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FROM KNOSSOS TO KAVOUSI: THE POPULARIZING OF THE MINOAN PALACE GODDESS

by Geraldine C. Gesell

Many scholars have written about Minoan religion, and in particular about the Minoan goddess.¹ Figurines, statuettes, and figures have been identified as representing her, as have images on pottery, seals, and frescoes. The types of representations vary from period to period, but those from the Prepalatial and Protopalatial periods are beyond the scope of this paper, as are ritual sites such as those at tombs, caves, or peak sanctuaries. The discussion here begins with the evidence for an elite religion practiced in the Palace of Minos at Knossos in the Neopalatial Period and traces its transformation into a popular religion in the Postpalatial Minoan culture.

Characterized originally as a goddess of nature and fertility, the Minoan goddess also has been identified as a household goddess, worshiped in houses and palaces. Although her identification as a household goddess is no longer accepted, she is still closely connected with the palace at Knossos, where her most famous images, the snake goddesses, were found. Their findspot in the official West Wing of the palace, as opposed to the Domestic Quarter, suggests that by the time of the floruit of the Minoan civilization, the Second Palace Period, these images represent the official religion, with its rituals limited to those having access to the palace. There is no evidence that they were part of the personal ritual equipment of the residents of that palace, for no such figures have been recovered from the Domestic Quarter of the palace at Knossos or of any other Minoan palace.

THE NEOPALATIAL PALACE AND ITS RITUALS

The Neopalatial images of the Minoan snake goddess and associated ritual implements were found at Knossos, buried beneath the Temple Repositories between the Throne Room and the pillar crypts of the palace.² Many of the objects—images of the snake goddess, offerings, and ritual objects—are made of a luxury material, faience. The snake goddesses (restored height of the best preserved goddess is 0.342 m) wear elaborate skirts with either horizontal tucks or flounces, embroidered aprons, belts, and jackets open at the breast, attire that would have been worn by their worshipers. The equipment includes a pair of graceful cups painted with fernlike sprays,

1. Among them Evans (*PM I–IV*), Nilsson (1927), Marinatos (1937), Persson (1942), Picard (1948), Alexiou (1958), Matz (1958), Branigan (1969), Warren (1988), Gesell (1985), Muhly (1990), Marinatos (1993), and Peatfield (1994). Goodison and Morris (1998) give an up-to-date review of the problem of singular versus plural goddesses. Rather than repeat the awkward expression “goddess or goddesses,” I shall use the term “goddess” “to designate a conceptual and visual category,” as does Marinatos (2000, p. 112).

2. Evans 1902–1903, pp. 38–94, figs. 19–64; *PM I*, pp. 463–523, 556–561, 596, frontispiece, and figs. 354–382. A new study of this material, including objects mentioned in the notebooks or photographed but not published by Evans, has been made by Panagiotaki (1999, pp. 71–179). In an earlier article Panagiotaki (1993) published previously unpublished drawings and photographs from the Evans archive at the Ashmolean Museum.

and one has a rose-leaf branch on top. Several small bowls, one decorated with shells and a second with figure-eight shields, and a ewer are also among the ritual materials.

The most interesting of the offerings are the faience robes and belts decorated with crocus flowers. They seem to represent gifts of clothing, though they could not have been worn by these statuettes. There is a hole running down the center of the robe to permit suspension on a wall of the shrine. The relief plaques of cows and goats suckling their young may have been decorations for the walls of the shrine, perhaps alternating around the room, as several from the same mold were found. The other faience objects—flowers, fruit, flying fish, rocks, argonauts, and shells—may have been parts of relief plaques or inlays for boxes.³ Fragments of bone, ivory, and rock-crystal objects, along with gold and silver foil, were also found. All these items indicate that this aspect of Minoan religion, the worship of a fertility goddess who had a chthonic dimension that was represented by the snakes,⁴ was reserved for the elite of the palace.⁵

From the Neopalatial Period there are many iconographic images of ritual scenes on seals, gold rings, stone vases, and frescoes, some of which include female figures identified as goddesses.⁶ In scenes where there is sufficient detail to permit identification of the participants, it is clear that they belong to the elite class. Alan Peatfield makes the point that the rings, seals, and stone vases were made of precious materials in palatial workshops for elite customers.⁷ Even in Xeste 3 at Akrotiri on Thera, where there is a fresco showing a goddess and her worship, the architecture of the building, which contains a Minoan-style lustral basin, reproduces elite architecture on Crete, and the females participating in the ritual wear the elaborate dress and jewelry of the Minoan elite class.⁸

THE NEOPALATIAL PERIOD AND POPULAR RELIGION

Two small shrines, one in the palace at Phaistos⁹ and one in the palace at Mallia,¹⁰ open out from the palace and therefore probably served as a link between palace and popular religion. Neither has yielded statuettes or ritual equipment fashioned in luxury materials. The Phaistos shrine did contain clay female figurines with hands under their breasts in the pose of a votary, and what is likely to be the skirt of a taller figure. No symbols, however, appear on the figurines or the ritual objects, which consist of stone libation

3. Marinatos (2000, p. 114) suggests that they are inlays for furniture.

4. Marinatos (2000, pp. 112–114) would define the goddess as a goddess of nature, fertility, and motherhood, and suggests that the snakes do not represent a chthonic aspect but indicate her power over nature as a snake handler or tamer. Goodison and Morris (1998, pp. 123–125) and Marinatos accept the nature and nurture aspect.

5. Panagiotaki (1999, p. 151), however, noting that the Miniature Temple Fresco shows some women distinctly depicted in court dress while others are summarily sketched, suggests that the rituals were open to all classes of Minoan society.

6. For illustrations see Marinatos 1993, pp. 147–156.

7. Peatfield 1994, p. 27.

8. Doumas 1992, pp. 127–175,

including illustrations; Marinatos 1984, pp. 61–84. For the divinity of the goddess, see Goodison and Morris 1998, p. 126; Marinatos 2000, pp. 114–117.

9. Pernier and Banti 1951, pp. 104–118, 582–583; Gesell 1985, pp. 127–128.

10. Chapouthier and Demargne with Dessenne 1962, pp. 9–13, 50–54; Gesell 1985, p. 106.

tables, a stone ladle, and pottery. Only the incised double axes and star on the building mark the sacredness of the spot.

The Mallia shrine has yielded different ritual equipment—a stone incurved altar, clay tubular and tripod incense burners, natural seashells, and a pair of clay feet. The feet are about half life-size. Yannis and Efi Sakellarakis compare them to the life-size feet found at the Anemospilia site at Archanes, which they reconstruct as those of a *xoanon*.¹¹ The Mallia feet do not have the tenon-like lower legs of the Anemospilia feet, however, and in fact appear to have been broken at the top, as if they had belonged to a clay figure. Such a clay figure could have been just as easily male as female.¹² The Mallia feet appear to be shod with shoes with turned-up toes. The only symbols that appear in this shrine are the star and the cross incised on the incurved altar.

