

Hillicock

Invisible People and Processes

Writing Gender and Childhood into European
Archaeology

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9 Engendering domination: a structural and contextual analysis of Minoan Neopalatial bronze figurines

LOUISE A. HITCHCOCK

We need to analyse artefacts in terms that go entirely beyond them.
(Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley 1987)

Introduction

As in other areas of Minoan archaeology, consensus, agreement and certainty regarding the overall status of women and their relationship to Minoan social, religious and political structures is lacking. Generally speaking, representations depict women of high status and seem to fall into certain categories: goddesses/priestesses, or a goddess impersonator whose image takes many forms; and attendants, worshippers, and protagonists in festivals and rituals believed to revolve around rites of passage and various aspects of fertility. Women occur in idealized depictions as young girls, as adolescents, and as mature women. The media of representation for women in the Neopalatial period (c. 1700-1450 BCE) includes the frescoes, seal iconography and bronze figurines which are the subject of this chapter.

Previous research on Cretan bronzes has resulted in the production of an empiricist catalogue and typology that distinguished eight different types of gestures (Verlinden 1984). Six of these are attested in Minoan bronzes from the Neopalatial period. These six gestures form the analytical background for this chapter and may be described as follows:

- Gesture 1 This is the so-called 'Minoan Salute' with variations in the form of sub-types a-d discussed in Verlinden (1984: 90-1), in which the right hand touches or is directed toward the forehead and the left arm remains at the side or is bent across the chest (Figures 9.1 and 9.2).
- Gesture 2 Both hands are bent toward the face (Figure 9.3).
- Gesture 3 Both hands are placed on the hips (Figure 9.4).
- Gesture 4 Both hands are folded on the chest (Figure 9.5).
- Gesture 5 The hands are crossed on the chest (Figure 9.6).
- Gesture 6 The right hand is folded on the chest, the left hand remains at the side (Figure 9.7).

In order to attempt to work out the relationship of the figurines to social practice in my study, I selected gender, gesture and context as significant traits,

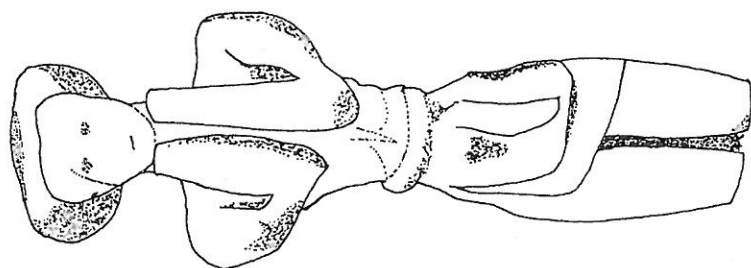


Figure 9.3 Gesture 2 (from the environs of Phaistos, Crete)

thereby introducing gender as one of the analytical concepts used (Gero and Conkey 1991: 9ff.). My data consisted of 114 out of 116 published Neopalatial bronze figurines depicting adult humans (Verlinden 1984; Lebessi and Muhly 1990: fig. 14).

My analysis of the figurines was carried out on several levels: at the level of the objects themselves to tabulate the traits and examine their numerical breakdown (Tables 9.1–9.3); followed by a detailed descriptive analysis of the network of associations produced through archaeological context. I also searched the corpus of seal representations in the *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel* (CMS) for gestures that were similar or identical to those made by the figurines, thereby introducing another level of context (Table 9.4). In attempting to interrelate all three levels of analysis, new networks of associations came into play, creating an ever-widening hermeneutic spiral (Hodder 1992; Shanks 1992) of contextual associations that I believe are relevant to documenting social

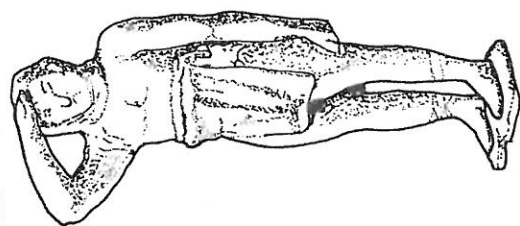


Figure 9.1 Gesture 1 (from Tylissos, House A, Crete)

