

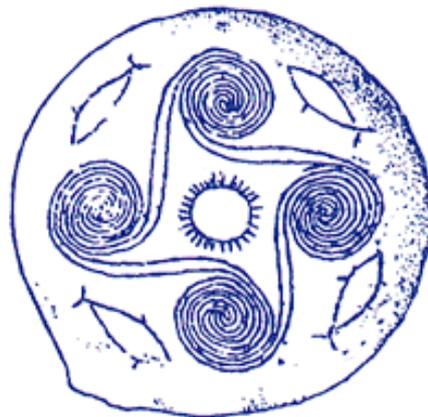


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Sheffield Centre for Aegean Archaeology

FROM THE FOUNDATIONS TO THE LEGACY OF MINOAN SOCIETY

A Round Table in Honour of Professor Keith Branigan



Sheffield 29th -31st January 2010

List of Abstracts

Saturday 30th January

9:15-12:15 **Session 1: General frameworks for understanding Minoan society**

Chaired by Paul Halstead and Sue Sherratt

Peter Tomkins

Email: pdtomkins@yahoo.co.uk

University of Sheffield/Université Catholique de Louvain

Prepalatial? Framing and Explaining the Early Bronze Age on Crete

With the publication of *Prepalatial*, nearly forty years ago, Keith Branigan breathed life into the study of the Cretan Early Bronze Age, critically reviewing the data then available and marshalling them into a narrative that characterised the Prepalatial period as a formative developmental stage in the emergence of a 'palatial society' in the Middle Bronze Age. The response by fieldworkers to Keith's typically terse and accurate portrayal of the state of knowledge in 1968, and especially to the program of remedial research that he proposed, took some time to gather momentum, but has greatly quickened pace in the last two decades. Both our knowledge base and our analytical range have broadened enormously and finally we have started to close in on the chronological clarity and resolution that Keith sought and largely in ways that he foresaw. Even the EBA sequences from the palatial sites, which were so frustratingly quiet for so long, are now, finally, beginning to reveal some of their secrets...

Building on recent insights into social, economic, spatial and demographic development between the late FN and MM IA, chiefly at Knossos, this paper will briefly review the Prepalatial project and ultimately question the heuristic value of continuing to frame our enquiries in such terms. The paper will question the notion that EM I and MM IB represent revolutionary horizons of change, suggesting instead that they are largely a modern conceit, born out of the (art-historical, object-oriented) origins of our discipline and answering to a desire to give deeper meaning to the arbitrary, inherited blocks of time by which we parcel up the prehistoric past. It will be argued that we should not so much abandon the notion that societies go through relatively rapid and transformative periods of social reconfiguration, as reconfigure our conceptualisation of their timing and significance on Crete during the late fourth and third millennia BC. An alternative narrative for the rise of institutionalised inequality on the island will be developed, firmly rooted in social transformation that took place in the late FN and where many elements of subsequent prehistoric and historic development are already recognisable, at least at certain key centres, by EM II (e.g. elites, economic diversification/specialisation, trading, a prestige goods economy, urbanism, central places etc). At the heart of this narrative lies a new reading of the origins of the first court buildings, the timing of their appearance and their significance for the emergent elite groups and incipient urban populations that constructed and used them.

Donald C. Haggis

Email: dchaggis@email.unc.edu

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Incongruous material patterns: a new neo-evolutionary approach to evidence for settlement structure and social organization in Prepalatial Crete

