MINOAN AND MYCENAEAN ADMINISTRATION IN THE EARLY LATE BRONZE AGE: AN OVERVIEW*

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INTRODUCTION

The following joint paper in two parts results from our spending several summers, traveling about the Peloponnesse and Crete, visiting sites, and discussing the topographical and architectural patterns we noticed. We both take as central to our understanding of administration in the early Late Bronze Age, the geographical position of the sites, their architecture, the documents, both written and/or sealed, the impressed sealings, and therefore the seals themselves.

For the Mainland, most of the evidence for early administration consists of the seals buried in elite tombs; there are few hints of contemporary administrative architecture. For Crete, however, there is a broader scope of evidence, and in presenting it first, we hope to construct some of the context that frames our considerations of early Mainland administration as well.

PART I: MINOAN SEALS, SEALINGS AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGE

In this first part of our examination, we concentrate first on the Cretan Neopalatial sites, both their location in the landscape and their architecture; since these were living buildings, we shall note too their modifications and remodeling. The written and sealed documents, too, provide a clue, we think, to identifying the twin, but not necessarily separate axes along which Minoan administration moved. Finally, we discuss what we call the Palatial Prestige System, a system whereby Knossos disseminates objects, styles, and iconography that serve to identify and fix the recipient state within a larger sociopolitical identity.

Two main models have been proposed for identifying the political organization and social structure of Minoan Neopalatial society in LM IA and IB. According to one, Crete comprises a number of interconnected but independent polities with their centers at the first-order sites (including Kato Zakro, Mallia, Aya Triada-Phalos, and Knahla). In the other model, Knossos would be the capital of Crete, the pre-eminent palace dominating all other palatial centers. In addition, there has been much talk of first-order, second-order, third-order sites, a scheme that apparently links all sites to some kind of single hierarchy; in such a system, Knossos would undoubtedly be a first-order site, but what of the other sites, especially the smaller court-centered buildings, like Petras and Gournia?

The recent, and still unpublished, conference at the Swedish Institute in Athens on «The Function of the Minoan 'Villa'» (1992) tried to establish another system, distinguishing «urban villas» (in close proximity to the palaces), «country villas» (isolated estates), and «manorial villas» (the centers of small towns). These distinctions are not always clear and, besides, a villa-terminology does not concentrate on their administrative inter-relationships.

We are dissatisfied with these schemes and shall try here to take another, more unified look. We concentrate on three sets of observations and then make some conclusions.
1. The Sites

In our travels, we noticed that isolated «villas» with substantial poros ashlar masonry often dominated what seemed to be neatly bounded geographical territories. Consider, for example, the two

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**MYCENAE GRAVE CIRCLE A**

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Fig. 1.
valleys south of Knossos, the upland plain of Archanes with the major site towards its north end, and the Giophiros Valley to the south dominated in the center by the double acropolis and medieval castle of Temenos or Kanli Kastelli (modern Profitis Ilias; probably ancient Lykastos). The two valleys are on the major Knossos-Phaistos route; they separated form each other by an east-west ridge at the south end of Mt. Iouktas, and a LM I villa sits on either side of this ridge, the poorly preserved Xeri Kara on the north slope and the well-known Vathypetro on the south slope. It is possible that both villas served as

KAZARMA

Fig. 2.
gateways to their territories across their mutual border, Xeri Kara communicating with the larger settlement Archanes to the north, while Vathypetro may have operated in tandem with a similar site at or near Lykastos.¹⁹

We imagine most of the produce from the Giophiros Valley, then, going to the large settlement in the plain, but the produce destined for transport to the north, to Archanes, Knossos, and even out to sea from Poros or Amnisos, would have passed through Vathypetro, then across the ridge into the next geographical unit via Xeri Kara.

We see the same situation in the Malevizi district at the south-western edge of the great north-central plain of Crete. On the northern slopes of Mt. Ida, the upland plain of Gonies,¹¹ the first sizable one below Anogeia, contains, at its eastern end, the LM I megalithic farm house of Sklavokambos.¹² Immediatelly east descends the long, steep, and narrow gorge near whose mouth lies Tyllissos, some 250 meters lower down, with its concentration of poros ashlar buildings. Again, it would seem that the gorge, like the louktras ridge, might separate one geographical unit from another, with Sklavokambos being the «gateway» site up into the northern Idalan slopes and Tyllissos the «gateway» site down into the plain below.

The Siteia Valley probably also represents a single territorial unit. If we were to imagine the route that produce would take from field to harbor, we can see it clearly marked by the line of buildings from the megalithic hillside farms of Achladia¹³ in the southwest and Zou¹⁴ in the southeast, to the poros

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**TRAGANA**

**GRAVE 1**

I 263

**GRAVE 2**

I 264

I 266

I 265

I 267

I 268

**Fig. 2.**
ashlar «villa» of Manares, possibly a harbor installation at the confluence of the Skalavidiakos and Siteia rivers, to the court-centered building of Petras (In. 5) above the harbor-mouth of the Siteia river.

In more constricted geographical units, the distance between the linked architectures may be erratic, like the megalithic «villas» that cluster above the ashlar court-centered building at Kato Zakros and the megalithic farm at Ano Zakros, high above at the head of the upland valley.

These territories and their architecturally demarcated subunits and limits are so obvious that, even when excavation has revealed only part of the linked architectural chain, we can reasonably predict the rest; for instance, in the Myrtos valley, the «country house» at Pyrgos at the river-mouth consists of

**Fig. 3.**
at least three buildings focusing on a central court, but there should be an isolated poros ashlar "villa" up-river near modern Mythoi and megalithic farms at the high head of the valley near Males.

These differences in masonry styles\(^\text{18}\) may have conveyed different messages to the Minoans. Megalithic masonry might symbolize an entry-level or low order administrative center, like a rural *latifundium* high up in the hills or a first-contact tax station like House A at Kato Zakro; one encounters this building before the Palace as one comes down the Minoan road\(^\text{19}\) that skirts north above the Gorge of the Dead. Poros ashlar masonry would then symbolize a higher order administrative center.

A third building material, gypsum, is not always present at the court-centered buildings: Kato
Zakro has a perfunctory pair of blocks, Makryiálos has a token single block. But other high-order sites, like the «villa» at Pyrgos, are saturated with it. While poros ashlar blocks still flank the entrance stairs to the central court there, gypsum was used in a truely palatial fashion as floor pavers, stair risers, ashlar antae, sheets of floor and wall-veneer, pier and door partitions, and wainscotting. In addition, red limestone from the river valley below the site paved the lightwell and furnished column bases. Since the main building produced tablets, impressed sealings, one uninscribed and one inscribed roundel,²⁰ and ritual vessels²¹ of many kinds, it is possible that the combination of poros ashlar and gypsum marked top-order centers that included both administrative and religious functions.²²

We imagine, therefore, a complex series of geographically related units, each dominated by a poros ashlar court-centered building, with subunits headed by a poros ashlar «villa» over megalithic farms at the farther edges.

While the villa system seems to expand in LM I, there is a reciprocal contraction in the number of peak-sanctuaries.²³ In place of the many peaks that had flourished during Protopalatial times, only a few
are active in the Neopalatial era, and Louktas\textsuperscript{24} above Knossos was the most prominent in this late period, receiving elements of palatial architecture and impressive dedications.

