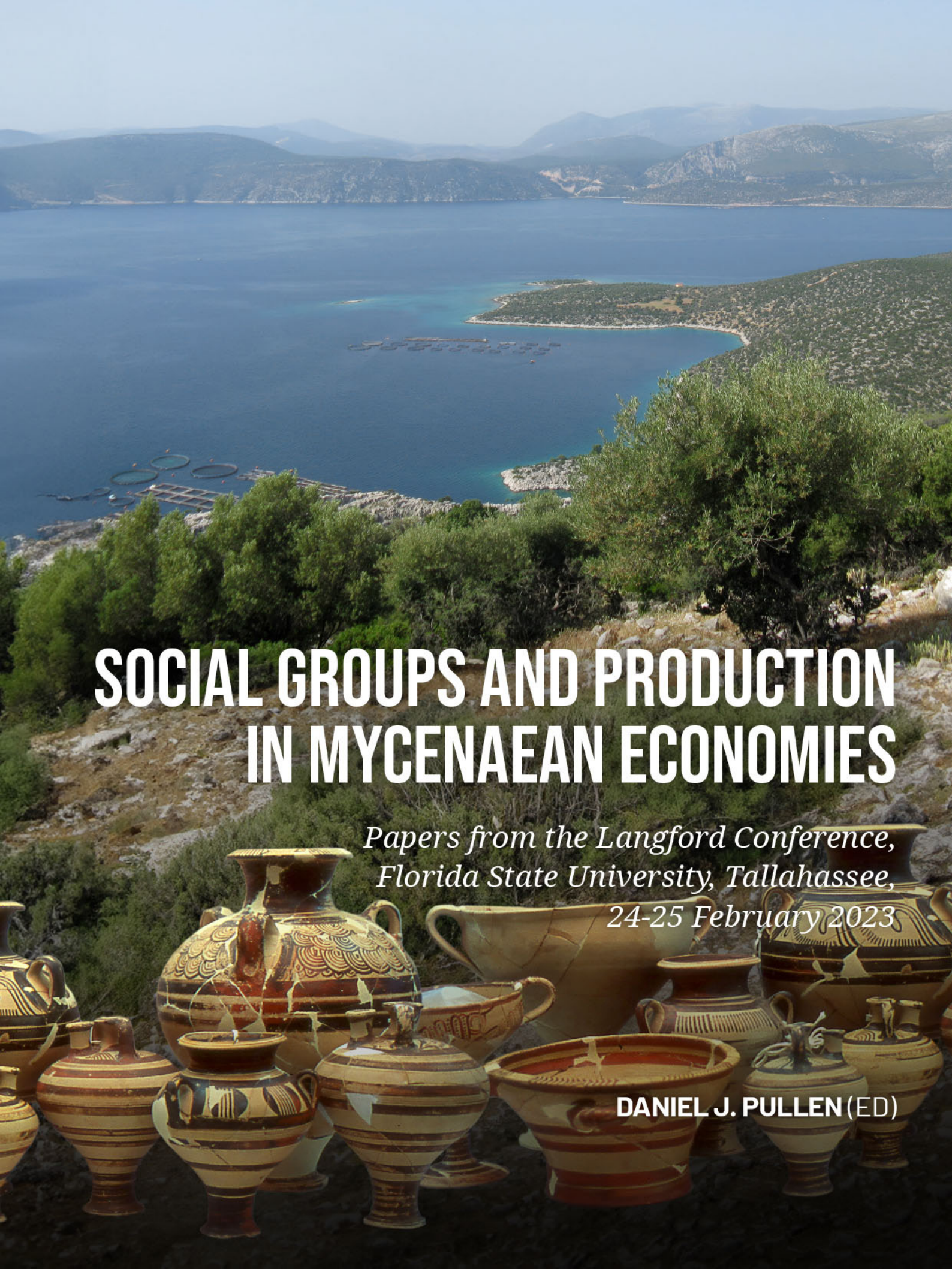




# SOCIAL GROUPS AND PRODUCTION IN MYCENAEAN ECONOMIES

*Papers from the Langford Conference,  
Florida State University, Tallahassee,  
24-25 February 2023*

