

# TIME, PERFORMANCE, AND THE PRODUCTION OF A MNEMONIC RECORD: FROM FEASTING TO AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF EATING AND DRINKING\*

## Introduction

Feasting as a theme of research and discussion enjoys a unique prominence amongst Aegean prehistorians today. We now have volumes exclusively dedicated to it,<sup>1</sup> and many others which deal with food preparation and consumption and in which feasting occupies, one way or another, a significant part.<sup>2</sup> We are also aware that as a regional tradition we are not unique in that respect, and that a similar recent emphasis on the topic is to be seen in the archaeology of many other parts of the world, as well as in discussions on archaeological theory and methodology.<sup>3</sup>

It is perhaps easy to forget that things were not always like this. I hope that I will be allowed a personal, reflective note: when I was starting my PhD in the early 1990s,<sup>4</sup> the topic was by no means unknown, but the articles on Aegean archaeology dealing with it were few and far in-between. Most archaeologists studying food remnants (plant and animal remains) in a sophisticated and thoughtful manner, were concerned primarily with animal and plant husbandry, strategies of production, risk and uncertainty minimisation, and their links with what has been, unfortunately, called social complexity, or better power dynamics. Others, dealing with material culture such as pottery would equally engage with the staples of typology, chronology, style, technological innovations, and more recently provenance. Studies of pottery function rarely touched upon eating and drinking. There were of course exceptions, with some, now almost forgotten but pioneering articles, such as the one by Gösta Sjöflund on the sacrificial banquets in the “Palace of Nestor” at Pylos<sup>5</sup> and by Jennifer Moody<sup>6</sup> on feasting in

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Additional abbreviations:

*Archaeology Meets Science*: Y. TZEDAKIS, H. MARTLEW and M.K. JONES (eds), *Archaeology Meets Science: Biomolecular Investigations in Bronze Age Greece* (2008).

*Cooking Up the Past*: C. MEE and J. RENARD (eds), *Cooking up the Past: Food and Culinary Practices in the Neolithic and Bronze Age Aegean* (2007).

*Strategies*: Y. HAMILAKIS, *Strategies for Survival and Strategies for Domination: Wine, Oil, and “Social Complexity” in Bronze Age Crete* (PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 1995).

*The Archaeology and Politics of Food*: T.L. BRAY (ed.), *The Archaeology and Politics of Food and Feasting in Early States and Empires* (2003).

1 E.g. *The Mycenaean Feast*.

2 *Cooking Up the Past; Food, Cuisine and Society*; S.J. VAUGHAN and W.D.E. COULSON (eds), *Paleodiet in the Aegean* (2000); and the forthcoming, *Cibo per Gli uomini, Cibo per Gli Dei*; These examples represent only part of the scholarly output, which also includes dozens of articles and several PhD theses.

3 For some examples see, M. DIETLER and B. HAYDEN (eds), *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics and Power* (2001); papers in P. WIESSNER and W. SCHIEFENHOVEL (eds), *Food and the Status Quest: An Inter-disciplinary Perspective* (1996); *The Archaeology and Politics of Food*; P. MIRACLE and N. MILNER (eds), *Consuming Passions and Patterns of Consumption* (2002); M. PARKER-PEARSON (ed.), *Food, Culture and Identity in the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age* (2003).

4 *Strategies*.

5 G. SJÖFLUND, “Sacrificial banquets in the ‘Palace of Nestor’,” *OpAth* 13 (1980) 237-246.

6 J. MOODY, “The Minoan palace as a prestige artefact,” in R. HÄGG and N. MARINATOS (eds), *The Function of Minoan Palaces* (1987) 235-41.

Cretan Bronze Age court complexes.<sup>7</sup> Most importantly, however, the pioneering work of the late Andrew Sherratt deserves special mention. Andrew has inspired archaeologists in many and diverse ways, but to me his greater contribution was neither his ideas on the “secondary products revolution,” for which he is best known, nor this work on world systems in prehistory for which he was honoured at a Sheffield roundtable in the spring of 2008, nor his experiments with satellite imagery. His most nuanced and far reaching contribution, both to the Aegean and to archaeology in general, are his many and rich insights on eating and drinking, on drugs and other stimulants. More importantly, he urged us all to look at pottery a-fresh, by examining it as one key material component of the total social phenomenon of eating and drinking. He did so by linking, for example, the appearance of pots with a flat base with the emergence of the table, or by linking the appearance and proliferation of drinking cups in the Early Bronze Age with the adoption of drinking rituals as a new form of commensality. Even some of the titles of his articles were simple but fundamental messages, little notes in a bottle thrown into the sea, some having found their destination, some still floating out here, waiting to be discovered: *Cups that cheered* (1987); *Palaeoethnobotany: from crops to cuisine* (1991); and more recently, *Alcohol and its alternatives: symbol and substance in pre-industrial societies* (1995).<sup>8</sup>

But these were indeed exceptions; in these “early days,” many archaeologists would categorically insist that we cannot really talk about feasting in the prehistoric Aegean, except say, in Pylos. And that the plentiful eating and drinking vessels in and around many prehistoric tombs, were exclusively grave goods, and were destined to serve the dead in their afterlife, or that more charitably, could have been used for libations and token toasting rituals. I recall giving a Mycenaean seminar in the late 1990s,<sup>9</sup> where I was discussing the plentiful, early “neopalatial” ritualised deposits from Crete with the hundreds and, in many cases, thousands of conical cups, and interpreting them as remnants of drinking rituals and feasting episodes, to do with the political dynamics of Bronze Age Crete, only to be told by a prominent archaeologist-member of the audience that these deposits are nothing to do with politics, not even with drinking rituals, but are exclusively to do with religion. As if it is unheard-of to have politically-loaded and religiously expressed, ritual commensality. Indeed, until recently, eating, drinking, consuming in general, were met with a certain linguistic consensus, a euphemistic vocabulary that perhaps revealed a fear to deal with the raw physicality of consuming substances, activities perhaps that caused, and may still do, certain embarrassment for specific, puritan, middle-class norms of respectability. Eating thus was banished to the private, biological sphere or it was discussed primarily in terms of “civilised,” elite hospitality; drinking had become toasting; implements more likely to have been used for the consumption of narcotic and hallucinogenic substances had become “fire boxes,” or “incense burners,” and the whole phenomenon was safely tacked away under the banner of religious ritual.

### Feasting in Aegean prehistory today

Of course some of the above attitudes and ideas are still around, indeed in certain quarters are still popular. Yet, a lot has changed in the last few years. There is a greater realisation that organic remnants, especially animal bones, can tell us more, and more directly

7 I avoid the use of the loaded and problematic term “palaces” for reasons that have been explained in the recent literature. Equally problematic are terms such as “protopalatial,” “neopalatial” and so on, used as chronological divisions, but in some cases their use is unavoidable.

8 A. SHERRATT, “Cups that cheered,” in W.H. WALDREN and R.C. KENNARD (eds), *Bell-Beakers in the West Mediterranean* (1987) 81-114; ID., “Palaeoethnobotany: from crops to cuisine,” in F. QUEIROGA and A.P. DINIS (eds), *Paleoecologia e Arqueologia II* (1991) 221-236; ID., “Alcohol and its alternatives: symbol and substance in pre-industrial societies,” in J. GOODMAN, P.E. LOVEJOY, and A. SHERRATT (eds), *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology* (1995) 11-46.

