

ON HIERARCHICAL THINKING IN AEGEAN BRONZE AGE GLYPTIC IMAGERY *

Introduction

Social inequality in life, differential treatment in death, power relationships in religious matters, hierarchy is a fact of human interaction in all its Aegean dimensions. It is reflected in architecture, sacred, funerary, and secular, in burial customs, in administrative documents, and in imagery, particularly glyptic. The representations are primarily concerned with religious motifs depicting an interplay between worshipper and worshipped. Gods and goddesses, priests and priestesses, sacrificer and sacrificed, as well as adorants, populate a rich pictorial database, and are confidently identified as such by the literature.

Yet the basis for such identifications is frequently unsubstantiated statements to a specific effect: for rarely clearly formulated reasons, the same figure is variously designated goddess, priestess, or adorant. Occasionally, appeals are made to dress, gesture, or position within the image, but without the necessary analyses designed to claim a given gesture, piece of clothing, or location in the composition as exclusively reserved for members of one category.

Such techniques as are habitually employed to decode Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Greek religious images, to wit, identifying inscriptions, acquired attributes, distinctive dress, fail when confronted with the Minoan-Mycenaean material. No inscriptions. No attributes. And the dress-code for mortal and divine is largely egalitarian. In this absence of cues, alternative methods, developed through the give and take of scholarly interaction, and codified into something resembling a consecrated approach to the problems involved in identifying the actors in Aegean religious scenes, should be an expected component of the methodological arsenal at the scholar's disposal.

Not so.

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EIKΩN = EIKΩN. *Aegean Bronze Age Iconography: Shaping a Methodology. Proceedings of the 4th International Aegean Conference/4e Rencontre égéenne internationale, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia, 6-9 April 1992, Aegaeum 8* (1992);

LONG, ATS = C.R. LONG, *The Ayia Triadha Sarcophagus. A Study of Late Minoan and Mycenaean Funerary Practices and Beliefs* (SIMA XLI, 1974);

MARINATOS, MR = N. MARINATOS, *Minoan Religion. Ritual, Image, and Symbol* (1993);

NIEMEIER, "Gottheiten" = W.-D. NIEMEIER, "Zur Ikonographie von Gottheiten und Adoranten in den Kultszenen auf minoischen und mykenischen Siegeln", in *Fragen und Probleme der bronzezeitlichen ägäischen Glyptik, Beiträge zum 3. Internationalen Marburger Siegel-Symposium 5.-7. September 1985, CMS Beih. 3* (1989), 163-184;

NILSSON, MMR = M.P. NILSSON, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion* (2nd ed. 1950).

Despite promising attempts, and precisely because of their as yet unfulfilled potential, much work remains to be done before the study of Aegean Bronze Age imagery has been endowed with a theoretical foundation, a clearly articulated framework of assumptions, and a tested array of methodological tools. Before this has been achieved interpretation cannot be more than a Babel of competing opinions ¹.

Dress

It is common knowledge that the characteristic flounced skirt worn by the Minoan female figure constitutes, with the open bodice, near to the sole item of women's fashion depicted by the artists. A typological classification of the flounced skirt cannot be undertaken. It appears that the artist was open to choose whatever idiomatic means deemed necessary: no consistent approach is revealed over a significant range of documents identical treatment frequently being confined to the same image ². Women of various, and oft undetermined, status occasionally are depicted wearing a long gown with or without sleeves, leaving the breasts (when depicted) exposed, although not trussed into a bodice; this garment was also worn by men ³.

A third instance of shared fashion also constitutes the exception to the rule which states that female fashion is egalitarian across the divine/mortal divide: the hide skirt. Available in two different styles, the skin retaining the hairs, or scraped clean thereof, it is sufficiently rare for both sexes to attract attention ⁴. It appears in contexts suggestive of processions. Sometimes various implements are carried. A priestly function has often been assigned to figures thus clad ⁵.

A further item of clothing is understood as exclusively worn by the male members of the priesthood: the so-called "Syrian robe" with tassled diagonal decorative bands. It is known from seven seals and a larnax ⁶. Whether a reading as sacerdotal personnel follows automatically from this garment is open to debate, and other suggestions have been made ⁷. Far more problematic are attempts to interpret selected female figures wearing

1 Adhering to the wishes of the editors, a condensed formulation is presented, favoring the narrative at the regrettable expense of the scholarly apparatus. It constitutes, together with M. WEDDE, "Pictorial Architecture: for a Theory-based Analysis of Imagery", in *EIKON*, 181-203, a preview of a larger project of slow gestation designed to analyse the manner in which distinctions in religious hierarchy are made in the literature, and to generate a theoretical and methodological framework for the study of the relevant glyptic material. For preliminary formulations of this framework, cf. also ID., *Towards a Hermeneutics of Aegean Bronze Age Ship Imagery* (unpubl. diss. [publ. in prep.], Universität Mannheim, 1992), Chapter One, and ID., "Canonical, Variant, Marginal: a Framework for Analyzing Imagery", forthcoming in *IVE Symposium International sur les sceaux minoens et mycéniens (Clermont-Ferrand, 10-12 septembre 1992)*.

