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Chapter 2

The Mykenaian prelude

1. Introduction

Most books on the ancient Aegean focus either on the Bronze Age or on the Iron Age and later periods. In order to provide a context for the developments after *circa* 1000—particularly as regards (dis)continuity!—it is necessary to give a brief overview of the major characteristics and developments in martial matters (as defined and specified in this book’s introduction) during Mykenaian era, specifically the so-called ‘Palatial’ and ‘Postpalatial’ periods. Warfare emerges as an important theme in the art, architecture, and burial customs of the Mykenaians from the earliest stages of the Late Bronze Age.

2. The Palatial period

The Palatial age corresponds to the Late Helladic IIIA2 and IIIB periods; the emphasis is put on the last period in this chapter, roughly the thirteenth century and especially its second half, *i.e.* the run-up to the destruction of the palaces that marks the dividing line between the Palatial and Postpalatial periods. Burials with weapons and armour are a feature of Late Helladic I through Late Helladic IIIA1, and again of Late Helladic IIIC (especially during its Middle and Late phases).²² During the Palatial period, the heyday of the Mykenaian civilisation, burials with arms appear to have been rare.²³ However, this lack of evidence may be attributed to the activities of grave-robbers. For example, between Late Helladic IIA and early Late Helladic IIIB, some members of the elite were buried in so-called *tholos* tombs.²⁴ Because the *tholos* monuments are rather conspicuous features in the landscape, virtually all of them have been rifled by tomb raiders.

a. Fortifications

Iakovidis points out that fortifications underwent little change down to about 1400. By that time, some settlements continued to use earlier fortifications, although others, such as Kea, updated theirs with the addition of towers. The walls consisted of stone sockles, made of large stones or

22 Deger-Jalkotzy 2006, 175 (Late Helladic IIIC graves).

23 Deger-Jalkotzy 2006, 152.

24 On *tholos* tombs, see Dickinson 1994, 222–227; Preziosi & Hitchcock 1999, 175–177.

boulders, topped by mudbrick superstructures. At around 1400, some sites, such as Philakopi and Lerna, were protected by a double wall built on parallel lines, which were connected by cross walls creating a series of empty spaces between façades.²⁵

Many of the Mykenaian palaces after *c.* 1400 were actually fortified citadels, though Thebes and Orchomenos (Boiotia), Iolkos (now Dhimini in Thessaly), and—if it is a palace—the Menelaion (Lakonia), appear to lack fortifications. In the 1990s, geophysical surveys have revealed what appear to be fortification walls at Pylos in Messenia, some distance from the palace itself.²⁶ Many of the other fortified citadels are found closely together, namely at Tiryns, Midea, and Mykenai (the Argolid), and Argos (the Aspis hill). The Boiotian fortress at Gla is massive, but no traces of a palace have been found there; it is thought that the rulers at Orchomenos had it built.²⁷

The fortifications at the Mykenaian citadels are built mostly in the then-new, so-called ‘Cyclopean’ style. Cyclopean masonry can be ‘defined as stonework of large irregular-shaped blocks, commonly of local limestone, unworked or roughly dressed and assembled without mortar, but with small stones inserted into the gaps between them.’²⁸ Cyclopean masonry was not limited to fortifications; it was also used in the construction of other monumental Mykenaian structures, including certain other buildings, dams, and bridges.²⁹

The middle of the thirteenth century saw much activity with regard to the construction of fortifications. At Tiryns, the lower town was originally protected by a stone-and-mudbrick wall built around 1280; a generation later, this wall was replaced by a more massive Cyclopean construction.³⁰ Small gates were now also replaced by more monumental constructions; the famous Lion Gate at Mykenai was probably built around 1250.³¹ Shortly before the end of the thirteenth century, Mykenai, Tiryns, and Athens undertook efforts to secure a water-supply within the walls.³² Such practical considerations suggest that the Mykenaians were on some kind of a war-footing. Fear of attacks from Central Greece or further north must have been the reason that a huge wall was built across the Isthmus,³³ sometime during the Late Helladic IIIB period, at about the same time as the final phases at Mykenai and Tiryns.³⁴

Even after the fall of the Mykenaian palaces, many Bronze-Age fortification walls remained visible; some were even extended, repaired, or reinforced, though no new walls of ‘Cyclopean’ type were ever built again. These sites include Salamis, Naxos (Grotta), Siphnos (Aghios Andreas), Kea

25 Iakovidis 1999, 199.

26 Davis & Alcock 1998, 58.

27 Dickinson 2006, 25 (with references).

28 Loader 1998, 3.

29 For an up-to-date survey, see Hope-Simpson & Hage1 2006.

30 Iakovidis 1983, 6–13.

31 For a survey of the available literature, see Hope-Simpson & Hage1 2006, 34–35.

32 Scoufopoulos 1971, 41–42 (Mykenai), 52–53 (Tiryns), 73–74 (Athens); Iakovidis 1983, 12 (Tiryns), 67–68 (Mykenai), 88–90 (Athens).

