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# KEIMELION

ELITENBILDUNG UND ELITÄRER KONSUM  
VON DER MYKENISCHEN PALASTZEIT  
BIS ZUR HOMERISCHEN EPOCHE

THE FORMATION OF ELITES AND ELITIST LIFESTYLES  
FROM MYCENAEAN PALATIAL TIMES  
TO THE HOMERIC PERIOD

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Herausgegeben von Eva Alram-Stern und Georg Nightingale

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## Πότνιος Ἀνήρ – Reflections on the Ideology of Mycenaean Kingship\*

The following contribution focuses on the issues of the nature of the Mycenaean ruler and his relation to the gods. Our reflections will take their start at seeming deficiencies of elite self-presentation linking the Minoan and Mycenaean spheres, and will lead to the discussion of the question of the possible character of those rituals that were carried out in the throne room of the palatial megara.

The discovery of the early Aegean civilizations has prompted a lively discussion on the relation of the Mycenaean culture of the Greek mainland to Minoan Crete. The range of different positions held in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century on that topic is exemplified by the controversy between Sir A. Evans and A. J. B. Wace.<sup>1</sup> While Evans explained the emergence of the Mycenaean culture as the result of a Minoan colonization of the Greek mainland,<sup>2</sup> Wace regarded Mycenaean Greece as strongly influenced by Crete, but nevertheless independent from it.<sup>3</sup> As we know today, the latter scholarly opinion proved to be the one which prevailed and this undoubtedly for good reasons.<sup>4</sup> But the notion of a basically autonomous Late Helladic culture had as its consequence that research split into a Minoan and a Mycenaean branch and that from then onwards the contrasts between both cultural spheres were emphasized.<sup>5</sup> This is particularly obvious in the differing importance assigned by research to religion as a factor in the ideology of the Bronze Age palatial cultures of Greece.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to the Old and New Palaces of Crete for which ever since their discovery a strong intermingling between religion and political power was assumed,<sup>7</sup> the attempts to describe the nature of the Mycenaean *wanax* were mostly characterized by the careful distinction between secular and religious features and by putting an emphasis on the non-divine nature of this ruler.<sup>8</sup> The foundation for the rather secular view of Mycenaean kingship was already laid during the early days of research into the early Aegean civilizations when Mycenaean Greece was interpreted by using the information provided by the Homeric poems.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, long before Linear B had been deciphered, due to the description of Homeric kings the strong conviction had emerged that Mycenaean rulers did not legitimize their claim to power mainly by religious means and thus were different from the Minoan ‘Priest-King’. Even as from the 1950ies onwards Homer was being gradually abandoned as a source for understanding Mycenaean culture, the Linear B texts with their fixation on economic transactions ensured that the impression of the secular basis of kingship became so overwhelm-

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\* To Sigrid Deger-Jalkotzy, the ‘Potnia’ of the Prehistory and History of the Early Aegean.

<sup>1</sup> For overviews of this controversy see McDonald 1967, 247–91; Platon 1970, 250–4. For stimulating discussions and helpful observations we would like to thank Melissa Vettters M.A.

<sup>2</sup> Evans 1929, 90–3.

<sup>3</sup> Wace in Wace, Heurtley, Lamb et al. 1921–23, 390–6; Wace 1962, 341–50.

<sup>4</sup> Dickinson 1977, 15, 53.

<sup>5</sup> Nilsson 1950, 16–33; Schachermeyr 1987, 379–87. For a thorough criticism of this constructed dichotomy between the Minoan and Mycenaean spheres see Jung 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Dickinson 1994, 306.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Evans 1902–03, 38; 1928, 774–844; Marinatos 1993, 74–5. For the history of Evans’s concept of a ‘Priest-King’ and its application in research see Bennett 1961–62, 327–35; McDonald 1967, 118–69; Farnoux 1995; Koehl 1995, 24–35.

<sup>8</sup> Hooker 1976, 202; 1979; Mylonas 1977, 73–5; 1983, 244; Iakovidis 2004, 14, 28–9; Thomas 1976, 93–116; Shelmerdine 1999, 21; Mylonas Shear 2004, 20; Jasink 2004, 187–9.

<sup>9</sup> Schliemann 1878; Tsountas and Manatt 1969, 44–66, 347–66; Nilsson 1933, 212–47; Wace 1949, 113; Mylonas Shear 2004, 34–41. But see Rodenwaldt (1921, 60), who was an early opponent against the attempts to link the Homeric poems with Mycenaean Greece.

ing, that the relatively few indications for sacral aspects of the *wanax* were not regarded by most scholars as sufficient proof of his divine character.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, other indications seemed to corroborate the notion of a marked difference between Minoan and Mycenaean rulers. On the one hand, the realization that the language of Linear B was Greek led to the assumption that the structure of kingship in Mycenaean Greece followed an ‘Indo-European’ model and must have diverged from the one of allegedly ‘pre-Greek’ Minoan Crete.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the markedly differing ground-plans of Minoan and Mycenaean palaces suggested differences in the underlying social and ideological structures of the particular societies.<sup>12</sup>

