

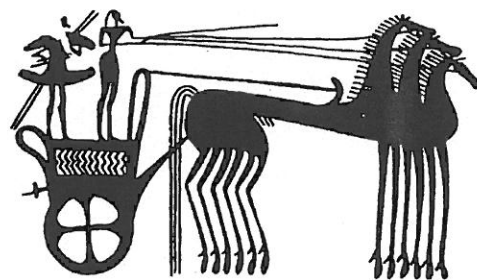
Pictorial pursuits

Figurative painting on Mycenaean and Geometric pottery

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WOMEN IN MYCENAEAN PICTORIAL VASE PAINTING

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Abstract

Two Mycenaean pictorial kraters were found during recent excavations at Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios. In both cases female figures are central elements of the representations, and as such the kraters diverge from the usual iconographic repertoire identified for this genre. In fact the apparent absence of female representations amongst the Mycenaean pictorial corpus is curious, as female figures are otherwise prevalent in Aegean Bronze Age iconography. This paper explores the evidence for other representations of females on Mycenaean pictorial vases and attempts to place these representations within a wider context of Aegean Bronze Age art, with reference to imagery on other media, primarily wall paintings and glyptic.

Recent excavations at Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios, Cyprus, have uncovered a number of important additions to the corpus of Mycenaean pictorial pottery.¹ Significant amongst these are two kraters, each decorated with representations so far unparalleled in the Mycenaean ceramic corpus: the shrine krater² (*Fig. 1*) and the procession krater (*Fig. 6*). In both cases the iconography belongs to the standard Aegean artistic repertoire and female figures are central elements. While researching these vases I was surprised by the apparent absence of female figures on Mycenaean pictorial vases, in particular given their predominance on other media from the Bronze Age Aegean. However, closer analysis suggests that this might be due to mistaken readings of the Mycenaean pictorial style. Despite the substantial comparative data available in other media a heavy gender bias has crept into the reading of the pictorial style. This paper attempts to redress the apparent imbalance. With reference to imagery on other media—primarily wall paintings, but also glyptic—I would suggest that there are many more females represented on Mycenaean pictorial vases than is generally believed to be the case. Many of the human figures that are usually interpreted as male more plausibly can be read as female. In other cases the sex is indeterminate or ambiguous.

THE PICTORIAL STYLE

The pictorial style of pottery developed during LH IIIA1, during the early fourteenth century B.C. The distribution of

this class of pottery, largely centred on coastal Syria and Cyprus, suggests that it was primarily manufactured for export to the East Mediterranean. There are, however, significant finds from the Aegean, most notably the pictorial pottery from Tiryns,³ Mycenae⁴ and above all Berbati,⁵ indicative of Mycenaean consumption of the style. The pictorial style was used to decorate a very restricted repertoire of forms. Typically it adorned a variety of kraters: amphoroid kraters (FS 53–55), open kraters (FS 7–8) and bell kraters (FS 282).⁶ These shapes comprised the central element of a wine service, indicating that the pictorial style was designed for high status display in feasting rituals. Other forms typically decorated in the pictorial style are shallow bowls (FS 295–296), deep bowls (FS 283), and conical rhyta (FS 199). The latter have ritual connotations in both the Aegean and the Near East⁷ while the bowls were elements of a dinner service.

The iconography emphasises the elite aspect of the pictorial style. The standard composition was the chariot scene,⁸ referring explicitly to an aristocratic lifestyle.⁹ This is clearly demonstrated by the inclusion of chariots in hunting and procession scenes on seal rings¹⁰ and adorning the walls

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Ian Todd and Alison South for permission to study and refer to the Mycenaean vases from Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios and for the photographs reproduced as figs 6–8. I am grateful to Berit Wells and Eva Rystedt for inviting me to take part in this very enjoyable colloquium. I am particularly grateful to Eva Rystedt for her patience and help with the completion of the final draft of this paper. I am indebted to numerous people for discussions of the Mycenaean pictorial style and Aegean iconography, in particular Joost Crouwel, Olga Krzyszkowska, Nicolle Hirschfeld, Christine Morris and Alison South.

¹ Steel 1994; South 1999, 769–770; South this volume.

² Steel 1994.

³ Slenczka 1974; Güntner 2000.

⁴ Crouwel 1991a.

⁵ Åkerström 1987.

⁶ Crouwel 1991a, 7; Steel 1999, 807, table 1.

⁷ Yon 1987; Steel 1999, table 1; van Wijngaarden 1999a, 19–21.

⁸ Åkerström 1987, 45–53; Crouwel 1991a, 13–15.

⁹ Immerwahr 1990, 124.

¹⁰ Younger 1988, 164–165.