2. Architectural Modifications\textsuperscript{25}

A number of these buildings show signs of architectural modification during the Neopalatial period, indicating that expansion of some functions and the contraction of others were going on simultaneously. For example, the ashlar building at Nirou Khan\textsuperscript{26} receives a set of rubble magazines for the storage of grain; and Vathypetro gains an industrial wing for metal-working and wine- (or oil-) processing.\textsuperscript{27}

Other modifications concern interior spaces. In Knossos's South-East House,\textsuperscript{28} one room has been subdivided (rooms H1/G1) with a thin gypsum veneer whereas at Nirou Khan (n. 24), two rooms (7a/7b, 15/16) are partitioned with a mud brick partition wall.\textsuperscript{29}

Two of the most distinctive features of Minoan neopalatial architecture are the polythyron\textsuperscript{30} with pier and door partitions and the sunken «Lustral Basin».\textsuperscript{31} An elaborately painted lustral basin in a house at Khania\textsuperscript{32} was filled in, in LM IA, shortly after the building was constructed. At Tylissos, the lustral basins in Houses A (room 11) and C (room 12)\textsuperscript{33} are turned into lightwells for modified polythyra. So too may have been the lustral basin in the Throne Room at Knossos.\textsuperscript{34}

The blocking off of pier-and-door partitions was also common in the course of LM I. At Ayia Triadha,\textsuperscript{35} several openings between the piers in room 13 were closed off, evidently to create closets, and the adjoining area, 14, was subdivided and given a figurial fresco. In the domestic quarter of the megalithic farmhouse at Sklavokambos (fn. 12), a pair of pier and door partitions in the entrance were blocked off by a brick partition wall, probably to create a brick cupboard.

Because lustral basins and polythyra have been identified as rooms for ritual activity,\textsuperscript{36} their modification is important for it suggests that the societal need for these areas was changing within the Neopalatial period. Where datable many of these modifications fall within LM IA, when they might have resulted from earthquake destructions; others are no later than LM IB, possibly LM II in the case of the Little Palace at Knossos.\textsuperscript{37} In any case, it would seem that even before the end of the Neopalatial period, Minoan society did not require the use of either polythyra or lustral basins, but rather more light and more storage space.

Many of these new storage spaces were used for storing temporary archives. At Zakros,\textsuperscript{38} the megalithic House A on the slope above the palace received a tablet, a roundel, and approximately 500 nodules — many more documents than survive from the palace! Along with bronzes and vases, the sealings were found above the floor of room VII belonging to the lower, terraced storey; above them were bricks that the excavator D. G. Hogarth thought looked like floor pavers. A visit to the site revealed that the first meter or so of the wall separating rooms VII and VIII was of stone rubble, but the rest was finished in brick (each ca. 16 x 17 x 3.5 cm.); these may have tumbled along with the sealings suggesting that they had been stored in tall cupboards set against the wall like those in the Archives room in the Palace.

The precise findspots of the sealings and tablets from the Palace are difficult to ascertain. The Archives room XVI held much material presumably fallen from above, but within and near\textsuperscript{39} three brick cupboards at its south end were found 14 tablets and an unknown number of sealings, both unimpressed and impressed; an additional sealing and three more tablets were found in the Hall of Ceremonies, presumably fallen from above. At least some of the contents of both of these deposits seem to have been safeguarded in wooden boxes with bronze hinges. More sealings, but no tablets, were found in the Treasury and apparently also in the northern lustral basin.

A similar cupboard (room 9) in Building 5 at Palaikastro had been converted from a polythyron by brick walls. This room held three impressed noduli, along with bronze tools, a cup rhyton, and worked pieces of ivory.\textsuperscript{40}

The elegant mansion at Pyrgos, in a deposit that included intact bricks, likewise has produced two Linear A tablets (fn. 21). With the addition of the pentagonal roundel found in 1994 by the authors, the likelihood increases that Pyrgos may have had a resident scribe, and was not simply the recipient of documents produced elsewhere.
The villa at Ayia Triadha possessed the largest surviving archive: the inscribed material — 147 tablets, 22 inscribed roundels, and 936 one-hole hanging nodules, all inscribed, 2 two-hole hanging nodules, and 7 inscribed noduli; the uninscribed material — 76 document sealings, 9 two-hole hanging nodules, and 46 noduli.\(^{43}\)

The bricked-up doorway at Sklavokambos\(^{42}\) probably contained the discarded sealings found there: 39 impressed but uninscribed nodules, 36 of which sealed leather documents, impressed mostly by gold rings depicting bull-leaping.

In the Bronze Age town of Khania, House I had a double doorway in room D that was remodeled to house a clay cupboard for pots and sealings.\(^{43}\) One of the sealings (KH 1559;\(^ {44}\) CMS vol. V Supplement 1A, nos. 128-137) is particularly interesting: an uninscribed clay bar attached to the back of a large, thick leather document bound with thread. The upper surface of the bar had been stamped 12 times with 10 different seals and metal rings in an obvious three-stage system: one group of special seals (nos. 128-131), one group of typical seals (nos. 134-136), one seal (no. 132) that seems to mark the transition between the stamping sessions, and two gold rings (nos. 133 and 137) marking closure to the stamping process.

Most of the leather documents attested by many flat-based sealings were small, carefully folded and bound with thread. Plastine impressions of the reverse of the document sealings\(^ {45}\) allow us to «see» the parcels that had been stored at Ayia Triada, Gournia, Khania, Knossos, Sklavokambos, and in House A at Kato Zakro.

From the studies of John Betts and, more recently, Judith Weingarten and Erik Hallager,\(^ {46}\) we can see evidence of inter-site contact.\(^ {47}\) Hanging one-hole nodules that are characteristic of Ayia Triada appear rarely enough in the Zakros House A archives to be imports; and, vice versa, seals local to Zakros impressed document sealings found at Ayia Triada (HMs 597, 598) and Sklavokambos (HMs 642), and a one-hole hanging nodule found at Knossos (HMs 163).

Two-hole hanging nodules secured the two ends of one string and could have hung around the necks of jars or around the pegs of boxes, while a pair of one-hole hanging nodules probably also seemed the two ends of one string but hung from papyrus documents,\(^ {48}\) as suggested by Drs. M. Marazzo and E. Hallager at this conference (q.v.).

Several rings carrying bull-leaping, battle, chariot, and lion scenes impressed clay sealings, presumably at one place (generally assumed to be Knossos), and these were sent out to various sites so that several sealings at different sites bear the impression of the same ring;\(^ {49}\) for instance, the same bull-leaping scene appears on document sealings from Ayia Triada and Sklavokambos and on noduli from Gournia and Kato Zakro, House A; another bull-leaping scene appears on document sealings from Ayia Triada, Sklavokambos, and Gournia; and a third bull-leaping scene appears on document sealings from Sklavokambos and Kato Zakro, House A. An extremely similar bull-leaping scene appears on nine document sealings from the Katre deposit at Khania.