33 For a recent overview of this wall, see Hope-Simpson & Hage1 2006, 123–140.

34 Shelmerdine 1997, 582–584 (with references).

(Ayia Irini), Melos (Phylakopi and Ayios Spyridon), Paros (Koukounaries), Tenos (Xombourgo); some, as Jan Paul Crielaard has pointed out, continued in use until Protogeometric and even Geometric times.³⁵ Some of these fortifications were still very impressive without being 'Cyclopean': two fortified *akropoleis* on Salamis, for example, were built wholly of stone.³⁶

b. The Palatial iconographic evidence

The iconographic evidence for the Mykenaian Palatial period consists for the most part of the frescoes with which the palace walls were once decorated. Mykenaian art was influenced stylistically by Minoan art from Krete.

i. Warriors on foot and their equipment

Wall-paintings are known from fragments that generally date to just before the palace's destruction. Scenes with martial subjects have been unearthed at the Peloponnesian palaces of Mykenai, Tiryns, and Pylos, as well as in Boiotian Orchomenos. These fragments provide clues concerning the equipment used by warriors. For example, we know that most warrior wore greaves. Fragments from the palace at Orchomenos depict walls with figures standing on top of them, whose lower legs are protected by white gaiters.³⁷ One figure's legs are furthermore equipped with two oval greaves, perhaps made of bronze: such small greaves are typical for the Late Bronze Age.³⁸ Unlike the greaves in use from about 700 onwards, these Bronze-Age specimens were clearly strapped (tied) on, rather than clipped on.

A Kretan motif that was readily adopted on the mainland was that of the so-called 'figure-of-eight' shield. This shield probably consisted of a wooden frame, covered by cowhide. It was the height of a man, elliptical in overall shape, with a very slender waist, making it resemble the Arabic numeral '8'. As this type of shield covers the entire body, it is classified as a 'body'-shield. Another type of body-shield was the 'tower'-shield, so named because it was more or less rectangular. Curiously, shields disappear from art and are not mentioned in Linear B tablets; instead, the figure-of-eight shield is known only as a decorative element.

Shields are never shown in the Palatial iconographic material, with one or two possible exceptions. One example is known from Pylos. Fragments of a wall-painting depict a figure with a short spear in overhand position; the scene also depicts what could be a shield. Piet de Jong restored the shield as if it were round and fitted with a double grip.³⁹ More recently, however, Peter Connolly has interpreted the visible elements of the shield as the upper lobe of a figure-of-eight shield.⁴⁰ The latter seems more likely, but

35 The foregoing, see Crielaard 2006.

36 Lolos 2001, 125–127.

37 Guida 1973, 72 fig. 6.1.

38 Fortenberry 1990, 83–100.

39 E.g., Grguric 2005, 17 (fig.).

40 Connolly 1986, 32 fig. 8.

Cheryl Fortenberry has emphasised the fragmentary nature of the fresco and that the preserved dark band might not be a shield at all. In addition, Fortenberry suggests that the figure is perhaps not even a warrior.⁴¹ Unlike typical soldiers (see below), the figure is not bare-chested, but clad in a tunic. Furthermore, he has no helmet and his spear seems very short. These characteristics strongly suggests that the figure is actually a hunter rather than a warrior.

Some of the men in the frescoes are equipped with boar's-tusk helmets. Examples of tusk plates have been unearthed at a number of sites, from Middle Helladic II and III down to Late Helladic IIIB, so we know that they may have been relatively common.⁴² It has been estimated that some thirty or forty boars would have to be killed to provide the necessary amount of tusks to cut plates from and cover the entire surface of the helmet,⁴³ from which it has been argued that only the aristocracy could have afforded them. Yet, in Mykenian art, the boar's-tusk helmet is by far the most popular piece of headgear depicted. It is also represented in Linear B tablets. Perhaps this helmet is closely associated with the palace, which may have handed these out to their soldiers. If true, this means that boar's-tusk helmets are not indicators of social status or wealth, but rather that the person in question—a palace guard, fighting men of the court—works for the palace and is supplied by it.

ii. Chariots and horses

Horses and chariots are depicted in some wall-paintings, and it is clear that chariots were used by some spearmen to move quickly to the battlefield, where they probably dismounted to fight on foot. Specialisation with regards to horses is demonstrated by fragments from Mykenai that show men in tunics grooming horses, while a warrior with boar's-tusk helmet and spear looks on (**plate 1.1**),⁴⁴ he is no doubt inspecting the work done by servants. Warriors with linen-wrapped legs are closely associated with chariots.⁴⁵ In some cases, the men may be setting out to hunt rather than fight. Remains of a wall-painting from Tiryns show a (chariot) horse following a tunic-clad figure with linen gaiters holding a dog on a leash.⁴⁶ (Of course, it is possible that the dog is supposed to be a war-dog; see also chapter 6.)

Mykenians were familiar with riding on horseback, but depictions are rare. A Mykenian Late Helladic IIIB sherd from a tomb near ancient Ugarit depicts a horseman equipped with a sword.⁴⁷ A terracotta figurine of a rider, dated to Late Helladic IIIB1, has been unearthed in the Prehistoric

41 Fortenberry 1990, 25–26.

42 Fortenberry 1990, catalogue pp. 332–352 (about one hundred finds pots in all).

43 Snodgrass 1999 [1967], 19.

44 Athens 2915: Guida 1973, pl. 19.2.

45 Examples include: (1) Athens 2782–2789: Crouwel 1981, pl. 85 (W8); Crouwel 1999, pl. 85.b. (2) Chora Museum: Grguric 2005, 41 (fig.); Shear 2000, 43 fig. 64.