Fig. 1. The shrine krater from Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios Tomb 13 (K-AD 1619).

of the Mycenaean palaces, at Tiryns,¹¹ Mycenae¹² and LM II-III A1 Knossos.¹³ The chariot motif was adapted from Near Eastern prototypes, for example ivory furniture inlay.¹⁴ Its popularity in the Aegean reflects the prestige and political advantage that the Mycenaean elite derived from esoteric knowledge of the lifestyle of Near Eastern royalty and nobility.¹⁵ Animal motifs are otherwise common—birds, fish, octopus and a variety of quadrupeds, especially bulls, but also goats and stags.¹⁶ These motifs reflect the diverse artistic influences on Mycenaean culture. Many of these artistic devices appear to derive ultimately from the ancient civilisations of the Near East: bulls in procession and fighting bulls, antithetic goats feeding off a sacred tree, wild goat hunts, and possibly the stag hunt.¹⁷ The fish and bird motifs however, appear to refer to Minoan iconography.¹⁸ Åkerström argues that the primary stimulus to the Mycenaean pictorial style was the Near East, "... a world full of fascination to the Aegeans, rich in old art traditions".¹⁹ Ironically, these exotic images were absorbed into the Mycenaean artistic repertoire and transformed into Aegean motifs, before being re-exported back to the East.

There are a number of salient points to consider prior to examining the evidence for female representations in Mycenaean pictorial vase painting. Firstly, there is the formu-

laic, generic character of Bronze Age Aegean art in general and the Mycenaean pictorial style in particular. Although some scenes might appear to hold some narrative content—most significant being the Zeus krater²⁰—for the most part the style is repetitive, more typical of genre scenes in which abbreviated chariot processions progress around the vase or pastoral scenes are arranged in a frieze. The repetitive character of the pictorial style strongly suggests the use of pattern books,²¹ an aspect of Mycenaean art that might be extrapolated to other genres, such as wall paintings. Whether particular images would be specifically commissioned is beyond the scope of the available data, but cer-

¹¹ Immerwahr 1990, 129–130, pl. 69.

¹² Immerwahr 1990, 124.

¹³ Immerwahr 1990, 92–95, fig. 27.

¹⁴ Åkerström 1987, 78–79, 86, 116.

¹⁵ See Helms 1988 for a discussion of how exotica and esoteric knowledge can be manipulated to enhance prestige and for political advantage.

¹⁶ Åkerström 1987, 54–66; Crouwel 1991a, 16–24; Steel 1999, pl. CLXXXIc.

¹⁷ Åkerström 1987, 54–63, 76–77.

¹⁸ Åkerström 1987, 64–66, 71–76.

¹⁹ Åkerström 1987, 86.

²⁰ Åkerström 1987, 100–102.

²¹ Åkerström 1987, 86.

tainly the range of images was carefully chosen to appeal to the taste and aspirations of the Mycenaean elite. In contrast to the very fine detail achieved by Mycenaean craftsmen working in other media, such as ivory carving, glyptic, metalwork and wall paintings, the Mycenaean painter/potter seemingly exercised rather less skill over the depiction of certain scenes and iconographic elements. In particular technical details and less important elements of the representations are drawn rather carelessly or are omitted, either because the painted/potter was not interested in these details or had misunderstood the original image.²² This is evident in representations of chariots and also the schematisation of architectural details. The resulting lack of detail compounds our problems in deciphering the iconographic content of the scenes.

The Mycenaean patrons who used the vases however, could focus on specific attributes and formulaic elements that would enable them to read the images. In many cases the scenes appear to be simplified versions of compositions that are well known in other media. In such cases, it might not have been necessary to depict gender. Instead, this would have been implicit in the nature of the scene and the associated attributes of the figures, or possibly might have been irrelevant. On the other hand, it should be noted that many pictorial vases were found in varied contexts throughout the East Mediterranean.²³ In these cases it is immaterial whether these scenes relate to specific Aegean iconographies, as they were being consumed in widely differing cultural contexts in which the original Mycenaean significance of the scene would have been of little or no relevance. In Cyprus and the Levant, the original signification of the Mycenaean iconography would probably be adapted for local consumption according to indigenous beliefs, ideologies and mythologies. The dissemination, adaptation and re-consumption of exotic iconographies are well-established phenomena in the ancient Near East and Aegean, resulting in a vibrant syncretic artistic style.²⁴ Despite the use of shared motifs and a common artistic tradition the signification of the iconography would be re-invented to fit new cultural contexts and ideologies. Consequently, unravelling the meaning of the iconography of the Mycenaean pictorial style is fraught with difficulties.

