

ARCHITECTURE IN GLYPTIC CULT SCENES: THE MINOAN EXAMPLES

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Because they are generally accepted as depictions of cult, many of the representations on Minoan seals and seal impressions have been used as evidence for Minoan cult practices. A number of these representations include built structures, which are then held to be shrines. I propose to examine here some of the so-called cult scenes — those which include architecture — and to briefly address the problem of identifying cult scenes and building types in Minoan iconography. In the first part of this paper, I propose some criteria for identifying cult scenes. In the second part, the architecture in some of these scenes is examined.¹ *Fig. 1* illustrates the scenes to be discussed.

In Minoan glyptic, almost all buildings occur in scenes identified as cultic. Yet there has been no real explanation of what constitutes a cult scene. While it may seem likely that many of the scenes did depict cult practices, there have been no stated criteria which would enable

* Source of illustrations: *Fig. 1,1*: W.-D. Niemeier in: CMS Beih. 3, 169 Abb. 2,1; *Fig. 1,2*: Niemeier op.cit. 175 Abb. 5,2; *Fig. 1,3*: Niemeier op.cit. 169 Abb. 2,4; *Fig. 1,4*: Niemeier op.cit. 182 Abb. 6,1; *Fig. 1,5*: Niemeier op.cit. 175 Abb. 5,6; *Fig. 1,6*: Niemeier op.cit. 182 Abb. 6,7; *Fig. 1,7*: D. Levi, ASAtene 8/9, 1925/26, 131 Fig. 141; *Fig. 1,8*: Niemeier op.cit. 175 Abb. 5,5; *Fig. 1,9*: Niemeier op.cit. 182 Abb. 6,8; *Fig. 1,10*: Niemeier op.cit. 173 Abb. 4,6; *Fig. 1,11*: CMS II,3 Nr. 56; *Fig. 1,12*: N. Marinatos in: CMS Beih. 3, 129 Fig. 5; *Fig. 1,13*: D.G. Hogarth, JHS 22, 1902, 77 Fig. 3; *Fig. 1,14*: Niemeier op.cit. 182 Abb. 6,4; *Fig. 1,15*: Levi op.cit. 118 Fig. 119; *Fig. 1,16*: Niemeier op.cit. 168 Abb. 1,9; *Fig. 1,17*: Papapostolou, Sphragismata Pl. 44 No. 32; *Fig. 1,18*: Niemeier op.cit. 173 Abb. 4,8; *Fig. 1,19*: Niemeier op.cit. 168 Abb. 1,10; *Fig. 1,20*: Niemeier op.cit. 169 Abb. 2,5; *Fig. 1,21*: Niemeier op.cit. 173 Abb. 4,11; *Fig. 1,22*: Niemeier op.cit. 168 Abb. 1,8; *Fig. 1,23*: Niemeier op.cit. 182 Abb. 6,2; *Fig. 1,24*: Hogarth op.cit. 77 Fig. 2; *Fig. 1,25*: Niemeier op.cit. 168 Abb. 1,12; *Fig. 1,26*: Niemeier op.cit. 182 Abb. 6,3; *Fig. 2*: F. Halbherr — E. Stefani — L. Banti, ASAtene 55, 1977, 97 Fig. 65; *Fig. 3,1*: Hogarth op.cit. 77 Fig. 3; *Fig. 3,2*: CMS II,3 Nr. 86; *Fig. 3,3*: CMS II,3 Nr. 287; *Fig. 3,4*: CMS II,3 Nr. 117; *Fig. 4,1*: Niemeier op.cit. 173 Abb. 4,11; *Fig. 4,2*: Niemeier op.cit. 173 Abb. 4,8; *Fig. 4,3*: Levi op.cit. 118 Fig. 119; *Fig. 4,4*: Hogarth op. cit. 77 Fig. 2; *Fig. 4,5*: Papapostolou, Sphragismata Pl. 44 Nr. 32; *Fig. 5*: Evans, PM II 600 Fig. 373b; *Fig. 6*: Evans, PM II 603 Fig. 376; *Fig. 7*: J. Shaw, AJA 82, 1978, 434 Fig. 8; *Fig. 8*: Shaw op.cit. 441 Fig. 10; *Fig. 9,1*: Niemeier op.cit. 168 Abb. 1,8; *Fig. 9,2*: Niemeier op.cit. 168 Abb. 1,9; *Fig. 9,3*: Niemeier op.cit. 168 Abb. 1,10; *Fig. 9,4*: Gill, KSPI Pl. 19 No. U56; *Fig. 9,5*: Niemeier op.cit. 169 Abb. 2,4; *Fig. 9,6*: Niemeier op.cit. 169 Abb. 2,5; *Fig. 10*: Shaw op.cit. 436 Fig. 9.

Drawing Figs. 1,11; 1,17; 3,2.3.4; 4,5: Th. Happel.

¹ This paper has grown out of the work on my dissertation, which examines all the two-dimensional representations of architecture from Minoan Crete. K. Krattenmaker, *Minoan Architectural Representation* (Bryn Mawr College dissertation 1991). I would like to thank Ingo Pini for inviting me to participate in this symposium and Jean-Claude Poursat for his graciousness in hosting it. Thanks also go to James Wright for reading preliminary drafts of the paper and for his helpful comments and suggestions. Any errors are my own.

one to say with a high degree of certainty that a scene was or was not a representation of cult. Without such criteria, analysis is difficult and conclusions about the character of buildings and figures in a scene are left open to criticism.

While pursuing this topic in connection with a larger study of Minoan architectural representation in general, I became interested in what iconographic setting could tell me about the architecture in Minoan glyptic, particularly in the 'cult scenes'. It seemed best to secure the first step of identifying cult scenes before taking the second step of identifying shrines. When a scene can be firmly identified as cultic, the architecture in it can then be recognized as a structure where cult was practiced — either a free-standing shrine or a cult area in a larger building.

