Creta Antica
23, 2023, pp. 17-28
doi 10.36153/ca23.2023.01

*Giacomo Fadelli**

* Dipartimento di Scienze Umanistiche – Università di Catania (giacomo.fadelli@unict.it).

Violence, Warriors, and Society in Early Iron Age Crete: Preliminary Notes

Abstract

This article explores the role of warfare and the construction of masculinity in Early Iron Age Cretan aristocracies. It examines physical strength, martial practices, and social rituals associated with warrior elites, drawing on archaeological evidence including weapon production, iconography and funerary practices. Applying the interpretative model developed by B.P.C. Molloy for Bronze Age Crete, the study considers war as a social process, practice, and event, highlighting its central role in shaping emerging identities. The research demonstrates how military prowess, ritualized displays of physical power, and communal consumption of food and drink contributed to the formation of virile ideals in early Cretan society.

Keywords: Early Iron Age Crete, Warrior graves, Martiality, Social archaeology, Warfare.

1. The Exercise of Violence and the Construction of Social Narratives in Early Iron Age Crete [1]

The exercise of violence, in its manifold nuances and connotations, constitutes, together with politics, religion, and economics, one of the principal forces capable of shaping a society and regulating the relations among distinct identity groups [2]. In ancient societies, the power exerted by an individual, a family group, or a wider community was frequently ensured by the potential ability to impose one's will through aggressive actions [3]. These actions converge in that complex and elusive phenomenon we designate as *war* [4].

Military practice, and the broad array of aspects associated with it, thus represents a central element in the self-legitimizing and self-celebratory propaganda of those who hold power. Such propaganda operates through the codification of a precise symbolic language, generally bound to a shared ideal of virility within an extended social group [5].

Over the past three decades, scholarship has witnessed a renewed interest in the study of military practice in the prehistoric world [6]. Rather than addressing the traditional questions concerning the origins, causes, and mechanisms of conflict resolution, these recent studies have increasingly focused on social analysis, conceiving warfare as a socially constituted and contextually situated phenomenon [7].

In his contribution *Martial Minoans? War as Social Process, Practice and Event in Bronze Age Crete*, Molloy seeks to apply these theoretical trends to the specific case of Bronze Age Crete [8]. He observes that the role of martiality in the construction of social narratives has been generally underestimated, especially when compared with religion, within the most recent generation of studies on the social organization and power dynamics of prehistoric Crete [9].

In his reinterpretation, Molloy builds upon the concept of *triadic balance* formulated by Ferguson, namely the recognition of an equilibrium among civil administration, religion, and the military system in the formation of prehistoric social structures [10]. From this premise, he develops his own heuristic model for defining the role of the warrior and warfare in the Minoan world, conceived as process, practice, and social event [11].

The present paper aims to apply Molloy's interpretative framework to the study of military practice and ideals

[1] This paper develops themes explored in my unpublished master's thesis at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, *Armi offensive e Utensili della necropoli di Orthi Petra, Eleutherna* (Fadelli 2015), thanks to funding by the project Changes, CHANGES – "Cultural Heritage Active Innovation for Sustainable Society, Spoke 6 (Fadelli 2018; Id. 2020; Id. 2023). I would like to thank Prof. N.C. Stampolidis for granting permission to study the materials from Orthi Petra, which first sparked my interest in the topic, and Prof. F.M. Carinci for the valuable discussions and insights.

[2] For the violence and war in the ancient world, see Turney-High 1949; Van Wees 1992; Keegan 1993; Keeley 1996; Carman 1997; Van Wees 2004; Harding 2007. Different possible approaches in Martin-Frayer 1997; Carman-Harding 1999; Osgood *et al.* 2000.

[3] Earle 1997, pp. 105-142.

[4] Ferril 1985, pp. 9-13; Harding 2007, p. 17; Molloy 2012, p. 91.

[5] Treherne 1995, pp. 106-109; Resic 2006.

[6] Carman-Harding 1999; Osgood *et al.* 2000; Otto *et al.* 2006; Molloy 2007; Unckelmann-Mödlinger 2011; Ralph 2013.

[7] Ferguson 1990; Ferguson 1999; Vandkilde 2006; Harding 2007.

[8] Molloy 2012.

