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THE SWORD IS A PLOUGHSHARE? INTERPRETING THE 'ARMED WOMAN' IN LATE BRONZE AGE AEGEAN ART

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Despite Late Bronze Age Aegean art containing a number of depictions of armed women, unacknowledged preconceptions about gender continue to divert thoughts away from past women exercising violent or coercive power, and thus affecting significantly our understanding of Late Bronze Age Aegean societies in general. This paper examines the depiction of armed women in the art of the Late Bronze Age Aegean and considers how previous generations of researchers have chosen to interpret it. The author then uses recent developments in gender theory and political theory to suggest that the connection of women to power needs to be reassessed.

INTRODUCTION

For over 120 years, the presence in Late Bronze Age (LBA) Aegean iconography of female figures with weapons and other items of military equipment has attracted comment (e.g. Gardner 1892–3; Evans 1930, 314; Persson 1942, 92; Nilsson 1950; Mylonas 1972; Càssola Guida 1975; Mylonas 1977; Rehak 1984; Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou 1993; Nikolaidou and Kokkinidou 1997; Kopaka 1999; Rehak and Younger 2009). This is, at least in part, due to the way in which it runs counter to a number of assumptions held by researchers. This iconography was at odds with the often highly gendered concepts of 'peaceful Minoans' (e.g. Meyer 1928, 785–94; Hutchinson 1962, 21; S. Marinatos 1973, 14; Willetts 1977, 64) and 'warlike Mycenaeans' (e.g. Vermeule 1964, 258; Taylour 1983, 135; Sherratt 2001, 229; Feuer 2011, 529) that had long dominated discussion of the period.[1] Even after the fall from dominance of those highly gendered approaches to violence in the LBA Aegean, iconographical analyses have been reluctant to discuss female figures with weapons in terms of violence or coercive power, a consequence of both dominant gender ideologies in western society (Wilson 1978, 125–9; Van der Dennen 1995, 593; Wrangham and Peterson 1996) and some strands of feminist thought (Addams 1916, 125–7; Woolf 1938; Brock-Utne 1985, 90–1; Eisler 1987; Spretnak 1990, 9–10). To paraphrase the authors of the Book of Isaiah (2:4), when it comes to depictions of women with weapons, interpretations turn swords into ploughshares. In an effort to move beyond such views, this paper will utilise current theories of gender archaeology to examine the iconography of 'armed women' and its broader significance in the societies of the LBA Aegean (Fig. 1). In the continuing debate over the role of women in social change (e.g. Rosaldo 1974; Schlegel 1977; Atkinson 1982; Bell 1993) and the effects upon women of 'state formation' (e.g. Leacock 1972; Ortner 1978; 1981; Gailey 1987), the examples provided by the various societies of the Aegean suggest that non-traditional models of power and complexity incorporating concepts of heterarchy originating in cybernetics and brought to anthropology and archaeology by the work of Crumley (1979; 1987; 1995) may offer new avenues for analysis.

The first part of this paper will discuss the material in question. The second part will interpret the material in the context of a wider view of gender and power in the LBA Aegean. I will begin by identifying examples of the 'armed woman' iconography of the LBA Aegean. The grounds for recognising women in these images are next discussed. This will be followed by a critique of the

[1] See Dickinson (2014) for an interesting partial inversion of this.

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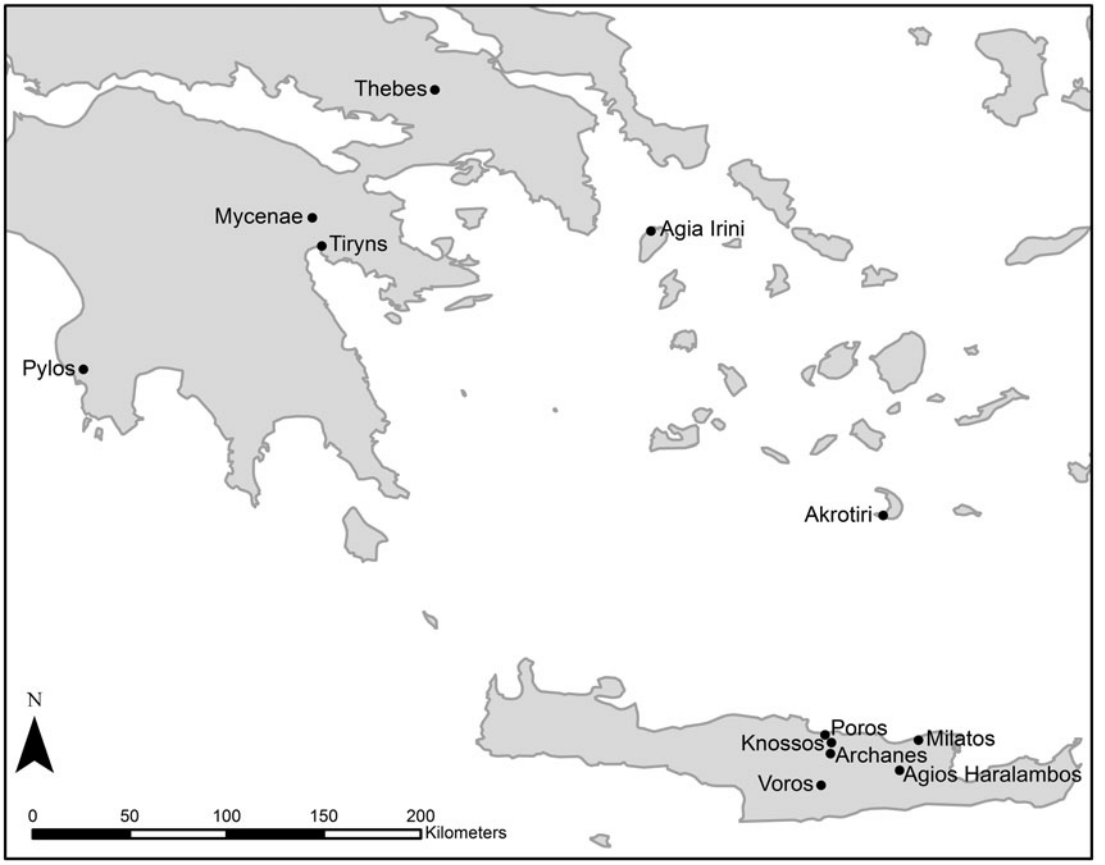

Fig. 1. Map showing Bronze Age sites mentioned in the text (author).

ways that previous researchers have discussed this material. Lastly, a new interpretation of the material will be put forward. The final outcome will be to demonstrate that previous research has distanced the meaning of this imagery from violence and coercion, and it will further be shown that re-connecting the imagery to those meanings has significant consequences for our understanding of elite women and power in the LBA Aegean.

'ARMED WOMEN' IN LBA AEGEAN ART

The criteria used in this article for including an image as an example of the 'armed woman' is of a feminine-coded human figure (based on physical characteristics, dress, or artistic conventions) depicted in close association with one or more items of military equipment (swords, spears, archery equipment, shields, helmets, body armour). This methodology yields the following list of examples, ordered chronologically:

1. A sealstone of red sardonyx from Knossos, depicting a figure with a long robe and clearly defined breast. In the figure's right hand is held a sword, while in the left is an object which has been interpreted as a scythe or a plumed scabbard. Date: Late Minoan (LM) IA. *CMS* II.3, no. 16. Fig. 2*a*.
2. A sealstone of unknown provenance held in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikenabteilung, said to be from Crete. It depicts a figure with a long robe, flat hat, and clearly depicted breasts aiming a bow to the right. A long object at belt level on the figure may represent a sword or dagger. Date: LM I. *CMS* XI, no. 26. Fig. 2*b*.

