Trade and Foreign Relations

The establishment of palace centres across the Mycenaean world in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries BC intensified the need for exotic raw materials and finished luxury products with which to satisfy the tastes of the palace élites. However, to what extent the Mycenaeans themselves engaged actively in this trade and how much they benefited from the mercantile ventures of other nations is hard to determine. It appears that various trading mechanisms were operating amongst the lands of the Mediterranean: from state-controlled commerce and high-level gift exchange, right down to the smaller-scale activities of groups and individuals.

The Mycenaeans certainly had access to the trade networks active in the east and west Mediterranean; there can be no doubt that goods were being exchanged in both directions. Entrepôts (trading colonies) were established on islands like Rhodes and Kos and at coastal sites like Miletos (on the coast of Asia Minor) to facilitate the processes of trade and exchange yet further. Such activities leave their traces in the archaeological record in a variety of ways: non-Aegean materials found in Mycenaean contexts; Mycenaean goods (mostly pottery) discovered in foreign lands; written sources, pictorial evidence and the wrecks of ships that once carried these trade goods found lying on the sea bed.

IMPORTS AT MYCENAEAN SITES

The Mycenaeans, being a Bronze Age people, needed constant supplies of the two metals which when alloyed together make bronze, namely copper and tin. As the palaces were built and the population of Mycenaean Greece apparently grew, the demand for these metals increased. The silver mines at Laurion in Attica, which were also rich in copper, could have satisfied much of the demand for this metal on the Greek mainland: scientific analysis of the copper used in Mycenaean Greece has shown that much of it did indeed come from there. The island of Cyprus was also an important source of copper and supplied large quantities of it to the lands of the eastern Mediterranean. Oxhide ingots of Cypriot copper were widely traded all over the region, as the 10 tons of it found on the Uluburun shipwreck of around 1300 BC will testify.

When we look for tin in the region, though, the situation is very different. There were no deposits of tin ores either in or near the Aegean or the eastern Mediterranean, so the tin that reached Mycenaean Greece must have come from far distant sources. Suggestions that the Mycenaeans may have acquired tin by trading with Bronze Age Britons for ores from mines in Cornwall in the south-west of England are interesting, but to date, despite intensive fieldwork in the region, archaeologists have thus far found no evidence for exploitation of Cornish tin deposits in the Bronze Age. More convincing perhaps is the suggestion that the vein of tin in Iberia, on the borders of modern Spain and Portugal, may have been a source, as signs of tin-smelting have recently been found there in Bronze Age deposits. Ingots of tin circulating on eastern Mediterranean trade networks, such as the tin of tin found on the Uluburun wreck, probably came from sources in the Far East, perhaps Afghanistan, which was also the provenance of the finest lapis lazuli, a prized semi-precious stone found widely in the Bronze Age Aegean.

Likewise, exotic raw materials and finished luxury goods supplied to the wealthy and sophisticated élites of the Mycenaean palaces would have had to be imported. Remains of such goods are found in the ruins of the palaces and tombs and are listed on Linear B tablets, especially those that detailed the contents of palace storerooms where fine pieces of furniture made of precious woods and ivory were kept. The Mycenaeans, given the scale of their demand for metals and luxuries, must have used a variety of trade routes to supply their needs: Gold, semi-precious stones, elephants and hippopotamus ivory and precious woods were imported by sea from the East and from Egypt, for instance, and amber - popular with Mycenaean warriors for their necklaces - came over land routes from the Baltic.
MYCENAEAN EXPORTS FOUND ABROAD

The Mycenaeans must have been trading something in exchange for all these precious goods, of course, and the clearest evidence for Mycenaean exports moving around the Mediterranean - both east and west - is the 'paper-trail' of mass-produced and highly uniform pottery, characteristic of the palace period (fourteenth and thirteenth centuries), which is found abroad. Other archaeologically invisible goods - organic perishables such as textiles for instance - must have been traded, too. Most of the pots were closed shapes such as stirrup-jars and flasks, used to transport liquids. Many of them will have been filled with perfumed olive oil, an industry which is clearly attested in the Linear B tablets from the palace at Pylos. Some vessels, though, were not just containers but highly valued pieces in their own right, notably large Pictorial Style vases painted with lively scenes of people and animals. These were made on the mainland of Greece but are found predominantly in Cyprus and the Near East.
The Linear B tablets discovered to date only document the internal workings of the palace bureaucracies and not their external contacts. It is disappointing that no tablets dealing with trade have been found, though it is possible that some of them may refer indirectly to the kind of gift exchange that we see in operation in the records of the East and Egypt: some high-status items, such as textiles (at Knossos) and perfumed oils (at Pylos), are referred to as *ke-e-nu-er-i-ja* (*semelita*), which, given its similarity to the Classical Greek word *xenoi* (which means stranger, host or guest) might indicate they have something to do with gift-giving.

When we look to the eastern Mediterranean, where so much of this trade and gift exchange was carried out, the picture is brought vividly to life by the kinds of documentary evidence that is lacking from Mycenaean Greece. This was a world dominated by three great empires: Egypt, Hatti (the Hittites) and Babylonia. Their dealings with each other and with the smaller independent kingdoms they dominated are illuminated by rich archives. These archives paint a picture for us of the mechanisms of trade in which the Mycenaeans were taking part.

One such archive of correspondence was found in the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten’s capital city of Amarna on the banks of the Nile in Middle Egypt. Dating to the fourteenth century, these ‘Amarna letters’ (as they are called) are inscribed on clay tablets (mainly in Akkadian – the *lingua franca* of official diplomatic correspondence in the eastern Mediterranean in the Late Bronze Age) and reveal the complexity of exchange and the important role played by gift-exchange between the rulers of great empires and their subject kings.

The thousands of cuneiform tablets from the kingdom of Ugarit – a great trade centre on the Syro-Palestinian coast – on the other hand, cover a wider spectrum of society and of the trade processes active in the area. The documents were written in various languages, though – like the ‘Amarna letters’ – the majority of them were in Akkadian. They throw light on many areas of society, not simply on diplomatic relations but on economy and trade. They document trade in high-status goods and also in basic foodstuffs like cereals and olive oil. The amounts of goods traded are also sometimes recorded: one bill of lading for a ship sailing from Ugarit details how much of its cargo of olive oil was bound for each port of destination.

