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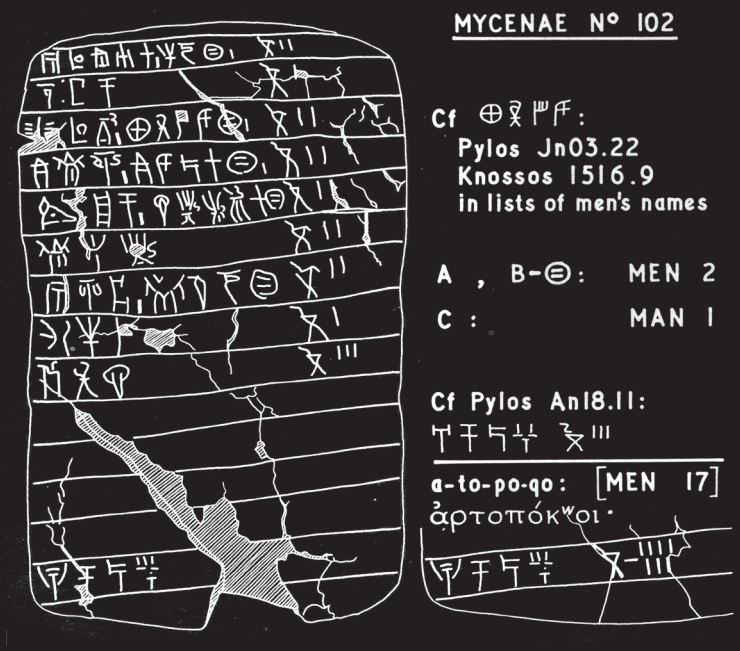
THE MYCENAEAN SEMINAR 2015–16



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14 October 2015

BEYOND THOSE SHERDS. 'AEGEAN' INTERACTION AND CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETIES IN THE MIDDLE AND LATE BRONZE AGE*

Francesco Iacono

The Bronze Age societies of southern Italy and the Aegean have been characterized as having a continuous and intense relationship for much of the second millennium BC. This is suggested by the import and copying of artefacts (primarily pottery, known under the umbrella name of 'Aegean type pottery': henceforth ATP); the way in which those artefacts, and their contents, were used; as well as the diffusion and transformation of social practices connected to all these materials. The coastal settlement of Roca located a few kilometres north of Otranto in Apulia represents the ideal vantage point to explore these dynamics because: (a) its occupation covers much of this chronological spectrum; (b) it has produced the largest amount of ATP west of Greece.

The earliest attestations of contact between central Mediterranean societies and Bronze Age Aegean polities date back to the Shaft Grave period. At this time southern Italian communities were small in scale and had few signs of strong social differentiation. When interaction started to be definitely visible, that is during LH I–IIIA (the period corresponding to the Protoapennine and Apennine in Italy), the geographical range of contacts attested was already extremely wide, passing through Apulia and encompassing parts of coastal Sicily, the Aeolian and Phlegraean Islands, and perhaps stretching to the south to Pantelleria. It has long been acknowledged that in this period the 'hot spot' for western interaction with the Aegean is the Tyrrhenian Sea. With such an extensive distribution of find-spots for ATP, the Adriatic where Roca is located can hardly be considered a frontier and Aegean connections with this area at the start were mainly non-directional on the way towards the Aeolian Islands, which were probably the main aim of these expeditions.

Things take a remarkably different direction in the subsequent Subapennine period corresponding to LH III B/C Early in Helladic terms, in late palatial and early post-palatial times. This is the time when Roca becomes an exception, producing the largest set of ATP found in an individual context west of Greece. This has been recovered in association with some remarkable faunal evidence possibly connected to a sacrifice related to a large-scale feasting episode.

Despite the continuous attestation of imports, also in a period when in other areas of southern Italy these were very scarce, our most recent research at Roca has emphasized the importance of local production. This is highlighted, among other things, by the earliest attestation of a pottery waster of ATP in Italy. Local production resulted in some rather unique vessels for which it is indeed very difficult to find precise parallels in both southern Italy and the Aegean. We could perhaps use a term currently very popular in archaeological theory like mimicry to describe them. They show little trace of local influence and appear to be a *pastiche* of Aegean elements from various traditions recombined in a way that would

* The study of the rich evidence from the site of Roca has been conducted thanks to the generous support of the Institute for Aegean Prehistory which has funded a research project and a postdoctoral fellowship (based at the University of Salento and the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge).

be impossible in the Aegean world.

