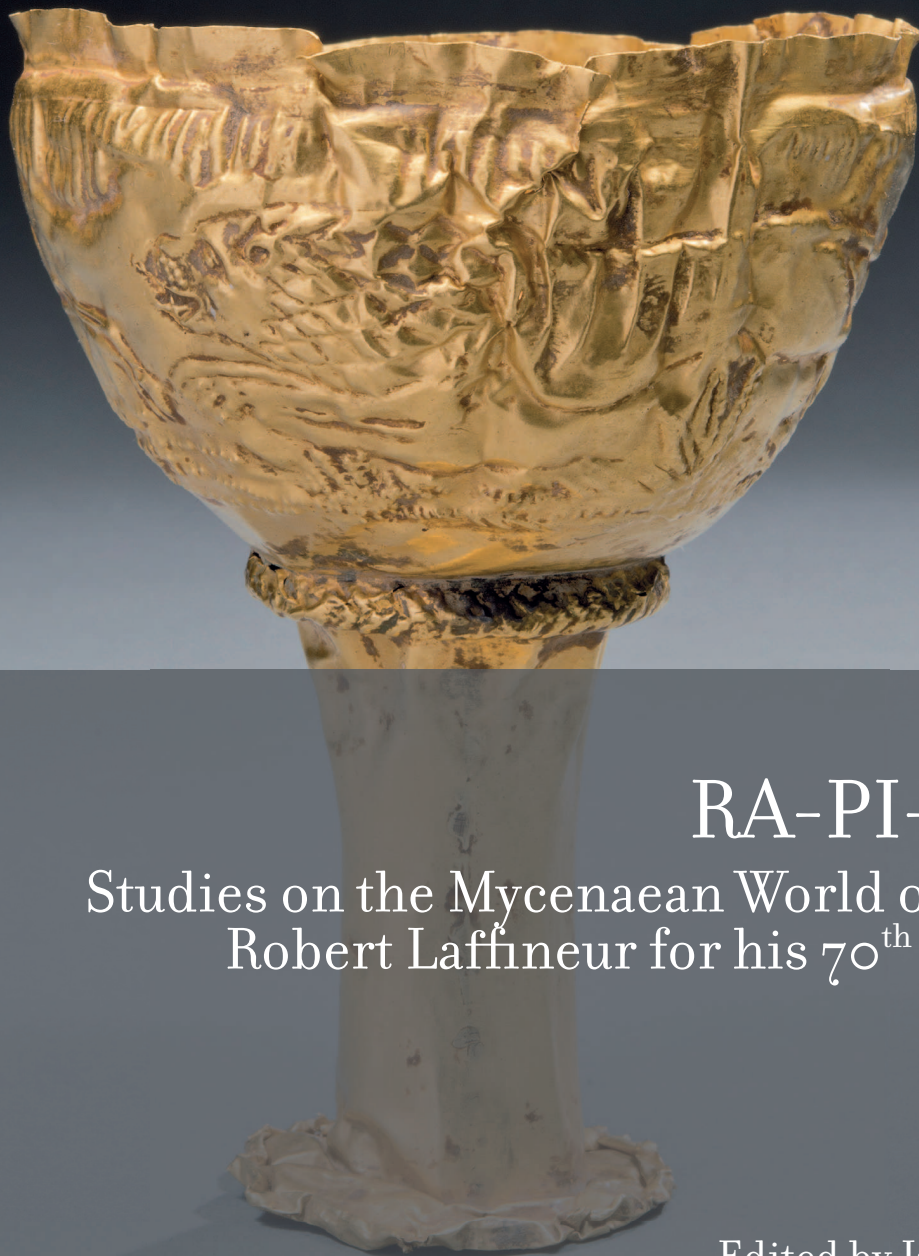


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RA-PI-NE-U

Studies on the Mycenaean World offered to
Robert Laffineur for his 70th Birthday

Edited by Jan Driessen

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25. The Gournia Megaron

John G. Younger

The Mycenaean megaron at Gournia (LM IIIA) is one of a handful such buildings in Crete. Unlike the large megaron at Ayia Triada, the Gournia megaron is small, much like the one at Plati. The presence of provincial megara in Crete begs the question: what officials resided/officiated in them? This paper posits a methodology for answering this question.

