

Rural Ritual in Bronze Age Crete: The Peak Sanctuary at Atsipadhes

Alan Peatfield

The Minoan mountain peak sanctuary of Atsipadhes Korakias (Rethymnon, Crete) was excavated by the author in 1989. This article presents the first published account of that excavation and addresses its contribution to broader issues of methodology and interpretation of Cretan Bronze Age religion. The spatial distribution of over 7500 finds was recorded, enabling the detailed reconstruction of the use and function of the sanctuary. This reconstruction is compared with other approaches to the identification of prehistoric cult places in Greece. Of the other excavated peak sanctuaries, the best known are elite sanctuaries associated with palatial centres; Atsipadhes Korakias is a poor, rural sanctuary, and offers a counterbalanced perspective on Minoan peak sanctuaries.

A peak sanctuary is a religious site set on top of a mountain peak. The term was coined by Sir John Myres for the Bronze Age (Minoan) site he excavated in 1903 on the summit of the mountain Psisophas, which rises right on the east coast of Crete (Fig. 1; Myres 1902-3, 356-37). Since then, many other sites on the island of Crete have been called peak sanctuaries, and some 25 of them have sufficiently similar characteristics of finds and topography to justify their identification as Minoan peak sanctuaries. Collectively they form a single class of shrine, representatives of a peak sanctuary cult which was one of the features of a

religious ideology which unified Minoan Crete. Eighteen of these 25 sites have been excavated to some degree or other, though rarely by more than trial trenches. With one exception, the published results of these excavations are limited to several pages at most, more often simply a couple of paragraphs. The exception is Joutias (Fig. 1), the peak sanctuary associated with Knossos, the palace and settlement which was the leading city of Minoan Crete. The preliminary reports of the excavations here since 1974 have been usefully full and detailed (Karetsou 1974-5; 1977-81). But Joutias is an atypical peak sanctuary - it

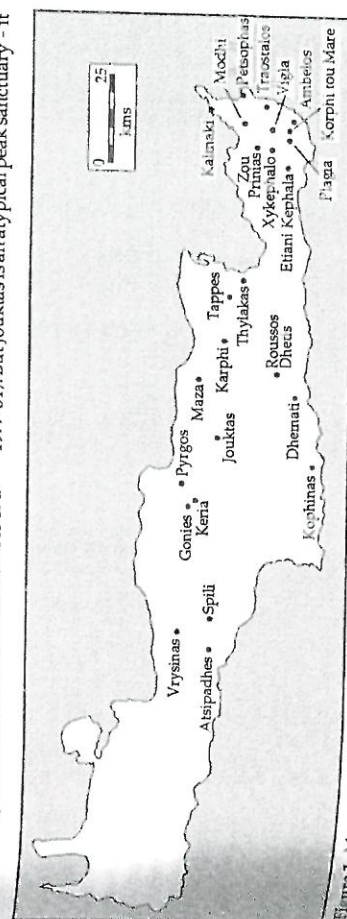


Figure 1. Map of Crete with locations of peak sanctuaries referred to in text. (Drawn by Christine Morris)

is the largest, richest, most well-built, and longest-lived peak sanctuary, appropriately so given its link with the palace of Knossos.

By contrast, the peak sanctuary at Aisipadhes Korakias is, allowing for a little poetic licence, the smallest and poorest peak sanctuary known (Fig. 1). But its interest, initially at least, lay precisely in that - because its full excavation and publication would provide a suitable balance to Joutkas in the way in which Minoan peak sanctuaries are perceived in the wider archaeological world. Aisipadhes Korakias is also pre-eminently a rural peak sanctuary, and is thus by definition more typical of a cult whose origins and earliest phases lay firmly in a tradition of rural, popular religion.

The characteristics of the peak sanctuary cult, as demonstrated by the consistent votive offerings of terracotta figurines, have been fairly well understood since the 1903 publication of Petsophas. Various surmises about the beliefs behind such offerings have also been made. Lacking, however, has been any understanding of the mechanics of the practice, and the contextual social elements of both belief and practice. The fundamental purpose of the Aisipadhes project, therefore, was the rigorous excavation of the site in order to recover, for the first time, the detailed spatial layout of a rural peak sanctuary, that we might know how it functioned, and by determining the level of activity there we might know something of the level of practical significance a peak sanctuary had in Minoan society. This was possible as the site was small, topographically self-contained, and relatively intact. Most peak sanctuaries, by contrast, have been persistently and sometimes systematically looted since the Second World War.

Characteristics of Peak Sanctuaries

In his honest appraisal of the problems inherent in the study of prehistoric religion, Renfrew remarked that one of the main characteristics of religion was the recurrence of elements in consistent patterns; patterns of belief, and patterns of practice. As archaeology is fundamentally concerned with the recovery of patterns, it is possible to understand something of prehistoric religion from archaeological evidence (Renfrew 1985, 17).

The understanding of the general characteristics of the peak sanctuary cult has been based precisely on the perception of such patterns of material evidence. From this I have been able to establish a 'definition' of a Minoan peak sanctuary: a site on or near the summit of a mountain, situated to maximize human interaction (visually and physically accessible from areas

of human habitation and exploitation) and identified as a shrine by the presence of specific groups of animal and human clay figurines, including an animal model, all interpreted as votive offerings.

It has proved important to have a definition because more than 50 Minoan sites have been claimed as peak sanctuaries (Rutkowski 1986, 96-8; 1988, 72-4; Peatfield 1983, 274), and the term has been indiscriminately applied to almost any site which is on top of a mountain, or which has many figurines. The is quite wrong. My definition relies on two main elements of evidence: the topographic, the characteristics of which I have dealt with elsewhere (Peatfield 1983, 1990, 119-20); and the finds which are common to the peak sanctuaries. The topographic criteria may be summarized as:

1. prominence and visibility of the peak from the area from which the worshippers came;
2. good view down onto that same area;
3. can 'see' and be 'seen' from other peak sanctuaries;
4. accessible;
5. proximity to areas of human habitation and exploitation.

This close association of peak sanctuaries with the areas from which the worshippers came makes them fundamentally popular shrines, and not places of remote and arduous pilgrimage, as are mountain shrines in many other cultures.

Though topography may first suggest the presence of a peak sanctuary, it is the finds which allow it to be identified as a shrine. The characteristic finds are terracotta figurines, of three main types: animals, human beings, and modelled parts of the human anatomy, referred to as votive limbs. The animal figurines represent species which are all valuable to or exploited by human communities either as domestic or as hunted species. The human figurines depict the worshippers themselves, displaying the consistent variety of Minoan dress and hairstyle. They adopt a restricted range of gestures, all of which seem to be worship gestures. In contrast there is no figurine or group of figurines which is different or distinguished enough to suggest that it is an idol, a depiction of a deity. The votive limbs are certain, offered as prayers or thanks for healing, the conceptual bridges between them and the human figurines being provided by a figure from Proskalos with a grotesquely swollen leg (Peatfield 1990, 120-2, fig. 10).

Though the votive limbs have an obvious parallel in the anatomical models found in Classical Greek temples to Asklepios and other deities with a healing aspect (van Straten 1981), the strongest model for understanding the group of figurine offerings as a

whole is the modern Greek *tamadis*, the gold and silver votive plaques hung above icons in Greek churches. The function of these, from which we can interpret the Minoan figurines, is to act as perpetual prayers to the deity for cure, protection, prosperity and health. Thus these Minoan clay offerings, which are common to all peak sanctuaries, reveal the personal concerns of the worshippers, and the popular, community nature of the cult.

This definition, based on topography and finds, arose out of my observation of the shared, common features of the claimed sites, and the two elements must go together before a peak sanctuary can be reliably identified. Only sites which conform to this definition can safely be called peak sanctuaries. Using this definition I have been able to limit the number of confirmed known peak sanctuaries to 25, and can offer the definition as a method for the future identification of yet undiscovered peak sanctuaries (Peatfield 1984, 9; 1990, 119). The 25 known sites which conform to the above definition allow us to identify a peak sanctuary cult which was essentially the same all over Crete, symbolically uniting Minoan society, and transcending regional differences.

The obvious contrast here is with Minoan cave shrines. First of all there are far fewer of these than has been supposed. Tyre, convincingly argued that only a dozen of the many known caves could have been Minoan shrines (Tyre 1974). Examination of the finds shows that each cave was different: the votive weapons and double-axes of Arkalochori, the pottery of Amari, and the figurines of Psychro may be cited as examples. The obvious conclusion is that the caves do not represent any single cult, while the peak sanctuaries do.

These conclusions stress the similarities which bind together the peak sanctuaries. This was inevitable if some sort of synthetic order was to be brought to the disparate material from excavations and surveys which I had made at the start of my peak sanctuary studies. But once established it becomes necessary to discern differences among the peak sanctuaries.

Elsewhere I have discussed a historical difference, a contrast between the numbers and use of peak sanctuaries in the First Palace and Second Palace (or Neopalatial) periods (Peatfield 1984; 1990, 123-31). During the First Palace period (c.2000-1650 BC), there were many peak sanctuaries, which represented a single cult which symbolically unified Minoan society. Probably all the major and minor settlement areas had their own local peak sanctuary, large or small, rich or poor, depending on the relative density and prosperity of the population. During the Second Palace period (c.1650-1425 BC) the peak sanctuary cult was

deliberately centralized at the few peak sanctuaries associated with the palaces and palatial towns as the symbolic dimension of the expanding economic and political control evident in that period.

The centralization of the peak sanctuary cult should, however, be seen as an ongoing, diachronic process throughout the Second Palace period, not a sudden event at the beginning of that period. The continuity of that process may explain the fact that, by Late Minoan (LM) II, Joutkas was the only peak sanctuary still in use. In other words, the peak sanctuary cult was progressively centralized until the whole cult was concentrated on Joutkas. This is clearly demonstrated in the evidence from almost all the 25 known peak sanctuaries of diminishing use in early Middle Minoan (MM) III, and clear limitations of MM III-LM I material to just six or eight peak sanctuaries. This means that for a period of time, probably MM II to MM III, there was a clear differentiation between two very broad groups of peak sanctuaries:

1. those which were associated with palaces and palatial towns, and which were destined to survive into the Second Palace period - these we may refer to as palatial peak sanctuaries;
2. those peak sanctuaries which were associated with the smaller settlements, villages or groups of farmsteads, and which were progressively abandoned after the end of the First Palace period - these we may refer to as rural peak sanctuaries.

Posing a Problem

Of the 25 Minoan peak sanctuaries, the two which the archaeological world knows best are Joutkas and Petsophas. Petsophas is known through Myres' 1903 publication and Davaras' brief reports of his own excavations in 1971 and 1976 (Davaras 1972; 1976). Joutkas is known through Kareisou's admirably full preliminary reports and articles (Kareisou 1974-5; 1977-81). But both these sites are palatial peak sanctuaries, Joutkas associated with Knossos, and Petsophas with the palatial town of Palaikastro. Thus they are large, rich, have buildings, and were used over both palatial periods. If knowledge of peak sanctuaries was to be based almost exclusively on these two sites it would give an unbalanced, potentially top-heavy perspective from which to judge the other 23 known peak sanctuaries, most of which were smaller, poorer, and non-palatial.

