KEYNOTE

Mobility and Agency in the Context of Space and Place in Early Mycenaean Greece

J a m e s   C .   W r i g h t[1]

Abstract: This paper outlines an approach to interpreting the archaeological evidence that is fundamental to an understanding of the origins of Mycenaean society. It discusses this process from the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age through the founding of the palatial states on the mainland about 1400 BC.

Keywords: Early Bronze Age, Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age, Minoan, Mycenaean, mobility, space, mortuary, settlement, religion, social organisation, elites

Introduction

In this contribution I will outline an approach to interpreting the archaeological evidence that I believe is fundamental to an understanding of the origins of Mycenaean society. I will discuss this process from the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age through the founding of the palatial states on the mainland about 1400 BC. In the interest of brevity, I will omit detailed consideration of the evidence, which deserves a monograph, and only lay out a framework for such an extended study.

I begin with a brief review of the state of affairs during the latter half of the 3rd millennium BC and through the transitional period at the end of the millennium into the beginning phase of the Middle Bronze Age. I do this to explain the evolving nature of interaction among communities across the Aegean archipelago, specifically the mainland of central and southern Greece, the Cyclades and offshore islands of southern Greece, and Crete. At the turn of the third millennium change in interaction throughout this area is driven by external developments, such as the introduction of sailing vessels and access to the copper resources on Cyprus, and also by internal developments, notably the rise of the first palaces on Crete and the position of key settlements among the islands such that they became *entrepôts*.

These developments demonstrate the necessity of recognising mobility as a primary concept that enlivens the archaeological record and exposes the social processes that underlie the formation of leadership among many different communities on the mainland and the islands during the Middle and Late Bronze Age. These processes may be documented by examining the changing spatial distributions of standard archaeological information that correlates with socio-political, socio-economic, and socio-ideological behaviours: residence, industry and storage, burial, transport and exchange, and worship. Each of these has geographical correlations that expand from the household outwards through the community and its territory into a wider world that ultimately falls within the embrace of a culturally specific view of the cosmos. Such an approach enables a systematic, diachronic and multi-spatial examination of the evidence within a dynamic model that accounts for our current state of knowledge of the evidence.

The incontrovertible fact of the employment of Linear B, the earliest written form of the Greek language, for the administration of Knossos immediately after the end of the Neopalatial era, provides a chronological and historical juncture that demands explanation in terms of the

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developments of the final phase in the rise of Mycenaean society. This paper ends with a suggestion of how the changing relationships between emerging leaders on the mainland and those at Knossos led to the founding of the palaces and the palace-administered territories of the Mycenaean era on the mainland of Greece.

The Framework

Today there is consensus that there was no single trajectory for the emergence of the civilisation we call Mycenaean. Instead, individuals and groups led the way forward according to how they responded to local circumstances and through a variety of engagements with the external world. The archaeological evidence for these activities is well-known but often misrepresented in terms of unifying concepts like Mycenaean and Palace Society. Their use signals a focus on the apex of the phenomenon of polity formation at key centres of Middle and early Late Minoan Crete, in the Cyclades, and in southern and central Greece. Fundamental as they are for describing the civilisation we term Mycenaean, as a result of such a focus they overshadow the important societal developments in areas such as Achaia, Elis, Triphylia, and Arkadia in the Peloponnese; Laureotiki and Marathon in Attica; Phokis, Lokris, Phthiotis, Euboia; Thessaly, and Magnesia in central Greece. These regions represent a diversity that is often referred to as the periphery of the Mycenaean world but they are vitally important at the beginning of the Mycenaean era (MH–LH IIB) and at its end (LH IIIB–C) for understanding the dynamics of relations to the Adriatic, the Balkans, Anatolia and the southeast Aegean, Cyprus, and the eastern and western Mediterranean. Likewise, during the acme of the Mycenaean palaces these regions played significant roles that remain under-appreciated (though no longer under-studied) without having become concentrated, urban centres like Thebes and Mycenae.

In line with the theme of the conference, I understand spatial theory to be inseparable from the sociological study of the old problem framed by Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx on how historical processes shaped the lives of humans and thus influenced the formation of society. The structuring of social relationships is a continuous historical process tied to the physical past and constrained by the environment as argued by Braudel.[2] Landscapes are shaped by humans interacting within them and for sedentary societies are marked outwards from the primary place(s) of residence to the most distant ones travelled to. Properly speaking, the *longue durée* is a view that takes into account environmental constraint as a variable. Technical responses to these constraints permit societies, within limits, to contend with them. With the establishment of states there occurs a critical shift in such responses. This is because the state exists to manage increasingly larger aggregates of population, territory, and political-economic relations they have to contend with, and also develops administrative solutions to the increasing diversity of its population in socio-economic and socio-political terms. States and empires are not better than other societal forms, they are rather institutions created to cope with these larger scale challenges.

Mobility

The concept of mobility is deployed in this analysis because it is a primary characteristic of human occupation of archipelagos. Mobility implies human agency in terms of decisions about movement, but mobility is also driven by nature in terms of available resources and the changing circumstances of their access. Mobility is also social because of interrelationships (or networks) that transfer knowledge and values across landscapes and between generations. The concept of agency employed here is not individual agency, though the role of individuals is recognised, but rather it

2   Braudel 1958.

is social agency, because, as Marx argued in the introduction to his *Grundrisse*, individuals do not exist outside of social groups, which define their individuality and extend it towards identity.[3]

Mobility is foremost to consider because it is how biological necessities are met and the necessities of culture acquired.[4] In social terms, mobility is necessary for our mental faculties, as mobility enables the acquisition of knowledge. Thus the resources readily available in the immediate and wider surroundings are knowable and exploitable for the production of material culture. Equally, knowledge of them is transferable from generation to generation. Hence mobility is an act of agency. It enables humans to create culture. On the other hand, a lack of mobility is constraining; both nature and agency play roles here, since the one naturally inhibits while the other does so socially.

Mobility across a wide geography gives access to exoteric knowledge and for both social and biological reasons not all persons or groups are able to travel widely outside their home base. Hence mobility as travel contributed to differentiation within social groups.[5] Mobility is thus a concept by which different standpoints can be differentiated, for example, infancy and childhood, adulthood, and gender. This is especially apparent when considering how travel advances social networks, as distant travellers not only learn about exotic resources and how to navigate different geographies but establish social relationships that connect them with different social groups and their different social and material cultures. These networks are intergenerational and vitally important for maintaining exoteric knowledge through times of stress when mobility may be constrained and infrequent. Finally, mobility is demonstrable through material acquisition. In the same sense in which a souvenir legitimises travel, the acquisition of a foreign item may authenticate a claim of distant travel and it may also legitimise claims of differentiation by virtue of the resources necessary to support such displays of mobility. The same is true for the knowledge gained, but such things as technical and navigational knowledge are of special importance, since it is necessary for maintaining the social links and, insofar as it is handed down from generation to generation, such knowledge connects people and places through the troughs of times of stress and dislocation.

Space and Place

Space and place are simply terms of speech denoting what is around us in the most general and limitless sense (space) and in the specific and demarcated sense (place). Hence space is made visible or is felt in relation to place, which marks out a defined area.[6] These distinctions are meaningless except as they are activated by processes through time occurring as a result of human movement and human manipulation of nature. In the first instance then, space is about the relationship between individuals and their social groups to the cosmos, while in the second that relationship is materialised as place through practices that are embodied, framed through movement, and secured through construction using the materials of nature. In other words, places are the fashioned environment, whether a mound in a landscape, a trail, a building, or even an article of clothing (as something inhabited). As such they structure the experiences of those who use them purposely and for those who encounter them afterwards.[7] This diachronic aspect of materialised social and physical 'landscapes' is fundamental for understanding change and adaptation. For archaeologists this is easy to understand since it is a prime directive of archaeological theory that we identify and explain materialised cultural practices as spatio-temporal relationships, that is as *contexts*.