The Khania, Odos Katre\(^ {50}\) deposit may to reflect a final archive, which, by definition, should consist of several types of accounting documents together, in this case both inscribed and uninscribed documents: 82 Linear A tablets,\(^ {51}\) 112 inscribed roundels,\(^ {52}\) and 26 inscribed hanging nodules;\(^ {53}\) as well as 57 uninscribed document sealings over leather parcels impressed by eight different seals (CMS V Supplement 1A, nos. 152, 154, 171-175, 179, 183), one of which (CMS V Supplement 1A, no. 183) also impressed the only uninscribed nodulus in the deposit. Two of the seals that impressed these uninscribed sealings were lenticoids that depict a man with a call (CMS V Supplement 1A, no. 173) or a dog (CMS V Supplement 1A, no. 183), but the rest were gold rings carrying bulls (CMS V Supplement 1A, no. 152, 154, 183), bull-leaping scenes (CMS V Supplement 1A, no. 171, 172), and cult scenes (CMS V Supplement 1A, no. 175, 179).

The distinction between inscribed and uninscribed nodules is important, because the inscribed hanging nodules are usually impressed by fairly common seals, but the uninscribed document sealings are generally impressed by gold cult rings and rings that carried bull-leaping scenes. Recently, Erik and Birgitta Hallager and the authors\(^ {54}\) have suggested that bull-sports and other bull-images, and special objects like bull-head rhyta, relief vases, and gold rings, are part of a Knossian propaganda program that was deliberately disseminated to other Minoan centers.

If so, then we have evidence for two types of inter-site shipments of sealed objects:\(^ {55}\) containers
from which dangled inscribed two-hole hanging nodules and perhaps papyrus documents with inscribed one-hole hanging nodules were shipped from one site to another, for instance, from Ayia Triada to Kato Zakro, or Kato Zakro to Knossos. But Knossos may have been shipping out leather documents bearing uninscribed sealings impressed by gold rings. It is possible that these two types of sealings reflect two axes of administrative communication: a busy inter-site transshipment of special commodities and papyrus documents but with no special geographical focus, and another whose communication on leather documents emanates from Knossos to the rest of the island.

3. The Palatial Prestige System

These two types of contact parallel another phenomenon, that of sets or assemblages of special objects. For example, Sklavokambos received a stone platter and conical rhyton, a stone «mace» and a Special Palatial Tradition jug that were surely not made at the site. The wealth of prestige objects stored in the West Wing of the Zakros palace, stone and terracotta rhyta and several more «maces», may signal redistribution to other centers further down the administrative chain, but their consistent appearance in carefully matched sets implies a conscious duplication and imitation of prestige, probably set elsewhere, since similar sets occur at Pyrgos and Ayia Triada.

It is not hard to guess where most of these objects originated: Knossos. It has long been suggested\(^6\) that most, if not all, the stone relief vases were made at Knossos, where the ropey, muscular style of the stone reliefs matches that of Knossos's plaster reliefs. Similarly, the style and the anatomical rendering of the Palaikastro ivory «youth»\(^7\) suggest that it too was produced by a Knossian workshop.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This brief set of observations suggests the following interpretations:

1) Towards the end of the Neopalatial period, sites of Minoan administration were growing in number. Their somewhat egalitarian sharing of masonry styles, materials, plans, and modifications for increased storage, workshop areas, and archives indicates a decentralization or out-reach of palatial administration.

2) At the same time, within existing buildings some of the prestige architectural features are in flux, and before the end of the Neopalatial period some polythyra and lustral basins are remodeled, evidently to serve different functions or to pass out of use entirely.

3) Peak sanctuaries seem to follow a different pattern during the Neopalatial period. Many peak sites that had flourished in the Protopalatial period decline, and activity is consolidated at a few major sites like louktas above Knossos which show increased signs of palatial architecture and dedications.

4) The contacts between Knossos and other non-palace sites around the island in terms of look-alike rings impressing uninscribed sealings over leather documents, and the dissemination of prestige objects that reflect a specifically Knossian iconography of ritual imply that the centralizing process in Minoan administration may have been conducted along religious lines. The increasing role of Knossos, and its ancillaries Amnisos and louktas, as the major religious centers on the island in LM I might also explain the presence of Knossian special-objects at non-palatial centers on Crete, in some of the Cyclades, and in the contemporary Shaft Graves on the mainland.

Our overview suggests that toward the end of the Neopalatial period, Minoan society itself was undergoing significant changes and was in a state of flux, especially in LM IA, perhaps in the aftermath of the Thera eruption and accompanying earthquakes. The subsequent LM IB destructions throughout the island — whatever their causes — mark the effective end of what we have come to consider Minoan Neopalatial society.
PART II: THE EARLIEST MYCENAEAN ADMINISTRATION ON THE MAINLAND?

Our understanding of the full development of Mycenaean administration and administrative systems is still incomplete, but it is becoming increasingly clear that Mycenaean practices were significantly different from Minoan. Three main phases in the development of Mycenaean administration on the mainland have been documented or postulated. The first phase is represented by the LH I shaft graves at Mycenae. These graves show a pre-administrative use of seals as jewelry, not as sphyragistic tools, and a limited awareness of Linear A (there is one incised Minoan or Cypro-Minoan sign on a bronze vessel from SG IV).\(^5\) A second phase probably begins some time in LH II, with the full development of the Linear B writing system,\(^5\) either on Crete or the mainland, probably just before or immediately following the widespread Cretan destructions at the end of LM I B. An early Mycenaean archive (LM II-III A:1) has recently been identified in the Room of the Chariot Tablets at Knossos which apparently predates the rest of the tablets from the palace.\(^6\) The third and final phase of Mycenaean administration is best represented by tablets and sealings of LH III B date at a number of important centers, most if not all of them palatial: Mycenae, Pylos, Thebes, and Tiryns on the mainland, and Knossos and Khania on Crete.

Much scholarly attention has been paid to all aspects of Mycenaean administration that involved the use of writing. This focus, however, tends to underestimate the role that seals played in administration on the mainland. An examination of groups of seals from mainland funerary contexts suggests that a complementary administrative system existed from LH II A-III A:2/early III B, one that used pairs of seals as administrative tokens, in a system that could function either in the absence of writing or alongside it.

Seals in the Shaft Graves at Mycenae

In the transition from MH to LH I, there is very little evidence for the use of seals on the mainland, in marked contrast to the contemporary situation on Crete surveyed in part I of this paper. The first major concentration of seals on the mainland occurs in the shaft graves of Circles A and B at Mycenae.\(^6\) Despite the concentration of wealth buried in the Shaft Graves, these tombs have produced a total of just twelve seals, most of which were buried with women or children.

From Circle B, there are two talismanics, which were used as centerpieces of women’s necklaces in graves Mu and Omikron (CMS I nos. 6, 7),\(^6\) an amethyst disk (no. 5) stored in a wooden box in grave Gamma, which may have belonged to a man,\(^6\) and a torn lentoid from Grave Rho (no. 8). These are all isolated seals.

Only two graves in Circle A included seals (Chart 1), but these now occur in multiple examples: grave III, with the presumed bodies of three women and two children, and IV, which contained men and women.\(^6\) Three seals in grave III are of stone (nos. 12-14) and three are gold cushions (nos. 9-11). Grave IV held a pair of gold rings (nos. 15, 16).

All of the seals in Circle B appear to be imports from Crete. The well-known amethyst disk from Grave Gamma is now recognized as belonging to the class of a Minoan «portrait gem» and not the depiction of a «Mycenaean prince».\(^6\) The talismanic seals belong to a Cretan class that was seldom used for impressing documents. By contrast, all the gold cushions and rings from Circle A have been identified as products of the «Mycenae Vaphio-Lion workshop» active on the mainland in LH I and II.\(^6\) This workshop was Minoan in origin, but may have been implanted itself to the mainland in order to meet the increasing need of the Mycenaean shaft grave folks for glyptic products.

