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SKRIFTER UTGIVNA AV SVENSKA INSTITUTET I ATHEN, 8°, IX  
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Nanno Marinatos

# Minoan Sacrificial Ritual

Cult Practice and Symbolism



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Cult Practice and Symbolism

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#### Abstract

Marinatos, Nanno, *Minoan sacrificial ritual: cult practice and symbolism*. Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen, 8°, 9. Stockholm 1986, 79 pp. ISBN 91-85086-95-9.

The cult practice and symbolism of Minoan sacrificial ritual are examined in this monograph.

The archaeological evidence is analyzed and suggestions are made concerning the type and place of sacrifice, location of cult meals and species of sacrificial animals.

The iconographical evidence supplies additional information about the priesthood, manner of sacrifice and occasions during which animals were slaughtered.

Several scenes from glyptic art are discussed where sacrificial ritual is represented as a pictorial metaphor. Certain symbols are isolated and their connection with sacrificial practice is established. Through a projective mechanism, the Minoans expressed not only the importance of animal sacrifice but their perception of it as an extension of the laws of nature.

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The design on the cover is after a seal from Tragana (CMS I, 264) depicting a bull and a sacrificial table. There is a deliberate ambiguity in the scheme which permits a different reading of the design depending on how you hold the seal. Either the bull is seen alive and walking, the sacrificial table appearing as a "sign" above his back, or he appears sacrificed on the table but still alive. This visual pun is a good example of Minoan symbolic thought. (Drawing and suggestion for lay-out by L. Papageorgiou.)

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# Contents

Introduction .....	9
Part I. The archaeological and iconographical evidence .....	11
I. Types of animals .....	11
II. Place of sacrifice; altars .....	14
III. Manner of sacrifice .....	22
IV. Libations .....	25
1. Blood libations; the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus .....	25
2. Libations and horns of consecration .....	27
V. Animal rhyta and libation tables .....	30
VI. Processions .....	32
VII. Burying and burning the sacrificial animal .....	35
VIII. Cult meals .....	37
IX. The skull and horns of the sacrificed animal .....	40
X. Occasion .....	41
XI. Symbolic representations .....	42
1. Hunters and priests .....	42
2. Animal predators as hunters .....	43
XII. Conclusions .....	49
Part II. Symbols on seals denoting sacrifice of animals .....	51
I. Introduction .....	51
II. The eight-shield .....	52
The role of the eight-shield in a festival of renewal .....	57
III. The sacred garment .....	58
IV. The impaled triangle .....	61
V. Types of scenes in which the three signs occur .....	64
VI. Determinatives and sacrificial ritual .....	71
List of abbreviations .....	73
List of illustrations .....	74
General index .....	76
<i>CMS</i> index .....	79



## Introduction

The publication of *Homo Necans* (1972) by W. Burkert was a landmark in the history of the study of Greek religion. Not only did he introduce a new approach for the analysis of myth and ritual but he also showed that sacrifice is intimately bound with the biological heritage of man. Although *Homo Necans* is about Greek ritual and myth, the implication of the thesis is that sacrificial practice lurks behind the rituals and symbols of most religions.

It would be surprising if sacrificial ritual were absent from Minoan cult. Yet, surprisingly little attention has been paid to this subject by the scholars who have written on Minoan religion. Nilsson in his *Minoan—Mycenaean Religion* does not, of course, deny that sacrifice was practiced but he devotes only a few pages to this in his voluminous work, mainly in connection with the double axe (pp. 230—235). E. Vermeule, in her insightful *Götterkult* (1974), suggests cautiously that “Blut- und Fleißopfer nicht unbedingt zum minoischen Kult gehören” (p. 12) and connects representations of animal sacrifice with the presence of the Mycenaeans in Crete. She correctly remarks, however, that ash and bone altars are a phenomenon introduced to Crete after the Dark Ages. This, of course, need not imply that animal sacrifice was not practiced at an earlier date in Crete, only that *this particular form of it* was later.

Some scholars, on the other hand, have seen that there was sacrificial practice in Crete and have built a hypothesis of continuity with the later Greek period on this evidence. B. Dietrich in his *Origins of Greek Religion* (1974, pp. 81, 83 etc.) assumes that burnt sacrifices were a feature of Minoan Crete which continued into Greek times. Similarly, B. Rutkowski, in his *Cult places in the Aegean* (p. 136), speaks of an altar-fire. Thus, although the above scholars have accepted sacrifice in Crete, the cult practice has been dealt with as though it were the

same as that of later Greece. However there are important differences.

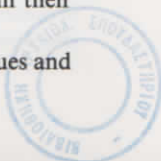
The most thorough treatment of the subject is by J. Sakellarakis in his dissertation on *Das Kuppelgrab A von Archanes und das kretisch-mykenische Tieropferritual* (1970). As the title shows, the author examined the evidence mainly from the perspective of his own finds at Archanes. Nevertheless, he collected, sorted and interpreted a large amount of evidence pertinent to bull and horse sacrifice in Crete and the mainland. His is the first work to lay an emphasis on sacrificial ritual.

The undertaking of a further study of the subject seemed worth while as, firstly, new material has come to light which must be taken into account. Secondly, I have tried to introduce questions which are of interest to the historian of religion. What were the occasions for sacrifice beyond funerary ritual? How was it performed? What kinds of priests were involved? etc. In an attempt to answer these questions, I have dealt not only with architecture and finds but also considered the extensive iconographical evidence from seals and sealings.

Finally, I have dealt with the question of “Minoan metaphors” of sacrifice and symbolism. This aspect was so extensive, that it seemed expedient to divide the work into two parts. In Part I, I deal with the cult practice and, at the end, with the symbolic representations of it. In Part II, I deal exclusively with symbols which I think are related to sacrifice.

Although some of the conclusions, especially in Part II, are somewhat speculative, it is important to at least raise the problem. Because if the Minoans represented sacrifice in such a multiplicity of forms, then this ritual was indeed one of the most important ones in their religion.

This work owes very much to colleagues and



friends who have read through various versions of the manuscript, have commented on it and corrected errors. I wish to thank Prof. W. Burkert and Dr. Ch. Sourvinou-Inwood in particular for encouraging me to pursue this line of inquiry; Dr. I. Pini for his meticulous reading of Part II and his invaluable comments on the

seals, Dr. I. Kilian for her support and comments on Part II. Finally, I wish to thank Drs. W.-D. Niemeier and Ch. Boulotis for discussions, Dr. R. Hägg, Ms. Brenda Conrad and Miss Brita Alroth for careful editorial work. Ms. Lily Papageorgiou has done some of the drawings. All the errors remain mine.

## Part I

# The archaeological and iconographical evidence

### I. Types of animals

In a study of Minoan sacrificial ritual it is tempting to associate special animals with particular deities as this is the case in Greek religion. In the latter the dichotomy between celestial and chthonic deities is especially emphasized in the sacrificial sphere where the two groups of deities require different animals: bulls for the Olympians, pigs or rams for the chthonic gods. It is, however, dangerous to assume *a priori* that this dichotomy is valid also for Minoan religion when we cannot even be sure that celestial and chthonic deities were perceived as opposites rather than as polar sides of the same continuum which was unified in cult.<sup>1</sup>

Two sets of evidence are available for the identification of sacrificial animals in Crete: archaeological remains of bones and iconography. What emerges is that a) different species of animals were sacrificed and b) that more than one species were sacrificed together at the same occasion.

It could be argued, of course, that animal bones testify to nothing more than remnants of meals. However, bones of different animal species have been found in numerous cult places, such as peak sanctuaries,<sup>2</sup> caves,<sup>3</sup> and tombs.<sup>4</sup> Thus the location suggests that the meals were preceded by sacrifice.

The animal which appears most often on pictorial representations is the *bull*.<sup>5</sup> This is to be expected as the latter is a powerful and impressive animal which has captured the imagination of all ancient Mediterranean peoples. In Crete it is the foremost sacrificial animal but, as F. Matz has convincingly shown, not a deity.<sup>6</sup>

In glyptic art there exist several examples of bulls lying on sacrificial tables; the most famous representation, in painting, is of course

<sup>1</sup> In Greek religion, for example, Olympian gods and their chthonic counterparts were worshipped together as has been shown by W. Burkert: *HN*, 111 ff.; *GR*, 311. The same phenomenon exists in Egypt where chthonic and celestial deities not only share the same cult but fuse into one another. Examples of such pairs are Min-Horus, Sokaris-Horus. See C. J. Bleeker, *Die Geburt eines Gottes*, Leiden 1956, 15—18; *idem*, *Egyptian festivals*, Leiden 1967, 57—60.

<sup>2</sup> Peak sanctuaries: N. Platon, *KrChron* 5, 1951, 157; A. Karetsou, *Praktika* 1976, 410 ff. Bones of goats, sheep, small animals and birds are reported. Also A. Lembessi, *Praktika* 1976, 401.

<sup>3</sup> Caves: The evidence has been collected by Tyree, *Caves*, 13, 15, 18, 68.

<sup>4</sup> Tombs: For EM burials see I. Pini, *Beiträge zur minoischen Gräberkunde*, Wiesbaden 1968, 27. Bones of hares, dogs, oxen, sheep and pigs have been found in the caves of Skaphidia, Trapeza, Miamou and the circular tombs of Hagia Triada, Krasi, Lenda. Especially interesting is the case of Krasi. Sp. Marinatos (*Deltion* 12, 1929, 123, 132) observes that there were both small animal offerings (hare and dog) as well as big ones (ox, pig, sheep). The small animals were thrown unburned, whereas the bigger ones must have been eaten because only the heads were offered. The latter were represented mostly by teeth. Perhaps we can see this as indirect evidence of cult meals. For evidence of later burials see K. Branigan, *The tombs of Mesara*, London 1970, appendix 2 and J. Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 160.

<sup>5</sup> Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 193.

<sup>6</sup> F. Matz, 'Minoischer Stiergott?', in *Proceedings of the 1st International Cretological Congress 1961* (= *KrChron* 15—16, 1961—1962), 1963, 215—223. On the other hand, N. Platon believes in the existence of a bull god: *Führer durch das Herakleion Museum*, Herakleion 1958, 35.



the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus.<sup>7</sup>

Pigs are depicted on seals from both Crete<sup>8</sup> and the mainland<sup>9</sup> as lying on sacrificial tables, or crouching on a groundline, which may suggest a platform (Fig. 3).<sup>10</sup>

Goats are shown in clear sacrificial contexts. On a seal from Mycenae, now in Berlin (Fig. 1), a goat is lying on a slaughtering table with a knife stuck in its neck.<sup>11</sup> On an unpublished seal in Tübingen a live goat is crouching on a structure which appears to be a sacrificial table.<sup>12</sup> On the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus, two goats are depicted under the sacrificial table awaiting their turn. Less direct, but equally suggestive, is a scene on a seal found on the mainland: a man leads a goat towards a sacred structure enclosing a tree (Fig. 4). A. W. Persson thought that the animal alluded to procreation and fertility,<sup>13</sup> but this is rather unlikely. Rather, as we shall see later, it is the sacrificial animal which is often shown in connection with a tree. Sacrificed goats and rams<sup>14</sup> are depicted on a special type of scene in glyptic art, where a woman carries the dead animal on her shoulders. This group has been treated by Sakellarakis, who has demonstrated the connection with sacrificial ritual.<sup>15</sup> Finally, goat-skulls often appear.<sup>16</sup>

Deer were apparently considered sacrificial animals. On a fresco fragment from Hagia Triada, a deer is being led to an altar (?),<sup>17</sup> whereas on a seal from the mainland a live deer is shown together with a bucranium (CMS I, 491). The association with the skull suggests sacrifice.

This survey shows that, in addition to bulls, goats (or agrimia), rams, pigs (or boars), sheep and deer were considered sacrificial by the Minoans.

Let us now see what evidence there is for multiple sacrifices. It is noteworthy that at archaeological sites the bones of several species have been found mixed together. This is further confirmed by the iconographical evidence. On a seal from Crete a bull is lying on a sacrificial table below which there is the head of another animal, perhaps a calf (Fig. 2). On the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus a multiple sacrifice of a bull and two goats is depicted. On seals living

animals are often represented together with the skulls of animals of different species. Some examples are listed below.

BULL + BUCRANIUM: CMS I, 50, 491.

GOAT + BUCRANIUM: CMS II, 3, 5; VII, 45 a, 191.

BULL + HEAD OF RAM: CMS I, 66.

BULL + GOAT SKULL: CMS I Suppl., 25; VII, 248.

BULL + UNIDENTIFIABLE HEAD: CMS I, 346; Suppl., 25; *Unexplored Mansion*, pl. 188 d.

DEER + UNIDENTIFIABLE HEAD: CMS I Suppl., 55.

RAM + GOAT: CCO, 68—71.

BUCRANIUM + BULL'S HEAD + GOAT'S HEAD: CMS XII, 84 b; PM IV, fig. 581.

Sometimes the heads of various types of animals are depicted together: CMS I, 18; a sealing from Hagia Triada;<sup>18</sup> another sealing

<sup>7</sup> Sakellarakis (*Tieropfer*, 169) has collected the evidence of sacrificial animals on altars from seals and sealings. He assumes that all are bulls but in fact No. 1. on p. 169 is a pig and No. 6 a goat. This has also been observed by Dr. Ch. Boulotis in his forthcoming book on Processions, which he kindly allowed me to see. The most thorough recent treatment of the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus is by Ch. Long, *ATS*, with bibliography.

<sup>8</sup> Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 169, No. 1 = PM IV, 41, fig. 25. Evans identifies the animal as a bull, but Kenna, *CS*, 136 as a boar. Thanks to Dr. Ingo Pini I have looked at the cast under a microscope and I have decided it is either a boar or a pig.

<sup>9</sup> CMS I, 80.

<sup>10</sup> CMS I Suppl., 76; II.3, 21; IX, 136 etc. See also *Iliad* XIX, 197, where a boar is sacrificed to Helios and Zeus.

<sup>11</sup> AGDS II, No. 44 = PM IV, fig. 24.

<sup>12</sup> I am very grateful to Dr. I. Pini for showing me a drawing of the Tübingen seal.

<sup>13</sup> A. W. Persson, *The religion of Greece in prehistoric times*, Berkeley 1942, 53.

<sup>14</sup> *ArchEph* 1889, pl. 10, No. 25; G. Mylonas, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean age*, Princeton 1966, 164.

<sup>15</sup> J. Sakellarakis, *ArchEph* 1972, 257.

<sup>16</sup> *MMR*, 233, fig. 115.

<sup>17</sup> L. Pernier & L. Banti, *Guida degli scavi italiani in Creta*, Rome 1947, pl. 21; Long, *ATS*, fig. 85.

<sup>18</sup> *MMR*, 233, fig. 116.



Fig. 1. Goat sacrificed on an altar table. Seal from Mycenae now in Berlin.



Fig. 2. Bull lying on a sacrificial table. Seal from Crete now in the Herakleion Museum. *CMS* II.3, 338.

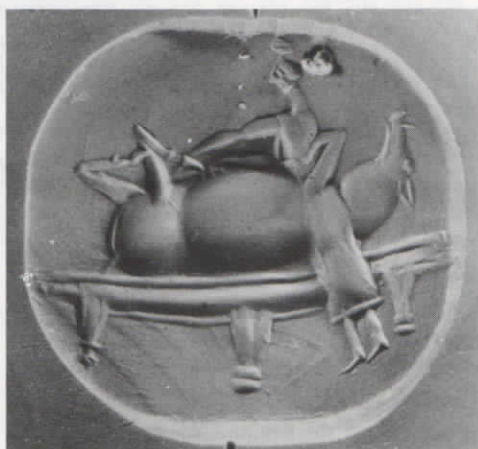


Fig. 3. Pig on a sacrificial table. Seal from Mycenae. *CMS* I, 80.

from the Herakleion Museum<sup>19</sup> shows a bucranium and a goat's skull. Bulls and goats occur with most frequency (*CMS* XII, 84; Hagia Triada Sarcophagus).

Lions' heads or skulls deserve some comments. I believe that these animals were regarded as quarry, and therefore, by extension, sacrificial victims. Several hunting scenes, from both Crete and the mainland, testify to this.<sup>20</sup> More will be said later about the connection between hunting and sacrifice.

Thus, it is incontestable that multiple sacrifices took place at one and the same occasion. We can now return to the question of whether or not particular animals are associated with particular divinities. Can we say, for example, that the pig was sacrificed to

a chthonic deity, a predecessor to Demeter? The evidence does not permit any such conclusion, but rather the contrary. The possible combinations of different animal species seem to vary considerably and are not strictly canonized. We have already seen this in the iconography. The mixture of animal bones from excavations testify to the same conclusion. For example, bones of a bull, pig and sheep were found together at Tyllissos. At Juktas the bones of birds and small animals have been found together

<sup>19</sup> B. Rutkowski, *Frühgriechische Kultdarstellungen* (*AthMitt-BH* 8), Berlin 1981, 65, fig. 21.3.

<sup>20</sup> D. Levi, *ASAtene* 8—9, 1925—1926, 182, fig. 231; *CMS* I, 9, 290; Suppl., 80, 81; Marinatos-Hirmer, col.pl. L.





Fig. 4. Man and goat walking towards a cult structure from which a tree is growing. The same species of tree is depicted above the goat's back. Seal from Mycenae. *CMS* I, 119.

with the bones of sheep and goats.<sup>21</sup>

Even more telling is the story of the Cretan sanctuary of Demeter which lies to the S. of the palace of Knossos and was founded upon Minoan dwellings. The sanctuary goes back to the 8th century but it is not impossible to imagine syncretism with a pre-existing Minoan cult.<sup>22</sup> What is interesting for our purposes is the identification of the animal bones. It was ascertained that in the 8th and 7th centuries, only 16% of the total number of bones belonged to pigs.<sup>23</sup> But by the 4th century, the latter reached 91%. Thus, the association of Demeter with the pig became definite at a *late* stage of the cult and can be considered an intrusion. We would not expect this, had a female Minoan deity, a precursor to Demeter, been associated with this animal.

## II. Place of sacrifice; altars

The absence of fixed sacrificial altars in the archaeological record is striking because of the sharp contrast with Greek religion<sup>24</sup> where the altar is the focal point of the cult and the most important element in the sanctuary. There can exist an altar without a temple but no temple is conceivable without an altar. However, in Minoan Crete temples, altars and cult images do not occur as an inseparable triad. Despite attempts to prove the contrary, it remains a fact that no clearly articulated architectural type has

been excavated which could qualify as a temple. Cult structures did exist, but we cannot call them temples because they do not conform to a canonical plan, nor do they seem to have been built primarily to house a cult image.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, the cult practices in Crete are peculiar to this civilization and require an examination with an unprejudiced eye. Sacrifice was evidently a very important ritual but it was not intimately connected with a temple and cult im-

<sup>21</sup> J. Hazzidakis, *Les villas minoennes de Tyliossos* (ÉtCrét 2), Paris 1934, 13; Karetsou, *Praktika* 1976, 410.

<sup>22</sup> J. N. Coldstream, ed., *Knossos, the Sanctuary of Demeter* (*BSA* Suppl. 8), London 1973, 181.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

<sup>24</sup> C. G. Yavis, *Greek altars*, St. Louis 1949, 41 f.; W. Burkert (*GR*, 142 ff.) emphasizes the characteristic triad of Greek cult practice: temple, altar, cult image, which does *not* occur in the Bronze Age.

<sup>25</sup> The existence of temples in Minoan religion has been denied by Nilsson, *MMR*, 77 and A. Furumark, *OpAth* 6, 1968, 90 f., but has been accepted by B. Rutkowski, 'Temple and cult statue in the Aegean world', in *Proceedings of the 3rd Cretological Congress*, Athens 1973, 290—294 and by S. Hood, 'Minoan town shrines?', in *Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean in Ancient History and Prehistory*, Festschrift F. Schachermeyr, Berlin 1977, 158—172. See also J. and E. Sakellarakis, *Praktika* 1979, 347—392. For a recent discussion: N. Marinatos and R. Hägg, 'Anthropomorphic cult images in Minoan Crete?', in *Minoan society*, ed. O. Krzyszkowska and L. Nixon, Bristol 1983, 185—201.

age, as was the case in the Orient and Greece, nor was it *always* performed within the physical boundaries of the sanctuary.<sup>26</sup> J. Sakellarakis has suggested that animals were slaughtered on movable, wooden tables and that generally, sacrifice took place outdoors and in localities appropriate to the circumstances. As Sakellarakis has correctly observed, the sacrificial tables, depicted on seals, have elaborately carved legs which are more probably of wood than marble.<sup>27</sup> The slaughtering table on the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus also looks, judging from its colour, as though it was made of wood.<sup>28</sup> Sakellarakis has also made the suggestion that the table top was removable and claims to have found such a marble top, which would have rested on a wooden frame, at Tourko-geitonia, Archanes.<sup>29</sup> If they were wooden, the tables could easily have been stored inside the shrine magazines and transported wherever it was needed; thus, they could hardly have provided a fixed mark in the sanctuary.

On the other hand, we should note that fixed stone altars did exist. Examples are the stone construction in the NW corner of the central court of the palace of Phaistos (*if* it really is an altar), or the stepped altar at Juktas. Representations of stone altars are also attested, the Zakros rhyton furnishing the best example.<sup>30</sup> These were, however, *deposition*, not sacrificial<sup>31</sup> altars to judge both from the find contexts of the real ones and from the representations. Fires were apparently associated with animal bones at Juktas and Kato Syme. In none of the above sanctuaries has a sacrificial altar been reported.<sup>32</sup> Finally, I think that the altars in the caves of Psychro and Skoteino were for deposition. I shall return to the evidence pertaining to these structures in section VIII on cult meals.

One important conclusion that follows from the above is that the sacrificial table was not a fixed point marking the sacred area. But such markers did exist and I believe they were trees (palms and other species). Pillars and baetyls could also have been used as markers. Finally, tree-shrines would have provided a focal point in certain sanctuaries.

It is certain, however, that trees were the most

common focal points connected with sacrifice as is shown on a great number of glyptic representations. *Table 1* summarizes and classifies the scenes which show animals near elements which can be considered markers of a sacred spot.

Table 1 \*

- 1) *Animal near tree or vegetation motif*  
 CMS I, 23, 45, 59, 76, 119, 242, 275, 281, 404, 495.  
 CMS II.3, 64, 212.  
 CMS IV, 245 (wounded animal).  
 CMS V, 185, 198, 247, 248, 250, 272, 317, 597, 598,  
 665, 689, 751.  
 CMS VII, 98, 184, 151, 162, 167, 189, 204, 205, 239,  
 261, 262.  
 CMS VIII, 84, 108, 129, 140.  
 CMS IX, 101—103, 108, 118, 125, 147, 157, 159, 176,  
 201, 203, 204.  
 CMS X, 1, 113—115, 139, 178, 222, 281.  
 CMS XII, 195, 248, 249, 252, 287, 289, 296.  
 CMS XIII, 6, 7, 27, 29, 37, 44.  
 Gill, *BSA* 60, 1965, 80 pl. 10.  
*AGDS* I, no. 48.

- 2) *Antithetical animals flanking tree*  
 CMS I, 58, 123, 155, 266; VII, 182; XIII, 27, 139; Gill,  
*BSA* 60, 1965, pl. 6, R 25.

<sup>26</sup> This was not the case in Greek religion either, but the *canonical* form of sacrifice for Olympian deities took place within the sanctuary precincts.

<sup>27</sup> Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 175 f.

<sup>28</sup> *Supra* n. 27; Long, *ATS*, 62.

<sup>29</sup> *Deltion* 20, 1965, 81, pl. 706 g.

<sup>30</sup> *MMR*, 117 ff. For the Zakros rhyton see N. Platon, *Zakros, the discovery of a lost palace in ancient Crete*, New York 1971, 163—169. A stone altar is also depicted on a fragmentary steatite vase from Gypsades, Evans, *TPC*, 103, fig. 2 and a stepped one is shown in front of the "dead" on the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus.

<sup>31</sup> The stepped altar on Mt. Juktas is built on the "lip of the chasm" and is the terminal point of an ascending ceremonial ramp. The proximity of the altar to the chasm shows the peculiar character of this altar which seems to have had no connection with sacrifice. Note also that multiple votive offerings were discovered in connection with it: A. Karetsou, *Praktika* 1984, 231 ff., and in *SCABA*, 141 f., fig. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Karetsou, in *SCABA*, 142, fig 5; *Praktika* 1975, 342; 1976, 417; 1978, 264—267; A. Lembessi, *ArchEph* 1981, 17; P. Muhly, *Minoan libation tables*, Ph.D. dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, 1981, 344.



## 3) Palm

- CMS I, 52, 57, 74, 88, 105, 375, 515.  
 CMS V, 157, 587.  
 CMS VII, 113.  
 CMS X, 143, 222?  
 CMS XIII, 13.  
 A. Sakellariou, *Cachets*, 121a; Gill, *BSA* 60, 1965,  
 69, pl. 10, K 10, pl. 6, R 25.

## 4) Animal on a base or platform

- BULL: CMS I, 91; Suppl., 34; XII, 137, 249; *PM I*,  
 fig. 515; Gill, *BSA* 60, 1965, 79.  
 GOAT: CMS I Suppl., 92; II.3, 50; X, 281.  
 PIG: CMS I Suppl., 76; II.3, 21; IV, 240; IX, 136;  
 S. Hood, *The Minoans*, London 1972, 110, pl. 41.  
 DEER: CMS V, 665; Kenna, *CS*, no. 190.

Noteworthy is a three-sided prismatic seal (CMS V, 191) which depicts a different animal on each face. All three are struck by a dart or spear, all three can, therefore, be considered victims. These animals are a) lion b) bull and c) goat.

## 5) Animal and pillar

- CMS I, 19, 265, 487.  
 CMS II.3, 40; *PM III*, fig. 208.  
 CMS VII, 155.  
 CMS XII, 288?  
 Gill, *BSA* 60, 1965, 79.  
*AGDS I*, no. 48.

\* This table does not claim to include a complete list but only a representative one.

In *Table 1* four groups of representations have been listed in which animals are associated with columns; trees; paved areas/platforms. Before proceeding to the meaning of these structures, it is worth repeating that *nowhere* does an altar occur as a feature demarcating the sacrificial ground. Had fixed sacrificial altars existed, they would probably have been used as markers, but this is clearly not the case.

The association of sacrificial animals with trees will be considered first (groups 1—3). It can be seen immediately from *Table 1* that there are a multitude of representations belonging to this category. It is therefore evident that the nexus animal-tree is an important one. What is the nature of the connection? A lengthy discussion on the subject would be out of place here and I plan to take it up elsewhere. But it can be stated with certainty that the tree marks the sacred ground and often the place of sacrifice. On a ring from Thebes (CMS V, 198) the animal

is shown close to a tree-shrine. Likewise, on a ring from Mycenae (CMS I, 119; *Fig. 4*) a goat is shown to the left of a man who is facing a shrine with a tree. Behind the goat there is another tree which seems to be growing out of its back. This is not perspectival rendering because the trunk of the tree is not shown; I therefore believe that the presence of the tree (which is of the same species as that growing from the shrine) has a symbolic purpose. Often, the tree is flanked by two animals, in a manner similar to the Oriental tree of Life.<sup>33</sup>

Let us note that sacrificial animals are connected with one special species, the date-palm (group 3).<sup>34</sup> There exist several scenes in which goats or, more often, bulls are shown together with the palm. The animals are depicted either as alive, standing next to the tree, or as sacrificed beneath it.<sup>35</sup> On a gem from Mycenae, now in Berlin, a palm is leaning over a sacrificed goat (*Fig. 1*). On a sealing from Knossos there is a similar representation which is of special interest because it includes symbolic elements. It is broken, half of it being in the National Museum, Athens, the other half in the Herakleion Museum. M. Gill realized that the two pieces joined and that an interesting composition emerged (*Fig. 5*).<sup>36</sup> Two bulls are

<sup>33</sup> Antithetical animals, mostly flanking a column, are treated by Nilsson, *MMR*, 250 ff. On the tree of life see E. O. James, *The Tree of Life, an archaeological study*, Leyden 1966.

<sup>34</sup> N. Marinatos, 'The date palm in Minoan iconography and religion', *OpAth* 15, 1984, 115—122. L. R. Palmer proposed quite a different interpretation regarding the relationship of the bull with the palm. He connected the former with a young dying god of a Mesopotamian type. This is impossible to accept, because the bull is unmistakably a sacrificial animal in these representations and the goat also appears sacrificed below the palm. Finally, the palm also occurs in quite different contexts which have nothing to do with the bull. L. R. Palmer, 'Bull and palm tree in Aegean iconography', *Nestor* 10:9, December 1983, 1762—1764.

<sup>35</sup> A. Sakellariou, *MS*, 33, n. 151; Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 172; N. Marinatos (supra n. 34), 117 f.