In the opening chapter in his book on the sanctuary at Phylakopi, Renfrew called for an explicit 'framework of inference' in any discussion of religion and cult. Such a framework would, in his words, "allow one to make warranted statements about the past, in this case about past cult practice and religious belief, on the basis of archaeological evidence".² Renfrew designed his framework for the wide range of archaeological material from the excavations on Phylakopi, but his method can be applied with equal success to the more circumscribed problems of Minoan glyptic and the interpretation of iconography as it relates to cult and cult practices.

Since archaeological context and artifact type are of little help in revealing cult associations in the case of Minoan glyptic, the 'framework of inference' used here is designed to examine iconography. It is based on a set of criteria met by the presence of certain key elements in a scene which will suggest it is a representation of cult. Because the depictions on rings, seals and seal impressions are figural, their iconography is rich in information which is not difficult to read. The initial step of recognizing or reading the separate parts of a representation — what Lyvia Morgan calls *iconic identification* —³ comes fairly easily in much of Minoan art, even in the smaller, abbreviated representations on rings and seals. In Minoan art we are also fortunate in that we know a good deal about many of the objects depicted, for actual examples have been found on Crete in good archaeological contexts. These same objects are also depicted in frescoes and stone relief vases where the larger pictorial field provides additional information. Much, then, is known about their use and character, and we can make informed statements about their significance in any given representation.

Known objects in a scene can inform us about the unknown and, in general, reveal the character of a scene. The presence of objects whose archaeological context associates them with cult practices will connect the scene with cult. While this is a principle most archaeologists recognize and follow, it helps to place it in the forefront of any analysis, to avoid reversing the process, in other words, first identifying a cult scene, then labeling everything in it a cult object.

² C. Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult: the Sanctuary at Phylakopi*, BSA Suppl. 18, 1985, 11.

³ L. Morgan in: *L'Iconographie Minoenne* 5.



Fig. 1 Minoan seals and sealings: 'the cult scenes'.

Along with cult objects, certain types of figures and behavior will identify a scene as cultic. Behavior and creatures not found in the natural world are sometimes present in a representation. They indicate a mythic, symbolic world — the realm of religion and cult. One characteristic of religious iconography is repetition. Meaningful forms or objects are repeated, often in the same combinations.⁴ Representations of cult in Minoan art can then be expected to be repetitive and patterned, and in fact, this is the case. Lyvia Morgan has pointed out one such pattern in Aegean representations, the figure standing with raised arm in front of a building crowned by horns of consecration.⁵ Such combinations are not arbitrary and their importance cannot be overstressed. To quote Morgan, "It is the recurrent use of associations which most persuasively reveals meaning".⁶

The principles outlined in the preceding paragraphs may be summarized as follows: 1) known objects can inform us about the character of a scene; 2) unnatural behavior and creatures take a representation into the mythical, religious realm; and 3) repeated gestures and combinations of motifs are indicative of cult and help reveal meaning. With these as a foundation, I propose the following criteria for identifying cult scenes in Minoan art:

Criteria for the Identification of Cult Scenes in Minoan Glyptic

- 1 The presence of figures engaged in non-human or extraordinary activity, such as flight;
- 2 The presence of fantastic or hybrid creatures such as griffins or winged figures;
- 3 The presence of altars;
- 4 The presence of objects or symbols which have been associated with cult;
- 5 The presence of figures engaged in formal activities or gestures which have a ritual significance.

Criteria One and Two most firmly indicate we are dealing with representations of cult. The presence of a bird-headed creature, for instance, or one of the small hovering 'epiphany' figures, takes the scene out of everyday reality into an otherworldly realm.

On the other hand, Criteria Three through Five are based on the presence of objects and activities clearly at home in the material world. Their connection to cult practices has been determined by their archaeological and iconographic contexts. For example, we know that rhyta function as ritual vessels because they have been found in archaeological contexts which suggest ritual use, there are rhyta on which ritual scenes are depicted, and there are representations which show rhyta being used in formal rites or ceremonies.⁷

⁴ Renfrew (supra n. 2) 13f.

⁵ Morgan (supra n. 3) 14ff.; 15 Fig. 4; and Morgan, MWPT 118. 201f.

⁶ Morgan, MWPT 15.

⁷ B. Koehl in: Hägg — Marinatos, SC 179ff. has demonstrated that some types of rhyta, particularly the close-necked types, may have been used mostly in domestic context. Others, for example the conical rhyta, have been found in contexts which indicate their use in cult.

The presence in a scene of altars, Criterion Three, clearly imply cult practices. There are three types of altars common in Minoan Crete — the rectangular, the incurved and the stepped. They are known from actual physical remains and are illustrated together on the Zakro rhyton. Any ambiguity about the cult context of the physical remains is offset by the clear cult setting of the altars depicted on the rhyton, which shows a peak sanctuary within a walled courtyard or temenos.

Under Criterion Four — the presence of objects or symbols which have been associated with cult— I include the following:

Objects Indicative of Cult

Horns of Consecration

Double Axes

Sacral Knots

Rhyta

Festoons

Trees on top of built structures

Floating Motifs

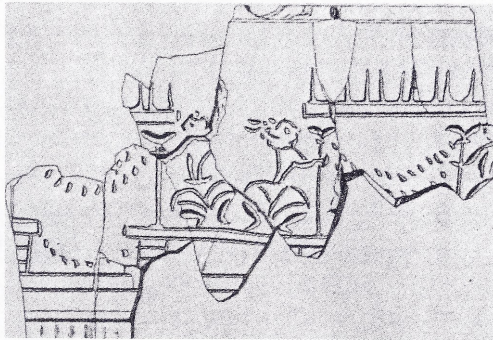


Fig. 2 Ivory pyxis from Ayia Triada.

