



Women in Mycenaean Greece

The Linear B Tablets from
Pylos and Knossos

Barbara A. Olsen

ROUTLEDGE



Women in Mycenaean Greece

Women in Mycenaean Greece is the first book-length study of women in the Linear B tablets from Mycenaean Greece and the only to collect and compile all the references to women in the documents of the two best attested sites of Late Bronze Age Greece – Pylos on the Greek mainland and Knossos on the island of Crete. The book offers a systematic analysis of women’s tasks, holdings, and social and economic status in the Linear B tablets dating from the 14th and 13th centuries BCE, identifying how Mycenaean women functioned in the economic institutions where they were best attested – production, property control, land tenure, and cult. Analyzing all references to women in the Mycenaean documents, the book focuses on the ways in which the economic institutions of these Bronze Age palace states were gendered and effectively extends the framework for the study of women in Greek antiquity back more than 400 years.

Throughout, the book seeks to establish whether gender practices were uniform in the Mycenaean states or differed from site to site and to gauge the relationship of the roles and status of Mycenaean women to their Archaic and Classical counterparts to test if the often-proposed theories of a more egalitarian Bronze Age accurately reflect the textual evidence. The Linear B tablets offer a unique, if under-utilized, point of entry into women’s history in Ancient Greece, documenting nearly 2000 women performing over 50 task assignments. From the decipherment of the tablets in 1952 one major gap in the scholarly record remained: a full accounting of the women who inhabited the palace states and their tasks, ranks, and economic contributions. *Women in Mycenaean Greece* fills that gap recovering how class, rank, and other social markers created status hierarchies among women, how women as a group functioned relative to men, and where different localities conformed or diverged in their gender practices.

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Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	vi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>Conventions of Linear B</i>	ix
1 The women of Mycenaean Greece	1
2 Identifying and contextualizing women in the tablets	25
3 Women and production at Pylos	60
4 Women and property holdings at Pylos	134
5 Women at Knossos: production and property	162
6 Women and land tenure at Pylos and Knossos	202
7 Women and religion at Knossos and Pylos	236
8 Conclusions: women in Aegean prehistory	252
<i>Appendix A: All mentions of women in the Pylos Tablets</i>	261
<i>Appendix B: All mentions of women in the Knossos Tablets</i>	302
<i>Bibliography</i>	346
<i>Subject index</i>	367
<i>Tablet index</i>	374

Illustrations

Tables

2.1	Women's titles identified by MUL at Pylos	28
2.2	Women's occupational titles identified by MUL at Knossos	34
2.3	Women's names at Knossos identified by the MUL ideogram	36
2.4	Women's names at Pylos and Knossos identified by name form	41
2.5	Knossos series tablets recording men and women	44
2.6	Pylos series tablets recording men and women	46
2.7	Women's holdings at Pylos	51
2.8	Women's holdings at Knossos	53
3.1	Women's workgroups by location	70

Figures

	Map of the Aegean Sea	x
	Linear B Tablet PY Tn 316	x
2.1	MUL Ideogram	26
2.2	VIR Ideogram	26

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viii *Acknowledgements*

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Conventions of Linear B

The following conventions are employed throughout the text in the transliteration of Linear B tablets.

KN	Knossos
PY	Pylos
.1 .2 .3 etc.	Line numbers for a horizontally ruled tablet
.A .B etc.	Line numbers for a partially ruled tablet
.a .b etc.	Line number for an unruled tablet
<i>recto</i>	Front side of a tablet
<i>verso</i>	Reverse side of a tablet
<i>vacat</i>	An empty ruled line
<i>vestigia</i>	Traces of illegible signs remain
<i>inf(ra) mut(ila)</i>	Damaged below
<i>sup(ra) mut(ila)</i>	Damaged above
-	Connecting signs in a word
,	Word divider
[]	Missing text
[.]	Text missing a single sign
[a]	Restored text
[[a]]	Erased text (still legible)
< a >	Restorable text omitted by scribal error
a	Damaged sign, subscript dot indicates most likely reading

A fuller introduction to the conventions of Linear B transcription can be found in R. Palmer 2008. See also Nakassis 2013.



Map of the Aegean Sea



Linear B Tablet PY Tn 316. (Photo credit: Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati)

1 The women of Mycenaean Greece

Introduction

“Cherchez la femme.” “Find the woman.” This command, to search out an unknown or invisible woman at the heart of a mystery, has particular relevance for the study of women in Greek antiquity – where so often women have been shrouded in myth, notoriety or obscurity. To talk about the actual, rather than mythological, women of Greek antiquity is a complicated task – in order to locate the real women of Ancient Greece one must sift carefully through the historical, epigraphic, and archaeological records, all of which are dominated by the deeds and activities of Greek men. Greek women are consistently – across eras and regions – recorded far less frequently than their male counterparts, both as a consequence of women’s near complete exclusion from the political and military arenas and the tendency to locate women in the domestic world, where often their social and economic identities become subsumed under those of their male relatives.

This question of rendering women visible – of recovering them from the documentary and archaeological records – is a task historians of women and gender in the ancient world have been undertaking for four decades now. Women’s graves have been excavated, and their names, responsibilities, and rituals have been carefully sifted from inscriptions, orations and the texts of the historiographers. Yet, perhaps nowhere does visibility for women need to be recovered more than in the Greek Bronze Age, whose women have not previously been the focus of a full-length study. Finley unlocked the Homeric world of Odysseus, but what might the Mycenaean world of a real-life Penelope look like?¹

This book is a study of the women of Mycenaean Greece as they appear in the administrative documents of Late Bronze Age Greece: the Linear B tablets of the 14th and 13th centuries BCE. This is the first study to compile all the references to women in the Linear B tablets from Pylos on the Greek mainland and Knossos on Crete – by far the two best-documented Mycenaean sites – and the first to offer a systematic analysis of the ways in which the economic institutions of these Bronze Age palace states were gendered. This study has three main objectives: 1. to locate the women scattered throughout the records; 2. to identify the mechanisms and rationales that drove the visibility of the women recorded in the

2 *The women of Mycenaean Greece*

documents; and 3. to assess the ways in which Mycenaean women functioned in the economic institutions where they were best attested – production, property holdings, land tenure, and cult practice – in order to determine whether gender practices were uniform in the Mycenaean states or differed from site to site. The study also raises a broader question: what was the relationship of the roles and status of Mycenaean women to their later Archaic and Classical counterparts, and do the often-proposed theories of a more egalitarian Bronze Age hold up to the evidence?

From the tablets of Pylos and Knossos, more than 2000 women emerge – rendering the Linear B tablets one of the largest sets of evidence for women in any period of Greek antiquity. Women surface either as individuals identified by their names and/or titles or as members of aggregate groups.² I suggest that these Bronze Age women attested in the tablets do not enter the documentary record randomly, but rather that both sites demonstrate a clear (if idiosyncratic) logic as to which women come to warrant palace attention and hence textual visibility. Overall, I contend that key differences occur between the treatment of women in the Mycenaean and historical periods; while the later evidence primarily places women in the contexts of the *oikos* (family), most of the Linear B evidence registers women who are outside it. And finally, I argue that the two Mycenaean palace states, while not egalitarian in their approach to gender, nonetheless differ not only from the later periods but also from each other. Knossos and Pylos do not share a unified, homogeneous set of gender practices but differ in several important ways in their incorporations of women in their states' economies. I conclude that as early as these earliest of Greek written records, gender already appears a variable institution in Ancient Greece, site-specific and driven by the idiosyncratic needs and histories of each state rather than as a monolithic, unchanging institution for the women of the Mycenaean world.

Gender and Aegean Prehistory

The concept of gender has meaning only as the product of specific historical circumstances. Gender, defined here as the differentiation of society based on perceived sexual difference, conveys different expectations for the roles of men and women in different cultures and functions as *a* primary, if not *the* primary, category of social organization in every known human society.³ Within a given society, gender establishes a framework for the activities of men and women, governs the mechanisms for the distribution of tasks and goods, sets the political, economic, and institutional roles assigned or denied to men and women, and provides a rationale for the social and economic separation of the sexes.⁴ As such, gender functions as a primary, defining trait of cultural identity – one as central as language and religion.

This awareness of the importance of gender as a social variable has been informing Classical scholarship since the early 1970s. Feminist historians, both inside and outside the field of Classics, have insisted on the historical specificity of gender throughout the different periods and *poleis* of Greek antiquity, recognizing

that the specific meanings of gender, as with other hierarchical categories, vary across space and time throughout the Greek world.⁵ In the historical period, social mores governing gender ideologies and practices differed widely, based on the particular histories of individual city-states. Certainly, no contemporary Classical scholar would declare that a universalized concept of gender was in place throughout the Classical period – even the most cursory of glances at the differences in women’s status and lives in fifth-century Sparta and fifth-century Athens would quickly dispel this notion; the differences in the gender practices of Athens and Sparta are substantial and are each rooted in the different historical and institutional circumstances of each *polis*. Both *poleis* evolved the gender systems specific to their own particular societal needs: the high levels of mobility, autonomy, and economic power enjoyed by Spartan women developed to fill needs opened in Spartan society by the vacuum left by the military-centered lives of Spartan men⁶ while the nascent democracy at Athens limited all of these to foster a sense of solidarity among citizen men and to protect newly restricted Athenian citizenship requirements – and so barred women from ownership of property and exercise of legal rights including the franchise and the ability to self-represent in court, while social mores strongly discouraged even the circulation of citizen women in public spaces.⁷ Consequently, we observe each state developing those specific systems of gender practice which fit its own specific needs and societal ideals.

But how far back do the roots of such widely different gender practices in the Greek world extend? Are these variances in Greek gender practices to be attributed to pressures related to the eighth-century rise of the *polis* which then fractured an otherwise monolithic system of gender throughout Greece or was gender already a fragmented and site-specific phenomenon well before the end of the Early Iron Age (the so-called “Dark Age”)?

This study situates these questions in the earliest documented phase of Greek culture – in the palace societies of the Late Bronze Age Aegean (ca. 1400–1200 BCE) – to assess the form or forms which gender assumes several hundred years prior to *polis* development. To answer this question, this text undertakes a study of the two best documented palatial sites of the Late Bronze Age, Knossos on the island of Crete and Pylos on the Mycenaean mainland, focusing on the women of each site to determine whether a *koine* of gender practice was in place or whether, in the earliest written documentation in Greek, gender already displayed regional variances.

