

When is a snake just a snake?
The lack of cultic continuity between the Minoan Mother
Goddess and Classical Greek deities based on snake
imagery

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Chapter 1: Introduction, Methodology and Theory

The overriding scholarly orthodoxy is one of a continuation from the Minoan-Mycenaean Snake Goddess, into the Classical goddesses. This dissertation will argue that although there is continuity between Minoan and Classical Greece, snake imagery does not provide a means for this continuity between the goddesses, and that the image manifests independently within each culture.

Chapter 1 will discuss the methodology and theory; a presentation of the scholarly discussions will follow in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 will provide archaeological and written evidence, and Chapter 4 provides a site-specific analysis in search of a continuation of orthodoxy. Chapter 5 will analyse interpretations of snake symbolism and will apply these to the Minoan and Classical goddesses.

Section a: Methodology

It is necessary to convey the scholarly consensus regarding cultic continuity of the Minoan Goddess into the Classical Greek goddesses, before providing the theoretical underpinnings of cultural memory theory and syncretism. This approach will allow a better understanding of previous scholarly discussions and their methodological shortcomings.

Scholarly Orthodoxy

Early scholarship sought the ‘eastern’ origin of Classical Civilisation,¹ and controversially in ‘*Black Athena*’ the possible Afro-asiatic roots.² Parker’s paper provides an overview on the continuity between Mycenaean and Classical Greece, looking at religious, literature, and architectural transference.³ Nilsson’s 1920s-30s attempts to prove a continuation of Mycenaean influence on Classical Greek religion were thoroughly researched but methodologically flawed in a search for one specific answer.⁴

Scholars have attempted to argue for a cultic continuation of the Minoan Goddess (see Chap. 2) but lack site-specific research and evidence (see Chap. 4). Hawkes searches for the origins of Greece from the Minoan and Mycenaean Civilisations, arguing that Athena was a continuation of the ‘Goddess’, but the work is poorly cited so lacks specific evidence.⁵

¹ Hawkes, 1968.

² Bernal, 1987; 1991; 2001.

³ Parker, 2007.

⁴ Nilsson, 1927; 1932.

⁵ Hawkes, 1968.

Gimbutas' search for a continuation focuses on the appearance of this 'goddess' figure across Europe, but some links and assertions are limited in scope.⁶ Lapatin's focus on the Minoan Goddess is informative, well researched, and more useful.⁷ Larson is the only scholar who attempts specific site continuity, providing the best evidence for direct cultic continuation from Mycenaean to Classical Greece for each Classical deity.⁸

This dissertation brings together evidence from archaeology, iconography, and Classical literature. However, in applying this multidisciplinary approach it is important to avoid skewing or omitting evidence to prove a theory, and to use all pieces of evidence. Therefore, to consider the continuity of worship, there will need to be site-specific research to show an orthopraxy of cultic practice.

Charlesworth's work is the main scholarly foundation for snake imagery in this dissertation, focusing on the change in snake symbolism from prehistoric to Christian society.⁹ A comprehensive study of the symbols' interpretations will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Iconography

Inter- and cross-cultural potential interpretations of mother and snake symbolism will vary; while images may universally be of mother and daughter, the names and relationships will be different. Scholars have often been too reliant on iconographic similarities, especially the idea that if a snake is seen there must be a goddess nearby. Ancient iconographic evidence

⁶ Gimbutas, 1989.

⁷ Lapatin, 2002.

⁸ Larson, 2007.

⁹ Charlesworth, 2010.

has various mediums (pottery, statues, gems, jewellery) all of which provide insight to their creators' projected ideology. However, using solely iconography restricts conclusions because modern interpretations may be influenced by later information and the socio-historical context.

Adams' approach to interpreting iconography initially identifies the basic image, before tracing the image's story for an underlying text.¹⁰ Namely, Greek pottery often depicts motifs known from mythological texts. Finally, the intrinsic meaning of the image can be gathered from combining appropriate evidence (images, material, provenance, context, and cultural underpinning).¹¹ The iconographic evidence is often fragmentary or lacks provenance, making interpretation difficult or untrustworthy.

Section b: Theoretical Considerations

Cultural Memory Theory

Halbwachs' *'On Collective Memory'* presents the idea that individuals within a group remember the past of their group as a socially constructed notion.¹² This combined with Aby Warburg's 'social memory' moves memory from a biological framework to a cultural idea.¹³ Cultural memory, further developed by Cubitt, presents history as the collective memory of society taking the form of knowledge that society receives through memory.¹⁴ Cubitt distinguishes memory as being a current continuous thought; whereas history is an

¹⁰ Adams, 1996; 2010, p. 43.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Halbwachs, 1941 (1992), pp. 21-2.

¹³ Assmann & Czaplicka, 1995, p. 125.

¹⁴ Cubitt, 2007, p. 40.

intellectual system based on discontinuity.¹⁵ This view indicates that the Minoans would have featured in Mycenaean cultural memory due to continuous interaction. However, discontinuity in the archaeological data between the Mycenaeans and Classical Greeks ('Dark Ages', Archaic Period), means it is questionable whether the Mycenaeans are history, or memory, in Classical Greece.

Assmann discusses culture as memory, and this will be used to debate whether the Mycenaeans and their culture are part of the Classical Greeks' remembered past.¹⁶ Halbwach claims that Homeric mythology is part way between religious representations and literary fictions, but the Greeks felt close to this earlier religion so were in some way connected.¹⁷ He argues that their religious practices and events are a remembrance of the past society.¹⁸ Halbwach's position has developed into arguments that the Classical Greek goddesses represent a collective memory of the past society and therefore of the Minoan Mother Goddess.¹⁹

Assmann argues for a clear distinction between cultural and collective memory,²⁰ outlining that cultural memory is of the most distant or near-mythical past, and is maintained through ceremonial communication.²¹ Collective memory is of the recent past, told in everyday communication and yet to be formalised.²² For cultural memory it is clear that traditions are

¹⁵ Cubitt, 2007, p. 40.

¹⁶ Assmann, 2008, p. 111.

¹⁷ Halbwachs, 1941 (1992), pp. 86-7.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 85.

¹⁹ Lapatin, 2002, p. 88.

²⁰ Assmann, 2008, p. 112.

²¹ Ibid, p. 117.

²² Ibid.

formalised into narratives like epic poems.²³ The Mycenaeans became the ‘mythical past’ of the Classical Greeks, seen in the ‘Age of the Heroes’ included in the Homeric epics.²⁴

However, what is unclear is whether the transition from collective to cultural memory happens when the last person to remember the event dies, or if there is another distinguishing factor.

Critiquing the theory, Hofstadter highlights the differences between history and memory, most importantly that one’s memory can be distorted, omit certain ideas, and forget parts of a story.²⁵ Arguably this can be applied to history, which can be altered depending on the society creating it. Hofstadter further claims that history cannot be a memory because of the break in continuity between the witnesses of history and the societal group hearing about it.²⁶ Again, this point has faults because the gap between what is considered history is beginning to lessen leading to less of a break between the two societies. The main distinction remains that memory is the view from within the group, whereas history today is the view from outside.²⁷

Assmann states that external symbols are important in creating a cultural memory, particularly in groups ‘making’ memories through monuments and archives.²⁸ This idea of external symbols could be applied to the use of the serpent image throughout history but can also be expanded upon by considering the Jungian archetype (see Chap. 5).²⁹

²³ Assmann, 2008, p. 112.

