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The Figured Mycenaean Stelai*

GEORGE E. MYLONAS

A TOTAL of seventeen grave stelai were found by Schliemann and his successors within the grave circle of Mycenae.¹ Of these, eleven were covered with sculptured designs, while six at the time of their discovery bore neither a sculptured nor a painted decoration. The majority of the sculptured stelai are preserved in fragments and bear geometric patterns, but a few in addition to these have figured compositions. The best preserved three² are so decorated, and all three were found over Grave V. Chariot scenes form the subject matter of the figured compositions on the three stelai. From Schliemann and Tsountas to Karo and Evans, all scholars, who have dealt with these early sculptured monuments of the Mycenaean world, have interpreted the chariot compositions as battle scenes in which the deceased on the chariot took a leading role. However, a more detailed examination of the stelai seems to indicate that the interpretation is not correct.

Representations of chariots and of chariot scenes on Mycenaean-Minoan works of art, other than on our stelai, are not very numerous, but are sufficient to prove the existence of the motive. In the Mycenaean world we find chariots represented on the following well-known works of art: 1) On the gold ring from the IVth

Shaft Grave we have two men on a chariot, drawn by two horses, pursuing a stag.³ One of the men is the charioteer, the other the hunter who is using his bow against the animal (fig. 1c). 2) On a sardonix bead-seal from the Vaphio tomb we have a man dressed in a long garment riding on a chariot drawn by two horses and bearing a leafed long staff or lance (fig. 1b). Sir Arthur Evans dates this gem from LM Ib.⁴ 3) On a fragment of a stele from the Grave Circle of Mycenae we find the lower part of a chariot wheel, while on another fragment we have two wheels supporting part of the curved chariot box and to their right the hind quarters of a horse.⁵ 4) On a fresco from the palace at Tiryns, now preserved in fragments, we have two women riding on a chariot pulled by two horses.⁶ Apparently a hunting scene was represented on that fresco. Chariot scenes were also represented on the walls of the Palace at Mycenae. 5) On two sherds from Tiryns found by Schliemann apparently we have chariot scenes.⁷ 6) Wace has published a terracotta figurine of an unusual nature reported to have been found at Argos and now in the collection of Professor A. B. Cook. It is an abbreviated plastic representation of a chariot drawn by two horses. The chariot, on which two figures are standing, is attached to the hind quarters of the horses.⁸

*To the memory of George Reeves Throop, Scholar, Teacher, Administrator, Friend: ΜΝΗΜΟΣΥΝΗ.

¹ For these stelai cf: H. Schliemann, *Mycenae* (London 1878) 80–85, 88–90 and Nos. 24, 140, 141. C. Schuchardt, *Schliemann's Excavations* (London 1891) 167–176. W. Reichel, "Die mykenischen Grabstelen," in *Eranos Vindobonensis* 24–33. Ch. Tsountas—J. I. Manatt, *Mycenaean Age* (Boston 1897) 92–94. K. Müller, "Fruehmykenische Reliefs," *JDAI* 30 (1915) 286 ff. W. A. Heurtley, "The Grave Stelai of Mycenae," *BSA* 25 (1919–1922; 1922–1923) 126 ff. G. Karo, *Die Schachtgräber von Mykenai* (München 1930) 168–169, pls. 5–7. Sir Arthur Evans, *The Shaft Graves and Bee-Hive Tombs of Mycenae* (London 1929) 50–59; *Palace of Minos* II, 1, 199–202. A. J. B. Wace, *Mycenae* (Princeton 1949) 59–61, pl. 79. The drawings used in this study were made by Messrs. Wilbur Rosvall and Ted Luecke of the School of Architecture, Washington University.

² They bear Nos. 1427, 1428, and 1429 in the inventory of the National Museum at Athens where they are kept.

³ Schliemann *op. cit.* No. 334, p. 223. Karo *op. cit.* pl. 24, 240.

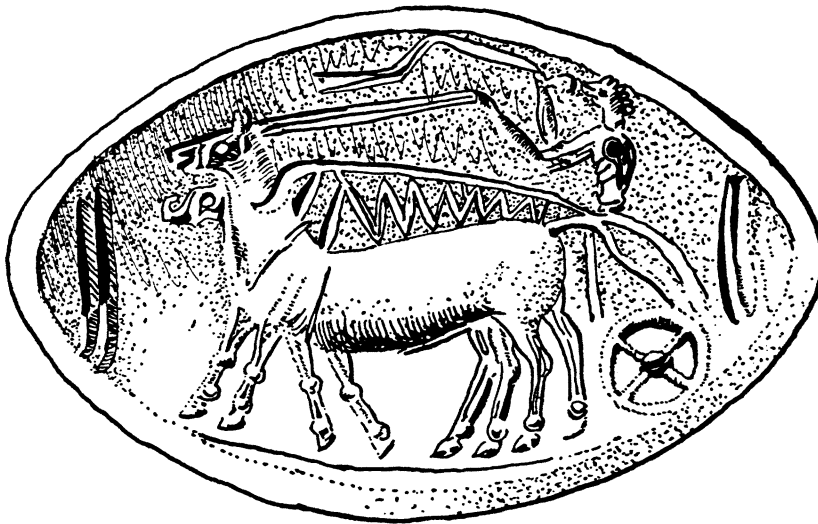
⁴ *Ephemeris* 1889, pl. 10, 30. *Palace of Minos* IV, 2, p. 816.

⁵ Heurtley *op. cit.* fig. 30. Karo *op. cit.* pl. 10.

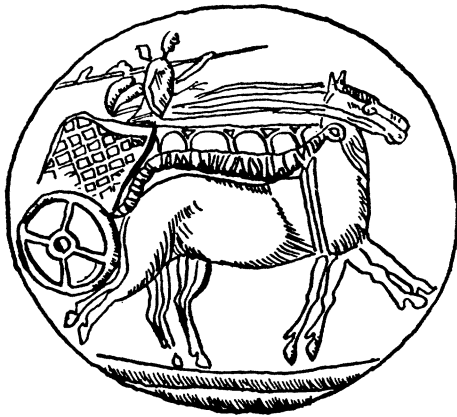
⁶ G. Rodenwaldt, *Tiryns* II, pl. 12. H. Th. Bossert, *Alkreta* (Berlin 1923) fig. 213. Rodenwaldt, *Der Fries des Megarons von Mykenai*, pp. 41–43, figs. 21–22. Reichel, *Homerische Waffen* p. 143, fig. 17c, saw a chariot on a fragment of the silver rhyton from Shaft Grave IV. However, a reexamination of the fragment has not proved his contention; cf. *Palace of Minos* III, 89 note 2.

⁷ Schliemann, *Tiryns* pls. 14, 15. On the sherd of plate 14 only the front part of the horse is represented, but the details above its back make it certain that it was harnessed to a chariot. See also *Tiryns* II, pls. 14 and 15; Bossert *op. cit.* fig. 267. Perhaps chariots are also represented on the sherds illustrated by Schliemann *op. cit.*, on pages 353 and 354, Nos. 152 and 155.

