaces and tombs? Here we face the classic problem of trying to read the ideograms as markers within our own system of transcription and translation, instead of attempting to understand how they were used by the scribes to signify meaning to themselves and to

60. See Palaima 1999, and this volume; Sacconi 1987.

61. Killen 1998, p. 421.

62. Killen 1998.

63. A fuller textual consideration of this matter is found in Palaima, this volume.

64. Killen 1994; Piteros, Olivier, and Melena 1990.

65. Killen 1994; for this procedure in an ethnographic setting, see Hayden 2001b.

66. Isaakidou et al. 2002; Wright 1994; Galaty 1999a, 1999b; White-law 2001 (I would like to thank J. Rutter for reminding me of this recent study).

67. Killen 1992; 1994, p. 80; 1998.

The tablets in question are Ta 716 and 722; see Palaima, this volume.

68. Vandenaabeele and Olivier 1979, pp. 271–273.

69. Bennett and Olivier 1973, pp. 231, 235; Ventris and Chadwick 1973, passim; Matthäus 1980, pp. 78–79; Palaima 2003, pp. 193–198.

other scribes.⁷⁰ It is clear that the addition of Linear B signs within certain ideograms (e.g., *202, see Fig. 7) modifies their meaning,⁷¹ and we know from texts where the vessel form has been written out, e.g., PY Ta 641 and 709, that the ideogram in some instances needs supplementing with words to convey a more specific meaning.⁷² This is a significant scribal convention in that it allows us to recognize that the standard set of ideograms was too small to represent all the cognitive types of vessels employed in the palace—a classic problem of typology without taxonomy.⁷³ Matthäus, in categorizing the corpus of bronze vessels from Bronze Age Greece, created a typology with a bewildering array of types and variants according to form, shape, size, and decorative and functional aspects—a classification much greater than what one sees represented on painted pottery or in frescoes and ideograms, a scheme that leads the contemporary analyst to despair when attempting to determine functional and symbolic relationships.⁷⁴ Similarly, no scribe in antiquity could have worked with such a typology, for every variation in the objects could never be registered in bureaucratic discourse. Nevertheless, the ancient scribes at Pylos and Knossos had to account for each vessel, and they devised ways of adding description to the ideograms that accounted for the variation and enabled them to refer to specific vessels.

This digression concerns an important issue of method. As Matthäus recognized, we are obligated when studying preserved metal vessels, and in some instances ceramic ones, to relate them to texts discussing those vessels.⁷⁵ To recover meaning from the texts, we must learn to read them, not merely translate them, and, in the structuralist sense, acknowledge the iconographic tradition that underlies the ideograms. This iconography informs other modes of representation: painted vessels in frescoes, painted vessels on vessels, and depictions of vessels in use. While there is no one-to-one correspondence between actual vessels and their ideogrammatic representation, a relatively consistent usage among different forms of representation may inform us as to what the Mycenaeans were saying about feasting through such depictions.

70. Matthäus 1980, p. 78.

71. Ventris and Chadwick 1973, p. 324, fig. 16; Vandenaebale and Olivier 1979, pp. 185 (*155), 190 (*212), 196 (*123), 205–206 (*211), 234 (*202), 259 (*209), and 266 (*210).

72. For example, *202 and its variants with and without handles: Vandenaebale and Olivier 1979, pp. 234–239; Ventris and Chadwick 1973, pp. 330–331 (*232), 336 (*236); Bennett and Olivier 1973, p. 231; see also the discussion by Sherratt, this volume.

73. See Rice 1987, p. 284; Whallon and Brown 1982; Adams and Adams 1991; Sinopoli 1991, pp. 49–67.

74. For example, Matthäus (1980, pp. 82–118) categorized kettles into nine types, each with subtypes and variants: 1) kettles with walls of multiple sheets; 2) two-handled kettles with single-part walls; 3) round-bottomed kettles with carination; 4) kettles with shoulder carination; 5) kettles with ring handles; 6) MM tripod kettles; 7) cylindrical tripod kettles with horizontal handles; 8) round-bottomed tripod kettles with collar rim; and 9) round-bottomed tripod kettles with incurved rim.

75. Matthäus 1980, p. 80. In his discussion Matthäus observes that in cases where a vessel form appears as an ideo-

gram but is unknown in clay, we can conclude that it exists in metal, e.g., *201—tripod kettles with ring handles—but the reverse is not true. As he points out, if the tablets recorded very large numbers of vessels (hundreds or thousands), then it would be clear that they are inventories of clay vessels; without such quantification one cannot tell whether ceramic or metal vessels are referred to. Consider in this regard that Pylos tablet Tn 996, which lists a few metal vessels, was found in pantry room 20, which contained 522 clay pots (Wright 1984, pp. 23–24; see also Mountjoy 1993, pp. 81–82).

The Linear B documents appear to indicate that feasting was an important activity that occurred with enough frequency and required such specialized implements that an inventory was necessary. As Palaima argues, some of the items used in feasting were heirlooms and had narrative, historical, personal, and prestige values.⁷⁶ Others were simply large clay vessels that needed to be on hand for use.⁷⁷ The attention given to recording implements used in feasting is not unlike the preservation of important residues of feasting, such as the burned cattle bones from the Archives Room at Pylos discussed by Stocker and Davis elsewhere in this volume. Ethnographical and historical studies of feasting have documented how communities record feasts; for example, the Akha of northern Thailand display water buffalo horns and pig mandibles.⁷⁸ Hayden observes that these are records of a “community’s ability to sponsor such events.”⁷⁹ Without textual records, however, it is unclear that remains recovered archaeologically could be interpreted in this manner; they might just as well advertise the wealth or historical position of a powerful person or group within the community.⁸⁰ In this regard, Killen’s conclusion that the Mycenaean texts refer to feasts that marked the transition of magistracies is only one of a number of possible interpretations of feasting as a practice, and we cannot extend his classification of Mycenaean palatial feasts as “state sponsored” to all archaeologically discovered instances of feasting. Indeed, there is no reason to believe that all of the feasts recorded in the texts need to have been sponsored by the state.⁸¹

DISTRIBUTION PATTERNS

Material evidence for feasting is not found universally throughout the mainland. For the early period, it is largely restricted to a few tombs in the Argolid and in southwestern Messenia; later, it is distributed more widely around the Argolid and Messenia. Evidence is much less abundant in Lakonia, Attica, Boiotia, and Thessaly.⁸² In Lakonia, for example, only the Vapheio tholos of LH II date contained any feasting equipment, and not in large quantity, although the effects of robbing must be taken into account.⁸³ In Achaia in the western Peloponnese, a tomb at Katarraktis provided a silver bowl, a hemispherical bronze bowl, a bowl with wishbone handle, and a carinated bowl.⁸⁴ In central Greece at Thebes, excavations in a storeroom on the acropolis turned up a few bronze vessels of probable LH IIIA1 date: a two-handled bowl, piriform jug, and broad-rimmed

76. Palaima 2003, and this volume.

77. Säflund 1980, p. 239; Wright 1984, pp. 23–26; Galaty 1999a; 1999b, pp. 45–49, 69–72, 77–80; Whitelaw 2001, pp. 52–62, 71–76.

78. Hayden 2001a, p. 55, figs. 2.7, 2.8; Clarke 2001. Of interest in this regard is a deposit of seven wild boar mandibles, apparently pierced through

for hanging, found during 1995–1997 rescue operations of the Kadmeia, Thebes, in a LH IIIB2 deposit in room 2; see Snyder and Andrikou 2001.

79. Hayden 2001a, p. 55.

80. Hayden 2001a, pp. 57–58.

81. I thank D. Nakassis for this insight.

82. I wish to thank J. Rutter for

urging me to look at this problem of distribution and attempt to explain it.

83. In bronze there are two jugs, a ladle, and a brazier; in silver, a ladle and some fragments; and in gold, the two famous cups (Matthäus 1980, pp. 32–33).

84. Papadopoulos 1979, pp. 277–280.

bowl.⁸⁵ Additional hoards scattered throughout the mainland, on the Acropolis in Athens, at Anthedon and Orchomenos in Boiotia, and at Kalydon in Aitolia add slightly to the evidence.⁸⁶

Most of these instances date between the periods LH IIB and LH IIIA, when major deposits of feasting equipment appear in chamber tombs on Crete. At this time the Mycenaeans were establishing themselves as overlords of the Cretan palaces, and the contemporaneous spread of feasting assemblages in elite tombs on the mainland and at major centers on Crete is surely indicative of the strength this custom had attained among high-status and powerful groups, as Borgna explores in her essay in this volume.⁸⁷ The absence of such evidence during the earlier, formative period between MH III and LH II is indicative of the various regional trajectories on the mainland as communities made the transition from “trans-egalitarian” to more highly organized entities such as chiefdoms or states.⁸⁸ The matter may be understood in terms of Dickinson’s suggestion that Mycenae had a “special relationship” with Crete,⁸⁹ that is, that for elites in the Argolid and Messenia the act of feasting—as well as representing it—was an important and self-conscious display of aggrandizement that may have had its origins in their relationship to court life in palatial Crete.⁹⁰

That it was less important in other regions to display the capability to feast may indicate that different customs of aggrandizement evolved in different areas (or equally that aggrandizing behavior was discouraged for social and ideological reasons in some areas, or that certain communities lacked the resources and social connections to amass the conspicuous wealth such behavior would require).⁹¹ As I have argued elsewhere,⁹² during the formative stage of development of Mycenaean society, variation would have been the norm, and there is no compelling reason for different social groups to represent their identities in the same way. At the height of Mycenaean society in LH III, feasting was widely practiced, becoming part of the emblematic identity of Mycenaean polities. It is likely that the representation of feasting in frescoes began at this time (see below).