Conflicting views of Prepalatial complexity emerged in the 1980's as processual antidotes to dominant evolutionary paradigms of Minoan palace-state formation. Quantification helped to down-date prestige-good production and mobilization, while demoting the importance and scale of household social structure; administrative tools; tombs; and patterns of ritual deposition. The results of contemporary survey mirrored the trend, finding weakly developed regional hierarchies around ambiguous population centers, as well as largely localized subsistence behavior centering on the household's response to population increase within constraints of local environments. Since the processual backlash, work on different aspects of EM society (e.g., metallurgy and craft production; sealing systems; ceramic distribution; ritual practices) has presented complex configurations that seem incongruous with the null case derived from survey. With few exceptions, the response has been either to ignore the settlement data altogether or again, following the new trend toward Prepalatial complexity, to find hierarchical patterns that seem to fit with ranked or chiefdom-level (vel sim) organization. This paper reexamines settlement development in EM, arguing that the evidence points to an equilibrium of dispersed, static and entrenched structures; centripetal and heterarchical dynamics of sociopolitical interaction, interdependent and multilateral communication and exchange. The approach is presented in opposition to centrifugal settlement development within top-down, center-periphery dependency structures, arguing that the kinship-corporate group, while ill-defined archaeologically, and operating on variable spatial and temporal scales, nevertheless provides the most useful social module for visualizing the material patterns.

Yiannis Papadatos

Email: ypapadatos@yahoo.com

University of Athens, Greece

Social complexity and ranking in Prepalatial Crete

The identification of social ranking and complexity has always been a focal point in Prepalatial studies, with the angle of view changing in the course of time. Earlier work aimed at proving or negating the existence of social ranking and in most cases it was a central issue in the debate concerning the “revolutionary vs. evolutionary” models of change which led to the emergence of the first palaces. This presentation tries to re-examine the available evidence focusing on three issues: First, the majority of the existing studies were inevitably based on evidence from funerary contexts, because of the limited number of excavated settlements. The problem, however, does not lie in the bias of the archaeological record but in the prevailing, though implicit, idea that mortuary practices passively reflect social structure. Second, by attaching the issue of social ranking to the debate of the emergence of the first palaces, many studies treated social complexity as a monolithic entity, which can be either present or absent, without trying to identify particular characteristics and subtle elements of social organization. Third, many studies, even when based on evidence from a few sites, attempted to identify social complexity across the entire island, without considering the possibility that prepalatial communities may have been structured differently, following different systems of value and different ways of expressing social ranking in the material record.

10:30-11:00

Coffee break

Despina Catapoti

Email: dcatapoti@yahoo.com

University of the Aegean, Greece

The complexity of feasting: An insight into the diversity of collective consumption events in Prepalatial Crete.

Over the past few years, the study of feasting has been awarded a central role in the archaeology of Early Bronze Age Crete. The present paper critically assesses this new trend by focusing on the detailed exploration of the following interrelated themes/questions: [a] How has the term “feasting” been employed so far in prepalatial studies? How safe is it to assume, as several scholars currently claim, that there is evidence for feasting in various prepalatial contexts (i.e. cemeteries, settlements, “palace-to-be” sites such as Knossos)? [b] If we accept that there is indeed empirical evidence in support of feasting events in Early Bronze Age Crete, is it possible to identify any differences and/or similarities between those events (i.e. nature and character of each occasion, types of equipment used, types of substances consumed, number of participants etc.)? [d] Finally, how can the study of feasting contribute to our understanding of broader analytical issues such as the creation and negotiation of identity, power and structure in third millennium Crete?

Jan Driessen

Email: driessen@arke.ucl.ac.be

Université Catholique de Louvain

Beyond the Collective...The Minoan Palace in Action

Minoan iconography opposes a clear-cut identification of a hierarchical system of power but can be used successfully to advocate a society in which the formation of coalitions rather than individual power played an important role during rituals and ceremonies. This paper argues that, rather than an artistic convention used solely for decoration purposes, archaeological evidence exists to argue that intermediate social units – between the nuclear family and the settlement – also formed an important element in Minoan society, and this from at least the Prepalatial Period onwards. By using different approaches to identify collective action in the archaeological material, it is proposed to highlight the existence of different types of corporate groupings – co-residential, proximate and neighbourhood. This is then used to argue for an advanced stage of self-government, encompassing but also crisscrossing different organisational scales, which helped to achieve an integrated identity centring on regional ceremonial centres.

