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Fig. 4. Seal impression from Pylos showing a pre-potnia motif. Fig. 5. Lentoid seal featuring a pre-potnia scene. Fig. 6. Ivory plaque from Mycenae with possible potnios theme. Fig. 7. Jasper ring from Mycenae featuring a potnios theron scene.

Animal Sacrifice in the Mycenaean World.*

Stephie Nikoloudis

Introduction

Animal sacrifice is attested, directly and indirectly, in the textual, iconographical and archaeological remains of the Mycenaean Bronze Age. The following synthesis of the current evidence (archaeological, iconographical, anthropological *and* textual) is presented in the hope that it may help to generate new insights into this topic. Much new evidence has appeared in the last decade in all four categories of specialized study. It is examined, here, in a combinatory way. The aim is to ascertain, as far as possible, the identity of the sacrificers and the receivers, the animals sacrificed and the occasion(s) and place(s) at which this was carried out, the procedure(s) and paraphernalia involved, and the underlying reasons for the fulfilment of this practice.

Preliminary answers to these questions are offered by ethnographic studies, which highlight the link between religion and society. Sacrifice itself effects communion between the mortal and divine spheres and involves the expectation of resulting well-being for the givers. It resolves the human conflict between the need to kill (for food) and the guilt associated with killing by constituting a means through which part of the kill is offered to the gods (Bürkert 1983: 38; Dietrich 1988: 36). It enforces community solidarity by channelling aggression away from the human members of a society (Marinatos 1988:

16) and enhances community spirit through an associated celebration and feast (Killen 1994: 70). Interestingly, by serving to intensify group identity, sacrifice may deliberately exclude outsiders (Seaford 1994: xii). At the same time, it articulates status and role divisions, thereby reinforcing the internal social structure of a given community (Seaford 1994: xii).

A predominantly synchronic approach is adopted in comparing the information retrievable from the administrative records (tablets and sealings), seals and seal-rings, frescoes and archaeological remains from the Mycenaean palatial centres of Thebes, Pylos and Knossos dating from the LH/LM III period. It should also be underlined that as sacrifice constitutes an example of religious *practice*, definitive conclusions cannot be drawn about its associated belief system, especially given the secular nature of the textual evidence and the difficulties inherent in decoding (and reconstructing) the iconographical remains. Furthermore, while different levels/strata may well have been operating in the Mycenaean world, e.g. official/state and popular cult, probably with some overlap and levels in between (Hägg 1996: 601), the current project is concerned with the level(s) attested in the Linear B texts (i.e. palatially-connected sacrifice). Nor is the issue of human sacrifice explored here.

The Linear B Texts¹

Thebes. Sixty sealings (nodules) have been recovered from Building III, a complex resembling a workshop, at Thebes (Piteros, Olivier and Melena: *passim*). Each sealing has three faces and, in general, bears a seal impression on side α and an animal ideogram usually on top of this, accompanied by a Linear B inscription on sides β and γ . Each sealing is thought to have represented a single animal and twenty-three seal or ring impressions have been identified, interpreted as the personal authentication marks of twenty-three individual seal-users.

Several toponyms occur on the Theban sealings, including the Euboean *a-ma-ru-to* (Ἀμάρυθος) on TH Wu 58 and *ka-ru-to* (Κάρυστος) on TH Wu 55. The allative-form *te-qa-de*, 'to Thebes,' on TH Wu 51, 65 and 96 implies the movement of livestock from outlying districts to Thebes. The formula '*pa-ro* + personal name' (= from/in the care of 'Name') on TH Wu 47, 59 and 60 tends to strengthen this hypothesis referring, as it seems likely, to the person (official or herdsman) in charge of the animals or other items in question.

The economic vocabulary appearing on the sealings includes the problematic term *qe-te-o* (e.g. TH Wu 49, 50) which occurs in other contexts, too, with animals and products, including oil and textiles, in which the palatial administration has a certain interest, e.g. PY Fr 1206, Fr 1241; KN Fh 348, Fp 363 (Piteros et al. 1990: 152-3). Hutton suggests that it may refer

to the payment of a religious fine, derived from the verb $\tau\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ and meaning 'due to be paid' (Hutton 1990-91: 125-6). The term *a-ko-ra* (e.g. TH Wu 49, 50), from the verb $\delta\alpha\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\omega$, is relatively more intelligible to us, referring to 'a collection' or 'gathering together' of animals. The verb *a-pu-do-ke* (3rd sing. Aor. of $\acute{\alpha}\pi\upsilon\delta\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\mu\iota$) on TH Wu 89 implies a transaction: the 'handing over' of something (*190) to someone. Killen alleviates the difficulty in determining whether this particular sealing authenticates 'entry' into or 'exit' from the Palace by noting that the verb *a-pu-do-ke* (= 'he paid') regularly appears elsewhere on the Linear B records in relation to the payment of taxes and, thus, most likely concerns incoming supplies at Thebes (Killen 1994: 71).