[9] *Ibid.* pp. 87-89 and pp. 92-93. Among the most significant contributions to the reassessment of Minoan social structures, see Cherry 1986; Hamilakis 2002a; Hamilakis 2002b; Schoep 2002; Driessen 2002; Schoep 2006; Whitelaw 2004; Schoep-Tomkins 2012.

[10] Ferguson 1999, p. 400.

[11] Molloy 2012, p. 94.

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Creta Antica
23, 2023, pp. 29-52
doi 10.36153/ca23.2023.02

Ειρήνη Γαβριλάκη*, Παναγιώτης Κουτής**, Νικόλαος Μαραγκουδάκης***

* Αρχαιολόγος, Προϊσταμένη Τμήματος Προϊστορικών και Κλασικών Αρχαιοτήτων στην Εφορεία Αρχαιοτήτων Ρεθύμνου (eigavrilaki@yahoo.gr).

** Μ.Α. Πανεπιστήμιο Κρήτης (panoskoutis@yahoo.com).

*** Υποψήφιος διδάκτωρ, Εθνικού και Καποδιστριακού Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών (nikosmaragudakis@gmail.com).

Η μολύβδινη επένδυση ξύλινης θύρας ταφικού θαλάμου από τη νεκρόπολη της αρχαίας Λάππας, στην Αργυρούπολης Ρεθύμνου

Abstract

The lead lining of a wooden door of a burial chamber from the necropolis of ancient Lappa in Argyroulopis, Rethymno.
This paper presents the lead lining (form, dimensions, iron band and lock) of the wooden door found on the inner step and the floor, at the entrance of the burial chamber of the cut-rock tomb 5, in the necropolis of ancient Lappa (Argyroupoli, Rethymno). The study of the two lead sheets allows us to understand the type and size of the wooden door. According to the pottery which escaped the robbers, the tomb was in use from the mid-1st until the early 2nd century.The unique, as far as we know, find of Lappa gave us the opportunity to raise the issue of symbolic significance of both material and doors in a funerary environment.
Keywords: Lappa necropolis, Roman cemetery, Wooden door, Lead sheathing, Chthonic symbolism.

1. Η θεση της αρχαια Λαππας

Στην ενδοχώρα της Περιφερειακής Ενότητας Ρεθύμνου, στα σύνορα των πρώην επαρχιών Ρεθύμνου και Αποκόρωνα και σε απόσταση 12 χιλιομέτρων από τη βόρεια ακτή, εντοπίζεται η αρχαία πόλη Λάππα, στη θέση του σύγχρονου οικισμού Αργυρούπολη. Καταλαμβάνει λόφο που περιτρέχουν οι ποταμοί Πετρές, ανατολικά, και Μουσέλλας – ο αρχαίος Μεσάπιος – δυτικά. Η γεωγραφική θέση της εξασφάλιζε εκτεταμένη σφαίρα επιρροής και στις δύο ακτές του νησιού και αξιοποίηση του οδικού δικτύου που τη συνέδεε τόσο με το ανατολικό όσο και με το δυτικό τμήμα του νησιού, καθώς και με τη Γόρτυνα, πρωτεύουσα της επαρχίας Κρήτης και Κυρηναϊκής κατά τη ρωμαϊκή περίοδο (*Εικ.* 1).

Σύμφωνα με τον Σκύλακα (4ος αι. π.Χ.) και τον Στράβωνα (1ος αι. π.Χ.), η Λάππα είχε τον έλεγχο και των δύο ακτών του νησιού εξαιτίας της γεωγραφικής θέσης της, καθώς απέχει 12 μόλις χιλιόμετρα από τη βόρεια και νότια ακτή αντίστοιχα. Η έξοδος της Λάππας στη βόρεια ακτή ήταν δυνατή μέσω των κοιλάδων των ποταμών Μουσέλλα και Πετρέ, ενώ στη νότια μέσω του φαραγγιού των σημερινών οικισμών Ασή Γωνιάς και Καλλικράτη. Στα *Γεωγραφικά*, ο Στράβων, αναφέρει τα λιμάνια της: Αμφιμάλλα ή Αμφιμάλλιον και Υδραμία στη βόρεια ακτή, όποι οι σημερινοί οικισμοί Γεωργιούπολης και Δραμίων, τον Φοίνικα Λαμπαίων πιθανότατα στη θέση του σημερινού Λουτρού, τον Λάμωνα και την Απολλωνία στην περιοχή του Πλακιά και πιθανόν το Ψύχιον στο ακρωτήριο Μέλισσα, αν αυτό δεν ανήκε στο Κόριον, στη νότια [1].

