

The Use of Heirlooms on Minoan Crete  
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My paper will address the issue of heirlooms found in burials on Bronze Age Crete. I will first examine the material found in undisturbed, funerary contexts such as the Chrysolakkos Tomb at Mallia from the Protopalatial period, in order to identify heirlooms. These will be recognized by their earlier date than the rest of the material found with the buried person or persons. I intend to show the importance of heirlooms as a means of identifying with, what Lillios describes as “an ancestral past”, which gives validity to the power or status of the person in question (Lillios 1999). For men, I will study weapons and symbols of authority as evidence of a social hierarchy. In turn, special attention will be paid to ornamentation for women as a source of conspicuous consumption, religious function, and a symbol of social status. Such items include gold diadems, seal rings, and other personal adornment.

In this project, I adopt the theoretical models established by Lillios (1999) and Mills (2004) due to their research regarding heirlooms and inalienable possessions respectively. Minoan items will be analyzed by both their material worth, with attention paid to the craftsmanship and origin of the raw materials and the item's function in a political, social or religious sphere. The object's value as an heirloom is most importantly determined by its availability, whether to the public or to an elite few. This availability must have been a correlate of several factors including the source and the cost of the material, whether it was crafted at home or abroad, and its age and function. By identifying the item's original purpose, then tracing its use as an “heirloom”, and lastly, focusing on its final deposition I hope to come to an understanding of the importance of personal and familial possessions and their role in a Minoan, status based society.