9 Y. HAMILAKIS, “Consumption patterns, factional competition and political development in Bronze Age Crete,” *BICS* 42 (1997-98) 233-34, which formed the basis of a later study, published as, “Too many chiefs? Factional competition in Neopalatial Crete,” in J. DRIESSEN, I. SCHOEP and R. LAFFINEUR (eds) *Monuments of Minoan: Rethinking the Minoan Palaces. Proceedings of the International Workshop «Crete of the hundred Palaces?», Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, 14-15 December 2001, Aegaeum 23* (2002) 179-199.

about eating and depositional practices, than about husbandry or production targets.<sup>10</sup> There is greater willingness to discuss assemblages of both organic remnants such as animal bones and botanical finds, and material culture, especially pottery, as possible indicators of feasting (defined here in very broad terms, as the ritualised, communal consumption of food, drink, and of other substances); and there have been several attempts to re-examine old assemblages with this question in mind. As a result, there is a growing realisation that the phenomenon was indeed widespread, encountered both in the Neolithic as well as in the Bronze Ages. The evidence from pit 212 in the Late Neolithic, flat-extended settlement of Makriyalos in northern Greece, for example, indicates vast feasting episodes taking place over “no less than several months,” and “unlikely to have exceeded several months or just a few years,” involving the consumption of a very large number of animals.<sup>11</sup> At Early Neolithic Knossos, evidence for ritualised and communal consumption is indirect, hinted at the relatively rare but elaborate ceramic tableware, much of which comes from elsewhere. Tomkins has argued that other, less fragile vessels in wood or basket might have been used for domestic consumption, whereas pottery may have been reserved for communal meals.<sup>12</sup> During the Bronze Age, the instances of communal consumption are far too many to even summarise here. I have claimed previously that feasting episodes were frequent but variable in terms of intensity, character and scale of participation in Bronze Age Crete, ranging from the ones held around the tholos tombs of the Messara, to the many cases in contexts we call “palatial” (court complexes, “villas,” elite urban buildings), in large sanctuaries, and even in later, “neopalatial” tombs such as the ones at Poros, or even the “post-palatial” ones around Knossos. These episodes seemed to have increased in intensity and scale of participation in “palatial” periods, reaching their peak during the early “neopalatial,” to change again in later periods, becoming less intense and, in many cases, possibly more exclusive.<sup>13</sup> Since then, several studies have refined and enriched this somehow crude picture, by looking for example at the special role of the elaborate Kamares pottery in communal consumption events,<sup>14</sup> by attempting to establish hierarchies of status in

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- 10 Martin Jones has claimed recently that animal and plants remains provide evidence primarily for production and food processing, and less for food consumption, hence his call for archaeologists to embrace chemical, organic residue analysis (on which more below), as a method directly related to consumption (M.K. JONES, “Introduction,” in *Archaeology Meets Science*, pp. xi-xiii). I take issue with this statement on two counts: first, I argue that research orientations and agendas have to do as much with the history and epistemological traditions of archaeology (and its social context), as with the inherent potential and limitations of different types of material. In the past, the heavy emphasis placed by archaeobotanists and zooarchaeologists on production, processing and distribution as opposed to consumption, had to do more with the influence of formalist economics and the discourse of “subsistence,” than with what plants and animal remains can tell us (cf. Y. HAMILAKIS, “Food technologies/technologies of the body: the social context of wine and olive oil production and consumption in Bronze Age Crete,” *WorldArch* 31[1] [1999] 38-54; ID., “The anthropology of food and drink consumption and the Aegean archaeology,” in VAUGHAN and COULSON [*supra* n. 2] 55-63). Second, to paint with the same brush plant and animal remains is simplistic and potentially misleading. As Glynis Jones has emphasised time and again (pers. memory from her teaching in 1988-89), one of the primary differences between animal bones and plant remains is that the former are in most cases the remnants of meals, the inedible leftovers, which still preserve the traces of consumption events, such as cut marks, or breaks to extract the bone marrow; plant remains by contrast, rarely represent meal remnants (with some exceptions, such as when found in coprolites), and in most cases their find spots (at least in the Aegean) are to do not with food consumption, but with storage or food processing and preparation. Archaeobotany, of course, can still make an extremely important contribution to an archaeology of eating and drinking through its indirect information, and also by looking at spices, flavourings and additives, and at the production and consumption of alcohol, and of other drugs and stimulants.
- 11 M. PAPPAS, P. HALSTEAD, K. KOTSAKIS, and D. UREM-KOTSOU, “Evidence for large-scale feasting at Late Neolithic Makriyalos, N Greece,” in *Food, Cuisine and Society*, 16-44, esp. 40.
- 12 P. TOMKINS, “Communitality and competition: the social life of food and containers at Aceramic and Early Neolithic Knossos, Crete,” in *Cooking up the Past*, 174-199; on the same point, cf. also C. MEE, “The production and consumption of pottery in the Neolithic Peloponnese,” in *Cooking Up the Past*, 200-224, p. 201.
- 13 *Strategies*; ID., “Wine, olive oil, and the dialectics of power in Bronze Age Crete: a review of the evidence,” *OJA* 15 (1996) 1-32; HAMILAKIS (*supra* n. 10, 1999); ID., “Eating the dead: mortuary feasting and the politics of memory in the Aegean Bronze Age Societies,” in K. BRANIGAN, (ed.), *Cemetery and Society in the Aegean Bronze Age* (1998) 115-132.
- 14 P.M. DAY and D.E. WILSON, “Consuming power: Kamares Ware in protopalatial Knossos,” *Antiquity* 72 (1998) 350-58.

feasting participation based on “ceramic hierarchy,”<sup>15</sup> by examining in detail the changes in consumption patterns during the so-called “Mycenaean” period in Crete,<sup>16</sup> or by showing that drinking ceremonies were a prominent feature in the EBA cemetery at Moni Odigitria.<sup>17</sup> While regional differences should not be underestimated, the earlier hypothesis on the explosion of feasting events in certain contexts in the Cretan “neopalatial” period has been strengthened by more recent studies,<sup>18</sup> as has the hypothesis on the relative decline of such trend and its turn to more exclusive events in the subsequent phases.<sup>19</sup> In general, feasting is now recorded and discussed in relation to most major Bronze Age sites in Crete, and other, well-known examples from the mainland include a range of detailed studies from the Palace of Nestor at Pylos,<sup>20</sup> from Tsoungiza in Nemea,<sup>21</sup> and from the “Mycenaean” sanctuary complex at Agios Konstantinos in Methana,<sup>22</sup> whereas this volume provides several other cases. It seems that feasting becomes much more visible and archaeologically recognisable in the Bronze Age, in comparison to the Neolithic. A fundamental change, however, as has already been emphasised by several seminal works, is the widespread adoption of rituals involving alcoholic beverages. The omnipresence of drinking vessels and their increase in relative proportion are probably the best indicator for this fundamental change, testifying to rituals much larger in scale and more frequent than in preceding periods. While it may have been the case that drinking stood for or “summarised” commensality,<sup>23</sup> its scale would have had important consequences, not only on the bodies of the participants but on society in general. Judging by the feasting paraphernalia (such as the diversity and elaboration of tableware, for example) but also architectural arrangement, commensal events in the Bronze Age are also more elaborate, richer in terms of etiquette and protocol, and in many occasions more complex in terms of hierarchy and entitlement of participation. In certain contexts and periods, however (such as for example in “neopalatial” Crete), the standardisation and plain nature of many eating and especially drinking vessels, point to the accompanying trend of mass pottery production, essential for mass commensal gatherings.

