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LM III Knossos Outside the Palace: Another Approach to the Tablet/Destruction Date Debate

Last year we held a session on the Aegean around 1500 B.C., and earlier this year one on Crete in LM II. We now continue the journey through time with a session on Crete in LM III. Tom Palaima will first discuss the Linear B tablets from Knossos and what they reveal about the economy and administration, particularly with regard to two major industries reflected in the tablets, the wool industry and the perfumed oil industry. Then I'll survey recent shifts of opinion and the evidence as to *when* this state of affairs existed, that is to say the date of the tablets and of the final destruction of the Palace of Knossos, add some information on sword tablets and swords, and look in particular at the evidence from areas surrounding the palace for information on the nature of Mainland impact and influence, the composition of the population, and the general state of life and society in LM III Crete.

These are, of course, subjects that have aroused fierce disagreement among very distinguished archaeologists. Fortunately, both Tom and I are by nature *reasonable* men, temperate and dispassionate in our views, so that what you hear from us tonight will surely be right.

There is no more contentious issue in all of Aegean Prehistory today than the question of the date of the tablets and the final destruction of the Palace of Knossos. Carl Blegen in 1958 was the first to state publicly that the tablets from Knossos seemed so closely to resemble the tablets he had excavated at Pylos as to make the almost-200-year time gap between their presumed dates seem

unreasonable, and to suggest that the Knossos tablets might belong to a later destruction. A few years later Leonard Palmer fired his salvos, including the charge that Evans had manipulated or changed the evidence in his daybooks concerning the tablets to fit the theory of a 1400 destruction, followed by reoccupation by illiterate squatters. This was met by indignant replies by Popham, Boardman and others. The issue so joined is still very much with us.

The two main positions may be stated as follows. First, there is the traditional British School at Knossos view, enunciated in detail by Mervyn Popham, that the destructions at the end of LM IB—around 1450 B.C. on traditional dating—were caused by invading Mainlanders who established their rule of at least central Crete, with Knossos as their capital, as shown by changes in language, pottery styles and burial practice, and who maintained control through LM II and IIIA until the destruction of Knossos at the beginning of IIIA2 around 1375 B.C., at which moment the tablets are burned and so preserved. On this view the area of the Palace is then largely deserted until the end of IIIB, when there occurs a “religious reoccupation”, to quote Popham.

Second there is the Palmer view that the destruction which baked the tablets occurred around 1200 at the time of the major destructions of the Mainland palaces, or perhaps even later, around 1175—Palmer believed on linguistic grounds that the Linear B tablets from Knossos were later than those from Pylos. In Palmer's view the Palace we see is essentially a Mycenaean palace reconstructed by Mainlanders. To this Wolf Niemeier and Stefan Hiller would add that the destructions of 1450 resulted from Knossos putting down local rebellions or conquering the rest of the island. The new types of tombs, the appearance of many weapons in some tombs and new pottery styles they see as reflecting the new Aegean environment in which Minoan Crete participated. A minor destruction of the Palace at the beginning of IIIA2 marks the Mycenaean conquest, which lasts until a final destruction with tablets around 1200, according to this view.

The belief that the tablets belong with a late IIIB destruction horizon has gained much ground in recent years. First came a book by Erik Hallager in 1977. Time does not permit a synopsis, but Hallager argued among other things that the LM II Palace Style pottery fragments which Evans thought belonged to the final destruction instead came from the fill of floors and walls, and that much LM IIIB pottery was missing because it was taken away by earlier excavators or thrown out by Evans because it was undecorated or decadent. Hector Catling also believes that the tablets were created and destroyed in late IIIB.

Finally last year came Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier, who published in separate editions in English and German, complete with 418 footnotes, his monograph called “Mycenaean Knossos and the Age of Linear B”. The German version has more plates but as far as I can see it is otherwise the same. This monograph contained an interesting photograph taken during Evans’ excavation showing one of the Linear B tablets from the North Entrance Passage close by the double amphorae which have generally been regarded as late. The explanation suggested by John Boardman and by Woodward in his *AJA* article was that the tablets had been “swept in” from elsewhere in a fit of vigorous cleaning, but this photo shows a large tablet shattered but together like a completed jigsaw puzzle; so it's unlikely it was “swept in”. While it is highly likely that the tablet belongs with the double amphorae, the chronological position of these vases poses a problem, as we shall see.

