

3. COMPOSITE CREATURES ON SEALS AND SEALINGS – OCCASIONAL HYBRIDS

Occasional hybrids have been defined as a category of composite creatures that do not occur in different places nor exist for a long span of time. They show no compositional rules and therefore it is proposed to view them not as specific entities, like a certain divinity or demon, but rather as ephemeral manifestations of certain abstract concepts or beliefs within the social group that shaped them.

Of the 512 entries in the database created for this study, 65 distinct entries⁴⁰ document composite creatures shaped in an organic combination. The following are a selection of the most frequent composite devices:

- bird protomes/wings/heads/bodies/fantails;
- human protomes/torsos/legs/arms; female breasts;
- quadruped protomes (especially bovine, caprid and feline, also boars, pigs and deer);
- quadruped bodies or legs; snake protomes; butterfly wings;
- attire, such as (banded and boar-tusk) helms; ‘snake frames’; flounced skirts or kilts; jewelry (headdresses, necklaces, bracelets, anklets, belts and belly chains);
- floral ornaments (palm stalks, flower motifs, rosettes);
- ornamental elements (loops, wavy lines, wheel- and heart-shaped motifs).

These composite elements can be combined in a variety of ways which makes the task of attributing them to certain types rather difficult. Such an attempt would end in many highly specific units with few representatives of a type and, ultimately, obfuscate the iconographical repertoire rather than explain it. Instead, this chapter strives to find more general categories that comprise a variety of possible combinations. Examples for these categories are *dyad and triad species composites*, *non-viable composites* and *winged creatures*.

⁴⁰ Many of the Zakros seals had very near copies and these cases are here counted as one combination although they could originally have been found on two or even three seals. Cf. Anastasiadou 2016, 79.

3.1 DYAD AND TRIAD SPECIES COMPOSITES

This broad group of composite creatures is characterized by the combination of two types of species that generate one hybrid. The resulting hybrids can be subdivided into further types: *a) human-animal combinations* with the lower body of a human and the upper body and head of a quadruped, mostly bulls, goats, and lions;⁴¹ *b) double-animal-human combinations* with a lower human body and two animal rumps and heads of one species emanating from the waist; and, finally *c) double-animal combinations* that merge two species, *e.g.* a ram and a lion, together with a human lower body. Type *a* comprises 33 hybrids, type *b* 11 and type *c* is represented here by five exemplary hybrids.

Human-Animal Combinations

Human-animal combinations are the most abundant within the typological group of *dyad species*. Yet, unlike the *winged creatures* that show a high potential for variation, the representatives of this group feature very homogeneously. They can be subdivided into the groups of ‘bull-men’, ‘goat-men’, ‘lion-men’ and finally, representations that can be categorized as ‘unique dyads’. Anna Simandiraki-Grimshaw has pointed to the interesting fact that these “homosomatic animal-human hybrids”⁴² appear almost exclusively in the glyptic context. She presents the following possibilities for this restriction to one medium:

*(a) these hybrids are connected with particular people, products, services, quality, or provenance in administrative, financial, elite realms; (b) they restrict, but also expand, the ideology of animal-human hybridity (and perhaps mastery) among controlled, knowledgeable audiences; (c) their use discontinues in ritual or perhaps this ceases to be their main function; (d) their meaning changes because of the influence of ideas likely to have been attached to the newly imported motifs.*⁴³

Some of these possibilities might well overlap in the case of the following human-animal combinations. For example, these depictions are most certainly connected with a particular social group, which can be inferred from their frequent occurrence at specific sites and times, especially Knossos in the phase LB II–IIIA1. They show a close adherence to a fixed set of devices and are all rendered in hard stone seals. The recurrence of material, style, date and find spot points toward a distinct social group who had access to hard stone materials and techniques in the Final Palatial Period and was connected to the administrative and political center of Crete.

⁴¹ These types have previously been called „tiermenschliche Akrobaten” by Schlager. However, as this term predetermines the figures’ interpretation as acrobats it will not be applied here. Cf. Schlager 1989, *passim*.

⁴² Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010, 99.

⁴³ Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010, 100. It needs to be pointed out that Simandiraki-Grimshaw’s category of homosomatic hybrids comprises more hybrids than just occasional ones.

Further, it is possible to assume the human-animal combinations did not play a role in ritual because, unlike some fixed hybrids that are depicted in narrative or heraldic scenes and on other media, the majority of occasional human-animal combinations appears isolated on their seal faces, thus assuming a more emblematic role. In the course of this chapter, Simandiraki-Grimshaw's categories should be kept in mind, while the study of the hybrids itself might contribute to further possibilities.

Bull-Men

Bulls are very prominent in the iconographic repertoire of the Bronze Age. Let alone 1669⁴⁴ seal faces show bulls or composite bull-creatures. In the archaeological literature, the hybrids in this group are typically called *Minotaur*,⁴⁵ a label that should be dismissed due to the fact that it is a term from Greco-Roman times applied to one specific mythological creature that has the body of a man and the head of a bull.⁴⁶ However, this mythological beast is not attested in the Bronze Age and, in contrast to the iconography of Minoan grotesques and later *gorgoneia*,⁴⁷ no typological development can be traced between the LBA hybrids shaped from men and bulls to the Minotaur of historical times.⁴⁸ Therefore, the neutral label 'bull-men' will be employed to denote all hybrids that are composed of the front of a bull (including head, front legs and front quarter of the body) and the lower part of a male⁴⁹ human being (from the waist down, sometimes including a belt or garment).

In the following, the extant bull-men images will be examined regarding their iconographical affiliation. The typology does not reflect a strict chronological sequence but focusses on stylistic and representational features. The seal faces are not necessarily considered in the orientation published by the Corpus of Minoan and Mycenaean Seals (CMS). Instead, each is turned so that the hybrids' knees show to the right⁵⁰ which makes it easier to compare the images. Only a few cases are not turned like this, such as dyad **OH.13** that shows an intrinsic orientation and **OH.07** that constitutes an inverted depiction of the regular type.

⁴⁴ This is counting only those seals published by the CMS up to now. The number comprises all seal faces (not single bull-depictions) in the *Arachne* database.

⁴⁵ Schlager 1989, 232–35 reveals several cases. Krzyszkowska 2005 and Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010 use the term as well, yet in inverted commas.

⁴⁶ Schlager 1989, 226.

⁴⁷ Cf. chapter 4.2, Minoan Grotesques.

⁴⁸ Krzyszkowska 2005, 208 has voiced the theory of a "re-discovery of old Cretan seals which prompted the revival of the imagery and the creation of the minotaur legends" in the Iron Age.

⁴⁹ When compared to the broad repertoire of LBA human depictions it becomes clear that these are male lower bodies, as they either wear garments only associated with men or no garments at all, which is unknown of female figures.

⁵⁰ As always, this is explained in view of the impression, not the intaglio on the seal face.

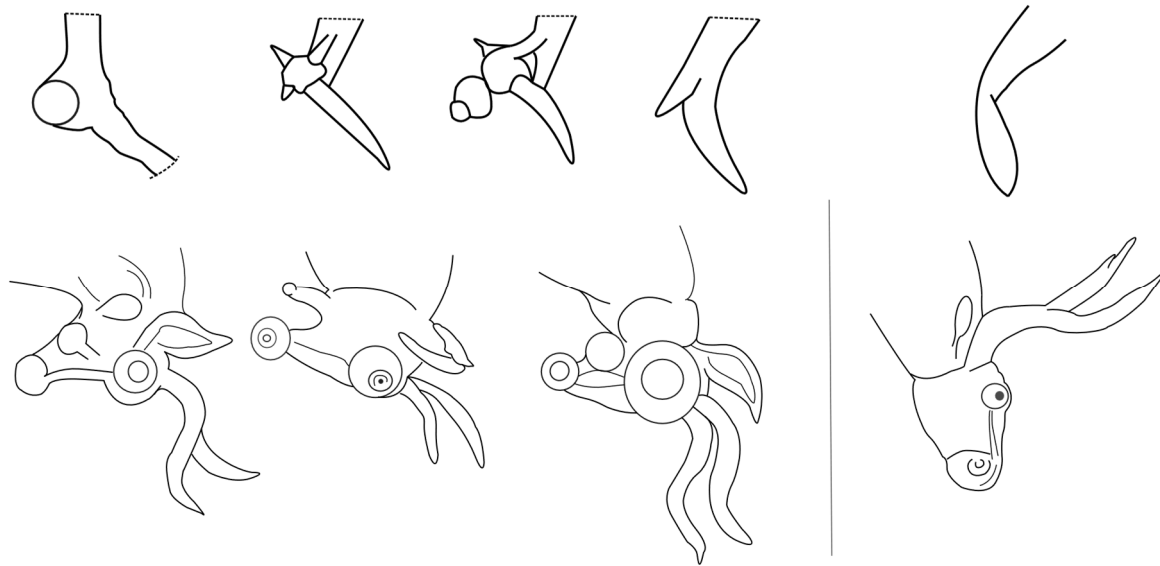


Fig. 1 Variable elements of bull-men group a: Top row: from left to right: feet of bull-men nos. OH.01, 05 (left), 06 (right), 02, 04. Bottom row: from left to right: heads of bull-men nos. OH.01, 04, 06 | 03.

The first vertical group (*group a*) consists of six representatives all dating to LB II–IIIA1 or LB IIIA1 on stylistic grounds.⁵¹ All show the same orientation, namely legs that begin at about one o’clock on the seal face and curve downwards until ca. four to five o’clock.⁵² The stomach protrudes upwards and the bull’s chest, due to a strong torsion of the body, to the left side (ca. eight to ten o’clock). The head is in the lower left corner of the seal impression with the forehead almost parallel to the edge of the seal (as if upside-down, this is again due to the torsion of the body). The only exception is **OH.03** whose chin is in line with the seal edge, its forehead pointing towards the middle of the seal face.

All these bull-men have a bipartite body segmented by the narrow waist typical of Neopalatial human depictions. The long legs are curved along the outline of the seal and show varying degrees of near-natural depiction. While the knees of **OH.01** and **02** are rather amorph, they are clearly shown as anatomic joints between thighs and shanks on the other seal faces. In these latter cases, the musculature of the thigh and the shinbone are worked clearly recognizably, with the small exception of **OH.05** that shows less detail in these features and overall. The feet on all but **OH.04**⁵³ are rendered with an articulate heel (*fig. 1*, top row) that is either indicated by a circular drill hole (**OH.01**, **03**, **06**, right foot, **OH.07**), a spike (**OH.02**, **06**, left foot) or a combination of one or two drill-holes and one or more spikes (**OH.05**). The torsion of the body takes place at the waist where the human lower body merges into the forepart of the bull. The abdomen is stretched out and abruptly curves downward at the chest. While **OH.01–03** and **06–12** display an anatomically discrete thin midsection of the body

⁵¹ CMS XII no. 61; VS3 no. 150; VI no. 298; XI no. 251; II3 no. 67; and X no. 145.

⁵² The round seal faces, mainly of lentoids, allow for this comprehensible analogy to a clock.

⁵³ Only on OH.04 is the heel not set off from the rest of the foot, giving it the impression of an amorphous sock.

between chest and waist, **OH.04** and **05** do not distinguish these body parts, effectively turning the body into a liver-shaped structure. **OH.06** arguably combines compositional variants, maintaining the observed liver form while at the same time sporting a well-defined chest that is set off from the abdomen. However, this is because on this seal, the muscles of the bull have been rendered in a way suggesting a close observation of a live bull by the engraver whereas **OH.01–03** do not reach this near-natural level.

The front legs of the creatures are either extended straight toward the head⁵⁴ or bent up⁵⁵ or downward⁵⁶ at the joint. Drill-holes with protruding triangular incisions represent the hooves of all bulls. The heads in this group show three variations (*fig. 1*, bottom row). The first type is a triangular head with a circular drilled muzzle (**OH.01, 02, 06**).⁵⁷ The second head shows more detail as the jawbone is added, the snout is again rendered by a drill-hole (**OH.04, 05**).⁵⁸ **OH.06** has both the triangle-shape and, above the neck, a ‘swollen’ section that could be indicative of the jawbone. Finally, **OH.03** does not fit with the other heads, because it is shaped in closer observation of the natural specimen. However, this bull-man is still included in this group due to its composition and association with two symbolic ornaments: a figure-eight shield⁵⁹ and an impaled triangle.⁶⁰

Of the six seals in this group only **OH.01** has no additional ornaments. Dyad bull-man **OH.02** winds his back around two tubular drill holes like the just mentioned one, **OH.03**, does around a figure-eight shield. This comparison leads to the association of the ornamental circles on **OH.02** with an abbreviated figure-eight shield. Additionally, **OH.03** displays an impaled triangle in between the head and the legs that points toward the back of the creature. The same composition can also be seen on **OH.04**, again accompanied by a figure-eight shield, although in a different position in front of the creature’s stomach. These close iconographic ties witnessed on both seals have led to the inclusion of bull-man **OH.03** in this group. The impaled triangle is engraved yet again on **OH.05**, tying the three seals (**OH.03–05**) closely together. I suggest that the

⁵⁴ OH.01, 03, 05, 06.

⁵⁵ OH.04.

⁵⁶ OH.05.

⁵⁷ This can be observed on (non-composite) bull-images as well. *cf.* CMS IX no. 194; II3 no. 212. Both examples date to LH/LM IIIA1 on stylistic grounds.

⁵⁸ This also features in the record of bull images: *cf.* CMS IX no. 147 (open-mouthed).

⁵⁹ The combined arrangement of bull and figure-eight shield ornaments knows many examples in Aegean glyptic. *Arachne* enlists 66 seal faces with this feature, although ca. half a dozen should be subtracted as they depict goats rather than bulls (e.g. CMS IX no. 128) or because two juxtaposed drill-holes were misinterpreted as a figure-eight shield (as I suppose happened in the case of CMS VI no. 302).

⁶⁰ The combination of an impaled triangle and bull iconography is also well attested. *Arachne* displays 20 seal faces that combine these elements. Krzyszkowska 2005, 208 mentions that the impaled triangle “resembles the Linear B ideogram for wheat, GRANUM, its occurrence on seals of this period defies explanation.”

use of the same devices on four stylistically close bull-man seals indicates shared semantics, which can be regarded as a deliberate, self-conscious act of constructing a relation between all four seals. Moreover, the use of the hard stone only and the presence of a related iconography imply that a synchronically established peer relationship was looked for.

The final bull-man of *group a* is not accompanied by ornamental symbols, but by a figural one, specifically, a frontal human head with short curled hair, and facial features including the brow, eyes, nose and ears. While bull-men **OH.01–02** and arguably **04** wear cinched belts, **OH.06** wears a belt and short garment that cannot be identified due to damages on the surface of the seal. This relates it to three further bull-men that are here treated as a subcategory with close ties to *group a*.

While *group a* is arranged on account of the body position of the bull-men, and, on a second level, of the associated ornaments, this sub-group shows some correlation to single specimens of *group a*, but not enough to be accounted on the same vertical axis. **OH.07** virtually mirrors the posture of **OH.06**. It is also stylistically close to this seal due to the head shape. The lower part of its head is rendered with the help of three consecutive drill-holes of similar size, the front one for the muzzle, the rear one for the jawbone, presumably.⁶¹ **OH.06** also shows a drill-hole for the muzzle, one behind this and the already mentioned ‘swollen’ rounded part that was created by joining two closely juxtaposed drill-holes.⁶² As the former, **OH.07** is also wearing a garment – a well-discernible breechcloth. It also has an ornament in shape of a three-leafed plant. The next two specimens in this group are clad as well, **OH.08** wears a garment with crosshatching ending in the middle of its thighs. Apart from this fact, it is closer to **OH.03** as it shares the same pose. Its head, however, sports two of the observed drill-holes and, additionally a well-formed muzzle. Instead of a third hole for the jawbone, this hybrid has a jawbone of near-natural shape. This is not the case with dyad bull-man **OH.09** whose head is triangle-shaped with borings for the jaw and muzzle. As this creature is not alone on its seal face but accompanied by another hybrid (a lion-man), there was less space for the entire creature, yet it shows several compositional and stylistic similarities with **OH.01**.

Another seal that is affiliated, but also dissimilar to *group a* should be mentioned along these lines as it has some similarities with **OH.03** (so-to-speak the ‘bête noire’ of *group a*). **OH.10** displays a very similar body posture and its near-natural head is a close parallel to dyad **OH.03**. It is also accompanied by an ornament, in this case a star above

⁶¹ This is encountered quite often on seals depicting (non-composite) bulls. Cf.: CMS II8 nos. 231. 419 (both dating to LH IIIA1 on stylistic grounds).

⁶² The beginning of this configuration of the lower head might be observed on OH.01 that has the drilled muzzle, another drill-hole in the center of the lower head and a drop-shaped one in place of the jawbone.

its forehead. The rest of the creature, especially its abdomen, is executed quite differently, the intaglio being shallower and not entirely smoothed out.

