

HOMER, THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF CRETE AND THE ‘TOMB OF MERIONES’ AT KNOSSOS

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Abstract: Homeric archaeology long dominated the study of early Greece, but new approaches have recently revolutionized the field. Drawing from these approaches, I offer a regional and diachronic analysis of Homeric stories about Crete, an assessment of the reception of these stories by the island’s inhabitants throughout antiquity and an account of their impact on medieval to modern literature and art. I find that Cretan interest in Homer peaks in the Hellenistic period, but also argue for the much earlier familiarity of some Cretans with stories that underlie the Homeric epics. This argument relies on an analysis of the archaeological assemblage of a Knossian tomb of the 11th century BC, which includes a range of arms that is exceptional for both Aegean archaeology and the Homeric epics. In the epics, this equipment is carried by the Knossian hero Meriones, whose poetic persona can be traced back to the Late Bronze Age on philological and linguistic grounds. Based on this, and on current understandings of performance at death, I argue that the Knossian burial assemblage was staged to reference the persona of Meriones, therefore suggesting the familiarity of some Cretans with early stories that eventually filtered into the Homeric epics.

Keywords: Homer, Crete, Homeric archaeology, Knossos, Idomeneus and Meriones

Since Heinrich Schliemann’s excavations in the late 19th century, the relationship between the Homeric epics and archaeology has been approached through the lens of Homeric archaeology. This involves matching the epics with the archaeological record and identifying *realia* of Homer’s heroes, from the ‘golden mask of Agamemnon’ to the ‘Palace of Nestor’.¹ Such identifications are not exclusive to modern scholarship and have a long history in classical antiquity, with monuments such as the ‘Tomb of Achilles’ and ‘Tomb of Ajax’ at Troy or the ‘Cave of Odysseus’ on Ithaca.² As Susan Sherratt has expressed it, ‘Of all the relationships between archaeology and epic, that between archaeology and the Homeric epics is, if not the longest, at least the longest traceable and almost certainly the most complex, and has probably existed in some form or another as long as the epics themselves.’³

In recent decades Homeric archaeology has faced major challenges. Indeed, James Whitley observed in 2002 the growing conviction that ‘The old Neoclassical edifice of Homeric archaeology is to be demolished ... Homeric archaeology is dead.’⁴ More recently he has reaffirmed that ‘that old neoclassical construct “Homeric archaeology” has now almost completely disappeared’.⁵ The demolition or deconstruction of Homeric archaeology has generated a plurality of thematic approaches to the study of epic and archaeology, which are often inspired by social anthropology.⁶

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¹ See, for example, Lorimer (1950); Webster (1958); Mylonas Shear (2000); and the German series *Archaeologia Homerica*, published since the 1970s; also,

McDonald and Thomas (1990); Morris and Powell (1997); Snodgrass (2012); Kotsonas (forthcoming).

² Macdonald and Thomas (1990) *passim*; Antonaccio (1995a) 145–66; Boardman (2002) 45–55, 67–70, 78–103; Mazarakis Ainian (2017) 101–02.

³ Sherratt (2005) 123.

⁴ Whitley (2002) 217.

⁵ Whitley (2013) 395.

⁶ See, for example, Morris (1986); Sherratt (1990); (2004); Shelmerdine (1996); Whitley (2002); (2013); Crielaard (2003); Bennet (2004); Morris and Laffineur (2007); Sherratt and Bennet (2017).

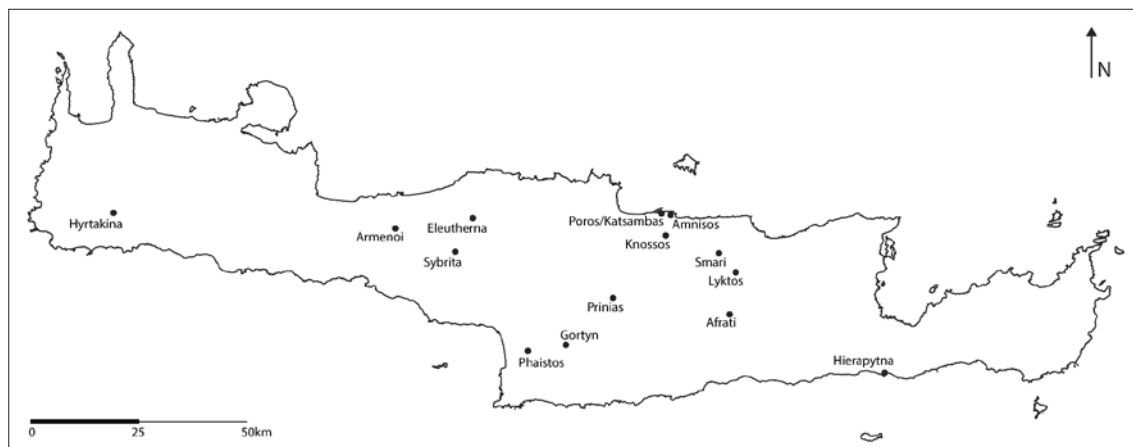


Fig. 1. Map of Crete with sites mentioned in the text (created by John Wallrodt).

This paper draws from the wealth of literature on the subject to develop a regional and diachronic approach to the ‘Ages of Homer’⁷ on Crete (fig. 1) and the archaeology of the Homeric epics. This type of approach has received attention in recent years,⁸ but the present work aims at a comprehensive coverage of the archaeological and philological material, and at the integration of epigraphic, linguistic and art-historical evidence. My aim is to transcend the antiquated agenda of Homeric archaeology and appreciate the reception of Homeric and related stories on Crete by the island’s inhabitants throughout antiquity and in medieval to modern literature and art.⁹

Another subject I explore is the extent to which early Cretan stories and poetry were part of the rich traditions that underlie the Homeric epics. Studies of the last decades have emphasized the prolonged development of these traditions and Gregory Nagy has made a compelling case for the gradual evolution of the Homeric epics through the reciprocal relationship between regional and (notionally) Panhellenic traditions and performances.¹⁰ Recent literature, however, typically emphasizes the input of a single region, Euboea, in this process.¹¹ The contribution of Cretan poetry and stories has received much less attention in literature, which has treated the relevant archaeological and philological evidence largely independently of each other.¹² This paper offers an integrated analysis of a broad range of such evidence and develops an original argument for the archaeology of Homeric poetry on the basis of the archaeological and socio-cultural context of a single tomb at Knossos. Setting this tomb against its Knossian and Cretan (as opposed to broader Aegean) backdrop, and drawing from current understandings of identity and performance in the context of death ritual and memorialization, I argue that this burial assemblage was staged to convey the visual and material connection of the main tomb occupant with the poetic persona of Meriones.

⁷ Cf. Carter and Morris (1995a).

⁸ For Crete, see Sherratt (1996); Levaniouk (2012). For other regions, see, for example, Kramer-Hajos (2012).

⁹ For diachronic approaches to Homeric receptions, see Efstathiou and Karamanou (2016).

¹⁰ Nagy (1990) 52–115; (1997) 206–07; cf. M.L. West (1988); also Snodgrass (2017).

¹¹ Powell (1991) 231–33; Antonaccio (1995b); Lemos (2002) 216–17; Wiener (2007) 27–31; M.L. West (2014) 1, 90; Bachvarova (2016) 280–85. Counterarguments in Lenz (1993); Miller (2014) 350–54. For the contribution of other regions as well, see M.L. West (1988); Bennet (2014) 220–22.

¹² Sherratt (1996); Levaniouk (2012); Martin (2012).

I. Homer and Crete: diachronic assessment of an uneasy relationship

Questions concerning the relevance of Homer to the archaeology of Crete have stimulated a variety of approaches, which have for the most part developed independently of each other. This section aims at a synthesis of the discourse which will demonstrate the relevance of the Homeric epics and, more broadly, of the ‘Homeric past’ to ancient Crete. The synthesis follows a broadly diachronic trajectory and covers both ancient evidence and modern interpretations, which are considered separately.

Homer’s Cretan heroes and the island’s ‘Homeric past’ fascinated western travellers to Crete long before the initiation of systematic excavations *ca.* 1900.¹³ The first notable manifestation of this fascination dates from the mid-19th century and concerns the discovery of *realia* of Homer’s Cretan heroes, who were then conceived of as historical figures. This ‘biographical approach’ to Homer’s Cretan heroes began with the proposed identification of the tomb of Idomeneus, which is, however, mentioned not by Homer, but by Diodorus Siculus (5.79.4), as explained in the next section. The Homeric epics include only a few brief references to monuments on Crete, including the palace of Idomeneus (*Od.* 19.190–95, *cf.* 14.382), some houses (*Od.* 14.201, 210, 233), a public storehouse (*Od.* 19.197) and the ‘dancing floors’ of Ariadne (*Il.* 18.590–92), all of which are located at Knossos.

The identification of the ‘Palace of Idomeneus’ attracted the most attention. The Cretan antiquarian Minos Kalokairinos recognized it in the remains of the Palace of Knossos (fig. 2), which he was the first to excavate.¹⁴ Kalokairinos considered that the palace was destroyed in the hostilities that followed Idomeneus’ return from Troy,¹⁵ an idea that proved unpopular with archaeologists but found its way into *The Odyssey* by the Cretan novelist and Nobel nominee Nikos Kazantzakis.¹⁶ The notable interest of Kalokairinos in Idomeneus was not exclusively scholarly; he viewed the participation of the Cretan king in the Panhellenic campaign against Troy as a distant model for his desired integration of Crete, an autonomous state and former Ottoman province, into the kingdom of Greece.¹⁷

Kalokairinos also called the monument he excavated the ‘Palace of Minos’,¹⁸ and this name prevailed with the excavations of Arthur Evans, who did not use the name ‘Palace of Idomeneus’ and thought that squatters had occupied the monument in the Late Minoan (LM) III period,¹⁹ the phase typically associated with the Homeric king. Developments of the post-war period, including the discovery of the ‘Palace of Nestor’ at Pylos and of the Palace at Thebes, in addition to the decipherment of Linear B, brought renewed interest to the monumental administrative complexes of the Late Bronze Age (LBA).²⁰ In the light of these developments, Doro Levi challenged Evans’ ideas on the final phase(s) of the Palace of Knossos. Drawing from a range of archaeological evidence and Homer’s reference to the power of Idomeneus (whom post-war scholarship treats not as a historical figure, but as a metonym for the ruler of Knossos in the LM III period), Levi concluded that the Cretan king could not have been ‘re di un popolo di “squatters”’.²¹ More recently, Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier proclaimed: ‘In its latest period the “Palace of Minos” was the “Palace of Idomeneus”’ (i.e. of a Mycenaean king).²² Fritz Schachermeyr sought

¹³ Hoeck (1828) 399–405. The fascination goes back to Cyriac of Ancona (Letter 23.3 and Diary IV.22 in Bodnar and Foss (2003)). For later travellers, see, for example, Moore (2010) 21, 28, 30, 33, 50–52, 55, 57, 66–67, 71.

¹⁴ Kalokairinos (1906–1907) 1, 46; Kopaka (1989–1990) 18. On Kalokairinos, see Kopaka (1989–1990); Kotsonas 2016b.

¹⁵ Kalokairinos (1906–1907) 36–37.

¹⁶ Kazantzakis (1958) books 5–8; *cf.* Beaton (2007) 184–86.

¹⁷ Kalokairinos (1906–1907) 41.

¹⁸ Kalokairinos (1906–1907) *passim*; Kopaka (1989–1990) 16–24.

¹⁹ Evans (1928) 332–44; Evans referred, however, to the Palace as the seat of Homeric kings when popularizing his finds; Sherratt (2009) 624–25.

²⁰ McDonald and Thomas (1990) 312–22, 328–37, 342–45.

²¹ Levi (1964) 189; *cf.* Demargne (1964) 218.

²² Niemeier (1982) 281.

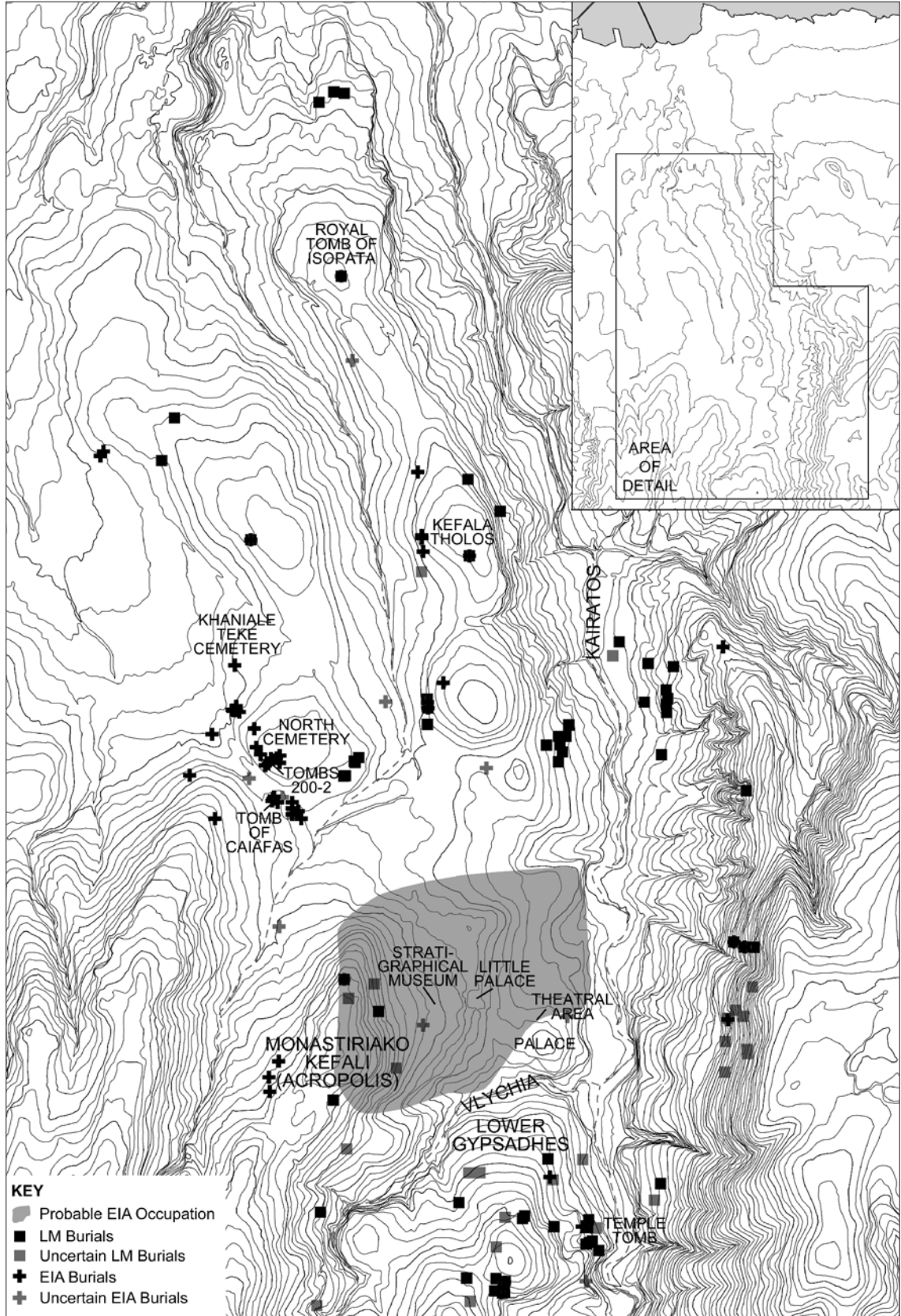


Fig. 2. Map of Knossos with locations mentioned in the text (created by Todd Whitelaw).