Most of the objects included here have long been accepted as cult objects. Horns of consecration, double axes, sacral knots and rhyta have been discussed by others before me and are an accepted part of the Minoan cult repertoire.⁸ Festoons, the fifth object in the list, are often shown hanging between the columns of buildings crowned by horns of consecration, for example, on the structures engraved on a seal impression and on an ivory

⁸ For a discussion of cult symbols and equipment see G. Gesell, *Town, Palace and House Cult in Minoan Crete*, SIMA 67 (1985) 62ff.

pyxis from Ayia Triada (*Figs. 1,19. 2*). Festoons are associated with horns of consecration⁹ and crocuses¹⁰ on Late Minoan IB pottery, often on ritual vessels such as rhyta, indicating a possible cult association. It can also be noted that, by its nature, the decorative festoon implies festivities and would be a natural accompaniment to ritual or cult.¹¹

Trees have long been considered to hold a place in Minoan cult, beginning with Evans¹² and continuing with Nilsson's discussion of the Minoan Tree Cult¹³ and, most recently, Nanno Marinatos' paper at the last CMS conference.¹⁴ The link between tree and cult is especially clear in the distinctive combination which shows a tree on top of a building or a stepped altar. Particularly telling examples can be found on the Epiphany Ring (*Fig. 1,1*) and on a seal impression from Zakro (*Fig. 1,20*), where a tree is shown on top of a building or stepped altar on the right and a hovering epiphany figure is shown in the center of the scene.

Floating motifs in a glyptic representation also have a special significance, for they have a limited occurrence. Niemeier has stated that they appear only in representations of the epiphany of deities.¹⁵ While they do not occur in scenes that include a hovering epiphany figure, they do occur in scenes which show a type of ecstatic behavior, which some have believed was meant to call forth the deity (*see Figs. 1,2. 1,5. 1,8*),¹⁶ or other types of ritual behavior such as special gestures or processions. In the scene on a ring from Kalyvia (*Fig. 1,10*), an example of the latter, one of the processing figures is a jackal-headed creature or a monkey, behaving as a human and thus filling Criterion Two. Floating motifs appear only in these suggestive combinations and not in more ordinary scenes. This fact, along with their symbolic nature, makes them a strong indication of cult.

Criterion Number Five — the presence of figures engaged in formal activities or gestures — is the most difficult of the criteria to define, because we know of gestures and activities only from two-dimensional representations or figurines. The lack of information from other contexts makes it difficult to avoid a circular argument. The gestures and activities I include in my lists are thus of a few specific types found repeated in similar contexts. This type of patterning is typical of Minoan iconography, where there is a limited number of elements and figures adopt a limited range of gestures.¹⁷ Morgan has discussed a

⁹ W.-D. Niemeier, *Die Palaststilkeramik von Knossos* (1985) 121 Fig. 2.

¹⁰ P. Betancourt, *The History of Minoan Pottery* (1985) 143 Fig. 108; M. Popham, *BSA* 62, 1967, 340 Fig. 2,6.

¹¹ In his discussion of the Fresco of the Garlands from Knossos, P. Warren noted the sacred uses of the garland or wreath in Classical Greece, and argued for a similar use in Minoan Crete. He sees the suspended flower chain, or festoon, as an alternate form of the garland. P. Warren in: *L'Iconographie Minoenne* 204ff.

¹² A. Evans, *JHS* 21, 1901, 67ff.; id., *The Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult* (1901).

¹³ Nilsson, *MMR*² 262ff.

¹⁴ N. Marinatos in: *CMS Beih.* 3, 127ff.

¹⁵ W.-D. Niemeier in: *CMS Beih.* 3, 241.

¹⁶ Among these were F. Matz and A. Furumark. F. Matz, *Götterscheinung und Kultbild im minoischen Kreta* (AbhMainz 1958: 7) 28; A. Furumark, *OpAth* 6, 1965, 92. More recently, R. Hägg implies the same in his writings on Minoan epiphany. R. Hägg, *BICS* 30 (1983) 184.

¹⁷ Morgan (*supra* n. 3) 14; W.-D. Niemeier in: E.B. French — K.A. Wardle (eds.), *Problems in Greek Prehistory* (1988) 238ff.

number of these gestures, calling them 'conventional gestures of specific import'.¹⁸ I include a number of her gestures in my list and largely follow her definitions.

Gestures

Raised, bent arm

Votive gesture

Commanding gesture

Hand to shoulder

Arms akimbo

The first gesture is a bent arm raised so that the hand is held in front of the face with palm facing outward. As mentioned earlier, Morgan identifies this gesture as occurring in association with buildings decorated with horns of consecration. It is one of the commonest gestures in Minoan art and appears to be a way of showing reverence, a type of salute. It is found directed at other people as well as at buildings, and it may also be shown with both arms raised, as on one of the seal impressions from Ayia Triada (*Fig. 1,19*). This first gesture is very similar to another of Morgan's conventional gestures of specific import, which is typical of Minoan votive figurines. As she described it, one or both arms are raised in front of the body with bent elbows, the hand or hands held in front of the face or to the forehead. I would like to limit the definition to the hand or hands touching the forehead, to differentiate it from the first gesture, in which the hand is held in front of the face. The votive gesture is displayed by the male figure on the so-called Mother on the Mountain sealing from Knossos (*Fig. 1,3*), and possibly by the male figure on another Knossos sealing (*Fig. 1,16*), who also displays the sway-back pose of the votive figurine.