The major popular ritual places, caves and peaks, were equipped with no images of the goddess at all, and independent shrines in settlements and towns have not been identified. In this period the image of the goddess as part of the ritual was an elite, palatial aspect of Minoan religion. The deity worshiped on peaks and in caves may have been represented by natural features or symbols; it was not represented in these places by an image.

THE POSTPALATIAL PERIOD

In the Postpalatial period,¹³ after most of the palaces had been destroyed, the situation was different. Although the palace at Knossos survived, it was controlled by the Mycenaeans.¹⁴ Nevertheless it had a shrine room complete with a Minoan-style bench, image of a goddess, votaries, and ritual symbols and equipment. During this period similar shrines began to appear in towns and settlements around the island. It is clear that these are now set up for the public, as they have larger images more suitable for display to groups of people, and that the images, ritual equipment, and offerings that were found in them are of affordable materials commonly used in daily life.¹⁵

11. Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1997, pp. 530–538. According to the excavators, the pottery assemblage from the temple at Anemospilia is dated to MM IIB–IIIA and the temple's destruction marks the end of the Protopalatial period; therefore the discussion of this very important complex is beyond the scope of this paper.

12. Cf. the male votaries of the later Shrine of the Double Axes at Knossos (12) and the Kannia shrine (4); bold-faced numbers refer to entries in the catalogue.

13. I use this term to cover the LM II to LM IIIC periods. The change in ritual from elite to popular

occurs after the time of the destruction of the palaces at Phaistos, Mallia, and Zakros.

14. Linear B tablets found at Knossos and Khania suggest that the Mycenaeans used these places as governing centers, but their political, economic, and religious uses were no longer the same.

15. The goddess figures and ritual equipment discussed below are part of a larger study of the goddess with upraised hands made in conjunction with the publication of the Kavousi shrine and its cult material. I wish to thank the following for permission to study the shrine objects: the Greek

Archaeological Service (Gazi and Gournia), the Managing Committee of the British School at Athens (Knossos and Karphi), and Giovanni Rizza and the Italian Archaeological School (Prinias). I also wish to express my very great thanks to Alexandra Karetsou, Director of the Archaeological Museum in Herakleion, and her staff for their helpful assistance and facilitation of my work in the museum, to Metaxia Tsipopoulou, who has discussed the excavation of the shrine at Halasmenos with me and provided up-to-date information for this paper, and to Amalia Kakisis, the archivist of the British School at Athens.

The shrines at Knossos and their objects will be discussed first, as they appear to have served as a bridge between the earlier elite ritual assemblage of the snake goddess from the Temple Repositories, and those of the later popular shrines of the goddess with upraised hands. See the catalogue for pertinent details of architecture, artifacts, and selected bibliography of all the Postpalatial shrines, listed in alphabetical order.

KNOSSOS AND THE END OF ELITE RITUAL

The Shrine of the Double Axes at Knossos (12) is particularly important because it reveals some of the new features of the shrines of the goddess with upraised hands. Its location was still within the palace, but not in the main state area like the Temple Repositories. It served, if not the elite Mycenaeans of Knossos, those Minoans who served the elite Mycenaeans. Although the objects from this shrine do not compare in luxury with those of faience and ivory from the Temple Repositories, they are still relatively small and of finer material than those from the public shrines in the towns and settlements.

Unlike the assemblage of ritual objects from the Temple Repositories, that of the Shrine of the Double Axes is from a room identified as a shrine by its architectural features as well as its objects.¹⁶ The arrangement of the room is described here because it is the basis for the restoration of less well-preserved shrines. The floor of the room was built on two levels, the lower of tamped clay on the south end and the upper of plaster covered with water-worn pebbles. A plastered clay bench, also covered with water-worn pebbles, ran along the back of the room. All the distinctive ritual objects came from the plaster floor and the bench covered with pebbles. The objects from the clay floor are painted and unpainted domestic pottery—a storage jar, pyxis, stirrup jar, amphoras—all suitable for holding liquids or vegetal material for the ritual. The ritual equipment, cups and small jugs, lay on the pebble-strewn floor. On the bench was the image of the goddess with upraised hands with a bird on her tiara, two female worshipers with hands on their breasts, one male worshiper holding a bird, and a Neolithic-type female figure. Two pairs of horns of consecration marked the bench as sacred and a miniature double axe lay next to one pair. The arrangement on the bench produced a picture of a ritual ceremony in front of sacred markers. The goddess is identified by her larger size and the bird perched on her head, which mark her as the dominating figure. The male worshiper appropriately offers a bird to her.

The goddess and her votaries are dated to LM IIIA2 by George Rethemiotakis, on the basis of shape, manufacturing technique, and painted decoration.¹⁷ This date places the figurines at the beginning of the time when the goddesses with upraised hands appear. That the use of the shrine continued into the LM IIIB period is shown by the LM IIIB octopus stirrup jar and champagne cups.¹⁸

Two other images of the goddess with upraised hands are from LM IIIB deposits in buildings associated with the elite in the Knossos area, the Unexplored Mansion and the Little Palace, but neither can be associated

16. There is a sketch in Evans's unpublished 1903 notebook opposite p. 33, and an excavation photograph in Popham 1964, pl. 9:b, f.

17. Rethemiotakis 1997, p. 119, note 13. He compares the facial features to the Palaikastro dancers, the painted decoration to LM IIIA2 pottery motifs, and the technique of a wheel-thrown skirt and solid torso and head to LM II–IIIA figurines. Further details are given in Rethemiotakis 1998, pp. 66–68. The Neolithic-type figurine (*PM* I, pp. 52, fig. 14) is given a new date by Rethemiotakis (1998, p. 67).

18. For the latest discussion on champagne cups or one-handled footed cups, see Hallager 1997b, pp. 23, 35–36, 40, and the Response and Discussion on pp. 48–55; 1997a, p. 408.

with shrine architecture. The goddess from the Unexplored Mansion (14), made of fine ware with painted details, is part of an assemblage including a male figure extending an arm, perhaps holding an offering, a stirrup jar, and a champagne cup, but no religious symbols. The goddess from the Little Palace (11) has a snake on her tiara and she is made of lead. Both of these images are likely to have been used in elite ritual, but no more can be deduced at this time.