**DANIEL J. PULLEN (ED)**



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# Contents

|                                                                                                                                                              |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Acknowledgements</b>                                                                                                                                      | <b>7</b>   |
| <b>Contributors</b>                                                                                                                                          | <b>9</b>   |
| <b>Getting beyond elite versus non-elite in Mycenaean economies</b>                                                                                          | <b>11</b>  |
| Daniel J. Pullen                                                                                                                                             |            |
| <b>Reading Between the Lines: Textual Evidence for Socioeconomic Organization in the Late Bronze Age</b>                                                     | <b>21</b>  |
| Dimitri Nakassis                                                                                                                                             |            |
| <b>A House Divided? Social Structure Before, During and After the Mycenaean Administration at Knossos</b>                                                    | <b>35</b>  |
| Jan Driessen                                                                                                                                                 |            |
| <b>Not a Great Kingdom: Mycenaean Economic Variation as a Measure of Nonintegration</b>                                                                      | <b>47</b>  |
| Michael L. Galaty, William A. Parkinson                                                                                                                      |            |
| <b>Mycenaean Economic Institutions: A Firm's Eye View</b>                                                                                                    | <b>59</b>  |
| Sarah C. Murray                                                                                                                                              |            |
| <b>Coastal Communities and Connectivity in the Late Bronze Age Aegean</b>                                                                                    | <b>79</b>  |
| Thomas F. Tartaron                                                                                                                                           |            |
| <b>Brokering Change in Southern Aegean Networks. A Comparison of Communities of Practice in the Cyclades and Mainland Greece in the Era of Minoanization</b> | <b>101</b> |
| Natalie Abell                                                                                                                                                |            |
| <b>Petsas House: Potters, The Workshop, and Ceramic Production in Mycenae's Society and Economy</b>                                                          | <b>129</b> |
| Kim Shelton                                                                                                                                                  |            |
| <b>Potting Communities during the Mycenaean Palatial Period</b>                                                                                              | <b>141</b> |
| Peter M. Day, Eleftheria Kardamaki                                                                                                                           |            |



# A House Divided?

## Social Structure Before, During and After the Mycenaean Administration at Knossos

Jan Driessen

### Abstract

The previous Langford conference in 2007 (see Pullen 2010) presented an occasion to engage with the House Society model as proposed by Lévy-Strauss and to apply it to Minoan Crete. In the meantime, numerous anthropological studies have discussed the model for traditional societies and there is also a wide application by archaeologists — with varied success. A workshop at the UCLouvain in 2018 presented an occasion to submit the applicability and pertinence of the concept for the Cretan Bronze Age context to a critical analysis. It became obvious that in fact very few societies strictly adhered to the Lévy-Straussian model, which in fact acted more as a straitjacket rather than stimulating further research. A bottom-up appreciation of archaeological data allows a better time-and space-contingent definition of the main characteristics of what a ‘House’ represented within the specifically Cretan context during its main Bronze Age phases (EM-LM I), and it are these characteristics which guide the present attempt to trace the development of the Minoan *House* through the troubled times of LM IB and afterwards. It will be argued that a few earlier Minoan *Houses* survived the troubles seemingly unscathed while new elites were established during the Knossian administration (LM II-III A2), occupying more modest dwellings that probably reflect initial nuclear families. While the old *Houses* may not have survived the LM III A2 destruction of the palace, the newly created elites appear to have developed into *Houses*, especially outside Knossos. To what extent funerary evidence agrees with this hypothesis is also discussed.

### Introduction

The identification of the basics of social structure and kinship relations of an ancient society that has left us with mostly accountancy records is not without obstacles since it remains hard to leave one’s Eurocentric comfort zone and approach the archaeological material with a bottom-up perspective that is as little as possible contaminated by present conceptions nor based on extrapolations and inferences from other contemporary societies. Purely archaeological approaches to kinship (Ensor 2013; Johnson and Paul 2016) have, however, shown that relevant hypotheses can be formulated that, occasionally, even find confirmation through advances in bioarchaeological research (e.g., Alt et al. 2016).

The 2007 Langford meeting (Pullen 2010) presented a first occasion to overcome a long-lasting frustration as to my understanding of Minoan social structure and an opportunity to propose an alternative way of appreciating Cretan settlement and house evidence to obtain, if not a better, then at least a more mitigated understanding of the basics of Minoan social structure

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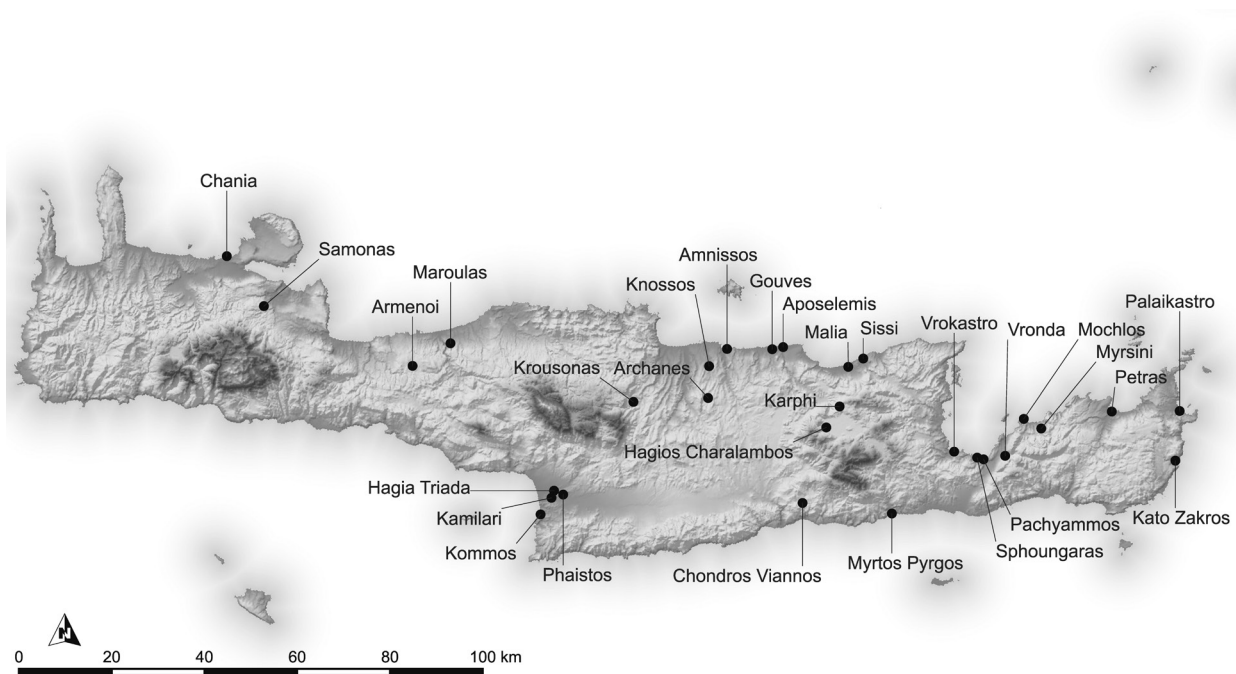