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Fig. 2. (a) Red sardonyx sealstone from Knossos (*CMS* II.3, no. 16). (b) Sealstone of unknown provenance, said to be from Crete (*CMS* XI, no. 26). (c) Gold ring of unknown provenance (*CMS* XI, no. 29). (d) Gold ring from the 'Acropolis Treasure' at Mycenae (*CMS* I, no. 17). (e) White lentoid sealstone of unknown provenance (*CMS* VII, no. 158).

3. A gold ring of unknown provenance held in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikenabteilung. In the centre of the field, a figure wearing a long flounced skirt aims a bow at a figure wearing a codpiece or loincloth, who faces left. The pair is flanked to the left by a further figure in a flounced skirt, with the lower body facing left and the upper body facing right. To the right of the central pair a figure in a skirt kneels before an object identified as a rock or sack, leaning on it with their left arm while holding their right arm out behind them. At the far right of the field is a tree. Above the central figures are one unidentified object and others identified as a double axe and two butterfly pupae. Date: LM I? *CMS* XI, no. 29. Fig. 2*c*.

4. A gold ring from the 'acropolis treasure' at Mycenae. Two figures with breasts, wearing long skirts, approach from the left a third figure, with similar attributes, sitting beneath a tree. Between the two figures and the seated figure is a large double axe. The seated figure is flanked by two companions represented at a much smaller scale, one of whom offers the

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seated figure flowers, the other of whom stretches their arms out towards the tree. To the far left of the field is a motif of six lion heads. In the upper register are a sun and a crescent moon, separated from the rest of the scene by a wavy double line which may represent clouds. Below and to the left of this set of wavy lines is a figure represented at a small scale, carrying a figure-of-eight shield and a spear or staff – the figure that is the basis for including this item in the list. Date: Late Helladic (LH) II. *CMS* I, no. 17. Fig. 2*d*.

5. A white amethyst lentoid seal of unknown provenance held in the British Museum. A central figure-of-eight shield is surmounted by a crested helmet. To each side of the shield are protrusions which may be intended to represent arms, the one on the left holding a pommelled sword. This may be mirrored in the damaged section of the seal to the right. Below the protrusions are objects which have been identified as representations of lion heads. The scene has been described as a panoply, or as a deity in military array (Càssola Guida 1973, 30). Date: LH II. *CMS* VII, no. 158. Fig. 2*e*.
6. A painted clay *larnax* from the North Cemetery at Knossos, showing a figure with an elaborate hairstyle or headdress and a long robe, armed with a spear and a round or figure-of-eight shield. Date: LM IIIA1. Danielidou 1998, 181–2. Fig. 3*a*.
7. A painted stucco plaque found in the 'cult centre' at Mycenae. Two figures with white skin, dressed in long robes, face a figure-of-eight shield placed between them. Elements of a third white-skinned figure, including parts of a head, left and right arms, and a foot, are associated with the shield, suggesting that it is being worn. A tapering yellow object apparently held in the right arm of this third figure has been interpreted as a sword or a spear. Immediately to the right of the shield, a small altar is depicted. Date: LH IIIA–B. Rehak 1984, 536–8; Immerwahr 1990, 121. Fig. 3*b*.
8. A fresco fragment from the 'cult centre' at Mycenae, depicting the head and shoulder of a white-skinned figure facing right. The figure wears a boar's tusk helmet and holds a small griffin. Date: LH IIIB. Immerwahr 1990, 121. Fig. 3*c*.
9. A fragmentary fresco from Room 31 of the 'cult centre' at Mycenae. The fresco is divided into two registers. The lower of the two depicts the upper part of a white-skinned figure holding sheaves of wheat (Taylour 1983, 56) or *Pinna nobilis* shells (Burke 2012, 175–6) in their raised arms. Part of a pillar and elements of a possible lion or griffin are visible next to the figure. The upper register, composed at a larger scale, depicts two white-skinned figures wearing long robes and facing each other. The upper part of the figure on the left is missing, but it is clear that they hold a large sword with the point resting on the floor. The figure on the right holds a long staff or sceptre. Between these two figures, two smaller figures are visible, rendered in black and placed some distance above the ground level of the composition, giving the impression of 'floating'. Date: LH IIIB. Rehak 1984, 539–41; Immerwahr 1990, 120–1; Rehak 1992, 47–53. Fig. 4*a*.
10. A fresco fragment from Thebes depicting the left-facing head, in profile, of a white-skinned figure wearing a boar's tusk helmet. Elements surrounding the head may indicate that it is looking through a window or battlement, although it is not clear that these elements are intended to depict architecture. Date: LH IIIB. Immerwahr 1990, 128. Fig. 4*b*.
11. A fresco fragment from a hunting scene at Tiryns depicting a hand with white skin holding a spear-shaft. Based on the apparent presence of spectators riding in chariots and a figure possibly represented at a larger scale wearing a flounced skirt, Anderson (1983) has suggested that the hunt has a religious character. Another fragment from this composition depicts what has been identified by Verlinden (1985, 142) as a quiver. Date: LH IIIB. Rodenwaldt 1912, 121. Fig. 4*c*.
12. A fresco fragment from Room 27 of the palace at Pylos, showing the hand and wrist of an archer with white skin, set against a blue background. Date: LH IIIB. Brecoulaki et al. 2008. Fig. 4*d*.
13. A painted *larnax* from Tholos 2 at Milatos, Crete. A human figure with no obvious garb or sexual characteristics is depicted with raised arms, the left of which holds, or rests against, a figure-of-eight shield. A pair of wavy lines are visible at each side of the figure's head, possibly intended to represent long hair. A fish is depicted below the figure's feet. Date: LM III. Danielidou 1998, 182. Fig. 4*e*.

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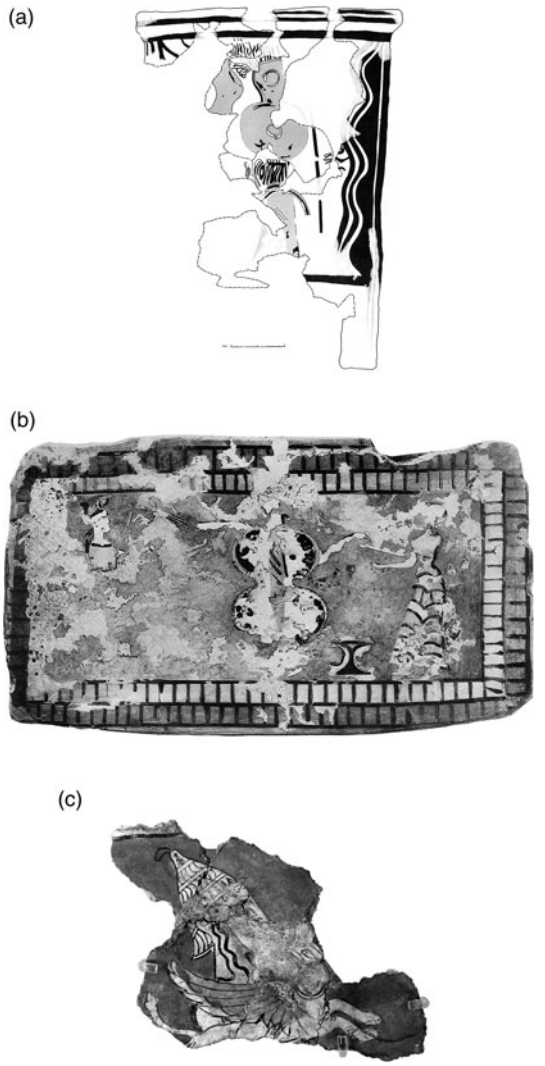

Fig. 3. (a) End of a painted *larnax* from Tomb 107.214 in the North Cemetery at Knossos (after Coldstream and Catling 1996, vol. 3, fig. 115). (b) Painted plaque from the 'Cult Centre' at Mycenae (Evans 1930, fig. 88). (c) Fresco fragment from the 'Cult Centre' at Mycenae (photo: David Smith).

