



PIHANS • CXXVIII

## SILVER, MONEY AND CREDIT

A TRIBUTE TO ROBARTUS J. VAN DER SPEK  
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 65<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY

*edited by*

KRISTIN KLEBER and REINHARD PIRNGRUBER



NEDERLANDS INSTITUUT VOOR HET NABIJE OOSTEN

LEIDEN

2016

PIHANS. UITGAVEN VAN HET  
NEDERLANDS INSTITUUT VOOR HET NABIJE OOSTEN TE LEIDEN

*voorheen* Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul

onder redactie van  
J.G. DERCKSEN, J. EIDEM, K. van der TOORN en K.R. VEENHOF

CXXVIII

SILVER, MONEY AND CREDIT

A TRIBUTE TO  
ROBARTUS J. VAN DER SPEK  
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 65<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY



*Bert van der Spek*

*(Photo: Yvonne Compier/Communicatie & Marketing, VU)*

# SILVER, MONEY AND CREDIT

A TRIBUTE TO  
ROBARTUS J. VAN DER SPEK  
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 65<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY

*edited by*

Kristin Kleber and Reinhard Pirngruber



NEDERLANDS INSTITUUT VOOR HET NABIJE OOSTEN

LEIDEN

2016

Copyright 2016 by  
Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten  
Witte Singel 25  
Postbus 9515  
2300 RA Leiden, Nederland

NinoPublications@hum.leidenuniv.nl

www.nino-leiden.nl

*All rights reserved, including the rights to translate or  
to reproduce this book or parts thereof in any form*

*Cover illustration: Lydian tribute bringers at Persepolis. Photo: Richard Stone.*

Silver, Money and Credit. A Tribute to Robartus J. van der Spek on the Occasion of his 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday /  
edited by Kristin Kleber and Reinhard Pirngruber. — Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije  
Oosten.

PIHANS = Uitgaven van het Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten te Leiden  
(ISSN 1571-5728; 128)

*(voorheen Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul)*  
*= Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul)*

ISBN 978-90-6258-339-3

Printed in Belgium

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

*Kristin Kleber and Reinhard Pirngruber*  
Editors' foreword. . . . . VII

*Jaap-Jan Flinterman*  
Toespraak bij het afscheid van Bert van der Spek als hoogleraar Oudheidkunde . . . . IX-XII

*Amelie Kuhrt*  
'Bert' and the History and Historiography of the Seleucid Empire . . . . . XIII-XVIII  
Bibliography of Robartus J. van der Spek . . . . .XIX-XXVII  
Tabula Gratulatoria. . . . . XXIX

### MESOPOTAMIA

*Theo J.H. Krispijn*  
Early Silver: Thoughts about the Sign KU<sub>3</sub> in the Earliest Documents from Uruk . . . . 1-10

*Jan Gerrit Dercksen*  
*Kaspam lašqul "Let Me Weigh Out the Silver":*  
Mesopotamian and Anatolian Weights during the Old Assyrian Colony Period . . . . . 11-22

*Marten Stol*  
The Old Babylonian 'I Owe You' . . . . . 23-37

*Kristin Kleber*  
The Kassite Gold and the Post-Kassite Silver Standards Revisited . . . . . 39-60

*Michael Jursa*  
Silver and Other Forms of Elite Wealth in Seventh Century BC Babylonia . . . . . 61-71

*Caroline Waerzeggers*  
The Silver has gone...  
Temple Theft and a Divided Community in Achaemenid Babylonia . . . . . 73-85

*Johannes Hackl*  
New Additions to the Rahimesu Archive:  
Parthian Texts from the British Museum and the World Museum Liverpool . . . . . 87-106

*Reinhard Pirngruber*  
The Value of Silver:  
Wages as Guides to the Standard of Living in First Millennium BC Babylonia. . . . . 107-118

**CHINA AND THE PERSIAN EMPIRE***Bas van Leeuwen and Yi Xu*

Silverization of China during the Ming-Qing Transition (ca. 1550-1700)  
and the Consequences for Research into the Babylonian Economy . . . . . 119-132

*Wouter F.M. Henkelman and Margaretha L. Folmer**Your Tally is Full!*

On Wooden Credit Records in and after the Achaemenid Empire . . . . . 133-239

*Mark Tamerus*

Elusive Silver in the Achaemenid Heartland:  
Thoughts on the Presence and Use of Silver According to the Persepolis Fortification  
and Treasure Archives . . . . . 241-294

**THE LEVANT AND GREECE***Willemijn J.I. Waal*

Silver in Search of his Father:  
A Comparative Folkloristic Approach to an Episode of the Song of Silver. . . . . 295-306

*Jorrit M. Kelder*

Mycenae, Rich in Silver. . . . . 307-317

*Caroline van der Brugge*

The Silver Krater of King Phaedimus:  
A Small Piece of Tyrian History in the *Odyssey*. . . . . 319-332

*Diana E. Kretschmann*

'A Bad Penny always Turns up':  
Silver Coins and Citizenship Ideology in Classical Athens. . . . . 333-348

# MYCENAE, RICH IN SILVER

*Jorrit M. Kelder\**

Whilst gold is the metal that is most commonly associated with Mycenae – mostly because of Homer’s reference to that city, but also because of the fabulous death masks that were uncovered by Schliemann in the shaft graves of Grave circle A – relatively little is known about the role and appreciation of silver in the Mycenaean world. Silver artefacts have been found only sporadically at Mycenaean sites, suggesting that the metal was rare, yet there is good evidence that the Mycenaeans were already mining silver in the Laurion, south of Athens. This article will try to explain this apparent dichotomy, by exploring the role and importance of silver in the Mycenaean world.

