Pax Minoica Revisited

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New Research on Arthur Evans' Concept of the Political Expansion of Minoan Crete

Edited by
Nanno Marinatos, Fritz Blakolmer
and Lefteris Platon

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Table of Contents

Preface 7
by Nanno Marinatos, Fritz Blakolmer and Lefteris Platon

Introduction 9
by Nanno Marinatos, Fritz Blakolmer and Lefteris Platon

Between the Eruption of Thera and the Helladic Conquest of Crete: Known Unknowns 13
by Malcolm H. Wiener

War and Peace: Sir Arthur Evans, the Great War, and the *Pax Minoica* 23
by Nicoletta Momigliano

Sir Arthur Evans and Spyridon Marinatos on the Minoan Dominance of the Aegean 35
by Nanno Marinatos, with an Appendix "A Bull Seal from Routsi" by Nanno Marinatos and Giorgos Rethemiotakis

Problematising Minoan Thalassocracy. A Theoretical Approach to a Longstanding Debate 61
by Diamantis Panagiotopoulos

The Uneven and Controversial Character of 'Minoan' Culture in the Central and Eastern Aegean: A Contextual Analysis 81
by Luca Girella

War or Peace? The Cause of the Destructions of the Neopalatial Sites at the End of the Late Minoan IB Period: Once Again 105
by Lefteris Platon

Offensive Weapons from the Grave of the Griffin Warrior at Pylos 131
by Jack L. Davis and Sharon R. Stocker

On the 'Minoanizing' Character of the Mural Iconography in the Cyclades in the Period of the 'Minoan Thalassocracy' 141
by Fritz Blakolmer

The Minoan Hero-Warrior. War Scenes on Sealings from Agia Triada, Knossos and Zakros 175
by Giorgos Rethemiotakis

A Brief Assessment of Possible Egyptian Influences on Minoan Martial Representations 203
by Richard H. Wilkinson

Why did the Relationship between Egypt and the Minoan World Reach its Zenith in the Era of Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III? 213
by Manfred Bietak

Preface

We cordially thank Manfred Bietak, the editor of the CAENL series, for his unhesitating acceptance in including this publication in this series and for his continuous support. Our gratitude also goes to Harrassowitz publishing house. For financial support we wish to thank the Institute for Aegean Prehistory (INSTAP) and its director Thomas Brogan as well as the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies of the University of Vienna. For editorial and layout works we cordially thank Silvia Prell und Kim-Denise Uhe. Our thanks also go to Giorgos Rethemiotakis without whose intellectual enthusiasm and support this volume may not have been put together.

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Nanno Marinatos, Fritz Blakolmer and
Lefteris Platon
Saronis, Vienna and Athens, January 2025

Introduction

This volume centers on questions associated with '*Pax Minoica*', a keyword that includes great and challenging interconnected subjects such as the existence of a 'Minoan state' and its possible cultural and political expansion throughout the southern Aegean during the 17th–15th centuries. It consists of 11 original articles written by 12 international specialists active in the field of Aegean archaeology (selected by personal invitation). They shed light on topics relevant to the issue by applying different perspectives. The aim of this volume is to present new evidence, research and ideas on these subjects, which challenge, or justify, Arthur Evans' original concept of Minoan expansion.

A similar topic was the theme of a conference with the title *The Minoan Thalassocracy* held at the Swedish Institute in Athens in 1984, which was organized and edited by Robin Hägg and Nanno Marinatos and subsequently published in the *Opuscula Atheniensia* series.[1] Several scholars among those who originally contributed to the *Minoan Thalassocracy* volume were invited to participate, but their own projects and deadlines made it difficult for them to accept in the end. But two of the authors (M. Wiener and J.L. Davis) and one of the editors (N. Marinatos) have taken part in both projects: this provides continuity of time and thought on the nature of Minoan influence in the Aegean.