I have considerable sympathy with the view in archaeology that we gain a greater understanding of a society from the study of the more common everyday objects than from the unique treasures. Thus

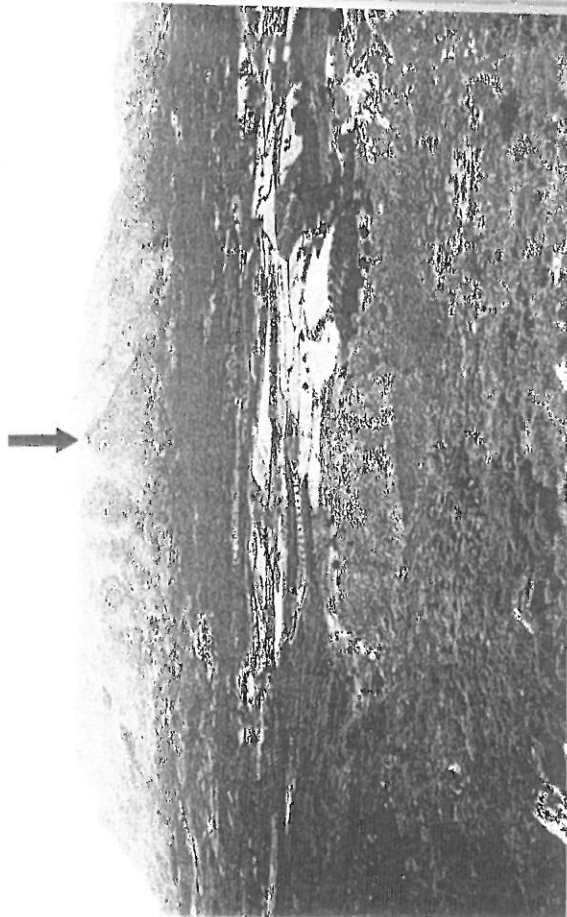


Figure 2. Ayios Vasilios valley, looking south to Mt Kouroupas. The Korakias peak is shown with an arrow.

increasingly through my work I observed that there was a need to balance this view of peak sanctuaries through the excavation of a small, parochial, rural, non-palatial peak sanctuary. This was realized with the 1989 excavation of Atsipadhes Korakias.

There was another need too. The general characteristics of peak sanctuaries have become well known, but still unknown was the detailed operation and use of such a sanctuary, the processes of religious belief and practice by which the archaeology or material remains of such a sanctuary were formed. The excavation of Atsipadhes Korakias gave the opportunity to try to recover that. The full account must await the final publication, but already, after the excavation and two study seasons, the main elements are clear. In that sense this article can act as a preliminary but interpretative report, concentrating on how the excavation results allow us to understand the functional layout of one small peak sanctuary. This obviously has consequences for understanding the broader issues of the peak sanctuary cult in Minoan society as a whole.

Geographical and Topographical Setting

The area in question is the Cretan district of Ayios Vasilios, the southern half of the province of Rethymnon, in west central Crete (Fig. 1). Here Mt Kouroupas divides the inland valley of Ayios Vasilios from the coastal plain of Plakias/Preveli. The Atsipadhes Korakias peak is a northern spur of the Kouroupas massif (Fig. 2). The name Atsipadhes taken from the village at the foot of the peak, while Korakias is the peak's local toponym, meaning the place of the crows'.

The altitude of Korakias is 735.86 metres, which is lower than the Kouroupas summit at 982.97 metres (Fig. 2). Elsewhere I have commented extensively on this practice of siting a peak sanctuary on a not prominent peak, lower than the actual summit of a given mountain. The peak sanctuary of Prinias above Sitias, for example, is on a prominent knoll lower than the summit of Dhrys; the Kophinas peak sanctuary is set on a plateau 300 m lower than the summit (Palak 1983; 1990, 119-20). The reason in all cases, including Atsipadhes, seems to be the relative viewpoint

the site chosen for the peak sanctuary is both more prominent and has a better view than the actual summit of a given mountain, and so gives a better two-way visual link between the peak sanctuary and its settlement area. Locally, therefore, in the central and eastern parts of the Ayios Vasilios valley, Korakias is extremely prominent, while the Kouroupas summit is barely visible.

In turn the view from Korakias down into the valley and to the hills beyond is spectacular. The view encompasses the whole of the Ayios Vasilios valley, east to west. To the east even Mt Ida is visible on a clear day, but at the head of the valley above the village of Spili stands the mountain Vorizi. On Vorizi another peak sanctuary has been identified, which probably served the extreme east end of the valley. Korakias undoubtedly served the central part of the valley, an area which is now under intensive olive cultivation (Fig. 3). To the north-north-east is Vrysinnas, where a palatial peak sanctuary served the settlements of the northern coastal plain of Rethymnon. The three peak sanctuaries (Korakias, Vorizi, and Vrysinnas) visually unite the Rethymnon province, and demonstrate the

Figure 3. View NNE from Korakias peak, looking over the Ayios Vasilios valley. The mountain on the horizon is Vrysinnas.

inter-visibility of peak sanctuaries.

Directly to the west rise the White Mountains which dominate the far west of Crete. Despite this mountainous landscape, no site west of Atsipadhes Korakias has yet been demonstrated convincingly to be a peak sanctuary.

Thus Atsipadhes Korakias conforms to the general topographic characteristics of peak sanctuaries, stressing visibility, accessibility, and proximity to areas of human activity and exploitation. Since the 1960s exploitation of the mountain has been confined mostly to the pasturage of sheep and goats, with the sporadic cultivation of cereal crops. This reflects a major decline over the preceding 30 years. All over the mountain are the remains of small eroding terraces, formerly used for the cultivation of cereal crops (and laboriously ploughed with teams of oxen) for the local production of bread essential to each village family's survival. The primary vegetation is garrigue, low shrubs which are burnt at the end of summer to allow a winter's fresh growth for the following year's pasturage.

Description of the Peak

The steep-sided Korakias peak has two main terraces, an Upper Terrace to the west, and a Lower Terrace to the east (Figs. 4 & 5). North and east of the Lower Terrace is a lower Sub-Terrace. These terraces are natural formations, bounded by edges of bedrock. While bedrock also peeps through the terraces themselves, they are flat and smooth enough for use. This was particularly so in the centre of the Lower Terrace, where there is a substantial earth fill. It had already been established in pre-excavation study that the Minoan occupation was limited to the peak itself. The goal of the excavation therefore was to examine the extent and layout of the sanctuary on the peak. It was also apparent, before excavation, that there was no evidence of any built structure on the site; this was later confirmed by the excavation.

On other unexcavated peak sanctuaries concentrations of material are often associated with the natural features of a site, the rocky configurations. It was reasonable to assume that such concentrations were meaningful, but Alsipadhes gave the opportunity to test the idea, and explore its implications. The

fundamental purpose of the excavation was therefore to record the finds in relation to the natural features of the peak. Only this would reveal how the sanctuary was used.

The Excavation

Methodology

The basis of the excavation was a specially drawn 1:100 topographic plan of the mountain peak (Fig. 5). This plan includes not only the outline of the peak but also all the natural rock features and formed the basis on which all finds were located. During excavation figurine fragments and feature sherds were precisely plotted in relation to the plan's grid. This proved to be a huge task, as more than 5000 figurine fragments and around 2500 feature sherds were recovered. Additionally, all non-feature sherds were kept in the each of an area no bigger than one square metre.

The first trenches were laid out along the east-west axis of the site in order to get an immediate impression of the distribution of finds. This strategy was successful and it quickly became clear that on the



Figure 4. The Korakias peak seen from the saddle to the south.



Figure 5. Plan of the peak sanctuary sites showing natural rock features of the Upper & Lower terraces. (Drawn by R. Nowicki and S. Lailate)

east of the Lower Terrace there was a distinct fall-off in the distribution of finds towards the east cliff which marks the edge of the peak. Material was concentrated in the rock clefts at the base of the drop between the Upper and Lower Terraces, and was also dense in the open area in the centre of the Lower Terrace. The trenches were extended so that during five weeks' work we were able to excavate around 95% of the central area of the sanctuary, and about 80% of the whole sanctuary, including identifying its edges.

Stratigraphy

In all areas of the sanctuary the layers of Minoan deposit (only two main strata, with many finds) were not deep, rarely as much as 30 cms before reaching natural, sterile earth (a limestone *terra rossa*). The modern surface, which may also have been the final Minoan surface, was a grey, humus stratum; the finds within this layer may have been moved by erosion. The second layer was a homogeneous orange earth thickly scattered with finds. Throughout this layer the finds seem mostly to have been *in situ*, particularly within the rock crevices. Some objects were found directly on the surface of the natural *terra rossa*, suggesting that this was the original Minoan surface. Test trenches dug into the *terra rossa* proved that it was indeed sterile.

Earth, Bones and Environmental Work

The consistency and homogeneity of the soil was surprising, because given the nature of the site as a sanctuary and the reports from other peak sanctuaries we expected to find, if not layers of ash, at least distinct deposits of carbonized remains. We found none, a part from a small deposit on a rock shelf on the Upper Terrace, and superficial flecks in the earth samples from the upper layers, which probably resulted from periodic burning of pastures. In other words, there was no evidence of ritual or sacrificial bonfires, or evidence of cooking on site. Complementing this was a total absence of bones, and flotation sieving of the soils did not find any seeds.

In attempting to understand this it will be necessary to recheck the evidence from other sites. Joukta's definitely has both extensive ash deposits and many bones, and Karetou has reported ash layers in the 1990 rescue excavation on Kophinas (Kareltsou & Karamiotakis, forthcoming).

From the smaller peak sanctuaries the evidence is less clear. Myras is quite explicit in his Petsophas report, describing the main deposit that he excavated as 'nearly black earth - slate-grey when dry - full of ashes and fragments of charcoal', but he does not mention bones. Bones are not mentioned in the brief

reports of other peak sanctuaries, and their consistent reference to soils as dark and sticky, therefore indicative of burnt sacrifices, is also unreliable, lacking scientific confirmation. Hopefully this question at Apsipadhas Korakias will be resolved by a programme of lipid analysis of the earth samples.

Nevertheless it is necessary to consider one of the possibilities concerning the general interpretation of peak sanctuaries that may be revealed by this negative evidence. The evidence of ash and bones is clearest from the larger palatial peak sanctuaries that continued into the Second Palace period (Joukta, Kophinas, Petsophas, Traostalos, Vrysinas). From the smaller, rural, exclusively First Palace period peak sanctuaries the evidence is unclear, or non-existent. This is an accurate observation of the facts, then it may be that the phenomenon of ritual fires on peak sanctuaries is a new feature of the Second Palace period, like the construction of shrine buildings, a reflection of their enhanced ritual and social function.

Description of the Sanctuary (Fig. 5)

Contrary to initial impressions, the sanctuary did not cover the whole peak. On the Upper Terrace it was limited to a small area, right on the eastern edge overlooking the drop to the Lower Terrace. This was delineated by a line of bedrock which had thus been used as a natural *temenos* boundary or *peribolos*, a feature marking the limit of the sacred precinct. Nothing was found west of this line, apart from a few scattered re-deposited finds. Almost the whole of the Lower Terrace was used as part of the sanctuary, though the density of finds diminished rapidly towards the eastern and northern edges of the Terrace.

The north-eastern Sub-Terrace was not part of the main sanctuary. To the north, the few finds could easily have been re-deposited or moved through erosion. On the extreme eastern edge, however, there was a substantial deposit of figurines in a large rock cleft. This was surprising as it was separated from the main sanctuary by an area almost entirely devoid of finds. Many of the most complete figurines came from here. It may therefore have been some sort of sacred *tothra* (crevice or pit) or was perhaps associated with the dramatic view eastwards over settlements below the sanctuary.

In total, therefore, the sanctuary area did not exceed 200 square metres, most of which was on the Lower Terrace.

The Lower Terrace (Figs. 5 & 6)

The Lower Terrace has two distinct areas: 1) the rock clefts on the west side, just below the Upper Terrace and 2) an open area in the centre and east of the

Terrace. Most finds on the site were within the rock clefts (Fig. 7). Though some of the finds may have moved through erosion, many were probably *in situ* in the clefts, which conforms to Platon's observation of other peak sanctuaries investigated up to 1951 (Platon 1951). It remains a problem whether the material was placed as offerings in the clefts, or thrown randomly, falling between the rocks. Whatever the process involved it is clear that the figurines and pots were broken at the time of deposition, presumably in the act of deposition. This may indicate the ritual breakage of offerings that Davaras has suggested



Figure 6. The Lower Terrace as seen from the Upper Terrace.



Figure 7. The first figurines found in the rock clefts of the Lower Terrace.

(Davaras, n.d.). Part of the purpose behind plotting all the finds was to assess any significance in the dispersion of joining fragments of figurines. Though the Lower Terrace finds are not yet fully studied, the joining pieces that we have so far observed are not dispersed very far.