## INTRODUCTION

The Mycenaean world, and Mycenae in particular, is known primarily for the fabulous wealth of its elite. Homer called Mycenae ‘Rich in Gold’, and Schliemann’s discovery of the Shaft Graves, which contained fabulous golden death masks and other precious objects, seemed to confirm the Poet’s description of Agamemnon’s citadel.<sup>1</sup> Apart from numerous gold objects, the Shaft Graves also contained a large amount of silver artefacts. Interestingly, the silver objects ‘zeigen ausnahmslos gute Qualität und saubere Arbeit’,<sup>2</sup> whereas the quality of the gold objects is more varied (Karo reports several poorly made cups with defects).

Whilst over 30 silver objects were recovered from the Shaft Graves, silver is only sporadically found in later strata at Mycenae. Indeed, the precious metal is rare in the Mycenaean world as a whole, whereas gold has been found at numerous sites, and in far greater quantities. Indeed, silver (*a-ku-ro*, as part of the decoration of a set of wheels) is mentioned only once (!) in the extant Linear B texts (on Sa 287 from Pylos), although the ideogram WE (which might

---

\* I thank the editors, K. Kleber and R. Pirngruber, for their invitation to contribute to this Festschrift to my PhD supervisor, Bert van der Spek. Much of the research for this paper has been done in Oxford and Amsterdam, and I thank my colleagues at those places for their help and inspiring discussions. In particular, I should like to thank Joanna Palermo and Lisa Bendall for their feedback and references.

<sup>1</sup> The Shaft Graves, of course, turned out to be much older than Agamemnon’s age (dating as they do to the beginnings of the Mycenaean period, to ca. 1650-1550 BC, whereas the stories of the Iliad in essence seem to hark back to the late Mycenaean period, shortly before 1200 BC), but their wealth remains a staggering testimony to the apparent power and prestige of the early Lords of Mycenae. The gold in the Shaft Graves is generally thought to have come from Egypt and the golden death masks similarly seem to hint at early contact between Mycenae and Egypt. However, many of the Egyptian objects in the Shaft Graves probably reached Mycenae via Minoan Crete (see already Karo 1930, 318; for a recent assessment Cline 2007, 193.)

<sup>2</sup> Karo 1930, 225.



indicate silver) is found on a handful of other tablets (including an interesting occurrence on Oa 734bis, where WE is written over what has been identified as an INGOT ideogram).<sup>3</sup>

This scarcity of silver in the archaeological and Linear B record is remarkable, for the Mycenaeans did not have direct access to natural gold reserves, whereas silver could be extracted from the mines in the Laurion. Stos-Gale and Gale conclusively demonstrated that these silver reserves were already exploited from the (late) Middle Helladic period onwards, until at least Late Helladic IIIC (12-11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC).<sup>4</sup>



Fig. 1: Silver rhyton from Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae (photo by Oren Rozen, CC License unported).

Despite its sporadic occurrence in the archaeological record, there can be no doubt that silver was highly valued in the Mycenaean world: indeed, some of the most iconic objects from the Shaft Graves, including the 'siege rhyton' and a rhyton in the shape of a bull's head (Fig. 1), were made of silver, whereas several later (14<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century) procession frescoes from Knossos and Tiryns demonstrate the use of silver (and gold) vessels in religious ceremonies.<sup>5</sup> The sudden 'boom' of silverwork in the Shaft Graves, and the later scarcity of silver in the Mycenaean archaeological record thus requires an explanation.

#### SILVER AND THE RISE OF MYCENAE

Silver was used in the Aegean from at least the third millennium BC onwards. Early examples of silverwork include a superbly made silver diadem from Amorgos (in the Cyclades), and a beautifully made two-handled sauceboat from Troy IIg, weighing a staggering 600 grams. Chemical analysis suggests that, during the third and early second millennium BC, silver from various sources (in Anatolia, the Cyclades (Siphnos), and possibly already the Laurion) was used throughout the Aegean. Towards the end of the Middle Bronze Age, however, the Laurion seems to have become the main source of silver: chemical analysis

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ventris/Chadwick 1973, 351; Luján 2011, 30. But see Olivier/Vandenabeele (1979, 152-153) who dismisses the identification of \*166 as an INGOT ideogram, whereas WE may more plausibly be identified as a designation for textile (wehanos).

<sup>4</sup> Stos-Gale/Gale 1982.