A possible bull-man, **OH.11**, also causes some typological problems. Its stance mirrors the *group a*-pose and the treatment of the section from abdomen to chest resembles **OH.01**. The rest of the figure is compartmentalized into several bulging parts to be witnessed especially well on the legs that have several rounded sections. Notably, the bent front leg looks

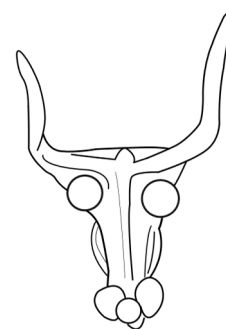


Fig. 2 Group b-type frontal bull's head (after CMS III no. 363).

unnaturally distorted because of this. Even one of the horns is divided into two sections. The head of the creature is reminiscent of the triangle-shaped heads, but its open mouth reveals several details that *group a* bull-men do not. From the lower jaw of its open mouth streams an undefinable item that could be interpreted as a tongue, weed or perhaps hair.⁶³

One bull-man that is considerably earlier is **OH.12**, a hard-stone amygdaloid dating in LM I–II on stylistic grounds. The seal has a rather difficult background as its authenticity has been a matter of debate, which is mainly due to the fact that several glass copies were made of it.⁶⁴ In a CMS *Beiheft* contribution, Ingo Pini doubted the authenticity of the amygdaloid because of its unusual shape (lentoids were the preferred medium for such depictions) and some atypical technical observances.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, he now proposes to view it as authentic “*mit einem gewissen Vorbehalt*,”⁶⁶ (‘with some reservation’) which is why the seal is mentioned here with a certain caveat. The bull-man in profile on its face almost forms a complete circle, with the creature’s muzzle nearly touching the human heel of the foot – unlike the hybrids on the later seals whose ears usually point toward the feet leaving some space in between that can be filled by ornaments. The observation that the amygdaloid was an unconventional shape for this motif can only arise from a perspective in hindsight, focusing on the abundant material from LM II–IIIA1 that demonstrates the prevalence of the lentoid for seals of and beyond the composite creatures.⁶⁷ In LM I–II such composite human-animal creatures only began to be issued on seals, so the possibility that we are dealing with an early stage of bull-men glyptic should not be ruled out on the basis of the seal shape.

⁶³ It was also considered to treat this figure as a goat-man, but it shows more parallels to bulls (esp. the body) than to goats. This figure’s head does not resemble any of the goat heads on hybrid figures, either.

⁶⁴ For details, see Pini 1981, 149–53.

⁶⁵ Pini 1981, 153: „[...] die einzelnen Bohrungen der Kinnpartie [sind] nur schwach angedeutet und stark verschliffen, desgleichen der Augenkreis. Dies sind für sicher antike Siegel völlig atypische Merkmale.“

⁶⁶ Pini, personal comment May 2018.

⁶⁷ Krzyszkowska 2005, 196.

Having dealt with bull-men in complete profile, the following seals, constituting *group b*, are arranged based on their frontally depicted heads that show very close parallels (*fig. 2*). On the three first seals, the bull's head is crowned by upward curving horns; on the fourth seal, they curve downward. From the top of the head over the forehead down to the nose runs a narrowing protrusion ending in two, respectively three,⁶⁸ drill-holes indicating the muzzle. The eyes are also rendered with the help of drill-holes. All four seals in this group adhere very closely to this scheme even though two of them are from Central Crete while the other two were found on the Greek mainland.

Bull-man **OH.13** is attributed to Phaistos and dates, like **OH.12**, between LM I–II. It shows similarities with the (later) *group a*, as it displays a similar torsion of the body. However, it is positioned quite differently, with one leg going almost vertically down, then bent backward at the knee and the other leg extended forward and bent down and back at the knee. The rump is straight up to the forelegs from where the chest turns backwards in a U-turn merging into the frontally depicted head. The space between the head and the backward extended leg is filled by a star-shaped ornament.

OH.14, said to come from Moni Odigitria or Chania,⁶⁹ dates in LM II–IIIA1 and is quite distinct from all other bull-men. Unlike these, it does not have the front quarter of a bull, but only the head of the animal on top of a frontal human torso. The legs are shown in profile with the feet pointing left. There are no other iconographic parallels in the extant record of Minoan and Mycenaean seals. It is also the only barrel-shaped seal, a form that suggests itself to the motif of an upright humanoid figure. Derived from a private collection,⁷⁰ the combined irregularities in seal shape, iconography and find spot invariably lead to questioning the authenticity of the seal, a possibility that cannot be further detailed within the scope of this work.

The two final seals of *group b* are similar in motif but different in style. The lentoid **OH.15** comes from a stratified context in Patras and dates to LB II–IIIA1. The bull-man's legs take up the right part of the seal face, its abdomen is stretched along the upper side, its chest along the left. The bull head assumes a considerable amount of space in the lower left quarter. Unlike the earlier and Cretan seals, the gem engraver used every available bit of space on the seal face, adding several ornaments to overcome an apparent *horror vacui*. Extending from the bottom towards the coccyx, a three-leaved plant with stem has been engraved. A further three-leaved plant with stem and protuberance runs along the right and upper edge of the seal face. Several ground-lines extend from

⁶⁸ On OH.13.

⁶⁹ In the *Arachne* database, the provenance is Moni Odigitria with a question mark. In the print volume *CMS* VS3 no. 154 it is suggested to have derived from a chamber tomb at Chania.

⁷⁰ This is the Mitsotakis collection. For more details, cf. N.P Goulandris Foundation (ed.). 1992. *Minoan and Greek civilization from the Mitsotakis Collection*. Athens: Museum of Cycladic Art. The bull-man OH.02 also derives from this collection.

the hooves on the lower left edge to the feet on the lower right. While the postures of both bull-men are near parallels, **OH.16**, from a stratified context in Elatia, varies strongly in the application of ornaments. The engraver of this piece preferred not to fill the entire seal face. Rather, the ornaments were executed finely and in a smaller scale, leaving open areas on the seal-face. The bull-man here is accompanied by two maritime symbols: a dolphin and a mussel. This is quite different from all other bull-men depictions, although the association of quadrupeds and marine animals is not entirely unheard of.⁷¹

While the contorted bull-men have no comparable models in Proto- or early Neopalatial iconography, they are reminiscent of bull-leaping scenes that arose in the early Neopalatial period and also appear in LM II-III times.⁷² The leaper summersaulting over the bull's head seems to have merged with the animal, creating this hybrid that comprises both the skill and elegance of the human leaper and the energy and strength of the animal. While we cannot grasp the extent of this hybrid's semantic meaning for Minoan observers, it can be accepted that these qualities (energy, strength, skill and elegance) played a major role in the iconology of the bull-men. Additionally, a relationship to the Knossian elite seems highly likely, as bull iconography has been shown to have had close links to the palace of Knossos.⁷³ Unsurprisingly, many of the bull-men come from Knossos as well, which Olga Krzyszkowska calls the "most likely home for the motif."⁷⁴

Since these images appear in times of political and cultural changes in the Final Palatial period, the possibility should be considered that not the 'old' Minoan elites who had established themselves in Neopalatial times created this hybrid, but rather a new group that had risen to the fore. The bull-men may have indicated "the ideology of a new administration" that was deemed "sufficiently different from Neopalatial (administrative/financial/political?) values," while at the same time "deliberately in tandem with new and more public visual vocabularies in Crete"⁷⁵ which were intentionally not devoid of connections to Neopalatial imagery. Were bull-men therefore symbolic tokens of a new elite group that created these as a means of legitimization that would have drawn on traditional imagery while at the same time adding new symbolic notions embedded in the homosomatic quality of the hybrid?

Although bull-men constitute the largest motif group of human-animal combinations, it is nevertheless challenging to arrange the material into rigid typological groups

⁷¹ Cf. *CMS* XI no. 226 (LH II-III A1 dolphin and quadruped, a bull according to the *CMS*, but it resembles more a deer); II4 no. 161 (LM III A1 from Gournes, dolphin and bull); V no. 667 (LB II-III A1 from Thebes, a goat or deer among fish).

⁷² Cf. *CMS* II6 no. 161; *VS3* no. 369.

⁷³ Krzyszkowska 2005, 206.

⁷⁴ Krzyszkowska 2005, 208.

⁷⁵ Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010, 100.

which is why the above groups and their correlates need to be understood as clusters that feature some variations such as the shapes of heads or feet specified at the outset rather than strict and standardized types. As the following human-animal hybrids are only represented by a small number of seals, they will not be arranged into typological units, since the material does not yield a sufficient quantity of images for such an endeavor.

Goat-Men

After bulls, goats are the second most common quadruped depicted on Bronze Age seals⁷⁶ and other media.⁷⁷ Goat-men, or agrimi-men, can be identified on three Minoan seals. The first three display very close iconographic ties. A shared feature is the shape of the head that differentiates the upper and lower jaw. The jawbone is plastic and elevated from the other features. The muzzle and eyes are made by drill-holes, which were also employed to render the striations on the long horns that are directed backwards. In two cases, the eyes are framed by a second circle. The joints of the human as well as animal parts are also demarcated by drill-holes. A typical feature of goats' legs is the depiction of the dewclaws that can be seen on the group of three similar goat-men.⁷⁸ The human legs are rendered in near-natural shapes showing a close adherence to human anatomy.

The earliest seal dates to LB I on stylistic grounds. Again, the shape of the lentoid was chosen, lending itself to the depiction of a body in torsion. This feature is brought to an extreme on dyad **OH.17** whose human lower body is bent backward, its bottom almost touching the lower back. The legs are thrown back as in a jump and seemingly kick the air above the creature. Its abdomen is stretched long in line with the lower edge of the seal face. The upper body of the goat is bent in an almost-perfect right angle from the outstretched back, the chest curving upwards into the elegantly curved neck of the animal. **OH.18**, although dating to LB II–IIIA1, is a very close parallel, but the body torsion and extreme position of the limbs are, in comparison, reduced. **OH.19**, also dating between LB II–IIIA1, stretches its legs behind the waist and only bends them upward from the knees on, which gives the body a more realistic shape. However, the creature's chest is thrust back even farther than on **OH.17**. While the heads of **OH.17** and **18** are close to the real animal's head shape, **OH.19** displays a very graphic head, with an overlarge, bulging eye, a horizontal cylindrical incision for the forehead ending in a drill-hole muzzle, as well as a pointed lower jaw. The horns are

⁷⁶ *Arachne* displays 1175 seal faces showing goats. These can be further differentiated in wild goats (agrimia) and domestic goats, however they are not always clearly distinguishable on the seal face. Cf. Bloedow 2003, 3–4.

⁷⁷ Bloedow 2003, 2.

⁷⁸ They are also typical for earlier goat depictions from Middle Minoan times onwards. Cf. Anastasiadou 2011, 174.

also rather graphic as they do not curve outward in a homogenic arc, like in the other cases, but in inconsistent lines.

It is especially on Crete that Bronze Age seal engravers have produced a multitude of goat depictions. Often, it is possible to differentiate between wild goats (agrimia) and domestic ones. This can be done on an iconographical level, where the characteristic long curved horns have been generally attributed to agrimia, yet in the case of seals, a distinction only by horn shape proves difficult. On the basis of pictorial themes (*Bildthemen*), such as hunting scenes, one must assume that it is wild goats that are hunted with spears and not their domestic relatives.⁷⁹ A first explanation for the prevalence of goat motifs has been sought in their economic value as evidenced from Linear tablets and animal bones. However, as Bloedow points out, this cannot be the reason for the huge pictorial output; when it comes to economically relevant livestock, sheep were a major factor in the Bronze Age and of utmost importance for wool and textile production. Nonetheless, sheep are strikingly insignificant, almost absent, in the extant pictorial repertoire.⁸⁰ This induces the idea that not the economically relevant domesticated animals were commonly depicted, but rather the wild goats associated with the sphere of hunting and body practices involving agility, skill and time to spare for such activities. This shifts agrimia to elite domains and explains why (wild) goats are prevalent within the elite media, such as seals and frescoes.⁸¹ Considering goat-men, it thus appears plausible to accept the animal half as that of an agrimi and not a domestic goat and to consider them, on an iconological level, as prestigious displays of elite (self-) representation. Additionally, wild goats were associated with Minoan religion. They are featured in scenes depicting peak sanctuaries and are also associated with a female deity.⁸²

Many goat-men characteristics can be traced on other seals as well. While it is not always possible to clearly differentiate between different species used for human-animal hybrids, the iconological interpretation offered in the above paragraph is posited for other animal-human hybrids depicted in this way. This is exemplary of the first seal in the following category of deer-men that was initially envisaged as a representative of the goat-men.

⁷⁹ Bloedow 2003, 3-4.

⁸⁰ Bloedow 2003, 4-5.

⁸¹ For frescoes, see the "Park Fresco" from Ayia Triada, e.g. in Cameron – Evely 1999, 242 fig. 1. For a very conclusive consideration of human-agrimi relationships, iconography, and religious significance of wild goats, cf. the article of Bloedow 2003.

⁸² Blakolmer 2016, 62, n. 10.

Deer-Men

The hybrid in question is **OH.20**. This creature is rather problematic as can be seen in the respective CMS entry that begins with the description “Confused motif. A man with bull forepart bent double, backwards.”⁸³ The motif is not only confused, it causes confusion in the observer. Like in the case of goat-men, extensive use was made of drill-holes and they similarly depict joints of the animal and human body – something that does occur on bull-men depictions, yet to a lesser extent than on goat-men seals. The hybrid **OH.20** displays the same unnatural backwards-bend of the lower body combined with an outstretched abdomen as, for instance, **OH.17** and **18** do, too.⁸⁴ On these grounds, it can be ruled out as a bull, however, another possibility needs to be taken in account, *i.e.* that we are dealing with a deer. The creature’s horns are neither like the bulls’ nor the goats’ but seem to branch out like stags’ horns.⁸⁵

Compared to the next specimen in this group, its interpretation as a deer- (instead of goat-) man is furthered. The observed body posture with the long abdomen and strong bend of the lower body that has been claimed to be most typical of goat-men, can also be seen on **OH.21**, a specimen characterized by its toothed horns as a deer. One of this creature’s legs is bent back so far that its human foot reaches under the muzzle, the lower part of its leg parallel to the back of the hybrid. The head of the deer does not end in a large drill-hole depicting the muzzle, but in a small one that acts as a nose. The mouth is open in the shape of a letter *v*, but it does not differentiate the anatomical distinctiveness of the upper and lower jaw (as observed on the goat-men seals).

The deer on *CMS* II4 no. 183 shows strong similarities in style and iconography. The same facial features can be observed on **OH.23** that also displays an open mouth but is otherwise iconographically distant.⁸⁶ The posture of **OH.21** is similar to that on **OH.22**, yet on this seal, no body parts overlap, and the bend of the legs is less harsh. This creature does not display a horizontally outstretched abdomen, but one that gently curves upward towards the head, which is turned facing the legs. Its head is different from the other two, as it is shaped like a drop ending in a small, rounded nose. The eye is not a rounded drill-hole, but almond-shaped. The antlers nevertheless characterize this as a deer. The posture of the first three deer cannot be transferred to the final representative of the group, as **OH.23** shares its lentoid seal face with another dyad creature. Due to the limited amount of semi-circular space, the hybrid’s upper

⁸³ *CMS* VI no. 303.

⁸⁴ There are bull-men that are also bent back in an extremely unnatural way, such as **OH.05** and **07**. Yet, these bulls’ abdomens are not over-long as in the case of the three goat-men just discussed.

⁸⁵ This characteristic has already been declared in the case of MM deer depictions. *Cf.* Anastasiadou 2011, 173. It is also prevalent on deer in the Cretan Popular Group of LM I (e.g. *CMS* I nos. 497, 499, 501).

⁸⁶ A seal from Armeni also dating to LB II–III A1 is iconographically very close to the deer depicted here, *CMS* VS1B no. 276a. The open mouth, the use of drill-holes in the face and along the legs as well as the forked antlers are extremely close.

body is bent so far back that its muzzle ends on the same level as the knees. Because its horns are rendered very accurately, it is possible to also include this motif in the category of deer-men, all of which can be dated to LB II–IIIA1 on stylistic grounds.

Like agrimia, deer were wild animals that humans had to leave their settlements for in order to encounter them in their natural habitat. The animal's escape behavior can be triggered very easily and certainly posed a challenge to a hunter. It required the skill of stalking as well as a high awareness for one's environment, because there would usually be only one chance to bring down this animal of prey before it escaped. Like with bulls, human mastery of this animal involved specific skills that needed to be developed and trained.