Στη ΒΔ πλευρά του λόφου, στον οποίο είναι χτισμένος ο σημερινός οικισμός της Αργυρούπολης, τοποθετείται η αγορά, στη θέση *Λεφού*. Εντός και εκτός του ιστού της πόλης υπήρχαν Λουτρά. Οι σωστικές εργασίες της Εφορείας εντός και εκτός οικισμού έφεραν στο φως πλήθος αρχιτεκτονικών καταλοίπων της Γεωμετρικής [2], Ελληνιστικής [3] και Ρωμαϊκής [4] περιόδου.

2. Η νεκροπολη στη θεση «Πεντε Παρθενες»

Η Ρωμαϊκή νεκρόπολη της αρχαίας Λάππας, στη σημερινή Αργυρούπολη Ρεθύμνου, εντοπίζεται κατά μήκος του Πετρέ, στα Α και ΒΑ της αρχαίας πόλης, στη θέση Πέντε Παρθένες. Ανασκάφηκε εν μέρει στο πλαίσιο προγράμματος ανάδειξης του λιθόστρωτου οδικού δικτύου του σύγχρονου οικισμού. Περιλαμβάνει κυρίως θαλαμωτούς τάφους, λαξευμένους στον μαλακό μαργαϊκό ασβεστόλιθο, στο πρανές, μέχρι την όχθη του ποταμού [5] (*Εικ.* 2).

Τα ανασκαμμένα μνημεία διέθεταν ταφικό θάλαμο και προθάλαμο κατ' άξονα ή πλευρικούς θαλάμους τετράγωνης ή παραλληλόγραμμης κάτοψης. Οι θάλαμοι έκλειναν με πλάκες

[1] Γαβριλακη 2014, όπου συζητείται η σφαίρα επιρροής της αρχαίας Λάππας βάσει των αρχαίων πηγών και των επιγραφικών μαρτυριών, οι δυνατότητες επικοινωνίας που προσφέρει το ανάγλυγο της περιοχή. Επίσης Γαβριλακη 1990, *σσ.* 443-445; Baldwin Bowsky-Gavrilaki 2010, *σσ.* 183-185; Γαβριλακη-Βιγλακη-Δασκαλακης 2012.

[2] Τσατσακη 2018.

[3] Γαβριλακη-Βιγλακη-Δασκαλακης 2012. Baldwin Bowsky-Gavrilaki 2010 όπου και αναφορές για τις σωστικές ανασκαφές ή διάφορα δημοσιευμένα σύνολα.

[4] Γαβριλακι Νικολουδακη 1988. Γαβριλακη Νικολουδακη-Καραμαλικη 1989/90.

[5] Γαβριλακη 2000, *σ.* 305.

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Creta Antica
23, 2023, pp. 53-75
doi 10.36153/ca23.2023.03

*Deborah Harlan**

* Independent Researcher.

Photographing hellenism[1]. The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies Photographic Collection

Abstract

This study explores a collection of photographs assembled from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century by the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies (SPHS), a British learned society founded in 1879. It looks at the collection's socio-historical context, its composition, and metadata in order to understand the development and use of the collection. During its active lifetime, the collection treated the images as empirical data, embedding telltale signs of how the Hellenic world was conceived. Visualising methodologies elicit meanings behind the photographs – responses to choices made in manipulations of the image, its relationship to its media and to text. Interpretation takes into account personal and cultural actions of the photographers, donors, and consumers involved in order to understand the evolving concepts of Hellenism and how that is reflected in the images. Currently, their reception focuses on culturally determined re-interpretations, benefitting from access to photographic archives through digitisation. These reinterpretations demonstrate that Hellenism as a concept is not static, but is continually changing through time, reflecting contemporary worldviews.

Keywords: Hellenism, Hellenic Studies, photography, visualisation, visual culture, digitisation, image collections.