AEGEAN DEPICTION OF DRESS AND GENDER

Representations of gender and dress have been accorded great importance in recent studies of the Bronze Age Aegean.²⁵ This is largely due to Elizabeth Barber's groundbreaking study of Aegean textile production²⁶ and increasingly sophisticated analyses of the wall paintings from Thera. Detailed studies of the different representations indicate that costume was used to refer to different social groups according to their age, gender and activities.²⁷ Representations of gender are conventional and highly structured in Aegean art. The main distinction, at least in polychrome media, is according to skin colour, but there is also a tendency for female bodies to be covered while males are

naked or lightly attired in simple belts, codpieces, kilts and tunics.²⁸ Female costume in particular is an important medium for display using elaborate highly decorated textiles.²⁹ Although Mycenaean clothing appears simpler both in design and decoration³⁰ it is evident that the apparel of the elite remained a significant medium for social communication, and there are clear distinctions according to gender. The pictorial style is one arena in which we might expect to see clear representations of distinct social groups according to status and gender. Certainly there are different styles of dress, which appear to relate to status distinctions: chariot-eers tend to wear long spotted robes, other individuals wear short tunics, and some individuals are naked. There are also a variety of types of headgear and hairstyles: bareheaded, conical headdresses, 'pigtailed'. Although there has been some discussion of dress and status,³¹ these distinctions have not been used to explore issues of gender in the Mycenaean world.

IDENTIFICATION OF GENDER ON MYCENAEAN VASES

The gender of the figures portrayed on Mycenaean vessels is extremely problematic, largely because we do not have the standard reference base that is used to identify gender on Aegean wall paintings—skin colour. Moreover, there are a number of assumptions implicit in the literature and, in general, if it is not evident that a figure is female it is usually assumed to be male. Analogy with representations in other media, however, indicates that the following can safely be identified as male or female according to costume. Naked figures are invariably male,³² as are the figures depicted wearing a short tunic.³³ Figures wearing what appears to be a flounced skirt, the typical Minoan court dress, are female,³⁴ as are figures with clearly depicted breasts, such as a figure on a chariot krater from Ayia Paraskevi,³⁵ a similar figure on a krater fragment from Ugarit,³⁶ and possible females on a globular flask from Rhodes (*Fig. 2a-c*).³⁷ However, this last category is open to confusion, as there are several figures that appear to have breasts but might in fact be males wearing corselets. These include a figure on a

²² Åkerström 1987, 86.

²³ Steel 1999, 806–809.

²⁴ For example Crowley 1989; Weingarten 1991; Phillips in press.

²⁵ Rehak 1996 and references; German 2000; Lee 2000; Alberti 2002.

²⁶ Barber 1991, especially 311–317.

²⁷ Rehak 1996; Lee 2000, 114–115.

²⁸ Rehak 1996, 39–42; German 2000, 98; Lee 2000, 116–118.

²⁹ Barber 1991, 317–321; Lee 2000, 119.

³⁰ Barber 1991, 322–325.

³¹ Karageorghis 1959.

³² Rehak 1996, 39.

³³ Rehak 1996, 42.

³⁴ Barber 1991, 324; German 2000, 98; Lee 2000, 116–118.

³⁵ Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, V 2.

³⁶ Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, V 3; Yon, Karageorghis & Hirschfeld 2000, fig. 25/415.

³⁷ Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, XII 18.

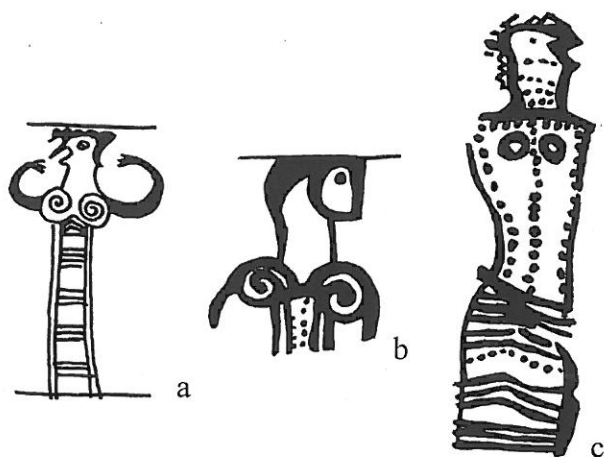


Fig. 2. Details of female figures on pictorial vases (a) Ayia Paraskevi; (b) Ugarit; (c) Rhodes. (After Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, V 2, V 3, XII 18.)

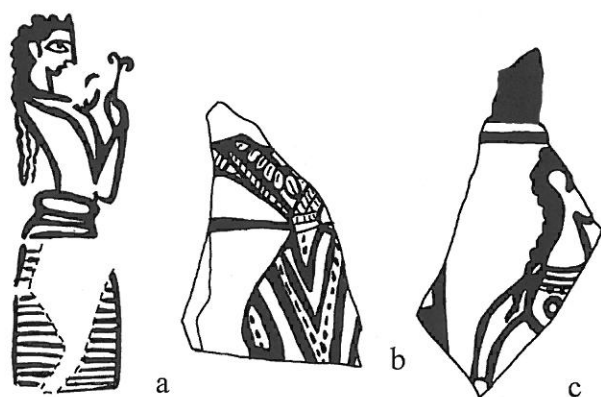


Fig. 3. Details of female figures on pictorial vases wearing Minoan court dress: (a) Kourion Window krater; (b) Paphos; (c) Kition. (After Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, III 12, 11, 10.)