History of scholarship on Aegean women: Mythological and iconographic studies

Scholarship has long been interested in the question of women’s status and activities in pre-Classical Greece. As much of the literary and archaeological evidence for this period seems to allege that the mythological women of the Homeric epics and the few women known from the real-life Geometric-period (10th–8th century) burials occupied economic and political roles very different

4 *The women of Mycenaean Greece*

from those occupied by 5th-century Athenian women. Several scholars postulated that women enjoyed a higher social rank in the earlier period than they did in historical-era Greece.⁸ With the archaeological rediscovery of the Bronze Age (ca. 3000–1100 BCE) civilizations of the Aegean in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, this scholarly “elevation” of the Female was extended backwards to include the newly discovered women of Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece. This re-envisioning of women’s position in the Aegean led (and still leads) to the commonplace claim that the women of the Late Bronze Age Aegean occupied a substantially higher status than their historical-period descendants. What exactly the nature of this status difference was, however, has been a source of lively debate. Some researchers, influenced by Bachofen’s *Mutterrecht* or by Freudian models of societal development, located in the Bronze Age a matriarchal antiquity for Greece, citing such evidence as the mythic traditions recorded in Hesiod’s *Theogony*.⁹ These scholars read this myth, with its allusions to an early supremacy of Gaia supplanted ultimately by the patriarch Zeus, as perhaps preserving the memory of a much earlier time when the earthly rule of women was overthrown by men.¹⁰ Other readers were more circumspect: a second line of reasoning, seeking a home for the many memorable women of the mythic tradition, was tempted to locate in Greek prehistory a past where women exercised their voices and political muscles – as Helens, Clytemnestras, and Antigones – at a considerably higher level than did real women of the Athenian *polis*.¹¹ Under such theoretical influences and faced with the many images of prominent women from the Knossos palace frescoes, this argument joined with Sir Arthur Evans, the excavator of Knossos and the discoverer of the Minoan civilization on Crete, in reading these images as “a sign of a female predominance”¹² in the Bronze Age Aegean.¹³

One hundred years later, an interest in Bronze Age women still remains, but the central questions and methodologies have changed. Early interest in such questions as whether the Minoans were matriarchal or whether their religion centered around a mother goddess¹⁴ have largely given way to discussions of gendered spaces, women’s participation in cult and ritual, and public images of power.¹⁵ Currently, research on Aegean women is being conducted through three main avenues of research: through art historical approaches which privilege iconographic evidence, through archaeological investigations of material culture and burial sites,¹⁶ and through analysis of the Linear B tablets.

Research on the women of Minoan Crete,¹⁷ particularly in light of the absence of translatable texts in the Minoan language, has relied heavily on iconographic studies. These studies have tended to privilege images from fresco, and to a lesser extent, glyptic and small sculptures (figurines) over other forms of evidence.¹⁸ These investigations have ranged in subject matter from women’s activities in religious ritual,¹⁹ to representations of women in public and domestic spaces,²⁰ to studies on women’s clothing,²¹ and their possible participation in athletic scenes.²² A few recent studies have also addressed the difficulties of recognizing girls in Minoan art.²³ As a result of this research, several patterns in the way Minoan art portrays women may be identified:²⁴ First and foremost, Minoan iconography consistently places women in public, never domestic, contexts where they often

occupy prominent spatial positions.²⁵ Second, Minoan iconography depicts women of different social ranks, with status hierarchies emphasized on both the Grandstand and Sacred Grove frescoes, each of which depict two categories of women: some large and well-differentiated and others who, like the men depicted on both frescoes, appear on a much smaller scale as an undifferentiated mass of painted heads. Finally, when taken as a whole, Minoan women do not appear to occupy a fully equal standing with Minoan men even in Minoan art; women go missing from several important pictorial media – for example, stone vase reliefs,²⁶ ivory figurines, and portrait seals²⁷ – and are absent from the scenes most generally associated with Minoan hierarchy or administration such as the single standing (male) figures of the portrait seals²⁸ or the “ambassadors” in the Avaris (Tell el-Dab’a) frescoes from Egypt – frescoes widely considered to be of Aegean origin or inspiration.²⁹ Instead, Minoan art more commonly locates its women in prominent roles in cult practice, perhaps even eclipsing the roles of Minoan men in particular rituals.³⁰

Images of women from the Mycenaean (Greek) mainland are somewhat different. Mycenaean images place some women in positions of power (for example as priestesses), but overall prominence in artistic images shifts to Mycenaean men, who as Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou note often appear in heavily militarized contexts.³¹ As yet, no Mycenaean women are seen occupying prominent positions at the expense of accompanying men. Mycenaean art also introduces a new locus for displaying women unattested in Minoan Crete as it adds a new trope for women, displaying them also in the domestic realm; over 70 figurine representations of women caring for children are attested in a significant change from the exclusively public Minoan images of women.³²

From these studies, we can gain some access to the ways in which these two societies address issues of gender. It is clear that these two societies approach gendered scenes differently and idiosyncratically, if not in practice, at least in representation. Not only are these neighboring societies not identical in their presentations of a gendered world, but each demonstrates its own specific approach to representing women in the public and domestic spheres: Mycenaean conceptualized and structured gender in one manner; Minoans in another. Or more simply, gender appears to convey different meaning in each society: Minoans seem more invested in locating women in an official, civic context while Mycenaean place greater emphasis on framing women within the family. Yet these two societies did not exist in isolation from each other, and the central theoretical question of this study is what is the historical result when one society comes to dominate another whose gender roles and ideologies differ from that of the governing society.

Iconographic studies are not, of course, without their own methodological difficulties, particularly if one’s goal is to recover the lived realities of actual Bronze Age women. Sara Immerwahr has identified succinctly the central problems in relying on the frescoes as evidence for “real life”: the ambiguous portrayal of prominent figures who cannot be distinguished as definitively human or divine, that is, as women or goddesses;³³ the impossibility of distinguishing

6 *The women of Mycenaean Greece*

between ritual, generic, or daily-life scenes as it is not yet clear how many of these options are exercised in Aegean iconography; the degree to which palatial frescoes depicting elite members of society do or do not accurately reflect life outside the palace; and difficulties in sorting out gender hierarchies as in some scenes women appear central and in others men do.³⁴ Obviously, iconography alone is insufficient to recover the everyday, lived realities of actual Bronze Age women. In his discussion on the lack of warfare scenes in Minoan art, Charles Gates makes the larger point regarding the relationship between iconography and lived reality: “Pictorial art is not – or better, need not be – a direct representation of society, but instead function[s] as a set of ideological statements whose messages vary according to context and audience.”³⁵

So, art can enrich but not of itself answer our questions. To investigate our topic, we need textual evidence which might provide a glimpse of Bronze Age women and their actual, day-to-day activities. Use of textual evidence, however, necessitates a much smaller chronological and geographical window of study. Because of the untranslated state of Linear A – and because of the abbreviated nature of most Linear A records – the historical realities of Minoan women before the period of Mycenaean administration on Crete are currently unrecoverable. Only the Linear B tablets are readable, and they limit the chronological scope for investigation of Aegean women to the final phase of the Bronze Age (1400–1200 BCE) – the period of the Mycenaean palaces of the mainland and the period of the Mycenaean administrative presence on (formerly Minoan-controlled) Crete. Furthermore, currently only two sites have produced a sufficiently large corpus of Linear B tablets to permit the large-scale investigation of women: Pylos on the Mycenaean mainland with 1107 tablets and Knossos on Crete with 3369.³⁶ It must be noted that the tablets from Knossos date from the period of Mycenaean governance of (at least parts of) Crete. As a consequence, they cannot be used as direct evidence for women’s lives in indigenous Minoan society; rather they reflect the social organization and economic activities of the hybridized Minoan-Mycenaean society that was Mycenaean Knossos (which may even provide some evidence of Minoan holdovers into the Mycenaean era). Nonetheless, even with these chronological limitations, for both these sites, the tablets are rich sources of demographic evidence for the women of Mycenaean-era Greece, with nearly 2000 women securely attested in their combined corpora.

The content of the Linear B tablets: The Mycenaean economy

The content of the Linear B tablets is entirely administrative and economic.³⁷ The tablets record economic transactions (transfers, allocations, collections, etc.) considered to be of direct interest to the palatial governments which commissioned them; no non-palatial records are known from Pylos and Knossos nor any documents with anything other than an administrative context – such as, for example, letters, chronicles, or hymns.³⁸ Nearly all the tablets conform to one of three categories: inventories of goods and property holdings;³⁹ production goals and records; and records of outflow, such as rations and offerings.⁴⁰ As such, the

Linear B tablets act not as simply random windows into the Mycenaean world, nor as spontaneous or free-floating threads of evidence, but rather as mediated texts, filtered through the interests and responsibilities of both the scribes themselves and by the palace elites which commissioned them.

Since we are working, then, with evidence specifically pertaining to elite, palatial economic interests, a short survey of current perspectives into the workings of the Mycenaean economy seems useful. The nature and workings of the Mycenaean economy have been a key area of research across the 60 years of decipherment. Scholarship has long noted that the closest models for this pre-monetary economy are not the city-states of Archaic and Classical Greece so much as those of the palace states of the Bronze Age Near East, in that both share an emphasis on redistribution of goods, commodities, and labor by a central administration, palace- or temple-centered in the Ancient Near East, palace-centered for the Mycenaean.⁴¹

And so, as the centers of redistributive economies,⁴² the palaces were the main economic nuclei of both Knossos and Pylos. The scope of the palatial economy embodied in the tablets is consequently broad as the palaces controlled the lion's share of the Bronze Age states' economies, particularly the import and export of goods.⁴³ The tablets from both centers indicate that the palaces were closely monitoring a variety of industries and commodities, including the textile industry in all stages of production (from counts of herds to wool production to the finished textiles themselves), the manufacture of luxury products such as perfumed oil, the organization of land management, the distribution of metals, the rations given to dependent personnel, the management of multiple species of livestock, the production of foodstuffs, and the distribution of olive oil, gold, and other materials to the (Greek and Minoan⁴⁴) gods. Early studies⁴⁵ once attributed near-complete domination of all aspects of the Mycenaean economy to the palaces;⁴⁶ more contemporary analysis would modulate this reading, noting that many areas of the economy and the vast majority of the population of the Mycenaean states do not come to enter the tablets,⁴⁷ and that we are more likely working under a system whereby the palaces act as the largest economic driver, but "para-palatial" or extra-palatial regions of the economy also play a significant role.⁴⁸ Under this model, then, we should read the tablets as reflecting the palatial area of the Mycenaean economy; much of the non-palatial economy remains outside the scope of our evidence. Nakassis sums up the situation usefully: "The Mycenaean palaces, then, rather than monopolizing virtually all economic activity, were engaged in mobilizing goods and services that benefitted the ruling elite."⁴⁹

