Minoan Kingship and the Solar Goddess

A Near Eastern *Koine*

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Introduction

"Throughout its course Minoan civilization continued to absorb elements from the Asiatic side . . ."

—Sir Arthur Evans (1921)

"Der kretisch-mykenische Kulturkreis gehört durchaus zur anatolisch-nordsyrischen Kulturgemeinschaft."

—Helmut Theodor Bossert (1944)

In the pre–World War II era it was not unusual for people to regard Crete as part of the larger Near Eastern world. This has gradually changed: in the field of Aegean studies an invisible border separates East from West. Minoan Crete has become a department of Greek culture and archaeology; Near Eastern departments, on the other hand, do not deal much with what lies west of Asia Minor. Maps of the Near East do not include Crete, whereas maps of the Aegean do not include the Near East. One of my tasks in this work is to resituate palatial Crete on a mental map that includes the Near East, specifically, Anatolia, Syria, the Levant, and Egypt. Such an undertaking re-creates, I think, what a hypothetical, second-millennium king residing in Ugarit would have taken for granted. As I see it, there is no doubt: Crete was included in the conceptual and political geography of the Near East.

Although modern popular writers associate Crete with Minos and the labyrinth, neither word is mentioned in our ancient Near Eastern sources.[1] For the inhabitants of the Syro-Palestinian coast and Egypt alike the name of the island was Kaphtor or Kaptaru, and its inhabitants were called Keftiu.[2] The island was perceived as being at the western periphery of the world, in the midst of the sea.

Most of the references to Kaphtor (Ugaritic *kptr*) are in Egyptian, Ugaritic, and biblical sources.[3] In Ugaritic myths, Crete is the kingdom of the craftsman god Kothar-and-hasis, and Kaphtor (*kptr)* is referred to as "the seat of his dwelling."[4] "Shapsh, . . . carry my voice to Kothar-and-Hasis in Crete (*kptr*)," we read in an Ugaritic prayer.[5]

This last information comes as a surprise: who is this Ugaritic god with a double name and why is he associated with Crete? It is often stressed that he was a god of crafts. It is less known that he was also a pilot of the sun goddess Shapsh(u), ferrying her back to the netherworld.[6] That a deity of transition to the beyond had his residence in Crete is not without significance and suggests that Ugaritic peoples perceived the island as the land of the setting sun in the far west. To this effect, a passage in an Egyptian papyrus, "as far as the Keftiu," lends its support.[7] Crete was thus considered to be close to the edges of the civilized world in the west, a land close to the gods and the setting sun (see Fig. 1.1). (In the minds of the Greeks of later times similar roles were allotted to the long-lived Ethiopians and the fictional Phaecians, who also lived close to the gods in the periphery of the universe). This much is known about the mythical position of Crete in the Egyptian and Ugaritic mind.

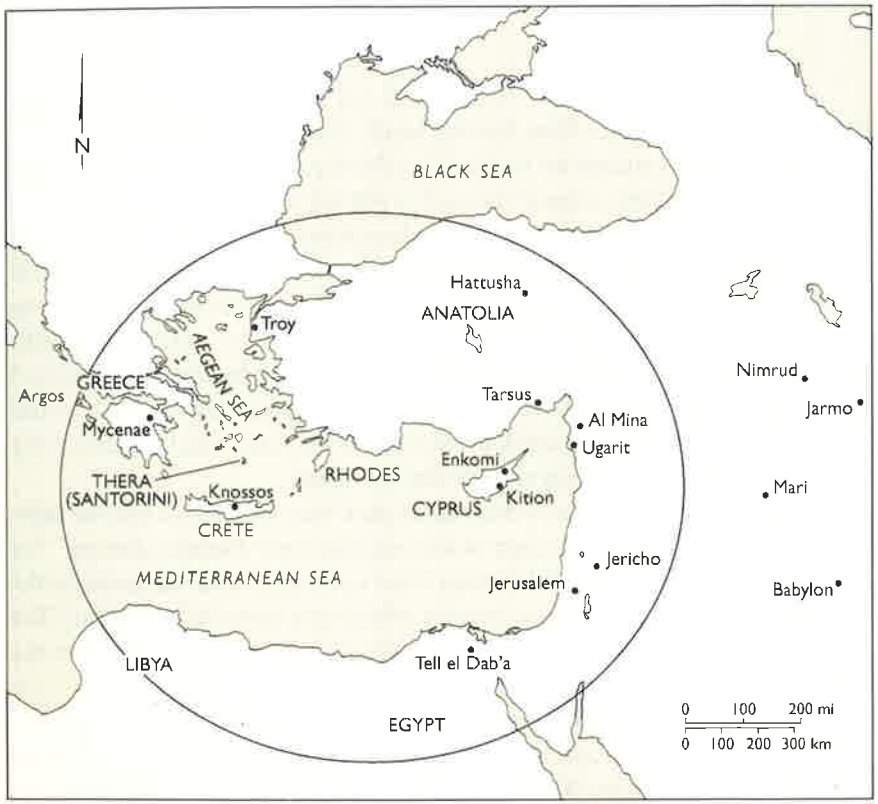


Fig. 1.1. East Mediterranean; Crete on the western periphery.

Chronology

The period covered in this book is that of the New Palaces, c. 1650–1390 BCE.[8] This era was designated by Sir Arthur Evans as the golden period of the Minoan kingdom, a period of peace and prosperity that he named *Pax Minoica.* It coincides with the late Hyksos dynasties and the beginning of the Eighteenth Dynasty in Egypt, and with the time of the Shaft Graves at Mycenae. It ends with the destruction of Knossos during the reign of Pharaoh Amenophis III.[9]

However, assigning absolute dates to this period is difficult, especially because the synchronization of the Aegean with Egypt and the Near East is a thorny and as yet unresolved matter. Much publicity is given today to dating methods based on natural science, which are deemed more accurate than archaeology. According to these methods, the New Palace period is given much higher dates than the ones arrived at by Evans. His synchronization scheme, revised by Peter Warren and Vroney Hankey (see Table 1), has much to recommend it, however, whereas natural science methods have not proven to be either totally accurate or completely uncontroversial.[10] Natural scientists work with hypotheses (as do scholars in the humanities), and their methods and tools may conflict among themselves.

The adoption of high or low chronology does not change the substance of my arguments because the political and economic factors that shaped kingship in Egypt and the Near East were the same in the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries, but the interregional relationships proposed in this book work best with the lower chronology given by Evans.[11]

Table 1.1. Minoan Kingdom Absolute Dates and Historical Eras

3650–3000 BCE	EM I	Pre-Palatial Period
2900–2300 BCE	EM II	
2300–2160 BCE	EM III	
2160–1979 BCE	MM IA	
1979–1700/1650 BCE	MM IB–MM IIIA	Old Palace Period
1650– BCE	MM IIIB	New Palace Period
	LM I	Eruption of the Volcano c. 1500
1425–1390 BCE	LM II	Fall of Knossos
1390–1370 BCE	LM IIIA1	

Source: Approximate dates are drawn from Warren and Hankey 1989.

A Historical Sketch

If we adopt the low chronology of Evans, the Minoan kingdom reached its peak between the seventeenth and early fourteenth centuries BCE (with a high point between 1550 and 1450). As stated previously, this was the period of the late Hyksos dynasties and the Eighteenth Dynasty in Egypt, a time period when the Mitanni and Egyptian empires competed for Syro-Palestine. The chief international language from the fifteenth century on was a form of Akkadian. William Moran speaks of a "cuneiform culture," a written language that enabled kings and their vassals to communicate.[12] In addition to a common written language, we may also speak of a common culture and ideology. Marc Van de Mieroop suggests that the royal families ruling the large kingdoms of Egypt and the Near East acted as if they were one great family and the whole world were a village; he even speaks of the "club of the great powers."[13] Van de Mieroop knows that Mycenaean Greece was part of this group, but he cannot say much about it because of the lack of available written historical sources.[14] Crete is absent from his account, and naturally so because there are no readable texts to go by.

Yet Evans saw clearly the role of Crete in precisely such an international milieu. He posited that Knossos was a huge metropolis, composed of as many as eighty-two thousand inhabitants. "The position of Knossos must have been unrivalled even in the East side of the Mediterranean basin. No fenced city surely, on the Syrian coast, shut in by walls . . . had either the expanse or its population."[15] "Never again," he writes, "till the Roman Governors put a final stop to the internecine feuds of the Greek cities did Crete enjoy throughout its length and breadth such uniform prosperity. . . . There is much in all this that recalls to mind the general well being fostered by the *Pax Romana* in the best days of the Empire."[16]

Evans's vision of the Minoan kingdom is historically very plausible.[17] We may easily conceive it as a member of the "club of great powers," and if so, it must have shared in the religious, ideological, and cultural *koine* of the period. Crete had to offer what every Near Eastern king might want: a powerful navy. Sadly, we have no written evidence about the specific nature of the political relations of the Keftiu (Minoans) with the great kings (*Grosskönige*) of Egypt, the Mitanni, the Hittites, and the less powerful kings of Cyprus and Ugarit. But it is tempting to suggest that an alliance with the Minoan naval force was much sought after by the monarchs of the Eastern empires.[18] By the time of Tuthmosis III (fourteenth century BCE) the Minoan kings were surely vassals of the pharaoh, and this is why they are depicted as tribute bearers in the tombs of Rekmire, Senmut, and others.[19] Vassalage, however, does not necessarily mean enslavement, but rather a type of hierarchical relationship in the nature of the alliance. The pharaoh or some other world ruler, such as the Hittite king (*Grosskönig*),

would be acknowledged as a ruler of the *cosmos* and the principal policymaker of the region, but he would not necessarily exact taxes from Crete. Because he could not administrate the empire without dependable allies, namely other kings who followed his general policy, he might require only loyalty in matters of world affairs.[20] The Cretan navy would have been invaluable to any world ruler of Asia or Egypt who desired safe trade and control of the seas. Similar models of world dominion in the Near East with dependence on Aegean fleets are attested later, in the sixth century BCE, when the great kings Croesus of Lydia, Amasis of Egypt, and the Persians cultivated relationships with the Greek tyrants to seek the aid of their navy.[21]

It was not only the great powers that interacted with Minoan culture, however. Areas of secondary political prestige interspersed with city-state kingdoms (such as Ugarit) are important for this study as well, especially Cyprus, Syria, and the Levant. Syria, in particular, must feature prominently in the discussion, because it was the great junction of civilizations. "This is where all the roads met, Greek, Hittite, Hurrian, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian," Martin West writes about Syria in the first millennium.[22]

Although Crete played a role in world affairs, letters from Keftiu (Minoan) kings are absent from the Amarna archives in Egypt. The reason is that Knossos had apparently fallen by the time of the reign of Amenhotep III.[23] The destruction seems to have been caused, or at least triggered, by indigenous developments: a series of earthquakes, according to Evans.[24]

The occurrence of earthquakes is not the complete explanation for the demise of kingship in Crete, however.[25] It is difficult to fathom why the royal house failed to recuperate from this disaster and why Knossos was not repaired on a grand scale. To aid our understanding of this situation, we must backtrack and take into account another major natural disaster that occurred in the Aegean: the eruption of the volcano of Thera. Volcanologists have recently concluded that this was one of the major eruptions in the history of the planet.[26] To be sure, this event had taken place many decades before the final fall of Knossos; yet it is hard to believe that it had virtually no effect on the subsequent fate of Minoan Crete, as has been argued by many scholars.[27] On the contrary, it is reasonable to postulate that the eruption must have changed the social landscape in a significant way.

One short-term effect must have been the destruction of the naval force, which as we have seen, played a major role in securing the position of Crete in world affairs. Another immediate challenge would have been the management of the crisis: getting rid of the dead bodies in the debris, coping with poisoned wells, taking care of homeless and wounded people, dealing with hunger and restlessness. The long-term effect is evident in the archaeological record: all the secondary palaces in key positions on the island disappeared and only Knossos was rebuilt. A more centralized and perhaps more rigid organization replaced the older one.

Knossos survived for several decades. Then, as we have seen, earthquakes struck again: "The end was sudden, and the evidence once more points to an earthquake as the cause, followed by a widespread conflagration and, doubtless, ensuing pillage of the ruins left. But on this occasion the catastrophe was final," writes Evans.[28] It must be the case that the earthquakes struck an already weakened state that was perhaps too monolithic by its centralization to respond to natural disasters and too weak to adapt to a changing world.

Evans made several important observations. The first is that the last dynasty of Knossos was more theocratic than its predecessors, and that it was more closely modeled on Near Eastern structures: "The increased vogue of certain religious symbols and the growth of sacerdotalism, which characterizes the latest palatial phase at Knossos, seems to have been largely due to influences, both Egyptian and Oriental."[29] This observation suggests a tighter connection with Egypt, perhaps a more strict vassalage. This idea of Evans is supported by the depiction of Minoans in Egyptian tombs at about the time of Tuthmosis III and by the presence of Minoan paintings at Tell el Dab'a dating to the time of Hatshepsut or early Tuthmosis III.[30]

The second observation of Evans is that the dynasty was more militaristic and aggressive than its predecessors. He concluded that the Minoan kings conquered the mainland and eventually transferred the seat of power there.[31] If we take these two observations seriously, we may arrive at a possible scenario regarding the changed political position of Crete in the international milieu in the decades before the final fall of Knossos. We shall return to this scenario after considering another important point.

Although Evans knew that the last dynasts of Knossos used a new administrative language written in the script Linear B, he did not know that it was Greek: the decipherment of the language did not take place until 1952, after Evans's death. In any case, he would not have wanted to believe that the mainlanders had conquered Crete during this last stage of Minoan kingship.[32] Today it is taken for granted that this is just what happened: the Greek-speaking Mycenaeans took over Knossos, established their language and culture, and ruled Crete by conquest. Evans was wrong according to the standard view today.[33]

I propose a modified hypothesis. I propose a dynastic fusion between Knossos and Mycenae, perhaps through marriages, resulting in a common Minoan-Mycenaean administrative language, a common religion, and a common foreign policy during the last era of kingship on Crete. I also envisage a tighter alliance with Egypt, which the Egyptians regarded as vassalage.

In any case, the ethnic identity of the last dynast of Knossos matters little for the assessment of the history of the institution of kingship on Crete. Whatever his cultural origin may have been, the last king of Knossos could not cope with the disaster caused by the earthquakes of c. 1390. Knossos was destroyed and

became a site for squatters. "In the 'Whirlgig of time,' it was ordained that the resting place of the old Priest Kings should not be re-occupied by new comers," wrote Evans.[34]

The real reason for the fall of Knossos must remain obscure at the present. The adoption of a broad interregional perspective, however, may throw light on this puzzle. Perhaps the answer to why Minoan kingship came to an end will emerge in the future from the other side of the Aegean.

A Lens

If we are to appreciate the Minoans as a world power, we must understand the international code of communication between royal courts. We must try to construct a lens through which we can decipher and eventually read Minoan images as part of the visual *koine* of the broader region. This is the best we can do because of the sad lack of readable texts.

What is visual decipherment? A linguistic definition, as suggested by John Chadwick, may provide a useful analogy: "Cryptography is a science of deduction and controlled experiment; hypotheses are formed, tested and often discarded."[35] To test their hypotheses, linguists rely on bilingual or trilingual texts.

Images, as well, are a kind of script with codes that may be broken by cryptographic methods. For this to happen, however, we need multicultural visual data from both sides of the Aegean; no system is decipherable by reference to itself only. The visual signs need to be ordered in sense-making patterns, their morphology needs to be observed, and the syntax (the combination of the signs) needs to be compared and analyzed. A hypothesis can then be formed. A lens is constructed, and the reading provided by this lens is tested against the evidence.

The traditional lens has been Greek mythology. It is often taken for granted that Minoan culture reflects Greek myths. But this hypothesis (like all others) may need reexamination. There is much that the Greek myth hypothesis does not explain; here we may detect the biggest weakness of Evans's lens for reading Minoan religion. The projection of Greek myth onto the past does not satisfactorily explain Minoan deities as we see them in art (see Chapters 12–14). My hypothesis is that Minoan society and religion may better be understood with the help of data derived from Egypt, Syria, the Levant, Anatolia, and, to a lesser extent, Mesopotamia. Each of these cultures has, of course, distinct characteristics, but there is also a lot in common that may be termed a *koine*.[36] This broader regional *koine* will be the lens through which I will decipher images of kingship and the gods of Minoan Crete.

That such a religious and cultural *koine* existed between historical Greece and the Near East has now been proven beyond reasonable doubt by Walter Burkert and Martin West.[37] Burkert goes so far as to claim that Greek culture cannot be

properly appreciated if we do not take into account what transpired culturally between the two sides of the Aegean: "Let us try to see what was there before Hellenism, and not only celebrate singular achievements but spell out the results of interaction and dialogue in a continuing East Mediterranean *koine*."[38]

The Bias of the Material: Minoan and Mycenaean Gold Rings

In this work, one of my main sources, but by no means the only one, is gold rings. They represent a biased material for the following reasons.

Access to gold was not easy in the second millennium BCE. This can be inferred clearly from the royal correspondence found at Amarna, the capital of the Egyptian empire in the fourteenth century BCE. In the letters exchanged between the Egyptian pharaoh and his "brothers" (allies or vassals) the issue is often gold. Indeed, it was so coveted that the writers of the letters employed various forms of flattery and pleaded to achieve their purposes. The Mitanni ruler Tushratta, for example, asks his "brother" to grant him more gold than was granted his father.[39] He even writes directly to Queen Teje, wife of Amenhotep III and mother of Amenhotep IV, to ask her to mediate on his behalf.[40]

Rulers are explicit about why they need it: they want to embellish their palaces or temples and increase their prestige. King Assur-uballit of Assyria writes, "Gold in your country is dirt; one simply gathers it up. Why are you so sparing of it? I am engaged in building a new palace. Send me as much gold as is needed for its adornment."[41]

Complaints about the quality of the gold sent are also evident in some of the letters that the pharaoh received. "You have sent me as my greeting gift, the only thing in six years, thirty pounds of gold that looked like silver."[42] This is the grievance of a Babylonian king to his Egyptian "brother."[43] Another king, Burr-Buriash, writes to the pharaoh: "As for your messenger whom you sent to me. The 20 minas of gold that were brought here were not all there. When they put it into the kiln, not 5 minas of gold were apparent."[44]

The concern that so many kings express about the quantity and quality of gold they want from Egypt has led Van de Mieroop to suggest that this raw material was an Egyptian monopoly in the second part of the second millennium. For the first millennium, we have Biblical texts: King Solomon asks the king of Tyre for gold (1 Kings 11:14 and 2 Chronicles 8:18).

The limited access to and the need for this precious metal throws light on how we understand the iconography of the Minoan rings. If the kings of Crete were dependent on Egypt for gold, they surely did not part easily with it. The subjects of the Minoan monarchs were dependent on the palace for access to

gold as their own means of self-glorification. Consequently, it may be inferred that a king gave a gold ring only to a trusted and loyal emissary. If this is the case, the iconography of the rings is palace-controlled. This leads to the further thought that iconography reflects what the royal family wants to promote about itself and its relationship to the gods. For this reason, the Minoan rings are biased material.

"Historiography," writes Nicolas Wyatt, "has always been a public and collective genre, expressing the sense of cohesion and common tradition of a community; it has traditionally served the interests of the ruling class, which has historically had the power to suppress alternative stories of the community's past, and so has its primary roots in royal propaganda . . . it is thus ideological in purpose."[45] The same claim can be made for the rings of Minoan Crete: they are documents of royal ideology, not personal biographies or artistic experiments of a flourishing local bourgeois class.[46]

It is tempting to speculate on the role of the ring bearers in Minoan Crete.[47] I envisage them as high-level officials in the service of the royal house. I consider the rings to be *insignia dignitatis* of these officials; their iconography, however, does not reflect the specific identity of the ring bearer, but rather that of the king and queen to whom the ring bearer wants to relate. Such a view is congruent with what Near Eastern experts say about cylinder seals.[48] Often we find that the king and the gods are the principal protagonists on the cylinders and that the seal bearer is a servant of god and king alike.[49]

I suggest that the Mycenaean ring bearers had a similar role to the Minoan ones as emissaries of the king. The gems of this culture have the same iconography as the Minoan ones, and many of the Mycenaean rings must be of Minoan manufacture anyway, in some cases heirlooms. There is no real iconographical criterion for distinguishing Minoan from Mycenaean; therefore, I consider specimens from both the island and the mainland as equally valid sources for my analysis of kingship.[50]

Despite their different ethnic origins, Minoan and Mycenaean peoples seem to have converged totally in the sphere of royal ideology even before they merged, as I have suggested. The term *Minoan-Mycenaean*, which today is often viewed as imprecise, is still extremely useful and may need to be revived. It explains well the ideological unity of Minoan and Mycenaean iconography on the level of royal ideology.

How to Understand Mythology

In many respects, this work differs significantly from my *Minoan Religion*, published in 1993, in which the dominant methodology was the classification of the

images into types and the creation of social categories (such as rites of passage). I thought then that we could understand Minoan religion with the help of anthropology. My classification criteria have proved to be somewhat useful, but they yielded limited results. I argued then that female deities are represented as nurturers and as one with nature, whereas male gods are represented as powerful and combative towards animals. The results of the present study confirm these early thoughts but go far beyond them because a narrative content has been added. This progress was made possible only by the adoption of the lens of a Near Eastern *koine*. In *Minoan Religion*, I saw the pattern but did not have the lens to read the narrative. I have changed my mind on certain issues, such as the use of the term *high priestess*, which (as I now know) has little social meaning in a theocracy. I then used the term *epiphany* in the same way as Fr. Matz (ecstatic revelation), but I offer a new view here, which has a social angle and places the royal couple in the center of the experience.[51]

The biggest pay-off of the adoption of a Near Eastern prism has been the deciphering of the central symbol of Minoan religion: the double axe. In 1993 I wrote, "We do not know what symbolic significance the double axe had for the Minoans. It is paradoxical that it is held by females rather than a male weather god. It obviously denotes power, but more we cannot say."[52] Applying a Near Eastern lens to Minoan iconography has enabled a new reading of the Minoan syntax as regards the double axe and symbols related to it. I have come to realize that they represent a cosmological system closely linked to the institution of kingship, which traditionally has an investment in world dominion.

Written Sources and Royal Libraries

The Minoans probably had literature written in the as yet undeciphered Linear A script. The fact that the only records that have survived were written on clay tablets or were inscribed on stone vessels may well be an accident of history because leather and papyrus do not survive. We must not assume that clay was the only, or even the main, medium on which writing was recorded. In fact, such a hypothesis is highly unlikely. It is far more probable that the main body of literature in Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece was written on leather or papyrus, for which linear scripts (as opposed to cuneiform) are particularly well suited.[53] Because such materials do not survive, this almost certainly means that we will never be able to retrieve the literature of the Minoans.

What are the chances that Minoan literature existed in written form? I think that they are high. All kingdoms (small or large) of the region around Crete had libraries. Why would Crete be an exception? Ugarit, which was more modest than Knossos, was especially multilingual and rich: tablets in Ugaritic, Akkadian, and Cypro-Minoan, among other languages, were found even in its houses.[54] It

is therefore a historically plausible (indeed an unavoidable) postulate that Minoan palaces contained libraries and literature. If that were the case, it would be easy to understand why and how myths spread: exchange of written documents across the Aegean sea would have greatly facilitated the diffusion of the conceptual and religious *koine* of myths and symbols.

There is, of course, little chance that a Minoan library will ever be discovered. Fortunately, as has already been mentioned, images also tell a story. The task of reading Minoan culture through visual data is undertaken in the ensuing chapters.

king.[48] The Minoan rings are different because they record *generic* statements of fact rather than *specific* accounts of individual utterances: a prophetic vision has occurred. This latter fact is the key to the interpretation of the iconography. The message is that prophecy has occurred and that the royal family was privy to it. Without exception, all the Mariot prophecies are addressed to the legal power, says Jean-Marie Durand.[49]

With this final stage of interpretation, we have moved very far from Evans and Nilsson's theory of tree cult and tree adoration: "Tree cult," wrote the Swedish scholar, "is one of the best known features of primitive religion."[50] However, instead of the primitive ecstasy envisaged for Crete by scholars of the early twentieth century, the activity depicted on the rings should be reinterpreted as a feature of a palatial theocratic society.