All these factors contributed to bolstering the opinion that a basic difference had existed as regards the role of religion in the legitimation of Minoan and Mycenaean kingship. After the Second World War only few scholars challenged this *communis opinio*, but their views remained minority positions. On the basis of his interpretation of the Pylos texts L. R. Palmer has reached the conclusion that the *wanax* was a sacral king, who was regarded as the earthly embodiment of a divine being and as the male companion of the goddess *potnia*.<sup>13</sup> In agreeing with this view B. C. Dietrich insisted that Mycenaean religion was not basically different from Minoan, and that important traits of Minoan religion, like the divine epiphany, were handed down to the Mycenaean Greeks.<sup>14</sup>

It is not our intention to deny the need to differentiate between the Minoan and the Mycenaean sphere. Nevertheless, we believe that exactly because of the evident differences certain connecting elements did not receive the necessary attention, elements which indeed point to a common ideological core between the Late Bronze Age palatial cultures on Crete and the Greek Mainland as regards the relation of the political elite to the gods. The first common point consists in the lack of an iconography of male or female ruling figures, the second in the fact that writing neither on Crete nor on the Greek Mainland was employed to convey ideological messages. Admittedly, these similarities between the Minoan and the Mycenaean cultures are defined through the absence of specific features and could therefore derive from different causes. Still, what makes the way how texts and images were not used in Minoan Crete and in the Mycenaean Greek Mainland so remarkable is the fact that exactly due to these traits both cultures hold a very special position among the early civilizations of the Old and New World.<sup>15</sup> At a time when in the Near East and in Egypt it was common practice that kings provided monuments with their names and/or illustrated their relation to the gods in images and words, for certain reasons both palatial cultures of the Aegean Bronze Age lacked these traits and were characterized by the phenomenon of the ‘missing ruler’.<sup>16</sup> An impressive architectural monument like the Lion Gate, for instance, would have presented an excellent place for an image of the king under whose reign it was built, or for a monumental inscription. But neither in Mycenae nor anywhere else in 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC Greece architecture seems to have been used in this way, and the issue of why this was so is certainly a central one.

<sup>10</sup> It is rather difficult to assign the extensive discussions between Linear B scholars on the position of the *wanax* as a god or rather as a human being to the one or the other group: cf. Lindgren 1973, 150–3 with earlier bibliographical references; Carlier 1984, 40–100; 117–32 with an extensive study of all related documents; see esp. 90; 130–2 (“si les rois mycéniens ne sont probablement pas des dieux, il est vraisemblable en revanche qu’ils sont des protégés des dieux”). For an opposite view see Stavrianopoulou 1995, 423–33.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Thomas 1976, 97–9; but see Palaima 1995, 122–4 for a critical assessment of this viewpoint.

<sup>12</sup> Driessen 2002, 4–6; Mylonas Shear 2004, 50–1.

<sup>13</sup> Palmer 1963, 86, 267–8.

<sup>14</sup> Dietrich 1974, 133, 180.

<sup>15</sup> Marinatos 1993, 50; Davis 1995, 17–9; Shelmerdine 1999, 20; Mylonas Shear 2004, 21.

<sup>16</sup> Marinatos 1993, 75; Davis 1995. Mylonas Shear (2004, 21) cites Ugarit as a possible Near Eastern example resembling the Aegean phenomenon of the ‘missing ruler’, but in our opinion the situation there does not correspond to what we find in the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations. While in Ugarit large-scale royal art and inscriptions seem to be lacking, we do have, in contrast to the Aegean, at least some examples for small-scale images which clearly conform to the artistic conventions of Near Eastern royal iconography, cf. Schaeffer 1954, 56–7, pls. IX–X. More importantly, the corpus of impressions of Ugaritic royal cylinder seals on cuneiform tablets underlines that the name and titles of the king were regularly used on official documents to visualize his power, something which is completely missing in the Aegean, Schaeffer 1956, 56–86; Millard 1980–83, 138–40. We would like to thank Prof. Dr. Peter Miglus (Heidelberg) for discussing this topic with us and for drawing our attention to the objects from Ugarit.

As regards Minoan Crete some scholars in recent years have interpreted the absence of images and inscriptions of rulers as a sign that a focus of social hierarchy on one leading person might never have existed and therefore the need for royal self-presentation simply did not arise.<sup>17</sup> Ever since the decipherment of Linear B we know that at least for the Mycenaean palatial culture such an explanation can be excluded, since the *wanax* is a figure with kingly characteristics and with an authority clearly exceeding the one of the other dignitaries.<sup>18</sup> Although he is invisible in the archaeological sources, evidently the Mycenaean *wanax* still held an outstanding position in society. The difficulty to verify archaeologically the existence of the *wanax* is particularly puzzling because only a few centuries earlier, in the shaft graves of Mycenae, we can clearly observe the wish to exalt a specific group of persons through iconographical means, like the individual rendering of the golden masks and the depiction of scenes of hunting and warfare on the stelae. This suggests that the seeming lack of interest in the exaltation of elite individuals and their accomplishments was not from the beginning embedded in Mycenaean culture, but rather emerged only at some point after the shaft grave period. If this change was brought about by an external impulse, the attention naturally turns to Crete where the mentioned peculiarities of elite self-presentation were present throughout the Old and New Palatial periods. In any case, the situation during the Mycenaean palatial period reminds us that also in Minoan Crete the ‘invisibility’ of a ruler may mean something quite different than his absence.