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- 15 Cf. The deposit A from “protopalatial” Knossos, with its stylistically and technologically diverse and uneven drinking vessels: C.F. MACDONALD and C. KNAPPETT, *Knossos: Protopalatial Deposits in Early Magazine A and the South West Houses* (2007) esp. 161-165. It should be noted, however, that this pottery group represents a “pottery store or pantry” (p. 163), not a use and discard context. The hypothesis of hierarchical feasting suggested by the authors relies on the assumption that all vessels were *brought out and used at once*, which may not necessarily be the case.
- 16 E.g. E. BORGNA, “Aegean feasting: A Minoan perspective,” in *The Mycenaean Feast*, 127-159; ID., “Social meanings of food and drink consumption at LM III Phaistos,” in *Food, Cuisine and Society*, 174-95.
- 17 F. MICHELAKI, K. BRANIGAN, and T. CAMPBELL-GREEN, “Pottery usage in the tholos cemetery at Moni Odigitria,” *Paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> International Cretological Congress, Chania, Crete, 1-8 October 2006*.
- 18 E.g. BORGNA (*supra* n. 16); L. GIRELLA, “Forms of commensal politics in Neopalatial Crete,” *Creta Antica* 8 (2007) 135-68; J. RUTTER, “Ceramic sets in context: one dimension of food preparation and consumption in a Minoan Palatial setting,” in *Food, Cuisine and Society*, 63-89.
- 19 E.g. BORGNA (*supra* n. 16, *The Mycenaean Feast*), where this trend to more exclusive feasting is attributed to the impact of mainland practices; also, RUTTER (*supra* n. 18), in relation to Kommos: “...there is no ceramic evidence from Final Palatial levels in Kommos’s Southern Area for the kind of periodic mass-feasting that is such a pronounced feature of the Neopalatial and early Monopalatial deposits in and around the court of Building T” (84-85).
- 20 E.g. S.R. STOCKER and J.L. DAVIS, “Animal sacrifice, archives, and feasting at the Palace of Nestor,” in *The Mycenaean Feast*, 59-75; J. HRUBY, *Feasting and Ceramics: A View from the Palace of Nestor at Pylos* (PhD thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2006).
- 21 M.K. DABNEY, P. HALSTEAD, and P. THOMAS, “Mycenaean feasting on Tsoungiza, at Ancient Nemea,” in *The Mycenaean Feast*, 77-95.
- 22 Y. HAMILAKIS and E. KONSOLAKI, “Pigs for the gods: burnt animal sacrifices as embodied rituals at a Mycenaean sanctuary,” *OJA* 23(2) (2004) 135-51; E. KONSOLAKI, “A Mycenaean sanctuary on Methana,” in R. HÄGG (ed.), *Peloponnesian Sanctuaries and Cults* (2002) 25-36. This could well be one of the extra-urban sanctuaries mentioned in Linear B tablets (cf. T. PALAIMA, “Sacrificial feasting in the Linear B documents,” in *The Mycenaean Feast*, 97-126, p. 99).
- 23 Cf. S. POLLOCK, “Feasts, funerals, and fast food in Early Mesopotamian States,” in *The Archaeology and Politics of Food*, 17-38.

An undisputable feature of feasting and communal consumption in the prehistoric Aegean, however, is their extreme spatial, chronological, and formal diversity, rendering any checklist and typology futile: it took place in a variety of contexts, in the open air such as at Nopigeia, West Crete,<sup>24</sup> as well as in enclosed spaces, courtyards, elaborate halls, some possibly designed especially for such events, in and around tombs, in open air and enclosed sanctuaries, in caves. The agents responsible for feasting events were also diverse, and not simply the elites linked to institutionalised authority, as it is often assumed. Its scale of participation varied, from a handful of people to possibly several thousands, hinting thus at a variable volume of consumed substances. Its format was also quite versatile: in some cases, it seems that drinking and the consumption of substances alterative to alcohol was the main medium of conviviality, whereas in others both eating and drinking seemed to have taken place. Wine has been assumed to be the main alcoholic drink, an assumption supported by the botanical finds,<sup>25</sup> as well as the presence of wine presses, especially in Crete,<sup>26</sup> although the possibility of alcohol from other fruits should not be excluded. We also know the other main species consumed, since in the last few years bioarchaeological studies have proliferated, although there is still much to be done on that front. Zooarchaeology has been more informative in that respect, inevitably, since as already noted, animal bones are often the remnants of actual meals. Moreover, the frequently prominent role of meat in feasting and its highly symbolic value,<sup>27</sup> makes zooarchaeology even more important. We were not surprised to learn that the main species found in feasting faunal assemblages are the ones also encountered in other, “ordinary” contexts: mainly sheep and goat, cattle, pig, but with occasional meaningful appearances of other species, such as deer, wild goat, dog, fish and seashell. This apparent homogeneity, however, reveals a much more complex picture. This package was not in all occasions deployed as such, with certain species being more prominent in certain contexts than others. More interestingly, it was not so much the kind of species used that marked out feasting occasions as distinctive and meaningful, as the selection of animals within these species, the ritualised killing, the mode of meat preparation and consumption, the treatment of the carcass, and the disposal and the post-consumption treatment of the remnants.

### Animals, Feasting and Sacrifice

It is becoming increasingly clear that meat consumption in feasting contexts was intricately linked to animal sacrifices, a practice that in the Bronze Age seems to have been much more varied than in the later, classical periods. While the notion of animal sacrifice usually implies offerings to deities and is associated with religious contexts, I prefer to adopt here a more broad definition. Animals, especially in prehistoric and pre-industrial societies, were rarely seen purely and exclusively as walking larders, ways to store excess crops to be relied on in times of need, or material wealth on the hoof. While clearly a pair of oxen is a significant asset for a prehistoric farmer or even for an elite authority, animals had an embodied presence,<sup>28</sup> and the close, physical proximity and continuous engagement of humans with domestic animals in particular, would have meant that the killing of an animal for a feast, was not only a sacrifice of a material resource, but also a highly charged, even emotional event. This act had to be

24 M. ANDREADAKI-VLASAKI, “Προϊστορικός οικισμός στα Νοπήγεια Κισάμου,” *Κρητική Εστία* 4 (1994-1996) 11-15; Y. HAMILAKIS and K. HARRIS, “The social zooarchaeology of feasting: the evidence from the “ritual” deposit at Nopigeia-Drapanias,” in *Proceedings of the 10<sup>th</sup> International Cretological Congress, Chania* (in press).

25 Cf. HAMILAKIS (*supra* n. 13, 1996); S. VALAMOTI, M. MANGAFA, Ch. KOUKOÛLI-CHRYSANTHAKI, and D. MALAMIDOU, “Grape-pressings from Northern Greece: the earliest wine in the Aegean?,” *Antiquity* 81 (2007) 54-61; A. SARPAKI, “Η αρχαιολογική ορατότητα της αμπέλου στην Κρήτη και στον Ελλαδικό χώρο την προϊστορική εποχή,” in *Proceedings of the 7<sup>th</sup> International Cretological Congress A2* (1995) 841-61.

26 Cf. HAMILAKIS (*supra* n. 13, 1996) and (*supra* n. 10, 1999).

27 Cf. N. FIDDES, *Meat: A Natural Symbol* (1991).

28 Cf. K. OMA, *Human-Animal Relationships: Mutual Becomings in Scandinavian and Sicilian Households 900-500 BC* (2007) with references.

sanctioned and justified, and would have called for specific rites of appeasement.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the violence involved in the killing, especially in the mass slaughter of animals for a feast, the associated visual and auditory impact (the screams of animals in distress as they face their death, the streams of blood, the bright red colour of blood and meat), would have made such occasions distinctive and special, and certainly memorable.

In the presence of a large number of feast participants, such events would have acquired a unique theatricality, which would have called for specific formalised and ritualised behaviour. While in some cases such killing rituals were accompanied by offerings to other, non-human entities (deities, the earth, animal spirits, and so on), often with additional embodied and multi-sensory effects (burning of odorous animal parts such as fat, for example), in other cases such offerings would have been replaced by the deposition of animal body parts or remnants on the ground (structured deposition of bones, for example), exhibition of skulls or other parts in special architectural features, and so on. In any case, for a pre-industrial society relying on cereals and legumes as its staple food (as was the case in the prehistoric Aegean), the logic of sacrifice is inherently present in the killing of animals for a special meal: sacrifice of a valuable resource, and of an animate, embodied being, killed in a theatrical, ritualised, emotive event. Moreover, both feasting and sacrifice are linked by the notions of sharing food (with other humans, as well as non-human entities), and of destruction and expenditure (of animals, food, and drink).

