



**The Department of Aegean Archaeology**  
Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw



presents

## **The Book of Abstracts**

for

# **THE 3<sup>rd</sup> YOUNG RESEARCHERS' CONFERENCE IN AEGEAN ARCHAEOLOGY**

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Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, Poland

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**Please note:**

the abstracts are published in the form in which they were submitted by their authors



**Mariya Avramova, MA**

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*Some Observations on the Archaeological Context and Interpretation  
of Gold Funeral Masks from Grave Circle A in Mycenae*

Grave circle A and B in Mycenae are considered by scientists to be the final resting place of the Mycenaean ruling class in the Late Bronze Age. That explains the high quality as well as the expensive materials from which the grave goods are made. Amongst the most spectacular finds are a total of 6 golden masks: 5 were discovered in 1876 by Heinrich Schliemann in Grave circle A and 1 – in the 1950s in Grave circle B.

In my lecture I would like to present some observations on the context of the gold masks discovered in Grave circle A and on the place of the buried individuals with gold masks in the cemetery. Interpretation of the funeral masks is usually limited only to the higher status of the individuals buried with them. However, I would like to take matters further and to attempt a more precise interpretation by taking into consideration not only the masks themselves, but also the other artefacts discovered alongside them. Thus I aim to determine whether a pattern can be observed when it comes to the burials with gold masks and whether the grave goods in the latter differ in any way from the grave furnishings in the rest of Grave circle A.

The rediscovery of the bones from Grave circle A in 1997 and their subsequent analysis and publication made possible the comparison of the skeletons from the burials with gold masks to the remaining individuals. Since the skeletons have been mixed and not properly catalogued it is quite often difficult to attribute a skeleton to a precise burial with absolute certainty. However, in some cases quite interesting observations can be made.



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*Animal Burials in Mycenaean Greece:  
The Question of Religious Customs or Socio-Cultural Identity?*

The question of animal burials and animal remains in human graves is very remarkable, but quite frequently underestimated aspect of the Mycenaean archaeology. Yet, when taking a closer look at this group of discoveries, one can find it exceptionally interesting not only for further studies of funerary rites or other cult activities. The selection of animal species, the manner and circumstances of their deposition in graves as well as the way the remains were treated – all these factors seem to be of particular importance. To collect these information, however, a proper archaeozoological analyze should be carried out. A few examples of animal burials will be given here to show how the archaeozoological data can provide valuable information about the rituals, ceremonies and beliefs in the Late Bronze Age Greece. Moreover, I will try to trace the relations linking the appearance of faunal remains in graves (as well as funerary sacrifice of animals) and the other issues concerning the transition period preceding the Mycenaean domination over Greece. Here, Crete deserves a special attention as a place where these two great Aegean cultures met and infiltrated, which was reflected also in the practices of animal burials.



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*Animals In Insular Environment:  
The Case Of Bronze Age Crete Through Minoan Art\**

Depiction of animals constitutes probably a pivotal choice in Cretan art in the course of the Bronze Age. Whether appearing alone or accompanied by other animals or humans, existent or imaginary and mythological, in a narrative scene or simply in a decorative manner, animal was a lively and -in most of the cases- familiar model for Minoan artist in order to transmit his embedded message.

This paper tries to shed light on that fact with the employment of a statistical approach conducted upon animal figures on three distinct media of representation, each of which is related to a different context of interpretation:

- firstly, animals engraved on seals or stamped as sealings, which constitutes the most populous group, basically focusing on humans in their everyday activities as long as their economic and social transactions within a vibrant community,
- paintings on the surfaces of clay funerary larnakai, associated with burial activities and ancient Minoan's beliefs about the afterworld,
- as exceptionally made frescoes on walls or floors from obviously rich houses, connected with elite groups from big Minoan centers and the need to display their social status in the eyes of their coevals.

Data processing at different periods throughout the Bronze Age Crete leads us to conclude that the meaning of specific animals is not irrelevant to the -anyway- distinctive temperament of ancient Cretans, while it allows us a fruitful insight into human-animal interrelations through time and the evolution of insular fauna, as it has been formed at the transition to the Iron Age.

