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CHAPTER FIVE: CONTEXTS AND AGENCY OF MYCENAEAN ART

5.1: Introduction

This chapter brings together the three different aspects of Mycenaean art discussed in chapter four in two ways. The first of these is provided in section 5.2 and concerns the contexts of Mycenaean art. That is, it deals with the interplay between material forms, craft and materiality, and iconography in different spatial settings. After providing an overview of the different kinds of spatial contexts, mainly architectural ones, this analysis focuses on specific themes. These themes are divided into public ritual, warfare and elite culture, and the relation between the human and natural worlds. A final section considers the interrelationships between these themes. The true synthesis of the chapter, however, is to be found in section 5.3 on the agency of Mycenaean art. The analysis here follows a two-ponged approach. First of all the properties of the agency of this art in itself are investigated through the use of the three higher-level concepts of metaphor, semiotics, and praxis. As discussed in section 2.4.4, these three concepts cross-cut the more empirical study of material forms, craft and materiality, iconography, and contexts of art, allowing for a higher-level synthesis. This internal pattern of the agency of Mycenaean art can then be related to the other nine elements of this early civilisation and its *longue durée* framework, as outlined in section 3.4.

5.2: Contexts of Mycenaean art

5.2.1: Introduction

The study of the contexts of Mycenaean art demands first of all a good grasp of the built environment in which most of this art was embedded. Hence before turning to the three themes of public ritual, warfare and elite culture, and the relation between the human and natural worlds, it is necessary to discuss this built environment in more detail. Particular attention in this will also be given to the ways in which art was incorporated in architectural settings. To structure this discussion it is useful to outline the four basic architectural forms that carried Mycenaean art:

1. Palatial complexes, with a basic distinction between Minoan-derived court-complexes and mainland-developed plans centred on a megaron unit.
2. A more generic category of 'settlement buildings', which range from what can be termed houses to more elaborate monumental structures.
3. Architectural structures that are interpreted as sanctuaries.
4. Funerary monuments of a variety of types.

These categories are very general and etic ones, however, and need to be further contextualised. Starting with palatial architecture, it is possible to recognize two different plans. The first one was derived from the Cretan sites of the Neopalatial period and was focused on a large open court. The other plan was developed on the mainland within the Mycenaean palatial period, and was focused on a large and partially roofed central space called a megaron. The differences between these plan types can be seen in figures 31-32. It is important to take into account the succession of architectural forms within the Mycenaean palatial period[240]. In LM/LH II the only palace in the

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[240] A number or recent critiques have emerged of the notion that the Minoan palaces of the First and Second Palatial periods functioned as the seat of a ruler (Adams 2004, 2006; Driessen et al. 2002; Schoep 2010). One of the key arguments for this critique is the centrality of the large central court as a focus in the circulatory patterns of these buildings (Palyvou 2002). This has been used to argue that these 'Court Compounds' had a corporate function, in contrast to LM II - IIIA period Knossos and the palaces on the mainland that both were controlled by the state hierarchy led by the *wanax* ruler known from the Linear B tablets (Driessen 2002, 2-5). Hence the palatial designator can be used here without too many problems, although the critique of anachronistic analogies with Early Modern Europe (Driessen

Aegean was in fact Knossos, rebuilt from its traditional court plan, although a variety of monumental structures have been found at mainland sites. An example of this is the LH II Menelaion in Laconia with elements that foreshadow the later standard megaron plan (Wright 2006b, fig. 1.2, p. 12). In LH IIIA1 the first recognisable megaron plan emerged at Tiryns, and possibly at other sites as well but the evidence remains circumstantial (Wright 2006b, 21-25). Yet at Pylos in Messenia a strongly Knossos-influenced court-focused plan was in use during LH IIIA (Nelson 2001, 200-207). By the LH IIIB period, however, the megaron plan is the sole palatial architectural form found in the Aegean.

When considering the second category of sites, those classed rather generically as 'settlement', the picture is further complicated. This category encompasses a variety of buildings, including those within larger townscapes such as the Panagia houses at Mycenae (Mylonas Shear 1987), what seem to have been relatively simple houses in non-palatial settlements such as Korakou (Blegen 1921), and more monumental buildings at sites such as Gla (Iakovidis 2001), and the Menelaion (Catling 2009). These different sites cannot be easily subsumed under a neat typology, however, given that so much is uncertain about them. Finally, there are the sanctuary sites with traces of monumental art. Two of these sites are located outside the main settlements, namely Ayios Konstantinos (Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2004) and Eleusis (Cosmopoulos 2003), while the Cult Center is situated within the Mycenae acropolis (Wardle 2003). Of these sanctuaries only the one from Mycenae has yielded enough fragments of wall-paintings to make interpretation feasible.

Despite the variations between and within these categories, the different artistic techniques were applied in much the same way in a technical sense. The only exception to this were the architectural façades. Of these only one direct example exists from a non-funerary archaeological context, namely the relief of the 'Lion Gate' at Mycenae. It has been suggested that this monument was a reused element from a LH II *tholos* tomb (Younger 1995a, 347). However, elaborate façades are known from a number of cult buildings/rooms (Gallou 2005, 67), and from the iconographic evidence as well, both for Minoan and Mycenaean wall-paintings (*Aegean Painting*, figs. 34-35, pp. 126-127). Caution should of course be observed for the correspondence of images to reality, but decorated façades may have been more common than can be inferred from the known material remains. Shaw has drawn attention specifically to the two altars which provide the platform for the central column of the 'Lion Gate', and has noted that such altars also frequently occur in depictions of architectural façades (Shaw 1986, 108-115). Although the Hittite evidence points to the possibility of major rituals taking place in gate areas (Thaler 2007, 305-306), the evidence from the Aegean is too meagre to support the possibility of such a hypothesis. Yet a generic symbolic role may cautiously be derived from the available sources (Shaw 1986, 122-123; Wright 1994).

Much more evidence is available to reconstruct the ways in which art was used in the interiors of building structures. Almost all of this material consists of painted plaster, which was applied to the floors, walls, and ceilings of structures. Although ceilings with painted plaster decoration have been hypothesized in a reconstruction of the central Pylos megaron (Betancourt 2007b, plate 8B), see figure 33, only a few fragments can tentatively be attributed to ceilings (Lang 1969, 155, 186), and the situation is worse at other sites. Therefore, little can be inferred as to what was and what was not depicted on ceilings. The situation is much better with regard to the walls and floors, with painting on the former including all decorative themes and the latter being limited to elaborate decorative motifs and nautical themes. These differences may suggest that different metaphors were appropriate for wall and floor surfaces, possibly as mirroring the natural world.[241] Painted plaster

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2002, 6) is valid for the Mycenaean palaces as well.

[241] An overview of nautical themes in Mycenaean art (see figures 23-25) shows that most of them are depicted on floors, with the exception of more decorative friezes and scenes depicting ships (Petrakis 2011, table 1, p. 90). A wall-

was also applied to the hearth in the megaron plan palaces, especially in Pylos, where a so-called 'flame pattern' that seems to represent flames was decorated on the painted plaster incorporated in the hearths, as well as on tables of offerings and another artefacts (Lang 1969, 144).

Also of interest for understanding the interior use of painted plaster decoration are the different forms of painting in relation to architectural space. This is not an easy task given the fragmented character of the remains at most sites. Much analysis has therefore been focused on the LC IA wall-paintings of the Cycladic site of Akrotiri, and it makes sense to consider the evidence from this site before turning to the more fragmented Mycenaean material. In his analysis of the site from a general comparative perspective, Renfrew (2000, 139-143) has emphasized how three different kinds of arrangements for viewing the mural art of Akrotiri can be discerned:

1. Detached observer space, where a small-scale and schematic rendering of the images remove the viewer from what is depicted.
2. Decorative plane space, where the wall acts as a surface with decorative motifs.
3. Inclusive space, where the figures (and other elements) are of such a natural, larger size that they draw in the viewer in a more direct way.

These overall distinctions between arrangements for viewing the Akrotiri wall-paintings were, however, actualised in a variety of quite complex arrangements of wall-paintings in relation to other kinds of architectural features such as doors and windows (Immerwahr 2000, fig. 3, p. 472). Palyvou (2000, 415-417) has added important insights from the perspective of an architect about the different features of the relation between architecture and wall-paintings, one of them being the relative proportions of 'mass' and 'void'. Cases where mass exceeds void are those where the walls and the paintings on them are continuous and only interrupted by minor voids like single doors. By contrast, where void exceeds mass it is the overall framework that is most important and the wall-paintings form autonomous patches that are subordinate to the frame, which itself is not decorated. Another important feature is the strong compositional emphasis on horizontality, with the iconographic horizon being demarcated by base and upper zones. To Palyvou this suggests a common metaphor for both wall-painting and architecture in general:

"To sum up, the zoning concept is the most powerful principle of design in mural treatment. It is in itself a manifestation of continuity and horizontality, the very same horizontality prevails in architecture: despite the two and three storeys of the buildings, the basic concept is a structure which adheres well to the ground and stretches out in all directions; the palaces of Crete are literally conceived on this basis. The overall morphology of Aegean architecture declares horizontality through the horizontal timber zones of rubble walls, the ashlar courses and cornices, and the overall design of the buildings. As in art in general, there are hardly any vertical marking elements, unlike those characteristic of Egyptian architecture for example." (Palyvou 2000, 422)

Mycenaean monumental art shares this basic principle of horizontality with Cycladic and Minoan art. The tendency of floor paintings, unknown at Akrotiri but known from other sites (Niemeier 1996), to reproduce what would be underneath the surface only reinforces this principle. A similar notion of viewing arrangements as in Renfrew's differentiation between detached observer and inclusive spaces has also been used by Bennet (2004, 12-13) for the Pylos wall-paintings, who termed them respectively 'panoptic' and 'participative'. However, there are important differences in

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painting from Gla appears to show dolphins actually leaping above the water surface (Iakovidis 2001, plate VIII). This would indicate that what would be represented on the floor would be phenomena that would be below one's feet (metaphorically) like the creatures of the sea, though they could be represented on walls if ships or leaping dolphins were involved. Yet in contradiction to this the repetitive friezes of nautili were depicted vertically on walls.

Mycenaean art, including changes in forms of painting, as discussed in section 4.2.3. In architecture there are also important differences, such as the disappearance of the grid pattern that can be discerned at the LC IA West House at Akrotiri (Palyvou 2000, 422-425). This causes for different relations between mass and void in Mycenaean architectural settings, with the latter being more dominant in the 'bounded naturalism' style of Mycenaean art discussed in section 4.4. Therefore, although there is continuity in overall style, the impact of changes such as 'bounded naturalism' can also clearly be recognised and were significant.

Turning in more detail to the inclusive or participative viewing arrangement, this is taken here to include all the larger paintings which directly drew in the viewers. Most of these were on the wall and level relative to the viewer, but the figurative floor paintings should be included as well. As noted by Palyvou (2000, 429), some of the paintings of ritual and procession may be seen as a 'photograph' of what took place inside. In that case the paintings would act like a metaphorical 'mirror' for participants in such activities, something which would be facilitated by the generic depiction of the figures, even if they represent a subset in terms of age and gender. Such a literal 'mirror metaphor' is unlikely, however, for the large-scale depictions of deities, sphinxes, bulls and lions on walls or nautili on floors. This viewing arrangement could rather be interpreted not as the wall-paintings projecting back what was there in the interior but rather what *ought* to have been there in Mycenaean conceptual terms. If that is accepted, the metaphor is one of a 'cultural mirror' that augments the reality of what takes place within the interior rooms by projecting ideal participants and other elements.

By contrast the detached observer or panoptic perspective seems to provide a way through which the viewer can look beyond the wall to a distant setting, as if through the telescope, even if that setting could include the exterior of the building itself. This 'window on the world' metaphor can be best seen in the miniature wall-paintings from LC IA Akrotiri, but such smaller-scale paintings are known from quite a number of Mycenaean sites as well. The connection with narratives was explored in section 4.4. It should be noted that two smaller-scale Mycenaean wall-paintings from Knossos and Pylos seem to depict a banquet that could conceivably take place in the room they were painted, and hence they would be 'photographic' in mirroring the interior rather than providing a perspective on the wider world. For the Pylos case, it may well me that an outside setting was actually depicted, as will be discussed in the next section. Yet it is important to emphasize here that the 'mirror metaphor' could potentially work for smaller-scale paintings as well, and that no exclusive correlation between the size of figures and their perceptions should be pre-supposed. This is true especially when larger groups are depicted, as in these two cases.

The third kind of viewing arrangement is that of the decorative plane space. As noted in section 4.2.3, wall-paintings could imitate wall-hangings, and there were other ways through which decorative motifs could be used to suggest architectural elements such as columns or exposed beam ends underneath the plaster (Palyvou 2000, 425-430). This is in addition to the more common dado and border functions used both in larger paintings for design, or simply as architectural effects in themselves. Yet, there is more than just architectural 'special effects' to the decorative plane spaces, as is indicated by the flame patterns on the hearth plaster and symbolic patterns such as the spirals and (half-) rosettes. It seems rather that this points to the intrinsic qualities of the painted plaster itself, highlighting and using its properties within architectural spaces. As such this metaphor can be linked with Gell's concept of architectural enchantment discussed in section 4.4.4, but this needs to be further qualified in section 5.2.4 below.

The final sub-category of the built environment to be considered is that of the funerary monuments. Most important here are the façades of the more monumental *tholos* and chamber tombs. The most

common façade decoration seems to have been ashlar, and can already be seen in similar tomb types of Neopalatial period Crete (Younger & Rehak 2008b, 170-173). Ashlar façades remain the norm in Mycenaean period Crete, as well as in the tombs of a Cretan-influenced region such as Messenia (Banou 2008, 51). Gallou (2005, 67-70) has analysed the cases from central Greece and the Argolid, and found a recurring pattern of façades with decorative motifs on the semi-columns flanking the entrance to the tomb, on the lintel, and on the section above the lintel called the *tympanon*. In the entrance system of one tomb at Thebes a painted plaster scene was found that shows two women in procession (*Aegean Painting,* 201), which may be interpreted as a participative viewing arrangement. Although a similar liminal role could be seen for the façades of palaces and sanctuaries discussed above suggest, the space that was entered was very different. The façades would then have formed a boundary in the transition to the 'chthonic' burial chamber (Gallou 2005, 74-75), which itself has been linked to caves and the underworld (Vermeule 1979, 51-54).

What then about art within the burial chamber itself? The material evidence for this is even more limited than for the façades. From the Minoan world several tombs are known that were decorated with Egyptian Blue (Panagiotaki 2008, 48), most notably the roof of Temple Tomb at Knossos, which should be seen as a decorative plane space (Evans 1935, 975). While no Egyptian Blue decoration has been found so far in any mainland tomb, the use of decorative plane space can be observed at the so-called 'Treasure of Minyas' tomb at Orchomenos, with engravings of rosettes, spirals and papyrus blossoms on the ceiling of the side chamber, and a similar kind of decoration may have been present at the 'Treasure of Atreus' at Mycenae as well (Gallou 2005, 68). A wall-painting of a spiral band with papyrus filling was found in the chamber of a rock-cut tomb at Thebes (*Aegean Painting,* 201). No participative or panoptic scenes were depicted on the walls of tomb chambers, and in fact the only figurative scenes were on the *larnakes* and other art objects that were deposited in these chambers.

Most of the high-value portable art objects and materials in fact derive from burial contexts, even if this may partly be due to the over-representation of burial evidence relative to that from settlement contexts. This does not mean, however, that the evidence from other contexts should be neglected. For the palatial structures at the site of Thebes a number of hoards can be noted (Dakouri-Hild 2012). In one of these an exceptional gold disc was found, located in the so-called 'Treasury Room', which can be understood as an object of prestige, for the conspicuous display of elite power:

"This view is congruent with the employment of precious commodities as material symbols of authority by the Mycenaean elite in general. But such an interpretation is also compatible with the nature of the overall archaeological assemblage from the Treasury Room (and other palatial sites, e.g. the Arsenal and the House of Kadmos), to which this artefact belongs. It seems that the most precious artefacts had been hoarded in the Treasury Room for the purposes of display during special events and perhaps limited, high-rank (gift) exchange." (Aravinatos 2005, 257)

As noted, however, most of the portable art objects come from burials, and this includes not only metal objects but also artefacts made from ivory and vitreous materials. Apart from the objects imported through long-distance exchange, many of them would have been worked in the Aegean itself. The discussion of the *chaînes opératoires* of some of these materials in section 4.3.2 pointed to patterns of workshop activities, which are known for many other materials as well. The evidence from both workshop contexts and deposition or 'consumption' contexts allows for more insights into the role played by high-value portable art objects in Mycenaean palatial society. Examples of studies that have explored this issue can be noted for the regions of Boeotia (Dakouri-Hild 2012) and the Argolid (Burns 2010, 163-190). Even if such studies are not yet as extensive as those for monumental art forms like the wall-paintings, these portable art objects already provide an

important complementary form of evidence. This can be noted for all the three themes discussed in the succeeding sections, but especially for funerary ritual and their relation to social structures.

