

FEASTING IN HOMERIC EPIC

ABSTRACT

Feasting plays a central role in the Homeric epics. The elements of Homeric feasting—values, practices, vocabulary, and equipment—offer interesting comparisons to the archaeological record. These comparisons allow us to detect the possible contribution of different chronological periods to what appears to be a cumulative, composite picture of around 700 B.C. Homeric drinking practices are of particular interest in relation to the history of drinking in the Aegean. By analyzing social and ideological attitudes to drinking in the epics in light of the archaeological record, we gain insight into both the prehistory of the epics and the prehistory of drinking itself.

THE HOMERIC FEAST

There is an impressive amount of what may generally be understood as feasting in the Homeric epics.¹ Feasting appears as arguably the single most frequent activity in the *Odyssey* and, apart from fighting, also in the *Iliad*. It is clearly not only an activity of Homeric heroes, but also one that helps demonstrate that they are indeed heroes. Thus, it seems, they are shown doing it at every opportunity, to the extent that much sense of realism is sometimes lost—just as a small child will invariably picture a king wearing a crown, no matter how unsuitable the circumstances. In *Iliad* 9, for instance, Odysseus participates in two full-scale feasts in quick succession in the course of a single night: first in Agamemnon's shelter (*Il.* 9.89–92), and almost immediately afterward in the shelter of Achilles (9.199–222). Later in the same night, on their return from their spying mission, he and Diomedes sit down to dine, drink, and pour a libation again (10.576–579). A similar sequence occurs in *Odyssey* 15–16. First, Telemachos and his companions, upon arriving at Ithaca early in the morning, prepare their meal and eat and drink their fill together (15.500–502). As soon as Telemachos has finished making the customary after-dinner speech, he sets off for the swineherd Eumaios's yard. No sooner has he arrived there than he sits down to another repast of roasted meat, bread, and wine (16.46–55). Later, in *Odyssey* 20, two full-scale feasts appear to

1. My thanks to John Bennet, Peter Haarer, and Andrew Sherratt for coming to my rescue on various points of ignorance or uncertainty, and for supplying a number of much needed references; to the *Hesperia* reviewers for further helpful comments and suggestions; and to James Wright for his invaluable assistance in providing Figure 1. Translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are based on those by R. Lattimore (Chicago 1961; New York 1968).

run into one another, with a disconcertingly abrupt change of scene: one held by the suitors in Odysseus's palace, complete with the slaughter and cooking of animals (20.248–256), and the other, apparently including the same people, held in the grove of Apollo, seemingly before the first has even got into its stride (20.276–280).

To a modern-minded reader of the epics, all this stopping to eat and drink can seem tedious. It interrupts the flow of the story (especially in the *Odyssey*) and distracts us from the plot, particularly since it often takes up a large number of lines and tends to be couched in repetitive, predictable language. Indeed, feasting scenes are among the most regularly formulaic in layout and vocabulary in the epics, ranking alongside other genre scenes such as arming.² Even when they are condensed into only a few lines they often preserve this character, frequently appearing as reduced versions of the more fully described scenes, using a selection of the stock lines, phrases, and vocabulary that regularly occur in the lengthier accounts as a *pars pro toto* shorthand to suggest the whole. In this way, at least some of the distinctive features of the fully described Homeric feast (meat-eating, wine-drinking, and inclusion of the gods by a ritual “sacrifice” and libation) are usually explicitly present or implied. Even breakfast (ἄριστον) can be seen to be a feast (see, e.g., *Il.* 24.123–125, where the element of feasting is suggested by the hallowing [“sacrificing” in the literal sense of the word] and consumption of a sheep). Thus, as described, Homeric feasting takes place as a matter of course every day, whenever named heroes and their companions prepare and eat a meal together, whenever they arrive somewhere and hospitality is offered and before they depart, before and at the conclusion of every heroic enterprise, and whenever they want to win the gods to their side. Feasting is ubiquitous and constant—it is what Homeric heroes do in company at every opportunity.

Within this framework, however, there are a number of variations, particularly of emphasis, designed to suit particular contexts. At one end of the spectrum are feasts whose primary stated purpose is to propitiate gods (such as the feast associated with Nestor's sacrifice of a cow to Athena in *Odyssey* 3), for which the bulk of the description is devoted to the elaborate ritual surrounding the slaughter, dismembering, and cooking of the animal. At the other end are primarily secular feasts where this ritual aspect is either omitted from the description or reduced to the odd word or line—just enough to suggest that the animal is still hallowed (“sacrificed”) before slaughter, and that the gods received their share of the meat and the wine by burning and libation, even if this is no less perfunctory than a grace said automatically before meals. In terms of practice, however, no very clear dividing line exists between these two types of feast, and the differences lie principally in the amount of detail in which the elements of the feast, from slaughter to consumption, are described. When they are not described (or not in detail), we are given no reason to believe that there is any substantial difference in the basic methods and procedures involved. Thus, Eumaios's feasts for Odysseus in *Odyssey* 14.72–114 and 14.414–456 are, to all intents and purposes, secular feasts, yet most of the elements contained are also standard elements of more overtly god-centered sacrificial feasts, such as that to Athena in *Odyssey* 3 or that to Apollo in *Iliad* 1. In this respect,

2. Kirk 1962, p. 167.

Homeric feasting forms a continuum, from the fully detailed step-by-step account of the slaughter, cooking, and eating of the meat, and the mixing, libation, and drinking of the wine, which together may take up several dozen lines, to the quick two-line drink and libation before bed.

Indeed, despite the importance accorded in the epics to propitiating the gods explicitly by means of animal sacrifice, there is much in the nature of divine inclusion in the Homeric feast—including the explicitly sacrificial feast—that seems curiously ambivalent in this respect. As G. S. Kirk has pointed out, after the sacrifice, Homeric heroes get down to the secular business of meat-eating with almost indecent speed, and with almost no ritual transition from the sacrifice itself except for the treatment of the “divine portion.”³ Ultimately, the gods are seen less as remote recipients of sacrifice than as straightforward (if unseen) coparticipants in the feast, alongside and more or less equal to mortal heroes (as, we are told, they actually were in the past [*Od.* 7.201]).

From a practical point of view, this approach has certain advantages for human feasters, since it removes any clear distinction between sacrifice and feasting, to the extent that sacrifice to a god in most cases appears as little more than a good excuse for yet another party,⁴ just as, conversely, all feasting is assured of divine sanction by the simple means of giving the gods their token share of food or wine. It is particularly convenient that, because the gods have ichor rather than blood in their veins (*Il.* 5.341–342),⁵ they do not actually eat mortal meat, and are therefore content with the smell of fat burning around extracted bones (which would not be eaten anyway), leaving most of the more edible portions for their mortal co-feasters. Exceptionally, only in *Odyssey* 14.435–436 is a portion of the cooked meat set aside unburned for Hermes and the nymphs—an arguably less sophisticated approach that finds numerous correlates in folk practices such as the bowl of milk left overnight for the pixies or the mince pie laid out for Santa Claus. The fact that gods particularly appreciate hecatombs—which, if taken literally, ought to mean a hundred oxen killed, cooked, and eaten at

3. Kirk 1981, p. 70.

4. The Greek verb *ἱερεῖω* (lit. “make holy”), which we translate as “sacrifice,” does not in itself suggest the connotations of self-denial that we associate with the English word. On the contrary, in its Homeric use it sometimes carries positive implications of self-indulgence: cf., e.g., *Od.* 17.535–536, where *ἱερεῖοντες*, as uttered by Penelope, clearly has no more meaning than “slaughtering for consumption.” The exceptions to the almost complete identification of sacrifice with feasting (and vice versa) in the epics are the sacrifices associated with the pledging of the oaths concerning the duel between Menelaos and Paris in *Il.* 3 and with the swearing of fidelity between Agamemnon and Achilles in *Il.* 19.190,

250–268, where the meat is either not eaten at all or not eaten on the spot.

5. On the introduction of the concept of ichor, see Kirk 1990, p. 104; Lorimer 1950, p. 466, n. 3. On the development of divine physiology and diet in general and its possible part in the differentiation of the Olympian gods from their oriental relatives, see Kirk 1990, pp. 1–14. When the gods on Olympos feast, they may drink nectar rather than wine, but they do so with the same equipment and often are described in much the same language as mortal heroes in their earthly houses (*Il.* 1.493–611).

The idea (cf. Kirk 1990, pp. 10–14) that a sanitized view of the Olympian gods who feed primarily on their own special food and drink and secondarily

on the fragrance of burning fat or evaporated wine (cf., e.g., *Il.* 1.462–463 = *Od.* 3.459–460) may be the culmination of a long process of theological development is borne out by the difficulty of accommodating the ubiquitous practice of libation within this view. Pouring libations onto the ground hardly seems compatible with the idea of the essence of the wine rising upward to its recipients. While it is almost certainly too simplistic to see this as a holdover from a pre-Olympian age characterized by the worship of predominantly chthonic deities, it nevertheless underlines the mix of sometimes apparently anomalous notions and practices that together make up Homeric views of and attitudes toward the gods.

once—seems as good an excuse as any for the kind of very large-scale communal feasting implied by the sacrifice to Poseidon in *Odyssey* 3. The other useful side of this, of course, is that joining in the feast also brings obligations, both for mortals (*Il.* 4.343–346, 18.546) and for deities (*Il.* 4.45–46).

From another point of view, we can probably distinguish two main types of feast, differentiated on organizational grounds. One is the feast provided by a host at his own expense for his companions or guests, as when, for instance, Agamemnon and Achilles prepare feasts in their shelters at Troy (*Il.* 9.89–92); when the hospitality of the feast is offered to the wandering Odysseus by Alkinoos, Circe, or Eumaios (*Il.* 9.199–222); or when Alkinoos provides a feast for all after the assembly of the Phaeacians (*Od.* 8.39).⁶ Another is the communal feast to which each contributes his share, such as the “bring a bottle” party held in Menelaos’s palace in honor of his daughter’s marriage during Telemachos’s visit (*Od.* 4.621–624), the community feast in honor of Poseidon arranged by Nestor in which each of the settlements surrounding Pylos contributes nine bulls (*Od.* 3.4–67), or Penelope’s account of the proper feasting behavior of would-be suitors (*Od.* 18.277–279). The outdoor feasts of Odysseus and his companions, for which they catch their own food and share the provisions they have brought or acquired collectively, probably also fall into this category (cf., e.g., *Od.* 10.155–184).⁷ While it goes without saying that feasting (as almost everything else) in the epics is mainly the province of heroes and gods, enough ambiguity exists in both categories to suggest that virtually everyone can join in at some time or other (cf. *Od.* 15.373–379). In an ideal world, shepherds have plenty of meat (*Od.* 4.87–88), and even reapers share in the royal ox-roast portrayed on Achilles’ shield.⁸ At any rate, the two clear categories of the hosted and communal feasts stand in blatant contrast to the travesty of the suitors’ feasting day in and day out on Ithaca, at the absent Odysseus’s expense and against his son’s will, and to the reckless action of Odysseus’s companions in killing and eating the cattle of Apollo in defiance of an express ban (*Od.* 11.108–117, 12.264–419). The suitors, for good measure, also violate the code associated with feasting in other ways—by mistreating the servants in Odysseus’s palace, and by their churlish treatment of Odysseus in disguise as a suppliant beggar. Similarly, other acclaimed villains such as Aigisthos and even Herakles pervert the ethics of the feast by murdering their guests at table (*Od.* 11.409–415, 21.26–30; cf. also 9.478–479).

The ingredients of a Homeric feast are typically meat, cereal (probably implicitly, as well as explicitly, in the form of bread),⁹ and wine, with the emphasis above all on the consumption of meat in the form of domestic cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs and—on occasion, with divine assistance—hunted game, such as mountain goats (*Od.* 9.155) or a deer (*Od.* 10.156–177): This emphasis on meat can be seen as at least partly an epic ideal (it is extremely unlikely that any members of a Homeric or pre-Homeric audience, however exalted, dined on meat with the regularity that Homer’s heroes do—though, as we shall see, there may have been times when it was relatively widely eaten within certain sectors of Aegean society). In the epics, meat in the form of flocks and herds is a regular index of an

6. See also *Od.* 1.374–375, where Telemachos suggests that the suitors take turns in giving feasts in their own households, eating up their own possessions.

7. A possible third category, of which we may catch a rare and elusive glimpse, is the public subscription feast with which Odysseus, disguised as the Cretan Aithon, claims to have entertained himself at Knossos (*Od.* 19.194–198)—in other words, a contributory feast in which the contributors themselves possibly do not take part. There is also a curious passage in *Il.* 17.249–250, where Agamemnon and Menelaos are said to drink “at the expense of the people” (δημία πίνουσιν). The existence of this third category, however, is extremely shadowy in the epics.

8. *Il.* 18.560, where πάλυονον probably implies that the barley is scattered on the ox.

9. Usually σῖτος, presumably in a secondary sense of bread made from grain (since it is sometimes referred to as piled up in baskets: *Od.* 1.147), but also on occasion ἄρτον (e.g., *Od.* 17.343, 18.120).

individual's worth—his own personal property—even though others may look after the animals on his behalf.¹⁰ Ideally, it derives from specially fattened animals that take time and expense to produce. Thus, although it is a renewable resource, it cannot be renewed quickly—hence the despair with which Telemachos contemplates the suitors' reckless dissipation of the herds and flocks that represent the tangible wealth of his paternal inheritance.¹¹ The implication of this is that meat can be eaten on a regular basis only by a wealthy elite (though even then not every day, let alone at every meal), and by others mainly as a result of the former's beneficence on certain regulated occasions. Indeed, this is what is implied by the “excuse” of divine encouragement, or at least divine involvement in epic feasts. Not only does this involvement sanction the improbably constant meat-eating activities of named heroes, but it provides opportunities for festivals at which meat may be eaten by very large gatherings of people. The observation or belief that meat gives strength and courage (even if sometimes false courage: *Il.* 8.229–232) merely adds to its desirable qualities.

Lest we should think the heroic diet monotonous, however, the presence of many other “things to eat” (εἶδατα πολλά) is frequently, though obscurely, signaled—at least where feasts in a domestic setting are concerned—by the following repeated lines:

σίτον δ' αἰδοίη ταμίη παρέθηκε φέρουσα,
εἶδατα πόλλ' ἐπιθειῖσα, χαριζομένη παρσόντων

A modest housekeeper brought in and set down bread [or cereal food],

adding many other things to eat, giving freely of what was in store.

Od. 1.139–140, also 4.55–56, 7.175–176,
10.371–372, 15.138–139, 17.94–95

What these things might be we are not told, but black puddings (*Od.* 20.25–26), cheeses, fish and other seafood, onions, leeks, olives, honey, and various types of fruit including apples, pears, pomegranates, and figs are all mentioned at various points in the epics (often in similes) and might have been assumed by Homeric audiences to be potentially included among

10. Odysseus, for instance, owned 12 herds of cattle, and equal numbers of flocks of sheep and goats and herds of pigs pastured by his own herdsmen outside Ithaca (*Od.* 14.100–102), a situation that finds broad analogies in the Linear B texts, where the palaces appear to have interests in livestock spread over very wide areas (Killen 1994; Chadwick 1976, pp. 127–132; Piteros, Olivier, and Melena 1990). For the transport by boat of animals destined for feasting, see *Od.* 20.187; cf. Piteros, Olivier, and Melena 1990, pp. 116–133, for the transport of livestock for similar purposes from Karystos and Amarnthos on Euboia to Thebes.

