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Knossos in LM II-III A2: Tracing Identity Through Material Culture

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I. Introduction: Entering the World of LM II-III A2 Knossos

During the Late Minoan II-III A2 periods, which span the late 15th and 14th centuries BCE, there was a shift in power dynamics and cultural identity that transpired in Knossos, on the island of Crete. It has, for much of this discipline's history, been described as the "Mycenaean Period" of Crete. This apparent conclusion stems from the decipherment of Linear B (the script used by palatial administrations between the late 15th and the early 12th century BCE), allowing linguistic insights (also related to Mycenaean 'Greekness'). This generated the possibility of working backwards, to attribute elements of Knossian material culture from the LM II-III A2 periods to the dominant mainland culture, the burgeoning Mycenaean culture. However, what is at times unclear, even after decades of excavations and research at Knossos, is the extent of the mainland influence, and how much of the innovation seen at Knossos can truly be attributed to external forces.

This thesis focuses on several areas of material culture which have been highlighted with evidence of innovation in the LM II-III A2 periods, including the Linear B administration, pottery, iconography, and mortuary practices. This analysis will be aided by the application of anthropological theories surrounding the creation and evolution of cultural identity and cultural entanglements, as well as comparisons between the material culture of LM II-III A to the preceding Neopalatial period, and analyzing the components of LM II-III A2 material culture which have been evidenced to have a distinct mainland influence. By doing this it is possible to: observe mainland cultural markers during the period concerned, identify which aspects of the material remains from the period may indeed be argued to be of mainland origin, what aspects are Cretan in origin, and rethink the provenance and nature of features that have often been considered to be "Mycenaean". This is not an exhaustive analysis; the discussion on the innovations of Minoan material culture in LM II-III A is a topic of extensive possibilities, not only including administration, pottery and mortuary practices but spreading further into wall paintings, art, architecture, and more. The inquiry that will be investigated in this particular discussion is how the presence of Mycenaean culture seemingly intensified during the LM II-III A periods at Knossos, and what evidence we see of that in the material culture and in the archaeological record. There will also be an investigation on how far that influence spread outside of the palace, and the possibilities of what the nature of the Mycenaean involvement was during that time.

1.1 Proximity and Exchange

Throughout their respective histories, Crete and Mainland Greece shared material culture and aesthetics, with periods where the Minoan culture was the dominant influencing cultural force on the mainland and vice versa. These two groups had been in contact before the formation of the “Mycenaeans” as a distinct cultural group, and the contact between the two areas continued in a more or less unbroken fashion, although “the intensity and the nature of that contact may have varied”¹. Before the supposed “Mycenaean” control of Knossos, there was a decisive “Minoanization” that occurred during the Neopalatial Period, which influenced mainland culture in the Peloponnese and the Argolid, but also stretched throughout the Cyclades and the Dodecanese islands, as far as Lemnos and the Anatolian coast². The Minoan culture had a considerable impact on the emerging Mycenaean culture, and particularly in the Late Helladic I-II periods there are striking similarities between the two cultures, though naturally the extent of this “Minoanizing” varied between mainland groups. It used to be a long-standing agreement that the inhabitants of Mainland Greece and Crete were “distinct ethnic groups”, a belief going as far back as Arthur Evans’ first interpretations and distinctions between Minoan and Mycenaean culture; however, it would be incorrect to assume that they were so distinct that they did not enjoy and participate in cultural exchange, or to assume that the peoples and groups considered themselves entirely distinct from each other³. The “Minoanization” of Mycenaean palace culture in LH IIIA2, and the “Mycenaeanization” of Knossos in LM II-III A are just two instances of this cultural flow that are seen between Crete and the Mainland⁴. The history and context of the relationship between the “Mycenaeans” and the “Minoans” is important, because it can be reasonably assumed that the past experiences shared by the two ethnic groups would influence their relations if any mainland group (the “Mycenaeans”) made long term settlement on the island.

Significant interactions between Crete and the mainland, as stated above, did not begin in the LM II-III A period, and it was not only the widespread Minoan influence in the Aegean region during the Neopalatial Period that was the basis of mainland and Cretan contact. Through archaeological evidence, it can be seen that important centers in Crete such as Chania had

¹ Feuer 2011, 524.

² Koh 2016.

³ Feuer 2011, 524; Bennet 2008.

⁴ Koh 2016.

established trade relationships with Peloponnesian centers as well as Kythera as early as the Early Helladic period⁵. These interactions only intensified over time with Cretan influence on the Greek mainland civilization being “decisive” by the Middle Minoan III period through the LM IB period⁶. These interactions between centers like Chania with Messenia and Laconia, which eventually reached Mycenae, and the material culture produced from these period shows a gradual Creto-Helladic syncretism that was evident before the destructions of LM IB; in the case of Chania, LH IIA pottery was imported to the LM IB settlement, showing a “two-way influence and convergence of Minoan and Mycenaean elements”⁷.

Other evidence of significant interactions between Crete and the mainland have been pointed out by Oliver Dickinson, in his studies of the pottery from the transitional period between the Middle and Late Helladic periods⁸. Dickinson focuses on an aspect of cultural flow that in ways can seem subtle, but have important implications as far as how Minoan ideals and aesthetics were absorbed into the burgeoning Mycenaean culture during a period of transition and change. As mentioned previously, Crete and Mainland Greece enjoyed a close relationship reflected in the influence of Minoan decorative styles on Early Mycenaean pottery. Beginning with LH I the mainland tradition not only import pottery from Crete (specifically in the Peloponnese, which is one of the earliest points of contact between Crete and Mainland Greece), but they began to incorporate Minoan shapes and motifs into their own local traditions⁹. We see a continuation of traditional MH shapes, but also a trend of adopting smaller vessels, particularly cups, jugs, and containers, which draw on Minoan and Cycladic styles; the new motifs adopted, also derived from Minoan and Cycladic repertoires, included “spirals and related curvilinear patterns, some plant-derived patterns, and birds”¹⁰ (Figure 1). Dickinson also emphasizes how the additions of Minoan tradition into the emerging Mycenaean styles during the MH and LH periods are important because they are in large part related to domestic wares, which “surely represent a significant interest in Minoan fashions and practices at a social level below that of the real elite”¹¹. The outside influences on MH and LH pottery was not sweeping, and it is still a very distinct and separate style from the Minoan traditions, but the importance of these

⁵ Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2022, 194.

⁶ Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2022, 193.

⁷ Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2022, 195.

⁸ Dickinson 2014, 2021.

⁹ Dickinson 2014.

¹⁰ Dickinson 2014, 543.

¹¹ Dickinson 2014, 544.

adaptations is the evidence of positive interactions between the two cultures, and the cultural flow of aesthetics and craftsmanship before the Final Palatial Period. As will be properly discussed in the following chapter, cultural identity is in part informed by previous social interactions, and influenced by history; a positive “syncretic” relationship between the two cultures can shed light on the nature of the increased Mycenaean cultural presence in Knossos during LM II-III A2.

1.2 LM IB Destructions and Decline

The shift in power dynamics in the Aegean had a cause that is still mostly obscure, though there are theories which suggest an approximate reasoning. When looking at past events in neat chronological lines it can be easy to think of the history between Mainland Greece and Crete consisting of episodes of asserting dominance in the Aegean, back and forth, with easy transitions and clear phases. Dickinson mentions the issues of this line of thought in his analysis of MH and LH pottery, but his central idea easily carries over into Aegean chronology and terminology writ large; “the change in terminology from MH to LH does not coincide with a change of great historical significance”¹². We measure change through the distinctions in pottery styles and configuration, but in truth the timeline is far more complex and nuanced. Anna Lucia D’Agata and Luca Girella analyze this aspect by suggesting more appropriate ways to view the events and historical processes concerning this period, and interpret how this shift in power dynamics could have occurred¹³. It would be simple to view a Mainland Greek presence at Knossos as a singular, insular event, instead of analyzing previous periods and facets which led to the conception of the Final Palatial Period. In reality, there could have been several catalysts and events that led to the changes seen in LM II-III A2 Knossos, in the Aegean, and on the mainland. Before discussing these causes, D’Agata and Girella state the benefits of understanding an “event” outside of the historical (written) bounds; instead of defining an event as a single immediate action, it is more beneficial to adopt William H. Sewell’s notion of understanding an event as “a structural change that includes a reordering of social structures and the formation of a new order”¹⁴. By using this definition, not only is a historical event given a

¹² Dickinson 2021, 4.

¹³ D’Agata and Girella 2022.

¹⁴ D’Agata and Girella 2022, 14.

wider context, but it also “offers a way for human agency to fit in, regarding it as the ability to generate structural change”¹⁵.

During the Neopalatial period, Cretans were without question a powerhouse in the Aegean, but *at the end* the LM IB period, they experienced a series of upsets which affected their influence and authority, as well as the destruction of several palaces around the island. These destructions were thorough, and in some places it seems they were even targeted: there are destructions recorded in Chania, Phaistos, Mochlos, Gournia, Zakros, Tylissos, and Malia (all of the major centers –some of them seats of literate administrations– on the island), and appeared to deliberately destroy administrative buildings in places such as Pygros and Mochlos¹⁶ (Figure 2). The outcome of these destructions virtually dissolved the Neopalatial territorial organization¹⁷. One theory of what triggered this chain of events was the eruption of Thera and subsequent destruction of Akrotiri; a destruction that would in turn disrupt trade, agriculture, and the economy, and cause a cascade effect of internal strife and led the eventual destructions of LM IB, with Knossos then being an obvious target for enterprising Mycenaean invaders¹⁸. Other theories suggest a Knossian takeover of the island, since the palace of Knossos was mostly spared in the destructions, with mainland groups playing the role of military support and either staying once stability was reestablished, or a new Knossian elite took over after sufficiently “Mycenaeanizing”¹⁹. Whatever theory to which one subscribes, however, the idea is clear: there is a continuation of sources of stress that were “crucial to trigger alternative trajectories of growth within the island political system”²⁰. The outcome of these stressors was a total rearrangement of social structure on the island; the previous system of palaces is completely overturned, and a new state emerges, one that, importantly, “sinks its roots in the economic behaviors that can be observed in the cultures of the Greek mainland since the 3rd millennium”²¹. Knossos is the only palace apparently to have avoided destruction at the end of LM IB and it is also the one site that seems to accommodate during LM II-IIA the institution of the *wanax*, a central power figure (‘king’) in whose hands is concentrated the power of running administration

¹⁵ D’Agata and Girella 2022, 14.

¹⁶ Rehak and Younger 1998, 148.

¹⁷ D’Agata and Girella 2022, 28.

¹⁸ Mee 2011, 16.

¹⁹ Rehak and Younger 1998, 149.

²⁰ D’Agata and Girella 2022, 29.

²¹ D’Agata and Girella 2022, 15.

and the control over territory²². With this weakening of Minoan power, there is seemingly a rise in Mycenaean power and influence, and ultimately culminates in a new “Mycenaeanized” administration of Knossos until the final destruction of palaces between the 14th and 13th centuries BCE²³.

1.3 The Power in a Name

Most of the epistemological discourse surrounding Crete and Mainland Greece centers around the two monolithic (as well as contrastive) categories of *Minoan* and *Mycenaean*. These are completely fabricated terms, created through a process which will be discussed at length in the following chapter. What this chapter has aimed to establish is the prior connections between the mainland and Crete. However, when discussing the cultural identity of Knossos, what emerges when analyzing the material culture of LM II-III A goes beyond the ideas of strictly Minoan and Mycenaean. Changing the perspective of cultural identity from one of influence or imposition to a more nuanced stance, such as entanglement, leaves our ironclad categories only as useful as the descriptors *Mainland* and *Cretan*. The history of scholarship in the Aegean has made archaeologists captives to interpretation, interpretations that have persisted and have been taken as fact from the very beginning of the discipline, when they still searched for Homer and his Achaeans in every trench. These early interpretations, a dichotomy forged by Schliemann and Evans and their respective excavations of Mycenae and Knossos, created what Yannis Galanakis states as “the opposition of Minoans and Mycenaean as distinct groups, with specific characteristics and static, normative behaviors, competing for power in the Aegean”²⁴. Though this belief in the idea of static, diametrically opposed cultural groups has lessened, and more nuanced interpretations of the relationship between Mainland Greece and Crete have become commonplace, “we are still limited by the use of the terms Minoan and Mycenaean [...] from labels of convenience, they have acquired a life of their own to refer, consciously or subconsciously, to specific groups of people with specific characteristics, temperament and behavior”²⁵.