In the third gesture, the arm is held outstretched at shoulder height, the hand usually grasping a long staff. This gesture appears on the Epiphany Ring (*Fig. 1,1*) and the Mother on the Mountain seal impression (*Fig. 1,3*). In the first, it is employed by a male epiphany figure and, in the second, by a female figure standing on a mountain top. Other well-known examples of this gesture are to be found on the Chieftain Cup, the Khania Master Impression,¹⁹ and the Berlin Ring.²⁰ Used by figures in a commanding position, it is a gesture of authority.²¹

The fourth gesture listed here, not discussed by Morgan, involves touching the hand to one shoulder while the other arm is extended, usually along the side of the body. Among glyptic representations which include architecture, this gesture appears on the Arkhanes Ring (*Fig. 1,2*), on a ring from Gypsades (*Fig. 1,4*), and on seal impressions from Khania (*Fig. 1,23*) and Ayia Triada (*Fig. 1,26*). In these examples, and in all other examples that I

¹⁸ Morgan, MWPT 117f.

¹⁹ Hallager, MI Figs. 9–17.

²⁰ CMS XI No. 28.

²¹ Hallager, MI 31.

know of, the gesture is used only by female figures in formal dress. Although the glyptic examples show the hand touching the shoulder of the same arm, the gesture may be related to one employed by a votive figurine from Piskokephalo, who is shown touching one hand to her opposite shoulder.²²

The last gesture, arms akimbo with hands on hips, may seem the least distinctive or most ordinary of the gestures included here.²³ Its appearance in specific contexts, however, presents a more formal picture. In glyptic representations with architecture its most noteworthy appearance occurs on a sealing from Ayia Triada (*Fig. 1,14*), where three female figures, one large and two small, all hold this pose. These same three figures can be found in the same arrangement on at least one other Minoan seal.²⁴ Most significantly, the gesture is adopted by the female epiphany figure on the seal impression from Zakro (*Fig. 1,20*). In all cases, it is women in the long, flounced skirts typical of Minoan female formal dress who display this pose. Their dress is often completed by thick garlands worn round the neck, so that in pose and dress they recall the female statues of various sizes from the temple at Ayia Irini on Keos.²⁵

Activities

Boulder/bactyl hugging

Tree-shaking

Procession

Presentation

Circle dance

Agrimia carried by female figures

The activities included under Criterion Five can be characterized as formal activities or unusual activities of an ecstatic nature. The first two activities, boulder/bactyl hugging and tree-shaking, are of the ecstatic type. Both are shown in contexts which eliminate the possibility that they represent mundane activities — for example, fruit harvesting in the case of tree-shaking. The distinctive and unusual nature of these activities places them in the realm of ritual. Procession, activity three, is by nature formal and ceremonial and is typical of Minoan ritual behavior, as exemplified by the well-known procession frescos from the palace at Knossos. Processions often end in the presentation of gifts, so that presentation, the fourth activity, can be considered a corollary to the third. A seal impression from Ayia Triada (*Fig. 1,7*) shows a procession away from a building, with one of the men carrying the so-called sacred knot.

²² Marinatos – Hirmer, CaM Pl. 17.

²³ Gesell (*supra* n. 8) 48 identifies this stance as a dancing pose.

²⁴ CMS II,3 No. 218.

²⁵ M. Caskey, Keos II, 1. The Temple of Ayia Irini. The Statues (1986) Pls. 8–10. 23. 41. 69; ead. in: Hägg – Marinatos, SC 132.

The fifth activity I list is dance, long considered to play a role in Minoan ritual. At present, I include only circular dances, since their role in cult practice is most firmly indicated by the archaeological evidence,²⁶ and because of the difficulty of identifying other types of dance movements in Minoan iconography. A ring from Isopata (*Fig. 1,11*) and a seal impression from Khania (*Fig. 1,12*) depict circle dances performed near buildings.

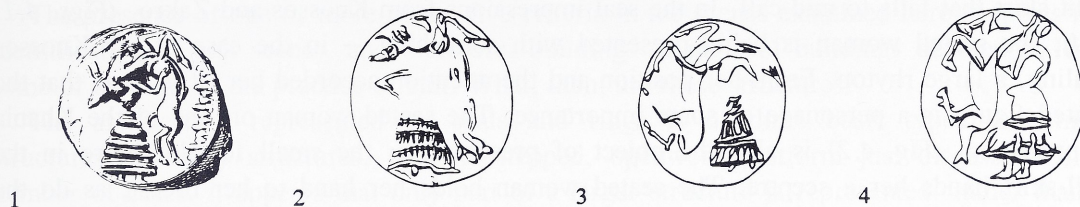


Fig. 3 Minoan seals and sealings: woman carrying agrimia.

Rather than considering the presence of agrimia themselves as an indication of cult, I include them in the sixth activity in the specific combination which shows a woman in a flounced skirt carrying an agrimi over her shoulder (*Fig. 3*). Since this type of formal dress is unlikely to be shepherdess' gear, a special activity is indicated. Agrimia are associated with peak sanctuaries through their appearance on the Zakro rhyton and from the number of votive figurines of goats and agrimia recovered from peak sanctuary sites.²⁷ Considering agrimia in these contexts, representations of women carrying goats become readable as possible references to sacrifice,²⁸ or as depictions indicating a (protective?) relationship between the female figures and agrimia.

In *Table 1*, Minoan rings, seals and seal impressions which include architecture have been charted for the presence of the five criteria. I would now like to examine one group of associated representations to show how recurrent association can help reveal meaning.

