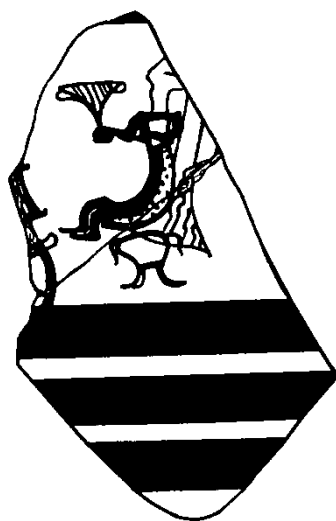


Our Cups Are Full: Pottery and Society in the Aegean Bronze Age

Papers presented to Jeremy B. Rutter
on the occasion of his 65th birthday

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Seats of Power? Making the Most of Miniatures— The Role of Terracotta Throne Models in Disseminating Mycenaean Religious Ideology

Melissa Vettters

ABSTRACT Already attested in the LH IIIA1 period in the repertoire of Mycenaean terracotta figurines, miniature throne models with and without attached human figurines are encountered in both settlement and funerary contexts of the southern and central Greek mainland. Yet on most sites miniature thrones represent a tiny minority within the corpus of Mycenaean figurines during the palatial period and seem to be almost absent from postpalatial assemblages. On the basis of a revised chronology for terracotta thrones, this paper assesses their inter- and intra-regional patterns as well as on-site distributions. It also discusses find contexts along with associations with other objects and architectural features. The paper argues that the terracotta thrones express religious ideologies and in this context explores how and to what extent such ephemeral objects would influence and inculcate (new) ritual behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Mycenaean terracotta models of thrones and enthroned figurines have received a fair amount of scholarly attention since the late 19th century C.E.¹ Apart from discussions of typology and chronology (Mylonas 1965; French 1971, 167–172; Tamvaki 1973, 246–253; Vlassopoulou-Karyde 2008), the focus has always been on the interpretation of these miniatures. Questions as to why the motif became popular in the first place and how people engaged with such models will probably never be answered with certainty. However, this paper tries to outline a contextual approach to such models, taking into consideration the iconography of the thrones, their find contexts and chronology, and interpreting them in the framework of the emergence, spread, and decline of Mycenaean palatial religious ideology.

Before discussing the actual terracotta thrones, other miniature models and images of thrones in the extant LBA iconography should be briefly discussed. So far, no miniature models of thrones made in metal or ivory are known from the Greek mainland, yet they are attested in glyptic and in the iconography of frescoes (Rehak 1995, 102–104; Younger 1995, 168–177, 189–194 on seated and enthroned

figures). They are also listed in the furniture texts in Linear B; the Pylian Ta-series records thrones (*to-no*; PY Ta 707, 708, 714) and accompanying footstools (*ta-ra-nu-we*; PY Ta 721, PY Vn 46) and describes their decoration and material. The Linear B words describing the motifs of inlays with which these thrones were decorated have been interpreted as signifying *inter alia* palms, birds, and spirals (Ventris and Chadwick 1973, 342–346; Jahn 1990, 137–141). Yet all these data derive from the palatial period. Iconographic evidence for thrones in the LH IIIC period is very scanty. As to thrones and seated figures on Mycenaean pictorial pottery, only few examples are preserved and those of the palatial period are found on Mycenaean pots exported to Cyprus. The so-called Aradippo krater, now in the Louvre, features a seated female figure on a three-legged throne (Vermeule and Karageorghis 1982, 197, no. III:29, pl. III:29); the figure is wrapped in a long garment, its legs are closed, and no arms are shown. Another pictorial krater from Kalavassos–Ayios Dimitrios tomb 13 depicts a scene in which a chariot approaches a sanctuary, which is characterized as such by the horns of consecration on its roof and an enthroned goddess in the interior of the shrine (Steel 2006, 148, fig. 1). On the Greek mainland, the best known example of a pictorial scene with an enthroned figure was found in Tiryns and is postpalatial in date. The panel on the amphora's body depicts a chariot race and a seated female figure holding a kylix in one hand (Kilian 1980, 28, figs. 1–2, pls. 9:1, 10). Thus, the figures associated with thrones in Minoan and Mycenaean iconography

¹ This paper forms a very small token of gratitude to Jerry who diligently co-supervised my Ph.D. thesis on the Mycenaean terracotta figurines from Tiryns. His unfailing support and encouragement throughout that period and ever since are greatly appreciated.

are predominantly female. The only example of a male figure in conjunction with a throne comes from postpalatial Crete. A larnax in one of the two chamber tombs excavated in Klima Messaras (Rethemiotakis 1995, pls. 42:α-β, 43:α-γ, figs. 3–7) and dated to the LM IIIA2 phase (Rethemiotakis 1995, 171) depicts a throne in profile. Two of its legs are visible, which means that the throne was probably conceived as four-legged. The throne has no backrest, i.e. conforms to the typical Minoan stools. Behind the throne a figure on a dais is shown, which is at first described as merely a “human figure” (Rethemiotakis 1995, 167). The figure wears a long garment that does not cover its feet, which are visible on top of the dais. Georgios Rethemiotakis characterizes the figure as male because of the absence of breasts and the backward leaning stance of the torso.