5.2.2: Public ritual in Mycenaean art

Public ritual is the first theme of the contexts of Mycenaean art to be discussed, and it is known primarily from depictions in art. A distinction can be made for this theme between two different but closely related kinds of scenes: a) the procession scenes with a ritual character, and b) depictions of specific places of public ritual.[242] There also are the scenes of lamentation and other rituals connected with the deceased, which will be discussed separately. Starting with the procession scenes, Blakolmer (2008, 258-259) has proposed a minimal definition of them as a *topos* that shows multiple figures moving in a single file towards a variety of destinations that can include other figures, architecture, or simply a void. Furthermore, he sees a difference between two kinds of processions in wall-painting. The first seems to represent the transportation of equipment and animals to be used in some kind of ritual activity, and consists of smaller-scale images in a narrative-like setting. By contrast the other kind of procession scene involves larger-scale figures that carry high-value artefacts and flowers, which were likely intended as gifts. The first kind of procession scene then can be understood as part of the panoptic viewing arrangement, while the larger-scale figures would correspond to the inclusive or participative one.

The same kind of combination of panoptic and inclusive viewing arrangements can be seen in the depictions of public ritual in fixed spatial locations. Examples of the panoptic scenes are the banqueting and drinking scenes, of which it was noted in the previous section that it is unclear if they actually took place within the rooms in which they were painted. The inclusive viewing arrangements include larger figures that function in architectural contexts that were of ritual character such as a sanctuary or throne-room. Unfortunately, the painted plaster fragments of both processional and fixed-location ritual are hard to relate to their original architectural contexts, since many were found in dumps or other secondary locations. For example, fragments of life-size processional figures are known from the palatial sites of Knossos, Mycenae, Pylos, Thebes and Tiryns, but only at Knossos can interpretations be made with regards to their specific setting. Much the same is true of the other kinds of scenes. The analysis here will therefore focus primarily on the sites of Knossos, Mycenae and Pylos, where something more solid can be said about the interaction between architecture and different kinds of ritual scenes. The evidence from other sites will be considered mainly as a way to infer to what degree the interpretations from these particular sites hold true more generally.

A number of wall-paintings connected with ritual activity are have been found in LM II-IIIA contexts at Knossos. Very important among these are the life-size procession figures in the 'Corridor of the Procession' (*Aegean Painting*, 88-90), see figure 34. These figures may have totalled 24, mostly male, including two youths, but also two women. A few of these carry important gifts such as the so-called Cupbearer with a high-value metal vessel. The exact composition of the procession is unclear, although one reconstruction shows figures with high-value gifts and musical instruments approaching a goddess from two different sides (Hood 2005, fig. 2.17, p. 68). There are some suggestions of a background that would represent an outside setting, but on the whole the procession accompanies the person entering the palace from this side. Although the 'Corridor of the Procession' scene was not in register, as Evans originally thought (*Aegean Painting*, 89-90), this

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[242] Even if some of these ritual scenes do appear to show deities, there exist no parallels in Mycenaean monumental art, and few for portable art objects, for the diversity of epiphany scenes that can be discerned in the art of Minoan Crete (Burkert 2004; Marinatos 2004). However, the possibility of epiphany scenes should not be ruled out, as indications of the association between red-painted ears and epiphany have been found at Pylos as well (Earle 2012).

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arrangement was used in the 'Camp-stool' wall-painting, see figure 35. This scene was reconstructed from a number of smaller-scale fragments found nearby a storage area (original context unknown), and shows two registers of seated and standing figures, many of them with drinking cups (Hood 2005, 61-62).

From a variety of sources it is clear that consumption of alcohol was important in Mycenaean ritual (Whittaker 2008b), and these two wall-paintings can be indirectly related to the impact of the Mycenaean domination of Crete. They do not represent a complete break with the past, however, as the procession resembles earlier prototypes of formalised ceremonial movement related to storage and consumption (Driessen & Langohr 2007, 183).[243] Yet the two scenes can also be related to broader changes in material culture, especially those deriving from the increased focus on the consumption of alcohol:

"Perhaps even more than in earlier times, the Camp Stool fresco shows that individual members of the elite were tied to the palace by the practice of communal feasting and banquets, during which meat sacrifices were distributed and quantities of wine were consumed. This is illustrated clearly by the importance of more distinctive personal drinking vessels, at first the Ephyraean goblets and later the kylikes, champagne cups and kraters. The tablets provide clear evidence for such practices." (Driessen & Langohr 2007, 183)

The larger-scale wall-paintings of processions from the other sites are broadly similar to those of Knossos, except that only the Pylos fragments show predominantly male figures while the fragments from Mycenae, Thebes and Tiryns are exclusively with female participants (*Aegean Painting*, 114). Unfortunately, none of these scenes can be related to a clear-cut architectural context, though a corridor or staircase is likely given the evidence from Neopalatial Knossos and LC IA Akrotiri. The other kind of procession scene, the more panoptic and narrative-like kind, is known from Ayia Triada and Pylos. The Ayia Triada material is dated to LM IIIA and was found in a painted plaster dump outside the building that it would have been part of (*Aegean Painting*, 102, 181). Recent research has shown a combination of Minoan continuities and Mycenaean adaptations in these processions, of which a notable feature is the reconstructed use of friezes in a layered pattern (Militello 2006, fig. 12, p. 199), see figure 36. This can be seen as a clear impact of the 'bounded naturalism' on wall-painting, as can also be observed in the ubiquitous use of friezes in the later murals from the mainland palace of Pylos.

The one panoptic procession scene that can be more closely related to its architectural context is that from the vestibule of the central megaron of the Pylos palace, the narrative properties of which were already extensively discussed in section 4.4.3. To briefly recapitulate the argument here, a sequence from processional movement to fixed-place ritual activity could be discerned, taking place in an outdoor setting. Based on their costumes, a number of participants in both the procession and fixed-place ritual can be identified as elites and/or part of a priesthood. Despite the recognition of a narrative micro-structure in this scene the interpretation of its overall meaning remains that of a *topos* or stock-scene. McCallum (1987, 117-118), however, has proposed a connection between this scene and the religious festivals described in the Linear B tablets, in particular that of tablet Un718. This tablet lists the offerings made by various individuals and social groups in honour of Poseidon (*Documents*, 170). Most plausibly these offerings, which include oxen or bulls, were intended for a ritual festival, the location of which is given as the district of *sa-ra-pe-da* (Palaima 2004, 110).

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[243] One difference with the preceding Neopalatial period can be seen in the absence of crowds in public ritual in the surviving record of LM II-III Cretan art, something that also holds true for the mainland. A good example of the role of larger crowds in public ritual can be seen in the Sacred Grove and Temple miniature wall-paintings from the Neopalatial period Knossos palace (*Aegean Painting*, 64-66; Hood 2005, 63-64).

Hence it is not implausible to link this ritual event with the procession scene, especially as both can be situated in outdoor contexts and involve cattle.

However, the connection between the pictorial representation of the procession and the written account of the provision of a specific festival should not be grasped as a specific, historical connection but rather as the sharing of a *topos*.[244] This would be enhanced by the focus on seasonality implicit in the temporality of Mycenaean art in general and made explicit in the calendar of ritual events. A further dimension to this is added by the wall-paintings within the central megaron of the Pylos palace itself. The murals in this area can only be partially reconstructed, but what is known shows a broad, paradigmatic coherence with the procession scene in the vestibule area (McCallum 1987, 109-123). Apart from the flanking lion and griffin pair next to what may have been the throne, there were floor paintings of an octopus as well as decorative motifs. Other wall-paintings show a large-scale bull, a lyre-player sitting on a rock or hill with a bird or small griffin flying away from him,[245] as well as two pairs of much smaller-sized male figures seated at tables (see figure 37). The lyre-player in particular has been connected with the notion of oral performance by bards, and can be understood within the more 'participative' setting of the wall-paintings of the central megaron (Bennet 2007, 18).[246]

The only other Throne Room for which an iconographic program can be reconstructed is that of Knossos. The setting of this space, although it lacked a hearth, had a gypsum seat with two flanking lion/griffin pairs and a dolphin that may either have been a floor or wall-painting (*Aegean Painting*, plates 47-48). It is somewhat similar to the Pylos case. Unfortunately this room and its art cannot be directly connected with either the Camp-stool or 'Corridor of the Procession' wall-paintings discussed earlier. The only other wall-painting that can be plausibly connected with the Throne Room is that of a bull in the anteroom to it (Hood 2005, 65), which can also be seen as a possible parallel to the use of a bull in the Pylos megaron. One of the reasons for the lack of connections between the wall-paintings discussed here seems to be that the Throne Room at Knossos was not a central focus in the centrifugal, court-focused layout of the building (Driessen & Langohr 2007, 184). Hence, the different paintings would not have had a singular and coherent architectural focus, as they had in the case of the megaron-focused plans.

A different kind of fixed-place ritual is known from the wall-paintings of the 'Room with the Fresco' in the Cult Centre at Mycenae. Although these have not yet received their final publication, a preliminary sketch has been available for some time (Marinatos 1988, figs. 1-3, pp. 249-251), which allows for a discussion of the broad outlines of the scene (see figure 38). The upper panel consists of two larger-scale female figures facing each other within an architectural space, as indicated by two flanking columns and a façade with decorative motifs to the left. The left figure holds a sword and has been interpreted as a warrior-goddess (Rehak 1999b). while the other also may have been a goddess (Marinatos 1988, 247). The figures in between had already been interpreted as possible facsimiles or *eidola* of humans in section 4.4.2. On the lower panel there is a

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[244] Palaima (2008, 348, 354) has argued that this pattern of religious activity inferred from Linear B and iconography bears some resemblance to the description in the *Odyssey* (Book III, 8-11) of a large-scale sacrifice of bulls to Poseidon presided over by Nestor at Sandy Pylos. According to Palaima the oral preservation of the king's name Nestor may have had actual historical connotations, but it seems at least as important to consider Nestor as a poetic exemplar of the wise and pious handling of the office of kingship.

[245] The association between lyre-player and birds is not unique to this painting, as it can be seen in a few other examples as well (McCallum 1987, 127-129). Some kind of ritual association seems likely, something which is corroborated by finds of musical instruments, likely including a lyre, in the sanctuary at Phylakopi (Renfrew 1985, 383-384).

[246] The role of music and musical instruments in general in ritual activity has also been emphasised for the ritual activities of Minoan Crete and the Cyclades, which played an important role in societal cohesion (Mikrakis 2011, 62-63).

smaller female figure, accompanied by a winged griffin, holding sheaths of what appears to be grain and which is also flanked by a column. The inclusive character of the viewing arrangement, as well as other features in the room like the hearth and the bench, point to the directly participative role of the paintings with the rituals that took place here. The painted plaster head discussed in section 4.2.2 is similar to that of the figure in the lower panel (Rehak 2005, 272). Unfortunately, the original position of the painted plaster head in this room is unclear.

Like the throne rooms of Knossos and Pylos, the wall-paintings in the Mycenae Cult Centre were of an inclusive character and directly implicated in ritual action. The key difference is, however, that in the case of Mycenae the area was much more secluded. The position of the room was evaluated by Morgan (2005, 171), who argued that it was closely connected in spatial terms with the 'Shrine of the Idols' elsewhere in the Cult Center, which together with the finds in both areas would point to a dual conception of life and death. In any case, the Cult Centre itself was connected to the central megaron through a 'Processional Way', which was partially roofed and carried a painting of a chariot and male figures, and which in another part could conceivably have carried the fragments of procession scenes found nearby as well (Morgan 2005, 162). Like the Knossos and Pylos cases, a basic connection can be made between these areas of ritual activity and the processions leading towards or otherwise connected with them. This may be seen as a series of layers of ritual action, going from intensive participation in rituals, to inclusive participation in procession, and finally to more panoptic representations of the broader settings of ritual activities.

Another kind of public ritual concerns the relations of the living to the deceased, especially as expressed in funerary ritual. As we saw in the previous section, the tomb façades acted as liminal boundaries, and both the façades and the interiors of tombs featured mostly decorative motifs. The exception to this was the wall-painting of a procession from a tomb at Thebes. The same site has also yielded indications of a processional way and open area connected with this tomb, and in the latter area funerary games may well have taken place (Gallou 2005, 126-127). Most of the images come from the *larnakes* that were deposited in some of the tombs, however, and they show a variety of images. Prime among them are the so-called lamentation scenes, which are known both from the Tanagra (see figure 39) and Cretan examples and point to elaborate rituals for mourning and remembering the death (Burke 2007). Apart from this kind of ritual, there are wildly divergent theories as to what the other images on these burial coffins represent, especially with regard to parallels either in the succeeding periods in the Aegean itself for the Tanagra case (Immerwahr 1995) or in contemporary Egypt for their Cretan counterparts (Watrous 1991).

Both in the use of friezes and the range of subject matters, the *larnakes* are very similar to other material forms of the art of the Aegean Bronze Age. One argument has been put forward that the scenes on the *larnakes* from Crete represent both the world in which the deceased dwelt and the journey they had to undertake to get there (Watrous 1991). For the Tanagra *larnakes*, Immerwahr (1995, 117) also tentatively sees a journey and possible depiction of the Underworld, but in a different way than on the Cretan coffins. Given that the Tanagra cases are insufficiently known, and in other features show much more affinity to Crete, it seems wise to refrain from positing essentialist differences between the two cases. It also seems overtly ambitious to relate such scenes of the afterlife to names such as Elysium, as proposed by Warren (2007), based on images that themselves are insecurely understood in terms of their iconographic meaning. Yet, an overall scheme can be discerned in terms of moving from the world of the living to that of the deceased. This starts with the lamentation scenes as well as possible funeral games, and then moves to the journey to the afterlife and possibly the depiction of the dwelling space of the afterlife itself.

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As noted in section 5.2.1, most of the high-value portable art objects were found in burial contexts, and hence it is necessary to consider these as part of funerary ritual as well. One very important point with regard to the notion of value in the Shaft Grave burials was made by Voutsaki (2012, 161-164), who argues that it should be understood not just in terms of status but within a broader framework of identities. Identity in this sense would have been closely connected with emotional and aesthetic considerations as well, not just with position in social structure. In fact these different factors cannot be really separated from each other. This can be seen very well for the objects made from vitreous materials found in burial contexts, and for those of blue glass in particular. The *chaîne opératoire* and conceptions of materiality of blue glass were extensively discussed in section 4.3, and here one of its consumption contexts can be added to this. Nightingale (2008, 81-83) has provided a basic overview of the context of blue glass objects, which have also been found in settlement contexts. With regard to burial contexts, it can be observed that the larger glass objects were predominantly found in more elaborate burials, while beads were found in a wide range of burials without clear distinctions in the richness of the graves.

There also was no clear difference in the quality of beads in the different graves. In a few instances it is possible to note the elaborate layouts of these objects relative to the remains of the deceased (Nightingale 2008, 82-83). This brings up the notion of adornment, as was noted for the depictions of blue glass jewellery in section 4.3.3. This kind of funerary adornment using beads, of course not only made from glass, extended to children as well, for they have been found in 20-25% of children's burials of the LH II – IIIB period (Pomadere 2012, 436-437). Apart from beads other kinds of glass objects were also found regularly in tombs. This includes the glass seals that were mainly found in more peripheral areas in central and northern Greece, even if finds are also known from major centres (Dickers 2001, 77-79; Krzyszkowska 2005, 270). Much rarer were the larger glass pieces, which can be noted for the weaponry items in a very rich tomb at Dendra (Nightingale 2005). Finally, the moulds used for working glass were occasionally also found in burials (Hughes-Brock 2008, 136-137). The distribution patterns of these different kinds of glass objects in tombs can be related to the evidence for their working contexts, which as noted in section 4.3.2 were closely associated with the palatial framework of economic activity.

This brings up the relation between the (aesthetic) appreciation of these glass objects as part of identities and their value within the overall societal context. Very different models for this have been proposed. Sherratt (2008, 221) takes the view that with the greater amount of blue glass objects available in LH III their relative value decreased, becoming an inferior version of gold. Furthermore, the increased finds of glass objects in more peripheral areas indicates to her either a lessening of palatial control or a less exclusive valuation of glass as a material. These arguments with regard to the value of glass seem to depend on a basic notion of supply and demand, in which a greater supply relative to other materials indicates a lesser value. There are good reasons to doubt this, first of all because of the observation that the use of glass in the LH III Aegean is not congruent with a role as a cheaper substitute (Hughes-Brock 2008, 136; Nightingale 2008, 81).[247] Instead these objects should be seen as valuable in their own right. One model for understanding their distribution is as 'tokens' of the palaces (Jackson & Wager 2011, 120).[248] The distribution of glass seals in particular may indicate a relation between the palaces and local elites in the more peripheral areas (Bennet 2008, 163-164).

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[247] The case of Egyptian glass discussed in section 4.3.3 suggests that it was valued within a set of hierarchical levels of value, as part of a complex set of conceptions of materiality. Although supply and demand could play a role in the value of materials, as for the caravans discussed in section 3.4.2, there is no reason to assume that the value of materials would be determined by supply and demand in situations other than such long-distance exchange.

