

INTRODUCTION

This volume is the product of hard work by many individuals over a period of more than two years. The idea to hold a conference on Aegean seals, sealings and administrative systems took form in September, 1987 at the Prison of Socrates restaurant near the Athenian acropolis. There Judith Weingarten, Erik Hallager and I, prompted by retsina and our normally friendly feelings toward one another, imagined an ideal gathering of experts in all the specialties pertaining to physical evidence for the ways the Minoans and Mycenaeans had organized and controlled their economic lives. We tossed questions and speculations at each other and had such fun in the process that we wanted to share it with others. I scribbled many of these spontaneous questions down on napkins, together with a list of Aegeanists and a few experts from the Near East and Egypt whom we planned to bring together rather informally to discuss all the problems confronting students of Aegean sealing and written administration. This information was transferred to the Macintosh computer back in Austin, and an announcement of our tentative plans was sent out to invited participants, almost all of whom eventually attended.

So much for the easy beginnings. We were all very fortunate to receive the support and cooperation which made the actual conference and this publication possible. First and foremost, I must thank my assistants in the Program in Aegean Scripts and Prehistory (PASP) who have worked on all stages of organizing and holding the conference and then on publishing the results : Jean Alvares, Kerri Cox, Philip Freeman, Leah Himmelhoch, Donna Jacobsen, and Bruce LaForse. Other members of the Department of Classics of the University of Texas at Austin also supported this project in various ways : Suzanne Bonefas, Chris Francese, Karl Galinsky, Nahid Khaki, and Cecilia Martinez. Debby Fuller of the Office of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Ken Fischer of the Office of Sponsored Projects, and Gale Free of Accounting helped considerably with the financial administration of the conference.

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It has been a pleasure to work with Robert Laffineur, editor of *Aegaeum*. He has done everything possible to produce a high-quality publication with the help of his secretary in the Service d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie de la Grèce antique de l'Université de Liège, Inès De Sousa. The authors, respondents and commentators were all extremely conscientious about deadlines for their contributions and proofs. Any shortcomings in the final results are definitely my own.

Thomas G. PALAIMA

Austin, Texas USA, November 7, 1989

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