<sup>36</sup> M. Gill, 'The Knossos sealings. Some reflections', in *Die kretisch-mykenische Glyptik und ihre gegenwärtigen Probleme*, Boppard 1974, 32—34, 36,

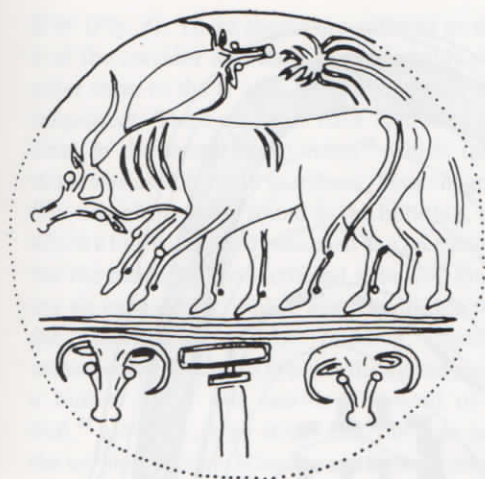


Fig. 5. Sealing from Knossos consisting of two separate fragments joined into one by M. Gill and depicting bulls on a platform (table?) supported by a column; part of another bull and a palm. Below the table there are bucrania.

standing on two double lines which must designate a table top of some sort. A palm is leaning over the bulls. The rendering of their heads is unusual; they resemble bucrania rather than the heads of living animals. Thus, there is a deliberate ambiguity, or an allusion to sacrifice. The double lines represent either a table top or a platform, since there is a supporting column underneath. The latter is flanked by animal skulls which have curved horns.<sup>37</sup> The representation is certainly symbolic. Although the bulls are standing, the platform with the column and heads underneath suggest a sacrificial table. Note that the latter are often decorated with bucrania as on the Berlin seal (Fig. 1). (For a combination of a live bull with sacrificial table see design on cover.) Thus, the palm and, by extension, other trees depicted in connection with horned animals, designate the latter as sacrificial victims. The tree has not only a religious significance, but it also marks the sacred location, whether for sacrifice or some other ritual.<sup>38</sup> This is hardly surprising as the tree plays a central role in Minoan cult.<sup>39</sup>

In the fourth group an animal is depicted crouched or standing on flat ground, rendered

either by a ground-line (single or double) or by chequer patterns which suggest a base or a paved area. I have listed only those cases where a paved court or a base is indicated. Noteworthy is a sealing from the area of the Grand Staircase in Knossos depicting a bull crouched on a platform with a spiral frieze below (PM I, fig. 515). The spiral decoration might have a symbolic significance. The important point here is that the animal is shown in an urban setting and not in a nature environment. Perhaps a ceremonial location is represented.

Finally, in the fifth group, the animal is shown in connection with a column, either standing close to it or flanking it in an heraldic scheme. The column functions here as the tree but signifies an urban location, probably a shrine as has been argued by Nilsson.<sup>40</sup> Antithetical griffins or lions may be regarded as guardians, not as sacrificial victims.

In none of the representations that have been discussed so far is there any indication that sacrifice took place indoors. Rather, an outdoor location is suggested by trees and paved

fig. 1. I wish to thank Dr. I. Pini for alerting my attention to this restored version of the sealing. See also PM IV, 568, fig. 542 a.

<sup>37</sup> These bulls must belong to a different family. For different types of bulls see *MASCA Journal* 3, 1984, 61 (bulls Nos. 1 and 2).

<sup>38</sup> They may also mark the place where the epiphany of the deity occurs; see N. Marinatos, *Tree*; Nilsson (*MMR*, 284) thinks that the tree is sacred to the deity or an abbreviation of his sacred grove, and the animal is a sacrificial one or a guardian.

<sup>39</sup> The importance of the tree in cult has been stressed by A. Evans, *TPC*, 99 ff. and has been connected with the vegetation cycle and *mana* by J. Harrison, *Themis*, Cambridge 1927, 158–162. A new treatment of the subject by Ch. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Renewal and divine return' will be an essay in a forthcoming monograph with the title: *Reading dumb images*. For the tree as a focal point of ritual action: N. Marinatos, *Tree*.

<sup>40</sup> That the column is an abbreviation of a sacred structure or shrine has been argued by Nilsson, *MMR*, 255 ff. The same author has also treated the heraldic scheme of animals, notably lions and griffins, flanking the column: *MMR*, 250 ff. I have concentrated on horned animals, the typical sacrificial species.



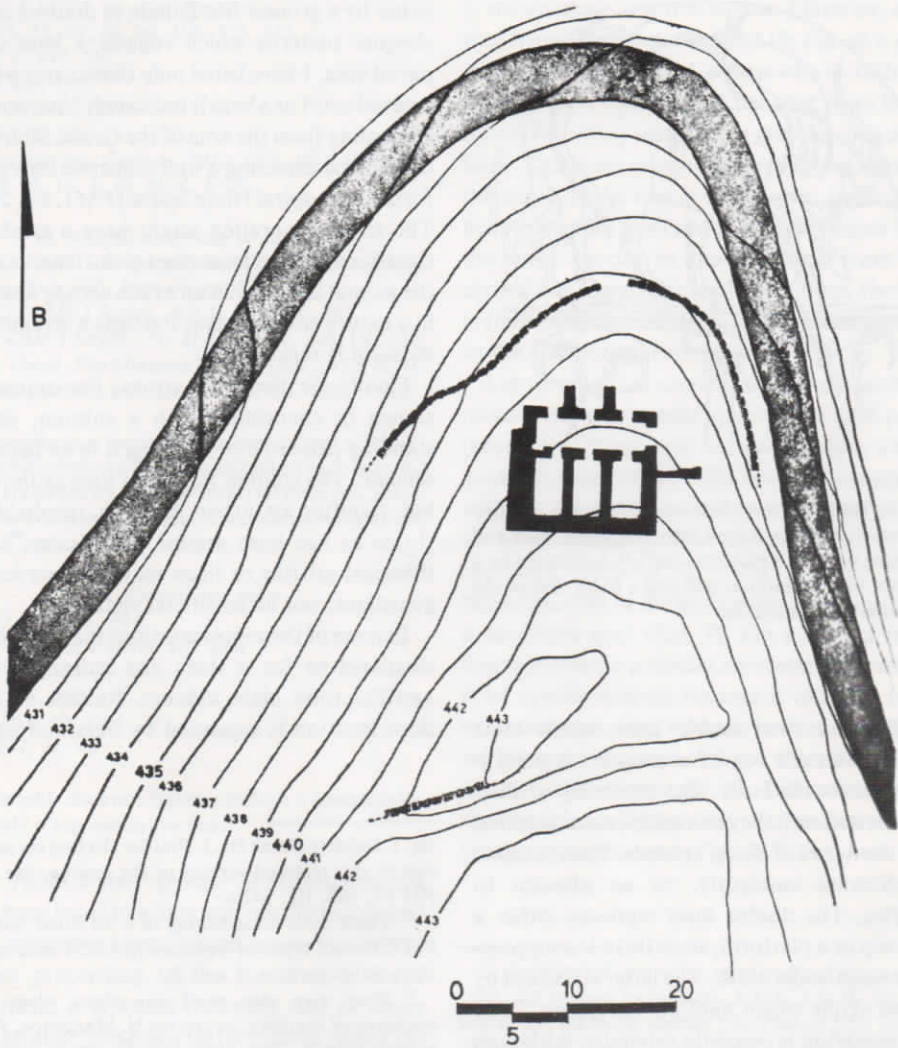


Fig. 6. Plan of the cult building at Anemospilia.

courts. This is to be expected since such a cult practice, with its emotional impact on the participants, can be better imagined outdoors where a large number of persons could watch the ritual.<sup>41</sup> Sakellarakis arrived at the same conclusion in his treatment of bull sacrifice.<sup>42</sup> However, some excavators have argued that they have found traces of sacrifice taking place *inside* a building. Let us review the evidence.

Starting with the protopalatial period, two cases exist. One is a MM II/MM III A building

at Anemospilia, excavated by J. and E. Sakellarakis. The excavation is not yet completed, but what has come to light is a series of three rooms opening on to a corridor running

<sup>41</sup> See the articles by J-P. Vernant and W. Burkert, in *Le sacrifice dans l'antiquité* (Fondation Hardt, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique, 27), 1981, 1-22 and 91-126, respectively.

<sup>42</sup> Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 172-175.



E-W (Fig. 6). These rooms are situated to the S of the corridor and there were probably another three to the N of it, in a symmetrical arrangement. The excavators have identified an altar in the westernmost room<sup>43</sup> which they think was used for bull sacrifices. They suggest that one of the vases found in the building, on which a bull is depicted, was used as a receptacle for the blood of the sacrificed animal.<sup>44</sup> During an earthquake, which was responsible for the destruction of the building, special measures were taken to appease the divinity and a human being was sacrificed instead of a bull.<sup>45</sup> However, they stress that this was not the *normal* practice. Human sacrifice was inferred by the existence of a skeleton found upon the structure which is called an altar by the excavators.<sup>46</sup>

There are some difficulties with the altar and bull sacrifice. Why would one bring the animal inside the building, through a corridor and several doors, when it would have been more convenient to sacrifice it outdoors? In addition, the "altar" would hardly have been large enough for a bull; the dimensions given are 0.63 × 0.76 m. The finds reported from the three rooms and the vestibule suggest that this entire section of the building was connected with industrial and cooking activities: cooking pots, grinding and cult vessels seem to have been represented in some quantities.<sup>47</sup> The actual ceremonies can be better imagined upstairs or out in the open, although ritual dining may safely be postulated inside the building. In conclusion, it is rather unlikely that bull sacrifice took place indoors.

Another possible case comes from the palace of Malia, from the area beneath Quartiers III–IV, usually referred to as "Domestic Quarters". It has been excavated by O. Pelon who named it *salle β* and it is dated to the first palace period (Fig. 7).<sup>48</sup> The room was very large,<sup>49</sup> comprising some 65 m<sup>2</sup> with an entrance from the W through a vestibule *α*. To the right and left of the entrance, there were jars embedded into the floor ("vases collecteurs") asymmetrically arranged. Two long, narrow platforms divide the room into three aisles, the N platform being of double width (Figs. 7, 8).

At the short W end of the N platform there was one more "vase collecteur" embedded in the floor, another one was placed at its NE end. Two more "vases collecteurs" flank the E end of the S platform. Narrow ledges run along the E, S and W walls of the room.<sup>50</sup>

On the E ledge there are cuttings in the stone as if made to receive a wooden structure. Pelon thinks it might have been a wooden table or "étagère" which would have rested against the wall. To the left (N) of this hypothetical "étagère" there is a channel leading to a hole. Pelon thinks that this was used for libations<sup>51</sup> and, indeed, it is reminiscent of the one in the throne room of the palace of Pylos.<sup>52</sup> It is noteworthy that *salle β* probably communicated through a large window with the adjacent *salle γ*, which was also of a large size, (52 m<sup>2</sup>), and in which were found horns of bovines.<sup>53</sup> In *salle β* there were two swords, one of which has the famous acrobat on its handle,<sup>54</sup> and small dedicatory vases of the Chamaizi type.<sup>55</sup> These were found together, arranged in front of the N platform. In general, the room had two main architectural charac-

<sup>43</sup> J. and E. Sakellarakis, *Praktika* 1979, 386.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 370, figs. 4, 5.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 389.

<sup>46</sup> The total number of human skeletons, found in the building, was four, three in the W room and one in the corridor. In addition, fragments of a human skull were found amidst the stones of the exterior, W wall, *Praktika*, 1979, 391.

<sup>47</sup> There is an analogous building at Akrotiri, Thera. The magazines of Sector A were used for storage of food and cult equipment as well as for cooking: N. Marinatos, 'Minoan threskeiocracy on Thera', in *Minoan Thalassocracy: Myth and reality*, eds. R. Hägg and N. Marinatos (*ActaAth-4<sup>o</sup>*, 32), Stockholm 1984, 169; *idem*, *Art and religion*, 16 f.

<sup>48</sup> O. Pelon, *BCH* 107, 1983, 696.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 693.

<sup>50</sup> The breadth of the ledge varies. The E one, for example, ranges between 0.69 and 1.30 (*ibid.*, 687).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 689.

<sup>52</sup> C. Blegen & M. Rawson, *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia*, I, 2, Princeton, N. J. 1966, pl. 70.

<sup>53</sup> Pelon (*supra* n. 48), 691 and fig. 15.

<sup>54</sup> O. Pelon, *BCH* 106, 1982, 176.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 165–172.

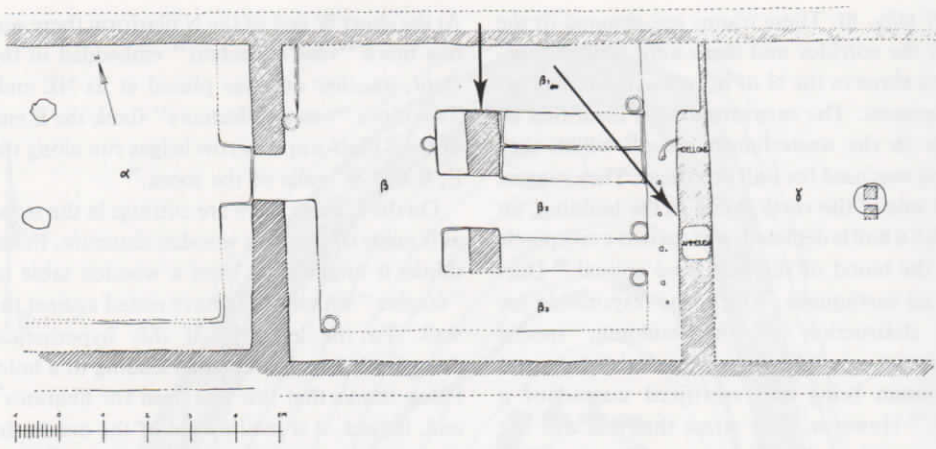


Fig. 7. Plan of salle  $\beta$  at Malia. (The focal points are marked by arrows.)

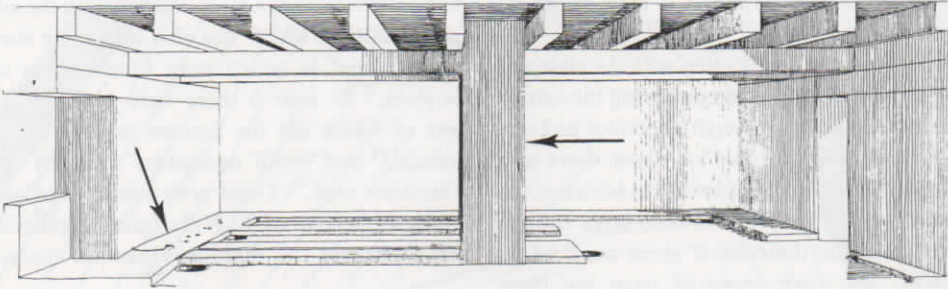


Fig. 8. Reconstruction of salle  $\beta$  at Malia. (The focal points are marked by arrows.)

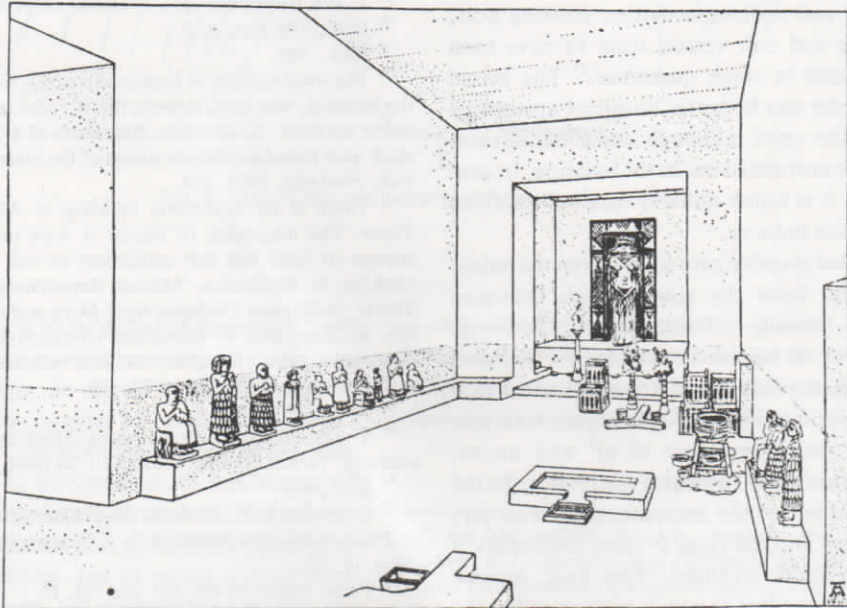


Fig. 9. Reconstruction of an Assyrian temple.



teristics: platforms, where objects could be placed, and jars for the collection of liquids.

O. Pelon suggests that *salle*  $\beta$  was used in connection with sacrifices and assigns to it a religious character.<sup>56</sup> This cannot be doubted because of the small dedicatory jugs which were placed on one of the platforms. Some connection with sacrifice also seems correct given the presence of bulls' horns in the adjoining room  $\gamma$ . The long, ceremonial swords, found in  $\beta$ , may have had some ritual significance, connected with the ceremonies. But I cannot follow Pelon in his, admittedly cautious, remark, that the "étagère" in particular and the room in general had "... une destination . . . sacrificielle . . ."<sup>57</sup> How could a heavy bull rest on a flimsy, wooden construction leaning against a wall? And would it be convenient to lead the animal through the aisles of *salle*  $\beta$ ? Is it not better in this case also to postulate animal sacrifice taking place outdoors and a supplementary ritual inside the room?

The monumentality of  $\beta$  suggests that it was used for major ceremonies. We must try to discover its function by locating its focal point(s). One such focal area must have been the wooden structure, the "étagère", since it was located opposite the entrance.

Although the hypothesis that it was a table is likely, it could also be reconstructed as a balustrade, which could have acted as a screen. One could imagine objects or symbols displayed against it. The second focal point must have been the N platform, in front of which there was a pillar (*Fig. 8*). The reason why I see it as an important spot is because there was a jar, embedded into the floor, in front of the pillar; there was also a concentration of dedicatory jugs.<sup>58</sup> It is reasonable to conclude that the contents of the jugs were poured into the "vase collecteur", and that some libations took place. Thus, it seems that the *predominant* ritual that can be associated with *salle*  $\beta$ , is *libations*. Both the jars embedded into the floor and the libation channel, to the N of the wooden structure (whether table or screen), attest to this function. These libations could have taken place in connection with sacrifice. When we later review the evidence for libations, we shall

see that there is much to support the idea that libations were closely connected with sacrificial ritual. For the moment let us note that vats/pits in front of pillars also exist in pillar crypts of the neopalatial period, such as the one in the Royal Villa and in the main crypt situated in the W wing of the Knossos palace.<sup>59</sup> The comparison with crypts can be pressed further since some of them also have ledges.<sup>60</sup>

An analogy with the Orient might prove illuminating. In *Fig. 9* we see a reconstruction of an Assyrian temple. There are certain similarities with *salle*  $\beta$ : low ledges for the placing of offerings, libation channels and altars. The greatest difference is the articulation of the Assyrian temple which has a clear focal point reserved for the cult image of the divinity, whereas the Maliote room may have had only a balustrade or wooden table/altar.

The final example comes from a building almost contemporary with the preceding: the House of the Sacrificed Oxen, excavated by Sir Arthur Evans.<sup>61</sup> Only the basement of the building survives. In rooms 4 and 5, which are a unit, two bucrania were found in the SE and NW corners of the suite. Evans states that they were on the floor, but Sakellarakis argues that they were placed on a ledge which runs along the walls.<sup>62</sup> Next to the bucrania were found tripod offering tables. Thus, it is clear that there was a ritual context for the skulls and that they were probably remnants of sacrifice. Still, I doubt very much that the slaughtering had taken place indoors. Rather, the main ritual took place out in the open and offerings, perhaps also libations, were made in the room. It is noteworthy that only the heads of the animals were found, not the rest of the skeletons. I suggest that the heads were kept as

<sup>56</sup> Pelon (*supra* n. 48), 694—696.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 689 f.

<sup>58</sup> Pelon (*supra* n. 54), 169.

<sup>59</sup> N. Platon, *Minoika iera*, 466.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 465.

<sup>61</sup> *PM II*, 283, 304, 324; Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 162 f.

<sup>62</sup> *PM II*, 302 ff.; Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 162 f.

a commemoration of the ritual, a permanent offering to the divinity.

We conclude then that it is rather unlikely that the slaughtering of the animal took place inside, but that supplementary cult practices, such as offerings and libations, possibly also cult meals, occurred indoors.

Next, we may speculate as to what kinds of outdoor settings can be postulated for sacrifice. The palace of Malia contains a hearth in the middle of the central court. Pelon has suggested that it may be connected with bull sacrifice.<sup>63</sup> Further, we know that sacrifices took place in peak sanctuaries and caves because of the abundance of animal bones found at these places.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, major courts, such as the west courts of the palaces, village squares or sacred enclosures are also good candidates.

### III. Manner of sacrifice

The bull was probably stunned before it was slaughtered as it is difficult to cut the throat of a large animal if it is moving.

A likely instrument for stunning is a stone mace or, rather, a stone mace-head inserted in a wooden shaft. Such are attested both archaeologically and iconographically. Examples have been found in the Temple Repositories at Knossos,<sup>65</sup> in the treasury of the palace of Zakros,<sup>66</sup> and at other places.<sup>67</sup>

As regards iconography, a seal from Malia (Fig. 10) depicts a priest wearing a long garment holding a mace in his hand.<sup>68</sup> Similar figures on other seals hold axes in their hands (axes can be considered as having a similar function to maces) (CMS I, 225; II.3, 198; PM = IV, fig. 343). Thus, the context shows that the mace has a religious character and is not an ordinary weapon. This is also supported by the archaeological evidence since maces are found in cultic contexts.<sup>69</sup> In addition, there exists a clay rhyton in the shape of a mace.<sup>70</sup> If we combine the weapon-like nature of the mace with its cultic character, the conclusion that it was used in connection with sacrifice, for stunning, follows easily.

The double axe may have also been used for

the same purpose. Its connection with sacrificial animals has been demonstrated by Nilsson, who concluded that it derived its sanctity through its association with sacrifice.<sup>71</sup> Noteworthy is that a real axe from Amari, Crete, has a bucranium engraved on one of its faces.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore the axe has an intrinsic significance: it is the instrument of killing and is thus imbued with special power.<sup>73</sup>

There is one additional reason which would make the stunning of the animal desirable. As we shall see further on, the blood of the sacrificial victim was collected and this would have hardly been possible if the animal was moving violently while its throat was being cut; the collection process would have been possible only if it was stunned.

The instrument used for slaughtering must have been a knife, dagger, Syrian axe or sword. Daggers or swords are depicted in some cases, in glyptic art. On the seal from Berlin (Fig. 1), a goat has a knife stuck in its neck. On a sealing from Malia (Fig. 11),<sup>74</sup> a sword is depicted above the sacrificed bull. Possibly we could also add a seal from Naxos (Fig. 12), where a male figure is standing in front of a table (altar?) on which a number of utensils, including a rhyton and a sword, are depicted; for this reason the

<sup>63</sup> O. Pelon, 'Le palais de Mallia et les jeux de taureaux', in *Rayonnement grecque, Hommages à Ch. Delvoye*, eds. L. Haddermann-Misguish and G. Raepsuet, Brussels 1982, 82.

<sup>64</sup> Notes 2 and 3 above.

<sup>65</sup> PM I, 463 ff.

<sup>66</sup> Platon (supra n. 30), 145.

<sup>67</sup> The evidence has been collected by M. Mante-Platonos, *ArchEph* 1981, 74–83.

<sup>68</sup> P. Demargne & H. Gallet de Santerre, *Mallia, Maisons I* (ÉtCrét 9), Paris 1953, pl. XLV, No. 1456. See also CMS II.3, 198: a priest holding an axe.

<sup>69</sup> Mante-Platonos (supra n. 67), 81 f.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>71</sup> MMR, 227 ff.; Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 195.

<sup>72</sup> K. Mavriannaki, AAA 11, 1978, 203 ff. A thorough study of the origins of double axes: H-G. Buchholz, *Zur Herkunft der kretischen Doppelaxt*, München 1959.

<sup>73</sup> Burkert, GR, 74 f.

<sup>74</sup> O. Pelon, *Mallia, Maisons III* (ÉtCrét 16), Paris 1970, 133 f.





▲ Fig. 11. Sacrificial bull, male officiant and sacrificial symbols. Sealing from Malia.

◄ Fig. 10. Priest holding a mace. Seal from Malia. *CMS* II.3, 147.



▲ Fig. 12. Male figure (deity) receiving offerings next to a palm. The offerings suggest a sacrificial set. Seal from Naxos. *CMS* V, 608.



► Fig. 13. Chanting priest and a sacrificial victim. Two-sided seal from Knossos. *CMS* II.3, 13.



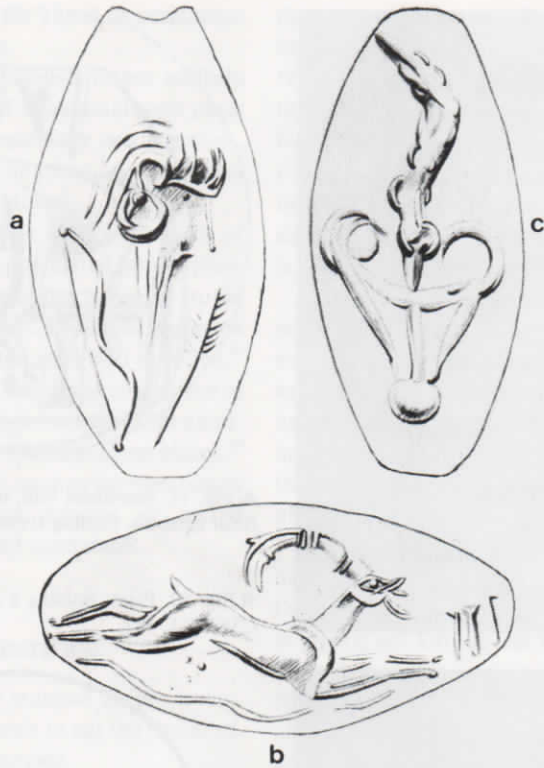


Fig. 14. Priest as a hunter, running goat and bucranium.  
Three-sided seal from an English private collection. *CMS*  
VIII, 110 a—c.



Fig. 15. Sacrificial scene from the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus.

cult assemblage can be connected with sacrifice.<sup>75</sup> On a seal from Mycenae, a figure in a long garment is holding a knife and apparently dissecting a pig with it; the animal is lying on a sacrificial table (CMS I, 80).<sup>76</sup>

Sacerdotal figures holding Syrian axes are attested on seals from both Crete and the mainland (PM IV, fig. 343).

The officiating priest could be either male or female; the sex must have depended on the type of festival during which the sacrifice took place. A priestess is officiating on the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus (the only man is a musician), and on two seals from Crete (PM II, fig. 15; CMS II.3, 213). Men are depicted on the Malia sealing (Fig. 11), and the seal from Mycenae (CMS I, 80) although, admittedly, in this case the sex of the sacerdotal figure is difficult to determine.

In addition to the above cases, three more seals offer indirect evidence of male priests being involved in sacrificial ritual. On a two-sided seal, from Knossos, a bearded man is depicted on one side, Evans' "Chanting Priest", while on the other the head of a calf (Fig. 13).<sup>77</sup> On a three-sided seal from the Dawkins collection (Fig. 14), the following figures are engraved: a bearded man, a running goat, and a strange object which V. E. G. Kenna identified as a *kantharos*, but which I think is a bucranium.<sup>78</sup> Here again, I believe, we have a priest and his sacrificial victims, shown alive and as a bucranium (the result of sacrifice) respectively. That the man is also represented in the role of a hunter should not concern us unduly because there is a close relationship between hunting and sacrifice, of which more will be said later. Although the hunted animal is a goat and not a bull, the bucranium should not be considered a problem. The latter occurs so often in sacrificial contexts that we can regard it as a symbol of this ritual.

Finally, on another seal from Crete, the head of the same type of bearded man, a priest, occurs together with several animal heads (CMS II.3, 196). In the three last cases the type of the bearded priest is consistently associated with animals or animal skulls.

In conclusion, both sexes officiated in sacrificial ritual.

A cult practice, the exact nature of which is difficult to determine, took place in front of the dead animal. Both on the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus and on the Malia sealing (Figs. 11, 15), a woman and a man respectively stretch their arms, palms downwards. Possibly this means an invocation of the deity or that a consecration of the animal is taking place. Long thinks that the gesture indicates a chthonic rite.<sup>79</sup>

## IV. Libations

### 1. Blood libations; the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus.

The blood of the sacrificial animal was collected in a vessel, as we can see on the sarcophagus. This has led several scholars to the conclusion that it was used for blood libations.<sup>80</sup> Of course, other liquids, such as oil, wine and milk, may also have been used in connection with sacrifice. It is also likely that dif-

<sup>75</sup> Ch. Kardara, 'Απλώματα Νάξου, Athens 1977, 6, pl. 6; Long (ATS, 67) discusses the scene in connection with sacrifice. I tend to think that, because of his gesture, the male figure is a deity receiving offerings, rather than a worshipper.

<sup>76</sup> G. Mylonas (*Mycenae rich in gold*, Athens 1983, 205) thinks that the figure on CMS I, 80 is a haruspex about to examine the intestines of the pig and predict the future. We have no evidence of hepatoscopy in the Bronze Age Aegean, however. For the introduction of hepatoscopy in Greece in the Archaic period: W. Burkert, *Die orientalisierende Epoche in der griechischen Religion und Literatur* (= SBHeidelberg 1984, 1), pp. 48–57.

<sup>77</sup> PM IV, fig. 167. J. Betts, *TUAS* 6, 1981, 1–8, identifies the types of bearded men as priests.

<sup>78</sup> CMS VIII, 110 a–c.

<sup>79</sup> Long, *ATS*, 67.

