

FORUM

Redistribution in Aegean Palatial Societies Before the Palaces: Redistribution and Chiefdoms in Mainland Greece

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Abstract

This article examines redistribution as formulated by scholars of the later Mycenaean palatial economies to ascertain its applicability to the Early Bronze Age (EBA) mainland. Lacking textual sources in the EBA, the emphasis is on archaeological correlates of redistribution as both a mode of transaction and as an institution. Three areas are examined: mobilization of goods as suggested through the evidence for staple vs. wealth finance, scale and control of production on the basis of evidence for household production vs. craft specialization, and centralized control of economic and political transactions using evidence for administration and feasting. While the data leave much to be desired in terms of suitability and completeness, only a limited number of the transaction types and institutional forms of redistribution as posited for the Mycenaean palatial economies are apparent in the EBA mainland. Thus, the political economies of the Mycenaean palaces may well represent transformations not just of scale but also of forms from the political economies of the EBA chiefdoms.*

INTRODUCTION: REDISTRIBUTION IN THE EARLY BRONZE AGE

In *The Emergence of Civilisation*, one of the most influential studies of the Aegean Bronze Age, Renfrew posited a model of redistribution of bulk staple goods as the economic and political power behind the chiefdoms that emerged in the Early Bronze Age (EBA) Aegean.¹ Thus, the EBA chiefdoms could be seen as the direct ancestors of the later so-called Minoan-Mycenaean palatial systems, themselves based on systems of redistribution of bulk staple goods as modeled

by Polanyi and Finley.² Since then, the concept of redistribution and its role in the political economies of the Late Bronze Age has been challenged by many scholars, but few have reexamined redistribution explicitly in Prepalatial mainland contexts.³ Here, I attempt to address this shortcoming by following the suggestion of Nakassis et al. in their contribution to this Forum that it would be fruitful to focus on how specific social institutions organized and distributed materials, goods, and services—that is, on redistribution as an institution within the context of the political economy.⁴ I examine the political economy of the Early Helladic (EH) period by concentrating (albeit not in great detail) on three areas that have been prominent in discussions of Mycenaean political economy: mobilization of goods, scale and control of production, and centralized control of economic and political transactions. Unless otherwise specified, I restrict my discussion to the EH II period, ca. 2650–2200 B.C.E.

While the data leave much to be desired in terms of suitability and completeness, and while we of course lack textual evidence from the Prepalatial period, only a limited number of the transaction types and institutional forms of redistribution as posited for the Mycenaean palatial economies are apparent in the EBA mainland. Thus, the political economies of the Mycenaean palaces may well represent transformations not just of scale but also of form from the political economies of the EBA chiefdoms. This may be expected if we characterize Mycenaean polities as first generation, secondary states.⁵

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this paper.

¹Renfrew 1972.

²Finley 1957; Polanyi 1968.

³Halstead 1989 is an exception.

⁴Nakassis et al. 2011.

⁵Parkinson and Galaty 2007.

Renfrew's model remains the prevailing view of the EH political economy. His conception of the later Minoan and Mycenaean palaces as "major redistributive centres" of subsistence commodities underpins his explanation for the emergence of civilization in the Aegean: "the growth of the palaces has to be seen in the first instance as the development of redistribution centres for subsistence commodities, controlled by a well-defined social hierarchy."⁶ Renfrew posited the establishment of the "Mediterranean triad" of wheat, olives, and grapes in the EBA, leading to diversification in agriculture and, more importantly, to agricultural specialization. This diversification and specialization led to "economic inter-dependence" that eventually needed to be organized and controlled.⁷ He saw the sealings from Room XI of the House of the Tiles at Lerna as suggesting the "emergence" of central organization of the redistributive system that operationalized this economic interdependence.⁸

I wish to focus here not on the various subsystems in Renfrew's model but rather on the institutions that organized and distributed goods in the EH period through redistribution.⁹ I define redistribution, following Earle, as the control of the movement of goods from individuals or groups to others by a centralizing ("political") authority. It is thus one mechanism used by various institutions within the political economy.

STAPLE AND WEALTH FINANCE IN EARLY HELLADIC GREECE

One of the archaeological correlates of Renfrew's subsistence subsystem in the economy of the Minoan-Mycenaean palaces is large-scale storage facilities.¹⁰ In other words, he viewed the Minoan and Mycenaean palace economies as staple-financed systems sustained through the mobilization of staple goods.¹¹ But the evidence for large-scale accumulation or mobilization of staple goods is lacking in EH Greece. From the production point of view, one might argue that the use of oxen for plowing,¹² for instance, indicates large-scale

agricultural production, but oxen can also be used for plowing more difficult, upland soils. Even if the scale of agricultural production was greater than in the preceding Neolithic, it is unclear how much "surplus" would be generated by an individual or group.¹³ Unlike the situation recorded in the Pylian tablets, we have no idea of the size of the landholdings of any individual or group or whether such a concept is even valid for the EH period.¹⁴ Given the usual direct association of a seal with an individual, the size of houses, evidence from burials, and other factors, most likely there was some concept of land tenure by the household or other corporate group.¹⁵

