



AHAR7007

**Iconographies of Power:
the Aegean**

Minoan Palatial Art

- Minoan Crete: no tradition of ruler representation
- Wall paintings:
 - Occasional depictions of large scale figures
 - Typically women – goddesses?
- Large-scale sculpture:
 - Palaikastros kouros
- More typically power is enacted through gold rings & glyptic



Priest King, Knossos

Minoan Palatial Art



Minoan “Priests”

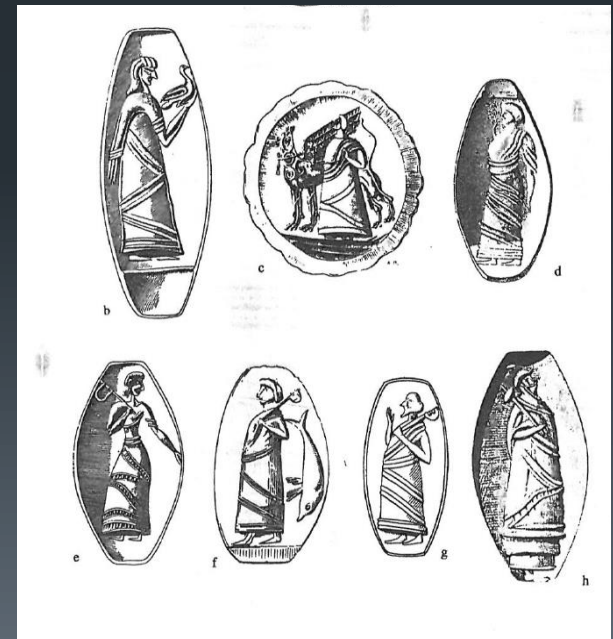
- Occasional bearded males in long fringed robes
 - Might carry symbols of authority
 - Or associated with chariots
- Most commonly depicted on portrait seals
- Davis: religious authority



Harvester Vase, Ayia Triadha



Mycenae, Grave
Circle B



Portrait seals

The Master Impression

- Gold ring impression initially interpreted as scene of Minoan ruler & realm:
 - Townscape in background
 - Water, rocky terrain
 - Male figure with staff & horns of consecration
- Davis interprets this as a deity & peak sanctuary:
 - Parallel from Knossos – female deity (mistress of animals on mountain)



Khania sealing



Knossos sealing

Mycenaean Greece

- Clear evidence for kingship from 14th century BC
 - But no representations of rulers
- From 16th century art & symbols of power draw upon Minoan art forms
- Largely from funerary arena
 - Shaft Graves
 - Griffin Warrior tomb
 - Vapheio tholos
 - Kokla tholos



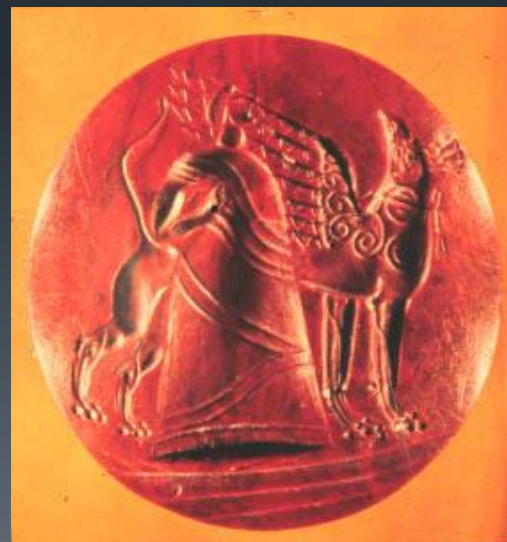
Pylos, gold rings

Mycenaean Iconographies of Power

- Ceremonial weapons
- Signet rings
- Glyptic
- Plate metal vessels
- Extensive use of gold, silver, semi-precious stones
- Monumental sculpture?
- Craftsmanship:
 - Minoan(ising)
 - Gifts?
 - Or commissioned by Mycenaean rulers?