11. Cf. *Od.* 14.13–20, where 600 pigs have been reduced to 360 by the suitors' depredations. In this connection, a particularly striking feature of the *Iliad* is the silence about how and where the Achaean heroes obtained the vast numbers of animals they appear to have sacrificed and consumed at Troy (cf., e.g., *Il.* 7.465–466), which suggests that, in general, the epic tradition did not include much consideration of the problems involved in servicing a large collective Achaean army. Indeed, only the Trojans and their allies seem to recognize food supplies as a potential problem, as when Hector mentions

how he wears down his people by providing gifts and food for the allies (*Il.* 17.225–226), or when Pandaros explains to Aineias that he did not bring his chariot horses to Troy because of the difficulties of feeding them appropriately in a situation where too many fighters were gathered in one place away from home (*Il.* 5.202–204). By contrast, however, we are told quite explicitly whence and how the Achaeans at Troy obtained their wine (*Il.* 9.71–72); and, as we shall see, the movement of wine as gifts or in commercial transactions figures frequently in the epics.

them.¹² The importance of (sea) salt is also indicated on several occasions (e.g., *Il.* 9.215; *Od.* 17.455, 23.270).

We are given several descriptions of the process of slaughtering, though it is not clear that the detailed variations have any systematic significance except insofar as they may be appropriate for different types of animals (themselves appropriate for different gods). Only once are the horns of a cow gilded (*Od.* 3.437–438; though cf. also *Il.* 10.294), which not only signals a very special occasion presided over by an ancient and venerable hero, but seems to mark this particular act of slaughter more firmly as representative of institutionalized sacrifice with a feast tacked on (as public sacrifice often appears to be in historical Greece), and less as a customary prelude to a hearty feast. The animals (if more than one) may be arranged in a circle, or (if one) the participants may arrange themselves in a circle around the animal. At this point, the hairs of the head may be cut off and thrown in the fire, and barley is scattered.¹³ The implement used to cut the throat of the victim may be an axe or a knife, and the blood may be collected (and perhaps used to make the black puddings).

The standard method of cooking, whenever we hear anything about it, is the barbecue, which real heroes are clearly expected to accomplish for themselves rather than leave to underlings (*Il.* 19.316–317; cf. *Od.* 15.321–324; and contrast the behavior of the suitors, *Od.* 4.681–683).¹⁴ After slaughtering and skinning, the meat is cut up and put on spits (ὄβελοι) and roasted over a fire, then lifted off and either distributed directly or placed on boards for subsequent distribution. In contexts where sacrifice to the gods is emphasized, this is preceded by descriptions of the thigh bones being cut out, wrapped in fat with token strips of flesh laid over them, marinated with wine libations, and burned on a σχίζη (a splinter of peeled wood, *Il.* 2.425). It is at this point, also, that the innards, which cook much more quickly than the flesh, are eaten, like the *kokoretsi* that precedes the meat at a modern Greek sheep roast. On at least one occasion, the divine portions are simply thrown on the fire before the eating begins (*Il.* 9.220). Wine is mixed and passed around generously, apparently customarily from left to right (*Il.* 1.597), for libation and drinking.

Ceremonial hand-washing is also standard, not only before the ritual of slaughter, but also before sitting down to a feast, when a golden jug (πρόχοος) and a silver basin (λέβης) are frequent washing equipment. Be-

12. It is interesting, however, that the only mention of pulses (in a simile) comes in a context that suggests they may be regarded primarily as agricultural weeds rather than a source of food (*Il.* 13.588–589). In this there is a strange parallelism with the Linear B texts, in which pulses are never mentioned—though we assume from the palaeobotanical remains that they were quite widely exploited at the time the texts were written (Halstead 2001, p. 38; de Fidio 1989, p. 199). A similar

sort of parallelism may perhaps be glimpsed in the treatment of olive oil in both the epics and the Linear B texts (see below). Cheeses and honey, however, as well as cereal, meat, and wine, are listed on Un 718 from Pylos, among ingredients for a feast in honor of Poseidon (Palmer 1963, pp. 215–216; Palaima, this volume; Bendall, forthcoming).

13. If barley is not available, oak leaves are pressed into service instead; see *Od.* 12.357–358. Similarly, in the

same passage, water is used to pour on the thigh bones instead of wine.

14. The only mention of boiling meat comes in a simile, where the rendering of pig fat in a cauldron (λέβης) is compared with the seething of the waters of the river Xanthos (*Il.* 21.362–364). Otherwise, cauldrons and tripod cauldrons are used only to heat water for ablutions (cf. *Il.* 18.343–350, 22.443, 23.40; *Od.* 8.433–437, 10.359).

fore joining the feast, individual heroic participants often bathe (or are bathed),¹⁵ anoint themselves with olive oil (which, interestingly, never figures in a culinary context), and don fresh clothing.

A complex array of utensils and equipment is often used. In addition to the spits for cooking, we hear once of supports for the spits (*Il.* 9.214) and on two occasions of mysterious objects called πεμπώβολα (*Il.* 1.463 = *Od.* 3.460), usually translated as five-tined spits or, perhaps more plausibly, forks.¹⁶ When circumstances allow it, the feasters sit on chairs of different types (κατὰ κλισμούς τε θρόνους τε: e.g., *Od.* 1.145 = 3.389 = 24.385, 10.233, 15.134, 17.86 = 17.179 = 20.249), often covered with cloth, at small, portable polished (stone?) or silver tables. Outdoors, or in Eumaios's hut, fleeces may substitute. Sometimes—but particularly if the feasters are divine or semidivine, guests of divinities, or overweening suitors—they place their feet on a footstool (*Il.* 14.241, 18.390; *Od.* 1.131, 4.136, 10.315, 367, 17.409–410, 462, 504, 19.57). The cooked meat may be placed on boards for serving, and bread may be served in baskets. Baskets are also used to hold the barley for the sacrificial ritual.

Wine is typically mixed in kraters, and drunk and libated from the epic δέπας (often qualified by the untranslatable epithet ἀμφικόπελλον), or less frequently from ἄλεια or κύπελλα;¹⁷ only once does anyone—Eumaios and Odysseus in the former's hut—drink from a σκύφος (*Od.* 14.112). Insofar as we are told, kraters are usually silver, and drinking cups are invariably gold. The importance of wine-drinking as a highly significant social activity is underlined by the custom of giving kraters and drinking cups as guest-friend gifts (*Il.* 6.220, 23.741–748, 24.233–234; *Od.* 4.591,

15. Bathtubs (ἀσάμινθοι) for this purpose seem to be available even to the Achaeans camped before Troy (*Il.* 10.576).

16. For the interpretation of these, see, e.g., LSJ, s.v. πεμπώβολον; Meier-Brügger 2001, p. 1147, s.v. πεμπώβολον (W. Beck); Chantraine 1968–1980, vol. 3, p. 771, s.v. ὀβελός; Kirk 1985, p. 101; cf. also Bruns 1970, p. 39; Buchholz, Jöhrens, and Maull 1973, p. 167, n. 614. The view that they represent five-tined instruments of tridentlike form is shared by virtually all ancient commentators and lexicographers. A different view is put forward by Kron (1971, pp. 131–144), who suggests that they represent bundles of five spits for roasting innards, partly on the grounds that forks or flesh-hooks would be inappropriate in the circumstances. While this idea perhaps finds a modicum of circumstantial support in the 10 spits associated with an Early–Middle Orientalizing burial in tomb 285 in the North Cemetery at Knossos (Snodgrass 1996, p. 591), it

has to be emphasized that it is not at all clear how the πεμπώβολα are used in the two Homeric contexts in which they occur. All we hear is that young men stand around with them in their hands while the thigh bones are burned (*Il.* 1.463 = *Od.* 3.460). Given the formulaic sequence, we might suppose that they are used to roast the innards, but this is not indicated either explicitly or implicitly. Metal forks or flesh-hooks of various designs, usually with two or three prongs, but also sometimes more, are relatively common in the Near East throughout the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. They are also found in Late Bronze Age Cyprus (Catling 1964, pp. 65–66; Niklasson 1983, p. 174) and in Late Bronze and Early Iron Age Europe (see Duhn 1926, pp. 331–332, fig. 1, for a five-pronged example from an Italian hoard).

In the Aegean, a trident was discovered by Schliemann (1880, p. 255, no. 372) in shaft grave IV at Mycenae, a bident of Late Helladic (LH) IIA date comes from a tomb at Routsis

(Demakopoulou 1988, no. 261), and a six-pronged version is known from a tomb at Dendra (Persson 1942, p. 126; cf. Persson 1931, pl. XXXIV); for single-prong “flesh-hooks” of Early to Middle Bronze Age date, which may have served a similar purpose, see Branigan 1974, pp. 30, 173, pl. 15:1181–1184. As has often been pointed out, the most likely use for such implements in a feasting context is for spearing and extracting pieces of meat from a cauldron (E. Banou, in Demakopoulou 1988, p. 246, no. 261)—circumstances in which one might well envisage participants standing around waiting with these in their hands. If so, it is not impossible that the twice-repeated line preserves some fossilized echo of a cooking practice earlier than that ostensibly presented in the Homeric epics (see below, n. 50).

17. That δέπα and κύπελλα are regarded as virtually interchangeable is seen in *Il.* 1, where Hera's δέπας ἀμφικόπελλον of 1.584 morphs into a κύπελλον 12 lines further on.

615–619, 8.430, 9.203, 15.85, 115–119, 24.275). These vessels often have a long history of personal ownership, and are frequently regarded as their current owner's most prized possession. A final piece of equipment associated once with the preparation of a mysterious wine-based potion is a bronze grater used to grate goat's cheese (*Il.* 11.639–640).

The Homeric obsession with what one might characterize as emblematic feasting should alert us to the highly charged significance that this activity had for Homeric (and without doubt also pre-Homeric and post-Homeric) audiences. At its simplest and perhaps most superficial, there is its obvious dramatic significance. Feasts form the setting for the telling (or singing) of stories, whether to catch up on background history essential to the plot or to digress into anecdotes concerning offstage characters. They are also the prelude to important speeches in which intentions are announced or philosophies expounded. Moreover, feasts herald the beginning of an exciting action or development or the close of a successful or harrowing episode. They are, often, more or less formulaic punctuation points that, among other things, allow the bard to gather his thoughts and remember where he wants to go next.

Of perhaps greater significance is the reflective aspect of Homeric feasting, particularly as far as the close association between the feast and the singing of tales is concerned (cf. *Od.* 4.15–18, 9.5–10, 13.26–28, 17.358, 22.351–352; and for the association between feasting and lyres, or singing and dancing generally, see also *Od.* 1.144–155, 8.99, 248, 17.269–271, 21.428–430; *Il.* 1.473, 601–604, 24.62–63). In this, the Homeric epics might be said to mirror the contexts of their own performance, since, given the probability that they were elaborated and performed at festivals at some supraregional sanctuary such as Delos,¹⁸ a context of large-scale religious feasting is almost assured. Indeed, at the risk of seeming flippant, it is hard to imagine how Homeric audiences could get through a performance of even a portion of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* as we know them without a relatively free flow of wine to sustain them (cf., e.g., *Od.* 14.193–198, 15.390–400). For audiences at what may be described as epic occasions, the frequent epic scenes of heroic feasting, in which tales are sung, heroes' stories told, and important speeches of moral or philosophical exposition made, may well have served as a mirror in which they could glimpse themselves directly reflected. They allowed listeners to step through the looking glass to become one with the epic world.¹⁹

At a deeper level, Homeric feasting can be said to encapsulate values that are likely to have simultaneously created and confirmed a collective ideology: the values of companionship and commensality, equal sharing and individual esteem, reciprocity and the obligations of hospitality,²⁰ together with duties owed to the feasting community of which one is a member—and at least the potential for universal inclusion (if not always its actuality).²¹ To a large extent, these are universal values in preindustrial societies (and remain at least ideals in almost all societies), but they are values that we particularly associate with an idealized notion of ancient Greece. The emphasis that the historical Greeks placed on such values as central to their own idea of themselves undoubtedly owes much to the pivotal part played by the Homeric epics, from the Archaic period on-

18. Taplin 1992, pp. 1–45.

19. In an even more reflexive mode, feasts themselves are subjects to be sung about at subsequent feasts down through the generations; to be present at a great feast assures one's participation in "history" (see, e.g., *Il.* 10.217).

20. See the expression ξενίη τε τροπέζα (*Od.* 14.158 = 20.230), which is used in the context of swearing an oath.

21. One of the most striking examples of exclusion from feasting (and perhaps the only occasion on which exclusion is ever made explicit in the epics) is the poignant passage in *Il.* 22.490–499 in which Andromache foretells the future plight of the orphaned Astyanax, driven from the feast by the sons of his dead father's companions because his father is no longer sharing their feasting. This, of all epic passages, is perhaps the one in which the sharing of the feast as an *exclusive* symbol of membership of an elite (and contingently constituted) warrior group is given most emphasis.

ward, as an accepted account of their earliest “history” and as the acknowledged basis for their educational system.

In this respect, aspects of the Homeric terminology that relate to feasting are particularly interesting. The most commonly used noun that we normally translate as “feast” is *δαίς*, which literally means a “share,” “portion,” or “division” (from the root verb *δαίω*, “divide” or “distribute”²² [cf. *Od.* 5.61, 9.551]) and is often in fact more easily translated as such. There are numerous passages in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* where these principles underlying the notion of the word *δαίς* are made quite explicit. The noun-epithet combination *δαίς ἔϊση* occurs several times in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in contexts where it is impossible to translate *δαίς* with either the single word “share” or “feast,” since both are neatly wrapped up in it. In *Iliad* 4, for instance, Zeus declares his support for Priam and the Trojans against Hera’s hostility, citing their punctiliousness in keeping him supplied with sacrifices:

οὐ γάρ μοι ποτε βωμὸς ἐδεύετο δαιτὸς ἔϊσης,
λοιβῆς τε κνίσσης τε· τὸ γὰρ λάχομεν γέρας ἡμεῖς.

For never did my altar want for an equal share of the feast, of the libation and the fragrance; we obtained our due honor.

Il. 4.48–49; 24.69–70

The same phrase, *δαιτὸς ἔϊσης*, figures again in *Iliad* 9.225 when Aias reassures Achilles that he has no lack of his equal share of the feast either in the shelter of Agamemnon or in his own hut, in *Iliad* 15.95, and in the frequently repeated line

δαίνοντ’, οὐδέ τι θυμὸς ἐδεύετο δαιτὸς ἔϊσης

They feasted, nor did any appetite feel the lack of an equal share.

Il. 1.468; 1.602; 2.431; 7.320; 23.56

Od. 16.479; 19.425²³

Elsewhere, we find variations on the phrase *δαίνυσθαι δαίτα* (“to share a feast”) (e.g., *Il.* 9.70; *Od.* 3.66 = 20.280, 7.50, 11.185–186); and, indeed, the normal verbs to “give (or apportion) a feast” and to “feast” are the active and middle voices of *δαίνυμι*.

It is interesting that the word *δαίς* with the meaning “feast” is rarely used in later prose (except in specific Homeric references or allusions), though it does occur in tragedy.²⁴ It is thus a special “poetic” word, regarded as “archaic” and associated particularly with Homeric epic and (one assumes) with special Homeric and possibly quasi-religious connotations. Whether it is a word with a much earlier pre-Homeric history is hard to say. It does not, as far as I know, appear in the Linear B texts, where feasts or festivals are implied from the context or given specific proper names. However, the word *e-pi-de-da-to* (*ἐπιδέδαστοι*? [from *δατέομαι*],²⁵ “have been distributed”?) on Pylos tablet (PY) Vn 20, apparently in the context of the palatial distribution of wine to each of the nine centers of the Hither Province,²⁶ suggests the right kind of semantic association. In general, the texts’ preoccupation with both meticulously measured palatial distribution and feasting (often together) makes it quite likely that the notions of

22. Cf. the verb *δαίωμα* and its synonym in this respect, *δατέομαι*.

23. Cf. also *Od.* 8.98, 11.185.

24. It also, as one might expect, occurs in Hesiod: cf. *Op.* 319–351, where several of the values associated with Homeric feasting are nicely expounded. In the phrase *ἐπι δαίτα καλεῖν* (“to invite to a feast”) in line 342, however, the word seems to have lost its frequent Homeric dual meaning of “portion or share” and “feast,” and means simply “feast” (cf. also Hes. *Op.* 736, 742).

