

SCRIBAL ORGANIZATION AND PALATIAL ACTIVITY

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The Mycenaean scribes of Pylos, recognizing their professional debt to the Minoan inventor(s) of Linear A, offer us an Ariadne's clew through the various subjects of this symposium. The scribes--33 have been cautiously identified--kept records found in the palace workshops, storerooms, annexes and central archives. Their activities and patterns of movement are defined by and in turn help to define the architectural modifications of the late LH IIIB palace.¹ They monitored the specific industries, goods and personnel with which the palace was concerned. The surviving Linear B documents are our main source of evidence for the production of cloth, the manufacture of oil and perfume, the working of bronze, leather and ivory and the location of relatively specialized work and storage areas for such crafts and industries in and around the palace. Clay sealings (Wr 1358-1361) from Room 105 let us know about the existence of different types of wine, and a single tablet (Fr 1184) from the area of the Archives Complex (Rooms 7-8) gives us the Mycenaean word for stirrup jars. We have to turn to Knossos for an ideographic representation of a stirrup jar (K 778.1; K 700.1, 2) and for a broader perspective on the general scribal system at Pylos. We turn to Knossos, Thebes and Mycenae for comparative insights into the ways the Pylian scribes used the 23 extant inscribed sealings, including the four referring to wine. Of course, this symposium would not be taking place, if the scribes of Pylos had not written texts conducive to the decipherment of Linear B. Thus the scribes and their records appear briefly or frequently in every contribution to this symposium.

I do not mention the importance of matters scribal in order to promote interest in individual Pylian record-keepers. This I hope to have done well enough in The Scribes of Pylos (Palaima n.d.), recently submitted for publication, which treats thoroughly the identification and work of distinct scribal hands, the location and contextual associations of almost every inscribed tablet and fragment, and the overall system of scribal organization at the Palace of Nestor. Rather I wish to stress how much, and how precariously, our view of the function and activities of the major Messenian palatial complex is based on inferences made from the texts and contexts of the Linear B tablets. In this paper I shall apply, like Procrustes, three rigid categories into which every single scholarly opinion about Mycenaean civilization can be placed: (a) what we know; (b) what we think we know; (c) what we do not know. I shall deal with the broad outlines of the scribal system of the Palace of Nestor and particular features of scribal activity as they relate to the separate industries and parts of the palace examined in this symposium.

¹See Palaima & Wright 1984.

(a) What We Know

Date of Inscriptions: 1107 of the 1112 inscribed tablets, labels, sealings and fragments from Pylos can be securely dated to the final destruction of the palace in late LH IIIB. The inscribed material from Rooms and Areas 4-6, 7-8, 20, 23, 24, 32, 38-41, 63, 71-72, 98, 99, 103 and 105 (fig. 1) is directly associated with the clearly discernible red brickish destruction stratum that pervades the site.² Tablets from disturbed surface soil in Court 47, Ramp 59, Rooms 92 and 94 and the SW Area can be connected with related tablets or sets of tablets from nearby locations, such as the Archives Complex, the NE Workshop or the SW Building. The Mb-Mn-Xa sets of Hand 14 and S1398-Cii are assigned to the simultaneous destruction of the SW Building on the basis of their relatively large numbers of tablets, their coherence and their stylistic resemblance to other firmly dated hands.

The overall chronological unity thus established by find-contexts corroborates the attribution of all but a few tablets to three contemporary classes of writing style. The five exceptional tablets (Ua 994, Ae 995, Xa 1419, Xa 1420, Xn 1449) actually lend support to this attribution by being unusual both in palaeographic features and in stratigraphical contexts. Three (Ae 995, Xa 1419, Xn 1449) definitely fit into a non-mainland palaeographic tradition; four (Ua 994, Ae 995, Xa 1419, Xa 1420) come from areas of confused stratigraphy closely associated with earlier periods of the site. Their find-spots (Rooms 55-57; along the western walls of Rooms 80-81) are isolated from the main locations of scribal activity in and around the palace.³ We must set these five tablets aside when we consider scribal activity in the Palace of Nestor at the time of its final destruction.