Test Case: stepped, openwork platforms

A stepped, openwork platform appears on a number of Minoan glyptic representations. This structure is found on seal impressions from Knossos, Zakro, Ayia Triada and Khania. One of the Khania seal impressions shows a woman seated on the platform feeding a goat (*Fig. 4,5*). Although she touches her shoulder with one hand, the fourth gesture under

²⁶ Terracotta models of circular dances have been recovered from Early Minoan tholos tombs, for instance at Kamilari. See D. Levi, *ASAtene* (1962) Fig. 174. Keith Branigan believes the paved areas in front of these tombs may have been used for circular dances. *The Tombs of Mesara: A Study of Funerary Architecture and Ritual in Southern Crete, 2800–1700 B.C.* (1970) 132ff., esp. 135; *id.*, *The Foundations of Palatial Crete* (1970) 94, 110, 123.

²⁷ A.A.D. Peatfield, *OpAth* 18, 1990, 120.

²⁸ For a detailed discussion of Minoan sacrificial rites see I. Sakellarakis, *PZ* 45, 1970, 135ff.

Criterion Five, one might still be tempted to see in the representation a charming agrarian scene. Examination of related depictions shows that the character of this scene is quite different.

Representations of the stepped, openwork platform form a distinct group, by virtue of a few shared characteristics. In each of the examples shown in *Fig. 4*, a female figure is seated on the top level of the platform. She is always shown in a pair of loose pants or a flounced, split skirt that falls to mid-calf. In the seal impressions from Knossos and Zakro (*Figs. 4,1, 4,4*), the seated woman is being presented with something — in the case of the Knossos sealing, a large rhyton. From her position and the attention accorded her, it is clear that the seated figure is a personage of some importance. The seated woman on one of the Khania impressions (*Fig. 4,2*) is also the object of presentation; the small female figure in the bell-skirt hands her a sceptre. The seated woman holds her hand to her breast, as do the women on the Knossos and Zakro impressions, indicating that this gesture may be linked with the receiving of gifts.

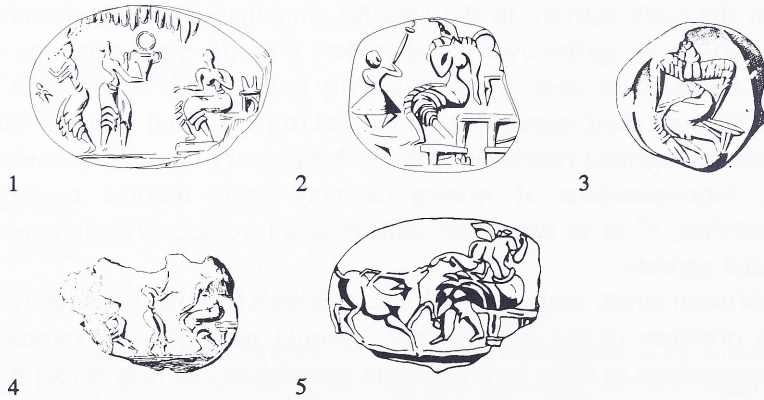


Fig. 4 Minoan seals and sealings: woman seated on stepped, openwork platforms.

The gestures and activities in these scenes suggest they may take place in the realm of cult. The representation on the sealing from Ayia Triada (*Fig. 4,3*) verifies it. The basic elements of the other four scenes are present: a female figure in the correct pose and dress is seated on a stepped, openwork platform. But this figure is obviously not human. She is winged and has the head of a bird. She is clearly otherworldly. The representations of female figures seated on openwork platforms are morphologically very close to the representation on the Ayia Triada sealing; they clearly belong to the same stock image. The representation on the Ayia Triada sealing, identified as cultic under Criterion Two (the presence of fantastic or hybrid creatures) brings the other representations into the realm of cult by virtue of association. The seated women in the representations, by this reasoning and by their apparent

interchangeability with the creature on the Ayia Triada sealing, can also be considered to belong to an otherworldly realm, probably as deities.²⁹

Identification of Buildings Represented

The presence of one or more of the five criteria in the scenes examined here supports the identification of cult scenes, and therefore, buildings or parts of buildings devoted at least some of the time to the practice of cult. What, then, are these structures?

The architecture represented on seals and rings is of three basic types: columnar structures, masonry structures, and the stepped, openwork platform just discussed. In a number of cases, it appears that only part of a larger structure is represented, rather than a complete building. When a building is not shown in its entirety but extends to the edge of the scene, it would seem to indicate that it is meant to be understood as continuing beyond the pictorial field of the ring or seal. An example can be found on a seal impression from the Little Palace at Knossos (*Fig. 1, 22*). The columnar structure depicted here is fairly elaborate. Columns support an entablature with a triple cornice and a frieze of circles or 'beam-ends', the whole crowned by horns of consecration. The beam-end motif provides a clue to the building type, since it is found in frescoes and three-dimensional models where the type of building can be better determined.³⁰

Three fresco fragments showing beam-ends came from the palace at Knossos: the so-called Pillar Shrine Fresco (*Fig. 5*),³¹ a fragment showing an entablature decorated with colored beam-ends and crowned by horns of consecration,³² and a fresco fragment showing a woman standing on a balcony (*Fig. 6*).³³ The entablature above the balcony is decorated with beam-ends painted in various colors. This fragment was recovered from the area of the Miniature Frescoes in the palace and may have formed part of the Grandstand Fresco, which is believed to represent the west side of the central court of the palace of Knossos.³⁴

²⁹ This interpretation would support N. Marinatos' identification of the female figure in the wall painting from Xesté 3 in the West House of Akrotiri, a clear example of the type, as a goddess. Marinatos, *AaR* 61ff.