²⁴ Hom. *Ody*; II.

²⁵ Hofstadter, 1968, p. 24 in Cubitt, 2007, p. 41.

²⁶ Ibid, in Ibid, p. 43.

²⁷ Halbwachs, 1941 (1992) in Cubitt, 2007, p. 44.

²⁸ Assmann, 2008, p. 111.

²⁹ Babejova, 2011, p. 98.

This research attempts to identify cultural memory between the Minoan/Mycenaean culture and the Classical Greeks, specifically through snake imagery being associated with ‘mother’ goddesses. Mycenaean Linear B texts display continued use of deity names,³⁰ but this does not equate to similar divine duties or attributes. Evidently, there is a form of memory of the Mycenaeans in Archaic Greece as evidenced by the Homeric works.³¹ The retelling of the age of heroes is potentially a mythical exaggeration with only a kernel of truth.

Syncretism

In this research syncretism, the amalgamation and merging of beliefs, is specifically applied to mother goddesses. Budin presents three types of syncretism, first *interpretatio*, where two goddesses are seen as the same or parallel to each other.³² Second is *amalgam*, the mixture of the two deities creating a new, possibly hybrid one.³³ The third and most relevant type is *syncretisme-henotheisme*, where several deities across many religions are seen as synonymous. For example, Hera is Hathor is Aphrodite is Ashtart is Isis,³⁴ and in this research, they are also the Cypriot Great Goddess and the Minoan Mother Goddess.

Pakkanen applies syncretism as a process.³⁵ The first step is the *Interpretatio/Parallelism*, for example the Mycenaeans identifying their deity with a Minoan equivalent. However, due to the c.500-year gap between Bronze Age and Classical, *interpretatio* would be relevant only if

³⁰ Pelon & Marinatos, 2005, p. 42.

³¹ Hom. *Il*; *Ody*.

³² Motte & Pirenne-Delforge, 1994 in Budin, 2004, p. 97.

³³ Ibid in Ibid.

³⁴ Budin, 2004, pp. 97-8.

³⁵ Pakkanen, 1996 in Budin, 2004, pp. 97-9.

there was a (cultural) memory of Mycenaean deities in Classical Greece. Evidence of the names of some classical deities in the Mycenaean Linear B texts suggests some form of continuity or remembrance. This could equally be syncretism, or cultural memory and continued transference.

Until Linear A is deciphered it will not be possible to tell whether there is a correlation between the Mycenaean gods and goddesses and the Minoans in a textual form. However, there are iconographical representations of what is believed to be Mycenaean and Minoan deities. It is possible that Pakkanen's amalgamation stage, where the new deity is created,³⁶ happened between the Minoans and Mycenaeans through iconographic merging and there is evidence for Minoan influence on Mycenaean artwork (see Chap. 3). Mycenaean snake imagery is often not directly associated with a female goddess, this inconsistency could possibly show a merging of images between the religions.³⁷

This new deity then becomes a permanent part of the pantheon, although further syncretism may occur later, perhaps in this case between the Mycenaeans and Classical Greeks; especially as the Greeks viewed their pantheon as universal, believing everyone had the same deities, if under different names and customs.³⁸ Possibly all the Classical Greek deities exhibit some form of *syncretisme-henotheisme* to the modern beholder: Athena = Hera = Aphrodite = Persephone = Kore = Ariadne = Artemis = Hestia; although they were clearly seen as distinct deities by the Classical worshippers.³⁹

³⁶ Pakkanen, 1996 in Budin, 2004, pp. 97-9.

³⁷ For snake imagery see Chapter 5.

³⁸ Budin, 2004.

³⁹ Consider Eur. *Hipp*.

Cultural memory theory and syncretism will be applied throughout this dissertation, focusing on a possible syncretic connection between the Minoan and Mycenaean deities that then continued as a cultural memory for the Archaic or Classical Greeks. Pakkanen's syncretic process will be applied to determine when the many goddesses may have amalgamated, and why there are multiple Greek goddesses who may have evolved from only one goddess.

Chapter 2: Goddess Scholarship, Arguments for a Cultic Continuity

Scholars attempt to assign a continuity between the Minoan Mother/Snake Goddess with Classical goddesses through comparison of the goddesses' attributes, but none attempt to focus on specific site cultic continuity. Hawkes searches for origins of the Greek pantheon from the Minoan Goddess, within three aspects: vegetation and rebirth, mistress of the animals, and domestic divinities.⁴⁰

Gaia, the Classical primordial deity (earth mother) is an assumed continuation of the Minoan Goddess.⁴¹ Evidenced by her cultic association at Delphi and with the serpent Python (see Chap. 4), and connection to Crete by telling Rhea to hide Zeus there.⁴² Possibly each Olympian goddess developed from Gaia, starting as regional earth goddesses: Hera - Argos; Athena – Attica; Artemis and Aphrodite in the Near East,⁴³ possibly Demeter in Crete (discussed below).

Recent scholarship focuses on the word 'Potnia' meaning Lady or Mistress.⁴⁴ Thomas and Wedde claim that:

“Potnia” as a specific goddess, or more than one female divinity, or aspects of a single deity, remains the symbol of the modern beholder’s desperate search for a cohesive image of the Aegean Bronze Age religions.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Hawkes, 1968, p. 137.

⁴¹ Downing, 1989, pp. 47-59.

⁴² Hes. *Theog.* 475.

⁴³ Downing, 1989, p. 54. Each goddess' role is related to a man: Hera as wife, Athena as daughter, Aphrodite as lover, Artemis as shunner (p. 55).

⁴⁴ Lapatin, 2002, p.90.

⁴⁵ Thomas & Wedde, 2001, p. 13.

This 'desperate search' sees Potnia applied to multiple goddesses (Athena at Knossos; Artemis in Homer),⁴⁶ predominantly to Persephone as 'Lady of the Underworld'.⁴⁷ The epithet 'Mistress of the Labyrinth' is also applied to Persephone,⁴⁸ despite a more likely connection to Ariadne (see below).⁴⁹

In Archaic and Classical literature Potnia has a formulaic role, used with women's personal names, often to fulfil a hexameter line.⁵⁰ It is also used to describe eminent woman, predominantly mother figures.⁵¹ In the *Iliad*, 'Potnia' is used 49 times, primarily for Hera and 'Potnia Mater', but also for other women (similar patterns are seen in Hesiod).⁵² In Classical literature, it is often applied as an adjective to describe a revered woman.⁵³

In this search for 'Potnia' is Persephone,⁵⁴ who in Archaic epic is the bride of Hades, associated with death (sometimes called Thea),⁵⁵ whereas Kore is seen as the daughter of Demeter, associated with spring and fertility.⁵⁶ This fertility and chthonic duality is seen in snake imagery (see Chap. 5). However, Persephone's link to snakes is a much later addition to Greek myth, when Zeus rapes her disguised as a snake and she bears two chthonic gods Zagreus and Melinoë.⁵⁷ This only happens in some mythic versions showing the lack of snake imagery continuity.

⁴⁶ Lapatin, 2002, p.90; Muss, 2017, p.1.

⁴⁷ Lapatin, 2002, p.80.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Kerényi, 1976; Graves, 1992.

⁵⁰ Thomas & Wedde, 2001, p. 4. The term is also associated with Poseidon, see Larson, 2007.