Recently, T. G. Palaima has put forward the hypothesis that not only the expression *wanax* but also central aspects of the accompanying royal ideology may have been of Minoan origin.<sup>19</sup> We believe that Palaima has pointed in the right direction and that the phenomenon of the ‘missing ruler’ common to Crete as well as to the Greek Mainland may be rooted in similar ideological concepts. In addition, we will argue that the seemingly independent aspects of the lack of royal images and the absence of inscriptions are linked to each other and derive from certain peculiarities of the self-image of kings in both early Aegean palatial civilizations. The question is which aspect of the world view kept Aegean rulers from doing the same as their contemporaries in Egypt and the Near East who immortalized their accomplishments in word and image?

Concerning the Mycenaean sphere K. Kilian has proposed the term ‘Wanax-Ideology’ to describe a specific concept of kingship, which according to him emerged during the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>20</sup> As its central feature he regarded the relation of the king to supernatural powers, and he argued that the ideology found its architectural reflection in the great megaron of the palaces.<sup>21</sup> In picking up this thread, J. Wright attempted to specify the character of this ideology by pointing to the close link between throne and hearth, from which he inferred that the hearth symbolized the centre of the state and that the *wanax* sitting on the throne acted as the lord and protector of this fire.<sup>22</sup> As is well known, features like the megaron serving as the centre of the palace and the connection between hearth and throne are missing in Minoan palaces and probably originate in the world views of societies of the Greek Mainland.<sup>23</sup> However, the same does not apply to the flanking of the throne by large-size fresco images of at least one griffin and one lion which occurs in the megaron of Pylos (*Fig. 1*).<sup>24</sup> It was C. W. Blegen who recognized the similarity of this fresco composition to the one on the wall behind the throne in the throne room of the palace of Knossos (*Fig. 2*),<sup>25</sup> and who made the suggestion that after the occupation of Crete by Mycenaean rulers this room was designed according to models of

<sup>17</sup> Weingarten 1999, 353–4; Driessen 2002, 1–13; Hamilakis 2002, 179–99.

<sup>18</sup> Davis 1995, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Palaima 1995, 127–8.

<sup>20</sup> Kilian 1988a.

<sup>21</sup> Kilian 1988a, 294–6.

<sup>22</sup> Wright 1994, 57–8; 2006. Certain of the implications of the link between throne and hearth were already noted by Müller (1930, 198) and Reusch (1958, 340).

<sup>23</sup> Noack 1903, 1–36; Rodenwaldt 1921, 52; Nilsson 1927, 15–7; Müller 1930, 196; Kilian 1988b, 7–9; Wright 1994, 56–7; 2006; Dickinson 1994, 152–7; Mylonas Shear 2004, 21.

<sup>24</sup> Whether these animals were part of an antithetically arranged composition is just as controversial as in the case of the Knossos throne room frescoes; For the discussion see McCallum 1987, 97–8. We would like to thank Sveta Matskevich M.A. for preparing the images used in our *Fig. 1* and *2*.

<sup>25</sup> Evans 1964, 901–20; Cameron 1987, 325. As for the comparison between Pylos and Knossos see Blegen 1956, 95; Blegen and Rawson 1966, 79; Lang 1969, 101–2; Niemeier 1986, 94–5; Hiller 1996, 73–4; Immerwahr 1990, 97–8, 167.

the Greek Mainland.<sup>26</sup> Based on S. Mirié's new research on the building history of the Knossos throne room,<sup>27</sup> W.-D. Niemeier spoke out against Blegen's opinion and demonstrated the chronological priority of the Knossos throne-fresco composition in relation to the one in the Pylos megaron.<sup>28</sup> By pointing to other common elements between Knossos and Mycenaean palaces, like the placing of the throne on the right-hand wall,<sup>29</sup> Niemeier concluded that the Knossos throne room must have, on the contrary, influenced the design of the later Mycenaean palatial megara.<sup>30</sup> Although Pylos is the only Mycenaean palace for which at least parts of the fresco decoration of the wall behind the throne can be reconstructed,<sup>31</sup> this case alone raises the question whether the similarity in images is equivalent with the adoption of religious ideas which were related to them. Indeed, not only the carefully designed fresco program of the Pylos megaron,<sup>32</sup> but also another similarity between the frescoes of the throne rooms of Knossos and Pylos militate against the notion that we are merely dealing with a superficial reception of Minoan iconographical conventions by the Mycenaean Greeks. As J. Bennet has observed, in Pylos the throne and the images on the wall behind it were so closely related to each other that the fresco composition only became complete when a person was sitting on the throne.<sup>33</sup> Exactly such an "interactive" relationship between the figure on the throne and the surrounding painted images has already been observed by H. Reusch and Niemeier for the Knossos throne room.<sup>34</sup>

As it seems, the search for comparisons for the only preserved throne-fresco composition of a Mycenaean megaron always leads us back to Knossos. But what do these similarities mean for the rituals carried out in the throne rooms and the actors who participated in them? With the question of who was the occupant of the throne of a Mycenaean megaron and which role he or she may have played in ritual, we arrive at the central issue for our question. The discussion of this question will again underline that in order to adequately assess the evidence in the Mycenaean palaces it is essential to take the Minoan sources into consideration. A few years ago P. Rehak challenged the conventional view that the *wanax* has occupied the throne of a Mycenaean megaron.<sup>35</sup> Rehak pointed out that the overwhelming majority of Minoan and Mycenaean images of seated figures showed women, while no fixed iconographical representation had existed for representations of seated men. He drew the conclusion that a female figure must have been the occupant of the throne of the megaron. This building, he contended, had not served as a great hall for the *wanax*, but rather as a communal centre for feasts with a honorary seat for a female being presiding over the celebration, possibly the goddess *potnia* or the queen.<sup>36</sup>

