COMMUNICATIONS

Recent seminars at the Swedish Institute in Athens:


J.W. Shaw, "The evolution of the Cretan temples at Kommos" (4 March 1983)

J.H. Betts, "A priest, a bureaucrat and a faker--studies in Minoan seals" (1 April 1983)

Miriam E. Caskey, "The Cycladic contribution to early Greek narrative art" (10 April 1983)

A table ronde on "L'iconographie minoënne" was organized by the French Archaeological School at Athens, 21-22 April 1983. Papers were presented in accordance with four major topics, "méthodologie et histoire," "thèmes et motifs," "iconographie et religion," and "l'identité minoënne." The proceedings will be published in a supplementary volume of Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique.

The fifth annual "TAG Conference" was held at University College, Cardiff, 12-14 December 1983. Papers were presented under the following headings: 1) Towards a Critical Historiography of Archaeology, 2) Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Settlement Patterns, 3) Material Culture Theory, 4) Theoretical Approaches to Urban Archaeology, 5) Approaches to Archaeological Reconstruction: The Social Dimension, 6) Time Scales and Forms of Explanation, 7) Ritual and Archaeological Analysis, 8) Theory and Practice: Putting Theory in Its Place, 9) The Nature of Cultural Change: Recent Work in Scandinavian Archaeology, 10) Archaeology and Space. Further details may be procured by writing: TAG 83 Organisers, Department of Archaeology, University College, PO Box 78, Cardiff, CF 1 1XL.

The New York Aegean Bronze Age Colloquium scheduled a meeting for 14 December with a paper by Mrs. B. Kling entitled, "Mycenaean IIIC 1:B Pottery in Cyprus: Principal Characteristics and Historical Context." There will be another meeting on 11 January (7:45 PM at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York) with a paper by J.H. Crouwel, "Chariots in the Bronze Age Aegean."

The Sixth Annual Eastern European Archaeology meeting (Hleb i Vino) will be held on the campus of the University of California at Los Angeles on 7-8 April 1984. Current work in the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages of Eastern Europe will be reported and discussed. Those interested in participating and/or attending Hleb i Vino are urged to contact Mark R. Stefanovich, The Institute of Archaeology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90024. The program will also include a symposium entitled
"Sociological Issues of the Neolithic Balkans -- Practice and Theory", scheduled for the morning of April 7. (A round table discussion of general issues pertaining to the Neolithic is planned for the afternoon.) Individuals interested in contributing a paper and/or participating in this symposium are encouraged to contact T. Cullen or M. Potiadiis, c/o Classical Archaeology, Indiana University, 408 N. Indiana Ave., Bloomington, IN 47405.

The Fourth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens will take place 11-16 June 1984. The theme will be "The Function of the Minoan Palaces". Further information is available from Dr. Robin Hegg, Mitseon 9, GR-117 42 ATHENS, Greece.

FORUM

To the Editors:

Bull and Palm Tree in Aegean Iconography

A Mycenaean Bull God was long denied on high authority though it has been difficult to understand why the North and Southwest Entrances at Knossos should have been watched over by a sacrificial animal. In Nestor January 1981, 1502 I suggested that the Mycenaean pantheon included a pair of G'ous and G'owia 'Bull and Cow'. Recent analysis of MY Fu 711 indicated that this tablet was a record of small offerings to divinities, among the recipients (in the dative) being gowe g'owia 'for the Bull', kune kunei 'for the Hound', karauja grawja 'for the Old Lady' (known as an epithet of Demeter) and arekese/we Alexewei, dative of Alexeus, meaning something like 'The Protector'; he may be the Hero God with the shield who does battle with a variety of opponents. Relevant here is the seal impression (Evans PM III 317, fig. 210) showing a bull with a figure-of-eight shield under its belly, which may be tentatively given the caption G'ous and Alexeus.