In the “Mycenaean” sanctuary of Agios Konstantinos, the bones from the room that was the focus of religious cult (room A), came mainly from whole carcasses of juvenile pigs and were burnt (Pl. I), having been thrown into a hearth, in many cases after the meat was removed, constituting thus a clear case of burnt sacrificial offerings.<sup>30</sup> Cooking pots, drinking vessels and other finds also testify to the rituals of feasting that accompanied these sacrificial offerings. In contrast to Agios Konstantinos, however (where the meat volume was relatively low), the burnt sacrifices at the “Palace of Nestor” in Pylos involved primarily certain body parts of cattle not pig, animals that could in the context of Pylian feasting have served a large number of people.<sup>31</sup>

<b>Species</b>	<b>NISP</b>	<b>MNI</b>
Sheep/Goat	371	15
Pig	319	10
Cattle	184	7
Sheep	56	4
Goat	53	4
Agrimi	11	3
Bird	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>995</b>	<b>44</b>

Table: Number of Identified Specimens (NISP) and Minimum Number of Individuals (MNI) for the Nopigeia-Drapanias animal bone assemblage.

In the feasting deposit at Nopigeia-Drapanias,<sup>32</sup> a LM IA ditch, deliberately dug into the ground and with no apparent link with any architectural features, was filled with many thousands of conical cups and other drinking vessels, as well as animal bones from a small, selected range of species (Table). In there, part of the skull of an agrimi (the wild goat of Crete,

29 Cf. the classical Greek context, where there is extensive and important discussion on this; e.g. M. DETIENNE and J-P. VERNANT (eds), *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks* (1989); S. GEOGROUDI, R. KOCH PIETTRE, and F. SCHMIDT (eds), *La cuisine et l'autel: les sacrifices en questions dans les sociétés de la méditerranée ancienne* (2005).

30 *Supra* n. 22.

31 V. ISAAKIDOU, P. HALSTEAD, J. DAVIS and S. STOCKER, “Burnt animal sacrifice at the Mycenaean “Palace of Nestor,” *Antiquity* 76 (2002) 86-92; P. HALSTEAD, and V. ISAAKIDOU, “Faunal evidence for feasting: burnt offerings from the Palace of Nestor at Pylos,” in *Food, Cuisine and Society*, 136-54.

32 *Supra* n. 24.

and an animal of special significance for the Bronze Age), with its impressive horn cores almost intact, was found. It was placed carefully at the bottom on the ditch, as a basal deposit. In this context, the species that the participants feasted on were sheep and goats, pigs and cattle, but they all came from a distinctive age range, the pigs mostly between 14 and 27 months, the sheep and goats between 4 and 6 years, and the cattle from equally mature animals. These animals thus were not surplus juvenile animals, nor animals that had exhausted their capacity as producers of secondary products. There were large size, mature and able animals, selected for feasting. What is also interesting in this assemblage is that whole carcasses seemed to have been consumed, and then deposited into the ditch, not just the body parts that are considered by us of prime meat value.

Moreover, the carcass was intensively processed, either to produce manageable portions to be boiled or stewed, the preferred method of meat preparation, or to break up bones for the extraction of marrow. Cattle metapodia (feet bones) seemed to have been particularly selected for marrow extraction: they were chopped to break open at mid-shaft, but they were also possibly placed above open fire, either before chopping in order to soften them and make them easier to break, or more probably after, in order to liquefy the marrow and thus make it easier for extraction. Afterwards, a hole was drilled at the proximal end of the metapodium and an instrument or a rib was used to push the marrow out, or the marrow was sucked out directly from the bone. To have gone to such an effort to extract the marrow in a feasting context, where meat was not in short supply, implies a strong culinary and taste preference; but it also confirms the recent observation by Halstead, that in Greek prehistory, animal carcasses were not treated in what he calls a “wasteful” manner,<sup>33</sup> placing thus in doubt, certain narrowly economic, rationalist understanding and expectations of feasting.

At Agios Konstantinos, while juvenile pigs were consumed as well as offered to deities in room A, a detailed room by room analysis of the whole complex, currently in progress by Kerry Harris and myself,<sup>34</sup> reveals a different picture: while the species composition in most other rooms is the one we are familiar with from most settlements of the period, two spaces in particular, which have been already flagged up by the excavator, Eleni Konsolaki, as special on the basis of their architecture and finds,<sup>35</sup> demonstrate a distinctive pattern: buildings Z and G, being according to her a megaron and a megaron-type space, respectively. Building G, very close to the main cultic room A, contains the highest concentration of cattle bones,<sup>36</sup> as well as evidence for the possible consumption of dogs, whereas in terms of body part representation, the main meat bearing elements pre-dominate. These two buildings contain by far the highest concentration (more than 70%) of seashells (mostly the common limpet, *Patella caerulea*) at the site as a whole (which yielded 6617 identified specimens), whereas Z also contains by far the highest concentration of fish, followed by G.<sup>37</sup>

The role of wild fauna in communal consumption has hardly been studied at all, but there are hints that, given its special social role and meaning, linked as it is to unfamiliar and thus remote social and cosmological realms,<sup>38</sup> and to the performative and confrontational character of hunting (not to mention its gender associations), wild animals were often treated and consumed in distinctive ways in relation to the domestic ones. I referred already to the possible sacrifice of an agrimi, and the deposition of its skull in the ditch at Nopigeia. Cornelia

33 P. HALSTEAD, “Carcasses and commensality: investigating the social context of meat consumption in Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Greece,” in *Cooking Up the Past*, 25-48, p. 39.

34 Y. HAMILAKIS, K. HARRIS, D. MYLONA, T. THEODOROPOULOU, and E. KONSOLAKI, *The zooarchaeology of the sanctuary complex at Agios Konstantinos, Methana* (in preparation).

35 E. KONSOLAKI, “Mycenaean religious architecture: the archaeological evidence from Ayios Konstantinos, Methana,” in M. WEDDE (ed.), *Celebrations: Sanctuaries and Vestiges of Cult Activity* (2004) 61-94.

36 Eleven fragments, whereas every other room contains one or two, and many none. Mammal bones amount to c. 1100 fragments (NISP) for the site as a whole.

37 Building Z yielded 186 out of 237 fish bones recovered from the site as a whole, whereas from G, 30 were collected (using dry sieving with a 5 mm mesh). Very few fish bones were found in the rest of the site. Fish bones are currently being analysed by Dimitra Mylona, and shells by Tatiana Theodoropoulou.

38 Y. HAMILAKIS, “The sacred geography of hunting: wild animals, social power, and gender in early farming societies,” in E. KOTJABOPOULOU, Y. HAMILAKIS, P. HALSTEAD, C. GAMBLE, and P. ELEFANTI (eds), *Zooarchaeology in Greece: Recent Advances* (2003) 239-47.

Becker has also observed that at Middle Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou, the bones of red deer, the main hunted species at the site, are less fragmented than the bones of domestic animals, indicating a different mode of meat preparation and/or carcass treatment and consumption.<sup>39</sup> Red deer was selected, along with cattle, for the burnt offerings at “Mycenaean” Pylos.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, it is in this period that wild fauna acquires a much more prominent role in communal consumption, with fallow deer emerging as particularly important (and numerically significant) in certain LM III contexts in West Crete, such as in the town of Chania.<sup>41</sup>

These new findings indicate that generic, routine zooarchaeological studies within a discourse of “animal husbandry” and of subsistence, result in homogenised patterns which may have missed much of the rich diversity of communal eating and drinking and its contextual specificities in Aegean prehistory. We often think of feasting in terms of huge animal bones assemblages coming from single depositional contexts. None of the assemblages discussed in some detail above come in such huge numbers. Yet, their importance derives from their context, and the associated human practices, be it sacrifices, the careful selection of animals to be consumed or the distinctive treatment of the carcass. I suggest that there is a need to revisit much, perhaps most published and unpublished zooarchaeological material, and engage in extremely detailed zooarchaeological analyses (including of the marine fauna), which will be micro-context specific and consumption-oriented, and which will also pay close attention to parameters such as butchery, body-side, burning, fragmentation and preservation status, and not simply the standard listing of species, body parts, ages and so on. Earlier excavation practices and recovery procedures may inhibit such a detailed analysis in some cases, but there is enough carefully collected material to justify such an effort.

