

## MINOS REDIVIVUS: SOME NOSTALGIC KNOSSIANS OF THE NINTH CENTURY B.C.

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People do not usually come to Knossos to see remains of the Early Iron Age; but nowadays there is no need to emphasize that the glories of ancient Crete did not cease with the passing of the Minoan Bronze Age civilisation. This message may not be immediately apparent to the visitor looking for traces of Early Iron Age settlement: indeed, there is virtually nothing of that period to be seen, *in situ*. Over the past century, excavators have sometimes encountered scraps of flimsy walling and patches of earth floor datable to the Early Iron Age, uneasily sandwiched between the much more substantial structures of the Romans above, and the Minoans below; these scraps are carefully recorded, and then dug away to reveal the monuments of the Minoan Bronze Age which, usually, form the main object of the excavation.

But, if the Early Iron Age settlement still eludes the visitor's eye, the Knossian tombs of that period tell quite a different story. Thanks to the local custom of using family chamber tombs cut into the rock and often used over many generations, their finds are numerous and sometimes very well-preserved. These finds are of a quality and variety that show that the phases from Subminoan to Orientalizing—from the eleventh down to the late seventh centuries BC—formed one of the island's most flourishing periods, when Knossos continued to be its most important centre; and, in a wider context, Knossos was then one of the largest and most progressive communities in the Greek world, in the same category as Athens, Corinth, Argos, and the cities of Euboea.

Furthermore, the tomb finds give us the impression that Knossos in the Early Iron Age was an exceptionally outward-looking place. Taking as our sample the hundred-odd collective tombs of the North Cemetery<sup>1</sup> excavated in recent years by the British School at Athens, we find there a range of imports considerably wider than in the previously published Fortetsa<sup>1</sup> tombs, and more varied, indeed, than in any other Early Iron Age centre in Greece

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1. *Knossos, the North Cemetery: Early Greek Tombs*, edd. J. N. Coldstream and H. W. Catling, *BSA Suppl.* 28 (1996) hereafter abbreviated as *KNC*. Preliminary reports by H. W. Catling in *AR* 23 (1977) 11-18 (the Teke tombs) and *AR* 25 (1979) 43-58 (the Medical Faculty site).

—especially during the so-called «Dark Age». Thus, in the tenth century BC, we have pottery imports of Attic, Corinthian, Euboean and Thessalian LPG; in the ninth and eighth centuries, Euboean SubPG and LG, Cycladic EG, MG and LG, East Greek SubPG and perhaps LG, and Argive LG. From the East, there are four Phoenician vessels of the late ninth century, followed in the eighth by plentiful imports of Cypriot unguent vessels in Black-on-Red ware, forming about one percent of the total pottery corpus<sup>2</sup>. Far more plentiful, however, are the Attic imports: more than a hundred vessels forming an unbroken sequence from LPG to LG, constituting as much as three per cent of the total<sup>3</sup>. Among the later interments in the richer tombs there are also plenty of exotic imports from the Near East in bronze, ivory, and especially in faience. Against all these imports one should, of course, balance the extreme rarity of any contemporary Cretan exports, even within the Aegean. This rarity may give us the impression that the Knossians, unlike the energetic Euboeans, did not take a very active role in overseas trade and other exchanges; even so, they must have offered a frequently visited port of call, and were always ready to benefit from dealings with visitors coming from many directions.

Here, however, I turn away from the outward-looking face of Knossos, and would like to explore an inward-looking aspect of the tombs and their contents: that is, a growth of interest and pride among the Knossians in their Minoan past - or, to them, their «heroic» past. My matter will be drawn from the tombs in the forthcoming publication of the North Cemetery, which we believe to have been the main burial ground of Knossos all through the Early Iron Age.

This North Cemetery certainly covered a much wider area than our recent excavations; it must have extended at least as far north as the reused Minoan tholos tomb beyond Teke village, excavated by R. W. Hutchinson<sup>4</sup> and remarkable for its treasure of Geometric gold jewellery. Even further afield, more tombs are constantly coming to light in rescue excavations by our colleagues

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1. J. K. Brock, *Fortetsa: Early Greek Tombs near Knossos* (Cambridge, 1957).
  2. J. N. Coldstream, *RDAC* 1984, 122-37.
  3. J. N. Coldstream in *Minotaur and Centaur: studies... presented to M. Popham*, edd. D. Evely, I. Lemos and S. Sherratt (London, 1996) 133-7, pls. 45-9.
  4. R. W. Hutchinson and J. Boardman, *BSA* 49 (1954) 215-28; J. Boardman, *BSA* 62 (1967) 57-70.

in the Ephorate of Herakleion. The part of cemetery that we know was recovered in two stages of rescue excavations. First, in the village of Teke by the modern road, two rows of chamber tombs were cleared in 1975-76; they now lie under a recently constructed *zacharoplasteion*. Then, a little further to the south, a large part of the cemetery was found in 1978 and 1979, deep down on the building site chosen by the University of Crete for its Medical Faculty, conveniently near the Venizeleion Hospital. There, under the direction of Dr H. W. Catling and with Dr Jill Carington-Smith as the Field Director, an area of six hectares was cleared (Fig. 1, KMF 78)—an area of approximately the same size as the Minoan palace. This was the most extensive single excavation ever undertaken by the British School at Knossos, lasting through nine months, and involving almost the whole of the School's personnel. Circumstances were not at all easy for the excavators, who had to operate throughout under the shadow of the bulldozers preparing the foundations of the new Medical Faculty building.

The 309 tombs on this site (Fig. 2) span a period of over 1500 years, from the eleventh century BC until the fifth century AD, when the burials ceased and an Early Christian basilica was constructed over part of the cemetery. Here we are concerned with only the first five hundred years, down to the late seventh century BC, represented mainly by the collective chamber tombs; that is, the same period as that covered by the twenty-odd tombs published by J. K. Brock in his *Fortetsa* volume, the masterly work to which we have all been much indebted in our various studies of the North Cemetery finds. After the seventh century there followed a long break in the cemetery's use, perhaps due to a northward expansion of the settlement in Archaic and Classical times. Eventually the cemetery came back into use from the third century BC onwards, when numerous Hellenistic and Roman graves were cut into the tombs of the Early Iron Age, often causing great damage to them and their contents. Indeed, very few of them have survived intact, unharmed by later graves and immune to plunderers. In this respect we become acutely aware of a quality of evidence that is largely missing in this cemetery: a quality found in abundance—for example—at Lefkandi in Euboea, which offers us cemeteries confined to a single period, containing intact single burials with numerous whole pots with plentiful finery in other media. At Knossos, by contrast, we have to deal with collective tombs often used for several generations. Even in the few un plundered tombs, it is not always easy to separate the contents

of individual interments—especially of the earliest interments, which may be shifted around by later burying parties, and thereby suffer serious damage. For reasons which will soon become apparent, especially vulnerable were the interments of the later ninth century, a period of exceptional interest at Knossos which will become the focus of this paper. We should, however, begin at the beginning of our cemetery, with a brief account of the historical setting.