THE POPULAR SHRINES

By the LM IIIB and IIIC periods there is growing evidence for shrines in towns and settlements. The important new features to be considered include the location and interior arrangement of the shrine, and the type of image and ritual equipment, including the size of the image and the material from which it was made. Distinct assemblages of ritual images and implements have been found on at least eight sites, along with single images or pieces of equipment on several others, and at four sites a sufficient amount of the town has been excavated to give a context for the shrine. Although most of these sites are located in central Crete and in the area of the Isthmus of Ierapetra, a few have been found in southern Crete and as far west as the Rethymnon district.¹⁹

LOCATION IN THE TOWN

At Gournia, Karphi, the Vronta site of Kavousi, Halasmenos, and Kephala Vasilikis, it is possible to see the relationship of the shrine to the town plan. Only the building that housed the shrine was excavated at Kannia, however, and at Gazi it was possible to excavate only one room, the one in which the ritual objects were found. At Knossos, where there was a LM IIIC example of a public shrine of the goddess with upraised hands in the former Spring Chamber, the LM IIIC town plan is unknown. The Prinias assemblage was published without architecture.

Although not much of the LM IIIB town at Gournia has been excavated, it is known to have included areas Eh, Ei, and Ej to the west of the West Ridge Road, and He to the south of the LM I town.²⁰ The LM IIIB shrine (2) is located at the end of a paved street running east from the West Ridge Road but not far from the remainder of the LM IIIB town.²¹ A paved court opens off to the north of the paved street just in front of the shrine, providing an open area suitable for public ritual; Harriet Boyd described the area in her 1903 plan as a piazza.²² Some of the paving

19. Shrines with ritual equipment but no goddess figures, and goddess figures that cannot be connected with architecture or other ritual equipment, have not been included in this study.

20. Hawes et al. 1908, pp. 23, 45, 46, and plan opposite p. 26.

21. Williams (1908) dated the shrine to LM I; however, she admitted that there was no solid evidence for this date. Kanta (1980, pp. 139–140), after much study of the LM III period, opts for an LM IIIB date. For the most recent evidence see Rethemiotakis 1997, p. 119, n. 13, pl. XLVIII:e,

where he differentiates between figures with hollow skirts and solid torsos (LM IIIA) and later figures that are completely hollow, such as the Gournia goddess. For further details see Rethemiotakis 1998, p. 73, fig. 46.

22. Fotou 1993, pl. XXXIII:b.

remains, but the area on top of the ridge is so badly eroded that the extent and features of the court are not known. Rooms to the south that may have been part of the shrine building are not on the plan.²³

The shrine at Karphi known as the Temple (5) is located at the northern edge of the LM IIIC town²⁴ and was reached via the main north-south passage through the town. Room 1, hypaethral according to the excavators, may have been an outdoor court with a display bench on the south; four of the goddesses and the plaque with the human face were found on the bench.²⁵ Bodgan Rutkowski, however, suggests that Room 1 was roofed and that the area in the passage outside the door may have been the public ritual area.²⁶

There is some evidence that Karphi had two other public shrines. Room 16–17 (6), like Temple Room 1, was unroofed and accessed from the main north-south passage;²⁷ the ritual objects were found on a raised area or bench. Behind this room was an enclosed room (70) suitable for storage. The third public shrine was Room 58 (7), a small chamber with no open court that was entered directly from one of the narrow town streets. It featured a natural bench and yielded some ritual equipment, but there are no recorded fragments of goddesses.

The shrine at Kavousi (9) is located on the southwest side of the Vronda ridge.²⁸ The rest of the excavated LM IIIC town lies on the top of the ridge with buildings extending down the north, northwest, and southwest slopes, and to the west of the ridge. A large bench suitable for displaying images for public ritual ran along the outside of the shrine west of Room 1 (Fig. 7.1). No goddess figures were found on the bench, but a large deposit of goddess, snake tube, and plaque fragments was discovered just to the west of it. Even though most of the fragments are probably from objects thrown out of Room 1 at the time of the construction of the Geometric cist grave, some may be from objects left standing on the exterior bench at the abandonment of the settlement. Due to the intrusion of a row of Geometric cist graves just west of the deposit, it is not clear whether there was an open court there.

The shrine at Halasmenos (3) is located at the northeastern edge of the town. Two paved roads of the calderimi type connect this shrine with the megaron-shaped buildings in the northern part of the town. There is an open space of more than 300 sq. m in front of and along the northeast side of the shrine building suitable for public ritual.

23. Fotou (1993, pp. 91–92, pl. XXXIII:a, b) discusses the new evidence available in Harriet Boyd's notebooks and illustrates the plans as they evolve through the excavation seasons. Rutkowski (1984, pp. 173–174; 1987a, p. 60, fig. 2) and Fotou have pointed out that the final plan of the shrine building may have included rooms to the south. Fotou suggests further excavation to clarify this.

24. For the excavators' plan of the settlement, see Students of the British

School of Archaeology at Athens, 1937–1939 (1940), pl. IX. Further study of the topography of the site has been done by Nowicki, who suggests (1987, p. 241) that the excavated area is no more than one-fifth of the town. Further study of the temple area has been made by Rutkowski (1987a, 1987b). He has incorporated in this work information from the unpublished notebook "Lasithi I," now in the archives of the British School at Athens, as well as a new study of the architecture.

25. Rutkowski 1987b, figs. 4, 5. Seiradaki (1960, p. 29) mentions fragments of at least one more goddess from Room 1.

26. Rutkowski 1987b, p. 259, figs. 3, 6.

27. Rutkowski (1987b, p. 262, fig. 7) suggests that the area of the Great House in which this open court is located, and the Temple, might have been parts of the same shrine.

28. For the plan of the Vronda settlement see Gesell, Day, and Coulson 1995, fig. 1.

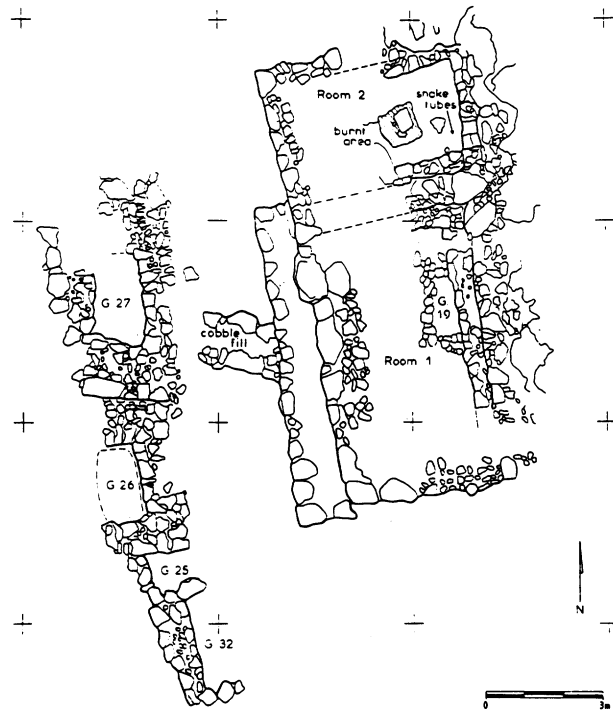


Figure 7.1. Plan of Building G (shrine) at Kavousi. Kavousi Excavations

Even though much of Kephala Vasilikis has not been excavated, at this time its shrine (10), called the Temple, appears to be located at the western edge of the settlement.²⁹ It is provisionally dated to LM IIIC continuing through SM and into to PG. The building is independent with an open area between it and the nearest building, building A. The outdoor hearth in this area close to the door of Room 5 supports the theory of open-air rituals.