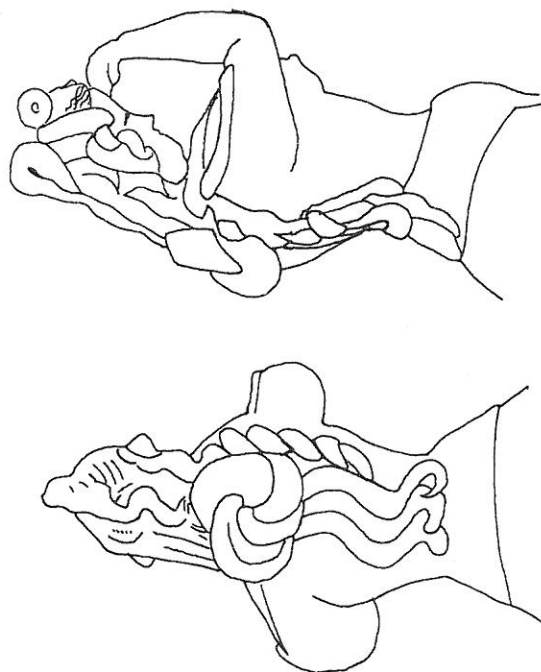


Figure 9.2 Gesture 1 variation 1b (from Troad, Turkey)

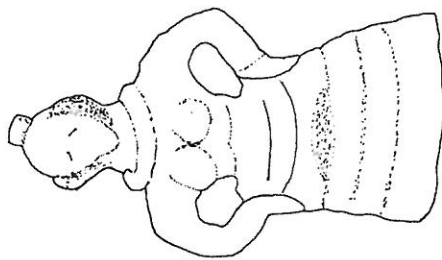


Figure 9.4 Gesture 3 (from Palaikastro, room 41, region X, Crete)

practice. This chapter presents a summary of a more detailed, unpublished study (Hitchcock 1991) along with a detailed discussion of gesture 4 where the hands are folded on the chest.

Gesture, power and authority

I would suggest that gestures 3 and 4 were used to express power and authority by females and males respectively. Although few in number, a broader range of gestures is made by the female figurines (Table 9.3). Multiple explanations for this are possible. They include: the use of certain gestures by females to define their own ideological sphere (Handsman 1991: 329ff.), the indication of a system of social ranking within a religious hierarchy acted out through ritual action for females who had access to bronze, and finally, a greater diversity of roles for women within the social and religious spheres of Minoan life. The vast majority of males as well as a significant percentage of the females tended to cluster in gesture 1a, the Minoan salute (Table 9.1). Here males greatly outnumber females (Table 9.3) by a margin of more than five to one (5.5 to 1 or 50 males to 11 females). The contextual and iconographic evidence clearly indicates that these represented a group or class of worshipper (Figure 9.8). The greater overall numbers of male figurines in proportion to female figurines (a two to one margin, see Table 9.2) further suggests engendered differences in social position as indicated by the asymmetrical distribution of resources (Miller and Tilley 1984: 7), namely bronze. Such disparities in the controlled distribution of a commodity for individual use, seems to be at odds with the portrayal of women in fresco imagery.

Only a single female bronze figurine makes gesture 3 (Figure 9.4). It was found at Palaikastro in a deposit of white ashes, pottery, clay bull heads, lamp

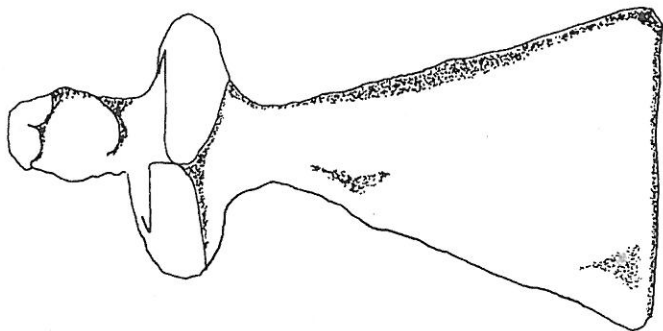


Figure 9.5 Gesture 4 (from the Dictaeon Cave, Lassithi, Crete)