<sup>80</sup> Matz, *Göttererscheinung*, 403 f.; Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 185; Long (ATS, 35) postulates a mixing of liquids for the pouring scene. Platon (*Minoika iera*, 466) postulates blood libations in the Pillar Crypts. One problem is how the Minoans kept the blood from coagulating. An experiment conducted by Dr. G. Gaines, Univ. of Vancouver, on my behalf, showed that if blood is mixed with vinegar or red wine, coagulation is prevented. See also below, n. 120.



ferent types of vessels reflect different libation types and that this depended on the occasion.<sup>81</sup> More will be said about this later.

The Hagia Triada Sarcophagus (Fig. 15) provides a starting point for our discussion because different types of libations are depicted. On the side with the dead, a pouring scene is shown to the left. A procession of two women, dressed dissimilarly, and a lyre-player are taking part. The officiating priestess, dressed in a garb of real or imitation animal hide,<sup>82</sup> pours the contents of a bucket into a larger vessel, a krater. The latter is standing between double axes, on which birds are perched. Paribeni thought that he recognized a red line running from the bucket into the krater. On the basis of this he conjectured that the vessel contained blood.<sup>83</sup> No such traces are visible nowadays, and Long suggests that a mixture of water and wine was poured.<sup>84</sup>

On the other side of the sarcophagus, the side with the sacrificial scene, another type of libation is depicted. To the right there is a priestess, dressed in a hide-skirt. She is standing in front of a low altar on top of which there is a bowl. Above, hovering in space, is a libation jug, the contents of which are evidently destined for the bowl. Still higher, there is a basket of fruit. The representation is quite clear. A libation is to be performed and fruit is to be deposited on the altar.

Let us now turn to the gesture of the woman. Her hands are stretched, palms down, repeating the gesture of the officiating priestess in the sacrificial scene. This repetition is hardly accidental and I think a connection between the two rituals is implied. The crucial question here, however, is what kinds of libations are depicted on the two sides of the sarcophagus. That they have different purposes could be argued because of the specialized vessels that are involved. I think, in agreement with Paribeni who had some evidence to go by, that blood was poured into the krater on the side with the dead.<sup>85</sup> Does this mean that a bloodless libation must be postulated for the other side with the sacrificial scene? Not necessarily, although one might think so because of the bowl of fruit which is a bloodless

offering.<sup>86</sup> Yet, even here a blood libation can be postulated on the following grounds. There is a direct connection with the sacrificial scene, which can be established not only by proximity, but also by the deliberate echoing of gestures. We have also seen that the blood of the bull was collected. Nor does the shape of the jug preclude a blood libation. On the contrary, such vessels are depicted on seals in contexts which suggest this cult practice, as we shall see later (cf. Fig. 18). If this is so, if, in other words, a blood libation cannot be excluded, why are there two different forms of the same cult practice on opposite sides of the sarcophagus? And what is its relationship with sacrifice?

To answer this question, it is necessary to make a short digression and analyze the iconographical elements of the offering scene which is associated with the sacrifice. The cult structures and objects present are: a low altar; a tall shaft, topped with a double axe on which a bird is perched; and an architectural construction with four horns of consecration and an olive tree. What is this structure? I believe that it is a special construction on which the sacred tree was placed.<sup>87</sup> Note the similarity with the Zakros rhyton,<sup>88</sup> which also is topped by horns and has a door, decorated with spirals.<sup>89</sup> The

<sup>81</sup> Two kinds of libations can be distinguished in Greek religion: *σπονδή*, which involves pouring from a pitcher or bowl, and *χοή*, in which the vessel is inverted and its contents emptied. See Burkert, *GR*, 122. A similar distinction may well be applicable to Minoan religion where different types of libation vessels were used: pitchers, conical and animal-shaped rhyta and conical cups; the latter are often found inverted.

<sup>82</sup> E. Sapouna-Sakellarakis, *Μινωικὸν ζῶμα*, Athens 1971, 123, 176, 178.

<sup>83</sup> *MonAnt* 19, 1908, 33 f.

<sup>84</sup> Long, *ATS*, 36. See also *MMR*, 433; Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 185.

<sup>85</sup> Matz, *Götterscheinung*, 404.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 403. Here I disagree with Matz, who inferred a bloodless type because the vessel is a pitcher.

<sup>87</sup> N. Marinatos, *Tree*.

<sup>88</sup> *Supra* n. 30.

<sup>89</sup> Spiral-decorated doors may be pseudo-doors or niches for communication with the beyond, cf. the false doors in Egyptian tombs.

shaft and this tree-shrine do not rest on the same groundline. The shaft, in particular, stands on a chequer pattern of alternating colours, which may well represent a pavement.<sup>90</sup> I think we are meant to understand the structures as not lined up behind one another but as spread out in the sacred area. Thus, we have here a *condensation* of a complex scene. This, of course, is hardly the place to discuss its interpretation so brilliantly made by others, notably Nilsson, Matz and, recently, Long.<sup>91</sup> Still, a few points can be made insofar as they are relevant to this inquiry into the meaning of bull sacrifice. The focal point of the ritual is the tree-shrine and the double axe surmounted by a bird.<sup>92</sup> It is therefore reasonable to infer that the offerings and the sacrifice are related to the tree cult. In my view, the whole procedure can be simply summarized as a ritual of renewal. This makes the sacrificial scene comprehensible; there is a deliberate juxtaposition between death, symbolized by the dead animal, and life, symbolized by the tree. This is not just a contrast but a continuum; there can be no life, or regeneration, without death.<sup>93</sup> To return to the relationship between the libation and sacrifice, I believe that the libation, accompanying the ritual near the tree-shrine, could well have contained blood. As to the pouring scene on the other side, it is probably a chthonic or funerary rite, the other aspect of Minoan cult, which is distinct from and yet related to regeneration.<sup>94</sup> There is every reason to think that in Crete ceremonies of death and renewal were closely connected, as they were in Egypt.<sup>95</sup>

My interpretation of the two sides of the sarcophagus can be summarized as follows. On one side there is the death aspect connected with funerary cult: blood libations are poured into a bucket. Perhaps this bucket was perforated and the contents eventually sipped into the earth.

On the other side there is animal sacrifice connected with renewal. This renewal is symbolized by the tree-shrine and the bowl of fruit above the altar. Here too a blood libation would have been poured into the bowl, which is placed on the altar, connecting the death of the animal to the regeneration in nature.

Thus, blood libations could have had different meanings depending on the occasions in which they were performed, on the vessels in which they were contained and, in general, on the cultic complex through which they were defined.

One final point. In the discussion of *salle β* at Malia and the House of the Sacrificed Oxen at Knossos, we have noted the existence of receptacles and offering tables and I suggested that libations were accompanying sacrifice. This is confirmed by the iconography of the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus.

## 2. Libations and horns of consecration.

On a sealing from Crete there is an interesting scene. A seated female (goddess or a high-ranking priestess?) is pouring the contents of a pitcher into a large two-handled vessel which stands between horns of consecration (*Fig. 16*). What concerns us here is the presence of the horns in connection with the libation scene and their role in sacrificial ritual.<sup>96</sup> It is to the nature of the connection between horns, libations and sacrifice that we shall next turn our attention.

A fresco from Xeste 3, Thera depicts a construction resembling the tree-shrine of the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus. Similar to the latter, it has a spiral door, or niche, and is topped with horns of consecration. There is no tree in this case but the spiral door is decorated with lilies; thus, here too the vegetation aspect is present (*Fig. 17*). However, there is a new element: red liquid is trickling down from the horns. On this evidence it is safe to postulate a blood liba-

<sup>90</sup> Long, *ATS*, 66.

<sup>91</sup> *Supra*, notes 84 and 85.

<sup>92</sup> *MMR*, 431; Matz, *Göttererscheinung*, 402 ff.

<sup>93</sup> Burkert, *HN*, 326. For the connection of the tree with renewal: Sourvinou-Inwood (*supra* n. 39); N. Marinatos, *Tree*.

<sup>94</sup> *MMR*, 433 ff.; Ch. Picard, *Les religions préhelléniques*, Paris 1948, 168; Matz, *Göttererscheinung*, 398, 407; Long, *ATS*, 67 ff.

<sup>95</sup> Bleeker, *Egyptian festivals* (*supra* n. 1), 57–60, 69, 139 f.

<sup>96</sup> *MMR*, 190.



*Archaeological and iconographical evidence*



Fig. 16. Seated female performing libation. Sealing from Knossos.

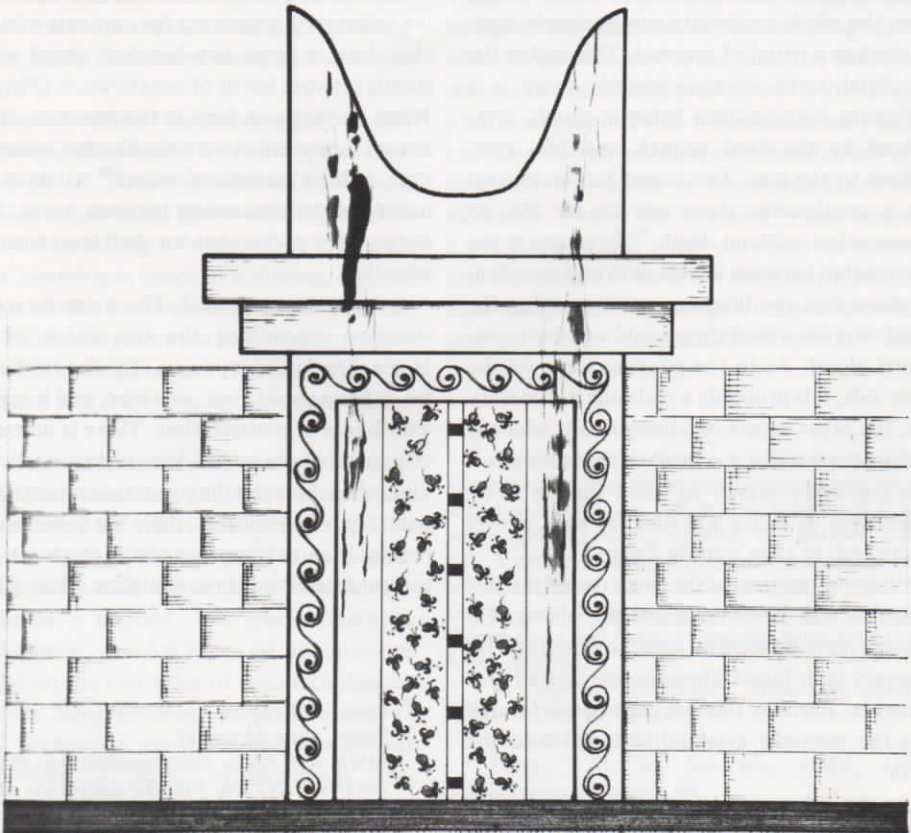


Fig. 17. Shrine topped with horns of consecration from which blood is dripping. Fresco from Xeste 3, Akrotiri. Slightly reconstructed drawing.



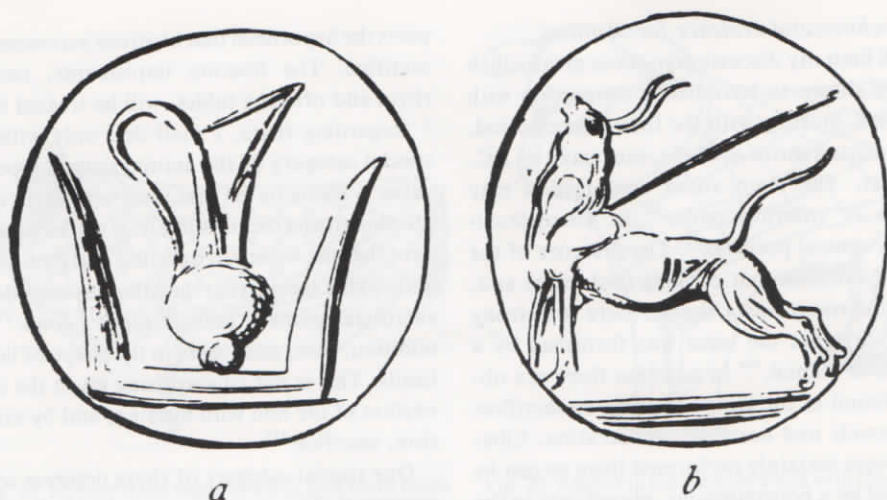


Fig. 18. Bull struck by a spear. Libation scene. Two-sided seal from Crete.

tion, which was poured over the horns.<sup>97</sup> The connection with sacrifice, although indirect, is unmistakable: the blood must come from a sacrificed animal. Confirmation comes from a Cretan seal, engraved on two sides (Fig. 18). On one side, a bull, struck by a spear, is depicted; on the other, a libation jug, standing between sacred horns. The relationship of the two scenes would not have been clear, had it not been for the afore-mentioned painting from Xeste 3. But on the evidence of the latter, the message becomes more obvious. The libation jug contains the blood of the struck bull and a blood libation will be poured over the horns. The above explains the frequent association of horns and libation jugs which so often appear on seals.<sup>98</sup> It also explains the representation on CMS I, 491 where a bull, a bucranium and a libation jug are depicted together, an unmistakable allusion to sacrifice. Further proof of the libation—sacrifice—horn nexus is a “tea-pot” vase from Archanes with moulded miniature horns around the rim.<sup>99</sup> It was probably a libation jug. Finally, a pair of miniature horns of consecration were found in room 63 d at the palace of Phaistos.<sup>100</sup> They were painted red, an allusion to blood libations. The sealing from Malia (Fig. 11) confirms many of the above observations. The main scene depicts a sacrificed bull and a

male figure; these have already been discussed above. Let us turn our attention to the field of the sealing where some symbols occur. These are a sword; a triangular object, which, with Pelon, I identify as a bucranium, but which may also be a two-handled vessel; a conical rhyton and horns of consecration.<sup>101</sup> Here we have a compression of the sacrificial procedure: the instrument of sacrifice (sword), the symbol (bucranium), a libation vessel (rhyton) and the horns over which libations can be poured. Let us also remember that the libation scene on one side of the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus (Fig. 15) is taking place near the tree-shrine topped by the horns of consecration. Thus, it is evident that (blood) libations, horns and sacrifice form a cultic nexus.

<sup>97</sup> Ch. Doumas, *Praktika* 1980, 295, fig. 4; N. Marinatos, *Art and religion*, 74, fig. 53.

<sup>98</sup> A. Onassoglou, *Die talismanischen Siegel (CMS-BH 2)*, Berlin 1984, pls. VI, Nos. 34–38; VII, Nos. 40, 44–46, 48, 49; VIII, Nos. 73, 75(?).

<sup>99</sup> Sakellarakis, *Praktika* 1980, pl. 265 a–g.

<sup>100</sup> L. Pernier & L. Banti, *Il palazzo minoico di Festòs II*, Rome 1951, 163 ff.

<sup>101</sup> Pelon (supra n. 74), 133 f.

### 3. Architectural evidence for libations.

I shall limit my discussion to those areas which can be shown to have had a connection with sacrifice. Starting with the first palace period, there exists a shrine at Malia, excavated by J-C. Poursat. The main room contained a clay hearth or offering table,<sup>102</sup> in an approximately central position.<sup>103</sup> The presence of the hearth indicates that cooking took place and, since the room was a shrine, there is a strong possibility that the meat was furnished by a sacrificed animal.<sup>104</sup> In addition there are objects found in the shrine alluding to sacrifice: clay bovines and horns of consecration. Libations were certainly performed there as can be inferred by a bottomless jar, placed next to the entrance which the excavator assumes was a receptacle for libations.<sup>105</sup> Although scepticism has been expressed regarding the function of this jar,<sup>106</sup> its presence in the shrine, in the context of cult equipment, makes it hardly likely that it was "a common appendage of hearths meant for either storage or collection of refuse."<sup>107</sup>

The monumental *salle*  $\beta$ , from the first period of the palace of Malia, has already been considered. Here, let us observe that the jars embedded in the floor offer a good parallel to the shrine discussed above, notably because of the position in both cases of the jars next to the entrance.

From the neopalatial period it is mostly pillar crypts that furnish evidence for libations. Vats placed in front of pillars (note the similarity with the receptacle in front of the pillar in *salle*  $\beta$  at Malia) have been found in the crypts of the W wing of the Knossos palace,<sup>108</sup> the Royal Villa,<sup>109</sup> and the Little Palace at Knossos.<sup>110</sup> Of these, the first one only has furnished certain proof of sacrificial ritual. Ashes, burned animal bones and fragments of ritual vases were found beneath the paving of the neopalatial crypt on an earlier floor.<sup>111</sup>

## V. Animal rhyta and libation tables

In the preceding section we have seen how iconographical and architectural evidence sup-

ports the hypothesis that libations accompanied sacrifice. The libation implements, namely rhyta and offering tables, will be treated here.

Regarding rhyta, I shall deal only with the special category of the animal shaped type because it seems to me that their very form is an allusion to sacrificial animals. It can be no accident that the vessels in question correspond exactly to the species that the Minoans considered sacrificial animals: bulls,<sup>112</sup> pigs,<sup>113</sup> goats.<sup>114</sup> In addition, there exist rhyta in the shape of lions' heads. This is not so surprising given the connection of the lion with hunting, and by extension, sacrifice.<sup>115</sup>

One special category of rhyta deserves some comments. These represent standing bulls, their

<sup>102</sup> J-C. Poursat, *BCH* 90, 1966, 514—551, esp. 521.

<sup>103</sup> P. Metaxa Muhly, *AJA* 88, 1984, 116, 120, has proved that this structure, usually referred to as an offering table, is a hearth. I cannot, however, follow her in her exaggerated scepticism regarding the religious function of both the hearth and the room.

<sup>104</sup> The relative rarity of hearths in Minoan Crete suggests that the diet consisted, to a great extent, of raw food, vegetables, milk, honey. Cooked food, and especially meat, must have been consumed on festive occasions, almost certainly after sacrifice. See N. Marinatos and H. Martlew, 'Cult meals in Minoan Crete and Thera', forthcoming.

<sup>105</sup> Poursat (supra n. 102), 521 f., 531.

<sup>106</sup> Metaxa Muhly (supra n. 103), 118.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>108</sup> Platon, *Minoika iera*, 466.

<sup>109</sup> *PM* II, 41.

<sup>110</sup> Platon, *Minoika iera*, 466.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 433.

<sup>112</sup> Marinatos-Hirmer, pls. 90, 98; *PM* I, 188—190; *PM* II, 259, fig. 154; 260, fig. 155. An early (MM IIB) example of a bull's head rhyton was found in Kommos, Crete. S. Hiller, *Archiv für Orientalforschung* 29/30, 1983/84, 316, fig. 12. For a discussion of animal head rhyta: K. Tuchelt, *Tiergefäße*, Berlin 1962, 36—40, 43—45.

<sup>113</sup> *Thera* VII, pl. 17 b; Ch. Zervos, *L'art de la Crète*, pl. 580.

<sup>114</sup> L. H. Sackett & M. R. Popham, *BSA* 65, 1970, 217 f., fig. 9 and pl. 57 a.

<sup>115</sup> Marinatos-Hirmer, pl. 99; *Thera* II, pl. 37.1; *Thera* V, pl. 80. On the connection of these animals with hunting and sacrifice see section XI on "Symbolic representations" further on.



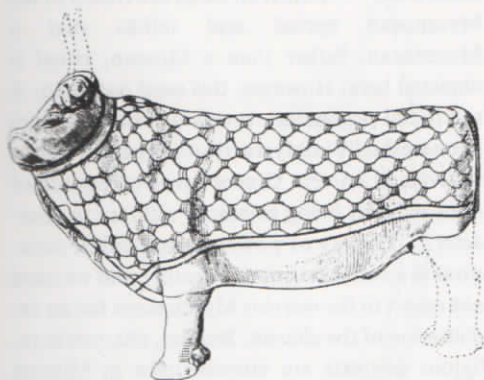


Fig. 19. Rhyton in the shape of a bull with blunt horns and a net on its back. From Pseira, Crete.

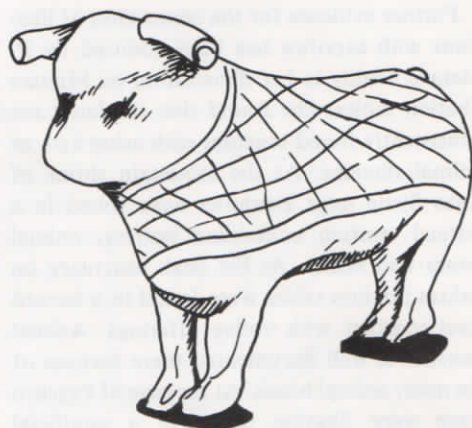


Fig. 20. Rhyton in the shape of a bull with blunt horns and a net on its back. From Akrotiri, Thera.

backs covered by a net and having horns whose tips have been cut. Two such specimens have been found in Crete and one in Thera (Figs. 19, 20).<sup>116</sup> The two interesting features are clearly the net and the blunt horns.<sup>117</sup> One can advance many interpretations regarding the meaning of these attributes but they will have the disadvantage of remaining speculations. It is tempting, for example, to connect the sawing of the horns with the equivalent Portuguese custom the purpose of which is to render the animal less dangerous for bull grappling, the latter being the standard procedure in Portuguese bull fights. One might argue that perhaps the Minoans did the same for their own games. However, bull leaping scenes, whether on frescoes or seals, always depict the bulls with sharp horns. It is therefore difficult to advance such theories. But the elements which stand out, the blunt horns and the net, give their own unambiguous message: passivity. The rhyta under discussion do not represent the wild, untamed bull but the animal which has come under human control. This leads one to the further thought that it is a sacrificial victim.

The animal and animal head rhyta are, then, appropriate vessels for libations in connection with sacrifice. They are attested in a variety of cult places, ranging from palaces<sup>118</sup> to peak sanctuaries.<sup>119</sup> The precise relationship with

sacrifice, however, is elusive. Were the rhyta used for libations *only* in connection with sacrificial ritual, or as substitutes for it?

As to the liquid in the libation vessels, Matz suggested that it was red wine, the equivalent of blood.<sup>120</sup>

Another point worth noting is that animal rhyta were used sometimes *together with tripod offering tables* which means that the offering tables were used as receptacles for libations and that the two formed a set. Such a set has been found in Thera, where a boar's head rhyton and a tripod offering table were stored together.<sup>121</sup> The bull rhyton, discussed above, was also found in the proximity of an offering table.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Crete: *PM* I, 188—190; II, 260. Thera: *Thera* III, 12, col.pl. A2.

<sup>117</sup> Matz (supra n. 6), 219, thinks that the net signifies the capturing of the wild bull, while Sp. Marinatos, *Thera* III, 59, speaks of a sacral net.

<sup>118</sup> *PM* II, 827.

<sup>119</sup> Rutkowski, *Cult places*, 169.

<sup>120</sup> Matz (supra n. 6), 216. Libations accompanied sacrifice also in Egypt. On a tomb painting, where a sacrificial scene is depicted, a libation is poured over the dead animal. K. Lange & M. Hirmer, *Ägypten*, Munich 1975, pl. 83.

<sup>121</sup> *Thera* VII, 14 f., pl. 17 b.

<sup>122</sup> *Thera* II, 19 ff.; III, 112.

Further evidence for the connection of libations with sacrifice has been adduced by P. Metaxa Muhly in her dissertation on Minoan libation tables. She found that the latter are consistently found together with ashes and/or animal remains. At the mountain shrine of Kato Syme most examples were found in a burned stratum containing pottery, animal bones and horns. At the peak sanctuary on Juktas libation tables were found in a burned level together with votive offerings. Animal sacrifice is well documented there because of the many animal bones. At the cave of Psychro there were libation tables in a sacrificial layer.<sup>123</sup> In the Temple Repositories at Knossos libation tables were found in one of the cists. They were mixed with black earth, greasy from animal fat; deer horns were also mentioned.<sup>124</sup> Thus, both animal rhyta and libation tables can be associated with sacrificial ritual. To judge from the finds and architectural evidence, libations were performed either inside the shrine, into the jars embedded in the floor, or onto portable offering or libation tables.

## VI. Processions

Processions are an integral part of religious festivities. They are means of allowing a large community to participate either actively by taking part or passively by watching. In the great Oriental cultures, watching processions was the main, if not the only, means of participation for the populace in religious rites.

In Crete, the causeways, which connect the palaces with different major buildings in the town,<sup>125</sup> must have been processional ways.<sup>126</sup> Sacrificial processions are attested iconographically.<sup>127</sup> Starting with wall-paintings, there exist several fresco fragments from the N Threshing Floor Area in the palace of Knossos. S. Alexiou reconstructed the composition as a man in a chariot.<sup>128</sup> M. Cameron later joined more fragments to it which he attributed to the same hand. In his new reconstruction (Fig. 21) the charioteer is followed by a bull.<sup>129</sup> He suggests "... a ceremonial procession of military

people to a cult place where the bull was to be sacrificed?"<sup>130</sup> Cameron dates the fresco to the Mycenaean period and thinks that a Mycenaean, rather than a Minoan, ritual is depicted here. However, this need not be so. A sacrificial procession, involving chariots, does not necessarily imply warrior-like people. Some festivals in ancient Greece involved parade of arms without being primarily military in character.<sup>131</sup> Display of power during public occasions is a common enough feature and we need not resort to the warrior Mycenaeans for an explanation of the chariot. Besides, chariots in religious contexts are attested even in Minoan Crete: the short sides of the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus show chariots with mortals and goddesses(?), while J. H. Crouwel has shown that "... a use in religious or funerary ceremonies is documented particularly for the dual chariot."<sup>132</sup>

A sacrificial procession is also depicted on the Ship Fresco frieze from room 5, West House, Thera (Fig. 22), although this has not been generally noticed.<sup>133</sup> Youths are marching towards the harbour, leading a bull presumably

<sup>123</sup> Muhly (supra n. 32), 339.

<sup>124</sup> *PM I*, 496 f.; Muhly (supra n. 32), 339.

<sup>125</sup> *PM II*, 394–400.

<sup>126</sup> N. Marinatos, 'Public festivals in the west courts of the palaces' forthcoming in *The function of the Minoan palaces*, eds. R. Hägg and N. Marinatos (*ActaAth-4*<sup>o</sup>, 35).

<sup>127</sup> For Mycenaean sacrificial processions see a fresco from Pylos, M. Lang, *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia II: The frescoes*, Princeton, N. J. 1969, pl. 119. See also S. Peterson, *Wall paintings in the Aegean Bronze Age: The procession frescoes*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1982.

<sup>128</sup> S. Alexiou, *AA* 1964, 785–804, figs. 1–14.

<sup>129</sup> M. A. S. Cameron, *AA* 1967, 330–344, fig. 12.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

<sup>131</sup> Examples are the Panathenaia: H. W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians*, London 1977, 43; or Hekatombaia at Argos: Burkert, *HN*, 187.

<sup>132</sup> J. H. Crouwel, *Chariots and other means of land transport in Bronze Age Greece* (Allard Pierson series, 3), Amsterdam 1981, 135 f., esp. 145.

<sup>133</sup> N. Marinatos, *West House*, 8; *Art and Religion*, 54.



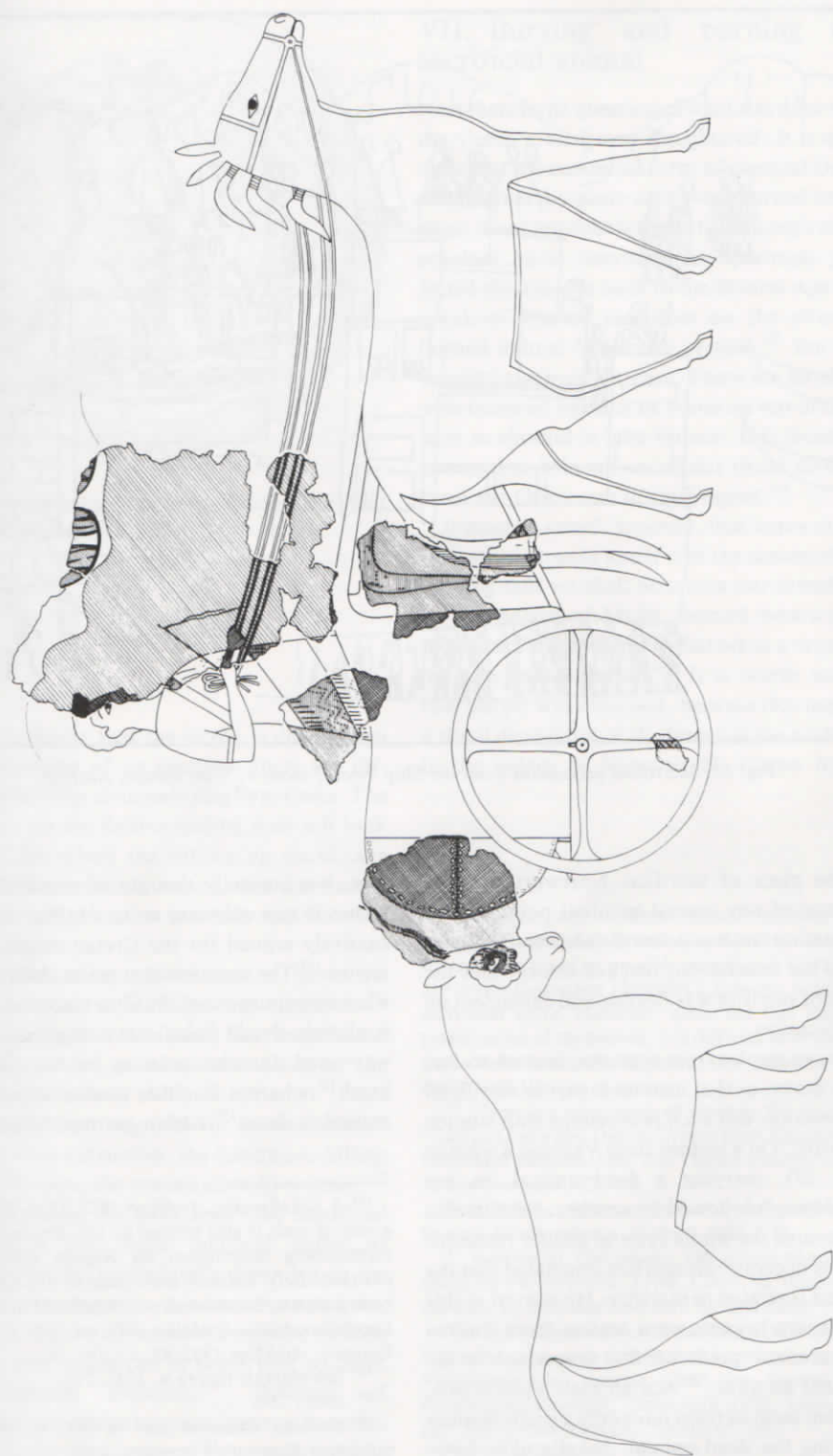


Fig. 21. Chariot procession and sacrificial (?) bull. Fresco fragment from Knossos.