The forms of the tombs show a steady continuity with the Minoan past. Most are chamber tombs in the Minoan tradition: for the earliest Subminoan burials, however, there are alternatives in the shaft graves and the pit caves, found chiefly in what we think to have been the original nucleus of the North Cemetery at the southern edge of the Medical Faculty site, containing the burials of several well-equipped warriors. The plain shafts and the pit caves also have plenty of precedents in the LM III cemetery of Zafer Papoura, not far away to the east of our site. This continuity in tomb forms is in sharp contrast with the rest of the Aegean world, where any form of collective tomb was being abandoned in favour of single burials in cist or pit graves. One can observe a similar contrast in the settlements. On the Greek mainland, for example on the fortified acropolis of Mycenae, life came to a full stop towards the end of the Bronze Age; whereas, at Knossos, an unfortified central settlement continues from LM IIIC into SM, in the same area. In central Knossos there are thirteen places where SM domestic deposits have been found<sup>1</sup>, starting from the western borders of the Palace area, and continuing up the hill slope to Peter Warren's recent excavations behind the Stratigraphical Museum—an unexpectedly large area about five hundred metres square. So Knossos preserved its urban centre, even in the darkest part of the «Dark Age». The Palace area had been largely deserted for some time, but in the ruins of one of its former dependencies in the Vlychia stream bed below, there are signs of continuity also in religion. This is the Spring Chamber, near the so-called «Caravanserai» of Minoan palatial times, where a vegetation goddess was worshipped both in the time of the Second Palace and in Subminoan times<sup>2</sup>.

Nevertheless, in spite of this remarkable continuity in the settlement, the religious worship and the forms of the tombs, there is a marked break

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1. J. N. Coldstream in *Aux origines de l'Hellénisme... Hommages à H. van Effenterre*, ed. C. Nicolet (Paris, 1984) 314-17, fig. 1.

2. A. J. Evans, *The Palace of Minos II*, 134-8.

—or a «caesura»—in the use of individual tombs, at some time during the eleventh century. This break seems to coincide with the beginning of the North Cemetery. So, if one should be looking for a time when Knossos might have been infiltrated or even taken over by newcomers—for example, the now highly unfashionable Dorians—this «caesura» in the eleventh century provides a suitable archaeological context. It has to be said, however, that in the gear of these Subminoan warriors whose burials inaugurated the use of the North Cemetery, nothing obviously points to the Greek mainland—except perhaps the remains of a (by then) very old-fashioned boars'-tusk helmet, Mycenaean rather than Dorian. Otherwise, the foreign affinities of the SM grave goods are with Cyprus: for example, the fragments of an imported four-sided bronze stand with ajouré figured decoration<sup>1</sup>, including human figures, animals, birds, and a wing possibly belonging to a sphinx. In a recent article Hector Catling has placed these warriors in a Homeric setting, heroes returning to Crete from a career as soldiers of fortune in the Eastern Mediterranean<sup>2</sup>.

With the beginning of the North Cemetery comes another innovation: the tombs of these warriors, nos. 200 and 186, supply our earliest evidence of cremation at Knossos. The new rite gradually gained ground at the expense of inhumation, until by the ninth century it had become the normal custom for adults, the ashes often being placed in a finely decorated pithos specially made as an urn. Any chamber tomb used over many generations would be filled with a dense accumulation of these urns, the earlier ones often being badly damaged and even broken up to make room for later interments. It follows that the further in time any urn is from the latest use of the tomb, the less likely it will be to have survived in good condition. Indeed, the piecing together of the earlier urns from *disiecta membra* — especially the fine urns of the later ninth century — proved to be extremely time-consuming task.

Against this background we should now consider a peculiarly Knossian phenomenon, without parallel — as far as I know — anywhere else in Crete. Scattered among the tombs of the North Cemetery are the remains of no less than sixteen Minoan clay sarcophagi or larnakes. Apart from one of the bath type, all are of the chest variety with gabled lid, current in the fourteenth

1. H. W. Catling, *RDAC* 1984, 86-7, pl. 15 *id.* in *KNC* chapter 9, figs. 155-6.

2. H. W. Catling in *The Ages of Homer; a tribute to E. T. Vermeule*, ed. J. B. Carter and S. P. Morris (Austin, Texas, 1995) 123-30.

and thirteenth centuries, LM III A and III B. Of these, eleven are plain and unadorned; the other five bear painted decoration. For one plain larnax, from Tomb 98, the chronological context is not at all clear; but for all the others, it is certain that none of them is associated with any tomb receiving its first Iron Age burials before the ninth century. Of the better preserved larnakes, that from Tomb 134 seems to be *in situ* and contained several vases of the mid eighth century. Most of the other larnakes, however, were retrieved from pieces often widely scattered in their tombs or outside them, and because of their fragmentary condition we cannot be certain that every one had been reused for Iron Age burials. But, as I have already mentioned, no less fragmentary were many of the late ninth-century urns of the PGB and EG phases which would have housed the early cremations in some of the richest family tombs, some of which continued in use throughout the eighth and well into the seventh century. In Late Minoan times, of course, these larnakes were originally intended for adult inhumations in a contracted position: one might well wonder what their function could have been when reused in a later age, when urn cremation had become the invariable rite for adults.

One of our most surprising finds is a very fragmentary larnax (Fig. 3) from Tomb 104<sup>1</sup>. On a long side, part of a hatched meander shows that it is not a Minoan original, but a pastiche of the Geometric period: and the wild accumulation of supporting ornament suggests a late ninth century date rather than later. The main fragment is from the lower part of one corner, with one of the four feet completely preserved. On the foot there are fish swimming up one side; on the other, the lower part of a robed figure, with another fish, bending over a triangular latticed construction, possibly an altar, or even a sacred tree — but it is fruitless to suggest any reconstruction of such a fragmentary scene. What matters here is the relevance of this find to any enquiry into possible sources for some remarkably ambitious scenes in Knossian vase-painting during the ninth century, to which I shall turn in due course. If the shape of the larnakes could provoke a later imitation, why not their pictorial decoration too? Or, on a larger scale, could there even have been an urge

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1. J. N. Coldstream in *Studies in honour of T. B. Webster II*, edd. J. H. Betts, J. R. Green, and J. T. Hooker (Bristol, 1988) 27, fig. 2.2, pl. 2.5-6; *KNC* 144 (T. 104. 118), fig. 105, pl. 144.

to reproduce the spacious designs of the Minoan tombs, in which the original larnakes would have been seen?

To resume thus far: during the later ninth century some burying parties began to reuse Minoan larnakes at least four centuries old; furthermore, an obsession with these antique sarcophagi even induced one potter, at least, to copy their shape. To think that these cumbersome objects had been stored for so long in people's houses would be absurd. They must surely have been found in LM III chamber tombs, demonstrating that the reopening of those tombs in the Early Iron Age, whether accidental or intentional, was not an unusual event.

We should now attempt to place the first reuse of these larnakes within the general context of the later ninth century, a period of great interest and importance in the story of the North Cemetery — and, indeed, of Knossos generally. Three other contemporary changes and developments require comment.

First, as already mentioned, there was the final acceptance of urn cremation as the invariable rite for adults. In due course we shall consider some remarkable artistic consequences of this change, when the decoration of urns for the leading families provided a stimulus for the lively imagination of Knossian vase-painters.

Secondly, there seems to have been a considerable rise in the population, during a period of sustained prosperity. The evidence comes from statistics analysed by Dr W. G. Cavanagh<sup>1</sup> in his study of the burial customs in our forthcoming publication. His graph estimates the number of burials per year within our part of the North Cemetery, suggesting a threefold growth of population during the course of the ninth century — and it is likely that a similar conclusion would arise from the statistics for Knossos as a whole. There are, of course, uncertainties in basing such conclusions on the dead rather than on the living, since births do not necessarily match deaths; but, for this period, living Knossians at home are hardly accessible, and we must therefore be content with the dead. At all events, we have a suggestion that Knossos in the ninth century was already experiencing a marked increase of population, on a scale that has not been observed in other Greek regions until a century afterwards, during the Late Geometric period<sup>1</sup>.

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1. W. G. Cavanagh, *KNC* chapter 18, ill. 10.