Returning to the Mycenaean terracotta models, miniature thrones have been found in settlement, funerary, and open-air sanctuary deposits; they are attested since the LH IIIA1 phase (French 1971, 167) and arguably continue until LH IIIC Middle (as evidenced by a four-legged throne model from the necropolis of Perati; Iakovides 1969, Γ, pl. 1038:337), as will be discussed in detail below. The typology of the terracotta miniatures was first established by Georgios Mylonas and was recently reassessed by Maria Vlassopoulou-Karyde. Three broad types can be distinguished: three-legged thrones with a solid backrest, known as type A; three-legged thrones with latticed back- and armrests, known as type B (cf. Mylonas 1965 for the definition of type A and B; Jahn 1990, 131–135 on type A, 135–136 on type B, 278–285, nos. 72–88), and four-legged thrones (as defined by Vlassopoulou-Karydi 2008, 23). The first two types (Fig. 1) also feature in group models, i.e. with anthropomorphic figurines seated on them (French 1971, 167–171; Jahn 1990, 112–117, 269–276, nos. 50–67 on plain seated figurines, 118–119, 276–278, nos. 68–71 on seated *kourotrophoi*). The figurines depicted on such thrones concur with the types of standing Mycenaean female figurines. That the figures on the thrones are indeed female can also be corroborated by two additional traits: the modeling of breasts on many examples and the depiction of the long garments that these figures wear (Kilian 1980, 27).

In a few instances, thrones and the figurines seated in them were modeled separately. An enthroned Psi figurine, but without accompanying throne, comes from Mycenae chamber tomb 91 (Mylonas 1965, 110–116, pl. XIII). Seated figurines on thrones of type A are predominantly of proto-Phi and Phi type. However, Psi figurines are attested on thrones of type A, e.g., an example in Tiryns (Fig. 2) which came to light in the foundation layer of the so-called “Zwinger” in the central western part of the Lower citadel. The layer (stratigraphic horizon 17 a0 in Tirynthian terminology) can be dated to the beginning of LH IIIB Developed, which provides only a terminus ante quem for the model. It appears

as if thrones of type B no longer feature seated *kourotrophoi* and canonical Phi figurines (the example in Amandry 1986, 174, no. 78, pl. 8, is of late Geometric date). Also, empty thrones of this type are more common than those of type A.

A comparison of percentages of terracotta thrones with total numbers of figurines found in settlement contexts is at the moment only feasible for Mycenae and Tiryns. Ioulia Tzonou-Herbst lists ninety-six examples of throne models with or without attached seated figurines in her study on the terracotta figurines from Mycenae, i.e. ca. 2% of all catalogued Mycenaean figurines (Tzonou-Herbst 2002, 338–395, catalogue A). At Tiryns the catalogued Mycenaean terracotta figurines amount to seventy-seven figurines of seated figurines and throne models (type A and type B) in total (Vettters 2009, 563–565, 569), representing again approximately 2% of all studied figurines of that site. Among these, twenty examples represent enthroned figurines, comprising one seated *kourotrophos*, nine figurines on thrones of type A, three figurines on thrones of type B, six proto-Phi and Phi figurines formerly attached to a backrest of a throne (presumably of type A), and one attached Psi figurine. Throne models of type A are attested in eight examples, whereas those of type B comprise forty-eight individual models. One example is a four-legged throne (Fig. 3). The dominance of throne models of type B is due to the fact that the stratified palatial contexts at Tiryns in which figurines were found date mainly to the LH IIIB2 period. The stratigraphical, and thus chronological, distribution of throne models of type B indicates that the type is palatial in date and apparently does not continue to be used in the postpalatial period: thirty-two out of the forty-eight examples were found in palatial strata, nine are unstratified and derive from old excavations, and seven were found in postpalatial layers. The latter are kick-ups resulting from continuous habitation of the same areas from the palatial into the postpalatial period. The preservation of throne models from postpalatial strata bears witness to such activities; they are very fragmentary and often show signs of wear.

A hotly debated topic in Mycenaean figurine studies is the putative derivation of throne models from earlier Eastern Mediterranean terracotta types. Tripod thrones so far seem to be an idiosyncratic Mycenaean phenomenon. Except for the Knossian throne, all models and thrones on Crete are of the “Minoan stool” type (Jahn 1990, 74–76), i.e. four-legged and without backrest (Platon 1951, 393, fig. 24; Jahn 1990, 77–78 on Minoan chairs with backrest but without armrests, of which the only example is the Knossian throne model). Thus the typical Mycenaean tripod terracotta models with closed backrest do not have any precursors in Minoan furniture models (Jahn 1990, 145).

Furniture models are attested on Crete since MM I, most notably on the peak sanctuary of Petsophas (Kopaka 1987,



Fig. 1. Left: throne model, type A from Tiryns (Vetters 2009, database no. 2837: LII 53 72/No. 52, unstratified, from Tiryns Lower Town West); right: throne model, type B from Tiryns (National Archaeological Museum Athens no. 1501; Schliemann 1886, 167, pl. XXIIIc; Vetters 2009, database no. 3208, unstratified, probably from the Upper Citadel); photographs by the author.



Fig. 2. Fragmentary throne model, type A, with attached figurine from the Lower Citadel of Tiryns; Amandry 1989, 170, no. 8; Vetters 2009, database no. 1717: LXI 41/63 XVIIg hor. 17 a0, i.e. foundation layer, start of LH IIIB Developed (scale 1:2); drawing by Roxana Docsan.