**SHIPS AND SHIPWRECKS**

We know of four different types of Mycenaean ship – those used for ceremonies, war, trade and fishing – but their depictions on Mycenaean pottery and on seal-stones are too schematic to give an accurate picture of how they were built and used. Our most detailed record of Aegean ships of the Late Bronze Age comes instead from a miniature fresco from the town of Akrotiri on Thera, and dates to around 1540 BC. The Ship Procession fresco shows a flotilla of large ships in a ceremonial procession, several small fishing boats in a harbour and one cargo ship in full sail (with a square-rigged sail and a central hold for its cargo, on which the sailors are sitting).

Wrecks of cargo ships like the one on the fresco reveal the truly international and cosmopolitan nature of trade in the Mediterranean in the Late Bronze Age. The most spectacular of these discovered to date is undoubtedly the Uluburun wreck, a Canaanite ship measuring 15 m (almost 50 ft) long and 5 m (16 ft) wide found off Kas on the coast of Turkey, which sank around 1300 BC. Its main cargo consisted of 10 tonnes of copper ingots, 1 tonne of tin ingots, teakbath resin, 145 Canaanite jars, 175 turquoise and cobalt-blue glass ingots, and large quantities of Cypriot pottery vessels of various kinds. Smaller cargoes included logs of ebony, ostrich eggs, seals and a scarab from Egypt bearing the name of Nefertiti, raw ivory (elephant and hippopotamus) and objects carved from ivory (like duck-shaped cosmetic boxes), faience vessels, tin vessels, a gold stemmed cup and an Egyptian statuette of a goddess made of gold and bronze. Plant remains found in the wreck have been carefully collected and studied, and included large quantities of pomegranate seeds and figs. Transport jars for olive oil
Myth and wine were also trade items: the terebinth resin which was found in 130 of the jars may have been there to resinate the contents or was being traded for its own properties. Other foodstuffs on the ship were probably for consumption on the voyage, or were the remains of prepared meals, such as charred wheat and barley. The small quantities of coriander and cumin on board may also have been for use in cooking.

Other finds from the ship of a personal or everyday nature were probably the belongings of the crew, such as a variety of bronze tools, cylinder seals, used oil lamps, wooden folding writing boards, and fishing tackle (net weights, bronze fish-hooks and a bronze trident). Two Mycenaean swords, two seals, spearheads, knives, razors and chisels, amber and glass beads, and small stirrup-jars and cups found on the wreck appear to indicate that two high-ranking Mycenaean were on board, either as passengers or in some official capacity.

The extraordinary range of items held in the cargo of the Ulu Burun wreck is illuminating: goods from Egypt, the Aegean, Cyprus, Syro-Palestine, Mesopotamia, and even, in the case of amber, ultimately from the Baltic, were being carried. This cargo reveals a trade in both luxury goods and essential raw materials, and the owners of the ship appear to have been travelling the Mediterranean and the Aegean, picking up and selling on items as required.

Two other wrecks from the Mediterranean, both of which went down at the end of the thirteenth century (around 1200 BC), are far less rich and diverse in their cargo. One fairly small Cypriot merchant ship (less than 10 m [32 ft] long) sank off Pont Iria in the gulf of Argos around 1200 BC. It had a limited but mixed cargo of large Cypriot, Cretan and Mycenaean transport vessels: Cypriot pithos, Minoan coarse-ware stirrup-jars and Mycenaean large two-handled jars. The second ship, which sank off Cape Gelidonya on the southern coast of Turkey, was probably a merchant ship from the East (perhaps Syria) with a mixed cargo of personal and trade items, including a cargo of copper consisting of thirty-nine complete ox-hide ingots and several fragments.

By pulling these different forms of evidence together from the mainland itself and from neighbouring lands, we can start to build up a picture of the patterns of trade and exchange between the Mycenaeans and peoples of various lands across the Mediterranean world.

EGYPT

The Mycenaeans’ great neighbour to the south-east was Egypt. The Egyptian empire of the pharaohs reached its greatest geographical extent with the conquests of the Eighteenth-Dynasty pharaoh Thutmose III (1470-1425 BC), which brought within Egypt’s domain the great lands of Nubia and western Asia. The best evidence for Egypt’s involvement in trade in the Mediterranean comes from texts such as the Amarna letters and from wall paintings on Egyptian tombs. The latter reveal that the Egyptians were certainly in direct contact with the Mycenaeans: people labelled as Keftiu are seen on tribute scenes painted on the walls of tomb chapels at the site of Egyptian Thebes, in tombs from the time of Hatshepsut (1479-1457 BC) and Amenhotep II (1427-1400 BC). They are identified as Minoans by their dress and by the offerings that they bring as gifts for the pharaoh, including fine vessels of precious metals and elaborately decorated textiles. This pictorial record is reinforced by archaeological evidence – the presence of goods from each country found in the other.
That the Kefiu are Minoans is not disputed, but whether the Egyptians refer directly to the Mycenaeans in their texts is a more complicated question to answer. One term that appears in the texts is 'Ises in the Midst of the Great Green' (a term which first appears in the reign of Thutmose III [1470–1425 BC]). 'Great Green' (waad wet) may be a general term for the marshy areas of Egypt itself and for the seas to the north, leading some scholars to believe that the 'Ises' in the midst of it could be identified with the lands of the Aegean. The other name that appears in the texts, 'hau nesu', has not been translated, but was used later on in Ptolemaic times (third to first centuries BC) to refer to Greece. On the Rosetta Stone, for instance (a tri-lingual text with scripts in Greek, demotic and hieroglyphics), the word for 'Greek' ('Hellenikos') is written as 'of hau nesu' in the section written in Egyptian hieroglyphics. Furthermore, the people referred to in Egyptian texts as Tanaja may well be Mycenaeans, as an inscription from Kom el Helan (see p.112) would seem to indicate.

If the Egyptians were trading with the Mycenaeans, as they did with the Minoans before them, where were the ports along the coast that could have been used to trade with these peoples of the north? Memphis must have been a busy port and a wall painting decorating an Egyptian tomb, the tomb of Kenamun, shows a group of foreign traders in foreign ships unloading at an Egyptian port, which is probably Memphis. But for trade with the Aegean, the coast of Egypt offers few convenient natural harbours: perhaps the best of them along the Mediterranean coast being the site of Marsa Matruh. Quantities of Mycenaean pottery have been found at Bates Island, just offshore from Marsa Matruh, but they come from what appear to be mainly domest-
temple had been inscribed with place-names, the fifth of which was the so-called 'Aegean list'. On it, the names Tanaja (arguably the Egyptian name for the Mycenaeans) and Kepi (perhaps as headers for names of specific places on Crete and in Greece which then followed. The sites appear to be listed in order, as if the inscription is giving an itinerary of an actual journey made by emissaries of the pharaoh. The sites visited were Amnisos, Phaistos, Kydonia, Mycenae, Boiotian Thebes or Kato Zakro, Methana (Argolid), Messana (Pylos, Messenia), Nauplion, Kythera, Ilios (Troy), Knossos, Amnisos (again) and Lyktos.