The archaeological and textual evidence for feasting demonstrates in general its importance for the formation of political and economic ties by rising elites during the formative era of Mycenaean society. In many areas the social act of feasting was probably independent of and preceded the formation of the Mycenaean “state.” Feasting in these areas would have functioned not merely for the advancement of political goals, but as an older custom for kin groups and factions within the community to mark occasions of importance, promote solidarity within the feasting group,

85. Matthäus 1980, p. 14.

86. Matthäus 1980, pp. 53–58.

87. See also Kilian-Dirlmeier 1985; Matthäus 1983; Popham and Catling 1974.

88. The term “transegalitarian” is used by Hayden (1995) to refer to the many stages of complexity in societies in transition from egalitarian to chiefdom, and gives a more nuanced meaning to what traditionally has

been described as “tribe.” This topic is discussed at length in Wright, forthcoming b.

89. Dickinson 1977, p. 54.

90. Wright 1995a, pp. 290–292; 1995b, p. 72.

91. In her masterful publication of the “shaft-grave” tomb at Kolonna on Aigina, including a comparative study of high-status MH tombs, Kilian-Dirlmeier (*Alt-Ägina* IV.3) shows that

as early as MH II there emerged elite burials with exotic and luxury artifacts similar to grave goods, yet distinctive. It is at this time, as I argue elsewhere (Wright 2001; forthcoming a, b), that there emerged among elites in different regions ways of competing that were not governed by rules determining the kinds of items most appropriate to represent elite status.

92. Wright 2001; forthcoming a, b.

demonstrate superior economic and social resources, and, only at the level of the chiefdom and state, to offer tribute.⁹³

In some regions, notably the Argolid and Messenia, feasting would have been manipulated by elites as an effective way to mobilize labor, promote allegiance to the leader, and make alliances with other powerful groups. It was probably not always institutionalized, however, but rather was carried out and sponsored by individuals and groups at all levels of society. These functional aspects of feasting surely remained important for all social orders after the formation of the state-level institutions of the Mycenaean palaces. That the evidence for feasting ranges widely, although variously, from the Middle through the Late Bronze Age and broadly from Minoan Crete through the islands and on the mainland, indicates development and change in the customs of feasting. Yet there was continuity in the act, as is documented by the presence of heirlooms among the assemblages—both those preserved in tombs and those noted in Linear B.⁹⁴ In a consideration of the iconographic evidence provided by frescoes, these issues (along with attendant problems) become much clearer.

FRESCOES

Frescoes that illustrate feasting or the preparation for feasts appear from the beginning to the end of the Late Bronze Age (LM I on Crete through LH IIIB on the Greek mainland) and are found in many contexts: the so-called villas of Neopalatial Crete, buildings at settlements on the islands (of Late Cycladic I date), and in the Mycenaean palaces. These widely diverse chronological and geographic contexts provide room for a number of interpretations. The use of evidence from the Cretan Neopalatial period to help fill out the picture of Mycenaean feasting in the later Late Bronze Age might, methodologically, be questioned. We need to examine whether what appears iconographically apprehensible and consistent, at Panofsky's level of iconographic synthesis as described above,⁹⁵ is indeed the same among the posited cultural entities of Crete, the Cycladic islands, and the mainland, and whether that meaning changed as these individual cultural groups developed, as Morgan has emphasized.⁹⁶

Militello has recently observed that the problem is complicated by the uncertainty that much of the evidence we have can even be read at the initial and necessary pre-iconographic level.⁹⁷ It is unclear how to identify and name representations of animals, insects, fantastic creatures, vegetation, and architecture until we understand the conventions of representation. Not only are we uncertain what the *Realien* of fresco representation are, but due to the polysemic nature of representation in the different media of fresco, pottery painting, writing, and so forth, there remains the probability of different meanings and structures of meaning.⁹⁸ In this study, however, I am primarily concerned with the meanings of Mycenaean expression rather than those of Minoan or Cycladic production, and I have the benefit of textual sources and several comprehensively studied types of artifacts. One might infer backward from meanings gleaned from Mycenaean evidence to develop an explanation of the cultural practices of the islands or Crete; for example, one might posit that, since Mycenaean

93. See Hayden 2001a, pp. 54–58.

94. Heirlooms in the Shaft Graves are discussed by Palaima 2003; those in tomb assemblages in general are documented by Matthäus 1980, pp. 341–342. The references in PY Ta 641 to “Cretan” tripods made by specific crafts persons surely document heirlooms (see Palaima 2003).

95. Panofsky 1939.

96. Morgan 1985, 1989.

97. *Haghia Triada* I, pp. 245–246; see also Morgan's (1989) discussion of ambiguity.

98. *Haghia Triada* I, p. 246; Morgan 1989.

curated special items such as the Cretan-made bronze tripods inventoried in Ta 641.1, there is a historical connection in usage and meaning from perhaps LM/LH I to LH IIIB. Such arguments, however, are open to the objection that whatever historical narrative was attendant on an object for Mycenaeans need bear no relation to the meaning it held either for its Minoan producer or for any similar object produced for and used by Minoans during LM I and II. For this reason, I restrict my discussion of Cretan and Cycladic frescoes to pointing out structural differences between frescoes from the Neopalatial and Mycenaean eras.

Strong evidence exists from tomb assemblages and Linear B tablets that items made in the earlier phase of Mycenaean culture, i.e., LH I–II, continued to be used during the palatial periods. Such evidence justifies the assertion that a certain consistency of meaning and practice prevailed—at both the functional and social level. I suggest that this continuity has to do with the interactions of Early Mycenaean elites as they competed with each other in their own regions as well as in other regions that were sources for prestigious craft goods (e.g., vessels of precious metal).⁹⁹ This history of interactions ultimately explains the formation of the homologous Mycenaean peer polities distinguished by common architectural forms, pottery manufacture, language of documentation (and in the courts of the palaces, the language of discourse), and legends of ancestors, heroes, and deities. While Mycenaean frescoes were derived from representations and conventions of Minoan and Cycladic painting, the Mycenaeans adapted these for their own purposes. We should be aware that what might be specifically understandable from Linear B texts—that feasts were sponsored by the state or *wanax* to mark royal activities—may not be understood directly from the frescoes without a consideration of specific iconographic evidence and architectural context.¹⁰⁰

Illustration of activities that appear to be related to feasting begins in LM I in the form of miniature frescoes from Tylissos on Crete and Ayia Irini on Kea. Fragments from Tylissos reconstructed by Shaw (Fig. 8) are organized in two registers, the lower of which shows males moving in a file, one of whom holds one end of a pole on his shoulder from which a large jar is suspended. Elements of architecture suggest a setting for the action.¹⁰¹ At Ayia Irini a series of fragments of miniature frescoes from rooms 18 and 20 of the Northeast Bastion have been reconstructed by Morgan as showing a festival outside the walls of a seaside town (Fig. 9). She compares them to the miniature fresco from the West House at Akrotiri on Thera and to that from Tylissos, while noting that the Ayia Irini frescoes have many elements that foreshadow Mycenaean painting.¹⁰² In the fresco men are depicted standing over tripod kettles. Abramowitz has suggested that one man is carrying to the kettle a large brown object from what might be a red table, and she wonders if this may be understood as venison from the hunt.¹⁰³ Morgan observes that the cauldron has “black burn marks . . . showing that the men are cooking.”¹⁰⁴

In other fragments from Ayia Irini, men are shown coming from left and right in a procession, which Morgan compares to the hilltop scene in the north fresco from the West House at Akrotiri.¹⁰⁵ Some individuals, who are part of a procession, carry items in their hands or suspended from poles; a large jar hangs from one, while an amorphous object hangs from