Yannis Hamilakis

Email: Y.Hamilakis@soton.ac.uk

University of Southampton

From individuality to trans-corporeality

Keith Branigan was one of the first to discuss extensively patterns such as the appearance of larnakes and funerary pithoi in communal Cretan burials at the end of the EBA. He prompted researchers to think about the possible social implications of the phenomenon, suggesting, with some degree of scepticism and ambivalence, that we may be observing the decline of the importance of the clan, and the emergence of the notion of the individual. It is his scepticism and ambivalence, however, that I find more fruitful and rewarding, and I take them as a departure point in my own exploration in this paper. In this endeavour, I also touch upon the debates in broader archaeological theory on the validity of the concept of the individual in pre-modern contexts, and on the dialectic between individuality and dividuality/partibility. By looking at funerary evidence such as burial rites and funerary space, but also broader material evidence such as pottery to do with the consumption of food and drink, I propose that Keith's original ambivalence was justified. The observable patterns we see at the end of the EBA should not be interpreted as evidence for the emergence of the individual, but as social practices to do with the work of memory, and the need to trace mnemonic links through time. The individual, and the assumed tension between the individual and the clan, are not the most appropriate concepts, nor the most fruitful units of analysis in this case. I propose instead to replace them with the (transitory) processes of individuation, which are by necessity collective, i.e. they are played out in the collective arena and during inter-personal engagements and negotiations. More importantly, I suggest that rather than relying on the sterile binarism of the individual versus the collective (clan or other), we should shift the discussion on the arena of corporeality, that is on the embodied and sensorial, inter-subjective processes that are constitutive of the (at times individuated but inevitably collective) self. Trans-corporeality is proposed here as the state that embodies and materialises these processes of inter-subjective exchange and circulation of substances, emotions and memories. What changed at the end of the EBA was not the status of the assumed clan with the emergence of the individual, but the ways through which people produced ancestral time, and generated mnemonic links and associations. To put it another way, the problem at hand is not the dialectic between the individual and the collective, but the one between remembering and forgetting. This repositioning of the problem, and the Cretan Bronze Age material that underpins it, have important implications for the broader discussion on individuality and dividuality in prehistory.

12:15-12:45

Discussion

12:45-14:30

Lunch

14:30-16:30

Session 2: Regional Analysis – Survey and settlement

Chaired by John Bennet

Gerald Cadogan

Email: geraldcadogan@onetel.com

British School at Athens

Early Minoan Knossos: a review

I hope to present some thoughts about Early Minoan Knossos that have arisen from working on the final preparation for publication (at last) of Sinclair Hood's excavations in Early Minoan Knossos: the EM I Palace Well, EM IIA-III deposits at Royal Road: North and the EM IIB-III deposits at the Early Houses below the South Front of the Palace.

Following a review of the development of EM studies at Knossos over the last half-century, I hope to discuss briefly the contribution of these excavations to understanding the history and cultural development of third millennium BC Knossos. It is difficult to be more precise at the moment, as this is likely to be an off-the-cuff presentation arising from work in progress (which I hope will be virtually finished by then). It will, however, certainly include discussion of issues where we still have plenty of work to do.

Todd Whitelaw

Email: t.whitelaw@ucl.ac.uk

University College London

Can we recognize territorial states in Prehistoric Crete?

Following the American evolutionary literature, early approaches addressing the question of state formation on Crete focused on process, but took the nature of the state as unproblematic. Concepts were mapped onto to a rich archaeological record with little debate about their relevance (e.g. redistribution). Debates about causes largely took the nature of the entities to be explained for granted.

Recently, some of these fundamental assumptions have been challenged, but the relevance of alternative concepts has also been largely assumed rather than explored critically. Various dynamic concepts have been introduced into debates, which, while useful in challenging assumptions about the nature or workings of states, may not be appropriate (or indeed originally intended) as alternatives to the concept of hierarchical states. The concept of heterarchy is particularly problematic, as it has not developed beyond polemical critique in 30 years. Similarly, the idea of factions has been introduced as if these are an alternative to the state, rather than, primarily, a political dynamic within them.