In addition to moving away from extreme models of palace control of state economies, models for the degree of hierarchical, political, and social organization have also shifted. Again, the earlier reading had attributed greater agency to the elite, here elite political officials, than current models, which stress a less stratified and more complex series of interactions among palace and regional officials and the rest of the Mycenaean population.⁵⁰ Again, missing sectors of the economic hierarchy are stressed, as is the multi-dimensional or overlapping nature of various officials' purviews,⁵¹ with the result that more current emphasis focuses

on the relationship between the palaces and the groups, officials, and individuals with whom they interact.⁵²

Women in the Mycenaean economy: The Linear B tablets

The Greek Bronze Age predates the invention of the alphabet but not the rise of recorded data. Writing and written documents emerge in the Aegean basin in the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE, first in the form of Cretan Hieroglyphic (also known as Pictographic) on the island of Crete in the 18th century BCE and then shifts to the – still-untranslated – syllabic script known as Linear A (well-documented by the 15th century BCE as the major writing system of the Minoan civilization at its peak in the New Palace period). In this writing system, specialized scribes kept records by inscribing clay tablets with a combination of syllabic signs, drawn images (ideograms), and numerical tallies to keep records of economic transactions of interest to their palace and local administrations.⁵³

Following the collapse of Neopalatial Crete in the 15th century BCE and the consequent loss of the Linear A script, a new syllabic script emerged in the Aegean, Linear B, deciphered in 1952 by Michael Ventris, who proved it to be a syllabic script representing the Mycenaean dialect of Ancient Greek. Found both at mainland citadel and palace sites and replacing the earlier Linear A at the now Mycenaean-administered site of Knossos on Crete, Linear B adopted many of the conventions of Linear A, continuing to spell words out via their component syllables alongside the ongoing use of ideograms and tallies. Clay continued to be the main media in use, at least for records intended to be kept for relatively short times,⁵⁴ and tablets were frequently stored in administrative centers, most typically palaces. When these palaces were destroyed, fires broke out and, fortunately for the modern researcher, baked the once semi-hardened clay tablets to kiln-like temperatures, inadvertently preserving these once short-term records for more than 32 centuries.

Once more, the primary impetus for creating these records was administrative and economic, allowing the palace administrations to track its varied interactions with an increasingly hierarchical and stratified Mycenaean population. On these records, the scribes would frequently list the names and titles of people either supplying or receiving goods and/or commodities for the palaces, the types of commodity involved in the exchange, and a tally of the number of units exchanged. From these records, we can reconstruct at least parts of those areas of the economy most regulated and recorded by palace scribes. Two palace sites emerge with vastly more documentation than the others: Pylos in the South-Western Peloponnese with more than 1100 tablets surviving and Knossos on Crete with more than 3000.

While the tablets have too often been dismissed as impenetrable or been subject to accusations of being the ancient equivalent of shopping lists,⁵⁵ the two corpora are actually rich sources for the social structures of Aegean proto-history. In fact, they provide a degree of demographic detail not replicated in later Greek history until well into the Hellenistic period. Of the nearly 5000 total tablets from

Knossos and Pylos, more than half provide evidence of the names, occupational responsibilities, and property holdings of real, rather than mythological, Bronze Age women and men.⁵⁶ Furthermore, as property and commodity holdings are typically quantified, we can estimate a relative sense of the listed individual's proportionate economic import vis-à-vis other members of his or her society. Overall, we see a high degree of centralization in the palace economies of the Aegean, with the palaces maintaining direct or indirect control over much of the economic activity within their states. Furthermore, these economies are maintained via a regimented hierarchy of personnel displaying a level of specialization unsustainable after the destruction of the palaces ca. 1200 BCE.

This economic evidence is particularly useful for the study of Bronze Age women. For a time period previously dependent on the vagaries of iconographic representations or on dubiously sexed burials for our understanding of social organization,⁵⁷ the tablets provide numerous and invaluable prosopographical details, documenting women's names, titles, professions, and, through the materials variously allotted to or collected from them, a sense of women's relative importance within the societies to which they contribute, a resource whose importance to the social historian cannot be overestimated.⁵⁸ This situation, where women are rendered visible to the historian by means of their economic roles, stands in marked contrast to Classical Athens, for instance, where what visibility women accrue stems from their roles within the domestic or religious spheres.

Returning to the Late Bronze Age, it remains ironic that, while women's importance has tended to be overread in the iconography, it has for the most part been marginalized in previous studies of Linear B administration. In many syntheses, the focus has been primarily on male officials with women mentioned only briefly in discussions of specific groupings of tablets such as the personnel series⁵⁹ or as religious officials.⁶⁰ This is particularly unfortunate as the tablets are a valuable primary source from which to access women's role in the palatial economy. To date, in the 60 years following the decipherment of Linear B,⁶¹ only seven studies have been specifically dedicated to women's activities in the Mycenaean economy.

The first study to address the functions performed by women in the tablets was published in 1958, within six years of Ventris's announcement of decipherment. In this study, Tritsch primarily addressed the workgroup women of the personnel series from Pylos.⁶² Tritsch noted that a wide variety of occupational tasks were assigned to these women and opened the debate as to whether these low-status workers were to be understood as slaves or free. Tritsch argued that these women were free female contract labor who traveled to Pylos as refugees from the disturbances throughout the Aegean in the Late Bronze Age in order to seek paid employment; this theory is no longer widely accepted.

The women of the tablets received only one direct study throughout the 1960s and 1970s in the form of Deger-Jalkotzy's article on the parentage of the thirteen slave women listed on the tablet PY An 607.⁶³ Otherwise throughout these two decades, women were addressed not in studies exclusively devoted to women *per se* but via treatments of areas of the economy in which women made prominent

appearances, for example, in work outlining the stationing and rationing of workers and in monographs devoted to specific institutions such as religion and industries such as textile production, where we are indebted to Killen's decades of careful and insightful study.⁶⁴

This period also saw the publication of two of the most influential reference texts in Linear B research: the revised 2nd edition of Ventris and Chadwick's 1956 landmark study *Documents in Mycenaean Greek*⁶⁵ and Lindgren's invaluable prosopographical study *The People of Pylos*,⁶⁶ both published in 1973. Although neither of these texts has chapters or discussions devoted solely to women, both works are indispensable for researchers addressing Bronze Age prosopography and social and administrative structure.

The 1970s also saw a burgeoning interest in women's history within the discipline of Classics, an interest which grew rapidly and in multiple directions upon the publication of Pomeroy's 1975 landmark *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves*.⁶⁷ These new directions of inquiry into women's historical realities in Ancient Greece took a variety of forms, ranging from monographs on women's legal, domestic, and economic status, to sourcebooks of primary materials relating to women's lives in antiquity, to thematically driven essay collections.⁶⁸ In the 1970s this growing interest in women's history was concentrated on women of the historical period but expanded in the 1980s to include the women of Greek pre- and proto-history alongside their Archaic and Classical counterparts.

Billigmeier and Turner's 1981 article,⁶⁹ published in the essay collection *Reflections of Women in Antiquity*, was the first study to reflect this renewed interest and was designed for a largely non-specialist audience and remains perhaps the most widely read treatment of women in the Linear B tablets.⁷⁰ In this survey of the evidence pertaining to women's socio-economic roles in the tablets, Billigmeier and Turner concentrated on bringing to light the variety of occupations held by women throughout the major palatial sites, noting divisions between sacerdotal women and artisans. In particular, they emphasized aspects of the tablets where men and women appeared to enjoy a somewhat egalitarian status and made the now-contested claim that "women in Mycenaean Greece may have enjoyed a more equal socio-economic status than they did in Classical Hellas."⁷¹ However, this reading fails to note the dependent rather than free status of most of the female laborers and neglects to quantify the holdings associated with the different groups of women referenced in the tablets, thereby excluding from its treatment the evidence most pertinent to determining the status of the women of this study.

In 1983, Carlier published a short but first-rate article, "La femme dans la société mycénienne," among the papers of the conference *La Femme dans les Sociétés Antiques*;⁷² it offered a well-grounded and judiciously presented survey of the types of information the tablets can and cannot provide about women in Mycenaean society.⁷³ This study first addressed the evidence for women in the state hierarchy – the role played by priestesses in palace society and the continuing difficulties in clearly identifying a Mycenaean queen – and then sampled the evidence for craftswomen at Knossos and Pylos on a site-by-site basis. Perhaps

most importantly, Carlier first raised the possibility of differences in gender practices between the two sites, noting that in the Knossian texts recording women and children, greater attention was given to subdividing the age groups of the children accompanying the workgroup women than at Pylos, and that Knossos employed a wider variety of descriptive terms for women than did Pylos.

Uchitel further expanded the context in which the women of the Linear B tablets were studied in 1984.⁷⁴ He compared the records of Mycenaean women at Pylos and Knossos with those of the Near Eastern archives from Lagash and Ur.⁷⁵ This article focused primarily on the status of the women of these records using the Near Eastern records as comparanda for the Aegean and argued based on (somewhat slim) internal evidence and through analogy with the Near Eastern material, that the women of Pylos and Knossos should not be considered to have been slaves but rather *corvée* workers.⁷⁶ Of additional value is Uchitel's lucid and concise methodological discussion of the Aegean personnel tablets and his treatment and elucidation of parallel sources.

The final major inquiry into women's roles in the Aegean Bronze Age documents in this period of renewed interest was John Chadwick's 1988 article "The Women of Pylos," published as part of the essay collection *Texts, Tablets, and Scribes*.⁷⁷ Like Carlier, Chadwick offered a circumspect treatment of the women of the tablets, specifically the palatial craftswomen. In this study, Chadwick compiled and presented all the extant texts pertaining to the craftswomen of the Pylos A series (Aa, Ab, and Ad), identifying them by their workgroup titles (frequently proposing and commenting on suggested etymologies for these terms) and by location. He also identified the calculations involved in the supply of rations to these workers, noting the standardized nature of the rations. On the larger question of the status of these workers, Chadwick quite effectively refuted Tritsch's refugee theory, instead arguing in favor of regarding these women as "menial dependents, virtually if not legally slaves, many of them probably acquired through Greek trading posts in the Aegean."⁷⁸ It should be noted that this investigation was nearly exclusively devoted to the women of Pylos; Chadwick only briefly referenced the Knossos evidence, but noted one important difference between the women mentioned at the two sites: the location-derived adjectives (the so-called "ethnics") which occasionally accompany women's workgroups were exclusively derived from Crete in the Knossos archives while at Pylos women's ethnics appeared to derive exclusively from the Eastern Aegean and the Greek mainland.

Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou's sweeping 1993 synthesis *Η αρχαιολογία και η κοινωνική ταυτότητα του φύλου Προσεγγίσει στην αιγαιακή*⁷⁹ was the first systematic investigation to reformulate the social evolution of Aegean Prehistory with gender as its primary axis of investigation. This study postulated that an increase/intensification of warfare led to an increasingly stratified social hierarchy as the Bronze Age progressed, a social hierarchy particularly delineated along gender lines, and that the more "egalitarian" societies of the Early and Middle Bronze Age were replaced by a more militaristic, hierarchical, and consequently patriarchal one in the Late Bronze Age. Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou draw the

majority of their evidence from archaeological material, but they also briefly discuss the Linear B data, which they characterize as reflecting primarily an androcentric and hierarchical political system under the control of the male *wanax* (“king”) and an evident task differentiation between the sexes which they attribute to an indoor/outdoor division of labor. Additionally, they discuss palatial religion, which they contend also became dominated by (male) hierarchical structures such as the priesthood. While I am reluctant to accept all aspects of their polarized pre-militaristic – egalitarian and militaristic – patriarchal theory of gendered social development, their discussion of religion is especially relevant to this project. Furthermore, their contention that women only acquire status through priesthood is addressed in Chapters 5 and 7, a contention I argue may be more accurate for the women of Pylos than for the women of Knossos.

From the late 1990s to the present, scholarship on women has evolved to include studies focused on recovering the lived realities of Bronze Age women and on recovering how Bronze Age social and political institutions were differently gendered for men and women. This scholarship has assumed three forms: 1. discussions of gender practices within specific Bronze Age social institutions, 2. textual studies not expressly devoted to women per se but where women figured prominently, 3. investigations employing ethnographic analogies to shed light on Aegean women and/or theoretical discussions about framing a methodology for studying Bronze Age women.⁸⁰ This first category – investigations of gender practice within Bronze Age institutions – has largely concerned the family unit⁸¹ while the second category – studies of specific institutions where women are predominant – has been spearheaded by Killen’s great corpus of work illuminating the textile industry at Knossos. Killen’s work on the textile industry is currently being expanded by Burke and Nosch, addressing the mechanics of the industry and the work performed by female laborers.⁸² Finally, Lupack’s ongoing work on cult sanctuaries and their personnel continues to tease out the complex economic interactions between cult personnel and their polities – especially pertinent to the study of Mycenaean women is her attention to the roles and economic activities of sanctuary priestesses.⁸³

While these various studies each help to illuminate some aspect of gender organization in the Mycenaean world, we nonetheless remain left with a disjointed and patchwork view of women and gender in this time period. While it is, of course, helpful to have an understanding of the evidence for women’s activities in specific subsets of the tablets, or to tease out the complexities of how gendered iconography – both of women and of goddesses – is employed, we are still in urgent need of a broader narrative, one which helps illuminate the wider contexts occupied by women in the tablets and which helps to decipher at least some of the rules and patterns of Mycenaean gendered practices. In short, we have located and analysed many pieces of this puzzle, but we need a frame. At present, several key questions remain unanswered – and largely unposed: Who are the women visible in the tablets, how do they become visible, and are they broadly representative of the women of their states? What is the relationship between the various women recorded in the tablets at each site? Do they share a similar status

as women or do the categories of gender, class, and/or other variables intersect to create hierarchies among women? Do the rules and practices governing women's activities in their states' economies vary across sites or is the status and economic role of women relatively homogeneous in the Mycenaean world? Iconography hints at differences;⁸⁴ do the texts confirm these? These questions all require answering, we need to take the tablets from each site as a whole, and this disparate evidence needs to be fitted into a more coherent narrative if we are to reach any overall understanding of how the category of woman functions in each of these palace states.

In addition to addressing these currently unasked questions, we also need to correct perhaps the largest methodological flaw in the previous scholarship; nearly all of the previous works share the tacit assumption that the different Mycenaean polities were essentially similar in their structures and institutions, and that the Linear B tablets reflected a Mycenaean *koine* not only of language but also of society. This methodological trait is particularly characteristic of previous studies of women's roles in the tablets and creates, I argue, a misleading impression of a single, monolithic conception of gender in place at all the different states of the Late Bronze Age Aegean. No previous study has juxtaposed the experience of the women recorded on the tablets across sites. Some studies have been confined to one site (generally Pylos) but the question of how similar gender practices are between Linear B-administered Pylos and Knossos has not yet been raised.

In fact, only recently have scholars begun to question the homogeneity of the so-called Mycenaean experience. Kopcke's paper ("The Argolid in 1400 – What Happened?")⁸⁵ prompted a discussion at the 1994 *Politeia* conference which led to Palaima's challenge for the future direction of Linear B studies:

One of the challenges facing Linear B scholars in the next twenty or thirty years – and one we are coming to terms with now – is really to try to see, with the variations in information that are available from site to site, what the regional differences are even in the documentation for administration and economic and social structure from site to site. So it is very tempting to take the documentation that we have from Pylos – say texts Un 718 and Er 312 – and extrapolate from them universally.... We should indeed not expect that Mycenae will conform to the pattern we see in the Linear B texts from Pylos.... *We should also not expect that Mycenaean Knossos is going to conform to the pattern that we see at Pylos* [emphasis added]. So it is a real challenge to figure out region to region what is going on in the period of full palatial culture.⁸⁶

This emphasis on site differentiation has not previously been applied to scholarship on women in the Late Bronze Age. What has been lacking in these studies of women in the tablets has been an attention to the potential site-specificity of gender practice in the Late Bronze Age. Surely, we cannot assume that gender practices are uniform across all Bronze Age sites, particularly given the unique historical circumstances of Pylos and Knossos. Instead we must allow for the

possibility that Knossos and Pylos both functioned as unique and idiosyncratic political entities, which may well have made significantly different choices in their orderings of their gendered practices and structures.

This tendency to homogenize the social and administrative practices of Knossos and Pylos is understandable, if unfortunate. As Olivier has succinctly noted, there are many similarities in the scribal and administrative practices of these two states: documents are written and presented in a nearly identical fashion, the same ideograms are in use, and the same subject matter is addressed.⁸⁷ The similarities between the sites extend further than the mechanics of the texts; as Olivier noted, the economic system, which permitted the palace to assess and redistribute agricultural products or semi-finished ones, seems to have been absolutely identical on Crete and in Messenia. Nearly all the traces of economic activity (religious, military or civil) in one palace find their equivalent at least partially in the other.⁸⁸

Olivier, however, went on to note that while the two sites appear very similar on a macroscopic level, when examined on a more microscopic level, distinct differences in the recording practices and themes emerge between Knossos and Pylos. In particular, he noted significant archival differences between the two sites (including wide ranges in numbers of scribes, findspots, and signs per tablets).⁸⁹ Differences have also been noted in the organization of various industries and personnel including the varied treatment of smiths, and the obligations related to sanctuary lands, the management of the perfume industry, and the attention paid to children's age grades at Knossos.⁹⁰ These studies strongly suggest that the specific mechanisms of the palace economy are not uniform throughout all Mycenaean polities but instead are adapted to suit best the local needs of each state. Perhaps the notion of local variation should not come as a surprise to us, particularly given the different historical circumstances of Pylos and Knossos⁹¹ – those of Pylos, where a Mycenaean administration governed a Mycenaean population, and those of Knossos which, by the time of the Linear B tablets, witnessed a Mycenaean administration which superseded an earlier Minoan one and governed a co-mingled population of Greeks and ethnic Minoans.

The question of Mycenaean Crete

Knossos, before the end of the Late Minoan IB period (traditionally dated to ca. 1450 BCE),⁹² had been the administrative center of one of at least five *Minoan* states – where Minoan populations had been governed by Minoan administrations.⁹³ Observable during the Minoan palatial period are distinctly and uniquely Minoan practices in architecture, ceramics, religion, social organization, and its system of scribal organization, which kept records in the Linear A script.

Widespread destructions of administrative buildings at the end of the LMIB period irrevocably changed the nature of Minoan Crete and the site of Knossos. These destructions have largely been attributed to the coming of Mycenaean from the mainland who remained and grafted a Mycenaean administration onto what had previously been Minoan-governed Crete.⁹⁴ While there continues to

be much debate over the exact mechanisms which governed this assumption of power on Crete by Mycenaean Greeks and whether they occurred concurrent with the LMIB destructions or in the following LMII period, certainly by the time the Knossos Linear B tablets were inscribed, Knossos and the parts of Crete under its control were unquestionably under Mycenaean administration.⁹⁵

Yet the Mycenaean-administered palatial state of Knossos is an entity unparalleled on the Mycenaean mainland. At Mycenaean Knossos, we encounter not a state like Pylos, where an ethnic Mycenaean population is governed by a Mycenaean administration, but rather a hybrid society of both ethnic Minoans and ethnic Mycenaean under the authority of a Mycenaean administration.⁹⁶

One of the major issues current in Aegean research is the question of how Mycenaean was Mycenaean-administered Crete.⁹⁷ Under this investigative rubric, archaeologists are focusing attention on questions of assimilation and of cultural survivals, asking what happened to Minoan culture in the period of Mycenaean administration. These investigations have devised a number of paradigms for interrogating material culture in order to identify the degree to which Minoan cultural traits are retained or displaced under Mycenaean administration. Scholarship is divided on the question of Minoan assimilation into Mycenaean “culture.” Davis and Bennet see Mycenaeanization as “a relatively homogenous cultural *koine* that covered most of the southern Aegean at the end of the Late Bronze Age,”⁹⁸ one which had the capacity for absorbing and acculturating non-Greek-speaking populations, especially non-Mycenaean elites. As evidence for a *koine* of Mycenaean culture, they cite the relative homogeneity of material culture during LH/LM III and read “the language of the Linear B tablets – almost indistinguishable from Knossos to Thebes – [as] used as a marker of elite Mycenaean identity.”⁹⁹ (The central problem with this reading, of course, is that it notes the linguistic unity of the script used by the various palace scribes; yet unity of scribal language does not necessarily demand a similar level of *cultural* homogeneity in the social, political, and economic behaviors of the different Mycenaean states and their inhabitants.)