Lion-Men

The fact that the lion is an animal that must have been extremely fascinating for the Bronze Age Aegean cultures is validated by the iconographical testimony from the era. The CMS database in *Arachne* counts 1032⁸⁷ lion depictions. Bloedow approximates the total amount of lions in Aegean art to 600 examples from the Early to Late Bronze Age (including Minoan and Mycenaean material records).⁸⁸ One interesting observation is the capacity of this animal to occur either as a hunter or as the victim of human hunters.⁸⁹ In the hybrid state of lion-men they are not hunted but can either stand alone or bring down game.

Lion-men on Bronze Age seals pose less difficulties when it comes to identifying the animal part of the composite. This is because their manes are shown,⁹⁰ making them unambiguously identifiable and divisible from other animals.⁹¹ The first specimen of this group, dyad **OH.24**, comes from a dated context⁹² in Malia's *Ensemble Lambda* where it was found among MM IIIB and LM IA pottery.⁹³ As such, it is likely the earliest specimen of lion-men and it stands out among the extant repertoire of the kind, the rest of which dates to LB II–IIIA1, with the possible exception of **OH.26** that has not been ascribed any stylistic date and whose provenance is unknown. While the later seals all combine the lion-man with an animal of prey, such as a goat or bull, **OH.24** takes up the entire surface of its lentoid seal face. Also, it is the only soft-stone seal in the group, a circumstance that needs to be pointed out as soft and hard stone types usually show

⁸⁷ Following the classification by the CMS. This is the number of seal faces, seals with two or more lions are not counted double or more.

⁸⁸ Bloedow 1992, 295. However, as this paper is already 26 years old, the amount of lion depictions can likely be reckoned higher, as excavations continuously yield new material.

⁸⁹ Bloedow, 1992, *passim*. Ballintijn 1995, 28–37.

⁹⁰ Shapland 2010a, 283.

⁹¹ Female lions were also depicted with a mane on a regular basis, their sex usually indicated by teats. Cf. Ballintijn 1995, 26; Weilharter 2016, 1–4.

⁹² Niemeier 1981, 93.

⁹³ Van Effenterre – Van Effenterre 1969, 112.

some stylistic and typological differences among one motif group. This is a consequence of the different tools usually employed for cutting soft or hard stones,⁹⁴ but also of different workshops specializing in either soft- or hard-stone engraving.⁹⁵ This soft-stone lentoid carries the image of a lion-man bent around the seal face with outstretched arms and legs.⁹⁶ From the impression, it can be seen that the seal face was, in fact, damaged (in the area connecting the chest and forelegs, on the outer knee, and in some parts close to the face, *i.e.* around the snout, on top of the head and near the mane).⁹⁷ The mane is made by several ellipsoidal indentations, a technique not found on the later hard-stone dyads of this group. The hybrid's pose is quite similar to most bull- and goat-men, that are, however, engraved on hard-stone seals.⁹⁸

As pointed out above, the other lion-men are shown together with animals of prey. **OH.25**, from Mycenae, displays a lion-man with its head in profile bent over the head of an agrimi and biting it in the neck, a common representation of a lion's killing strike.⁹⁹ The feline part is much larger than the human part and the motif of an outstretched body with a strong torsion at the waist is maintained, although the front of the lion is configured in a profile stance of attack. **OH.26** shows a similar scheme, but the torsion of the body is much stronger, as can be seen in the legs that are turned in opposite direction of the upper body, its knees bending away from the front of the creature (whereas the knees of **OH.24** bend toward the front giving the pose a more natural impression). The lion heads show common features, such as the eyes made from drill-holes with an outer circle for the eyelids. The forehead is divided by an indentation engraved from the snout to the brow where it branches to the left and right above the orbitals of **OH.25**, respectively above the right eye of **OH.26**. The snout is clearly distinct from the rest of the face as it curves inward before expanding again at the low end. On **OH.25**, the forehead indentation extends beyond the rest of the snout, whereas on **OH.26** it is shaped by two concentric drill-holes. The ears of the latter are almond-shaped outlines protruding from the sides of the head while the first has simpler handle-shaped ears. The manes differ as well; on the Mycenae seal it is rendered by incised striations, on the other by drop-shaped borings that are somewhat reminiscent of the Malia lentoid **OH.24**.

⁹⁴ Pini 2010, 325: "While soft stone and bone/ivory were normally engraved with burins, knives, chisels or files, hard stone gems were generally cut with the aid of a bow lathe using various types of wheels, solid and hollow drills."

⁹⁵ Pini 2010, 327.

⁹⁶ Tiré – Van Effenterre 1978, pl. IX no. 2.

⁹⁷ The seal is to be published in *CMS IIS*, forthcoming.

⁹⁸ *Cf.* dyads OH.01–02, 04–10, 17–19.

⁹⁹ Ballintijn 1995, 29.

The differences become even more apparent when considering the human part of the composite creature. Not only do they differ in degrees of torsion, but also regarding their overall style. **OH.25** is in line with the general observation that human legs on dyad composites are rendered with near-natural accuracy. This is not the case for **OH.26** whose legs are shaped from independent, nearly geometric parts. The joints are simple drill-holes connecting ellipsoid thighs and lower legs; the feet are each made of a circle from which emanate two triangular elements resembling a bird's open beak. Additional hollow-drill-holes are distributed across the seal face, some of them seemingly connected to a non-specifiable device (a tool or symbol are proposed by the CMS). These observations reveal that, although it would on first sight be tempting to assign both seals to a same contextual framework, they represent two different styles and workshops. Unsatisfactorily, we cannot gain any information on the likely provenance or dating of **OH.26**.

The final lion-man appears on a previously discussed seal, **OH.09**, where it is depicted together with a bull-man. It is also dated to LM II-III A1 on stylistic grounds and probably derives from a mainland context. The composite creature is shown in profile with a torsion of the mid-section. Its mane is not curled, as on the earlier soft stone lentoid from Malia, but consists of straight incisions, as is also the case on **OH.25**. The distinctiveness of the snout from the forehead observed on frontally depicted lion heads can also be seen here; there is a perceivable breach between the rounded jaw and the snout, both made by large drill-holes.

From the repertoire of (identifiable) human-animal hybrids, the lion is the only animal that is a carnivore and predator. As such, it is different from bulls, goats and deer, which occur as its prey on a regular basis on Bronze Age seals. Although bulls are at times depicted as potentially threatening to human safety, this is only the case in the context of bull-sports. Lions, however, perpetuate this danger as any encounter with a human being poses an immediate hazard. Therefore, depictions of unarmed men encountering bulls are not unusual,¹⁰⁰ but when facing a lion,¹⁰¹ arms and defense were indispensable: While bulls do not afford armament, lions do. Along the lines of affordance theory¹⁰² a lion “affords danger when pursued by humans”¹⁰³ – overcoming a lion is the highest qualification a member of a Bronze Age elite group could achieve in a wild-animal encounter, which is also a reason why this animal lends itself to an ico-

¹⁰⁰ Bietak et al. 2007, 124 fig. 112, 125 fig. 115, 127 sc. 3+5. Note how the thigh of sc. 3 is about to be pierced by the bull's horns; Evans 1930, 224 fig. 157 shows a close-up of a register on the Ayia Triada Boxer Rhyton where the taureador is taken on the horns by the bull.

¹⁰¹ CMS I nos. 9, 112, 228; II3 no. 14; VS1A no. 135. An extended lion hunt scene is depicted on a dagger with gold inlays from LH I Mycenae: Marinatos – Hirmer 1973, pl. XLIX.

¹⁰² Gibson 1986, 127–35.

¹⁰³ Shapland 2010a, 275.

nography of power as has been observed especially for Mycenaean Greece.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the homosomatic hybridization of human and lion is simultaneously a process of corporal appropriation of an animal of power.

Unique Dyads

This final chapter on animal-human combinations comprises seals that are neither bull-, goat-, deer- nor lion-men and only occur as single representations. The first is dyad **OH.27**, a hybrid that fits well into the array of animal-humans engraved around a lentoid seal-face with the characteristic torsion of the body in the mid-section. The CMS defines it as a bull-man which is likely due to similarities in the body posture, the form of the upper body and the accompanying figure-eight shield. An interesting observation is that the human feet are closer to human anatomy than any other human-animal hybrid's in this study and even show the indentation between ankle and heel bone. The hooves display similarities with both bull and goat hooves, but the rear section ending in the dewclaw is configured separately from the rest of the leg.

A sound reason not to assume that this is a bull- (or goat-) man are the missing horns and the shape of the head, that does not correspond to the respective animals. Rather, it takes on a canine form with pronounced chaps and ears that do not stand off the head but lie flat against it. The canine impression is furthered by the collar that is worn around the neck of the animal. This element can be seen on other dog representations such as *CMS* II6 no. 79, *VSIB* no. 74; or VI no. 397, to name just three.

The CMS proposes a stylistic dating to LB I-II but when compared to the human-animal hybrids discussed so far, and also with dog iconography, a stylistic date at the end of this range or perhaps even between LM II-III A1 is worth considering. In this time, the body posture observed on this seal is most common and prominent eyes, as seen on this seal, are typical.¹⁰⁵ There is also a tendency to configure animals less close to their true anatomy in a slightly more graphic way,¹⁰⁶ which is also supported by the enlarged, dominating eye. Lapis Lacedaimonius, the material of this seal, has been in use since LM I but noticeably rises in popularity in LM II-III.¹⁰⁷

It cannot be stated with absolute certainty that we are dealing with a dog-man on this seal. However, it also fits the repertoire of human-animal hybrids on the

¹⁰⁴ This is beyond the scope of this work, but literature on this topic is abundant. Cf. Bloedow 1992; Shapland 2010a, 2010b; Weilharter 2016, esp. 1 n. 4 for further bibliographical references.

¹⁰⁵ Krzyszkowska 2005, 198–99. See also *CMS* I no. 161 that has been dated to LB IIIA1–2 and shows the same shape of the head, but individual details have been “smoothed” out in course of the reduction of minute details that Krzyszkowska observes during LB II-III.

¹⁰⁶ Shapland 2014, 555–56. Krzyszkowska 2005, 199.

¹⁰⁷ Krzyszkowska 2005, 196.

iconological level. Among domesticated animals,¹⁰⁸ the dog seems to have been the most popular one depicted in glyptic since the Prepalatial period.¹⁰⁹ It is associated with hunting, and unlike the game (wild bulls, goats or deer) the dog represents the animal practice of hunting from the other side, as an assistant to its human owners. Also, Dimopoulou has noted that “on Neopalatial and Final Palatial seals dogs are even depicted with human figures, occasionally in instances of official or symbolic-ritual character.”¹¹⁰ It is highly likely that humans and domestic dogs interacted on a daily basis that ranged farther than a practical or economic relationship such as that postulated for humans and sheep. The hybridization of a human and a dog is therefore in accord with the observation that the respective animal devices were not chosen randomly from a repertoire of creatures that humans encountered and exploited regularly, but that these animals were imbued with more meaning: For instance, the strength and energy of the bull that could be mastered by human skill and elegance or the wild goats whose pursuit must have led human hunters to the liminal zones in the mountains far from their settlements, demanding agility and skill of them. As today, the dog was probably valued not only for its ability to assist at hunting, but also for its obedience and loyal character when raised and trained by humans. Moreover, dogs are generally accepted as animals with which humans can closely interact and communicate.

OH.28, A lentoid seal found in a LH IIIA2-B context in a chamber tomb in Prosymna on the Greek mainland shows a human-animal composite that has been categorized as a bull-man by the CMS. Like **OH.27**, it is missing the horns necessary to identify the species. This hybrid has no ears at all and other indicators, such as a collar, are absent as well. It is wearing a kilt or similar male garment as well as a belt. A figure-eight shield accompanies this human-animal composite. As a main-land product, this seal stands in the tradition of LB II–III A1 Cretan seals without being a copy or imitation of their styles. The identification of the animal remains difficult and it might be best to call it a ‘quadruped-man’.

On the previously mentioned seal **OH.23**, the deer-man is accompanied by another dyad, most likely a boar-man. The upper body of the creature is shaped like a bull’s, but horns are conspicuously absent. Instead, the spine is covered by a unique fin-shaped mane that rises on top of the head. The face is very graphic and therefore difficult to attribute to a certain species. But if the ‘fin’ is seen as a mane of short hair, it can be said to resemble the bristles known from boar representations. The dyad on the next seal, **OH.29**, can be considered as a boar-man on firmer grounds. This is due mainly to

¹⁰⁸ This is not counting the bull depictions as they mostly show wild specimens that are either being hunted, caught or otherwise mastered – including bull-leaping – which are actions that are not necessary in the case of domesticated bulls (or rather oxen).

¹⁰⁹ Prepalatial dog representations are somewhat difficult and sometimes hard to distinguish from lion depictions (*cf.* CMS III no. 68 or II5 no. 279). They become clearer in the Protopalatial period.

¹¹⁰ Dimopoulou 2010, 97.

the pointed, pig-like ears behind which extends a rounded back with short bristly hair common for boar depictions.¹¹¹ The snout is elongated and ends in two small drill-holes for the nose. Its arms are raised forward in a gesture that could be interpreted as appeasing. This human gesture is not displayed on other human-animal hybrid seals. The hands are ambivalent, while the gesture is very human, they are not; yet neither do they not find comparisons on other seals depicting boars. The hybrid wears a short kilt which Matić and Franković have pointed out as a recurrent garment typical of a group of men motifs exercising control over lions.¹¹²

The observation is interesting, as this scene depicts a hybrid exercising control over animals. Like the lion-controllers, the boar-man is in an upright position although the posture of his legs could be argued as a kneeling position. One leg is bent back and up at the knee while the other is stretched forward and bent back at the knee, which might also imply movement.¹¹³ The boar-man is not configured around the lentoid seal face as other hybrids, the ones Norbert Schlager has termed *Tiermenschliche Akrobaten*¹¹⁴; rather, its composition is derived from heraldic motifs of two mirrored animals flanking a central image.¹¹⁵ However, this seal does not show two animals of the same species, but two antithetical dogs that lack hindquarters and are, in fact, joined at the waist. So, while humans control animals of the real-world, hybrid animal-humans control composite creatures. The emblem of animal mastery is transferred to a ‘metaphysical’ level where the master cannot be human anymore.

This concept can also be seen on the next seal, **OH.30**, a LB II–IIIA1 lentoid from Phigalia depicting a central humanoid figure holding up two fantastic creatures by the scruff of their necks. The central figure has human feet and legs joining into a body that adheres to the basic shape of a human upper body but with too strong deviations to be considered perfectly human. Above the knee, the shanks continually grow in volume and seamlessly merge into the upper body. This is divided into a circular upper segment and a lower “humanoid” one connected by a slim cylindrical section. The head is shown in profile with an open beak-shaped mouth. Weingarten interprets the figure as a bird-man “drift[ing] along the edge of demonology”.¹¹⁶ While the head does remind of a bird, it is difficult to characterize the creature as a bird-man, as it has neither the wings nor

¹¹¹ Cf. *CMS* I. no. 184; II3 nos. 25b, 168; VS1A no. 118.

¹¹² Matić – Franković 2017. They point out *CMS* II6 no. 36 and XII no. 207 among others. The latter shows close similarities to the garment worn by the boar-man.

¹¹³ This is reminiscent of the so-called “*Knielauf*” encountered on Near Eastern representations of divine figures.

¹¹⁴ Schlager 1989, 230–35.

¹¹⁵ Heraldic scenes of „identical animals flanking a sacred object or god/hero (Master of Animals) derives from the Near East” (Aruz 2008, 174). They were adapted by Minoan artists and feature on seals in LM times.

¹¹⁶ Weingarten 1983, 112.

(clearly identifiable) body of a bird. Instead, it has simple human arms that grasp two composite creatures of the fixed hybrids group: Minoan Genii.

The human-animal combination on **OH.31** is also characterized by its heraldic composition. Yet in this case, the motif does not transfer mastery of a humanoid figure over other creatures. The depiction is strongly reminiscent of a LM I–II dated seal¹¹⁷ featuring a central female figure in a flounced skirt and outstretched arms flanked by two smaller females with their upper bodies curved back as if dancing. The central figure of **OH.31** is also female, as the long skirt and small, drilled breasts reveal. The head (which is in profile) is not human and difficult to interpret; it is rounded and filled almost entirely by a large eye. A cylindrical ‘nose’ or beak extends from this and ends in a circular ‘snout’. The head is topped by a rounded triangle. In *Arachne*, it is interpreted as a quadruped head, but missing facial details make a more exact interpretation difficult. However, a long, curved incision to the back of the central figure’s head possibly denotes the curved horn of an agrimi.¹¹⁸ The overall schematic configuration is known from various seals depicting quadrupeds that are made from simple geometric parts,¹¹⁹ so I carefully propose to see this hybrid as an ‘agrimi-lady’.