Number of Scribes: The inscribed material preserved from the destruction phase gives evidence of 25 securely identified hands and six additional sets (stylus groups) that can be designated as probable or secondary hands. Other tablets are assigned merely to general classes of writing style because they do not offer sufficient evidence for secure attribution to hand or stylus. However, one of these tablets, An 594-Ciii, had such a distinctive form of the VIR ideogram that it may well be the work of a separate scribe. We can therefore take 32 (25+6+1) as a conservative estimate of the number of scribes whose work was preserved by the destruction of the palace. It is interesting to note that the ratio of scribes to tablets at Pylos closely approximates the ratio at Knossos estimated by Olivier: Pylos (32 scribes : 1107 tablets) vs. Knossos (100 scribes : 3369 tablets), despite obvious differences in the size, structure and layout of the two palaces and in the characteristics of their corresponding scribal bureaucracies.⁴

²See Palaima n.d., chapter 3, for a detailed treatment of all find-spots based on work with the original UC excavation notebooks from 1939 and 1952-1964. I thank E. Tucker Blackburn and E.L. Bennett, Jr., for making microfilm copies of these notebooks available for extended use.

³For a full discussion of these tablets, see Palaima n.d., Hand 91 and Class iv, and Palaima 1982.

⁴Olivier 1967, 102; J. Chadwick in Bintliff 1977, 50-51.

Location of Tablets: Knowledge of precise find-spots reveals how extensively throughout the main palace and its ancillary buildings records were kept. Figure 3 shows where outside the Archives Complex and in what numbers tablets of individual scribes were found. The Wine Magazine, the NE Workshop and the SW Building all contained a fair number of records produced by different scribes. Six rooms within the palace yielded documents pertaining to their use: Rooms 20, 23, 24, 32 and above Rooms 6 and 38. Still the Archives Complex dominates the whole record-keeping system. Excluding very fragmentary tablets (Series Xa, Xn), nearly 81% of the tablets (767 of 946) were located in, or definitely displaced from, the Archives Complex.

(b) What We Think We Know

Comments: Any attempt to reconstruct daily activity, scribal and economic, in the Palace of Nestor must keep in mind the selective nature of the evidence at our disposal. In interpreting the epigraphical data, we must be aware that the extant tablets and their locations were preserved accidentally when fire destroyed the palace. They only represent, perhaps incompletely, the records that existed on clay in various areas at that single arbitrary moment. John Bennet first suggested to me an apt metaphor. Our view can be thought of as a freeze-frame which has stopped the action of a motion picture of scribal and other work over a longer, continuous period. Our task is to interpret the details of this static image in ways that are valid for more extended periods in the administrative life of the LH IIIB palace.

The Scribal System: The Palace of Nestor in late LH IIIB underwent architectural changes apparently designed to restrict access to the palace proper. This concern with controlling the flow of personnel and goods into and out of the palace may be connected with an increased concentration of industrial activity in the immediate area of the palace. The architectural changes also brought into further prominence the Archives Complex as the center of record-keeping for the palace's many workshops and storerooms.

The centripetal focus of the Pylian scribal system is best illustrated statistically. The Archives Complex contained, as I have mentioned, 81% of the fuller extant tablets. But it also contained an even higher percentage of longer lists, compilations and summaries, that is, tablets of a high archival status (series An, Aq, Cn, Cr, En, Eo, Ep, Eq, Er, Es, Fn, Gn, Jn, Mn, Nn, On, Pn, Tn, Un, Vn): 189 of 206 tablets. This percentage would be still greater, were it not for the 11 Mn tablets of Hand 14 and S1398-Cii, which have been connected with a possible subsidiary archives in the SW Building.⁵ Such a secondary archives might have been related to the storage of textiles in the SW Building, if the identification of ideogram *146 on the Ma and Mn tablets as a kind of plain textile received as a taxation payment to the palace is correct.⁶

Here then is a specific instance where the nature of our data is

⁵Blegen & Rawson 1966, 283.

⁶Duhoux 1976b; Lejeune 1971, 313-325; Shelmerdine 1973.

problematical. The overwhelming proportion of longer texts comes from the Archives Complex. So do nearly all records with administratively important contents: ration lists for the female labor force (Aa, Ab, Ad); assignments of military personnel (An); detailed landholding records (Aq and E- series); supervision of flocks (Cn); consignments of raw materials to the bronze industry (Ja, Jn); proportional taxes and exemptions for regional sites (Ma); raw flax deliveries with lists and totals (Na, Nn, Ng); three additional Mn records by another scribe (Mn 11, 162, 456 of Hand 2). Might we not suppose the Mn (and Mb) records from the SW Area would also have been transferred eventually to the Archives Complex? We have evidence that such transfers took place: sets of related documents (series Cc, Sa) were discovered partially in the Archives Complex, partially in the NE Workshop, where their subjects and the archaeological remains prove that they were written. Still other sets from the main archives resemble the kinds of texts found elsewhere in the palace.⁷ If our motion picture had advanced a few frames, the Archives Complex might have gained additional texts of a higher archival status; but then we would have lost all traces that the SW Building was the place where an important manufactured item (*146) was collected (and stored?) in considerable quantities. This is one good example of the hazardous nature of our evidence. There are others.