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*The Significance of Multiple Burials in the Studies of Early Mycenaean Elites*

The presentation will provide a summary of the studies about Early Mycenaean elites of Argolis. The preceding analysis had been focused on burials, dating from the Middle Helladic III to Late Helladic IIA period, explored on the most important areas in the Argolis, the sites of Asine, Argos, Dendra, Lerna, Mycenae, Tiryns and Prosymna. Among them, to the further analysis was specified a small group of graves, with the multiple burials – only 5 % of the total.

The posed questions were focused on the formal nature of specified graves, as well as on their prospective importance in the formation processes of Early Mycenaean society. Firstly, the analyses were concentrated on attempts to determine the chronology of objects and to capture any correlation between multiple burial and any additional form of grave highlighted, for example using a complicated form, using a ground marker or assembling a valuable offerings. The conclusions that have been drawn, show that there is difficulty to determine certain regularities for multiple burial graves – the objects show a greatest diversity, complexity and uniqueness, except the Mycenaean Grave Circles.

After the analyses, it will be an attempt to interpret a phenomenon of multiple burials in boarder social context, especially in investigation of terms about tradition and communal identity. The posed questions will be about the purpose of actions, acts of adding and proving or highlighting the relationships between successive deceased and between deceased and living. The interpretations should be combining with the presence of tumuli, which together indicate a desire to accent a significance of the blood ties role into a community and the role of the family as the basic social unit. It emphasizes also the acquiring individual identity, to define his origin and himself as a member of a larger group. The presentation of interpretations will be connected with the so-called internal conditions of formation of Mycenaean culture and its elites, combined with purposing to placement some graves in former cemeteries and public spaces or to tamper in the local landscape.



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*A Forgotten Periphery or Independent Development?*

*Early Minoan III-Middle Minoan IA Period in Eastern Crete*

The chronological system for the Minoan civilization was developed by Sir Arthur Evans and based on meticulous studies of the Knossos pottery. The whole Cretan Bronze Age was divided into three main parts (Early, Middle, and Late) and sub-phases (I, II, and III). The phases were characterized by pottery styles and innovations in pottery techniques. When applied to other sites in Crete, the system proved to be incompatible with other sites' sequences. As it is based only on the Knossian pottery, it obscures the "historical" events and processes, and does not take into account regional development. Although, it has been challenged on many occasions, Evans' system is still used to describe the phases of Minoan culture, especially in discussion of pottery.

Problems with Evans' system concern almost all stages of the Minoan civilization, but the transition between the Early and the Middle Bronze Age is particularly difficult to define, as the archaeological record is very scarce. Early Minoan III (EM III) follows immediately the EM II period, which ended with a series of destructions throughout the island. Whereas in Knossos there is no gap in occupation, and there is a gradual development of material culture, EM III and Middle Minoan IA (MM IA) in East Crete was considered for a long time a period of abandonment and collapse of culture. More and more research, however, emphasizes the importance of this period, also in East Crete, as it precedes the rise of the First Palaces in MM I. The socio-economical process that led to the emergence of the palaces had to occur first in the EM III-MM IA period. Since East Crete seems to be somewhat isolated from the rest of the island, the period in question had probably a different course, but it is nevertheless important to the region.

The paper presents the state of research and the latest developments in the study of the Prepalatial period in East Crete. Because of the field of interest of the author, a special attention is paid to the pottery and its role in the understanding of the EM III-MM IA period in Eastern Crete.



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***Representations of the Male Figures in Aegean Art in the Second Millennium BC;  
Their Regional Variations and Social Context***

My presentation concerns the examination of the basic features of the Aegean male figures in terms of their overall proportions and typical distinctive traits. The representations of the Aegean men vary depending on the region. The main types presented: Cretan (Minoan), Cycladic (Minoan) and Mycenaean seem distinct although similar. The comparative analysis of these 'ethnic' types will be elaborated during the presentation. Even if they appear to differ according to proportions, costume and style, they clearly have a common route. After closer examination one can easily recognise the traits on which they meet. The points of intersection show in what way the regional styles are intertwined. The social functions of the males in turn range from simple peasants, through warriors to supposed priests. Their interpretations stay inconclusive as their actual social functions or professions are difficult to determine, even more since the societies changed in time. The criterion of costume cannot provide clear evidence in this respect. It seems that what we usually define as the Aegean figures are mostly the representations of athletes and warriors in standing poses, while the silhouettes of priests for instance can substantially differ. The latter also happen to be presented as atypical sitting figures. As regards the position of the body, I will briefly discuss the typical poses of males in movement. Certain formal features of these seem to have survived to the archaic period when they reappeared in the depictions of heroic figures of warriors.