a compromise by identifying the ‘Palace of Idomeneus’ with the ‘Little Palace’, a monumental building erected west of the Palace of Knossos in the Middle Minoan (MM) IIIB/LM IA period and destroyed in LM IIIA2;²³ others have conceded that ‘even without a proper palace, an Idomeneus may have commanded a sizeable domain’.²⁴ Nonetheless, the connection of Idomeneus with the Palace of Knossos remains popular, as evidenced, for example, by the spectacular sets that Steven Kemp prepared for the performance of Mozart’s *Idomeneo* at San José, California, in 2011.

The identification of Homer’s ‘dancing floors’ of Ariadne, which were crafted by Daedalus (*Il.* 18.590–92), has also received considerable attention. An ancient scholiast took the passage to refer to a colonnaded edifice with sculptures,²⁵ while the ‘dancing floors’ were depicted on a relief at Knossos (Paus. 9.40.2) and a painting (Philostr. *Imag.* 10.18). Archaeologists have associated the Homeric reference with Knossian landmarks, such as the theatral area by the Palace, the area between the Palace and the Kairatos, the circular platforms by the Stratigraphical Museum, and the toponym *da-da-re-jo* (the possible location of a sanctuary to Daedalus) mentioned in Linear B tablets from Knossos.²⁶ Evans also identified this landmark on a fresco from the Palace of Knossos.²⁷

This kind of identification has not gained as much popularity on Crete as elsewhere. Sherratt has explained that ‘In Crete, since the beginning of archaeological investigation, archaeologists have on the whole been permitted to get on with the serious business of archaeology, unhampered by any very pressing need to make the tales they tell conform to a particularly Homeric form of “history”’.²⁸ This trajectory is largely the brainchild of Evans, who steered Minoan scholarship away from Homer (without challenging Schliemann’s ‘Homeromania’), towards a broader Mediterranean perspective,²⁹ but also towards a Creto-centric archaeology focused on stories about Minos and his family;³⁰ those were the stories that coloured and to an extent still colour the ‘serious business of archaeology’ in Crete.

A far more widespread approach to epic and the archaeology of Crete (henceforth called the ‘chronological approach’) researches the historicity of Homeric Crete and identifies this with the island’s LBA or Early Iron Age (EIA), often without due acknowledgement to the literary context of the epic references. Indeed, in the first pages of *The Palace of Minos*, Evans argues that Homer’s references to Crete (especially in the Catalogue of Ships at *Il.* 2.645–52 and in the famous account of the island’s many cities and people at *Od.* 19.172–81) offer ‘a real glimpse of the historic conditions in Crete at the beginning of the Iron Age’.³¹ Evans was not consistent in this view, which proved unpopular.³² A different interpretation, which emerged in the early 20th century and became widespread in the 1960s to 1980s, held that Homer’s descriptions of Crete and the poetic persona of Idomeneus reflect the island’s history in the 14th and 13th centuries BC (the LM IIIA2 and IIIB periods), when Cretan culture has its closest resemblance to that of mainland Greece.³³

²³ Schachermeyr (1964) 292; *contra* Hooker (1969) 61–62. On the Little Palace, see Hatzaki (2005).

²⁴ McDonald and Thomas (1990) 442.

²⁵ Schol. to *Il.* 18.590 in the Marcianus Graecus Z. 454 (= 822) (Venetus A), folio 250v; *cf.* Frontisi-Ducroux (1975) 136; Morris (1992) 14.

²⁶ Evans (1902–1903) 111: theatral area; (1930) 79–80: between the Palace and the Kairatos; Warren (1984): platforms; see also Morris (1992) 75–76; *contra* Lane Fox (2008) 188.

²⁷ Evans (1930) 73–80.

²⁸ Sherratt (1996) 87.

²⁹ *Cf.* Marinatos (2015) 11; Palmer (forthcoming).

³⁰ Sherratt (2009) 625.

³¹ Evans (1921) 10–12, quotation p. 11. The beginning of the EIA is placed in the 12th or 11th century BC: Kotsonas (2016a) 240.

³² Evans’ view is taken up by Willetts (1965) 23–35; Hope Simpson and Lazenby (1970) 111–16, 164.

³³ Hall (1901) 213; Pendlebury (1936–1937) 197; Burr (1944) 81; Demargne (1947) 50–52; (1964) 218; Lorimer (1950) 46–47; Webster (1958) 2; Aposkitou (1960) 147–62; Marinatos and Hirmer (1960) 30, 60, 78, 111; Huxley (1961) 44–47; Graham (1962) 14–15; Alexiou (1964) 52; Schachermeyr (1964) 301, 315–16; Hooker (1969) 60–61; Faure (1980); Kanta (1980) 319; Niemeier (1982) 220; Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis (1987) 124–26; Scafa (1989); Mylonas Shear (2000) 142–43.

Homeric Crete has been increasingly associated with the EIA in the last two decades. Indeed, several scholars relate specific passages from the *Odyssey* – especially those referring to the areas of Amnisos (*Od.* 19.188–90) and Gortyn (*Od.* 3.293–99) – to the archaeological topography of central Crete from the ninth to the early sixth century BC.³⁴ Additionally, Eduardo Federico has attributed the selective representation of Crete in the Catalogue of Ships to a political agenda of the 8th and 7th centuries BC aimed at glorifying some cities of central Crete, at the expense of many others located elsewhere on the island.³⁵ The criteria for dating this agenda seem unconvincing, but the argument conforms to the broader downdating of Homeric Crete.

A comparative assessment of the two contradictory views over the date of Homeric Crete reveals their historical indifference to each other. The comparison also illustrates broader disciplinary divisions within classics; the LBA date is typically favoured by prehistorians and the EIA one by classicists, each group claiming Homeric Crete for their own field of specialization. Interestingly, discussions by prehistorians mostly engage with the generalizing Homeric descriptions of Crete (*Il.* 2.645–52; *Od.* 19.172–81), whereas classicists generally focus on specific passages regarding particular sites or micro-regions. The dating of Homer's Crete to the LBA was popular until the 1980s, but the tide changed from the 1990s, perhaps as a belated response to the downdating of Homeric society in general.³⁶ This development perhaps relates to the recent trend for identifying LM III Crete, not with Idomeneus, but with his aunt Ariadne.³⁷

As the tide of interpretations was changing, Sherratt proposed an argument that seems like a compromise. According to her, the Crete of the *Iliad* represents an earlier historical phase than the Crete of the *Odyssey*.³⁸ This view has its roots in ancient literature, where it served to explain the discrepancy between the 100 Cretan cities of the *Iliad* and the 90 of the *Odyssey*.³⁹ It also relates, however, to the linguistic and philological arguments for the chronological primacy of the *Iliad* over the *Odyssey*.⁴⁰ Sherratt's argument has a different basis. She notes that the Cretans of the *Iliad* are closely related to the other Greeks, a picture that best fits Aegean archaeology of the 15th and 14th centuries BC. On the contrary, she argues, the Cretans of the *Odyssey* are unlike the other Greeks, largely because of their close association with the Phoenicians, and this cultural pattern fits the island's archaeological record in the tenth and ninth centuries BC. Sherratt acknowledges that these Homeric profiles of the Cretans are not strictly historical, but also literary constructs, and interprets the portrayal of Crete in the *Odyssey* as 'anti-Phaeacia' (or, better, anti-Scheria).⁴¹

A related but less popular line of interpretation not only matches Homeric Crete with a specific period in the island's history, but also identifies Homeric descriptions of (largely non-Cretan) material culture and social practice with archaeological evidence from EIA Crete. Examples of this approach can be found in studies of domestic architecture at Smari in central Crete and of the practice of cremation at the necropolis of Eleutherna in west-central Crete.⁴² Rooted in the tradition of Homeric archaeology, this approach has been criticized on the grounds that it has not explained

³⁴ Morris (1992) 173–76; Marinatos (1996); Cucuzza (1997) 74–76; Perlman (2000) 69–71; D'Acunto (2008) 269, 275; Lane Fox (2008) 340–44; Anzalone (2011) 170–71; Melfi (2013).

³⁵ Federico (1999a) 215–16; (1999b) 279; (2013) 19.

³⁶ Finley (1954); cf. Morris (2000) 90–92; Bennet (2014) 201–14.

³⁷ As observed in Kotsonas (2006) 188, with reference to Farnoux and Driessen (1997) and D'Agata et al. (2005).

³⁸ Sherratt (1996) especially 92–93, 97 n.18; cf. Hooker (1969) 60–61, 70–71; Hadji-Vallianou (2004) 124.

³⁹ According to Strabo (10.14.15), Ephorus explained that the *Odyssey* gives the number of cities at

the time of the Trojan War, while the ten additional cities of the *Iliad* represent later foundations by the Dorians. A different sequence of events is offered in the scholia on the *Odyssey*, according to which the number of Cretan cities dropped after Idomeneus returned from Troy and destroyed Lyktos and other communities that had revolted (*Scholia Graeca in Homeri Odysseam* 19.175). On these cities, see Mylonas Shear (2000) 142.

⁴⁰ Janko (1982); cf. Heubeck (1988) 12–23.

⁴¹ Sherratt (1996) 91–92, quotation p. 92; on Homer's Phoenicians and Phaeacians as literary tropes, see also Winter (1995); Dougherty (2001) 102–21. On the Phoenicians in Crete, see Stampolidis and Kotsonas (2006).

⁴² Stampolidis (1996); Hadji-Vallianou (2004).

why the correspondences identified could not be generic, it has assumed without demonstrating that the Homeric texts were familiar to the Cretans of the EIA and it has not explored the processes that made the epics available to them.⁴³ These criticisms have not discouraged the excavator of Smari from proposing its identification with ‘Homeric [i.e. pre-Classical] Lyktos’, one of the seven Cretan cities of the *Iliad* and the home of Koironos, the charioteer of Meriones who dies at the hands of Hector (*Il.* 17.610–19).⁴⁴ It has also not prevented the excavator of Eleutherna from making Homer the cornerstone of archaeological exhibitions on the site, even though Eleutherna and the surrounding region are never mentioned in the epics. Homer remains the most prevalent way to popularize the archaeology of early Greece, irrespective of methodological considerations.⁴⁵

Only a few scholars have been sceptical about the relevance of Homer to the archaeology of Crete. Indeed, Angeliki Lebessi emphasizes that Geometric to Classical Crete is characterized by a dearth of poetic compositions and narrative art, which she relates to the paucity of evidence for tomb cult and hero cult.⁴⁶ In a similar vein, Whitley criticizes the ‘Homeromania’ described above⁴⁷ and follows Lebessi in arguing for the unfamiliarity of the Cretans with Homer, which he deduces from the paucity of narrative art, of informal literacy and of the culture of the symposium.⁴⁸ The two scholars further emphasize the passage from Plato’s *Laws* (680c2–5) in which Cleinias the Cretan comments on Homer as follows:⁴⁹ ‘This poet of yours seems to have been a man of genius. We have also read other verses of his, and they were extremely fine; though in truth we have not read much of him, since we Cretans do not indulge much in foreign poetry.’ Lebessi and Whitley have taken the Plato passage to mean that ancient Cretans were unfamiliar with Homer.⁵⁰ However, philologists have recently questioned this direct reading and explained that both the description of Homer as ‘foreign poetry’ and two specific terms Cleinias uses (χαρίεις, δεινὰ) suggest feigned ignorance and expose the Athenocentric character of the comment.⁵¹ Cleinias is not only familiar with Homer, but also with the Athenian way of referring to the epics.

The reliability of Plato’s testimony is also challenged by the notable interest in the ‘Homeric past’ in general, and in Homer’s epics in particular, which is manifested at Knossos and elsewhere on Crete during the Hellenistic period. Symptomatic of this interest is the Cretan edition of Homer⁵² and the edition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by Rhianos, a Cretan poet of the third century BC.⁵³ The Knossians of the Hellenistic period displayed the tomb of Idomeneus and Meriones, and along with other Cretans they venerated the two Homeric heroes (Diod. Sic. 5.79.4; see below). Also, Knossos was famous for a marble relief, of uncertain date, which showed the Homeric ‘dancing floors’ of Ariadne (Paus. 9.40.2; cf. *Il.* 18.590–92; and see above)⁵⁴ and the related toponym Καλλίχορον was recorded by Hesychius.

