

## FOREWORD BY THE SERIES EDITORS

The prehistoric site of Akrotiri is of immense significance for understanding the Bronze Age Aegean. In an ironic circumstance, the ferocious volcanic explosion that annihilated all life in the flourishing prehistoric town three and a half millennia ago was the very factor that preserved its material remains for us by cushioning them in a thick layer of volcanic ash. As a result of this, Akrotiri is the best preserved Bronze Age town in the Aegean and a key site for understanding life in prehistoric times.

From the moment that we encountered the work of Artemis Karnava on the seals and impressed objects from Akrotiri we recognized that this study was appropriate for publication in the *CMS* Series. The Akrotiri material comes from a singular site and was well protected from external interference from the time of its final deposition to the time of its discovery. This circumstance offers an unparalleled opportunity for better understanding the significance of seals and sealings for the inhabitants of the Bronze Age Aegean. All seals and objects with seal impressions in Akrotiri come with a 'bonus' that is critical for comprehending the role that seals played in Bronze Age societies: they originate from well-documented 'residential' contexts which offer a vibrant image of life during the town's last hours. Karnava takes us through the discovery process of each piece and discusses in detail its find circumstances in a way that offers rare glimpses into the role that seals played in Akrotiri's everyday life. The distinctive character of the material and its recovery in closed contexts have allowed the author to make clear distinctions between imported and locally-made material. On this basis, she has been able to provide evidence both for the significance of seals to the residents of Bronze Age Akrotiri and for their contacts with other Aegean sites, most notably, with Neopalatial Crete. Of critical importance for studies of Aegean administration is the fact that the majority of impressed nodules comes from a single context and belong to one nodule-type, the flat-based variety. This unique circumstance has provided the author with critical insights into the processes by which this material was accumulated in Akrotiri. Most importantly, it has enabled her to trace in the archaeological record seal users of different ranking who were active in a hierarchical administrative system attested in both Crete and Akrotiri during the Minoan Neopalatial period.

This volume is the first of a new *CMS* Series that is being produced at the Institute of Classical Archaeology in Heidelberg following the relocation of the *CMS* Archive from Marburg in 2011. The new volumes are heavily reliant on the traditions established by the *CMS* in Marburg in respect of high quality documentation and presentation of the material. They are, however, also different in several ways which are meant to signify a new beginning and also make the series better adapted to the needs of our time. The most important change is related to the form of the series which will, from now on, be available as an Open Access digital publication. The decision to transform the series into a digital publication is related to financial and practical considerations. At a time when funding for the humanities is drastically diminishing, it is crucial to explore viable solutions that will guarantee the sustainability of this project, whose critical significance for the study of the Aegean Bronze Age is undeniable. Moreover, at a time when knowledge is being disseminated at an incredibly high speed through the web, one of our main concerns has been to find a way for the series to offer 'knowledge for all'. It is this same concern that

has also led us to adopt English as the series language. By offering us the possibility of integrating the series in Propylaeum Publishing, the University Library of Heidelberg guarantees both the continuation of the *CMS* Series in the future and the dissemination of knowledge produced by it.

However, in addition to the digital version, the volume will also be available in a printed edition, corresponding to the standards of previous *CMS* volumes. This will be an essential addition to the collections of specialized institutional libraries and will be welcomed by readers who do not wish to rely solely on a digital publication.

The publication of this volume would not have been possible without the support of a number of institutions and individuals, whom we cordially thank here. The Austrian *Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung* has provided the financial support that enabled us to prepare the volume for publication. The Museum of Prehistoric Thera and the Akrotiri Excavations provided the permit for M. Anastasiadou to handle and photograph material held at their premises. A. Devetzi has been particularly helpful during the visits to the premises of the Akrotiri Excavations. J. Bennet and C. Macdonald provided reviews at an initial stage in the preparation of this volume. S. Lieberknecht, V. Ronchi and A. Theodoropoulou are responsible for the drawings published in this book. A number of research assistants have been charged with various tasks relating to the volume: D. Wolf, D. Antypas, S. Tuppatt and A. Scognamiglio. The contribution of D. Wolf has been particularly valuable as she has also worked on the manuscript consistently during the work-laden summer of 2018 when the final preparations for the publication were being made. Finally, N. Valasiadis set up the book for publication.

We sincerely hope that the new *CMS* volumes will live up to the high standards set by the old series but will also expand it in ways that provide good responses to the challenges of our times. Time will only tell if our intentions meet with success.

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