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Studies in Honor of Joseph and Maria Shaw

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and Hector Williams

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This is a collection of papers presented in honor of Joseph and Maria Shaw. The articles within this festschrift, written by many specialists in Minoan and Mycenaean art and archaeology, pertain to Aegean Bronze Age architecture, harbors, frescoes, and trade.

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Neopalatial Knossos: Rule and Role

Malcolm H. Wiener

Some years ago Colin Renfrew challenged me to state in a paper why I believed that Crete in the Neopalatial period was under unified rule from Knossos, in contrast to his advocacy of the peer-polity interaction model for Neopalatial Crete (Renfrew 1986; Cherry 1986).* My eightfold argument follows.

1. The Extension of Knossian Control Following the End of the Old Palace Period

After the destructions at the end of MM IIB and in MM IIIA, Knossos was the only palace/great administrative center left standing. Moreover, it seems clear that Knossos played a role in the reconstruction of the political and economic landscape of Crete which followed. The extent of the destructions across the face of Crete is not always appreciated. At Phaistos the palace suffers a massive MM IIB destruction at the end of the Old Palace period, probably due to a catastrophic earthquake. The following "fase III" (MM IIIA) shows two aborted attempts at reconstruction followed by abandonment in MM IIIB and LM IA at the time of peak Knossian power and influence in the Aegean (La Rosa 1989, 91–92; 1995; 2002). At the end of MM III, Hagia Triada becomes the administrative and cultic center of

*It is a pleasure to offer this paper in tribute to Joe and Maria Shaw, dear friends, generous colleagues, distinguished scholars, and fellow advocates for the role of Knossos.

south-central Crete and exhibits dominant Knossian influence in all aspects of cultic feasting, architecture, wall paintings, stone vases, and pottery (La Rosa 1995, 890). The Neopalatial palace at Phaistos is built in LM IB over the remains of the Old Palace, but the New Palace displays no evidence of literacy or administration (notwithstanding the fire destruction at the end of LM IB), no figurative frescoes, and little in the way of valuable finds (La Rosa 2002, 89–92). Administration, accompanied by finds of great value, is centered at Hagia Triada, which is described by La Rosa as "sous le contrôle plus ou moins direct de Cnossos" during LM I (La Rosa 2002, 94; for the relations between Phaistos, Kommos, and Hagia Triada in the Neopalatial period, see Shaw 2002; Warren 2004, 163–164). At Myrtos Pyrgos, also on the south coast, the settlement is destroyed at the end of MM IIB and is seemingly unoccupied during MM III, whereas, in LM IA, a "country house" is constructed that "is so Knossian that one feels a Knossian master-builder must have come to make it" (G. Cadogan, personal communication of 31 January 2007, for which I am most grateful).

At Malia, Quartier Mu is destroyed at the end of MM IIB and left a highly visible ruin. The rebuilt Neopalatial palace has similarly revealed no evidence of literacy or administration. Various other sites in east-central Crete such as Myrtos Pyrgos, Gournia, Pseira, and Vasiliki also show some signs of destruction at the end of the Old Palace period. The chain of watchtowers guarding roads in MM II suggests the unsettled conditions of the period, as does in particular the occupation of so extremely austere and inaccessible a refuge site as Katalimata (where even an experienced mountain climber guide refused to go [K. Nowicki, personal communication]). Here, Nowicki found high-quality MM IIB pottery (Nowicki 2001). The inhabitants of Katalimata must have had reason to flee. (The redeposit of MM IIB and earlier burials accompanied by valuable grave goods, including Egyptian imports at the cave at Hagios Charalambos [Betancourt 2004; 2006], may have been the result of similar circumstances and motives related to the expansion of Knossian power.) In the west of Crete, the major Phaistian settlements of Monastiraki and Apodoulou in the Amari Valley are destroyed and never reoccupied. The change in the Pediada district east of Knossos described below is a particularly striking and well-documented example of the extension of Knossian control following the end of the Old Palace period.