²² D’Agata and Girella 2022, 20.

²³ Preston 2004, 323.

²⁴ Galanakis 2022, 144.

²⁵ Galanakis 2022, 164.

That is, of course, not to say that the Cretans and Mainland Greeks did not have distinctive cultural markers, such as language, religion, or material culture. Though, in a bid to understand the changes that occurred at Knossos and other sites on Crete in the LM II-III A2 period, it may be more beneficial to analyze things through a lens of intensified interaction and cultural/material entanglements between two groups. It is not possible to firmly state the nature of the relationship between the Mainland Greeks and Minoans (“non-Greeks”) during the period directly preceding LM II-III A2, or what facilitated the seemingly sudden intensification of innovative, mainland cultural elements seen in Knossos after LM IB. This has already been shown above, with differing theories as to why “Mycenaeans” were at Knossos, or how they found themselves there. However, there are means to parse out what their relationship might have been, and what the material culture left behind can tell us. This next chapter will focus on these means; theories surrounding cultural identity, entanglements, and the conceptualization of cultural identity within the archaeological record will be discussed, and will help form an image surrounding the nature of this dramatic societal change at Knossos.

II. Conceptualizing Cultural Identity Within The Archaeological Record: An Anthropological Approach

Defining and understanding cultural identity within the archaeological record with cultures such as the Minoan and Mycenaean cultures is a daunting task. Even within the cultural anthropology field, studying extant cultures, defining identities from an etic perspective is difficult and something that requires fine attention to detail. Cultural anthropologists, however, have the advantage of being able to observe cultures first hand; they see a culture's beliefs, rituals, ways of life, social organization, and cognition acted out by members of that culture. Cultural anthropologists, most importantly, are able to draw conclusions through the invaluable experience of interacting with people from the culture they are studying. Archaeologists do not have that same advantage, as they are always looking at what is left behind; material culture that has survived the passage of time, in many cases the result of destruction, abandonment, or disposal. However, that does not mean archaeologists are hopeless in their endeavors of understanding ancient people and ancient cultures, and piecing together how they lived their lives. For example, the objects and materials found in graves are crucial resources for archaeologists, and are able to tell us much more about culture and society than simply how someone was buried. Even still, the fact remains: archaeologists do not get a complete picture when studying a culture, and our understanding of ancient cultures is informed by incomplete pictures that we can use as a basis for further inferences. This also brings us to the purpose of this chapter, and the questions that beg to be answered: how can we understand cultural identity within the archaeological past, and how can anthropological means aid in this search? To begin, it is first important to conceptualize cultural identity within the archaeological record, and then step into anthropological theories surrounding the development of cultural identities. Then, it is possible to go deeper, and discuss identity negotiations, hybridization and entanglements, and what these things look like when laid over archaeological cultures such as the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations.

The depths of this kind of analysis have no real end; theories surrounding what defines culture, what defines a cultural identity, what constitutes a society, are topics that have been debated in increasingly complex ways by social scientists²⁶. This is not surprising; humans are exceptionally complex beings, and there is no one definition or theory that can fully encapsulate

²⁶ Cf. Sewell 1999; Antonaccio 2010; Schatzki 2022.

what it means to experience and create culture, or to explain all the different and unique ways in which people live their lives. For this reason, broader definitions of certain terms suffice; it is more beneficial to remain focused on the topics of cultural identity and hybridity within the understanding of culture being the whole of ideals, beliefs, and ways of life for individuals within a society, with society being understood as the groups of people tied together by a specific culture. However, even with using broad definitions of base concepts, there is already our first issue. As stated above, archaeologists are forced to make educated guesses surrounding the categorization of cultures, and what makes one culture different from another, and so on. Therefore, the first step in analyzing cultural identity during the Bronze Age is to conceptualize cultural identity within the archaeological record.

The Bronze Age Aegean lies on the precipice of prehistory and history; we have scripts and pictorial depictions, but scripts like Linear A are still not fully deciphered, and without textual sources to accompany the wall paintings and other medias found at various sites around the Aegean, it is still difficult to interpret the cultural significance of the objects we find. Philipp Stockhammer explores the intricacies of conceptualizing cultural identity within the archaeological record, as well as potential limitations: “The lack of literary sources, together with the scarcity of pictorial depictions on prehistoric objects, makes it impossible to go far beyond a merely etic perspective [...] Prehistoric archaeology deals with the surviving fragments of prehistoric artifacts, which are mostly deprived of their past functional contexts, in a situation where there are no literary sources to tell us about the perception of these objects”²⁷. Because of this, archaeologists must be thoughtful in their organization and classification of what differentiates ancient societies from each other, and material culture is the first line of defense in aiding archaeologists in this endeavor. This has led to the development of ancient peoples being categorized with modern labels of pseudo-ethnic significance; for example, the use of the term “Minoan” as a cultural indicator was coined by archaeologist Arthur Evans, influenced by his love of Greek myths, after the mythical king Minos of Knossos.

The classifications into distinctive culture groups may often be viewed as a necessity within the discipline, but there are negative effects to such taxonomic practices. Mainly, the issue is that archaeologists have unwittingly introduced notions of “purity” and “impurity” into discussions of culture, which is obviously politically charged. This is a problem within

²⁷ Stockhammer 2012, 44-45.

postcolonial studies, because “this politically so often misused division of human existence into pure and impure” is exactly what these studies aimed to overcome²⁸. This issue is not an easy one to sidestep, however, as Stockhammer argues: “We are already operating with purity on a daily basis in our disciplines: every taxonomic category created by the observer is pure and distinct by definition [...] The use of terms like “Mycenaean” already means accepting the existence of something pure from an epistemological point of view”²⁹. These issues are compounded by the fact that these archaeologically defined cultures are mostly arbitrary; there is no guarantee that they are accurate representations of past realities, they are entities created by scholars within the discipline, as a result of our discipline’s history of research³⁰. Being aware of these issues, and only having material culture to guide archaeologists in reconstructing ideas of cultural identity within the archaeological record, it can seem as though there are limited options available in the pursuit of shedding light on the distant past. However, by introducing theories and methods usually employed by cultural anthropologists, such as theories of practice, identity negotiation, and hybridization, a different angle to approach these ancient societies is revealed.

2.1 A Theory of Practice

Practice theory was created by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as a response to the theories based heavily on dichotomies, especially the dualism championed by Claude Lévi-Strauss with his system of “opposites”³¹. Bourdieu argued that culture is “the exclusive product of neither free will nor underlying principles but is actively constructed by social actors from cultural dispositions and structured by previous events”³². Dispositions are something similar to preferences, and they concern all aspects of life; they can range from “aesthetics to parenting to ideas concerning success” and are always culturally informed³³. Practice theory seeks to discover how societies reproduce themselves and change, with emphasis on agency and historical context; culture does not occur in a vacuum, and the events that happened previously influence and inform culture in such a way that they should not be discounted. Material culture naturally has a role in this, because of the ways in which social actors use objects to implement

²⁸ Stockhammer 2013, 12; *cf.* Ackermann 2012; Papastergiadis 1997; Weißköppl 2005, Young 1995.

²⁹ Stockhammer 2013, 13.

³⁰ Stockhammer 2013, 13; Galanakis 2022.

³¹ Moore 2009, 615; *cf.* Bourdieu 1977, 1990.

³² Moore 2009, 607; *cf.* Wacquant 2008.

³³ Kupari 2016, 20.

their own strategies and desires, and what the objects say in reflection of the culture in which they were created³⁴. Practice theory concerns the perpetuation of culture, and how individual and daily practices and activities perpetuate culture. When one is within their own culture, this is how culture endures; when one is outside of their culture, or when members of another culture move into their environment, then they are going to start making cultural negotiations with the opposite culture. These cultural negotiations, however, are drawn from a set of schemes, which Bourdieu called *habitus*.

Habitus plays a vital role in understanding cultural identity, as it is a pillar of practice theory. It is a system of dispositions, and these dispositions are informed through social encounters, but also the product of historical antecedents. Bourdieu states that habitus has, “an endless capacity to engender products whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production”³⁵. For example, how a community navigates language barriers and reacts to multilingual inhabitants produces and reinforces ideas on social divisions, but these ideas are based on previous thoughts, inclinations, and actions. Habitus is a sort of social orientation, informing individuals on what to expect in social situations and also how to act as social agents. In short, it can be seen as “a creator of cultural distinction”, or “the way people are enculturated into their society and how they form concepts with reference to the things that are part of their group’s environment”³⁶. The way in which people experience things are processed through filters, which are heavily influenced by their culture, perceptions, and their prior experiences of the world. These filters then turn into “ideas of acceptance and resistance seen through material culture and artifacts”, and link actions and perceptions with cultural practices³⁷. In the context of an Aegean history of interaction, we are shown the convergence of multiple habitus’; the mainland Greek habitus and the habitus of Minoan Crete. These two differing groups have a history of associating with each other, yet they still have their own system of preferences and processing filters. This has been shown in the previous chapter, where Minoan motifs and shapes were incorporated into the Mainland pottery repertoire, but with mainland groups maintaining their own traditions. That is just one example, and as will be seen in later chapters pertaining to the signs of cultural exchange through material remains, there is

³⁴ Praetzellis 2015, 194-195.

³⁵ Moore 2009, 58; cf. Bourdieu 1977, 95.

³⁶ Praetzellis 2015, 156,

³⁷ Praetzellis 2015, 144.

evidence between the two groups of a willingness to negotiate these systems, a positive predisposition to external influences.

Material culture will always be imperative to understanding and analyzing the ways in which two separate habitus' interact and converge, though it is not the only option. Language is a good example to use for this, because while it is not a "physical" boundary, the areas in which different languages interact (loanwords, bilingual inscriptions, multilingual communities) display ideas of acceptance and resistance, and are foundational to how people are enculturated. Strict distinctions between languages, or geographical boundaries of language use, can give insight into much more than when or where a language was spoken. In the case of Knossos, we can extend this line of thought to administrative language, and the development and usage of Linear B, e.g. how a native Cretan script was used to write the "foreign" or "intrusive" Greek language.

Within this topic of research, there is always the disclaimer from researchers stating that it is impossible to know whether the artifacts found in Crete during the Final Palatial period are truly Minoan or Mycenaean, and that it is incorrect to extend those labels to the individuals who might have been found with them. This is true, of course, because artifacts do not equal people, and there is no way of knowing the exact circumstances or sequences of events from that time in order to explain what happened with complete accuracy. However, this blurring of cultural (and, potentially, ethnic) lines within Knossos during the Final Palatial period raises the line of inquiry about the relationship between the Minoan and the Mycenaean culture, and how these civilizations practiced a long tradition of identity negotiation through a period of close contact.

2.2 Contact, Interaction, and Identity Negotiation

The concept of identity negotiation has existed for as long as people have had interpersonal and intergroup differences, and the challenge of this is that with multiple and changing identities comes conflict³⁸. The Mycenaean identity was sculpted through contact with the Minoan culture, but the supposition of an emergent mainland influence on Knossos adds yet another layer to navigate, their intergroup and interpersonal differences as well as the construction of identities which leads to a new identity to emerge. The conflict in this is inherent, but it is "what we do with that difference and incumbent conflict that is most critical to the

³⁸ Jackson II 2002, 359.

development and sustenance of identities”³⁹. That is not to say that the convergence of mainland and Minoan culture was a violent affair; conflict in this sense simply means an opposition, a difference in cultural identity, a difference in habitus. How that conflict is managed is important; it is a very Marxist view of things, conflict being the root of cultural interactions, negotiations and distinctions. But there is merit in an understanding of cultural contacts having an inherent conflict of opposition, because it forces one to put the relationships between Mainland Greeks and Cretans into a specific context in which may be reflected in the material culture which came out of the period.

The concept of identity negotiation is a natural continuum of the ideas presented in practice theory; we create systems of dispositions, and then those dispositions are set against the dispositions of people from differing cultures, which leads to initial conflict. The result of this conflict of disposition, whether positive or negative, would be in many ways influenced by the historical contexts related to the two groups interacting with each other. The historical context is imperative to these negotiations, and groups living in Crete and the mainland had already enjoyed shared connections by the time the “Mycenaeanization” of Knossos began. There is no doubt that these prior interactions influenced how the groups in Knossos during the LM II-IIA2 periods readily adapted both traditional and innovative cultural symbols.