The Spring Chamber at Knossos (13) was built in the LM I period but reused in the LM IIIC–SM periods. As it is located south of the palace, in an area isolated from known LM IIIC constructions, its relationship to the town is problematic.³⁰ The area in front of it is an open space, and rituals could have been conducted there.

In sum, five of the major shrines were on the edge of town yet still convenient to the townspeople. It is likely that all shrines had an outdoor area suitable for rituals for the public.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE INTERIOR OF THE BUILDING

Not only are the plans of the shrines discussed above known, but also those at Gazi and Kannia, where the surrounding areas have not been excavated.³¹ It is probable that all of these shrine buildings except the Knossos Spring Chamber and Room 58 at Karphi had more than one room. In the best-preserved buildings there are as many as eight rooms, which can be identified according to function as a sacred shrine or display room, a storeroom for ritual equipment and offerings, other storerooms for supplies for the rituals, a room for preparation activities for either the public rituals or smaller private rituals, and an outside area for public rituals. The number of rooms and their functions varied from site to site, and in the smaller buildings one room might have served several functions.

29. For plans of the Kephala settlement and shrine, see Eliopoulos 1998, figs. 5, 9.

30. Hood and Smyth 1981, pp. 11–14.

31. Plans for the shrine rooms can be found in the excavator's report, listed in the catalogue, and in Gesell 1985, if available at that time.

The most complete shrine buildings are at Kephala Vasilikis and Kannia. In both of these shrines there was a room with a bench for the display of ritual objects. In Room I at Kannia (4) the images of the goddess were found on the display bench and the snake tubes on the floor in front of it, whereas in Kephala Vasilikis Room 4 (10) the goddesses and the ritual equipment were on the benches. Both shrines had preparation rooms with hearths and benches (Kannia V, Kephala Vasilikis 3, 5, 6) and storage rooms (Kannia III, XV, Kephala Vasilikis 7, 8). The situations at Gournia (2) and Gazi (1), where only one room was excavated, are not as easy to interpret. Both rooms have produced a sizable number of ritual objects, suggesting that the excavated room was the one used for display, but the relationship between the ritual objects and the architectural features is not clear. The ritual objects certainly were not in display position upon discovery. The objects in the Gournia room were not found near the bench, which is on the south side, but in the northeast corner, and there was no bench or any other focal point in the Gazi room. Four of the Gazi goddesses and associated ritual equipment were found along three of the walls but the other objects were brought to light in the center of the room. Perhaps these rooms were used for display on ritual occasions and otherwise served as storerooms.

At Karphi, the arrangement of Room 1 (5), an open court with a display bench on the south, and its function as a ritual center are clear, but the function of the remainder of the rooms is not. Room f, from which the fifth goddess was recovered, may have been a storeroom. It is also likely that Room 16–17 (6), an open court with a bench on its west side, was a second ritual center with Room 70 behind it a storage area. The Kavousi shrine (9) has two rooms with benches. Room 1, with the bench along its east side, fits the pattern of a display room. Room 2, with side benches, a platform, and a central hearth, is more likely a preparation room. The shrine at Halasmenos (3) also has two rooms with interior benches. Room I, the largest, is entered from the open area outside. Facing the door is a bench running along the opposite wall, on which were found three goddesses, the largest in the middle; there is a semicircular built hearth in the northwest corner of this room next to the door and a second bench. Room II, which is behind Room I, has three benches. Snake tubes and plaques were found in both rooms, but the shrine is still under study so it is too early to interpret the function of the individual rooms and objects. As published, the Spring Chamber at Knossos (13) in the LM IIIC and SM periods was a single shrine room. The niche in the back wall would have been suitable for holding the small hut urn with the goddess inside. Offerings originally may have been left on the ledges, but in fact so many were left that they filled the basin and extended to the exterior area. The room was too small for its ritual purpose.

THE RITUAL OBJECTS

All these shrine buildings and the deposit at Prinias (15) are to be associated with the ritual of the goddess with upraised hands. They feature the same types of distinctive ritual equipment—snake tubes with kalathoi, separate kalathoi, and plaques—as well as regular domestic pottery, and at Kannia stone vases, too. Almost all the goddess figures or images are made of

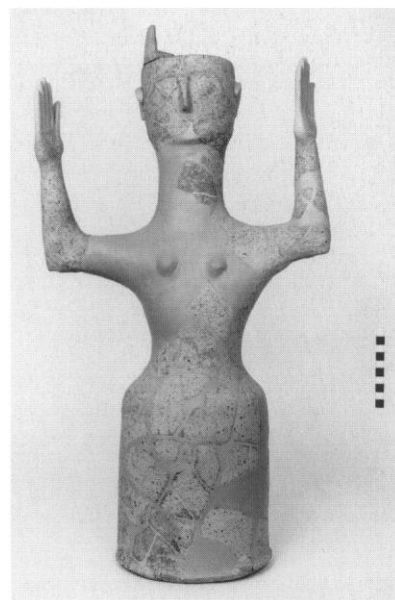
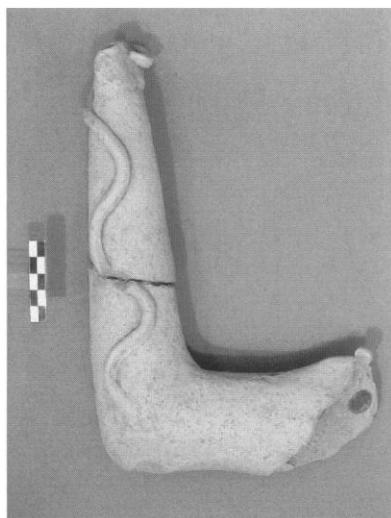


Figure 7.2. Goddess 1 from Kavousi. Kavousi Excavations

Figure 7.3 (*opposite, upper left*). Goddess arm 1949 from Prinias. G. Gesell

Figure 7.4 (*opposite, lower left*). Goddess arm 1950 from Prinias. G. Gesell

Figure 7.5 (*opposite, upper right*). Back view of head of goddess 7 from Kavousi. Kavousi Excavations



32. Except several stone vases and a crystal pendant at Kannia, where, considering the number of clay finds, they were rare.