Rehak's line of reasoning recalls the article of Reusch on the function of the Knossos throne room. In 1958 she presented iconographical evidence which according to her suggested that the throne flanked by at least one image of a griffin (*Fig. 2*)<sup>37</sup> must have been meant for a female deity.<sup>38</sup> Reusch argued that the

<sup>26</sup> Blegen 1956, 95; Blegen and Rawson 1966, 88; Wace 1962, 348–50.

<sup>27</sup> Mirié 1979.

<sup>28</sup> Niemeier 1986, 67–8; 1987, 163–5.

<sup>29</sup> Müller 1930, 198; Reusch 1958, 341. Hiller (1996, 80) has made the important additional observation that the fresco decoration of both the ante-room of the Knossos Throne Room Complex and the vestibule of the Pylos megaron comprised at least one image of a large bull.

<sup>30</sup> Niemeier 1986, 94–5; 1987, 167–8; Immerwahr 1990, 97–8; Hiller 1996, 78.

<sup>31</sup> Hiller (1996, 78) remarks that on the basis of the existing fresco fragments from Mycenaean palaces "... it was only at Pylos that there existed a composition of antithetic wild creatures flanking the throne." While Pylos is currently the only Mycenaean palace where we can ascertain such a fresco composition, we have to bear in mind that in the megaron of Mycenae the wall where the throne would have stood, has collapsed into the Chavos ravine, whereas in the Great Megaron of Tiryns the wall behind the throne has been dismantled after its destruction, in order to build the new eastern wall for 'Building T'. Thus, in both cases there was never the slightest chance to get an insight into the fresco program on the wall behind the throne. Accordingly, the similarities between the throne room frescoes of the palatial megara may have been much more pronounced than it seems.

<sup>32</sup> McCallum 1987, 138–40.

<sup>33</sup> Bennet 2001, 34.

<sup>34</sup> Reusch 1958, 352, 356; Niemeier 1986, 88.

<sup>35</sup> Rehak 1995b.

<sup>36</sup> Rehak 1995b, 117.

<sup>37</sup> As for the controversy surrounding the question of a possible antithetic arrangement of griffins at the throne see Reusch 1958, 346–8; Cameron 1970, 163; Mirié 1979, 47–9; McCallum 1987, 98; Rehak 1995, 109.

<sup>38</sup> Reusch 1958, 348–52; Niemeier 1986, 84–6.

Knossos throne room had served as the place for the divine epiphany<sup>39</sup> which since G. Rodenwaldt and M. Nilsson is regarded by many as a central element of Minoan religion.<sup>40</sup> In conclusion, Reusch conjectured that a person participating in the ritual had the responsibility to sit down on the throne and by doing this to become the goddess.<sup>41</sup> As the leading actor of this important role of impersonating the deity in the course of ‘enacted epiphany’, as it was called by R. Hägg,<sup>42</sup> Reusch identified not Evans’ ‘Priest-King’, whose existence she called into question, but rather a priestess.<sup>43</sup> Niemeier concurred with this interpretation and added the hypothesis that the priestess enacting the appearance of the goddess may have emerged from the ‘Inner Sanctuary’ into the Throne Room, because the door linking these rooms was flanked on the side facing the Throne Room by painted griffins resembling the one at the throne.<sup>44</sup>

The similarities in the argumentation and in the conclusions of Reusch and Rehak are far-reaching. On the basis of iconographical evidence they have postulated that the throne in Pylos and in Knossos respectively belonged to a goddess whose role in ritual was impersonated by a female person. They also agree in the rejection of the participation of a male ruler in these ritual practices. The main difference between their views consists in the fact that by assuming the existence of an epiphany ritual Reusch in our opinion succeeded in proposing a solution for the problem of how deity and human being were connected in ritual, while Rehak did not elaborate on this point.<sup>45</sup>

It seems to us, that Reusch and Rehak have reached such similar conclusions because the throne rooms of the palaces of Knossos and Pylos were functionally much closer interrelated than has hitherto been realized. The decisive connecting link we see exactly in the mentioned ritual of enacted epiphany of a female deity which we presume to have formed not only on Crete, but also in the Mycenaean palatial megara a main constituent of ritual practices. That the megaron served as the seat of a deity would explain why in Pylos not only the decoration on the wall immediately behind the throne, but, as Hägg and L. McCallum have shown,<sup>46</sup> the whole fresco program of the eastern walls of the vestibule and the throne room seems to have been dominated by religious subjects. The procession scene adorning the eastern wall of the vestibule of the Pylos megaron and seemingly leading right into the throne room belongs just as much as the griffin and/or lion flanking a seated figure to the motives which are iconographically closely associated with deities.