8

The Cosmic Mountain as a Frontier

The best known pictograms of the ancient world are the Egyptian hieroglyphs. Yet the Egyptians were hardly the only ones to have developed pictographic scripts: Minoans, Luwians, and Hittites had them as well. In all these cultures the signs of the script had a conceptual value as ideograms in addition to their phonetic value. In other words, the sign expressed an idea that helped the viewer instantly to grasp the concept behind the image. This ideogrammatic meaning of signs will occupy us here.

The Minoans developed several hieroglyphic systems during the Old Palace period that were later replaced by Linear A and B.[1] One of Evans's many contributions is his observation that Minoan hieroglyphs were also used as ideograms in art, especially on seals of the Old Palace period. He also noted that many hieroglyphs were common to the Egyptian script.

In the following three chapters, the ideogrammatic meaning of four important Minoan hieroglyphic signs, numbers 36 through 38 in Evans's inventory, are deciphered (Fig. 8.1).[2] It is shown that they can be understood in the context of Minoan cosmology, religion, and kingship.

The Minoan "Sacred Horns": The Reasoning of Evans

Hieroglyph 37 𐄷 is commonly interpreted as "bull's horns." It also exists as a three-dimensional object found in many places in Crete, the mainland and the Aegean islands. We can, therefore, be certain that it is a symbol of great importance for Minoan cult. But what is it?

One specimen, found in the southern section of the Knossian palace, may give us a first clue (Fig. 8.2). Evans noted that it made a perfect frame for the mountain of Juktas; although its original location is uncertain, the question

arose in his mind whether there existed a relationship between the object and the mountain itself.[3]

In the end, Evans rejected this option. He assumed that the shape represented stylized bull's horns, perhaps because he was impressed by the ubiquitous presence of the bull in the palace. It is also possible that he was influenced by the

Fig. 8.1. Ideogram of double axe, sacred mountains, and ox head in Minoan hieroglyphs of Old Palace Period. Hieroglyphs 36–38 in Evans's inventory.

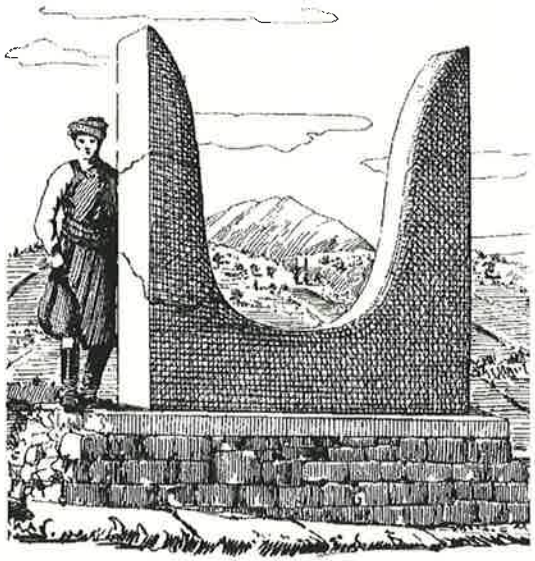


Fig. 8.2. Top of mount Juktas viewed from the palace of Knossos. Framing mountain is object that Evans interpreted as bull's horns but may be better explained as "sacred mountain."

biblical description of Hebrew incense altars in Exodus 30:1–3: "You shall make an altar on which to offer incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. . . . It shall be one cubit long, and one cubit wide; it shall be square . . . its horns shall be of one piece with it" (RSV).

Evans knew his Bible well; horns are indeed mentioned there. Yet the context shows that the horns refer to each of the four wooden poles projecting from the corners of the altar, thus defining the cardinal points of the square edifice. *Horns* is used in a metaphorical way in the Exodus passage and has nothing to do with bulls (note also that the altar is an incense altar and not a slaughter table).[4]

Evans had another reason for his interpretation. He looked at a stele from the sixth century BCE (Achaemenid period), which is now in the Louvre, and interpreted it as an altar topped by horns and a bull's head (Fig. 8.3). He assumed that the head was a sacrificial offering, concluding that this was a "complete parallel" to the Minoan usage.[5] He thus deduced that 𓃗 on which the animal's head was placed must designate bull's horns.[6]

Fig. 8.3. Royal personage shown twice. On upper level, as king topped by the sun disc; on lower level, acting as high priest, the king stands in front of podium (not necessarily altar) with boukephalion. Stele from Persian period, now in Louvre.

Evans's reasoning is based on the principle of association by contiguity, by which two linked objects mean the same thing. Thus, if a bull's head is shown together with 𓌳, then the latter must be its horns. But this is erroneous logic which, if followed strictly, would mean that any two objects shown together (let us say a spoon and a fork) would have the same meaning.

A second problem is that Evans did not illustrate the whole stele but only its lower part, which depicts a male figure in front of the so-called altar. If we look at the entire stele, however, we see that the "altar" is, rather, an object of veneration (and indeed this is what the gesture of the worshipper indicates).[7] If this is the case, the implications are quite different from what Evans imagined. In the next chapter, the bovine head (hieroglyph 38 in Fig. 8.1) will be discussed extensively; it will be shown that it is not a sacrificial animal but a mythical one imagined in heaven.

Let us return to the so-called horns. Nilsson, Evans's critic, followed him in this case: "the use and significance of the sacral horns are established with certainty through the testimony of the representations. They were justly called 'horns of consecration' by Sir A. Evans."[8] Yet Nilsson emended the original theory: "The Minoan horns of consecration are no symbol but a cult implement, the place of consecration for different objects."[9] Having lost its symbolic function, 𓌳 now becomes a mere implement of cult. And yet, even a cursory glimpse at the collection of Nilsson's evidence will show that the object in question is almost never a receptacle for offerings, an implement of consecration. For this reason, its function can hardly have been to consecrate, as Nilsson suggested.[10] Rather, it is an embellishment of the palace, enriching its meaning as a cosmic center (Chapter 5).

Interpreting 𓌳 as "sacred horns" is not convincing, but Nilsson's acceptance of this interpretation caused the hypothesis of Evans to become fixed in stone. Generations of scholars have relied on these two giants of Minoan religion for the interpretation of the sign as bull's horns, an idea that originated with a biblical passage and a misunderstood image, as has been shown here. Nevertheless, even at the time of Evans, there were alternative views, which Nilsson with his characteristic objectivity, carefully recorded. He cites the theories of the Dutch scholar W. B. Kristensen and the German scholar W. Gaerte, who both regarded the so-called horns as mountains, pointing to the similarity with the equivalent Egyptian ideogram. Nilsson concluded, however, that the hypotheses were wrong.[11] Written in Dutch and German, respectively, these theories found no echo. Occasionally, the similarity between the Egyptian mountain of the horizon and the Minoan "horns" is noticed anew. Barry Powell demonstrated it in 1977, but he did not discuss the cosmological concepts underlying this coincidence of form.[12] In more recent years, Alexander MacGillivray and Vance Watrous have also returned to this view.[13] I endorse it here as well and will add additional

visual evidence that makes it unlikely that the symbol is anything but the twin peak mountain depicting the east and west points of the horizon. Given the similar morphology of mountain signs in Crete and the Near East, it would be strange indeed if the Minoan symbol *alone* meant something different.

The Minoan "Horns" Redefined as a Mountain

As noted above, the Minoan symbol (Fig 8.4a) is almost identical to the Egyptian cosmic mountain. The Egyptian symbol consists of two peaks that define the horizon between which the sun disc rises (Fig. 8.4b). On Akkadian seals of the third millennium we find a very similar rendition of the mountain represented as two scaly cones that signify "land" (Fig. 8.4c). In Syria and Anatolia, the twin peaks also symbolize a mountain, sometimes a double one (Fig. 8.4d).[14]

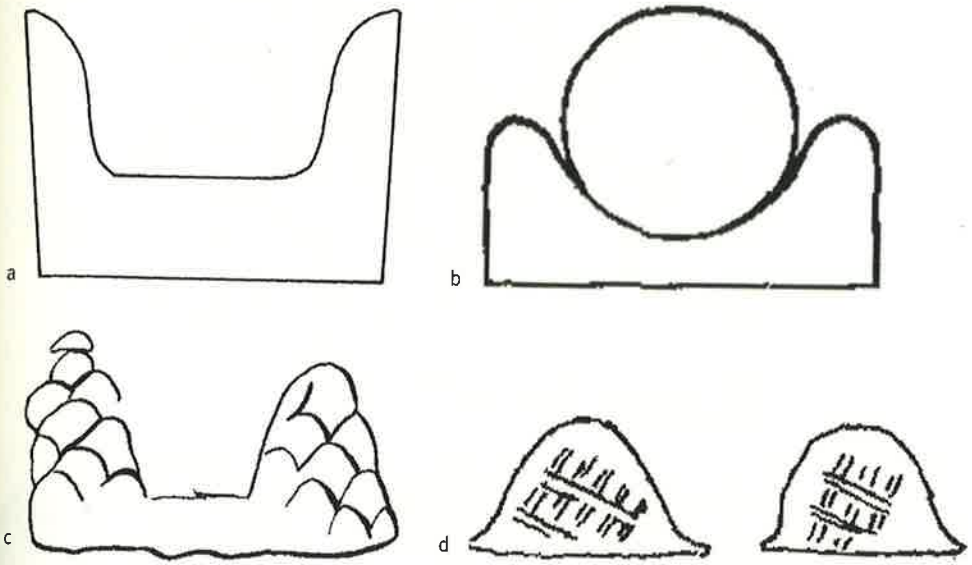


Fig. 8.4. Twin mountain peaks in East Mediterranean *koine*.
(a) Minoan representation. (b) Egyptian ideogram.
(c) Akkadian seal (see Fig. 8.9). (d) Syrian seal (detail).

The twin peak mountain defines the edges of the cosmos. Three pairs of 𓌳 would cover three sides of this imaginary cosmic triangle, and four pairs would define an entire square. For this reason, 𓌳 occurs in double, triple, or even quadruple numbers (see, for example, Figs. 8.5 and 11.2). A symbol so common to Mesopotamia, Syria, Anatolia, and Egypt and designating "mountain" *must*

have had a similar meaning in Crete. Subsequently, our task will be to explore its use in Minoan conceptual thought.

First, Nilsson's theory of consecration ought to be put to the test. It has been previously mentioned that we do not see offerings (bread, meat, incense, etc.) between the peaks of the object that has been redefined as a mountain; therefore, its function cannot have been to sanctify offerings. Instead, the two peaks frame a tree (Fig. 8.5), a double axe (Fig. 9.2a), or a god (Fig. 8.7a). All of these are symbols of cosmic significance and not votives that can be consecrated. Nilsson's view is therefore conceptually inaccurate.

One particular scene, a bronze votive tablet from the cave of Psychro (Fig. 8.5), will be considered next.[15] Three pairs of twin mountain peaks define the

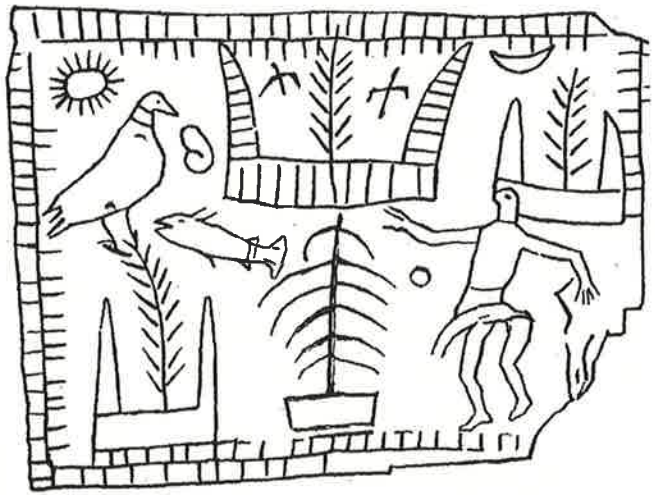


Fig. 8.5. Cosmic tree growing between peaks of sacred mountain and framed by sun and moon above and sea (fish) below. Bronze votive tablet from Psychro.

center, the eastern and western edges of the universe. In the center we have a tree that reaches to the very top of the scene and is framed by the sun and moon. In addition, we see a fish and a bird and some other illegible object. On the ground, a human is dancing or worshiping. Lucy Goodison has cleverly suggested that the sun's journey is being represented.[16] In any case, the central tree is an axis of this cosmic map and it grows between the mountain peaks. If we compare it with an Akkadian seal depicting the rise of the sun god, we find the same cosmic elements: tree, fish, and birds (see, for example, Fig. 8.9b). On a seal from Vapheio, a tree rises between the two peaks of the mountain (Fig.

8.6). Because it is watered by leonine demons, there is little doubt that this, too, is a cosmic tree ensuring the well being of the earth. In summary: the tree rising between the Minoan twin-peak mountain is not consecrated as an offering but constitutes the tree of life. This is the solar palm that has been already encountered in Chapter 4.

On a seal from Cretan Kydonia we meet something even more striking: instead of a tree there is a god standing between the mountain peaks and receiving homage from a Minoan demon and a goat (Fig. 8.7a).[17] The visual syntax of the rising god has parallels in Egyptian art: primeval Geb rises up from a mountain (Fig. 8.7b).[18] In the Hittite sanctuary at Yazilikaya, a mountain god stands atop one (Fig. 8.7c).[19] On Akkadian seals, the sun god Shamash habitually rises between the twin peaks of a mountain (see, for example, Fig. 8.9).

Fig. 8.6. Tree between peaks of sacred mountain, framed by demons. Seal from Vapheio.

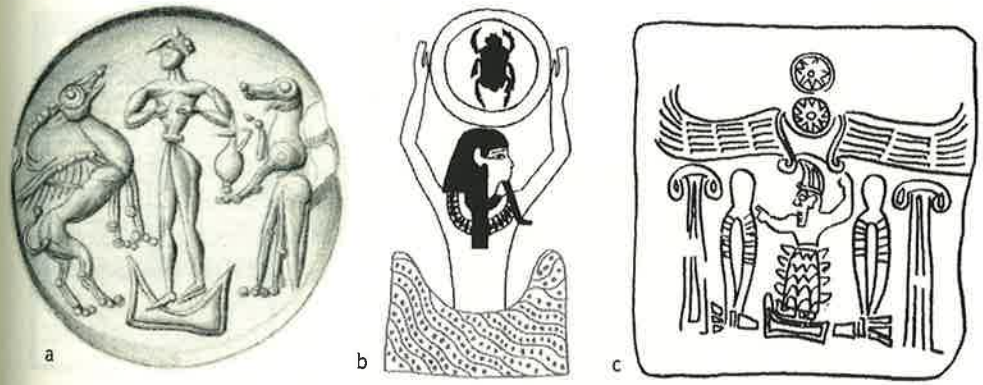


Fig. 8.7. God standing between peaks of sacred mountain. (a) Minoan seal from Kydonia (western Crete). (b) Egyptian image. (c) Relief from Yazilikaya.

All the cases discussed here prove that Evans's and Nilsson's theory that 𓉐 is an altar serving to consecrate an object cannot be right. The connection with the sacrificial bull was tenuous and arbitrary. It has been shown, instead, that the morphology of the sign is almost universal and designates the twin peaks of a cosmic mountain. But the story of the mountain is not finished yet; we must investigate the conceptual apparatus behind its inception.[20]

The Mountain as a Gate to the Underworld in Near Eastern Cosmology

Mountains are gates. Strange as this may seem to us, it was a common concept in Near Eastern mythology, and it is a key for unlocking the door of its meaning.

A starting point for our discussion will be a clay votive model of a sanctuary from East Crete excavated by Costis Davaras. It shows a peculiar building that is a blend of fantasy and realism and has the shape of two large mountains, one within the other (Fig. 8.8a; see also Fig. 5.2).[21] In the center, a gate is flanked by more mountains and smaller gates. This highly abstracted construction illustrates how "mountain" and "gate" are conceptually linked in the Minoan world of ideas. The Egyptians constructed similar images: for example, a door is shown on top of the mountains of the horizon sign on a papyrus from the *Book of the Dead*, Nineteenth Dynasty (Fig. 8.8b).[22]

Mountain gates are also present on Akkadian cylinders of the late third millennium that show the rise of the sun god Shamash from the underworld (Figs. 8.9). The gate to the beyond is conceived as a double-peak mountain, sometimes guarded by lions.[23] The Akkadian seals depict an entire mythological topography. The sun god rises from the netherworld through the mountain gate and is greeted by Ishtar and other gods. A river flows by. Birds and sometimes animals are there to greet him at sunrise.

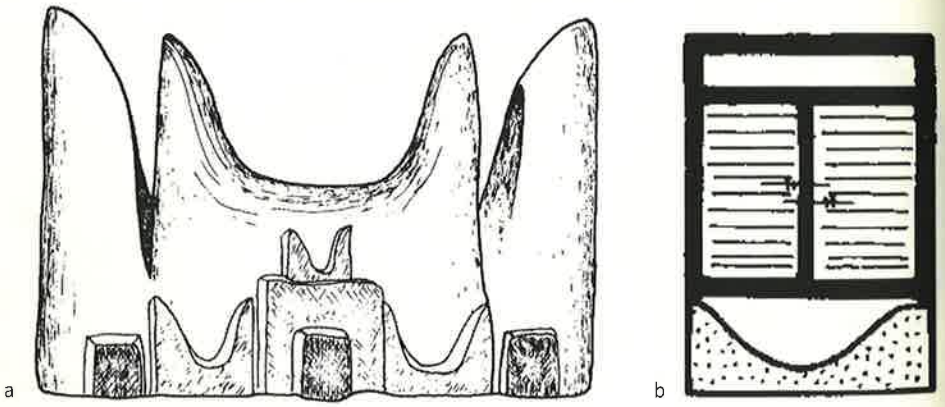


Fig. 8.8. Mountains as gates. (a) Gates within mountains on Minoan clay model. (b) Mountain and gate on Egyptian funerary papyrus vignette from New Kingdom.

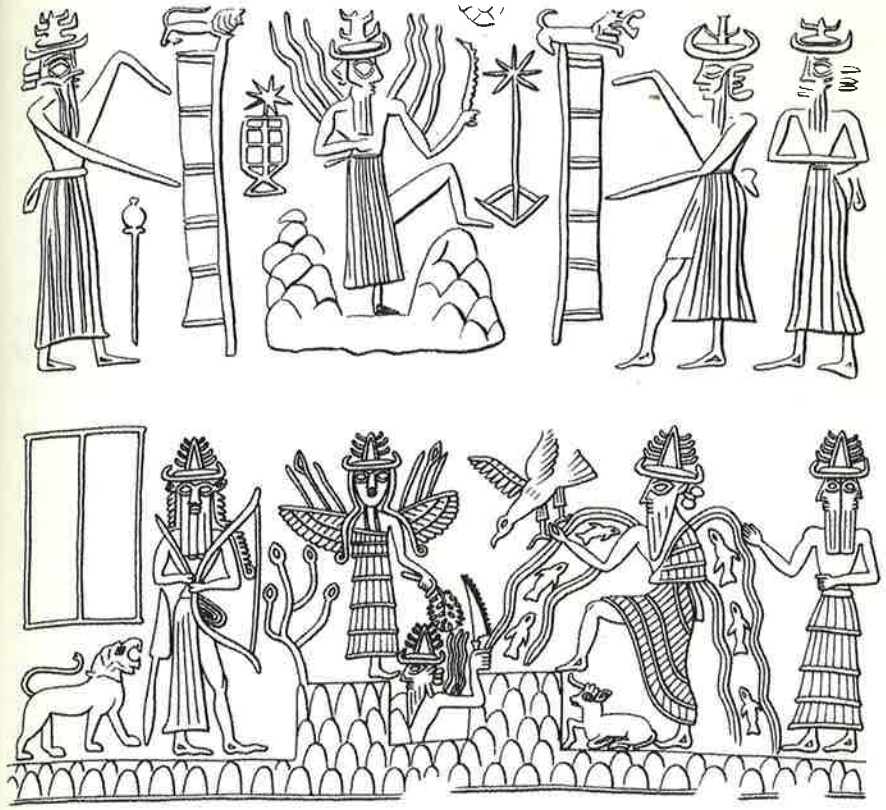


Fig. 8.9. Babylonian god Shamash rising from the mountain gate. In Akkadian cylinder seals (third millennium BCE).

The idea that the mountain is a gate to the netherworld is supported by linguistic evidence. The Sumerian word *kur* means both "mountain" and "underworld." This has puzzled scholars because the two meanings seem incompatible if not outright contradictory.[24] The contradiction is removed if the mountain is simultaneously a ladder upwards towards heaven and downwards to the underworld: it is a medium of transition between worlds, which makes it equivalent to a gate.[25]

The Assyrian twelve-tablet version of the *Gilgamesh* epic gives us explicit and lively evidence about the journey of the hero to the edges of the cosmos along the path of the sun. He travels in search of the man who can advise him on matters of immortality: the wise Utnapishtim. The latter is the only mortal

who has ever been present at the assembly of the gods and thus knows everything about life and death. He lives far away at the edges of the universe, and Gilgamesh sets out to find him. He must leave civilized cities behind him and proceed in the wilderness, traversing the steppe and killing lions at mountain passes. He comes to the cosmic mount Mashu "which daily guards the ascent and descent of the sun." The mountain is a cosmic gate guarded by a scorpion man whose mien and eyes are terrible to behold and whose function is to stop anybody who wants to enter the gate of the sun.[26] Gilgamesh is questioned by the guard: why does he want to pass the gate? The answer is deemed satisfactory, and he is allowed to go through, although not without a warning of the trials he is to meet ahead. The path of Gilgamesh through the dark tunnel of the mountain is measured in twelve units, which are units of space and time, evidently reflecting the Egyptian model of the twelve-hour sun journey in the underworld. At the end, Gilgamesh arrives at a splendid garden.

This passage is a goldmine of information about Mesopotamian cosmology. First, we learn that Mashu is a cosmic mountain, the root of which is located in the underworld, whereas its peak reaches heaven.[27] We also learn that the sun uses the mountain as a gate. This is important because it corresponds exactly to the images of the sun god rising between the mountain peaks engraved on the Akkadian seals (Fig. 8.9).

The final piece of evidence about the role of mountains as the frontiers of the universe is a Babylonian cosmic map on a clay tablet dated anytime between the ninth and seventh century BCE (Fig. 8.10).[28] Here, the universe is represented as a circle. In the center are cities and rivers. Around the circle is a cosmic river, the *marratu,* (equivalent to the river Ocean in Greek mythology). Beyond this river lie triangular regions referred to in Babylonian as *nagu;* they are usually thought to represent islands. Because of their triangular shape, however, it is more likely that they are mountains. This has been argued by Nicolas Wyatt, and I find this very convincing because mountains are always triangles in ancient art, whereas islands are not.[29] One thing is certain: the triangles constituted the world's frontier.