Location of Scribes and Industries: Despite the high proportion of tablets found in the main archives, 17 of the 32 probable scribes wrote tablets found elsewhere in the palace (fig. 3): Hands 2, 4, 13-15, 21, 26, 31-34, 41, 43; S632, 1203, 1217, 1219. Several wrote tablets and sealings discovered in more than one definite situs originalis outside the Archives Complex: Hands 2, 4, 13, 34, S1203; to several are assigned tablets found inside and outside the archives rooms: 2, 4, 15, 21, 26, 41, 43, 44. This distribution of documents gives us a sense of movement, at least of tablets and probably of scribes. There is also an apparent versatility in the range of subjects treated by the better-attested record-keepers, e.g., Hand 2: bronze allotments (Ja, Jn), provincial taxation (Ma, Mn), special inventory of vases and furniture (Ta), distribution of agricultural items to sanctuaries (Fn 187), and records of various transactions involving different types of oil (Fr); Hand 21: bronze allotments (Jn), livestock (Cc, Cn), ration allotments for female textile and household workers (Ab), land records (Aq).

This wide range of 'assignments' must be kept in mind when considering the roles of scribes, whether well-attested or not, in specialized industries. For example, the oil records of Hand 2 can be distinguished by subject and location. His tablets from Room 23 refer to OLE + PA (Fr 1231 and 1238 to OLE) in small quantities (Z2 to 1 V2) connected with wa-na-so-i and the toponym pa-ki-ja-na. Those fallen into Room 38 deal with larger quantities of OLE + PA (S2 V4 to 5 S1 V4) in religious contexts similar to those on the tablets from Room 23. His single fragmentary tablet from Room 32 treats AREPA; and a final tablet from the Archives Complex records transactions of much larger quantities of yet another type of oil (OLE + WE) between 'unguent-boilers'. At the very least five other scribes left records of oil in these areas. How specialized were the interests of any of these six scribes within this specific industry? Are the number and spread of scribes a result of chronological factors: for example, a need to record nearly

⁷I discuss this topic fully in Palaima 1980a.

contemporaneous transactions with oil in several areas of the palace? We have no means of estimating exactly the span of time, hours, days, weeks over which these oil tablets were written. Is the involvement of Hand 2 in particular aspects of the oil industry somehow linked with the toponyms and religious terms, e.g., pa-ki-ja-na, po-ti-ni-ja, common to some of his Fr, Fn and Jn tablets? What is the significance of the single record (Fr 1184) involving unguent-boilers in respect both to his other oil tablets and to the stores of oil in Rooms 23, 24, 25, 32 and above Room 38? Why was Fr 1184 the only oil record found in the Archives Complex?

Hand 4 is another scribe concerned with oil, on four tablets fallen from above Room 38. These deal with far smaller quantities and different types of oil than the tablets of Hand 2 from the same location. Although Hand 4's only other set of tablets concerns female personnel in the Further Province (Aa 60-98), his oil tablets have one identifiable place-name, now from the Hither Province, an allative form of pa-ki-ja-na, which occurs three times on the oil tablets of Hand 2 in Room 23. Hand 4's oil tablets have the religious associations common to most of the oil records in Rooms 23 and 38. What was the basis for the separate assignments of Hand 4: oil and Hither Province, women and Further Province? For the assignments of Hands 2 and 4 relating to oil? Is there real specialization and accountability here, or might these assignments have been interchangeable depending on the scribal workload on a given day? Were these two scribes and their counterparts in the oil industry working on the spot in Rooms 23, 32 and 38; or were these records actually instructions, order forms, written to storeroom managers as various parties went past the main archives to obtain consignments of oil? It is very easy to slip into category c. Let me remain a while in b.

The identification of work and storage areas within the Palace of Nestor is most secure when artifactual and epigraphical evidence are found together in a location suited to the requirements of a particular industry. This combination of data precludes our missing or misidentifying the functions of specific areas of the palace. The evidence is least secure when epigraphical data are found in isolation. I have already mentioned our good fortune that our freeze-frame captured the Mb-Mn records in the neighborhood of the SW Building, where we may therefore propose that the basic textile commodity *146 was delivered and stored. So, too, the Ae and La records of Hands 13 and S628-Ciii fallen from above the megaron suggest, without material corroboration, that a textile workshop involving at least 20 women (Ae 629) was located on the upper story of the palace. Yet these hypotheses cannot be proven without appropriate evidence from material remains.