Figure 3.1. Crete: Sites Mentioned in the Text (©TALOS-N. Kress, with permission).

and organization (Driessen 2010a). At the time, I was much influenced (perhaps overenthusiastically) by anthropological studies on what are known as *House Societies*, an extended social group of which the identification went back to Franz Boas' study in the late 1890s of the *numayma* of the Kwakiutl of British Columbia, explicitly dubbed *House Society* in the 1970s by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his book *The Way of the Mask* when discussing the Tlingit (Lévi-Strauss 1983). In anthropology, House/house-centric/house-based societies have been studied extensively and it was only a question of time before their relevance would filter down into archaeology. Important edited volumes such as that by Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995), Joyce and Gillespie (2000), and Beck (2007) have explored the use of the concept more widely, including in archaeology, and since then the *House* (in italics with capital H as I will refer to it) has been identified (often convincingly) in several ancient and less ancient societies (e.g., Sissons 2010; Wynne-Jones 2013; Chiang 2015; Nelson-Hurst 2015; Artursson 2015; Thomas 2016; Kuo 2021). While several studies have used the *House* concept in Aegean archaeology (González-Ruibal 2006; González-Ruibal and Ruiz-Gálvez 2016; Driessen 2012, 2017, 2018; Relaki 2009; Apostolaki 2015), in 2018, Maria Relaki and I felt that the time was ripe to examine the validity of the concept primarily where Minoan Crete was concerned in a three-day workshop published as *Oikos. Archaeological Approaches to House Societies in Aegean Prehistory* (Relaki and Driessen 2020). At the meeting, a few papers touching other societies were presented, including one by Kalliopi Efkleidou (2020) who looked for the evidence of *Houses* in tombs of the Mycenaean Argolid, a theme which touched the

focus of the present meeting *Social Groups and Production in Mycenaean Economies*. Since then, Corien Wiersma (although presented at *Oikos*) has treated the topic in the *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* (Wiersma 2020) for the Early and Middle Helladic periods and Dimitri Nakassis (2022) explored the Mycenaean side in the edited volume *From House Societies to States: Early Political Organisation* (Moreno Garcia 2022), also paying attention to Linear B terms as well as to those termed “collectors.” And finally, Tina Kalantzopoulou (2022) has investigated whether the concept could be used for Cretan mountain communities.

Not all scholars who participated in the *Oikos*-workshop agreed with our hypothesis to regard Minoan Crete as a *House Society* while others recognized such a system only at specific moments during its long Bronze Age history. I partly think that this disagreement is largely a result of adhering too closely to the Lévi-Straussian definition as if it would or should be a fixed screenplay which societies followed or had to strictly observe cross-culturally and at all times, as Nakassis (2022: 126) already observed when referring to Watanabe's (Watanabe 2004: 160) “ready-made formulations.” But both in the introduction to the *Oikos* volume with Maria Relaki (Driessen and Relaki 2020) and in a co-authored paper with Quentin Letesson for the same volume (Letesson and Driessen 2020), we attempted to go beyond the Lévi-Straussian definition or rather to present a definition of the *House* which was both culturally and historically specific for Minoan Crete. That is, we attempted to recognize archaeological patterns first and then combine these observations to create a hypothetical model for the

social structure that best corresponded with these patterns. Whether we call this the Minoan *House* rather than another term such as “*oikos*,” “*do*,” or “*kotona*” (or *gens*, *genos*, *stratos*) is less relevant although it would perhaps have been more appropriate since it would have sidestepped a too strict identification with the Lévi-Straussian concept. Others have proposed to use the term “social house” to distinguish between the social unit and the physical structure (cf. also Nelson-Hurst 2015: 259). Suggesting alternative terms is rarely successful, however, as the discussion surrounding the Minoan “palace,” court centers/compounds/complexes, etc., shows, but again, as long as we know what we really mean with a term, it should be acceptable. At the outset of this paper then, I think it is necessary to repeat what a Minoan *House* represents, to avoid misunderstanding. It remains a bottom-up, archaeologically data-driven hypothesis. This also means that, at this moment, we cannot convincingly prove the existence of a Lévi-Straussian *House Society* because we simply do not have access to all necessary criteria including kinship, alliance formation and the maintenance of property (outside that of the residential structure itself), sufficient reasons to stick to a Minoan *House* (already Driessen 2010a, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2018).