[248] This idea of 'tokens' was originally formulated by Halstead (2007, 71-72) to account for the use of items such as clothing and jewellery to structure the relations between the palaces and their subjects. Somewhat similar ideas were expressed earlier in (Morris 1986).

This can be related to the extension of the palatial framework through seals discussed in section 4.2.4. In that section it was also observed that resources for ritual activities could be mobilised from areas far away from the major centres, as in the case of Boeotia. As such, the distribution of glass objects in more peripheral areas can be understood as an extension of palatial influence rather than as a degradation of it. Furthermore, the relation of blue glass to *ku-wa-no* has implications for the understanding of the value of the objects made from this material. This is not to imply that the Mycenaean deceased would necessarily have had knowledge of the Near Eastern conceptions of colour. Rather the aesthetic valuation of these objects would have derived from the intrinsic properties of blue glass, and also from the fact that it derived from the palatial sphere. Through this the glass objects would have been related to a broader set of material forms of art, such as the use of glass in architectural contexts and objects made from lapis lazuli. It is not surprising in this sense that beads have been noted as a 'marker' of Mycenaean culture, even in the more peripheral areas of this early civilisation (Nightingale 2008, 84-85).[249] The deposition of glass objects in burials would have involved a shared identity, based on the intersection of economic value, adornment and colour aesthetics, as well as the emotional and moral connotations of death.

5.2.3: Warfare and elite culture in Mycenaean art

In those wall-painting scenes where what may be termed expressions of palatial power form the main subject, the primacy of 'courtly' and war-oriented iconographic elements and narrative forms becomes clear. This is something that is also paralleled in other artistic media, especially the decorations on various kinds of vessels and naturally also on the weaponry itself. Scenes of quotidian activities are entirely absent, at least as far as the limited evidence goes. This constitutes something of a break with the preceding art of Neopalatial Crete and the Cyclades, where activities such as harvesting were represented and larger crowds were depicted as well. Some characteristics of the courtly and war-oriented iconographic elements can also be discerned in ritual and hunting scenes, especially for the latter in the focus on violence and the importance of the chariot. Yet in their basic focus they remain distinct from the theme of warfare and elite culture. Within this broader theme two specific kinds of scenes can be recognised. The first of these involves war-related scenes of a more narrative character, while the second consists of depictions of emblematic artefacts that can also be related to such activities.

Starting with the narrative scenes related to warfare, an overview of all Aegean Bronze Age monumental and non-monumental art has led to the formulation of a typology of different kinds of such scenes (Hiller 1999, 319-322). These different categories include warriors marching and involved in single or group combat, naval battles or attacks from the sea, and combat involving cities or palatial buildings. Individual scenes can be seen as excerpts of that broader set of images, deployed either singularly, as in glyptic, or in larger settings in wall-paintings. Although the typology changes over time, certain elements, such as the boar's tusk helmet, can be traced back to antecedents in Neopalatial period Cretan art. The recognition of such recurrent scenes can be related to the discussion of stock-scenes or *topoi* in section 4.4.3. The contemporary sites of Akrotiri and the Shaft Graves at Mycenae have also yielded important precedents, and the evidence for warriors on the former site has led to questions about its connection to the emerging mainland (Immerwahr 1977). One enigmatic feature, however, is that the apparent Minoan 'taboo' on depicting direct combat in wall-paintings,[250] seems to continue into the Mycenaean period on Crete. Neither the

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[249] Even so, blue glass should certainly not be seen as exclusively being used for this, for other materials like amber were also used for adornment and prestige purposes in burials and other contexts (Maran 2013).

[250] This pattern in Minoan monumental art is peculiar since weaponry and certain kinds of violence-related themes do occur on the non-monumental art forms, if not actual battles (Peatfield 1999). Furthermore, there are some indications

'Captain of the Blacks' wall-painting from the 'House of the Frescoes' at Knossos nor the earlier javelin throwers (*Aegean Painting*, 173, 176) can be plausibly related to a coherent combat scene, even if these can be seen on Mycenaean period Cretan vessels and glyptic.

Of the two cases where battle scenes can actually be related to their original architectural contexts, the material from the central megaron at Mycenae is less clear in terms of its overall composition (*Aegean Painting*, 123-125). Originally, the battle scene from this site may have formed a frieze of smaller-scale figures at eye-level, running alongside all four walls of the room, but two of those have collapsed and the (burnt) fragments cannot be directly related to each other. The different elements of the composition are clear, however. These include chariots that are not engaged in combat, women standing before architecture, a battle involving hand-to-hand combat, a hurtling warrior associated with palatial architecture (see figure 40), and female onlookers within a building. Although the overall composition remains unclear, it is possible to divide the fragments between those involved with preparations for battle and those involved in the actual battle (Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1999, 333-334). Fragments of an earlier scene, the so-called 'Groom fresco', involving chariots and a warrior (*Aegean Painting*, 192) can also possibly be connected with preparations for war.

The same kind of elements as in the Mycenae megaron frieze are also known from the fragments of Thebes and Orchomenos, which respectively included a warrior and architectural fragments with warriors, as well as horses and chariots (*Aegean Painting*, 125-128). The Pylos battle scene was of a different character, although caution should be applied to its interpretation as the fragments are currently being restudied. It was located in Hall 64, and involved different kinds of smaller-scale figures (*Aegean Painting*, 197). These include one group with boar's tusk helmets and short skirts, who engaged a group of 'Tarzans' in skins in hand-to-hand combat (see figure 41), while other elements are chariots and a chequerboard motif that suggests architecture, and a wavy line suggesting a river. Based on their reconstruction (Bennet & Davis 1999, plate XIV), Bennet and Davis (1999, 108-109) argued that the war-related activities were part of a frieze of both stationary chariots and active hand-to-hand combat, with a frieze of dogs below and a frieze of nautili above, and perhaps shrine façades as well. The combat scenes would then not be very dissimilar from Mycenae, Orchomenos, and Thebes, except for the 'Tarzan' skin-clad figures that are usually understood as being outsiders to palatial society (Blakolmer 2012).

However, restudy of the fragments has indicated that Shaw's (2001, 41-43) initial suggestion that a naval scene formed part of the decorative program of Hall 64 was correct. At least three ships can be reconstructed for this scene, though many details remain unclear (Brecoulaki 2005).[251] Furthermore, this project has also revealed that the material from room 27 was not from a hunting scene, but rather depicts warriors and chariots in a war-preparation scene or perhaps even in procession (Evenson 2005), and a fragment of an archer has now also been recognized (Brecoulaki et al. 2009).[252] The new analyses of the Pylos material, while still incomplete, broaden our view of depictions of war-related activities in Mycenaean art. There may be reason to reconsider the idea that the combat scene from Hall 64 represents an action taking place in Messenia itself, as plausibly

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that warriors could have been depicted on stucco relief from Knossos (Blakolmer 2007a, 222-223). Even so, the evidence is rare and models need to be developed to account for this (e.g. Weingarten 1999), in order to go beyond modern-influenced biases of violent Mycenaeans and flower-loving Minoans (Gere 2006, 117-144).

[251] Recent finds at the nearby site of Iklaina have included a wall-painting fragments that appears to show a ship with two male figures in it (Cosmopoulos 2009, 14).

[252] The archer may have been female, for which parallels exist on non-monumental art, and women may have hunted as well (Brecoulaki et al. 2009, 376-378). If true this would provide an interesting contrast to recurring images of female onlookers at battles and war-related activities, and challenge theories of an exclusive link between war, violence and masculinity (Nikolaidou & Kokkinidou 1997, 188-191).

interpreted earlier (Bennet & Davis 1999, 114-115).[253] There might be alternatives that can be suggested, perhaps raids beyond the Mycenaean heartland, the possibility of which is suggested by the presence of foreign workers, especially the female textile workers from Anatolia (Ergin 2007). Yet considerable caution should be applied given the still-incomplete understanding of the overall composition of the pictorial outline of Hall 64.

In any case, what is important here is that the different battle scenes discussed here can be related to different parts of the overall typology of such scenes. Hence it can be argued, despite the limited evidence, that different kinds of 'stock scenes' or *topoi* could be deployed in different ways to suit the needs of individual compositions. Such an interpretation of the battle narratives corresponds to the 'paratactic' type of narrative scenes in Mycenaean discussed in section 4.4.3. There also exist images in which the human world is primary that cannot be directly related to military activity. The so-called 'Palanquin-charioteer' wall-painting, which also included a bull, from the Knossos palace (Hood 2005, 69-70) seems to indicate a more peaceful use of chariots. Also, another set of fragments from the 'House of the Oil Merchant' at Mycenae include indications of a palanquin, architecture, horses, as well as a charging bull, from different locations in the building (*Aegean Painting*, 193). A fragment from Gla shows two miniature female figures in what seems to be an architectural context (Iakovidis 2001, 139). These rather enigmatic clues would point not so much to an obscured set of depictions of quotidian scenes, but rather seem to belong to a set of images of high-status material culture, which can also be seen in the ceramic vessels (C. Morris 2006).

Finally, there are the figure-8 shields and the *ikria*, which have been interpreted respectively as emblems of military and naval power (*Aegean Painting*, 138-141). The latter are only deployed in an emblematic way in a near life-size frieze without a precise architectural context from Mycenae (Shaw 1980, 171-172). Friezes of life-size and smaller figure-8 shields are known from more sites. The earliest example in monumental art (with predecessors in the non-monumental art of the preceding period) comes from LM II Knossos in the form of life-size figure-8 shields in a frieze that was likely located in an upper floor loggia (Hood 2005, 74-75). For the mainland, fragments are known from Thebes and Tiryns (see figure 42), but at Mycenae there are two friezes, one life-size and the other half the size of that (*Aegean Painting*, 193). They are both from the Southwest Building of the Cult Centre, and can be related to the warrior-goddess figure of this building complex (Rehak 1999b). Another shield frieze is from the palace of Pylos, where it was found in an area that may have had a more security-focused role (Shaw 2012, 733). Both the shields and ship-cabins are larger-scale paintings, and can therefore be understood as part of an inclusive viewing arrangement. Hence they would directly impress the viewer with their emblematic meanings,[254] complementing the panoptic narratives of naval and battle scenes.

Summarising the available evidence, we can observe that it runs in a continuum from the larger battle scene compositions to the emblematic friezes of *ikria* and figure-8 shields. Uncomfortably wedged in between, given the often highly fragmented material record, are the more isolated scenes involving chariots, horses, and architecture. Nevertheless, the overall emphasis on certain elements is clear, of which the most important seem to be monumental architecture, the use of chariots, the *ikria* and deployment of ships, and prominent attributes of warriors like the figure-8 shield and the

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[253] Another interpretation was offered by Yalouris (1989), who connected this battle-scene and Linear B references of skin-wearing warriors to a specific description in Homer (*Iliad*, VII, 152-156) of a battle between warriors from Messenia and Arcadia. This highlights the danger in making connections between Mycenaean art and early historical Greek poetry that are too specific for the evidence available.

[254] The emblematic effect is enhanced by the repetitive frieze design, which for the figure-8 shields can also be seen on ceramic vessels, including from Neopalatial period Crete (Rehak 1992). For the *ikria*, if they existed as they were depicted in art, it can also be observed that they would depict a set of (textile) friezes within the wall-painting frieze, highlighting the connections between these material forms discussed in section 4.2.3.

boar's tusk helmet. With regard to their spatial distribution it is significant that, so far, the battle scenes and emblematic friezes were found in palatial contexts only, while the more isolated scenes have a wider distribution in the larger houses (at Knossos and Mycenae) and secondary centres (Gla and Iklaina). In this regard it should also be mentioned that depictions of chariots are fairly ubiquitous in Mycenaean vase-painting as well (Crouwel 2006), see figure 43, and may have derived from wall-paintings (Rystedt 2006, 245). At the same time depictions of ships are also quite common in vase-painting, especially the oared galleys on LH IIIB-C vases (Wedde 2006).

Rystedt (2006, 240) has argued that the depictions of chariots in vase-paintings and their relation to other iconographic elements, seems to indicate that they were a dominant theme in this medium. Even more so, she relates it to a diverse set of activities that include athletics that involve not only chariots and horses but also boxing and running, ceremonies with assistants carrying campstools and parasols, as well as religious festivals (Rystedt 2006, 245). This last element is not so far-fetched as it may seem, given the goddess on a chariot drawn by griffins shown on the Ayia Triada sarcophagus (*Aegean Painting*, plate 53). It should be remembered that these pots were widely distributed, most of them having been found on Cyprus (Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982). From the reception of these vessels in Cyprus it is clear that we are dealing here with the consumption of the desire, through acquiring the painted vases as a commodity, to be part of an elite culture in which chariots played an important role (Steel 2013, 127-138). We may then observe in this different accumulation of pictorial themes in wall-paintings and vases already a pattern of enchainment in that 'fragments' of the former are put on the latter, but to gain a fuller picture it is necessary to turn to the instruments as well.

From the different instruments discussed in section 4.2.4, it is clear that the ships, weaponry, and chariots can be most profitably connected with the monumental art discussed above. These 'tools of power' would not only project palatial power, thereby ensuring its ability to accumulate goods and people, but also tie those using these instruments to the nexus of production and consumption of the palaces.[255] This is true for weaponry in general, and can be seen especially well with regard to the chariots. Schon (2007, 137-138) has argued that while the making of the different parts of chariots and their assembly may have taken place in different locations, the overall process was still closely administered by the palatial scribes. Although the precise function of the various regional road systems of the Mycenaean world is subject to debate (Hope Simpson 1998; Jansen 1998), at least one of their benefits would have been to facilitate the movement of chariots at a regional level. As such they would have been useful for both dominating and incorporating the elite persons in outlying areas (Schon 2007, 144).

Both the weaponry and chariots can be understood through the notion of 'tokens' discussed for the beads in the previous section, in the sense that through the palatial framework materials were gathered and assembled to create finished goods that were then distributed to various individuals and groups. It is the centrality of the palace in this regard through its unique capacity to sustain a mode of organisation able to create and maintain a large amount of chariots that stands out in this, highlighting the intimate relation between the chariot and state power (Driessen & Schoep 1999, 396; Dickinson 1999, 25). To a certain extent this is indeed true for weaponry and military organisation more generally, signalling a co-dependence of the instruments of scribes and warriors at this point in time (Driessen & Schoep 1999, 389). To these instruments of power projection the ships should be added as well, not only because of their depiction in art but also because of the concern with naval matters in the tablets (Palaima 1991). Although there are depictions of chariots

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[255] Overall there was a shift away from the elaboration of weapons within funerary containers as 'intentionally individual' (Harrell 2012, 801). The evidence of the Linear B administration of Knossos also suggests a close palatial control over different forms of weaponry in this polity (Driessen & Schoep 1999).

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and ships both before and after the Mycenaean palatial period, these states did control these crucial instruments of power during their existence.[256]

Synthesising the evidence, three analytically distinct levels of contexts of art can be recognised for the theme of warfare and elite culture. At the top level there are the palaces themselves, where as we saw earlier there was an almost exclusive concentration of the narrative and emblematic wall-paintings that can be related to palatial power. Furthermore, it was the scribe's stylus that made possible the nexus for the administrative control of tools of power such as ships, chariots, and weaponry in general, and also to a large degree for the control of their application. At this level, then, we can see a clear pattern of conspicuous display and the fabrication of objects that were both containers of prestige and instruments of power. The next level is not as concentrated spatially, but consists of a number of secondary sites, both houses and secondary centres, in which more isolated scenes of themes related to palatial power have been found. Given the fragmentary evidence it is best not to exclude the possibility that some of these have narrative connotations. An even wider distribution of scenes involving chariots and ships can be observed for vase-painting. Although these two should not be conflated, they both can be seen as different 'abbreviations' of the palatial art, and reflecting the broader sharing of elite groups in Mycenaean culture as a whole.

5.2.4: The human and natural worlds in Mycenaean art

Turning to the third theme of contexts of Mycenaean art discussed here, this concerns the relation between humans, animals, and the broader natural environment. It should be emphasised that any distinction between 'flower-loving' Minoans and game-devouring Mycenaean hunters is far from the truth, much as with war-related scenes as discussed in the previous section. Such ideas have, unfortunately, tended to hide much of the underlying complexities in this theme. In fact the relation between humans and nature arguably contains the most ubiquitous and diverse set of motifs and compositions of Mycenaean art. Furthermore, they also seem to have had the widest distribution both in terms of the number and different kinds of architectural contexts in which they were found, as well as in terms of representations on non-monumental art forms. These include agonistic scenes between humans and animals (whether of actual combat or of domination), more peaceful scenes of humans and/or animals in landscapes or seascapes, friezes with repetitive designs of animal motifs, and friezes of 'stylised nature' motifs. Each of these will now be discussed further in turn.