14. An engraved bronze double axe from Voros, Crete, plausibly depicting human figures. Side A of the axe shows a figure-of-eight shield flanked by objects which have been variously identified as 'sacral knots' (Platon 1959, 387; Càssola Guida 1973, 163–4, no. 54), cult or other garments (Buchholz 1962b, 170; Verlinden 1985, 135–40), or rudimentary human figures (Small 1966, 104). Side B depicts a further example of this object flanked by objects which have been variously identified as a ritual object like Evans' 'snake frames' (Evans 1935, 168–76; Buchholz 1962b, 170), architectural elements (Small 1966, 106), ritual tankards (Onassoglou 1985, 23–8), or quivers (Verlinden 1985, 141–5). Date: LM III. Fig. 5.

Also relevant here due to the possibility that they represent human figures with weapons are a number of painted depictions of figure-of-eight shields surmounted by a small arc, including those on two LM IA three-handled jugs from Xeste 3 (Room 11) at Akrotiri on Thera (Danielidou 1998, 165–6), an LM IA–IB cup-rhyton from House A at Agia Irini on Kea (Danielidou 1998, 166), an LM IB cup-rhyton and amphoriskos-rhyton from the Stratigraphical

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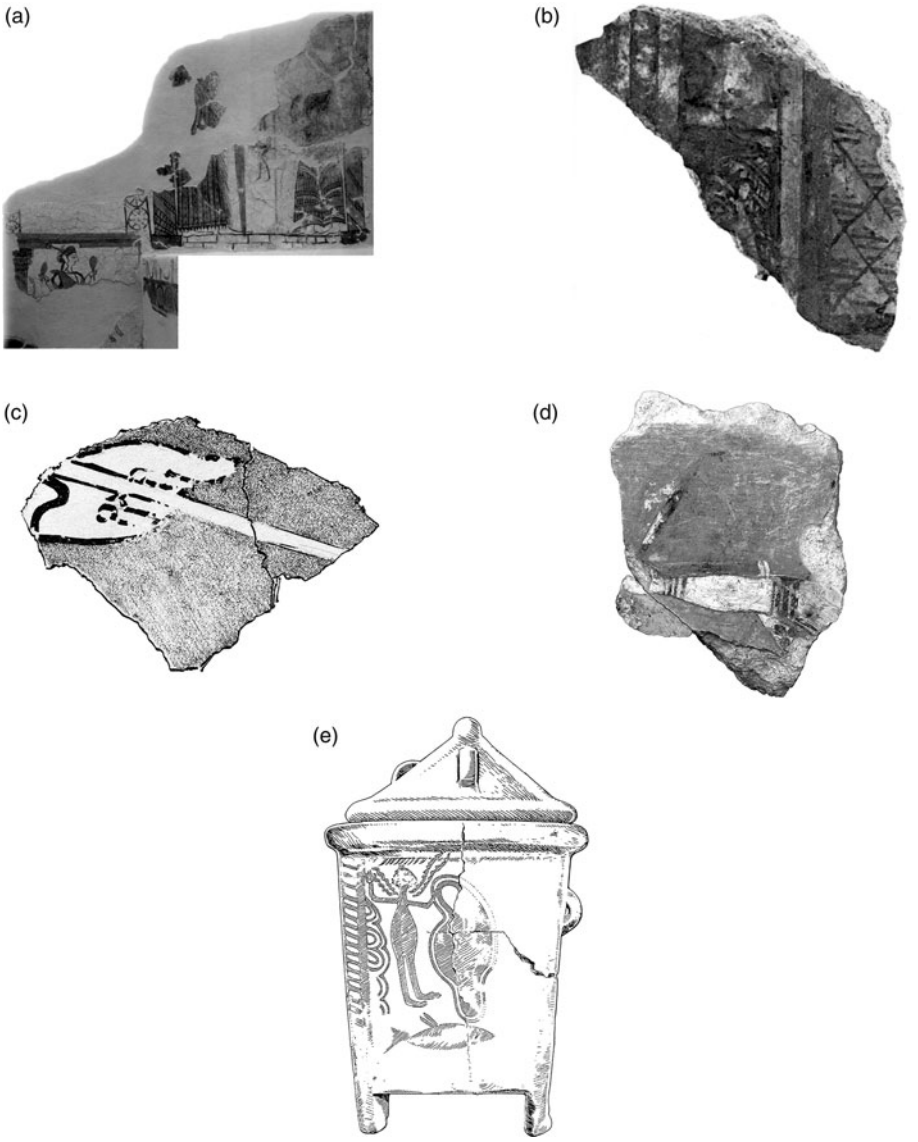

Fig. 4. (a) Reconstruction of a fresco from Room 31 of the 'Cult Centre' at Mycenae (Barringer 2014, fig. 1:45*a*). (b) Fresco fragment from Thebes (Morgan 1988, fig. 156). (c) Fresco fragment from Tiryns (Rodenwaldt 1912, pl. XIV:1). (d) Fresco fragment from Pylos (Brecoulaki et al. 2008, fig. 1). (e) End of a painted *larnax* from Milatos (Evans 1906, fig. 107).

Museum site at Knossos on Crete (Warren 1984, 20–1; Danielidou 1998, 167–8; Warren 2000, 462–3), and an LM I three-handled jug from Poros on Crete (Warren 2000, 463–4). These arcs have been interpreted as loops for hanging the shields from walls (Verlinden 1985, 146), though Peter Warren (1984, 23; 2000, 463–4) has argued that they may be intended to represent the head of a 'Shield Goddess', as suggested by Small (1966, 105) on the basis of parallels with the white amethyst lentoid seal (**5**) and the painted plaque from the 'cult centre' at Mycenae (**7**). Frescoes of LM / LH IIIA–B date depicting rows of figure-of-eight shields surmounted by a rosette are known from Knossos, Tiryns and Mycenae (Immerwahr 1990, 138–40), with the rosette, again, interpreted as the head of a 'Shield Goddess' (Mylonas 1977, 116; Immerwahr 1990, 140). However, M. Shaw (2012, 735) notes that the rosettes on the figure-of-eight shield fresco from Staircase 54 at Pylos are positioned between the shields, and suggests that they represent a hanging device rather than a head. Against this interpretation may be set an ivory

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Fig. 5. Bronze double axe from Voros, Side A (top) and Side B (bottom) (Buchholz 1962b, fig. 1*a*–*b*).

figure-of-eight shield from the area of the prehistoric cemetery at Mycenae, which is shown either surmounting a boulder or crowned with a disc (Papazoglou-Manioudaki 2012, 448–52), suggesting that circular devices atop shields are not necessarily hanging devices. The rosette has also been claimed as a solar symbol with connotations of kingship, on the model of Egyptian religion (N. Marinatos 2007b; 2009, 27). However, even if all of the examples of solar imagery given are correctly identified, giving it a divine meaning reaches beyond what can clearly be evidenced, as does constructing Minoan religion on Egyptian parallels. It is not possible to determine whether any or all of these depictions are in fact a stylised depiction of a human with a figure-of-eight shield, so they have not been included in the list of armed women but they do represent potential further examples.[2]

The images listed above range in date from LM IA to LH IIIB, a period of around 500 years (*c.* 1700–1200 BC) which encompasses the Neopalatial and Final Palatial periods on Crete and the early and palatial Mycenaean periods on the Greek mainland. In terms of spatial distribution, eight of the 14 examples (57.14%) are from the Greek mainland and the remaining 6 are from Crete (42.86%). The mainland examples are almost all associated with major palatial centres of southern and central Greece during the LH IIIB period, and Mycenae is a particularly strong focus for finds. The Cretan material is less associated with palatial centres, although Knossos was the find site for 2 of the 6 examples (33.33%), and is limited to the central and eastern parts of the island. As a phenomenon, then, the 'armed woman' iconography is very much a product of the latest palatial phases of the Aegean Bronze Age, with Mycenae and Knossos representing the sites most associated with it.