25. *Ἐπιδέδαιτοι* (from *δαίωμα*), the alternative suggested by Ventris and Chadwick (1956, p. 392; cf. also Lejeune 1958, p. 226; Lejeune 1971, p. 151; Gallavotti 1961, p. 173; Davies 1963, p. 87, s.v. *e-pi-de-da-to*) would be even better from our point of view, but now seems generally to be regarded as less likely (Palmer 1994, p. 74; Aura Jorro 1985, p. 223).

26. Palmer 1963, p. 369; Ventris and Chadwick 1973, pp. 348–349, no. 250; Palmer 1994, pp. 75–76.

“portion” or “share” and “feasting” were closely allied in at least Late Bronze Age ideology, and, indeed, built into much of the rationale behind palatial record-keeping.²⁷ In particular, the evidence from the tablets for palatial involvement in the direct apportionment of wine both to communities and individuals²⁸ might lead one to speculate whether the term δαίς could perhaps originally have acquired its secondary meaning of “feast” in the context above all of festal wine-drinking. If so, we should probably conclude that this development took place considerably earlier than the period of the Mycenaean palaces, since the use of the words δατέομαι and δασμός (*da-so-mo*: PY Wa 730) in the Linear B texts to mean “distribute or apportion” and “portion or share,” respectively,²⁹ suggests that δαίνουμι and δαίς may already have acquired narrower and more specialized meanings than they appear to retain in the epics.³⁰

Within this dominant notion of “sharing” and “equality” implied by the word δαίς, however, there is also scope for the concept of individual honor—the idea that some within the feasting circle may be (at least on occasion) a little more equal than others. Just as the gods always get their choice portions (typically the burned thigh bones of the animals, and the first taste of the wine in the form of libation), human participants can also be offered a “portion of honor,” as when Agamemnon gives Aias the choice cuts from the back of the roasted ox (*Il.* 7.321–322) or when Menelaos sets before Telemachos and Peisistratos the same cuts that have been set aside as his own prerogative (*Od.* 4.65–66). The idea that a particular rank or status (including the status of honored guest conferred by the obligations of friendship or hospitality) may be singled out through apportioning the choicest meats or the first passing of the wine-cup (cf. *Od.* 3.51–53) is thus also built into the ideology and protocol of the feast.

Two other words used much more rarely in Homer to denote a “feast” are εἰλαπίνη (and its verb εἰλαπινάζω) (*Il.* 10.217, 14.241, 18.491, 23.201; *Od.* 1.226, 2.57, 11.415, 17.410; cf. *Il.* 17.577 [εἰλαπιναστής]) and ἔρανος (*Od.* 1.226, 11.415). Neither the precise meaning nor the derivation of the former is clear, and its epic derivatives seem to imply no more than generic feasting or reveling in company. On two occasions, however, the word itself is contrasted both with an ἔρανος and with a wedding feast (*Od.* 1.226, where it is, however, apparently more akin to a wedding; 11.415),³¹ on one it is distinguished from a wedding (*Il.* 18.491), on one

27. Bendall, forthcoming; Palmer 1994, pp. 73–85.

28. Palmer 1994, pp. 73–85.

29. Palmer 1994, pp. 80–81, 85.

30. In the epics, not only does δαίς clearly retain its primary meaning of “share or portion” in places, but the verbs δαίω and δαίνουμι also on occasion retain a general sense of “distribute” well outside the semantic context of feasting (cf. *Od.* 3.309, 5.61; also perhaps *Od.* 9.551), despite the use elsewhere of δατέομαι (e.g., *Od.* 6.10, 14.208, 17.80; *Il.* 18.511, 20.394).

Conversely, the noun δασμός, which seems to mean “share or division” in general in the Linear B texts (Palmer 1994, p. 79; cf. also Classical Greek), occurs only once in the epics, in connection with the division of booty (*Il.* 1.166). This suggests that the Linear B use of δασμός as a general term for “share or portion” may postdate much of the original linguistic inheritance preserved in the Homeric epics, in which δαίς in its primary sense normally fulfills this less specific semantic function; and it further suggests that

the specialized use of δαίς meaning “feast” (and perhaps even primarily “feast,” as in Hesiod) may already exist in the period of the Linear B texts. An older, primary sense of δαίς meaning “share or portion” may be reflected in a variety of Linear B titles and proper names, such as *da-i-ja-ke-re-u*, *da-i-pi-ta*, *da-i-wo-wo*, *da-i-ze-to* (Ventris and Chadwick 1973, pp. 178, 537; Mühlestein 1968, p. 113; Aura Jorro 1985, pp. 149–150).

31. In *Od.* 1.225–226 the implication is that εἰλαπίνη is a subspecies of δαίς.

from a *δαίς* (*Il.* 10.217), and on one apparently from drinking (*Od.* 2.57). This, together with its rarity, suggests a noun that originally had some fairly specific meaning, which it has already lost by the time that it is incorporated in the Homeric epics.³² The observation that the parts of the lines in which it is differentiated from a wedding feast scan rather awkwardly (*Il.* 18.491; *Od.* 1.226) might hint that it is already an archaic word whose phonology has changed over time. As for *ἔρανος*, it occurs in Homeric epic only in the two lines in the *Odyssey* already cited. It is also found in a similar sense in Pindar (*Ol.* 1.38; *Pyth.* 5.77, 12.14), where it seems to mean no more than a generic feast or festival. Its later use to denote a club or mutual society (Dem. *Epistulae* 5.6.1, *In Aristogitonem* 1.22.1) has led to its usual translation in the *Odyssey* as a meal to which each contributes his share and thus as the proper Homeric technical term for the communal type of feast discussed above, and, although it is never explicitly applied in the epics to any of the more obviously communal type of feasts,³³ it may originally have had some such meaning.³⁴

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONSTITUENTS OF HOMERIC FEASTING

There can be little doubt that the Homeric epics are not only creations of their own time, but that, precisely because of their ethnogenetic role (and probably also purpose) in creating a shared panhellenic “past,” they reflect a complex accumulation of beliefs, concepts, and practices superimposed in popular consciousness over a long period and transmitted through different regional traditions. Indeed, this is certainly a necessary precondition for their immediate effectiveness in this respect, since the cumulative weight of what is “known” intuitively through narrative bardic song continuously generated, transmitted, and reinterpreted through successive generations in different places carries far more credence than any *ad hoc* creation contrived, however aptly or adeptly, out of nothing. Elements of chronological layering and, indeed, of linguistic and cultural transfer are evident in various aspects of the material culture and language of the epics, in some cases going back to at least the early Late Bronze Age, or earlier still, and covering an area that includes the Near East and Egypt as well as most of the Aegean. There is no reason to suppose that this sort of layering and transfer may not also apply to feasting practices and attitudes to feasting.

This combination of the integrative nature of the epics and the deep regional and historical accumulations that give effect to it means that, in terms of the definitions formulated by modern anthropologists, Homeric feasting behavior is likely to appear ambiguous and to resist clear classification. This ambiguity is characteristic of many of the social practices and institutions encountered in the epics. Indeed, it was arguably the deliberate ambiguity of Homeric epic, which like biblical scripture allowed it to be all things to everyone, that ensured its centrality to collective Greek identity from the beginning of the Archaic period onward. While in the archaeological record we may, given a certain amount of luck, be able to

32. *Εἰλαπίνη* is otherwise found only in later poetry (particularly epic) that consciously alludes to or is modeled on Homer. It is abundantly clear that late authors such as Athenaeus, as well as all the lexicographers and Homeric commentators, were as much in the dark as we are concerning its derivation and meaning. Cf. Frisk (1960, p. 455, s.v.) and Chantraine (1968–1980, vol. 2, p. 318, s.v.), who suggest that the term may have been a loanword.

33. Nor in Hes. *Op.* 722–723, where the term *πολύξεινος δαίς κοινός*, meaning a feast with many contributory participants, is used.

34. Its etymology, like that of *εἰλαπίνη*, is obscure, though it has been suggested that it is closely related to Homeric *ἤρα* [= *Ἔρα*] (cf. *Od.* 3.164; *Il.* 1.578), meaning “kindness” or “favor” (Frisk 1960, p. 455, s.v. *ἔρανος*; Boisacq 1923, p. 262, s.v. *ἔρανη*). If so, the word *e-ra-ne*, which appears as the possible title of a functionary on Knossos tablet (KN) Ch 902 (which lists cattle in association with various place names), almost certainly has no connection with *ἔρανος*.

identify detailed feasting practices that fall into well-defined and coherent categories of structure, motives, and practical benefits, the Homeric texts inevitably prove more elusive and ambivalent in this respect.

As it is, there is probably no limit to how far back into prehistory one can push feasting in general, either in the Aegean area or anywhere else. How far back (and from where) we can trace any of the specific ideologies and practices of Homeric feasting depends largely on archaeology, and particularly on what it can supply in the way of suitably contextualized artifacts, rarer representational art, and even rarer textual data.

We can start by looking at the cooking practices and equipment associated with feasting in the epics. The spits (ὄβελοι) that are used to roast meat (whenever we are given a description of the cooking process)³⁵ have usually been associated with the iron spits that appear in the Aegean area from the 10th century onward, occasionally accompanied by metal spit supports.³⁶ These seem to be a fashion that reached the Aegean from Cyprus, where spits of bronze closely followed by ones of iron occur already in 11th-century contexts, although the possibility that the idea of bronze spits together with a new, fashionable way of cooking meat may originally have reached Cyprus from the central or western Mediterranean in the closing centuries of the second millennium, along with imported examples of the artifacts themselves, cannot entirely be ruled out.³⁷ It has been argued that these spits are merely the translation into metal of wooden spits that already had a long history in the Aegean;³⁸ while this argument may perhaps gain some support from the possible identification of a bronze spit among unpublished objects from the 15th-century Vapheio tholos,³⁹ it leaves the puzzle of why they should not regularly have been translated into bronze at an earlier date and deposited much more frequently along with other bronze cooking equipment (for instance in Cretan tombs) or recorded in any recognizable form in the Linear B inventories. As it is, the

35. Explicit spit-roasting takes place both outdoors (*Il.* 1.465, 2.428, 7.317; *Od.* 3.462, 12.365) and indoors (*Od.* 14.420–430, 19.422). In some instances (e.g., *Il.* 9.468), spit-roasting is only implied.

36. For spits see Haarer 2000, 2001. For spit supports in the shape of ships, from Cyprus, Crete, and the Argolid, see Demetriou 1989, p. 66; Snodgrass 1996, pp. 591–592; Haarer 2000, pp. 50–52. Since extant examples of spit supports date predominantly from the later part of the eighth century, it may be significant that supports are mentioned only once in the epics (*Il.* 9.213–214). This passage does not recur in any other descriptions of feast preparation and to that extent is non-formulaic, but it gives us a more graphic description of how the spits are used than is provided by other accounts.

37. The precise chronology of the

articulated bronze spits of western Mediterranean/Atlantic type is still uncertain, but they suggest a prior history of metal-spit development in the west, possibly of considerable duration. Examples of these occur in a tenth–ninth-century hoard at Monte Sa Idda on Sardinia and in a tomb of roughly similar date at Amathous on Cyprus (Karageorghis and Lo Schiavo 1989). As far as I know, however, no other bronze spits predating the Early Iron Age have been recognized in the central Mediterranean (see Haarer 2000, pp. 192–193). Nevertheless, the presence on the late-13th-century Gelidonya wreck of what seems to be a bronze spit (Bass 1967, p. 109, no. B 187, figs. 116, 117; but cf. Catling 1964, p. 99, where it is identified as the blade of a pair of smithing tongs) would place their eastern Mediterranean debut in an appropriate context

for their import from the west to be considered (cf. Sherratt 2000a). The bundle of bronze spits associated with the bronze hoard from Anthedon in Boiotia (Catling 1964, p. 297), although almost impossible to date (Knapp, Muhly, and Muhly 1988, p. 248), may well be of Cypriot origin and could theoretically date as early as the 11th century. In this context, however, their main significance probably lies in the fact that they are bronze rather than in their artifactual nature. In other words, they cannot of themselves be taken as proof that bronze spits were used in Greece in a period immediately preceding the introduction of iron ones in the 10th century.

38. Cf. Karageorghis 1974, p. 171; Haarer 2000, p. 11.

39. Karageorghis 1974, p. 171, pl. XVIII:1.

regular appearance of metal spits only in the 11th century and later in Cyprus and the Aegean seems to indicate a new social or ideological emphasis on spit-roasting meat at this time, while the observation that spits often appear in tombs associated with male (warrior) burials suggests a context of male bonding through barbecuing, possibly mainly outdoors and associated particularly with hunting.⁴⁰ We are nowhere informed of the material of which Homeric spits are made, nor are we normally told precisely how they are used, which leaves room for the possibility that the recurrent passages in which spits are mentioned derive from contexts in which wooden spits, perhaps deployed in some other manner, were the norm. The ideology associated with Early Iron Age iron spits, however, as far as we can comprehend it, seems wholly in tune with their standard role in epic feast preparation, and with the general ethos associated with their use.

Another piece of equipment that also seems to belong in the Early Iron Age is the bronze grater used by Hekamede to grate goat's cheese into the curious potion she prepares for Nestor and Machaon in *Iliad* 11. Graters of bronze (and occasionally of iron) first turn up in Greece in tenth–ninth-century contexts, and have been discussed recently by David Ridgway.⁴¹ The association at Lefkandi of three bronze graters with ninth-century graves furnished with weaponry, one of which also contained a number of iron spits,⁴² brings these into the same general context, and suggests that they too are associated in some way with contemporary warrior feasting activity—though whether they were used only to grate cheese (as in the *Iliad*) or for a more exotic purpose is debatable. Given the general rule that elite activity is most susceptible to inclusion in elite-sponsored art, whether visual or verbal, at the time when it is newest and most novel (and therefore most elite), a date of around the tenth–ninth centuries for the initial incorporation of both spits and grater into pre-Homeric heroic song, with its probable emphasis in this period on the defining κλέα (“glorious deeds”) of contemporary or near-contemporary individuals or small groups,⁴³ seems in principle quite likely.

The conclusion that Homeric cooking practices predominantly reflect those of Early Iron Age warrior elites finds support in the Bronze

40. Ample iconographic evidence exists for hunting and warrior groups and for feasting throughout the Late Bronze Age (Wright, this volume), and the presence of deer in the burned bone deposits from Pylos provides a further indication of this elite connection (Isaakidou et al. 2002; Stocker and Davis, this volume). The hunting scenes from the Palace of Nestor and possibly also from Ayia Irini on Kea, however, seem to point to a connection between the post-hunting feast and tripod cauldrons rather than spits (see below). The importance of the Early Iron Age spits lies in the indications they provide within the standard

personal equipment of the warrior of a formal recognition of spit-roasting (and possibly, therefore, a new type of outdoor post-hunting feast). Inscriptions (one apparently a mark of ownership) on three bronze spits from a late-11th- to early-10th-century tomb (T. 49) at Palaipaphos-Skales in Cyprus further underline the notion that spits were at this time significant items of elite male personal equipment (Karageorghis 1983, pp. 61, 411–415, pl. A:2–4).