99. Wright 1995b; and see discussion above.

100. I thank L. Morgan for clarifying this point.

101. Shaw 1972.

102. Morgan 1990, p. 258; 1995; 1998, pp. 202–205.

103. Abramowitz 1980, p. 62, cat. nos. 90–95; for scenes of the hunt see p. 61, cat. nos. 83–89.

104. Morgan 1998, p. 204.

105. Morgan 1990, p. 257; 1998, p. 204; Abramowitz 1980, pp. 58–59, cat. nos. 66–82.

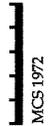
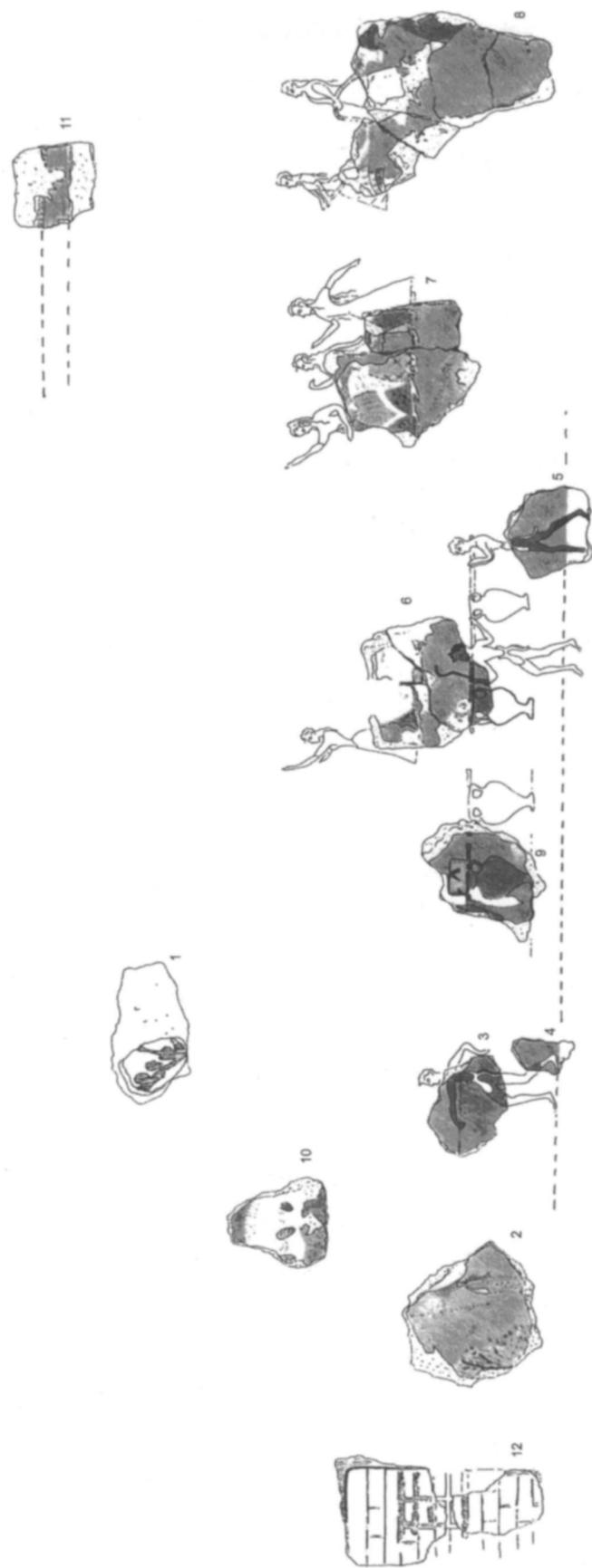


Figure 8. Fresco from Tylissos: feasting scene. After Shaw 1972, p. 184, fig. 13, with additional details by M. Shaw

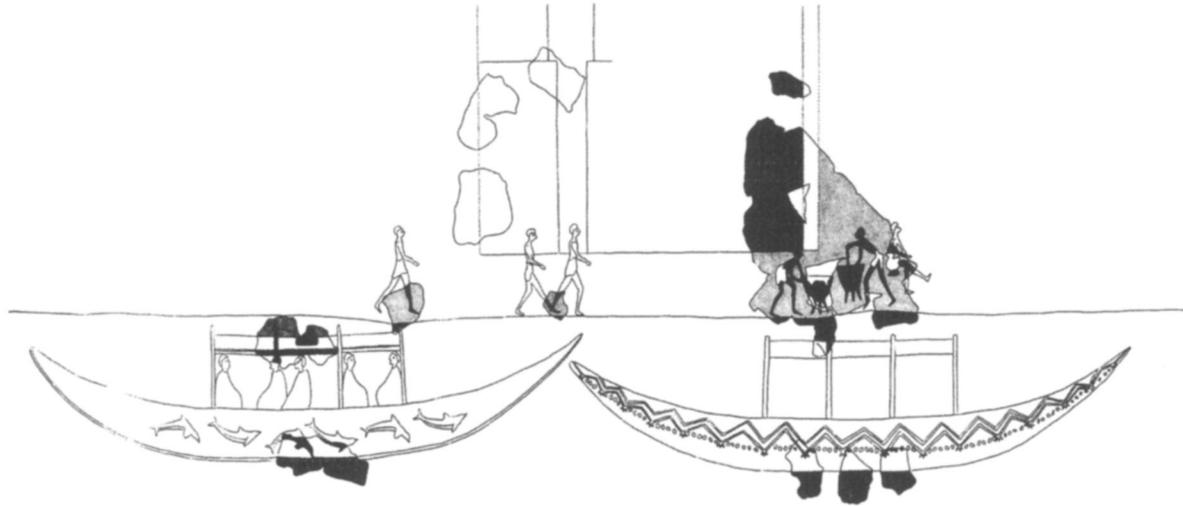


Figure 9. Fresco from Ayia Irini: feasting scene. After Morgan 1998, p. 209, fig. 6

another.¹⁰⁶ One fragment shows a male with a large head, who Abramowitz thought may be a dwarf,¹⁰⁷ although Morgan does not single the figure out for discussion. A group of fragments that Morgan believes come from the western end of the south wall, or from the west wall, depict a helmeted hunter carrying a deer slung from a pole. Other fragments from the west wall, larger in scale than the scene with the men and kettles, show dogs running to the south pursuing deer.¹⁰⁸ Morgan emphasizes that these scenes show horses and chariots, the earliest such representations in fresco.¹⁰⁹

Morgan's comments suggesting a special affinity between the Kea scenes and Mycenaean frescoes bear closer inspection.¹¹⁰ During LH III such scenes were still being painted in Mycenaean palaces. Scattered around the palace grounds and within the palace rooms at Pylos are fresco fragments that recall those from Ayia Irini. From a second-story room (probably above hall 46) fragments combine to show men and dogs from the hunt accompanying other men carrying tripods (Fig. 10), presumably to cook the meat.¹¹¹ This reconstructed scene includes fragments showing men and dogs hunting deer,¹¹² and, significantly, from the southwest wall (which collapsed into the small rooms to the side of the flanking corridor) came large-scale fragments, including a scene with deer and papyrus.¹¹³ A fragment from the northwest fresco dump shows a robed man apparently holding a dead animal by the legs (Fig. 11).¹¹⁴ The similarity of these scenes to those from Ayia Irini suggests a relationship between hunting scenes

106. Abramowitz 1980, p. 59, cat. nos. 66, 68, 70.

107. Abramowitz 1980, p. 58, cat. no. 65, pl. 4:b.

108. Morgan 1998, p. 204; Abramowitz 1980, pp. 61–62, cat. nos. 106–113; I thank L. Morgan for discussing this scene with me.

109. Morgan 1998, pp. 204–205. J. Rutter points out (pers. comm.) that

these are not the earliest Bronze Age representations of horses, however, since the depictions of horses on the grave stelai from Mycenae are probably earlier; see Mylonas 1973, p. 33, cat. no. A-490, pl. 12; dated to LH I by Graziadio (1988, p. 371).

110. Morgan 1990; 1998, p. 205.

111. *Palace of Nestor II*, pp. 68–70, fr. 16–17H43, 19–20H43, and

21H48; pp. 107–108, fr. 12–14C43.

112. *Palace of Nestor II*, pp. 205–207, 212, pl. M.

113. Fr. 36C17: *Palace of Nestor II*, pp. 118–119, 195, pls. 61, 62, 136, G; see also Lang's discussion of the northwestern wall, p. 196.

114. *Palace of Nestor II*, pp. 43–44, 49, 74–75, fr. 31Hnws, c, pls. 22, N.



Figure 10. Fresco from Pylos: men, dogs, and tripods. After *Palace of Nestor II*, pl. 122; courtesy Princeton University Press and the University of Cincinnati



Figure 11. Fresco from Pylos: hunters. After *Palace of Nestor II*, pl. N; courtesy Princeton University Press and the University of Cincinnati

and those showing the preparation of a feast, an opinion already expressed by Morgan in her treatment of the Ayia Irini frescoes.¹¹⁵

The presence of deer in these frescoes is worthy of notice, although given the frequent appearance of deer in Aegean art, perhaps we should not be overly surprised.¹¹⁶ Of special interest in this regard is the stag in a LM III fresco from Ayia Triada on Crete published by Militello; a lyre-player is also depicted, suggesting that a feasting scene may have been represented.¹¹⁷ Additional evidence that venison was a regular part of the feast is provided by archaeozoological analyses from Pylos, Tsoungiza, and Ayios Konstantinos on Methana,¹¹⁸ and by Linear B sources; Bennet, in noting deer on seal impressions and on two tablets from Pylos (Cr 591, 868+875), suggested that they were contributions to feasts by elites.¹¹⁹ We must consider possible restrictions on the consumption of hunted foods by elites, a point recently made by Hamilakis.¹²⁰ For a later period, we are told by Athenaeus (1.17–18) that King Cassander was not permitted to recline at dinner and had to remain sitting, since he had never speared a boar without the use of a net.¹²¹ He adds that the heroes of Homer feasted on nothing but meat, which they prepared for themselves. It seems, therefore, within the bounds of probability that game such as venison and boar, both products of the hunt, may have been restricted in distribution, prepared differently than domesticated animals, and consumed only by those who had participated in the rituals of the hunt.¹²²

Game meats have a tough fiber with high albumin content and they also contain much gristle and tendon, which is best made edible by boiling; Athenaeus (14.656) reports that the Athenians preferred to boil pig as it takes away the rawness of the meat and softens it.¹²³ The boiling of pig is also mentioned in the *Iliad* (21.362–364), but, as Sherratt discusses in her contribution to this volume, this method of cooking is not otherwise attested by Homer. A large quantity of beef was distributed at Mycenaean feasts, but while it was roasted over an open flame, meat from the hunt was boiled and distributed to a more exclusive audience, and the tripod would have been the appropriate vessel for such preparation.¹²⁴ It is reasonable to

115. Morgan 1998, p. 204: “The relationship of these scenes—deer hunt, hunter, chariot, cauldron—therefore makes sense in terms of hunting for the feast.”

