


Minoan Missionaries in Pylos

What we call the Mycenaean culture came into being at a particular time and in special circumstances, deeply impacted in its formative stages by contact with Crete through a process that has been called Minoanization. The people we call Mycenaeans shared artistic styles and political institutions, and held similar religious beliefs, but we cannot assume all of them spoke Greek. In the Early Mycenaean period, it is equally clear that there were those outside the sphere of major centers like Pylos who did not share in Mycenaean culture but may have spoken Greek. Language and culture are two different things. In chapter 6, we focus on Cretan contributions to the creation of Early Mycenaean culture at Pylos. The suggestion of Minoan missionaries in our title is intentionally provocative, but we can recognize the infiltration of Minoan concepts, even in regard to the institution of kingship and belief. Discovery of the Griffin Warrior permits us to argue that in the fifteenth century B.C., this powerful figure, likely an Early Mycenaean wanax, exercised power both on the field of battle and in the religious sphere.

In Christmas week of 2016, a long article in *Smithsonian* magazine about our excavations in Pylos hit the newsstands, well-researched and impressively written by journalist Jo Marchant, a scientist with a Ph.D. in microbiology (see figure 32).¹ We had worked closely with Jo for six months and were excited to see it published.

Little did we expect the online comments that the story would provoke. Here are three:

The political comment at the end could indicate a desire to force-fit these discoveries into a revisionist history that redefines these societies as cosmopolitan. Really, I don't think that respectable scholarly work can be done by people who try to impose modern socio-political visions onto the evidence of the past. Without juxtaposing these implications against the reams of evidence to the contrary, it seems like journalistic sensation pandering to a modern cosmopolitan audience that wants to follow their imaginations instead of the evidence.



THE 3,500-YEAR-OLD TOMB OF AN UNKNOWN
SOLDIER IS SHAKING OUR UNDERSTANDING
OF THE ROOTS OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

BY JO MARCHANT

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MYRTO PAPADOPOULOS
ILLUSTRATION BY JON KRAUSE

THE GOLDEN WARRIOR

38 SMITHSONIAN.OOM | January • February 2017

FIGURE 32. The *Smithsonian* magazine cover for the issue presenting the first major story about the grave of the Griffin Warrior. Copyright 2017 Jo Marchant/illustration for *Smithsonian* by Jon Krause. Reprinted with permission from Smithsonian Enterprises. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any medium is strictly prohibited without permission from *Smithsonian* magazine.

It's so funny how the comments all assume the writer meant trump. But trump is never mentioned. You hear "xenophobe" and immediately think of your president. Amazing!

I'm pleased to see that so many here called them on that blatant Cultural Marxist ending.

What was that "blatant Cultural Marxist" ending that inspired so much controversy?² Jo wrote that we "favor the idea that the two cultures [Mycenaean and Minoan] became entwined at a very early stage," and she continued:

It's a conclusion that fits recent suggestions that regime change on Crete around the time the mainland palaces went up, which traditionally corresponds to the decline of Minoan civilization, may not have resulted from the aggressive invasion that historians have assumed. The later period at Knossos might represent something more like "an EU in the Aegean," says [John] Bennet, [director] of the British School at Athens. Minoans and Mycenaean Greeks would surely have spoken each other's languages, may have intermarried and likely adopted and refashioned one another's customs. And they may not have seen themselves with the rigid identities we moderns have tended to impose on them.

Jo concluded:

The revelation is compelling for anyone with an interest in how great civilizations are born—and what makes them "great." And with rising nationalism and xenophobia in parts of Europe and the United States, Davis and others suggest that the grave contains a more urgent lesson. Greek culture, Davis says, "is not something that has been genetically transmitted from generation to generation since the dawn of time." From the very earliest moments of Western civilization, he says, Mycenaeans "were capable of embracing many different traditions."

We doubt that many professional Aegean prehistorians, if any, would disagree with this statement. We presume that by "cultural Marxism," the commentator is referring to the far-right conspiracy theory that claims there is an ongoing academic and intellectual effort to undermine Western culture and its values. We assure readers that we are neither that clever nor that conspiratorial.