41. Ridgway 1997.

42. Popham, Touloupa, and Sackett 1982, p. 229, nos. 6–8; cf. Ridgway 1997, p. 325; Haarer 2000, p. 30.

43. Cf. Sherratt 1990.

Age archaeological record. Relatively deep tripod cauldrons (*ti-ri-po*, ideogram *201) are well represented in the Linear B texts (see below, Fig. 1:201), two of them occurring on a tablet (PY Ta 709) that lists decorated portable hearths and other palatial cooking equipment. They also appear in what is undoubtedly a feasting context in the hunting scenes that decorated the walls above megaron 46 at Pylos,⁴⁴ and possibly on a related type of scene from Kea.⁴⁵ Together with the absence of any objects identifiable as spits, they indicate the strong probability that ceremonial food (including meat for human consumption) was prepared in the Mycenaean palaces mainly by means of boiling or stewing.⁴⁶ No hint of this practice is found in the epics, where tripod cauldrons are used in heroic contexts exclusively to heat water for washing (*Il.* 18.344, 22.443, 23.40; *Od.* 8.434, 10.359). However, the reported results of recent organic residue analyses on clay versions of these tripod vessels (insofar as they may be reliable) seem to indicate that meat was frequently cooked in this way from at least the Middle to the Late Bronze Age in the Aegean area generally, and often, significantly, in ritual contexts.⁴⁷

This method of cooking is much more economical than grilling or roasting, since the meat can be cut into smaller pieces and bulked out with liquids and other ingredients, and since boiling or stewing makes even the toughest bits edible. It is therefore inherently more appropriate for large-scale feasts than the Homeric practice of barbecuing.⁴⁸ Moreover, the suggestion, supported by traces of meat in tripod vessels from Armenoi, Thebes, and postpalatial Tiryns, that meat cooked in relatively humble clay pots may have become an item of diet of a progressively wide section of the population from the 13th century onward⁴⁹ gives us a plausible background against which to see the introduction of the exclusive warrior barbecue-feast with its distinctive equipment around the beginning of the new millennium as a new and deliberate form of elite differentiation. In light of this suggestion, the mysterious *πεμπώβολα*, which hover with no clear function in a repeated line in only two epic cooking scenes, might well be considered a fossilized remnant of the much older boiling or stewing practices that the Early Iron Age barbecue replaced.⁵⁰

44. *Palace of Nestor II*, pp. 68–71, 107–108, pls. 122, M; Wright, this volume, p. 159, fig. 10.

45. Morgan 1998, fig. 6; Wright, this volume, p. 158, fig. 9.

46. Borgna 1997a.

47. Tzedakis and Martlew 1999, cf. esp. p. 183, no. 173 (a tripod vessel from Apodoulou, Middle Minoan IIB), p. 101, no. 70 (from Chania-Splanzia, associated with the remains of slaughtered animals, Late Minoan [LM] IB), p. 196, no. 181 (from room 31 of the cult area at Mycenae, LH IIIB), and for other tripod vessels that may have been used to cook meat, p. 115, no. 90; p. 116 no. 93 (from the LM IIIB cemetery at Armenoi), and p. 120, no. 96

(from a LH IIIB house at Thebes).

Other cooking pots (not tripods) with signs that meat may have been cooked in them have been found in areas with evidence for ceremonial or ritual activity at Thebes, Mycenae, and Midea (Tzedakis and Martlew 1999, p. 121, no. 100; p. 122, no. 103; p. 127, no. 108; p. 131, no. 113; p. 186, no. 176). In the absence of detailed reports of the results, however, the interpretations suggested by Tzedakis and Martlew should be treated with caution. “Meat,” for instance, means the presence of animal lipids, which may indicate no more than the presence of animal fat (and not necessarily flesh), as in *Il.* 21.362–364. Nevertheless, the doc-

umentary and iconographic evidence for the association of tripod cauldrons with feasting and hunting does seem to support the idea that boiling or stewing was the normal method of cooking meat in the Late Bronze Age.

48. For the presence of some 30 or so clay tripod cooking vessels in rooms 67 and 68 at Pylos, almost certainly associated with large-scale feasting in courts 63 and 88, see Whitelaw 2001, p. 57, figs. 2, 3; Bendall, forthcoming.

49. See n. 47 above; also Kilian 1985, p. 79.

50. See above, n. 16. It should be pointed out, however, that no word resembling *πεμπώβολον* has yet been found in the Linear B texts, nor have

The avoidance of any mention of olive oil in the epics for any culinary purpose may or may not be related to the above observations. Oil is not necessary for spit-roasting on an open fire, particularly since there is plenty of fat on the animals. It is probably not necessary for stewing or boiling either, but it greatly improves the taste of meat cooked in this way; and traces of olive oil are said to have been found in virtually all of the Bronze Age clay tripod vessels and other cooking pots with organic residues of meat,⁵¹ as well as in a number of other cooking pots. This suggests that—as in the case of meat—olive oil may have been a fairly regular element of Bronze Age festal and other diets. It is interesting, however, that there is no clear evidence in the Linear B texts for the culinary use of oil,⁵² although it figures largely in texts concerned with the manufacture of unguents and (usually in ready-perfumed form) in those concerned with ritual offerings, especially since oil in the epics (sometimes in a golden flask [*Od.* 6.79], and sometimes of vintage quality [*Il.* 18.351]) is used only for anointing. The consistent and positive emphasis in the epic poems on the preciousness of olive oil (which can hardly have escaped a Homeric audience) suggests that the absence of its mention in culinary contexts is not accidental; while it almost certainly reflects a continuation into later periods of the kinds of uses documented in Linear B, it may also indicate that olive oil generally (and perfumed oil in particular) was a relatively rare and expensive commodity throughout the Early Iron Age.

That feasts in the Mycenaean palatial period could be held on an impressively large scale—probably much larger than anything the normal Homeric barbecue would have been capable of coping with in reality—seems likely from various indications. The faunal evidence from Pylos, which has been discussed with great subtlety elsewhere,⁵³ provides reason for thinking that a feast in honor of Poseidon, with a number of suggestive similarities to that described in *Odyssey* 3.4–342, took place in the palace very shortly before its destruction. The 10 or more cattle involved⁵⁴ are a far cry from the 81 bulls contributed by the nine Pylian towns in the *Odyssey* (3.7–8), but probably enough, nevertheless, to feed over a thousand people at one time—perhaps the entire (male?) population of the town of Pylos, or a substantial number of representatives from each of the main Pylian centers. The picture envisaged of high-ranking diners feasting in pairs at small, fancy portable tables within the megaron, with a much larger gathering of their social inferiors in the southwest courts and a still larger

pronged forks or flesh-hooks been identified among feasting equipment listed on the tablets. The significance of the latter perhaps depends on whether such implements typically formed part of palatial equipment or were the private property of individuals—in which case, as with individual drinking cups (cf. below, n. 71), one would probably not expect to find them in palace inventories. All known Aegean examples come from tombs (see above, n. 16), which suggests

that they were indeed regarded as the personal possessions of the deceased.

51. Tzedakis and Martlew 1999, p. 108, no. 77; p. 115, no. 90; p. 116, no. 93; p. 120, no. 96; p. 122, no. 103; p. 127, no. 108; p. 127, no. 109; p. 131, no. 113; p. 183, no. 173; p. 185, no. 175; p. 186, no. 176; p. 196, no. 181; p. 198, no. 185.

52. Melena 1983, p. 120. Palmer (1994, p. 128), however, suggests that olive oil allotted to sanctuaries on the Fs tablets from Knossos was designed

for culinary use. See also Bendall 2001 for the argument that the palaces were dealing with much more olive oil than is allocated as offerings or for perfume manufacture on the tablets. The remainder, presumably, was intended for culinary use.

53. Isaakidou et al. 2002; Stocker and Davis, this volume.

54. See Stocker and Davis, this volume, p. 184, n. 21, where they state that the estimate of 10 cattle is likely to be low.

gathering of even lower ranks outside the area of the palace,⁵⁵ is one of which we clearly glimpse elements in the *Odyssey*.⁵⁶

Much has been written over the last decade or so about the textual evidence for Mycenaean feasting,⁵⁷ and it has become abundantly apparent that feasts loom very large in the recorded activities of Mycenaean palaces. Because of the elusive “snapshot” nature of the texts, it is not always clear how such feasts were organized. We seem, however, to have evidence both for contributory feasts organized directly by the palaces, for which animals were brought in to the center from various surrounding (sometimes quite far-flung) communities, and for feasts at religious (and possibly also secular) centers elsewhere, to which the palaces themselves made contributions of wine, barley, honey, figs, or oil (the last perhaps principally for anointing garments offered to a deity).⁵⁸ Whether or not the latter were organized independently of the palaces, the very fact that we know about them indicates a close palatial interest, suggesting in turn that the palaces had a hand in most of the public or official feasts that went on in the localities with which they were concerned.

Despite the fact that we are concerned with subscription feasts, since most, if not all, of the ingredients were ultimately coerced from surrounding populations by one means or another, this close intertwining of palaces, religious centers, and other communities, in terms of the movement of feasting materials, appears to blur any clear distinction between the kinds of hosted and communal feasts discernible in the epics; moreover, it suggests that every official feast, no matter where it took place and who really bore the brunt of the expense, was meant to appear as a combination of communal effort and palatial beneficence.⁵⁹ Given what looks like the inherently precarious position of the palaces in the 13th, and probably also the 14th, century (effectively demonstrated by their sudden disappearance around 1200 B.C.), it may well have seemed a sensible strategy to involve as many as possible in the double obligations of commensality and clientage fuzzily merged in this way. The large numbers of animals and quantities of other materials sometimes involved⁶⁰ indicate that some feasts took place

55. Bendall, forthcoming; Whitelaw 2001; cf. also Borgna, this volume.

56. For the tables (*to-pe-za*), many of them of stone and inlaid with precious materials, see PY Ta 642, Ta 713, Ta 715 (Palmer 1963, pp. 345–348; Ventris and Chadwick 1973, pp. 339–342, nos. 239–241), and cf. *Od.* 1.111, 138, 4.54, 5.92, 7.174, 9.8–9, 10.354–355, 370, 15.137, 466–467, 17.93, 333–334, 447, 19.61, 20.151–152, 259, 21.28–29, 22.19–21, 84–85, 438, and *Il.* 11.628–629. On the tablets, these are accompanied by equally fancy chairs (*to-no*) and matching footstools (*ta-ra-nu*) (Ta 707, Ta 708, Ta 712, Ta 714, Ta 722; Palmer 1963, pp. 348–353; Ventris and Chadwick 1973, pp. 342–346, nos. 242–246; cf. esp. for fancy chairs *Il.* 11.645; *Od.* 1.130–131, 7.162, 169, 8.65, 10.314 = 366, 16.408,

17.32, 20.150, 22.341, 438 = 452). If the *ta-ra-nu* truly are footstools (θροῖνος), as are their Homeric verbal equivalents (though the word is also used once for the bench of a ship: *Il.* 15.729), there are a sufficient number to suggest that they were not merely provided for a divine or quasi-divine *wanax*. It is possible, however, that they were another form of seating equipment for palatial feasters (Di Filippo 1996; Palaima 2000, p. 237), perhaps equivalent to the *κλισμοί* with which θρόνοι are frequently paired in the *Odyssey* (for the *κλισμός* as a light chair without arms, see Hainsworth 1993, p. 294).

For a picture of the enclosures and the megaron of Odysseus’s palace full of feasters, see *Od.* 17.604–605; for the neighbors and kinsmen of

Menelaos feasting in his house, *Od.* 4.15–16; for Eumaios’s father’s clients feasting in the forecourt of his house, see *Od.* 15.466–467. In *Od.* 19.60–62 we catch a glimpse of the clearing of the remains of the feast along with the tables and drinking cups—a reminder of the kind of process that resulted in the deposit in room 7 at Pylos.

57. E.g., Piteros, Olivier, and Melena 1990; Killen 1994, 1996; Wright 1995; Shelmerdine 1998; Bendall 2001, and forthcoming; Aravantinos, Godart, and Sacconi 2001. See also the articles in this volume by Wright; Stocker and Davis; and Dabney, Halstead, and Thomas.

58. Shelmerdine 1995.

59. See Bendall, forthcoming.

60. Killen 1994, p. 78; 1996; Chadwick 1976, pp. 96, 100.

on a truly massive scale, increasing the probability that virtually everyone, regardless of social status, had a chance to share at some time in an official feast.⁶¹

That unofficial feasting, of which we naturally hear nothing directly, also existed outside the palace circles with some sense of at least tacit palatial benevolence is strongly hinted at by Halstead's observations that the constituent membership of palatial sheep flocks tended to be unusually fluid, suggesting that herders were free to remove fattened wethers for their own feasting requirements.⁶² One can also glimpse this practice in the composite world of the epics, even if most clearly through its denial. When the swineherd Eumaios makes up his mind to slaughter the best of the pigs for Odysseus, who is disguised as an unknown stranger (*Od.* 14.414–417), he vents his feelings in words that ring not only with anger at the outrageous depredations made on his master's herds by the suitors, but also with the deeply felt personal grievance of one whose own accustomed rights (described by him in 15.373) have been arbitrarily and unjustifiably removed (cf. also *Od.* 4.87–88).

In general, however, as in the case of cooking practices, the glimpse that the Linear B tablets give us into palatial feasting equipment has little to offer the Homeric picture. It is particularly unfortunate that the shorthand nature of the texts does not often allow us to link ideograms and words, but despite this limitation, the proliferation of specialized forms and terminology probably indicates a degree of functional specialization adopted by the mainland palaces from Neopalatial Crete,⁶³ quite unlike anything seen in the epics. There are at least four names for jugs and at least four separate ideograms, with (in this case) three matches between them (Fig. 1:204–206).⁶⁴ Similarly, there are several ideograms for what we should probably recognize as drinking vessels—various forms of cups, goblets, kylikes, and chalices of gold or bronze, all of them with metal and ceramic counterparts in the archaeological record (Fig. 1:208, 215, 216, 218, 221).⁶⁵

61. See Bendall, forthcoming; Dabney, Halstead, and Thomas, this volume.

62. Halstead 2001, pp. 41–44.

63. Borgna 1997b; also this volume.

64. Vandenabeele and Olivier 1979, pp. 246–258; Anderson 1994–1995, pp. 300, 302, 305, fig. 1. The four names are *qe-ra-na*, with *204 (KN K 93, PY Ta 711); *a-te-we*, with *205 (PY Tn 996); *ka-ti*, with *206 (PY Tn 996); and *po-ro-ko-wo*, without ideogram (MY Ue 611). Ideogram *303 (KN K 93), which looks like a beaked jug, has no identified name, but it appears in a collection of probable washing equipment (*226 [Fig. 1:226, 303], Vandenabeele and Olivier 1979, pp. 271–272). All are either certainly or probably of metal, in most cases bronze; and all occur in lists of vessels likely to be associated with feasting.

While the individual ideograms for the most part have plausible correlates in contemporary or earlier metal (and ceramic) types known from the archaeological record, among the names only *ka-ti* (cf. *κάδος*, a water jar or urn) and *po-ro-ko-wo* (cf. *πρόχοος*, a jug) can be identified with later Greek words. The word *qe-ra-na*, however, has also plausibly been connected with ritual washing (Aura Jorro 1993, p. 195, s.v. *qe-ra-na*; Anderson 1994–1995, p. 312), and the appearance of three *qe-ra-na* at the beginning of the sequence of Pylos Ta tablets (Palaima 2000), immediately followed by three *pi-je-ra*₃ (with ideogram *200, a pedestal basin [Fig. 1:200]), suggests that this was indeed the particular function of these jugs. Their ideogram (*204 [Fig. 1:204]) also appears with a basin (ideogram *305 [Fig. 1:305]) on KN K 93 (Vandenabeele and Olivier 1979,

pp. 271–273). That in general these are genuine ideograms, standing for more or less standardized types rather than “portraits” of individual jugs, is shown by their repetition on more than one document or by the plurality of individual vessels they represent.

