

### ***The Early Urbanization in Minoan Crete***

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The aim of this master thesis was to examine the early urbanization in Minoan Crete, namely the appearance of the first urban centres in the island. First of all, Crete was a field of human activity since the late Palaeolithic Period. The island's geomorphology favoured the creation of many different domains, namely of many geographical areas, in which the power of a single state was dominated, within which, however, there were also integrated and others, equally important towns. Due to the complex character of the island the examination of the early urbanization was considered to be feasible only through the study of the most important Protopalatial and Neopalatial towns of the island, by geographical unit, starting with those of Eastern Crete and continuing with those of Western Crete.

Before the examination of the most important Minoan towns however, it was considered essential to define the terms of territory and town, as well as its basic features, with reference to the first attempts to determine the term of a 'town', as well as to the first attempts to determine an urban hierarchy. The presentation of the so far parameters for the determination of a Protopalatial and a Neopalatial site as a town, showed the lack of a spherical overview of the subject, partly due to the lack of excavation data, with the majority of scholars establishing an urban hierarchy by size alone, ignoring the other defining features of Minoan towns.

For this reason, it was necessary to examine whether the most important Protopalatial (1925/00 – 1750/00 BC) and Neopalatial (1750/00 – 1470/60 BC) towns, especially Zakros, Palaikastro, Petras, Gournia, Malia, Knossos, Faistos and Khania, qualify and some others basic features, necessary for their identification as urban centres. The criteria taken into consideration were the extent of each town, the presence of a palace, the urban planning, the organisation of the houses and their relationship with the palace, and the evidence for their participation in commercial networks inside and outside Crete, as well as the presence of villas, peak sanctuaries or others depended settlements in the wider territory of each town and their relationship with it.

The survey results demonstrated that the beginning of early urbanization in Crete date back to the Old Palace Period (1925/00 – 1750/00 BC), when the first palaces appear. In Eastern Crete there had been identified three urban centres: Zakros, Palaikastro and Petras, on the north coast two: Gournia and Malia, in north-central and south-central Crete from one urban centre, Knossos and Faistos respectively, while in Western Crete according to the excavations that have been conducted during the last decades, it have been suggested the existence of a possible urban centre in the modern city of Khania, in the place of which there was possibly the ancient town of Kydonia. The study of the above mentioned towns showed that they had a lot of similarities and differences. In any case however, they seem to meet all the basic features that allowed their identification as urban centres. All of them, except Palaikastro and Khania, had a palace, which was the administrative-economic-religious-ritual and artisan centre of the town. Both in Palaikastro and Khania, the presence of other evidences, also suggested the presence of such a building. Furthermore, all towns except Petras and Khania for which there is insufficient evidence, seem to have an organized urban planning with a road and drainage system and the houses organized in blocks around it. Finally, all towns except Khania, where excavations are still recent, they had a peak



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sanctuary in the surrounding territory, the settlement pattern however, does not seem to be identical, with some of them including in their wider territory villas and others only depended settlements, villages and farmhouses.