The megaron, however, encapsulated not only aspects of a temple, but also of a ruler’s seat. Thus, the one point in which we do contend with Reusch and Rehak is the exclusion of the king as the person sitting on the throne and impersonating the deity. While both have claimed that, based on the iconographical evidence, this person must have been female, we think it is necessary to differentiate between the female deity who appears in the images and is indeed likely to have been regarded as the owner of the throne, and the actual person responsible for enacting the epiphany in ritual. We don’t see any reason why this shouldn’t have been the *wanax* and we would even suggest that holding the main role of the epiphany ritual belonged to the central tasks within the *wanax* ideology. This does not exclude the possibility that on certain occasions the queen, whose important position is also attested in the Linear B sources, took over this role. The course of the ritual in the throne room of the Mycenaean palatial megara may have been structured in the following way: The *wanax* or the queen underwent rituals of purification and other preparatory measures in rooms bordering on the megaron, cf. in Tiryns the so-called ‘Bathroom’ with its ante-chamber and in Mycenae the ‘Chamber of

<sup>39</sup> Reusch 1958, 353–8.

<sup>40</sup> Rodenwaldt 1921, 16; Nilsson 1950, 277–84; Matz 1958. The careful analysis of the pictorial structures and gestures of the figures on the Isopata Ring by Cain (2001) underlines the difficulty of interpreting the meaning of such scenes, but does not, in our opinion, invalidate the arguments in favour of the existence of epiphany rituals in Minoan Crete. On epiphany in Greek religion in general see Gladigow 1990.

<sup>41</sup> Reusch 1958, 356.

<sup>42</sup> Hägg 1986, 46–7, 60.

<sup>43</sup> Reusch 1958, 356–7; Niemeier 1986, 74–84; Marinatos 1995, 43; Marinatos 1993, 108–9.

<sup>44</sup> Niemeier 1986, 77; 1987, 165. On the fresco composition see Cameron 1970, 163. Marinatos (1995, 39) cites an Egyptian royal ritual as a remarkable comparison for the assumed Minoan epiphany rituals.

<sup>45</sup> But since Rehak (1995, 117) insinuated that the throne may have been meant for *potnia*, he actually came quite close to proposing a divine epiphany.

<sup>46</sup> Hägg 1985, 216; McCallum 1987, 108–41; Palaima 1995, 132–3.

the Painted Curtains'.<sup>47</sup> Then they entered the megaron through a side-entrance of the porch (Mycenae) or the vestibule (Tiryns and Pylos). By taking up the throne the *wanax* or the queen created the precondition for the appearance of the goddess. The latter was invoked and possibly was perceived to appear through the flickering hearth fire, which would represent a major deviation from the sequence of events reconstructed for the epiphany ritual in the Knossos Throne Room (see above). In the moment of epiphany the king or the queen became one with the goddess, and from this point of view, the animals flanking the Pylos throne would have simultaneously served as protectors of the *wanax* and companions of the deity.<sup>48</sup>

To assume that the *wanax* had the duty to ritually embody a goddess, inevitably leads to further questions regarding the possible religious meaning attached to this merging of a male ruler with a female deity. Of the various possibilities of how this embodiment of the deity might have been understood by society we only want to mention a few. It may have signified a 'sacred marriage' between the deity and the ruler,<sup>49</sup> or the rebirth of the ruler by his divine mother, or as a way by which a supernatural power uses the body of a human being to express its will.

By ascribing the main role of the ritual of enacted epiphany to the *wanax*, new explanations for the curiously ambivalent features<sup>50</sup> of this ruler emerge, whom, in spite of the eminent significance and god-like veneration suggested by the Linear B texts, we are not able to grasp in the archaeological sources. His sacral traits he gained through the merging with the goddess, time and again renewed in ritual, but the deeds he accomplished were still regarded as being brought about by the deity, which is why he did not attach his name and image to them. If we follow this view, the main duty of the *wanax* did not only consist in communicating with divine beings, but also in embodying them and making their supernatural power felt through his deeds.<sup>51</sup>

The intimate relationship between human dignitaries and supernatural powers characterizing the ritual of enacted epiphany we would attribute to those traits of the *wanax* ideology for which Palaima has assumed a transfer from Crete to the Greek Mainland. Without opting in favor of the use of the term 'Priest-King',<sup>52</sup> it seems to us that Evans correctly conjectured the religious basis of Minoan kingship and that Minoan palatial society had a male ruler, whose power was to a certain degree based on the close relationship to a female deity and whose individuality was concealed by this goddess. As Evans has recognized, at the very beginning of the Mycenaean period, in the shaft graves of Mycenae, remarkably strong links not to Crete in general, but to Knossos in particular can be observed.<sup>53</sup> Irrespective of his further exaggerated assertions concerning a Minoan colonization of the Greek Mainland, Evans in our opinion was right to infer a very special relation between Mycenae and Knossos already at the beginning of the Mycenaean period.<sup>54</sup> At some time during the following centuries mainland rulers must have taken possession of world views and rituals, which had hitherto been restricted to Crete, and adapted them for use in their own ideology of kingship by adding autochthonous religious elements. Thus this transfer of rituals from another tradition encompasses both the recep-

<sup>47</sup> On a possible ritual function of the Tiryns 'Bathroom' see already Siedentopf 1975, 34; also Maran 2006, 84. On the 'Chamber of the Painted Curtains': Wace 1949, 79; Iakovidis 1983, 59.