65. Vandenabeele and Olivier 1979, pp. 200–205, 207–216: *208 (PY Tn 996), *215 (PY Tn 316), *216 (PY Tn 316), *218 (KN K 872), *221 (KN K 434). Of these, only *208 has a possible associated word (*po-ka-ta-ma*, though cf. Ventris and Chadwick 1973, pp. 338–339, no. 238; Anderson 1994–1995, p. 305). The word [*ku*]-*pe-ra* possibly occurs, without an ideogram, on MY Ue 611 (Ventris and Chadwick 1973, pp. 331–332, no. 234; Anderson 1994–1995, pp. 302–303; though cf. Palmer 1963, p. 364).

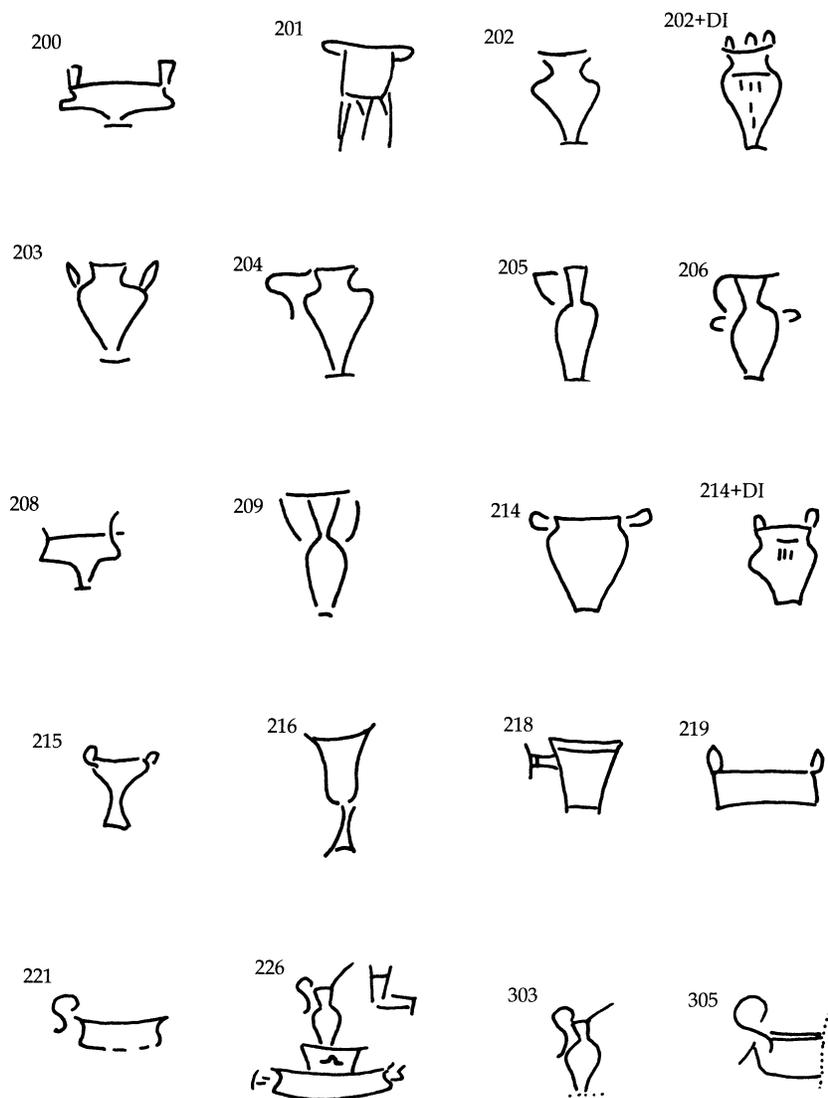


Figure 1. Selected Linear B ideograms for vessels. Adapted from Vandenabeele and Olivier 1979, *passim*

In each case, however, only two names (*po-ro-ko-wo* and possibly *ku-pe-ra*, both on Mycenaean tablet Ue 611, and both, unfortunately, without ideograms) can be recognized as corresponding to the usual Homeric word for a jug from which water is poured for washing (*πρόχοος*: *Od.* 1.136, 7.172, 15.135, 17.91; *Il.* 24.301) and perhaps to one of the two less common words for a drinking cup (*χόπελλον*: *Il.* 1.596, 3.248, 4.345, 9.670, 24.305; *Od.* 1.142, 2.396, 4.58, 10.357, 20.253).⁶⁶

66. There is no easily recognizable equivalent for the Homeric *ἄλεισον*, which is specified as gold in six of its nine mentions (*Il.* 11.774; *Od.* 3.50, 53, 8.430, 15.85, 22.9). However, the dative plural form *a-re-se-si* occurs on PY Ub 1318 preceded by the word *di-pte-ra* (skins), suggesting that the objects referred to are probably of leather (Voutsas 2001, p. 151). An

ἄλεισον may therefore originally have been a leather mug or wineskin (Ruijgh 1967, p. 159, n. 323, p. 356; Aura Jorro 1985, pp. 101–102, s.v. *a-re-se-si*).

Apart from the tripod cauldron and the *δέπας* (on which see below), other Homeric vessel words probably or possibly represented in the Linear B texts (some with ideograms; Fig. 1) are *pi-je-ra₃/pi-a₂-ra* (PY Ta 709 with

ideogram *200, Tn 996 with ideogram *219, Vandenabeele and Olivier 1979, pp. 221–224; cf. *φιάλη*, *Il.* 23.243, 253, 270, 616); *qe-to* (PY Ta 641 with ideogram *203, Vandenabeele and Olivier 1979, pp. 239–240; cf. *πίθος*, *Il.* 24.527; *Od.* 2.340, 23.305); *a-pi-po-re-we*/*a-po-re-we* (KN Gg series, PY Tn 996 with ideogram *209, Vandenabeele and Olivier 1979, pp. 259–263; cf. *ἀμφι-*

Particularly intriguing problems, from a Homeric point of view, arise with the ideograms *202 and *214 (Fig. 1:202, 202+DI, 214+DI), which accompany the noun *di-pa*, undoubtedly the same word as the Homeric *δέπας* (PY Ta 641; KN K 740, K 829, K 875).⁶⁷ On K 740, the 30 *di-pa* listed are clearly of bronze, and on Ta 641, where they are listed alongside tripod cauldrons, they are almost certainly also of metal. The regular ideogram *202, which is best described as looking like a jar, appears in three versions: one with four handles perched on top of the rim, one with three handles (Fig. 1:202+DI), and one with no handles (Fig. 1:202). These ideograms correspond to the written descriptions *qe-to-ro-we* (“with four ears”), *ti-ro-jo-we* (“with three ears”), and *a-no-we* (“with no ears”), respectively. As has often been remarked, this vessel hardly seems suitable for drinking, particularly with as many as four earlike handles protruding upward from the rim. Yet in *Iliad* 11.632–635, Nestor’s famous gold-studded *δέπας* is described, improbably, as having four “ears” (οὔατα τέσσαρα) in addition to its eight gold doves (two around each “ear”) and two stands or stems.⁶⁸

The fact that on Ta 641 six assorted examples of *di-pa* occur alongside other vessels likely to be associated with feasting,⁶⁹ while on K 875 six handleless examples are assigned to six individuals probably of *basileus* (and therefore in some sense official) status, suggests that *di-pa* had a ceremonial function. The small number (six) listed on Ta 641—part of a series of tablets that seem otherwise to list the equipment needed for 22 feasters⁷⁰—makes it doubly unlikely that they were intended as individual drinking vessels, and suggests a more communal function.⁷¹ The ideogram itself cannot easily be reconciled with any ceramic form known from the archaeological record. Vandenabeele and Olivier identify it with a type of large bronze two- or three-handled “krater”-like vessel of Early Mycenaean date; this has a much wider mouth, however, than the vessels represented by most versions of the ideogram,⁷² though it is not unlike ideogram *214 on KN K 740 (Fig. 1:214+DI), which appears to be associated with the

φορεός, *Il.* 23.92, 170; *Od.* 2.290, 24.74 and passim); *ka-ra-te-ra* (MY Ue 611, Palmer 1963, p. 364; Ventris and Chadwick 1973, no. 234; Anderson 1994–1995, p. 301; cf. *κητήρη*, *Il.* 1.470 and passim; *Od.* 1.110 and passim); and perhaps *ke-ni-qa* (KN Ws 8497, Vandenabeele and Olivier 1979, p. 177; Dialismas 2001, p. 128; cf. *χέρονιβον*, *Il.* 24.304). That in the Pylos texts (though not in the epics), *pi-je-ra₃* (*φιάλαι*) are basins for ritual washing is indicated by their position in the sequence of Ta tablets, brilliantly reconstructed by Palaima (2000; see above, n. 64). It thus seems likely that they have a similar function to the Homeric *λέβης* in such passages as *Od.* 1.137 = 4.53 = 7.173 = 10.369 = 15.136 = 17.92, 3.440, 19.386, 469. See also Anderson 1994–1995, pp. 319–320, for

other possible Homeric vessel words in Linear B, either uncertain (*a-ke-a₂*? = ? ἄγγος [e.g., *Od.* 2.289], *a-ma*? = ? ἀμνίον [*Od.* 3.444]); oblique (*ka-ne-ja*, cf. *κάνεον* [e.g., *Od.* 1.147, 17.343], *ke-ra-me-u*, cf. *κέραμος* [e.g., *Il.* 9.469, cf. 5.387]); or less directly concerned with feasting (*a-sa-mi-to* = ἀσάμινθος [e.g., *Il.* 10.576; *Od.* 4.48], *re-wo-to-ro* = λοετρόν [cf., e.g., *Il.* 14.6]).

67. Vandenabeele and Olivier 1979, pp. 234–239; cf. Gray 1959, pp. 50–51, pl. VII; Anderson 1994–1995, p. 300.

68. That the handles on Nestor’s *δέπας* are called (literally) “ears” need not imply any uniquely special relationship between it and the Linear B *di-pa*, since the word for “ears” is often used to denote handles on vessels in later (including modern) Greek (see Gray 1959, p. 50). It is also used elsewhere

in the *Iliad* (18.378) for the handles on Hephaistos’s wheeled tripods. What it does imply in the Linear B and Homeric cases, however, are particular sorts of handles that project upward like ears, typically from the rim of a vessel.

69. Killen 1998; Palaima 2000.

70. Palaima 2000.

71. The absence of identifiable drinking vessels in the Ta series may suggest that elite palatial feasters used their own personal drinking cups—a practice with good epic analogies (cf., e.g., *Il.* 16.225–227). If so, they may have kept them (or left them behind) in the central megaron (see Bendall, forthcoming).

72. Vandenabeele and Olivier 1979, pp. 236–239, figs. 161, 162. Cf. Matthäus 1980, pp. 150–157, pls. 22, 23.

word *pa-ko-to* on PY Ta 709 (Fig. 1:214).⁷³ This identification, insofar as it is convincing,⁷⁴ might be thought interesting in view of the emphasis put on the size and weight of Nestor's uniquely described *δέπας* in *Iliad* 11.638. As it is, it is clear from Ta 641 that *di-pa* come in different sizes, since three of the examples listed there are described as *me-zo* ("larger") and the other three as *me-wi-jo* ("smaller").

Also of interest in this connection is that the word *di-pa* on the tablets not only seems to be associated with two rather different-looking ideograms, but also invariably needs to be qualified with a specific description, relating either to size or the number of handles or both. In this respect, an analogy can be drawn with the Homeric *δέπας*, which is regularly tied to the epithet *ἀμφικύπελλον*—even though the nature of the descriptions is quite different. Even in the 13th century, then, the term itself—unlike other contemporary forms of vessel terminology—was apparently a relatively generic one, which, though it may have been associated with a specific function, had less precise specificity of form than is suggested by other noun-ideogram combinations. This in turn suggests that it was probably already an old, well-established term. Indeed, the possibility that it was originally a Luwian loanword⁷⁵ hints at its much greater antiquity.

By the eighth century, as its variant Homeric forms show, the word was firmly entrenched in the artificial language of epic where it seems to denote a generic drinking-cum-libation vessel, with the emphasis perhaps above all on libation.⁷⁶ By this time, however, it seems evident that any clear sense of a specific meaning (or function) for the word, and for its standard qualifier *ἀμφικύπελλον*, had been lost irretrievably. On balance, it seems likely that the epic *δέπας* is the cumulative and confused result of a very long and varied history for the term and its application, going back well before the Late Bronze Age. It may well have had its origins in a ritual vessel, possibly for libation or other form of offering—a function with which the *di-pa* may still have been associated in the 13th century. Indeed, it is not impossible that Nestor's unique two-stemmed *δέπας*, which (apart from its four "ears") sounds nothing like the Linear B *di-pa*, preserves traces of a much earlier ritual form that had disappeared or changed beyond recognition by the period of the palaces.⁷⁷

73. Vandenaebée and Olivier 1979, p. 235, pl. CXXIII:5 [= Fig. 1:214+DI], cf. pp. 240–241, pl. CXXIV:2 [= Fig. 1:214]. There is a great deal of confusion in the literature over the classification of ideogram *214. Palmer (1963, p. 342) gives the ideogram associated with *pa-ko-to* on Ta 709 as *234, while Anderson (1994–1995, p. 303) gives no number for this ideogram (though cf. her fig. 1, where it is shown as *214). For the view that the ideogram on KN K 740 should not be associated with *di-pa*, see Gray 1959, p. 50.

74. Though cf. Matthäus 1980, p. 157, n. 7.

75. Palmer 1963, p. 487; cf. Janko

1992, p. 237; Anderson 1994–1995, p. 313.

76. Cf. the repeated lines *Il.* 1.471, 9.176; *Od.* 3.340, 7.183, 21.272. See also, e.g., *Il.* 3.295, 7.480, 23.196, 219, 24.285; *Od.* 3.46, 63, 7.137, 8.89, 18.418, 21.263.

77. The description *ἀμφικύπελλον*, which is often, and particularly after Schliemann's pronouncements (1880, pp. 237–238), translated as "double-handled" (cf. *ἀμφιφορεύς*), ought to mean probably (by analogy with *ἀμφιφορεύς*) "with cups (or hollows) on both (or all) sides" (cf. Arist. *Hist. an.* 642a.9, where it is compared with the cells of a honeycomb). One might,

in this case, envisage cups (*κύπελλα*) arranged around something like the Linear B *di-pa*, which might be assumed to have served as a central vessel from which wine was dispensed. What it also brings to mind, however, are some of the multiple vessels found in clay (and almost certainly also produced in metal) from the Early Bronze Age onward (cf., e.g., Buchholz and Karageorghis 1973, pp. 67, 298, no. 858), particularly the late Early Bronze Age to early Middle Bronze Age Cycladic "kernoi," with a single large vessel in the center surrounded by small cups (e.g., Renfrew 1972, pl. 11:1; Sherratt 2000b, figs. 116–118, pls. 254–

In general, as we move back in time beyond the reach of the Linear B texts, the possibility of positively identifying elements of practice or equipment that have a direct bearing on Homeric feasting becomes understandably slighter. There can be no doubt, however, that feasting took place in earlier times and that it was almost certainly as important a social institution as in the palatial and later periods. The emphasis on drinking vessels in graves of the Early Mycenaean period combines with the emphasis on weaponry, chariotry, hunting, and glittering items of personal adornment to suggest that the feast was an important bonding mechanism for the kind of active elite warrior band that we can probably see, for instance, in the Mycenae shaft graves—and one might hazard that its importance in this respect was directly commensurate with its exclusivity. At the same time, the spotlight directed on the individual at the time of the funeral, which the frequent practice of covering the body with lavish gold ornament betrays, suggests that the esteem and honor of individuals within the group was also an important preoccupation.