Hellenism is a concept that refers to the impact of the culture and values of a people. It is not restricted to the modern nation-state of Greece, but extends to areas defined by the Byzantine empire as well as the modern diaspora of Greek communities around the world. It also extends to relationships with other cultures who adopted these values and aesthetics [2]. It is related to Hellenic Studies which is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Greek history, language, and material (and intangible) culture from Antiquity to the present. This concept is embedded in the principles of the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies (hereafter SPHS). The SPHS is a British learned society, founded in 1879 and continues to this day. Three objectives, or Rules were established by the SPHS when it was founded – first to promote the study of the Greek language from ancient to modern, second to create a collection of images of the Hellenic world, and third to promote travel and archaeological work. The second Rule resulted in the formation of a photographic collection, and the third was instrumental in the establishment of the British School at Athens (hereafter BSA) in 1886 which, in turn, contributed to the growing photographic collection.

Hellenism does not remain static, but is affected by cultural interpretations which shift over time. My goal was to look at how the photographs from the old SPHS image collection – built up from the late 19th to the mid 20th century – reflected various notions of British-oriented Hellenism through time. I first discuss context which is key to interpretation. Scales of context analysis include understanding the socio-historical background to the formation and operation of the photographic collection, the biographical histories of the individual objects that make up the collection, and the creation of the archive after the collection ceased to function as an active photographic library. Second, a series of visualisation techniques are explored that aid in interpreting meaning behind the image that point to cultural attitudes of the photographs' creators and users. Lastly, I offer some reflections on digitisation of photographic archives and current re-interpretations of the images that reflect modern definitions of Hellenism.

1. Context and History of the Collection

The primary dataset for my research was the SPHS photographic collection at the BSA. The collection of over 7,000 objects came from the London offices of the

[1] This paper is based on my seminar presentation 4 April 2025 at Catania University. I would like to thank Pietro Militelo for the invitation to speak in Catania, to all of those who posed questions at the seminar for which I have tried to take account of in this written version, and to the helpful comments from the anonymous reviewers. I am also very grateful to the British School at Athens for allowing me to study the collection and to John Bennet for encouragement and inspiration throughout this project. See Harlan 2025 for the full publication of the SPHS photographic collection.

[2] Defining the varieties of the construct of Hellenism is a complex process reflecting a multitude of approaches from different disciplines – for example: classics, ethnography, cultural history, literature – at different periods of time from ancient to modern. For a more in depth study see, for example, Zacharia 2008 and Lamers 2018.

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Creta Antica
23, 2023, pp. 77-143
doi 10.36153/ca23.2023.04

Χριστίνα Παπαδάκη[*], *Καλλιόπη Γκαλανάκη*[**]

[*] Postdoctoral researcher, University of the Aegean (papadakichristina@gmail.com).

[**] postdoctoral researcher, University of the Aegean (papadakichristina@gmail.com).

Σωστικη ανασκαφικη ερευνα στο υψωμα βορνο-Πυργος Σαμπά Πεδιάδος

Abstract

Rescue excavation research in the mound of Borno-Sampà-Pediados.

The article presents the pottery from the rescue excavation carried on in the spot *Βορνό* or *Πύργος* in the northern part of Sampà, a modern settlement identified by Spratt with the polis Thenai, mentioned by Callimachus, in the area of the public school. Archaeological evidence included both architecture (including also mudbricks) and pottery, dated from the EMIB-II period to the neopalatial period. The excavation data from the few days of exploration on the mound Vorno or Pyrgos, although, document the importance of Samba, known for decades, placing it among the most important sites of the Bronze Age in the neighbouring provinces of Pediados and Monofatsio.

Keywords: Sambas, Pediada region, minoan architecture, minoan pottery, minoan topography.

Ο σύγχρονος ημιορεινός οικισμός του Σαμπά, στον Δήμο Μινώα Πεδιάδος βρίσκεται σε υψόμετρο 330 μ., είκοσι τέσσερα χιλιόμετρα νοτιοανατολικά της πόλης του Ηρακλείου, στο βορειοδυτικό όριο των επαρχιών Πεδιάδας και Μονοφατσίου [1]. Η ονομασία του είναι αραβικής προέλευσης και σημαίνει *πολύ πρωί*. Αναφέρεται με το όνομα *Saba* στον Καστροφύλακα (K 95), έχοντας μόλις 80 κατοίκους το έτος 1583. Ο οικισμός περιβάλλεται από εύφορες εκτάσεις με καλή υδρολογία, που, κατά τα νεότερα χρόνια, απέδιδαν ετησίως, κατά μέσο όρο, εκατόν σαράντα (140) τόνους σουλτανίνας, εξήντα (60) τόνους επιτραπέζιων σταφυλιών και ογδόντα (80) τόνους ελαιολάδου [2]. Οι σημερινοί κάτοικοι, που δεν υπερβαίνουν κατά πολύ τους εκατό, ασχολούνται κυρίως με την ελαιοκαλλιέργεια και τη μελισσοκομία.