THE PHENOMENON OF MINOANIZATION

What is not, however, thoroughly understood as yet is the process (or processes) by which Minoan ideas and technologies spread from Crete to the Greek mainland. By the end of the New Palace period, ca. 1450 B.C., was the Aegean one [happy] EU trading community, as Bennet is quoted as saying?³ Or do we imagine that Minoanization, a term long used by prehistorians working in the islands of the Aegean Sea to describe the adoption of Cretan ways, followed a violent path? Both scenarios may, of course, be perfectly possible, with one following the other sequentially, or both happening concurrently.⁴

Minoanization was characteristic of islands in the Cyclades and the Dodecanese in particular, but also the western coast of Turkey—even the island of Kythera, off the southeastern Peloponnese.⁵ Minoan culture had already arrived on Kythera in the third millennium B.C., and this island, along with neighboring Antikythera, was certainly settled by immigrants from Crete. On Thera, in the period of the Minoan New Palaces, the settlements buried by the volcanic eruption in the sixteenth century B.C. are hardly distinguishable from contemporary towns and villages on Crete.

Homer, our earliest Greek poet, wrote about King Minos of Knossos, as did many other ancient authors.⁶ Archaeologists have been tempted to see in these references a remembrance by Classical Greeks of a prehistoric past—of the civilization that we today call Minoan. Even the fanciful tale of the Minotaur is sometimes imagined to contain a kernel of truth. King Minos's wife, Pasiphae, bore this monstrous creature, part man and part bull; he was locked in a labyrinth constructed by Minos's master craftsman Daedalus. Do Daedalus's miraculous abilities reflect the skills of Minoan craftsmen? Is the labyrinth a vague recollection of the labyrinthine passageways in the palace uncovered by Sir Arthur Evans at Knossos? Could the Minotaur encapsulate a fractured memory of bull sacrifice or athletic bull-leaping?

King Minos appears in Greek literature as a tyrant, whose navy allowed him to rule wide dominions and police his empire—his thalassocracy, or sea empire. Hesiod, writing in the eighth century B.C., attributes overseas territories to Minos. His children and brothers supposedly founded colonies in Italy and Sicily, at Miletos and in Lycia in western and southern Turkey, on the Levantine coast, in Libya, in central Greece, and in the Troad.

Toward the end of the fifth century B.C., Thucydides was quite clear on one point: "Minos was the oldest of those who we know possessed a navy and he dominated most of what is now called the Greek Sea. He ruled the Cycladic islands and was first to colonize most, after he drove out the Carians and established his own sons in them as sovereigns."⁷

Some of the ancient traditions are very specific in their details, as in the case of the island of Kea, nearest of the Cycladic islands to Athens, where one clan (called the Euxantidai, "descendants of Euxantios") in historical times traced its pedigree to Crete and a son of Minos. In the early fifth century B.C., the poet Bacchylides, himself from this island, described how:

Warlike Minos came with a host of Cretans in fifty ships with swift sterns. By the will of Zeus who brings glory, he married the ample-bosomed maiden Dexithea and left her half of his people, men who were devoted to Ares, god of war. Then after distributing this mountainous land to them, King Minos, he of Europa's bloodline, sailed back to Knossos, his beloved city. After nine months the fair-haired maiden Dexithea bore Euxantios to rule over the celebrated island of Kea.⁸



FIGURE 33. The Bay of Ayios Nikolaos on the Cycladic island of Kea (Ayia Irini and peninsula in foreground). Courtesy of Lyvia Morgan.

How well does the archaeological record agree with this literary tradition of a “Minoan thalassocracy”? There is considerable evidence that, in the Minoan New Palace period, Crete had a profound influence on the development of local cultures in other parts of the Aegean. Any evaluation of the historical worth of later Greek traditions must take into account evidence from several archaeological sites in the Cyclades and Dodecanese. The long-term process of Minoanization is, however, seen very clearly at Ayia Irini.

The prehistoric settlement of Ayia Irini sat on a low peninsula inside a deep bay on the island of Kea (see figure 33).⁹ Because its remains are deeply stratified, it is possible to follow the development of contacts between Kea and Crete from the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age through the Minoan New Palace period. The process of Minoanization for the most part played out gradually, but accelerated at certain points in the life of the settlement. Ayia Irini, like Akrotiri, was, however, most deeply impacted by Minoan civilization in the early phases of the Late Bronze Age.