<sup>5</sup> On the procession frescoes, see Blakolmer 2007, 43; see also Weilhartner 2012, 223-4.

of a small number of objects from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae suggests that 80% of the silver found in those tombs originated from the Laurion.<sup>6</sup>

The question rises as to how such a large quantity of silver from the Laurion arrived at Mycenae. It seems unlikely that Mycenae already exercised some sort of control over the Laurion as early as Late Helladic I (the era of the Shaft Graves), and it seems equally implausible to attribute the wealth in the Shaft Graves exclusively to successful raids. Instead, it is more likely that most of the objects from the Shaft Graves were acquired in the process of gift exchange between the rulers of Mycenae and other potentates<sup>7</sup>, most likely partners (or competitors) in a trading network centred on the Saronic Gulf, which connected the Argolid to Crete, the Cyclades, and the Near East.<sup>8</sup>

At the centre of this network stood Kolonna on Aegina, which, by the time of the Shaft Graves, reached its zenith in terms of wealth and power. Testimony to Kolonna's wealth and importance as trading centre is the so-called Aegina Treasure (dated to ca. 1700-1500 BC). It seems likely that the rulers of Kolonna, Mycenae and other Aegean states, cemented their relations by sending gifts, such as this type of precious metalwork. It is equally likely



Fig. 2: The Saronic Gulf and nearby regions, with LH I-III sites mentioned in the text (after Tartaron 2013).

that Kolonna was instrumental in facilitating Mycenae's access to the Minoan world and that various objects from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae reached that citadel via Aeginite middlemen,<sup>9</sup> although direct contacts between the Argolid and Crete must also have existed.<sup>10</sup>

Although it remains unclear how and why Mycenae became involved in the Aeginite network, there is good evidence to suggest that, towards the end of LH II (i.e. the late 15<sup>th</sup> century BC), Kolonna was eclipsed by Mycenae. There is no evidence for significant building

<sup>6</sup> Stos-Gale/Gale 1982, 476.

<sup>7</sup> Voutsaki 1999, 110.

<sup>8</sup> For a recent assessment of the Saronic trading network, see Tartaron 2013, esp. 236 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Tartaron 2010, 172.

<sup>10</sup> The adoption of numerous Minoan elements in Mycenaean culture further testifies to Crete's role as the leading region in cultural, political and economic life in early Mycenaean times.

activity at Kolonna during LH IIB, and although it is generally assumed the ‘mansion’ at Kolonna continued to function, it was evidently out of use in LH IIIA (when a large kiln was constructed inside its remains).<sup>11</sup> The decline of Kolonna in LH II-III A, which coincides with the rise of Mycenaean Troezen, may well be seen as a conscious Mycenaean attempt to eliminate a contender for regional hegemony and to establish more direct control over important trading routes.<sup>12</sup>

Kolonna was not the only important centre in the area that suffered a setback in LH IIB-III A: numerous important sites in Attica similarly seem to have lost in importance, too. Thorikos, which had been graced with the so-called ‘elliptical tholos’ (or built chamber tomb IV) during LH I-II A and a tholos tomb in LH IIA, ceased to be of importance: there is no evidence for later substantial architecture (such as fortification walls, mansions or tholos tombs), although habitation at the site continued.<sup>13</sup> Other sites in Attica which had been of importance during MH-LHI, such as Kiapha Thiti, also ceased to be of significance between LHII and LHIII A. Indeed, the abandonment or decline of hitherto ‘princely’ villages throughout LHII-III A1 Attica is so widespread and marked, that it has been connected to Theseus’s mythical ‘synoikismos’.<sup>14</sup> Yet there is, in fact, no reason to suppose that this phenomenon was the result of Athenian intervention. Quite the contrary in fact, for there are precious few indications of substantial activity on the Athenian acropolis predating LH III B.<sup>15</sup>

It is tempting to see the decline of the early Mycenaean ‘princely’ villages in Attica as the result of Mycenaean intervention, aimed at gaining control over the Laurion mines and the sea routes to the Cyclades, Crete, and further east and south, to Anatolia and Egypt. After the decline of Attica in LH IIB and the eclipse of Kolonna (where the mansion was abandoned) towards the end of the same period, Mycenae was left in effective control of the Saronic Gulf and, by extension, the mines of Laurion.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Gauss 2010, 476. But note that Kolonna remained a major exporter of ceramics to, e.g., Attica and northern Korinthia, until LH III A2: cf. Tartaron 2010, 175.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Konsolaki-Yiannopoulou 2010, 73.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Servais 1969, esp. 68 and n. 7. Servais (1971, 21-102) suggested that the LH IIA ‘proper’ tholos at Thorikos may have belonged to a new ruling house at Thorikos.

<sup>14</sup> Lohman (2010, 44-45) prefers ‘sympoliteia’, noting that some of the settlements remain inhabited (although clearly of lesser status), whilst there is no evidence for early concentration of settlement at Athens.

<sup>15</sup> Hurwitt 1999, 72; although Mountjoy (1995a, 16) notes that two sherds in the so-called Palace Style that have been found on the acropolis suggest that the settlement there must have been of some importance.

<sup>16</sup> N. Papadimitriou (2010, 255) similarly suggests a Mycenaean take-over of Thorikos. I consider Mycenae to have been the dominant centre – the ‘capital’ – of the Argolid by LH IIA at the very latest (when the first tholos at that site was built). The funerary record also points to the early pre-eminence of Mycenae: S. Voutsaki (2010, 97 ff.) observes that the rise of Mycenae in LH II is accompanied by the rise of several (secondary / dependent) sites, and that burials are notably wealthy in the eastern part of the Argolid (i.e. the region around Mycenae), although she argues that only during LH III A2 the process of concentrating wealth at Mycenae reached its final stage.