Interactions are the things that shape identities, a process that begins from the moment we are born. Human beings carry “their undetachable identities into every cultural and conversational encounter [...] [s]ome of these parts of our cultural identities [...] are highly secured and virtually immovable, while others may shift during a persuasive dialogue or sustained relationship”⁴⁰. Therefore, identity negotiation is about coordinating one’s identity to align with, complement, or avoid resisting other cultural identities, something that is seen in Knossos. The specific interactions, whether between individuals or groups, that Mainland Greeks on Knossos might have gone through to navigate these negotiations cannot be seen through the archaeological record, but the results of these interactions are evident in the material culture. Artifacts do not have intention, and it is impossible to ask them what they want, but it is possible to try and see what the artifacts say, because there exists an “intimate relationship between people and things [...] culture [is] meaningfully constructed”⁴¹. In Knossos, there was an

³⁹Jackson II 2002, 359.

⁴⁰Jackson II 2002, 360.

⁴¹ Kristiansen 2001, 201.

established shift in identity, leading to a distinct, meaningfully constructed culture. It created a new identity; and the question is how those shifts and new identity are manifested in the archaeological record.

2.3 Identity Formation Through a Series of Entanglements

I have already spoken about conceptualizing cultural identity within the archaeological record, how cultural identities are developed through practice theory, and how people navigate interactions with differing cultures through identity negotiation. But what happens when aspects of distinct cultural groups merge, and seemingly new cultural trends and ideals emerge? Hybridization occurs, a sort of transcendence of boundaries and cultural lines. It is an idea that has become more popular among Bronze Age Mediterranean archaeologists within the last 20 years, and has a lot of promise as a concept, though it has its hindrances as well⁴². As mentioned above, in order to understand cultural identities within the archaeological record, there has to be an acknowledgement of an unconscious introduction of notions of purity and impurity surrounding ideas of what constitutes a culture. The concept of hybridization is the same in that regard, as Stockhammer argues: “‘Hybridity’ cannot exist without ‘purity’, ‘international’ cannot exist without ‘nation states’ and ‘transculturality’ cannot be used without acknowledging the existence of distinct ‘cultures’ in a container-like understanding of the term”⁴³. Furthermore, there are biological origins to the term as a means of classifying the offspring of individuals of different races, with negative connotations of “impurity” attached⁴⁴. Before discussions of hybridity, there must be an understanding of what is considered “pure”, which is difficult in archaeological contexts because we have created arbitrary taxonomic systems for the cultures we study within the discipline. However, that does not mean that hybridity cannot sufficiently be used as a conceptual tool; categories will never be perfect, they will never be all-inclusive⁴⁵. Politically charged implications surrounding hybridity for its notions of purity, as well as biological connotations surrounding race, have led to the proposal of other terms, such as “borrowing”, “creolization”, “syncretism”, and “cultural mixing”, but Stockhammer argues that “a multitude of terminologies and concepts is more of a hindrance than a help when it comes to

⁴² Stockhammer 2013, 11; cf. Feldman 2006; Knapp 2008, 2009, 2012; Steel 2002; Voskos and Knapp 2008.

⁴³ Stockhammer 2013, 12.

⁴⁴ Stockhammer 2013, 13-15.

⁴⁵ Stockhammer 2013, 13.

developing the ‘hybridity’ metaphor into a concept useful for archaeology”⁴⁶. Vagueness or a multitude of terms for the same concept do not help the already ambiguous topic at hand.

At the heart of the matter, hybridity is “what falls between the analytical categories defined by us”⁴⁷. Marian Feldman, quoted in Stockhammer, asserts: “Hybridity can denote strength and vitality as a way to constitute and facilitate channels of interactions. Furthermore, the state of being hybrid is relative to time and place, never constant, and always determined by the various participants in any exchange [...] just as the cultures from which hybridity derives are likewise always in flux, always in the state of becoming. Hybridity can be thought of as the process of interaction”⁴⁸. Interactions are the key to tie together these concepts: interactions shape dispositions and preferences, they facilitate identity negotiation as well as hybridization. Interactions are the catalysts of change, which may seem like a simple concept, but is an important foundation to cultural change. That being said, and keeping close to the ideas of interactions and intermingling being the central pillars of hybridization, Stockhammer suggests the term “entanglements” to be a better term to describe this process, as it does not have the political baggage of “hybridization” or the explicit point of departure from a linguistic model such as “creolization”, while still being specific enough as to not venture into vague, wide-ranging notions⁴⁹. He also speaks of degrees of entanglements, because it “makes a huge difference for archaeologists to identify an entangled object (material entanglement) or the entanglement of past practices with an object (relational entanglement)”⁵⁰. He describes these degrees of entanglement as steps: the first step is relational entanglement, where an object (such as a tool, or pottery shape, etc.) is appropriated into “local practices, systems of meaning and worldviews” and the second step is material entanglement, which “signifies the creation of something new that is more than just the sum of its parts and combines the familiar with the previously foreign”⁵¹.

Exploring the material culture coming from Knossos during the LM II-III A periods as a series of “entanglements” may be a promising approach to describe what was happening during that time. As will be discussed in the next chapters, we see relational entanglements with objects

⁴⁶ Stockhammer 2012, 46.

⁴⁷ Stockhammer 2013, 13.

⁴⁸ Stockhammer 2012, 52.

⁴⁹ Stockhammer 2012, 2013; Antonaccio 2003.

⁵⁰ Stockhammer 2012, 23.

⁵¹ Stockhammer 2012, 15-17.

appropriated into local practices (such as Mycenaean feasting practices and mortuary rituals), as well as material entanglements with the creation of new things that combine traditional and innovative parts (such as pottery and architecture). Hybridization is a good jumping off point, and its usefulness as a term to describe cultural flow and change cannot be discounted, but the political connotations of the term bring the discussion of Mainland Greeks on Knossos too close to the theories about a Mycenaean “invasion” and “colonization” of Knossos that would be best to stay away from, in order to allow room for more nuanced conversations about the nature of the Mainland Greeks’ involvement on the island during that time.

III. Cultural Identity through Material Remains

The simplest way to see material and relational entanglements within the archaeological record is by analyzing material culture, and, as previously mentioned, the periods of “Mycenaeanization” and “Minoanization” that shaped elite culture on the Greek mainland and in Crete. “Mycenaean Crete” may appear as a prominent, but also most idiosyncratic, “Mycenaeanization” episode, and by analyzing the material aspects it is possible to not only see the outcome of these entanglements but also to theorize about the extent of Mycenaean cultural influence in Knossos and on the rest of the island. Mortuary practices, including both the location and form of the graves, as well as the grave goods deposited with the burials, can illuminate the cultural trends of the people who were buried (and those who buried *them*), and indicate conceptions of wealth, prestige, and importance. Pottery, not least because of its sheer quantity, can be another good indicator, and the pottery styles developed in the Final Palatial period showcase both Cretan and Mainland cultural markers and craftsmanship (Figure 3). Within both of these areas, iconography will play a large role in showcasing how the new elite class at Knossos used traditional and innovative motifs to convey ideas of power and influence. Something that is important to remember through this discussion, however, is that “the physical presence of Mycenaeans does not mean that the culture cannot still have been Minoan”, and that while we see exchanges between the two cultures, it is not a wholesale transformation or reinvention of Minoan culture⁵². In the same way, any innovative styles or aesthetics employed during this period cannot be solely attributed to intrusive “Mycenaeans”; we are still largely observing *Cretans* (of whatever descent) exercising culture in their own way. Aspects of change or innovation in material culture such as architecture and administrative practices, as they relate to the palace of Knossos, will be discussed further in the following chapter.

3.1 Changes in Iconography

The iconography seen on grave-goods, on pottery recovered from both mortuary and non-mortuary contexts, and (in the case of wall-paintings) in different architectural settings during LM II-III A2 is a very interesting case of combining innovative and traditional iconographic motifs and creating a unique and new aesthetic. As will be shown, the pottery of this period showcases the motifs which lie within the Neopalatial repertoire (e.g. the Special

⁵² Driessen and Langohr 2007, 180.

Palatial Tradition of LM IB, seen in Figure 4), but the same is true of the overall iconography as well. The mainland influence is there, but it does not overshadow the fact that Aegean iconography overall was strongly shaped by Minoan, specifically Neopalatial, concepts⁵³. After the destructions of LM IB, there is a somewhat clean cut off in tradition, as Fritz Blakolmer states in his study of LM II-III iconography, “several iconographic media largely, although not completely, came to an end: stucco reliefs, stone relief vessels, large figurines of ivory or metal, and larger objects of faience”⁵⁴. Relatedly, there is only one other site outside of Knossos which produces extensive evidence of continued figural wall painting after LM IB, namely Agia Triada; however, it should be noted that there is also evidence that some Neopalatial compositions remain into the LM II-III A2 periods⁵⁵. The disappearance of these media allows for a more clearly defined comparison of before and after, and aids in seeing the difference between Neopalatial and LM II-III A2 styles. However, to understand any sort of innovation within the iconography of LM II-III A2, it is important to understand the state of Early Mycenaean art. Blakolmer, when referring to the art of LH IIB-III A1 (the Mainland phases contemporary with Final Palatial Knossos), argues that “no continuation of images exists, such as the distinct type of chariot combat motif on the Shaft Grave stelai at Mycenae, nor was any autochthonous (i.e. free or largely free of exotic stimulation) iconography developed independently of and contrasting with imagery of LM I Crete”⁵⁶. In short, Blakolmer emphasizes the difficulty in locating mainland contributions to LM II-III art, because early Mycenaean art should not be “understood by us as possessing any alternative, non-Minoan concepts”⁵⁷.

It could be argued that the biggest innovation seen in the iconography of LM II-III A concerns *preferences*: quantitative changes made to the repertoire by the new elite groups and what images or motifs were *chosen* to be depicted. Pictorial themes consisting of bull-leaping (such as the Taureador Fresco, seen in Figure 5), processions and other related rituals continued after LM I, but as Blakolmer states, “formerly prominent subjects of religious significance such as pure landscape scenes, female and male youth, boxing, saffron-gathering, and monkeys disappeared from the new thematic repertoire”⁵⁸. It may be considered surprising that martial

⁵³ Blakolmer 2022, 388.

⁵⁴ Blakolmer 2022, 387; *cf.* Rehak 1997; Poursat 2008.

⁵⁵ Rehak and Younger 1998, 155.

⁵⁶ Blakolmer 2022, 388; *cf.* Heurtley 1921-1923, 126-146; Mylonas 1951; Marinatos 1968; Younger 1997; Blakolmer 2007a, 68-71, 74-75.

⁵⁷ Blakolmer 2022, 388.

⁵⁸ Blakolmer 2022, 389; *cf.* Rehak 1997, 61; Shaw 1997, 500; Militello 2006, 201.

pictorial subjects, which have long been associated with Mycenaean influence, appear less frequently in this period compared to those appearing in LM I⁵⁹. These changes to the repertoire could possibly reflect the aforementioned disappearance of several forms of iconographic media, or reflect the fact that the needs met by iconography had changed with the new regime, and the new social environment at Knossos. Neopalatial iconography was extensive, and possessed a “highly unspecific, ‘neutral’ character,” one that would be easily digestible to the various regions and political systems of the Aegean that the objects created in the Neopalatial period might reach, but even with that being true, there was still pieces of ideology inherently attached to certain subjects that the new political system during the Final Palatial Period might have seen the need to eliminate⁶⁰. Blakolmer concludes his analysis by reiterating the strong line of continuity between the Neopalatial and Final Palatial Periods, and by stating, “early Mycenaean mainlanders *received* from Knossos, but they hardly had anything to *offer* on their own; [...] the arts of the Late Palatial Crete can be best defined as a new chapter of Minoan art which was given a fresh direction”⁶¹.

The importance of the Neopalatial period when discussing the topics of LM II-III A2 cannot be understated, because this period was what the new Knossian elites looked back to in order to define and re-establish ideas of power and influence. Neopalatial iconography and symbols were imperative to the new idea of what an elite person was, and their remixing of styles and reuse of Neopalatial wares confirms that. These ideas of conveying legitimacy by using traditional, Neopalatial iconography spread further than just Knossos as well. At Agia Triada, the so-called “megaron” ABCD, sacello, and stoa were all deliberately placed over the remains of the Neopalatial mansion, the “Villa Reale”; Neopalatial artifacts such as copper ingots and pithoi have been found in situ, seemingly left on purpose and absorbed into the later structure⁶². Jan Driessen and Charlotte Langohr call this strategic use of the past “the most intriguing element” in how the new Knossian elites legitimized their power by “the appropriation and subsequent reinvention and reuse of particular elements that triggered the memory of, and nostalgia for, the glory of times past [...] As in many other ancient societies, the past was a powerful tool”⁶³.