[3]   Elster 1986, 3–20.
[4]   Purcell 1990; Horden – Purcell 2000, 123–172, passim; Broodbank 2000, 89–106, passim; Hahn – Weiss 2013; Kiriatzi – Knappett 2016.
[5]   Helms 1988.
[6]   Casey 1996.
[7]   Tilley 1994.

Contexts cannot be interpreted or understood except as they are traced in process. Social theory introduces archaeology to the people of the past actively living their lives and actively engaged in group practices that constitute and reconstitute their material and social worlds.

Occupation and Settlement

Occupation and settlement are by their very nature spatial.[8] People inhabit and exploit landscapes. Their knowledge of them is handed down through generations, hence names and stories attach to places within them. There are many dimensions to the occupation of landscapes, from seasonal hunting and gathering to nomadism to sedentary occupation for agriculture and industry. The earliest occupation then exists within a territory, whose outlines and uses are adapted to support settlement. The changing location of settlement needs explanation in terms of the internal dynamics of changing resource availability (largely driven by the environment) and need (largely driven by biology), and equally according to culture, which consists of such things as cosmological and religious concepts and the impact of external political economies. Within a socially defined territory there may exist one or more settlements and they may share common space among them. How common space is defined and utilised presents specific problems for archaeological survey, but also interesting challenges for interpretation as common space is redefined over time. Likewise, common space may exist between territories and it will change as territories expand and contract and, especially, as they compete with each other. Finally, the spatial structure of settlements is important to understand as a reflection of the social relations that exist within the settlement. Over time these may reinforce a sense of the durability of the community or change in ways that correspond to evolving political relations, including imposition or merely emulation of external concepts of organisation, structure, and form. Obviously the evolution of settlement organisation and the types and changing forms of residential and other structures are very important to trace through time.

Mortuary Space and Place

Another form of occupation is mortuary space and in many ways it connects all the aspects of human activity.[9] Mortuary activities mediate between the living and the dead and in so doing they mediate between the living and the cosmos insofar as the deceased are understood as returning to nature. The locations of mortuary activity are direct expressions of an inhabitation and marking of the social space and the landscape. The deceased may be strewn about in meaningful ways, such as we know from Aborigine practices, or emplaced in edifices that mark the landscape to influence how others, including many subsequent generations, use and understand the landscape.[10] Because the dead are linked to the living over generations, we tend to think that the material expressions of mortuary behaviour may reflect the structure of social relations. Ethnographic examples caution us to be careful in asserting these associations, and we understand that mortuary behaviour may tell us as much if not more about the actions of the burying group than about the deceased. The spatial correlations, therefore, are limitless, extending from placement in the landscape to the minutest placements of objects around and on the deceased and throughout the burial. At some level, these spatial relations may tell us about biological, social, economic, political, and spiritual relations – all of which might be renegotiated at the time of burial. Often we may need to rely on locations of mortuary practices as proxies for settlements. Always it is necessary to study mortuary practices and their spatial distributions over time.

8   Clarke 1972.
9   Parker Pearson 2000.
10   Littleton – Allen 2007.

Religious and Cosmological Space and Place

Closely related to the mortuary sphere is the cosmological, which we classify as a series of rituals that may group into a form we call religion, but which, again, ethnographic examples caution us not to project from our own deeply biased notions.[11] Fundamentally religious practices are mediations to the cosmos and therefore deeply embedded in nature, identified as meaningful in terms of sky, earth, water, light and dark, cold and warm, wet and dry, and to the abundant varieties of life that inhabit the lived-in landscape. Naturally these have specific places that humans mark out and populate with spirits. The mediating role of ancestors to the cosmos, and the roles of animals and plants are important in ritual and its representation through myth and legend. Hence we regard representation as an abstraction of spatial relations and we seek to recognise the natural foci, often marked out or built up as loci of ritual and worship. These loci must be sought as expressions of the senses: sound, smell, image, and material form. They may be located on or around places marked out by others who preceded and who are recognised either through some intergenerational knowledge or through fictionalised legitimating legend or myth, which are frequently authenticated through material demonstrations. As with everything else, the places of religious expression mark out landscapes and communities within them, and we know they may connect different communities and different regions through communalities and differences.

The Emergence of the Mycenaean World

The foregoing are theoretical and methodological considerations of how the application of social and spatial analyses need be considered when thinking about the problem of the rise of what we term 'Mycenaean civilisation'. Because the subject of this conference is specifically the 'early Mycenaean' world, I want to offer an abstract and idealised map of it in two primary arenas. The first I term 'the spatial geography of a trans-egalitarian society' (Fig. 1), and the second 'the world of the Centre Man/Man-of-Renown' (Fig. 2). I use the term 'trans-egalitarian' as defined by Brian Hayden in order to capture a level of social organisation that is more fluid than the early notions of Band and Tribe and the contentious term of 'chief'.[12] Trans-egalitarian societies encompass communities with minimal social differentiation through the inception of leadership all the way to its formation into a durable, probably heritable status that would encompass the emergence of a stratified level of organisation. Leadership is generally of factions (groups of kin and non-kin) within a community and potentially among different communities.[13] Such leaders may become Big Men who seek, through self-aggrandisement and promotion of their faction, to secure stable positions of power over their community and other communities.[14]

The spatial geography of trans-egalitarian societies (Fig. 1) is defined by a territory within which is the Home Base, the primary place of residence. It consists of a population made up of families, kin, non-kin, and sometimes slaves – all of whom form a labour pool that is necessary for the fundamentals of the economy. The basis of the economy is agriculture, with produce from gardens, middle and outer lands, where crops are sown and harvested or gathered and where animals forage and graze. Throughout this territory are natural resources available for exploitation. Mobility and geographic knowledge of this territory are generally shared by the community. Agricultural activities extend from the inner area of the home base outwards to the farthest extension of the territory – the boundary area that defines some geographic limit in real and conceptual terms.[15] Coursing through these dimensions are social networks that are defined by such things as

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[11] Sahlins 1996.

[12] Hayden 1995; Hayden 2001; Pauketat 2007, 4–6, passim.

[13] Brumfiel 1994.

[14] Sahlins 1963; Wright 2004b, 70–76.

[15] See Clarke 1972; on cycles of activity that have spatial implications see Bourdieu 1990, 200–270.