The animals on the Thebes sealings include numerous pigs, ovids and caprids but only two bovids (one of each sex, as indicated by the ideograms on TH Wu 53 and 76). The sealing inscriptions betray a variety of other characteristics of the animals. For example, the adjective 'sacred' occurs as *i-je-ra* (neut. pl.) on TH Wu 44 (probably meant as a collective of origin, but potentially problematic as such since it does not reflect the 1:1 correspondence attested elsewhere in support of the theory that one sealing represents one animal) and as *i-je-ro* (neut. sing.) on TH Wu 66, 86 and 87, referring to goats, sheep and a pig (all males). The abbreviation *SI*, for *si-a-ro* (σίαλος), describes the pigs on TH Wu 52 and 68 as 'fattened'. Both words, 'sacred' and 'fattened', are suggestive in

terms of animals which may be intended for sacrifice or slaughter. So, too, is the term *o-pa* (taken to be an action noun from the verb ἔπω), which is found on TH Wu 46, 56, 58, 64, 76 and 88 in association with male and female animals of all sorts and which, as Killen suggests, may refer to a 'finishing' process to be understood as 'fattening' in the case of livestock (Killen 1999: 332, 336).

The abbreviation *we*, for *wetalon* (=yearling) on TH Wu 74 and 78, the word *po-ro-e-ko-to* 'superior' (from *προ* + ἔχω on TH Wu 67 and 92, and the form *e-qi-ti-wo-e* (Perf. participle of φθίνω 'to decay, perish' in the plural or dual) further reflect the effort made to record accurately the sex, age and other characteristics of these animals. This may have been required by the Palace as a precaution against fraud and welcomed by the men responsible for the deliveries as security against unfair retribution for the untimely, natural death or deterioration of inferior animals (Piteros et al. 1990: 157; Killen 1992-93: 102). Additionally, the sealings contain a number of problematic ideograms which have been variously associated with fodder or other commodities.²

Overall, the sealings from Thebes suggest the transfer of animals from outlying districts/centres of production to Thebes itself, either to the palace proper or to some nearby pastures, at which time they were physically separated from the sealings which accompanied them. Alternatively, the sealings may have preceded the arrival of the animals. They would have acted as certificates of,

guarantees for, delivery and constituted primary information documents from which palatial tablets could be compiled. The three bone styluses found in the room in which the sealings were discovered may have been intended for such a transfer of information.

Pylos. Turning to the textual evidence from Pylos, Piteros, Olivier and Melena (1990) have pointed to the similarities between the number and type of animals recorded on the Thebes Wu sealings and those listed as 'due(?)' from *Dunios* on PY Un 138. They propose that these two sets of animals were destined for a similar fate, consumption at a ceremonial banquet. According to their calculations, each group of livestock would have provided roughly the same quantity of meat. In terms of recorded details, the 'yearlings' and 'fattened' pigs are reminiscent of those on the Thebes nodules, as is the significantly small number of bovids (here, two bulls and one cow), which is understandable given the higher worth and maintenance cost of such creatures in relation to sheep, goats and pigs.

Other familiar vocabulary includes the term *qe-te-a₂* and '*pa-ro* + personal name,' leading to the proposal that PY Un 138 may itself have been compiled from information derived from similar sealings. One obvious difference between the two sets of data is the mention of a single person (*Dunios*) as responsible for roughly the same number of animals as opposed to at least 23 individuals (as presumed) in the Theban case. This may simply be the result of two distinct stages of information processing, with a single

official assuming complete responsibility once he had been handed the nodules and perhaps even personally inspected the delivery. The olives and wine noted on PY Un 138 would have complemented the menu for a large banquet, with enough food and drink to sustain 1000 people (Piteros et al 1990: 179-181).

What might have constituted the occasion for such a banquet? PY Un 2 provides a clue. The text is a list of edible items at the disposal of 'the overseer of *te-u-ke-a*' at *Pakijane* 'at the time of the initiation of the king.' One bull is recorded among numerous sheep, goats and pigs. Again, the amount of food and drink recorded would amply nourish 1000 people and it seems fitting that the inauguration of a Mycenaean king would be celebrated with communal feasting (Ventris and Chadwick 1973: 222; Piteros et al 1990: 179; Killen 1994: 70-71).

While PY Un 718 is considered to be a completely different type of text, recording the anticipated contributions of animals and foodstuffs by various sectors of the society (*wanax*, *lawagetas*, *damos*, *worgioneion*) to Poseidon, it contains an important and potentially fruitful detail: while sheep, cheese, wine, honey and grain are to be contributed by all these groups, sometimes in overlapping fashion, only one bull is mentioned and it is to be given by the *wanax* (*Ekhelawon* or **Egkhes-lauwon*). Thus, the importance of the bull is emphasized by its exclusive association with the chief figure in Mycenaean society (Palaima 1995: 132-3).

The Ta series from Pylos is an inventory of furniture, vessels and other

equipment compiled when *Phygebris* carried out an inspection on the occasion when the *wanax* appointed *Aukewas* to the office of *da-mo-ko-ro*. Of interest in terms of the evidence for sacrifice is PY Ta 716 which appears to list two gold chains (or pegs?) *pa-sa-ro* (from ψάλιον), two 'stunning-axes' *wa-o* (from ἄξορ) with a corresponding ideogram, and two swords *qi-si-pe-we* (from ξίφος) with an ideogram. The association between the gold chains/pegs and the associated throne is unclear: were they to be placed on/around the throne? (Sacconi 1999: 288; Speciale 1999: 292-3). The stunning-axes were probably functional (see below). The swords may have been functional or decorative, as one could perhaps also argue for the gold chains. Might this equipment have served as cultic paraphernalia intended to be used - functionally or symbolically - along with the seats, tables, vessels and cooking equipment of the Ta series at a sacrificial banquet of the sort proposed in the case of the Thebes sealings, PY Un 138 and PY Un 2? If so, this inventory may have been compiled as an audit of the palace's banqueting equipment required upon an administrative change of office and in preparation for an associated, or unrelated, communal banquet (Gallavotti in Speciale 1999: 296; Killen 1998: 421-422).

