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Maria Relaki and Yiannis Papadatos (eds) *From the Foundations to the Legacy of Minoan Archaeology*. pp. 331, 69 b/w ills, 9 tables. 2018. Oxford: Oxbow Books (Sheffield Studies in Aegean Archaeology). ISBN 978-1-78570-926-5, paperback £38.

This volume contains final versions of the majority of papers given at the 14th Sheffield Round Table in Aegean Archaeology, 29–31 January 2010, so it has taken a long time to arrive, but it can be said straight away that specialists in Minoan archaeology should find it worth the wait. The Round Table was held to honour Keith Branigan, founder of the Sheffield Centre for Aegean Archaeology, and its topics were evidently chosen to reflect the areas in which he has made particularly significant contributions. Thus, the papers published here are concerned principally with different aspects of the rich field of funerary activity, especially in the Prepalatial period, but also with patterns of settlement and land exploitation, and with the processes of development that brought the Minoan civilisation into being. The contribution by Relaki, the co-editor (Ch. 2), stands out in focusing on another field in which Branigan was active at an early stage, that of developments in technology, their spread within Crete, and their links with the outside world, notably the Cyclades and Egypt.

The papers are generally well presented, but occasionally paragraphs are allowed to run on without a break over two or three pages, which makes them harder to take in and which the editors might have tried to prevent. There is a sprinkling of minor errors, typos, etc. that really ought to have been noticed at some point in the editing process, but only one is serious, the total absence of Table 10.1, clearly referred to in the text (p. 201). There are indications that many if not all papers have been revised to some extent from their original oral presentation, which surely included more illustration than is provided; nevertheless, each paper contains some figures, tables etc.,

and Whitelaw's paper on recognising polities (Ch. 11) is appropriately well supplied with these. Relaki's paper in its introduction provides the nearest approach to an editorial summary, usefully summarising the content of the papers and their relation to the major themes of the volume.

Since it would take an inordinate amount of space to discuss the papers individually, the reviewer will remark on the most striking impressions that he gained, while emphasising that all will repay close study. Many of them return to ground already visited in papers submitted by the same authors to the workshop published as Schoep et al. 2012, but in that publication some papers pay specific attention to Protopalatial developments at the major centres of Phaistos and Malia. These do not figure largely in the volume under review, except in Whitelaw's expanded version of his very useful attempt to establish the parameters within which any 'states' in Crete must have developed (Ch. 11). Knossos is not particularly prominent either, which is not surprising, since material of the early phases has only been recovered there in rather bitty form (cf. Cadogan in Ch. 4 on three separate sources of Early Minoan (EM) material close to the palace); most notably, no early cemeteries of the kind that provide so much of the most interesting Prepalatial data have been found at Knossos. However, it still retains a claim to be the oldest established settlement in Crete, and Tomkins has made it very clear how early the evidence is, dating from before the end of Final Neolithic, for a focus of likely ceremonial activity on the hill later occupied by the palace, and how major reshaping of the hill associated with this purpose began as early as EM IIA (Ch. 3, provided with a series of useful plans of different stages). Although he is able to cite some evidence from Phaistos also, Knossos may well have been the leader in establishing what at the very least can be termed major communal centres of ceremony.

Tomkins' evidence underlines the point that the roots of the Minoan civilisation lie far in the past. At Knossos there was no relative sudden construction of a 'palace'; rather, there were repeated periods of extensive construction and remodelling of previous layouts. The creation of a recognisable Minoan civilisation is likely to have been an equally long and complicated process. One salient feature of the evidence that emerges from studying the papers in this book is the degree of local variety that there was in Crete in the Prepalatial period. Some homogeneity did develop, as particular features that were developed in one region spread to others, and this may often reflect the influence of the major centres, but in the Prepalatial period this process

had not developed far; even styles of pottery and seal type might be locally based. Thus, what the data represent is not a single, unified 'culture', but rather a group of related cultures, that may have shared the sense of common identity that the historical Greeks clearly had, despite their notorious differences, but this cannot be assumed of Minoan Crete.

The abandonment of a unilineal model of development in Minoan Crete in fact carries the implication that evidence gathered from data in one region, however abundant and well-analysed, cannot necessarily be taken as 'typical' for the whole island. Yet the reviewer feels bound to point out that this remains a lurking tendency, clearest in papers that are attempting to offer a model for general application, whether in the basic organisation of society (Driessen, Ch. 14) or in the significance of the often elaborate funerary rituals (Hamilakis, Ch. 15). The evidence cited in several papers reveals some pitfalls. Thus, Papadatos discusses the two earliest funerary structures in the great north Cretan cemetery at Arkhanes: Fourni (Ch. 6), Tombs Γ and Ε, both circular stone-built tombs of the type often referred to as 'tholoi', that is particularly popular in central southern Crete. These are similar in size and many features of construction and in the evidence they provide of burial practices, were founded in the same phase (EM IIA), and were used concurrently for a considerable period; yet they differ markedly in the range and quality of goods recovered. This must surely represent some social distinction of real significance; interestingly, another pair of such tombs at Moni Odigitria in the southern Asterousia region, that was again of similar date and used concurrently for a long period, also differs markedly, but in this case in the treatment of the human remains (p. 146). Yet the interpretive model that sees these 'tholoi' as the basic form of communal tomb, tied either to a community or neighbourhood, which was partly developed on the basis of the Ayiopharango survey in south Crete, 'often seems to be used as a template for Prepalatial social organisation in general, although it is only in south Cretan regions that this type of tomb seems to be not just popular but almost exclusive. As Schoep points out in her study of the 'house-tombs' of northern and eastern parts of Crete (Ch. 9), in those regions there are many different types of burial place, and separate cemeteries, that may be associated with the same site (pp. 170–71); even within the 'house-tomb' type there can be notable variations in the patterns of use.