When compared with the *Minoan Thalassocracy* conference of 1984, one remarks that, since then, hardly any fundamentally new questions have arisen in this field of research, which is of highest significance for our understanding of Neopalatial Crete, the Minoanised Aegean islands and Early Mycenaean Greece. Nonetheless, in the past 40 years, a plethora of new 'hard facts' have surfaced showing the extent of Minoan influence. As well, fresh methodological impulses have been discussed in a variety of articles and conference proceedings.[2] Thus, without any doubt, major progress has been made on the different levels of scholarly discussion in this field (see the contribution by Panagiotopoulos). For example, in the meantime, it is obvious amongst Aegean archaeologists that "cultural supremacy does not necessarily mean political and administrative supremacy" (Hamilakis[3]) while the evidence by the so-called 'Knossos Replica Rings', including the sealings at Akrotiri in Thera, might give support to Evans' concept of a Knossian hegemony.[4]

When we consider 'Pax Minoica', we have to bear in mind that a series of subjects and aspects related to Neopalatial Crete is meant and, confusingly enough, many of them are interconnected with each other: the role of Minoan warfare, fortifications and defense architecture; their absence by no means implies 'peaceful Minoans'. The issue of 'Minoan Thalassocracy' entails models of colonisation, internal rebellions, material culture and identity, economic relations, cultural transformation, ethnicity and other inner-Aegean aspects and perspectives. It was decided to consider also relations to Egypt and the Near East and the impact of the Theran eruption on maritime networks. All these issues are addressed in this volume. This implies that cultural phenomena such as syncretism, hybridisation, acculturation, appropriation, koine, ethnicity, colonialism, threiskeiocracy and, last but not least, the 'Versailles effect' are scrutinised in many of the contributions. Since chronology matters, all the topics in this volume focus on the Neopalatial period of Crete and the early Late Bronze Age Aegean, which encompasses a long span of time. It was an eventful period, instead of a static continuum, as we know today by the individual development of palatial sites throughout the island of Crete.[5]

The present editors thought it useful to re-examine the above-mentioned issues under the impact of recent evidence, such as the new excavations at Pylos (contribution by S. Stocker and J. Davis), but also old and inadequately published material in the Herakleion Museum, which needed re-examination (contribution by G. Rethemiotakis). We have also considered old but inadequately published material from the excavations of Spyridon Marinatos at Peristeria and Routsi (contribution by N. Marinatos). Several Cycladic mural paintings have been discovered since 1984 and they deserve close and careful comparisons with Minoan art (contribution by F. Blakolmer). In summary, in the light of recent discoveries and research, there is new evidence to consider and evaluate.

With regard to the geographical focus of the individual contributions, several of them shed light on the inner-Cretan political situation during the Neopalatial period (M. Wiener, L. Platon), while others investigate the interconnections between Crete and the Aegean islands (L. Girella, D. Panagiotopoulos, F. Blakolmer) and those with the early Mycenaean mainland (J. Davis and S. Stocker, N. Marinatos). Another element we have introduced is the inclusion of Egyptologists, who give their point

1 Hägg and Marinatos (eds.) 1984.

2 See esp. Macdonald, Hallager and Niemeier (eds.) 2009; Molloy 2012; Gorogianni, Pavúk and Girella (eds.) 2016.

3 Hamilakis 2002, 183.

4 Panagiotopoulos 2022.

5 Driessen, Schoep and Laffineur (eds.) 2002.

of view and perspective regarding the relationship between Minoan Crete and Egypt (contributions by M. Bietak and R. Wilkinson).

In addition, we thought that the focus of *Pax Minoica* should not necessarily be the military role of the Minoan navy, as Thucydides implied in his narrative by the word *thalassocracy* – a subject extensively discussed by Ch. Starr in the *Minoan Thalassocracy* volume.[6] Rather, our emphasis is on what Evans *really* meant by *Pax Minoica* (contributions by N. Momigliano and N. Marinatos). Does recent evidence support his vision of a Minoan *trade imperium* in the Aegean?

Although we have tried to have a variety of approaches ranging from theoretical models (contributions by L. Girella and D. Panagiotopoulos) to more traditional art historical analysis (contributions by G. Rethemiotakis and F. Blakolmer) and historical possibilities (contribution by M. Wiener), in the end, most of the authors have been in a dialogue with Sir Arthur Evans: this needs no special apology. A recent Economist issue discusses extensively "Darwin and Dawkins: a tale of two biologists" commenting that "one public intellectual has spent his career defending the ideas of the other." If some authors have taken Evans' ideas for granted, let us be forgiven.

We hope that this volume will contribute fresh new or unrecognised evidence, results and approaches to the ongoing discussion of a cluster of interconnected fundamental subjects of Minoan Crete and related regions in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean.

Nanno Marinatos, Fritz Blakolmer and Lefteris Platon

6 Starr 1984.