116. Pylos: *Palace of Nestor* II, pp. 104–106, fr. 1–2C2, 3C20, 4C19, 5C63, 6Cnw; Ayia Irini: Abramowitz 1980, pp. 61–62; Tiryns: *Tiryns* II, pp. 140–154, figs. 60, 61; Ayia Triada: *Haghia Triada* I, pp. 139–142, pls. I, L. They are also frequently depicted on seals, for which see Erlenmeyer and Erlenmeyer 1956, 1957; but also Younger 1988, pp. xi–xii, xvii–xix, on the problem of distinguishing quadrupeds. J. Rutter points out (pers. comm.) “that deer are second only to bulls as the most popular zoomorphic pattern

in Mycenaean pictorial vase painting, and the kraters on which both bulls and deer appear are likely to have played some role in Mycenaean (or Mycenaean-derived, as on Cyprus) feasting.” See also Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1996, pp. 121–122.

117. *Haghia Triada* I, pp. 139–142, 287–288.

118. Isaakidou et al. 2002; Stocker and Davis, this volume; Dabney, Halstead, and Thomas, this volume; Hamilakis and Konsolaki 2004.

119. Bennet 2001, pp. 34–35; cf. Melena 1997a, p. 284; 1997b, p. 163, for the recent join.

120. Hamilakis 2003; I thank Y. Hamilakis for drawing this article to my attention.

121. Murray 1996, p. 16.

122. Hamilakis 2003; Becker (1999) has found that the bones of deer at Plataia Magoula Zarkou were treated differently than those of domestic animals; I thank Y. Hamilakis for directing me to this article.

123. I thank Phyllis Bober for clarification of this point; Speth (2004) argues that the boiling of meat, especially the bones for their marrow, significantly increases the nutrient content by releasing fats.

124. A possible reason both for prizing bronze tripods and making them larger than ceramic ones; see above, n. 56, and also Sherratt (this volume) for further discussion of tripod vessels.

think that one type of Mycenaean feast was restricted to elites who were members of hunter-warrior groups and who used bronze tripods and other equipment found in their tombs for the preparation and consumption of meats of the hunt. It is also possible that within large-scale, state-sponsored banquets such as suggested by Killen (see above) and reconstructed from the remains at Pylos (Stocker and Davis, this volume), there may have occurred smaller exclusive feasts among groups of high-status palace officials and nobility.

Morgan's restoration of the Ayia Irini fragments reflects the paratactic arrangement of scenes in the miniature frescoes from the West House at Akrotiri, where, as Sarah Morris has argued, the whole can be read as a narrative.¹²⁵ Her restoration also presumes that a corpus of miniature frescoes served as a major source for Mycenaean painters, who continued to paint them in the palatial period, as Shaw has often observed.¹²⁶ Other sources, of course, could have influenced the Mycenaean painters, not least Egyptian painting, as has frequently been pointed out.¹²⁷ The inferences drawn by these comparisons, however, are based upon highly fragmentary evidence, the contexts and associations of which are not sufficiently clear to prove the linkages between the Neopalatial and Mycenaean traditions, let alone from elsewhere. As Cain has recently cautioned,¹²⁸ in studies of Aegean iconography scholars tend to reach a consensus based more upon the history of discourse than upon any renewed critical examination of the evidence.

The evidence presented so far has three components: 1) an argument, based on artifact distributions, that certain vessels were used by elites in feasting; 2) three epigraphic arguments, one of which cites the slaughtering of fattened animals as evidence of state-sponsored feasts, another that interprets inventories of vessels as the equipment of feasting, and a third that posits that feasts occurred in conjunction with the installation of state officials; and 3) an argument based on fresco iconography that involves at least three scenes—men and dogs hunting deer and bringing the kill home (and at Kea showing horses and chariots), preparations for the feast where men are cooking what appears to be meat in tripods, and men in procession, with some carrying large vessels that might be presumed to hold wine or some other refreshment. The last two scenes may take place near architectural settings.

Two additional frescoes are significant for an examination of the question of feasting: the fresco from the megaron unit at Pylos (Figs. 12, 13) and the Campstool Fresco from Knossos (see below, Fig. 15), both of which show figures thought to be eating and drinking, seated in chairs with X-shaped cross-pieces. The Pylos fragments have been interpreted by Lang and McCallum as forming part of a decorative program of the entrance rooms to the central megaron, consisting of a procession leading a bull into the antechamber of the megaron, presumably for sacrifice (Fig. 12),¹²⁹ and continuing into the megaron proper, to the right as one approaches the throne. On a fragment from the foyer (hall 5) of this procession, men carry indeterminate objects, one of which is described by Lang as “the upright of a rectangular frame which rests on his shoulder cushioned by a large white pillow” (perhaps a stool?), while others depict furniturelike and hornlike objects (cf. the Linear B text KN K(1) 872).¹³⁰ Other individuals carry

125. Morris 1989, pp. 515, 534–535; 2000; Cain 2001, pp. 29–33.

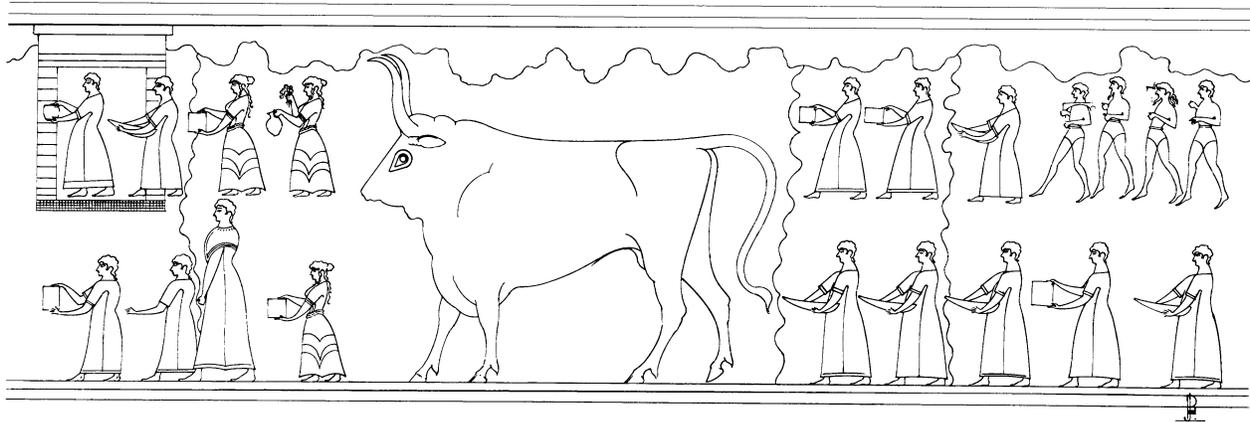
126. Shaw 1980, 1996, 1999.

127. Most recently, Hiller 1996, esp. pp. 91–92; and Rehak 1998.

128. Cain 2001, p. 46; see also Rehak 1998, 2000.

129. *Palace of Nestor II*, pp. 192–196; McCallum 1987a, 1987b.

130. *Palace of Nestor II*, p. 64; see also p. 193, frs. 5–6H5.



a variety of items in the procession: pyxides or baskets, large shallow bowls, and a lamp stand.¹³¹

On the wall of the megaron itself is the famous scene showing the lyre-player, bull, and individuals seated on campstools on either side of a three-legged table (Fig. 13). The entire scene brings to mind other procession frescoes from Knossos, Pylos, Tiryns, and Thebes where figures carry similar items.¹³² The goal of the processions is uncertain. Was it for presentation of tribute or part of a festival that ended in sacrifice and feasting? Or a combination of these? The restored bull in the Pylos fresco evokes the sacrifice depicted on the Ayia Triada sarcophagus (Fig. 14), in which a bull is strapped to a table, his blood collected in a tapered cylindrical vase that is similar to those in the scene on the other side of the sarcophagus, where women empty vases into a krater placed between two poles surmounted by double axes.¹³³ Below the table are two goats, seemingly oblivious to the fact that their turn is next.

In the Pylos megaron fresco, the upper bodies of the figures seated across the table from each other are missing. To associate these two fragments with the Campstool Fresco, details of which are shown here (Fig. 15), we must reconcile their interpretations. The Campstool Fresco is too fragmentary to reconstruct the whole scene, and care must be taken not to read too much into it. Evans interpreted it as pairs of seated males facing each other and exchanging “loving cups.”¹³⁴ In his view the fragments of females represent the “Mother Goddess.” The interpretation of the “loving cups” is derived from the two fragments illustrated here, which show the base and foot of what appear to be a chalice and a two-handled goblet of LM IIIA type.¹³⁵ In 1959 Platon reconstructed the entire scene in two

Figure 12. Pylos megaron fresco: procession. Drawing Piet de Jong, Piet de Jong Papers; photo I. Ioannidou and L. Bartzioti. Courtesy American School of Classical Studies at Athens

131. *Palace of Nestor* II, pp. 66–68, 81, 193, 198, frs. 8–9H5, 47H13, 49Hnws.