It is also at Ayia Irini that we can see best what Cycladic settlements were like before interaction between the islands and Crete became routine. Plans of Middle Bronze Age houses at Ayia Irini were one-storied and simple. There were no Cretan elements in their architectural details. Plastered walls are rare and bore no traces of wall-paintings with figural decoration. Local potters for the most part looked to the Greek mainland for inspiration rather than Crete and produced pots with highly polished, lustrous surfaces, sometimes red with patterns in white. The vessels were largely handmade.

This situation began to change rapidly near the end of the Minoan Old Palace period. A grand circuit of fortifications with rectangular towers was constructed of large limestone blocks. Minoan pottery became more abundant then, and potters working locally closely imitated Cretan shapes. The Minoan Linear A script was used. And the centuries that followed witnessed a veritable avalanche of

additional Cretan influences. Several grand mansions sprang up. It is clear that these buildings, like the houses at Akrotiri, were patterned on contemporary mansions in Crete. Local traditions were not entirely extinguished, but Minoan influence was evident in almost every element of daily life. Cretan weaving technology was introduced. Scoops, trays, stands, and many other forms of specialized Minoan ceramic vessels were copied.

Near the main gateway to the town, inside the fortifications, a temple served as a place of worship. More than fifty large terracotta statues of women in Minoan dress served as cult paraphernalia. A Minoan-style shrine was also established on a hill called Troullos, which overlooks Ayia Irini.

The most impressive mansion was House A, which was outlined by alleys and may have occupied an entire block of the town.¹⁰ Beneath its pavements were drains to conduct rainwater away from the house. A stairway led to living quarters on the second floor. State rooms included several Minoan features: a columnar hall, a paved bath, and an elegant parlor. Also of Minoan inspiration was a light well (a small room open to the sky), which allowed air and light to reach deep into the house. As at Akrotiri, the walls of some rooms were adorned with figural frescoes.

We cannot yet be entirely sure which particular polities on Crete were responsible for initiating, promoting, and maintaining contacts abroad. The island of Crete was not a monolithic or politically unified entity. Already, however, there are hints of relationships between specific Minoan centers and certain settlements outside Crete: for example, the same seals were used at Akrotiri and at Ayia Triada and Sklavokampos in central Crete.

MINOANIZATION AT PYLOS

Minoanization is a term not much used in reference to the Greek mainland, in large part, we think, because no settlement comparable to Ayia Irini on Kea has been excavated there.

Nor do ancient texts much mention the mainland in regard to Minos or his thalassocracy. Pylos is an exception, since there is literary reference to Cretans headed there, specifically in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo.¹¹ Pylos figures in an origin myth for the cult of the god at Delphi:

Straightway then in his heart began pondering Phoibos Apollo who were the men he should bring in there to be priests of the temple, making oblations and doing him service in Pytho the rocky [Delphi]. As he revolved these things, he perceived a swift ship on the wine-dark seaway and saw inside of her men both many and noble, Cretans from Knossos the city of Minos, who for the lord make sacred oblations, and also as messengers bring the decrees of Phoibos Apollo the god of the gold sword, which he declares as oracles out of the laurel below the ravines of Parnassos. These, pursuing their commerce and profit, were now in a black ship making a voyage to sandy-soiled Pylos and seeking the people native to Pylos; but they were encountered by Phoibos Apollo.



FIGURE 34. An ashlar block from beneath the Archives of the Palace of Nestor, with the Minoan double-axe symbol carved on it. Courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati. All rights reserved by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports—Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development.

This is the lone reference to Cretans at Pylos in ancient Greek literature, but we can, nonetheless, be confident that in the Early Mycenaean period it was a major node for the exchange of ideas between Crete and southern Greece—a settlement unlike its contemporaries in Messenia.

We will even go so far as to suggest that Cretans likely lived and worked at Pylos at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. Minoan influence was hardly superficial, as is clear from extensive use of ashlar masonry—with quintessential Minoan symbols, a double axe carved on one ashlar block and a large stone horns-of-consecration, reused much later in a pavement outside the thirteenth century B.C. palace (see figure 34). Pylos was a locus where not only technologies were transferred from Crete to the mainland. Beliefs and perhaps even political systems were too.