Knossos. In his appraisal of the tablets from Knossos, Killen has identified a number of similarities in terminology and format with the material from the mainland: the word *a-ko-ra-ja* (nom. neut. pl.) on the KN Co texts appears with

bulls, sheep, goats and pigs; bulls are to be transferred to Knossos, *ko-no-so-de*, on KN C(1) 5753+7046+7630; and the formulaic '*pa-ro* + personal name' occurs on KN C(2) 913. Killen has also contemplated the possibility of the texts of such C(2) tablets having been "transcribed, direct and unmodified, from sealings" (Killen 1994: 74).

The extraordinary number of bulls intended for a festival, *e-wo-ta-de*, on KN C (1) 901+7661+8049 probably reflects the grandeur attached to Knossian-related palatial activities/concerns, while the adjective *sa-pa-ka-te-ri-ja* (*sphakteria* =victims, from the verb σφάξω) on KN C(2) 941, C 1561 and X 9191 securely labels these animals (sheep, here) as destined for slaughter (or sacrifice).³ Abbreviated descriptions of these sheep occur on KN 394 and U 7063+fr.: *sa* (for *sa-pa-ka-te-ri-ja*) and *pa* (for *pa-ra-jo* =old).

Religious associations may be applied to the animals by the occurrence of (*i*)-*je-re-u* in KN C 7048 (although it should be noted that priests are not necessarily barred from participating in purely secular livestock management) and, more justifiably, by the name *pa-de* in KN C 394 which seems to be a divinity's name given its appearance in KN Fp (1) which lists wine offerings to a number of divinities. The small numbers of animals in KN C 394 and U 7063 might further suggest that they have been raised for a special purpose. In C 394, only male animals are noted, which may be of significance.

The general similarities between the terminology and format of these texts and the material from Thebes and Pylos would seem to reflect a similarity of practice in the herding and movement of livestock, its destination for sacrificial slaughter and, potentially, consumption.

The Iconographical and Archaeological Evidence

Sealings. The evidence of sealings (seal impressions) is extremely problematic, owing to the difficulty of dating these artifacts and their inherent (often impenetrable) symbolism. Distinguishing between Minoan and Mycenaean ritual scenes is an added problem. Nevertheless, as products of the Bronze Age they warrant consideration and the selected examples from Crete in Fig. 1 offer us glimpses of what might have taken place during (and after) some forms of Aegean Bronze Age animal sacrifice.

In Fig. 1a, a sword pierces/points to a stag's neck, while blood drips from its mouth. Fig. 1b may represent a post-kill ritual, with a male figure with outstretched arms standing to the left of the seemingly unconscious bull (Marinatos 1988: 15). Fig. 1c features a wooden altar. In Sakellarakis' view, the intricate carving of tables on seals is more akin to wooden than marble manufacture (in Marinatos 1986: 15). The issue of fixed/portable altars/sacrificial tables is discussed below. Interestingly, as Marinatos remarks, both males and females are depicted as officiating in sacrifice, but never together in this capacity: "either sex could be in charge of

sacrifice *singly but not together*" (Marinatos 1986: 13, original italics). Finally, Late Bronze Age representations of sacrifice appear mainly on seals, which were the possessions of an élite class (Marinatos 1988: 9). This might indicate that animal sacrifice was a practice restricted to a relative minority of privileged members, whether it was carried out for personal or wider community benefit.

The Aghia Triadha Sarcophagus. The Aghia Triadha sarcophagus, of LM III date, found in a tomb near Phaistos, Crete (Long 1974), constitutes an invaluable source of evidence for animal sacrifice, even if some of the features depicted on it may be specific to the funerary context to which it owes its existence. Also, as a product of an era in which the Mycenaeans had established themselves on Crete, its intermingling of Minoan and Mycenaean details, e.g. agrimia and griffins, respectively, on its short ends (Long 1974: 44-53), may derive either from artistic licence or from real overlap in beliefs and/or ritual practices, the nature and degree of which presently elude us.

One long end of the limestone coffin, the so-called 'front' (thus named by Long owing to its better quality of workmanship and its relative positioning in the tomb which made it visible from the doorway), is divided into two sections (fig. 2). On the left, a woman (the officiating priestess?) empties the contents of a bucket (wine or the blood of the bull pictured on the back?) into a krater/bucket set between two double-axes on stands, with a bird on top of each

one. Behind, follow a woman carrying two more buckets⁴ slung on a pole and a male lyre-player. On the right, the scene faces the opposite direction: three men appear to be carrying votive gifts - models (?) of two calves and a boat (or shallow basin) - towards a dead man standing outside his tomb (thus identified due to his stiff, armless pose), or perhaps a *xoanon* draped with a sacred robe.