132. Immerwahr 1990, pp. 114–118.

133. *Palace of Nestor* II, pl. 53, fr. 19C6; *Haghia Triada* I, pp. 295–296; see also Sakellarakis 1970, pp. 178–188. Other representations of sacrifice are known from signet rings and seals, and thoroughly discussed by Sakellarakis (1970, pp. 166–178). Lang (*Palace of*

Nestor II, pp. 26, 80) suggested that fr. 18C5 in the vestibule may represent a scene of bull sacrifice, but she doubted that fr. 19C6 in the Throne Room was a bull (p. 99); see also pp. 109–110. Stocker and Davis (this volume, p. 190, n. 47) draw attention to an unpublished restudy of this fragment that dismisses its identification as a bull.

134. *PM* IV.2, pp. 381–396; see

Hiller 1999 for an investigation of Egyptian parallels to this scene.

135. The chalice is reconstructed in Evans’s diagram (*PM* IV.2, p. 390, fig. 325), and is based on the appearance of a distinct flattish base of the bowl attached to a slender stem, which then rises vertically forming the wall of the chalice. For the form, see Mountjoy 1999, p. 352.

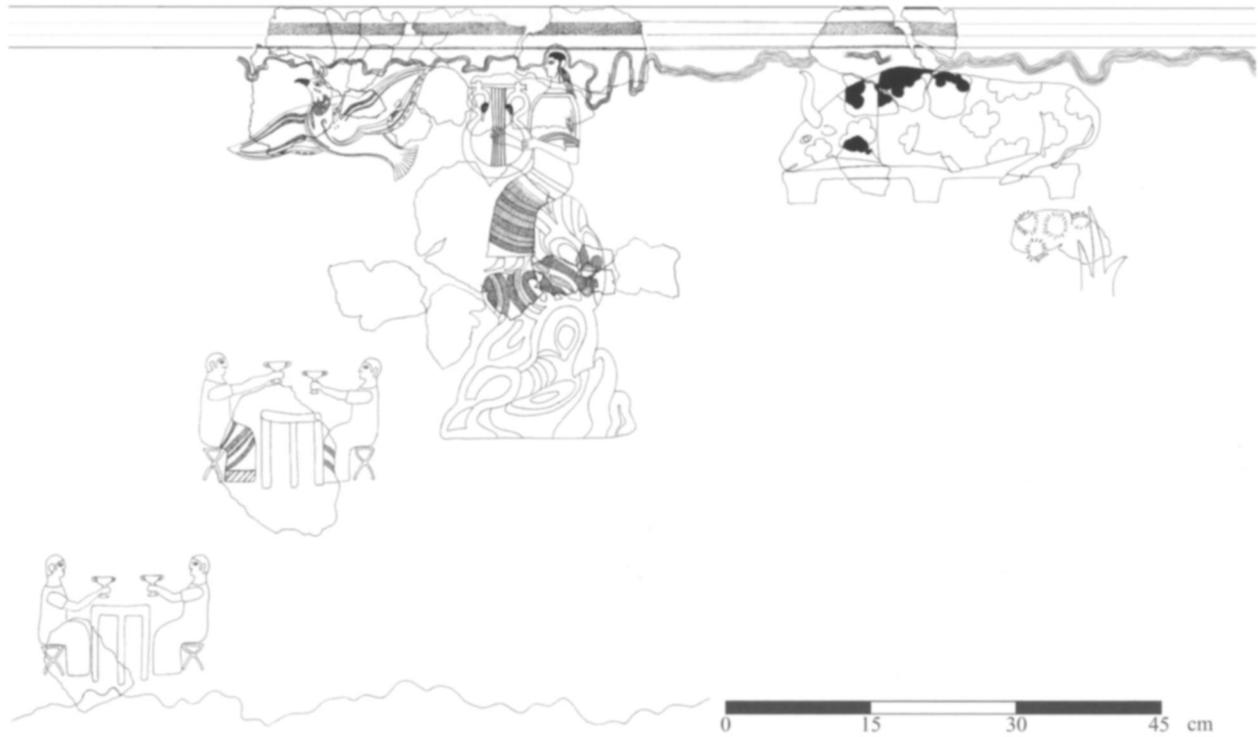


Figure 13. Pylos megaron fresco: lyre player, sacrificial bull, and banqueters.
 K. E. Leaman, after McCallum 1987a,
 pl. 10; courtesy L. R. McCallum



Figure 14. Ayia Triada sarcophagus.
 Photo A. Frantz (CR 13), courtesy
 American School of Classical Studies at
 Athens

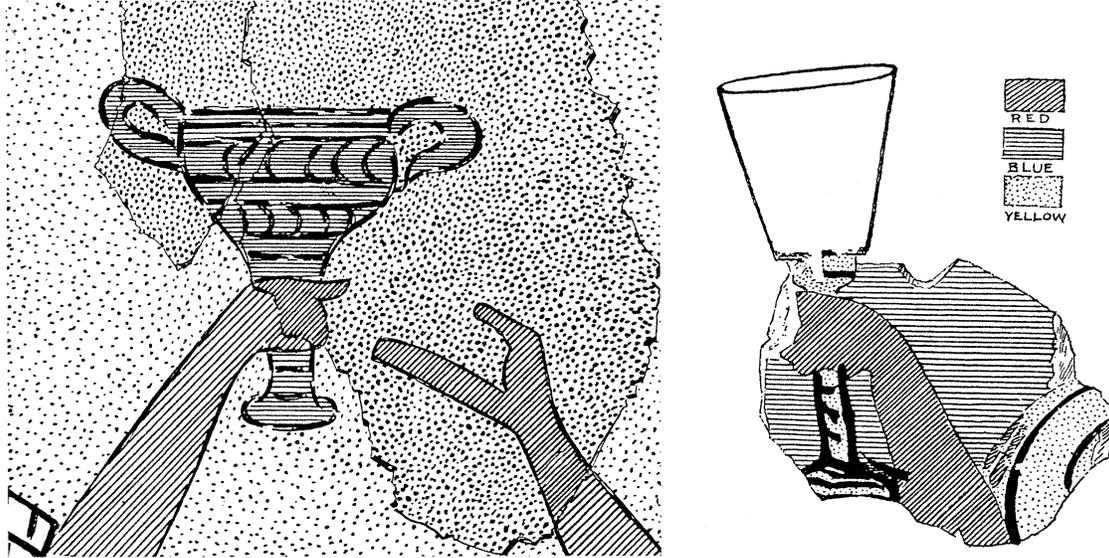


Figure 15. Details of the Campstool Fresco from Knossos. Adapted from *PM IV.2*, pp. 389–390, figs. 324, 325

registers and argued that the juxtaposition of seated figures facing each other was incorrect.¹³⁶ Because the angle of the hand extending the vessel worked better when restored to a standing figure, he proposed that standing individuals offered vessels to those seated. In 1964 Cameron published a new study; he did not follow all of Platon's suggestions, and declined to offer a restoration, although he convincingly demonstrated that some of the figures (e.g., "La Parisienne") are larger than others, so that the two registers of the frieze may conceivably merge into one.¹³⁷ Immerwahr accepted that the figures were part of a religious scene and that "La Parisienne" was standing.¹³⁸

In a recent study of Aegean painting, Shaw includes the Campstool Fresco in the category of feasting scenes, but there is no direct evidence that these fragments illustrate a feast.¹³⁹ As Shaw notes, there are details common to feasting scenes, such as seated men dressed in robes decorated with diagonal stripes sitting on campstool-type chairs. She does not believe the figures in the Campstool Fresco are divinities for the following reasons: they seem to be paired as equals, with different figures (including "La Parisienne") wearing dresses with the same decorations, and deities in Aegean art are not usually depicted receiving offerings directly from humans.¹⁴⁰ Other illustrations of seated deities do exist. The most complete, and presumably earliest, is the gold signet ring from the Tiryns Treasure (Fig. 16).¹⁴¹ Here a robed figure with a rolled crown or cap sits on a campstool that has a back. The figure's feet rest on a footstool and the right hand holds out a chalice as four genii process forward, each holding out a jug. This figure must be a deity, since both the falcon behind and the genii presenting would not be appropriate for a mere mortal.