Most significant of all, in the reviewer's opinion, is the authoritative account of the evidence of the human remains by Triantaphyllou (Ch. 8), which cites material from a range of burial sites of different types, including caves, rock shelters and ossuaries. On her analysis, relatively few primary burials have been found; rather, the great bulk of the evidence represents the situation in which the remains of the dead were left after various forms of secondary treatment. This could often involve communal events, which sometimes included the transfer of a major group of remains from their original tomb(s) to somewhere that served as an ossuary, such as a structure or cave. The general impression given by her account of the evidence is how different the treatment of the dead might be, not merely between different types of tomb but between different tombs of the same type, even if these practices fall within the same general class of 'secondary' treatment of the remains. Thus, as tables for several well-studied assemblages show, there were significant variations in the number of 'sub-adults' buried in different tombs, and in two out of four cases where a fair number of the adult dead could be assigned a gender, men outnumbered women to a significant degree (pp. 155–6). There is also evidence for the singling out and separate arrangement of some remains, especially skulls, and the building of subsidiary rooms attached to the main chamber for some form of special treatment was often part of the original plan (for more detail see Hamilakis, pp. 318–23).

The evidence that Triantaphyllou presents for the low numbers of burials in several types of tomb is particularly striking. On the formula first suggested by Bintliff² and cited by both Schoep and Triantaphyllou, that allows one 'nuclear family' to supply about twenty burials a century, most tombs where there has been a realistic count of minimum individuals represented have not produced evidence suggesting regular use by even a single family over the date-range suggested by the contents (Triantaphyllou, p. 154, with Table 8.3). The reviewer has criticised elsewhere the implication that nuclear families did no more than replace themselves in every generation,³ but that is not the point here; it is rather that the low numbers do not fit with the idea that these remains represent the *total* dead of the communities whose labour went into building them (which would have been considerable),⁴ as Bintliff assumed, and with the numbers who, it is supposed, might be involved in the secondary

¹ Blackman and Branigan 1977.

² Bintliff 1977.

³ Dickinson 1999.

⁴ Cf. Legarra Herrero 2012, 327.

funerary rites and in general ceremonies outside the tombs.⁵ Rather, as Triantaphyllou suggests, some segments of the population must have been excluded from burial in these tombs. Taken with the evidence that there are examples of sub-adults, down to infants, being buried in them, and that, as noted above, even among those who did receive secondary rites some were singled out for separate treatment, this suggests that there were social divisions in the population. Where different kinds of tomb and several cemeteries can be associated with single sites, more of the population may have received primary burial and some kind of secondary rites; certainly, the practice of using the same tombs or other burial sites for a series of burials over many generations seems to be popular in many parts of Crete. Unfortunately, for lack of proper examination of the human remains, much information from some of the best-known tombs has been lost, but this conclusion should be taken into account in considering the evidence that we have.

The whole question is complicated further by the regrettable fact that we know little about the nature of the living communities that followed such elaborate funerary procedures for at least some of their dead. For there has been remarkably little excavation of Prepalatial and Protopalatial settlements in Crete, and what there is relates largely to central southern Crete, which is also one of the regions that has seen the most survey work. The tendency to assume that the pattern of small, dispersed settlements combined with communal tombs, identified in the Asterousia region (to which the Ayiopharango valley belongs), is standard has been criticised by Legarra Herrero,⁶ and does not seem to be completely typical even in the Asterousia, to judge from the account given of survey and excavation in the Moni Odigitria and Trypiti areas by Vasilakis and Sbonias (Ch. 13, especially pp. 279–84). Nevertheless, there is survey evidence from several regions for a wide spread of settlements so small in estimated surface area that they have been identified as hamlets or farms (Haggis, Ch. 12), although as Legarra Herrero remarks, the smallest are unlikely to have survived for more than a few generations and had to form part of wider communities. Assessing these small sites is made harder by the potentially confusing terminology used. Even specialists might want to ask, what is signified by a hamlet in terms of actual population? Legarra Herrero speaks of ‘small hamlets’ housing ‘no more than one or two nuclear families or their equivalent’, which sounds more like a farm to a UK

