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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in addition to the standard ones:

AnnScAtene = *Annuario della Scuola archeologica di Atene e delle missioni italiane in oriente*

ArchAnAth = 'Αρχαιολογικά 'Ανάλεκτα ἐξ 'Αθηνῶν

ArchDelt = 'Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον

ArchEph = 'Αρχαιολογική 'Εφημερίς

Art and Religion in Thera = N. MARINATOS, *Art and Religion in Thera. Reconstructing a Bronze Age Society* (Athens 1984)

CMS = *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel* (Berlin 1964 -)

Ergon = Τό 'Εργον τῆς ἐν 'Αθήναις 'Αρχαιολογικῆς 'Εταιρείας

Iconographie minoenne = P. DARCQUE and J.-C. POURSAT eds, *L'iconographie minoenne. Actes de la Table Ronde d'Athènes (21-22 avril 1983)*, *BCH Supplément XI* (Athens 1985)

IMMERWAHR = S.A. IMMERWAHR, *Aegean Painting in the Bronze Age* (Philadelphia and London 1990)

KARO = G. KARO, *Die Schachtgräber von Mykenai* (München 1930-33)

KretChron = *Κρητικά Χρονικά*

MORGAN = L. MORGAN, *The Miniature Wall Paintings of Thera. A Study in Aegean Culture and Iconography* (Cambridge 1988)

MYLONAS = G.E. MYLONAS, 'Ο ταφικός κύκλος Β τῶν Μυκηνῶν (Athens 1972-73)

OJA = *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*

OpAth = *Opuscula Atheniensia*

PM = Sir A. EVANS, *The Palace of Minos at Knossos I-IV* (London 1921-1935)

PraktArchEt = *Πρακτικά τῆς ἐν 'Αθήναις 'Αρχαιολογικῆς 'Εταιρείας*

SCE = *The Swedish Cyprus Expedition I-IV* (Stockholm 1934-1972)

TAW II I = *Thera and the Aegean World I. Papers presented at the Second International Scientific Congress, Santorini, Greece, August 1978* (London 1978)

TAW II II = *Thera and the Aegean World II. Papers presented at the Second International Scientific Congress, Santorini, Greece, August 1978* (London 1980)

TAW III = *Thera and the Aegean World III. Proceedings of the Third International Congress, Santorini, Greece, 3-9 September 1989*, 1 Archaeology, 2 Earth Sciences, 3 Chronology (London 1990)

Thera I-VII = S. MARINATOS, *Excavations at Thera I-VII* (Athens 1968-1976)

TUAS = *Temple University Aegean Symposium 1-10* (Philadelphia 1976-1985)

VERMEULE-KARAGEORGHIS = E. VERMEULE and V. KARAGEORGHIS, *Mycenaean Pictorial Vase Painting* (Cambridge 1982)

MYCENAEAN SCRIBAL AESTHETICS *

In this paper I address in a direct way, for the first time as far as I can tell, the issue of Mycenaean scribal aesthetics. I discuss what level of artistic skills, what standards of artistic quality and what sources of visual inspiration individual Mycenaean scribes had. I examine three sources of information, the last two more fully: 1. the calligraphic and design standards of Mycenaean scribes as illustrated by their texts; 2. drawings that occur on the versos of Mycenaean tablets and which I argue are most reasonably interpreted as doodles by the scribes themselves; 3. a group of naturalistic ideograms that can be compared to representations in other media. I hope that this paper will go a long way toward clearing up some longstanding misconceptions in the general art historical or archaeological literature about the artistic talents of Mycenaean scribes. These have led in two cases to rather fantastic, though uncritically cited, theories about drawings that occur on clay tablets. In other cases, it is clear that specialists in other disciplines have, as is natural, only a limited understanding of, or interest in, the Linear B material. I hope that they will find my discussion here valuable, just as I welcome their criticisms.

That Mycenaean scribes had general aesthetic sensibilities might be deduced from the almost calligraphic care which some identifiable scribes used in particular contexts to inscribe signs of the Linear B writing system. I have discussed this process, which involves embellishment, elaboration and idealized conceptualization of the forms of characters of the script, in regard to scribes who are prominent in two of the three separate palaeographic classes that can be identified in the tablets associated with the destruction stratum of the Palace of Nestor at Pylos¹. It is also well known that the cursive and complex forms of many of the signs of the Linear B script indicate that Linear B was designed primarily for drawing with brush or pen and paint or ink, as on the stirrup jars with painted inscriptions². These pottery

* I thank Emmett L. Bennett, Jr., and Nicolle Hirschfeld for suggestions that improved the logic and style of this paper. I am indebted to Carlos Varias Garcia, visiting fellow at PASP in spring 1992, for discussing with me the deposit of tablets from the House of the Oil Merchant and their archaeological contexts (cf. *infra* n. 23). I am responsible for all faults that remain. I use the following standard abbreviations:

MT II: E.L. BENNETT, JR., ed., *The Mycenae Tablets II* (*Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* NS 48: Philadelphia 1958);

PN II: MABEL LANG, *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia Volume II. The Frescoes* (Princeton 1969).

1 T.G. PALAIMA, *The Scribes of Pylos* (1988) 24-26: work by Hands 2 and 43. I identified earlier and in more detail in *Scribes of Pylos* a group of tablets which cannot be associated with the destruction of the palace and which palaeographically match the earlier Knossian stylistic traditions of writing. These I assigned to a new Hand 91, but it would perhaps have been better to assign them collectively to a fourth palaeographic class (Class iv) without specific assignment to Hand, although their style is so distinctive that there must be one new Hand within these tablets.

2 Treated most recently in regard to the contents and styles of the inscriptions by: E.L. BENNETT, JR., "The Inscribed Stirrup Jars and Pinacology", in *Φίλια ἔπη εἰς Γ.Ε. Μυλωνάν* A (1986) 136-143, with comment on the fact that some of the hands of the painters "are practically illiterate" (p. 138); E. HALLAGER, "The Inscribed Stirrup Jars: Implications for Late Minoan IIIB Crete", *AJA* 91 (1987) 171-

inscriptions, occasionally made, it seems, by illiterate painters, are nevertheless our best means for acquiring some sense of the appearance of writing on ephemeral materials such as papyrus or parchment. The very process of drawing signs on leather or papyrus documents of a higher order of archival importance than most of our surviving clay tablets would move the act of writing into a realm wherein the aesthetic aspects of the texts might have had considerable importance.