The gold seals from graves III and IV are highly unusual. Metal cushions and rings are Minoan shapes, but on Crete at this time they were generally used to carry religious scenes. The recurring scenes of hunting and warfare on the Circle A gems instead seem to reflect Mycenaean preferences, even where the scenes find Minoan iconographic parallels.\(^6\) It seems likely that these are actual commissions.

The burials in Circle A came to an end in LH II A, perhaps because of the difficulty of opening the shafts for successive interments.\(^6\) At this point, Mycenae adopted a form of elite burial that was already in use in the southwest Peloponnese: the tholos tomb. Six tholoi were erected at Mycenae in LM II A and
B, followed by the latest tholoi at the site, the «Treasury of Atreus» and «Clytemnestra Tholos» in LM III A:2 and B:1, respectively. Since all of these tombs were thoroughly robbed in antiquity, we cannot know whether seals were included with the burials.

In the Peloponnese, the use of tholoi as burial places for the early Mycenaean elite had started earlier, at the end of MH III. A number of rich Peloponnesian tholoi, in use between LH II A and III A:2/B:1 include large personal or family collections of seals. These include a tholos at Kazarma in the Argolid (LH I-II) and three tholoi near Pylos: Gouvalari Tholos 1 (LH I-II), the Tragan Tholoi (LH I-II), and Routsi Tholos 2 (LH II-III A). The latest example of a tholos with a large collection of seals occurs at Nichoria in Messenia (LH III A:2-B). The largest single collection of seals consists of the 29 gems found in a LH II A cist in the Vapheio tholos near Sparta.

Because many of these tombs have not received their final, comprehensive publication, it is sometimes unclear with which individual burials the seals were associated. Regardless, however, of the actual findspots, the glyptic material from each tomb tends to fall into pairs or triplets that are linked by material, shape, iconography, and workshop of origin. And in each case, there were far more seals than the individuals buried, who must therefore have owned several — too many seals were present in each grave for them to have been used in a system where one seal represents one seal owner. Because the pairing of gems occurs in several high-status burials of roughly contemporary date, we postulate that this is not accidental. Here we will briefly survey the material from each tomb, and then suggest some possible interpretations of the evidence.

Kazarma (Chart 2)

The LH I-II tholos at Kazarma, located between the Argolid and Epidauros, was discovered accidentally in the course of roadwork. It has not been completely published, though the finds from the tomb are on display in Nauplion. Its ten seals, however, fall into four distinguishable pairs with two possible add-ons.

One pair (CMS V nos. 577, 578) consists of two cornelian amygdaloid seals with talismanic devices; both are probably of late Middle Minoan date. Although they do not carry the same scenes, they are otherwise similar in shape, color, and origin. A second pair consists of lentoids (nos. 579, 580). Both are of red stone, one sard and one cornelian, and both been identified as belonging to two, late Middle Minoan, stylistically similar groups.

Two of the gems are prisms, similar in size though they are made of different materials. The first (CMS V 2 no. 581) is a three-sided amethyst prism, while the second (no. 582) is a four-sided prism of cornelian, both probably from the same Minoan workshop. Each is carved only on one side: the amethyst gem with a talismanic design of quadruped in vegetation; the cornelian with a frieze of ducks flying among reeds. The motif of ducks and reeds is extremely popular in LM I, occurring for example on one of the paintings from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri on Thera.

Three of the seals are cylinders: two are tiny amethyst cylinders (less than 2 cm. in height) belonging to the Jasper-Lion group. Both were probably manufactured on Crete in the late 16th c. B.C. The iconography of each is unusual, however, and deserves additional comment. No. 584 shows a standing long-skirted woman (not a man as is sometimes claimed) flanking a lion that faces a griffin. No. 585 depicts a whip-wielding charioteer who drives a team of lions, rather than horses. Here, instead of fighting the lions, the human figure has subjigated them to the role of draft animals. The third cylinder, of blue glass, originally approximated the color of the other two. Although corroded, it shows a pair of griffins in procession. It perhaps can be considered an add-on to the pair of amethyst cylinders, though it is slightly larger than them. Its griffin iconography, however, is related to that of no. 584.

One of the Kazarma seals does not fit the pairings noted here. No. 586 is a corroded glass lentoid bearing an indistinct quadruped; according to CMS V p. 414 it may come from the dromos, rather than the chamber, of the tomb, and is probably from a LH III C context.

It should be noted that most of the seals are of Minoan manufacture, despite their mainland findspot. In addition, the presence of three amethyst gems in the tomb — two cylinders and a three-sided prism - may be considered unusual, since no Aegean sources for the material have been identified, and it
was likely imported from Egypt through Crete. Since the burials also included amethyst necklaces, the material may be a sign of high status.

Gouvalari (Chart 3)

The two tholos tombs at Gouvalari (Koukounara) near Pylos form a related pair, erected and used in LH II. Tholos 1 contained five sealstones; a singleton from Tholos 2 forms a pair with another found in Tholos 1. The seals can be grouped primarily according to shape.

In Tholos 1, the seals follow some of the patterns observed before. There is a loose pair associated by their lentoid shape (CMS V 2 nos. 639, 641), one of lapis lazuli with gold caps and a schematic depiction of four fish, the other of agate with a fine design of agrimia. Two seals are amygdaloids (nos. 640, 645) of red stones, one of cornelian and one is of a different dark red stone; they carry carry different motifs, however — a talismanic design and a design of a bull, respectively.

There are three cushion seals of similar size; two of these are close in color. One of red jasper (CMS V 2 no. 642) depicts a hunting griffin; another, of cornelian (no. 644) represents a deer. The third cushion is of amethyst (no. 643) and carries a combat scene that is a common topos in early Mycenaean art, as on some of the Mycenae seals mentioned above (CMS I no. 11, 12).

Gouvalari tholos 2 contained a single sealstone: an amethyst amygadaloid (CMS V 2 no. 646). It represents a wounded bull that is very similar in pose to the wounded bull on a dark red stone amygadaloid from Tholos 1 (no. 645). It thus perhaps represents one of a pair that was separated between two graves. We will see a similar pair of seals divided between two burials in the gold amygdaloids with bull-sports in the Routsi tholos, considered below.

Tragana Tholos 1 (Chart 4)

Another pair of LH II tholoi was erected near the coast at Tragana, northwest of modern Pylos and west of Gouvalari. Tholos 1 contained two burials with seals: one in grave 1 (CMS I no. 263), and five in grave 2 (nos. 264-268). All the seals are lentoids.

The amethyst lentoid seal in grave 1 (CMS I no. 263) shows a battle among three warriors: it is attributable to the Tragana Duelers Group, a Cretan workshop that made an amethyst seal as found at Gouvalari discussed above (CMS V no. 643).

Of the five seals in grave 2, three are of conglomerate (CMS I nos. 265, 267, 268), and two of these (nos. 265, 267) seem to have been cut from the same die and are products of a single LM III A:1 Knossian workshop although they carry different scenes. The other pair, of crystal (no. 264) and jasper (no. 266), differ in material but show scenes which may be significant: a bull on a sacrificial table, and anthropomorphic agrimia flanking a central tree. Both are Minoan ritual motifs.