Ο Άγγλος ναύαρχος T. A. B. Spratt [3] ταυτίζει τον Σαμπά με την αρχαία κρητική πόλη *Θεναί* που καταγράφεται από τον Καλλίμαχο [4]. Τόσο αυτός όσο και ο Taramelli [5] σχολιάζουν τον μνημειώδη οχυρωματικό περίβολο των ελληνικών χρόνων στο δυτικό όριο του σύγχρονου οικισμού, για τον οποίο η Money - Coutts αναφέρει, λανθασμένα, ότι καταστράφηκε και μέρος του δομικού υλικού του εντοιχίστηκε στην εκκλησία του Αγίου Σίλα [6], εννοώντας, προφανώς, τον ναό του Προφήτη Ηλία. Η ίδια, ωστόσο, παρατηρεί κατά την επιτόπια έρευνά της ανατολικά του χωριού και σε μικρή απόσταση από αυτό, κατάλοιπα οικοδομήματος με «κυκλώπεια», όπως αναφέρει, τοιχοποιία, γύρω από το οποίο υπήρχαν *λίγα υστερομινωικά* και κυρίως *ύστερα ελληνιστικά ή ρωμαϊκά* όστρακα [7]. Πρόκειται πιθανόν για τμήμα της ίδιας οχύρωσης των ελληνικών χρόνων. Κατά τη Βυζαντινή ή Ενετική περίοδο το ύψωμα του Σαμπά περιτειχίζεται, ακολουθώντας τον «κυκλώπειο» περίβολο των ελληνικών χρόνων, όπως μαρτυρούν τα αρχιτεκτονικά του κατάλοιπα που σώζονται κυρίως βορειοδυτικά και ανατολικά του σύγχρονου οικισμού.

Η σημασία του Σαμπά υπογραμμίζεται από δεκαετίες, κυρίως, μέσα από παραδόσεις κινητών ευρημάτων, με σημαντικότερο το γνωστό ΠΜ είδωλο από τη θέση *Λάκκος* [8]. Τοπωνυμικές μαρτυρίες, όπως *Κώμες*, *Ελληνικά*, *Πυργί*, *Βίγλα* και πυκνά επιφανειακά κατάλοιπα των προϊστορικών και ιστορικών χρόνων υποδηλώνουν την εντατική κατοίκηση της περιοχής κατά την αρχαιότητα καθώς και την τοπογραφική συνάφεια ενός πυκνού δικτύου οικισμών και φρυκτωριών στην ευρύτερη κτηματική περιφέρειά της [9].

1. Η σωστικη ερευνα στο υψωμα *Βορνο* η *Πυργος*

Κατά το χρονικό διάστημα 22/9/2004 έως 22/10/2004 πραγματοποιήθηκε σωστική ανασκαφική έρευνα στο βορειότερο όριο του Σαμπά, στη θέση *Βορνό ή Πύργος* και συγκεκριμένα στο οικόπεδο του παλαιού Δημοτικού Σχολείου, έκτασης 140 τ.μ. Το σχολείο κατασκευάστηκε το 1935 με οικοδομικό υλικό της παρακείμενης αρχαίας οχύρωσης και λειτούργησε ώς το 1976. Η θεμελίωσή του προκάλεσε έντονη αναμόχλευση στα αρχαία στρώματα κατοίκησης, όπως εξάλλου και οι ταφές του

[1] https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CE%A3%CE%AC%CE%BC%CF%80%CE%B1.

[2] Παπαδημητρίου [επιμ.] 1971, p. 578.

[3] Spratt 1865, I, 92.

[4] Καλ. 1, 43.

[5] Taramelli 1899, p. 369.

[6] Pendlebury, Money - Coutts, Eccles 1934, p. 80.

[7] Pendlebury, Money - Coutts, Eccles 1934.

[8] Σαπουνά - Σακελλαράκη 1983, pp. 44-46.

[9] Sanders 1982, p. 147; Panagiotakis 2003, pp. 413-415; Watrous υπό δημοσίευση.