The large and heterogeneous range of (often unique) precious metal drinking cups found in the shaft graves and other tombs of the prepalatial period⁷⁸—clearly items of portable, personal wealth—also leads one to suspect that, as in the epics, these vessels were frequently guest-gifts, many of them perhaps with their own long histories of previous distinguished ownership. It seems likely, in view of the absence of drinking cups from the Pylos Ta series, that individual ownership and use of prized drinking vessels remained a feature of palatial elite society three centuries or so later. The golden kylikes and chalices listed on Tn 316 as having been given by the Pylos palace to various divinities may thus represent an institutionalized adaptation to a religious context of the practice of giving such objects as guest-gifts.⁷⁹

The exclusive, mutually supportive ethos of the warrior band in the earliest Mycenaean period (and probably also of its feasting practices) is hinted at above all by the symbolism of the circle, seen in tangible form not only in the two grave circles at Mycenae, but in contemporary tumuli and perhaps also the earliest tholos tombs. Some of this symbolism survived into the palatial period in the form of the fixed circular hearths that are a feature of mainland palace megara, and it is tempting to suppose that those who feasted around these hearths inside the megara were principally the *e-ge-ta*, in whom (complete with their patronymics) one can probably see a residual hereditary element of the earlier warrior band.⁸⁰

256). These vessels, rather than the two-handled Anatolian “depas” with which the name has long been fancifully associated by archaeologists, arguably more closely resemble Nestor’s double-stemmed δέπας. The original concept of a δέπας, which in the 13th century was associated with the vessel type(s) shown on the Linear B ideogram(s), and which eventually fed into the Homeric epics in a vague and shadowy form overlaid (particularly in Nestor’s case) by elements of the palatial “variable-eared” *di-pa*, is

likely to extend back as far as the third millennium.

78. Wright, this volume.

79. Palaima 1995, p. 628. The divinities (or their human representatives) presumably would not only appreciate them for their bullion value, but also use them for the kinds of feasting or quasi-feasting purposes with which they are associated in some representations (see, e.g., Wright, this volume, pp. 162, 165, figs. 12, 16).

80. One might speculate that the number 22, highlighted by Stocker

and Davis (this volume) as possibly the number of feasters within the megaron (see, earlier, Palaima 2000, p. 237), bears some relationship to the number of members of the *e-ge-ta* band at Pylos, 15 of whose names have been identified (Jasink 1976). The same number (22) seems to apply, for instance, to pairs of wheels assigned to chariots on the Sa tablets (Chadwick 1976, p. 170), i.e., those assumed to be ready for regular use, rather than those kept for purely ceremonial occasions. Almost as intriguing are the 10 sets of

Traces of a similar symbolism of the circle can be glimpsed in epic feasting contexts. It can be seen in the way in which animals for slaughter may be placed in order around the altar (*Il.* 1.447–448),⁸¹ or, alternatively, the prospective feasters may arrange themselves around a single animal (*Il.* 2.410).⁸² It may also be seen in the arrangement of the feasting party, implied by the placing of Demodokos on a chair in the middle of the feasters who are seated in order (ἐξείης) in Alkinoos’s palace (*Od.* 8.65–66 = 473; cf. 9.8), by Antinoos’s peremptory words to Odysseus and the manner in which the latter goes round the feasters in order (*Od.* 17.447, 450), and by the way the feasting suitors take turns stringing the bow, in order from left to right in the same direction that the wine is circulated (*Od.* 21.141–142; cf. *Il.* 1.597). This symbolism can also be seen in the epics in other archetypically heroic contexts, as when the Achaean heroes stand in a circle around “godlike” Menelaos in his hour of need (*Il.* 4.211–212), hunters encircle a lion (*Od.* 4.792), or the elders on Achilles’ shield sit in a sacred circle on polished stones (*Il.* 18.504).

ASPECTS OF HOMERIC DRINKING

One or two aspects of, and attitudes toward, wine-drinking in the Homeric epics are of special interest in relation to the history of drinking in the Aegean. Here, the epics are particularly valuable in that contexts of use, descriptions of wine, and social and ideological attitudes toward wine emerge much more explicitly from them than from the archaeological record or even from the Linear B texts alone. As with other aspects of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the epics provide a freeze-frame of the accumulated strands of attitudes and practices involving wine that had built up over a very long period, forming part of a generalized Greek consciousness around 700 B.C.

In the first place, the epics have two words for “wine”: the usual one, (φ)οῖνος, and another one, μέθυ, which appears in only two places in the *Iliad* (7.471, 9.469; cf. also μεθύουσσαν [“soused”] in *Il.* 17.390) and in 15 instances in the *Odyssey*. Almost half of the references in the *Odyssey* occur in a single recurring line:

ἤμεθα, δαινύμενοι κρέα τ’ ἄσπετα καὶ μέθυ ἡδύ

We sat, feasting on unlimited meat and sweet wine.

Od. 9.162, also 9.557, 10.184, 468, 477, 12.30⁸³

This sounds very like a proverbial expression of plenty, similar to the biblical expression “a land flowing with milk and honey.”⁸⁴ From the contexts in which μέθυ appears in the epics, it is clear that it is indistinguishable

body armor listed on the Sh series from room 7 as newly repaired (Palaima 1996; Dialismas 2001, p. 132). If we add to these the minimum of 11 *e-qe-ta* (10 of them with preserved names) on the *o-ka* tablets, whose armor (if any) is presumably in good condition, we return to nearly the same number. To speculate further, is there any connection between the pairing of sets of

armor on the Sh tablets and the pairing of feasters at individual tables (Palaima 2000, p. 237; Stocker and Davis, this volume)? Was the renovated armor to be ready for collection at the time of the feast, the equipment for which was recorded and debris of which was deposited in the same room?

81. Cf. Kirk 1985, p. 101.

82. Cf. Kirk 1985, p. 159.

83. The other instances of μέθυ occur in *Od.* 4.746 (the same phrase in 7.265; cf. also 17.533), 7.179 = 13.50, 9.9, 45, 12.362, 14.194, with a single instance of μεθύοντι (“drunkard”) in 18.240.

84. Exod. 3.8, 13.5; Lev. 20.24; Num. 13.27; Deut. 26.9; Jer. 11.5; Ezek. 20.6.

from οἶνος, but the word itself, cognate with English “mead,” almost certainly had a rather different meaning in an earlier form of Greek, probably referring to a drink made from fermented honey.⁸⁵ In this connection, it is particularly interesting that the word also appears once on the Pylos texts in the phrase *me-tu-wo ne-wo*, apparently as the name of a festival (“of the new wine [or mead]”) (Fr 1202)⁸⁶—precisely the sort of context in which names may persist long after they have lost their original meaning and specific significance (just as “Yuletide” is still used to refer to the Christmas festival).

While μέθυ in the epics is sweet (ἡδύ or γλυκερόν: *Od.* 14.194), οἶνος is most often gleaming or sparkling (αἰθοψ: *Il.* 1.146 and passim; *Od.* 2.57 = 17.536 and passim), though it can also be red (ἐρυθρός: *Od.* 5.165, 9.163, 208, 12.19, 327, 13.69, 16.444) or black (μέλας: *Od.* 5.265, 9.196, 346), like life-giving blood, in a few cases in what might be thought of as symbolically suggestive contexts. Οἶνος is also described as sweet—either straightforwardly sweet (*Od.* 3.51, 10.519 = 11.27, 20.69; cf. also *Il.* 2.340; *Od.* 3.391, 15.507), which could mean sweet in a metaphorical sense, or literally sweet—or described by compounds of the word for honey (μέλι) as “honey-sweet” (μελιθηδής, μελίφρων: *Il.* 4.346, 6.258, 264, 8.506, 546, 10.579, 12.320, 18.545, 24.284; *Od.* 3.46, 7.182 = 13.53, 9.208, 10.356, 14.78 = 16.52, 15.148, 18.151, 426, 21.293). Accompanying this is an implication that the sweeter the wine the higher the quality and—in notable instances—the greater the strength, like the ultra-sweet, ultra-strong wine given by Maron as a gift to Odysseus (*Od.* 9.196–215). Though these compounds are also used in a metaphorical sense to describe such abstract concepts as life, sleep, and homecoming, and are applied to other sweet things such as grapes and the fruit of the lotus, their frequent use to qualify wine suggests that honey may have been added to it to increase the sugar content, either at the time of manufacture or later, a procedure that would enhance both its strength and its keeping qualities. Though there is no explicit indication of this in the epics, the appearance of the adjective *me-ri-ti-jo* (“honeyed”) on the back of a sealing nodule recording a wine delivery at Pylos⁸⁷ suggests that, at least in the 13th century, certain wines may have been treated in this way. Honey is explicitly mixed with wine for drinking on one or two occasions in the epics, but in circumstances that indicate that mixing of this sort is unusual—certainly not normal practice for heroes who (it is implied) always drink their wine mixed with water.⁸⁸

It seems that almost anyone can drink wine in the epics, with the possible exception of women (apart, that is, from goddesses or semi-goddesses). The entire Achaean army is kept well supplied at Troy (*Il.* 9.71–72); Eumaios has plenty of wine in his humble hut; and even plowmen drink wine to refresh themselves in the course of their work (*Il.* 18.545). At the same time, there is a strong suggestion that the kind of formal drinking party that takes place in the Homeric palace is, like the Classical symposium, for men only. In these contexts wine is described as εὐήνωρ (“manly”) (*Od.* 4.622); Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, is invited by Telemachos to sit and drink wine at a table and chair “with the men” (μετ’ ἀνδράσιν: *Od.* 20.262); and we are told that, after his bath in Alkinoos’s palace, Odysseus goes to join the men in their wine-drinking (*Od.* 8.456). This sort of drinking is often accompanied by the songs of the bard (*Od.* 1.340). The association

85. Referred to as ὑδρομέλι by Classical and later authors. For the precedence of mead over wine in Greek mythology, see Kerenyi 1976, pp. 35–38. Kerenyi (p. 37) points out that the μελιχρητος (used first in sequence with wine, water, and barley to summon the dead in *Od.* 10.518–520, and cf. 11.26–28), though usually thought of as honey mixed with milk, probably denotes mead. See also Kerenyi 1976, pp. 37–38, for the particular suitability of leather vessels as containers for fermenting mead—perhaps indicative of the original associations of the Homeric ἄλεισον (see above, n. 66).

86. Palmer 1963, p. 434; Palmer 1994, pp. 63–64.

87. Palmer 1994, p. 63.

88. See below for more detailed discussion.

of wine with “manliness” may be further reflected in the number of masculine proper names derived from the root *οἶνο-* in the epics. We have two Oinomaoses in the *Iliad*, one Oineus, and one Oinops, all of them heroes themselves or the fathers or grandfathers of heroes; and one Oinops, the father of an excess-hating diviner, in the *Odyssey*. Possibly in a similar sort of connection, wine may also be associated with freedom (*Il.* 6.528).⁸⁹ Finally, that there is a perceived parallelism—if not blurring—between divine and kingly consumption of wine is suggested by the picture of Alkinoos sitting on his throne drinking his wine “like an immortal” (*ἀθάνατος ὤς*; *Od.* 6.309). One wonders whether, at this point, one should think of the megaron at Pylos with the throne of the *wanax* flanked by its libation channels.

Although wine is a normal component of hospitality and refreshment from the palace to the humblest dwelling, along with the other staples of bread and water (and, like them, part of the standard provision when setting out on a journey), wine also figures quite largely in princely gift-giving. The Kikonian Maron gives Odysseus, along with seven talents of gold and a silver krater, a gift of 12 jars of wine of exceptional sweetness and strength; while Euneos king of Lemnos sends a gift of a thousand measures of wine to his compeers Agamemnon and Menelaos at Troy, along with an unspecified number of shiploads of wine for sale to lesser members of the Achaean contingent (*Il.* 7.467–475). What appear to be distinctions in qualities of wine implied by such gifts also occur elsewhere in the epics, and may have applied in Bronze Age palatial times.⁹⁰ The wine stored in pithoi in Odysseus’s palace storeroom is of more than one sort (*Od.* 2.340–352): the best wine is stored for Odysseus’s homecoming; the second-best is that which Telemachos asks Eurykleia to draw off for him for his journey to Pylos; one might presume the existence of a third quality offered (at least initially) to the suitors whom Telemachos complains have consumed all of Odysseus’s wine along with his flocks of sheep and goats (*Od.* 2.56–58). Elsewhere we hear of wine reserved for the elders (*Od.* 13.8), and the “choice” (*ἔξαιτος*) wine enjoyed by Sarpedon and Glaukos as leaders of the Lycians (*Il.* 12.318–320). Vintage wine is also appreciated. The special wine stored in Odysseus’s palace against his return is described in approbatory fashion as “aged” (*Od.* 2.340); and the wine that Nestor brings out in honor of Telemachos is, we are told, 11 years old (*Od.* 3.391–392). There is the same sense of enhancement through long keeping as there is with the unguent used to anoint Patroklos’s body, which has been kept for nine years (*Il.* 18.351).

Wine is apparently produced in many different places, at least in some cases on a small scale. Laertes has his vineyard plot, no more than a small holding (*Od.* 1.193, 11.193), and even the Cyclopes produce an admittedly strife-stirring kind of wine from wild vines (*Od.* 9.111, 358). At the same time, there are suggestions, particularly in the “Catalogue of Ships,” that certain localities may be especially famed for wine production or the quality of their wine. Epidauros, Arne, Histiaia, and Pedasos are all singled out as famous for their vineyards. Apparently particularly prominent in this respect is the North Aegean region, the home of Maron and Euneos’s special gift-worthy wines and of the Thracian wine brought daily to Troy

89. On the other hand, the obscure phrase *κητήρα ἐλεύθερον* may simply be a reference to one of the epithets of Dionysos (Ἐλευθήρ) (cf., e.g., Puhvel 1964, p. 164; but see also Palmer 1963, p. 419; Antonelli 1996, p. 172).

90. See Palmer 1994, pp. 62–63, 89.

on Achaean ships for the Achaean army (*Il.* 9.71–72). The regional reputation for specialization in wine that this may imply may be a relatively late feature, datable to no earlier than the 10th century, when evidence for long-distance transport of amphoras, possibly containing North Aegean wine, begins to appear.⁹¹ Although there may be some evidence for export of wine from Crete in the Neopalatial period, there is little clear sign that wine was transported in significant quantities by ship around the Aegean in the Late Bronze Age. This is suggested by the failure of the Aegean world generally to adopt their own version of the Canaanite jar (the forerunner of the Classical amphora).⁹²

Wine for heroic drinking is usually explicitly “mixed” (the verb used is *κεράννυμι*) and invariably served from mixing-bowls or kraters (*κρητῆρες*, from the same verb), though—perhaps surprisingly—on only two occasions are we specifically told that it is mixed with water (*Od.* 1.110, 9.209). Nevertheless, the general epic ethos, in which drunkenness is seen as not only a dangerous but also a shameful condition (*Od.* 14.466, 18.240, 331, 19.122, 21.293–294), strongly suggests that dilution of wine with water is what a Homeric audience would have understood, particularly in view of the Polyphemos episode in *Odyssey* 9. Those who drink unmixed wine (like the Cyclops) tend to come to grief;⁹³ and in general any suggestion of not being able to take one’s wine, along with its misuse in unmixed form, is regarded as decidedly nonheroic. Characters associated with drunkenness include Polyphemos, Elpenor (who is otherwise portrayed as a rather ineffective warrior and a bit simple-minded: *Od.* 11.61), and the centaur Eurytion (“the first who found his own evil in heavy drinking”: *Od.* 21.304). There is also a strong implication that suitors in the *Odyssey* might well be capable of committing such a solecism (*Od.* 16.292 = 19.11, 18.406–407), while one of the worst and foremost insults that Achilles in his quarrel with Agamemnon can think to hurl at him is to call him a drunkard (*Il.* 1.225).