If we look to the sites listed as receiving the mission, can we find any corroborating in the archaeological record of its having actually taken place? Nine faience plaques bearing the cartouche of Amenhotep III were found at Mycenae and some small items like a faience monkey at Tiryns, but these could just as easily have reached Greece as traded Egyptian trinkets (like those found on the Ulu Burun wreck). Whether or not the Kom el Héran base does record an actual journey, it still demonstrates that the Egyptians were aware of the important ports and towns in Crete and Greece.

THE EAST

Mycenaean access to trade with the East was clearly vital to ensure supplies of metals and luxuries. Settlements such as those on the islands of Rhodes and Kos, invaluable stepping-stones to the East, grew and flourished. On Cyprus, at the crossroads of trading routes both north-south and east-west, large quantities of Mycenaean pottery have been found, imported from the mainland. The coast of Asia Minor - Ephesus, for example, and lasos - received imports of Mycenaean pottery, as did Troy to the north and sites in Lydia to the south. At Miletos and Mysgebi, which had both Mycenaean pottery and cemeteries of chamber tombs, there may well have been Mycenaean settlers actively engaged in promoting trade. Ongoing excavations at Miletos are uncovering increasing and exciting evidence for a Mycenaean trading enterprise having been established there at the site of an earlier Minoan colony.

On the Syro-Palestinian coast more sites than ever before have Mycenaean imports, with pottery reaching places like Tell Aitkha on the River Orontes, Tel el Hawami, Beth Shan and the port of Tell el Ajud.

Canaanite (or Syro-Palestinian) jars - large transport amphorae about 30 cm (12 in) high, are testimony to the trade between the Aegean and Syro-Palestinian centres in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries. Ships laden with cargoes of these jars left Ugarit full of wine, oil or resin (or resinated wine and oil). They travelled to the Aegean, selling their cargo on trade routes that stopped at Crete, the Argolid.
twelfth century. No direct correspondence between the Greeks and the rulers of Ugarit has been found, but contacts between the two regions can be traced in the great quantities of Mycenaean pottery that has been found at Ugarit, dating from the early fourteenth century (LHI-IIA1) onwards. At first these pots were imported from production centres on the Greek mainland itself, but later on—in the second half of the thirteenth and early twelfth centuries—they are coming from other sources, notably from Mycenaean colonies that had been established on the islands of Rhodes and Kos. The pottery is a visible trace of the goods being traded, but there must also have been perishables that leave no trace in the archaeological record.

Back in Mycenaean Greece itself, the most spectacular evidence for links between the Mycenaeans and the peoples of Mesopotamia is in the cache of thirty-nine cylinder seals—made from faience, stone and lapis lazuli—found at the palace of Thebes in Boiotia, nineteen of which are imports from Mesopotamia. They range in date from c. 2500 BC to the thirteenth century BC, and seventeen of them are made of lapis lazuli. The significance of this discovery and the meaning of the presence of the seals at Thebes have been hotly debated and suggestions and theories abound. Were they a collector’s hoard? Did they constitute simply a cache of lapis lazuli waiting to be reworked? Were they a diplomatic gift? More common Mesopotamian imports found in Mycenaean contexts are beads and moulded glass objects which were most probably trinkets.

Looking further inland into the heartland of Anatolia, we find the great empire of the Hittites, which had its capital, Hattusa, at Bogazköy and was one of the great powers (the Hatti) known to us from the ‘Amarna letters’. It seems likely that the country named Ashihiwa in Hittite texts is actually Mycenaean Greece, and that therefore we can try and chart the relationship between the two from the records. One of the apparent anomalies in the trading systems of the Late Bronze Age is the marked paucity of evidence for trade links between the two lands. This has led to the suggestion that there was a trade embargo in place. Interestingly, a thirteenth-century Hittite text is inscribed with a treaty—signed between the Hittite king Tudhalija IV and Sausamunu of Amarru—which talks of an embargo on the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I, forbidding ships of the Ashihiwa to reach him (see p. 197).

THE WEST AND THE NORTH

To the west, Mycenaean pottery has been found on the island of Malta, at Monte Toro on the coast of eastern Spain; at many sites in south-east Italy and Sicily, and even as far north as the Po Valley. Some sites in Sicily and south-east Italy have very high concentrations of Mycenaean material, for instance in the tombs at Thapsos. In the thirteenth and twelfth centuries such southern sites as Scoglio del Tonno (Taranto) were found to have not only quantities of imports, but also local imitations of Aegean wares. At Broglio di Trebisacce in Calabria the local Aegean wares are of such high quality that they may have been made by Aegean potters living in the area. The scattering of Aegean-style sherds in northern and central Italy—for instance at Fondo Paviani in the north-east and at Lumi sull’Mignone, Monte Rosello and Ben Giovenale in southern Etruria—may either be true imports or perhaps again the work of local potters. On the island of Sardinia imported Aegean pottery from the thirteenth century has been found at several sites, for instance at Barumini, at a site near Orsel on the east coast, and at Nuraghe Antogni, where the excavators have found quantities of Aegean pottery imported from the Peloponnese and Crete, as well as imitations made by local potters. Ox-hide ingots have also been found in Sardinia and the island may well have played a role in the metals trade in the Mediterranean. Few objects of apparently Italian provenance have been discovered at Mycenaean sites, a notable exception being a winged-axe mould from the House of the Oil Merchant at Mycenae, of the thirteenth century. This stone mould was for the making of bronze axes of a form common in north Italy.