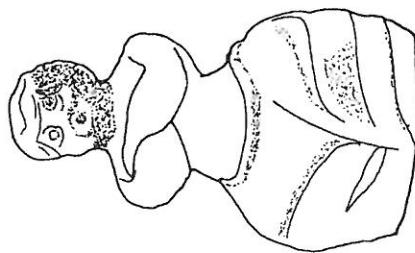


Figure 9.6 Gesture 5 (from Lyttos, Pedias, Crete)

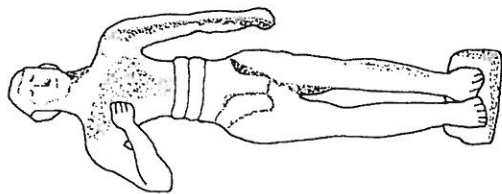


Figure 9.7 Gesture 6 (from Tyliisos, Crete)

Table 9.1 Minoan bronzes, context by gesture

Gesture	PS	C	M	V	T	R	No Prov.	Total
1a	4	10	-	8	-	2	37	61
1b	-	-	-	1	1	-	5*	7
1c	-	1	2	-	-	1	6	10
1d	-	-	-	-	-	-	2*	2
2	-	-	-	2	-	1	1	4
3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
4	2	5	-	3	-	-	3	13
5	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	3
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5

PS = Peak sanctuary, C = Cave, M = Megastucture, V = Villa, T = Temple, R = Rural find, Prov. = Provenance

* One figurine counted twice because it incorporated elements of sub-types b and d. Verlinden (1984) classified it as 1b. The distinctions in Gesture 1 sub-types were made by Verlinden. It is not clear whether the Minoans would have made the same distinction.

fragments, bovine bones and horn cores (Dawkins 1904-5: 287). Facial features are selectively rendered, the skirt has horizontal folds and the hair is in a great curl on top of the head that falls down the back. It is one of only two female figurines wearing jewellery (a necklace), such display being more common to the male figurines. Based on the gesture, Verlinden (1984: 52, n. 119) suggested that it might be a priestess.

The rarity of the gesture, the material, namely bronze, its particular context,

Table 9.2 Minoan bronzes, context by gender

Gender	PS	C	M	V	T	R	No Prov.	Total
M	6	12	2	8	1	2	46	77
F	2	10	-	6	1	2	16	37
Total	8	22	2	14	2	4	62	114

PS = Peak sanctuary, C = Cave, M = Megastucture, V = Villa, T = Temple, R = Rural find, Prov. = Provenance

Table 9.3 Minoan bronzes, context by gender and gesture

Gender	PS	C	M	V	T	R	No Prov.	By gesture
M	3	8	-	8	-	1	28	1a
F	1	2	-	-	-	1	7	1a
M	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1b
F	-	-	-	1	-	-	4*	1b
M	-	-	2	-	-	1	6	1c
F	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1c
M	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1d
F	-	-	-	-	-	-	2*	1d
M	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
F	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	2
M	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	3
F	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
M	1	5	-	3	-	-	1	4
F	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4
M	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	5
F	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	5
M	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6

PS = Peak Sanctuary, C = Cave, M = Megastucture, V = Villa, T = Temple, R = Rural find, Prov. = Provenance

* One figurine counted twice because it incorporated elements of sub-types b and d. Verlinden (1984) classifies it as 1b. The distinctions in Gesture 1 sub-types were made by Verlinden. It is not clear whether the Minoans would have made the same distinction.

and evidence from three seals would tend to support Verlinden's interpretation and my proposition that it was a female gesture of authority. In two instances, there is a central figure rendered in hierarchic scale flanked by two smaller figures. All are making gesture 3 (Figure 9.9). The possible roles of the flanking figures could be attendants, priestesses, worshippers, or minor deities. In addition to the small flanking figures, another example includes a built structure with an associated tree. Similar, though not identical, relationships can be observed in yet another seal in which the flanking figures are not rendered in hierarchic scale, but are both bent over in contrast to the central figure who is still positioned above them by virtue of her posture (Figure 9.10). Both of the flanking figures are associated with built structures associated with columns and vegetation, common Aegean religious symbols.