Paul Halstead has noted that in most cases in prehistory, the killing of animals would have invited sharing, simply for the practical reasons of the availability of meat which, in conditions where preservation is difficult and costly, would go bad very fast.<sup>42</sup> I have argued that in addition to these reasons, the killing of an animal in prehistory would have been an unusual, emotive, theatrical event which would have created a distinctive and memorable social occasion. Herein lies the importance of animal bones that come from food remnants and from animal sacrifices. This does not mean that we should talk of feasting every time we encounter a single animal bone in an excavation; it means, however, that concentrations of animal bones, however small, should be subjected to detailed contextual, theoretically informed, integrated zooarchaeological analyses, for possible ritualised, sacrificial, commensal practices.

### **Commensality, elaboration and performance**

The etiquette and the protocol of consumption are more difficult to assess, yet, not entirely beyond our reach. In some occasions, for example, the diversity of animal and plant species as well as the material culture used, especially the range of pottery shapes and its elaboration, point to a much more elaborate protocol of consumption as well as to a complex grammar of social communication. Equally, the architectural arrangement of feasting space, especially factors such as restrictions of access to the main feasting space, the sensory affordances or restrictions that architecture creates (visibility, audibility, control of smells), and the bodily movement and circulation towards the spatial focus of consumption, may imply a complex protocol of entitlement, as well as a strong performative element. For example, in the complex of Agios Konstantinos discussed above, the diversity of species was context-specific: it was the megara buildings with their formalised, perhaps restrictive, highly symbolic architecture, that yielded the most diverse pattern of animal consumption, pointing to an elaborate cuisine, employing perhaps various foods, tastes and flavouring combinations, and enabling and enacting the culinary incorporation of the marine as well as the terrestrial environment.

39 C. BECKER, “The Middle Neolithic and the Platia Magoula Zarkou – a review of current archaeozoological research in Thessaly (Greece),” *Anthropozoologica* 30 (1999) 3-22.

40 *Supra* n. 31.

41 Cf. on-going doctoral research by Kerry Harris, at the University of Southampton.

42 HALSTEAD (*supra* n. 33).

Thanks to the combined study of different categories of material, from pottery to space and organic remnants, we are able to detect cycles of intensification of feasting and speculate on the associated political dynamics; we are also able to detect the shifts from communal eating and drinking, in the sense of people passing around a large platter of food or a large drinking vessel, to a more individualised mode, with one eating or drinking vessel per person. In EBA Crete, Day and Wilson<sup>43</sup> have claimed that there is evidence for a shift from a mode of communal consumption in EBA I, where people used to pass round drinking vessels such as the chalice, to forms of communal individualism, or better collective individuation,<sup>44</sup> with the adoption of the smaller, individual drinking vessels such as goblets and cups in the EBA II and III. The shape and the relative numerical proportions of some of the drinking and serving vessels in this period demonstrate that the act of serving and pouring alcohol, in other words the *demonstration and the performance of hospitality*, were of prime importance, as Catapoti<sup>45</sup> and others, have pointed out.<sup>46</sup> The proportionately large quantities of pouring vessels (in relation of cups) at Myrtos-Fournou Koryfi, and the abundance of so-called teapots, with their disproportionately elongated spout, is a case in point. At Late Neolithic Makriyalos, in northern Greece, while the eating vessels were standardised and communal, the drinking cups were individual and stylistically diverse,<sup>47</sup> possibly expressing materially the interplay between the individual and the collectivity, however defined.<sup>48</sup>

The detection and definition of drinking sets, and more so the ratio of cups to jugs have been simple but very instructive measures of communal drinking, and more importantly, ways of estimating the number of participants. On that basis, I suggested that we can detect a change in the scale of participation in the drinking rituals at the tholos tomb of Agia Kyriaki in the Messara in Crete, with the later phase of the tomb (EM III-MM I) marked by more people partaking of the rituals, a sign that I connected to the intensification of regional political competition.<sup>49</sup> For later periods, I have claimed that feasting episodes can be seen as the barometer of social and political dynamics, and that the peak in the occurrence of single deposits of masses of plain conical cups, indicates the peak in intra-site as well as regional factionalism, as testified also by other evidence, from space and architecture to administrative technologies.<sup>50</sup> More recently, factional competition, with its associated features of conspicuous display and consumption, has been seen as a useful concept in interpreting other contexts, such as “proto-palatial” Mallia.<sup>51</sup> But competition amongst factions would have been only one aspect of these feasting events, and let us not forget that the very act of bringing all these people together for a communal feast would have helped to create and reproduce the collectivity of the faction in the first place, an inherently unstable process.<sup>52</sup>

43 P. DAY and D. WILSON “Ceramic change and the practice of eating and drinking in Early Bronze Age Crete,” in *Food, Cuisine and Society*, 45-62.

44 This concept is used by Vasilis Tsamis, doctoral student at the University of Southampton, in his study of the sensory perception of space in Bronze Age-Iron Age Greek Macedonia. The source of inspiration was the work of G. Deleuze.

45 D. CATAPOTI, *From Power to Paradigm: Rethinking the Emergence of the ‘Palatial Phenomenon’ in Bronze Age Crete* (PhD Dissertation, University of Sheffield, 2005).

46 Cf. POLLOCK (*supra* n. 23) 25.

47 Cf. *Supra* n. 11, 24.

48 Cf. *Supra* n. 11, 41. We should avoid, however, the universalist and presentist assumption that in prehistory the concept of the “individual” was necessarily the accepted norm, and a self-evident reality.

49 HAMILAKIS (*supra* n. 13, 1998).

50 HAMILAKIS (*supra* n. 9, 2002).

51 Cf. for example, the important work by Isle Schoep, such as, I. SCHOEP, “Assessing the role of architecture in conspicuous consumption in the Middle Minoan I-II periods,” *OJA* 23(3) (2004) 243-69; cf. also the thorough and extremely interesting analysis of a “protopalatial” pottery deposit from Petras by Donald Haggis, where styles of pottery, and stylistic relationships between pottery and other artefacts are interpreted as material and visual identity signifiers of competing corporate groups: D. HAGGIS, “Stylistic diversity and diacritical feasting at Protopalatial Petras: a preliminary analysis of the Lakkos deposit,” *AJA* 111 (2007) 715-75.

52 Cf. M. DIETLER, “Clearing the table: some concluding reflections on commensal politics and imperial states,” in *The Archaeology and Politics of Food*, 271-82.

The discussion on feasting, especially for LBA Crete, therefore, has elevated the humble, plain and undecorated conical cup, which only a few years ago was seen by senior scholars of Aegean archaeology as dull and uninteresting, to an important material embodiment of sociality, and political dynamics. Its plain character in a period which is seen as the highest artistic point in Bronze Age Crete, speaks of the political desire to evoke communal spirit and corporatism, masking thus existing hierarchies. It is worth comparing this shape with the main drinking shape of the subsequent periods, the kylix. While there are undoubtedly many contexts with masses of plain kylikes (most notably at Pylos), a phenomenon in some ways similar to the “neopalatial” conical cup assemblages, the kylix allows for more formal diversity, and in its relative elaboration (in comparison to the conical cup), it makes a prominent rhetorical material statement: while the conical cup disappears as you hold it on your palm, the kylix is made to be raised, to be seen, and to be prominently present in the performances of communal drinking.

Elaboration, exclusivity and the adoption of an elite, diacritical etiquette are clearly visible in the contexts of restricted commensal events in LM II-LM III Crete, especially in the funerary arena, as seen for example in the metal vessels and other material found in the tombs around Knossos.<sup>53</sup> In these funerary contexts, an emphasis on the aesthetics of individualised body is also hinted at finds such as mirrors. At the same time, at Pylos and elsewhere in mainland Greece, Bendall<sup>54</sup> and Wright<sup>55</sup> have suggested different hierarchical levels of participation in feasting, based on the access or exclusion from certain important spaces such as the megaron, and the use of lavish, metal drinking vessels.

