

BODIES IN BLOOM

The Association of Flora and Female Figures in Late Bronze Age Aegean Iconography

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“Flowers...without lips, have language”

Emily Dickenson, 1885

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INTRODUCTION

A Bronze Age “Language of (Women and) Flowers”?

For over a century, the women of Late Bronze Age Aegean art have captivated the scholarly imagination. Take one look at their elaborate costumes, bared breasts, and eye-catching physical proportions (Figure I.1), and it is not hard to see why: the female figures of the closely related artistic traditions of Crete, Mainland Greece, and the Cyclades in the Late Bronze Age (or LBA, ca. 1700-1100 BCE) are a lovely and bosomy bunch.¹

The women of LBA Aegean art, however, are remarkable not only for their beauty and their bared breasts but also because they occupy remarkably prominent positions and play seemingly unusual social roles. When men and women are depicted together, typically women rather than men occupy central positions, and they are often depicted at a larger scale.² Furthermore, sexual partnership and, to a certain degree, motherhood—typical preoccupations of female figures in contemporary Egyptian and Near Eastern art—are (with very few exceptions) unfamiliar to the women of LBA Aegean art.³ Instead, these female figures are depicted in more public roles, typically in outdoor spaces: they dance or converse in courtyards or meadows, they parade towards shrines or through palatial corridors,⁴ they participate in ritual activities either as

¹ More specifically, by the “Late Bronze Age,” or LBA, we are referring to the period beginning with the Neopalatial period on Crete (MM IIIb-LM Ib) and ending with LM IIIC and LH IIIC on Crete and the Mainland, respectively (Sheldermine 2000: 3-7). For readers seeking a general introduction to the Aegean Late Bronze Age, the collected essays in Sheldermine 2008 offer a good starting point.

² Rehak 1999: 197.

³ Morris 2009: 246. In three-dimensional Mycenaean art, *kourotrophoi* figurines are not uncommon. In two-dimensional media like glyptic art, frescoes, and vase paintings, however, scenes of women nurturing children are unknown on both Crete and the Mainland (Olsen 1998: 384).

⁴ The locus and target of processions of female figures are not always indicated, as on the gold signet ring CMS VS3.243, on which female figures are simply shown walking with flowers in hand and no additional contextualizing

worshippers or as religious officials, and sometimes they even appear to impersonate female deities.⁵

The prominence and the unusual roles of women within the iconography of the LBA Aegean world have generated a lot of interest, speculation, and controversy among scholars as to what these images might mean and what they can tell us about the societies that produced them. Arthur Evans saw in the prominent, bare-breasted women an archetypal “Mother Goddess,” despite the absence of obvious maternal imagery within the iconography.⁶ Others have argued that, in light of the apparent absence of an obvious iconography of male rulership in LBA Aegean art, the leading ladies in Aegean iconography might also have been leading ladies in Aegean—specifically Minoan—society. Helen Waterhouse, for example, argued in 1974 that the female figures of Minoan art were rulers in a gynaeocratic society in which female priestesses exerted both religious and civil authority.⁷ In recent decades, scholars such as Paul Rehak, Senta German, and Alexandra Alexandri have worked to apply contemporary gender theory to the iconography of Aegean art and have developed a veritable subfield of Late Bronze Age Aegean gender studies. Their scholarship has helped to illuminate (among other topics) how gender and other social identities were not merely reflected in but also actively performed and constructed by LBA Aegean iconography and how these gendered images and performances may have functioned in the construction of social hierarchies in the LBA Aegean world.⁸

information is provided. Although the point is a relatively minor one, we must also acknowledge the fact that although procession frescoes decorate “palatial” walls, at Knossos, Pylos and Thebes, for example, the palace need not necessarily be understood as the site of the procession.

⁵ Olsen 1998: 390.

⁶ Morris 2009: 245; Cadogan 2009: 226, citing Evans, *The Palace of Minos at Knossos II*: 778-9.

⁷ See Waterhouse 1974 for a summary of the paper presented at the Mycenaean Seminar of the Institute of Classical Studies during the 1973-1974 session. See also a discussion by Cadogan 2009: 226-7.

⁸ See especially Alexandri 1994, German 2005. For an extensive bibliography on LBA Aegean gender studies, see Kopaka 2009.

Despite all the scholarly ink that has been spilled on the topics of female figures in LBA Aegean iconography and constructions of womanhood and social identity in Neopalatial and later Minoan, Late Cycladic, and Mycenaean societies, scholars have never devoted concentrated attention to a small but potentially significant and illuminating fact concerning the depiction of women: across multiple different artistic media, women and girls are frequently shown in close association with plants and especially flowers. Female figures pick flowers in fields, they walk in processions carrying flowers in hand, they present flowers to goddess-like figures, they wear flowers on their bodies, and—as we will argue in Chapter 3—their bodies are sometimes manipulated to resemble flowers and other, non-flowering plants. In many scenes, the engagement between female figures and flora is the central focus, and plants are often exaggerated in size or strategically placed, as if to invite a comparison between the plant and the female figure (see Chapter 3).

The fact that no one has carefully considered this recurring association of female figures and flora before now is even more surprising in light of the attention that scholars have devoted to the ways in which Aegean artists have selectively represented and distorted elements of the natural world to convey meaning,⁹ and, furthermore, because several scholars of LBA Aegean iconography have demonstrated particular interest in symbolic comparisons between men and animals.¹⁰ Some scholars *have* considered isolated scenes in which women engage with flowers and have speculated on the medicinal and economic uses of particular plants and flowers,¹¹ and

⁹ See especially the papers presented as part of Session 4 “Environmental Dimensions” in Sherratt 2000. See also Chapin 2004 on idealized landscapes.

¹⁰ Specifically, previous scholarship has examined the symbolic identification of men with lions (N. Marinatos 1990; Morgan 1995) and to a lesser extent, boars (Morris 1990, Morgan 1995). Lyvia Morgan has also explored the visual metaphor drawn between the “Boxing Boys” and antelope in Room B1 at Akrotiri. See Chapter 3 (p. 135) for a more thorough discussion of this previous scholarship.

¹¹ On the medicinal uses of flowers, see Ferrence and Bendersky 2004 (discussing the medicinal use of saffron as it relates to the Thera paintings) and Younger 2009: 208 n.12 (discussing the emmenagogic, or menstruation-

some have even acknowledged the possibility that particular flowers may carry symbolic meaning in LBA Aegean art.¹² No one, however, has undertaken any manner of rigorous or systematic study of the association of women with plants and flowers, examined how the female figure is repeatedly likened to plants and flowers, or considered what these phenomena might mean.¹³ The purpose of this project is to do precisely those things. By systematically examining the flora and female figures that occur in association with one another, and by exploring the way the artists formally likened the female body to plants and flowers, this project aims to shed light on what the recurring association of flora and female figures may say about conceptions and constructions of womanhood in the LBA Aegean world. Before we can do this, however, some introductory words and warnings are in order.

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We might begin by noting that the study of the association of women and flowers in LBA Aegean iconography becomes all the more interesting—and, indeed, all the more potentially challenging (see below)—in light of the fact that this association is not unique to the LBA Aegean world. In numerous cultures around the globe and throughout history, flowers have been associated with women both literally and metaphorically. On the literal level of association, flowers are often thought to belong to the sphere of women, either as the objects of women’s feminine delight or as the objects of their responsibility and livelihood. Though numerous examples exist to illustrate this point, we need look no further than the modern cut flower industry. Even in our own non-traditional, twenty-first-century American culture, cut flowers are

inducing, properties of lilies with respect to the “Acropolis Ring” from Mycenae, CMS 1.017) On economic uses of saffron in relation to the Xeste 3 Frescoes, see Sarpaki 2000.

¹² Marinatos 1984: 89-96; Angelopoulou 2000; Sarpaki 2000; Rehak 2004: 89.

¹³ To be fair, at the conclusion of his study on girls as acolytes in LBA Aegean art Rehak does note the fact that girls often appear in association with plants. His assessment is far from systematic or comprehensive, however, and does not take into consideration the fact that this association is not limited to girls but applies to more mature women as well (Rehak 2000).

conventionally thought of as appropriate gifts for women, rather than men.¹⁴ Similarly, in the developing world, the floriculture industry supplying these flowers to American women runs primarily on the labor of women, rather than men.¹⁵

On a metaphorical level, flowers (as reproductive, sexual organs) have been and continue to be associated with women in relation to virginity, sexual maturity, and female sexuality. Perhaps one of the most obvious and well-known examples of this is the association of the white lily—the so-called “Madonna lily”—with the Virgin Mary in the Christian tradition, as a symbol of the virgin’s sexual purity. In most cases, however, the flower is associated with virginity as it precedes and leads to a woman’s sexual activity: in Greek poetry, *nubile parthenoi*—brides- and sexual-partners-to-be—are discussed with floral and vegetal language (a topic we will discuss further as it relates to our Bronze Age data in Chapter 3 of this study). Similarly, since the fourteenth century, the verb “deflower,” coming from the Old French *desflorer* or *desflowerer*, has been used to refer to the “taking” of a woman’s virginity.¹⁶ Metaphorical floral language has also been applied to a woman’s menses—the physiological indicator of her sexual maturity and fertility—which were most commonly referred to as a woman’s “flowers” in Elizabethan

¹⁴ The abundance of internet articles on floral-vending websites like www.proflowers.com that argue that it is now acceptable for women to send flowers to men because “Times have changed...for the better!” and that offer potential female clients tips on how they might present flowers to men without the male recipient feeling awkward only makes the deeply entrenched cultural notions about flowers being appropriate for women rather than men all the more obvious (<<http://www.proflowers.com/flowerguide/flowersformen/>>).

¹⁵ For example, in Colombia, the world’s second largest producer of exported flowers and the source of half of the flowers sold in the United States, the floriculture industry employs some 80,000 women, who make up two-thirds of the floriculture labor force. Unlike male floriculture workers in Colombia, who are more likely to fill supervisory roles, these women engage most directly with the flowers (and thus also with the harmful pesticides used in their growth) (Watkins 2001). For ethnographic evidence for the relegation of flowers to the domain of women, see Jack Goody’s reference to John Middleton’s observations of flower use among the Swahili of Lamu in coastal east Africa (Goody 1993:11) and Goody’s own observations on the role of women in preparing floral offerings for religious ceremonies in Bali (Goody 1993: 8-9).

¹⁶ *OED* 1989, s.v. “deflower.”

England.¹⁷ In our own culture, the vulva is conceptually and iconically associated with flowers, as is classically exemplified by the popular (mis)interpretation of Georgia O’Keeffe’s large-scale paintings of flowers, which scholars and the public alike have viewed as statements on female sexuality and thinly veiled depictions of the vulva (a topic we will return to below).¹⁸ As a final example, a recent artistic project entitled “Women are Flowers” (Figure I.2) illustrates that sexualized women might be iconically likened to flowers in modern Western culture as well.

The symbolism and communicative powers that cultures throughout history have attached to flowers and plants, however, are not limited to those explicitly associated with gender and sexuality. Flowers and plants are also used as metaphors for youth, growth, success, beauty, and ephemerality, as well as for the time of the year or the locations in which they grow, bloom, or are harvested. Additionally, plants and flowers may also carry a wide range of more arbitrarily determined and culturally specific symbolic meanings established by convention on the basis of their species, color, or form (consider, for instance, the red rose as a symbol of romantic love and the yellow rose as a sign of friendship in modern American culture).¹⁹ Studies of systems of floral meaning in cultures throughout history have filled entire volumes,²⁰ and even a cursory overview of the range of such symbolism is beyond the scope of this introduction. A brief consideration of one such system of floral meaning, the nineteenth-century “Language of Flowers,” however, might offer an illustrative (if extreme) example of the many ways in which flowers can communicate meaning within a culturally specific symbolic system.

¹⁷ Montrose 2004: 509 n. 44.

¹⁸ Lynes 2007: 143.

¹⁹ Goody 1993: 232.

²⁰ See for instance, Kandeler 2009, a study of plant and color symbolism restricted to European and circum-Mediterranean cultures, and Goody 1993. Goody’s focus is wider, both in terms of the range of geographic areas/cultures and the range of cultural aspects of flowers considered.

The aptly named “Language of Flowers” was an elaborate system of communication through flowers and floral bouquets which developed in nineteenth-century bourgeois French society and spread throughout much of Western Europe and the United States.²¹ This “language” was codified in written texts which laid out a floral vocabulary and grammar. Flower species were assigned semantic values, which could be augmented when flowers of multiple different species were combined, or altered through the manipulation of the flower (e.g., the removal of its leaves or thorns) and the manner of its presentation. Where the flower was positioned in relation to the body of the presenter (“„A marigold on the head means trouble on the mind, on the heart the pain of love, on the breast ennui.”²²) and how it was oriented in space (“a rosebud [presented upright] with its thorns and leaves means „I fear, but I am in hope;“ if one turns the bud upside down, that means: „One mustn’t fear or hope.”²³) all contributed to the overall message it conveyed. Within this system, bouquets functioned as elaborate, coded messages by which a young woman’s suitors might declare their feelings and intentions without saying a word.

The nineteenth-century language of flowers presents an extreme case of the symbolic use of flowers, and it is a symbolic system that—with its sheer number of floral symbols, its arbitrarily established meanings, and its particularly complicated grammar—could only be possible (in its full form) within a literate and, indeed, text-saturated society. It illustrates, however, the vast range of variables on and about flowers that may be manipulated to convey an equally vast range of meaning. And while symbolic flowers may be used to communicate meaning *to* women, as was the case with the nineteenth-century language of flowers, these flowers—when depicted together *with* women—may potentially also communicate meaning *about* women.

²¹ Goody 1993: 232-253.

²² Goody 1993: 238-9, citing Latour 1819: 6.

²³ Goody 1993: 238, citing Latour 1819: 5.

Yet, to paraphrase Freud, sometimes a flower (or an iconic representation thereof) is just a flower—not a symbolic stand-in for a sexual organ or the sexual being to which that organ belongs, not laden with potent symbolism of any sort—just a decorative ornament, and nothing more. This fact was made apparent to me while I conducted research for this project at Mycenae. Emerging from the on-site archaeological museum, where I had spent hours searching for connections between women and flowers in the Mycenaean artifacts on display, I encountered two modern, flower-clad female tourists, one in a floral-print sunhat, the other in a floral-print dress, standing amid the LBA palatial ruins (Figure I.3). Confronting these flower-wearing women, I realized that although I had approached the artifacts in the museum assuming that the associations I was searching for might allow me to get at some deeper, symbolic meaning, the iconic flowers on the clothing of these two modern women carried no obvious symbolic significance to the modern mind (or to my modern mind, at least). They were just pretty patterns, ornamental, decorative, and, indeed, “feminine,” but they did not obviously signify anything deeper to the modern viewer concerning women generally or the specific women who wore them.

This encounter raises a crucial question which must be addressed at the onset of our study: how can we be sure that we are not looking for symbolic or metaphorical meaning where no such meaning was intended? In other words, how can we know that the association between women and flowers is an intentional and significant one and that iconic flowers are not used merely for decorative purposes?

We can proceed on this assumption firstly because of the fact that associations between women and flowers are particularly common in media that were designed to be looked at closely and that served functional and communicative purposes. Glyptic objects, in the form of hard and

soft stone seals and metal signet rings, account for approximately 64% of our scenes, and the primary purpose of such seals and signet rings was communication. Senta German has contextualized this concept quite aptly: “In an age before the invention of locks, seals or engraved gems offered a way of identifying property and [controlling] access to it. A lump of clay over the lid of a jar or covering the string which secured a box or a door could not be removed or replaced without detection if it was stamped with a seal.”²⁴ The imagery on the clay sealings formed by seals or signet rings was central to the operation of this system, and might— together with the manner in which the sealing was made—have been used to identify the status or occupation of the owner within the administrative system, connecting palatial elites to those in peripheral areas and even abroad.²⁵ Sealings and their small-scale imagery (Figure I.4) were thus designed to be looked at carefully and to communicate meaning—even ideologies of power.²⁶ Aegean wall paintings, which account for the second largest portion of our dataset (approximately 15% of scenes/objects), are also recognized as being primarily functional and communicative rather than decorative.²⁷ In some instances, as in the case of processional frescoes along processional corridors, wall paintings would have replicated or performed the ritual action that occurred in a given space and thus would have directed their viewers on how to behave within that space.²⁸ In other cases, as demonstrated by the well-preserved frescoes from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri, wall paintings might have played a key role in rites of passage and in

²⁴ German 2005: 9.

²⁵ German 2005: 9. On the possible relationship between iconography and the status of the owner, see Laffineur 1990. Alexandri 1992 and German 2005 both expand on this notion considering how gendered imagery may have been used as indications of palatial authority. Younger 1992 explores a number of non-sphragistic uses of seals, such as the wearing of seals as jewelry in a fashion that presumably communicated personal status.

²⁶ On ideologies of power conveyed by glyptic iconography see Alexandri 1992 and German 2005. For a general overview of sealing systems, see Krzyszkowska 2005: 155-163 and 279-285.

²⁷ Marinatos 1984: 31-33. Some of the later Mycenaean frescoes do take on a more decorative, wall-paper quality with repeating designs (Lang 1969); however, none of these particular frescoes fall within our dataset.

²⁸ Marinatos 1984: 31-33

socializing young members of society.²⁹ Even wall paintings depicting scenes of nature, which may at first appear to be more purely decorative, seem to have displayed religious or symbolic imagery to those who entered the rooms in which they were painted.³⁰ This is not to say that all aspect of LBA Aegean art were communicative and functional rather than decorative—the filling ornaments in Late Mycenaean pottery or the “wall paper” patterns in later Mycenaean frescoes present good candidates for images that seemed to have been used in a more purely decorative way—but it is to say that some of the most significant media in Aegean art served primarily functional, communicative purposes and that much of the imagery associating women and flowers occurs on objects produced in these media.³¹

Matters of medium and function aside, the treatment of flora and female figures within many scenes also gives reason to dismiss the possibility that the inclusion of flowers in scenes of women may be purely for decorative purposes or entirely coincidental. As we will demonstrate in this project, in selectively translating the natural world into iconography, the artists sometimes choose to exaggerate the size of plants and flowers, to add units to the plants and flowers that do not occur in the natural world but that make the plant or flower look more like the female figure, to combine flowers of different blooming seasons in the same scene with different female figures, and even to make the interaction between female figures and flora the central focus of some compositions. In such scenes, the artist seems to invite the viewer to compare the female figure with the flower or at least consider this particular association. For this reason, and,

²⁹ Marinatos 1984a: 73-84.

³⁰ Angelopoulou 2000; Chapin 2004.

³¹ We have not included in our dataset vegetal elements that simply form a border around a scene including female figures, in order to avoid including elements that may indeed be of a more decorative nature. One exception to this statement is the Tanagra larnax from Tomb 6 (Cat. No. 101) on which two vertical rows of stacked ivy leaves flank the scene of female figures. The figures seem to be formally likened to the ivy leaves while the two other larnakes from Tanagra included within our dataset include ivy leaves amid the female figures; because of this last association, we have thought it best to include the scene on the larnax from Tomb 6 as well.

furthermore, because of LBA Aegean artists' penchant for drawing visual metaphors (see Chapter 3), it is impossible to write off these scenes as purely decorative or the associations as insignificant or unintentional. We will proceed, then, with the working assumption that there is—at least in some cases—some meaning as well as genuine artistic intent behind the association of women with plants and flowers.

With this assumption made explicit, we face a second crucial question: with all our “baggage” concerning the association of flowers with women and the symbolism of flowers, how can we be sure that we are not imposing our own associations and meanings onto the flowers and the women of Minoan, Cycladic, and Mycenaean art? How can we hope to set aside our own expectations and associations and get at the meaning that the Aegean artist intended the flowers and the women to carry or that the ancient Aegean viewers of the artifacts understood in them? Georgia O'Keeffe's response to the critics who mistakenly read into her first large-scale paintings of flowers ideas of feminine sexuality offers us fitting, cautionary words: “Well—I made you take time to look at what I saw and when you took the time to really notice my flowers you hung all your own associations with flowers on my flower and you write about my flower as if I think and see of the flower what you think and see of the flower—and I don't.”³² As we take the time and really notice the flowers of LBA Aegean artists in the course of this study, how are we to avoid making this mistake?

The solution lies in approaching the dataset with a particular methodological rigor so that we may allow the iconography to speak for itself. Central to this process is recognition of the fact that iconography functions as a sort of non-verbal, visual language, a system of “picture writing,” as the linguistic origins of the term suggests. No scholar of Bronze Age Aegean art has shown a greater awareness of the linguistic nature of iconography than Lyvia Morgan, who

³² Lynes 2007: 143, citing Watson 1943: 10.

argues that iconography should be thought of not merely as a pictorial language, but as an “idiom”—a *culturally specific* pictorial language, governed by artistic conventions that are particular to a given culture or artistic tradition.³³ Employing this “idiom,” artists translate their experiences of the real world into iconic and symbolic elements constituting a pictorial vocabulary and join different elements together in associations according to rules or conventions of pictorial syntax. As in a verbal language, meaning is conveyed through the choice of specific elements, the combinations of multiple elements, and the syntactical relationships between these elements.

Because iconography functions linguistically, Morgan argues that we can and should approach and analyze it linguistically, “first breaking down the structure of images to their smallest definable units and then rebuilding the structure by observing the ways in which these units relate to one another.”³⁴ According to Morgan, there exists a hierarchy of structural components and relationships within a pictorial language as in a verbal language. We have already mentioned these terms in passing or hinted at the ideas they represent, but because the terms Morgan uses to discuss the components and how they relate to one another will play a central role in the organization of the ensuing analysis, it is necessary to clearly define their meaning here before we proceed:

- “Unit” The smallest comprehensible component of pictorial iconography, an iconographic form from which nothing can be removed without the object becoming unrecognizable. Units might be thought of as the “morphemes” of pictorial language. They may stand alone or be used in combination to form elements.³⁵

³³ Morgan 1985: 9.

³⁴ Morgan 1985: 10.

³⁵ Morgan 1985: 10, 14.

- “Element” An independent pictorial entity comprised of one or more units. The nature and relationship of units that compose an element help to establish the identity of that element, and certain units are “diagnostic” of a particular element type. For example, female figures can be identified by one or more diagnostic units: breasts or flounced skirts (see discussion below).
- “Association” A group of two or more elements occurring together in the same scene or pictorial field. For the purpose of this study, we are interested in associations including female figures and vegetal elements, and as relevant, we will consider what other objects occur in association with these female figures and vegetal elements and under what conditions such associations occur.
- “Syntax” The organization of and the relationship among the elements in an association. The relative location of elements within a pictorial field and the overall structure of a scene, for example, are significant syntactical considerations.

Morgan argues that when we examine how units relate to one another in forming elements, how elements relate to one another syntactically in forming associations, and how certain associations and syntactical arrangements recur, we can ensure that our interpretations are firmly rooted in what is explicitly communicated in the iconography, and our inferences regarding implicit meaning will become more reliable.³⁶

Following Morgan’s linguistic approach, this thesis will examine the iconography of scenes containing both flowers or plants (hereafter collectively referred to as “vegetal elements”) and female figures as a sort of Bronze Age “language of (women and) flowers” (or “flora” more generally). We will begin by analyzing morphologically the most important elements of the

³⁶ Morgan 1985: 14-19.

pictorial vocabulary—vegetal elements and female figures—in Chapters 1 and 2, respectively. By breaking these elements down into their constituent units, exploring the variability in form that is possible for each unit, and examining how these units come together to form elements, we will attempt to identify and classify the elements according to their similarities; we will also make note of particularly remarkable or unusual units and consider what these might suggest about the iconographic intention behind the depiction of the element. In Chapter 3, we will move from the level of individual elements and their units to the levels of associations and syntax. We will propose a methodology by which future studies could build upon the analysis of Chapters 1 and 2 to identify potentially meaningful patterns at work in this “language of women and flora” through a systematic examination of the associations and syntactical structures at work in all scenes within the dataset. We will then spend most of the chapter focusing on a select and rather special group of scenes and objects from our dataset and will examine how, through particular associations and syntactical arrangements, artists seem to compare female figures to flora through visual similes and metaphors. We will also explore the potential literary legacies of these LBA visual similes and metaphors in the association of maidens with plants and flowers in the Early Iron Age poetic tradition. In final section of this thesis, we will identify and briefly discuss potentially fruitful directions for further examination of the association of female figures and flora.

By examining the iconography linguistically at the level of its units, elements, associations, and syntax; and by examining how visual similes and metaphors are formed through the manipulation of units and syntax, we may ultimately allow some meaning to emerge from the iconography itself. Because we are working with an incomplete material record and because we lack an LBA literary record against which to verify our claims, our conclusions will

necessarily be modest in their scope and open to reexamination as additional relevant artifacts are unearthed (as one remarkable, relevant artifact—an ivory pyxis from Mochlos [Cat No. 89]— was even during the course of my research). The goal of this project is to bring to the attention of the scholarly community an intriguing and thus far unduly neglected aspect of the depiction of women in LBA Aegean iconography, to explore one methodological approach by which we may begin to interpret its significance(s), and to lay essential groundwork for future scholarship on this topic.

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Before we can proceed to interpret the iconographic data within our dataset, however, we must say a few words about how that dataset is defined and how it was compiled. We have established that the scenes and objects of interest to us are those that contain elements of two types—“female figures” and “vegetal elements”—occurring together in association with one another. While these terms may seem straightforward enough, it is necessary to be explicit about exactly how we have defined them.

First, “female figures”: As Alexandra Alexandri has noted, “gender differentiation is constructed...along a variety of axes which build upon themselves: [anatomy of] the body itself, attire, colour, pose, gesture, movement or stasis, activities and themes.”³⁷ Elsewhere, Alexandri has argued that these variables can be ordered hierarchically according to their strength: “variables of primary importance are those which unequivocally place a figure in one gender category and usually consist of a person’s visible sexual characteristics.”³⁸ In Aegean art, where the vulva is almost never depicted, these visible female sexual characteristics are the breasts,

³⁷ Alexandri 2009: 21.

³⁸ Alexandri 1992: 27.

most significantly, and also wide, full hips.³⁹ These units thus serve as what Lyvia Morgan terms “diagnostic” units for femaleness with respect to the human figure. When neither of these units is included in the depiction, this absence is not necessarily an indicator of non-female status, but we then must rely on some other unit or units to “diagnose” the figure as female. In such instances we can look to what Alexandri identifies as variables of “secondary importance”—units that are exclusively (or all but exclusively) associated with the primary variables of one gender group.⁴⁰ Particular articles of clothing—namely, skirts falling down to or below the knee, flounced “female kilts” (what others have termed “pantaloons”), and tight-fitting, open-fronted bodices—are variables of strong secondary importance and thus may serve as additional “diagnostic” units.⁴¹ Finally, in polychromatic media like wall paintings, skin color also functions as a “variable of secondary importance,” with white skin typically occurring together with the other “diagnostic units” indicating a female figure.⁴² Figures are thus identifiable as female by the presence of breasts or wide, full hips; skirts hitting somewhere on the lower leg, “female kilts,” or open-fronted bodices; and (outside of Knossos) by white skin, when skin is depicted in color. Because of the strong association of breasts and skirts or “female kilts” with female human figures, composite creatures including these units have also been included in the dataset when they appear together with vegetal elements.

³⁹ German 2000: 98. In medical or biological terms, the breasts and full, wide hips of human females would be considered “secondary sexual characteristics,” i.e., characteristics that distinguish the two sexes of a given species and that appear at puberty but that are not directly related to the reproductive organs. While this is a significant point to make with reference to how these characteristics “unequivocally place a figure in one gender category” (Alexandri 1992: 26), we have reserved this point for a footnote to reduce confusion over the fact that these “secondary sexual characteristics” are “variables of primary importance” within Alexandri’s system of assigning gender, which we have employed here.

⁴⁰ Alexandri 1992: 27-28.

⁴¹ Alexandri 1992: 27-28.

⁴² This is not necessarily the case at Knossos, however, where, as Benjamin Alberti has argued, the red skin/white skin binary does not map neatly onto a male/female binary, and where it thus it serves as a relatively weak indicator of gender (Alberti 2002).

It is rather more challenging to succinctly define “vegetal elements” and their “diagnostic units,” for in this case we are dealing not with a single sex of a single species, as with female human figures, but with an entire biological kingdom of organisms.⁴³ While Aegean artists drew selectively from the natural world,⁴⁴ the range of vegetal elements appearing within the iconography is substantial nevertheless, and an assessment of the full range of flora represented must necessarily be “rooted in” a thorough examination of the iconography. As a sort of working definition for purposes of collecting potentially relevant artifacts, I initially indentified all elements composed of units iconically resembling roots, bulbs, stems, trunks, branches, leaves, flowers and their component parts (petals, pistils, and stamens), or fruit as “potentially vegetal elements” and tentatively included scenes or objects containing these elements within the dataset. In subsequent stages of the analysis, explained in greater detail and carried out in Chapter 1, I reexamined elements identified as being “potentially vegetal” to classify each element based on the form of its units and their relationship to one another. In some cases, this process allowed for the identification of particular plant species or iconographic types based on the presence of “diagnostic units” established by existing plant typologies for LBA Aegean ceramics and previous studies of the iconographic conventions for rendering particular species within the iconography. In other instances, the examination resulted in the formation of new typological plant categories on the basis of common (or sometimes unique) units and form. In other cases still, this process allowed for the elimination from the dataset of more ambiguous elements that were originally included, but that could not easily be determined to be vegetal

⁴³ Taxonomic categories such as “kingdom” and “species” (as well as “phylum,” “class,” “order,” “family,” and “genus,” which fall between these two extremes in the Linnaean taxonomic system) are modern constructs and certainly do not map directly on to Minoan conceptual or classificatory systems (Morgan 1985: 6-7). The point here is simply that “vegetal elements,” as we have conceived of them for the purposes of this study, constitute a much larger and more varied category which is more difficult to define succinctly.

⁴⁴ Morgan 1985: 14.

elements rather than elements of some other sort when I reexamined them with a greater familiarity with the “idiomatic” conventions of LBA Aegean plant depiction.⁴⁵

With these working definitions established, I conducted personal autopsy of artifacts on display in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, and the archaeological museums at Mycenae, Nafplion, and Nemea during June and July of 2010,⁴⁶ and, over the course of roughly nine months, I conducted a thorough search through the published literature to identify relevant artifacts. Comprehensive catalogues and databases such as the *Corpus der Minoischen und Mykenischen Siegel* (CMS) and Sara Immerwahr’s *Aegean Painting in the Bronze Age*⁴⁷ served as major resources, but numerous more narrowly focused studies were also consulted. These examinations revealed approximately 118 objects or scenes each containing at least one female figure together with at least one vegetal element.⁴⁸

Admittedly, this dataset does not constitute an *exhaustively* researched and thus “complete” corpus of all published artifacts meeting the established criteria. For example, I am aware of at least one published LBA scene associating female figures and vegetal elements that I elected not to include in this dataset: a painted fresco from the entrance to a chamber tomb at Thebes depicting female figures and papyrus plants. Because only a cursory description is published and no image is provided,⁵⁰ I could not make any significant use of this scene for the purposes of this study and have, therefore, omitted it. Beyond this, it is not only possible but

⁴⁵ I am particularly indebted to my advisor, Professor Jeremy Rutter, for the assistance he provided me in this process.

⁴⁶ Regrettably, because of the renovation of the Heraklion Museum in 2010, I was unable to visit this museum and examine its collection in person.