The location and operation of industries are matters for full treatment by other participants in this symposium. Here I wish to furnish data relevant to the interpretation of the textual evidence from Rooms 32, 38, 98 and 105. Two areas definitely used for oil were Room 32 and the second story above Room 38. Room 32 (fig. 4a) contained many pithoi wedged upright by large crude bricks against the western and southern walls, pithoid jars, stirrup jars of three different sizes, dippers, scoops, basins, bowls, i.e., all the vessels suitable for the storage and transport of oil. In fig. 4a, the pottery can be identified as follows: jars (13, 15, 18, 21, 22, 27, 28), two-handled jug (23), lid (35), pithoi (1-12, 17), pots under pithoi 3 and 4 (32, 33), stirrup jars (20, 24, 26, 29, 34). The entire room was filled with masses of red brick and plaster that had fallen and crushed the contents of the room. Three tablets, each relating clearly to olive oil, and an inscribed sealing were found in Room 32. Two of the tablets were by scribes who deal with oil elsewhere in the palace: Fr 1198 (Hand 2; Rooms 23, 38, Archives Complex); Fr

1200 (S1203-Cii; Room 38). The sealing Wr 1199 was written by Hand 34, who also wrote tablet Un 1321 (VIN, GRA).

The area of Room 38 (fig. 4b) contained the second largest batch of oil tablets and large quantities of broken pottery, fused and warped by intense fire, of types that are associated with the handling of oil in Rooms 23, 24 and 32. Only pots 9 (large two-handled jar), 11 (three- or four-handled jar), 28 and 29 (small stirrup jars) at either side of the doorway between Rooms 38 and 41 rested on or near the floor. The other pottery and the inscribed tablets had demonstrably fallen from the upper floor above the southern corner of Room 38. We may note that the place where these tablets and storage vessels were originally kept would have been approximately equidistant from stairways 36 and 54 and perhaps along a main corridor for this part of the second floor. By means of these stairways one could quickly reach the main oil stores of the palace (Rooms 23, 24, 27, 32), the exterior industrial courts (42, 47) and the central archives at the main entrance to the palace (7-8).

The tablets cluster in groups that conform to individual hands and sets:

Hand 2 : Fr 1202 (58a, 58b);; Fr 1205 (60, 64); Fr 1206 (75, 76, 78);

S1203 : Fr 1203 (68, 80); Fr 1201 (83); Fr 1208 (61);

Hand 41: Fr 1207 (found in sifting);

Hand 4: Fr 343 (1); Fr 1209 [+] 1211 (55, 77); Fr 1212 (66); Fr 1204 (59, 65, 67, 79)

The components of S1203 come from the broken pottery that spreads southeastward along Wall F. The components of Hand 2 cluster further south and eastward. The components of Hand 4 interrupt this rough pattern of groupings. The four components of Fr 1204 are distributed so as to divide the components of Hand 2 from those of S1203. Fr 1212 can be added to the group of tablets and pottery fragments that spilled to the southeast into the doorway between Rooms 38 and 43. The other components of Hand 4 were probably displaced since they lay in the disturbed surface stratum.

Room 98 (fig. 5a), which was destroyed by a very intense fire, contained large quantities of bronze in various shapes, bits of flint and obsidian, fragments of worked stone, grinders, a whetstone, two wide-mouthed jars (17, 18) that themselves held an extraordinary variety of colored earth and granular material, and a group of pots and pottery fragments in the eastern corner: bases (21, 29), a basin (16), bowls (8, 15, 16, 20, 26), wide-mouthed jars (3, 13, 24), jugs (8-12, 22, 23), wide-mouthed storage jars (17, 18), a kylix (27) and miscellaneous sherds (5, 6, 14, 16, 19, 25, 28, 30).^{*} These finds well establish the character of Room 98 as a storeroom for materials used in the NE Workshop.