Introduction

The Gournia megaron (House He; Werner 1993: 119; Fotou 1993: 95-96; Pantou 2014: 382-388; Pantou 2015) was excavated by Harriet Boyd in 1904 (Hawes 1908: 26), re-excavated by Costis Davaras in 1984 and again in 2010-2014 by L. Vance Watrous (Watrous *et alii* 2015: 439-443).

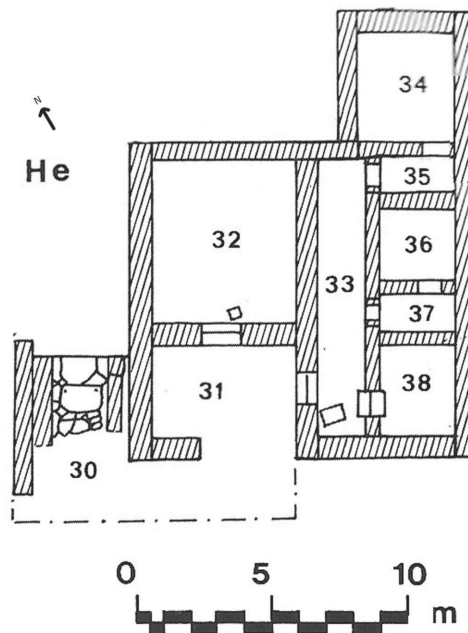


Fig. 25.1. PLAN OF THE GOURNIA MEGARON (ADAPTED BY THE AUTHOR FROM FOTOU 1993: PLAN B)

After the destruction of the main part of the site in LM I, Gournia lay mostly uninhabited until the construction of the Megaron, most of whose pottery dates to LM IIIA. The building conforms partly in layout and size to a typical Mycenaean ‘corridor-building’ (Pantou 2011) that consists of an abbreviated type of megaron found widely throughout the Mycenaean world.

In an earlier, short study (Younger 2005), I drew attention to an unpublished PhD dissertation by Kenneth Schaar (1979) who discussed the ‘double’ palaces of Pylos, Tiryns, and Mycenae. Actually, each of these complexes comprises three megara (halls) with flanking corridors and rooms: a large central megaron with porch and vestibule and two smaller megara, usually preceded by just the porch.

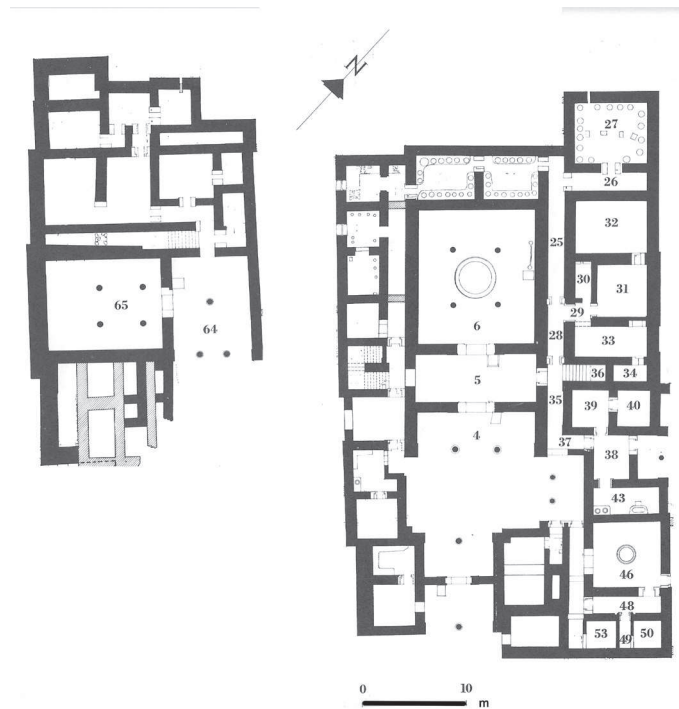


Fig. 25.2. ABBREVIATED PLAN OF THE MYCENAEAN PALACE AT PYLOS (ADAPTED BY THE AUTHOR FROM BLEGEN & RAWSON 1996: VOL. I: END PLAN)

In the Pylos palace (Younger 2005: 185-186, fig. 1) (Fig. 25.2), the main megaron consists of rooms 4-6 but there are two other megaroid suites: 48 / 46/ 53-50 in the south-east; and 64 / 65 in the south-west.