<sup>48</sup> Niemeier 1986, 95; 1987, 167–8 assumed a shift in meaning of the Throne Room griffins from Knossos, where they were regarded as companions of the goddess, to Pylos, where they acted as guardians of the *wanax*. If our interpretation is correct, then there is no need to make this distinction.

<sup>49</sup> Already Palmer (1964, 267) thought that the *wanax* has been considered as the husband of the goddess. On the possible role of the 'sacred marriage' in Minoan religion see Koehl 2001.

<sup>50</sup> Chadwick 1976, 70; Shelmerdine 1999, 21, 24; Palaima 1995, 133–4.

<sup>51</sup> For the Minoan palace see already Marinatos 1995, 47.

<sup>52</sup> See Koehl 1995, 23–35 and Shaw 2004, 77–82 for a nuanced assessment of the validity of Evans's arguments. Hamilakis (2002, 183–5) states that recent scholarship dealing with the social and political situation in Bronze Age Crete is "... still influenced by the stereotypes of a high European civilisation with strong hierarchical structures, monarchs and aristocracy." But in alleging such an unconscious bias influenced by much later historical situations, the impression arises as if monarchs (in the sense of the word) were a quite recent historical phenomenon, while in fact in Near Eastern and Egyptian societies of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC male rulers and strong hierarchies are omnipresent. In all likelihood it was this very evidence contemporary with the Minoan and Mycenaean palaces and not Europe during the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium AD which exerted the most important influence on scholars and made them wonder why the palatial societies of the Greek Bronze Age should have differed so much from their contemporaries in the surrounding regions to the east and south.

<sup>53</sup> Evans 1929, 26–43; 1964, 237–44.

<sup>54</sup> See also Dickinson 1989, 136; 1977, 55; Wiener 1991, 334–40; Wright 1995, 70–2.

tion and the transformation of the rituals. Furthermore it offers a new perspective on how the introduced rituals may have been further developed in a different social and cultural context.<sup>55</sup>

As the most likely date for this transfer we assume the time immediately in the aftermath of the extensive destruction of the palace of Knossos at the beginning of LM IIIA2. After it has become clear that the earliest known example of a Mycenaean palatial megaron, the one at Tiryns, may have been built not earlier than LH IIIA2,<sup>56</sup> the possibility of a historical connection between the destruction of the palace of Knossos and the seemingly sudden<sup>57</sup> establishment of megaron-palaces starting in the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC arises. In this context, we regard it as necessary to modify the currently prevalent opinion according to which the choice of the megaron as the central building of a Mycenaean palace marks the introduction of a purely ‘Helladic’ feature deviating from earlier forms of Mycenaean imposing architecture which closely resembled Minoan prototypes.<sup>58</sup> While we would agree that the canonization of the Megaron as the core of a Mycenaean palace signifies a break with previous architectural traditions, the emergence of this central building may itself, as Niemeier has already suggested, bear witness for an inspiration by the Minoan sphere and derive from the blending of an indigenous architectural form with parts of the interior layout and furnishings of the Knossos throne room complex.<sup>59</sup> In our assessment, the background for this phenomenon was formed at the beginning of LM IIIA2 by the elimination of the last stronghold of Minoan power by a coalition of Mycenaean palaces, leading to a degradation of Crete to the status of a Mycenaean vassal.<sup>60</sup> After the great destruction of Knossos a ritual transfer took place, rooted in the wish to transplant the place of encounter between the deity and the ruler from this palace to the centers of Mycenaean power on the Greek Mainland. Guided by the collective imagination of something which could be described as the ‘Knossos idea’, the Mycenaean rulers founded ‘new Knossos’ in different regions of Greece.<sup>61</sup> Through this they became in their opinion legitimate successors to that place, which since the shaft grave period they had admired and revered as a center of religious and political power. The possibility of a massive influx of Minoan religious ideas at the beginning of the Mycenaean palatial period would also explain why the fresco programs of the Mycenaean palaces regularly comprise depictions of bull leaping which previously was closely linked to Knossos.<sup>62</sup>

The presumed Minoan roots of central elements of the *wanax* ideology do not only help to understand the reasons for the ‘invisibility’ of the rulers of both early Aegean palatial civilizations, but also why *potnia*, the main deity of the pantheon of the Mycenaean palatial period did not survive the dark ages.<sup>63</sup> In contrast

<sup>55</sup> On the effects for the identity of a ritual in the course of such modifications or transformations see the comments of Kreinath 2004, 267–8. For a theoretical discussion of the notion of ‘transfer of ritual’ see Langer, Lüddeckens, Radde et al. 2006.

<sup>56</sup> Maran 2001, 23, 28.

<sup>57</sup> Kilian 1987a, 33; 1987b, 121–4; 1988a, 294–8; Wright in Dabney and Wright 1990, 48–9; Wright 2006; Maran 2001, 28; Nelson 2001, 207–12; Rutter 2005, 26–9.

<sup>58</sup> Kilian 1987c, 214–7; Kilian 1988a, 294–6; Nelson 2001, 187–91, 200–12; Rutter 2005, 23–8. Already Jung (2000, 77–85) convincingly argued against the tendency to regard the megaron as a ‘Helladic’ feature and to oppose it to Minoan forms of monumental architecture.