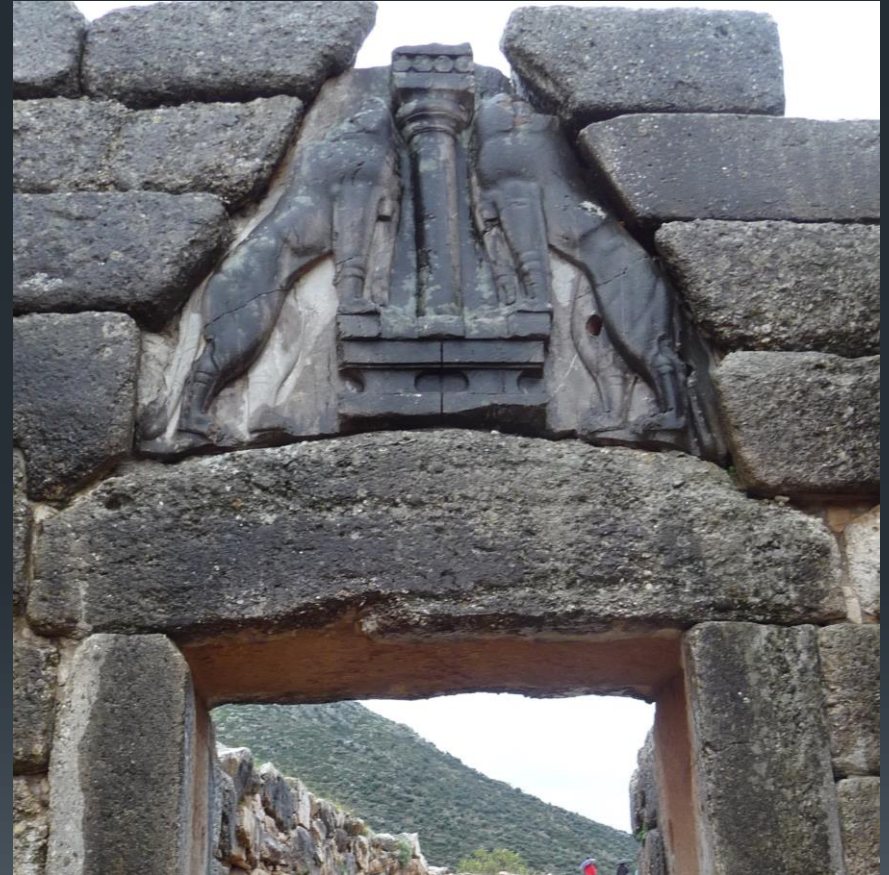
Detail, Lion Hunt dagger, Mycenae



Sealstone,
Vapheio

Symbolic Communication

- Can we identify emblems of kingship?
 - Some indication that elite/wanax at Mycenae identified with lion
 - Likewise “royal” household at Pylos identified with griffin
- Possibly as early as 16th century BC
- Persists into LH III period



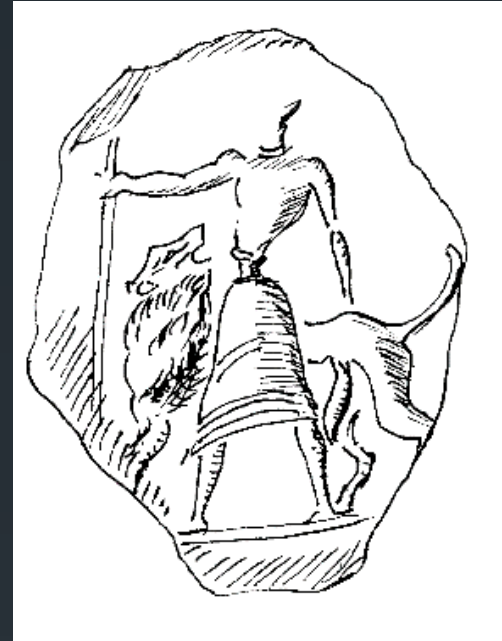
Lion Gate, Mycenae

Symbolic Communication



Lions: Mycenae Shaft Graves

- Minoan antecedents (naturalistic animal art)
- Mycenaean “predilection for violence was real & quite visible” (Thomas 2004, 176)
 - Attack of two or more lions on one prey
 - Overlapped attack: lion bodily overlapping and bearing down prey
 - Flying gallop coupled with attack
 - Lion against man
 - Double hunt: man versus lion & lion versus prey
- Near Eastern influences