None of this has shaken Mervyn Popham's faith, however. At Knossos last summer, I couldn't resist teasing Mervyn about the fact that the tide of opinion seemed to be running a bit against him, and mentioned that Jerry Rutter, who for many years believed that the tablets were early, two years ago switched and now teaches his Dartmouth students that the tablets and final destruction probably occurred at the end of IIIB. Mervyn replied, “Splendid. Nothing would please me more than to have Jerry Rutter get it all wrong”.

Some scholars have changed their positions more than once in response to new evidence or interpretations. Sinclair Hood first supported the Evans-Boardman-Popham view, subsequently turned to the Palmer position, then in 1966 supported Jacques Raison's suggestion of a middle date, at the end rather than the beginning of IIIA2 for the destruction and tablets, then after Niemeier's paper at the 1981 Cambridge Colloquium accepted Niemeier's argument, previously discussed, for a late date, and most recently has come back at least to the Raison view, and indeed perhaps back to the Popham position. Erik and Brigitta Hallager have also changed position somewhat, and now believe the fire at Knossos which baked at least the main body of tablets occurred at the transition between LM IIIB1 and 2, around 1250 B.C., at the approximate time of the abandonment of Kommos.

Indeed, anyone attempting to reconstruct the history of Crete between 1400 and 1200 from the results of excavations in the Palace of Knossos—that is to say in the area traditionally called the Palace—faces formidable obstacles, not just because of the character of the old excavations—Evans' and MacKenzie's technique was very good for its day—but because of certain general problems of Minoan archaeology.

First, Minoan pottery studies at the moment lag Mycenaean in chronological definition and detail. Blegen, Furumark in particular, E. French and others have been able satisfactorily to isolate chronological stages in Mycenaean pottery in a way not yet achieved in Crete. The closest we have to a Furumark is Mervyn Popham, who has published many extremely important articles and deposits, but not yet a total overview or compendium. Anastasia Kanta's book on Crete in LM III, while an excellent gazetteer with much important information, does not attempt to identify chronological stages.

What, for example, is meant by “LM IIIA2” as distinguished from LH IIIA2? There is perhaps one style of decoration which we might identify as essentially restricted to LM IIIA2, consisting

of a wide band with cross hatchings, three narrow bands and then another wide band. Perhaps the kylix with a convex base occurs mostly in IIIA2, and the champagne goblet seems to start at the end of IIIA1-beginning of A2 though it continues on into IIIB, as Vance Watrous has reminded me. As for the division between IIIA2 and IIIB, of course on the Mainland the principal indicator is the appearance of the deep bowl. E. French has recently reconfirmed that the appearance of the deep bowl marks the beginning of IIIB on the Mainland. However, if you say to Mervyn Popham that the first appearance of the deep bowl marks the beginning of IIIB, he may take you by the hand into the Stratigraphic Museum at Knossos and drag out a vase which anyone would instantly and correctly say is IIIA1, judging from the fabric and the decoration consisting of parallel chevrons, but is indeed a deep bowl. This vase, however, appears to be the sole known exception to the rule, for in Crete as on the mainland, all other deep bowls are IIIB in decoration and appear in IIIB contexts, according to information kindly provided by Sinclair Hood.

Second, there is the possibility of disproportionate retention of pottery from different periods in the Evans excavations. Hallager in particular, as I mentioned earlier, has suggested that Evans had thrown out proportionately more IIIB than anything else because it was undecorated or seemed decadent. Certainly it is true that of the “thousands of late unpainted kylikes, amphorae and jars” noted by Mackenzie not many remain, and of the 40 double amphorae found in close association with the Linear B tablets in the North Entrance Passage only three can be located today. This should not be taken necessarily as a criticism of the excavators, for especially in Crete some sort of weeding out is necessary. Peter Warren estimates, for example, that at Knossos there have been found to date over 1 million conical cups. Of these even today over 4,000 complete examples remain. Now where would you store a million conical cups? (Peter once told his students in jest that I was preparing a *catalogue raisonné* of conical cups.)