In support of the notion that deities are represented in similar scenes is a fragment of a terracotta figure from the sanctuary at Amyklai; it preserves a left hand grasping the stem of a vessel, which Demakopoulou interprets as a kylix.¹⁴² The head of a snake(?) is attached to the hand and appears to be heading toward the kylix. This supports the interpretation of the figure as a deity. Another representation is painted on a vessel from

136. Platon 1959.

137. Cameron 1964; see Marinatos 1993, p. 55, fig. 44, for an illustration of Cameron's reconstruction.

138. Immerwahr 1990, p. 95.

139. Shaw 1997, p. 496.

140. M. C. Shaw (pers. comm.).

141. Sakellariou 1964, p. 179.

142. Demakopoulou 1982, pp. 55–56.



Figure 16. Ring from Tiryns. After Marinatos and Hirmer 1973, pl. 207, courtesy Hirmer Verlag

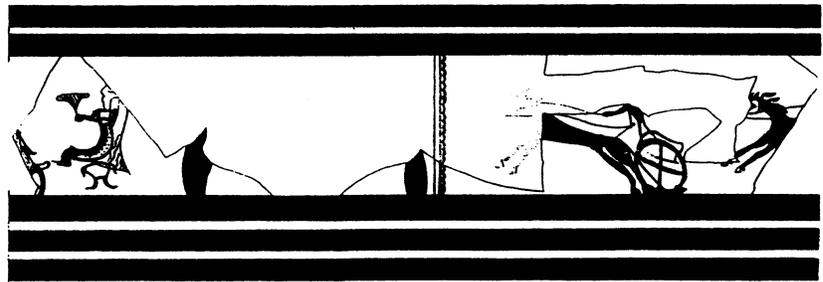


Figure 17. Scene on chariot krater from Tiryns. After Kilian 1980, p. 23, fig. 2

Tiryns;¹⁴³ it shows a figure seated in a chair holding a kylix by its stem while chariots race around the vessel (Fig. 17). Kilian advocates the interpretation of this scene as a deity at funeral games,¹⁴⁴ although Steel has recently argued for a more general interpretation, urging that it be understood merely as a “scene denoting an aristocratic lifestyle.”¹⁴⁵

These alternative interpretations caution against adopting any single one. The common display of a goblet or chalice, however, is significant and is open to further analysis. The Tiryns ring presents a complete scene, and there can be no mistaking it as a presentation to a deity. Here, as elsewhere, the chalice is firmly associated with divinities. It rarely appears in archaeological contexts, and when it does it is made of marble, alabaster, or gold and is found in special contexts such as the Treasure Room at Zakros on Crete, the Shaft Graves at Mycenae, and the tholos at Dendra in the Argolid.¹⁴⁶ Especially important is the unique appearance of the chalice and goblet in the Linear B tablets (see Fig. 7:215, 216). They appear only in Tn 316 at Pylos, which we have seen interpreted as a text recording the dedication of offerings to deities at their shrines. Similarly, three gold goblets and seven gold bowls are uniquely offered to deities.¹⁴⁷ Associations of the chalice and the goblet conform to their co-occurrence on the Campstool Fresco and to the terracotta figure from Amyklai, as well as illustrations mentioned earlier. Notwithstanding Shaw’s concerns about the interpretation of the Campstool Fresco, all these examples must be considered as representations of formal ceremonies of presentation to deities. It seems likely that the accepted convention was to depict deities seated while they received honors or tribute, signified by these special vessels.¹⁴⁸ The chalice and goblet thus appear to be signs of divine participation in

143. Kilian 1980, p. 22, n. 10; the findspot is unknown but surely the vessel was not funerary. Kilian claims it is an amphoroid krater.

144. Kilian 1980, pp. 30–31; Immerwahr (1990, p. 154), however, demurs.

145. Steel 1999, p. 806.

146. Platon 1971, pp. 6, 65, 132–148; Persson 1931, p. 52; Karo 1930–1933, cat. nos. 600, 854; an exception is the clay Sykes chalice, probably from Cyprus: see Karageorghis 1957.

147. The handleless bowl ideogram is found on only two other Linear B documents: KN K 7353 and KN Uc 160 (Vandenabeele and Olivier 1979, p. 183).

148. Lang’s thoughtful consideration of the problem of distinguishing deities from humans (*Palace of Nestor II*, pp. 57–61) is worth considering in this context.

the feast, and the connection between the portrayal of these vessels and their use by elites may demonstrate the special relationship with the gods enjoyed by these high-status individuals.

Although the megaron fresco at Pylos permits an association between procession, sacrifice, and feasting, and at Ayia Irini it is probable that the preparation for feasting is accompanied by a procession, it is unclear if that is the case for other depicted processions, such as the Procession Fresco and the Grand Staircase Fresco at Knossos. Therefore, a distinction between formal palace-centered ceremonial processions and feasting must be preserved.¹⁴⁹ Procession frescoes are a complex genre with many sources (Crete, Egypt, the Near East),¹⁵⁰ and may have been intended for a variety of purposes. Some could be processions of tribute, and others of sacrifice, which might include a feasting scene.¹⁵¹ The representations of large formal processions in the Mycenaean palaces at Pylos, Tiryns, and Thebes may draw on the tradition recognized in the great Procession Fresco at Knossos and the frescoes at Xeste 4 at Akrotiri,¹⁵² but they may also have been adapted for Mycenaean purposes, as the procession into the megaron complex at Pylos illustrates (see Fig. 12).¹⁵³ The complex at Pylos, as several scholars have observed,¹⁵⁴ is part of a program of decoration that unifies each megaron suite.

No matter which iconographic tradition the Mycenaean were drawing on (large-scale or miniature, Cretan or island or Egyptian), they transformed it for their own purposes and used it especially to organize an elaborate meaning around and within the megaron units at Tiryns, Thebes, Mycenae, and Pylos.¹⁵⁵ These programs and their constituent iconographic ensembles express the hierarchical character of Mycenaean society, which began with the appropriation of Minoan and island cultural forms by Early Mycenaean chiefs (mostly from the Argolid and Messenia) and concluded with the focused iconography of the political culture of the palaces. Depictions of feasting per se are hardly the goal of these programs, since the feast was being actively celebrated by living participants, whether in the megaron or in the palace courts. Scenes showing people seated at a table are self-conscious and rare reproductions of these practices.

149. The procession frescoes differ in size: Mycenaean ones, such as those from Xeste 4 at Akrotiri on Thera and the Procession Fresco from Knossos, are large, whereas those from Ayia Irini are miniature. In general the Mycenaean examples are not only large, but also, with the exception of that from Pylos, contain only women, which distinguishes them from the island and Cretan examples (*Palace of Nestor II*, pp. 51–62; Immerwahr 1990, pp. 114–121). Immerwahr also observes differences in dress: the Mycenaean ones more often represent the flounced skirt, whereas the example from Knossos has a bordered robe and apparently depicts

priestesses or deities in contrast to the mainland Greek females, who are bearing pyxides and flowers, as if they were votaries (cf. Boulotis 1987). Lang, however, suggests that the Mycenaean did not distinguish between deity and priestess, and she states (*Palace of Nestor II*, pp. 58–60) “that it would seem best, therefore, to think of the regular processions (Thebes, Tiryns, Pylos) as going toward an altar or shrine and being composed at the same time of priestesses about to make offerings and goddesses flocking in to bestow their favors.”

150. *Palace of Nestor II*, pp. 58–61; Immerwahr 1990, pp. 114–121; Boulo-

tis 1987; Hiller 1996; Rehak 1998.

151. Hägg 1985, pp. 210–214; Boulotis 1987, esp. pp. 151–154.

152. Boulotis (1987, p. 155) argues persuasively that the Procession Fresco at Knossos is purely Minoan and must date to about LM II, a position followed by Immerwahr (1990).

153. McCallum 1987a, 1987b; *Palace of Nestor II*; Hägg 1985, 1995, 1996.

154. Kilian 1984; Hägg 1985, pp. 216–217; 1996; McCallum 1987a; Davis and Bennet 1999.

155. For an interpretation of the complex at Thebes as a megaron, see Kilian 1987, p. 207.

Aegean frescoes provide a rich but fragmentary and generalized picture of feasting across cultures and over generations. The early examples are found exclusively in Minoan “villas” or the mansions of wealthy islanders and consequently offer a restricted, elite view that need not be representative of the practices of feasting throughout the society. This limitation notwithstanding, these examples provide considerable insight into the elements of feasting: the probable hunting of game, especially deer; the preparation for the feast through the readying of cooking equipment and the transport of refreshments; and the setting of the scene of feasting outside monumental structures. This picture of Minoan and Cycladic feasts does not permit us to determine their purpose, whether for creating alliances and fostering cooperation, for economic gain, or for sumptuary display.¹⁵⁶ Boulotis has suggested, however, that we should pay attention to any evidence that these activities were regulated by a sacred calendar.¹⁵⁷

As Borgna has argued, it is likely that Minoan feasting was conceived as an activity that reinforced solidarity among age-old communities.¹⁵⁸ Certainly feasting equipment belonged to the elite, whether those of palaces or villas, and they would have most likely sponsored and benefited from feasts.¹⁵⁹ It is probable that the acquisition of bronze, silver, and gold vessels by aggrandizing Mycenaean elites during the beginning years of the Late Bronze Age resulted from their participation in such festivals while on Crete. Their reenactment of formal feasting in their mainland communities, however, seems to have been a much more exclusive activity that was oriented toward competitive display initially for the purposes of promoting solidarity within their retinue and to gain political support and forge alliances as they expanded their control.¹⁶⁰ Feasting was a means of mobilizing labor, which became a major concern as Mycenaean chiefs began to mount major construction projects, such as monumental underground “tholos” tombs and Cyclopean stone fortifications,¹⁶¹ and manage large-scale drainage and farming operations, as at Kophini near Tiryns and in the Kopaic basin. It is equally reasonable that feasting may have been carried out to mark the change of magistracies, as Killen argues,¹⁶² since the focus of such feasting again reinforced the hierarchical socio-political structure of the Mycenaean palace societies. At the same time, as Dabney, Halstead, and Thomas argue elsewhere in this volume, feasting in the territories of the Mycenaean polities could have continued to serve the purposes of elites as they expanded networks of obligation for alliance building, for extending political and ideological dominance, and for economic purposes.