Arguing from analysis of early modern Mediterranean farming practices, Halstead concludes that prehistoric farmers without much interference from external forces would have pursued a strategy of mixed crops to avoid risk of failure; that they would "normally aim for overproduction in order to secure a sufficient harvest in most years"; and that olive and vine cultivation was often small-scale, the products consumed in "prestige or ritual contexts."¹⁶ The question, then, as Halstead poses it, becomes: "When and under what circumstances did elite-sponsored, *extensive surplus production* (as in the Mycenaean palaces) perhaps come to supplement or replace elite *extraction of 'normal surplus'* from subordinate households?"¹⁷

Evidence for storage in subterranean pits and ceramic pithoi is plentiful in the EH period, but so far, none of the storage facilities or equipment recovered need be for any scale of use other than household consumption. Pithoi are numerous in EH contexts and are a regular feature of EH houses.¹⁸ If one compares the number of pithoi (and their capacity) found in corridor houses with the number and capacity of those found in other structures, there is no significant difference. The House of the Tiles at Lerna is famously devoid of large-scale storage facilities. Only 23 storage vessel fragments were recognized among the sherd material, and of these, only one jar was suf-

⁶Renfrew 1972, 296–97.

⁷Renfrew 1972, 306.

⁸Renfrew 1972, 306, 389–90.

⁹Halstead (1988) recognizes that criticisms of Renfrew's ideas about redistribution take them out of the larger "systems" context of Renfrew's work. Like Halstead, I recognize that without *The Emergence of Civilisation*, Aegean prehistory today would be a very different subject.

¹⁰Renfrew 1972, 291–96.

¹¹D'Altroy and Earle 1985.

¹²Pullen 1992.

¹³Halstead 1989.

¹⁴Careful correlation of settlement size and distribution,

population estimates, and ancient land use through landscape studies might give us some indication of potential sizes of landholdings, but that topic is beyond the scope of this paper.

¹⁵E.g., Pullen 1985, 1992, 1994.

¹⁶Halstead 2004, 191.

¹⁷Halstead 2004, 195 (emphasis original).

¹⁸E.g., at Zygouries, Blegen (1928, 117–18) found pithoi in situ in three houses—House D (1 pithos), House of the Pithoi (4 pithoi), and House L (6 pithoi)—and fragments of many other pithoi in the remaining houses. At Tsoungiza, five pithoi were originally found in situ by Harland in House B, which dates to the EH II period (Pullen 2011, 324–30).

ficiently preserved to have been in use at the time of the destruction.¹⁹ Indeed, the majority of intact vessels from the House of the Tiles are small bowls found in the little storage room, Room XI, which is accessible only from the exterior.

Wiencke mentions some 27 fragments of roller-impressed necked pithoi that were found immediately to the west, south, and north of the House of the Tiles and are probably contemporary with the House of the Tiles.²⁰ At least eight different pithoi can be identified from among these fragments, as catalogued by Wiencke.²¹ She concludes her taphonomic discussion of their distribution by declaring, “it is easier to suppose that several pithoi were standing in use near [perhaps in a temporary shelter, as Wiencke notes] or even in the House of the Tiles [though only one sizeable piece comes from Room XI, as Wiencke explains]” than to assign them all to earlier buildings.²² Even if we accept that eight pithoi were associated with the House of the Tiles, we are hard put to consider this to be large-scale storage. While as far as I know, no EH pithos has been measured for its capacity, based on comparable storage vessels from other Aegean contexts and time periods, an estimate of approximately 300 liters capacity would not be out of line for the Lerna examples. Whitelaw suggests an individual annual consumption of 300 liters of wheat, 30–100 liters of oil, and 40–60 liters of wine by an occupant of Early Minoan Myrtos.²³ The eight pithoi associated with the House of the Tiles, then, might have stored food for a nuclear family of four or five individuals for one year. Alternatively, these pithoi could have been used to store food for a shorter period of time, but for more people, even for a large number of people for a one-time event such as a feast.²⁴ But large-scale storage of the sort we see in Bronze Age Crete or at the Mycenaean palace of

Pylos does not seem to exist on the Greek mainland in Early Helladic times.

MOBILIZATION OF STAPLE GOODS: SEALINGS AND PITHOI

Nevertheless, there is evidence for some control over some staple goods through the application of seal-impressed closures of pithoi and other vessels at Lerna, Petri, and elsewhere. The two pithoi in Room DM at Lerna show repeated sealing and stamping.²⁵ Elsewhere in Room DM, a large quantity of tableware (several of the items marked by potter’s marks)²⁶ and deposits of figs and grains were found. Only a portion of Room DM was preserved, and the form of the building of which it was a part is unclear. To the west of Room DM, and most likely separated from it by a corridor or path that led north from the gateway in the fortifications, was House CA, in one room of which (Room CA) a well-preserved assemblage of tableware pottery originally on shelves,²⁷ some small storage vessels and cooking pot vessels, and much botanical material were also found. Only one sealing was found, in the partially excavated room to the north of Room CA,²⁸ and there was one seal-stamped loomweight in Room CA itself.²⁹ Together, House CA and Room DM formed a built passageway from the gateway in the fortifications to the south to the large open square in front of the earlier corridor house, Building BG (fig. 1).³⁰ It is tempting to assign to House CA and Room DM some public function, such as the storage and preparation of food and drink and the equipment to serve them.³¹ Thus, we have in Lerna III phase C evidence for limited centralized control of some staple goods, perhaps being mobilized for use in feasting, which would take place in the square and possibly also in Building BG.