The first and, perhaps, most fundamental question to be addressed is whether, in fact, the figures depicted in these images can be confidently identified as women or female. In contemporary western terms 'woman' would be a term for gender, a cultural identity, and

[2] See Nikolaidou (2020) for an examination of the significance of figure-of-eight shield symbolism to Aegean Bronze Age societies.

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'female' would be a term for sex, a biological identification. Such a distinction is comparatively recent (e.g. Stoller 1968; Rubin 1975). However, it is understood that even the biological understanding of sex shows it to be a spectrum with clusters around particular nodes, rather than a simple binary (e.g. Nordbladh and Yates 1990, 224; Sofaer 2006, 92). It is also the case that not all human societies of the past or present thought of sex as binary (e.g. Nordbladh and Yates 1990; Gilchrist 1999, 58–64; Geller 2005; Voss 2006, 107–8; Joyce 2008, 18–19, 43–5). Human definitions and understandings of gender are perhaps even more varied (e.g. Herdt 1994; Gilchrist 1999, 54–78; Meskell 1999, 78–82). Given all of this, it might legitimately be asked why we would try and identify the sex and/or gender of figures depicted in ancient art. My preferred answer is that of Skogstrand (2016, 11): because the physical differences that constitute our understanding of 'male' and 'female' are visible across time, they may be used as an analytic category, a point of departure for research which can examine the diversity mentioned above through seeing whether physical differences were relevant or not, and how differences and similarities were expressed.

In terms of Aegean prehistoric art, previous generations of scholars have often adhered to Arthur Evans' (1900–1, 94; 1930, 208) scheme for frescoes of red-skinned figures representing males and white-skinned figures representing females, but more recent research has extensively critiqued this approach (Damiani Indelicato 1988; N. Marinatos 1989; B. Alberti 2002; 2005; N. Marinatos 2007a). Figures with black and yellow skins are also present in Aegean fresco painting (Evans 1928, 755–7; Immerwahr 1990, 96; Morgan 2000, 939), and examples exist of scenes in which figures appear to defy the convention: the white skinned bull-leapers at Knossos and Tiryns who wear clothing otherwise seen on red-skinned bull-leapers (Evans 1930, 209–18; Immerwahr 1990, 90–2, 110), or the red-skinned figures of the Knossos 'Campstool' fresco who wear apparently feminine clothing (Evans 1935, 381–95; Immerwahr 1990, 95). While skin colour may have relevance to the depiction of gender in Late Bronze Age Aegean art, it is not a straightforward indicator.

While it may be that the people of the prehistoric Aegean had artistic conventions which they used to differentiate male and female, man and woman, it is clear that modern researchers face considerable difficulty in reconstructing what these conventions were. Archaeologists cannot simply make the assumption that human societies have universally had a binary model of sex and gender (Weismantel 2013, 322; various contributions to Gaydarska et al. 2023), and being aware of the possibility that we are not dealing with such a society is important when interpreting art. Even if Aegean societies of this period did have strongly binary conceptions of sex and gender, gender systems are not totalising, and societies with strongly prescribed gendered behaviours may in fact generate more alternative gender identities than societies with more fluid concepts of gender (Robb and Harris 2018, 132–3). This must be borne in mind as we proceed to analyse images of 'armed women'.

In terms of sex, a set of criteria have been developed by Talalay (2000, 5 and n. 9) to examine Neolithic human figurines. While there are clearly differences in medium, chronology, and contexts of use between these figurines and the LBA material discussed above, the criteria nonetheless provide a useful method which may be applied here:

- Definite females are identified by the presence of female genitalia and/or breasts which do not appear to represent male nipples.
- Probable females are identified by the presence of breasts and secondary traits which occur repeatedly on definite females (e.g. design patterns painted onto the surface [in the case of Neolithic figurines] or particular physical attributes).
- Definite males are identified by male genitalia.
- Possible males are identified by secondary traits which also occur repeatedly on definite males (e.g. posture).
- Dual-sexed images are identified by the appearance of male genitalia and breasts which do not appear to represent male nipples.
- Sexless or sexually ambiguous pieces are identified by the absence of any recognisable sexual attributes or secondary traits that also occur repeatedly on sexable images.

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Applying these criteria to the above corpus of images yields **1** and **2** as definite females with weapons or military equipment, **4**, **5**, **7**, **8**, **10**, **11**, **12**, **13** and **14** as sexless or sexually ambiguous figures, and **3**, **6** and **9** as probable females if dress conventions are correctly understood. At this point we have already begun to discuss gender rather than sex. By its very nature, the process of decoding gender is a far more difficult one than sexing images. A more nuanced gendering of figures which pays close attention to features such as the body, hairstyle, costume, jewellery, colouring, pose, gesture, movement, activities and themes (Rehak 1998; Alexandri 2009, 21; Rehak and Younger 2009, 15; Newman 2017; Franković 2022) is required to achieve any meaningful understanding of gender construction in the Aegean Bronze Age. However, there is currently little consensus arising from such studies.[3] In particular, the possibility that LBA Aegean societies did not perceive gender as a binary system of men/women presents a challenge to modern interpretation, as do those images which may have been composed without any intention of coding for gender, or in the case of figurines perhaps as a genderless 'core' which would then have a gender applied to it through the application of perishable clothing. Even if a binary concept of sex and gender did exist in this period, it is entirely possible that ambiguity was deliberately invoked for religious or ceremonial purposes.[4]

The position taken in this paper is that, while we may not be able to provide a definitive sex or gender identity for a given image, it is possible to detect some patterning (Chapin 2012), with figures coded for gender by varying from male and female prototypes (Alexandri 2009, 21). Therefore, while we may not able to state with certainty that a weapon is held by a male or a female, or even by a man or a woman, we can say that a figure is coded to invoke masculine or feminine characteristics. While, as has been established above, the general pattern of white being used for feminine figures in fresco painting cannot be used to definitively categorise a figure as a woman, it would add images **7**, **8**, **10**, **11** and **12** to a category of scene in which weapons or military equipment are associated with figures that have been coded for a significant degree of femininity.

As will become clear, what is most striking about the corpus of images which appear to show or allude to armed female figures is the consistent manner in which their meaning has been interpreted by us.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE 'ARMED WOMEN'

Images of armed women in the corpus of LBA Aegean art have attracted comment and interpretation from a number of researchers, perhaps because they run counter to both modern conceptions of gender roles and ideas regarding gender roles in the Aegean Bronze Age.