Evans might have been sympathetic to our ideas about Crete and Pylos. In *Shaft Graves and Bee-hive Tombs of Mycenae*, written in 1929, he observed: “The higher aspects of the culture revealed to us at Mycenae must in any case be recognized as belonging to the Minoan world . . . showing that the Minoan religion had been transported in every detail to the Mainland side.”¹² Stephanos Xanthoudides, father of Minoan archaeology and Evans’s coeval, even imagined that Minoan missionaries had sailed forth from Crete. At the port of Nirou Chani in the center of Crete’s north coast, among the remains of an extensive Minoan settlement, he discovered in 1918–19 a grand, well-preserved house that he thought was “occupied by the Priest of the Minoan Cult.”¹³ Within the rooms of this structure, he found several curious features. At one side of a well-paved court was a raised platform with large stone horns-of-consecration. Next to it were large bronze double axes and fragments of a fresco representing the Minoan sacral knot. In a small room beyond



FIGURE 35. The plaster tripod table from the Throne Room of the Palace of Nestor at Pylos (in foreground, to the left of a column base). Courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati. All rights reserved by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports—Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development.

the court, Xanthoudides recovered dozens of painted plaster offering tables, which he imagined were awaiting export from the nearby harbor to places overseas only recently exposed to the religion of the Minoans.

Tables of this sort, with plaster surfaces, are relatively common on those Aegean islands in contact with Crete in the New Palace period. At Ayia Irini, a dozen or more were recovered, apparently made locally, the plaster legs molded around stones or conical cups, a quintessential Minoan shape found by the thousands in Cretan settlements.

Blegen also discovered offering tables in his excavations at Pylos, one on the floor of the Megaron near the throne of the *wanax* (see figure 35). We believe that it was likely recycled from an Early Mycenaean grave—looted by later Mycenaeans at a time when connections were broken between those in power and the dead, no longer recognized as ancestors. Earlier grave goods would have been fair game then.¹⁴

We can, in fact, now be sure that offering tables like the one Blegen found in the Throne Room were used locally in Early Mycenaean times. In preparation for building the new shelter over the palace, fragments were discovered in pre-palatial contexts. Equally important evidence is the complete plaster offering table found on a bench in an Early Mycenaean tholos tomb excavated near Pylos at Routsis.¹⁵

Xanthoudides's notions must have been inimical to the beliefs of Blegen and Wace, although I have found no evidence that either of the two confronted his ideas directly. The battle for an independent mainland Greece was eventually won by the "Govs", as Blegen and Wace called themselves, and there has subsequently been a tendency to emphasize differences rather than similarities between these two areas of the Aegean.¹⁶ Perhaps the deepest criticism of Martin Nilsson's *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and Its Survival in Greek Religion* was, in fact, the implication of its title: that the religions of the Minoans and the Mycenaeans were a unity.¹⁷

Several years ago, however, Thomas Palaima argued that the impact of Minoan ideology on mainlanders was so profound that the very institution of Mycenaean kingship was borrowed from Crete. He placed that event in the later Shaft Grave period, arguing that

the terminology directly relating to Mycenaean and later Greek kingship and kingly ideology is either non-Indo-European (ἀναξ and βασιλεύς) or Greek-specific (σκήπτρον). . . . We can detect the importation and implementation of such an ideology within the various stages of Shaft Grave burials. . . . I do not think it is coincidental that LH I is a period of extremely strong Minoan influence in the two regions where our evidence for the formation of mainland palatial culture is strongest: the Argolid and Messenia, and that in both territories we find then and later Minoan objects with strong religious overtones.¹⁸

He believes that the powers of the *wanax* are "intimately connected with—and derived from—his religious associations," and he argues that the σκήπτρον is a symbol of the divine authority held by the *wanax*, stressing the significance of the staff in Minoan iconography.

Palaima anticipates one problem with his argument: poor archaeological documentation for the Early Mycenaean period:

What we have here is a selective élite using these and other symbols, such as the non-Minoan but equally non-pan-Mycenaean funeral masks, to legitimize and enhance their authority. Whether they would have used such symbols in their lives as well is a question which the poor documentation for LH I–LH II aristocratic architecture at Mycenae and Pylos makes it impossible to answer. . . . There is no compelling reason to argue, essentially from a broader silence of archaeological testimony that the "religious" artifacts of the later Shaft Graves had no "religious" or "charismatic" meaning for the "rulers" with whom they were buried.¹⁹

At the time Palaima wrote, the silence of archaeological testimony was, indeed, deafening. But we have seen that now at Pylos we can talk about the settlement in which Early Mycenaean elite resided, and there we find Minoan symbolism in play. In addition, the discovery of the grave of the Griffin Warrior has given us an unparalleled opportunity to study relationships between and among objects decorated with Minoan figural iconography, as they were employed in that Early Mycenaean burial of a single individual.