⁵¹ Thomas & Wedde, 2001, p. 4.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ LSJ s.v. Ποτνιά.

⁵⁴ Larson, 2007, p. 69.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid. There is debate over the term Kore and its association with Persephone.

⁵⁷ Leita, 2012, p. 95.



Figure 1 'Descent of a Goddess'.
From: Baring & Cashford, 1991, p. 117.



Figure 2 'Return of a Goddess'.
From: Baring & Cashford, 1991, p. 117.

Together, Demeter and her daughter Persephone are referred to as 'The Great Goddesses'.⁵⁸ Baring & Cashford claim the goddesses are connected to Crete in mythology but omit a reference.⁵⁹ Minoan images supposedly show a goddess going into the ground (Figure 1) and a goddess rising from the ground (Figure 2); connected to the *kathodos* and *anodos* of the Eleusinian Mysteries.⁶⁰ It is unclear whether Baring & Cashford's interpretation is based on this 'desperate search for a cohesive image'.⁶¹ Nichols also attempts a connection with a cult to Demeter on Crete, but does not provide any archaeological evidence.⁶²

Demeter is associated with agricultural fertility. Her name contains the Greek word for 'mother' (*meter*), and the initial syllable (*De*) means either 'earth' or 'grain'.⁶³ Figure 3, where Demeter's wrists are entwined by snakes, is the focus for discussions on cultic continuity. This image is often compared to Figure 4's Mycenaean fresco. However, similarity of images cannot prove a continuity of worship. There is no direct correspondence

⁵⁸ Larson, 2007, p. 69.

⁵⁹ Baring & Cashford, 1991, pp. 115-7.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Nichols, 1995, p. 13.

⁶³ Larson, 2007, p. 69.

and no additional linking factor, so despite scholarly focus these images cannot be used as evidence of continuation.



Figure 3 Demeter (Ceres).
Hellenic, terracotta relief, 3rd century BC, Magna Graecia. From: gods-and-monsters.com



Figure 4 Seated goddess/priestess
Mycenaean fresco, 13th century BC.
From: brewminate.com

Kerenyi and Graves both suggest Ariadne as a continuation of the ‘Goddess’.⁶⁴ Ariadne has associations to Crete within mythology, through the epithet ‘Mistress of the Labyrinth’⁶⁵ and her involvement in Theseus’ escape from the Labyrinth.⁶⁶ The Ariadne myth displays the merging of Cretan and Greek ideologies, and the constant changes and interweaving of mythic tradition.⁶⁷ Her myth is potentially one of the oldest, which could explain the differing versions,⁶⁸ and increases the likelihood of her connection to the ‘Goddess’.

The epithet ‘Cretan Persephone’ applied to Ariadne suggests that her myth describes the original separation from the mother and disappearance from the mortal world; later being mirrored by the Demeter-Persephone myth, and providing a foundation for the multiple

⁶⁴ Kerenyi, 1976; Graves, 1992.

⁶⁵ Kerenyi, 1976.

⁶⁶ Wunderlich, 1983, pp. 260-276.

⁶⁷ Nichols, 1995, p. 13.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

myths that follow.⁶⁹ Ariadne's fertility aspect (Lady of the First Fruits) has connections to the Eleusinian rituals, which are associated with Persephone and Demeter.⁷⁰

Hawkes connects the Minoan Goddess in her capacity as 'Mistress of Wild Animals', with Artemis and Cretan Britomartis.⁷¹ Artemis is the virgin goddess of hunting, nature, and animals, but is not mythically associated with snakes. Muss argues that Homer's 'Potnia Theron' meaning 'Lady of the Hunt' refers to Artemis because she is 'Lady of Wild Things'.⁷² While Potnia Theron may originally have meant one goddess, it possibly came to describe all goddesses associated with animals and began to be used in funerary contexts.⁷³ Thomas and Wedde suggest that Potnia Theron is actually a pictorial motif and a scholarly construct, not one individual Minoan-Mycenaean deity.⁷⁴

Artemis is syncretised with Britomartis ('Sweet Virgin'), the goddess of mountains and hunting worshipped on Crete. This association with Crete draws a tenuous link to the Minoan Goddess, especially as Briomartis' secondary name, Diktynna, is the goddess of the Mt Dikte where Zeus was born.⁷⁵ Diktynna is also associated with nets, which is linguistically problematic because her name can either be spelt with a Kappa meaning

⁶⁹ Nichols, 1995, p. 13. Ariadne is taken to the heavens by Dionysus after abandonment by Theseus, mirrored by Hades taking Persephone into the underworld. Dionysus and Hades are connected in orphic myths, both are associated with Persephone: Dionysus is Persephone's son after being raped by Zeus disguised as Hades, see: Leitao, 2012, p. 95.

⁷⁰ Nichols, 1995, pp. 13-4. Artemis is said to have killed Ariadne due to jealousy of her relationship with Dionysus. Ibid. p. 13; Hom. *II*.321-25; Johnston, 1999, p. 216.

⁷¹ Hawkes, 1968, p.137.

⁷² Muss, 2017, p.1; Hom. *II*. 21.470.

⁷³ Muss, 2017, p.1.

⁷⁴ Thomas & Wedde, 2001, p. 12.

⁷⁵ Johnston, 1999, p. 217. Diktynna is often syncretised with Aphaia, woman in mythology are often rescued by a goddess and become either a statue or priestess (think Iphigenia and Ariadne).

mountain or a Chi (X) meaning net, the latter of which would loosen her connection to the Mother Goddess argument.

Aphrodite is the oldest Classical goddess and is associated with fertility. Budin discusses the syncretic connection between Ashtart and Aphrodite, and connection with near-eastern Ishtar, a possible explanation for Aphrodite's militaristic aspects and connection to Ares.⁷⁶ Budin demonstrates a Cypriot origin for Aphrodite, so it is unlikely that she is a continuation of the Minoan Goddess unless there was a further syncretism process.⁷⁷ Aphrodite is seen as the 'Asiatic Great Goddess' and was believed to have been introduced by the Mycenaeans, demonstrating that there is cultural continuity into the Classical age.⁷⁸ Notably, there is no association between Aphrodite and snake imagery.

When discussing domestic divinities, Gimbutas argues that Hera is a continuation of the Mother Goddess.⁷⁹ Monaghan describes a festival where the goddess's statue is carried to the spring of Kanathes for cleansing;⁸⁰ Gimbutas compares this allegorically to snakeskin shedding.⁸¹ Gimbutas associates Hera with the Egyptian mother goddess Hathor,⁸² who is often depicted with a *uraeus* cobra on her headdress.⁸³ Perhaps syncretism occurred between

⁷⁶ Budin, 2004; Cyrino, 2010, pp. 50-1; Paus 3.15.10; Greek Anthology. The military aspect of Aphrodite continues to the Romans, see: Venus Vectrix 'She who conquers' statue types, see: Budin, 2004.

⁷⁷ Budin, 2004.

⁷⁸ Boedeker, 1974, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁹ Gimbutas, 1989, p. 134.

⁸⁰ Monaghan, 2014, p.245; Gimbutas, 1989, p.134. Larson (2007, p. 31) also discusses this ritual, connecting it to a myth of Hera renewing her virginity by bathing at Kanathos, and that during the ritual the priestesses bath in the waters/spring called Amymore.