The results of the iconographic research will be confronted with our fragmentary knowledge of the Aegean societies coming from other sources. I will also make an attempt to contrast and compare the Aegean figures with the selected examples coming from the neighbouring cultures. The study is a development of ongoing research on the human figure in the Aegean art...



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***Gold and Silver of the Aegean and Mediterranean during the Middle and Late Bronze Age***

The people of the Aegean world were the proponents of knowledge have changed, cultured and improved the Western world, spreading their knowledge to other populations. In every age have explored and enriched their "neighbors" with their goods.

This contribution will examine the objects in precious metals, gold and silver, from the Mycenaean cemeteries of the Middle and Late Bronze Age, between 2000 and 1100 BC, comparing, through an analysis of stylistic and decorative, with those found in Sicilian cemeteries poles of the same period.

Through this comparison and the discovery of common aspects if not from the same source, the contribution will touch the important topics on trade routes and the interests of trade and knowledge of the Mycenaean to the indigenous peoples of Sicily, land important for its strategic position, and the role he has gained as a Mediterranean commercial port that connected the Aegean. Moreover, Sicily was devoid of deposits collection of metals in question, and the process of importing the raw metal or finished parts was almost certain. The two peoples were confronted and opened to each other amicably, a relationship that was torn, and in some centers destroyed, by the supremacy of Greek colonization of historical age.

This allows us to shed light on the important role of Sicily which acquired within the interests of the Aegean culture, partnership started already in Prehistoric Age and consolidated in Proto-historic Age, becoming Historical Age.



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*The Age of Innocence*

*Parallel Young Lives in Bronze Age Crete and Cyprus*

‘Pre/Sub-adults’, ‘pre-sexual individuals’, ‘the third gender’ are recurring terms in the archaeological debate to define infants, children or adolescents. In this vein, the overall impression is based on the immediate equation ‘biologically immature = socially immature’; until recently, this pattern appeared to be sufficient for archaeologists. As Kemp (2001: 2) pointed out: ‘Maybe [...] archaeologists neglect childhood not because it is perceived as unimportant, but because it is too intangible’. As a consequence, their scarce visibility in the archaeological record contributed to overshadow childhood, considering this subject matter as vague and elusive into the archaeological debate concerning the recent Mediterranean Prehistory. Nevertheless, *Childhood Archaeology* has quite recently developed as research field *per se*, thus evidencing the importance of a description of children’ identity in the Pre-literate societies.

The aim of this paper is to preliminarily re-examine the Childhood Archaeology’s current state of art in Bronze Age Crete and Cyprus under a comparative perspective. The basic data-set includes visual records and iconography, contextualized and supported, whenever possible, by the analysis of the material culture and the physical anthropology’s studies.

The paper focuses on the way infants, children and adolescents were represented and perceived, the relationships they used to have with adults, starting from motherhood and parental cares, their characterization as individuals with a specific role. The discussion of this complex evidence can contribute to improve our knowledge of Bronze Age Cretan and Cypriot societies, in order to evaluate differences and analogies in the construction of the Childhood Identity within two coeval and peculiar Bronze Age Mediterranean Island Societies.



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***From Egypt to Crete: Iconography on Minoan Seals in the Phaistos Deposit***

My thesis seeks to better define the interaction between proto-palatial Minoan iconography on seal stones and the corpus of iconography from ancient Egypt. Consisting of three parts, the first is an introduction to Minoan seals, specifically a select group from the Phaistos deposit. The second is a catalogue of those images with a discussion comparing Egyptian and Minoan social and cultural contexts. The third section is a discussion of cultural exchange between Bronze Age Crete and Egypt extrapolated from the discussion in the catalogue in the format of three hypothetical scenarios. Additionally in the second chapter, my thesis offers interpretations of how the imagery on some seals interacted with proto-palatial Minoan society and the possible meanings of those symbols. Seals from the Phaistos deposit were chosen because of their secure context, their naturalistic subject matter, and because most are the first examples of their kind in Minoan art. Some of the topics addressed include the use of Minoan seals, proto-palatial Minoan society, and cultural exchange expressed through iconography.

