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AN UNPUBLISHED MARKED WEIGHT FROM THE ROYAL VILLA AT KNOSSOS*

There are four boxes of sherd material from the Royal Villa in the Stratigraphical Museum at Knossos.¹ The boxes were recently examined by M. R. Popham who dated all but a very small amount of the pottery to two distinct phases: LM III A, contemporary with the final destruction of the Palace, and LM III B.² From one of these two periods, thus, must also date the bluish-black serpentine disk-shaped weight found in box 1504 (labelled 'Royal Villa Pillar Room'), the subject of this brief notice.

The disk (Pl. 1), with a diameter of 6.8 cm., is marked on one face with three deep drilled circles and about the circumference with a grooved line on the top and another on the bottom. Slightly chipped on both faces, it now weighs 204 grams (within an estimated 5–10 grams of its original weight). Assuming that the three drilled circles indicate a 3-unit weight, the resultant unit is +68 grams. This is rather heavier than the mean calculated Aegean unit of 61.7 grams,³ but it is possible that a somewhat heavier unit was in use at Knossos in the Mycenaean period.

* I am grateful to the Managing Committee of the BSA for permission to publish this object. In addition to standard abbreviations, we use:
PETRUSO = K. M. Petruso, *Ayia Irini: The Balance Weights* (Keos VIII), Mainz, 1992.

¹ From the 'S.E. Rooms' (box no. 1501), 'Megaron' (1502–03) and 'Pillar Crypt' (1504).

² The Destruction of the Palace at Knossos, Göteborg, 1970, 16–21; also 'scrappy and slight' LM I and II, and a 'small quantity of LM III C, Geometric and later sherds' almost certainly from the eroded slope above the villa (p. 20).

³ See PETRUSO for a catalogue of weights from Crete and the Cycladic islands, summarized on *ibid.* 60–61 (with a *Normzone* variation of 5.4%). See also K. M. Petruso, "Marks on some Minoan Balance Weights and their Interpretation", *Kadmos* 17, 1978, 26–42, where the purely Minoan mean was calculated as 61.3 grams.

Sir Arthur Evans published two 'overweight' disks from Knossos, a white limestone disk marked with four small circles weighing 273.47 grams (PM IV 654, Fig. 638c = PETRUSO no. 70), and a large black 'steatite' disk marked with two large and four smaller circles, which Evans interpreted as 24 units, weighing 1567.77 grams (PM IV 653–654, Fig. 638a = PETRUSO no. 72);⁴ the resultant units are 68.4 grams and 65.3 grams respectively. Though further evidence is equally slight, there is some support for a 'heavy unit' at Mycenae where two lead disks among a group found on the Acropolis weigh 66.0 and 67.2 grams.⁵

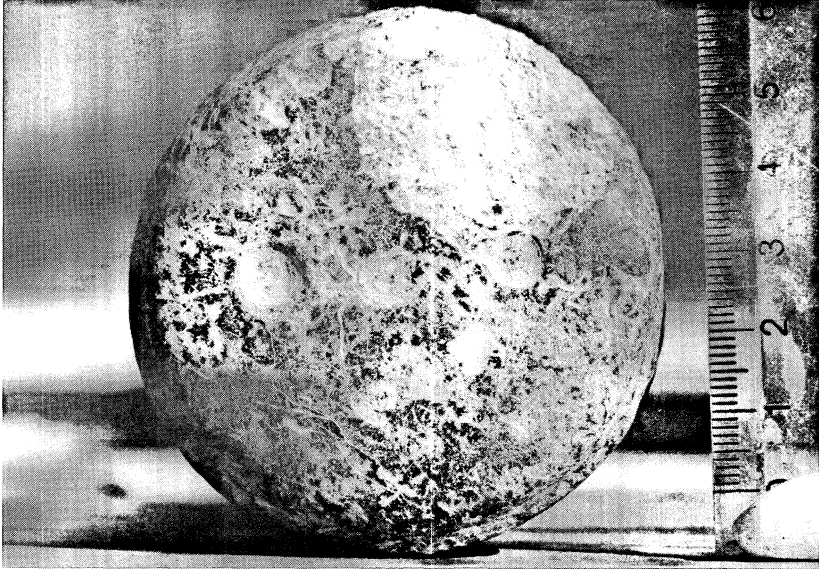
This is the first three-unit marked weight known from Crete or the Cyclades,⁶ and it allows us to expand the whole-number series of known denominations to 1, 2, 3, 4, (6), 8, 12, 24.⁷ By inserting a unit of three into the attested series, the duodecimal character of the Minoan system of weights is reinforced.

⁴ Findspots are not recorded; Evans gave their contexts as 'Late Palatial' (PM IV 643–644). In early publications 'steatite' was a common misnomer for what is presumably black serpentine.

⁵ PETRUSO 58–59, nos. 203, 204; the mean resultant unit at Mycenae was 62.5 grams, with a large *Normzone* of 7.3%.

⁶ Cf. PETRUSO 60–61. E. Grumach published a unique limestone amygdaloid ("Ein Gewichtsstein der Sammlung Metaxas, Herakleion", *Kadmos* 1, 1962, 162–165 = PETRUSO no. 178) incised with three parallel strokes and a representation of an amphora; the piece weighs 8.4 grams but whether the strokes mark 3 or 1/3 or 3/4 in a 'foreign' metrological system is unknown.

⁷ The proposed 6-unit piece relies on a steatite disk from Knossos weighing 327.02 grams (PM IV 654, Fig. 636b = PETRUSO no. 71): Evans read the unclear inscribed circles and crescents as 'five' (units of 65.4 grams); PETRUSO, 38–39, reads 'six' (units of 54.5 grams). Prof. Petruso justly remarks (per litt. 1/12/94) that "5 is quite foreign" to a duodecimal set while "decimal factors are conspicuous by their absence". It is curious, in any case, that someone made and used an ambiguously marked weight.



Pl. 1. Marked Weight from Knossos

