A1136 Eur-Crete-Great Goddess Ring

Fig. 1. The so-called “Great Goddess Ring” depicts a seated woman with two standing

female attendants, photograph of replica.



Fig. 2 The so-called “Great Goddess Ring” depicts a seated woman with two standing

female attendants, artist’s sketch of original

Case No.: 4

The so-called “Great Goddess Ring” was discovered on the acropolis at Mycenae in the ruins of the Ramp House (no. 5 below) in close proximity to the “House of the Warrior Vase” (2), the “Citadel House” (3) and the “South House” (4).

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Fig. 3. Map of Mycenae and important locations. After <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/564x/49/5f/f4/495ff408c3b4889edfc3976be6391603.jpg>.

The scene depicts a female seated on a bank of cobbles below a fruiting tree and before whom is a platform of cobbles. These cobbles indicate that this area is separate from the rest from the rest of the scene. The seated female and two approaching adult females wear diadems in their hair, necklaces around their necks and elaborately tiered skirts. Flowers in this scene are suggestive symbols. The seated female holds three poppies. She is approached by a girl, who holds a flower (perhaps Brugmansia).



The first of the two adult females gestures toward the poppies, while the second carries two lotus flowers. Above her is a diminutive warrior figure holding a sword and a figure-of-eight shield suggesting that the event transpiring cuts oneself from the mundane and secular. Behind the seated female is a tree, which a girl behind the tree reaches up to (harvest?) its fruit. In the center of the scene is an isolated double axe, that hovers in the midst of the scene as an epiphany event symbol marking the separation of sacred history (German *heilesgeschichte*) from secular history (German *historie*). On the right margin are six lion heads that border the edge of the bezel, perhaps as apotropaic or protective figures like the cyclopean wall that protects Mycenae from invaders. Above the entire scene is a sun and a crescent moon that are set apart by an undulating curvilinear line, indicating that the entire scene is taking place beyond earthly history in the realm of the sacred, the history of no sun, no moon.

This scene suggests that the seated woman is a deity being offered symbolic poppies that induce visions (Furumark, 1988: 73; Dimopoulou and Rethemiotakis, 2000: 53) and this type of offering scene indicates a date of LH II or IIIA when compared to the fresco in the Old Palace at Thebes and engraved gold rings (Reusch, 1956: pl.15). Furthermore, the crescent moon and solar symbol separated from the rest of the scene suggest a LH II date when compared to Near Eastern engraving (Crowley, 1989a: 203-204; Aruz, 2000: 7-8) of early second millennium Babylonia, such as the Akkadian cylinder in the collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library (Porada, 1948: 30, pl.XXX, no.195; Collon, 1987: 35-37) in which the symbols were separated from the rest of the scene by a curvilinear boundary.

Therefore, “The Great Goddess Ring” contains a mixture of Minoan, LH II-IIIA symbols and Near Eastern structural elements (Hooker, 1983:140-141; Niemeier, 1990: 167; Wedde, 1992: 190-191; Krzyszkowska, 2005: 255), suggesting a syncretism of Minoan religious symbols and Near Eastern visual “grammatical” structures that determine the way the entire scene is to be read.

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AJA: *American Journal o f Archaeology*

BAR: *British Archaeological Reports*

BCH: *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*

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2 HM 1629 Glyptic: Metal Neopalatial Crete Poros

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3 HM 1700 Glyptic: Metal Neopalatial Crete Knossos

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