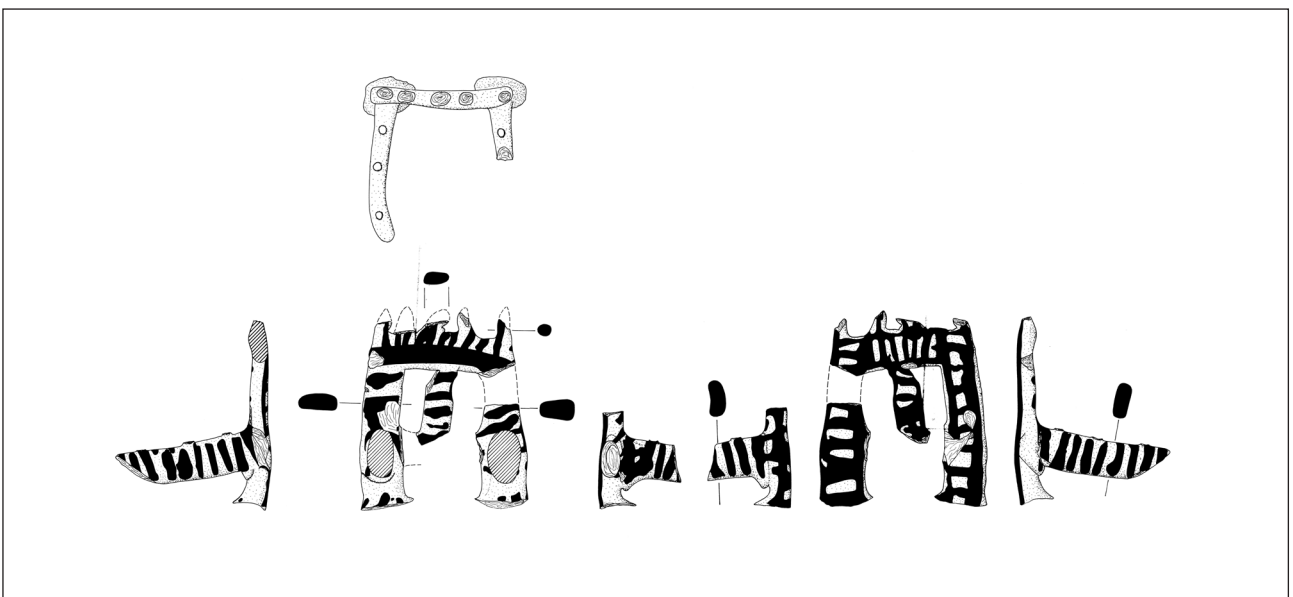


Fig. 3. Square, probably four-legged throne model from the Lower Citadel of Tiryns, six fragments; Vetters 2009, database (DB) no. 718: LXII 43/75 XII a14.59 hor. 19 b0, DB no. 737: LXII 43/16 Xgrau a14.77 hor. 19 c, DB no. 918: LXII 44/04 XIIa a14.53 hor. 19 b0, DB no. 1543: LXII 43/76 XIIa hor. 19 b, DB no. 2052: LXII 43/86 XIIa hor. 19 b, DB no. 2053: LXII 43/66 XIIa hor. 19 b, i.e. deposition at the beginning of LH IIIC Early (scale 1:3); drawing by Roxana Docsan.

95; Myers 1902–1903, 373–374). From this site a small class of seated terracotta figurines (Myers lists five examples of seated figurines altogether), most of which cannot be identified with certainty as representing either females or males, have been published. The criterion used by the excavator—spread legs indicating male figurines—is not a distinctively gendered attribute; compare, e.g., the arguably later Mycenaean figurines with spread legs, but polos, from Mycenae chamber tomb 91 (Mylonas 1965, 110, pl. XIII); enthroned figurines with spread legs which conform to the Mycenaean female figurine types, e.g., in Tiryns (Vetters 2009, database nos. 1707, 1717, 2923, and 2958); or a seated proto-Phi figurine of unknown provenience with spread legs and modeled breast, and a *kourotrophos* of the same type, said to come from Mycenae (Vlassopoulou-Karyde 2008, 81–82, nos. 18–19). Also, three examples of four-legged chairs (Myers 1902–1903, 374, pl. XIII:77–79) are attested at Petsophas, one of which is apparently attached to a base (no. 79). The legs of these throne models are splayed outwards and are best compared to Minoan campstools. These figurines were also studied by Bogdan Rutkowski, who published the male and female figurines seated on four-legged stools and figurines seated on benches in more detail (Rutkowski 1991, 29, 32, 79, no. 1.2.1, pl. XXXIV, nos. 1.2.2–3; 94, no. 3.1.24, pl. XXXIII:10, XLII:1; 79–80, nos. 1.2.1.1–4 on chairs, no. 1.2.1.1, pl. XXIII:9–10, no. 1.2.1.2, pl. XXIII:11–12, no. 1.2.1.3, pl. XIII:5–6; 80, no. 1.2.1.4, pl. XXIII:5–6; 91, no. 2.2.1, pl. XXXIII:11, XLII:2, no. 2.2.n2). These Minoan figurines are to my knowledge the only Minoan examples for terracotta models of seated figurines and thrones. No such Neo-palatial terracotta figurines are extant that could bridge the chronological gap to the Mycenaean LH IIIA1 miniatures, which, moreover, in contrast to the Minoan ones, only depict seated females. Thus, the inspiration for Mycenaean miniature throne models has often been assumed to lie further east.

Throne models are documented in Mesopotamia prior to the Late Bronze Age (the parallels cited by Weber-Hiden 2000, 146, for Mycenaean thrones from the Near East are mostly of post-LBA date). Seating furniture starts to increase in the Early Dynastic III period; the depicted seated persons are either of elite status or, less often, deities, yet thrones of deities become a focus of veneration already during the Ur III period (Cholidis 1992, 118). Decorated chairs are confined to the Ur III – Old Babylonian periods and apparently to Southern Mesopotamia (Cholidis 1992, 119). Nadja Cholidis, in her study of sixty chair models from Mesopotamia (see the catalogue in Cholidis 1992, 226–240, pls. 8–20), cites three examples for which contextual information is available: one of these is found in a private house, another in a temple, and the third in a palace, which probably indicates the ritual significance of throne models as *pars pro toto* representations of a deity

and as a focus of veneration in temples and private houses (Cholidis 1992, 120–122).