The model developed here fits reasonably well with the Hebrew Book of Enoch, dating to more than a thousand years later (second century BCE). The mountains that define the borders of the universe in 2 Enoch are twelve: three in the north, three in the west, three in the south, and three in the east.[30] The prophet reaches the underworld through a mountain: "And he showed me to the west a great and high mountain of hard rock, and there were four hollow places in it, deep and very smooth . . . and a fountain of water was in the midst of it. . . . These hollow places are intended that the spirits of the souls of the dead might be gathered into them" (2 Enoch, 22:1–3). Because this work dates much later than our period, it may be used as proof that the conceptual apparatus of the ancient Near East regarded the mountain as "transition between two dimensions" over many centuries.[31]

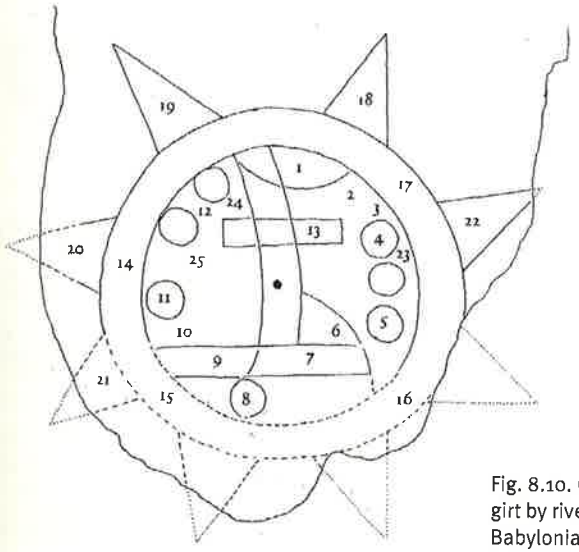


Fig. 8.10. Cosmos as circle girt by river and mountains. Babylonian map.

Near Knossos there is a mountain by the name of Juktas, which dominates the plane south of Knossos. It is not very high, but its conical shape makes it stand out as a special feature of the landscape. Being atop this mountain is an unusual experience. The view of the north coast of Crete and much of the surrounding plane is perfectly compatible with the fantasy that it is a pillar of the universe. The ancient Greeks claimed that it was the tomb of Zeus, thus imagining it as an axis uniting the heavens with the world below. Excavations, which were conducted already by Evans and continued in the 1980s by the Greek archaeologist Alexandra Karetsou, have proven that Juktas was considered one of the most impressive sacred mountains of central Crete. At its top was a monumental sanctuary, which was open to the sky although it contained rooms for storage. Its most salient feature is an altar and a deep fissure in the rock. This chasm, found full of votives, was apparently the entrance to the underworld.[32] The further associations of the mountains with the underworld will be explored in Chapter 11, where the 𓌉 motif decorates the coffins of the dead.

In conclusion, the Minoan pictogram 𓌉 is neither a bull nor an altar but a mountain. Yet, as we shall see, Evans was not completely off the mark; as usual, part of his intuition was correct. The full significance of the pictogram will be appreciated only when we look at two other syntactically related signs: the ox head (hieroglyph 38 in Fig. 8.1) and the double axe (hieroglyph 36 in Fig. 8.1), to which we turn next.

9

The Double Axe, the Ankh, and the Ox Head

"It is clear that the special aniconic form of the supreme Minoan divinity, as of her male satellite, was the Double Axe."

—Sir Arthur Evans

The double axe is hieroglyph 36 in Evans's grid (Fig. 8.1). "Of all religious symbols and emblems that appear in the Minoan civilization the double axe is the most conspicuous, the real sign of Minoan religion and as omnipresent as the cross in Christianity and the crescent in Islam," wrote Nilsson.[1] Evans was the first to stress this and used the double axe, along with the plumed crown, on the cover of his *Palace of Minos*.[2] His ideas about what it signified shifted in time as his knowledge about the Minoans increased. At first, he suspected that it represented a male Minoan god, but later he changed his opinion. Convinced of the predominance of the Great Goddess, he arrived at the conclusion that the double axe embodied a duality: the goddess and her consort or son.[3]

For the pragmatist Nilsson, the double axe was not a deity at all but a sacrificial instrument, a mere tool of cult.[4] There are two major objections to Nilsson's view. First, the double axe is never depicted as an instrument of animal sacrifice in Minoan or Mycenaean art.[5] Second, it would be unusual in the ancient world if a mere tool were turned into the central symbol of a religious system.

Scholars today follow either of two schools: the pragmatism of Nilsson (symbols originate in practical use), or the imaginative/intuitive path of Evans (the double axe is an abstract emblem of divinities).[6]

Decipherment of the double axe will be made here by a review of its visual syntax in a variety of contexts. The analysis of the syntax will take the form of seven different questions or riddles of the type: "Why is the axe doing this or that?" The riddles will be answered independently of each other; whereas each

of the individual answers may be doubted, it will be difficult in the end to reject the one solution that answers all seven questions. Only one hypothesis explains all the riddles.

First Riddle: Why Does the Double Axe Rise from the Cosmic Mountain?

In the previous chapter, we concluded that 𓉐 represents the gate of the cosmic mountain of sunrise and sunset, rather than the horns of a bull. If this is indeed the case, the double axe, shown frequently between the two peaks of the mountain, must be semantically related to the mountain peaks. In terms of visual syntax, the double axe is equivalent to the anthropomorphized sun god Shamash rising between the mountains in third-millennium Akkadian seals (Fig. 8.9) and the sun-disc in Egyptian art (Fig. 9.1). The axe, then, occupies the same position as the rising sun in the syntax of the representation: it passes through the mountain gate every morning.

There is a detail that supports this hypothesis in some instances of Minoan art. Birds flank the twin peaks (Fig. 9.2a) or perch atop the double axe, as on a coffin from Giofyrakia (Fig. 9.2b).[7] We may easily understand why birds are

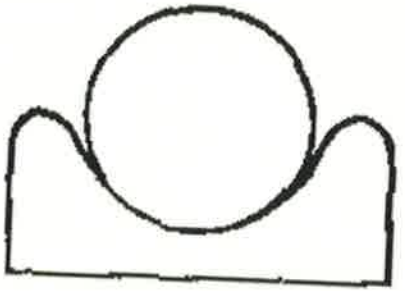


Fig. 9.1. Egyptian ideogram for mountain.

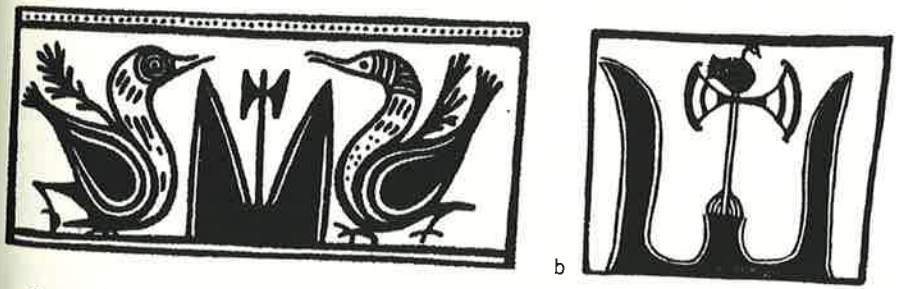


Fig. 9.2. Birds perching on double axes. (a) Minoan clay vessel. (b) Larnax from Giofyrakia (detail).

associated with the sun. They are the first to wake up in the morning and greet the emerging disc; their presence on the same scene as the rising axe is thus quite meaningful.

Why does the double axe rise from the cosmic mountain? The double axe is the sun.

Second Riddle: Why Does the Double Axe Appear Between the Horns of a Bovine Head (Boukephalion)?

The ox head is hieroglyph 38 in Evans's hieroglyphic grid (Fig. 8.1). He noticed that it is related to the double axe because in many cases the double axe is represented between the horns of the ox head. Although the semantic meaning of the horns of the ox and the peaks of the mountain is different, they are *morphologically cognate.* This similarity led Evans to the hypothesis that they are identical and that the mountain peaks are bull's horns. The distinction in their semantic value, however, is essential and must be kept in mind.

Before we proceed to the meaning of the ox head we must clarify that it is not a *bucranium,* as it is often called. Rather it is a *boukephalion,* as Othmar Keel has called it. Namely, it is the head of a live animal with open eyes and ears, not the skull of a sacrificed animal. Once a distinction is made between head and skull, a new perspective opens. The assumption of Nilsson that the axe is the instrument of sacrifice falls apart on the grounds that the ox head is alive. The *boukephalion,* however, is itself a visual riddle that defies the common-sense approach of Nilsson.

In the Near East, the ox and the ox head are manifestations of animals imagined in heaven, and they always have something to do with the sun or moon. In Egyptian mythology, both sun and moon bore the epithet "bull of heaven."[8] Richard Wilkinson says the following: "As a cosmic animal, the powerful bovine appears as the "bull of Re" in the Pyramid texts; and the sun, the moon and the constellation of Ursa Major were all associated with the bull in some way. The young bull calf also occurs as a symbol of the rising sun."[9]

We must also note that sometimes the bull has lunar associations or is a manifestation of Seth, the adversary to Horus.[10] The female cow of heaven is Hathor, and she carries the solar disc between her horns: apparently the entire bovine family was involved in the bearing of the sun. Although we cannot devote further discussion to the whole range of meanings of the bull and cow in Egypt and the Near East, the evidence already cited here shows that we must seek the answer to our riddle in the mythological sphere, not in ritual practice.

Consider one example on an Egyptian Nineteenth Dynasty sarcophagus that shows the journey of the elongated polelike sun bark. It ends in two ox heads and is pulled by deities (Fig. 9.3). Here, the ox heads define the east and west

axis of the pole. Thus, in Egyptian imagery the ox heads envelop the sun's course between east and west.

The ox head (or cow's head) appears also on scarab seals, as a carrier of the sun disc.[11] If we compare a Mycenaean gem from Argos with an Egyptian scarab, the similarity of syntax will not go unnoticed, nor the fact that the double axe is interchangeable with the sun disc (Fig. 9.4).[12]

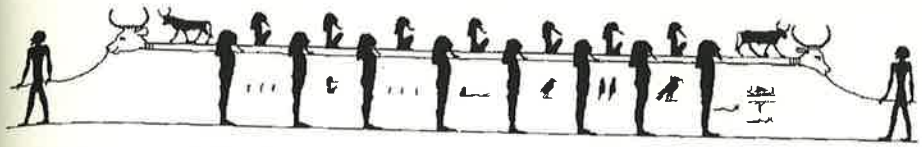


Fig. 9.3. Elongated sun bark with two ox heads and two bulls at each end. Sarcophagus of Seti I.

Fig. 9.4. Ox head as a carrier of emblems. (a) Mycenaean seal from Argos. (b) Egyptian scarab seal (New Kingdom).

A series of Minoan seals show exactly the same thing, although this has gone largely unnoticed: a rayed stellar body is shown between the horns of an ox (Fig. 9.5a and b). This is definitive evidence that the ox head functions as a stellar/solar carrier, similar to the Egyptian bull or cow of heaven. We find the same pattern on the Minoan vessels held by the Keftiu in the tomb of Senmut; the symbol here takes the form of a rosette between the horns (Fig. 9.5c).[13] Thus, there was a *koine* mutually understood by Minoans and Egyptians alike.

The ox head and the bull are associated with the heavens also in the Near East. From Hittite art we have a sealing from Boghazköy on which the disc hovers above the animal's horns (Fig. 9.6).

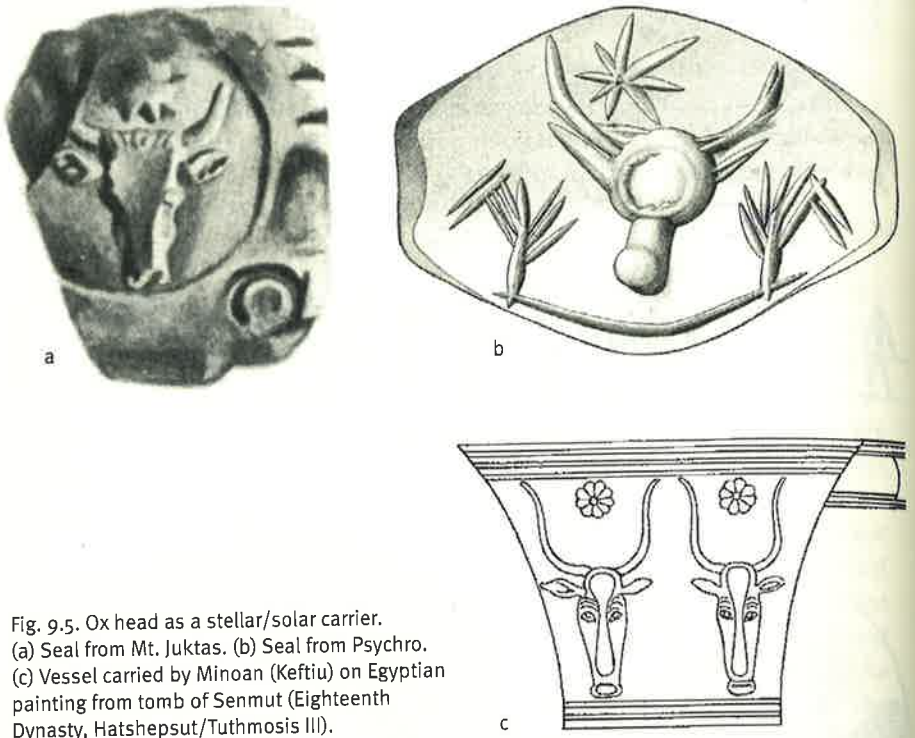


Fig. 9.5. Ox head as a stellar/solar carrier.
(a) Seal from Mt. Juktas. (b) Seal from Psychro.
(c) Vessel carried by Minoan (Keftiu) on Egyptian painting from tomb of Senmut (Eighteenth Dynasty, Hatshepsut/Tuthmosis III).

Fig. 9.6. Ox head as carrier of disc of moon (or sun). Hittite seal impression from Boghazköy (thirteenth century BCE).

Also, in Syria and Ugarit the ox head appears in the sky.[14] On an Old Syrian seal (eighteenth century) the *boukephalion* is situated between two figures identified as rulers. Behind them and to the right is a man holding an emblem with a crescent and a disc; we therefore know that the cult referred to here is a stellar one (Fig. 9.7a). On a seal from Ugarit dating to the fourteenth or thirteenth century BCE, a boukephalion carrying the disc between its horns is behind the seated pharaoh (Fig. 9.7b).[15] These few examples show that in Anatolia, Syria, and Palestine the ox head is a manifestation of a mythical animal and a carrier of the luminaries of heaven.

A ring found in Vapheio in the Peloponnese has a similar syntax with the above Syrian and Ugaritic examples. The ox head is represented in the sky, together with a double axe to the right of a dancing figure (Fig. 9.8).[16] Here we note once more the close association of double axe and ox head. A sealing from Knossos throws further light on Minoan symbolic thought by making the ox head the center of a heraldic composition: two lions flank a large boukephalion (Fig. 9.9).[17] On other seal impressions, lions flank the sun disc.[18]

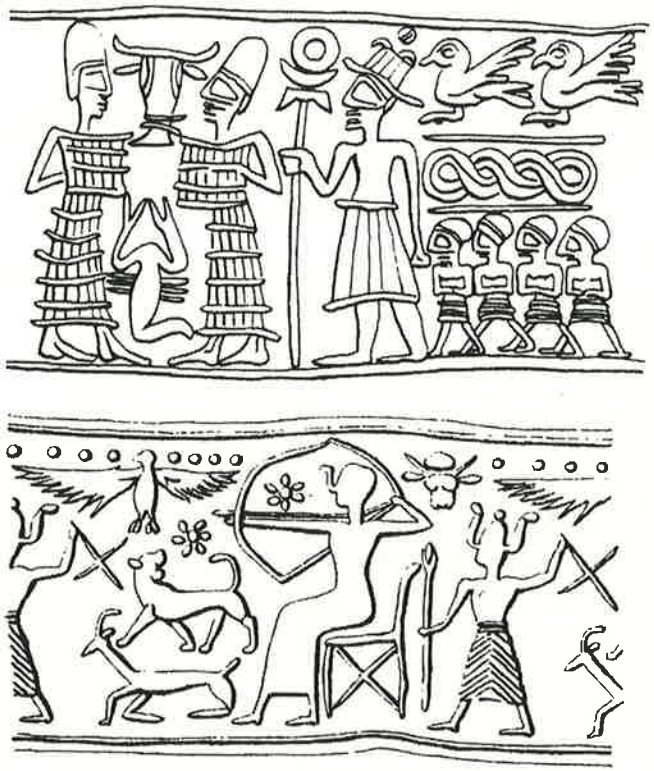


Fig. 9.7. Ox head in sky.
(a) Old Syrian seal. (b) Syro-Palestinian seal from Ugarit.

Fig. 9.8. Ox head in sky with double axe, above ecstatic (perhaps queen). Ring from Vapheio (detail).

Fig. 9.9. Ox head flanked by lions. Seal from Knossos.

These examples show that in the *koine* of Egypt, the Near East, and Minoan Crete, the bovine head is a carrier of the solar disc (sometimes also the lunar disc, in all cases a heavenly body).[19] If the ox head is a mythical animal imagined in heaven, and if the double axe appears between its horns, then the double axe is the sun.

Why does the double axe appear between the horns of a bovine head (boukephalion)? The axe is a manifestation of the sun.

Third Riddle: Why Does the Double Axe Turn into a Lily?

In Egyptian thought, certain flowers, such as the papyrus and lotus, had regenerative qualities; this is the reason why paintings of the New Kingdom depict the deceased smelling flowers. The lotus flower is considered to have been a primeval plant of regeneration when it emerges from the waters. A spell from the *Book of the Dead* says: "I am this pure lotus which went forth from the sunshine."[20] Sometimes a child emerges from the lotus bud. This child is none other than the sun of the horizon, sometimes taking the form of a specific person, as Tutankamun (Fig. 9.10).[21]

Evans noticed that lily and papyrus in Crete had similar qualities to Egyptian sacred plants and that sometimes the two merged, resulting in a hybrid flower that he named *waz* after its Egyptian name: "As a decorative motif the flower

Fig. 9.10. Primeval lotus emerging from waters and giving birth to sun deity. Egyptian funerary papyrus.

[lily] is often combined with the upper part of the papyrus symbol or *waz*, intensifying thus the religious value of the symbol."[22]

Evans did not stress the association of the lily with the double axe, although it is evident in many examples. A jar from Pseira, a small island off the East coast of Crete, is decorated with ox heads and double axes, from which lilies are sprouting (Fig. 9.11).[23] How is it possible that an inanimate object gives life to a flower? Evidently there is a process implied here, a "coming forth," as the Egyptian phrase from the *Book of the Dead* puts it. Could it be that the double axe has a regenerative quality? This idea is supported by the scene on the Pseira vase because the double axes occur interspersed with plants (olives). Lilies occur on other representations as well.[24] Sometimes the axe is topped by rosettes rather than a lily (Fig. 9.12).[25]

Fig. 9.11. Ox head as carrier of double axe sprouting into lily. Vase from Pseira (detail).

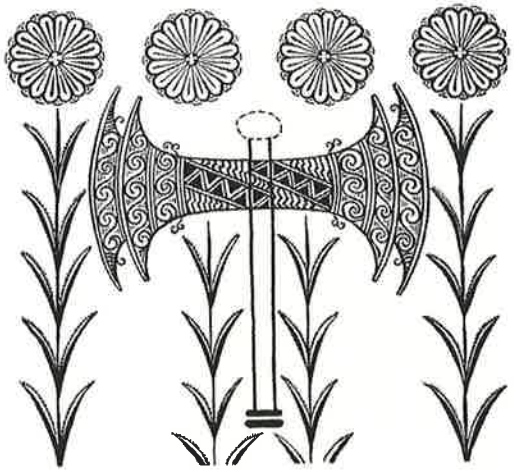


Fig. 9.12. Pithos from Knossos.

Why does the double axe turn into a lily (or rosette)? The double axe is a regenerative symbol suggesting growth or development. It is the visual manifestation of the Egyptian concept of "coming forth by day" and the equivalent of the lotus giving birth to the primeval sun/child.

Fourth Riddle: Why Does the Double Axe Merge with the Ankh Sign?

A peculiarity of the double axe is that it sometimes blends with the Egyptian ankh, a sign of life (Fig. 9.13). The ankh has many variants, such as the knot of Isis (Fig. 9.14).[26] The Minoan hieroglyphic script includes the ankh as its own sign.[27] Evans noted the similarity of the Minoan and Egyptian hieroglyphs as well as the relationship of the double axe with what he called a "sacred knot," and came to the conclusion that it signified life and divinity.[28] Indeed, the solution is very simple if we adopt a Near Eastern *koine*. In Egypt, Syria, the Levant, and Anatolia, the sign of the ankh means "life."[29]

Fig. 9.13. Double axe combined with ankh sign.

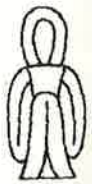


Fig. 9.14. "Knot of Isis," Egyptian ideogram, which has form of ankh.

In the Hittite/Luwian script, the meaning of ankh as life is quite clear.[30] Helmut Theodor Bossert, a Hittitologist and contemporary of Evans, systematically explored the similarity of Hittite signs to their Minoan equivalents and arranged them into a table, shown here as Figure 9.15.[31] In the Egyptianizing seals of the Middle Bronze Age, the ankh also signified life, health and blessing, and we sometimes see the ruler in front of the ankh (Fig. 9.16).[32]

Why does the double axe merge with the ankh sign? It is because they both signify regeneration and life.

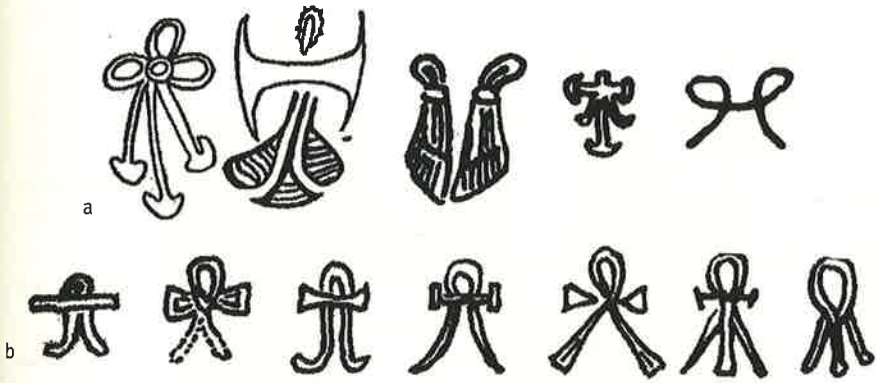


Fig. 9.15. Double axes and ankh as collected by H. Bossert. (a) Minoan. (b) Hittite.

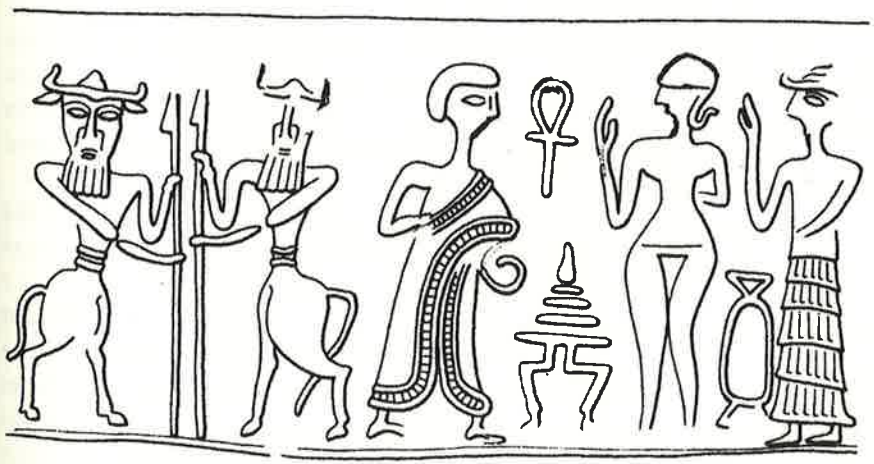


Fig. 9.16. Ankh between ruler and god or deified ruler. Old Syrian seal (eighteenth century BCE).

Fifth Riddle: Why Is the Double Axe Both in the Underworld and the Sky?