This paper will appraise some of the recent empirical challenges to long-standing assumptions about the nature and development of states in Prehistoric Crete. Varieties of evidence used in the past to define and map potential states will be considered critically (geography, material culture styles, administrative practices), and the potential of settlement evidence explored, to ask whether we can develop more effective approaches to understanding the changing nature of prehistoric Cretan polities and political structure.

Andonis Vasilakis and Kostas Sbonias

23rd Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Crete /
Department of History, Ionian University

Email: andonis.vasilakis@gmail.com
sbonias@ionio.gr

Comparative issues in archaeological field survey in the Asterousia region

In their seminal article 'An Archaeological survey of the lower catchment of the Ayiofarango valley' published in 1977, Blackman and Branigan inaugurated along other projects the first truly intensive, field by field surveys in Greece. Their research in Ayiofarango (1971-2) revealed a remarkable density of communal stone tombs and dispersed settlement along the linear valley and formed the basis of many discussions on Prepalatial settlement patterns, demography and social organization in southern Crete. The survey recorded also a declining human occupation of the valley in MM I-II, presumably associated with the rise of urban centers in the Mesara region, with no evidence of occupation after LM I. Other surveys followed in this marginal area of southern Crete, both intensive (by Blackman and Branigan in Kali Limenes area) and extensive. Antonis Vasilakis in his 1989/90 paper summarized the results of his long research in the Asterousia region, based both on reconnaissance and excavation work. The Moni Odigitria survey organized by K. Branigan and A. Vasilakis in 2003 and the recent Trypiti survey, organized by A. Vasilakis and K. Sbonias in 2007/8, ahead of the final publication of the Moni Odigitria cemetery and the publication of the prepalatial settlement of Trypiti, represent the most recent intensive field surveys in the Asterousia region. Both projects, having as a starting point an excavation, combine the results of the excavation of Moni Odigitria cemetery and Trypiti settlement with the results of intensive surveys, which create windows in the landscape and incorporate the individual sites in the context of their micro-region. Through comparison of surveys in the Asterousia Mountains and the south coast, the paper aims to discuss methodological issues as well as regional dynamics and divergent trajectories. Emphasis will be given to cycles of expansion and contraction of settlement in the Asterousia region and the south coast, in the Prepalatial, Protopalatial and Neopalatial period.

**Evangelia Kiriati, Myrto Georgakopoulou and
Cyprian Broodbank**

Fitch Laboratory, BSA, University College London

Email: fidirector@bsa.ac.uk
flchemistry@bsa.ac.uk
c.broodbank@ucl.ac.uk

From Sherds and Slags to Landscapes: Integrating scientific practice to the study of field survey finds from Kythera.

During the last decades field survey has been established as the main component of archaeological research on the reconstruction of Aegean/Mediterranean landscape history. Despite the high levels of sophistication reached in survey methodology itself, the study of surface scatters of archaeological finds has not, however, achieved analogous development. Although ceramics, lithics and slags constitute the vast majority of the material collected by survey teams, their analogous analytical potential has hardly begun to be unlocked. Moreover, it gradually becomes evident that survey finds provide a much richer range of evidence for addressing historical questions, than has been recognized, since they concern a large number of sites, of different function, from the same region; they cover a broad diachronic range; they are collected and studied with a coherent strategy deployed over a very large number of sites and considered with a strong landscape perspective. For these reasons, we argue that archaeological scientific work on pottery, metallurgy and lithics must actively embrace the study of survey material, and, moreover, that it needs to succeed this through full integration in survey design, fieldwork itself, and processing of the material, not simply as a later appended piece or work. We want to demonstrate the need for and the potential of such an approach, as well as discuss its limitations, through our work in the context of the Kythera Island Project that focuses on the analysis of the environmental and cultural dynamics of insularity through time on an Aegean island. An intensive field survey, comprising the central component of the project, has so far identified almost 200 sites dated from the Neolithic to Modern times. Scientific analysis of mainly pottery and slags has been closely integrated into our project design, as an ideal means of understanding such dynamics and their diachronic change, even within a landscape not rich in any specific resources. The first stage of our research involved macroscopic examination, optical microscopy and chemical analysis of well-dated ceramics and metallurgical debris from previously excavated sites within the survey area. In parallel, a systematic recording and sampling of all mineral resources on the island was undertaken. The comparative analysis of the local raw materials and, in some cases, replication experiments contributed significantly to the reconstruction of the technological choices made by craftspeople working on the island in different periods. The above knowledge formed the basis for the study and comparative scientific analysis of ceramics and slags collected systematically, both as on-site and off-site material, during the field survey. All phases of our work will be briefly presented and the evidence on contemporary pot-making and metallurgical activities will be discussed comparatively for specific periods of the island's past, putting special emphasis on the Bronze Age.