Earlier throne models are also attested in Syria. According to Leila Badre, seated or kneeling figurines comprise less than 10% of all recorded anthropomorphic figurines in the three regions studied by her and are mostly of Middle Bronze Age date. She published male figurines with an ‘additional leg’ attached at the back from the Orontes region (Badre 1980, 61–62; e.g., the example from Selemiyeh, pl. X:7) and these are dated to 1900–1450 B.C.E., i.e. they precede the Mycenaean throne models. Seated figurines from the Euphrates region comprise mostly male, but also one female figurine (Badre 1980, 97–98, for the latter see Badre 1980, pl. L:24 from Tell Habuba). These are dated to the MB II period. Six out of the seven seated figurines found along the Mediterranean littoral come from Byblos (Badre 1980, 115–116, pl. LVI:62–68), three of which (Badre 1980, 375–375, BYB. 62–64, pl. LVI:62–64) form part of the ritual “dépôt d’offrandes au bucrane” and can therefore be dated to the end of the Early Bronze Age. The typical three-legged type is apparently attested at Ugarit and represents the one seated example from this site (Badre 1980, pl. LIX:7). It is similar to the figurines from the Orontes region but cannot be stratigraphically dated. Badre observes close stylistic similarities between seated figurines found in the Euphrates and Orontes regions (Badre 1980, 137) and notes that figurines that are depicted as seated by applying an additional support or ‘third leg’ at the back are attested in Southern Mesopotamia since the Ur III/Isin Larsa period (where they were mainly found in Nippur, Ur, and Assur).

In contrast to the common opinion that tripod chairs are idiosyncratic to Mycenaean throne models, Syrian terracottas do attest to a similar concept of ‘three-legged’ chairs, but all seated figurines depicted are male and most of the cited figurines are from the Middle Bronze Age at the latest. In sum, although parallels for three-legged terracottas are found in the Near East, these are not typical thrones, and evidence for Mycenaean contact with the Near East prior to LH IIIA1 is slim at best. Thus, the Mycenaean terracotta models are still best understood as a distinctively Mycenaean phenomenon catering to the taste and requirements of the emerging palatial societies on the Greek mainland.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS

1. Early Settlement Contexts

Thrones of type A, with or without attached seated figurines, are witnessed in settlement contexts on the Greek mainland from the LH IIIA1 period onwards, e.g., in Mycenae, where they are already present as refuse in the Atreus bothros (French 1971, 168, fig. 14, pl. 28a–b). A

seated proto-phi figurine derives from a LH IIIA1 stratum in the settlement of Lefkandi, pointing to the fact that such models are already present outside the Mycenaean core area at this time (French 2006, 261, no. 1, pl. 72:1). Another early example can be cited for the Cyclades: one throne model resembling the Mycenaean type A examples was excavated in Room 16 of House A (Cummer and Schofield 1984, 72), i.e. the central building of the settlement of Hagia Irini on Keos. It was found in a layer of the reoccupation phase VIII (which is synchronous with LH IIIA on the Greek mainland). However, this three-legged throne model (Cummer and Schofield 1984, 73, no. 479, pl. 45:479) with incised spirals and quirks on the exterior and interior of the backrest is unique with respect to both the incised decoration and unpainted ware, which are not paralleled in any Mycenaean throne models to date.

The Petsas House in Mycenae offers a useful opportunity to explore the social setting of such early throne models in the settlement context. Petsas House is LH IIIA in date and was apparently under palatial administration as evidenced by the Linear B tablets found in it. A small number of furniture models with and without applied figurines are attested in the bulk of more than 150 terracotta figurines found in the basement Room Γ (Papadimitriou and Petsas 1950, 214, fig. 17; Shelton 2009, 56; for a seated, but detached figurine from the Petsas House without specific published provenience, see French 1971, 167, pl. 29a). The closed primary deposit excavated at the north end of the room (which measures only 4 by 2 m) contained mainly undecorated one-handled kylikes (Shelton 2009, 57). The kylikes are comparable to those of the same type found in Apothekē A, where more than 500 vessels of twenty different types had come to light, having apparently been stored on shelves in that room for further shipment. The excavators proposed that Room Γ functioned as a household shrine, in contrast to their first interpretation of the room as a storage room (Papadimitriou and Petsas 1951, 195). More convincingly, Kim Shelton recently interpreted the building as a ceramic warehouse and Room Γ as a storeroom for goods prior to their shipment. She points to the specific architectural features of Room Γ: it lies in the general entrance area of the building, a ramp of poros slabs allowed access for wheeled transport, and a wide stair led from this basement room up to the first floor.

Two terracotta models of so-called breadmakers (Blegen 1946–1948), which to my mind are better interpreted as female figures depicted in the act of offering food, *vel sim.*, at a tripod altar, and which show close stylistic similarities with figurines seated on thrones of type A, were excavated in Excavation Unit 9 of the site of Tsoungiza in the hinterland of Mycenae (Wright et al. 1990, 636, pl. 95f). On the eastern flank of the settlement hill a pit was discovered which was sealed by LH IIIB strata and yielded more

than thirty complete or almost complete vessel profiles which have been dated to LH IIIA1/early LH IIIA2. The pit contained abundant undecorated fine ware ceramics, mainly kylikes, and, in addition to the two ‘breadmaker’ fragments, the lower two thirds of a wheel-made female figure. The assemblage has been interpreted as the remains of ritual feasting (Dabney, Halstead, and Thomas 2004).

Although the cases of terracotta thrones in the settlement strata mentioned above were selected at random, these contexts offer contextual data from which a first tentative interpretation can be deduced. The social settings in which such throne models occurred at the beginning of the Mycenaean palatial period were either embedded in affluent households with apparent links to palatial elites, or, as in the case of Tsoungiza with the breadmaker figurines (which are typologically comparable to seated figurines on thrones of type A), related to acts of communal ritual feasting.

2. Funerary Contexts

Early thrones of type A with or without applied figurines are amply attested in the Argolid (e.g., Prosymna; Blegen 1937, 366–367), in Attica (e.g., Athens; Pantelidou 1975, 77, pls. 19β, 20; Alyki Glyphadas; Papadimitriou 1955, 84–87, pl. 26α), and are even documented on Rhodes (Ialysos; Vlassopoulou-Karyde 2008, 84, no. 22, fig. 38).

