

## The Matrilineal Nature of Bronze Age Cretan Society

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Over 15 years ago there were tantalizing hints by field archaeologists that Bronze Age Crete might have been a matrilineal society. A matrilineal society is one in which land and status is inherited from the founding ancestress through the female line. The archaeologists based this suggestion on the study of house structure and its features. None of these archaeological works described what a matrilineal society is or how it functions. I decided to research published ethnographies and analytical works on matrilineal societies to determine if there were common practices that might explain some patterns of archaeological finds in Bronze Age Crete. These common practices I call the “Matrilineal Framework”.

In thinking about the website, I realized that the “Matrilineal Framework” which is presented in the manuscript may be generally applicable to early farming/horticultural societies anywhere. The earliest farming cultures were essentially based on stick and hoe gardening. Women primarily do this work in documented ethnographies. Only in a few contemporary, matrilineal societies, where it is considered dangerous for women to work in fields due to negative relations with neighboring tribes, men do the gardening. In other contemporary, complex, economically productive horticultural societies, a lower caste or slaves perform this work. In all these societies the matrilineal kinship structure with its common practices is maintained. What is fairly clear is that a matrilineal kinship system and social organization rarely is found in pastoral, plow or irrigation agricultural societies, or any society where personal wealth is accumulated by individuals, usually men. These societies tend to be patrilineal where inheritance and status passes through the male line.

My work began in earnest in 2019 through the end of 2023. The website edition was created in 2024 thanks to Isaac Morgan. This is an unpublished manuscript. It has not been edited. Please excuse mistypings. View, download or print the documents. Share them. Please use these ideas. Debate them, apply them to old and new data, test them on the archaeology of early farming /horticultural societies. Please cite this website. I did my PhD work at Harvard University and most of my prehistoric anthropology research in the Balkans.