2 Compare the skirts worn on the following rings and seals: N4.3, 4.9, 4.11, 5.4, 5.9.

3 Cf. C. TELEVANTOU, *AE* 1982, 113-135, esp. 121 fig. 3α-γ; LONG, *ATS*, pl. 15.

4 Leather skirt: MARINATOS, *MR*, figs 101-107; D. HOGARTH, *JHS* 22 (1902), pl. VI, 7-9. Fleece skirt: *CMS* I, No 226; VIII, No 146; LONG, *ATS*, pls 6, 15, 19, 31. E. SAPOUNA-SAKELLARAKI, *Μινωικὸν Ζῶμα* (1971), 122-125, and LONG *ATS*, 37 treat the garment as a single type. Cf. catalogue in the former, pp. 64, No 143, 75-79 Nos 175-185. SAPOUNA-SAKELLARAKI (p. 123) does not understand them as being of fleece, but rather woven imitations. For the physical remains of such a cloth, cf. *Un siècle de fouilles françaises en Egypte 1880-1980* (Exhib. cat. Louvre 1981), 194 No 218 (18th Dyn.). For a full-length gown of fleece, cf. N4.13; LONG, *ATS*, pls 6, 19 (the deceased), 18 (figure on the procession wall painting at Pylos).

5 MARINATOS, *MR*, 135-137.

6 MARINATOS, *MR*, figs 88a-f, 95 (seals), LONG, *ATS*, pl. 13 fig. 31.

7 P. Rehak suggests a reading as middle-level administrators for these figures (*The Role of the Ruler in the Prehistoric Aegean*, *Aegaeum* 11 [1995], 95-118); J. CROWLEY (cf. this vol.) understands *CMS* I, No 223 as a deity with griffin.

the flounced skirt as "high priestesses" on the basis of position, gesture, and size⁸. As will be seen shortly, gestures are traits common to all levels in the hierarchy. To argue from size merely constitutes an unhappy influence from the Near East: in Aegean Bronze Age glyptic imagery significant, diagnostic differences in size are unknown. A specific position, as the body of the present paper will argue, if allied to indicators designating it as hierarchically superior, can be thus employed, although not in all cases where the function as "high priestess" has been invoked.

Gesture

A widespread misconception operates distinctions between mortal and divine by reference to gesture. This affirmation is untenable⁹. It raises important problems concerning how the rendering and the meaning of gestures are to be understood. For each clearly defined combination of arm movements there are carelessly rendered gestures, ambiguous in nature. Moreover, the absence of three-quarter views raises occasional doubts as to whether a specific frontally depicted gesture is related to a similar rendering of the arms seen in a profile view¹⁰.

The so-called "adoration-gesture", one hand raised to the forehead, the other, when visible, pendant, or lifting the hand to buttock, waist, or chest level, can be identified with confidence only occasionally. It is defined chiefly on the basis of the metal statuettes¹¹, and recognized on a small number of glyptic documents. Understood as translating a profound religious emotion¹², it cannot be identified as a compulsory element in representations depicting the manifestation of the deity. On the contrary, it appears in a number of other contexts, without a distinct pattern emerging¹³. Although a mortal status can frequently be argued, it is by no means assured.

All too frequently, it is replaced by, or confused with, a recurrent gesture, one arm raised, hand held in front or to the side of the face, the other pendant. This gesture appears at least in four tolerably well defined contexts (keeping in mind that any reading is partially founded on the expectations of the beholder):

- (1) greeting the manifesting deity, in which case it could, at least occasionally although not systematically, be understood as a carelessly rendered adoration gesture¹⁴;
- (2) approaching a construction, instances of which clearly cannot be related to the adoration gesture by virtue of branches held in the raised hand¹⁵;
- (3) dancing, when it can be interpreted as translating rhythmic movements executed with various bodily appendages, and, as such, not *per se* a gesture with a specific meaning (as is assumed for the two previous cases)¹⁶;

8 MARINATOS, *MR*, 184-188.

9 A sustained analysis must be undertaken elsewhere.

10 The above-mentioned examination will also consider frontality vs. profile view as status-indicator.

11 C. VERLINDEN, *Les statuettes anthropomorphes crétoises en bronze et en plomb, du IIIe millénaire au VIIe siècle av. J.-C.* (1984), pl. 1ff.

12 N2.1 may be considered the most emphatic statement.

13 Procession scene: N1.2; in connection with sacred markers: N1.7, 6.8, *CMS V Suppl.* 1A, No 75; uncertain contexts: N1.18, 1.26, 6.13.

14 N2.2, 2.6, 3.3; cf. also 4.7.

15 N1.1, 1.3, 1.4, possibly 1.23, 1.24; cf. also 1.22.

16 N1.5, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4(?), 5.9.

- (4) dictated by activities in which the figure is engaged, and therefore subordinate to their requirements and in terms of gestures imbued with symbolic portent, irrelevant¹⁷.

The range covered by arm movements answering directly or superficially to this combination is too great to permit any statements regarding status. The conclusion is strengthened by the difficulties involved in determining the extent to which the gesture has a specific purpose, as opposed to being incidental to an activity.