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Creta Antica
23, 2023, pp. 145-178
doi 10.36153/ca23.2023.05

*Anastasia M.A. Vergaki**

* Università Ca' Foscari – Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici / Trinity College Dublin – Department of Classics (anastasiavergaki@gmail.com).

Prepalatial Communities of Crete and the Role of the Multitude. The Cases of Koumasa and Trypiti on the Southern Cretan Mountains

Abstract

The Bronze Age in Crete has traditionally been interpreted as a top-down organized society, with social elites viewed as the primary agents of power and innovation. Despite substantial advances in the study of prehistoric Cretan societies, the role of lower-level social echelons and collective forms of agency remains implicitly underestimated. Drawing on the theoretical concept of the multitude, this paper explores the capacity of non-elite social groups to generate socio-political change through collective practices already since the Prepalatial period. Focusing on the Prepalatial communities of Koumasa and Trypiti in the southern Cretan mountains, the study examines funerary and domestic contexts in order to trace social strategies that fostered mobility and collective forms of authority. Particular emphasis is placed on elaborate architectural traits and their gradual transformation into diacritical markers of socio-political identity, whose origins are argued to lie within the household rather than in higher-level institutional settings. Pottery associated with probable collective events is also considered, as it played a significant role in ritual practices promoting affluence and competitiveness, thereby shaping trajectories towards popular forms of sovereignty.

Keywords: Trypiti, Koumasa, multitude, Crete, Bronze Age.

1. Introduction [1]

The 'Multitude' as a theoretical concept

Two books and a theoretical spring school [2], which initiativesuring the period of the pandemic, when the multitude was itself obliged to remain isolated and restricted from acting as a determining factor in socio-political initiatives, provided the stimulus for the preparation of the present paper, which addresses the impact of the multitude on enigmatic social changes in prehistory. Negri and Hardt [3] introduced the term Empire in order to describe a transnational form of sovereignty that emerged in the context of modern and contemporary socio-economic transformations, specifically in relation to the historical transition from Fordism to post-Fordism in the modern world [4]. Within the framework of Empire, the multitude labors and struggles against established forms of exploitation and possesses the potential to generate imbalance and tremors within consolidated systems of power.

Furthermore, the multitude has been theorized as being fundamentally connected to the production of inventions, diversities, and modes of life, thereby encouraging the emergence of singularities. While the concepts of Fordism and post-Fordism pertain strictly to modern political and economic theory, the notion of the multitude is here employed as an analytical lens for exploring collective agencies, social innovation, and bottom-up dynamics in prehistoric contexts, without implying direct historical or economic equivalence [5].

The multitude (*multitudo*) may serve as a heuristic term for archaeology, particularly in the study of socio-political phenomena in the absence of written records. Rather than employing terms such as *crowd*, *populace*, *huddle*, *throng*, *plebs*, or even *people* (*populus*), the concept of the multitude retains a necessary neutrality regarding the social or political classifications that these terms implicitly convey. At the same time, it clearly refers to everyday people who have not secured a distinct position of power within the social contexts in which

[1] I would like to thank INSTAP Study Center for supporting me during my research on the pottery from the Prepalatial settlement of Trypiti and the Prepalatial cemetery of Koumasa. This paper was written within the framework of the Filippo Maria Carinci Fellowship in Aegean Prehistory 2024 as part of my project '*The Ethnoarchaeology of Drinking and Feasting in the Southern Cretan Mountains*' (*EthnoFeast*). Many thanks to Ilaria Caloi for her help and fruitful discussions and to the University of Ca' Foscari, Venice for the warm hospitality. Above all, I owe gratitude to Prof. Diamantis Panagiotopoulos and to Dr Antonis Vasilakis, excavators and lovers of the Asterousia Mountains. Also, I thank Prof. Christine Morris for her inspiring mentorship and support.

[2] The Spring School named as 'The impact of the political on archaeological research' was held in the framework of the program 'The Construction of Knowledge in Archaeology and Art History in Southeastern Europe', planned for 19-24 April 2021 in Sofia, Bulgaria; however, it was held online due to the quarantine restrictions. I gave a lecture under the title 'Searching for the Power of the Multitude: political and ritual dimensions of Minoan Neopalatial domestic architecture'.

[3] Negri-Hardt 2004; Negri-Henninger 2007.

[4] Fordism refers to the mass production of automobiles initiated by Henry Ford in the early 20th century (Hudson 2020, pp. 203-208).

[5] Brown-Szeman 2006, p. 378.

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