One difficulty with this line of argument is that even as regards those examples which remain—that is to say, the unpainted kylikes remaining out of the thousands and the three double

amphorae remaining out of the 40—we can't be certain what the precise chronological implications are, since undecorated kylikes appear in large number in IIIA2 as well as IIIB and the double amphorae are unique, and as far as I can tell, and may belong at the end of IIIA2 or the beginning of IIIB rather than at the end of IIIB. If, however, these double amphorae are late IIIB, then their association with the tablet described suggest that at least some of the tablets are also late IIIB.

It should also be said that there is some pottery which is clearly late IIIB, particularly in the South Propylaeum, an area presumably included in what Mervyn Popham calls the “religious reoccupation” of IIIB involving a nearby cultic area. This, however, is an area lacking tablets, a point stressed by John Boardman.

Finally, there is the problem of how long certain vessels were used. Of course in all societies storing and pouring vessels tend to survive for much longer periods than tableware. In Crete the giant pithoi in particular tended to be used for long periods. There were Middle Minoan pithoi larger than a man still in use in the destruction levels. Paul Faure says that near Sitea he once discovered a Minoan pithos used currently to store olives (although he did not say whether he thought the use was continuous!).

With regard to the seal impressions of the destruction level, we are no better off. To begin with, it is most unfortunate that 50 years after the final publication of the *Palace of Knossos* by Sir Arthur Evans we still have no definitive publication of the sealings, although they certainly have been studied by Margaret Gill and others. The principal problem is that seals may be used for a long time. At Pylos, for example, it is believed that a sealing from a IIIB context was made by a seal of much earlier date. John Betts has doubted whether there were any seals made (or at least made of hard stones) after the beginning of LM IIIA2. For the moment, it is difficult to glean anything of major significance from the sealings as far as the date of the final destruction is

concerned. So also with the ideograms on the tablets, since first of all the ideograms may depict, for example, ritual vessels which themselves are heirlooms, or the ideograms themselves may have become standardized while metal and pottery shapes changed.

For these reasons, it has long seemed to me that the most promising path for progress is to turn from re-analyzing evidence from the old excavations of the Palace and look closely at the more recent excavations of the areas of Knossos surrounding the Palace. We have now had, after all, several generations of excavation, including those at the Gypsades and Acropolis hills to the south and west of the Palace, Mavro Spelio Cemetery to the east, the LM II tombs at the hospital site to the north, the Zapher Papoura and the Sellopoulo Cemeteries to the north, the site of the “Taverna” (the residence quarters of the British School), and more recently the excavations of the Unexplored Mansion by Mervyn Popham, the Royal Road running from the Palace to the west by Sinclair Hood and Peter Warren and finally, in the last couple of years the Stratigraphic Museum extension excavations conducted by Peter Warren, not to mention numerous brief rescue excavations. In which phase does the archaeological evidence best fit the Knossos we know from the records provided by the Linear B tablets?

Let us begin with the cemeteries, particularly the so-called Warrior Graves full of weapons, and compare them to the evidence from a third major category of tablets, the Sword Tablets. The subject has recently been most ably studied by Colin Macdonald, a student of the British School, to whom I'm much indebted for allowing me to see his unpublished dissertation.

The Sword Tablets comprise the so-called RA series. One tablet mentions 50 weapons and another mentions 18 and 99. Twenty more tablets list swords with the totals incomplete, but it is clear that we are talking about a large number of weapons. In some cases fragments of swords were found near the tablets. Can we associate these tablets with any particular swords and any particular burials? Both Nancy Sandars and Hector Catling have concluded that the finest

specimens of sword types C1, D1 and G were made in Knossos. According to Sandars, “D1 is the Knossos sword *par excellence*”. There is one with a crystal hilt and some with gold-covered hilts found at Knossos. Delicate tracery ornament appears on some of the swords and also on spearheads possibly from the same workshop. In Crete the swords are found first and foremost in the so-called Warrior Graves around Knossos beginning in LM II.

