

Colloquium on Post-Minoan Crete, Institute of Archaeology, 10th-11th November 1995

Manolis I. Stefanakis and Deborah Ruscillo

Institute of Archaeology, UCL

The first annual colloquium on post-Minoan Crete was held at the Institute of Archaeology in conjunction with the British School of Athens. The impressive attendance and the variety of international speakers almost guaranteed that another colloquium in this series will follow. The intention of the colloquium was to gather specialists and those interested in Cretan studies together for much needed discussion on the somewhat neglected Iron Age of Crete. Most colloquia dealing with the archaeology of Crete usually concentrate on the Minoan culture, so it was refreshing to attend a meeting focused on non-Minoan archaeological remains and current research in the post-Minoan period being carried out on Crete. The conference included papers concerning archaeological excavations, history, coinage, epigraphy, and architecture, from the eleventh-century BC to the early-Christian period. The proceedings continued for two days, and useful discussion and deliberation about Iron Age Crete resulted from the many fascinating presentations organized through this forum. The extent of the discussion after each paper and during the break periods confirmed the need for this type of conference, and for the continued attention that Iron Age Crete requires.

The meeting began with a three paper session concerning the excavations and discoveries at Kavousi, Crete. Kavousi has been showcased at a number of meetings in the past year, and has gained considerable exposure as a result. The American School of Classical Studies is usually very good at publicizing its work, and this policy has contributed to its reputation as an institution of serious and dedicated scholars. William Coulson, the current director of the American School in Athens and the Kavousi excavations, presented the first paper of the colloquium 'The Early Iron Age in the Kavousi Area of East Crete', setting the scene for the two papers that followed. Margaret Mook continued the series with her discussion of Early Iron Age domestic architecture, focusing on the Northwest Building on the Kastro at Kavousi as an example.

Lee Anne Turner then discussed a figured lead pendant discovered during the excavations of the Kastro. The pendant consisted of a ring mounted by a human head in the Daedalic style. The head-dress of the figure resembled an Egyptian sun disk, and was paralleled by other examples from objects with similar disk motifs discovered at excavations in the Aegean region. Her study of the object was thorough, and made a case for Egyptian influence on aesthetic art in the surrounding area, even as far as northern Greece. The piece also borrowed some motifs from other areas of the Aegean, confusing the origin of production and style it was meant to represent. This type of study is clearly valuable, but it leaves one wondering how much of the interpretation of such small finds is deduction, and how much of it is actually imagination. Aesthetic objects are particularly difficult to decipher, since often in antiquity, pieces were commissioned on the basis of personal tastes, a motivating aspect of production that leaves no trace in the archaeological record. Inexact parallel motifs can be mere coincidence, so reference and association with other objects exhibiting similar designs can be misleading.

Kavousi was a recurring site of reference during the colloquium, as were Prinias,

Praisos, Kommos, and predictably Knossos, excavated by the British School in Athens. Elizabeth Moignard gave a most delightful talk about the foreign influences on the Orientalizing pottery from the Knossos north cemetery, the major influence on the style originating in Cyprus. Her paper was useful in drawing together samples of pottery from the north cemetery, and was presented in a cohesive and witty manner.

Jane Carter was one of several speakers to present a paper on the site of Prinias in central Crete. She discussed the themes and origins of imagery on the 26 stelai from the Prinias acropolis, a subject of which many scholars have been interested for many decades since the site was first excavated. Carter interpreted the imagery and function of the warriors, women and seated goddess of the Temple A stelai, and related them to parallel figures on the processional entry inside the King's Gate at Karkamish. The processional scene at Karkamish depicts the royal succession placed between the warriors and elite on one side, and the patron goddess of the city with her votaries on the other. Similarly, the stelai from Temple A at Prinias depict a processional scene, which would have adorned the entry to the acropolis. This scene could reflect the aristocratic traditions of Prinias and its divine sanction, and certainly suggests an eastern influence in its design and imagery.