### The Minoan House

Our starting point was the large to exceptionally large size of residential structures, with dwellings on Crete that, since the advanced Neolithic period, often exceed 100 m<sup>2</sup> or more (Figure 3.1). Using the (granted) simplistic equation of 1 person equals 10 m<sup>2</sup>, it suggested that extended social groups occupied these residential structures (cf. Coupland and Banning 1996).

A second characteristic is the intergenerational use of both the residential structure and/or the location, giving it a sense of permanence. This is suggested by the use and/or palimpsestic rebuilding of structures throughout several ceramic periods, most often illustrated by a vertical succession at the very spot rather than a horizontal displacement (see Haggis 2013). The close link with the place is often accentuated through foundation deposits or buried offerings.

A third characteristic is that a clear investment in the design and appearance of certain residential structures can be observed; some Minoan scholars have even assumed that innovations in architecture first took place within residences before being applied to palatial architecture (Schoep 2004, 2007). This attention to architecture is accentuated by special materials, room fittings, etc., but also e.g., by house models, miniatures, foundation deposits, and so on.

A fourth characteristic is that the dwelling acts as a nexus of interactions that perpetuates a sense of identity and this is mainly through the presence of meeting or reception rooms (*polythyra*) on the one hand, and cultic

features (lustral basins, pillar crypts, etc.) on the other hand. Both show the importance of several residences as the foci for a larger social unit and, basically, as “miniature palaces.” This also implies a potential public or semi-public role of these residences for non-residents, also suggested by their access and circulation systems (Letesson 2014) and implies that the boundaries of the household did not coincide with those of the physical structure. Moreover, it stresses the semi-public character of the building which also served to host visitors (ξενία?) through, for example, feasts as indicated by feasting equipment and a much larger than necessary supply of cups.

A fifth feature is that several residences also acted as independent economic actors as suggested by the presence of evidence for craft production. Some of the crafts involved formed part of what are called “maintenance activities” (Monton-Subias and Sanchez-Romero 2008), including limited cooking and textile production; others, however, seem to be organized at a larger scale and may have provided a more extensive group with the necessary ceramics and metals. Architectural specialists may also be included amongst these crafts and, although only indicated by proxy evidence, farmers and shepherds. Trade and mercantile activities too could be a *House*-related affair and Steve Karacic (2015) has proposed that the Prepalatial longboats could well have been manned by *House* members in their voyages to acquire obsidian and metals. Doniert Evly (2000: 550) too has stressed how most evidence for crafts comes from dwellings and not from palaces and this only changes in LM IB when the Kato Zakros palace also focusses heavily on production.

Two additional features seem to strengthen this corporate view of society. One is funerary, the other external group involvement in public building and feasting. As is well known, the primary method of body disposal in Minoan society (up to a point) was collective, something that agrees well with the *House Society* hypothesis, since we can perhaps assume that “Gathered in Death” also means “Gathered in Life” (Schmitt, Déderix, and Crevecoeur 2018). Collective burial probably expressed a corporate identity, with tombs being houses and an “enduring material referent for a particular social group” (Thomas 2016: 8). Collective tombs hence prioritized groups and group solidarity over individuals and their glorification (Driessen 2010b). At this moment of research, we are not able to state yet that people buried together in a Circular or House tomb shared blood or other ties but advances in DNA and isotope analyses may soon improve this (cf. Skourtanioti et al. 2023). But the close location of tombs to settlements should be stressed and this is especially the case for House Tombs (Vavouranakis 2007). The other is public building and feasting, which likewise suggest the involvement of different, largely equivalent groups. This has been confirmed by a detailed study of mason’s marks on ashlar (Devolder 2018) and by the

identification of different groups within the ceramic deposits such as that of the Protopalatial Lakkos Deposit at Petras (Haggis 2007), the Knossos Palace deposits (Macdonald and Knappett 2007), and the Neopalatial Sissi deposits (Caloi 2018; Mathioudaki 2022). Both features illustrate a clear bottom-up direction in collective action.

The *House Society* hypothesis for Crete implies a high degree of equality between the different *Houses* but also an internal hierarchy within the *Houses*, perhaps based on age, gender or ritual status (cf. Puglisi 2020). Why the *House* on Crete? I have argued that it was a typical Cretan solution since only a sizeable, internally differentiated, long-living enduring corporate group would be able to respond to the simultaneous and intergenerational demands on labor investment that were required by the agropastoral economy of the island (Driessen 2018; Driessen and Letesson 2023): *simultaneity* as implied by the relatively short harvesting periods of the Mediterranean triad and various tasks of herding; *intergenerationally* because especially olives and vines but also flock maintenance required a multi-year investment. Moreover, insularity and male absence for trade surely played a role.