33. This point is discussed in detail in Gesell and Saupe 1997.

34. Goddess 1 from Kavousi, Fig. 7.2, is 0.74 m high. The most complete discussion of the goddess with upraised hands, with illustrations and references, is Alexiou 1958. New comparisons, stylistic dating, photographs, and drawings can be found in Rethemiotakis 1998. The Kavousi (9), Kephala Vasilikis (10), and Halasmenos (3) goddesses were discovered too recently to be included in Rethemiotakis 1998.

coarse clay, some with painted features and dress, and for many there are matching ritual implements made from the same clay. No luxury or even semiluxury objects were found in these shrine assemblages;³² the objects are those that the ordinary people could obtain at their potter's workshop.³³

Most of the goddess images from the popular shrines are too large to be called figurines (Fig. 7.2).³⁴ They range in size from the small figure from Kannia with a handle on her back for carrying (H. 0.22 m) to the largest from Karphi (H. 0.85 m). The majority are larger than 0.50 m in height, a size suitable for display and worship by a congregation. Most have symbols on their tiaras and a few exhibit such on their bodies. They can be divided into two main groups: snake goddesses and bird goddesses.

The snake goddesses from Gournia, Kannia, and Prinias appear to be descended from the Temple Repository snake goddesses. None of the later goddesses is exactly like either faience statuette in pose, but the figure with upraised arms from Gournia does have snakes wrapped around her body and arms in the manner of the larger faience snake goddess. One figure from Kannia holds her arms forward and obliquely upward displaying her snakes and has snakes on her tiara. Fragments of two standard upraised arms from Prinias have snakes on them (Figs. 7.3, 7.4). At least four other Kannia goddesses and the small figurine from the Little Palace at Knossos also have snakes on their tiaras.

Bird goddesses have been found in shrines at Gazi, Karphi, and Kavousi, but the shrines at Gazi and Karphi have no depictions of the snake at all. Although birds appear on ritual objects and in sacred areas in the Prepalatial, Protopalatial, and Neopalatial periods, they do not appear on images of the goddess, priestesses, or worshipers. The goddess from the Shrine of the Double Axes is perhaps the earliest Minoan image with a bird on her head. Two goddesses from Gazi and two from Karphi have birds on their tiaras. All the goddesses from Kavousi whose heads are sufficiently well preserved have birds on their tiaras (Fig. 7.5).



Figure 7.6 (left). Kalathos 1 with snakes, from Kavousi. Kavousi Excavations

Figure 7.7 (above). Side view of head of goddess 22 from Kavousi (before third palette attached). Kavousi Excavations

At first glance there appears to be a separation into shrines for snake goddesses and shrines for bird goddesses. At Kannia, however, one goddess has snakes on her arms and tiara but also a bird on her cheek. The shrine at Gournia yielded four small birds probably broken off of ritual objects, and the shrine at Kavousi held a kalathos (Diam. 0.237 m) decorated with two snakes in relief (Fig. 7.6). The goddess with the poppy bulbs on her tiara is the dominating figure from Gazi, but the other goddesses found there have birds on their tiaras.

Other symbols occur, mostly on bird goddesses. The palette, a flat elongated ovoid symbol, appears on tiaras at Gazi, Kannia, and Kavousi. Its meaning is not known, but at Gazi and at Kavousi it is found on tiaras with birds. The Kavousi tiaras have palettes in front and on both sides, with the bird at the back (Fig. 7.7). On the Gazi tiara the bird is at the front. Disks, perhaps representing the sun or stars, appear together with birds on two Karphi tiaras. Some figures appear to have borne no symbols at all. The division between snake goddess and bird goddess is not strict and there is evidence for other aspects or goddesses.

Particularly important is the evidence for an enthroned goddess at Kephala Vasilikis (10). The unmistakable shape of a clay throne was discovered with enough sherds of a matching goddess with upraised hands to suggest that they belong together. Nearby was another goddess of the canonical standing shape. A total of five goddesses were found in this building, none with the standard symbols on the tiara or on the ritual implements. Further study may clarify whether this is the shrine of a new aspect of the goddess or that of a different goddess.

The most distinctive piece of ritual equipment used in the shrines is the snake tube.³⁵ Preserved examples vary in height from the shortest (0.377 m), from Gournia, where they have lifting handles and are meant to be carried, to the tallest, at Gazi (0.545 m). The shrines with the taller goddesses have taller snake tubes. There are no miniature examples. The function of the snake tube was to support a kalathos, a type of bowl to hold offerings that is frequently found in these same assemblages (Fig. 7.8).

The kalathoi were of various sizes, according to the sizes of the snake tubes;³⁶ larger examples were used independently. At Kavousi some kalathoi

35. The most complete discussion of the snake tube is Gesell 1976. Snake tubes discovered since include those from Kommos (Watrous 1992, pp. 95, 144), Kavousi (9), Kephala Vasilikis (10), and Halasmenos (3). The height of snake tube 7 from Kavousi (Fig. 7.8) is 0.430 m; that of snake tube 3 from Kavousi (Fig. 7.9) is 0.351 m without horns, 0.376 m including them.

36. For a discussion of the kalathoi from Kavousi, see Gesell 1999. The diameters of kalathos 7 from Kavousi (Fig. 7.8), the kalathos with the goddess from Karphi (Fig. 7.10), and the kalathos top of snake tube 3, are 0.186 m, 0.26 m, and 0.252 m, respectively.



Figure 7.8 (*above*). Snake tube 7 holding kalathos 7, both from Kavousi. Kavousi Excavations

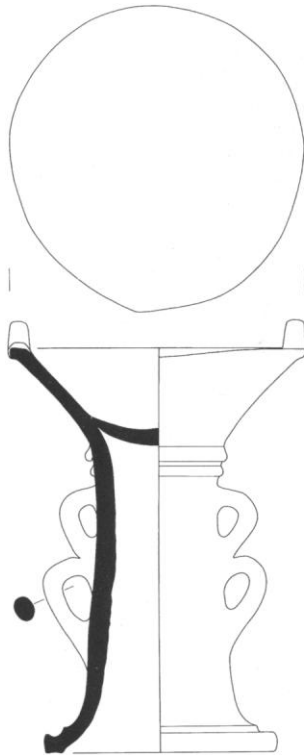


Figure 7.9 (*right*). Snake tube 3 from Kavousi, with horns of consecration on attached kalathos. Drawing R. Docsan; photo Kavousi Excavations



are marked on their rims with horns of consecration, one is fixed permanently on a snake tube (Fig. 7.9), and the interior of one exhibits snakes in relief (Fig. 7.6). Some show signs of burning that suggest burnt or cooked offerings; others do not. Most of the kalathoi at Kavousi were found in Room 2 together with snake tubes and plaques. The kalathos with the small figurine of the goddess with upraised hands from Karphi (8) may have been a piece of ritual equipment for a household shrine, combining both the image and the offering bowl into one (Fig. 7.10). Alternatively, it could have been a special piece of equipment for an unusual ritual area with an offering “tank” in the floor.