It is possible to regard the five seals from tomb 2 as comprising two groups of three and two seals, respectively (CMS I 265, 267, 268; 264, 266). The Tragana duelers in tomb 1 (no. 263) may once have formed a pair with the one from Gouvalari (CMS V 2 no. 645). We will see a similar phenomenon in Routsi tholos 2.

Routsi Tholos 2 (Chart 5)

An impressive pair of tholoi at Routsi near Pylos was excavated by S. Marinatos in 1956-1957, but like the Kazarma tholoi, the tombs have never received a definitive publication. Tholos 2 included two earlier pits in the floor plus a later burial on the floor of the chamber. There are some interesting connections between an individual in pit 2 and the man who was laid to rest on the floor.

One of the pits contained a burial atop the remains of other interments; this individual had a collection of seven sealstones along with two niello dagger blades. The man on the floor of the tomb was buried with at least ten swords, an ivory mirror, and twelve sealstones. Thus it is clear, and not just from
the sealstones, that both individuals were of high status.

The individual buried in pit 2 had a pair of cushion seals (CMS I nos. 269, 271), one in dark and the other in light stone; each carries a female griffin in profile. One cushion has gold caps. Another pair of sealstones consists of amethyst three-sided prisms (nos. 272, 273). On each prism, two sides are carved with iconographically related scenes, a recumbent lion and a recumbent stag on no. 272, and pairs of ducks in flight on no. 273. The third face of each prism was left blank.

There were also three amygdaloids, each interesting for their Iconography and medium. One of dark stone (CMS I no. 270) carries a design of insects similar to several sealstones found at other sites and discussed by I. Pini.79 The second amygdaloid (no. 274) is of gold, and shows a scene of bull-netting reminiscent of those on the Vapheio cups. The third, of glass (CMS I Suppl. IA no. 345), was worn as a bracelet by the deceased. It depicts a man wearing a diagonally banded robe of the type traditionally identified as priests; three of the Vapheio sealstones show similarly dressed individuals.80

The latest burial was laid out on the floor of the tomb; in his cupped hands was a collection of twelve sealstones, most of which fall into pairs. There are two sardonyx lentoids (CMS I nos. 275, 277), two agate lentoids (nos. 276, 278), and four cornelian lentoids (nos. 279-282). A pair of cylinders is related by shape and style but not by material: one is cornelian (no. 284); the other is of sardonyx (no. 285).

The iconography of two of the cornelian lentoids seems specifically Minoan: one (CMS I no. 279) shows a woman in flounced dress and apron at an altar surmounted by horns of consecration and vegetation; another (no. 282) shows an unfinished pair of griffins reclining on a platform supported by incurved altars, a composition related to one of the frescoes from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri81 and even to the iconography of the Knossos throne room.82

Two more seals do not make an identifiable pair. One is a white paste lentoid (CMS I no. 286) a motif that shows a lion attacking a quadraped, a motif that recurs on an agate lentoid (no. 278). The other singleton is a gold amygdaloid (no. 283) with a somewhat indistinct scene of bull sports. This singleton is important, however, because it has a counterpart in the gold amygdaloid found in pit 2 (no. 274). Thus each of these important individuals had one gold amygdaloid with a scene of bull-sports; together they would have formed a pair, like the gold Vapheio cups, and one wonders if they started out as family or governmental, rather than individual, possessions. Interestingly, these are the only gold amygdaloid seals presently known in the Aegean.

Nichoria Tholos (Chart 6)

The Nichoria tholos was excavated by the Greek Archaeological Service and the Minnesota Messenia Expedition between 1971 and 1973.83 Twelve seals were recovered, many of them correctly identified by the excavators as heirlooms at the time they were buried in LH III A:2-B. Two were found with the latest burial on the floor of the tomb (CMS V 431, 438). Six more came from pit 4, which held four secondary burials (nos. 430, 432, 433, 435, 436, 439). Three were found in the disturbed fill of pit 2 (nos. 434, 440, 441). And the last came from pit 1 (no. 437). Though it was impossible to match most of the seals with specific burials, a number of interesting groupings emerge.

The seals from the floor were both cornelian lentoids. One, carrying the portrait of a frontal head, is unique (CMS V 431). Its cut style makes it contemporary with LM II-II A:1, and thus one of the latest seals in the tomb.84 But it shows signs of heavy wear and chipping around its edges. The other seal from the floor (no. 438), also a cut-style gem, carries a griffin and is interesting because it forms a pair with a cut-style agate lentoid with a griffin found in pit 1 (no. 437).

The six seals from pit 4 also form three pairs. Two are cornelian amygdaloids: one with gold caps is Cretan talismanic (CMS V 430), while the other is a later (LM II-III A) cut-style gem with a pair of ducks (no. 439). Two banded agate lentoids from pit 4 have similar designs of recumbent bulls (nos. 432, 433), in a distinctive pose which J. Younger has suggested is a symbol identifying a Mycenaean official, perhaps the laudetetas of the later Linear B tablets.85 These seals were produced by the same workshop, responsible for seals in Ayios Ioannis Tomb 3 on Crete, one of the warrior graves near Knossos.86 Two other agate lentoids (nos. 435, 436) are engraved with a lion attacking a bull.
Finally, the three seals from the disturbed fill of pit 2 include a pair of lentoids, one of glass paste with a pair of bulls (CMS V 434) and one of cornelian with a pair of goats (no. 441). The singleton is a cornelian amygdaloid showing a genius with a pitcher, standing at a pillar (no. 440).

It is noteworthy that the Nichoria seals were carved mostly from a rich red cornelian, probably from Mesopotamia, or from distinctive banded agates which may have been imported from central Europe.87 A glass paste lentoid is the only exception. Most were heirlooms at the time they were buried, but a few must have been created and collected relatively late. The two lentoids with pairs of animals from pit 2 may form a set, but the cornelian lentoid with a pair of goats (CMS V 441) is close to the Island Sanctuaries Workshop in the 14th c. B.C.,88 while the glass lentoid is a product of the 15th c. (no. 434).89 Similarly, of a pair of cornelian amygdaloids from pit 4, one (no. 430) is a Minoan talismanic gem of 16th c. date, and the other (no. 439) should be a near contemporary, a hard-stone member of the Line-Jawed Lions Group, perhaps near the Berlin Attacking Griffin.90

Vapheio

The most complex assemblage of seals occurred in the cist of the Vapheio tholos in southern Lakonia.91 This individual, buried in LH II A, is perhaps best known for the pair of gold cups, one found at each hand,92 but the grave included a number of objects which indicate far-reaching contacts. The deceased also owned the largest personal hoard of glyptic, some 29 gems and one ring, ever found in the Aegean, mostly worn as bracelets at the wrists. A complete discussion of the Vapheio collection needs its own separate study, but a few general characteristics of the collection can be noted here. Certain iconographic themes recur on at least two, and sometimes more, seals: women thought to be carrying sacrificial animals (CMS I nos. 220-222), genii (nos. 22-, 232), robed «priests» (nos. 223, 255). A close examination of the priest with a leashed griffin (no 223) reveals that he has a minute hole drilled in his wrist to indicate that he is himself wearing a lentoid sealstone bracelet, making this one of the first self-referential objects in Aegean art.93 The other «priest» (no. 255) carries a Syrian axe of a type actually found in the tomb.