The burials dateable to LM II are few and belong to scattered sites such as the New Hospital site and perhaps the earliest burials from the Kephala tholos and the Isopata Royal Tomb, all of which are warrior burials. Hood has suggested the possibility that these scattered burials may indicate a reallocation of land after 1450 B.C. and burial by members of a new warrior class on their own estates.

In LM IIIA, four principal cemeteries are in use at Knossos. Mavro Spelio across the ravine to the east of the Palace and Upper Gypsades to the south are traditional Minoan cemeteries, which were in continuous use from Middle Minoan through LM IIIC. The Mycenaean type of chamber tomb, however, is introduced in Mavro Spelio in Late Minoan IIIA1.

Two other major cemeteries of Knossos begin in LM IIIA1. The largest and richest cemetery, Zapher Papoura 800 meters to the north of the Palace, contains most of the warrior graves. Although a few tombs were still in use in LM IIIB there is no evidence that any were built later than LM IIIA. In addition to chamber tombs of the Mainland type, shaft graves appear here for the first time in Crete. Seven hundred meters northeast is the small cemetery of Sellopoulo, two of whose five tombs are LM IIIA1. Their Mycenaean features have been discussed by Mervyn Popham.

Were the people buried in the warrior graves, or the cemetery as a whole, Mycenaean? What was the role and status in the society of those buried with all the weapons?

Niemeier and Hiller have questioned whether there is any convincing evidence that the people so buried are Mycenaeans or indeed whether there is any strong evidence for Mycenaean presence at Knossos in LM II and IIIA1, or at least any presence other than that of a “praetorian guard”. The prevalence of swords, dirks and daggers in the tombs they would attribute to the spirit of the age, on the Mainland as well as in Crete, and indeed this may have been a violent time. (The excavation of the Unexplored Mansion indicated at least two destructions by fire in LM II, and the excavations at the Stratigraphic Museum site indicate a further violent destruction sometime during IIIA1. However, construction, including construction involving reuse of fine ashlar blocks, such as in the three round structures—the so-called “Dancing Circles”—found in the Stratigraphic Museum excavation also occurs in this period.) Niemeier and Hiller argue that the Palace-Style jars and Ephyrean goblets may be stylistic borrowings rather than evidence of presence of Mycenaeans, and that the chamber tombs of this period have their origin in earlier Minoan chamber tombs in the Mavro Spelio Cemetery, not on the Mainland. The MMIII chamber tombs from Mavro Spelio published by Forsdyke in *BSA* for 1928-29 do indeed display the later Mainland features of regular construction and few burials. But what is of interest is the appearance for the first time in LM IIIA1 at Mavro Spelio as well as the cemeteries to the north of the Palace of a specific type of chamber tomb, with a keyhole-shaped entrance and a long dromos narrowing as it rises to ground level. These chamber tombs clearly achieve their florescence on the Mainland, as in tomb 505 at Mycenae. Moreover, as Hartmut Matthäus has shown, the funerary goods in Tomb 4 Sellopoulo, Tomb 14 at Zapher Papoura and Tomb 2 at Dendra on the Mainland are notably similar, including the curious feature of pairs of mirrors and razors. We should also take note of the fact that both the Zapher Papoura and Sellopoulo cemeteries contain mainland-type shaft graves. Finally, one of the major tombs at nearby Archanes, constructed at the end of IIIA1 or beginning of IIIA2, probably just before the destruction of Knossos, was of such clear mainland character that its excavator, John Sakellarakis, named it “The Tomb of the Mycenaean Princess.”

On the whole, the Zapher Papoura and Sellopoulo cemeteries to the north of the Palace, begun and principally used in IIIA, are significantly different from the Mavro Spelio and Gypsades cemeteries, and appear likely to be the principal place of burial for the Mycenaean segment (and perhaps those with whom they intermarried).