The figures to the left and right of the quadruped-human are described as water birds by the CMS. However, in the light of the heraldic configuration of dyads **OH.30** and **31** as well as in comparison to *CMS* II3 no. 218, it is here proposed that we are dealing with hybrids again. This is also supported by the bell-shaped and layered elements in the center of the creatures that could be skirts like the ones worn by the small female figures on the seal in comparison. It needs to be pointed out that water birds’ plumage may also be rendered in a similar way, although the bodies usually maintain more coherence to bird anatomy than on the seal discussed here. Also, the striations are denser on well-recognizable birds.¹²⁰ The heads remind of waterfowl, especially on the left figure that has a long neck, a drill-hole for a head and a long ‘beak’. It is paralleled by many identifiable water birds on LB I–II seals.¹²¹

The right figure poses more difficulties as it lacks an identifiable head. The long, slightly curved line considered as a possible horn of the central figure also emerges from the body of the right creature, but it has no identifiable head. Moreover, what seems on first sight to be outstretched arms might also be interpreted as an open beak, but this would deprive the figure of any neck, a most prominent feature of water birds.¹²² Finally, both figures appear to have legs, the one on the left has two lines

¹¹⁷ *CMS* II3 no. 218. The same stylistic date is proposed by the CMS for no. 32 = *CMS* II4 no. 136.

¹¹⁸ However, it connects too low to the head.

¹¹⁹ For example, *CMS* II3 nos. 278, 341; II4 nos. 127, 181; II7 nos. 57, 59; III no. 318; IX nos. 101–03.

¹²⁰ Compare to *CMS* II3 nos. 179, 351, 353, for example.

¹²¹ Examples are *CMS* II3. nos. 78, 179; II4 nos. 13, 125; IX no. 154.

¹²² Perhaps the seal cutter was copying a seal image that he/she did not fully understand, leading to this ambiguity of horn/neck and arms/beak.

emerging from underneath the supposed skirt, the right figure preserves one leg, but due to a surface damage, it cannot be seen whether a second one was originally there as well. In summary, it is not possible to conclusively define the small figures, but they nevertheless constitute a heraldic scene enclosing a central hybrid figure. Unlike the scenes of dominance, as witnessed on **OH.29** and **30**, it is proposed to recognize the scene as part of a ritual involving female figures and dancing. Again, this is an example of how pictorial themes can be transferred from the realm of humans to another ‘metaphysical’ level of hybrid creatures.

Another seal features two, perhaps three composite creatures in a row (**OH.32**). They are all in profile facing right, so this is neither a heraldic, an ‘animal mastery’, or a ritual dance scene, but a different arrangement which resembles a procession. The front figure poses some difficulties, and two possibilities can be considered: (1) It is an inorganic composite with human legs and lower body, a completely missing torso and the shoulder and arm of a lion. A head is missing; or (2) it is not a figure at all, but two isolated legs, possibly lion legs (proposed by the CMS)¹²³ or quadruped/bull legs (proposed by Blakolmer)¹²⁴. The interpretation of the lower leg is difficult as the impressions did not preserve the area around the foot well, which makes it hard to tell whether it is a hoof, paw or even human foot. The upper leg is, however, identifiable as leonine.

This configuration is followed by a human-animal hybrid with the lower body of a human and the upper body, front leg and head of an animal, most likely a boar as evidenced by the short hair on its body and ridge. It could also be a lion; some manes of Late Minoan lion depictions are structured by small ellipsoid indentations and there are examples where some hair stands off the animal’s back.¹²⁵ The long snout and its distinct ‘plug’-shape point again to boar representations.¹²⁶ Its front leg/arm is extended forward to the missing mid-section of the inorganic composite in front of it. **OH.33** is a fragmentary sealing that preserves most of the lower body of a human and a fraction of an animal back with short spikey hair along the spine, possibly the same creature as depicted in the middle of **OH.32**. The procession is ended by a fixed hybrid, the Minoan Genius.

Blakolmer offers another interpretation based on Egyptian motifs of “*Taweret* supporting Horus in his struggle against Seth who is symbolized by detached bull

¹²³ CMS II8, 339 no. 200.

¹²⁴ Blakolmer 2015b, 34.

¹²⁵ A piece assigned to the Cretan Popular Group shows these characteristics although this of course dates to LM I. Cf. CMS II3 no. 348.

¹²⁶ CMS I no. 436; II5 no. 287 (this is MM II, but it demonstrates the perceived overall shape nevertheless); V no. 314; VS3 no. 246. However, CMS II8 no. 198 shows a very similar mane in combination with a lion head. This might even be another animal-human composite, but over half of the impression is missing, so it cannot be proven.

limbs and stood in connection with an astral constellation.”¹²⁷ He interprets the scene differently. According to him, the middle creature is a lion-man “handling two isolated legs of a quadruped.”¹²⁸ While it is tempting to explain the iconology of an image with the help of material and texts from neighboring cultures, and even though Egyptian *Taweret* is the attested prototype for the later Minoan Genius, this needs to be handled with caution. The Minoan Genius is not simply a ‘minoanized’ *Taweret*, but a hybrid creature in its own right with differing competences and functions from its Egyptian antecedent. Not only its appearance and capacities change, but in the wake of these transformations, its semantic meaning must have undergone many changes – especially considering the probability that the Egyptian demi-god’s functions might not have travelled as a complete convolute along with its iconography when *Taweret* arrived on Crete in MM II.¹²⁹ In the Neopalatial period, the figure is strongly shaped to fit Minoan needs and, very likely, beliefs.¹³⁰ It appears somewhat questionable that a LM IIIA gem engraver would have decided to render a purely Minoan hybrid (the Minoan Genius and no longer *Taweret*) in order to represent a downright Egyptian myth. Rather, it is herewith proposed to view the seal(ing) in context of the place, time and especially people who ushered it.¹³¹

If we consider the first interpretation of an inorganic hybrid likely, this impression, made by a soft-stone seal, combines three major categories of composite creatures: a fixed hybrid, an occasional organic hybrid, and an inorganic composite creature. Perhaps the materiality of a soft stone made this possible, as we do not encounter such cross-depictions on hard stone seals, which are mostly reserved for fixed hybrids and dyad species. In fact, soft stone hybrids are extremely rare and “their characteristics at best half-remembered.”¹³² The seal has been dated to LM IIIA1 on stylistic grounds.¹³³ In this period, many seals from LM I–II were in use as antiquities¹³⁴ and gem engravers could have found a source of inspiration from them.¹³⁵ Krzyszkowska has

¹²⁷ Blakolmer 2015b, 34.

¹²⁸ Blakolmer 2015b, 34.

¹²⁹ In Egypt this deity was “mainly responsible for the protection of women and children, childbirth and the underworld” (Blakolmer 2015b, 29). While some of these roles remain in Middle Minoan times, such as its connection to fertility, others are fashioned from Minoan needs, such as cleaning and libations (*cf.* Rehak 1995, 215).

¹³⁰ Rehak 1995, *passim*.

¹³¹ In order to repeat as little as necessary, the extent of the Minoan Genius in Late Bronze Age glyptic will not be treated here but in the respective chapter (4.1) on this fixed hybrid.

¹³² Krzyszkowska 2005, 213.

¹³³ The sealing was found in a stratified context with LM IIIA1–2 pottery, *cf.* Krzyszkowska 2005, 228.

¹³⁴ The designation ‘heirlooms’, which is often found in literature about Minoan glyptic, is rejected, because it implies a deliberate and continuous passing on of an object through a family or social group. These circumstances cannot be proven in the case of seals that are re-used much later than the period they were engraved and first used in. Krzyszkowska assumes that many of these re-used seals had been re-discovered by later generations (*pers. comment*, June 2018).

¹³⁵ Krzyszkowska 2005, 192.

pointed out that processions are not part of the repertoire of seal images after the collapse in LM IB. Also, soft stone seals were seldom used on Crete (in contrast to the mainland).¹³⁶ Taking these facts into consideration, we are dealing with a very curious ‘relic’ in terms of material and iconography.

This chapter has presented 33 seals showing human-animal combinations. A few results need to be pointed out. First, most hybrids were divided at the waist, with a lower human and an upper animal body. Quadrupeds are the animals of choice for these composites. Bulls are encountered most often, *i.e.* on nearly half of the material. Other recurrent candidates are wild goats, deer, and lions, together comprising nearly one third of the repertoire. Unique dyads are often more difficult to discern due to missing parallels, but it is possible to identify one boar-man with near certainty, another one is very probable while a third one might also have been intended as a lion-man; the dog-man is still disputable as is the ‘bird-man’ that deviates from the scheme as it does not have the head and upper body of one species and the lower body of a human. Like the quadruped-headed lady it misses a (clearly identifiable) animal upper body.

The species selected for human-animal composites were not chosen randomly; instead, the seal engravers chose animals that played an important role for social messages. Only species with special external and internal properties that went beyond functional or economic value were combined with the lower body of an athlete to create hybrids that possessed the properties of both constituent parts: the skill, prowess and cunning of the athlete was thus combined with the energy and strength of the bull, the symbol of the Knossian elite; or the agility and hardiness of agrimia that inhabited the remote and rough areas of Crete; the speed and reactivity of a deer; the dangerousness and exoticism of the lion; etc. The affordances of these animals were transferred to the hybrids they configured, thus creating entities whose capabilities went beyond the potential of normal humans or animals. Someone who ushered or chose such a seal would have seen it not only as a merely functional item, but as a very personal object, perhaps even a charm. The chosen motif could formulate statements of individual or group identity; testify to a certain social group or perhaps even guarantee the protection of benevolent ‘spirits’, which we cannot reconstruct due to the many open questions concerning Minoan beliefs. Simandiraki-Grimshaw has pointed out the possibility that the understanding of such hybrids might restrict or expand “the ideology of animal-human hybridity (and perhaps mastery) among controlled, knowledgeable audiences”¹³⁷ – I regard such a ‘knowledgeable’ group of seal users as a very likely case.

Blakolmer has pointed out that the animal part of the dyad species composites dominates in the cognition of the hybrid creature. When occurring together, it is the

¹³⁶ Krzyszkowska 2005, 201, 204, 212.

¹³⁷ Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010, 100.

lion-man that attacks the bull-man – paralleling the behavior of lions in the contexts of bulls observed on other seals. Therefore, Blakolmer concludes that “they are primarily meant to be animal beings with human components and not man enhanced by beastlike elements.”¹³⁸ Supportive of this view is the notion that the human-animal hybrids always have an animal head and consequentially no access to human reasoning.

Finally, the materials chosen for these composites are interesting. Except for three seals, all of the hybrids are engraved on hard stones. This can be explained partially by their occurrence mostly after LM IB, after which soft stones were rarely employed on Crete. Nevertheless, most of the seals that could date earlier are also made of hard stones.

Double-Animal-Human Combinations

Double-animal-human combinations share about the same time frame as well as the preference for hard stones as the animal-human composite creatures of the previous chapter. The prevailing motif in this group is the combination of the forequarters of two quadrupeds (of the same or different species) conjoined at the waist to a pair of human legs in a walking or running stance. Three seals show combinations of the same species: On **OH.34**¹³⁹ and **35** two goats join to a lower human body with deeply bent knees. While the first comes from a stratified context in Kato Symi and can be dated to LM II, the other double-goat-man is from Knossos and has been dated to LB II–IIIA1, the acme of dyad and triad species composites. The goat parts on **OH.34** do not feature the contorted pose of most dyads, rather, the forequarters are bent horizontally forwards, respectively back, so that their abdomens show towards the ground. The reason for this might be that the lentoid seal face is divided into an upper section figuring a grazing quadruped and a lower section with the double-animal-human combination, which was easier to configure in a semi-circle when the upper bodies stretched out nearly horizontally. In fact, the quadruped has its head in the same position as the right head of the triad creature. Its four legs are arranged so that the front and hind legs each leave an open triangular surface in between them and a smaller, closed one between the hind leg reaching forward and the front one reaching back. The triad features the same open and closed fields between each animal forequarter and human leg and in between both legs; thus, the natural world represented by the animal in the upper part of the seal face is a blueprint for the supernatural world represented by the double-animal-human combination below.

¹³⁸ Blakolmer 2016, 65.

¹³⁹ Younger 1986, 134 subsumes it under group “C. One large dot on the jowl.” One goat-man (OH.19) and the (possible) dog-men (OH.27 and 28) belong to the same group in Younger’s typology.

Triad **OH.35**, preserved in an impression from Knossos, shows a very strong torsion of the body resulting in the quadrupeds' abdomens pointing upward, and the back of the heads toward the waist, thus filling out the entire circular seal face. The goat heads on the impression are iconographical parallels to dyad **OH.18**, a goat-man on an agate lentoid found in Chania. The overall composition strongly reminds of a swastika; accordingly, the body can be said to have transcended not only the sphere of the natural world (due to its composite state) but also to have accessed the graphic and symbolic scopes of a standard ornament. The same could possibly be posited for triad **OH.36**, a hematite lentoid attributed to Milatos showing a double-bull-human composition with two frontally depicted bull's heads. The animals emerge from the human waist, one bent to the left, the other to the right side. Together, they arc over the human legs. Three ornaments accompany the hybrid; underneath the right animal torso, a three-leaved plant with stem and protuberance is engraved, an ornamental mirror of the three-partite creature. The space between the left animal body and the legs is filled by a similar ornament with four protrusions coming from the stem. Finally, a figure-eight shield is in the lower right corner. While the heads preserve the general shape and borings of frontal bull heads observed in the group of dyads, the features are put together from geometric forms (circles, cylinders, cones) resulting in a veritable 'composite' creature already on a stylistic level. The graphic quality is reinforced by the single leg attached to each animal body (instead of two forelegs). In essence, the shared characteristic of this first group of triad composites is the duplication of the animal conjoined to the human legs. Apart from this, the seals differ in style and composition.

Another four seals show double-animal-human combinations with two different quadrupeds emerging from the human waist. While the first three are distinctly different on a stylistic level, they are all composed of each a bull's and a goat's forequarters. As pointed out before, these are the two most commonly depicted animals in Bronze Age glyptic. Their possible semantic meanings have been discussed in the previous chapter and the same strand of interpretation is applied to the triad composites.

Triad **OH.37** is composed in two-part axial symmetry with a minor deviation, which is due to the variations in the bull and goat bodies. The forequarters display the typical torsion viewed on the hybrid specimens (*e.g.* bull-man **OH.07** or goat-man **OH.19**), but the human legs are perfectly straight and in a walking stance.¹⁴⁰ **OH.38** displays the same running position of the legs as **OH.35**, bent at the knee with the hind leg kicked back. The legs seem to be clad in a loincloth. Unlike the other triads, both animals' heads are stretched forward (in the direction of movement). It needs to be pointed out that the goat head, which is in front of the bull's, is not connected

¹⁴⁰ When one of the animal forequarters is covered, *e.g.* by a hand, the resulting image(s) are near parallels to the dyad composites. This feature is not found again in the double-animal-human group.

organically to the body, rather, it seems to ‘float’ in front of the composition. There are no preceding examples of such conjoined heads showing in one direction and the ‘floating’ head might be the craftsman’s solution to handle the perspective. The goat head is stylistically close to the ones on triad **OH.35** or dyad **OH.18**. The bull head can be seen in similar fashion on bull-man **OH.09**. The composition is accompanied by a two-sided fir branch with protuberance taking up the empty space where the second head would typically feature on other triad compositions. The animal extremities are far from natural; as the forearm and lower arm meet at the knee, the two parts overlap and finish in pointed ends. The dewclaws and hooves are made by use of a hollow drill, with additional incised triangles emanating from the hoof-drill-holes. Sharp lines and points are recurrent and cause a quite unnatural impression of the body.

A goat in left profile and a frontal bull head are conjoined to striding human legs on the next seal, **OH.39**. The bull is very close to bull-man **OH.13** with the single (instead of triple) drill-hole on the muzzle being the only major variation. Each animal has only one foreleg, as observed before on **OH.36**. The space in between the legs is filled by a figure-eight shield, a regularly encountered ornament in the context of many hybrid and quadruped seals.¹⁴¹ As on the next seal, frontal and profile depictions are combined. However, **OH.40** is composed of a goat head in profile and a frontal lion head. The latter can be identified by its mane, which is rendered by parallel cut lines; also, the distinct shape of the broad forehead connected to a rounded snout by a narrow mid-section of the head characterizes it as a lion. Large drill-holes were employed to render the snout and forehead, and several small drill-holes indicate the joints. While these emphasize the flexibility of the bodies, they result in a less life-like impression of the body shapes overall. An unidentifiable ornament or motif is floating above the lion’s abdomen, but because the right part of the seal is broken off, it cannot be identified. What remains is an ellipsoid indentation with four drill-holes.¹⁴²

OH.41, a fragmented object sealing from Knossos bears the impression of a soft stone that probably depicted a double-animal-human combination. It preserves most of the hybrid’s human legs and parts of a lion body, including most of the head. The lion emanates from the waist and bends back and down to the right. Its face is shown in profile and, exceptionally, upside down. It has the typical shape of lions’ heads as discussed earlier, the brow and bridge of the nose are engraved in the same way as on **OH.26**. The mane is rendered by drop-shaped cuts. Due to the fragmented state of the sealing, it is not possible to tell whether a second animal’s forequarter was connected to the legs. In favor of such an interpretation is the positioning of the extant body parts

¹⁴¹ Cf. dyads **OH.03–04**, 18–19, 28 and triads **OH.36** and 42.