In the following, two burial contexts in the Argolid will be reviewed to outline briefly the deposition of such miniatures and the artifacts they were associated with in the funerary sector: a chamber tomb in the Berbati valley and a chamber tomb in the Dendra necropolis. The lower stratum in the Berbati chamber tomb, separated from the upper (which contained only a single skeleton) by a layer of earth, contained badly decayed skeletal remains and offerings which were spread over the whole floor of the chamber, except for a small space in the center, and contained the remains of at least eighteen individuals, apparently in the position of their primary deposition within the tomb. None of the grave goods could be associated with a specific interment. In total, forty-six vessels of open and closed shape, three standing female figurines (which are proto-Psi figurines, the last one is illustrated, but missing and hence not described by Holmberg), and a seated figurine (of the transitional type, seated on a throne, type A) were encountered (Holmberg 1983, 14). Of the ceramic vessels, fourteen drinking vessels, mostly kylikes, were covered with tin foil. Other finds included two bronze knives, a small fragmentary bronze bowl, six arrowheads of bronze, three small fragments of gold foil (one in the form of a rosette), five steatite conuli, and several meters of lead wire. The chamber tomb was probably constructed during LH IIIA2 and in use for a rather short period of time, since the vessels from the lower and upper layer do not show much stylistic development (Holmberg 1983, 48).

The stylistic features of the figurines attested in the tomb concur with such a date. The three almost identical proto-Psi shaped female figurines all feature a monochrome polos; an almost U-shaped torso with modeled breasts, which is decorated with wavy lines; arms which are flattened at the tips forming protrusions similar to hands; a low waist line; and a long narrow columnar stem decorated with several vertical stripes (Holmberg 1983, 43, nos. 55–57; 44, fig. 27). The throne model with an applied anthropomorphic figurine is very schematized (Holmberg 1983, 44, no. 58, fig. 27). Above the bare head of the figurine an umbrella (Weber-Hiden 2000, 147) is attached to the backrest of the throne, which is decorated on the interior and exterior with wavy vertical lines. Maria Vlassopoulou-Karyde dates the model to the LH IIIA2–LH IIIB period (Vlassopoulou-Karyde 2008, 46, 85, no. 24), whereas the contextual data favor a date in LH IIIA2 rather than early LH IIIB, since the interment of the single skeleton in the upper layer is dated to early LH IIIB (Holmberg 1983, 50). The burial gifts as preserved do not attest to great wealth (Holmberg 1983, 49), although the drinking vessels were covered with tin foil, which hints at the aspiration to emulate elite symposia sets.

Turning to the evidence from the Dendra chamber tomb necropolis, a throne of type B with a seated figurine comes from chamber tomb 11 (Persson 1942, 100, no. 19, fig. 112:1). The finials of this miniature throne end in spirals, perhaps emulating the decoration of real thrones, though the Linear B texts only refer to the motif in the context of inlays (Ventris and Chadwick 1973, 342–343 on PY Ta 707). According to Axel W. Persson (1942, 101) the throne model was found in group III, which was located at the inner left chamber wall along “its right section”. Associated with the throne model were three glass beads (no. 23) and an undecorated two-handled kylix (no. 6; Persson 1942, 98, fig. 109:2). The pottery excavated in tomb 11 dates to the LH IIIA period; none of the burial gifts within tomb 11 can be assigned to LH IIIC. Thus, Vlassopoulou-Karyde’s dating of the model as postpalatial (Vlassopoulou-Karyde 2008, 89, no. 32) is purely based on stylistic assumptions. In this instance, the corollary archaeological evidence demonstrates that a schematization of the throne and/or the applied seated figurine is not an accurate indicator for a late date, as is often assumed and less easily refuted for figurines from settlement contexts, where closed depositional contexts are often rare. There is, however, enough evidence from later palatial settlement sites to investigate whether differences in the usage of throne models across regions can be glimpsed from the archaeological remains.

3. *Settlement Contexts of Late Palatial (LH IIIB2) Date*

The palace of Pylos does not feature any throne models except for one very worn, seated Phi figurine (Blegen and

Rawson 1966, 311–312, fig. 310) from Room 97 in the Northeast Building, which was associated with a steatite conulus—once again pointing to the common occurrence of such conuli and other beads with figurines (Tzonou-Herbst 2002, 206–219). Thus, the contexts in Pylos deviate markedly from contemporary Argive contexts, where figurines abound.

The recently published contexts of the Northwest Houses in the citadel of Mycenae offer another opportunity to assess the social setting in which miniature thrones were circulated. Fragments of seven Psi, eight Phi, and two Tau figurines and sixteen zoomorphic terracottas; one tripod throne with an attached seated figurine; and seventeen unidentified terracottas are reported from the area as a whole (Iakovides 2006, 167). Out of these five Phi, one Psi, one three-legged throne with an attached Phi figurine, and two unidentified fragments were found on the floor immediately below the abandonment phase in Room II 2 (Iakovides 2006, 171) located in the basement of the building (only the basements are still preserved). These figurines were associated with fifteen steatite conuli, four ivory fragments, one ivory plaque with incisions, half a tusk of a wild boar, 124 complete and 150 fragmentary annular glass beads, three larger frit beads, one glass rosette, one grain-shaped glass bead, one conical glass bead, four amorphous glass fragments, one cylindrical faience bead, two lapis lazuli beads, and four electron beads (Iakovides 2006, 173). According to the excavator all objects except the annular beads had probably fallen down from an upper story. The fragments of faience plaques with the cartouche of Amenophis III are assumed to belong to this assemblage, whereas the Levantine Reshef figurine, which was already excavated by Christos Tsountas and associated with a wheel-made bull’s head, came from a deeper layer of the Northwest Houses (Iakovides 2006, 4) and was apparently excavated in the vicinity of Rooms II 5 und II 6 (Iakovides 2006, 173). The construction of Room II 2 dates shortly after LH IIIB Middle; the floor bears witness to occupation into the phase LH IIIB Developed, during which time the building was destroyed by an earthquake (Iakovides 2006, 177). Another deposit from Mycenae, this time from the Northeast extension of the citadel, further attests to terracotta throne models in the neighborhood of affluent households, although the example was found in a secondary refuse deposit: a fragment of a throne model, of which the seat and parts of the legs are preserved (Danielidou 2009, 240, fig. 2ζ) was encountered in lane Γ at the height of wall I, i.e. the southern wall of Building B (Danielidou 2009, 233–234, no. 2162.5). This throne of type B bears traces of an attached seated figurine, now lost, and is stylistically closely comparable to LH IIIB2 examples from Tiryns (e.g., Vettters 2009, database nos. 1446, 1603, 1769, 1802, and 1883). A Tau figurine, a polos-head fragment, and two horns of bovid figurines, one of which once definitely formed part of a wheel-made bull figure, are reported from the same context.