Starting with the agonistic scenes, these involve depictions of bull-leaping, hunting, and the 'master or mistress of animals' composition. In general terms it has been observed that such relations provide a symbolic parallel between the aggressive behaviour of wild animals and (mostly male) humans (Morgan 1995). The category of bull-leaping is closely associated with Crete and the preceding Minoan periods, and it occurs in the Mycenaean period predominantly in Knossos. Even so, there are examples of bull-leaping in LH IIIA wall-paintings from the mainland palaces and the later Tanagra *larnakes* that can be used to argue that this activity was not entirely unknown on the mainland (Gallou 2005, 126). Bulls occur at a number of different places in the Knossos palace, but the only example where bull-leaping can clearly be observed is in the 'Taureador Frescoes' from either the so-called 'Court of the Stone Spout' or an upper floor (Hood 2005, 79-80). It consists of a series of panels with smaller-scale figures, of which only one can be reconstructed in detail (see figure 44), which depict action taking place outdoors as indicated by changing background colour between the panels and segments of rockwork (*Aegean Painting*, 90-92). Overall, they indicated a

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[256] Wedde (2006) has pointed out the implications of the existence of certain continuities in the depictions of oared galleys and chariots in Mycenaean through Late Geometric vase-painting (cf. Crouwel 2006). On the assumption that the depiction of such objects would imply their actual use, this could be used to argue for a 'partial systems survival' because of the concentration of resources and personnel to make chariots and man ships (Wedde 2006, 265-269). The presence of post-palatial elites on the mainland was already demonstrated by Morris (1987, 1991).

series of episodes of bull-leaping, with both male and female participants, providing what is here interpreted as a panoptic overview of this activity.

This wall-painting can be placed in a tradition of bull-leaping scenes in Aegean Bronze Age art, which can be traced through time through the use of different ways of rendering them (Younger 1995c). In some examples from non-monumental art within this tradition, bulls are draped with a cloth for sacrificial purposes (Betancourt 2007a, fig. 30.2, p. 186) or are depicted in scenes where they being captured with nets (Younger & Rehak 2008b, 181). These point to both the ritual and hunting features that are associated with the animals, as we already saw for the role of bulls in scenes of public ritual discussed in section 5.2.2. Intriguingly, from the Linear B evidence it seems that bulls may have been referred to by noun-epithets such as wine-dark (Blakolmer 2004, 63). From the tablets it is clear that oxen were used for agricultural purposes, but they were never depicted in such capacities in wall-paintings, consistent with the lack of other domesticates and quotidian scenes.[257] What is emphasised is rather the agonistic relation between the bulls and humans, and the mastery of the latter over the former is then represented in dangerous activities such as hunting and leaping over bulls, as well as in their being sacrificed in ritual contexts. A possible parallel to this ritual context for grain, can be seen in a wall-painting from the Cult Centre at Mycenae, showing a female figure holding two sheaves of grain (*Aegean Painting*, plate 61).

Even more agonistic are the hunting scenes, which are known only from non-monumental art on Crete but on the mainland are represented in different wall-paintings from Pylos, Orchomenos and Tiryns. Certainly the boar-hunt was already important before this, as can be seen in the early presence of boar's tusk helmets (Morris 1990). In fact boar's tusks can already be found in MH I contexts (Wright 2008, 251). All of these are rendered in the panoptic variant, and none of them were found *in situ*. The very fragmentary scene from Orchomenos is the most basic one and depicts hunters with and without boar's tusk helmets, hunting dogs and a fleeing boar (*Aegean Painting*, 195). The boar hunt scene from Tiryns is much more extensive, and from the hundreds of fragments from a dump three parts of the composition have been reconstructed (*Aegean Painting*, 129-130). The first group of fragments is of hunters walking with dogs, the second of groups of chariots driving in different directions and not directly being involved with hunting, while the third group depicts the various stages of the chase and killing of the boar (see figure 45). The vegetation associated with the different fragments indicate that they took place in different kinds of landscapes: a more open landscape for the chariot groups and a marshy terrain for the actual hunt itself.

For Pylos, the restudy of the fragments has led to new, if preliminary, conclusions (Evenson in Brecoulaki 2005), which indicate that the hunting composition from an upper floor room above Hall 64 also consisted of different scenes. These include two or three registers of hunters with dogs, the hunting and killing of deer by men and dogs, and the return from the hunt and the preparation for a feast (as indicated by the carrying of cauldrons). While the Pylos material may yield additional

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[257] Shapland (2009) has discerned a similar situation for the rendering of nature in Neopalatial Minoan art, where the animals depicted similarly show a preference for the wild over domesticates used in everyday contexts. Cattle is the only animal able to transcend this difference, being both hunted and used in bull-leaping and involved in mundane agricultural tasks like ploughing. A plausible reason for this might be the difference between the oxen as used for farming labour and the bulls who were unsuitable for this. Here an interesting contrast can be noted, which would in broad terms also hold true for the Mycenaean case, between the administered domesticates and depicted wild animals:

"By going in search of animals over the horizon, seeking relations with them, the inhabitants of Neopalatial Crete sought to bring the enduring qualities of animals to play in their own fluid social strategies. Whereas the Linear A documents show a relocation of domestic animals to or from the centre, the frescoes show a set of relations with non-domestic animals. In the case of bull-leaping, the animal might become non-domestic through the distinct set of practices it is involved in, but in the case of lions or wild goats, the animal's life beyond domestication affords a different set of relations which will set the human participants apart." (Shapland 2009, 124)

details for reconstructive work, it is enough here to note the significance of the division between the different scenes. This provides a parallel to the Tiryns composition and strongly indicates that the hunting wall-paintings can be understood as panoptic and with the same kind of 'paratactic' narrative as for the battle scenes.[258] This may also hold true for the bull-leaping painting from Knossos, but from its preservation this is less certain. This kind of compositions can be contrasted with the 'master of animals' pose that was noted in section 4.4.2, in which the agonistic animals are subordinated in what is primarily a ritual context. Perhaps the relation of such animals can be understood as emblematic (even if with a different meaning) to the narrative scenes in the same way as the *ikria* and figure-8 shields, with a common theme of the domination of agonistic animals.

There are other kinds of scenes of humans within the natural environment, however, that are not agonistic. Two 'scenic' friezes have been reconstructed for two different locations in Pylos, consisting of seemingly tame deer, boars and horses alongside seated women and architectural façades or shrines (*Aegean Painting*, 133). These are argued to be 'wall-paper' made up of disconnected elements, but they might also simply be stock-scenes or *topoi* of peaceful landscapes. Perhaps a similar kind of scene can be seen on a Mycenaean krater found on Cyprus with a woman in a shrine, a landscape with flanking horses and, rather strangely, a large fish (Steel 2006, fig. 1, p. 148). If we are dealing with a recurring *topos* here, the scene of women with deer at an altar from Ayia Triada (*Aegean Painting*, 181) could also be included in it, even if this formed part of a larger ritual scene. The association between women, architecture, and tame animals that would otherwise be hunted, as well as the lack of dangerous creatures like lions and griffins, provide an interesting counterpoint to the hunting scenes. Here it is possible to recognise the contours, but based on only a few cases, of a distinction between peaceful 'inner' landscapes near architecture and hunting in 'outer' landscapes such as marshy areas.

There is more to depictions of animals, however, as they are also shown without humans in quite a few examples. A distinction has to be made here between animals in free compositions and those in repetitive friezes. The former category is harder to recognise since some of the isolated fragments may well have belonged to scenes with human participants, but nevertheless a number of cases have been reconstructed. The bull of the anteroom to the Throne Room of Knossos has already been mentioned, but another bull was found on the upper floor of the 'Hall of the Double Axes' and can be dated to LM II (Hood 2005, 73). Also discussed above was a bull from the Throne Room at Pylos, and a frieze of hunting dogs from Hall 64. From the same palace a frieze of at least ten lions and three or four griffins (one forming a lion/griffin pair) is known from Hall 46, a room with hearth that may have acted as the secondary megaron (*Aegean Painting*, 136-137). Fragments of sphinxes are known from Tiryns and possibly also from Thebes (*Aegean Painting*, 137-138). Finally, deer friezes with environmental settings are known from Pylos and Tiryns, although the latter has been associated with the larger boar hunting composition (*Aegean Painting*, 130-132).

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[258] The resemblance of the focus on hunting boars in Mycenaean art to the same activity in Hittite texts and art has been noted by (Cultraro 2004). He stressed in particular the relation of boar-hunting in both cases to royal ideology and warfare. Bachvarova (2010, 76) has noted the implicit connection between hunting animals and fighting, especially fighting 'outsiders', in Hittite epic, something that can for her be seen as comparable with the scenes of warfare in Hall 64 at Pylos, now supplemented with the hunting scene from the upper floor. The widespread sharing of a simile between warfare and hunting may be reflected in a more deep-rooted set of *topoi* that could be used in panoptic, narrative settings such as the Tiryns boar-hunt. This does not necessarily imply a complete similarity between the Mycenaean and Hittite cases, but the question of some forms of (mutual) influence should be considered:

"But we should not neglect the strong possibility that many of the similarities in the ways of thinking that we can see in the Hittite material, Mycenaean art, and the later Greek epic tradition come from a common pool of conceptions of how man fits into his world, in which man is compared to animal to explore and explain man's relationship with the gods and to turn natural history into human history." (Bachvarova 2010, 77)

Paintings of marine animals are known from both floor and wall-paintings. Apart from the dolphins in the Pylos naval scene, these creatures were never associated with humans unlike for the fishermen of the LC IA Cycladic wall-paintings. An overview of the scenes includes dolphins, a variety of fish and mollusc species, as well as marine flora (Petrakis 2011, table 1, p. 190). Many of these paintings are floor paintings, but a wall-painting from Gla shows dolphins actually leaping above the water surface (Iakovidis 2001, plate VIII). The floor painting of an octopus from the Throne Room of Pylos may have been involved with the 'throne area', but such floor-paintings do occur in different contexts as well. For both the land and marine animals it seems that what is most noticeable about them is how little narrative potential there is to these scenes. Many of them are larger, some life-size, and can be interpreted as part of a more inclusive viewing arrangement. Unfortunately, it is unclear how the Mycenaean viewer would actually have related to these animals in these specific settings.

The repetitive animal friezes are therefore easier to understand as they can be categorised as part of the decorative plane space viewing arrangement. All of them are from the Pylos palace (*Aegean Painting*, 141-142), and adequately discussed in the catalogue (Lang 1969, 141-157). They include six friezes of stylized nautili, which are very unlike those in the freer compositions and may have been connected to designs used in inlays (Lang 1969, 143).[259] There are also two snail friezes, as well as one of bluebirds. For the snail examples there is a close parallel with textile borders, as indicated by garments shown at wall-paintings from Ayia Triada and Knossos (Lang 1969, 144). They are hard to distinguish from the friezes with repetitive designs of decorative motifs, and indeed Lang treats them as part of a single group. Many other sites have similar decorative schemes, which include a variety of spirals, papyrus (sometimes together with spirals), rosettes and half-rosettes and triglyph motifs, see for a variety of designs (*Aegean Painting*, fig. 39, p. 143). Most of them occur throughout the palatial complexes, such as the elegant spiral friezes from Knossos that could be found in three different locations (Hood 2005, 72), but they are a common find at non-palatial sites like Gla as well (Iakovidis 2001, plates II, V).

It is not easy to interpret these repetitive friezes, and given the lack of indications from other sources it may be logical to simply denote them as 'ornamental friezes' (*Aegean Painting*, 142). There are clear parallels for this from borders on garments, and also to some degree from the *ikria*. In the art of the Neopalatial period such borders were shown alongside broader compositions of the natural environment on garments. A good example are the so-called 'crocus costumes' from wall-paintings of Akrotiri, which have been connected with a female deity and the different phases of womanhood (Rehak 2004, 97). At the level of the eastern Mediterranean artistic *koine*, it can be observed that the voluted palmette constituted an important element (Feldman 2006, 81-86). It co-existed alongside more local adaptations of vegetation (including the lily, Egyptian lotus and papyrus), which were often associated with agricultural abundance and royal power in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Feldman (2006, 84-85) sees some parallels in Minoan depictions of lilies and papyriform motifs. It would be unwise, however, to posit any kind of specific relation between the Mycenaean *wanax* and Near Eastern power figures based upon such motifs only, since many of them are still not well-understood in their Aegean contexts. This is especially true for the spirals, rosettes, and half-rosettes.

It is therefore hard to ascertain the meaning for both the repetitive friezes of animals, plants, and decorative motifs and those with freer compositions. Without direct interaction with humans, it seems, it is much harder to understand what they would refer to. There is another way to explore the

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[259] One notable feature of the nautili friezes is the careful and complex use of colours to depict their features, in particular for combinations of colours (Lang 1969, 142-143). Unfortunately, as noted in section 4.3.3 the 'naturalistic' use of colours in Mycenaean art and that of Aegean prehistory as a whole remains underexplored.

issue, however, one that focuses less on iconography and more on the conceptual aspects of these material depictions. This aspect can be better understood when considering the wall-paintings which simulate architectural features, which have the least potential for iconographic interpretation. These include dadoes, some with more complex designs suggestive of rockwork, and other kinds of simulated features such as beam-ends (*Aegean Painting*, 145-146; Brysbaert 2007, 337-338). The latter are especially interesting, since in some cases they are highly realistic and seem to have functioned as an 'X-ray' of beams that were actually present under the plaster (Palyvou 2000, 429-430). This raises interesting questions of whether the painted plaster 'represented' something else, for example a wooden beam, or whether it can be seen as congruent with the material 'simulated' by it. In effect this constitutes a form of 'naturalistic skeuomorphism' (cf. Brysbaert 2007, 337).

Recent work on Minoan art and architecture has also sought to challenge dualistic notions of a separation of art as concerned mostly with 'mind' and the natural environment (Herva 2005, 2006; Shapland 2009). Instead of representing something external, these studies suggest that through art animals and other natural phenomena became part of society. Based on the study of Minoan building deposits, Herva (2005) argues that buildings can be seen as being 'alive' and related to in a social way. Despite the perceived lack of naturalism, such models can be extended to the Mycenaean case as well. It should also be emphasised, however, that we are not dealing here with a generic animistic way of conceiving of the world but rather with the specific Mycenaean and eastern Mediterranean material ontologies that were described in section 4.3.3. Of special importance in this is the act of the (almost alchemical) transformation of materials and the rituals and religious obligations that were associated with this. Reference can be made here also to the concern with the transformative character of using painted plaster and its periodic renewal, as also noted in section 4.3.3. Of course architecture itself involved acts of transforming materials, but this should not necessarily be construed as being in opposition to the processes of the natural world.

This perspective would make it possible to see the more basic elements of nature in Mycenaean art not as the representation of a conscious ideology of power, but rather as a background congruent with the Mycenaean conceptualisation of the natural world. This would hold true as much for the 'pictorial skeuomorphism' of beam-ends and rockwork as for the repetitive friezes of snails and bluebirds, and perhaps for some of the decorative elements as well. The paintings on floors should also be grouped as part of this background. All could potentially be grasped as part of the 'transformed nature' that constituted the built environment. This makes it less surprising to find such 'natural backgrounds' at a wide variety of sites with evidence for the use of painted plaster.[260] The scenes of bull-leaping and hunting, however, were limited to the palaces and houses in palatial sites, at least as far as wall-paintings are concerned. They depict a theme of domination that can also be noted for the use of lions and griffins in the central megaron and other areas of the Pylos palace. Furthermore, the hunting scenes resemble in some ways the theme of warfare and elite culture, for example through the presence of chariots in the Tiryns case (*Aegean Painting*, plates 68-69). Hence the contexts of the theme of the relation between the human and natural worlds in Mycenaean art extends from a basic background to narrative extensions that highlight elite culture.

5.2.5: Contexts of Mycenaean art

Many of the patterns discussed in the previous section already pertain upon the agency of Mycenaean art that will be discussed in section 5.3. The goal here is merely to note the features that

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[260] This arguably makes it less remarkable that many of the wall-painting fragments at the secondary fortified site of Gla in Boeotia were found in a granary and a room used for preparing and cooking food (Iakovidis 2001, 138-139). These would have formed a 'background' without having been intended for any kind of direct propagandistic effect on the viewer (who presumably would have been mostly workers).

cross-cut between the different themes. Two of these stand out in particular. The first concerns the distribution of the different material forms of Mycenaean art over different architectural contexts. The second has to do with conceptualisations of contexts of art as they can be inferred from various art objects and representations. With regard to the spatial distribution of art the central role of the palaces is fairly clear. First of all most of the monumental art is located in these complexes, in particular the wall-paintings with more complex iconography and narrative content. Even so, to some degree such wall-paintings could also be found in settlement buildings, sanctuaries, and funerary monuments.[261] This art is at a lesser scale, however, and lacks the broader programmatic connections that can to some degree be noted for the palaces, for example for the central megaron of the Pylos palace. The portable art objects allow further insights into this, in particular with regard to the idea that some of them would have functioned as 'tokens' of palatial society. The finds of (blue) glass objects in tombs in more peripheral areas highlighted the extension not only of social status but also of Mycenaean identity to these areas.