On the other hand, the persistence of Minoan ceramic and architectural styles on Crete would seem to indicate the continued survival of at least some indigenous Minoan artisanship and technologies into the period of Mycenaean administration. Additional Minoan cultural survivals seem to be indicated in the sphere of religion; various tablets from Knossos record local Minoan divinities receiving offerings along with Olympians, votive traditions persist, and Minoan burial patterns continue deep into the Mycenaean period. Two textual studies have also tracked the degree of assimilation for Minoan men by examining the geographical contexts where Minoan men’s names are given to boys and where Mycenaean ones seem to have been preferred.¹⁰⁰ (Driessen has also argued on the basis of later literary evidence that the process of Hellenization on Crete should be regarded as a slow, centuries-long process.)¹⁰¹ It seems clear that at least some elements of an earlier Minoan culture persist and are co-existent with Mycenaean cultural traits, at least as far as religion, technology, and the social organization of men are concerned.

But is this also true for the social organization of Cretan women? More to the point, how do the social and cultural choices of Minoan society fare under a Mycenaean Greek administration? Would our model be one of broad cultural assimilation to the gender mores and practices of the Mycenaean administration or do elements of Minoan cultural practices persist? To answer this question, we might look to see how closely the gender patterns of Knossos conform to those of mainland Pylos. Closely patterned similarities might argue for a high degree of assimilation of Minoan gender roles and practices into Mycenaean ones while significant differences might argue for the holdovers of at least some aspects of a more Minoan approach to gender organization, persisting even a century or so after the initial Mycenaean dominance of Knossos. This is particularly significant if the theorized higher status for women in Minoan Crete than in mainland Greek society is valid;¹⁰² should this be true, we would have a scenario in which a society with a relatively low status for women assumes dominance over another which accords women a higher social status. So what did political dominance by Mycenaean mean for the women of previously Minoan Crete? The answer to this question may offer another entry point into the assimilation/persistence debate.

The structure and scope of this study

Uchitel writes concerning the Sumerian texts of the Ur III period, “we have to keep in mind that Sumerian economic texts were not written for the purpose of sociological research, but for the very practical reason of registration of actual work-teams”¹⁰³ under the control of the administration of Ur. This caveat also applies to the range of evidence present in the Linear B records. Keeping this in mind, we must acknowledge the futility of using the Linear B tablets to answer all our questions about Mycenaean palatial society. A more viable and valuable approach to the tablets, then, lies in the careful framing of questions which the tablets can answer, rather than those they cannot. Therefore, for this study, the central research question posed is “is the treatment of women in the economic records from Pylos and Knossos the same?” – a question that the tablets can address. This central question is posed across the two sites in terms of how women’s status compares to that of men at each site, the ways in which women’s status tiers are arranged and structured and the ways in which well-documented institutions shared by both sites (e.g. land tenure and religion) are gendered.

Consequently, this study focuses mainly on the economic activities of women at these two sites and uses their Linear B tablets as its primary source for women’s participation in economic matters. In assessing this evidence, I contend that the different historical circumstances of Mycenaean Pylos and Mycenaean-Minoan Knossos have produced very different gendered economic structures at the two sites. In particular I ask the question, how closely do the economic activities of women at a purely Mycenaean site like Pylos conform to those of women at a hybridized Mycenaean-Minoan site like Knossos? Do we see women’s production and property holdings taking roughly the same form at both sites – indicating a high level of correspondence – or do they differ significantly? I argue that a high level of

correspondence would indicate that an indigenous Minoan gender system had been largely assimilated into that of the Mycenaean administration while a high level of difference would indicate that even under Mycenaean political domination, Crete continues to be governed by its own idiosyncratic system of gender.

Toward this end, I focus on the ways they manage their subordinate populations: women. Women are the focus of this project because it is here with women where gender-based status differences are visible – far more visible than among men within patriarchal societies. Due to the patriarchal organization of both Knossos and Pylos, the men of the two states appear largely the same; at both sites, men comprise the highest civic and ruling elite, own or control the majority of commodities and resources, and are fully integrated throughout all the arenas of palatial social, political, and economic life. To see difference, we must look to the marked, rather than unmarked, social category; to the ways in which the socially subordinated sex is incorporated into palace society, for it is here where we may observe variances in the degrees of access to resources, and in patterns of ownership, social and economic mobility, task-assignments, etc. In a mathematical analogy, if men are considered to have full (100 percent) access to all areas of ancient economic life (commodities, property, social and political institutions, etc.), differences in gender practice will not be particularly visible between one site or another. If, however, women at one site have 75 percent access to men's activities, and women at another have 20 percent, we might speculate that different ideologies about women and their social roles are at work in these two societies.

Throughout this study, I focus on areas of visible difference – seeking to identify the types of access and relative economic status of the women at Pylos and the women at Knossos – both vis-à-vis men in their societies, and then vis-à-vis each other. Practically, and due to the methodological issues inherent to the fragmented Knossos corpus, this translates to first identifying the ways in which various economic institutions at Pylos are organized by gender and then contrasting the more limited evidence from Knossos with the patterns recoverable at Pylos. As the evidence of both archives indicates the overall subordinate position of women,¹⁰⁴ I ask not whether women were dominant or even equal participants in the political arena of Late Bronze Age palatial society— since it seems certain that they were not – but rather whether there was a common system of gender organization in place in the Late Bronze Age Aegean or rather discrete, site-specific systems such as those present in the historical period. In what ways is gender constructed in these two centers, what gender roles do women occupy, how do the palaces incorporate women into their economies, and does gender construction – in the forms of gender roles and gender ideologies as recoverable from both the textual and iconographic evidence – look the same on Mycenaean Crete as it does on the Mycenaean mainland? I argue that not only does gender play a major role in governing the range and scope of women's roles in both palatial economies, but also that each site makes different and locally specific choices in the ways it structures women's production and control over goods and commodities.

This book addresses these questions by examining both the quantitative and qualitative evidence pertaining to women's economics in the tablets, with emphasis on the specifics of each palatial site. Toward this end, I limit my discussion to only those women who can be established *qua* women with a high degree of security,¹⁰⁵ and I concentrate on the ways in which task assignments and property holdings create and reinforce status hierarchies both between men and women and among women. Throughout, I identify what gender patterns are in place at each site with respect to such social and economic institutions as property holdings (including land holding), production and task assignment, and religion, and compare each site's pattern for engendering each institution within the other's in order to identify similarities and differences. As mentioned above, the evidence allows a greater chance at reconstructing and modeling gendered patterns at Pylos; the Knossos evidence does not allow such modeling, but can be used as a counterpoint to the patterns observed at Pylos.

Above all, I argue that even as early as Late Bronze Age Greece, gender is already a site-specific and locally distinct institution, governed by the needs and ideologies of a particular community at a particular historical moment. Toward this end, this book comprises several thematic chapters which explore different facets of women's economic activities at both sites. Chapter 2 establishes the criteria by which I identify women in the tablets and discusses the ways in which both Knossos and Pylos are revealed as gender-segregated and patriarchal societies. The remaining chapters address the ways in which gender affects specific palatial institutions critical to the economies of both sites. Chapters 3–5 investigate the roles that production and property holding play in creating and reinforcing status hierarchies among elite and non-elite women at each site. Chapter 3 discusses the evidence for low-status women at Pylos, women who are defined exclusively through their production activities, while Chapter 4 discusses the property holdings of elite Pylian women as well as the criteria which appear to justify their more elite status. Chapter 5 discusses production and property at Knossos and identifies the ways in which women's hierarchies at Knossos differ from those of Pylos. Chapters 6 and 7 each focus on the two specific institutions where men and women at both sites are recorded in sufficient numbers to assess how gender affects the involvement of the sexes vis-à-vis each other: Chapter 6 addresses men's and women's investiture into the land tenure systems of Pylos and Knossos while Chapter 7 surveys the evidence for the gendering of cult offices and the ways in which religion relates to the creation and sustaining of social hierarchies.

I conclude with a discussion of the ramifications of this gender-centric investigation¹⁰⁶ as they pertain to the study of women's economic history within Greek antiquity, especially with respect to low-status women, and within Bronze Age studies to address the ways in which newly visible gender practice impacts questions such as the structure of the larger palatial economy and the Hellenization of Late Bronze Age Crete.

Notes

- 1 Moses I. Finley's seminal 1954 study *The World of Odysseus* explored the palace-centered societies of the Homeric epics, set in the 10th–8th centuries BCE and established much of the social, economic, and cultural backdrops of the worlds of the epics. My project pushes back from the mythological world of Homer to the real-life palace societies the epics purport to describe, the palace societies of the Mycenaean Greek Bronze Age from the 14th to the late 13th centuries BCE to investigate and establish the social contexts experienced by actual rather than mythological women, drawing from documentary rather than epic sources.
- 2 These circumstances presage that of, for example, later Classical Athens where certain women – either those most revered, such as Athenian priestesses like Lysimache, or those most notorious, such as the former slave Neaira – appear as named and differentiated individuals while the vast majority enter the historical record in the collective, as girls or matrons in the practice of cult, as mourners lamenting family losses, or as widows grieving the loss of husbands in war.
- 3 Feminist historical scholarship has long emphasized the central role occupied by gender in human social organization from its emergence as a field in the 1970s via such work as Ortner 1974, and continuing to the present with recent studies such as Judith Bennett 2006. Early scholarship like Ortner's tended to emphasize human universality of ideology and experience while newer scholarship such as Bennett's instead insists on the necessity for focused and sustained attention to cultural specificity in the study of gender.
- 4 Research on gender and gendered societies which began within the discipline of history in the 1970s within ten years spread to other disciplines occupied with past societies, coming to Classical History in the mid-1970s, Aegean Bronze Age studies in the early 1980s and to Anthropology-based Archaeology in the mid-1980s with the work of Conkey and Spector 1984 and Gero and Conkey 1991. Useful review articles on the origins of feminist scholarship within anthropological archaeology include Wylie 1996; Gilchrist 1991; and R. Wright 1996a. For the state of scholarship on women in Ancient Greece, see Katz 2000.
- 5 The attention to local gender practices was the impetus behind the 2004 Feminism and Classics IV Conference, "Gender and Diversity in Place" hosted at the University of Arizona, Tucson. (Papers are published online at *Diotima* (www.stoa.org/diotima).)
- 6 On gender roles and ideologies in Spartan society: Bradford 1986; Cartledge 1981; Fantham, Foley, Kampen, Pomeroy and Shapiro 1994; Kunstler 1987; and Zweig 1993.
- 7 On the rationale behind gender relations at Athens: Cohen 1989; Foxhall 1995; Foxhall 1989; and Walters 1993. The major exception to these restrictions comes in the form of Athenian religion: Connelly 2007.
- 8 Scholarship alleging a higher status for Greek women in the Homeric era: Arthur 1981; and Leduc 1992. On women of the Geometric period: Coldstream 1995; Smithson 1968; and Whitley 1996.
- 9 Gimbutas 1999, 1997, 1974 has been the most vocal proponent of this position; she posits a matriarchal Minoan culture that came to be conquered by patriarchal Indo-European Mycenaean. She reads this supposedly matriarchal Minoan culture as part of the larger culture of "Old Europe" which she regards as uniformly peaceful and matriarchal. Gimbutas argues that the preponderance (in her view) of female figurines from prehistoric Europe indicate the ascendancy of a Mother Goddess at the center of the "Old European" pantheon and that in turn the rule of a female figure in heaven is paralleled by the rule of mortal women in matriarchal societies throughout late Neolithic Europe. See also: Dexter and Polomé 1997; and Christ 1998. In recent years, several feminist prehistorians, notably Talalay 1994, 1993 and Meskell 1995 have called Gimbutas's interpretations into question, noting that the culture of "Old