Also found in the room were a single tablet (Sa 1313) and 18 clay sealings, five inscribed (Wr 1325-1329), situated as shown in fig. 5a. Sa 1313 belongs to the set of chariot tablets of Hand 26, the other 32 tablets of which were found in the Archives Complex. The five inscribed sealings also provide links to other records in the palace. Wr 1325 (CMS I, 319) is written by the same scribe (S1331-Ci) who wrote sealings Wr 1330-1334 found in Room 99. But Wr 1330 (CMS I, 312) and Wr 1331-1334 (CMS I, 329) bear different seal impressions. Wr 1330-1332 were found in a nest of 11 sealings in Room

^{*}Blegen & Rawson 1966, 314-318; M. Rawson excavation notebook (1957) 186.

99, Wr 1334 in another spot of Room 99 together with tablets of the Qa series. Wr 1326 (CMS I, 312), found together with Wr 1324 (CMS I, 324) and 1328 (CMS I, 318), shares its seal impression with Wr 1330 from Room 99, but not with the sealings with which it was found. Wr 1326 is attributed to S1272-Ciii who wrote the coherent set of nine Ac tablets found grouped together in Room 99.

Room 105 (fig. 5b) was a major storage facility for the palace providing space for at least 35 large storage pithoi arranged in two rows in its center and along its western and southern walls.⁹ Two pots, a dipper and a stirrup jar, were found within the pithoi. Just inside the doorway from Room 104 lay a huge lid, a large jug, part of an amphora and the 'teapot' shown in fig. 5b. Near the 'teapot' were found two of the 40 sealings from Room 105. These sealings were dispersed on, along, and on the wall behind the bench for pithoi 1-6 in the south corner of the room to the right of the entrance. The find-spots of 34 of the 40 sealings and 5 of the 6 components of the 4 inscribed sealings can be fixed.

The sealings can be separated into three groups: 1-5; 22-32; 11-19, 40.¹⁰ I am to undertake a thorough contextual study of sealings from Pylos for Palace of Nestor IV, but some information about the sealings from Room 105 is already clear. The first group (1-5), from the floor along the bench for pithos 1, contains three inscribed sealings (Wr 1358 [1], 1359 [3], 1360 [4]), all bearing the same seal impression (CMS I, 363) as sealings 2 and 5. Within this homogeneous set, Wr 1358 is unascrbed; but Wr 1359 (Hand 13) and Wr 1360 (S628-Ciii) are attributed to different scribes whose other texts, primarily of the La series, were discovered in Room 6. The last group, from behind pithoi 5 and 6, includes a single inscribed sealing (Wr 1361 [14, 15, 17] of Ci). It shares its seal impression (CMS I, 361) with one other sealing, perhaps no. 11.¹¹ All four inscribed sealings bear the wine ideogram, two (Wr 1359 and 1360) an additional descriptive term.

What We Do Not Know

In the first two sections I have raised several questions about the interpretation of epigraphical evidence for record-keeping in the Palace of Nestor. My treatment of Rooms 32, 38, 98 and 105 concentrated on hard data, reserving questions for this final section in which I shall try to define the limits of our understanding of scribal organization and palatial activity at late LH IIIB Pylos.

We have at Pylos a system of record-keeping that depends upon a single centrally located archives within a general spread of workshops and storerooms. We can identify areas concerned with the manufacture, storage and distribution of different materials most securely through the combination of inscriptional and artifactual evidence. When either type of evidence is

⁹Blegen & Rawson 1966, 344-349.

¹⁰The unity of these groups is confirmed by the original excavation notebooks: D.H. French (1958) 82-84, 95; 84-89; M. Rawson (1958) 35.

¹¹D.H. French (1958) II, 6.

lacking, our interpretation of the function of a given area is bound to be less certain. Yet, even when both types of evidence are available, major questions may still remain about the daily operation of specific industries and the role of record-keepers within them.

One question concerns how exclusively a room or area was given over to a particular economic function. Because of the discovery of four sealings with the wine ideogram (Wr 1358-1361), Rooms 104 and 105 have been designated the Wine Magazine. Yet the two rooms contained 54 sealings, 50 unscribed. Since the four inscribed sealings were clustered within two larger groups of five and 10 sealings respectively, we may infer that at least these groups also referred exclusively to wine. This is not a necessary deduction and need not apply to the 39 remaining sealings. Moreover, the usual, but not essential association of stirrup jars is with olive oil; and one was found inside of one of the storage pithoi in the two central rows of Room 105. Might wine have been stored in pithoi 1-8 along the western and southern walls where the wine sealings were found, but olive oil in the two central rows of pithoi?