The *House* then was the best environmentally adapted solution for this agropastoral insular society. I feel strengthened in this hypothesis by the results of a recent paleogenetic analysis (Skourtanioti et al. 2023) which is based on a Cretan sample of 66 individuals from different sites and periods (Early Neolithic Apselemis (6 samples); Middle Bronze Age Hagios Charalambos (28), Late Bronze Age Chania (27), Apselemis (3) and Krousonas (2)). Not only do their results effectively illustrate the arrival of the so-called WES (Western Eurasian Steppe) ancestry, also found on the Mainland, especially at Late Bronze Age Chania and hence a phase of mixing between different population groups, but more importantly, they were also able to illustrate a very high degree of consanguinity at Middle Bronze Age Hagios Charalambos, which suggested a relatedness to the degree of first cousins. This marital system, also present in the Cyclades, seems a result of endogamy, the practice of marrying within a special group, and hence likely to prevent the inherited farmland within families from being divided, in order to ensure a continuity of the family in one place, hence precisely what we would expect for a *House*.

This in, a nutshell, is our present hypothesis. Within this general framework, however, we should leave sufficient room for variety, development, and change. Accepting the *House* as the main social actor certainly does not exclude the presence of other social systems or of regional or temporal variety. Jeunesse and colleagues (2021) have shown how, on the island of Sumba in Indonesia, the western part of the island is largely organized in tribes, forming egalitarian *House Societies* with a council of elders in each village, while the eastern part of the island comprises different chiefdoms with royal, hereditary

lineages. Sumba is an island somewhat larger than Crete and one of the rare contemporary contexts where even today megalithic monuments are still produced. An identical material culture exists all over the island despite there being 24 different ethnic groups and eight different languages and hence two political and social systems. The geographical separation between the two systems is not absolute and they are mixed within their respective core regions. Both systems use megalithic tombs for collective burials, but they serve all *House* members in the *House Society*, whereas they only receive the royal lineage in the chiefdoms (Adams and Kusumawati 2011). These last tombs are larger and more extensively decorated. Because informants are available, we can acquire an understanding of the social differences.

### The House after Late Minoan IB

In earlier papers, I primarily explored the *House Society* system for the Minoan periods (also Driessen and Letesson 2023), while here the focus is on the post-LM IB periods, taking up O. Dickinson's challenge, who, in a review of Relaki and Papadatos (2018), noted that the *House Society* model

"... represents a praiseworthy attempt to conceive of Minoan Society as potentially more 'different' than has been usual, and to provide a setting for the marked 'communal' element in Minoan culture....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 civilization" (Dickinson 2020: 580).

A first problem we must tackle is whether the end of collective burials also meant the end of the social system as represented by the Minoan *House*. It is well known that collective tombs already become rare during the Neopalatial period with only a handful examples still in use (Kamilari, Myrtos Pyrgos, and Sissi) and during the same phase, large cemeteries with individual body depositions such as at Sphoungaras, Pachyammos, and elsewhere seem to become if not the rule, then more preeminent. Especially for LM IB, however, funerary evidence is notoriously lacking and this, as we already argued (Driessen and Macdonald 1997: 35–83), illustrates just one of the considerable societal changes that Crete was going through in the period after the Santorini eruption. Together with the going-out-of-use of all palaces and their central courts as venues for staged collective, regional feasting and ritual integration, the abandonment of vernacular venues such as peak sanctuaries and cave shrines, the change from a prime female to a male divinity, and the gradual diminishing in the architectural and decorative investment of private residences, these changes are quite upsetting, perhaps

even world-changing, affecting the core of Minoan society and thus undoubtedly also its social basis. The bottom-up direction of collective action seems clearly to become less important, if not largely eradicated. When the smoke of the LM IB fires eventually clears, the island was unrecognizable (*contra* Whitelaw 2022: 62 who, I believe, overemphasizes continuity). All main Neopalatial settlements and cult places had gone up in fire and/or were in ruins, many abandoned forever, and apart from the Knossos palace, no public buildings remained. The recent publication of the volume *One State Many Worlds* (D'Agata et al. 2022) is of immense help to get a better grasp of the relevant period. Did the Minoan *House* as attested in the previous periods survive the troubles? As before, we have two strands of evidence: settlement and funerary data.

