

Congratulations!

In a special ceremony at the Embassy of Greece in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, June 3rd 2015, Dr. Malcolm Hewitt Wiener was awarded with the Gold Cross of the Order of Honor by the Hellenic Republic for his contribution to the study of Aegean Prehistory. On behalf of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Dr. Wiener was given this honor by the Ambassador of Greece to the United States, Mr. Christos Panagopoulos, who praised his vision and generosity. Dr. Wiener, expressing his gratitude for the recognition, spoke warmly about the importance of studying those first complex societies of the western world, and referred to the quantum leaps made possible by the use of innovative scientific applications.

Dr. Wiener's extensive publications on the Eastern Mediterranean world in the Bronze Age include the emergence, florescence, and collapse of Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece; their relationship to the civilizations of the Near East and Egypt; and the chronology of the ancient world via comparisons of radiocarbon, tree-ring, ice-core, and astronomical dates in relation to the ancient texts, inscriptions, and stratigraphy of the artifacts. His recent publications have examined the interaction of human agency including warfare with climate change and pandemics in the collapse of civilizations.

In 1982, he founded the Institute for Aegean Prehistory (INSTAP), one of the largest institutions in the world in this field of research, which continues to fund excavations

*Dr. M.H. Wiener
and Amb. C. Panagopoulos at the
Greek embassy in
Washington, D.C.*



in the Aegean and fellowships for scholars. Some of Dr. Wiener's awards include honorary doctorates from the University of Sheffield, the Eberhard-Karl University Tübingen, the University of Athens, the University of Cincinnati, University College London, Dickinson College, the University of Arizona, and the Ring of Honor of the German Academy in Mainz.

Dr. Wiener was born in Tsingtao, China. He is married to Carolyn Talbot Seely, and they have four children, all present at the ceremony. He is a graduate of Harvard College and the Harvard Law School. He served as an Ensign/Lt. in the United States Navy, as well as an advisor to the U.S. Department of State on the International Convention on Illicit Traffic in Antiquities. He was also the founder and CEO of related investment firms between 1971 and 1987.

EXCAVATION OF THE PRE- AND PROTOPALATIAL CEMETERY AT PETRAS, SITEIA 2015

Metaxia Tsipopoulou

The archaeological sites at Petras occupy two neighboring hills ca. two km to the east of the modern town of Siteia in northeastern Crete. The year 2015 marked the 30th anniversary of archaeological research in the area.

Results include the excavation of two locations: a Minoan palace (1900–1450 B.C.), which housed the best-preserved archive of the Cretan Hieroglyphic script, in a primary deposit, and also Linear A tablets; parts of settlements dated from the Final Neolithic period (3300–3000 B.C.) to Late Minoan IIIC

(1200–1100 B.C.); and a cemetery dated to the Middle Byzantine period (11th–13th centuries A.D.). Since 2005, an extensive unplundered cemetery dated to the Pre- and Protopalatial periods (Early Minoan IB–Middle Minoan IIB, 2500–1800 B.C.) has been under excavation.

The monumental complexes at Petras and the changes in the occupation of the various sites between the two hills over time testify to a remarkable historical continuity. The first habitation started on Hill II (or Kephala) where a settlement of Final



Figure 1. The Petras cemetery, from the southwest. Photo M. Tsipopoulou.



Figure 3. House Tombs 4 and 3, from the northeast. Photo Ch. Papanikolopoulos.



Figure 2. House Tomb 2, from the west. Photo Ch. Papanikolopoulos.



Figure 4. Pottery from the Petras cemetery. Photo Ch. Papanikolopoulos.

Neolithic IV and EM I (3300–2650 B.C.) was founded. During EM II, the settlement was moved to Hill I, while on Hill II the cemetery was established. The settlement on Hill I eventually became palatial in character, and it was occupied until 1200 B.C. Following its abandonment, the inhabitants returned to the place of their ancestors to establish a new settlement on the plateau of the ancient cemetery, avoiding—and respecting—the tombs, with a single, significant exception, namely a large megaroid building and its accompanying complex.