The Gournia megaron is not, however, an anomaly or a unique version of the Mycenaean palace but rather an abbreviated version of the main complex that was standardised and repeated. Again, if we compare the plan of the Pylos palace with that of Gournia (Fig. 25.3) we see that the Gournia megaron copies the core of the Pylos megaron (rooms 5 & 6) and the rooms immediately to the north-east (27-33) – but at half the same size.

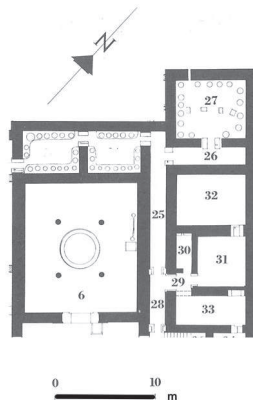


Fig. 25.3. PLAN OF THE PYLOS CENTRAL MEGARON (ADAPTED BY THE AUTHOR FROM FIG. 25.2)

1. Description of the Gournia Megaron

House He consists of a small complex of rooms. A long rectangular suite (L. 12.0, W. 7.4 m) of two rooms constitutes the megaron proper with entrance vestibule (room 31) and main room (room 32). It had two superimposed floors both dated within LM IIIA, the earlier floor over a fill that contained an LM II *nodulus* (Watrous 2015: 449-450, fig. 36).

A corridor (33), entered from the vestibule, runs along the south-east side of the megaron. Off the corridor are three rooms (south to north: 38, 37 which leads to 36, and 35). The megaron, corridor, and these three rooms form a large square, 12 x 12 m. The last room, 35, leads to a large square room (34; about 3.4 m square) appended, as it were, to the north-east corner of the complex. Most of the building consists of rubble masonry but a two metre stretch of ashlar masonry, perhaps reusing blocks from the Minoan palace, restricts the entrance to the vestibule on the south-west.

To the west of the complex, Hawes had uncovered a gateway (also cleared by Watrous) leading to a small court just before the vestibule. The gate has two limestone thresholds (W. ca. 1.30 m), an outer and an inner, saw-cut and drilled with two pivot holes. Presumably a road led to the gateway from the north, possibly a continuation of the road from the Palace area that separates blocks El and Hc.

Few finds are recorded from the megaron (Fotou 1993: 95-96; Schwarzott 1997: 31): an amphora (Hawes 1908: pl. X.8) and five unpublished stirrup jars, a stone Horns of Consecration found inside the north-east room 35 (Hawes 1908: 48), and a small, unpublished bull's head (material not mentioned) found outside the north-west corner of He¹. There is no illustration of the Horns of Consecration but it is said to be similar to one found at the north end of the 'Public Court' in front of the Palace (Hawes 1908: pl. XI.25; Fotou 1993: 96).

2. Parallels to the Gournia Megaron

While part of the Pylos megaron almost duplicates the Gournia megaron, the layouts of the palaces at Mycenae (Younger 2005: 187-189, figs 3-4) and Tiryns (Younger 2005: 187-188, fig. 2) are not as similar. At Mycenae, its south corridor is no longer extant and the entire complex is about four times the size of Gournia's megaron; the main megaron at Tiryns, plus some of the rooms to the north-east, is about three times the size of Gournia's He, but the correspondence in plan is not close.

The Gournia megaron, however, does duplicate, almost exactly, both in layout and in size, Menelaion Mansion I (Catling 2009, vol. 2: fig. 14 top; especially if we omit the mansion's west corridor and rooms), Phylakopi (Renfrew 2007: 34, fig. 3.15), Dimini Megaron A (Adrimi-Sismani 2007; this volume: the corridor and rooms lie now on the western side), and Plati House A (LM III) in the Lasithi plain (Dawkins 1913/1914: pl. I; Watrous 1982: 17-18).