⁴⁷ Immerwahr 1990.

⁴⁸ As we have already noted, the majority of the dataset is comprised of glyptic objects (metal signet rings, hard stone seals, and soft stone seals) as well as frescoes. Female figures also occur together with vegetal elements on carved ivory objects, faience and glass plaques, terracotta larnakes and the unusual stone Ayia Triada Sarcophagus, terracotta figures and figurines, terracotta painted vessels, a gold pin ornament and a single stone bead. Apparently female figures are not associated with flowers on bronze figures or on stone vases.

⁵⁰ Spyropoulos 1971: 164.

even probable that some relevant published objects have escaped my notice in the search process. That said, thanks to the comparatively thorough nature of my search for relevant objects, we can proceed with the assumption that our dataset provides a *fairly comprehensive* picture of the associations between female figures and vegetal elements as these are represented by the presently known and published archaeological record.⁵¹

Before we proceed, however, one logistical note is in order: for scenes containing more than one female figure, the figures have been assigned numbers from left to right across the scene for ease of reference. Numbers for glyptic objects were assigned based on the impressions. In the case of the three metal signet rings from the Heraklion Museum for which no images of the impressions were available (HM 989, 1629, 1700; Cat. No. 1-3), female figures have been labeled from *right to left* across the surface of the *ring*. The abbreviation “FF” will be used for “female figure” in the graphics and tables in the appendix.

With our problem, our methodology, our dataset, and our abbreviations all established, let us turn now to the iconography and its “language of (women and) flowers.”

⁵¹ During my visit to the CMS archives in December 2010, Ingo Pini graciously permitted me to view impressions from the as yet unpublished seals that will at some future date be published as CMS II Supplement 1..Having examined the imagery on those seals (albeit with some haste), I can also say with confidence that my assessment of the association of female figures and vegetal elements in glyptic media is unlikely to be undermined by the future publication of that volume. Of that group of seals, nine at most contained what we might call “potentially vegetal elements,” and only in one of these did the element appear unambiguously vegetal. The imagery does not differ radically from that on the hard and soft stone seals contained within this dataset. I was also allowed to view impressions from the unpublished seals in the private collection of Jonathan Rosen. The Rosen Collection contained two obviously relevant seals, but ones which do not differ significantly from some published seals already included within the dataset. One of the two, in fact, seems almost identical to the published soft stone seal CMS XI.347 included in our dataset.

CHAPTER 1

Vegetal Vocabulary: The Vegetal Elements and Their Units

We begin our study of the pictorial language of female figures and vegetal elements at the most basic level: that of the units or “morphemes” of the pictorial language, and the elements or “pictorial vocabulary” that these units come together to form. As Lyvia Morgan has explained, “each plant or animal...is defined by a relationship between certain units,” and “the process of breaking down the units will facilitate the identification of the image... (and) may also throw light on the iconographic intention of that image.”¹ In the next two chapters, our goal is to accomplish precisely those things: we will examine the constituent units of vegetal elements in this chapter and those of female figures in the next chapter in an attempt to group plants and female figures according to the form of their units, and—where possible—to shed light on their identity. In the process of examining these units, we will also attempt to determine where the units are portrayed in unusual or remarkable ways, perhaps revealing iconographic or artistic intentions behind the image.

This chapter and the accompanying images lay out a formal typology of the vegetal elements that appear together with female figures within the dataset, setting forth a sort of “lexicon” of the vegetal vocabulary. The goals in establishing this typology were twofold: first to identify types of vegetal element within the dataset based on similarities in the presence and general form of different plant units, and second to identify how for elements of the same type artists could and did manipulate or add minor details or less common units. The overriding goal was to gain a familiarity with the ways that the vegetal elements are constructed and to establish

¹ Morgan 1985: 10.

which aspects of the depiction seem to be recurring or conventional and which suggest artistic license or other factors at work.

1.1 The Classification Process

In examining the morphology of the vegetal elements within the dataset I conducted three stages of classificatory analysis.

In the first stage of classification, I divided the elements into three general categories: trees or “arboreal elements,” “flowering elements,” and “other vegetal elements” that are neither arboreal nor flowering. I first examined the elements to identify units resembling trunks (defined for our purposes as long, sometimes thick, central units, off of which spread branches or foliage)—units that are unique to trees, and thus diagnostic. Any element determined to include a trunk was placed into the category of “arboreal elements.” I then examined the remaining non-arboreal elements, looking for any element containing units resembling flowers or the constituent units of flowers—petals, pistils (with stigmas, styles or ovaries), stamens (with anthers or filaments), or buds (Figure 1.1)—and placed these elements into the category of “flowering elements.” The remaining elements, comprising neither trunks nor floral units, were grouped into a third category of “other vegetal elements.”

In the second stage of classification, I reexamined the elements belonging to each of these three categories in order to classify these elements into more specific types according to similarities in the form of their units and the relationship of their units to one another or, as relevant, to identify individual elements as unique within the dataset. The arboreal elements were grouped according to the form and the placement of their foliage and/or their branches in relation to the trunk. The flowering elements were classified on the basis of the form of their flowers, and

the “other vegetal elements” were classified according to the types and forms of other units they comprise: roots, bulbs, stems, leaves, branches. In this stage of the analysis I consulted existing plant typologies devised to describe LBA ceramic motifs—specifically, Arne Furumark’s typology of the motifs appearing on Mycenaean pattern-decorated pottery and Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier’s typology of the motifs of Knossian Palace Style pottery²—as well as the extensive corpus of scholarship on plant motifs in Aegean wall paintings³ to establish when units, such as flowers, or entire elements could be determined according to conventional or “idiomatic” manners of depiction common within LBA iconography (e.g., the use of two antithetic, inverted J-shapes to represent lilies, below p. 31).⁴ For some types of elements, the units are rendered in such a way as to suggest real-world referents that have been identified by previous scholarship, and names (e.g., palm trees, lilies, squills, etc.) could be applied to the types at this stage in the analysis. In other cases, when the form does not obviously suggest a specific real-world referent, the elements have been described simply according to the common form of their units (e.g., “Arboreal Element Type 1: Trunks with clumps of foliage on top”).

In the final stage of the analysis, I reexamined the units of each element type identified in the previous stage to establish the range of possible variation in the units that make up elements of a given type. For example, I compared the elements identified as lilies (Flowering Element Type 1) based on their antithetic, inverted J-shape petals to establish what additional units are added to this diagnostic petal unit, e.g., stamens, stems, leafs, pronounced calyx tubes, etc. This

² Furumark 1971; Niemeier 1985.

³ See, for instance, Morgan 1988: Ch. 1 and the numerous relevant articles in Sherratt 2000.

⁴ In a few instances, Furumark’s or Niemeier’s categories seemed too broad, encompassing elements with obvious formal differences (as in the case of Furumark’s “Grass or Reed,” FM 16, or Niemeier’s “Gras/Schilf,” motif 15). In these instances, further distinctions were made between elements that might otherwise be grouped together within Furumark’s or Niemeier’s system, either through the classification of these elements as two different types, or, in the case of “Foliate Band,” through the identification of subgroups within the larger, perhaps overly broad category.

analysis established the various ways that artist could and did elaborate on the basic conventional form of an element, and made apparent particularly unusual depictions.

The subsequent pages of this chapter present the results of this classification and morphological analysis for each type of “arboreal,” “flowering,” and “other” vegetal element. In the discussion of each element type, the common or diagnostic units of that type will be set forth, and the range in variation among the units of the elements of a given type will be discussed.

Before we discuss these results, however, a few words of warning are in order:

First, as with any typology, this is a hermeneutic tool. The categories and types identified here may not represent how the artist or his intended audience categorized or conceived of the vegetal elements in the iconography, but that is not the point of the typology. Because this present study is primarily interested in the formal structure of the iconography and the morphology of the units, this formal typology serves as a tool with which we can make sense of the structures of the elements. The point may be self evident, but it is nevertheless worth stating explicitly.

Secondly, typological discussions are necessarily very descriptive, and as a result, inevitably somewhat dry. The more casual reader may wish to jump ahead to Chapter 3 where we will reap the fruits of these analytical labors, examining how, through the association of vegetal elements and female figures with similar types of units in similar syntactical positions the “pictorial language” conveys meaning about the female figures and flowers. The more serious (or obliged) reader should know that the analysis conducted here lays essential groundwork both for the conclusions of Chapter 3 and for future scholarship on this topic.

Having set out the guiding principles of this typology and these warnings, let us turn now to the “vegetal vocabulary” and its morphology.

1.2 Arboreal Elements

Eight different types of arboreal elements occur within the dataset. Three types of arboreal elements appear in more than one scene, while five types of arboreal elements are represented in only one example each within the dataset.

Arboreal Element Type 1: Trunks with bunches of foliage at top (Figure 1.2)

The most common type of arboreal element within the dataset is composed of a trunk with clumps or bunches of foliage at the top. Trunks are either depicted as straight (and oriented either vertically or obliquely) or bent, depending largely on where the tree is located within the pictorial field; in many cases the trunk is shown branching below the clumps of foliage. A considerable degree of variation exists in the way foliage is articulated within the bunches; for instance, on four examples the clumps of foliage are outlined by small dots (CMS I.126, I.219, II.3.252, HM 1629). While it is conceivable that in some cases the foliage was depicted in a particular manner to imitate a distinctive feature of a particular genus or species of tree, it is very difficult to distinguish such examples from incidental stylistic differences in depicting foliage. Within the dataset, 23 metal signet rings or sealings made from metal rings include a tree or trees of this type while only one soft stone seal includes a tree of this type.

Arboreal Element Type 2: Young, fruiting (?) or flowering (?) trees and tree growth (Figure 1.3)

Two metal signet rings contain tree elements with thinner, delicate trunks from which equally thin branches grow. On the tree elements in both of these scenes, foliage (or perhaps fruit) is indicated by numerous small units (either teardrop-shaped or round with lines or dots radiating outwards) rather than the few large clumps of Tree Type 1. A third example of this vegetal element type can perhaps be seen in the upper right quadrant of the impression from VI.277, the so-called “Ring of Nestor.” Here, four thin, limb-like lines branch off from the upper

part of the large tree trunk that dominates the ring (see Tree Type 6 below), and round dots are attached to these lines. The association of the narrow limb-like units to the larger trunk in VI.277 and the thin, delicate nature of the tree trunks on the other two metal signet rings suggest young trees or tree-growth. The box-like support structures at the bases of the trees in I.514 and II.3.326 reinforce this impression.

Arboreal Element Type 3: Palm trees (Figure 1.4)

Full palm trees (as opposed to individual palm elements, discussed below pp. 53-4) occur in association with women on three glyptic objects. Each palm has a thick trunk, depicted as straight and vertical on the soft stone seal CMS VS1A.005 and slightly curved to fit the curving pictorial fields on the metal signet ring CMS VI.280 and on the hard stone seal CMS VS1A.075. The trunk is depicted with a ridged surface on CMS VS1A.075; on all other examples it is smooth. The palms are characterized by four long leaves or fronds which hang downwards from the top of the trunk, with two on either side; on the hard-stone seal CMS VS1A.075, these leaves more closely resemble the tongue-like fronds of the ceramic motif Palm II (FM 15) than the more substantial leaves of the palms in the other two glyptic scenes. Shorter, newer leaf growth from the top of the palm is indicated on two of the three palms in the dataset by a characteristic “Dreiblatt” unit on CMS VI.280 and VS1A.075. On only one palm (CMS VS1A.075) is any significant emphasis placed on the base of the tree; this element is depicted growing from a mound with two “suckers”—the offshoots by which palms propagate⁵—sprouting from its base on either side.

Arboreal Element Type 4: Long exposed trunk, Foliate Band at top (Figure 1.5)

One hard stone seal, CMS II.3.007, includes a highly stylized tree with a long exposed trunk and foliage that is indicated by a short segment of Foliate Band (see p. 48) at the top. A

⁵ Morgan 1988: 25.

short horizontal line segment at the base of the trunk seems to emphasize that this tree grows from the ground.

Arboreal Element Type 5: Long, straight branches growing off of trunk, obvious roots (Figure 1.6)

The soft stone seal CMS XII.D012 features a unique tree type with a vertical trunk off of which fork straight branches of different lengths and thicknesses. Although the portion of the tree towards the center of the seal is somewhat worn, it is nevertheless apparent that more and longer branches originally extended from the opposite side, towards the edge of the pictorial field. Three roots are clearly depicted; foliage is not.

Arboreal Element Type 6: Massive, gnarled trunk and thick limbs (Figure 1.7)

The highly unusual “Ring of Nestor,” CMS VI.227, is dominated and divided into quadrants by an arboreal element composed of a massive trunk with two thick, horizontal limbs. No foliage grows from either the thick trunk or the limbs, but as mentioned above, thin, limb-like structures in the upper right quadrant of the impression perhaps suggest young tree growth branching off of this otherwise very old tree. Roots with short vertical ribs appear to grow into the ground surface at the bottom of the scene.

Arboreal Element Type 7: “Fig” or “mulberry” tree (Figure 1.8)

The miniature fresco decorating the north wall of the West House at Akrotiri includes two trees of a unique type. Each of the two trees, which are positioned directly above the heads of two female figures, is composed of “a short, thick, and irregular trunk” with straight branches lined with “a mass of large leaves and round dark fruits (painted black to distinguish them from the red ochre leaves and branches)” radiating from the top of each trunk. The explicit depiction of fruit is noteworthy, as fruit is only perhaps present in one or two other scenes within the

dataset. Morgan identifies these trees as cultivated fig trees, highly uncommon in LBA Aegean iconography, but mentioned in Linear B records and further attested by carbonized fruits recovered from 13th century BCE levels at Midea and other Mycenaean sites.⁶ A. Sarpaki, however, rejects this identification and suggests that these trees are *Morus nigra*, or black mulberry trees.⁷

Arboreal Element Type 8: “Olive” tree (Figure 1.9)

The final arboreal element that occurs in association with women appears positioned above a small shrine between two pairs of horns of consecration on Side B of the Ayia Triada Sarcophagus. The tree is depicted with seven spreading branches off of which fork straight, pointed leaves painted in red, black, and white. The tree appears very two dimensional, and, as Charlotte Long observes, “seems to be an afterthought for the painter had to stop the blue background of this section rather awkwardly in order not to obliterate the blue branches and trunk.” Long identifies the tree as an olive tree and speculates that its association with the shrine and the scene of sacrifice may suggest association with a particular deity.⁸

1.3 Flowering Elements

Flowering elements are particularly numerous within the dataset. Seven different forms of flowers are represented in more than one scene, and an additional six types are unique to a single scene.

⁶ Morgan 1988: 18. Morgan notes that “only one other certain representation of the fig in Aegean art is on a fragment of a serpentine vessel from Knossos (Pl. 18).”

⁷ Sarpaki 2000: 665.

⁸ Long 1974: 67.

Flowering Element Type 1: Lilies⁹ (Figure 1.10)

Lilies are characterized and can be identified by their two distinctive, curving petals which take the form of antithetic and inverted J-shapes. The pistil and six stamens that occur between the petals in the natural world are depicted in one of several stylized fashions, or not at all:

A) Lilies with three stamens (Figure 1.10 A)

The most naturalistic depiction of lilies includes three stamens between two curving petals, but a considerable degree of variation is possible in the depiction of the anthers on the end of each stamen. Among the lilies that occur together with women, three different treatments of the anthers are represented: lilies with one flat anther per stamen, those with two flat anthers, and those with one round anther per stamen.

B) Lilies with petals capped by a curving line (Figure 1.10 B).

Two glyptic examples, one hard stone seal (CMS I.279) and one metal signet ring (CMS I. 017), place a single line above two curving lily petals. On the hard stone seal, the line seems to hug the contour of the petals, while on CMS I.017, the line curves slightly but does not follow the contours of the petals exactly. Neither Furumark nor Niemeier illustrates a parallel in vase painting.

C) “Lilies” with teardrop-shaped projection, resembling Palm I (FM 14) (Figure 1.10 C))

Two curving, lily-like petals appear on a LM IIIA larnax from Knossos with a teardrop-shaped unit at the center. These elements resemble the tops of Palm I motifs (FM 14), but lack the characteristic sprays of thin lines and the smaller side “leaves” that typically occur between the tear-drop shape and the volute on the Palm I motif. Furthermore, they are isolated heads or blooms which occur without any sort of palm-like trunk. Furumark notes that in the LM II Palace

⁹ Compare to Furumark 1972: FM 9; Niemeier 1985: 51-61, Palace Style Motif 10.

Style the Palm II motif was fused with the papyrus,¹⁰ and this element is not unlike the LM II “papyrus” illustrated in Niemeier 1985: Abb. 14(1) 22; however, it lacks the fanning filler that occurs between the central teardrop-shaped “Blatt” and the curving “petals” in that example. Because the antithetical, lily-like petals are the dominant units of these vegetal elements, and because, as we have noted, the space between antithetical lily petals can be filled in a variety of ways (as the artist seems to explore in the lily-like vegetal elements on one short end of this same larnax, discussed below), we will classify these vegetal elements as “lilies,” bearing in mind their potentially hybrid nature.

D) “Waz-lilies” (Figure 1.10 D)

A fourth unit which occurs between the two curving petals is a filled fan-shaped “waz.” Evans first identified this vegetal element as a combination of lily petals and the fanning papyrus “waz” tuft.¹¹ Furumark acknowledges the fundamental motif as the lily, and rejects the notion that the “waz” originally represented a papyrus,¹² but he then classifies “waz-lilies” with papyrus in his classificatory system and Niemeier follows suit.¹³ Because the curving petals are the dominant feature in the three artifacts containing “waz-lilies” in the dataset, we will treat them here as lilies.

Of the three “waz-lilies” occurring with female figures, two occur as pendants on two terracotta figures from Tiryns (Cat. No. 107 and 108). The first, occurring on the figure identified here as Cat. No. 107, hangs downwards and the petals coil upwards. The “waz” is not particularly pronounced but simply fills in the space between the two lily petals. A second terracotta figure from Tiryns (Cat. No. 108) also wears what appears to be a “waz-lily” pendant

¹⁰ Furumark 1974: 186, 276.

¹¹ Furumark 1972: 148-149, citing Evans, *Palace of Minos II*, pp. 475, 476, 775.

¹² Furumark 1972: 148-9.

¹³ Niemeier 1985: 53-56.

but one that hangs in the opposite direction and that is rendered much more schematically: two inverted J-shapes lie parallel to one another, and a curved line connects them, creating a fan-shape between the curving petals.¹⁴ A third “waz-lily” occurs on a short end of the LM III larnax from Knossos discussed above. Here, multiple stylized lilies are depicted stacked on top of one another with the uppermost lily terminating in a triangular “waz.”¹⁵

E) Lilies with curving petals and no central units (Figure 1.10 E)

Finally, the bloom of a lily is sometimes reduced to only its essential units, the two antithetic curving petals, with no central unit at all. Lilies of this type occur on an ivory plaque in the Chania Museum, on the Kourion Window Crater, and in the hair and bouquet of an older female figure in Room 3b of Xeste 3. In all three examples a stem seems to continue down from the base of the bloom.

F) Presence of central units unclear due to preservation (Figure 1.10 F)

Two lilies, one depicted with the “Lady with the Lily” from the Cult Center at Mycenae, and one growing in a landscape near the knee of the “Kneeling Woman” in the fresco fragments from Room 14 of the Villa at Ayia Triada, are too poorly preserved for it to be determined if they were originally depicted with any sort of central unit indicating anthers and filaments.¹⁶ A

¹⁴ Younger speculates that this pendant is a bucranium (Younger 1992: 282). Its curving, antithetic J-shapes, however, seem nevertheless to suggest a lily, even if one that is rendered rather abstractly, and for this reason it has been included within the data set.

¹⁵ The lilies below this uppermost “waz-lily” have projections which fan out at the same angle as the “waz” on the uppermost lily, but these projections are divided into two separate parts to accommodate the stem of the lily above, and they terminate in concave ends which hug the form of the curving petals of the lily above. Because these are a rare and isolated example of projections like this, we will proceed on the assumption that they are perhaps just a form of “waz,” heavily modified to accommodate the stacking of the lilies, and we will not discuss them further as their own category of projection within the body of the text. It should also be noted that these lilies occur together with the other problematic lily with the teardrop-shaped central unit (see above, p. 31), and that the larnax in question is itself rather unusual.

¹⁶ It came to my attention in the final stages of this project that other fragments from the context as the fragment group containing the knee of the “Kneeling Woman” and the poorly preserved lily have three stamens with one flat or slightly curving filament each. It is probably fair to assume that this lily did as well.

consideration of these two lilies side by side in Figure 1,10 F, however, draws attention to a different variable feature of the lilies: their color. The lily carried by the female figure from Mycenae is white while those growing in the landscape near the “Kneeling Woman” are red. Because upright lilies with their antithetic, inverted j-shaped form most closely resemble the white Madonna lily (*Lilium candidum*), the color of the white lily from Mycenae is natural, while the red color of the lily and buds from Ayia Triada has been borrowed from the Martagon, lily (*Lilium chalcedonicum*) which hang downwards rather than standing upright (see below p. 44 and Figure 1.20).¹⁷ The lily near the “Kneeling Woman” is thus an unnatural hybrid, which Anne Chapin argues may carry religious significance similar to the way that hybrid animals such as griffins do.¹⁸

G) Immature lilies (Figure 1.10 G)

In four different scenes within the dataset, lilies appear to be depicted at different developmental stages or at different points in the blooming process.

This can be observed most clearly in the bouquet of the older female figure with lilies from Room 3b of Xeste 3. Within the bouquet, fully opened lilies are combined with what appear to be closed buds and buds that are just beginning to open. Closed buds are indicated by quasi-elliptical shapes that come to a point at the distal end. Buds that are just beginning to open appear as V-shapes that are mostly filled in but come to three points at the end—interestingly suggesting the tips of three petals, while only two petals are depicted when the lily is fully open.

The fresco fragments with the “Kneeling Woman” from Room 14 of the Villa at Ayia Triada also combine blooming lilies with lily buds, though apparently with less variety in the stages of blooming. Lilies running up the stem of the plant are shown in full bloom while the

¹⁷ Chapin 2004: 58; Negbi and Negbi 2000.

¹⁸ Chapin 2004: 54-62.

three buds at the top are fully closed; unlike the buds at Akrotiri, these do not come to a point at the distal end and look somewhat like “cat-tail” reeds.

Unopened lily buds may also be depicted in the bouquet of lilies held in the hands of Female Figure 1 on the Acropolis ring (CMS I.017) from Mycenae. Two fully opened lilies seem to flank a central stem with what appears to be two lily buds, but the depiction is rather unclear, due largely to the very small scale.

Finally, the Isopata ring, CMS II.3.051, also seems to explore floral development, but in a somewhat different manner and with a lesser degree of naturalism. The artist reduces smaller and apparently less developed flowers to groups of three dots without the curving petals and fully developed stem of the most developed flower in the central flowering group. Because the three dots above the central flower suggest round anthers on stamens above curving lily petals and because anthers are one of the last parts of the flower to develop fully, it is strange that the less developed plants should be reduced to just these dots. The fact that groups of dots seems to function as a glyptic short hand for flowers more generally (as we will discuss below) may play into this. It seems that if the artist was indeed exploring or suggesting different stages of floral development, naturalism was not of great concern (as seems to be the case in his treatment of female figures as well).

H) Non-floral units of lilies

On almost every lily within the dataset, a stem is indicated by a line extending down from the V-shaped base of the antithetical petals.¹⁹ On one example, CMS VS1B.113, an additional ring-like structure suggesting a calyx tube has been added, separating the flower from the stem;

¹⁹ This is not true of lilies on three artifacts: the fragmentary proto-phi figurine, the “waz-lily” pendant on the Tiryns figurine, or the stacked “waz-lilies” on the short end of the LM III larnax from Knossos.

calyx tubes of this sort do not naturally occur on members of the lily family,²⁰ and this is thus a fanciful addition by the artist. The round base of the lilies in the bouquet on CMS I.017 may also suggest another such fancifully added calyx tube.

In three examples within our data set, short, linear leaves have been added to the stems, projecting upwards off the stem at roughly a 135-degree angle. On two of these three examples (CMS I.279 and VS3.243), the leaves occur directly opposite one another along both sides of the stem. The third example (CMS VS1B.113) includes only one leaf on the stem, with two small leaves growing out of the ground at its base. The central floral group on the “Isopata Ring,” with the fully developed lily, is flanked by two longer, more substantial and slightly curving leaves at its base (as are the other three groups of immature “lilies”).

Flowering Element Type 2: Papyrus plants (Figure 1.11)

Within Aegean iconography a roughly triangular fan-shaped plant head or “tuft,” defined by two slightly curving concave sides and (typically) by a slightly convex top is used to represent papyrus (*Cyperus papyrus*). The fan-shaped motif is inspired by and adopted from Egyptian iconography, where it often includes three bracts at the base of the fan and, in painted scenes, often a band across the top of the tuft rendered in a different color. In Egyptian art, the individual papyrus tuft is naturalistically placed atop a stalk that is tall, narrow, straight, and leafless except for leaves that occur at the base; when depicted as growing, papyrus plants typically occur together in large numbers.

The fan-shape of the papyrus head, defined in outline or by leafy bracts, is the characteristic feature of papyrus in Aegean iconography, but, as a quick glance at Figure 1.11 A-J suggests, a wide range of variation occurs in the details and articulation of this fan-shape and its accompanying stem. Due to this great degree of possible variation, it is easiest to identify the

²⁰ Rebecca Irwin, Department of Biological Sciences, Dartmouth personal communication, March 2010.

possible units of the papyrus plant occurring together with female figures in chart form, displayed below.



	Variety in Units: Papyrus					
	None	Reniform dots	Round dots	Round dots with curving line above	Vertical lines	Single disk
Projections from top of tuft	None	Reniform dots	Round dots	Round dots with curving line above	Vertical lines	Single disk
Top border of tuft	None, completely Open	Simple curving line defining slightly convex top	“Dentate “ border	Subtly “scalloped” border	Wavy lines	
Internal detail of tuft	None	Horizontal division(s)	Several vertical divisions	One central, vertical divider		
Additions to the base of the tuft	None	Side-bracts	Calyx tube at base tuft (round, U-shaped, or V-shaped unit			
Stem/ Stem type	None (isolated fan-shaped tuft= “waz”)	Depicted, Leafless	Depicted, with leaves			
Leaves at base of stem	None (with present stem)	Single leaf, one side	Multiple leaves, one side of stem	Multiple leaves, both sides	N/A, no stem	

Papyrus Element from CMS XI.020a

As the table and the papyrus images in our plant typology (Figure 1.11) indicate, Aegean artists explored different ways of defining the top of the tuft, the internal detail of the tuft, the units surrounding the tuft, and the stem and base of the papyrus plant. Indeed, the range of variation in units, and consequently overall form, seems to be greater with papyrus plants than any other “flowering” vegetal element within the dataset.

Several factors may perhaps explain why artists explored such a range of detail in depicting papyrus. If Aegean artists did in fact have first-hand exposure to the plant in Aegean contexts in the Late Bronze Age, as Peter Warren has argued,²² the fact that the tuft of the papyrus plant progresses through multiple developmental stages and varies in form across the

²² Warren 1976.

life of the plant,²³ may explain—at least in part—the variation in the internal detail, upper border, and projections of the tuft as they are depicted in the iconography, and the maturity of the tuft could perhaps carry significance with respect to the scene. The scene on the cylinder seal CMS VI.321 includes several different papyrus plants and several different treatments of the tuft and its projections, perhaps providing an example of an exploration of differing levels of maturity through the tuft (Figure 1.11 J.i). The hard stone seal CMS III.339, also appears to present papyrus plants of differing stages of maturity, but in a somewhat different manner—not through the tuft but through the height of the stem (Figure 1.11 J.ii). The scene depicts three leafy bases of papyrus with short, single stems of different heights growing from two of these and a tall stem with widely spread bracts growing on the third, as if suggesting a progression in maturity from one element to the next. As with lilies (p. 31), it seems that in some instances, Aegean artists may have explored matters of plant development in their depictions of papyrus.

Some variation in the depiction of papyrus plants can also be explained by artistic hybridization of the papyrus through the incorporation of units that are foreign to the plant. In examples occurring together with female figures, leafy stems, pronounced calyx tubes, and anthers are sometimes added,²⁴ and we have already noted how the papyrus “waz” is fused with lily petals in the form of a “waz-lily.” Indeed, despite the fact that the fan shape umbel of a papyrus plant is in fact made up of leafy spikes which themselves produce small flowers, Aegean artist seem to treat the fan shape umbel very much like a flower itself. Additionally, papyrus

²³ Morgan 1988: 21: Triangular bracts open to reveal numerous, narrow, spike-like leaves that form a fan-shaped tuft; these leaves develop short shoots at their distal ends, and short clusters of tiny brown flowers grow at the axial between these shoots; ultimately the shoots at the base of the flower lengthen and the leaves no longer stand in a close fan shape but droop downward instead.

²⁴ Morgan 1988: 22. Hybrid features of the “papyrus” elements in the House of the Ladies at Akrotiri have led some scholars to argue that these elements are not papyrus at all but sea lilies (*Pancreatium maritimum*) (see, for instance Porter 2000: 603-616; Baumann 1993: 174-175).

elements are sometimes fused with palm-like elements, as is the case with the elements held by the girls on the ivory mirror handle NM 2899 (Figure 1.11 I)

Finally, sometimes no additional units are added and no internal detail is depicted at all, and the fan-shape “waz” occurs in isolation as a motif on pottery, jewelry, or dress beads (Figure 1.11 A).

Flowering Element Type 3: “Fanning petaloid lines” (Figure 1.12)

Two soft stone seals of unknown provenance (CMS IX.166 and IX.167) include unusual, floral-like elements, which consist of petaloid rays that fan outward, forming a rough semicircle; a slightly curved line spans about half of the bottom of each semicircle, and each petaloid ray connects to this line. On CMS IX.166, a vertical line extends down from the center of this curved line, suggesting a stem. In both cases, the vegetal elements are connected to skirts with feet projecting from beneath them, suggesting that they have been substituted for the torsos of female figures (see Chapter 3, p. 133). A closer look at a photograph of papyrus (Figure 1.13) suggests that these vegetal elements may simply represent a less stylized version of papyrus.

Flowering Element Type 4: Poppy capsules (Figure 1.14)

The characteristic and diagnostic unit of a “poppy capsule” is a round or spherical capsule topped by a small, disk-shaped “cap.” These capsules are attached to short, straight stems. Two artifacts depict poppy capsules together with female figures: the Acropolis ring from Mycenae (CMS I.017) and the well-known LM IIIC terracotta figure wearing a fillet with three projecting poppy capsules. On the Acropolis ring from Mycenae (CMS I.017), a stubby cylindrical unit has been added between the sphere and the cap, forming a bottle-neck shape.