The double axe may be found in the depths of the sea. An obvious example of such a depiction is a ritual vessel from Palaikastro and one palace of Knossos that represents a marine landscape replete with conch shells and coral reefs (see Fig. 9.17a). The dominant motif in this seascape is the rayed sun disc in the depths of the ocean.[33] The first reaction of the modern viewer is that this is a paradox: the sun cannot be under water. But, in fact, the very opposite is the truth. In the ancient Near East and Egypt, the sun is the only deity that reaches the depths of the cosmos.[34] "Shamash, your glare reaches down to the abyss so that the monsters of the deep behold your light," we read in a Babylonian hymn.[35]

Although the mythology of the sun is most elaborately documented in Egyptian thought, it is found throughout the Ancient Near East.[36] The principal characteristic of the sun in these mythologies is its cyclical journey around the universe. The waters of death can be crossed only by the sun god Shamash, says the woman Sidouri to the hero Gilgamesh in the eponymous epic: "There has never been a ferry of any kind, Gilgamesh / And nobody from times immemorial has crossed the sea. / Shamash the warrior is the only one who has crossed the sea: apart from Shamash nobody has crossed the sea."[37]

In a Babylonian hymn addressed to the sun god Shamash, he is praised as "never failing to cross the wide expanse of the sea."[38] When the sun god and/or the sun goddess cross the sea, they end up in the netherworld. In the Babylonian hymn, Shamash goes to the underworld to care for the gods there.[39] In Ugaritic religion, the sun goddess Shapshu has the role of taking souls to the underworld and spreading her light there; she is therefore named the "luminary of the underworld." In the epic of *Baal* we read: Baal "was carried away by the luminary of the gods Shapsh . . . into the hands of divine Mot."[40] More evidence comes from Ugaritic liturgical texts in which the sun goddess is asked to go down to the underworld and shine on the dead: "Go down, Shapsh, yea, go down, Great luminary! May Shapsh shine upon him."[41]

Among the Hittites, the sun travels in the sky, the underworld, and in the depths of the sea.[42] A couple of Hittite myths relate how the sun was one time held down by the sea in its depths and could not rise up to the sky.[43] This story expresses a fear of disorder and chaos: what will happen if the sun does not return and follow its course? The journey of the sun from the underworld to the horizon, and his subsequent climb to the sky is expressed in spells from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. "Hail to you, you having come as Khepri, even Khepri who is the creator of the gods. You rise and shine on the back of your mother (the sky) having appeared in glory as King of the gods."[44] Another spell

hails the sun: "O sun-disc, Lord of the sun beams, who shines forth from the horizon everyday: may you shine in the face of N . . . May the soul of N go up with you in the sky."[45]

We now return to the Minoan vases depicting the depths of the sea and view them through the Egyptian and Near Eastern lens of the *koine*. The sun is shown in the depths of the sea on two vessels from Palaikastro (Fig. 9.17a–b). On one of the two, the double axe is shown next to the sun (Fig. 9.17a). It has an inverted position, as though it is dipping into the sea head down.[46] The juxtaposition of the inverted axe and the rayed sun disc shows that the two entities are cognate but not identical. In other words, the axe is not the solar disc in the sky but its underworld counterpart.

Fig. 9.17. Minoan rhyta showing sun disc and double axe in depths of sea. (a) Rhyton from Palaikastro. (b) Rhyton from Palaikastro.

The axe also appears in the depths of the sea on the short side of a clay coffin from Kavrochori (Fig. 9.18a).[47] The scene there may be described as a topographical map showing an island bordered by the undulating wavy water lines to the right and the sea with fish to the left. The island incorporates a rectangle, within which we see a double axe. A possible interpretation of this unique scene would be that the axe rises from the caverns of the depths of the underworld. On a clay painted cylindrical vessel from Crete, the painted decoration also corresponds to the cosmological model outlined here (Fig 9.18b). The double axe appears both on the lower half, together with fish, and on the upper half. The vessel may be considered a mini-model of the universe, showing the upper and lower worlds.

Why is the double axe in both the underworld and the sky? It traverses both regions like the sun. In the Ancient Near East it is the sun and only the sun that makes this journey; consequently the double axe must be the sun. Such a hypothesis explains why double axes occur in graves and caves, namely chthonic realms.[48] At Knossos/Isopata there was even a tomb that had the shape of a double axe.[49]

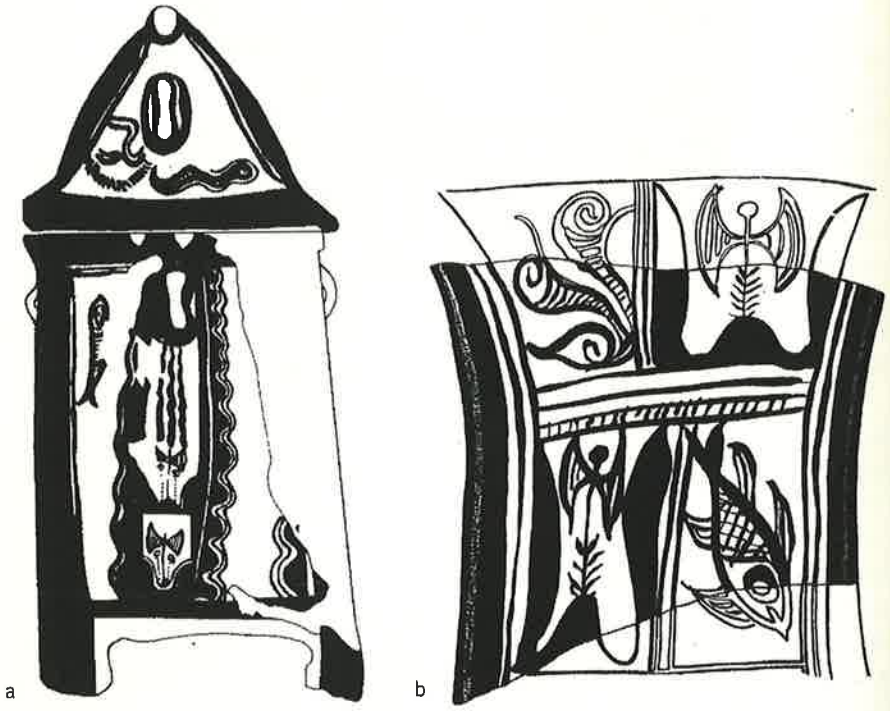


Fig. 9.18. (a) Double axe on larnax from Kavrochori. (b) Double axe on clay vessel.

Sixth Riddle: Why Does the Double Axe Encircle the Cosmos?

The double axe occurs as a decorative motif on several vases; only two very special representations on vases from Pseira will be considered here. The composition on the first example is circular. It is particularly striking because the axe is shown four times around a center (Fig. 9.19a).[50] On a cylindrical vessel from the same site, the entire surface is decorated with axes (Fig. 9.19b).

If the pattern on the Pseira vases were unique, it would not be so crucial to our discussion, but there are other instances. On a ring impression from Knossos, the center of the composition is a rosette surrounded by four double axes (Fig. 9.20). In all cases, the double axes surround the cosmos or travel around it. It is no accident that there are four of these on Figure 9.20. In German, the word *Sonnenlauf* quite precisely captures the notion of the sun's course.

Why does the double axe encircle the cosmos? The answer is that it *is* the sun.

Seventh Riddle: Why Does the Double Axe Occur Together with the Sun and Moon Disc?

On a gold ring from Mycenae, the double axe is represented together with the sun and moon (Fig 9.21). However, the axe is *below* the undulating line (the sky or the horizon in Minoan art). The simultaneous occurrence of the double axe with stellar bodies (see also Fig. 9.17a) leads us to the inevitable conclusion

Fig. 9.19. Double axes in orbit. (a) Lid of vessel from Pseira, east Crete. (b) Cylindrical basket-shaped cultic vase from Pseira.

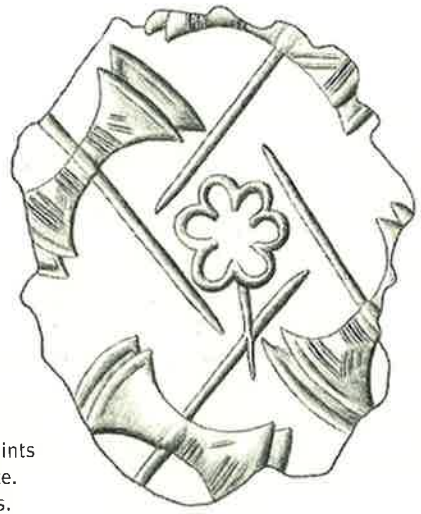


Fig. 9.20. Four double axes (perhaps representing four points of horizon) orbit central rosette. Ring impression from Knossos.

Fig. 9.21. Gold ring from Mycenae.

that the double axe has some close relationship with the heavenly luminaries, the sun and moon.

Why does the double axe occur together with the sun and moon disc? It is related to the solar disc but is *not identical* with it.

The Hypothesis that Answers the Riddles: The Double Axe Is the Emerging Sun of the Horizon.

"Truth did not come into the world naked, but it came in types and images," says the anonymous Valentinian author of the *Gospel of Philip.* "Every image can constitute a powerful, but, in the last analysis, limited and imperfect expression of the nature and reality," says Eric Hornung.[51] These two authors, one ancient and one contemporary, have expressed the wisdom that images and language are alternative forms of rendering reality and that we need both to articulate truths. The double axe may not be simple to translate in one word into English or any ancient or modern language, but its conceptual range may be grasped in an image.

My hypothesis is that the double axe is the sun, specifically the sun emerging from the horizon. The rayed sun disc in the sky has a different function from the newly born regenerative sun. For this reason the two suns have two forms. Whereas the disc in the sky is luminous and forceful, the sun of the horizon has potential but is not fully realized, expressing the dynamic aspect of the deity. As it rises from the depths of the sea and reaches the mountain gate, it has immense potential for regeneration. It comes forth by sunlight, according to the expression from an Egyptian spell. For this reason it may merge with a lily or a rosette and blossom into a new being. For the same reason it merges with the ankh to signify life. In the form of the double axe, the sun loses some of its power when it goes into the underworld, but it still may revive the dead. This theory explains the prominent role of the double axe on Minoan coffins.

It must be noted that this conceptualization is not unique to Crete. The visual expression of the sun also takes many forms in Egypt: a winged disc, a falcon, a beetle, a child emerging from the lotus plant, even an eye.[52] All these images say something about the nature of the solar divinity, describing its shape, its movement, its force, its ability to regenerate, its growth; yet, none of them captures all these notions simultaneously.

We may ask the further question why the Egyptian sun of the horizon takes the form of a scarab? In Egyptian, the sound (vocalization) *kheper* sounds both like "beetle" and "coming into being."[53] The image thus creates a linguistic/visual pun and reproduces the unique side of the reality of god. I suggest an equation of the double axe with the Egyptian scarab (Fig. 9.22).

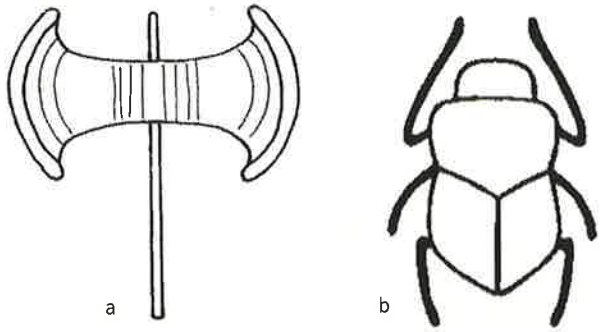


Fig. 9.22. Symbols of sunrise as a "becoming" or "coming forth by day." (a) Minoan double axe. (b) Egyptian scarab.

Two features of the sun have been stressed consistently: its chthonic and celestial sides. Duality is a constant and key feature. I suggest that this duality is made manifest in the two blades of the axe.

The double axe is the sun of the horizon: this is the only hypothesis that explains all seven riddles from the visual contexts where it occurs. It may be tested again and again as new findings come to light.

10

The Rosette, Half-Rosette, and "Incurved Altar"

Evans grouped together a cluster of ideograms that represent heavenly bodies (Fig. 10.1). Thus, it is an undisputable fact that the Minoans utilized solar and stellar symbols as pictograms. Of these ideograms, 108 and 111, the whirled, rayed disc and the lunette, are most obviously identifiable as sun and moon. But the rosette, 110, too is a stellar body, as we shall see; it is an allomorph of the sun.[1]

The Minoan rosette has two forms. It is either a circle with petals or an oval with or without petals. The naturalistic petal version became a popular motif on pottery from the Middle Minoan II A period onward, namely the nineteenth century BCE.[2] It was even more popular in the succeeding phase, the eighteenth century BCE, when the Knossian palace became consolidated during an era of intense international contacts.[3]

The split oval rosette, on the other hand, is a phenomenon of the New Palace period, beginning in the sixteenth century BCE.[4] At that time it became one of the dominant decorative emblems of the Knossian palace, indeed of many Aegean palaces that have been hitherto excavated, including the Egyptian one of Tell el Dab'a, in the Eastern Nile Delta. In the Tell el Dab'a palace, a split-rosette frieze was a major feature of the decorative mural program.[5] Recall the prominence of the split rosette in the west façade of the palace of Knossos and in the Throne Room (see Chapters 2 and 4, Figs. 2.24 and 4.7).[6]

Fig. 10.1. Minoan ideograms and hieroglyphs relating to the cosmos.

Why would a flower be the central emblem of the Knossian palace? We turn to Near Eastern seals for inspiration. There, the rosette is a visual metaphor for heavenly rayed bodies, signifying either a star or the sun.[7] A further development shows that it came to symbolize the sun only. This occurred in the eighteenth century BCE when it fused with the Egyptian winged solar disc, a mutation that coincides with the strong Egyptianization of Syrian seal iconography. The winged rosette may thus be viewed as a Syro-Levantine solar idiom forged under Egyptian influence.

Figure 10.2 shows two Anatolian seals of the eighteenth century BCE on which the rosette represents the sun in the sky.[8] On an Old Syrian seal, the winged rosette is attached to a solar standard flanked by two griffins (see Fig. 4.10a). There is no doubt, then, that in Syrian glyptic the rosette represents the sun.[9]

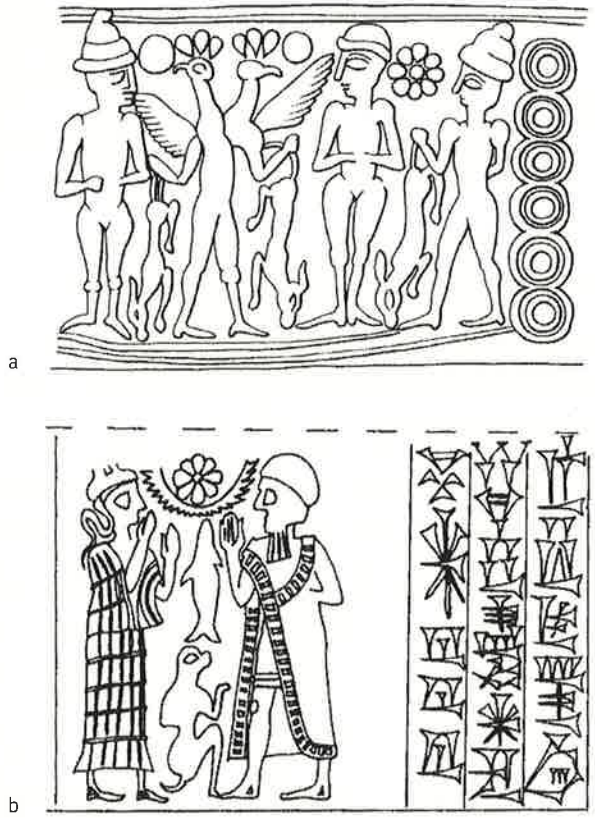


Fig. 10.2. Solar symbol as rosette in sky. (a) Mitanni seal of the sixteenth century BCE. (b) Seal of Princess Matrunna of Karkemish (eighteenth century BCE).

The Hittites used both the rosette and a winged rosette in their hieroglyphic script. The winged variety signifies "sun," whereas the wingless one signifies "life and health" (Figs. 10.3a–b).

Consequently, if a Syro-Anatolian lens is applied to Minoan pictograms, the rosette is a sun symbol. A crucial key to the decipherment is not only its resemblance to the rayed sun disc of the Levantine and Anatolian *koine*, but its link with the double axe, which was explored in chapter 9. When the two fuse into one body, the double axe becomes a blossoming flower (Figs. 9.11–12).[10]

Such a double axe/rosette is depicted on a vase from Knossos. It stands within a zigzag landscape that possibly suggests mountains (Fig. 10.4).[11] Note that the shaft of the double axe has the undulating shape of a tree trunk. Such trunks belong to palms, because only they have this roughness created by the constant cutting of the dry leaves (Fig. 10.5b).

Fig. 10.3. Hittite hieroglyphs. (a) Winged rosette signifying sun. (b) Wingless rosette meaning life and health.

Fig. 10.4. Cult standard on Knossos vase.

The peculiar motif of figure 10.4 may be interpreted as follows: it is a palm shaft with a double axe fitted onto it and a rosette topping it. If so, it is a man-made object, a cult standard of a deity combining three different cult symbols of the sun goddess: the palm, the double axe, and the rosette. It resembles the double axe cult standard topped by a bird depicted on the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus (Fig. 10.5a).[12] The pole supporting the axe is a palm trunk from which the leaves

have been cut, as may be deduced from the rough texture of the trunk. We can compare this further to the palm cult standard topped by the solar rosette disc on a Syrian seal (Fig. 10.5b). Since the Hagia Triada double axe is itself topped by rosettes on the border above, there can be little doubt that we have here a symbolic visual language common to Crete, Egypt, and the Syro-Levantine area. The formula is solar rosette plus palm. Teissier argues that "the symbolism of the tree with the winged sun disc was developed in the Levant."[13]

The comparisons show that solar cult standards existed on both sides of the Aegean. They must have been quite large, constructed by palm trunks and crowned with emblems of the sun deity.

The combination of the double axe with the rosette is comprehensible if they both allude to aspects of the sun. Yet, it must be stressed that although the axe and rosette have related semantic values, they are not identical. My proposal is that the rosette exemplifies the life-giving qualities of the sun, whereas the double axe represents the regenerative potential of the sun of the horizon.[14] As for the palm tree, recall from Chapter 4 that it is a solar tree in Minoan Crete as it was in the Levant (see also Chapter 12).[15] The final proof that the rosette designates the sun in the Near East comes from Kassite seals (fifteenth century and later) where it is used as a determinative of the sun god Shamash.[16] Finally let us note that at Knossos, the rosette decorates a ceiling.[17]

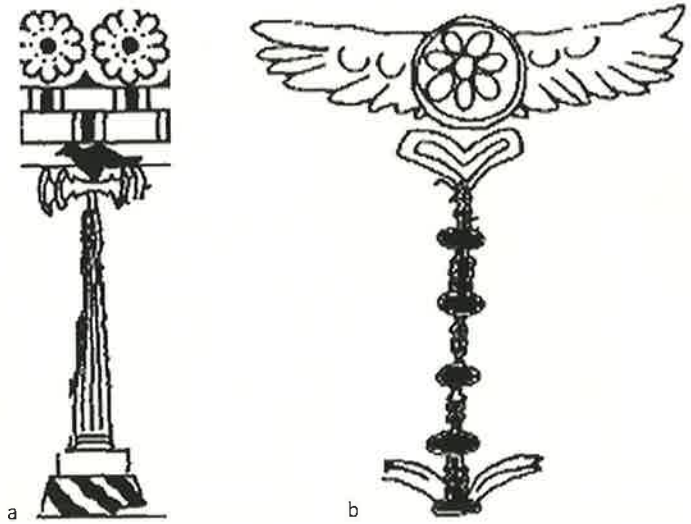


Fig. 10.5. Cult standards. (a) Double axe atop palm tree shaft on Hagia Triada sarcophagus (detail). (b) Solar disc on Syrian seal (Middle Bronze Age BCE).

The Abstract Split Rosette

The story of the rosette is not yet finished, however. Its alternate form, the oval split in the middle, became quite popular in the sixteenth and fifteenth centuries BCE, during the New Palace Period. We have seen already how it occurs in connection with the throne room at Knossos, on the façade of the same palace, and in the Egyptian palace at Tell el Dab'a (Fig. 10.6a).[18] Another instance is the rosette design on the hem of the dress of a female figure from the corridor of the Procession mural at Knossos (Fig. 10.7a).[19]

Comparing the Minoan split rosette (Fig. 10.7a) to a Luwian/Hittite hieroglyph (Fig. 10.7b), we see that the two have the exact same form. Helmut Theodor Bossert was the first to note this similarity in 1932. He was followed by Helga Reusch in 1958, but this striking connection between the conceptual apparatuses of the two cultures seems to have been forgotten.[20] It is unlikely that the similarity is an accident because the signs are too abstract for such a coincidence.

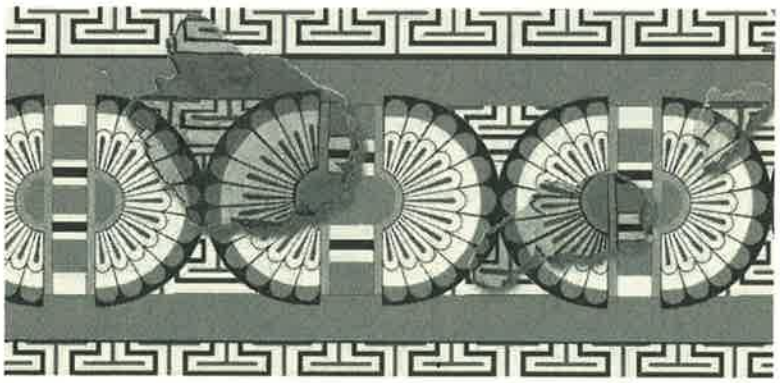


Fig. 10.6. Split rosette. Minoan painting found at Tell el Dab'a, Egypt.

Fig. 10.7. Split rosette. (a) Minoan. (b) Hittite.

The question, then, is how this similarity may be interpreted in a historical context. The Hittite sign is a determinative for "god." This meaning is quite compatible with my suggestion here that the Minoan equivalent designates the solar goddess. I suggest that the commonality of this symbol between Minoans and Hittites may be best explained by intimate contact between the royal courts (see also Chapter 14).[21] Consider also the following two images in which the two halves of the rosette are used to determine a building as sacred. One is the Hittite hieroglyph for "house of God," depicted as an edifice with a split rosette (Fig. 10.8a). The second is a gold plate from the Shaft Graves of Mycenae (c. 1550–1530) that also shows the house of god (Figs. 10.8b). In conclusion, the split rosette is god (or a particular solar deity) and when it is combined with a building it designates the divine palace or its earthly counterpart.

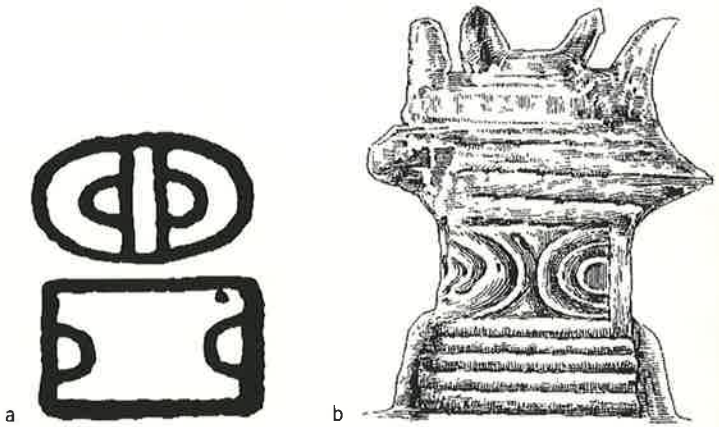


Fig. 10.8. House of god. (a) Hittite hieroglyph. (b) Gold plate ornament from Shaft Graves at Mycenae.