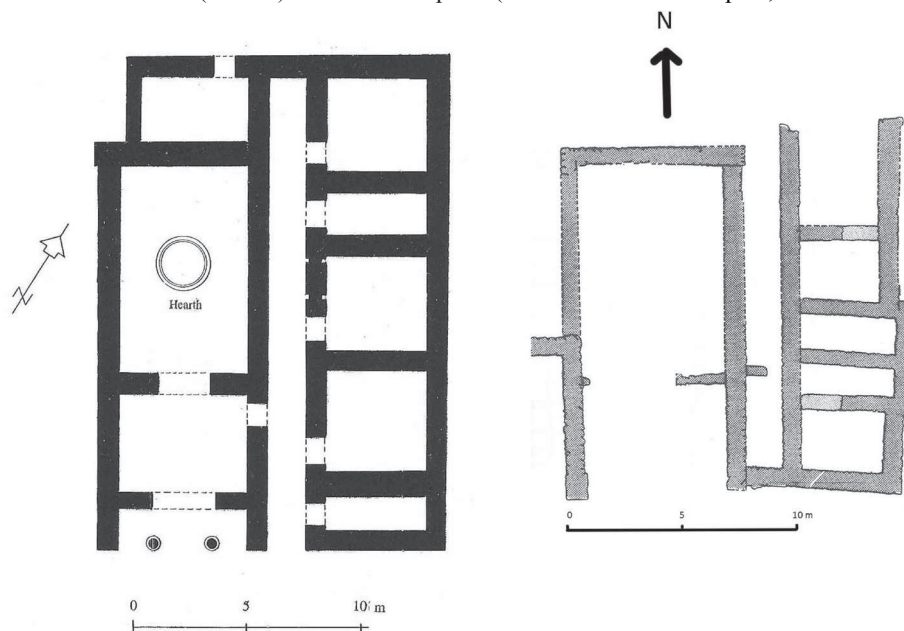


Fig. 25.4. PLANS ADAPTED BY THE AUTHOR OF THE MENELAION MANSION AND THE PHYLAKOPI MEGARON (PHASE 4, LH IIIA), BOTH AT THE SAME SCALE

¹ Other finds were attributed to both He and other areas (Schwarzott 1997: 31): two amphorae (also cited as from C 151-154, E 16, H 35); and a jug, a cup, a 'bulb' vase, and a sealstone (all also cited as from Dh 57-59).

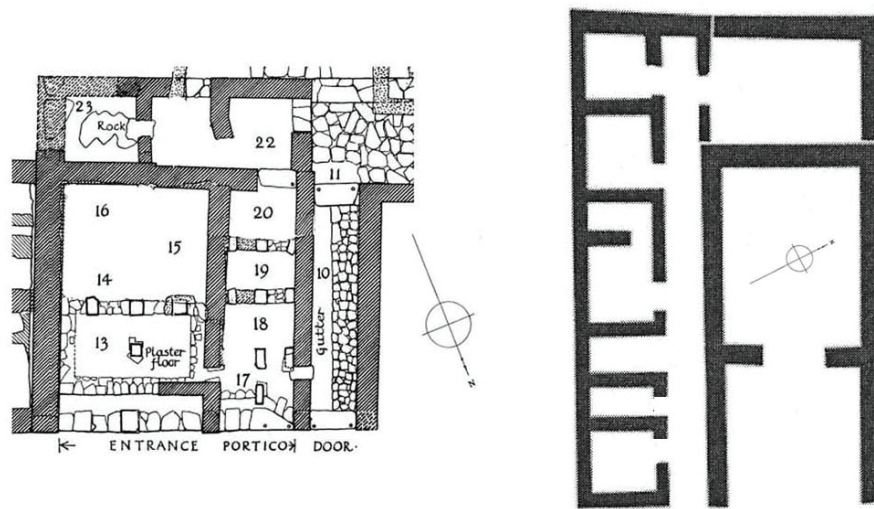


Fig. 25.5. PLANS ADAPTED BY THE AUTHOR OF PLATI AND OF DIMINI MEGARON A (BOTH TO THE SAME SCALE AS FIG. 25.4)

All these plans show such a consistency in layout that it seems justified to speak of an abbreviated megaron module: a megaron building (usually two rooms), flanked on its east side (if the megaron is oriented north-south) by a corridor and a short suite of (usually) four rooms with a large square room appended north of the north-east corner².