Several of the shrines had plaques pierced with holes so that they could be hung on a wall.³⁷ These would be most appropriate for the display room. All are rectangular, but at Kavousi those with horns of consecration on top have their greater dimension vertical (Fig. 7.11), while those with a raised frame have their greater dimension horizontal. The framed plaque with relief decoration has a unique shape. Ritual scenes are depicted in relief on two plaques from Kannia and one from Kavousi (Fig. 7.12). These relief scenes suggest that the plain plaques from Gazi, Karphi, Kavousi, and Kephala Vasilikis had similar scenes painted on them. The Karphi plaque topped with a head displays no holes for suspension (Fig. 7.13). Its function may have been similar to that of a *xoanon*.³⁸

37. For a discussion of the plaques from Kavousi, see Gesell 2001; plaque 2 from Kavousi (Fig. 7.11) measures 0.352 × 0.241 m; plaque 4 from Kavousi (Fig. 7.12), 0.384 × est. 0.307 m.

38. Karphi plaque (Fig. 7.13) measures 0.40 × 0.218 m. Rutkowski (1987b, p. 263) has suggested that this plaque was attached to a wooden stem and clothed, but there is no indication

of how this could be done. Perhaps the plaque was inserted into a slot in a log. The holes at the shoulders might have been for pins to hold the clothing on.

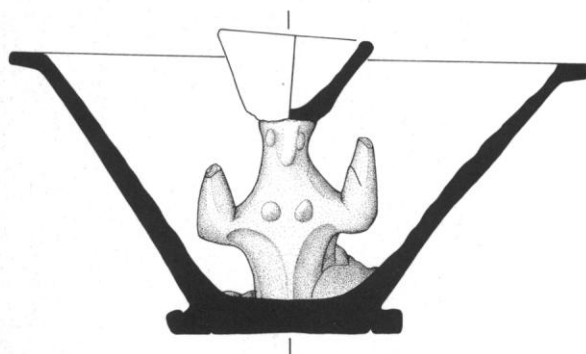


Figure 7.10. Kalathos with goddess, from Karphi. Photo G. Gesell; drawing R. Docsan

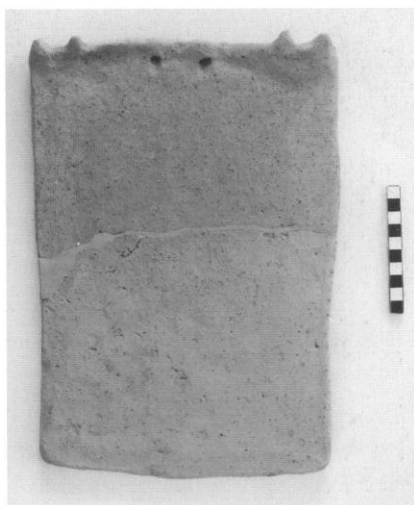


Figure 7.11. Plaque 2 from Kavousi. Kavousi Excavations

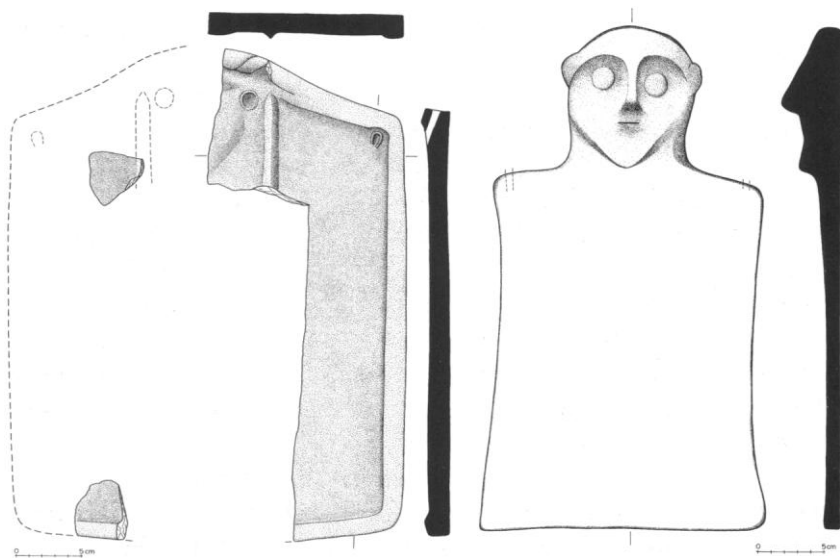


Figure 7.12 (*left*). Plaque 4 from Kavousi. R. Docsan

Figure 7.13 (*right*). Plaque with face from Karphi. R. Docsan



Figure 7.14. Goddesses 1 and 5; snake tubes 2 and 4; kalathoi 7 and 5; plaques 2 and 1; all from Kavousi. Kavousi Excavations

CONCLUSIONS

This then is the picture of the public ritual building, called by various excavators a shrine, sanctuary, or temple, in the LM IIIB and IIIC periods. It has either an open court or a room opening to the exterior with a display bench to be used for public rituals. On the basis of the Shrine of the Double Axes, Kannia Room I, and Karphi Room 1, such a display can be reconstructed. The goddesses stood on the bench with the snake tubes holding kalathoi before them (Fig. 7.14). Other kalathoi rested on the floor or the bench. On the basis of the suspension holes the plaques are restored on the wall behind. The figures of the goddesses, snake tubes, and plaques, which occur in sets, appear to be permanent fixtures in the shrines, whereas the kalathoi filled with offerings would have been presented as part of the ritual. Although there is some evidence suggesting that the smaller images of the goddess and the snake tubes were carried in a procession, most of the goddesses and snake tubes are too large and heavy to have been carried easily for any distance. It is more likely that they stood on display benches and that the ritual was performed in front of them. This ritual may have included the display of snakes, the offering of birds, or the partaking of opium, as appropriate.

The major unanswered question regarding these images is always: are they in fact images of the goddess, and if so, is she one or many? There is of course no answer to this question that will satisfy all. The figures could

represent the same goddess, several different goddesses, priestesses representing goddesses, priestesses representing themselves, or worshipers. How can one tell? There are points in favor of all the possibilities, and at the same time nothing that will convince everyone beyond a shadow of a doubt that even one possibility can be eliminated.