Flowering Element Type 5: Crocuses and stigmas (Figure 1.15)

The characteristic and diagnostic unit of the crocus in Aegean iconography is its tapered, wine-goblet-shaped flower with three petals.²⁵ Stigmas, the red, saffron-producing parts of the flower which project from between the petals in V-shaped pairs are also characteristic, and in some cases—as in Xeste 3, where the pigment used to paint the petals has not been preserved—the stigmas rather than petals identify an element as (having originally been) a crocus, and seem to appear in isolation due to the unpreserved pigment. Crocus flowers are often depicted growing on short stems, sometimes together with narrow, elliptical buds on slightly shorter stems. When leaves are depicted, they are long and narrow and flank the base of the plant. Crocus flowers can be shown growing in isolation, but more often they are depicted growing together in clumps, *perhaps* suggesting cultivation.²⁶ When not depicted as growing in the landscape, crocus flowers or the stigmas suggesting crocus flowers can appear in the hands of female figures, in clumps in baskets and as repeating motifs on clothing (as on the “Veiled Girl,” the “Necklace Swinger,” the “Goddess,” and possibly also the “Older Woman with the Red Mantle” from Xeste 3). They can be worn in the hair and perhaps over the ear hanging in front of the cheek, and the petals can be stylized as “pendant” motifs, as in the jewelry held by a hand from the Ladies in Blue fresco fragments from Knossos.²⁷ While stigmas sometimes only seem to occur in isolation because the associated petal pigment has not been preserved, in three different locations in Akrotiri stigmas clearly were depicted unaccompanied by crocus petals: the “Necklace Swinger” from Xeste 3 wears a garland of crocus petals bound together in fan-like tufts, the blue monkey presents a clump of stigmas to the “Goddess” in Xeste 3, and the priestess from the West House holds a brazier of individual stigmas.

²⁵ Porter 2000: 617.

²⁶ Morgan 1988: 31. This is particularly controversial topic within the scholarship.

²⁷ Morgan recognizes the pendant motif as crocus heads (Morgan 1988: 30).

Flowering Element Type 6: Dots + a stem and/or leaves (Figure 1.16)

In a small number of glyptic scenes and on a bead from Ayia Triada in the shape of a female figure (Cat. No. 93), flowering vegetal elements are also suggested by groups of dots together with a stem and/or leaves/petals. That this combination is a means of conveying a flower is clearly indicated in the “immature lilies” from CMS II.3.051, the Isopata ring, discussed above, where combinations of dots, stems, and leaves appear together beside more fully articulated flowers. While we discussed the possibility that the artist was exploring different levels of floral maturity on CMS II.3.051, and that he was depicting lilies given the form of the more fully articulated flower, this does not necessarily imply that all flowers depicted as “dots + a stem and/or leaves” should be read as being of a specific maturity level or species. The presence of a monkey and a basket—elements which recur in scenes of saffron gathering—in a glyptic scene containing a flower depicted in such a manner (CMS III.358) almost certainly suggests that this shorthand is not reserved exclusively for lilies, and that it might perhaps be thought of as shorthand for flowers more generally.

In two examples, the soft stone seal CMS III.348 and a bead from Ayia Triada in the shape of a female figure, groups of three dots arranged in a pyramid occur above a single stem, as in the second-most mature floral element on the Isopata ring. On two other examples, the arrangement is slightly different. On the highly unusual (and somewhat damaged) gold seal CMS III.358 dots appear but between the upper “arms” of lines arranged in a Y-shaped design (perhaps suggesting a stem plus leaves or petals) and near the hand of the female figure who appears with a monkey and a basket very similar to those of the Xeste 3 “Saffron Gatherers.” This suggests that the dots should perhaps be read as stigmas in this scene. On the soft stone seal IS.134, dots appear above a V-shape (leaves or, again, perhaps petals?). Though the seal is worn

(and was apparently not carved with great attention to detail in the first place), it appears that the forearm of one of the female figures in the scene might be angled downward towards this flower and may even be associated with a single dot, somewhat above the rest. It is possible that we have here yet another indication of saffron gathering, though this cannot be asserted with any certainty.

Flowering Element Type 7: “Roses” and “rosettes” (Figure 1.17)

Within the dataset, flowers that have been identified by previous scholarship as wild roses²⁸—or, in their isolated and stem-less form, as “rosettes”—occur together with female figures in frescoes from Akrotiri, Pylos, and Thebes, on an ivory mirror handle from Mycenae, and in one soft stone seal of unknown provenance. The characteristic units of this vegetal element are a clearly articulated circular center surrounded by petals with rounded edges; in all instances the flower is presented as if viewed from above so that the petals are shown radiating outwards from the center.

The treatment of the rosette in fresco painting is rather consistent—the central circle is either outlined or filled in, the edge of the petals is outlined in a thick band of red, and the space between the central circle and this band of color is left white (or yellow, like the fabric background in the rosettes on the clothing of the older female figure from Xeste 3, Room 3b). In the fragments from Pylos red lines have been added in this space, while the rose fragments from Thebes include naturalistic dots surrounding the central circle. The roses associated with fingers with white skin from Thebes include five rounded petals, while those from Pylos only include

²⁸ Sarpaki 2000: 663.

four. Stems are indicated in all examples except Thebes fragment group 30 (perhaps a result of the way the fragment broke).³⁰

The rosettes that occur on the ivory mirror handle NM 2898 from Mycenae have eight petals and a relatively small and simply indicated central circle. The roses collected in the bags of the female figures on this same mirror handle, appear to have only six petals around a simple central circle; these are mixed with and in some cases appear to be connected to small three-pronged sprays which may have been intended to suggest stems and foliage.³¹

One other rosette occurs together with a female figure on the soft stone seal CMS III.352. The petals of this element are not clearly defined in the way that those appearing in wall paintings or on the ivory mirror handle are, but petaloid units surround a pronounced central circular unit, suggesting the form of a rosette.

Flowering Element Type 8: “Iris” (Figure 1.18)

The hairpin of the “Wounded Woman” from the Adyton of Xeste 3, presents the only example of what has been identified as an “iris” associated with a female figure in LBA Aegean art.³² The flower is similar to other iris motifs in wall paintings with two petals, joined in a V-shape at their base, arching outwards and downwards, with two slightly curving “prongs” rising between them (apparently representing the narrower petals of the iris that stand upright).³³ The curvature of the petals is more dramatic than in other examples from wall painting, however,

³⁰ Reusch 1948: Taf. 11. In a third fragment group (Pylos 41 H sw) a small amount of pink color is visible near long stems that held are held in a white hand, suggesting another bouquet of roses.

³¹ In a second ivory mirror handle, NM 8343, from Routsis, which is not included within the dataset because it does not contain female figures but which nevertheless is of relevance to our discussion (see Chapter 3, p. 132) three roses are depicted as if in a bouquet. The roses include 12 petals and an ornately outlined central circle; two leaves (only one of which is preserved) originally flanked the “bouquet,” and it is possible that the simple vertical lines that run down the handle (in lieu of the more elaborate handle decoration of the other ivory mirrors) were intended to suggest stems.

³² Porter 2000: 624.

³³ Niemeier 1985: Abb. 21.2-3.

such that the petals form S-curves bending back near the base of the flower, not unlike the S-curves of the Palm II motif (FM 15). The pin is painted in a yellow-gold color, with purple accents along the edge of the petals at the top of the curve where the flower meets the rest of the pin.

Flowering Element Type 9: Possible Martagon lily (Figure 1.19)

In addition to the lilies, poppy capsules, and crocuses of the Acropolis ring (CMS I.017), a fourth type of flower is depicted which has no parallel within the dataset or among ceramic motifs. The two flowers of this type hang downwards from long, thin stems. On the more clearly articulated of the two flowers, a pair of angular units resembling butterfly wings point upwards, and three trumpet-like units project from below these. The orientation of the flower, the upward-pointing bottom units, and the straight, lengthy stem suggest the *possibility* that what is depicted here may be inspired by a lily, but one of a different variety than that represented iconographically by the distinctive antithetic curving petals: namely, the red *Lilium chalconicum*, or the Martagon lily (Figure 1.20). While, as we noted with reference to the lilies from the Kneeling Woman Fresco from the Villa at Ayia Triada, red lilies *are* depicted in Aegean art, they typically take the form of the white lily or Madonna lily (*Lilium candidum*) and are simply painted in red—perhaps due to inspiration from the Martagon lily—for either artistic or perhaps symbolic reasons.³⁴ The flowering elements on CMS I.017 are interesting in that they seem to suggest the *form* of the Martagon lily (albeit in a somewhat stylized way), which artists otherwise do not seem to have had interest in showing. The fact that the female figure who holds these flowering elements holds lilies of the normal variety with antithetic J-shaped petals in her other hand makes this possibility an interesting one in light of LBA Aegean artists' apparent interest in combining features of these two species of lilies.

³⁴ Negbi and Negbi 2000; Chapin 2004.

Flowering Element Type 10: Y-shape with central lines and dots (Figure 1.21)

The soft stone seal CMS III.349 presents a unique flower apparently without parallel among ceramic motifs. The flower is composed of a straight stem and short, straight petals which together form a slightly asymmetrical Y-shape. Between the petals are lines and dots which suggest anthers and filaments (the filament on the middle anther is not obviously articulated, perhaps because this area is particularly crowded). The flower lacks the distinctive curving petals of a lily (which, as we have noted, can have similar anthers and filaments) as well as any other obvious identifying features to indicate its species.

Flowering Element Type 11: Stems with circular flower or coils (Figure 1.22)

The two impressions from a hard stone seal that are identified as CMS II.8.257 include another unique type of (apparently) flowering element. These elements are made up of three short, straight stems between two thick, curving leaves (in an arrangement similar to that of the central flowering group from the Isopata ring, CMS II.3.051). The plant is unique, however, in its representation of the flowers (?) at the end of the short stems, which appear as individual circles that meet the stem at their sides (at roughly the nine o'clock position, if we conceive of the circles as clock faces), perhaps suggesting coils of some sort.

Flowering Element Type 12: Budding flower between basal leaves (Figure 1.23)

The soft seal CMS V.253 also presents a unique flowering vegetal element. This flowering plant is made up of a short stem topped by what appears to be a teardrop-shaped floral bud. The bottom portion of the calyx appears to be defined, and a vertical line on the bud³⁵ seems to suggest some distinction between the developing petals. On either side of the stem (but not in

³⁵ Vertical with respect to the major axis of the bud.

contact with the stem) two leaves rise out of the rocky ground and run parallel with the stem for roughly two-thirds of its length before fanning outwards.

Flowering Element Type 13: V-shaped flower (Figure 1.24)

A final miscellaneous flower type occurs on the soft stone seal CMS VII.141. A short, slightly bent stem opens up into a narrow V. This shape is partially filled in with lines running parallel to the edges of the V, leaving a smaller V-shaped opening at the top. If this is indeed intended to represent a flower, it is not obvious what type it might be. The same seal also features a similar but smaller vegetal element, with a second V-shaped unit at its base, perhaps suggesting leaves. This portion of the seal is worn, however, so this vegetal element has simply been identified as “too worn to establish type” (see below, p. 55).

1.4 Other Vegetal Elements (Neither Arboreal nor Flowering)

Sixteen types of vegetal elements that are neither arboreal nor flowering occur within the data set. These may take the form of plants growing in the landscape, isolated leaves, branches, or sticks or staffs with vegetal finials.

Other Vegetal Element Type 1: Branching line segments (Figure 1.25)

Several glyptic scenes and a group of glass plaques from Chamber Tomb 27 at Mycenae include female figures together with vegetal elements composed of individual straight line segments that branch out from one another. In their simplest form, these vegetal elements are indicated by Y-shaped or “bisected V”-shaped (∇) units. These units can be combined together and stacked on top of one another (often with the addition of other line segments) to form larger, more complex vegetal elements. Unlike “arboreal elements,” which might have branching limbs but which have long segments of exposed trunk below the limbs, these elements do not have

lengthy exposed trunks or stems, and branching begins fairly close to the base of each element. The branching appearance of this type of vegetal element is its dominant and characteristic feature. It is not obvious that vegetal elements of this type are meant to represent plants of the same species or of any particular species at all.

Other Vegetal Element Type 2: Squills (Figure 1.26)

Five metal signet rings or sealings made by metal signet rings and an ivory signet ring from Phylakopi all include vegetal elements composed of long, narrow, “strap-like” basal leaves radiating out from a bulbous central point or points. In the examples within our data set there can be between two and approximately ten leaves per plant, and the leaves can be straight or somewhat wavy. The bulbous central point(s) from which these leaves radiate can take the form of a single rounded bulb, a bulb with some internal vertical divisions suggesting two halves, or two distinct but conjoined bulbs. The range in relative size of the bulbs is considerable: in CMS I.127, for example, the bulbs are roughly one-eighth the height of the female figure, while in CMS VI.278 the bulbs are roughly half the size of the female figure and resemble large baetyls. Warren has identified vegetal elements of this type as maritime squills—which serve as apotropaic symbols of fertility and immortality in rural modern Greece—and his argument is convincing.³⁶ In reality, as in the iconography, the “strap-like” leaves of this plant can grow from two conjoined bulbs.

Two sealings from soft stone seals (CMS II.7.135 A and B) bear images of composite female creatures with tail-like skirts, bird wings, breasts, and—in lieu of a head—long, leaf-like lines fanning outwards above the breasts. The two large breasts and the long, leaf-like lines

³⁶ Warren 1984: 17-24. Warren’s identification of the vegetal element at the base of the cult structure on the Ayia Triada sealing CMS II.6.001 as a “probable double squill,” however, seems incorrect. Looking at the drawing on which Warren bases this assertion (Warren 1984: pl VII.5), one can see how he reached this conclusion; a close examination of a photograph of the impression, however, reveals the drawing to be incomplete and inaccurate. Based on the photograph, I have classified this vegetal element as a “reed or grass” (see below, p. 51).

which radiate up from these evoke the combination of leaves and roots of squills (See Chapter 3, p. 124).

The vegetal elements flanking the shrine on the metal signet ring CMS VI.279, also bear some similarity to squills. While these vegetal elements each only have one “strap-like” basal leaf, the small rocks from which they grow (and on which the shrine is constructed) suggest bulb-like units. The combination of the narrow leaf and bulb-like rock on each side of the shrine is “squill-like” and the vertical support structures reinforce this impression, appearing like basal leaves; no effort, however, is made to imply any sort of bulb on the single leaf which grows between the horns of consecration.

Other Vegetal Element Type 3: Foliate Band elements (Figure 1.27)

A number of vegetal elements that occur in association with female figures bear resemblance to the ceramic motif Foliate Band (FM 64; Niemeier 1985: Motif 19, “Blattband”). As in the ceramic motif, there is wide range of possible variation in these elements; all, however, are characterized by their narrow, linear nature, and by repeating leaf-like units along one or both sides of a linear axis that sometimes takes the form of a narrow “stem.”

Most of the Foliate Band elements that occur in scenes with women are of the double Foliate Band variety, demonstrating axial symmetry. In these examples, leaves branch symmetrically off of a central stem, angling upwards, or, in a stemless form, narrow V-shaped units are stacked on top of one another, suggesting leaves spreading out symmetrically.

Elements resembling simple Foliate Band—in which leaves or leaf-like units project from only one side of a stem—also occur together with female figures. As with the double foliate band, the foliage may be depicted with a varying degree of stylization—ranging from the more

naturalistic repeating lines (perhaps suggesting palm fronds) on CMS I.410, to the more rope-like recurring units forming the garland in the gold pin from a shaft grave at Mycenae.

On ceramics, Foliate Band typically occurs in a long horizontal band running around a vessel, thus functioning less like a plant than a decorative vegetal motif. In most scenes within the dataset, however, the Foliate Band elements are only short segments, typically arranged vertically, that suggest small plants or sprigs rather than a decorative vegetal motif. The two forms of Foliate Band occurring with rows of rosettes on the ivory mirror handle NM 2898, however, are rather more decorative than suggestive of individual plants.

Finally, it should be noted that although these elements bear resemblance to the same ceramic motif, Foliate Band, this does not necessarily imply that they are representative of some single species; all are narrow and linear with repeating leaf-like units, but variety exists among them in the form of their leaves, in whether or not stems are indicated, and in how precisely these leaves attach to the stems when stems are indicated. It is also possible in the case of the most stylized examples that the elements do not necessarily represent a particular real-world plant referent but are perhaps just meant to suggest vegetation generally.³⁷

Other Vegetal Element Type 4: “Lanceolate” element with dotted border (Figure 1.28)

On the metal signet ring CMS I.127, squills and Foliate Band elements occur together with an unusual vegetal element composed of a central linear unit made up of individual segments with curved upper and lower borders stacked on top of one another. This central unit is outlined by a dotted line, forming a “lanceolate” shape that swells at the center and comes to a

³⁷ It has been suggested that the sprig from the hair of the “Wounded Woman” from the adyton of Xeste 3 is identifiable as the species “olive.” Niemeier recognizes “Olive/Myrthe” as a separate motif (Motif 16), but some of the examples of this motif that he illustrates bear a close resemblance to Foliate Band (or Niemeier’s “Blattband”). It therefore seems appropriate to recognize this element as having the same characteristic qualities of the other foliate elements we have grouped together, while also recognizing that it is possible to suggest a species for this particular example.

point at both ends. At the base and roughly one-quarter of the way up the element are two short horizontal line segments, setting off the bottom portion of the plant from everything above it.

Other Vegetal Element Type 5: Stems and leaves (Figure 1.29)

Two metal signet rings, CMS I.086 and CMS VS1B.114, include vegetal elements composed of short stems with elongated, leaf-like dots that spring out from the stem and are also depicted above the upper end of the stem. On CMS I.086, where the vegetal elements are held in the hands of female figures, the stems are simple, short line segments. On CMS VS1B.114, the stem branches and the leaves spring out from the upper portions of the stem. On this scene, the combination of the units may be intended to suggest an immature tree, but this young tree is different from the other immature trees discussed above and is best classified with CMS I.086 according to its units.

Other Vegetal Element Type 6: Sheaves (Figure 1.30)

Two objects from Mycenae—a fresco fragment from the Room of the Frescoes and the ivory plaque NM 2473 from Chamber Tomb 49—include vegetal elements resembling sheaves that are clutched by female figures. These vegetal elements take the form of fanning clumps of individually articulated lines capped by wider heads. In the fresco fragments from the Room of the Frescoes, these “clumps” are painted red.

Other Vegetal Element Type 7: Reeds with rounded foliage (Figure 1.31)

Fresco fragments from Ayia Triada and the gold signet ring CMS VI.281 include short vegetal elements with multiple thick, long leaves with rounded ends. In the example from Ayia Triada and the larger of the two vegetal elements of this type from CMS VI.281, one leaf is located at the top and center of the short plant with two leaves just beside it and other leaves lower down on the plant. The long leaves are not evidently attached to any sort of central stem.

Other Vegetal Element Type 8: Reed or grass (Figure 1.32)

On one of the two Ayia Triada sealings from a metal ring that are identified as CMS II.6.001, a vegetal element is evident at the base of the cult structure towards which the female figures move. The element is made up of long leaves spreading upwards and outwards in three V-shaped pairs stacked on top of one another with a single leaf projecting from the center of the uppermost V. Unlike the stacked V-shaped units of the Foliate Band elements, these V-shaped elements do not create a narrow, linear, and rigid vegetal element. The element bears a strong resemblance to FM 16, “Reed or Grass” (especially 16.2-4), and Niemeier’s Palace Style motif 26, “Schilf.”

Other Vegetal Element Type 9: Bushy, foliate “Dreiblatt” (Figure 1.33)

An uncommon vegetal element fills the space between the final processional female figure and the edge of the pictorial field on the gold signet ring CMS I.086 from Mycenae. The element is composed of three bushy, tear-drop shaped leaves or foliate clumps, outlined by short line segments or “spikes,” and radiating from a small, roughly elliptical base. The leaves or clumps are positioned in a “Dreiblatt” arrangement, with a central leaf and two flanking side leaves; however, the side leaves are slightly larger than the central leaf, which is atypical of the standard “Dreiblatt” arrangement. This vegetal element has parallels on a hard stone seal, CMS IX.125, where it occurs above a contorted bull (with the point of meeting of the leaves partially obscured by the bull), and also in a smaller version in the landscape below the bull. On a metal signet ring, CMS I.058, this same motif occurs atop a trunk, flanked by two quadrupeds in what Furumark identifies as an “Oriental scheme.”³⁸ The addition of a trunk to this motif results in an element resembling Palm II. The pairs of lines around the necks of the quadrupeds (collars?) strengthen this impression, suggesting the tongue-like fronds that typically hang down from

³⁸ Furumark 1972: 200, 278.

Palm II elements. This “Oriental scheme” is repeated in CMS XI.095 where the motif is reduced to its basic shape—the outline of a “Dreiblatt” and an indication of the point from which all three leaves radiate. In all three of these examples, the side leaves are as large as or larger than the central leaf as on CMS I.086. Notably, the element CMS I.086 has been rotated 90 degrees counterclockwise from its standard orientation.

Other Vegetal Element Type 10: Bulb with branching leaves (Figure 1.34)

The soft stone seal XII.276b depicts an unusual composite creature with the head of a horned animal (a goat?), the wings of a bird, a flounced kilt formed by an unusual vegetal element, and legs projecting from below the kilt. The vegetal element is made up of a central bulb-like unit, which hangs between the legs of the figure and from which sprout four curving lines—two to the left and two to the right—with smaller line segments rising up off of these at a roughly 90 degree angle. Each branching line seems to form a flounce of a kilt coming to a point formed by the bulb (see Chapter 3, p.134).

Other Vegetal Element Type 11: Cordiform/ “ivy” leaves (Figure 1.35)

Cordiform leaves, which may be intended to suggest ivy leaves, are associated with women on four painted terracotta objects (three of the Tanagra larnakes and a LH IIA jug from Routsis) and in a fresco fragment group from Pylos. These leaves are similar insofar as each is heart-shaped, but they differ with respect to their precise form and their internal detail.

On two of the Tanagra larnakes, ivy leaves “float” with their pointed end down, between female figures with upraised arms, while on a third larnax, coming from Tomb 6, six ivy leaves are stacked with their points up, framing the female figures. The differences in the units and the manner of presentation of these leaves seem to relate to the presentation of the female figures with which they are associated. On the larnax identified by Vermeule as Larnax 3, a line has

been added to the lobed end of the leaves creating a sort of band across the top of the leaf similar to the band across the shoulders and the costumes of the female figures. On the larnax from Tomb 6, the shape of the upward-pointing ivy leaves is delineated on each side by a band outlined in black paint and filled in with a lighter color; similarly the arms of the female figures, which are raised upwards forming roughly the same shape as the two sides of the ivy leaf, are painted and filled in with this same color.

An ivy leaf on fresco fragment 53d H nws from Pylos is shown in association with the white-painted wrist of a female figure. Though it is difficult to discern from the published image, the object is green with a “black barred yellow center,” according to Mable Lang.³⁹

One final and particularly noteworthy form of ivy leaf occurs on a LH IIA jug from Routsis (NM8375) of the Minoanizing “Arcade group.”⁴⁰ The point of the ivy leaf is exaggerated into a pronounced stalk that is rounded at the tip, the lobed end is formed by two volutes with dark dots in the center, and the border of the leaf has been outlined with dots. As we will argue in Chapter 3, these specific details of the leaf cause the motif, in combination with the pendant motif (FM 38) to which it is joined, to suggest the form of the female body (see Chapter 3, p. 128).

Other Vegetal Element Type 12: Curving leaves, possible Palm II units (Figure 1.36)

Two of the ivory mirror handles from Mycenaean burial contexts, NM 2899 from Chamber Tomb 55 and NM 2900 from the Tholos of Clytemnestra, include tightly curving leaves, originally in pairs (with both preserved on NM 2899 and only one preserved on NM 2900), at the top of the handle and below the rectangular field in which female figures are

³⁹ Lang 1969: 91. Lang also notes that the arrangement of the leaf near the wrist suggests that the ivy is being carried, like the bouquets of roses that occur in the same fragment group, and the existence of similar, non-joining fragments further suggests the possibility of an ivy bouquet.

⁴⁰ Mountjoy 1999: 321.

depicted. On both artifacts, a line runs down the middle of each leaf, following the leaf's curvature and dividing the leaf in half; numerous diagonal or slightly curving lines radiate off of this central line. Divided in this way, the leaves resemble fronds, and they bear resemblance to the more dramatically curved leaves flanking fully articulated Palm II elements on other ivory objects (FM 15 a, b). Remarkably, young girls fill the space above these leaves which, in fully articulated depictions of palms, would ordinarily be occupied by young foliage in the form of a "Dreiblatt" (see Chapter 3, p. 130).

Other Vegetal Element Type 13: Stems for palm fronds(?) (Figure 1.37)

On the unusual ivory signet ring from Phylakopi, CMS I.410, there occurs a vegetal element composed of five short, parallel, curving line segments with two shorter parallel line segments intersecting with the bottoms of the two outermost curving lines at a 90-degree angle. This element can be understood best in the context of the entire scene depicted on CMS I.410: on the opposite side of the central female figure is a group of Foliate Band elements with short, linear leaves radiating off of stems indicated by double parallel curving lines; a fifth curving line, without short linear segments radiating off of it occurs together with these elements, for a total of five curving lines. At the bottom of the two curving lines forming the stem of the outermost foliate-band-like element are two short line segments oriented at a 90-degree angle to the base of the curving lines. The unusual vegetal element on the opposite side of the female figure might therefore be interpreted as the five stems, without leaves, of the more developed frond-like elements occurring on the opposite side of the scene.

Other Vegetal Element Type 14: "Saw branch" (Figure 1.38)

An unusual soft stone seal CMS X.270 contains multiple branch-like elements composed of long line segments each with numerous shorter line segments extending outward to one side at

a 90-degree angle. Branches of this type are not unusual in MM II glyptic iconography and have been labeled “saw branches” in Maria Anastasiadou’s forthcoming study of Middle Minoan three-sided prisms in CMS Beiheft 9.⁴¹

Other Vegetal Element Type 15: Long stick/staff with potential foliage at top (Figure 1.39)

The soft stone seal CMS XI.347 depicts a long, straight stick or staff with what appears to be individual leaves or knobs projecting off of it beginning roughly two-thirds of the way from the top. The element has not been classified as a tree here for two reasons: first, the artist seems to emphasize that the element does not grow from the ground (or anywhere) by juxtaposing it with a vegetal element shown growing from an articulated ground line; secondly, the element has very little—if any—foliage and no branching limbs to identify it as a tree.

Other Vegetal Element Type 16: Staff with vegetal finial (Figure 1.40)

The metal signet ring CMS V.173 includes a long, straight staff-like object crowned by a “Dreiblatt” motif. While the vegetal element is similar to that which appears on the hard stone seal CMS XIII.039 atop an altar between two griffins (Figure 1.11 F), the two side leaves on that motif are longer, more narrow, and flaring, making the top portion appear more papyriform. The side leaves on the vegetal finial on the element in CMS V.173 are shorter, more rounded, and less suggestive of papyrus, placing the element in a class of its own—and causing it to resemble the garlanded female figures in the scene (see Figure 2.21 D.i, p.246).

Too Worn or Too Small to Establish Type (Table 1.1)

Finally, ten scenes contain elements that appear to be made up of vegetal units but that are too worn or too small to determine their type. Those scenes are enumerated in Table 1.1.

⁴¹ Maria Anastasiadou, personal communication, December 2010.

Concluding Comments

This chapter has set forth a formal typology of the vegetal elements that appear in association with female figures within the dataset, defining the “vegetal vocabulary” of the “language of women and flora.” Heavy in description and detail though this chapter may be, it represents the results of the first and crucial step in my engagement with the “language of women and flora” and with matters of iconographic morphology. This exercise established the range of tree, flower, and plant types that occur in association with female figures through the classification of the elements, and it brought me an awareness of the possibilities that exist within the iconography for rendering different units for each type of vegetal element. Equally importantly, however, this examination of the units of vegetal elements prepared me—and hopefully the reader, as well—to think about the female figure in a similar fashion, as collection of variable and manipulatable units which, may similarly convey meaning concerning the identity of the element, and which can similarly be examined in systematic and methodical fashion—a task we will take up in the following pages.

CHAPTER 2

Maidens, Matrons, and Morphemes: The Female Figure and Her Units

Continuing our morphological analysis, we turn to the second element of the pictorial vocabulary, the female figure and her component units. A morphological examination of the female body has the potential to reveal a vast amount of information concerning the iconographic female figure: basic biological information, social identity as it is performed on and by the body, and perhaps also artistic intention. Most basically, the presence or absence, the size, and the form of different anatomical units of the body may convey information about the biological identity of an individual, namely sex (here, all girls and women) and physical maturity. Beyond expressing basic biological information, however, the body also serves as a locus for the construction and performance of identity—what Judith Butler has termed “performativity”¹—and may thus be encoded with important information concerning the social identities of the female figures within the dataset. Because an individual can perform aspects of her social identity such as her gender, age group, social class, marital status, and occupation (to name just a few examples, all of which could be revealing for our examination of the women who occur together with vegetal elements) through the manipulation of her hair, the selective concealing or exposing of particular body parts, and the adornment of the body with particular garments and accessories, the body may act as a sort of personal signifier of an individual’s identity.² And although we are rather limited in the extent to which we can decipher this culturally and historically specific code, we may at least

¹ Butler 1990. See also, German 2000: 7-25 for a general discussion of Butler’s theories as they may be applied to LBA Aegean iconography within glyptic scenes.

² We will illustrate this point by exploring select contemporary examples of how manipulation and presentation of the body convey social meaning in some of the discussions of specific units. See, for instance, the discussion of hairstyle below at p. 60.

make some progress by grouping female figures according to their similar units in an attempt to get at similarities in iconographic significance. Finally, both the form of bodily units and, more basically, the presence or absence of units of the body may also indicate artistic intention. When particular units are emphasized in some manner, ignored altogether, included instead of other units, or depicted in such a fashion that they do not seem to reflect any obvious real-world referents, such choices may reflect artistic intention and thus may shed light on important qualities of the figure and even on the meaning of entire scenes.

In examining the female figures of the dataset and their constituent units in order to access the various potential meanings communicated by the clothed female body, we will look first to the anatomical units of the body from the top of the head down to the feet, considering the hair as it is arranged and styled, the breasts and chest as they are used to indicate physical maturity and as they are exposed or concealed, and the legs and feet as they are selectively exposed below the clothing. We will then look at the variable accessories of the body—first the clothing, and then the hats, hair ornaments, and jewelry—to examine what groups can be identified based on the presence or absence of these units and the various forms these units take. Finally we will consider two variable qualities of the female figure as a whole: relative size and pose.

“Had we but world enough, and time,” to quote the metaphysical poet Andrew Marvell, we could potentially dedicate “An age at least to each part” of the body and catalogue every unit of the female figure in exhaustive detail.³ We do not, however, have such unlimited time, nor

³The sexually charged message of the poem aside, the first stanza of Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress” seems too appropriate to the present situation not to be quoted at greater length here: “Had we but world enough, and time/...An hundred years should go to praise/ Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze;/ Two hundred to adore each breast./ But thirty thousand to the rest.” Even examining the units of the body as we do here in a rather abbreviated form, the process of analysis took almost ten weeks; while thirty thousand years may be an excessive estimate, one could truly spend years examining the morphology of the female body in LBA Aegean iconography in exhaustive detail.

would so exhaustive an examination necessarily be particularly illuminating for the purposes of this present project. While cataloguing variation on every millimeter of the female figure could *perhaps* prove useful to some future study, for the purpose of this study we will focus on the units of the iconographic body in which variation is most obvious and therefore more likely to be laden with semiotic significance. We will consider units like hairstyles and clothing, which can be categorized into several clear-cut and potentially meaningful groups, while ignoring seemingly less significant factors such as slight variation in the thickness of the lower abdomen from one figure to the next, and variables like the gestures of female figures, which, though potentially significant, would not add much to our understanding of our female figures given the scholarly quagmire that previous studies have proven the topic of gesture to be.⁴ In the process of examining the selected units of the body, our emphasis will be placed less on discussing in detail the full range of variation possible for each unit, and more on indentifying recurring unit types and grouping female figures according to common units in hopes of getting at common iconographic significance. We will, however, also make note of remarkable outliers which deviate from the standard categories or from what might be possible in the real world, in hopes of shedding light on possible artistic intention. Finally, as much as possible, we will seek to let the images themselves “do the talking.”