Now sites with ATP are considerably more central in local networks than those without ATP pottery, but the interesting novelty — beyond intensity of connections — is their range and scope. Indeed, diagnostic elements of local Subapennine pottery are actually not limited to Apulia or even southern Italy but have been recovered over a much wider area that includes also Adriatic northern Italy.

This special connection along the Adriatic coastline was recognized long ago by many scholars and involves not only pottery but also metal types, and extends to a broader region which also encompasses much of the Aegean. A wider rationale for contact was probably metal circulation. Such interaction dynamics indicate a more proactive role of southern Italian communities and a more balanced relationship between these and Aegean partners.

In the subsequent Protovillanovan corresponding to LH IIIC Late to the end of the Bronze Age, we see a dramatic decrease of the traces of interaction between the Aegean world and southern Italy. Many important post-palatial sites have now seriously shrunk in size, while once 'remote' (from the perspective of the Mycenaean heartland) areas flourish (*e.g.* western and central Greece). At Roca probably the most important and better studied context is the large building recovered in Area IX where we have also found the majority of the Aegean type pottery of this phase.

Overall during this last phase of the Italian Bronze Age, sites in the central Mediterranean seem to have maintained only a marginal interest in the Aegean world (in the so-called Western Mainland Koine). And yet Roca and other sites in Apulia preserved a certain linkage, even if interaction was now either focused on the regional level or, in terms of longer-range interaction, was with northern Italy or the Balkans.

Autumn Lecture in association with the British School at Athens, 18 November 2015

NEW DISCOVERIES AT MYCENAEAN THEBES

Vassilis Aravantinos

From the outset, excavations in Boeotian Thebes had a target, namely to elucidate the city's most ancient past, echoed in Greek mythology. Early archaeological work proved that a mighty and thriving administrative centre was established on its citadel (Kadmeia) in the Mycenaean palatial period (*c*. 1450–1200 BC). However, only in the last thirty years or so have some major issues concerning the archaeology of Mycenaean Thebes finally been resolved; these were issues which had troubled scholars for decades. Archaeological research and the interpretation of data from this particular period of the city's prehistory have been affected or defined to a greater or lesser extent by the mythological tradition and the lack of published material from past excavations. However, new excavations and the study of old finds, as well as a comparison with relevant data from other powerful Mycenaean centres, have recently led to plausible new suggestions regarding old and newer issues.

The first major unresolved question in the study of palatial Thebes was the dilemma of the city's fortifications. For decades and until a few years ago, the choice was between accepting the existence of the walls, mentioned in the myths, and totally denying it, given the lack of visible and documented remains. The discovery of many sections of the walls' foundations at several points of the citadel's perimeter now demonstrates that this major feature of Mycenaean citadels in the palatial period also existed at Thebes. The upper structure of the walls was built to a great height with mud-brick, as was true in most of the citadels of the Aegean world and Hittite Asia Minor.

A second great puzzle of Mycenaean palatial Thebes was the correlation of rulers' tombs with those of other centres and especially of Boeotian Orchomenos. The search for other monumental tombs leads, first and foremost, to the unique tomb of Kastellia, which was in use for most of the palatial period. In its second and final phase, it was expanded, redesigned, and furnished with wall paintings. This is the largest known chamber tomb and the only one painted with figural scenes. The reconstruction of its wall paintings offers us the opportunity to re-evaluate this monument as a ruler's tomb, detaching it from any mythological references.