⁵⁹ Blakolmer 2022, 394; *cf.* Hiller 1995, 570-571; 1999; Blakolmer 2007b; Molloy 2012, 98-112.

⁶⁰ Blakolmer 2022, 395.

⁶¹ Blakolmer 2022, 396-397; *cf.* Niemeier 1997, 306; Poursat 1997, 389-390; 2014, 182-189.

⁶² Driessen and Langohr 2007, 185.

⁶³ Driessen and Langohr 2007, 189.

3.2 Pottery

Pottery is an aspect of Aegean material culture that can be shown to have been particularly prone to transformation, diversification and, more often than not, very receptive to innovative stylistic or technical elements. The pottery of Minoan Crete heavily influenced mainland styles, beginning with the decorated finewares of Late Minoan IA, although various ‘Minoanizing’ wares existed in the Middle Helladic period. Beginning with Late Minoan IB, however, certain Cretan styles were so closely imitated that “it is frequently impossible to tell what is Cretan and what is Mycenaean [...] it is clear that Cretan artists must have emigrated [...] to centers outside of the island. It was the Late Minoan IA style which was the model for much of the earliest Mycenaean pottery and it seems likely that the standard followed was that of Knossos”⁶⁴. Motifs inspired by flora and marine fauna are very popular within the Neopalatial repertoire, and mainland examples are stylistically close and “retain the same iconographic package of conventions familiar from the Minoan pictorial repertoire”⁶⁵. However, these early examples of Mycenaean pottery used the iconography of the Neopalatial period, but utilized them without the same meanings attached to them by “Minoans”⁶⁶. Popham may be correct in his assumption of Cretan artisans emigrating to the mainland, but it could also be just as truthful that mainlanders were instead locally imitating Minoan styles, devoid of the iconographic context.

In Late Minoan II, there is evidence of innovation in pottery in Knossos in the form of styles, shapes, and decoration. We see the emergence of the ‘Palace Style’, which are heavy on motifs of probable ritual connotations such as the double ax and the helmet, which has been considered as reflecting a legitimizing strategy by the new elites, by using “an artificially reanimated and constructed Minoan past”⁶⁷. Again, we see a proliferation of Neopalatial iconography, which could be a continuation of the Neopalatial pottery styles, as well as a continuation of mainland traditions (Figures 6-9). As mentioned above, mainland practices had already enjoyed incorporating Neopalatial motifs. As assessed by Paul Rehak and John Younger in their review of Final Palatial Crete, “LM II pottery shows an increasing trend toward simplifying and fossilizing motifs, which some have attributed to increased mainland influence, although the trend was already apparent in LM IB and need not reflect either mainland influence

⁶⁴ Popham 1967, 342-343.

⁶⁵ Crouwel and Morris 1995, 181.

⁶⁶ Blakolmer 2022, 388.

⁶⁷ Driessen and Langohr 2007, 185; Blakolmer 2022, 391-392.

or conquest”⁶⁸. Rather than an appropriation of traditional motifs being used in an innovative way, Rehak and Younger insist that these trends more likely showcase “a clear evolutionary development with few interruptions”⁶⁹. Outside of the Neopalatial motifs, there is also the development in LM II of an increasing appearance of pictorial pottery, especially pieces which depict the human form⁷⁰. Humans are notoriously absent from the otherwise very rich repertoire of Neopalatial pottery decoration, but it does occur occasionally outside Crete. Early Mycenaean pottery, however, does include depictions of the human form in pictorial pottery more frequently, and by LM IIIA we see pottery closely following that of the LH IIIA repertoire, which include “animals, birds, and exotic plant life, as well as abstract patterns”⁷¹.

Alongside decoration, there are new pottery shapes which are introduced into the Cretan pottery assembly, including the goblet, flat alabastron, and the small piriform jar, whose features have been claimed to be characteristically Mycenaean⁷². The goblet, however, did not remain long, and was replaced by the kylix by the Late Minoan IIIA1 phase. However, while there are clear similarities between earlier Minoan and Mycenaean pottery on the mainland, and introductions of new mainland pottery shapes in Crete, there is less ceramic incorporation at other Cretan sites outside of Knossos in the Late Minoan II period. Eleni Hatzaki states, “the lack of clearly defined ceramic synchronisms between Knossos and other sites in Crete, either in the form of imports or local Late Minoan II Knossian ceramic forms and decorative schemes, leaves the Knossian sequence of events largely in isolation from the rest of the island”⁷³. While Knossos has certain unique ceramic forms and decorative schemes during LM II-III A2, the adoption of the mainland-type drinking vessel shapes, first the goblet and then the kylix, showcase the adoption of Mycenaean drinking practices. This is evident not only in Knossos, but also in Chania, an important administrative center. Late Minoan II in Knossos, as previously mentioned, was a time of sensational change: new administration, urban buildings projects, and the (re)establishment of an elite class. It was highly centralized, but also localized, which is reflected in the pottery styles, even as Knossos maintained contact with several other sites on the island.

⁶⁸ Rehak and Younger, 1998, 153.

⁶⁹ Rehak and Younger, 1998, 153.

⁷⁰ Rehak and Younger, 1998, 154.

⁷¹ Rehak and Younger, 1998, 154; cf. Rutter 1993; Crowel and Morris 1996.

⁷² Popham 1967, 244-245.

⁷³ Hatzaki 2004, 124.

3.3 Mortuary Practices

As is true with the pottery and iconography of LM II-III A2, in order to interpret the burial record of Knossos, the Neopalatial period must be included⁷⁴. More specifically, it is imperative to understand the LM II period, as it is a period of major change for Knossos and Crete as a whole, and the innovations in the Knossian funerary practices did not occur in a vacuum. Whitelaw, quoted in Galanakis, notes on the existing conceptualization of chronological periods and encourages us to think of “cultural development in terms of long, relatively stable blocks of time, with short transitional periods of rapid change between them; and to think of change as event-driven – major destructions or conquests”⁷⁵. It is only natural, then, to observe the burial record at Knossos to find comparisons not only from the mainland, but also from the Minoan past. Knossos is unique, however, within the context of the rest of the island because of the tendency of burial practices containing innovative or experimental aspects. The experimentation and innovation seen during LM II is not as much as a novelty as it is a continuation of how burial practices were treated as a “dynamic field of social competition, with experimentation and diversity playing an important role in how identities were negotiated and projected”⁷⁶. Another aspect of this innovation that cannot be ignored is the possibility of these interests in experimentation actually reflecting local processes and sociopolitical turbulences, ones that eventually led to not only the rise of the *wanax*, but also the changes in objects, rituals, and the built environment that ultimately resulted in the materialization of a new ideology⁷⁷.

The best examples of the Neopalatial funerary corpus comes from Poros, a harbor town close to Knossos. It is there where we see evidence to suggest that it was not just the elite groups, but also the broader Knossian population that were “already receptive to the idea of introducing and using diverse funerary forms and practices in the Neopalatial times”⁷⁸. With around 18 rock-cut tombs, Poros hosts the largest Neopalatial tomb group in the Knossos valley⁷⁹. The tombs from Poros were used for multiple deposits, however there are also tombs that highlight specific individuals; it would seem that there was a general trend of emphasizing a collective identity in the Neopalatial period, though there were still outliers depending on the status of an

⁷⁴ Galanakis 2022, 146.

⁷⁵ Galanakis 2022, 146; Whitelaw 2022.

⁷⁶ Galanakis 2022, 148.

⁷⁷ Galanakis 2022, 148.

⁷⁸ Galanakis 2022, 147.

⁷⁹ Cf. Dimopoulou 1999; Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki 2004.

individual⁸⁰. Along with highlighting certain individuals, there is also evidence of weapons accompanying some of the burials, and Galanakis proposes an interesting thought: “Should these two aspects, [...] be considered ‘mainland inspired’? Or, should they be considered part-and-parcel of the same development, i.e. different parts of the Aegean contributing to the formation of a new identity, to which some members of the Poros community participated?”⁸¹. Both of these possibilities could be true, and set up a logical parameter in which to view and analyze Knossos in the following periods: Minoan practices, whether they be related to pottery, iconography, or mortuary practices, are still firmly within *Aegean* practices; the acknowledgement of connectivity is the acknowledgement of the fact that practices were not so concrete and easy to categorize.

This Neopalatial importance is also evident in tomb construction, in the reuse of Neopalatial masonry in prominent tombs. This reuse of Neopalatial masonry, as well as Neopalatial objects, can be seen in places such as in the main chamber of the Isopata Royal Tomb, where an ashlar block from a Neopalatial structure had been used as a part of the tombs’ construction. What is significant about this is the fact that the particular block had not been reused simply for its quality as a readily available building material, but for its symbolic qualities as well. The one meter long block, thought to be a coping stone from the niche in the main chamber, boasts four symbols: three classic masons’ marks (the branch, the double ax at 45 degrees, and the trident) and one unique fourth mark, an 8-pronged star that has been encircled, almost like a wheel⁸². Sinclair Hood suggests that this is a reused but notable block, an antique, while Evans was uncertain in the dating of the tomb; he first dated it to be Neopalatial, and then moved the date to LM II⁸³. Colin Macdonald asserts that, “If the tomb was built in LM II, there seems to have been an attempt to establish a lineage with Neopalatial predecessors as much in the construction of the monument from the reused ashlar – with the Neopalatial masons’ marks – as in the antique objects interred”⁸⁴.

The proclivity for innovation in Knossian burials naturally lead to highly localized styles and practices, which have in turn been largely attributed to being of Mycenaean or mainland origin. The support for the “invasion” perspective of the Mycenaean presence on Crete is usually

⁸⁰ Galanakis 2022, 147; *cf.* Dimopoulou 1999; Miller 2011, 78-79.

⁸¹ Galanakis 2022, 147.

⁸² Macdonald 2022, 126.

⁸³ Macdonald 2022, 126; *cf.* Evans 1906, Hood 2020.

⁸⁴ Macdonald 2022, 126.

evidenced by the multiple so-called “warrior burials” (often termed, perhaps even more accurately, as “burials with bronzes”) found in various cemeteries around Knossos, a term coined because of the volume of bronze weapons discovered in the graves of the area dating to the first half of the Final Palatial period⁸⁵. However, the style of these burials and the objects contained within them could mean many things, with the possibilities ranging from adoption of mainland customs, rulers at Knossos having Mycenaean mercenaries in their service, competition between elites, and adoption of foreign influences specifically for legitimation purposes⁸⁶. Preston argues that an invasionist interpretation undermines the “remarkable degree of cultural eclecticism and experimentation evident in some of these tombs [...] The uniting feature of the Late Minoan II tombs seems to be less a statement of common ethnic origin, than a shared desire for conspicuous display which manifested itself in different, and in some cases highly innovative ways”⁸⁷.

The prevalence of the idea that graves loaded with weapons must be of Mycenaean origin dates back to historic views of the “Minoans” being “free-spirited, lovers of nature and of the arts, a peaceful folk” while the “Mycenaeans” had a “predilection for aggression” and were a “rather volatile group of people”⁸⁸. These attitudes have been repeatedly called into question, but the agonistic attributes of the “Mycenaeans” have remained, no doubt because of their association with the epics of Homer and how so many Greek Mainland (and Cretan) sites are tied to Homeric legend⁸⁹. Galanakis, quoting Barry P.C. Molloy, states that, “there is a tendency in scholarship to ignore the ‘dominant flow of military ideologies from Crete to the mainland in MM III-LM IB [...] marking a Cretan origin to mainland military tradition’ and not the other way around”⁹⁰. Militaristic attitudes should not be considered a solely Mycenaean attribute or attitude. Molloy, again cited by Galanakis, continues this line of thought when commenting on the presence of swords found in graves from MM II to LM IIIA, and that while the swords are “capable of inflicting fatal injuries, their inability to inflict deep cuts afforded the potential to prolong combats and emphasize the shedding of blood”⁹¹. This goes against ideas that the “Minoans” were the peace-loving island dwellers described by previous scholars, and more

⁸⁵ Kerr 2012, 31-32.

⁸⁶ Kerr 2012; Alberti 2004.

⁸⁷ Preston 2004, 326.

⁸⁸ Galanakis 2022, 144.

⁸⁹ *Cf.* Evely 1996; Peatfield 1999; Molloy 2012; 2013; Verduci 2020.