<sup>59</sup> Niemeier 1986, 95; 1987, 167–8. For an early attempt to refute the idea of an indigenous or even ‘northern’ origin of the Mycenaean megaron see Mackenzie (1905–1906, 250–8), who pointed to similarities between this type of building and certain forms of Minoan palatial architecture. Recently, Rutter (2005, 32) made the interesting suggestion that the combination of lion and griffin which can be observed twice in the Pylos frescoes (Throne Room and Room 46) may reflect the melding of Knosso-Messenian and Argive heraldic devices, perhaps in the aftermath of a dynastic marriage or an Argive conquest of the kingdom of Pylos.

<sup>60</sup> Maran 2005, 428.

<sup>61</sup> Wiener 1984, 20–5; Wiener (forthcoming) has drawn the important comparison between the cultural impact of Neopalatial Knossos on the surrounding regions of the Cyclades and the Greek Mainland to the ‘Versailles effect’ in continental Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> century AD. What we are proposing for the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC would go beyond such earlier forms of emulation, inasmuch as the former ‘periphery’ would have aimed at taking the place of the centre it had previously emulated. The emergence of imposing architecture in Early Medieval Central Europe possibly lends itself as a comparison. Juwig 2006 argues that the structure and layout of Carolingian sacral and secular monumental buildings in the late 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD was inspired by ideas revolving around the creation of a ‘new Rome’ or a ‘new Jerusalem’. While the buildings which derive from this collective imagination bear in details some resemblance to Mediterranean prototypes the overall architectural language is nevertheless unmistakably Carolingian. We are indebted to C. Juwig M.A. (Heidelberg) for sharing and discussing his stimulating ideas with us.

<sup>62</sup> Immerwahr 1990, 163.

<sup>63</sup> For *potnia* see now Boëlle (2001; 2003), who argues for a plurality of *potnia*-divinities, but also accepts *po-ti-ni-ja* of Tn 316 as the great goddess of the sanctuary in *pa-ki-ja-ne*; contra Trümpy 2001. Very recently Jasink (2004) and Trümpy (2004) proposed two different dynamical concepts on the nature of *potnia*. Jasink argues that the theonym *potnia* was transferred from the Helladic de-

to the prominent position of deities like Zeus, Hera and Poseidon in the classical pantheon, *potnia* after the Mycenaean period is degraded to an adjective.<sup>64</sup> In trying to explain this shift in importance it is crucial to differentiate between the carriers of the different strands of tradition during the Mycenaean period and after its end. We would attribute the decline of *potnia* to her position as the deity to whom the *wanax* was ritually attached and through whose power he gained an important part of his legitimacy.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, the fate of both figures was closely connected with each other. Unlike this tradition specifically attached to the ruler and, as we see it, introduced from Crete as recent as the beginning of the Mycenaean palatial period, a god like Poseidon during Mycenaean times probably had a longer ritual tradition and enjoyed a reverence which was embedded in a much broader segment of society. He was the deity simultaneously worshipped by the *wanax*, the *lawagetas* and the *damos*.<sup>66</sup> Exactly this manifold basis of his cult, which was not exclusively tied with the authority of the ruler, probably did not only contribute to the survival of this deity, but also to the enhancement of his cult after the Mycenaean period. Poseidon took over the position of *potnia* and became part of a new tradition.<sup>67</sup>

From that point of view, important features which were to characterize later Greek religion already had crystallized before the end of the Mycenaean culture. In this new canonical tradition the kings carried the title ‘*basileus*’ and they were praised as ‘*diotrepheis*’ and not as ‘*potniotrepheis*’.

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ity to the “Signora del palazzo”, i.e. to the queen. Trümpy (op. cit. 22-30) interprets *potnia* as an Indoeuropean deity, almost identical to the pre-Greek Demeter (op. cit. 26: “Fastidentität”), with a special relationship to the *wanax* and the Mycenaean palatial administration. This twofold connection of *potnia* to Demeter and to the *wanax* explains, so Trümpy (op. cit. 34-7), the naming of the temple in Eleusis in the Classical times as *anaktoron* (\**(w)anakt-ktoron*, that is the “sanctuary of the *wanax*”.

<sup>64</sup> As regards the attestations of the word in Homer and the later Greek literature see Trümpy 2001, 416-9.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Dietrich 1974, 181-5; Carlier 1984, 131; Trümpy 2004, 38. The Linear B evidence on *potnia* and on the *wanax* shows certain parallels, insofar as both are connected with stock-breeding, metallurgy and textile manufacture. The *oikos* of *potnia* in Thebes seems to have been not only a cult place, but also an economical institution whose closest counterpart is to be found in the palace itself.

<sup>66</sup> **Un 718**: De Fidio 1977, 187; Carlier 1984, 59-63. The distinction made by Hägg (1981; 1995) between a ‘state’ and a ‘popular’ cult does not exactly grasp the distinctive character of the cults of *potnia* and Poseidon respectively, because Poseidon’s cult has also been “conducted by the elite” (Hägg 1995, 387) as the one of *potnia*. In the Linear B texts a certain difference in the hierarchy between the two deities can be observed on the level of the organization of their cult: For the cult of *potnia* see supra n. 65; for the cult of Poseidon a sanctuary is attested (**Tn 316**) as well as cult personnel (**Fn 187** *po-si-da-i-je-u-si*).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Diod 15,49. However the position of Poseidon as the main deity may not have lasted for long, since in the Homeric poems we are confronted with a Poseidon subordinate to Zeus.