¹⁴² The upper and lower holes touch, the left and right drill-holes only connect to the upper and lower ones.



Fig. 3 OH.42. Green contours: plant; blue dotted lines: 'inanimate' parts.

which allow enough space on the seal face for a conjoined animal device. Another device, most likely a figure-eight shield, is engraved right next to the waist, taking up space at the joint between human and animal body. While figure-eight-shields are often in close proximity to the hybrids' bodies,¹⁴³ they do not connect to joint parts.

Perhaps the next triad on a cushion seal from Midea can hint at an explanation. Simply, **OH.42** (fig. 3) cannot be called a 'double-animal-human' combination as it does not entail two animal parts. Rather, it could be deemed 'plant-animal-human' combination. The legs of the creature are human, bent at the knees in an almost 90° angle: the front leg's

thigh is first horizontal, then bends vertically downward, the hind leg is in an upright kneeling position. Two parallel striations on each thigh and a horizontal groove on the waist indicate a garment. The torso of a bull is connected to the human legs along the horizontal groove. In effect, there is no room for another torso conjoined at the waist. Instead, the body of a bull extends upwards and is curved back at the neck. The chest is exposed, and this is where the next device is attached to the creature; but the composition is not easily cognizable in this section. What can be discerned is a three-leaved plant with stem and protuberance. This is again connected to the body by two incised lines meeting at what would be the hoof of the bull. However, the foreleg is composed of disturbed lines with several angles below the knee. Possibly, the limb of the creature turns from an animal part to an inanimate link to the plant.

Although this interpretation might seem far-fetched, as we have no other combinations of the type, it is here preferred the possibility of a human-animal combination associated with a plant ornament. While plant ornaments, and especially three-leaved plants with stems (and sometimes protuberances), occur repeatedly with occasional hybrids, they are smaller and never overlap or connect to the body. Instead, they function as a filler or '*Beiwerk*' for the main motif; yet, on **OH.42** the plant is part of the motif proper.

The seal engravers of the Late Bronze Age have proven their capability of rearranging given devices and creatures to new combinations, and a look at the non-viable composites offers proof of other plant-animal combinations.¹⁴⁴ If we accept the possibility that they could also combine animate creatures with inanimate plants or even

¹⁴³ Cf. OH.03, 18–19.

¹⁴⁴ See chapter 3.2, Non-Viable Creatures and Motif Combinations, below.

objects,¹⁴⁵ they might well have produced hybrids that combine the organic with the inorganic, such as human legs, an animal torso and a figure-eight shield as on **OH.41**.¹⁴⁶ Further proof of the possibility of a combination of floral and faunal elements is delivered by some of the LM I Zakros sealings, *e.g.* **NV.01**.¹⁴⁷

The next motif in the group of double-animal-humans is witnessed on two impressions from similar seals subsumed as **OH.43**. The motifs on the string nodules diverge strongly from other double-animal-human combinations. While they maintain the human legs, the front parts of goats emerge horizontally from the shoulders, their heads hanging to the ground while the legs ‘kick’ the air. In the place where the human head would usually be a roughly head-shaped feature was engraved on the seal face. However, it is hard to identify. The ‘face’ is in the shape of a heart, with short, stubbly hair on the ‘head’ and long ‘ears’ extending from the sides. While the engraving can be compared to the anatomy of a human or animal head, it is not possible to assign this to any living creature, which is why the anatomic parts are placed in inverted commas here. It could either be an aniconic (featureless) hybrid face or an inorganic composition of body parts emitting from the hindquarters of the goats; the quality of the impressions does not allow for better cognizance. On a typological level, this motif might be traced back to images showing a central figure, human or hybrid (such as the Minoan Genius) carrying a (possibly) sacrificial animal over its shoulders or on a pole.¹⁴⁸

While **OH.42** and **43** have proven difficult to understand for a modern viewer, **OH.44** is more accessible. It is placed at the end of the double-animal-human combinations because it inverts the composition: Two pairs of human legs in a leaping position arc around the seal face, conjoined in the center to a frontally depicted bull’s neck and head. The intaglio is very detailed, showing the folds of the leaper’s shorts and the creases of the bull’s neck. The animal face is also executed with care for internal details such as lines around the nose bone, which possibly indicate striations of the fur that can be viewed on live bulls. A three-leafed plant with stem is in the upper center of the seal face, echoing the three-partite composition of the hybrid below it.

In conclusion of this overview, a few points can be established. The stylistic dating of the double-animal-human combinations lies in the same time span as those of the animal-human-combinations of the previous sub-chapter. They mostly feed on the same compositional schemes and styles as the previous group, which can be well-observed

¹⁴⁵ The LM I Zakros workshop whose ephemeral motifs of composite creatures are published, amongst others, in *CMS II*7 is evidence for the openness of individuals in the Bronze Age to such combinations. While we are dealing here with another place and time of production, the gem engravers of the Zakros ‘monsters’ and those of **OH.41** or **42** were part of a cognitive scape evolving from the Neopalatial period onward that allowed for creative re-assembly of composite devices.

¹⁴⁶ I do not claim this as the answer to what the motifs represent, rather, this is a suggestion to make sense of these images that seem to go beyond the ‘average’ hybrid creature.

¹⁴⁷ See chapter 3.2, Non-Viable Creatures and Motif Combinations.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *CMS I* no. 222; V no. 209; VI no. 25a; II8 no. 238; IX no. 129.

on the animal parts, but also the human legs. As they have more components than single-animal-human combinations, they afford a different placement on the lentoid seal face which has led to the choice between upright standing or striding human legs, or alternatively bent legs suggestive of quick movement. In most cases, the animals sprout from either side of the waist, arcing over the human legs. Their heads can be depicted in profile, frontally, or one in profile and one in frontal view. The prevalence of bulls and goats observed throughout different iconographic media of the Bronze Age is also distinctive of the triads examined here. The characteristics of the animals used in these combinations were combined with social, and likely also individual, ideas of their external and internal qualities. It therefore does not come as a surprise to find that bulls and goats are most commonly combined together in double-animal-human combinations, merging the energy and power of the bull with the swiftness and agility of the goat as well as the skill and prowess of the athlete to an amalgam of physical supremacy as it can only be encountered in the realm of human-animal hybrids.

Human-animal and double-animal-human composites in general are directly linked to real-world human-animal relations on Bronze Age Crete. These were not only of a practical nature that aimed at the procurance of food stuffs and raw materials but were endowed with symbolic value due to the vital significance of these relations on the one hand and, on the other, the emblematic qualities of certain species attributed to them by humans. This resulted in an output of a broad range of motifs depicting humans and animals in interaction (*e.g.* hunting, sports, sacrifice or animal mastery scenes) and, finally, animal-human hybridity. Simandiraki-Grimshaw interprets this form of hybridity in the context of somatic mastery¹⁴⁹ – not the mastery of human over animal, but rather, as proposed above, the achievement of somatic mastery through the combined qualities of the bodies merged to form a hybrid creature.¹⁵⁰

Conjoined Animals

This sub-chapter deals with representations of creatures that consist of the parts of two animals joined together at a certain point of the body. Conjoined animals are a recurrent representation from MM times onward and constitute a category that should be viewed as a phenomenon in its own right that existed parallel to the composite creatures. Therefore, this chapter introduces only a few of the extant representations of this type, of which 66 are published in the CMS.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010, 94.

¹⁵⁰ Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010, 101.

¹⁵¹ These can be generated in the *Arachne* database by using the search term *Lebewesen Tier Vierfüßler Kombination*.

The first two depictions show quadrupeds joined at the waist, resulting in a creature that comprises two forequarters but no hindquarters. **OH.45** is a LH IIIA2-B soft stone lentoid depicting conjoined goats or perhaps deer – the exact species cannot be recognized. The creature's heads are shown in profile, inclined towards another, its body is elongated in the center of the seal face. The engraved lines are rather simple and sketchy, which reinforces the ambiguity of the creature. **OH.46**, on the other hand, is more easily recognizable. It dates to LB II and is preserved only as the impression of the hard stone lentoid that originally displayed this conjoined animal. The left part of the creature is composed of the forequarters of a ram whose head is shown frontally. While the impression it is partly damaged, one of the horns remain, making it possible to identify the animal. At the waist, it merges into the forequarters of a lion depicted in profile and recognizable by its mane. The bodies are voluminous, preserving details of the muscles and anatomical units even in the impression. Another case of a conjoined creature needs to be mentioned together with the previous two. The LM I impression **NV.36** shows two lion forequarters joined together. However, the abdomen is entirely missing, resulting in a very short mid-section resembling rather two protomes that have fused together.

Following these, the next creatures to be discussed are joined somewhere near the chest or perhaps shoulder. **OH.47** is similar to **OH.45** in that it remains rather sketchy, however, this LH IIIA1-2 lentoid reveals more details around the heads, horns and hooves of the animals, making it possible to identify them as deer. It seems that they were intended to be joined by the chest, but the depiction does not make this absolutely clear, with one neck emerging somewhere around the center of the other animal's body. Both necks and heads are stretched backward, which might be the reason why it was not possible to make a very smooth connection between the 'extra' deer's head and the complete deer's body. The engraver of **OH.48**, an agate lentoid dating between LB II-III A1, circumvented this problem by depicting his conjoined animal in profile view. However, this has resulted in one head seemingly floating above the other, another problem of perspective. We are dealing not only with a conjoined animal here, moreover, this is a conjoined creature, consisting of the heads of a goat, elaborate wings like those of a griffin, and the body and tail of a feline.

Lastly, two seals that existed far apart in space and time display conjoined creatures with a single shared head. The Zakros impression **OH.49** preserves most of a lentoid seal face on which two lion bodies in profile curved around the perimeter, joining in one head (shown frontally) that took up the center of the seal face. The Mycenaean agate lentoid **OH.50** is structured differently. Here, the engraver also made use of the lentoid's rounded surface, but the griffins joined by the heads do not run along the outline of the seal face. Instead, they are depicted rampant, forelegs resting on a

pedestal, wings stretched back. While the body is a clearly recognizable a feline's, the wings and especially the frontally depicted, shared head are quite abstract. Simple outlines preserve the general shape of head and wing, and fundamental elements, such as the eyes, nose, and feathers are added. However, they preserve rather the idea of a griffin than an actual depiction of one. Were these elements isolated, it would not have been possible to identify the creature.

While it is conceivable that observations of rare cases of conjoined twins or polycephaly might have given the incentive to such representations, the cases of **OH.46**, **48** and **50** demonstrate that depictions of conjoined creatures did not necessarily mirror a real-world observation of such a phenomenon. The conjoined griffins, winged goats as well as the combination of a ram and lion indicates that we are dealing with composite creatures that belonged to a certain realm of Minoan cognition that intermingled with a level or sphere transcending experiences of the real world.

3.2 NON-VIABLE CREATURES AND DEVICE COMBINATIONS

Unlike the creatures discussed so far, the composites treated now do not adhere to fundamental rules of faunal anatomy. This means they do not possess a complete set of head, torso, and limbs in the correct order and do not always have the potential of autonomous movement (by legs or wings, for example). Since these criteria are not fulfilled, the resulting depictions need to be considered as *non-viable creatures*. Moreover, in cases where composite devices do not add up to any impression of a unit, the results cannot be designated 'creatures' but can only be understood as (fantastic) device combinations.¹⁵² Characteristic of this group of representations – all of which were found on clay nodules excavated in a LB I destruction layer in House A of Kato Zakros¹⁵³ – is that they are created by the combination of interchangeable motif devices. Anastasiadou has noted that, because of this, “their taxa cannot be used as a means of meaningfully categorizing a composite.”¹⁵⁴ Her solution is a differentiation “on the grounds of the degree of cohesion” leading to a subdivision of creatures that still follow basic rules of anatomical building blocks and combinations that do not. While this basic differentiation is followed, the combinations are also categorized into different device groups. Dominant devices, such as wings, fan-tails or legs, define a group of non-viable creatures and device combinations. The interchangeability of devices leads to the representation of our 'monsters' in more than one device group, which is necessary in order to

¹⁵² This is a short summary of the of the definitions postulated in chapter 2.

¹⁵³ Here, a large amount of clay nodules (over 550) preserved 257 different LM I seal faces (Anastasiadou 2016, 77. Numbers as identified by the CMS. The motifs were published in *CMS II*7). While many sealings bear motifs that were prevalent during the LM I period, others show unique composite representations, some of which have already been treated among the occasional hybrids above.

¹⁵⁴ Anastasiadou 2016, 81.

grasp the extent of possibilities the Zakros engraver(s) encountered when creating new fantastic creatures and combinations.

Device I: Bird Wings

Wings were one of the most frequent devices used to create composite creatures. They are found both with fixed hybrids, *i.e.* the griffin¹⁵⁵ or *bird lady*, occasional viable hybrids,¹⁵⁶ as well as in the case of non-viable composites. As today, flight was sure to fascinate the land-bound people of prehistoric times. Perhaps birds were considered to have a closer relationship, maybe even an intermediary role with celestial entities. Being able to reach areas that were inaccessible for humans has led to birds' special place in belief systems throughout space and time. While we do not possess any information on Minoan religion or beliefs, such a possible understanding of winged creatures must be taken into consideration.

Three non-viable composites from Zakros can be understood in the context of *bird lady* iconography. **NV.01** is a combination of bird wings attached to female breasts which are again attached to a fan-tail below and a floral element above. Since it is missing a rump or abdomen as well as a head, this creature is clearly non-viable. Nevertheless, it maintains a sense of natural order. The same accounts for **NV.02**, a combination possessing the entire body of a bird, but with a missing head. Instead, a head-like device with a central horizontal fissure that separates the upper part of the 'head' completely from the lower part deems this otherwise very bird-like like creature non-viable. Further, **NV.03** does not even possess any kind of head or substitute for a head. The wings are detached from the body of a female, including breasts, a slim cylindrical waist and spread legs clad in a flounced, pant-like garment.

Interestingly, **NV.04** is also characterized by its headlessness. While the impression does not preserve the uppermost part of the seal face, it is very unlikely that a head fit in the missing area, as the slim neck reaches up almost all the way to the edge of the seal face. Here, we see a leftward facing profile of a creature with one wing spread out behind. It is composed in a natural sequence, but some body parts necessary for a live creature are missing. Thus, the neck joins to a pair of female breasts, which again join directly into a lion leg each. The wing is connected to the back of the breasts, but there is no chest or abdomen. The hindquarters of a canine, recognizable by the short, curved tail, appear behind the wing, seemingly not attached to anything.

The next winged composite stretches the limits of our understanding of viable and non-viable combinations. **NV.05** is combined in approximation of a *bird lady* but denies

¹⁵⁵ See chapter 4.3, *Griffin*.

¹⁵⁶ See following sub-chapter.

any identification with this fixed hybrid. Rendered entirely in frontal view, the head is that of a bull, ‘attached’ to a banded helm that functions as the body, alluding to *bird ladies*. Outstretched wings emanate from between the head and the helm. Strictly speaking, this is a non-viable composite, not even a creature, as its central part is an artificial element of attire and therefore inorganic. However, the way it is constructed maintains the impression of a unit – the decisive criterion we use to draw the line between creatures and motif combinations.

The two final representations in this device group can be called motif combinations without hesitation. **NV.10** shows wings attached to a bucranium with lion legs emanating from between the feathers. On top of the bucranium there is a loop-shaped element. While the engraver attached the devices to one another, this was not the case on **NV.15**, which displays single, unattached elements from top to bottom: two single human arms arranged in the shape of spread legs with a trefoil spray in between the arms; below this, a feline head with the typical triangular pointed ears and the three-partite snout of a cat or lion; below this, two wings of a water fowl connected by a horizontal incision of small consecutive boughs with a larger and pointed central element arching out from the horizontal line, possibly a schematic outline of a bird (?).

These seven different combinations with bird wings show the high variability of device coalescence at a single production site. Yet, wings were not the only part of a bird that inspired fantastic combinations.

Device II: Fan-Tail

As a device, fan-tails are employed in a very standardized fashion. They always appear at the bottom of a combination in the same vertical orientation with the tips of the feathers pointing downward. We have already seen this device combined in a non-viable *bird lady derivative* on **NV.01–02**, but it also occurs on a wing-less specimen of this type, **NV.06**. Here, the fan-tail is connected to a pair of female breasts. From these extend two bejeweled human arms with the hands coming together at the center of the body. The creature’s head is zoomorphic but otherwise unintelligible. The CMS database in *Arachne* has identified this as a bull’s head,¹⁵⁷ which was possibly motivated by the bull-like muzzle of the animal. However, the irregular ovoid shape of the head is not paralleled by any bull heads in the CMS repertoire. On top of its head, it is wearing a banded helm with an element that resembles a horn extending from its tip. Around its neck it is either wearing a necklace or the engraver has indicated a feather plume. All in all, the depicted creature remains puzzling to the modern viewer, and perhaps this was already the case during its use in the Bronze Age.