This raises the question of when the practice of mixing wine with water, well attested in the Classical symposium, first made its appearance in Greek lands. It is not a question readily susceptible to direct archaeological investigation. Moreover, some confusion results from conventional archaeological terminology, in which the term “krater” is extended to prehistoric vessels of roughly the same size or shape as Classical kraters, with an unspoken assumption that both were used in the same way. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, it is possible to offer suggestions.

The shaft graves at Mycenae and other Early Mycenaean graves contain bronze vessels of a suitable size and shape to have fulfilled the functions of epic *κρητῆρες*, and which are, indeed, often called “kraters.”⁹⁴ Not only is their general function unclear,⁹⁵ however, but they occur only in bronze—in contrast to the wealth of precious metal drinking cups from the same and other contemporary graves. The only possible example of a precious metal “krater” known from this early period is the unique silver “battle krater” from shaft grave IV, which is sufficiently large and, in its restored shape, most closely resembles a relatively wide-mouthed, medium to large, amphoroid (or “Palace Style”) jar of the type known from the contemporary ceramic repertoire.⁹⁶ Whatever the function of this vessel,

91. Catling 1996, p. 126.

92. Palmer 1994, pp. 187–188.

Recently, Rutter (2000) has suggested that a type of short-necked amphora of the LM IIIA–B period might be regarded as an equivalent of the Canaanite jar. The jar is so far known mainly from Kommos, however, and there is as yet no clear evidence that it traveled widely (Rutter 2000, pp. 182–183). The absence of clear evidence for the long-distance transport of wine in the Aegean Late Bronze Age contrasts with the case of oil in LM/LH IIIB, associated with the large transport stirrup jars of mainly Cretan origin.

93. A symptom of Polyphemos’s uncouthness seems to be that he even drank milk unmixed (*Od.* 9.297).

94. Matthäus 1980, pp. 150–157, pls. 22, 23, 24:202–204.

95. Matthäus 1980, pp. 154–155.

96. Sakellariou 1974; cf., e.g., Müller 1909, p. 316, fig. 16; and for smaller versions of the shape, Karo 1930–1933, pl. CLXVII; Mountjoy 1986, p. 12, fig. 3.

however, it is significant that no general class of precious metal vessels can be identified as “kraters,” nor are there any large, sufficiently wide-mouthed, kraterlike vessels in the decorated ceramic repertoire of the Early Mycenaean period. Such vessels first appear in clay in the form of enlarged goblets in LH IIIA1,⁹⁷ when, as James Wright points out elsewhere in this volume, a few precious metal vessels of comparable size and identical shape also occur in tombs.⁹⁸ The form these vessels take in both media strongly suggests that a concept of “kraters” as a distinct functional class did not exist before this period, but was “invented” by enlarging an existing form of drinking vessel in the early 14th century.⁹⁹

This is not to say that the function or functions served by the LH IIIA1 and later vessels were necessarily also entirely inventions of these periods, since any mixing of wine with other substances could easily have taken place in individual drinking vessels, as in Nestor’s famous *δέπας* (*Il.* 11.631–639). Nor can we assume that these vessels were called “kraters,” which would at least confirm that they were used for mixing something.¹⁰⁰ The appearance of these enlarged drinking vessels does suggest, however, the formal recognition of a new, or more regularly occurring, practice. If what we call “kraters” can indeed be regarded as true *κρητῆρες*, their scale seems to indicate substantial mixing rather than merely the inclusion of additives, and dilution with water is a reasonable possibility.¹⁰¹ The timing of the first appearance of “kraters” in the ceramic repertoire strikes me as potentially significant, since it coincides with the appearance of the Mycenaean palaces on the Greek mainland, and thus raises the possibility that the regularized practice of substantially diluting wine with water may have been a direct result of the deliberate inclusion of wider elements of society in official feasting in this crucial period.¹⁰² Moreover, the persistence of ceramic “kraters” from this period into the eighth century suggests that this practice thereafter continued without a break.¹⁰³

97. Or in LH IIB at the very earliest (see Mountjoy 1999, p. 214, no. 89). Cf., however, French 1964, pp. 248–249, 256; Mountjoy 1986, p. 61, table IV.

98. See, e.g., Persson 1942, pp. 87–88, fig. 99:1.

99. The commonest form of the LH IIIB–C “krater,” at least in some regions, is the deep bowl krater (Furumark [1941] shapes [FS] 281–282), an enlarged version of the contemporary deep bowl, which probably also acted as a drinking vessel. For kraters of pedestal type from palatial pottery assemblages at Pylos—possibly a regional feature—see Bendall, forthcoming. The amphoroid kraters (FS 52–55) that form such a prominent feature of Argive pottery exports to the eastern Mediterranean appear to have been ceramic versions of a metal form already well integrated into eastern Mediterranean Late Bronze ceramic reper-

toires (Furumark 1944, p. 238; Matthäus 1985, pp. 228–232, pls. 66–68; Kling 1989, p. 130; Morris 1989; Karageorghis 1990, pl. XXIV; Sherratt 1999, p. 188; cf. Steel, this volume).

100. The absence of clearly recognizable kraters on the Linear B texts (with the probable exception of one *ka-ra-te-ra* on MY Ue 611, listed, without ideogram, alongside equipment plausibly associated with feasting: Palmer 1963, p. 364; Ventris and Chadwick 1973, no. 234) is possibly not as significant as it seems. The failure of the Pylos Ta series, for instance, to mention kraters is comparable to the omission of drinking vessels, about whose existence we have no doubt. It is possible that, as in the epics (cf., e.g., *Il.* 23.741–748; *Od.* 15.115–119), precious metal kraters, like drinking cups, were prized personal possessions, often perhaps heirlooms or the objects of

guest-gifts, and would therefore not figure in lists of communal feasting equipment held in the palace.

101. One need not assume that the 20 measures of water to one *δέπας* of wine required by Maron’s exceptional vintage was the normal ratio. In Classical times, a ratio of 2:3 for wine and water, respectively, seems to have been typical.

102. Dabney, Halstead, and Thomas, this volume.

103. Very few contexts in the epics can be cited in which unmixed wine is explicitly used: libations of unmixed wine are poured at the swearing of solemn oaths in regard to the proposed single-combat duel between Menelaos and Paris (*Il.* 2.341 = 4.159) and in connection with the final preparation for burial of Achilles’ cremated bones (*Od.* 24.73). Both of these are very solemn, ritual occasions, and in the first

As already mentioned, wine can be mixed with substances other than water in the epics, but only rarely and in rather interesting contexts. Apart from villains (who may think of it—or at least think others capable of it: cf. *Od.* 2.329–330), only women do it, and, it seems, only certain sorts of women. Though men can drink the results, mixing wine in this way is not a normal part of male, let alone heroic male, culture in the epics, and one detects an implication that it is not a regular part of a Greek cultural ethos or even a particularly commendable use of wine. Its effects can be either good or bad. The most famous instance is provided by Circe, the enchantress and seductress, who mixes Pramneian wine not only with barley, cheese, and honey, but also with certain malignant (perhaps hallucinogenic) substances that turn Odysseus’s companions into pigs and destroy their memories (*Od.* 10.234–240).¹⁰⁴ The antidote for this is the mysterious herb moly (*Od.* 10.305)—perhaps not wild rue (*Ruta graveolens*) or garlic (*Allium nigrum*), with which it was variously identified by the ancients,¹⁰⁵ but the maritime squill (*Urginea maritima*), which also has a white flower and was used medicinally in Classical times. The associations of this plant, as Peter Warren has pointed out, are not only apotropaic, but may have been linked, from at least as early as the middle of the second millennium, with certain manifestations of the Mistress of Animals.¹⁰⁶

Another instance of wine mixed with a psychoactive substance—though this time to more benign effect—is found in the scene in the *Odyssey* in which Helen mixes a potion of wine with νηπενθές ἄχολον, a sedative with a euphoriant effect, which, we are told, was given to her by Polydamna of Egypt:

τῇ πλεῖστα φέρει ζείδωρος ἄρουρα φάρμακα, πολλὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ
μειγμένα, πολλὰ δὲ λυγρὰ

Where the grain-giving earth brings forth the greatest number
of drugs, many good in the mixing, and many malignant.

Od. 4.229–230¹⁰⁷

The effects of this drug suggest a liquid preparation of opium, for which there is evidence in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean from at least as early as the middle of the second millennium, but whose use is

of these cases the “unmixed libations” (σπονδαί τ’ ἄκρητοι) are contained in a formulaic line that has the ring of a very ancient, ritualized saying—as ancient and ritualized as the single combat in the general context of which it arises (the reference to “right hands” in the same formulaic line recalls the kinds of rituals typically associated with swearing blood brotherhood). See also Kirk 1985, pp. 302–303, on the problems caused to later commentators by the use of a krater during the oath-sacrifice in *Il.* 3, to which 4.159 ostensibly refers; and pp. 347–348, on the absence of any mention of “right hands”

in the account given of it. It is also interesting that in *Il.* 9.202–204, when the delegation including Odysseus arrives at Achilles’ shelter, Achilles tells Patroklos to mix a stronger (ζωρότερον) drink, since it is for the men who are dearest to him.

104. It has been suggested that the hallucinogen is *Datura stramonium* (the thorn-apple), which contains the alkaloids hyoscyamine, atropine, and hyoscyne, and whose properties were known in antiquity: Philipp 1959, p. 513; Hijmans 1992, p. 30; cf. Polunin 1969, pp. 372–373.

105. Theophr. *Hist. pl.* 9.15.7;

Gal., *De temperamentis* 12.82, 19.124; Dioscorides, *De materia medica* 3.46.1. Dioscorides tells us that the word was still in use in Cappadocia and Galatia, which suggests that it may originally have been of Anatolian (and perhaps non-Greek Aegean) origin.

106. Warren 1984; cf. also Hijmans 1992, p. 30.

107. Another woman “who knew of all the drugs that the broad earth nourishes” (though without any mention of either “good” or “malignant” ones) is Agamede, a figure of the long-gone days when Nestor was a young man (*Il.* 11.741).

probably considerably older.¹⁰⁸ In a third instance, the ancient hero Nestor's Trojan captive, Hekamede, again mixes Pramneian wine with cheese and barley in Nestor's enormous δέπας (*Il.* 11.637–639). In this case, although there is no mention of any other substance added, one might suspect that the cheese is a Homeric substitute for something else.¹⁰⁹ Nutritious though cheese and wine may be for elderly kings and wounded warriors, it is hard to believe that the bronze graters, of which ninth-century Euboian warriors appear to have been so proud,¹¹⁰ were regularly used only for the ceremonial grating of a mundane item such as cheese, which can just as effectively be scraped with a knife.

The significance of the Pramneian wine offered by Circe and Hekamede is a bit of a mystery—and clearly was also to the commentators and lexicographers of later antiquity.¹¹¹ That it indicates a very special sort of wine is suggested by the comparison of Hekamede to goddesses as she stirs it in Nestor's δέπας (*Il.* 11.638),¹¹² and by the fact that it was apparently not mixed with water. It is referred to only twice in the epics, both times in association with mixtures (either with or without the explicit addition of mind-altering drugs), which suggests that it was a type of wine that was regularly doctored,¹¹³ that it had special medicinal properties in its own right, or possibly that it was made from an ingredient other than the grape, rather than a simple toponymic description as suggested by some later scholiasts.¹¹⁴ The occasional presence of such wine-based mixtures deep in the heart of the epics suggests that the spread of “civilized” wine use in early Greek culture from the East in the third millennium may have subsumed preexisting customs of drinking other psychoactive substances.¹¹⁵ At the same time, the exclusive association of these types of wine-based mixtures with foreign, foreign-connected, or otherwise strange and exotic *women* suggests that, by the time of the Homeric epics, this use of wine for other than purely medicinal purposes may have been actively excluded from the normal Greek perception of wine use—and that wine had effectively supplanted the social and cultural use of other substances, at least at any level of society that counted.¹¹⁶

On what may be a related point, we can turn to a particularly intriguing type of epic drinking vessel, not yet mentioned, which occurs only

108. Kerenyi 1976, pp. 23–28; Sherratt 1995, p. 32; cf. also Tzavella-Evjen 1983, p. 188.

109. Tzavella-Evjen (1983, p. 188) suspects that the “something else” is ergot on the barley.

110. As were their seventh-century Etruscan successors: Ridgway 1997, pp. 331–338. One wonders whether these graters combined with some gratable narcotic substance might have been the equivalents of the morphine packs carried by First World War officers.

111. Chantraine 1968–1980, vol. 3, p. 933, s.v. *πράμνειος*.

112. Circe, of course, is an actual goddess—even if a somewhat suspect (and essentially foreign) one (Hes. *Cat.* 46).

113. Cf. Hippoc. *Mul.* 1–2.

114. Ridgway 1997, pp. 327–328.

115. For varying views about the spread of wine-drinking in the Aegean area, see, e.g., Renfrew 1972, pp. 281–285; Hamilakis 1996; Maran 1998, pp. 251–255. For arguments that an ideology of wine-drinking as a symbol of elite lifestyle “arrived” from the East no later than the mid-third millennium, see Sherratt 2000b, pp. 51, 355. See also Sherratt 1995 for discussion of

the use of a wide variety of psychoactive substances in addition to grape-based wine in Old World prehistory, including that of the Aegean.

116. It is noticeable in the Homeric epics that, with the exception of Circe's and Helen's *φάρμακα*, and the *φάρμακα* that the suitors fear Telemachos may add to their wine, virtually all *φάρμακα*, such as the *ἥπια φάρμακα* in the hands of a “blameless healer” (*ἀμύμων ἱητήρ*) like Patroklos in *Il.* 11.822–835, are applied externally (*Il.* 4.218, 5.401 = 900, 11.514–515, 15.394, 16.28–29).

twice in the *Odyssey*. This is the strange *κισσόβιον*, a word often translated—for want of a better term—as “ivy bowl.”¹¹⁷ It is in a *κισσόβιον* that Eumaios (in a recurrent line) mixes the honey-sweet wine when entertaining the disguised Odysseus and later Telemachos in his rustic hut (*Od.* 14.78, 16.52). But even more strikingly, it is a *κισσόβιον* from which the Cyclops Polyphemos drinks three bowls of the extra-strong unmixed wine that makes him so drunk that Odysseus is able to outwit him (*Od.* 9.345–346). The association with ivy is, of course, familiar from the Dionysiac symbolism of the Archaic period onward; but, once we recall the “sacral ivy” patterns painted on pottery jugs and drinking vessels, and decorating embossed metal cups and other feasting equipment already in the centuries around the middle of the second millennium, it becomes apparent that an association of ivy with drinking may well go a very long way back in the Aegean.¹¹⁸ It could perhaps be argued that the epic *κισσόβιον* simply preserves a dim recollection of ivy-decorated vessels of the Late Bronze Age, themselves merely fashionable manifestations of a partly understood motif borrowed deferentially by Neopalatial Crete from Egypt;¹¹⁹ although this may be part of the story, the contexts in which it is used suggest that there is more to it than this.

Dionysos himself, now clearly demonstrated as a deity of considerable antiquity in the Aegean with deep roots in Crete,¹²⁰ may well have been associated with ivy long before his association with the vine.¹²¹ In a Frazerian view of early religion, ivy makes perfect sense as an attribute of an epiphanic vegetation god, since it is not only an evergreen that grows mysteriously both upward and laterally without the apparent need of soil, but also has a curious dual cycle of growth that allows it to flourish in shade and cold.¹²² At the same time, from a structuralist point of view, ivy in Dionysiac symbolism

117. The alternative—a bowl (or cup) made of ivy wood (LSJ s.v.)—makes no sense, since ivy does not produce wood suitable for this purpose (cf. *RE* V.2, 1905, cols. 2826–2847, s.v. Epheu [F. Olck]).