2. The Extension of Knossian Control in the Pediada Region

The creation of the Palace at Galatas and the dramatic changes in the surrounding countryside strongly support the case for Knossian expansion and the establishment of Knossian control over the area. In the Old Palace period, the Pediada, whose valleys form natural north–south as well as east–west corridors, appears to be part of a Malia-Myrtos Pyrgos subregion (Cadogan 1983; 1988; Panagiotakis 2003, 370; connections to Knossos are discussed in Panagiotakis 2004). In MM II, links also exist between the Pediada and Phaistos as well as Malia (Van de Moortel 2006, 858–859). All sites in the Pediada are at elevations of 300–400 meters, and some are enclosed by walls, giving the appearance of sites created with defense in mind (Panagiotakis 2003; 2004, 180 and sources cited therein). In the New Palace period, the picture changes completely. A palace on Knossian lines is established at Galatas, at which all aspects of life, from architecture (with over fifty mason's marks of Knossian type) to wall painting to pottery to cult practice, appear Knossian or Knossian-derived (Rethemiotakis and Christakis 2004). The visual orientation of the site on the great Knossian peak sanctuary of Mt. Juktas rather than nearby Prophetes Elias may also be significant. (Juktas is visible from the central court and also from the north court with its ritual installations, but the orientation of its courts does not align exactly with the peak [L.V. Watrous, personal communication of 3 March 2007].)

On the nearby hilltop of Kastelli, excavation has revealed another large central building surrounded by a large Neopalatial settlement. The central building displays a carefully made paved and pebbled court, colonnaded south facade, large Minoan hall,

stepped structures and a raised platform under a stoa, and fine painted plaster floors. The MM III–LM IA horizon at Kastelli has produced evidence for large-scale Knossian-style communal feasting in the form of large numbers of cups and chalices, libation tables, and cooking vessels (Rethemiotakis 1997; K. Dimopoulou and G. Rethemiotakis, pers. comm. of 2 March 2007, for which I am most grateful). In addition, the Pediada contains two "mansions" with fine ashlar masonry built in this period, which await excavation. One lies near the villages of Episkopi and Aitania between Galatas and the port of Amnisos; the other is near Alagni, three kilometers northwest of Galatas. Together they are well positioned to dominate the two primary routes from Galatas to Knossos, Archanes and the port of Poros to the northeast, and Amnisos to the north (Rethemiotakis and Christakis 2006. I am extremely grateful to the authors for sharing this information).

The countryside is densely populated. Watrous and Buell conclude on the basis of their intensive survey of the area that "the Neopalatial period marks a *dramatic change* in the settlement of our region. Site numbers increase sharply, and site functions become specialized . . . *It seems that the establishment of a palace at Galatas was accompanied by a massive, centrally controlled settlement and organization of the region*" (Watrous and Buell 2007). They note further that the Pediada displays wide contacts only during periods of imperial expansion, as during the Venetian–Ottoman period, the Roman Empire, and the Neopalatial period (see section 8 below). The island of Pseira displays a similar history, with a destruction in which the MM IIB town was almost completely destroyed, followed in LM I by what appears to be a new settlement showing strong Knossian links and an Old Palace period cemetery no longer in use. Betancourt and Davaras, the excavators of Pseira, note that "considerable Knossian influence was present at Pseira in LM I, making a distinct contrast with the almost entirely local east Cretan products that were used in the preceding period" (Betancourt and Davaras 2000, 50, fig. 59; see also Betancourt 2005, 290–291). Knossian influence becomes apparent as well in the eastern Mesara in the Neopalatial period (Warren 2004, 164), perhaps transmitted via the Pediada. In sum, Knossos in MM IIIA appears to move swiftly to occupy and settle the Pediada with its key transportation routes, together with key sites along the north coast of Crete.

3. The Increasing Importance of Knossos in the Neopalatial Period

Knossos dwarfs all other Aegean sites in the Neopalatial period. Already in the Old Palace period, the palace at Knossos is twice the size of the palace at Phaistos, and both Knossos and Malia display greater evidence of foreign contacts than Phaistos. Moreover, the palace at Knossos is surrounded by an array of fine ashlar buildings such as the Little Palace/Unexplored Mansion, the House of the High Priest, the House of the Chancel Screen, the South House, the South-East House, and others. The Central Court of the palace is considerably larger than all others, and its ceremonial West Court may have been enormous. Warren notes that it may extend to the modern car park (1994, 196–199, 203–204; 2004, 163; see also Fotou 2004, 98; Letesson and Vansteenhuyse 2006). The replacement at Knossos in the Neopalatial period of the previously employed hieroglyphic script by the Linear A script used at Phaistos in the Old Palace period may signal the wholesale transfer of Linear A scribes from the abandoned palace at Phaistos to Knossos.