Figurines and sherds were also found in the open area, fairly densely in the centre of the Lower Terrace. These may have moved through erosion, or through clearing and raking the site before or after each episode of use. The distribution of finds fell off dramatically towards the eastern edge of the Terrace. This concentration of finds suggests that votive activity was focused on the rock clefts.

The Upper Terrace (Fig. 5)

The only part of the Upper Terrace used by the sanctuary was its eastern edge, overlooking the drop to the Lower Terrace. In preliminary survey this area had already been noted for its surface pebbles. Though a few other pebbles were found across the site, a huge number were concentrated in this small area (Fig. 8). Excavation revealed that the pebbles were not a defined layer or floor, but were thickly scattered through the fill of the deposit layers. The earth here was also full of sherds and figurine fragments. The pebbles were round, and clearly water-worn; they are not natural to the geology of the site, and must have been deliberately brought there in Minoan times. They are not sea pebbles, but river pebbles from the valley floor. Within the trenches the location of these was plotted and though they did not urea floor or surface, they were certainly intended to define and separate an important area of the sanctuary.

In the centre of the pebble scatter was discovered an earth feature, set on the natural east-west axis of the site (Figs. 5 & 8). It was roughly circular in plan, defined by soil of a consistency and colour different from the adjacent sediments; it was remarkable for a total absence of pebbles or artefacts, contrasting with the finds clustered densely around it, which suggests that something stood just here, around which offerings were deposited. The feature itself was placed over a shallow hollow apparently dug into the natural *terra rossa*, which was partly lined with schist-like stones, apparently foreign to the geology of the immediate site.

We are unlikely ever to know for certain what stood in this feature; its shallowness limits the possibilities, but the most likely are: a vessel for receiving offerings, a crude idol, or a bacyl or sacred stone. But whatever stood here, it was definitely the focus of activity and placed on the main axis of the site at a higher level than most of the sanctuary (Fig. 9). The

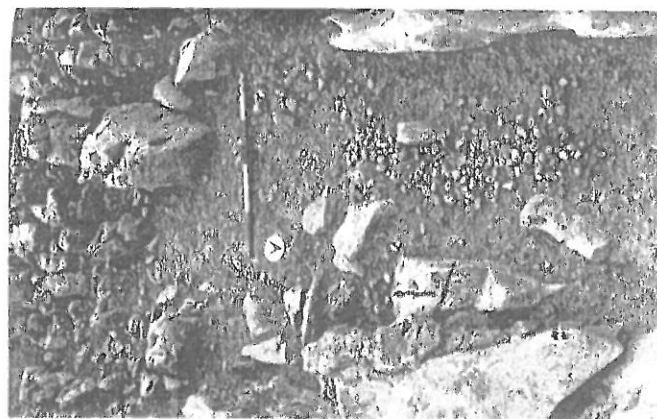


Figure 8. The pebble scatter and feature of the Upper Terrace.

concentration of pusherds was greater here than anywhere else on the site.

Our study so far indicates a differential spatial distribution of the pottery, especially vase shapes, between the Upper and Lower Terraces. This may reflect differences in the nature of the ritual activity in each place. Cups and large shallow dishes are the predominant shapes in the subsidiary deposit on the east edge of the Lower Terrace. By contrast, the pottery in the area near the eastern edge of the Upper Terrace (the area of the feature) was notable for the use of blue paint, for the presence of bridge-spouted jars, and for tantalizing fragments of larger vessels, the best preserved of which is a spouted jar. The same area also produced the base of a rhyton (a specialized perforated vase for pouring ritual libations) and at least three perforated cup bases, which may also be from rhytons.

These last sherds are part of an increasing body of evidence for libationary activity in the area of the Upper Terrace. As well as vase rhytons, among the animal figurines there is at least one bull's head with

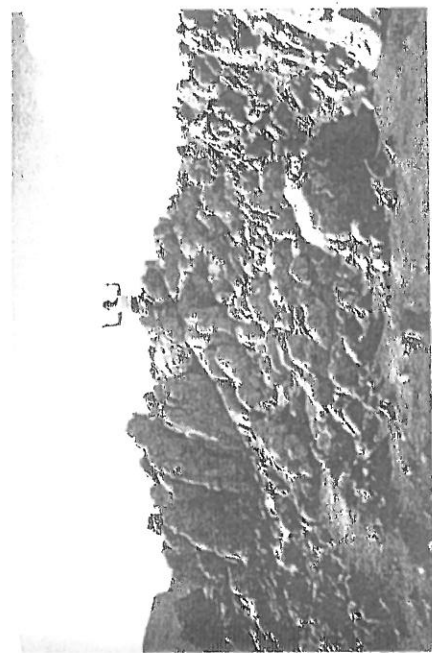


Figure 9. The liturgical area of the Upper Terrace as seen from the Lower Terrace. The pebble Minoan Goddess (Alexandria Roberts) stands in the location of the feature.

the stone varieties, but are so far unique in their material.

The programme of lipid analysis should, if successful, complement this artefactual evidence for libations.

In summary: the east edge of the Upper Terrace was delineated by a natural rock *peribolos* or boundary wall, and was the only part of that Terrace occupied by the sanctuary. The area was marked by a scatter of sherds. An earth feature, surrounded by the greatest density of finds on the site, is situated in the centre of the area, on the main east-west axis of the sanctuary site. The predominance of pottery amongst these finds and the identification of specialized ritual vessels (including the vase and animal-shaped rhytons and the libation tables) strongly suggests that this may have been the main 'liturgical' part of the sanctuary, where ritual activity was focused around whatever stood in the earth feature.

Pottery

Peak sanctuary pottery is generally a neglected study. This is because on all sites it is extremely fragmentary, probably through deliberate breakage at the conclusion of rituals. Fine decorated pottery was rarely brought to the peak sanctuaries, so that the sherds are mostly of plain and/or coarse wares. Only in recent years has Aegean archaeology begun to give plain and coarse wares the attention they merit, and the Aspidades study is part of this pioneering work. The peak sanctuary pottery is being studied for its own

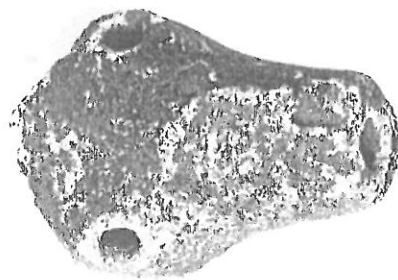


Figure 10. Head of hollow bull-rhyton from the Upper Terrace.

interest, in order to reveal the full range of shapes, decoration, and chronology, but also as part of a broader fabric study including the material found in the regional survey of the whole Ayios Vasilios valley.

Despite the fact that the Atsipades Korakias pottery is broken into small pieces and is often heavily abraded, careful study has already begun to yield valuable information about the chronology of the site and the range and spatial distribution of shapes and fabrics. Though we have a broad overview of the whole site, only material from the Upper Terrace and the subsidiary deposit on the extreme eastern edge of the site has been studied in detail. The observations presented here, though meaningful, should therefore be understood as preliminary.

Differences between the pottery from the Upper and Lower Terraces have already been briefly commented upon. Over the site as a whole the main shapes are cups of various types, both with and without handles. These include everted lip, straight sided and conical forms (Fig. 11); some are small but none are miniatures. Well represented are large dishes with straight flaring sides, bridge-spouted jars, and lamps (Fig. 12). Other shapes identified include small dishes with flaring rims, jugs (Fig. 13), several fragments of small *pilloloi* (storage jars), and tripod cooking-pots.

This range of shapes is suggestive not just of drinking and libation ceremonies but of ritual meals. In the face of this the absence of bones and the lack of evidence for burning on the site becomes all the more surprising. None of the tripod cooking-pot fragments shows any sign of burning. This negative evidence does not entirely exclude the possibility of ritual meals, which other scholars have argued were an essential part of Minoan ritual, but with the absence of evidence from the Atsipades peak sanctuary, one can only speculate about the carrying of fresh or pre-cooked food to the sanctuary and the removal of any organic remains.

The presence of dishes provides a useful link to representations of peak sanctuaries in Minoan art. The use of these dishes as containers for offerings, probably of food, may be inferred from the fragment of a stone vase found near Knossos (Fig. 14). It is carved with a scene showing a man bending to place such a dish, filled with offerings, in front of a shrine building at the top of a rocky slope (usually interpreted as a peak sanctuary). Many of the pots may have held non-animal organic offerings of some sort - not only vegetables and fruits, but perhaps also perfumed oils (Fig. 15). A number of lamps have already been identified (Fig. 12).

The predominant fabrics are a fine, pale orange-to-buff (or smaller shapes), and pale orange and



Figure 11. Conical cup from the Lower Terrace.



Figure 12. Lamp from the Lower Terrace.



Figure 13. Fragmentary jug with blue paint from the deposit on the extreme east edge of the sanctuary.



Figure 14. Carved stone vase fragment from Gypsallides, Knossos, showing a man making an offering at a sanctuary on top of a hill.

dark orange gritty fabrics with dense quartz and mica inclusions. Some of these have a darker smoothed surface. The same range of fabrics is represented both in the vases and in the figurines.

Much of the pottery seems to have been undecorated. Where preserved, the main surface decoration is a blue paint characteristic of other MM. Blue-painted cups and bridge-spouted jars occur in a fine, yellowish-buff fabric, which is repeated in blue-painted human figurines. Both larger vessels, such as jugs, and animal figurines with blue paint occur in a distinctive buff-to-pale orange fabric with predominantly blue inclusions (Fig. 13). Contemporary with the blue-painted vessels are a few fragments of barbotine ware, apparently plain. (For further discussion see Morris & Peatfield, forthcoming).

Chronology

It is, of course, the pottery which provides the fundamental evidence for the chronology of the sanctuary. The blue paint is a regional variant of the better-known blue-black painted background of Middle Minoan (MM) pottery from eastern and central Crete, more popularly known as Kamares Ware. The similarities with the Minoan pottery may suggest a terminus ante quem of MM II, the destruction date of that site. In Chania blue-painted pottery has a long life, Early Minoan (EM) III-MM II. This easily conforms to the proposed general chronology for rural peak sanctuaries (Peatfield 1990). There is nothing in the material to suggest that the sanctuary was used beyond this into the Second Palace period. Rather more



Figure 15. Small jar from the Lower Terrace. problematic, however, is the evidence for the earliest use of the Atsipades peak sanctuary.

Though rural and palatial peak sanctuaries separate at the later end of their history (Peatfield 1994; 1990, 126-31), at their beginning they seem clearly to be together. Detailed chronological evidence for the foundation of individual peak sanctuaries is sadly lacking, but enough broad evidence exists to allow the suggestion that they were in use at least as early as the immediate Prepalatial period, EM III-MM I (Peatfield 1989). Only at Juktas is there more specific evidence; there Karetsou has revealed the presence of EM II sherds, though she hesitates to interpret this as ritual activity (Karetsou, pers. comm.).

On the Lower Terrace of Atsipades Korakias two broken but almost complete cups of a handmade, gritty brown and lightly burnished fabric, were found turned upside down on the virgin terra rossa, apparently *in situ*. The better preserved was found in a rock cleft on the west side of the Terrace (Fig. 16), the other in a small hollow in the open central area. The deepest pottery lots in the same areas include substantial fragments of bowls with spouts and vertical lugs in the same distinctive fabric. This is noteworthy, because elsewhere on the site the pottery is very fragmentary; complete profiles are rare, and the preservation of only 10-20% of the rim of each vessel is typical.

In both fabric and shape these handmade, burnished vessels closely resemble the EM pottery of western Crete. If the cups are to be interpreted in the same way as other upturned cups, then they represent a ritual act, perhaps a foundation offering. Even if this interpretation is to be rejected, the sherds of this fabric still place the earliest use of the sanctuary well within the Prepalatial period. But can we be more specific about the date?