⁴ Michael Wedde has argued that attempts to relate gesture to distinctions in divine vs. mortal identity, for example, are altogether misguided (Wedde 1995b: 495) and that the same gesture may be used by figures in apparently different contexts (see, for instance, his examination of the “adoration gesture”) and thus does not necessarily carry a single, invariable meaning from scene to scene or even scene type to scene type (Wedde 1999). Wedde’s scholarship has revealed that further systematic study of gesture is required, and should his long-awaited *Talking Hands* ever be completed and published, this could lead to major steps forward in the study of gesture in LBA Aegean iconography.

2.1 Units of the Body

Hair

The hair of female figures provides a particularly good starting point for our examination of the variable units of the female body and the iconographic significance these might carry. Ethnographic literature on the manipulation of hair as a powerfully charged symbol of social identity in “traditional societies” abounds,⁵ but even in our own non-traditional Western society, there exist well-established conventions of hairstyle as it relates to different categories of social identity. These categories may include gender (long hair is thought more appropriate for women than men, while women who wear their hair cropped short are often thought masculine), age (pigtails are thought appropriate only for young girls, and “helmet hair” is characteristic of “old ladies”), socio-economic class (the mullet, for instance, is often associated with blue-collar workers), occupation (consider the crew cuts of military men), religious affiliation (e.g., the requisite clean-cut hair of Mormon males),⁶ and identification with particular subcultures (e.g., the long, straight bangs worn swept across the eyes by youths identifying with the twenty-first-century “emo” subculture), to name but a few examples familiar to the modern reader. Indeed, even in the modern Western world, hair remains a (normally) highly visible and easily manipulated unit or “morpheme” of the body, which may convey information concerning many different aspects of an individual’s social identity.

⁵ See Doumas 2000: 979 for several references.

⁶ The reasons behind the requirement that Mormon men keep their hair short and their faces shaved, as explained in 1971 by Dallin Oaks, president of Brigham Young University, speak clearly to the semiotic power of hair in modern society. Oaks explains that because long hair on men is associated with drug culture, hippies, and rebellion against authority, Mormon men are to wear their hair short lest they send the wrong message and be led into temptation by someone mistaking these men to be something they are not (Oaks 1971). Though the product of a much more traditional culture than modern Western society, the long, curly sidelocks/sideburns, or “peyos” of Orthodox Jews provide another clear example of the semiotic significance of hair that may be familiar to modern readers; the side locks of Yemenite Jews are even known as “simanim,” meaning signs, because of their semiotic significance as indicators of the wearer’s Jewish identity (Parfitt 1996: 97).

The work of scholars like Ellen Davis and Robert Koehl, Christos Doumas, and Anne Chapin make clear that the LBA Aegean world presents no exception to this common cultural phenomenon of manipulating the hair to convey social meaning. Davis, Koehl, Doumas, and Chapin have examined the role of hair and hairstyling as they relate to age, gender, rites of passage, and possibly also social class in specific works of Minoan and Theran art.⁷ Davis and Koehl have both made strong arguments for the existence of gender-specific and age-determined hair-cutting conventions for pre-pubescent and pubescent youth for at least some level(s) of Theran and Minoan society.

Because hairstyles apparently carry meaning with respect to the social categories of age and gender in some scenes from the LBA Aegean iconographic tradition, and because, as our examples have illustrated, hair is often endowed with significance concerning many other social categories as well (even if these are not manifested in the anatomy and thus not easily correlated with differences in hairstyle in the way that age and sex are), the hair of female figures appearing within the dataset is a particularly important variable to consider in our attempt to identify different groups of female figures and possible similarities in iconographic significance.

An examination of the hair of figures within the dataset reveals 16 types of hairstyle that appear on figures from more than one scene or object within the dataset (seven of which occur in more than one medium), and an additional 25 hairstyles which occur on female figures from only one scene or object. These hairstyles are illustrated and catalogued in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 in the appendix, and each style is labeled with a descriptive title identifying the defining qualities or features of each style as we have grouped them. Because of the sheer number of hairstyles, we will let the grouped images and their accompanying captions speak for themselves and will

⁷ Davis 1986, Koehl 1986, Doumas 2000, Chapin 1997-2001. Only Koehl 1986 considers class associations and he does so only in passing and only with respect to men.

discuss recurring hairstyles that seem to be of particular relevance with respect to the association of female figures and vegetal elements in Chapters 3.

It is important to note that hair is not always indicated: 18 female figures from 11 glyptic objects, enumerated in Table 2.1 A, are depicted with no hair at all despite being depicted with human heads.⁸ Typically only when the head is rendered with very little detail will it be depicted without any hair at all, though a number of figures with abstracted heads are depicted with hair.⁹ Of the composite figures within the dataset that include female human units, those without human heads are also depicted—reasonably enough—without human hair (Table 2.1 B).

Preservation also affects our ability to assess hairstyle or the presence or absence of hair. Figures from five objects within the dataset are apparently depicted with hair, but due to their poor state of preservation, the style of the hair cannot be determined (Table 2.1 C). The state of preservation for female figures on 26 objects is such that we cannot determine if hair was present or not (Table 2.1 D)

For a final group (Table 2.1 E), factors other than preservation—namely the presence of ambiguous marks near the head or the poor quality of the published image of the object—make it impossible to say conclusively whether or not hair was present.

⁸ The reader should note that each female figure is listed individually in these tables; the number of objects or scenes can be determined by looking to the object numbers or names.

⁹ E. Kyriakidis refers to these heads as “aniconic” or “semi-aniconic” depending on how little detail is shown. He also argues quite convincingly that in LM I glyptic the decision to depict heads in this manner was motivated by stylistic or logistical concerns rather than symbolic concerns (Kyriakidis 2004). For this reason, we will not focus on the head and its treatment in varying degrees of detail as a major variable unit with respect to the dataset.

Breasts

Moving down the body, we turn now to the breasts, which in their presence or absence, their size, and their exposure may potentially convey important information about the female figure.

Most basically, because breast development is part and parcel of the process of physical maturation, the rendering of the breasts may, in some cases, shed light on the physical maturity of the female figure. When well-developed breasts are indicated on a female figure (as they are on the female figures from the dataset enumerated in Table 2.2), the figure can be determined to have reached sexual maturity, and in some cases, the treatment of the well-developed breast(s) may also indicate how youthful the sexually mature female figure is. Well-developed, but pendulous or sagging breasts, as on the “Bending Woman” from the House of the Ladies at Akrotiri, suggest that a figure is not a nubile young maiden, but is rather more advanced in years (Figure 2.3 A). The frescoes from Xeste 3 also suggest that distinctions in the fullness or relative size of the well-developed-but-not-yet-sagging breasts of sexually mature women may also correspond with distinctions in age. The youthful but sexually mature young women of Xeste 3—the “Goddess,” the “Necklace Swinger,” and the “Wounded Woman”—for example, are depicted with breasts that are well-developed but not remarkably full or large (Figure 2.3B), while the “Older Woman with the Red Mantle” from Xeste Room 3b, is depicted with a remarkably full breast (Figure 2.3C). It is possible that a similar distinction also occurs between the flower-carrying figures with frontal torsos and partially obscured chests and the pyxis-carrying figure(s) with profile torso(s) and exaggeratedly large breast(s) from the “Frauenfries” fresco at Thebes (Figure 2.4). While glyptic artists did not seem to have explored differences in the relative size of fully developed breasts frequently, at least one scene within the dataset—

CMS II.3.326—possibly suggests distinctions in maturity among women with well-developed breasts on the basis of relative breast size and corresponding differences in relative scale (Figure 2.5). In all, however, distinctions in size of developed breast among female figures within the same scene are relatively uncommon.¹⁰ When they do occur, however, distinctions in breast size may be significant with respect to age/maturity, especially when such variations correspond with other distinctions that may indicate differences in age.

Well-developed breasts, however, are not always indicated. The breast area may be blocked by the position of the arms, it may be obviously concealed beneath clothing, or it may be visible but appear mostly flat. When a female figure's chest is depicted without obvious or visible, well-developed breasts, it does not necessarily mean that the figure is sexually immature; factors other than an intention to convey information concerning age or maturity—for instance, the desire to emphasize some other aspect of the female figure (such as her gesture or her clothes which happen to conceal the breasts)—may explain why many individuals are depicted without obvious or visible breasts. In a few instances, however, the lack of well-developed breasts does seem to carry particular significance with respect to the physical maturity of female figures. Specifically, the depiction of a chest as obviously exposed but altogether flat or only swelling slightly, and perhaps with small nipples, as on the “Saffron Gatherers” from Xeste 3, indicates that the breasts are undeveloped or newly developing and that the figure is thus prepubescent or in the early stages of puberty (Figure 2.7).¹¹ In two other scenes (Figures 2.8 and 2.9), small-scale female figures depicted without any indication of developed breasts (either with the chest area blocked, as on CMS I.017, or fully visible and breast-less, as on CMS II.6.001) occur in

¹⁰ One other scene within the data set, the hard stone seal CMS VS3.080 (Figure 2.6) seems to suggest a distinction in breast size. Here, however, the difference in size is fairly small and does not correspond with other distinctions between the female figures, leaving it unclear whether or not breast size here is significant.

¹¹ See Chapin 1997-2000 which explores the very nuanced stages of breast development indicated on the chests of the “Saffron Gatherers” of Xeste 3.

association with figures with large, full breasts and are depicted at less than half the size of these figures.¹² Together the absence of breasts and their small relative size seem to suggest that the smaller, breast-less figures are younger and less physically mature than their full-size, full-breasted companions.¹³

While the mere presence of the breast conveys information concerning age and sexual maturity, it is possible that the deliberate and selective exposure of the breasts carries additional meaning of some other sort. It is not, however, precisely clear what that meaning might be. Scholars have proposed that exposed breasts could represent fertility and maternal nourishment, sexual liberation, political authority (like that conveyed by the phallus in later Greek art), or simple matters of fashion,¹⁴ and it is possible that the significance surrounding the bared breast was complex, richly layered, and not limited to the literal associations of fertility and nourishment.¹⁵ Despite the fact that the significance of the exposed breast(s) remains unclear to us, it is worth making note of which female figures are indicated with their breasts prominently exposed; columns 3 and 4 of Table 2.2 identify the female figures that occur with prominently bared breasts and the numbers of bared breasts shown on each of these figures. It seems clear enough that when breasts are depicted, they are most often exposed. Figures with frontal torsos

¹² Relative size will be discussed in more detail below at pp. 109-113.

¹³ There are, however, seven scenes on metal signet rings and on the newly discovered ivory pyxis from Mochlos in which small-scale figures appear to float above scenes of religious rituals (see below, p. 110). These figures are almost universally depicted as breast-less, even though other female figures in the scenes may be depicted with prominent breasts. It is possible that the absence of breasts on these figures might be explained by their small scale and the potential artistic challenges that rendering breasts on such small figures might have presented; however, the fact that the floating female figure on the larger-scale Mochlos ivory pyxis is *apparently* depicted without breasts (if our poor quality image is to be trusted) although she is rendered larger than her floating glyptic counterparts suggests that technical limitations may not be *entirely* to blame. Because these figures are depicted on a different plane from the larger participants in the scene and are understood to represent deities, it also does not seem to follow necessarily that their breast-less chests mean that they are at an earlier stage of maturity than the breasted female mortal worshipers in the scene below, as is more plausibly the case for smaller, breast-less female figures depicted on the same ground-line and engaging in the same sort of activity as their well-developed counterparts. The artists seem to have had other reasons for depicting these floating figures without breasts.

¹⁴ Morris 2009: 243-5.

¹⁵ Morris 2009: 243.

are shown with two breasts exposed, except in six cases where one hand blocks one of the two breasts; figures with torsos rendered in full profile are shown with only one exposed breast; and torsos rendered in three-quarter profile may be shown with either one or two breasts, though three-quarter depictions with one breast are most common. On one female figure, however, the form of breasts is depicted beneath obvious clothing, and on an additional eight figures from five objects, the breasts are somewhat flattened against the chest, a manner of depiction that suggest they could perhaps be covered by thin cloth rather than fully exposed (although clothing may not be explicitly rendered). Female figures from an additional six objects wear garments with high necklines that conceal the breast area and any breasts that may be implied beneath, though their form is not explicitly shown (see discussion of clothing on torsos below, p.81). A few other remarkable female figures are depicted with well-formed breasts that are covered by clothing yet still clearly visible (Figures 2.10 and 2.11); that the artist chose both to depict clothing and to depict breasts in great detail through this clothing seems particularly noteworthy and potentially significant.

One final observation on breast exposure is also worth noting here: even when breasts are clearly exposed or fully visible through the clothing, not all breasts are shown with nipples and/or areolae (Table 2.2, column 4). The clearly exposed breasts of 32 female figures are depicted without obvious nipples or areolae,¹⁶ prominent though the breasts may be; the exposed breasts of five figures are possibly shown with small dots indicating nipples, and the exposed breasts of only 19 figures are depicted with clear indications of nipples and/or areolae. When

¹⁶ These account for the figures for which the central portion of the breast is preserved well enough to determine if a nipple or areola was originally indicated. Four 14 figures additional figures with exposed breasts, the breasts are not well enough preserved or the published image quality is too poor to determine if areolae or nipples were originally indicated.

nipples and or areolae are clearly depicted, there is also some variety in the degree to which these are emphasized: if particularly large or prominent, these may be of special significance.

Lower Legs, Ankles and Feet

Continuing down the body, we move from the breasts, which are sometimes depicted above the costume, to the legs, ankles, and feet, which are sometimes depicted below it. Just as the breasts of female figures can be exposed, not exposed, or simply not depicted, the lower legs, ankles, and feet similarly may be exposed to varying degrees below the clothing—or not depicted at all. Seven relatively clear-cut categories of leg exposure can be identified within the dataset and are illustrated in Figure 2.12. The legs, ankles, and feet may be completely concealed (or simply omitted) (Category A), or almost completely exposed (Category F), though on most figures these units are exposed to some degree between these two extremes.

In 36 scenes or objects within the dataset, the artist has made no attempt to depict any part of the feet, ankles, or lower legs projecting from beneath the clothing; the representation of the female figure stops at the bottom of her costume and although she may even be placed above an articulated ground line, no feet, ankles, or lower legs are indicated (Category A, Figure 2.12 A, Table 2.3 A). The majority of scenes, however, contain female figures with some portion of the feet, ankles, and/or lower legs shown.

Most basically, the artist can allow just the foot and nothing more—neither the ankle¹⁷ nor any portion of the lower leg—to peek out beneath the costume, as is the case in a total of ten scenes (Category B: Figure 2.12 B, Table 2.3 B).

In 14 scenes from the dataset, the costume is shortened only a little further to reveal the feet and the ankles, but nothing more (Category C: Figure 2.12 C, Table 2.3 C).

¹⁷ While ankle bones are sometimes clearly depicted, as on the “Wounded Woman” and the “Veiled Girl,” this is not always the case. For the purpose of this classification, we have defined “ankle” as the point at which the foot meets the lower leg and turns upward (where the ankle bone is depicted when it is shown).

The next level of exposure, revealing the feet, ankles, and bottom portion of the lower legs, is by far the most common among scenes of women with exposed feet/ankle/leg units, and is represented in 39 scenes within the dataset (Category D: Figure 2.12 D, Table 2.3 D).

A smaller number of scenes—seven in total—include one or more female figures with most or all of the lower legs exposed in addition to the feet and ankles (Category E: Figure 2.12 E, Table 2.12 E).

In one single scene, the unusual and possibly fraudulent metal signet ring CMS I.514 in which a smaller female figure wears a “male kilt” (see below, p. 91), the feet, ankles, all of the lower legs, and most of the upper legs are fully exposed—the greatest degree of exposure within the dataset (Category F: Figure 2.12 F, Table 2.3 F).

Finally and somewhat curiously, six glyptic examples depict just the lower legs projecting like prongs beneath the costume, with no feet attached to them and thus, by definition, no ankles either (Category G: Figure 2.12 G, Table 2.3 G).¹⁸

As with our consideration of the other units, either wear to or partial preservation of some objects within the dataset interferes with our ability to determine the presence or absence of feet, ankles, and lower legs for the female figures represented on or by those objects. These objects are listed in Tables 2.3 H, 2.3 I, 2.3 J, and 2.3 K based on how much the poor state of preservation allows us to surmise concerning the original depiction and exposure of the legs, ankles, and feet.

Precisely what we should make of these slight differences in the degree of exposure of the lower leg and feet or if they have one single, straightforward meaning is not immediately

¹⁸ In the case of CMS XIII.039 (and perhaps CMS X.270), this might be explained by the artist’s attempt to *imply* frontal feet for a fully frontal figure, rather than choosing feet rendered in profile as is otherwise standard in glyptic iconography; in the case of CMS VI.280 (FF 2), and VS3.080 (Figure 2.12 G), where the figures are fully depicted in profile, and CMS XIII.039 where the placement of the hip beneath the skirt suggests the lower portion of the body is rendered in profile, this explanation does not account for the peculiar absence of the feet.

clear. It is clear, however, that although these distinctions may seem inconsequential from a modern perspective, there are historical parallels for clear-cut but subtle differences in leg exposure being endowed with social significance; as recently as the Victorian period there existed rigid social conventions concerning skirt length in relation to a young girl's age, as is illustrated by Figure 2.12.2.¹⁹ Rehak has noted that age distinctions also seem to be at work in the length of the garments in the Akrotiri frescoes, with the younger girls in shorter kilts and robes and more mature young women in ankle-length robes.²⁰ This is an interesting pattern, but it does not seem to hold true for all figures we have identified as likely to be younger, such as the small figures from CMS II.6.001 who have no feet exposed, or those from CMS I.017 whose feet and legs are exposed in the same way as those of their full-scale companions. Indeed, it seems possible that these clear-cut groupings of females by garment length may carry meaning in particular instances or contexts but that their significance may not be universal throughout all LBA Aegean iconography, and different factors may play into the amount of leg and feet revealed from scene to scene.

2.2 Clothing

Turning from the anatomical body itself to the way the body is adorned and accessorized when presented publicly, we will look first to the variable clothing units in which female figures are depicted. This, too, is a potentially illuminating undertaking, for clothing plays a key role in the performance of social identity and can potentially signify a vast amount of information concerning the clothed individual and the activity in which she engages. As Elizabeth Wayland

¹⁹ The reader is asked to kindly forgive this minor inconsistency in numbering. This figure and the following were inadvertently both assigned the number 2.13, and the error was only recognized after all figure numbers had been placed within the text.

²⁰ Rehak 2007: 211.

Barber notes in her study of the production of cloth and clothing throughout history, “most clothing is worn for social reasons—to mark sex, age, marital status, wealth, rank, modesty (whatever that may be within a particular culture), place of origin, occupation, or occasion.”²¹

Textual evidence in the form of documents inscribed in Linear B indicates that women made the clothes in the LBA Aegean world,²² but given the semiotic significance attributed to clothing, the clothes may have “made” the women as well. Clearly, then, if we hope to shed light on the social identities of the female figures associated with vegetal elements within LBA Aegean iconography, we must take a close look at their clothing.

This is, however, no simple task. In studying the clothing of the Aegean world in the portion of the Late Bronze Age represented by the dataset, we face the challenge of making sense of snapshots from some five centuries of fashion, from three related but distinct cultural groups, rendered according to the conventions and constraints of several different media and, in some cases, perhaps also according to the variable fantasies of numerous individual artists. Added to these factors is also the reality that “Minoan-style” costume—itsself originally inspired by Near Eastern garb²³—appears on female figures decorating objects from throughout the LBA Aegean world; we cannot be sure that the costume was in fact worn throughout the LBA Aegean world (rather than simply imitated by Mycenaean artists looking to earlier Minoan art, for example),²⁴ nor can we be certain that the same costume type carried the same significance within Neopalatial Minoan, Later Minoan, Late Cycladic, and Mycenaean cultures or even throughout their individual iconographic corpora over time.

²¹ Barber 1994: 128.

²² Olsen 2009: 122-123.

²³ Jones 1998: 157.

²⁴ Paul Rehak has proposed on more than one occasion that Minoan-style costumes were simply imitated by Mycenaean artists, or that if they were worn they were “fossil” costumes that were only worn on special occasions “much as (medieval) gowns and hoods are still worn at colleges and universities for academic processions” (Rehak 1999: 194). See also Rehak’s question for Michael Wedde and Janice Crowley following Wedde 1995b.

Despite these challenges, LBA Aegean clothing has received much scholarly attention in recent decades, due in large part to the discovery of the remarkably well-preserved frescoes of Akrotiri and the meticulously rendered clothing of the female figures these portray. Through studies of the Akrotiri frescoes, other more fragmentary fresco remains, and terracotta figures and figurines, scholars have managed to identify and even recreate several of the articles of clothing that appear within the iconography.²⁵ Such scholarly endeavors have not always been without controversy or confusion; scholars sometimes disagree as to what exactly the iconography depicts, and even when there is general consensus as to the form of a particular garment, terminological confusion abounds (one scholar's "chemise," for example, is another's "robe" and yet another's "Minoan chiton"). Furthermore, even some of the most significant studies in the field are not without their own internal inconsistencies.²⁶ Nevertheless, previous scholarship on LBA Aegean clothing, and especially the significant studies and experimental garment reconstructions by Bernice Jones, prove particularly illuminating for our own consideration of the clothing in the dataset.

Jones' reconstructions and the previous scholarship these build upon have revealed that the standard "Minoan-style" ceremonial costume can, in fact, take several different forms. On the torso, the standard breast-exposing bodice with a deep, V-shaped neckline can constitute the upper portion of a full-length robe or a "Minoan chiton," as on the figures in the House of the Ladies and in Xeste 3, or it may perhaps be a separate, shorter bodice that is attached to a skirt as

²⁵ See, for instance, Jones 1998, 2000, and 2009.

²⁶ Specifically, the scholarship of Bernice Jones—though innovative, creative, and contributing much to LBA clothing studies—is sometimes frustratingly inconsistent. Jones' largest shortcoming is arguably that her scholarship is insufficiently self-referential. Understandably, Jones has revised some of her original ideas and reconstructions of costumes over the years, but she frequently is not explicit about when a new idea revises or undermines ideas set forth in her doctoral dissertation (Jones 1998), and making sense of how her studies all fit together is sometimes no easy task. That said, even in their inconsistencies her studies still present many ideas that shed light on the dataset, and we will make use of these here, attempting where possible to take into consideration the evolution of Jones' ideas and reconstructions throughout her scholarship.

part of a “Minoan two-part dress.”²⁷ Either way, Jones’ experimental reconstructions suggest that the form-fitting nature of the bodice was a product of artistic license: though skin-tight in the iconography, the open-fronted bodices of female garments were, in reality, probably loose enough so as not to inhibit movement as well as to prevent splitting.²⁸

Below the waist, the look of an ornamental “skirt” can also be created in one of several ways. A flaring, bell-shaped skirt may be worn, either sewn to the bodice as the second part of the “Minoan two-part dress,” or perhaps as a separate unit.²⁹ In many cases, this skirt is decorated with horizontal tiers of fabric, or “flounces,” sometimes with additional vertical striations. Alternatively, a flounced “female kilt” may be worn over the long robe, or “Minoan chiton,” wrapping around the waist, tying in the front, and typically coming to a point between the legs, as on the figures from the House of the Ladies and many of the female figures from Xeste 3.³⁰ The bottom of the chiton is often visible below the kilt so that the overall look is very skirt-like indeed; in some instances, however, the chiton under-layer is not depicted.³¹ By convention, the skirt or kilt is commonly rendered in frontal or three-quarter view, even when the legs and hips are depicted in full profile.³²

A girdle around the waist often completes the costume, and this too can take several forms. As Jones has noted, the girdle is typically thick and rolled and placed loose and low on the waist. It is often wrapped around the waist once or twice, and it is sometimes looped in the

²⁷ Jones 1998: 89.

²⁸ Jones 1998: 73.

²⁹ Jones 1998: 89. Jones 1998 generally argues against the independent skirt, but acknowledges that this “must remain an open question” (Jones 1998: 80, 83). In subsequent scholarship she argues that a skirt may sometimes form an intermediate layer between the kilt and the Minoan chiton (Jones 2009: 331-332), necessitating that the skirt be an independent layer. The dataset, which includes some female figures wearing skirts but no apparent bodices, seems to provide evidence for the possibility of skirts as independent units.

³⁰ Jones 1998: 169-211. For Jones’ revised reconstruction of the kilt, see Jones 2009.

³¹ Jones 1998: 192.

³² Jones 1998: 191.

front with the ends hanging down.³³ In the Akrotiri frescoes, belts or girdles of a different sort—so-called “cord-belts” made of cords that wrap around the waist once or twice and tie in the back or at the side—are more common.

In addition to these standard elements of the Minoan-style costume, a number of other articles of clothing appearing in the iconography have been noted by Jones and other scholars and are of relevance to the dataset. Thick mantles can be worn draped over one shoulder and across the body in more than one fashion. “Frontless blouses” are sometimes worn over robes or perhaps by themselves.³⁴ In other ceremonial scenes, scholars have also identified “string skirts” of hanging ribbons attached to a girdle or waistband and—on objects of Mycenaean and Monopalatial Minoan provenance—skirts with rounded bottoms apparently made of animal hide (probably sheep or goat skins). Simple, non-flounced and unornamented skirts and bodices are worn in what appear to be non-ceremonial contexts, as are striped robes.³⁵ In Mainland iconography, simple, gender-neutral robes are common, and tops with high, horizontal necklines also appear. This list is hardly exhaustive, but it makes clear the fact that LBA Aegean garments come in many forms within the iconography.

In addition to taking many different forms, garments rendered in polychromatic media, especially frescoes, also appear in different colors (yellows, reds, and blues in many different shades), fabrics (linen of various degrees of transparency and wool), and woven patterns. The form, color, fabric, and pattern of a garment might all potentially function to communicate information about the individual the garment adorns.

³³ Jones 1998: 83.

³⁴ Jones 2009: 329-331. Elsewhere in the scholarship these are referred to as “bolero jackets,” but as Jones points out, scholars are quick to see “bolero jackets” wherever breasts are exposed, although in many depictions the open-fronted bodice of a robe is clearly shown. Without discussing how it may relate to the proposed “bolero jacket,” worn separately, Jones proposes a “frontless blouse” over-layer in her reconstruction of the “Mykenaiia” fresco from Mycenae, and notes that a similar garment appears on the Ayia Triada Sarcophagus as well.

³⁵ Morgan 1988: 99.

With this wide range of possible variation established, we turn now to the clothed female figures of the dataset. We will examine the body of these figures as three “clothe-able” divisions which arise out of the common “Minoan-style” costume: the torso and arms above the waist, the waist itself, and the hips and legs below. To these three divisions of the body, the artist could add clothing “units” of different forms, patterns, colors, and materials. Looking primarily to the form of the clothing units, but also, as relevant, to patterns, to colors, and occasionally to the material types suggested, we will group female figures together according to similarities in their costumes in an effort to get at possible similarities in iconographic significance and perhaps also artistic intention.

Clothing above the Waist: The Torso and Arms

If and how clothing is depicted on a female figure’s torso and arms depends in large part on the medium in which the figure is depicted. Clothing above the waist is *de rigueur* for female figures in fresco scenes, for example, where form-fitting clothing can be set off from the skin simply by the use of colored paint against the female figure’s white skin. All 20 of the fresco figures from the dataset for which the torsos are preserved are depicted with some form of clothing above the waist. For female figures within the dataset executed in other painted media, including terracotta figures, painted terracotta vessels, larnakes, and the relevant side of the Ayia Triada sarcophagus, clothing above the waist is also very common, and is indicated by outlines on or around the torso and arms as well as painted patterns and solid colors on the torso or arms.³⁶

³⁶ At least one female figure in the dataset occurring on a painted medium, the female figure holding a flower on the Kourion Window Krater (Cat. No.96), cannot be definitively said to be depicted with clothing on the torso, as her torso area is simply outlined and not filled in with any color or pattern or with any internal lines suggesting the form of clothing. Her torso thus appears just like the arms and the face, and we cannot be certain it was clothed. For most of the female figures in the dataset from painted media, however, paint is used to indicate clothing in one or another of the manners enumerated above. See Table 2.4 A for a list of all the female figures from the dataset with clothing

In small-scale and achromatic glyptic media, bodices and other garments above the waist had to be rendered as some sort of outline or pattern on or around the torso and/or the arms, and these garments are depicted much less commonly. Of the soft stone seals within the dataset, clothing is only clearly indicated on one female figure; this fact is likely due to the limitations of the medium: the tools used for carving soft stone seals were imprecise and allowed for minimal detail to be indicated on the torso. Most female figures on soft stone seals in the dataset are depicted with solid masses of torsos, which might be intended to represent fully covered torsos but which cannot be determined to be clothed with any degree of certainty. Both hard stone seals and metal signet rings, however, were created using tools that allowed for the level of precision and detail necessary to depict outlines and patterns around the torsos and arms; the fact that clothing is indicated in this way on 23 female figures from 12 hard stone seals and metal signet rings offers clear evidence for this. And yet, clothing above the waist is hardly standard in these media: at least 20 female figures from hard stone seals and metal signet rings are depicted with well-preserved torsos and no obvious indications of clothing, even though some of these figures occur in the very same scene with female figures having indications of clothing on their torsos. That glyptic artists who produced hard stone seals and metal signet rings clearly had the capacity to depict clothing on the torso and arms but chose to do so only selectively thus seems potentially significant and worthy of special attention as we proceed with this analysis.

Having discussed the most basic variable concerning clothing on the torso and arms—whether or not such clothing is indicated at all—we might also consider some variable aspects of the clothing which *is* depicted. It is impossible to catalogue the full range in variation in the

obviously indicated on the torsos and Table 2.4 B for a list of the figures for whom it cannot be determined whether or not clothing is or was originally present on the torso.

bodices and other garments worn on the torso, but it is worth examining a few of the more obvious variables in the depiction and the groups that emerge on the basis of those variables.

Layers of Clothing above the Waist (Table 2.4 A)

Perhaps most basically, the number of layers of clothing depicted on the torso and/or the arms is not the same on all female figures. In almost every scene within the dataset where clothing is depicted on the torso, only one layer of clothing is indicated. There are, however, a small number of scenes or objects in painted media in which female figures appear to wear more than one layer of clothing above their waists.

Four female figures from three fresco scenes wear mantles draped over their proper right shoulders (Cat. Nos. 111, 113, 117) on top of a sleeved under-layer. On two of these figures—the “Priestess” from the West House at Akrotiri and the “Goddess with Sheaves” from the Room of the Fresco at Mycenae—the mantle drapes across the upper portion of the chest and provides a significant amount of coverage. The mantles on the older female figures from Xeste 3, Room 3b, in contrast, seem to hang straight down from the figures’ right shoulders and do not cover the left side of the torso.