⁹⁰ Galanakis 2022, 144; Molloy 2012.

⁹¹ Galanakis 2022, 162.

importantly showcases that mainlanders or “Mycenaeans” were not the only group interested in militarism. It also displays the fallacy in promoting the idea that weapons found in graves should be interpreted as “warrior-graves”, and more specifically “Mycenaean warrior-graves”.

The burials in areas around Knossos (Agios Ioannis, Kephala, Katsambas, Nea Alikarnassos, Zapher Papoura, Poros, Sellopoulo, Mavro Spelio, the Isopata ridge, and Venizeleio), however, do indeed have indicators of Mycenaean influence, from their assemblages to the burial type, and highlight the experimentation and change which occurred during Late Minoan II-III in mortuary rituals of the elite class⁹². These changes include the position of tombs within the landscape, their architecture and their use, along with the establishment of new cemeteries⁹³ (Figures 10-11). The change of positions of the tombs in the context of the landscape is intriguing, because the abandonment of previously used cemeteries and the establishment of new cemeteries could easily be a sign of newcomers in the area, with no ties to historically prestigious landscapes, however it could also be a sign of an “intentional ideological transformation of Knossos’ funerary landscape by those vying for power”⁹⁴. Galanakis and Preston note that the positioning of tombs in the landscape, as well as the experimentation present at Knossos, seem to “highlight that certain members of the broader Knossian community were eager to emphasize their presence in the landscape, especially along the northern overland routes”⁹⁵. One of the biggest changes seen in Knossian burial practices is the introduction of single chamber tombs, and the preference of low numbers of depositions in each grave⁹⁶. This is in direct contrast to burial practices from earlier periods, such as the Middle Minoan period, where several of the tombs at Knossos have multiple depositions and evidence of long reuse, except in very rare cases⁹⁷. This procedure is common in mainland practices, and the burial assemblages at Knossian cemeteries also reflect a mainland influence.

As previously mentioned, many of the tombs included bronze weapons, objects, and vases, along with large ceramic assemblages which commonly showcased piriform jars, alabastra, and kylixes, all features shared with mainland assemblages. There are of course examples of continuity in the artifactual categories found in graves, which include jewelry, seals,

⁹² Preston 2004.

⁹³ Galanakis 2022.

⁹⁴ Galanakis 2022, 148.

⁹⁵ Galanakis 2022, 149; Preston 2004.

⁹⁶ Alberti 2004, 128.

⁹⁷ Alberti 2004, 128.

rings, and traditional Minoan pottery; the main examples of innovation pertain to the profusion of weaponry, the specific ceramic shapes, and an influx of metal vessels⁹⁸. The occurrence of Neopalatial gold signet-rings in a number of wealthy LM IIIA burials (Isopata tomb 1, Sellopoulo tomb 4, Archanes tholos A, Kalyvia near Phaistos) is particularly notable. Assemblage comparisons to the mainland, specifically with Athens and Prosymna, highlight the similarities between burial practices during Late Minoan II-II, and Lucia Alberti argues that these changes are culturally important beyond aesthetic reasons, stating that, “even if these burial practices are merely ‘imported’ from the mainland without some sort of Mycenaean influx into the area, we must assume that a significant and cultural upheaval took place in the Minoan world”⁹⁹. Preston argues that these emulations of mainland practices arose from a desire for conspicuous displays, which “may well have been a reaction to a crisis in elite confidence and identity” after the destabilization and destruction of Late Minoan IB, which had undermined Crete’s political structures and elite ideological systems¹⁰⁰. However, as Galanakis notes, the interpretation of LM II-III A2 burials is largely the case of working with limited information, limited knowledge, and limited data: “the limited comparisons between the Neopalatial and Final Palatial burials at Knossos do not allow us to speak in the detail we would have wished about the people who were actually buried in these tombs and who should after all constitute the starting point of our discussion”¹⁰¹.

An apt descriptor of what happened with material culture in the LM II-III A2 periods is “intensification”. The examples mentioned above, concerning pottery and mortuary rituals, are unique in that such exchanges of cultural ideas and aesthetics are not seen until we reach the LH IIIA period, when the mainland palatial agents borrow several palatial aspects from Crete to incorporate into their own administrative practice which, effectively, can be viewed as a direct transportation of the Knossos system to the mainland, only with moderate adjustments¹⁰². Of course, as it has been shown in previous sections, the mainland and Crete were not strangers before this, and are known to have shared their culture with each other through a prolonged period of contact, not just on an elite, administrative level, but one that also blended into

⁹⁸ Galanakis 2022, 161.

⁹⁹ Alberti 2004, 136.

¹⁰⁰ Preston 2004, 327.

¹⁰¹ Galanakis 2022, 160.

¹⁰² Cf. Petrakis 2022.

domestic, non-elite spheres¹⁰³. A cultural exchange that goes through multiple levels of society speaks to the cooperation and tolerance between Mainland Greeks and “Minoans”, and possibly even the idea that they did not see themselves as very different from each other. The period comprising LM IB and LH IIA can be measured in a century, which could speak to an ease of transition. At the very least, it points to familiarity, and the displays from the material culture of LH II-III A could easily be seen as a result of intensified frequency between the two cultures. The question of the cultural identity of the groups at Knossos is so obscured for this very reason; the lines of what was Mycenaean and what was Minoan were sufficiently blurred and transformed.

¹⁰³ Dickinson 2014, 544; *cf.* Dickinson 1972.

IV. Administrative Changes and the Emergence of a New Knossian Elite

The change in aspects of the administrative practice at Knossos, such as the adoption of the *wanax* ideology, and the first instances of a written Greek language are, naturally, imperative to the picture of Knossos in the LM II-III A2 periods. They are also the most obvious points of mainland influence. However, as with the other aspects of this period, there is still a strong Minoan flair in each innovative action. How Linear B was developed and adopted, the influence it would have on Crete and the mainland, and the scope of its use allow archaeologists to understand the depth and breadth of the new Knossian regime, and how they ran the island. The palace is key to this understanding, because even though it was not destroyed in the LM IB destructions, the new administration made extensive changes and initiated building works around the town of Knossos, as well as renovating the palace itself, evident by areas such as the South Front dumps. Relatedly, by looking at other important centers of the period, such as Chania, it is possible to gain insight into the administrative network of the time, and how centers were connected by regional centers such as Aptara. As is known, Knossos was the only palace in operation at the time, though by LM III A they began to stretch beyond the boundaries of Knossos and re-established centers such as Agia Triada in southern Crete, likely to control the activities and trade in farther flung areas on the island. It is also important to look into these areas because it may not be totally correct in assuming Knossos was the only “major player” on the island in LM III A. Connecting these separate spheres of influence on the island helps create a broader picture of the restructuring which occurred on Knossos, and how they flexed their influence in the years after.

4.1 Write That Down: The Development and Usage of Linear B

One of the main signposts of Mycenaean control in Knossos is the emergence of the Linear B administration, and the shift in administrative language from Linear A. This switch is intriguing, because while it is a sign of Mycenaean control, it is also yet another example of the deep connections mainland and Cretan groups shared. Linear B was a script adapted from an earlier Cretan script, probably Linear A, and its use was modified partly to fit new administrative needs and partly to accommodate a new language, the Mycenaean Greek dialect. Linear A, while established that it represents a/the Minoan language, is still mostly undeciphered. It is unfortunate that we do not know the language that Cretans used, only that it was different from

the language of the Linear B inscriptions, because knowing language barriers between the two groups could give better insight into how they interacted (or did not interact) with each other. However, it is known that, *as a script*, Linear B is a modification of Linear A (or a very similar variant) because many of the syllabographic signs are of similar form and are very likely to have been “carried over from one to the other, at least approximately”; the rate of similar signs between the two signs is of the range between 70-80% which is comparable to other known script adaptations such as the Latin alphabet from the Greek alphabet (Figure 12)¹⁰⁴. Also, as Rehak and Younger argue, it should not be assumed that “since Linear B was used to write Greek, Linear A reflects a non-Greek language”¹⁰⁵. Although the disuse of Linear A looks sudden, some use of it retained in non-administrative contexts was retained, as the LM IIIA1 inscriptions on a figurine from Poros *Katsambas* (coastal site, possible harbor north of Knossos) and a cup from Chania show. During the Neopalatial period, Linear A was used in a variety of contexts outside of palace administration, especially cult objects (so-called ‘libation tables’ or ‘ladles’ are prominent) from religious contexts, and in general had a broader use range than Linear B¹⁰⁶. However, even in Linear A, one of the main “reasons” for writing was palace-related administrative duties, and after the emergence of Linear B, the apparent dominance of Greek-speaking groups meant that the scribes were “realigning to new socio-political realities, developing ways of writing a new language and adapted administrative practices at the same time”¹⁰⁷. The possibility that users of Linear A (or whatever the precise form of the Linear B ‘parent’ script was) systematically replaced the script with Linear B in order to accommodate the changes happening around them is also compatible with the recent view expressed by Ester Salgarella, in which the basic palaeography of the two Linear scripts appears to have been common, making the change from (one variant of) Linear A to Linear B less radical and more smooth.

Linear B writing and administration can be therefore shown to be an entirely Cretan affair, and this is supported by the fact that “there is so far no evidence for administration on Mainland Greece during the end of the Middle Bronze Age or the earlier phases of the Late Bronze Age, in contrast with the deep history of literacy in pre-Linear B Crete”¹⁰⁸. This is true

¹⁰⁴ Steele 2024, 5-6.

¹⁰⁵ Rehak and Younger 1998, 159.

¹⁰⁶ Steele 2024, 107.

¹⁰⁷ Steele 2024, 108; Driessen and Langohr 2007.

¹⁰⁸ Petrakis 2022, 406.

despite the fact that the script came to be used as a tool for a Greek language, and some scholars have now argued that Linear A and Linear B should not really be considered two mutually exclusive scripts, but “a single script that underwent modifications over time to accommodate the needs of another language and of a new administration”¹⁰⁹. Vassilis Petrakis has argued for a systemic unity of the Linear B system, making the point that “it is of little help – and even potentially misleading – to distinguish between the script and the administration that deployed it”, so that theories surrounding the origin and spread of Linear B must account for the spread of the script as well as the administrative apparatus on which it was used at the same time¹¹⁰. The emergence of Mainland palatial administration occurs only after LM II, and it would be theoretically possible to consider the earliest stages of literate administration on the Greek mainland as appendages of Knossos in LM II-III A, until the final destruction of Knossos facilitated the freedom of mobility for these sites to become palaces in their own rights. Linear B is inextricably linked to the establishment of literate administration on the mainland, and this diffusion, Petrakis argues, “effectively collapse[s] the Crete/mainland distinction”¹¹¹. As mentioned in the previous chapter surrounding LM II-III A2 iconography, the elites of these periods strived to emphasize their legitimacy as the heirs of the Neopalatial tradition, and it is only logical that this ideology would be carried over when certain mainland groups became palatial in earnest. The Linear B administration at Knossos, while it has been seen as the trademark of mainland control of the palace, in truth speaks to the complex system of mainland and Minoan traditions intersecting each other; yet another example of the entanglements of Cretans and Mainland Greeks, and of the intensification of interaction and cultural change. Minoan and Mycenaean are misleading labels, and within its scope, intention and use, Linear B in the Third Palace Period literate administration “must be considered *Aegean* (or, at least, *southern Aegean*), and perhaps this represents better the emic standpoint of the elite groups that used it”¹¹².

Outside of a cultural and linguistic presence, the physicality of Linear B is impressive: the archives at Knossos that have been uncovered are extensive, with over 3,000 tablets recovered from the site (Figure 13)¹¹³. It had been supposed, for quite some time, that all of the

¹⁰⁹ Galanakis 2022, 166; *cf.* Salgarella 2020.

¹¹⁰ Petrakis 2022, 405.

¹¹¹ Petrakis 2022, 407, with modification.

¹¹² Petrakis 2022, 407.

¹¹³ Rehak and Younger 1998, 159.