Lands to the immediate west of the Mycenaean world—Thrace, for instance, and modern-day Albania—received Mycenaean imports. Mycenaean swords were particularly prized by the warrior chieftains of those regions. Further to the north, though, the extent of Mycenaean trading links with the lands of northern Europe are obscure. Imports of amber from the Baltic, prevalent during the Shaft Grave Era, are far fewer in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries, and if copper was being traded from the north down into the Aegean at this time—as many have suggested—there is little Mycenaean pottery to attest to this trade. High-status prestige items, such as gold cups of Aegean appearance, have been found in lands to the north, but their true origin and the mechanisms by which they reached their destination are still a matter for debate.
The Lives of the Mycenaeans

From the settlements, tombs, artefacts and written records they left behind them, we can attempt to piece together an impression of the people we call 'Mycenaeans'. The discovery, decipherment and subsequent reading of the Linear B tablets has shed a whole new light on their lives, at least during the time of their palaces which is when the tablets date from. The earliest administrative tablets inscribed with Linear B found so far are those from the Room of the Chariot Tablets at Knossos, dating to LMII (1450–1400 BC). Apart from some examples dating to the fourteenth century BC (LHIIB), which had been thrown away at Pylos, the earliest from the mainland come from Thebes and from the House of the Oil Merchant complex at Mycenae, dating to around 1350 BC (the end of LHIIB). The tablets have revealed that the Mycenaean palace was not simply the home of a warrior king, but also the hub of a kingdom meticulously controlled and ordered down to the smallest detail; a complex bureaucracy was at work. Caches of recently discovered and deciphered tablets from the palace at Thebes have added greatly to this picture, even hinting at connections between the great kingdoms of the Mycenaeans. The painstaking records of the palaces reveal that the society of the Mycenaeans was extremely hierarchical, from the king down to the slaves.

THE KING AND HIS COURT

Most of our information for the workings of a Mycenaean palace on the mainland comes from the archive of the 'Palace of Nestor' at Pylos in Messenia. Tablets found at other palace centres, such as Thebes and Mycenae, seem to indicate that they were organized along similar lines, although still exhibiting local differences. The Mycenaeans called the ruler of their kingdom the wanax (wa-nax, in the syllabic script on the Linear B tablets), a word meaning king and one familiar to us from Homeric epic. From the tablets we understand that the wanax was not only the ruler of the kingdom but sometimes also presided over religious rituals, so he may perhaps have been a priest-king – both the political and religious leader of his kingdom and its subjects. To what extent the Mycenaean kingdom was fully under the control of the king and his court is difficult to determine as the tablets do not concern themselves with the issue of political control. Therefore we need to look at other categories of information, such as how the palace and the kingdom functioned economically, to see if the role of the wanax can be more fully explained. The tablets concerned with taxation, industry, raw materials and agriculture show that the palace functioned as a redistribution centre. Each palace would have had dependent villages and people within their territories that produced goods of various kinds, which were then collected and stored centrally in the palace. These were then redistributed either as raw materials or, where appropriate, as worked items. All the elements were closely controlled by the palace, and the tablets that regulate these processes show that the palace did indeed exercise a fairly rigorous control over the surrounding territory.

It is clear from the tablets found at Pylos, dating to the destruction of the palace around 1200 BC, that the wanax was extremely wealthy in that he owned great estates of land. Although the wanax at Pylos is never directly named in the tablets, a man called Enkheleywon ('en-khe-ley-won') is demonstrated by the archives to have been of such high status that it seems reasonable to identify him as the king. Enkheleywon owned a very large estate of rich agricultural land, which was planted with over a thousand grapevines and as many fig trees. He also had personal craftsmen working for him, designated as royal by the term wa-nax-ka-te-ra-la. There is a royal potter listed as working at Pylos, for example. Similarly, in the Linear B tablets from the palace of Knossos on Crete, we find references to textiles as being 'royal', presumably a special kind of cloth that was only owned and worn by the king. We also find the term basileus on the tablets, which in Classical Greek was used to mean king, but in Mycenaean Greek (as in Homeric epic) it seems to denote a lesser status, equivalent perhaps to the term chieflain – the head of a group of people rather than of an entire kingdom.

The palace was also home to the members of the court, and the titles of some of these upper echelons of Mycenaean society are also recorded in the tablets. Second in importance to the wanax was apparently the lawsytes, a term found at both Pylos and Knossos. It is difficult to determine his precise role within the kingdom, though it's possible that he was the head of the army; the term lawsytes means loosely 'Leader of the People', and 'people' in Homeric and later Greek usage could have a military aspect.

More certainly connected with the military are the hetairoi ('e-te-a-ti'), which means 'followers', and certain clues are found in the tablets which can be pieced together to build up a picture of their character and status in society. They were probably an aristocratic elite, who were the companions of the king. The Mycenaeans who are referred to by name on the tablets are usually identified simply by their first
name. The hoplites on the Pylos tablets, though, are also given their father's name, perhaps a reflection of their aristocratic status. They are recorded as owning slaves and as having a special kind of cloth made for them, presumably for some kind of outfit or uniform that only they were allowed to wear. Their military status is further implied by the fact that an adjective derived from their title is applied to chariot wheels stored in the palace, suggesting that they owned or used chariots. Furthermore, in the Pylos tablets they are named as the commanders of those who watch the coast — an important job at Pylos, which lay vulnerable to attack from the sea.

WARFARE

The presence of an important and influential military aristocracy forming the upper echelons of Mycenaean society was to be expected from the material remains, which give the overwhelming impression of a fierce and warlike people who gloried in battle and in the hunt. The warrior burials of the Mycenaens, seen from the sixteenth century onwards, continue throughout the centuries of the palace era and through to the end of the period in the twelfth century. This impression of militarism is further reinforced by the settlement evidence provided by the fortresses and palaces of the Mycenaens.

The great and rugged citadels built to protect many of their palaces give an immediate impression of strength and power; an impression conveyed, too, by the fresco paintings that decorated the walls within. A mighty battle was depicted on the walls of the megaron at Mycenae, while in another scene grooms and a warrior are preparing for battle, the latter dressed in tunics, greaves and boar's-tusk helmet (see fig. 66 above). Hall 64 at Pylos was painted with a town built of ashlar masonry and with two warriors similarly wearing linen tunics and boar's-tusk helmets, one riding in a horse-drawn chariot and the other walking behind. There are also striking duelling scenes from Pylos, with Mycenaean warriors in hand-to-hand combat with a variety of enemies, often distinguished by their strange attire, perhaps meant to denote foreigners. In one such battle, Mycenaean warriors, dressed in short white kilts, helmets and greaves and armed with short swords or daggers, are fighting against enemies with shaggy hair who are wearing animal skins knotted at the shoulder. It seems that scenes of battle were considered the most suitable theme for the great hall of the king, reflecting his military prowess and intended to impress his subjects and his visitors.