A second type of outer-layer, termed an “open fronted-blouse” by Jones, appears on the scene from the Ayia Triada Sarcophagus that is included within the dataset (Side B, Cat. No. 102). Female Figure 5 wears this garment over a long robe (as do the similarly robed female figures on the opposite side, and as the poorly preserved Female Figures 1-4 from Side B presumably did as well). Female Figure 6 in the hide skirt also wears this open-fronted blouse, but it is unclear from her stance whether she wears a white under-layer beneath this white open-fronted blouse or if the white paint indicates an exposed torso with the open-fronted blouse being the only layer of clothing above the waist.

The terracotta figurine with a downward-hanging waz-lily pendant from the Lower Citadel at Tiryns (Cat. No. 107) wears a different arrangement of two layers: two full-length robes, one of which is sewn together high enough at the center to cover the breasts (which, as we have already noted, are nevertheless still indicated prominently both in plastic modeling and in paint) while the second hangs over the under layer, open to the ground.

Finally, the “Veiled Girl” from the adyton of Xeste 3 wears only one layer of clothing directly in contact with her torso, but holds around herself a second layer, a diaphanous yellow veil with red dots that hangs down to her ankles (Cat. No. 110).

Sleeves (Table 2.4_A)

The sleeves are the second major variable concerning clothing on the torsos. When clothing is depicted above the waist, sleeves are depicted or indicated in almost all cases, but they come in a variety of lengths, and they can be depicted in a variety of ways, especially in glyptic media.

The sleeves of most female figures terminate at some point on the upper arm below the shoulder and at or above the elbow; more specific, clear-cut subgroups could not be determined among these figures. A smaller number of figures, however, wear sleeves that continue beyond the elbow. The garments worn by at least two female figures—the “Necklace Swinger” and the “Wounded Woman” from Xeste 3, who wear similar loose diaphanous tops—fall slightly below the elbows towards the top of the lower arm.³⁷ Additionally, three female figures from metal signet rings and two terracotta figurines seem to wear long sleeves that reach all or most of the way to the wrist. It is possible, however, that on the figures in glyptic the cuff-like lines at the wrist are simply bracelets and that while the artist has indicated clothing on the torso he has not

³⁷ I say “at least two figures” here, because one other figure, a metal signet ring, FF 2 from CMS I.086, discussed below, presents a somewhat unclear case. The figure is somewhat curiously depicted with one sleeve of a length similar to that of the “Necklace Swinger and the Wounded Woman” and one sleeve at her elbow. See below p. 79.

indicated where the sleeves terminate. In addition to these groups there exists a small group of figures for which sleeve length cannot easily be determined, despite the relatively good state of preservation of the torso, as well as an additional group of female figures with obvious clothing on the torso or arms, but for which the state of preservation does not allow sleeve length to be determined. Figures are classified according to these groups in Table 2.4 A.

In addition to these differences in sleeve length, differences in how the presence of a sleeve is indicated can be observed from one figure to another and from one medium to another. Although a thorough discussion and cataloguing of the various techniques used to indicate the sleeves for each clothed figure in the dataset would not be of particular relevance or value to this project, it is worth briefly making note of what these various techniques of representation are and what an examination of the sleeves might tell us.

First the techniques: depending on the medium he was working in, it appears that the artist generally chose to indicate a sleeve by 1) filling in some portion of the otherwise white arm with colored paint to indicate that it is covered with material; 2) using a pattern to distinguish the sleeve from the smooth skin of the arm below; 3) depicting a small line or “cuff” on the arm to indicate the bottom of the sleeve; 4) depicting a line at the top edge of the arm or, in glyptic, just above the arm to indicate the upper edge of the sleeve and perhaps more specifically, the decorative band that seems to have run along the top of the arm on many LBA Aegean robes; and, finally and least commonly, 5) depicting the sleeve as a solid mass that is wider than the arm, so that the presence of a sleeve is made obvious by the difference in the width of the edge of the sleeve and the arm emerging from it (e.g., HM 1629, FF2, and CMS VS1B.114, FF2). These different techniques or manners of sleeve depiction could be used in combination with one another to achieve different effects. Lines above the arms are frequently shown together with

“cuffs” at the bottom of the sleeves in glyptic, for example, and in frescoes an artist could show the arm band and the bottom cuff with colored or patterned material on the rest of the sleeve or on a white sleeve with only the band and the cuff indicating that the white on the upper portion of the arm is a sleeve rather than skin (e.g., “Saffron Gatherer 2”, Xeste 3).

Consideration of these various manners of portraying the sleeve makes apparent two interesting facts. First, all of these manners of sleeve representation, except for uncommon manner number 5, emphasize or showcase the form of the arm beneath the sleeve rather than conceal it. When color is used to set the arm off from the skin, for example, the sleeve unrealistically hugs the form of the arm, and no space is visible between the edge of the sleeve and the arm emerging from it. Similarly, in glyptic depictions the form of the arm is clearly visible below the outline of the sleeve shown above it, or the sleeve is reduced to a simple cuff and the arm above this appears no different than an arm shown with no cuff. Secondly, looking specifically at how these various techniques are used in glyptic depictions we can observe that the manner used for depicting sleeves not only differs from one scene to the next or from one figure to the next within the same scene, but in several cases from one arm to the next on the same figure. Consider, for instance, the three figures from the gold signet ring CMS I.086: on all three of the figures a horizontal line at the proper right elbow indicates the end of the sleeve; on the proper left arm of two of these figures, no cuff and thus no sleeve is indicated at all, and on the proper left arm of Female Figure 3, the cuff falls *below* the elbow rather than at the elbow, even though this arm is bent upwards. The differences in the depictions of the two arms of the female figure on CMS VI.279 also illustrate this point quite well: the proper right arm is shown with a “cuff” roughly one-quarter of the way up the upper arm and a rounded outline above the form of the upper arm indicates the form of a sleeve, while the proper left arm hangs down with

no apparent sleeve cuff and no outline above the arm—in short, no obvious indication of a sleeve at all. While many aspects of glyptic scenes demonstrate Aegean artists’ remarkable eye for detail, the treatment of sleeves is often rather haphazard and even sloppy, suggesting that in many cases this was perhaps not of particular concern for the glyptic artist—as seems to be true of clothing on the torso more generally.³⁸

Neckline and the Form of the Garment on the Torso (Table 2.4 A)

While sleeves are commonly used to suggest the presence of some sort of garment worn above the waist, these garments are not always indicated on the torso itself (i.e., any portion of the abdomen, breasts, chest, or—if it is shown—the back). 60 female figures *are* depicted with clothing indicated on some part of the torso by outlines suggesting necklines or by patterns, designs, or colors indicating the presence of cloth. Seven figures that are depicted with sleeves, however, have no such markings on their torsos. An additional three figures who wear sleeves are shown with lines on the torso that may or may not suggest clothing, and the torsos of four female figures are not preserved well enough for us to determine if clothing is indicated on the torso itself in addition to the sleeves that are preserved.

When clothing is depicted on the torso some variety exists in how much of the abdomen, breasts, and chest the clothing covers and in the shape of neckline. Low, plunging necklines that expose most or all of the breasts are common and appear on at least 22 female figures from 13 objects or scenes within the dataset. For all but one of these female figures, the deep, breast-exposing neckline is roughly V-shaped, hugging or framing the exposed breasts and coming to a point somewhere below the bust. The revealing neckline of Female Figure 4 from the “Ring of

³⁸ In all of my research, I have not encountered any discussion of the particular emphasis on the form of the arm within LBA Aegean iconography or of the general lack of concern Aegean artists demonstrate in the treatment of sleeves which we have argued for here. These points—especially the first of these points—are significant and underappreciated.

Minos” (HM 1700), however, presents an apparent exception. It does not come to a V-shaped point below this figure’s bust, but rather it is formed by horizontal lines running beneath the exposed breasts, *perhaps* suggesting a frontless blouse with added bands in the front below the bust, similar to (but less angled than) those in Jones’ recent proposed reconstruction of the costume of the “Mykenaiia” from Mycenae.³⁹

On at least 29 female figures from 11 objects in the dataset, a high neckline that rises above the breasts is either clearly defined by a line or lines drawn somewhere on the upper chest, or indicated by patterns, designs, or solid swatches of color that cover the torso and stop somewhere on the upper chest above the breasts. The high necklines on figures from six of these objects are formed by a horizontal line near or at the top of the torso (a fashion that appears to be distinctly Mycenaean), while on figures from two objects the high neckline is V-shaped.

While high necklines are common within the dataset, lines at the upper portion of the chest or low on the neck are sometimes ambiguous and may be intended to suggest necklaces rather than high necklines. This is true of the sleeved under-layer of the mantle-wearing “Priestess” from the West House at Akrotiri, whose blue band at the neck could possibly suggest either a neckline matching the blue sleeves of her under-layer or a blue necklace like that of the “Saffron Gatherers” of Xeste 3 (see below, p. 101). For two additional female figures depicted on the metal signet rings CMS VI.278 and VI.279, which were discussed in our examination of breast exposure above and which are pictured in Figure 2.21 E.iv and v, lines at the base of the neck may suggest necklines below which breasts are nevertheless clearly visible, or they may suggest necklaces, meaning no neckline is clearly indicated on these figures.

If the lines on the necks of these figures are to be interpreted as necklaces, meaning that the clothed figures are depicted without clearly indicated necklines, they would not be unique in

³⁹ Jones 2009: 229-331.

this respect: on an additional eight female figures—all from glyptic objects—clothing on the torso is indicated by sleeves on the arms, and no neckline is depicted. On six of these figures, the breasts are very prominently depicted and are set off from the rest of the torso, projecting outwards in a way that would not be naturalistic if these breasts were covered by fabric. As the unusual seal CMS I.279 indicates, this does not necessarily mean that these breasts were uncovered; however, the artist has apparently made no attempt to indicate that the breasts are covered by clothing. In such instances a deep neckline falling below the breasts may be *implied* by the absence of a neckline and the presence of prominent breasts (with sleeves serving as a sort of short-hand for the normal open-fronted bodice), or the artist may have attempted to depict a “frontless blouse,” the edges of which would not be visible when a female figure is depicted frontally.⁴⁰ On two other female figures with sleeves but no necklines, the general shape of the breasts is suggested, but the breasts do not project outwards from the rest of the torso and they even appear to be somewhat flattened against it. In such instances, both an implied plunging neckline and frontless blouse *could* be suggested but we cannot rule out the possibility that the artist was perhaps attempting to depict the shape of the breast underneath a thin layer of clothing. More significantly, these depictions make clear that depicting clothing on the torso with great accuracy and attention to detail was in many instances less of a priority than clearly and prominently depicting the breasts that this clothing framed and showcased.

On a final note about necklines and garments on the torso itself, for four female figures on which clothing on the torso is somehow indicated, the state of preservation does not allow

⁴⁰ Two of the female figures in this group, Female Figures 4 and 5 from the Isopata ring, CMS II.3.051, are depicted in profile and are not shown with a diagonal line running from underarm area to the lower back which indicates a frontless blouse on profile figures (see, for instance, either of the two preserved female figures on Side B of the Ayia Triada Sarcophagus). In these instances, it is clear that the artist is not suggesting a frontless blouse, and the plunging V-shaped neckline that is visible on the other figures on the Isopata ring is not visible here because these figures are depicted in profile. For figures that are depicted frontally with prominently exposed breasts and no obviously depicted neckline, a frontless blouse remains a possibility.

anything to be determined about the height or shape of the neckline. On four female figures the arms are positioned in such a way as to block the chest area so that the height of the garment is not clear.

Floral Patterns on Clothing above the Torso

One final variable concerning clothing units above the torso is particularly worth noting for the purposes of this study: the presence of floral or vegetal patterns on the garments. Seven female figures from the dataset wear garments on their arms or torsos that are ornamented with floral elements. On the bodices of six of these figures, these designs take the form of small repeating patterns. The “Goddess” and the “Necklace Swinger” from Xeste 3 are depicted in diaphanous blue bodices with repeating crocus flowers on the top arm band and repeating sets of stigmas on the rest of the bodice, which, as Paul Rehak has noted, may originally have been full crocus blooms for which the petals no longer survive.⁴¹ Rehak has also observed the presence of stigmas on the robe of the “Veiled Girl,” suggesting she also wore a crocus-patterned robe below her veil.⁴² The “Older Woman with the Red Mantle” from Room 3b of Xeste 3 similarly wears a garment on her torso that is ornamented in repeating stigmas that may once have been full crocus flowers as well.⁴³ The two layers worn by her companion with the yellow mantle are ornamented with floral designs of a different type: repeating red lilies adorn her yellow robe under-layer, and the mantle that she wears over this is decorated with red roses. Citing the “expert weaver” Valerie Bealle, Jones notes that it is possible that these repeating patterns in the Xeste 3 costumes represent real or artificial flowers woven into the fabric rather than ornamental woven

⁴¹ Rehak 2004: 87.

⁴² Rehak 2004: 90.

⁴³ Rehak 2004: 91.

designs.⁴⁴ The bodice of a sixth female figure from outside of Akrotiri—a terracotta figurine from Temple Room 19 at Mycenae—is decorated not with repeating small-scale floral patterns, but with the “blooms” of large papyrus plants that grow up her dress/robe and bloom both at her waist and above her breasts.

General Notes on Clothing above the Waist

Before moving down the body to garments depicted at and below the waist it is worth briefly bringing together the major points concerning clothing above the waist that our examination has revealed. Specifically, clothing above the waist frequently is not treated with particular attention to detail, and in glyptic media it can sometimes be omitted altogether or reduced to only sleeves. In most cases, the garment serves to showcase the breasts (as has been often noted in previous scholarship) but it seems it may also be intended to showcase—or at least not conceal or distract from—the form of the arms as well (a point which previous scholarship has not explored, to the best of my knowledge). In frescoes clothing on the torsos is typically rendered in a more consistent fashion and with more attention to detail than in glyptic media or in ivory, but ordinarily even in fresco scenes, clothing above the torso is often quite simple and plain (albeit richly colored) in comparison with the elaborate garments below the waist. Garments within the dataset that present an exception to this general rule are—perhaps significantly—adorned with carefully rendered flowers.

Clothing at the Waist: Girdles

Within the dataset female figures from 69 scenes or objects are depicted with some form of prominent girdle or pronounced band at the waist, separating the torso from the clothed hips

⁴⁴ Jones 1998: 253. Jones also argues that the two young girls on NM 2898 wear flower-patterned shawls on their backs. While recognizing that this is possible, I am inclined to interpret these as bags of flowers as the line drawing in Poursat 1977: pl. 35 suggests.

and legs below. This girdle/waistband unit takes eight distinct forms illustrated in Figure 2.13 A-H.

The “single girdle”—a single, thick “roll” with rounded edges that curve upwards slightly (Figure 2.13A)—is the simplest and most common form, appearing on female figures represented in 48 different scenes and by 2 figurines within the dataset (Table 2.5 A). The form of the single girdle is sometimes be duplicated to form a “double girdle”—the second most common form of girdle in the dataset, appearing on female figures in 12 scenes as well as on two faience dress models from the Temple Repository at Knossos⁴⁵(Figure, 2.5 B, Table 2.5 B)—or repeated three times to form a “triple girdle” in one isolated example, the gold signet ring CMS I.126 (Figure 2.13 C, Table 2.5 C). A fourth type of girdle, appearing on the female processional figures on a Mycenaean krater, K-AD 2359 from Kalavassos-Ayios Dhimitrios (Figure 2.5 D), is composed of four horizontal bands. While on side B of the krater the edges of these bands are clearly defined by a smooth line outlining the entire figure, suggesting some sort of single striped piece of fabric rather than four stacked units, on side A the edges of each of the four bands of the girdle are slightly more rounded and perhaps suggest a “quadruple girdle” similar to the “double girdle” and “triple girdle.”

Three other types of girdles are formed by the addition of hanging bands or straps to a single girdle or waistband, as illustrated in Figures 2.13 E-G. Bernice Jones has noted the presence of hanging tails of girdle sashes on terracotta figurines, but on these figurines, the ends generally loop over one another and hang down in the front.⁴⁶ Within the dataset, single bands hang from the backs of the girdles of two female figures in the sealing CMS II.6.001 (Figure

⁴⁵ An isolated girdle model with crocus flowers that also comes from the Temple Repository also represents a “double girdle.” This has not been included in the dataset because it does not explicitly meet our criteria for gendering an object as “feminine,” but it seems relevant nevertheless.

⁴⁶ Jones 1998: 83 and pl. 4.30-32.

2.13 E, Table 2.5 E) and on one female figure, Female Figure 2 from the gold signet ring CMS I.127 (Figure 2.13 F) one band appears to hang from the front and one from the back. A more elaborate and unusual type of girdle identified as a “string skirt” by Barber and others,⁴⁷ includes multiple bands or “streamers” hanging down from a single girdle. This garment is worn by the “Wounded Woman” from the Adyton of Xeste 3, and seems also to be worn by a unique female figure wielding a bow on the gold signet ring CMS XI.029 (Figure 2.13 g) and possibly by the female figure on CMS I.219 as well.

A final and rather different form of girdle or belt, referred to as “cord belt” by Jones (Figure 2.13 H), is also worn by the “Wounded Woman” from Xeste 3, as well as the three saffron gatherers from Xeste 3 on whom the girdle region is visible, and the two female figures from the West House at Akrotiri. This thin, rope-like belt functions, according to Jones, to secure the wrap-around flounce skirt in place.⁴⁸ On the young “Saffron Gatherers” from Xeste 3, the belt wraps around the body a single time and loops in the back with a short portion of the cord hanging down, while on the “Wounded Woman” and the older female figures from the West House, the belt appears to wrap around the waist twice and hang down without forming a loop. Within the dataset, this cord belt is apparently unique to female figures from the frescoes of Akrotiri.

While female figures from 69 scenes or objects within the dataset wear girdles, female figures occurring with vegetal elements on 30 different objects are depicted with no obvious girdle or waistband at all (Figure 2.13 J, Table 2.5 J). An additional four scenes contain female figures whose waist area is not visible and whose girdled status is thus unclear (Figure 2.13 I, Table 2.5 I), and depictions of female figures on six different glyptic scenes and one ivory plaque

⁴⁷ See, for instance, Jones 2001.

⁴⁸ Jones 2000.

(Table 2.5 K) include lines segments that *may* represent girdles but whose placement or relationship to other parts of the skirt does not make their status as girdles clear or obvious. Finally, for female figures from 23 different scenes or objects, the presence or absence of a girdle cannot be determined due to the state of preservation (Table 2.5 L).

Clothing below the Waist: Transparent Pantaloons, Kilts, Skirts, Robes, etc.

Clothing worn below the waist cannot be reduced to such simple and straight-forward groups as the girdles around the waist, nor can we possibly describe and account for the full range in variation in skirt and kilt designs in a study of this nature. We can, however, identify some major categories and similarities and speculate as to what the clothing below the waist suggests about the female figures in the dataset.

A small but clear-cut group is formed by eight female figures from six different metal signet rings whose bare legs are visible through or outlined by transparent and/or form-hugging “pantaloons” that terminate in a single or double cuff at some point on the lower leg or the ankle (Figure 2.14). In several cases, it is only the presence of the cuff which suggests that the legs of the female figure are clothed at all, and even the cuff is not always articulated with great clarity. When we examine these scenes next to the metal signet rings CMS XI.029 and HM 1700, however, the nature of the garment becomes clearer. CMS XI.029 and HM 1700 depict cuffs attached to looser pant legs through which the female figures’ bare legs are visible, perhaps indicating that the pants are made of diaphanous material, like the bodices of the “Necklace Swinger” and the “Wounded Woman” from the Adyton of Xeste 3. The form-fitting depiction seems to emphasize the most significant features of this costume, the visible form of the legs and the cuff at the bottom, without showing the outline or the seam of the looser pant legs. As we will discuss in Chapter 2, this costume occurs strictly in scenes of cult activity. One seal from

Knossos that is not within the dataset (CMS II.3.8) depicts a female figure in double-cuffed, form-fitting pantaloons carrying a kilt and a double axe over her shoulders, perhaps suggesting that the pantaloons could form an under-layer beneath a kilt; however, this is not clearly suggested by any other scene.

A much larger group of female figures (51 figures from 26 objects) wear two layers below the waist: a kilt with flounced layers hanging down diagonally and coming to a point in the center, over a robe or skirt with a straight bottom edge (Figure 2.15 B). While in the Akrotiri frescoes the kilt is clearly worn together with a full length robe, many of these figures do not have any indications of clothing on the torso, suggesting that the bottom layer *may* be an independent skirt, or that the artist has simply chosen not to depict the bodice of the full-length garment. The skirt or robe under-layer is commonly depicted with a pattern of either horizontal or vertical lines, and female figures in the same scene sometimes wear under-layers decorated with lines oriented in different directions (see, for instance, the Isopata Ring, CMS II.3.051). Nine female figures have under-layers with simple horizontal lines, while 16 figures have under-layers decorated with vertical lines. In a few scenes, thicker decorative bands have been added to the hem below the repeating horizontal or vertical lines. The variety in the form and ornamentation of the kilt itself is much greater and is especially difficult to make sense of in small-scale glyptic scenes which account for such a large portion of the dataset.⁴⁹ The kilt is typically made up of large tiers of fabric with smaller subsidiary flounces attached to the bottom of each tier; however, the number and arrangement of tiers and subsidiary flounces seems to differ from figure to figure and scene to scene and attempting to count and categorize the tiers and flounces proved an overwhelming and unfruitful task. For the sake of this study we will not

⁴⁹ Jones also recognizes the difficulty in making sense of kilts in glyptic media and notes that these depictions can add little to our understanding of the form of the garment (Jones 1998: 190).

attempt to categorize the figures any further than according to the fact that they wear kilts together with robe or skirt under-layers and, where applicable, according to the vertical or horizontal stripes on the under-layer.

A third group of female figures, 37 in all from 21 objects or scenes (Table 2.6 C),⁵¹ seem to wear only a flounced kilt with no robe or skirt projecting from below. In several cases, the kilt lies on the legs in such a way as to appear somewhat like trousers with concave leg openings at the bottom (Figure 2.15 C); in others, it hangs much like a skirt but without any clear bottom layer below the V-shaped points formed by the kilt. The patterns on kilts worn alone are no less complicated than those on kilts worn over robes or skirts, and as such, we will not attempt to identify any sub-groups within the group of female figures wearing only kilts.

A fourth group of female figures, 49 in all, coming from 40 different objects or scenes (Table 2.15 D), seem to wear just a single layer in the form of a skirt. As on the kilts, a great deal of variety is demonstrated in the patterns on the skirts. Several different patterns seem to suggest variations on the flounced skirt: simple horizontal lines on part or all of the skirt, horizontal lines with a single vertical band down the center of the skirt,⁵² horizontal lines with additional vertical striations, and horizontal lines with individual squares of fabric. Three skirts form a unique subgroup with an inverted U or V-shaped design at the bottom of the skirt. Five skirts are decorated with simple vertical lines, which seem to suggest pleats as opposed to flounces which run horizontally. Finally, the skirts of three figures are apparently unornamented and Morgan has proposed that, in the case of two of these female figures, the women from the “Pastoral Scene”

⁵¹ Note that one of the female figures included within this these 37 (Female Figure 2 on CMS XI.029) apparently wears a string-skirt with the kilt, so the kilt is not the only garment shown below the waist on this particular figure.

⁵² It seems possible that this combination could also represent a garment with horizontal pleats and a central medial band like the under-layer worn by the female figures from the House of the Ladies. It is indeed difficult to distinguish between possible horizontal pleats and possible flounces on glyptic scenes.

from the miniature fresco at the in the West House, at Akrotiri, such plain skirts represent non-ceremonial clothing.⁵³

On at least 12 female figures, even though the garment below the waist may be preserved quite well, it is difficult to determine whether the flounced garment is a kilt over a robe/skirt, just a kilt, or just a flounced skirt, suggesting that perhaps this distinction was of little importance to the particular artist in the particular scene in question. In some cases, unclear or unrealistic depictions of the garment may also provide possible support for the idea that some artists working in the later periods of the LBA simply imitated costumes that they observed in earlier artworks, without being personally familiar with these garments or how they really hung on the body. The costumes worn below the waists of the female figures on the on the Tanagra Larnax from Tomb 6 (Figure 2.15 E), for example, provide a good candidate for such a depiction.

Beyond the groups of female figures wearing kilts and under-layers, just kilts, and just skirts, several smaller groups and a few unique garments can also be identified within the dataset. On three female figures, the clothing below the waist is clearly just the bottom portion of a long robe. Similarly, for the three figures identified as wearing mantles draped over one shoulder for which some portion of area below the waist is preserved, the clothing hanging below the waist appears to be just an extension of the mantle.⁵⁴ Unique articles of clothing within the dataset can be seen on Female Figure 6 on Side B of the Ayia Triada Sarcophagus, who wears a hide skirt (Figure 2.15 H); Female Figure 2 on the LM IIIA Larnax from Knossos who seems to wear a flounced skirt with what appears to be a rectangular apron hanging over it (Figure 2.15 I); and Female Figure 2 on CMS I.514, a gold signet ring that the CMS editors have

⁵³ Morgan 1988: 98.

⁵⁴ This includes the “Goddess with Sheaves” from the Room of the Fresco at Mycenae, for which very little is preserved below the waist. In the fragment containing part of the proper right foot of this figure, only a corner of a garment is preserved, but this garment is clearly the same color as the mantle depicted on the torsos. The fragment suggests that the bottom of this mantle was decorated with fringe.

identified as potential modern forgery, who wears a “male kilt” that hangs down over the buttocks in the back but that otherwise exposes almost all of the upper-thigh (Figure 2.15 J).

Finally, for several female figures, the state of preservation makes classification of the garments below the waist difficult or impossible. For at least ten figures, the general outline of the skirt shape is clear, but the internal detail has been worn to the point that it is impossible to determine if the figure was originally depicted in a skirt, a robe, or in a skirt/robe under-layer with a flounced kilt on top. For an additional ten female figures, the state of preservation does not allow any judgment to be made concerning the nature of the garment below the waist.

Muddled though the overall picture of clothing below the waist may seem, our examination yields a few important take away messages about the dataset. First, elaborate skirts, kilts, and combinations thereof are by far the most commonly appearing types of garment on female figures within the dataset—a fact that is true of female figures in LBA Aegean iconography as a whole.⁵⁵ While a wide range of variation exist in the ornamental designs on these skirts and kilts, and sometimes distinctions in skirt or kilt design seem to individuate figures from one another within a scene, it seems, generally speaking, that we are looking at a fairly homogenous group of well-dressed ladies whose elaborate costumes suggest a privileged status.⁵⁶ It is also interesting to note the extent to which the design of the garment below the waist is emphasized or privileged over other details: on some soft stone seals, for example, on which the artist makes no attempt to depict breasts or any detail on the torso, the skirt is shown to be elaborately patterned in some way. Similarly, the precise form of the garment (i.e. whether it is a kilt over a skirt, just a flounced skirt, or just a kilt) is not always conveyed but the fact that these are elaborately crafted and woven articles of clothing is made clear. The wide variety of

⁵⁵ See for instance, German 2005: 24.

⁵⁶ German 2005: 24. See also Barber 1991: 312 (quoted in part by German) on the Linear B evidence for different qualities and costliness of fabric and observes the emphasis on fabric bands or trimming.

ornamental designs for both kilts and skirts also suggests that the artist had a particular level of creative discretion in how he depicted skirt designs (allowing for the likening of skirts/kilts to vegetal elements in some cases, as we will see in Chapter 3, p.137-9) and, as Barber has suggested, it may reflect an extensive repertoire of weaving patterns mastered by LBA Aegean women.

Even when female figures are not depicted in the standard elements of the “Minoan-style” ceremonial costume, in many cases, their garments are nevertheless remarkable in some way: the hide skirt on Female Figure 5 on the Side B of the Ayia Triada Sarcophagus seems to set her off from the procession of female figures behind her, and the full-length robes worn by some female figures on objects from Mycenaean contexts such as the seated goddess on the Tiryns Ring, CMS I.179, are also of finely patterned clothing. A possible exception to this general rule is presented by the female figures from the “Pastoral Scene” in the Miniature fresco from the West House at Akrotiri, whose skirts are rendered as completely solid albeit with some color bright colors. Morgan argues that in their simple, solid design and their apparently fleecy nature, these garments worn by women engaged in everyday tasks associated with rural life, stand in contrast to the elaborate costumes of Xeste 3.⁵⁷

The emphasis on the garments below the waist on many of the female figures also makes the barely-there nature of the semi-transparent and/or form-hugging, cuffed pantaloons worn by eight figures on six metal signet rings in the dataset particularly noteworthy. Skirts and kilts accentuate the general curvature of the upper hips and kilts may define the hollow between the

⁵⁷ Morgan 1988: 98. There seems to be some dispute about the precise nature of these garments. German (2005) sees them as typical Minoan-style costumes and tries to justify their presence on female figures who appear to be engaged in every-day tasks by pointing to the fact that these women are surrounded by vignettes of extraordinary activity: men meeting on a hill, soldiers marching, and a ship at the moment of destruction. She claims that amid all this extraordinary activity, it is fitting to find finely dressed women engaged in an apparently ordinary activity. (German 2005: 25).

legs somewhat like trousers but these garments otherwise conceal the form of the legs below. The presence of the cuffed pantaloons, on the other hand, is hardly discernible on six of the figures and the full, rounded thighs are prominently displayed. The female figures who wear these garments come the closest to full nudity that non-composite female figures come within LBA Aegean art.⁵⁸ Even their particularly great level of exposure, however, they do not expose the vulva, which remains absent within the dataset and on non-composite or non-fantastical female figures in LBA Aegean iconography.

2.3 Accessories

Having examined the units of the body itself and the clothes which adorn and selectively conceal and reveal the body, we turn next to accessories, including various forms of hats, headwear, and hair ornaments, as well as jewelry of several forms. Ornamental though these units may be, they may also convey significant information about the individual they adorn: social status, age, religious position or divine status—to name but a few of the more obvious possibilities—may all be encoded in the trappings of the body. Thus in attempting to get at similarities in possible iconographic significance we will examine the accessories of the body and group female figures according to similarities in the presence and the form of these units.

Hats and Headdresses

Hats are clearly depicted on the heads of only five female figures from five different scenes or objects within the dataset (Figure 2.16). The only hat depicted on an object from a Neopalatial Minoan context is worn by Female Figure 1 on the Isopata Ring; this hat is narrow,

⁵⁸ As we discussed above (p. 68), the female figure on CMS I. 514 who wears the unusual “male kilt” is depicted with almost fully exposed legs and comes closer than most female figures in LBA Aegean iconography to full nudity. The strangeness of her kilt, however, makes it hard to overlook. As we noted above, the CMS editors have speculated that this ring may be a modern forgery.

tall, and rounded at the top, similar to the hats of some of the Minoan female figurines from Piskokephalo and Traostalos.⁵⁹ All of the other hats within the dataset are depicted on objects from Mycenaean or Final Palatial Cretan contexts. Unlike the tall rounded hat on the Isopata ring, these hats are short and squat with rounded, slightly flaring edges and flat tops. The short, flat hats of two female figures from the dataset—the “Goddess with Sheaves” from Mycenae and Female Figure 5 from the side B of the Ayia Triada Sarcophagus⁶⁰—are crowned with tall, red plume-like ornaments which project upwards from the center of the hat. Notably, the hat of the female figure on Side B of the Ayia Triada Sarcophagus also appears to be decorated with a row of lily-shaped ornaments, like the plumed hat of the so-called “Priest-King” from Knossos. Two other female figures, both from the lower citadel at Tiryns—a terracotta female figure with a possible “waz-lily” pendant (Cat. No. 108) and the seated female figure on the Tiryns ring (CMS I.179)—both wear flat hats without plumes. Additionally, female figures from three other objects—the three Tanagra larnakes in which women are depicted together with cordiform leaves—*may* wear short hats with a scalloped top and a tail-like projection down the back; these units, however, are somewhat ambiguous and seem also to suggest styled hair, and thus we cannot definitively identify them as hats.