⁸¹ Gimbutas, 1989, p.134.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Vischak, 2002, p. 158.

these goddesses, but in this context Gimbutas cannot prove a continuation from the Minoan Goddess.⁸⁴

Larson provides convincing evidence that Hera's origins lie in a goddess whose cult was adopted by the Mycenaeans and then passed on to the Classical World.⁸⁵ This is attested by the name '*Hora*' (season – associated with fertility and ripeness for marriage) in Linear B tablets from Pylos and Thebes.⁸⁶ At Argos we see Hera's *Kourotrophic* aspect.⁸⁷ She is depicted as the protector of the young, often with children in her lap.⁸⁸ The Archaic temple built on Mycenaean remains at Argos suggests cultic continuity although this is not direct and cannot be confirmed.⁸⁹

Alternatively Rhea, Zeus' mother, displays continuity connections with Crete (and the Minoans), as Hesiod says she hid Zeus in Lykotos.⁹⁰ Rhea is a more likely suggestion for a continuation than Hera, and Hawkes proposes that Zeus could fulfil the role of the young male consort/son figure that is often depicted with the Minoan Goddess.⁹¹

Hestia could logically be perceived as a continuation of the Minoan Goddess in her household aspect, as the goddess of the hearth and home.⁹² She would have had a shrine in

⁸⁴ Gimbutas, 1989, p.134. There is possible syncretism between Hathor and Isis in Egyptian mythology.

⁸⁵ Larson, 2007, p. 29.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 30.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Also the Heraia festival at Argos, significantly the ritual of a male youth carrying a sacred shield, this could be a connection to the Minoan Goddess' young male.

⁹⁰ Hawkes, 1968, p.133-4; Hes. *Theog.* 470-480.

⁹¹ Hawkes, 1968, p.133-4.

⁹² LSJ s.v. *ἑστία*

every Greek home, perhaps similar to the Mycenaean palace shrines.⁹³ Hestia is the least researched goddess of the main pantheon, so there is little evidence available for extended discussion.

Hawkes proposes that Athena as protector of the city and loosely associated with snakes (through her son Erichthonius) developed from the Minoan Goddess.⁹⁴ However, Athena's role is confined to protector of Athens. There would need to be evidence of a localised transference from the Minoan Goddess into Athena for Hawkes' argument to be accepted.⁹⁵ There is no obvious Minoan Goddess in Bronze Age Athens, although evidence is limited as the city has been under constant occupation (see Chap. 4).⁹⁶



Figure 5 Mycenaean Shield Goddess
From: Vermeule, 1958, p. 98.

The strongest evidence for a continuation of the Minoan Goddess into Athena, through a Mycenaean version of the Goddess, is the Linear B inscription 'Potnia of A-ta-na'.⁹⁷ Further connections have been made to the Shield Goddess depiction found at Mycenae (Figure 5), as

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Hawkes, 1968, p.17; Hooper, 1963, p.6.

⁹⁵ Ibid; Ibid.

⁹⁶ Hopper, 1963, p. 6.

⁹⁷ Larson, 2007, p. 41.

Athena is the only classical deity to hold a shield.⁹⁸ This seems unlikely as the epithet “A-ta-na” does not appear in Mycenae.⁹⁹ Parallels have been drawn between Near Eastern deities such as Ishtar and Anat, and Neith in Egypt, all of whom are seen as protectors of the king and citadel.¹⁰⁰ However, determining continuity of worship is problematised due to gaps in the archaeological record.¹⁰¹ A significant exception to this is Athena Alea in Arcadia, where worship is said to have started in 900BC, although material finds from the Late Bronze Age suggest that goddess worship may have started much earlier.¹⁰²

As Lapatin summarises, this evidence shows that although it is possible that all the Classical Greek goddesses emerged from a single Minoan Goddess, it is highly unlikely and may derive from:

[an] unsubstantial nineteenth-century idea that the numerous goddesses of Classical Greece were descended from a single prehistoric divinity gained increasing popularity in the twentieth century.¹⁰³

The lack of evidence of a Mycenaean Mother Goddess (see Chap. 3), means that neither an ortho -doxy or -praxy continuation between the Minoan and Classical times can be identified. Cultural memory does not appear to shape the ‘Goddess’ motif.

⁹⁸ Larson, 2007, p. 41; Vermeule, 1958, pp. 98-9.

⁹⁹ Ibid; Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Larson, 2007, p. 41.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 52.

¹⁰² Ibid. Alea and Athena were originally distinct goddesses who syncretised overtime and became Athena Alea by the 6th century.

¹⁰³ Lapatin, 2002, p.88.

Chapter 3: The Snake from Minoan Crete to Classical Greece

This chapter will provide an overview of Minoan Crete, Mycenaean, and Classical Greek snake imagery with reference to the various ‘mother goddess’ associations.



Figure 6 Snake Goddesses
From: Heraklionmuseum.gr

Section a: Minoan Snakes

The Mother Goddess

The Minoan Snake Goddesses, found by Evans during his Knossos excavations (Figure 6),¹⁰⁴ are interpreted as having various forms with symbols such as bird models and double axes.¹⁰⁵ Lapatin argues that the Mother Goddess is shown in phases of life, from child to consort to mother,¹⁰⁶ but admits there are no depictions of a mother nursing or with children, so no definite imagery for a ‘Mother’ Goddess.¹⁰⁷ Although she is bare-breasted this does not necessarily equate to fertility imagery.

¹⁰⁴ Ogden, 2013, p.8-9.

¹⁰⁵ Discussion on different forms see: Branigan, 1969, p.29-32.

¹⁰⁶ Lapatin, 2002, p.81.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

The Goddess' significance and depictions have caused scholarly debate.¹⁰⁸ Warren argues that the statuettes depict a goddess;¹⁰⁹ Persson argues for a nature goddess linked with trees and stone cults;¹¹⁰ Hawkes for an association with agricultural fertility introduced with early farming.¹¹¹ Lapatin disagrees with the statuettes being goddesses or priestesses instead presenting Dussaud and Thiersch's suggestions that the figurines are snake charmers, possibly representing Egyptian entertainers in Crete.¹¹² Caskey's solution is that goddess, priestess or charmer are not mutually exclusive categories, the statuettes could be depicting all at the same time.¹¹³

Bonney and Evans associate these representations of the Goddess with those from Syria.¹¹⁴ Bonney suggests an iconographic hybrid showing the social negotiations of the time.¹¹⁵ Foster concurs, saying the use of faience shows a transfer of technical knowledge from Syria, while Lucas argues that the importation of natron was from Egypt.¹¹⁶ However, it is widely agreed that the image was heavily influenced by Egypt.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁸ For discussion see: Goodison & Morris, 1998, p.113.

¹⁰⁹ Warren, 1981, 1988.

¹¹⁰ Persson, 1942.

¹¹¹ Hawkes, 1968, p.26-7.

¹¹² Dussaud, 1914; Thiersch, 1906 in Lapatin, 2002, p.76.

¹¹³ Caskey, 1915 in Lapatin, p.82.

¹¹⁴ Evans, 1930, p.277 in Baring & Cashford, 1991, p.110; Bonney, 2011, p.177.

¹¹⁵ MacDonald, 2002; Robb, 2004; 2010 in: Bonney, 2011, p.177.

¹¹⁶ Foster, 1979 and Lucas, 2003 in Bonney, 2011, p.177.