46 Vermeule 1964, pl. 29.a.

47 Crouwel 1981, pls. 80.a–d (V157); Greenhalgh 1973, 44 fig. 28.

Cemetery at Mykenai, Central Areas III–IV (**plate 1.2**).⁴⁸ However, these examples do not *a priori* support the notion that the Mykenaian Greeks also fought from horseback,⁴⁹ although it obviously cannot be excluded. However, similar pictures are known from Egypt, where horsemen clearly serve as dispatch riders and scouts.⁵⁰ In a Mykenaian army, horsemen perhaps also served in similar capacities. Recreational riding can also not be excluded. Unusual are depictions of female figures, sometimes considered divinities, riding side-saddle.⁵¹

iii. Scenes of combat

Tantalising glimpses of what a siege may have been like in Mykenaian times are afforded by fragments of the so-called ‘Siege Fresco’ from Mykenai.⁵² It shows parts of a town with the characteristic checker-pattern to denote walls, with at least one woman looking out of a window while other figures are shown standing in front of the walls. Other small fragments supposedly reveal the presence of other warriors out in the field, possibly archers, and a chariot, but the enemy has not been preserved. A large warrior, clad in tunic and linen gaiters, appears to fall from a roof. The curving line above him is commonly interpreted as part of a horse, and the figure has thus been regarded as forming part of a motif well-known from Near-Eastern art and some of the Shaft-Grave *stelai*, namely that of a warrior being run down by a chariot. According to this view, the warrior does not fall from the roof, but is actually part of a scene perhaps wholly unconnected with the rest of the wall-painting. Joost Crouwel has cast serious doubts on this interpretation and regards the line and the accompanying change of colour to denote simply a hill or other change in the landscape,⁵³ with which I agree.

Actual combat between rival armed forces is depicted in a large number of fragments of wall-paintings that once decorated Hall 64 in the palace at Pylos. This room was probably the first traversed by visitors to the palace,⁵⁴ and no doubt served to instill dread in them. The fragments show various scenes of presumably Pylian soldiers fighting so-called ‘savages’. The well-known ‘Tarzan Fresco’ shows Pylian soldiers, clad in short kilts and equipped with linen gaiters and boar’s-tusk helmets, attacking men with unkempt hair and clothed in animal skins (**plate 1.3**).⁵⁵ Two of the Pylian warriors and one of the savages are equipped with short swords; one Pylian soldier attacks using a long spear. The Pylian soldiers also have an oval drawn on their right shins. These undoubtedly represent (bronze) greaves tied to their legs and covering part of their linen gaiters.⁵⁶

48 Athens: Crouwel 1981, pls. 42.a–d (T18); Greenhalgh 1973, 45 fig. 29; Guida 1973, pl. 37.2.

49 See also Greenhalgh 1973, 98–111.

50 Cf. Schulman 1957 (Egyptian riders).

51 E.g., Crouwel 1981, pl. 46 (T48).

52 Athens 2782–2789: Guida 1973, 72 fig. 6.2; Vermeule 1964, 103 and pl. 31.a.

53 Mentioned during a discussion in Thomas 1999, 311.

54 Davis & Bennet 1999, 110.

55 Chora Museum: Grguric 2005, 28 (fig.); Shear 2000, 68 fig. 103.

56 Guida 1973, 73–75.

Another set of fragments from the palace at Pylos shows a scene of combat similar to the one just discussed.⁵⁷ This time, however, there are no savages. Instead, all men appear to wear some sort of shorts or loincloths; none of them have any leg wrappings. One group is bareheaded while the other wears helmets of unknown type, perhaps of felt or leather. The helmeted soldiers are probably to be interpreted as Pylian troops, although of a different type than the ones just discussed, presumably not elite troops or guards as they lack gaiters, greaves, and have apparently simpler and cheaper helmets. Two warriors fight each other with swords while one of the bareheaded ones is equipped, if properly restored, with a club. Both scenes appear to take place at a river, perhaps representing the boundary of Pylian territory, with brave Pylian soldiers fending off attacks from hostile barbarians and possibly unfriendly neighbours.

iv. Indications of rank

The wall-paintings reveal that while many men wear some kind of (linen) gaiters to protect their lower legs, some are also equipped with a single greave. Single greaves are also known from tombs. Cheryl Fortenberry has suggested that these single greaves, tied to one leg, may indicate status or rank.⁵⁸ I would suggest more specifically that single greaves, like boar's-tusk helmets, further indicate a connection with the palace, perhaps in combination with the linen gaiters, although there really is no evidence other than that found at the palaces to corroborate this hypothesis.