Colliques experienced in the pottery of western Crete suggest that these vases and sherds would not look out of place in EM I (Tzadchakis & Vlasaki, pers. comm.). Even allowing for a more conservative regional ceramic tradition, they cannot be later than

Human Figurines

The human figurines are of both males and females. They display all the same features of posture, dress, hairstyle, and modelling characteristic of other peak sanctuary figurines. Hands-to-chest or hands-to-waist are the most common worship gestures, adopted by figurines of both sexes. The more complete female construction seems to have been a common form of attachment of torso to skirt. Male figurines wear the usual belt, codpiece, and dagger (Fig. 19). Many heads are bald, but there is also the usual variety of hats, including pointed caps, and low and high splaying brimmed hats, both flat and hollowed (Fig. 20). Scalp blocks also display the considerable variation usual among peak sanctuary figurines (Fig. 21).

Along with these features typical of peak sanctuary figurines and Minoan terracotta figurines in general, the human figurines also show distinct local or regional variations in manufacture. Particularly striking is the peculiar 'lizard-like' face of many figurines; this may have been a regional or chronological type.

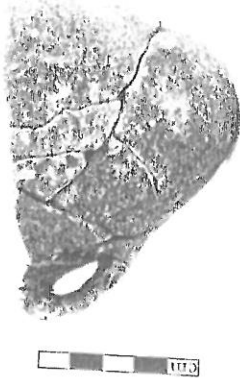


Figure 16. EM cup from the lowest levels.

EM III. As it is highly unlikely that Atsipades Korakias was the first peak sanctuary to be founded on Crete, the implications of this early material for the general chronology of the peak sanctuary cult needs to be considered. At the very least the pottery from other sites needs to be searched for similarly early material.

Pottery versus Figurines

It is figurines (animal, human, and votive limbs) which are the most characteristic peak sanctuary finds. As already stated, some 5000 figurine fragments were plotted, compared with around 2500 feature potsherds. There were also non-diagnostic sherds collected in the one square metre area lots. But in sheer numbers the figurine fragments came close to matching the total number of vessel fragments. On some parts of the site there were far more figurine fragments than sherds. This was unexpected in view of the vast numbers of sherds usual in Minoan excavations. Nevertheless, it may be a more common phenomenon at Minoan shrines than has previously been recognized.

Animal Figurines

Of the 5000 figurine fragments the majority were bovine horn or leg fragments. Some of the more complete pieces display considerable character. The animal figurines were predominantly of cattle, mostly of medium to large size, some hollow-made (Fig. 17). It is probable that several of the hollow figurines were rhytons, though only one head with a pierced muzzle has been recorded so far (Fig. 10). Noticeably lacking were the miniature animal figurines of other domestic species (pigs, goats, sheep, etc.), which are common at other peak sanctuaries. Special mention should be made of figurines of a bird perching on a rock and a head with long muzzle and upright ears - perhaps a dog or weasel.

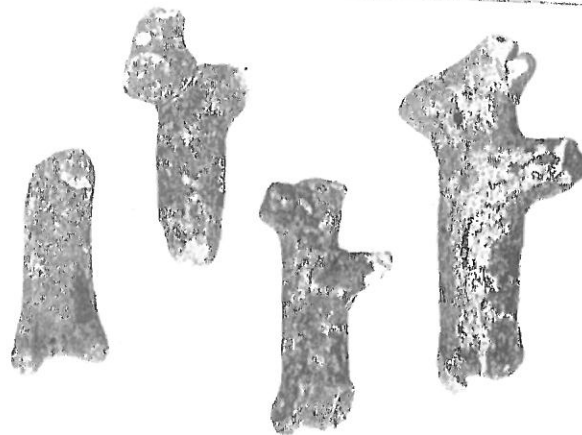


Figure 17. Cattle figurines.

Among the fragments are around 135 detached heads, few of which match or join the 50+ torsos. This is the most striking evidence we have to suggest that, even on this small and unlooked site, only a small proportion of the total number of votive figurines has survived for archaeological recovery. The 1991 survey around the peak did not discover any indication of erosion of material off the site down the slopes. The implications, statistical (hypothetical total numbers of votives) and ritual (possible deliberate clearing and removal of votives in Minoan times), have yet to be fully explored.

Of 143 heads or more complete figurines preserving heads, 93 have been gathered into 23

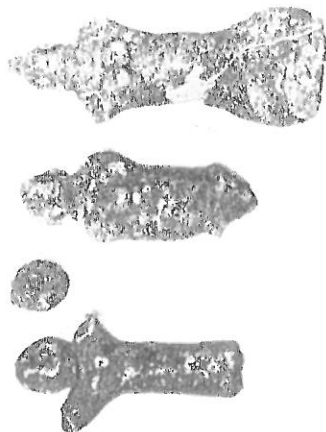


Figure 18. Female figurines.



Figure 19. Male figurines.

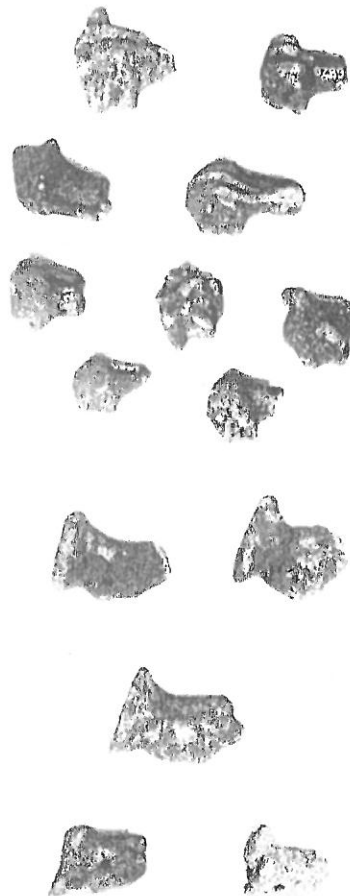


Figure 20. Human heads (female?) with flat hats.

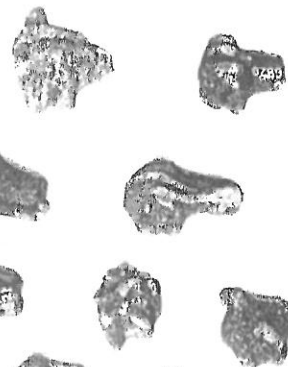


Figure 21. Human heads with scalp blocks.

Votive Limbs

Whereas other terracotta figurines are found at other types of Minoan site, sacred and secular, votive limbs

are found only on peak sanctuaries. The peak sanctuaries of eastern Crete, particularly Psisophus, have them in large numbers, and it was Myres who first suggested a function associated with healing (Myres 1902-3). Though Nilsson cast doubt on this interpretation with the question: 'are we to assume that the Minoans suffered only in their arms and legs?' (Nilsson 1950, 74), the basis of his disagreement is inaccurate. Even among the votive limbs known in his time, there was a large range of anatomical pieces, from the aforementioned limbs to torsos with the pennis and vulva emphasized. Nevertheless the apparent lack of human genitalia among the Minoan votive limbs has been puzzling when compared with the many such models among the later Classical Greek and Roman anatomical offerings (van Straten 1931).

On this the finds from Atsipadhes may be important. At this early stage we have recognized very few votive limbs amid the finds. Only one leg noticed (Fig. 22). We do however have a large number of finds which we can only assume to be phalli (Fig. 23). We are not certain if this identification is correct, particularly as to go with so many phalli we only have one pair of testicles (and these probably come from a large bull figurine) (Fig. 24).

Other Finds

Other categories of small finds are rare on the site. Three globular spindle-whorls were found in the area of a single rock crvice. A very unusual object has the shape of a typical MM II stamp seal, but in clay rather than the usual material of ivory or stone. The circular face has crude indentations suggestive of a carved design, but it is too crude to identify. It has been suggested that this is a clay facsimile of a seal for votive purposes rather than an actual clay seal (Finii & Weingarten, pers.com.). The only definite non-ceramic find is an obsidian blade.

Defining a Shrine

In the foregoing description of the Atsipadhes Korakias peak sanctuary I have already touched upon many issues that are raised by the excavated sanctuary and its finds. The fuller consideration of these will proceed as the excavation study progresses. Already, however, the results allow a discussion of the most basic issues raised by the excavation. Fundamental is the identification of the site as a shrine within rigorous parameters of definition, and the cognitive interpretation of it in terms of practice and belief. By extension this has relevance to other peak sanctuaries and to the understanding of their role in Minoan

74



Figure 22. *Votive leg with suspension hole.*

society. For all the current sophistication of interpretation of prehistoric religion through the application of anthropological and religious theory, the successful understanding of Atsipadhes Korakias as a site and within the broader context of Minoan civilization will only be possible because of the extensive material database recovered by rigorous excavation. All errors of experience and judgement. Nevertheless, the planning of the peak and the plotting of all figurine fragments, etc., means that we have an accurate record of the spatial distribution of the finds that is unique for this kind of site. As this spatial distribution is the primary database upon which any conclusions about function will be drawn, it is first necessary to establish the level of movement of the finds on the site since their disposition. Just how meaningful is the recovered distribution?

The survey of the Ayios Vasilios valley in 1991 included the area around the peak sanctuary and the immediate vicinity (Figs. 2 & 3). The slopes down from the peak were subjected to especially detailed scrutiny. Almost no material was found here, suggesting that there has been very little erosion of pottery and



Figure 23. *Votive phalli.*

figurines from the site. Geological study of the soil (by Clark and Moody), especially on the Upper Terrace, points to disturbance during the life of the sanctuary. This observation is supported by the pottery - the sherds on the Upper Terrace are far smaller and more broken than those on the Lower Terrace (Morris, pers.com.). In addition, there are very few large pieces; it is as though someone has taken a large rake and removed all the pieces larger than the spaces between the prongs. The lack of large fragments may also be due to persistent though small-scale robbing of the site over the three and half millennia since its abandonment, but this would not seriously disrupt the original spatial distribution of the remaining pieces. Significantly in this respect, joins between finds so far tend to be from pieces close to one another, which suggests that post-depositional disturbance or movement has indeed been slight. All this goes to indicate that the spatial pattern of finds recovered by the excavation is a meaningful one, accurately indicative of the way the site functioned.

Having established the validity of the source material, the two fundamental cognitive strands are



Figure 24. *Testicles, probably from a large bull figurine.*

belief and practice. Practice is the easier to discern archaeologically because it will leave a pattern of material remains. Renfrew's definition of a shrine involved four main criteria (1985, 18):

1. attention focusing
2. special aspects of the liminal zone (the place or focus of ritual activity)
3. presence of the transcendent and its symbolic focus
4. participation and offering

Attention focusing involves stimulation of the senses: sight, sound, smell, touch. Touch would be stimulated through movement, such as gesture and dance, for which there can be no direct evidence from the peak sanctuary, but sight, sound, and smell would arise from the use of objects. Many of these objects would be included under Gesell's definition of Minoan ritual equipment (Gesell 1985, 2-4), for example musical instruments (triton (conch) shells), and lamps for the burning of fragrant substances (Fig. 12).

The absence of architecture on Atsipadhes Korakias does not exclude the visual aspect of attention focusing, for the attention of sight was clearly drawn by the layout of the sanctuary - the separation of a topographically distinct area of the sanctuary (with the pebbles) for a special purpose (Fig. 5). This was on the Upper Terrace, which by virtue of its higher position was a natural focus for people on the Lower Terrace;

75

more directly, attention would have been drawn by whatever stood in the earth feature (Fig. 9).

Pebbles are persistently found on other peak sanctuaries, notably Joulkias, and defined scatters are especially apparent on Spili Vozzi and Koria (Fig. 1). These findings suggest that this was a usual feature of peak sanctuary spatial design. The above-mentioned scatters are also associated with rocky areas on each site. Similarly there is a consistent focusing of peak sanctuaries onto areas of bare rock, by means other than pebbles. The shrine buildings on both Joulkias and Peisophas front onto open areas of bare rock; that on Joulkias has an altar set in the middle. It is likely that this was deliberate and associated with ideas about baetyls (sacred rocks).

We might also reasonably infer from the evidence of ritual activity on the Upper Terrace that attention was focused by those rituals. There is no direct evidence for music among the Aisipadhes finds, but triton shells have been reported from at least two other peak sanctuaries, Kalumaki in east Crete and, perhaps significantly, Vryssinas, just north of Aisipadhes (Fig. 1). Peisophas too has miniature triton shells, which may signify the use of larger ones. Perhaps, then, we can suggest the more general use of triton shells for music in general peak sanctuary ritual.