¹¹⁷ In Bonney, 2011, p.177 see: Nicholson & Peltenburg, 2000; Foster, 2008; Shortland, et al., 2006; Panagiotaki, 1999.



Figure 7 Minoan Snake Goddess
From: Wikipedia

Controversially Bonney argues against a snake goddess, viewing Evans' and Bugges' restorations as flawed.¹¹⁸

Panagiotaki provides a comprehensive list of the original finds of the two female figurines, of which snake imagery is limited to a female torso with two serpents, a tiara with a snake, a spirally striped object, and possibly part of a snake (see Figures 8, 9 & 10).¹¹⁹

Bonney goes on to argue that the most famous Goddess (Figure 7) may not be holding a snake, due to

'peppermint stripes' being uncommon on snakes.¹²⁰

Instead, she may be holding a twisted object like a rope, which parallels the depiction of Syrian women seen holding a cord, interpreted as an abbreviation for their skirt.¹²¹ Jones argues that there is no comparison in Cretan art to the goddesses: the only similarities being a brooch from Mycenae with a checkerboard skirt style; and the positions are seen in the Hagia Triada.¹²² There is no comparison for the tiara.¹²³

It is possible that segregation of social relations was desired during the construction of the New Palace, so in order to disrupt the collective history the figurines were intentionally broken and buried.¹²⁴ Alternatively, they were destroyed during an earthquake.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ Bonney, 2011, p.174-5. For discussion, see: Hitchcock & Koudounaris, 2002.

¹¹⁹ Panagiotaki, 1999, p.66 in Bonney, 2011, p.173.

¹²⁰ Bonney, 2011, p.178; MacGillivray, 2001; Evans, 1921.

¹²¹ Marinatos, 2000; Winter, 1983; Uehlinger, 1998-2001 in Bonney, 2011.

¹²² Jones 2005 in Bonney 2011, p.178.

¹²³ Ibid in Ibid.

¹²⁴ Bonney, 2011, p.182. Recycling components as a recollection of the past and part and collective memory see: Boivin, 2008; Jones, 2007.

¹²⁵ Bonney, 2011, p.183. Earthquake theory see: Evans, 1921; Gesell, 1985; Panagiotaki, 1999. Intentionally broken see: Alberti, 2001; Hervas, 2005; Hatzaki, 2009.

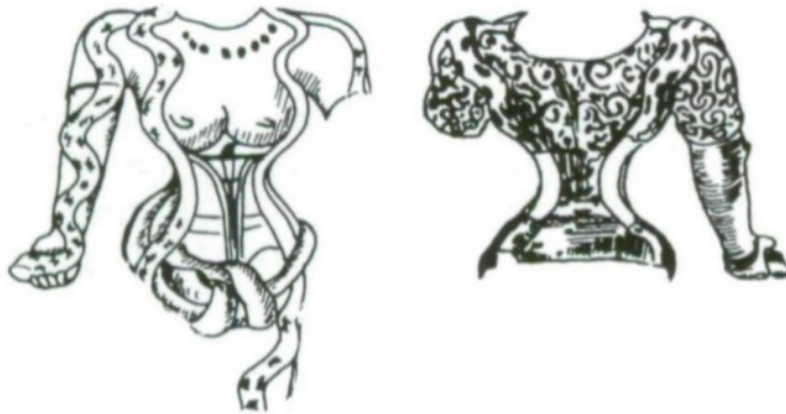


Figure 8 Original parts of faience female torso encircled by snakes from HM63. From: Bonney, 2011, p.174.

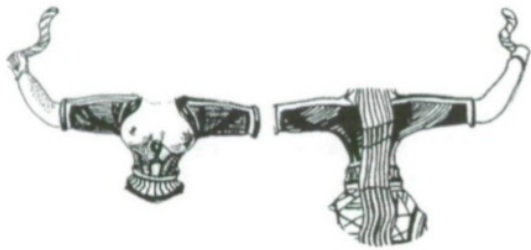


Figure 9 Original Part of female torso holding spirally shaped object. From: Bonney, 2011, p.174.



Figure 10 Original part of head and conical tiara from HM63. From: Bonney, 2011, p.174.

Snake Tubes

Snake imagery has been identified on Cretan loop-handed objects (Figure 11), frequently found with the 'raised hand goddesses', but their function is debated.¹²⁶ Stylised like serpents,¹²⁷ Xanthoudides identifies them as clay idols, Wide argues they are an earlier form of the Goddess.¹²⁸ It is speculated that the objects are used for a libation process as stands for the offering cups and bowls, or libation tubes.¹²⁹ Evans suggests that they could be shelters for snakes within the sanctuaries.¹³⁰ All these suggestions are feasible, as the objects' main feature is their clear association with snakes. Similar snake cult objects have been found in Beth Shan (Figure 12).¹³¹



Figure 11 Snake Tubes from Gournia: 1935, 1937, 1938.
From: Gesell, 1976.



Figure 12 Snake Cult Object from Beth Shan.
From: Gesell, 1976.

¹²⁶ Gesell, 1976, p.247.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Evans, 1921-37, IV pp. 140-9; Wilde, 1901, p. 248; in Gesell, 1976, p.247.

¹²⁹ Zahn and Nilsson in Gesell, 1976.

¹³⁰ Evans, 1921-37, IV pp. 140-9 in Gesell, 1976.

¹³¹ Gesell, 1976, p.254.

Section b: Mycenaean Snakes

Snakes at Mycenae



Figure 13 Clay Snake from Room 18
From: Artsweb.bham

Serpent figures were found in the 'Room of the Idols' at Mycenae in 1921 (Figure 13).¹³²

Taylor reports that seventeen snake figurines were found, possibly associated with idols although this is unclear.¹³³ He also describes a Mycenaean female statuette who he suggests is holding a snake.¹³⁴

Although one hand is missing there are two coils beneath her left hand; other snakeheads were found along with snake coils.¹³⁵ Two intaglios also discovered at Mycenaean supposedly show the Great Mother with snakes, lion, and the double axe.¹³⁶

Morris suggests the figurines can be compared to those from Egypt and the Near East as votive and funerary offerings,¹³⁷ and the most widely accepted interpretation is that the serpents represent the duality of life and death.¹³⁸ Taylor notes the chthonic nature of the serpents, connecting them to the natural rock of the temple, with the snake's ability to slither in and out of rocks going between the underworld and the shrine;¹³⁹ this association with the

¹³² Morgan, 2005, p.166.

¹³³ Taylor, 1970, p.278.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p.272.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Deane, 1923, p.83.

¹³⁷ Morris, 1992.

¹³⁸ Morgan, 2005; Taylor, 1970.

¹³⁹ Taylor, 1970, p.278.

natural rock also connects them to nature.¹⁴⁰ Morgan concurs, indicating that most figurines were found next to large clay snakes.¹⁴¹ The association of the snakes at Mycenae with the natural and uncut rock of the shrine is strong evidence for their connection to nature.¹⁴²

Where is the Mother Goddess in Mycenaean Greece?

The Mycenaean female figurines (Figure 14) are not interpreted as being a version of the Mother Goddess, although their depiction mirrors the Cypriot 'Great Goddess' figurines (Figure 15). This mirroring could evidence a syncretism of the goddesses or a transfer of technological skills. There is not enough significant evidence for a transference of the Mother Goddess from Minoan Crete to Mycenaean Greece.



Figure 14 Cypriot 'Great Goddess' In British Museum.
From: *Flight of the goddess blog*.