The interstice between two abutting oval split rosettes results in another shape that may be termed an "incurved podium" (Fig. 10.9). As usual, it was Evans who noticed the complexity of Minoan morphology, namely that the combination of two rosettes gives birth to a second form.[22] I suggest that this second form is the sacred pillar of the universe, an axis between the two halves of the East and West of the cosmos. It occurs as a pictogram of the hieroglyphic script, so we can add it to our conspectus of ideograms that are also cult symbols.[23]

First, however, we must note that objects with this shape actually have been excavated in Crete; Evans perceived their sacred nature and called them "altar-bases of the incurved type."[24] He was followed by Nilsson, who noted that in art they are flanked by griffins or lions (Fig. 10.10).[25]

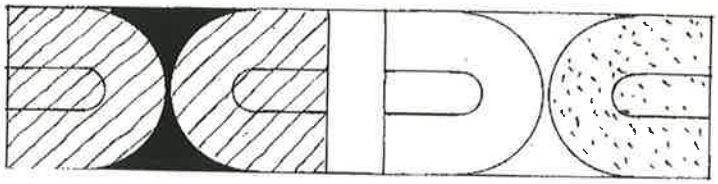


Fig. 10.9. Rosette and incurved design.

Fig. 10.10. So-called incurved altar flanked by griffins. Seal from Mycenae.

We now turn to meaning. The object is not an altar because we almost never see offerings placed on it. As Maria Shaw has shown, it has some connection with gates, and we have seen that gates mark transitions to another world.[26] Still, the puzzle remains: what does this object signify?

Some help may come from the other side of the Aegean. The so-called *weres* is an Egyptian hieroglyph and pictogram with a similar form (Fig. 10.11). Here the meaning is clear: the Egyptian object is without a doubt a headrest with symbolic associations relating to the sun's course.[27]

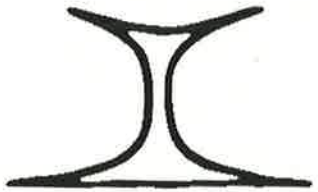


Fig. 10.11. Egyptian hieroglyph signifying headrest (or support) of sun. It is equivalent to Minoan sign labeled "incurved altar."

Richard Wilkinson explains: "Symbolically, the head-rest was closely associated with solar imagery for it held the head which, like the sun, was lowered in the evening and rose again in the sky."[28] Indeed, in the tomb of Tutankhamun, one of the headrests was personified by an Atlas-type figure, a god who supports the firmament and is flanked by the lions of the horizon (Fig. 10.12a).

I believe that the Egyptian conceptualization of the incurved object as an axis of the cosmos explains well its function in Minoan art. Compare with a seal from Crete on which two lions flank the incurved base, above which is the rayed sun disc (Fig. 10.12b). The coincidence of the motifs is not accidental. The Minoan and Egyptian symbols shared in a *koine* in which the solar cult played a major role. The incurved podium was conceived as a support of the firmament, a pillar of heaven or at least a cosmic axis. Its use as a sacred podium in Minoan imagery may be best explained thus.

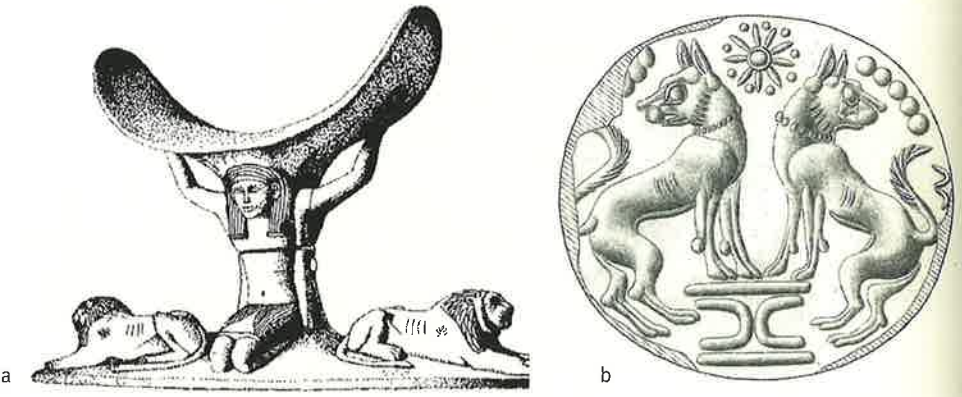


Fig. 10.12. Headrest. (a) From Tutankhamun's tomb. (b) As cosmic pillar on seal from Crete.

Why are so many symbols referring to the cosmos and the sun: the rosette, the split rosette, the double axe, the incurved podium? Each of these visual forms is complementary to the others. We may postulate an entire system of interconnected concepts that cohere first by the nature of their morphology and second by their semantic links. They were used singly or in combination to create a vocabulary of sacredness, most of which revolved around the sun. When a grid is applied to decipher the ideograms, much may be explained, such as for example why the incurved podium is also the center of two abutting rosettes. The split rosette signifies the sun of the East and West; the incurved podium signifies the cosmic pillar in the center. If my thesis is correct, it is clear why the half rosette and the incurved podium are often prominent features of the house of god. See, for example, Figure 10.13, the reconstruction by George

Rethemiotakis of the mansion on the Poros ring, where the sacred mountain, the incurved podium, and two half rosettes (on either side of the podium) are all present (cf. Fig. 5.6). More examples may be found in Chapter 5.

One cannot help but notice that the underlying concept behind the variety of forms is symmetry. We meet this symmetry in the duality of the two peaks of the mountain sign, the split rosette, the double axe, and the incurved podium. Symmetry is essential to cosmic harmony: right and left, East and West, up and down, sky and underworld.

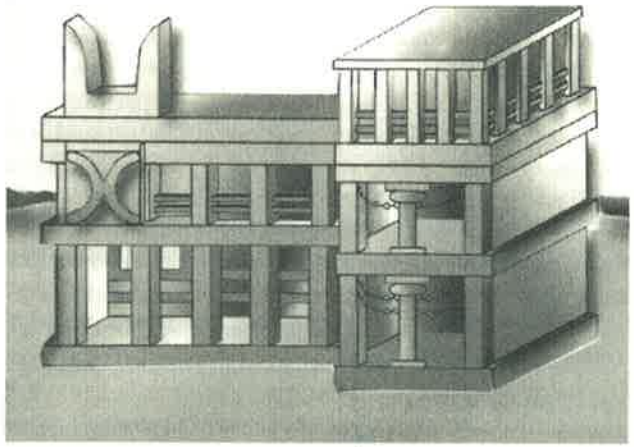


Fig. 10.13. "Sacred mansion" with symbols of split rosette and cosmic pillar. Poros Ring as reconstructed by G. Rethemiotakis.

A decipherment of the Minoan pictograms is possible only if signs from the wider horizon of Egypt and the Near East are taken into consideration. Anatolia, Syria, the Levant, Minoan Crete, Mycenaean Greece, and Egypt were interconnected on the semiotic level. Overlaps are considerable, although not all signs are found in all cultures. For example, Crete has the rosette in common with the Levant, but not the winged disc, which the Levant shares with Egypt. The incurved podium is common to Egypt and Crete, but it is not found in the Levant. The split rosette is common to Luwian/Hittite and Minoan cultures. The double axe as the sun of the horizon is unique to Crete.

This completes the ideogrammatic decipherment of the hieroglyphs. They turn out to be of great importance for the understanding of the vocabulary of the architecture of the palaces and the ideology of palatial religion. A large and complex pictorial dictionary is beginning to emerge, a necessary tool for the comprehension of symbols on both sides of the Aegean. The results are tested in the field of funerary symbolism in Chapter 11.

11

Minoan Afterlife Beliefs

No Minoan texts that elucidate Minoan afterlife beliefs have remained; nevertheless, we are not lacking in eloquent material. This material consists of clay painted larnakes (coffins) dating to the fourteenth and mainly thirteenth centuries BCE, namely a little before and after the fall of the palace of Knossos (ca. 1375 BCE).[1] Unfortunately, we have little funerary iconography before this period because very few royal tombs in the vicinity of the grand palace survived to be excavated by Evans.

The first surviving tomb was a magnificent building at Isopata that was unfortunately destroyed during World War I. The second was excavated as late as 1931 and was the result of Evans's last campaign at Knossos.[2] He called it a Temple Tomb because it combined a grave and a sanctuary within the same building. The pottery shows that it was in use even after the fall of the palace of Knossos; this testifies to a continuous cult of the dead king in the post-palatial period.[3] The temple tomb constitutes evidence that ruler deification was practiced in Crete, as it was in Egypt, Syria, Anatolia, and Ugarit (see also Chap. 3).

Ruler cult vanished shortly after the fall of the palace of Knossos. There are no more structures that may be identified as royal tombs after this period, but this is the time when the larnakes become most popular. We are fortunate that many were found because they constitute an invaluable corpus for Minoan afterlife beliefs of the post-palace period. Strangely enough, neither Evans nor Nilsson seriously considered them as sources for Minoan metaphysical ideas. Since their time, Greek excavators have successively augmented the known examples, and their publications have contributed a great deal to the interpretation of this quaint iconography.[4]

The Function of Coffins as Maps and the Journey to the Beyond

The form of the coffins is rectangular, often with a gabled lid, simulating a house with a roof. A bathtub shape is also attested, especially in East Crete. The iconography of the coffins is quite varied. Sometimes entire landscapes are represented; other times the motifs consist of grazing or hunted animals, bulls, cows, and goats. In a few cases, griffins occur. Humans are rare, but they do occasionally appear as well.[5]

Because the images are so varied, it is not easy to detect a coherent mythology that governs Minoan afterlife beliefs. But we may exclude some possibilities. It is very unlikely, for example, that the scenes on the larnakes are biographical in nature. They do not likely show the profession of the dead or represent excerpts from his life. This kind of biography would be very unusual, if not unique, in the second millennium BCE. Also, it is unlikely that the larnakes depict rituals of sacrifice, as some scholars have argued.[6] The case for sacrificial practices rests on the assumption that 𓋹 and the double axe both represent sacrificial implements, but if this postulate is contested (as it has been here in Chaps. 8–10), then the sacrifice scenario cannot hold. There remains a third possibility: that the scenes represent landscapes of the netherworld. This is the position that will be adopted here. My hermeneutical frame will be constructed on the basis of Near Eastern and Egyptian templates of cosmology and netherworld beliefs.

Death in Ancient Egypt and the Near East entailed a difficult journey for the soul through the beyond, with a kind of paradise as its final destination. Yet, *paradise* has misleading connotations to the modern reader. In the second millennium BCE, the netherworld was not a single place, but rather a whole universe with diverse lands and a complex geography: mountains, rivers, and lakes. The journey of the dead was difficult and dangerous because these barriers had to be crossed. For this reason the dead might be aided by instructions in visual or textual form, so they could navigate safely through "the undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler ever returns."[7] It will be argued here that the scenes on the Minoan coffins are topographical maps designed to guide the dead to the netherworld and show them their final destination.

But let us start with Egypt, where the journey is well documented in sarcophagi, papyri, and murals of the royal tombs. For the nobility and the wealthy members of society, funerary papyri were commissioned.[8] On these papyri we see specific landscapes of the beyond: rivers, fields with plants, and groves with palm trees. The barriers are sometimes conceptualized as gates, a notion that we have already explored in connection with the mountain 𓋹 (Chap. 8).[9]

The topography of the Egyptian netherworld is not unique. It shares common features with Mesopotamian cosmology. In Chapter 8 we looked at a clay tablet showing the Babylonian cosmic map on which the circular earth is surrounded by a river and mountains (see Fig. 8.10). These mountains delimit the inhabited universe and constitute barriers to the beyond.[10] The triangles at the circumference of the circle have been interpreted as isles or mountains. On the back of this Babylonian clay tablet there is a textual description of the various regions of the beyond that helps us understand the imaginary geography better. In the texts, it is clear that the netherworld consists of several regions. One of them is said to be enveloped in darkness "where the sun is not seen," another has wondrous trees, and another yet is given the name of the "land of horned cattle" (compare with Fig. 11.3 in the following discussion).[11] It is to be assumed that only a few of these regions are perfectly blissful, the equivalents of the Greek Elysium or the biblical Garden of Eden; others may be frightening or dark.

A journey to the beyond is described in the Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Assuming a *koine* between the Aegean and the Near East, the vivid description of the hero's adventures may be an invaluable guide to the mentality behind the images on the Minoan larnakes.[12]

After the death of his friend Enkidu, the hero Gilgamesh is desperate to find out the secret of life and death. He seeks the wise man Utnapishtim, who lives at the edges of the world and has taken part in the council of the gods. To find Utnapishtim, Gilgamesh has to travel to the netherworld and follow the path of the sun. In other words, the hero makes a journey modeled on the trip of the dead. He enters the beyond through the sun's gate, which is located in the midst of Mount Mashu. The latter is our familiar cosmic mountain, represented as twin peaks in Egyptian and Minoan art and acting simultaneously as a barrier and a gate to the netherworld. Gilgamesh passes through the mountain gate guarded by a scorpion man and travels in darkness through a kind of tunnel. He races the sun itself and eventually arrives at a splendid garden flooded with light:

> [But the darkness was still dense, there was no light]
> It was impossible for him to see ahead or behind.
> When he had achieved eight leagues, he hurried on;
> The darkness was still dense, there was no light.
>
> . . .
>
> He came out in front of the sun
> Brightness was everywhere.
> All kinds of . . . spiky bushes were visible, blossoming with gemstones.
> Carnelian bore fruit
> Hanging in clusters, lovely to look at,
> Lapis lazuli bore foliage.
> Bore fruit, and was delightful to view.[13]

Because the garden is flooded with sunlight and contains marvelous trees, it is evidently a kind of paradise. We are reminded of the Garden of Eden in the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 2:8), which is likewise located east, namely, close to the sun. As we shall see, the Minoan paradisiacal landscape is also close to the rising sun.

The *Odyssey* also shares in the tradition of the *koine* of a cosmic journey. Like Gilgamesh, Odysseus arrives at some kind of paradise at the edges of the world when he reaches the island of Circe "where the sun rises" (*Odyssey*, 12.4). Circe is related to the sun by kinship, and she is the one who directs Odysseus to the island of the sun, where his sacred cattle graze. I have suggested elsewhere that the journey of Odysseus takes place around the cosmos and that it is modeled on the Egyptian journey of the soul's passage to the beyond.[14]

Fig. 11.1. Double axe, sun, and griffin in paradisiacal landscape. Larnax from Palaikastro (fourteenth/thirteenth centuries BCE).

With this background in mind, we return to the Minoan coffins. It is possible to detect in the images the journey in the afterlife: gardens or groves, a sacred tree, rivers, and the sun. To start with the garden, some scenes depict palm groves, lilies, and other curly plants (see, for example, Fig 11.6 in the following discussion). We also meet the sun on a larnax from Palaikastro, (Fig. 11.1, right panel) next to a griffin. Previously, we met the griffin as a companion of the solar goddess in the throne room of the palace of Knossos (Ch. 4). Here we see it again

in the metaphysical setting next to the sun disc and a papyrus plant; this scene must be the paradisiacal landscape, the Minoan Elysium. As Evans put it: "We see here an abode of light rather than darkness. We have not here the Hades of primitive Greek tradition—the gloomy Under-World of pale shadows and gibbering ghosts. This is the true Elysion, un-Hellenic in its conception . . ."[15]

We need to consider next what kind of barriers divide the land of the living from that of the dead. We have seen on the Babylonian map that the world is surrounded by mountains and girt by a cosmic river. Thus, both river and mountain constitute boundaries to the netherworld. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the hero must travel across the waters of death to get to the isle of Utnapishtim. But remember: only the sun may cross this body of water.[16]

A river surrounds also the Greek *cosmos*. In the *Odyssey*, the Elysian fields are described as lying next to the river Ocean. The wizard Proteus tells Menelaus: "You will not meet your fate and die in Argos where the horses graze. Instead the immortals will send you to the Elysian plain at the world's end, to join the red-haired Rhadamanthys in the land where living is made easier for mankind, where no snow falls, no strong winds blow, and there is never any rain but day after day the West wind's tuneful breezes come in from the Ocean to refresh its folk" (*Odyssey*, 4.561, transl. Rieu). Consider also another passage in the *Odyssey* in which Penelope expresses the wish to die and reach the river Ocean: "Oh let the storm wind snatch me up and vanish with me down the ways of darkness to drop me where the sea runs into the circling stream of Ocean" (*Odyssey*, 20.63–65). The topography of the netherworld is summed up succinctly in the final book of the same epic. When the suitors of Penelope are killed, their souls have to go past the river Ocean, past the white rock, past the gate of the sun, and past the region of dreams (*Odyssey*, 24.1–14). Hesiod locates the "islands of the blessed" in a distant sea.[17] Finally, Herodotus testifies of an actual map, that of Hekateus, on which the world was surrounded by the river Ocean (Herodotus 2.23).[18]

This digression into Greek myth shows us that we may be certain about the existence of a *koine* between the Aegean and the Near East and that in this *koine* of religious and metaphysical ideas the concept of barriers separating the two worlds is ever present. Furthermore, the barriers are specified as either water or mountains.

This is precisely what we find on the Minoan larnakes: rivers and mountains. To start with rivers, we often find that the scenes of the netherworld are framed by wavy lines, a convention for rendering water or rivers in Minoan art. These lines run vertically across the borders of the coffins, quite often decorating the legs. One example is the coffin from Armenoi, West Crete (Fig. 11.2).

Mountains may encircle the universe, as we have seen in the Babylonian cosmic map (Fig. 8.10). If this map is translated into an image, and if we search

for the circle of mountains on a coffin, we ought to find ⌓ surrounding the netherworld. We also ought to find the sun of the horizon rising between the two mountain peaks. Indeed, this is the case on a second coffin from Armenoi (Fig. 11.3). On the lid of this coffin, we see an unusual scene: a bull with his head lowered approaches a double axe. Is this the bull of heaven, the mythological animal the head of which we have discussed as an ox head in Chapter 9? In any case, it cannot be doubted that this is a landscape of the netherworld and that this is a mythical scene and not a ritual one. Consider the following Ugaritic text, where the boundaries of the underworld are defined by two mountains:

> Set your faces toward Mount Trgz,
> Towards mount Shirmegi;
> Towards the twin (peaks) of the
> Ruler of the underworld.[19]

Fig. 11.2. Possible scene of hunt in the beyond, framed by rivers that surround supernatural region. Larnax from Armenoi (thirteenth century BCE).

Fig. 11.3. Mountains and double axes create boundary that enclose landscape of the beyond. Larnax from Armenoi (thirteenth century BCE).

The World under the Sea's Surface

A peculiarity of the Minoan netherworld landscapes is that many of them were imagined as lying in the depths of the sea; this may be the special contribution of Minoan Crete to the topography of the afterlife. The sea surface is also a border between this world and the beyond, but its extent is unfathomable, both on the horizontal and the vertical level. The larnakes depict another universe equally rich and complex as the terrestrial one. This netherworld is located in the depths of the sea, replete with plants, fish, and mollusks. Of the latter, the octopus features prominently. It is a creature that lives in caverns and probably symbolizes the unfathomable and dark depths of the sea.

A scene on a coffin from Kavrochori illustrates the world in the depths of the ocean (Fig. 11.4). To the left, we see a palm and a bird alighting on top of it. Next to the palm is a mollusk; next we see a chariot, the vehicle that transports the dead to the netherworld.[20] This unusual landscape is delimited by rivers on the right and left: the latter constitute the frontier of the realm in which terrestrial and underwater-scapes have been combined to form a new universe. The same combination of terrestrial and underwater creatures is repeated on the lid.

Fig. 11.4. Netherworld in depths of sea. Larnax from Kavrochori (thirteenth century BCE).

On another larnax from Pachyammos, East Crete, we see a juxtaposition of land and sea. On the left half, there is a large octopus that symbolizes the depths of the ocean; on the right, a grove of palms symbolizes the paradisiacal garden. (Fig. 11.5).

On a coffin from Vassilika Anogeia, East Crete, the palm tree grows in the center (Fig. 11.6). Analogous to the biblical passage about Eden, this can be described as the "tree of life" growing in the midst of the garden (Gen. 2:9). Its crest is surrounded by birds, and its lower leaves are surrounded by fish. The palm is thus an axis of the world with its roots in the depths of the sea and its top in heaven.[21]

One important conclusion that emerges from the study of these mixed landscapes is that there is symmetry in the universe; another is that there was a second universe in the depths of the sea. The underwater world was full of regenerative potential. Compare with a passage in *Gilgamesh* where the hero is told by the wise Utnapishtim to dive into the depths of the water to find the plant of youth.[22] He does so, and finds the miraculous plant at the bottom of the ocean. Thus, the plant of youth could only be found underwater.

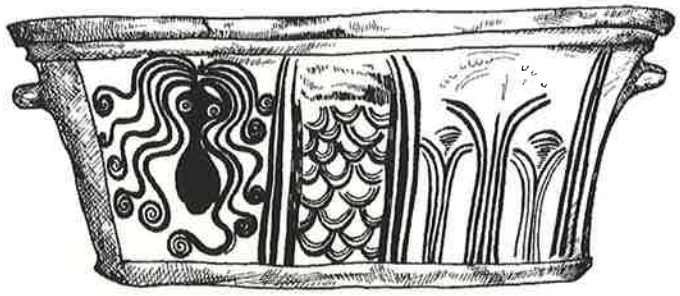


Fig. 11.5. Sea and land symmetrically juxtaposed. Larnax from Pachyammos (thirteenth century BCE).

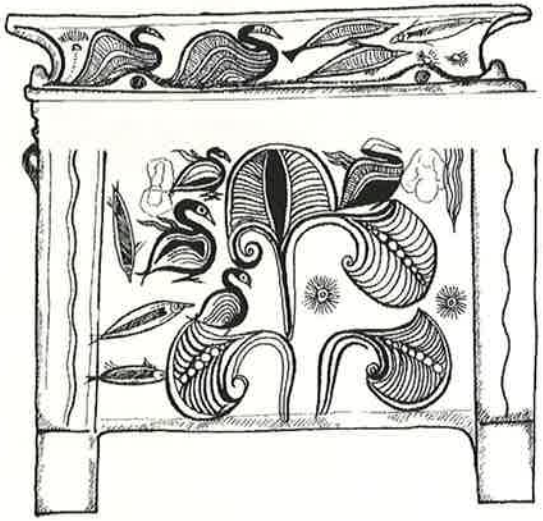


Fig. 11.6. Palm as tree of life. Larnax from Vassilika Anogeia, East Crete (thirteenth century BCE).

The Ultimate Goal of the Journey: The Land of the Rising Sun

It is to be suspected that, for the Minoans, the ultimate goal of the journey of the dead was the arrival at the land of the sun, which was embodied in the double axe. Such an idea fits perfectly with the *Gilgamesh* passages: the hero races the sun and arrives at the precious garden flooded by light. It fits even better with Egyptian afterlife beliefs, according to which the sunlight is constantly sought after by the souls of the dead.[23]

If the double axe is the rising sun, as is argued in Chapter 9, then we should expect to find it as a motif on the larnakes. This is, indeed, the case. Consider, for example, a coffin from Giofyrakia on which the double axe rises between the mountain peaks and is topped by a bird (Fig. 11.7). The latter greets the sun at sunrise.

Also, on the coffin from Palaikastro, discussed previously (Fig. 11.1), we noted the sun on the right panel. On the left panel, however, we see the rising sun represented as a double axe emerging from a cluster of lilies. Is it an accident that the disc and the double axe appear side by side? This juxtaposition serves as a further proof of the hypothesis proposed in Chapter 9 that the double axe is the rising aspect of the sun. In fact, the iconography of the Palaikastro larnax may be understood easily if we apply the grid of the Near Eastern *koine*. The double axe is the regenerative sun of the horizon, and the griffin, a creature associated with the sun (Chapter 4), lives in the paradisiacal landscape of the beyond. The rayed disc (which appears also on the lid) and the double axe are *both* features of the sun, and exist in the blissful paradise of the Minoan world. As for the lily, its association with the double axe as a regenerative symbol was previously discussed in Chapter 9. The imagery of the lily of the Palaikastro larnax is conceptually similar to the Egyptian lotus plant giving birth to the sun child (Fig. 11.8).[24]

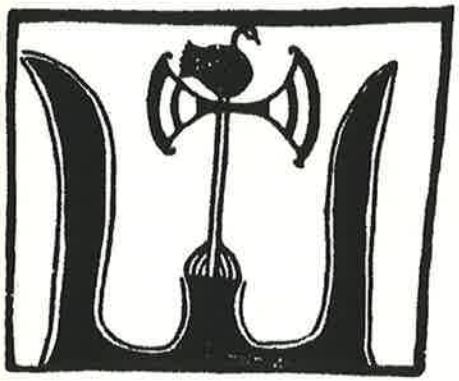


Fig. 11.7. Axe as rising sun. Larnax from Giofyrakia (detail; thirteenth century BCE).