The third, old, and most difficult question is the issue of excavation, limits, plan, and date of the Theban palace. Its connection with the mythological 'House of Kadmos', unquestioned for decades, has led to dead-ends and views which have been dramatically dismissed. From 1963 onwards, even the partial discovery of important building complexes, of jewellery and other prestige items, and of parts of Linear B tablet archives, have changed previously established theories. These discoveries, which are still ongoing, have taken place at several distant areas of Kadmeia and in any case outside the limits of the supposed palace. The distribution in so many parts of Kadmeia of buildings of the palatial type, often decorated with wall paintings or containing *inter alia* prestige objects and tablets, demanded a different interpretation, which necessitated an evaluation of the Linear B texts. These point to specialized work, accommodation, and support for numerous personnel at Thebes, which would require a huge infrastructure, far exceeding the facilities of one or a few buildings.

The central building of the palatial complex began to be uncovered from 1963–64. Its northeastern corner was named ‘The Palace’s Treasury’. The latter as well as two other areas, which have been recently or previously investigated, yielded among other items small deposits of Linear B texts (tablets and sealings) for the first time. In addition, after new systematic investigations, the width of the central building is estimated to be double of that of the palace at Pylos. Its sudden destruction perhaps took place in a thriving period, by the end of the thirteenth century BC, and did not allow the personnel to remove its precious contents.

2 December 2015

ICONOGRAPHY AND AGENCY IN THE MYCENAEAN ERA

James C. Wright

This paper sought to explain how an iconography originated and crystallized in the society we call Mycenaean. It focused on the social processes of the development and display of objects, visual images, and symbols in the early 'palace' states on the mainland of Greece and showed how these practices evolve into a stable repertory of images deployed in the palaces and their distributed architecture. The paper argued that this process was driven by the actions of small competing groups throughout the mainland of Greece, but led by the burying groups and individuals interred in the Shaft Graves at Mycenae. They were the cutting edge of a phenomenon in which many similar actors from emerging centres on the mainland of Greece participated, a phenomenon which ultimately overwhelmed and overthrew the palace culture of Crete. The paper concluded with remarks on the post-palatial era and the memorialization of the artistic and cultural legacy of the Mycenaean palace civilisation.

The paper was divided into six sections:

Agents, Factions, and Leaders in Middle Bronze Age Greece: a discussion of social processes of differentiation out of which emerge factional and community leaders who shape an iconography of leadership.

Performance and Prestige: the process by which the display of objects creates emblems that become symbols of power and prestige through an eclectic selection which utilizes existing workshops, probably in the islands and certainly within the Cretan palaces, through commissions by the emerging leaders.

Adjusting the Iconography of Power: an exploration of how the iconography of the palaces of Crete during the Neopalatial period, especially at Knossos, is adopted and adapted by mainland leaders acting in three primary arenas: Crete, the islands, and the mainland.

Warrior Display and Communities of Practice on the Mainland and Islands during LH IIIA: how the now established displays of prowess and valour are spread among a functionary elite that evolves to meet the administrative demands of territorial centres on the mainland and at the age-old centre on Crete, which are now controlled by a Greek-speaking bureaucracy. This creates an increasingly standardized iconography within the emerging peer-polities.

The Floruit of Mycenaean Palaces and the Projection of 'State' Power: a discussion of how, during the acme of Mycenaean power, when a civilization is established that extends throughout the Aegean, into Anatolia, and to Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean, the iconographic tradition takes on a variety of forms (in fresco painting, in ideograms, in Pictorial Style pottery painting, through the distribution of engraved seals and rings, through decorative objects in ivory, gold, silver, and glass, and through ceramic figurines) that characterize and identify this civilization.

Post-Palatial Iconographies of Memory: an exploration into the *Nachlass* of Mycenaean civilization by examining the social life of objects that represent and display, individually and as assemblages, the memory and the acts that characterize Mycenaean civilization. How in the post-palatial period the reproduction of the past prolongs and extends the character and identity of a society that can now only act on the 'world stage' through individuals who, through personal contacts, can evoke the practices of faded institutions.

20 January 2016

MAKING P(A)LACES, MARKING DIFFERENCES: THE 'PREPALATIAL' ORIGINS OF THE MINOAN PALACES (3600–2000 BC)

Peter Tomkins

Ever since the discovery of the Minoan Palaces, the question of their emergence — how, when and why they appeared — has been seen as pivotal to an understanding of the nature and timing of social, political, and economic development on Crete during the Bronze Age. Early on, an orthodoxy developed that Minoan Palaces first appeared suddenly, and seemingly fully formed, both architecturally and institutionally, during MM I (*i.e.*, *c*. 2000–1900 BC). Although the validity of this MM I palatial revolution was challenged, attempts to define a more gradual process reaching back into EM foundered on sparse or equivocal data for spatial organization at palatial locations prior to MM I.