Whereas most of the Old Palace period peak sanctuaries, so notable a part of the ritual landscape, go out of use in the Neopalatial period, Mt. Juktas above Knossos assumes increasing importance. Kophinas to the south, which remains in use, is visually connected to Juktas. The sanctuary of Kato Syme in the remote southeast now receives visitors and offerings from most areas of Crete to judge from the pottery deposited, suggesting a unified ritual landscape. The similarity of inscriptions on libation tables deposited at various sanctuaries also suggests religious uniformity (Xanthoudides 1907; Brice 1965, 56–58; Grumach 1968. Owens [1996, 163] reports 46 examples of the Libation Formula). Knossos is the likely cosmological center of Crete in this period (Soles 1995), as it had been for millennia before (Manning 1999, 472).

4. The *Pax Minoica* in the Neopalatial Period

The phenomenon of the structures known as "villas" or "country houses," a feature unique to the Neopalatial period, deserves special consideration. They sit undefended and indefensible in the countryside with their surrounding structures or as parts of small villages (Cadogan 1997a, 230), apparently as part of a unified and secure political landscape. The phenomenon of the isolated and undefended "villa" or "country house" with its neighboring structures exists in east Crete as well as all other areas, for example at Zou, Manares, Vai, Achladia, Prophetes Elias, and at least nine others (Driessen and MacGillivray 1989, 103; Tsipopoulou and Papacostopoulou 1997). Other isolated buildings such as the structure at Anemospilia on the road to the peak sanctuary on Mt. Juktas appear to serve cultic functions. The "country houses" accordingly take their place along with the apparently unwalled cities of Neopalatial Crete as reflections of an internal *pax minoica*, dependent on a dominant power with broad jurisdiction.

5. The Spread of Knossian Cultural Influence

In LM I, Knossian styles of architecture, wall painting, and pottery become predominant throughout Crete (Niemeier 1984, 214; Wiener 1990, 134–143, 154). The images presented in Knossian wall paintings, seal impressions, and luxury products conveyed powerful religious/ideological messages (Blakolmer 1999, 50). Knossian cultic feasting practices and organization appear universal as well, as indicated by the vast numbers of conical cups that appear at all sites in the Neopalatial period. Warren has estimated on the basis of the sherds from his Stratigraphic Museum excavation at Knossos that the whole of Knossos would produce a total of 47,000,000 fragments (!) of conical cups, with few joins, for all periods, with a heavy concentration in the Neopalatial period (1993, 219). The numbers recovered are vast everywhere and suggest that a larger proportion of the populace than before is participating in mass rituals, and/or that larger work forces are being utilized on centrally directed construction projects. The fact that the conical cups found at the palaces seem to be of poorer quality than those found in fine houses (Gillis 1990, 148–149) may be indicative of such palatially directed activities. Cadogan concludes that the explosion of construction projects, including grand villas and town mansions, in LM I was directly connected to the establishment of peace in Crete, guaranteed by a dominant power (Cadogan 1997b). Warren, in his fine-grained study of the impact of Knossos in various spheres, proposes that, at a minimum, Knossos controlled central Crete and the harbors on the north, east, and south coasts, but that it was unnecessary for Knossos to control inland areas east of western Dikte, which could have been controlled at least in part by Malia (Warren 2004, 164). Even if this area were not under the direct control of Knossos, however, it does not seem likely that any activity contrary to the interest or will of Knossos would have been allowed to continue, and the same principle is likely to apply with regard to western Crete.

6. Kato Zakros as a Knossian Port

The situation and finds from Kato Zakros on the east coast of Crete argue strongly for its role as a key port for overseas trade in a unified Knossian state. Unlike the palaces of Knossos, Phaistos, and Malia, each set among fertile plains and valleys, Zakros had limited hinterland that was insufficient to provide a surplus of grain (although the site was near vineyards and olive groves). Halstead (1981, 203) and Moody (1987, 236–237) have noted that the storage areas at Zakros appear to occupy