Spatial Geography of a Trans-egalitarian Society:
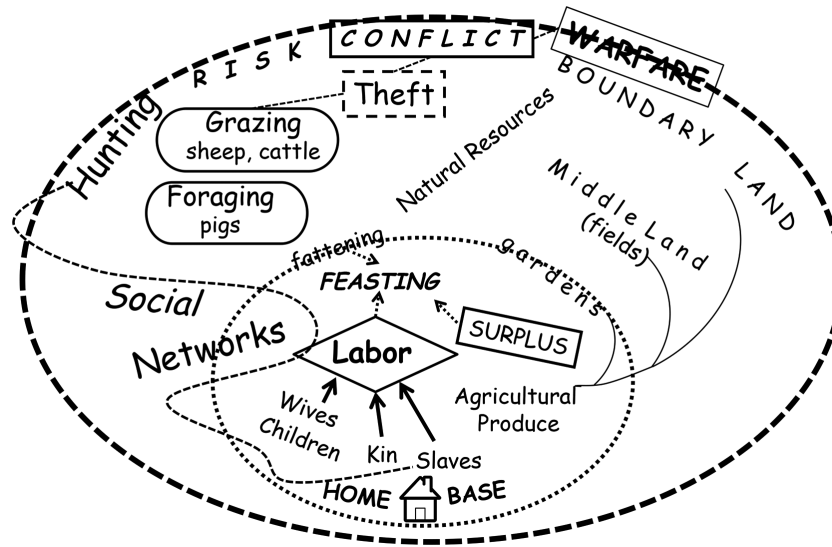## The World of the Center-Man

Fig. 1: The spatial geography of a trans-egalitarian society (J. Wright)

different kinds of labour, procurement, and activity. Some of these are defined by status roles, by gender and age, and by other relationships. Herding, as an activity that occurs in the outward territory, entails both a geographic knowledge and a degree of risk, such as theft of animals. Hunting is another activity that can be intensely social as a group activity, presumably of males, though it can be solitary. In any case, whether carried out by male or female, in groups or alone, hunting has a demonstrable result in the sharing of the catch and the social credit of acknowledged skill, both in the fashioning of weapons or traps, their deployment and use, and in the sharing of meat. Ethnography is important in understanding the many dimensions of hunting, for example how kill sites and the sharing of meat play out in the formation of social relationships and how skill can be exploited for social differentiation.[16] On the basis of the artefactual remains of the Bronze Age in the Aegean, it is safe to posit that skill in hunting conveyed *renown* and that there was a transference of skill as a hunter to skill as a warrior. All of these activities take place in boundary areas and are displayed or aggrandised in Home Base settings. The geography of the trans-egalitarian community and the social actions and networks that exist within it are displayed in social gatherings at the Home Base, where all the status differences are recognised, contested, and confirmed. It is fair to say there is common agreement today that the many forms of feasting are a central social activity for the display of these many dimensions of social relations.

The World of the Centre-Man/Man-of-Renown (Fig. 2) describes the geography of those who travel outside the boundaries of the territory of the Home Base. Normally they are probably factional leaders and their retinue. I suggest that for the world of the mainland of Greece with which we are concerned renown is largely centred around achievement in hunting and warfare, but this is not to exclude renown for craft abilities and special talents that may also lead to itinerant lifestyles e.g. knappers, metal-workers, and story-tellers.[17] Fundamental to this world is mobility. Travel is necessarily maritime, so sailing is a special craft with its own renown.

The spheres of interaction are arenas external to Home Base territories. When speaking of the core during the Middle and early Late Bronze Age, a natural orientation is to Crete with its palace centres and their territories. Key to interaction from any point on the mainland are the

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[16] Collier – Rosaldo 1981; Wiessner 2002.
[17] Helms 1993, 28–51; Wiessner 2002; Ruppenstein 2012, 61–62; Kiriatzi – Knappett 2016.
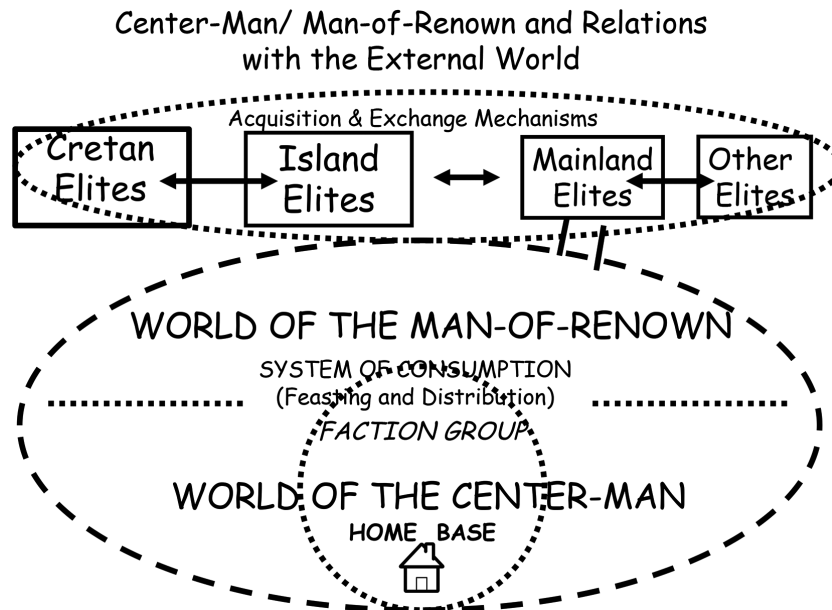
Fig. 2: The world of the Centre Man/Man-of-Renown (J. Wright)

islands, of which the Cyclades are paramount mediators. But Aigina and Kythera are primary key players because of their proximity to the mainland. However, as distance from Crete increases, other Small Worlds come into play, as we understand when looking at western Greece and its preoccupation with the Ionian Islands, the Adriatic, and even southern Italy, Sicily and the Tyrrhenian Coast, or the special structure of social groups in central Greece, the orientation of the northern regions to the Balkans, Thrace and the northwestern Anatolian sphere. These geographic considerations are especially important in view of their role during the Early Bronze Age and its aftermath during the centuries from c. 2100 to 1900 BC.

Over the course of the late Early Bronze Age, throughout the Middle Bonze Age, and into the early phases of the Late Bronze Age, the movement of Men-of-Renown from many different Home Base communities on the mainland created many opportunities for interaction and competition at different arenas outside their native territories. The material evidence indicates prestige exchange among elites that describe the known world at that time – a cosmos that extends across Europe, the Baltic and the British Isles, westwards to the central Mediterranean, north through the Balkans to the Carpathian Basin, and eastwards into central Anatolia, but transpiring especially within the Aegean Basin with Crete as the focus.[18] Acquisition through exchange and plunder, and the formation and reinforcement of social networks throughout these geographic arenas fashioned multiple outer worlds for the Man-of-Renown and for his faction. Acquisition included special knowledge, special social networks, and all forms of exotic material possessions. These were strategically deployed within the faction and also within the Home Base in order to cement alliances and loyalty. The different geographical orientations created the diversity we see in the kinds of status objects found in settlements and especially among grave goods. In life, distribution and feasting were primary vehicles for the factional leader or Big Man and his group. A primary goal for these status-seekers was to stabilise relations of power so as to pass them on through designated heirs.

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[18] Ruppenstein 2012, 39–42, argues that the emergence of elites at Mycenae in particular is owed to their role in accessing tin from Cornwall; cf. Maran 2004.