Hunting scenes are more common than those showing actual combat and these no doubt feature high-ranking men. Fragments of a wall-painting from Pylos show a tunic-clad figure aiming a short spear at an antlered deer.⁵⁹ The man is equipped with linen gaiters, like a warrior. Similar-looking figures are also shown on fragments from Tiryns.⁶⁰ These, too, wear tunics and are equipped with linen gaiters. They carry a set of two short spears each and must be interpreted as hunters rather than warriors. It seems to me that the short spear is particularly a weapon associated with the hunt. Other fragments, also from Tiryns, again show a very similar figure equipped with two short spears.⁶¹ None of these figures is equipped with a helmet and all of them wear a tunic and linen gaiters.

Furthermore, clothing also indicates relatively high status. Only men associated with chariots and horses, as in the 'Groom Fresco', for example, wear tunics. Hunters and men in procession also tend to be fully clothed and equipped with gaiters and greaves. I would suggest that all of the fully-clothed men include both high-ranking individuals, as well as their personal attendants, including grooms, charioteers, and huntsmen. The men in waisted tunics and associated with chariots may belong to the *heqetai* or 'Followers' known from Linear B tablets (see below). By contrast,

57 Chadwick 1976, 63 pl. 34.

58 Fortenberry 1991, 626–627.

59 Chora Museum: Guida 1973, pl. 20.1; Shear 2000, 49 fig. 72.

60 Athens 5878: Guida 1973, pl. 21.1; Shear 2000, 54 fig. 81.

61 Athens 5885: Guida 1973, pl. 20.3; Shear 2000, 35 fig. 54.

rank-and-file 'soldiers' are always bare-chested and may have been culled from the lower classes.

c. *The Linear B tablets*

The palaces maintained archives where tablets written in so-called Linear B were kept. These tablets provide some clues as regards Mykenaian sociopolitical structure, military equipment, and military organisation. The Mykenaians never intentionally fired their clay tablets: all of the preserved tablets were accidentally baked in the fires that ravaged or destroyed the palaces in which they had been kept. Many of the tablets thus reflect a situation just prior to the destruction of the Mykenaian centres.⁶² The fact that archives have been unearthed in a number of centres (Knossos, Pylos, Chania, Mykenai, Tiryns, and Thebes) suggest that the individual Mykenaian centres were as independent as they were belligerent.⁶³

The tablets suggest that the palaces produced and maintained at least some of the equipment used in war,⁶⁴ including arrowheads, swords (*pa-ka-na*, probably the same word as the Homeric *phasgana*),⁶⁵ spears, arrows and javelins,⁶⁶ helmets, chariots, as well as, at Knossos, corslets (though we have no idea of what material they were made).⁶⁷ However, the palaces did not apparently provide all of the necessary equipment, as there are many tablets in which incomplete chariots are provided. Some of these list only a single wheel or a single horse.⁶⁸ Furthermore, some people may have been awarded land by the palace in exchange for military service, for which they were provided at least part of the equipment as well.⁶⁹ It thus seems that Mykenaian armies were organised using a mix of private and public (palatial) means, with warriors perhaps only needing to provide part of the equipment at their own expense.⁷⁰ This fits in well with recent insights regarding the relatively limited extent to which the palaces regulated or controlled economic processes within the territories that they occupied.⁷¹

The most informative tablets with regard to the sociopolitical organisation in Mykenaian centres come from Pylos and Knossos, which in turn reveals how the military may have been organised. The tablets reveal that the ruler at both Pylos and Knossos was known as the *wanax* (*wa-na-ka*), i.e. ruler or 'king', who possessed vast tracts of land and employed his own craftsmen, who are called *wanakteros* ('royal') in the tablets.⁷² At Pylos, the *wanax* may have had the warlike name *Ekhelawon*, i.e. 'he who is victorious

62 For further details, refer to Shelmerdine 1998, 294.

63 *Contra* notions regarding a unified 'Mykenaian Empire', as defended enthusiastically by Wood 1996 [1985]; Kelder 2009.

64 Palaima 1999, 367–368.

65 Chadwick 1976, 171; see also, on vocabulary, Palaima 1999, 369.

66 Analysis in Fortenberry 1990, 230–231.

67 For further details, see Fortenberry 1990, 66–69.

68 Discussion in Uchitel 1988.

69 Deger-Jalkotzy 1999, 124–125; Shelmerdine 2006, 78 (with references).

70 Deger-Jalkotzy 1999, 125–126.

71 For an overview, refer to Shelmerdine 2006, 73–74; Tartaron 2008, 93–95 and 100–110.

72 Shelmerdine 2006, 75.

in/over the host'.⁷³ Second in command was the *lawagetas* (*ra-wa-ke-ta*), whose name contains the words *laos* and *agein*; the term thus means literally 'leader of the people'. It has been suggested that this was an army-leader, as *laos* in Homer and later sources is often rendered 'host' or 'army' (the entire body of armed men), a reasonable interpretation.⁷⁴

Both *wanax* and *lawagetas* were involved in the organisation of feasts;⁷⁵ perhaps these places were also the meeting ground of a warrior elite. That such an elite existed is attested by a group of men known as the *hegetai* (singular *hegetas*, from *e-ge-ta*). The later Greek word *hepetas* simply means 'follower'. John Chadwick already observed that the *hegetai* were probably elite troops, as well as commanders of the Mykenaian infantry. On the tablets, they are associated with three things, namely 'slaves, cloths, and wheels. [...] The mention of textiles at Knossos (Ld tablets) indicates that the Followers wore a distinctive form of dress [...]. The wheels are meant for chariots [...]. All of this is consistent with their high status'.⁷⁶ There are other apparently high-ranking individuals and social groups in Mykenaian society,⁷⁷ but none appear to have as strong a military connection as the *hegetai*.