Table 9.4 Minoan bronzes, iconographic parallels for gestures 1-6*

Gesture	Male	Female	Seal parallels
1a	50	11	M-1
1b	2	5	M-2; F-3
1c	9	1	M-2; F-2, 2?
1d	-	2	F-1; 1?
2	1	3	F-2?
3	-	1	F-3
4	2	11	M-1
5	1	2	-
6	4	1	F-1; 1?

* Parallels which do not derive from seals are not tabulated. Neither are seal parallels which depict the figures gesturing in isolation as these do not provide enough contextual information to permit any kind of interpretive analysis.

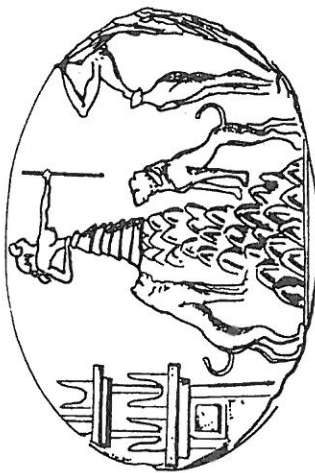


Figure 9.8 So-called Mistress of the Mountains seal from the 'Palace' at Knossos, Crete (after Evans)



Figure 9.9 Gesture 3, Seal from Mycenae, Greece (after CMS I no. 159)

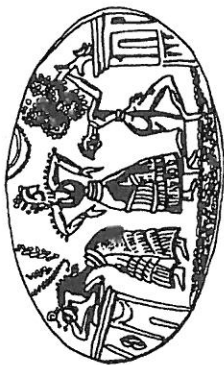


Figure 9.10 Gesture 3, Seal from Mycenae, Greece (after CMS I no. 126)

Context

Males and females are equally well represented in caves and 'villas' (large well-constructed houses incorporating 'palatial' design features; however, their function is not well understood) (Table 9.2). Since males usually greatly outnumber females, the almost equal numbers of females in cave and villa contexts is particularly significant: it suggests that both males and females were taking part in the activities at caves. A number of different functions can be suggested for the figurines found in villas including storage, ritual and personal use. In each case, these interpretations are heavily dependent upon context, and are too detailed to be elaborated here.

In contrast to gesture 1, females making gesture 4 outnumber males by more than five to one (Table 9.3), although in fewer numbers (actually 5.5 to 1, or 2 males to 11 females). Both gesture 1a and 4 occur in the peak sanctuary context (Table 9.1). Based on this, I would like to suggest that gesture 4 is a female gesture of worship employed alternately with gesture 1a. However, females making gesture 4 occur more frequently in cave contexts (Table 9.3). They account for half of the executions of gesture 4 among females. This may be significant, since gesture 4 is one of the two most frequent gestures made by females and more than one quarter of the female bronzes with known provenance occur in caves. Females overall, regardless of their gesture, are rarely attested in peak sanctuary contexts where there are three males for each female. However, at eight, the total number of bronzes from peak and outdoor sanctuaries is so small, little else can be said.

Both of the males that make gesture 4 are unusual. One is a male bronze without provenance (Verlinden 1984, no.93) and wearing a tall, conical cap (Figure 9.11). It is one of only two Neopalatial bronze male figurines which wear headgear. The conical cap connoted divinity or ruler status in the Near East where such caps typically included horns. The Mesopotamian ruler might have himself portrayed with divine attributes such as the conical cap in order to enhance his status, as is depicted in the Akkadian Stele of Naram Sin (Figure 9.12).