Smell is more directly attested among the Aisipadhes finds by the 'lamps' (Fig. 12). Though usually referred to as 'lamps', this vase shape seems also to have been used for the burning of spiritually purifying fragrant substances, much like the modern *Mymalera* used in Jonian religious rituals of modern Greek homes. The number of lamps among the Aisipadhes finds suggests that this attention-focusing device was part of the ritual's here.

Special aspects of the liminal zone. At Aisipadhes Korakias it is of course the mountain setting itself with its spectacular view that is the most impressive aspect of the liminal zone (Figs. 2 & 3). The sanctuary itself is delineated by the natural boundaries of the bedrock, and the pebble scatter on the Upper Terrace clearly defines an area of extra importance (Fig. 5).

Renfrew's explanation of this criterion further defined the liminal zone as a 'special and mysterious region'. One of the more controversial aspects of my earlier work on peak sanctuaries was the suggestion that there may have been a Minoan (specifically EM) taboo on human trespass into the mountains, which may have been considered the abode of the spirits/deities. I explored this possibility with the analogy of the Japanese *kamae*, commenting on the scarcity of Minoan settlement in the mountains (Peatfield 1990, 126). The 1991 Ayios Vasilios Valley Survey revealed

an almost complete absence of Minoan material on the Kouroupas massif, the mountain where the Aisipadhes Korakias peak sanctuary is located. The only sherds from the peak sanctuary, was a small scatter of sherds in a small rock shelter. This may indeed indicate the location of the peak sanctuary within a 'special and mysterious region'. In this case the whole mountain, I am not suggesting that the mountain was not exploited by Minoan shepherds or farmers, but that permanent settlement may have been discouraged for ritual reasons.

Presumably the presence of the transcendent and its symbolic focus was symbolized on Aisipadhes Korakias by the object in the feature. It was the visual focus and the 'recipient' of the ritual activity judging by the sheer density of finds around it, including the libation vessels (Fig. 2). Within Minoan religion the objects which symbolize the transcendent (i.e. the divine) are anthropomorphic deity images, and symbols such as the double-axe, horns-of-consecration, baetyls (see above), birds, discs, etc. (Gesell 1985, 3). There is no figurine among the Aisipadhes finds (or indeed those of any other peak sanctuary) to suggest a deity image. The possibility of an aniconic image of the deity, such as a baetyl, standing in the Upper Terrace feature would be consistent with other peak sanctuary evidence. The Traostalos peak sanctuary in east Crete (Fig. 1) has a standing rock incorporated into its shrine building (Peatfield 1990, 122-3; Fig. 12); this rock can reasonably be interpreted as a baetyl (see also the discussion of rocky areas above). The association of baetyls with peak sanctuaries is further demonstrated by the peak sanctuary on the Kato Zaho stone rhyton, where a baetyl is shown set on top of the architectural facade of the sanctuary.

Warren's recent exhaustive study of Minoan cult scenes involving baetyls conclusively demonstrates their importance in Minoan religion (Warren 1990). One significant element of the scenes is a natural setting, perhaps appropriate to a peak sanctuary. But one scene, that on the Sellopoulo ring (Warren 1990, 194, fig. 5), may be relevant to an Aisipadhes find. The scene combines the normal ritual action of human being embracing a baetyl with the appearance of a bird, hailed by the human figure. As the bird is a common Minoan symbol of the divine, Hägg includes this scene in his study of Minoan epiphany. Though the Aisipadhes figurine of a bird on a rock is clearly too small to be an idol (Fig. 25), it may, as a votive offering, represent the same divine concepts of baetyl and bird epiphany.

Participation and offering are of course the elements best attested by peak sanctuary finds



Figure 25. Figurine of a bird perching on a rock.

generally, not only those of Aisipadhes Korakias. All the finds are deliberately brought there and are disposed of (Peatfield 1990, 127-8), hence are evidence of an activity, specifically an offering activity, which involves participation.

Religious belief, involving as it does the abstractions of thought, word, and idea, is much harder for an archaeologist to interpret from prehistoric material than ritual practice. In the study of Minoan religion, iconography has been the main source for scholarly interpretations since Evans' pioneering efforts (1901). It is not appropriate, nor is there the space to discuss here the iconography relevant to peak sanctuaries generally (see Peatfield 1989), especially as none specifically refers to Aisipadhes Korakias. The central element of Minoan religious belief seems, however, to focus on a female deity, the Minoan Great Goddess. We might therefore consider the relationship of the Aisipadhes Korakias evidence to that belief.

Let me first note a word of caution. It is a general feature of peak sanctuaries that there is little direct evidence in their finds to identify the deity or deities worshipped there. Most peak sanctuary finds were offerings rather than permanent cult symbols and permanent ritual equipment. That the deity worshipped on the peak sanctuaries was the Minoan Great Goddess is essentially an interpretation based on the few finds of Minoan cult symbols at individual peak sanctuaries: double-axes and horns-of-consecration (Peatfield 1990, 127-5). This interpretation, based on the 'internal' evidence of peak sanctuary

finds, is supported by an 'external' piece of evidence, the clay seal impression from the Palace of Knossos, commonly called the 'Mountain Mother' seal, which shows a female deity standing on a mountain, flanked by lions and saluted by a male worshipper (Gill 1965, 58-98). Though it remains an assumption, it is reasonable to suggest that Aisipadhes Korakias conforms to the other peak sanctuaries in this. The suggested presence of a baetyl and model bird epiphany, if correct, would support this notion.

A Rural Shrine

It is clear that the initial identification of Aisipadhes as a rural, rather than a palatial, peak sanctuary, was entirely correct. There is no feature of the site or its finds which suggests that it had any relation with a major palatial centre, palace or town. Furthermore, though the Ayios Vasilios valley was densely occupied in Minoan times, there is no evidence for a palatial centre in the area; the preliminary results of the 1991 survey reveal a dispersed settlement pattern of villages and farmsteads. Aisipadhes can therefore stand as a rural peak sanctuary, a contrast to the better known palatial peak sanctuaries.

Common features of the peak sanctuary cult bind all the sites, and the primary differences between palatial and rural are scale and quality. The small size of Aisipadhes Korakias, approximately 200 square metres, contrasts dramatically with that of the main sanctuary on the Joulkias peak, some 10 times larger than Aisipadhes. The area enclosed by the Joulkias *temenos* wall is 100 times larger than Aisipadhes. The area of the Peisophas peak sanctuary is apparently small, only about 500 square metres, but this assumes that the sanctuary is only within that area enclosed by the *temenos* wall. This is probably wrong. Myres seems only to have cleared the area around the wall, tracing its length, and dug into a deposit on the east side of Room I. Davaras excavated a little further east into another major deposit, but it is clear from superficial surface study that the sanctuary in fact extends considerably further west and south of the existing *temenos*. Indeed, on the next peak westward of the summit crest, some 80 metres from the sanctuary proper, a scatter of sherds and other material has been observed. There is a clear need for a proper surface survey to determine the limits of the Peisophas peak sanctuary; taking rather arbitrary limits, it is probably some two - three times the size of Aisipadhes, roughly 600 square metres.

The defined size of a peak sanctuary is important because it gives us an impression of the number of

people who could have worshipped at the sanctuary, at least in relative terms. This is already apparent in the relative sizes of Atsipadhes, Joutias and Pelsophas. Thus the small size of Atsipadhes is appropriate to the settlement area from which its worshippers came, and with its identification as a rural peak sanctuary.

Related to the size of the sanctuary is the number of finds. The scarcity of finds reported from other sites had always presented an obstacle to the interpretation of the peak sanctuaries as the principal Minoan community shrines. The excavated finds from the Pyrgos and Gonies peak sanctuaries, for example, seem to consist only of 140 and 40 figurines respectively (Ruikowski, pers. comm.). These were from large sites with buildings, at least one of which, Pyrgos, is associated with a palatial centre, Tylosos, and may have continued in use into the Second Palace period. In comparing the 5000 figurine fragments recovered from 80% of the Atsipadhes sanctuary with those from Pyrgos and Gonies it is important to remember that the latter were only trial-trenched, not fully excavated. The finds from Joutias, do of course, already run into the thousands. As for Pelsophas, the known preserved material from the British excavation includes around 450 figurines and miniature vases. Davaras' material probably doubles that.

Absolute numbers are not always helpful as they cannot take into account 3500 years of loss through erosion, destruction, minor looting, etc. Nevertheless, tentative densities can give an impression of the level of use of the peak sanctuaries as shrines. Atsipadhes has a rough density of 32 figurine fragments per square metre, which surely harmonizes with the interpretation of the peak sanctuaries as regularly used shrines. Regrettably, such statistics are not available for other peak sanctuaries.

The question remains: if the Minoans visited the peak sanctuaries only on an annual or seasonal basis, did each of the worshippers always offer a figurine? It seems unlikely. Even allowing for the relatively high densities of finds from both rural and palatial peak sanctuaries, this does not translate into a very high level of offerings for the potential number of worshippers over the centuries of peak sanctuary cult use. Figurines were probably only offered therefore for particular ritual purposes or needs as the individual worshipper desired.

The quality of any sanctuary is expressed in its structure (the layout and definition of structural features) and its finds. Buildings on peak sanctuaries are essentially Second Palace Period constructions (Peatfield 1990, 127), and are therefore not relevant to this discussion of Atsipadhes Korakias. Even the shrine

at Joutias seems in the First Palace Period to have been limited to ash layers around the built altar. Here, however, the shrine structures of the subsequent period have surely eliminated the potential evidence for any earlier structures. On the other hand, the simple adaptation of natural features, such as the bedrock, to provide boundaries or a ritual focus is evident at all peak sanctuaries.

One bold statement about the finds from Atsipadhes Korakias may be enough to demonstrate rural, non-palatial characteristics: the figurines are mostly cruder in form, manufacture, color, and decoration than the figurines from palatial peak sanctuaries. Any visual comparison with the elaborately coiffed and painted figurines of Pelsophas will be sufficient demonstration. Nevertheless there are specific comparative features of the Atsipadhes Korakias figurines which are especially significant.

I noted above that the animal figurines from Atsipadhes are overwhelmingly of cattle (Fig. 17). Though cattle form the largest single group of animal figurines from each of the peak sanctuaries, other peak sanctuaries also have many other species. Pelsophas, for example, has sheep, goats, pigs, birds, beetles, dogs and vases. The predominance of cattle figurines as votive offerings may indicate something of the economic concerns of the region. Significantly, the nearby peak sanctuary of Vrysinas (north of Atsipadhes Korakias and serving the settlements of the northern half of Rethymnon province) also has vast numbers of cattle figurines. Travellers to Crete in previous centuries commented that the Amari valley was famous for its cattle (Blackham, pers. comm.). As the Amari valley is just to the east of the Ayios Vasilios valley it is possible that it may have shared this economic concern, and maintained it not only in the Venetian and Turkish periods, but also in Minoan times.

Cattle are rare in the Ayios Vasilios valley of the 1990s, but until a generation ago they were essential to the economy of the valley. Before the centralized production and distribution of bread, each village family had to make their own. Consequently (before the widespread use of the tractor for mechanized ploughing) they each maintained their own team of cattle to plough their own small terraces on the steep slopes of Kouroupas where their own corn was grown. Moody (Kouroupas) believes that this part of Crete may, in Minoan times, have specialized in breeding cattle for export elsewhere on the island. Even if this were the case, the ethnographic evidence for the importance of cattle to the arable economy of the valley and indeed to the survival of its people is surely applicable to Minoan times. In the broader perspective

the importance of peak sanctuaries to Minoan shepherds and the pastoral economy has long been recognized in the finds (Ruikowski 1972, 155). The evidence of the peak sanctuaries of the Rethymnon area, Vrysinas and Atsipadhes Korakias, demonstrates that they were equally important to the Minoan farmers and to their arable economy.