16:05-16:30

Coffee break

16:30-17:45

Session 3: Technology and craft activity

Chaired by Peter Day

Maria Relaki

Email: M.Relaki@sheffield.ac.uk

University of Sheffield

A dialectic of *roots* and *routes*. Examining the politics of Prepalatial regional identities through craft activity.

Regional diversity is recognised by current scholarship as a striking feature of Minoan society in general. During the Prepalatial period, regional variability is observed in settlement and burial practices across the island, while also consumption patterns appear to differ markedly as, for example, the differential consumption of Cycladic and Cycladic-style pottery at different areas of the island. There appears also to be considerable variability in the degree, kind and quantity of imported materials consumed at different communities at different regions indicating perhaps differential access to varied exchange networks. Such spatial variability is also accompanied by significant temporal diversity in consumption with certain craft goods being consumed more widely across the island at certain periods, while at other times more localised consumption preferences prevail. One aspect of regional variability which is very prominent in the material culture of Prepalatial Crete, but which remains nevertheless a little overlooked, is the degree of variability that exists in technological practice, made sharper by recent analysis of materials, particularly ceramics. In this paper I will attempt to examine these patterns in some detail and focus in particular on how technological practices relating to different craft goods (such as for example, ceramics, stone vessels, sealstones) might interact with each other in terms of their raw material sources, their consumption contexts and their technological, social and symbolic value. In addition, I want to examine how such local technological practices are affected by changing consumption preferences for imported materials and goods and what are the implications of such interactions for the identity of the craft producers.

Roger C.P. Doonan

Email: r.doonan@sheffield.ac.uk

University of Sheffield

The significance of the differences in dagger fabrication in EBA Crete

Branigan's early work on Early Bronze Age Aegean daggers successfully documented regional and chronological variation in artefact form. In demonstrating affinities between regions his study showed which areas were influential in the development of Aegean communities, especially on Crete. Whilst acknowledging the importance of these studies this paper suggests that typological studies can also be used to analyze changes in the practice and organization of production during the Early Bronze Age. Whilst the study of production has traditionally focused on the acquisition of material resources this paper highlights the point that metalworking involves dynamic practices which utilize bodily skills, tools and memory, as well as material resources. As material, skill and memory are brought together in practice, artefacts are materialized and testify to the effectiveness with which an individual employs these diverse resources. Considered in these terms, changes in dagger fabrication practice, become highly significant. I argue that practice is central to the construction of a smith's identity and in turn the network of values, which converge in an artefact. Metallurgical practice embodies risk not only in terms of effective production but also in terms of identity. It is argued that differences in technological practice are better understood in terms of the values afforded to artefacts and artificers than being the result of technological or stylistic evolution.

17:15-17:45

Discussion

Sunday 31st January

9:30-13:30

Session 4: Funerary Archaeology

Chaired by Peter Warren and Gerald Cadogan

Tim Campbell-Green

Email: tcampbellgreen@googlemail.com

British School at Knossos

The Creation and Ordering of Space in the Tholos Cemeteries of South-Central Crete.