What was the status of the people buried in these tombs? Note first that even where the warrior graves are most concentrated, they represent only a small proportion of the total burials. At Zapher Papoura only seven out of 100 burials contain swords. Those buried with the splendid swords and other weapons have been called a “military aristocracy”, but by no means all warrior graves are rich in non-military grave goods nor do all rich burials have a military appearance. Several warrior graves are extremely rich in other grave goods as well as weapons, especially Zapher Papoura 36 and Sellopoulo Tomb 4, Burial 1, which have been described as “princely” burials. A number of tombs with weapons also contained gold chains, which led Popham to suggest that the chains may have been insignia of rank. (If this was the custom, its origin may have been Minoan; consider the Chieftain Cup, where the “officer” with a sword seems to wear some sort of collar chain, and the “Prince” to whom he is reporting wears chains of some sort, not necessarily gold, at the neckline, upper arm and wrist.) On the other hand, two of the five tombs with gold necklaces are completely non-military in appearance. Both of these tombs were furnished with gold signet rings, bronze mirrors, tin-coated kylikes and such exotic objects as an ivory boat and, in Zapher Papoura 66, a faience cylinder seal. Similarly at Archanes Tholos A has no weapons but some of the finest jewelry ever found in the Aegean; this tomb, however, was in all likelihood the tomb of a woman. Conversely, many of the warrior graves are very modest. In other words, some of the men buried in the warrior tombs may have been part of an aristocracy, which however was unlikely to have been exclusively military (unless most of the wealthy burials without weapons were those of women, or burial customs changed). What the comparable situation was at Mycenae we cannot know, since all the great tholoi have been

looted, but at Dendra we have on the one hand the famous burial with the cuirass and on the other Dendra Tomb 10 with no weapons but extremely fine jewelry.

LM IIIA is also the period when dedications of weapons occur by the ton for the first time in the Diktaian Cave, as Vance Watrous, who is publishing the pottery from the Cave, has kindly informed me. At the peak sanctuary of Kato Syme 3 very fine bronze swords were dedicated sometime after LM I. Note that these dedications are taking place at traditional Minoan shrines, difficult to reach, and that Dikte is the birthplace, in later Greek mythology, of Zeus. To make the circle complete, one of the Knossos tablets refers to Diktaian Zeus. The tablets in general show an intermingling of Greek and non-Greek divinities.

Finally, it is worth noting that a workshop producing extremely fine swords probably existed at Knossos in LM IIIA1 to 2, but after LM IIIA2 a decline is apparent in bronze working as well as many other crafts. The uniformity of sword types disintegrates during LM-LH IIIB so that by the 12th century many Aegean swords appear to be practically *sui generis*. Similarly the warrior graves cease after IIIA2 at Knossos.

Can we conclude, therefore, that the Sword Tablet inventory belongs with the swords in LM IIIA, and provides evidence of a destruction then? Here a note of caution is in order, for consider the comparable situation on the Mainland. Catling and others have written of the bronze shortage of Late Helladic IIIB, for weapons (and indeed bronzes of every type including vessels) generally cease to appear in Mainland tombs at this time. This would be convincing were it not for the Pylos Linear B tablets dealing with bronze workers. One broken tablet lists 260 bronze workers. Emmett Bennett has suggested that given the size of the whole tablet, it may originally have listed up to 400 bronze workers as well as allotments of bronze to workshops at various places throughout the Pylian kingdom. While the allotments of bronze to individual workers are small, at least some existed. While a partial change in burial custom is possible, it seems likely

that a combination of reduced supplies of metal arriving from the East and continuous military threat required that all available bronze be kept in circulation. Bearing this caveat in mind, it nevertheless appears that on the evidence of the RA tablets from Knossos on the one hand, and the evidence for a sword workshop at Knossos and of swords and daggers from the warrior graves on the other, that the tablets better fit the situation as we see it reflected in the archaeological record in IIIA rather than at the end of IIIB, and that on this issue we should put a marker on Mervyn Popham's side of the ledger.