¹⁹The fragmentary vessels (with room number indicated) include seven pithoi (I: cat. no. P1003; V: cat. nos. P1029, P1030; VI: cat. no. P1038; VII: one uncatalogued; XI: cat. no. P1136; XII: one uncatalogued) and 16 jars (I: cat. nos. P999, P1002; II: cat. no. P1005; IV: one uncatalogued; V: one uncatalogued; VI: five uncatalogued; XI: cat. no. P1057; XII: cat. nos. P1143, P1144, P1147, two uncatalogued); only cat. no. P1143 was substantially preserved (Wiencke 2000, 471–90).

²⁰Wiencke 2000, 288.

²¹Wiencke 2000, cat. nos. P936, P1163, P1165–P1167, P1223, P1237, P1242.

²²Wiencke 2000, 288. Nilsson (2004, 114) makes the improbable suggestion that these decorated pithoi were “exhibited” on the upper floor of the House of the Tiles, to be admired for their decoration.

²³Whitelaw 1983, 342 n. 7.

²⁴Perishable containers are always a possibility. The well-preserved room deposit in Room CA included a large quan-

tity of *Vicia faba* (fava beans) that Wiencke (2000, 132–36) suggests was stored in a perishable container on a shelf. Elsewhere in her publication, she suggests perishable containers such as sacks or wooden boxes.

²⁵Wiencke 2000, 139–44; see also Wiencke 1969 (for original publication). Discarded sealings of Type D (mouths of jars and pithoi) on the floor were stamped by eight different seals, probably from earlier episodes of sealing the pithoi.

²⁶See Wiencke (2000, 434–48) for catalogue.

²⁷See Wiencke (2000, 448–58) for catalogue.

²⁸Wiencke 1969, 508, S83, no. 190; 2000, 137.

²⁹Wiencke 1969, 508, S84, no. 191; 2000, 134, 136.

³⁰See Weiberg (2007, 129–34) for the continuity of this square throughout the later phases of EH II Lerna.

³¹Wiencke (2000, 135, 143) comments on the great variety of hands involved in making the tableware in Rooms CA and DM and suggests these vessels were accumulations of several years, unlike what one usually sees in domestic assemblages.