The other male bronze figurine making gesture 4 (Figure 9.13) comes from the peak sanctuary at Kato Symi (Lebessi 1988: 154; Lebessi and Muhly 1990: fig.14) and is stylistically dated to the Neopalatial period (Verlinden 1984). It is highly detailed: the eyes are rendered with incised pupils; nose, mouth, and ears

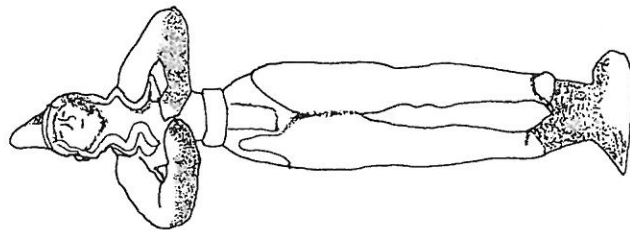


Figure 9.11 Gesture 4, male with conical cap, from Katsaba, Crete

as well as hair falling on the chest and the back are depicted. The largeness of the ears and eyes may have constituted individuating features. The Symi figurine was found in an area referred to as the 'Sacred Enclosure', although the precise location is unclear.

The site of Kato Symi is located in south-eastern Crete on the slopes of Mount Dikte where it overlooks the south coast. The date of the Neopalatial sanctuary is Late Minoan I (c. 1650–1450 BCE). This period is represented by three architectural phases and includes a 'monumental complex' open to the sky and composed of three distinct elements as summarized from Lebesse and Muhly (1990). The complex incorporates a massive enclosure wall defining a rectangular area (approximately 530 sq. m), a paved road (2 m wide) leading to the interior of this area and a rectangular, unroofed built structure lacking internal supports (12.20 × 7.7 m) in the middle of the area. The road follows a dog-leg approach.

Associated material from the 'Sacred Enclosure' included cups, pots and faunal remains in a midden deposit. The excavators suggest that ritual feasting was taking place. They interpret the ground plan of the rectangular structure as conforming to the representation of the tripartite shrine on the so-called 'Peak

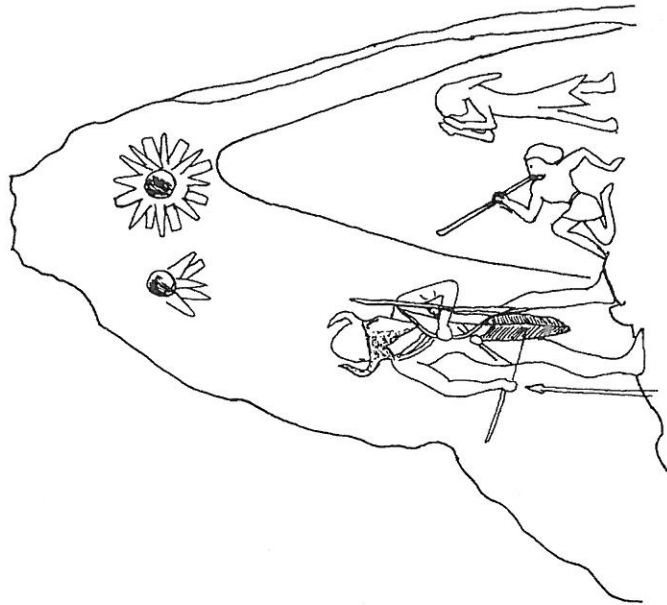


Figure 9.12 Akkadian Stele of Naram Sin, originally Sippar, Babylonia, later Susa, Mesopotamia

Sanctuary' rhyton from Kato Zakro as reconstructed by J.W. Shaw (1978). The enclosure wall distinguishes Kato Symi from Shaw's reconstruction. Its presence around the rectangular built structure and the location of the midden deposit between the two architectural features indicates that participants would have been free to either move back and forth, or circumambulate the rectangular structure in the performance of ritual action.

Elite and cult connections

At least five bronze figurines, one 'libation' table with a Linear A inscription, and the absence of human and animal terracottas that were a common offering at peak sanctuaries in the earlier 'Old Palace' or 'Middle Minoan' period (c. 1900–1700 BCE) were found in association with the sacred enclosure. This suggests an élite status for those moving about the enclosure (Lebesse and Muhly 1990: 334–5). The relationship between luxury materials and peak sanctuaries indicates palatial control (Peatfield 1987). This is further indicated by the