¹⁵⁷ <http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/objekt/160485> (last accessed 17/08/2018).

NV.07 needs to be mentioned in connection with the previous creature. Here, we find the fan-tail joined to a cross-hatched bird rump in profile. One human arm is attached to this and bent up in front of the body that finishes in a leonine or canine head. The creature is mirrored and thus back-to-back in axial symmetry with its counterpart. It is unusual to find two discrete creatures made up of a device combination sharing the same seal face. It cannot be ruled out that a conjoined nature is implied, since the composites touch along the backs of their heads. **NV.08** is a clear case of conjoining bodies, moreover the protomes of two water birds. These merge at the lower part of the back of their necks, from where they unite into a shared fan-tail. A rump or mid-section is, consequentially, missing. The impressions of three different seals that were copying the same motif also combine water bird elements: **NV.09** displays the head, elongated neck and rump of a water fowl attached to a fan-tail. Two lion legs spring from the bird's body and curve around the fantail underneath the body. There are two more elements that are difficult to identify. These ovoid shapes with a centered circle are placed between the rump and underneath the emanating lion legs. The CMS has identified this as the standard ornament 'circle and dot'¹⁵⁸ but it seems to fulfill more than an ornamental role, perhaps alluding to female breasts, attributing a sense of gender to the composite creature.

The final fan-tail composition, **NV.14**, is preserved in the impressions of two look-alike seals. The creatures engraved on these were highly non-viable, possessing nothing but a zoomorphic head, spread human legs, and a fan-tail. These parts do not join but are arranged in the correct order. While the CMS identifies the latter as a fan-shaped plant,¹⁵⁹ the position on the seal and relationship to the rest of the creatures' bodies speak in favor of an interpretation as an animal part, *i.e.* a fan-tail, and not a plant. Further, **OH.04** displays a related representation of a fan-tail directly attached to spread human legs, where the junction is shown, ruling out any identification of the appendix as a plant.

The heads are most likely feline, which is less obvious on *CMS* II7 no. 119 than on no. 120. In favor of a feline identification is the rendering of the snout, which derives from a combination of an elongated incision for the nose-bone and two circular ones slightly beneath and to the sides of this. The same characteristics can be seen on *CMS* II7 no. 76, another lentoid seal from Zakros, not bearing composite iconography, but four lion heads arranged in four-part radial symmetry.¹⁶⁰ A second indicator are the tufts of hair on the creatures' heads. Short, bristly hair covers the top of the head, while a longer tuft of hair sprouts from the sides.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ <http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/objekt/160526> (last accessed 17/08/2018).

¹⁵⁹ "Pflanzen: Fächer", see <http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/item/objekt/160480> (last accessed 20/08/2018).

¹⁶⁰ See also the head in the motif combination NV.15.

¹⁶¹ This can also be seen on the lions in comparison.

To sum up, fan-tails frequently occur with birds or bird-like creatures, but they can also be combined with parts of human and other mammal bodies. We should recognize this as a figure with meaning, perhaps of indexical or even metaphorical nature, although this information is elusive to us.

Device III: Lion Legs

Lion legs are more freely combined than fan-tails. A few examples have already been noted above: **NV.04** combined them with a winged, griffin-like creature without a recognizable head, a missing chest and abdomen, and a dog's hindquarters; **NV.09** was the group of water birds with two lion legs; **NV.10** was a motif combination of a bucranium, wings and lion legs. While the feline legs only complemented a motif combination in these previous cases, they are the dominant device in the next two cases. **NV.11** presents a central pair of long lion legs, from which sprout two ornamental devices that can best be described as butterfly wings. While the area right above the lion legs, where possibly a head was, is damaged, a crown-like finial can be made out on top of this. Similarly, **NV.12** shows two lion legs encased by larger 'butterfly wings' and a 'crowning' papyrus-leaf element. Both motif combinations center around this device. An interesting observation is the design of the butterfly wings, which display a central circle which creates the impression of two eyes regarding the viewer of these configurations.

Two further uses of the lion-leg device are present among the Zakros material. **NV.13** shows a combination that appears to be very organic at first sight, but again features missing body parts and links. In contrast to the previous 'staging' of the lion legs, here, the device is very small and inconspicuous. It is attached to a boar's head, recognizable by the long snout, tusks, and bristly hair. Behind the head of the boar extend a pair of butterfly wings, taking up most of the seal face. A fan-shaped plant with a stem is engraved between the spread wings and above the boar's head. Three versions of this seal are testified, and all share the same elements with only minor deviations.

NV.16 features a very creative use of lion legs. They are presented in the place of horns attached to a bull's head represented in axial symmetry on a lentoid seal face. While this treatment of the device is unique, human legs have been put to the same use, as will be seen in the case of the following device.

Device IV: Human Legs

The most common use of human legs as a device in non-viable creatures and motif combinations is as the lower part of a composition with both limbs spread apart, as if squatting, or possibly in a birth-giving posture. Such a posture can be identified in the case of the feline-headed and fan-tailed composition **NV.14**. It is, however, more abstract in the case of **NV.17** and **NV.18**. Both of these show the 'legs' as a single tubular element that imitates the shape of spread legs, but in very soft curves and simple shapes, as if the limbs were made of a soft, flexible material and not flesh and bones. Above these hover frontal quadruped's heads; **NV.17** is clearly a ram, as can be seen by the characteristic out- and downward curving, corrugated horns; **NV.18** is more difficult to identify, the CMS suggests a goat or bull. The creature's horns are replaced by human arms with very long, schematic fingers at the ends and the indication of a garment on the upper part. Four long lines also run from the forehead upward and elude further recognition.

NV.19 shows again two distinct human legs that also demonstrate a very flexible jointless quality. Where they touch in the middle, an element protrudes upward, which the CMS has identified as a plant-shaped fan with stem. While this is certainly the case, it needs to be pointed out that the calyx of the plant is composed by three constituents, two outer, elongated ovals of the same size, and a slightly larger and farther down reaching third oval. This combination is reminiscent of a schematic face. The 'fan' of the plant (the petals emanating from the calyx) remind of hair or a bird's feather crown. The engraver of the seal was intentionally creating an ambiguous image, that suggested a 'plant' and 'living being' at the same time.

The arrangement of the device found on the next two seal impressions has already been mentioned – the use in the place of horns. On **NV.20**, human legs emanate to the left and right of a feline's head, thus supplementing a naturally horn-less animal with a horn substitute that turns this combination into a fantastic one. 'Snake frame' elements protrude above the feline's head and are joined to antithetical water bird protomes, but these will be treated in the section on protomes below. First, **NV.21** needs to be considered, a bucranium with human legs instead of bull's horns. A curved horizontal incision below the head might be considered as a boar's tusk with two pointed ends that is close, but not connected, to the bucranium. Above the latter, there is a loop-shaped element and the remains of a plant motif.

Finally, **NV.40** presents a very inorganic conjunction of a minute human leg in profile, connected to the front of a lion's neck. Of the lion, only the head and mane are displayed. The creature's mouth is wide open as if roaring. Possibly, part of a human

waist is also preserved and connects the leg to the mane. All in all, the combination is not understandable from a taxonomic or semantic point of view.

Device V: Quadruped Heads

Rarely do composite creatures lack a head. A reason for this might be that the face “gives a point of reference”¹⁶² for recognizing the inner world or inherent qualities of the being depicted. As observed above, quadrupeds were very frequently represented on Bronze Age seals. Bulls, goats, lions and boars are abundant in glyptic iconography, be they depicted as live animals, hybrids or, as is the case here, non-viable creatures and even motif combinations. The device group will be viewed animal by animal, beginning with the feline heads.

Lion/feline heads

Seven instances preserve lion/feline heads in the shape of non-viable occasional hybrids and motif combinations. **NV.07** combines a feline head in profile to a bird’s rump and fantail, **NV.15** is a motif combination with the head in the center among bird wings and spread human arms, **NV.14** displays a likely cat or lion head atop a pair of spread human legs with a fan-tail, and the feline head on **NV.20** sprouts a human leg on either side, topped by a ‘snake-frame’-like structure with double bird protomes. On **NV.40** the head dominates the composition, dwarfing the minute human leg it is connected with. Another, not yet discussed, feline head is featured on **NV.22** as the central device. It is crowned by a papyrus plant, and from its chaps emanate two snakes in an S-curve, imitating tusks. Similarly, a water bird head grows from either side of the lion’s head on **NV.23**, curving upward towards a double-ax hovering at a 90° angle above the head. The combination of animal protomes as an extension or substitute for animal horns and extremities will be discussed below. Here, it needs to be pointed out that in the case of motif combinations, feline heads tend to strongly dominate the combined devices, whereas composite creatures, even when deemed non-viable, feature the device in a congruent relation to other compositional elements.

Bull heads/bucrania

There are again seven cases where bulls’ heads or bucrania constitute a central device. We have already discussed the combinations with wings, *i.e.* **NV.05** which displays a bull’s head atop a banded and winged helm and **NV.10**, where the bucranium is the center piece of the motif combination, in between two wings and lion legs and crowned

¹⁶² Anastasiadou 2016, 82.

by a loop. **NV.16** sports a bull's head with lion legs in the place of horns and **NV.21** a bull's head sprouting horns in the shape of human legs and combined with a possible boar's tusk. **NV.24** is also combined with boars' tusks, this time they are on the level of the muzzle, as they would be on a natural boar. Apart from this, one could point out a resemblance of the horns with those of ram's as they show the corrugation as well as curvature of this species' horns.

The next three bull head devices are all combined with a pair of protomes that are connected to the heads. **NV.25** preserves one horn¹⁶³ that curves toward the head, ending in what could be a canine head, which displays ears, a snout and the general shape of a dog's head. As before, the bull's head sports boars' tusks that grow out from the sides of its muzzle. **NV.26** is more puzzling, as the protomes, two water birds, are attached to the head of the bull behind its ears and horns. The birds' heads meet in the space above the bull's brow. Additionally, they are equipped with one wing each, whose tips touch the sides of the mammal's muzzle. Below the head, we find the lower part of a 'snake frame', two up- and inward curving lines of a general horizontal orientation, the smaller, higher one outlined by the larger and lower one. It is on **NV.27** that the 'snake frame' also plays an important role, hovering above a bucranium with a central wheel-shaped ornament. The horns, which begin in a very graphic style, sprout each an entire but simple water bird. Three versions of this seal are attested among the Zakros impressions, very close in details with only minor deviations.

Boar heads

While boars do not play a major role for dyad or triad species, they appear regularly in the Bronze Age glyptic from MM II onwards. Among the Zakros material they constitute several motif combinations. **NV.13**, the boar's head with butterfly wings, lion legs, and floral ornament has already been introduced above. The other cases where boars' heads function as a device make it their central feature. **NV.28** are two look-alikes that display the head with two 'snake frame' elements in the place of the tusks. The features also exhibit leonine features, such as the rounded ears and the tripartite snout, which is, however, elongated like a pig's. The hair along the jawline is typical of boars, so, eventually, the boar-like features outweigh the leonine. From the top of the head sprouts a fan-shaped item, interpreted by the CMS as a plant, but perhaps the engraver created this in the intention to further the lion/boar ambiguity, combining the mane of the prior with the bristly stubbles of the latter.

NV.29, which again comprises two look-alike seals, does not play with this kind of ambiguity as this is a very straightforward boar's head with the typical bristles along

¹⁶³ The right part of the impression is missing, so only the beginning of the horn on the head is preserved.

the jawline, the elongated snout, small eyes and pointed ears. The only other composite device lies in the substitution of the tusks by a single ‘snake-frame’ element. **NV.30** shows a less detailed boar head but adds several layers of a ‘snake frame’ on top of it. In this case, the ‘snake frame’ tusks might have also represented snakes or even a water bird protome, but this is hard to make out properly. Finally, **NV.31** derives from two similar, but not look-alike, seal faces. Both have boar’s tusks, but *a* has an additional ‘snake frame’ element above these, while *b* has two small inverted engravings shaped like brackets below the tusks and around the lower part of the elongated snout. It also displays two incisions that curve out from the sides of the head, only preserved well enough in the left half of the impression.

Unique device heads

The final instances of recognizable quadruped heads as a device are subsumed here, as they occur in single cases. **NV.17** has been discussed in the context of *device IV*; it is a frontally depicted ram’s head above spread human legs that have merged to one tubular structure.

NV.32 is another highly abstract combination of which three versions existed, two facing left, and a third facing right. The seals displayed a deer’s head¹⁶⁴ in profile, with an antler branching upward from above the ear. Below the ear, a human arm also branches off the head, reminding of an antler. In two of the three versions, another human arm grows out of the deer’s forehead, while in the remaining version, a thick drop-shaped element takes its place.¹⁶⁵ Also, the antler of this specimen is not attached to the head but sprouts three, lunette-shaped branches of different size at its base. Three drop-shaped forms protrude below the head, the rear one connected to a thin line that runs along the outer contour of the deer head. Like no other instance, the fusion of animal and human parts on **NV.32** dissolves “the boundaries between humanity and animality.”¹⁶⁶

Two dog’s heads on **NV.33** are displayed back to back and attached to the upper side of a boar tusk helmet. A broad ram’s horn grows out in between the two heads, curving toward the right. The fantastic combination mixes three types of composite material: the animate heads of a live animal, the inanimate horn derived from a live animal, as well as the helmet, a product of human processing and craftsmanship that was attributed with prestigious meaning in the Bronze Age. Its recurring appearance in

¹⁶⁴ Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010, 97 sees these as caprid heads.

¹⁶⁵ Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010, 97 proposes that these might be glands, breasts or rocks.

¹⁶⁶ Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010, 98.

iconography as well as its function as a funerary offering point toward an elevated meaning of the boar's tusk helmet, an element of attire and protection that could only be crafted after a series of successful boar hunts.

Unrecognizable quadruped heads

This last group of devices are heads that are not attributable to a certain species although they show features of the above defined device heads. **NV.34**, engraved on three look-alike seals, has an abstractly shaped head. The snout resembles the tripartite feline nose and mouth but is very elongated and emerges right next to a pair of small eyes on either side of a narrow forehead. Above the eyes, the head shape is like a boar's, with a trapezoidal forehead and bristles along the sides. The top of the head is composed of two indented lines that curve down and up again, meeting in an acute central point. On the left and right side of the top of the head, the points fuse into a circular ending. Long, curved elements emanate from the snout, possibly tusks or part of a 'snake frame' whose ends are not preserved in the impressions. Two antithetically arranged, bent limbs sprout from either side of the head at the level of the boar's bristles. What could be a pair of legs appears from the indented area on top of the head, going first up and then bending to the sides. These limbs or extensions are striped, which is not known from human legs. The area between them is filled with parallel lines that steadily grow longer toward the top. The overall impression left by the arrangement of the limbs is that of a scorpion or arachnid.

While the creatures behind the head of **NV.35** are recognizable, the engraver has achieved such a level of amalgamation that it is not possible to attribute the head to one or the other of the animals, therefore, it is not found in the respective sub-chapters above. The head has the elongated nose and snout of a boar together with the tripartite elements of a feline as well as tusks. The eyes are almond shaped and arranged like a cat's, but the side of the head features the bristles of a boar. The pointed ears remind again of a cat, while the hairless top of the head is pig-like. From there sprouts a fir-branch element. In this regard it is related to **NV.28**.

The last two device heads have already been mentioned under different aspects in previous device groups but need to be readdressed in order to provide an overview of all the possible device heads for non-viable composite creatures and motif combinations. **NV.06** has already been discussed under *device II: fan-tail*, its head seems to fuse parts of different animals, perhaps a bull, judging by its snout, the feathered neck-line might also point towards a bird, whereas the large eye and the general shape of the head is equivocal of a fish – however this remains a matter of speculation and up to now, no composites are known that include fish or marine animal devices. **NV.18**, discussed with

device IV: human legs, has a head that reminds most of a bull, with long tendrils extending from the top. Since it misses detailed facial features, it is hard to infer more information from this head.

Device VI: Antithetical Protomes

Several instances of antithetical protomes have been mentioned in the course of this chapter. The frequency of this allows us to define it as a main device for the composition of non-viable creatures and motif combinations. At Zakros, we encounter two possibilities for employing this device. The gem engraver could either feature the antithetical protomes as the main constituent of the design or they could use them to supplement a quadruped head.