spouted jug from Melathria (Lakonia),³⁸ a krater fragment from Iolkos³⁹ and a piece from Kynos.⁴⁰ Using such criteria the existing corpus of women on Mycenaean pictorial vases is in fact very small. The best examples were all found in Cyprus. The Window krater from Kourion⁴¹ and fragmentary pieces from Paphos and the temple complex at Kition⁴² all clearly depict women wearing Minoan style court dress (Fig. 3a–c). A common theme for female figures on Mycenaean pictorial pottery places them inside architectural facades, such as the Window krater from Kourion and the shrine krater from Kalavassos (Fig. 1). This is a traditional motif from the Aegean figurative style used in wall paintings, and is found at Thera, Knossos and Mycenae.⁴³ Women are also depicted on Mycenaean vases holding flowers. In addition to the Kourion Window krater (Fig. 3a) this motif occurs on vases from Alyke, Voula (Fig. 4b).⁴⁴

While the criteria listed above appear to be fairly safe for ascribing gender to the figures on Mycenaean pictorial vases, in the majority of cases this is problematic. Some figures are typically assumed to be male, but this is open to question, as the depiction of their gender is ambiguous. Within the genre of pictorial vase painting robed figures are

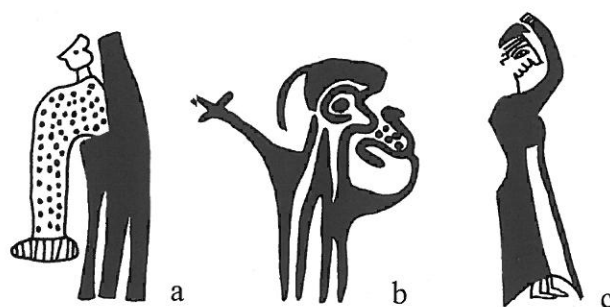


Fig. 4. (a) Detail of a seated goddess on the Aradhippou Homage krater; (b) detail of female smelling flower, on jug from Alyke, Voula; (c) detail of woman waving farewell or raising her arm in a gesture of mourning, on Warrior Vase from Mycenae. (After Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, III 29, IX 13, XI 42.)

assumed to be male and yet there is ample evidence from other media, such as wall paintings, that both males and females wore long ceremonial robes. Robed females include two figures from the Cult Centre at Mycenae, usually interpreted as a priestess and a goddess,⁴⁵ and the priestess from the West House, Akrotiri.⁴⁶ The female participants in the religious ceremonies depicted on the long sides of the Ayia Triadha sarcophagus are similarly attired in long robes. This item of clothing is a symbol of status referring to membership of the religious elite and is not gender specific. Robed females have been identified on a Mycenaean pictorial vase, namely the seated figures on the Homage krater from Aradhippou (Fig. 4a).⁴⁷ Similarly, in the context of Mycenaean vase painting scenes depicting charioteers are assumed to be gender specific, the representation of an exclusively male pursuit. Yet there is substantial evidence for both male and female charioteers amongst the corpus of Bronze Age representations from the Aegean. The boars' hunt fresco from Tiryns,⁴⁸ for example, demonstrates that females were able to use chariots, possibly to participate in hunting or more probably to spectate.⁴⁹ Small female charioteers were depicted on LH IIIA fresco fragments found in the area of the West Portal, Mycenae.⁵⁰ There is also the LM IIIA larnax from Ayia Triadha, on one of the short sides portraying female deities in a chariot pulled by griffins and on the other female deities in a chariot drawn by goats.⁵¹ Consequently, it is too simplistic to assume that all the figures in chariot scenes are automatically male. The

³⁸ Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, VIII 6.

³⁹ Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, XI 57.

⁴⁰ Dakoronia this volume.

⁴¹ Walters 1900, 73, fig. 127; Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, III 12.

⁴² Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, III 10, 11.

⁴³ Immerwahr 1990, 157, pls. 29, 54; Dourmas 1992a, pl. 48.

⁴⁴ Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, IX 13.

⁴⁵ N. Marinatos 1988, figs. 1–3.

⁴⁶ Dourmas 1992a, pls. 24, 25.

⁴⁷ Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, III 29.

⁴⁸ Immerwahr 1990, pl. 69.

⁴⁹ Immerwahr 1990, 129.

⁵⁰ Immerwahr 1990, 194.

⁵¹ Immerwahr 1990, pls. 52, 53.

charioteers on the krater from Pyla Verghi,⁵² for example, might be identified as female by their distinctive dress and flat headdress.