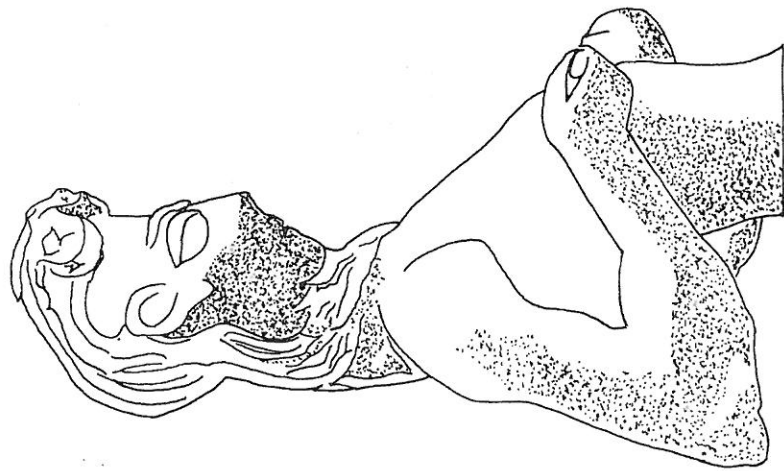


Figure 9.13 Gesture 4 (from the sanctuary at Kato Symi, Crete (after Lebessi and Muhly, 1990))

regulatory role which the so-called 'Palaces' played in the production and distribution of goods such as bronze to the stratum of society that had access to them, and the proliferation of villas in the Neopalatial period. This indicates an elite stratum of Minoan society that was predominantly male which was procuring bronze figurines and making offerings at the peak sanctuaries. The presence of the male figurine making gesture 4 within the enclosure further emphasizes this elite connection. Bronze was the material favoured for dedicatory figurines in the Late Minoan I period. The use of bronze, the high degree of workmanship, the individuating features and the rarity of gesture 4 in the male sphere would tend to indicate that this particular figurine placed in Kato Symi represented a specific individual of higher status than the dedicants of two of the other male bronze figurines (Verlinden nos 51 and 115) which are making the more common gesture 1, the so-called 'Minoan salute'.



Figure 9.14 Gesture 4 (from Kydonia, Crete (after CMS I no. 201))

Although gesture 4 is made predominantly by female bronze figurines occurring mainly in caves and villas, in its only occurrence on a seal (CMS I no. 201), it is being made by a male (Figure 9.14). In this composition, he stands between 'horns of consecration' and is flanked by a winged goat and a Minoan genius (Betts 1965, 1978: 18, n. 4; Pini 1978: 142-5). Sir Arthur Evans (1921-36: IV, 467) has interpreted this figure as a 'Youthful Male God' based on his relationship to the horns, his centrality, and the flanking by supernatural animals which places him in what Nanno Marinatos (1984: 61-2) calls the 'realm of the fantastic'. MacGillivray *et al.* (1988: 267, 1989: 426-7) have noted that the gesture of the figure in the seal is identical to the gesture of the chryselephantine male figurine recently discovered at Palaikastro (Figure 9.15). Based on Evans' interpretation of the seal figure as a divinity, they interpret the Palaikastro statuette as a cult figure, and not as votive. Sackett and MacGillivray (1989: 26-31) have gone so far as to suggest that the Palaikastro statuette may have represented a youthful Zeus. Their interpretation is based on classical Greek myth, archaeological evidence that the Roman temple site of Dikraian Zeus overlies Minoan Palaikastro where an Archaic Greek 'Hymn to the Kouroi' was found, and on four offering tables from the peak sanctuary at Petsophas overlooking Palaikastro on which DI-KI-TE was inscribed in Linear A (Sackett and MacGillivray 1989: 30-31). Does the evidence suggest continuity of cult or the projection of a homeostatic idealized Greek past onto a dynamic, changing pre-Greek Bronze Age?

In trying to determine whether the status of males making gesture 4 is divine, I want to consider two other examples of supernatural animals flanking human figures. In the so-called 'Throne Room' at Knossos, the occupant of the throne was flanked by griffins. A similar, though not identical (McCallum 1987) situation can be found at Mycenaean Pylos. It has been suggested that a re-enactment of an epiphany took place in the Knossian throne room with a priestess occupying the throne (Niemeier 1987) and that a female occupies the throne because the stone seat is carved to suit a woman's anatomy (Peatfield *pers. com.*, 1988). Still, it remains uncertain whether the occupant of the Knossian 'throne' was a male or a female, a king or a queen, a priest or a priestess, or some other type of official.