At Knossos, this picture only recently began to change as a result of the work of the Knossos Kephala Project (KKP). KKP aims to assemble, review, and integrate all information (archival, published, artefactual, architectural) relevant to an understanding of Neolithic–MM I activity on the Kephala (Palace) Hill, drawing on a century of excavations and decades of detailed ceramic and stratigraphical study. A major component of KKP has been a review of primary sources for the Evans–Mackenzie excavations, enabling recovered deposits to be reconnected with their original spatial and architectural associations. While the jigsaw is, and will inevitably remain, incomplete, there are now more pieces, which, in many cases, can be joined or juxtaposed to form a discernible picture.

The narrative of palatial emergence at Knossos now begins at the turn of the Bronze Age, in a levelling of the hilltop and the creation of a formalized, rectangular open space or court, within the area of the later Central Court and on the same alignment as the later Palace. This early court, along with two aligned buildings flanking it to the west, goes through several phases of use, renewal, and reconstruction during EM I. Early in EM IIA the demolition of these houses and the laying out of a much larger court testifies to a second wholesale reorganization of the hilltop. To the west and on the same footprint as the Central Palace Sanctuary and Throne Room system, three separate, aligned buildings, with thick walls built out of field stones on foundations of clay and stone rammed into foundation trenches, can be identified. The latest pottery associated with these walls, where contamination is absent or minimal, is EM IIA Early. This initial complex of 'court buildings' saw the addition of other similarly aligned buildings to the north, west and east during EM II, EM III and MM I (as is also the case for the later 'palatial' phases of the Middle–Late Bronze Age).

The evidence suggests a radically different, but coherent pattern of long-term development at Knossos, paralleled now also at Phaistos, in which the hill is progressively transformed at the turn of the Bronze Age from a place of residence to a place of ceremony, with specifically choreographed and aligned open-air spaces. Out of this earlier pattern, and still early in EM II, there emerged a complex of specifically aligned buildings around a large rectangular court that is the direct ancestor of the MM I 'court complex', which it predates by possibly as much as 700 years. Out of this deeper history the Kephala Hill emerges as a 'monument', evolving through multiple episodes of investment and reorganization, as the community it served changed in nature, scale, and outlook; as a place (and later a 'palace') where people, through large-scale participation in shared ritual practice and experience, reached an understanding of their origins, affiliations, and positions in society and the world; and where social orders could be naturalized or renegotiated.

17 February 2016

'DIGITAL NESTOR': AEGEAN SCRIPTS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Dimitri Nakassis

Linear B tablets do not photograph well, both because of their mode of production and the processes whereby they were preserved. While certain problems of representing the tablets in print publications have persisted, recent technological developments have made it easier than ever to capture and share data digitally. A research programme directed by the author and K. Pluta is currently underway to document digitally the administrative records of the Mycenaean 'Palace of Nestor' at Pylos.

The first part of this work involves creating digital images of the documents, using Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) and three-dimensional scanning in addition to traditional line drawings. RTI produces a high-resolution colour image that also records the topography of the tablet, allowing the user to re-light the artefact however s/he wishes in a virtual environment. Moreover, a number of rendering modes allow the user to manipulate the image in a variety of ways that aid in reading the document. Three-dimensional scanning complements RTI's emphasis on text and topography by representing the document's overall shape, and allows the user to manipulate the text as a virtual object in the round.

The second part involves study of the texts as artefacts. Macroscopic fabric analysis of the texts by J. Hruby and J. Gulizio has confirmed the heterogeneity of the fabrics used to make the tablets, labels, and seals, with over twenty fabric groups preliminarily identified. This heterogeneity of fabrics is not typical for Linear B texts found elsewhere in the Mycenaean world. The use of X-Ray Fluorescence by B. Wilemon is identifying elemental outliers among the documents which, in coordination with other types of information such as scribal hand, find-spot, and fabric group, will allow us to understand the significant variability in the tablets that has already been observed. These data and metadata, in addition to information about find-spots, are being integrated into databases, including spatial databases using Geographical Information Systems (GIS), by J. Newhard.