A possible variant moves the raised hand from the vicinity of the face to the chest. Whereas it occurs in several instances performed by the woman seated on a construction, or on stones, believed to depict a goddess¹⁸, it is also encountered in connection with standing women of indeterminate status¹⁹. It is conceivably related to cases in which the seated woman holds one forearm horizontally below the breasts²⁰; the angle of the bend at the elbow varies sufficiently not to warrant imposing too rigid criteria.

Frequently understood as a sign of divine status, raising both hands to the level of the head is encountered, whenever specification is feasible, across the spectrum. Again problems rise concerning the distinction between a gesture loaded with meaning, one (perhaps also symbolic in nature) imposed by, and one incidental to, an activity. In addition, it is not always possible to determine the exact position of the hands in relationship to the head through an arc of 180 degrees from shoulder to shoulder. Whereas a deity may raise both hands as a "manifestation gesture" (?)²¹, or as a sign of dominance over wild beasts²², the gesture also occurs in dancing, processions, and in the presence of a construction, as well as performed by a monkey²³.

Pending a more in-depth examination, the tenor of which is partially revealed by the present section, it is preferable to exclude any reference to gesture from discussions purporting to provide means viable for the identification of status in Minoan-Mycenaean glyptic imagery.

Pictorial structure

Given the difficulties raised by the application of the traditional procedures, it appears preferable to approach the stated problem by reference not to specific traits, but to the principle by which these are organized: the structure of the image. The method may be described as a simple form of structuralist analysis. Behind an image lies a conceptual matrix, a predeterminate template, bearer of a generic message, into which are inserted variant components, articulators of a distinct meaning. The repetitive occurrence of a distinct pattern governing the use made of the available surface constitutes the basis for a typological classification, creating clusters of images related in a sufficient number of manners so as to permit formulating a coherent set of statements applicable to all members. Variation is observed at the level of the contents within any given area (or zone) of the surface, indicating, at least in terms of image structure, the permissible range of alteration open to the artist.

17 N1.14, 1.16, 4.9, 5.7(?), *CMS I*, No 12, XI, No 27; V Suppl. 1A, Nos 175, 179 may be related.

18 N4.4, 4.7, 4.8, 4.11.

19 NILSSON, *MMR*, 342 fig. 155, N6.2, 6.3, *CMS XI*, No 29.

20 N4.1, 4.5, 4.14.

21 N3.2 and the terracotta statuettes from Gournia, Pankalokhorion, Karphi, Gortyn, cf. S. ALEXIOU, *KretKhron IB'* (1958), pls. E'-Z'.

22 *CMS I*, Nos 144, 167; NILSSON, *MMR*, 358 fig. 169.

23 N5.9. N1.21. N1.10, *CMS I*, No 377.

It is clear that an approach such as this and the never clearly articulated, although subjacent, procedures evident in the literature cannot function without a foundation of crucial assumptions, however aware the beholder may be of their presence in the analysis. These range from the obvious belief that the images studied are meaningful in terms of their structure, content, and message, thus deserving of examination, to more complex aspects of pictorial decoding. Since the interpretative superstructures created by the scholar are directly tributary to these unspoken dogmata, it is imperative that they be endowed with a voice.

Representations as small as those of the Minoan-Mycenaean glyptic corpus raise the issue of inclusiveness: for the purpose of analysis, it will be assumed that an undamaged depiction will constitute a complete enunciation in itself. This need, by no means, be true. That which is depicted may be a *pars pro toto* rendition of a more complex whole, either as a shorthand image which omits certain components, or as a porthole composition, giving partial, albeit locally complete, insight. Or it may form part of a larger cycle together with other clusters identified, whereby one cluster may excerpt another. Elements seemingly crucial to the meaning may be absent in some instances, a classification being possible only through the recognition of the complete image.

Support and boundary, surface and the beyond, have, thus, a significant impact on the reading process, raising a further two problems.

Firstly: for a coherent, reproduceable reading it is necessary to assume that the contents of the pictorial field are governed by a meaningful symbiotic relationship. That is: all components contribute in an integrated manner to the message. And: their relative position upon the surface is tributary to a function within the statement. This assumption cannot be raised to a principle since its opposite cannot be excluded: the paratactic enumeration of elements constituting an act/idea, without specification of internal connections between them.

Secondly: the contrast between pictorial and physical space. Human activity takes place in a tridimensional environment, whereas its translation into a language non-conversant with true perspective requires adjustment into two dimensions. The loss of depth raises the issue whether the resulting image provides the information required for a translation back into three dimensions. It may be of considerable significance whether figures depicted on a baseline should be understood as queuing in front of a construction, or whether the shape of the support imposes such a notation on actors dispersed within an area endowed with depth. The physicality of glyptic space, by its very nature, cannot *a priori* be translated into a dynamic relationship of the elements active therewithin.

Scenes of pyramidal hierarchy

For a study of ritual stratification in Minoan-Mycenaean glyptic imagery, which is to avoid imposing preconceived notions upon the database, it is necessary to assume certain stances in regards to the problems enumerated above. These will become apparent as the method to be employed is detailed.