³⁰ Although the beam-end motif is in many cases purely decorative, with little or no connection to the actual use of beams in Minoan architecture, there is some evidence from excavations for the existence of round beams in Minoan buildings, the ends of which may have been left exposed. In the Knossos palace, Evans found the carbonized ends of fairly small, round beams to the east side of the well of the Grand Staircase. A loggia had been located there, level with the third landing of the staircase. The carbonized beams were found above the remains of the architraves of the lower columns which had supported the floor of the loggia. Evans, *PM III* 300f. *Fig. 195*. At Phaistos, the round sockets of ceiling beams are visible in the west wall of room IL in the Protopalatial palace, J. Shaw, *ASAtene* 1971, 142 *Fig. 74*; see also 155ff. *Fig. 185*.

³¹ Immerwahr, *Aegean Painting* 173 No. 18d.

³² Immerwahr, *Aegean Painting* 173 No. 17d. This fragment was originally wrongly restored over the central section of the tripartite structure depicted in the Grandstand Fresco (Shaw [*supra n. 30*] 430 n. 6).

³³ Immerwahr, *Aegean Painting* 173 No. 17a.

³⁴ Immerwahr, *Aegean Painting* 65; E. Davis in: *Hägg – Marinatos, FMP* 157ff; Shaw (*supra n. 30*) 430f.; Evans, *PM II* 796ff.

The beam-ends represented in the Pillar Fresco are painted on an entablature above columnar openings or niches. Beneath the openings are walls with decorative paneling, and horns of consecration crown the entablature. The building depicted in the fresco had at least two stories and was richly decorated, suggesting palatial architecture. As with the Grandstand Fresco and the Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco, it probably depicts a part of the Knossos palace.

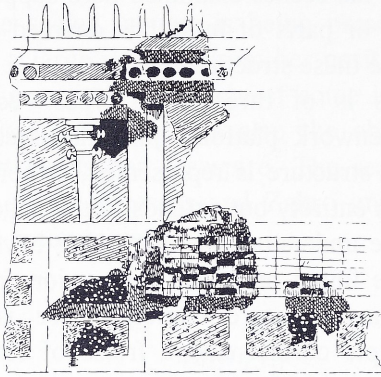


Fig. 5 Knossos 'Pillar Shrine' fresco

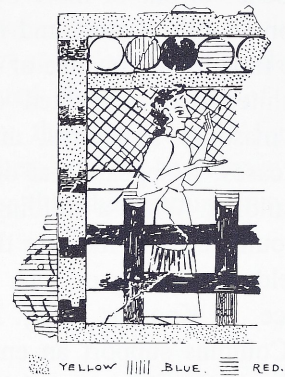


Fig. 6 Knossos fresco fragment: woman on a balcony

Further evidence on beam-ends comes from terracotta models from Arkhanes and the Loomweight Basement Deposit from the palace of Knossos. The column in the half-open room of the Arkhanes model, which A. Lembessi identifies as a light-well, carries two round beams whose red-painted ends were left exposed, and the balcony on the upper floor is supported by four round beams,³⁵ their ends again painted red. Based on the types of rooms and their arrangement (vestibule, stairway, light-well, forehall, hall) the Arkhanes model can be identified as a Type 1 or 2 villa according to McEnroe's classifications,³⁶ which are typologically closely related to the palaces.

The Loomweight Basement models include the model of three columns supporting two horizontal round beams, their ends painted red,³⁷ and three-sided models of checkerboard masonry walls with projecting cornices and beam-end decoration.³⁸

In a forthcoming article, Rebecca Mersereau has identified a number of other round, wooden beams in this deposit, most with red-painted ends.³⁹ Based on her new examination

³⁵ A. Lembessi, *AEphem* 1976 Pl. 9a-b.

³⁶ J. McEnroe, *AJA* 86, 1982, 3ff.

³⁷ Evans, *PM I* Fig. 166F; C. Zervos, *L'art de la Crète néolithique et minoenne* (1956) Fig. 385.

³⁸ Evans, *PM I* Fig. 166F; Zervos (*supra n.* 37) Fig. 383.

³⁹ R. Mersereau, "The Nature and Context of the Architectural Model(s) from the Loomweight Basement Deposit at Knossos", *BSA* forthcoming.

of the Loomweight Basement models, Mersereau has determined that these beams and all the other terracotta pieces from the basement made up a single building of palatial character.

Round beam-ends are thus found in painted and three-dimensional representations of palaces and villas. If one looks at the depictions of peak sanctuaries on the Zakro Rhyton (*Fig. 7*) and a stone vessel fragment from Gypsades (*Fig. 8*), beam-ends are conspicuously missing. This is probably because, as Joe Shaw suggested, the peak sanctuary structures were not buildings to be entered, but rather facades which formed a backdrop for ritual activity performed in open courtyards. In a structure lacking depth, the beam-end motif, if it was indeed based on architectural elements, would make no sense.

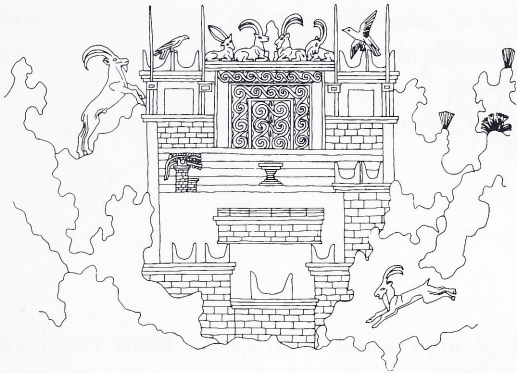


Fig. 7 Stone rhyton from Kato Zakros

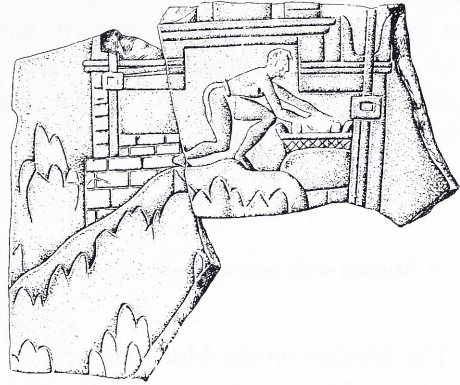


Fig. 8 Stone rhyton fragment from Gypsades.