This highlights the need to focus not so much on the palaces as architectural structures, but rather as the central nodes in a network of different kinds of contexts of art. Different levels of interaction can be recognised in this, as between the palaces and secondary administrative buildings, between the palaces and sanctuaries, and finally between the palaces and elites in peripheral areas. Such relations need not necessarily have been the result of top-down impositions by the palaces, especially as they would derive in part from pre-palatial developments. The primacy can rather be located in the network itself, with art both reflecting and helping to constitute the relations within it. This also brings up the conceptualisation of that network as it can be recognised in the specifics of the art objects and the images depicted on them. The best way in which this can be seen is in the use of instruments such as weaponry, ships, and chariots as extensions of palatial power. The use of these different instruments in this way can also be grasped from their use in the warfare and elite culture scenes, as well as in the hunting scenes. In this way the portable art objects are related to the more extensive pictorial spaces of the wall-paintings, yielding more details with regard to the contexts in which they it was appropriate to use them.

Likewise seals and musical instruments can be related to depictions of public ritual, because of their respective roles in the provisioning and performative action of ritual events. Representations of processions form an important component of the visual repertoire of public ritual. They were shown in small-scale paintings in panoptic settings that could represent a narrative-like sequence, including those showing outside settings. Processions, however, could also be larger-scale murals and located in areas that may have been used for processional movement. Both kinds of scenes can also be related to fixed-place ritual, which could take place in palatial settings such as the central megaron of the Pylos palace. Here the 'throne area' and the paintings on the wall and floor surrounding it can be seen as the setting for a 'participative' and 'performative' context of art. In this same room there was also a depiction of a ritual drinking event, something that can also be seen at a different location in the Knossos palace. This provides some iconographic context for the different kinds of drinking vessels found widely in the Mycenaean archaeological record. As such, instruments, other portable art objects, and both panoptic and participative wall-paintings were all used to represent and help constitute Mycenaean public ritual. In section 5.3 below the connections between these different elements will be explored more in-depth in the discussion of praxis in Mycenaean art.

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[261] Some parallels may be drawn in this regard with Cameron's (1975, 243-253) outline of different themes of wall-painting in different architectural contexts for Minoan Crete, for example for the palace of Knossos, villas and more ordinary houses. More evidence is needed for the use of art in Mycenaean houses and sanctuary contexts, however, before a similarly elaborate interpretation can be offered.

5.3: *The agency of Mycenaean art*

5.3.1: Introduction

This section will provide the synthesis of the preceding analyses of Mycenaean art through a consideration of its agency. This is investigated at two distinct levels. The first of these analyses the agency of Mycenaean art in itself in section 5.3.2. Following the approach to art discussed in section 2.4.4, this involves using the higher-level analytical concepts of metaphor, semiotics, and praxis. Using these concepts allows for the recognition of patterns that cross-cut between the more empirical analysis of material forms, craft and materiality, iconography, and contexts of art discussed in sections 4.2, 4.3., 4.4, and 5.2. This also provides the basis for the comparison with LPC lowland Maya art in section 9.3. The second level of analysis in section 5.3.3 builds upon the first, in that it takes the higher-level patterns of the agency of Mycenaean art as a whole to return to the general interpretations of Mycenaean early civilisation discussed in section 3.4. This will allow for a better understanding of the role of the agency of art within the general *longue durée* framework of the Mycenaean Aegean.

5.3.2: The agency of Mycenaean art

The investigation of metaphor in Mycenaean art has to start with the basic material forms. From the discussion of these in section 4.2, the three main categories of it were recognised to be three-dimensional and two-dimensional containers, as well as instruments. The most abundant and well-known forms of Mycenaean art are the wall-paintings, together with a broad range of instruments that included weaponry and seals. Notably a number of patterns can be discerned that cross-cut between the different material forms, as discussed in section 4.2.3. One of these concerned the use of similar kinds of rendering art, which can be seen for complex iconographic scenes in wall-paintings and metal vases, and also for decorative friezes on pots, textiles, and wall-paintings. The iconographic relations that can be seen in this may well have derived from some set of 'model book' schemes. A second relation is that between seals and sealings, which in terms of symmetrical design of pictorial space can be recognised in stone sculpture and wall-painting as well. The seals had a dual role as containers of meaning, both of images and of material properties (including notably the use of semiprecious stones), and as instruments of administration. Based on the ideas formulated in (Wengrow 2014), the ability for seals to reproduce images on a large scale and across different material forms was stressed in section 4.2.5.

Another pattern is that of the common use of certain materials as inlays in different material forms, something that could be seen especially well for the use of blue glass in furniture and architecture discussed in section 4.3.3. One important property of blue glass as a material was its convertibility, both in terms of its exchange (as will be discussed in section 5.3.3) and in terms of its ability to be worked into different shapes through the use of moulds. Furthermore, this convertibility allowed for horizontal cross-craft interaction with other kinds of materials that derived from different *chaînes opératoires*, as discussed in section 4.3.2. The use of moulds and horizontal cross-craft linkages can be seen as a way to reproduce the aesthetic effects of certain kinds of materials on a large scale, and across a diversity of material forms (as through the use of blue glass inlays). In this reproductive effect it parallels the seals, but using very different techniques and different purposes. The same holds true for the possible use of 'model books' referred to earlier, which would facilitate the transfer of iconography from one material form to another. Although the seals, moulds, and 'model books' all point to some kind of design crossing between material forms there, as noted in section 4.2.5 the notion of a more overarching concept of modularity that would have governed all relations between materials forms is not proven.

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Unrelated to the idea of modularity is the direct skeuomorphism from one material form to another, as can be seen very well for textiles and wall-paintings. A special case of this was the notion of 'naturalistic skeuomorphism' discussed in section 5.2.4, which involved the close imitation of both architectural and natural phenomena in wall-paintings. The 'second nature' thus created can be extended to the more 'decorative' designs of natural phenomena, such as the repetitive friezes of snails and bluebirds, as well as to various depictions of marine life. Showing such phenomena can be understood as part of a 'natural background', albeit one that depended upon the transformation of natural materials into an architectural structure. This transformation importantly includes the process of applying the painted plaster and painting it. As discussed in section 4.3.3, the initial application of plaster and pigment led to a gradual brightening of the colours of the wall-painting, only later to fade away and to be replaced by a new layer of plaster. In a very general sense this cycle of painted plaster would mirror the life cycles of the natural world. Unfortunately, the Mycenaean conceptions of the materiality of painted plaster remain mostly unknown, making it impossible to improve upon this generic outline for the moment.[262] The same situation holds true for most of the materials used in Mycenaean art.

However, as discussed in sections 4.3.3 and 4.3.4, a much more specific interpretation is possible for the Linear B term *ku-wa-no*, later Greek *kyanos*. It was proposed in section 4.3.3 that *ku-wa-no* can be understood according to a template that is based both on the Mycenaean archaeological record and on the connections to the contemporary Near East. The basis for this template lies in the close association of lapis lazuli and blue glass, in terms of their uses and aesthetic valuation. This last aspect of aesthetics can be discerned in the conception of *ku-wa-no* as a colour term, encompassing not only lapis lazuli and blue glass but a wider set of metaphoric associations. Yet blue glass was also distinct from lapis lazuli in terms of its initial production, which involved a complex *chaîne opératoire* with pyrotechnology and the use of colouring materials such as copper and cobalt. As noted in section 4.3.4, this process of making glass can be seen as part of a wider set of techniques, especially metallurgical ones, that involved the intrinsic transformation of materials through pyrotechnology. At the same time dark blue glass was grouped together with naturally-occurring (if imported) lapis lazuli in the primary glass-making areas of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The reference in Mesopotamia of 'lapis from the mountain' for naturally-occurring lapis lazuli and 'lapis from the kiln' for dark blue glass captures this well, and shows furthermore that a sharp distinction between 'natural' and 'artefactual' is hard to make.

Based on the template of *ku-wa-no* provided in section 4.3.3, two distinct kinds of colour-uses can be noted. One concerns the symbolic connotations of the blue colour of lapis lazuli and blue glass in Mycenaean and Aegean prehistoric art. This can be seen not only in the objects themselves, but also in depictions of jewellery in wall-paintings. On the other hand the use of blue in wall-paintings in general is not clearly symbolic but rather follows a 'naturalistic' pattern.[263] This pattern is also reflected in the ubiquitous use of Egyptian Blue pigment in the LC IA wall-paintings of Akrotiri, which is not used either to symbolically highlight certain elements (excepting jewellery, and possibly for the wings of griffins) or in ways that reflect its value as a material. This raises the status

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[262] In particular it is not possible to ascertain to what extent the use of painted plaster to create wall-paintings was seen as an extension of nature or as an artificial parallel to it. Further avenues of study that might be able to shed more light on this question are: gaining a better grasp of the plaster dumps and patterns of replacing plaster, a more in-depth study of the notion of 'naturalistic skeuomorphism', and, finally, ascertaining whether the Hittite texts on rituals for building and plaster referred to in section 4.3.3 can be used to shed some light on the Mycenaean case.

[263] To clarify, naturalism here refers to the specific Mycenaean and Aegean ways of rendering the natural environment, as discussed in section 5.2.4, and does not necessarily reflect colours as they occur in nature. The distinction with the symbolic use of colours is that there is no apparent relation to lapis lazuli or blue glass in, say, the use of blue on the fish of the LC IA fisherman wall-painting from the West House at Akrotiri (Doumas 1992, fig. 20-21, p. 53).

and character of *ku-wa-no* as a colour term, an issue explored for the use of *kyanos* in Homer and other early historical Greek poetic sources in section 4.3.3. There it was argued that instead of denoting a patch of a blue hue, *kyanos* metaphorically referred to a 'vital, vigorous, and lustrous darkish surface'. Colour as used in this sense in Homer is not specifically tied to a material, but rather can be seen as a dynamic phenomenon that can be expressed best in certain materials. A similar conception of the materiality of colours can be noted for the Mesopotamian textual sources on lapis lazuli, even down to the descriptions of lapis lazuli coloured facial hair of deities that also occur in the Homeric epics.

One reason to bring up the Mesopotamian case in particular is because of the spectacular finds from the Royal Cemetery of Ur, with its use of lapis lazuli (and gold) in the facial hair of bulls. This represents a clear example of how the symbolic connotations of the colour of lapis lazuli can be reflected in actual iconography. Other cases of this are known for the statuary of Mesopotamia and Egypt as well, but despite some enigmatic clues (the use of blue on the wings of griffins) there is no equivocal case of this in Aegean prehistoric art. Even so, the uses of lapis lazuli and blue glass, and their association with gold as well, in Mycenaean art points to a broad aesthetic coherence in terms of colour conception with the Near East.[264] This brings up the question of value and its relation to the visual characteristics of materials, as they could be seen in Mesopotamian cases of the *ekphrasis* of objects and in the Egyptian evidence as well. In this regard that lapis lazuli and blue glass present an exemplary case of the extension from material metaphors to linguistic metaphors, with a degree of specificity that could not be achieved for other materials used in Mycenaean art. It is this extension from materiality to language that allows materials to be used within complex semiotic and value systems. However, it should not be assumed that because the uses and conception of lapis lazuli and blue glass in the Mycenaean case share a common template with the Near East, they are also valued in precisely the same way in different use contexts.

Not only are there no Aegean parallels to the Royal Cemetery of Ur or Egyptian temples and their statuary art, it can also be noted that lapis lazuli and blue glass were worked in Mycenaean workshops. Taking the specifically Mycenaean ways of working and using lapis lazuli and blue glass into account, can allow for a better grasp on the valuation of *ku-wa-no* as a material and linguistic metaphor in the Mycenaean context. It is useful in this regard to distinguish between four different kinds of usages of lapis lazuli and blue glass:

1. First of all it is possible to note the architectural use of blue glass, most notably the use of this material as an inlay in a stone frieze of the Tiryns palace. While the Egyptian Blue frit and lapis lazuli were also used in painted plaster pigments, it is not certain that this can be related to *ku-wa-no* as a symbolic colour term given the overall 'naturalistic' uses of colours in the wall-paintings.
2. Based on the Linear B Ta-series tablets from Pylos, *ku-wa-no* material was used as an inlay in elaborate pieces of furniture, in one case associated with an inlay of gold.
3. Seals made of lapis lazuli (imported) and blue glass (worked in the Aegean itself) were found in considerable numbers. An association between seals of both materials and gold foil could also be noted. More exceptionally, blue glass was also used in weaponry.
4. Lapis lazuli and especially blue glass beads were used for personal adornment, often also in combination with other beads made of gold and semiprecious stones.

The use of seals, weaponry, and beads can be related to notions of Mycenaean personhood as they can be grasped through artistic sources. Here the discussion of metaphor comes full circle, as the

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[264] Furthermore, because of the likelihood that at least some of the objects with *kyanos* in Homer refer to Bronze Age objects, it is probable that at least in a basic sense the semantics of *kyanos* as a colour term goes back to this period.

metaphors derived from the generic human body (containers, instruments) are used to understand the body and personhood in the specific cultural configuration of Mycenaean early civilisation. What prevents this circle from degenerating into a circular argument, however, are the linguistic and iconographic sources that allow the material metaphors to be related to each other in a culturally-specific framework. As noted in section 4.4.2 on iconography, Mycenaean personhood can be grasped as relational, implying that individuality is strongly structured within a nexus of social relations. In terms of artistic representation this relational character can be seen in the absence of true portraiture and an overall idealism in the rendering of human figures (showing no impact of ageing or bodily deformation). Key characteristics were instead expressed through skin colour (for gender), bodily gestures, emotional states, clothing, and attributes such as jewellery and weaponry. These different situational characteristics allowed for the expression of social roles such as gender, for showing activities like war, hunting, and ritual, and likely also for highlighting status through depicting specific kinds of clothing and attributes.

The use of lapis lazuli and especially (because of their greater quantity) blue glass beads, seals, and (parts of) weaponry would have functioned as attributes and adornment in this nexus of relational personhood. The use of beads as adornment in funerary contexts discussed in section 5.2.2 provides one of the best examples of how these materials related to identity and personhood. Yet it should be stressed that such portable art objects were related also, through the use of the same materials, to elaborate furniture and monumental architecture. Furthermore, for all these forms there exists the common linguistic term *ku-wa-no* and the symbolic colour conceptions associated with it. A key question, then, is how the semantics of colour encapsulated in *ku-wa-no* related to the individual use of lapis lazuli and blue glass beads, seals, and weaponry parts. One of the best ways for grasping this relation is to focus on adornment, especially in the use of beads for this. From the use of lapis lazuli beads and other small objects in Mesopotamia it can be inferred that their visual aura allowed the wearer access to protection, cures, and other kinds of magical forces (Winter 2010, 298-301). In this sense the lapis lazuli objects, and especially their visual qualities, acted as an intermediary between individuals and magical forces.

For the Mycenaean case it is not known whether lapis lazuli and blue glass were connected to magic, and if so what the specific qualities of these magical forces were.[265] But it is clear that the colour and visual properties of both materials in adorning the body would have acted as an intermediary between the individual wearer and the semantic meaning of *ku-wa-no*. This is based on the strong coherence in their uses in objects and the association with gold (including as described in the Ta714 Linear B tablet), the good evidence for the exchange of these materials with the Near East, and finally the etymological connection to early historical Greek poetic sources like Homer. As such, being adorned with lapis lazuli or blue glass would not involve the 'incorporation' of these materials in the body. Rather the intermediary role of the visual properties of lapis lazuli and blue glass should be seen as a material version of poetic techniques like noun-epithets and similes, which allow for different phenomena to be connected through linguistic metaphor. Even if many of the specific linguistic meanings of Mycenaean *ku-wa-no* remain ill-understood,[266] the basic pattern of the intermediary role of colour is of considerable significance in itself. It provides another example

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[265] Based on the ideas of Helms (1993a), the fact that both the lapis lazuli and the blue glass found in Mycenaean contexts derived from long-distance exchange with the Near East would have bestowed upon them an extra layer of cosmological significance. This much can certainly be seen for the Mesopotamian myths surrounding lapis lazuli and other resources that came from far away lands (Aubet 2013). Unfortunately, the Mycenaean textual evidence is too limited to recognise similar myths related to lapis lazuli and blue glass.

[266] As noted in section 4.3.3 a much more systematic approach to colour-use in Mycenaean art is needed to ascertain whether the metaphoric use of colours implied by the use *kyanos* can be recognised. The use of blue on the wings of griffins provided only a clue to this, to understand the phenomena properly a complete and highly detailed overview of colours in different iconographic elements is required.

of how the relational personhood inferred for Mycenaean art was qualified.