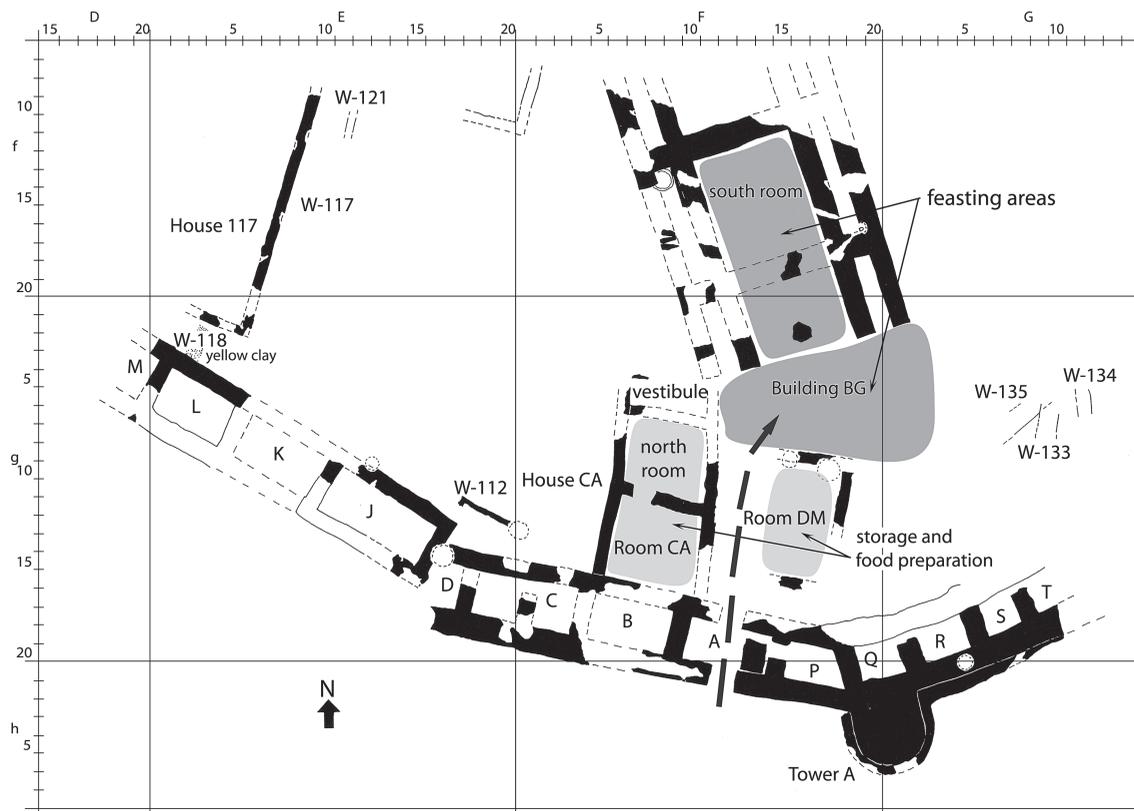


Fig. 1. Feast preparation and feasting areas at Early Helladic Lerna III phase C (Building BG; Rooms CA, DM) (modified from Wiencke 2000, plan 7; courtesy the Trustees of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens).

At Petri, storage in pithoi, repeated sealing of the pithoi, and storage of broken sealings, tableware, and cooking pots on shelving were found together in Room A-1, which was destroyed by fire.³² A number of pithoi and large jars were found in the room, including three roller-impressed necked pithoi impressed by the same roller seal.³³ The nearly vitrified interior of one pithos and the entirely vitrified small pots (sauceboats and small bowls) that had fallen into it suggest to Kostoula that the content of that pithos was olive oil;³⁴ the other pithos was not vitrified, and Kostoula suggests it contained wine.³⁵ The 250 sealing fragments repre-

sent about 100 different sealings. Only sealing Types C (around the necks of jars and pithoi) and D (closing the mouths of jars and pithoi) were identified at Petri.³⁶ Twenty-six different seal designs were identified, several of them similar to the designs at Lerna.³⁷ Of the 250 sealing fragments, 193 were found in the southeast corner and along the south wall of the room, in the same 20 cm thick ashy layer with many broken vessels, mostly tableware. Like Room DM at Lerna, Room A-1 at Petri seems to have had shelving along its south wall holding a wide assortment of vessels, objects, and the broken sealings.³⁸ Kostoula argues for a

³² Kostoula 2000. Unfortunately, so little of the site at Petri—let alone the structure to which Room A-1 belongs—has been excavated that we cannot tell what the larger context of the room might be.

³³ Kostoula 2000, 137. Additional roller-impressed sherds, from ca. 10 roller seals, were also found, as well as nonimpressed pithoi.

³⁴ Kostoula 2000, 137–38.

³⁵ Kostoula 2000, 140.

³⁶ For sealing types at Lerna, see Heath 1958; for Type B as door sealings, see Aruz 1994. No examples of Types A and B,

which were used for wooden boxes or doors (and were common in the House of the Tiles at Lerna), were identified from this room, but one was found in the destruction layer.

³⁷ Similar to the pattern of sealing at Lerna, at Petri only one sealing fragment has the impressions of two different seals; up to 11 impressions of the same seal could be found on the same fragment.

³⁸ Kostoula 2000, 144–45. Based on the forms of these vessels and the stylistic similarities of the seal designs with Lerna, Kostoula dates the destruction to the end of EH II, equivalent to Lerna III phase D, the period of the House of the Tiles.

multistage administrative process represented by primary sealing (as also seen in Room DM), temporary storage of broken seals (as represented by the majority of the Petri sealings) in the process of being archived, and perhaps an ultimate archive of sealings as seen in Room XI of the House of the Tiles.³⁹

Thus, at both Lerna and Petri there is evidence for the mobilization of some agricultural produce, albeit on a limited scale. We can therefore say that like the Mycenaean palace at Pylos, where there is mobilization of some of the polity's agricultural production for its own use, so, too, there is some mobilization of staple goods by an authority in EH settlements. While we do not have any direct evidence for mobilization of other types of goods (e.g., prestige goods), the sealings from Lerna's House of the Tiles provide indirect evidence that small containers of ceramic, wood, and reeds were under some control. This suggests that limited quantities of items of higher value than ordinary staples were also being mobilized for some purpose.

MOBILIZATION OF PRESTIGE ITEMS: THE HOUSE OF THE TILES SEALINGS

The House of the Tiles had few finds in it, but certainly the most famous set of finds is that of the sealings found in the small Room XI, accessed only from the exterior.⁴⁰ The 143 sealings with the impressions of 70 distinct seals contained in Room XI of the House of the Tiles indicate control over a variety of small containers.⁴¹ There is still debate over how to interpret the sealings,⁴² ranging from a low-intensity nonbureaucratic use⁴³ to an archival function—an interpretation that the majority of scholars, including Wiencke, Kostoula, and me, prefer.⁴⁴

Other than the sealings, the only finds from the room were some faunal and botanical remains from the postholes in the four corners and ceramics. The ceramics found in Room XI consisted of complete (or nearly so) small bowls (62 or more) and sauceboats (n=6–8)

and incomplete vessels represented by only one or more sherds. This latter group of vessels represented by sherds included jars, one pithos, and some other shapes.⁴⁵ Though no well-preserved jars were found, Wiencke supposes both that they must have been present at one time (because of the Type C and Type D sealings from the room) and that the jars were looted or removed just before the destruction.⁴⁶ The room is too small (2.6 x 1.3 m), and the doorway too narrow (width 0.60 m), for vessels of any significant size. The jars, boxes, and baskets could not have been so large or so numerous as to be used for the large-scale storage of staple goods. Whether the containers represented by the sealings were actually kept in Room XI is really not important for the purpose at hand; I would suggest that those containers held nonstaple types of items, whether processed (i.e., value-added) agricultural products or manufactured goods such as textiles.