If the beholder is to perceive a difference in status not signaled through dress or gestures of high symbolic content reserved for a specific stratum of the hierarchy, an expressive interaction between the strata is required. The occupant of the upper stratum may in some manner render evident his/her superiority, or the inferior entity engage in supplicatory or adorational activities directed towards the higher level. This approach to the problem is suggested on the basis of the behavior in which the adorants in the "scenes of manifestation" (Pl. LIX1) and "scenes of adoration" (Pl. LIX2) are engaged in: ecstatic movement, touching of trees and baetyls, acknowledgement of the manifesting

deity, offering objects to the seated deity. These activities are united by a common denominator: they are examples of directed action targeting the deity or objects in some way connected with it.

The focusing of an act on a recipient requires in terms of the beholder's ability to perceive a profile view of the active figure, and the presence within the picture surface of the destination. The structure to be studied here focuses on a central entity, flanked by two identical lateral units, targeting the central one. Inclusiveness is assumed, although the structure can be extended laterally (see below).

This composition posits a symbiosis, a power relationship between the central and the lateral entities, assigning a superior status to the former. Such a position is supported by the understanding of the "scenes of manifestation" and "of adoration": the adorant, almost exclusively in profile view, targets the small floating figure, or the seated deity, with his/her undivided attention, or, as in certain cases, objects perceived in some way connected with the apparition of the divinity (tree, baetyl).

The final problem, that of pictorial vs. physical space is partly avoided by the nature of the representations considered. Space as it relates to reality is not a primary preoccupation of the artist creating an image reduced to the antithetic disposition of two identical elements to either side of a central motif: the available surface becomes a cosmos in itself.

Variant I of the "scenes of pyramidal hierarchy" (Pl. LIX3) contains the well-known Mistress/Master of Animals composition and declinations thereof, such as animals, real and fantastical, flanking a tree or a pillar²⁴. The rules of transformation are simple, allowing a restricted number of components to occupy each zone. The central zone cannot automatically be equated with the divine sphere, since there is sufficient evidence that the pillar and the tree are not substitutes for the deity and worshipped as such, but serve to indicate the place where the deity is liable to manifest itself, subsequent to the appropriate action on the part of the worshipper.

Variant II (Pl. LIX4), if correctly identified, offers a more eloquent approach to the power pyramid. The addition of a second central component above the extant one creates a more complex message based on the tripartite hierarchy of lateral, lower central, upper central zones in ascending order. Images of lions rising with their front paws onto an altar below a sun or bucranium are among the simpler examples²⁵.

A seal with a profile figure of uncertain sex seated on a lion's head and flanked by two regardant raises a problem. The fact of being seated is known from the "scenes of adoration", albeit always on a shrine-like construction, a stool, or a rock. Whether the lion's head should be read as the lower central entity, or merely as a variation on the seating arrangement is open to debate²⁶. A comparandum is provided by a sealing depicting a seated woman of the familiar type on a platform which also serves as support for the front paws of two lions²⁷.

Variant III (Pl. LIX5) extends the composition laterally. It also illustrates the limits of method: if an upward extension is understood as hierarchically superior, a lateral one

24 The hierarchical factor constitutes the critical difference with a mere antithetic or heraldic composition: antithetic compositions do not contain the crucial statement concerning a stratification of components, whereas the term "heraldic composition" is best left alone and value-free, not weighted by the interpretational baggage here associated with the "scenes of pyramidal hierarchy".

25 *CMS* XI, Nos 47, 176; V, No 201. A male figure standing on horns of consecration and flanked by a winged goat and a Minoan genius adds complexity, both through the inverted size relationship between the two central components, and the variation in the lateral zones.

26 *CMS* VII, No 118. Cf. NILSSON, *MMR*, 235, 359.

27 *CMS* V Suppl. 1B, No 195.

should constitute a regression in status. However, the instances inventoried to date suggest a more complex situation. The Chamber tomb 91 ring (Pl. LIX6) depicts a central shrine, surmounted by what could be two squills, and flanked by two women performing the "adoration gesture". The vegetation left and right is only inferior to the women if considered *mise en scène*, while if markers of holy ground, they may be understood as superior.

Clearly inferior in status by virtue of a series of images adhering to Variant I (as well as further documents not constructed on the structure hitherto discussed) are the goats or goat-like quadrupeds on the Chamber tomb 88 seal (Pl. LIX7) and the sealing from the palace at Pylos (Pl. LIX8)²⁸. On the former, the architecture along the edges, onto which the animals rear may be understood as superior, as are the *genii* on the latter²⁹.

The "Mother of the Mountain" sealing³⁰ constitutes the most complex statement employing the Variant III structure. Standing on the central mountain, and thus superior to it, the woman is flanked by two lions, in turn flanked by architecture and what appears to be an adorant. The "scenes of pyramidal hierarchy", as the structure is defined here, prescribes equality between the occupants of comparable zones. This would suggest that the adorant is of non-mortal status, yet inferior to the woman on the mountain³¹. It should also be noted that this image can be decomposed into a canonical "scene of manifestation" if the mountain and the lions are removed, and a canonical "scene of pyramidal hierarchy" if the lateral additions are ignored³².