resident, while Haggis does not commit himself in terms of numbers of families, but on fig. 12.3 suggests that survey sites with estimated areas of between 0.1 and 0.2 ha were ‘farms’, between 0.2 and 1 ha ‘hamlets’ (alternatively between 0.2 and 0.5, p. 268), and above 1 ha ‘villages’. But the structures at one of the very rare excavated sites, the complex at Myrtos: Fournou Korifi, cover only 0.125 ha,⁷ although on Whitelaw’s analysis they may have housed five or six families, which is surely a hamlet rather than a farm. But is this site typical, and for that matter is the site at Trypiti, with tightly packed houses on either side of a street, a typical ‘village’,⁸ as one might well suppose? There are simply not enough data to suggest figures, in fact, and the nature of the communities whose links Relaki explores in Ch. 2, and which must have been involved in the building and use of the ‘tholoi’, remains unclear. The most that can be said is that Haggis’s⁹ argument for a common pattern of dispersed settlement, often on very small sites, with occasional larger ‘villages’ that might serve as local centres, is plausible, but that there was considerable scope for variation. The potential contributing populations for collective tombs like the ‘tholoi’ thus remain very difficult to calculate. It may be noted that the populations of the much larger settlements that became probable centres of ‘polities’, as studied by Whitelaw (Ch. 11), with the aid of a barrage of statistics drawn from historical data, are paradoxically easier to estimate, if with a considerable margin of error, so that the minimum extent of territory they would need to have controlled to support their populations can be mapped with a reasonable degree of probability.

The possibility of change over time in the practices used for burying and commemorating the dead is indicated by Girella’s account (Ch. 7) of the Kamilari cemetery of three ‘tholoi’ near Ayia Triada, particularly of T.A, which was among the largest ever built in Crete and, quite unusually, had repeated periods of use for burials and ceremonies into the Neopalatial period and even for a short time beyond, a striking example of the varied histories that such tombs might have. But in general the collective tombs did not outlast the Protopalatial period and, as Hatzaki shows in her very useful survey (Ch. 10), funerary rituals in later periods of the Bronze Age ceased to involve communal events

⁵ As suggested in Branigan 1993, Ch. 7

⁶ Legarra Herrero 2012, 335.

⁷ Warren 1972, 267; the site’s extent was originally estimated as about 0.24 ha (BSA 59 (1964), 95).

⁸ See Dickinson 1994, 53–4, figs 4.2 and 4.3 for plans and comment on these two sites

⁹ [Editor : Following the model proposed by Bintliff (1978). Pedology and land use, in D. Blackman and K. Branigan (eds) ‘An archaeological survey of the Ayiofarango valley’. *Annual of the British School at Athens*. 72: 24–30].

and instead became the concern of small groups, and while some tombs were evidently used over extended periods, others might contain only a single burial. Tombs and burials were often used for ostentatious display, in more convincing evidence for concern with 'the individual' than Hamilakis was able to find in considering the evidence from the collective tombs (Ch. 15). His interpretation, that changes in the complex secondary treatment given to the remains of the dead in collective tombs reflect developments in ways of thinking about the relationship between the living and dead members of the community, is definitely interesting, but if, as suggested above, the tombs only held some of the community's dead, what then? Moreover, what caused the surely very significant abandonment of the whole complex of secondary treatment of human remains? It might well be seen as part of a more general abandonment of 'communal' ways of thought and action, although caves, put to a whole variety of uses in Prepalatial and Protopalatial times (Betancourt, Ch. 5), continued to be centres of cult, into the historical period, in some well-known cases.

Finally, Driessen's innovative reconstruction of Minoan society deserves mention (Ch. 14); it should be read with his earlier contribution to Schoep et al. 2012 on the possibility of a matrilineal system of residence. As its title indicates, it offers an interpretation of the palaces as communally planned and built structures, reflecting the 'corporate' nature of society, which he suggests was made up of widespread and long-lived groups that he terms 'houses', which might live together in settlements but, even if they did not, acted in common generally and could collaborate in building projects such as the palaces, which would act as central places for displays of cooperation between 'houses' and the settlement of disputes. The theory represents a praiseworthy attempt to conceive of Minoan society as potentially much more 'different' than has been usual, and to provide a setting for the marked 'communal' element in Minoan culture already referred to, but it is likely to prove controversial. The reviewer feels that it needs to be set out in much greater detail, to explain how such a system fits what we know of Prepalatial communities and the degree of variety in many cultural features, and also with the historical patterns of development that emerge from the papers in this book, not least the architectural sequences being demonstrated in the palaces themselves. One might also hope to learn whether, if it formed the bedrock of Minoan society, it is thought to have survived the Late Minoan I collapse of the original Minoan civilisation.

Overall, then, this book provides a fine introduction to the very lively and often innovative work that is being carried out in the study of the beginnings of Minoan civilisation. While strengthening the case for the communal nature of Minoan society, it also presents evidence for patterns of social differentiation deep into the Prepalatial past, and encourages the development of interpretations that allow for a considerable degree of regional variation, but also for the growing homogeneity detectable in the palatial periods.

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