Finally, we are making advances in understanding prehistoric culinary cultures and cuisine, by attempting to detect regional preferences for certain staple foods;<sup>56</sup> identify flavourings and additives such as spices;<sup>57</sup> recognise distinction and elaboration through food diversity, as in the case of the megara at Agios Konstantinos discussed above, with their marine as well as the terrestrial range of foods; or detect certain ways of cooking and removing meat and marrow from the bone, as in the case at Nopigeia. At MBA Knossos, Isaakidou<sup>58</sup> has identified a unique to the site pattern of equidistant cut marks across the shaft of long bones of sheep, goats and pigs, and often around the entire circumference of the bone; this leads her to speculate that these may indicate seasoning with herbs, the need to achieve a striking visual presentation or to create portions for serving. Her discussion of other data such as pottery vessels and utensils used for food processing and preparation, the use of spices, and the consumption of “exotic” animals such as fallow deer, lead her to propose the development of what she calls, “haute cuisine,”<sup>59</sup> a concept that has been also employed by Hruby, using similar criteria, to describe the culinary culture at the “Palace of Nestor” in Pylos.<sup>60</sup> Crucial in the development of cuisines, of course, was the emergence and use of cooking pots,<sup>61</sup> which enabled the mixing of different

53 HAMILAKIS (*supra* n. 13, 1998); a comparison with the earlier, “neopalatial” tombs at Poros, with their large quantity of plain drinking vessels, is instructive.

54 L. BENDAL, “Fit for a king? Hierarchy, exclusion, aspiration and desire in the social structure of Mycenaean banqueting,” in *Food Cuisine and Society*, 105-35.

55 J. WRIGHT, “A survey of evidence for feasting in Mycenaean society,” in *The Mycenaean Feast*, 13-58.

56 S-M. VALAMOTI, “Traditional foods and culinary novelties in Neolithic and Bronze Age Northern Greece: an overview of the archaeobotanical evidence,” in *Cooking up the Past*, 89-108.

57 A. SARPAKI, “Condiments, perfume and dye plants in Linear B: a look at the textual and archaeobotanical evidence,” in A. MICHAÏLIDOU (ed.), *Manufacture and Measurement: Counting, Measuring and Recording Craft Items in Early Aegean Societies* (2001) 195-265.

58 V. ISAAKIDOU, “Cooking in the labyrinth: exploring ‘cuisine’ at Bronze Age Knossos,” in *Cooking Up the Past*, 5-24, p. 19.

59 *Supra* n. 34, *passim*.

60 *Supra* n. 20, pp. 131-77; also J. HRUBY, this volume.

61 There is currently a debate on when ceramic cooking pots were introduced in the prehistoric Aegean. According to Chris Mee, cooking pots may not have been used until the end of the Neolithic, at least in the Peloponnese: “It is difficult to believe that pottery was not used to cook food, particularly in the Final Neolithic period, yet this may well have been the case earlier” (C. MEE, “The production and consumption of pottery in the Neolithic Peloponnese,” in *Cooking up the Past*, 200-224, p. 219). On this, he concurs with the earlier doubts expressed by Vitelli (K.D. VITELLI, “Were pots first invented for foods? Doubts from

foods, and thus different tastes and flavours, leading to the further elaboration of culinary practices, the development of complex recipes and perhaps of taste and flavour complexes, which may have acted as regional, cultural and identity signifiers (think of the olive oil-tomato-garlic complex in the present day Mediterranean). The same innovation would have also made easier the use of local and exotic herbs and spices, which would have enabled further the development of distinctive culinary traditions. To appreciate the value of spices, we only need to be reminded that the desire for them was at the heart of recent European colonialism.<sup>62</sup>

### Embracing theorised science, avoiding scientism

In this attempt to study prehistoric cuisine, chemical analyses of organic residues in pots and isotopic studies of human remains have been recently added to our array of techniques. This is undoubtedly an important development and one that has the potential to advance our understanding not only of past diet but also of sensuous experience, especially in terms of the diversity and social role of tastes and smells in commensal events. But the danger of scientism, the belief that hard-science, laboratory techniques have the magical ability to recover and reconstruct past experiences in a direct and unproblematic way, will have to be avoided. For a start, past sensory and sensuous experiences cannot be reconstructed and recovered, despite the seductive promises of technology and science, be it computer-generated, three-dimensional virtual reality or organic chemistry. Not only are we dealing with radically different social contexts, but we also inhabit very different bodies from past people, which possess historically-specific sensory capabilities. We will not be able to tell, for example, whether roast pig would have tasted the same for Bronze Age people as it does for us, not whether the scent of pine resin would have produced the same sensory stimuli in their bodies as it does to our bodies today (more so since, even in the contemporary world such sensory experiences are diverse, and culturally defined and valorised). But to be able to detect the range and the diversity of tastes, smells, sounds, and tactile experiences in any given context, their changes in space and time, and their potential social roles and meanings, will be a major advance, and indeed the central enquiry for a sensory and sensuous archaeology.<sup>63</sup> These techniques, however, as all research, are subject to their own limitations, and epistemological and social constraints. This is more so with novel research methodologies like these, which are still to establish their research apparatus, assess their taphonomic problems, and identify their potential and limitations. For example, the chemical detection of some compounds on the basis of residues in archaeological ceramics is still difficult, if not problematic. Wine and alcohol in general are particularly difficult to identify,<sup>64</sup> whereas fats and lipids are easier.

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Franchthi," *WorldArch* 21 [1989] 17-29), but others (e.g. TOMKINS [*supra* n. 12] 184), see their use, albeit in rare occasions, having started even in the Early Neolithic. Detailed zooarchaeological studies with a focus on butchery marks, bone fragmentation and burning traces, can shed indirect light on this debate, illuminating at the same time culinary practices such as boiling and roasting. In any case, it seems that in the prehistoric Aegean, it is in the Bronze Age that ceramic cooking pots become omnipresent, and were used to boil meat even in large feasting gatherings such as at Nopigeia-Drapanias (HAMILAKIS and HARRIS, *supra* n. 24).

62 Cf. E. and P. ROZIN, "Culinary themes and variations," in C. KORSMEYER (ed.), *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink* (2005) 34-41, p. 36; on spices in general, see W. SCHIVELBUSCH, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants and Intoxicants* (1993).

63 For my call for a sensuous archaeology, see Y. HAMILAKIS, "The past as oral history: towards an archaeology of the senses," in Y. HAMILAKIS, M. PLUCIENNIK, and S. TARLOW (eds), *Thinking Through the Body: Archaeologies of Corporeality* (2002) 121-136. I have attempted to develop such an approach, especially in relation to eating and drinking, and animal sacrifice, in various publications, e.g. HAMILAKIS (*supra* n. 13, 1998) HAMILAKIS (*supra* n. 10, 1999) and HAMILAKIS and KONSOLAKI (*supra* n. 22) and in the forthcoming book, *Archaeologies of the Senses*.

64 Cf. N. BOULTON and C. HERON, "The chemical detection of ancient wine," in P.T. NICHOLSON and I. SHAW (eds), *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technologies* (2000) 599-602.