Figure 15 Mycenaean Female Figurines. From:
Hartzler.org

¹⁴⁰ Morgan, 2005, p.169.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² See Chapter 5 for serpent symbolism.

Section c: Classical Greek Snakes

Asclepius' Snakes: Healing

In Classical Greece, snakes were often associated with healing particularly with the healer god Asclepius.¹⁴³ At Asklepieia (healing sites such as Epidaurus) snakes are said to have lived in the groves, cared for by staff, and then carried around the site to be used for their curative properties (see Chap. 5).¹⁴⁴



Figure 16 Asclepius and Hygieia with serpents
From :Ogden, 2013, p.310.

Snakes were also seen as the embodiment of Asclepius and physically used to create new Asklepieia.¹⁴⁵ Ogden discusses the founding of Athens' Asklepieion in 420BC, seen in an inscription and an increase in Asclepius' iconography (Figure 16).¹⁴⁶ Ogden states that the reading of the inscription now differs slightly and although once translated as *drakon* being 'serpent', an alternate reading is *diakono(u)s* meaning 'temple servants'.¹⁴⁷ In 292-1BC the Asclepius was moved to Rome via a snake,¹⁴⁸ and Pausanias tells of the founding of three

¹⁴³ Ogden, 2013, p.310; Bodson, 1981, p.74. Note that his staff is still used as a medical symbol today.

¹⁴⁴ Ogden, 2013, p.347; Becker, 2005, p.263-5.

¹⁴⁵ Becker, 2005, p.263-5.

¹⁴⁶ Ogden, 2013, p.310; Inscription: SEG232.

¹⁴⁷ Ogden, 2013, p.310.

¹⁴⁸ Charlesworth, 2010, p.167. More detailed story in: Ov, *Met.* 15.622-744.

other Asclepius cults by the transferring of a snake from Epidaurus, including Sicyon, and Epidaurus Limera.¹⁴⁹

Bodson concluded that Asclepius' is depicted with either the *Elphae Longissima* or *Elphae Quatuorolineata* (interestingly the same as the snake represented with Athena in her polis form),¹⁵⁰ showing the ancient authors detailed knowledge of snakes. She reaches this conclusion despite ancient authors disagreeing on the colour of the snake: Nicander says pale yellow to green/blue/black,¹⁵¹ Pausanias says intense yellow like a lion's mane,¹⁵² other ancient authors say a brownish yellow or yellowish belly with a black back;¹⁵³ but it is difficult to determine a snake's exact colour due to observer bias.

Chthonian Zeus



Figure 17 Zeus Meilichios
From: Larson, 2007, p. 22.

The chthonic aspect of snake imagery (see Chap. 5) is recognised by the Greeks through the form Zeus Meilichios.¹⁵⁴ In this form Zeus appears on votive reliefs as a snake (Figure 17). This is unusual both because snakes in Greek art were thought to represent the underworld, and gods being depicted in animal form was unusual.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Ogden, 2013, p.310; Paus, 2.10.2-3.

¹⁵⁰ Bodson, 1981, p.77; Bodson, 1990.

¹⁵¹ Nic. *Ther.* in Bodson, 1990.

¹⁵² Paus. in Bodson, 1990.

¹⁵³ Bodson, 1990.

¹⁵⁴ Larson, 2007, p. 22.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

The Monsters and Their Slayers?



Figure 18 Heracles strangling snakes
From: Wikimedia Commons

Ogden introduces the idea of 'Drakon-Master' and 'Drakon-Slayers'.¹⁵⁶ Apollo is 'Drakon-Slayer' when defeating the Python,¹⁵⁷ but is also associated with other serpents.¹⁵⁸ Greek heroes who defeat serpents and dragons are classed as 'Drakon-Slayers'.¹⁵⁹ Particularly Heracles who kills the snakes Hera sends to kill him (Figure 18),¹⁶⁰ (see Hera discussion in Chap. 2).¹⁶¹ Heracles goes on to defeat snakes such as the Hydra, *Ketos* at Troy, and Achelous in his serpentine form.¹⁶² Heracles is often depicted with Athena on vases and it is in these cases that Athena's tassels are usually serpents (see below).

¹⁵⁶ Ogden, 2013, p.193.

¹⁵⁷ Python and Delphi see Chap. 4. See: Ogden, 2013, p.193; HH3.335-370.

¹⁵⁸ These include: a shrine at Troy; Cassandra having snakes whisper in her ear when asleep in the temple of Apollo; Athena, Poseidon or Apollo sending the serpents that killed Laocoon, a priest of Apollo Thymbaeus or Poseidon; and a shrine in Epirus in his 'Thymbraean' aspect. For more details and the ancient sources see: Ogden, 2013, p.193.

¹⁵⁹ Ogden, 2013, p.193.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Gimbutas, 1989.

¹⁶² Ogden, 2013, p.193, has further discussion on other mythical figures association with drakons or serpents including: Perseus, Jason, and Cadmus.

Athena's Snakes



Figure 19 Varvakeion Athena, restored Athena Parthenos from 2nd Cent CE Roman Period.
From: Wikipedia.

Athena, despite being the only Classical deity directly associated with snake iconography, there is limited scholarly discussion regarding this connection.

Nilsson lists depictions of Athena with snakes on pottery, focusing on Phidias' Parthenon statue; although the original does not survive a Roman copy shows a snake behind Athena's shield (See Figure 19).¹⁶³ Hawkes directly associates Athena's snake imagery

as her being the continuation of the Minoan Goddess.¹⁶⁴

Figure 20 and Figure 21 depict Athena with snakes on her shield, while Figure 20 to Figure 23 show serpent tassels on her cloak.¹⁶⁵ Bodson concludes that in her war personification Athena is shown with a *Vipera Ammodytes*, whereas in her *polis* aspect it is an *Elaphe Quaturorlineata*.¹⁶⁶ There is debate within scholarship as to whether Athena's *aegis* is her shield from Zeus with the gorgon's head or her goat-skin coat,¹⁶⁷ with either interpretation the image of a snake is still visible.

¹⁶³ Nilsson, 1927, p.426.

¹⁶⁴ Hawkes, 1968.

¹⁶⁵ Deacy and Villing, 2009.

¹⁶⁶ Bodson, 1990. The same species was depicted with Asclepius.

¹⁶⁷ Deacy and Villing, 2009.



Figure 20 Athena with serpent tassels and serpent shield. From: Beazley 41123.



Figure 21 Athena with Heracles – serpent shield. From: Beazley 200047.



Figure 22 Close up of Athena's Serpent tassels from Figure 23. Photo by Forder, J., British Museum December 2019.



Figure 23 Panathenaic prize-amphora, made in Athens c.566-2BC (GR 1842.7-28.834 Vase B 130). Photo by Forder, J., British Museum December 2019.



Figure 24 Jason against the Colchian Dragon with Athena watching. From: Bridgeman Images.



Figure 25 Athena against the Anguipede giants. From: LIMC Gigantes 389.



Figure 26 Athena with serpent tassels helping Heracles. From: LIMC Herakles 1438.