⁸ A. J. B. Wace, *Chamber Tombs at Mycenae* (Oxford 1932) 216–217, pl. 24a. He also illustrates there two specimens from tomb 513 which represent men driving oxen executed in the same abbreviated manner.



a



b



c



d

FIG. 1. CHARIOT SCENES.

a. Amygdaloid sard bead-seal from Knossos. b. Sardonyx bead-seal from the Vaphio tomb. c. Gold ring from Grave IV, Mycenae. d. Detail from the "standard-mosaic" from Ur.

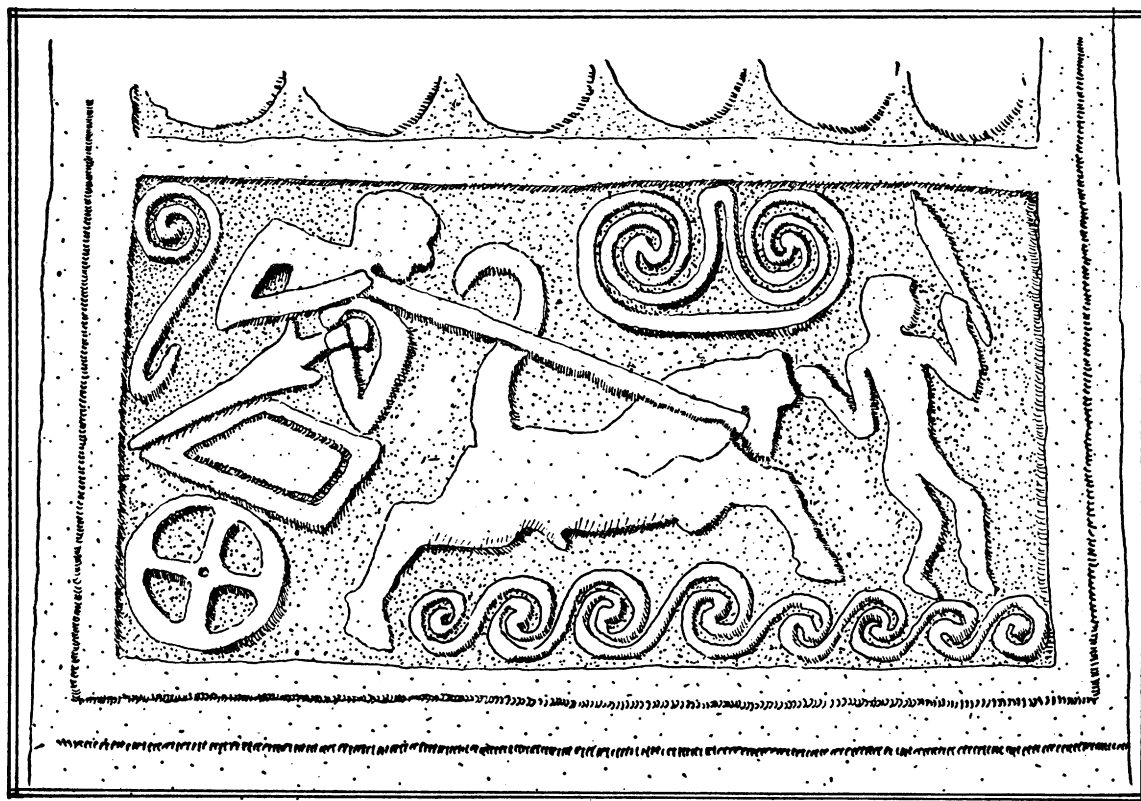


FIG. 2. STELE No. 1428.

Additional chariot representations can be found on objects discovered in Crete. 1) On an amygdaloid bead-seal from Knossos, now in the British Museum (fig. 1a), we have a charioteer holding the reins in his left hand and a whip in his right. The chariot is pulled by two horses.⁹ 2) A charioteer and a man seated in a chariot drawn by two wild goats are carved on a LM sardonyx ring from Avdu near Lyktos.¹⁰ Again the charioteer holds the reins in his left hand and a whip in his right. 3) A chariot drawn by two horses is represented on the short sides of the sarcophagus of Agia Triada.¹¹ Two figures can be seen on the chariot. 4) A possible chariot scene can be made out on a LM Ib sealing from Agia Triada.¹²

Of course this list of chariot representations may not be complete, but it serves to illustrate the fact that the motive was in existence in Mycenaean-Minoan times. Evidently on our stelai we have its earliest known representation in the mainland of Greece. Beyond continental Greece and the islands adjacent to its shores such chariot representations are to be found on the later pottery of prehistoric Cyprus and Rhodes.¹³

In all the extant representations we have one or two persons on the chariot whenever a quiet, stately scene is represented; but we have two men on the chariot whenever an active or violent scene is represented or action is anticipated. In the latter case, one man handles the horses

⁹ B. M. *Catalogue of Gems*, p. 5, pl. 1, 39. Furtwaengler, *Antike Gemmen*, pl. 2, 9. *Palace of Minos* IV, 2, pp. 815-816, fig. 795.

¹⁰ *Palace of Minos*, IV, 2, p. 823, fig. 803.

¹¹ S. Paribeni, "Il Sarcophago dipinto di Haghia Triada," *MonAnt* 19 (1908) pl. 3.

¹² D. Levi, "Le Cretule di Haghia Triada," *Annuario* 8-9 (1925-1926) p. 125 fig. 133a, b, and pl. 8, 117.

According to Sir Arthur Evans this sealing is not later than LM Ib (*Palace of Minos* IV, 2, pp. 827-828, fig. 808.) He also mentions, *i.e.*, other sealings with the chariot motive from the Little Palace dating from LM II.

¹³ B. M. *Catalogue of Vases*, I, 2 Nos. C338-C341, C345, C348, C398, figs. 109-11, 112b, 114, 136. *Annuario* 6-7, p. 234, fig. 150.

and the other is engaged in movements required by the action; and this is only natural since a single warrior or hunter on a chariot could hardly handle the horses and fight or hunt at the same time. Beyond the Mycenaean-Minoan world we find two men represented on the war chariots of Mesopotamia, (fig. 1d), Egypt and the Hittite district.¹⁴ We would therefore expect to find two men riding on war chariots if battle scenes were depicted on the stelai; but only one rider is to be seen on all the three figured examples from Mycenae. One may be tempted to attribute this to the inability of the artist to represent two figures on the chariot. This, however, can scarcely be maintained in

view of the parallel representation on the almost contemporary ring from Grave IV.¹⁵ In all the stelai there is sufficient room behind the charioteer for a second person, if it were necessary. As a matter of fact on stele 1428 (fig. 2) a spiraliform motive was introduced to fill the blank space behind the rider. This observation however is not the only reason for which we are forced to reject the traditional interpretation of the scenes.