I will simply make a few points in defense of the goddess or goddesses option. Lucy Goodison and Christine Morris have recently suggested some criteria: "She might be big; if she is a 'Mother Goddess,' she might be expected to have a child. If she is 'the Goddess,' there will be one of her. She might have been found in a location suitable for ritual. Better still would be evidence from a picture showing her being worshiped."³⁹ Certainly some of these conditions are met by the shrines of the goddess with upraised hands, though unfortunately the last and crucial condition is not. The images with upraised hands are large compared to other figures and figurines of the Postpalatial period. In the case of the Shrine of the Double Axes, the image with the upraised hands is larger than the other female figures that have their hands on their breasts or the male holding the bird. The position of the images, on benches with offering vessels in front of them in the Shrine of the Double Axes and Kannia Room I, fulfills the condition of a location suitable for ritual. Although Goodison and Morris do not mention the use of symbols, this too might argue for the divinity of the images. A number of images wear tiaras with ritual symbols on them. Snakes and birds pose on their tiaras and bodies in ways that do not occur in nature. Although alternative explanations can be submitted regarding each of these points, the weight of all of them together appears to me to favor the goddess theory.

The issue of how many goddesses were involved is another matter. Most recently Nannó Marinatos and Goodison and Morris have argued for multiple goddesses.⁴⁰ Peatfield, on the other hand, believes in one goddess for the Prepalatial, Protopalatial, and Neopalatial periods, but that the goddesses with upraised hands represent "separate personifications."⁴¹ At this point it is difficult to determine whether she is one goddess with separate aspects or whether the bird, snake, and poppy images represent different goddesses. As noted above, even though the bird or snake aspect usually dominates, the pose and ritual equipment as a whole is essentially the same. The new evidence of the goddess on the throne from Kephala Vasilikis (10), however, should remind us that all is not yet known and that dramatic new evidence may yet be uncovered.

Whatever the images represent—goddesses, priestesses, or worshipers, it is clear that the practices and rituals associated with the Minoan snake goddesses from the Temple Repositories in the palace at Knossos evolved into a popular religion, with rituals performed at least partly in open areas in front of shrines and temples in many, perhaps all, of the towns of Postpalatial Crete.

39. Goodison and Morris 1998, p. 114.

40. Marinatos 2000, p. 112; Goodison and Morris 1998, p. 132.

41. Peatfield 1994, pp. 35–36.

CATALOGUE OF SHRINES OF THE GODDESS WITH UPRaised HANDS

This catalogue gives a brief description of the architecture, a list of the artifacts, and selected references for each shrine. Where no architecture is listed or no shrine was found or identified, the artifacts are part of a deposit. References give the primary excavation publication and cite a more complete catalogue entry in Gesell 1985, where further descriptions and references can be found. The most recent discussions are cited in the notes.

1 GAZI, Shrine

Architecture: room (4×2.9 m) with no features.

Artifacts: 5 goddesses with upraised hands (H. 0.52–0.775 m), with tiaras decorated with poppy heads, birds, horns of consecration, and palettes; 2 snake tubes (H. 0.445 m, 0.545 m); plaque (0.44×0.36 m); 2 kylikes; pedestal bowl; three-eared bowl; jug; jar; cylindrical vessel.

Marinatos 1937; Gesell 1985, pp. 69–71.

2 GOURNIA, Shrine

Architecture: room (4×3 m) with bench, open court to north.

Artifacts: snake goddess with upraised hands (H. 0.365 m), and fragments of at least 2 others; tripod offering table; 5 snake tubes (3 have a lifting handle topped with horns of consecration, one of which has a snake, one a disk, and the third a missing symbol; H. 0.377–0.423 m); 4 birds; 2 snake heads; fragment of clay pithos with relief double axe and disk decoration; “many coarse ware sherds,” probably from kalathoi and storage vessels.

Williams 1908; Gesell 1985, p. 72.

3 HALASMENOS, Shrine

Architecture: megaron shape 4.5×13 m, with 2 rooms;

Room I has 2 benches and hearth, Room II has 3 benches.

Artifacts: 9 goddesses, 5–6 snake tubes, ca. 11 plaques, a few kalathoi, and 3–4 large pithoi.

Tsipopoulou 2001, and pers. comm.

4 KANINA, Shrine (of at least 5 rooms)

Room I

Architecture: shrine room (4.3×3.3 m) with display bench along back.

Artifacts: 4 goddesses with upraised hands (H. 0.34 m, 0.52 m, others incomplete), 3 with snakes on their tiaras, 1 with bird on neck; 3 snake tubes (none completely preserved); plaque with relief image of goddess; fragmentary human and animal figurines; flower pot; conical cup; 2 necklaces; pottery.

Room III

Architecture: irregular storeroom.

Artifacts: goddess fragments including head, arms, palettes, horns of consecration, bird; column-shaped stone libation table; pottery.

Room V

Architecture: preparation room (3.0×3.0 m) with side benches and hearth.

Artifacts: 1 goddess with upraised hands (H. 0.22 m), others incomplete; vase in shape of head of goddess; male figure (pres. H. 0.385 m, head missing); 2 snake tubes (neither completely preserved); plaque with sphinxes in relief; plaque with schematic decoration; female, animal, and bird figurines; shells, including 1 triton; stone libation table; 3 clay fruit stands; clay stirrup jar; crystal pendant; pottery.

Room VI

Architecture: anteroom (3.0 × 3.0 m).

Artifacts: 6 clay female figurines; 6 clay milk jugs; miniature clay vases; clay bowls; clay conical cups; pottery.

Room XV

Architecture: storeroom (4.0 × 1.0 m) with benches.

Artifacts: goddess with upraised hands with snakes on tiara (H. 0.34 m); snake tube (incomplete); stone libation table with incised horns of consecration; small clay plaque; incense burner; conical cups; flower pots; cylindrical basin; pottery.

Levi 1959; Gesell 1976, pp. 250–252, 256–257; 1985, pp. 77–79.

5 KARPPI, Temple (Room 1 and Rooms f, g, and h in Rutkowski 1987b)

Architecture: Room 1 (8.0 × 5.0 m), open court with display bench along south wall and shelf along west wall, altar near north end of court. Rooms f, g, and h with no features.

Artifacts: Room 1, 4 goddesses with upraised hands (H. 0.55–0.85 m) with tiaras decorated with birds, horns of consecration, and disks; plaque with modeled face (Fig. 7.13); 4 pounders; seal; spindle whorls; bead; 3 shells, including 1 triton; obsidian fragment; pottery. Room f, goddess with upraised hands with birds and disks on tiara, H. 0.85 m.

Students of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, 1937–1939 (1940), pp. 75–76; Gesell 1985, p. 79; Rutkowski 1987a, 1987b.

6 KARPPI, Rooms 16–17, 70

Architecture: Room 16–17 (6.5 × 5.5 m), open court with bench along north wall. Room 70, enclosed without features.