10 years ago at a Round Table chaired by Branigan, Hamilakis, borrowing a word developed by Foucault, described the Early Minoan tholos cemeteries as Heterotopia. This term, used to describe an 'other place' set apart from, yet still operating within, normal existence, is extremely useful as a concept that allows us to explore how the cemeteries were conceptualised by those who used them. This paper examines the ways in which such a space was created, how the area was marked out and made manifestly different, and how this allowed the cosmology of the Early Minoan period to be ordered. From a physical wall – the peribolos noted at many tombs – through the use of 'paved' areas, or a spread of pottery, the exterior of tombs was often made to be different from both the surrounding landscape and the interior of the tomb. This enabled a particular zone to be highlighted, an area of liminality within which rites could enacted, actions performed, and through which individuals must pass whilst moving between the world of the living and the dead, whether for funerary purposes, or for more 'ritual' purposes. This paper aims to provide an explanatory model that may allow us to better understand the place of these monuments within the cosmology of the Early Bronze Age of south-central Crete.

Philip P. Betancourt

Email: ppbetancourt@aol.com

Laura H. Carnell Professor of Art History and
Archaeology, Temple University

Caves as Architectural Space

The Minoan use of caves as a part of Early to Middle Bronze Age funerary customs is well known. Many caves functioned as burial places or ossuaries in the Early to Middle Minoan periods. This custom is a part of a larger Minoan use of underground spaces for a variety of functions, including rituals. In several cases, the underground rituals were enacted in the same caverns that had previously been used for burial. Caves are a highly specialized type of landscape, and they have characteristics that must be considered carefully if they are to be used as architectural spaces. Just as the Minoans adapted their above-ground architecture to the topographic setting, so they also had to modify the caves in order to fit them for human activities. Caves were modified in various ways, including by the addition of tables or platforms, by building terraces that changed the configuration of the surfaces where people stood, and even by the addition of walls that would enclose space in the underground environment. Continuity in the spaces used for funerary and ritual actions implies the possibility of continuity in aspects of the belief-systems enacted here as well.

Sevi Triantaphyllou

Email: sevitri@otenet.gr

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Managing with Death in Prepalatial Crete: the evidence of the human remains

It has been more than two decades since the intriguing issue of the manipulation of the human remains in Prepalatial mortuary assemblages was extensively discussed by Keith Branigan in his pioneering then article on Ritual Interference with Human Bones in the Mesara Tholoi (1987). Since then, not much work has been done on the human remains considering the enormously large number of the excavated tombs. Very recent work however on skeletal assemblages from Prepalatial Crete can contribute significantly to the discussion related to the character of the deposition of the human remains and to the biological parameters and in particular, the demographic synthesis of the population accommodated in such assemblages. This paper will examine key issues, already pointed out by Keith Branigan in 1987, as they can be investigated by the examination of the human skeletal remains. These issues include: Degree of articulation of the skeletal remains; Preferential selection and manipulation of certain anatomical units; Fragmentation of the skeletal remains; Evidence of burning of the skeletal remains. Aspects related particularly to the demographic synthesis of the populations accommodated in pre-palatial mortuary assemblages will be discussed in order to approach the minimum number of the individuals disposed of and to distinguish possible differential treatment as regards rights of accessibility to certain age and/or sex groups. The paper will attempt to re-direct the focus of death management in Prepalatial Crete from regional studies and symbolic actions, which refer to the mortuary assemblages strictly as evidence of material culture to the people who actually used them in negotiating social roles in the community of the living.

Eleni Hatzaki

Email: eleni.hatzaki@uc.edu

Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati

Visible and invisible death. Shifting patterns in the burial customs of Bronze Age Crete.

Visibility and invisibility in the landscape, ostentatious or modest display in tomb architecture, body adornment or lack thereof, elaborate or modest artefactual assemblages, involvement of many or few live participants, and last but not least the visibility of the dead body articulated or disarticulated, are all contrasting elements that can characterise the burial customs of Bronze Age Crete over time and space.