Whilst the exact degree of control over this area may have changed per region and over time<sup>17</sup>, there are reasons to believe that by LH IIIB (the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC), Mycenae's grip on the area was tightened. At Korphos: Kalamianos on the Saronic coast of the Korinthia, a large and monumental harbour town was constructed (pottery evidence suggests only limited habitation on the site prior to LH IIIB) which is thought to have been Mycenae's main port in the region. Daniel Pullen, one of the site's excavators, has described it as a 'short-lived maritime outpost, purposely founded as a component of state expansion in a climate of intense peer-polity competition in LBA (fifteenth-thirteenth centuries BC) Greece.'<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the sudden rise during LH IIIB early of the acropolis of Athens as the dominant centre of Attica may be seen as conscious attempt to bring the region under palatial control: Hurwitt assumes (and I agree) that a Mycenaean palace was functioning on the acropolis in LH IIIB, but it was only towards the end of LH IIIB, in the last quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC, that the acropolis was surrounded by a cyclopean wall. The impulse for the fortification (and quite possibly for the establishment of Athens as the palatial centre for Attica as a whole), Hurwitt (op. cit. 80) suggests, may well have come from the Argolid, i.e. Mycenae.

If we were to assume that all of the above is true (and the problem with all this is, of course, that nothing can be conclusively proven or, for that matter, rejected<sup>19</sup>) and that Mycenae, from ca. LH II-III A1 onwards managed to control the entire Saronic Gulf, and thus had full control over the Laurion, we are faced with two questions:

1. What triggered the collapse of the early Mycenaean (MH late-LH IIA) system of peer polity interaction and gift exchange, and caused the rulers of Mycenae to expand their realm?
2. What happened to the silver that was extracted from the mines in the Laurion following Mycenae's annexation of Attica?

In my view, the answers to these two questions are closely related, and have to be sought beyond the Aegean, in Egypt.

---

<sup>17</sup> Tartaron (2010, 171: see now also Tartaron 2013) notes that the northern part of the Korinthia, as far as the archaeological record is concerned, shows very little Mycenaean impact until LH IIIA2, when the export of pottery at Kolonna declined and local pottery production started to show strong links with the Argolid. It should be stressed, however, that archaeology is a problematic tool for establishing political boundaries and limits of 'imperial control' (cf. Kelder 2013, 41-52), whereas Hittite texts (cf. below) suggests a very early expansion of Mycenae.

<sup>18</sup> Pullen 2013, 245.

<sup>19</sup> As I have argued elsewhere (Kelder 2013), archaeology alone is not a very reliable tool for identifying state formation and expansion. The same goes for the Linear B evidence (although there are some clues, most notably the uniformity of script and administration throughout Greece, that suggests a degree of unity towards the very end of LH IIIB (cf. Postgate, 2013, 412 [and references therein]), which is too late in date anyway to be of much use in reconstructing the development of the early Mycenaean state.

## SILVER FOR GOLD?

In ca. 1437 BC, whilst on campaign in northern Syria, Thutmose III received an envoy from the 'Prince of Tanaju', bringing him *'a silver shawabti-vessel in Keftiuan workmanship together with four bowls of copper with handles of silver. Total 56 deben 4 kite'*.<sup>20</sup> Keftiu has long been recognized as the Egyptian designation for Crete, whereas Tanaju is now understood as the Egyptian term for mainland Greece. That Tanaju was indeed situated in the Aegean is confirmed in a later text, dating to the reign of Amenhotep III (ca. 1390-1353 BC). This text, a long list of states describing the world then known to the Egyptians, is incised on the bases of colossal statues of Amenhotep III in his mortuary temple at present-day Kom el Hetan. On one of these bases, Tanaju is listed immediately following Keftiu, which, considering the grouping of other (known) states in the list, suggests that Tanaju lay in roughly the same direction as Keftiu, although further. Whilst its grouping with Keftiu already indicates that Tanaju must be situated in the Aegean, evidence for its exact position is provided in a second column, listing the cities and principal regions of Keftiu and Tanaju. Although a number of these have not been conclusively identified, the identifications of Mycenae and Nauplion, as well as Kythera, Messenia and the Thebaid (notably the region around Thebes, but not Thebes itself) are now widely accepted. Thutmose's annals thus seem to indicate that, already in the (advanced) 15<sup>th</sup> century BC, Mycenae was already involved in international gift exchange.

One objection against this notion of early contacts between Egypt and Mycenae may be that it is simply too early and that Minoan Crete, at this time still the major power in the Aegean, must have been too great a barrier for all this to happen. However, there can be little doubt that Mycenaean Kings were involved in international diplomacy. Hittite texts suggest that, already in the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC, a King of Ahhiyawa received the island of Lazpa (Lesbos) as a dowry from the King of Aššuwā – a clear indication of early diplomatic contact between the Mycenaean world and an Anatolian great power.<sup>21</sup> These same texts also indicate that the King of Ahhiyawa sent, and received, prestige goods in the context of diplomatic missions to and from the Hittite court. That this also involved the exchange of messages is clear: at least one of the so-called Ahhiyawa texts found at Boghazköy has now been identified as a letter *from* a Mycenaean King sent *to* the Hittite King.<sup>22</sup> In sum, there are very good reasons to believe that already in the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC, the Lords of Mycenae were involved in international gift exchange and diplomacy. As a result, the reference to Mycenaean messengers from Tanaju in the Annals of Thutmose III is entirely consistent with the Hittite textual evidence. The mission from Tanaju can thus be interpreted in terms of royal gift exchange between the Mycenaean world and Egypt. Archaeological evidence, most notably the large and homogenous corpus of Mycenaean pottery at El Amarna, suggests that diplomatic contact between the Pharaonic

<sup>20</sup> Annals of Thutmose III; cf. Strange 1980, 50-51; P. Haider (1988, 10) reads 'iron cups' with handles of silver.

