

— Studies in Aegean —
Art and Culture —

A New York Aegean Bronze
Age Colloquium
in Memory of Ellen N. Davis



Ellen N. Davis at Hagia Eirene, Kea, August, 2006. Photo by Andreas G. Vlachopoulos.

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edited by

Robert B. Koehl



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Preface and Acknowledgments

With the passing of Ellen N. Davis on July 15, 2013, just a few weeks shy of her 75th birthday, the community of Aegean scholars lost one of its most valued and beloved members. As the news quickly spread, I immediately began to receive suggestions about how best to honor her memory along with requests from her many friends and colleagues to be included in whatever was decided. Since Ellen was a member of the New York Aegean Bronze Age Colloquium from its founding in the fall of 1978, along with Günter Kopcke, Malcolm Wiener, and the late Claireve Grandjouan, it seemed most appropriate to dedicate a special session to her memory. And so, on September 13, 2014, a group of us gathered at Hunter College's Roosevelt House and presented papers, which are published in this volume with the addition of one by her dear friend Christos Doumas.

Ellen Nancy Davis was born July 20, 1937, in Baltimore, Maryland. After her graduation from high school and following a short-lived marriage to her English teacher, Ellen enrolled at St. John's College in Annapolis where she honed her intellectual skills through their renowned and rigorous "great books" program. Thriving in this environment, and sure of her love of ancient art, she entered graduate school at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts, where she was quickly taken under the wing of her adored mentor, Peter von Blanckenhagen. Like many of us, visits to Greece sparked her love for the Bronze Age, which led to her 1973 doctoral dissertation on the Vapheio Cups and Aegean gold and silver ware published in the *Garland Outstanding Dissertations in the Fine Arts* series

(Davis 1977). After receiving her Ph.D., Ellen became a full-time faculty member of Queens College, City University of New York, where she taught in the Art History Department until her retirement in 2000.

Even with her earliest studies, Ellen's approach was trailblazing, merging art history with technical analyses to differentiate Minoan from Mycenaean manufacture (Davis 1974, 1976, 1977). Indeed, it was always a great learning experience to stroll through the Athens National and Herakleion Archaeological Museums with Ellen, and see the great works of Aegean craftsmanship through her keenly observant eyes. I vividly recall her pointing to the frieze of plaster relief "snail shell" spirals that ran along the top of the wall in the Zakros gallery in Herakleion, and extolling how the love of three-dimensionality was uniquely Minoan; or to the small silver jug from Zakros with gold embellishments as an example of the Minoan penchant for color contrasts in metal ware, and indeed, the Minoan love of color, in general, especially as expressed in their frescoes.

Ellen loved nature in all its forms, and art, especially painting (Davis 1990a). Thus, when the Onassis Cultural Center brought the exhibition of Minoan art, "From the Land of the Labyrinth," to New York in 2008, it was particularly thrilling to stand with Ellen before the Partridge fresco, as she pointed out the exquisite brush strokes, shading, and highlighting on the feathers (as in Davis 2007). Not only a famous ailurophile, but a passionate bird watcher, Ellen had a particular affection for that painting, as she did for the Spring fresco from Akrotiri, with its playful (or aggressive) swallows. Indeed, using the classic Morellian method of attribution analysis, she convincingly identified the individual hands and reconstructed the structure of the workshop that painted the landscapes in the Spring fresco in an article that merits greater recognition than it has hitherto received (Davis 2000b).

Alongside Ellen's contributions to the study of Aegean precious metal vessels and wall painting, stand her break-through articles on Aegean iconography, notably her studies on the miniature ship fresco from Akrotiri (Davis 1983b), on representations of aging in the Akrotiri frescoes (Davis 1986; revised in Davis 2000b, 868–871), on the miniature frescoes from Knossos and the function of the central courts (Davis 1987), and on ruler imagery, or the lack thereof (Davis 1995). Ellen even weighed in on the still-debated date of the Thera eruption by introducing the "Ahmose" stèle into the discussion, thereby supporting the traditional synchronism of Late Minoan IA with the beginning of the 18th Dynasty (Davis 1990b). Other ideas went unpublished, such as her belief that the marine scenes painted inside Late Minoan III sarcophagi were residual references to earlier practices of burial at sea.