Artifacts: Room 16–17, fragments of goddesses; “cult objects”; snake tube; triton shell; boar’s tusk; small clay figurines; bronze tools; spindle whorls; spool; pottery. Room 70, fragments of 1 goddess, 1 plaque, 1 snake tube; stone pestle and bowl; pottery.

Students of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, 1937–1939 (1940), pp. 77–79, 86; Gesell 1985, pp. 79–81.

7 KARPPI, Room 58

Architecture: room (3.5 × 2.0 m) with projecting rock in northwest corner.

Artifacts: 2 snake tubes; at least 8 kalathoi; pithoi; 2 spindle whorls; bronze fragment; pottery.

Students of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, 1937–1939 (1940), pp. 84–85; Gesell 1985, p. 81.

8 KARPPI, Building on Mikre Koprana

Room 147

Architecture: room without features.

Artifacts: hut urn; bronze knife; bronze fibula; stone lid; spindle whorls; spools; pithoi; domestic pottery.

Room 148

Architecture: “outhouse.”

Artifacts: listed with those of Room 149 in publication.

Room 149

Architecture: room with artificially enlarged oblong “tank” in rock floor.

Artifacts: kalathos, H. 0.126 m, Diam. 0.26 m, with figurine of goddess with upraised hands attached to center of bowl (Fig. 7.10); head of clay ox

figurine; bronze blade; stone bowl; lid; whetstone; stone beads; spindle whorls; spools; at least 17 pithoi; pithoid jars; tripods; dishes; large krater; other domestic pottery.

Room 150

Architecture: room with no features.

Artifacts: pierced boar's tusk; whetstone; spindle whorl; spools; domestic pottery.

Students of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, 1937–1939 (1940), pp. 69–70.

9 KAVOUSI, Building G (shrine)

Figs. 7.1, 7.14

Room 1

Architecture: shrine room (6.3 × 3.0 m) with display bench.

Artifacts: fragments of goddesses, snake tubes, plaques (1 plaque with relief decoration, Fig. 7.12); 3 kalathoi; pottery.

Room 2

Architecture: preparation room (5.0 × 3.0 m) with 2 benches, display ledge or shelf, hearth.

Artifacts: fragments of 1 goddess; 6 snake tubes (H. 0.292–0.424 m, Figs. 7.8, 7.9); 3 plaques topped with horns of consecration (0.338 × 0.238 m, 0.352 × 0.241 m, 1 fragmentary, Fig. 7.11); plaque with raised border (0.198 × 0.330 m); fragments of other plaques; 16 kalathoi (H. 0.08–0.12 m, Figs. 7.6, 7.8); pottery.

Deposit South and West of Room 1

Artifacts: fragments of goddesses (largest restored to H. 0.74 m, Figs. 7.2, 7.5, 7.7); snake tubes (3 restored to H. 0.37 m, 0.375 m, 0.355 m); plaques; kalathoi.

Gesell, Day, and Coulson 1988, pp. 289–290; Gesell, Coulson, and Day 1991, pp. 161–163; Gesell, Day, and Coulson 1995, pp. 78–80.

10 KEPHALA VASILIKIS, Building E (temple with 8 rooms)

Room E1

Architecture: later addition with bench along west wall.

Artifacts: tripod cooking pot; PG krateriskos.

Room E2

Architecture: room with 1 stone column base.

Artifacts: unpublished.

Room E3

Architecture: room with central trapezoidal stone altar bordered by stone baetyl, narrow display bench on west wall, platform with adjoining clay hearth along south wall, bench along east wall suitable for sitting, rock outcrop on north and northwest.

Artifacts: unpublished.

Room E4

Architecture: room (5.0 × 4.0 m) with benches covered with pebbles on all sides of room, clay central hearth, small built base.

Artifacts: fragments of 4 goddesses with upraised hands, one restored to H. 0.75 m has 3 triangular symbols on tiara; fragments of clay throne (ca. H. 0.45 m); partially preserved snake tube; plaque with raised border; 2 fenestrated stands; cups; kalathoi; amphoras; jugs; trays; cooking pots; dishes; lamps or braziers; pithoi; large stone tool.

Room E5

Architecture: room (4.1–4.3 × 3.1 m) with benches on north, east, and parts of south wall; clay hearth on eastern side of room; clay hearth just outside door.

Artifacts: more fragments of clay throne; arm of goddess with upraised hands matching throne; plaque with two suspension holes; kalathoi; krater; bowls; cups; cooking pots; pithoi.

Room E6

Architecture: room (7.5 × 5.0 m) with clay central hearth framed east–west by 2 column bases, stone-lined pit in northwest corner.

Artifacts: unpublished.

Room E7

Architecture: irregular storeroom with paved strip for holding pithoi.

Artifacts: pithoi; cooking pots; tray; bowls; cups; seal; fragment of blossom bowl.

Room E8

Architecture: storeroom without features.

Artifacts: pithoi.

Eliopoulos 1998.

11 Knossos, Little Palace

Artifacts: lead snake goddess figurine (H. 0.11 m).

PM II, p. 540; Gesell 1985, p. 94.

12 Knossos, Shrine of the Double Axes

Architecture: room (1.50 × 1.50 m) with display bench (H. 0.60 m) and floor covered with pebbles.

Artifacts: goddess with upraised hands with bird on tiara (H. 0.22 m); 2 female worshipers with hands on breasts; male worshiper offering bird; Neolithic-type figurine; 2 pairs of horns of consecration; miniature double axe; champagne cups; small jugs; storage jar; pyxis; amphoras; stirrup jar.

Evans 1901–1902, pp. 95–101; *PM II*, pp. 335–344; Gesell 1985, pp. 90–92.

13 Knossos, Spring Chamber

Architecture: room (1.9 × 1.7 m) with spring basin, 2 ledges, niche.

Artifacts: hut urn containing goddess with upraised hands; clay figurines; incense burners; kalathoi; 2 fenestrated stands; later pottery including stirrup jar; cups; jug; bird vase; skyphoi.

PM II, pp. 123–139; Gesell 1985, pp. 100–101.

14 Knossos, Unexplored Mansion

Artifacts: goddess with upraised hands (H. 0.33 m); male figurine with partially surviving arm (holding offering?); animal askos; champagne cup; miniature conical cup; stirrup jar; kylikes.

Popham 1984, pp. 7–12; Gesell 1985, p. 101.

15 PRINIAS, Shrine deposit

Artifacts: 1 goddess with upraised hands (H. 0.62 m) and at least 4 others fragmentary (Figs. 7.3, 7.4); 5 snake tubes (one H. 0.527 m, remainder incomplete).

Wide 1901; Gesell 1976, pp. 253, 258–259; Rizzo 1985, pp. 144–145; Gesell 1985, p. 132.

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