It has, of course, been hard to distinguish between situations where mainlanders borrowed Minoan symbols and attached the same meanings to them that they had on Crete and situations where symbols were recontextualized on the mainland and assigned different meanings. Some scholars have even entertained the possibility that Minoan exotica had no specific meaning for mainlanders—that they were just loot from raids or goods acquired through trade for the purpose of impressing others.

Prior to the discovery of the grave of the Griffin Warrior, the most ambitious attempt to distinguish between such options was a study by Imma Kilian-Dirlmeier, published in the annual of the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum in Mainz.²⁰ There Kilian-Dirlmeier examined the spatial distribution of grave offerings retrieved from a cist in the floor of the famous tholos tomb at Vapheio near Sparta, explored by Tsountas in the later nineteenth century (see figure 36).

The Vapheio tholos is exceptional in that the locations of objects recovered from the cist can be determined with some accuracy, using Tsountas's description of the excavation, while the artifacts themselves were extraordinary. Not only were the two eponymous Vapheio Cups found in this cist but also an extraordinary number of sealstones, one of which depicted a priest in a long robe, carrying a "fenestrated axe," a type of axe with openings in its blades, presumably associated with animal sacrifice.²¹ The head of an actual axe of this kind was present in the grave.

Kilian-Dirlmeier concluded that the social structure and organization of power supported by an elite had been fully established already by what she calls the "LH IIA protopalatial stage." She proposed a direct relationship between the owner of the seal, the individual buried in the cist, and the image of the priest itself—a proposal very much in accord with Palaima's ideas.

Unfortunately, Tsountas found no body in the cist. Its absence gave rise to the notion that the grave might have been a cenotaph, although it is also possible that the bones had thoroughly decayed. Whatever the case, we do not know the gender of the deceased.

IDEOLOGY AND THE GRIFFIN WARRIOR

It is control over osteology that makes the grave of the Griffin Warrior so important for prehistorians, in addition to the number and diversity of the grave goods that accompanied the burial. We know for certain that the Griffin Warrior was a young man, about thirty-five years old. His sex was determined by Lynne Schepartz and has been confirmed by the recent discovery that the Y chromosome is present in his DNA. No mortal wounds are obvious on his skeleton.

There are many similarities but also several differences between the burial in the grave of the Griffin Warrior and that in the Vapheio cist. We found no ceramic vessels in his grave, whereas at Vapheio, Tsountas found several. For over a century, Vapheio held the record for the most sealstones (twenty-eight) from a single