20 *The women of Mycenaean Greece*

- Europe” is significantly less than uniform or monolithic or that Gimbutas’s evidence – primarily consisting of figurines once thought to be predominantly female – is instead more frequently androgynous or of indeterminate gender. For histories and critiques of prehistoric matriarchal theories: Georgoudi 1992; Meskell 1995; and Tringham 1994.
- 10 This myth has strong ethnographic parallels in Amazon societies: Bamberger 1974.
 - 11 This theory emerged with the *Palace of Minos* (Evans 1930, vol. 3: 227) and reemerged in feminist studies of the 1980s: Billigmeier and Turner 1981: n. 81; and Ehrenberg 1989.
 - 12 “Women among the Minoans, as is well illustrated by their occupation of all the front seats of the Grand Stands, took the higher rank in Society, just as their great Goddess took the place later assigned to Zeus.” Evans 1930: 227. Immerwahr 1983 echoes this statement, noting that “the frescoes from Knossos certainly suggest a female bias,” but Nixon 1983 rightly criticizes dependence solely on iconography to read a high status for Minoan women.
 - 13 The evidence most commonly cited by proponents of this position is the Women in Blue, the Sacred Grove, Temple, and Grandstand Frescoes.
 - 14 Scholarship has also investigated Mycenaean women, but to a lesser degree; the gender dynamics of Mycenaean society have largely been treated as a foil for the allegedly “female-centered” Minoan culture and dismissed as entirely patriarchal in nature: Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou 1993: n. xx.
 - 15 Kopaka 2009; Dyczek 1992; Hägg and Marinatos 1981; Marinatos 1995, 1993, 1987a, 1987b.
 - 16 For example, Acheson 1999 on longevity in the Bronze Age which revealed sex-based differences in life expectancy: 32 years for Late Bronze Age women and 40 for men. Cavanagh and Mee 1998 also note that male burials outnumber female in Mycenaean society, offering as possible explanations a higher level of female than male infanticide or a declination to bury unmarried or widowed women. Lisa Little’s anthropological investigation into family relations in the graves at Mochlos is eagerly anticipated.
 - 17 For clarification purposes, I am treating as “Minoan” all material up to the LMIB destructions on the island. I use the term “Mycenaean Crete” to identify the hybridized society of the LM II and LM III periods in which the island is being administrated in the Greek Linear B script. See Driessen 1990 for definitively fixing LM II as administered in Linear B (Room of the Chariot Tablets). As no women are mentioned in the Room of the Chariot Tablets texts, all Knossian references will date to the LM III period.
 - 18 Alexandri 1994; Lee 1995.
 - 19 *Supra*, note 13.
 - 20 Hitchcock’s work on gendered spaces in the Minoan world is typical of the increased sophistication of recent iconographic studies through careful attention to detail and strict methodology; she observes that rather than operating as part of a fluid gender system, gender roles in Minoan art tend toward clear definition and delineation: Hitchcock 2000, 1997.
 - 21 Jones 1998.
 - 22 Damiani Indelicato 1988; Younger 1995, 1976.
 - 23 Rehak 2007; Rutter 2003.
 - 24 While iconography cannot permit the full recovery of day-to-day lived realities, it can provide useful insight into societal norms and expectations: Weingarten 1999.
 - 25 Marinatos 1995: 584–85; Olsen 1998.
 - 26 Warren 1969: 174–81; Hood 1978: 142–50; Younger and Rehak 2008: 152.
 - 27 E. Davis 1995: 11–20.
 - 28 E. Davis, citing the evidence of portrait seals notes, “it must be significant that only men and not women appear on the portrait seals. And it is primarily men who

- are shown as single standing figures with attributes, the way men in the ‘priest-robes’ are shown. This suggests that men functioned in the Minoan hierarchy or administration in a capacity that was not shared by females.” E. Davis 1995: 16. Likewise, Thomas 1999 notes that several major narrative vessels are entirely male-populated, including the Master Impression, the Deer Hunt, the Harvester Vase and the Boxer Rhyton.
- 29 Wachsmann 1987; Rehak 1996.
 - 30 Immerwahr 1983 notes that this apparent emphasis on women over men might reflect the dominance of a female divinity and her priestess at a religious ritual.
 - 31 Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou 1993.
 - 32 Olsen 1998, followed by Rutter 2003.
 - 33 Exceptions to this trend are relatively few: human (as opposed to divine) women can be identified if they are wearing a sealstone – the mark of an administrator – on their wrists; a female figure is likely to be a representation of a goddess, on the other hand, if she is seated on a throne and surrounded by non-anthropomorphic characters such as griffins, monkeys, genii, etc. Otherwise, the distinction is very difficult to defend. Rehak 1995.
 - 34 Immerwahr 1983.
 - 35 Gates 1999.
 - 36 A major archive at Thebes is currently being excavated and published; Chania is also producing a small, but extremely interesting, tablet cache.
 - 37 The workings of the palatial economy and palatial industries continue to be a central topic of investigation in Bronze Age research. Discussions (non-gender-themed) of the Mycenaean palatial economy include: Earle 2002; Chaniotis 1999; Cline 1994; Halstead 1992; Morris 1986; Killen 2008, 1985; Olivier and Palaima 1988; R. Palmer 1994; Shelmerdine 2008a, 2008b, 2006, 1985; Shelmerdine and Bennet 2008; Sherratt and Sherratt 1991; Sjöberg 1995; Uchitel 1988.
 - 38 “Les textes inscrits sur les tablettes sont toujours des comptes. On n’a aucun contrat, aucune lettre, aucune chronique, aucun hymne religieux, aucun texte littéraire. Ce point fondamental étant rappelé, il faut ajouter que les comptes mycéniens sont de types assez variés: on a des cadastres [land registers], des recensements [inventories], des rôles fiscaux, des rentrées d’impôt, des distributions de rations, des listes d’offrandes, etc.” Carlier 1983: 9.
 - 39 These goods and holdings include both imported goods and those produced for export. Shelmerdine 1998: 292.
 - 40 Uchitel 1988: 20, 23.
 - 41 Ventris and Chadwick 1956: 106; Killen 2008: 159.
 - 42 The palaces’ role as redistributive centers has long been recognized: Finley 1957a.
 - 43 Killen 1985: 252.
 - 44 For studies on Minoan-Mycenaean divinities: Gérard-Rousseau 1968; L. Palmer 1981; Yamagata 1995.
 - 45 Nakassis 2013: 1–20, provides an excellent survey of the evolving scholarship on the nature and structures of the Mycenaean economy.
 - 46 Sjöberg 1960: 109–144.
 - 47 Nakassis 2013: 2–16.
 - 48 Nakassis 2013: 2. See also Bennet 2007: 190; Galaty and Parkinson 2007: 26.
 - 49 Nakassis 2013: 2.
 - 50 Bennet 2001: 25–26.
 - 51 Bennet, 2007: 195. Nakassis 2013: 2–20.
 - 52 De Fidio 2001; Nikoloudis 2006, 2008b; Nakassis 2013: 3.
 - 53 A few non-transactional usages of Linear A are also known, such as short inscriptions on so-called offering tables found at shrines throughout the island.
 - 54 Longer-term records are thought to have been transferred to more costly surfaces, such as papyrus.

22 *The women of Mycenaean Greece*

- 55 For example, Facaros and Pauls 2003: 109. Rather than as shopping lists I suggest they should probably be thought of as akin to contemporary corporate phone logs in that they typically provide, in abbreviated form, details of a transaction including the name, title, and location of the relevant official, the form of commodity and its specific size. The obvious advantage of this model is in its focus on the real people involved in real transactions at a specific moment in time.
- 56 The majority of the tablets where men and women are not mentioned are typically either illegible or very fragmentary; the Pylian and Knossian texts most commonly reference not only the commodities involved in a given transaction but the humans involved in these transactions as well.
- 57 In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – arguably the most prolific period for the excavation of Bronze Age cemeteries – burials were typically sexed not by anthropological examination of skeletal remains, but rather by Victorian/Edwardian notions regarding the sexual distribution of grave goods. Graves containing weapons were commonly sexed as male, while graves with jewelry were sexed as female without further physical investigation. This causes great distortion in the evidence particularly on Crete where, “no clear index of distinction between male and female [grave gifts] may be established.” D’Agata 1999: 52. Consequently, it has largely been impossible to link burial property conclusively with one sex or the other. Fortunately, recent research has begun to sex Bronze Age graves based on skeletal remains: Cavanagh and Mee 1998: 165–171.
- 58 Numerous recent textual studies of women of the Mesopotamian Bronze Age provide useful comparanda for research on Bronze Age Aegean women. In particular: Lerner 1986; Uchitel 1984.
- 59 These tablets roster and record rations for personnel dependent on the palace. They are generally identified as belonging to the A series and are discussed more extensively in Chapters 2, 3, and 5.
- 60 Cline 2011; Shelmerdine 2008a; Dickinson 1994.
- 61 For the story of Linear B’s decipherment, see Pope 2008.
- 62 Tritsch 1958.
- 63 Deger-Jalkotzy 1972.
- 64 For a discussion of Killen’s work on the palatial textile industry, see Chapters 3 and 5, *passim*.
- 65 Ventris and Chadwick 1956, 1973.
- 66 Killen 1985: 252.
- 67 Pomeroy 1975. Among the early 1970s, “pre-Pomeroy” studies: Ortner 1974; Richter 1971; Slater 1974; Thomas 1973; de Ste. Croix 1970.
- 68 Notable works on women’s legal, domestic, and economic status in Greek antiquity include Cohen 1989; Cole 1981; Gould 1980; Just 1989; Lefkowitz 1983; Schaps 1979; Sealey 1990. Sourcebooks include: Kraemer 1988; Lefkowitz and Fant 1992. Essay collections include: Cameron and Kuhrt 1983; Foley 1981; Hawley and Levick 1995; Schmitt Panel 1992; Peradotto and Sullivan 1984; Pomeroy 1991.
- 69 Billigmeier and Turner 1981.
- 70 Interestingly, this interest in women in Aegean prehistory predates the beginnings of feminist archaeological inquiry within anthropology, where gender was also primarily investigated through economic evidence. Feminist archaeological inquiry within anthropology began with a co-authored four-page article in 1984 where Conkey and Spector offered suggestions for investigating gender in prehistoric societies through an economic framework focused on task-differentiation: Conkey and Spector 1984.
- 71 Billigmeier and Turner 1981: 10.
- 72 Carlier 1983.
- 73 Among the lacunae he places the education of free young women, matrimonial customs, and the role of wives. Carlier 1983: 31.
- 74 Uchitel 1984.