It seems significant and noteworthy that the four female figures who clearly wear hats and who are depicted within scenes (as compared to the free standing Tiryns terracotta figurine) are marked as prominent or special in some respect by their associations or syntax. Female Figure 1 of the Isopata ring is faced by all the other female figures on the ring; the “Goddess with Sheaves” is flanked by a griffin; the female figure on the Ayia Triada sarcophagus leads a procession of women, and the hat-wearing female figure on the Tiryns ring is seated before a

⁵⁹ Kyriakidis 2004: 163.

⁶⁰ Note that the similarly dressed female figure on Side A wears a similar hat, but only side B meets the criteria of the dataset.

procession of Minoan genii. In these cases, the presence of a hat seems to correspond with a position of importance for the female figure.

In addition to the five or more female figures wearing hats, two other female figures associated with vegetal elements (papyrus elements, specifically) wear unique headdresses. On the hard stone seal CMS XIII.039, a small-scale female figure depicted atop a papyrus-like vegetal element is depicted with a “snake-frame” headdress obstructing or replacing her head, and the female figure on the gold pin ornament from Shaft Grave III at Mycenae wears on her head an elaborate, voluted frame that supports a garland of papyrus plants.

Fabric Hair Bindings

Fabric bindings for the hair appear within the iconography more commonly than hats and headdresses and take three major forms: fillets or headbands at the top of the forehead, ribbons looping at the forehead and wrapping around long locks, and pieces of fabric wrapped around hair that is worn in up. Fabric hair bindings are particularly common among the large-scale figures of Xeste 3,⁶¹ where the different types of hair bindings seem to correspond roughly with the age groups of the female figures who wear them (see below). Fillets are particularly common in ivory objects from the dataset, and they also appear in fresco scenes from other sites, in terracotta figures, and on a terracotta vessel within the dataset, the second two types of bindings for the hair appear only at Xeste 3. No hair bindings of any form are obvious within the glyptic scenes in the dataset, a fact which is probably due to the small scale of glyptic media.

⁶¹ Notably, only the “Veiled Girl” seems to wear no hair band or related head ornament at all; though it is possible that the “Priestess” from the West House is also without any sort of hair band or fillet.

Fillets/Headbands

Fillets or headbands worn at the top of the forehead appear on at least 16 figures from ten scenes or objects.

In the Xeste 3 frescoes, each of the four “Saffron Gatherers” and the seated “Goddess” wears a headband that appears to terminate above the ear with a papyriform ornament hanging down like a sideburn.⁶² Blue is the most common color for the headband within the scene, but the youngest female figure wears a yellow band with black decorations, and “Saffron Gatherer 4” wears a band that is both yellow and blue; both “Saffron Gatherer 3” and the “Goddess” have added beads attached to their headband. The “Priestess” from the West House appears to wear a papyrifom ornament above her ear like those attached to the fillets of the other young girls, but she does not obviously wear a headband. Either the artist has made no effort to distinguish a blue headband from her blue shaved head, or perhaps she wears only an ear ornament somehow hooked over the ear like the male Knossos Cup-Bearer.⁶³ Female figures with short, curly hair from two ivory mirror handles (NM 2898 and NM 2900) also wear fillets that terminate above the ear, though it is not clear whether or not these terminate in ornaments.

Although the fillets of several figures appear to terminate just before the ear, other figures wear fillets that continue beyond the ear and may wrap around to the back of the head or hang loose following the contours of the neck (Figure 2.18 A). A terracotta figure from Gazi with upraised arms wears an unusual fillet that tucks behind her ears and supports three vertical poppy capsules above her forehead. On other figures the fillet continues further still; on two figures from Mycenae, the “Lady with the Lily” and the female figure holding a sheave on an ivory

⁶² Younger seems to agree with Televantou’s suggestion that these bands were tied at the base of the neck and that their papyriform ends were be flipped back up over the ears (Younger 1992: 259). On “Saffron Gatherer 1” whose head is shaved, however, we see no evidence for the band tying at the back of the neck and flipping back over the ears; it seems obviously to terminate above the ears.

⁶³ For a discussion of the Knossos Cup-Bearer see Younger 1992: 259 and pl. 65b.

plaque from Chamber Tomb 49, the fillet appears to form a ring around the head, and no loose ends appear to hang down. On the seated female figure holding a single lily on an ivory plaque in the Chania Museum, the fillet tucks behind the ear and its loose end hangs down, following the curvature of the neck and terminating near the shoulder. The terracotta figure from the lower citadel at Tiryns who wears a lily pendant, appears to wear two fillets; one, rendered in plastic relief, sits high on her forehead with the loose ends extending past her ears and down to the middle of her back, and what appears to be a second fillet, rendered in paint, sits below this and seems to terminate above her ears with ornaments similar to those on the fillets of the “Saffron Gatherers.”

For a final group of female figures on a Mycenaean procession crater from Cyprus it is difficult to determine where the fillet ends, as the ears are shown at the very back of the profile head.

Looped Ribbons Wrapped around Long Tresses

A second style of fabric hair ornaments or bindings are worn by the nubile “Wounded Woman” and the “Necklace Swinger” from the Adyton of Xeste 3 (Figure 2.18 B). Each of these figures wears a ribbon in her hair that wraps around her thick tresses several times and forms a decorative loop at the top of her forehead (interpreted by Davis as a substitute for the front lock that each figure would have worn in her younger days).⁶⁴

Fabric wrapped around Updos

A third type of fabric hair binding is worn by the three older figures from Room 3b of Xeste 3, whose hair is wrapped in a large updo with fabric either woven into the updo or perhaps simply wrapped around the hair (Figure 2.18 C). This style of hair binding is unique within the dataset, and apparently also within LBA Aegean iconography more generally.

⁶⁴Davis 1986: 402; Younger 1992: 260.

Beads in the Hair

Hair ornamentation can also take the form of spherical beads worn in the hair. As indicated by Recurring Hairstyle 5 in Figure 2.1 , the “Goddess” from Xeste 3 wears spherical beads along a long lock of hair, and it is possible that a similar type of hair ornamentation is indicated on three female figures from two signet rings from Mycenae, CMS 1.126 and 1.127.

Real and Artificial Vegetal Elements Worn in the Hair

A total of seven female figures from the Acropolis Ring from Mycenae (CMS I.017) and from two different fresco scenes within Xeste 3 appear to wear (or to have originally worn) vegetal elements or metal pins shaped like vegetal elements in their hair (Figure 2.19). The three mature female figures from the Acropolis Ring appear to wear flowers in their hair at the front of their heads,⁶⁵ and the small female figure standing among them (FF 3) is depicted with dots at the front of her head which may also be intended to indicate flowers. A lily is worn in the hair of the older female figure carrying a bouquet of lilies from Room 3b of Xeste 3, projecting upwards from the back of her updo. Because the bouquet carried by the female figure includes lilies at several different stages in the process of blooming, it is perhaps significant that the petals of the lily this figure wears in her hair are spread rather wide in comparison with those many of the lilies in her bouquet, suggesting that this flower has been in bloom for some time. Also from Room 3b of Xeste 3, the “Older Female Figure with a Red Mantle” appears to have three pairs of stigmas positioned above the back of her updo; Rehak reconstructs crocus petals around these stigmas, projecting from the back of the hairdo.⁶⁶ Finally, the “Wounded Woman” from the Adyton of Xeste 3 wears a crook-shaped hair pin with a dangling iris ornament at the back of her

⁶⁵ These may be lilies but in Chapter 1 we determined them to be too small to be classified.

⁶⁶ Given that the pigment used to depict the petals of the crocus flowers in other scenes within Xeste 3 has flaked off or disintegrated, as we have noted in our discussion of stigmas in Chapter 1 our examination of floral patterned garments, and given the position of the stigmas, Rehak’s suggested reconstruction of flowers in the hair of this figure seems reasonable.

head, and she wears a foliate myrtle or olive sprig at the front of her head; Younger argues that this sprig is a metal pin, but it is not obviously artificial rather than natural. In either case, the “Wounded Woman” is the only female figure to wear a hairpin (or hairpins) in LBA Aegean iconography.

Additionally, we might also include in this category the terracotta female figurine from Gazi with a fillet that supports three poppy capsules worn across her forehead and tucked behind her ears (discussed above).

Earrings

Outside of Akrotiri, earrings appear very rarely in LBA Aegean iconography and have been interpreted by Younger as a “short-lived fad at the transition to the Late Bronze Age.”⁶⁷ Within the dataset they are worn by all the female figures from Xeste 3 except the older female figures from Room 3b (whom Younger deems “too old-fashioned to get caught up in” this new fad),⁶⁸ by the “Priestess” from the West House, and by female figures on two ivory mirror handles from Mycenae (NM 2898, with girls and bags of flowers, and NM 2900, with girls and waterfowl). They do not obviously appear in any glyptic scenes within the dataset.

Figure 2.20 illustrates the variety in earring form. Most commonly, earrings are round hoops that may be plain or decorated with ribbing or granulation. The “Priestess” from the West House wears a more complex and unusual earring with four spokes across the center of the circle, and three figures in the dataset (“Saffron Gatherer 3” from Xeste 3 and the two female figures holding waterfowl on the ivory mirror handle NM 2900) wear earrings of a third type,

⁶⁷ Younger 1992: 265.

⁶⁸ Younger 1992: 265. It is worth noting, however, that the older female figure with the red mantle appears to have two short lines on her lower earlobe at the same spot from which the earrings hang on the younger girls who wear them. It is tempting to interpret these marks as stretched earring holes, though it is not clear why there would be two of these marks side by side, when only one earring is worn in each ear when these are depicted.

made of two round interlocked rings. In the Akrotiri frescoes where the earrings are depicted in color, they are portrayed in shades of yellow, suggesting gold.

Necklaces

Necklaces are the most commonly depicted type of jewelry worn by female figures both within Aegean iconography generally and within the dataset specifically.⁶⁹ 52 female figures from 36 objects or scenes within the dataset are depicted with lines or marks at the neck suggesting or clearly indicating necklaces or garlands.⁷⁰

The necklaces depicted within the dataset take many forms (Figures 2.21 A-I). Beaded necklaces are perhaps the easiest to identify, and they appear on the necks or in the hands of 19 different figures, primarily from fresco scenes and terracotta figures but also from a few glyptic scenes. A variety of different bead shapes appear within the group of beaded necklaces in the dataset, and these necklaces can be composed of single or multiple strands of different lengths. Strands of spherical beads are most common within the dataset and are worn by 12 female figures from 12 different scenes or objects (Figure 2.21 A); other less common forms of beads include cylindrical beads, X-shaped beads, amygdaloidal beads, “waz”-shaped beads, crocus-flower-shaped beads, teardrop-shaped beads, and even duck-shaped beads (Figure 2.21 B). Younger argues that because women draw attention to their beaded necklaces in several scenes within LBA Aegean iconography and because archaeological evidence suggests that beaded necklaces were dedicated at sanctuaries, these could have carried particular social and economic value.⁷¹ That the three female figures within the dataset who wear pendants wear these uncommon and eye-catching necklace add-ons together with beaded necklaces perhaps provides

⁶⁹ See Younger 1992: “Chart.”

⁷⁰ For four five of these figures from four different objects, the markings at the neck could also perhaps suggest high necklines of garments.

⁷¹ Younger 1992: 266-268.

further evidence for this claim concerning the function of beaded necklaces as “statement” pieces and possible indicators of social status.⁷²

Blue “chokers” that are outlined by black dots are a second common and easily identifiable necklace type within the dataset, but they appear exclusively in the large-scale frescoes from Akrotiri (Figure 2.21 C). Chokers of this sort are worn by the “Goddess,” the “Necklace Swinger,” the “Veiled Girl” and the partially preserved older woman with the bouquet of Lilies (Room 3b),⁷³ all from Xeste 3. The “Priestess” from the West House is depicted with a blue band at her neck of the same color and approximately the same thickness of the other chokers, but without dotted borders. It is possible that her necklace is a variation on the dotted blue choker, though, as we have noted above (p. 81), it is also possible this band simply the hem of her undergarment.

In glyptic media, jewelry at the neck is commonly, though not exclusively, indicated by a solid line or lines on the neck itself or high on the upper chest. On seven figures from three scenes (Figures 2.21 D.i-iii), this line is very pronounced and rises upwards from the upper chest, forming a prominent collar similar to the garlands like those worn by the terracotta female statues from Keos (Figure 2.21 D.vii). The neck ornament of the terracotta figure with upraised arms and a poppy diadem from Gazi (Cat. No. 103), which extends down the figure’s back forming a deep V-shape, may also be a garland of a somewhat different type. The “Necklace Swinger” from Xeste 3 seems to wear a garland of a third kind, composed of clumps of stigmas

⁷² These female figures include the “Goddess” from Xeste 3, who wears multiple dragonfly pendants, and the two terracotta figurines from Tiryns, Cat. Nos. 107 and 108, both of whom seem to wear a single floral pendant.

⁷³ The only published images of this figure that I have encountered are in black and white, and very little description has been published. Her necklace appears to be very similar to these other blue chokers with black dots, but it is not clear that hers is in fact blue.

strung together and forming a chain that is draped wide on her shoulders,⁷⁴ and it is possible that female figure from CMS V.253 wears a similar garland across her torso unless this is a beaded necklace.

Looking to the function of garlands in ritual contexts in the Classical period, Younger is inclined to see a possible garland in the necklaces of any female figure depicted as an adrant engaged in religious activity;⁷⁵ however, in many cases it is less clear whether the lines at the necks of female figures depicted in glyptic media should be interpreted as garlands or necklaces of some other sort, such as solid “neck-rings” encircling the neck. Figures 2.21 E and F set out the two major groups of female figures with lines indicated at the neck that *may* represent garlands but do not obviously do so. Most simply, figures may have a single line on the neck or upper chest (Figure 2.21 E), or they may be depicted with two lines, typically one on the neck or at its base and one draping down on the upper chest (Figure 2.21 F).

Two additional types of necklaces appearing on female figures in Xeste 3 may be related to the types of necklaces suggested by the solid lines on the necks of female figures in glyptic media. “Saffron Gatherer 2” wears a golden choker that appears to be a solid ring (Figure 2.21 G). While this necklace has some ornamentation in the form of small black dots and our glyptic examples have no such additional decorative features, in its form it is similar to the solid lines depicted on the necks (rather than draping and lying below the base of the neck on the upper portion of the chest) of several female figures in glyptic media. Furthermore, the combination of this necklace with longer, draping necklaces seems to create a similar look to that seen on some of the female figures from glyptic media that are depicted with more than one line on their necks.

⁷⁴ Younger 1992 interprets this garland as a strand of gold papyrus shaped beads. A careful look at a high-quality image of the “Necklaces Singer” makes clear that these are clumps of stigmas fanning outwards and not papyrus shaped beads.

⁷⁵ Younger 1992: 261-262.

A second necklace type, labeled a “torque” by Younger, is worn by the “Older Woman with the Red Mantle” from Room 3b of Xeste 3 (Figure 2.21 H). This thick, solid neck-ring, which sits at the base of the neck and curves upwards, bears resemblance to the slightly curving necklaces suggested by lines at the base of the neck and top of the upper chest of some of the female figures in glyptic (e.g., CMS V.728, Figure 2.21 F.iii).

Finally, in scenes from five different objects: two frescoes, two ivory mirror handles, and the gold pin ornament from Mycenae—two narrowly spaced parallel lines at the base of the neck indicate the presence of a necklace or necklaces (Figure 2.21 I). In all of these depictions it is unclear if these lines are supposed to suggest two narrow, simple strands lying parallel to one another or if these two lines are intended to form the outline of a single band worn at the base of the neck similar to the solid band depicted on many figures in scenes on glyptic media.

Tassels and Dress Beads

Moving from the neck and down the upper arm, we come next to the top edge of the sleeve, from which the warp threads are occasionally left hanging as tassels that are sometimes ornamented with beads or tied in interesting ways (Figure 2.22).⁷⁶ Within the dataset, hanging tassels can be seen on all four “Saffron Gatherers” and all three female figures from the Adyton of Xeste 3, on both female figures from the House of the Ladies, on a single sleeve of only one female figure from glyptic, Female Figure 5 of the Isopata ring (CMS II.3.051).

These dress tassels can take several forms. On both “Saffron Gatherer1” and the “Veiled Girl”—the two female figures with shaved heads and isolated locks from Xeste 3—the tassels are gathered into two strands and strung with papyriform beads (Figure 2.22 A). Beads also appear on the tassels of the female figures from the House of the Ladies, where tassels are

⁷⁶ Younger 1992: 273.

gathered into two strands with pairs of small beads spread over the length of the tassel (Figure 2.22 B).⁷⁷ The single hanging tassel of Female Figure 5 from the Isopata ring (CMS II.3.051) also appears to be strung with beads, specifically seven spherical beads (Figure 2.22 C). Tassels can also be bunched and tied in a decorative fashion, as on Saffron Gatherer 2 (Figure 2.22 D), or they can be left flowing in thick bunches as on Saffron Gatherer 4 and on both the “Necklace Singer” and the “Wounded Woman” from Xeste 3 (Figure 2.22 E).

While Younger notes that spindle whorls sometimes appear at the bottom hems of dresses of female figures with LBA Aegean iconography,⁷⁸ none of the female figures within the dataset wear these. The female figures from the Tanagra Larnax from Tomb 6 (Cat. No. 101) are, however, depicted with fringe or tassels running along the bottom hem of their dresses and are unique within the dataset in this respect.

Arm rings

Arm rings are worn by female figures only infrequently in LBA Aegean iconography, and within the dataset they are unique to the female figures from the “Saffron Gatherers” fresco of Xeste 3 and to a terracotta figure from Mycenae.⁷⁹ On Akrotiri, “Saffron Gatherers” 1 and 2 each wear two thin arm rings in total, while the “Goddess” wears three rather elaborate arm rings on her one fully preserved arm alone. Those worn by the two “Saffron Gatherers” are relatively simple: they are depicted as thin golden yellow bands with black detail work in the form of transverse lines, dots, or outlines (Figure 2.23 A). These are worn at the middle of the lower arm and towards the bottom of the upper arm on each girl; “Saffron Gatherer 2” wears both of her

⁷⁷ Only the top portion of the tassels of the “Standing Lady” is preserved, but this is enough to indicate that the tassels are very similar to the fully preserved tassels of the “Bending Lady” on the opposite wall.

⁷⁸ Younger 1992: 273-4.

⁷⁹ Younger states that the “Priestess” from the West House may wear a gold arm band as well, but upon examining the high-quality images in Doumas 1992, I see no evidence for a gold arm band on this female figure. Laffineur 2000 makes no mention of a possible arm ring on this figure either.

arm rings on her proper right arm, while “Saffron Gatherer 2” wears one ring on each arm. The arm rings of the “Goddess” are relatively more elaborate (Figure 2.23 B). Notably, one arm ring, worn roughly a quarter of the way up the lower arm, ring is made of dangling blue beads in the shape of papyrus “wazes.”⁸⁰ The “Goddess” also wears a simple golden arm ring with red and black dots on the middle of her lower arm, and though neither Younger nor Laffineur makes mention of it in his discussions of the jewelry of the Xeste 3 figures, she also clearly wears a third arm ring below the sleeve on her fully preserved arm, made of a row of large golden-yellow circles (beads?) below a thick black line. Finally, the terracotta figure adorned with highly stylized papyrus plants from Temple Room 19 at Mycenae (Cat. No. 106) wears what appear to be arm rings made up of two strands of dots high on both of her upper arms (matching the bracelet on her preserved wrist), with a second arm ring at the elbow of her preserved (proper right) arm.⁸¹

Bracelets

After necklaces, bracelets are the second most common article of jewelry within the dataset. They are worn by at least 27 figures from 20 different objects or scenes, and an additional four figures from three metal signet rings are depicted with somewhat ambiguous lines at their wrists that could indicate either bracelets or the cuffs of long sleeves. Within the dataset, bracelets appear on female figures from all media except hard and soft stone seals, and painted terracotta vessels. In frescoes they are almost a universal feature on large-scale female figures, appearing on all the preserved wrists within the dataset except those of the “Wounded Woman”

⁸⁰ Laffineur calls these “anchor-shaped” (Laffineur 2000: 900).

⁸¹ It is possible that one of these strands of dots is intended to represent the edge of a sleeve; the cylindrical shape of the figure and the flower designs suggest that this figure is clothed in some sort of robe or dress, but it is unclear what lines are intended to represent a neckline and sleeve edges, if indeed any are.

from the Adyton of Xeste 3 and the single, somewhat poorly preserved wrist of the “Older Woman with the Red Mantle” from Room 3b of Xeste 3.

When bracelets are depicted on female figures in the dataset, and when both wrists of the female figure are clearly depicted and preserved, bracelets appear only both wrists. Sometimes, however, figures do not wear the same type or number of bracelets on both wrists (e.g., the “Veiled Girl” from Xeste 3, and the seated female figure from the Tiryns ring [CMS I. 179] who wears two rings on her upraised hand and three on the hand on her lap).

The range in bracelet types within the dataset is illustrated by Figure 2.24 A-E. We will not discuss each type in great detail, but it is worth briefly making note of the types here as they relate to the dataset and to one another:

Figure 2.24 A represents the so called “U-bracelet,” a curved bracelet describing the shape of a U or an S-curve. This bracelet only appears in fresco images within the dataset and is particularly common at Akrotiri, where—perhaps significantly—it is the bracelet type of choice for all but two figures. The “Veiled Girl” from the Adyton of Xeste 3, and the “Priestess” from the West House, the two figures clad in additional or unusual garments and the only two young girls who do not engage in gathering crocus flowers, are the only bracelet-wearing figures who do not wear the U-bracelet (see below). U- bracelets are also worn on white wrists in the fresco fragments from Pylos.

Strands of spherical beads (Figure 2.24 B) also appear on the wrists of at least three figures in objects from the dataset executed in painted media: the “Veiled Girl” from Xeste 3, who wears a single strand on her raised arm, and on terracotta figurines from Mycenae (Cat. No. 106) and Tiryns (Cat. No. 108), each of whom wears two strands of spherical beads on her one preserved wrist together with necklaces of spherical beads.

In scenes from metal signet rings, bracelets are depicted as simple, straight, solid lines, similar to the manner in which necklaces are depicted. These lines suggest solid rings or perhaps cords (Figure 2.24 C) that are commonly worn singly but that can be worn in pairs or even groups of three (e.g., CMS I.279). These simply depicted bracelets in glyptic bear some resemblance to two other types of bracelets occurring in polychromatic media. In their double and triple form the solid glyptic bracelets are not unlike the multi-colored solid bands worn on the wrists of the “Priestess” from the West House, and on the lowered wrist of the “Veiled Girl” from Xeste 3 (Figure 2.24 D). In their singular form, the bracelets on female figures in glyptic also appear similar to a fifth type of bracelet that is indicated by a single narrow line, perhaps suggesting a cord. As Younger has observed and as is evident on the proper right arm of the “Goddess with Sheaves,” these narrow bracelets sometimes appear with a single, large, circular bead, which Younger interprets as a lentoid seal, when they are worn by figures with large hats.

Finally, Figure 2.24 E shows a final miscellaneous group of bracelets, each of which is unique within the dataset and made of strands of beads of various shapes.

Anklets

Anklets, the final form of jewelry and the final specific unit of the female figure that we will consider here, appear only on the legs of the four “Saffron Gatherers” and the “Veiled Girl” from Xeste 3 (Figure 2.25). On all of the girls, the anklets occur on both of their notably thick ankles and describe an S-curve (like the U-bracelets they wear on their wrists). On “Saffron Gatherers” 2 and 4, the anklets are depicted in a dark yellow color, while on “Saffron Gatherers” 1 and 3 and the “Veiled Girl” from the Adyton, the anklet is depicted in blue. On all the girls from the Saffron Gatherers fresco, the anklets have additional beading or granulation

but those of the “Veiled Girl” apparently do not. While anklets occur on male figures within glyptic scenes, no female figures from the glyptic scenes in the dataset appear with anklets.

2.4 Final Variables Concerning the Female Figure as a Whole

Moving finally from the level of variable units of the female figure to the level of the female figure as a whole, two variable qualities of the figure—her pose and her relative size—are also important to consider because these too shed light on the identity of the figure, the role she plays within the scene, or some aspect about her that the artist wished to emphasize.

Pose

Having explored the various significances of different units, it is important to note that the way the component units are joined together to depict a female figure positioned in a spatial field—in other words, how the female figure is posed—is also, in some instances, potentially significant as well.

Female figures are most often depicted in an upright or standing position. In the few instances when female figures are not portrayed standing upright, they are depicted in one of five other poses: they may be seated, crouching or squatting, kneeling on the ground, hanging from or pulling on a tree, or standing and bending at the waist. Each of these poses is illustrated in Figure 2.26 and the female figures depicted in each pose are also enumerated in that figure.

Pose is an important variable to consider because a figure’s pose may shed light on the type of activity in which the female figure is engaged, which in turn may shed light the nature of her engagement with the vegetal elements in the scene, on some aspect of her identity, and/or on status distinctions among figures depicted in different poses within a scene. Figures hanging from trees or kneeling before large stones or similar objects, for example, can be determined to

be engaged in the religious rites of “tree-pulling” and “baetyl-hugging” and thus can be determined to be mortal religious participants. Female figures in a seated position, however, are especially noteworthy, because within LBA Aegean iconography this position is reserved for figures of particular importance. Seated female figures are often shown together with fantastical creatures (e.g., CMS I.179, and the seated “Goddess” from Xeste 3 within the dataset) suggesting a divine status for these particular figures; often other seated figures are the target of processions in religious contexts, suggesting that the figure may again be a goddess or perhaps her mortal representative on earth.

Relative Size

Finally, we look to matters of relative size. As we have noted already in our examination of the breasts, female figures occurring together in the same scene are not always of precisely the same height. 17 scenes within the dataset contain female figures of different relative sizes (Figure 2.27 A-D). A number of different explanations may exist for these differences, some more significant for our purposes than others.

In some cases, differences in relative height seem to be important for spatial considerations that have little to do with the female figures themselves. Within glyptic scenes with curved pictorial fields, height among female figures may vary according to the artist’s attempt to make use of as much of the pictorial field as available,⁸² or the artist may use height to experiment with perspective, as seems to be the case in the metal signet rings in Figure 2.27 A. Differences in height that can be explained by these factors ultimately do not tell us much about

⁸² Note, for example, the way that on CMS I.017 (Figure 2.27 C.ii), the curved edge of the bezel serves as the ground line, and the feet of Female Figure 1 are placed higher than those of Female Figure 2. Female Figure 1 is thus shorter than Female Figure 2, but because the heads of these female figures stop at roughly the same place in the field this difference in relative height is not emphasized and seems of little significance with respect to the relationship of the two figures to one another.

the individual female figures themselves, except for their relative position in the scene, and are thus of rather limited use to us in this study.

Far more significant for our purposes are the more dramatic differences in scale that occur among female figures in nine scenes within the dataset that include one or more female figures depicted at less than approximately half the size of the larger female figures within the scene (Figures 2.27 B and C).⁸³ As the two different groups in the Figures 2.27 B and C suggest, these scenes can be divided into two groups according to the syntactical position of the small-scale female figure(s) within the scenes (if we may briefly get ahead of ourselves and consider matters of syntax). The first group includes small-scale female figures that are not depicted standing on the ground (whether a ground-line is explicitly rendered or simply implied) and who appear to float in or fly upright through the air (Figure 2.27 B). Figures in this group are generally thought to represent deities, either physically presenting themselves to or imagined by the figures engaged in cultic activity below.⁸⁴ As we noted above in our discussion of breast development (p. 65 n. 13), these figures are universally shown without breasts although they sometimes appear together with full-breasted, full-sized figures. Because they seem to operate on a different plane than the figures below and are thought to be deities, their small relative size and breast-less chest need not necessarily suggest youth or physical immaturity. The hard stone seal CMS XIII.039 (Figure 2.27 B.viii) presents a similar but isolated, small-scale female figure that, in her association with griffins and her snake-frame headdress in lieu of a head, also seems to

⁸³ Floating Female Figure 2 in CMS II.3.305 is somewhat exceptional in that she is roughly three-quarters of the height of her full-scale companion, while most floating figures are no larger than half the size of the larger figures. Despite the lesser height disparity, this figure seems to occupy the same syntactical position as the other figures and shares the recurring bent arm gesture; it seems fully appropriate that she should be considered here.

⁸⁴ See Cain 2001:36-37 for a discussion of various interpretations of the nature of the “manifestation” and see p. 36 n. 62 for numerous references to scholarly works referring to these figures as divine entities.

represent a goddess, making it appropriate that she should occupy the same portion of the field often filled by deities manifesting themselves to large-scale religious worshipers.

Small-scale female figures in the second group (Figure 2.27 C) are depicted in the same plane as their large-scale counterparts and typically engage in the same action that the large-scale female figures do. There is nothing to indicate that these figures should be interpreted as deities; their position and actions place them firmly in the same mortal sphere as their larger-scale companions. As we have argued already, however, their small scale may, nevertheless, convey information concerning other aspects of their identity: namely, youth.

Other, less dramatic differences in relative size among female figures within the dataset may also be of significance. We have already noted, for instance, the slight difference in relative size among the female figures in CMS II.3.326 (Figure 2.27 D.i), which correspond with differences in relative breast size and may suggest distinctions in age. Other differences in relative size within the dataset seem to be less a matter of distinction in maturity and more a matter of potentially significant artistic intention. The difference in the relative sizes of Female Figures 1 and 2 in CMS VI.278 (Figure 2.27 D.ii) is particularly striking; while the torsos of the figures are approximately the same size, the upper legs of the kneeling Female Figure 2 are greatly exaggerated in size, with the result that, although Female Figure 2 is kneeling on the ground, her hips stop at the same level as those of her standing companion. That this figure with exaggeratedly large thighs occurs in close association with a squill with exaggeratedly large bulbs is visually striking and possibly quite significant; we will return to this matter in Chapter 3 (see p. 129). The legs of Female Figure 2 in CMS XI.030 (Figure 2.27 D.iii) are also exaggeratedly large in comparison to those of her standing companion, with the knees of the seated figure reaching the waist of the standing figure. Seated at a shrine as the target of a (one-

woman) procession, Female Figure 2 fills, as we have just noted in our discussion of pose, a role sometimes filled by goddesses or by figures thought to be the mortal representatives of the goddess. While the use of hierarchical scale is rather uncommon in Aegean art,⁸⁵ it is possible that the differences in size between these female figures could reflect the relative status differences between these figures. Artistic concerns, however, might also factor into the presentation: because their torsos are positioned at the same level and the lower legs of Female Figure 2 are the same size as the legs of Female Figure 1, the interaction between the female figures is emphasized and the similarities in their kilts are also made obvious, as they would not be if the lower legs of Female Figure 2 were not so exaggeratedly long.