On stele No. 1428, we have a man, apparently nude and without a helmet bending forward and holding a broad triangular dagger or sword, on a chariot drawn by a horse at full gallop (fig. 2). In front of the horse a man on foot is

¹⁴ One of the earliest chariot scenes is to be seen in the so-called "standard mosaic" of Ur (fig. 1d). Cf. C. L. Woolley, *The Development of Sumerian Art* (New York 1935) frontispiece. G. Conteneau, *Manuel d'Archéologie Orientale*, figs. 679, 744, 745, 761. It seems probable that the use of the chariot spread from Mesopotamia to Greece and thence to Crete; therefore, the comparison is not only instructive but essential.

¹⁵ Comparison of the reliefs on the stelai with the intaglio on the ring is legitimate since all authorities agree that the carvers of the stelai were craftsmen skilled in working gold and precious stones. Heurtley states the case succinctly when he writes that the sculptors of the stelai were "perhaps the same as the gold-workers experimenting in a new material" (*op. cit.* 145, 140); cf. *Palace of Minos IV*, 1, p. 253.

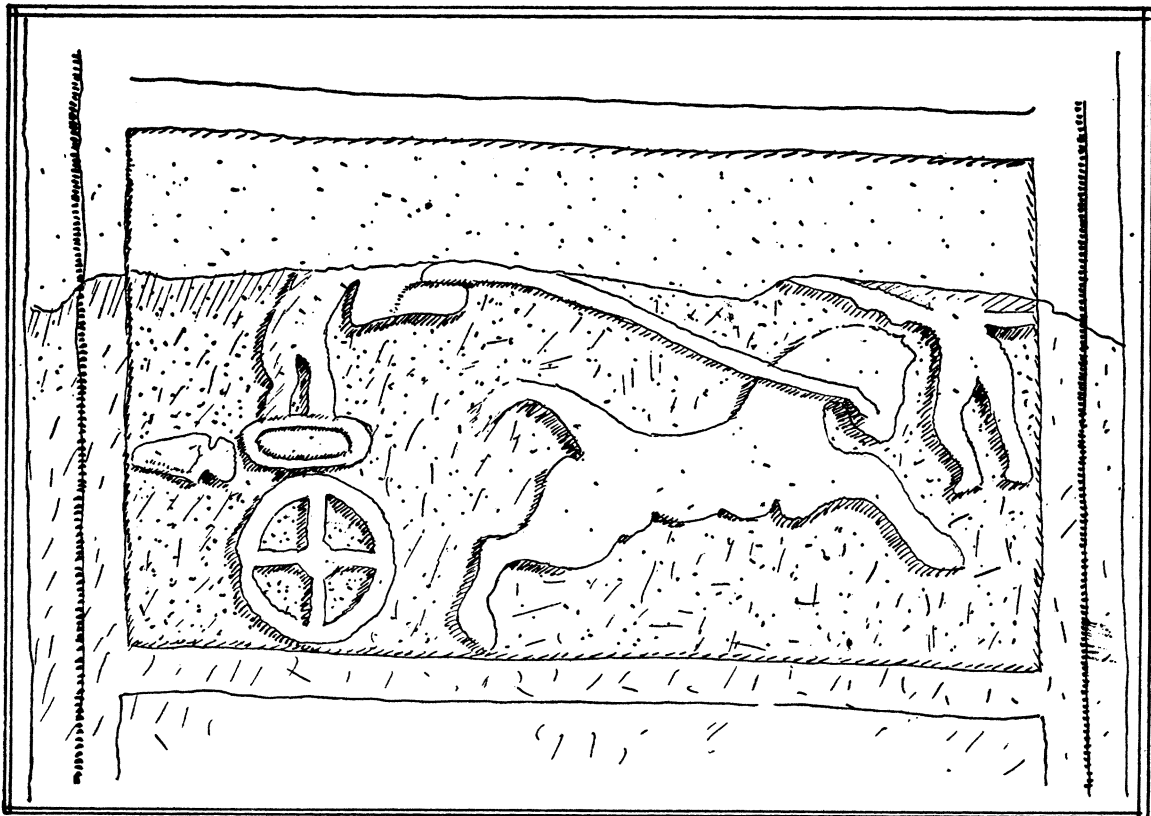


FIG. 3. STELE No. 1429.

represented, again nude and without a helmet, brandishing an object broad in the middle, tapering to both ends. Heurtley and Karo have with reason compared that object with the bronze knives terminating in a circle from Grave VI, but Tsountas before them had pointed out that the object was not a war weapon and suggested that the man holding it was an attendant who accompanies his chief to battle or the hunt.¹⁶ We may observe, however, that the man seems to hold both feet on the ground in the same way, and this certainly indicates, as Schliemann first pointed out, that he is not running but is standing near a point by which horse and chariot are passing. His raised hands and the position of his torso and feet will remain unexplained if we accept him as a footman running along side his riding master, but they will be understandable if the man was stationary and under a strong feeling of excitement and perhaps of joy.¹⁷ Finally we may note that neither the rider nor the man on foot is wearing helmet or shield necessary for battle, and that the charioteer is not equipped with arms necessary for hunting, such as a bow or a spear. The broad sword or dagger which the rider seems to hold could be of little use to a riding warrior or hunter.

On stele No. 1429 we also have a man riding on a chariot and a man on foot standing to the side of the galloping horse (fig. 3). This time the man on foot is facing the charioteer and is holding both feet firmly on the ground. Unfortunately the stone is broken and weathered at crucial points, but still we can see that the man on foot is holding a rather long round object at the level of his elbows. The charioteer, evidently unarmed, is represented bending forward holding the reins in the left hand and in the right some unidentified object, faint traces of which survive. Attached to the rear of the

chariot we find a triangular object which both Schliemann and Schuchardt identified as a "sword with round hilt." Thus, the charioteer is not holding his sword but an object that from parallel representations on Cretan gems could be identified as a whip. We may note especially that the Cretan charioteers seem always to hold the reins in the left and a whip in the right hand, exactly as our man does. The round object held by the man on foot has been identified as a spear and because of that it is generally believed that he "is making at the mounted man with a spear," to use Tsountas' words. Consequently a veritable battle scene has been recognized on this stele.¹⁸

There are a few details, however, that remain puzzling. The only chance a man on foot has against a man riding on a chariot is to hurl his spear against him from some distance. Our man does not seem to be in the right position to hurl a spear; that position is excellently illustrated on the inlaid dagger-blade from Grave IV (fig. 4). On that blade a number of hunters are represented ready to hurl their spears against lions, and as it is natural the spears are held above their shoulders.^{18a} But our man seems to hold the round object at the level of his elbow, an impossible position from which to hurl, a position that proves our man is not hurling a spear. To maintain that the man on foot is making a determined stand and is thrusting a spear, as a modern soldier thrusts his bayoneted gun, not at the horse but at the rider, is absurd since such a stance in this composition is impossible. Furthermore, our man has no other equipment necessary for a warrior armed with a spear and engaged in combat. That Mycenaean spearmen were equipped with more than their spears or lances is indicated by the few representations of battle scenes which have survived. A real encounter is represented on the gold ring from

¹⁶ For the interpretation of the scene cf. Schliemann, *Mycenae* 82–84. Schuchardt *op. cit.* 173. Karo *op. cit.* 169. Heurtley *op. cit.* 132.