Ogden classifies Athena as a 'Drakon-Mistress' because of her power over serpents, and ability to fight snakes, either directly or indirectly,¹⁶⁸ including the Gorgon and the Anguipede giants (which have serpent legs from as early as 400-375BC) (Figure 25).¹⁶⁹ Athena is also depicted helping heroes battle serpents, not just Heracles as was discussed above, but also Perseus, Cadmus, Bellerophon, and Jason (Figure 24 and Figure 26).¹⁷⁰ Interestingly, when depicted helping heroes fight serpents, Athena's *aegis* often has serpentine tassels, further evidence of the importance of serpent imagery associated with Athena, she clearly has some form of power over serpents.

Other serpent associations with Athena include snakes guarding her shrine on Chryse,¹⁷¹ and the snakes that she sends to attack people (Laocoon in the Aeneid, and Ajax the Lesser when he attempts to rape Cassandra).¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Ogden, 2013, p.195, suggests further reading: Kuster, 1913, p.116-7; Cook, 1914, III 764-76; Mitropoulou, 1977, 31-4.

¹⁶⁹ Ogden, 2013, p.195. Gorgon see: Eur. *Ion* 967-98; Hyg *Poet. astr.* 2.12 citing Euhemerus. Giants see: LIMC Gigantes 389. More detail on the anguipede Giants see: Ogden, 2013, p.83-4.

¹⁷⁰ Ogden, 2013, p.196. Perseus see: Pind. *Pyth.* 10.29-48, 12.6-26; Aesch. *Phorcydes* F.261; Luc. 9.666-70. Cadmus see: Stesichorus F.195; Pherecydes 22ab Fowler; Euripides *Phoen.* 638-48; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.4.1. Bellerophon see: Pind. *Ol.* 13.60-90; Paus. 2.4.1-2. Jason see: LIMC Iason 32 and 36.

¹⁷¹ For Chryse see: Soph. *Phil.* 1326-8 and Hyg. *Fab.* for story of the nymph; Hom. *Il.* 2.722. Tzet. a Late Byzantine author viewed it as a local epithet.

¹⁷² Ogden, 2013, p.196. For Laocoon see Verg. *Aen.* 2.199-231. For Ajax see: LIMC Aias II 42.

Erichthonios: Half-Snake Son of Athena



Figure 27 Athena with Erichthonios
From: LIMC Athena 480.

Athena's 'son' Erichthonios (who is half-snake or protected by snakes), was either born of the earth after Hephaestus attempted to rape Athena or given to Athena by Gaia the earth.¹⁷³ Ogden presents the idea that the guardian serpent *oikouros ophis* said to be living in the Erechtheion was believed to be the spirit of Erichthonios.¹⁷⁴ A further link to snakes is Erichthonios'

association with Cecrops the first king of Athens who had a serpent's tail.¹⁷⁵

Pausanias tells the story that Athena asked Cecrops' three daughters to nurse Erichthonios.¹⁷⁶

The myth of the Agraulides, tells of the daughters receiving a chest holding Erichthonios but told to not open it, however, they disobeyed and two snakes emerged from the chest (Figure 27) fatally scaring the daughters who then, according to some variants of the myth jump from the acropolis.¹⁷⁷ Kirk views this myth of Cecrops' daughters as having developed into the Arrhephonia ritual where young girls weave a new robe for Athena in the priestesses house on the Acropolis, then carry the bundles on their head to the precinct of Aphrodite at the bottom of the Acropolis, swap them for an unknown bundle which they carry to the priestess of Athena.¹⁷⁸ The image of the unknown bundles being carried back is associated with the

¹⁷³ Luyster, 1965, p.146.

¹⁷⁴ Ogden, 2013, p.197.

¹⁷⁵ Luyster, 1965, p.145; Ogden, 2013, p.197.

¹⁷⁶ Paus. 1.18.2.

¹⁷⁷ Nilsson, 1927, p.427. Alternate versions: Eur. *Ion*; Ar. *Vesp.*; Apollod. *Bibl.*; Diod. Sic.; Hyg. *Poet. astr.*; *Fab.*; Philostratus *Vita Apollonii*, Hesychius, and Sophocles *frag.643*.

¹⁷⁸ Kirk., 1974, p. 228. Further ritual details: Hopper (1963, p. 4) discusses the Arrhephoroi as 'bearers of secret objects', and inscriptions mentioning Athena and Pandrosos, as well as Demeter and Kore and Ge-Themis; Larson (2007, pp. 45-6) gives more detail on the Panathenaia festival and the Skirophorion. See also: Sourvinou-Inwood, et al., 2011.

sisters carrying the box with Erichthonius, however, the ritual would make more sense with three girls instead of the two or four.

Medusa

Medusa's hair is a famous depiction of snakes in the Classical World (Figure 28).

Frothingham presents Medusa as an earth-spirit and connects her to the 'Great Mother' of prehistoric times.¹⁷⁹ This would be logical because of the association with snakes despite Medusa not being a goddess in Classical times.¹⁸⁰ Bowers expands on this idea, saying Medusa was a serpent goddess of the Libyan Amazons who represented women's wisdom.¹⁸¹ Freudian interpretation of Medusa's snakes within psychoanalysis relates to the castration complex but are not relevant for investigating Classical interpretation.¹⁸²

The Medusa myth adjusts over time. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, she is raped by Poseidon and



Figure 28 Medusa with Perseus
From: LIMC. Perseus 113

killed by Perseus, and from her head emerge Pegasus and Chrysaor, however, she lacks sacred power and no petrifying gaze is mentioned.¹⁸³ Only later in Apollodorus do the Gorgon's have the ability to turn those who gaze on them to stone.¹⁸⁴ Medusa's association with Athena is not until Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where Medusa was once a mortal woman of great beauty, who is

¹⁷⁹ Frothingham, 1911, p. 349.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Bowers, 1990, p. 220. There is also mention of an inscription at Sais where Medusa is described as 'mother of all the gods, whom she bore before childbirth existed'; and discussion on depictions of Medusa at a Temple of Artemis in Corfu.

¹⁸² Freud, 1922.

¹⁸³ Bowers, 1990, p. 221; Hes, *Theog.*

¹⁸⁴ Bowers, 1990, p. 221; Apollod. *Bibl.*

raped by Poseidon in Athena's shrine, and then Athena punishes her by turning her hair into snakes.¹⁸⁵ The changes to the myth lead to changes in representations, as can be seen in Figure 28 where Medusa appears on vase paintings as non-human. What is strange is her later association with Athena, whether this association occurs when she is represented as the Gorgoneion on Athena's Aegis, after Perseus gives Athena Medusa's head.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Bowers, 1990, p. 222; Ov, *Met.*

¹⁸⁶ For the Gorgoneion see: Marx, 1993; Hartswick, 1993.

Chapter 4: Site by Site Continuity

To prove a continuity of pious orthopraxy of the Minoan Goddess to the Mycenaean, to the Classical, there would need to be a continued orthopraxy at particular sites which is very difficult to prove. (See Appendices 1.3 to 1.4 for site location maps).

Knossos, the epicentre of Minoan Crete, was still occupied during Mycenaean times, meaning a continuity of religious beliefs.¹⁸⁷ By Classical times Knossos had lost its importance and declined in power,¹⁸⁸ becoming the subject of myths associated with Ariadne and Minos. Linear B decipherment has revealed the names of Classical Greek deities at Knossos,¹⁸⁹ clear evidence for continuity and cultural transference from Crete to Greece.