Fig. 11.8. Sun as god rising from lotus plant. Egyptian funerary papyrus of Ani (New Kingdom).

Thus, a number of ideas converge to form a coherent system pertaining to the afterlife: flowering plants and a double axe signify regeneration; symmetry and duality reflect the terrestrial and sea realms, light and darkness, up and down, East and West. All these concepts would be comprehensible in the Ancient Near East and Egypt although the particularities of the idiom varied.

The Egyptians had a fear of darkness and were terrified by the idea that the soul could be trapped between the doors of the underworld and never reach the sunlight. Consider spell 91 from the *Book of the Dead:* "As for him who knows this spell, he shall become an equipped spirit in the realm of the dead, he shall *not* be restrained at any gate of the West whether coming or going." Also, spell 164 expresses fear of imprisonment in darkness: "His soul shall not be imprisoned."[25]

These passages generate some reflections on puzzles about Minoan afterlife that cannot be conclusively resolved, but that may add a dimension to our reconstructed Minoan netherworld. Is it possible that the Minoans, like their Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and West Semitic neighbors, equated darkness with nonexistence? If so, did they conceive of the deepest levels of the ocean as the abyss of nonexistence? Were the images on the Minoan coffins meant to counteract this negative vision by showing blissful landscapes and double axes emerging from the darkness to the light?

Who Was Buried in the Larnakes?

A final question pertains to the social status of the dead buried in the coffins. The chronological range from the end of the palatial period in LM III A to the one succeeding the fall of Knossos alerts our attention to the fact that in this case we may look for nonroyal ideology in the nature of our material. Were ordinary people given the privilege of possessing painted larnakes? Two issues are relevant here. First, we must consider the frequency of the painted coffins. They were widespread across the whole island of Crete, with each cemetery having several specimens. For this reason, we cannot speak of a restricted elite class who had the privilege of the coffins; rather, we must envision a broader middle class that had access to these ideas and myths. Note, however, that the iconography was present already in palatial pottery and became widely accessible after the fall of the palaces.

Another inference is that the coherence of the images reflects knowledge about the netherworld, which would be difficult to possess without an established and codified mythology. Such a mythology was certainly crystallized during the palatial era. The narrative as well as the visual vocabulary became standard enough to be employable across Crete, even after the fall of the palatial theocracy.

12

The Solar Goddess of Kingship

One of Evans's contributions to posterity was the notion of the great mother goddess. He imagined her as a divinity with powers over the earth, sky, and underworld, responsible for fertility, regeneration, and all aspects of life. He tended to identify her with Greek Rhea (a goddess of very little importance in Greek cult) or with Phrygian Cybele.[1] Subordinate to her was a male, a boy god.

A century later, the mother goddess is still very much alive in both popular and specialized scholarship, although she has taken various guises. She has been linked to Babylonian Ishtar or Syro-Palestinian Astarte by scholars who rightly acknowledge Near Eastern influences on Crete.[2] But even so, she remains the great mother of vegetation and fertility.[3]

Nilsson was critical of Evans's idea of a single goddess, but for unexpected reasons. Because Minoan Crete was primitive, closer to nature than culture, he thought it could not have developed monotheism, which is a mark of high cultures. In Nilsson's view, Crete was primitive and polytheistic, replete with nature gods.[4] The notion of matriarchy we owe less to Evans and more to nineteenth century anthropology. Although he went along with the idea that matriarchies existed in the early history of mankind, he himself mentions the term only rarely.[5]

Matriarchy has never been documented for any Ancient Orient or Mediterranean palatial society of the second millennium BCE.[6] Mother goddesses, on the other hand, exist in all forms and guises but are rarely, if ever, characterized by motherhood alone. Foremost among their roles is the protection of their divine sons and their counterparts, the earthly kings. For example, Mesopotamian Ishtar is often regarded as a fertility goddess, but the most constant feature of her religious identity is her patronage of kings. This characteristic is dominant from the third to the first millennia BCE, and is especially obvious during the

Assyrian epoch. To classify her simply as a fertility or vegetation goddess is to ignore her social role. Yet, if the mythical world has any relevance to real society, we must seek the social paradigms behind the imagery.

Mother and Son

Several gold rings from Crete and the mainland have as their subject an enthroned goddess. The seated posture of the goddess denotes a special type of authority, seniority, and rank within the pantheon. Of the latter there can be no doubt: the goddess is accompanied by mythical or formidable creatures, such as griffins or lions. They attend her or flank her throne (Fig. 12.1). Why is the goddess seated and what kind of authority does this posture denote?[7] The following set of scenes have a semi-narrative character because the seated goddess interacts with a standing male figure. How does this male relate to the goddess?

Fig. 12.1. The enthroned solar goddess.
(a) Ring from Tiryns. (b) Ring from Mycenae.

On a ring from Mycenae, the goddess sits on a throne, the back of which has the shape of a mountain; before her is a standing male who holds a spear (Fig. 12.2). The hands of the two cross, and both have pointed fingers. Apparently they are engaged in an animated conversation.[8]

Evans spoke of intimacy between them, whereas Nilsson interpreted the image as a representation of everyday life: "the scene is claimed as a *sacra conversazione* between the Great goddess and her consort, though for my part, I must admit that the scene strikes me as entirely secular in character."[9] The mountain throne, however, is sure proof that Nilsson was mistaken: mortal women do not have mountain thrones, whereas gods do (Chapter 4). Note two additional elements: First, the size and matronly shape of the body of the female figure indicate that she is a mother; this contrasts with the smaller size of the male, who appears to be younger than her. Second, the seated posture of the female shows her superior hierarchical position. Whatever we say about the nature of the interaction, the relative age difference must be taken into account. Equally evident is the fact that the female figure ranks higher than the male.

A similar pattern is represented on a seal stone now in Geneva. Instead of being engaged in animated conversation, in this case the two figures extend their hands towards each other in a gesture of intimacy (Fig. 12.3). Note however that it is *not* an erotic embrace. Above the pair we see an elongated object best identified as a shooting star or comet (Chapter 7) and a small seated child figure, which I am not able to interpret. Both objects can probably be imagined as being in the sky. If so, the heavens are open, revealing supernatural signs. Surely, then, the figures are divine.

On a ring from Thebes on the Greek mainland, the goddess is seated on a building that has the form of a palace, probably her own (Fig. 12.4). The male god is quite muscular and large compared to those in the previous scenes; both figures are engaged in what may be interpreted as mutual greeting. Above the couple is the horizon line; above the horizon is a rayed sun disc in the sky. This is an indication that the goddess is a solar divinity.

Also recall the Poros ring discussed in Chapter 7 and the Mycenaen ring in Chapter 9. The Poros ring shows a seated goddess facing a standing male. His extended arm is a gesture that typifies rulers and deities (Fig. 7.10).[10] The ring from Mycenae shows a goddess seated under a tree, receiving an armed god who arrives from the sky (Fig. 9.21). The sun and moon in the sky show that the deities are stellar gods; the seated posture shows that the goddess is conceptualized as a queen.

All the rings discussed here juxtapose the seated goddess to a standing god. The former is evidently a major deity of the pantheon because she is enthroned. I suggest that she is not only a divine queen but a figure who is older than the male god.

Fig. 12.2. Goddess and god engaged in conversation, possibly with god receiving instructions. Ring from Mycenae.

Fig. 12.3. Goddess and her son with signs appearing above firmament. Seal now in Geneva.

Fig. 12.4. Goddess seated on her divine palace, facing her son. Sun appears between them, identifying goddess as solar divinity. Ring from Thebes.

The next issue is the relationship of the two deities. The first possibility is that they are partners (as Evans assumed at first); if so, an allegory of vegetation cycle might be implied.[11] Note, however, that Evans had toyed with the hypothesis that they were mother and son. Concerning the ring from Mycenae (Fig. 12.2) he writes: "The impression produced by the design is rather the relationship of a son to a mother than of a husband to a wife or mistress."[12] Evans was right: the ample and curvy proportions of the goddess are deliberately exaggerated to show her matronly aspect. I would further suggest that the images may be interpreted in composite ways: they are both myths and pragmatically based social paradigms. In mythic terms, the mother gives her son instructions and endorses his authority (we shall return to this subject in Chapter 13 when we explore Near Eastern myths). In social paradigmatic terms, the seated deity is the queen mother and the standing male is the king. Seen in this light, the famous ring from Mycenae (Fig. 9.21) may be interpreted as the encounter between the solar goddess and her son, who may well have been a moon god.[13]

Near Eastern Iconographical Parallels for the Seated Goddess

The visual formula of the seated goddess and the standing male god was not unique to Crete. On an Old Syrian seal that dates a little earlier than the rings we have examined from Crete, we see an enthroned goddess seated on an animal; across from her are two gods dressed in kilts and holding weapons, similar to the Minoan god (Fig. 12.5).[14] One of these gods is large and steps on a winged lion. He is the Storm God. The other male deity is smaller and is of uncertain identity. The fact that the goddess is enthroned signifies her queenlike senior (rather than superior) status. Is the smaller god her son?

Another Syrian seal shows the enthroned goddess seated on a bovid and flanked by solar signs (Fig. 12.6).[15] Facing her is a man wearing a kilt and long mantle; behind her is a greeting deity. In this case, the standing figure is most likely the king, rather than a god, because he is *not* stepping on an animal. Note, however, that in Syrian glyptic art it is difficult to distinguish between god and king (Chapter 2).[16] If he is a king, the seal shows us the special relationship of the king with his patron goddess.

On a cylinder found in Cyprus, but in all likelihood of Syrian origin, the enthroned goddess (Ishtar?) holds two palm branches with clusters of dates (Fig. 12.7). She is approached by a worshipper who offers her a live predatory bird; the latter person is most likely the king. To the left, a deity facing the goddess is standing on a bull and can thus be identified as the Warrior God.[17] In this case, both god and king are present, and they are both standing in front of the enthroned goddess.

Fig. 12.5. Seated goddess and Storm God. Old Syrian seal.

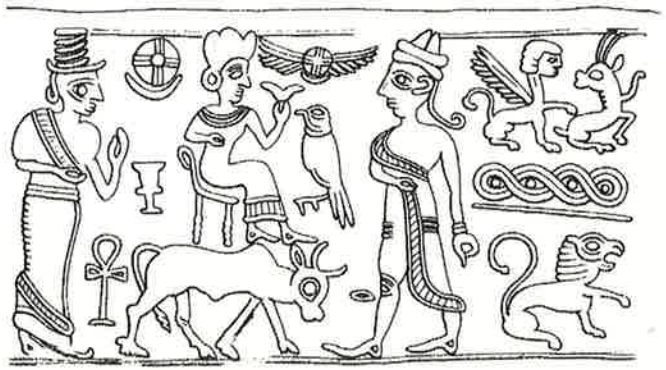


Fig. 12.6. Seated goddess, flanked by solar signs, faces ruler. Syrian cylinder seal.

Fig. 12.7. Enthroned goddess faces ruler. Old Syrian seal found in Cyprus.

Finally, on a relief from Malatya from the Neo-Hittite period in the Iron Age, a date later than our Mycenaean rings, the sun goddess is likewise seated. Here, she is also facing the Storm God (Fig. 12.8).

A pattern is beginning to emerge: the seated deity is a major goddess of the pantheon not only in Crete, but in Syria and Anatolia as well. On some occasions, she can be identified as a solar goddess. The standing male whom she faces is the Storm God or his human counterpart, the king.

We now turn to the Hittite reliefs at Yazilikaya (thirteenth century BCE), where the relationship of the goddess and her son is firmly attested. The chief female deity in the Hittite pantheon is *Hepat* (Hurrian name), who is synthesized with the sun goddess of Arinna. The latter is the chief patroness of kingship, the mistress of the land, the greatest of gods, and the protectress of king and queen.[18] She is often (but not in this case) shown seated.[19] On the relief shown in Figure 12.9, she has a central position in the composition and is standing on a feline.[20] Of particular interest is that she is accompanied by her son Sharuma, who is smaller and stands behind her. Sharuma is also the tutelary god of the king and is dressed like him. He stands on a feline, like his mother, and holds a double axe as his emblem. At Yazilikaya, then, we have a clear case of *goddess and son,* the latter being of smaller size.

This brief excursus into Syrian and Anatolian art has shown that the iconographical formula of seated goddess and standing god is not unique to Crete. Moreover, it has shown that the enthroned goddess is a queen. The designation "Great Goddess" is correct; however, it does not necessarily imply a matriarchy. Such a hypothesis is not only unhistorical but it undercuts the role of the king, who, as the fictive son of this goddess, is the hidden protagonist of the mythical paradigm.[21] We have further seen that in most cases in Syria and the Levant the standing god may be identified as the Storm God. We examine him and his Minoan equivalent in the next chapter. We have seen that the seated female in Syrian glyptic art must have some relation to the sun; on several occasions, the Minoan goddess is also accompanied by the sun disc.

If the male god mirrors the role of the king and the seated goddess that of the queen mother, this shows that queens and queen mothers had an elevated social position in Crete, not because Crete was a matriarchy, but because it was a theocracy. Wyatt has made a similar suggestion for Ugaritic and early Israelite queens.[22] This view finds support in a Hittite mythical paradigm in which the sun goddess of Arinna is a mother of both god and king. The Hittite queen Puduhepa prays to her and names the sun goddess as mother of the Storm God of Nerik and of the king alike.[23]

Fig. 12.8. Seated goddess accompanied by winged solar disc faces Storm God. Iron Age relief from Anatolian Malatya.

Fig. 12.9. Hepat followed by her son. Hittite relief from Yazilikaya (thirteenth century BCE).

Mother Goddesses and Queen Mothers in Two Near Eastern Mythical Narratives

Having investigated the iconography in Crete and the Orient we now turn to the mythical side of the paradigm. Two narratives from the Near East illustrate the role of a major goddess of the pantheon as both a mother and a queen. The first example comes from the Babylonian story about the Anzu monster from Nineveh (probably from the seventeenth century BCE). A dreadful monstrous bird steals the tablets of destiny from the gods and causes anarchy and chaos.[24] The gods meet under the leadership of the chief god, Anu. In the council of the divine pantheon, the gods are in despair. Anu proposes that they call the goddess Belet-ili/Mami, to save them:

Have them call for me Belet-ili, sister of the gods,
Wise counsellor of the gods her brothers.
Have them announce her supremacy in the assembly,
Have the gods honor her in their assembly:
I shall then tell her the idea which is in my heart. . . .
Previously [we used to call you] Mami
(but) now [your name shall be] Mistresss of All
gods.
Offer the powerful one, your superb beloved,
Broad of chest, who forms the battle array!
Give Ninurta, your superb beloved,
Broad of chest, who forms the battle array
[then shall his name be] Lord in the great gods'
assembly.
Let him show prowess to [the gods, that his name may
be Powerful].[25]

The role of this goddess is to summon her son, who will champion the cause of the gods and fight the monster on their behalf. Mami was her old name, but now she is given the title Mistress. Her power (which is so great that the collective gods, the Igigi, kiss her feet) derives from the fact that she is a queen mother. Her position in the pantheon is not due to the fact that she is a fertility goddess but that she appoints her son Ninurta to defeat a dangerous monster. The Ninurta epic has an evident relationship to kingship; its composition in the form we have it reflects the royal ideology of the Assyrian king.[26]

This type of narrative is not unique to the Babylonian culture. In the Ugaritic poem of Baal we find a goddess with a similar role. Athirat, the consort of the creator god El, enjoys the respect of all the gods and is accordingly given epithets of power. She is called "the Great Lady who tramples Yam," the sea snake of chaos;[27] she also receives the epithet *rbt* "great." Athirat is also called "the Mother of gods."[28] Like Babylonian Mami, she has an important role in determining matters of succession. For example, when the young Storm God Baal decides he needs a palace (to establish his position in the pantheon) he turns to Athirat, asking her to mediate on his behalf with El. Her approval seems necessary.

In another passage, El himself turns to Athirat. He is desperate because Baal has disappeared and another god/king must be found to replace him. El ask Athirat to appoint a successor:

"Aloud cried El to the Great Lady who tramples Yam:
Listen, O Great Lady-who-tramples-Yam.
Give the first of your sons;
I shall make him king."[29]

Athirat agrees. Her choice is Athtar, a god who eventually rules on earth rather than the heavens. Thus, Athirat's role as a mother of kings is to determine succession. As Wyatt states, the son of Athirat is the apotheosis of the human institution of kingship and Athirat's role in the Ugaritic pantheon reflects the importance of the dowager queen, a key figure in the issue of royal lineage.[30] Moreover, Athirat nourishes future kings by her milk. In the Ugaritic epic of Keret, the king heir, Yasib "will drink the milk of Athirat."[31] Note that Athirat is regarded as a solar goddess; as we shall see, this may be of relevance for interpreting her Minoan counterpart.[32]

Both of these narratives illustrate the exalted role of the mother/queen in the ancient Orient and testify to a common tradition. In Egypt this tradition is represented by the goddesses Isis, the mother figure of Horus and Hathor, whose name literally means "house of Horus." In Minoan religion, then, the goddess is the mother of the dominant male god of the pantheon. At the same time, she is the mythical mother of the king, endorsing his authority. The scenes of the seated goddess and the standing male god can be interpreted through a Near Eastern lens. The seated goddess appoints her standing son in a position of authority and endorses his power. Recall from Chapter 2 that the iconographical similarities between the god and king are *deliberate,* resulting not in confusion but in *intended ambiguity.* It is from this ambiguity that the royal paradigm derives its force.

The Goddess as a Tamer of the Dragon

We now examine some additional Minoan evidence in which a different aspect of the solar goddess is shown. On a ring from Mochlos, a goddess is seated in a dragon boat, and her shrine appears at the edge of the representation (Fig. 12.10).[33] Above the goddess is an oblong rayed symbol of unknown significance that resembles Luwian hieroglyphs designating sun/moon. Moreover, the boat is the vehicle of solar deities in the ancient Near East, especially of Babylonian Shamash and Egyptian Horus. In some cases, the solar bark takes the form of a live dragon, who has been tamed and has become the vehicle of the deity.

As a thought experiment, we may interpret the dragon boat of the Minoan goddess by use of Ugaritic mythology. The chief goddess of the pantheon, Athirat, has the epithet "the Great Lady who tramples Yam," or "the great lady who treads on the sea dragon."[34] Behind the epithet of Athirat lies a story that was unfortunately not preserved. We can assume that the story related how the goddess tamed the sea serpent. What supports this hypothesis is that the solar goddess of the underworld, Shapsh, who is the counterpart of Athirat, navigates over the sea. The sea is the serpent Yam. The Ugaritic goddess has the god Kothar-and-Hasis as a pilot.[35]

Fig. 12.10. Solar goddess transported by sea-dragon boat, arriving at her sanctuary. Ring from Mochlos.

On the sea of the monster and the dragon
Kothar-and-Hasis navigates you
Kothar-and-Hasis propels you.[36]

The Minoan Mochlos ring practically illustrates the Ugaritic text because the sea dragon is the vehicle of the deity's transport. If we look at the Mochlos ring with a Near Eastern interpretative lens, the imagery becomes richer in connotations; this is the point of the thought experiment.

The Mother Goddess as a Solar Goddess

Many paths have led us in the direction of the solar goddess. In Chapter 3, on the sarcophagus of Hagia Triada, we saw that the goddesses on both short sides are related to the cult of the double axe. On rings from Tiryns, Mycenae, and Thebes (Figs. 2.25, 9.21, and 12.4), the seated goddess has been associated with the sun disc, the split rosette, the double axe, or a combination of the three. Note that on the gold ring from Tiryns the sky above the goddess and her demon servants is replete with shooting stars, the sun, and the moon (Fig. 12.11). This iconography defines her celestial aspect. Below her is a row of split rosettes, which are solar signs (Chapter 10). Finally, her throne is decorated with half of a split rosette. Thus, all the inquiries of this study converge on the idea that the principal female deity of the Minoan pantheon is a sun goddess.

Fig. 12.11. Solar goddess and queen of heavens receives libations by leonine demon-servants in her celestial palace. Ring from Tiryns (fourteenth century BCE).

Whose Emblem Is the Double Axe?

If, as discussed in Chapter 9, the correct interpretation of the double axe is the sun of the horizon, then it must be the emblem of a solar deity. That this deity was female was known to Evans as well as Nilsson; "the Minoan double axe is never found as an attribute of a male god," said Nilsson.[37]

The hypothesis is confirmed by the images on a mould found at Siteia in Eastern Crete, an object that was evidently designed for the production of reliefs representing the chief goddess and her symbols (Figs. 12.12). On the one side of this mould, the deity is represented next to the sun disc, holding a rosette in her left hand (viewer's right, Fig. 12.12a). On the other side of the mould, the goddess is displayed holding a double axe in each hand and a rayed disc is also present (Fig 12.12b). Here we see a nexus of images with related meaning: goddess, sun disc, double axe, and rosette flower. That they occur in the same mould and in association with each other, can be considered strong if not conclusive evidence that these images are semantically related and designate the solar goddess and her manifestations. This conclusion may not have come as a complete surprise to Evans. He interpreted the same disc as a "rayed solar symbol of Goddess of Double Axes."[38]

In the post-palatial era, the solar goddess remains important, as is evidenced by a series of clay statues with raised arms. She wears a crown on which the solar disc features together with the sacred mountain, birds, and snakes.[39]

Fig. 12.12. Solar goddess and her emblems on mould from Siteia. (a) Goddess with rosette in one hand. (b) Goddess with double axe.

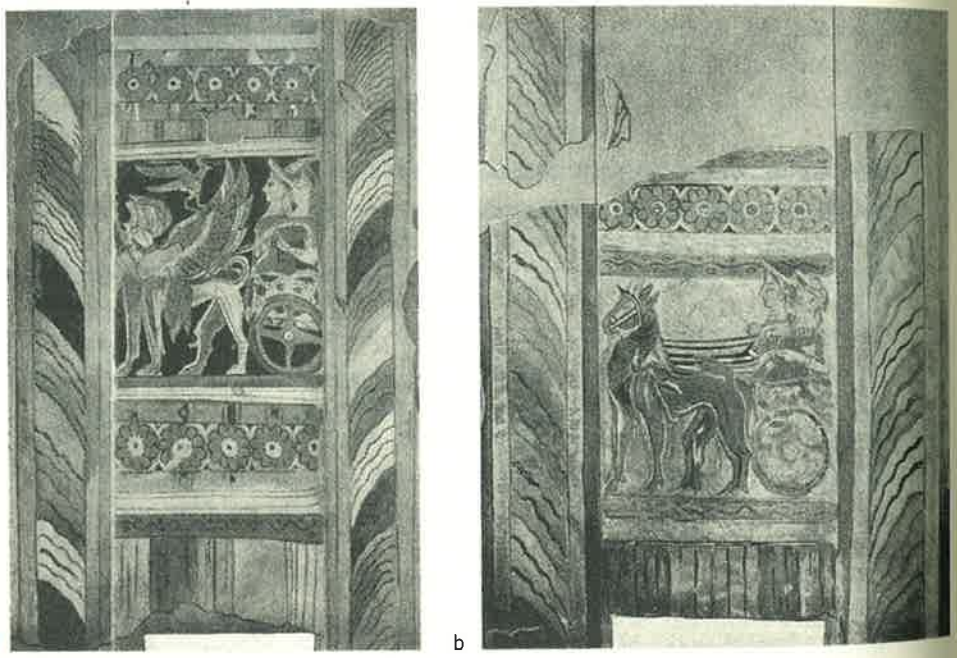
The Deities of the Sun and the Underworld on the Hagia Triada Sarcophagus

In Chapter 3 the clay coffin from Hagia Triada revealed the king's and queen's priestly roles. The king made offerings to a divinized ancestor, but we did not discuss the deity in whose honor the sacrifices were made. The key is the presence of double axes on both long sides of the sarcophagus. The repetition of the cult emblem shows that the same deity was worshipped. We can now test the hypothesis that the double axe represents the solar goddess of kingship by investigating the identity of the deities represented on the sarcophagus.