The notable Hellenistic Cretan interest in Homer may have been (partly) stimulated by non-Cretan poets who visited the island. It is possible only to speculate whether Homeric themes came up in the songs that envoys from Mylasa presented to different Cretan cities in the second century BC⁵⁵ or in the performances that the Teian ambassador Meneclēs gave at Knossos and Priansos in the mid-second century BC, which included old Cretan songs and his own compositions on the

⁴³ Johnston (1999) 139; Tarlas (1999) 302; comment by Petros Themelis in Hadji-Vallianou (2004) 125.

⁴⁴ Hadji-Vallianou (2004) 122–24. The location of Classical Lyktos is fixed southeast of Smari on solid epigraphic and archaeological grounds.

⁴⁵ Cf. Kotsonas (forthcoming).

⁴⁶ Lebessi (1987) 134–35.

⁴⁷ Whitley (2002) 223–27; (2013) 400, 402–06.

⁴⁸ Whitley (1997) 652, 660; cf. Padgett (1995) 399–400.

⁴⁹ Translation after Martin (2012).

⁵⁰ Lebessi (1987) 135; Whitley (1997) 659–60.

⁵¹ Nagy (2009) 388–89; Levaniouk (2012) 371–72; Martin (2012); Prauscello (2017).

⁵² S.R. West (1988) 44; M.L. West (2001) 67–72; Nagy (2004) 20, 96; Levaniouk (2012) 372; Martin (2012).

⁵³ *RE* IA.1 s.v. Πρωτός; S.R. West (1988) 45; M.L. West (2001) 56–58.

⁵⁴ Weniger (1912) 38: sculpted work resting flat on the floor; Morris (1992) 13–14: Neo-Attic relief; Lonsdale (1995) especially 281–82 n.3; Sporn (2002) 125 n.845; Nagy (2015a); (2015b).

⁵⁵ Chaniotis (1988); (2009) 263–64.

deeds of local gods and heroes.⁵⁶ More concrete evidence for foreign poets that disseminated Homeric-style poetry to Crete is provided by a late second-century BC inscription, according to which the Knossians honoured the grammarian Dioscourides of Tarsus for producing ‘an *enkōmion* of our race in the manner of the “poet”’ (i.e. Homer) and also for sending the epic poet Myrinos to perform it at Knossos.⁵⁷ It is tempting to assume that the Homeric-style *enkōmion* contained references to the Knossian heroes of Homer.

Dioscourides or Myrinos may also be associated with a funerary epigram from Knossos of the same period (fig. 3). Written in epic style and in a non-Cretan dialect, the epigram raises the fallen horseman Tharsymachos, son of Leontios, to a special status: ‘in the assembly of the dead, glorious Hades placed you on the same throne with Idomeneus, the patron of the city’.⁵⁸ This late second-century BC inscription once stood on a family burial plot at Khaniale Teke, north of Knossos, next to the monument of a certain Agoi, daughter of Leontios and thus probable sister of Tharsymachos.⁵⁹ I find it tempting to hypothesize that the epigram for Tharsymachos was commissioned by his father Leontios, who is probably to be identified with Leontios, son of Klymenidas, who was appointed by the Knossians to supervise the erection of a stele honouring Dioscourides of Tarsus.⁶⁰ It is perhaps in this context that Leontios commissioned the epigram to the foreign poet. In any case, this epigraphic testimony reaffirms the notable interest of the Hellenistic Knossians and other Cretans in the ‘Homeric past’ in general and the Homeric epics in particular.

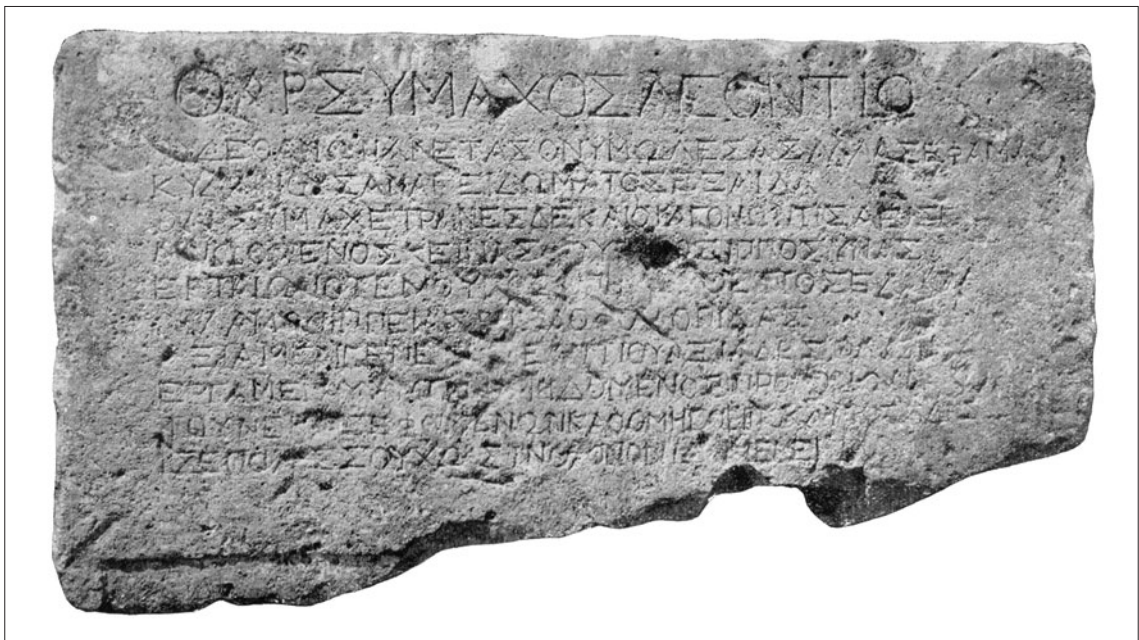


Fig. 3. Late second-century BC inscription from Knossos connecting the fallen Tharsymachos to Idomeneus (after *IC* I.viii.33; © Heraklion Archaeological Museum, Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports-TAP).

⁵⁶ *IC* I.viii.11 (Knossos); *IC* I.xxiv.1 (Priansos); see also Jacoby (1955) 340–41 no. 466. For the broader political context, see Chaniotis (1988); Rigsby (1996) 289–90; Prauscello (2009) 192–93.

⁵⁷ *IC* I.viii.12 (Delos); *RE* V.1 s.v. Dioskurides (no. 3); Chaniotis (2010) 262–64.

⁵⁸ *IC* I.viii.33; cf. *LIMC* V.1 s.v. Idomeneus; Federico (1999b) 306–07; Vertoudakis (2000) 55–57.

⁵⁹ *IC* I.viii.26. Tharsymachos was a common name for Knossian aristocrats (Chaniotis (1992) 298–99; see also *LGPN* 1.14).

⁶⁰ *IC* I.viii.12 line 54. This is probably the Knossian Leontios, son of Klymenidas, who is named as a benefactor on an inscription from Thera of the same period (*IG* XII.3 333/1298). For the family tree, see Chaniotis (1992) 299. Leontios is a common name in Crete: see *LGPN* 1.284.

This interest persisted in Roman times, as evidenced by the references made by Pausanias and Hesychius mentioned above. An original creation of this period is the account of Dictys Cretensis, a Knossian 'companion of Idomeneus and Meriones' in the Trojan War. This text is said to originate from the transcription of tablets found in a Knossian tomb during the reign of Nero (AD 54–68), derives from a Greek poem that was probably composed in the second century AD (cf. *POxy* 4944 of the third century AD), was translated into Latin prose in the fourth century AD by Septimius (*Journal of the Trojan War*, Letter, Preface and 1.1, cf. 5.17) and became very popular in medieval to early modern times.⁶¹ Based on some of this evidence, Susan Alcock argues for a new pattern of commemoration in Roman Crete, which involved an emphatic interest in the island's 'Homeric past'.⁶² I find that this interest is amply documented already in the Hellenistic period, but following Alcock I hypothesize that in Roman times the expression of this interest could have shifted from advertising civic pride into celebrating aspects of Cretan stories that would be recognized by audiences across the Empire.

II. An archaeology of Homer's Cretan heroes

In the Homeric epics, Idomeneus, son of Deucalion, grandson of Minos and great grandson of Zeus (*Il.* 13.449–53; cf. *Od.* 19.178–84), is celebrated as the king of Knossos and the leader of the Cretan contingent that sailed to Troy (*Il.* 2.645–52).⁶³ His armada of 80 ships is equal to that of Diomedes (*Il.* 2.568) and smaller only than the 100 ships of Agamemnon (*Il.* 2.576) and the 90 of Nestor (*Il.* 2.602).⁶⁴ The Cretan king maintains close relations with Agamemnon (*Il.* 4.257–59) and Menelaus (*Il.* 3.230–33), and is placed by Helen among the four most illustrious Achaean heroes (*Il.* 3.161–244). Being older than most of his peers (*Il.* 13.361, 23.474–77) Idomeneus is characterized by wise leadership (*Il.* 13.219, 255), but also excels in battle (*Il.* 13.210–515). It is probably because of these qualities that the Cretan king returns safely from Troy (*Od.* 3.191–92; cf. *Diod. Sic.* 5.79.4). Hellenistic and Roman sources are particularly concerned with the ill fate(s) of Idomeneus after his return, and it is these stories that inspired the reception of the hero in European literature and art, including in Mozart's *Idomeneo* and in *The Odyssey* (books 7–8) by Kazantzakis.⁶⁵

Idomeneus led the Cretans together with Meriones, son of Molos, a younger and lesser Achaean hero of the *Iliad*.⁶⁶ Although the *Odyssey* does not mention Meriones, Odysseus in his 'Cretan lies' assumes the persona of this hero.⁶⁷ Homer calls Meriones the retainer (ὀπάων, θεράπων) of

⁶¹ Reece (1994) 168–69; Giatromanolakis (1996) 24–52; Levaniouk (2012) 374; Martin (2012); Ni Mheallaigh (2012) 182–85; Tsagalis (2012) 315. The story may be inspired by the discovery of Linear B tablets at Knossos: Stampolidis and Kotsonas (2006) 337; Bennet (2014) 192. For discoveries of ancient texts in Roman and Christian times, see Giatromanolakis (1996) 52 n.1; on the reception of Dictys' account, see Giatromanolakis (1996) 32–40; Prosperi (2013).

⁶² Alcock (2002) 123–30, 179–80; cf. Romeo (2010).

⁶³ For Idomeneus, see especially *RE* IX.1 s.v. Idomeneus (no. 1); Federico (1999b) 280–300; Camerotto (2010) 1–18; Kanavou (2015) 50–53; see also Aposkitou (1960) 167–71; Haft (1984) 295–97; Sherratt (1996) 87–88. Etymologically, the name Idomeneus is associated with Mount Ida on Crete, and can be connected with anthroponyms attested in Linear B: *RE* IX.1 s.v. Idomeneus; Federico (1999b) 268–69; Bettarini (2014); Kanavou (2015) 52–53. A few scholars connect the name with western Macedonia (Kretschmer (1943) 164–65; cf. Hooker (1969) 68–69; Bettarini (2014) 53;

Kanavou (2015) 53) and especially with Idomene (*RE* IX.1 s.v. Idomene), a toponym that made it to the international headlines in 2016 because of the makeshift camp built there by refugees from Syria and elsewhere heading towards central Europe.

⁶⁴ On authors mentioning more or fewer ships, see Federico (1999b), 281 n.22, 306 n.7.

⁶⁵ For the ancient sources, see Haft (1981) 118–21; Federico (1999b) 304–403. For the modern reception, see Kazantzakis (1958); Danese (1991) 140–44; Valverde Sánchez (2016) 65–163.

⁶⁶ For Meriones, see especially *RE* XV.1 s.v. Meriones (no. 1); Federico (1999b) 281–88; see also Aposkitou (1960) 171–72; Clay (1983) 84–88; Haft (1984) 293–95; Sherratt (1996) 87–88. For the etymology of his name, see below.

⁶⁷ On the 'Cretan lies', see Haft (1981) 18–84; (1984); Sherratt (1996) 88–90; Federico (1999b) 296–300; Martin (2012). On Odysseus and Meriones, see Haft (1981) 64–66; (1984) 295; Clay (1983) 84–88; Martin (2012); Tsagalis (2012) 216 n.58.

Idomeneus, but Hellenistic authors speculate on their kinship (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.3.1; Diod. Sic. 5.79.4) and Roman sources consider them lovers (*Anth. Pal.* 12.247; cf. Sext. Emp. *Pyr.* 3.199).⁶⁸ Meriones is a young but effective warrior (*Il.* 13.287–89, 328) and is assigned appropriate tasks, such as the command of the guards (*Il.* 10.58–59) and the preparations for the funeral of Patroclus (*Il.* 23.110–24). From antiquity onwards, Meriones has remained in the shadow of Idomeneus,⁶⁹ but to a Cretan military officer of the early 20th century, the young hero was ‘the teacher of many nations in the art of war’.⁷⁰

Inclusion in the Homeric epics did not ensure the popularity of the two Cretan heroes in Greek culture. There are relatively few references to them in ancient literature, on which basis Eduardo Federico has credited Idomeneus with ‘un destino di marginalità’.⁷¹ Additionally, there are only four Greek inscriptions that refer to Idomeneus or Meriones,⁷² and two of these reproduce information from the *Iliad* (*SEG* 15.535 from Chios; *IG* XIV 1284 *Tabula Iliaca Capitolina*). A third inscription, the *Lindian Chronicle*, refers to the dedication by Meriones of a silver quiver at the Sanctuary of Athena Lindia,⁷³ while the fourth example is the Knossian inscription for Tharsymachos.

Idomeneus and Meriones are very rarely shown on Classical art, and never on art from Crete. The episodes illustrated are set outside the island, and mostly at Troy. The few surviving depictions of Idomeneus are varied in date, material and theme, while those of Meriones are mostly found on Roman reliefs and gems, and show the hero assisting Menelaus in carrying the body of Patroclus (*Il.* 17).⁷⁴ No surviving illustration shows the two heroes together, but Greek literature records three lost and/or fictitious representations of the pair.