proportionately much less space than at any of the other palaces (although there exists the possibility that storage spaces once existed in the parts of the east wing now missing, or in the surrounding town where many of the houses consist of one main room accessible from the street, surrounded by storage areas [Chrysoulaki and Platon 1987, 78], or that storage areas have not been recognized because of the use of baskets that have not survived in the archaeological record). Yet the wealth of finds in terms of luxurious finished products (bull's head rhyton, vase with gold and rock-crystal handle, etc.), the abundant indications of major foreign trade (copper ox-hide ingots, elephant tusks, etc.), and the evidence of intensive administration in the form of sealings from House A all point to the central role of Zakros in Cretan trade with the East. After the Theran eruption toward the end of LM IA, construction began on new palaces at Phaistos in the south and at Kato Zakros, perhaps better protected from tsunamis than the harbor of Palaikastro farther north. In contrast to the architecture and pottery at Zakros of the preceding periods, which appear almost entirely local in character, that of the LM IB period follows Knossos in all respects, including many detailed aspects of architecture, use of imported stone, water supply, wall paintings, iconography, stone rhyta, precious materials such as ivory, faience, and ostrich eggs, and particularly pottery (N. Platon 1974, 228; L. Platon 2004). The rectangular palace building with its many Knossian features and Building G with its rectangular layout, portico with a single column, vestibule on an axis with the main hall, and decorated floors are superimposed on earlier, less regular buildings and cover part of the old road. In LM I, luxury workshops are concentrated at Knossos and Zakros—gold, sealstones, faience, and stone vases at Knossos; stone vases, faience, bronze, ivory, and rock crystal at Zakros. Egyptian stone vases are found at both sites (Moody 1987, 237; Branigan 1989, 70).

House A, located on a hill overlooking the harbor and situated on a road connected to the harbor and the palace, contained in its LM IB destruction level the second largest sealing archive found in Crete. While the Linear A tablets recovered from the palace list the usual collection of agricultural products, the sealing archive at House A is of a far different character. It consists of approximately 1,070 seal impressions stamped by at least 214 separate seals on 554 objects, of which 490 are nodules bearing impressions of parchment on their bottom surfaces (Weingarten 1983, 38–44; Hallager 1996, 137–145; Wiener 1999, 415). Almost all of the sealings are impressed on local clay. Examination of the backs of the sealings recovered from House A indicates that 88 percent had once been attached to parchment documents, compared to only seven percent at Hagia Triada, the site of the largest known Minoan archive. Seventy percent of the nodules from Zakros are stamped on more than one side, whereas in the rest of Crete the number of nodules stamped on more than one side known to date is very small, with the exception of the sealings from the Knossos palace. At Knossos, the nodules with multiple impressions from two Neopalatial deposits (perhaps somewhat earlier in date than the Zakros deposit) comprise almost half the total in each case, perhaps further indication of the special link between Knossos and Zakros.

The Zakros multiple sealing system is a closed system—the seals of participants appear only in combination with other such seals and never individually. Some combinations of seals always appear together, but there are 100 different combinations in all, more than would be needed at one time for purely local administration, which in any event could be accomplished on the standard clay tablets, which are much less labor intensive and less valuable than parchment. Parchment, however, could travel by ship. (The one clay tablet at House A lists large amounts of grain and figs. Grain and dried figs could be utilized aboard ship as rations.) Overall, the impression from the seals is one of state administration of overseas trade, or of the creation and provisioning of ships and crews for trading and raiding.

7. The Island-wide Knossian Administration

The existence of identical or very similar seal impressions—both on clay that appears to be central Cretan and on clay that appears to be local—at six sites on Crete and at Akrotiri on Thera, made by what in all likelihood were Knossian palatial gold rings, suggests the existence of island-wide Knossian administration (Betts 1967, 15–28; Hallager 1997, 215; contra, in part, Weingarten 1991, 308–310). Fifty-five such impressions are known to date, spanning the period from the late LM IA destruction horizon on Thera to the LM IB destructions in Crete, with one ring in use in both periods (Doumas 1995; Weingarten 1997, 784). The seal impressions from Akrotiri and Hagia Triada were stamped on nonlocal, and probably Knossian, clay (Weingarten 1991, 309). Erik Hallager's study of the impressions concludes that those on local clay were stamped by administrators sent out from Knossos (1997, 215). A ring matrix found at Knossos showing a seated goddess receiving an offering is closely paralleled by a nonidentical ring impression from Zakros (Betts 1967, 20, fig. 10). A number of the seal impressions from the same Knossian gold ring found at five sites outside Knossos show a scene of bull-leaping, and there are examples showing bull-leaping from other rings at Sklavokambos and Hagia Triada (Hallager 1997, 215). Maria Shaw in particular has argued persuasively that bull imagery in Crete was the prerogative and insignia of Knossos (e.g., 1995, 105; 1996, 190; 1997, 501; see also Betts 1967, 27; Hallager and Hallager 1995, 550).

