Reassessing Subminoan: Context and Meaning

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Reassessing Subminoan: Context and Meaning

Abstract
Subminoan is a term used variously and often inconsistently to refer to a chronological period and a style of pottery. Scholars have typically blurred the distinction between style and chronology from the end of the Bronze Age and throughout the Early Iron Age. The situation on Crete at the transition from Bronze Age to Early Iron Age is particularly difficult to explicate because, with the exception of the Kastro, the few excavated settlements, including Knossos and Phaistos, lack complete or stratigraphically continuous habitation records. Much of the relevant pottery has come from graves, notoriously unreliable sources for chronological information. The Knossian classifications are frequently applied throughout the island and are themselves derived from tomb groups, such as those from the North Cemetery, Fortetsa, Ayios Ioannis, and Gypsades. A reassessment of both the contexts identified as Subminoan in date and the definitions applied to the Subminoan ceramic style demonstrates that little consensus has been reached on the meaning and application of this term. I argue here that “Subminoan” should be used only to refer to a ceramic style, one taxonomically distinct from the styles of Late Minoan IIIC and (early) Protogeometric pottery but produced simultaneously with it. Although Subminoan pottery may assist in generally identifying the transition from Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age, it does not specifically define it. Subminoan pottery had little popularity in eastern Crete, where this style of pottery is more prevalent in grave offerings. In habitation areas it may be completely absent.

Disciplines
Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity | Archaeological Anthropology | Other History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology

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This deliberate experimentation with prestige symbolism from diverse sources in the mortuary sphere suggests the use of formal burial for purposes of status advertisement within a context of social instability. While not necessarily invalidating the invasion hypothesis, this approach reopens the issue for debate, questioning previous usage of the mortuary evidence to reconstruct the geographical origins of the deceased on the basis of static cultural diagnostics. In LM IIIA, by contrast, this competitive role for mortuary practices at Knossos gives way to increasing standardization and ideological conformity among the local elite, before an overall decline in archaeologically visible burial in LM IIIIB.

These interpretations expose a need to readress fundamental theoretical and methodological assumptions within Aegean archaeology, particularly regarding models of normative cultural identities, and of passivity and conservatism as characterizing burial customs.

**NEW CERAMIC EVIDENCE FROM MOCHLOS: REGIONALISM AND EASTERN CRETE DURING LATE MINOAN II AND EARLY MINOAN IIIA: R. Angus K. Smith, Bryn Mawr College**

Until recently there existed a significant Late Minoan II "gap" in the Late Bronze Age occupation of eastern Crete. While finds of recognizably LM II pottery, most notably at Palaikastro, have helped to close this gap, such finds are still relatively rare. Based on evidence from Palaikastro, MacGillivray recently proposed that this perceived gap results from two misleading factors: a chronological delay in the arrival of the LM IB destructions to eastern Crete, and regional ceramic differences at the start of the "reoccupation" period (BCH Suppl. 30 [1997]: 275–9).

New evidence from Mochlos supports MacGillivray’s suggestions. LM II pottery found in predestruction LM IB levels suggests that the LM IB period in Mochlos did indeed come to an end after the start of LM II at Knossos. In addition, the excavations at Mochlos have provided a much-needed stratigraphic sequence for the area’s early LM III pottery. Evidence from a limited number of central Crete imports as well as more common imports from Palaikastro have made possible the identification of a local ceramic style that shows great continuity from the local LM IB style.

The regional styles in evidence during the early “reoccupation” periods at both Palaikastro and Mochlos run counter to the widespread opinion that LM II and IIIA are periods of ceramic uniformity throughout Crete. Until recently the lack of recognition of this regionalism, along with the chronological delay, hampered the identification of early “reoccupation” period pottery in eastern Crete and led to the perceived LM II gap.

**REASSESSING SUBMINOAN: CONTEXT AND MEANING: Margaret S. Mook, Iowa State University**

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A reassessment of both the contexts identified as Subminoan in date and the definitions applied to the Subminoan ceramic style demonstrates that little consensus has been reached on the meaning and application of this term. I argue here that “Subminoan” should be used only to refer to a ceramic style, one taxonomically distinct from the styles of Late Minoan IIC and (early) Protogeometric pottery but produced simultaneously with it. Although Subminoan pottery may assist in generally identifying the transition from Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age, it does not specifically define it. Subminoan pottery had little popularity in eastern Crete, where this style of pottery is more prevalent in grave offerings. In habitation areas it may be completely absent.

**THE PALEONTHOBOTANY OF IRON AGE CRETE: Kimberly B. Flint-Hamilton, Stetson University**

Paleoethnobotany is a vital component of archaeological studies. We cannot fully understand a culture without also understanding the plants available to the population, the ways those plants were used, and which of those available plants were chosen for food and which for other uses. Paleoethnobotany cannot address all these questions completely, but it is only when we have the raw material that we can begin to form our answers.

The Iron Age is still a poorly understood archaeological period, but the systematic excavation and study of the two sites of the Cavousi region, Vronda and Kastro, have begun to fill many gaps in our knowledge of it. My preliminary analysis of the Cavousi paleoethnobotanical finds, presented here, details the finds themselves and their significance in our understanding of pre-Classical Crete.

**SESSION 5F: GREEK SCULPTURE**

**KORAI FROM SAMOS: PROPORTIONS, PROFILES, AND MEASUREMENTS: Eleanor Garalnick, Chicago Society**

A visually distinctive style of sculpture evolved on the island of Samos. In two instances, two or more well-preserved Samian korai were carved by the same sculptor. Diodorus Siculus (1.98.5–9) suggests close ties between the sculpture methods of Samos and those of Egypt. Do the works of Rhoikos’s contemporaries exhibit the relationship with Egyptian sculpture attributed to his work by this ancient writer?