Pausanias (5.25.8–10) saw at Olympia a bronze sculptural group made by the Aeginetan sculptor Onatas (early fifth century BC) showing the nine Greek heroes of the Trojan War who offered to fight Hector in a duel, plus Nestor holding the helmet with the lots (cf. *Il.* 7.161–74). Pausanias only identifies three of the nine heroes, including Idomeneus,⁷⁵ but it is reasonable to assume that Meriones was also depicted since he was among the nine that volunteered (*Il.* 7.166).⁷⁶

Two more sculptural groups of Idomeneus and Meriones are mentioned in literary sources, but they cannot be confidently considered as real monuments. According to Diodorus Siculus (5.79.4), one of these monuments was placed over the neighbouring tombs of the two heroes at Knossos, which were crowned by a stele inscribed with the epigram: ‘You see the tomb of Knossian Idomeneus, and I, Meriones the son of Molos, stand nearby.’⁷⁷ The epigram has been taken to designate a sculptural group or a relief,⁷⁸ apparently because of the use of the term ἵδρῦμαι (here translated as ‘stand’). Diodorus Siculus is not explicit on the matter, but he reports that Idomeneus and Meriones were treated as heroes, received sacrifices, and were invoked at times of war.⁷⁹ Philologists have long considered this monument a literary creation inspired by the epigrams in

⁶⁸ Steinbichler (1995); Vertoudakis (2000) 178–82.

⁶⁹ But see Steinbichler (1995) 89.

⁷⁰ Nouchakis (1903) 11.

⁷¹ Federico (1999b) 404; cf. Vertoudakis (2000) 177–82.

⁷² This excludes epigraphic testimonies on artefacts bearing only the name of the two heroes, about which see below, and also *LIMC* V.1 s.v. Idomeneus; *LIMC* VI.1 s.v. Meriones.

⁷³ *IG* XII.1: Lindos II.2; Higbee (2003) 91–92. Weapons of Meriones were also kept in the Temple of the Mothers at Engyon in western Sicily, together with weapons of Odysseus: Plut. *Marc.* 20.3–4; cf. Federico (2010) 81–84; Levaniouk (2012) 387.

⁷⁴ *LIMC* V.1 s.v. Idomeneus; *LIMC* VI.1 s.v. Meriones.

⁷⁵ Federico (1999b) 269–70; also Camerotto (2010) 3 n.15.

⁷⁶ Bastianini et al. (2001) 190; Ioakimidou (1997) 82–87, 213–25 no. 13.

⁷⁷ The epigram also appears in Arist. *Peplos* (fr. 640 in Rose (1967) 399) and in *Anth. Pal.* 7.322. The translation above is based on Paton (1917) 173 and Gutzwiller (2010) 245 with slight modification. Ancient literature also knew of a tomb of Idomeneus at Colophon: Schol. to Lycoph. *Alex.* 424; cf. *Scholium Graeca in Homeri Odysseam* 13.259; Servius on Verg. *Aen.* 3.401; see Federico (1999b) 264, 365–69.

⁷⁸ Gutzwiller (2002) 50; (2010) 245.

⁷⁹ Federico (1999b) 305–07; (2013) 19; Sporn (2002) 123.

the Aristotelian *Peplos*.⁸⁰ Kathryn Gutzwiller argues that the epitaphic couplets collected in the *Peplos* (which she dates to the Classical rather than to the Hellenistic period) were first developed in an oral context and served to validate local stories associating the graves of specific heroes with particular cities.⁸¹ A descent from the *Peplos* is likely for the testimony of Diodorus Siculus, but this does not mean that the monument was not real. Indeed, his book 5 indicates that Diodorus Siculus consulted the work of four Cretan historians (5.80.4) and demonstrates his command over Cretan mythology and history (5.64–66, 69–80), and his knowledge of Knossian topography and cults (5.66.1, 5.72.4); the last characteristic is unmatched elsewhere in the surviving corpus of ancient literature.⁸²

The assumed grave monument of Idomeneus and Meriones would be exceptional for Crete, which is notorious for a paucity of hero cults and tombs cults, and a dearth of iconography inspired by Homeric and other mythology, as noted above. Nevertheless, recent studies have collected this limited evidence for tomb cult and for burial monuments with inscriptions and figural decoration, and have shown that such monuments were not unknown in Crete from the Archaic period onwards and became more common in the late Classical to Hellenistic period.⁸³ Hero cults are also attested in Knossos and its territory from the end of the Archaic period,⁸⁴ and the site had landmarks inspired by Homeric references (*Καλλίχορον* and the relief showing the ‘dancing floors’ of Ariadne, noted above), as was fitting for the Cretan city most celebrated by Homer. Lastly, several Knossian tombs of the Middle Bronze Age (MBA) to LBA, including the most monumental ones, are known to have attracted some activity in the first millennium BC, at which time Minoan antique objects were often reused.⁸⁵ On these grounds, I would not dismiss the possibility that Diodorus Siculus refers to an existing monument ascribed to the two Knossian heroes, which could explain why this is the only epigram from the *Peplos* that attracted his interest.⁸⁶

More doubtful is the existence of a statue group of Idomeneus and Meriones ascribed to the Cretan sculptor Kresilas (mid- to late fifth century BC), which is mentioned in a poem in the new Posidippus papyrus (*PMil. Vogl.* VIII 309, col. X, II. 26–29):⁸⁷ ‘[Praise] without stint that famous bronze Idomeneus of Cresilas. How he worked perfectly we saw very well. Idomeneus [cries out], “Come, my good Meriones, run [... ..] being motionless for so long”.’ It is agreed that the epigram plays on Homeric lines (*Il.* 13.249, 13.477–82) and emphasizes the groundbreaking realism of the work. Scholars conceive of this epigram as a literary product intended to promote the poet’s aesthetic preferences in sculpture, which pervade his different poems on statues; a few also entertain the possibility that the epigram was carved on a monument.⁸⁸ Gutzwiller argues that the poem of the new Posidippus is inspired by the *Peplos* and has identified evidence for an intertextual relationship between the epigram of this poem and the epigram recorded by Diodorus Siculus in the ‘speaking object’ motif and in the reference of both texts to the vision of the audience.⁸⁹ Further

⁸⁰ Wendling (1891) 44–48; Heitsch (1968) 655; Gutzwiller (2010) 230.

⁸¹ Gutzwiller (2010).

⁸² On the Cretan sources of Diodorus Siculus, see Jacoby (1955) 307, 341–64; Romeo (2010) 70–71; Fowler (2013) 387–90; Sporn (2013) 398–99.

⁸³ On tomb cults, see Lefèvre Novaro (2004); Legarra Herrero (2015); on narrative art and myths, see Sporn (2013); Pilz (2014) (*contra* Whitley (2015) 297–98, 304 n.48). Also, Katja Sporn ((2014) 226–35) has collected the burial monuments of Archaic to early Hellenistic Crete, and shows that epigrams first appear in the fourth century BC, when monuments with figural decoration also increase.

⁸⁴ Callaghan (1978:) ‘Glaukos’; *JC* I.viii.4b line 7: Archos. *Cf.* Sporn (2002) 126–30, 135–36.

⁸⁵ Later activity has been traced, for example, at the ‘Royal Tomb of Isopata’ (Evans (1906) 170–71), the Kephala tholos (Preston (2005) 78–79, 88) and the ‘Temple Tomb’ (Evans (1935) 1018). For Bronze Age antiques in EIA Knossos, see Crowe (2016).

⁸⁶ A question that puzzled Aemilius Wendling ((1891) 48).

⁸⁷ Translation after Austin and Bastianini (2002) 87; *cf.* Gutzwiller (2002) 50.

⁸⁸ Literary product: Gutzwiller (2002) 50–52; Sens (2005) 216–20; Lapini (2007) 272–73. Possibly on a monument: Bastianini et al. (2001) 189–91; Angiò (2002).

⁸⁹ Gutzwiller (2010) 245–46.

correspondences include the mention of both heroes by name, their stated close relation and the physical proximity of their images. Lastly, the reference of one epigram to the grave of Idomeneus can be matched with the reference of the other epigram to the immobility of Meriones. This evidence suggests that the second epigram is crafted in response to the first⁹⁰ and cannot be ascribed to an existing monument.

The identification of the tombs of Idomeneus and Meriones attracted considerable attention from antiquarians and early archaeologists. The Dutch scholar Olfert Dapper, who travelled to Crete in 1688, was aware of the reference of Diodorus Siculus,⁹¹ but to my knowledge the first to propose an identification for the tomb of Idomeneus and, more generally, to associate a Cretan monument with one of the two Homeric heroes, was Captain Thomas Spratt, who visited Crete in 1851.⁹² In Hierapytna, Spratt learnt of the discovery of two sculptured sarcophagi in an underground chamber near the ancient theatre. The sarcophagi were looted and the larger sarcophagus was damaged, but Spratt took them both to the British Museum.⁹³ The two pieces are Attic and date from AD 150–170. The larger and more elaborate sarcophagus is sculpted on all four sides with scenes from the life of Achilles (fig. 4), whereas the smaller piece only carries a gorgon's head on the pediment. Spratt was convinced that the sarcophagi were not found in their original context. Referring to the first sarcophagus, he notes:



Fig. 4. Roman sarcophagus from Hierapytna, identified with the ‘Tomb of Idomeneus’ by Spratt (© The Trustees of the British Museum).

⁹⁰ Note the linguistic peculiarities of the new Posidippus poem identified in Sens (2005) 217–18.

⁹¹ Plevri (1999) 81; *cf.* Kopaka (2004) 503.

⁹² Spratt (1865) 60–61, 274–88.

⁹³ Walker (1990) 39–40 nos 44A, 44B. On the politics of the export, see Spanakis (1960) 279 n.21.

Heroes and monarchs alone were worthy of such a tomb and monument [i.e. the large sarcophagus], wherever it stood originally, whether Hierapytna or elsewhere. But Hierapytna was never a city of such celebrity as to possess either, so far as we know of Cretan history. To whom, of all Cretans, was such a monument so appropriate as to the hero king Idomeneus himself, one of the suitors of Helen, and companion of Achilles in the great war ... May we not, then, suppose ... that it [the large sarcophagus] came from the old capital, Gnosus [sic], at some very late period of its decline, to become the tomb of a Hierapytnian of the late Roman time ... this may have been the very monument or tomb noticed by Diodorus at Gnosus [sic] to its Trojan hero Idomeneus, since no other Cretan was so worthy of so fine a work.⁹⁴

Spratt attributes the large sarcophagus to Idomeneus because of its exquisite art and Homeric iconography. He hypothesizes that the second sarcophagus was for the wife of the individual who had appropriated the first sarcophagus and once belonged to the monument for Idomeneus, but somewhat surprisingly he does not consider the possibility that it was originally intended for Meriones.⁹⁵ Spratt’s attribution of the large sarcophagus to the Homeric king may be coloured by two supernatural phenomena he describes:⁹⁶ first, the emergence of a ghost from the large sarcophagus, who attacked an Ottoman guard in the castle of Hierapytna and, second, the sudden illness and death of the man who excavated the finds. Spratt expresses disbelief in the stories, but he discusses them at length, thus reaffirming indirectly that there was a superhuman aspect to the finds.

By the early 20th century, the tombs of Idomeneus and Meriones were localized at Knossos, the homeland of the heroes. Kalokairinos speculated that these tombs would be found in the burial area north of Knossos, near a Roman monument known as the ‘Tomb of Caiaphas’.⁹⁷ In contrast, Evans identified the tomb of Idomeneus with an impressive tomb he excavated in 1904 on the flat hilltop of Isopata, which lies north of Knossos and overlooks modern Herakleio. The ‘Royal Tomb of Isopata’ (fig. 5) involved a large rectangular chamber (8m by 6m), corbel-vaulted and lined with ashlar masonry, and provided with two side niches. Evans reconstructed the complex history of the monument as follows: the tomb was erected and first used in the LM II period (originally he argued for a MM III date); a second interment was introduced in the LM period; and at a later period the monument was used for ‘promiscuous sepulture, or possibly as a public ossuary’.⁹⁸

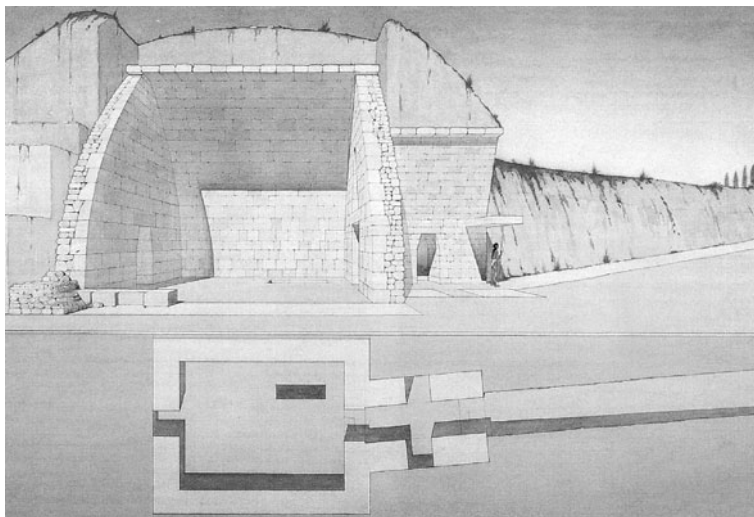


Fig. 5. The Minoan ‘Royal Tomb of Isopata’, or ‘Tomb of Idomeneus’ according to Evans (illustration based on drawing by Piet de Jong; © Heraklion Archaeological Museum, Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports-TAP).

⁹⁴ Spratt (1865) 283–84, 286.

⁹⁵ Spratt (1865) 282, 285.

⁹⁶ Spratt (1865) 275–77, 282.

⁹⁷ Kalokairinos (1906–1907) 5; cf. Nouchakis (1903)

109. On the ‘Tomb of Caiaphas’, see Kopaka (2004); Kotsonas (2016b) 301.

⁹⁸ Evans (1906) 170; for the revised date, see Evans (1935) 774.