One of the strongest indications that the seals occur in deliberate pairs occurs in the two lentoids that show similar depictions of scratching dogs in mirror-image poses. One is of lapis (no. 255), while the other, perhaps a «custom order», is of terracotta (no. 256). Some of the seals in the cist form a pair with a seal from the chamber of the tomb. The rudimentarily engraved amygdaloid with chariot scene (CMS I no. 230) has a much more detailed counterpart on a lentoid found in the chamber (no. 229), where one of the passengers is another long-robed «priest».

It is also worth noting that a relatively small number of workshops is repeatedly represented in the seals from the cist. The Mycenae-Vapheio Lion group accounts for seven of the seals (CMS I nos. 223, 232, 234, 242, 244, 246, 252).94 And the lapis and terracotta seals with dogs have been attributed to a single workshop.95

In addition to their large number, the Vapheio seals suggest a system more complicated than that of the other tombs with seals that fall into simple pairs. Several of the seals potentially form triplets linked by shape and motifs like the quadrupeds, bulls, and lions, while the lion-hunting-bull motif links three lentoids with a fourth example, the copper ring (CMS I no. 253).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A number of other tombs could be added to this study, e.g., Mycenae chamber tomb 515, the seals from which also support the patterns observed here. The six tholos tombs surveyed, — Kazarma, Gouvalari, Tragana, Routsi and Nichoria — are located in areas of the Peloponnese that, along with the Argolid, show exceptionally strong contacts with Minoan Crete, and especially with the Knossos area.
Significantly, the tombs illustrate a phenomenon of the early Mycenaean age which disappears later on the mainland and is not common on Crete except at Phylaki Apokoronou: the burial of select individuals or family groups with large numbers of paired sealstones. The seals in each tomb tend to fall into discrete pairs or triplets linked by shape (lentoids, amygdaloids, cylinders, prisms), similar material, and workshop or stylistic group of origin. Two shapes, cylinders and three-sided prisms are rare in Late Bronze Age assemblages, and it is interesting to see them here in pairs and triplets. Some of the stones are also unusual, especially the amethyst that is common to most of the tombs surveyed here.

Amethyst generally is a symbol of status in early Mycenaean tombs; it is generally lacking from later Mycenaean burials, and surprisingly little of it has been found on Crete. But both the Vaphio and the Kazarma tombs included large necklaces of it, and at Nichoria, it appears that a deliberate attempt was made to acquire cornelian seals.

There also seems to be an emphasis on several types of iconographic motifs. While bulls are common to most of the tombs, lions are represented at Kazarma, Routsi, and Vaphio, while bulls and griffins are common to most of the tombs. Ducks are represented at Kazarma, Routsi, and Vaphio, suggesting that this motif may have some special significance. At Routsi and Vaphio, the depiction of long-robed figures suggests an awareness of Mycenaean iconography for individuals who may be administrators or rulers, but who are probably not priests. Talismanic amygdaloids are represented at four sites: Kazarma, Gouvalari, Routsi, and Vaphio. The existence of these recurring motifs suggests a deliberate choice which probably has little to do with the personalities of the individuals buried at the four locations but which might have had much to do with notions of what motifs were considered appropriate to an early Mycenaean élite.

The manufacture of many of the seals is also considerably earlier than the contexts in which they were found, and most were produced by Cretan workshops. The recurrence of seal types, medium, and iconographic motifs, suggests that early Mycenaean rulers in the Peloponnese were deliberately acquiring certain types of seals in pairs, though the mechanisms for this process of acquisition — trade, royal gift exchange, initiation presents? — deserves further, careful inquiry.

We postulate, however, that the pairing of seals only makes sense if they served as tokens in a simple administrative system used independently of writing. Individual lieutenants may have been entrusted with one of each pair of seals, while the owner would retain the other. A similar use of rings as tokens of authority is known from the Classical and Medieval worlds, when trusted servants or lieutenants were given seals to verify their authority or establish their identity. In early imperial China, one half of a bronze tiger figurine was given to a general as a symbol of his right to raise troops; the emperor kept the other half.

An analysis of seal collections may even be a way of gauging the relative significance of some early Mycenaean rulers, their families, and the degree of sophistication of their administrative structures. The number of pairs of seals may be an index of the relative power of individual owners. Since the Kazarma aristocrats, for example, had three pairs and one triple, they may have been able to oversee three lieutenants. But the Vaphio aristocrat was able to dispatch as many as fourteen separate lieutenants at one time.

After the end of LH II-III A, however, mainland graves seldom include large collections of seals (Nichoria is the exception that proves the rule), indicating that this simple system of seals as administrative tokens may have fallen into abeyance. This decrease in the number of seals after the start of LH III A in mainland tombs coincides with an increase in the number of actual palace centers with standardized architectural features like the megaron, cyclopean fortifications, and the administrative use of Linear B. With the advent of Linear B, the earliest form of Mycenaean administration on the mainland — one that used seals as tokens instead of writing — fell into disfavor and was abandoned.
NOTES

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Abbreviations follow those listed in the «American Journal of Archaeology» 95 (1991) 1-16. Additional abbreviations include:

CMS = Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel (Gebr. Mann Verlag; Berlin, 1964-present).


12 Marinatos, S., 1939-1941.
15 Platon, N., 1971, p. 44.
21 Cadogan, G., 1981.
26 Xanthoudides, S., 1924; Begg, I., 1975, pp. 33 & 67.
28 Evans, A. J., PM II p. 426, plan in fig. 306; Begg, I., 1975, p. 182.
29 Begg, I., 1975, p. 181.
30 Marinatos, N. and Hägg, R., 1986.
35 Hallager, E., 1996, pp. 73-77.
36 Marinatos, N., 1993, pp. 77-87.
37 Evans, A. J., PM II.2, p. 520.
38 Hallager, E., 1996, pp. 73-77.
39 Platon, N. and Brice, W., 1975, figs.
Minoan and Mycenaean Administration in the Early Late Bronze Age

44 Hallager, E., 1996, pp. 202-3, fig. 75.
45 Hallager, E., 1996, figs. 47-56.
60 Dressen, J., 1990.
61 Kard, G., 1930/33, 43-66 & 71-121; Mylonas, G., 1972, pp. 139, 144, 145, 155, 162.
65 Betts, J.H., 1981.
70 Pena, O., 1976, pp. 198; Osmanaga tholos.
73 Doumas, C., 1992, pl. 135.
75 Pena, O., 1976, pp. 203-204.
76 Pena, O., 1976, pp. 195-197.
81 Doumas, C., 1992, pl. 122.
82 PM IV 2 pp. 919-920.
83 Pena, O., 1976, pp. 188-190; McDonald and Wilkie, N., 1992, pp. 231-358.
88 Younger, J.G., 1987, p. 64.
98 Mazzatenta, O.L., 1996, 85 and color figure.
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DISCUSSION

KANTA

Thank you, John Younger, for a very stimulating and interesting discussion. I would like, as a presidential privilege, if you like, to start the discussion by making a few comments. You gave us a long list of sites which are neo-palatial. Some of them have proto-palatial remains, but I take it that you were referring to their neo-palatial phase. For this reason I think that you should exclude Monastiraki because we don't have anything neo-palatial there. Also I would like to mention that closures and modifications are common practice in living buildings, it happens all the time. They exist for example in the neo-palatial palace at Phaistos, they exist at Nerokourou, they exist all over the place.

I think, however, we should make a differentiation between modifications which arise out of the needs of living everyday life, and some modifications in neo-palatial times that seem to have arisen out of a certain historical event.