There is considerable discussion on what precisely happened at Knossos between the LM IB and LM II periods. Macdonald (2005) has argued for some changes to have taken place in the palace already during LM IB, continuing with major changes in LM II. The same process — Neopalatial buildings (whether or not partly damaged in LM IA by Santorini-eruption related events) patched up and reused in LM IB–LM II — can also be seen elsewhere at Knossos, as in the Unexplored Mansion, the South House, and the Royal Villa (Hatzaki 2011: 258). The detailed biographies of the South House and the Royal Villa remain somewhat obscure but at least that of the Unexplored Mansion is clear (Popham et al. 1984): built in LM IA and possibly damaged by earthquake in that same period, it was extensively reused during LM II when there is evidence for cult activity but also for metal production. The house was extensively damaged by fire at this moment and the reuse afterwards is much more limited. The biography of House X at Kommos, is quite similar (Shaw and Shaw 2012; Rutter 2017): built in LM IA, it remained occupied throughout without suffering a wholesale destruction until it was given up in early LM IIIA2. Most of its floor deposits date to LM II so we may perhaps assume some disturbance then since there were considerable modifications afterwards and some rooms were given up. The same thing happened with Maison Epsilon at Malia. The first rooms of this complex were found when a road between the palace and the national road was cut in the 1930s, but its true excavation took place in the fifties (Deshayes and Dessenne 1959), followed by smaller investigations later (Pelon 1967, 1970; Bradfer-Burdet 2003, 2004, 2006). Although there was a Protopalatial predecessor, Neopalatial Epsilon also included a lustral basin, two large reception rooms, a columnar court, a frescoed room, plastered floors and ashlar. The quality of some finds (especially the lamps) is also surprising. It was an elite complex, undoubtedly. Pelon's study has shown that there were four main phases, the first being Protopalatial and the last Postpalatial whereas phase IIIB is dated to LM IB–LM II, when the building was simply reused after some minor LM IA disturbance, hence,

closely paralleling the history of the Unexplored Mansion and House X at Kommos. After its abandonment in LM II, its ruins were only reoccupied after an interruption in LM IIIB, a reoccupation which took place especially in the most eastern and western rooms.

These three cases in three different settlements have in common that we have no reason *not* to assume that the same intergenerational social unit occupied the building between LM IA and LM II, i.e., for at least 100 years or four generations (Rutter 2017: 237). Moreover, each of these buildings is quite large, with 205 m<sup>2</sup> ground floor space for Kommos X, 460 m<sup>2</sup> for the Unexplored Mansion and 1370 m<sup>2</sup> for Neopalatial Epsilon. It is very possible that something similar happened with Building 1 at Palaikastro, which was also largely reused without much change from LM I to LM II (MacGillivray and Sackett 2019). Using our rule of thumb, this would mean respectively about 20, 46 and 137 residents. Even if these numbers are exaggerated, it may imply that some social units were able to maintain themselves throughout the period of troubles and even though, apart from that of Knossos, no other palace survived.

On the other hand, several other buildings either at Malia and Knossos or in other sites seem to be newly built LM II constructions, and Whitelaw (2022: 55) has noted the blatant reduction in size of individual dwellings after the Neopalatial period. Indeed, newly constructed residential buildings, often with fewer than five rooms, have been recognized at Knossos, at Malia (in Quartier Nu), at Sissi, and at Mochlos and Chania. At Knossos, for example, the Gypsum House, located behind the Stratigraphical Museum next to the LM II–IIIA dancing circles (of which the function remains debated), was constructed in LM II (Warren 1983: 63–65). It got its name because of the ample use of gypsum for slabs, bases, staircases etc. Although only a part of the building was excavated (the rest remains hidden in the baulk), it comprised four rooms including an entrance room, a frescoed main room as well as two rooms to the west. The material found in it would also suggest that this was an elite dwelling but of relatively small size and it did not seem to survive the LM II period. The same goes for a house excavated near the South-West House (S.VII) (Macdonald 2011, 2022: 121, figs. 6–10), built and destroyed by fire in LM II. The presence of fine gypsum floor slabs, a polythyron, and pillars suggests it was a house of some standing but again it cannot have been very large. The same may apply to a house recently excavated at Gypsades which was occupied in LM II but also suffered a destruction (Morgan 2015: 34–35). Likewise, the LM II remains we found beneath Quartier Nu at Malia and at Sissi are those of small buildings (Driessen and Farnoux 1994) and the same seems true for the building constructed on top of the LM IB house at Chania's Agia Aikaterini Square (Hallager and Hallager 2016). At Mochlos too, the houses constructed somewhat later, in LM IIIA, are small, rarely comprising

more than five rooms (Brogan, Smith, and Soles 2002; Soles and Davaras 2011). The only thing all these contexts have in common is a typical Knossian pottery assemblage so we can assume their occupants formed part of the new regime. But we clearly seem to have a contrast with, on the one hand, large complexes that show a continuity from the previous period into the next, and, on the other hand, newly built residences of small size. These small, new houses often did not survive the period, nor do they comprise specifically larger rooms that could be used for receptions or as a ritual focus. This suggests they belonged to more introverted, nuclear families. Is it then possible that in some settlements some *Houses* survived the LM IB troubles but elsewhere they did not, and new elites progressively established themselves? This may be the case, but perhaps something else is also going on. As we will see below, both at Sissi and at Malia, the small LM II structures were followed by large complexes, and this seems also to be the case elsewhere in the Cretan countryside. The restudy of the remains on a hill at Kephali Chondros Viannos showed that the core of this complex was an original central residence with Knossian characteristics continuously inhabited between LM II and LM IIIA2 when it suffered a fire destruction (Platon 2022). This central residence counts about 10 rooms, and it was against its walls that all other rooms were constructed afterwards in LM IIIA2 and IIIB (Platon 2022: 282–283). Does Chondros illustrate a new process of a gradually expanding social group and the recreation or renaissance of a larger corporate unit, in a sense announcing what happened, e.g., at Late Geometric Vronda (Gaignerot-Driessen 2016: 149)? This process — the recreation of larger corporate units — is a phenomenon which we can observe immediately after the fall of Knossos in LM IIIA2.