From a variety of types of evidence we are able to gain a very clear picture of how a Mycenaean warrior was equipped for battle. Perhaps the most immediately identifiable piece of Mycenaean armour is the boar's-tusk helmet, which has been found in tombs spanning the entire Mycenaean period and is known from many depictions of warriors in Mycenaean art. It consisted of a felt-lined leather cap, with several rows of cut boar's tusk sewn onto it. Fifty or sixty tusks were needed to make such a helmet and it was clearly the high-status helmet of the Mycenaens. Other types in less durable materials have not
survived but are known to us from art, such as the horned helmet (worn by soldiers seen marching on the 'Warrior Vase' from Mycenae) and the zoned helmet (which appears to have been made of strips of leather sewn together). A helmet worn by warriors on one of the Pylos frescoes seems to incorporate a nose guard, a feature not otherwise seen on a Greek helmet until the metal Corinthian helmet of Classical times.

Protective body armour of a variety of kinds was also worn by Mycenaean warriors, both in battle and during the hunt. Metal body armour was found dating to as early as the sixteenth century in the shaft graves of Mycenae, but these thin sheet-gold breastplates were too fragile to have been worn in battle and must have been purely decorative, made for ceremonial occasions or perhaps specially for the funeral. That the Mycenaeans wore more substantial metal armour is made clear by the 'Dendra Panoply' — an impressive corset made from sheets of bronze, with large shoulder guards and a neck guard — found in a chamber tomb along with a boat's-tusk helmet with metal ear guards. The Dendra Panoply (dating to the late fifteenth/early fourteenth century) dramatically brings to life ideograms on the Linear B tablets: at Knossos a series of tablets recording body armour include an ideogram with a profile very like that of the Dendra Panoply; as do several from Pylos, which are linked with the word thorax, the Classical Greek term for a corset. Occasional finds of small metal scales in tombs suggest that the Mycenaeans also had suits of scale-metal armour, known from the contemporary Near East. Body armour of perishable materials was also worn: warriors fighting or riding to battle on the fresco paintings are often lightly clad, for instance in kilts and bare-chested, or in white linen tunics reaching down to mid-thigh and with short sleeves. Armour made up of several layers of linen could provide quite good protection, but would not easily survive in the archaeological record. A piece of thick material made up of many layers of linen from one of the Mycenaean shaft graves may well be a rare remnant of such armour. The Mycenaeans probably also had leather armour, which again would not have survived. Both the linen and leather armour, however, could be reinforced with metal,
and traces of such reinforcements have sometimes been identified in tombs. A Linear B tablet from Knossos refers to fine linen for a tunic and to tunic fittings of bronze, indicating a linen tunic reinforced with metal.

Mycenaean warriors and hunters on many of the frescoes wear graves protecting their lower legs, a few bronze ones have survived in tombs, but none to date have been identified on the Linear B tablets. Shields are also apparently not recorded on the tablets, unless the ideogram for them has not yet been recognized, and have not survived in tombs as they were usually made of perishable materials. They do survive in art though. Large body shields, the figure-of-eight shield and a tall rectangular one (known as the tower shield) are carried by hunters on the sixteenth-century lion hunt dagger from Mycenae, for instance. Rows of figure-of-eight shields, used as a decorative motif on frescoes, show that they were made of ox-hide. The tower shields carried by Mycenaeans on a miniature fresco from Akrotiri on Thera are clearly made of the same material. Later the Mycenaeans adopted a smaller shield, seen carried by warriors on the Warrior Vase and Warrior Stele from Mycenae and on several late Pictorial Style vases.

The Mycenaean warrior was also armed with an array of weapons. Large numbers of bronze swords were placed in warrior burials, some of them simple examples in bronze and others with embellishments such as sheet-gold hilts, marble or ivory pommels and decorated blades. Two types of long sword (rapiers) were in use from early Mycenaean times. One, Type A, probably of Minoan origin, had rounded shoulders, a short tang and a mid-rib down the length of its narrow blade. The other, Type B, which perhaps originated in the Near East, was a stronger weapon; it had a slightly shorter blade, square shoulders and a longer tang, thus attaching the blade more securely to the hilt. In the fourteenth century, Type A evolved into the cruciform sword and Type B into one with horned shoulders. The Mycenaeans would have used such rapiers for cut-and-thrust fighting. In the second half of the fourteenth century a new type of sword was introduced, probably from the Near East, with a shorter blade with no mid-rib and with a double cutting edge. This was a slashing weapon, and with its introduction must have come a new form of fighting. Warriors fighting each other with such swords are seen on frescoes, notably on the battle scene from Hall 64 at the palace of Pylos.

The ideogram for the sword on Linear B tablets is immediately recognizable, but is so schematic as to make it often difficult to distinguish types. On one tablet from Knossos (Ra 1540) a weapon with a mid-rib is shown, but may be either a sword or a dagger. The latter was also an important part of the Mycenaean warrior’s array of weaponry and could be a simple bronze one or a very ornamental example; particularly striking are those inlaid with scenes in precious metals, found in tombs of the Shaft Grave Era.

Thrusting spears are held by both hunters and warriors in fresco paintings, and spearheads are found frequently in warrior graves. A lighter spear, like a javelin, also seems to have been used for hunting, but evidence for its use in bat-
tle – so graphically described by Homer – is lacking. Early Mycenaean spearheads had a double-sOCKETed blade fixed onto a split shaft, to be succeeded by a leaf-shaped blade with a mid-rib that was fixed to a wooden shaft by a socket. Arrowheads, made initially of flint and obsidian and later also of bronze, have been found in tombs and are illustrated on Linear B tablets. We see bows and arrows used for both hunting and war, such as by the archer on the lion hunt dagger and as carried by Mycenaeans on Pictorial Style vases.