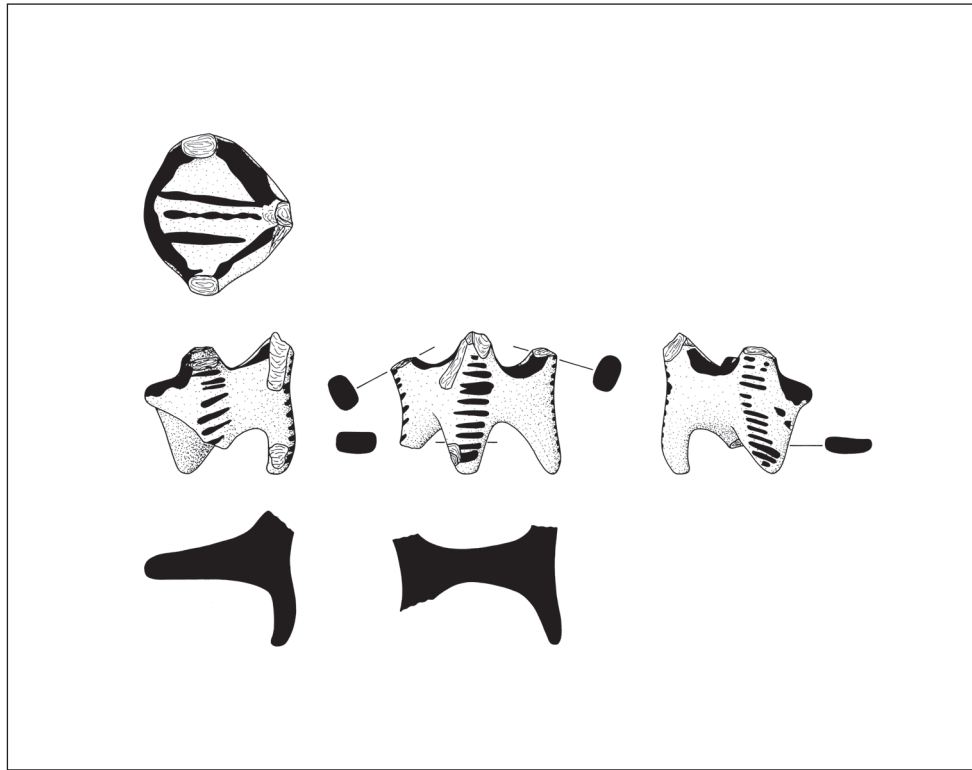


Fig. 4. Fragmentary throne model, type B, from the Lower Citadel of Tiryns; Vetters 2009, database no. 669: LXII 42/59 VIIIa a15.17 hor. 17 a3–17 a4, i.e. LH IIIB Developed (scale 1:2); drawing by Roxana Docsan.

In the Lower citadel of Tiryns a throne model (Fig. 4) came to light at the hearth in the center of Room 191 in Building VI. The find spot at the hearth corroborates Klaus Kilian's observation that figurines tend to be associated with hearths or thresholds (Kilian 1980, 27, n. 44). There is no evidence yet for the association of throne models with entrances in Tiryns, but such can be tentatively suggested for figurines found in the fortress of Gla, although this palatial site features only very few Mycenaean figurines. The excavator of Gla published four anthropomorphic and two skeuomorphic terracotta fragments (one High-waisted Psi; Iakovidis 1989, pl. 25β:1; a hollow stem; Iakovidis 1989, pl. 25 β:3; two columnar stems and two fragments of thrones, type B; Iakovidis 1989, 227, fig. 34:3, pl. 77 β upper left; pl. 25β:12). Three of the anthropomorphic figurines came from the area of the southeastern dipylon and were associated with a fragmentary conical rhyton. The fourth anthropomorphic figurine fragment was found in a rock crevice west of the entrance (Iakovidis 1989, 242–243). Although the find context is not a closed one, a female figurine, a throne model, and a conical rhyton were probably once used, set up, or at least discarded in the entrance area to the LH IIIB fortress.

The best evidence stems from Dimini/Iolkos, the northern frontier of the Mycenaean palatial world. Here, a kernos stone, one kylix sherd with incised Linear B signs, nine anthropomorphic fragments including a fragmentary throne with applied figurine, six zoomorphic figurine fragments,

the leg fragment of a furniture model, one stylized marble figurine, numerous bronze pins, one miniature cup, one pictorial sherd depicting a male head, one sherd of a pictorial krater with a chariot scene, and two rhyta are documented on the right side of the southern entrance to Room 3, i.e. in close proximity to Megaron A (Adryme-Sismane 2004–2005, 42, 44, fig. 30).