There exist other examples of more complex connecting metaphors pertaining upon personhood in Mycenaean art. Important is the parallel between animals and human beings as predatory beings, which as noted in section 4.4.3 could occasionally be shown in a simile-like pictorial setting. This does not involve the entire natural world, however, as it seems to focus mostly on hunting activity and by extension to warfare,[267] as discussed in section 5.2.4. Yet while this would provide another connection between personhood and a set of metaphors, the overarching worldview in which those metaphors would be embedded remains hard to grasp, as noted in section 4.4.2 for the element of specialised knowledge. One recent idea put forward by Shapland (2013), may provide the means to start remedying this situation. He uses the model formulated by the French anthropologist Descola of an analogical worldview, in which 'modes of relation' such as exchange, production, and protection define the relations between dissimilar elements (Shapland 2013, 192-193).[268] Even if this sounds very abstract, it can be understood in very practical terms for art and material culture in general, as in an ontology based on analogy 'connectors' relate different elements to each other. A good example of this discussed here earlier, is that of the analogy of hunters and lions (and by extension between hunting and warfare as well) in the art of the Shaft Graves (Shapland 2013, 197).

This 'connector' between humans and animals and their activities depended upon iconographic and linguistic metaphors, just as the 'connector' of lapis lazuli and blue glass in adornment used both material and linguistic metaphors. In a basic sense these connecting elements would derive from the patterns of skeuomorphism that were first established in the Neolithic (Shapland 2013, 198). Even if the overall worldview of Mycenaean early civilisation and Aegean prehistory as a whole remains very incompletely understood, the exploration of the various material, iconographic, and linguistic metaphors that acted as 'connectors' in an analogical framework would allow for at least some basic insights (with possibilities for expansion). Also important is how such metaphors would have been built up over the *longue durée* of Aegean prehistory:

"Earlier collectivities showed local responses to the influx of new things and bodies, before the emergence of elite collectives in the Middle to Late Bronze Age, which successfully incorporated a wide range of new materials, things, monsters, and animals as means of differentiation. This can be seen as a process of segmentation in response to the increasing contact with the world beyond the Aegean: an overarching analogy between the elite and the outside provided the basis for the formation of an elite collective centered on the palaces. This analogy can be seen most clearly at the point when a new elite collective emerged centered on Mycenae whose members, human and non-human, were brought together in the Shaft Graves. The change seen over the course of the Late Bronze Age as the circulation of materials increased in scale was an increased industrialization, involving the mass production of export goods." (Shapland 2013, 203)

Descola (2013, 366-377) had noted the suitability for the analogical mode to incorporate hierarchies among people and the natural environment. In this sense the expansion of the scope of the analogical mode is closely related to the emergence of palatial states and the hierarchies they entail. Some qualifications have to be made for the general scenario sketched by Shapland, however. First

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[267] The boar's tusk helmet is an object that would have metaphorically connected these two kinds of activities as well, relating individuals to more general ideas in a way analogous to the lapis lazuli and blue glass beads.

[268] Analogism is part of a scheme of four modes based on the relations between different phenomena in the world in terms of their interior and physical characteristics (Descola 2013, fig. 1, p. 122). In analogical modes both the interior and physical qualities of phenomena are different, hence requiring (metaphoric) 'connectors' to relate them to each other. The other three modes are: 1) totemism, with both shared interior and physical characteristics, 2) animism, with similar interior characteristics but different physical ones, and 3) naturalism, with different interior and shared physical characteristics of phenomena. This framework will receive more extensive and critical discussion in section 9.3.2.

of all the process of the development of hierarchies among humans, and with regard to nature in the form of domestication, was as much an internal Aegean process as it was influenced by long-distance contacts. For the case of the Shaft Graves in particular this can be seen in the role of kinship groups in the creation of the social hierarchies that influenced later Mycenaean palatial society, as discussed in section 3.4.3.[269] A second qualification that needs to be made is that the impact of the transformative character of making glass and metal alloys, and their resulting convertibility in exchange and craft-work, is not sufficiently captured in the generic concept of analogy as defined by Descola. As such further work is needed to embed the analogical mode more closely within the specifics of Aegean prehistory. However, despite these two qualifications the use of the concept of analogy has provided important insights into the role of metaphoric 'connectors' linking human bodies, art objects and materials, iconography, and language. The next step is to consider the semiotics of these relations as expressed in Mycenaean art.

The first aspect of the semiotics of Mycenaean art to be considered here is that of the relation between words and images, as discussed in section 4.4.3. Little insight into this relation could be gained from the Linear B tablets. Neither is it possible to relate the use of noun-epithets and similes in oral poetic discourse directly to art, with the important exception of the relation between humans and animals in hunting similes discussed earlier in this section. Only at the very general level of *topoi* or stock-scenes can a generic similarity be noted between oral poetry and art. The example of the *ekphrasis* of the Shield of Achilles from the *Iliad* showed that there was more narrative potential to *topoi* than might be assumed. Yet the notion of *ekphrasis* only serves as an opener to reconsider the narrative qualities of *topoi* that seemed to lack them. In the absence of any insights into the content of Mycenaean oral performance, all the evidence has to come from iconography.[270] For this reason the narrative micro-structures of Mycenaean art discussed in section 4.4.3 are of crucial importance, since these form the analytical basis for understanding the relations between the different kinds of iconographic elements.

As discussed in section 4.4.3, the first element to delineate in interpreting a narrative micro-structure is the nucleus, which constitutes the core action of a scene. The examples of processions in section 5.2.2 and of war-related scenes in section 5.2.3 showed in particular that their nuclei consisted of standardised *topoi*. The same may well also be true for the hunting scenes discussed in section 5.2.4, but here the available evidence is more limited. Of course, the use of a *topos* does not imply that each scene that can be grouped under it is exactly identical. Also, in some cases catalysts (elements supporting the nucleus) could be used to add further details, even if in general their role is limited in Mycenaean art. More important is the role of informants, those elements that provide information on the qualitative characteristics of iconographic scenes. One important category of these informants are those that provide clues to the spatial settings of scenes. In the discussion of the way the macro-cosmos was rendered in Mycenaean art in section 4.4.2, the locational informants were those that define the spatial environment of the palatial states. This includes palatial and other forms of architecture, as well as the hillsides and seascapes that demarcated the valleys in which the palaces themselves were located.

Additional qualifications to this can be seen in the landscape settings for the peaceful interaction with animals and the hunting scenes, with the former taking place in an area with a shrine and the latter in more rugged, marshy areas. This suggests a more subtle conception of different kinds of

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[269] This is precisely why the relation between humans and things should not be seen as 'symmetrical', as this obscures the primal causal role of humans in fostering change. As discussed in section 2.4.4, this is why the agency of art should be seen as a social agency. Although things certainly structured social relations, the impetus behind these relations derive from social processes and the linguistic frameworks within which such processes were articulated.

[270] This is less of a problem than it might seem, as *ekphrasis* is more incidental, providing added detail and with potential idiosyncratic elements. Iconographic depictions can be expected to carry the basic elements and framework.

landscapes and the activities that took place within them. Further qualifications may have been added in a temporal sense by seasonality, as can also be inferred for the ritual activities that would have been scheduled according to a month-based calendar. There are no indications as of yet, however, for the presence of other kinds of temporal or cosmological markers in Mycenaean art.[271] Other informants qualify the human figures depicted in these spatio-temporal settings. As noted for the discussion of metaphor and personhood earlier in this section, these kinds of informants could include bodily features like skin colour, gestures, and emotional states, but also attributes such as jewellery, weaponry, and clothing. Such informants provided the necessary texture for the human figures to fulfil their role as part of the nucleus of a *topoi* or as catalysts to it. However, the notion of *ephemera* (non-lasting phenomena) discussed in section 4.4.2 highlights that the recurrent *topoi* should not be seen as imposing some kind of iconographic 'harmony'. Instead the *topoi* can be seen as the 'iconographic stage' for the metaphoric 'connectors', as discussed earlier in this section, to play out in a pictorial space, without denying the more idiosyncratic role of *ephemera*.

The metaphoric 'connector' of agonistic relations between humans and animals can be seen in its narrative extension in the hunting scenes discussed in section 5.2.4. Based on the discussion in that section some of the warfare-related scenes can also be understood through this 'connector' of agonistic relations, in particular the battle scene from Hall 64 in the Pylos palace. The use of lapis lazuli and blue glass is less clear in Mycenaean art, but the examples from the LC IA wall-paintings of Akrotiri discussed in section 4.3.3 provide a good example of their use in broader, iconographic settings. More basic material metaphors can also be noted in narrative extensions, as with the role of weaponry in hunting and warfare-related scenes. Of particular interest are also the depictions of ships and chariots, discussed in section 4.2.4 as instruments of power. The role of the chariot as an index of elite culture (tied to the palatial nexus of production and distribution) was noted in section 5.2.3, and its use in warfare-related and hunting scenes highlights this role in narrative extension.[272] Although the functions of ships in Mycenaean art can as of yet not be understood in full detail, owing to the unpublished Pylos naval scene, ships do seem to have played some role in narrative settings. Finally, it is possible to note the use of musical instruments in both the performative and narrative settings of public ritual that were discussed in section 5.2.2.

Mycenaean art as a semiotic system, then, seems to have relied primarily on *topoi*, which provided iconographic settings for material forms of art, relational personhood, and metaphoric 'connectors' to be used in narratives. The relation of images to words would only have been at a more general level of cultural meaning, not for the technical properties of the narrative micro-structures of art or the use of noun-epithets in oral poetic discourse. However, there is one way in which images and words can be related more closely to each other. This concerns those 'participative' settings of art discussed in section 5.2.1 that may have functioned as special places for the performance of speech acts.[273] These kinds of performative locations have to be understood not in a semiotic sense, but as part of the praxis of Mycenaean art, a subject that will be discussed presently. The best example of a performative setting of art comes from the wall-paintings in the central megaron of the Pylos palace, with its 'throne' area, lyre-player, and men drinking at tables. These three elements suggest a close relation between art and performative acts in this area. A relation between performance and art is less obvious for the LM II – IIIA wall-paintings of the Knossos palace, but at least there is a more

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[271] The depictions on *larnakes* burial coffins of a location that may possibly have been the space where the deceased dwelt, as discussed in section 5.2.2, cannot be seen as an extension of the landscapes discussed here. Note also that there are iconographic indications that a journey by boat was required to reach this location.

[272] The uses of chariots in vase-painting seems even broader and dominant within the kinds of activities depicted on them (Rystedt 2006, 240), even if this also is paralleled by a lack of clear narrative contexts such as for the scenes of battles and hunting in Mycenaean wall-painting.

[273] These speech acts may have involved not only recitations of epic, but also hymns, public declarations, and other kinds of ritual and public speech, all of course irrevocably lost.

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clearly defined throne area and, from another area of the palace, also the Camp-stool mural that shows a ritual drinking event. Thirdly, there is the close relation between wall-paintings depicting ritual activity in the Cult Centre located in the Mycenae citadel area and the ritual practices that would have been carried out there.

In all three cases the supporting role for the wall-paintings for (ritual) performances took place in more secluded architectural spaces in palaces or in monumental buildings very near to them, allowing for only a limited number of people to participate in such events. This does not mean that ritual activity could not involve large numbers of people in other areas, especially in outdoor ones, but these numbers could not fit into the areas with highly symbolically-charged wall-paintings with complex iconography.[274] A similar palatial focus can be noted for the various narrative, panoptic depictions of war-related, hunting, and public ritual scenes. The evidence from the 'Ivory Houses' complex at Mycenae showed that it is not impossible for narrative scenes to occur outside the palatial buildings proper, but at the same time this building of course was a part of the palatial centre as a whole. One qualification to be made for this observation is that the sample of Mycenaean wall-paintings may well be biased towards the palaces and larger sites. While this is true to some extent, it was also noted that there are at least 20 prehistoric sites on the Greek mainland from which painted plaster fragments have been recovered, most of them dating to the Mycenaean palatial period. This sample size makes it possible to make at least some generalisations about praxis from the distribution of wall-paintings over different kinds of contexts, however open these might be to future revisions based on newly published evidence.

The ideological dominance of the palatial centres can be seen in a number of different ways. The first of these is the theme of public ritual, discussed in some detail in section 5.2.2. Apart from the performative settings of wall-paintings, there are also the larger-scale representations of processions from a number of Mycenaean palaces and the smaller-scale, panoptic procession murals from Ayia Triada and Pylos. Of these procession scenes, the panoptic one from the Pylos palace is most useful for understanding the aspect of praxis, as it can be related to other wall-paintings and to other kinds of sources as well. Based on the discussion of this scene in sections 4.4.2 and 5.2.2, a number of observations can be made for this scene. First of all, the narrative micro-structure of this wall-painting indicates a sequence of procession toward an architectural setting located in an outdoor context, where a fixed-place ritual activity will take place. This pictorial layout represents a *topos* which provided a paradigmatic link to the wall-paintings of the central megaron itself, based on the overarching theme of the cycle of ritual festivals. As noted in section 3.4.2, the festivals of this cycle were supplied through a ritual economy based on the donation of sacrificial cattle and other goods by various elite persons and social groups.

The combination of this ritual economy and the performative character of the festivals themselves would have had an integrative effect. The coordinating role of the palaces in this is clear from the seals and the Linear B tablets, which also show the geographical aspect of this in tying outlying regions together to a centre. Conversely, outlying sanctuaries would have extended the coordinating role of the palaces back to more remote regions.[275] The wall-paintings of the central megaron and its vestibule of the Pylos palace show this very clearly, involving both the performative art in the megaron itself and the panoptic scene depicting a *topos* of a major ritual in an outlying area in the

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[274] A contrast noted in section 5.2.2 with Neopalatial Crete concerned the lack of crowds in depictions of Mycenaean public ritual. At the same time it should be noted that the best example of the Minoan crowds in the Sacred Grove and Grandstand miniature wall-paintings were located in the small-scale and relatively inaccessible Room of the Spiral Cornice (*Aegean Painting*, fig. 35, p. 86-87). Even so, most of the wall-paintings in the Knossos palace seem to have been more accessible than their counterparts in other Minoan palaces and houses (Letesson 2012, 49).

[275] The use of sanctuaries in outlying regions can also be seen for the later Greek *polis* (De Polignac 1994), even if no direct parallel of this to the Mycenaean situation can be established.

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vestibule. Hence the central role of the palace in the ritual economy and the cycle of religious festivals was highlighted, together with the importance of this coordinated ritual activity for relating the outlying areas to the palatial centre. This means that the metaphoric 'connectors' of art depicting public ritual worked in two distinct ways. In the participative settings of art they would provide a highly symbolically-charged context to support the actual performance of rituals, while in the panoptic, narrative representations of ritual *topoi* the broader context of the cycle of ritual festivals would have been referred to.

Unfortunately the remains of art from the sanctuaries outside palatial settlements, such as Ayios Konstantinos on the Methana peninsula, are too fragmentary to ascertain whether such performative and panoptic scenes were used here as well. This would imply a broader sharing of art depicting public ritual. Better insights into the relation between palatial centres and their subjects can be gained from the burial evidence, which was also discussed in section 5.2.2. In certain exceptional cases art was used at a monumental scale in funerary contexts, such as for the Shaft Grave circles and the tomb façades at Mycenae, Orchomenos, and Thebes. For the case of Thebes a processional way and elaborate funerary ritual was also suggested, and depictions of funerary ritual are known from the Tanagra and Cretan *larnakes* burial coffins. Such elaborate funerary ritual and monumental art would, however, be limited to a small minority of the deceased, most likely the *wanax* king and the upper stratum of society associated with him. As a metaphoric 'connector' monumental funerary art would serve to underline the importance of this special class of the deceased in the overall social framework. For the majority of burials it is the portable art objects that yield insights into social relations. The discussion of the distribution of blue glass objects in burial contexts in section 5.2.2 is especially relevant for tracing social relations through art. Blue glass objects in burials were mostly beads, but there were also the seals, and occasionally more exceptional finds like the weaponry items from a Dendra grave in the Argolid.

Given that many of these blue glass objects were found in burials in more peripheral regions, the question of what this implies for the relation of these areas to the palatial centres arises. The notion of blue glass objects as (status) 'tokens' was noted, yet this also involved complex notions of aesthetics and identity. This can be seen particularly well for the use of beads in adorning the dead, but the seals also raise questions in this regard.[276] The use of blue glass for artistic purposes in palatial architecture is suggestive of a part/whole relation with the portable art objects made from this material. Furthermore, through the Linear B term *ku-wa-no*, blue glass was metaphorically connected to lapis lazuli and a complex aesthetics of colour. Ultimately the glass was imported through long-distance exchange with the Near East, and the common template of materiality of *ku-wa-no* to Egyptian and Mesopotamian worldviews also suggests considerable influence in this regard. However, it is likely that the working of blue glass in palatial sites or in those under palatial control provided the key interface for the beads, seals, and other objects made from this material found in the burials. As such, the use of blue glass in funerary contexts functioned as a metaphoric 'connector' between the personal identity of the deceased and the palatial framework, which supplied both the art objects themselves and the colour aesthetics that made them very suitable for adornment and use in funerary contexts.[277]

A different set of part/whole relations between the palatial states and their subjects that involve art can be discerned for the theme of warfare and elite culture, which was discussed in section 5.2.3.

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[276] As noted in section 4.2.4 the seals may well have functioned as an index for status, but the possible role of the glass and soft-stone seals in administrative practices of some kind should not be completely ruled out either.