As Cynthia Shelmerdine notes, 'it is amazing how little attention is paid in extant documents to military organisation.'⁷⁸ However, there is a unique set of eight tablets from Pylos that describes the preparations made for an impending attack by apparently seaborne raiders. Two of these tablets give lists of 'rowers', along with their places of origin (PY An 1 and 610); six other tablets list the groups (*o-ka*) of people sent out to watch the coast (PY An 519, 653, 656, 657, 661). These tablets must be military in nature.⁷⁹ These groups consist of men from a particular place and led by an individual with a patronymic, *i.e.* a *hegetas*. The rowers and the men led by the *hegetai* appear to be individuals who had to perform military service for one reason or another, which supports the notion that the palaces were responsible for mobilising the army as a whole, though the everyday tasks of command were probably left in the hands of the *hegetai*.⁸⁰

3. The Postpalatial period

Many of the Mykenaian palaces were destroyed in the early decades of the twelfth century, heralding the start of the Postpalatial period. This period, also known as Late Helladic IIIC, covers the twelfth century and part of the eleventh. Late Helladic IIIC is usually divided into three consecutive stages, dubbed Early, Middle, and Late. Much of the evidence presented in the following subsections dates to Late Helladic IIIC Middle, set sometime after

73 Deger-Jalkotzy 1999, 127–128 (with references).

74 Compare the *lawagetas* to the Hittite crown-prince (*tukhanti*), *e.g.* Bryce 2002, 21.

75 On Mykenaian feasts, see especially Palaima 2004.

76 Chadwick 1976, 73.

77 See Jan Paul Crielaard's 'The "*wanax* to *basileus* model" reconsidered: authority and ideology after the collapse of the Mycenaean palaces' (forthcoming).

78 Shelmerdine 2006, 79.

79 *Contra* Uchitel 1984; *cf.* Sacconi 1999.

80 For further discussion, see Fortenberry 1990, 296–302.

the destructions that marked the end of the Palatial period and the beginning of Late Helladic IIIC Early.

The later stages of the Palatial period saw an increase in martial activities, such as the construction of larger fortifications. At least some of these activities were related to an increase in actual warfare. The clearest example is provided by the continued improvement of swords throughout the Late Bronze Age.⁸¹ The earliest Mykenaian types tend to be long and slender 'rapiers', which must have bent easily, and feature very short tangs that must have made their handles fragile. Many examples of the earliest types (so-called A and B) were repaired multiple times.⁸² In the following centuries, Mykenaian swordsmiths strove to make their weapons shorter and stronger. An example is the type E sword, introduced in Late Helladic IIIA2, which is flat, broad, and relatively short, with small rivet holes and a long tang.⁸³

Toward the very end of the thirteenth century, the so-called Naue type II sword was introduced, probably from Central Europe via Italy.⁸⁴ This long sword features a solid tang with pommel extension; the rivet-holes are very small. Aegean swordsmiths added the unique 'ears' at either side of the pommel spur.⁸⁵ While most swords until now were intended mostly for stabbing, the Naue-II sword is the first true cut-and-thrust sword. Once adopted, this superior blade spread quickly throughout the Aegean and is the main type of sword in Late Helladic IIIC, which is also when the earliest iron examples appear.⁸⁶ This long-lived sword type survives in the Aegean until the end of the sixth century, by which time it was replaced by a shorter Greek sword with cross-guard.⁸⁷

a. Burials with arms

Sigrid Deger-Jalkotzy has published a brief survey of the major Late Helladic IIIC warrior graves, providing summaries for warrior burials from Perati, graves from five sites in Achaia, one site in Arkadia (Palaiokastro), one in Thessaly (Trikkala), one on Naxos (Grotta), one on Kos (Langada), and a number of sites in eastern Krete, as well as a number of sites without a clearly ascertainable context, including Kephallonia.⁸⁸ One of the graves at Grotta contained a man buried with a Naue-II-type sword and accompanied by what the excavators believe to be remains of a bronze curry-comb for horses, and Deger-Jalkotzy adds that other evidence at Naxos makes clear that horses were important as 'part of the ideology and self-awareness of the

81 'That is, with a flange along each side of the hilt to hold in place the inlays or plates, normally of wood or bone' (Snodgrass 1964b, 241 n. 1); referred to more often as *Griffzungenschwerver*, see Killian-Dirlmeier 1993, 17–126.

82 Fortenberry 1990, 148–149 (with references).

83 Sandars 1963, 132–133.

84 Deger-Jalkotzy 2006, 163 n. 13 (with references).

85 Snodgrass 1964b, 106–110.

86 Snodgrass 1964b, 103.

87 Killian-Dirlmeier 1993, 118–130.

88 Deger-Jalkotzy 2006, 154–167.

Naxian elite(s)'.⁸⁹

Following the collapse of the Mykenaian palaces, there is an apparent increase in the number of burials containing weapons,⁹⁰ especially in regions away from the former core Mykenaian centres,⁹¹ such as in Achaia.⁹² There is some continuity in funerary practices from the preceding period in that most of these burials are inhumations, with many burials re-using older Mykenaian chamber tombs. As in the preceding periods, the graves contain multiple bodies.⁹³ The total number of warrior graves in a cemetery is typically very small: Deger-Jalkotzy points out that of the 219 tombs found at Perati, only two were what could 'be defined as warrior tombs'.⁹⁴ This limited distribution of warrior graves is similar to that of the Early Iron Age, as we shall see in the next chapter.