Problems in Aegean Archaeology

What is outlined above is a perspective from the standpoint of the mainland of Greece, especially central and southern Greece. I propose this because my aim is to organise an explanation of the rise of Mycenaean society. However, I firmly believe that Aegean studies have fallen into a dangerous trap by classifying the Aegean according to geographic regions: the Greek mainland, the Islands, and Crete. Over generations of scholarship these have created fictional containers that we have filled with reified notions of difference and largely untested notions of identity that, even as they are challenged, frame the discourse of our scholarship. Colleagues try to overcome them with notions like 'Minoanisation', 'core-periphery', and 'world systems theory' that have some heuristic value but sustain a flawed discourse.[19] Within the application of the concept of network theory Maria Relaki has made a useful observation that avoids the polarity of centrality within networks, namely her suggestion that we consider 'networks of relevance', a term that better characterises the intensely social nature of networks.[20] I would argue that the circum-Aegean world was highly fluid and that such ideas as Protopalatial and Neopalatial on Crete, especially, need to be dismantled not merely in terms of what was happening within Crete but in terms of what was happening within the wider Aegean world. In arguing this I ask that we consider how many of the developments towards centralised, complex and increased scalar configurations of populations and political economies are products of many actors from different parts of the Aegean rather than simply products of some unarticulated 'Minoan' actors with roots in the Neolithic settlement of the great island, or 'Minoanised' actors thronging to participate. In turn the islands, particularly the Cyclades are also open vessels that in fact thrive on the arrival and participation of persons from elsewhere. In this sense, it is not the Cyclades, but all the islands – the Sporades, the islands of the north and northeast Aegean, the islands off the Anatolian coast (especially the Dodecanese) – that supply the cultural diversity of the Aegean world. Indeed, we study an Aegean world rather than a Hellenic one. Likewise the *epirotic* mainlanders are neither free agents nor tethered to central cores; rather they inhabit all landscapes, communicate through inland mountain passes, across plains and coastal margins into peri-maritime regions, and their communities are subject to migration flows from many directions. This is especially seen when we consider the powerful axis of the Corinthian Gulf and its outpouring at the west, as we know all too well from the 'colonial' outburst of the 8th–6th c. BC. All of these are geographically constant, and therefore familiar. Hence when taking a view of the *longue dureé* we understand how many roots and routes were laid down during the Neolithic and subsequently refashioned throughout the metallurgical and other technological revolutions of the Bronze Age.

The Prelude of the Third Millennium

The setting for studying the emergence of Mycenaean civilisation must consider the entire Middle Bronze Age in the widest Aegean sphere. To understand this, however, requires taking some account of what went before during the Early Bronze Age, not least because of the collapse and contraction during EH III and into MH I, nowadays in large part corresponding to the 4.2ka climatic event.[21] One way to focus on this is to recall the imprint of the past in the navigation of the Aegean as defined by the reach of a long-boat journey as argued by Cyprian Broodbank.[22] These paddled boats commanded the circumference of the Aegean basin. They effectively established

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[19] Broodbank 2004, 50–65, passim; Whitelaw 2005, 60–61; Knappett 2011; Maran 2011; and Harding 2013, the last of which is a very useful review of these concepts; see now Girella at al. 2016, 3–7; Knappett 2016; Galaty 2016: I have not had time to peruse thoroughly the other articles in this new study.

[20] Relaki 2004, 172–173, passim.

[21] Weiberg et al. 2016.

[22] Broodbank 1989.

the link between the mainland and the western Anatolian coast. This link presumably gave access to old overland routes through Anatolia to northern Syria and the Akkadian states. The breakdown during the intermediate period of the end of the third millennium disrupted that system of interaction. By contrast, the inception of the sailing vessel at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age radically transformed the reach of interaction.[23] Instead of only the old overland route it was now possible to sail throughout the eastern Mediterranean, from coastal North Africa and the Nile delta, along the Levantine coast including Cyprus, all of the Anatolian coast and up into the Black Sea. Crete was best poised to take advantage of these new possibilities and the result was the rise of the first palaces. This new system, however, was laid over the older one, which was remembered and revitalised in new ways.

At the local level the imprint of these changes is visible in the archaeological record. For example, apsidal buildings were introduced during EH II, not merely with the inception of EH III as John Caskey had claimed on the basis of his discoveries at Lerna.[24] Furthermore, Jeremy Rutter has demonstrated that within EH II Anatolian pottery technologies were being introduced as demonstrated by such assemblages as the final deposits of the House of the Tiles at Lerna and in the Lefkandi I and Kastri assemblages on Euboia and Syros respectively.[25] Surely it is permissible to suggest that the Early Bronze Age II period in the Aegean-Anatolian sphere was one of great interactions between different communities with different technologies and different access to resources?[26] Surely, this gave rise to a world where people of different cultural backgrounds, customs, beliefs, and languages lived side-by-side and intermingled and even intermarried, and therefore became knowledgeable of the wide geography of this sphere of interaction? Migration could certainly have played a role, especially if the 4.2ka event was as widespread as it seems to have been.[27] We may not yet be in a position to explain exactly why settlements like Lerna during the occupation of the House of the Tiles were destroyed, but by taking a processual perspective we can understand better how different generations towards the end of the 3rd millennium related to each other. For example, the settlers of Lerna IV (EH III) recognised and respected the tumulus that had been heaped up over the remains of the House of the Tiles at Lerna. Only in succeeding generations did the apsidal houses encroach on the tumulus, as memory and respect for the past faded.[28] Elsewhere, for example at Kolonna on Aigina, occupation was unbroken. The continuous use of the fortification wall throughout the Early and Middle (and Late) Bronze Age settlements signalled the durability of the settlement and its inhabitants. For us this settlement is evidence of how knowledge of the wider world and of the traditions of earlier generations were carried forward through the troubled times of the late Early Bronze Age into the Middle Bronze Age.

When we expand the view of the geography of the Aegean and focus again on the routes of interconnection, then the imprint of the past is visible in important ways. I follow Broodbank and Rutter, who in examining the distribution of Early Bronze Age III duck vases argued that they create an arc that runs from west to east, extending from the region of the Saronic Gulf through the Cyclades to southwestern Anatolia all the way up the Maeander Valley to Beycesultan.[29] Broodbank argues that in the wake of the disturbances at the end of the Early Bronze Age the networks reconfigured along lines that reflect the imprint of the previous Early Bronze Age network but in a more regional manner, such that he describes a North Aegean Network, an Island Network, and a southwestern Network.[30] The last two set the stage for major developments during the Middle Bronze Age. The former locates the importance of Kolonna on Aigina as the western anchor

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[23] Agouridis 1997; Broodbank 2000, 341–349.

[24] Forsén 1992, 199–203 (Tiryns, Asine?, Pylos?, Kouphovouno, Athens Plato's Academy?, Rouf, Manika, Linovrochi?, Mourteri, Thebes, Orchomenos); Weiberg 2007, 31–33, 119–152.

[25] Rutter 1983; Rutter 1995.

[26] Maran 1998, 432–450, passim; Weiberg – Finné 2013.

[27] Weiberg et al. 2016 with references; Rutter 2017, 18–25.

[28] Weiberg 2007, 103–185; Banks 2013.

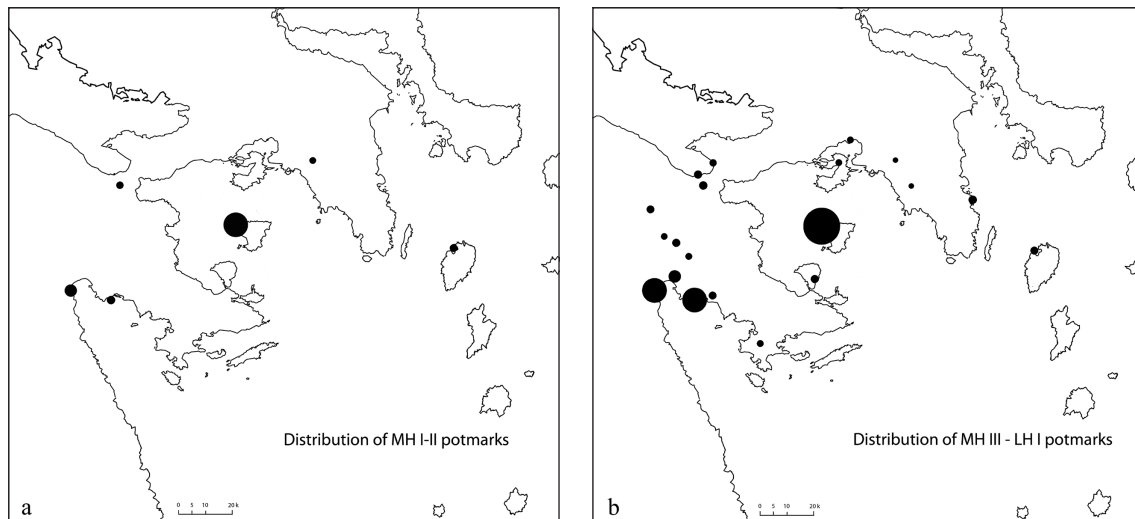[29] Rutter 1985, 574 and n. 9.