Five examples of antithetical protomes as main elements can be discerned among the material. **NV.33**, the dog heads combined with a boar's tusk helmet and a horn, has already been mentioned. Apart from this, **NV.36**, the lion forequarters attached shoulder to shoulder, is the only other case of a mammal lending itself to the device. In general, bird protomes seem to have been favored. **NV.08** displays the antithetical heads of two water birds joined to a shared fan-tail, while **NV.37**, of which two versions exist, displays again two water birds, which are, however, joined by a tubular and possibly be-feathered section. Furthermore, each protome bears a schematic wing. In the space between the heads, the engraver has added a fan-shaped plant. The final bird's head protome, **NV.38**, is most probably not a simple bird, but rather a griffin. The centered-circle incision at the shoulder and the plumage on the head, indicate that this is not a mere bird of prey. As the only antithetical protome of the first group, these creatures stand chest to chest with their heads thrown back.

The second possibility to depict antithetically arranged protomes is as a supplement to quadruped heads. Since the latter have been discussed extensively above, the different options and animals used for this will only be briefly mentioned. In five cases, the protomes are extensions of the body, while one case, **NV.20**, displays its protomes, probably of a (water?) bird with a long beak, as part of the 'snake frame' element. **NV.22** has snakes that are attached to the cat's head like tusks. **NV.23** sports water birds growing out from the sides of a feline's head. **NV.25** is the only example of a mammal being used for this depiction, where dog's heads stream out of the end of the bull's horns (only one side preserved). **NV.26** is a bull's head with waterfowl protomes attached to the head, but not replacing the horns, since these are also rendered. Finally, water birds also combine with a bucranium on the three versions of **NV.27**, where they grow out of the lower end of the bucranium's horns. Ultimately, birds prove the dominant species for antithetical protomes also in the case of quadruped heads'

supplements. It is interesting to see how the person or people responsible for these images could repurpose the heads of different species, bringing ‘dead’ body parts, such as horns or tusks, to life.

Device VII: ‘Snake Frame’ Elements

The final group of main devices comprises the head gear conventionally termed ‘snake frame’. The nature of this element of attire has been discussed and re-discussed for over a century. In glyptic, it is most often worn by a central female figure who is sometimes flanked by rampant animals.¹⁶⁷ The head-gear consists of two to three horizontal lines with upward curving middle sections and ends that terminate in a torus with a bulging element.

The Zakros sealings display ‘snake frames’ also in combination with quadruped heads, where they can appear floating above the head, *i.e.* on **NV.20**, **27,30** and **39**. On **NV.26** it is presented beneath the head. In other cases, it appears in parts as a substitute for animal horns, as can be seen on **NV.28–30** and **31a**. This “interchangeability of the ‘frame’ with animal horns and tusks”¹⁶⁸ has led Robin Hägg and Yvonne Lindau to hypothesize that the head gear was also fashioned out of animal horns. While this metonymic explanation stands to reason, it disregards the cases of animal protomes substituting quadrupeds’ horns or tusks. These demonstrate that the Aegean artisan did not necessarily think in categories of material interconnection. Moreover, this comparison opens again the possibility of the ‘snake frame’ being indeed connected to the animal that gave it its name – running counter to the argument postulated by Hägg and Lindau.¹⁶⁹

3.3 WINGED CREATURES

This subcategory of occasional hybrids comprises all winged composite creatures. A broad categorization under the caption ‘winged’ has advantages as well as disadvantages from a heuristic point of view. The main advantage is the fact that it comprises all winged composite creatures without pre-selection, making it possible to give an overview of the extant iconographic material delivered by seals and impressions. A disadvantage arises from the analytical subdivision of the material in occasional and fixed hybrids that would result in a separation of the creatures into the occasional winged composites and the fixed winged composites known as *bird ladies*. However, since the

¹⁶⁷ An overview of scholarly opinions on this head gear is given by Hägg – Lindau 1984, 67–70. See this also for an overview of glyptic ‘snake frame’ representations.

¹⁶⁸ Hägg – Lindau 1984, 73.

¹⁶⁹ To sum up, Hägg and Lindau explain the ‘snake frame’ as a device fashioned out of animal tusks, to the ends of which dates were fastened, creating the bulbous ending of the device. (Hägg – Lindau 1984, 73).

so-called *bird ladies* and many of the occasional winged hybrids show a very close relationship, they will not be separated along the lines of this analytical subdivision. Instead, they will be treated here at the end of this chapter dealing with occasional hybrids and before the following chapter containing fixed hybrids, so as not to split the material for reasons of artificial categories.¹⁷⁰

In order to understand the occasional winged hybrids, we must first address the fixed group of *bird ladies*, since these most likely formed the cognitive basis for some or most of the occasional winged hybrids. All glyptic representations of this creature are engraved on soft stone seals.¹⁷¹ On a basic level, *bird ladies*, also called “bird women”¹⁷² or even “Bird-Goddess,”¹⁷³ consist of the head, rump and wings of a bird, together with a flounced skirt in place of the tail and, occasionally, human legs.¹⁷⁴ It is not always easy to differentiate between a bird’s tail and a skirt. In these cases, legs are vital for a secure interpretation of the creature as a *bird lady* as opposed to a bird.¹⁷⁵ The first hybrids that can be definitively identified as *bird ladies* corresponding to these criteria derive from LM I material. However, it has been suggested that depictions of this hybrid originated as early as MM II, although missing details in this era’s soft stone glyptic do not allow for certain identification.

Aruz raises the possibility of an Anatolian origin of bird-headed demons from the Middle Bronze Age onwards,¹⁷⁶ although these show different combinations of human and bird elements.¹⁷⁷ For example, a seal from Acemhöyük bears the depiction of two bird-headed upright standing humans with one arm and one wing each.¹⁷⁸ One MM II possible *bird lady* can be seen on **B.01**, a three-sided steatite prism discovered in Kato Zakros. It stands alone on the seal face, something which can be observed in later depictions of this type as well. The head is rendered in left profile; the bird wings extend to either side of the body which ends in what is possibly a skirt. Two vertical

¹⁷⁰ *I.e.* into occasional and fixed hybrids. While these artificial categories are useful for structuring the large amount of material covered by this study, a rigorous execution of the heuristic device would hinder a better understanding of this specific group of hybrid creatures by dividing their study into two independent chapters, whereas the contents of these would remain strongly interdependent.

¹⁷¹ There has been an ongoing discussion about whether the depiction in soft stone material means that these seals were used by “ordinary people while the elites or their administrator had metal rings or hard stone seal” (Pini 2010, 338). The matter has not been resolved yet and a discussion here would be beyond the scope of this thesis. For more considerations of the topic, see Pini 2010, *passim*.

¹⁷² Anastasiadou 2011, 183.

¹⁷³ Pini 2010, 239.

¹⁷⁴ Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010, 95 also counts breasts as constitutive elements, however, the abundance of *bird ladies* without this feature proves that this was not a fundamental element, but one that could be added, creating what is here called a *bird lady derivative*.

¹⁷⁵ *Cf.* Seal of the Month June 2017, CMS Heidelberg, by M. Anastasiadou <https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/fakultaeten/philosophie/zaw/cms/monthlySeal/monthlySealOlder.html> (last accessed 01/09/2018).

¹⁷⁶ Aruz 2008, 226.

¹⁷⁷ Aruz 2008, 101, 106.

¹⁷⁸ Aruz 2008, 112, fig. 243.

incisions below this suggest the presence of a pair of legs, one of which can be observed well in the impression. The posture of the creature corresponds to that of later, clearly identifiable bird ladies, such as **B.22** and **B.29**. Two further MM II depictions can be mentioned along these lines, **B.02** from the same stylistic group, is iconographically very close to **B.01**, yet without any indication of legs, instead including two lunettes as fillers underneath the wings; **B.03** is also close to these two. They cannot be postulated as original *bird ladies*; however, they show a close conceptual affiliation to these hybrids and should be considered as possible antecedents.

Another MM II *bird lady* candidate is exhibited on a three-sided steatite prism, **B.04**, found in Malia. While this specimen shows no indication of legs, the posture of its wings hints at a humanoid component. Its right wing extends downward next to the rump, as on the previous seal, and its left wing is held up, inclined towards the back of the head. This is well known from several depictions of females wearing flounced skirts and performing a gesture possibly related to dancing.¹⁷⁹ The adoption of this stance by the figure in **B.04** allows for the categorization of it as a *bird lady*, rather than a bird.

There are three further examples of Protopalatial bird-human hybrids, however, they do not show any signs of (female) gender and therefore do not necessarily correlate to the early bird ladies. **B.05** is engraved on a soft stone conoid and has every characteristic of a bird, but two vertical incisions emanating at the end of the fan-tail, as well as the upright position and the wings held at the sides of the body like arms make a humanoid impression. A rather different human-bird can be seen on **B.06**, a three-sided MM II prism from Neapolis. The figure consists of a large triangle for the upper body topped by a slender neck and a bird's head with a large open beak. It is seated on a round structure, possibly a stone, and its legs are clearly human. The 'arms' are very peculiar, as the front one looks rather like a human's while the rear one resembles a crude wing. Although it is clearly different in style, the concept is reminiscent of bird-humans on the Acemhöyük seal. **B.07**, the final un-gendered bird-human, is, exceptionally, on a hard-stone figural seal from Malia. It has the head and wings of a bird, a human torso and possibly feathered legs and clawed feet, unique features for the

¹⁷⁹ Cf. CMS II3 no. 17 (see how similar the skirts are to the fantail-skirt of other *bird ladies*; also, legs/feet are missing, so they are not necessary components of a female wearing a skirt). Cf. further CMS II3 nos. 169, 171, 236, 304; III nos. 350–53; VI no. 287, *i.a.*



Fig. 4 Two 'bee-ladies' and two bees. Top: B.08; middle: CMS II3 no. 314; bottom: CMS II3 no. 315.

bird-human composites. Aruz draws comparisons to the Anatolian bird-human, which she calls a griffin-demon.¹⁸⁰

Before continuing with the evolution of bird-humans to *bird ladies* in the Neopalatial era, one final Protopalatial composite that is regularly pointed out in the context of bird-human hybrids needs to be addressed because of its research history. **B.08** (fig. 4, top), an object sealing from Phaistos, displays the torsos and heads of two antithetically arranged and possibly beaked humanoid figures that face one another. Their bodies have the shape of a figure-eight shield or a bee. The arms are humanoid and touch in the center of the impression. Both creatures have characteristic curls in the nape of their necks common for Anatolian griffins¹⁸¹ and which can also be observed on **G.02**, a MM II griffin on another sealing in Phaistos.¹⁸² However, interpretations of this hybrid as an early *bird lady* might be misleading,¹⁸³ as the comparison with two contemporary Phaistos sealings reveals: CMS II5 no. 314 and 315 clearly show a wasp or bee (fig. 4, middle & bottom). Their heads are rendered in the same way as that of **B.08**, including the curl, and what appeared as a beak turns out to be the mandible. The insect's legs are a close parallel to the hybrids' arms, and it sprouts a wing on its back. Due to the impression of **B.08**, where parts of the seal face at the backs of both creatures are not fully preserved, it cannot be entirely ruled out that these were winged as well, although this seems un-

likely. I suggest naming this hybrid a 'bee-lady' – as has formerly been done by Weingarten.¹⁸⁴

In LM I, the iconographic material of bird- or winged humans loses some of the former Protopalatial diversity and it becomes easier to recognize a fixed class of hybrids. *Bird ladies* appear exclusively on soft stones, mainly lentoids,¹⁸⁵ and are usually encountered in an upright standing position, wings spread wide with the bird head

¹⁸⁰ Aruz 2008, 112.

¹⁸¹ Compare to two stamp seals from Acmehöyük, Aruz 2008, figs. 243, 245; also to be observed on a stamp seal from Karahöyük, *ibid.* fig. 233.

¹⁸² Pl. XI G.02.

¹⁸³ The CMS database calls it a "Vogel-Mensch" (bird lady).

¹⁸⁴ Weingarten 1983, 93f.

¹⁸⁵ Other seal shapes bearing the depiction of *bird ladies* are attested in unique instances: one cushion seal (B.17), one cylinder seal of Cypro-Aegean style from Palaikastro (B.36), and one amygdaloid preserved in an impression from Ayia Triada (B.27).



Fig. 5 Wing types 1, 2 and 3.

facing straight up or sideways.¹⁸⁶ Some specimens are depicted crouching with their legs spread apart.¹⁸⁷ 23 out of 42 *bird ladies* include identifiable legs. Among those without, the majority has well-recognizable flounced skirts (cf. **B.09** or **B.10** that show the layers and ornamentation of this typical female garment). Only four depictions are ambiguous as regards the fan-tail/skirt element (**B.11–12**, **42**). Since these are all soft stone lentoids displaying bird creatures in the posture paralleled by so many *bird ladies*, they can be carefully attributed to this category of hybrids.¹⁸⁸ As a group, *bird ladies* appear in very homogeneous depictions with variations mostly in style. However, some are more divergent than others, such as **B.13** which possibly bears horns on the head, or **B.14**, a *bird lady* depicted in profile from the waist down.

While the wings seem, at first glance, to be rather heterogeneous, a closer inspection reveals that most *bird ladies* follow one of three compositional types (fig. 5). Most often, the wing consists of a continuous line that runs horizontally along the bones of the bird wing and seamlessly into the outer primary feather, which is elongated and functions as a frame for the vertically incised feathers hanging from the horizontal ‘bone-line’. Two variations of this type exist: (1) the ‘bone line’ is almost straight and horizontal, bending down at nearly a right angle into the elongated primary feather, or (2) the ‘bone line’ is curved and runs more smoothly into the outer primary feather. In the first case, the vertical feathers run straight down and have about the same length, while the feathers in the second case show more irregularities in length and alignment. Representatives of the first group are **B.12** and **B.15–20**. **B.21–25** and **B.11** show minor variations to this type, such as single feathers emanating from the vertical part of the ‘bone line’ (**B.23**, **25**), a break between the horizontal and outer vertical line (**B.24–25**) or other smaller deviations. The second group, which is closely related to the first, comprises the *bird ladies* **B.26–32**.

¹⁸⁶ See B.13, 23, 30, *i.a.*

¹⁸⁷ Cf. B.33, 36 and possibly B.26.

¹⁸⁸ A difficult to understand piece is B.19, which could either display a plumed bird’s head looking upward or a quadruped head looking to the left (impression). In *Arachne*, a possible headgear is also mentioned. Scrutiny of the impression underneath the microscope could not, however, dissolve these difficulties, which is why the piece is mentioned here for the sake of completeness, although no solution can be offered to whether or not this is a *bird lady* with a smaller variation or rather an occasional derivative of this composite creature.

A third type, possibly derived from the MM II *bird lady* antecedents, (3) is a nearly crescent shaped wing with no, or very few, feathers attached to it. This can be seen on **B.33** and arguably **B.34** (whose few downward feathers look like a very sketchy version of wing type 2 feathers). Only few bird ladies do not fit into these three types: **B.09** has a single curved ‘bone line’ not ending in a primary feather, from which emanate the vertical feathers as before in type 1; **B.14** has very compartmentalized wings, but it also stands apart from the other representations due its lower body, which is depicted in profile view; **B.13** has wings that are curved upward, yet again, this *bird lady* is different from others in that its head is shown in profile with two eyes up front and it possibly has horns. **B.35** is in a bad state of preservation, but a partially preserved wing seems to have had feathers extending upward from a lower bone line instead of the other way around. We can summarize that there is a close typology of wing types that seal engravers adhered to when depicting *bird ladies*. Variations of the wing seem to go hand in hand with further variations of the hybrid creature, possibly a first step in a process leading to the creation of new winged composite creatures that have no direct relation to MM II predecessors.

Winged female figures again occur in the phase LM III, however, they are far detached from the iconography of the LM I type. These are more linear and “simplified”¹⁸⁹ and therefore appear ornamental rather than figurative. The bodies and wings which of **B.37–41** are made by simple, linear incisions that give the bodies their shapes. The heads of **B.37** and **B.38** are of a bird, the one on **B.39** is not preserved and **B.40–41** have female human heads. One final LM III specimen exists which is different from the rest. **B.42** consists of geometrical shapes, such as a triangular skirt/fan-tail, a straight vertical line for the rump, nearly horizontal ‘bone lines’ with parallel incised, hanging feathers and a head rendered by a centered-circle adorned with a small curved beak and a v-shaped plume at the back of the head. The space beneath the wings is also decorated with centered-circle ornaments, leaving nearly no free space on the seal face. While the pictorial theme remains that of a *bird lady*, the style and composition differ from the contemporaneous *bird ladies* as well as from earlier ones.

Other winged composite creatures show a stronger divergence from the *bird lady* prototype and appear only in single depictions and find spots, which is why they will be treated as occasional hybrids, even though they depend on *bird ladies* on an iconographic and certainly also cognitive level. While we are once more confronted with the difficulty of missing provenance for most of the seals, those that have known find spots testify to the existence of *bird ladies* at various Cretan sites, including east

¹⁸⁹ Pini 2010, 329.