The earlier statement about the quality of the figurines is especially applicable to the human figurines. The best of the Pelsophas figurines are of fine clay, which is well-fired. They are well-modelled and have detailed painted decoration. The Atsipadhes figurines tend to be of a coarser clay, are less well-fired, and rarely have painted decoration (Figs. 17-25). The quality of the Pelsophas figurines is understandable given the proximity to the palatial town of Palaikastro, which no doubt controlled local specialized pottery production. The less fine figurines of Atsipadhes suggest that the worshippers did not have access to this sort of specialized and skilled manufacture.

Most puzzling, of course, are the votive limbs. The single leg so far recognized (Fig. 22) does at least demonstrate the presence of this class of offerings at Atsipadhes Korakias. It must be acknowledged too that it is an assumption to classify the 'phall' (Fig. 23) as votive limbs, let alone as actual phalli. The variety of votive limbs from other peak sanctuaries is much greater: Pelsophas has arms, legs, and various torsos. These Atsipadhes seem to lack. So, why so many phalli?

I should stress here that the lack of Minoan models of human genitalia from other peak sanctuaries is only apparent, perhaps more due to the reticence of excavators than a genuine absence in the material. Karetou has mentioned the presence of miniature phallai (Joutias (pers. comm.). Among the unpublished finds from Traostalos are many pairs of testicles and what may be model vulvae. If the Atsipadhes 'phall' are really what they appear to be, they could be indicative of some aliment common in the Minoan Ayios Vasilios valley. The alternative interpretation is that they were generalized offerings for or symbolic of fertility. Phalli were so used in later Greek and Roman times, but there is as yet no other evidence for such a Minoan symbol.

An aspect of quality is variety. Apart from the three groups of figurines mentioned above, Atsipadhes is very poor in other types of finds. True, there are clay offering-tables, loom-weights, a single clay seal facsimile, and a single obsidian piece. By contrast Pelsophas has stone offering-tables, other stone vessels, bronze votive knives, a bronze cut-out of a human figure, a triton shell, pieces of obsidian, clay balls and

spirals, horns-of-consecration, and a *swet-stone* or *karvas*. Joutias has many stone vessels, some with Linear A inscriptions (including libation tables, ladles, *kanoti*, bowls and vases, and a miniature altar), bronze figurines and votive tools, bronze double-axes, seals and sealings, and jewellery. The obvious conclusion to draw from this is the relative prosperity of the communities of worshippers, obviously poorer in the case of Atsipadhes Korakias, befitting the small dispersed settlements in the valley.

Reconstructing a Ritual

A fitting conclusion to this article is a tentative reconstruction of the peak sanctuary ritual, specifically drawing on the Atsipadhes Korakias material, but of relevance to other peak sanctuaries. To assist the reconstruction I shall draw on the analogy of the modern Cretan mountain chapels, which are such a distinctive feature of the landscape, often set on prominent mountains near their respective villages.

The modern mountain chapels are dedicated to various saints, but most commonly to Profitis Elias (the Prophet Elijah). His chapels also tend to conform to many of the topographic characteristics of peak sanctuaries. The chapels are usually visited annually (less often seasonally) on the festival day of the saint. The Prophet Elijah's day is July 23rd and, appropriately for the time of year, he is specifically prayed to for rain. In times of drought additional pilgrimages are made to his chapel. The whole community, which may include several villages, journey up the day before the festival and stay overnight. They bring food with them. The pilgrimage journey and the consumption of the food at the chapel are often celebrations, with the appropriate party atmosphere. The next day, the religious service is conducted. This ceremony has a primarily communal purpose, although the opportunity is also taken by individuals to make personal offerings for their own particular needs (for instance personal crises, rites of passage, etc.); this is when the *tamata*, the gold and silver plaques, are offered. As is common in most Greek Orthodox rituals, all worshippers usually mark their presence with the offering of candles, whether they make additional special offerings or not.

This seems a reasonable model for the use of Atsipadhes Korakias and other peak sanctuaries. The numbers of finds do not indicate anything more than occasional use, annual or seasonal. Clearly, the sanctuary did not cover the whole peak, but was concentrated in the centre, focused around the drop between the Upper and Lower Terraces (Fig. 5). The

line of rocks on the Upper Terrace probably served as a *temenos* boundary. So too, though less clearly, did the pebbled area on the east edge of the Upper Terrace was the main ritual area (Fig. 8). The pebbles were either placed to define the area or did so incidentally if they were cast down by worshippers as part of the offering process, perhaps an act equivalent to the modern candles, memorializing the presence of the worshippers. We may call this the 'liturgical area', a separated place for the celebrant of the ceremonies (Fig. 9).

As sacred object of some sort may also have stood here. The object was certainly the focus of ritual activities which included libation offerings. The congregation of worshippers probably gathered in the open area on the Lower Terrace. They faced the 'liturgical area' on the Upper Terrace, and at the appropriate time they came forward to place in the rock clefts their offerings, those figurines which are the mute witnesses to Minoan religious belief and practice.

Acknowledgements

The material presented in this article arises from the excavation of the Minoan peak sanctuary of Atsipadhes Korakias. The excavation was completed in one season in the autumn of 1989. It was carried out under the auspices of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, by whom the author was employed at the time as Knossos Curator, and with the support and permission of the Archaeological Ephoria of Western Crete and the Greek Ministry of Culture. The project was financially supported by the British School at Athens, the British Academy, the New York INSTAP, and especially Carole Daibac, without whom none of it would have been possible.

Whole-hearted thanks are due to all members of the dig team, and especially to Krzysztof Nowicki (who first found the site) and Stuart Laidlaw for the excellent plan. All excavations require a good dig-foreman: Nikos Daskalakis is the best. There have been two study seasons (1990 and 1991) since the excavation. The continuing perceptive assistance of Victoria Batten and Alexandra Roberts has been invaluable.

This article was completed after the 1991 field season in Phase 2 of the Atsipadhes Project, the Ayios Vasilios Survey. This was done in co-operation with Stavroula Markoulaki and under the field direction of Jennifer Moody. All references to the settlement pattern of the valley in relation to the sanctuary arise from

preliminary observation of the Survey data.

All remarks about the pottery in this article arise from the work of my wife, Christine Morris, who is responsible for the study of the peak sanctuary pottery. I also wish to thank her for reading the versions of this text and helping to polish its finished form.

Alan Peatfield
Department of Classics
University College Dublin

Comments

From Peter Warren, Department of Classics & Archaeology, University of Bristol, 11 Woodland Road, Bristol BS8 1TB

This report, like the excavation which lies behind it, is greatly to be welcomed. The recent excavations of the Joutkas peak sanctuary apart, there has been until now only a single tolerably published Minoan peak sanctuary site, Petsophas, and that reported in 1903. A deplorable situation. Atsipadhes is small and humble in its range and quality of offerings in comparison with major sites like Joutkas, Kophinas and Vrysinas. But it and Vrysinas extend the distribution westwards to west-central Crete, and its careful excavation, recording and study, combined with the astonishing quantity of finds, make it a site of much interest and importance.

Among the ideas and points put forward several invite further comment, *seriatim*. Firstly, as Peatfield says, there are no obvious statues or statuettes of divinities from the peak sanctuaries. It should however be recalled that part of a terracotta face from Petsophas (Myres 1902-3, 375-6 & pl. XII 34) and in fact implies a life-size figure. This might well have had a special status.

Secondly, we can certainly agree that the peak sanctuaries provide a strong argument for unity of belief across the island. But, *pace* Peatfield, it is not at all an obvious conclusion that cave sanctuaries do not represent a single cult. There are similarities as well as differences among their finds. In any case, the awesome form and chthonic nature of the cave sites may well have been the dominant factor for users, with a common belief in chthonic power.

Thirdly, Peatfield argues for progressive centralization through time, the sanctuaries reducing in number until Joutkas reigned supreme in Late Minoan II (late fifteenth century BC). While the apparently reducing numbers do indeed suggest some

absolute reduction or centralization, Peatfield's emphasis needs modifying. Not all Neopalatial (or Second Palace) period sanctuaries can be called palatial. Palaikastro, served by serving Petsophas, is not (yet) in any sense a palatial town. Vrysinas does not (yet) relate to any palatial centre. Kophinas commands the whole Mesara plain but is a considerable distance from Palaiois. Further, peak sanctuaries have been argued (not by Peatfield) to be closely linked to palaces, existing in order to provide spiritual legitimization for rulers. All the peak sanctuaries may be seen as a spiritual focus each for their own territory, whether or not the territory included a palatial centre. There may have been nucleation of towns and enlargement of territories, and reduction in the number of sanctuaries, but regionalism rather than political hierarchy seems the heart of the matter throughout the period of use. That Joutkas appears to have been the only such sanctuary during Late Minoan II owes more to the fact that very many sites in central and east Crete were abandoned in this period, than to any deliberate closing of other peak sanctuaries to allow Joutkas to remain alone and supreme.

In fourth place, the author's remarks on foundation dates for the sanctuaries are important. If indeed Atsipadhes began well back in the Pre-Palatial period, no later than Early Minoan II (mid third millennium), and, as is highly probable, it was not the first such sanctuary to be founded, the implications are considerable. Joutkas itself has indications of use in Early Minoan II (anyone who has stood on that summit site will not find it easy to imagine any usage other than the subsequent ritual ones; domesticity on that spot is highly unlikely). We are in fact beginning to see the likelihood of yet another aspect of later Minoan religion already established in Pre-Palatial times (as we have long known at Petsophas). Further, the social and spiritual definition of geographical territories becomes a precursor to a more political definition in the age of palace centres some four centuries later.

A fifth point concerns the suggestion of ritual bonfires in the later Neopalatial period of use of the sanctuaries. This is difficult to accept. The ash levels at Joutkas and Petsophas were on the bedrock and at the later site under the Neopalatial buildings.

There construction of ritual practice at Atsipadhes (what I have elsewhere called the operation of belief) is welcome. The focus of ritual appears to have been an earth feature amid the pebbled area of the Upper Terrace or liturgical space. Peatfield suggests that a ritual object, such as a stone baetyl, may have stood in this feature. This is interesting (and not just to the baetylophile), but one would have expected a stone to

survive as apparently at Traostalos. Given all the rhytons and other vessels suitable for libations near the earth feature one might suggest it was just that, with no sacred object, simply a sacred spot to receive liquid libations into the earth, a chthonic liturgy.

Finally, the abundance of cattle figurines and human phall in the offerings could hardly beoken more explicitly the purpose of the sanctuary and the ritual action: to promote and protect the fertility of stock, bovine and human.

This welcome and informative article whets our appetite both for the full publication and for the conversion of the author's doctoral thesis into a book. Amid all that he has done one hopes too for detailed recognition of the contributions of others, notably Platon, Faure and Rutkowski.

From Colin Renfrew, Department of Archaeology,
Downing Street, Cambridge CB2 3DZ

The interest of Peatfield's article goes far beyond the issue of identifying and interpreting Minoan 'peak sanctuaries' as such. For in fact there are very few studies available in the archaeological literature of any region in the world which deal in a systematic way with the identification and then the definition (or is it the other way round?) of particular classes of religious or ritual site. So a case study, clearly argued in an explicit way, as this one is, has a wide general and theoretical relevance.

The interest, from the theoretical standpoint, is that Atsipadhes was excavated, following its identification as a member of a well-defined class of cult site, and as an apparently unexceptional (i.e. not especially rich) example. The express intention was to throw light not only on the cult practice at that specific site, within its own unique context, but also on practice at those other sites which are members of the class.

There are important theoretical issues here which have yet to be addressed (and which have not been addressed by those 'post-processualists' who, when they correctly remark that every site is unique, make the erroneous presumption that this circumstance precludes any kind of generalization). Cognitive archaeology is still an underdeveloped discipline, and there exist as yet very few field studies where these general issues are confronted along with the site-specific ones. Only by recognizing those features which are shared by a number of sites within a class can a coherent picture of the generality of cult practice be obtained, and hence of the shared elements of belief and practice which together constituted what we call 'Minoan religion'.

As Peatfield brings out, the definition of the

generality then allows variations from it to be identified. The obvious next question is the extent to which there were regional and chronological variations. The analysis reveals that during the Neopalatial period the cult became centralized at just a few peak sanctuaries associated with the major palaces and towns.