[30] Broodbank 2000, 351–356.

Fig. 3: Distribution of Aiginetan potmarks: a. MH I–II; b. MH III–LH I (from Lindblom 2001)

for connections across to Anatolia, while the latter connects the Gulf of Argos along the eastern Thyreatis down through Lakonia and Kythera to Crete. Significantly, these networks do not take into account what happens when the sail is introduced and when the first palaces are established in Crete.[31]

One way to model how these networks worked in relation to the mainland is to use Michael Lindblom's distribution of Aiginetan potmarks as a proxy for Aiginetan interests through the Middle Bronze Age (Fig. 3a).[32] For the early phases the distribution is limited to Aigina and key sites of Ayia Irini on Keos and in the Argolid. The increase in distribution when the MH III/LH I potmarks are mapped shows dramatically how much the influence of the Aiginetan pottery industry had spread (Fig. 3b), such that it is reasonable to describe the entire Saronic Gulf region and outwards to the islands and to the Argolid as lying within Kolonna's reach. This distribution raises a larger question concerning how the various networks of the Aegean evolved over the course of the Middle Bronze Age, namely to what extent were routes driven by local factors (mainland to islands, islands to islands) as opposed to the interests of rising centres on Crete?[33] For the purposes of this essay, a major question to ask is, "To what extent was Kolonna's sphere of interest restricted to the Saronic Gulf region owing to competition with other island centres throughout the Middle Bronze Age?" Secondarily we may consider, as Broodbank does, how Cretan interests during the Protopalatial period transformed these networks. At this point we may recall Jack Davis' 1979 hypothesis of the Western String during the Neopalatial period; he postulated it to describe the nature of the primary connections from Crete up towards the mainland (Peloponnese and central Greece) and vice versa.[34] Since then other scholars have both questioned this hypothesis and added to it, considering for example such places as the Mesara and the Euboian Gulf.[35] Importantly the durability of the southwestern route is now firmly established thanks to the research of the Kythera Island Project (KIP).[36]

[31] Rutter – Zerner 1984; Berg 1999; Berg 2007.

[32] Lindblom 2001; admittedly this distribution is a product of the limited evidence from a few systematically exca-
      vated and studied sites; see also Pullen – Tartaron 2007, and Niemeier 1995 for a consideration of the rise of
      Kolonna on Aigina as a dominant player from MH into early LH.

[33] Broodbank 2000, 356–361; Broodbank 2004; see also Berg 2007; Van de Moortel 2007; Van de Moortel 2010.

[34] Davis 1979; Berg 2006.

[35] Berg 2006 argues that on the basis of ceramics, Davis' postulation of a linear 'string' of relations is not sustainable.

[36] Broodbank – Kiriatzi 2007; Broodbank – Kiriatzi 2014.

What happens when we attempt to factor in the role of strong agents travelling these routes during the Middle and early Late Bronze Ages? Perhaps the earliest examples of this new era that we can point to are those mariners known from burials outside the fortification gates at Ayia Irini on Keos and at Kolonna on Aigina.[37] The warrior burial from Kolonna contained a wealth of items that anticipate the shaft graves at Mycenae. As is well-known, during MH III several small burying groups, possibly kin, decided to set themselves apart from others utilising the prehistoric cemetery on the western ridge of Mycenae by erecting the circular enclosure known as Circle B and then beginning to inter in pit and cist graves within it. Over the course of the three phases of use defined by Giampaolo Graziadio from MH III–LH I,[38] each of the three clusters of burials increased in density and also in elaboration as shaft graves and elaborate built cists were installed, with increasingly luxurious and numerous grave goods, and also, as some of the burials became collective, facilities for successive burials. These developments, as is well-known, show in their material expressions a lively, sustained, and focused interest on acquisition of valuable items from the major centres of the Cyclades and from the palaces of Crete. In view of the abstract diagrams of Home Base and Centre-Man/Man-of-Renown geographies sketched above, several questions are pertinent.

– Did some or many of the emerging leaders buried in these tombs find their way among the islands and to Crete on the bottoms of Aiginetan freighters?

– Did they initially, or perhaps later, decide to take their own or other vessels from the Gulf of Argos along the western coast of the Argolid, around Spetses and across the Myrtos Sea straight to the emporia of Phylakopi on Melos and Akrotiri on Thera – thereby avoiding Aigina?

– Were Phylakopi and Akrotiri gateway communities that controlled access to Crete or were they merely way stations for travellers continuing to such ports as Poros-Heraklion, Amnisos, and further east and west?

– To what extent does the role of competition among different groups contesting for prominence among these island arenas create constraints on some actors and opportunities for others?

– How might these probabilities of changing permutations among the actors play out as we examine the evidence of change throughout the successive periods of the Late Bronze Age?

The same questions may be asked of the role of Kythera as a mediator between the mainland, especially Lakonia and Messenia, as the developments from the Middle Bronze Age into the early phases of the Late Bronze Age.[39] Of particular importance is to take account of the long history of this relationship from the Early Bronze Age extending durably into the Late Bronze Age. In this regard the importance of the recent discovery of the so-called Griffin Warrior Tomb at Pylos-Ano Englianos cannot be overestimated, even though it represents a later, mature stage of the chain of interaction.[40] What was established in this sphere of interaction has its roots early in the Middle Bronze Age as witnessed by the settlement at Ayios Stephanos and the tumuli at Antheia-Kastroulia.[41] The presence of MM I pottery at Ano Englianos clearly indicates that these routes were effective in advancing and stimulating interactions between Crete and Lakonia and Messenia in an unbroken sequence through these periods.[42] They set the stage for the establishment of Ano Englianos as a major focus within the Middle Bronze Age, its eventual dominance of southwestern Messenia and ultimate takeover of Kythera under Pylian control during the palace period.[43]

[37] Overbeck 1984; Overbeck 1989b; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1997; Kilian-Dirlmeier 2003.
[38] Graziadio 1988.
[39] Broodbank et al. 2005.
[40] Davis – Stocker 2016; Stocker – Davis 2017.
[41] Rambach 2007; Taylour † – Janko 2008.
[42] Davis – Stocker 2010.
[43] Bennet 1999.