Reading Minoan ritual imagery

To venture from the description of structures to interpreting the components inserted in the various zones on the basis of the aggregate of occurrences and the hierarchical relationships to the attendant counterparts, although fraught with hurdles, constitutes the ultimate aim of any inquiry into Minoan-Mycenaean glyptic ritual imagery. Within the present limits, it is not possible to suspend every document in a web of analysis, particularly since whereas the earlier structures appear fairly consistent, the "scenes of pyramidal hierarchy" generate a multitude of feasible readings.

A representative sample reveals a number of patterns in position within the structures. In the simplest form, Variant I, the "Mistress/Master of Animals" images serve as entry point due to the clearly formulated power relationship: bird, lion, dolphin, but also griffin and *genius* flank the axial figure³³. Further documents indicate that the

28 CMS I, Nos 123, 379. A detailed demonstration will have to wait another occasion.

29 Cf. also CMS V Suppl. 1A, No 178 (tree flanked by women with lateral architecture; on CMS II.3, No 56 the central component is absent).

30 N2.4.

31 Cf. C. SOURVINOU-INWOOD, *Kadmos* 28 (1989), 97-100 ("Young God").

32 These documents merely illustrate the freedom of the artist to move beyond proven compositional patterns, as well as the limits of a structuralist approach. A similar fusion of two structures is argued for the "Ramp House" ring (N4.1), cf. WEDDE, in *EIKON*, 190-191: "scene of adoration", "of manifestation"; the "Ring of Minos" (PM IV, 950 fig. 917) "scene of manifestation", "of adoration", cultboat); the "Kandia" ring (N2.6; "scene of manifestation", cultboat); the Tiryns ring (N4.13; "scene of adoration", "of procession"), to be treated elsewhere.

33 Bird: CMS I, No 233; VII, No 134; IX, No 154. Lion: CMS I, No 89; II.3, Nos 167 (with griffin), 193; XI, Nos 177, 301 (lion skins?); NILSSON, *MMR*, 358 fig. 169. Dolphin: CMS I, No 344; V Suppl. 1B, No 116. Griffin: CMS II.3, No 167 (with lion). Genius: CMS XI, Nos 36, 290.

genius can occupy the median zone, flanked by lions³⁴, and men³⁵, thus creating a first complex hierarchy: male/female- *genius* -men/lion (and by extension bird, dolphin, griffin).

A second series of images replaces the human figure or *genius* by a pillar, flanked by birds, bulls, lions, goats, griffins, and *genii*³⁶. Essentially identical in message is the series in which a tree takes the place of the pillar³⁷. Whether a significant difference should be read into the placing of the pillar or tree on an altar or altar with horns of consecration cannot be ascertained as yet³⁸. The "scenes of manifestation" and "of adoration" argue against understanding the pillar/tree as the equivalent of the central male/female figure, thus suggesting the following hierarchy: male/female-pillar/tree -*genius*- men/lion/bull/bird/dolphin/griffin/ sphinx³⁹. Further permutations are to be expected as the study proceeds.

Representations constructed according to the Variant II approach permit finer tuning of the broad lowest stratum. The special status of the bull, otherwise evident in Minoan-Mycenaean imagery, is clearly articulated in such instances where a bucranium surmounts the scene⁴⁰. Of particular interest is a small group of images clustering around a seal thought to come from Argos (Pl. LIX9). A bull's head is surmounted by a double-axe, and flanked by flounced skirts⁴¹. The double-axe and skirt are carried by human figures in several scenes, possibly of procession⁴². It is probably no coincidence that the double-axe, the skirt, and the horns of the bull appear on seals depicting the so-called "woman with the snake frame"⁴³. She carries the horns, surmounted by the double-axe, on her head and is flanked by griffins or lions, placing her somewhere between her companions and the elements of her headdress.

The lion was seen above to flank the "Mistress/Master of the Animals", the pillar, the tree, and the woman with the horn/axe crown, here understood to be a mortal of temporarily exalted status⁴⁴. In other words, the lion cuts across a number of strata: the divine, the marker of the sacred locus, and the servant of the deities. Hunted and hunter⁴⁵, it also moves on the purely mortal stratum. Furthermore, it can be ridden, hitched to

34 CMS I, No 172; cf. XI, No 37 (lion skins as in XI, No 301?).

35 CMS VII, No 95.

36 Birds: CMS VII, No 187. Bulls: CMS II.4, No 203. Lions: CMS IV, No 304; VII, No 154. Goats: CMS XI, No 196. Griffins: CMS I, Nos 171 (with minotaur below), 218. Genii: CMS VIII, No 65; XII, No 302.

37 With flanking bulls: CMS I, No 58; V Suppl. 1B, No 354; XIII, No 27. Goats: CMS I, Nos 123, 155, 266. Sphinxes: CMS I, Nos 87, 218.