I find the identification of the site as a shrine, following well-defined criteria, to be a persuasive one. There are many detailed points of interest: the presence of deliberate, presumably ritual, breakage, the consistent use of pebbles at peak sanctuaries, the possibility of an aniconic image as a central feature at some of these sites, the dominance of cattle among the figurines at Atsipadhes. And the discussion of periodicity in the use of the site, while partly based on analogy, is based also on quantitative assessment of the finds, and breaks new ground.

Cognitive-processual archaeology, if it is to develop, needs more studies of this kind, where generalization is attempted, based on explicit reasoning and careful field observation.

From Joyce Marcus, Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1079

Peatfield's study of peak sanctuaries is an important one since it encourages archaeologists to look outside the main population centres to other places in the landscape where ritual activities were carried out. The Minoan sanctuaries he discusses are defined as sites on or near the summit of a mountain not far from a settlement, where human and animal figurines were placed in great numbers as votive offerings. Peatfield emphasizes that these shrines were not remote places requiring arduous pilgrimages. His study suggests some similarities and contrasts with mountain top shrines in Prehispanic Mesoamerica.

The Aztec, Toltec, Mixtec, Zapotec and Maya as places where spirits, supernatural, or deities lived. Some sacred mountains were visited, but left unmodified. Others had permanent structures that served as shrines, while still others had natural stone outcrops that were carved. All such mountain top sites, including those that were not permanently modified, could be the site of votive offerings, most commonly incense burners in which copal (a resin used as an incense) was offered. Plates, bowls, and serving dishes that once contained food or sacrificial blood were often left behind, as were figurines.

However, unlike Peatfield's peak sanctuaries, which were located in close proximity to a settlement, many Mesoamerican mountain top shrines could have been reached only after an arduous pilgrimage. Some

were located near a frontier separating two ethnic groups, suggesting that ritual trips to the 'peak sanctuary' served to reinforce territorial borders.

One well-known Mesoamerican mountain top shrine—that of Mount Taloc—illustrates some of these features. Mount Taloc rises to a height of 4000m above sea level, some 77km east of modern Mexico City. On its peak is a group of permanent Prehispanic structures qualifying it in the eyes of some investigators as the highest archaeological site in Mexico (Wicke & Horcasitas 1957). The mountain is named for the Toltec Aztec deity Taloc – associated with rain, thunder, clouds, and mist – who was thought to live within the mountain.

One of the Spanish friars of the late sixteenth century AD, Fray Diego Durán, described an annual human sacrifice carried out on the mountain to honour Taloc. This ritual was conducted by Aztec priests and attended by rulers from the Valleys of Mexico and Puebla. At dawn on April 29 in temporary shelters constructed on the slopes of the mountain, priests and nobles prepared a young child for sacrifice. They concealed the child under a cloth and carried him on a litter up to the summit. Amid the sounds of shell trumpets and other instruments, the child was sacrificed by priests inside the shrine located on the summit, with his blood being collected in a bowl.

Following the child sacrifice, the ruler Montecuhzoma II of Tenochtitlan (the Aztec capital) entered the shrine, as did rulers of the towns of Texcoco, Tlacopan, and Xochimilco. These four rulers brought special foods as offerings such as turkey stews, baskets of tortillas, and gourds of foaming chocolate. These foods had to be left within the shrine until they decomposed; those in attendance could eat only after returning to the temporary shelters on the mountainsides. Archaeologists would find it difficult to detect the remains of the food, baskets, or gourds but if such items as turkey stews were brought in ceramic vessels, those might be recovered.

The limited excavations that have been conducted at Mount Taloc reveal badly-weathered sherds, as well as fragments of ceramic burners and figurines (Wicke & Horcasitas 1957). The excavators also mapped the shrine, which feature a long passageway leading to an enclosure. This passageway served to restrict access to the most sacred inner part of the shrine, where the child sacrifice took place. Since no excavation was carried out on the slopes of the summit, we do not know whether evidence for temporary shelters and cooking vessels might be recovered there.

A different type of mountain top shrine is that of Acapulcan in the Valley of Mexico, 2270m above sea level. At Acapulcan numerous natural bedrock

outcrops have been carved with motifs related to the Aztec cosmos and the supernatural forces that inhabited it. As in the case of Mount Taloc, incense burners were recovered at Acapulcan (Noguera 1972).

A possible link between ritual and political activity is suggested by the fact that the date 1 Cipactli (1 Crocodile) in the Aztec calendar was carved on one rock outcrop (Marcus 1982). The date 1 Cipactli was regarded by the Aztec as the appropriate date for a ruler's accession to the throne, and indeed some Aztec rulers claimed to have taken office on that date (Nicholson 1959). Rituals at Acapulcan may have accompanied such inaugurations, requiring a trip of some distance from the Aztec capital. That possibility is raised by documents of the sixteenth-century AD suggesting that mountain tops were favoured places for Aztec ritual circuits, and that pilgrimages enabled new rulers to restore order to a temporarily disordered cosmos.

From John F. Cherry, Faculty of Classics, Sidgwick Avenue, University of Cambridge, CB3 9DA

To those unfamiliar with the history of Minoan archaeology, the landmark that Peatfield's recent work at Atsipadhes represents may not be immediately obvious. Peak sanctuaries, as a site-type, were established by the early excavations of Myres at Psephassa and Evans at Koukias; but these were limited explorations of what can now be more clearly appreciated as somewhat unrepresentative instances. Subsequent discussion has been obscured both by the inclusion of many sites claimed as peak sanctuaries on less than rigorous criteria, and by a scandalously poor record of publication of the many excavations at and especially his 1989 doctoral dissertation), Peatfield has hacked a path through the confused jungle of earlier writing to a very clear view of what we do and do not know about peak sanctuaries. This has greatly clarified what we now need to know and, indeed, what he has now provided in his own excavations at Atsipadhes Koukias – namely, the excavation *in toto*, with the piece-ploting of each and every find, of a typical, small, parochial sanctuary, together with survey of its immediate rural context. It has been an object lesson in archaeological strategy; arguably we have learnt more about Minoan cult and society from this excavation, completed in a single season at modest cost, than from many a more protracted campaign at larger, stratigraphically complex, and allegedly more important sites in Crete. Obviously, we need more in the same vein to achieve a balanced picture, but the Atsipadhes project provides a splendid new

beginning.

It would be unfortunate, however, if these excellent data were to become irrevocably locked within the wider socio-political interpretative framework adopted here. This emphasizes the notion that – to quote the words of another adherent (Aoudy 1987, 238) – the so-called 'abandonment' of many peak shrines in LM I could instead be interpreted as a nucleation of the cult at a few select centres in an attempt by the Minoan elite to more closely control that sphere in Minoan life. A contrast between 'rural' peak sanctuaries not in use between MM II and 'palatial' ones that continue seems obvious enough, but only with the benefit of historical hindsight; nor is it a distinction predictable from the Protopalatial evidence alone, which – as Peatfield himself stresses – implies a cult 'the same all over Crete, symbolically unifying Minoan society, and transcending regional differences'. Furthermore, to claim that the diminution in the overall number of sanctuaries and the elaboration of those that survived reflect progressive centralization of a cult, as a deliberately fostered symbolic dimension of expanding political control in MM III – LM I, presupposes that Neopalatial period Crete became politically unified (ultimately, under the sole control of Knossos); there is, however, no decisive evidence for this, and other views are equally tenable (Cherry 1986, 25–6).

Origins, too, are problematic. The chronology of Atsipadhes' use is no different from that of most other peak sanctuaries: the overwhelming bulk of the finds seem not to post-date MM II or pre-date EM III/MM I. It is surely very striking that, roughly coincident with the very period of state emergence, there occurred an island-wide proliferation of cult sites of a new type, sharing many elements of ritual practice and symbolism: a marked 'religious horizon', as it were, in Crete's early history. I have discussed elsewhere how common symbols made visible in ritual might serve to unify an increasingly hierarchically organized society' (Cherry 1986, 31). Peatfield, in contrast, prefers to emphasize small amounts of material from Atsipadhes which might date to EM II or even earlier; Joukias alone provides a parallel, and the excavator there is rightly neutral on the question of whether the ritual use of the site reaches back as far as the earliest material from it. (The same question, of course, has proved a major obstacle in understanding the earliest history of Greek sanctuary sites and, particularly, in demonstrating continuity or discontinuity in religious practice through the Dark Age.) Peatfield invites us to envisage a genuinely popular cult, arising from the strictly personal preoccupations of rural communities and stretching back centuries or millennia before the

palaces, which was eventually subverted by the dark forces of Minoan political domination.

Perhaps so: but there is a hidden sub-text to these ideas. Peatfield is evidently in sympathy with gradualist accounts of Minoan state development, in which the long Pre-Palatial era is seen as formative, even explanatory, none of the currently available data, however, is incompatible with alternative models (Cherry 1983). Despite the vigour with which these opposing perspectives have been debated, the matter is decidedly open. It seems premature, therefore, to propose a specific history of Minoan peak sanctuaries that rests not on hard data, but on a particular view of the relationship between ritual activity and the pattern of socio-political change.

From James Wright, Department of Classical & Near Eastern Archaeology, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania 19010

The meticulous excavation of Atsipadhes Korakias, is important for students of Minoan archaeology, particularly for the evidence it provides of a working peak sanctuary. Peatfield's research makes a significant contribution to the study and definition of the regional extent of settlements during the formative stage of Minoan palace society. This needs further emphasis in this article, for, as Peatfield himself has pointed out (1983: 1987, 90) the existence of these peak sanctuaries prior to the formation of the palaces raises a major question about the relationship of palaces to prior settlements. How did the individuals running the early palaces manipulate local belief systems to their advantage? In this regard Peatfield's emphasis on palatial versus rural sanctuary seems a bit misplaced. Is not the distinction really one of centralized peak sanctuaries of the Neopalatial period? And if so then surely the process that this example directly addresses is the transformation of autonomous regional sanctuaries during a period of transition to the latter. This is a major issue in the study of the origins of early polities in Minoan Crete for it is a question of assessing the characteristics of a regional polity. For this reason also the comparative study of pottery from the sanctuary is, as indicated by Peatfield, a priority in the recognition of regional centres of pottery production. These questions have recently been studied in a different manner by Dabney, who has utilized quantitative measures to identify ceramic assemblages in Prepalatial tomb and settlement contexts (Dabney 1989). These she has compared to similar early Neopalatial period contexts in order to understand the extent to which the increasing centralization of the

Reply from Alan Peatfield

assemblages of votive offerings, cult equipment, etc., all over the island. It can thus safely be assumed that the cult practices were also approximately uniform and that the cult in the peak sanctuaries can be considered a basic element of the religious observances in the era of the Minoan palaces.

Peatfield's paper is a welcome contribution to the current direction of research on Aegean Bronze Age religion, which tries to reconstruct the actual cult practices, i.e. to see religion as ritual action (Warren 1988). Such attempts have generally been based more extensively on the iconographical sources than on archaeological evidence (Hägg 1986; Marinatos 1986; Warren 1990). This is due partly to the lack of excavated material of a kind and a quality that would allow analysis of cult practices. Peatfield's significant contribution is based not only on a careful examination of the entire material accessible from previously known peak sanctuaries, but also – and even more important – on a meticulous excavation and study of a new site. For the first time has it been possible to investigate in detail almost an entire peak sanctuary, albeit a minor one of a rural kind.

The site of Atsipadhes Korakias confirms to a large extent the picture of typical peak sanctuaries as reconstructed by Peatfield from earlier known evidence; the one important surprise was the complete lack of ashes and burnt matter observed at other sites and thought to have originated from bonfires lit by the worshipper. Peatfield may well be right in his tentative explanation that such fires did not belong to the cult in the early Prepalatial period, but were introduced at the few sites where the cult continued into the Neopalatial period and was brought under palatial control. This, then, indicates a change in the ritual and warns us not to view the cult in the peak sanctuaries as static and unchanged through the centuries. (This warning is not directed to Peatfield who does not fail to consider possible changes in the ritual expression from one period to the next.)