On the 'back', a male pipe-player and three or - to judge from the number of feet - more women approach a table, reminiscent of those seen in the sealings (Marinatos 1986: 15). On the table lies a trussed, dappled bull with blood dripping from it into another bucket-like receptacle. Beneath the table sit two calves. In front, a woman makes an offering (note the bowl) on an altar (a libation?). Beyond the altar stands a double-axe on a stand with a bird perched on it and behind it is a shrine surmounted by Minoan horns of consecration. It is tempting to assume that the similar decoration of the altar and shrine point to their similar, presumably fixed, nature. Long views the altar as being of wooden construction, Yavis as of monolithic slab construction (Both in Long 1974: 65).

In terms of the sacrifice depicted on the coffin, it is important to note the elements of procession, and musical accompaniment, the portable (?) table and fixed (?) altar, the blood dripping from the bull into a receptacle, the Minoan horns of consecration and the double-axes with birds resting on them, the fruit (?) basket and the 'libation jug' (of *226 type according to the Linear B ideographic evidence) shown above the altar,

suggesting an important function for these two containers in the rite.

Birds are often associated with female divinities in Minoan scenes and might, here, symbolize the presence of the divinity (Long 1974: 31, 36). The poles on which the double-axes are attached are coloured green suggesting that foliage was wrapped around them, while the axes and their hafts are yellow, perhaps indicative of originals in gold or polished bronze (Long 1974: 35), calling to mind some of the items encountered in PY Ta 716.

The three scenes on the sarcophagus (pouring, presentation, bull sacrifice) appear to be set outdoors. In discussing their narrative connections, Long comments that a real bull sacrifice would likewise probably entail a banquet for which the preparation of wine (pouring scene) would be required (Long 1974: 36). Marinatos interprets the sacrifice of the bull, with the libation of its *blood* in the vicinity of a tree-shrine (note the foliage issuing from the structure), as a ritual of renewal, pointing to the link which exists between Death and renewal rituals world-wide (Marinatos 1986: 27). Finally, it is unclear if the prominence of women here (pouring scene, bull sacrifice) is reflective of their age-old dominant role in Greek mortuary practice or if it relates to their Bronze Age role as 'priestesses' for which there is strong evidence in the Linear B texts. These options are not mutually exclusive.

A number of the elements of sacrifice implied by the scenes on the Aghia Triadha sarcophagus and on the aforementioned sealings find parallels in

later Greek literature. Of particular interest is the Odyssean passage recounting Nestor's bull sacrifice to the goddess Athena (*Od.* 3.418-463). In it are mentioned: a bowl (of lustral water), a sharp axe (to cut down the animal), a dish for the blood, the preparation of a banquet, the symbolic presence of the goddess and the participation of women in the ceremony. This observation is not intended as a retrojection of Homeric practice on to the Bronze Age, although Cook and Palaima have recently argued that Homer does preserve real information about palatial ritual in the territory of Mycenaean Pylos (Cook and Palaima 2001: 192). In any case, the text brings to life certain, common and independently identified, aspects of the act of sacrifice.

Pictorial Programmes of the Palaces. Bronze Age Aegean iconography, like Near Eastern official art, most probably served a functional purpose, conveying the power of the ruling administration to its audiences (those visiting the palace on local or foreign business) (Hägg 1985: 209). This could be achieved by means of heraldic symbolism, scenes of military conquest, depictions of prestige items of manufacture - alluding to restriction of access and associated power - and wealthy ceremonial displays. Often, the wall-paintings may have acted as 'sign-posts' (Hägg 1985: 210-11) for certain activities, directing participants from one place to another, or even perpetuating activities during the period when they were not actually being performed.

An example is offered by the 'Grand Staircase' fresco from the East Wing of the Palace at Knossos (fig. 3a). It shows a procession of men moving upwards in the direction of the East Hall, believed to have been an important cult area (Hägglund 1985: 211). Intriguingly, the group is headed by a pipe-player, the second 'moving' figure holds the head of a bull (or, perhaps more likely, a bull's head rhyton), the third a conical rhyton, the fourth a bowl/dish and the fifth a spouted jug, most of these items having been encountered already in the sacrificial iconography of the sealings and the Aghia Triadha sarcophagus.

The 'Procession' fresco on the northeast wall of the vestibule, Rm 5, of the central megaron at the Palace of Pylos (fig. 3b) also depicts some offering-bearers, this time behind a huge bull in a procession making its way to an open-air shrine (Palaima 1995: 133). At the block altar stands a figure taken, by some, to be the *wanax* himself (e.g. Kilian cited in Palaima 1995: 133). Of course, the surviving depiction is itself minute. The posture of this figure's arms on the monolithic slab altar - which is so reminiscent of the female's on the Aghia Triadha sarcophagus - is not (necessarily) real but reconstructed. In any case, the singularity of the bull portrayed on the wall of the official seat of authority of the *wanax* is significant and brings to mind the correspondence in PY Un 718 where the *wanax* alone, of all the elements that make up the community of the Pylian kingdom, offers a bull to the commensal banquet (Palaima 1995: 132).