Early interpretations (Gardner 1892–3; Evans 1930, 314) identified the figure-of-eight shield as the embodiment of a deity often identified as female on the basis of parallels to the Pallas Athena of later Greek religion. These religious interpretations continued into later periods, with Persson (1942, 92) seeing the shield as a symbol of divine protection and Small (1966) suggesting that it was the symbol of a protective goddess in Crete, who was then developed into a 'warrior goddess' by the Mycenaeans. Both authors again make a comparison to the later Pallas Athena as part of their interpretation. Vermeule (1974, 51–2) believed that the shield was either an attribute of a goddess or her personification. Borchhardt (1977, 12–15) argued that the shield was an attribute of a war or hunting deity on the basis of a ritual interpretation of scenes in which it appears, without specifying a sex or gender for the deity concerned.

What is most striking about these interpretations is the desire to find a Bronze Age version of Pallas Athena, which requires reading back Classical Greek religion some 700–1000 years. The

[3] See, for example, the conclusions reached in Lee (2000), B. Alberti (2002; 2005), Alexandri (2009), Chapin (2012), Newman (2017), Morgan (2020) and Franković and Matić (2023).

[4] Evans 1935, 385–6; Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1971, 128–9; Hitchcock 2000; 2009. See Geller (2005, 602–4) for 'gender impersonation' or 'gender bending' performances and power in Classic Maya societies, including women associating themselves with militarism.

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only current evidence for Athena in the Bronze Age is the presence of the term *a-ta-na-po-ti-ni-ja* ('Mistress Athana') on Linear B tablet KN V 52 + 52 bis + 8285 from Knossos, although Athana is plausibly the name of a settlement (Duhoux 2008, 276–8; Hiller 2011, 183). Even if a deity called Athena existed in this period, there is no evidence of her having the attributes associated with her by the Classical Greeks.

The concept of a 'warrior deity' has also proved influential in interpreting this iconography. Martin Nilsson (1950, 406–12) is unusual in generally viewing the figure-of-eight shield as not a cult object on the basis that he does not see any clear cult-scenes featuring the shield. Instead he sees the shield as part of the equipment of a Mycenaean 'war goddess', and armed figures in Minoan art as representing a male hunting god, due to his perception of Minoan art being less violent in nature than Mycenaean art. Mylonas (1972, 27–9; 1977, 115–16) saw the shield as the symbol of a goddess of war who was worshipped in the cult centre at Mycenae, with their function being one related to rites involving animal sacrifices to a divinity. Càssola Guida (1973, 30) interprets the figure-of-eight shield as a cult object based upon the idea that it was no longer used as a weapon after LH I, and through the hypothesis of a Mycenaean 'warrior god'. In her later work (Càssola Guida 1975), male and female war deities are identified, characterised by the attributes of the figure-of-eight shield and the boar's tusk helmet respectively. This interpretation is based upon the Aegean colour convention for depicting male or female figures (see above), Linear B texts, and a comparison once again to the later Pallas Athena. Perhaps most influentially, Rehak (1984; 1999) identified the armed figures as a 'warrior goddess' originating in Crete and later being adopted on the Greek mainland on the basis of the generally religious nature and/or context of the depictions, and on the Minoanising elements found in the Mycenaean depictions. In a later work (Rehak and Younger 2009) it is suggested that the attribute of the figure-of-eight shield is symbolically removed from connotations of hunting or militarism and is, instead, associated with females, the natural world, the practice of bull sacrifice, and sanctuaries. This is on the basis that the shield appears in scenes of sanctuaries with tree-pulling and *Omphalos*-embracing, and with women in the *lactans* or breast-holding pose. While Hooker (1996) accepts the likelihood of a 'war goddess' in Mycenaean Greece, he disputes whether any extant iconography actually depicts such a figure. He suggests, instead, that both the 'acropolis treasure' ring from Athens and the 'cult centre' plaque from Mycenae depict a hybrid of separate Minoan motifs of a descending divinity and a warrior covered with a figure-of-eight shield by Mycenaean artists unaware of their original significance. The iconography of the figure-of-eight shield without any human elements he sees as a purely decorative motif with no cult significance. Overall, this iconography is said to have developed through Mycenaean misunderstandings of the actual meanings of various Minoan motifs.

These interpretations of the 'armed woman' iconography are again striking for their reliance on the later figure of Pallas Athena. What is also apparent is that even the 'war goddess' is not always connected to violence; a confused position was perhaps epitomised by Mylonas (1977, 115–16), who identifies the place of worship of the 'Goddess of war' partly by the presence of frescoes which 'exhibit subjects of a peaceful and even religious nature', while even the frieze of figure-of-eight shields 'was not symbolic of … military prowess and achievement but possessed another special meaning'. In the case of Rehak's later work (Rehak and Younger 2009), it is particularly strange that he argues for the removal of the shield from contexts of hunting or militarism while simultaneously connecting it to bull-sacrifice and noting that in the LM IB 'cult basement' at Knossos a cup-rhyton decorated with figure-of-eight shields was associated with the bones of children bearing cut marks consistent with the removal of flesh (Rehak and Younger 2009, 12; see also Warren 1980–1, 79–92). Once again, violent connotations and contexts for this imagery become muted in our interpretations.

Perhaps representing an opposite pole to interpretations favouring a warrior deity, there is also a body of explanations favouring a connection to fertility. Warren (1984; 2000) sees the shield as embodying a nature goddess with connections to fertility, through an identification of stylised sea squills associated with some depictions of the figure-of-eight shield. Later beliefs in the regenerative powers of the plant are used to suggest the possibility of similar associations in the

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LBA. N. Marinatos (1986, 52–8) challenged the association of the figure-of-eight shield with a war goddess, arguing instead that on Crete the shield was associated with males and was a cult implement used in the worship of a hunting god, or related to a 'vegetation festival', an interpretation based upon Cretan depictions of the shield being carried by apparently masculine figures, and the hunting or sacrifice required to manufacture a shield.

As with the interpretations of the 'armed woman' iconography as a warrior goddess with a curiously pacific nature, the interpretation of the imagery as being connected with fertility once again seems to distance women from concerns of violence. Even if the identification of sea squills is correct, their significance remains uncertain, and it is not clear that they should characterise the whole significance of the figure-of-eight shield. Claiming an association between men and the shield does not help us interpret the shield when it is depicted with women, nor is it apparent what the connection between a shield and a 'vegetation festival' would be.

Some interpretations have placed more emphasis on the possibility of connections between the 'armed woman' iconography and violence. Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou (1993; Nikolaidou and Kokkinidou 1997) argue that the presence of armed male and female figures in LBA Aegean art represents the arrival of violent trends to Aegean religion, introduced by a greater participation of males in cult activities, in contrast to earlier periods in which such activities would have been more matrifocal. This reading posits that the 'armed women' have a more warlike character but retain some part of their long-standing association with fertility (Nikolaidou and Kokkinidou 1997, 184–5). Overall, Nikolaidou and Kokkinidou see the use of symbolically violent imagery in the LBA Aegean as simultaneously supporting and subverting the dominant order. This dialectic is suggested, furthermore, to be an explicitly gendered one, with violent androcentric values being subverted by the strong female element of the LBA Aegean religious domain. If the author correctly understands the discussion of post-Freudian psychology which opens Nikolaidou and Kokkinidou's 1997 paper, these violent men and peaceful women are to be understood in timeless, essentialised terms.