The many representations of Mycenaeans fighting show they did so on foot, but did they also fight from chariots? Chariots appear for the first time in Greece in the art of the Shaft Grave Era, carved in relief on socles placed above the tombs. Numerous Mycenaean Pictorial Style vases depict them, and terracotta models of chariot groups are often found in tombs. They were perhaps introduced to Greece from Syria/Palestine via Crete. These chariots were fast two-wheeled vehicles with a rectangular chariot box. Shortly before the fall of the palaces at the end of the thirteenth century, a new type of even lighter faster chariot was apparently developed in Greece. Mycenaean art certainly suggests that chariots were used for processions and hunting, despite the rocky landscape of Greece. Enough depictions survive to make it seem likely that the Mycenaeans also used them in battle, as did the people of the Near East and Egypt.
The warlike nature of Mycenaean society must have been a factor in their relations with other cultures. We have seen them armed and marching on a fresco from the island of Thera (from around 1540 BC) and have looked at the evidence for them taking control of Crete around 1450 BC. Other hints of rather less than friendly relations with other areas are to be found in Linear B tablets: some women listed in the palace records are qualified by the term for ‘captive’ and were presumably women captured in raids and then taken back to the palaces as slaves.

Mycenaean warriors may also have hired out their services to fight as mercenaries in the armies of foreign powers, such as Egypt. A very fragmentary battle scene, painted on papyrus and showing Egyptian foot-soldiers fighting Libyans, was excavated in 1936 at the site of Tell el-Amarna, capital of the heretic pharaoh Akhenaten (fig. 75). Amongst the two rows of running troops are warriors wearing helmets and ox-hide tunics otherwise unattested on depictions of Egyptian battles. The colour and demarcations of the helmets, the tunics of ox-hide with metal reinforcements and the skin colour and facial features of the warriors arguably identify them as Mycenaeans.6

HUNTING

Hunting was clearly seen as a suitable pursuit for the Mycenaean warrior elite: the hunting of wild and dangerous animals would have called upon similar skills and courage as engaging in battle and would have demanded similar equipment. The dangers of the sport are seen on the lion hunt dagger, where one of the hunters is depicted lying beneath the front jaws of a lion. Fresco paintings show the Mycenaeans hunting deer and wild boar, the latter important not only for its meat but for its tusks. From Tiryns comes a wonderfully lively fresco of a boar hunt, badly damaged but in fragments in a rubbish dump on the west slope of the site. Hunters in short tunics and greaves or leggings take their dogs in pursuit of wild boar. On one fragment spatted hunting dogs wearing red collars surround a boar which is being speared between the eyes by a huntsman. Accompanying the hunters are women riding in chariots, presumably spectators to the sport.

Another hunting scene, this time from Pylos, shows men hunting deer against a landscape through which flows a river: other male figures, accompanied by extraordinarily large dogs, are carrying large tripod cauldrons, presumably for cooking the meat once the deer are caught. Mycenaean Pictorial Style vases also show dogs, with one fine example depicting a man with a pair of lively dogs on leads leaping around him. Domesticated hunting dogs were thus clearly an integral part of the Mycenaean hunt and this is reflected in the Linear B texts, where the word for hunter is *kamugelai* – ‘dog-leader’.
WOMEN

Women, presumably high-born or connected to the family of a rich and powerful man, are pictured on the frescoes from the palaces as spectators of warfare and the hunt; at Tiryns they ride in chariots to watch the hunting of wild boar; and at Mycenae they anxiously survey the battle raging outside from the safety of the town. There is no mention, though, on the Linear B tablets of a queen. All of the high-ranking officials in Mycenaean society were male, as far as one can tell from the evidence of the tablets. The only women who appear to have high status in their own right are those who are probably priestesses. One woman, called Karpadh, is listed on a land-holding tablet for the district of Sphagianes (part of the Pylian kingdom) as owning two plots of land, an indication of her wealth and high status. She has the title of ‘key-bearer’ and is likely to be a priestess, though nothing else is known of her.

The role of women in a society is not only defined by profession, of course, and it is clear that the Mycenaean world is no exception to this. Women of all classes in Mycenaean Greece must have played an important part in various rituals, both religious and funerary. This is seen on a grand scale in the processional frescoes that decorated the walls of the Mycenaean palaces, where richly dressed women carrying gifts are taking part (see fig. 55). On a more personal level, women were involved with funerary rites. The rituals which took place at a Mycenaean funeral are most vividly depicted on painted larnakes (coffins) from a chamber tomb cemetery at Tanagra in Boiotia (see p.168). These show processions of women, their hands held up to their heads in a gesture of mourning. There are also depictions of the prothesis, the laying out of the corpse, and here again it is the women who are caring for the deceased. Some of the women have red drops painted on their faces, perhaps indicating drops of blood from scratching themselves in grief. All these details correspond with later Greek funerary practice.

The women painted on the walls of the palaces can clearly command the finest and most elaborate textiles and rich clothing. Figurines and seal-stones show that the basic form of Mycenaean dress is a long
60. Cypriot necklace from Enkomi, Cyprus. Its beads are in the form of the Aegidian figure-of-eight shield.

61. opposite. Gold shroud ornaments (below), a necklace made of blue glass beads which were wrapped in gold (above). Blue glass locks of hair and beads of rock crystal, amethyst, and carnelian (centre).

tunic, usually belted at the waist, sometimes covered by a knitted shawl. Frescoes depict women dressed in a variety of different outfits made from brightly coloured cloth (sometimes patterned), their gowns frequently trimmed with highly decorative embroidered brocade. Tight bodices and long flounced skirts are often accompanied by a shawl worn over the shoulders. Apparently heavy cloaks are also seen, some tied at the shoulder, with fringed edges that appear to indicate that they are of a textured fabric. These garments were made from wool and linen and perhaps also from wild silk. The women’s hair is shown plaited or twisted into a number of long tresses, with a fringe and sometimes curls at the front.

The jewellery they wore, known from frescoes and tombs, included necklaces, bracelets, armlets, ankle-rings, finger-rings, hair-rings and earrings. Semi-precious stones were used for beads (amethyst, carnelian, lapis lazuli, onyx, red jasper, sardonyx and chalcedony) and silver and gold were made into exquisite items using techniques like granulation, cloisonné, repoussé and filigree. These were elaborate pieces of jewellery created with labour-intensive techniques and precious and expensive materials and must have therefore been available to only a very few women at the top of the Mycenaean social hierarchy. In the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries, though, new techniques of jewellery-making were introduced, which made necklaces and ornaments
available to a wider spectrum of society. Beads of glass and blue paste (kyanos) were cast in steatite moulds that were carved on all sides with a variety of bead shapes. These moulds have been found at palaces like Mycenae and Knossos, and were clearly in use in the palace workshops. Their products, though – necklaces of glass beads in the shape of designs like rosettes, lilies, papyrus, palms, seashells and curls of hair – are found all over the Mycenaean world, often in fairly simple burials. Some of these glass beads were carefully wrapped in thin sheet gold to give the appearance of a gold necklace, an early form of gilding. Women were also buried with cosmetic items, such as combs, ivory boxes in the form of ducks and ivory hairpins.
CHILDREN