<sup>21</sup> Teffeteller 2013, 596-571.

<sup>22</sup> First suggested by F. Starke (unpublished lecture at Concordia University); see also Melchert forthcoming; and now Kelder 2013, 41-52.

court and the palace at Mycenae continued, quite possibly until the end of the Mycenaean palaces.<sup>23</sup>

Egypt may have been of interest to the Lords of Mycenae primarily because of its reserves of Nubian gold.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the very concept of gift exchange with the Egyptian court itself must have been a significant attraction to any Mycenaean Lord, as Pharaoh's recognition of a foreign peer (or anything that might be construed as such at home) added to one's prestige.<sup>25</sup> Elsewhere, I have argued that the Egyptian desire to acquire Mycenaean (perfumed) olive oil, olives and olive trees, may have been the main incentive for Amarna age interest in the Mycenaean world, although an interest in other Aegean goods and people is likely to have been of importance, too.<sup>26</sup> Strategic considerations may also have played a role, and the American archaeologist Eric Cline has suggested that Egypt, especially during the reign of Amenhotep III, may have actively courted the Mycenaean world in an effort to isolate the Hittites.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, Amenhotep's interest in the Mycenaean world may also have been triggered by its silver reserves, as has recently been suggested by David Gill.<sup>28</sup> Gill did not provide any evidence for Mycenaean shipments of silver to Egypt (although he did point out that the silver ingots brought by Minoans, as depicted on the walls in the tombs of the Theban nobles, may have originated from the Laurion), but the excerpt from the Annals of Thutmose III cited above, clearly shows that silver objects were presented to Pharaoh by Mycenaean messengers.

Whilst the Annals of Thutmose III document the earliest (known) diplomatic contact between Mycenae and Egypt (in ca. 1437 BC), it is likely that the Mycenaean world (and Mycenae itself, especially) had already been part of the Egyptian world for almost two centuries.

---

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Kelder 2009, 339. The objection that 'it is hard to conceive of these pots as the result of deliberate and specific high-level gift-exchange such as represented in the Amarna letters. Instead, the population of Akhenaten's capital appears to have had a *sudden* and *wide* access to this class of unspecific exotica' (my italics), as Van Wijngaarden (2011, 239-240) ignores the point that the over 800 pots at Amarna are remarkably homogenous (chemical analysis suggests that virtually all of these pots come from the region around Berbati, near Mycenae) and must have served as containers for more desirable goods such as (perfumed) olive oil (a point that is strengthened by the equally sudden appearance of olives in the botanical and iconographic record at Amarna), whereas the notion of a 'wide' access to these exotica seems to contradict the archaeological facts (i.e. the majority of the Mycenaean sherds were found in the Central City – the palatial heart of Amarna – while only small quantities were found in the domestic quarters of the city). Van Wijngaarden also leaves the question as to how and why this singular corpus reached the Egyptian capital unanswered. For an overview of the available evidence, see Kelder 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Stos-Gale/Gale 1982, 476.

<sup>25</sup> See the various contributions to Cohen/Westbrook 2000 for an up to date discussion of Amarna-age diplomatic *mores*.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Kelder 2009; J. Kelder 2010, 125-140. A.P. Kozloff (1977, 101-103) identified Minoan fan-bearers on a relief from Amarna; cf. Haider 1996 for an extensive discussion of possible Aegean presence in New Kingdom Egypt.

<sup>27</sup> Note that V. Hankey proposed a similar (if earlier) scenario (involving a marriage alliance between a Minoan (Knossian?) royal family and the kings of the early 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty): cf. Hankey 1999, 115-119.

<sup>28</sup> Gill 2010, 21-35.



There are strong indications that the et-Tôd Treasure (which includes one gold and 153 silver cups, a number of (mostly lapis lazuli) seals, 10 gold ingots, 20 silver chains (which are believed to be a type of ingot) and 13 silver, oval bar-shaped ingots, and which hitherto was thought to have dated to the Egyptian 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty (thus excluding any possible link with the Mycenaean world)) is the product of Mycenaean workshops. Maran has persuasively argued that the style of the metalwork indicates that the objects from et-Tôd belong to the (early) Shaft Grave era, i.e. the final stages of the Middle Helladic period (the 17th century BC).<sup>29</sup> If the silverware from et-Tôd is, as Maran argues, indeed the product of a Mycenaean workshop, the connections between the early Mycenaean Greek mainland and Egypt may have already been much stronger than has hitherto been thought.<sup>30</sup>