The seals were selected because they feature naturalistic iconography which not only compares well with the naturalistic iconography found in Egyptian art, but they can also be compared with what is known about the ancient indigenous fauna on Crete. This helps this study to distinguish which symbols must have been imported. Then during the second chapter, the stylistic difference between the two visual cultures is discussed as a means to understand how Minoan society reinterpreted ancient, religious, and exotic concepts. To do this, three hypothetical narratives are proposed to illustrate cultural exchange between Middle Bronze Age Crete and Egypt.



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*Review of the Prehistoric, Historic and Modern Human-Nature Relations.  
A Case Study from Northern Greece*

Presentation concerns newest data collected and elaborated by the AVPP (Anthemountas Valley Paleogeographical Project) in 2013/2014. Valley is located along the eastern shores of Thermaic Bay, near the modern town of Thessaloniki.

First, the presentation focus of palaeoenvironmental view of Northern Greece with relation to the study area, such as pollen diagrams comparison and Greenland ice cores climate data. The time span from Late Glacial Maximum deals with a period of more than 20 000 years, that locates the beginning of the reconstruction in a time of a Late Paleolithic in Northern Greece.

Secondly, the paper aims to show main land and sea line transformations in a context of Central Macedonia and their consequences for human societies. Geomorphic changes in this area do not match the wider Mediterranean scheme of Holocene patterns, presenting inverted view stimulated by strong alluviation processes.

Third part of presentation deals with the Anthemountas Valley and its landscape history from the threshold of the 4-th and 3-th millennium BC up to modern agents of land relief formation and hydrological activity. Ongoing Anthemountas Valley Archaeological Project brought already various of settlement data that is also included in following paper. Combination of these two scientific methods - archaeological and palaeogeographical - poses an important tool to explain the settlement patterns and agents of changes both in social and environmental dimension. Moreover the examination of modern natural processes, additionally stimulated by human activity, produces an opportunity to understand past landscape formation episodes.



**Dr Malgorzata Siennicka**

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***Textile Implements from Early Bronze Age Greece: Searching for Potential Tools***

Prehistoric textile production has recently seen an increasing interest among scholars. New research on diverse aspects has been undertaken in order to improve our comprehension of the crucial craft of fabric and cloth manufacture in prehistoric times. Since textiles are hardly ever preserved in the archaeological material at prehistoric Greek sites, we can only investigate other remains related to textile production, especially textile implements made of clay, stone and bone. While it is relatively easy to identify the main types of clay spindle whorls, loom weights or needles, other classes of implements have proved to be more difficult to classify. This is true especially for bone tools, which are commonly found in prehistoric contexts, but their functions often remain unclear. Also various stone implements, e.g. pierced discs, may have been used in textile production, but this still needs to be verified through further studies and experiments. This paper will present various classes of Greek Early Bronze Age objects which have never before been considered as potential textile tools. The aim is to turn our attention to commonly neglected artefacts, which were often, especially in older publications, published without further examination or interpretations, but, in my view, might well have been related to textile production. Moreover, the functions of other artefacts, such as pierced clay discs, spools, and bone implements will be reconsidered.



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*Textile Tools on Seals and Seal-Imprinted.*

*In Search of Loom Weights and Loom(s?) in Minoan Glyptic*

The iconographic approach to Aegean textile production is commonly applied in studies on textiles and cloths, weaves, weaving techniques and patterns or selection of colours and dyes. However, textile manufacturing and textile tools, being matters of everyday life and its chores, hardly find any place in the iconographic repertoire of the Aegean art.

A significant exception to this rule may be observed in the iconography of Prepalatial and Protopalatial seals and sealings from Crete. The already observed relations between textile production and glyptic suggest a certain level of administration of textile manufacturing confirmed by stamping chosen textile tools, as well as an interest in depicting some of the tools on multi-faced seals. Themes and motifs connected with possible fibre sources may also be detected.