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*Fig. 2:* Knossos, the north wall of the Throne Room, detail. After Cameron 1987, 323 fig. 7.

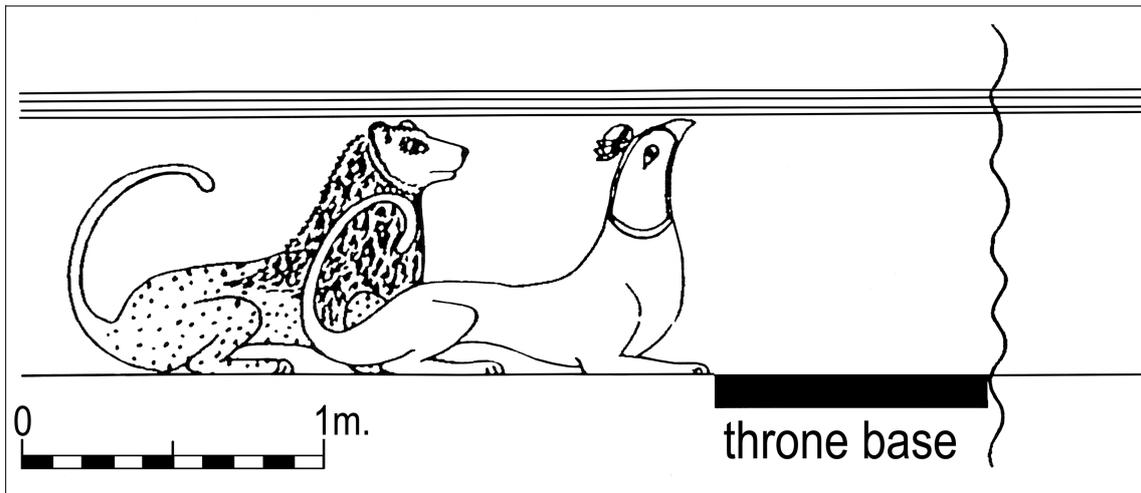


Fig. 1 Pylos, the east wall of the Throne Room (detail)

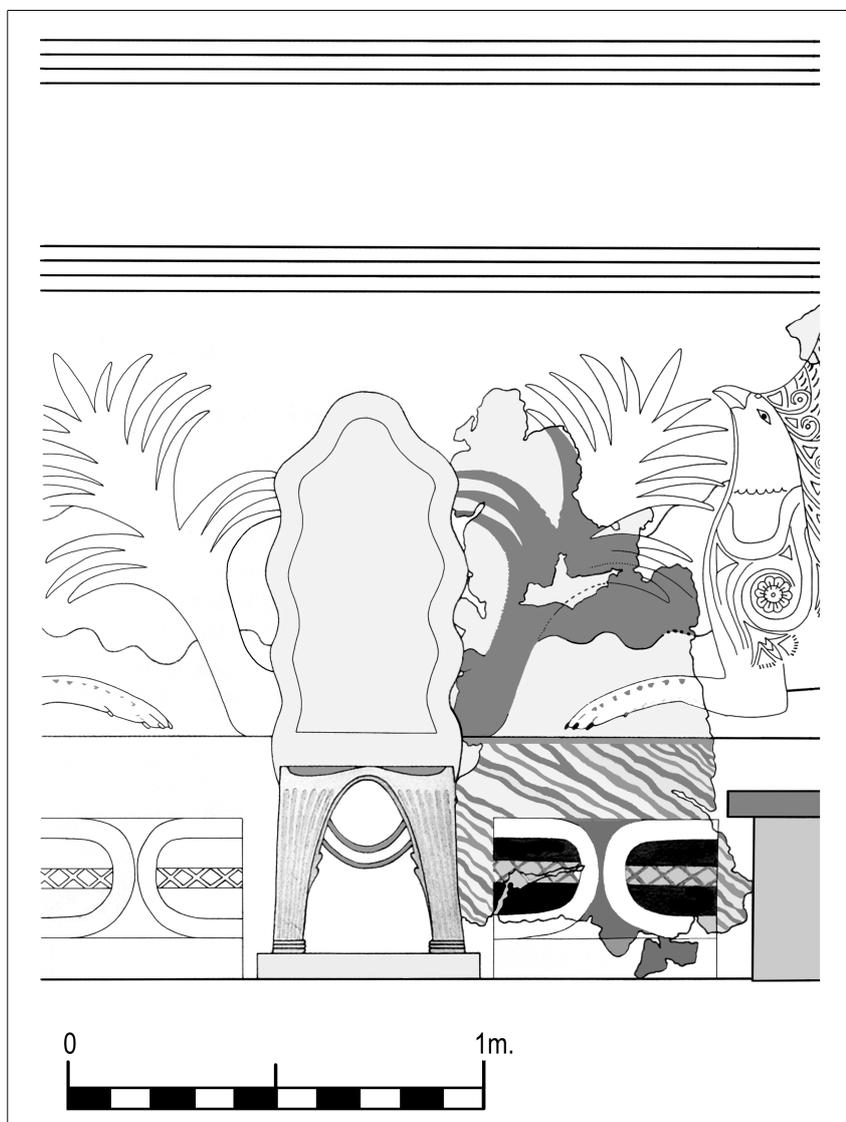


Fig. 2 Knossos, the north wall of the Throne Room (detail)