The association of figures with military accoutrements need not presuppose that the figures depicted are male. In Aegean art of the Bronze Age martial iconography was not exclusively male and there is plentiful evidence from other media for female association with such paraphernalia. The wall painting from the Cult Centre at Mycenae depicts two large female figures (goddesses) on either side of a large sword; one of the figures holds a sceptre or spear.⁵³ A stucco plaque from Tsountas' house at Mycenae (Cult Centre) depicts two females (goddesses) facing a large figure-of-eight shield.⁵⁴ The figure-of-eight shield was a frequent device used to represent the epiphany of a deity in Minoan art and Immerwahr suggests that this symbol became identified with a Mycenaean warrior goddess.⁵⁵ These examples imply the existence of an important female deity with warlike attributes, whose imagery was strongly associated with military equipment in Aegean iconography.

Clear attributes are necessary, therefore, to assign gender to the human figures that decorate Mycenaean pictorial vases. Even so, we might not be able to assign gender in all cases, either because it was secondary to the scene or because the combination of iconographic elements would have been immediately apparent to a Mycenaean and so had not been made explicit. After examining the corpus of Mycenaean vase painting I have identified certain attributes (dress, gestures, activities) that might indicate gender. Firstly there are three distinctive styles of headdress or hair that are gender exclusive. Conical headgear, representing a helmet, is worn exclusively by male figures. A type of curved pigtail indicates a male.⁵⁶ This is similar to the fashion of hair depicted on sealings from the hieroglyphic deposit at Knossos.⁵⁷ A flat headdress, frequently with a plume, is exclusive to females (priestesses and goddesses) and sphinxes in other media, for example the priestess holding sheaves of corn depicted on the lower panel by the altar in the Cult Centre at Mycenae.⁵⁸ A fragment from Alalakh provides a very close parallel for the Mycenaean wall painting.⁵⁹ The identification of the elements behind the figure on the Alalakh fragment is problematic. The wavy lines certainly resemble flames, raising the possibility that these represent a torch. However, such a scene would be without parallel amongst the Aegean Bronze Age corpus of representations. More plausible is identification of the larger element as the pillar of an architectural façade.⁶⁰ The wavy

lines between the pillar and the female figure could very plausibly be a sheaf of wheat, providing a very close parallel to the scene from the Cult Centre at Mycenae (Fig. 5). Indeed, it seems probable that the Alalakh krater fragment was decorated with religious imagery of a priestess offering sheaves of corn to a deity. This scene would no doubt have been immediately recognisable to the Mycenaean consumers of the pictorial style—although the religious significance of the motif was presumably not transmitted to Syria when the krater was exported.

Seated figures are invariably female: in Aegean iconography it is extremely rare to depict a seated male, but there are numerous examples of seated females. As a general rule in glyptic these females are placed on the right side of a scene, facing left.⁶¹ Frequently they are being made offerings and they are usually interpreted as goddesses. The Homage krater from Aradhippou (Fig. 4a) is perhaps the best known of the religious scenes on Mycenaean pictorial vases. The general iconography is typical of Aegean art. There is a seated figure on a throne at the right hand side of scene, its feet resting on footstool. This is comparable to the representation of Mycenaean goddesses in wall paintings.⁶² The Aradhippou figure is the recipient of a procession of naked (male) figures. According to the well-established principles of Aegean iconography this is clearly a female figure, and undoubtedly a goddess. She is wearing a long spotted robe, which demonstrates that this item of dress is not gender-specific, but refers to status. The imagery of a seated goddess survives into the 12th century, for example the seated figure on a collar-necked jar from Tiryns associated with a chariot race.⁶³

Close association with wild, exotic or fantastic animals and mythical beasts, such as lions, monkeys, sphinxes, griffins, generally denotes a female in Aegean art. In other media these animals are usually attendant on female figures of

⁵² Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, III 13.

⁵³ N. Marinatos 1988, figs. 1, 3; Immerwahr 1990, pls. 59, 60.

⁵⁴ Immerwahr 1990, pl. 62.

⁵⁵ Immerwahr 1990, 140.

⁵⁶ Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, III 18, 19; Yon, Karageorghis & Hirschfeld 2000, fig. 3/34.

⁵⁷ Immerwahr 1990, fig. 13.

⁵⁸ N. Marinatos 1988, 246, figs. 1, 2.

⁵⁹ Crouwel & Morris 1985, 91, no. 12, pl. 17, fig. 2.

⁶⁰ Crouwel & Morris 1985, 91.

⁶¹ Younger 1973, 235.

⁶² Immerwahr 1990, 191, My no. 4.

⁶³ Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, XI 19.1.