Room 32 has strong associations with oil: three Fr tablets and suitable pottery. But the room contained sealing Wr 1199 written by Hand 34 whose other tablet Un 1321, albeit fragmentary, from the NE Workshop deals with VIN and GRA in unknown quantities. Is the sealing, usually indicative of deliveries, to be associated with the otherwise established function of Room 32 or with the otherwise known interests of the scribe who wrote it? Its inscription, ka-ra-ni-jo, provides no help. Pertinent comparanda are the sealings Wr 1359 and 1360 from Room 105 written by two different hands attested in the presumed textile workshop on the second story in the area of the megaron. Is it fanciful to connect the sealings with an order of wine for the female workers whom the two scribes were monitoring? Or are the wine sealings and the textile documents, as well as the sealing from Room 32 and the record of GRA-VIN from Room 99, not directly related to each other? If they are not, how does one explain the fact that Wr 1359, 1360 and Wr 1358 (perhaps by a third scribe) bear the same seal impression? The most convenient explanation, of course, is that the scribes were working together and therefore made use of a seal somehow at their disposal in the area when they were working.

Wr 1326 (Room 98, S1272-Ciii) and Wr 1330 (Room 99, S1331-Ci) offer another example where the same seal (CMS I, 312) was used to impress sealings that were then inscribed by different hands, in this case referring to different subjects (de-mi-ni-jo vs. o-pa). The scribe of Wr 1330 has access to two other seals on Wr 1325 (CMS I, 319) and Wr 1331-1334 (CMS I, 329). Despite their separate find-spots in Rooms 98 and 99, these sealings do refer to the same general subjects: CAP^m, o-pa, and the formula "livestock (hide?) o-pa."

How are we to explain the sharing of seals by scribes A and B? Does A own the seal and authorize a transaction which B, a co-worker or subordinate, counterinscribes? Do both A and B use a sealing that belongs to the supervisor of a work area when they make records pertaining to such work, e.g., the textile-wine scribes? What are we to make of the scribe from the NE Workshop who uses three seals, one in common with another scribe? The sealings suggest, but do not prove, that scribes at times worked together in places removed from the eventual find-spots of their texts. This observation leads to more general questions about scribes and their involvement with specific industries.

Were any scribes at Pylos entirely specialized, to or within a particular

industry? Were all scribal assignments under the control of the central archives or might a multi-purpose area, like the NE Workshop, have a minor scribal staff and internal record-keeping authority of its own? How much information would the central archives require about daily business in the NE Workshop, the SW Building, the Wine Magazine, and even the storerooms and work areas of the central insula of the palace? I do not think we shall ever have full answers to such questions, but we can make pertinent observations about some details of our freeze-frame view of life and work at the Palace of Nestor.

The most fully attested scribes (Hands 1, 2, 21) worked with a wide variety of seemingly unrelated subjects. Are they to be taken as the standard or as exceptionally talented officials who could be entrusted with such disparate responsibilities? Are we to assume that the less well documented scribes would have evidenced a similar range of concerns if we had evidence from a longer period? At Knossos, where the data are similarly chronologically restricted, only two scribes do not specialize in documents pertaining to a single branch of the palace's economy.¹² Of the far fewer scribes at Pylos, at least ten write records about more than one branch of the palace's economy: Hands 1, 2, 4, 11, 21, 24, 41-44. The records from the oil storerooms, the Wine Magazine, and the NE Workshop are linked to the main archives by prominent and versatile scribal hands and/or by other texts demonstrably relevant to the concerns of these areas: Hands 2, 4, 21, 26, 44; series Cc, Fr, Gn, Sa, Sh. It would seem, therefore, that most aspects of economic and scribal activity at Pylos were under rather rigid central control. The absence of a formal archives anywhere else in the palace would support this conclusion.

However, I would also suggest that our freeze-frame can be interpreted, like any visual image, in various ways. The tablets and sealings from the Wine Magazine, the Oil Storerooms and the NE Workshop were grouped in rough sets, undoubtedly as work took place, and then set aside without labels. The texts themselves are often very cursory, to us frustratingly allusive, with all sorts of personal ad hoc textual inventions, such as idiosyncratic extemporaneous ideograms (see the Ub and Va tablets). Some such poorly drafted records do make their ways to the Archives Complex, e.g., Tn 316 and the Sh tablets. But we can also imagine that a functionary, trained--as all Pylian scribes apparently were--in the stylistic traditions of the central archives, might have been accountable only to a superior in one of these locations, say in the NE Workshop. He might have thereby and therein obtained the kind of happy and relaxed independence that comes from observing the converse of Periander's theorem: "Don't wave your stylus too high in the air when there's a tyrannical archives around."

¹²Olivier 1967, 131-133.