A deliberate votive deposit of throne miniatures can be observed in the case of the two type B throne models which were once set onto the bench of Room A in the settlement sanctuary of Ayios Konstantinos, Methana (Konsolaki-Giannopoulou 2003, 382–383, 405–406, figs. 36–37). Throne models are also attested in open air sanctuaries, e.g., on the Kynortion Hill, Epidauros, where two fragmentary thrones of type A have been found (Peppas-Papaioannou 1985, 40, no. A89, pl. 22:A89, 88, no. B169, pl. 22:B169, 161) and in the Aphaia sanctuary on Aegina, where fragments of a detached Psi figurine, two seated figurines on thrones of type A, one empty throne of type A, two seated figurines on thrones of type B, parts of two empty thrones of type B, and one four-legged throne were brought to light during the German excavations (Pilafidis-Williams 1998, 75–76, nos. 525–533, pl. 56).

4. Funerary Evidence of Late Palatial Date

Throne models are also still attested in chamber tombs

in LH IIIB2, best witnessed in the Boeotian examples of chamber tomb 25 on the Kolonaki Hill in Thebes and of Tanagra chamber tomb 25. A total of five Psi, two Tau, and one zoomorphic figurines and four throne models, one of these with an attached seated figurine (which is stylistically very similar to a throne model excavated by Heinrich Schliemann and on exhibit in the National Archaeological Museum, NMA no. 1501; Vettters 2009, database no. 3208) were recorded in chamber tomb 25 of the necropolis on the Kolonaki Hill in Thebes (Keramopoulos 1917, 190, fig. 135:7). Additional grave goods comprised two stirrup jars, one spouted bowl, one double pyxis with a basket handle, gold foil in the form of rosettes, ivory plaques, one steatite conulus, one spiral formed from a copper-alloy strip, one javelin head of copper alloy, shell-shaped glass beads, and a miniature stone skyphos.

Details of the context of chamber tomb 25 in Tanagra have not been published yet. Nevertheless, the illustrations provided by the excavator in his preliminary report are sufficient to date the latest grave goods to the final years of the palatial period. The tomb contained at least one feeding bottle, one straight-sided alabastron, one skyphos, one one-handled juglet, one double pyxis in the shape of two straight-sided alabastra (Spyropoulos 1969, pl. 11α, γ), four figurines (a late Psi A figurine; Spyropoulos 1969, pl. 10α right), and three throne models of type A (Spyropoulos 1969, 14, pl. 10β)). One of these features an attached, seated, and schematized Psi figurine (Spyropoulos 1969, 14 pl. 10β center), which is also illustrated by Vassilis Aravantinos (2003, 76, 77, no. 30) who dated the occupation of the tomb to LH IIIB and refers to it as a child's burial.

CHRONOLOGY REVISED

As already touched upon in several instances, a very marked decrease in miniature thrones can be observed after the collapse of the palatial societies, and thrones of type A and B are apparently not produced anymore. Thus, contrary to Ingrid Weber-Hiden who dates the 17.5 cm high throne model, type A (which once held an applied seated figurine with separated legs) from the Syringes in the Lower citadel in Tiryns (Weber-Hiden 1990, 79–80, cat. no. 165, pls. 49, 50:165, 53) to LH IIIC, there is a high probability that this example, which is unique with regard to its size, represents refuse of the late palatial period, since the secondary deposit within the Syringes contains mixed LH IIIB/LH IIIC material.

However, four-legged models (Amandry 1989, 168 n. 8; Vlassopoulou-Karyde 2008, 23) of the postpalatial period are reported on Cyprus and the Greek mainland, i.e. Perati grave 25 (Iakovides 1969, A, 337, 339, no. 337; Γ, pl. 1038:337), Mycenae (Vlassopoulou-Karyde 2008, 23, 79, no. 15), and Tiryns (Kilian 1983, 307, fig. 33; Amandry

1989, 170, no. 13). The four joining and two non-joining fragments of the Tiryns model derive mainly from an LH IIIC Early layer with abundant residual LH IIIB Final material (Fig. 3). A four-legged example from Aphaia on Aegina (Pilafidis-Williams 1998, 76, no. 531, pls. 4, 56), the Neutron Activation Analysis results of which point to an Attic origin (Pilafidis-Williams 1998, 158, 169), has been dated by Korinna Pilafidis-Williams to LH IIIB, but the latest pottery from the site, though in very small quantity, is of LH IIIC Middle date (1998, 160), thus not precluding a late date for this example. From postpalatial Crete, a large wheel-made figure seated on a four-legged throne is reported from Room E4 in Kephala Vassilikis, where it was associated with further fragments of the so-called goddesses with upraised arms and LM IIIC Middle to Protogeometric ceramics (Eliopoulos 1998, 307, 308, figs. 13–17). Four-legged throne models seem to be a phenomenon of the Final Bronze Age/Early Iron Age transition in the Eastern Mediterranean (cf. Eliopoulos 1998, 309 n. 11 on Cypriote comparanda and the so-called Ashdoda figurines in 11th – 8th centuries B.C.E. Philistia; Yasur-Landau 2001, 331, 337, pl. XCIXa–b; Ben-Shlomo and Press 2009, 49–54, figs. 5–7, 8:1–3).

DISCUSSION

The distribution of miniature throne models displays clustering mainly around palatial centers and in the southern part of the Mycenaean world. Funerary contexts with thrones and seated figurines are most common in the core regions of the Mycenaean palatial mainland, i.e. the Argolid, Attica, and Boeotia, whereas in Messenia they are curiously lacking. Nevertheless, they are also found in the settlements of Korakou in the Corinthia (Rutter 1974, 516, figs. 213–214), Lefkandi on Euboea, and Iolkos in Thessaly. Mycenaean terracotta thrones are apparently not documented on contemporaneous Crete and only one example is reported to have been found in Cyprus (Mylonas 1965, 114).