Neopalatial Crete

It is now necessary to turn attention to the Neopalatial period. During this period the Minoans dominated much of the traffic throughout the Aegean and may have succeeded to some extent in consolidating their power throughout much of the island-scape of the central and southern Aegean including parts of coastal Anatolia.[44] At the same time, traffic in and out of Crete was managed through such ports as at Poros-Heraklion, which had by then surely taken on a cosmopolitan character, including arrivals from such faraway places as Cyprus, the Levantine ports, and perhaps also occasional visitors from the west.[45] The recognition of Messenian and Kytheran pottery at Kommos is a clear indicator that such trade was hardly limited to ports along the northern coast of Crete.[46] These interactions are in addition to the abundant evidence of Minoan impact on the settlement of Akrotiri on Thera and Phylakopi on Melos. Indeed, the original excavations at Phylakopi demonstrated, as Alan Wace and Carl Blegen early recognised, the importance of these islands as nodes in networks, with connections to Crete and the mainland, and we should note also to Cyprus.[47] By the Neopalatial the Western String and all the other directional networks were fully activated, yet it is worth observing that for all the evidence of Cretan contact, Ayia Irini itself maintains a local character that reflects not only its greater distance from the central sources in Crete but also its connections to the burgeoning source of wealth at Thorikos and the emerging centres throughout central Greece.[48]

No one today would consider reviving Arthur Evans' argument that the mainland at this time was colonised.[49] The little that we know about from excavations at Kolonna, Kiapha Thiti, Thorikos, Vrana, Lerna, Argos, Asine, Mycenae, Ayios Vasileios, Ano Englianos, Kakovatos, Kirrha, Thebes, Eleon, Mitrou, Kastro-Volos and Dimini (to name the most salient) would lead us to think that the occupants of these settlements were recipients of such domination by the culture of the Minoan palaces during LH I–IIA (LM IA–IB) as reflected in their form, organisation, customs, and material culture.[50] Instead we witness in such contexts as the Shaft Graves the specific results of a multi-generational tradition of acquisitive interactions of small groups of powerful and successful players in the external arenas of the Cyclades and Crete. The material expression is highly selective, as frequently noted in studies of the contents of the Shaft Graves, a phenomenon that still begs for a more satisfactory explanation, one of which, as Florian Ruppenstein argues, is trade in metals, specifically tin.[51] What it shows is the emergence of factional leaders and the processes and results of their competition among each other in local and wider settings.[52] This transformation takes generations to accomplish and that is why we term this formative period early Mycenaean.

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[44] The most vocal proponent of a Minoan dominance is Wiener 2016, with full references; but see against this view Nikolakopoulou – Knappett 2016 and Davis – Gorogianni 2008.

[45] The absence of evidence at the harbour site is a problem of publication, since salvage work by the Ephorate has recovered material from the area but for now only tantalising hints of this port are published: Dimopoulou 1997; Dimopoulou 2000; Wilson et al. 2004; Dimopoulou et al. 2007; Wilson et al. 2008; Dimopoulou 2012. Compare with Kommos, a site with almost no disruption after the Bronze Age, which demonstrates more clearly the cosmopolitan character of Minoan ports at this time: Rutter 2004; Rutter 2006; Rutter – Van de Moortel 2006; Van de Moortel 2007; Van de Moortel 2010; Tomlinson et al. 2010.

[46] Day et al. 2011.

[47] Wace – Blegen 1939, 141: "(…) the people of the Mainland were in touch with the Islands, but the extreme scarcity of their pottery in Crete hints that direct relations between the Mainland and Crete were rare and not cordial"; Edgar 1904, 158, fig. 4, illustrates a rim sherd of an Early White Slip Cypriot bowl, which is on view in the National Museum.

[48] Davis 1986, 103–104; Overbeck 1989a, 9–16; Wiener 2016, 144.

[49] Schoep 2018 with full bibliography.

[50] I refer here to those places reported on in this conference.

[51] Wolpert 2004; Voutsaki 2010; Ruppenstein 2012; Harrell 2014.

[52] Wright 2004a; Wright 2004b, 76–80.

There are two aspects of this transformation that deserve consideration. One has been drawn to our attention by Marisa Marthari and this is the strong evidence of a preference for polychrome vessels, especially products from Phylakopi and Thera in the burials of Circle B.[53] On the one hand, this might merely be a visual preference for the attractive decorative schemes, especially the representation of animals and vegetation that has its roots in the Middle Bronze Age II circulation of bird jugs with pulled away spouts, but it is likely as much, if not more, an indication of the extent to which these two island emporia were gateway communities to Crete already from the early second millennium. Closely related is a second phenomenon that I believe stands to reason, namely that what we are witnessing is the result of several generations of interaction of mainlanders with the islands and with Crete. The roots of this interaction go back to the founding of the Cretan palaces; it was first recognised on the mainland by Jeremy Rutter and Carol Zerner as a phenomenon demonstrable through the distribution of Cretan imports of MM IA date[54] but also is recognisable as a sign of expanding Cretan interest further abroad – to the north at Lemnos and Samothrace and to the farther east at Lapithos on Cyprus – surely in search of copper and tin.[55] We understand little about what happened during Middle Bronze Age II but the relationship quickens with the beginning of Middle Bronze Age III,[56] perhaps stimulated by the rebuilding, consolidation and centralisation that accompanied the onset of the Neopalatial period, which certainly was focused at Knossos, probably much in the manner of it being recognised as the *axis mundi* of Crete as argued by Jeffrey Soles.[57] This scenario particularly describes the changing relationships of the diverse mainland regions to Crete during the Neopalatial period. My sense is that it was not only dynamic and competitive but also was built upon a set of relations already established on Crete, for which, most unfortunately, there is virtually no material evidence.[58] In this arena the regions of the Argolid, Corinthia, the Saronic Gulf, eastern Attica, Keos and southern Euboia, and central Greece provided players. Equally involved are those from Messenia and Lakonia, acting through Kythera and exploiting the old network of relations with western and central Crete.

Often it is remarked that the Neopalatial period stands in great contrast to its predecessor.[59] The cause of the destructions of the Protopalatial edifices, especially at Mallia and Phaistos is still not known, but it is clear that what follows was different by a considerable magnitude.[60] Have we adequately pursued the question of what infused the new life we see in the art, architecture, economy, and political structure of the Neopalatial world? Was there something that places like Mallia, Phaistos-Ayia Triada, and Knossos (to name the most salient) were stimulated by that we have not appreciated? We often look to the remains at Akrotiri, Thera, to grasp the dynamism that must have been apparent in the monumental art of the palaces, but at the same time we have clouded our perceptions of the Neopalatial period by viewing it as quintessentially 'Minoan' and by a history of retrojecting some of what we find of later periods (LM II–IIIA1) into it. Further, as research into the Late Bronze Age I phase (LM IA and B, LC I, LH I–IIA) advances, we recognise its longevity, perhaps as much as c. 190 years (Tab. 1),[61] that was punctuated by events within it that demonstrate how poorly it corresponds as a phase to the reality of what happened over that period of time.[62]

In the midst of this scrum the volcanic eruption of Thera occurs. It was adumbrated by a major seismic event in early LM IA, more or less contemporary with apparently severe tectonic activity

[53]   Marthari 1993; Marthari 1998.
[54]   Rutter – Zerner 1984.
[55]   Grace 1940; Matsas 1995; Boulotis 2010; Ruppenstein 2012, 39–40, 50, passim.
[56]   See the contributions in MacDonald – Knappett 2013a.
[57]   Soles 1995.
[58]   Early recognition of Minyan at Knossos by Wace – Blegen 1939, 141 n. 4, citing Evans 1928, 309.
[59]   MacDonald – Knappett 2013b.
[60]   Broodbank 2004, 49; MacDonald – Knappett 2013b, 2, and passim; Carinci – La Rosa 2013.
[61]   Dates for Tab. 1 are drawn from Wiener 2018 (I thank Malcolm Wiener for an advance copy of this publication) and from Barnard – Brogan 2011, 448.
[62]   Brogan – Hallager 2011.