The most prominent project on chemical analysis of organic residues and isotopic studies in the Aegean in the last few years is the one associated with the exhibition “Minoans and Mycenaeans: Flavours of their Time.”<sup>65</sup> As other scholars have already pointed out,<sup>66</sup> we need to be particularly cautious of the claims of this project, especially the ones that do not come directly from the scientists who carried out the analysis. The reasons are many fold; for a start, archaeological science has had a significant impact in Aegean archaeology for the last 30 years, primarily through the macroscopic and microscopic study of plants, animals, and human remains, but also some organic residue analysis. Unfortunately, there has been no attempt by this project to integrate their research questions and their results with the preceding systematic studies. Moreover, in this project there has been very little archaeological comparative contextual assessment and discussion of the finds spots, and sites under analysis. Finally, the decision was taken early on by the initiators of this project to use the results, prior to their scientific publication, for a series of grand, international exhibitions. As a consequence, as they themselves admit, research decisions but also statements and pronouncements were governed, to a large degree, by the desire to impress and excite public imagination.<sup>67</sup>

Let me offer just a few examples of the consequences of this decision: the researchers claimed to have recovered conclusive evidence for prehistoric recipes of certain dishes such as stews, on the basis of finding different animal and plant compounds in the same cooking pot, as if we are dealing with a pot used only once, and not repeatedly, probably for different dishes and foods, and even different functions; or, that they have found retsina in the Bronze Age, ignoring the well-known warning by archaeo-chemists that the various resins found in pots could well have been sealants of a ceramic vessel, and not necessarily deliberate, flavour-enhancing additives.<sup>68</sup> They have thus produced an image of familiarity and seamless continuity from prehistory to the present, revealing a fear to face the otherness of the past, and the possibility, indeed the probability, that prehistoric people may have consumed substances totally alien to our own taste buds and sensibilities. More damagingly, the co-ordinators of the project state that:

“The most important conclusion drawn from the [isotopic] research, however is that, contrary to previous assumptions that in the Bronze Age people consumed meat mainly on high days and holidays, the inhabitants of the Cemetery of Armenoi, Grave Circles A and B at Mycenae, and in the chamber tombs in the environs of Mycenae, all appeared to have consumed meat on a daily basis.”<sup>69</sup>

In fact, if you read the relevant chapter in the very same book, you will realise that the scientists who carried out the analysis have never made such a claim. They were instead making a point about the lack of any significant marine foods in the Cretan samples, based on the problematic assumption that, because the Cretan sites are so close to the coast, one would expect to find marine resources in the diet, as if food choices are simply a matter of availability:

“This [the lack of any significant marine protein in the diet] is surprising due to the location of these sites at, or close to, the coast. Instead the data indicate diets based on terrestrial C<sup>3</sup> foods, with a significant amount of the protein coming from animal sources (meat or milk) at the Cave of Gerani and the Cemetery of Armenoi and some of the Mycenaean chamber

65 *Archaeology meets Science*; cf. also the exhibition catalogue, which came out nine years before the publication of scientific results, and through which the results of this project were disseminated not only to the public, but to the scholarly community as well: *Flavours*.

66 E.g., S. SHERRATT, “Feasting in Homeric epic,” in *The Mycenaean Feast*, 181-217, n. 47; HRUBY (*supra* n. 20) 156-57); ISAAKIDOU (*supra* n. 58) 14.

67 “What other sites should be addressed as the Project had now been expanded to include skeletal material? The very obvious, not only because of their great importance, but also because we were now thinking in terms of what would make the *most exciting presentation in an exhibition*, were the Grave Circles A and B at Mycenae:” Y. TZEDAKIS and H. MARTLEW, “Archaeology meets science: the background,” in *Archaeology Meets Science*, xiv-xxiv, xix (emphasis added).

68 Cf. BOULTON and HERON (*supra* n. 64) 601.

69 TZEDAKIS and MARTLEW (*supra* n. 67).

tomb individuals. There is also evidence of a strong input from plant foods for some of the Mycenae chamber tomb individuals with relatively lower  $\delta^{15}$  values. The Grave Circles A and B data are different. Here there is clear evidence for the consumption, perhaps up to 20-25% for some individuals, of marine foods.<sup>70</sup>

A statement thus on the part of the analysts about the lack of marine foods in the diet, became, in the project directors' rendering and interpretation of it, a statement about prehistoric people consuming meat daily, when in fact the analysis a few pages later talks about animal protein (*meat or milk*) over the lifetime of these individuals, and not daily consumption of meat. I do not wish to claim that all results of this project are invalid, or problematic; indeed, there are some potentially important indications, especially in relation to the use of additives and flavourings in food and drink,<sup>71</sup> but these too will need to be verified by other, systematic analyses, fully integrated with the archaeobotanical and other archaeological data. Perhaps we should reflect, however, on the words of two of the scientists of this project:

So while archaeologists can accept the solidly documented identification of organic components in an ancient organic residue as certain, they are well advised to consider assignments of these components to a specific plant or animal source not only with a grain, but with a veritable stalactite of salt. Few of them are more than probable.<sup>72</sup>

### Consumption and the sensuous materialisation of time

This cautionary tale should not overshadow the significant achievements of the last 15 years or so, which I have tried to briefly outline above. But this is perhaps the time to pause and reflect on the salient features of the emerging picture, and on where do we go from here. It is striking, given the volume of work on the topic, how rarely we pause to ask fundamental questions, such as: what makes feasting so special, and what is its underlying logic? Why is it so widespread, and, if it is so politically powerful as we have claimed, where does this power derive from? And furthermore, at the end of the day, is it so different from other eating occasions, and should the distinction between them be maintained? Here, I have space to offer only some hints towards possible answers. It must be clear from the range of examples I have used that I define feasting in very broad terms, as the occasion where ritualisation and commensality are key features. Fundamentally, however, feasting is about disrupting time. Let me explain: all food consumption produces time, partly because feeding the body calls for certain regularity and repetition, and partly because the rhythms of social life are structured around gatherings in which food consumption is central.<sup>73</sup> Eating does not mark time, it creates it. Breakfast time, lunch time or dinner time are not marked by the consumption of food, they are rather constituted as temporal occasions and as social interactions by the consumption of food and drink. In that sense, feasting is about a commensal event which defines time as different from the ordinary. This is achieved either by consuming something distinctive or non-ordinary, meat for example in a staple diet of cereals and legumes, or by consuming together with other people beyond the ordinary social unit, or by consuming in non-familiar and unusual space, or by consuming an ordinary food but prepared and flavoured in an unusual way, or by using unusual, elaborate and distinctive material culture, and so on. This disruption of time may be also linked to important landmarks or disruptions of biographical time (rites of passage), agricultural time (e.g. harvests), political time (e.g. inauguration of chiefs and offices). This punctuated time, however, acquires its own periodicity, it becomes a repetitive, citationary time, following a distinctive repetition, the annual harvest for example.

70 M.P. RICHARDS and R.E.M. HEDGES, "Staple isotope evidence of past human diet at the sites of the Neolithic cave of Gerani; the Late Minoan III cemetery of Armenoi; Grave Circles A and B at the Palace site of Mycenae; and Late Helladic chamber tombs," in *Archaeology Meets Science*, 220-229, p. 229.

71 Cf. S. MORRIS, this volume.

72 C.W. BECK and E.C. STOUT, "Certainty and doubt in organic residue analysis," in *Archaeology Meets Science*, 5-11, p. 10-11.

73 G. SIMMEL, "The sociology of the meal," *Food and Foodways* 5 (1994[1910]) 345-50; A. APPADURAI, "Consumption, duration and history," in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (1996) 66-85.

This punctuation of time has another important effect: while all eating produces memory,<sup>74</sup> generates mnemonic effects, feasting events produce remembering (and forgetting) in distinctive ways. This is not the habitual memory of daily consumption events, which produces subjectivity and identity as embodied routine and self-knowledge. It is rather the heightened memory of disrupted and punctuated time. It is the memory of the distinctive event, of the performances, of the processions, of the violence and sensory effects produced by the sacrificing and killing of animals, of distinctive participants with their elaborate garments, their perfumed bodies and their rare and exotic drinking vessels, of the substances consumed with their psychoactive effects, and so on. And while a number of collective ceremonies could have been deployed for mnemonic effects, feasting is perhaps more powerful not only because it relates to a constant and fundamental biological/social need but also because it is about *incorporation*, it involves much more directly the collective human body and *all* its bodily senses acting *in unison*, producing thus powerful mnemonic effects. These feasting mnemonic events would have acted both retrospectively, by evoking and citing past events, and deploying the powerful senses of taste and smell to trigger past memories (the Proustian moments), but also prospectively: by creating memories which could be stored in the human body, and be evoked and recalled at a later occasion. Embodied memory generated through eating and drinking is thus a fundamental, existential process in producing subjectivities and identities.