Fig. 5. Comparison of iconography on the wall painting from the Cult Centre, Mycenae and the Alalakh krater fragment. (After N. Marinatos 1988, fig. 1; Crouwel & Morris 1985, fig. 2/12.)

authority (priestesses or goddesses). The prime example is the seated priestess flanked by a griffin and receiving an offering of saffron from a monkey on the wall painting from Xeste 3, Akrotiri.⁶⁴ A similar association of goddesses and griffins occurs on both Minoan and Mycenaean gold signet rings, for example from Mycenae chamber tomb 91⁶⁵ and Archanes Phourni.⁶⁶ This has repercussions for the interpretation of the iconography of a krater from Enkomi. The krater was discovered in a tomb group during the British Museum excavations.⁶⁷ On one side there are heraldic griffins flanking a tree of life, the griffin on the right pulling a chariot, and on the other side there is a heraldic pair of sphinxes flanking a tree of life. Griffins and sphinxes have a long pedigree in the Aegean, being introduced to Crete from the Levant during the Proto-Palatial period.⁶⁸ One of the earliest examples of an Aegean griffin is depicted on a clay sealing from Phaistos, dating to MM II.⁶⁹ Although used sparingly in Minoan art, the griffin and sphinx motifs are an important component in Mycenaean elite iconography. The Aegeanised beasts⁷⁰ were usually used as an emblematic or heraldic device, flanking a column,⁷¹ or else associated with a goddess. The depiction of griffins in chariot scenes is a purely Mycenaean development, reflecting changing religious narratives. By their association with and control over griffins the figures in the chariots can be assumed to be divine. Parallels to this iconography are reflected in other media, most famously the scene depicted on one of the short sides of the Ayia Triadha sarcophagus.⁷² There is also a similar scene on a gold signet ring from Antheia.⁷³ In the case of the Ayia Triadha sarcophagus the figures are clearly female, as they are painted white. The headdress worn by the charioteers on the Ayia Triadha sarcophagus and the Antheia signet ring is the plumed headdress typically worn by females. Only rarely are males associated with griffins, such as on a cylinder from Astrakoi, which depicts a male figure in a chariot drawn by a griffin.⁷⁴ Analogy with the general range of scenes in Aegean art and the general association of females with mythical beasts, therefore, might suggest that the figures being pulled in the chariot on the Enkomi krater are female, the scene referring to a specific Mycenaean religious narrative. Their gender, however, is not made explicit by the vase-painter.

THE KRATERS FROM KALAVASOS-AYIOS DHIMITRIOS

Two pictorial kraters from Kalavasos-Ayios Dhimitrios add to the repertoire of female figures on Mycenaean pictorial vases (see also discussion in South this volume). The shrine krater (K-AD 1619; *Fig. 1*), found in Tomb 13,⁷⁵ has already been discussed in some detail.⁷⁶ On one side of the vase there is a chariot procession towards a building that can be interpreted as a shrine by the horns-of-consecration on the roof. Inside the shrine there is a seated female figure, apparently wearing a Minoan flounced skirt, although this is extremely schematised (*Fig. 1 upper*).⁷⁷ On the other side of the vase the seated female inside the sanctuary building

comprises the central element of the composition, flanked by horses, those on the right apparently representing an abbreviated chariot scene (*Fig. 1 lower*).⁷⁸ According to the rules of Aegean Bronze Age iconography, the figure in the building clearly can be identified as a goddess: her seated posture, her association with a religious architectural structure and the fact that she is the recipient of a procession. These iconographic aspects are repeated consistently within the corpus of Aegean art. Reference to images of religious procession scenes might indicate that the charioteers are female votaries. It is not clear whether the charioteers are wearing gender specific headgear, as the tops of their heads overlap the thick application of solid paint around the neck of the vase. However, the striped robes worn by the charioteers are possibly very specifically female. These are paralleled by the robes worn by the Pyla Verghi charioteers and resemble the robes worn by high status females waiting in the town in the miniature ship procession fresco from Thera.⁷⁹

The second pictorial vase of note from Kalavasos is the procession krater (K-AD 2359; *Fig. 6*), found in Tomb 21 together with an exceptionally large chariot krater, a Mycenaean stirrup jar, a set of nine large Base Ring I jugs, one Base Ring II cup, a single White Slip hemispherical bowl, several Plain ware bowls, a Plain ware jug, and a pair of Red Lustrous lentoid flasks.⁸⁰ This krater is incomplete and was restored from many sherds. Parts of side B, including the figured decoration in the handle zone, are missing. On the more complete side A (*Fig. 7*) there are six human figures in procession, facing left. These can be identified as females according to their costume. The figures wear long spotted skirts covering the feet and belted at the waist, shown by three or four horizontal lines. The upper body is bent backwards and filled with solid paint, probably representing a tight-fitting bodice. The arms and hands of the figures are not shown. Three of the figures (the first, fourth and sixth from the left) wear what appear to be necklaces, represented by three horizontal lines on the necks. All the figures wear similar headgear—a fillet illustrated by two horizontal lines around the forehead, filled with short vertical strokes.

⁶⁴ Dumas 1992a, pl. 122.

⁶⁵ Vasilikou 1997, fig. 28.