This module becomes all the more convincing when we look at the two wings of the L-shaped administrative building at Gla (Fig. 25.5a). If we separate the two wings and lay them side by side (Fig. 25.5b) we see that the two wings share a similar configuration, except that the corridor projects beyond the megaron and the suite of rooms lies off the corridor behind the megaron. Especially striking is the south wing with a simple two-room megaron 24/23, corridor, and a suite of four rooms (16/17 - 18/19 - 20 - 21/22) plus a large square, appended room 15 at the back, north-east corner. The Gla wings are both about half again as large as the Gournia complex.

Gournia's 'truncated' version of the Mycenaean megaron is common, occurring at the Menelaion, Phylakopi, Dimini, and Plati, all with a single corridor and suite of rooms and 'appended' large square room at the back, right-hand side (with the megaron oriented vertically). The two wings of the administration building at Gla rearrange the megaron, corridor, and suite of rooms (including the large square rear room) in a single alignment.

We might think of the full Mycenaean palace as consisting, therefore, of modules: a basic Gournia-type megaron with single corridor and single suite of rooms (with a larger square room at the back of the right-hand side); an additional flanking corridor for symmetry (as at the Menelaion, Pylos, and Tiryns); and a second and third megaron with their own corridor and adjacent rooms (Mycenae, Pylos, Tiryns).

A complex of three megaroid suites may imply that each served as the seat of one official. We can name three officials who seem to be more or less equal in status: the *wa-na-ka* (wanax, king); the *ra-wa-ke-ta* (*lawagetas*, war-lord; these two hold equal amounts of land at Pylos); and a chief priest or priestess like Erita at Pylos (Palaima 1995; Kelder 2008; Shelmerdine 2009). If the wanax was a more central authority, we could place him in the main megaron, hall 4-6 at Pylos; if the lawagetas was actually a military leader, we could place him in the south-west megaron, hall 64-65 (based on the fresco decoration of room 64 with chariots and hunting hounds); and this would leave the third megaroid suite at Pylos, rooms 46, 48, 49, 50, 53, to the chief religious authority.

² A different type of megaron is the single, large, block megaron ABCD at Haghia Triada (L 30.4, W. 14.4 m), larger than the megaron at Pylos. See Cucuzza & Hellner 2009 for a reconstruction of a Mycenaean propylon at Haghia Triada and a general discussion of the megaron.

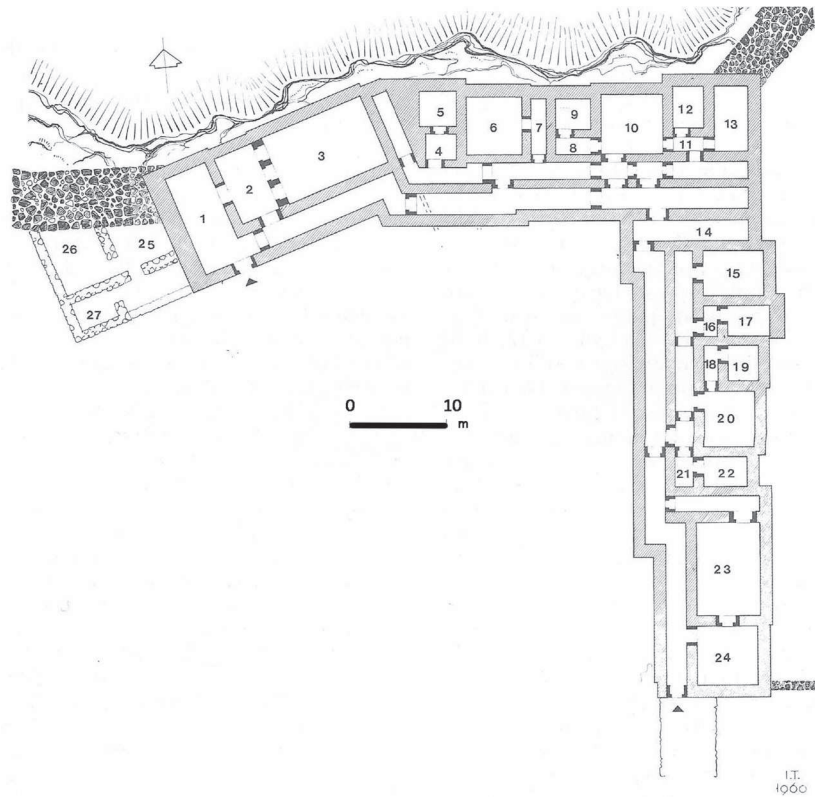


Fig. 25.6. PLAN OF GLA (ADAPTED BY THE AUTHOR FROM IAKOVIDIS 1983: 99, FIG. 19)