The 'Bull Sacrifice and Banquet Scene' in the Throne Room itself, Rm 6, features a lyre-player seated on a rock outdoors, a large bird nearby, seated banqueters, whose raised cups have been reconstructed on the basis of the 'Campstool Fresco' from the Palace at Knossos (Wright 1995: 292-3), and a sacrificed bull (fig. 3b). In this case, as Palaima explains, it seems that "the purpose of the ceremonial scenes in the megaron complex is to remind one of the ritual actions that have taken place *en plein air*," (original italics) allowing for the possibility of a symbolic ritual enactment of these events indoors (Palaima 1995: 133 n. 47; also McCallum 1987: 140).

The outdoor setting for the actual slaughter and ensuing banquet may have been in some outlying field/sanctuary or perhaps closer at hand, in one or more of the outdoor courts of the palace. Shelmerdine has proposed that Court 88, with access to the pantries of the main building of the Palace, may have been a site of feasting (in Davis and Bennet 1999: 110). Davis and Bennet also point to Court 63 as a location "in which crowds could be gathered on ceremonial occasions," especially since nearby Rooms 60, 67 and 68 were found packed with vessels for eating and drinking (Davis and Bennet 1999: 110 and n. 21) (fig. 4).

Generally, the identification of sanctuaries corresponding to the many mentioned in the Linear B tablets from Pylos and Knossos has been problematic (Palaima forthcoming). Nevertheless, a fixed altar of squared poros, coated with a

number of layers of plaster bearing frescoed decoration - such as the one indicated in the vestibule 'Procession' fresco (fig. 3b) and on the Aghia Triadha sarcophagus - was discovered in Court 92 of the Northeast Building at Pylos (fig. 4), suggesting that such altars may well have been the focal point of some open-air religious activity (Blegen and Rawson 1966: 301-302).

It is tempting, then, to contemplate whether the 'Grand Staircase' fresco from Knossos - which admittedly works better as a 'sign-post' than does the Pylos 'Procession' fresco with its super-scale bull and apparent outdoor setting - may in fact reflect the post-kill phase of a bull sacrifice in which the bull's head (or a bull's head rhyton), the bull's blood (?) and other offerings/paraphernalia are returned to the palace-proper - and, specifically, to the interior of the complex - for display, storage and/or further ritual treatment. (The separation of the cranium from the body of the slaughtered bull depicted on the sealing in Fig. 1d is suggestive).

When considered in this light, the 'intricacies' of Tablet PY Tn 316 are, to some extent, untangled. The iconographical evidence adds weight to the theory that those mentioned as being sent to the individual sanctuaries listed on the tablet in the formulaic phrase *do-ra-qe pe-re po-re-na-qe a-ke* are not human sacrificial victims but gift-bearers/carriers (Palaima 1996-97). As Palaima has observed, these vessels need not have constituted 'permanent' gifts to the deities but, instead, might have been taken from the palatial treasuries at different times to

be used in ceremonies and then returned (Palaima 1999: 451).

In McCallum's view, the frescoes at Pylos reflect "a symbolic assurance of the kingdom's prosperity through adequate provisioning of the gods" (McCallum 1987: 149). Political strength and stability itself depended on sound rule. This may have entailed the ruling administration's adherence to certain ritual observances, including the performance of sacrifice, perhaps in accordance with a festival calendar (Chadwick 1988: 201), all of which would have been equally important in the endeavour to win divine favour and to secure popular support.

Cultic Paraphernalia.

Altars. The iconographical evidence considered suggests the use of both fixed altars and portable wooden sacrificial tables in the ritual of animal sacrifice, both of which are attested archaeologically. For example, in addition to the altar base of Court 92 at Pylos, a fixed stone altar was found in the northwest corner of the central court of the Palace at Phaistos and a stepped altar at the peak sanctuary of Mt. Juktas (Marinatos 1988:15). As for wooden tables, a great deal of burnt wood has occasionally been found with surviving stone slabs, suggesting stone table-tops supported by wooden legs (Marinatos 1988: 15; Long 1974: 62).

The problem lies in trying to distinguish between burnt and unburnt offerings. As Hägg concludes: "The comparatively few structures that have been interpreted as built altars are not of types that could have served for burnt

animal sacrifice" (Hägg 1998: 101). That is, their plastered decoration argues against offerings of the *burnt* variety. And, in fact, traces of fire on the upper surfaces of these structures are rare or insignificant (Hägg 1998: 101). This corresponds well with the picture of animal *consumption* following the sacrificial ritual. As Hägg comments:

There is definitely no indication that the Mycenaean animal sacrifice was of the Greek [burnt] type - the animals were only slaughtered and afterwards consumed. If any parts were saved as "the gods' portion," there is no evidence that these parts were burnt (Hägg 1998:101; See also Bergquist 1988: 21, 32).

In relation to the ambiguous nature of the ash layers at the early Mycenaean Maleatas shrine in the Argolid, the possibility is noted that these may have resulted from a general cleaning (involving burning) of the sacred area rather than from actual burnt sacrifice (Hägg 1998: 100-101; Bergquist 1988: 30). Thus, on the basis of the current evidence, it would appear that animals were slaughtered on portable wooden tables, and portions thereof and/or other offerings simply 'deposited' on altars (Marinatos 1986: 15). The animals could then be cooked for consumption.

NOTE: Views of this evidence may change with the forthcoming publication

by J. L. Melena of a new join at Pylos which seems to specify an altar for burnt sacrifice.