All of the papers in this volume in some way build on, or were influenced or inspired by Ellen's work in several of the areas touched on above. In Chapter 1, Judith Weingarten revisits Ellen's study of the silver kantharos from Gournia and demonstrates that a re-dating of Minoan contexts, from Middle Minoan IB to Middle Minoan IIA, resolves issues that had previously vexed Davis, thereby supporting her belief that the Cretan lobed rimmed kantharos derived from Anatolian prototypes. In Chapter 2, Malcolm Wiener argues a Late Helladic IIIA:1 date for the burial context of the Vapheio Cups, and he looks into the history and cultural significance of the pairing of precious metal Aegean drinking vessels. In Chapter 3, Günter Kopcke defends Ellen's belief that Mycenaean gold came from Transylvanian sources, but also emphasizes the importance of Egypt in the acquisition of this metal, specifically for Crete. In Chapter 4, Philip P. Betancourt, Susan Ferrence, and James D. Muhly look to the north of Crete to explain the presence of certain types of metal objects found in Early and Middle Minoan burials from the Petras cemetery. In Chapter 5, Christos Doumas spans Cycladic prehistory in his investigation of the human experience in its many manifestations, observing how the changing roles of women and men are reflected in Cycladic art and iconography. Ellen's interest in the pigments used in Aegean wall painting is reflected in Chapter 6, by Andreas G. Vlachopoulos, who examines the purple rosettes from Xeste 3, Thera, and the illusions created by the juxtaposition of colors. In Chapter 7, Elizabeth B. Shank analyzes the various ways that water was depicted in Aegean miniature frescoes, including a remarkable three-dimensional rendering from Epano Zakros. In Chapter 8, Bernice Jones deconstructs Evans's restorations of the two famous Snake Goddess statuettes based on her studies of Minoan women's garments, and reconstructs a third statuette from her examination of some hitherto largely overlooked fragments. In Chapter 9, Robert B. Koehl finds a homoerotic component in his interpretation of the male initiation rites he thinks are referenced in the imagery on a gold ring from Pylos and two sealings from Zakros. Finally, in Chapter 10, Thomas G. Palaima explores the etymology and ideology of Mycenaean Greek words associated with kingship—*wanaks*, *megaron*, *skēptron*, and *thronos*—and suggests that they derive from a non Indo-European, pre-Greek speaking population.

When discussions for a memorial colloquium began to coalesce, with the expectation that the papers would be published, Larissa Bonfante, Professor Emerita of Classics at New York University, volunteered to aid me in the task of editing. Though not an Aegean scholar, but a world-renowned Etruscologist (and close friend of Ellen), it seemed to me that someone from outside the "Bronze Age Mafia" would ensure they could be appreciated by

a wider audience of archaeological scholars. Working with Larissa on this volume has made my task easier, and I am grateful for all of her time and efforts. I am also grateful to the two anonymous reviewers of the papers for this volume, for their valuable insights, additions, and corrections, and to the INSTAP Academic Press for undertaking its publication.

Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Hunter College President Jennifer J. Raab for allowing us to hold the colloquium in the beautifully restored Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute at Hunter College and for sponsoring a fine luncheon for all the speakers and attendees. I am also grateful to the Institute of Aegean Prehistory (INSTAP) and the M.H. Wiener Foundation for their financial support, without which the colloquium honoring Ellen would surely not have been the memorable occasion that it was.

Robert B. Koehl
New York City, NY
November 2015

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List of Abbreviations

AM	Ashmolean Museum	HT	Hagia Triada
ANM	Athens National Archaeological Museum inventory number	IE	Indo-European
cm	centimeter(s)	inv. no.	inventory number
<i>CMS</i>	<i>Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel</i>	INSTAP-	Institute for Aegean
d.	diameter	SCEC	Prehistory Study Center for East Crete
dim.	dimensions	LC	Late Cycladic
EC	Early Cycladic	LH	Late Helladic
EH	Early Helladic	LM	Late Minoan
EM	Early Minoan	m	meters
FN	Final Neolithic	MM	Middle Minoan
h.	height	Myc.	Mycenaean
HM	Herakleion Archaeological Museum inventory number	th.	thickness
HMs	Heraklion Archaeological Museum sealing	XRF	X-ray fluorescence
		w.	width