156. Hayden 2001a, pp. 29–42; 1995, pp. 26–28, fig. 3.

157. Boulotis 1987, p. 153, and esp. n. 40.

158. Borgna 1997, 1999, and this volume; see also Moody 1987; Rutter, forthcoming. Morgan (1998, p. 205) argues that the frescoes at Ayia Irini are local productions representing local ceremonies.

159. This is evident in the distribution of equipment in the palaces and “villas” (e.g., Mallia, Knossos, Tylissos) and in elite tombs, as at Archanes, around Knossos, and at Phaistos.

160. Borgna, this volume; Davis and Bennet 1999.

161. Wright 1987.

162. Killen 1994.

REPRESENTATIONS ON POTTERY

The majority of scenes on pottery that show a variety of vessels, and may indicate assemblages used in commensal activities, derive from the eastern Aegean and Cyprus, and thus may not be strictly representative of Aegean social conventions at the end of the Late Bronze Age. Since this area was largely implicated in the Mycenaean political economy, it is likely that iconographic traditions were derived from Mycenaean practice, but we cannot exclude consideration of other practices, such as those from the Near East, as Steel reminds us in her discussion of Cypriot feasting.¹⁶³ The iconography may have also been influenced by a myriad of local conventions, whether older practices of feasting on Crete (for which see Borgna, this volume), continuing traditions of feasting among residents of the islands and the western coast of Anatolia, or the multicultural society of Cypriot polities (see Steel, this volume).

The most complex of these representations is on a fragmentary krater from Enkomi (Fig. 18). A procession led by two robed figures riding in a chariot, with another robed person walking behind, is depicted. The robes are spotted. The walking figure has a baldric strapped across his chest from which hangs a long sword in a scabbard. He is attended by a nude servant who walks behind, holding a sunshade in his left hand and a small staff in his right. Clearly these implements are markers of rank and give the impression that this is a formal procession. Painted on the background around the armed walking man are a dipper, jug, chalice, krater, and conical rhyton. These vessels may be depicted as appropriate for a drinking ceremony, which might have included feasting, and their placement in the background may be an adopted convention, seen also, for example, in the scene on the Ayia Triada sarcophagus (Fig. 14).¹⁶⁴ It is significant that the scene occurs on a krater and that the drinking assemblage depicted is that which appears at the time of the palaces. The hint from the Ayia Irini frescoes that horse-drawn chariots may have been part of these procession scenes permits the conclusion that by the end of the Late Bronze Age a specialized iconography of drinking had evolved.

A similar fragment, probably from another krater, preserves the head and shoulders of a robed man, and on the background are painted a thin-necked, beak-spouted jug and a crosshatched hemispherical dipper.¹⁶⁵ A looping cable is suspended above the man's head and a painted curving line in front is broken away. It is likely that this display of vessels is a way of symbolizing a drinking service, owned by elites and used in rituals, both commensal and religious. This painted assemblage can be contrasted with ideogram *226 from Knossos tablet K 93 (Fig. 7:226). The difference is that painting these vessels on kraters emphasizes the predominant role played by the krater and dipper in drinking activities by elites at this time, a matter explored by Steel and by Sherratt in this volume.¹⁶⁶

Another krater fragment, of advanced LH IIIC date from Lefkandi in Euboea, shows a two-handled bowl.¹⁶⁷ Large and small legs indicate that the scene also contained people. A krater from a tomb at Pigadi on Karpathos depicts an instrument (a rattle or sistrum?), wheel, pilgrim flask, and two high-handled kylikes—a special collection of artifacts whose pur-

163. Steel, this volume; see also Joffe 1998.

164. Long 1974.

165. Vermeule and Karageorghis 1982, p. 196, cat. no. and pl. III.22.

166. See also Steel 1998, 1999.

167. Vermeule and Karageorghis 1982, p. 223, cat. no. and pl. XI.66.

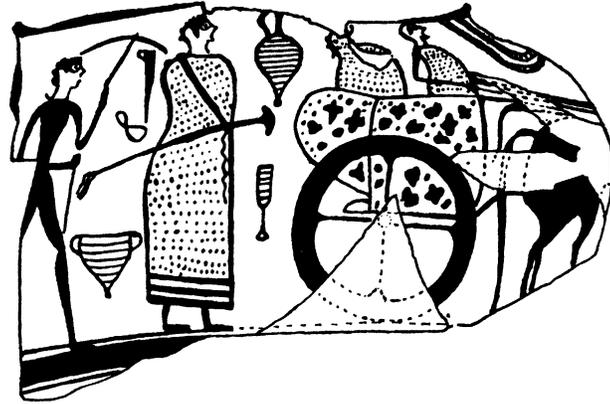


Figure 18. Detail from Enkomi krater. Adapted from Furumark 1941, p. 435, fig. 75

pose is unknown since not enough is preserved to reconstruct the scene.¹⁶⁸ A conical rhyton from the cemetery at Kameiros on Rhodes is even less easily understood.¹⁶⁹ It illustrates a high-handled kylix in the midst of a group of three standing boars (or men dressed as boars). It is possible that it represents a ritual dance, perhaps associated with the boar hunt. Whether or not it can be associated with feasting remains to be demonstrated.

Other representations do not readily add to our understanding of feasting since they are explicitly associated with mourning the dead. For example, a LM IIIB painted terracotta larnax from a chamber tomb at Episkopi, Ierapetra, Crete, depicts standing individuals raising kylikes.¹⁷⁰ Another from Tanagra in Boiotia shows a person raising a kylix or goblet while another individual raises both hands in an apparent gesture of mourning.¹⁷¹ In this regard the frequent appearance of smashed drinking vessels, primarily kylikes and angular bowls, in the dromoi of chamber tombs should be considered; such an activity may have been part of a mourning feast or represent a more restricted ritual marking the final separation of the deceased.¹⁷²

CONCLUSIONS

A distinct Mycenaean society emerged on the mainland of Greece between 1600 and 1400 B.C., demonstrated by a consistent stylistic and iconographic system of representation, of which feasting is one important aspect. From initial displays of high-status vessels, such as the gold and silver drinking vessels from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae, a broader pattern of display developed, particularly through the deposition of bronze feasting equipment in elite tombs distributed widely over the areas of Mycenaean dominance. These practices are signs of the competitive and somewhat disparate nature of social formation among various elite groups. This competition eventually led to the adoption of a common Mycenaean style and iconography at the time of the founding of the palaces and is displayed in the program of frescoes and records of Linear B tablets and sealings in the palaces at Pylos, Thebes, Mycenae, and Knossos.

Mycenaean feasting is characterized by several practices: the hunting of deer; fattening and gathering of sheep (and goats), pigs, and cattle; probable boiling of meat in tripods; delivery of large vessels holding a liquid

168. Vermeule and Karageorghis 1982, p. 228, cat. no. and pl. XII.28.

169. Vermeule and Karageorghis 1982, p. 227, cat. no. and pl. XII.17. See also Benzi 1992, pp. 109–110, 413, pl. 130:a, b. I thank J. Rutter for this reference.

170. Kanta 1980, pp. 150–153; Watrous 1991, p. 301.

171. From tomb 36: Spyropoulos 1973, p. 21, pl. 10:b; Immerwahr 1995, p. 116, fig. 7.5:a.

172. Cavanagh and Mee 1998, p. 115.

(probably wine);¹⁷³ processions near architectural settings (fortifications and large buildings); processions with bulls; the sacrifice of cattle, sheep, and goats; the collection of large bronze vessels and implements specific for feasts; the collection of specific serving and drinking vessels made of bronze, silver, and gold (and complementary ceramic forms); the apparent dedication of burned animal bones and other gifts to deities; and, finally, the preservation of feasting equipment and sacred debris. Analysis of the vessel forms and of their representation indicates particular emphasis on drinking, which results about the time of the founding of the palaces in LH IIIA in a ritual of the consumption of wine that is characterized by the use of a krater for holding (and mixing?) the wine, a dipper, and a goblet, kylix, or angular bowl for drinking.

Just as earlier Minoan and Cycladic feasting practices influenced the tastes of mainland elites at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, the Mycenaean feast found favor in many areas with which the Mycenaeans were in contact. In this manner the iconography of feasting spread throughout the area of Mycenaean influence in the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean, continuing even after the demise of the mainland palace centers. This is the period when the symbols of the feast are widely illustrated on painted pottery, especially on Cyprus, as Steel eloquently shows in her contribution to this volume.