Fixed altars, where they existed, certainly would have provided a focus for cult activity. In Marinatos' view, trees may also have served as important markers of ritual space, either in the vicinity of such altars or alone (Marinatos 1986: 15). The trees on sealings and on the Aghia Triadha sarcophagus may thus be more than decorative.

Libation. A close ritual connection exists in many cultures between sacrifice and libation (Hägg 1998: 104). The custom of libation, "the pouring of a liquid as a drink offering to a divine recipient" (Hägg 1996: 610), seems to have been well established in Mycenaean times (Bergquist 1988: 32). Libations (possibly of wine, oil and/or animal blood) were poured from vessels, e.g. conical-shaped rhyta and 'libation jugs' of the type depicted on the famous gold ring from Tiryns in which a procession of genii take part in a libation ceremony (the mythical nature of the creatures alluding to the divine sphere [Rehak 1995: 224]). Both vessel shapes are encountered in the Linear B texts and iconography of the period.

Libations were received either by fixed installations, like the libation channel cut into the plaster floor next to the throne in the megaron at Pylos (with a libation jug painted on a nearby wall, perhaps perpetuating the activity) or by movable tripod offering tables, such as that found by the central hearth of the Throne Room at Pylos (Hägg 1996: 607; Hägg 1998:

104-5; for photos of the finds, see Hägg 1990, 179 and 182). As noted by Hägg, both the rhyton and offering table were Minoan inventions (or at least they were attested earlier on Crete) adopted early on by the Mycenaeans on the mainland (Hägg 1998: 105).

In her noteworthy discussion on animal sacrifice, Long points to a seal from Naxos as featuring the whole 'set' of equipment which the procedure would have entailed: a sword/dagger, a sacrificial table,⁵ a rhyton, a spouted libation jug, a krater/jar, and a (palm) tree (-marker) (Long 1974: 62) (fig. 5).

Double-axes and Horns of Consecration.

Both of these are accepted as 'Minoan' symbols of religion (Marinatos 1993: 5). The double-axe, as Dietrich explains, may have been viewed as a symbol of renewal: "The flow of the animal's blood released its vital force which was a potent agent to ensure renewal, and in some form the promise of rebirth" (Dietrich 1988: 36). Niemeier's useful observation that the Minoan double-axe was appropriated by the Mycenaeans but used differently in their own representations of it on seals, i.e. as a symbolic emblem, but never carried as a real object in the Minoan way (Niemeier 1990: 167), is supported by the archaeological discoveries of double-axes on the mainland: most of these are made of bronze sheet and were, therefore, most likely intended only for display. At the early Mycenaean Maleatas sanctuary, for instance, one double-axe was rather solid and capable of being used as a sacrificial implement, while the rest were non-functional (Hägg 1998: 102). Similarly,

the double-axes on stands shown on the Aghia Triadha Sarcophagus seem to serve a symbolic purpose. Meanwhile, stone mace-heads were probably used to stun the animals and swords/daggers/knives to carve them (Hägg 1998: 102; Marinatos 1986: 22). Indeed, the ideogram for the axes on PY Ta 716 does not reflect a true Minoan double-axe but, instead, what looks like a 'stunning-axe' with one side 'bladed' and the other side 'hammer blunt' (Speciale 1999: 294; Sacconi 1999: 286-89) (fig. 6).

Horns of Consecration, such as those depicted on the Aghia Triadha sarcophagus, typically adorned the wall-tops of Minoan palaces and shrines, but have rarely turned up at excavations on the mainland. Three large, but fragmentary, stone examples are known: from Gla, Pylos and Mycenae (Hägg 1996: 612).

Minoan/Mycenaean Distinctions

The textual, iconographical and archaeological evidence examined in this study from Thebes, Pylos and Knossos and attributed to the 'Mycenaeans' as the users of the Linear B script, supports the view of a "relatively homogeneous cultural *koine* that covered most of the southern Aegean at the end of the Late Bronze Age" (Davis and Bennet 1999: 113). At the same time, Mycenaean syncretism does not seem to have been absolute, even in the late palace period. Whether it is appropriate to speak of distinct 'Mainland Mycenaean' and 'Knossian Mycenaean' religions (Hägg 1988a: 204) cannot be determined on the

basis of the sacrificial evidence alone. Yet, there are certain peculiarities in other aspects of the religious record which suggest the need to distinguish between Minoan and Helladic cult practice, both spatially and temporally. An example is the contrast in religious architecture between the un-Minoan hearths of the Mycenaean megaron and the typically Minoan pillar crypts, pier-and-door partitions and lustral basins which are missing from the mainland (Hägg 1988a: 205-6, 212-13).

In the arena of sacrifice, Hägg rules out the blood libation for the Mycenaean mainland, no doubt due to the lack of supporting evidence (Hägg 1998: 113; Cf. his earlier view in Hägg 1990: 183). If not merely due to the accidents of discovery, might this feature have been the culturally-differentiating one between mainlanders and Minoans in an otherwise apparently similar sacrificial ritual? It would be worthwhile to explore this issue further. Is blood libation attested anywhere in the palatial iconography of the Mycenaean period in Crete? If so, is it to be interpreted as an adoption of a local Minoan practice by the incoming Mycenaeans? Might this line of reasoning perhaps account for the blood libation alluded to on the Aghia Triadha sarcophagus?