Bear in mind also that continuation of traditional Minoan burial practices in on-going Minoan cemeteries, at the same time as the warrior burials to the north, in the light of Lydia Baumbach's demonstration that the Knossos tablets contain a mixture of Greek names and totally non-Greek names which we assume to be Minoan, a combination which exists with regard to all levels of society as reflected in the tablets. The Ayia Triada sarcophagus also shows the employment of Minoan iconography in an upper class, perhaps princely, burial in LM III. At the same time, however, we see a decline in the Neopalatial Minoan practice of mass feasting and/or ritual, to judge from the marked decline in the numbers of that previously ubiquitous Minoan vessel, the conical cup, in LM III.

A second category of evidence may shed light on the nature of the Mycenaean component in the Knossian population. Let us consider in this regard the standard Mycenaean figurines, the well-known Phi, Tau and Psi types, named by Furumark in 1941 after the three letters in the Greek alphabet which they resemble. These figurines, whose typology and history were set forth by Dr. Elizabeth French in the 1971 *BSA*, are omnipresent on Mainland sites in the Argolid, Boeotia, Attica and Messenia starting in Late Helladic IIIA1 and continuing into IIIC, with the Phi's being generally earlier and the Psi's later. The concentration is heaviest in the Argolid. From Schliemann's excavations at Mycenae there are about 500 in the National Museum in Athens. Others were given as gifts to museums around the world. Subsequent excavations in the general

area of Mycenae have produced another 1,100, and there must be many more from the excavations of Mylonas which are not yet published.

At Knossos the situation is completely different; not a single figurine has been reported from the palace itself, and only a single late Psi type from the Royal Road excavation. In the Shrine of the Double Axes in the southeast corner of the Palace, on the raised bench or shelf, there were of course the five Cretan-type figurines, well-modeled and with upraised arms. Perhaps the best known of these is the goddess with doves and indications in paint of seals on both wrists. The date of this late shrine is a subject of much dispute, but it is somewhere between LM IIIA2 and IIIB. There is also what might be called a Phi type from the Unexplored Mansion, but it is modeled and more Cretan in style. Moreover, there are none of the typical Mycenaean animal figurines at Knossos, although they occur in large numbers on the Mainland starting in Late Helladic IIIA.

If Knossos in IIIB is essentially simply another Mainland-style palace, as Palmer maintained, one may legitimately ask, “where are the figurines?” One should keep informed, however, that while the figurines are found throughout the Mycenaean world in Late Helladic III, there may be a concentration in the Argolid. Compare the 1,600 or so already counted at Mycenae with the situation at Pylos where 15 to 16 late Psi type and 13 to 16 animal figurines were found (depending on one's interpretation of enigmatic fragments), mostly from the SW corner of the Palace and the surrounding areas. Of course this may be due at least in part to the fact that a much smaller area has been excavated around Pylos than around Mycenae. Not very many figurines were found in the Palace building at Mycenae either. However, the numbers in Rhodes and Cyprus also seem low when compared to the amounts of Helladic pottery in the East. Just to fill out the picture, a few isolated examples appear at sites such as Miletos and Tell Abu Hawam, and Ras Shamra has about 10 all together.

The concentration in the Argolid is all the more interesting in the light of Erik Hallager's discovery of a number of the figurines in the ritual context from a LM IIIB house with a central hearth at Chania in West Crete. The figurines were grouped around the hearth and five of them, when tested, turned out to have been made of clay from the Argolid. It should be noted that the figurines in the Argolid appear both in settlements and in tombs, particularly though not exclusively in children's tombs. They also appear in clear votive contexts, such as the 75 found in one deposit at Delphi. (This deposit, however, may have resulted from later reburial.)

It is worth noting that in Late Helladic IIIC the standard Mycenaean figurines appear for the first time on the south coast of Crete at a site near Phaistos and in significant numbers in Rhodes and Kos, at the time when there is other evidence of Mycenaean emigration from the mainland.

Unfortunately we know too little yet concerning the precise contexts and distribution of figurines in the Mainland at different times to be confident of the significance of their absence from Knossos. Was their use largely restricted to the humble, as suggested by Tsountas (but denied by French who believes that the evidence cited by Tsountas suggests a chronological rather than sociological distinction), or to women and children? Either hypothesis, if true, could account for their absence from Knossos if only upper class male warriors went to Crete, as a "praetorian guard" or otherwise. Since the figurines are absent at Knossos in LM IIIA as well as IIIB, they offer no help on dating the final destruction, however relevant their absence may be to the question of the degree of Mycenaeanization of Crete in LM III.