Less well known is that a bull fresco decorated the Anteroom to the Room of the Throne which itself was set in a landscape of palm trees (see Penultimate Palace 35-37 with ref. to BSA 6,1900,401). This combination of bull and palm tree is frequent in Aegean iconography and it is a key to its interpretation. Recently new evidence has come to light about a fresco found in 1901 on the north wall of the Hall of the Double Axes. Photographs in the Ashmolean Museum show its position and the fresco is described by Mackenzie (DB 11 June 1901) as follows. It was still preserved from a mere 20 cm. below the surface going down to some 80 cm. to the level of the upper floor. Above a lower dado 15-20 cm. wide was a design of young palm plants, grey-white (through discoloration) on a red ground. It was still preserved for over a metre but was traceable for over three metres. Subsequently the hind foot of a bull with part of the leg in profile left was discovered. The fresco was described by DM as unique as being the only example on the site belonging in situ to the upper floor. The description of the palms as grey on a red ground is identical with his description of the palms of the Throne Room frescoes.
The 'young palm plants' recall the phoinikos neon eranos which Odysseus saw by the altar of Apollo on Delos (Od.6,163), and this points eastwards. Among orientalists it has long been powerfully argued (notably by G. Widengren, The King and the Tree of Life, 1951) that the palm tree is the symbol for the Young Dying God (Sumerian Dumuzi who is the son of Enki, god of the underground world of sweet water). Widengren stresses that the Tree of Life is inseparable from the Water of Life which is used to refresh the dying palm that symbolizes the dead god.

For this combination of motifs the cylinder seals from Thebes recently published by Edith Porada (AFO,1981) provide valuable illustration. No.26 shows a water god between mountains with eight-petalled rosettes in the field, the latter being a frequent symbol for Ishtar. No.27 likewise shows a water god flanked by fish-men. He stands in an undulating stream of water which links up with palm trees alongside placed in an arylalsos.

The new seals illuminate another point in the texts cited by Widengren. The palm tree stands not only for the Young God but also for the king who substitutes for him in the cult. Thus Shulgi, the king, is a date palm planted by the water ditch. Of vital importance in the present connexion is that the god himself has the cult title The Lord or the King. In ANET 638, where Inanna enumerates the bridal gifts, Dumuzi alternates with en, and this nomenclature persists down to Adonis. A further point is that Inanna calls herself 'the Queen'. This cult title accounts for a puzzling point in Near Eastern iconography: why is the palm tree so often surmounted by the winged sun-disk? A possibility is that this represents not the Sun God but the royal title 'My Sun' equivalent to 'His Majesty'.

This thesis can be tested on seal no.25. It is a Hittite seal with hieroglyphic inscriptions. At a late stage of Hittite religion there was a far-reaching Hurrianization of the pantheon. Prominent was the Mother Goddess Hebat, her consort the Weather God Teshub and their son Sharrumma. On the seal the first figure (on the right) is identified as Shaushga, the Hurrian Ishtar. The third figure (from the right) is tentatively identified as Sharrumma because of the hieroglyphs before it: the logogram of the Storm God above a bovine figure (a calf?). In support of this H.G. Götterbock (pp. 71 f.) cites E. Larroche's discovery that Sharrumma was entitled 'the (bull) calf of Teshub', a quite natural expression seeing that the Weather God was mostly represented in cult by a bull. He demurs however 'this would still be hard to reconcile with the winged disk over his head since Sharrumma is otherwise not known to be connected with the sun.' E. Porada (p.48) dismisses the hieroglyphic title as an error. I submit that there is no problem if the sun-disk is taken as 'My Sun' and Sharrumma is 'the King' par excellence. Thus it is parallel with the frequent combination of sun-disk and palm tree.

The theme Bull + Vegetation and the connexion with water may well go back to pre-Sumerian times. Bucrania with plants on the head were found in the Halaf strata at Chagar Bazar and the excavator wonders 'if the bull does not also go with the power to bring rain.' Some four thousand years later a Knossos seal combines Bull and Fish, the latter a diacritic for 'water', just as fish are observable in the streams that flank Enki.
In general it may be said that iconographically the Aegean forms a province of a religious koine going back ultimately to Mesopotamia. This is not a heterodox position. Two authoritative recent works (W. Burkert, Griechische Religion..., 1977 and B.C. Dietrich, The Origin of Greek Religion, 1974) make the point that given the existence of this koine the eastern connexions must play their part in the interpretation of Aegean iconography. This is an immense task demanding the collaboration of experts in both fields.

Professor L.R. Palmer

ERRATA

p. 1680, §811792
The source of this decipherment seems to be Paul J. Muenzer of Munich. We owe this information, with our thanks, to D. Willers of the University of Bern. Read "Schliemanns" for "Schliemann's"

p. 1755, §832705

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**REVIEWS**