¹⁷ Perhaps we should note that the tail of the horse, among other details, is rendered wrongly. Heurtley, *op. cit.* 132, states that the footman is "holding the horse's head with one hand." Certainly this cannot be so (cf. Schuchardt *op. cit.* p. 173) and the footman should be understood as standing beyond the horse.

¹⁸ For the interpretation of this scene, cf. Schliemann

op. cit. 89–90; Schuchardt *op. cit.* 169–170; Tsountas—Manatt *op. cit.* 92; Heurtley *op. cit.* 131; Karo *op. cit.* 169. The round object held by the man on foot could be a spear, a lance, or even a long staff similar to the one held by the charioteer on the Vaphio Gem or the one on a fragment of a stele from the Grave Circle illustrated by Heurtley *op. cit.* fig. 31.

^{18a} Karo *op. cit.* pl. 94, 394 and fig. 27. *Palace of Minos* III, fig. 71.

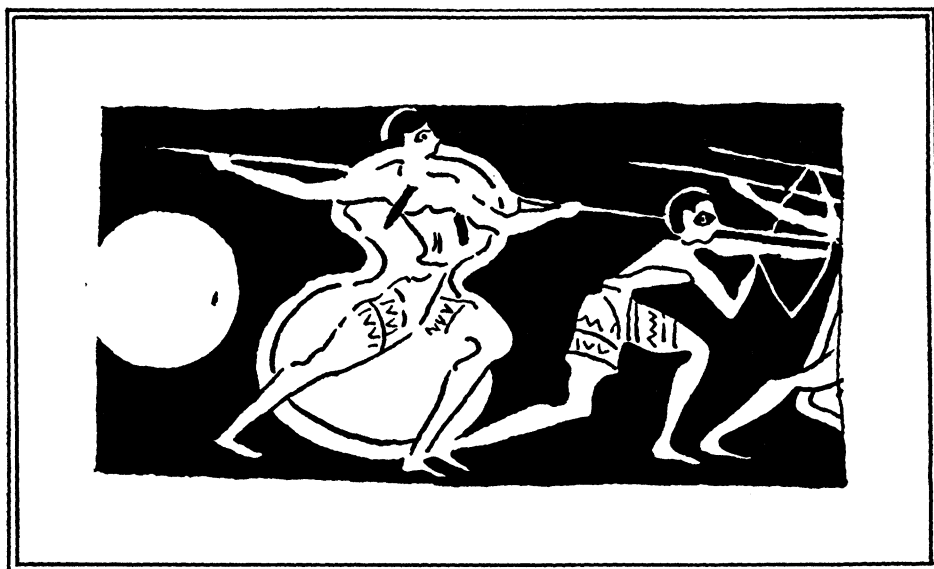


FIG. 4. HUNTERS OF LIONS ON AN INLAID DAGGER
FROM GRAVE IV.



FIG. 5. GOLD RING FROM THE ACROPOLIS
OF MYCENAE.

Grave IV (fig. 7j).¹⁹ With the exception of the warrior who is on the ground, apparently out of combat, the others are wearing helmets and one of them with a spear is also the possessor of a shield. On a gold bead from Grave III we have a duel in which two men are involved; one of them is wearing a crested helmet and is holding a large shield, while the other is armed with a sword which he is successfully using against his opponent.²⁰ The raised hand of the second man makes it impossible to see whether or not he was wearing a helmet. But it is interesting to remark that the helmeted warrior apparently was armed with a spear which seems to be hovering in the background. In both cases the warrior with the spear is both helmeted and has a shield. On the well known silver rhyton from Grave IV we have represented a number of warriors.²¹ Some of them are equipped with bows, others with slings, and still others with spears. The wielders of the sling and the bow, weapons that could be used from a distance, have neither helmets nor shields, but the spear-men are well protected with shields. We may now recall that even those of the lion hunters represented on the blade from Grave IV who wield a spear are equipped with shields, while the archer on the same blade has neither shield nor helmet (fig. 4). That this was not accidental is indicated by the composition on a flat cylinder of red jasper from Kydonia now in the *Cabinet des Médailles*. On that cylinder we have a hunter with a spear and one with a bow attacking a lion; the wielder of the spear is protected by a shield, while the archer depends only on his bow.²² Shields are also borne by the warriors who are armed with spears on the painted stele from Mycenae, and by those on the so-called warriors' vase and on the sherd from Tiryns.²³ To these we may add the small figure which seems to be descending through the air on the great gold ring from the Acropolis of Mycenae (fig. 5). There can be no doubt that the figure, hidden behind a large shield, is holding a spear.

We may also add the warrior on a clay seal-impression from the treasury of the domestic quarter of the palace of Knossos²⁴ (fig. 7i). It seems therefore safe to maintain that at least the shield was part of the usual equipment of a warrior armed with a spear or lance and that only warriors who used long-distance weapons, such as bows and slings, were not equipped with it. We would therefore expect our men on foot, and especially the one on stele No. 1429, to be equipped at least with a shield.

If we now turn to the charioteer we shall find that the man seems to be unarmed and is completely unaware of any danger that the presence of the man on foot is assumed to indicate. Indeed, he is holding in his right hand a short object that cannot be identified; but that object most probably was a whip. Such a short object can be also assumed to be a dagger; but a dagger to a man riding on a chariot is useless, especially when he is supposed to be fighting against a man presumably armed with a spear or lance. And we may recall that Schuchardt has recognized a sword in the triangular object attached to the back of the chariot; certainly no warrior engaged in combat will leave his sword in that position! Thus we seem to have an unarmed charioteer at the side of whose chariot appears a man on foot improperly armed for battle. I believe that this is sufficient to cast doubt on the traditional interpretation.

We may now note that on both stelai we have a man on foot just abreast and to the side of the galloping horses. These men are equipped with light weapons, in the one case a knife, in the other what seems to be a spear, a lance or even a long staff, and both seem to be experiencing some kind of excitement that is more pronounced in the case of the man on stele No. 1428. In both stelai we have a single man on the chariot who is essentially unarmed and who is represented bending forward. The appearance of a footman in both instances and in a similar position cannot be co-incidental, nor can the

¹⁹ Karo *op. cit.* pl. 24, 241.

²⁰ *Ibid.* pl. 24, 35.

²¹ *Ibid.* pl. 122, 481. Reichel, *Homerische Waffen* fig. 17. *Palace of Minos* III, p. 93, fig. 52.

²² *Palace of Minos* IV, 2, p. 575, fig. 556. However, on the lentoid bead-seal illustrated by Sir Arthur, *l. c.*, fig. 555, a spearman attacking a lion at close quarters is wear-

ing a conical helmet but has no shield. Perhaps that is due to the fact that a hand to hand fight is represented on that bead-seal.

²³ Schliemann, *Mycenae* p. 133, No. 213. *Tiryns*, pl. 14. Wace, *Mycenae*, 82a, b. *Ephemeris* 1896, pl. 1.

²⁴ Schliemann, *Mycenae* p. 354 No. 530. *Palace of Minos* II, 1, p. 341, fig. 194e; III, p. 313, fig. 205.