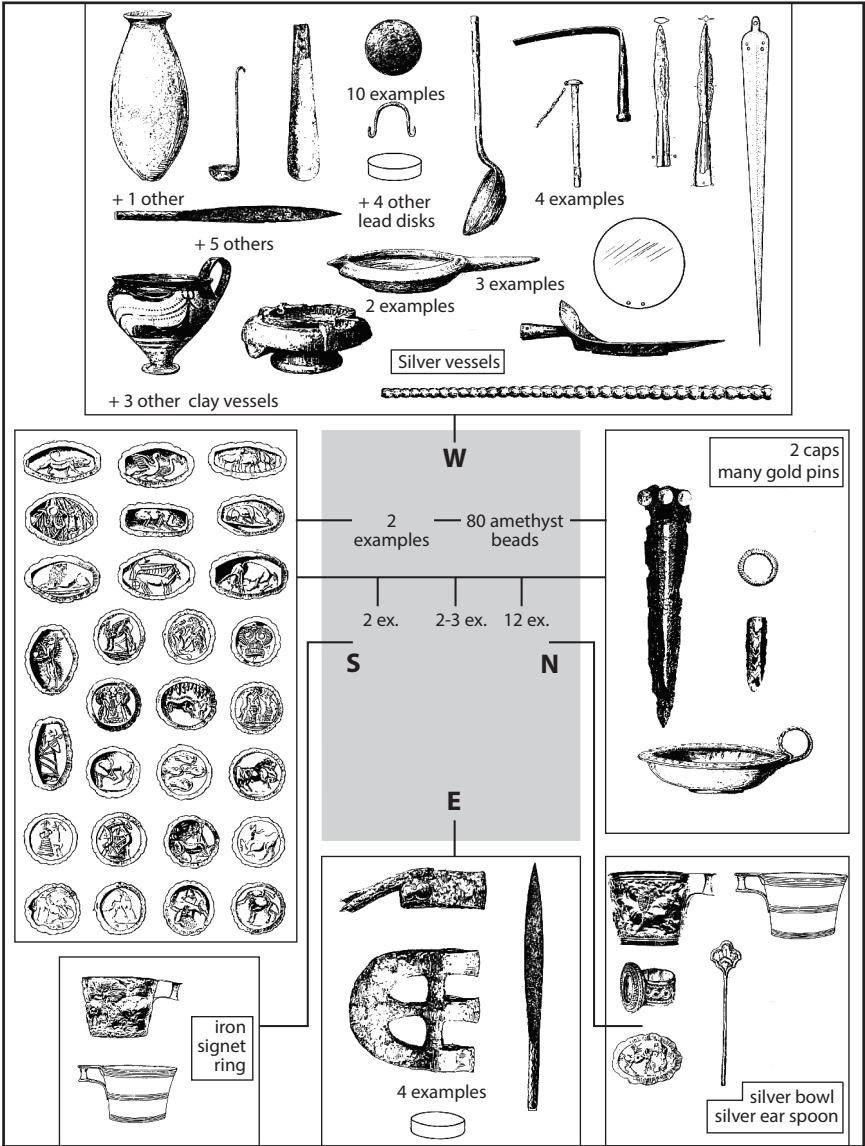


FIGURE 36. Offerings in the cist in the floor of the tholos tomb at Vapheio in Laconia, south of Sparta, in relation to the status and rank of the interred individual. Courtesy of Imma Kilian-Dirlmeier. Adapted by Rosemary Robertson from Kilian-Dirlmeier, "Das Kuppelgrab," fig. 9, with permission from Imma Kilian-Dirlmeier.

grave. Now the Griffin Warrior has over fifty. But what is most striking at Pylos, as at Vapheio, is the extent to which physical objects reflect the imagery on sealstones and signet rings.



FIGURE 37. Sealstone with Minoan genii from the grave of the Griffin Warrior. Tina Ross. Courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati. All rights reserved by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports—Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development.

We first noticed this phenomenon in 2016, when we published four gold rings from the grave of the Griffin Warrior.²² Then we noted an emphasis on bulls and horns, in comparing the representation of bull-leaping on one gold ring to the bronze head of a staff, a σκήπτρον, in the shape of a bull's head. The staff, in fact, is not so different from one carried in the outstretched arm of a goddess who descends to earth between twin mountain peaks on another gold ring.

The resemblance between the design on another seal and an actual artifact in the grave leaves no doubt that the motifs refer to each other and a common idea.

The seal in question is a large lentoid agate, exceptional for not only its size but also the detail of its engraving (see figure 37).²³ Two Minoan “genii” (a composite demon modelled on the god Taweret, an Egyptian divinity depicted as a bipedal composite of a hippopotamus and a crocodile, with lion paws and female human breasts) face each other antithetically. One grasps a ewer, holding its handle with one paw, supporting its base with the other. The second genius supports what may be an incense burner in both paws. Together they flank an altar with incurving sides, on top of which are horns-of-consecration, from which a tree sprouts. Above their heads is a sun-symbol.

The basic components of the scene all find parallels in Minoan art, and antithetic genii are not unique. The Vapheio cist offers one particularly close parallel, also an agate sealstone.²⁴ Although not identical, in that on it both genii carry

ewers and there is no sun-symbol above their heads, they also flank an altar topped by horns-of-consecration and a tree.

Genii are depicted in Minoan art as hunters who carry dead animals over their shoulders (in one case, a human) or as participants in cult activities, where they typically hold ewers from which libations will be poured. In one instance, however, on impressions from a gold ring used at Pylos in the thirteenth century, both genii carry long, loop-handled, single-edged knives of the sort that Schliemann called *Schlachtmesser*, or “butchers’ knives.” Here they seemingly are associated with blood sacrifice.