The eventual goal is an integrated online edition of all data and metadata about each document. In combination, the digital techniques described above will provide scholars with highly accurate renditions of the colour, shape, topography, and texture of every administrative document from Pylos. The distribution of these data directly into the hands of users will have the additional beneficial effect of decentring editorial authority. Although the images cannot replace autopsy, they are sufficiently high-quality that users can make new observations and ask new questions of the documents. It is also argued that the analyses of the texts as artefacts, besides representing a continuation of the traditional integration of archaeology and text in Mycenaean studies, has the potential to improve our understanding not only of administrative procedures and the production of the texts, but also of the processes whereby the palace was destroyed.

16 March 2016

RISE AND FALL OF AN EARLY MYCENAEAN SITE: KAKOVATOS IN TRIPHYLIA

Birgitta Eder

Kakovatos is a prominent site of the early Mycenaean period of Greece (*c*. sixteenth–fifteenth centuries BC) located in the region of Triphylia on the western coast of the Peloponnese and became widely known through the excavations of Wilhelm Dörpfeld in 1907–08. Here he unearthed three large tholos tombs with rich burial gifts, which suggest that the associated settlement site on the so-called acropolis most likely played a significant role within the surrounding region.

In addition to large palatial style amphorae dating to Late Helladic IIA, the beehive tombs contained weapons, jewellery made of gold, amber, lapis lazuli and blue glass, and furniture fittings made of ivory. These finds illustrate the inter-regional connections between the residents of early Mycenaean Kakovatos and those of other contemporary settlements in southern Messenia and in the Argolid. Within the framework of her PhD project, Christine de Vree has documented all finds from the three tholoi, now stored in the National Museum of Athens, and has analysed them in comparison with material from contemporaneous tombs on the Greek mainland in a supra-regional perspective. The site of Kakovatos appears to be well integrated into the Early Mycenaean elite networks of the Peloponnese in general, and in particular close contacts were apparently entertained with the contemporaneous sites of Messenia.

Following a survey in 2009, excavations were carried out in 2010–11 on the western and northern end of the Kakovatos hill. The project was conducted within the framework of a cooperation between the Institute for Archaeological Studies at the University of Freiburg (Birgitta Eder, now Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Oriental and European Archaeology) and the 7th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities in Olympia (under the direction of Georgia Hatzi-Spiliopoulou), under the auspices of the German Archaeological Institute and with the participation of Barbara Horejs and Konstantinos Nikolentzos. The recent investigations aimed to establish the character and the chronology of use of the Mycenaean site on the acropolis hill of Kakovatos.

Excavations on the so-called acropolis of Kakovatos in 2010/11 uncovered the south-eastern corners of two early Mycenaean buildings, which had already been partially revealed by Dörpfeld's excavations. Pottery and storage vessels were found burnt on the pebble floors and indicate a destruction by fire, which can be archaeologically dated to the end of LH IIB. The C14 analysis of the organic remains provides important absolute dates for the period of the fire destruction and will offer the first scientifically-based dating evidence for the LH IIB phase (*c*. 1480–1430 BC) on the Greek mainland.

A wall corner built of large stone blocks on the western slopes of the hill was also known from Dörpfeld's excavations. Its outer face is built from up to 1 m wide blocks of sandstone, conglomerate, and shelly limestone of Cyclopean dimensions. The function of this wall, which was never part of a surrounding fortification, may be explained as terrace wall of the building complex on the upper plateau. Its construction, which also dates to the LH IIB period, conforms to the architectural layout of the building complex on the upper plateau and most likely formed part of an overall plan of the entire complex.

Currently, the various find groups from the excavation at Kakovatos are under study: ceramics and small finds (Birgitta Eder, Georgia Hatzi-Spiliopoulou, Kostas Nikolentzos, Michaela Zavadil); animal bones (Norbert Benecke, DAI Berlin); botanical remains (Simone Riehl, University of Tübingen); and the C14 analysis of selected organic samples (Curt-Engelhorn-Zentrum für Archäometrie in Mannheim).