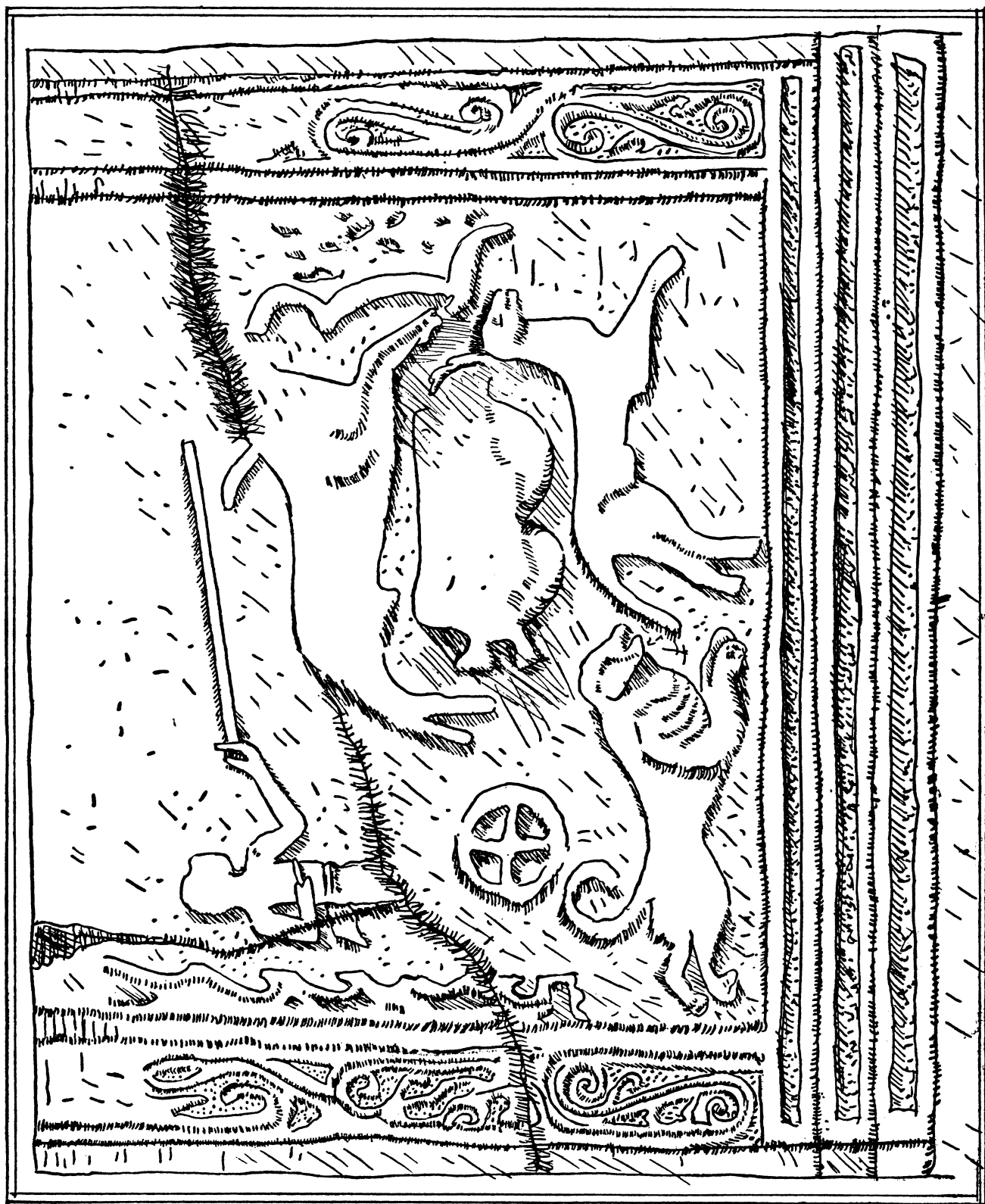


FIG. 6. STELE No. 1427.

fact that the riders are without weapons. These facts prove that we have neither a battle nor a hunting scene on these monuments. There is possible only a third interpretation: that we have a chariot race represented on the stelai. A single rider without helmet, shield or heavy spear will be required for such a race, and the role of the men on foot and to the side of the horses will become clear when we recall the description of such a race in *Iliad* 23.358 ff. In arranging for the chariot race held in honor of Patroklos,

"Achilles showed them the turn-post
Far on the level plain and stationed beside
it as umpire
Phoenix, a match for a god and the former
squire of his father,
Bidding him note and report the truth in
regard to the runnings."²⁵

I suggest that in the men standing in front and to the side of the horses we have such umpires waving the chariots on their way and naturally enough exhibiting a good deal of excitement at the event. Since they are stationed by themselves in the fields they hold simple tools or weapons—a knife, a long staff or spear—for their protection against animals, snakes and the like. Incidentally the stance of the bending charioteers and their proximity to the umpire bring to mind Nestor's wise advice to Antilochos: "Drive quite near (the turning-post and the umpire who was placed by it) and graze it almost, with horses and chariot, leaning a bit thyself—in the car well-knitted together" (*Iliad* 23.333–335). It seems to me that the interpretation of the scene on the Stelai 1428 and 1429 as a chariot race is the only one warranted by the evidence.

Stele No. 1427 is technically the most advanced of the three figured stelai and according

to Sir Arthur Evans it dates from the middle of the sixteenth century.²⁶ Since its discovery by Schliemann it was recognized as bearing two separate themes independent of each other (fig. 6). In the lower section we have a lion chasing a gazelle.²⁷ In the upper part of the stone we have a chariot drawn by a galloping horse and occupied by a single rider. In front of the horse this time we do not have a man on foot, but instead between it and the margin we have at least three connected half-moon shaped chevrons, arranged vertically, and beyond them granular markings irregularly punched in the stone. A similar arrangement, of double incised chevron-like connected lunar lines, with markings beyond, is also to be seen at the back of the chariot and between it and the ornamented margin.

The rider again is not wearing a helmet, nor does he bear heavy armor, but only a triangular dirk attached to his waist. In his left hand he is holding the reins, while in his right he is grasping a short object, presumably a whip. Between the legs of the horse we find a pattern of two semi-circles which have been identified as representing the characteristic Mycenaean 8-shaped shield and as such have been restored by Sir Arthur Evans.²⁸ Beyond the left edge of this so-called shield two small projections in the stone have been interpreted as two feet, while beyond its right edge and between it and the head of the gazelle Schuchardt saw the head of a man thrust between the horns of the "ibex." Because of this Schuchardt recognized in the relief the scene of a victorious warrior in a chariot galloping over the body of his enemy fallen on his shield. What Schuchardt identified as the horns of the "ibex," Mueller interpreted as a crested helmet worn by the fallen warrior,²⁹ and this interpretation has the weighty support of Sir Arthur Evans. Whether or not we admit

²⁵ Translation W. B. Smith and Walter Miller.

²⁶ *Shaft Graves* 58.