Crete (Kato Zakros), south central Crete (Ayia Triada, here in impressions), and north Crete (Tylissos, Knossos). Up to date, no direct relatives of the LM I *bird ladies* have been found.

Against the background of the *bird ladies*, we will now look at occasional winged hybrids, a group of 22 seals to be discussed in the following. Most can be considered as *bird lady derivatives*

(e.g. **WH.01–07**) that feed on the iconography of the fixed hybrid while including new features, such as breasts or animal heads, or displaying reconfigured body parts and postures. **WH.01**, a winged composite in an elaborate flounced skirt, at first reminds of *bird ladies* depicted in profile, such as **B.14** and **B.28**. Yet, it does not only have a bird's rump but also a female breast, and, prominently, two forearms with claws emanating from the chest. Combined with the J-spirals observed along the wing and the bird-of-prey-head of the creature, its features are very close to griffin iconography.¹⁹⁰ What the engraver has represented needs to be properly called 'griffin lady' and not *bird lady* although the latter hybrid functioned as a role model for the creation of this occasional winged one.

Seven seal faces show winged creatures with human features. **WH.02**¹⁹¹ depicts a frontal female torso clad in a typical Minoan flounced skirt with squatting human legs beneath it. In place of the arms it has outspread bird wings with downward facing feathers. In the place of the head we find a banded helm with cheek guards. Strictly speaking, the missing head deprives the figure of its access to most senses and therefore eliminates the feature that has the highest potential of capturing visual attention.¹⁹² Nevertheless, the helm can be viewed as a *pars-pro-toto* metonymy for a human head that is very well imaginable on top of a human body as depicted on this sealing. Therefore, it is accounted as an organic combination.¹⁹³

WH.03 (fig. 6) shows the same feature: A banded helm with cheek guards is in the place of the head on a winged female figure. The body is for the most part that of a bird, but it has pronounced female breasts – a feature unknown in the fixed group of *bird ladies*. Unlike **WH.02**, this winged creature is not clad in anything, but the zig-zagged lines right above the plumed tail are nevertheless reminiscent of Minoan female garments. Their helms make both creatures ambiguous and one is prompted to ask: Are they more human or more animal? It is this device that simultaneously reveals the human nature of its bearer, since only humans wear attire; however, the helm with the single cheek guard hanging from its center also looks vaguely like a head with a beak.



Fig. 6 Helm with single cheek guard on WH.03.

¹⁹⁰ See chapter 4.3, *Griffin*.

¹⁹¹ CMS II7 nos. 129A, 129B; XII no. 174a.

¹⁹² Cf. Itier – Batty 2009 for the central role of eye gaze in social cognition and Peelen – Downing 2007 for neural perception of different body parts.

¹⁹³ Unlike OH.66–68 whose 'head-substitutes' cannot count as metonymical representations.

As Anastasiadou has pointed out, the “face is an important constituent element of any creature, because it gives a point of reference which suggests the existence of an inner world [...]”¹⁹⁴ – when it is missing as an element of distinction, the observer is no longer able to attribute the creature an unambiguous identity and can only guess at its ‘inner world.’

WH.04 is less ambiguous in this respect. This creature has the head of a bird in right profile with a very long straight beak. The rest of the body remains in frontal view. Where **WH.02** ends in a female lower body clad in a skirt, this composite creature ends in a fantail. What makes the creature nevertheless humanoid is the prominent pair of female breasts on its torso. If it were not for this feature, the bird hybrid would be accounted as a genuine *bird lady*. The wings are spread sideways and show fine details. **WH.05** is similar, but the lower half of the impression is missing, so it cannot be determined how the lower body looked. The head is a simpler and more schematic version of the one on **WH.04**. A clear difference to this sealing lies in the wings that are, in fact, disputable. The posture of these outstretched upper limbs is the same as on the other frontally depicted winged creatures, yet the vertical feathers hanging from the wing are missing entirely, giving the impression of humanoid arms. However, these limbs are quite thick and not as articulated as human arms. The ambiguity of this feature could be intentional since it condenses the bird-human hybridity. Like **WH.04**, this creature also has female breasts, but they seem to be attached to a human torso, rather than a bird’s as is the case on the previously discussed sealing. **WH.05** also has a more distinct neck that further enforces the bird-human ambiguity as it emanates directly from the bird head but links it to the torso like in human anatomy. The impression is furthered by the necklace the creature is wearing.

Another squatting *bird lady* derivative can be seen on **WH.06**. Its elongated head resembles that of the previous two and its spread wings are similar to those of **WH.05**. The creature wears either a collar or a necklace around the neck, beneath which extends a female human torso that is clad in a belt and a flounced skirt almost as elaborate as that of **WH.01**. A line of elongated dots streams from the back of the head down along the outline of the neck, possibly depicting a braid. A curving line was also engraved above the head but most of it cannot be made out in the extant impression.

Further seals in this group show human and quadruped elements combined with bird iconography. The Zakros sealing **WH.07** shows a frontally depicted human body with spread legs. Once again, there are outstretched wings with downward incised feathers in the place of arms. The human torso with female breasts joins at the top with a bull’s head in right profile. In between the legs and underneath the creature a fantail

¹⁹⁴ Anastasiadou 2016, 82.

emanates from the coccyx. The bird and bovine parts of the creature are executed near-naturally, but the human features are quite graphic, the rump being a simple cylinder, the legs rounded tubes. The style of execution cannot be the result of available natural models but has to be intentional. The seal cutter has rendered the animal composite parts more attention grabbing than its human parts which provokes questions concerning the semantic meaning of such a creature that can only be speculated on.

The following four composites also derive from Zakros and are characterized by their caprid heads, humanoid bodies, and bird wings. **WH.08** shows a frontal human body with a goat head in right profile. It has a long, curved horn, goat's ears and even a goatee, but the eyes are missing. The head goes over into a neck that smoothly merges into the outstretched wings. A very simple, cylindrical incision denotes a human torso. The creature is wearing a flounced skirt without any further gender-specific characteristics. Beneath the skirt extend short graphic, squatting legs. As on **WH.07**, the human parts are especially schematic, yet, on **WH.08**, this contrasts less to the rest of the body that is generally executed with fewer details.

While **WH.09** features the same iconographical elements as the previous winged goat-human, it is stylistically very different. The head of the creature is again that of a goat in right profile, however, the shape of the head is closer to the natural model than on the previous sealing. The transition from goat head to human torso is fluent and the exact border indiscernible. The lower body is separated from the upper body by a cinched belt creating the typical hourglass waist of Neopalatial human iconography.¹⁹⁵ The human legs are clad in shorts also recognized in other male depictions.¹⁹⁶ What is strikingly different from other representations is the position of the legs that can best be described as in *Knielaufpose*. Weingarten assumes that the so-called Zakro Master had come into contact with glyptic from Mitanni and used the pose for depicting swift movement.¹⁹⁷ This composite creature does not show the above observed divergence between the execution of human and animal parts as either are rendered in near-natural shapes and with similar detail.

There are two more examples of goat-headed winged humanoids: **WH.10** and **WH.11**. Both are shown in a squatting position in profile. They have caprid heads and wings but apart from this, they are very different. **WH.10** stands out for its very clear-cut lines and elegant, slim body shape. The head resembles rather the skull of wild-goat

¹⁹⁵ Other examples of this body shape are a) in glyptic: *CMS* II8 nos. 236, 280, II7 no. 39; b) in wall-paintings: the Knossos taureadors: Bietak et al. 2007, 127 fig. 118; c) in bronze figurines: Verlinden 1984, pl. 10 fig. 24 (from Phaistos), pl. 12 fig. 28 (from Skotino); d) on relief stone vessels such as the chieftain cup and boxer rhyton: Marinatos – Hirmer 1973, 100, pl. 106. Evans 1930, 224 fig. 157.

¹⁹⁶ This garment can be referred to as *kilt* or *loincloth*, however, the terminology is not fixed and therefore rather problematic. Cf. Crowley 2012, 234; Morgan 1988, 96–97; Rehak 1996; Verlinden 1984, 98–99. also, for a promising reappraisal of the terminology and iconographic types cf. Matić – Franković 2017.

¹⁹⁷ Weingarten 1985, 179–80.

than its actual head. The wings, shown parallel to each other, are also very skeleton-like. The creature's torso is a curved cylinder that becomes smaller towards the waist. It is clad in a cinched belt and either a flounced skirt or pants as seen in women depictions. Further, it is characterized as female by its large breast that almost extends onto the squatting leg. The final and not easily interpretable feature is an elongated upward-curving element beginning in the middle of thigh and ending on the level of the forehead, perhaps resembling a tail. **WH.11** has a similar feature sprouting from the coccyx and therefore certainly representing a tail. This creature is designed in an altogether more graphic way as its torso, legs and feet seemingly melt into each another without any joints or interior forms. The head is conceivably a ram's head with the respective horns that curve towards the front head. Unlike on **WH.10**, this creature's wings do not extend parallel to each other behind the back but are depicted frontally to the front and back of it, increasing the graphic impression of the composition. Due to its long tail and the missing garments, the creature's body has also been interpreted as an ape – a possibility that should not be ruled out. Either way, the shape can still be referred to as 'humanoid'.

This is not the case for the following two sealings that feature bird bodies including the rump, fantail and, arguably, wings (as on **WH.05** the downward feathers are again missing). This is topped in each case by a boar's head characterized by its long snout, tusks and tufted hair on the sides of the head. **WH.12** and **WH.13** are very similar to each other, but **WH.13** is more detailed, with discrete feathers, well-recognizable ears and tufts of hair. The fan-tail is also more detailed and, unlike **WH.12**, the boar-headed bird wears a belly chain around the rump.

Three non-viable winged composite creatures need to be added to the repertoire presented here. They have already been treated in the chapter above, which is why the description will not be repeated here. **NV.01–3** can be tagged as *bird lady derivatives*: Like their viable 'relatives' **WH.01–08** they adhere closely to *bird lady* iconography but deviate from it by changing the heads or adding female breasts. **NV.01** comes from a lentoid seal with deep intaglios and is in this regard as well as iconographically close to **WH.03**. Despite its head being substituted by a floral element, it is still considered a *bird lady derivative* due to the pendulous breasts that clearly indicate the female gender and represent a human device. This is otherwise missing because the rest of the body is a bird's (*i.e.* with no human feet or garments). A combination of faunal and floral elements has been suggested for **OH.42**, which is from Midea and of a later date. While it cannot be ascertained unequivocally for the Midean cushion seal, it can in the case of **NV.01**. The plant-shaped fan mirrors the bird's fan-tail, creating an altogether ornamental impression that does not leave a lot of free space on the seal face.

NV.02 is another *bird lady derivative* where, unluckily, the lower part of the impression is not preserved, which is why feet cannot be made out. This makes it the most questionable in this group as it could well be another winged creature. Unlike the wings of **NV.01**, which hang down along the sides of the body, this composite has wide-spread wings as if taking off for flight or preparing to land – a posture also found on the following *bird lady derivative*, **NV.03**. This creature would also fit well in the category of winged organic hybrids if it were not again for the head, which is utterly missing. The wings resemble those of **WH.10**, which shows a crouching goat-headed winged hybrid in profile. Both creature's wings are rendered by single incisions that do not join but fill the space beneath the wing bow. **NV.01** shows what **WH.10** would look like depicted frontally (ignoring the missing head).

The next two combinations show winged quadrupeds. **WH.14** is an impression from Ayia Triada preserving only the center of the image, but a feline head and body can be recognized. The creature is depicted frontally and most likely standing on all four legs, but its head is turned in right profile. The bird wings extend horizontally to either side of the body. Similarly, the Zakros impression **WH.15** depicts a horizontal 'quadruped bird' whose exact species cannot be identified. Its head is featured in left profile. Interestingly, the rump of the composite is in the shape of a bird, and four (likely feline) legs extend from it. This might also be the case on **WH.14**, however, that part of the seal impression is not preserved. Another winged quadruped is shown entirely in profile on a seal derived from a LH IIIC context in Medeon, Wiotia: **WH.16** probably depicts an agrimi with overlong thin legs that would resemble insect's legs rather than a mammal's if not for the hooves. The head is very schematic and almost skeletal. Furthermore, the wings do not correspond in any way to the bird wings featured on the combinations observed so far. Nevertheless, the seal depicts the survival of winged quadrupeds beyond Neopalatial Minoan Crete. **WH.17–18** show the same motif, but in this case the quadrupeds, goats, are easily recognizable. Apart from wings, they also have a long, feline tail which both remind of griffins. While **WH.17** has hooves, as far as the extant front leg indicates, **WH.18** seems to have talons. Due to these differing features, they are considered as occasional hybrids and not as griffin types. Back in LM I Zakros, we find the depiction of conjoined winged quadrupeds on several impressions from two different but very close seal stones of which one must have been re-worked at some time. **WH.19** shows two winged mammals, perhaps deer, lying antithetically on the ground. Their hindquarters cannot be clearly discerned as they are covered by the bird wings, which leads to the assumption that they may be joined at the rear ends, a feature known from other examples from and beyond Zakros.

Two more occasional hybrids with bird wings need to be included within this chapter. These could be accounted as either viable or non-viable combinations. On **WH.20** this is the case because a chasm runs vertically all the way through the representation, leaving an impression of mirrored body halves. We are dealing with an upright male figure with outstretched bird wings in frontal pose. The legs are well articulated and clad in a short kilt.¹⁹⁸ The wings have very linear downward incisions depicting the feathered wings of a bird. Its head is not easy to understand, and it could well be that this is a mask or a helm with cheek guards. The outer perimeter of the seal is not preserved in the impression, so the upper end of the head or helm is lost as are the ankles and feet. Despite the difficulties considering the head and the rather inorganic character promoted by the break in the middle of the figure it still compares well to other humanoid winged creatures of this group. **WH.21** bears no indications of human forms but it is rather an ornamental composition emanating from a heart shaped leaf-like ‘torso’ that might resemble a bird rump. Short, stylized wings are on either side of the feature and it is topped by a ‘head’ that surpasses the size of the torso. It has large eyes in the shape of petaloid loops leaving the impression of an owl-like head, but nothing else is reminiscent of facial features. Due to its inorganic constitutive elements, the hybrid is defined as an inorganic combination that gives the impression of a unit.

The final occasional hybrid of the type *winged creatures*, **WH.22**, is placed at the end because it bears an important difference: Up to now it was bird wings that dominated the compositions. On this Zakros sealing, however, the creature has butterfly wings. These are attached to a frontal female torso which joins to a human head with headgear in right profile and a pair of leonine legs. This is the only figure with butterfly wings that belongs to the organic combinations. Other hybrids with this feature are in utterly inorganic combinations, including a very close example from Zakros.¹⁹⁹

Ultimately, this group has been defined through the very prominent element of wings attached to either human or animal body parts. The combination with the lower body of a human and a quadruped head (mainly of agrimia) is repeated several times (as on **WH.07, 09–11** and perhaps **08**). Another recurrent possibility is what could be called a ‘bird variant’ in analogy to the fixed group of *bird ladies*. These show variations from the scheme of typical *bird ladies*, such as a non-bird head (**WH.02–03, 07–10, 12–13**) or a human torso instead of a bird’s rump (**WH.04–10**). Finally, a group of winged quadrupeds can be pointed out in the record (**WH.14–19, 22**, the latter bearing quadruped legs but a rather hybrid human-quadruped torso). The winged occasional hybrids testify to a creative force in the conceptualization and production of hybrid images. The seal engravers could choose from a repertoire of forms and motifs

¹⁹⁸ The CMS does not identify this as a kilt but as “double joints”. See *CMS II*7 no. 85.

¹⁹⁹ NV.011.

from the natural world and re-assemble these to create a variety of composite creatures. Wings seem to have had a special attraction which is why they are used so often, even beyond this category of winged hybrids. *Bird ladies*, griffins or the winged grotesques²⁰⁰ also display this trait, for example.

While most of the specimens of this group come from Zakros and can be dated to LM I, there are also examples from Ayia Triada and Phaistos from the same period. Further, these images were all depicted on soft-stone seals – there is no known example of a hard-stone variant. This leads to the assumption that soft stone types were considered the adequate medium for rendering occasional hybrids of the winged typed – an observation that should be kept in mind when considering other hybrids. Future research on hard and soft stones is necessary to understand possible differences of the material on a social scale. Were soft stones, which all occurred on Crete and could be incised with simple hand-held tools, preferred by non-elite or sub-elite members of society who did not have access to the rarer and usually imported hard stones and the more advanced technology and tools for engraving? If this hypothesis can be tested and proven, implications for the understanding of distinct Minoan social groups and their specific mindscapes could be inferred from a revisit of seal iconography.

²⁰⁰ Gr.10.