- 75 For a more general comparison between the Mycenaean and Near Eastern archives: Uchitel 1988.
- 76 This contention is addressed in depth in Chapters 3 and 5.
- 77 Chadwick 1988.
- 78 Chadwick 1988: 92.
- 79 Kokkinidou and Nikolaidou 1993.
- 80 Most prominent among this research is the work of Barber and Nosch on women and textiles in Aegean prehistory: Barber 1997, 1994, 1991; Nosch 2012, 2011, 2008, 2003; and Nosch and Gillis 2007. For non-textile related investigations, see also Ehrenberg 1989: 50–54; Kopaka 1997; Nordquist 1995; R. Wright 1991.
- 81 For women in the family, see Hiller 1989; Olsen 1998; Rutter 2003; and Budin 2011, the latter of which examines kourtophobic imagery in Bronze Age Mediterranean iconography, including Mycenaean and Minoan art.
- 82 Burke 2011, 1999, 1997; Nosch 2000, 1997b, 1997a. Nosch's work with experimental archaeology reproducing ancient textile techniques and technologies continues to offer particularly promising insights into this critically important industry.
- 83 Lupack 2008a, 2007a, 2007b, 1999.
- 84 For example, the Mycenaean mainland maintains a significant interest in gendered scenes of mother and children, while Mycenaean Crete does not: Olsen 1998.
- 85 Kopcke 1995.
- 86 Palaima 1995a: 93.
- 87 Olivier 1984: 12.
- 88 Olivier 1984: 12.
- 89 On differences in scribal habits across the two sites: Olivier 1984. See also Bartonek 1983: 19–22; Teggey 1987.
- 90 For the treatment of smiths and sanctuary lands: Olivier 1984. For the perfume industry: E. D. Foster 1980; Shelmerdine 1985, 1984. For age grade variances: Teggey 1987. Also: J. Bennet 1990, 1988b; Hooker 1987a; Ilievski 1983; Shelmerdine 1988.
- 91 Another critical difference between the two is the different dates of their archives in the LH/M III phases of the Mycenaean era. The Pylos tablets are, save five tablets, a chronologically unified archive dating to the end of the LH IIIB period (generally dated ca. 1200 BCE); the Knossos tablets, on the other hand, are more complicated. The unity of the main body of the Knossos tablets remains heavily debated and no consensus has yet been reached as to whether they derive from one destruction or many; likewise their date. While they are at least a century earlier than the tablets at Pylos, the Knossos tablets have been variously dated ranging from LH II to LH IIIA1 (for the Room of the Chariot Tablets texts) to LH IIIA2–LH IIIB for the larger set. For recent discussions on the state of the debate over the date and unity of the Knossos tablets, see Driessen 2008; and Shelmerdine and Bennet 2008: 292, 310–11, 320.
- 92 On traditional and revised datings for the Late Bronze Age, see Dickinson 1994; Manning 1995; Warren and Hankey 1989.
- 93 Palaces have been discovered at Knossos, Phaistos, Malia, Kato Zakro, and recently at Galatas.
- 94 There continues to be debate over the exact time that Mycenaean administration was imposed on Crete, but as recent research by Driessen indicates, as early as LM II, the Greek language as evidenced by the Linear B script was already well established on Crete: Driessen 1990: 115–125. Whether the coming of the Mycenaeans to Crete should be dated to the LM IB destructions or to the LM II phase continues to receive lively debate. Among those arguing against an LM IB are Driessen and McDonald, who argue for internal rather than external causes for the disintegration of Minoan society during LM IB and cite as support for their contention that other than at Knossos, LM II occupation remained scarce for most sites on Crete. Driessen and McDonald 1997: 389.

- 95 For the evidence of Mycenaeans at LM II Knossos: Driessen and McDonald 1984; Driessen 1990: 115–125. For a dissenting view, see Niemeier 1983, who contests reading LM II Knossos as Mycenaean. To my mind, Driessen’s establishment of a LM II date for the Linear B tablets in the Room of the Chariot Tablets severely problematizes Niemeier’s argument.
- 96 Studies on ethnicity in the Aegean Bronze Age have taken two major forms: theoretical and methodological discussions and archaeological studies of Mycenaean and Minoan interactions via the physical evidence. Major recent theoretical and methodological discussions: S. Jones 1997; Hall 1997; Sherratt and Sherratt 1998, and Bennet 2008. Notable among studies focusing on the interactions of ethnic Minoans and ethnic Mycenaeans on Crete is D’Agata 1999: 47–55. D’Agata notes (*pace* Popham, Catling and Catling 1974: 253) that the two ethnic groups remain sufficiently distinct during LMII – LM IIIA1 to be using different cemeteries at Knossos, associating in particular the cemeteries at Mavrospelia and Gypsadhes with Minoan burials.
- 97 Important recent overviews of this question include de Fidio 2008; Preston 2008; D’Agata and Moody 2005; and Driessen and Farnoux 1997; and Driessen and Langohr 2007.
- 98 J. Davis and J. Bennet 1999: 113.
- 99 J. Davis and J. Bennet 1999: 115. In this position, Davis and Bennet echo Tsountas and Manatt 1966, who argue for the “ultimate homogeneity” of mixed-population Mycenaean cultures under a dominant Greek rubric.
- 100 The prosopographical studies of Firth 1993 and Baumbach 1979 each indicate that assimilation differed for men across the parameters of space and social status. Firth, examining the naming patterns for men at Crete, noted a strong correlation between Mycenaean male names and identification and social rank, observing that 80 percent of the high-ranking male officials at Knossos had Greek rather than Minoan names. Baumbach, in her investigation of the naming patterns of shepherds, noted that these low-ranking men had names which were 80 percent non-Greek (Minoan). Taken in conjunction, these two studies seem to demonstrate the disproportionate rankings of Minoan- and Mycenaean-identified men, with greater social status associated with Greek names on Mycenaean-administered Crete. A similar study is not possible with women’s names at Knossos as too few are extant to be statistically significant.
- 101 Driessen 1998–99: 83.
- 102 Ehrenberg 1989.
- 103 Uchitel 1984: 273.
- 104 None of the upper-ranking officials who can be definitely identified are female, nor do women hold any of the larger estates of the land recorded in the palatial systems.
- 105 A detailed delineation of these criteria appears in Chapter 2.
- 106 This project intersects in particular with many of the theoretical issues raised by feminist archaeological research within the fields of anthropology and history, notably the ongoing work on the incorporation of women into status hierarchies and the role of gender in social stratification as well as the structures and rationales governing male/female task differentiation; see especially: Ehrenberg 1989; Lerner 1986; Spector 1993; Tringham 1994; R. Wright 1996a, 1996b.

2 Identifying and contextualizing women in the tablets¹

Introduction

The Linear B tablets from Knossos and Pylos offer a rare opportunity for the study of women's economic history in the ancient Aegean.² These documents, which were commissioned and collected by the administrations of these Mycenaean palace states in the Late Bronze Age, were serendipitously preserved by the very fires that destroyed their palaces – fires that preserved the clay fabric of the tablets as if in a kiln. Therefore, these accidentally preserved documents, deciphered again some 32 centuries after their initial loss, are to historians of gender an invaluable cache of historical documents recording the lived economic and public roles of actual, rather than idealized, women. With the exception of the papyrological records of Hellenistic Egypt, these texts, in both the quantity and quality of information they preserve, provide the most extensive documentation of women in the historical record of any period in Greek antiquity. Consequently, study of these tablets serves to enlarge the scope of scholarship on women in Ancient Greece by allowing the inclusion of Mycenaean women in our discussions of women in Greek antiquity and offers a valuable early counterpoint to the more frequently discussed (and less well-documented) women of the Archaic and Classical periods.

Locating women in the Linear B tablets

Before any discussion of women's roles and activities in the Linear B tablets can be initiated, it is first necessary to establish which persons can be recognized with certainty as women – and to limit the field of discussion only to those individuals who can be definitively identified as women.³ This task requires careful attention, as the usual means of identifying women in (alphabetic) Greek texts are further complicated by the conventions of the syllabic Linear B script.⁴ Isolating the presence of women in alphabetic Greek texts can be a thorny matter in itself; the choice of Greek to use the masculine plural to refer to groups including both men and women and the fact that Greek does not always allow the sexing of names based on their endings alone (as many Greek names of either sex end in $-\omega$ or $-\iota\varsigma$) highlight only two of the methodological obstacles to the secure identification

of women in Greek texts. The complexity of the situation is only heightened by the requirements for writing Linear B; in particular, the requirement of Linear B that all words be rendered in syllabic form (either naturally occurring syllables or those artificially rendered to fit the script) and that all syllables end with a vowel can make the normalization of a Mycenaean Greek word back into its phonetic counterpart difficult. This is especially the case in Linear B's omission of final sigmas, which can serve to blur critical distinctions between such nominal endings as -ης and -η or -ας and -α and hence to obscure the gender of the named individual. And lastly, due to the particular history of Knossos with its co-mingled Greek and non-Greek populations bearing names either Greek in form or with apparent Minoan language origins further complicates the sexing of persons; it is surely not reasonable to assume that non-Greek words would follow Greek conventions for signaling gender. All of these are legitimate concerns that illustrate the inherent challenges of the evidence, and most careful attention is required to distinguish between male and female persons in the Mycenaean archives. Fortunately for the modern researcher, the ancient scribes seemed to have shared many of these concerns, employing in their texts several practical solutions through which they could (and we can) identify the sex of individuals or groups in the tablets, with a high degree of security. Of these, three primary conventions allow an individual to be securely sexed as female: the addition of the Linear B ideogram for woman (MUL); the use of a gender-specific familial, occupational and/or official title; and the use of the feminine variant of an identifiably Greek name.