It is apparent that drinking is an important part of feasting activities, evident from the drinking vessels found in tombs and, as the studies by the other contributors to this volume demonstrate, in feasting deposits. Many depictions of drinking represent activities that are largely independent of feasting (such as honoring divinities and the dead). Drinking as a central activity of feasting is consistent with its historic function of aggrandizement by elites for whom rituals of drinking were associated with social strategies for consolidating their leadership and building the allegiance of a retinue. The practices of feasting and drinking gave hosts and guests alike opportunities for signaling their positions and status. Murray argues that in Classical times particular types of feasting can be identified and that among the Macedonians a type of feasting emerged that expressed hierarchy among the elites who surrounded the royal household.¹⁷⁴ The organization of these feasts reflected social position, with main participants in the principal rooms and others seated (or reclined) in outer halls and courtyards.¹⁷⁵ Something like this arrangement may have been taking place in the Mycenaean palaces.

Grandiose displays by Mycenaean elites, in particular those reflected by burials in the Shaft Graves at Mycenae between MH III and LH I–II, were necessary early on to establish positions of dominance and display hospitality. Sponsored feasts were probably held exclusively for their kin, important retainers, and allied peers. The importance of this activity is registered by the appearance in tombs of the great metal vessels used for preparing and serving feasts. Over time this activity became evident in other categories—as deposits of cooking vessels in tombs and in domestic contexts, as records in Linear B, and in frescoes.

As Mycenaean society became more complex, social divisions emerged. Some evidence suggests that those striving to achieve status were eager to demonstrate their ability to command the resources of feasting or to par-

173. On wine, see Palmer 1994, 1995; and for barley wine and spiced wines, see McGovern 2003, pp. 262–276.

174. Murray 1996, pp. 16–25.

175. See especially Athenaeus's description (12.538) of the marriage feast of Alexander in 324 b.c. at Persepolis (Murray 1996, p. 20); see also Ath. 1.17–18.

ticipate in feasts, as can be surmised from the emulation of elite expressions of feasting through the compromised value of items such as ceramic imitations of metal vessels. For the less wealthy, participating in a feast exhibited an alternative kind of value, measured in terms of social distance. In this way feasting reflects the expansion of a Mycenaean social identity tied to the emerging political and economic needs of the palaces.

For the elites, however, the ability to sponsor feasts represented real economic value.¹⁷⁶ The size and importance of a feast denote the amount of surplus the sponsor can draw on, which is symbolized through particular vessels, such as the bronze tripod kettles displayed in the assemblages of bronze cooking and serving vessels found in so many tombs of the elite (Table 6). Since the surplus is collected from agricultural activities, its economic dimension is both geographically and demographically broad. Any substantial feast affected directly and indirectly a large and diverse population throughout the territory held by a community, as Palaima indicates in this volume in his study of the Linear B evidence. Therefore, the sponsor of a feast demonstrates the ability to bring together large groups (through coalitions and alliances), to mobilize labor, and to command surplus and distribute it. The sponsor gains in prestige through these activities and advances his family, lineage, and allies both within and beyond the community.

The bronze tripod kettle may have been selected so often for representation because it symbolizes the necessary wealth to command technologically superior craft items that were instrumental in the preparation of elite feasts, especially diacritical ones.¹⁷⁷ The special attention accorded the tripod kettle is amplified by textual references to Cretan-made kettles, and by the appearance of heirloom kettles (e.g., the Cretan kettle from grave IV of Circle A at Mycenae).¹⁷⁸ The tripod was selected early on as an important sign of wealth and prestige in historic Greece, with dedications occurring as early as the 10th century at sanctuaries.¹⁷⁹ The vessel has probably always been accorded symbolic value, since it was manufactured throughout the Late Bronze Age and into the Iron Age without a break, especially on Cyprus,¹⁸⁰ and becomes an icon in Classical times, as Jones has recently argued.¹⁸¹ Heirlooms carry a history of their own, which can be related by participants in a feast. Through such storytelling, participants and sponsors can assert and establish claims of status back through the generations and, in passing the tales on, look into the future.

A feast must have food, and meat of course is highly regarded due to its cost and associations with the hunt. Thus we see three other aspects of the feast represented and recorded: the hunt, procession, and sacrifice. In Aegean art the hunt centers on deer and boar. The boar hunt has not been considered in this review because as of yet there are no clear associations with any of the feasting scenes.¹⁸² It may be that the boar hunt was a separate activity, reserved for the elite and, as we know from later sources,¹⁸³ a sign of manhood and therefore a restricted rite of passage. The hunting of deer, however, is frequently represented. Textual evidence and zooarchaeological remains indicate that it was associated with feasting.¹⁸⁴ The hunt may be understood as one way—an aboriginal way—of provisioning meat and thus identified exclusively with peer hunters and warriors, and perhaps with cooking in a tripod.

176. Wiessner 2001, pp. 117–119.

177. Bronze tripod kettles range in size from 0.20 to 0.53 m in diameter, with most clustering around 0.30 m, in contrast to the standard ceramic Mycenaean tripod, which ranges from 0.12 to 0.20 m; see Mountjoy 1993, p. 82.

178. Palaima 2003.

179. Jones 2002, pp. 358–359, with references; Palaima 2003, p. 200, n. 37.

180. Catling 1964, 1984; Matthäus 1985, pp. 331–334; Hemingway 1996 (but see Catling 1997).

181. Jones 2002.

182. For a full study, see Morris 1990.

183. Murray 1996, pp. 15–18.

184. Bennet 2001, pp. 34–35; see the study in this volume by Dabney, Halstead, and Thomas; Isaakidou et al. 2002.

Also important is the sacrifice of domesticated animals: cattle, pigs, and sheep (and probably other animals documented by recent excavations at the Mycenaean shrine at Ayios Konstantinos on Methana).¹⁸⁵ Their slaughter, preparation, and consumption have a multitude of meanings for the feasting group and its sponsor or sponsors. The animals represent wealth and thus emphasize the special occasion of the feast. Their sacrifice requires expertise—from the manufacture of instruments suitable for killing to knowledge of how to kill, gut, clean, and butcher the animal. Technological skill is also necessary in the preparation—from the manufacture of a variety of vessels and implements to the preparation of the meat by expert cooks, who boil, roast, or grill it, and who use spices and seasonings and a variety of recipes.¹⁸⁶ The animals provide a high level of nutrition for the feasters, and the act of eating them is a sharing of flesh and blood. For this reason the symbolic value of the meat is high, and it is important that this taking of animal life is mediated by ritual, with appropriate respect and offerings to the ancestors and gods. Feasting is therefore often preceded by processions, marking the physical, social, and religious boundaries of the feasting group. It permits all who participate in the feast (and those present but excluded to varying degrees) to prepare themselves to participate and to comprehend the nature, dimensions, and purpose of the feast.

The archaeological record preserves not only generalized information about feasting but also evidence that its practices are interrelated across cultural horizons spanning more than half a millennium. The better part of the evidence comes from the period and culture we designate as Mycenaean, yet it is clear that no understanding of the Mycenaean feast can be gained without attention being given to evidence from the Neopalatial Cretan and Cycladic societies. It is commonplace in Aegean studies that Mycenaean culture is heavily dependent upon and derived from its island predecessors. These archaeologically recognized relationships are not diffusionist “just so” stories, nor are they theories based on models of economic production and exchange, nor iconographically based projections of religious and ideological interaction; instead, they are the result of sustained and intense human social interaction carried out at every level from the personal to the political. Feasting is one of the most ubiquitous and socially productive of these interactions, highly personal and open to infinite cultural variation in the selection of comestibles, their manipulation by preparation and presentation, and customs of their consumption. Feasting can thus be argued to be an appropriate vehicle for many other human activities, especially those that involve production and exchange, all of which depend on human relationships, trust, and sharing.

Feasting is an active, evanescent activity that is continuously transformed as it is performed, and consequently serves many functions in promoting personal, group, economic, ideological, and political aims. Much of what has been presented in this essay corresponds to the documentation in ethnographic studies of feasting in transegalitarian and complex societies,¹⁸⁷ including feasts for promoting group membership and alliances, mobilizing labor, competitive display, and collecting surplus, as well as ritual feasts marking important events in the cycles of the life of a household and community. To advance our understanding of feasting in the pre- and

185. Hamilakis and Konsolaki 2004. They have recovered sheep/goat, goat, cattle, pig, red deer, deer, mouse/rat, rock doves, bird, and fish from rooms A–C in the shrine. Of these, sheep/goat, goat, sheep, and pig predominate in terms of anatomical units represented. Only a few examples (1–3 of each) of mouse/rat, rock dove, bird, and fish were counted. In general on this subject, see Hayden 2001b for a model of the geographic and economic dynamics of animal husbandry and feasting.

186. See Killen 1992, pp. 367–370, on the presence of spices; also McGovern 2003, pp. 262–278.

187. Hayden 2001a, pp. 44–58; Dietler 2001; Junker 2001.

protohistoric Aegean and to identify specific feasts in the archaeological record, archaeologists need to structure their research toward the recovery of the diverse evidence of feasting.¹⁸⁸ Necessary is the proper recovery and analysis of biological remains through sampling and water sieving, as well as the comparative analysis of various lines of recovered evidence—organic and inorganic, stratigraphic and depositional. The most salient evidence is that which was written into the historical record because it was important to the higher orders of society: the preservation of prestige goods, the scribal documentation of chiefly or state activities, and the graphic representation of their sponsored feasting. This rich record bespeaks the importance of feasting to the chiefs and administrators of the Mycenaean polities.

188. See, e.g., the excellent study of the bioarchaeology of feasting at Cahokia by Pauketat et al. (2002).

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