The lack of 'warrior tombs' in Late Helladic IIIC Messenia, Boiotia, and the Volos area in Thessaly may be attributed to depopulation following the destruction of the palaces there; the lack of such burials in the Argolid has no satisfactory explanation to date.⁹⁵ However, it should be stressed that most Late Helladic IIIC cemeteries are generally poorer than in the preceding period, so it should come as no surprise that expensive items such as weapons are perhaps not interred as often as before.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the total number of Late Helladic IIIC burials with arms in the Aegean area is relatively small.⁹⁷ Finally, burials with arms never returned in some of these regions, such as the Volos area, in which case the lack of such graves may simply represent a change in funerary customs.

Recently, construction activities revealed the burial of a warrior near the town of Amphiloikia, situated by the Ambrakian Gulf. The grave has been dated to the twelfth century; a fuller report on the burial with a more accurate date is no doubt forthcoming. The finds included a golden *kylix* (wine cup), a dagger combining bronze and iron, a pair of greaves, an arrowhead, and a spearhead. The grave furthermore contained a pair of bronze swords, one with a bone handle, the other had gold wire wrapped around the hilt. Analysis of the bronze also showed that this second sword was of Italic make.⁹⁸ This find emphasises several characteristically aristocratic aspects, namely warfare (the different weapons, including an arrowhead), consumption of wine (the *kylix*), and overseas activities (the Italic sword).

b. The iconographic evidence

With the destruction and abandonment of many of the Mykenaian palaces,

89 Deger-Jalkotzy 2006, 162 n. 12.

90 Cavanagh & Mee 1998, 98.

91 For a convenient overview, see Dickinson 2006, 73–75 (with references).

92 On Achaian warrior-graves, see Papadopoulos 1999.

93 Dickinson 2006, 178–183.

94 Deger-Jalkotzy 2006, 155.

95 Deger-Jalkotzy 2006, 167–168.

96 Deger-Jalkotzy 2006, 151–152.

97 Deger-Jalkotzy 2006, 155.

98 Aegeanet message http://howrah.org/sci_tech_htm/32359.html (8 October 2008).

painting is transferred to large vases, especially kraters (Late Helladic III C).⁹⁹ Figurative vase-painting flourishes in the twelfth century before petering out toward the end and then disappearing altogether in the eleventh, replaced by a style of vase-painting characterised by abstract, geometric motifs (Submykenaian and earliest Protoegeometric).

i. Warriors on foot and their equipment

Especially on kraters of the Late Helladic III C-middle style, warlike scenes proved very popular. While there is much variety, warriors on foot are often depicted on these pots equipped with one or two spears, helmet, dark gaiters, and normally also a shield. The boar's-tusk helmet, so popular in the centuries preceding the fall, has all but disappeared. In its stead we encounter a number of different types of helmets that were perhaps cheaper or easier to manufacture, as these have left virtually no archaeological traces and are known solely from the iconographic evidence.

Perhaps the best-known Late Helladic III C artefact is the so-called 'Warrior Vase' from Mykenai (plate 2.1),¹⁰⁰ which was restored from fragments. Both sides of the *krater* show files of warriors. Side A shows a line of six warriors, who are seen off by a woman on the far left; the gesture she makes is either one of farewell or mourning. The warriors are uniformly equipped. Each carries a crescent-shaped shield, wears some kind of fringed tunic or perhaps a leather jerkin, dark gaiters, and is equipped with a single thrusting spear and a helmet equipped with horns and a plume. If the chariot-borne spearmen are considered leaders, then perhaps these men represent the rank-and-file of a Late Helladic III C army. That these are commoners, perhaps even some sort of conscripts, is furthermore suggested by the knapsacks tied to their spears: a high-ranking individual would surely have used servants or slaves to carry his provisions. Side B shows a group of similarly equipped warriors, except that they hold their spears overhead, as if ready to attack; their shields are also larger and their helmets are of the so-called 'hedgehog' type. The hedgehog-helmet might have consisted of an actual hedgehog-skin stretched over a cap or something, or it perhaps represents a feathered helmet, raw hide, fur, *et cetera*.

Depictions of men apparently in some kind of battle-stance are also encountered on a Late Helladic III C limestone *stèle*, also from Mykenai and generally believed to have been made by the same artist at the 'Warrior Vase'.¹⁰¹ The object has been damaged and some of the decoration is gone, but one scene shows a line of five warriors, posed and equipped in a manner very similar to the men shown on side B of the 'Warrior Vase', clad in fringed tunics and equipped with dark gaiters, large shields, and holding their spears overhead as if ready to strike an (unseen) enemy.