One of the most persisting problems facing Minoan archaeologists is not in which period to place the destruction of the palace at Knossos, but rather when precisely within the Late Minoan IIIA period this happened: at the beginning, the middle, or the end? Our pottery resolutions do not allow this conundrum to be solved for the moment. While Evans had suggested Late Minoan II, i.e., around 1400 BCE, Popham modified this into early LM IIIA2 (around 1375 BCE), with Raison proposing 1350 BCE and Macdonald (2005) going down to 1325 BCE (Driessen 2008). Does this really matter? We think so. Deciding when the destruction happened in the 14<sup>th</sup> century BCE is important for our historical thinking. Just one example: the megaron and other buildings at Hagia Triada are said to have been constructed in LM IIIA2 but we have no way of deciding whether this was *before* or *after* the destruction of Knossos.<sup>1</sup> The same goes for most of the

larger building complexes in the excavation of which I was involved: Quartier Nu at Malia and Building CDE at Sissi (Driessen 2017 for a more detailed analysis). Both buildings preserved plenty of good floor assemblages *in situ* and both complexes were constructed on top of the ruins of earlier buildings. We may envisage that this reflects both a structural concern and an attempt to link with the past. For Quartier Nu, we assume that, because of its regularity, a core building to the east was first laid out early in LM IIIA2 but soon after the complex developed around a small central court which carries the thus far only Bronze Age pebble mosaic found on Crete. In its first phase, when a kitchen/tower still functioned to the east, the entire complex may have functioned as a single unit. After an earthquake destruction, however, the west side may have been abandoned (as was the east kitchen/tower), and only the east part was reused till this burned down late in LM IIIB. If this interpretation is correct, we would have a repetition of what we saw at Chondros Viannos, the gradual extension of a core building into a multiroom complex. At Sissi, Building CD may also have started off with a core building, which was expanded into a much larger complex CDE in early LM IIIB. This too, however, suffered from an earthquake accompanied by fire after which the south wing was given up, but the north wing continued till the advanced LM IIIB period.

Does this turn Nu and Sissi CDE into *Houses*, as existed in earlier Minoan times? If we recall the six characteristics mentioned earlier, they do answer most of the requirements. The buildings have a large size in common, each counting about 30 rooms, quite surprising for the period. But although there is also a vertical stratigraphy with the palimpsestic rebuilding on the same spot, it seems that we have relatively modest core buildings which only develop later into larger complexes by horizontally adding additional spaces and functions. In both cases, however, the complexes were intentionally placed on earlier structures as if they wanted to create a link with a longer genealogy. We also have a few foundation deposits stressing the importance of the construction. Both complexes include halls that could serve for larger numbers of people, including non-residents, and in both cases, there is sufficient ritual equipment to claim that they also had a cultic function (Gaignerot-Driessen 2014). Moreover, pits associated with both complexes also show that feasting was a major element in the social relations of the residents and potentially also included non-residents (Driessen, Farnoux, and Langohr 2008). Architectural elaboration, however, seems much reduced although the presence of house-related imagery such as the large house model and pebble mosaic at Malia Quartier Nu and the hut-models found at Sissi may be relevant here, stressing their emblematic use.

The archaeological evidence, taken broadly, hence seems to suggest different developments. On the one hand, there exist old corporate groups residing within large

1 Privitera (2016: 153) mentions for example that the Casa VAP was built “at the very beginning of LM IIIA2” with changes in the house taking place “at an advanced stage of LM IIIA2” and that the Hagia Triada painted sarcophagus dates to the “ripe LM IIIA2” (2016: 155).

complexes in a few major settlements that survived the LM IB destructions but seem to have disappeared with the LM IIIA2 destruction of the palace. On the other hand, new, small-scale social units develop into larger corporate groups. These seem to have started before the destruction of the Knossos palace but continued and even thrived afterwards, at least till the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BCE. This also seems to imply that there was a renaissance of a type of Minoan *House* different undoubtedly from the earlier type. It also seems to imply indeed that the *House* model was very much a social solution that was closely linked to the Cretan environment and economy.