### SILVER FIT FOR KINGS

The realisation that the et-Tôd silver stems from the Mycenaean world may explain why the MH final-LH II system of Aegean peer polity interaction, with its regional systems of gift exchange (between e.g. Kolonna and Mycenae) eventually collapsed. As I noted above, the very notion of contact with Egypt must have greatly added to any Mycenaean Lord's prestige, whilst Egyptian gold and other exotica from the Nilotic Kingdom will have further boosted the prestige of the recipient. In view of the clear parallels between the silver cups from et-Tôd and several vessels from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae, the Egyptian influence at Mycenae (e.g. the golden death masks),<sup>31</sup> and indeed the later (LH IIIA-B) 'special relation' that Mycenae seems to have enjoyed with Egypt, it seems reasonable to assume that, by LH I, contact had been established between Mycenae and with Egypt. Mycenae's wealth and soaring prestige amongst its LH I-II peers may have tipped the balance of power, allowing Mycenae to establish itself as the preminent centre in the Argolid and, not much later, to impose itself on the various communities around the Saronic Gulf. The wealth of the Laurion must have made that region of singular importance to the early Mycenaean, for control over the mines secured ongoing contact with Egypt and other parts of the Near East.<sup>32</sup> Dickinson, in his seminal *The Origins of Mycenaean Civilization* (1977, 55-56), already argued that trade in base metals was the most

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Maran 1987. Note that E. Davis (1977, 75-77) already pointed out that these cups could not have been made by Minoan workmen, noting that 'the connection with the work of the Mycenaean [...] is even stronger' (p. 77; see similar statements on p. 127).

<sup>30</sup> Maran cautions that the silver from et-Tôd may have reached Egypt via middlemen on Cyprus or in the Levant. Whilst this possibility cannot be excluded, the impression of uniformity – the 153 silver cups to my (untrained) eye seemed to be the work of a single workshop – seems to argue for a single (direct) shipment.

<sup>31</sup> Russell 1999, 119. It may be interesting to note that the Mycenaean word for gold, *ku-ru-so*, χρυσος, is a loanword from West Semitic (compare to Hebrew *harus* and Ugaritic *hrs*). Cline (2013, 32) notes that 'it seems clear (...) that the foreign word was imported along with the foreign object, arriving together in the Bronze Age Aegean.' If Mycenae's gold came indeed from Egypt, then the Shaft Grave period seems a good fit, as this coincides with the final decades of Hyksos rule in Egypt.

<sup>32</sup> Note that a silver vessel in the shape stag from Shaft Grave IV hints at early contacts between Mycenae and Anatolia (chemical analysis suggests that the silver originated from mines in the Taurus mountains: cf. Stos-Gale/MacDonald 1991, 271-273, 285). In addition, C. Melchert (2008, 153-157) has established that

important factor in the rise of Mycenae. To this, one may now add a very international and silvery dimension.

It is difficult to say anything with certainty about Mycenaean royal burials after the era of the Shaft Graves since virtually all tombs were robbed. From the scraps that remain, it seems likely that later rulers were buried with equal expressions of wealth. Silver, however, seems to have gone largely ‘off the menu’, although there are exceptions (most notably the LH IIIA tholos tomb at Dendra).<sup>33</sup> Whereas pieces of gold leaf, beads, etc., have been recovered from various ‘royal’ tombs throughout Greece, silver objects are rare. The reason for this may plausibly be sought in an increasing Mycenaean familiarity with Near Eastern *mores*.

There can be no doubt that, during ‘the international age’ of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, silver was widely used as a universal means of payment: as money *avant la lettre*. Silver served as an index of value: it was a widely recognised ‘standard’ that was used to estimate the value of diplomatic gifts, trade, salaries, tribute, ransoms and fines. Given its centrality to international diplomacy, law and trade, it seems likely that silver, more than any other metal, was systematically removed from circulation<sup>34</sup> – not only in the ancient Near East, but also in Mycenaean Greece. It is likely that, as Mycenae was drawn more closely into the orbit of other, Near Eastern, states and became more involved in international exchange and diplomacy, its rulers – like their contemporaries in the Near East – started to remove silver from circulation, to resmelt it into ingots that could be used to maintain their position on the international scene.

The collapse of the Mycenaean palaces brought this royal monopoly on silver to an end, although the mines at Laurion continued to be exploited.<sup>35</sup> Various silver (and lead) objects from the Laurion have been recovered alongside numerous *orientalia* from the LH IIIC cemetery at Perati, no doubt reflecting the metal’s ongoing importance for overseas trade. Perati gradually dwindled into insignificance around 1075 BC, and it is unclear to what extent the mines were used (and by whom) in the centuries that followed.<sup>36</sup> It is only during the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC that silver from the Laurion again propels the Greek world onto the international stage.

---

the Mycenaean word for lead (*mo-ri-wo-do*) is a loanword from Lydian *marīwda* (dark, black), probably dating to the period 2500-1500 BC, which suggests close connections between the early Greeks and Anatolia.

<sup>33</sup> The depositions in the tholos included at least 4 silver vessels (a vapheio cup [NM7340], a goblet [NM7339], a one-handled teacup, and a silver cup [NM7336]). See Davis 1977, 283; Burns 2010, 182.

<sup>34</sup> Kassianidou 2009, 52, with references.

<sup>35</sup> Mountjoy (1995b, 195-227), noting that the Transitional LH III B2/C early pottery assemblage from Thorikos mine No. 3 is unusual and that its nature implies a specific function rather than the debris of normal settlement, suggested that activity continued in mine 3 at Thorikos.

<sup>36</sup> The wealth of various early 9<sup>th</sup> century burials in Attica, especially that of the ‘Areopagus Lady’, may be connected to renewed exploitation of the Laurion mines, although Van den Eijnde has pointed out that Thorikos and the Laurion mines appear not to have been included in the Athenian state until much later. Cf. Van den Eijnde 2010, 433. Van den Eijnde notes that there are no indications for kinship relations between the Athenians and other Attic population groups beyond the Athenian plain in the 10<sup>th</sup> to early 9<sup>th</sup> century BC. The early Athenian elite may, however, have acquired Laurion silver (perhaps in the context of symposia or religious gatherings) from their peers (from e.g. Thorikos) as prestige gifts.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BLAKOLMER, F. 2007: Minoisch-mykenische Prozessionsfresken: Überlegungen zu den dargestellten und den nicht dargestellten Gaben. In: E. Alram-Stern/G. Nightingale (eds.), *Keimelion. Elitenbildung und elitärer Konsum von der mykenischen Palastzeit bis zur homerischen Epoche*. Wien, pp. 41-58.
- BURNS, B. 2010: *Mycenaean Greece, Mediterranean Commerce, and the Formation of Identity*. Cambridge.
- CLINE, E.H. 2007: Rethinking Mycenaean international trade with Egypt and the Near East, in M. Galaty/W. Parkinson (eds.), *Rethinking Mycenaean Palaces II, revised and expanded second edition*. Los Angeles, pp. 190-200.
- 2013: Aegean-Near East relations in the Second Millennium BC. In: J. Aruz (ed.), *Cultures in Contact: From Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean in the Second Millennium BC*. New York, pp. 26-33.
- COHEN, R. / WESTBROOK, R. (eds.) 2000: *Amarna Diplomacy*. Baltimore.
- DAVIS, E. 1977: *The Vapheio Cups and Aegean Gold and Silver Ware*. New York.
- EIJNDE, F. VAN DEN 2010: *Cult and Society in Early Athens: Archaeological and Anthropological Approaches to State Formation and Group Participation in Attica, 1000-600 BCE*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Utrecht.
- GAUSS, W. 2010: Aegina Kolonna. In: E.H. Cline (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Bronze Age Aegean*. Oxford, pp. 737-751.
- GILL, D. 2010: Amenhotep III, Mycenae and the Laurion. In: N. Sekunda (ed.), *Ergasteria: Works Presented to John Ellis Jones on his 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday*. Gdansk, pp. 21-35.
- HAIDER, P. 1996: Menschenhandel zwischen dem ägyptischen Hof und der Minoisch-mykenischen Welt? *Ägypten und Levante* 6, pp. 137-156.
- 1988: *Griechenland – Nordafrika. Ihre Beziehungen zwischen 1500 und 600 v. Chr.* Darmstadt.
- HANKEY, V. 1999: The whirligig of time: The Aegean and Egypt in the Second Millennium BC. In: A. Leahy/J. Tait (eds.), *Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honour of H.S. Smith*. London, pp. 115-119.
- HURWITT, J.M. 1999: *The Athenian Acropolis. History, Mythology, and Archaeology from the Neolithic Era to the Present*. Cambridge.
- KARO, G. 1930: *Die Schachtgräber von Mykenai*. Berlin.
- KASSIANIDOU, V. 2009: “May he send me silver in very great quantities” EA35. In: D. Michaelides/V. Kassianidou/R.S. Merrillees (eds.), *Egypt and Cyrus in Antiquity*. Oxford, pp. 48-57.
- KELDER, J.M. 2009: Royal Gift Exchange between Mycenae and Egypt, in *AJA* 113/3, pp. 339-352.
- 2010: The Egyptian interest in Mycenaean Greece. *JEOL* 42, pp. 125-140.
- 2013: Ahhiyawa and the world of the great kings. In: A. Papadopoulos (ed.), *Current Research and Perspectives on the Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean* (Talanta XLIV [2012]). Amsterdam, pp. 41-52.
- KONSOLAKI-YIANNOPOULOU, E. 2010: The Middle Helladic establishment at Megali Magoula, Galatas (Troezenia). In: A. Philippa-Touchais/G. Touchais/S. Voutsaki/J. Wright (eds.), *Mesohelladika: The Greek Mainland in the Middle Bronze Age* (BCH Supplement 52). Paris, pp. 67-76.
- KOZLOFF, A.P. 1977: A new interpretation of an old Amarna enigma. *AJA* 81, pp. 101-103.
- LOHMAN, H. 2010: Kiapha Thiti und der synoikismos des Theseus. In: H. Lohmann/T. Mattern (eds.), *Attica: Archäologie einer “zentralen” Kulturlandschaft. Akten der internationalen Tagung vom 18.-20. Mai 2007 in Marburg*. Wiesbaden, pp. 35-46.
- LUJÁN, E.R. 2011: Payment and trade terminology on Linear B tablets. In: M.P. Garcia-Bellido/L. Callegarin/A. Jimenez Diaz (eds.), *Barter, Money and Coinage in*

- the Ancient Mediterranean (10<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> Centuries BC)*. Madrid, pp. 25-32.
- MARAN, J. 1987: Die Silbergefasse von et-Töd und die Schachtgraberzeit auf dem griechischen Festland. *Prähistorische Zeitschrift* 62, pp. 221-227.
- MELCHERT, C. 2008: Greek mólybdos as a loanword from Lydian. In: B.J. Collins/M. Bachvarova/I. Rutherford (eds.), *Anatolian Interfaces: Hittites, Greeks and their Neighbours*. Oxford, pp. 153-157.
- forthcoming: Mycenaean and Hittite diplomatic correspondence: Fact and fiction. In: A. Teffeteller (ed.), *Mycenaeans and Anatolians in the Late Bronze Age: The Abhiyawa Question*.
- MOUNTJOY, P. 1995a: *Mycenaean Athens*. Jonsered.
- 1995b: Thorikos mine no. 3: the Mycenaean pottery. *BSA* 90, pp. 195-227.
- OLIVIER, J.-P. / F. VANDENABEELE 1979: *Les idéogrammes archéologiques du Linéaire B* (Études crétoises 24). Paris.
- PAPADIMITRIOU, N. 2010: Attica in the Middle Helladic period. In: P. Touchais/G. Touchais/S. Voutsaki/J. Wright (eds.), *Mesohelladika* (BCH Suppl. 52). Paris, pp. 243-257.
- POSTGATE, N. 2013: *Bronze Age Bureaucracy: Writing and the Practice of Government in Assyria*. Cambridge.
- Pullen, D. 2013: The life and death of a Mycenaean port town: Kalamianos on the Saronic Gulf. *Journal of Maritime Archaeology* 8, pp. 245-262.
- RUSSELL, P. 1999: Aegean peoples. In: K.A. Bard (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*. New York, p. 119.
- SERVAIS, J. 1969: Vases mycéniens de Thorikos au Musée de Genève. In: H.F. Musche *et al.* (eds.), *Thorikos IV*. Brussels, pp. 53-69.
- 1971: La tholos circulaire. In: H.F. Musche *et al.* (eds.), *Thorikos IV*. Brussels, 21-102.
- STOS-GALE, Z. A. / GALE, N.H. 1982: The sources of Mycenaean silver and lead. *Journal of Field Archaeology* 9/4, pp. 467-485.
- STOS-GALE, Z.A. / MACDONALD, C. 1991: The sources of metals and trade in the Bronze Age. In: N.H. Gale (ed.), *Bronze Age Trade in the Mediterranean*. Jonsered, pp. 249-288.
- STRANGE, J. 1980: *Capthor/Keftiu. A New Investigation*. Leiden.
- TARTARON, T. 2010: Between and beyond: Political economy in non-palatial Mycenaean worlds. In: D. Pullen (ed.), *Political Economies of the Aegean Bronze Age*. Oxford, pp. 161-183.
- 2013: *Maritime Networks in the Mycenaean World*. Cambridge.
- TEFFETELLER, A. 2013: Singers of Lazpa: Reconstructing identities of Bronze Age Lesbos. In: A. Mouton/I. Rutherford/I. Yakubovich (eds.), *Luwian Identities: Culture, Language and Religion Between Anatolia and the Aegean*. Leiden, pp. 596-571.
- VENTRIS, M. / J. CHADWICK 1973: *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*. Cambridge (second edition).
- VOUTSAKI, S. 1999: Mortuary display, prestige and identity in the Shaft Grave Era. In: I. Kilian-Dirlmeier/M. Egg (eds.) *Eliten in der Bronzezeit: Ergebnisse zweier Colloquien in Mainz und Athen*. Monographien des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums. Mainz, 103-117.
- 2010: From the kinship economy to the palatial economy. In: D. Pullen (ed.), *Political Economies of the Aegean Bronze Age*. Oxford, pp. 86-111.
- WEILHARTNER, J. 2012: Religious offerings in the Linear B tablets: an attempt at their classification and some thoughts about their possible purpose. *Faventia Supplementa* 1. Actas del Simposio Internacional: 55 Años de Micenología (1952-2007), pp. 207-231.
- WIJNGAARDEN, G.-J. VAN 2011: Tokens of a special relationship? Mycenaean and Egyptians. In: K. Duistermaat/I. Reguluski (eds.), *Intercultural Contacts in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Louvain, pp. 234-255.

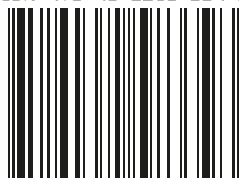
*SILVER, MONEY AND CREDIT* gathers a collection of contributions by leading specialists on the role of silver in Ancient Mesopotamia. The volume is a tribute to Robartus J. van der Spek, professor emeritus at the VU University Amsterdam.

The thematic core area is the documentation concerning silver in cuneiform sources from first millennium BC Babylonia, and how this vast body of primary sources can be employed in order to shed light on aspects of the economy. It thus coincides with the honouree's main area of research. The volume is rounded off by comparative material mainly from other periods in Mesopotamian history, rendering justice to his broad range of interest. The scope of the volume thus extends from the first written records on the use of silver in Uruk to the Neo-Babylonian Empire's apogee in the sixth century BC and further to insights to be gained from comparisons with early modern economies.



NEDERLANDS INSTITUUT  
VOOR HET NABIJE OOSTEN

ISBN 978-90-6258-339-3



9 789062 583393