99 For a brief overview, see Crouwel 2006a.

100 Athens 1426: Benson 1970, plate 36.2; Guida 1973, pls. 31.1 (side A) and 32.2 (side B); Higgins 1981 [1967], 121 figs. 141 and 143; Shear 2000, 86 fig. 125; Snodgrass 1999 [1967], pls. 10–11; Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, plate XI.42.

101 Athens 3256: Guida 1973, plate 32.1; Shear 2000, 87 fig. 126; Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, plate XI.43.

It is unclear what material was used to make armour. A krater fragment from Euboea shows the body of a warrior, who is equipped with a sword and wears the dark gaiters or leggings so characteristic of Postpalatial vase-painting.¹⁰² The way that the upper body has been rendered is sometimes taken to indicate that the figure is wearing a bell-shaped cuirass, or perhaps some other bronze plate cuirass fitted with shoulder pieces similar to the chronologically earlier ones found with the 'lobster' armour found at Dendra and dated to around 1400. A second krater fragment, also from Euboea and decorated by a more proficient artist, shows the fringed tunic of a warrior, who is equipped with dark gaiters and a sword.¹⁰³ It seems unlikely that bronze armour was meant by the artists. More likely, all armour consisted of a kind of leather padding similar to that depicted on other Postpalatial pots; the evidence for the use of metal body-armour other than greaves from Late Helladic IIIA2 onwards is in any case slight to nonexistent.

ii. Chariots and horses

Chariots remain a favourite subject across the Late Helladic IIIB–IIIC divide.¹⁰⁴ It is clear that some spearmen continued to use chariots to transport themselves to the battlefield, as they had apparently done in the Palatial period and possibly continued to do throughout the Early Iron Ages, if similar scenes on Geometric pottery are indicative of continuity. Fragments unearthed in Mykenai show at least two chariots, each with a driver and a spearman (**plate 2.2**).¹⁰⁵ Both driver and spearman are equipped with round shields that cover most of the body; they may be wearing helmets with spiky crests or feathers. A fragment from Tiryns shows something similar, except that this spearman is equipped with two spears.¹⁰⁶

This suggests that the origin of the Greek practice of carrying two spears into battle, familiar from Geometric and Archaic pottery, as well as the Homeric epics, may have its origin in the Late Helladic IIIC period. Further continuity is demonstrated by processions and races. Early fragments of a krater found at Tiryns show a chariot race, probably part of the funeral games.¹⁰⁷ Fragments of another krater from Tiryns show a chariot with driver and spearman, the latter equipped with a round shield.¹⁰⁸ This

102 Crielaard 2006, 283 fig. 14.4e; Evely 2006, pl. 32.5; Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, pl. XI.39.

103 Crielaard 2006, 283 fig. 14.4d; Evely 2006, plate 58.a; Guida 1973, pl. 33.1; Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, pl. XI.59.

104 *E.g.*, Nafplion 13.214: Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, plate XI.14; as well as Athens 1511: Guida 1973, plate 35.2; Rystedt 2006a, 129 fig. 5; Shear 2000, 41 fig. 63.

105 Athens 3596 (lot 1772) and Nafplion 8357 (from Schliemann's dump): Crouwel 1981, pls. 53.a–b (V18); Greenhalgh 1973, 31 fig. 24; Guida 1973, 104 fig. 7.a–b; Höckmann 1980, 284 fig. 69.a (right fragment).

106 Guntner 2006a, 59 fig. 27.

107 Currently in Nafplion: Crouwel 1981, plate 66 (V51); Crouwel 2006a, 16 fig. 1; Crouwel 2006b, 166 fig. 2; Laser 1987, 23 fig. 2; Rystedt 2006b, 242 fig. 4.b.

108 Nafplion 14.336: Crouwel 1981, pl. 60 (V43); Guida 1973, pl. 36.1; Höckmann 1980, 284 fig. 69.b; Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, pl. XI.16.

chariot was part of a procession, or perhaps a group of chariots setting off to war. Similar scenes would re-appear on Late Geometric vases.

iii. Scenes of combat

Battle-scenes are rare in Late Helladic IIIC. A number of Late Helladic IIIC (middle) fragments belonging to a krater have been unearthed at Kalapodi (Phthiotis),¹⁰⁹ which may depict some kind of siege or an assault on a settlement. The extant fragments show parts of warriors, all equipped with swords; some 'hedgehog'-like helmets are also visible. One warrior carries a large curved stick across his shoulders, from which are suspended two sacks or possibly baskets (a water-carrier?). There is also a large, apparently rectangular area filled with a checkerboard pattern, possibly a section of wall or part of a building.¹¹⁰

iv. Warships and naval combat

Prominent features in Postpalatial vase-painting are ships and scenes of fighting on sea or possibly beaches; the vessels themselves develop logically from earlier Palatial examples. The pots come from a very distinct geographic area. They are found in Euboeia, Kalapodi, Pyrgos Lagynaton, some of the islands, and even the west coast of Asia Minor (*e.g.*, Bademgediği Tepesi). Clearly, the fall of the Mykenaian palaces did not bring about a total collapse of the socio-economic system, as these regions at least still built and crewed warships.¹¹¹

A detailed discussion and typology of Aegean ships of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages has been created by Michael Wedde,¹¹² parts of which I shall here summarise. The Mykenaians were the first to use the oared galley, at the start of the Late Helladic IIIB period or a little earlier, though not all galleys are by definition warships. The first Mykenaian oared galley, type V, developed out of earlier crescent-shaped type IV vessels, which were Minoan. This ship possessed a 'flat keelline, a vertical stempost terminated by a birdhead device, and a curving (or vertical) sternpost, with several cases [...] clearly decked.'¹¹³ The type VI galley is similar, but the keel is extended beyond the stempost; this structure would much later, in the Archaic period, morph into a ram.