⁶⁶ Vasilikou 1997, fig. 29.

⁶⁷ A.S. Murray 1900, figs. 14, 71, no. 927; Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, V 27.

⁶⁸ Immerwahr 1990, 30, 137.

⁶⁹ Immerwahr 1990, fig. 10a.

⁷⁰ Crowley 1989, 44, 51.

⁷¹ Immerwahr 1990, 97; Vasilikou 1997, figs. 13, 16, 17.

⁷² Immerwahr 1990, 101, pl. 53.

⁷³ Vasilikou 1997, fig. 30.

⁷⁴ Younger 1988, 165, no. II.3.99.

⁷⁵ Steel 1994, 201–205; South 2000, 354–355.

⁷⁶ Steel 1994.

⁷⁷ Steel 1994, 205–207.

⁷⁸ Steel 1994, 207–208.

⁷⁹ Dumas 1992a, pl. 48. Although the two uppermost female figures in this wall painting are restored, other female figures wearing this type of striped robe are clearly illustrated.

⁸⁰ South 2000, 362; see also South, this volume.



Fig. 6. The procession krater from Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios Tomb 21 (K-AD 2359). Photo, A. South.



Fig. 7. The procession krater (K-AD 2359). Detail of side A. Photo, A. South.



Fig. 8. The procession krater (K-AD 2359). Detail of side B. Photo, A. South.

Above the fillets wavy lines indicate the hair, and figures 1, 4 and 5 have a wavy line of long hair hanging down their backs. Davis has explored the importance of hairstyles as a device used in Aegean art to depict age, with reference to the Thera frescoes. She argues that a fillet of cloth worn across the forehead, and long locks of hair represents a stage between adolescence and maturity.⁸¹ Although it is not possible to extrapolate the exact signification of this hairstyle to the procession krater, it is probable that the depiction of the women's hair in the procession krater refers to an attribute used to designate specific social information, at least within the Aegean context. The figures are separated by vertical bands of rock pattern (FM 34), comprising vertical wavy lines filled with groups of between five and nine horizontal bands. Flower motifs (FM 18) are located at the extreme left and right of the composition, by the handles. The figured decoration on side B of the procession krater (Fig. 8) is less complete, but the composition is very similar to that described above. At least six females proceed around the shoulder of the krater to the left. The representation of the figures recalls that on side A, but the upper body is spotted.

Although this krater is unique in the corpus of Mycenaean pictorial pottery published to date, it clearly derives from the Mycenaean iconographic repertoire. The procession scene, comprising a row of life size women wearing Minoan court dress (tight bodice and flounced skirts), is one of the more common themes in the Mycenaean figurative repertoire used to decorate the walls of the palaces in LH IIIA and LH IIIB. Although it is suggested that the iconography ultimately derives from Minoan processional scenes, most notably the LM II wall paintings decorating the Corridor of the Procession at Knossos,⁸² it is notable that the Mycenaean scenes are invariably composed of females, whereas the earlier Minoan scenes show males in procession.⁸³ This reflects a significant change in the iconography, illustrating Mycenaean adaptation of Minoan artistic themes in accordance with different cultural circumstances and ideologies. The earliest Mycenaean examples of the procession scene, dating to the fourteenth century, have been found in the Kadmeia (Thebes), amongst the fresco fragments in the Ramp House deposit at Mycenae and in the southwest building of the sanctuary area at Mycenae.⁸⁴ Later examples of this scene include the LH IIIB processional frescoes from Tiryns⁸⁵ and Pylos.⁸⁶ It is interesting to note that the Mycenaeanised processional motif is re-exported back to Crete, where it is found at Ayia Triadha in LM III fresco dumps.⁸⁷

Unlike the figures on the Kalavassos procession krater, the women in the procession frescoes are usually depicted carrying objects, such as an ivory pyxis,⁸⁸ stone vases⁸⁹ and flowers.⁹⁰ They are interpreted as votaries and it is assumed that object of the procession and recipient of their offerings is a female deity. Such deities, apparently associated with processions, include the "White Goddess" from Pylos,⁹¹ and from Mycenae both the "Mykenaiia" and a seated goddess, her feet resting on a footstool,⁹² recalling the pose of the goddess on the Homage krater, Aradhippou (Fig. 4a). The Kalavassos procession krater, therefore, might be read as an

abbreviated processional scene derived from the Mycenaean palatial figurative repertoire. In its indigenous, Mycenaean, context it refers explicitly to a ceremonial religious offering scene. Whether this connotation was transmitted to Cyprus or the scene was re-consumed according to Late Cypriot ideologies cannot be answered by the available evidence. It is notable, however, that several Mycenaean pictorial kraters that explicitly reference Aegean religious imagery⁹³ were consciously selected by the Late Cypriot elite for incorporation within high status funerary contexts.