The existing iconographic evidence on beam-ends suggests, then, that the building represented on the seal impression from the Little Palace is a palace or villa. The intentional inclusion of this decorative element in painted and terracotta representations of villas and palaces indicates that it was one of the identifying features of such structures. It would then be appropriate for a Minoan artist or craftsman to use beam-ends to indicate that the abbreviated structure on the Knossos seal impression was a palace or villa. Similarly, columns, typical of palaces or villas, are included in these representations as an identifying element.

Again using the method of identification by association, we can expect representations of the same syntax as the Little Palace sealing to depict a palace or villa. Such representations would show a person presenting the raised arm salute as they approach a columnar built structure with a beam-end frieze, cornices and horns of consecration.

Fig. 9 shows examples of glyptic representations of buildings related to the one on the Little Palace seal impression. One very fragmentary example from Knossos (*Fig. 9,4*) is published only in the form of a rudimentary sketch, but it is the only other representation showing a beam-end frieze. The other representations — from Knossos (*Figs. 9,1–2*.

9,4–5), Ayia Triada (*Fig. 9,3*) and Zakro (*Fig. 9,6*) — show columnar buildings with cornices and horns of consecration. The Zakro sealing shares with the Little Palace seal impression the additional presence of an altar crowned by horns of consecration.

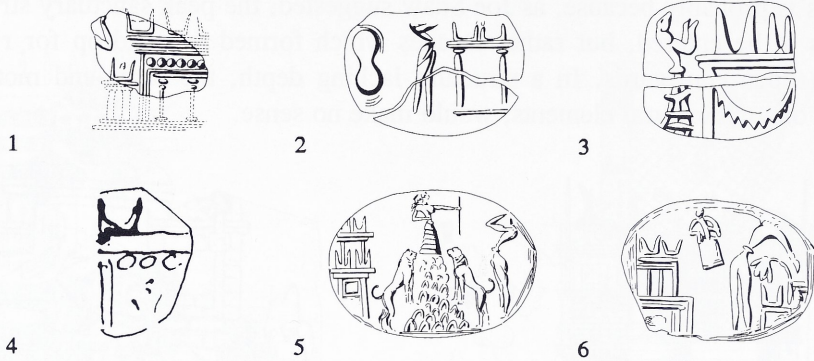


Fig. 9 Minoan seals and sealings: columnar buildings.

The Mother-on-the-Mountain sealing and the seal impression from Zakro show two-level structures. The columns are on the upper level, according well with the arrangement on the Knossos Pillar Fresco. These more complex, two-story structures are also most readily explicable as palaces or villas rather than shrines. Because they share a number of characteristics with the Little Palace seal impression, this identification is strengthened. It should not be surprising to find ritual activity shown in proximity to the palace, for the central and west courts and the theatral areas of the palaces were sites of major festivals and rituals. There is evidence that the exterior courtyards of villas were used in the same way.⁴⁰

In addition to the palace or villa, another building likely to be represented in the rings and sealings examined here is the Minoan shrine or peak sanctuary. Using the Zakro Sanctuary Rhyton as a model, certain features can be expected to be present in glyptic representations of peak sanctuaries. These are: masonry walls, horns of consecration, tapered posts with rectangular fixtures, tripartite facades, altars and enclosed courtyards.

The gold ring from Arkhanes (*Fig. 1,2*) shows a tripartite structure on top of a masonry wall or terrace. The tripartite structure, although much abbreviated, compares well to the tripartite facade of the peak sanctuary on the Zakro Rhyton, down to the projecting cornices and the squiggle on the central part of the facade, which may be a rough indication of a spiral frieze. The masonry supporting wall may be interpreted as either a terrace wall or an

⁴⁰ At Nirou Khani, for example, in the exterior courtyard there is a walkway running alongside the facade of the house. G. Cadogan, *Palaces of Minoan Crete* (1976) 138f. Fig. 14; Evans, *PM II* 279ff.; *AEphem* 1922, 1ff.

enclosure wall, both of which are attested on peak sanctuary sites.⁴¹ The tripartite structure on the ring sits to one side of a paved area (courtyard?), another element which compares well with the peak sanctuary on the Zakro Rhyton, although there the courtyard is unpaved.

The tree shown on top of the structure on the Arkhanes ring appears on another probable representation of a peak sanctuary — the building on the Knossos Epiphany Ring (*Fig. 1,1*). Again, a masonry structure with a projecting cornice is depicted to one side of a paved courtyard. In this case the structure lacks a tripartite format but has an opening or niche containing a columnar lampstand. This niche can be compared to the shallow niches of the structure on the Zakro rhyton, which can be seen reconstructed in the perspective drawing of the sanctuary published by Shaw, reproduced here in *Fig. 10*. An upward tapering post stands in the paved court to one side, or in front of, the structure on the ring. Since only one type of tapering post is known in Minoan iconography, what Alexiou and Graham have identified as a bracketed flagpost,⁴² this must be such a post. The best examples of these posts are depicted standing in front of the tripartite facade of the peak sanctuary on the Zakro Rhyton.

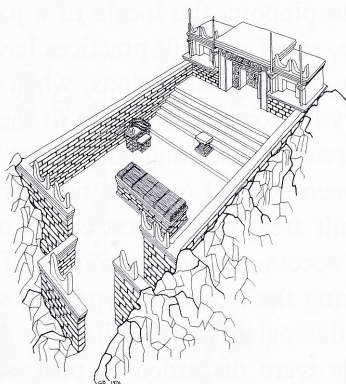


Fig. 10 Conjectural perspective drawing of peak sanctuary shrine on Zakro rhyton, by J.W. Shaw and G. Bianco.