The oared galley was long and sleek, with warriors manning the oars. The larger the number of men at the oars, the faster the vessel would move. It is clear, especially in the Late Helladic IIIC period, that these galleys were made 'for speedy seaborne attacks on coastal settlements and for naval engagements at sea.'¹¹⁴ The straight keel allowed the ship 'to beach at speed [which] would have offered a tactical advantage, in that the warriors could spring directly on dry land, and not wade ashore, a moment when the

109 Crie laard 2006, 283 fig. 14.4i; Crouwel 2006a, 17 fig. 7; Felsch 1996, pl. 36 (no. 231).

110 Cf. the 'Siege Fresco' from Mykenai, discussed above.

111 For further details, refer to Crie laard 2007.

112 Wedde 1999 *passim*.

113 Wedde 1999, 466.

114 Crie laard 2006, 280 (with further references).

defenders would have had a critical advantage.¹¹⁵ During boarding actions at sea, the Mykenaians would then fight with javelins, spears, and swords, in a manner virtually identical to fighting on land.¹¹⁶ The success of the Mykenaian types is clear when the Iron-Age evidence is considered: the galleys depicted on Geometric pottery are clearly developments of the type VI Mykenaian ship.¹¹⁷

4. Conclusions

The Palatial period sees the flowering of Mykenaian civilisation. Mykenaian culture had a distinct martial edge, though this should perhaps not be taken to mean that these people were constantly at war. Wall-paintings with martial scenes often adorned specific places within the palace complexes. The frescoes that decorated Hall 64 at Pylos were probably the first things seen by those who visited—or paid homage?—to the Pylian *wanax*; the southwest building may even have been the residence of the *lawagetas*. Similarly, the Siege Fresco at Mykenai once decorated the walls of the *megaron*, the central chamber of the palace, where the ruler perhaps entertained his guests. Seen in this light, the wall-paintings conveyed a powerful message: do not meddle with the Mykenaian rulers, lest you suffer forceful retaliation. Similarly, the monumental fortifications that protected most palaces no doubt also served as both a testament to Mykenaian power and a warning to would-be aggressors.

Some of the warriors in Palatial imagery are probably members of the aristocracy, while others may have been culled from a lower stratum of society, perhaps even soldiers in the sense of men who fought for some kind of pay. The aristocratic warriors, especially the *hegetai*, used chariots, probably as a means to get to and from the battlefield. Lower-status soldiers appear to have fought bare-chested and often used relatively short swords; battles look rather like wrestling competitions. The tablets suggest that the palaces used perhaps a kind of conscripts, commanded by *hegetai*, to form the bulk of their army. The palaces provided some of the equipment necessary, though the fighting men themselves appear to have supplied part of it themselves.

Although war in the Palatial period was perhaps not endemic, a military threat does seem to emerge in the latter half of the thirteenth century, when some palaces turned toward reinforcing or extending their existing fortifications, and some, like Mykenai, sought to safeguard their water-supply. In the years following 1200, many of the palaces were destroyed, and with them disappeared wall-painting, writing, and its relatively complex social organisation. The subsequent Postpalatial period, is characterised by both continuity and change. Rail chariots, for example, continued to be used, and warriors still wore some kind of gaiters to protect their legs. People in Postpalatial times sometimes continued to dwell near

115 Wedde 1999, 469.

116 Wedde 1999, 469–470; Crouwel 1999, 456–458.

117 Wedde 1999, 471–472.

the palaces, repairing the older fortification walls when necessary.

New equipment appears on the scene. In the iconographic evidence, we now have spearmen equipped with thrusting spears and shields, who also wear some kind of padded tunic or perhaps armour. In iconographic sources, the old boar's-tusk helmets disappear, replaced by a variety of different kind of helmets, horned or of 'hedgehog'-type, and so on. Prior to the collapse of the palaces, a new type of sword (Naue II) was introduced, which was stronger and better than earlier Mykenaian swords. In the Postpalatial period, this becomes the dominant type of weapon, and remains in use down to the sixth century. It is frequently found in warrior graves.

The fact that groups of men are often uniformly equipped, as on the 'Warrior Vase', suggests that some kind of central authority survived; indeed, the little knapsacks attached to the spears of these men strongly indicates that they were equipped and provided for by a central body or commanding individual. Only such leaders may perhaps have been awarded the honour of being buried with weapons (see also the next chapter). Warrior graves are very rare in the archaeological record of Late Helladic IIIc, and they are always comparatively rich. However, this is very similar to the situation before the destruction of the palaces, as well as in the Early Iron Age: only a specific group of people was ever buried with arms in Greece.