38 Pillar on altar with griffins: CMS I, No 98. Vegetation on altar with horns and genii: CMS I, No 231.

39 Images of genii carrying sacrificial animals (CMS XI, Nos 38, 39) confirm the superior position of the genius, while a variant depicting a genius carrying a man (CMS V Suppl. 1B, No 153) does the same in relationship to man. On this motif with a woman carrying the animal, cf. I. SAKELLARAKIS, *AE* 1972, 245-278, with the corrective note by I. PINI, in *EIKΩN*, 17 regarding the interpretation.

40 Cf., for instance, CMS XI, No 176.

41 Related documents include: CMS II.3, No 11; V Suppl. 1A, No 141; *BSA* 8 (1901-02), 102 fig. 60. Cf. also CMS II.3, No 149, and XII, No 250.

42 CMS II.3, No 8; MARINATOS, *MR*, 136 figs 105 (only axes), 106.

43 On this motif, cf. R. HÄGG and Y. LINDAU, *OpAth* 15 (1984), 67-77, H. REUSCH, in *Minoica. Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag von Johannes Sundwall* (1958), 334-358, R. HÄGG, *AM* 101 (1986), 41-62, W.-D. NIEMEIER, *AM* 101 (1986), 63-95.

44 This is partially supported by CMS XIII, No 39 where the manifesting deity appears in the same guise. The position occupied by the woman in the series discussed in the previous note within the structure argues against endowing her with divine status.

45 Hunted: CMS I, Nos 9, 112; IX, No 152; XI, Nos 33, 208. Hunter: CMS V, No 678; XII, No 251. Cf. I. PINI, in *Iconographie minoenne. Actes de la Table Ronde d'Athènes (21-22 avril 1983)*, *BCH* Suppl. XI (1985), 153-166.

chariot⁴⁶, appear with a male figure in a composition well attested to as far as mortal content is concerned, that of the "animal familiar"⁴⁷. This argues against seeing the lion as a divine marker⁴⁸.

The griffin is in much the same position: hunter⁴⁹, draught animal⁵⁰, companion⁵¹, with rarely an indication that the accompanied human figure is, by definition, divine in nature. It cannot, therefore, be employed to argue in favor of divine status.

A final fivesome merits particular attention due to its colorful critical fortune: the Archanes, Vapheio, Isopata, Mycenae, and Mitsotakis gold rings⁵². The central female figure has been variously interpreted as goddess, "high priestess", or adorant⁵³. The purpose is not here to offer an in depth examination, but to inquire into the possibility of superposing the pyramidal structure onto these images.

The Archanes ring: neither the man grasping the tree on the left, nor his companion kneeling and embracing the baetyl(?) to the right, target the central woman.

The Vapheio ring: same remarks (reading the objects on the right as a woman crouching against a figure-8 shield)⁵⁴. In terms of structure, these two representations are identical, down to the floating symbols at upper right⁵⁵.

The Isopata ring: the doubling of the woman to the right could qualify as a variation, yet neither they, nor the woman on the left, are focused on the central figure. The epiphanic component, moreover, at upper right precludes the concurrent appearance of the deity in full size⁵⁶.

The Mycenae ring: the absence of targeting of the central woman is evident⁵⁷.

46 Ridden: CMS V, No 584. Hitched: CMS V, No 585.

47 As defined by CROWLEY, in *EIKQN*, 26. Man with lion: CMS II.3, No 52; V Suppl. 1B, No 77; IX, No 114; XII, No 207; NILSSON, *MMR*, 355 fig. 164. Man with bull: CMS V Suppl. 1A, No 173; VII, No 102. Man with dog: CMS V Suppl. 1A, No 174; NILSSON, *MMR*, 354 fig. 163. Woman with dog: CMS V Suppl. 1B, No 58. Man with unidentified quadruped: CMS V Suppl. 1B, No 341.

48 Despite CMS I, No 374, a rearing lion flanked by two women, a scene which merely raises the lion to an occasional position equivalent to the pillar, tree, or genius. Thus, the well-known sealing from the Temple Repositories depicting a male with lance and a lion (NILSSON, *MMR*, 355, fig. 165) can be placed in the divine stratum only if the male figure warrants it (cf. W.-D. NIEMEIER, *AM* 102 [1987], 65-98).

49 CMS XI, No 244.

50 CMS V Suppl. 1B, No 137; cf. LONG, *ATS*, pl. 11, to be compared with idem pl. 27, the goat-drawn chariot, and a seal, pl. 28 fig. 77.

51 CMS I, No 128 (with seated figure); I, No 223 (with "priest"); V Suppl. 1B, No 429; VIII, No 146; MARINATOS, *MR*, 164 fig. 152 (unspecified). Attempts to read the final image, the Phourni ring, as depicting a goddess (E. SAPOUNA-SAKELLARAKIS, *BCH* 114 [1990], 83, 84 fig. 31; cf. also *PraktArchEt* 1967, 153 and pl. 137a; I. and E. SAKELLARAKIS, *Archanes* [1991], 93 fig. 68; MARINATOS, *MR*, 164 and caption to fig. 152) ignore the unspecific nature of the griffin. For the composition, cf. CMS V Suppl. 1A, No 174, rendering the reconstruction of a chariot (MARINATOS, *MR*, 164) unnecessary. For CMS VIII, No 146, cf. I, No 226 (probably same fleece skirt).