The children of the upper echelons of Mycenaean society do not appear in the Linear B tablets, nor do those of the ordinary people; the only children that are mentioned are slave children. Actual depictions of children are extremely rare; a notable exception, an ivory group of two women and a child from Mycenae, may represent two goddesses and a divine child. Some children were clearly highly valued, notably the two buried in one of the Mycenae shaft graves, each wrapped in a suit of thin sheet gold (fig. 87). Children's bones, being so small and
has been identified as having written the tablets concerned with wool, cloth and women workers at Knossos, probably the palace official in charge of textile production there. Scripta hands have also been recognised amongst those regulating the perfumed oil industry at Pylos, some of whom apparently had responsibility for goods in just one specific room of the palace, whilst another had written tablets found throughout different rooms as well as in the archive; perhaps he was the head of the administrative department with overall responsibility for the production of the oil. Personal touches amongst the tablets include the doodled sketches sometimes found on them and spelling mistakes and missed-out signs.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

Outside the confines of the palace and the court there were major landholders who seem to have acted as local administrators on behalf of the palace. In the case of Pylos, the territory controlled by the palace was divided into sixteen districts, each ruled by a governor, or mayor, the korete (ko-re-te), and his deputy the prokorete (pro-re-ko-re-te). The prokorete has a subsidiary title of 'key-bearer', a term which is found elsewhere in the tablets associated with a woman who has been identified as a priestess. The governor and his deputy were probably at the head of a group called the teletai (te-re-to) – high-ranking men listed in large numbers and thought to be independent landowners or yeomen living in areas controlled by the palace.

LIVES OF THE ORDINARY MEN AND WOMEN

Somewhere in-between the extremes of court official and slave there was a whole gamut of professions. Those who had land, even as sub-tenants, were probably the top level of the ordinary people of the kingdom. The term damos found in the tablets corresponds to the later Greek word demos, which means 'the people'. At Spaghianes in the Pylian kingdom, the damos holds communal land and is perhaps meant to mean the community in some way. The sub-tenants of plots of land listed at Spaghianes also include a few royal craftsmen who presumably had a higher status than most of their fellows. Also listed are people called 'servants of the deity', perhaps a reference to those concerned in some way with the official cult of the palace.

The basis of the Mycenaean kingdom was pastoral, and agricultural prosperity lay at its heart. On a basic agricultural level, the kingdom must have relied on the land it controlled for the growing of staple crops, for animal husbandry for meat, hides and wool and the growing of flax for making cloth. In the Linear B tablets we find meticulous regulation of all of these: women are listed as working flax, for instance, and men are shepherds, cowherds and goatherds.
CRAFT WORKERS

The objects found in Mycenaean palaces, settlements and tombs show clearly just how wide a range of skills were held by the craft-workers in Mycenaean society. Many different trades are also listed in the Linear B tablets, indicating a quite remarkable level of craft specialization, ranging from fundamentally important craft-workers like masons and bronzersmiths to those who provided luxuries for the palace elite, such as a ‘maker of blue glass paste’. Some may have worked independently and sold their goods to the palaces, but those working in some of the industries, notably bronze-working (which used expensive raw materials, particularly tin) and the production of high-status commodities such as textiles and perfumed oils, did so under the close control and supervision of the palace elites.

The working of bronze (copper alloyed with tin) was vital to the Mycenaeans. Although there was iron ore in Greece, the technology to work it was not yet known and so the principal metal for tools, weapons and metal vessels was bronze. The Linear B tablets from Pylos give us an insight into the way the bronze industry there was organized. It has been calculated that in the area controlled by the palace there were about 400 smiths at work. The palace acquired the necessary raw materials and allotted them to craftsmen. Interestingly, bronze itself was distributed, as opposed to the copper and tin needed to make it. This was certainly the case at Nichoria (probably to be identified as the site called ‘limi-ta-aka-e on the tablets), where we know from the archive that palace bronzersmiths were working. A bronzersmithy excavated there from the second half of the thirteenth century shows that they were reworking bronze rather than alloying copper and tin to make bronze. Some of the smiths listed in the tablets were not given any metal at all, and others were only given small quantities, indicating that there may have been a shortage of bronze in the last years of the palace.

Some tablets say what is to happen to the bronze that is being distributed - such as at Pylos, where some metal is allocated for the making of arrowheads and spearheads - but in general our picture of what the bronzersmiths made with their raw materials is determined by what has survived in tombs: weapons and armour, vessels (cups, jugs, buckets, ladles, bowls), razors, tweezers, pins, mirrors, fibulae and tools like sickles, knives, axes and chisels. Important items like the large bronze tripod cauldrons we see being carried on the Pylos hunt fresco painting (fig. 89) are listed carefully on the tablets, including the damaged ones.

The palace also provided the ingredients needed for perfuming olive oil. A series of tablets from the archive room at Pylos gives us some idea of how the perfumed oils were made and others, many of them found in the oil store behind the Pylos megaron, meticulously record the finished oils, describing them with the ideogram for oil plus an adjective. From these we know that the oils might be scented — with flowers like roses, or herbs such as sage — or dyed, for instance with henna. These perfumed oils might be given as high-value gifts or as offerings to a deity. They were also traded abroad, although this is not mentioned in the tablets; we see the tangible remains in the stibip-pars that once contained them traded around the Mediterranean.

Another crucial element in the economy of a Mycenaean kingdom was the textile industry. References to it are found on tablets from Mycenae, Thebes, Pylos and Knossos. At Pylos the industry was very centralized, with specific people located within the kingdom and at Pylos itself in control of it. The Mycenae and Thebes tablets record wool that has been collected and is to be redistributed for further work. They were found in buildings that may well have been storerooms for wool belonging to the palaces. The Linear B tablets which show the palace controlling textile production are not concerned with this domestic production or with ordinary cloth, but with the production of special kinds of textiles made from both wool and linen for the court.

89. Large hunting dogs on leads accompany men carrying cauldrons on a hunt fresco from Pylos.
and for the family of the king, and some may have been made for export. Domestic spinning and weaving of wool into cloth must have been a common activity all over the Mycenaean world, presumably carried out by women in the home for their own families.