Finally, two fresco scenes from Xeste 3 also merit mention here. Within the “Saffron Gatherers” fresco (Figure 2.27 D.iv), the seated “Goddess” is significantly larger than the “Saffron Gatherers” below her, and would be significantly taller than they are if she were to stand up. According to M. Bietak, this scene is one of the few scenes in which hierarchical perspective is clearly employed in Aegean art, with the size of the “Goddess” reflecting her divine status like the fantastical creatures that flank her;⁸⁶ it also seems possible that distinctions in maturity could be another factor in the size differences. Finally, distinctions in relative size are also evident among the figures from the “Adorants” fresco on the North Wall of the Adyton one floor below (Figure 2.27 D.v). The central “Wounded Woman,” seated on a higher ground level than her companions, is of a slightly larger scale than both the younger “Veiled Girl” and her apparent age-peer, the “Necklace Swinger;” her size, her pose, and her central position within the scene all draw attention to her and her reaction to her wounding.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Bietak 2000: 235.

⁸⁶ Bietak 2000:235.

⁸⁷ Marinatos 1984: 78-79.

A Brief Note on Composite Figures with Female Units

As we mentioned briefly in the Introduction, composite figures including units that are explicitly gendered as female—namely, human breasts, skirts, and/or flounced kilts—have also been included in the dataset when they occur in association with vegetal elements. These figures are illustrated in Figure 2.28; we will not discuss the component units of these composite creatures at length here, but rather have itemized their units in the captions in Figure 2.28 A-E. We will reserve a discussion of the most relevant of these composite figures in Chapter 3, but it is worth noting that for seven of the nine composite female creatures, vegetal elements function as units of the composite element, with vegetal elements forming part of the torso and head for six of the composite creatures (Figure 2.28 B-D) and with a vegetal element forming a kilt on the figure in CMS XII.276b (Figure 2.28 E).

Concluding Notes

In this chapter we have closely examined several of the most important and variable units or “morphemes” of the female figure. In the process we have explored both the formal variation in these units and, where possible, what these units may communicate concerning the figure herself. By grouping the female figures within the dataset according to the similarities of their component units, we have laid important groundwork for future systematic examinations which will be outlined briefly in the following chapter. Equally importantly, we have developed a sense for the possibilities available to the artist in depicting the units of the female body and we have noted particularly unusual manners of rendering units that suggest possible iconographic intention. Having now examined the “pictorial vocabulary” of vegetal elements and female figures, we turn now to examine how, through particular associations and syntactical

arrangements, artists seem to have made meaningful visual statements concerning the likeness of these two element types.

CHAPTER 3

The Language at Work: Syntax, Similes, Metaphors, and Meanings

In Chapters 1 and 2, we have explored how different units come together to form vegetal elements and female figures. In this chapter, we will broaden our focus to consider how these elements come together to form associations and how associated vegetal elements and female figures are arranged in syntactical relationships that convey meaning.

There is much that could be examined concerning associations and syntactical relationships within the “pictorial language,” and there is more than one way to approach the topic; this chapter will explore two. If indeed there is some sort of symbolic code at work when flowers and plants of different sorts are depicted in association with different female figures—a true “language of women and flora”—then a comprehensive and systematic examination of associations and syntax would be necessary to identify potentially meaningful patterns in the dataset and to interpret that meaning. Such an examination, while beyond what can be achieved within the constraints of the present project, could build upon the systematic examination of units and pictorial vocabulary in Chapters 1 and 2 and could potentially prove quite fruitful. We will not attempt such an analysis here, but will begin by considering how such an examination could work and what sorts of questions this sort of analysis could address.

In the subsequent sections of this chapter we will examine how, within a select group of scenes from the dataset, artists do not merely depict female figures and vegetal elements together in association with one another but also explore how female figures resemble and sometimes actually constitute vegetal elements through visual similes and metaphors. We will attempt to

demonstrate how such metaphors are expressed through the association of elements with similar units and through the syntactical relationships in which these elements are depicted.

In the final two sections of this chapter we will explore what meaning may be conveyed through the visual similes and metaphors, and we will consider the possible literary legacies of the LBA visual similes and metaphors in early Greek poetry.

3.1 Associations and Syntax: A Possible Systematic Approach

In order to assess fully any meaningful patterns of association and syntax within the dataset as a whole, a comprehensive systematic examination would be necessary. In systematically examining the vegetal elements and the female figures in the previous two chapters, we have laid important groundwork for a similar sort of analysis that could be carried out at the level of associations. Using the data set out in Chapters 1 and 2, it would be possible to consider every combination of female figures and vegetal elements that occurs within the iconography. One could consider, for example, if female figures in certain types of girdles or with particular hairstyles are repeatedly or even exclusively associated with vegetal elements of a given sort. Similarly, one could consider every scene in which a papyrus is depicted and establish if patterns in the addition of the different possible units we identified correspond to patterns in the types of female figures with which the vegetal element is associated. Given the large number of variables we have identified, the possible associations that could be explored are numerous and a comprehensive exploration of the sort required would be extremely time-consuming.

This examination of associations could be even broader in its scope. Several scenes containing women and vegetal elements also include other elements: landscape features like

“rockwork” or groundlines, animals and imaginary creatures, manmade objects like cult architecture or accessories, celestial symbols and floating objects, and sometimes—but only rarely—male figures. In associations that include elements other than just female figures and vegetal elements, these elements may contribute to the overall meaning of the scene and possibly to the meaning of the relationship between the female figures and vegetal elements that the scene contains; these elements thus merit consideration in the investigation of associations. One could consider what sorts of vegetal elements occur within a scene when male figures are included in the association as opposed to when they are not, the various vegetal elements that occur in association with female figures and boats, or the full range of female figures and vegetal elements that occur together in association with shrines, to name but a few examples. It is possible that a systematic examination of the other elements that occur in association with different combinations of female figures and vegetal elements may reveal additional and potentially significant patterns concerning the relationship between the females and the flora.

Further still, future examinations could and should systematically consider the syntactical structures at work within scenes in which female figures, vegetal elements, and elements of any other sort occur in association with one another. In conducting such analysis one could build upon Michael Wedde’s various studies on “pictorial architecture,” in which he identifies recurring basic structural templates and scene types at work within glyptic media specifically, but which also appear in select scenes in other media as well.¹ Indeed, one could examine and group scenes according to whether they represent the syntactical structure of what Wedde has identified as a “scene of procession,” a “scene of adoration,” a “scene of supplication,” a “scene of invocation,” a “scene of manifestation,” a “scene of pyramidal hierarchy” or some unusual combination of or deviation from these recurring scene types and structural templates. In

¹ Wedde 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 1999, and 2004.

considering the scenes according to their syntactical structures, one could then examine the associative patterns at work within each scene type and could explore how the relationship between female figures and vegetal elements differs from “scenes of procession” and “scenes of adoration,” for example. A consideration of the scene types in which the female figures and vegetal elements are associated, would be an important step in assessing the meaning of these associations.

Ultimately, such systematic analysis of the associations and syntax of all the scenes within the dataset could potentially prove quite illuminating in identifying patterns in the association of female figures and vegetal elements (or, alternatively, the absence of apparently meaningful patterns). Analysis of this sort would help to determine if there may indeed be some sort of meaningful iconographic code or “language of flowers(/flora)” at work in terms of when and how female figures and vegetal elements of different sorts occur in association with one another. This project, however, would be no small undertaking and would require the use of a very carefully constructed database for the examination of all of the associations and syntactical patterns within the dataset. Furthermore, it would perhaps only prove truly meaningful if matters of chronology could be taken into consideration in a serious way—something that is rather challenging given difficulties of working with stylistic dates for glyptic objects that do not come from securely dated contexts, which account for a large portion of the dataset.² While this project has laid the groundwork for comprehensive systematic analysis of associations and syntactical relationships within the dataset through its classification of plant types and its careful examination of the variable units of the female body, such an undertaking is beyond what can be accomplished in the timeframe of the current project. Having laid out what could be done in

² We will discuss this point further in the final section of this thesis “Conclusions and Directions for Further Research.”

examining the associations and syntax of the scenes within the dataset in a rigorously systematic and comprehensive fashion and how this could help us to identify more implicit or encoded meaning in the relationship between women and vegetal elements, we will turn now to explore matters of association and syntax with respect to a smaller group of scenes within the dataset, in which meaning seems to be conveyed rather more explicitly.

3.2 Visual Similes and Metaphors

In the following discussion, we will consider how, within a select number of scenes in the dataset, the associations between female figures and vegetal elements and the syntactical relationships in which these are arranged seem to express some sort of meaning by showing how female figures *are like*—or in some cases—how they *are* vegetal elements, through what we will call “visual similes” and “visual metaphors.” We will focus first on *how* artists conveyed meaning through visual similes and visual metaphors, and we will then turn our attention to the question of *what* that meaning may be.

3.2a Visual Similes

“Visual similes” are created when female figures and vegetal elements occurring in association with one another are kept as distinct or separate entities but are shown to be *like* one another in one or more ways. Because female figures and vegetal elements are pictorial elements which are made up of units and which are placed in syntactical relationship with one another, the likening of these elements can occur either on the level of units, such that figures are depicted with formally similar units, or it can occur on the level of syntax, such that the figures or their units are depicted in proximity to one another or in syntactically parallel positions within the

pictorial structure of the scene. While some scenes liken female figures and vegetal elements on only one level, the most explicit and convincing visual similes are those that employ a combination of these techniques, depicting female figures and vegetal elements that are alike in the rendering of their constituent units and that are positioned in such a way within the pictorial syntax, either through proximity or parallelism, that this formal similarity is accentuated.

Although we cannot explore all the scenes in which there is either some formal likening of units or syntactical equation of units or elements, we will look to four particularly salient examples which demonstrate the possibilities for visual simile-making in LBA Aegean art.

CMS VS1A.075

One of the most simple and striking “visual similes” likening a female figure and a vegetal element is carved on the lentoid seal CMS VS1A.075 (Figure 3.1a) on which a female figure is likened to a palm tree near an altar with horns of consecration.³ This image provides a clear example of how elements can be likened to one another both on the level of their units and the level of their syntactical relationships. Looking first to the likeness of units within this scene (Figure 3.1b), we note that the female figure wears a skirt with horizontal flounces (one of several different common skirt designs that the artist could have selected) and that the trunk of the palm is shown with similar horizontal ridges (a naturalistic feature, but one that only occurs within the dataset on this specific palm tree). Both the ridged trunk and the ridged flounced skirt terminate in smooth units or areas at the top. The smooth, round crowning unit at the top of the trunk also happens to be placed directly opposite the smooth, round, exposed breast of the female figure, which is emphasized by its fullness and its unnatural height on the torso. Above the round breast, the female figure’s proper left arm is held up and bent in to the forehead at an acute angle which is copied in the angle formed by two of the shoots of new growth sprouting from the

³ We will return to the matter of this association of female figure, palm, and altar below (p. 144).

round crowning unit of the trunk. Finally, two long, parallel strands of hair hang down from the female figure's head, and from either side of the round crowning unit of the palm hang two parallel "tongues," a characteristic feature of the palm motif. At the level of at least four units the palm and the female figure are similar.

These elements are not only similar to one another at the level of units; they are also arranged in syntactically parallel positions within the scene. Both elements are located on the same ground line and curve (slightly) around the central altar, creating a roughly symmetrical pictorial structure in the lentoid field in which the female figure and palm fill syntactically equivalent positions.

Finally, the fact that this roughly symmetrical scene occurs on a seal, the function of which was to make impressions in clay or some other soft material, may add another layer of complexity to the relationship between the female figure and the palm. Because the image carved on the lentoid seal would appear as a mirror image in the impression, an individual examining the image on the agate seal and then using that seal to make an impression would note that the female figure and the palm swap positions; where female figure appears on the seal, palm appears on the impression, and vice versa (Figure 3.2). While many individuals who viewed this scene might have viewed only impressions made by the seal in clay, this is not the only glyptic object within the dataset which suggests that glyptic artists were cognizant of the interplay between the imagery on seal and that on the sealing and might have exploited this interplay to convey meaning (see also Figure 3.6).

The visual simile likening the female figure and the palm tree that occur in association with one another in this scene is thus achieved through the likeness of the units that make up these elements, by the syntactical parallelism of these elements within the pictorial field, and—

possibly—by the glyptic artist’s exploration and exploitation of the interplay of the imagery between seal and impression.

CMS I.279

A second particularly noteworthy and equally elegant visual simile appears on the hard-stone lentoid CMS I.279 from Myrsinokhori (Figure 3.3). Here a female figure appears in association with two lilies to which she bears striking formal resemblance. In studying these lilies and this female figure separately in Chapters 1 and 2, we noted in both cases that the elements are made up of unusual units. The torso of the female figure, for example, is carefully rendered dressed in a garment with a high neckline indicated by a continuous line running from one upper arm to the other; this neckline is unique among glyptic figures in the dataset. We also noted in Chapter 2 that despite the high-necked garment, the female figure’s breasts are fully exposed and rendered with prominent areolae. The lilies are also somewhat unusual: the manner of rendering the anthers and stamens above the antithetic curving petals as a simple contour-hugging line is employed in only one other scene within the dataset, and no other lilies within the dataset are depicted with leafy stems with numerous leaves projecting from both sides of the stem. What is remarkable about this particular association, then, is that through these highly unusual units—which seem to suggest artistic intention—the female figure and lilies are made to look like one another. Considering the elements in association with one another, we note that the contour-hugging line above the prominently curving lily petals is mimicked by the high, contour-hugging neckline above the curving shape of the prominent breasts. Similarly, the unusual leaves which flare outwards diagonally from the stems of both lilies are mimicked by the diagonal flounces on the skirt which radiate out from an implied medial line. Above the flounces a double medial band is depicted on the skirt which seems to curve to the right slightly just as the stems

do. The juxtaposition of the female figure and lilies side-by-side (if at somewhat different scales) calls attention to the similarity of the units of these elements.

CMS VS1B.113

On gold signet rings, where artists had larger, elliptical pictorial fields to fill and where different production techniques allowed for the use of even greater amounts of detail, the scenes associating female figures and vegetal elements are generally more complicated, and the “visual similes” are in many cases not as elegant or straightforward as those in the two lentoid seals we have just considered. The larger pictorial field and enhanced scope for the rendering of details created opportunity to explore more complicated relationships among female figures and vegetal elements. The artists seem to explore, for instance, how the same floral or vegetal unit may relate to more than one unit on the same figure in different ways or to more than one figure within the scene. These more complex relationships make for more complex (if less obvious) “visual similes,” and the multiple layers and types of similarities reinforce the overall message concerning the general similarity of female figure and vegetal elements.

The gold signet ring CMS VS1B.113 (Figure 3.4) provides a clear example of a busier, more complicated scene in which more than one unit of the female figure may be shown to relate to the same vegetal element(s) in different ways. Most strikingly in this scene, the flounced skirts are likened to the growing flowers through both the formal similarity and the syntactical proximity of their units. The flaring forms of the flowers are matched in the flaring form of the upper tier of flounces on each of the female figures’ skirts—a comparison which is made especially apparent with respect to the central lily and the rightmost papyrus plant given the way these flowers are positioned at the same level as the flounces.⁴ The flounces on Female Figure 2

⁴ Note how the similarity between the left-most papyrus plant and the flounces is not as obvious (even though the spreading form of the papyrus is actually more similar to the spreading V-shape of the flounces than the more

and the curving lines of the right-most papyrus plant are even so close in their syntactical position that they touch, creating continuity from flower to flounce and emphasizing the visual similarity even further.

Striking though this likeness of the flowers and flounces is, it is not the only formal similarity between the vegetal elements and the female figures within this scene that suggests artistic intention. As we noted in examining the central lily from this scene (Chapter 1), the pronounced “calyx tube” (the short, horizontal line segment) at the base of the lily bloom is a unique addition that does not occur on lilies in the natural world or elsewhere in the dataset.⁵ Similarly, the bracts at the base of the two growing papyrus “flowers” are rather more pronounced than they are in other glyptic scenes (where they are sometimes not depicted at all). The artist thus fancifully adds or emphasizes these units on each of the three growing flowers, which seem to have the effect of clearly demarcating the boundary between flower and stem (an effect that is also achieved by the placement of the hands on the picked flowers in the upper portion of the pictorial field). In separating flower and stem, these units find formal and functional parallels in the single girdles at the waists of the female figures which demarcate the boundary between the torsos above and the skirts below. The likeness of the calyx/bracts and the girdle is all the more striking when we note that the torsos which rise up from the girdles are rendered as two separate somewhat flaring lines (especially discernible on Female Figure 2), like the petals rising up from rising up from the calyx on the lily. Within this scene there is thus not a simple one-to-one correlation between similar plant units and similar units of the female figure

curving V-shape of the lilies) because this vegetal element is not placed on the same level as the flounces in the way the other two vegetal elements are. This highlights the role that syntactical arrangement plays in the making of visual similes.

⁵ I am grateful to Professor Rebecca Irwin of the Department of Biological Sciences at Dartmouth College, who shared with me her expertise on plants and flowers and pointed out that pronounced calyx tubes of this sort do not occur on lilies in nature.

as on the lentoid seals discussed above; instead the composition reveals different ways in which the female figures are like the flowers they walk among.⁶

CMS II.3.051

As a final example of visual similes at work within the dataset, we will consider the relationship among the female figures and flowers on the Isopata ring, CMS II.3.051 (Figure 3.5). In this scene, four flowering plants grow in a landscape otherwise occupied by four full-scale female figures. The same number of flowers and of full-scale figures likens these two groups of elements, and, as Figure 3.2 suggests, the arrangement of the flowers in relation to the female figures seems to reinforce this one-to-one correspondence in an interesting way. Were the flowers to be reflected over to the right side of the composition, each flowering bunch would fill *approximately* the same position as one of the female figures; remarkably, the relative size (and maturity?) of each flowering plant corresponds to the syntactical importance of the figure whose position it would occupy.⁷

While the flowers are thus shown to relate to all four of the figures, each to its own female figure, their concentration on the left side of the pictorial field closest to Female Figure 1 and (to a lesser degree) Female Figure 2, also allows for the exploration of formal similarity among syntactically proximate units of the flowering plants and these figures. One flowering plant, for example, is positioned at the same level as and directly beside the second tier of

⁶ If indeed different symbolic or semantic meanings were attached to lilies and papyrus plants (as in the nineteenth century language of flowers, for example), the fact that these female figures are shown to be like the flowers in multiple ways and each female figure is most closely associated with a different type of flower may mean that there is some sort of important difference between these female figures communicated by their floral associations which is not otherwise apparent from their identical hairstyles, skirts, and gestures.

⁷ Regarding the relative syntactical importance of the figures, the arm gestures and the arrangement of the bodies of the female figures draw attention to the frontal Female Figure 1 and make her the focus of the scene and the ritual action (Kyriakidis 2004 agrees with this reading as well). While Female Figure 2 directs her attention towards Female Figure 1, she also occupies a place of importance, positioned as she is in the center of the pictorial field. The two female figures with raised arms are not the object of attention of any of the other figures and they do not occupy an important syntactical position within the pictorial field.

flounces on Female Figure 1 and the form of the flaring leaves is mirrored by the pointed form of the kilt flounce. The placement of a flowering plant just to the left of the skirt of Female Figure 2 also invites a comparison between the pointed kilt and the flaring stems and leaves of the flowers. Finally, while it is less striking in a two-dimensional photograph, the similarity between the highly stylized, upper-left-most flowering plant (reduced to an elliptical shape crowned by smaller dots between two spreading leaves) and the highly stylized head of Female Figure 1 (reduced to an elliptical shape crowned by smaller dots between two raised arms) is particularly obvious when the impression is examined in person. The syntactical structure of the scene also emphasizes this likening of units: through the orientation of the bodies and the arm gestures of the other figures within the scene, Female Figure 1 is made the central focus, receiving the attention of her female companions and also that of the viewer of the scene. The gaze of the viewer is pushed upwards and over from the right side of the seal and comes to rest on the left side of the composition where this likening of units is explored.

Thus, through the form, number, and syntactical arrangement of different floral and female elements, the artist likens the same growing flowers in the landscape to different female figures within the scene and to different units of the same figure at the same time. So doing, he creates a visually complex and multivalent statement concerning the likeness of females and flowers.

These four scenes are among the most interesting and salient examples of visual similes within the dataset, and they demonstrate several of the ways that artists communicate the similarity of different elements through the pictorial language: formal similarity of units (which sometimes involves rendering units in an atypical fashion), the association of equal numbers of the comparable elements (as on the Isopata ring), and syntactical proximity and parallelism of

similar units or entire elements. These examples also illustrate some of the recurring types of similarities that LBA Aegean artists emphasize, namely the association of vegetal elements (or units thereof) with the clothing (specifically the kilt or skirt) and with the clothed body, a point we will explore further after we examine visual metaphors at work within the dataset.

3.2 b Visual Metaphors

In a small number of scenes within the dataset, the similarities between female figures and vegetal elements are explored not through visual similes, in which female figures and vegetal elements remain distinct elements that are likened to one another, but through visual metaphors in which vegetal elements and female figures are fused into a single element. The scene thus expresses not simply that the female figure *is like* a vegetal element, but that the female figure *is*—either in part, or part of—a vegetal element.

This visual metaphor-making that equates female figures and vegetal elements takes three forms within the dataset. First, vegetal elements can be incorporated into the female figure, being substituted for or made to express the form of a unit of the female figure. The element thus combines female and vegetal units, but the form is still clearly that of a human female. These metaphors show that the female figure is *in part* a vegetal element. In a second class of metaphorical objects, female figures are incorporated into the form of vegetal elements; they either take the form of or simply fill the place of units of the vegetal element, demonstrating how female figures are *parts of* plants. In a final group of objects, female units and vegetal units are fused to create composite creatures that are equally female and vegetal at the same time. These scenes explore the likeness in the female and vegetal form but the overall form is neither predominantly vegetal nor human female.

Metaphor Type 1: Female Figures Are (in Part) Vegetal Elements

In the first type of metaphorical equating of female figures and vegetal elements, vegetal elements are incorporated into or used to express some part of the female form. Female figures are shown to be, *in part*, vegetal elements.

A particularly fascinating example of this sort of visual metaphor making occurs on a LH IIA “Arcade group” beaked jug from Routsis, NM 8375 (Figure 3.7). On the jug, pendant motifs, looking very much like long skirts, are crowned by ivy leaf motifs. The cordiform ivy leaves are depicted with elongated tips that point upwards and with their wider ends formed by volutes that rest on top of the pendants. The leaves are outlined with dots, and two larger dots fill the volutes of the ivy leaves. Together these details make the ivy leaf appear very much like the upper portion of the female body, including a head (formed by the elongated tip), sloping shoulders and arms curving upwards beneath the breasts (a position very similar to that of some of the early “Naturalistic” style Mycenaean figurines [Figure 3.8]), breasts with prominent areolae (formed by the dots in the center of the volutes) and dotted hair following the contours of the head and shoulders (Recurring Hairstyle 9a within our hairstyle typology [Figure 2.1]). Here, a vegetal motif is used to suggest the form of a female head and torso positioned above a pendant motif skirt. The artist does not merely draw a comparison between two units or elements side by side, but creates the female form by using a vegetal element. The resultant metaphor is striking: the female figure is, in part, a vegetal element.

A second visual metaphor of this type is expressed on a terracotta figure from Temple Room 19 at Mycenae on which stylized papyrus elements are painted growing up the body of the figure (Figure 3.9). As we noted in our discussion of clothing in Chapter 2, the presence of a painted pattern on the body *suggests* that this is some sort of pattern on a long robe; however, no

details of the garment itself are shown. Instead we see female figure and vegetal elements metaphorically combined into one single element; the figure is decidedly a human female, but she is also vegetal.

Metaphor Type 2: Female Figures Are (Parts of) Vegetal Elements

In a select group of other scenes and objects within the dataset, the incorporation works in the opposite direction: the female figure is incorporated into the form of a vegetal element either filling the place of or expressing the form of units of the vegetal element. In these visual metaphors, female figures are shown to be *parts of* vegetal elements.

A metaphorical relationship of this sort seems to be at work on the gold signet ring CMS VI.278, though this is not immediately obvious (Figure 3.10). At first glance, the scene seems to present a striking and straightforward visual simile—an obvious likening of the voluptuous thigh of a kneeling female figure to the exaggeratedly large double-bulbs of a squill against which the figure leans—but nothing more. A closer look at the relationship between the female figure and the squills, however, reveals that the formal similarity and syntactical proximity of their units also creates a sort of visual metaphorical “play” within the image, making the female figure into part of a squill herself. Because the double bulbs of the squill and the thigh are so similar in their form and position, the thigh itself seems to become a third bulb, and the torso of the female figure rises up between the thigh and the left-most squill bulb on which it leans, filling the same position that the wavy basal leaves of the squill fill between the two “real” squill bulbs. In fact, if we were to cut out the image of the squill and slide it over one “bulb unit,” the visually translated form of the squill would almost perfectly eclipse the kneeling figure and bulb on which she leans (with only the projecting lower leg remaining visible).

Completing the metaphor, in the space where the top of the head and the proper right arm of the figure come together with the squill leaves, lines forming the leaves and lines forming details of the body seem to merge. The line that appears to form an upper band of a sleeve outlining the form of the arm continues past the cuff of the sleeve into the center of the spray of leaves. Similarly, a thin wavy line extends from a dot on top of the head to the meeting point of the leaves, seeming to suggest both squill leaf and hair strand at the same time. There is thus a blurring of the distinction between units of the vegetal element and units of the female figure. What appeared at first to be a striking but simple likening of the vegetal and female units seems, upon closer examination, to be rich with metaphorical visual “play,” where female figures and vegetal elements (or component units thereof) are not only likened but even fused, and the female figure expresses the form of a vegetal element herself.

Two other, rather more straightforward examples of this sort of visual metaphor (in which female figures assume the place of units of a vegetal element) can be found on two ivory mirror handles from Mycenae, NM 2899 and 2900 (Figure 3.11). On each of these ivory mirror handles, the portion of the handle that would have been held in the hand is crowned by distinctive (albeit rather short) curving leaves, characteristic of a Palm II motif in Furumark’s classification of painted motifs on pottery. Ordinarily on Palm II motifs the curving leaves are themselves crowned by shorter, straighter leaves or fronds that point upwards, suggesting newer leaf growth (Figure 3.12). On these two ivory mirror handles from Mycenae, however, the area above the curving leaves is instead filled by two female figures, who are indicated to be youthful by their short curls worn close to the head, a hairstyle shared with (and shown convincingly to be

ted to the age of) the hair of the pubescent girls of Xeste 3.⁸ The metaphorical substitution of youthful palm growth with youthful maidens is striking and seems potentially quite significant.

A more careful consideration of one of these mirror handles, NM 2899 from Chamber Tomb 55 at Mycenae (Figure 3.13), reveals that visual metaphor-making at work on the mirror handle may be even more complicated and fascinating than this simple substitution of units. Taking a closer look at the scene (Figures 3.11a, 3.13), we note that the two young girls, who form mirror images of one another, hold vegetal elements in their hands. The elements, as we noted in Chapter 1, are somewhat hybridized: they most clearly resemble stylized papyrus plants, but the ridges on the leaves also clearly liken them to the ridged Palm II leaves below. Thus within the scene, two female figures holding stylized vegetal elements form mirror images of one another and are themselves likened to or equated with vegetal elements. The scene becomes all the more fascinating when we consider that the length of the mirror handle is ornamented with a vertical foliate band motif, meaning that together the foliate band “stalk” and crowning Palm II ornaments make the handle itself a sort of hybridized Palm II-like vegetal element. In using the mirror, an LBA Aegean woman⁹ would have thus held in her own hand a hybridized Palm II-like element; she would have confronted her own image in the surface of the bronze mirror, reflecting back at her in much the same way as the faces of the girls reflect one another; and her own reflected image would have also occupied the space above the Palm-II leaves, likening her to the

⁸ On hairstyles as a marker of age in the Thera frescoes, see Davis 1986. Rehak 2004 discusses these mirror handles and identifies these female figures as girls primarily according to their short curls like those of the Xeste 3 “Saffron Gatherers.” Rehak also points to the minimal breast development of these figures, but due to the wear to the ivory, I am not certain that much can be said concerning the breast development. Rehak also claims the these girls are connected to the girls of Xeste 3 by their shorter costumes, but the skirt of the figures on NM 2899 clearly covers most of her legs (short though *they* may be) I am convinced that the hairstyle and the anatomical proportions of the figures suggest that these are youths—as many scholars other than Rehak also are (see, for example, Younger 1992: 258), but I am not prepared (nor do I find it necessary) to agree with all the evidence Rehak adduces in support of his claim.

⁹ While mirrors could have been used by men, the imagery on ivory toiletry objects like mirrors and combs is gendered female, suggesting these were made for a female user (see for instance Burns 2000, Rehak 2007: 215). Furthermore, when mirrors appear within the iconography, as on CMS XI.030 from the dataset, they are held by female figures.

vegetal element as well. This mirror handle and the mirror to which it was attached would have created a fascinating *mise en abîme* when used by its female owner, with the interaction between the gazer, her reflection, and the mirror handle itself played out in the relationships between the smaller female figures and the vegetal elements carved below.

This consideration of reflected images in mirrors as they would have played into visual metaphor-making on mirror handles brings us to a third mirror handle, NM 8343, from Routsis (Figure 3.14). While this mirror handle is not officially included within the dataset because it does not include a *depiction* of a female figure, the plate of the mirror would have incorporated the reflection of its female gazer into a visual metaphor with the vegetal elements on the handle. Specifically, this handle is carved to look like a floral bouquet, with straight vertical lines suggesting stems running up the handle and with three rosettes, each framed by a circle with a larger ivory circle behind these, placed on top of these stems and depicted “face-up” (i.e., as if viewed from an overhead position rather than in profile like lilies or papyrus plants). In holding the mirror/bouquet to her face, the female user would have seen her own image reflected in the circular bronze plate of the mirror above the three “faces” of the encircled roses, with her encircled face becoming part of the bouquet she holds.

As these mirror handles indicate, this sort of visual metaphorical relationship between female figures and vegetal elements in which the female figure is shown to be part of a vegetal element presents particularly rich possibilities for incorporating real human females into this exploration of the likeness of the vegetal and the female form. In most cases, attempting to establish how the likening of the iconographic body to vegetal elements in LBA Aegean art might have impacted the corporeal bodies and the self-perceptions of Aegean women proves to be an insurmountable hermeneutic challenge. However, these two ivory mirror handles—

especially NM 2899 with its explicit juxtaposition of female figures and vegetal elements and with its interplay of mirror and handle—offer remarkable examples of how women would have engaged with this visual metaphor-making. In supplying the image of herself to this visual metaphor, the female figure may in turn have found her *self-image* shaped by the metaphorical equating of women to plants and flowers.

Metaphor Type 3: Composite Creatures That Are Equally Vegetal and Female

In a final group of scenes within the dataset, female figures are equated to vegetal elements through the fusion of female units and vegetal units to create composite creatures that are neither predominantly female nor predominantly vegetal, but equally vegetal and female (and sometimes also part something else) at the same time.