²⁷ Neither the lion nor the gazelle was well represented and Schliemann recognized a dog in the pursuing animal, while the gazelle has been called by various names, roe, deer, ibex, etc. As Schuchardt has pointed out (*op. cit.* 173) the theme of a lion chasing a deer was common in Mycenaean—Minoan art and as a matter of fact we have it represented on the repoussé plaques which covered the sides of the hexagonal pyxis found in Grave V (Karo *op. cit.* pl. 143). Consequently the identification of the theme

seems to be certain. The tail of the gazelle is very long, but we may recall that the tail of the horses on the stelai, and especially of the one on stele No. 1428, are not exactly right. For interpretation of the scene on this stele cf. Schliemann, *Mycenae* 80–82; Schuchardt *op. cit.* 173–175; Karo *op. cit.* 168; Heurtley *op. cit.* 128; A. Persson, *New Tombs at Dendra Near Midea* 121, 189.

²⁸ *Shaft Graves* fig. 42.

²⁹ *JDAI* 30 (1915) 287. But Heurtley *op. cit.* 128 states that "the man's head has been taken for the horns of the animal," thus eliminating the existence of a helmet.

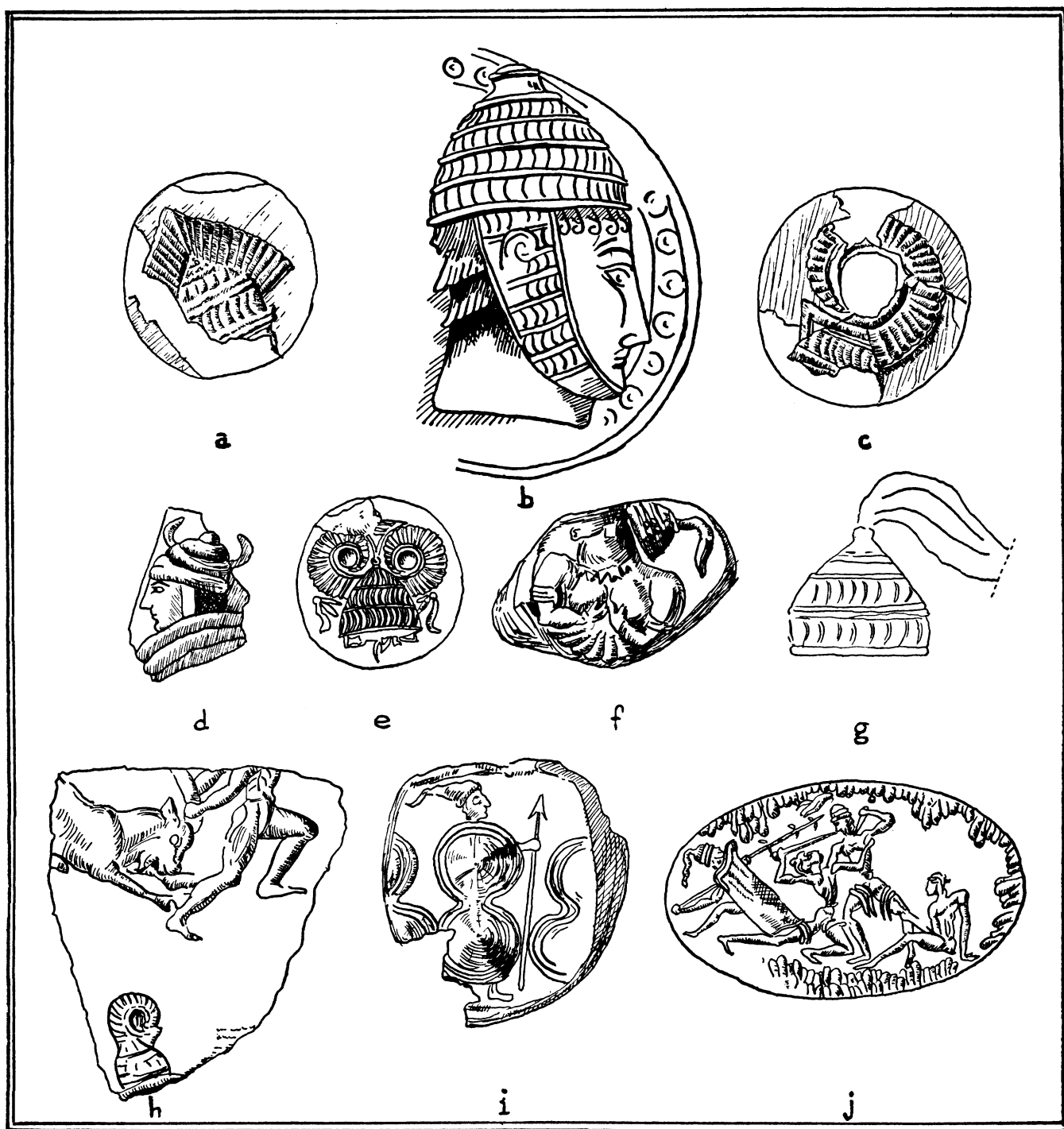


FIG. 7. MYCENAEAN-MINOAN HELMETS.

a. Helmet on the silver vase from Grave IV. b. Ivory relief of a warrior from Mycenae. c. Crested helmet on the silver vase from Grave IV. d. Faience fragment from Mycenae. e. Lentoid bead-seal from the Vaphio tomb. f. Clay sealing from Zakro. g. Helmet from the silver rhyton of Grave IV. h. Fragment of steatite rhyton in the Ashmolean Museum. i. Clay seal impression from Knossos. j. Gold ring from Grave IV.

Schuchardt's interpretation or Mueller's correction, the fact remains that both they as well as all the other scholars who worked with the stele see in this relief a victorious warrior in a chariot advancing over the body of his fallen enemy. This interpretation, however, is not borne out by the facts.

First of all it seems strange to find that the so-called victorious warrior in the chariot is altogether unarmed when his assumed enemy is equipped with heavy armor. Then if we accept the crested helmet of Mueller we shall have to look for the horns of the gazelle which are nowhere to be found, and we must also find in Mycenaean works of art a helmet that will look like the horns of the gazelle depicted on the stone. Almost contemporary examples of helmets are known from a number of art objects discovered in the shaft graves and elsewhere. In spite of the variations which the Mycenaean helmets present, basically they are of a simple type, at least the earlier examples. They are formed of a conical cap on which are attached crests and plumes which in the main are responsible for the varied aspect of the late Helladic head gears. The most common crest (type A), perhaps made of horse hair, waves above the conical cap to the top of which it is attached by means of a button or other arrangement.³⁰ Examples of this type of crest among others can be seen on the silver rhyton from Grave IV (fig. 7g),³¹ on the gold ring from Grave VI (fig. 7j),³² on a clay seal impression from the treasury of the domestic quarter of Knossos (fig. 7i)³³ and on a clay sealing from Zakro (fig. 7f).³⁴

Excellent representations of the button in which the plume was secured is to be found on the ivory relief of a warrior from Mycenae (fig. 7b), on a similar relief from Spata,³⁵ while a different means of attachment is illustrated by the fragmentary remains of a helmet found by Wace in Chamber Tomb 518 at Mycenae.³⁶