Knossos,
Temple
Repositories

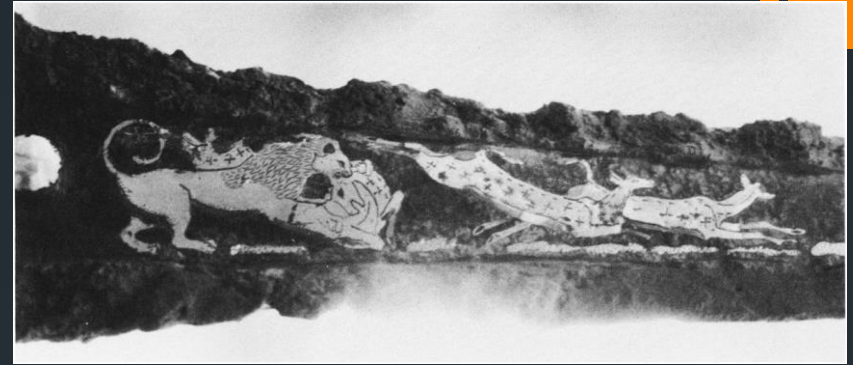


Inlaid dagger, Shaft Graves

Mycenae, Lions



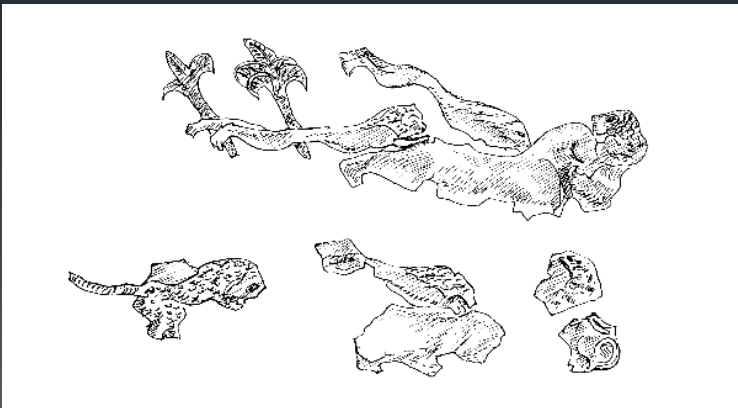
Daggers, Grave Circle A



Reverse of Lion Hunt dagger



Stela Grave Circle B, Grave Gamma



Reliefs, Grave Circle A

Symbolism of Lions?

- Lion symbolizes power & emergent hierarchy,
 - A symbol of masculine elite prowess
- Marinatos notes pairing of man & lion in parallel scene:
 - In zones on grave stela stele
 - On the two sides of Lion Hunt dagger
- Thomas highlights 4 competing masculine power roles:
 - Chief, warrior, hunter & ritual-maker



Detail of sword hilt, Grave Circle B,
Grave Delta

Mycenae-Vapheio Lions

- Group of sealstones from Vapheio tholos & other sites in southern Peloponnese:
 - Lion imagery with stylistic parallels to Mycenaean shaft grave lions
- Remarkable consistency of style also evident in other animals
 - Square heads & with manes with locks like over-lapped flames
 - Tough lean bodies, crimped fur & thick legs with strong veins
- Earliest detectable Mycenaean workshop



Lentoid seal, Vapheio

Combat Agate

- Pylos Griffin Warrior Tomb (LH II):
 - LH I sealstone of Minoan manufacture (3.6 cm long)
- “arguably the finest work of Aegean glyptic ever discovered” (Stocker & Davis 2017, 584)
 - Minute scale of the engraving is unparalleled
 - Exquisite detail in imagery
- Combat is typical of LH I, with best parallels from the burials of Grave Circle A at Mycenae