What is significant about the Room XI ceramic deposit is that the vessels clearly in use at the time of destruction were only drinking and pouring vessels: the small bowls and the sauceboats. In contrast to the greater variety of shapes in assemblages found in households or in assemblages such as those that accumulated over several years in Rooms CA and DM, Wiencke suggests this was a special-purpose assemblage, made rapidly by only a few potters.⁴⁷ What distinguishes the Room XI deposit from the deposits in Lerna Room DM and Petri Room A-1 is the lack of the storage vessels that would have been sealed by the Type C and Type D sealings; the (perishable) containers represented by sealing Types A, B, and E could have been destroyed in the fire that consumed the House of the Tiles. In addition, the large number of distinct seals (n=70) compared with the number of sealings (n=124) indicates a broader population affected by the deposit than at Petri. As Kostoula proposed, Room XI represents a different stage in the administrative process of controlling items, perhaps near the end.

³⁹ Kostoula 2000, 147.

⁴⁰ Wiencke 2000, 232–36. See Heath (1958) for original publication of the sealings. Two sealings were found in other parts of the House of the Tiles, in Room III (Wiencke 1969, 501, S71) and in Room VI (Heath 1958, 82, 90, S36).

⁴¹ The most common types of sealings were Type A (on groups of poles, perhaps forming wooden boxes or chests) and Type B (on pegs or pommels); less common were Types C and D (on necks and mouths of jars and pithoi) and Type E (on reeds) (*supra* n. 36).

⁴² Wiencke (2000, 302–4) summarizes the various opinions.

⁴³ Weingarten 1997.

⁴⁴ By “archival” I mean a situation in which the signifying el-

ements (e.g., the sealings) are stored apart from the elements signified (e.g., the containers or their contents), without necessarily implying a bureaucratic archive as evidence in the later Aegean Bronze Age (Pullen 1994; Kostoula 2000; Wiencke 2000, 304). Some (e.g., Fiandra 1968) suggest repeated sealing of a few containers in the room. Again, perishable containers are a probability, especially given the presence of sealing Types A, B, and E.

⁴⁵ See Wiencke (2000, 479–88) for pottery catalogue; see also *supra* n. 19.

⁴⁶ Wiencke 2000, 235.

⁴⁷ Wiencke (2000, 235–36) identifies at least three groups of small bowls from Room XI, with 15, 10, and 13 vessels, respectively, each made by a single hand.

PRESTIGE ITEMS AND CRAFT SPECIALIZATION

This is not the place to look in detail at evidence for wealth accumulation or for the exploitation of prestige goods in the EH period, but I will make a few observations. While there is some variation in quantity and types of grave goods, especially in metal objects, there are no outstanding differences such as one sees in the Early Mycenaean mortuary data—there are no grand chiefly burials such as the Shaft Graves.⁴⁸ Metal objects, especially daggers and jewelry, become widespread in the EH II period, and these are probably one medium for marking differences in wealth, prestige, or rank.⁴⁹ Exotic goods (i.e., imports from other regions) are often pegged as indicators of wealth. Items such as Cycladic stone vessels (or at least two lids) at inland Tsoungiza, Cycladic ceramic vessels, or metal items of particular regional styles are found at EH sites, but never in any significant numbers and without any clear indication of their significance.⁵⁰ The mechanisms by which these objects arrived at sites such as Tsoungiza are not clear—should we imagine adventurous entrepreneurs traipsing all the way to Paros and returning with a souvenir of a marble object, as Helms would argue?⁵¹ Or should we imagine a more mundane down-the-line method of acquisition,⁵² with Tsoungiza receiving some of the leftovers? While it is clear that raw materials and finished goods circulated widely throughout the Aegean in the third millennium B.C.E., the scale and intensity of such intraregional movements remain to be ascertained.⁵³ And the movement of raw materials and finished goods between the peoples of the Aegean and those of regions outside the Aegean seems to be of such a small scale that it may not have been of much importance in the Early Bronze Age.