If we can assume that this apparent burgeoning is not a mirage, one wonders whether there might be a causal connection between these two developments: could the final conversion towards urn cremation be attributed to a wish to conserve burial space for a rapidly rising population? Before contemplating such an easy solution to a much-discussed problem, we should take note of the third new development in the ninth-century use of the North Cemetery. During the main PG sequence, in the tenth and early ninth centuries, some thirty chamber tombs were in use. Many of them were arranged in fairly regular rows, in an expansion northward from the SM nucleus at the southern edge of our excavation. Then, at or near the turn to the PGB period in the mid ninth century, only eight of these thirty tombs continued to receive incumbents. On the other hand, within the ninth century, sixteen more chamber tombs came into use, including some of the very richest, destined to remain in use for many subsequent generations, sometimes well into the seventh century. A similar break occurred among the Fortetsa tombs at this time<sup>2</sup>, when eight tombs went out of use—as did the whole of the outlying burial plot at Ayios Ioannis<sup>3</sup>, about a kilometre north of our cemetery, and two kilometres north of the central settlement of Knossos. Thus we have a second «caesura» in tomb use: not as sharp a break as that which occurred in the eleventh century, with the foundation of the North Cemetery; but, nevertheless, a break which might throw some light on the mystery of the reused larnakes.

After the ninth-century «caesura», when urn cremation had become the rule, one might expect the new tombs to have been smaller than the old, if there had been any functional logic in their size. Indeed five of them—to be precise, Teke tomb M and Tombs 13, 104, 147 and 286 on the main site—do seem purpose-built for cremations, in the very modest size of their chambers. They are modest, too, in their contents. Others, paradoxically, flaunt chambers surprisingly large for the stacking of urns, and recalling the capacious sepulchres of LM III that had been designed for inhumations: of these, the

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1. For Athens (e.g.), a threefold rise based on a count of wells in the area of the later Agora: J. N. Coldstream, *Greek Geometric Pottery* (London, 1968), 360, n. 1. In *Archaeology and the rise of the Greek State* (Cambridge, 1977) A. M. Snodgrass proposes a sevenfold rise, based on the statistics of Athenian graves throughout the eighth century B.C.

2. J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece* (London, 1977) 99.

3. J. Boardman, *BSA* 55 (1960) 128-48.

most noteworthy are Teke Tombs G and N, and on the main site Tombs 75, 107 and 283. These are among the richest in the whole cemetery, and the families who inaugurated their use must have had great confidence in a settled future.

At this point the obvious question arises: could it be that these spacious and apparently new tombs in the North Cemetery are in fact not new at all, but LM III tombs cleared of their original contents, apart from the bulky larnakes that might have served for later burials? This proposition has been debated for many years: here we need only a brief summary of the arguments for and against it. In its favour are the general similarities in design, the chambers that are needlessly roomy for urn cremation, and a natural tendency towards inertia: given the perseverance of burying successive generations in collective family tombs, why need the later Knossians have bothered to hollow out new chambers in the hard rock, when an extensive area north of the settlement was already known to be riddled with capacious Minoan tombs? As John Boardman has put it in his publication of the Ayios Ioannis plot, «with such large burial places available already, the people may have preferred to take advantage of the hospitality thus readily afforded for their dead»<sup>1</sup>. The case against, at least for the North Cemetery, has been most recently argued by Dr Catling who doubts that there could have been such a thorough clearance of the Minoan burials with all their goods. He thinks that few LM III tombs could have survived in good enough condition for cleaning and reuse after several centuries; and furthermore, if the North Cemetery had once been a burial ground, surely some of the original burials should have escaped untouched. In fact, no interments were found earlier than the tombs of the Subminoan warriors whose families, according to Dr Catling, were deliberately choosing a new plot, and making an entirely fresh start<sup>2</sup>.

An important new contribution to this debate has now been made by Dr Cavanagh, who has prepared a rigorous and dispassionate comparison between 40 of our better preserved chamber tombs and 52 elsewhere in the Knossos area, including 27 that are certainly Minoan<sup>3</sup>. For his cluster analysis he chose eleven variables, derived from the size, shape and proportions of

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1. *Art. cit.* 143.

2. H. W. Catling, *art. cit.* (p. 240, n. 2 *supra*) 124; *id.* in *KNC* chapter 17.

3. W. G. Cavanagh, *KNC* chapter 18.

the chamber, the stomion and the dromos. One typically Minoan feature is the inward lean of the dromos walls, especially near the stomion; unfortunately this could not be included in his analysis since too few of the tombs were well enough preserved. At all events, on the available data, only six of the North Cemetery tombs emerged as being of Minoan type, the most telling criteria being in the shaping of the stomion, the presence of jambs in the doorway, and the large size of the chamber.

When plotted on the cemetery plan (Fig. 4), the wide distribution of these six tombs is interesting, if somewhat baffling. Two of them, 82 and 106, are quite near the Subminoan nucleus at the southern edge. The other four are isolated singletons, each one among a row of apparently post-Minoan construction. The southern pair contain virtually nothing before the eighth century. On the contrary no. 219, the richest of all, received interments ranging from the tenth down to the seventh centuries; and no. 207 is an exclusively PG tomb, abandoned before our ninth-century «caesura». No. 283 was by no means the earliest tomb in its row, since 285, another outstandingly rich tomb, contained cremations going well back into the tenth century. Thus, apart from the row of Tomb 75 to which we return later, there is no reason to suppose that any row developed from the rediscovery a Minoan tomb.

What is more, we are not even entitled to assume that any of these six tombs was in fact constructed in Minoan times, simply on the grounds of a computer analysis: indeed, for Tomb 106, there is some clear evidence to the contrary. This is an exceptionally well-cut chamber tomb, with a finely shaped stomion with door jambs, a large and regular squared chamber, and a long wedge-shaped dromos, all in the best Minoan tradition; but its dromos cuts into, and therefore must be later than two earlier tombs of the Dark Age, 98 and 168<sup>1</sup>. So it can still be argued that tombs which may look convincingly Minoan are in reality skilful and respectful pastiches cut in the Dark Age — informed, no doubt, by a view of the real LM III tombs from which the larnakes must have been extracted. (Before leaving Tomb 106 we should note in passing that the larnax fragment marked on the plan was not found in the chamber, but rather in the earth above the chamber's collapse; it is recorded as Tomb 113).

We should now confront the placing of these six seemingly Minoan tombs

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1. *KNC* 129.30, 145; figs. 33-5, pl. 26.

with the findspots of the larnakes (Fig. 5). At first sight there seems to be very little correspondence in individual tombs — indeed, this happens only in one tomb, no. 75, where part of an exceptionally fine larnax with human figures was found in the dromos, in curious circumstances which I shall soon describe. Otherwise, the larnakes are all from contexts well outside the tombs supposed to be of Minoan type. I present, as typical, the case of Tomb 85. There, beside an urn of the mid eighth century, we found many fragments from a long side of a fine LM IIIB larnax, painted with large quatrefoil panels. These were the only finds in a tomb of strikingly un-Minoan character; a shallow pit divided into two rectangular compartments<sup>1</sup>.

Here, then, are several problems which need to be considered. Why, in the North Cemetery, are there so many Minoan larnakes scattered around, in various states of disrepair? And if we can assume that they had some funerary function in their reused state, what can that function have been? As for the chamber tombs which seem to be of overwhelmingly Minoan character, can we be at all confident (bearing in mind the example of Tomb 106) that any of them are truly Minoan tombs cleared of their original contents, rather than later pastiches? And, even if we should accept that the other five tombs were cut in Minoan times, why does their location correspond so little with the tombs in which the larnakes were actually found?