Memory, however is also an important political resource: it requires effort and work, the generation, accumulation and expenditure of resources. What is remembered and how, is crucial for the reputation and standing of the hosts; and feasting can work both ways: the hosts may attempt to impress through conspicuous generosity, but guests may recall other, past feasts and engage in unfavourable comparisons. Aggrandisers can fail, and attempts to impress can backfire; the highly emotive and sensory act of eating can be a pleasing, as well as a painful<sup>75</sup> and even fatal experience: the host may poison and kill us, as well as nourish and please us. Social standing and political reputations are made and unmade in the arena of feasting, and the control of its mnemonic effects is thus a powerful resource in prehistoric political economies. But the conviviality and commensality of feasting can be also seen as the process of producing and reaffirming collectivities, founded in the arena of the sensuous, consuming body; we eat together, and thus we belong together, as a family, clan, village, faction, region, political or religious group. Time, and more specifically, *the production of synchronicity*, is again crucial: we do not simply eat together, but also at the same time, and we thus belong together, be it as a family, as a regional or national group, or as religious community, which celebrates through feasting at the same time major events in the festal or religious calendar.<sup>76</sup> By eating, we consume place at the same time,<sup>77</sup> produce our regional identities, or consume exoticity and distance. In prehistory, these collectivities and social units were not pre-existing and stable, and were not necessarily engaging in feasting with clear strategic goals and agendas. It is more likely that they were made and unmade through eating and drinking, both biologically and socially. Categories such as household, faction, or regional group, to name but a few, were emerging at the same time as the social actors who were about to fill them, and they had to be continually reproduced.

Given all these diverse, experiential and social effects, thus, it makes no sense to engage in feasting typologies such as the ones proposed by Dietler and Hayden.<sup>78</sup> For example, to what extent is the distinction between empowering, diacritical, and patron-role feasts, both possible and interpretatively useful? Does a “diacritical feast” which is supposed to express hierarchical

74 Cf. D. SUTTON, *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory* (2001); HAMILAKIS (*supra* n. 13, 1998); C.N. SEREMETAKIS, *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity* (1994).

75 Cf. R. EVES, “Remembrance of things past: memory, body and the politics of feasting in New Ireland, Papua, New Guinea,” *Oceania* 66 (1996) 266-77.

76 Cf. M. BUITELAAR, “Living Ramadan: Fasting and feasting in Morocco,” in KORSMEYER (*supra* n. 62) 175-80.

77 Cf. A.B. TRUBEK, “Place Matters,” in KORSMEYER (*supra* n. 62) 260-71.

78 E.g. M. DIETLER, “Theorising the feast: rituals of consumption, commensal politics and power in African contexts,” in DIETLER and HAYDEN (*supra* n. 3) 65-114; B. HAYDEN, “Fabulous feasts: a prolegomenon to the importance of feasting,” in DIETLER and B. HAYDEN (*supra* n. 3) 23-64.

status through exclusion and material elaboration cease to be about corporate identity (of an elite group)? Does it cease to have socio-economic effects, commonly associated in these typologies with the other two forms? And does a patron-role feast, not express and promote distinction, for example through the conspicuous generosity of the food provider? Even if distinction is not emphasised through elaborate and exotic material culture, it can be expressed through other means, festal oratory for example, where the virtues of the patron or the chief or aspiring chief are praised.<sup>79</sup> It thus makes sense to talk about diacritical *features* and *effects* in a feast, but not to adopt the term diacritical feasts (or any other, seductive but ultimately reductive label, for that matter) as a distinct typological category. The danger to pigeon-hole a diverse and multi-faceted phenomenon, and thus reduce its richness and complexity, outweigh any methodological convenience that these categories may offer. As with neo-evolutionist typologies, in using such labels it is implicitly assumed that the role and the meaning of feasting phenomena are automatically explained, which is far from the case.

Given the emphasis on memory and on producing collectivities, it is no surprise that an important feature of the Aegean prehistoric feasting is the production of a mnemonic record: the practice of storing, hoarding, and curating the paraphernalia of feasting, and in some cases revisiting the same spot and reciting past ceremonies and events. At Nopigeia-Drapanias, preliminary results of soil micromorphology<sup>80</sup> reveal that the ditch seems to have been filled gradually, and was thus the outcome of cumulative and repetitive feasting episodes, with the same material culture, and the same range of animals consumed. As the bones do not show any carnivore damage or weathering due to exposure, it is safe to assume that the deposited material was covered, more or less immediately, after the event. The remnants of the feast were concealed but people returned to the same spot to carry out more feasting events, and deposit and cover their remnants. At Pylos, it seems that some of the bones from burned sacrifices and the associated consumption events were either purposefully buried in special deposits, or brought into the archive rooms, possibly as a physical proof “that the rituals in which these objects were involved had been completed.”<sup>81</sup> In both cases, a mnemonic record of the sacrificial and commensal events was produced. In many other contexts, from Early Neolithic Knossos,<sup>82</sup> to “neopalatial” Chania,<sup>83</sup> we see a need to hoard remnants of eating and drinking vessels and animal bones into pits (some intentionally fragmented some not, some arranged in a structured manner some not), preserving them thus for the future. The adoption of ceramic food vessels from the Early Neolithic onwards had another interesting effect: it traded short-term durability (afforded by the previously used perishable materials such as wood) for the long-term durability of pottery, allowing thus for a lasting mnemonic link between eating ceremonies and material to be established, and enabling the material production of a commensal mnemonic record. Indeed, in many cases, the archaeological recognition of feasting events has become possible because prehistoric people took great care to create a mnemonic record, to preserve the remnants of the feast, by hoarding them in a ditch or a pit for example, as opposed to have left them exposed, resulting in their dispersal and destruction. Along with the produced somatic mnemonic record (the sensuous memories stored in the human body), we see here the production of an additional, external, material mnemonic record: a deliberate attempt to preserve materially the collectivity which ate and drunk together. In other words, to *objectify* and perhaps preserve, the already dispersed and perhaps potentially already dissolved social unit. Communal eating and drinking is about the dialectic between the individual and the collective, but also the dialectic between accumulation and dispersal.<sup>84</sup>

79 For an ethnographic example, see the work of Peter Parkes among the Kalasha in Northern Pakistan: P. PARKES, “Reciprocity and redistribution in Kalasha prestige feasts,” in A. GRANT (ed.), *Animals and Their Products in Trade and Exchange* (1992) 37-46.

80 R. MACPHAIL, *Minoan Crete – ditch fill; assessment of soil micromorphology* (Unpublished report, 2005).

81 STOCKER and DAVIS (*supra* n. 20) 73.

82 TOMKINS (*supra* n. 12) 189-90.

83 M. ANDREADAKI-VLASAKI “Are we approaching the Minoan Palace of Khania?” in DRIESSEN, SCHOEP and LAFFINEUR (*supra* n. 9) 157-66, p. 161.

84 Cf. C. GAMBLE “Materiality and symbolic force: a Palaeolithic view of sedentism,” in E. DEMARRAIS, C. GOSDEN, and C. RENFREW (eds), *Rethinking Materiality: The Engagement of Mind with the Material World* (2004) 85-95.

Thinking thus about feasting from the point of view of punctuated temporality, repetition, memory, sociality, and above all the human body and its senses, it makes no sense to rigidly separate it from other drinking and eating episodes. Neither is devoid of social meaning and neither is purely biological, they are both about in-corporation. If feasting is about punctuated time, and often the production of a material mnemonic record, other meals are about embodying memory as familiarity and as daily repetition. While it still makes sense to use feasting for certain, archaeologically visible events with distinctive features, our discussion of it should be part of the emerging Aegean archaeology of eating, drinking and, in general, of the bodily consumption of substances. By producing a detailed phenomenology of consumed substances, from staple foods, to meat, alcohol, and hallucinogenics, and by linking eating with memory and the sensuous body, Aegean prehistory has the potential to contribute a great deal to world archaeology.

Yannis HAMILAKIS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATION

- Pl. I      Animal bones from Room A at the sanctuary of Agios Konstantinos, Methana. The assemblage is dominated by the burnt bones from the hearth, the remnants of burnt sacrifices (photo by Kerry Harris).