Concluding Remarks

The textual evidence for sacrifice from Thebes, Pylos and Knossos in the Late Bronze Age provides information about the herding and transfer, from outlying districts to palatial centres, of animals

destined for sacrificial slaughter and (as seems likely) human consumption. The TH Wu sealings, and tablets PY Un 2 and Un 138 are particularly instructive. This evidence is supplemented by the iconographical and archaeological remains which support that the offerings dedicated to the gods included animals such as sheep, goats, pigs and bulls and a variety of foodstuffs like cheese, olive oil, honey, wine, wheat and barley. These were 'given' as tokens of worship by various sectors of the society, the gift often commensurate to the giver's or even the divinity's status (e.g. PY Un 718 and PY Tn 316 respectively) but not so, it would seem, in the case of the other individuals named in association with these special, sacrificial animals (e.g. *Dunios* on PY Un 138). They seem to have been 'instruments' of the palatial establishment in its undertaking to fulfill its sacrificial obligations.

The overall picture is one of state-organized banquets in the Mycenaean world, in which the élite and the common people (?) were invited to partake of the kingdom's produce. The amount of food recorded on the texts suggests that these were community-wide events, but precisely how community-inclusive they were is debatable. Was everyone welcome or were only the upper echelons of society invited as representatives of their respective communities (villages)? Either way, these gatherings could certainly be used by Mycenaean leaders to consolidate their power by periodically assembling their followers and reinforcing, in a friendly atmosphere, the internal social hierarchy of their society.

Likely occasions for such celebrations would have probably included a change of office, especially the inauguration of a new king or other state official (PY Un 2, Ta 711).

As for the ritual of animal sacrifice itself, the evidence suggests unburnt sacrifice, probably outdoors, on portable tables, possibly in the vicinity of a fixed altar or other marker, accompanied by a libation, outdoors and/or inside. As mentioned, the publication of a likely Linear B reference to an altar for burnt sacrifice is awaited. The procedure involved procession, with musical accompaniment, the sacrificial act, and communal feasting.

Admittedly, specific details are lacking, but this is not surprising given the secular nature of the textual evidence. Details which elude us include the identities and particular duties of those officiating, the prayers which may have been uttered and clarification on whether all the animals consumed were sacrificed with the

splendour which the bull seems to have been accorded. What is comforting, though, is that the information extrapolated from the administrative documents complements and occasionally corroborates, but never contradicts, the iconographical and archaeological record.

Divorced from the social context of the period under consideration, it is perhaps unlikely that our understanding of its ritual of sacrifice will ever be satisfyingly complete. With added discoveries and further research, however, it is expected that we may indeed come closer to distinguishing more satisfactorily, synchronically and diachronically, between Minoan and Mycenaean elements, and to exploring the possibility of distinct public and private manifestations of the practice. Such avenues of investigation will help to refine our present picture of animal (and other?) sacrifice in the Aegean Bronze Age.

* I thank Professor Thomas Palaima for assigning to me the topic of Sacrifice in his Linear B seminar a year ago, for his helpful guidance throughout that project, and for reading a draft of the present paper and offering further advice. Any shortcomings remain my own.

NOTES

1. Discussion of word forms is based on information derived from Aura Jorro (1985; 1993) and from Ventris and Chadwick (1973).

2. Killen discusses the unlikelihood of *134/*190 (some foodstuff), *PYC + O (regularly recorded in small amounts) and *171 (a relatively rare commodity) being fodder intended for consumption by the animals (Killen 1992: *passim*). His view that the regular appearance of 30 as the number in *171 entries represents not the number of days in a month but a standardized contribution is supported by the tantalizing evidence from a modern Greek folk custom during the festival of Saint Marina in Demati, Epirus, which involves a religious ceremony followed by the

sacrifice of a bull which is carved up into 30-32 portions, distributed to the 30-32 leading families of the village (Megas 1957: 222). [While such information must not be projected on to the Bronze Age, it demonstrates how ethnographic evidence helps to elucidate the range of possibilities.] Admittedly, the numbers 30 and 36 (the latter appearing on TH Wu 59) are also suggestive of month divisions, and the fact that *171 occurs mainly on *o-pa* texts lends itself to the equally viable alternative that it may indeed represent fodder used to 'finish', or fatten, the animals concerned (Killen 1999: 337-8).

3. The spelling of *sa-pa-ka-te-ri-ja* is compared to *wa-na-ka-te-ro* and its occurrence with the toponym *u-ta-no* in KN X 9191 makes it unlikely that it is a toponym (classical Σφακτηρία), since the sheep records at Knossos invariably contain only one place-name each (Killen 1994: 75).

4. The originals of these painted containers may have been "wooden buckets or waterproofed baskets" (Long 1974: 36). Since the contents of the two full buckets are not shown heaped above the rim, Long concludes that they must have contained liquids. Importantly, Paribeni had noted a thin pink line (now

invisible) running from the overturned bucket into the krater, which he interpreted as blood (in Long 1974: 36). Marinatos follows his interpretation (Marinatos 1986: 26). In Long's opinion, however, such a line would rather represent wine as opposed to the "thick globs" of blood dripping from the bull slaughtered on the back. According to her, the pouring scene on the front could represent the mixing of wine and water in a krater (Long 1974: 36, 39).