Spinners, carders and weavers are listed and also more specific terms, which we are not able to recognize, for more specialist processes or types of material. Linen, for instance, was used for clothing and battle tunics, and could also have been used for the sails of ships. Thus the tablets reveal a complex industry for the making of fine textiles, and the finished products of this industry are seen worn by the men and women depicted in fresco paintings.

The Knossos tablets list large numbers of women working in the textile industry in several main towns within the area controlled by the palace. Some groups were making the cloth itself and others decorative attachments for it. Female workers are also recorded for the kingdom of Pylos, and rations of food are issued to them. The textile workers are listed with their children, but no husbands, and they appear to have had a very humble status. It is often difficult to establish from the tablets whether they were just low-born or in fact were slaves.

The building of the Mycenaean palaces and fortress walls would have demanded not simply stonemasons and a large work-force to move massive blocks of stone, but also many other kinds of specialized craftsmen. Highly skilled engineers, for example, would have been needed to overcome various problems presented by the construction of the fortifications, such as the building of the retaining wall to encompass Grave Circle A within the walls of Mycenae. Other major projects will have included tunnelling and construction of underground passages to secure water supplies at Mycenae, Tiryns and Athens, the building of roads and bridges linking areas of the kingdoms, the complex drainage system of Lake Kupais and the diverting of rivers at Tiryns and Pylos.

Coarse-ware pottery, such as cooking vessels, could have been made locally by relatively unskilled people, but the best products of fine-ware, both vases and figurines, would have required the skills of specialist craftsmen, reaching as they did an extremely high standard of production and artistry: they are listed along with goldsmiths, bowyers and saddlers on one Pylos tablet, while another mentions a royal potter, presumably making particularly fine items for the king. Ideograms for the various shapes of vases—some of clay, others in precious metals—are found on the tablets.

Fine wares from the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries demonstrate the standardization of shape and decoration that was to characterize the period of the Mycenaean koiné, a term which refers to a time when a very uniform culture was spread across the Mycenaean world in the palace era. Amongst the most elegant products were the kylikes, long-stemmed drinking goblets. Some plain unpainted vases, usually kylikes and bowls, have patches of black encrustation on them, indicating that they were once coated in moehn tin to form cheaper imitations of such vessels in silver.

Craft-workers specializing in the two-dimensional arts were clearly also at work in the palaces, the best of them employed in painting the walls and floors of palace buildings with brightly coloured frescoes. Less skilled painters decorated the class of vases known as 'Pictorial Style', often appearing to draw their inspiration from contemporary frescoes. These vases, painted with lively scenes, were made in the Argolid, probably principally for the overseas market, as so many of them have been found abroad, especially on the island of Cyprus. Many of these are decorated with scenes of people riding in chariots, but the artists also painted human figures, birds and animals that were familiar to them (for instance eagles, bulls and deer), and mythical beasts (such as griffins and sphinxes).

Other metals were also worked by Mycenaean craftsmen. The Mycenaeans from their earliest days showed a great fondness for gold and it continued to be their preferred precious metal in the palace era. Gold is identified on the Linear B tablets either by its ideogram or by the word kerass. Vessels and elements of very fine furniture are listed on the tablets as being made of gold and a tablet from Pylos mentions goldsmiths amongst other tradesmen. Gold items found in contemporary tombs include vessels, jewellery and plaques from ornamental boxes, which were probably made of wood. Some silver items are also found on the tablets: the wheels of what must be a particularly splendid chariot are bound with silver instead of the usual bronze. Silver is not at all common on the tablets, though, unless its ideogram has not yet been recognized. Lead, like silver, was mined at Laurion and was used for making small figurines and other small cast objects.

Skilled ivory-carvers must have been working in the palace workshops to produce the exquisitely made objects of elephant and hippopotamus ivory that have been found. Ivory inlays were used to decorate furniture and boxes and chests listed in the tablets and ivory was carved to make toilet items, such as cosmetic boxes, combs, spatulas, small spoons, hairpins and needles—items often found in high-ranking women's graves. Also some jewellery was carved from ivory: from small pendants to more splendid items like the three ivory crowns found in the ruins of the Treasury at Thebes. Stone-carvers used fine stones to make decorative relief panels for the walls of palaces and façades of tombs and also vessels, such as pyxides (boxes) of alabaster. Their most delicate art, though, was the carving of exquisitely detailed scenes on semi-precious seal-stones.

Workshops where craftsmen made such products from these precious materials have been identified at the palaces, within which we find scraps of raw materials and sometimes tablets and sealings to indi-
lyre made from a tortoise shell found in a tholos tomb at Menidhi must once have belonged to a bard, like the one who was painted on the wall of the megaron at Pylos, seated on a rock and playing his lyre. Another tomb, this time at Nauplion, contained a set of bronze surgical implements, dating to around 1450 BC. The instruments included drills, scalpels, tweezers and large forceps. Doctors and surgeons have not been identified amongst the professions listed on the tablets, but this must be the burial of one. Studies of Mycenaean skeletal remains certainly show that the Mycenaens practiced trepanation and successfully set badly broken bones – procedures requiring medical expertise.

Doctors and bards would have been few in number, of course, and at the opposite end of the scale we have the very large numbers of men who are listed simply in the Pylos tablets as the 800 who were sent to watch the coast and the 500-600 men who worked as rowers in the fleet.

SLAVES

The tablets tell us that the royal officials had large numbers of dependants and slaves, both men and women. We can see from the tablets that there was widespread slavery in Mycenaean Greece, at least in those areas controlled by the palace at Pylos, and, by inference, at other such centres. The Linear B word for slave was do-wo-ro, giving us the word *dowelos*, which in Classical Greek was *doulos*, slave. Men, women and children are listed as slaves on the tablets, though there are far fewer male than female slaves. Some of them have ethnic adjectives attached to their names, indicating their origins. They come from such areas as Asia Minor; women from Miletos, Knidos and from the island of Lemnos. Some of these foreign slaves may have been acquired on raids abroad as several of the women are said to be *ra-wi-ja-*ja, meaning captives. A number of the women slaves were employed as flax-workers, grinders of corn and bath attendants; amongst the male slaves are those listed as belonging to bronzesmiths, so they may well have been skilled. The actual status of some groups of slaves is difficult to determine: the term ‘slave of the god’, for example, may either refer to a slave belonging to the god or be an honorary title for one who serves the deity.