The Petras cemetery, one of the largest in Crete in these periods, is comprised of house tombs, each of which occupy up to ca. 80 or 100 m² and have up to 10 rooms (Fig. 1). To date, 14 house tombs and a burial rock shelter have been excavated. A particularly interesting feature of the Petras cemetery is the spatial organization that includes corridors between the tombs and two extensive open ceremonial areas, measuring ca. 150 and 300 m², respectively.

Each house tomb has a different plan (Figs. 2, 3). The burials are collective, and each tomb probably served an extended family. With very few exceptions, these entombments are secondary burials. Defleshing happened in another area (not yet identified) and, subsequently, some bones were selected (mostly skulls and long bones) and moved into the rooms of the house tombs. Not all rooms have doors, suggesting that in some cases the roofs were opened in order for the bones to be deposited. Many cases of semi-articulated body parts indicate that it was not unusual for bodies to be moved into the house tombs before the defleshing was completed. It is quite probable that the grave goods were offered at the time of the secondary depositions. In all tombs the grave goods are quite rich, and in many cases exceptional works of art have been collected, including items in different classes: decorated pottery (Fig. 4); stone vases of very fine quality; figurines with polychrome (Kamarea) decoration; many pieces of jewelry made of gold, silver, bronze, and semi-precious



Figure 5. Stone vases, gold jewelry, bronze tweezers and razor, and seals from the Petras cemetery. Photo Ch. Papanikolopoulos.

stones; bronze implements for personal adornment; as well as an impressive number of seals made of hippopotamus ivory and hard stones, such as carnelian and jasper, many of them with hieroglyphic inscriptions (Fig. 5). The tombs also contained three larnakes (Fig. 6), a burial pithos, and a large wine-press also used as a burial container (Fig. 7). The quantity of the skeletal remains is impressive. Its study is already producing very important results (Fig. 8).

The two ceremonial areas (Figs. 9, 10) contained a plethora of ceramic finds: cult vessels of various types, almost all with painted decoration and many with plastic decoration depicting plants, animals, and human forms, as well as vases for serving and consuming food and drink in a variety of types, including lamps, suggesting that there were nocturnal ceremonies as well. Offerings in these areas were ritually broken after their use, and often the fragments were scattered.

It is very interesting to note that in the LM IIIC period (12th century B.C.), a large rectangular megaroid building was



Figure 6. Larnax from House Tomb 2. Photo Y. Papadatos.



Figure 7. Clay wine-press used as a burial container, House Tomb 3. Photo M. Tsipopoulou.



Figure 8. Human remains in House Tomb 3. Photo M. Tsipopoulou.



Figure 9. Ceremonial Area 1, from the northeast. Photo Ch. Papanikolopoulos.

constructed partially on top of the earlier (MM IB, ca. 2000 B.C.) House Tomb 1. For its construction, many ashlar blocks were used, especially on the west side facing Hill I where the settlement and the palace were situated. These blocks were transported from the palace or some important houses of the settlement and reused (Fig. 11). The Rectangular Megaroid Building was connected to a complex comprised of a square platform and peribolos wall to the east and a retaining wall to the west and north. The use of this complex was probably ritual even though no concrete evidence about its use came to light. Near the entrance of the rectangular building a large pit was excavated (partially on top of House Tomb 5), and it was found to be full of LM IIIC pottery, especially serving and drinking vessels. Another similar pit, with the same type of pottery and a very large amount of shells, was excavated to the northeast of the Rectangular Megaroid Building. In the area between the building and the platform, two open-air cooking installations were excavated: a hearth and an oven.



Figure 10. Ceremonial Area 2, from the south. Photo Ch. Papanikolopoulos.

The 10th excavation campaign at the Pre- and Protopalatial cemetery of Petras was held from July 13th to August 12th, 2015, under the direction of the author and funded by the Institute for Aegean Prehistory. The season produced important new finds. Two new Protopalatial house tombs were identified at the northern part of the cemetery and partially excavated (MM II, 1900–1800 B.C.), each comprising several rooms (Fig. 12). An EM II (2400–2200



Figure 11. Late Minoan III Rectangular Megaroid Building and MM I House Tomb 1, from the west. Photo Ch. Papanikolopoulos.