In this paper the changing picture of visibility and invisibility in death is discussed diachronically at an intra-island level, and compared and contrasted with comparable phenomena (or lack of them) in settlements and sanctuaries.

I shall argue that ostentatious display in burial customs, or the lack of it, is directly linked to a shifting emphasis towards other contexts suitable for social display, shifts which are directly linked to the changing social and political setup of Crete during the Prepalatial, Palatial, and Postpalatial periods.

11:10-11:30

Coffee break

Ilse Schoep

Email: ilse.schoep@arts.kuleuven.ac.be

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

The cemetery of Sissi in context

Keith Branigan has made a major contribution to the study of Cretan funerary practices. He was the first to draw attention to the importance of funerary practices in the constitution of society, an approach that departed from the traditional focus on typological and chronological study of grave goods. This paper will present the first results of the excavations of the cemetery at Sissi and attempt to address questions of demographics, identity, regionalism in funerary practices etc. within a wider, regional framework.

Luca Girella

Email: lucagirella@yahoo.it

Dipartimento di Scienze della Antichità e del Vicino Oriente, Università di Venezia

Variables and diachronic diversities in the funerary remains: the Kamilari tholos tombs.

Few archaeological contexts have attracted so much interest among the scholars of Crete as the tholos tombs. At present, the understanding of these cemeteries relies largely on old data, but they still suffer of incomplete publication or not sustainable interpretative models, which did not pay enough attention to the variability through the time and space. A new wave of archaeological research starts to consider traditional approaches to the study of tholos tombs inadequate, and stresses the need to interpret the cemetery as a social arena, where groups played actively a role in constructing and modifying their position and status.

The two tholos tombs, north of the village of Kamilari, are the ideal case of study, as they have been used for a long period. A quite exhaustive preliminary report was provided by D. Levi after the excavations in 1959. However, the present picture of this cemetery still suffers of a vague interpretation, as not enough attention has been paid to the changes occurred within the history of the tombs as well as most of the artefacts have been regarded independently from the dense architectural components.

An ongoing project is currently focusing on the complete study and publication of the Kamilari material. The paper aims to demonstrate how through the reconsideration of old published and unpublished material is possible to draw a proper contextualization of the data and to highlight those variables that were part of the tombs history. By exploring diachronic changes the paper aims to set properly the Kamilari tombs in their region and to interpret differences in the use of the tombs as elements of the mortuary behaviour of the communities, which used the cemetery through the centuries.

Tristan Carter

Email: stringy@univmail.cis.mcmaster.ca

Department of Anthropology, McMaster University

Bodies of Evidence: EBII Relations between Mochlos and the Near East

The funerary record of Early Bronze Age Mochlos provides us with an array of artefacts of Cycladic, Anatolian, Near Eastern and Egyptian origin and/or influence, a reflection of this community's nodal position within a series of mercantile exchange networks. Preferential access to the base commodities (copper, obsidian), luxury goods (textiles, precious metals), and ideational benefits (technological, stylistic and politico-religious innovations) that flowed along these trade routes, would have represented a fundamental means of creating and maintaining social distinction in this coastal community.

This paper focuses on the nature of interaction between EBII Mochlos and the Near East as expressed through the body. It is argued that Cretan north coast communities occupied an interesting space between two strikingly different worlds with regard to how the human form was employed as a means of constructing and expressing the social being. On the one hand you have the Cyclades, with its essentially 'Neolithic' aesthetic, involving a gaudy mixture of temporary and permanent corporeal modification: depilation, painting, tattooing and adornment. On the other, you have the first states of the Near East, with their emphases on unmarked and clothed bodies and the use of goldwork - not least sheet jewellery such as diadems - whose brilliance evoked a link between divinity and political leadership.

Mochlos represents an important case study into one of the ways through which members of Crete's Prepalatial populations reconfigured long-term concepts of body, self and society through the adoption and performance of practices and institutions associated with Near Eastern states.

12:45-13:15

Discussion

13:15-13:30

Final Remarks