Method 1: The MUL ideogram

The simplest and most secure means for distinguishing the sex of an individual is to locate a personal name or a title accompanied by the ideogram for either MAN or for WOMAN (Figures 2.1 and 2.2). These ideograms – schematic line drawings of either a man or a woman – are transliterated using the standard scholarly convention for rendering Linear B ideograms with their equivalent Latin terms. Hence, the convention is to render these ideograms in textual transliterations as VIR (“man”) and MUL (for *mulier* “woman”). When the scribes provide these ideograms, the task of detecting women in the tablets is much simplified.



Figure 2.1 MUL Ideogram



Figure 2.2 VIR Ideogram

In addition to being the simplest convention to convey gender, the MUL ideogram is also the most common means for signaling the presence of women on a tablet. Of the 199 tablets at Knossos that preserve mentions of women, 71 employ the MUL ideogram and it can reasonably be restored in lacuna on another 52 tablets. Similarly, MUL appears on 84 tablets and can reasonably be restored on another 11 of the 208 Pylian texts mentioning women.⁵ Overall, more than half of the women who can be identified in the tablets are identifiable through the usage of MUL either alone or in conjunction with women's names or titles. This seems to be the solution that both Knossian and Pylian scribes most frequently employed to sidestep any difficulties involved in sexing potentially ambiguous names or titles.

The MUL ideogram in the Pylos tablets

As noted above, 84⁶ of the extant tablets from the mainland site of Pylos use the MUL ideogram to signal that their tablets record women.⁷ These 84 tablets employing the MUL ideogram record a total of approximately 1100 women mentioned either as individuals or as members of collective groups.⁸ The Pylian texts use MUL to signal “woman” in two different ways: either on its own or accompanying the women belonging to aggregate workgroups. In all instances at Pylos in which it is used, MUL refers to women of low social rank.

The MUL ideogram is almost exclusively the domain of the A series (or personnel series) tablets from Pylos, a series devoted to the tallying and rationing of low-ranking palace workers. Outside the personnel series, only three additional texts use this ideogram: the clay tablet-transport basket label PY Wa 114, which recorded rations allocated to workgroup women in Pylos's outer province,⁹ PY Wa 1008, a sealing so fragmentary it preserves only the MUL and a three-sign word fragment, and the much-discussed offering tablet PY Tn 316.¹⁰

As a modifier for women's workgroups at Pylos, MUL appears in the two subseries of the personnel tablets Aa and Ab, which respectively record the group strength and rations provided for workgroups of female laborers and their children.¹¹ In these personnel series tablets the MUL ideogram is used in conjunction with workgroup designations in four ways: with women's occupational titles, with adjectives identifying the geographic (“ethnic”) origins of workgroup women, with place names identifying the current location of the workgroups, or to identify (unnamed) women in the service of elite male officials. These titles always appear in the nominative feminine plural. In these series, the ideogram serves to reinforce the entirely female composition of these workgroups.¹² The following section offers a brief introduction to each of these workgroup designations. (Table 2.1 lists all occupational usages of MUL at Pylos.)

Of these four types of workgroups, those identified with task designations are most common; MUL commonly appears alongside the occupational titles. Many of these titles normalize clearly into Greek and can be easily read and translated; other titles are less clear etymologically but can still be recognized as task designations due to their usages of agent suffixes, most notably the feminine variant of $-\epsilon\upsilon\varsigma$,

28 *Identifying and contextualizing women in the tablets*

Table 2.1 Women's titles identified by MUL at Pylos

<i>Workgroup designation</i>	<i>Normalized (ethnics and tasks)</i>	<i>Tablet</i>
a-*64-ja	<i>Aswiai</i> ("women of Asia/Lydia")	PY Aa 701, PY Ab 515
a-ke-ti-ra2 / a-ke-ti-ri-ja	<i>asketriai</i> "finishers/decorators"	PY Aa 717, PY Aa 815, PY Ab 564, PY Aa 85, PY Ab 1099, PY Un 219.04
a-pi-qo-ro	<i>amphiqoloi</i> "attendant-women"	PY Aa 804
a-pu-ko-wo-ko	<i>ampukworgoi</i> "headband makers"	PY Ab 210
a-ra-ka-te-ja	<i>alakateiai</i> "spinning women"	PY Aa 89, PY Aa 240
e-ke-ro-qo-no	<i>enkheroquoinoi</i> "women wage-earners"	PY Aa 854, PY Ab 1100
e-ke-ro-qo-no o-pi-ro-qo	<i>enkheroquoinoi</i> "unassigned/remaining women wage-earners," <i>opiloquoi</i> "supernumerary"	PY Aa 777, PY Ab 563
e-wi-ri-pi-ja	<i>Ewipiai</i> ("women from Εὔριπος," ethnic adj.	PY Aa 60
ka-pa-ra2	description of women cloth-worker(s), ethnic or descriptive term	PY An 292.02, PY Aa 788
ki-ma-ra	description of women, possibly ethnic adj.	PY Aa 63
ki-ni-di-ja	<i>Knidiai</i> ("women from Κνίδος," ethnic adj.	PY Aa 792, PY Ab 189, PY An 292.04
ki-ri-te-wi-ja	a class of women with a religious function	PY An 607
ki-si-wi-ja	"Chian women," ki-si-wi-ja ethnic adj., describing women	PY Aa 770
ki-si-wi-ja o-nu-ke-ja	"Chian women o-nu-ka makers"	PY Ab 194
ko-ro-ki-ja	ethnic adj. describing women	PY Aa 354, PY An 292.03, PY Ab 372
ku-te-ra3	" <i>Kytherai</i> (cf. PN: Κύθηρα)," ethnic adj.	PY Aa 506, PY Ab 562
ku-te-ra3 ka-pa-ra2	"Kytheran textile workers;" ka-pa-ra2 (above)	PY Aa 788
me-re-ti-ra2/ me-re-ti-ri-ja	<i>meletriai</i> "flour-grinders"	PY Aa 62, PY Aa 764, PY Ab 789
mi-ra-ti-ja	<i>Milatiai</i> ("women of Miletus)," ethnic adj.	PY Aa 798, PY Ab 382, PY Ab 573, PY Ae 634
mi-ra-ti-ja a-ra-[ka-]te-ja	<i>Milatiai</i> ("women of Miletus) spinning women"; a-ra-ka-te-ja (above)	PY Ad 380
ne-we-wi-ja	adj., describing women textile-workers	PY Aa 695, PY Ab 560
no-ri-wo-ko	"nori-workers" (<i>-worgoi</i>)	PY Aa 98
o-pi-ro-qo	<i>opiloquoi</i> "remaining, supernumerary"	PY Ab 899

<i>Workgroup designation</i>	<i>Normalized (ethnics and tasks)</i>	<i>Tablet</i>
o-ti-ra2/o-ti-ri-ja	“- <i>triai</i> workers” (name of a trade: - <i>triai</i>)	PY Aa 313, PY Ab 417+1050
pa-wo-ke	<i>pan-worges</i> “maids with a variety of tasks”	PY Aa 795, PY Ab 558
pe-ki-ti-ra2	<i>pektriai</i> “wool-carders”	PY Ab 578
ra-mi-ni-ja	<i>Lamniai</i> (“women of PN: Λήμινος,” ethnic adj.)	PY Ab 186
ra-pi-ti-ra	<i>raptriai</i> “sewing women” [ῥάπτριαι]	PY Ab 555
ra-qi-ti-ra2	<i>laqtriai</i> description of women; women’s trade not identical with ra-pi-ti-ra2	PY Ab 356 + 1049
ra-wi-ja-ja	<i>lawiaiai</i> , description of women	PY Aa 807, PY Ab 586
re-wo-to-ro-ko-wo	<i>lewotrokhwoi</i> “bath-attendants”	PY Aa 783, PY Ab 553
ri-ne-ja	<i>lineiai</i> “linen-workers	PY Aa 94, PY Aa 96, PY Aa 772, PY Ab 379, PY Aa 93, PY Aa 76
(ri-ne-ja?) pa-ke-te-ja	<i>lineiai</i> “linen-workers;” pa-ke-te-ja (a women’s trade – obscure, perhaps “measurers”)	PY Aa 662, PY Ab 745, PY Ab 746
?si-to-ko-wo	<i>sitokhowoi</i> “grainmeasurer(s)?”	PY An 292.01
[]-ti MUL	too fragmentary for identification	PY Ae 629
ti-nwa-si-ja	“Tinwasian women,” ethnic adj.	PY Aa 699, PY Ab 190
ti-nwa-ti-ja i-te-ja	“Tinwasian weaver women,” ethnic adj.; <i>histeiai</i> “weavers”	PY Ad 684
to-sa-me-ja	“to-sa-me-ja women,” description of woman, probably a trade	PY Aa 775+0956, PY Ab 277
ze-pu2-ra3 ri-ne-ja	“Zephyrian women linen-workers/flax-weavers”; <i>lineiai</i> ; ze-pu2-ra3, ethnic adj. from PN: Ζεφυρία	PY Aa 61
<i>Women’s workgroups identified by their location</i>		
e-pi-jo-ta-na (PN) MUL	“women at PN: e-pi-jo-ta-na”	PY Aa 95
me-ta-pa (PN) MUL	“women at PN: me-ta-pa	PY Aa 752, PY Aa 779, PY Ab 355
ne-wo-pe-o (PN) MUL	“women at PN: ne-wo-pe-o”	PY Aa 786, PY Ab 554
pi-we-re (PN) MUL	“women at PN: pi-we-re”	PY Aa 1182