These divinities have an anthropomorphic form but are shown only on the short sides, not on the long ones. On one panel (Fig. 12.13a) a goddess and her charioteer both wear plumed hats and have long robes. They are dressed like the queen, clearly revealing how royalty and gods mirror each other. We know that the figures in the chariot are goddesses, however, because the chariot is drawn by winged griffins.

On the other short side, two more goddesses are represented: they ride a chariot that is drawn by mules or goats (Fig. 12.13b).[40] The two panels of the short sides are very similar, indeed symmetrical. The second, however, has a peculiarity: this scene is located on a *lower level* than its counterpart. This positioning must be deliberate, showing that the deities in this panel are coming from the underworld. Indeed, the closest scene (around the corner) is the tomb of the dead king. Above the deities is an incompletely preserved panel of which the feet of male figures in procession are preserved; perhaps they are images of the ancestors who are joining the festival.[41]

The complete symmetry in the iconography of the panels of the two short sides makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that the same goddess and her companion, or rather two manifestations of the same divine pair, are represented traveling in two distinct spheres, the sky and the underworld. We might note a further detail: in the celestial scene (Fig. 12.13a) the panel is bordered by rosettes above and below. In the underworld scene (Fig. 12.13b) wavy lines are depicted above the chariot. Thus, the goddesses are below waters. I take these decorations to be topographical indicators, further hints about the location of the divinities in the cosmos; the rosette signifies the realm of the sun, whereas the wavy lines are the waters that constitute the borders of the netherworld. There is only one



a b

Fig. 12.13. Short sides of Hagia Triada sarcophagus.

possible candidate for a divine traveler of this type: the sun, because it is the only divine figure that crosses boundaries and enters both realms. Like the Ugaritic sun goddess Shapshu, who has the role of a *psychopompos*, a leader of souls, the Minoan solar goddess seems to have this dual role as well.[42] Evans, then, was remarkably close to the truth when he posited a dual nature for his Great Goddess. A pair of divinities wearing a plumed hat and traveling in a griffin drawn chariot is shown on a gold ring found in the Peloponnese (Fig. 12.14). This means that the iconography of the sarcophagus was not unique. Note the presence of the palm and the griffin, both of which have been interpreted as solar symbols and inhabitants of the paradiasical landscape (see Chapters 4, 9, 10, and 11).

Fig. 12.14. Divinities with plumed head-dresses in griffin-drawn chariot. Ring from Peloponnese.

The Minoan name of the goddess cannot be securely ascertained but there may be a clue based on the evidence of Linear A tablets and votive stone libation tables, where we see the name *A-sa-sa-ra* several times. We can reconstruct the phonetics by using the sound values of Linear B and transposing them on Linear A. *A-sa-sa-ra* must be the name of a deity to which the objects were dedicated. Who is she? The name does not evoke any figure of Greek mythology.[43] In 1958, Nikolaos Platon timidly suggested that *A-sa-sa-ra* may be a linguistic adaptation of Ugaritic *Atrt* (Athirat).[44] Platon may have been right, although I shall not press this point. Suffice it to say that such an equation would be very convenient for the thesis proposed here.

Using different methods, Lucy Goodison concludes that a sun goddess existed in the Bronze Age; she regards her as a chief deity who was replaced by a male sun god during the Iron Age.[45] Goodison's postulate is based on a developmental view of history, namely that important female deities were in time marginalized

and replaced by male ones. I am not convinced of this part of her thesis, because the sun goddess exists already in the second millennium as a major deity of the pantheon in Anatolia and the Levant, where she is a queen and patroness of the king. Despite the divergence of approaches, it must be stressed that Goodison was the first to recognize the existence of a solar goddess in Minoan religion.

This solar goddess, I suggest, had a dual role as a goddess of the underworld and the sky; it may be that she had two different names, each referring to one of her aspects. This duality is expressed on the two short sides of the Hagia Triada sarcophagus and by symmetry of forms inherent in all the sun symbols: double axe, split rosette, and incurved podium.

In the mythological *koine* of the Near East and Egypt the sun goddess is often related to the underworld goddess as a mother or sister (see Table 12.1).

Table 12.1. Relationship between Sun Goddess and Underworld Goddess

Region	Relationship	Names
Mesopotamia	sisters	Ishtar and Ereshkigal
Egypt	sisters	Hathor and Isis
Greece	mother/daughter	Demeter and Persephone
Ugarit	unknown	Athirat and Shapshu

It is likely that the solar goddess had the epithet "great" or "mistress" in the Minoan language. This is pure conjecture, but it is based on the probability that her iconogram as a seated deity corresponds to the epithet "great mistress." The Mycenaeans called her *po-t-ni-ja,* the peoples of Ugarit *rbt,* and the Greeks *potnia.*[46] This "mistress" was not primarily a huntress or a fertility goddess, *pace* Nilsson. She was, rather, the "queen of heavens." Compare also the epithets received by Anat and Astarte in Ugarit, "Lady of Heaven," and see also Jeremiah 7:18 and 44:19.[47] She was also a goddess of the underworld, a dragon tamer, and, most importantly, the mother of the Storm God and the king alike.[48] The throne at Knossos belonged to this solar goddess, but it was the king who sat on it, as if on her lap. It is from her that he derived his power and authority.

13

The Storm God

Although the solar goddess has a primary role in the Minoan pantheon, the male god has a more diverse and more interesting iconography. The standard view is that he is not as significant as the goddess. This is one of Evans's legacies to posterity.[1] He himself detected only one male divinity in Minoan religion. Sometimes he called him a boy god, other times "a youthful divinity, martially arrayed."[2] He died and was reborn; he was a type of Tamuz or Greek Adonis, who was mourned by the mother goddess.[3] This notion is due to his contemporary and colleague, Sir James Frazer, who advanced the idea of the dying god of vegetation. However, today we know that Frazerian narratives are of dubious validity because they are in themselves myths, invented in the nineteenth century to explain ancient beliefs.[4]

Nilsson followed the track of Evans. The Minoan male deity, he thought, was a hunting god and "a relic of a nature demon."[5] But after Erik Hallager's excavation of the ring impression from Chania (Fig. 5.10), Alexander MacGillivray's ivory statue from Palaikastro, and Nota Dimopoulou's three gold rings from Poros, no doubt may exist about the importance of the youthful male god. He must be viewed not as a mere satellite of the Great Goddess, but as an autonomous bright star in the constellation of Minoan deities.[6] Yet despite new discoveries, his mythical persona remains tied to Frazerian notions of fertility religion, death, resurrection, and seasonal allegory.

Because some kind of mythology (ancient or modern) is necessary for thinking about a deity, I suggest we look for models in the Near East, rather than in Greek mythology or anthropological theory about primitive religions. Our first task, however, will be to investigate the typology and morphology of the representations of the chief male god. One immediate observation is that, unlike the solar goddess, he is always standing and never enthroned.

the cognitive worlds of the Egyptians and Minoans were related, as Evans always claimed.

Finally, the intuition of Evans about the nature of the theocracy of Minoan Crete was fully justified. It is to him that we owe the first, and historically correct, notion of Minoan sacral kingship.

Notes

Chapter 1: Introduction

Epigraphs: Evans PM I, 15; translated: "The Creto-Mycenaean cultural orbit absolutely belongs to the Anatolian and North Syrian Cultural Community" (Bossert 1944).

1. Most popular books on Minoan Crete immediately associate Knossos with the labyrinth. See, for example, *Wondrous Realms* 1993 and Siebenmorgen 2000.

2. Most scholars think it fairly certain that the Cretans of Minoan times are the Keftiu of the Egyptian and Syrian sources and that Kaphtor is the island of Crete. On some occasions, however, Syria also is called by that name. See, for example, Helck 1979, 26–27; and Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1984, 199–202. A collection of primary sources with commentary may be found in the older but still useful books by Bossert (1937, 62–72), Vercoutter (1911), and Helck (1979, 26–35).

3. For Keftiu in Egypt see Evans, PM II, 719; see also note 2 above. Extensive discussion appears in Vercoutter 1911. Biblical references include Amos 9:7, "Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, the Philistines from Kaphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?" The reference here pertains to the Iron Age.

4. KTU 1.3 vi 15; Wyatt 2002, 89.

5. KTU 1.3 vi 15. Identification of Kaphtor with Crete is not 100 percent certain but it is most plausible. See Wyatt 2002, 89, n. 83. See also KTU 1.100 v 45 and Wyatt 2002, 383.

6. Wyatt 2005a, 19–20. The double name may be a reference to the dual nature of the god as belonging to both this world and the netherworld.

7. *Papyrus Leiden* I, in Bossert 1937, 55; cf. also Helck 1979, 35: Crete was regarded as "*exponent des Westens.*" Helck sees Crete as the western edge of the universe with Punt its counterpart in the East.

8. The dates are very approximate and are based on Warren and Hankey 1989.

9. Scarabs of the period of Amenophis III have been found in an LMIIIA context. Warren and Hankey 1989, 137.

10. The bibliography on chronology is immense and beyond the scope of this work. Basic literature includes Warren and Hankey 1989 and Manning 1999 with criticism by Bietak 2004. See also Wiener 2003.

11. Take, for example, seal and ring iconography. The king riding a chariot motif in LMIA/LHI (Ch. 13) does not appear in Egypt before the Eighteenth Dynasty (Figs 2.19–2.22).

12. Moran 1992, xv–xxvi; and Cline 1995.

13. Van de Mieroop 2004, 130–35. He speaks mainly of the period between 1500 and 1200 BCE.

14. Ibid., 121–25. See also Aruz 1995 and Caubet 1999.

15. Evans PM II, 564.

16. Ibid., 571.

17. For a sample of the criticism of the methods of Evans see Hitchcock and Koudounaris 2002, 48–50. For support see Alexiou 1987.

18. Annals of Tuthmosis III and Leiden papyrus I, 344, 8. See Bossert 1937, 55.

19. Evans PM II, 740–41. The discussion of Bossert 1937, 62–72 with pls. 536–50 about interconnections in the Aegean remains fundamental. See also Helck 1979, 33; Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1984.

20. The relationship of the pharaoh to his vassals in the Levant and Asia Minor is evident from the Amarna letters (Moran 1992, xvi–xvii).

21. See the excellent discussion in Munn 2006, 178–221. It is quite possible to see Croesus' involvement with Solon as concealing an attempt to secure Athenian aid, although Herodotus reports that Croesus sought Sparta's alliance. The relationship of Egyptian Amasis and Persian Darius with the ruler Polycrates of Samos (who possessed a strong navy) is well attested in Herodotus (Hdt. 3, 128). Most illuminating is the relationship of the Athenian Peisistratids with the Persian court.

22. West 1997, 4. See also Wiesner 1968, 141–73.

23. Cline 1987, 20.

24. Evans PM IV, 942–44.

25. For similar skepticism concerning the end of the Mycenaean palace culture see Hall 2007, 54–55.

26. Personal communication with Floyd McCoy, whose lab work suggests that the eruption was much more destructive than envisaged a decade ago.

27. The volcanic destruction of the Minoan palaces was proposed by Spyridon Marinatos (Marinatos 1939). The theory has been contested on the grounds that LMIB pottery is absent from Thera. See the summary of C. Renfrew after the Theran conference of 1989 in Hardy et al. ii 1990, 11–12. However, the fact is that both styles LMIA and LMIB coexist in several sites as at Sklavokampos and most clearly at Zakros. The inevitable conclusion is that they are close in date and are not fifty years apart, as assumed by Evans. This argument is being developed at length by Lefteris Platon.

28. Evans PM IV, xxiii.

29. Ibid., 882.

30. Tuthmosis III dates are 1479–25 BCE; Bietak 2007, 13–43.

31. Evans PM IV, xxiii, 884–87

32. Evans's thesis has been labeled "pancretism" or "pan-minoanism," somewhat disapprovingly, but his reasoning is very solid. He and his assistant Duncan MacKenzie both saw that there was homogeneity of iconography and style in the pottery and artistic representations of the LMI and LMII periods, and that LMII pottery attests to homogeneity of style between Crete and the mainland. Thus, the most reasonable conclusion was that this style betokened a unified territory during the *pax minoica* when Crete was a leader. The break between this era and what followed came at only at LMIII, after the fall of Knossos, and not before. To explain this homogeneity, we need not posit a Minoan dynast ruling Mycenae, but neither do we need to posit a Mycenaean dynast ruling Knossos. For discussion of the Creto-centric view, see Fitton 1996, 132–34 and MacGillivray 2000c, 272–75.

33. For a standard account see Hood 1971.

34. Evans PM IV, 1018.

35. Chadwick 1970, 67.

36. Methodically compiled by Keel in his dictionary (Keel 1978).

37. West 1997; Burkert 2004a.

38. Burkert 2004a, 124. See also Karageorghis and Stambolidis 1998; Karetsou 2000.

39. Moran 1992, 44; EA no. 19.

40. Moran 1992, 84–86; EA no. 26.

41. Moran 1992, 39; EA no. 16.

42. Moran 1992, 43; EA nos. 1, 24, etc.

43. Moran 1992, 19; EA no. 3; Redford 1984, 41; Van de Mieroop 2004, 133.

44. Moran 1992, 19; EA no. 10.

45. Wyatt 1997, 775.

46. Doumas 2000, 34, claims that the Therans had an indigenous bureaucratic system that was not dependent on Crete. According to him, the presence of Minoan sealings on Thera signify that goods were imported from Crete. This theory does not explain the fact that rings stamped not only goods but also documents. And if so, then the sealings are firm evidence of Minoan administration on the island of Thera.

47. Hallager (1996) believes that the rings were state owned. Very valuable observations are made by Pini in CMS II. 6 XXI-XXIX; Pini does not commit himself to any theory about the identity of the ring bearers.

48. See Chapter 6, note 24.

49. Plutarch writes that Artaxerxes gave his ring to a friend as a sign of recognition (Plutarch, Artaxerxes, 18).We are told about the image on the ring: dancing Karyatides. This story indicates that the images are not inherently related to the person who wears the ring but that the relationship is arbitrary and culturally constructed. I am grateful to D. Kyrtatas for this reference.

50. No distinction in the iconography of the Minoan and Mycenaean rings is evident in Younger's compilation of themes (Younger 1988), and Pini has said that he has difficulties in finding criteria for distinction between Minoan and Mycenaean rings on iconographical grounds.

51. Matz 1958.

52. Marinatos 1993, 5.

53. Burkert 2004a.

54. Wyatt 2002, 11–24; West 1997, 84.

Chapter 2: The King and Queen in Art

1. See, for example, Beckman's entry on Hittite festivals in Johnston 2004, 336–39.

2. Hood (1971, 146) takes kingship for granted although there is no discussion devoted to it.

3. In a book devoted to rulers in the Bronze Age (Rehak 1995a), nobody except the present author accepted Evans's notion that sacral kingship existed in Crete, although Mycenaean kings were readily acknowledged. Krattenmaker (1995a, 58) comes to the conclusion that the palace represents authority but that kings themselves are nowhere evident. The logic of this argument is not clear to me. See also Farnoux 1995; Preziosi and Hitchcock 1999, 120–22.

4. Evans PM IV, 942.

5. For a method of reading Greek myths, I selectively mention here Burkert 1979 and Vernant 1980. For Ugaritic myths, see Wyatt 2005a.

6. Evans PM I, 2.

7. Hägg and Marinatos 1984; Laffineur and Niemeier 1995; Hamilakis 2002a. See especially Koehl 1995a, 23–35; Koehl 1986, 1997; Hitchcock 2000.

8. See collection of articles in Hägg and Marinatos 1984.

9. Marinatos 1984c, 167–76; Marinatos 2000.

10. Pelon 1995; Cultraro 2000.

11. Betancourt 2002, 211.

12. Davis 1995. See also the comments of Kopcke in the discussion following the paper of Crowley 1995.

13. The shape of the head itself suggests that it was topped by a crown.

14. Poursat 1977, pl. XXXVIII no. 350; and pl. XLVIII.

15. Evans PM II, fig. 506a.

16. Teissier 1996, 80–84; 87–88. Jean-Claude Poursat (1977) suggests that the sphinx is a Mycenaean, not a Minoan idiom. The thesis here is that it arrived at both Crete and the Mycenaean mainland through Syria, and it is connected with royal ideology in both cultures.

17. Teissier 1996, 80–88, no. 142; 192–95.

18. Evans PM II, 774–90.

19. Niemeier 1987.

20. Shaw 2004.

21. It is no accident that Mycenaean royalty borrowed this very emblem, although, to date, only females in Mycenaean art, i.e. queens or goddesses, are represented wearing it. For an overview of paintings where the plumed hat appears, see Immerwahr 1990, 114–21, pls. 58, 61, 62, 92. For ivories, see Poursat 1977, pls. 12; 28; 53.

22. Schroer 1985, 53–115.

23. Winter (1983, 170, n. 415) suggests that the man with the long robe on this particular seal is a ruler because of his curved scepter, which is reminiscent of that of the Hittite king.

24. The scarab seal is discussed in Schroer 1985, 53–115. Winter (1983, 244) identifies the figure from Qatna as a god because of the small horns engraved on the headdress. Similar seated sculptures of men wearing long mantles are found in Ugarit and are identified as either gods or kings (see, for example, Schroer 1985, 72, figs. 23–24).

25. See Evans PM IV, figs. 341–43 for figures carrying such insignias. The dolphin is also a royal emblem; this is why dolphins decorated the palace of Knossos (see Immerwahr 1990, 48, pl. 31; 80, fig. 23; and CMS II. 8, 258; see also Rehak 1994).

26. Betts 1981, 74–83; Davis 1995, 15; Koehl 1995a, 30–31. Koehl acknowledges that the axe is an emblem of royal nature and argues that the head priest and chief may be the same person in chiefdoms or proto-states. Catalogue in Younger 1995, 162–65. Most recently, Cultraro 2001, 265.

27. Rehak 1995b, 111.

28. Evans PM IV, 419–21; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1987; Koehl 1995a, 31, pl. XIIIb; Cultraro 2001, 263–64. For Syrian axes, see Matthiae 1984, 61, fig. 13.

29. Evans PM IV, 412; Marinatos 1993, 129.

30. For debates regarding the attire, see Evans PM II, 341, fig. 194; Nilsson 1950, 160–62; Demargne 1949; S. Marinatos 1967, A27, fig. 4; and Cultraro 2001, 259–60 with recent bibliography. Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1971, 78 no. 181, 107.

31. Evans PM IV, 219; Nilsson (1950, 160) calls him "a headman with a cuirass." S. Marinatos (1976) calls him a "local ruler." See also Sapouna-Sakellaraki, 107, 123–29, pls. 44–45, 52.

32. Demargne 1949, 280–88.

33. Keel 1978, 278–79.

34. On the forelock (*hornfrisur*), see S. Marinatos 1967, B12.

35. Betts 1981, 74–83; CMS II.3, 13 and 196; VIII, 110 a–c; IX, 6D; X, 278. S. Marinatos (1967, B7) however, identifies them as rulers. I must correct my previous view (Marinatos 1993, 127–33) that they are priests.

36. CMS IX, 6D and CMS X, 278.

37. For example, Seti I and Ramses II are represented with their crown princes (Kitchen 1982, 34, fig. 12; Lange-Hirmer 1956, pl. 219).

38. This man is not an African, as originally interpreted by S. Marinatos, but a ruler (N. Marinatos 1987, 137–41 with bibliography).

39. Stevenson Smith 1965, 22–23; Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 68.

40. Chariots do not appear before the Eighteenth Dynasty: Wiese 1990, 81–87; Keel 1995, 202; Teissier 1996.

41. Karo 1933, 29–35; Vermeule 1964, 90–94; Hood 1978, 96–98. Karo and others after him did not understand that the lion is a companion of the king and saw the two scenes as inorganically connected. For Egyptian parallels in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasty art, see Saleh and Sourouzian 1986, no. 178 (Tutankhamun accompanied by lion); Kitchen 1982, 167, fig. 52; Keel 1978, 86–87, fig. 103.

42. Three imprints have been found at Sklavokampos and Hagia Triada in Crete and at Akrotiri, Thera. They are made by the same ring (Marinatos 1976, 16–17, pl. 115; Pini in CMS VS.3, 391).

43. Evans (PM IV, 812–25) collects chariot scenes but does not discuss the Knossos

41. Wilsson in Johnston 2004, 378.
42. Nilsson 1950, 330–40; see also Burkert 2004b, 5–9.
43. Popham 1974, 217, 223, fig. 14D; Herakleion museum no. 1034.
44. This is also the conclusion by G. Rethemiotakis (personal communication).
45. See also Burkert 2004b, 9–14; and Ezekiel 1:1.
46. Dimopoulou and Rethemiotakis (2000) suggest that the same goddess is depicted in two phases of epiphany in cartoonlike fashion. For a summary of the discussion on minute figures, see Rehak 2002 and Cain 2001, 36–37.
47. Collon 1987, 123.
48. Nissinen 2003, 5; Nissinen 2004.
49. "Toutes ces propheties Mariotes sont des encouragements sans reserve addressés au pouvoir legal," Durand 1997, 132.
50. Nilsson 1950, 262.

Chapter 8: The Cosmic Mountain as a Frontier

1. Evans PM I, 276–89; and PM IV, 665–763.
2. Evans PM I, fig. 214.
3. Evans PM I, 151–63; and PM II, 159, fig. 81.
4. The same shape is found on the top of altars in Syro-Palestine and Cyprus. Yet this does not constitute proof that they are animal horns, but simply means that there was a *koine* of altar symbolism. See, for example, Figure 8.3.
5. Evans 1921, fig. 214, no. 37.
6. Evans 1921, 136–37.
7. Illustrated by Perrot and Chipiez 1887, 392, fig. 206. Inscription dating from the time of Darius I, 521–485 BCE.
8. Nilsson 1950, 183.
9. Nilsson 1950, 189. See in general 165–93.
10. Nilsson 1950, 119: "Altars . . . must be recognized by their form." This is a serious methodological error confusing form and function. Altars may differ in form, especially if we are to apply an interregional comparative perspective, but their function will remain the same: they are offering places for the god. The confusion in Nilsson's categories is evident if we look at figs. 35, 61, 73, 77, 78, 80, 83, 85–87, 142, 162.
11. Gaerte 1922; Nilsson 1950, 187–88.
12. Powell 1977.
13. MacGillivray 2000a, 123–30; Watrous 1989, 23.
14. Dijkstra (1991) sees the two mountains as representing specific topography which may well be right but the ideogram must have indicated also a general cosmic topography. Laroche 1960, 125, no. 228.
15. Evans PM I, 632, fig. 470; Nilsson 1950, 171, fig. 72.
16. Goodison 1989, 74, fig. 133.
17. CMS V, 201; Evans PM IV, 467, fig. 392; Nilsson 1950, 148, fig. 56; Marinatos 1993, 169.
18. Also, the cosmic serpent rises between the mountain peaks in the tomb of Senned-jem: Wilkinson 1992, 132, fig. 1.