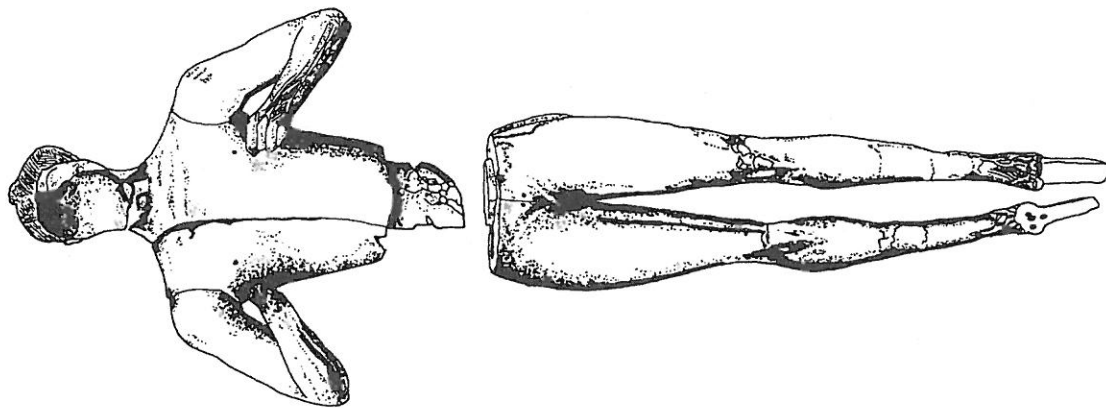


Figure 9.15 Palaikastro Statuette, from Palaikastro, Building 5, Crete (after MacGillivray and Sackett 1991)

The situation at Pylos is somewhat different. The title 'wanax' or king is attested in the Pylos tablets [Na58; Ta711; La622; Un03], as is the word for throne: to-no [Ta707]. What, then, happens to a ruler who is placed in association with supernatural animals? Does this make the wanax divine or place him under divine protection? How strongly do the secular and the religious become conflated? In ancient Sumer, kingship was handed down from heaven (Kramer 1963: 328–31), whereas in Egypt, Pharaoh was god.

Discussion

Now that our hermeneutic spiral has led us to Sumer and back, I wish to state that I am not raising these questions to suggest that the situation in Minoan Crete was necessarily identical to those in Pylos, Mesopotamia, or in Egypt. Rather, I am trying to demonstrate that the status of a figure placed between supernatural animals is not as simple as Evans, Sackett, MacGillivray, Marinatos and others would have us believe. Do the male bronze figurines, the seal example and the Palaikastro statuette all making gesture 4 represent Minoan deities or do they represent early examples of Minoan ruler portraiture? How do we relate all of these strands of contextual meaning back to the question of gender?

I want to reiterate the high degree of workmanship and the careful rendering of facial details in the piece from Kato Symi (Figure 9.13). There are also other differences in our male examples of gesture 4. The long, 'snaky' locks of hair that are typical of mature Minoan males are absent on the seal example and the Palaikastro statuette (Figures 9.14, 9.15). The stippling on the Palaikastro statuette suggests the shaved head that is an indication of youth in the Bronze Age Aegean (Marinatos 1984). In contrast, both Verlinden no. 93 and the Kato Symi statuette have long locks and detailed workmanship. (Figures 9.11, 9.13). Verlinden no. 93 is further distinguished by the cap. Both of the male examples can be distinguished from all of the females making gesture 4, which are simply rendered and lack facial detail (Figure 9.15). Despite their greater numbers, the female figurines making gesture 4 received less effort and artistic workmanship. Their context in caves and villas rendered them less visible. Of the female figurines making gesture 4 from 'villas', only the one from Palaikastro House X (see Dawkins 1904–5: 272ff) has a well documented context (Bosanquet and Dawkins 1939: 122–3). As an example, it effectively serves to underscore significant differences from the male figurines. In terms of workmanship, facial features are not rendered, other details are not clearly visible, and the back of the figurine is practically flat (Verlinden 1984: 55). In terms of context, it was found with an ivory comb in a narrow cubicle decorated with painted plaster. Its location eight thresholds and a corridor from the reconstructed external portico (Preziosi 1983: 400ff.) ensured its seclusion.