In searching for a solution to these problems, one clue is offered by the fragmentary, but nevertheless very precious find which has already been mentioned: the pieces from a Geometric imitation of a larnax, from Tomb 104 (Fig. 3). Apart from its antiquarian interest, the scale, too, is enlightening. For a Minoan original, the maximum width of the feet is, on average, 12 centimetres; the foot of this piece is only six centimetres wide. Here, then, we have a Geometric larnax purposely made at half the size of the Minoan prototypes, with a length of about 60 centimetres. In this age of adult cremation in urns, it was still the custom to inhumate children, sometimes in large pots. I would suggest, in these circumstances, that the only possible function for this pastiche was for the inhumation of a small child, whose bones could so easily have vanished in a tomb used by many subsequent generations, and then plundered in later times. Could it be, then, that the Minoan originals were also put to use for this purpose? In examining their contexts elsewhere in

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1. *KNC* 128.

the cemetery, there are several clues which point to their use for child inhumations, even in tombs which had been seriously plundered.

One of these plundered tombs is Teke Tomb Q, not among those thought to be of Minoan construction; but here the data for the computer analysis were incomplete, since part of the dromos could not be excavated without undermining a modern house. In this tomb<sup>1</sup> the robbers had missed a side-chamber opening from the dromos, where the base of a larnax was found *in situ*. More of its fragments were found scattered elsewhere in the tomb, some of them built into the blocking wall of the chamber; thus, most of the long sides could be recovered, showing a spiral plant design of LM IIIA2. Under the base, intact, was a deposit of some thirty small unguent pots of the PGB phase<sup>2</sup>; also, the amazing «hippalektryon»<sup>3</sup> vase of the same date, a combination of horse and bird, covered with every kind of ornament including fish, snakes, and even a Tree of Life down the front of the creature's neck; there is even a diminutive rider, perched precariously in front of the handle. Although less than two centimetres high, his hair and dress are shown in great detail but his facial expression looks just as bewildered as we might be, by this strange form of transport. In this same PGB deposit was a miniature oinochoe of Atticizing shape with some equally extraordinary monsters on the shoulder.<sup>4</sup> Here, surely, the abundance of miniature pots are suitable offerings for the inhumation of a child, with the astonishing «hippalektryon» as its toy. Elsewhere in the cemetery, the contexts of the larnakes are more seriously disturbed; but here we have our clearest association of a reused Minoan larnax with pottery of the late ninth century, the earliest period for which we have evidence of their reuse.

Some hints pointing towards a similar conclusion can be gathered from the much more seriously disturbed contexts of Tombs 18 and 31, where the remains of two plain larnakes were found. That from Tomb 31, apparently *in situ*, belonged to an isolated burial well outside the nearby chamber tomb

1. *KNC* 44-6, fig. 12, pl. 10.

2. *KNC* 46, pl. 86, larnax; group photo of deposit underneath, *AR* 23 (1977) 17, fig. 37.

3. J. N. Coldstream in *Festschrift für N. Himmelmann*, edd. H-U. Cain, H. Gabelmann and D. Salzmann (Mainz, 1989), 24-5, pl. 4.1-4; *KNC* 51 (Tomb Q 115), pl. 86.

4. J. N. Coldstream in *Pepragmena tou IV Diethnous Kretologikou Synedriou*, 1976 (Athens, 1980) I, 68, pl. 11b.

5. *KNC* 67-8.

18. Associated with it were a few fragmentary miniature vases, suitable for a child; and clay figurines of a goat and a bird<sup>1</sup>, probably once attached to toy vases; and the latest of all our Attic Geometric imports, a LG II skyphos which dates the burial to the last quarter of the eighth century. More fragments of miniature vases accompanied the remains of the other larnax, in the dromos of tomb 18, and very near it was one of the most impressive of all the finds from the North cemetery: a fine oval amethyst LM sealstone, showing a lion attacking a seated agrimi goat<sup>2</sup>. Hundreds of Minoan sealstones have turned up in post-Minoan contexts, but this one is unique in that it is goldwork of a later period; it has a gold mounting with a simple lotus bloom at one end, elaborated with twisted wire and granulation; the back is covered in sheet gold, with two loops for suspension. Dr Reynolds Higgins, the author of the chapter on jewellery in our publication, dates the mounting to about 800 BC, and attributes it to the school of the oriental master jeweller of the Teke tholos tomb<sup>3</sup>.

Common to all these supposed inhumations of children are the associations of miniature pots, and exotic objects which could serve as playthings, with the fragmentary larnakes which are always found outside the chambers of the family tombs. We miss, of course, the positive evidence of child bones, which could so easily have been lost in the disturbed state of the cemetery; and so at this point it would be opportune to draw attention to the best-preserved of all the child burials in the cemetery, Tomb 78, which also combines miniature vases, exotic playthings, and a location outside the family chambers. The receptacle here is not a larnax but a coarse pithos, containing a baby girl of twelve to sixteen months. Her pots are a set of LG miniatures; small cups, a baby kotyle, and a baby hydria. Her other goods are rich, varied and exotic: offerings in silver, electrum, gold leaf, bronze, rock crystal, glass and amber; four scarabs in Egyptian blue paste, and three faience figurines of Egyptian character, including the largest statuette in that material ever to have been found in the Aegean: a figurine of Nefertum, son of Ptah, 32 centimetres high<sup>4</sup>.

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1. *KNC* 81, T. 31.3-4, pl. 94.

2. *KNC* 69 (T. 18.f3) fig. 154, pl. 264.

3. R. A. Higgins in *KNC* chapter 10. On the Minoan seal, see there n. 1063, with comments by J. H. Betts and I. Pini.

4. *KNC* 123-5. Pottery: pl. 150. On the faience figures, V. Webb in *KNC* chapter 13.

Turning back to a comparison between the two plans (Figs. 4, 5), we can at least notice a general correspondence between where there are tombs of Minoan type, and where the larnakes were found (the Teke plot apparently provides an exception, but there the opportunities for excavating complete tombs were to some extent limited by the presence of modern houses). There is also some correspondence in the areas of the cemetery where these two phenomena do not occur—for example, in the overcrowded central area of the main Medical Faculty plot. We have gathered some hints that the old larnakes were put to reuse especially for the inhumation of small children. If we pursue that hypothesis, it becomes less surprising that they should have been found outside the chambers, and often outside the collective tombs altogether; for it was a frequent practice, going back to the collective tombs of the Late Bronze Age<sup>1</sup>, to reserve the chambers for adult interments, and to place the child burials either in niches opening off the dromos, or else in separate graves outside the family tombs — graves which would have been especially vulnerable to robbing and later encroachment in Hellenistic and Roman times, allowing little chance of survival for the inhumed bones of small children. Following this line of reasoning, then, I should be surprised if any of the reused larnakes had to be carried very far; they could well have come from neighbouring tombs in the North Cemetery, which not only look Minoan, but are Minoan.

Let us now consider the row of Tomb 75, four tombs which all received their first Iron Age interments after the ninth-century «caesura». They also contain among their offerings several signs of nostalgia for the Minoan past. I need not dwell on the Minoan sealstone found in Tomb 129<sup>2</sup>, in view of the frequency of these indestructible objects in much later contexts. Tomb 132, although thoroughly plundered, nevertheless contained antiques from a very remote past. In a niche opening off the dromos, and evidently *in situ*, was part of a bath-tub larnax<sup>3</sup>, possibly of a higher antiquity than the LM III chest type. Even more surprising, in the chamber was a handmade painted pithos of MM I<sup>4</sup>, made a millennium earlier than its context, and probably

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1. On child burials in the Aegean Late Bronze Age, see most recently N. Polychronakou-Sgouritsa, *AD* 42, 1987 (Athens, 1994) A, 8-29.

2. *KNC* 170, T. 129, fl, fig. 193, pl. 303.

3. *KNC* 171-3, T. 132.38.