Of course all the Cretan archaeological evidence must be considered in light of the overarching facts that 1) the Linear B script contains an early form of Greek, whereas the language behind Minoan Linear A is thought to be non-Indo European, and to utilize a different system of weights, measures and fractions, and 2) in the Cyclades, Dodecanese and sites on the Anatolian Coast, Mycenaean pottery and other remains supplant Minoan after LM II.

Finally, let us return once more to the pottery. If the amount of undecorated LM IIIB pottery excavated by Evans in the Palace is uncertain, what about the pottery from all the areas surrounding the Palace? That there was LM IIIB occupation at many points around the Palace is clear. There is some LMIIIB from the Little Palace and the Unexplored Mansion, a little thus far from Gypsades, probably some (depending on the categorization of certain sherds as IIIB rather than IIIC) from the Stratigraphic Museum site, but less elsewhere. Nowhere is there evidence of significant new construction. At the Stratigraphic Museum site, for example, after the LM IIIA2 occupation the next significant building period appears to be IIIC.

If the tablets belong at the end of IIIB as the currently popular view holds, the relative insignificance of late IIIB occupation and activity is hard to understand. Recall that the wool tablets list 100,000 sheep. Professor Killen has argued that the wool industry as disclosed by the tablets was as important to Knossos as it was to 14th Century England, and that it would take all of central Crete to graze 100,000 sheep. The control of herding on this scale and of the complex cloth manufacturing recorded by the tablets, plus administration of the extensive oil, perfume, sword and other industries indicated, clearly implies the presence of wealth, stratification, a military class and a considerable bureaucracy and supporting cast living nearby. It is difficult to match the picture provided by the tablets with the physical evidence of III B occupation at Knossos.

Do we have here strong evidence against the proposition that the Palace was flourishing until the end of IIIB? Again, a caveat is in order. Remember that in general Mainland palaces, or at least their central buildings, are small compared to Knossos. It may just be possible that everyone needed crowded into part of the central building of the Palace of Knossos, with a few bronze workers left over at the Unexplored Mansion, where only one-fourth of the former Minoan grand dwelling was ever used again, and where crude cross walls were built and a metal working

installation established. Moreover, undecorated IIIB pottery from Evans' excavations may have been discarded from the areas around the Palace. Still it seems to me that the absence of evidence of substantial and extensive IIIB occupation surrounding the Palace argues against dating the tablets to late IIIB. Going further afield, the almost island-wide Knossian pottery koiné of LM IIIA1 better fits the tablet evidence of a Knossos controlling almost the whole of Crete than do the more localized pottery styles of IIIB. Moreover, the types of weapons, jewelry and chamber tomb with long dromoi described above found at Knossos also appear at various sites in the central zone of Crete in LM IIIA but not in IIIB, as Popham has noted. The Linear B tablets burnt in the destruction of Knossos indicate that it is this area which is controlled by Knossos at the time of its destruction.

Have we thus saved Mervyn Popham and routed Palmer, Hallager, Hiller, Niemeier, Catling, Hood, Rutter *et. al.* as to the date of the Knossos Linear B tablets? Perhaps we should still allow for the possibility that the destruction which baked most of the tablets occurred somewhere later than the beginning of III A2, close to the date of the Raison-Hood intermediate position, that is to say that the destruction occurs closer to 1330 than 1375 BC, and not so far from the vases perhaps not far removed from III B. However, as between a LM IIIA2 and an end of IIIB date for the fire destruction which burnt the great majority of the Knossian Linear B tablets, the archaeological evidence points strongly toward the former. The data with respect to the nature of the occupation of the site of Knossos outside the Palace, the numbers of swords and seals, the presence or absence of elite crafts and construction techniques, and nature of elite burials are consistent with the picture of life, administration and production provided by the Knossos tablets early in LM IIIA2, but not at the end of LM IIIB.