And I will repeat here the example I gave at the minoan villas conference of the 'Minoan Hall', quotation marks, of Nerokourou, which in its last phase was changed from its - if you like - official character and it was made into something, let's say 'biotechniko', something producing something there, storing tripod jars, that type of thing. This has been noticed in other places, one of those is Vathypetro, for example, perhaps parts of the second palace of Phaistos, should be added, and we see a change of function in certain rooms of these centres. Apart from that, I would agree with your paper and I find it most interesting and defining, well-defining certain of these points. I would like to open the discussion, now. Erik Hallager.

HALLAGER

Well, if I understand you correctly, in your conclusion you're actually trying to separate the political picture from the religious picture... you see, you argue that there's a kind of religious uniformity or superiority going from Knossos around the whole of Crete at the same time that you see a decentralisation in the island. Is that correctly understood?

YOUNGER

I think so, yes.

HALLAGER

Ok, because you put the flat based nodules or the document nodules in the religious sphere.

YOUNGER

If I understand it correctly, most of the flat based nodules or the document nodules are stamped by cult-rings and bull-leaping rings.

HALLAGER

Yes, that's right.

YOUNGER

So I am making a distinction along that line.

HALLAGER

So you don't think they have any administrative implications, what was written on documents around Crete or, for the same type of nodules, those which were found in the archives of the different centres in Crete?
YOUNGER

As I say, we're making a distinction along the lines of the iconography of the impressing seals, and I would not say that this leather document has no administrative sense. Of course it does, but perhaps within a different sphere.

HALLAGER

Let me just add one thing more about the iconography on the document sealings. It's correct, that's where you find those with the bull leaping and also with the fighting scenes, but there are quite a number of other rings where you find a surprisingly small amount of the usual cult scenes on those documents, while you find many animals, even birds, from rings also, on this type of document which is not particularly, say, religious to me.

YOUNGER

Maybe we will just go along with the rings.

KANTA

Tom Palaima.

PALAIMA

No, I wanted to follow up on this because I find John's general argument very interesting and I think there may be a way of clarifying the question Erik is asking. Now, if I understand you correctly, what you're seeing is that, at least from the ring iconography, it's Knosso-centric iconography emanating out, and now whether you qualify that as religious or not I don't know.

Whether these birds and other representations are also things that John would be able to link to a Knosso-centric iconography emanating outward, whether it has a religious significance or not, certainly the leather packets have to have some kind of religious significance, but he couples that with the disappearance of the peak sanctuaries too, the down-scaling of their importance which also would tend to make me think of moving into another level of centralised religious attitude or something of that sort.

But one of the things I wanted to do is get on to, in a strange way, one of your interests, which is namely nomenclature, which I agree is very very important. I mean, anybody who has ever read Plato understands that most of our problems arise from how we refer to things such as my loose reference to sealings, but one of the things here is if we have these villas, developing in importance for these particular zones and regions which you quite well describe, we can call that decentralisation from one point of view, but it's absolute centralisation from another point of view. It's decentralisation from the point of view that now your bureaucratic and controlling apparatus is not simply located at a major centre, but it's centralising in that these villas are linked in to the centre in some way, shape or fashion, as we have the parallel in Mycenaean centre in Mycenae, certainly in the late Bronze Age, that is you have 9 and 7 principal towns all of which are feeding into the major centre and controlling in a much more intensive, organised and systematic way all aspects of activity that is taking place so that... you see my point? that decentralisation in bureaucratic structure is centralisation in terms of the control of what's going on in these various areas so it's a kind of double edged term.

KANTA

If I may make a point here on what Tom was saying, what happens is that in the old palace period, where you don't get villas, you have enormous storing capacity within the palatial centres, truly enormous. In the second palaces themselves, you don't have this enormous capacity, obviously they were operating through the villas. I don't know about all of them, and as you know 9/10 of them are unpublished. As far as Nerokourou is concerned, where the study is published, I think it's evident that the building was built immediately at the very beginning of the neo-palatial period, I mean MM III A, going by the existing pottery. So with the end of the second palace period the system has already changed, and then, you don't have big storerooms in the palaces. The movement of goods was done through the villas and this is one change, and if you want to call it 'decentralisation' it is decentralisation of some sort, I don't know, we don't have the evidence, because the relevant buildings are unpublished, to know that
the villas were doing any redistribution, actual redistribution, as palaces must have been doing in the proto-palatial period.

YOUNGER

Maybe I am not myself conveying some of our own doubts in all of this. Paul and I are trying to create a vocabulary or a way of thinking that allows us to make sense of this spread of the so-called villas, but at the same time the concomitant retreat of the peak sanctuaries, and also, as you pointed out earlier, these modifications that occur. The one modification that really struck us were the creation of these closets for temporary archives for the holding of sealings and once we started noticing one we began to notice that in many of these buildings there is a closet created in order for these buildings to keep their own storage of their own documents and that struck us as being rather important.

KANTA

But you don’t just have closets created for sealings. At Nerokourou we had a closet created, very similar to one you showed, and this closet stored vases.

YOUNGER

There are vases in the Hallagers’ house A as well.

KANTA

Paul Rehak.

REHAK

Several people have brought up very good objections to what we’ve said, perhaps sounding a little bit more secure than we actually are. What John and I are reacting to is that we were looking at the literature of several years ago, and people were coming up with these very neat explanations for how neo-palatial Crete was working, and then of course with the Villas conference and several other fora for discussion, and as we started travelling around and looking at the specific buildings and the finds, we started thinking that there must be a much more complicated picture than I think we’re giving the Minoans our credit for. And I think John in saying now that the peak sanctuaries are declining, what we were really talking about was a consolidation of the many individual peak sanctuaries and the functions being centralised at just a few of those. And then we were also talking about local decentralisation, you know, in the villas, but even in the villas at the Minoan villas conference several years ago people couldn’t agree on the definition of what constitutes a villa, and now that we have all these smaller court-centred buildings, you know, obviously it’s not just a case of we have palaces and villas, but we have a wide range of things. Of course administration is a part of religion on Crete, so we’re not denying that administration is taking place, but we do see a dissemination of Knossian iconography and then some types of palatial goods to the other centres and even there it’s not simple, because Zakros, for example, is getting a lot of goods I think from outside, but at the same time it has its own workshops and so it too is producing finished goods that can then be distributed further down the line. So any suggestions that people can make would help us immensely. And the more we work on it ourselves the more we realise that the picture is extremely complicated.

KANTA

Tom Palaima.

PALAIMA

Even before Paul made that clarification I had been talking ‘sotto voce’ to John and saying I don’t think anyone is disagreeing with what you’re laying out here. Certainly it wasn’t in my intention. I really think that what you’re doing is perfectly clear and obvious and you’ve laid out the whole picture very neatly and I don’t even think that Athanasia has been putting up any objections. There are simply gee, this is an interesting picture and let’s see how we can now clarify it.
KANTA
Very much so.

PALAIMA
That was the spirit in which I brought up this idea about decentralisation and so I just want to make sure we're all on the same page with that, and I thought that the architecture modifications you showed, many of them, actually suited Athanasia's criteria. Well, now if you have a very formal and important area and all of a sudden it's reworked, again, we have this at Pylos in late III B period, where all of a sudden the main formal entrance way coming up from the gate is sealed off and made into a work area, that has to be something significant about the economic change or the whole attitude towards the site. So again I see that you've laid out for us in a very clear and systematic way many many different avenues of understanding this process and just I wanted to emphasise that.