8. Minoan Dominance in the Aegean

The Minoan role in the Aegean in LM I provides a further strong argument for a unified and purposeful Crete. Discoveries since 1989, when I presented the argument in "Isles of Crete" (Wiener 1990), have strengthened the case for Minoan dominance in the Aegean. I proposed then that while the impact of Minoan Crete on Mycenaean Greece rested on cultural appeal of the nature of a "Versailles Effect," the impact of Crete on the Cyclades and Dodecanese was of a different kind, requiring the presence of significant numbers of Minoans and/or their descendants living on the various islands under a Knossian-directed *pax minoica*. The vast Cretan advantage over the islands of the Cyclades and Dodecanese in terms of population, wealth, access to bronze for weapons, organization, technological skills, and literacy is not in doubt. Scenes of sieges and warfare on metal vessels, wall paintings, rings, and seals may indicate Minoan military prowess (Hiller 1984; 1999; Hood 1984; Manning 1986; Wiener 1990, 150–151). Only Crete in this period had extensive contacts with the Near East and Egypt. The great amount of bronze acquired by Neopalatial Crete, on an island with scanty sources of copper and no tin, required the outfitting of ships and crews and the utilization of ports of call for voyages. (It is inconceivable that Crete waited passively for foreign ships to arrive with something so essential as bronze, or copper and tin, to the survival and prosperity of a Bronze Age society.) Sites in the Aegean and Dodecanese show Cretan influence in nearly every dimension.

In the sphere of ritual and culture, recent work underscores the closeness of iconography and technique in wall paintings between Minoan Crete and Thera. Boulotis concludes that the ties between Akrotiri and Knossos "are becoming ever clearer" (2005a, 69); Younger notes that many white-background frescoes are known from Crete as well as Thera (2007); Georma and Nikolakopoulou observe that the wall paintings from Building Beta at Thera bear a close resemblance to paintings from Knossos and Hagia Triada (2007), and Televantou refers to Crete as the center around which Theran painting developed (2000, 831). The question of Minoan presence on the islands and on the coast of Asia Minor at Miletus and other sites rests, however, not so much on the existence of Minoan iconography, religious symbolism, architectural features (e.g., the similarity of Xeste III on Thera to the Royal Villa at Knossos as described by Fotou and Michailidou [2006, 92–95]), Minoan techniques of

firing pottery (Kaiser 2005, 193–194) and of stone-vase manufacture (Warren 1979, 103–108), the use of the Minoan Linear A script and the Minoan system of weights, or the similarity in general of luxury products, but rather on the evidence of Minoan ways of cooking and weaving, and the pervasive mass use of that peculiarly Minoan ritual feasting implement, the conical cup, on all the sites in question. On Thera, each building complex possessed hundreds of conical cups, reflecting an explicitly Cretan practice (Boulotis 2005a, 63). At Hagia Eirene on Kea, every house had masses, with about 20 per inhabitant counted to date. Pottery scatters in the countryside of Kea consist solely of pottery of Minoan type, such as conical cups and legs from tripod cooking pots (Davis and Cherry 1990, 188). On Kea, pottery in the Middle Cycladic tradition seems to have vanished by LM IA, whereas on Thera the continuing evolution of the local pottery tradition (Marthari 1987) and the presence of Cycladic serving and cooking vessels (Kriga 2007) alongside those of Minoan-type indicate the continuation of the Cycladic element of the population. Minoan "fireboxes," perhaps intended for dispensing aromatic scents, are found only on Crete, Kea, and the other Minoanized islands and coastal sites. The structure the excavators called the Temple contained 50 large terra-cotta female statues of purely Minoan inspiration with flounced skirts and bare breasts. Some have breasts built around conical cups; as Warren once observed, "one cannot get more Minoan than that" (P. Warren, personal communication; Caskey 1986, esp. 29, pls. 32e–g, 37a). On the hillock of Troullos, there exists what appears to be a Minoan-type peak sanctuary.