The analysis of Kopaka (1999), while seeking to place women into the social phenomenon of warfare, relates 'armed woman' iconography to the initiation rites of adolescent women in some Aegean Bronze Age societies. In this reading, the transition to adulthood was marked by a ritual performance of war for both males and females, after which they would move into separate adult worlds revolving around warfare (for males) and the home (for females). The role of the home in the female initiation ritual is signified by the presence of architectural elements in the figural scenes featuring 'armed women'. This interpretation is based upon the idea that maternal care would make women responsible for transmitting cultural ideas about society to children, and on the presence of non-combatant women in militaristic scenes such as the frescoes from Akrotiri on Thera or the 'siege rhyton' from Mycenae, in addition to the iconography discussed in this article.

While Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou's analysis is perhaps the most developed and nuanced, it remains based around an essentialised view of masculine and feminine relationships to violence, so the 'armed woman' must represent women subverting masculine violence, or ritualised violence must actually be about the control and elimination of violence (Nikolaidou and Kokkinidou 1997, 190). Kopaka's interpretation encounters the problem of why children would receive the same initiation rite connected to warfare when they would subsequently move into separate and highly gendered spheres.

Overall, previous researchers have tended to distance the 'armed woman' iconography from violence. While we should be aware that any given object can be, and often is, encoded with a variety of contextual meanings, there appears to be an underlying belief within modern academic discourse that women cannot be associated with violence. Certainly, the variety of symbolic meanings proposed for weaponry and military equipment in Aegean art is much reduced when they are associated with apparently male figures. Is the main determinant for the non-martial reading of a sword, a shield or a boar's tusk helmet simply the observation that it is held by an apparently female figure?

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In order to produce new interpretations of 'armed woman' iconography which move beyond the consciously, or unconsciously, gendered interpretations of the recent past, there are a number of possibilities which must be considered. Many of the interpretations discussed above revolve around divine explanations, in the form of a war and/or hunting deity. While the context of much of the material does suggest a cult or ceremonial connotation, it has proven difficult to distinguish deities in LBA Aegean art. It is also the case that, as Rehak (1998, 192) has noted, by seeing every feminine depiction in Aegean art as a deity, we render the landscape curiously devoid of powerful mortal women.

Should this iconography be taken as a sign that LBA Aegean women and/or people who would in modern western terms be considered of non-binary gender (Herdt 1994) participated in violent acts such as hunting and warfare? The evidence of various historical and ethnographic cultures around the globe (Estioko-Griffin and Griffin 1981; Burbank 1994; Koehler 1997; Alpern 1998; Goldstein 2001, 59–127; Hollimon 2001; Loman 2004, 44–53; Pennington 2010; Fabre-Serris and Keith 2015; Carney 2021) makes it clear that we cannot reject the idea out of hand. It might be argued that none of these representations actually depict feminine-coded figures engaging in violent acts, in a manner similar to Nikolaidou and Kokkinidou's (1997, 182) proposal that in Aegean art the act of animal sacrifice is always depicted being carried out by masculine-coded figures, although feminine-coded figures are seen carrying dead animals and bronze double-axes. This suggests that direct associations between violent acts and femininity were ideologically unacceptable, whether or not they occurred in reality, although Molloy's (2012, 131) identification of shared elements between scenes of competition, hunting, violence and sacrifice as part of a symbolic grammar of dominance and power means that we should be cautious about making unequivocal judgements. The interment of weapons and military equipment in graves with female-sexed[5] human skeletons is a recognised global phenomenon[6] and one also evident in the LBA Aegean. Examples of weaponry and artistic depictions of martial themes interred with female-sexed skeletons range from Grave Circles A and B at Mycenae to tholos tombs at Archanes on Crete (see Appendix A).[7] Such items should not be regarded biographically (Härke 1990; Whitley 2002). But if they are regarded as being linked to performances and displays connected to rank and status when found with male-sexed skeletons, why not also when found with female-sexed skeletons?

Crete provides examples of female-sexed skeletal remains bearing signs of osteological trauma consistent with inter-human violence. The cave of Agios Haralambos was used in Middle Minoan IIB for the secondary burial of remains that had earlier received primary burial at a different location. Osteological analysis of these remains yielded evidence of trauma to the skull in three females, 11 males, one child, and one individual who could not be sexed (Chlouveraki et al. 2008, 581–94; McGeorge 2011). At Mochlos a basement room in the west wing of Building B2, which was destroyed in LM IB, contained a female-sexed skull with a hole in the cranium (Soles 1999, 57–8). By its very nature, osteological trauma may be more likely to identify victims, rather than the perpetrators, of violence, although an individual can be simultaneously both perpetrator and victim (Ferguson 2021, 118).

[5] The term used in this paper for skeletal material to which archaeologists have assigned a sex based upon either associated grave-goods or bioarchaeological analysis of the human remains. See Geller (2005) for further discussion.

[6] Arnold 1991, 369–70; Lucy 1997; Gilchrist 1999, 64–71; Shepherd 1999; Doucette 2001; Mägi 2002, 77–81; Guliaev 2003; Wang 2004; Cool 2005; Simniškytė 2007; Rubinson 2008; Vavouranakis 2009; Horváth 2017; Haas et al. 2020. See also Moilanen et al. (2021) for an early medieval grave at Suontaka Vesitorninmäki in Finland, in which a sword was buried with an individual with the chromosomal sex XXY, and for the suggestion that the grave assemblage might indicate that this was a person who would be thought of as non-binary in contemporary western culture.

[7] For the Early Iron Age Aegean, see Blandin (2007, 112) for a possible burial of a sword with a female-sexed skeleton in Bouratza T.3 at Eretria in Euboea and the argument by Harrell (2014) that the female-sexed skeleton buried with a dagger in the Heroön at Lefkandi should be considered a burial with weapons.

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The discussion of burials with weapons in Aegean prehistory and in archaeology more broadly has in recent decades been concerned with the question of whether such interments can be described as 'warrior graves' (Härke 1990; Treherne 1995; Whitley 2002; Frieman et al. 2017; Georganas 2018), with a broad consensus arising that these burials should be seen as an expression of a social status. To use Georganas' (2018, 191) phrasing 'In the Bronze Age, as in later periods, being a male member of the aristocracy usually meant being a "real man". A "real man" meant being identified as a warrior.' This is not incorrect, but we should consider whether being a 'real man' – or possessing at least some of its defining characteristics – was limited to males. Molloy (2012, 89) has proposed that in the Bronze Age Aegean a warrior identity was enacted through competitive displays including bull-leaping, boxing, hunting, combat training, and fighting, while Franković and Matić (2023, 56) believe that such activities were how elite boys acquired masculinity. We have already seen above that the white-skinned figures present in some depictions of bull-leaping have led to suggestions that women took part in these displays, and that several of the depictions of armed women – particularly those with archery equipment – have been interpreted as women engaged in hunting.[8] For boxing, at least one of the figures engaged in the activity in a fresco from Building Beta at Akrotiri on Thera has been suggested to be a girl on the basis of a slightly lighter shade of red used for the skin and the presence of a gold earring worn by women in other depictions.[9] It is also the case that, as noted by Parr (2014), the comparative lack of osteological studies carried out in Minoan archaeology means that any of the numerous LM II–IIIA weapon-burials near Knossos (L. Alberti 2004) – held to be of men largely because they are weapon-burials – could be the burial of a woman. The possibility that at least some of the violent, risky lifeways that were part of elite status for LBA Aegean men were also open to LBA Aegean women must surely have consequences for our understandings of political power in the period.