The gendered contrasts in the figurines making gesture 4 might be further illustrated by the following oppositions: male/female, detailed/simple, individual/common, presence/absence, peak sanctuary/cave, outside/inside, public/personal. These oppositions underlie the social relations that were cunningly acted out in the production and use of these figurines by the Minoans. For a

term, in this case gesture 4 used in the male context, to become dominant, it needed to devalue another term (Derrida 1976, 1978; Ulmer 1985). The transference of gesture 4 in the male sphere is thus built upon the repressed female. The less visible context of caves and villas for female figurines making gesture 4 served to place them under erasure through the creation of an ideology of separate spaces. As a result, the status of females making gesture 4 does not seem to be as high within the female sphere as those making gesture 3.

Gesture 4 was primarily associated with females, as its distribution among the bronzes indicates (Table 9.3). However, I would suggest that its enhanced visibility, prominent display and restricted use by males indicates a gradual transference of power relations between males and females through the appropriation of a gesture popular among a particular class of female worshipper. Among males, its use was restricted to males of rank, status, power, and possibly divinity, or a combination of these, as further demonstrated by the much greater degree of detail in males making gesture 4.

Gesture 4 further combined elements of rank and reverence which were played out in the sphere of public and perhaps private ritual action as indicated by its contextual associations. These include peak sanctuaries and caves where it was made only by females. If the bronze example from Kato Symi represented a ruler, then it also served a polysemous function as a representation of a powerful ruler who chose to demonstrate his reverence for the divine. This demonstration was carried out by using a gesture that was predominantly used by female worshippers. By appropriating a known sign of worship, placing it into a slightly different context, and bringing it into a visible public discourse of social practice, he thus engendered his dominant role in Minoan society.

Acknowledgements

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10 Changing gender relations in the later prehistory of Eastern Hungary

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Introduction

With few exceptions, Hungarian prehistory has been the stronghold of an apparently gender-free, and, therefore, implicitly male-dominated, paradigm. There is a long and distinguished record of male scholarship in Hungarian prehistory, stretching back to the foundation of the National Museum in 1802. In this record, it is exceptional to find women such as Baroness Zsófia von Torma, the discoverer of Tordos in the 1870s, who published and excavated widely (Gyula 1972). The male achievement continued into the twentieth century through strong schools of archaeology in Budapest and Szeged (Laszlovszky and Siklódi 1990) and with increasing attention paid by non-Hungarians to the wealth of the local archaeological heritage. Since there were few female professionals in Hungary until after the Second World War, the narratives of Hungarian prehistory are, for the most part, both replete with male achievers and male achievements and bereft of a gendered perspective about major foci of change.

Previous studies

There is a strong tendency for male prehistorians to exclude females from their discussions, unless the topics of figurines or burials are under consideration. In his review of Neolithic and Copper Age studies, entitled 'Clay Gods', Kalicz (1970) takes the standard line on Neolithic art and ritual: 'Quite naturally, the female became the symbol of fertility, as the source of life' (Kalicz 1970: 15). Similarly, major recent surveys of the Late Neolithic and the Bronze Age in eastern Hungary, all edited by males (Kovács 1994; Meier-Arendt 1992; Raczky 1987), consistently avoid discussion of gender except in the context of burials and figurines. A male-dominance position is also adopted by Sherratt in his processual research programme on social organization, settlement and exchange in eastern Hungary (Sherratt 1982a, 1982b, 1983). Here, males and females are related in a hierarchical manner, with males possessing the 'power within the group (which) consisted in control over marriageable women' (1982b: 22). Women are fetishized as exchange commodities, such as valuables and trade items, while men are regarded as the pivotal points in lineage relationships and alliances.