52 N5.2, 5.3, 5.9, 5.1, and 5.4, respectively.

53 NIEMEIER, "Gottheiten", 174-178 and caption to fig. 5 sees all five as depicting a deity. MARINATOS, *MR*, 185-186 with captions to figs 187-189 considers the woman on the Mycenae, Archanes, and Vapheio rings to be a "high priestess". The present author, based on the analysis presented in *EIKQN* (cf. n. 1 above), interpreted all five as adorants (for further references, cf. n. 53 in that paper).

54 I. PINI, in *EIKQN*, 14, following *PM* III, 141, contra C. BOULOTIS and W.-D. NIEMEIER, cf. NIEMEIER, "Gottheiten", 176 and n. 71, who see a garment and a sword stuck into the shield.

55 A similarity in structure to Variant III can be argued for the Archanes and Vapheio rings: the adorants and the markers/objects in the lateral zones exhibit the non-linear outward regression in status, the symbols could be read as the upper central zone shifted sideways to accommodate the occupant of the central zone, thus down-sizing the latter in the hierarchy. The absence of targeting remains problematic.

56 Cf. M. WEDDE, in *EIKQN*, 187-188 and n. 49.

57 On this ring cf. NIEMEIER, "Gottheiten", 176, 184, and I. PINI, CMS II.3, xlv-xlvii.

The Mitsotakis ring: whereas the woman to the right is intent on acquitting herself of her part in invoking the deity to appear, her companion on the left has turned to the central figure, raising both arms. It should, however, be noted that the lifting of the latter onto a higher plane, a feature she shares with the central figure on the Isopata ring, suggests a circular conception of space as depicted on the support: the central woman may well occupy a position to the rear of a potential target.

Therefore it may be tentatively concluded that the structure governing the composition of "scenes of pyramidal hierarchy" cannot serve to confirm a reading as a deity for the central woman. To widen the definition of the pyramidal structure, or at least that of the third variant, to allow for variations such as those exhibited by the above five documents is feasible, given the marginal instances observed in connection with the clusters and structures defined to date. Nonetheless, such a *Hilfshypothese* should be recognized for what it sets out to achieve: an appeal to method in favor of raising the central figure to a superior status. It may also be argued that the emphasis on the central zone, as illustrated by the pyramidal structure, and by those instances of "scenes of manifestation" which adhere most strictly to the canonical form⁵⁸, could permit stressing the *Macht der Mitte* in general, and, thus (but only thus in terms of pictorial structure), enhance the status of its occupant. If done, an interpretation as priestess could be entertained⁵⁹.

Conclusions

It is apparent that an analysis of the pictorial structure, particularly in terms of the interaction between the occupants of various zones, reveals a web of interrelations. By following the fortunes of a given entity through a range of documents, it is possible to chart the position or positions held within a hierarchy, and, the ultimate aim, to test the resultant potential of an entity to determine the nature of any companion with which it is depicted.

It ensues that the artist (as translator of an ideology) employed a more complex system of ritual stratification than a mere division into adorant, sacerdotal personel, deity. An important level, as yet difficult to detail, inserts itself between the priesthood and the divinities. On the one hand, it is constituted by animate beings, some real, such as the lion, the bull, and, particularly the monkey, some fantastical, such as griffins and sphinxes. These appear to function as intermediaries or deputies in communication with the divine level⁶⁰, as well as being susceptible of receiving ritual attention, or occasionally of serving as sacrificial animals. On the other hand, cult architecture, pillars, vegetation, inanimate objects, clearly are placed in the spotlight, elevated to a level above the status of the mortal.

This phenomenon may be related to the deity's ability to manifest itself in various non-anthropomorphic forms: the bird, twin butterflies, the double-axe with sacred knot, perhaps also the plain double-axe. This suggests fleeting borders between divine and mortal, a nexus of several registers. The deities appear in many forms, symbols of their

58 N2.1, 2.3, to a lesser extent 2.2, 2.5. An up-to-date listing, modifying that of the author in *EIKON* paper, will appear elsewhere.

59 The author does not side with MARINATOS, *MR*, 187-188 and captions to figs 190-193, in seeing a "high priestess" in the cited images for reasons which must find their full exposition elsewhere (fig. 191 depicts a "scene of manifestation" as defined in the author's *EIKON* paper [n. 1 above], esp. p. 186).

60 This is particularly well brought out by the wall painting from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri with the women seated on the dais, flanked by a griffin and a monkey, the latter functioning as an intermediary for the adorant pouring out an offering of crocus blooms (cf. MARINATOS, *MR*, 206 fig. 213).

various aspects, *in corpore* among adorants, or deputized by a mortal who receives the honors of the divine -leaving aside the problem of how to distinguish between the real and pretending to be real.

An important aspect yet to be factored into the analysis is the relative chronology of the documents studied⁶¹. If not done to date, this omission in no way stems from ignorance of the possible ramifications involved. Rather: the hard stone gem cutting of the Minoans and the Mycenaeans exhibits a certain general unity imposed by technique and support which clearly distinguishes it from the earlier soft stone seal production, and which has an impact on the styles identifiable and the motifs employed. In terms of statistics, it has been deemed preferable, at this early stage of work, to examine larger clusters, if necessarily in partial contravention against the original, and still adhered to, definition of a cluster⁶². Moreover, the very real problems involved in determining the exact date of a seal cannot be ignored⁶³.