Any consideration of women and power in Aegean prehistory inevitably exists in the shadow of 'prehistoric matriarchies', a position advanced in Aegean archaeology by Evans,[10] part of a more general intellectual movement concerning prehistoric matriarchy and the 'Mother Goddess' or 'Great Goddess' which extended into the middle of the twentieth century (Goodison and Morris 1998, 7–9). More recently, the matristic 'Old Europe' reconstructed by Marija Gimbutas (1974; 1989; 1991) has proven influential, particularly at a popular level. Such views have now been largely rejected by archaeologists (Nixon 1983; Talalay 1994; Conkey and Tringham 1995; Meskell 1995), and to posit the existence of one or more matristic systems in the Bronze Age Aegean based on the prominent artistic depiction of women (Thomas 1973; Rehak 1998, 197) is methodologically naïve.[11] Recent work by Driessen (2010; 2012) has argued on the basis of architectural studies that Cretan societies of the Neolithic down to Neopalatial were 'house societies' on the model of Lévi-Strauss (1982) in which society is composed of corporate groups materially represented by a physical structure and objects associated with it. Many house societies are matrilocal (married couples reside with the wife's family) and matrilineal (kinship is traced through the mother), which often results in a higher social status for women. While a matrilocal and matrilineal society would meet some definitions of matriarchy (Göttner-

[8] See Morris (1990) for connections between hunting and warfare.

[9] S. Marinatos 1971, 49; Säflund 1986, 187–8. Blakolmer (1993, 14–15, n. 77) disputes that earrings reliably denote women in LBA Aegean art.

[10] Evans 1930, 58, 227. Evans' views were influenced by the work of Johann Bachofen (1861), James Frazer (1906–15) – although Frazer did not subscribe to the concept of prehistoric matriarchies – and Jane Harrison (1903): see Eller (2012).

[11] See Graeber and Wengrow (2021) for an attempted resurrection of both Gimbutas' ideas and a female-led Minoan society. For reasons of space a full critique of this will have to take place elsewhere, but suffice it to say that Gimbutas being plausibly correct that Proto-Indo-European languages originated on the northern shores of the Black Sea does not address the many archaeological inaccuracies that have been identified in her presentation of 'Old Europe'. With regards to Bronze Age Crete, Minoan art does not lack plausible depictions of male authority figures (Younger 1995), and the archaeology of the Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods gives ample evidence for military activity (e.g. S. Alexiou 1979; Alusik 2007; Molloy 2012).

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Abendroth 2007, 4), Driessen explicitly argues against Bronze Age Crete being matriarchal, noting that in most matrilineal societies it is men who hold power (Driessen 2012, 141).

While the universality of male domination in human societies has been a matter of debate (e.g. Rosaldo 1974; Schlegel 1977; Atkinson 1982; Bell 1993), the discussion of women in 'state' societies has tended to follow Engels (1884 [1972]) in arguing that such societies feature a universal subordination of women (e.g. Leacock 1972; Gailey 1987). The most significant deviation from this pattern has been the work of Ortner (1978; 1981), which has put forward the view that the rise of 'state' society in fact enhanced the status of women. Certainly it is possible to find examples of 'state' societies in which women attain positions of power, wealth and status (Wheatley and See 1978; Rohrlich 1980; Bay 1998; Nelson 1998). Rather than adhere to any universalised scheme, it may be most productive to focus on the culturally and historically specific developments which occurred in the gender relations of past societies (Rapp 1977; Silverblatt 1988; Pyburn 2004). While most known societies may be patriarchal, there is significant variation in women's power in those societies.

Textual research into LBA Aegean societies has recently demonstrated the existence of elite women with access to some forms of power in the LM / LH IIIA–B periods. At Knossos, while men appear to have controlled more property, personnel and commodities than women, the Linear B texts attest to the presence of non-priestly women who owned land and controlled foodstuffs, slaves, livestock, textiles and luxury goods. These women are recorded in the documents in a manner analogous to that of male landowners (Olsen 2014, 257). At Pylos the situation is different (contra the more utopian account given by Billigmeier and Turner 1981), with economic status limited to female cult officials who controlled leased (rather than owned) land, and control over foodstuffs, textiles, and commodities including bronze (Olsen 2014, 255). These *ka-ra-wi-po-ro* ('key-bearers') are linked by Younger (1992, 272–3, 276) to a number of depictions of feminine-coded figures which he identifies as wearing the administrative technology of lentoid seals, including the figure holding the sheaves of wheat or *Pinna nobilis* shells in the fresco from Room 31 of the 'cult centre' at Mycenae (**9**). This control of economic resources must have implications for our understanding of power in LBA Aegean societies, at least at the level of political economy (Sanday 1974; Leacock 1987, 33–4) and for particular segments of society.

To return to the 'armed woman' iconography, it is clear that we should avoid a totalising explanation given the variation which exists in both the medium of representation and the nature of the scenes depicted. Such is well exemplified by the high number of archery depictions in the corpus, compared to the generally low presence of the bow in LBA Aegean iconography (Snodgrass 1967, 17–18). It is, therefore, possible that archery had strongly gendered connotations in the LBA Aegean world, although we should remain aware of some depictions of military archery in the art of the period (e.g. Sakellariou 1974; 1975), and that archery equipment could form part of weapon-burials.[12] The use of boar's tusk helmets, figure-of-eight shields, and swords in palatial iconography suggests that these items form part of a language of power. As such, the concentration of such items iconographically associated with feminine-coded figures in the 'cult centre' at Mycenae (**7**, **8**, **9**) is of particular interest, given the combination of a comparatively circumscribed social and political role for women and their strong presence in Mycenaean cult activities. The concept of the 'cult centre' as an entity separate from the palace has been articulated by a number of scholars,[13] and while westernised concepts of a separate church and state are inappropriate (Nikolaidou 2012, 42), it may be productive to consider the 'palace' not as a monolithic entity but rather as a location in which competing forms of power were articulated. In such a context, depictions of 'armed women' may have served to lay claim to particular types of power, and perhaps more explicitly those

[12] Karo 1933, 1.113; Buchholz 1962a, 4–20; Mylonas 1973, 1.88. Franković and Matić (2020, 359, 368) argue for the bow ranking hierarchically below the spear and the sword in both iconography and burial evidence, although they themselves are cautious about this given the comparatively small number of depictions of the bow.

[13] E.g. Mylonas 1977, 126–7; Iakovidis 2004. See Wright (1994, 61–3), Albers (2001, 132–4) and Maran (2006, 77 and n. 20) for an opposing view.

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connected to coercive authority. As Jensen and Matić (2017, 14) have recently pointed out, cosmologies and belief systems are not innocent alternatives to violence, as they are deeply entangled with the material realities of power. Nikolaidou (2020, 9) has recently spoken of the use of violent, competitive imagery by women in the LBA Aegean as representing their appropriation of the dominant ideology, but it is also possible that women were always involved in the creation and maintenance of that ideology.