Linear B tablets found had belonged to a single administrative period and had also all been destroyed in a single, final destruction event¹¹⁴. The date of this destruction has been polarized into two arguments; following Evans, Boardman (1963) dated the tablets to an early destruction of LM IIIA2, supported by Popham's¹¹⁵ (1964, 1970) study of the pottery, while Palmer (1963) argued a LM IIIB date for the fact that some of the tablets were associated with LM IIIB pottery, an argument which was later developed in more detail by Hallager (1977) and Niemeier (1982)¹¹⁶. However, there is evidence that points to this supposed "unity of archives" did not exist¹¹⁷. For example, Driessen established that some of the tablets found in the Room of the Chariot Tablets could have been fired either in LM II or early IIIA, and the "mix of hieroglyphic and Linear B material in the west wing suggests the presence of 'discard' archives [...] the lack of an identifiable main archive at Knossos may imply that at least that other deposits of documents belong to 'discard' archives"¹¹⁸. The implications of both discard and regular use archives showcases the extensive productivity and commerce that occurred at Knossos, and how the palace was a central pillar of the island economy.

4.2 From the Ashes: Knossos after the LM IB Destructions

A picture emerges at Knossos during Late Minoan II, which may give insight into the trajectory of the administration from the palace to periphery centers with marked Mycenaean features. Though the palace itself was spared of total destruction during the events of Late Minoan IB, there were still destructions present in other areas in the surrounding town. Because of this, some scholars have argued that the cause of the LM IB destructions were an entirely internal process, a bid from Knossos to gain control of the entire island by dismantling and destroying administrative centers around the rest of the island, however there is evidence that Knossos already "dominated at least most of central Crete, or even the entire island, by the later Neopalatial period"¹¹⁹. In any case, the destruction of LM IB was not avoided by Knossos, as there are signs of destruction around the town and the palace, as well as abandonments. The exact areas of destruction or construction are not clearly defined, as scholars like Hood and

¹¹⁴ Rehak and Younger 1998, 159; cf. Hooker 1965.

¹¹⁵ Though his pottery analysis was published the following year, Popham, a student of Boardman in Oxford, is already a contributor to Boardman's work. Cf. Boardman 1963, Appendix A, 90-100.

¹¹⁶ Whitelaw 2022, 39.

¹¹⁷ Rehak and Younger 1998, 159.

¹¹⁸ Rehak and Younger 1998, 160; cf. Driessen 1990.

¹¹⁹ Whitelaw 2022, 36.

Macdonald state, “Understanding LM IB Knossos remains remarkably difficult”, with “the absence of fine decorated ware from the palace and the great houses round it in MM III – LM I makes it virtually impossible – at any rate difficult – to distinguish LM IA deposits from those of LM IB”¹²⁰. In contrast to LM IB, Knossos during Late Minoan II is a period marked with vigorous building projects, in the urban sectors and including structures outside of the town boundaries¹²¹. In some cases, Late Minoan I buildings were completely leveled or demolished; for example, two Late Minoan II buildings, the Gypsum House and the South House “were founded upon the destruction of abandoned Late Minoan I predecessors”, though it is not known if they were abandoned at the time of destruction in LM IB or earlier¹²².

This series of rebuilding also involved refurbishing the palace itself, as evidenced by Late Minoan II pottery deposits found at the South Terrace Basements stratified below the latest walls of the palace, which “demonstrate that the whole interior of this area of the palace was reorganized and practically rebuilt in Late Minoan II, if not Late Minoan III A1”¹²³. This area, and the South Front dumps, may indicate that large sections of the palace were refurbished in the Final Palatial Period. This is evidenced by half-rosettes and triglyph friezes becoming a popular stone decoration, incorporating them in the facade of the palace. This was a new feature in LM IIIA1, one that would soon after be adopted by mainlanders and employed in both funerary and palatial contexts at sites such as Tiryns and Mycenae¹²⁴.

Colin Macdonald, in his analysis of architectural continuity and the renovations that occurred at Knossos, notes the renovations and construction that encapsulated the palace and the surrounding town, and how these changes not only showcase the strong desire for continuity from the Neopalatial period, but also the innovative ways in which the Knossian elite strengthened their position of power¹²⁵. It speaks to a certain thoughtfulness the new elite class had in how they planned to move forward; there was intention attached to each choice they made, from mortuary rituals, pottery, to the architecture of the palace and how they chose to renovate it. This is no more evident than in the Throne Room, where the Neopalatial room was transformed in the Final Palatial period. The way the room is arranged, with the stone “throne”

¹²⁰ Macdonald 2022, 117.

¹²¹ Hatzaki 2004, 121.

¹²² Hatzaki 2004, 120.

¹²³ Hatzaki 2004, 121.

¹²⁴ Driessen and Langhor 2007, 181.

¹²⁵ Macdonald 2022.

situated opposite a Lustral Basin, as well as the wall-paintings on the surrounding walls “can be dated no earlier than LM II, but the Lustral Basin is Neopalatial in construction and the iconography of the wall paintings are clearly derived from Neopalatial tradition”¹²⁶. The gypsum benches were either reused from a room of similar dimensions or recut to fit the room, which is more likely since “the bench along the south side is not only cut to receive lustral basin columns but also perfectly proportioned to fit that side”¹²⁷. The Lustral Basin, though it had gone out of use during the LM II period seems to act as a reminder of the legacy in which the new elites had inherited, but could have also highlighted their new power: “the south bench opposite of the throne forces participants to turn their back on that area and to focus on the throne”¹²⁸.

4.3 The Scope of Power: Consolidation, Networks, and Expansion

Linear B has been found in Chania and Knossos, but during the Late Minoan II-III periods it is broadly agreed that Knossos functioned as the main administrative center for most of the island, especially the central, west-central, and western areas¹²⁹. References to place-names, such as *a-mi-ni-so* and *ko-no-so* (Amnisos and the Knossos settlement itself) in the Knossos Linear B tablets indicate palatial interest as intense in its surrounding area. The Linear B archives found at the palace of Knossos “have shed considerable light on the economic basis, political geography, and administrative structure of the Final Palatial regime”, but there are still speculations surrounding how this structure influenced the rest of the island.¹³⁰ John Bennet had theorized a possible system of how Knossos handled administrative control during this period with a three-level hierarchy system: Knossos was on top, with second-order centers below it (such as Ayia Triada and Chania/Kydonia), and the third tier consisted of sites that had been directly subordinate to Late Minoan I palaces but were absorbed into the influence of the second-order centers (Tyliisos, Amnisos)¹³¹. However, other scholars such as Nikos Merousis have challenged this, stating that there seems to be no other regional centers or functioning within the Knossian framework during the Late Minoan II-III A1 period, and goes even further by suggesting that, “Knossos may have not tolerated the reconstruction of other regional centers,

¹²⁶ Macdonald 2022, 119.

¹²⁷ Macdonald 2022, 119.

¹²⁸ Macdonald 2022, 120.

¹²⁹ Bennet 1990, 208.

¹³⁰ Preston 2004, 323.

¹³¹ Bennet 1990, 209.

which in any case had been destroyed during the Late Minoan IB period”.¹³² Later discoveries, such as the Knossian-flavored “warrior graves” in LM II-III A1 Chania (Kouklaki plot), however, lend strong support to Bennet’s idea of secondary centers closely tied to Knossos –Chania may well have been one such center already during the period immediately following the LM IB destructions.

In Late Minoan IIIA, instead of revitalizing the destroyed or abandoned centers in other parts of the island, there is a series of constructing imposing buildings, in areas such as Tyliisos, Agia Triada, Kommos and Malia¹³³. These buildings, particularly at Tyliisos and Agia Triada, are characterized as the dwellings of local rulers. Prominent among them is the arrangement of the ‘Throne Room’ in the Knossos palace itself, that seems to foreshadow the simple plan of the Mycenaean palatial ‘megaron’-type of hall, with a succession of spaces (propylon, vestibule) leading to a main room with the ‘throne’ placed at the right as one enters. It has been extensively argued that the mainland megara are intentionally replicating the same arrangement as part of an ideologically-driven simulation, with the hearth added as a mainland ‘traditional’ element¹³⁴. Maran further argued that “in the aftermath of the 14th-cent. destruction of Knossos, in which Mainland Greek elites were probably involved, these very elites strove to replace it by building megara [on the mainland] as new meeting places for deities and rulers, thereby creating many ‘New Knossos’”¹³⁵. The megara that are seen at sites such as Pylos and Tiryns on the mainland are not examples of local architectural continuity which extends back into early Mycenaean traditions, but the chronological closeness of these structures emerging on both Crete and the mainland indicate close ties¹³⁶.

The construction of new administrative branches during LM III could suggest that after rebuilding Knossos and reestablishing authority, the ruling class began the process of attempting to bring other areas of the island under Knossian influence, especially in the central and western parts¹³⁷. This is evident by Linear B tablets which mention separate districts from the far west to perhaps the western borders of Lasithi in the east, and as Rehak and Younger suggest, “it seems logical to assume that Knossos had some kind of centralizing control over the island, especially

¹³² Merousis 2002, 165.

¹³³ Merousis 2002, 166.

¹³⁴ Petrakis 2021; Maran 2019.

¹³⁵ Maran 2019, 359.

¹³⁶ Maran 2019, 358.

¹³⁷ Merousis 2002, 167.

since some places mentioned in the tablets (e.g. Phaistos) do not appear archaeologically to have been able to function administratively on their own”¹³⁸. The specific mention of Phaistos, and its apparent inability to function administratively highlight the necessity of extra branches of administration like Agia Triada, which is nestled in close proximity to the former Phaistos palace complex. Knossos continued to exercise economic and political authority over parts of the island, with wool and textile production being the main commodities under palatial control. This remained the case until the final collapse of the palace, and “regional centers took on a leading role within smaller, perhaps territorially defined political and economic units”¹³⁹.

Although Knossos held a sort of centralized authority on the island, the success of the administration still relied on a network, with other centers which helped the flow of trade as well as kept Knossos connected to different areas of the island. Centers such as Tylissos and Agia Triada have already been mentioned, but settlements such as Aptara and Chania paint a picture of how larger centers operated with Knossos and the *wanax* at the helm. Aptara is situated at the entrance of the bay of Souda, a site with good conditions to become an important settlement. Having been able to survive the LM IB destructions, Aptara became somewhat of an important point in the dealing of Western Crete, and likely a midway point between the connection of Chania and Knossos (Figure 14). The mention of Aptera in Linear B tablets found at Knossos in the Room of the Chariot Tablets indicates that it was not only a “major player” on the island but it was also “an important Minoan settlement”¹⁴⁰. Also, the presence of a *ko-re-te* at *a-pa-ta-wa* (i.e. an official at Aptera, probably representing Knossos), as asserted by Papadopoulou, “indicates the control exercised there by the palatial center and also hints at the relations between Aptera and Knossos”¹⁴¹. This is supported by not only its presence in the Linear B tablets, but also from the material culture, “where homogeneity and typological and stylistic continuity prevail, proving that there was contact between West Crete and Knossos during th[e LM II-III A1] period”¹⁴².

Connections between Knossos and smaller settlements is not surprising, as proven by the presence of the settlements mentioned above. If Knossos was to thrive, it is only natural that the archaeological record, and the epigraphic record, would reflect their relationships with other

¹³⁸ Rehak and Younger 1998, 162.

¹³⁹ Merousis 2002, 167.

¹⁴⁰ Papadopoulou 2022, 225.

¹⁴¹ Papadopoulou 2022, 225.

¹⁴² Papadopoulou 2022, 226, clarification added.

places, such as Agia Triada and Aptara. However, other sites, like Chania, were already reputed as major settlements as far back as the MM period, and had not only survived LM IB, but had recovered and thrived in LM II-III A2. Chania, or Kydonia (*ku-do-ni-ja* in the Knossos Linear B tablets) as it was known during that time, had strong connections to the mainland before the Mainland Greek administration at Knossos, a status that only intensified in LM II-IIA1; Knossian imports reach their height during this period, and in LM IIIA1 specifically, the preference for plain ware pottery highlights the Kydonian connection to the mainland, as well as the Kouklaki “warrior graves” plot (certainly part of Kydonia’s formal elite burial ground) which has been dated to LM II-III A1¹⁴³. It is known that Knossos had connections with Kydonia because of the appearance of the toponym on tablets found in the Room of the Chariot Tablets, dated to the LM II-III A1 period, and that “the Knossos archive presents Kydonia as an important city of western Crete, which provides the Knossos palace with sheep and goats, oxen, and chariots”¹⁴⁴. That Kydonia supplied Knossos with chariots, Maria Andreadaki-Vlazaki asserts, “strongly indicates that the site was of high status”¹⁴⁵. The Linear B tablets related to Kydonia also point to it having a “semi-autonomous appearance, controlling the ‘Kydonia group’ that comprised cities of western Crete with a geographical and administrative relationship”¹⁴⁶. These cities, and their transliterations, are as follows: *wa-to*, *a-pa-ta-wa*, *ka-ta-ra-i*, *o-du-ru-wo*, and *si-ra-ro*¹⁴⁷. It is important to note that of these, *a-pa-ta-wa* is the aforementioned Aptara, whose important position within the administration has already been stated.