The well-known drawings on the versos of tablets from Pylos, Mycenae and Knossos would further suggest that some of the Mycenaean scribes had artistic sensibilities that might be a proper subject for iconographical study. At Pylos, tablet Cn 1287 has on its verso the carefully devised and executed drawing of a labyrinth (Pl. XXa) ³. The drawing was made while the verso of the tablet was very moist, and perhaps even before the recto was inscribed ⁴. However, what has not been taken into account in general discussions of the tablet and its drawing is the observation made by Bennett and Olivier that the recto is palimpsestic ⁵. Thus we cannot be sure that the labyrinth was drawn before the first (now erased) text on the recto was inscribed, especially since the first text must have been erased when the recto surface, like the verso surface, was very moist. The recto of the tablet now preserves a second text listing in ten entries she-goats after personal names in the nominative that are accompanied in six cases by occupational designations: 'messenger'?, fuller, potter, 'plaiter' or 'weaver'?, servant of *di-u-ja* (the female counterpart of Zeus) and servant of *ke-re-ta* (perhaps the 'seer'? ⁶). In nine of ten entries, a single she-goat is recorded. In the ninth entry, two she-goats are listed opposite an individual named *mo-ri-wo* whose occupation is unspecified, unless we are to understand for the last three entries the last-recorded occupation (servant of *ke-re-ta*) from line .7, an unorthodox, but not entirely unparalleled procedure ⁷. The tablet comes from the NE Workshop, Room 99, and its present recto text is attributed to Hand 31. However, the fact that the recto of the tablet is palimpsestic also introduces a further complication: there is no absolute guarantee that the scribe who drew the labyrinth was the scribe who wrote the final text. Nor is it certain that the final text, with its one conspicuous reference to a religious functionary (the servant of *di-u-ja*) and other references to occupations that occur elsewhere in series alongside religious personnel, albeit sometimes with further qualifications marking special status (e.g., 'plaiter' in the MY Oe series; *wa-na-ka-te-ro* potter and fuller in the Pylos E- series), has any direct relationship with the image of the labyrinth ⁸. It is not even clear why

190, with discussion of palaeography (pp. 171-176); H.W. CATLING *et al.*, "The Linear B Inscribed Stirrup Jars and West Crete", *BSA* 75 (1980) 49-113.

3 To my knowledge last discussed by L.J.D. RICHARDSON, "The Labyrinth", in *Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium on Mycenaean Studies* (1966) 285-296. For earlier discussions, see J.L. HELLER, "A Labyrinth from Pylos?", *AJA* 65 (1961) 57-62, pl. 33, and the initial publication by MABEL LANG, "The Palace of Nestor Excavations of 1957", *AJA* 62 (1958) 175-191, pl. 46. A photograph of the tablet verso is also found in M. GÉRARD-ROUSSEAU, *Les mentions religieuses dans les tablettes mycéniennes* (1968) pl. IX, in connection with the term *da-pu2-ri-to-jo* which occurs in conjunction with the goddess *po-ti-ni-ja* on KN Gg 702.

4 LANG (*supra* n. 3) 190. See also the personal correspondence from Lang reported by HELLER (*supra* n. 3) 59-60: "S. Dow confirms my impression that the labyrinth was inscribed before the obverse both because the clay seems to have been softer and the lines are slightly closed."

5 J.-P. OLIVIER and E.L. BENNETT, JR., *The Pylos Tablets Transcribed*, Part 1 (*Incunabula Graeca* 51, 1972).

6 *ke-re-ta* = χρήστης attested by Hesychius in the sense of 'seer': χρήστης· ὀφειλέτης· ὁ μάντις. See GÉRARD-ROUSSEAU (*supra* n. 3) 127 and n. 8.

7 See tablet Cn 328, where the scribe, after four lines, tires of repeating *a-ka-na-jo* as the first element of the formulaic entries, and abandons writing it after writing its initial sign in line .5

8 HELLER (*supra* n. 3) 59, asserts categorically that the figure on the reverse "is quite unrelated to" the text on the obverse. This stems from his belief that the figure "has no architectural, mythological, or ritualistic associations".

these individuals are listed in the nominative opposite the single she-goats. We can only say that at Pylos such smaller numbers of female animals are listed in records having to do with materials for religious ceremonies or offerings: PY Un 2.5 (2 he-goats and 2 she-goats, 26 rams and 6 ewes at the 'initiation of the *wanax*'); PY Un 6 (single cows and ewes and pairs of sows offered to Poseidon and the female deity *pe-re*-*82); PY Un 853 [+] 869 (1 ewe and a no longer extant number of she-goats associated with Poseidon). Our one reference to 'labyrinth' in the Mycenaean texts is found in a religious context, specifically (KN Gg 702) an offering of a vase of honey apiece to 'all the gods' and to the *po-ti-ni-ja* 'of the labyrinth'. Thus it is reasonable, but not absolutely compelling to conclude that the drawing was somehow prompted by the general religious subject of the final text, done apparently after the drawing. Or we might suppose that the drawing was inspired by the original—now erased—text on the recto, done perhaps before the drawing, if it recorded the same kind of information as the final text. A parallel for recto text and verso drawing being related is provided by the recently identified schematic doodle of a ship (Pl. XXb) on the verso of tablet PY An 724, the recto of which lists absent rowers ⁹.

From the same area at Pylos (Northeast Workshop, Room 99) comes tablet Un 1320 [+] 1442 which has on its verso a carefully executed and detailed drawing of the head of a pig (Pl. XXc). The text of the fragmentary tablet is assigned to general palaeographical Class ii, i.e., the same class to which Hand 31 belongs, without any further evidence for identification. The text on the recto unfortunately refers to an unidentifiable phonetic logogram A (in quantities 1-5) preceded in fully extant entries by the formula *pa-ro* PERSONAL NAME, which is otherwise found most frequently in livestock herding and landholding contexts. Landholdings, however, are almost always registered by means of the ideogram GRA and often in sub-units of measure. The absence of GRA here and the small whole-unit entries would be consistent with the relatively small numbers of pigs recorded on other Linear B tablets (cf. PY Cn 608 with entries of 'fatted pigs' in numbers 2-6 for each of the 9 major communities of the Hither Province). So there is some basis for supposing that the pig drawn on the verso might have been inspired by the subject of the recto.

In fact, there is a chain of references that makes it reasonable to suppose that the phonetic logogram A here refers in some way to livestock or a product from livestock. On fragmentary Pylos tablet Un 1185, Hand 1 lists mixed commodities generally associated with items for banquets on fuller tablets (e.g., Un 718). In order, these are:

cheese (listed as a lexeme and as a phonetic logogram: *tu-ro*₂ *TUR*Q₂),
ca. 11.6 liters of some dry commodity listed as owed,
three sheep (OVIS),
twenty yearling sheep (WE),
ten of an unknown item,
and finally another entry designated by lexeme and phonetic ideogram:
*a*₃-*ka-na-jo* and A₃.

⁹ See T.G. PALAIMA, "Maritime Matters in the Linear B Tablets", *Thalassa. L'Egée préhistorique et la mer. Actes de la troisième Rencontre égéenne internationale de l'Université de Liège, Calvi, Corse (23-25 avril 1990)*, *Aegaeum* 7 (1991) 286-287, pl. LXIII. The other tablet assigned to Hand 31 is Ub 1315 also from Room 99 of the Northeast Workshop. It contains a non-ideographic/non-logographic account of "horse trappings", i.e., all the items recorded on the tablet are identified purely lexically: 'reins', 'leather pieces', 'headbands', 'halters'. There is nothing in its text to suggest a motive for the drawing of the labyrinth, nor do its functionally rendered phonograms offer any indication of the scribe's artistic talents.