Agate sealstone



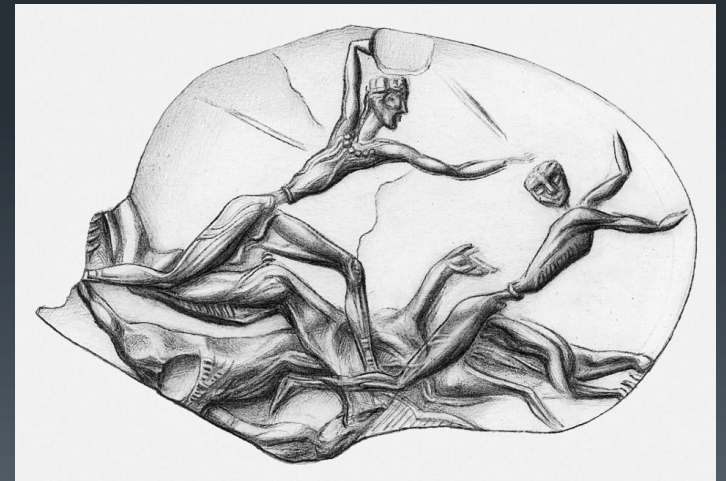
Combat Scenes



Battle of the Glen gold signet ring,
Shaft Grave IV Mycenae



Combat scene on cushion seal,
Shaft Grave III Mycenae



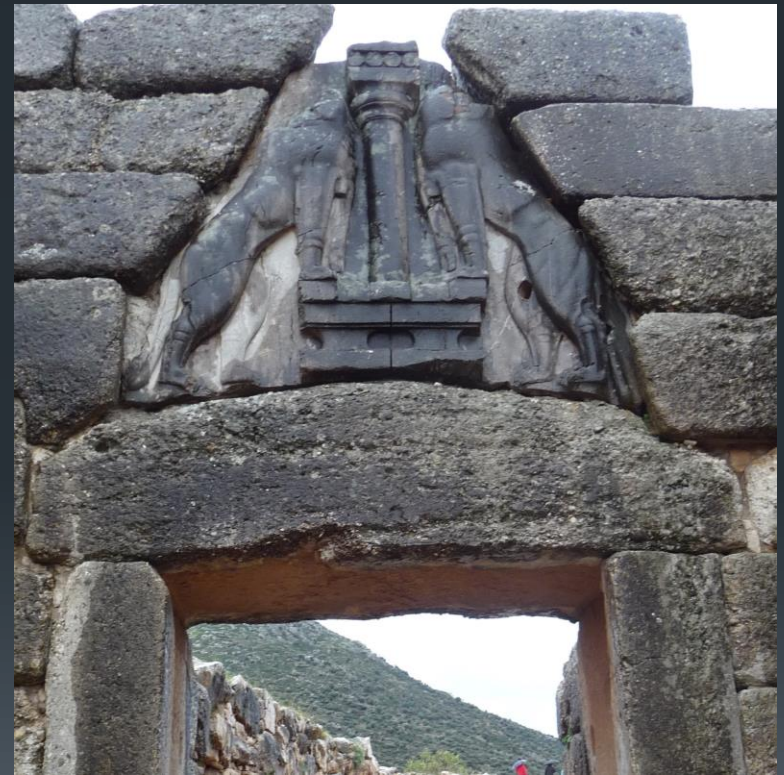
Ayia Triadha sealstone

Lord of the Gold Rings



Monumental Stone Sculpture

- Incredibly rare in Aegean art
- Grave stelae LH I Mycenae
- Lion Gate Relief:
 - Raised relief sculpture on single slab of limestone
 - 2 rampant lions flanking altar supporting a central column
 - c.3.5m wide at base & 3m high



Lion Gate, Mycenae

Lion Gate Iconography

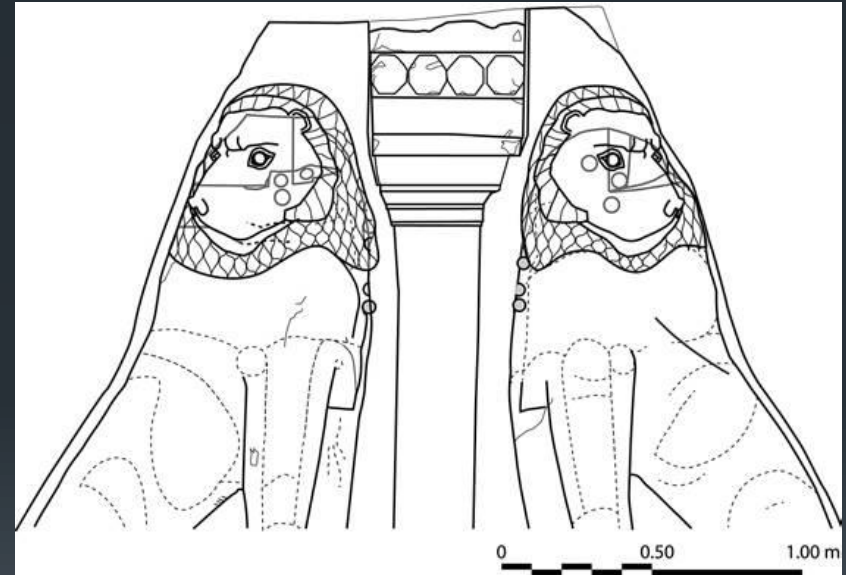
- Heraldic antithetic animals common in Aegean art
- Debate surrounding identification of animals:
 - Lions, sphinxes, griffins
- Direction of heads?
- Blackwell suggests lions with heads twisted backwards:
 - Lions & griffins looking in this direction in portable art



Ialysos, ivory antiemetic lions

Lion Gate Iconography

- Blackwell artistic hybridity: amalgam of craft traditions & iconographic traits:
 - Hittite stoneworking methods supplemented Mycenaean technology
 - Aegean iconography evident in heraldic composition
 - Two animals flanking a central object particularly common in glyptic



Blackwell – possible reconstruction

Summary

- Unlike Near East: no representations of rulers can be identified & virtually no monumental art
- Development of pan-Aegean style & certain themes associated with elites identified, especially with Mycenaeans:
 - Portrait seals
 - Heraldic scenes & antithetic animals
 - Combat scenes
 - Lion & griffin iconography
- Typically associated with glyptic
- Shaft Grave period: whole range of elite objects referencing this imagery