It is unfortunate that the modern city of Chania is situated on top of the ancient settlement, which has hindered extensive access to large parts of the site. However, there has still been plenty of information uncovered, among the most important being the discovery of parts of a ceremonial building of LM IIIA2-IIIB date in the still ongoing excavations by Maria Vlazaki in Katre 1 street, which matches important buildings recovered in the Plateia Agias Aikaterinis site of the Greek-Swedish-Danish Excavations. Andreadaki-Vlazaki notes the synchronization of the construction of this building to that of the destruction at Knossos, which further highlights the importance of Kydonia, and that it might have been seen as the natural successor to

¹⁴³ Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2022, 197.

¹⁴⁴ Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2022, 199.

¹⁴⁵ Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2022, 199.

¹⁴⁶ Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2022, 199.

¹⁴⁷ Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2019, 199; cf. McArthur 1993; Chadwick & Ventris 1973. All exact locations of toponyms, excluding *a-pa-ta-wa*, are unknown, but are somewhere in western Crete based on clay analysis of stirrup jars from Thebes.

administrative power on the island¹⁴⁸. Kydonia is famous for its workshops which produced the iconic stirrup-jar, which emerged there in the LM IIIA/B period, a pottery shape which would spread throughout the Mediterranean in the following periods¹⁴⁹. While the characteristics of Kydonia still showcase a predominance of Knossos during LM II-III A/B, after the “enfeeblement” of Knossos, we see the site grow into an important gateway for the “Mycenaeans” into the island, as well as occupying a “dominant position and developed into a major trading harbor of Crete”¹⁵⁰. That Kydonia would rise to such a prominent position, and effectively outstrip Knossos, after LM IIIA2 suggests that its deference to the palace was more of a hierarchical placement than a reality of its abilities and caliber.

¹⁴⁸ Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2022, 199.

¹⁴⁹ Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2022, 199; *cf.* Pratt 2016.

¹⁵⁰ Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2022, 198.

V. A Note on Theoretical Speculation

One of the most important, if not *the* most important, discussions concerning Knossos in LM II-III A2 have been the discussions about how to explain the presence of a Greek-speaking administrative elite on Crete in the first place, and if the new elite regime at Knossos were “Mycenaean Greeks”. Ultimately, most of these questions will never be definitively answered, and so it has been highly speculated about what the nature of the “Mycenaean” presence on Knossos was; the most popular of those favoring ideas of a Mycenaean invasion, which in turn led to a sort of colonization or complete Mycenaean control of the island. It is hoped that this analysis points to the fallacy of this theory, and how the occurrences in Knossos during LM II-III A2 showcase an exploration of past Minoan culture, with the use of innovative and traditional symbols which “allowed the *wanax* to use the palace to legitimate his claim as the rightful heir to the ‘Minoan’ tradition — an amalgamation of various cultural traits that were now distinctive”¹⁵¹. Knossos during this period was many things, and easy to decipher is not one of them; there is difficulty in base archaeological reconstructions such as its original stratigraphy as well as Minoan ceramic phases, not to mention, most importantly, “its ‘Minoan’ or ‘Mycenaean’ cultural and ethnic character”¹⁵².

Logistically, the Mycenaean conquest model holds no water because “at this time in the southern Aegean, the end of the Late Helladic II A on the mainland, there is no evidence that any polity existed anywhere on the mainland that would have been able to organize a significant military invasion of Crete”¹⁵³. This has been mentioned in previous sections: on the basis of extant evidence, the palatial, major Mycenaean polities capable of such military maneuvers, the ones of which are envisioned as the protagonists of a conquest scenario, did not exist until LH III A2, well after the final destruction of Knossos. Whitelaw finishes this line of thought by adding, “for at least most of the following century, conflict will almost certainly have been largely focused locally, within competitively expanding mainland polities”¹⁵⁴. It is also extremely important to consider identities, which has been explored here, particularly how the mainland groups and Cretans viewed themselves and each other. Galanakis very concisely notes that, “cultural differences between these two regions may well have existed, but even if stereotypical

¹⁵¹ Driessen and Langohr 2007, 185.

¹⁵² Rehak and Younger 1998, 161.

¹⁵³ Whitelaw 2022, 36.

¹⁵⁴ Whitelaw 2022, 36.

perceptions of group identity occasionally coincided around such broad differences, in most instances, these were probably not the identities that mattered the most¹⁵⁵. Splitting Crete during the LM II-III A2 periods into two static groups, and focusing an analysis on what fits into which category, ultimately does a disservice to the subjective and transient context of Knossos:

“Convenient, therefore, as our labels may have been for a very long time, they fail to capture the dynamism, complexity, and shifting attitudes of group identities”¹⁵⁶.

It is important, then, to go beyond these speculations and separations of *mainland* and *Cretan*: “The pertinent agenda may be defined by the observation that the geographic/cultural entities Crete and the Greek mainland need to be considered as both distinct and close at the same time”¹⁵⁷. Close enough that not only would the Greek speaking elites of the Knossian regime go to great lengths to present themselves as the rightful heirs of the Neopalatial tradition, but they would also continue that tradition when the mainland became palatial in their own right, “because giving a ‘Minoan’ appearance was part and parcel of the ‘Mycenaean’ identity”¹⁵⁸. It is not so much of a strain to suggest that the ideology surrounding power and authority was bigger than a *Minoan* ideal, but one that was inherently *Aegean*. Recognizing that this is not an issue with the material expressions, which indeed tell us a story of their cultural interactions, but with the labels put upon them by the discipline is imperative to understanding the full complexity of the Bronze Age Aegean¹⁵⁹.

This is, in essence, the advantage of using more anthropological approaches to archaeological cultures. Ancient cultures have the capacity for endless dynamism, and the scholarship created to study them must reflect that, in order to avoid essentialist ideas of how people in the Aegean world might have interacted with each other or how they should be categorized. The material culture that we see from the LM II-III A2 periods shows a thoughtfulness in the construction of a new identity, a creation of something new whilst still honoring traditional styles. We see entanglements in the adoption of Mycenaean feasting rituals through pottery and experimentation in mortuary rituals through tomb construction, Palatial Style pottery and of course the development of Linear B. These entanglements are no doubt the result of an intensification of interaction, but with a level of familiarity that made the assimilation and

¹⁵⁵ Galanakis 2022, 165.

¹⁵⁶ Galanakis 2022, 164.

¹⁵⁷ Petrakis 2022, 407.

¹⁵⁸ Petrakis 2022, 407.

¹⁵⁹ Galanakis 2022, 165.

adaptation of objects and practices seemingly easy, with material culture being readily adapted and modified to local needs and tastes. The more readily archaeologists incorporate these views into their scholarship, then perhaps a truer understanding of this period and the mainland and Cretan groups will be explored.

VI. Conclusions

A study of the “Mycenaean presence” in Knossos allows consideration of several interesting factors, from the hybridization of material remains to the implications of the cultural identity of the area during that period of time. There are changes in administration, writing styles, mortuary practices, and pottery, along with new ideas of elitism. If indeed there was an establishment of mainland groups in Knossos, or how it might have happened, cannot be known. When examining the evidence, one conclusion that seems plausible is that mainland groups most likely did not arrive in Crete as colonizers or invaders. The invasion hypothesis, supported for some scholars by the so-called “warrior graves” found around Knossos, and the frequent assumption that these burials are to be associated with an intrusive, mainland-derived elite group does not suffice; the Mainland Greeks did not colonize, capture, or occupy Crete. The question of who was buried in these graves cannot be answered, regardless of the similarities they showcase between the mortuary practices of Crete and the mainland. The evidence seen through mortuary practices, as well as through administration, show that it is more likely that the Mainland Greeks were “aides in arms” of a sort; a strong military presence that allowed the recovery and restructuring of the Knossian elite. This is especially evident when taking into account the long history of cultural exchange between the two groups; for centuries, they influenced and exchanged ideas with each other, with an ease that shows no real resistance or foreshadowing of an invasive maneuver on part of the Mainland Greeks.

Conceptualizing the cultural identity of Knossos during the LM II-III A2 periods has been proven to be a delicate balance of identifying distinct cultural indicators while recognizing the problems inherent within categorizing groups of people from a compulsory etic point of view. It is a discussion that requires nuance, and an understanding that by using the terms assigned to these groups, in this case, the Mycenaean and Minoan cultures, it is perpetuating a divide that may not have been a reality for the people who lived on the mainland or in Crete. However, by using anthropological approaches, with theories such as Pierre Bourdieu’s Practice Theory and by analyzing “hybridized” material remains through a lens of entanglements and identity negotiations, archaeologists are brought closer to what may have been a Bronze Age reality. There is no way to know for sure; this analysis has shown the intricacies in trying to recreate the environment during this complex time at Knossos.

A portion of these entanglements were showcased in this discussion through analyzing material remains, and the modifications to pottery, iconography, and mortuary rituals. What is seen in the LM II-III A2 periods is interesting not only because of the way in which some mainland traditions emerge in the Minoan repertoire, but also how the new elite class that had taken control of Knossos used both innovative and traditional symbols to establish themselves as legitimate heirs to the Neopalatial Knossos of the past. It is an artful and purposeful endeavor, and through this we see constructions of identity as well as intensifications of cultural exchange between Crete and Mainland Greece.

The extensive refurbishments of the palace of Knossos, along with the fact that no other palatial center on the island experienced this level of activity at the time also support the theories of Mycenaean aid during or after the crisis years. In turn, it further refutes theories of a conquering or colonizing intention, or an “invading force”; would the mainland groups have put in the extensive effort of revitalizing Knossos if it were beyond help? The Mycenaean as a culture group were only just emerging as a prominent power in the Aegean, and an undertaking of trying to revitalize a limping Crete would be extremely ambitious when they had their own lands and other peripheries on the mainland to worry about. One may consider the case of Akrotiri; this Cycladic town was arguably a gateway to the rest of the Aegean and a Minoanized stronghold, yet after its abandonment and destruction from the eruption of the volcano of Thera, there was not a sufficient allocation of time and resources to revive the settlement, even with its established importance. However, if, *theoretically*, the Cretans called mainland groups to aid them, their steadfast connection across the sea, and a collaborative effort was invoked in order to refurbish the palace after the events of Late Minoan IB, this could have been a means to successfully re-establish the authority of the elite class. Collaboration is not only an idea as to how a mainland presence at Knossos may have unfolded, but also a reality when aiming to understand the Linear B administration, how the script was developed and how the administration navigated trade and commerce on the island. The administrative practices, above all the act of a literate administration, is Cretan in origin and thoroughly a Cretan affair, yet it is the language of the mainland that is used as the administrative language of the palace.

Though outside of the scope of this thesis, a further comprehensive exploration into the relationship between the “Mycenaeans” and “Minoans”, especially the long held stereotypes of the “peaceful” “Minoans” and the “warlike” “Mycenaeans” could be supremely beneficial to

working towards a more nuanced understanding of the cooperation between the two groups. It would be most advantageous for understanding the Late Minoan II-III period, and perhaps this exploration would in turn lead to possibilities of moving beyond the rigid classifications of Minoan and Mycenaean, when in many cases the cultural markers of the two are so close in similarity it can be difficult to differentiate the two. This may be an impossible task, as these beliefs have been ingrained in the study of the Bronze Age Aegean almost as long as it has existed, though a shift towards a more comprehensive understanding can only benefit further research undertakings.