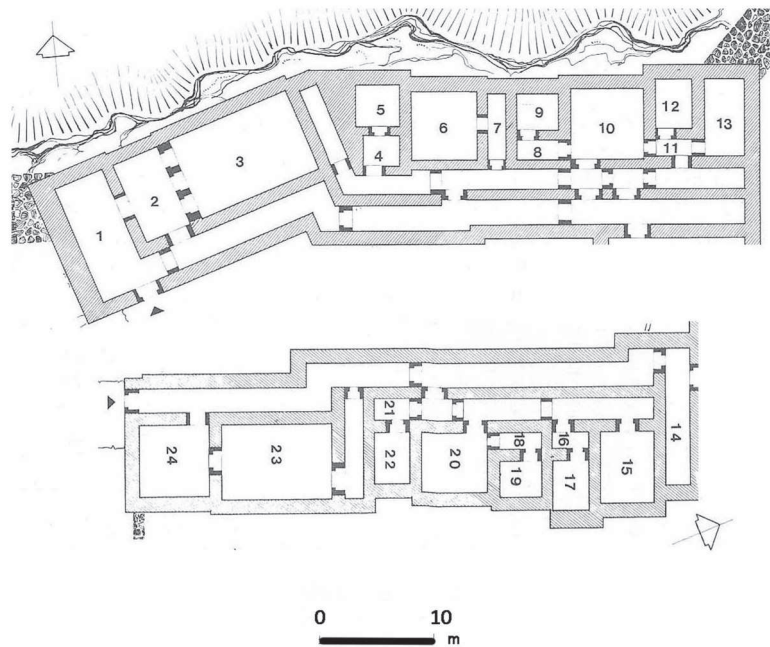


Fig. 25.7. PLAN OF GLA (ADAPTED FROM FIG. 25.6), THE TWO WINGS SEPARATED AND PLACED SIDE BY SIDE

3. Who Resided/Officiated in the Gournia Megaron?

The Gournia megaron was an important building; it apparently sported a Horns of Consecration that probably once marked the building as one approached it from the north³. It was therefore prominent. Knossos was still functioning as the major Mycenaean centre in Crete when the Gournia megaron was built in Late Minoan IIIA (Driessen & Langohr 2007), but Gournia is at some distance from that centre, over 80 km, and the rugged terrain of the last 20 of them would have emphasised the site's remoteness. Visitors may have felt some relief and satisfaction when they saw those Horns of Consecration; they symbolised a continuity of Minoan culture and stability.

The official who resided and/or officiated in the Gournia megaron must also have been important, but not of the highest rank. The architectural unit is an abbreviation of the larger Mycenaean palace complex like those at Pylos, Tiryns, and Mycenae. But it nonetheless reproduces a common and conventional module found at other provincial sites, Plati in the Lasithi plain, Phylakopi, Gla, Dimini: a truncated central megaron with (if oriented north) a long corridor on the east accessing a suite of four rooms with a larger square room at the rear. The size of this module, approximately one-half that of the central megaron at Pylos, reinforces the impression that those who resided and/or officiated in these conventional modules were local. And so we would expect lesser officials there.

There are several possible lesser officials, the most plausible being a *te-re-ta* (*telestas*, holder of communal land), a *da-mo-ko-ro* (*damokoros*, provincial governor), *qa-si-re-u* (*gwasileus*, head of work groups), and a *ko-re-te* or *po-ro-ko-re-te* (*koreter* and *prokoreter*, mayor and vice-mayor, respectively) (Shelmerdine 2008: 131-135).

Three telestai held as much land as the wanax at Pylos and they may have had religious functions since 14 are associated with the sanctuary at Pakijane. The damokoros can be identified as a provincial governor. A gwasileus seems to have been a local official, connected to work-groups (after the collapse of the Mycenaean states, the gwasileus emerges as the Greek *basileus*). And the koreter and prokoreter are the heads of local centres.