FEMALE FIGURES IN POPULAR ART

For the most part the pictorial style appears to reference palatial art, namely the wall paintings. There is however some blurring of boundaries between palatial and popular art in the LH IIIB–LH IIIC periods, particularly evident in the realm of funerary iconography. This is manifest on the Tanagra larnakes.⁹⁴ Female figures are particularly prevalent in these scenes, largely engaged in activities associated with funerary ritual: scenes of *prothesis* (laying out the dead), holding a kylix (referring to Mycenaean funerary practices involving the pouring of libations and funerary feasts), grieving figures with their arms raised to tear the hair in a gesture of mourning, figures in procession, and robed women apparently engaged in a funerary dance. These images are significant as they accord us an alternative view of female social roles to the idealised images prevalent in the palatial art forms. Although the iconography of the Tanagra larnakes is largely derived from the palatial wall paintings, Vermeule suggests that many images represent an innovative artistic style that is particularly evocative of the emotions associated with death, and which has nothing to do with the formalised imagery of palatial art forms.⁹⁵ The iconography of the LH IIIC Warrior Vase from Mycenae is closely related to these popular art forms rather than Mycenaean palatial art. Although there has been considerably more emphasis on the procession of soldiers on both sides of the krater,⁹⁶ there is a female figure next to the handle at the left hand side of the scene on side A, her arm raised in a

⁸¹ Davis 1986, 401, fig. 1h.

⁸² Immerwahr 1990, 114.

⁸³ Immerwahr notes that the only example of males in procession in the Mycenaean processional frescoes is from Pylos; 1990, 114, 117–118.

⁸⁴ Immerwahr 1990, 111, 114, 190–191, pl. XXI.

⁸⁵ Immerwahr 1990, 114, pls. 55–56.

⁸⁶ Immerwahr 1990, 118, pl. 57.

⁸⁷ Immerwahr 1990, 181.

⁸⁸ Immerwahr 1990, pls. 55–56.

⁸⁹ Immerwahr 1990, pl. XXI.

⁹⁰ Immerwahr 1990, pls. 57, XXI.

⁹¹ Immerwahr 1990, pl. 58.

⁹² Immerwahr 1990, 119, 191.

⁹³ In addition to the two kraters from Kalavassos there is also the Homage krater from Aradhippou, Fig. 4a.

⁹⁴ Vermeule 1965; Immerwahr 1990, 154–158.

⁹⁵ Vermeule 1965.

⁹⁶ Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, 130–132.

gesture of farewell or possibly mourning (*Fig. 4c*).⁹⁷ While the Warrior Vase dates to the 12th century and belongs to the post-palatial culture of Mycenaean Greece there is an interesting precursor from Ayia Paraskevi, Cyprus, dating to the 13th century (*Fig. 2a*).⁹⁸ This illustrates a female standing behind a chariot, her arms raised to her head in a gesture that clearly indicates mourning in Mycenaean popular art. Any identification of this figure as a goddess is erroneous, as the chariot procession is leading away from her. The figure is composed from a stylised plant motif and it is unclear whether she was an intentional element of the scene or was added subsequently as an afterthought. However, the final appearance of the scene does fit in with a particular class of Mycenaean popular iconography and should probably be read as such.

CONCLUSIONS

Clearly female figures were depicted on Mycenaean pictorial pottery. The scenes are frequently schematised versions of those found on wall paintings and in other media and would have been immediately recognisable to a Mycenaean. They can be subdivided into a number of main groups. First there is the female figure at the edge of the scene with arms raised in gesture of mourning or bidding farewell. This motif is relatively uncommon within the corpus of Mycenaean pictorial pottery, and references popular rather than elite art forms. More typical is the seated female, usually on the right side facing left towards a procession. The procession scene is surprisingly rare given its predominance in My-

cenaean palatial art. Females might also be depicted associated with architecture and possibly with mythical beasts. The identification of some figures in chariots as female is possibly the most controversial, although such representations are not uncommon in other media. Occasionally a single female figure might be used as a filling motif, as for example on a globular flask from Rhodes (*Fig. 2c*).⁹⁹

In many cases it is not possible for the modern reader to infer gender from the depictions. Possibly the sex of participants was irrelevant to the scene, either in its indigenous context or as re-consumed in Cyprus and the Levant. Other attributes/elements were more important. More probably, at least within the Mycenaean world, the sex of the figures was immediately apparent from the iconographic content of the scene or other attributes. Unfortunately, despite the rich repertoire of iconographic parallels, our knowledge of the mythologies and ideologies being represented is too limited to allow us to decrypt these scenes, and thus to identify possible gender roles. However, we should also bear in mind that the exported vessels were no doubt re-interpreted according to Cypriot and Levantine mythologies.

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⁹⁷ Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, 130, XI 42; Immerwahr 1990, 150, pl. 86.

⁹⁸ Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, V 2.

⁹⁹ Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, XII 18.