Several categories of prestige items from Mycenaean palaces are craft products, such as textiles, chariots, and worked ivory. The tablets also record some of the craftspeople, often because they were supported by

rations or because the palace supplied the raw materials.⁵⁴ But evidence for full-time craft specialists is scanty in EH contexts. While we can postulate a number of specialized crafts in EH society,⁵⁵ we are decidedly lacking in evidence for permanent, full-time craftsmen associated with a centralized authority. Wiencke argues that the large impressed necked pithoi were the products of “skilled specialist potters” but points out that the same roller seal was used to mark pithoi and hearth rims at Lerna, Tiryns, and Zygouries—vessels that theoretically are portable. This suggests that the potter and his roller seal moved from village to village.⁵⁶ Karabatsoli proposes a pattern of itinerant lithic specialists who moved from large coastal sites (such as Manika), where primary production took place, to smaller, inland sites (such as Tsoungiza), bringing with them partially worked blanks.⁵⁷ Like chipped stone and pithos manufacture, the metallurgical activity at Tsoungiza could well be the product of itinerant craftsmen, as the full range of metallurgical activities is absent there.⁵⁸ Unlike the situation in Mycenaean palaces, we do not have any evidence for centralized support of craftworkers through rations or other payments.

FEASTING IN THE EARLY HELLADIC II PERIOD

Feasting is of great importance in studies of the Mycenaean political economy. As several scholars have shown, the scale of feasting can be quite large,⁵⁹ and perhaps mobilization of foodstuffs for feasting is of more importance than mobilization for supporting craftsmen.⁶⁰ Feasting, or at least drinking, is evident in EH contexts as one might expect, even in some “public” contexts.⁶¹ I know of no comprehensive study of EH cooking and serving practices,⁶² but from studies of the assemblages of EH pottery,⁶³ we can make some assumptions about what would constitute feasting or drinking sets. The assemblage from Tsoungiza Pit 56 (fig. 2)⁶⁴ contained a basin (or large bowl); a ladle;

⁴⁸ Pullen 1994. For the Mycenaean situation, see Voutsaki 1995.

⁴⁹ Renfrew 1972, 319–25.

⁵⁰ Burns 2010.

⁵¹ Helms 1988.

⁵² Renfrew 1975.

⁵³ For a discussion of the scale of exchange in Late Bronze Age contexts, see Parkinson 2010.

⁵⁴ Earle (2011) suggests that attached specialization would be one of the means by which elites could exert control over the production and distribution of prestige items.

⁵⁵ E.g., architect (for the corridor houses), metallurgist (from ore reduction to fashioning weapons and jewelry), chipped-stone knapper, and so on (Wiencke 1989).

⁵⁶ Wiencke 2000, 578–79 (citing Wiencke 1970, 103, 105); see also Caskey 1959, 206; Weisshaar 1989, 320.

⁵⁷ Karabatsoli 1997, 2011. See Hartenberger and Runnels

(2001) for similar conclusions based on the Lerna chipped stone.

⁵⁸ Some metallurgical activity at Tsoungiza is attested by the presence of open-faced stone molds for the casting of tools such as chisels and ornaments such as pins. Lacking, however, is evidence for smelting or other metallurgical processes.

⁵⁹ Bendall 2004.

⁶⁰ Nakassis 2010.

⁶¹ For purposes of this paper, I do not distinguish between eating and drinking but rather focus on the consumption of food or drink by groups at occasions or in particular contexts.

⁶² But see, e.g., Day and Wilson (2004) and Rutter (2004) for examples from Early Minoan and Late Minoan Crete.

⁶³ E.g., Wiencke 2000; Pullen 2011.

⁶⁴ Pullen 2011, 254, fig. 5.12.



Fig. 2. Feasting assemblage from Tsoungiza Pit 56 (T. Dabney).

two small bowls, all solidly painted; one plain small bowl (not illustrated); and a cooking pot. If all six vessels were meant to go together, we have represented a cooking pot for processing food or drink, perhaps with heat; a serving bowl (the basin); and a ladle for serving the contents of the basin into the three individual bowls for consumption by three individuals. The ubiquitous small bowl (“saucer” in Lerna parlance) seems to be the primary vessel for individual consumption of both food and drink. Larger bowls and basins of the same tableware fabrics and finishes as the small bowls and sauceboats and with accompanying ladles are common in EH II contexts, especially earlier ones. Sauceboats seem to be for pouring, albeit for small quantities of liquid, and increase in frequency in later contexts at the expense of the large bowls and ladles.⁶⁵ Wiencke has remarked that sauceboats often occur in pairs,⁶⁶ especially in Lerna III phase C, which suggests some larger significance for the type. The presence of cooking pots would seem to indicate consumption of food in addition to drink.

⁶⁵ While it is possible to drink out of some examples of sauceboats (see illustration in Weinberg 1969, pl. 3.3), for many others the spout is too narrow or awkward, and one’s nose interferes with the “ears” of the spout (personal experience).

⁶⁶ Wiencke 2000, 591.