On a fragment of a silver vase from Grave IV we find the second type of a crest, type B. It is attached to the side of the conical cap over which it rises vertically in a graceful high curve forming almost a complete circle³⁷ (fig. 7c). The crest, apparently made in imitation of ram's horns, was made of the same material as the cap and was covered with boars' tusks in the same way as the cap itself.³⁸ We have a similar crest on the gold bead from Grave III discussed above, and on the fragment of a green steatite rhyton now in the Ashmolean Museum (fig. 7h).³⁹ Sometimes horn-like plumes were placed in front and the rear of the conical cap (type C). On a lentoid bead-seal from the Vaphio tomb we shall find an excellent illustration of this type (fig. 7e) and perhaps on a faience fragment from Mycenae (fig. 7d).⁴⁰ The flying plume is replaced by a triangular edging on a helmet represented on the fragmentary silver vase from Grave IV (fig. 7a). It is evident that this arrangement, forming our type D, was not made of horn, but of the same material as that used in the making of the cap, and it was covered in a similar fashion with boars' tusks.⁴¹ Besides the crested helmet, of course, Mycenaean warriors also wore conical caps without crests similar to the "helmet of bull's hide, neither with crest

³⁰ For an early discussion of the Mycenaean helmet see Reichel, *Homerische Waffen* 94 ff. I regret that I was unable to find and consult Kukahn's *Der griechische Helm* (Diss. Marburg 1936).

³¹ Karo *op. cit.* pl. 122, 481. Reichel *op. cit.* figs. 17 and 43 b.

³² Karo *op. cit.* pl. 24.

³³ *Palace of Minos* III, p. 313, fig. 205.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 2, p. 867, fig. 854.

³⁵ *Ephemeris* 1887, pl. 11. *Homerische Waffen* figs. 38 and 39. Bossert *op. cit.* figs. 226 and 227.

³⁶ *Chamber Tombs at Mycenae* pl. 38, Tomb 518.

³⁷ Karo *op. cit.* pl. 131p, f. Unfortunately the representation is so fragmentary that it is difficult if not impossible to determine which is the front and which is the rear of the helmet. The projecting piece below the curving end of the crest may indicate that the crest was attached to the rear of the cap and curved to the front. A similar pro-

jection is to be seen on the helmet pictured in figure 7h, and there we may be more sure that the crest curved to the front; perhaps the projection was there to support the end of the crest, if necessary. On the sealing from Agia Triada, *Annuario* 8-9, p. 87, fig. 33 the plume arises from the top of the cap. In that example too it is impossible to determine which is the front and which the rear.

³⁸ Boar's tusks were found in Grave IV, Karo, *op. cit.*, pl. 69, and in other Mycenaean sites. cf. *Iliad* 10.261 ff. For a restored helmet with boars' tusks, cf. Wace, *Chamber Tombs at Mycenae* pl. 33; Persson *op. cit.* 126 ff.

³⁹ Karo *op. cit.* pl. 24, 35.

⁴⁰ *Ephemeris* 1889, pl. 10, 37 *Homerische Waffen* fig. 23. There is the possibility that this double crest was attached to the sides of the cap.

⁴¹ Karo *op. cit.* pl. 131, g. This will certainly indicate that the crest of type B, pl. 130p, was also made of material covered with boars' tusks.

nor cone—it is therefore known as a skull-cap”—which Diomedes placed on his head and which is also worn by the lion hunter on the gold bead from Grave III.⁴² The crestless headgear, however, does not concern us here, since Mueller and Evans saw the crest of a helmet in the horns of the gazelle.

A comparison of the Mycenaean crested helmets represented on works of art with the markings on the stele will prove that the former have no resemblance to the latter and to the crested helmet postulated by Mueller. The markings on the stele, that were interpreted as the crest of a helmet, neither exhibit the characteristic wavy outline of a plume made of horse hair or other similar material (type A, fig. 7g, j), nor curl in the fashion typical to type B (fig. 7c, h). A closer examination of the markings on the stone will indicate that they represent horns of the knobbed variety typical to a gazelle with lyrate horns and to the wild goats represented by the Mycenaean artists,⁴³ but different from the ram's horns which are imitated in type B. Furthermore, we have noticed above how the crest of type B rises almost vertically above the cap; if we interpret the markings on the stele as a crest then that crest will be toward the rear of the cap and, beyond it, in a position altogether different from that occupied by the crest of type B in relation to the cap. Certainly, the markings on the stone can have no relation to crests of types C and D. We are therefore justified in concluding that they have no relation to any of the crested helmets known to us from Mycenaean works of art.

Besides these representations, however, we now have an actual bronze helmet of Late Helladic I-II date that was discovered in Chamber Tomb No. 8 at Dendra. The helmet has been discussed fully by Professor Persson, its discoverer, in the final report of that site published in 1942 and entitled *New Tombs at Dendra Near Midea*, pp. 119-126. In that report, Persson rightly pointed out that the Dendra is a "new Mycenaean helmet type" and

that it corresponds to Homeric descriptions. He further stated that the "only representation of a helmet of that type . . . is on the stela found above the Fifth Shaft Grave at Mycenae," i.e. on our stele No. 1427. The markings on the stone on that stele, however, will make it impossible to determine the actual shape of the helmet assumed to be represented there and its only similarity to the Dendra helmet will have to be based on the curves which have been assumed to form its crest. Unfortunately the crest of the Dendra helmet has not survived, but only two holes on its top "for attaching helmet adornment." That crest has been restored in figure 114 of Persson's publication; but it is impossible to know whether or not that restoration is correct. Consequently it is impossible to maintain that the markings on the stone represent a helmet of the Dendra type.

We may further remark that the space between the edge of the so-called shield and of the back of the head of the animal will not be sufficient to accommodate the head of a warrior covered with a crested helmet. In addition, the markings start from the back of the head of the animal, and not altogether behind it as drawn by Evans, and they were made along with the profile of the head of the animal by the same undercutting or grooving of the background.⁴⁴

The projections beyond the left edge of the so-called shield that have been interpreted as feet are equally doubtful. We may note that even the makers of stelai 1428 and 1429, by all admitted as less advanced than the carver of stele 1427, were able to render feet in a more natural and convincing way. We would expect equal success from the carver of stele 1427. But instead, we find two irregular projections, extending in almost equal length in both directions, making it impossible to distinguish at what end the toes are to be found. As a matter of fact Reichel in his drawing, places the feet with toes pointed up toward the horse,⁴⁵ an impossible position. Again the straight line immediately below the belly of the horse has been

⁴² *Iliad* 10.258. Karo *op. cit.* pl. 24, 33.

⁴³ Cf. painting from Mycenae illustrated by Sir Arthur Evans, *Palace of Minos* IV, 2, p. 834, fig. 815 and its comparison with the head of *Capra Aegagrus* in fig. 814. *EpheMERIS* 1887, pl. 11.