4. *KNC* 171-2, T. 132.9. pl. 170.

put to use as a cremation urn. But the most impressive antique comes from the two largest tombs, 75 and 107, both very rich, and stuffed with interments of the next two centuries and then subsequently plundered, thus leaving very little chance for the earliest cremations to survive in good condition. Tomb 75 has an exceptionally long dromos<sup>1</sup> of nearly ten metres; alone in this group, it satisfies Dr Cavanagh's criteria for Minoan construction and, in all the North Cemetery, it has the strongest claim to be accepted as a reused Minoan tomb. Its dromos contained the remains of a plain Minoan larnax<sup>2</sup> and also, scattered in the upper fill, many fine LM IIIA larnax fragments with painted decoration including human figures. These proved to join up with a much larger part of the same larnax found in a dromos niche of its neighbour, Tomb 107, which also housed a plain larnax in another of its dromos niches<sup>3</sup>. We can only guess how and why the two tombs eventually competed to have pieces of the same figured larnax in their dromoi, although it seems that its reuse is more likely to have occurred in Tomb 107. At all events, we are able to recover enough of the composition to enable a full iconographical study by Lyvia Morgan<sup>4</sup>.

On one side of the figured larnax are two panels, each one showing a female wearing the full Aegean flounced skirt (Fig. 6). The better preserved lady raises both her arms in a dancing pose, her locks of hair apparently flying in the breeze. In each hand she holds a flower, or some piece of vegetation. Meanwhile a small bird, spreading its wings in flight, is just about to perch on her forehead. In a previous paper<sup>5</sup> I suggested that this larnax, when seen in a reused Minoan tomb — and very possibly in this row — might have provided the inspiration for the scenes on a PGB straight-sided cremation urn, evidently one of the earliest in Tomb 107 and, like the larnax, mended from widely scattered fragments. On both sides it shows a bold and majestic goddess of nature (Fig. 7), also attended by birds, here perching on trees: spiral and luxuriant trees on one side, dead and wintry trees on the other. In a recent paper, the wheeled platform on which she stands has been interpreted by Dr Walter

1. *KNC* 107-10, figs. 29-30, pls. 21c-e, 22.

2. *KNC* 118, T. 75.225.

3. *KNC* 149, T. 107.215, pl. 38.

4. *KNC* 159, T. 107 214; L. Morgan, *BSA* 82 (1987) 171-200

5. J. N. Coldstream, *BICS* 31 (1984) 99-100.

Burkert<sup>1</sup> as a cult chariot or waggon enabling a Potnia goddess to arrive at the sprouting of vegetation in spring, and depart at its waning in late autumn. The contrast between the seasons is obvious; but, in my opinion, when these scenes are painted on opposite sides of a cremation urn, we should look especially for their funerary relevance; the seasonal contrast must be related to the alternation between birth, death and rebirth, a wholly appropriate theme for the decoration of a receptacle for human ashes. What is especially germane to the theme of this paper is that virtually every element of these scenes is drawn from the imagery of the Minoan pictorial larnakes. Thus, the spiral trees recall those on one of the short sides of the figured larnax (Fig. 8) reused in the same tomb; it is as though the PGB painter had been taken inside a Minoan tomb, had been shown the larnax, and then had been commissioned to make a cremation urn with a comparable scene, translated into a Geometric idiom. As for the goddess's chariot abridged into a wheeled platform, this abbreviated version already appears on a Minoan larnax from Kavrochori near Tyliisos<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, not only the shape of the Minoan larnakes, but their pictorial decoration too, were stimulating the imagination of the more adventurous Cretan potters of the late ninth century, no doubt meeting the requirement of patrons among the leading families who were anxious to associate themselves with their heroic past. Even before the ninth-century «caesura» and the actual reuse of the larnakes, they may already have been supplying the vase-painters with a source of ideas when seen in Minoan tombs opened in previous generations. Thus the MPG bell-krater from Teke Tomb F, of around 900, carries a scene of hunting, spread over its two sides, and floating in the field above the usual concentric circles<sup>3</sup>; perhaps the earliest known figured scene in Greek vase-painting. The two hunters, with their spears poised, close in from opposite directions upon their assorted prey. A wild agrimi goat, already hit by a spear, totters to the ground, while a large hound pursues a bird and a small deer. We can see a similar scene on a LM IIIB larnax from Armeni<sup>4</sup>, though in a much freer composition. It could be that the krater was especially made to

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1. W. Burkert in *Early Greek Cult Practice*, ed. R. Hägg, N. Marinatos and G. Nordquist (Stockholm, 1988) 81-8.

2. A. Lembesi, *AD* 31 (1976) B 351, pl. 274b.

3. *AD* 23 (1977) 15-16, figs. 34-5; *KNC* 7-8, Tomb F 1, fig. 55, pl. 48.

4. *AAA* 4 (1971) 218, figs. 4-5.

house the ashes of a keen huntsman; it may be no accident that a pit adjoining his tomb contains the skeletons of two horses and two dogs<sup>1</sup>.

To return to the PGB Goddess urn from Tomb 107: this is one of three urns, all of them straight-sided pithoi, by the same painter who shows a special interest in birds and trees, and his trees always follow the luxuriant spiral type as seen on the short side of the larnax. Each one is the earliest cremation urn from a rich post-caesura tomb, subsequently used throughout the next two centuries; hence their battered state, recovered from sherds widely dispersed over their tombs. Of the other two, one is from Tomb 283, judged to be of Minoan type: there we see a bird perched on alternate trees<sup>2</sup>. The second one came from Tomb 292<sup>3</sup>; on that urn all the trees have birds, and each bird opens its beak and sings — a veritable Garden of Paradise; this tomb also contained a pictorial Minoan larnax of LM IIIA2, with floral and marine motifs<sup>4</sup>. Closely related to these three urns is the most famous PGB vase of this shape, the straight-sided pithos Fortetsa no. 144<sup>5</sup>, showing under its handles a reincarnation of the Minoan Snake Goddess; this comes from Fortetsa Tomb P, another of the very rich post-caesura tombs in the Knossos area, named after the late Professor Nicolas Platon who excavated it in the 1930's. The shape of these straight-sided pithos-urns may seem new in a ninth-century context, but I would see it as a deliberate revival of the so-called «pyxis» of LM IIIC, like the example from Kritsa in the Mirabello region, which housed one of the earliest known cremation in Crete<sup>6</sup>. When the new rite had become universally accepted at Knossos, these straight-sided pithoi were the first urns to be specially designed as such; unlike their plainer PG predecessors, we never find them in domestic contexts. They are usually provided with lids bearing matching ornament; they are always carefully and lavishly decorated with spirals, cables, and other freehand curvilinear ornament derived partly from Near Eastern ivories or metalwork, but also in large measure from a resurgence

1. *KNC* 8 and chapter 20 (S. Wall-Crowther's zoological analysis).

2. J. N. Coldstream, *BICS* 31 (1984), 95, pl.8a-b; *KNC* 233, Tomb 283.11, fig. 133, pl. 212.

3. J. N. Coldstream, *art. cit.* (p. 241, n. 1 *supra*) 26, fig. 2.1, pl. 2; *KNC* 266, Tomb 292, 144, fig. 150, pl. 242.

4. *KNC* 270, Tomb 292.239, pl. 250.

5. *Fortetsa* 125-6, pls. 77, 163.

6. A. Kanta, *The LM III period in Crete...* (*SIMA* vol. 58, Göteborg 1980) 281f., pl.54-5.

of the Minoan spirit. These ostentatious urns, made at Knossos only in the second half of the ninth century BC, are never found in poor tombs, for which there are several plainer alternative shapes; and furthermore, like the Tree Painter's trio and Fortetsa 1440, they are almost always the earliest urns in a rich post-caesura tomb; this is also true of the pithoi from Tomb 75<sup>1</sup> and Teke Tomb G<sup>2</sup>, belonging to the EG phase at the end of ninth century. That from Tomb G, with its lid, stands over a metre high; it is but one of many superb and floridly decorated vases of this period, on show in the penultimate room of the Herakleion Museum's exhibition. This tomb was clearly used by a family of very high status, for whom the potters of the day were making unusually strenuous efforts.

The vitality of Knossian pottery decoration is unique in Greece at this time. When combined with a steep increase in the population and a steady flow of imports from overseas, we have the impression that this was for Knossos a time of great exuberance. It was also an age of increasing interest in an even more prosperous Minoan past. Let us suppose that, around 850 BC, some of the families wished to associate themselves more closely with their Minoan predecessors. Abandoning the modest chamber tombs that they had used hitherto, they began to place their dead in more spacious sepulchres of Minoan character; some were real LM III chamber tombs reused, others were careful copies of them newly hewn out of the rock. Tomb 106, to judge from its stratigraphical context, seems to be a fastidious and elegant pastiche of the ninth century, a remarkable expression of admiration for a bygone age. Of the others in the North Cemetery, some at least — in particular Tomb 75 — are likely to have been real Minoan tombs. The distribution of Minoan larnakes, even though only one is found in the dromos of a tomb thought to be of Minoan type, nevertheless corresponds quite well with the areas of the cemetery where tombs of Minoan character occur. Their presence in dromoi, and in graves outside the collective tombs altogether, is consistent with their use for the inhumation of small children, the only possible function consistent with the current custom of adult urn cremation. In spite of the fragmentary condition, this function is supported in some cases by the pro-

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1. *KNC* 114, Tomb 75.110, fig. 97, pl. 122.

2. *KNC* 15-16, Tomb G 6-7, pl. 51. N. Platon describes his rescue excavation of this tomb in 1943, in difficult and dramatic circumstances: *KNC* 9-14.

ximity of suitable miniature vases and children's playthings. By inhuming their deceased young in these antique but robust sarcophagi, the families lamenting the death of their children would thereby have consigning them to the care of distant ancestors.

There are, of course, exceptions. Some, but not all Knossians were nostalgic about the past. In some areas of the North Cemetery there are no tombs of Minoan type, no reused larnakes. In particular, Tombs 249 and 285, by far the richest of all, rich in bronze vessels, iron weapons, spits and firedogs, and various *orientalia* in faience and ivory, reveal no ninth-century «caesura» in their use; they contain no larnakes, nor even any ornate PGB vases. Several tentative explanations could be proposed; truly aristocratic families might feel no need to advertise their ancestry, or to display their wealth pictorially; or the families owning these tombs may have suffered some relapses at the times in question; or, even, these tombs may belong to high-ranking families of the much-neglected Dorians, who might have felt no affinity with the Minoan past. All this is speculation. Be that as it may, some Knossians in the late ninth century were indeed displaying a revival of interest in the past, comparable to that shown by many mainland Greeks in the eighth century<sup>1</sup>. In both regions, this interest coincides with a reviving prosperity and a rapid growth of population; but the symptoms are quite different. In the Argolid and in Attica, where eighth-century burials were in individual cists or pits, the chance discovery of a spacious Mycenaean chamber tomb would have excited awe and reverence, and elicited votive offerings to a bygone hero; whereas at Knossos, where the habit of collective tombs had never been abandoned, old Minoan tombs were not thought at all strange. When rediscovered, they attracted no votives; instead, they were there for reuse by those who wanted to associate themselves with, or even emulate, a more illustrious past. As with many truly conservative societies, attention to the past was a guarantee for an assured and stable future.

*Acknowledgements.* I thank Professor Sp. Iakovidis for his invitation to deliver a paper on this topic on June 4, 1996, at the Academy of Athens on the occasion of my induction as a Corresponding Fellow. Among the illustrations Figs. 1 and 2 are the work of the late Mr David Smyth, Honorary Surveyor to the British School at Athens: Figs 4 and 5 are based on Mr Smyth's general plan of the Early Iron Age tombs in the North Cemetery at Knossos. Figs. 3 and 7 were drawn by Dr Nicola Coldstream, while Figs. 6 and 8 are the work of Dr Lyvia Morgan.

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1. Most recently C. Antonaccio, *AJA* 98 (1994) 389-410, with discussion of, and bibliography on various interpretations. For my own view see *JHS* 96 (1976) 8-17.

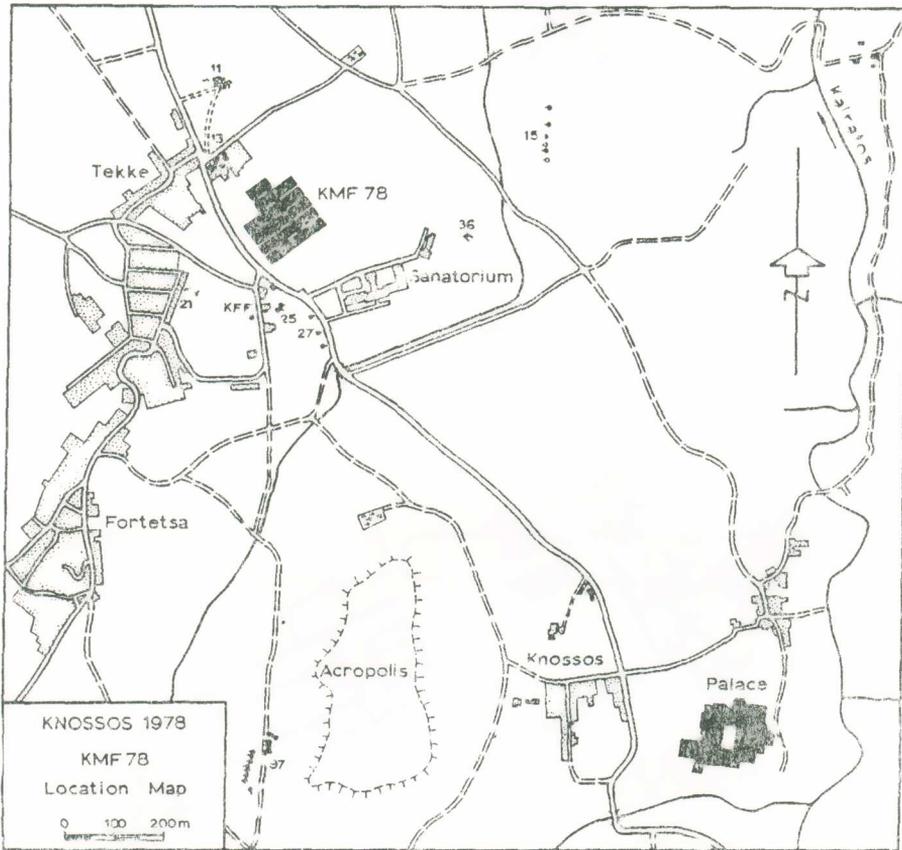


Fig. 1. Location map of the Knossos area. *AR* 25 (1979) 43, fig. 1.

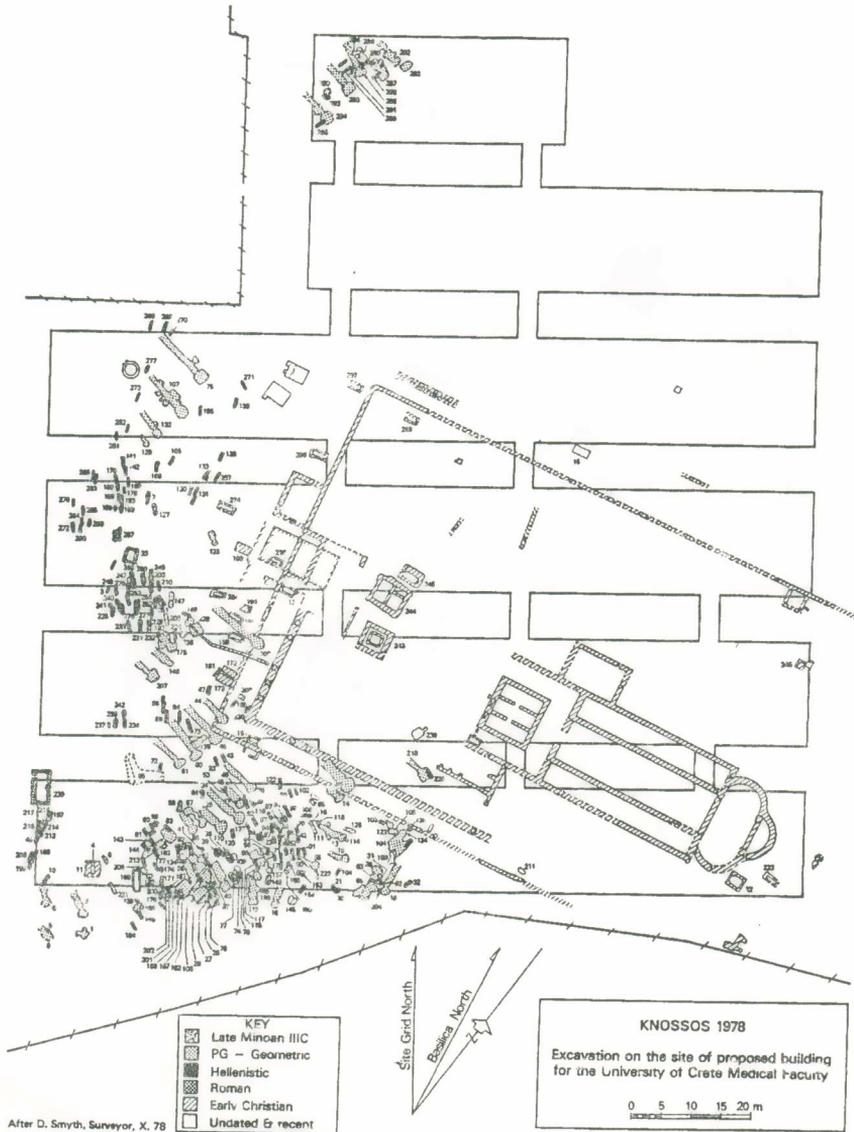


Fig. 2. Knossos, North Cemetery: Medical Faculty site. *AR* 25 (1979) 44, fig. 2.

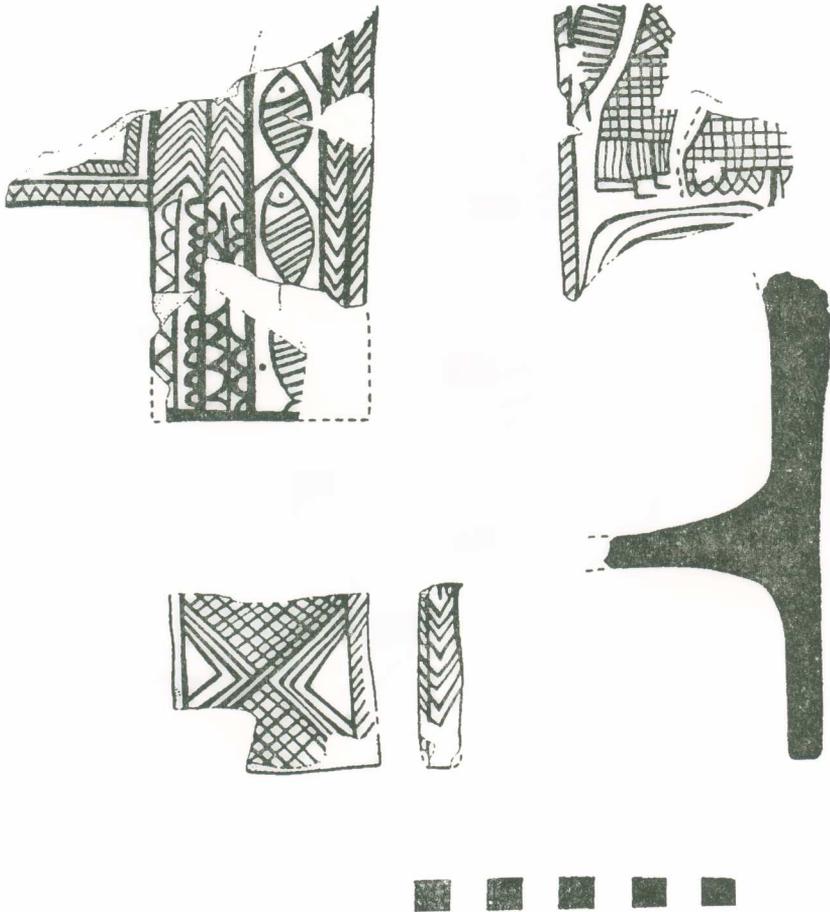


Fig. 3. Fragments from miniature larnax, T. 104.118.

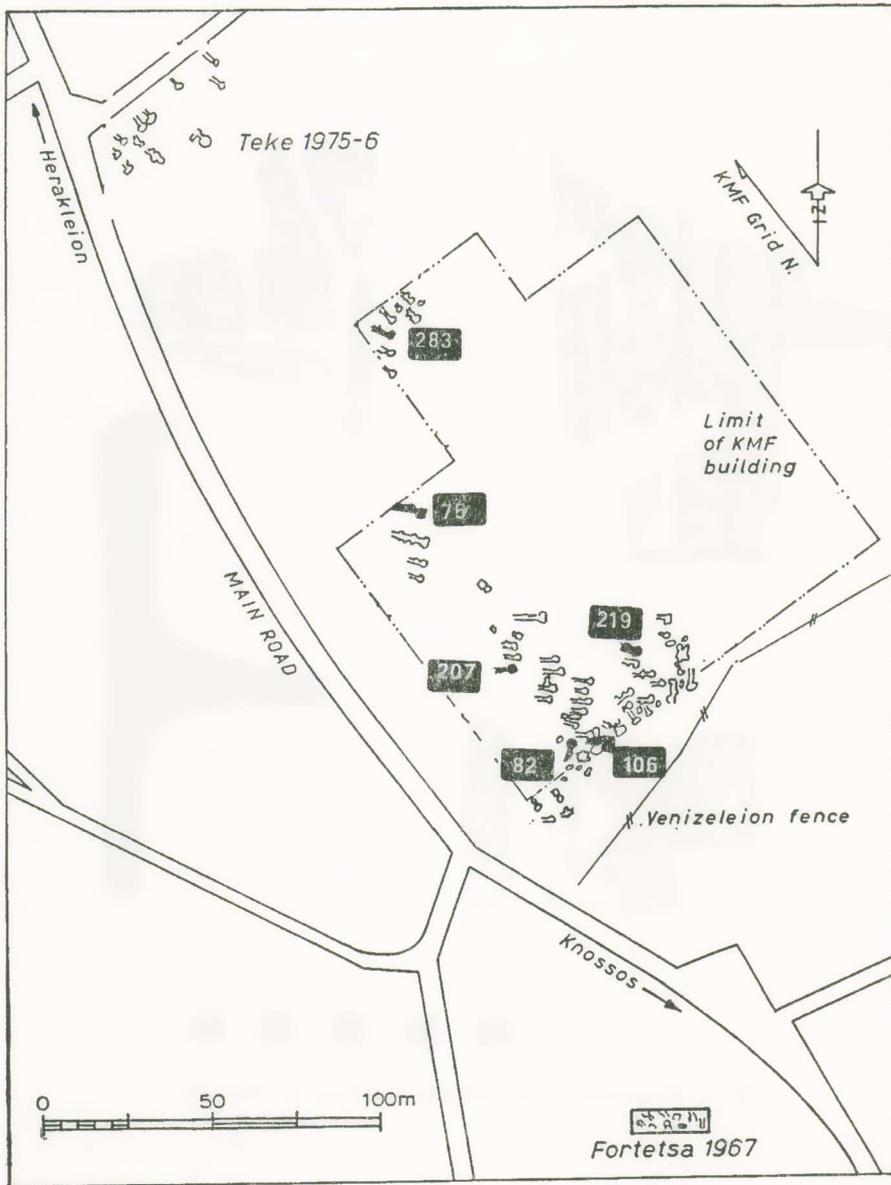


Fig. 4. Knossos, North Cemetery: tombs of Minoan type.