Obviously the duties of the Gournia official would have included some administration of the surrounding region, the south end of the Mirabello bay; a similar administrator up at Plati must have had similar regional duties, perhaps encompassing all of the Lasithi plain.

Another duty might also have been linked to the unique geographical location of Gournia, at the north end of the Hierapetra peninsula (Younger 2014). A portage across the isthmus, only 12 km wide, would save a sea voyage of some 135 km around treacherous Cape Sidero and Crete's barren south-east coast. An official placed at Gournia who could be trusted to keep the portage route open to Knossos shipping would be valuable⁴.

This official, representing Knossian interests, would therefore have had some direct ties to Knossos. A koreter or prokoreter (mayor and vice-mayor of the community) may have not held sufficient power and authority to protect the portage route, especially since protecting it would have involved maintaining good working relations with the other Minoan-Mycenaean sites in the Ierapetra isthmus and along the north and south coasts⁵. For this, a provincial governor, a damokoros, might be more suitable or perhaps a gwasileus in command of work-groups. Under those officials we can imagine several koreteres providing community support and the personnel for the necessary work gangs.

³ Post-Minoan, non-Cretan use of the Horns of Consecration is limited, yet telling: one set at Pylos found at the north entrance to the plateia (space 101) between the main palace and the north-east building (Blegen & Rawson 1966: 328-329, figs 238, 239, 271 no. 9); one set at Mycenae, area of Grave Circle A (Hood 1989: pls 5-6); and one set at Gla found at the interior junction of the two wings (*Ergon* 1960: 47-48, fig. 88; *BCH* 1961: 746-748, fig. 11). From the fact that one full set of Horns of Consecration appears at each of these non-Cretan sites, and each apparently conspicuously placed, one could argue that in Mycenaean Crete and especially off-Crete after the fall of Knossos a set of Horns of Consecration was a *de rigueur* reference to the cultural debt that the site owed to Minoan Crete.

⁴ It is likely that Minoan Knossos was also interested in Gournia maintaining the portage route (Watrous *et alii* 2015: 443-451). The Linear A tablet found in the Palace probably recorded distributions and may have been of Knossos clay. Similarly, sealings and nodules found in and near the Palace, including a document sealing and a *nodulus*, are probably also of Knossos clay.

⁵ Besides the well known sites at Pseira, Mochlos, Kavousi, there is evidence for a Minoan Ierapetra: a Neopalatial farm near the peak sanctuary at Anatoli-*Stavromenos* (Chalikias 2016; Papadatos 2016) and Final Palatial to Postpalatial tombs at Episkopi (Watrous 1991).

In the Lasithi plain, a similar high-level official (damokoros or possibly gwasileus) with wide authority over territory and work-groups might have been needed at Plati; the site is in the south-west corner of Lasithi. Just north of Plati lies Chonos, the sink-hole that, if cleaned and maintained, would have drained the plain⁶. Another, similar official with similar duties can be envisioned at Phylakopi, organising the extraction of obsidian.

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⁶ Watrous (1982: 16), however, believes the Chonos was not cleared until the 20th c., but this seems unlikely, considering both Minoans and Mycenaeans practiced water engineering, constructing dams on Pseira and east of Thebes and draining sink-holes in the Argolid and the Copaic basin.

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The content

This volume, in honour of one of the Odysseuses in Aegean archaeology, Professor Robert Laffineur, comprises a combination of papers presented during a seminar series on recent developments in Mycenaean archaeology at the Université de Louvain during the academic year 2015-2016. These were organised within the frame of the ARC13/18-049 (concerted research action) 'A World in Crisis?' To these are added a series of papers by friends of Robert Laffineur who were keen to offer a contribution to honour him foremost as a friend and scholar in his own right but also as editor of a respected international series founded by him – *Aegaeum* – and as the driving force and inspiration behind the biannual Aegean meetings that have travelled the world. Several papers within touch scientific domains close to Robert's heart while others present new excavations or new interpretations of known data.

The authors

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The series AEGIS (Aegean Interdisciplinary Studies) attempts to make the results of new archaeological research on Aegean and especially Minoan societies available to the scientific and wider public at a rapid pace. Monographs, PhD dissertations, proceedings of scientific meetings and excavation reports complete each other to offer a general view of this time frame which is of primary importance to understand the ancient world and its historical, political, symbolical and social sequences.



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