At the time of the excavation, Evans noted about the monument: ‘It was tempting to recognize in it the traditional tomb of Idomeneus; but though further researches in its immediate vicinity led to the discovery of a rock-cut chamber-tomb containing contemporary relics, it was hardly considerable enough to be taken for that of Meriones, which tradition places beside the other.’⁹⁹ Slightly later, Evans wrote with more confidence:

The size and conspicuous position of the Isopata tomb led me, when first it was opened, to make the suggestion that we might have here the legendary resting-place of Idomeneus, the leader of the Cretan contingent of eighty ships against Troy, whose grave was pointed out near Knossos in Hellenic times together, close beside it, with that of his colleague and half-brother Meriones the son of Molos ... In spite of exhaustive researches no trace of any like built tomb could be found in the neighbourhood. A few metres to the south, however, there came to light a chamber-tomb cut in the rock, of somewhat irregular form, but containing fragmentary remains of painted vases in the Palace Style contemporary with those of the neighbouring vault. Could this otherwise quite isolated sepulchral chamber be the traditional tomb where Meriones was laid, hard by the resting place of his half-brother? Such questions may never be answered, but the possible survival here of local traditions cannot be gainsaid, especially when it is remembered that the later use of the vault went on apparently into the Geometrical [sic] period.¹⁰⁰

Evans’ identification of the Isopata tomb as ‘royal’ and as the ‘Tomb of Idomeneus’ was based on its prominent location, impressive size and architecture, and its rich finds. According to Evans, the vault of the structure originally rose well above bedrock and could have been capped by a mound possibly crowned by a stele and a herōon,¹⁰¹ thus conforming to the description by Diodorus Siculus. Evans did not conceal the weaknesses of this identification: the rich burials dated well before the assumed time of Idomeneus and the later burials were not rich enough to be called ‘royal’; also, there was no exceptional tomb nearby that could be convincingly ascribed to Meriones. Lastly, there were no *realia* that could be directly associated with the poetic personae of the two heroes. These weaknesses explain why Evans revisited this identification only briefly in *The Palace of Minos*. He restated that the tomb of Isopata ‘with its mound and possibly a memorial stone above, was identified by later legend with the sepulchre of Idomeneus’,¹⁰² but did not elaborate on this and made no reference to the tomb of Meriones.

After Evans, the quest for the palace and tomb of Idomeneus and Meriones was basically abandoned. The ‘biographical approach’ to the two heroes, which was popular from the mid-19th to the early 20th century, was marginalized, and gave way to the alternative ‘chronological approach’, which became popular in post-war scholarship. Recent developments in Homeric studies, however, invite a different and innovative approach to Homer’s heroes and the archaeology of Crete.

III. The ‘Tomb of Meriones’ at Knossos(?): archaeology, Cretan Bronze Age poetry and the Homeric epics

The well-known, early tenth-century BC double burial at Lefkandi Toumba in Euboea, which has yielded one of the most spectacular funerary assemblages from early Greece, has been compared to the burial of Patroclus in *Il.* 23.161–257 and has loomed large in discussions of the role of Euboea in the formation of the Homeric epic.¹⁰³ In this section I make a comparable argument for Crete and propose a closer association between the epic persona of Meriones and the archaeology

⁹⁹ Evans (1903–1904) 5–6. The press release was published in *The Times* on 25 April 1894: see MacGillivray (2000) 228.

¹⁰⁰ Evans (1906) 170–71.

¹⁰¹ Evans (1906) 146, 169, 171.

¹⁰² Evans (1928) 230; cf. Evans (1935) 960, where

this tomb is compared to the ‘Temple Tomb’ at Knossos, which is associated with the ‘Tomb of Minos’ in Sicily (Diod. Sic. 4.79.3; see also Hatzaki (forthcoming)).

¹⁰³ See, for example: Antonaccio (1995b) 15–20; Morris (2000) 218–38; Boardman (2002) 70–74; Whitley (2013) 400–01.

of an 11th-century BC tomb at Knossos. In promoting this association, I do not claim that this tomb is the resting place of the Meriones of Homer or the Meriones of Diodorus Siculus, as the 'biographical approach' would have it. Instead, I argue that it belonged to a prominent but anonymous Knossian whose identity at death was deliberately associated with the poetic persona of the Cretan hero, as was done for the Knossian Tharsymachos and Idomeneus nearly a millennium later. However, the kin of the 11th-century BC Knossian did not introduce a short literary allusion as in the case of Tharsymachos, but staged a performance that promoted the visual and material connection of the deceased with Meriones, as later portrayed by Homer.¹⁰⁴ I will argue that this man was intentionally buried with an assemblage of offerings that turned him into 'a Meriones look-alike', and it is specifically in this sense that I find it useful to call this monument the 'Tomb of Meriones'. Although this label may recall the tradition of Homeric archaeology, it stems from a very different approach.

The Knossian tomb is part of the extensive North Cemetery, which is located *ca.* 1km north of the Palace of Knossos and was the main burial ground of the community from the EIA to the early Christian period (fig. 6).¹⁰⁵ The site was explored by the British School at Athens in 1978–1979 (and the tomb in question in May/June 1978) during rescue excavations. All tombs unearthed were destroyed in the construction of the Medical Faculty of the University of Crete. Whitley has called this 'little short of scandalous',¹⁰⁶ and I consider that this applies especially to the decision to maintain no trace of even the best-preserved and important structures, including the tomb in question. Had this tomb been identified as the 'Tomb of Meriones', we could have had the first important monument from Greek Knossos to be spared by the urgencies of development and the priorities of archaeological research.

This tomb was part of the tomb complex 200–202, which is Subminoan in date and is assigned to the mid-11th century BC.¹⁰⁷ It is of the pit-cave type and consists of a large square pit (1.34m by 1.34m) with niches (the 'caves') opened in the western, eastern and southern cut faces. These niches are numbered as individual tombs, respectively Tombs 200, 201, 202 (fig. 7), of which Tomb 201 is the focus of this study. The tomb complex 200–202 may have been used on a single occasion only, as indicated by the filling of the pit and as attested for the large Bronze Age pit-caves. The upper part of the pit was damaged by Hellenistic graves, but the rest was undisturbed.

Tomb 202 was found empty, but the other two tombs yielded rich offerings. Tomb 200 contained the cremated remains of a probable adult female, who was furnished with 81 gold beads, a gold finger-ring, two gold disks, gold-leaf fragments, beads of faience and glass, an ivory comb, a bronze pin, a serpentine conulus, a stirrup jar and several shell fragments. Indeed, 'Tomb 200 was equipped more richly than any other contemporary Subminoan or Submycenaean burial.'¹⁰⁸

Two stirrup jars flanked the opening of Tomb 201, which contained the cremated remains of two adults, a male and a female, and probably of a child as well. These individuals were likely cremated on a single occasion and their ashes interred simultaneously. Tomb 201 also yielded bronze weapons, including a sword, a large spearhead, five or six large arrowheads and a *phalaron* (shield boss?) (fig. 8). More fragmentary (and less securely identified) were the remains of an

¹⁰⁴On burial goods as bearers of statements by the living projected on the deceased, see Morris (1987) 38–42; Parker Pearson (1999) 83–86; Dickinson (2006) 177–78; Eaby (2007) 17–18. On performance and embodied identities at death, see, respectively, Dakouri-Hild and Boyd (2016); Mina et al. (2016).

¹⁰⁵The following report is based on Catling (1978–1979) 45–46; (1995); (1996a); (1996b); (1996c); Coldstream and Catling (1996a) 1.191–95; (1996b) 715. On the osteology, see Musgrave (1996) 692.

¹⁰⁶Whitley (1998) 612.

¹⁰⁷Catling (1995) 123; Coldstream and Catling (1996b) 715. This date is maintained (Kotsonas (2011); *cf.* Whitley (2002) 223; (2013) 405), even though an earlier date is occasionally given (Whitley (2002) 400; (2016) 217; Wallace (2010) 24, 155, 158, 187), perhaps on the basis of a preliminary excavation report (Catling (1978–1979) 45–46). D'Agata (2011) 53 ascribes the tomb to her Subminoan I phase, which is an unpopular designation: see Kotsonas (2008) 35–36; Wallace (2010) 23–24.

¹⁰⁸Catling (1995) 125.

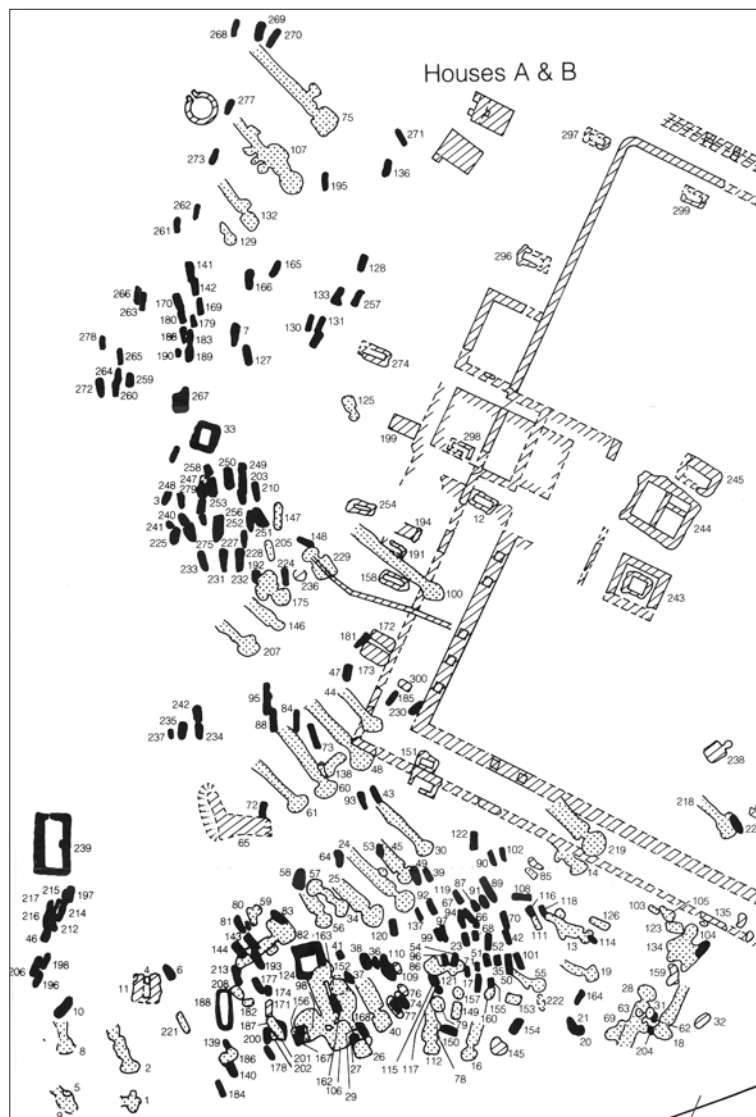


Fig. 6. Central part of the Knossos North Cemetery: dotted tombs date from the EIA, solid-black features are Hellenistic and Roman, and hatched features are medieval to modern or undated (reproduced by permission of the British School at Athens).

antique Cypriot bronze stand (fig. 9),¹⁰⁹ an antique boar's-tusk helmet (fig. 10 left), bone inlays attributed to a quiver (fig. 10 right), an iron knife, two iron pins, a gold ring, an ivory comb, an ivory handle and bronze fragments perhaps from tweezers. The various offerings had accompanied the deceased in the funerary pyre, which explains their state of preservation. These offerings can be associated with different individuals only hypothetically. Evidence from Subminoan single burials at Knossos¹¹⁰ indicates, however, that the weapons should be assigned to the male burial and the items of personal adornment to the female burial.

¹⁰⁹ On the stand, which was perhaps damaged when deposited, see Papasavvas (2001) 82–84, 175, 241–42; (2011).

¹¹⁰ Cf. the single male burial with weapons in Tomb 186 (Coldstream and Catling (1996a) 1.190–91) and the

single female burial with jewellery in Tomb 202 (Coldstream and Catling (1996a) 1.191–94). On the osteology, see Musgrave (1996) 692; on burial customs in Subminoan Knossos, see Catling (1996c).

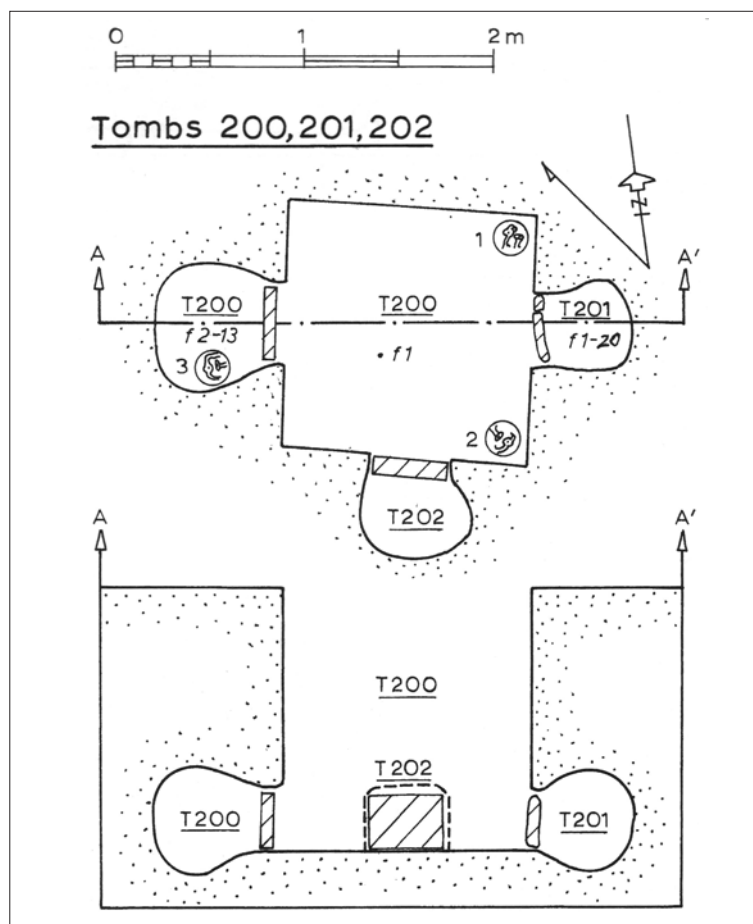


Fig. 7. Plan of tomb complex 200–202 of the Knossos North Cemetery (reproduced by permission of the British School at Athens).