⁶⁷ At Tsoungiza, a similar assemblage was uncovered from the so-called Burnt Room (Pullen 2011, 322–24, fig. 5.58). The 16 small bowls and jug belonging to the Burnt Room assemblage were apparently stored close together in one corner of a small room that seemed to lack typical domestic characteristics such as evidence for storage and cooking, though the botanical evidence suggests the final stages of food prepara-

Several assemblages for large-scale consumption have been reported at EH sites, including the deposits from Room CA and Room XI of the House of the Tiles and Room A-1 at Petri.⁶⁷ Peperaki has noted that the number of small bowls (62 catalogued by Wiencke) found in Room XI of the House of the Tiles is quite close to the number of seals represented on the sealings from that same chamber (n=70).⁶⁸ Rather than representing an accumulation over a period of time, however long or short,⁶⁹ she argues instead that the ceramics and sealings are the result of the same event.⁷⁰ She sees participants in a feast bringing sealed containers of goods to be consumed at the feast; the sealings preserve the accounting of these goods, while the vessels in Room XI are the feast service ware. She also suggests that despite the uniformity in size and simplicity of the vessels used (they are virtually all plain), differentiation may have occurred in the performance of feasting and drinking, such as in the serving order.⁷¹ She assumes the feasting would have taken place in the large and well-finished Room XII, with its carefully

tions may have taken place here. Also lacking were any sauceboats. The large number of drinking/eating bowls in the Burnt Room deposit suggests that a group larger than an individual household was involved. But it is unclear whether the drinking would have taken place in the room where the vessels were stored or elsewhere.

⁶⁸ Wiencke 2000, 479–90. There were perhaps more in use, though the 77 saucers that Peperaki (2004, 223) mentions is probably a misreading of Wiencke 2000, 235.

⁶⁹ See Pullen (1994, 47) for suggestion of a short period of time.

⁷⁰ Peperaki 2004, 223–26.

⁷¹ Peperaki 2004, 223; 224, fig. 12.5.

plastered walls, wood jambs, and other features,⁷² but is at a loss to explain why the deposition of materials from this feast would have been in a space accessible only from the exterior.⁷³

Whether or not the sealings are to be associated with the service ware at a single event, the important point is that the Room XI ceramic assemblage is a feasting (or at least drinking) assemblage. Weiberg's interesting observations on both the interior and exterior spaces associated with the House of the Tiles pertain here.⁷⁴ Weiberg identified four separate exterior spaces around the House of the Tiles, the largest of which was to the east. Perhaps the feasting took place not solely within Room XII, as Peperaki seems to imagine, but also in this large open square to the east, Weiberg's Area C (fig. 3).⁷⁵ Thus, we have a situation in which differentiation among participants in the feasting was marked not by the pottery used but, to modify Peperaki's suggestion of differentiation through performance, rather by where the participants were situated: inside Room XII but visible through the double doors for higher-ranking individuals and outside in the open to the east for the rest of the participants.⁷⁶ One could even bring in the possibility of a third space for participants in the feast: the second-story balcony looking out over the square/Area C.

If this reconstruction of a feasting arena situated in Room XII and the open Area C to the east of the House of the Tiles is correct, then picking up again on Weiberg's observation of the continuity of this open space from Lerna III phase C (the time of Building BG and Houses CA and DM) to Lerna III phase D (the time of the House of the Tiles), perhaps we can also push this situation back into the previous phase and propose a feasting arena in the same place. In Lerna III phase C, the feasting arena was associated with the facade of Building BG on the north side of the square and the feasting paraphernalia and preparations taking place in Houses CA and DM on the south side of the square (see fig. 1). In the subsequent phase D, the feasting arena continued essentially in the same place but in a more formalized setting with the bounding of Area C to the east of the House of the Tiles. Some of the paraphernalia for feasting was stored in Room XI. And perhaps the accompanying sealings were evidence for participants having contributed toward the feast,

whether directly through giving (or being assessed for) staple commodities or indirectly through giving prestige goods that could be redistributed in some fashion. The distinct but related spaces for the feasting activities might have been used by different groups of participants, distinguished by various social relationships in an asymmetrical arrangement. In this model of feasting, redistribution, in Halstead's sense of the term,⁷⁷ can be identified as an institution for mobilizing the resources needed to conduct the feast.

CONCLUSIONS: REDISTRIBUTION IN THE EARLY HELLADIC CHIEFDOMS

So, what is the role of redistribution in the EH political economy? Redistribution as an institution for mobilization of resources makes a limited appearance in the EH period. Despite early identifications of the House of the Tiles as a palace,⁷⁸ we do not expect the EH world to present the same degree of organization in political economy as the Mycenaean. While there are some components of the Mycenaean political economy that are apparent in EH contexts, several are lacking or are only present in a rudimentary fashion. To put it into Earle's terms, it is difficult to identify the same "bottlenecks" in the political economy of the EH period as those in the Mycenaean political economies.⁷⁹

In the EH world, we see the mobilization of staple goods on a limited scale, but how similar the process is to what we see in the later Mycenaean palaces is not clear. The sealings from Lerna suggest a small-scale control of nonstaple goods, but we lack knowledge of what these goods might have been, who the seal owners were, and what the relationship of the seal owners to the authority that controlled this institution of mobilization was. We lack evidence for centralized control of craft production, centralized control of exotic raw materials (e.g., metals, stones), or centralized control of distribution of prestige items such as one might find in a wealth-financed political economy. There does not seem to be great differentiation in wealth, as far as we can interpret the mortuary evidence, and metal items, if markers of prestige, are fairly widespread.

Feasting is well attested in the EH world. Lerna provides us with evidence through time of a place for the feasting, storage of the paraphernalia, and even evidence for mobilization of some goods to be used

⁷² Pullen 1986; Wiencke 2000, 236–42.