Figure 12. House Tombs 7 and 8 and part of Ceremonial Area 2, from the east. Photo Ch. Papanikolopoulos.

B.C.) house tomb was also uncovered and found to be preserved in a fragmentary state. This is probably the earliest tomb, and it was excavated in the southern part of the cemetery. All of the newly excavated tombs contained secondary burials. Grave goods included gold bands and jewelry and seals made of hippopotamus ivory, carnelian, rock crystal, and hard limestone. Several of the seals are carved with hieroglyphic inscriptions. We also discovered a unique bronze or silver signet ring.

Furthermore, the excavation of EM III/MM IA (2200–2050 B.C.) House Tomb 3, which started in 2013, was almost completed. The process was very slow because of the large quantity of skeletal material. Grave goods included a gold band, some pottery, and a small duck made of bone, probably a pin head imported from somewhere in the eastern Mediterranean region.

This year the excavation of another significant area within the cemetery was completed, namely the Protopalatial Ceremonial Area 2 at the northern part of the cemetery (ca. 300 m²). It produced more important finds such as vases with plastic decoration and parts of figurines. An unexpected new discovery in the



Figure 13. Stratigraphical trench in the Rectangular Megaroid Building, from the northwest. Photo M. Tsipopoulou.

area was EM IIB pottery (including Vasiliki Ware) in cavities of the bedrock, indicating a very early occupation of this space that was probably nonfunerary in character.

Also, stratigraphical trenches were dug into the LM IIIC Rectangular Megaroid Building in an attempt to define its relationship with the MM IB House Tomb 1. Part of the original LM IIIC paved floor was cleaned, and very well-constructed column bases came to light (Fig. 13). To the same Late Bronze Age period belonged parts of two large buildings at the southernmost and northernmost areas of the cemetery, the latter being a storage area containing four or five pithoi (Fig. 14). For the construction of these buildings, ashlar blocks were transported from the palace, or other important buildings of the settlement on Hill I were used.

The Petras cemetery is studied by an international interdisciplinary group of scholars (Fig. 15), including: Philip Betancourt and Miriam Clinton (architecture); Heidi Dierckx (stone tools); Philip Betancourt, Susan Ferrence, and James Muhly (metal objects and jewelry); Alessandra Giumlia-Mair (XRF analyses of metals); Vassilia Issakidou (animal bones); Olga Krzyszkowska (seals); Evi Margaritis (palaeobotany); Eleni Nodarou (petrographic analyses of pottery); Maria Relaki and Christina Tsoraki (stone vases); David Rupp (LM IIIC Rectangular Megaroid Building and accompanying complex); Anna Simandiraki-Grimshaw (figurines and plastic vases); Tatiana Theodoropoulou (shells); Sevi Triantaphyllou, Ria Kiorpe, and Effie Nikita (skeletal human remains); and Metaxia Tsipopoulou (project director and pottery specialist).

In February 2015, the Second International Petras Symposium was organized in Athens, entitled “The Petras Cemetery in Context,” with the participation of all the above researchers and also of other scholars who excavate and/or study material of the same periods in East Crete, especially with a focus on funerary culture (Fig. 16). These included Tom Brogan (metal disks, possible balance pans from the Petras cemetery), Gerald Cadogan (Myrtos-Pyrgos),



Figure 14. LM IIIC storage area with pithoi, from the northwest. Photo M. Tsipopoulou.



Figure 15. The 2015 Petras excavation team. Photo G. Kostopoulou.



Figure 16. The participants at the Second International Petras Symposium, Athens, February 2015. Photo D. Rupp.

Carl Knappett (East Cretan networks in the Middle Bronze Age), Yiannis Papadatos (mortuary practices, cultural diversity, and social organization in Prepalatial East Crete), Lefteris Platon and Maria Tsiboukaki (Zakros), Ilse Schoep (Sissi), and Giorgos Vavouranakis (ritual areas in cemeteries in East Crete).

For the Petras bibliography in general see: www.petras-excavations.gr/en/home/bibliography.