How to make this settlement evidence agree with funerary data is not easy since there is little evidence for truly collective tombs during the Final and Postpalatial periods on Crete, and, as mentioned, collective tombs are more commonly associated with Lévi-Straussian *House Societies*.<sup>2</sup> To explain the absence of collective tombs it is often suggested that corporate identity was largely given up to the advantage of individual status, expressed through precious grave gifts such as jewelry, bronze weapons, and vases. This privatization of luxury goods by a minority would hence betray a considerable change in the sociopolitical system. This should perhaps be mitigated. That there is a change cannot be denied but it was perhaps less world-shocking than assumed. For a start we should note with Galanakis (2022: 148) that six out of 11 Neopalatial funerary locations at Knossos show *continuity*, paralleling the settlement evidence of the Unexplored Mansion and other buildings mentioned above. It should also be remembered that even the Tlingits, a tribe that Lévi-Strauss used to back up his *House Society* theory, practiced individual inhumation usually within *House*-related burial plots. Can we conjecture something similar for Crete? Galanakis (2022) has also noted how rare it is to find tombs on Crete during the Final and Postpalatial period that were used for more than a few individuals, and this is in some contrast with the Mainland where there is good evidence for collective burials. Two remarks are in order here. Although our evidence is fragmented, it seems probable that each major settlement on Crete had *multiple* burial grounds during this period and each ground could have belonged to a specific *House*. At Knossos, burial grounds are found at Gypsades, Zafer Papoura, Ailias, Sellopoulo, and Mavrospelio, but the same may be true for e.g., Palaikastro, Chania, Malia, Archanes, and Phaistos, all sites where several

burial plots have been identified that were in use at the same time. We can even wonder if cemeteries that are located at some distance from each other, such as that of Mochlos-Limenaria and Myrsini, with respectively 31 and 12 tombs, could have belonged to separate groups residing in the same settlement (Smith 2020). The same may be the case for Karphi, Vrokastro, and in the Messara where quite a lot of small cemeteries cluster in the same general area (Girella 2020). I would not go as far as Naglak and Terrenato (2020: 33–34) who assumed that an entire cemetery of 600 graves in Osteria dell'Osa near Gabii should be attributed to a single *House*. On Crete, spatial clustering of tombs *within* large cemeteries can already be noted at earlier Sphoungaras and this is also the case at Zafer Papoura and Armenoi. In this last cemetery, Eleni Papadopoulou (2017) has recognized three separate clusters while the Maroulas cemetery has two groups of tombs apparently used simultaneously. Tomb clustering is evidently an argument used to conjecture the existence of a *House Society* on the Mycenaean Mainland but on its own (i.e., without relevant settlement data) I would remain careful about such conclusions.

Finally, we can ask who the people were residing in these new, gradually expanding Final and Postpalatial complexes. I would agree with Dimitri Nakassis (2022) that their occupants may have been those who are known from our Linear B studies as “collectors,” some kind of elite with multiple interests, variously interpreted as stakeholders, aristocrats, or nobles. Perhaps *House* representatives would be a better term and Landenius Enegren (2008) already suggested that the collector names could express household/clan affiliations, in the manner of the second personal name recorded in the genitive case in early Mesopotamian texts (the pre-Sargonic Farah administrative lists). Although collectors are regularly mentioned with their names, often they also occur in the adjectival form and perhaps interpreting these as “of the *House* of Wewesijojo,” helps us to understand them better as indicating decentralized elite Houses. Neither at Sissi nor at Malia do these large “collector” complexes stand on their own and smaller buildings also exist, occupied at the same time. These may have comprised dependent nuclear families, retainers, allies, or neighbors of some sort. And this mixture of large and small households seems also the case at Gouves, Amnisos, Samonas, Palaikastro, and Chania, simply judging from the sizes of the residential evidence.

## Conclusion

What I have suggested in this paper is that the specific social structure as represented by the Minoan *House* partly survived the troubles of the LM IB period in some of the main settlements but that, during Late Minoan II, new more individualizing types of elites established themselves or were created in both the capital and the countryside, perhaps filling up a power vacuum left by the elimination

2 This said, we may miss part of our LM II–IIIA evidence since later interferences clearly happened. At Sissi, within the ruins of a Neopalatial House tomb, a LM II–IIIA1 shaft grave was installed; this was used twice, the last burial being disturbed, the earlier one, of a woman, remaining intact (Driessen and Mouthuy 2022). In the same ruins, however, we also found a pit with redeposited human bones and LM IIIA2 miniature vases, as well as a box with the remains of at least six people and LM IIIA vases, including a conical cup, a piriform jug, a jar, and a pyxis lid while nearby were primary depositions.

of earlier groups. While both the old and new elites may have been obliterated in the capital together with central authority with the destruction of the palace at Knossos in LM IIIA2, the countryside elites seem to be at the basis of the development of new corporate groups. Why is this? Largely, I suspect, because it was the best, most adapted or most engrained social system to the Cretan environment and mixed economy in which flock keeping, cereals, vines and olives demanded an intergenerational labor investment by a larger corporate group that acted as one, and organized its own internal specialization which could not be assured by the smaller social units or households. But the insular involvement surely also played a role since comparative ethnographic work has shown that in such situations men are often absent for trade, forcing those who stay behind to form more extensive groups in which females played a major role and ensured economic production. Extensive corporate groups, however, are detrimental to central authority and it may be suggested that, from the outset, the Knossian Linear B administration may not have been entirely favorable to their presence even if it needed these to be operational. Later, external dominators such as the Romans, the Venetians, Ottomans, and the modern Athenian state have each tried to eliminate such groupings. This said, the Cretan *Soi* still survives today (Herzfeld 1983; Daskalopoulou 2018).

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