Hector Catling, who excavated and published this assemblage, argues that tomb complex 200–202 contained probably the earliest burials of the Knossos North Cemetery. An ‘oikistic flavour’ is indicated by the congregating of later burials in the vicinity of these tombs. Additionally, this complex held the earliest cremations at Knossos, and attests to the new ritual of destroying valuable items in the funerary pyre.¹¹¹ Furthermore, these tombs ‘are not only the richest at present known from Knossos; they must be richer than any contemporary burials not only in SM [Subminoan] Crete but in SMyc [Submycenaean] Greece as well’.¹¹² Catling records notable comparisons between these burials and other exceptional burials of roughly the same period in the Aegean and on Cyprus, such as those at Lefkandi Toumba.¹¹³ Also, based on the Cypriot provenance or connection of several items in Tomb 201, Catling argues that its male occupant was a Cretan who spent part of his life on Cyprus, but returned to his native island for a fresh start, an experience that he compared to the *nostoi* of the Homeric heroes¹¹⁴ (under the influence of the ‘biographical approach’).

¹¹¹ Coldstream and Catling (1996b) 715; Muhly (2003) 24; Whitley (2013); (2016). Individual tombs in the North Cemetery may have been used in the LM III period, but the systematic use of this area for burial begins with Tombs 200–202 in the Subminoan period.

¹¹² Coldstream and Catling (1996b) 715.

¹¹³ See especially Catling (1995) 126–27; (1996c) 647–48.

¹¹⁴ Catling (1995) 126–27; (1996c) 647–49. A similar argument has been made for the double burial at Lefkandi Toumba: Boardman (2002) 72–74.

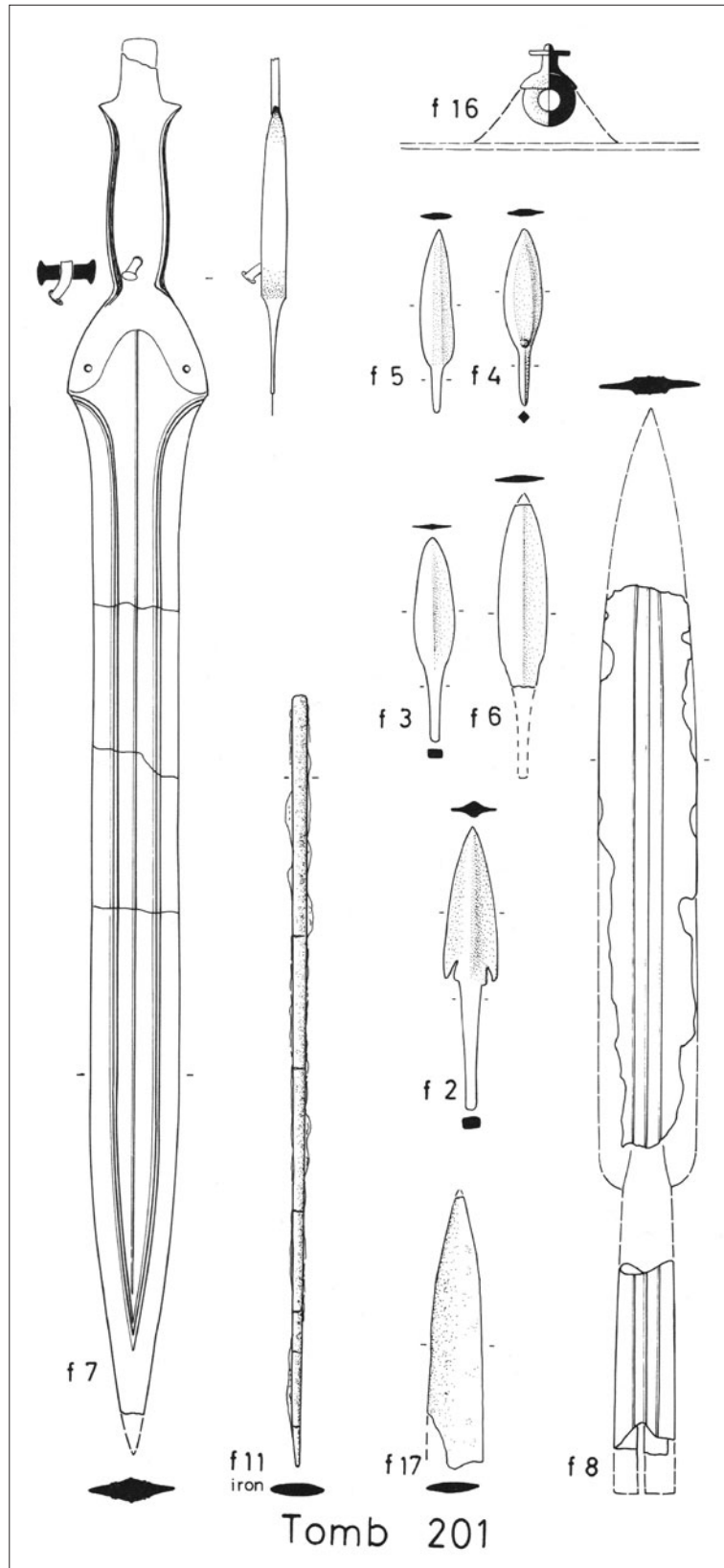


Fig. 8. Weapons from Tomb 201 of the Knossos North Cemetery (reproduced by permission of the British School at Athens).

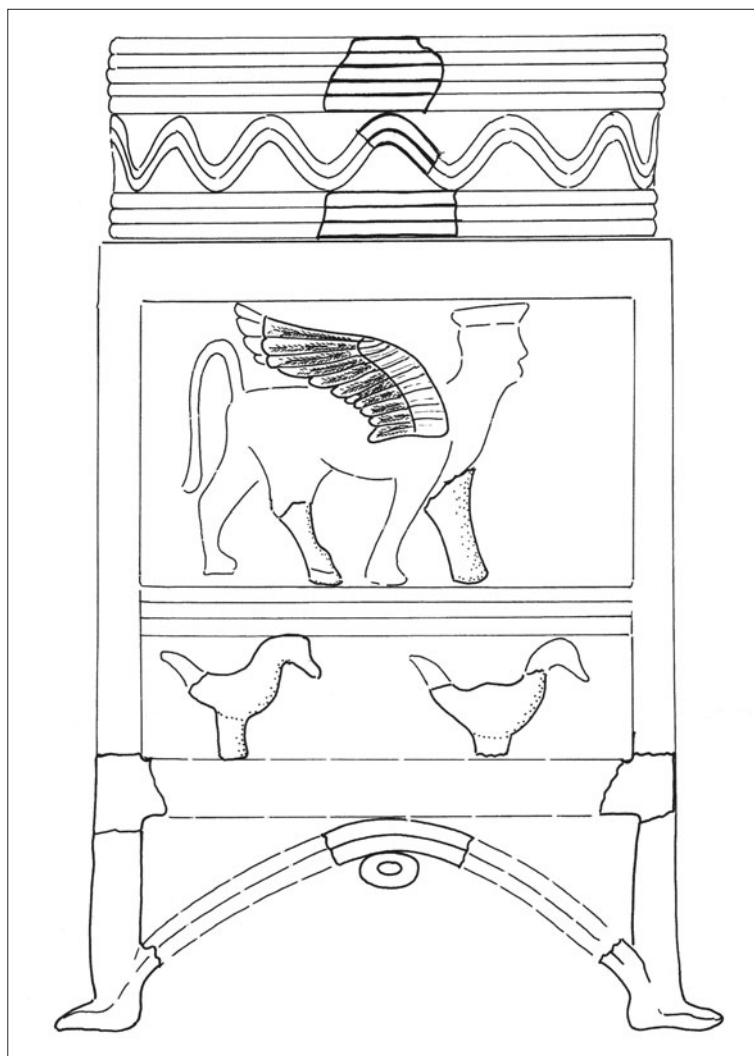


Fig. 9. Cypriot bronze stand from Tomb 201 of the Knossos North Cemetery (reproduced by permission of the British School at Athens).

Catling explores the Homeric overtones of Tomb 201 at length.¹¹⁵ He associates the antique boar's-tusk helmet with the epic reference to a similar piece that changed several hands before reaching Meriones (*Il.* 10.261–71). He also compares the antique Cypriot bronze stand to the silver work basket that was given to Helen by Alcandre at Egyptian Thebes (*Od.* 4.125–27) and to other guest-gifts exchanged in the epics (for example *Il.* 4.615–19). Additionally, Catling assumes that the female occupant followed the male into burial and compares her status to the 'chattel-like' status of Chryseis in *Iliad* book 1.¹¹⁶ He further approaches this Knossian double burial in the light of the epic references to the slaying of Polyxena over the tomb of Achilles in *Iliou Persis*, the sacrifice of the Trojan captives during the funeral of Patroclus (*Il.* 18.336–37, 23.22–23) and the

¹¹⁵ Catling (1995) 125, 127–28; (1996a) 534; (1996c) 647.

¹¹⁶ Catling (1995) 125; it is equally possible that the tomb occupants died at the same time and from the same cause.

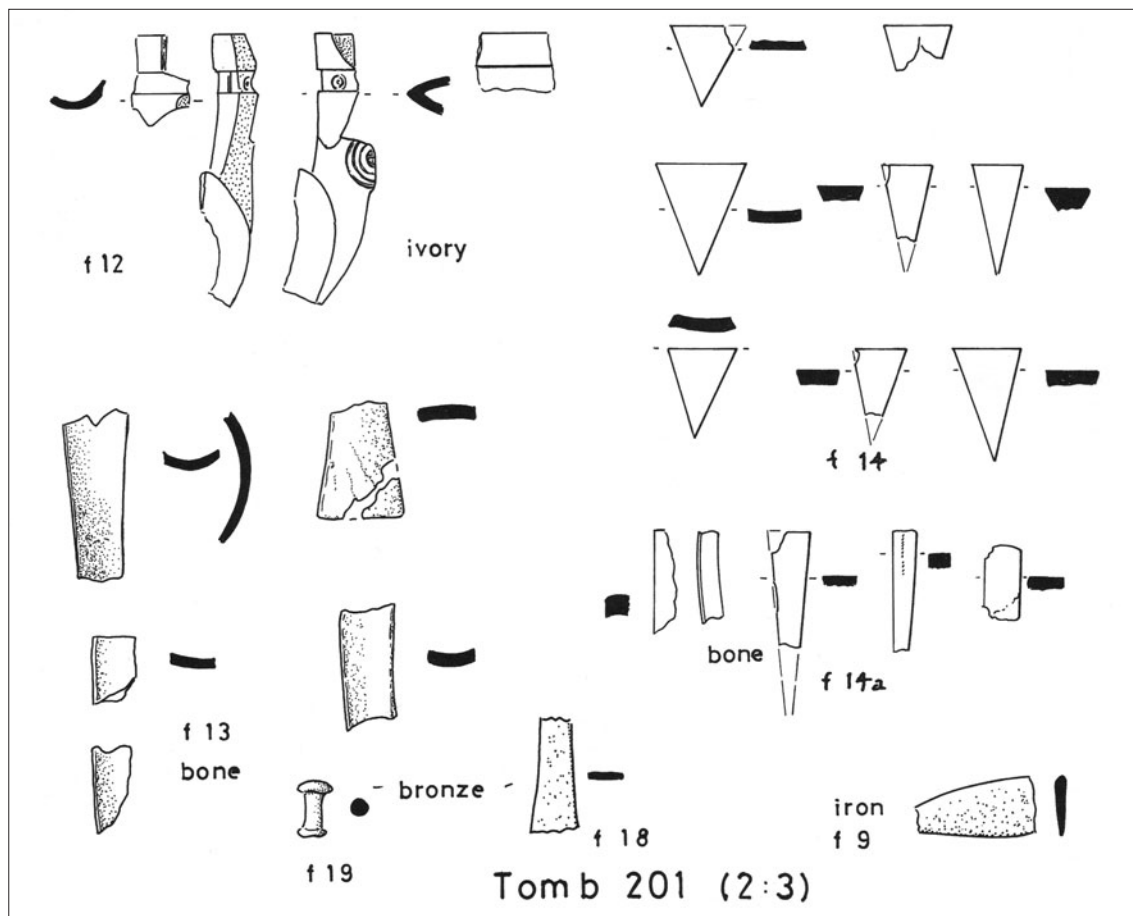


Fig. 10. Fragments of boar's tusk and of bone inlays (from a quiver?) from Tomb 201 of the Knossos North Cemetery (reproduced by permission of the British School at Athens).

mingling of the ashes of Achilles and Patroclus in a single container (*Il.* 23.243–44; *Od.* 24.73–77). Additionally, he relates the neighbouring burial of Tomb 200 to that of Antilochus, son of Nestor, who was interred near Achilles and Patroclus (*Od.* 24.78–79). In pursuing this analysis, Catling cautiously explains that the ‘reminiscences of Homer’ he identifies in these tombs involves ‘no more than the *kind* of people who appear in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the material objects with which they are associated, and their behavior’, rather than ‘the congruence of archaeological evidence and Homeric events’.¹¹⁷

Catling's interpretation has proved popular,¹¹⁸ and has also inspired the present work. My approach to this tomb is, however, considerably different from that of previous scholarship and emphasizes the Knossian and more generally Cretan context of the assemblage, rather than its broader associations. Instead of reviewing the well-explored comparisons between Tomb 201 and burials elsewhere, I demonstrate the uniqueness of the assemblage for the archaeology of Knossos and Crete. Likewise, the Homeric comparisons I introduce are not drawn indiscriminately from

¹¹⁷ Catling (1995) 127.