The word-unit *a₃-ka-na-jo*, thus spelled, is a *hapax*; and *A₃* is a logographic coining for a commodity that has no regular pictorially derived ideogram, most likely because of the rarity with which the item occurred in the records of palatial scribes. We do know that *A₃* is some sort of liquid commodity, since it is here recorded using the liquid measure S in the quantity of twelve liters. Given the context, it is not unreasonable to suggest that *A₃* (= *a₃-ka-na-jo*) is some liquid product from livestock, either sheep or the presumed animal that preceded the entry 10. In other contexts (e.g., PY Cn 131, Cn 202) smaller numbers of goats are listed after entries of sheep. So I would be inclined here to take *a₃-ka-na-jo* as a description of a commodity derived from some herd animal other than sheep, perhaps goats.

This hypothesis gains some credibility from the fact that *a₃* occurs elsewhere only on Knossos tablet C(2) 913 as an adjunct modifier of a he-goat. The full entry reads:

pa-ro , *e-te-wa-no* , *a₃* CAP^m 1[.

That this is no mere coincidence is proved, I believe, by the references to the lexeme *a-ka-na-jo*, which I take to be an alternative spelling of *a₃-ka-na-jo*. *a-ka-na-jo* is written on lines .2-.4 of Pylos tablet Cn 328 (by Hand 1) as the first element of a two-word entry formula: *a-ka-na-jo* + man's name in the nominative. Each entry has to do with sheep or goats, male and female, in relatively large numbers. The heading of the tablet indicates that these are groups of animals in the district of *ro-u-so*. The entry formulae (*pa-ro* + man's name in dative) of two other Hand 1 tablets (Cn 131 and Cn 202) with headings parallel to that on Cn 328 make clear that these groups of animals are under the control of the men listed on lines .2-.15 of Cn 328. In line .5 of Cn 328, Hand 1 began writing the first word: *a*.... He then stopped, obviously tiring of repeating mindlessly—Mycenaean scribes had no ditto marks—the same descriptive term line by line. It seems clear that *a-ka-na-jo* is to be understood in all the remaining entries of sheep and goat in lines .5-.15. Place is specified in the heading and the individuals responsible are specified in each line. Thus *a-ka-na-jo* is most reasonably to be interpreted as somehow qualifying the animals¹⁰. The only other place the term occurs is on the fragmentary tablet Xa 1337. This tablet is assigned to Class iii and was found southwest of Room 92, i.e., in the environs of the Northeast Workshop. Its total text reads as follows:

.1]*ke-wa-o* , *o-pe[-ro*
.2]*8 a-ka-na-jo[*

Here the entry preceding *a-ka-na-jo* is of a size comparable to that preceding *a₃-ka-na-jo* on Un 1185, and the find-spot associates the tablet with the NE Workshop and Un 1320 [+1442] which recorded the phonetic ideogram *A* using the *pa-ro* + dative formula.

In brief then, the known contexts of *a₃-ka-na-jo* (*a₃* or *A₃*) and *a-ka-na-jo* (*A*?) link the terms with sheep or goats, with the *pa-ro* formula used in herding contexts, and at Pylos with the NE Workshop. The term, according to my interpretation, describes some sort of liquid product from these livestock and therefore can be used to define the animals themselves. We might compare in English: “milk” used to identify a product from cows and “milk cow” used to identify the purpose to which the cows are being put. Thus I am inclined to interpret the

10 *a-ka-na-jo* might be a direct adjectival modifier of the animals, even though it does not change its endings according to whether the flocks are composed of male or female animals. Given the obvious monotony felt by the scribe in repeating and ultimately omitting the term, he might simply have neglected adjusting the ending. It is even possible that *a-ka-na-jo* modifies in each instance the understood singular of the heading term *we-re-ke* = *ῥέγες* ‘herds’, so that each entry would be read: “an *a-ka-na-jo* herd (under the charge or ownership of X)” followed by specification of the type of ‘herd’. The idea that *a-ka-na-jo* is a place-name does not at all fit the contexts in which it occurs.

phonetic ideogram A on Un 1320 [+] 1442 along the same lines. This would create a suitable "livestock" context for the doodle on the verso. We must leave open what precisely this liquid commodity was and whether in fact it could be derived from pigs as well as from goats.

At Mycenae in the House of the Oil Merchants basement Room 2 were found 37 tablets "in the confused debris of broken crude brick and fallen rubble"¹¹. In this debris which had fallen from the upper floor, there were also pieces of fresco fragments depicting heads and bodies of women in miniature style, naturalistic and impressionistic horses, and architectural scenes. One of the tablets, Oe 106 by Hand 51, has on its verso a sketch (Pl. XXd) of a standing man wearing a short kilt and holding an unidentifiable small object in his joined hands at his waist¹². Wace's observations and theories are pertinent to our theme, so I shall quote them at length¹³:

The sketch is vivid and lively but is less deeply incised on the tablet than the writing on the front. Thus we might suppose that the writing on the front was done while the tablet was still damp but that the sketch on the back was done when the tablet was beginning to dry. We can hardly imagine, as has been suggested, that the drawing is a "doodle" done by the hypothetical oil merchant for instance on the back of an old bill. The sketch seems rather to have been done purposely with a more definite object and not to be a piece of casual amusement done in an idle hour. We must seek another explanation.

We know that the walls of Mycenaean palaces and houses were decorated with frescoes of various kinds and subjects and of varying scales. The frescoes from Room 2 ... prove that private houses no less than palaces were adorned with wall paintings. Did the fresco painters draw their designs direct on the walls as they painted them or did they make preliminary sketches and plan the composition and scale before they began to draw the fresco on the wall?...Thus, we might perhaps regard this sketch on the back of tablet Oe 106 as a sketch by a painter composing a design for a fresco. More such sketches on clay tablets may well be found in the future at Mycenae, Pylos, Thebes or other sites. Yet another point must be considered. All serious students of Mycenaean architecture agree that the great buildings like the Treasury of Atreus, the Megaron at Tiryns, and even the House of the Oil Merchant itself must have been designed and planned before construction actually began. If the architects made plans, on what material did they make them? Did they have papyrus, or linen or soft stone slabs? Or did they, as we have suggested for fresco painters, sketch their first plans on clay tablets? It is far from impossible that fresco painters and architects both used clay tablets (we know that some of the Pylos tablets are of a yet larger size than those so far found at Mycenae) for their preliminary studies of the frescoes they were designing and of the buildings they were planning.

Wace goes on to compare the "Gem-Engraver's sketch" (Pl. XXe) on an uninscribed tablet from Knossos¹⁴ which bears three "vigorous but careless" designs which Evans originally interpreted as preliminary sketches for engraved sealstones. Wace then suggests that

11 A.J.B. WACE in *MT II* 8.

12 For a color photograph of both surfaces of Oe 106 and a brief discussion by Eleni Banou of its text and drawing, see the catalogue of the recent exhibition *El Mundo Micénico* of the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid, pp. 256-257, cat. no. 185.

13 *MT II* 14.

14 For discussion and photograph, see A.J. EVANS, *Scripta Minoa II* (1952) 66, pl. XVIII. The provenience of this 'tablet' or even the year in which it was excavated is nowhere recorded. Its photograph is grouped on plate XVIII with "tablets from the Arsenal-site at Knossos," but the caption also specifies these as Series 04.01-04.82 and the sample tablet photographs on the plate bear corresponding numbers. The "Gem-Engraver's" tablet is identified as number 1720. It is unnumbered in the figures of line drawings of tablets and objects wherein miscellaneous seal impressions, figurine heads, and even an object from Bogazköy are assigned numbers 1701-1716, 1717, and 1722. The tablet is of the same general shape and size as some of the chariot chassis and wheel tablets (cf. 04-32, 04-39 and 04-40, 04-49) and even some with ideograms *142, *150 and *253 (04-63) catalogued by Evans as from the Arsenal. It is explicitly mentioned that there is no 04-57. Since 04-56 now is assigned number Mc 4456 + 4477 + *fr.* and 04-58 now is Mc 4454 + 4458 + *fr.*, it is remotely possible that 04-57 is our "Gem-Engraver's" tablet, but this is highly speculative. J.T. Killen (*per vocem*) is of the opinion that the tablet probably comes from the Arsenal.

fresco painters had sketch books of clay tablets containing “repertories of standard and popular designs” which would even have been available to artists in other media, like vase painters.

There are several factors and assumptions that obviously led Wace to this line of interpretation: (1) the coincidence of tablets, including Oe 106, and human figural fresco fragments in the debris that fell together into Room 2 of the House of the Oil Merchant (HOM) ¹⁵; (2) his assumption that the HOM is a private house run by an oil merchant who could not be expected to have developed enough artistic talents to have executed the “vivid and lively”, *scil.* reasonably good, drawing on the verso of tablet Oe 106, which Wace likens to “the back of an old bill”; (3) Wace's own deep familiarity with the principles and complexities of large-scale Mycenaean architecture which would seem to call for preliminary drawings and plans; (4) in this regard, the convenience of clay as an easily erasable and reusable medium for writing and sketching; (5) the common repertory of designs in fresco and vase painting which might suggest the existence of pattern books; (6) isolated examples of human and animal figures drawn on tablets of the third and second millennia from Mesopotamia ¹⁶. The suggestion by Evans that one of the Knossos tablets bore “Gem-Engraver's Sketches” added support to Wace's ‘pattern-book’ theory.

We are dealing here with the hypothetical, yet there are some obvious objections to be made. There is no discussion of the figures that occur rarely on the Near Eastern tablets, so that they can be used as comparanda only for the act of drawing upon the open space of a written tablet, not for any particular interpretation of the reasons, serious or whimsical, for such drawings. The existence of architectural plans for large-scale structures built even in archaic and classical times is hotly debated. Certainly there is no compelling reason to believe that it was necessary for Mycenaean vase painters working in a highly traditional industry to have any more inspiration for innovations in decorative motifs, including figural representation, than a view of seal stones or wall paintings or actual pieces of pottery with new motifs and methods of representation imported from other regions. Of the five Mycenaean tablets with drawings discussed here, only the kilted man from Mycenae occurs in a context with frescoes ¹⁷. The others, so far as we know, are divorced from any context that would support the idea that the drawings were ultimately used for higher artistic ends.

Another aspect of Wace's theory is problematical. Wace argues that we must conclude from the relatively fine quality of the drawing that it was done for higher motives by an artist, in this case a fresco painter. This involves one of two assumptions: 1. either that the HOM was a private house whose owner (“the hypothetical oil merchant”) was involved in trade and production and therefore would not possess the talent or inclination to draw such a figure; or 2. that a drawing of this quality could not have been produced for its own sake as a source of personal scribal amusement in such a context. With regard to the first assumption, it is sufficient to remark that “the hypothetical oil merchant” was of high enough administrative or economic status to oversee an operation that required the employment of at least six scribes writing, in the short term, thirty-eight tablets dealing with cloth and oil. Thus he *himself* ¹⁸

15 I have not been able to see the full complement of fresco fragments from this area, only those in *MT II* figs. 42-43. IMMERWAHR 193, announces that they will be published in a forthcoming fascicule of *Well Built Mycenae*.

16 *MT II* 13 n. 34.

17 An 724 with the ship drawing comes from the Archives Complex at Pylos. Cn 1287 with the labyrinth and Un 1320 [+] 1442 come from the functional and undecorated Northeast Workshop. The so-called “Gem-Engraver's Sketch” comes (?) from another utilitarian context: the Arsenal (?) at Knossos.

18 Wace obviously did not think deeply about this question before making what is after all a judgment about cultural attainments based on modern perceptions of class and status. He also did not take into account the scribal analysis by implying that a single oil merchant would have been responsible for the activities and

might not have been too boorish to draw a human figure of moderate artistic quality. Moreover, the architectural quality of the HOM, the very existence of frescoes within it, and the number of scribes at work within it all could be used to argue that it was not a 'private' house and that its activities did not lie outside the orbit of the palatial administration. In fact, frescoes from the Palace of Nestor at Pylos are restricted to areas of more than utilitarian importance¹⁹, an indication that frescoes mark areas of special functional status. Thus, even in Wace's own terms, the owner or chief administrator of the HOM—to judge from the 37 Oe tablets, more a rather large-scale wool handler than an oil merchant²⁰—would have to have been a fairly sophisticated palatial official or semi-private entrepreneur. In regard to the second assumption, we should note that the labyrinth on PY Cn 1287 and the pig's head on PY Un 1320 [+] 1442 both match the kilted man of MY Oe 106 in skill of layout and execution. Thus a drawing of this sort is hardly out of place as an end in itself within a functional administrative context.

In regard to the purpose of this paper, I object most of all to the assumption that the *scribe* of Oe 106 would have lacked sufficient aesthetic sensibilities or talents to have drawn the sketch on its verso²¹. The same type of assumption underlies the interpretation of the drawings on the single tablet from Knossos as "Gem-Engraver's Sketches". However, there is no compelling circumstantial or contextual evidence to interpret these figures in any way differently than those on Pylos tablets An 724, Cn 1287 and Un 1320 [+] 1442. About Cn 1287 (and the rest) Heller asserts what I would like to claim²²: "Its context is secular and sophisticated, the pastime of an ingenious but idle scribe, like other doodles mentioned by E.L. Bennett, *Archaeology* 13 (1960) 31". If we do not make Wace's assumption, then the coincidence of fragments of figural frescoes and of Oe 106 and other tablets would imply that the tablets were perhaps produced in an environment where the scribe (Hand 51) would have had visual images in front of him that might have inspired the doodle²³. This is certainly a much simpler way to understand the direction of artistic influence than to imagine that a fresco painter borrowed a recently completed tablet from one of six scribes who were perhaps working in the same location (above Room 2 of the HOM)²⁴ and sketched a design on this tablet, used the design for some purpose, and then handed the tablet back to Hand 51 or some other administrator so that its undamaged record of ('colored' or 'woven') wool distributions to two parties, one specified as 'daughter', could be filed with other similar records. I do not think that Wace thought through these practical implications of his theory.

records of the HOM. E.L. Bennett, Jr. (*per litteras* ca. July 1, 1992) speculates that Wace may have written his discussion of the sketch and its significance before he saw the scribal analysis.

19 See the list of areas with fresco decoration in *PN II* 226.

20 There is even a chance that X 508, the lone tablet from the House of the Shields, came originally from the upper floor of the HOM. See T.G. PALAIMA, "Seal-Users and Script-Users / Nodules and Tablets / at LM I B Hagia Triada", *Archives Before Writing, Acts of the Colloquium Held at Oriolo Romano, October 1991*, n. 30. Tablet X 508 deals with a special type of wool being shipped to Thebes and would conform to the documented pattern of wool distributions recorded in the Oe tablets from the HOM.

21 In this I have support from Eleni Banou (*supra* n. 12) who remarks that the sketch is "uno de los contados ejemplos de manifestación artística de un escriba micénico".

22 HELLER (*supra* n. 3).

23 C. VARIAS GARCIA "Las Tablillas de la Casa del Comerciante de Aceite" (unpublished work in progress written at PASP in spring semester 1992) 24-26, demonstrates that Oe 106 has to do with the allotment of small quantities of 'dyed' (or 'spun') wool to individuals for use in finishing garments. Thus the sketch on the verso might even be thought of as pertaining to the activities of garment production that were monitored in the HOM, a kind of tailoring work.

24 These records of wool distributions were eventually collected above Room 2, but it is only a reasonable hypothesis (from the unity of subject of the texts, the fact that no other tablets by the six scribes were found in other buildings or areas of the site, from the absence of supporting evidence for tablet transport: wicker marks on the backs of tablets, the discovery of related labels or sealings in the same location) that they were all written in this same location.

It is necessary here to comment on the so-called “Gem-Engraver's Sketches”. I have discussed above (n. 14) the fact that we have no secure information about the provenience of this tablet with its three drawings in various states of completion and clarity. Our best guess from available published information is that it might come from the Arsenal, in which case it would come from a context similar to the Northeast Workshop at Pylos, i.e., one concerned primarily with the manufacture, repair, assembly and storage of chariot parts and other military equipment. There would be nothing in the find-context to support an interpretation of the drawings on the tablet as preliminary designs in an artistic process, whether seal-engraving or wall-painting. The PASP archives did not have a readily accessible good-quality photograph of this tablet, for the good reason that it is not an inscription. I therefore have had to make judgments on the basis of the photographs and drawings presented in *Scripta Minoa II* and the *Europa* Festschrift. From the clay fold on the right of the drawing surface and its generally uneven and poor condition, it appears that the manufacturer of the tablet might have intended this surface to be the verso. The size and shape of the tablet are consistent with those of other tablets from the Arsenal. As for the drawings, we should compare the two main commentaries to see how misleading the original interpretation by Evans actually is.

Evans²⁵ likens the leftmost design to an upside-down Linear B sign *mi*, but then argues that it is the right-hand element of Linear B sign *ma*, “probably a sketch for an engraved seal-stone”. It is unimportant to decide whether this identification of these squiggles is indeed true—I doubt that it is. But if Evans thought that it was true, it was a great error to suggest that it had anything to do with an engraved seal-stone, since, with two possible late and degenerate exceptions²⁶, none bears any signs resembling the characters of the Linear B script. The central sketch Evans interprets as a heraldic design, also for an engraved seal-stone, “consisting of a floral or palm-leaf centre between facing animals on their hind legs. On the top of the central floral motif he identifies three human figures, each 1/4 inch high, forming a combat group. The leftmost man thrusts a spear at the central figure who is protected by a shield, while the rightmost figure reaches his hand forward in a gesture of assistance”. Without autopsy of the actual tablet, it is difficult to determine what elements of this seemingly fantastic interpretation are incorrect, but the published drawings and photographs give no reason for confidence in any of them. In any case, I would ask readers of this paper whether they know of any seal design remotely similar to the complicated mass of strokes that make up the central image. Unless there are plausible comparanda, this sketch, too, ought not be interpreted as a seal-engraver's preliminary design. The rightmost figure is interpreted by Evans as a lean and sinuous quadruped, with head turned backward. The “long wavy line in front of the body looks like a bull's horn; but the eyes and other features are obscure. This also seems to be a sketch for an engraved seal-stone, with one of the common bull-types”.

Let us contrast a more recent interpretation by Marinatos²⁷. He begins from an entirely different point of view: “In hours of leisure they [the Mycenaean scribes] used to scratch graffiti on the reverse of their tablets.... One of the scribes from Knossos filled the whole reverse of a tablet with such graffiti”. Marinatos then links all three designs compositionally²⁸. Left to right they are in his view: 1. an attempt at drawing a lion's head full face, abandoned after sketching the left contour of its head; 2. a lion's head with ears and mane executed at a different scale; 3. the body of a whole lion running to the left, onto which the scribe tried to append a

25 *Scripta Minoa II* 66.

26 T.G. PALAIMA, “Ideograms and Supplementals and Regional Interaction Among Aegean and Cypriote Scripts”, *Minos* 24 (1989) 31-32, n. 4.

27 S. MARINATOS, “The ‘Volcanic’ Origin of Linear B”, in W.C. BRICE ed., *Europa* (1967) 207-209.

28 J.T. Killen observed (*per vocem*) that the dots on the surface of the tablet might be interpreted as filler devices linking the three sketches as a unified image.

head similar to the one he had drafted. Marinatos concludes, "The whole is sketchy, but charming". I agree entirely with this conclusion. Whatever the correct interpretation of these drawings is, they are so vague and unrecognizable—two of the greatest Aegean scholars of the twentieth century can propose completely different interpretations for each of the three sketches—as to offer no support for the claim that they served as preliminaries for the work of a hypothetical seal craftsman²⁹. They are best interpreted as charming scribal doodles, and the rightmost shows some proficiency at rendering the outline and contour of an animal figure. As such they are evidence of scribal aesthetic sensibilities.

Wace's 'pattern-book' interpretation of MY Oe 106 and Evans's 'Gem-Engraver's' interpretation of the Knossos tablet are both unfounded. Both are based mainly on an assumption that Mycenaean scribes did not possess sufficient talent or artistic impulse enough to produce what are, after all, only fairly detailed rough sketches. This raises a serious question that I thought would be appropriate for a conference on iconography: How can we define Mycenaean scribal aesthetics? We have, of course, just found part of the answer: by admitting that the sketches on five Linear B tablets discussed above were drawn by scribes as doodles in their spare moments and concluding from the relatively competent composition of the drawings that some scribes had decent artistic skills and an inclination to use them. The writing of a tablet like Cn 131 (Pl. XXIa)³⁰ would suggest as much to us. Its overall layout and arrangement required of its scribe a sure control of space and an ability to adjust format when the amount of information, phonetic and numerical, made it necessary to do so. Its ruling and the elegant and precise execution of its linear and curvilinear characters indicate that the scribe had a sure and steady hand. The writing style retains its high quality despite the length of the text and the monotonous line-by-line repetition of the ideographic signs for sheep and numbers. This scribe was unwilling to compromise the aesthetic quality of the visual image he was creating, i.e., his final text. This becomes all the more significant if we keep in mind that the individual scribes had considerable freedom in such matters as textual formatting. The arrangement of written information upon a tablet surface and the style in which that information is presented are therefore matters of creative concern to the scribes and means by which they display their own creative talents.

This brings me to a third means of assessing Mycenaean scribal aesthetics which I touched upon in discussing Wace's interpretation of MY Oe 106. There are in the Mycenaean writing system a large number of ideograms or logograms. These are used in a special way in Linear B, almost without exception before numerical or quantitative entries and following descriptive information that is given lexically. Thus the first entry of line .3 of tablet PY Cn 131 reads *pa-ro*, *ku-pi-ri-jo*, OVIS^m 50 = "under the control of Kyprios 50 sheep^{male}". Within the repertory of ideographic signs, some, like OVIS = sheep, are abstract and stylized, especially those that were inherited from Linear A and therefore have undergone a longer process of

29 It is true that preliminary sketches, like original drafts of papers, can be rough and sketchy. However, what is at issue here is the use of identifications of the sketches as proof that they were used as model drawings for seal designs. Unless a convincing correspondence can be proposed between the sketches and known seal motifs, it is perverse to interpret these drawings in such a way. Even if a correspondence could be established, we would have to pay attention again to find circumstances. Again, the lack of any associated materials suggesting that the tablet comes from an area devoted to seal manufacture means that this interpretation rests, as does Wace's, on an underlying assumption that scribes would or could not have drawn pleasant sketches in their spare moments. Since the tablet drawings from Pylos suggest that this is what they indeed did, it is more reasonable to accept the Mycenae and Knossos examples as parallels, especially given the lack of any convincing arguments to the contrary.

30 See *El Mundo Micénico* (*supra* n. 12) 256-257, cat. no. 186, for color photograph and discussion.

development³¹. Others are more realistic renderings of objects and artifacts (vases, furniture, chariot equipment, armor) that were items of value and use in contemporary, mainly palatial, life³². Even the horse is rendered in exceptionally accurate detail, perhaps because it was an important Greek-Mycenaean contribution to Aegean culture which therefore has no known Minoan ideographic representation. Thus its ideogram would have been more recently invented and not subject to the long process of repetitive use that would have led to stylization and simplification.

If we compare these naturalistic or lifelike ideograms to corresponding representations in Aegean artwork, specifically fresco which uses a comparable technique of drawing, we shall see not only that the scribes have a high level of artistic competence, but also that their style of rendering is so similar as to suggest perhaps that they drew inspiration from the fresco representations that they doubtless observed during the course of their administrative tasks in the palatial centers. Thus, as I remarked previously, the direction of influence is from the fresco paintings to the tablet ideographic drawings—or doodles like MY Oe 106.

The case I shall discuss in this paper is the rare Mycenaean ideogram CERV = deer. It is found only on three fragmentary tablets from Pylos (Cr 591, Cr 868, and Cr 875) written by two unidentifiable scribes of Classes i and ii. The tablets come from the central archives Room 8, an indication that they had probably been important enough to be processed and stored. Cr 591 comes from grid area 3/06, i.e., just off the edge of the clay bench where it turns at the southern angle of Room 8. Cr 868 and 875 were found close to one another in grid 26 on the far side of the so-called Chasm formed by the robbing of the wall of the Archives Complex that faced the Propylon. The disturbance of the post-destruction situation of the tablets by the removal of this wall no doubt explains the fragmentary state of Cr 868 and Cr 875. The presence in the archives of sets of tablets recording deer and written by two different scribes indicates that deer were of considerable importance in the life of the Palace of Nestor. The deer are listed in small quantities (1-3) in the 9 entries (out of 14) where the numbers are preserved, and the parallelism between texts Cr 868 and Cr 875 (both by S868-Ci) makes it virtually certain that the missing entries would have been of the same order. The deer ideograms are preceded by single sign-groups, identifiable or complete in five cases, three of which are *hapax*. The two non-*hapax* sign-groups are likely place names that both recur in similar contexts. *te-re-ne-wi-ja* (Cr 868.3) or a related form is found otherwise only on tablets An 18.6 and An 852 which list men and entries of *te-ko-to-na-pe* (= 'absent carpenters'?) and *qo-u-ko-ro* (= 'herdsmen of bovids'). On Cr 868.1 is written the place name *a3-se-we* which might well be a variant of the place name *a-se-e* which also occurs on An 18.4 and An 852.4. The place name *qe-re-me-ti-wo* occurs on Cr 875.3 and then on An 5.6, a list of single men specified by personal names and *te-ko-to-a-pe* (An 5.1-.5). On An 5.6 the individual recorded at *qe-re-me-ti-wo* is *sa-ni-jo*. On the following line the individual *ku-ri-ša-to* is listed at *mu-ta-pi*. These two individuals at the same locations recur in succeeding lines on tablet Cn 4.2 and .3, a record of 'steading' sheep. Thus the deer here are being monitored at small-scale sites which are clearly involved in herding activities and perhaps in building activities. In an earlier study specifically of bovids at Pylos, I proposed that tablets An 18 and An 852 had to do with building activity in

31 A good example is the phonetic and ideographic sign *ni* = 'figs' stemming from a Cretan (Minoan) word *nikuleon* standing for Greek *suka*. Cf. sign *22 which functions phonetically, perhaps = *mi* or *mbi*, but also ideographically as the sign CAP = goat. J.L. MELENA, "On Untransliterated Syllabograms *56 and *22", in P. ILIEVSKI and L. CREPAJAC eds., *Tractata Mycenaea* (1987) 203-232; M. JANDA, "Zur Lesung des Zeichens *22 von Linear B", *Kadmos* 25 (1986) 44-48.

32 These 'archaeological' ideograms have been studied comprehensively by F. VANDENABEELE and J.-P. OLIVIER, *Les idéogrammes archéologiques du linéaire B* (1979).

remote areas as part of a palatially controlled land clearing and settlement operation³³. The deer texts might corroborate this hypothesis. The Peloponnesian red deer is a forest dweller. The deer at the minor sites in the Cr texts have perhaps been captured or killed during the process of land clearance and settlement that was removing their natural forest habitat. Or they might be selected as objects for ceremonial hunts from carefully monitored preserves in these regions on the fringes of settled land in the region of Messenia.

These are the circumstances for recording deer at Pylos, which is the only site where deer are recorded. We may wonder whether the scribes of the Cr tablets actually observed the deer, perhaps as carcasses brought to the central palace, as they wrote down the appropriate information and drew the lifelike ideograms. Or did they draw the deer ideogram with the images on the walls of the Palace of Nestor fresh in mind? Pl. XXIb-d presents closeup details of the best preserved deer ideograms from tablets Cr 591 (Pl. XXIb) and Cr 868 (Pl. XXIc) and a full-scale shot of tablet Cr 591, which shows the finely rendered ideogram on line .2 (Pl. XXId). The deer are drawn in profile with jutting well-detailed antlers. On Cr 591.4 and .5 (the last two lines of Pl. XXIb) the scribe eventually simplifies the snout and mouth of the deer and even begins to draw the eye rapidly and almost as an extension of the simple strokes of the prominent backward thrusting ear. This is a good example of the process of simplification and stylization that pictorial ideograms underwent through time. On PY Cr 868 (Pl. XXIc) the most fully preserved ideogram is composed of multiple short and sinuous strokes that make the image expressive, despite the rapidity with which it was drawn.

As L. Morgan points out in her discussion of deer within the Aegean iconographical tradition, the animals are “not as familiar a part of Cretan iconography as they are of Mycenaean: a fact partly influenced, no doubt, by the Mycenaean predilection for hunting scenes”³⁴. Deer are found in fresco scenes at Tiryns and Pylos, and in a Mycenaean context as early as the gold cut-out of deer on a palm from Shaft Grave III at Mycenae (Pl. XXIIe). But we are dealing with scribes who worked within the central administration of the Palace of Nestor at Pylos (Pl. XXII). These scribes would have brought their tablets regularly to the Archives Complex (Rooms 7-8) to the left of the Propylon Rooms 1-2, where they would have seen on the southwest face of the northeast wall of Room 2 deer represented in the middle register of a wall painting depicting shrines, grazing animals, and gossiping women (Pl. XXIIIa-b: *PN II* 1C2 and 2C2 plate 131). It can be observed that the deer's heads here are restored. However, an exquisitely drawn and well-preserved fragment of the head of a stag (Pl. XXIIIc: *PN II* 4C19 plate 45) found in Room 19, but either fallen from an upper room or reused as part of the walls or ceilings, indicates how fresco painters would have rendered the head of a deer. *PN II*, color plate E (not reproduced here) most clearly captures the details that are paralleled in the scribal ideographic renderings: the contour of the head and delicate parted curvature of the mouth and snout, the expressive large eyes, the prominence of the antlers projecting vertically atop the head. Pylos 4C19 shares with the ideogram on Cr 868 the extended curved stroke that defines the head of the deer in profile against the background of its neck. The main difference between 4C19 and the ideograms is the forward projection of the ears on the fresco, perhaps caused by the extreme downward tilt of the head. In this it follows the gold cut-out from Shaft Grave III where the deer's heads also point downward. Unfortunately the only other heads preserving this feature are of deer without antlers, but the ears still project forward (cf. *PN II* 5C63 and 6Cnw color plates C and R, not illustrated here).

33 T.G. PALAIMA, "Perspectives on the Pylos Oxen Tablets", in T.G. PALAIMA *et al.* eds., *Studia Mycenaea* (1988) (1989) 85-124.

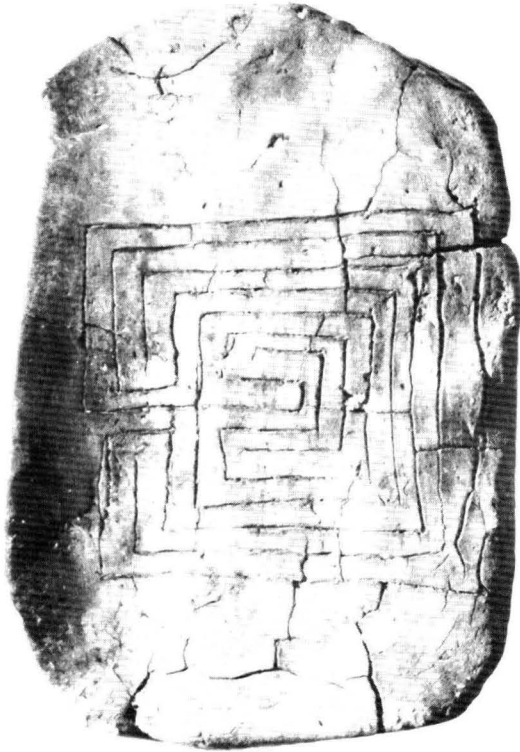
34 MORGAN 55.

The scribes of the Cr tablets are writing ideograms on administrative records for mundane, bureaucratic purposes, and not as decorative works to delight the eyes of those permitted to pass through the carefully guarded propylon of the Palace of Nestor. Nonetheless the scribal renderings of the sign CERV are so remarkably similar in details to those on frescoes as to suggest that the scribes were influenced by fresco art. The wall paintings from Room 2 of the Palace of Nestor would have delighted their eyes and made an impression on their memories en route to the central Archives Complex. If the Mycenaean scribes had refined aesthetic sensibilities, these might well have been affected by the palatial environment in which they worked. They seem to have derived their artistic inspiration from their surroundings and from the activities in which they were involved.

Thomas G. PALAIMA

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Pl. XXa PY Cn 1287 verso. Drawing of labyrinth. Photo from PASP archives courtesy of University of Cincinnati Archaeological Excavations.
- Pl. XXb PY An 724 verso. Schematic drawing of ship. Photo from PASP archives courtesy of University of Cincinnati Archaeological Excavations.
- Pl. XXc PY Un 1320 verso. Drawing of pig's head. Drawing after M. LANG, "The Palace of Nestor Excavations of 1957. Part II", *AJA* 62 (1958) plate 48.
- Pl. XXd MY Oe 106 verso. Drawing of kilted man. Drawing after *MT II* 53.
- Pl. XXe KN tablet with "Gem-Engraver's Sketches". Photo and drawing after A.J. EVANS, *Scripta Minoa* II (1952) 66 pl. XVIII.
- Pl. XXIa PY Cn 131 recto. Photo from PASP archives courtesy of University of Cincinnati Archaeological Excavations.
- Pl. XXIb-d PY Cr 591 recto and Cr 868 recto close-ups of ideograms; PY Cr 591 recto full-scale. Photos from PASP archives courtesy of University of Cincinnati Archaeological Excavations and the École française d'Athènes.
- Pl. XXIe Gold cut-out from Shaft Grave III at Mycenae. Photo after MORGAN fig. 77.
- Pl. XXII Key plan of the Palace of Nestor. After C.W. BLEGEN and M. RAWSON, *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia* I (1966) fig. 417.
- Pl. XXIIIa-b Deer from fresco (1C2 and 2C2) on southwest face of the northeast wall of Room 2 of the Propylon at the Palace of Nestor. *PN II* pl. 131.
- Pl. XXIIIc Stag's head from fresco (4C19) fragment found in Room 19 of the Palace of Nestor. Photo after *PN II* pl. E.



a



b



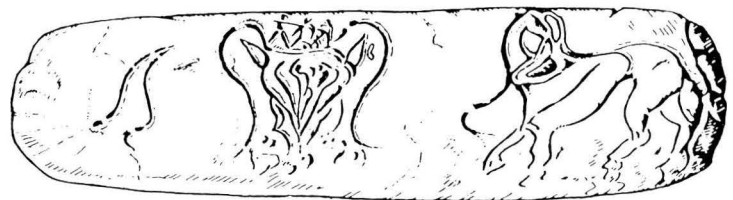
Oe106 reverse

d



Un1320 rev.

c



e



a



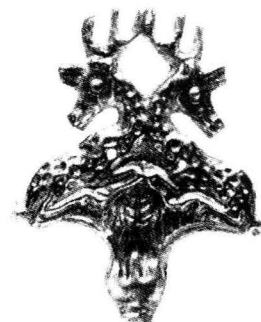
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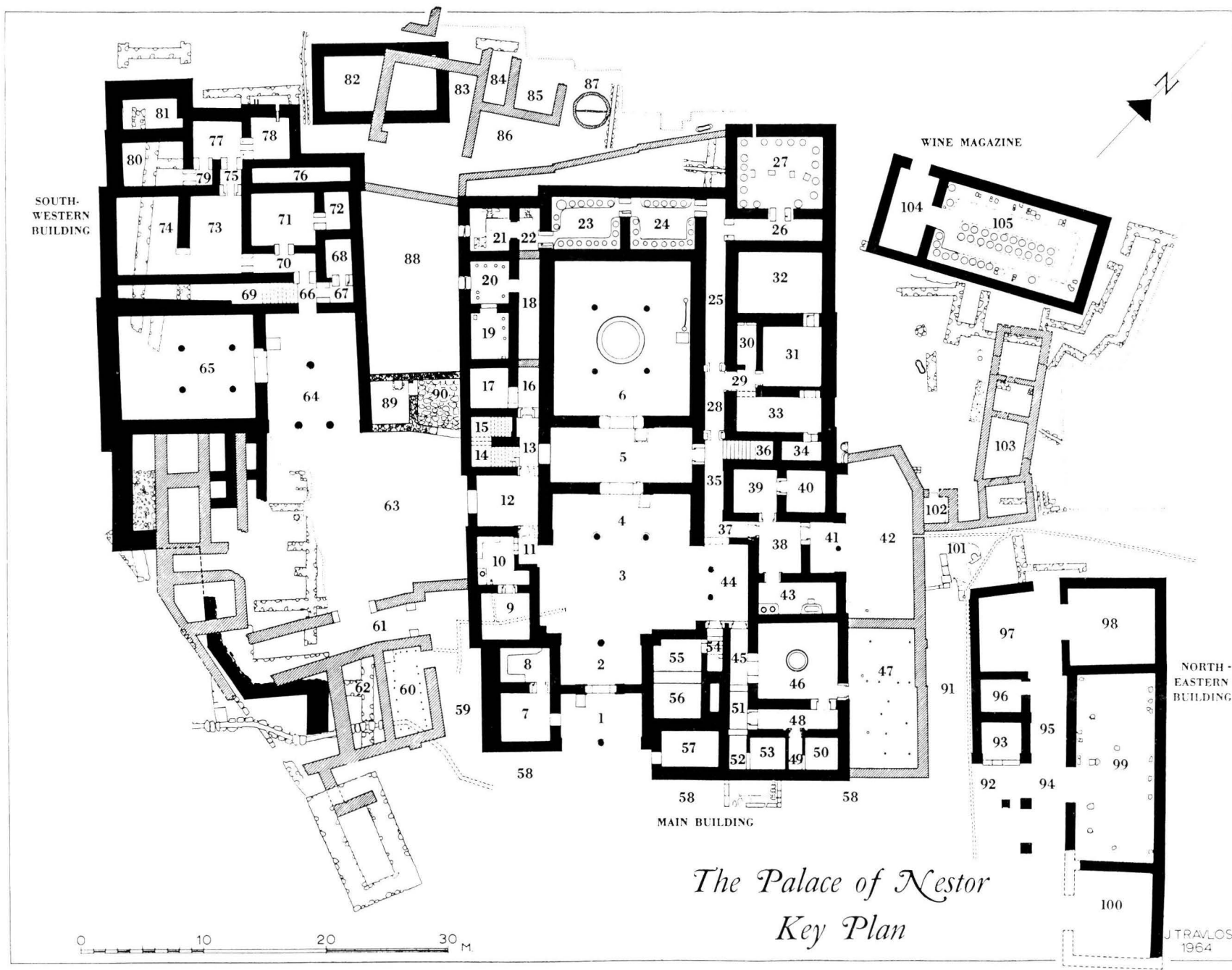
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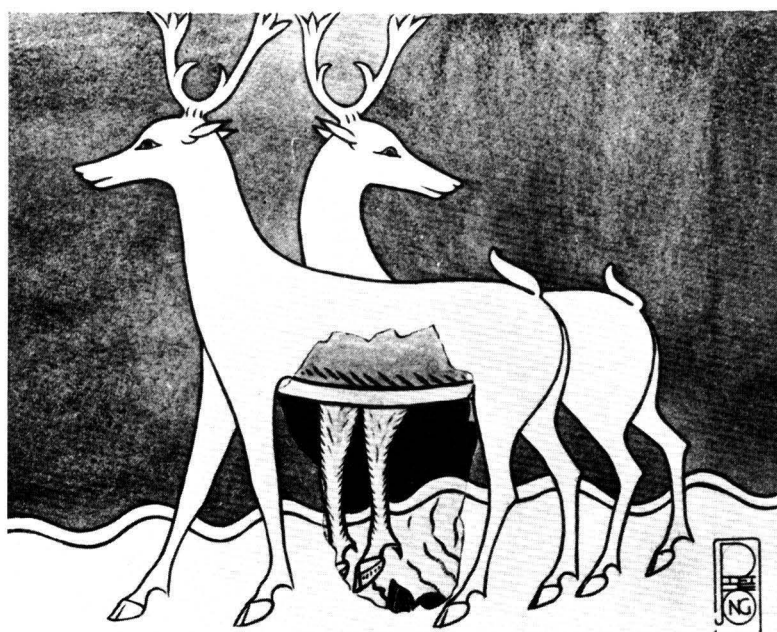


e

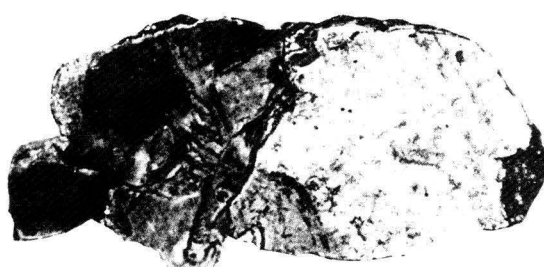




a



b



c