The reconstruction of the ritual performed at Atsipadhes Korakias as sketched tentatively by Peatfield at the end of the article I find quite convincing. Although much is admittedly hypothetical, the archaeological evidence from the site itself has yielded enough data for the internal analysis, the results of which are only marginally supplemented by the analogy of the modern Cretan ritual at mountain chapels.

From Robin Hägg, Swedish Institute at Athens, Mitseon 9, GR-117 42 Athens

Open air cult places constitute an important and characteristic feature in Minoan Crete during a considerable part of the Bronze Age. The numerous peak sanctuaries in particular form a homogeneous group, as shown by Peatfield, a group that displays the same topographical features and the same

The work and influence of the respondents has inspired much of my own research, and it is therefore gratifying to read their positive comments on the excavation. It is rare for any group of eminent scholars to be in such agreement. There is evident care too in their broader interpretative comments, but here there is less agreement between them. Warren, for example, supports the suggestion of a peak sanctuary origin earlier in Early Minoan than previously thought; yet it is precisely this point for which Cherry reserves his severest criticisms. It is appropriate therefore to reply to some of the issues raised.

First, most of the criticisms are directed towards more general interpretations which I have argued elsewhere. These issues are better discussed in my thesis which is currently being revised for publication; my replies here are focused on Atsipadhes itself. The fundamental point, however, is that the details of historical and social interpretations are less important than the perception, to which Hägg refers, that the peak sanctuary cult was not static, but changed through time. Only when this diachronic principle is established can objective analysis and debate progress.

Secondly, I stress that this is a preliminary discussion. The limited nature of the interpretation to which Wright alludes is inevitable at this early stage. The restrictions of time, money and access mean that artefact study is slow. Given that the recovery of the finds was so rigorous, it would be foolish to offer elaborate interpretations of their function, before the completion of equally rigorous study. The classifications of Voigt's and Ucko's work are less relevant to the study of peak sanctuary figurines than is their general methodology. We have already established that 'patterns of use-wear' are confused by erosion wear, resulting from the position of the finds in the soil of such an exposed site. Ucko's primary data were Neolithic figurines, mostly single finds from a variety of contexts, whose superficial similarities led to the earlier unitary conclusion that they were all 'Mother Goddess' figures. Peak sanctuary figurines are a consistent assemblage in a single repeated context. While Ucko's and Voigt's particular conclusions about differing figurine functions are definitely applicable to individual Minoan figurines in various contexts, they are marginal to the peak sanctuary assemblage as a whole. Here, understanding evolves from the internal spatial study we have initiated. In this context, Dabney's work on assemblages is tantalizing, and comparison with the Atsipadhes material can only be helpful. It is to be hoped her data will be published soon.

Warren's expectation that any hypothetical baetyl at Atsipades would have survived is reasonable, but more information may help. The baetyl at Troastalos is protected within the hollow of a partially enclosed drop between two terraces. The liturgical area at Atsipades is one of the highest and most exposed parts of the peak; this might account for the non-survival of whatever stood in the feature.

Marcus' description of Mount Tlaloc is helpful in placing Minoan peak sanctuaries within the broader phenomenology of mountain cults, where, as she rightly says, there are similarities and contrasts. Marcus picks up the observation that peak sanctuaries were not places of remote and arduous pilgrimage. This is an obvious contrast to Aztec mountain-top shrines. Pilgrimages to Japanese sacred mountains are equally arduous, and are part of an ascetic tradition by which religious merit is earned. They are also an expression of Buddhist cosmology, where the material universe is envisaged as a mountain. I shall discuss these comparative models in my book.

Cherry's reservation about the 'socio-political framework adopted here' is puzzling, because it is a modification of his own views about the role of the peak sanctuaries in the establishment of Minoan elite dominance (Cherry 1978; elaborated in 1984, 29-32). Whereas he sees this role in relation to the rise of the palaces in the immediate Prepalatial and Protopalatial periods, I and others suggest that it is more applicable to the political transition from Protopalatial to Neopalatial. Cherry's attribution of his generalizing principle to the origin of the peak sanctuaries was a plausible reading of the data then available; I have already acknowledged this (Peatfield 1990, 126). But the data now available allow that earlier hypothesis to be tested and modified. Nor does the modification inevitably presuppose Neopalatial political unification; it can harmonize with Cherry's pluralistic vision of Minoan polity relations (1984), if the material evidence indeed reveals a propagandist element by which Knossos attempted to legitimize (perhaps formalize) its position as *primum inter pares* (Peatfield 1990, and references therein to Cameron, Gesell, Moody & Nixon). The attempt does not imply success.

On origins, it is misleading to say that (emphasize the Atsipades Early Minoan pottery, when my actual words are 'the implications of this early material for the general chronology of the peak sanctuary cult and other sites needs to be considered. At the very least, the pottery from other sites needs to be studied for similarly early material'. The absence of Early Minoan material from the accounts of other peak sanctuary excavations arises from their partial nature and from the fragmentary state of peak-sanctuary pottery, which

discourages study; it does not indicate that it is definitely not there. The search must be carried out. As for the 'meaning' of the Early Minoan pottery, the limited repertoire of shapes, upside-down cups, the absence of domestic debris, all suggest ritual use; the burden of proof lies with those who disbelieve that it is a more serious misrepresentation to suggest that my ideas are designed to support 'gradualist' accounts of Minoan state development. My interpretation of peak sanctuary history remains just that: there is no hidden agenda. The problem with both 'gradualist' and 'revolutionary' theories is that they have each proved inadequate as complete models accounting for the complexity of the material. Cherry rightly concedes that the debate is unresolved.

Religion is a supremely cognitive subject, involving the most complex interaction of intellectual and physical processes (belief and practice). Moreover, whatever definition of religion one chooses, the socially defined elements must involve personal preoccupations - personal needs, perceptions, and spirituality. The progress in cognitive archaeology of which Renfrew argues must also be a collective, co-operative effort. The ordering of artefacts and their theoretical interpretation require the rigours of a self-imposed, open-minded discipline. No individual can achieve this without the objective perspective provided by their colleagues. I conclude, therefore, by repeating my thanks to the respondents, the dig-team, the editors and everyone who helped in the completion of this article.

References

- Åström, P., 1987. Inverted vases in Old World religions. *Journal of Prehistoric Religion* 1, 7-16.
- Cherry, J.F., 1983. Evolution, revolution, and the origins of complex society in Minoan Crete, in *Minoan Society*, eds. O. Krzyszkowska & L. Nixon. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 33-45.
- Cherry, J.F., 1986. Politics and palaces: some problems in Minoan state formation, in *Peer Polity Interaction and Socio-Political Change*, eds. C. Renfrew & P. J. Cherry. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 19-45.
- Dabney, M.K., 1989. *A comparison of correlation in spatial distribution of archaeological remains from Prepalatial and Palatial Crete*, PhD Thesis, Columbia University. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International.
- Davaras, C., 1972. Archaeologikon Deltion. *Chronica* 27, 652-3.
- Davaras, C., 1976. Archaeologikon Deltion, *Chronica* 31, 390-1.
- Davaras, C. n.d. *Guide to the Hagios Nicolaos Museum* and its Mediterranean relations. *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 21, 99-204.
- Gesell, G.C., 1985. *Town, Palace and House Cult in Minoan Crete*. Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology 67. Göteborg: Paul Åströms Förlag.
- Gill, M.A.V., 1965. The Knossos sealings: provenance and identification. *Annals of the British School at Athens* 60, 58-98.
- Hägg, R., 1986. Die göttliche Epiphanie im minoischen Ritual. *Athenische Mitteilungen* 101, 41-62.
- Karetsou, A., 1974-75, 1977-81. Ieron koryphis loukta, *Praktika tis en Athenais Archaeologikis Etaireias*, 223-39 (1974), 330-42 (1975), 419-20 (1977), 232-58 (1978), 280-1 (1979), 337-63 (1980), 405-408 (1981).
- Karetsou, A., 1981. The peak sanctuary of Mt Iktus, in *Sanctuaries and Cult Places in the Aegean Bronze Age*, eds. R. Hägg & N. Marinatos. Stockholm, 137-53.
- Karetsou, A., 1984. Ieron koryphis loukta. *Ergon*, 111-15.
- Karetsou, A., 1985. Ieron koryphis loukta. *Ergon*, 83-7.
- Karetsou, A., Godart, L., & Olivier, J.-P., 1985. Inscriptions en linéaire A du sanctuaire de semina minoen de mont Ioukas. *Kadmos* 24, 89-152.
- Karetsou, A., & Rethemiotakis, G., forthcoming. Sostiki anakaaphes sto iero koryphis Kophinas. *Proceedings of the 7th International Cretological Congress, Rethymon, August 1990*.
- Len, D., 1961-62. La tombe a tholos di Kamilarì presso a Festos. *ASAteve*, xxiii-xxiv, 7-148.
- Marcus, J., 1982. The Aztec Monuments of Acalpixcan. In *Prehispanic Settlement Patterns in the Southern Valley of Mexico*, ed. J.R. Parsons et al. Memoirs of the Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, 14, 475-85.
- Marnatos, N., 1986. *Minoan Sacrificial Ritual. Cult Practice and Symbolism*. Stockholm: Svenska Institutet i Athen.
- Moody, J., 1987. The Minoan palace as a prestige artefact, in *The Function of the Minoan Palaces*, eds. R. Hägg & N. Marinatos. Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, 235-41.
- Morris, C.E., n.d. Detecting the individual: The role of attribution in Prehistory. Paper delivered at the Mycenaean Seminar, University of London, November 1991.
- Morris, C.E., & Peatfield, A.A.D., forthcoming. The pottery of the peak sanctuary of Atsipades Korakias. *Proceedings of the 7th International*
- Cretological Congress, Rethymon, August 1990.
- Myres, J.L., 1902-3. Excavations at Palaikastro II. The Sanctuary site at Psefusa. *Annals of the British School at Athens* 9, 356-87.
- Nicholson, H.B., 1959. The Chalcolithic cliff sculptures of Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin. *El México Antiguo* 9, 379-444.
- Nilsson, M., 1950. *Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survivals in Greek religion*. 2nd ed. Lund.
- Noguera, E., 1972. Antigüedad y Significado de los Relieves de Acalpixcan, Mexico. *Actas de Antropología* 9, 77-94.
- Peatfield, A.A.D., 1983. The topography of Minoan peak sanctuaries. *Annals of the British School at Athens* 78, 273-80.
- Peatfield, A.A.D., 1984. Palace and peak: the political and religious relationship between palaces and peak sanctuaries, in *The Function of the Minoan Palace*, eds. R. Hägg & N. Marinatos. Stockholm, 39-93.
- Peatfield, A.A.D., 1989. *The Peak Sanctuaries of Minoan Crete*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London.
- Peatfield, A.A.D., 1990. Minoan peak sanctuaries: history and society. *Opuscula Atheniensia* 17, 117-31.
- Platon, N., 1951. To Ieron Maza ke ta minoika iera koryphis. *Kritika Chronika* 5, 96-160.
- Renfrew, C., 1985. *The Archaeology of Cult. The Sanctuary at Phylakopi*. British School of Archaeology at Athens Supplementary Volume 18.
- Rutkowski, B., 1986. *Cult Places of the Aegean*. London.
- Rutkowski, B., 1988. Minoan peak sanctuaries: the topography and architecture. *Aegeum* 2, 71-99.
- Tyree, L.S., 1974. *Cretan Sacred Caves: Archaeological Evidence*. Ann Arbor.
- Ucko, P.J., 1962. The interpretation of prehistoric anthropomorphic figurines. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 92, 33-54.
- van Straten, F.T., 1981. Gifts for the gods, in *Faith, Hope and Worship: Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World*, ed. H.S. Versnel. Leiden, 65-151.
- Voigt, M., 1983. *Hajji Firuz Tepe, Iran: The Neolithic Settlement*. Philadelphia.
- Warren, P., 1988. *Minoan Religion as Ritual Action*. Göteborg: Paul Åströms Förlag.
- Warren, P.M., 1990. *Obaeyis. Opuscula Atheniensia* 17, 192-206.
- Wicke, C., & Horcasitas, F., 1957. Archaeological Investigations on Monte Tlaloc, Mexico. *Mesoamerican Notes* 5, 83-95.