⁴⁴ *Shaft Graves* fig. 42. The horns were placed in a

similar position—at the back of the head—on the stags represented on the gold plaques of the hexagonal pyxis from Grave V: cf. *Mycenae* p. 309 No. 470. Karo *op. cit.* pl. 144.

⁴⁵ *Homerische Waffen* fig. 16.

taken by Evans "as the border of a long mantle, or perhaps a plaid, which was certainly an article of Minoan attire."⁴⁶ There can be no doubt that the Minoans had mantles, but how can a warrior on the battle field be attired in such a long, heavy garment? Certainly in none of the existing representations of battle scenes do we find a warrior so dressed. Besides, vanquished warriors shown under the feet of horses of an advancing conqueror, a common theme in Mesopotamian works of art from which apparently were derived similar themes in the Mediterranean world, are as a rule shown deprived of their armor.⁴⁷ Perhaps we should notice that on the gold ring from Grave IV (fig. 7j) the vanquished warrior appropriately enough is without armor or clothing, while the warriors still fighting have both their armor and their clothing.⁴⁸ How is it then that on our stele a vanquished warrior was allowed his weapons and even his mantle?

If we now turn to the so-called 8-shaped shield that was responsible for the development of the notion of the prostrate foe, we shall find that such a shield is not represented on the stele. All scholars, following Schuchardt, have seen that typical Mycenaean shield in the two adjacent semi-circular formations between and below the horse's legs. Sir Arthur Evans has restored these into full connected circles and thus made the illusion of an 8-shaped shield much more striking.⁴⁹ Since the stone above that design was not sunk or worked and has preserved its original surface, we would expect to find the shield completely delineated. That is not the case and we may wonder what caused the artist to indicate, according to the interpretation of Sir Arthur, the edge of the mantle but not the complete form of the shield behind or over which the so-called warrior is resting! Furthermore, we should recall that even on gems 8-shaped shields bear on their outer surface and along their longitudinal axis a raised, elongated boss.⁵⁰ This, or traces of it, we should expect to find if our design actually represented a shield; but no traces of the elongated boss are to be

seen on the stone. There can be no doubt that a detailed examination of the pattern proves that neither a warrior nor a shield is represented below the legs of the prancing horse.

We propose to see in that pattern the contour of the landscape through which the chariot is racing; that is, two boulders placed side by side instead of an 8-shaped shield. The markings within the outline of the boulders, which were assumed to be "patches" indicating the hide of a bull, are but details of the stone usually added for variety by the Minoan-Mycenaean artists in rock representations. We may now point out that the background is cut away only around the figures represented, leaving the rest of the stone in its original state. This method of undercutting will explain the projecting lines beyond and between the semi-circles. Furthermore, if we compare our raised semi-circles with the half-moon shaped continuous chevrons at the rear of the chariot we shall find striking similarities between them. Those chevron-designs have been proved by Sir Arthur to be the "conventional rocks of the sea margin."⁵¹ There too the rocks are made in the form of semi-circles; they are not rounded on top, and are connected by lines. In the semi-circles below the legs of the horse our artist has rendered somewhat plastically the same idea which he had rendered by means of deeply incised lines at the sides. Above the semi-circles the stone was left uncut for a distance and then the body and legs of the horse had to be cut out of the stone. That I believe caused the straight line that marks the edge of the part of the stone which was left unworked.

The meaning of the vertical chevrons and of the granular markings which are to be seen in front of the horse and at the back of the chariot has been established by Sir Arthur Evans: the granular markings are an indication of a pebbly shore, while the chevrons represent, in conventional fashion, rocks, the contour of the landscape. Sir Arthur further proved that the design was transferred to stone work, "without any consideration of appropriateness," from what

⁴⁶ *Shaft Graves* 56.

⁴⁷ Contenau *op. cit.* fig. 679. Zervos, *L'art de la Mésopotamie* fig. 72.

⁴⁸ The despoiling of fallen antagonists, of course, is a well-known Homeric practice.

⁴⁹ *Shaft Graves* fig. 42.

⁵⁰ Cf. for example the sealing from Zakro, showing the façade of a shrine, *Palace of Minos* I, p. 308 fig. 227 c.

⁵¹ *Shaft Graves* 56.

he calls the "marine cycle" of Minoan wall-paintings and reliefs.⁵² This is certainly borne out by a comparison of the pattern on the stele not only to the design of the MM III burial jar from Pachyammos, which he cites, but also to those on the stone vase from Mycenae with the octopus pattern and on the gold cup from the tholos tomb of Dendra with the "submarine landscape" and the four octopi.⁵³ This would further confirm the assumption that goldsmiths and carvers of gems were responsible for the cutting of the Mycenaean stelai.

The re-examination of the details on stele No. 1427 we believe has proved that the theme represented on it cannot be a battle scene; it must be a chariot race. The charioteer, one man and unarmed, stands on his chariot holding the reins in his left hand and a whip in his right in regular Minoan-Mycenaean fashion. Instead of an umpire stationed at the turning point, we now have the boulders marking that point.⁵⁴ In front of or around these boulders the charioteer will have to turn and then follow the path indicated by the "landscape contour," by the vertical chevrons, avoiding the pebbly shore symbolized by the granular markings. The interpretation of the theme on this stele as a chariot race is fuller, takes into consideration all the elements in the composition, and does no violence to any of the evidence revealed by Mycenaean works of art.

We may now conclude that all three stelai

were found over the same Grave V in which three men were buried, as can be adduced from the skeletal remains and the two gold masks with which the faces of the two corpses were covered. All three are decorated with chariot scenes. One rider is represented on each chariot, and all three riders are essentially unarmed either for battle or the hunt. The chariot compositions on the stelai cannot be interpreted as battle or as hunting scenes but as chariot races. They therefore seem to indicate that chariot races were held in those early days. It is rather doubtful to assume that on the stelai we have represented actual victories of the deceased. The idea of commemorating a victory in such a manner and in such an early period does not seem to find a parallel in Mycenaean-Minoan customs as revealed by the art of the Age. And there is no evidence to suggest that by the end of the Middle Helladic period the sport had reached such a high state of recognition as to warrant such a commemoration of a victor. It seems more probable that chariot races were held as part of the funereal rites for a chieftain, and as such were considered appropriate themes for the decoration of stelai erected over graves. That certainly became customary in later years and in our stelai perhaps we may see the beginning of that custom.⁵⁵

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⁵² *Ibid.* 56.

⁵³ Tsountas and Manatt *op. cit.* p. 75 fig. 24. A. W. Persson, *The Royal Tombs at Dendra Near Midea* (Lund 1931) frontispiece and pls. 9, 10.

⁵⁴ We may recall that "white stones" were on either side of the stump that served as the turning point in the chariot races held in honor of Patroklos: *Iliad* 23. 329.

⁵⁵ "The funereal appearance of chariot scenes," writes

Sir Arthur Evans (*Shaft Graves* 58), "is itself traditional in Crete, as may be seen from the chariots on the Hagia Triada sarcophagus, and survives to a still later date in an imperfectly preserved scene on a larnax from the Zafer Papoura cemetery." We may certainly assume that the funereal appearance of chariot races was traditional in continental Greece also.