This sort of metaphor-making is demonstrated most straightforwardly on two highly unusual soft stone lentoids, CMS IX.166 and 167 (Figure 3.15). On these seals, vegetal elements, which we speculated in Chapter 1 may be rather naturalistic depictions of papyrus, are depicted above skirts with feet projecting from beneath these skirts. Unlike the combination of pendant skirt and ivy leaf on the jug from Routsis, nothing about the form of the vegetal elements suggests the form of a torso. The juxtaposition of the lower half of a female body on the bottom and the growing vegetal element on top in each of these scenes makes a direct statement likening female figure and plant. Visually, however, this linkage seems rather inharmonious, and yet the strange projections between the vegetal element and the skirt on each seal serve to and make this linkage “work.” As we noted in Chapter 1, the projections seem to bear resemblance to vegetal bracts which appear in papyrus depictions, but they also resemble streamer-like projections that are sometimes worn from the shoulders and waists of female figures as in Figure 3.16. Serving a dual function as bracts and streamers, the projecting lines help to smooth over the visual

disjunction between the skirt and the vegetal element while allowing the composite element to remain equally vegetal and also female.¹⁰

Two sealings from soft-stone lentoid seals, CMS II.7.135 A and B (Figure 3.17a-b), offer another example of the fusion of vegetal units and plant units into one single element to create a composite creature that is neither predominantly vegetal nor predominantly human female. On these sealings, vegetal units (lines suggesting strap-like leaves) are combined with female units (breasts) to create or suggest the form of a vegetal element (a double-bulb squill), and this vegetal unit itself forms units (the head and chest/torso) of a gendered composite creature.

A final and rather remarkable example of the fusion of female and vegetal elements into a composite, gendered creature appears on the soft stone seal CMS XII.276b (Figure 3.18). On this seal, a creature with bird wings and the torso and head of a goat wears a relatively short female kilt that appears to be made up of a unique vegetal element with a bulb-like center forming the point of the kilt, and long, slightly curving, branching “leaves” forming the flounces. The artist thus not only fuses female and vegetal units into one composite creature, but into one single unit—the logical extension of the comparisons between vegetal elements and kilts/skirts that are

¹⁰ If the reader will permit another digression of this sort, Samuel Johnson’s characterization of the metaphors and wit of seventeenth-century metaphysical poets like John Donne seems appropriate to the present visual metaphor and, more generally, to the wider visual metaphor-making and playfulness that occurs within Aegean art. Johnson calls the metaphysical wit and the resultant conceits of these poets “a kind of *discordia concors* (harmonious discord): combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions” (Cowley 1979: 2361). Given the proclivity of Aegean artists to make playful visual associations of apparently unlike objects that ultimately “work” (the figures discussed here, for example, or cuttlefish made of helmets and skirts, see Rutter 2006), Johnson’s observations can be applied to Aegean artists and their visual metaphors as well as they apply to seventeenth-century CE poets and their metaphysical conceits.

Before moving on from these scenes, we should also make note of the fact that the skirt on CMS IX.166 also bears resemblance to a helmet (though the presence of feet and the similarity of this scene to CMS IX.167 where the skirt bears no clear resemblance to a helmet seems to clearly indicate that it is or can be viewed as a skirt). The fact that helmets may have been plumed with some sort of fanning ornament may also make this combination of units “work,” but this does not take away from the interplay of human female or vegetal elements within the figure.

made within the visual similes we studied above. Significantly, it is thus through the inclusion of this unusual vegetal element that the composite creature is gendered female.

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Building upon our examination of the units of vegetal elements and female figures in Chapters 1 and 2, we have thus examined how, through the association of figures with similar units in similar syntactical positions and through the combination or fusion of female and vegetal units into single elements, the LBA Aegean artists not only associated female figures and vegetal elements but made bold visual statements concerning their similarity through visual similes and metaphors.

3.3 Getting at Meaning: A Symbolic Parallel?

Having now examined *how* the pictorial language seems to convey meaning concerning female figures and vegetal elements, we face the questions of *what* that meaning is and how far we are able to get in accessing it.

Here, a brief consideration of the dataset in light of the pictorial similes explored by previous scholarship proves illuminating. Previous studies have argued that within LBA Aegean iconography, men and animals are associated and syntactically likened to convey some sort of symbolic parallel.¹¹ Lyvia Morgan, for instance, has argued that recurring juxtaposition of man and lion within Aegean art (as in Egyptian and Near Eastern art) conveys a “parallel of power” allowing man to metaphorically appropriate the power of the beast.¹² Morgan also points to the juxtaposition of the Boxing Boys and Antelopes from Room B1 at Akrotiri, and makes a case

¹¹ See especially Morgan 1995; see also, Morgan 1985: 14-18, Marinatos 1990, and Laffineur 2007.

¹² Morgan 1995.

that there is a symbolic parallel of youthful ritualized competition playing out in these frescoes.¹³ These examples raise the question of whether we can determine there to be “symbolic parallels” expressed in our visual similes and metaphors as well, and, in fact, a consideration of our similes and metaphors against these man-beast comparisons helps shed light on what symbolism may be at work.

When we look to the male-lion similes after having explored several female-flora similes and metaphors and how precisely these function, one particularly striking fact emerges: for all the juxtaposition of men and lions that occurs in Aegean art, and for all the meaning these may carry, these elements do not seem to be formally likened on the level of their units in the way that female figures and vegetal elements are time and time again. The parallels between men and lions function mostly on the level of the syntactical relationship between these elements: on a stele above Shaft Grave V from Grave Circle B at Mycenae, a male figure rides in a chariot over the body of his enemy with a lion depicted below the chariot and its prey below the fallen enemy;¹⁴ on the “Lion Hunt Dagger” from Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae (Figure 3.19), men hunting a lion appear opposite a lion hunting his prey; and in numerous glyptic examples men and lion oppose each other in combat. When men and lions are likened to one another on the level of units this likening works on a conceptual level—for example, when sharp metal swords meet sharp lion teeth¹⁵— but does not seem to be expressed through formal similarity. The same may be said of the Boxing Boys and Antelopes from Akrotiri. Meaning is thus conveyed primarily through the syntactical apposition or opposition and not through formal resemblance at

¹³ Morgan 1985: 14-18, 1995:180-184.

¹⁴ Morgan 1995: fig.2.

¹⁵ Morgan 1995: 179.

the level of units or through the metaphorical combination of units into a single form, like the human-cum-lion sphinx in Egyptian iconography¹⁶

The fact that artists seem to have explored the similarity and conceptual parallels among men and animals without exploiting formal similarities to convey this point makes the recurring exploration of formal likeness between female figures and vegetal elements remarkable and perhaps quite significant. If juxtaposing man and animal with one another was sufficient to elicit a comparison between these elements in the mind of the artist or his viewer, then why in so many scenes within the dataset should the artists have not stopped with a simple juxtaposition of female figure and vegetal element, but have gone to great lengths to indicate the formal similarity between them? This seems to suggest that the formal likeness of units that we have demonstrated repeatedly in this examination may, in fact, be more than just a means of calling attention to deeper, symbolic meaning, and that it may be a significant part of the meaning itself. The fact that female figures look like vegetal elements in their form seems to be at least one of the important parallels that the artist is drawing attention to, even if there is also further symbolic meaning conveyed beyond this.

But can we say more about the formal likening of female figures and vegetal elements? Are there instances in which the artist seems to say something more specific in drawing formal parallels? In a word, yes. As the similes and metaphors we considered in this chapter demonstrate and as is made clear in many other scenes which we could not consider here, in likening many vegetal elements to the form of the female figure, the artist is in fact likening the vegetation to the form of the clothed body. That is to say, the formal comparison between female figure and vegetal element is made possible because of the way that the clothing, together with

¹⁶ Morgan also notes that unlike in Egyptian iconography, where the lion was fused with the male human in the form of a sphinx, “a single embodiment of domination” and a “visual metaphor” according to our definition, the male-lion parallel in Aegean art is explored strictly through alternation rather than combination (Morgan 1995: 177).

the anatomical units of the body, plays into the formal relationship. On VS1A.075 (Figure 3.1), for example, the ridged/flounced skirt, together with the breast, arm, and hair, plays a key role in the likening of the female figure to the ridged palm; on CMS I.279 (Figure 3.3), the striking connection between the lilies and the torso is made possible by the combination of the unusual neckline and the shape of the prominent breasts. Similarly, the torsos of the female figures in VS1B.113 (Figure 3.4) only look like the flowers with bracts/calyx tubes because of their formal relationship to the single girdle around the waist of each figure. It is through the presence of clothing on the body, then, that the formal likeness of the female figure to most vegetal elements is communicated.

It is also significant to note that fine clothing itself is frequently likened to vegetal elements, especially flowers. The likening of flounced skirts and kilts to vegetal elements occurs in each of the similes we considered above and is obviously at work in the plant-kilt of the composite creature on CMS XII.276b (Figure 3.18). Similarly, the two faience dress plaques from the Temple Repository at Knossos (Cat. Nos. 90, 91) are depicted with elaborate sprays of crocus flowers, and, as we noted in our discussion of clothing on the torso, several female figures wear remarkable floral-patterned garments (or perhaps, as we noted, garments with real flowers woven in).

This specific formal likening of fine clothes to vegetal elements and the role that clothes seem to play in the formal resemblance of vegetal elements to most female figures suggest that the artist may be making a statement about the clothed body itself: the finely arrayed body is like a vegetal element, and especially a flower; that is to say, the finely arrayed body is a body in bloom.

This parallel seems to work quite nicely on several levels: that flowers appear to play a key role in cultic rituals within the iconography and that fine clothing is worn as part of cult activity make this association a natural one. Additionally, if, as some scholars have speculated, particular rituals or festivals were related to the blooming seasons of different flowers,¹⁷ then when the flowers bloomed, so too, the highborn girls or ladies would have “bloomed” in donning their cultic apparel. The fact that saffron from crocus flowers may also have been used to dye particularly special garments, as suggested by the yellow garments worn by the “Veiled Girl” and the older women from Xeste 3,¹⁸ and the possibility that real flowers might have been woven into some costumes, as Bernice Jones suggests, adds another very literal connection between flowers and garments. The juxtaposition of a wall of “papyrus flowers” in full bloom opposite the “robing scene” in the House of the Ladies (in which an older, but finely dressed lady carries a kilt, presumably to robe a statue that is no longer preserved) also seems to work quite nicely with this notion of the association of the finely clothed body and vegetation generally and flowers specifically. Additionally, more simply dressed figures such as the robed townswomen in the miniature wall paintings from the West House are not shown to be formally likened to vegetal elements or even to be associated with them at all (and thus do not appear within the dataset).¹⁹

Working in interesting ways with this apparent conceptual association of the clothed body with flowers, when formal comparisons are made expressly between vegetation and

¹⁷ See, for instance, Porter 2000.

¹⁸ Rehak 2004: 92.

¹⁹ It should be noted that the two female figures in the dataset from the “Pastoral Scene” in the miniature wall paintings of the West House wear garments that are similar in general outline to but apparently much less elaborate than the cultic finery that appears in Xeste 3 and the House of the Ladies. While, as we discussed above, Lyvia Morgan and Senta German interpret these garments differently, the issue is not of great importance. The female figures are syntactically likened to two fruiting fig or mulberry trees, but they do not seem to be formally likened to the trees. Thus, even if these female figures are not finely dressed, they do not contradict the notion that artists often seem to explore the formal likeness of vegetation and fine clothing as well as blooming plants and finely dressed women.

unclothed units of the female body—or apparently unclothed units as in the case of the legs of CMS VI.278—the sort of visual parallels that the artist draws are very different. Indeed, there seems to be an altogether different symbolic parallel at work. The almost nude and heavily emphasized thigh of the kneeling female figure on CMS VI.278 and the exposed and unidealized breasts of the composite figures on CMS II.7.135 A and B are likened and, in all three instances, even converted into squill bulbs, as we observed in our exploration of visual metaphors above. That breasts and wide, full hips and thighs—units that are decidedly female and decidedly tied to sexual maturity, and, by extension, fertility—should be directly likened to squills, plants that, as Peter Warren has argued compellingly, seem to have functioned as symbols of fertility in the LBA Aegean as they did in Classical antiquity and even in the villages of Crete in the twentieth century CE,²⁰ must be significant. It seems that in these scenes as well, a symbolic parallel may underlie the formal similarity that is so visually striking.

One other symbolic parallel seems to be clearly expressed in the dataset: the connection of youthful or pubescent girls to the new youthful growth of palms on the ivory mirror handles from Mycenae, NM 2899 and 2900. No clear formal similarities play into the metaphor; the substitution of units seems to work clearly through the conceptual or symbolic relationship of the units that are swapped: a girl, indicated to be somewhat young by her hairstyle and bodily proportions, fills the space where young palm growth ordinarily occurs. While we cannot say more about the age-related associations of other vegetal elements, this symbolic, age-related parallel is clearly expressed.

These are not necessarily the only symbolic parallels at work, and it is possible that symbolic connections with vegetation on one level might, in some instances, have conveyed to

²⁰ Warren 1984. Warren notes that “no plant could more suitably convey the concept of the fertility of the world of vegetation” (Warren 1984: 18).

the LBA viewer other connotative meanings as well. Concepts such as youth, fertility, ephemerality, or—given the importance of the perfume industry in the Mycenaean world²¹—even scent, which are not (or in the case of scent, cannot be) directly conveyed in the scene itself, could nevertheless be suggested even when these are not explicitly shown. Having recognized these three symbolic parallels which seem to be clearly expressed within the iconography itself and having recognized the possibility that there may also be more implicit connotative associations at work, we will also recognize our “limits of inference,” as Lyvia Morgan advises,²² and leave our speculations on meaning at this.

Having now argued for the existence of similes and metaphors likening female figures and flora in LBA Aegean iconography, having examined how these similes and metaphors work, and having considered what they may mean, we turn finally to the matter of early Greek poetry and the question of whether these similes and metaphors might have had a post-Bronze Age afterlife in the poetic tradition of the Early Iron Age.

3.4 Literary Legacies?

Among many scholars of LBA Aegean iconography, there exists a general interest in exploring the connections between the pictorial tradition of the Late Bronze Age and the oral poetic tradition that was crystallized in Homeric times. As Andreas Vlachopoulos notes “today, there is a scholarly consensus that Early Greek poetry, and mainly epos, present vestiges of the pictorial universe of the Late Bronze Age.”²³

²¹See, for example, Shelmerdine 1985.

²²Morgan 1985: 19.

²³Vlachopoulos 2007: 108.

Naturally, then, all this discussion of LBA visual similes and metaphors raises the question of whether it is possible to identify legacies or echoes of this LBA likening of female figures and vegetal elements in early Greek poetry. The man-lion simile so prevalent in Mycenaean art clearly finds echoes in Homer, as, do other symbolic parallels, such as the likening of ships and birds in the miniature fresco from the West House at Akrotiri, as Robert Laffineur has demonstrated.²⁴ Can the same be said of this likening of female figures and flowers?

Previous scholarship, approaching this topic primarily through a consideration of the flower-picking “Saffron Gatherers” of Xeste 3 on Akrotiri, has already pointed out that the association of pubescent girls with flowering landscapes finds a clear parallel in the flowering meadows that provide a backdrop for the abduction of maidens in Greek poetry.²⁵ In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Persephone is abducted while collecting flowers in a blooming landscape; in the *Theogony*, Poseidon rapes Medusa upon a bed of flowers; in Euripides’ *Ion*, Apollo abducts the Athenian princess Kreousa while she gathers flowers.²⁶ There thus seems to exist a conceptual association between youthful girls and flowering landscapes in Greek poetry which seems to find parallels both in the Xeste 3 frescos specifically and in the larger dataset that we have examined in this study.

This is a significant point and should not be underemphasized. However, given the explicit visual similes and metaphors that we have identified in LBA Aegean depictions of female figures and flora, we can perhaps go even further than identifying this conceptual association of maidens and flowering meadows and look for *explicit* literary comparisons likening females to vegetation, such as the frequent similes likening men and lions in the *Iliad*

²⁴ Laffineur 2007, on ships and birds see p. 83.

²⁵ Vlachopoulos 1991; Suter 2002; Rehak 2007: 224-225.

²⁶ Rehak 2007: 224.

and the *Odyssey*. While we cannot undertake a comprehensive study of early Greek poetry here, a rather cursory examination, looking to the Homeric epics and two of the earliest Homeric *Hymns*, the *Hymn to Demeter* and the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, points to exciting possibilities.

Significantly, females are likened to flowers and vegetation not merely through association in early Greek poetry, but also through metaphorical language, in some cases language that relates directly to their physical form. Persephone, set among a field of flowers in the opening lines of the *Hymn to Demeter*, is herself described as a *καλσκώπιδι κούρη*, a “flower-faced maiden” (*h. Dem.* 8),²⁷ an epithet she applies later in the poem to one of her nymph companions when relating the story of their flower-picking (*h. Dem.* 240). The term, also used as an epithet of nymphs in the *Hymn to Aphrodite* (*h. Aph.* 284), calls to mind the ivory mirror handle from Routsis (NM 8343, Figure 3.14) which places the face of its gazer within a floral bouquet. Other metaphorical floral connections are made elsewhere in the *Hymn to Demeter*, when four virginal maidens who meet Demeter by a well are likened to goddesses and said to “have the maiden/youthful bloom”: *ηέζζαρες, ὄζηε θεαί, κοσρήιον ἄνθος ἔτοσζαι* (*h. Dem.* 108).²⁸ Additionally, while such terms are not applied strictly to female figures in early Greek poetry, the adjective *θαλερός*, “blooming” or “fresh,”²⁹ is used with reference to the marriages of both Persephone and Nausikaa (*h. Dem.* 80, *Od.* 6.66), and similarly the term

²⁷ Foley 1994 translates the phrase thus. Evelyn-White 1922 opts for the less literal “bloom-like.” L.S.J. *s.v.*, “*καλσκῶπις*,” supplies “like a budding flower in the face,” and speculates that this may relate to a blushing or roseate color of the face.

²⁸ No “*εἰδόν*” (nor the dative “*εἶδει*,” as in l. 66) is supplied to make explicit that these maidens are being explicitly likened to goddesses with respect to their form, but the likening of a mortal to a god or goddess in form is common in Homer, and in this scene the maidens are contrasted with Demeter, the goddess who has taken on the form of an old mortal woman.

²⁹ L.S.J., *s.v.* “*θαλερός*.”

θαλός, (used metaphorically for young offspring, as an extension of θαλλός, “young shoot or branch”³⁰) is applied to both nubile maidens as well (*h. Dem.* 66, *Od.* 6.157).

Finally and most significantly, as A.F. Garvie notes, the use of vegetal language with reference to Nausikaa early in Book 6 of the *Odyssey*, sets the scene for a peculiar and rather more extended comparison of Nausikaa to vegetation that is made by Odysseus.³¹ Addressing and supplicating the nubile Nausikaa in a meadow by the seashore in Scheria (seemingly setting the scene for the abduction of the maiden, as many scholars have commented³²), Odysseus claims to be stricken by her beauty. Having likened her to Artemis, he asserts that never among men or women has he seen anyone quite like her, and that only a young palm near the altar of Apollo on Delos compares to her:

I have never with these eyes seen anything like you,
neither man nor woman. Wonder takes me as I look on you.
Yet in Delos once I saw such a thing, by Apollo’s altar.
I saw the stalk of a young palm shooting up. [...]
And as, when I looked upon that tree, my heart admired it
long, since such a tree had never yet sprung from the earth, so
now, lady, I admire you and wonder and am terribly
afraid to clasp you by the knees. (*Od.* 6.160-169, trans. Lattimore)

The nubile girl is compared to a young palm shoot sprouting up (θοίνικος νέον ἔρνος ἀνεπτόμενον) near an altar not only by way of the content of the statement, but also through syntactical parallelism: ὥς δ’ αὔηως καὶ κείνο ἰδὼν ἐηεθήπεια θσμῶ...ὥς ζέ.

C. Sourvinou-Inwood makes a connection between this strange simile and numerous scenes of young women juxtaposed with palm trees near altars on Attic vases of the Archaic and Classical periods (Figure 3.20). Sourvinou-Inwood argues convincingly that the scenes in Attic

³⁰ L.S.J., s.v. “θαλός,” “θαλλός.” Elsewhere in Homer and in the *Hymn to Demeter*, the term is also applied to males, e.g., *Il.* 22.87 (of Hektor), and *h. Dem.* 197 (of Demophon).

³¹ Garvie 1994: 122 n. 157.

³² See for instance, Vlachopoulos 2007: 112 and Sourvinou-Inwood 1992:127 n.33.

vase painting are associated with Artemis and thus perhaps to ritual preparation for marriage,³³ since Nausikaa is preparing for marriage and has just been likened to Artemis, the connection to these later scenes seems apt.

Significantly, however, this simile seems to find striking parallels in LBA iconography as well, raising the question of whether it may also have connections to this *earlier* artistic tradition. Specifically, the verbal likening of Nausikaa to a palm at an altar seems to find a precise parallel in the visual simile expressed on the lentoid seal CMS VS1A.075 (Figure 3.1), in which a female figure and a palm with sprouting offshoots at the base bear formal resemblance to one another in the rendering of their units and occupy syntactically parallel positions on opposite sides of an altar. While there does not seem to be the same explicit visual likening of the palm-like vegetal elements and female figure at work in a second scene, from an unusual ivory ring from Phylakopi, CMS I.410, this too seems to relate directly to the Homeric comparison (Figure 3.21). Here, a central female figure stands before an altar with foliate elements that resemble palm fronds behind her and—significantly—lines that seem to indicate new frond growth at her feet beneath the altar (see Chapter 1 p. 54). Finally, while no altars are involved, the ivory mirror handles from Mycenae on which pubescent girls are metaphorically equated with new palm growth seem to relate directly to this literary likening of the nubile maiden to a young palm shoot. Collectively these scenes associating and even comparing female figures, palms, and, in some cases, also altars, seem to suggest that Odysseus' peculiar simile for Nausikaa may not only have a legacy in Archaic to Classical vase painting, as Sourvinou-Inwood suggests, but that

³³ Sourvinou-Inwood 1991: 99-143. See p. 127 n. 33 for Sourvinou-Inwood's reference to the simile from *Od.* 6.

it—like the male similes that scholars have previously focused on—could also have its origins in a Late Bronze Age pictorial tradition.³⁴

This consideration of possible poetic legacies of the association as well as the formal and metaphorical likening of females and flora in LBA Aegean iconography has admittedly been somewhat superficial. It has, nevertheless, revealed that in addition to the general conceptual association of nubile maidens and impending sexual activity within flowering landscapes in early Greek poetry, more explicit similes and metaphorical language are also employed to equate young women directly with flowers and vegetation. It should be stressed that the emphasis seems to be on *young* or nubile women in early Greek poetry, and thus the associations of full- or pendulous-breasted women with flowers in LBA iconography find no explicit parallels in the poetic tradition.³⁵ Nevertheless, there do seem to be echoes, albeit rare ones, of LBA similes and metaphors associating female figures and flora present in early Greek poetry. In at least one example, the comparisons of women and vegetation in early Greek poetry seem to quote the pictorial similes and metaphors at work within LBA Aegean iconography almost directly. Perhaps, then, the male-oriented similes and metaphorical comparisons such as those identified by Robert Laffineur are not the only LBA comparisons to have endured in the poetic tradition of the Early Iron Age.

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In the course of this chapter we have moved from the level of units and elements to explore larger considerations of associations, syntax, and meaning. Building upon the

³⁴ Whether the LBA association of female figure and palm had anything to do with Artemis or a deity like her is another issue entirely and is beyond what we can engage with here. It does seem clear, however, that the palm carried clear religious significance, and N. Marinatos seems correct in identifying its association with the manifestation of a deity (Marinatos 1984b).

³⁵ Hera does seduce Zeus in a bed of flowers on Mount Ida in the *Iliad* (*Il.* 14.346), providing an example—albeit only one—of a scenario in which a more mature woman is conceptually associated with an eroticized meadow. I am not, however, aware of the metaphorical likening of more mature women and flowers in literature.

morphological analysis of Chapters 1 and 2, this chapter has set forth a methodology for a systematic and comprehensive exploration of matters of association and syntax which could shed light on recurring patterns—and thus perhaps meaning—within the dataset as a whole.

More significantly, this chapter has built on the morphological analysis of Chapters 1 and 2 to consider how, in a select number of scenes containing female figures and flora, the artist associates elements with similar units and combines these elements in similar syntactical positions to create visual similes and metaphors. This chapter has explored both how these similes and metaphors function, and by looking very carefully at precisely what units the artist is comparing and drawing attention to, what these similes might mean. In the process, this chapter has done for female figures what previous scholarship has done in considering male-related metaphors in LBA Aegean art. Finally, this chapter has examined a few compelling examples that suggest that the metaphorical association of female figures and vegetal elements in LBA Aegean iconography may have legacies in early Greek poetry in the same way that male-centered metaphors seem to persist in early Greek epic, as previous scholarship has observed. With all this accomplished, we turn finally to some concluding remarks and a brief exploration of additional directions for future research.

CONCLUSIONS

And Directions for Further Research

This project has undertaken for the first time a careful examination of the recurring association of female figures and flora within LBA Aegean iconography. I began this exploration with the working assumption that because this association of females and flora is so prevalent within the iconography and appears on media that were used for communicative purposes, this relationship might carry significance.

Having now studied the iconography carefully and methodically as a sort of “pictorial language of women and flora” I have—through a close examination of the morphemes, the vocabulary, and the syntax of the language—argued that the iconography does indeed seem to make meaningful statements concerning the relationship between female figures and vegetal elements. I have explored *how* meaning is conveyed through visual similes and metaphors, and have taken initial steps in establishing *what* that meaning may be: how the finely clothed female body is like a blooming flower, how the nearly-nude and voluptuous female body is like a fertile squill, and how the youthful female body is like young palm growth. I have thus identified several specific scenes in which LBA Aegean artists seem to have used vegetation to communicate—and perhaps to construct—meaning about the female body.

Finally, looking to connections that previous scholarship has made between male-centered similes in LBA Aegean art and the similes of early Greek epic, I have made a cursory examination of early Greek poetry and have identified possible literary legacies for these female-centered LBA similes and metaphors.

These accomplishments are significant, but this study provides only the first and not the final words that may be said on this topic. With the accomplishments of *this* study summarized, I will conclude by setting forth a few matters meriting further examination and exciting possibilities for future scholarship on this topic.

Directions for Further Research

Chief among the matters meriting further investigation is that of chronological and geographic variation within the dataset. Five centuries is a long time in the course of human affairs, and despite the shared artistic idiom of Crete, the Cyclades, and Mainland Greece it would be naïve to suppose that a single concept of gender or womanhood existed throughout the entire period represented by the dataset or throughout the LBA Aegean world at any given point in time. Barbara Olsen's study of gender roles attested in the Linear B tablets from Pylos and Knossos speaks eloquently to this point: even at roughly the same point in time during the Late Bronze Age, the roles occupied by and rights afforded to women at Pylos and Knossos seem to have differed in significant ways.¹

On the assumption, then, that concepts of gender and womanhood were neither chronologically constant nor geographically uniform during the Late Bronze Age, a consideration of how the iconographic association of women and flora evolved over time and differed between Crete, the Cyclades, and the Mainland—and even locally within these geographic regions—would be a logical extension of the present project that would have considerable merit.

Such an examination, however, will have to wait, not simply because it is beyond what can be achieved in the confines of this present study, but, more importantly, because there is still

¹ Olsen 2009.

much scholarly work that needs to be done on matters of LBA glyptic chronology before this sort of exploration can be feasible and fruitful.

Much of the imagery associating female figures and vegetal elements occurs on glyptic objects which, in all too many cases, are from unknown or unstratified contexts. Additionally, even when secure deposit contexts are known, the facts that glyptic objects are highly portable and could easily have been passed down through the generations as heirlooms (in a way that more fixed or easily broken works like frescoes or terracotta vessels could not), make considering matters of chronology and provenance a particularly difficult task.²

Ingo Pini has worked on developing stylistic dating criteria for glyptic objects, and the newly digitized CMS database now includes some of his stylistic dates.³ However, much more scholarly discussion concerning the stylistic dating of glyptic objects in general and the specific dates that Pini has recently assigned is necessary before it will be worth basing systematic and comprehensive studies on such necessarily speculative datings. It is my hope that as the scholarship on the topic progresses and as additional relevant objects are uncovered from securely datable contexts, there will come a time when matters of chronology and provenance can be handled in more meaningful ways with respect to the corpus of scenes associating female figures and vegetal elements.

When that time comes, factoring chronology and provenance into the systematic examination of units and elements we have already conducted in this study could potentially reveal that some of the differences in the treatment of the female figures and vegetal elements we observed in Chapters 1 and 2 may indeed be related to chronology or to regional differences throughout (and even within) Crete, the Cyclades, and the Mainland. Perhaps even more

² See, for instance, Wedde 1999: 919 n. 56 on issues of dealing with chronology.

³ Ingo Pini, personal communication, December 2010.

importantly, factoring matters of chronology and provenance into the systematic examination of associations and syntax proposed in Chapter 3 could shed light on whether and how the association of women and flora changed throughout the Late Bronze Age and differed throughout the Aegean world.

In addition to contextualizing the iconographic associations of women and flora temporally and spatially within the LBA Aegean world, future scholarship could also situate these associations in their wider Mediterranean context. As previous studies have demonstrated, there existed extensive interconnections between the Aegean, the Levant, and Egypt throughout much of the Late Bronze Age, which included the borrowing and transmission of artistic motifs and perhaps also the ideas or ideologies behind them.⁴ Given that Aegean artists clearly borrowed vegetal motifs such as the papyrus and lotus from Egypt,⁵ where, in art of the Eighteenth Dynasty, women are commonly shown holding or wearing these flowers, it seems that a comparative study of the associations of women and flowers in these two traditions could be particularly enlightening.

Finally, future research could also make strides in contextualizing this “language of women and flora” within the wider pictorial language of LBA Aegean iconography. Studies of this sort could take numerous directions, but two topics seem particularly worth pursuing further.

First, a careful examination of women who do not occur together with vegetal elements within the iconography could enhance our understanding of the women who *do*, and could, in turn, call attention to other visual similes and metaphors that may be expressed comparing women to other, non-vegetal elements.

⁴ See, for example, Stevenson Smith 1965; Crowley 1989, 1998; Bietak 2000; Karetsou 2000. See Crowley 1998 for a summary of scholarship on interconnections among these cultures in the Late Bronze Age.

⁵ Even a cursory glance at of the images in Michalowski 1969 made apparent how regularly flowers occur in association with human, and especially female, figures in Egyptian art.

Secondly and ultimately, future studies could also look to the association of male figures and vegetal elements within LBA Aegean art to develop a fuller sense for how vegetal elements are employed in the construction of gender within the iconography. A cursory examination of this topic in glyptic media performed as part of the initial research for this study has suggested that male figures often occur in together with trees, branches, and growing plants and that there is nothing particularly unusual about this association; in the few instances when male figures appear together with flowers, however, these figures are almost exclusively acrobats.⁶ This seems to fit in potentially fascinating ways with the recognition of acrobats and athletes in Aegean fresco art as gender-bending characters who upset traditional gender binaries,⁷ as well as with Maria Shaw's identification of the "Prince of the Lilies" from Knossos as an athlete.⁸ Both this association of acrobats and flowers and the larger patterns of association between male figures and vegetal elements invite further study.

Concluding Notes

As the preceding pages indicate, this study has ultimately raised as many questions as it has answered. It is my hope that by calling attention to this previously underappreciated topic, laying essential methodological groundwork for further exploration of the topic, taking some initial steps towards interpretation, and identifying promising directions for future research this thesis has prepared the scholarly "field" and sown some seeds for studies by others that may someday bear additional fruit.

⁶ I identified only four seals depicting both male figures and flowers; three of these contain images of acrobats: CMS I.131, I.169, and VI.184.

⁷ See especially Alberti 2002.

⁸ Shaw 2004.