¹¹⁸ Carter and Morris (1995b) 4, with reservations; Sherratt (1996) 93; Crielaard (1998) 188–90; Whitley (1998) 613; (2016) 219, with reservations; Kanta (2003) 181; Muhly (2003) 24–25; Prent (2005) 119–20; Dick-

inson (2006) 65, 207, 243; Eaby (2007) 158, 314–15; Wallace (2010) 155, 158, with reservations; Perna (2011) 121, 137, 144, 152–53; Bachvarova (2016) 282, 321; Emanuel (2017), 110–14; *cf.* Whitley (2002) 223; (2013) 400, 405; (2016) 219–20.

throughout the epics, but focus on those parts of the poems that have been associated with Cretan poetry. My purpose is to demonstrate the notable correspondence between the male burial of Tomb 201 and the Iliadic (10.220–65) description of the Knossian Meriones, which has hitherto remained unnoticed, and argue that this can be taken to suggest that stories that later filtered into the Homeric epics circulated in Crete in the 11th century BC.

The contextual approach I am advocating is best exemplified by the discussion of three exceptional pieces of arms and armour from Tomb 201. Primacy is due to the boar's-tusk helmet, which is given the most attention by Catling.¹¹⁹ The find contexts of Aegean boar's-tusk helmets date from the MBA II to the end of the LBA, with most pieces dating in the early LBA (although representations of such helmets become most common in Late Helladic (LH)/LM IIIB). Boar's-tusk helmets remain rare in Crete in comparison to the mainland;¹²⁰ indeed, such helmets are only known from four other Cretan tombs, dating from MM III/LM IA to LM IIIB1: three from around Knossos and one from Armenoi in central-west Crete.¹²¹ Tomb 201 is, however, the latest Cretan and Aegean context to contain such a piece of equipment.¹²²

The occurrence of the boar's-tusk helmet together with archery equipment, including arrowheads and a possible quiver, is unparalleled in Knossos and across the rest of Crete. In contrast, several Bronze Age tombs from the Peloponnese and nearby Aegina have yielded boar's-tusk helmets together with stone arrowheads.¹²³ Arrowheads become uncommon in Knossian and other Aegean burials from the LBA IIIA onwards and remain so in those of the EIA; they are exceptionally rare in Cretan 'warrior graves' of the time, which are typically furnished with swords and spearheads.¹²⁴ From LM IIIA2 onwards, arrowheads occur in Cretan tombs singly or in pairs, and caches comparable to that from Tomb 201 are unknown from Knossos and remain extremely rare in Crete.¹²⁵ Also, to my knowledge, only one other quiver has been found in an Aegean grave of LBA and EIA date, and this too at Knossos (Fortetsa Tomb P).¹²⁶ The two finds recall the later fame of Knossian quivers (Luc. *Pharsalia* 3.185).

¹¹⁹ Catling (1995) 127; (1996a) 534; (1996c) 647; Coldstream and Catling (1996b) 715.

¹²⁰ Chronology: Lorimer (1950) 213, 217–18; Stubblings (1962) 516; Hooker (1969) 69; Borchhardt (1972) 19, 31–33, 52; Varvaregos (1981) 53–54; Shelmerdine (1996) 475–76, 479–92; Dickinson (2006) 157. Geography: Lorimer (1950) 218–19; Alexiou (1954) 213; Stubblings (1962) 516; Borchhardt (1972) 18–33, 47–52; Varvaregos (1981) 54–61, 71–127; Shelmerdine (1996) 479–92.

¹²¹ Knossos Zafer Papoura pit-cave no. 55: Evans (1906) 66–67; cf. Evans (1935) 868–69; Katsambas: Alexiou (1970); Poros: Muhly (1992) 101; Armenoi: Banou (1990). Relevant references are collected in Varvaregos (1981) 110–12; Kilian-Dirlmeier (1997) 44. Cretan representations are more common: Varvaregos (1981) 112–17; Shelmerdine (1996) 490.

¹²² Helmets of any type are extremely rare in LBA and EIA Crete: for example Kilian-Dirlmeier (1985) 199, table 1; Stampolidis (2004) 282 no. 361.

¹²³ For the archaeological contexts of boar's-tusk helmets, see Varvaregos (1981) 71–127; Gregoropoulos (2010) 162–64. For such helmets found with arrowheads, see Wace (1932) 58 nos 22–23, 84–85 nos 52, 59 (Mycenae); Persson (1942) 45–49 nos 13, 17 (Dendra); Kilian-Dirlmeier (1997) 29–50 (Aegina Kolonna).

¹²⁴ LBA and EIA Aegean: Snodgrass (1964) 141–56; (1967) 17–18, 23–24, 29–30, 39–40; Catling and Catling

(1980) 256–57; Lemos (2002) 122–23; Dickinson (2006) 158; Gregoropoulos (2010) 169–71. Bronze Age and EIA Knossos: Kilian-Dirlmeier (1985) 199 table 1; Snodgrass (1996) 584; Alberti (2004); Gregoropoulos (2010) 51–59, 64–65. Cretan 'warrior graves': Löwe (1996) 52–57; Kanta (2003); Gregoropoulos (2010) 104–12; Perna (2011) 136–37, 145, 152–53; Psallida (2011) 119–20, 130–34; Basakos (2016). One of the few exceptions is the 'quiverful' of arrowheads from the Late Protogeometric Tomb T26 at Lefkandi (Catling and Catling (1980) 256–57). An Early Protogeometric vase from Sybrita illustrates three warriors with spears, shields and swords: D'Agata (2012).

¹²⁵ Eaby (2007) 116, 145, 248, 255, 259, 260, 297, 300, 302, 303, 317, 321, 322, 331, 333, 335; Gregoropoulos (2010) 52–57, 64–65, 111–12; Psallida (2011) 119–20; Basakos (2016) 10. This pattern also applies to the unpublished EIA necropoleis of Prinias (Haartmut Matthäus, personal communication) and Eleutherna. The rare exceptions include an EIA find from Afrati: Levi (1927–1929) 87 (between pithos burials 8 and 9).

¹²⁶ Brock (1957) 198–99. For 'quiverfuls' of arrowheads from Knossian and other Aegean tombs of the late MBA or the early LBA, see Gregoropoulos (2010) 24, 27, 30, 46, 47, 80, 267, 297, 319, 325, 363, 379, 391. In many cases the 'quiverfuls' did not come with a quiver (Kilian-Dirlmeier (1997) 32–33).

These distinctive components of the archaeological assemblage in Tomb 201 are closely comparable to the exceptional equipment that Meriones gives to Odysseus in *Il.* 10.260–65: a bow, a quiver and a boar’s-tusk helmet (plus a sword). These weapons are very uncommon in the epic, as much so as in the archaeological record; Meriones possesses the only boar’s-tusk helmet mentioned by Homer and he is exceptional among the Greeks in using the bow, ‘a weapon not usually thought of as the ideal for a contemporary, mainstream Achaean hero’¹²⁷ (cf. *Il.* 11.384–95 and, perhaps, 4.242). Indeed, ‘in the *Iliad* the bow plays a comparatively small part, and is more a foreign weapon than a Greek one’.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, Meriones takes his bow to the battlefield (*Il.* 13.650–52) and wins the archery contest at the funeral games for Patroclus (*Il.* 23.870–84). Meriones also carries other military equipment typical for a Homeric hero, which corresponds to the spear, the sword and the shield(?) found in Tomb 201. Indeed, the hero bears a shield (16.609) and is ‘famed for his spear’ (*Il.* 16.619), which he uses effectively (*Il.* 13.255–56, 295–96, 528–33, 567–75, cf. 5.65–68).¹²⁹

In summary, the male occupant of Tomb 201 and the Iliadic persona of Meriones share (a) a Cretan and particularly Knossian identity, (b) an unusually broad range of weapons, including pieces that are otherwise rare in both the epic and the archaeological record, (c) an association with antique objects, especially a boar’s-tusk helmet and (d) an exceptional status among the Knossians and beyond. The range of these correspondences and the exceptional aspects they cover cannot be fortuitous. However, their full assessment requires moving beyond the kind of matching that was popular within Homeric archaeology and appreciating the philological evidence which suggests that Cretan versions of Homeric stories circulated on the island already in the second millennium BC in the light of current ideas on the gradual evolution of the Homeric epics.

Philologists have identified ample evidence for this proposal. Indeed, they widely regard *Iliad* book 10 (the *Doloneia*), which describes the exceptional weapons of Meriones, as the single major interpolation in the Homeric epics, and this idea can be traced back to ancient commentaries.¹³⁰ The same notion is embedded in the studies that take *Iliad* book 10 to be ‘the most “Odyssean” book of the *Iliad*’ in theme and language¹³¹ and in the arguments that have this work inspired by an alternative version of the *Odyssey*, in which Crete and Meriones play a central role. For example, Federico hypothesizes that the *Doloneia* ‘prelude a o presuppone un’Odissea che vedeva protagonisti proprio Odisseo e Merione’.¹³² Likewise, Christos Tsagalis comments that the scene that has Meriones give his bow to Odysseus ‘may have “crossed over” from an alternative epic of return, in which Odysseus would have “re-discovered” his interest in using the bow during his stay in Crete’.¹³³

The impact of Cretan epic poetry on the *Iliad* has been assumed on the basis of other passages as well. Indeed, traces of a Cretan epic poem celebrating Idomeneus have been identified in the names of three warriors he kills at Troy, which have explicit Cretan associations.¹³⁴ These warriors

¹²⁷ Stubbings (1962) 518.

¹²⁸ Stubbings (1962) 518; cf. Lorimer (1950) 289; Mylonas Shear (2000) 59–60. Palmer (forthcoming) explains that this idea has been coloured by broader notions of an east–west dichotomy. The importance of the bow for the Homeric heroes is defended in Shewan (1911) 168–69 and Farron (2003), and also emerges in the arming scenes in *Iliad* book 10, which are not connected to night ambush: Dué and Ebbott (2010) 57–58, 291; cf. McLeod (1988). On the tradition for Cretan archery, see Snodgrass (1964) 142; Haft (1984) 291 n.8.

¹²⁹ Also, Janko (1992) 78–81, 86, 116, 118, 126.

¹³⁰ Leaf (1900) 423–25; Danek (1988); Taplin (1992) 11, 152–53; Hainsworth (1993) 151–54; Reichel (1994) 327–40; M.L. West (2001) 10–11; (2011) 69–70, 233–35; (2014) 1, 24, 40. This interpretation is chal-

lenged in Shewan (1911); Thornton (1984) 164–69; Williams (2000); Dué and Ebbott (2010); Dué (2012). Indeed, it has been argued that *Iliad* book 10 and the *Odyssey* resemble each other only because of their shared focus on the *lokhos* (ambush): Dué and Ebbott (2010) especially 31–87; Dué (2012) especially 181–83. Even this revisionist approach, however, reserves a special role for Crete: Dué and Ebbott (2010) 260.

¹³¹ Clay (1983) 75; cf. Dué (2012) 176.

¹³² Federico (2010) 82.

¹³³ Tsagalis (2012) 325 n.57.

¹³⁴ Aposkitou (1960) 172; Kullman (1960) 104, with references; Federico (1999b) 291–93; *contra*: Hooker (1969) 69 n.58; Kirk (1990) 57–58. Two of these warriors are recorded in *IG XIV 1284 Tabula Iliaca Capitolina*; cf. *LIMC V.1 s.v.* Idomeneus, no. 7.

are Phaistos (*Il.* 5.43–44) and Asios Hyrtakides (*Il.* 13.383–93) – the names and patronymics of whom respectively recall the names of two Cretan cities (Phaistos and Hyrtakina) – and also Othryoneus (*Il.* 13.363–72), whose name is etymologically related to the word ‘mountain’ in the Cretan dialect (Hesychius, *s.v.* ὄθρον).

Stronger evidence for the impact of Cretan poetry has been identified in the *Odyssey*, especially in the ‘Cretan lies’ of Odysseus that abound in Cretan references and themes (13.256–86, 14.191–359, 19.165–202, 221–48, 262–307, 336–42). Among the different lies, Odysseus (a) is always cast as a Cretan (even if a different individual), (b) assumes the Cretan prowess in raiding, archery and lying, (c) provides descriptions of Crete and (d) is connected with Idomeneus (cf. *Il.* 1.144–47, 2.404–07, 7.161–68, 19.310–11). The literature on the ‘Cretan lies’ is vast, and I focus here on their relevance to the hypothesis for an alternative ‘Cretan Odyssey’.¹³⁵

Evidence for a ‘Cretan Odyssey’ focused on the visit of Odysseus to the island has been sought in the repeated reference by the ‘Cretan Odysseus’ to his wandering in many different cities (*Od.* 15.492, 19.170, 16.63–64).¹³⁶ This theme is missing from the rest of the *Odyssey* – with the exception of the proem (1.3) – but both epics (*Il.* 19.649; *Od.* 19.170–74) emphasize the exceptionally large number of cities on Crete.

External evidence in support of a ‘Cretan Odyssey’ has been sought in the scholia to *Odyssey* 3.13 that preserve two readings from Zenodotus’ text, according to which the final destination of Telemachus’ voyage, as specified in *Odyssey* 1.93 and 1.285, was not the Sparta of Menelaus but the Crete of Idomeneus.¹³⁷ Stephanie West hypothesizes that this variation derives from an earlier draft of a *Telemachy* or was designed to satisfy a Cretan audience.¹³⁸ Martin West argues that it is revealing of the original plan of the poet of the *Odyssey*¹³⁹ and Nagy argues it reflects an oral tradition from Crete.¹⁴⁰ Additional evidence for a ‘Cretan Odyssey’ has been sought in book 6 of Dictys Cretensis, in which Odysseus tells his tales not to Alkinoos in Scheria, but to Idomeneus in Crete (*Journal of the Trojan War* 6.5).¹⁴¹ Scholars generally agree that Dictys refashioned the Homeric epics to suit later tastes and to serve his own Cretan bias, but also suggest that his work is inspired by a non-Homeric ‘Cretan Odyssey’. This ‘Cretan Odyssey’ may have been central to the Cretan edition of Homer and the commentaries on the Homeric epics produced by Rhianos, which were discussed above.