Trees are shown on top of the shrines on the Epiphany and Arkhanes rings (*Figs. 1,1, 1,2*). Trees also appear on the structures on rings from Gypsades (*Fig. 1,4*), Isopata (*Fig. 1,11*), Mochlos (*Fig. 1,6*) and Kalyvia (*Fig. 1,8*), on a lentoid from Ligortino (*Fig. 1,25*), and on seal impressions from Khania (*Figs. 1,12, 1,23*), Ayia Triada (*Fig. 1,14, 1,26*), and Zakro (*Fig. 1,20*). Based on analogy with the Arkhanes and Epiphany Rings, can the method of identification by association be stretched to interpret all of these as depictions of peak sanctuary shrines? I do not believe so. There are significant variations in some of the

⁴¹ B. Rutkowski, *Aegaeum* 2, 1988, 1ff.; A. Peatfield, *BSA* 78, 1983, 273ff.; A. Karetsou in: Hägg — Marinatos, *SC* 137ff.

⁴² S. Alexiou, *KretChron* 17, 1963, 346ff.; id., *AAA* 2, 1969, 84ff.; J.W. Graham, *AJA* 74, 1970, 231ff.

scenes. For example, a two story structure on a seal impression from Khania (*Fig. 1,23*) can be compared to the two story palatial structures on the Knossos and Zakro sealings, but here it is topped by a tree as well as by horns of consecration, the latter seemingly common to both palace and shrine. The tree-topped building on the seal impression from Ayia Triada (*Fig. 1,26*) appears to be columnar in the published drawings, again like the palatial buildings rather than shrines. The Ligortino seal (*Fig. 1,25*) shows a masonry building decorated with festoons, horns of consecration and a tree. Some of these elements are typical of representations of palaces, some of shrines, and some of both. Examination of the variations in these scenes will lead us to more certain identifications of building type and to a clearer understanding of the building blocks and syntax of Minoan iconography.

Concluding Remarks

It may be useful at this point to ask how these representations fit within the larger context of Minoan archaeology. The inclusion of architecture in representations makes them site-specific, indicating a desire to pinpoint the locale of a particular activity. In the case of the representations examined here, ritual and cult practices have been placed in the courtyards of shrines and of palaces or villas. The representations, when their archaeological provenance is known, come from palatial or villa contexts and date to the Neopalatial period, suggesting a particularly close connection between palace and cult during this period.

This connection has already been pointed out in a number of other studies. For instance, changes have been noted in the cult areas of the west courts of the palaces in the Neopalatial period, reflecting more restricted access and tighter control of cult by the palace,⁴³ and Alan Peatfield has pointed out that during the Neopalatial period, shrine buildings were erected at those peak sanctuaries serving the palaces and villas.⁴⁴ At the same time, objects and offerings typical of palace goods were discarded at peak sanctuaries. The representations examined here provide confirmation, in the realm of iconography, for the close relationship between palace and cult during the Neopalatial period and raise questions about the impetus behind the sudden appearance of this iconography at a time when Minoan Crete exhibited numerous changes from the preceding period.

⁴³ G. Gesell in: Hägg – Marinatos, FMP 123ff.

⁴⁴ A. Peatfield in: Hägg – Marinatos, FMP 92; id., *OpAth* 18, 1990, 117ff., esp. 126ff.

Object	Fig.	Extrahuman acts	Fantastic beings	Altars	Cult objects	Formal activities and gestures
Epiphany Ring,	1,1	'Epiphany'			ToB	Raised bent arm, commanding gesture
Gypsades Ring	1,4				HC, ToB	Hand to shoulder
Sellopoulo Ring	1,5				FM	Boulder hugging
Arkanes Ring	1,2				ToB, FM	Boulder hugging, tree pull, hand to shoulder
Isopata Ring	1,11				HC, ToB	Dance
Mochlos Ring	1,6			Stepped	ToA, FM	Raised bent arm
Kalyvia Ring	1,10		Standing jackal		FM	Raised bent arm
Kalyvia Ring	1,8				ToB	Boulder hugging, tree pulling
Ligortino Seal	1,25				HC, ToB, Fst	Raised bent arm
Makrygialos Seal	1,9				HC(?)	Raised bent arm
Knossos Sealing	1,3				HC	Votive gesture, commanding gesture
Knossos Sealing	1,22			Rectangular	HC	Raised bent arm
Knossos Sealing	1,16				HC	Votive gesture
Knossos Sealing	1,21				HC, Rh	Presentation
Triada Sealing	1,15		Winged woman			
Triada Sealing	1,7				SK	Procession
Triada Sealing	1,19				HC, Fst	Raised bent arm
Triada Sealing	1,26				ToB	Hand to shoulder
Triada Sealing	1,14				ToB	Arms akimbo
Zakro Sealing	1,20	'Epiphany'		Stepped	HC, ToB	Arms akimbo
Zakro Sealing	1,24					Presentation
Zakro Sealing	1,13					Woman carrying agrimi
Khania Sealing	1,12			Rectangular	HC, ToB or ToA	Dance
Khania Sealing	1,23				HC, ToB	Hand to shoulder
Khania Sealing	1,18					Presentation
Khania Sealing	1,17					Hand to shoulder

Table 1 FM = Floating Motifs; Fst = Festoon; HC = Horns of Consecration; Rh = Rhyton; SK = Sacral Knot;

ToA = Tree on Altar; ToB = Tree on Building;