Period	Dates BC*	Span in Years
MM III/MH III	c. 1700?–1620	80
LM IA/LH I	c. 1620–1520	100
LM IB/LH IIA	c. 1520–1440/1430	80–90
LM II/LH IIB	c. 1440/1430–1400/1390	40
LM/LH IIIA1–2	c. 1390–1290	100
LH IIIB1–2	c. 1290–1200	90

* low chronology for Thera following Pearson et al. 2018

Tab. 1: Absolute chronology (from Wiener 2018; Barnard – Brogan 2011, 448)

in western and central Crete.[63] The Theran eruption and tsunami caused widespread destruction and disruption across the northern coast of Crete from its central through eastern areas. In terms of the life of Crete and the Aegean, however, it seems apparent that there was a relatively quick recovery and for some years thereafter life went on as before, but not without a sense of insecurity.[64] One thing is certain: Akrotiri ceased to be a gateway community. The whole island of Thera ceased to be a node in the network. Hence our map must be redrawn and we must consider how this disaster changed the dynamics of the networks of travel, particularly from the mainland centres that trafficked the islands. For example, did the loss of Akrotiri increase direct connections between Mycenae and Knossos?[65] Did it contribute to a downgrading of Phylakopi as a node, or rather increase its role?[66] What might have been the consequences for ports like Poros-Heraklion and for major centres like Knossos?

The last is a pertinent question in light, first, of the review of the possible effects of the volcanic explosion on Crete by Jan Driessen and Colin MacDonald,[67] and, second, in consideration of the interesting analysis by Laura Preston of the changing dynamics of mortuary practices in the Knossos area during LM I and II.[68] She argues convincingly that these changes reflect social stress, even social disorder within this period. What is missing from these discussions, however, are two phenomena that must be staring us in the face: first, the long presence of small numbers of mainlanders and also certainly islanders since at least back into the Protopalatial period and, second, the presence of refugees after the destruction of Thera. It seems obvious that many if not most of those who escaped from Akrotiri ended up on the shores of Crete. Ports like Poros-Heraklion were already cosmopolitan centres mixing local and foreign residents who had developed relationships over the generations and likely even intermarried. Into this mix came mainlanders, especially the small but influential warrior groups whom we recognise from the mainland burials of MH III–LH II. Some may have returned to their Home Base as successful individuals (as for example the LH II example of the Griffin Warrior at Pylos),[69] others, however, may have intermarried and established strong bonds with kin groups in Crete. The likelihood of intermarriage needs to be posited because one among other consequences would have been entry into Cretan society and, even, if at a sufficiently high status, entry into the nobility of the court of Knossos or other palaces.[70]

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[63]   Marthari 1990.
[64]   Driessen – MacDonald 1997, 82–83, passim; Preston 2004.
[65]   Dickinson 1982.
[66]   Whitelaw 2005, 45–49.
[67]   Driessen – MacDonald 1997, 85–104.
[68]   Preston 2004.
[69]   Davis – Stocker 2016; Stocker – Davis 2017.
[70]   Kilian-Dirlmeier 1985; Andreadaki-Vlazaki, n. d. [2009], 114–127, 156–164, 166–179; the conclusions of Nafplioti 2008 notwithstanding, as argued in this paper, it is no surprise that the osteological material she sampled showed the interred to have been born in Crete; that conclusion, however, has no bearing on the question of main-

Admittedly, this is largely speculation but it is what we know from other historically documented events that caused refugees to flee their homelands. Even today we can witness this phenomenon with our own eyes, including how wealthy and connected elites find safe harbour in the upper echelons of their new host societies. Such a scenario makes it easier to conceptualise what was driving the leaders whom we find buried in the wealthy shaft graves of Circles B and A and in similar built tombs of MH III through LH II at other locations in the Argolid, the Corinthia, Lakonia, Messenia, and elsewhere. Likewise, in envisioning dynamic social relations such as these, we may have a way of viewing the development of the warrior tombs that show up at Poros-Heraklion as early as MM III and, of course, those that define the character of the new chamber tomb and shaft burials around Knossos, Phaistos and Chania beginning in LH II–IIIA1.[71]

By taking this view into account the Neopalatial period can be viewed as a product of a rainbow spectrum of persons, factions, and interests and not merely an end trajectory of a pristine 'Minoan' civilising process. Such a view conforms with the ethnic complexity of interrelations we know about in the ancient Near East and Egypt and it rescues us also from maintaining the patently false dichotomy of a mainland/Cretan divide.

The Mainland

One of the things that drove the mainlanders whom we find in the Shaft Graves and in tombs that emulate their wealth of grave goods was a strong sense of the individual. Perhaps this was a consequence of the traditional social order on the mainland, whether we are in Thessaly or Phokis, Achaia or the Corinthia, Triphylia or Messenia. This was an order that through lineages reinforced direct lines of descent. It might also have been reinforced through the competitiveness that was encouraged both within the Home Base for position within factional groups and in the exoteric arenas of interaction that took place among the islands and within Crete. Certainly demonstrations of prowess and success in leadership inspire the kinds of displays that we witness in the items placed in the Shaft Graves: vases commissioned to tell of feats, success as a hunter shooting a stag from a horse-drawn chariot, and, borrowing from Near Eastern iconography, daring to combat the lion, the master of the animals, in single combat. Even more elaborate stories of conquests were displayed, as in the *repouss*é scene on the Silver Siege Rhyton from Shaft Grave IV or the conclusion of a seaside battle on the north wall of the West House at Akrotiri, Thera, and now the Combat Agate from Pylos. In these stories, as Sarah Morris has suggested, we may have the beginning of oral cycles that take on epic form.[72]

I would be remiss not to take notice also of the selection of items that were deposited in the Shaft Graves, since from early on it reflects a focused interest in high status items primarily found in Crete and only in extremely special places within the palaces. The earliest of these is the small faience strap-handled cup from Shaft Grave A.[73] Similar ones were found in the 'Temple Repositories' at Knossos.[74] This extraordinary link to the innermost deposits at Knossos is reiterated by other finds from Grave Circle A, for example the bull rhyton from Shaft Grave IV and the numerous items that find their closest parallels in the 'Treasure Room' at Zakros.[75]

The individuality of the warrior elite is readily recognisable in the artefacts assembled in the Shaft Graves and also in other wealthy tombs on the mainland, beginning even in MH II but especially evident during LH I and II. Individuality is displayed through the subjects of representation:

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landers being present among the population of those interred in the cemeteries around Knossos between LM I and LM III, which is a matter to be settled by DNA analysis.

[71] Muhly 1992, 165–175; Preston 2013, 59, 61, 63, 68.
[72] Morris 1989; Morris 2000; Stocker – Davis 2017, 602, with references to recent scholarship.
[73] Mylonas 1972/1973, 27, passim, pl. 16.
[74] Evans 1921, 499.
[75] Wright 1995, 72, 76 (tab. 1); Ruppenstein 2012, 38–40.

individual images of males on seal-stones, individual and group images of hunting and combat, contests even between a single male in combat with a lion, assemblages of boars' tusks, objects like sceptres, axes, swords, and daggers denoting individual power, and especially representations of horses drawing chariots and actual pieces of related equipment.[76]

How should we understand the situation at Akrotiri before the catastrophe where we have buildings such as Xeste 3 with some Cretan elements and others like the only partially explored Xeste 4 with emblematic displays of a row of boar's tusk helmets painted on the wall of a major room?[77] Is not the West House reasonably interpreted as one belonging to a ship captain? Islander, mainlander, or Cretan, we cannot discern with certitude, but his ships clearly transport warriors armed with scabbarded swords, long spears, and tower shields, and outfitted with boar's tusk helmets. Significantly there are no representations of horses or chariots. Their representation is confined to a few signet rings and seals and to the mainland grave stelae – their later appearance on frescoes is primarily a mainland phenomenon.