118. For the “sacral ivy” pattern (Furumark motif 12) on ceramic jugs, drinking vessels, and other shapes (including Palatial-style jars and rhyta), particularly of LH I–IIIA date, see Furumark 1941, pp. 268–274. For the same motif on contemporary Cretan clay vessels (including cups, goblets, jugs, a pedestaled cauldron, and jars), see *PM* II, p. 476, fig. 284, p. 485, fig. 291:e, p. 486, fig. 292; *PM* IV, p. 361, fig. 301:c–e; Popham 1967, p. 338, fig. 1:10–11, p. 346, fig. 5:11, pls. 77:d, 83:b, 84:c; Betancourt 1985, p. 129, fig. 98:B, D, F, p. 137, fig. 103:B, p. 141, fig. 105:H, p. 146, fig. 109, pls. 17:G, 21:E, 24:B. Ivy

leaves are a relatively frequent motif on metal vessels with probable feasting associations: cf., e.g., *PM* II, p. 481, fig. 288:c (a bronze cup from Mochlos), p. 642, fig. 408 (the handle of a bronze basin from Knossos); Persson 1942, p. 75, fig. 88, p. 89, fig. 101, pl. IV (a gold cup and silver spoon from Dendra chamber tomb 10); Persson 1931, p. 95, fig. 67, pls. XXXI:3, 6, XXXIII:5 (a bronze spouted bowl, a bronze jug, and a silver cup from Dendra chamber tomb 2); Åström 1977, p. 53, figs. 16, 18, 19, pls. XXV, XXVI:1, XXVII:1, 2, XXVIII (a bronze basin and bronze jug from Dendra chamber tomb 12); Matthäus 1980, pl. 55:466 (a bronze brazier from Kato Zakros). They are also found decorating stone pedestal lamps from Crete (*PM* II, pp. 480–481, figs. 287:g, 288:a; Buchholz and Karageorghis 1973, pp. 92, 355, nos. 1149–1150).

119. *PM* II, p. 480.

120. Kerenyi 1976; Antonelli 1996.

121. It is not clear, for instance, that Dionysos is linked with wine in the Linear B texts; at Chania, perhaps significantly, gifts to him take the form of honey (Palmer 1994, p. 62; *OCD*³, p. 479, s.v. Dionysus [A. Henrichs]; Godart and Tzedakis 1991; cf. Kerenyi 1976, pp. 29–37). He was certainly strongly associated with wine by the time of Hesiod, however, and almost certainly by the time of the Homeric epics (cf. Hes. *Op.* 614; *Il.* 14.325, where he is described as “a source of joy to mortals”). For Kissos as one of the names by which he was known in the deme of Acharnai in Attica, see Paus. 1.31.6. For the antiquity of his association with ivy, see also Kerenyi 1976, pp. 61–64.

122. Otto 1965, pp. 153–155, quoted in Kerenyi 1976, pp. 63–64.

may be seen as a symbolic inversion of the cultivated vine;¹²³ and in the *Odyssey*, too (especially where the land of the Cyclopes is concerned), we might be tempted to see it as representing the antithesis of the vine and civilized norms of wine use—an anti-vine, characteristic of the wild (or ἄγριος) domain beyond the bounds of the civilized world.¹²⁴

But could such clever (and fleeting) symbolism have impressed Homeric audiences unless the ivy that gave its name to this vessel also formed an intimate and pervasive part of the Greek cultural experience of drinking? Was ivy, in fact, part of the varied inheritance of drinking practices of an earlier “untamed” world that wine, as a symbol above all of “civilization,” first subsumed and ultimately displaced in Aegean culture over the course of several millennia?¹²⁵ If so, in this as in other respects,¹²⁶ the Homeric epics set the agenda for a new, ideal, “civilized” world, exclusively characterized by universal (and predominantly male) wine use with the closely regulated social norms that we see in them, and in which the drinking of other psychoactive substances, either on their own or mixed with wine, is relegated to strictly medicinal use, or to the twilight realms of female “witches” (or “witch”-goddesses) and foreigners.¹²⁷ As with other components of the ideal new Greek world delineated by the epics, it was an ideal that probably far outshaded any actual practice. Inherited by the post-Roman West and given new life at the Reformation, it is an ideal that nevertheless still casts a long shadow.¹²⁸

123. Otto 1965, pp. 153–155; Kerenyi 1976, p. 63; Ruck 1986a, pp. 185–186.

124. Perhaps the antithesis, too, of the light-loving flowers that adorn purification basins and kraters (*Od.* 3.440, 24.273).

125. Ivy’s medicinal uses were widely acknowledged in antiquity (Polunin 1969, p. 848; *RE* V.2, 1905, cols. 2826–2847, s.v. Epheu [F. Olck]; and see also Ruck 1986a, p. 183). Among other things, it was regarded as a useful analgesic, and as having particular applications for a variety of gynecological and obstetric disorders. In addition, the sap or berries drunk in small quantities in wine were thought to promote conception, while the umbels, ground and added to wine in much larger quantities, were regarded as a contraceptive. The leaf stalks mixed with honey and applied to the womb externally were believed to act as an abortifacient. Whether or not they were effective, these perceived applications in the manipulation of female fertility probably marked it as a socially dangerous (“women’s”) plant whose use needed careful social control. That it

was also regarded as having psychoactive properties is clear from the belief that the sap and fruit, if drunk, caused weakness and befuddling of the senses, and that any part of the plant had the ability to attack the nerves (no doubt in large enough quantities it could also induce blindness).

Ivy may well have many of the properties attributed to it by the ancients. It is still a component of several proprietary medicines in continental Europe, and the toxicity of the berries when ingested in significant quantities is well known. In general, it is likely that it was used from a very early period, along with other better-documented plants such as cannabis, henbane, and poppy, to spice up various lightly fermented fruit-based brews that preceded, and probably continued to form more readily available substitutes for, the elite use of grape-based wine (Sherratt 1995; see also Ruck 1986a and 1986b for a much more ambitious attempt at tracking the use of a wide variety of psychoactive plants in the hidden recesses of Greek cultural history).

126. See Sherratt 1996.

127. From this point of view, the story of Lykourgos in *Il.* 6.130–140, with its portrayal of atavistic (and ultimately doomed) opposition to the young, fragile, wine-associated god and his “fosterers,” has a certain logical consistency. Whether or not the stories (*Apollod. Bibl.* 3.5.1; *Plut. Quomodo adul.* 1) of Lykourgos’s crazed attacks on vines themselves (in the belief that their wine was pernicious) were already current by this early date, this kind of rationalization gives a vivid insight into antiquity’s own perceptions of what his opposition was about. In Greek myth, Lykourgos is merely one of a series of figures punished with madness (or, in his case, also with blindness) for their opposition to Dionysos, the most famous of whom is Pentheus in Euripides’ *Bacchae*, in which the virtues of wine are given a glowing account (Ruck 1986a, p. 179). Significantly, perhaps, others include women, such as the daughters of Minyas (*Ov. Met.* 4.1–40) and the daughters of Proitos (*Hes. Cat.* 18).

128. See Goodman 1995, p. 143, n. 66.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There can be no doubt that feasting is an integral part of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and plays a very important role in them. It provides not only the most likely setting for the creation and elaboration in performance of the Homeric epics themselves, but also the consistent setting in which their content was perceived as having been rehearsed over many generations, thus providing the notion of continuity with the past essential to bind the identity of the present to its “history” (cf. *Il.* 10.217). That this was not just a perception but a historical reality also seems beyond doubt. Feasting in the various forms glimpsed in the epics (including religious, funerary, nuptial, aristocratic, warrior, community, and more general social feasting) did indeed, over a very long period, provide the occasions for the creation, transmission, and re-creation of the kinds of heroic songs and cycles of songs that constituted the prehistory of the epics and provided much of the material for their specifically Homeric form. Feasting can be seen to be deeply embedded in this prehistory in a number of different ways, from the values and practices glimpsed in the epics to their associated equipment and terminology.

The most prominent values of Homeric feasting—the ideals of equal sharing, mutual obligation, and individual esteem within the collective, and the potential for universal inclusion, together with the drinking exclusively of wine according to well-defined social rules and the “taming” of the Olympian gods by making them co-feasters at a relatively safe distance—may be seen as among the conscious props of a new sense of Greek collective identity and ideology that was shaped in the later eighth century, and which the epics themselves were specifically designed to foster. This is not to say, however, that these ideals were simply or entirely creations of this period. Rather, as seems likely from the contradictory or anomalous elements we occasionally glimpse behind their facade, they represent an accumulation of historical values, attitudes, and practices encapsulated in a wealth of story-patterns, formulaic genre scenes, motifs, and vocabulary inherited from an extended past.¹²⁹ The various elements of this blending of different relics of past and present are often not easy to disentangle—a tribute in itself to the wholly organic processes of imaginative creation that produced the Homeric epics as we know them. When it comes to the more nebulous sphere of values, these can often reinforce each other relatively seamlessly. A Mycenaean palatial anxiety to ensure that all those sectors of society on which it relies for its continuation should believe that they have the opportunity to feast with the aid or blessing of palatial munificence, for instance, can end up being harnessed to produce a more generalized notion of universal inclusion. An original and obvious duality in the meaning of the word for “feast,” preserved in certain formulaic phrases, can reinforce the notion of equal sharing at a time when the word itself has lost this more general connotation; and the symbolism of the elite circle of feasters, traceable in various forms throughout the Late Bronze Age, can continue or reemerge in new forms.¹³⁰ Only occasionally do we glimpse values that seem to jar with the predominant ones: Aithon’s compulsory subscription feast in *Odyssey* 19.194–198 (which contrasts with

129. Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 1981, p. 18, on the similarly composite, cumulative nature of Homeric attitudes to death.

130. As it may have done, perhaps under Homeric influence, in the 5th century “tholos” attached to the Prytaneion in Athens (Miller 1978).

the contributory feast for all of Menelaos's Spartan townfolk), or the misery predicted for the orphaned Astyanax in *Iliad* 22.490–499 (which contrasts with the notion that even shepherds and reapers can feast on meat). While these examples might reflect a much older vision of feasting as the privileged preserve of ruling elites or close-knit warrior bands, they might equally well be telling us about contemporary attitudes to Cretans and non-Greeks.¹³¹

Similar observations can be made for the material cultural field of feasting practices and equipment. We now know (if we did not guess it before) that feasting was an important activity for Aegean societies almost as far back as we can trace them. We know more particularly, thanks to a decade of often inspired textual studies, that feasting loomed large in the concerns of the Mycenaean palaces, and at 13th-century Pylos, at least, we can combine the Linear B texts with the archaeological record to obtain a remarkably full picture of the nature of such feasting: the occasions on which it happened, who took part, where they did so, what was consumed, and what equipment was used.¹³² Thanks to the preservation of frescoes (and their imaginative reconstruction), we can see these feasts in action with their bardic accompaniments, and perhaps even glimpse something of the songs that were sung on such occasions.¹³³ We also know, thanks to sophisticated faunal analyses, that at Pylos and elsewhere selected bones of animals slaughtered for feasting were burned in a manner reminiscent of rituals described in the epics.¹³⁴ Suggestive though all this may be, however, I am not sure how far it helps illuminate the prehistory of epic feasting without running the risk of precipitating us back into the kind of Homeric fundamentalism that once saw the epics as a transmitted reflection of 13th-century history retained (as far as the vagaries of transmission allowed) in a 13th-century setting.¹³⁵ What it does is to make it increasingly likely that the Homeric epics preserve elements that originated in bardic creations many centuries earlier; to go any further than this, however, we need to seek clues in the epics themselves.

It is above all the tantalizing glimpses of anomalies or contradictions in the material cultural field of practices and equipment that most suggestively hint at the thick past of aoidic inheritance underlying the epics.¹³⁶ Though feasting, because of its very nature, may not be as revealing in this respect as other aspects of epic material culture, it is perhaps still possible on occasion to detect the effects of the mingling of different chronological contributions. For instance, the unmixed libations and right hands by which oaths are sworn in the ancient-sounding formula of *Iliad* 4.159 (= 2.341) seem to have no part in the ceremony to which they ostensibly refer, in which a krater plays a prominent part (*Il.* 3.269); one might, therefore, suggest that the libating (and perhaps also drinking) of unmixed wine fossilized in this formula derives from a very early period, perhaps before the regular appearance of kraterlike vessels in LH III (see above). Similarly, while the invariable Homeric practice of cooking on spits can probably be assigned a terminus post quem of around 1000 B.C., it is conceivable that the curious *πεμπύβoλα*, which occur in a single repeated line and whose function is unexplained, preserve traces of an older festal practice of boil-

131. Sherratt 1996.

132. Palaima, this volume; Bendall, forthcoming; Stocker and Davis, this volume.

133. Shelmerdine 1996, p. 477; Davis and Bennet 1999; Wright, this volume.

134. Isaakidou et al. 2002; Stocker and Davis, this volume; Dabney, Halstead, and Thomas, this volume.

135. Isaakidou et al. (2002, p. 90) make a similar point.

136. Sherratt 1990.

ing or stewing meat in tripod cauldrons, which is otherwise conspicuous by its absence. Again, it seems curious that the bronze grater that, like spits, formed part of the equipment of ninth-century warriors, should be reduced in *Iliad* 11.639–640 to grating nothing more exciting than goat's cheese into the Pramneian wine that is elsewhere given more colorful additives; one might suspect that its original warrior associations and purpose had meanwhile changed. Wine is drunk and libated from a completely interchangeable trio of δέπα (often ἀμφικύπελλα), κύπελλα, and ἄλεια, which must originally have had different forms and functions, and whose precise significance (in some cases) was almost certainly no longer evident to Homeric bards and their audiences. Nestor's highly improbable δέπας in *Iliad* 11.632–635, complete with its four "ears," which must have been as impossible to envisage in the eighth century as it is now, seems more likely to preserve a confused (and confusing) memory of a much earlier form (or forms) of δέπας, which had passed in the course of its very long aoidic history through the songs of a Mycenaean palatial bard, than to have been specially invented for the occasion.¹³⁷ Similarly, the strange κισσύβιον, though woven into a neat structural contrast that is particularly well designed to fit an eighth-century context of Greek ethnogenesis, nevertheless itself recalls vessels (and also perhaps hints at drinking practices) that have roots in a much deeper and probably rather different past.

Over 120 years after Schliemann excavated Tiryns and Mycenae with a copy of the *Iliad* in his hand, and over 60 years after Blegen first put spade to earth at his Palace of Nestor at Pylos, the wheel has begun to turn full circle. The idea of a long prehistory of aoidic inheritance that ultimately fed into the epics, once uncritically championed (not to say exaggerated) and subsequently dismissed as pure wishful thinking, is becoming respectable once more, as several of the articles in the present volume attest. That it is so is in large part tribute to the sophisticated and painstaking work of archaeologists at Pylos and elsewhere who, by studying the evidence in a wholly contextual manner, can read between the lines of Linear B texts, reconstruct the circumstances in which animal bones were deposited, and reveal something of the complexity and ideology of Aegean feasting practices at a very early period. Their results tell us nothing about the historicity of Homeric epic, with which earlier scholars were often concerned, but they are beginning to indicate with increasing persuasiveness that certain elements of the epics (including elements of epic feasting) themselves have a long history, which, moreover, extends back well beyond any conventionally imagined setting for a "historical" Trojan War.

137. Pace Hainsworth 1993, p. 293.

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