HATZIMICHAEL
Just talking about centralisation and decentralisation in palatial times, what I am actually interested in, and I don't know I understand you correctly, is: do you perceive the structure of the administrative system in the neo-palatial period as unified with regional differences or different regional administrative systems, judging from the sealings or the networking of the sealings? And the follow up to that is, if actually we can argue something like this or hypothesise something about a unified administrative system, what about the political organisation then? Can you speculate something about a unified political authority? Therefore we go back to what we used to say about the pre-eminence of Knossos and not what people have been seeing in the last few years of regionalism and differences in the structure of that system.

YOUNGER
Personally I'm rather fluid or sort of organic on the subject, and I can't really answer your question in any kind of generic way, but I can somewhat lay out a few specifics. Judith Weingarten has very neatly pointed out certain seal classes which are Pancretan that occur in all sites and then certain classes which occur at predominantly one site or another. That would be one indication that these little tight units that Paul and I are seeing may be fitting in with a larger system, but at the same time holding their own individuality. In order to buttress this, I think it's quite clear in some cases that we can point to, at least in terms of seals, we can point to iconographic territories. Obviously the Zakro master and peculiar monsters, this iconographic territory is peculiar only to Zakro, but also in my own work with the Knossos sealings and so on I think one can make a very clear case at least in LM II, which is somewhat beyond what we're looking at, at least that there is an iconographic territory there. That's quite clear in terms of sealing, seal motifs and style. So I guess basically that there are some grounds for thinking of these tight independent units, but they are sharing very largely ideas and ways of doing things and so on and so forth. I don't see the kind of political rivalry so much as I see a kind of independence in iconography and independence in style, but superimposed over all this, however, I think it's quite clear there's Knosso-centric overwhelming authority.

I don't know whether this is political. I don't even know whether this is religious in a sense of a theocracy or eschatology or something.

PERNA
The last short question.

KANTA
Can I just say something very very shortly. We must perhaps take a lead from tradition which survived in later Greek times and which says that king Minos had to go every nine years and take his, let's say, right of exercising power from his father Zeus.

I do very strongly believe in tradition. This just tells us something about the ideas that were circulating in the period, and the system of authority in Crete.
MILITELLO

Some observations on the religious iconography. I completely agree on the importance of the religious iconography for political links, and on Hagia Triada I can say that the frescoes from room 14 are a completely extraneous element in the pictorial tradition of Hagia Triada. I will publish the frescoes from Hagia Triada and I can say that we have two different levels: a group of frescoes which belonged to the tradition of the Messara and only the frescoes from room 14, which I think are made by Knossian artists. I also have to say that we have perhaps a precedent to room 14 in Late Minoan IA because some fragments were found in a Late Minoan IA level; and I also want to remember a suggestion made by Marc Cameron on the exclusivity of some Knossian iconography. He said that bull games for example are peculiar to Knossos and don't occur in any other of the villas, so this can suggest a religious dominance by Knossos; and since I don't think that in a prehistoric community religion can be separated from the political side, so I think that religious predominance of Knossos means political predominance of Knossos.

PALAIMA

It would be rather interesting to see how this exactly demonstrates itself. There's a sense in which you see a centralised control can be felt even without any demonstrable change in the landscape; it's just by working through the avenues and the set systems that the authority has set up and established, but then, if in the archaeological record, the iconographical record, in looking at the sealings... I mean, where you get lateral communication, all of this is just what we see even in the modern industrial Western society, if we were to think of it in equivalent terms. But when you see the actual archaeological evidence, that reinforces this sense that something along the lines of what you're suggesting is happening.

KANTA

Judith Weingarten.

WEINGARTEN

As you know, John, I think it's also been suggested that some of these re-styling changes that we see, the dividing up of the Minoan halls, and many of the other changes can be a sign not of invigorating rebuilding, but a sign of decay. And this has been linked especially by Colin McDonald and Jan Driesen to the fact that perhaps such external factors as the eruption on Thera might have shaken the basic society somewhere around the end of LM I A. For example in the administrative sphere one sees that the great variety of Linear A inscriptions and so forth which are spread all over the island seem to be dated to the LM I period, and then in the LM I B period it is apparently much more concentrated, and this may be parallel to a sort of retrenchment, and the high point of Minoan neo-palatial civilisation is in fact the LM I A period, and this is a period of flux.

YOUNGER

LM I A pre-Thera, you mean?

WEINGARTEN

Pre-Thera, indeed, and that this may be a period of flux in which a great number of things are happening and perhaps not in every part of the island in quite the same way.

YOUNGER

I think we agree with you that the pre-Thera society is quite different, and there does seem to be a change, at least, a change in mental attitude that gets reflected in the architecture, but I would like, however, to also align ourselves with Athanasia Kanta that these are living buildings and they react to effects rather than saying that one is degenerate or something.

WEINGARTEN

Well, that is certainly true, but if you take for example at Palaikastro the building 5, where you do
have precisely this phenomenon of which you're speaking, and it is the building with the noduli and the closet, it's quite clear, it's been subdivided by nasty mud brick sub-divisions which is totally out of keeping with the rather magnificent semi-palatial - if you will - room, that it was. And this and the sudden appearance and the only appearance at Pk of sealed documents is in that room, and this may be not coincidental because you do have something not entirely dissimilar over at Khaniâ in the same period, so it may be even more complicated than your suggestion.

KANTA
Yes, I agree with you totally, but this comes under this specific historical event that I am talking about, which we are trying to identify through the various architectural remains in the various areas. If you like, it does mean a certain degeneration, a certain decline, if you want to use these terms, but something produced them, and when I call it a 'historical event' I am registering the fact that you can find it all over the island.

YOUNGER
Exactly.

WEINGARTEN
Yes, but I think its manifestation in some places is much stronger than in others, and it may be that there is a kind of retrenchment within some of the major buildings.

KANTA
Judith, don't forget that the villas are unpublished, most of the buildings are unpublished, so we shouldn't talk from unpublished evidence, because when they are published we may be surprised as to what happens.

WEINGARTEN
I'd be surprised to know when some of them were destroyed. Already, that would be a great step forward.

REHAK
Just to reiterate what was being said about things going up at the same time that other things were going down, there is the Palaiokastro building of LM IA date that is destroyed and the building materials are pillared at the beginning or right at the end of the LM IA period and it's basically an open area in LM IB, but not that far away at Gournia Jeff Soles's re-study of the so called palace - I don't think it is - indicates that that is probably a development of the LM IB phase, where you start getting nice architecture and a monumentalisation of the central building. So the more John and I are travelling around Crete the more our heads are spinning because it's not really a coherent picture that's emerging and this is why we're grappling with it. I wanted to say one thing about the religious influence because you brought it up. We actually were starting to think in terms of parallels like Medieval Europe for example, where the Catholic Church is exerting a tremendous amount of influence on the various countries, but not necessarily controlling them in very concrete ways. I mean, the Catholic Church was siphoning off some money, had the power to excommunicate people that didn't agree with its standards, but at the same time nobody is going to say that the pope was controlling the kingdoms of, you know, Italy or Western Europe.

PALAIMA
Holy Roman Empire.

REHAK
Right, well...
PALAIMA

Just neither nor...

REHAK

Right, yet, not Holy not Roman and not an Empire.