19. He is incorporated in the royal *aedicula.* Bittel et al. 1941, 214, fig. 249; Haas 1982, 49–54.
20. For the mountain as a cosmic center, see Clifford 1972; and Wyatt 2001, 147–57.
21. Davaras, Hagios Nikolaos Museum, fig. 31.
22. Keel 1978, 23–24.
23. Lions also guard the horizon gate in Egyptian art: Wilkinson 1992, 68–69. Shamash steps with one foot on a mountaintop as though he conquers it: Collon 1982, pl. xxiv, nos. 168; Collon 1987, 166, no. 766; discussion on p. 167. On other seals with similar iconography the sun god appears through a regular gate that frames a twin-peak mountain. For further examples, see Keel 1978, 22–26, fig. 8; Collon 1987, 34, no. 103; 126, no. 537, etc.
24. See Black and Green 1992, 114, under *kur.* The authors are puzzled at how the same word can have such diverse meanings; they suggest they possibly have different origins.
25. "Certainly in some myths the mountains (*kur*) are treated as an other-worldly locale": Black and Green 1992, 114. On cosmic mountains in Canaan: Clifford 1972; and Burkert 1996, 83.
26. Hecker et al. 1994, Tablet XII, col. ii.
27. *Gilgamesh,* Tablet IX, col. ii, 1–5. For the cosmic geography of Gilgamesh, see Horowitz 1998. The cosmic mountain is also the house of Belet-ili, the Mistress of the mountain: Meissner 1920–1925, 2:120
28. Meissner 1920–1925, II, 378–79; Horowitz 1998, 20–42; and Wyatt 2001, 81–82.
29. Wyatt 2001, 82.
30. Between each set of three is an extra fourth one, which is the throne of god. The Book of Enoch makes use of ancient Mediterranean cosmography according to Nickelsburg (2001, 279–80).
31. Wyatt 2001, 154.
32. Evans PM I, 154–56; Karetsou 1981, 137–53, esp. 142–43, figs. 5–7, 145, fig. 10; Rutkowski 1988; Peatfield 1987; Peatfield 1990; Watrous 1995; Jones 1999.

Chapter 9: The Double Axe, the Ankh, and the Ox Head

Epigraph: Evans PM I, 447.

1. Nilsson 1950, 194.
2. The double axe has been associated with the palace of Knossos, and rightly so. What is more dubious is the assumption that it was called *labrys* in Minoan times, a theory that cannot be established securely. On the contrary, if the phonetic values of Linear A correspond to those of Linear B (a reasonable assumption), then the double axe has the phonetic value "a" and not "la." For *labrys,* see Plutarch, *Quaestiones Graecae,* 302A. See also discussion of labyrinth/labrys in Nilsson 1950, 223–25 with note 34. The association of the double axe with the labyrinth is commonly made; see for example Alexiou 1964, 91; Alexiou 1969b; and Pötscher 1990, 60. Note the reservations of Davaras (1976,

73), who calls the Anatolian connection "obsolete." More recently the question has been reviewed by Sippel 1986a and Sippel 1986b. Good critical discussion of the history of the concept can be found in MacGillivray 2000, 213–14. There is a Mycenaean word in Linear B, *da-pu-ri-jo*, which is viewed as linguistically equivalent to *la-by-ri-nthos* and Anatolian *labrys*.

3. Evans PM I, 447. Some scholars have followed this view, accepting that a deity or a unification of two deities are represented by the axe, although there is disagreement as to whether the deity was a female chthonic goddess or a male weather god. See in particular Pötscher (1990, 151–60) who postulates that the axe stands for a male god but the birds perching on it are female and the whole complex signifies sacred marriage between gods and goddess.

4. Nilsson 1950, 227; criticism of Evans: 223–25. See also Dietrich 1988.

5. Marinatos 1986, 22–25; 51–72; Varschoonwinkel 2004.

6. Rutkowski (1981, 91–97) rightly stresses that the double axe is an emblem of kingship. See also Davaras 1976, 71–74.

7. For a different interpretation of the double axe as a sacrificial symbol on the larnakes: Watrous 1991, 302–5 with pls. 82 a; 87 c; 88 f;

8. Lurker 1980, 36.

9. Wilkinson 1992, 57; see also the *Introduction to the Book of the Dead* by Hornung 1990b, 33. For solar cow, see Wilkinson 1994, 72–73 and fig. 45.

10. For the associations of the bull with the moon god, see Bernett and Keel 1998, 62–93.

11. Fribourg Biblical Institute collection: Keel and Schroer 1998, Tafel III b.

12. Evans PM I, fig. 312. The Mycenaean seal is flanked by sacred garments, which, in my view, represent a cult emblem of the goddess (see Demargne 1949). On the Egyptian scarab seal the motifs are hawks, the sacred birds, and the manifestation of the sun.

13. Evans PM II, fig. 338.

14. Keel (1998, 34–40) has shown that the disc is sometimes a lunar one.

15. Winter 1983, fig. 213.

16. See recent discussion in Kyriakidis 2005, 151–52, fig. 21.

17. Evans, PM IV, 597 B, g.

18. CMS II. 8, 326.

19. In Hittite myth and iconography the firmament is carried by two bulls, Herri and Hurri, in the sanctuary of Yazilikaya: Bittel et al. 1941, nos. 28–29. See also Black and Green 1992, 49.

20. Faulkner 1985, 79, Spell 81A.

21. Reeves 1990, 66.

22. Evans PM II, 473, 483.

23. Evans PM II, 475.

24. Niemeier 1989, pl. 8, XVII A1.

25. Evans PM IV, fig. 286; Niemeier 1985, 117; Betancourt and Davaras 1995, 35–36.

26. Wilkinson 1992, 201.

27. Evans PM I, 200, 280–81.

28. Evans 1901, 178; PM I, 434–35; Nilsson 1950, 207–12.

29. Wilkinson 1992, 177. The origin of its visual form is still uncertain.

30. Laroche 1960, 195, no. 369.

31. Bossert 1932. See also Evans 1901, 178, fig. 54; Laroche 1960, 195.

32. Teissier 1996, 158–61.

33. Scholars normally identify this as a sea star, but this is impossible because it is suspended in space, does not crawl at the bottom, and is too large.

34. See Chapter 11.

35. Lambert 1996, 129, lines 37–38. This Babylonian hymn, found in Ashurbanibal's library, probably goes back to the second millennium.

36. Frankfort 1948, 105–23; Keel 1978, 15–46; Hornung 1990a; Wyatt 2001, 184–87.

37. *Gilgamesh*, Tablet X, ii; Dalley 1989, 102.

38. Lambert 1996, 129, line 36.

39. Lambert 1996, 127, lines 31–32.

40. KTU 1.6; Wyatt 2002, 134.

41. KTU 1.161 R15; Wyatt 2002, 437.

42. Götze 1957, 138.

43. TUAT, 811–15 nos. 3, 4. Transl. Ahmed Ünal. For an analysis of that and similar myths, see Pecchioli Daddi 2001, 407.

44. Hymn to the sun god, Faulkner 1985, 27. See also Hornung 1990b, Spell 15b, p. 57.

45. Spell 15 in Faulkner 1985, 41.

46. Bosanquet and Dawkins 1923, pl. XX; Bossert 1932, pl. 166. Bosanquet (50) recognized the star as the sun.

47. Rethemiotakis 1979, 228–59.

48. Buccholz 1959.

49. Evans 1914, 1–59.

50. Nilsson 1950, fig. 97; Betancourt and Davaras 1999, 136.

51. Hornung 1982, 125.

52. Wilkinson 1992, 57, 127; Hornung 1982, 125–35.

53. Keel 1995, 21–22.

Chapter 10: The Rosette, Half-Rosette, and "Incurved Altar"

1. Evans recognized the sun as the rayed disc: Evans 1909, I, 221, no.107a; cf. also Davis 1967, 179, fig. 133; 205. The rosette is a pictogram, also on the Phaistos disc: Davis 1967, 88–94.

2. Evans PM I, 241, col. pl. II; 585, fig. 428; Pendlebury 1939, 112–13, fig. 17, no. 9; fig. 18, no. 30; Betancourt 1990, figs. 44–45. Niemeier 1985, 84: "Die Rosette zählt zu den ältesten Motive der minoischen Kunst." Note its occurrence on the Phaistos disc as sign no. 38: Evans PM I, 652.

3. Crete (Kaphtor) is mentioned in the correspondence of king Zimrilim at Mari. Durand 1997, 159; Guichard 1999, 167–77.

4. It is absent from the hieroglyphic grid, Evans PM I, 282, fig. 214. See also Davis 1967, 182.

5. Bietak 1996, col. pl. iiib. Bietak, Marinatos, and Palyvou 2000, 77–90; Bietak, Marinatos, and Palyvou 2007.

6. See Chapter 2, notes 46–49.

7. Teissier 1996, 101, 111. She considers it a symbol of Ishtar and connects it with femininity.

8. Collon 1987, 49, no 180. That the rosette is the sun in Syrian glyptic is established also by Otto 2000, 230ff.

9. Otto 2000, 230.

10. Several vases of the New Palace period in Crete and the island of Thera furnish such examples; see Niemeier 1989, 119, fig. 57. Niemeier (1989, 117) calls the rosette a knob or handle: "Knauf."

11. Evans PM II, fig. 254.

12. The green leaves were clearly observed by the first excavators and commentators. See Harrison 1962, 162.

13. Teissier 1996, 71.

14. The interpretation of the rosette as life is suggested by its meaning as "life" in Luwian/Hittite hieroglyphs.

15. Teissier 1996, 71; Keel 1998, 20–36. Keel, however, does not stress the solar aspects of the palm.

16. Collon 1987, 58.

17. Evans PM III, 30–31, col. Pl. XV. Evans rightly stresses the comparative material from Egypt.

18. Bietak, Marinatos, and Palyvou 2000, 78–79. For another view with which I disagree, see Weißl 2000.

19. Evans PM II, fig. 450.

20. Bossert 1932; Reusch 1958, 351–352.

21. We may draw some further cautious inferences. In the same Luwian/Hittite hieroglyphic script, the sun is rendered as a staff with a triple split rosette. This suggests that the basic symbolism of the rosette is solar and that this meaning was extended to denote "god": Laroche 1960, no.191.

22. Evans PM II, fig. 381.

23. Evans PM I, fig. 214, no 55.

24. Evans PM IV, 613.

25. Nilsson 1950, 253.

26. Shaw 1986, 108–23.

27. Wilkinson 1992, 159.

28. Ibid.

Chapter 11: Minoan Afterlife Beliefs

1. Discussion of these materials can be found in Rutkowski 1966; Mavriyiannaki 1972; Alexiou 1972; Watrous 1991; Rethemiotakis 1995; Immerwahr 1995; Marinatos 1997.

2. Evans PM IV, 964–78.

3. The sanctuary has been largely reconstructed: Evans PM IV, 964–68.

4. I would like to mention especially the work of Alexiou 1972, Rethemiotakis 1995 and Davaras 1986, all of whom rightly refer to a Minoan version of the Greek Elysium in their publications of specific larnakes. See also Mavriyiannaki 1972; Tzedakis 1971; Kanta 1973, 315–21. Vermeule's study focuses on hunting. The killing of the animals, she argues, makes them holy and gives them a spiritual intimacy with nature: Vermeule 1979, 66–67. I find this logic difficult to grasp. More sober is Immerwahr 1995. See also Marinatos 1993, Ch. 11. The most synthetic work is by Watrous 1991, who stresses that the iconography of Minoan larnakes has an affinity with Egyptian funerary iconography.

5. Some of the motifs on the larnakes were foreshadowed by Palace Style pottery: see Niemeier 1985.

6. Watrous 1991, 303.

7. Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* Act 3, Scene 1, lines 79–80.

8. Most stem from the Nineteenth Dynasty: Budge 1906. The best recent analysis supplemented with pictures is that of Hornung (1990a).

9. For the Egyptian gates of the beyond, see Hornung 1982, 1990a, and 1990b.

10. Meissner 1925, II, 378–79; Horowitz 1998, 20–42; Wyatt 2001, 81–82.

11. See Horowitz 1998. For the dark region, page 33. In Akkadian, *milu* and *zinu,* but this word is difficult to interpret. Instead of wondrous trees, it may signify a region of high rainfall or flooding (38). For the land of horned cattle, see page 39.

12. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* has a long tradition that spans the entire Bronze Age and comes down to the time of King Ashurbanibal in the seventh century BCE.

13. Tablet IX.v; Dalley 1998, 98–99.

14. Marinatos 2002.

15. Evans PM III, 155–56. He was discussing there the forged ring (of Nestor). Yet, his description is very applicable.

16. *Gilgamesh,* Tablet X, ii; Dalley 1998, 102. Utnapishtim's island may be likened to that of the Phaecians in the *Odyssey:* it is a region for semi-divine peoples and cannot be reached by ordinary humans except under very special circumstances. Its inhabitants, like the Phaecians of the *Odyssey,* may consort with the gods. The island of Utnapishtim, then, is a frontier to the habitat of the gods; see Strasburger 1998.

17. Hesiod, *Erga,* 171.

18. Herodotus writes in the middle of the fifth century BCE but embodies views that go back a century earlier.

19. KTU 1.4 viii; Wyatt 2002, 112.

20. Rethemiotakis 1979, 228–59.

21. Marinatos and Hirmer 1976, pl. 130; Marinatos 1993, 231–32.

22. *Gilgamesh,* Tablet XI, lines 209–307.

23. Hornung 1990a and 1990b, 55–57, Spells 15, 17, 18.

24. Derived from the Ani papyrus. See Faulkner 1985, 79 and Wilkinson 1992, 121 with references.

25. Faulkner 1985, 160, Spell 164.

Chapter 12: The Solar Goddess of Kingship

1. Evans PM III, 463–68.

2. Sugaya 2000, 273–82; Owens 1996a and 1996b, 209–18. In Owen's account, Astarte is hardly differentiated from Anat and Ishtar.

3. Most influential is Gimbutas (1995) who generalizes the concept to include Neolithic Europe. More moderate are Alexiou 1969a, 70–71: "Equally the creative power of nature assumed the traits of the Great Mother"; Hood 1971, 131: "The Chief deity worshipped by the Bronze Age Cretans was evidently a goddess; either a single goddess under different aspects, or a group of goddesses with different names but basically similar in character. The Cretan goddesses were versions of the Goddess of Fertility worshipped throughout the Near East in earlier times"; Owens 1996b, 212: "The Great Goddess has been seen as common to every culture in her many guises"; Kourou 2001, 34: "Most tree cults are extreme in their realism often directly implying a personification of the Great Goddess as a tree." The other extreme is represented by skepticism towards mythological interpretation. Thomas and Wedde (2001) discuss iconography as well as Linear B (Mycenaean sources) and conclude that "although visible in the written sources, no clear characterization of *potnia* emerges from Linear B sources. The written evidence cannot be equated with archaeological sources." For criticism of the approaches to the great goddess, see Lapatin 2002, 66–90.

4. Nilsson 1950, 393.

5. Evans PM III, 406. For a recent reassessment, see Keel and Schroer 2006.

6. The idea of matriarchy is due to J. J. Bachofen (original edition appeared in 1861) who, however, spoke of *Mutterrecht* not matriarchy. Due to Bachofen, an entire school of social evolutionist history was founded, which had an impact on Evans, Jane Ellen Harrison, and many other scholars. Discussion and evaluation of the history of (the now outdated) idea of matriarchy for the Near East can be found in Lapatin 2002, 66–90; and Winter 1983, 416–20. Matrilineality, on the other hand, is another phenomenon. It is very probable for Ugarit, at least for the royal family: Wyatt 1999, 544.

7. Rehak 1995b.

8. I have previously sided with those who see the male grasping the wrist of the goddess as an erotic gesture (Marinatos 1993, 1990 with notes 73–75); I no longer think this likely. Recently Koehl 2001, 237–43.

9. Evans PM III, 464. Nilsson 1950, 405. See also Evans PM III, 464 and Dimopoulou and Rethemiotakis 2000.

10. Niemeier 1987 and 1989.

11. Nilsson's thesis is that the Great Goddess portrays the decay and revival of nature: Nilsson 1950, 401–3 with discussion.

12. Evans, PM III, 464.

13. Such an interpretation is suggested by two pieces of evidence. First, a gold ring from Poros, Crete, which I have seen thanks to the kindness of the excavator Nota Dimopoulou and Giorgos Rethemiotakis, shows a seated goddess and a standing god.

Above the goddess is the sun; above the god is the moon. Second, in Egypt the moon is conceived as the son of the sun god.

14. Collon 1994, 81–88, fig. 5. Collon suggests that the motifs can be connected with Alalakh level VII, namely the seventeenth century BCE. Our scenes would be two centuries later according to the traditional chronology, but the new chronology (based on scientific evidence of the volcanic Thera eruption) and adopted by W.-D. Niemeier, would make the Minoan new palace period almost contemporary with Alalakh. I opt for traditional chronology.

15. See also the parallel iconography on a late Egyptian relief of the time of Nectanebo II: Cornelius 2004, 43, fig. 33.

16. Winter (1983, 452) assumes he is a king. The similarity of dress and attributes of god and king have been discussed in Chapter 2. They are a big subject in the discussion of the Hittite deities at Yazilikaya: Bittel et al. 1941, 67 (where god 34 looks exactly like the king).

17. Winter 1983, 449.

18. Bittel et al. 1941, 86; Götze (1957, 136–37) includes citations from hymns.

19. Bittel 1976, fig. 198. A relief at Alaca Hoyük, however, shows the goddess as seated, approached by three males: Bittel 1976, 192, fig. 216.

20. See Güterbock 1943, 307; Götze 1957, 139–46. The relief in question probably dates to the reign of king Tudhaliya IV: Bittel et al. 1941, 86; and Bittel 1976, 167.

21. Cornelius also reaches this conclusion for the Ugaritic Athirat. Cornelius (2004, 100) cites all available iconographical evidence.

22. Wyatt 2001, 168–69.

23. ANET, 393.

24. The narrative exists in an early second millennium and a first millennium version, the so-called Standard Babylonian, which is the one cited here: Dalley 1998, 203.

25. *Anzu* I in Dalley 1998, 210–11.

26. Annus 2001; Wyatt 2006, 5.

27. KTU 1.6 i 45, 48: Wyatt 2002, 131–32.

28. Two of the many examples: KTU 1.4 iv 33 in Wyatt 2002, 99; KTU 1.8 ii 2 in Wyatt 2002, 152.

29. KTU 1.6 i 44–47 in Wyatt 2002, 131.

30. Wyatt 1999, 540–44; Wyatt 2002, 132 with n. 75.

31. KTU 1.15 ii. 27 in Wyatt 2002, 209.

32. Wyatt 1999, 544.

33. This ring has been lost, but a replica was produced and has survived. CMS II. 3, 252; Nilsson 1950, 269–70; Sourvinou-Inwood 1973; Niemeier 1989, 182; Marinatos 1993, 162–63, fig. 150.

34. *rbt atrt* ym. Albright 1968, 105; Wyatt 2005a, 18–37; 38–54.

35. Wyatt 2005a, 18–37 at 19–20.

36. KTU 1.6 iv 45–52 in Wyatt 2005a, 20.

37. Nilsson 1950, 223.

38. Evans PM IV, 94.

39. Notably the goddesses from Gournia and Gazi: Alexiou 1958, pls. E3, Z; Marinatos 1993, 226, fig. 229.

40. Long 1974, 54–55.

41. Long (1974, 73) suggests they are men, but men would not be depicted along with goddesses. Therefore, they must be the dead.

42. Consider also the following texts, which show that Shapshu goes to the end of the world: "Mother Shapshu, take a message to Ilu at the headwaters of the two rivers, and the confluence of the deeps," or, "Mother Shapshu, take a message to Kotaru-wa-Hashishu in Caphtor (Crete)." For RS 24.244 see Pardee 2002, 174, 177–79.

43. Spyridon Marinatos thought that she may have been *A-ka-ka-lis,* basing his conclusion on the fact that one syllable is duplicated in both the Linear A word and the Greek mythological name.

44. In addition to Platon 1958, see more recently Hiller 2000, 107–35; and Owens 1996b, 209–18.

45. Goodison 1989, 173–76. See also Moss 2005.

46. Burkert 1985, 43–46.

47. Cornelius 1994, 80–81.

48. Munn 2006.

Chapter 13: The Storm God

1. Cf. Alexiou 1969a: "The powerful gods of Olympus—Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo—seem foreign to the small pantheon of Minoan religion dominated by female deities." See the summary statement of Burkert 2000, 23: "The warrior figure is strikingly absent from the Minoan civilization of Crete."

2. Evans PM III, 464.

3. Evans PM III, 464–65; compare with Frazer 1949, 327–29. Note that the source of Frazer's Adonis is the Roman author Macrobius. For criticism of fertility theories, see Mettinger 2001; Wyatt 1999; and Wyatt 2005b. For a recent interpretation of the Minoan god as a year god, see Otto 2001, 27–48.

4. Discussion in Burkert 1979.

5. Nilsson 1950, 400–12, esp. 411.

6. Hallager 1985, as well as Niemeier 1987; Niemeier 1989; Marinatos 1993, 166–74 with bibl.; and Dimopoulou and Rethemiotakis 2000. MacGillivray 2000a.

7. Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 66–68, fig. 35; 66–67, figs 56–67. See also Cornelius 1994 for the iconography of Canaanite male deities.

8. Hornung 1982 has a seminal discussion of the "one and the many" in connection with Egyptian religion and iconography. Scholars of Greek religion, on the other hand, debate endlessly if the Mistress of Animals on a given Geometric or Archaic piece is Athena or Artemis or Hera. The issue of identity may be solved once and for all if we acknowledge that roles may overlap with names and admit that art gives us information about the latter and not the former.

9. Niemeier 1987; Niemeier 1989.

10. The god and lion: Cornelius 1994, 195–208, pls. 49–51. See also Fulco 1976.

11. Genette 1980; Cain 2001, 29. A more complex view is offered by Lebessi et al. 2004, 22–23.

12. Cain 2001, 29.

13. Cain 2001.

14. For the various Hittite storm gods, see Götze 1957, 130–34. For the Standard Babylonian version c. 720 BCE see Annus 2001.

15. Bietak 1996, 41; Dijkstra 1991.

16. Cornelius (1994, 258) argues that Reshep never has an enemy and he is a defensive god—an averter of plagues—unlike Baal. Reshep is primarily a healing god and a god of pestilence. See also Burkert et al. 2003, 3–4; Collon 1972.

17. Burkert 1975, 51–79, reprinted as Burkert et al. 2003, 22–25.

18. Götze 1957, 139; TUAT 808–11; for an analysis of the myth on a comparative basis, see Haas 1982, 118–25; Burkert 1979, 8–9; and Uehlinger 1995; ANET, 125–28.

19. Annus 2001.

20. Discussions of *Chaoskampf* (war against forces of chaos) in the Near East in Keel 1978, 47–56; Haas 1982, 118–125; Uehlinger 1995; Annus 2001; and Wyatt 2005.

21. This view is still widely held today. See Otto 2001, 27–48.

22. An exemplary discussion of this issue concerns Ninurta, which Annus 2001 connects with kingship.

23. Wyatt 1997 and Wyatt 2005b.

24. Uehlinger 1995; Wyatt 2005b.

25. He usually has seven or twelve adversaries. Heracles and Ninurta share this in common: Annus 2001, 109–21; Burkert 1979, 78–88.

26. For refined analysis, see Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 55–109, Summary and perceptive comments can be found in Burkert 2000.

27. Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 134–38; Wyatt 2006.

28. The political dimension is explored by Uehlinger 1995, 13–16.

29. Wyatt 2006.

30. Wyatt 1997, 778–79 with further refs.

31. That the time span of the rings coincides with the New Palace period has been cogently argued by Pini 2000, 239–44.

32. Dijkstra (1991) identifies the two mountains as specific topographical locations, but it seems to me that they rather signify dominance over the entire world.

33. Porada 1984, 485–88; Bietak 1994, 57; Dijkstra 1991, 127–40.

34. Originally published by Levi, 1925–26b, no. 114. Also see Pini 1989, 203, fig. 1; CMS II. 6, 16. Pini suggests that the god's weapon was a sword. It may be argued that the Minoan smiting figure is a king, but since king and god are interchangeable in Minoan art (Chapter 2), this makes no big difference.

35. Keel 1978, 293–97; Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 84–92.

36. Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 129.

37. Bossert 1937, fig. 400 f.; Nilsson 1950, 40; CMS 5:173 with bibl.

38. Loud 1939, pl. 4; Wiesner 1968, 190, fig. 39.

39. Nilsson 1950, 40.