The continuity from Minoan to Mycenaean glyptics permits a treatment of documents spanning the Middle Minoan III to Late Mycenaean III period, over half a millennium on the high chronology, but raises a second, and related, issue, that of distinguishing Mycenaean from Minoan images. It is conceivable that a difference in structure can be observed, thus potentially contributing to this thorny issue⁶⁴.

Finally, the spirit of the present enterprise. Beyond the basic belief of the present author that Aegean archaeology must theorize or be damned, a method based on a specified theoretical stance, a clearly formulated framework of assumptions, and an arsenal of methodological tools, applied to representational data exhibiting a recurrent use of a restricted number of images, that is, as argued here, the repeated clothing of a limited set of pictorial structures with the flesh of the individual representation, cannot but render the act of decoding more accessible to the scholar and student. The major criticism leveled against the literature is not directed at specific readings and the ensuing reconstruction of Minoan-Mycenaean rituals and beliefs, but the absence of transparency: the minutiae of analysis are not made available for inspection. This lack of insight into the analytical process runs contrary to the principle of accountability as practised in the hard sciences.

Far be it from the purpose of the present paper, and its companions, to adopt a prescriptive stance. It attempts to illustrate the potential harbored by the examination of the subjacent structure of images within a cluster to a study of their meaning, be it in terms of rituals enacted, relationships between actors, and beliefs revealed. And of the identification of deity, priesthood, and adorant -that is: the hierarchy of cult.

Michael WEDDE

61 As most correctly noted in the discussion by P.P. Betancourt.

62 Cf. Chapter One of the author's dissertation (n. 1 above), esp. Section 1.4.

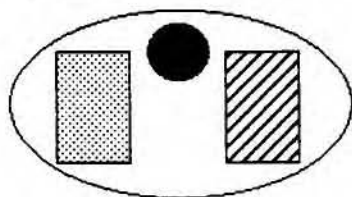
63 Once a number of structures have been identified, it will be necessary to turn to the chronological issue on the basis of the groundwork having been done by I. Pini (cf. the introductions to *CMS* II.3 and II.4), as well as the stylistic analyses of H. BIESANTZ, *Kretisch-mykenische Siegelbilder. Stilgeschichtliche und chronologische Untersuchungen* (1954), V.E.G. KENNA, *Cretan Seals* (1960), J. BOARDMAN, *Greek Gems and Finger Rings* (1970), 19-65, and a series of articles by J. YOUNGER, *Kadmos* 21-26 (1982-1987), the first together with J. BETTS.

64 P.P. Betancourt suggested this in a private discussion with J. Weingarten, as Dr Weingarten kindly informed the author.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

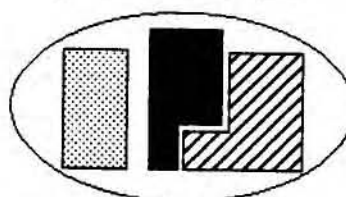
- Pl. LIX1-5 Computer graphics by the author.
Pl. LIX6 Mycenae Chamber tomb 91 gold ring (NM 3180), *CMS* I, Nr 127.
Pl. LIX7 Mycenae Chamber tomb 88 seal (NM 3154), *CMS* I, Nr 123.
Pl. LIX8 Pylos sealing (NM 8552), *CMS* I, Nr 379.
Pl. LIX9 Seal from "Argos" (Berlin, Staatl. Museen, Antiken-Abt. 638), *CMS* XI, Nr 259.

Scenes of Manifestation



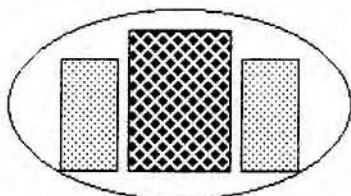
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Scenes of Adoration



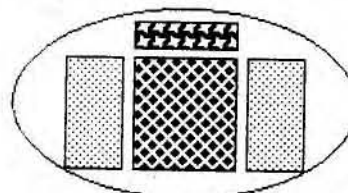
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Scenes of Pyramidal Hierarchy – Variant A



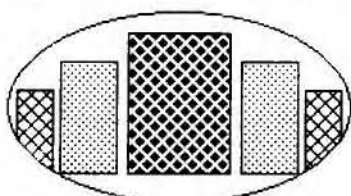
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Scenes of Pyramidal Hierarchy – Variant B









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Scenes of Pyramidal Hierarchy – Variant C

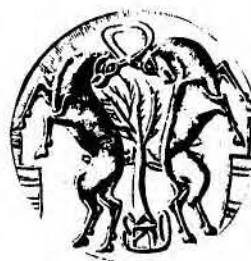


5

-  Adorant/Inferior Entity
-  Deity
-  Sacred Marker
-  Superior Entity
-  Lateral Entity
-  Superordinate Entity



6



7



8



9