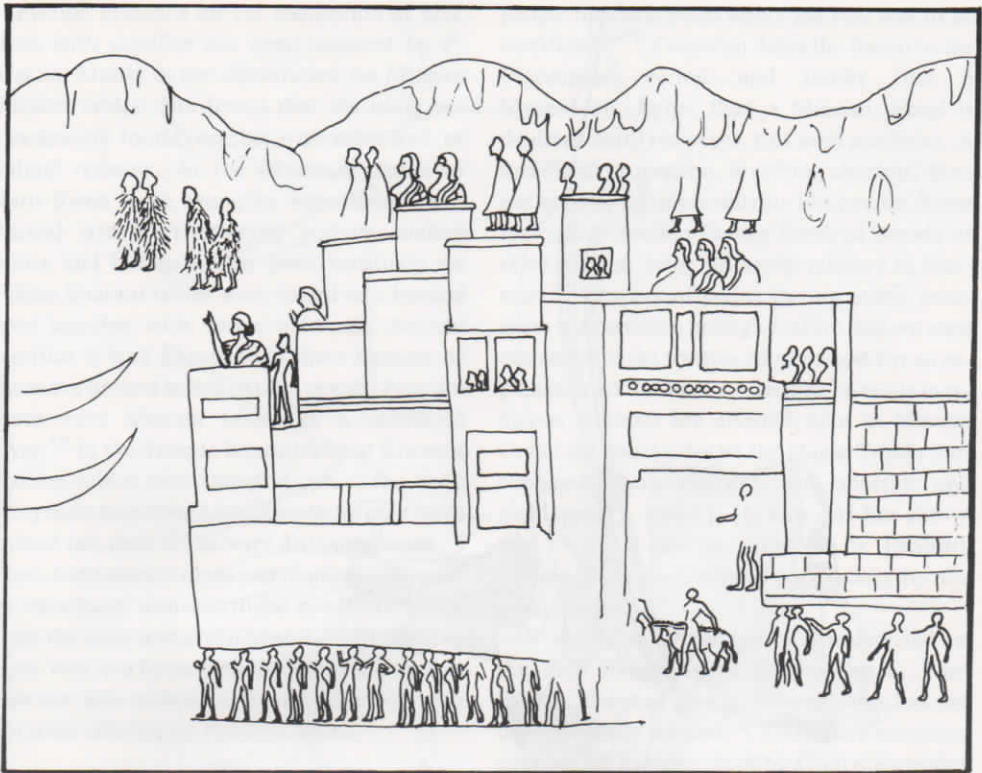


Fig. 22. Sacrificial procession from the Ship Frieze, room 5, West House, Akrotiri.

to the place of sacrifice. Noteworthy is the absence of any special terminal point for the procession, such as a sacrificial altar. This supports the conclusion, reached above, that the place of sacrifice was flexible and dependent on the occasion.

The examples from frescoes, treated so far, have shown us that men took part in sacrificial processions. But such processions with women also exist. On a lentoid from Vapheio a woman (Fig. 23), carrying a dead animal on her shoulders, is followed by another. Sakellarakis has treated the whole cycle of similar representations in glyptic art and has concluded that the subject is related to sacrifice. He arrived at this conclusion because on a sealing from Zakros the terminal point of the procession is indicated: an altar.<sup>134</sup> Not all seals show a procession; most of them have only a single woman carrying the dead animal. Sakellarakis, how-

ever, has correctly thought of combining the scenes in one coherent unity. He has also persuasively argued for the Cretan origin of the scenes.<sup>135</sup> The question that arises, however, is what is the purpose of the altar since the animal is already dead? Sakellarakis suggests that it was used for the severing of the victim's head,<sup>136</sup> whereas Boulotis doubts whether the animal is dead.<sup>137</sup> Although there is no good

<sup>134</sup> J. Sakellarakis, *ArchEph* 1972, 255–275. This group of seals is also treated by Ch. Boulotis in his forthcoming dissertation on Aegean processions (*AthMitt-BH*). Recently more seals of this type have been found in the sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas: V. Lambrinouidakis, *Praktika* 1975, pl. 149 b and at Knossos: *ArchRep* 1982/83, 77, fig. 35.

<sup>135</sup> Sakellarakis (supra n. 134), 275.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>137</sup> Boulotis discusses this in his, as yet, unpublished dissertation (supra n. 134).





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Fig. 23. Priestess carrying a sacrificial animal. Seal from Vapheio. *CMS I*, 220.

reason to doubt that the victim is dead, given the lifelessness of its position, there are difficulties with the dismembering hypothesis. The structure on the Zakros sealing does not look like a table where the cutting up could take place. It is possible, however, that the victims were carried by women to a holy spot for consecration.

Note that most representations leave the species vague, as Boulotis has observed.<sup>138</sup> Given also the fact that many have been found on the mainland, a misunderstanding of the original scheme may well have occurred. If this hypothesis is correct, then the involvement of priestesses is instructive: the hunting or killing is done by men, the consecration by women.<sup>139</sup>

In summary, we have seen that sacrificial processions may have involved males or females and this undoubtedly depended on the nature of the occasion. It is important to note, however, that we never have a mixture of both sexes, a fact which can be confirmed by other iconographical evidence.<sup>140</sup> Division of capacities and duties between the sexes is accentuated in the ritual sphere.<sup>141</sup>

## VII. Burying and burning the sacrificial animal

Next there is the question of what was done with the victim after it was slaughtered. It is quite clear that the canonical form of classical Greek ritual, whereby parts of it were burned on an altar, is not applicable to Crete, although many scholars have, unconsciously perhaps, projected this custom back to the Bronze Age and speak of burned sacrifices on the altar, if burned animal bones are present.<sup>142</sup> But this cannot have been the case. There are no altars with traces of burning or bones on top of them such as abound in later Greece. It is therefore patent that Minoan sacrificial ritual differed from the Greek one in this respect.<sup>143</sup>

It must be noted, however, that bones mixed with ashes do exist and it is to the nature of the burning that we shall now turn our attention. At the palace of Malia, burned bones were found in a stuccoed pit (bothros) in a crypt of the new palace period.<sup>144</sup> It is worth noting that the pit was stuccoed, because this implies a ritual deposition of the bones in the bothros. In the palace of Knossos, N. Platon found

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Women are seldom shown holding the sacrificial instrument even in scenes where they officiate in the ritual. A possible exception is *CMS II.3*, 213 where the author identifies a priestess holding a sacrificial knife. However, given the bad state of preservation of the lentoid, it is difficult to be certain that a knife is actually depicted. It is men who normally hold the axe or mace.

<sup>140</sup> There is a separation of sexes in the so-called "Sacred Grove and Dance" fresco from Knossos: N. Marinatos (*supra n.* 126). For Thera frescoes: *idem*, *Art and religion*, 52–72.

<sup>141</sup> R. Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and purification in early Greek religion*, Oxford 1983, 177.

<sup>142</sup> Rutkowski, *Cult places*, 136, speaks of an altar fire at the Psychro cave. Tyree, *Caves*, 42, thinks that the altar in the same cave was for sacrifices.

<sup>143</sup> Yavis (*supra n.* 24), 41; Burkert, *GR*, 94; *idem*, 'Opferbräuche und Gesellschaftsstruktur', in *Der Religionswandel unserer Zeit im Spiegel der Religionswissenschaft*, Darmstadt 1976, 168–186, esp. 180 ff; Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 166.

<sup>144</sup> Platon, *Minoika iera*, 450.

bones on the older floor of the W pillar crypt. They were mixed with ashes and conical cups.<sup>145</sup> At Zakros, the same excavator found burned animal bones in one of the palace wells together with fragments of offering tables, animal figurines, grape pips, pumice and conical cups.<sup>146</sup> Finally, there exists a pit at Akrotiri, belonging to the Middle Cycladic level, which contained animal bones, horns and ashes mixed with organic substances, fragments of burned pots and remnants of fava beans.<sup>147</sup>

There is little doubt that the above constituted offerings. The conical cups, offering tables, animal figurines, animal horns and even the pumice at Zakros speak of this.

Burned animal bones (jaw of a pig) and upturned conical cups were excavated in rock crevices of a large pillar room (or court?) at Sklavokambos. This area was considered a kitchen by the excavator, Sp. Marinatos,<sup>148</sup> but N. Platon identified it as a crypt.<sup>149</sup> To me it seems that it was a ritual dining area; this would explain the deposition of bones in the rock crevices and the conical cups, which testify to dining activities.<sup>150</sup>

A great number of bones, mixed with ashes, come from peak sanctuaries or mountain shrines.<sup>151</sup> At Kato Syme, A. Lembessi reports bones mixed with figurines and other offerings in the ash layers.<sup>152</sup> Sometimes bones, mixed with ashes, were thrown in rock crevices or chasms even on peak sanctuaries.<sup>153</sup> The same practice, the throwing of offerings into crevices, is also attested for caves.<sup>154</sup>

Let us now attempt an interpretation of these rituals. They are widely spread in urban shrines, as well as in rural ones. Two different forms can be distinguished. Firstly, there is the total burning of pieces of meat (never the whole animal) together with votive offerings which is attested mainly in peak sanctuaries and mountain shrines. As has often been observed, bonfires were lit in which various types of votives were thrown, perhaps in order to reach the divinity above.<sup>155</sup> Secondly, there is the burying of parts of the *cooked* animal. Probably we are dealing here with remnants of the sacrificial meal which was deposited in stuccoed pits or crevices as an offering to the chthonic divinities

or the chthonic aspect of the goddess of nature.<sup>156</sup>

That some of these offerings were remnants of meals can be concluded because of the presence of conical cups, burned pots or even fava beans, as in Thera.<sup>157</sup> This need not always have been the case, but it is clear that the burying was of a ritual nature. Thus, we have here two practices, one of which involves sending the meat below, through burying, the other sending it above, through burning. The existence of animal figurines both in Thera and in the peak sanctuaries, suggests that the meat in question was from a sacrificed animal. This dual practice can be regarded as a polar ritual involving celestial and chthonic deities. However, both practices are characteristic of peak sanctuaries and caves; the former being the typical abode of celestial deities, the latter of chthonic ones. As we have seen, offerings were thrown in the chasms of peak sanctuaries, whereas bones,

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 433.

<sup>146</sup> Platon (supra n. 30), 196 f.

<sup>147</sup> Thera II, 21.

<sup>148</sup> Sp. Marinatos, *ArchEph* 1939/41, 69 ff. It is noteworthy that Marinatos at first pronounced himself in favour of a ritual interpretation although he later changed his mind.

<sup>149</sup> Platon, *Minoika iera*, 452 f.

<sup>150</sup> M. H. Wiener, 'Crete and the Cyclades in LM I: the tale of the conical cups', in *Minoan Thalassocracy* (supra n. 47), 17–26, esp. 20.

<sup>151</sup> One should draw a distinction between peak sanctuaries and mountain shrines. Kato Syme, for example, hardly qualifies as a peak sanctuary although it is on a mountain. For a definition see A. Peatfield, *BSA* 78, 1983, 273–279.

<sup>152</sup> A figurine of a bovid for example, A. Lembessi, *Praktika* 1975, 324.

<sup>153</sup> Platon (supra n. 2), 103, 120, 142, 151; Karetsov, in *SCABA*, 146.

<sup>154</sup> Rutkowski, *Cult places*, 136.

<sup>155</sup> Platon (supra n. 2), 151; *MMR*, 75; Rutkowski, *Cult places*, 180 with bibliography.

<sup>156</sup> Note that this form of the ritual differs from the typical Greek chthonic rite: P. Stengel, *Opferbräuche der Griechen*, Berlin 1910, 20 f.

<sup>157</sup> Here one should be careful lest the custom reflects a local Cycladic practice, not a Minoan one. However, the parallels with Crete are striking enough to warrant the inclusion of this case.



mixed with ashes, have been found also in caves. Thus, I find it difficult to accept the distinction made by Nilsson and others that there existed two very distinct types of divinities requiring different types of worship.<sup>158</sup> It is impossible to tell how many deities were involved but one fact emerges clearly: *there was an essential unity in Minoan cult.*

The same conclusion can be reached if we analyze the finds of the Temple Repositories at Knossos. They represent the sea (sea-shells) and land (animals, flowers). As G. Gesell has correctly observed, these allude to the domains of the goddess.<sup>159</sup>

In the light of this, we can conclude that burying and burning parts of the sacrificial animal can be considered a popular ritual which was practiced in all types of shrines and must have been related to the celestial and chthonic aspects of the cult.

## VIII. Cult meals

There is little doubt that the sacrificed animal was eaten. The evidence for this is indirect, furnished mostly by animal bones, but comparisons with other religions show that cult meals, following sacrifice, are an almost universal custom.<sup>160</sup>

Animal bones are well attested in tombs,<sup>161</sup> where we have also evidence of toasting rituals<sup>162</sup> and perhaps even cooking. P. Metaxa Muhly identified circular hearths at Chrysolakkos.<sup>163</sup> The latter were thought by Demargne to have been used for the burning of incense.<sup>164</sup>

Let us now examine the evidence from urban shrines. Two rooms with rectangular hearths have been found at Phaistos in the first palace period. One room was situated near the central court; it was undoubtedly associated with eating because of the hearth but we cannot make a definite connection with sacrifice.<sup>165</sup>

The other room (VIII) is part of the sanctuary complex facing the W court. It has been considered a shrine by Pernier<sup>166</sup> because of the presence of libation vessels and a triton shell. A rectangular hearth with a cupule was placed ap-

proximately in the centre of the room. Its rim was decorated with bovids and spirals.<sup>167</sup> The decoration cannot be accidental and probably indicates that meat was cooked on the hearth. (In fact this is probably the only food which could be cooked on this structure.) Egyptian offering tables often bear images of the offerings which should be deposited on them.<sup>168</sup> There exists further proof of sacrifice in the form of bones, which were recovered from the neighbouring room VII.<sup>169</sup>

At Malia, J-C. Poursat excavated a protopalatial shrine with three rooms. Two of these were storage areas, whereas the third one contained a rectangular hearth, similar to the one at Phaistos, a triton shell, a libation receptacle and offering tables (or portable braziers). Two terracotta animal figurines were found in one of the store-rooms (see also above section IV.3).<sup>170</sup> Can we infer a sacrificial meal in this case? The evidence is indirect: the animal

<sup>158</sup> *MMR*, 396 ff.; Rutkowski, *Cult places*, 151, 180.

<sup>159</sup> G. Gesell: 'The place of the goddess in Minoan society', in *Minoan society* (supra n. 25), 95. See also Sp. Marinatos, *ArchEph* 1937, 290 for a monotheistic interpretation of Minoan religion. Essential unity of cult is postulated also by B. C. Dietrich, *The origins of Greek religion*, Berlin 1974, 128 ff., esp. 162 f.

<sup>160</sup> Cult meals are well attested in many religions including the Greek one: Burkert, *GR*, 174—176.

<sup>161</sup> Supra n. 2; Pini (supra n. 4), 27.

<sup>162</sup> Branigan (supra n. 4), 93.

<sup>163</sup> Metaxa Muhly (supra n. 103), 114.

<sup>164</sup> P. Demargne, *Mallia, Nécropoles I* (ÉtCrét 7), Paris 1945, 34 f.

<sup>165</sup> D. Levi, *Festòs e la civiltà minoica* (Incunabula Graeca 60), Rome 1976, 265—271; Metaxa Muhly (supra n. 103), 116.

<sup>166</sup> L. Pernier, *Il palazzo minoico di Festòs I*, Rome 1935, 195—238; Banti (supra n. 100), 577.

<sup>167</sup> Metaxa Muhly (supra n. 103) has shown that the structure is a hearth.

<sup>168</sup> Many such offering tables are to be seen in the Cairo Museum.

<sup>169</sup> Banti (supra n. 100), 577: Burned bones were found in room VII, which communicated directly with the outside and belonged to phase III of the shrine. It is very likely that sacrifices took place in the W court and dining inside room VII, which was furnished with a bench.

<sup>170</sup> Poursat (supra n. 102), 514—551, esp. 536.

figurines which were probably a substitute for a real offering, suggest sacrifice while the presence of the hearth and the benches point in the direction of ritual dining. Since the shrines are small, only a few banqueters, perhaps the priests, could have taken part in such meals.

Room I.12 in quartier Mu at Malia has been considered a shrine.<sup>171</sup> Here again, the evidence of sacrificial meals is indirect, furnished only by the existence of a hearth. But, as noted above, if meat was cooked and eaten in a sacred context, the conclusion that the meal was preceded by sacrifice lies close at hand.

The cult building at Anemospilia, already discussed briefly above (section II), yielded evidence of cooking and eating: the excavators, J. and E. Sakellarakis, report conical cups, bowls, cooking pots and animal bones scattered throughout the vestibule and inside some of the rooms.<sup>172</sup> Sacrifice, preceding the meals, may have taken place outdoors.

In the neopalatial period the rectangular hearth fell out of use. Instead, there exist other types of portable braziers.

In the area of the "agora" at Malia, H. and M. van Effenterre excavated a building, the "Maison de la façade à redans" which contained a kitchen as well as a larger room in which bulls' horns were found. The kitchen, XV, included a bronze tripod, a cooking pot, jars, ashes and carbonized wood. The biggest room, XVI, had an interesting circular terracotta construction, in the middle of which were ashes. The excavators suggest that it may have been a portable hearth.<sup>173</sup> Close to it a knife was found.<sup>174</sup> A model of a boat led to the conclusion that this complex may have had a ritual function.<sup>175</sup> The finds are telling: a kitchen installation, a knife (for the cutting of meat?), bulls' horns (the remnants of the sacrificial animal) and the boat model affirming the religious character of the procedure. In this case, a cult meal in connection with sacrifice can be safely assumed.<sup>176</sup>

In the central court of the palace of Malia, there exists a rectangular hearth pit with clear traces of burning. O. Pelon connects its use with bull sacrifices. He also notes, however, the fragility of the construction which means that

it was in use only for a limited period of time: one occasion or a series of occasions close in time.<sup>177</sup>

The S shrine of the palace of Malia, which was directly accessible from the outside, contained cooking equipment, buried in a pit.<sup>178</sup> This shows consumption of meals in the shrine. But can we infer a sacrificial meal? I believe so. In one of the granaries, which are directly connected with the shrine by proximity and by the occurrence of two symbols,<sup>179</sup> there were found horns of bulls, surely remnants of a sacrifice.<sup>180</sup>

At the palace of Zakros, N. Platon excavated a large room, XXXII, situated to the N of the central court. This has been identified as a kitchen because of the presence of a hearth, cooking pots, conical cups and animal bones among which were jaws of oxen.<sup>181</sup> It is tempting to reconstruct sacrifices in the central court and cooking/feasting in the easily accessible room XXXII.

At Nirou Chani, rooms 7 and 7a have been

<sup>171</sup> G. Daux, *BCH* 91, 1967, 885; Metaxa Muhly (supra n. 103), 116.

<sup>172</sup> Sakellarakis, *Praktika* 1979, 351—386.

<sup>173</sup> H. and M. van Effenterre, *Mallia, L'Agora* (ÉtCrét 17), Paris 1969, 97, pl. LV, 2.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 103, pl. LVIII, 1.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 102, pl. LV, 3 and 4.

<sup>176</sup> The room in which the bulls' horns were found can be connected with ritual because another clay boat model was found there, together with heads of clay figurines, miniature horns of consecration etc., van Effenterre (supra n. 173), 103 and pl. LVII.

<sup>177</sup> Pelon (supra n. 63), 56. See also J. W. Graham, *AJA* 74, 1970, 232.

<sup>178</sup> F. Chapouthier and P. Demargne, *Mallia, Palais IV* (ÉtCrét 12), Paris 1962, 10—11; N. Marinatos (supra n. 47), 167.

<sup>179</sup> An identical set of symbols, star and cross, were engraved on an incurved altar found in the shrine as well as on the pillar of one of the silos: Chapouthier & Demargne (supra n. 178), 10.

Also O. Pelon, *Mallia, Palais V. 1* (ÉtCrét 25), Paris 1980, 216 f.

<sup>180</sup> Chapouthier & Demargne (supra n. 178), 19. Recently, lots of horns of goats and conical cups were found NE of the palace of Malia in the fill of a magazine: *BCH* 108, 1984, 891.

<sup>181</sup> Platon, *Praktika* 1964, 152 ff.



identified as cultic by the excavator, S. Xanthoudides,<sup>182</sup> whereas Prof. Platon sees them as a Pillar Crypt complex.<sup>183</sup> In these rooms large double axes have been found. A clay partition separated the larger room 7 from 7a. In the latter there was blackened cookingware, ashes, bowls, jugs, cups and a blossom bowl.<sup>184</sup> There is little doubt that ritual dining took place in the building, perhaps after sacrifices out in the courtyard. Unfortunately, no animal bones are reported.

At Tyllissos, House A, bones of pigs, sheep and bulls (of the species *bos primogenius*) were found in the Pillar Crypt.<sup>185</sup> Here we have the cooking equipment in which the meat was boiled: bronze cauldrons which were found in the annex of the Crypt.

The evidence from Sklavokambos, where bones were thrown into rock crevices, has already been mentioned above (section VII). Ceremonial eating is well attested in many other cases as well, notably in connection with the Minoan Hall.<sup>186</sup> Since there is no certain evidence of sacrifice, however, this subject lies beyond the scope of this paper.

We now turn to the rural shrines. In the peak sanctuary of Juktas, evidence of meal consumption comes from room 1 which contained animal bones (mostly from sheep and goats), horns, ashes and conical cups. There was also an alabaster cup and a table of offerings.<sup>187</sup> The presence of bones in Kato Syme has been already noted above. Finally, there was a room with a bench at the sanctuary of Petsofas. If benches are an indication of dining, then this room was perhaps used for ritual meals.<sup>188</sup>

It has often been noted that animal bones are present in caves. It is, however, difficult to know if these are remnants of secular meals, from the period when caves were used as dwellings, or of sacrificial ones, when the caves were holy places.<sup>189</sup> Only in some cases can we be sure: when the bones are found close to an altar. Such a case is furnished by the cave of Skoteino, where a natural rock formation is considered an altar.<sup>190</sup> Next to it there were layers of ash, mixed with animal bones and potsherds.<sup>191</sup> The find context here suggests that these were remnants of ritual meals.

At Psychro there was a different type of altar, made of roughly hewn stones. Next to it was found an inscribed offering table and fragments of about 30 more pieces of the same type of object. Hogarth also reports bucrania, horns and bones (of pigs, oxen, boars, goats), a double axe, a bull-shaped rhyton. All of the above fit well with sacrificial ritual. It is especially tempting to associate the bull rhyton with the libations accompanying the sacrifice. In addition, there were fruit-stands and conical cups, vessels which would have been used in connection with meals.<sup>192</sup> In both the above cases the altars were not for burning the animal and I prefer to see them as for deposition.

The caves of Stavromyte, Ida and Kamareas also yielded bones.<sup>193</sup> In addition, the Kamareas cave had lots of pottery, some of which, for example cups and jugs, can be related to ceremonial feasting.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>182</sup> *ArchEph* 1922, 13.

<sup>183</sup> Platon, *Minoika iera*, 449.

<sup>184</sup> Xanthoudides (supra n. 182), 13.

<sup>185</sup> Hazzidakis (supra n. 21), 13; Platon, *Minoika iera*, 451.

<sup>186</sup> It is possible that ceremonial dining took place in polythyron halls, as many have yielded evidence of animal bones and/or cooking ware: Achladias: Platon, *Praktika* 1959, 214; Hagia Triada: E. Stefani & L. Banti, *ASAtene* 55, N. S. 39, 1977, 63–69; Thera: *Thera* IV, 18–20, pl. 24.

For a discussion of the function of the polythra: N. Marinatos and R. Hägg, 'On the ceremonial function of the Minoan polythyron', *OpAth* 16, 1986, 57–73.

<sup>187</sup> Karetsou, *Praktika* 1976, 410 f; *idem*, in *SCABA*, 147.

<sup>188</sup> Rutkowski, *Cult places*, 161 f; Platon, *Minoika iera*, 103, 152.

<sup>189</sup> E. T. Vermeule, *Götterkult* (= *ArchHom* III, ch. V), Göttingen 1974, 12, 61; Tyree, *Caves*, 13, 15, 18; Rutkowski, *Cult places*, 135.

<sup>190</sup> Rutkowski, *Cult places*, 136; Tyree, *Caves*, 22.

<sup>191</sup> Rutkowski, *Cult places*, 136.

<sup>192</sup> Hogarth, *BSA* 6, 1899/1900, 98–101; Rutkowski, *Cult places*, 137.

<sup>193</sup> Tyree, *Caves*, 35, 39, 60.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 39, 70.

## IX. The skull and horns of the sacrificed animal

It is not uncommon in ancient cultures to keep the skull and/or horns of the animals and decorate the walls of the sanctuary or sacred precinct. The custom goes back to neolithic times as the excavations of J. Mellaart in Çatal Hüyük have shown.<sup>195</sup> The practice was known also in ancient Greece<sup>196</sup> and has already been correctly postulated for Minoan Crete by Nilsson.<sup>197</sup> That this was the case can be proven by an abundance of archaeological and iconographical evidence. Bucrania have been found in the House of the Sacrificed Oxen and in Tholos A at Archanes.<sup>198</sup> It will be remembered that animal skulls are reported from the cave of Psychro.<sup>199</sup>

Iconographically, animal heads or skulls are frequently depicted on seals.<sup>200</sup> Here a comparison with a Mesopotamian seal is interesting. On this seal, an animal skull is placed on an altar and offered to a seated goddess.<sup>201</sup> It is likely that in Minoan Crete also the skulls, or horns, which have been found inside certain buildings were offerings to the divinity. It is mostly horns though that the Minoans kept, to judge from their wide distribution in tombs<sup>202</sup> (real horns or votive<sup>203</sup>), caves,<sup>204</sup> and peak sanctuaries.<sup>205</sup> Sometimes they were stored inside buildings which we call "villas", such as at Hagia Triada, where they were inside storage jars,<sup>206</sup> or in Xeste 3, Thera.<sup>207</sup> In such cases we have to be a little cautious because animal horns could have served a commercial purpose, rather than cultic, if they were used as a raw material. The horns at Akrotiri belonged to deer. Although an economic use of them cannot be excluded, the essentially religious character of the building reinforces the ritual interpretation. Cores of deer horns were found also in the W repositories of the palace of Knossos, together with organic substances, no doubt remnants of sacrifice.<sup>208</sup>

One of the most interesting cases is furnished by one of the silos at Malia which contained horns of bulls. The suggestion of the excavators, that they acted as scarecrows is not very convincing,<sup>209</sup> and there remains but one

explanation: they were remnants of sacrifices, performed in connection with the harvest.

Finally, the custom persists into the Greek period.<sup>210</sup> In the temple of Dreros, Sp. Marinatos found horns of goats, deposited inside the temple. He suggested that some of these antedate the building.<sup>211</sup> Could it be that here we have a continuity with the Minoan custom?

Although the above survey is not comprehensive, sufficient proof has been furnished to show that horns, belonging to species which Minoans considered sacrificial animals, were distributed in a variety of cult places. Why were they kept? Skulls and horns are characteristic of the animal; their preservation is thus a permanent commemoration of the sacred act. Behind this practice we may perhaps recognize an attempt at restitution as K. Meuli and W. Burkert have suggested.<sup>212</sup> The message, simply stated, is this: the individual must be killed to provide food but the species must continue. Ultimately, life must triumph over death.

<sup>195</sup> J. Mellaart, *Çatal Hüyük*, London 1967, 241—245.

<sup>196</sup> Nilsson, *GGR*, 76; Burkert, *HN*, 13.

<sup>197</sup> *MMR*, 232.

<sup>198</sup> Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 157 f.

<sup>199</sup> Hogarth (supra n. 192), 101.

<sup>200</sup> *MMR*, 232 ff.

<sup>201</sup> B. Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien II*, Heidelberg 1925, 75.

<sup>202</sup> Poros: A. Lembessi, *Praktika* 1967, 200; Long, *ATS*, 57.

<sup>203</sup> Branigan (supra n. 4), 115.

<sup>204</sup> Tyree, *Caves*, 15; Rutkowski, *Cult places*, 139.

<sup>205</sup> Karetsoy, *Praktika* 1975, 334.

<sup>206</sup> L. V. Watrous, *AJA* 88, 1984, 128.

<sup>207</sup> Ch. Doumas, *Praktika* 1976, 263.

<sup>208</sup> *PM I*, 495—497.

<sup>209</sup> Chapouthier & Demargne (supra n. 178), 19.

<sup>210</sup> The *keraton* of Delos is an interesting case: G. Roux, *BCH* 103, 1979, 109—135.

<sup>211</sup> Sp. Marinatos, *BCH* 60, 1936, 244.

<sup>212</sup> K. Meuli, 'Griechische Opferbräuche', in *Phyllobolia, Festschrift P. von der Mühl*, Basel 1946, 185—288; Burkert, *HN*, esp. 48.



## X. Occasion

It has been said that "no ancient ceremony was complete without sacrifice".<sup>213</sup> Indeed this was the case in Minoan Crete, where sacrifice seems to have been ubiquitous, as we can see in both the iconography and the archaeological material.

The existence of animal bones in the vicinity of tombs, the embedded bucranium in the door of Tholos A at Archanes, the evidence from the sarcophagus of Hagia Triada, all leave no doubt that sacrifice accompanied funerary rituals and ceremonies at the tomb. It is interesting to observe that evidence of libations is not lacking either. Not only does the afore-mentioned sarcophagus furnish us with two libation scenes, but actual tombs supply further evidence. The LM II tomb of Khaniale Tekke at Knossos<sup>214</sup> included horns of consecration, whereas the Tomb of the Double Axes yielded a bull's head rhyton.<sup>215</sup> We have seen above (section IV.2) that horns and libations appear together on seals in a close cultic connection. A bothros, at the cemetery of Phourni, Archanes, was probably used for libations. However, we cannot prove that sacrifice took place there.<sup>216</sup> Although there is no doubt that animals were slaughtered in connection with funerary cult, it is not correct to designate sacrifice as primarily a chthonic rite, as Long has done.<sup>217</sup>

Another occasion for sacrifice would have been harvest and vegetation festivals. In the protopalatial sanctuary at Phaistos, which faced the W court and which has been mentioned already, there was a hearth, imprinted with spiral and bovid motifs on its rim, as well as animal bones.<sup>218</sup> What is important in this context is that the sanctuary in question was apparently involved in a harvest festival, which took place in the W court. The granaries, situated in the immediate vicinity, testify to this, as does the mill installation inside the shrine itself.<sup>219</sup> It is probably here that the first grain of the year was ground ceremonially.<sup>220</sup>

The palace of Malia furnishes supportive evidence for this hypothesis. As already mentioned above (section VIII), bulls' horns were found in one of the granaries. Moreover, in this

case also there exists a connection between the shrine and the silos themselves as the same symbols of the star and cross occur in both. Thus it is a parallel to Phaistos. Sacrifice can be postulated in the Phaistos case because of the animal bones and the bovid decoration on the hearth and in the Malia one because of the horns.

Finally, let us consider the bull rhyton with the blunt horns from Akrotiri (Fig. 20). It was found in Sector A, on the upper floor, in a room identified as a shrine by the excavator, Sp. Marinatos.<sup>221</sup> Below this shrine, on the groundfloor, there is a mill installation. If the bull rhyton alludes to sacrifice, the connection with the grinding of grain is unmistakable also here.

So far, only harvest has been discussed, but there is little doubt that sacrifice accompanied other vegetation festivals as well. This would explain the frequent depiction of animals together with trees and branches (Table I) and the relationship of animal skulls with plant motifs (CMS II.3, 289) (Fig. 24).

Similarly, the association between sacrifice/blood and vegetation can be discerned in paintings. On the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus, there is an olive tree growing from the tree-shrine and above (section IV.1) I have connected this with the sacrifice scene.

The fresco from Xeste 3, Akrotiri (Fig. 17) has already been mentioned and compared to the tree-shrine of the Hagia Triada Sar-

<sup>213</sup> Parker (supra n. 141), 225; cf. also Burkert, *GR*, 105. A recent summary of Burkert's thesis: *Anthropologie des religiösen Opfers*, München 1983.

<sup>214</sup> Long, *ATS*, 67.

<sup>215</sup> *PM* II, 279; A. Evans, 'The Tomb of the Double Axes', *Archaeologia* 65, 1913/14, 1-94, esp. 51-53.

<sup>216</sup> J. Sakellarakis, *AAA* 5, 1972, 413-415; *Ergon* 1972, 118, fig. 113; Long, *ATS*, 67.

<sup>217</sup> Long, *ATS*, 67.

<sup>218</sup> See supra, notes 166 and 167.

<sup>219</sup> N. Marinatos, 'Public festivals . . .' (supra n. 126).

<sup>220</sup> J. Makkay, *ActaArchHung* 30, 1978, 13-36.

<sup>221</sup> *Thera* III, 12 ff.

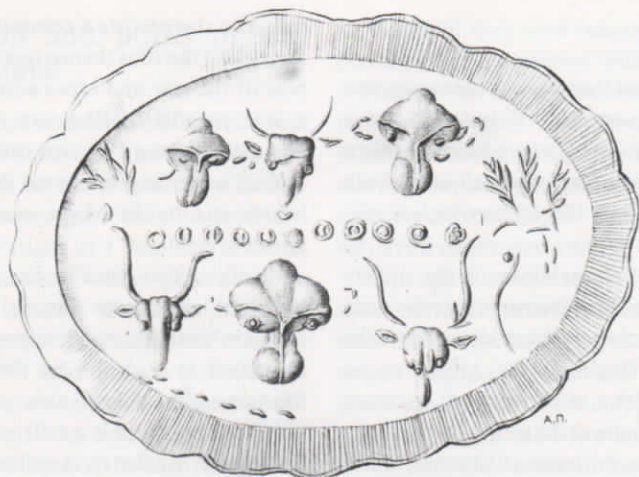


Fig. 24. Animal skulls and vegetation elements. Seal from Mycenae. CMS I, 18.

cophagus. Here there is no tree, but another vegetation element exists: red lilies decorate the false door or niche of the construction. The latter is topped by horns of consecration from which blood is dripping, no doubt the blood of a sacrificed animal. Thus, here also we are compelled to see a relationship between vegetation and sacrifice.<sup>222</sup>

Another occasion for sacrifice may have been bull-leaping. Indeed, some scholars have proposed this and I find it *a priori* likely that the bull would have been killed after the ceremony.<sup>223</sup>

The foundation of major buildings was certainly accompanied by sacrifice, a good case being furnished by the palace of Zakros where 31 conical cups, a bowl and animal bones were deposited in the W court.<sup>224</sup> Further, we can assume that the inauguration of a person in his or her new office, and any type of ceremony involving renewal of power would have required sacrifice.

Let us finish with one specific festival which we can infer from the Ship Frieze from Thera (Fig. 22). A procession of youths is leading a bull to sacrifice. The occasion here is a victory celebration where the fleet and the male population, the warriors and future warriors, are taking active part. The women are watching as passive participants. The sacrifice is obviously

going to take place in the harbour, as is appropriate to a marine victory festival.<sup>225</sup>

## XI. Symbolic representations

The most interesting aspect of Minoan sacrificial ritual is perhaps its symbolic aspect. To use literary language, there is actuality and there is metaphor. The most important metaphor for sacrifice is hunting, the two being interchangeable and equivalent in the minds of the Minoans.

### 1. Hunters and priests.

On Fig. 25 a hunter is shown about to stab an oversized *agrimi* (the disproportionate size emphasizes the strength of the goat). An animal skull is depicted between the hunter's legs. This is an allusion to a sacrificial victim, because, as we have seen, animal heads are sacrificial sym-

<sup>222</sup> N. Marinatos, *Art and religion*, 74–84.

<sup>223</sup> Matz (supra n. 6), 219 f.; Pelon (supra n. 63), 55 ff.

<sup>224</sup> This and related evidence has been treated by Ch. Boulotis, *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 12, 1982, 153 f.

<sup>225</sup> N. Marinatos, *Art and religion*, 52 ff.





Fig. 25. Hunter stabbing an agrimi; animal skull. Seal from Crete.



Fig. 26. Priestess, head of sacrificial victim and spear. Seal from Crete.

bols. Thus, hunting and sacrifice are shown to be equivalent here.

On a seal from Crete (Fig. 26), a priestess (or worshipper?) is depicted. Behind her, to the left, there is a head of a calf and a spearhead (or is it an ear of corn?). The former alludes to sacrifice, the latter, however, is not a sacrificial but a hunting weapon. The woman must be the ministrant of the cult which involves sacrifice expressed as hunting.

On Fig. 14, which we have already discussed in connection with the gender of priests, is the next example of the interchangeability between hunting and sacrifice. The head is that of a priest, his status being marked by the beard and ear-rings.<sup>226</sup> He is also represented as a hunter as he is flanked by a bow and arrow. On the second side of the gem, we see the victim, a running goat, and on the third side the symbol of sacrifice, the bucranium.<sup>227</sup> Thus, the bearded figure has a double function as a priest and hunter.

The connection between hunting and sacrifice is also to be found in the Archaic period in Crete. From the mountain shrine of Kato Syme there is a bronze blade decorated with a hunter who is offering part of a sacrificed victim to a deity.<sup>228</sup>

## 2. Animal predators as hunters.

Another symbolic way of depicting sacrifice involves a predatory animal, rather than a priest or hunter. Let us start with lions. On a seal from Kalyvia (Fig. 27) a lion is shown together with skulls and an arrow. The latter is a hunting weapon and has no logical connection with the scene unless we see the lion as equivalent to the hunter. On another seal in Munich<sup>229</sup> two lions are flanking an incurved altar on which their front paws are resting. Between them and directly above the altar is a bucranium. Here the existence of an altar suggests a ceremonial setting with the lions acting as sacrificers. A similar scene is depicted on a sealing from Knossos,<sup>230</sup> the main difference being the absence of the bucranium.

<sup>226</sup> See also CMS X, 278 for another example of a bearded man with ear-rings.

<sup>227</sup> Kenna, CMS VIII, 110, identifies the object as a kantharos, but its shape is clearly reminiscent of a bucranium. Compare with the stylized bucranium ear-ring from Maurospelio, Marinatos-Hirmer, pl. 164; note especially the similarity of the knob at the tip of the muzzle.

<sup>228</sup> Lembessi, *Praktika* 1981, 393.

<sup>229</sup> AGDS I.1, pl. 7, No. 56.

<sup>230</sup> Gill, BSA 60, 1965, 80.



Fig. 27. Lion, arrow and skulls. Seal from Kalyvia, Crete. *CMS* II.3, 104.



Fig. 28. Two griffins attacking a bull. Seal from Brauron. *CMS* V, 216.



Fig. 29. Griffin about to attack a deer. Sacrificial table below. Seal now in Paris. *CMS* IX, 20 D.



Fig. 30. Daemon attacking a bull. Sealing from Zakros.

Next, griffins will be considered. That they are predators *par excellence* can hardly be doubted. They are a combination of two aggressive animals, the lion and the eagle, and embody the power of both. It should be noted that griffins are often depicted as predators in Minoan art and that this is not an exclusively Mycenaean schema (Fig. 28).<sup>231</sup> It is noteworthy that both griffins and lions are shown together with divinities, male and female.<sup>232</sup>

<sup>231</sup> The griffin as a predator on seals: *CMS* II.3, 9, 25, 334; *CMS* II.4, 73; *CMS* V, 216; *CMS* VII, 94. Also Sakellariou, *Cachets*, No. 306; Levi, *ASAtene* 8—9, 1925—26, 178, fig. 221; *AGDS* I.1, pl. 8, No. 70b; II, Nos. 36, 38.

<sup>232</sup> An example of a griffin associated with a goddess comes from Xeste 3, Akrotiri, Thera. Dumas, *Praktika* 1980, 295, fig. 4; N. Marinatos, *Art and religion*, 62, fig. 40. Examples of male gods on seals: *CMS* II.3, 167; Gill, *BSA* 60, 1965, 94. For a collection of scenes in glyptic art where griffins flank a goddess see Rutkowski, *Kultdarstellungen*, 100, fig. 30.





Fig. 31. Minoan genius together with a hunter attacking a lion. Seal from Kakovatos.



Fig. 32. Minoan genius holding a knife about to sacrifice a deer. Seal from the Giamalakis collection.



Fig. 33. Scene of pursuit showing a dolphin and a griffin as predators. Cylinder seal now in the British Museum. Simplified drawing after CMS VII, 94.



Fig. 34. Dolphin attacking an animal. An animal head below. Seal now in Manchester University Museum. CMS VII, 249.

Their function of divine guardians or attendants of gods cannot therefore be doubted. What is remarkable is that the griffin, and perhaps also the lion (Fig. 27), can be equivalent to a sacrificing priest. On Fig. 29 there is a griffin about to attack a deer which is depicted in a contorted position (this usually denotes pain or fear and is often used to foreshadow the animal's death). Below this scene is a construction which is easy

enough to recognize, once the metaphor of the picture is understood: it is a sacrificial table altar. The coupling of two motifs, the sacrificial table and the predator, makes the griffin equivalent to a sacrificer. Here the fantastic and the real meet in the ritual sphere.

The griffin is not the only imaginary animal to act as a sacrificer; the Minoan daemons (genii) also play this role. These creatures have



Fig. 35. Horned animals, bucranium, plant and dolphin. The relationship predator-prey explains the choice of animals. Seal now in the British Museum. *CMS* VII, 111.



Fig. 36. Horned animal attacked by a dolphin. Seal now in Berlin. *AGDS* II, No. 57. Courtesy Dr. I. Pini.

received much attention;<sup>233</sup> here I shall not be concerned with their origins but only with their function. Nilsson made a very penetrating observation when he called them servants of the cult. "They are not gods themselves, but the stuff of which gods are made, daemons or beings of popular belief, roaming the land and haunting the sacred places and groves, superior to animals and to man and feared by him, but subject to the gods like the wild animals, and like man the ministers of their cult."<sup>234</sup> Nilsson understood both the function of the genii and their position in the hierarchy. I do not follow him, however, in his assumption that they are beings of popular belief. Their frequent depiction on seals (surely objects belonging to persons of status) suggests that they were part of the official Minoan religion.

The main spheres of action of these daemons are two in my opinion: libations<sup>235</sup> and sacrifice/hunting. On a sealing from Zakros (*Fig. 30*)<sup>236</sup> a daemon, armed with a lance, is stabbing a bull, whereas on a seal from Kakovatos (*Fig. 31*)<sup>237</sup> a daemon assists a human hunter who is stabbing a lion. Sometimes they are shown leading bulls by the horns<sup>238</sup> or carrying animals on a pole, on their shoulders, or in their claws.<sup>239</sup> They appear to

be fiercer than, and superior to, lions since they are represented leading the latter or carrying them on a pole.<sup>240</sup> Their fierce nature and their high status as ministrants of the cult is thus

<sup>233</sup> Levi (*supra* n. 231), 190 ff.; *PM* I, 19; IV, 430 ff.; *MMR*, 376 (with bibliography); M. Gill, 'The Minoan genius', *AthMitt* 79, 1964, 1—21; Sp. Marinatos, 'Polydipsion Argos', in *Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium on Mycenaean Studies*, Cambridge 1966, 265—274. An important article attempting to define the function of daemons and reaching conclusions similar to mine is F. van Straten's 'The Minoan genius in Mycenaean Greece', *BABesch* 44, 1969, 110—121. Recently two libating daemons depicted on a conch-shell rhyton have been found at Malia: C. Baurain and P. Darcque, *BCH* 107, 1983, 3—73.

<sup>234</sup> *MMR*, 381.

<sup>235</sup> van Straten (*supra* n. 233), 111—114. See *CMS* I, 231; *PM* IV, 453, figs. 377—379; Baurain & Darcque (*supra* n. 233).

<sup>236</sup> Levi (*supra* n. 231), 162; Gill (*supra* n. 233), *Beilage* 5.7.

<sup>237</sup> *PM* IV, fig. 387 = Gill (*supra* n. 233), *Beilage* 7.2.

<sup>238</sup> *PM* IV, 441 ff.

<sup>239</sup> *CMS* II.3, 105 a; *CMS* VII, 177; *CMS* IX, 129; *MMR*, 357, fig. 167; 378, fig. 185; *PM* IV, 430; Gill (*supra* n. 233), *Beilagen* 1—5.

<sup>240</sup> *PM* IV, 442, figs. 367, 369. See also van Straten (*supra* n. 233), 114—119.



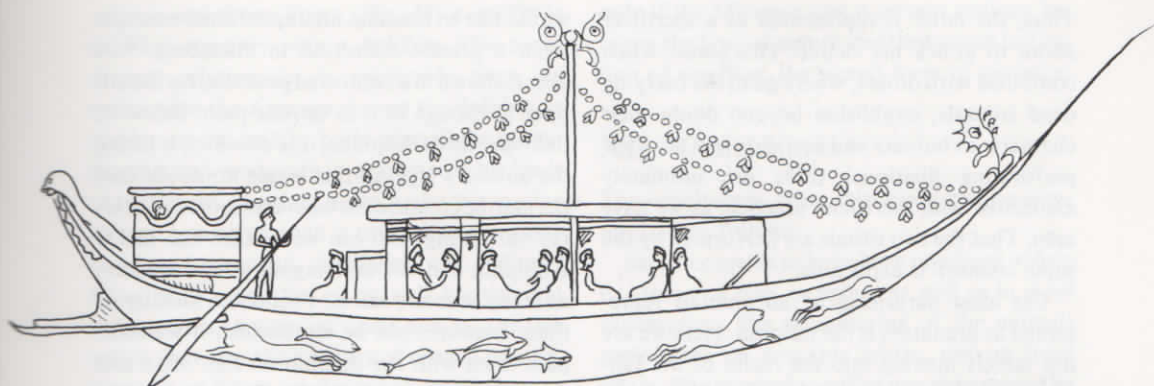


Fig. 37. The leader's ship from the Ship Frieze, room 5, West House, Akrotiri. Simplified drawing showing the association of lions and dolphins as predators as they appear on the hull of the ship.



Fig. 38. Griffin and dolphin. Seal from Akrotiri, Thera. *CMS V*, 690.



Fig. 39. Priest with axe or mace. Seal from Crete.

securely established. Nilsson, however, missed the connection with sacrifice and partially misunderstood the role of the genii in hunting. He thought that their function was to bring good luck and carry the spoils of the chase,<sup>241</sup> whereas it is more reasonable to see them as the hunters themselves. The final proof is furnished by a seal in the Giamalakis collection (*Fig. 32*). To the right there is a deer in a contorted position, to the left a daemon holding a knife.<sup>242</sup>

<sup>241</sup> *MMR*, 382. The hunting capacity of daemons explains why they also hunt lions and carry them as spoils, a feature which bothers Gill (*supra* n. 233), 11.

<sup>242</sup> Gill (*supra* n. 233), 10, questions the existence of the knife in the paw of the daemon and says that it is not there on the original seal. However, armed daemons are attested as one can see from the seal of Kakovatos (*Fig. 31*), n. 237. Moreover, the contorted position of the animal shows that it is about to be attacked.

Thus, the latter is represented as a sacrificer about to attack his victim. This scene, when combined with others, where genii are carrying dead animals, establishes beyond doubt their character as hunters and sacrificers. As to their performing libations, these are intimately associated with sacrificial practice, as we have seen. That the two rituals are performed by the same creature is explicable.

The most surprising of all animals represented as predators is the dolphin. Here we are not merely moving into the realm of the fantastic, but of the improbable as well. Because the dolphin, a marine mammal (certainly a fish in the Minoan classificatory system) is represented as actually attacking horned animals! The paradox here is so blatant that scholars of Minoan art have tried to find alternative explanations and designate the dolphin as a fish-monster.<sup>243</sup> Yet the evidence is unmistakable.

On a cylinder seal there are two scenes of pursuit one inverted to the other (*Fig. 33* is a simplified drawing showing only the lower part of the scene). On top there is a Cretan goat pursued by a lion, below another quadruped pursued by a griffin. This same quadruped is attacked from above by a dolphin. Despite the improbability of the scene, the context is clearly one of pursuit with the dolphin in the role of predator. There are more scenes of this type.

On *Fig. 34*, there is an animal in a contorted position attacked by a dolphin (fish-like monster according to the description in *CMS* VII, 249). Below, there is a goat's head, which alludes to sacrifice.

On *Fig. 35*, there are two horned animals, antithetically disposed. In the field appear three smaller motifs: a plant, a bucranium and a dolphin. Given the above, it is not difficult to explain the relationship. The horned animals are potential victims, the dolphin is the dangerous predator, the bucranium the symbol of sacrifice. As for the plant, its connection with sacrificial animals has been dealt with above.

Another unmistakable attack is shown on a gem now in Berlin (*Fig. 36*). A horned animal is bitten in its back by a dolphin.<sup>244</sup> Finally, I

would like to mention an unpublished example from a private collection in Starnberg.<sup>245</sup> A deer is shown in a contorted position, his mouth open as though he is in terrible pain. Below it, there are three dolphins, one of which is biting the animal's leg. All this leaves no doubt that the marine creature has been transposed in a terrestrial setting. But can we be sure that this is a dolphin and not an imaginary fish monster, as many scholars call it? I think the identity of these creatures can be established, if we compare them with the dolphin on *Fig. 39*, a seal from Crete. Note especially the characteristic flippers on the underside of the body.

Let us now look at some representations where the dolphin can be designated as an aggressor by virtue of analogy, because it is shown together with other predatory animals. On the major ship of the fleet, depicted on the S frieze of room 5, West House, Thera (*Fig. 37*), there appear emblems of aggression:<sup>246</sup> lions and dolphins. The association of the two would be problematic, were it not for the observation made above, that the dolphin is itself a hunter which makes it equivalent to a lion. Thus, the two animals represent aggression in two domains, the land and sea. That the dolphin motif was used emblematically in the Aegean *koine* can be proved also by its depiction on the inlaid daggers of the Mycenaean mainland.<sup>247</sup> R. Laffineur has shown that predators, such as cats, lions, birds (which fly with great speed) were used as emblems on daggers, the very instruments of aggressive behaviour.<sup>248</sup>

<sup>243</sup> For a discussion of the "fish monster" see I. Pini, introduction to *CMS* II.4. I thank him for discussing the topic with me and for alerting my attention to several examples of the type.

<sup>244</sup> *AGDS* II, No. 57. See also *ibid.* No. 38.

<sup>245</sup> I thank Dr. I. Pini for showing this to me.

<sup>246</sup> See N. Marinatos, *Art and religion*, 59 ff, for the significance of the emblems in the context of the victory festival.

<sup>247</sup> Prosymna: C. W. Blegen, *Prosymna: The Helladic settlement preceding the Argive Heraeum*, Cambridge, Mass 1937, 330 f., figs. 420-421. Achaia: Th. J. Papadopoulos, *Mycenaean Achaia* (SIMA 55.2), Göteborg 1978, figs. 321, 357.

<sup>248</sup> R. Laffineur, 'Mycenaean at Thera: Further evidence?', in *Minoan Thalassocracy* (supra n. 47), 133-139.



On a seal from Thera (*Fig. 38*) a griffin is depicted together with a dolphin. The paradoxical relationship is explicable once we realize that the Aegeans viewed the dolphin as similar to the griffin both animals being aggressive and predatory in character. This leads us to the next question, namely why this marine animal was given such a role when we today consider it peaceful, intelligent and basically friendly to man. Yet, it is well known that dolphins tear fishermen's nets and eat the fish which provokes the hostility of coastal populations. In addition, it is large and speedy having thus all the characteristics of a predator. Compare with Homer (*Iliad* XXI, 22—24): "Like the small fish that flee in terror before a huge dolphin and crowd into the corners of a sheltered cove, knowing that to be caught is to be eaten up, the Trojans cowered under the overhanging banks of that terrible river". (Translation by E. V. Rieu.)

The dolphin's speed, size and intelligence must have impressed the Minoans who attributed special powers to it and made it a companion to the divinity in a similar manner as the lion and the griffin.<sup>249</sup> Once it was made the king of the seas, the second step was to elevate it to the symbolic sphere as a "sacrificer". I have used this word deliberately because I believe it makes sense as a Minoan metaphor. Let us consider a final example which will illustrate this. On a seal from Crete (*Fig. 39*) a male priest is represented, recognizable by his long garment. In his hand he is holding an axe or mace, which is the instrument of sacrifice and at the same time a visible sign of his authority. To his right, a dolphin appears, engraved longitudinally on the seal. Its presence here, as on the seal with the griffin (*Fig. 38*) is telling: both the priest and the animal are sacrificers in the sacred sphere.

The pictorial metaphors of sacrifice take many forms. I have tried to show that even the predator—prey relationship in the animal world can have symbolic meanings as can be deduced in the seeming absurdity of some compositions. A griffin attacking a deer above an altar table, a daemon sacrificing a deer, dolphins attacking bulls. All this makes sense

only if the Minoans saw a certain analogy between the laws of nature and the human institution of sacrifice, the sacred form of violence.

## XII. Conclusions

The conclusions from this study can be summarized as follows.

Sacrifice seems to have been practiced widely in Minoan Crete, in urban as well as in rural sanctuaries. The slaughtering of the animals took place on movable tables, not on fixed altars. The place of sacrifice was determined by the occasion and could have taken place in any public, open space such as the W or central courts of the palaces, public squares, on top of the mountains, in peak sanctuaries or in rural shrines. The tree was a marker of the sacred spot and seems to indicate an outdoor shrine. No secure evidence of indoor sacrifice exists and it is highly unlikely that this was ever the case.

Sacrifice was accompanied by supplementary rituals such as libations to which both the archaeological remains (vats, receptacles) and iconographical sources (libation scenes on the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus) testify. Another sacred set connected with libations and sacrifice are the sacred horns which may have been used in connection with blood libations.

The meat of the animal was consumed in a communal meal. This can be argued because some shrines contain hearths and/or benches or have yielded animal bones (Malia, Phaistos, peak sanctuary of Juktas, caves). The presence of animal bones in such sacred contexts suggests that the meat came from a sacrificial animal.

Various species were considered sacrificial. In this context it is worth stressing that not only domestic but also *wild* animals could be designated as such. What is peculiar to Minoan

<sup>249</sup> In this context an as yet unpublished seal from Aidonia is worth mentioning. On it there appears a female figure with raised arms (goddess?) flanked by two dolphins. See also *CMS* I, 344.

religion is the equivalence of hunting and sacrifice. If the French structuralist school of J-P. Vernant, P. Vidal-Naquet, etc. are right, and there is an opposition between sacrifice (tame, civilized life) and hunting (untamed, wild life) in Greek religion,<sup>250</sup> this distinction does not apply to Minoan Crete. As we have seen, in the section on Symbolic Representations, the

animal predator is interchangeable with the priest and sacrifice becomes an extension of the implacable laws of nature.

<sup>250</sup> J-P. Vernant, 'The myth of Prometheus in Hesiod' and 'Sacrificial and alimentary codes in Hesiod', in *Myth, religion and society*, ed. R. L. Gordon, Cambridge 1981, 55 ff. and 60 ff.



## Part II

# Symbols on seals denoting sacrifice of animals

### I. Introduction

Minoan seals often include small figures or signs in the field in addition to the main scene. These can be either geometric, such as circles, x's, impaled triangles etc., or recognizable schematizations of identifiable objects, for example, eight-shields, garments (often called sacred knots), eyes, ears, insects and vegetation motifs. The above are often called "filling ornaments"<sup>1</sup> and it is assumed that they have no purpose other than to fill up empty space. It is, however, doubtful that the *horror vacui* principle is applicable to Minoan art of the neopalatial period. Besides, we would have to assume that the Minoan engravers sacrificed organic unity in order to achieve over-ornamentation and this is difficult to imagine for glyptic art. The surface of the seals is so small, that a larger design would have sufficed to cover it.

What is peculiar to glyptic art is the restricted space in which the artist had to work and yet still represent as much as possible. Thus, it is *a priori* likely that a code had to be devised which would convey *more information than it was possible to represent in a single scene*. The small figures in the field would then function as signs which supplement the meaning of the main scene.

The method is not at all unique. In Egyptian art hieroglyphs have just this function, namely to supplement, differentiate and explain representations. Furthermore, on Mesopotamian reliefs and seals there exist not only inscriptions but various signs, such as animals, trees, stars etc.,<sup>2</sup> which act as determinatives of the deities or convey supplementary information about the representations.

If the figures serve the same function in Minoan glyptic, the term "filling ornament" has

to be abandoned and the term "sign" or "symbol" should be used instead. Although these signs are incomprehensible to us, they would be understood by Minoans familiar with the visual code. But how can we decode this system? The first step is to *organize the signs into groups* and see with what types of scenes each given sign occurs. The second step is to see if there is a *common factor* among the various representations. Finally, *equivalence* or *interchangeability* of signs is important. If two or more signs are used interchangeably in the same kind of context, this means that they have related meanings. My method will thus rely on both contextual analysis and interchangeability. One cannot hope to solve all questions with this process of decipherment. Very often a correlation emerges but its significance remains obscure. However, this is a first step which can lead to further refinements of the method.

I shall deal with a limited set of signs only, which I think relate to sacrificial ritual. These are the eight-shield, the sacred garment, the impaled triangle and the animal skull. It will be shown that the above occur in the same types of scenes and often interchangeably.

Two questions arise. Firstly, what is the function of the signs in such scenes, and what kind

<sup>1</sup> PM IV, 493; MMR, 410; Long, *ATS*, 59; Kenna CS, 137. Sakellarakis (*Tieropfer*, 174), however, remarks: "die sogenannten Füllmotive (dienten) nicht nur ästhetischen Zwecken, sondern hatten auch eine symbolische Bedeutung". Similarly, A. Sakellariou (*MS*, 47) speaks of the "supplementary motifs" as symbols.

<sup>2</sup> H. Frankfort, *The art and architecture of the ancient Orient*, Harmondsworth 1954. Assyrian example: pl. 116; Kassite: pl. 71.

of supplementary information do they add? Secondly, what is the relationship between the categories of the scenes themselves?

In order to explore these problems I shall look at each sign separately in an effort to decode it. First one has to understand what object gave rise to the sign and what was the function or importance of that object. Then one can try to understand the meaning of the sign itself.

A final methodological point. In this study seals will be examined from both Crete and the mainland although my aim is to understand Minoan cult, iconography and symbolism. It may thus seem inconsistent that I use seals found on the mainland as evidence for Minoan religion. However, material found on the mainland is not necessarily Mycenaean since much of it is imported from elsewhere and most notably from Crete. But how does one distinguish what is Minoan and what is Mycenaean? I have followed a very simple rule. I adduce as evidence only seals the iconography of which has exact or very near parallels in Crete; this ensures that all the iconography discussed reflects Minoan mentality.

## II. The eight-shield

The natural assumption concerning the eight-shield is that it is war equipment and that its primary associations are military.<sup>3</sup> Although this cannot be excluded, let it be noted that another function seems equally important: hunting.<sup>4</sup> It is not unusual in Creto-Mycenaean art that the eight-shield is shown in hunting contexts, used by the hunter as protection against wild animals. On the inlaid dagger from Mycenae (Fig. 40) or on a seal from the mainland (Fig. 41) it is used as a defensive hunting weapon in a lion hunt. There are further examples of this use of the shield also from other cultures and from later periods.<sup>5</sup>

Another factor which may be of significance, as will be argued later, is that the eight-shield is constructed from animal hide, probably from bulls or cows, to judge from the dappled surfaces that we see clearly on the painted examples.<sup>6</sup> Further confirmation of the hunting

hypothesis comes from three Knossian sealings where male divine (according to Evans) figures are accompanied by lions.<sup>7</sup> All three are armed: one with a spear(?), another with a bow and a third with a spear and a rectangular shield. These are likely to be divinities of hunting<sup>8</sup> rather than war since the lion is itself a hunter, but the latter possibility cannot be excluded. Male hunting gods are at home in Oriental cultures.

Is the eight-shield then the attribute of a hunting or a war divinity? And is that divinity male or female? These questions cannot be answered with any degree of certitude at the present stage of the evidence. But my intention is to challenge the commonly accepted idea that the eight-shield has to be connected with a war goddess. The reason for this assumption is that a female divinity seems to be behind the eight-shield on the painted limestone tablet from Mycenae,<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For example: E. Gardner, 'Palladia from Mycenae', *JHS* 12, 1893, 21; H. Borchhardt, *Frühe griechische Schildformen* (= *ArchHom* I, ch. E), Göttingen 1977, 6–15 with bibliography; G. Mylonas, *Mycenaean religion*, Athens 1977, 61–62; *idem*, *Mycenae rich in gold*, Athens 1983, 197, 202. Mylonas does observe that there is a connection between the eight-shield and animals. A recent article with bibliography: P. Rehak, 'New observations on the Mycenaean warrior goddess', *AA* 1984, 535–544.

<sup>4</sup> Nilsson, *MMR*, 410 f., suggests the possibility of a hunting deity carrying the shield.

<sup>5</sup> Borchhardt (supra n. 3), 11 f., figs. 4 a, b; 15 c. *PM* IV, 575, fig. 556. I thank Prof. W. Burkert for alerting my attention to a mosaic in the Museo delle Terme in Rome, where a Nilotic scene is depicted in which a hunter, equipped with a small round shield, is hunting a hippopotamus.

<sup>6</sup> Knossos: *PM* III, 229 ff., pl. XXIII. Tiryns: G. Rodenwaldt, *Tiryns* II, Athens 1912, 34 ff., pl. V. Mycenae: Mylonas, *Mycenae* (supra n. 3), 146, pl. 115; *idem*, *Mycenaean religion* (supra n. 3), pl. XIX.

<sup>7</sup> *PM* II, 831 f., fig. 547. Evans speaks of a goddess and her male consort or son. S. Hood, *The Minoans*, London 1971, 88, speaks of a "military" god.

<sup>8</sup> The shield in *PM* II, 831, fig. 547, is a rectangular one, not an eight-shield. Still, it shows that a shield can be used as hunting equipment.

About hunting divinities: *MMR*, 382.

<sup>9</sup> Select bibliography: Ch. Tsountas, *ArchEph* 1887, 162–164; G. Rodenwaldt, *AthMitt* 37, 1912,





Fig. 40. Inlaid dagger from Shaft Grave IV, Mycenae showing hunters with eight-shields fighting lions.



Fig. 41. Hunter, armed with an eight-shield, fighting a lion. Seal from Vapheio. *CMS* I, 228.



Fig. 42. Man in front of a sacred structure; behind him, an eight-shield. Sealing from Crete, Herakleion Museum.

and this figure is clearly worshipped. But this is Mycenaean evidence and we cannot be sure that the prototype was Minoan. In Crete itself, the shield is associated with males and is carried in procession by them.<sup>10</sup> Thus I would suggest that a *male hunting divinity* may well be involved, although this is just a hypothesis which cannot be conclusively proved.

This investigation has led to negative, rather than positive, results. What has been ascertained is that the function of the eight-shield in Crete is related to hunting, not only war. Further, the commonly accepted view that it is the attribute of a female divinity has been questioned although not conclusively dismissed.

Let us now turn our attention to the evidence which links the eight-shield with cult activities. It has been noticed by several scholars that some scenes have an undisputably sacred character.

The latter observation has led them to see it as a sacred object, as a palladium,<sup>11</sup> an object of

129—140; *PM* III, 135 ff.; A. W. Persson, *The religion of Greece in prehistoric times*, Berkeley 1942, 72 ff.; *MMR* 344 ff.; T. E. Small, *Kadmos* 5, 1966, 103—107; E. Simon, *Die Götter der Griechen*, Munich 1969, 181; P. Cássola-Guida, *Le armi difensive dei micenei nelle figurazioni* (Incunabula Graeca 56), Rome 1973, 164 ff.; Rehak (*supra* n. 3) etc.

<sup>10</sup> Several sealings from Knossos depict men in procession armed with eight-shields: *PM* III, 313, figs. 204, 205; M. Gill, *BSA* 60, 1965, 81, R60. The processions may depict a festival where display of arms was involved as at the Panathenaia in later times. Noteworthy in this context is the fact that the eight-shield is carried by males.

<sup>11</sup> Gardner (*supra* n. 3), 21.

hoplology<sup>12</sup> or a vehicle for possession by the goddess. The latter view was held by Evans and has recently been revived by P. Warren in the light of new finds from his excavation at Knossos.<sup>13</sup> A. W. Persson saw its function as being apotropaic.<sup>14</sup> M. P. Nilsson, on the other hand, questioned the divinity of the eight-shield and accepted the possible sanctity only of the specimen on the painted limestone tablet from Mycenae and the Mycenae gold ring.<sup>15</sup> The shield had no sanctity of its own, he argued, even in the latter scenes;<sup>16</sup> the Vapheio ring was an exception but the shield there played an insignificant role.<sup>17</sup> E. Vermeule accepted a cultic function for the eight-shield of the mainland,<sup>18</sup> while H. Borchhardt thought that it may have represented an attribute of the divinity of war or hunting, a view that has much to be said for it, as we shall see later. Borchhardt thought that the shields could also be used as votives in sanctuaries but that they were not divine in themselves.<sup>19</sup> B. Rutkowski sees an inherent magico-religious power in the shape of the eight-shield which involves two interconnected circles.<sup>20</sup> In summary, two main trends can be distinguished: some believe that the shield is divine in itself and others see it only as a cult implement. I shall argue that the second view is the correct one.

To start with two observations which will help establish the function of the shield in cult. The first one is that on certain representations (Figs. 46, 47) there are distinct loops depicted on top of the shields which means that they were sometimes hung up. A rosette has replaced the loop on one of the frescoes from Mycenae.<sup>21</sup> That they were hung on the wall is compatible with the idea that actual hanging shields inspired the frescoes from Knossos, Mycenae and Tiryns.<sup>22</sup> This practice probably explains the presence of shields, which seem suspended in the air, in religious scenes on two sealings (Fig. 42).<sup>23</sup> What is probably depicted here are shields hanging from the wall of the shrine. On a sealing from Zakros,<sup>24</sup> shields flank a tripartite structure which is identified as a shrine. Here again, the explanation which lies closest at hand is that they have a direct connection with the shrine. For obvious reasons the artist could

not show them inside, so he symbolically depicted them outside.

The second observation is that the eight-shield was displayed together with a garment. On the ring from Vapheio (Fig. 43) a male and a female figure are involved in a vegetation ritual to judge from the presence of the tree in the pithos, as well as from the ear of corn, depicted as a sign in the field on the ring. To the right of the scene an eight-shield and a garment are displayed.<sup>25</sup> It is not my purpose here to

<sup>12</sup> Ch. Picard, *Les religions préhelléniques*, Paris 1948, 190.

<sup>13</sup> *PM* III, 214, 315–317; P. Warren, 'On squills', in *Aux origines de l'hellénisme, La Crète et la Grèce: Hommage à H. van Effenterre*, Paris 1984, 23.

<sup>14</sup> Persson (supra n. 9), 92.

<sup>15</sup> *MMR*, 347, 417, fig. 146. For a discussion of previous scholarship see Mylonas, *Mycenaean religion* (supra n. 3), 56–63.

<sup>16</sup> *MMR*, 411.

<sup>17</sup> *MMR*, 410: "The real meaning of the shield is uncertain but the scene by no means gives the impression that the shield plays a part in the cult ceremonies performed . . ."

<sup>18</sup> E. T. Vermeule, *Götterkult* (= *ArchHom* III, ch. V), Göttingen 1974, 41. See also F. H. Stubbings, 'The Mycenaean pottery of Attica', *BSA* 42, 1947, 58: ". . . at least in LH III period the figure-of-eight shield was associated with some cult . . ."

<sup>19</sup> Borchhardt (supra n. 3), 15. For bibliography see pp. 6–15.

<sup>20</sup> B. Rutkowski, *Kultdarstellungen*, 106.

<sup>21</sup> Mylonas, *Mycenaean religion* (supra n. 3), 62 also comes to the conclusion that the rosette may have been used to hang the shield on the wall. See also *ibid.*, pl. XIX.

<sup>22</sup> *Supra* n. 6.

<sup>23</sup> On a seal from Mycenae (*CMS* I, 132) there is a procession of three female figures and two eight-shields in the background, the latter on different heights. On a sealing from Zakros (Cássola-Guida, supra n. 9, pl. VI.3) a woman is depicted involved in some activity which could be ritual. An eight-shield and other objects seem suspended in the air behind and above her.

<sup>24</sup> *PM* I, 307, figs. 227 a, b; Borchhardt (supra n. 3), 13.

<sup>25</sup> For basic bibliography see *CMS* I, p. 253. Vegetation ritual discussed by Persson (supra n. 9), 36 ff.; *MMR*, 163, 211, 257, 287. For an interpretation of the ritual: Ch. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Renewal and divine return' (supra, Part I, n. 39). I. Pini sees





Fig. 43. Male and female dancing figures, a tree in a pithos, an eight-shield and a sacred garment displayed to the right. Ring from Vapheio. *CMS* I, 219.

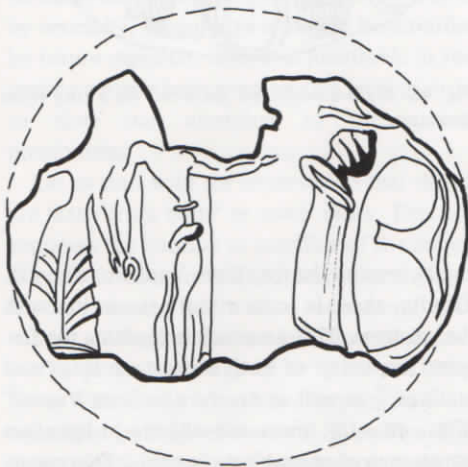


Fig. 44. Man and woman. To the right an eight-shield and, possibly, a sacred garment. Sealing from Zakros.



Fig. 45. Woman, to the right an eight-shield and, possibly, a sacral knot. Unpublished. Courtesy Prof. Platon and Dr. I. Pini.

discuss the nature of this ritual in detail. Suffice it to say that the shield and garment are apparently playing an important role. On a sealing from Zakros<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 44) a male and a female figure are moving to the right where an eight-shield is displayed. Another object, identified by Levi as a tower shield,<sup>27</sup> is next to it. This identification seems problematic, however, and Ch. Boulotis and myself have independently identified it as a garment.

a kneeling female figure, rather than a garment, next to the shield: I. Pini, 'Chronological problems of some Late Minoan signet rings', *TUAS* 8, 1983, 40. This, however, can not be the case. Firstly, the presumed figure is too small in relation to the other humans in the same scene. Secondly, she has no feet and is suspended above ground. Finally, kneeling figures are associated with stones, or pithoi but not shields.

<sup>26</sup> Levi, *ASAtene* 8—9, 1925—26, 183, fig. 233.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

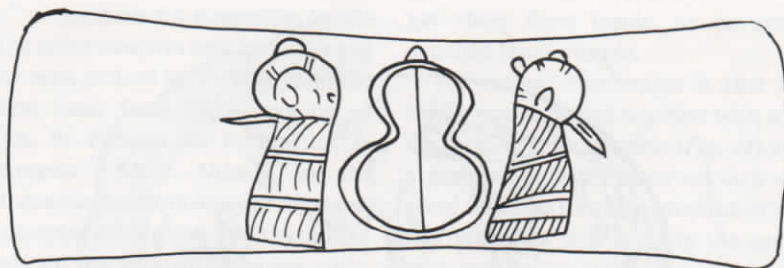


Fig. 46. An eight-shield flanked by two garments, on an axe from Vorou.

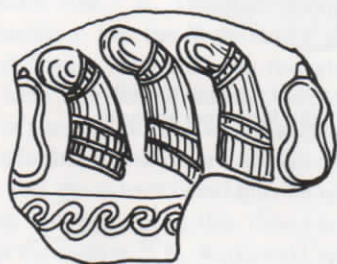


Fig. 47. Sacred garments and shields. Sealing from Knossos.



Fig. 48. Eight-shields and garments on a ring from Archanes.

If this is so, then we have a striking analogy with the Vapheio ring: in both there is a male and a female, in both a shield and a garment are displayed. We may thus suppose that different phases of the cult are depicted in the two representations (Figs. 43, 44). Finally, a sealing from Zakros<sup>28</sup> shows a woman in a gesture of adoration (Fig. 45). To her right is depicted an eight-shaped object which may be a shield shown *en face*, not in profile as in the previous representations, topped by a long garment. In all three cases discussed above, the eight-shield seems to be coupled with the garment; both are displayed ritually. That the origin of the cult is Minoan cannot be doubted since the two sealings come from Crete.

The conclusions that can be drawn from the above observations are the following. Firstly, the shield is *not worshipped* but is merely an *implement* in the cult. Secondly, it has some association with a vegetation or renewal cult, as

can be seen on the ring from Vapheio (Fig. 43). Thirdly, there is some ritual association with the garment. This association explains the frequent depiction of both objects on rings and sealings,<sup>29</sup> as well as on the axe from Vorou<sup>30</sup> (Figs. 46–48); there the objects in question have acquired an emblematic value. This means that they played such an important role in the cult that they were elevated to symbols. The persons wearing rings or possessing seals with such

<sup>28</sup> The sealing is unpublished. I thank Prof. Platon for permission to publish a sketch of it.

<sup>29</sup> Ring from Archanes: J. Sakellarakis, *Deltion* 21, 1966, B2, pl. 44a. Sealing from Knossos: *PM IV*, fig. 597 A, k.

<sup>30</sup> H-G. Buchholz, *Kadmos* 1, 1962, 166 ff. Recently: C. Verlinden, 'Decor incisé sur la hache de Voros', in *Iconographie minoenne* (BCH Suppl. 11), Paris 1985, 134–149.



emblems must have had priestly status, a conclusion reached also by J. Sakellarakis for the Archanes ring.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, the shield (and the garment as we shall see) were probably hung up in a shrine; they were only displayed during the cult activities which took place in the open.

#### *The role of the eight-shield in a festival of renewal*

It is perhaps worth making an attempt to explain the role of the shield during the vegetation festival depicted on the ring from Vapheio (Fig. 43). It should first be made clear, however, that there are two levels in the analysis. One is the observation that the eight-shield is accompanied by the garment and that they both play a role in a ritual; this is firm ground and constitutes evidence. The interpretation of the shield's role belongs to a second level which is, by necessity, speculative and may be modified by future research. Still, it is justifiable to formulate a hypothesis even on this level in order to alert our attention to the various possibilities.

Let us start with the observation that shields are made from bulls' or cows' hides. This presupposes the hunting or sacrifice of the animal in order to have the hide to make the object; it is worth keeping this in mind for reasons which will be made clear further on. Now if we turn to the phenomenology of religion and think about what kind of rituals accompany festivals, especially festivals of renewal, a pattern does seem to be dominant; it is necessary to make the renewal concrete. This can be achieved by renewing the potency of the cult image through bathing (Plynteria—Athens,<sup>32</sup> cult of Hera—Samos);<sup>33</sup> by making a new robe for the statue (Panathenaia—Athens<sup>34</sup>); by retrieving certain contents which are stored in a secure place and by replenishing them (Thesmophoria;<sup>35</sup> Hittite spring ritual<sup>36</sup>); by erecting a new shrine<sup>37</sup> (early laurel shrine of Apollo at Delphi?); by white-washing the shrine;<sup>38</sup> finally by constructing a new object. Is it not then possible that a new shield was made for each occasion? An animal was hunted or sacrificed and it was then embodied in the shield<sup>39</sup> which, as we

have seen, was also a hunting weapon. One small detail would confirm this hypothesis. On the field of the ring from Vapheio (Fig. 43) there is a small object below the ear of corn which was identified as a chrysalis by Evans.<sup>40</sup> Other

<sup>31</sup> Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 156.

<sup>32</sup> Nilsson, *GGR*, 102, 430; H.W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians*, London 1977, 152—155; Burkert, *GR*, 347ff.

<sup>33</sup> Nilsson, *GGR*, 429f.; Burkert, *GR*, 213; *idem*, *Structure and history in Greek mythology and ritual*, Berkeley 1979, 130.

<sup>34</sup> Nilsson, *GGR* 102 f.; Burkert, *GR*, 149, 153, 165, 222.

<sup>35</sup> Nilsson, *GGR*, 463 ff.; Parke (supra n. 32), 83.

<sup>36</sup> In a Hittite spring ritual agricultural products were placed within pithoi in the autumn and were retrieved the following spring. A. Archi, 'Fêtes de printemps et automne et réintégration rituelle d'images de culte dans l'Anatolie hittite', *Ugarit-Forschungen* 5, 1973, 14ff.

<sup>37</sup> Ch. Sourvinou-Inwood, 'The myth of the early temples at Delphi', *CQ* 29, 1979, 231—251, esp. 237—238, argues that some early shrines of Apollo were made of laurel branches. It is possible that a temporary shrine was erected during the festival days to be destroyed or burned when the god departed from Delphi for his winter journey.

<sup>38</sup> White-washing is a repetitious action characteristic of many rituals. See K. Kilian, in *SCABA*, 53, for white-washing in a Mycenaean shrine in the *Unterburg* of Tiryns. Perhaps this is an explanation of the presence of jars containing plaster in several Minoan shrines or shrine-rooms, which the excavators have not been able to explain satisfactorily. Such were found in the House of the Sacrificed Oxen at Knossos (*PM* II, 301ff.); at Chania (House I, room D: Y. Tzedakis & E. Hallager, *AAA* 11, 1979, 38 f., fig. 9). Two examples come from Akrotiri, Thera. One was found in the shrine of the West House (*Thera* VI, 22; see also N. Marinatos, *West House* for arguments that the suite, where the plaster jar was found, was a shrine). The other jar was found in room 7, of "The Ladies" (*Thera* V, 9 f.; *Art and religion*, 97).

At Malia the adyton ("lustral basin") of Maison E was covered with successive layers of stucco (J. Deshayes & A. Dessenne, *Maisons* II (ÉtCrét 11), Paris 1959, 102). Finally, at Gournia, there was found within the shrine a table of offerings covered with multiple layers of stucco (H. Boyd Hawes, *Gournia*, Philadelphia 1908, 48, No. 7).

<sup>39</sup> For a parallel in Greek religion: Burkert, *HN*, 188.

<sup>40</sup> *PM* III, 141.

scholars, however, have seen an animal skull<sup>41</sup> and this is just as likely. If this is so, then animal sacrifice is alluded to by the symbol in the field.

But do we have any parallels for such a cult practice? A very analogous ritual is attested in Hittite religion. From a text we learn that two sacred shields were kept within the sanctuary and had to be periodically *renewed*.<sup>42</sup> The old shields were then transported to the provinces where they were worshipped as divinities themselves. This parallel is important insofar as it shows that shields *are renewable* but the Hittite ritual cannot be presumed to have been similar to the Minoan one in any other respect.

Another case which possibly constitutes a loose parallel is the following. In the West House at Akrotiri, Thera, there existed eight paintings in room 4 (Fig. 49).<sup>43</sup> They were almost identical and could not be understood until another remarkable painting was discovered. This was a miniature frieze,<sup>44</sup> belonging to the S wall of room 5, which depicts a fleet. The captains' cabins in each of the ships looked exactly like the afore-mentioned paintings of room 4 but only the cabin of the captain of the largest ship was crowned with waz lilies (Fig. 50). It seems then, that the leader's cabin was depicted as an emblem in room 4. It is beyond the scope of this work to discuss the interrelationships between the West House paintings, and this has been done elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> Suffice it to say that the cabin had a special symbolic or emblematic value. But why was it painted eight times? I suggest that here also we have the element of renewal, which I have postulated for the eight-shield. The frieze with the fleet depicts a spring festival;<sup>46</sup> it is therefore reasonable to assume that a *new* cabin was constructed for each occasion and that the paintings reflect the multiple number of times when the festival was held.

The analogy with the shield is all the more close because of another detail: the cabins were made of bull or cow hide, stretched between erect wooden poles. Thus, here again the skin of the animal plays a role in the renewal. Finally, it is noteworthy that a sacrificial procession is depicted on the frieze with the spring marine festival of room 5 (Part I, Fig. 22).

In conclusion, a possible role has emerged for the shield in the context of the vegetation festival. As for the garment, it could also be renewed. A new one would be woven for each occasion.

### III. The sacred garment

It is difficult to be certain what kind of attire is represented by the sacred garment which is often also referred to as a sacred knot.<sup>47</sup> Both M. P. Nilsson and P. Demargne drew attention to the fact that different types of dresses played a role in cult, for example skirts and "cuirasses", such as the one worn by the leader on the Harvesters' steatite vase from Hagia Triada.<sup>48</sup> To these types we might add a long strip of cloth, such as is carried by a male figure on the fresco from the Corridor of the Procession at Knossos according to Ch. Boulotis' reconstruction.<sup>49</sup> Also, a male figure from Xeste 3, Thera carries a similar piece of material.<sup>50</sup> Finally the Phylakopi goddess holds a long strip of cloth, which is often identified as a net, but which may well be such a garment.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>41</sup> G. Korres, *Proceedings of the 4th Cretological Congress 1976*, A2, Athens 1980, 681.

<sup>42</sup> Borchhardt (supra n. 3), 13f., n. 99.

<sup>43</sup> Thera VI, 26.

<sup>44</sup> Thera VI, 38—44.

<sup>45</sup> Basic work by L. Morgan in *BICS* 28, 1981, 166 and *idem*, 'Theme in the West House paintings at Thera', *ArchEph* 122, 1983, 85—105. About the religious nature of the paintings: N. Marinatos, *West House*; *idem*, *Art and religion*, 34ff.

<sup>46</sup> N. Marinatos, *Art and religion*, 60ff.

<sup>47</sup> *PM* I, 430ff. Both Evans and Persson (supra n. 9) considered the garment sacred.

<sup>48</sup> P. Demargne, 'La robe de la déesse minoenne sur un cachet de Mallia', *Mélanges Ch. Picard* I, Paris 1949, 220ff.; *MMR*, 162f.

<sup>49</sup> Ch. Boulotis, 'Nochmals zum Prozessionsfresko von Knossos', forthcoming in *The function of the Minoan palaces*, eds. R. Hägg and N. Marinatos (*ActaAth-4°*, 35).

<sup>50</sup> *Ergon* 1982, pl. 114; Ch. Doumas, *Praktika* 1982, p. 265, pl. 169.

<sup>51</sup> *Excavations at Phylakopi in Melos conducted by the British School at Athens*, London 1904, 72ff.; *PM* I, 54—547; III, 41ff.; S. Hood, *The arts in prehistoric Greece*, Harmondsworth 1978, 53.



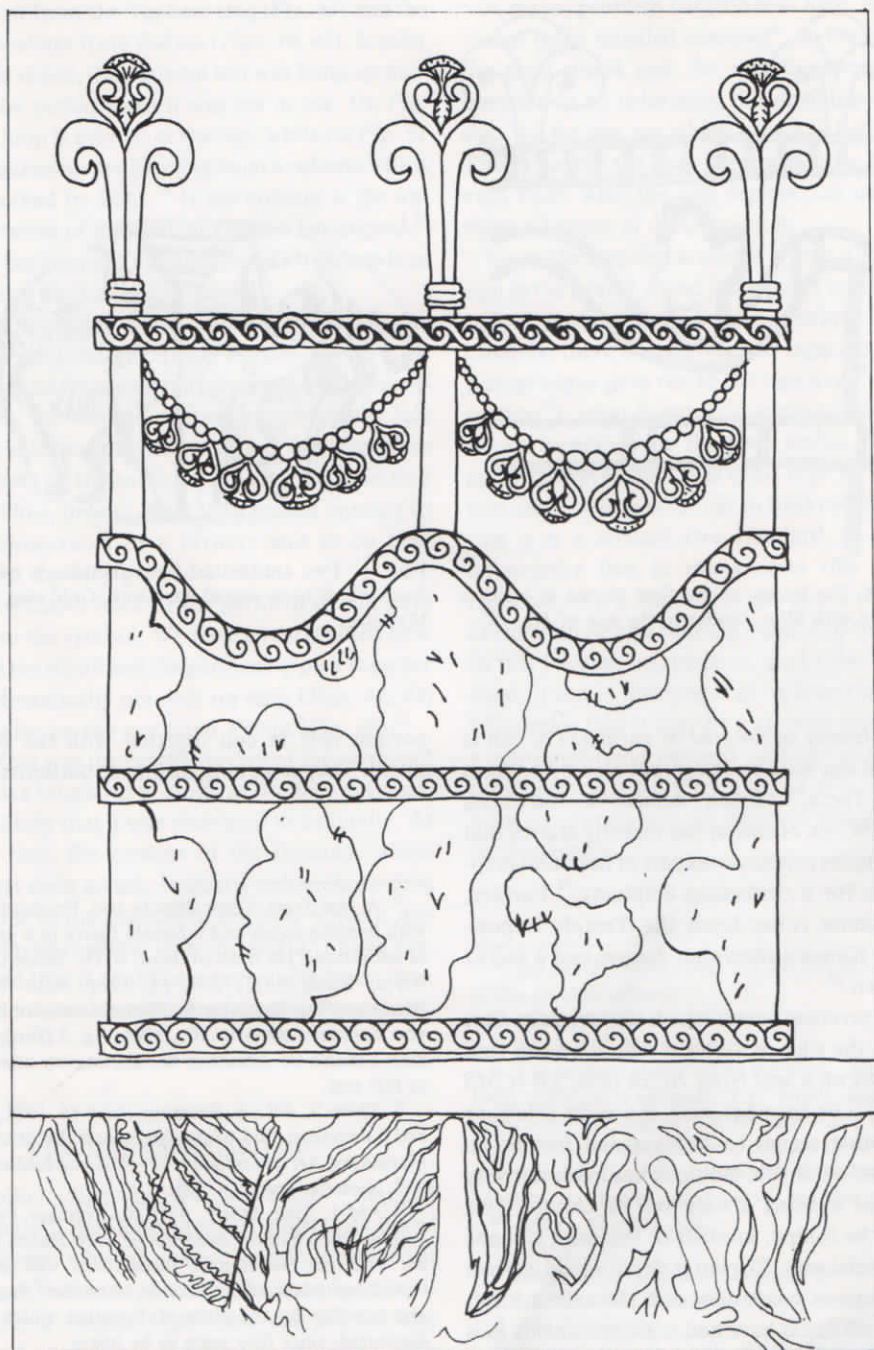


Fig. 49. A ship's cabin made of ox-hide. Painting found in room 4, West House, Akrotiri.

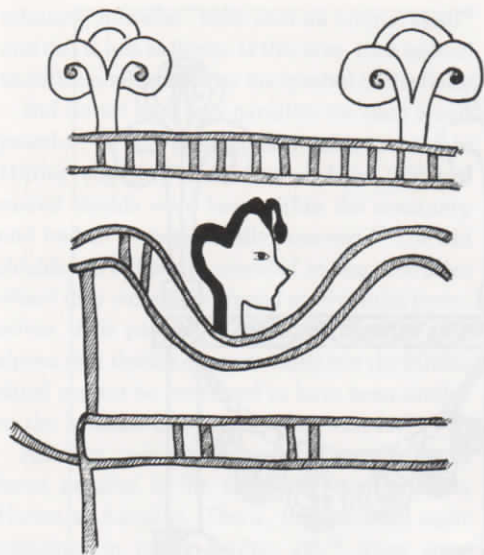


Fig. 50. The leader of the fleet shown in a cabin crowned with lilies, similar to the one of Fig. 49.

Testimony to the role of garments in cult is offered not only by seals<sup>52</sup> but also by a fresco from Thera,<sup>53</sup> which depicts a costuming scene. W.-D. Niemeier has recently argued that dressing the priestess was part of her ritual preparation for a performed epiphany.<sup>54</sup> Further, the faience robes from the Temple Repositories, Knossos show that dresses had a sacred function.<sup>55</sup>

The problem here is which type of attire gave rise to the sign or emblem which we can find depicted on a seal from Argos (Fig. 53) (CMS I, 205)<sup>56</sup> or together with the eight-shield or with other scenes to be discussed further on (Figs. 46—48). Ch. Boulotis has made a strong case for it being a long veil or cloth.<sup>57</sup> This would be folded, knotted or tied with ribbons in a special way. The latter detail would explain the frequent confusion with the sacred knot. The cloth could have had scale-ornaments as is evident from the shawl, which the two female figures of the "Ivory Trio" of Mycenae are wearing.

For reasons of convenience, I shall use the term "garment" without specifying which type it is. We have already seen that it played an im-



Fig. 51. Two antithetical lions flanking a column from which hang sacred garments. Gold ring from Mycenae.

portant role in cult together with the eight-shield. They were both displayed outdoors as is

<sup>52</sup> A seal from Crete depicts two flounced kilts with hanging cords and a female figure in a gesture of adoration(?) in front of them: H.Th. Bossert, *Alt-Kreta*, Berlin 1937, 234, pl. 397d. Also W.-D. Niemeier, 'Zur Deutung des Thronraumes im Palast von Knossos', *AthMitt* 101, 1986, fig. 3 (forthcoming). I thank Dr. Niemeier for alerting my attention to this seal.

<sup>53</sup> *Thera* V, 40f.; S. Peterson, *AJA* 85, 1981, 211. For a reconstruction of the fresco and the ritual: N. Marinatos, *Art and religion*, 87—105 and fold-out B.

<sup>54</sup> Niemeier (supra n. 52).

<sup>55</sup> *PM* I, 506; *MMR*, 311; K. Polinger Foster, *Aegean faience of the Bronze Age*, New Haven 1979, 86. The real meaning of these robes will not be elucidated unless we try to understand their function and position on the piece of furniture which they decorated, since they seem to be inlays.

<sup>56</sup> The garments on the Argos seal have scales and tassels at the bottom. They look like skirts but it could be that only the fabric is depicted.

<sup>57</sup> Ch. Boulotis, 'Some remarks on the Vaphio ring CMSI, 219: eight-shield, sacral knot, ceremonial sword' (forthcoming). See also C. Verlinden (supra n. 30), 146, 149.



evident from the Vapheio ring (Fig. 43) and the two sealings from Zakros (Figs. 44, 45). Similar to the shield, the garment too was hung up during the period when it was not in use. On Fig. 46 a loop is evident at the top, while on Fig. 51 two garments are hanging from a column which is flanked by lions.<sup>58</sup> If the column is the abbreviation of a shrine, as Nilsson has argued,<sup>59</sup> then the garment's connection with shrines is as obvious as that of the shield.

On a sealing from Knossos two garments hung antithetically from a palm tree.<sup>60</sup> Here the tree has replaced the column in the representation, but the two entities are analogous. Not only was the palm a sacred tree, but trees were markers of the sacred area (see Part I, section II). Thus, in both cases the garment appears to be consecrated to a divinity and to be kept within the holy grounds.

The importance of the garment in cult gave rise to the symbol. We have already noted how both the shield and the garment appear together emblematically not only on seals (Figs. 47, 48) but also on the axe from Vorou (Fig. 46).<sup>61</sup>

What was the exact function of the garment? If it is a long strip of cloth, as Boulotis suggests, it is likely that it was dedicated to a divinity. At any rate, the context of the frescoes, which depict such scenes, is clearly cultic. Regarding its role in the vegetation festival, where it was displayed together with the shield, I have suggested that it could be woven anew every year. As a cult implement it would make renewal concrete.

#### IV. The impaled triangle

Another sign is the so-called "impaled triangle", the importance of which was noted by Evans who so named it and considered it sacred.<sup>62</sup> Nilsson, on the other hand, called it simply a "linear sign" and did not see any sacred meaning.<sup>63</sup> Rutkowski considers it a stylized tree standard.<sup>64</sup> Sakellarakis observed that it occurs together with a sacrificed bull and thought that it may have some connection with sacrifice;<sup>65</sup> as we shall see, this is valid for many scenes.

A major problem confronts us here, namely "what is the impaled triangle?" In the case of the eight-shield and the sacred garment the question is to determine the meaning of the sign, so we can see which object is behind it. This is hardly the case here, where we do not even know what the sign depicts. Let us make some attempts at deciphering it.

Since the impaled triangle is also a syllabic sign in the Linear A and B scripts, it is tempting to look in this direction for a solution. Unfortunately, there is disagreement regarding what pictogramme gave rise to the sign (ivy,<sup>66</sup> vessel, saffron<sup>67</sup>); what is more, it seems to have different meanings in the two scripts.<sup>68</sup> Most agree, however, that it is some type of vegetation motif, which is similar to Rutkowski's idea that it is a stylized tree standard. It is also noteworthy that in many cases this sign is rendered with a horizontal line above the apex of the triangle and running parallel to the base. In this I see an influence of the Linear sign in form, if not in meaning. Let us keep the possibility open that it may be a stylized version of a plant motif and proceed with our attempt at decipherment in a different way. Let us see with what signs or objects the impaled triangle is interchangeable.

<sup>58</sup> See *MMR*, 249ff., esp. 251 for the significance of the heraldic scheme.

<sup>59</sup> *MMR*, 255ff.

<sup>60</sup> *PM* I, 431; IV, 602, No. 12.

<sup>61</sup> The motif is identified by Buchholz, *Kadmos* 1, 1962, 166ff. as a garment. T.E. Small, *Kadmos* 5, 1966, 103—108, argues that the eight-shield is a goddess because he takes the loop, on top of the shield, to be a head. That the shields were hung by a loop, however, has been argued above. See also n. 6.

<sup>62</sup> *PM* II, 616; III, 316.

<sup>63</sup> *MMR*, 230.

<sup>64</sup> Rutkowski, *Kultdarstellungen*, 70.

<sup>65</sup> Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 194.

<sup>66</sup> *PM* IV, 686.

<sup>67</sup> *PM* IV, 720. Prof. W. Brice kindly informed me in a letter that the prototype of the Linear A sign may have been a vessel.

<sup>68</sup> Prof. W. Brice, to whom I owe this information, thinks that the impaled triangle in Linear B is the ideogramme prototype for the "PEMO" sign for wheat. See also M. Gill, *Kadmos* 4, 1966, 12—14.



Fig. 52. Bull's head flanked by a goat's head and another, unidentifiable, skull. Between the bull's horns is an impaled triangle. Sealing in the Heraklion Museum.



Fig. 54. Bull lying on a sacrificial table. Seal from Crete now in the Herakleion Museum. *CMS* II.3, 338.



Fig. 53. Bull's head flanked by sacred garments and topped by a double axe. Seal from Argos.



Fig. 55. Goat sacrificed on an altar table. Seal from Mycenae now in Berlin.

On *Fig. 52*, a sealing from Crete, a bucranium is depicted, flanked by two skulls of different animals. Above the bull's head, between the horns, is an impaled triangle. If we compare this with the seal from Argos (*Fig. 53*), there is a striking analogy in the composition. Instead of the garments we have here animal heads, instead of the axe an impaled triangle. On another piece from Crete (*Fig. 54*), a bull is

shown lying on a sacrificial table. Below the latter lie goats' heads(?) whereas above the bull there is an impaled triangle. Compare this with a seal now in Berlin, which shows a goat on a sacrificial table with a dagger still stuck in its neck (*Fig. 55*). The impaled triangle occupies approximately the same position as the dagger. Three further gems offer illustrative comparisons. On a seal from Mycenae (*Fig. 56*) a





Fig. 56. Calf in a contorted position with an arrow in its back. Seal from Mycenae. *CMS VII*, 105.



Fig. 57. Calf in a contorted position struck by an arrow. Sealing from Chania.



Fig. 58. Bull in a contorted position; impaled triangle in the field. Seal now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. *CMS XII*, 237.

calf is depicted in a contorted position because it is struck by a dart. On a sealing from Crete (*Fig. 57*) there is much the same composition except that the animal in question is hit by an arrow. On another seal, now in the Metropolitan Museum (*Fig. 58*), a bull is depicted in the same contorted position. No weapon is apparent but an impaled triangle appears as a sign in the field.

What emerges is that the impaled triangle is *interchangeable* with *weapons* and specifically deadly ones: the double axe, dagger and arrow. It is therefore reasonable to assume that it represents a weapon, perhaps a dagger in a stylized form. Of course, symbols can be interchangeable without being similar. We have

seen, for example, that the garments of *Fig. 53* and the skulls of *Fig. 52* occupy the same position in the field of the respective seal/sealing, both flanking a bucranium. This does not mean that they are the same object although it does show that they have an affinity. However, in the case of the impaled triangle it must be admitted that it *looks* like a stylized dagger. In fact the ideogramme SWORD is rendered in a very similar manner on Linear B tablets.<sup>69</sup> Further, it

<sup>69</sup> *PM IV*, 721, 725, 759. A similarly rendered dagger on an Old Assyrian seal found in Poros, Crete: A. Lembessi, *Praktika* 1967, pl. 192.

follows from the above analysis that the impaled triangle is a sacrificial symbol whatever it represents. Noteworthy is the fact that it often (although not always) appears with animals in a contorted position which indicates pain (Figs. 58, 61, 64, 70, 76). Thus, although it cannot be excluded that it is a stylized plant motif, it is more likely that it represents a dagger. The final answer, however, must be postponed until more evidence is available from either the field of glyptic art or epigraphy.

## V. Types of scenes in which the three signs occur

It has been established that the eight-shield, the sacred garment and the impaled triangle have a religious meaning. From this follows that when they occur in representations which appear secular in character, they add information which changes the nature of the scene and renders it religious. To return to a point made in the introduction, the scenes, when enriched by symbols, depict more than meets the eye. The signs then act as *determinatives*.<sup>70</sup>

We now turn to the types of representations where these signs appear. It is striking that the repertory is limited and most fit into five types which can be described as follows:

- A. An animal is hunted by a predator.
- B. An animal, mostly a bull or deer, is depicted alone.
- C. A scene of bull-hunting or bull-grappling.
- D. A composite creature, bull-man, goat-man, stag-man etc.
- E. Animal heads, bucrania or goats' heads.

Starting with category A, we can compare three different glyptic scenes, in each of which the three signs appear respectively. On *Fig. 59* a lion is holding its victim in its mouth (the apparent dismemberment of the latter is due to the restricted space of the seal). An eight-shield is engraved below the animal. On *Fig. 60* the same composition repeats itself, the main difference being that the sacred garment appears instead of the eight-shield. On a sealing from Crete (*Fig. 61*) an animal is attacked by two predators

(dogs?), between them stands an impaled triangle.<sup>71</sup> The compositional layout in the first two figures is so similar, that one suspects that the same pattern was used by the artists. In the third case, the sealing in the Herakleion Museum (*Fig. 61*), we have a different composition but the same idea is expressed.

In category B we observe much the same phenomenon. *Figs. 62—64* all show bulls with their heads turned backwards. All have the three signs of shield(s), garment and impaled triangle respectively.

Before we leave this category, some observations can be made which further demonstrate the close relationship of the signs. In *Figs. 65* and *66*, both seals now in Boston, bulls are shown. In both two signs feature; the eight-shield and the sacred garment. Noteworthy is the contorted position of the bull on *Fig. 65*, which denotes pain. Moreover, the animal is raising its hind-leg as if to remove the dart; but in fact there is no dart shown, only an eight-shield. Does the shield here act as a determinative explaining the contorted position? We shall see later that this hypothesis is likely, given the connection of the signs with sacrifice.

Not only does the eight-shield occur together with the garment in the same scene, but with the impaled triangle as well. On *Fig. 71*, a man and a bull are shown; the head of a second bull is in the background as well as several signs, among them are the eight-shield and the impaled triangle. These two symbols can also appear in strikingly similar compositions such as in *Figs. 67, 68* where the theme is lionesses and

<sup>70</sup> For the use of determinatives in Aegean art: A. Furumark, 'Gods of ancient Crete', *OpAth* 6, 1965, 92.

<sup>71</sup> Rutkowski, *Kultdarstellungen*, 70, fig. 21.4, discusses the heraldic scheme of the dogs flanking the impaled triangle and sees a sacred scheme in the arrangement. A very interesting comparison is afforded by a seal published by Evans, *PM IV*, 624, fig. 11. It depicts a bull, its back attacked by two griffins with a cereal motif between them. The scheme of a single animal attacked by two symmetrical predators, who flank a sign, is remarkably similar in both cases.





Fig. 59. Lion holding its prey in its mouth; shield below. Seal from Midea. *CMS* I, 182.



Fig. 60. Lion holding its prey in its mouth; sacred garment in the field. Seal from Crete, now in the British Museum. *CMS* VII, 125.

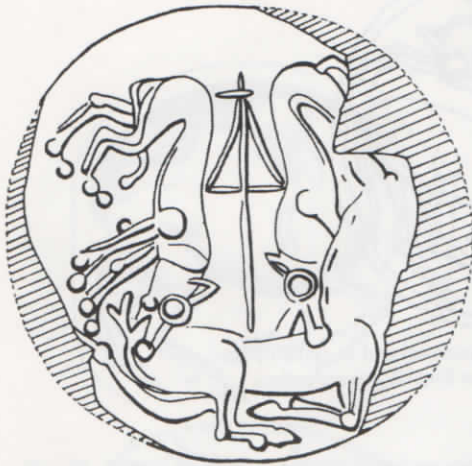


Fig. 61. Two dogs attacking their prey. An impaled triangle between the two predators. Sealing from Crete.

suckling cubs,<sup>72</sup> or *Figs. 69, 70* with bulls in a contorted position.

In category C we have men and bulls in a relationship which is not clear. Bull-leaping comes to mind, but given the strange posture of the "acrobats", it is equally, if not more, likely that bull-grappling or hunting is involved (*Figs. 71—73*).<sup>73</sup> The exact interpretation of these representations cannot be discussed here, suffice it to say that the eight-shield, sacred gar-

ment and impaled triangle accompany these scenes as can be seen in *Figs. 71—73*. There is one problem, however, with *Fig. 72*, a seal from Smyrna, because it is suspected of being a fake.<sup>74</sup> Sound stylistic arguments have been produced to this effect but I am not competent myself to pronounce on stylistic matters. However, it does strike me as odd that the forgers would think of using the garment sign; this would presuppose a very accurate knowledge of not only Minoan iconography, but also of symbolism. Still, there is one representation where the association of the sacred garment with a bull-"sport" scene is probable.

On a fragmentary plaque from Mycenae (*Fig. 74*), a bull is shown in a galloping position.<sup>75</sup> Beneath him is visible the hand of a

<sup>72</sup> *PM* IV, 559, *figs. 522a, b*. Evans discusses the subject of the suckling motif.

<sup>73</sup> I have discussed the matter with Dr. I. Pini to whom I am indebted for his comments. Many of the seals depicting such scenes are post-LM I A—B and perhaps there is a misunderstanding of the original composition in the late period. For a discussion of the various types of "Bull-games": J.G. Younger, 'Bronze Age representations of Aegean bull-leaping', *AJA* 80, 1976, 124—157.

<sup>74</sup> Younger (*supra* n. 73), 131, n. 24.

<sup>75</sup> G. Mylonas, 'Ο ταφικός κύκλος Β' τῶν Μυκηναίων', Vol. A, Athens 1973, 23; Vol. B, Athens 1972, pl. 11.





A. n.

Fig. 62. Horned animal (bull?), head of a goat and two eight-shields. Seal from Mycenae. *CMS I*, 75.



Fig. 63. Horned animal, head of another and sacred garment in the field. Seal now in Basel. *CMS X*, 142.



Fig. 64. Bull in a contorted position and an impaled triangle in the field. Seal in an English private collection. *CMS VIII*, 107.



Fig. 65. Bull in a contorted position; an eight-shield and a sacred garment in the field. Seal now in Boston. *CMS XIII*, 33.



Fig. 66. Bull, two sacred garments and an eight-shield. Seal now in Boston. *CMS XIII*, 32.





Fig. 67. Lioness, a suckling cub and an impaled triangle. Seal from Mycenae. *CMS I*, 106.



Fig. 68. Lioness, a suckling cub, a goat's head and an eight-shield.



Fig. 69. Bull in a contorted position and an eight-shield. Seal from Crete.



Fig. 70. Bull in a contorted position; impaled triangle in the field. Seal now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. *CMS XII*, 237.

fallen man, who is presumably being trampled. In front of the animal is the leg of another man, running in the same direction as the bull. Perhaps he is being attacked by the bull or he may be confronting another animal as G. Mylonas suggests.<sup>76</sup> A folded garment and a sword appear on the right corner of the plaque. This can hardly be part of the attire of the men, who probably wore only a kilt, to judge from the naked legs of one of the remaining figures, so it probably has a ritual function. Although

it is hard to be more precise, it is tempting to connect this scene with others of category C where the shield and impaled triangle occur in connection with bull rituals.

If it is bull-hunting that scenes of category C represent, then we may have here the process by which the new shields were made: a bull was

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. A, 23.



Fig. 71. Man, two bulls and signs in the field among which are an impaled triangle and an eight-shield. Seal in the British Museum. *CMS VII*, 100.

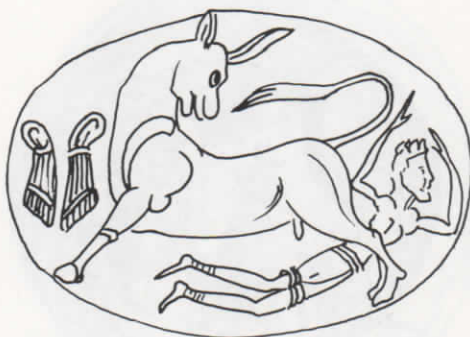


Fig. 72. Bull and fallen man: two sacred garments in the field. Seal from Smyrna suspected of being fake.



Fig. 73. Man and bull; impaled triangle in the field. Seal from Mycenae. *CMS I*, 137.



Fig. 74. Fragmentary ivory plaque depicting from left to right: the hand of a fallen man, the fore-legs of a bull, the leg of a second man, a sacred garment and a sword. From Mycenae.





Fig. 75. "Goat-man" with an eight-shield and a star symbol. Seal in Paris, Cabinet de Medailles. *CMSIX*, 128.



Fig. 76. "Goat-man" and an impaled triangle. Seal now in London. *CMS VII*, 138.



Fig. 77. "Bull-man", a head of a goat, and a vegetation motif, possibly between sacred horns. Seal from Crete, now in New York. *CMS XIII*, 84.



Fig. 78. Eight-shield and animal bones. Seal now in Paris, Cabinet des medailles. *CMS IX*, 182.

hunted and killed and his hide was used for the new festival. This, however, must remain speculation since it cannot be shown definitively what role the bull played in these representations.

In category D a composite creature (minotaur)<sup>77</sup> is associated with two of the signs only, the eight-shield and the impaled triangle (Figs. 75—77); no seals exist yet where the sacred gar-

ment features as a sign with such monsters but this may be only an accident.

What is the meaning of these creatures? Evans saw in them the prototypes of the minotaur<sup>78</sup> but this is rather unlikely since

<sup>77</sup> *PM IV*, 307; *MMR*, 374f.

<sup>78</sup> *PM III*, 316; *IV*, 387, 498f., n. 6.

stag, boar, goat and lion-men varieties exist.<sup>79</sup> Nilsson denied that they had any religious significance although he admitted that on one of the gems some sacred symbols appeared.<sup>80</sup> There a bull-man is represented together with the head of a goat, a tree, and, below it, sacred horns (*Fig. 77*). The latter are not certain, however, and may simply represent the lower foliage of the tree.

Both Evans and Nilsson found parallels with the Orient significant.<sup>81</sup> Bull-men occur on Syro-Hittite seals, whereas animal-headed daemons can be found in Babylonian and Assyrian art.<sup>82</sup> Although the idea of animal-headed daemons may derive from the Orient, the Minoan creatures are different. Their Oriental counterparts can be conceived as priests wearing animal masks,<sup>83</sup> but this is impossible for the Minoan "minotaurs" which have animal torsoes. Noteworthy is also their characteristic posture: their contorted V or "inverted V" position which makes them look "acrobatic" as Evans observed.<sup>84</sup>

Although it is difficult to specify their significance, there are certain observations that strike one about these daemons. One is that the animal torsoes represent the species of sacrificial animals (bulls, goats, stags, boars), or predators (lions).<sup>85</sup> The second is that a predator-prey relationship seems to be indicated in some of the representations. On one a lion-man chases a bull-man,<sup>86</sup> on another, as yet unpublished seal, a lion-man attacks a bull.<sup>87</sup> Thus, we are back to the realm of animals and the predator-prey relationship, which we have noted in the other categories. Note the occurrence of the animal head on *Fig. 77*.

In the final category E, the three signs feature together with animal heads. On a seal, now in Paris, *Fig. 78*, a cluster of unidentifiable objects appear, among which it is perhaps possible to identify bones and an animal skull. The only recognizable figure is the eight-shield. On a seal from Argos (*Fig. 53*), a bull's head is flanked by two garments and topped by a double axe. Finally, on a sealing from Crete (*Fig. 52*) we have much the same composition. A bull's head is topped by an impaled triangle and flanked by two goat skulls.

The analysis of the three signs has yielded some results about their contextual significance and relation to each other. *Table 1* illustrates the results.

Table 1.

	Shield	Sacred garment	Impaled triangle
<i>Category A</i>			
Animal/predator	×	×	×
<i>Category B</i>			
Animal	×	×	×
<i>Category C</i>			
Bull hunt(?)	×	×	×
<i>Category D</i>			
Composite creature	×	o	×
<i>Category E</i>			
Animal head	×	×	×

As can be seen, all signs have a common pool of representations with one exception: the garment does not occur together with the composite creature (minotaur). This, however, may be accidental.

<sup>79</sup> *MMR*, 375, figs. 182—183; *PM IV*, 588f., figs. 586—587.

<sup>80</sup> *MMR*, 375.

<sup>81</sup> *PM IV*, 498. Nilsson, *MMR* 383ff., thinks that the antithetical group may be Oriental, but judiciously remarks that a thorough investigation is needed since many Oriental seal-representations of this scheme are later than the Minoan ones.

<sup>82</sup> *MMR*, 371, fig. 174; 372, fig. 180. The Phaistos tablet, which depicts animal-headed daemons, is believed by Nilsson to have been of Oriental derivation.

<sup>83</sup> Frankfort (*supra* n. 2), pls. 92, 94a. Priests wore animal masks also in Greece and Cyprus: Burkert, *GR*, 95, 104.

<sup>84</sup> *PM IV*, 589. Note the close similarity of the posture of the "minotaurs" with that of real animals, which are sometimes represented in peculiar positions in glyptic art (*PM IV*, 588 f., figs. 583—587). This reinforces the impression that the essential quality of these composite creatures is their animal nature. That acrobatic stances have a ritual significance has been convincingly shown by W. Deonna, *Le symbolisme de l'acrobatie antique* (Collection Latomus IX), Bruxelles 1953, 23—30 and esp. 72ff.

<sup>85</sup> See above n. 79.

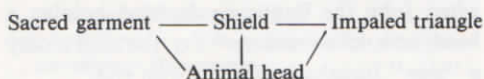
<sup>86</sup> *PM IV*, 589, fig. 586.

<sup>87</sup> This information was given to me by Dr. I. Pini.



It is worth observing that while the eight-shield and the animal skull occur together with the other two signs, the impaled triangle and sacred garment do not appear together (unless again this is due to accident of preservation). This is illustrated in *Table 2*.

Table 2.



The above schematization of the relationships of the signs implies that the eight-shield + animal head are more central symbols than the other two and probably had a broader significance. A comparison with the cross, the most central symbol of Christianity, may be instructive.

## VI. Determinatives and sacrificial ritual

I have argued that the three signs under discussion act as determinatives and add religious information to the scenes in which they occur. Let us be more specific.

In the Introduction, I addressed the question "what is the relationship between the categories of the scenes?" The common factor in all of them is obviously *animals*: solitary, hunted, daemonic or represented by a head. An explanation lies close at hand and that is that sacrificial practice is indicated. In other words, the determinatives designate the animals as sacrificial victims when they occur alone or as animal heads<sup>88</sup> (categories B, E); they suggest symbolic sacrifice where there is a predator—prey relationship (categories A, D) even if the hunter is human (category C).

What favours this hypothesis is the association of all three signs with animal heads; note also that the impaled triangle has obvious connections with sacrifice, as has been established independently (*Figs. 52, 54*).<sup>89</sup>

But why not depict sacrifice explicitly, why resort to these symbolic expressions using determinatives?

This question will lead us into a small digression on the nature of metaphor in language and art. Recent work in philosophy<sup>90</sup> has shown that metaphor is not only important but essential for the understanding and ordering of our world. Language is full of metaphoric projections whereby abstract concepts are rendered concrete by familiar imagery. The projective mechanisms help us enrich our perceptions by establishing connections with more familiar or general concepts. Hence, it is natural that each culture uses as sources for its symbols that with which it is most acquainted. In ancient societies it was nature which provided the model for order in the universe and was therefore used extensively to illustrate deep truths relevant to humanity.

In summary, the power inherent in metaphor is two-fold. Firstly, it places human experience within a larger, universal order and, secondly, it uses familiar models to illuminate actions and concepts.

For example, the animal-gods of Egypt reflect the natural world as the Egyptians saw it, as well as a set of relationships which are taken from the animal kingdom and which transcend human institutions. The similes in Homer offer explicit comparisons between human actions and nature. The result is that the former become not only more vivid but also more valid and explicable within a larger context.

To return to the Minoans. Their art is full of symbolic projections. We have already seen in Part I (XI. 2) that the dolphin and griffin were symbolic, archetypal, predators. Furthermore, in Minoan art a deliberate juxtaposition is often made between animals and humans, as on a fresco from Thera, which depicts boxing boys and competing animals, or on the inlaid dagger

<sup>88</sup> Mylonas, *Mycenae* (supra n. 3), 59, reaches a similar conclusion that the shield marks the animal as a possession of the goddess.

<sup>89</sup> That there exists a connection between the impaled triangle and sacrifice has already been observed by Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer*, 173.

<sup>90</sup> I am indebted for this information to Prof. M. Johnson, Univ. of S. Illinois at Carbondale, who is preparing a book on the nature of metaphor.

from Mycenae showing animal and human hunters on both of its sides.<sup>91</sup> As in the Homeric similes, this visual juxtaposition enables the artist to place human actions within a larger frame and interpret them. Let us also remember that nature metaphors have more authority. There is something awesome in a scene where the lion is devouring its prey, whereas the practice of man slaughtering an animal on a sacrificial table appears mundane in comparison. The sacrilization of violence in nature is also used extensively in religious art of the Archaic period where many a temple pediment is decorated by lions mercilessly devouring their prey.

In conclusion, I have tried to show that the signs of the eight-shield, sacred garment and impaled triangle are determinatives designating the animals with which they appear as sacrificial victims. This is not because they themselves necessarily have a direct connection with sacri-

fice, but, in the case of the first two signs, they are important cult implements and have, therefore, obvious religious associations.

The use of signs or symbols can be paralleled not only in Oriental but also in Christian art. The sign of the cross is the most obvious example one can adduce, but there are others as well. Would a Minoan have understood that when John the Baptist is depicted holding a head, he is not a murderer? Yet, the head is only a "sign" foreshadowing his own end.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Thera fresco: *Thera* IV, col.pl.D. Inlaid dagger from Mycenae: Marinatos-Hirmer, col.pl.L. On the relationship between animals and humans in Creto-Mycenaean art: N. Marinatos, 'Man and animal in Creto-Mycenaean art', in *Festschrift for G. Mylonas* (forthcoming).

<sup>92</sup> Byzantine icon in the Benaki Museum, Athens.



## List of abbreviations

- AA* = *Archäologischer Anzeiger*  
*AAA* = 'Αρχαιολογικά ἀνάλεκτα ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν.  
*Athens annals of archaeology*  
*ActaArchHung* = *Acta archaeologica Academiae scientiarum Hungaricae*  
*ActaAth-4°* = Skrifter utg. av Svenska institutet i Athen  
*AGDS* = *Antike Gemmen in deutschen Sammlungen*, 1968  
*AJA* = *American journal of archaeology*  
*ArchEph* = 'Αρχαιολογική ἐφημερίς  
*ArchHom* = *Archaeologia Homerica*, ed. F. Matz and H.-G. Buchholz, 1967  
*ArchRep* = *Archaeological reports*  
*ASAtene* = *Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene*  
*AthMitt* = *Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts. Athenische Abteilung*  
*BABesch* = *Bulletin antieke beschaving*  
*BCH* = *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*  
*BICS* = *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London*  
*BSA* = *Annual of the British School at Athens*  
 Burkert, *HN* = W. Burkert, *Homo necans*, 1972  
 Burkert, *GR* = W. Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*, 1977  
*CCO* = J. Boardman, *The Cretan collection in Oxford*, 1961  
*CMS* = *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel*, eds. F. Matz, H. Biesantz and I. Pini, 1964—  
*CQ* = *Classical quarterly*  
*CS* = V.E.G. Kenna, *Cretan seals, with a catalogue of the Minoan gems in the Ashmolean Museum*, 1960  
*Deltion* = 'Αρχαιολογικὸν δελτίον  
*Ergon* = Τὸ ἔργον τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας  
*ÉtCrét* = *Études crétoises*  
*JHS* = *Journal of Hellenic studies*  
*KrChron* = Κρητικὰ χρονικά  
 Long, *ATS* = C.R. Long, *The Ayia Triadha sarcophagus* (SIMA 41), 1974  
 Marinatos-Hirmer = S. Marinatos & M. Hirmer, *Kreta, Thera und das mykenische Hellas*, 1973.  
 N. Marinatos, *West House* = N. Marinatos, 'The West House at Akrotiri as a cult center', *AthMitt* 98, 1983, 1—19  
 N. Marinatos, *Art and religion* = N. Marinatos, *Art and religion in Thera. Reconstructing a Bronze Age society*, 1984.  
 N. Marinatos, *Tree* = N. Marinatos, 'The tree as a focal point of ritual action in Minoan glyptic art', in *Fragen und Probleme der bronzezeitlichen ägäischen Glyptik (CMS-BH 3)* (forthcoming)  
 Matz, *Göttererscheinung* = F. Matz, 'Göttererscheinung und Kultbild im minoischen Kreta', *Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz* 1958, No. 7, 381—449  
*MMR* = M.P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean religion and its survival in later Greek religion*, 2nd ed., 1950  
*MonAnt* = *Monumenti antichi*  
 Nilsson, *GGR* = M.P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion I* (HAW V.2.1), 2nd ed., 1955  
*OpAth* = *Opuscula Atheniensi*  
 Platon, *Minoika iera* = N. Platon, 'Τὰ μινωικά οικιακά ιερά', *KrChron* 8, 1954, 428—483  
*PM* = A. Evans, *The Palace of Minos at Knossos I—IV*, 1921—35  
*Praktika* = Πρακτικά τῆς ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας  
 Rutkowski, *Cult places* = B. Rutkowski, *Cult places in the Aegean world*, 1972  
 Rutkowski, *Kultdarstellungen* = B. Rutkowski, *Frühgriechische Kultdarstellungen (AthMitt-BH 8)*, 1981  
 Sakellarakis, *Tieropfer* = J.A. Sakellarakis, 'Das Kuppelgrab A von Archanes und das kretisch-mykenische Tieropferritual', *Prähistorische Zeitschrift* 45, 1970, 135—219  
 Sakellariou, *Cachets* = A. Xénaki-Sakellariou, *Les cachets minoens de la collection Giamalakis (ÉtCrét 10)*, 1958  
 Sakellariou, *MS* = A. Sakellariou, *Μυκηναϊκή σφραγιδογλυφία*, 1966  
*SBHeidelberg* = *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse*  
*SCABA* = *Sanctuaries and cults in the Aegean Bronze Age*, eds. R. Hägg & N. Marinatos (*ActaAth-4°*, 28), 1981  
*Thera I—VII* = S. Marinatos, *Excavations at Thera I—VII*, 1968—76  
*TPC* = A. Evans, 'Mycenaean tree and pillar cult and its Mediterranean relations', *JHS* 21, 1901, 99—204  
*TUAS* = *Temple University Aegean Symposium*, 1—10, 1976—85  
 Tyree, *Caves* = E.L. Tyree, *Cretan sacred caves: archaeological evidence*, Diss. Univ. of Missouri, Columbia, 1974  
*Unexplored Mansion* = M.R. Popham, *The Minoan Unexplored Mansion at Knossos (BSA Suppl. 17)*, 1984

## List of illustrations

1. Goat sacrificed on an altar table. Seal from Mycenae now in Berlin. After *PM IV*, fig. 542 *b*.
2. Bull lying on a sacrificial table. Seal from Crete now in the Herakleion Museum. *CMS II.3*, 338.
3. Pig on a sacrificial table. Seal from Mycenae. *CMS I*, 80.
4. Man and goat walking towards a cult structure from which a tree is growing. The same species of tree is depicted above the goat's back. Seal from Mycenae. *CMS I*, 119.
5. Sealing from Knossos consisting of two separate fragments joined into one by M. Gill and depicting bulls on a platform (table?) supported by a column; part of another bull and a palm. Below the table there are bucrania. After Gill, in *Die kretisch-mykenische Glyptik und ihre gegenwärtigen Probleme*, Boppard 1974, 36, fig. 1.
6. Plan of the cult building at Anemospilia. After Sakellarakis, *Praktika* 1979, 348, fig. 1.
7. Plan of salle  $\beta$  at Malia. After Pelon, *BCH* 107, 1983, 685, fig. 9.
8. Reconstruction of salle  $\beta$  at Malia. After Pelon, *BCH* 107, 1983, 694, fig. 18.
9. Reconstruction of an Assyrian temple. After Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien II*, 74, fig. 17.
10. Priest holding a mace. Seal from Malia. *CMS II.3*, 147.
11. Sacrificial bull, male officiant and sacrificial symbols. Sealing from Malia. After Pelon, *Mallia, Maisons III*, pl. xxvi.6.
12. Male figure (deity) receiving offerings next to a palm. The offerings suggest a sacrificial set. Seal from Naxos. *CMS V*, 608.
13. Chanting priest and a sacrificial victim. Two-sided seal from Knossos. *CMS II.3*, 13.
14. Priest as a hunter, running goat and bucranium. Three-sided seal from an English private collection. *CMS VIII*, 110 a-c.
15. Sacrificial scene from the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus. After *PM IV*, fig. 27.
16. Seated female performing libation. Sealing from Knossos. After *PM IV*, fig. 376 *b*.
17. Shrine topped with horns of consecration from which blood is dripping. Fresco from Xeste 3, Akrotiri. Slightly reconstructed drawing. After N. Marinatos, *Art and Religion*, fig. 53.
18. Bull struck by a spear. Libation scene. Two-sided seal from Crete. After *PM IV*, fig. 546 *b*.
19. Rhyton in the shape of a bull with blunt horns and a net on its back. From Pseira, Crete. After *PM II*, fig. 154 *b*.
20. Rhyton in the shape of a bull with blunt horns and a net on its back. From Akrotiri, Thera. Drawing after *Thera III*, pl. 54.2.
21. Chariot procession and sacrificial (?) bull. Fresco fragment from Knossos. After Cameron, *AA* 1967, 330-344, fig. 12.
22. Sacrificial procession from the ship frieze, room 5, West House, Akrotiri. Simplified drawing after *Thera VI*, pl. 112.
23. Priestess carrying a sacrificial animal. Seal from Vapheio. *CMS I*, 220.
24. Animal skulls and vegetation elements. Seal from Mycenae. *CMS I*, 18.
25. Hunter stabbing an agrimi; animal skull. Seal from Crete. After *PM IV*, fig. 558.
26. Priestess, head of sacrificial victim and spear. Seal from Crete. After *PM II*, fig. 15.
27. Lion, arrow and skulls. Seal from Kalyvia, Crete. *CMS II.3*, 104.
28. Two griffins attacking a bull. Seal from Brauron. *CMS V*, 216.
29. Griffin about to attack a deer. Sacrificial table below. Seal now in Paris. *CMS IX*, 20 D.
30. Daemon attacking a bull. Sealing from Zakros. Drawing after Levi, *ASAtene* 8-9, 1925-26, 162, fig. 175.
31. Minoan genius together with a hunter attacking a lion. Seal from Kakovatos. After *PM IV*, fig. 387.
32. Minoan genius holding a knife about to sacrifice a deer. Seal from the Giamalakis collection. After Sakellariou, *Cachets*, no. 380.
33. Scene of pursuit showing a dolphin and a griffin as predators. Cylinder seal now in the British Museum. Simplified drawing after *CMS VII*, 94.
34. Dolphin attacking an animal. An animal head below. Seal now in Manchester University Museum. *CMS VII*, 249.
35. Horned animals, bucranium, plant and dolphin. The relationship predator-prey explains the choice of animals. Seal now in the British Museum. *CMS VII*, 111.
36. Horned animal attacked by a dolphin. Seal now in Berlin. *AGDS II*, No. 57. Courtesy Dr. I. Pini.
37. The leader's ship from the ship frieze, room 5, West House, Akrotiri. Simplified drawing showing the association of lions and dolphins as predators as they appear on the hull of the ship. After *Thera VI*, pl. 112.
38. Griffin and dolphin. Seal from Akrotiri, Thera. *CMS V*, 690.
39. Priest with axe or mace. Seal from Crete. After



PM IV, fig. 343 b.

40. Inlaid dagger from Shaft Grave IV, Mycenae showing hunters with eight-shields fighting lions.
41. Hunter, armed with an eight-shield, fighting a lion. Seal from Vapheio. *CMS I*, 228.
42. Man in front of a sacred structure; behind him, an eight-shield. Sealing from Crete, Herakleion Museum. After Rutkowski, *Kultdarstellungen*, fig. 1.7.
43. Male and female dancing figures, a tree in a pithos, an eight-shield and a sacred garment displayed to the right. Ring from Vapheio. *CMS I*, 219.
44. Man and woman. To the right an eight-shield and, possibly, a sacred garment. Sealing from Zakros. Drawing after Levi, *ASAtene* 8—9, 1925—26, 183, fig. 233.
45. Woman, to the right an eight-shield and, possibly, a sacral knot. Unpublished. Courtesy Prof. Platon and Dr. I. Pini.
46. An eight-shield flanked by two garments, on an axe from Vorou. Drawing after Buchholz, *Kadmos* 1, 1962, p. 167, pl. I a.
47. Sacred garments and shields. Sealing from Knossos. Drawing after PM IV, fig. 597 A,k.
48. Eight-shields and garments on a ring from Archanes. After Sakellarakis, *Deltion* 21, 1966, B2, pl. 444 a.
49. A ship's cabin made of ox-hide. Painting found in room 4, West House, Akrotiri. After *Thera* V, fig. 6.
50. The leader of the fleet shown in a cabin crowned with lilies, similar to the one of Fig. 49. After *Thera* VI, pl. 108.
51. Two antithetical lions flanking a column from which hang sacred garments. Gold ring from Mycenae. After PM I, fig. 310 b.
52. Bull's head flanked by a goat's head and another, unidentifiable, skull. Between the bull's horns is an impaled triangle. Sealing in the Herakleion Museum. Drawing after Rutkowski, *Kultdarstellungen*, fig. 21.3
53. Bull's head flanked by sacred garments and topped by a double axe. Seal from Argos. After PM I, fig. 312.
54. Same as Fig. 2.
55. Same as Fig. 1.
56. Calf in a contorted position with an arrow in its back. Seal from Mycenae. Drawing after PM IV, fig. 499 = *CMS VII*, 105.
57. Calf in a contorted position struck by an arrow. Sealing from Chania. Drawing after I. Papapostolou, *Tà σφραγίσματα τῶν Χανίων*, Athens 1971, pl. 14.3.
58. Bull in a contorted position; impaled triangle in the field. Seal now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. Drawing after *CMS XII*, 237.
59. Lion holding its prey in its mouth; shield below. Seal from Midea. *CMS I*, 182.
60. Lion holding its prey in its mouth; sacred garment in the field. Seal from Crete, now in the British Museum. *CMS VII*, 125.
61. Two dogs attacking their prey. An impaled triangle between the two predators. Sealing from Crete. After Rutkowski, *Kultdarstellungen*, fig. 21.4.
62. Horned animal (bull?), head of a goat and two eight-shields. Seal from Mycenae. *CMS I*, 75.
63. Horned animal, head of another and sacred garment in the field. Seal now in Basel. *CMS X*, 142.
64. Bull in a contorted position and an impaled triangle in the field. Seal in an English private collection. *CMS VIII*, 107.
65. Bull in a contorted position; an eight-shield and a sacred garment in the field. Seal now in Boston. *CMS XIII*, 33.
66. Bull, two sacred garments and an eight-shield. Seal now in Boston. *CMS XIII*, 32.
67. Lioness, a suckling cub and an impaled triangle. Seal from Mycenae. *CMS I*, 106.
68. Lioness, a suckling cub, a goat's head and an eight-shield. After PM IV, fig. 522 a.
69. Bull in a contorted position and an eight-shield. Seal from Crete. After PM III, fig. 210.
70. Same as Fig. 58. Photograph.
71. Man, two bulls and signs in the field among which are an impaled triangle and an eight-shield. Seal in the British Museum. *CMS VII*, 100.
72. Bull and fallen man: two sacred garments in the field. Seal from Smyrna suspected of being fake. Drawing after PM III, fig. 158.
73. Man and bull; impaled triangle in the field. Seal from Mycenae. *CMS I*, 137.
74. Fragmentary ivory plaque depicting from left to right: the hand of a fallen man, the fore-legs of a bull, the leg of a second man, a sacred garment and a sword. From Mycenae. After G. Mylonas, *Ὁ ταφικός κύκλος Β' τῶν Μυκηναίων*, vol. B, Athens 1972, pl. 11.
75. "Goat-man" with an eight-shield and a star symbol. Seal in Paris, Cabinet de Medailles. *CMS IX*, 128.
76. "Goat-man" and an impaled triangle. Seal now in London. *CMS VII*, 138.
77. "Bull-man", a head of a goat, and a vegetation motif, possibly between sacred horns. Seal from Crete, now in New York. *CMS XIII*, 84.
78. Eight-shield and animal bones. Seal now in Paris, Cabinet des medailles. *CMS IX*, 182.

## General index

- Achaia, 48 n. 247  
Achladia, 39 n. 186  
Aidonia, 49 n. 249  
Akrotiri (Thera), 19 n. 47, 27, 28 31, 32, 34, 36,  
40—42, 44 n. 232, 47—49, 57 n. 38, 58—60  
Alexiou, S., 32  
Alroth, B., 10  
altars, 14—17, 19, 21, 22, 26, 34, 35, 38 n. 179, 39,  
49, 62  
Amari, 22  
Anemospilia, 18, 19, 38  
animals, sacrificial, 11—14, 16—18, 19, 21, 23, 25,  
30, 49  
— burying and burning of, 35—37  
— carrying of, 34  
— skin of, 57—59  
— skull of, 40, 51, 58, 70, 71  
Apollo, 34 n. 134, 57  
apotropaism, 54  
Archanes, 9, 15, 29, 40, 41, 51, 56, 57  
Argos, 32 n. 131, 60, 62  
Assyria, 20, 21, 51 n. 2, 63 n. 69  
Athens, 32 n. 131, 57  
axes, 22, 26—27, 35 n. 139, 39, 47, 49, 56, 61—63
- baetyls, 15  
Betts, J., 25 n. 77  
Bleeker, C.J., 11 n. 1  
Borchhardt, H., 54  
bothroi, 35  
Boulotís, Ch., 10, 12 n. 7, 34, 35, 55, 58, 60, 61  
Branigan, K., 11 n. 4  
Brauron, 44  
Brice, W., 61 nn. 67—68  
bucrania, 12, 17, 21, 22, 25, 29, 39—44, 48, 63, 64,  
70  
bull-leaping, 31, 42, 65  
bulls, 11—13, 16—19, 21—23, *passim*  
Burkert, W., 9, 10, 11 n. 1, 14 n. 24, 40, 52 n. 5
- Cameron, M., 32  
Çatal Hüyük, 40  
caves, 11, 15, 22, 36, 37, 39, 40, 49  
Chamaizi, 19  
Chania, 57 n. 38, 63  
chariots, 32  
chrysalis, 57  
Chrysolakkos, 37  
chthonic rites, 11, 25, 27, 36, 41  
columns, sacred, 17, 60, 61  
conical cups, 26 n. 81, 36, 38, 39, 42
- Conrad, B., 10  
Crouwel, J., 32  
cult images, 14, 21, 22, 25 n. 75, 32  
Cyclades, 36 n. 157
- daemons, 45—48, 70, 71  
dancing, 55  
deer, 12, 16, 32, 40, 44, 45, 47—49  
Delos, 40 n. 210  
Delphi, 57  
Deonna, W., 70 n. 84  
Demargne, P., 37, 58  
Demeter, 13, 14  
Dietrich, B.C., 9, 37 n. 159  
divinities, 36 (check before, e.g. 17, 23), 37, 43—45,  
49 n. 249, 51—54, 58, 60, 61  
dogs, 11 n. 4, 64, 65  
dolphins, 45—49, 71  
Dreros, 40
- earthquakes, 19  
Effenterre, H. and M. van, 38  
Egypt, 26 n. 89, 27, 31, 37, 51, 52 n. 5, 71  
eight-shields: *see* shields  
Evans, A.J., 12 n. 8, 17 n. 39, 21, 25, 52, 54, 57, 61,  
69, 70
- figurines, 36, 38 n. 176, 58  
— animal, 30, 36—38  
fish-monsters, 48  
frescoes, 12, 27—29, 31—34, 35 n. 140, 41, 42, 47,  
54, 58—60  
funerary rites, 27, 41  
Furumark, A., 14 n. 25
- Gaines, G., 25 n. 80  
garments, 51, 56—72  
genii: *see* daemons  
Gesell, G., 37  
Gill, M., 16, 47 n. 242  
goats, 11 n. 2, 12, 30, 39, 42—44, 46, 48, 62, 66, 67,  
69, 70  
Gournia, 57 n. 38  
griffins, 17, 44, 45, 47—49, 71  
Gypsades, 15 n. 30
- Hägg, R., 10  
Hagia Triada, 39 n. 186, 40  
— frescoes, 12  
— Sarcophagus, 12, 13, 15, 24—26, 27, 29, 32,  
41



- sealing, 12
- steatite vase, 58
- tombs, 11 n. 4
- Harrison, J., 17 n. 39
- Helios, 12 n. 10
- hepatoscopy, 25 n. 76
- Hera, 57
- heraldic scenes, 61 n. 58, 64 n. 71
- Hittites, 57, 58, 70
- Hesiod, 50 n. 250
- Hogarth, D., 39
- Homer, 12 n. 10, 49, 71
- Hood, S., 14 n. 25, 52 n. 7
- hoplolatry, 54
- horns of consecration, 26, 29, 30, 38 n. 176, 41, 42, 49, 69, 70
- hunting, 13, 25, 30, 42—49, 52, 57, 64, 67
- Idaeian cave, 39
- impaled triangle, 51, 61—64, 66—72
- incense, 37
- James, E.O., 16 n. 33
- Johnson, M., 71 n. 90
- Juktas, 13, 15, 39, 49
- Kakovatos, 45, 46, 47 n. 242
- Kalyvia, 43, 44
- Kamares, 39
- Karetsou, A., 11 n. 2
- Kassite art, 51 n. 2
- Kato Syme, 15, 32, 36, 39, 43
- Kenna, V., 12 n. 8, 25, 43 n. 227
- Kilian, I., 10
- Kilian, K., 57 n. 38
- Knossos, 14—17, 21—23, 25, 27, 28, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 40, 41, 43, 52, 53 n. 10, 54, 56, 57 n. 38, 58, 60, 61
- knots, sacred, 51, 55, 58, 60
- Kommos, 30 n. 112
- Krasi, 11 n. 4
- Laffineur, R., 48
- Lembessi, A., 11 n. 2, 36
- Lenda, 11 n. 4
- Levi, D., 55
- libation, 19, 21, 22, 49
  - architectural evidence, 30
  - jugs, 26, 29
  - and horns, 27—29, 41
  - of blood, 25—27, 29, 41
  - of wine, 25, 26, 31
- Linear A and B tablets, 61, 63
- lions, 17, 30, 43—48, 52, 53, 60, 61, 64, 65, 67, 70
- Long, C., 27, 41
- maces, 22, 23, 35 n. 139, 47
- Malia, 19—23, 25, 27, 29, 30, 35, 37, 38, 40, 41, 46 n. 233, 49, 57 n. 38
- Marinatos, N., 14 n. 25, 16 n. 34, 17 n. 38, 19 n. 47, 30 n. 104, 32 nn. 126 & 133, 35 n. 140, 39 n. 186, 48 n. 246, 57 n. 38, 58 n. 45, 60 n. 53, 72 n. 91
- Marinatos, Sp., 11 n. 4, 36, 37 n. 159, 40, 41
- masks, 70
- Matz, F., 11, 26 n. 86, 27, 31
- Maurospelio, 43 n. 227
- meals, cultic, 11, 15, 19, 22, 30, 36—39, 49
- Mellaart, J., 40
- Metaxa Muhly, P., 30 n. 103, 32, 37
- Meuli, K., 40
- Miamou cave, 11 n. 4
- Midea, 65
- Min-Horus, 11 n. 1
- minotaurs, 69, 70
- musicians, 25, 26
- Mycenae, 12—14, 16, 25, 42, 52—54, 60, 62, 63, 65—68, 72
- Mycenaeans, 9, 32, 44, 46 n. 233, 49, 52, 57
- Mylonas, G., 25 n. 76, 54 n. 21, 67, 71 n. 88
- Naxos, 22, 23
- nets, 31
- Niemeier, W.-D., 10, 60
- Nilsson, M.P., 9, 14 n. 25, 16 n. 33, 17, 22, 27, 37, 40, 46, 47, 54, 58, 61, 70
- Nirou Khani, 38
- palladium, 53
- Palmer, L.R., 16 n. 34
- Papageorgiou, L., 10
- Paribeni, R., 26
- peak sanctuaries, 11, 22, 31, 32, 36, 39, 40, 49
- Pelon, O., 19, 21, 22, 29, 38
- Pernier, L., 37
- Persson, A.W., 12, 54
- Petsofas, 39
- Phaistos, 15, 29, 37, 41, 49, 70 n. 82
- Phylakopi, 58
- pigs, 11—14, 16, 25, 30, 36, 39
- pillars and pillar crypts, 15, 16, 21, 25 n. 80, 30, 36, 39
- Pini, I., 10, 11 n. 4, 12 n. 8, 48 n. 243, 55 n. 25, 65 n. 73
- pithoi in art, 54, 55
- plaster in shrines, 57 n. 38
- Platon, N., 11 nn. 2 & 6, 25 n. 80, 35, 36, 38, 39
- polythyron halls, 39 n. 186
- Poros, 40 n. 202, 63 n. 69
- Poursat, J.-C., 30, 37
- priesthood, 22—26, 35, 38, 42, 43, 45, 47, 49, 50, 57, 60
- processions, 32—35, 58
- Prosymna, 48 n. 247
- Pseira, 31
- Psychro cave, 15, 32, 35 n. 142, 39, 40
- pumice, 36
- Pylos, 19, 32 n. 127

- rhyta, 22, 26, 29—31, 39, 41, 46 n. 233  
 Rome, mosaic, 52 n. 5  
 Rutkowski, B., 9, 14 n. 25, 54, 61, 64 n. 71  
 sacrifice,  
   — human, 19  
   — manner, 22, 25  
   — occasion, 41, 42  
   — place, 11—22, 38, 49  
   — symbolic representations, 42—49  
   — symbols on seals, 50—72  
 Sakellarakis, J., 9, 11 nn. 4—5, 12, 15, 18, 21, 34,  
   38, 51 n. 1, 57, 61, 71 n. 89  
 Sakellarakis, E., 18, 38  
 Sakellariou, A., 51 n. 1  
 Samos, 57  
 scarecrows, 40  
 seals and sealings: *see CMS Index*  
   — Basel, 66  
   — Berlin, 12, 13, 16, 17, 22, 46, 48, 62  
   — Boston, 64, 66  
   — Herakleion Museum, 13, 16, 53, 62, 64  
   — Metropolitan Museum, 63, 67  
   — Munich, 43  
   — Paris, 44, 69, 70  
   — Starnberg, 48  
   — symbols on, 51—72  
 shields, 51—58, 61 n. 61, 64, 66—72  
 shrines, 15—21, 27, 29, 30, 32, 36—38, 41, 43, 49,  
   54, 57, 61  
 Skaphidia, 11 n. 4  
 Sklavokambos, 36, 39  
 Skoteino cave, 15  
 Small, T., 61 n. 61  
 Smyrna, 65, 68  
 Sokaris-Horus, 11 n. 1  
 Sourvinou-Inwood, C., 10, 17 n. 39, 54 n. 25  
 Stavromyte, 39  
 stones in art, 55  
 symbolism: *see sacrifice*  
 Syria, 22, 25, 70  
 tables, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22, 25, 27, 30—32, 35, 36, 38,  
   45, 49, 62  
 temples, Minoan, 14  
 Thebes, 16  
 Tiryns, 52 n. 6, 54, 57 n. 38  
 tombs, 11, 40, 41  
 Trapeza cave, 11 n. 4  
 trees, sacred, 14—17, 26—27, 41, 42, 49, 54, 55, 61,  
   70  
 triton shells, 37  
 Tübingen, 12  
 Tyliossos, 13, 39  
 Tyree, E.L., 11 n. 3  
 Vapheio, 34, 53—57, 61  
 vegetation rites, 40, 41, 54, 56—58, 61  
   — *see also trees*  
 Vermeule, E., 9, 54  
 Vernant, J-P., 50  
 Vidal-Naquet, P., 50  
 Vorou, 56, 61  
 Warren, P., 54  
 weapons, 19, 21, 22, 25, 29, 38, 43, 47, 48, 52, 63,  
   67, 68  
   — *see also axes*  
 whitewashing, 57  
 Xanthoudides, S., 39  
 Zakros, 15, 22, 26, 34—36, 38, 42, 44, 46, 54—56,  
   61  
 Zeus, 12 n. 10



# CMS Index

I,	9: 13 n. 20	50: 16	VIII,	84: 15
	18: 12, 42	64: 15		107: 66
	19: 16	104: 44, 45		108: 15
	23: 15	105a: 46 n. 239		110: 24, 43 n. 227
	45: 15	147: 23		129: 15
	50: 12	167: 44 n. 232		140: 15
	52: 16	196: 25		
	57: 16	198: 22	IX, 20—D: 44, 45	
	58: 15	212: 15	101—103: 15	
	59: 15	213: 25, 35 n. 139	108: 15	
	66: 12	289: 41	118: 15	
	74: 16	334: 44 n. 231	125: 15	
	75: 66	338: 13, 62	128: 69	
	76: 15		129: 46 n. 239	
	80: 12 n. 9, 13, 25	II.4, 73: 44 n. 231	136: 12 n. 10, 16	
	88: 16		147: 15	
	91: 16	IV, 240: 16	157: 15	
	105: 16	245: 15	159: 15	
	106: 67		176: 15	
	119: 14—16	V, 157: 16	182: 69	
	123: 15	185: 15	201: 15	
	132: 54 n. 23	191: 16	203: 15	
	137: 68	198: 15, 16	204: 15	
	155: 15	216: 44		
	182: 64, 65	247: 15		
	205: 60	248: 15		
	219: 55, 56	250: 15	X, 1: 15	
	220: 34, 35	272: 15	113—115: 15	
	225: 22	317: 15	139: 15	
	228: 52, 53	587: 16	142: 66	
	231: 46 n. 235	597: 15	143: 16	
	242: 15	598: 15	178: 15	
	265: 16	608: 22, 23	222: 15, 16	
	266: 15	665: 15, 16	278: 43 n. 226	
	275: 15	689: 15	281: 15, 16	
	281: 15	690: 47		
	290: 13 n. 20	751: 15		
	346: 12		XII, 84: 13	
	375: 16	VII, 45a: 12	84b: 12	
	404: 15	94: 44 n. 231, 45	137: 16	
	487: 16	98: 15	195: 15	
	491: 12, 29	100: 68	237: 63, 67	
	495: 15	105: 63	248: 15	
	515: 16	113: 16	249: 15, 16	
		125: 64, 65	252: 15	
I Suppl.,	25: 12	138: 69	287: 15	
	34: 16	155: 16	288: 16	
	55: 12	162: 15	289: 15	
	76: 12 n. 10, 16	167: 15	296: 15	
	80: 13 n. 20	177: 46 n. 239		
	81: 13 n. 20	182: 15	XIII, 6: 15	
	92: 16	184: 15	7: 15	
		189: 15	13: 16	
II,	3: 12	191: 12	27: 15	
	5: f2	204: 15	29: 15	
		205: 15	32: 66	
II.3,	9: 44 n. 231	239: 15	33: 66	
	13: 23	248: 12	37: 15	
	21: 12 n. 10, 16	249: 45, 48	44: 15	
	25: 44 n. 231	261: 15	84: 69	
	40: 16	262: 15	139: 15	

