

## Warriors Don't Do Paperwork: Chariots, Seals, and the Disappearance of a Motif

The chariot appears as a new motif on Minoan and Mycenaean seals in the beginning of the LBA, coinciding with the inception of a warrior-culture visible most powerfully in the Shaft Graves at Mycenae. The motif is especially popular with these new Mycenaean warrior elites: whereas the evidence from Crete suggests currently the existence of no more than four seals with chariots, from the Mycenaean mainland six seals and a sealing are known (CMS I 15; 229; 230; 302; V 585; V Suppl. 1B 137; and a gold ring probably from the Aidonia cemetery, though provenance is uncertain: Krzyszkowska 2005, 141). Since the number of Minoan seals *in toto* far exceeds that of Mycenaean seals, this suggests that the chariot motif resonated with Mycenaean patrons. Their material (gold in four out of seven cases) and find contexts (rich warrior tombs in four cases, a palatial sealing in one) suggest that chariot seals were restricted to the highest elites.

Despite their appeal, chariot seals are short lived. On current evidence, they are limited to the earliest Mycenaean period (LH I-II; Krzyszkowska 2005, 252). This is not due to a demise in status of the chariot motif, which finds its way onto the frescoed walls of the palaces in LH III, suggesting that it retains its associations with royalty (see Schon 2007 for the multiple ways in which chariots are associated with and highly restricted by the palaces). This paper argues that the reason is due to a change in the use, connotations and associations of seals.

After LH I-II, seals were increasingly associated with minor elites (Laffineur 1990, 129), and analysis of the grave goods found in the chamber tombs at Mycenae suggests that in LH IIIA the highest ranking warriors ceased to be associated with seals. This change coincides chronologically with the oldest evidence for Mycenaean administration (at Knossos in early LH IIIA1: e.g. Driessen 2008, 72). This paper suggests that elite knowledge of the sphragistic use of seals changed the perception of these seals from items of personal adornment indicating high

status, to tools of an administration. It is argued that it is this change in perception that is reflected in the divorce between warrior graves and seals, and that we witness here the creation of two different ideological spheres: the sphere of the high ranking warrior, which continues to be symbolized by chariots, versus the sphere represented by seals and administrators and taken up by minor warrior elites. The chariot motif may have been actively restricted by ruling elites when seals became more widespread.

Driessen, J. 2008. "Chronology of the Linear B Texts," in Y. Duhoux and A. Morpurgo Davies, eds., *A Companion to Linear B. Mycenaean Greek Texts and Their World*, Louvain 2008, 69-79

Krzyszkowska, O. 2005. *Aegean Seals: An Introduction*, London

Laffineur, R. 1990. "The Iconography of Mycenaean Seals and the status of their Owners," *Aegaeum* 6, Liège, 117-160

Schon, R. 2007. "Chariots, Industry, and Elite Power at Pylos," in M.L. Galaty and W.A. Parkinson, eds., *Rethinking Mycenaean Palaces II*, Los Angeles, 133-145