⁷³ Peperaki 2004, 225.

⁷⁴ Weiberg 2007, 44–57.

⁷⁵ Weiberg 2007, 46, fig. 12.

⁷⁶ But note that there were two painted sauceboats, cat. nos. P1058 and P1059, and one nearly complete painted small

bowl with a potter's mark, cat. no. P1062, in the Room XI deposit.

⁷⁷ See Halstead's (2011) critique.

⁷⁸ E.g., Caskey 1955a, 40; 1955b.

⁷⁹ Earle 2011.

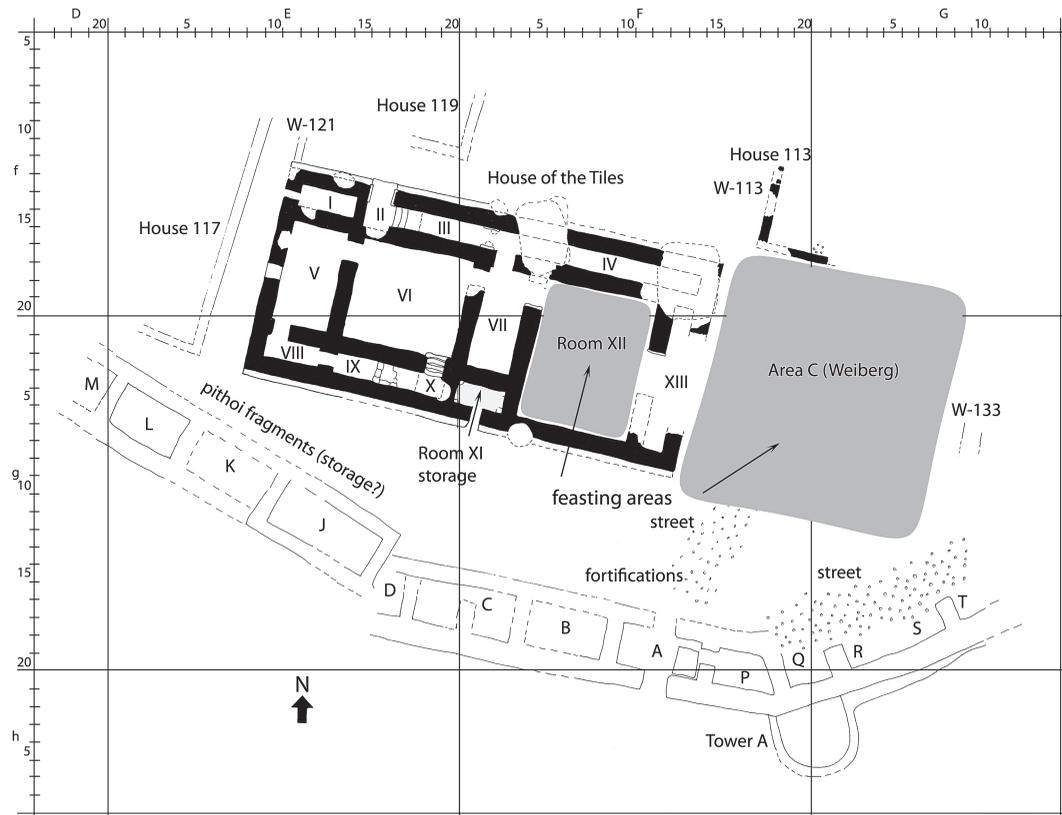


Fig. 3. Feast preparation and feasting areas at Early Helladic Lerna III phase D (House of the Tiles) (modified from Wiencke 2000, plan 8; courtesy the Trustees of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens).

in conjunction with the feasting. My reconstruction of a feasting area at Lerna is a much simpler situation than the model of feasting locations that Bendall proposed for Mycenaean Pylos,⁸⁰ but it involves some of the same principles of differentiation by location as well as by types of feasting equipment. One is even reminded of the pile of sacrificed cattle bones and miniature kylikes in the Pylos archives room awaiting processing by the scribes,⁸¹ perhaps similar to what Kostoula envisions for the multistage process of administrative control.

The nature of the authority in EH society is not clear. I have long been an advocate of a chiefly form of political organization,⁸² though others have questioned this and prefer some more corporate form of organization.⁸³ Perhaps at this point, the nature of the

authority need not be specified. We have indication of asymmetrical social relationships emerging in the EBA Aegean, as seen in the differentiation in feasting activities outlined in this paper. The EH authority most likely is not of the same type as the *wanax* of Mycenaean Pylos. The EH “polities” (for lack of a better word) are much smaller in scale than the Mycenaean polities, have fewer long-distance contacts, and have fewer established institutions that can manipulate the political economy. The Mycenaean political economies are different not only in scale but also in kind.

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⁸⁰ Bendall 2004.

⁸¹ Stocker and Davis 2004.

⁸² Pullen 1985, 1986, 1992, 1994.

⁸³ E.g., Weiberg 2007. Nilsson (2004) makes a similar assertion but without any theoretical or comparative basis.

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