5. Hägg prefers to see this as a tripod 'offering table' intended to receive libations (Hägg 1998: 105). For the difference between wooden sacrificial tables on which animals seem to have been slaughtered and tripod offering tables, see Marinatos 1993: 7. Note also her seemingly sound distinction - a source of disagreement (confusion?) among excavators as regards terminology and function - between block-made, hollowed-out 'libation' tables for liquid offerings and tripod 'offering' tables for dry offerings (Marinatos 1993: 6-7). The find in the megaron at Pylos reveals the complexity of the problem: miniature kylikes overturned on what one might logically interpret as an offering table for dry food (see Hägg 1990).

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a



b



c

Fig. 1 (a, b, c). Sealings from Crete: Scenes of Slaughtered Animals (after Spiciale 1999: Fig. 1 [for a, b] and Marinatos 1988: Fig. 8 [for c]).

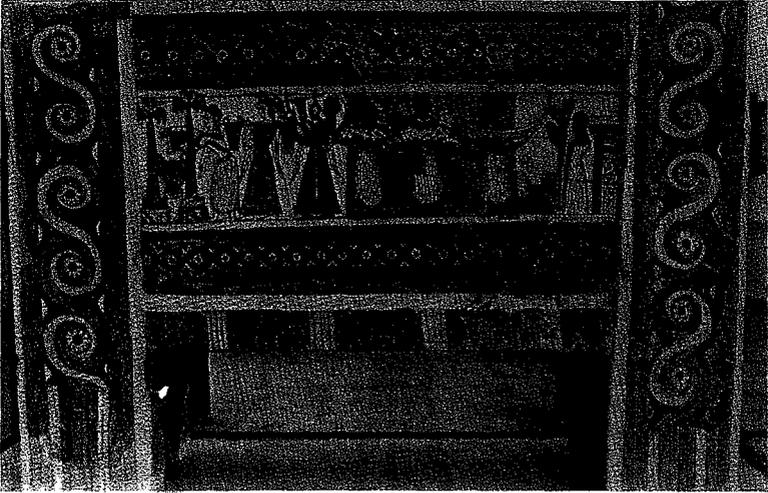


Fig. 2. The two long sides of the Aghia Triadha Sarcophagus.

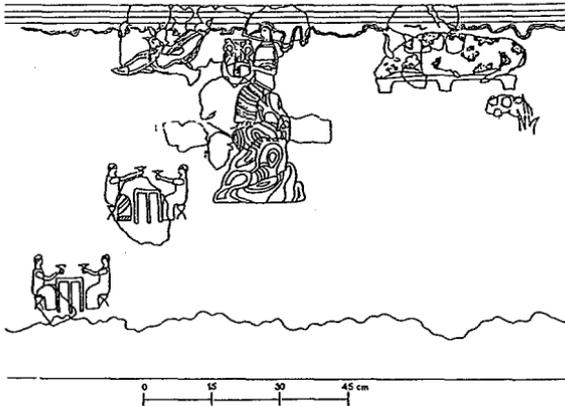
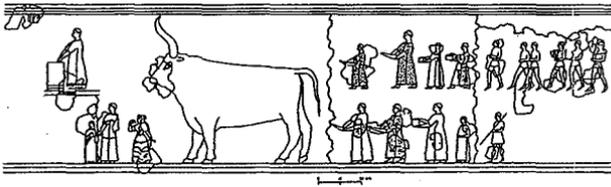
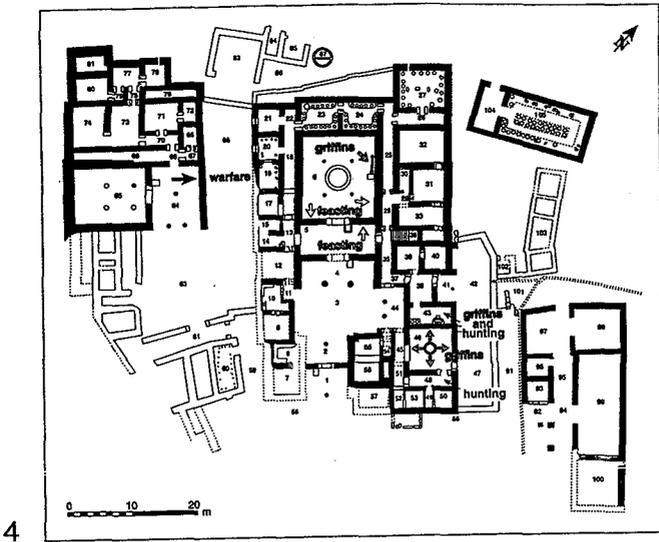


Fig. 3a. Reconstruction of Grand Staircase Fresco from Knossos (after Cameron in Marinatos 1993: Fig. 56). Fig. 3b. Frescoes from Palace at Pylos (after McCallum in Palaima, 1995: Pl. XLI).



4



5



6

Fig. 4. Plan of Palace at Pylos (after Davis and Bennet 1999: Pl. XIIIa). Fig. 5. Seal from Naxos featuring the 'kit' of sacrificial paraphernalia (after CMS V, 608. Courtesy I. Pini).

Fig. 6. The stunning-axe ideogram from PY Ta 716 (after Sacconi 1999: Fig. 2).