In my paper I will argue that the range of textile tools represented on seals may be broader than it was already suggested and that more complex references to textile production are to be found in the iconography of the Minoan glyptic art. Moreover, I will suggest that some motifs and ornaments, described until now in abstract terms, may in fact be references to actual textile tools, fabrics and finally the textile craft, transformed into a schematic form of two-dimensional iconic signs.



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*Phantom Mycenaeans in Western Anatolia?*

Working in Western Anatolia in the margins of what are often assumed greater civilizations in the Aegean and Anatolia has both its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, cultural dynamics in Western Anatolia often tend to be studied in reference to these greater civilizations, whereas local communities are characterized in terms of their 'Aegeanness' or 'Anatolianess'. At the same time, however, it offers a unique opportunity to expand our potential to make sense of the past beyond the narrow constraints placed upon us by traditional interpretative frameworks and the assumptions they carry. This paper uses this potential to re-evaluate a long-standing debate about the nature of Mycenaean trade with and settlement in Western Anatolia. Mycenaean pottery starts to appear in the region in the 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE and was soon followed by the production of a local adaptation. Traditionally, the appearance of Mycenaean imports is associated with Mycenaean enterprise in the East Aegean, whereas the subsequent local production is considered the result of either acculturation or even Mycenaean settlement. This paper aims to question these premises by asking, does Mycenaean pottery necessarily reflect Mycenaean enterprise or cultural influence? The aim is not to deny any form of Mycenaean involvement in the East Aegean, but it is stipulated that the Mycenaeans may not have been as central a reference point for Western Anatolian and East Aegean history as we have hitherto assumed.



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*The Human Life Hidden in a Symbol of Flower  
Between Minoan World and Egypt*

Flowers and plants were one of popular motifs depicted in the Minoan art. Floral symbolism is, in opinion of scholars, an element of Minoan identity. Frescoes and other materials are space where these motifs were visible. The most popular flower in Aegean art is the crocus which was the subject of many discussions. Properties of crocuses were debated e.g. medicinal powers. The iconographic evidence of this flower is often present in sacral context. Flowers could be the gifts to the priestess or goddess, an ornamentation on altars, as motifs on offering tables, as pendants etc.

In the Egyptian beliefs flowers played an important role. The lotus was perceived as the plant of regeneration because it emerges from the water. Two kinds of lotuses, blue and white, symbolized death and rebirth. In the *Book of the Dead* the following spell is found: *I am this pure lotus which went forth from the sunshine*. This spell shows us that a flower could be interpreted as a symbol of human's life cycle.

In this paper I would like to analyze some of the floral iconographic evidence in Minoan art. I will try to answer the question whether flowers could be symbols of human's life in Minoan world as they were in Egypt. However, many scholars think the floral symbolism in Minoan art has Egyptian origin, it is good to know how strong is this connection between two cultures.



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*The (In)Visible Tombs.*

*Some Remarks on Seeing and Perceiving Sicilian Tholoi*

Hitherto almost 140 Middle and Late Bronze Age (ca. 1500-900 BC) rock-cut *tholos* type chamber tombs have been identified in the area of southern Sicily. They owe their name to the overall architectonic resemblance with Minoan and Mycenaean built tholos tombs, although being cut in rock they have even more in common with LH Mycenaean rock-cut tholoi. In fact, Aegean influence in the creation of this specific chamber model has been almost unambiguously accepted nowadays.

Constructional, chronological and typological aspects of Sicilian *tholoi* have been examined thoroughly, yet no further analyses (concerning e.g. spatial or visual properties) have been performed on the gathered material. Nevertheless, some of the south-eastern Sicilian *tholoi* are believed to have born special meanings connected with the visibility of their prominent locations. Existing explanatory models assume that high visibility implied special character to those units. The structures are traditionally assigned the role of important landmarks, symbols of territorial control, high social status, etc., and thus could have produced major change in the perception of surrounding landscapes.

This paper is to present some preliminary results of distributional, visual and phenomenological analyses evaluating chosen Sicilian rock-cut *tholos* tombs' visibility and actual visual range in the landscape, as well as evaluating the impact the foreign model's introduction could have had on local communities in terms of perception of space. Contrarily to currently ruling theories, the tombs seem to have had less visual impact on the landform than e.g. the EBA funerary constructions had.

Notes:

