

Greek cult, particularly the figurines characteristic of chthonic cults, were adopted within the indigenous communities, for their own cults. But this change is part of a series of social and cultural mutations which signal a new equilibrium at the heart of the indigenous societies and in their relations with Greek cities.<sup>39</sup>

The path from mediation to sovereignty which I have described explains how divinities of thresholds, of passage, of initiation—like Artemis—sometimes occupy a central place in great cults, and in the very idea of their own beginnings that cities or states create. Just as Pierre Ellinger has very truly said of the cult of Artemis at Hyampolis, which furnished the Phokian federal state with places and myths with which to think about its origins, the role of cults in Archaic societies invites us to replace our contemporary metaphor of the *birth* of the city, or of the state, by the rather more Greek metaphor of the *transition* towards a more finished, 'adult' stage of society and institutions, a metaphor which would be completely justified from the historic point of view.<sup>40</sup> In conjuring up change from one state to another, rather than a sudden rising out of darkness, this new model allows justice to be done to the research, such as that represented in this volume, which rightly tries to remove the study of society and cult in the Geometric and Archaic periods from the conceptual framework imposed through hindsight by the model of the Classical city. But it also insists, against a positivist conception of gradual and linear evolution, that historical societies can only be formed if crucial thresholds are crossed as the traditions and slow transformations of past centuries are brought together, remodelled, and transcended by large-scale changes, the skein of whose tangled interactions the historian must unravel.

*Translated by Robin Osborne*

<sup>39</sup> Sabbione (n. 38); D. Yntema, 'Oria', *Archivio Storico Pugliese* 39 (1986), 3–26.

<sup>40</sup> Ellinger, *Légende nationale* (n. 20) 296.

## 2

*After the 'Big Bang'—What?*

or

*Minoan Symbols and Shrines  
beyond Palatial Collapse*

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An Historical Perspective

Beginning or ending, any Big Bang implies a fragmentation, a scattering of elements previously bound together in a structural form. This analogy is surely applicable to the end of the palatial system of Minoan Crete.<sup>1</sup> There we can see the breakup of political and economic structures; this breakup is equally apparent in the religious dimension, and this article examines it on two levels, a disintegration of shrine relationships, and a significant reformulation of one of the key symbolic belief elements of Minoan religion—the iconography of the Minoan Goddess.

This inevitably posits a contrast between Minoan religion in the Neopalatial period and in the Postpalatial period. In suggesting this contrast I am attempting to modify or progress from earlier analyses of Minoan religion which have tended to see their subject as a synchronic construct, created from sites and artefacts widely separated in time. Such a construct, labelled 'Minoan Religion', is inevitably artificial, and can offer only a partial perspective on the totality of religious belief and practice over two thousand years of Minoan cultural history. We have only to look back over two thousand years of Christianity to see how the faith of our own cultural heritage has been altered and redefined in relation to the events of history.

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this article I am assuming the end of the Minoan palatial system to be the conventional date of the final destruction of Knossos in Late Minoan IIIA2. But there is no intention here to contribute to the Destruction controversy; this article is entirely concerned with the religious dimension of Postpalatial Crete. Abbreviations: EM = Early Minoan, MM = Middle Minoan, LM = Late Minoan.

There are, of course, sufficient constant elements in Christianity for us to recognize that the faith of the first century AD is the same as that expressed in the established churches of today. Similarly, the Minoan artefacts allow us to recognize features constant in the development of Minoan religion—the focus on a female deity, the significance of symbols such as the double axe and the horns of consecration, meaningful animals such as bulls and birds, the emphasis on elements of the natural world. But the continued use of such features should not mislead us into believing that their meanings necessarily remained constant. Rappaport commented that only in its capacity to redefine its symbols does a society maintain its spiritual vitality.<sup>2</sup> The very continuity of Minoan religion does suggest the ability to redefine its symbols. The attempt to understand such redefinition is the duty of the historian of religion.

The historian of Minoan religion is inevitably constrained by the archaeological/artefactual nature of the material. Therefore this approach must start from the 'great events' of Minoan history, the transitions of the Pre-, Proto-, Neo-, and Postpalatial periods. Recent studies within the field of Minoan religion have started to take a more diachronic perspective. My own contribution to this has been the observations of changes in the peak sanctuary cult over the Proto- and Neopalatial periods.<sup>3</sup> That chronological focus, however, has been typical of recent studies; the cults, beliefs, and practices of the Pre-, Proto-, and Neopalatial periods have been emphasized, to the relative neglect of the Postpalatial period. Only Gesell has taken any consistent interest in Postpalatial Minoan religion.<sup>4</sup> This interest has been appropriately brought to fruition with the Kavousi excavations and the discovery of the Vronda shrine.<sup>5</sup>

### Rural Sanctuaries in the Neopalatial Period

There is a pattern of evidence which suggests that during the Neopalatial period the expression and practice of religion became centralized on the palaces. This has been separately recognized by scholars looking at different aspects of Minoan culture. Gesell has observed that access to palace shrines becomes much more

<sup>2</sup> R. A. Rappaport, 'Ritual, Sanctity and Cybernetics', *American Anthropologist* 79 (1977), 53–76.

<sup>3</sup> A. A. D. Peatfield, 'The Topography of Minoan Peak Sanctuaries', *BSA* 78 (1983), 273–280; 'Palace and Peak: The Political and Religious Relationship between Palaces and Peak Sanctuaries', in R. Hägg and N. Marinatos (edd.), *The Function of the Minoan Palaces* (Stockholm, 1987), 89–93; 'Minoan Peak Sanctuaries: History and Society', *OpAth* 17 (1990), 117–31; 'Rural Ritual in Bronze Age Crete: The Peak Sanctuary at Atsipadhes', *CAJ* 2 (1992), 59–87.

<sup>4</sup> G. C. Gesell, 'The Minoan Snake-tube: A Survey and Catalogue', *AJA* 80 (1976), 247–59; *Town, Palace and House Cult in Minoan Crete*, SIMA 67 (Göteborg, 1985), esp. ch. V. See also now R. Mersereau, 'Cretan Cylindrical Models', *AJA* 97 (1993), 1–47, which appeared too late to be incorporated here but with which I broadly agree.

<sup>5</sup> G. C. Gesell, W. D. E. Coulson and L. P. Day, 'Excavations at Kavousi, Crete 1988', *Hesperia* 60 (1991), 145–77, esp. 161–3.

restricted in the Neopalatial period, in comparison to the Protopalatial period.<sup>6</sup> I have noted that the peak sanctuary cult, initially a peasant, popular cult, becomes palatially controlled in the Neopalatial period, centralized onto the peak sanctuaries of the various palatial centres.<sup>7</sup> Cameron went even further than this, by attributing the origin of figured fresco decoration at Knossos to that palace's appropriation of the cult of the Minoan Goddess in her capacity as 'Mistress of Animals and Peak Sanctuaries'.<sup>8</sup> Moody has contributed to this picture with her perception of religion as a prestige activity in palatial Crete, as important to elite domination as was control of material resources and prestige artefacts.<sup>9</sup>

Centralization of religion should not seem surprising in the Minoan context. It is a consistent social tool of elite hierarchical domination in many cultures. Modern scholars, in particular Cherry, have expanded the perspective of Minoan scholarship by applying this generalizing principle to Minoan society.<sup>10</sup> Wright has initiated a fruitful approach by offering a structuralist perspective of this religious centralization (see Ch. 3 below). He suggests a dyadic relationship (both complementary and oppositional) between palace cults and rural cults (correctly linking cave cults and what have been termed 'sacred enclosures' with peak sanctuaries as components of a broader earth/fertility cult).

I have already discussed aspects of peak sanctuaries elsewhere (see note 3), but in the context of the theme of this volume certain things may bear repetition. Crete is primarily a land of mountains. Its traditional economy is based on the Mediterranean staples of olive, vine, and pastoralism. These are the typical resources of a marginal landscape. Any culture that evolves in such a landscape is going to have an appropriate ritual response to it, and for the Minoans that response was the cult of the peak sanctuaries. A peak sanctuary is a sanctuary set on a mountain peak, but though this may seem an unnecessarily obvious definition, the twenty-five peak sanctuaries so far known on Crete all share features of topography and of finds so similar that we may identify a Minoan pan-Cretan peak sanctuary cult. The characteristic finds are terracotta figurines of three main types: human, animal, and separately modelled parts of the human anatomy, referred to as votive limbs. Most, though by no means all of these

<sup>6</sup> G. C. Gesell, 'The Minoan Palace and Public Cult', in Hägg and Marinatos (n. 3), 123–8.

<sup>7</sup> Peatfield, 'Palace and Peak' (n. 3); 'Minoan Peak Sanctuaries' (n. 3).

<sup>8</sup> M. Cameron, 'Theoretical Interrelationships among Thera, Cretan and Mainland Frescoes', in *Thera and the Aegean World*, i (London, 1978), 579–92.

<sup>9</sup> J. A. Moody, 'The Minoan Palace as a Prestige Artifact', in Hägg and Marinatos (n. 3), 235–41.

<sup>10</sup> J. F. Cherry, 'Generalisation and the Archaeology of the State', in D. Green, C. Haselgrove, and M. Spriggs (edd.), *Social Organisation and Settlement* (Oxford, 1978), 411–37; 'Evolution, Revolution and the Origins of Complex Society in Minoan Crete', in O. Krzyszkowska and L. Nixon (edd.), *Minoan Society: Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium 1981* (Bristol, 1983), 33–46; 'The Emergence of the State in the Prehistoric Aegean', *PCPS* 210, NS 30 (1984), 18–48; 'Politics and Palaces: Some Problems in Minoan State Formation', in C. Renfrew and J. F. Cherry (edd.), *Peer Polity Interaction and Socio-Political Change* (Cambridge, 1986), 19–45.

figurines seem to be Protopalatial in date. A significantly restricted group of nine (six certain, and three possible) peak sanctuaries also have more varied finds, e.g. bronzes (figurines, blades, double axes), stone vases and libation-tables, some with Linear A inscriptions, and very rarely seals and jewellery.<sup>11</sup> Many of these finds are Neopalatial in date.

Of these sites, only Jouktas, the peak sanctuary linked with the palace of Knossos, has anything approaching monumental architecture, with three huge terrace constructions, and a multi-roomed shrine building.<sup>12</sup> Only eight other sites (the same as those with Neopalatial finds, referred to above) have any trace of buildings, and these seem to have been rudimentary dry-stone structures, probably hypaethral (open to the sky). The smallest have single rooms, the largest have four or five rooms. Thus, most peak sanctuaries have no architecture. On these, however, the features of the natural rock seem to have served 'architecturally', e.g. as temenos boundaries or to demarcate special ritual areas.<sup>13</sup>

On the basis of the finds and the architecture (or lack of it) we can make some inferences as to the religious belief and practice associated with the peak sanctuaries. The finds are almost all votive offerings, very rarely are they cult symbols or equipment for use in ceremonies. As votives they seem to reflect the concerns of the worshippers, themselves (the human figurines), their health (the votive limbs), and their property and prosperity (the animal figurines). These personalized and agricultural, especially pastoral, concerns strongly suggest that, at its inception at least, the peak sanctuary cult was a genuinely popular, peasant one, based on the fertility of Nature. The few cult symbols, double axes and horns of consecration, do suggest that the divine focus of the peak sanctuary cult was the same as in the rest of Minoan religion, i.e. the Minoan Goddess.

In terms of practice, worship seems to have been primarily, perhaps exclusively, communal. Even on peak sanctuaries with buildings, the main focus of activity was an open space suitable for the gathering of groups of people. Ritual activity was not random, however; there is ample evidence for the demarcation of special ritual places, using natural rock features and/or pebble scatters. There is very clear evidence for this at Atsipadhes Korakias, where the lower of the peak's two natural terraces is an open flat space. Both its natural topography and the distribution of finds focus the Lower Terrace towards the Upper Terrace,

<sup>11</sup> Peatfield, 'Palace and Peak' (n. 3); 'Minoan Peak Sanctuaries' (n. 3), 127.

<sup>12</sup> A. Karetsou, 'The Peak Sanctuary of Mt. Juktas', in R. Hägg and N. Marinatos (edd.), *Sanctuaries and Cults of the Aegean Bronze Age* (Stockholm, 1981), 137-53; *Praktika* (1974), 228-39; (1975), 330-42; (1976), 408-18; (1977), 419-20; (1978), 232-58; (1979), 280-1; (1980), 337-63; (1981), 405-8; *Ergon* (1984), 111-15; (1985), 83-7.

<sup>13</sup> The available evidence of the peak sanctuaries is fully documented in my book, *Rural Religion in Prehistoric Crete* (forthcoming).

where an area covered with pebbles can be identified by its finds as a special liturgical zone.<sup>14</sup>

Before progressing to a discussion of spatial dimensions of peak sanctuary distribution, the sites should be placed in their chronological and historical context. The available evidence suggests that peak sanctuaries as a group and cult came into being sometime late in the Prepalatial period—probably EM III, and the very earliest sites possibly in EM II.<sup>15</sup> Almost certainly all twenty-five sites were in use by the Protopalatial period (MM IB-III A) (Ill. 2.1). Then, in the Neopalatial period (MM IIIB-LM IB) all but eight peak sanctuaries went out of use; these eight are the peak sanctuaries associated with palatial/urban settlements.<sup>16</sup> It is this restriction of the cult to the sanctuaries of elite political centres, that suggests its transformation from a diffuse peasant/popular cult to a centralized, elite-dominated cult.

From the preceding summary, the spatial significance of the peak sanctuaries can already be discerned. I have discussed the topographic characteristics of peak sanctuaries elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> In summary form these characteristics are as follows: 1) prominence and visibility of the peak from the area from which the worshippers came; 2) good view down onto that same area; 3) can 'see' and 'be seen' from other peak sanctuaries; 4) accessible; 5) proximity to areas of human habitation and exploitation.

The general point which underlies all these features is that peak sanctuaries are very much part of the 'human' landscape. Their geographical position is determined in relation to human factors, their interaction with the population who worshipped on them. This is not to deny the possibility that the Minoans regarded higher, more remote mountains as sacred; it is simply that they did not leave any material remains on them, i.e. did not build sanctuaries or leave offerings. Similarly, we should not assume that to the Minoans the peak sanctuary site was the only sacred part of a given mountain, the specific 'abode of the gods'; rather it may have been the most suitable location for a sanctuary from which those 'gods' could be worshipped.

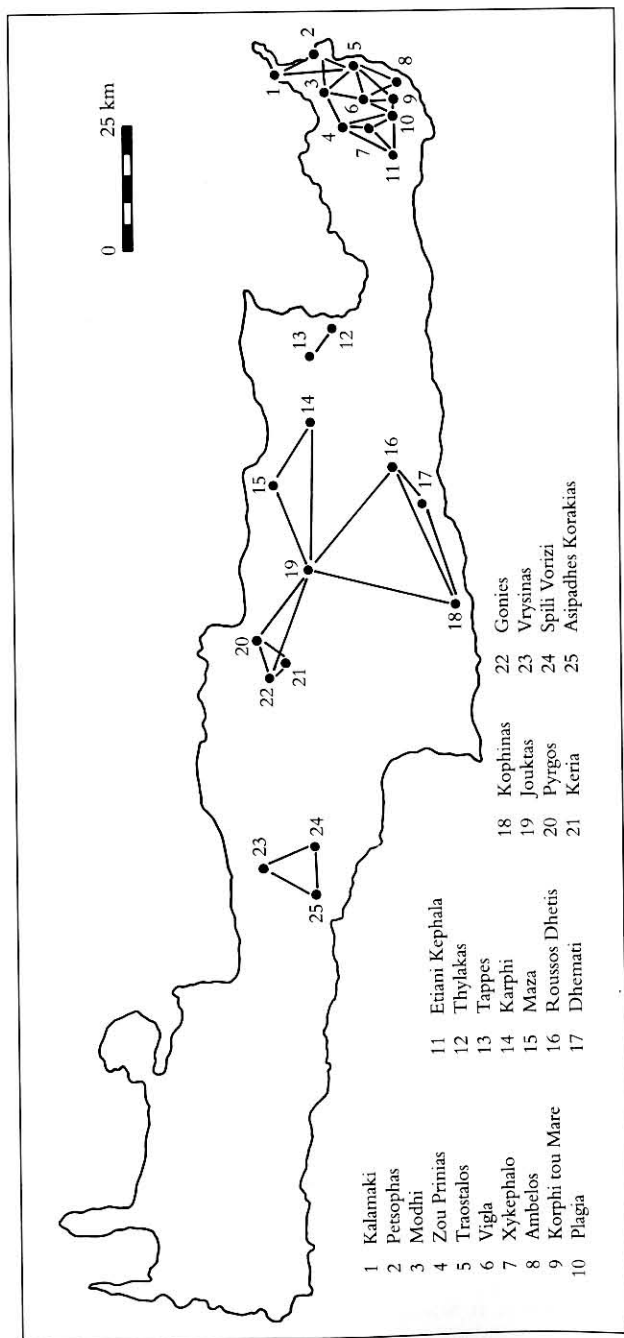
This element of choice, to maximize the factors of human interaction, does make the Minoan peak sanctuaries an interesting variation of the general religious phenomenon of mountain worship. In most other cultures the sacred mountain is a remote, almost supernatural place; e.g. the mountain shrines of

<sup>14</sup> Peatfield, 'Rural Ritual' (n. 3), 68-69.

<sup>15</sup> Peatfield, 'Minoan Peak sanctuaries' (n. 3), 123-6; 'Rural Ritual' (n. 3) 71-2 and 86.

<sup>16</sup> These are: Gonies (serving the Sklavokampos villa and valley), Jouktas (serving Knossos, Archanes, and north central Crete), Kophinas (serving the Mesara plain and Phaistos), Petsophas (serving Palaiakastro and its hinterland), Traostalos (serving the Epano Zakro sites and hinterland, and the Kato Zakro palace), Vrysinas (serving sites in the Rethymnon area), Zou Priniias (serving the Sitia coastal plain), and Pyrgos (serving the Tylissos villas).

<sup>17</sup> Peatfield, 'Topography' (n. 3); 'Minoan Peak Sanctuaries' (n. 3), 119-20.



ILL. 2.1 Intervisibility of Minoan peak sanctuaries

Japan, the universe-mountain of Buddhist cosmology expressed in the domes of temples and embodied in certain Himalayan peaks, Mesoamerican holy mountains like Mt. Tlaloc. It is this contrast that I have had in mind when, in other articles, I have referred to peak sanctuaries as 'community shrines, not places of remote and arduous pilgrimage'.<sup>18</sup>

This does not invalidate, however, the symbolic 'otherness' of peak sanctuaries within the Minoan religious context; indeed it might almost emphasize it, for the very deliberateness of the choice of peak sanctuary location suggests that the Minoans were indeed cognizant, no doubt at various conscious and more subliminal levels, of the difference between the natural/rural world and the urban/palatial world. The recognition of the difference may have arisen through the impulse that first gave rise to the peak sanctuaries. Previously I have suggested that the absence of peak sanctuaries in the earliest Prepalatial periods (EM I-II) may have had some correlation with the comparative scarcity of settlements in the mountains during the same period, which may even have had the symbolic implications of a taboo; the impetus of economic expansion in the latest Prepalatial period (EM III-MM IA) certainly led to increased exploitation of the mountains, which may have required a placating of the spirits.<sup>19</sup> This suggestion received unexpected corroboration from the 1991 Ayios Vasilios Survey, when the upland area of the Kouroupas mountain (the location of the Atsipadhes Korakias peak sanctuary) proved almost entirely free of Minoan occupation; apart of course, from the peak sanctuary itself, Minoan material was found only in a small rock shelter. Seen in this way, one of the spatial elements of peak sanctuary distribution is that it is the symbolic and ritual expression of secular human exploitation of the mountain.

The wider spatial implications of peak sanctuaries are territorial. In the latest Prepalatial and Protopalatial phases any peak sanctuary is the spiritual focus of an expanded territory with multiple settlements—the spiritual focus, embodied in the landscape, for its community identity. On a regional level the intervisibility of peak sanctuaries provides an opportunity for the expression of ritual unity that may have transcended political boundaries (Ill. 2.1). This is most graphically represented by the intervisibility of Jouktas and Kophinas, the main peak sanctuaries of north central and south central Crete respectively, and, of course, the regions dominated by the great power blocs of the Minoan world, Knossos and Phaistos.

The Neopalatial centralization of the peak sanctuaries is expressive of political centralization. There is some correlation of the Neopalatial peak sanctuaries (noted above) with the palatial polities as suggested by Cherry.<sup>20</sup> This is again

<sup>18</sup> Peatfield, 'Minoan Peak Sanctuaries' (n. 3), 120.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 126.

<sup>20</sup> Cherry, 'Polities' (n. 10).

territorial, but it is with this centralization that the symbolic spatial dimension of peak sanctuary interaction with palatial urban cult is most profound. As has been already stated, however, this symbolic interaction is not exclusive to peak sanctuaries. It is a rural dimension which also includes caves and what Wright terms 'sanctuaries in a rural location'.

Caves are an intrinsic feature of the limestone geology of the Cretan mountains. Tyree has, however, persuasively argued that there were only around twelve caves sacred in Minoan times.<sup>21</sup> This radically reduces the number of Minoan sacred caves listed by Rutkowski and Faure.<sup>22</sup> But a consistent feature of these caves is that the finds which reveal their sacred usage are of high quality, e.g. fine pottery, bronze figurines and other objects, stone vessels (some with Linear A inscriptions), double axes in bronze, gold, and silver. They are, if only in a manufacturing sense, palatial objects.

In the present context 'sanctuaries in a rural location' should be defined as self-contained religious sites in a rural setting, i.e. not part of a larger, secular settlement site, such as a villa or farmhouse. They could be shrines associated with some numinous natural feature, a rock or stream or tree, or they are associated with agricultural land, perhaps for on-site rituals. Collectively these have been defined in the handbooks as 'sacred enclosures'.<sup>23</sup> As I have observed elsewhere, however, there are major problems with the identification of sites listed as sacred enclosures.<sup>24</sup> I conclude from first-hand examination that there are very few sites of the palatial period which may be confidently claimed as independent sacred enclosures; indeed, on the basis of currently available material, I would limit the certain ones to Anemospilia, Syme, and Piskokephalo.

One of the many ways in which the Syme sanctuary is remarkable is for the extremely high quality of its finds, and the elaboration of its architecture and layout, peaking in the Neopalatial period.<sup>25</sup> There are even suggestions, not simply of palatial involvement there, but specifically of Knossian involvement. The Anemospilia shrine is obviously within the Knossian sphere of influence, and judging by the personal objects among the finds, the people found therein, killed and buried by the earthquake which destroyed the shrine, were actual

<sup>21</sup> L. Tyree, *Cretan Sacred Caves* (Ann Arbor, University Microfilms, 1974).

<sup>22</sup> B. Rutkowski, *Cult Places of the Aegean* (London, 1986); P. Faure, *Fonctions des cavernes crétoises* (Paris, 1964); 'Chroniques des cavernes crétoises 1972-77', *BCH* 102 (1978), 629-40.

<sup>23</sup> Rutkowski (n. 22), 99-118.

<sup>24</sup> A. Brown and A. A. D. Peatfield, 'Stous Athropolithous: A Minoan Site near Epano Zakro, Sitias', *BSA* 82 (1987), 23-33, esp. 33 n. 32.

<sup>25</sup> A. Lebesse and P. Muhly, 'Aspects of Minoan Cult. Sacred Enclosures: The Evidence from the Syme Sanctuary (Crete)', *AA* (1990), 315-36. Lebesse and Muhly also address the issue of sacred enclosures with specific reference to Syme. I agree with their suggestion for closer definition of the term. I repeat, however, my basic point that the term has indeed been used as a catch-all for rural shrines that are associated with particular natural features, rocks, streams, trees, etc. (but not peak sanctuaries or cave sanctuaries), and which can be more closely defined through that association.

members of the palatial elite.<sup>26</sup> The Piskokephalo figurines, though clay, are also very fine, with elaborate forms of dress and hairstyle which can only be indicative of a local palatial or urban elite.<sup>27</sup>

In his discussion of sacred enclosures, Rutkowski acknowledged the difficulties of identifying the actual sites; he therefore focused his analysis on the iconography, i.e. religious scenes on seals, sealings, gold rings, frescos, stone vases, etc. which show rituals associated with natural features, most likely indicating a rural setting, actual as well as symbolic.<sup>28</sup> But recall what the objects are which present these scenes—they are objects of palatially controlled precious resources, made in palatial workshops, for wealthy elite palatial customers and reflecting their preoccupations.

Therefore, all the evidence—the sites themselves, the finds thereof, and the iconography which celebrates their importance—is consistent in revealing that Neopalatial elite interest was not just in the cult of the peak sanctuaries, but was extended to all the spiritual aspects of the natural world. At this point it is appropriate to draw a distinction between the peak sanctuary cult on the one hand and the caves and sacred enclosures on the other. As I have argued elsewhere, the basic material features of the peak sanctuary cult, finds and topography, fundamentally the same all over the island, suggest that it was a, perhaps the main, pan-Cretan Minoan cult.<sup>29</sup> The more individualized finds from the caves and sacred enclosures do not offer evidence of other pan-Cretan cults.<sup>30</sup> Rather they suggest that each was an individual sanctuary site, of, initially at least (viz. Syme), localized spiritual significance.

In political terms palatial interest in all these sites is very properly expressive of elite palatial centralizing control of rural popular cults, a concern with religious monopoly both on the pan-Cretan level and on the more parochial local level. Where Wright elaborates on his structuralist observation in spatial terms he does so on this territorial level, suggesting a balanced integration of palatial and rural sanctuaries, each having a place in actual and in hierarchical terms. We may, however, also observe a more symbolic spatial dimension to the binary relationship between palatial and rural: the hierarchical dominance of the 'inside', the urban/palatial elite cults, is expressed in the imagery of the 'outside', the rural popular cults.

We may conclude therefore, that by the Neopalatial period there had evolved

<sup>26</sup> J. A. and E. Sakellarakis, 'Drama of Death in a Minoan Temple' *National Geographic* (Feb. 1981), 205-22; *Archives* (Athens, 1991), 137-56.

<sup>27</sup> N. Platon, 'To ieron Maza kai ta minoika iera koryphis', *KrChron* 5 (1951), 96-160, esp. 124-35.

<sup>28</sup> Rutkowski (n. 22), 99-118.

<sup>29</sup> Peatfield, 'Minoan Peak Sanctuaries' (n. 3); 'Rural Ritual' (n. 3), 61.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Peatfield, 'Rural Ritual' (n. 3), 61. I note, however, that Warren in his reply to the same article expressed his disagreement with this interpretation of caves (p. 80). I shall present my full arguments for this interpretation at a later date.

a complex religious structure, which integrated both palatial and rural cults in terms of practical functions and of symbolic meaning. What then happened to this centralized religious structure after the destruction of Knossos and the end of the palatial system?

### Postpalatial Religion

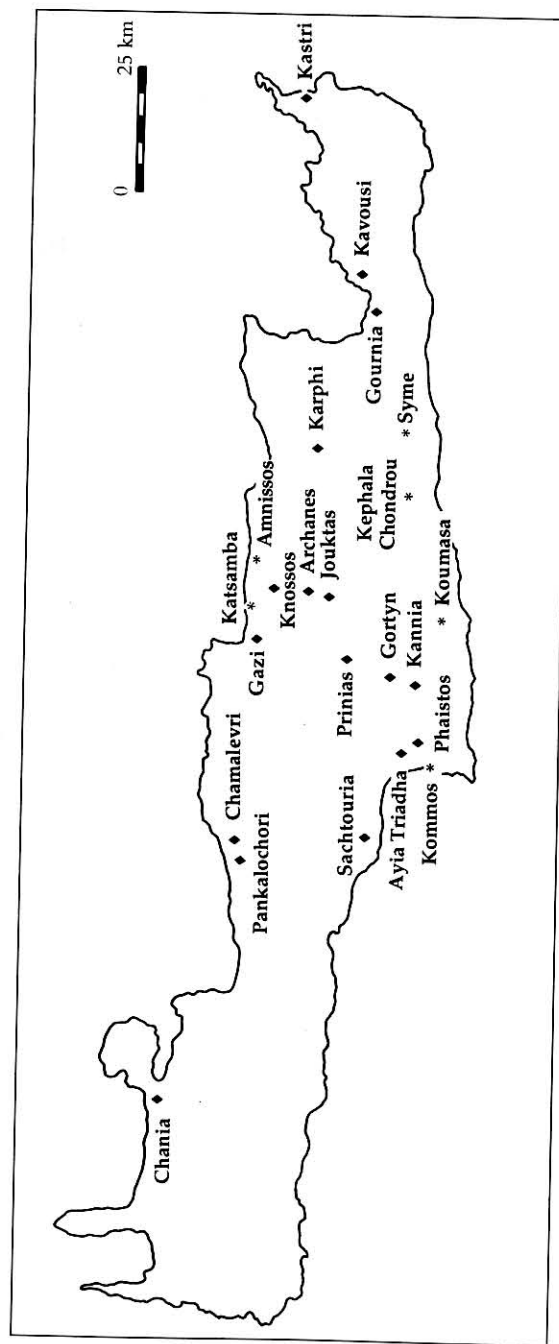
The primary evidence for Postpalatial religion is the phenomenon of the Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms, initially defined and catalogued by Alexiou.<sup>31</sup> It is the presence of these figures that allows the recognition of Postpalatial shrines. Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms are relatively simply designed figures



ILL. 2.2 Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms from Karchi

consisting of a cylindrical wheel-made skirt to which is attached a schematic torso. The name derives from the characteristically raised arms. The divinity of these figures is identified by the attributes which crown their heads: e.g. typical Minoan symbols such as horns-of-consecration, birds, discs, etc. (Ill. 2.2). Fortunately many of these figures have been found in shrines (mostly bench-sanctuaries) more or less *in situ* (Ill. 2.3): e.g. at Gazi (Ill. 2.4), Gournia, Karchi, Kavousi Vronda, and Knossos (Shrine of the Double Axes). More problematic, but still demonstrably cultic, are other deposits at Knossos and at

<sup>31</sup> St Alexiou, 'He minoike thea meth' upsomenon cheiron', *KrChron* 12 (1958), 179-299.



ILL. 2.3 Distribution of Late Minoan III Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms figurines (◆), and of snake-tubes in bench-sanctuaries (★)



ILL. 2.4 Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms, with poppy-head tiara from Gazi

Prinias. Fragments of Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms have also been found among the mixed finds in the large Postpalatial sanctuary at Ayia Triadha. (Similarly, fragments of at least two Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms are from mixed deposits on the peak sanctuary of Jouktas.) Fragments have also been reported from Chamalevri near Rethymnon. Two of the best preserved Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms are chance finds from Sachtouria, on the south coast of Rethymnon province, and from Pankalochori, near Rethymnon. Where it is possible to date the context of all these finds more specifically than Late Minoan III, they can be assigned to the LM IIIB and LM IIIC periods, which is consistent with their stylistic characteristics.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For these sites I am giving only the relevant reference in Gesell, *Town* (n. 4); this is done purely for convenience. For other references, interested readers should consult Gesell's entries. Gesell, *Town* (n. 4): Gazi (no. 5, pp. 69–71); Gournia (no. 10, p. 72); Kannia (no. 21, pp. 77–9); Karpfi (no. 22, p. 79); Knossos, Shrine of the Double Axes (no. 37, pp. 90–2); Knossos (no. 68, p. 101); Prinias (no. 118, p. 132);

Frequently found with these Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms have been the tubular offering vessels usually called 'snake-tubes'. Gesell has persuasively argued that where Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms and snake-tubes have been found together, it is possible to observe the direct association of an individual snake-tube with an individual Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms, usually by virtue of identical clay fabric and/or painted decoration. Moreover this 'set' is often completed by the addition of a vase which seems to have been placed in the open mouth of the tube. Gesell's observation has been confirmed by the Kavousi finds.<sup>33</sup>

### The Spatial Context of Postpalatial Shrines

This relationship between Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms and snake-tubes opens up the possibility that sites which have snake-tubes in bench-sanctuaries, but do not have Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms, may nevertheless represent the same cult. This would allow us to add several more sites: Katsamba, the port of Knossos, Kephala Chondrou, south of Mt. Dikte, Kommos, Amnissos, Koumasa, and Kato Syme.<sup>34</sup>

This is not an exhaustive list, but it reveals a minimum of eighteen separate sites which participated in the cult of the Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms, involving the greater portion of the island, at least as far east as Kavousi and at least as far west as the Rethymnon region. It is striking that many of the sites are relatively near one another: Ayia Triadha, Kommos, and Kannia; Gournia and Kavousi; Knossos, Jouktas, Gazi, Katsamba, and Amnissos. Despite this, however, there is little discernible hierarchical relationship between these near-neighbour sites in terms of size, richness, furnishings, and decoration. Certainly there is no evidence for selective luxury at especial shrines, such as is evident from Neopalatial sanctuaries. Another consistent feature revealed by the better preserved sites is that they are independent sanctuaries within settlements, i.e. they are public shrines. They are clearly a manifestation of *public* cult rather than simply private devotion.

Inevitably this is a simplification of the details, but what emerges is a broad picture of a single cult focused on a particular image of the Minoan Goddess, which was shared over most if not all of the island. It operated as a public, mostly

Ayia Triadha (no. 17, p. 76); Chamalevri (pp. 49–50); Sachtouria (p. 47); Pankalochori (p. 47). For Kavousi Vronda, Gesell *et al.* (n. 5), 161–3; for Jouktas, *Praktika* (1974), 235, pl. 175. On dating, Gesell, *Town* (n. 4), 47–50.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 50; Gesell *et al.* (n. 5), 162.

<sup>34</sup> Gesell, *Town* (n. 4): Katsamba (no. 30, p. 82); Kephala Chondrou (no. 31, p. 82); Kommos (no. 69, p. 102); Amnissos (p. 50); Koumasa (no. 70, p. 102). For Kato Syme, see no. 25.

settlement, cult. The material aspects of the cult (the buildings, equipment, idols themselves) reveal a moderate level of corporate prosperity.

This then is the basic material. What does it reveal of the social context of the Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms cult, especially in contrast to the earlier palatial periods?

The first point to highlight is that many of the sites are familiar more for their Palatial remains than their Postpalatial finds. These sites were clearly important for their role as greater or lesser regional centres in the political, economic, or indeed religious network of the centralized Neopalatial states, e.g. Knossos, Ayia Triadha—palaces; Gournia—town; Kommos, Katsamba, Amnisos—towns/ports; Kannia (perhaps also Gazi)—villa; Jouktas—central peak sanctuary.

Significantly, the two latest Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms sanctuaries, the LM IIIC sites of Karphi and Kavousi, are regional centres in the refuge site period.

These shrines are therefore strongly associated with secular sites; they are not independent sanctuaries, whose presence provides the *raison d'être* for any given site. In contrast there is very little evidence for other rural shrines in the Postpalatial period. If my reading of the evidence is correct, then already by the end of the Neopalatial period (if not earlier) Jouktas was the only peak sanctuary still in use.<sup>35</sup> Peak sanctuaries seem not to have been replaced by another form of sanctuary. Apart from the Syme sanctuary, the evidence of sacred enclosures in the Postpalatial period is apparently non-existent. These two sites, Jouktas and Syme, might seem to contradict the idea of no Postpalatial rural sanctuaries, but by the end of the Palatial period they had developed an individual pan-Cretan importance, independent of any association with a more general cult. Therefore their Postpalatial survival is expressed by incorporation into the main redefined cult of that era, i.e. that of the Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms. Though they apparently have no material to link them directly with the Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms cult, the same is true of the two main sacred caves which survived in the Postpalatial period, Psychro and Ida. Significantly, too, Tyree suggests a diminution in the overall number of Postpalatial sacred caves, from eleven Neopalatial to nine Postpalatial, only eight of which are the same.<sup>36</sup>

This strongly indicates that the centralized Neopalatial structure of integrated palatial and rural cults had simply ceased to exist. Even without other evidence this argues that Wright's structuralist observation is correct, because in any structure, physical or symbolic, the removal of one component is going to affect the others; in this case the removal of the palaces (buildings and system) negated

<sup>35</sup> Peatfield, 'Minoan Peak Sanctuaries' (n. 3), 131.

<sup>36</sup> Tyree (n. 21), 98.

the importance of the rural sanctuary sites which had validated the palaces' importance. In Postpalatial society the physical spatial distinction between palatial and rural no longer had any significance, therefore the symbolic nature of the spatial distinction was also irrelevant and meaningless.

No structure simply evaporates, however; we need to understand what was left. Late Minoan IIIB Crete seems to have undergone a cultural 'Indian summer' after the destruction of the palace of Knossos. Perhaps the two are causally related. What is commonly perceived of the artefacts, however, especially the pottery, is that there was an increasing regionalism.<sup>37</sup> If this can be truly translated into social terms, then released from the centripetal energy flow of the centralized Minoan state, the towns and villas that had been the local provincial centres of the palatial political and economic network were perfectly placed to express independent control of their own small regions. The Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms sanctuaries, a public cult in public shrines, were the religious component of Postpalatial territorial definition.

### A Symbolic Spatial Break-up

In the preamble to this paper I referred to the redefinition of symbols. It is clear that the Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms is the Postpalatial incarnation of that central symbol of Minoan religion—the Minoan Goddess. Moreover, the attributes of the Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms include many of the symbols familiar from earlier manifestations of Minoan cult: bulls, birds, horns-of-consecration, double axes, snakes, solar or lunar discs, etc. In the Postpalatial use of these, however, there is a significant difference. Gesell has remarked that 'all the standard Minoan cult symbols—birds, bulls, snakes, agrimia, double-axes, horns-of-consecration—continued to appear; however, the majority of these are not independent objects, but are attached to other cult objects (goddesses, snake tubes, stands).'<sup>38</sup> Of the Gournia sanctuary in particular she says: 'it includes almost all the sacred symbols used in Neopalatial cult . . . with the distinction that all these have been reduced to attributes of the goddess and her cult equipment.'<sup>39</sup> This is surely a redefinition of fundamental importance. But what does it reveal?

Primarily it reveals that all these symbols are now specifically defined in relation to the Goddess. The Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms figures are crowned with various permutations of these symbols. The selective association of the symbols seems to be deliberately characterizing each particular Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms as an individual. For example, at Gazi the four preserved

<sup>37</sup> A. Kanta, *The Late Minoan III Period in Crete*, SIMA 58 (Göteborg, 1980).

<sup>38</sup> Gesell, *Town* (n. 4), 41.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 43.



Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms heads are quite distinctive, especially the largest figure with the incised poppy-head tiara (Ill. 2.4). Given the common medicinal use of opium in the Late Bronze Age, this figure surely represents the healing aspect of the Goddess, earlier celebrated by the votive limbs on the peak sanctuaries. This symbolic individualization of the Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms harmonizes with the observation about the careful formation of 'sets', consisting of Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms figure, snake-tube, and offering vase. This is particularly clear at the better preserved sanctuaries, e.g. Gazi, Karphi, and Kannia.

Obviously the exact symbolic meaning of the permutations of attributes eludes us today, but the significant point is that the individualization of Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms figures was deliberate and, undoubtedly, meaningful to the Postpalatial Minoans. To be explicit, I am suggesting that a major feature of Postpalatial Minoan religion was a progression (probably no more than an intermediate stage) towards the developed polytheism familiar from later Greek religion, and that this was a feature new to Minoan religion.

The debate between Minoan monotheism and polytheism is not yet resolved. Nilsson and the scholars of his generation firmly believed in a multiplicity of Minoan goddesses,<sup>40</sup> but their synchronic approach to the material could not distinguish a progression through the cultural phases. By 'monotheism' I am not denying the probability that the Minoan Goddess had a consort; rather, I am suggesting that there is nothing in the iconography or cult places of the Pre-, Proto-, or Neopalatial periods to indicate that the Minoans of these phases characterized the aspects of the Minoan Goddess into separate deities. Branigan has already argued that the 'Minoan Household Goddess' and the 'Mistress of the Animals' are artificial definitions, and were in Minoan belief one and the same goddess. Warren too has argued for the basic unity of the Minoan Goddess.<sup>41</sup>

A possible analogy for the Palatial Minoan Goddess is the Virgin Mary as expressed in the imagery of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The Virgin is worshipped under a variety of epithets, e.g. the Virgin of the Annunciation, Mary the Mother of Christ, Panayia Galaktrouphissa, Our Lady of the Sorrows, the Black Madonna. Each of these has a distinct and separate iconography, which for the outsider who sees only the material, would indicate separate goddesses, yet the insider, the believer recognizes these images as all of a single person.

<sup>40</sup> M. P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion* (Lund, 1950).

<sup>41</sup> K. Branigan, 'The Genesis of the Household Goddess' *SMEA* 8 (1969), 28-38; P. M. Warren, 'The Beginnings of Minoan Religion', in *Antichità Cretesi: Studi in onore di Doro Levi* (Catania, 1977), 137-47; *Minoan Religion as Ritual Action* (Göteborg, 1988). Also A. A. D. Peatfield, 'Water, Fertility and Purification in Minoan Religion', in C. E. Morris (ed.), *Klados: Essays in Honor of J. N. Coldstream*, *BICS Suppl.* 63 (London, 1995), 217-27.

Before the cynical reader suggests that this analogy may also be applicable to the Postpalatial Minoan Goddess, let me point out that the personalization of the Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms is not of single figures, found in single shrines, but of *individuals within groups of figures*. Together, they need to be distinguished from each other. The association of offering vessels, too, suggests that the symbolic distinctions made by the permutations of attributes was accompanied by a practical ritual distinction, i.e. the distinctions were meaningful in terms of both belief and practice.

The factor which may account for this major difference between Palatial and Postpalatial religion is that crucial social change of the era—the presence of the Mycenaean on Crete, and the Mycenaean cultural domination of the Aegean during Late Bronze III. Renfrew has argued for Mycenaean influence on Minoan religion in this period, which he termed a 'reflux' of the initial Minoan influence on the Mycenaean.<sup>42</sup> Using the evidence of the Linear B tablets, Hooker has argued that there was a 'syncretism' of Minoan and Mycenaean features.<sup>43</sup> The limited scope of the tablets really only reveals names, names assumed to be divine from their receipt of offerings and their similarity to later Greek deities. Hooker argues that these names are essentially Mycenaean, but that the Knossos tablets show a syncretism by attributing Cretan epithets, e.g. Diktaian Zeus. If Hooker is correct, then the use of divine names suggests that Mycenaean religion was more overtly polytheistic than was Minoan. The individualization of the Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms figures would thus be the Minoan response to the 'reflux' of Mycenaean influence.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have highlighted what seem to be the two most important aspects of Postpalatial Minoan religion: 1) the wide distribution of the Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms cult over Crete, and 2) the individualization of the Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms figures into separate personifications. The first can only be a response to the social and political fragmentation evident in the period, whereby the former local regional centres of the Neopalatial economic network evolved into independent political units. In other words, the Goddess-with-Upraised-Arms sanctuaries were a religious component to Postpalatial political and economic territorial definition. The second point is also a fragmentation, but of a more conceptual kind, a popular spiritual alienation against the centralizing religious impulses of the preceding political order.

Conventionally this material is defined as Postpalatial (after the Minoan

<sup>42</sup> C. Renfrew, 'Questions of Minoan and Mycenaean Cult', in Hägg and Marinatos (n. 12), 27-33.

<sup>43</sup> J. T. Hooker, 'Minoan Religion in the Late Palace Period', in Krzyszkowska and Nixon (n. 10), 137-42.

palaces), but many of the features which characterize post-Bronze Age (historic Greek) Crete are also apparent. In the fragmented regionalism of Postpalatial Minoan society lie the roots of the Archaic and Classical 'Crete of the hundred cities', an extreme example of the political divisions of ancient Greece. In the deliberately individualized Goddesses-with-Upraised-Arms are the first hints of the developed polytheism of ancient Greek religion. The end of something great provides its own impetus and continuity to the development of something more.

Viewed this way, it may well be that the analogy with which I began this paper is truly appropriate. The cosmic 'Big Bang' threw matter, in the form of galaxies and worlds, outwards to create the universe; in turn, the religious elements of Postpalatial Crete reveal a centrifugal scattering of religion and society from the 'Big Bang' of Palatial collapse, to provide the roots of later Greece.

## 3

*The Spatial Configuration of Belief:  
The Archaeology of Mycenaean Religion*

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Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The archaeological traces of Mycenaean religion demonstrate three broad types of religious sites. These are the megaron with its central hearth and throne, the shrine building, and open air settings. But there is no agreement among scholars as to how the available evidence fits into these categories. For example, Hägg has argued forcefully in favour of identifying a house shrine type, Lambrinoudakis has suggested that the remains at the Maleatas terrace at Epidaurus are of a Minoan-type peak sanctuary, and Klaus Kilian has hypothesized that the remains from Ayios Ilias near Tiryns are part of a cult located in a small cavern.<sup>2</sup> These examples illustrate the need for clear-cut criteria that distinguish among the different types and that allow us to speak comprehensively about the nature of Mycenaean religious practice and belief.

Equally, estimates of the number and distribution of religious sites varies. Some scholars, such as van Leuven and Rutkowski,<sup>3</sup> using very loose criteria,

<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations: LH Late Helladic; LM Late Minoan; MH Middle Helladic; MM Middle Minoan. Acknowledgements: I wish to thank Susan Alcock, John Cherry, Andrew Cohen, Mary Dabney, Robin Hägg, Robin Osborne, and Ann Wright Parsons for commenting on earlier drafts of this article, suggesting references and lines of inquiry. They are, of course, in no way responsible for the views espoused here.

<sup>2</sup> R. Hägg, 'Official and Popular Cults in Mycenaean Greece', 'The House Sanctuary at Asine Revisited', and V. Lambrinoudakis, 'Remains of the Mycenaean Period in the Sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas', all in R. Hägg and N. Marinatos (edd.), *Sanctuaries and Cults in the Aegean Bronze Age* (Stockholm, 1981), 35-40, 91-4 and 59-65; Klaus Kilian, 'Patterns in Cult Activity in the Mycenaean Argolid: Haghia Triada (Klenies), the Profitis Elias Cave (Haghios Hadrianos) and the Citadel of Tiryns', in R. Hägg and G. C. Nordquist (edd.), *Celebrations of Death and Divinity in the Bronze Age Argolid* (Stockholm, 1990), 185-97.

<sup>3</sup> J. C. van Leuven, 'The Mainland Tradition of Sanctuaries in Prehistoric Greece', *World Archaeology* 10 (1978), 138-48; 'Problems and Methods of Prehellenic Naology', in Hägg and Marinatos (n. 2), 11-25; B. Rutkowski, *The Cult Places of the Aegean* (New Haven, Conn., 1986), 169-221.