Krzysztof Nowicki later spoke on the changes in settlement patterns in Dark Age Crete. The sometimes terrifying locations of the so-called 'refuge settlements' discovered by the speaker himself, on cliff edges and the like, fascinated the audience. His interpretation of the settlement pattern changes during the thirteenth and twelfth-century BC in Crete was somewhat new to the field in light of his recent site discoveries. A good discussion followed the lecture on the implications of this settlement change, particularly in the selection of locations easily defended, implying a state of unrest during the Dark Ages of Crete. Another more heated debate on the matter of settlement followed the presentation by the guest lecturer Nikolaos Stampolidis, who presented his paper on the new discoveries from Eleutherna. The debate was based more on the movement and borders of populations during the Dark Age period, and the defense and conditions of passage through those borders.

Stampolidis presented the finds from the ninth to seventh century BC cemetery at Eleutherna. The emphasis was placed on a chamber tomb containing hundreds of funerary urns and grave goods. Objects accompanying the burials revealed apparent trade relations of Crete with the Dodecanese islands, Lycia, Cyprus, Syria, Phoenicia and Egypt. The most interesting burial however, was that of a soldier buried in situ on the remains of a funeral pyre, accompanied by a headless man. Stampolidis interpreted this as the ritual slaughter of an enemy soldier at the funeral of a war hero in ancient Greece. He reinforced his interpretation with references from ancient texts and illustrations from Greek vase paintings of the decapitation of the enemy at the foot of the funeral pyre of a hero. Homer refers to this practice as well during the description of the funeral of Patroclus in the *Iliad*, where twenty young Trojans were sacrificed on his funeral pyre [Il. 23].

Among the presenters enlightening aspects of Classical, Hellenistic and Roman Crete was Lucia Nixon who discussed the survey techniques and the preliminary results of the Sphakia survey project. The project, successfully carried out for several years, is one of the most organized attempts to understand the history of the much neglected area of southwest Crete. The study concentrated on the four ancient poleis of the Sphakia territory, Poikilasion, Tarrha, Araden, and Anopolis, and the harbour town of Phoinix,

and is based on a combination of surface finds, archaeological remains, geomorphological features, and literary and historical evidence. Many unknown sites have come to light during this survey, and the puzzling chronology in relation to the distribution of the area occupation is becoming clear.

Numismatic studies were represented at the colloquium as well, reflecting the increase of the study of coins within the past few years. Manolis Stefanakis, one of the numismatists at the colloquium, examined a rare and small issue of Cretan silver staters from the fourth-century BC. From the study of these coins, he was able to convincingly reassess the location of ancient Kytaiion, previously thought to be more in a more inland location on the island. The mention of a similar site name on Linear B tablets from Knossos, the inscription on the coins, and the topography of the region, aided the identification of a more plausible site of ancient Kytaiion on the Bay of Sisses in north-western Crete. The iconographic similarity with the coins of Axos, south of the proposed location of Kytaiion, also reveals possible socioeconomic links between the two cities, and adds another mint to the already known mints of Crete during this period.

After 20 presentations, the colloquium closed with a presentation by the honorary speaker, Nicholas Coldstream, who spoke on the burial practices revealed by excavations in the North Cemetery of Knossos. Coldstream presented burials from the LM III period (*ca.* eleventh-century BC) through to the seventh-century BC, in an attempt to identify cultural change in burial practice over time. The focus of his paper entitled, 'Minos Redivivus: some nostalgic Knossians of the Ninth Century BC' concentrated on the reuse of LMIIIA-B larnakes and possible tombs some two hundred years later for burials from the ninth-century BC. He hypothesized that the late Minoan larnakes were probably used for the inhumation of children in the ninth-century phase of the cemetery, since cremation with urn burial for adults was typical in this period. His eloquence and thoroughness made this last presentation a pleasure to attend, especially as he was dealing with approximately 100 tombs and 600 interments.

Mike Curtis from the University of Cambridge was responsible for organizing this excellent conference aided by Alan Johnston of the Instituté of Archaeology. Johnston also ably substituted an absentee paper with a last-minute lecture of his own concerning the historical imported pottery at Kommos, Crete. Papers presented at this colloquium will be published in the near future for those interested in post-Minoan Crete who were not in attendance.