List of Figures

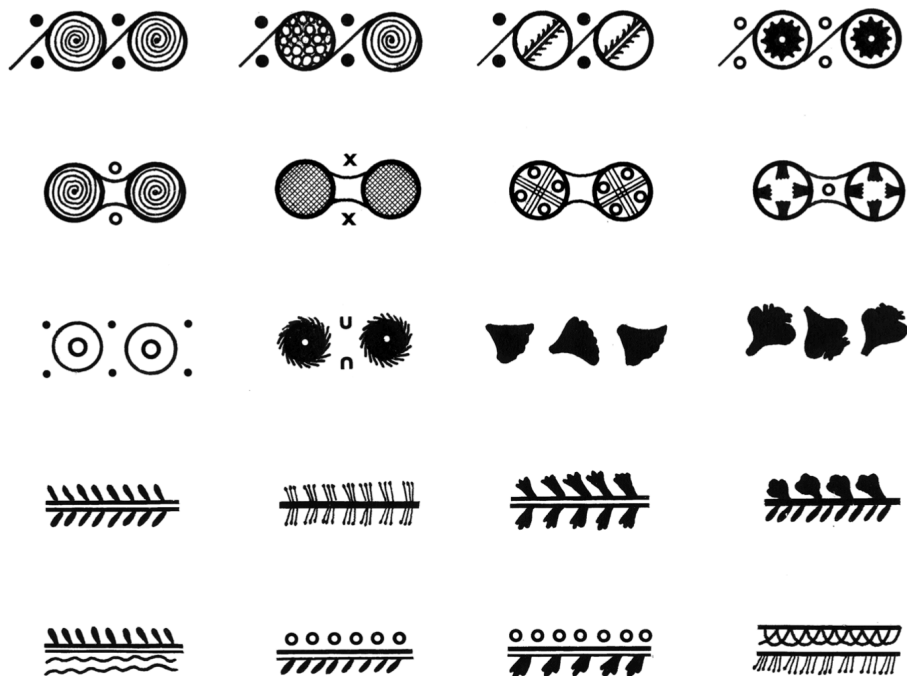
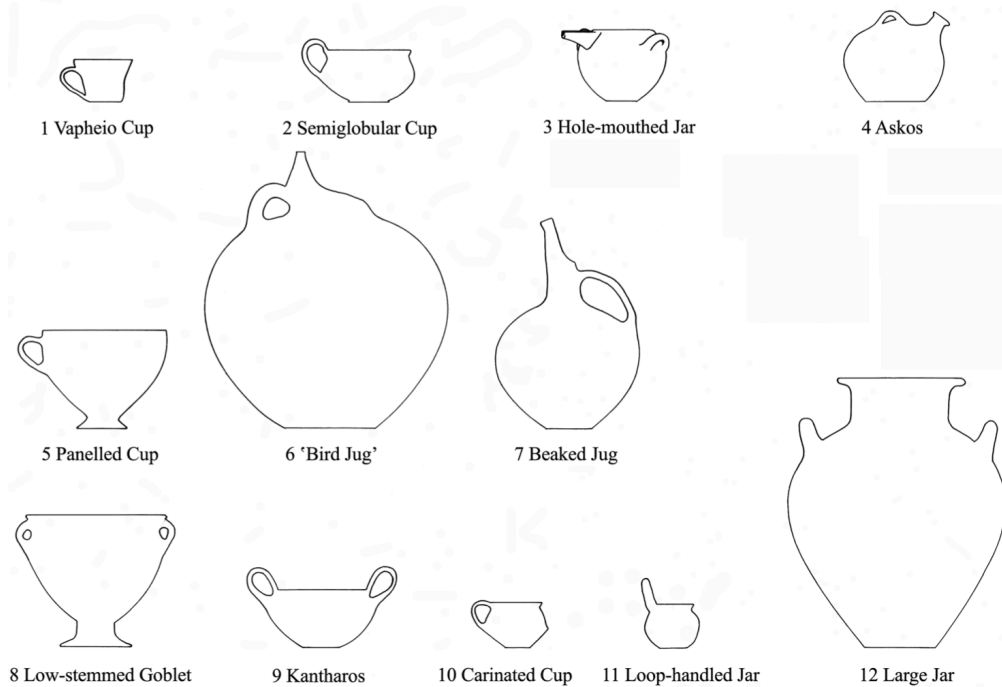


Figure 1. Examples of common MH-LH pottery shapes and typical LH motifs (Dickinson 2021).



Figure 2. Map of principal sites on the island of Crete (Anslin 2009).

Crete (Minoan)			Mainland (Helladic)		
	Pottery Phase	Calendar dates	Pottery Phase	Calendar dates	
Prepalatial	Early Minoan (EM) I	3100–2700	Early Helladic (EH) I	3100–2700	
	EM II	2700–2200	EH II	2700–2200	
	EM III	2200–2100	EH III	2200–2000	
Protopalatial	Middle Minoan (MM) IA	2100–1900	Middle Helladic (MH) I	2000–1850	
	MM IB	1900–1800			
Neopalatial	MM II	1800–1700	MH II	1850–1700	
	MM III	1700–1600	MH III	1700–1600	Shaft Grave Era
	Late Minoan (LM) IA	1600–1480	Late Helladic (LH) I	1600–1500	
Final Palatial	LM IB	1480–1425			
	LM II	1425–1390	LH IIA	1500–1440	Mycenaean
			LH IIB	1440–1390	
Postpalatial	LM IIIA1	1390–1370	LH IIIA1	1390–1370	
	LM IIIA2	1370–1300	LH IIIA2	1370–1300	
	LM IIIB	1300–1190	LH IIIB	1300–1190	
	LM IIIC	1190–1070	LH IIIC	1190–1070	
	Subminoan	1070–1000	Submycenaean	1070–1015	

^a The relative merits of low and high chronologies are discussed in the text. All dates B.C.

Figure 3. Relative chronology of Crete and Mainland Greece (Tartaron 2007).



Figure 4.
Π8407
Clay
Incomplete, mended and restored.
Phaistos
Palace
Late Minoan IB period: 1500-1450 BC
Heraklion Museum



Figure 5. Taureador Fresco from the palace of Knossos, LM II period, Heraklion Museum



Figure 6.

Π33378

Clay

Knossos

Late Minoan II period: 1450-1400 BC

Heraklion Museum



Figure 7.

Π5749

Clay

Mended and restored.

Knossos

Little Palace

Late Minoan IIIA2 period:

1400-1375 BC

Heraklion Museum



Figure 8.

Π31150

Clay

Knossos

Unexplored Mansion

Late Minoan II period: 1450-1400 BC

Heraklion Museum



Figure 9.

Π2762

Clay

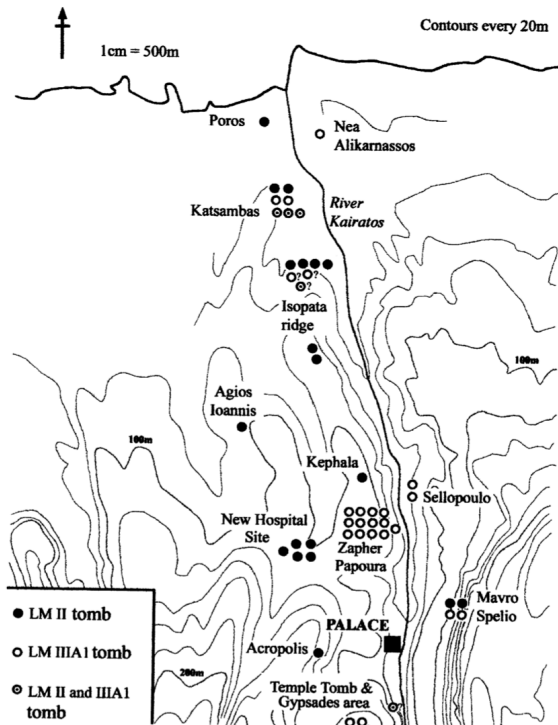
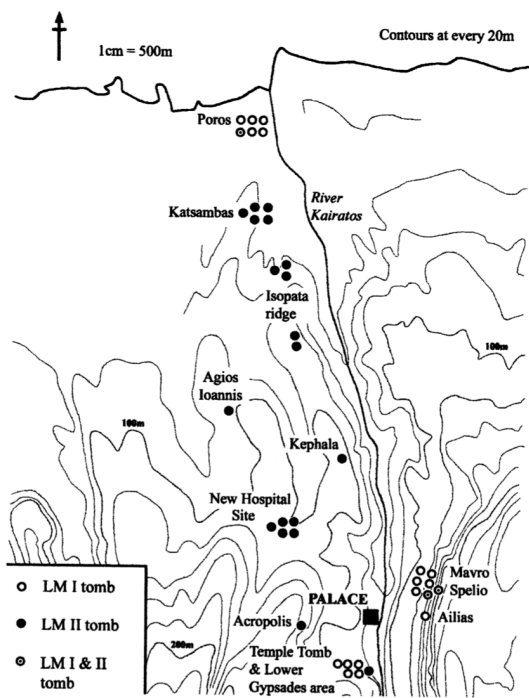
Incomplete, mended and restored.

Knossos

Royal Villa

Late Minoan II period.

Heraklion Museum



Figures 10-11. Map comparison of LM I and LM II-III A1 cemetery and tomb locations (Preston 2004).

































































Linear A signs shared with Linear B														
a		*08	e		*38	i		*28	o		*61	u		*10
da		*01	de		*45	di		*07				du		*51
ja		*57	je		*46							ju		*65
ka		*77	ke		*44	ki		*67	ko		*70	ku		*81
ma		*80	me		*13	mi		*73				mu		*23
na		*06	ne		*24	ni		*30				nu		*55
pa		*03				pi		*39	po		*11	pu		*50
qa		*16	qe		*78	qi		*21						
ra		*60	re		*27	ri		*53	ro		*02	ru		*26
sa		*31	se		*09	si		*41				su		*58
ta		*59	te		*04	ti		*37	to		*05	tu		*69
wa		*54				wi		*40						
za		*17	ze		*74				zo		*20			
Other shared signs (not in the core syllabary from a Linear B perspective)														
?		*22	pu ₂		*29	?		*47	nwa		*48	?		*49
?		*56	ta ₂		*66	ra ₂		*76	?		*79	?		*82
au		*85	?		*86	?		*87						

Figure 12. Shared Linear A and Linear B signs (Steele 2024).



Figure 13. Linear B Findspots at the palace of Knossos (Whitelaw 2022).

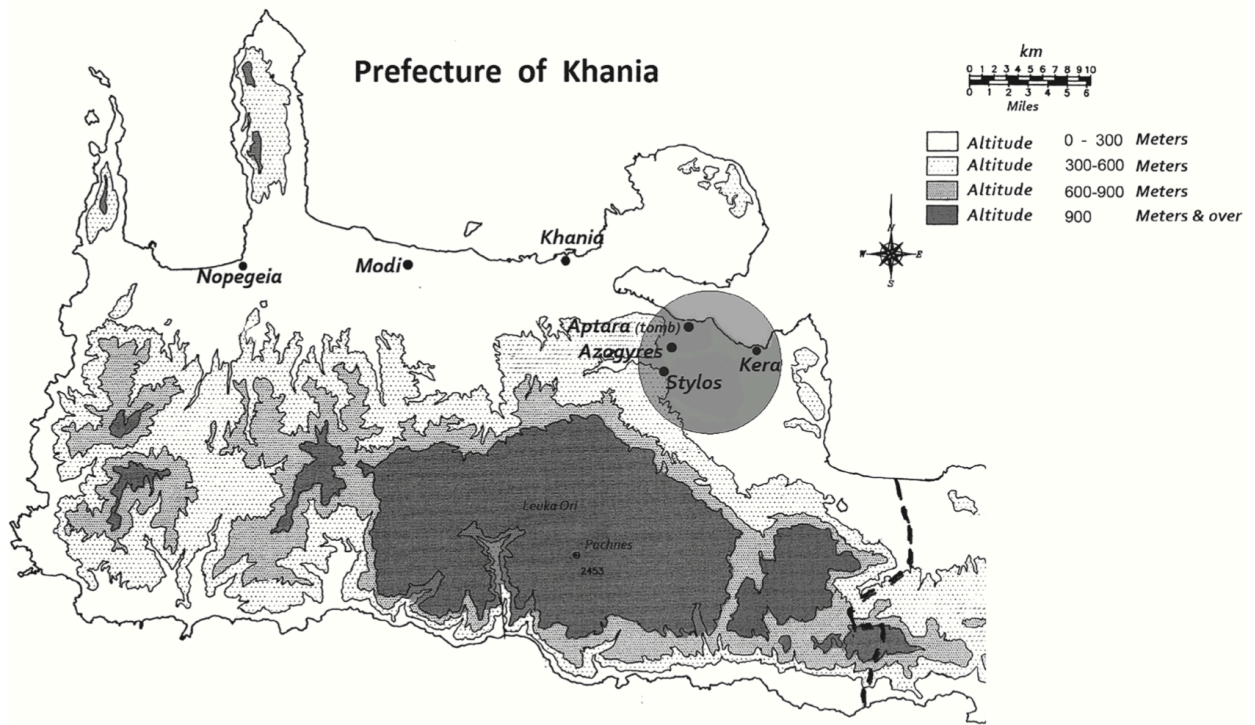


Figure 14. Map of western Crete (Aptara, Chania) (Papadopoulou 2022).

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