[277] Although there is no space to consider this matter here, it is likely that some of these blue glass objects would have had more elaborate cultural biographies not necessarily tied to the palaces. The process of their distribution is not known, but it may have involved social relations within the framework of patrimonialism discussed in section 3.4.2 for the element of class and inequality.

First of all it is important to recall from that section that there were three levels of contexts of war-related scenes in Mycenaean art. At the palatial level this can be seen in the narrative wall-paintings of battle scenes, as well as in the emblematic use of figure-8 shields. At the same time it was noted that the palatial states, partly through the scribes' stylus, controlled the key 'instruments of power' such as weaponry, chariots, and ships, as well as the contingents of warriors and sailors that used them. The second level was that of a more limited set of wall-paintings involving scenes related to war and elite culture, some possibly narrative in character, in houses as the palatial centres and also in secondary settlement sites. To this can be added war-related portable art objects in burials (which included ornamented weaponry). This art would be accessible to a broader elite group involved at a higher level in military matters, but who were on a personal basis also dependent upon the palace for the supply of key items such as chariots.

These chariots would have functioned not only as instruments of power, their depictions in art (including in houses at palatial sites) also suggest that they formed part of a more general elite culture. This can be seen in the third level of contexts of artistic depictions of war and elite culture, that of vase-painting. The common depiction of chariots, and to a lesser degree also of ships, are more indicative of a general elite culture than directly connected to the organisation of warfare. The wide distribution of these pots to areas outside the control of the palatial states such as Cyprus points to a widely shared elite culture, one that can be seen in the art styles of other contemporary cultures too (Feldman & Sauvage 2010). These different kinds of contexts of artistic depictions of warfare and elite culture imply different kinds of praxis. Within the palatial states the relation between the centre and its organisational capacities and the elite groups encapsulated in its framework can be recognised in the part/whole character of this theme of Mycenaean art. That is, the totality of narrative and emblematic art as shown on palatial walls, as well as the 'instruments of power' controlled by them, can be seen in more limited wall-paintings and portable art objects in houses at the palatial centres, secondary settlements, and burials.

In this way elite groups are tied not just to the palace through a basic need for the mutual coordination of military activities by a central authority, but also by a more broadly shared ideology that shaped their identity as a subject of the palatial state. The more complex narrative battle scenes such as that of Hall 64 in the Pylos palace (cf. Bennet & Davis 1999) and that of the Mycenae megaron would have reinforced such identities. Through the metaphoric 'connector' between hunting and warfare noted in section 5.2.4, the narrative hunting scenes could potentially have added to this identity as well, especially for the elite groups. The broader distribution of vase-painting scenes beyond the Aegean, however, has to be seen as separate from this palatial nexus of identity. Instead it can be seen as a looser sharing of certain elements of elite culture, adaptable to specific local contexts, as can be seen for the cultural biographies of some of the Mycenaean painted vases on Cyprus (Steel 2013, 209-216). This 'international' context can be seen more or less alongside the lines of the 'template' inferred for the relation of Mycenaean conceptions of lapis lazuli and blue glass to their Near Eastern counterparts, sharing basic similarities but adapted to specific socio-political contexts.

'Connector'	Description
'naturalistic skeuomorphism'	forms a basic natural background that links architecture to the natural world within which it was embedded
agonistic animals/humans	visible in a basic sense as a simile, but expanded further in narrative settings of hunting and battles
topoi public ritual	refers both to performative settings of ritual and to the overall cycle of ritual festivals
ku-wa-no	connects personal identity to a broader nexus of palatial production and distribution, as well as an aesthetics of colour-use influenced by the Near East
chariots	act as an index of elite culture and palatial control, visible in narrative extension in warfare-related and hunting scenes

Table 5.1: Material, iconographic, and linguistic metaphoric 'connectors' in Mycenaean art.

In this section the analysis of the agency of Mycenaean art moved from an outline of its metaphors to the semiotics that related these metaphors to each other in narrative and non-narrative pictorial settings, and finally to the role of the praxis of art in structuring social relations. Throughout the analysis a number of metaphoric and semiotic 'connectors' could be discerned, which are summarised in table 5.1 above. These 'connectors' can be understood within the model of Shapland discussed earlier in this section, which posited a developing set of analogical relations between humans and things that had been developed since the Neolithic in the Aegean. Here linguistic and iconographic 'connectors' are added to this analogical framework as well, as with the connecting role of visual *topoi* of public ritual and the semantics of colour-use of *ku-wa-no*. The list provided in table 5.1 is by no means a complete one of all the possible 'connectors' in Mycenaean art. More detailed investigations than the present one and new forms of evidence would undoubtedly add other 'connectors', as well as provide important qualifications to the ones presented here. However, for the present purpose of providing an overall synthesis to be used for the comparison with the Maya case, the analysis presented here is sufficient in having captured what are arguably some of the main features of the agency of Mycenaean art.

5.3.3: The agency of Mycenaean art in its *longue durée* context

Having outlined the agency of Mycenaean art in the previous section, the next step to be taken here is to situate that agency within the *longue durée* framework of Mycenaean early civilisation. The analysis in this section will follow the fourfold division of the *longue durée* trajectory of the Greek mainland of section 3.4.3, focusing on the Neolithic, the Early Bronze Age (EH I – II), the Shaft Grave period (MH III – LH I), and finally the Mycenaean palatial period of LH III. To start with the Neolithic period, it can be observed that this supplied many of the basic pre-conditions of the later civilisations of the Bronze Age, including agriculture, feasting, and the emergent modular household. Yet there is little in the limited artistic record of Neolithic Greece that can be connected to the art of the Mycenaean palaces, even if this does not imply that this art is not interesting in itself.[278] At most an argument can be made that the basic patterns of skeuomorphism that can be seen in the Neolithic (Perlès 2001, 252-254), lay at the basis of later Mycenaean relations between material forms. Yet skeuomorphism in Mycenaean art involves quite different patterns and

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[278] Of particular importance in this is the agency of Neolithic Greek art as it relates to the early communal forms of organisation and later development of modular households. In particular portable art objects used for adornment (Perlès 2001, 221-226) have been used for arguments concerning Neolithic forms of personhood (e.g. Chapman et al. 2011).

techniques, so the relation (if it exists) is a highly generic one.

Just as with the Neolithic, the impact of the Early Bronze Age (specifically EH I – II) on the later development of Mycenaean art lay not in the direct continuation of a specific mainland art style. Rather, the developments in this period helped to establish another pre-condition of Mycenaean art and its social agency. In the case of the Early Bronze Age the key development lies in the introduction of seals, weights, and metal alloys. As noted in section 3.4.3, these three features can be related to the overall development of economic practices involving weighing, administration, and metallurgy in a 'social field' stretching from the Aegean to the Indus. The use of seals and particularly the weights, together with evidence for the exchange of metals, can be understood as part of Renfrew's notion of the 'commodity nexus' (see figure 46). This is an important concept for the discussion here and therefore deserves a more detailed treatment. Basic to the commodity nexus is the interaction of the four basic elements of commodity, measure, exchange, and value (Renfrew 2012, fig. 12.1, p. 254). It is useful to define these terms here in more detail, based on the present author's understanding of their meaning:

1. A commodity is a material or object created through social labour, which is allocated through exchange for serving one or multiple needs within a specific social context.
2. Measure involves establishing the physical properties of a circumscribed amount of material or standard form of it, according to some standard of size and/or weight.
3. Exchange is the process that connects the creation of materials and objects through labour to a demand based on socially-defined needs.
4. Value derives from the social needs for different commodities within a social context.

The definition of these four basic terms should make it clear why the evidence for weights and the exchange of metals (likely based on their weight) in the Early Bronze Age Aegean is so important, as it involves the introduction of complex forms of mensuration in exchange. The seals furthermore point to new kinds of economic relations based on the need for some form of accountability and control over commodities. The relevance of all of this for art can be seen in another aspect of the commodity nexus, namely the role of materials and objects related to notions of prestige. Renfrew (1986b, 157-159) used Marx's discussion of commodity fetishism to argue that what is significant in a prestige good is not so much the thing itself, but rather the nexus of social relations that made such goods prestigious in specific times and places. As such, prestige as a symbolic and social force plays an intermediary role not only in social interaction, but in the relation of humans with the material world at large as well.[279] This can be seen in more practical terms for his discussion of the role of gold in the 5th millennium Varna cemetery in Bulgaria (Renfrew 1986b, 148-149). Gold was used in these burials to adorn the dead and also for more elaborate objects, functioning as a material of distinction in the social ranking that can be discerned in the Varna burials.

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[279] These notions go back to Renfrew's (1972) systems theory analysis of the emergence of civilisation in the prehistoric Aegean. The idea of the primacy of symbolism as a mediating role between humans and the material world in this work is derived from Cassirer (Renfrew 1972, 404-405), who can be situated in a broader tradition that had its origins in Vico (Verene 1985). It follows from this that the structural symbolic relation between the orders of humans and that of things, is what allows for social relations to be expressed in material terms. For Renfrew this is also what allows individual agency to shape history within systemic contexts:

"Out of this equation of material objects and social activities or values, which in cold logic are simply not equivalent, existing as they do in different dimensions, arises the whole complex pattern of interactions among human activities such as those which we have been describing.........The essential kernel of many of the interactions between activities and between subsystems, interactions which are the mainspring for economic growth, develops from the human inclination to give a social and symbolic significance to material goods. For in this way a whole complex of activities in the material world satisfies aspirations, ambitions and needs which are, at first sight, entirely without adaptive significance in facilitating the continued existence of the individual or the species." (Renfrew 1972, 496-497)

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The uses of gold to adorn, therefore, added prestige and in this way related the material to social distinctions. Although the characteristics of gold in terms of its colour aspects and durability likely influenced its selection for prestige objects, it was not intrinsically valuable but rather valued in social terms, which is captured in the notion of 'prime value' (Renfrew 1986b, 159). According to Renfrew (2012, 259-260) the use of gold as a material of prestige in the Varna cemetery, and later in the Shaft Graves as well, was more separated from an exclusively religious context of symbolically-charged materials. That is, gold would be used for adornment as personal display within a context of status competition in a funerary setting. This 'secular' use of gold would make its later fungibility (through being valued in weight) in coinage more easy to develop, in contrast to other cultures where materials like gold remained sacred and unique (hence immeasurable).[280] As such, it is possible to sketch an overall trajectory of value systems in western Eurasia from the prestige use of a material like gold in its initial stage, later developing into an elaborate exchange system based on measurement and standardised units of value (Renfrew 1986b, 162-163). The particular pattern of the use of gold in the Varna and Shaft Grave cemeteries therefore lies at the basis of the later use of coinage and by extension even of modern capitalism (Renfrew 2012, 260).

Using these ideas provided by Renfrew, some aspects of the Mycenaean use of blue glass can be related to a broader theoretical framework. Although the use of blue glass cannot yet be seen in the Early Bronze Age, the pre-conditions of the commodity nexus as part of a broader social field stretching from the Aegean to the Indus were already present, as noted in section 3.4.3. It is useful to consider the general properties of Mycenaean blue glass as part of the long-term trajectory of the commodity nexus before turning to its actual use contexts in the palatial framework. The first general feature of blue glass to be considered here is its convertibility, as discussed in section 4.3.4. This convertibility depended upon the transformative process of glass-making, creating a material with very flexible working qualities. Just as with metals, glass could be shaped in a great variety of ways (including through the use of moulds), and another connection with metallurgy can be seen in the use of copper and cobalt as colouring agents in the making of blue glass. Based on these material properties, two different kinds of convertibility were possible. The first of these concerns the cross-craft linkages discussed in section 4.3.2, but more important here is the role played by convertibility in the exchange of blue glass.

As with the metals, the flexible working properties of glass allowed it to be shaped into a variety of forms, including the blue glass ingots found in the late 14th century BC Uluburun shipwreck. These ingots can be understood as being part of a commodity nexus, in the sense that their value in this context derived from their weight and by implication that they have number-based value. Even so, there are strong indications that as commodities these blue glass objects were not freely exchangeable with any other kind of material on a supply and demand basis. The exceptional 15th century BC Egyptian painting from Karnak noted in section 4.3.3 show a hierarchy of levels of different kinds of materials, including blue glass. This provides an alternative way for relating the value of commodities made of different materials to each other. The close proximity of blue glass to lapis lazuli in this painting, on the same level in the overall hierarchy, points to additional complexities in the value of blue glass. For the relation between lapis lazuli and blue glass was not based on their interchangeability as commodities, but rather on their close association in terms of materiality and a complex colour-based aesthetics.

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[280] This brings up the question of comparison with other kinds of systems for determining value in different regions of the world, which may be of relevance to understanding their long-term trajectories as well (Renfrew 1986b, 163). This question will be addressed in section 9.3 for the comparison of Mycenaean and LPC lowland Maya art.

The role of the conception of materiality and colour of lapis lazuli and blue glass as captured in the Linear B term *ku-wa-no* was discussed extensively in the previous section for the agency of Mycenaean art. There it was argued that the use of blue glass beads and other objects made from this material to adorn the deceased acted as a metaphoric 'connector' between personal identity and the palatial context in which the material was worked. The close relation of blue glass to lapis lazuli and the broader semantics of colour-use implied by *ku-wa-no*, as well as the association with gold, provides additional meaning to the role of blue glass as a 'connector' between individual adornment and collective identity. In this sense blue glass clearly functioned as a prestigious material in the Mycenaean palatial framework. Yet at the same time it was also exchanged as a commodity in long-distance exchange, where its value was determined by the numerical weight of the ingot shape. It is not the case that the difference between blue glass as a material for adornment and as a weight-based commodity would have been due to a strict separation between the sphere of the palaces and that of long-distance exchange. For it is the template of materiality and colour conception that related lapis lazuli and blue glass to each other that was shared over a large area, creating similar aesthetic uses across the area of the Near East and eastern Mediterranean.

Both exchange and the colour-based aesthetic of blue glass were spread over a large area, which implies that the roles of blue glass as a commodity and as an aesthetically valuable material were not incompatible but rather complementary.[281] This can be seen as an intermediary stage in Renfrew's outline of a long-term trajectory in western Eurasia from the use of prestigious materials like gold from 'secular' status to coinage. Furthermore, as noted in section 4.3.4, there was a pre-existing colour aesthetics before the advent of metallurgy as well, which has to be taken into account (cf. Chapman 2007, 70). Based on these observations a more refined trajectory, if also more Aegean-focused, can be sketched for the development of (colour-based) materials for prestigious adornment in relation to the commodity nexus:

1. The use of naturally-occurring copper for ornamental purposes, which can be seen in the Near East as early as the 11th millennium BC.
2. A new preference for gold as a prestigious material for adornment, together with the use of semiprecious stones for this, after the initial development of metallurgy. This corresponds to the case of the Varna cemetery as discussed by Renfrew.
3. The expansion of the amount of materials used for adornment through the larger-scale use of materials such as blue glass. This scale in the use of blue glass was possible because of its flexible working properties as a material, something that also facilitated its convertibility in exchange and cross-craft uses. It was this flexibility that allowed blue glass to be used both as a commodity and a prestigious material.[282]
4. The development of standardised, weight-based units of universal value in coinage.

Based on this it is possible to qualify Renfrew's idea, discussed earlier in this section, that the 'secular' use of gold as a material of prestigious adornment in the Varna cemetery can be seen as the

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[281] As noted in section 3.4.2 for the element of specialised knowledge, the use of a weighing system involves both measuring the physical properties of a material and relating that weight to the value of the material in exchange relations. This may be related to the latent opposition between value as determined within the process of exchange and value as a social relation discussed by Marx (Harvey 2010, 49). Basic to this opposition in modern capitalism is the abstraction of value as a number in money. It may well be that the abstraction of number in the weighing systems of Bronze Age western Eurasia represented a first step towards this dichotomy, but one circumscribed by the lack of coined money and the limited scope of the exchange of commodities. Wengrow (2008) emphasises the parallel between Bronze Age and modern commodities based on other factors like the seals for 'branding' commodities, but this would be more for facilitating their exchange than for determining value.

[282] This flexibility was similar for metals, as noted in (Sherratt 2000), but these were used for a wider range of purposes than blue glass. Even so there are relations between metals and aesthetics as well, as can be seen for the use of tin in creating colouring effects on the surfaces of Mycenaean pottery (Gillis 2004).

starting-point for the development of the commodity nexus. It remains plausible that the initial step towards this nexus involved the prestigiousness of gold, which derived from the development of metallurgy and the emergence of a ranked society. It is the conception of the place of Varna in the overall sequence that needs to be changed somewhat. First of all, it can be noted that the colour aesthetics of gold developed out of a pre-existing colour aesthetics. It is indeed very likely that the emphasis on gold in the Varna cemetery was induced by the introduction of metallurgy, but it is less clear why this should lead to a more 'secular' conception of gold as separate from religious ideas. The much later case of the Mycenaean use of blue glass can provide some clarification of this for the Late Bronze Age, even if it should not be used to directly influence the interpretation of the Varna material. One notable feature of blue glass, as emphasised numerous times, was its convertibility. This allowed for it to be used both as a commodity and for working it into a variety of forms to be used as a material for adornment for the deceased in burials, as well as its use as an inlay in architecture and furniture.