The maintenance of such a view would, perhaps, require reassessment of the political structure of Mycenaean palatial society, often still described in terms of a pyramidal vertical control hierarchy (Kilian 1988). The work of Crumley (1979; 1987; 1995) has introduced concepts of heterarchy into anthropology and archaeology. Heterarchy describes a situation in which elements are either unranked or have the potential to be ranked in a number of different ways (Crumley 1995, 3). As such, heterarchy is not a model of how a particular society operates, and it is possible to describe a variety of social systems as heterarchical (Moore and González-Álvarez 2021, 127). Rather than a pyramid, societies might be better represented by a trapezoid (Hill 2011, 254–5) or as a network of nodes (Mytum 2018). Concepts of heterarchy have been applied to the LBA Aegean, with one recent study using Cretan and mainland societies as poles on a continuum between 'corporate' and 'network' societies, contrasting 'corporate' theocratic Cretan heterarchical societies with 'network' mainland hierarchies based on economic control (Parkinson and Galaty 2007). This, however, ignores the potential for more horizontal or heterarchical relationships of power in the Mycenaean world. We have already discussed the possibility of the 'cult centre' at Mycenae operating separately from the palace, and should resist the assumption that religious power must be inferior to political power.[14] Traditional models of the 'state' (e.g. Flannery 1972; Service 1975; Rousseau 1985) have demonstrated little scope for the theorising of female political action, but heterarchical concepts (at least in the broader descriptive sense accepted by Saitta and McGuire [1998]) may prove useful in its future analysis. Heterarchical concepts offer one way of moving beyond strictly binary conceptions of gender, and of exploring the way in which gender may be cross-cut by multiple other aspects of a social order (Levy 2006; Hutson, Hanks and Pyburn 2013). As such, heterarchical concepts might offer the most appropriate method for further exploring the position of women with regards to violent power in LBA Aegean societies that has been outlined in this article.

CONCLUSION

This article has demonstrated that, despite the difficulties of interpreting gender in prehistoric art, it is possible to identify a body of images in the LBA Aegean which represent feminine-coded figures with weaponry of various types. The possibility that some or all of this imagery relates to people who would be considered transgender or non-binary in contemporary western terms cannot be ruled out, but it is also impossible to state with certainty given our current levels of knowledge. It has also been shown that for much of the history of its study, the 'armed woman' iconography has been interpreted in terms which implicitly conform to modern gender ideologies: when carried by apparently female figures, weapons have nothing to do with violence, but are removed from such meanings, often through their identification as the attributes of a deity. Through the use of ethnographic and historical material, this article has demonstrated that such conclusions are premature given the evidence for women engaging in violent acts of a variety of types.

The position that the 'armed woman' in Aegean art represented a connection between women and violence was then used for a deeper consideration of the role of women, violence and power in the societies of the LBA Aegean. Beyond artistic depictions of feminine-coded figures with weaponry, examples also exist of the burial of female-sexed skeletons with weaponry as grave goods. If found with male-sexed skeletons, such items would be used as evidence of either direct

[14] Al-Zubaidi 2004, 128. See Molloy (2012, 118–19) for the important connections between religion and warfare in the LBA Aegean.

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participation in or the ideological invoking of violent lifeways for the purpose of creating and demarking an elite social status. Given that in Aegean art of the period, apparently feminine-coded figures are depicted undertaking activities such as hunting and bull-leaping, this article poses the question as to whether such lifeways could also be invoked by women for political purposes? Using recent research both into the Linear B texts of the period, and of historical and ethnographic examples, this paper has proposed women's participation in political power in the LBA Aegean, a challenge to traditional assumptions of the social and political role of women, not only in the LBA Aegean, but in other contexts also.[15] The view espoused in this paper that aspects of Late Bronze Age gender relations are explicable neither by analogy to contemporary western society nor to the Classical period offers a meaningful contribution to the increasing 'de-familiarisation' of the prehistoric Aegean past (Hamilakis 2002, 18–19).

The consequences of this 'de-familiarisation', achieved partly through placing the Bronze Age Aegean in its global context through the use of ethnographic material, have also been shown to extend to our models of society themselves. The possibility of non-binary gender identities in the past is something which must be borne in mind when interpreting our evidence, even in contexts such as the LBA Aegean where it is yet to be unequivocally demonstrated that such identities were recognised by the societies under study. The role of women in generating and benefitting from violence (e.g. Lowie 1935, 215; M. Alexiou 1974, 21–2; Šterbenc Erker 2009, 144–9) is something which has been outlined here, and is perhaps worth further exploration both within and without studies of the LBA Aegean. Heterarchical concepts, as elaborated above, may provide a more useful way of exploring women's positions regarding power and violence than older models of strict hierarchy. Four decades since gender began to be an explicit focus of archaeological research (Nixon 1983; Conkey and Spector 1984), many directions remain to be explored.

APPENDIX A: INTERMENTS OF WEAPONRY AND/OR MARTIAL IMAGERY WITH FEMALE-SEXED SKELETONS IN THE LBA AEGEAN

Mycenae Grave Circle B Grave Delta

The female-sexed skeleton *Myc*. 60 from Grave Delta, Grave Circle B was associated with a gold sword hilt (Mylonas 1973, 1.81–2; Rehak 1999, 230 and n. 21). Date: Middle Helladic (MH) III–LH I.

Mycenae Grave Circle B Grave Theta

A female-sexed skeleton was associated with a bronze blade (Mylonas 1966, 98; 1973, 1.109; Rehak 1999, 230 and n. 31). Date: MH III–LH I.

Mycenae Grave Circle A Grave III

The grave contained the remains of individuals sexed as one female, one male, one probable male, and one sub-adult (Papazoglou-Manioudaki et al. 2010, 171–80; Dickinson et al. 2012, 173–5). The grave goods included several seals with depictions of inter-human and human–animal combats (*CMS* I, nos 9–12; Schliemann 1878, 164; Angel 1973, 391; Dickinson 1977, 48). The nature of the original excavation makes it impossible to determine which seals were associated with which skeletons, but most of the grave goods have been associated with the female-sexed skeleton (Papazoglou-Manioudaki et al. 2010, 160–1; Dickinson et al. 2012, 174), and it seems reasonable to count the seals among them. Date: LH I.

[15] See Arnold (1991; 1995; 2002; 2012) and Harrell (2014) for further examples from European prehistory.

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Myrsinohori-Routsi Tholos 2
A female-sexed skeleton was interred with two inlaid daggers (D'Onofrio 2011, 654; Harrell 2014, 101). Date: LH II–IIIA1.

Archanes Tholos Tomb A
A female-sexed skeleton was associated with ivory reliefs of figure-of-eight-shields and human heads wearing boar's tusk helmets (Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1991, 82–5; 1997, 721–9). Date: LM IIIA1/2.

Archanes Tholos Tomb Δ
A female-sexed skeleton was accompanied by a figure-of-eight shield shaped bead (Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1991, 128–35). Date: LM IIIA2.

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Το Σπαθί είναι Υνί; Ερμηνεύοντας την "ένοπλη γυναίκα" στην τέχνη της Ύστερης Εποχής του Χαλκού στο Αιγαίο.

Παρά το γεγονός ότι η αιγαιακή τέχνη της Ύστερης Εποχής του Χαλκού περιέχει αρκετές απεικονίσεις ένοπλων γυναικών, οι ανομολόγητες προκαταλήψεις σχετικά με το φύλο εξακολουθούν να εκτρέπουν τις σκέψεις μακριά από τις γυναίκες του παρελθόντος στο να ασκούν βίαιη ή εξαναγκαστική εξουσία, επηρεάζοντας έτσι αισθητά την άποψή μας για τις κοινωνίες του Αιγαίου της Ύστερης Εποχής του Χαλκού εν γένει. Η παρούσα μελέτη εξετάζει την απεικόνιση των ένοπλων γυναικών στην τέχνη του Αιγαίου της Ύστερης Εποχής του Χαλκού και εξετάζει τον τρόπο με τον οποίο οι προηγούμενες γενιές ερευνητών επέλεξαν να την ερμηνεύσουν. Στη συνέχεια, ο συγγραφέας χρησιμοποιεί τις πρόσφατες εξελίξεις στη θεωρία του φύλου και την πολιτική θεωρία για να προτείνει ότι η σύνδεση των γυναικών με την εξουσία πρέπει να επανεκτιμηθεί.

Μετάφραση: Β. Μανωλοπούλου

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