Based on much of this evidence, William John Woodhouse proposed in 1930 that the ‘Cretan lies’ echo some of the original wanderings of Odysseus as narrated in a pre-Homeric ‘Saga of Odysseus’.¹⁴² This idea was increasingly taken up in the post-war period,¹⁴³ and from the 1980s onwards it has generated titles such as *Ulysse, le Crétois*, *Cretan Odyssey* and *Cretan Homers*.¹⁴⁴ Stronger arguments emerged in the 1990s, with the development of a new form of Neoanalysis that is informed by the principles of oral theory. Indeed, Steve Reece proposes that the ‘Cretan

¹³⁵ For example Haft (1984) 289–91; Federico (1999b) 296–300; Camerotto (2010) 21–34; Levaniouk (2012) 374–80; Tsagalis (2012) 314–15, with n.19 systematizing different explanations for the centrality of Crete in the ‘Cretan lies’, 321–28.

¹³⁶ Tsagalis (2012) 314.

¹³⁷ S.R. West (1981) 173–74; (1988) 43–44; (2003) 304–05; Reece (1994) 166–68; Burkert (2001) 93–94; M.L. West (2001) 33; (2014) 107–10; Camerotto (2010) 27–28; Levaniouk (2012) 380–90; Martin (2012); Tsagalis (2012) 315–16; Nagy (2015b).

¹³⁸ S.R. West (1988) 43; (2003) 304–05. Conversely Burkert (2001) 93–95 considers the replacement of Crete with Sparta as a last-minute change intended to satisfy Spartan audiences.

¹³⁹ M.L. West (2014) 3, 87 n.36, 107–10.

¹⁴⁰ Nagy (2004) 39; followed by Levaniouk (2012) 389.

¹⁴¹ Reece (1994) 168–69; Giatromanolakis (1996) 46–49; Romeo (2010) 82–84; Levaniouk (2012) 374; Martin (2012); Ní Mheallaigh (2012) 182–85; Tsagalis (2012) 315.

¹⁴² Woodhouse (1930) 133–35.

¹⁴³ Lorimer (1950) 94; Webster (1958) 117–18; Faure (1980); S.R. West (1981); Reece (1994); Sherratt (1996) 93; (2005) 139; Federico (1999b) 293–300; (2010) 77–80; Powell (2007) 180–81; Levaniouk (2012); Martin (2012); Tsagalis (2012) 317–31; Nagy (2015a); (2015b); *contra* Haft (1984) 290–91.

¹⁴⁴ *Ulysse, le Crétois*: Faure (1980); *Cretan Odyssey*: Reece (1994); Nagy (2015a); (2015b); *Cretan Homers*: Martin (2012).

lies' of our *Odyssey* reflect a 'Cretan Odyssey' in which both Odysseus and Telemachus reach Crete independently of each other, meet there and return home together.¹⁴⁵ Most recently, Olga Levaniouk has elaborated on this in arguing that different poetic compositions from Crete filtered into Homer's *Odyssey*.¹⁴⁶

The idea of a 'Cretan Odyssey' has found support in the iconography of an early fifth-century Attic red-figure stamnos by the Siren Painter (fig. 11).¹⁴⁷ The vase depicts three men identified by inscriptions as ΟΔΥΣΥΣ, ΙΔΑΜΕΝΕΥΣ and ΚΥΚΛΟΠΙΣ. The inscriptions and the iconography establish that this is the episode of Odysseus in the cave of the Cyclops Polyphemus. ΙΔΑΜΕΝΕΥΣ, however, is odd for this context, and his inclusion recalls the arguments for poetry connecting Odysseus with Idomeneus. The identification of this Ἰδαμενεύς with the Cretan Ἰδομενεύς has, however, been questioned by Luca Bettarini.¹⁴⁸ Bettarini's criticism is based on (a) the depiction of the hero without a beard, which would be expected for the aged Homeric king, (b) the attestation of the name Ἰδαμενεύς on two Archaic inscriptions from Rhodes and (c) a conclusion based on linguistic analysis that this name is independent of Ἰδομενεύς and was chosen because of its heroic and 'literary' connotations. Although Bettarini does not argue specifically against the significance of the stamnos for the hypothesis of a 'Cretan Odyssey', his conclusions, if accepted, would make such a connection dubious. I am sceptical, however, about this line of argumentation. The presumed 'Cretan Odyssey' need not have had an Idomeneus identical to the homonymous Homeric hero. Moreover, the other two inscriptions on the Attic stamnos also show epigraphic, linguistic or dialectic peculiarities that cannot be interpreted as conscious choices by the inscriber; such peculiarities are not uncommon on Attic vase inscriptions.¹⁴⁹ Accordingly, I would not dissociate the Attic stamnos from the presumed 'Cretan Odyssey'.

In sum, there is considerable philological evidence that poems about the Cretan heroes Idomeneus and Meriones were in circulation, and echoes of these poems underlie some passages in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. These Cretan poems could explain the correspondences identified between the male occupant of Knossos North Cemetery Tomb 201 and the Homeric persona of Meriones. It is not easy to determine whether the poetic reference inspired the burial or vice versa, and these sorts of inquiries, which pervade the field of Homeric archaeology, often result in 'a kind of chicken-and-egg debate as to which came first: the story or the custom'.¹⁵⁰ It is conceivable that a Cretan poet composed a work praising the military prowess and the weapons of the exceptional male occupant of Tomb 201 for performance on the occasion of his funeral, as Hesiod may have done for Amphidamas of Chalkis¹⁵¹ and as has been assumed for the Toumba burials at Lefkandi.¹⁵² The hypothesis that such a composition dates from the 11th century BC recalls the argument by Martin West and Susan Sherratt that this is one of the three most important phases in the formation of the Homeric epics.¹⁵³ The formative character of this period is also assumed by other scholars; for example, Ian Morris proposes that 'the distinctive Greek concept of the hero' emerged in the 11th century BC¹⁵⁴ and Sarah Morris suggests that the historical conditions of the period may have inspired some of the 'Cretan lies' of Odysseus.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁵ Reece (1994), based on an idea going back to Geddes (1878) 31–32 n.7. More episodes are hypothesized in Tsagalis (2012) 317–19.

¹⁴⁶ Levaniouk (2012).

¹⁴⁷ Greifenhagen (1982); *LIMC* V.1 s.v. Idomeneus, no. 1, with references. The vase is related to the 'Cretan Odyssey' in Federico (1999b) 297–98; (2010) 77–80; Camerotto (2010) 29.

¹⁴⁸ Bettarini (2014).

¹⁴⁹ Wachter (2016).

¹⁵⁰ Whitley (2002) 227.

¹⁵¹ For the possibility of such performances in LBA

Greece, see Bachvarova (2016) 268–73. The theme of Hesiod's performance is not specified in *Works and Days* 650–60, but the *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* suggests the performance was not about the achievements of Amphidamas: Rosen (1997) 473–77.

¹⁵² Lenz (1993); Antonaccio (1995b) 14, 24 n.37; cf. Powell (1991) 185; Lane Fox (2008) 54.

¹⁵³ M.L. West (1988) 159–65; Sherratt (1990); cf. Morris (2000) 231–32; Bennet (2014) 220–22.

¹⁵⁴ Morris (2000) 228–38.

¹⁵⁵ Morris (1997) 614; cf. Emanuel (2017).

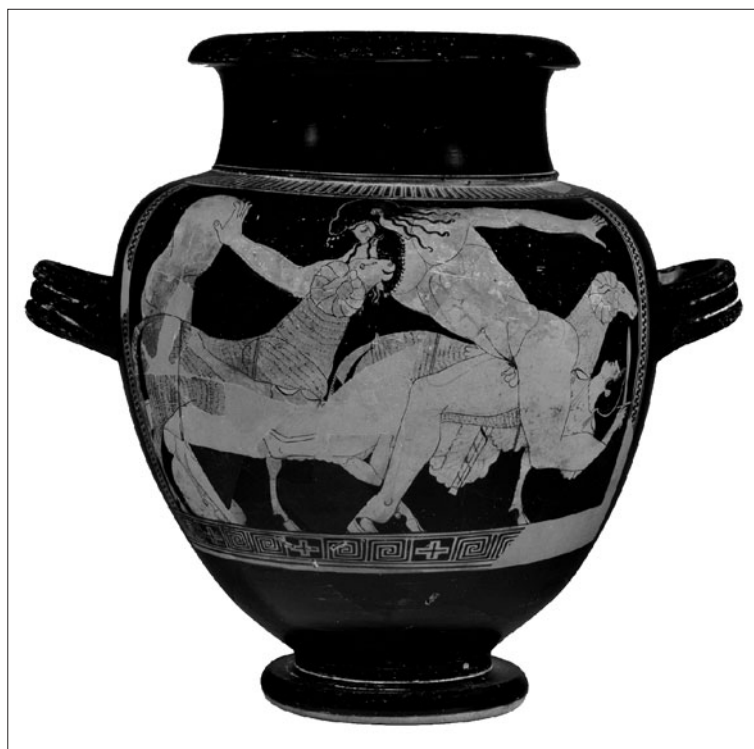


Fig. 11. Attic stamnos with scene from the ‘Cretan Odyssey’(?) (photograph courtesy of Sotheby’s Inc. © 1990).

The approach of West and Sherratt also allows for the alternative hypothesis that an earlier poem about Meriones inspired the way the male occupant of Tomb 201 was presented at death. That poem could belong to what the two scholars identify as the first formative phase of the Homeric epics, in the mid-second millennium BC. This hypothesis finds support in the different philological evidence for the antiquity of the poetic persona of Meriones.¹⁵⁶ This includes the formulaic line for Meriones in the *Iliad* (2.651, 7.166, 8.264, 17.259: Μηριόνης ἀτάλαντος Ἐνυάλιω ἀνδρειφόντη, ‘Meriones peer of the manslaying wargod’), which is linguistically very old and represents a modernized version of a hexameter that must date back to the 14th century BC. Additional evidence for the antiquity of the poetic persona of Meriones is provided by the narrative of the *Iliad*, which often connects this hero (and Idomeneus) with Ajax, an epic figure echoing the early Mycenaean period.¹⁵⁷ Also, Meriones possesses the boar’s-tusk helmet, a piece of equipment that was probably perceived as archaizing by the LM/LH IIIB period and could have been involved in contemporary stories about the past, which eventually filtered into the *Iliad*.¹⁵⁸ More generally, the formulaic references of Homer to bows and arrows also suggest a very early linguistic pedigree.¹⁵⁹ Accordingly, Meriones has been considered a pre-Greek hero who was introduced into Greek hexameter poetry in the Early Mycenaean period, perhaps by means of a poem on the (assumed) fall of Knossos to the Mycenaeans, and was later transferred to the Trojan myth-cycle.¹⁶⁰ Such an early date is also suggested by the etymology of the name Meriones, which may

¹⁵⁶ For this evidence, see Promponas (1980) 46–49; M.L. West (1988) 159; (1997a) 234; (1997b) 612; (2011) 118; Janko (1992) 79; Reece (1994) 166 n.1; Ruijgh (1995) 85–88; (2011) 287–89; Burkert (2001) 88; Latacz (2004) 261–63.

¹⁵⁷ See n.156 above

¹⁵⁸ Shelmerdine (1996) 477; Bennet (2014) 210.

¹⁵⁹ Page (1959) 278–80.

¹⁶⁰ M.L. West (1988) 159; (1997b) 612; (2011) 118; Ruijgh (1995) 85–86; (2011) 257–58; Latacz (2004) 261–63.

derive from the Hurrian term *maryannu* that was used across the Near East in the 16th and 15th centuries BC to designate the elite chariot warrior.¹⁶¹ Warriors of this kind had a special role in defending LBA Knossos, as evidenced by the Linear B chariot tablets from the site,¹⁶² and may have contributed to stories about Meriones.

On this archaeological and philological basis, I propose that the identity ascribed to the occupant of Tomb 201 at death was inspired by a pre-existing story about the Cretan hero Meriones, which was referenced by the weapons and antiques deposited in the tomb. This same story may have had an impact on the shaping of the Homeric epic, especially of book 10 of the *Iliad* and of the ‘Cretan lies’ of the *Odyssey*.

IV. Conclusion

The relationship between Homer and the archaeology of Crete has attracted a variety of approaches since the 19th century, but these largely fall within the antiquated agenda of Homeric archaeology. In this paper, I argue for a different, diachronic and contextual approach, which integrates disparate strengths of classical scholarship and offers a panorama of the Cretan ‘Ages of Homer’.

The analysis above suggests that no Cretan monument of the Bronze Age can be closely associated with the ‘Homeric past’, despite earlier resourceful arguments. Philological and linguistic evidence suggests, however, that stories that underlie the Homeric epics were circulating about the island in the middle to late second millennium BC. In this period or in the EIA, this literary output may have included stories about Idomeneus and Meriones, and an alternative ‘Cretan Odyssey’. I argue that by the 11th century BC these stories were so appealing that the kin of a prominent Knossian staged his funeral as a performance that promoted the connection of the deceased with Meriones, as later portrayed in *Iliad* book 10. This performance offers a rare glimpse into the appeal of stories that underlie the Homeric epics and highlights the research potential of regional and interdisciplinary approaches to the archaeology of Homeric poetry.

The Cretan interest in Homer is not manifested for more than half a millennium after the ‘Tomb of Meriones’, but Hellenistic Crete has yielded a variety of literary and epigraphic evidence for an interest in the epics and, more broadly, in the ‘Homeric past’. At around this period Knossos boasted two Homeric landmarks: the tomb of Idomeneus and Meriones and the site Καλλιχορον with the ‘dancing floors’ of Ariadne (*Il.* 18.590–92; Paus. 9.40.2). Cretan interest in Homer persisted in the Roman period, as evidenced by the poem of Dictys Cretensis and its Latin translation (*Ephemeris Belli Troiani*). This work proved popular in medieval and later times, but it was the Homeric epics which inspired the antiquarians and excavators who initiated the archaeological exploration of Crete in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and which still dominate discussions of the island’s ‘Homeric past’.

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¹⁶¹ Schachermeyr (1968) 306; M.L. West (1988) 158–59; (1997a) 234; (1997b) 612; Hiller (1990) 233; Raulwing (2000) 117–18; Latacz (2004) 262; Kanavou (2015) 53–54. On the possibility of Cretan Bronze Age epic see Hiller (1990); Bennet (2014) 215–17.

¹⁶² Driessen (1996); for chariots in Cretan art see Feldman and Sauvage (2010) 134–40.

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