Another perspective of the project takes the regional dimension into account. In cooperation with Greek colleagues Kostas Nikolentzos and Panagiotis Moutzouridis, Jasmin Huber studies the Mycenaean pottery from other archaeological sites in Triphylia (Epitalion, Kleidi Samikon, Ag. Dimitrios). In the framework of her PhD project she will trace the production and consumption patterns of pottery within a Late Bronze Age micro-region. A thorough programme of petrographical analysis is currently being carried out by the Fitch laboratory of the BSA (Evangelia Kiriatzi and Georgia Kordatzaki). Together with NAA (carried out in Bonn by Hans Mommsen) this will allow the finds from Kakovatos to be placed in their regional context and to determine the provenance of a rich collection of imports of cooking pots and storage vessels.

At the present stage of our work, it has become clear that the cultural character of Early Mycenaean Triphylia was shaped according to Messenian models and that the whole region was oriented towards the southwest Peloponnese. One of the questions that needs to be pursued is why Kakovatos, *i.e.* the most significant site within the region, already seems to disappear from the political geography of Triphylia in the Early Mycenaean period. It remains an assumption, still to be supported by further data, that this had to do with the territorial expansion of one of the most powerful Mycenaean centres of the southwest Peloponnese, and that Triphylia was incorporated into the territory of the palace of Pylos in the fifteenth century BC.

20 May 2016

DIGGING UP THE PAST: THE MINOAN SITE OF APESOKARI IN THE MESARA

Georgia Flouda

This presentation reassessed the archaeological correlates of burial ideology and practice at Apesokari in the southern Mesara from the late Prepalatial to the end of the Protopalatial period. It focused mainly on reconstructing the mortuary practices and commemoration rituals performed inside and outside Tholos Tomb A, which was excavated in 1942 by the Austrian archaeologist August Schörgendorfer after looting by locals. The long use of the tholos proper for successive burials from late Early Minoan III to Middle Minoan IIA (roughly from 2200–1750 bc), along with the secondary treatment of human remains, has disturbed primary depositions. Nevertheless, new data emerging from the systematic study of the hitherto unpublished pieces from the burial assemblage suggest that the annexe rooms and the paved area with the open-air altar were used simultaneously with the burial chamber throughout the latter's period of use; and, less systematically, afterwards. The funeral ritual would have been a communicative act involving the presence of performers entitled to enter the tomb complex and other mourners assembling in the paved area for collective feasting. Commemoration was probably supported by objects which, through their display, served as an index referencing ancestors, such as the abstract stone idol found near the entrance of the annexe.

The social unit using the tomb and participating in the commemoration rituals performed inside and outside Tholos Tomb A is tentatively correlated with one of the kin groups inhabiting the rocky Vigla hill to the south, where dispersed habitatonal foci can be discerned. The correlation rests upon the ongoing study of the associated multi-phase habitation site excavated by Schörgendorfer on the south slope of Vigla, a site traced by Stephanos Xanthoudides in 1915. A sequence of seven basement rooms, which covers a surface of 134 sq. meters, served as the substructure for the first floor of a freestanding two-storey building; this was inhabited continuously until at least the late Neopalatial period. The loss of Schörgendorfer's excavation notebook or notes, possibly during his period of active military service in the Wehrmacht, and the concomitant result of the separation of his excavation finds from their stratigraphic setting, make their recontextualization an imperative. The unpublished artefactual deposits and the storage capacity of the building correspond to a 'household unit', most probably equivalent to a clan or an extended family. The picture emerging from the analysis of the finds, combined with the strategic location of the building complex on one of the two main access routes leading from the Mesara plain to the harbour of Lebena on the south coast, supports the view that the habitation was an important node in the network of sites connected with the palace at Phaistos.

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Georgia Flouda	**Digging up the past: the Minoan site of Apesokari in the Mesara**

The front cover shows a Linear B page-shaped tablet from Mycenae (Au102) detailing work-groups of men, with comparanda from Pylos and Knossos. Drawn by Michael Ventris. © Institute of Classical Studies, Ventris Archive.