This 'promiscuity' of the different roles of blue glass derived from its convertibility, which in turn derived from the flexible material properties of the material created through the transformative process of glass-making. As noted in section 4.3.4, this sequence of transformative creation through pyrotechnology, to convertibility in working and exchange (ingots), and finally to use contexts of materials can also be seen for metal alloys. One difference, however, is that blue glass was limited to aesthetic uses. These aesthetic uses, furthermore, were part of a broader conception of colours and materiality that related blue glass to lapis lazuli, and both materials in turn to other materials (gold) and to a wider set of semantic meanings implied by the term *ku-wa-no*. Two important points derive from these observations. The first is that as a 'connector' based on linguistic metaphors, the term *ku-wa-no* cannot be understood as either 'secular' or 'religious'. Rather, based on the discussion of Homer and the Bronze Age Near Eastern textual sources in section 4.3.3 the semantics of colour terms can be seen as allowing for a variety of uses, some of which are highly charged in a religious sense and others more in terms of prestigious adornment. These uses can sometimes be hard to disentangle, as in the use of gold and lapis lazuli in the Royal Cemetery of Ur.

The semantics of colour-use in the Mycenaean use are less well-understood, but based on the shared template with the Near East outlined in section 4.3.3 would have been similar in basic principles. This brings us to the second point, namely that it was the convertibility of blue glass as a material that would have allowed for a more extensive sharing of the prestigious and other metaphoric qualities of lapis lazuli. In fact, the Mycenaean use of blue glass can be seen as the commodification (through the exchange of ingots) and mass-production (though the moulds) of items of adornment, to be distributed across a greater segment of the population.[283] As such, this seems to represent an intermediate position between the use of a material (gold) for prestigious adornment, as in the Varna cemetery, and the use of coined money. Blue glass was dual in that its value lay both in its weight and its aesthetic colour qualities, both of course deriving from the transformative process of glass-making. Much more research is needed, however, to situate the Mycenaean use of blue glass in particular and the Late Bronze Age aesthetics of blue glass and lapis lazuli in general within the overall trajectory that stretched from the early metallurgy of Varna to the Iron Age and the adoption of coinage. This is beyond the scope of the work here, but it may be useful to focus more on the relation between metallurgy and convertibility, as it is related to aesthetics and (prestigious) adornment in the earlier stages of the western Eurasian trajectory.

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[283] Once again, it should be stressed that even if the quantities of blue glass were much greater, the relative value of lapis lazuli to blue glass remains unknown. Based on the Egyptian evidence referred to in section 4.3.3 there is no reason to assume *a priori* that lapis lazuli was intrinsically seen as the more valuable material.

Having considered the long-term trajectory of some aspects of Mycenaean art, it is now time to turn to the actual formation of a distinctly Mycenaean style in the Shaft Grave period. Of course it should be constantly borne in mind that both in terms of craft-work and style, Mycenaean art was largely derivative of the art of Minoan Crete and the Cyclades. Some particular mainland influences can be seen in style, as with the notion of 'bounded naturalism' discussed in section 4.4.2, but the real distinctiveness of Mycenaean art lay in the kinds of subjects emphasised in it such as war and hunting. As noted in section 3.4.3, two other elements of the later Mycenaean early civilisation first developed in this period, namely a warrior culture and a lineage-based pattern of class and inequality (the conical clan). These two elements can be recognised in a fairly straightforward way in the art of this period. The patterns of portable art objects in the Shaft Grave burials, and in burials in other regions such as Messenia as well, show a concern with adorning the dead and prestige objects. Without going into detail for each kind of artefact, the overall pattern can be understood according to the ideas of prestigious adornment of Renfrew referred to earlier. This facilitated the process of social distinctions discussed for the Shaft Grave period in section 3.4.3.

One notable feature of the portable art objects of the Shaft Graves is that they depended upon outside influences (mostly from Minoan Crete) in terms of craft-work. Some of the finds are highly exceptional, such as the 'black bronze' daggers referred to in section 4.3.3 that carried more complex iconographic scenes. The prominence of weaponry within the burial assemblages is paralleled by a clear concern with hunting and warfare in the extant imagery on both the portable art objects and on the stelae. It can be recalled from the discussion in section 4.4.3 that the simile between humans and lions in pursuing prey, as well as the further extension from hunting to warfare, derived from scenes on a Shaft Grave stela and a 'black bronze' dagger. Some form of narrative extension can also be noted in the Shaft Graves in the form of the battle-scene on the Siege Rhyton (Blakolmer 2007a). In more general terms the focus on prestigious adornment and hunting and warfare-related imagery can be understood as part of the articulation of identity within and between emerging conical clans. Prestigious adornment in this sense served as a 'connector' to the longer-distance contacts within the Aegean, in particular with Crete, in which elite lineages would have played a dominating role.[284] Warfare-related images would have functioned as a 'connector' to the role of military force involved in the expansion of polities organised around conical clans. The theme of hunting acted as a broader extension of warrior prowess and prestige, which can also be seen in adornment using boar's tusk helmets in burial.

The discussion of the agency of Mycenaean art in relation to the other elements of this early civilisation during the palatial period of LH III, has to start with a consideration of the palaces as monumental complexes containing art. The use of the 'connector' of 'naturalistic skeuomorphism' discussed in the previous section related these buildings themselves to the natural world of which they formed part, and with which they interacted through administration and the projection of state power. The use of wall-paintings in these buildings also created the possibility for more complex narrative depictions of themes from the art of the Shaft Graves, as well as for the introduction of new themes and performative settings. The rendering of the spatio-temporal environment in wall-painting highlights the palatial *Umwelt*, showing its architecture, the boundaries provided by the sea and hills, as well as more complex terrain settings for different activities and indications for seasonality. In this way a pictorial counterpart was created to the administrative conception of the spatial layout of the Mycenaean kingdoms in the Linear B tablets. Both the artistic image and the administrative text would create a form of 'legibility' of the spatial context in which the palaces

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[284] Here the work by Helms (1988, 1993a, 1998) on the importance of distance as a 'cosmological' factor in pre-modern cultures can be noted. Her argument that privileged access to craft-work and ideas from distant sources fostered prestige and legitimacy has also been used for the Shaft Graves (Wolpert 2004).

were embedded, and in this way art can be seen as a form of specialised knowledge as well.[285]

The themes of hunting and warfare-related scenes that could already be seen in the Shaft Graves continued into the palatial period. However, its role in relation to the elements of a military organisation and class and inequality was changed by the addition of a third element: that of the palatial states. The full-scale development of Mycenaean states created important changes in military organisation, as discussed in section 3.4.2, including the administrative monitoring of land and naval contingents, control over weaponry items, and the construction of large-scale fortifications and road systems. Given the pre-existing warrior culture and its social base in conical clans, there would exist a need to incorporate this culture within the new palatial framework. The extensive discussion of the praxis of Mycenaean art in the preceding section is very relevant in this regard, for it showed a part/whole relation between the palaces and elite groups for the theme of warfare. Although the battle-scenes and other war-related art in the palaces were concerned with Mycenaean ideology and identity in general, elements were incorporated separately into more clearly defined elite contexts.[286] The chariot played an important role in this, functioning as a 'connector' between the wall-painting narratives and palatial control over its production on the one hand and elite prestige on the other, a prestige expressed more broadly in vase-painting.[287]

Another part/whole relation in the agency of Mycenaean art noted in section 5.3.2 was for public ritual. Here, however, this relation was not between the palaces and elite groups, but rather between the use of wall-paintings in performative settings of ritual (as a part) and the use of narrative wall-paintings to refer to the overall ritual cycle (the whole). This duality of ritual performance and more generic *topoi* of public ritual related the palatial centre and its coordinating role in the cycle of ritual events to the outlying areas of the realm. This cycle of religious festivals and its provisioning through a ritual economy had an integrative effect, not only between the palatial centre and its hinterland but also between different social groups. As noted in section 3.4.2, there was a strongly corporate aspect to these events, as reflected in the terminology of obligations used to describe them and also practically in the large-scale distribution of meat. It is unclear whether this ritual cycle of the Mycenaean palaces developed out of a pre-existing system. Yet with the further development of the LH III palatial framework there existed a clear reason to capture the broader set of ideas concerning public ritual in both performative settings and narrative *topoi*. Hence just as the metaphoric 'connectors' of hunting and warfare could be adapted from the Shaft Graves for new purposes in the emergent palatial framework of LH III, so new 'connectors' could be created to facilitate new roles of public ritual as well.[288]

A third change induced by the development of the Mycenaean states was that the praxis of prestigious adornment as they could be seen in the Shaft Graves and other early Mycenaean burials

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[285] The notion of 'legibility' was discussed in section 2.4.4 as the use of schematic templates to provide conceptual order, allowing for elite control. However, the administrative conception of space of the Linear B scribes should not be conflated with the artistic rendering of space, since the latter was based on the long-standing iconographic conventions that were discussed in section 4.4.2.

[286] The role of the hunting narratives in this is very interesting. The way hunting narratives were depicted in Mycenaean wall-painting seems more suggestive of hunting being an elite activity, based on the presence of chariots, the clothing and attributes of the participants, and the use of hunting dogs, and generally the elaborate character of the activity. It may be that as warfare became a larger-scale activity involving large groups of warriors, hunting became a more suitable way to showcase special qualities in warrior prowess for elites.

[287] Chariots were depicted in the Shaft Graves as well, as on one of the stelae, the concern here is with the shift towards the palatial control over this artefact, however.

[288] Of course the evidence for continuity noted for the LM II – IIIA palace of Knossos in section 5.2.2 with regard to public ritual should also be noted in this regard. One argument made for the 'throne' are as a locus of ritual activity was that it was 'transferred' from Knossos to the mainland palaces after the destruction of the Knossos palace at the beginning of LM IIIA2 (Maran & Stavrianopoulou 2007, 290-291)

changed. This can be understood as part of the overall trajectory of value systems sketched earlier in this section, something that is not surprising given that this sequence was related closely to the Aegean evidence. The introduction of blue glass created changes at a more technical level, in that its convertibility made it possible to be exchanged as a commodity and worked on a larger scale using moulds and cross-craft techniques (including notably for inlays). Based on this there were also changes in patterns of prestigious adornment, shifting away from the exclusivity and reliance on outside craft-work that could be seen for the Shaft Graves. First of all, despite the lack of glass-making abilities and the consequent need to import blue glass from Egypt and Mesopotamia, the material was worked extensively within the Aegean itself. Based on the blue glass ingots found in the Uluburun wreck, the Linear B references to workers dedicated to *ku-wa-no*, and the distribution of moulds, working blue glass would have taken place within the palatial framework.

As discussed in section 5.3.2, the blue glass objects such as beads, but also seals and weaponry parts were used in burial contexts to adorn the dead.[289] This would involve an aspect of prestige, but also more broadly notions of identity. The broader semantics of colour aesthetics as they could be noted for the term *ku-wa-no*, based on a shared template with the Near East, provided a further extension of the blue glass to lapis lazuli and a complex material ontology. Furthermore, lapis lazuli and blue glass were both used in palatial settings, as can be seen in the hoard contexts of seals made from lapis lazuli in the Thebes palace and for the architectural use of a blue glass inlay in the Tiryns palace. The use of *ku-wa-no* inlays in elaborate furniture, even if it was unknown whether this concerned lapis lazuli or blue glass, provided another example of the high valuation of either of these materials. The relation between the palatial hoards and display of *ku-wa-no* materials to their broader distribution in the form of smaller, portable art objects like beads is very much a part/whole one. In this regard it can be useful to return to the concept of the palaces as 'storehouses of value' referred to in the discussion of the element of economic relations in section 3.4.2. Although not concerned with blue glass specifically, the argument made by Killen in this regard is of considerable relevance to the present discussion:

"It is possible, indeed, that some of the items of luxury production which are mentioned in the tablets were never intended for use in the narrow sense of the term, but were objects that would have remained in store until such time as the need arose to dispose of them by way of a diplomatic or other gift. Other manufactured goods may have been used for conspicuous display in the palace buildings (one thinks here particularly of the elaborate furniture recorded on the Pylos Ta tablets); and this again would have been an important means of enhancing prestige (and hence also power) of the centres. Some products, again, may have been used for trading or other external exchanges: most probably, exchanges conducted or controlled by the centres themselves."[290] (Killen 2008, 178-179)

The notion of the Mycenaean palace as a 'storehouse of value' is also useful to understand the relation between the palatial context of the production of chariots and their distribution to elite groups. The palatial 'display' of chariots within narrative wall-paintings of hunting and war-related scenes added additional meaning to this 'instrument of power' as an elite good, as did the ubiquitous depictions of it in vase-painting. Value in the sense of prestige was in this way again related to broader stories and metaphors, through the 'connector' of art. This leads us to some observations on the general role of art within the LH III palatial states. It was stated at the start of the discussion of LH III art in this section that the rendering of the spatio-temporal environment in the wall-paintings helped to make 'legible' the environment within which the palatial states were situated. The

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[289] Of course on the basis of the iconographic evidence this would have had its parallel in adorning the living as well.
[290] Killen (2008, 178) notes similar relations between storage and wealth for the Near East and Homer (cf. Finley 1977, 65-67). The kinds of objects in Homer and the organisation of their manufacturing are quite distinct, however.

'naturalistic skeuomorphism' also provided a 'connector' between architecture itself and the physical world of which it formed part. Based on the discussion of war-related art and the role of chariots, depictions of public ritual, and the role of blue glass, it is possible to argue that these artistic elements functioned as 'connectors' between the different social relations in a 'legible' framework. These 'connectors' both reflected and helped shape the 'relational personhood' of different kinds of actors such as elite groups, the broader social groups that participated in ritual events, and communities located in more peripheral areas that used blue glass beads for adorning the dead.

Viewed in a certain way the role of art in the Mycenaean palaces can almost be seen as a form of *bricolage*, with the palaces taking the different metaphoric 'connectors' listed in table 5.1 as they were available from different sources. In particular the role of warfare-related and hunting scenes would derive from the Shaft Graves, the rendering of public ritual to some degree was derived from Minoan art, and the blue glass and the broader aesthetic metaphors associated with it were literally imported from the Near East. Of course, the emphasis on a limited number of themes here implies that a more refined overview of Mycenaean art, taking into account more evidence, might reveal more internal coherence. Nevertheless, the patterns as presented here have to be accounted for. Here it is important to emphasise that despite the *bricolage* character of the use of the different kinds of metaphoric 'connectors', a common aspect of all of them is the dominance of the palaces. This can be seen particularly well for the part/whole relations as they can be observed in both iconography and the distribution of portable art objects. It was argued in section 5.3.2 that these part/whole relations can be understood within an 'analogical' worldview, in which phenomena intrinsically different from each other could be related through metaphoric 'connectors'.

The relation of these analogical connections discerned for Mycenaean art and the role of the palaces within it can become clearer when we recall the discussion of an 'archival' system of administrative order in section 3.4.3. The point there was that a nexus of weighing, administration, and metallurgy formed the core ordering principle of Bronze Age palatial states like those of Mycenaean Greece. It was furthermore noted that as an administrative system this existed parallel to a structure of power based on patrimonialism, which had developed from the Shaft Grave period onward. It is at the intersection of these two that the social agency of Mycenaean art can be seen most clearly, drawing different social groups together through metaphoric 'connectors' within the framework defined by the 'archival' system. In general terms the function of weighing and administration can be argued to have created regulative 'connectors' between people and things, but it would go too far to ascribe the work of the artists as derivative of that of the scribe (or the other way around). However, further investigation of the relation between the two may well prove very fruitful, as can be seen in a recent study of the iconography of monsters or 'composite beings' in Bronze Age art as it relates to the role of seals and the broader administrative framework (Wengrow 2014).

Some final comments have to be made about the role of metallurgy. It is quite clear that the nexus of weighing, administration, and metallurgy that forms the core of 'archival' systems was tied to the use of specific kinds of metals, namely bronze alloys. At least as noted in section 3.4.3 the origin of this nexus in the 3rd millennium BC and its demise after the spread of large-scale iron metallurgy, broadly corresponds to the period in which this kind of metallurgy was dominant. In fact one of the factors behind the disappearance of the Mycenaean palatial system itself was argued to have been a change in exchange patterns of metals (if not attributable to iron). Furthermore, the use of lapis lazuli and other semiprecious stones was also connected to the emergence of the nexus of weighing, administration, and metallurgy. The later prominence of blue glass can be seen as a Late Bronze Age extension of this. Notably the entire aesthetic complex of lapis lazuli and blue glass completely ceased in the Aegean after the collapse of the palaces (if not completely so in the Near East), except for faint traces in oral poetic tradition. These developments point to the importance of

understanding changes in metallurgical technology as they relate both to changes in the organisation of society and to changes in aesthetic preferences. This issue cannot be properly addressed on the basis of the Mycenaean case alone. However, using the comparative case of the LPC lowland Maya early civilisation and its art, a case without any metallurgy at all, it will be possible to discuss this question further in section 9.3.