The chariot may well have entered Crete through the Levant, as Joost Crouwel has argued.[78] But the horse seems to have come from the north, probably from the Carpathian Basin, and early – during LH I, as recently argued by Aleydis Van de Moortel and Joseph Maran.[79] It remains a tantalising mystery to try to imagine how the horse and chariot were brought together, but thinking about it leads to the probability that among the mainlanders present in Crete were occasional warriors with horses – presumably leaders of armed bands.[80] How long had they been active in Crete? Did they accompany Cretan overlords or their representatives on journeys to the East where they became acquainted with chariot technology? These are fundamental questions that result from acknowledging the importance of mobility as a factor in recognising the role of agency by individuals and small groups in the archaeology of the Aegean Bronze Age. They may reflect the degree to which the Cretan palaces were now inhabited by diverse social groups including islanders and mainlanders. The impact of such groups on the development of political and social relations and on the formation of political economies would have been profound. We must continue to seek to make sense of these problems in order to inspire new research agendas and also to write new narratives of explanation – not master narratives but instead local ones, such as we can imagine could be written about the exploits of the Griffin Warrior from Pylos.

Knossos – a Troubled Era

In closing, I want to consider the phenomenon of the transition from the Neopalatial era to the Mycenaean. As I noted earlier, the insightful work by Preston promotes the notion of social unrest within the community, or at least the elite community, at Knossos during LM IA and IB and into LM II. As a process this might be considered to be reflected in the dynamic changes that occur in pottery production during this time, as vividly reflected in the variety of papers presented at the conference on LM IB pottery of 2007.[81] As Rutter noted in his summation of the evidence from Kommos the "(…) conventional picture of a single destruction horizon across virtually the entire island at the end of LM IB, followed by a period of widespread abandonment during the ensuing LM II period, (…)" is now much more complicated, as anticipated by Driessen and MacDonald in 1997.[82] Still the evidence continues to support the notion that multiple fire destructions across

[76] Stocker – Davis 2017, 602; Ruppenstein 2012, passim.
[77] Vlachopoulos 2010.
[78] Crouwel 1981, 148–149; but see Harding 2005, 297, for an argument for a northern connection.
[79] Maran – Van de Moortel 2014; see also Harding 2005 for a summary of other horse trappings from the Carpathian region.
[80] Ruppenstein 2012, 39–41.
[81] Brogan – Hallager 2011.
[82] Rutter 2011, 326; Driessen – MacDonald 1997.

the island were violent and led to the flight of inhabitants from their settlements, who in many instances did not return for some time.[83] The invention of Linear B and the succeeding deposition of the tablets in the Room of the Chariot Tablets at Knossos in LM II, perhaps as late as c. 1400–1390 BC establishes a baseline of fact that begs for more clarification.[84] In actual chronological terms, however, for this whole period we are talking about a range of some 180–190 years from the beginning of LM IA/LH I to the end of LM IB, roughly from 1620 to 1440/1430 BC. If we add in another 40 something years (a long generation?) for LM II we reach c. 1400/1390 BC. And then, during the next 25 years or so, we find ourselves with the phenomenon of the 'warrior tombs' in the chamber tomb cemeteries at Knossos, at Ayios Ioannis below Phaistos, and at Chania. These are transformed landscapes in which mainlanders rule at Knossos and make themselves felt across Crete as they begin to remake the cosmic axis of the Aegean according to their own customs and beliefs. Our understanding of their rule is not without its interpretive problems, as is also the case for the next act.

The 'final' destruction of Knossos was probably an act of an alliance of forces, likely made up of such centres as Mycenae and Thebes. It broke the Knossian-'Mycenaean' monopoly over economic, technological, administrative, and ideological resources on Crete and across the Aegean. As a consequence, other centres were now able to assert themselves and develop the infrastructure and apparatus of governing states. The centre of power shifted decisively to the mainland. These events were followed by a remarkable expansion in settlements throughout the Aegean sphere, marked especially by the spread of chamber tombs across the islands of Crete and Rhodes, at Miletus and elsewhere along the coastal margins of southwest Anatolia, and throughout the Peloponnese and central Greece.[85] This is also when large Mycenaean Corridor Houses and architectural ensembles at important secondary centres appear on the mainland, on the island of Melos, and at multiple places on Crete.[86] It is apparently a demographic explosion that is accompanied by the widespread increase in the production and distribution of Mycenaean material culture throughout the Aegean and the eastern and western Mediterranean. At this time Linear B must have been widely employed as the administrative tool at the newly fortified palace centres across the mainland. At the same time an inter-polity exchange system developed, as witnessed in the distribution of Cretan inscribed stirrup jars, and it had its international counterpart in the wider distribution of transport stirrup jars.[87] From this point on, the citadels with their palaces functioned as state-level administrative centres with accompanying and emerging secondary centres scattered throughout their growing territories. It is because of this development that the need for and role of a monumental palace became paramount as the centre of administration and power. The production of this centre was not merely a quirk of evolution but rather a self-consciously crafted form, best preserved at Pylos and Tiryns, and notable at Mycenae, Tiryns, Thebes, and Pylos for their claims on the ancient cosmic centre of power of Knossos.

Conclusions

This conference, by taking an explicitly spatial and social approach to the early Mycenaean era, brings together scholars for the first time in over forty years to consider this formative period. I have drawn heavily on the notions of space and mobility to try to activate the dynamics that led to the emergence of leaders in communities across the mainland. In doing so I have attempted to outline how they engaged with islanders including Cretans. I have sought the roots of these interactions in the remnants of relations established during the 3rd millennium. I have indicated

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[83]   Rutter 2011, 326 and 340–341 (tab. 4); Barnard – Brogan 2011, 448–449; Brogan et al. 2002.
[84]   Driessen 1988; Ruppenstein 2012, 61–62.
[85]   Preston 2004; Mee 1988a; Mee 1988b; Cavanagh – Mee 1998.
[86]   Wright 2006, 21–25.
[87]   Haskell et al. 2011.

how the offshore islands of Aigina and Kythera and the *entrepôts* of the Cyclades were essential to engagement with the palace-communities of Crete and suggested this process is already under-way throughout the Middle Bronze Age, such that, with the dawn of the era of the New Palaces, small groups of mainlanders were active and familiar players. The dynamics of these interactions, coupled with the devastations of the volcanic eruption of Thera, led to a process of socio-political turmoil that ultimately resulted in the overthrow of the palace centres of Crete. Once admitted into the Minoan courts the mainlanders did not let go.[88]

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88   For an up-to-date survey of this next stage, see Eder – Jung 2015.

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Illustrations

Fig. 1: The spatial geography of a trans-egalitarian society (J. Wright)

Fig. 2: The world of the Centre Man/Man-of-Renown (J. Wright)

Fig. 3: Distribution of Aiginetan potmarks: a. MH I–II; b. MH III–LH I (from Lindblom 2001)

Table

Tab. 1: Absolute chronology (from Wiener 2018; Barnard – Brogan 2011, 448)