The function or inherent symbolism of the thrones has been interpreted variously. Chrysanthi Gallou (2005, 55–56) assumes that "... if thrones are accepted as the seats of divine figures, then the 'throne' models without occupants in tombs could be considered as the aniconic presence of the chthonic deity or the dead ancestors, and/or as connected with special ceremonies involving the pouring of libations, as in the case of to-no-e-ke-te-ri-jo." Angeliki Tamvaki (1975, 238) assigns "them little more than a decorative function." Ioannis Papadimitriou (1954, 86) interpreted the thrones as symbols of a "Great Mother Goddess" cult on the basis that he could associate the thrones with child burials in the necropolis of Alyki Glyphadas. Naya Polychronakou-Sgouritsa (2003) points out that throne models are replicas of life-size furniture and interprets them as votive offerings, substituting for the offering of the luxury

objects, i.e. real furniture. Eva Wacha (2009) interprets the terracotta thrones with attached figurines in funerary contexts as tutelary deities facilitating the deceased's passage to the underworld—an interpretation which follows the line of Klaus Kilian's (1980, 27) more general hypothesis of an apotropaic function of the miniature furniture models in settlement contexts.

Yet another interpretation of the function of Mycenaean miniature thrones is suggested here, namely that the humble terracotta model was used as a token motif representing the ritual of epiphany. Terracotta throne models were apparently not valued for any intrinsic object value or history. Normal-sized chairs were probably not a widely used artifact throughout the Late Bronze Age and thus would in any case be seen as luxuries, even if not crafted from precious and imported raw materials. Evidence adduced to demonstrate the existence of epiphany rituals abounds in Aegean Late Bronze Age archaeology. The previously mentioned larnax from Klima Messaras has been interpreted as depicting an epiphany ritual; despite the immobile stance of the figure and the dais, Rethemiotakis suggests reading the scene as a figure in motion or rather just arriving from above. In his opinion, the fine wavy diagonal lines in front of the torso should signify motion from above, which leads him to the conclusion that the scene depicts the descent of a god to the dais (Rethemiotakis 1995, 173). That the throne is depicted in front, whereas the human figure is relegated to the back of the scene, hints at the importance of the throne (Rethemiotakis 1995, 175). In view of the putative epiphany rituals in the Knossian throne room (Rethemiotakis 1995, 176–177), he concludes that the uncommon iconology relays the epiphany of a Minoan god. Although the iconography and the find context of this larnax are purely Minoan, this example nevertheless might give evidence of shared rituals in the Minoan-Mycenaean world. Such an interpretation has also been proposed for Near Eastern thrones (Metzger 1985, 296).

One incongruity in the interpretation of the Mycenaean throne models as inculcating new religious ideology springs to mind immediately, namely that enthronement rituals involved the male apex of Mycenaean society, the *wanax*, whereas the humble terracotta models only represent female occupants on the thrones. Joseph Maran and Eftychia Stavrianopoulou (2007) have recently tried to resolve this apparent contradiction by arguing that the male *wanax* received his worldly power by enacting a ritual merging with the female tutelary goddess of the palace—assumed to be the often cited *potnia* of Minoan origin.

In view of the ritualization and dissemination of palatial ideology/religion via throne models, it can be argued that figurines constituted a durable and therefore efficient medium for the enactment and preservation of ritual acts

(Pakkanen 2009, 152). Petra Pakkanen (2009, 154) further argues that the act of using Mycenaean figurines created new power relations. She assumes that a new emphasis on more centralized and officially promoted rituals appeared, which sprang from new forms of social organization based on changed power relations and political strategies within society, yet she does not base her assumptions on archaeological data. Helene Whittaker (2009, 108) points in the same direction by stating that “the elaboration of religious beliefs and rituals seems to have played a not insignificant role in the development of Mycenaean ruler ideology, and [that] the end of the Late Helladic II and the beginning of the Late Helladic III period can be seen as a time in which there is an increased interest of the elite in equating political authority with supernatural power.” It is hoped that the previous contextual analysis of the iconography of Mycenaean throne models, their typology, find spots, and associated artifacts and architecture provides at least some evidence which corroborates such hypotheses.

CONCLUSIONS

In the funerary sector, the furnishing of interments with terracotta throne models is widespread but mainly confined to more affluent burials. There is slight evidence that enthroned figurines are more often found in child burials than with adults, although the data so far are inconclusive, since anthropological determinations of sex and age are missing or unpublished. Also, evidence derived from settlement contexts often points to architectural settings and artifactual assemblages of the wealthier segments of Mycenaean society. Moreover, the practice of setting a throne model at the central hearth, as attested in Tiryns, alludes to the ‘hearth-*wanax*-ideology’ (Wright 1994, 57–60), i.e. a specifically Mycenaean characteristic of the palatial period. Thus, the rare occurrence of miniature models of thrones in comparison with other types of Mycenaean terracotta figurines might be explained by their link to a restricted range of social strata within the palatial society: neither the very poor nor the very rich would have furnished their surroundings with them.

However, to apply a term coined by John Bennet (2008) for the products of palatial glass-production, I also consider the throne models as “tokens of the palace”. They evidence the transfer and acceptance of a religious ideology and new rituals such as the epiphany rituals centered on the throne in the palatial megara to the wider Mycenaean populace. The figurines act as means of ritualization and were perhaps even regarded as tokens of remembrance of these apparently rather exclusive rituals, thus linking individuals to a religious ideology that was promoted as the *raison d'être* of social stratification, but, by means of such terracotta models, was played out without an active enforcement of the highest echelons of Mycenaean society.

Hence they established and enacted “seats of power” during the palatial period. Following such an interpretation, this would also form the very reason why the production and use of throne models quickly faded in the postpalatial period. Their connotation of core rituals of the palatial elite became obsolete and was perhaps even frowned upon after the collapse of the palaces. The rituals and by extension the throne models certainly did not fit into the social realities of the less stratified and more fragmented LH IIC societies on the Greek mainland.

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