Every house excavated on Kea also possessed metallurgical equipment (Wiener 1990, 133). In sum, Hagia Eirene in LM IA appears to be a Minoan processing port for metals from the mines of Lavrion across the strait. A fortification wall surrounding the site was destroyed around the MM IIIB–LM I transition, and when repaired it was compromised by a path built over part of the wall to permit easy access to a spring (E. Schofield, personal communication in the weeks prior to her premature passing, a parting most keenly mourned and a major loss to Aegean prehistory). This change, seen in the light of the extent of Minoanization of Kea in this period, suggests the existence of a *pax minoica,* maintained if necessary by Minoan ships and warriors such as those depicted on seals, stone and metal vessels, the Town Mosaic from Knossos, and the fresco from the West House at Thera and implied by the existence of great Minoan swords, extending from the early examples at Malia—described by Sandars as swords to which "the armourers of Egypt and the Levant could produce nothing to compare" (1963, 119)—to the Type A swords of LM IA (Hood 1980), to the swords found in the LM IB burial at Poros (Dimopoulou 1999, 29–31, figs. 1–7). (The general prevalence of warfare in prehistory is discussed in Guilaine and Zammit [2005] and in Carneiro [1970], who describes the pervasive cross-cultural phenomenon of the aggregation of villages into chiefdoms and chiefdoms into states through warfare.) Of course, there is no reason to assume that relations between Crete and the island and coastal sites described were generally hostile prior to the arrival of Minoan settlers; rather, some or all island elites may have been content and indeed eager to participate in the protected trade, prosperity, and cultural exuberance of the *pax minoica.* (Trendy postmodern attempts [e.g., Hamilakis 2002] to explain the Minoan impact on the Cyclades, Dodecanese, and the coast of Asia Minor as the consequence of competition for social prestige among local indigenous non-Minoan elite "factions" [for which there is no evidence whatever] ignore basic Neopalatial Aegean realities.)

The excavations of W.-D. Niemeier and B. Niemeier at Miletus on the Anatolian coast have again shown all the indicia of a typical LM I Minoan colony, with 95 percent of the pottery of Minoan type and evidence of Minoan cult and administration. Indeed, at Miletus, the first Minoan settlers may already have arrived in the Old Palace period, spurred by the desire for access to copper and tin (Niemeier and Niemeier 1997, 229–240; Niemeier 1998, 32–34; 2005; Kaiser 2005). These include: 500 complete and 8,000 fragmentary conical cups amid all other typical forms of eating, drinking, storing, and pouring vessels, with very little Anatolian-style pottery present; Minoan-type kilns; typical Minoan cult equipment, including the iconography and technique of wall painting; six Linear A inscriptions, five of which were incised on locally-made pots before firing; and weights of Minoan type and system. At Miletus as at Akrotiri on Thera and at all sites on Crete, the technique or organization of weaving changes; while spindle

whorls are found at these sites in the Old Palace period, by LM I they disappear almost completely (W.-D. Niemeier, personal communication of 7 February 2007; Tzachili 1990, 386), suggesting that perhaps spindle whorls made of wood have come into use (as in Egypt). Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier accordingly concludes that Miletus in LM I constituted a full Minoan settlement colony, which followed in the footsteps of a Minoan community colony of merchants that had arrived in Miletus in the Old Palace period (Niemeier 2005, 9; the terms "settlement colony" and "community colony" are defined in Branigan 1981, 26). Niemeier reaches a similar conclusion as to the existence of a Minoan settlement colony at Trianda on Rhodes (Niemeier 2005; see also Wiener 1984). Recent years have also witnessed the discovery of Minoan administrative devices—roundels and sealings—of likely MM III date on Samothrace (Matsas 1991) and evidence of some LM I Minoan presence on Lemnos (Boulotis 2005b; Cultraro 2005) on the routes to metal sources in the Rhodope Mountains or via the Troad.

Branigan observes that it is as if energies previously needed internally were released (1989, 70–71). The purposive outward thrust of Crete in LM IA and the resulting import on the Cyclades, Dodecanese, and coast of Asia Minor suggests the existence of a Crete unified in some manner at home. Knossos, operating on a scale an order of magnitude greater than any other site in the Aegean at the time, is the obvious hub of the thalassocracy. (The nature of the fit between the archaeological and the literary tradition of a Minoan thalassocracy is discussed in Niemeier 2005, 1.) Finally, the role of Knossos on the Greek mainland, in the Near East, and in Egypt merits brief comment. A "special relationship" between Knossos and Mycenae has long been supposed (Dickinson 1996, 66–67, 70). The appearance of Minoan iconography and technique in wall paintings at Alalakh, Qatna, and Tell Kabri indicates widespread contacts and the fame of Cretan arts and crafts. It is, however, at Tell Dabʿa in Egypt in particular where the wall paintings of bull-leaping or grappling, of griffins, and of a split-rosette frieze display the insignia of Knossos (Shaw 1995, 93).

In the absence of texts, certainty is unattainable. The arguments presented, however, make a strong case for the role and rule of Knossos in Crete and much of the Aegean during part, if not all, of the Neopalatial period.

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