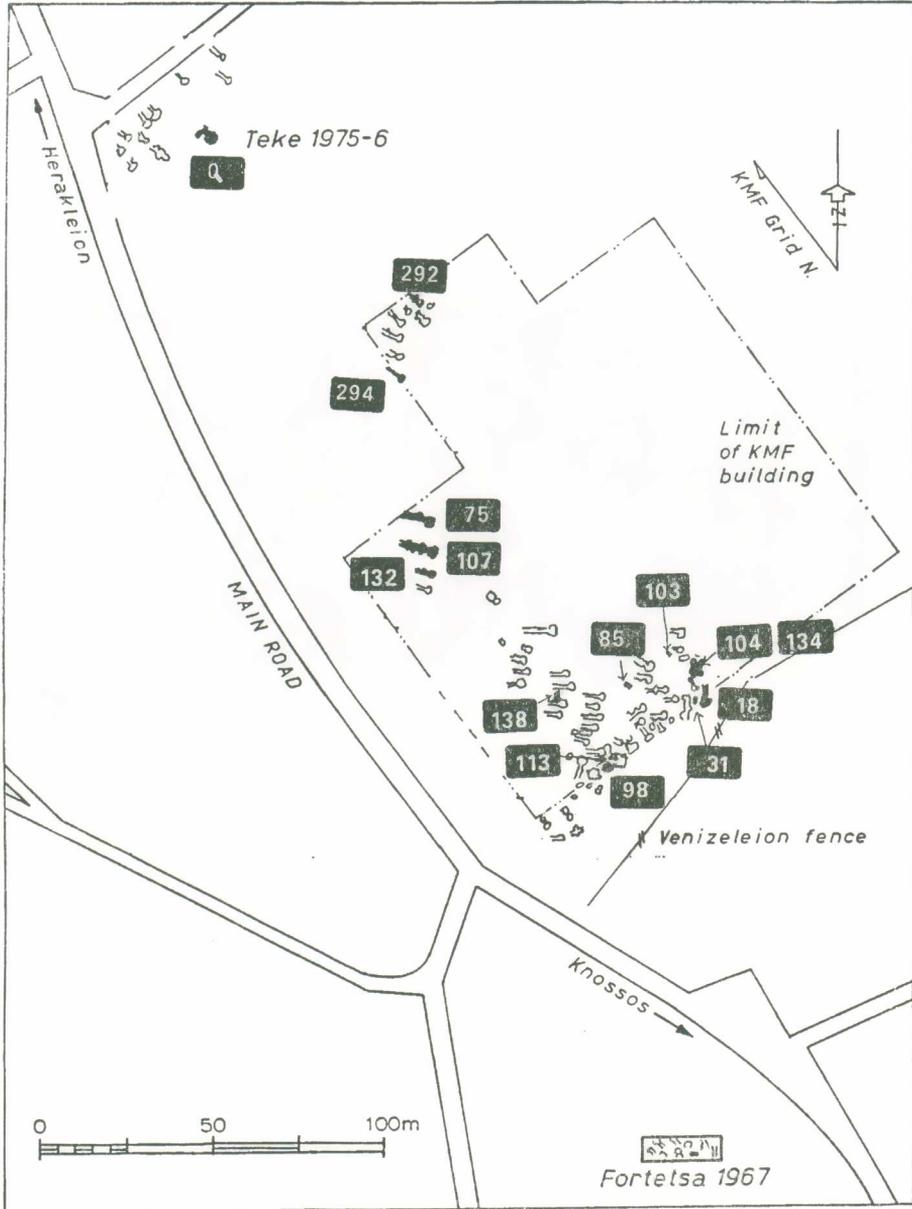


Fig. 5. Knossos, North Cemetery: findspots of Minoan larnakes.

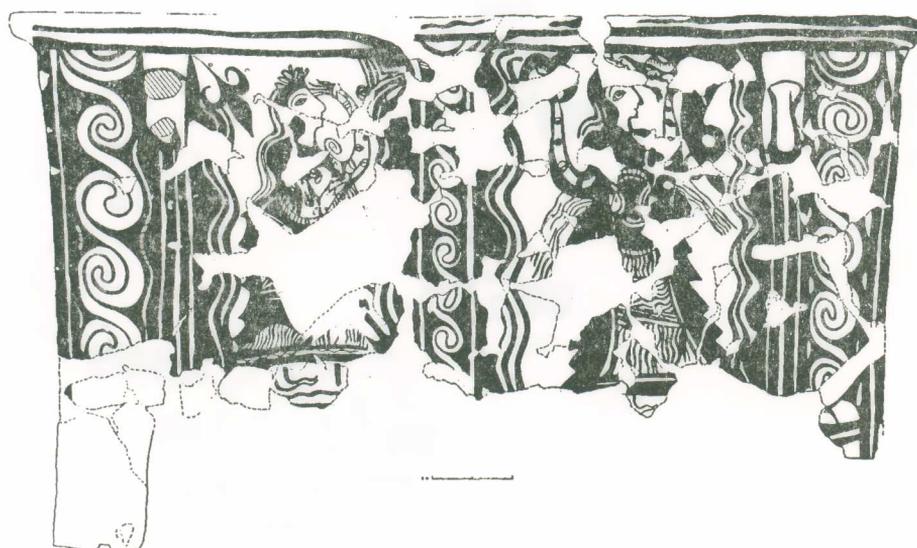


Fig. 6. LM III A1 figured larnax, T. 107.214: long side.

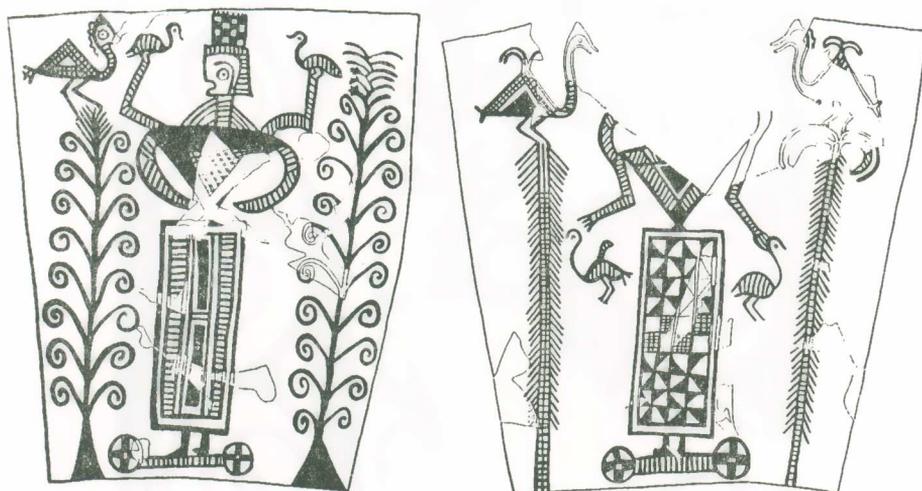


Fig. 7. PGB straight-sided pithos, T. 107.114 scenes with goddess.



Fig. 8. LM III A1 figured larnax, T. 107. 214 short side.