Our example is unique in associating the act of sacrifice and the sacrificial altar with the sun-symbol and seemingly supports Nanno Marinatos’s reading of this complicated set of interlocking iconographical elements, as discussed in her book *Minoan Kingship and the Solar Goddess*. There she also revives an argument that horns-of-consecration are not horns, but a schematic representation of the morning sun rising between twin peaks.²⁵

Among hundreds of fragments of bronze armor from the grave of the Griffin Warrior was a heavily corroded bronze disk that likely was attached to its breastplate. At first sight, only one small pointed piece of gold foil peeked out from beneath the corrosion at its edge. But in December 2016, the fragment was transported to the Wiener Laboratory of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, where it was examined by portable X-ray. The result was extraordinary: from beneath the corrosion emerged a sixteen-pointed sun-symbol, with sixteen dots between the rays, identical to the sun-symbol over the heads of the genii on the ageal sealstone.

Marinatos sees the ubiquitous distribution of religious symbols in the New Palace period, both on the mainland and on Crete, as justification for speaking, as did Nilsson, of a common Minoan-Mycenaean religion.²⁶ Although there were fundamental differences between cult in New Palace Crete and the Mycenaean mainland—an obvious one being the scarcity of peak sanctuaries in the Peloponnese, is it not likely that the belief systems of the elite of Early Mycenaean Pylos and the Minoans were similar? Intentionality in the choice of religious symbols deployed for the burial of the Griffin Warrior seems to suggest that concepts originating in Crete had been transplanted to Pylos already in the Early Mycenaean period, if not by Minoan missionaries, then by “converted” mainlanders.

It seems clear that such motives belong to the symbolic universe that concerned Fritz Blakolmer when, in the course of a discussion of the evolution of representations of the Minoan genius, he wrote that a “theological concept of constructing a normative and unified Minoan sacred ambience borrowed from abroad in order to give a new orientation to the entire society of Crete would perfectly fit a propaganda of religion.”²⁷ He was speaking of Near Eastern concepts introduced to Crete, but *mutatis mutandis*, the same interpretation can explain the presence of Minoan elements on the mainland.



FIGURE 38. Sealstone with a priest carrying a fenestrated axe from the grave of the Griffin Warrior. Jeff Vanderpool. Courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati. All rights reserved by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports—Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development.

Other objects from the grave suggest that the Griffin Warrior was himself a participant in ritual activities with Minoan content. Among the sealstones chosen to be buried with him were two with depictions of a long-haired man in priestly robes (see figure 38). On one, the priest bears the fenestrated axe over his shoulder. The representation is virtually identical to the sealstone from the Vapheio cist. The grave of the Griffin Warrior lacks an actual axe head, but it does have another type of ritual sacrificial instrument: a bronze *Schlachtmesser* of the variety illustrated on the sealing with the genii from Pylos.

The combination of military and religious imagery present in the grave of the Griffin Warrior seems to us to point in the very direction suggested by Marinatos, Palaima, Kilian-Dirlmeier, and others: these symbols of power and ritual are appropriate to the office of a *wanax* at a time when the state of Pylos was in its earliest stages of formation, when the elite in Messenia were drawing on Minoan antecedents to reinforce the emergent inequalities that are manifested in the archaeological record, even expressed in the diet of the elite.

In our epilogue, the various conclusions reached in this and previous chapters are conjoined. We include a brief systemic reconstruction of the sort that Renfrew employed for all of Greece in the *Emergence of Civilisation*, but it pertains only to the micro-region of Pylos. The data at our disposal are much more detailed than Renfrew's, but their collection was inspired by his example. Systems analysis has long been criticized as lacking in explanatory power, unable to identify actual causes. It is, nonetheless, a useful way of looking at interrelated subsystems in an ancient society.²⁸

We focus on relationships between the agricultural economy and diet, settlement patterns and population growth, trade and other external contacts,

investments in mortuary display—and, of course, the role of ideology. Each of these factors promoted and in turn reflected the expansion of power that is witnessed in the Early Mycenaean archaeological record and that led to the emergence of the first states on the Greek mainland.

Our reconstruction is stripped of any assumptions that Mycenaean civilization was predestined because of essential elements in the character of earlier Bronze Age peoples, whether Greek speakers or not. In so doing, we hope to make a contribution to the separation of Greek prehistory from the national project of the nineteenth century that has so long haunted it.