There is minimal evidence of a goddess at Mycenae but there was clearly snake worship (Chap. 3).¹⁹⁰ There was continued, if less concentrated, occupation at the site into the Classical period.¹⁹¹ The extensive use of sanctuaries, compared to smaller settlement evidence during the Archaic period, suggests a form of 'hero' cult worship, therefore a cultural memory of the significance of the Mycenaean site perhaps connected to the dissemination of the Homeric epics.¹⁹² Klein cites evidence for an establishment of a temple and cult from the Geometric period and discusses the debate surrounding which goddess was worshipped.¹⁹³ Originally believed to be Athena (based on interpretation of a Bronze Plaque found on the acropolis), later studies now suggest an association with Hera.¹⁹⁴ This correlates

¹⁸⁷ Dietrich, 1993; Gulizio, 2011.

¹⁸⁸ Coldstream, 1999; MacDonald, 2012, p. 541.

¹⁸⁹ Pelon & Marinatos, 2005, p. 42.

¹⁹⁰ Morgan, 2005; Taylour, 1970.

¹⁹¹ French, 2002, p. 141.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Klein, 1997, pp. 297-8.

¹⁹⁴ Klein, 1997, pp. 297-8; French, 2002, pp. 141-3.

with a Daedalic style bust of a veiled woman, suggested to be Hera as a bride, which Hall links to the connection between Mycenae and Argos.¹⁹⁵

Sparta was the home to Helen in Homer, suggesting that it was occupied continually from Mycenaean times.¹⁹⁶ However, there is little research on this continuation. Most discussion surrounds Spartan Aphrodite (Chap. 2), and the syncretism of Artemis with Eliethia (daughter of Zeus and Hera, protector of pre-infants and childbirth).¹⁹⁷ Although the Mycenaeans brought Aphrodite to Greece, it was from Cyprus not Crete, showing a multi-cultural transference. The Hyakinthia cult to Apollo at Sparta or Amyclaeon is an example of cultic continuation from Mycenaean times,¹⁹⁸ and there is clear evidence showing how the festival changed and developed overtime.¹⁹⁹ This shows religious continuation from Mycenaean to Classical times at Sparta, even if not associated with the ‘Goddess’.

For Athena to be a continuation of the ‘Goddess’ there would need to be direct site continuation. However, evidence of Mycenaean Athens is limited due to constant occupation. Evidence shows occupation on the Acropolis,²⁰⁰ the Ionic building the Erechtheion was called the ‘Old Temple’ by Classical Athenians and was probably built on an old Mycenaean ‘temple’, perhaps the supposed Dorpfeld temple or “pre-Erechtheion” structure.²⁰¹ In Homer Athena is said to enter the ‘House of Erechtheus’, which could possibly refer to this temple.²⁰²

¹⁹⁵ Hall, 1995 in French, 2002, p. 143.

¹⁹⁶ Cartledge, 1979.

¹⁹⁷ Paus. 3.17; Papadopoulos, 2010, p. 5.

¹⁹⁸ Pettersson, 1992; Burkert, 1975; Graf, 2006.

¹⁹⁹ Graf, 2006. Hyacinthus, a lover of Apollo, killed either by Apollo (Ov. *Met.* 10.162-219), or by his rival Zephyrus (Paus. 3.19.5).

²⁰⁰ Hopper, 1963.

²⁰¹ Larson, 2007, p. 42.

²⁰² Hopper, 1963; Hom. *Od.* 7.78-81.

In Classical times Eleusis was under Athenian control and hosted the Eleusian Mysteries associated with Demeter.²⁰³ Here, there is evidence of Bronze Age remains that suggest a form of cultic continuity; notably, the Mycenaean Megaron that is directly underneath the temple of Demeter.²⁰⁴ The function of the Mycenaean remains is debated, either elite residences or a cultic site.²⁰⁵ There are, however, other Mycenaean remains within the Classical sanctuary suggesting a continuation of cult worship.²⁰⁶

There is possibility of religious continuity at Delphi from Mycenaean times although archaeological evidence is scarce. In Classical mythology Delphi was a shrine to Gaia, interestingly it was said to be her son Python, the snake, who guarded the shrine.²⁰⁷ In the Homeric Hymn, Apollo defeats the Python and takes the oracle, before finding Cretan sailors who he makes his first priests.²⁰⁸ In other mythic versions Zeus discovers Delphi by letting loose two eagles in opposite directions to find the centre of the world.²⁰⁹ The eagles pass at Delphi, where Zeus sets up the shrine to Gaia.²¹⁰ These myths surrounding Delphi, particularly those incorporating snake imagery, are the clearest available evidence for continuation of worship from the Minoan Goddess to Classical deities.

²⁰³ For Demeter and the Eleusian Mysteries see: Foley, 1994.

²⁰⁴ Larson, 2007, p. 73.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Scott, 2014, p. 32.

²⁰⁸ HH3.335-370; Scott, 2014, p. 32.

²⁰⁹ Pind. frag. 54; Plut. Mor. 409E-410A; Strabo 9.3.6; Scott, 2014, pp. 33-4. Stories for the founding of Delphi in: Aeschylus' *Orestia*, *Eumenides* lines 1-19; Euripides, *Iphigenia at Tauris* lines 1234-58.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

Chapter 5: Snakes as a Symbol

This chapter identifies the symbolic meanings associated with serpents, how this may influence interpretations and provides the necessary symbolic understanding of the goddesses' association with snakes.

Section a: The Symbolic Serpent - a Jungian Archetype

The serpent appears as a Jungian archetype, a symbol within the collective unconscious appearing in cultures across the globe, without interaction.²¹¹ Jung associated the uncoiled snake with initiation rites within ancient mysteries.²¹² However, he cautions against abstract symbolic meanings turning into explanations, as it is impossible to experience an image in the same way as a contemporary viewer.²¹³ Neumann suggests that the serpent image is not a Jungian archetype itself, but represents an aspect of the mother archetype.²¹⁴ This would depend on how the image is perceived, perhaps if the snake is shown with the Goddess then it is not an archetype, but if alone then it could be.²¹⁵

²¹¹ Babejova, 2011, p.98 quoting Jung, 1992.

²¹² Jung, 1956.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Neumann, 1955, pp. 3-6.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

Girard argues that the serpent has the most symbolic meanings of all animals.²¹⁶ Serpent symbolism is significant globally,²¹⁷ and has been traced back to prehistory.²¹⁸ Babejova quotes Philo of Byblos' describing snakes as the 'reptiles which contained the most spirit'.²¹⁹ Aristotle discusses the physical attributes of serpents instead of their symbolic meanings.²²⁰ Nicander's *Theriaca* discusses venomous animals, particularly snakes, and their poisons and antidotes.²²¹ However, writing in didactic poetry, his work is often ignored by scholarship. In the ancient world the work would have taught people the dangers of those animals in a way they could understand.²²²

Charlesworth introduces the reasons for the serpents' symbolic significance due to the thirty-two almost-unique aspects of a serpent,²²³ Becker clarifies the main three as: the ability to move without legs, living in holes, and being born from eggs.²²⁴ Snake symbolism ranges from a chthonic nature and adversary of man, both a masculine and feminine sexual symbol, and protector of sacred precincts and the home.²²⁵ Chthonic symbolism is important, due to the snakes being seen as intermediaries between life and death as they pass between the netherworld to the earth's surface.²²⁶ Juxtaposed to this idea, they also represent rebirth and constant renewal due to seasonal shedding of their skin, which has been associated with menstruation, therefore fertility.²²⁷

²¹⁶ Girard, 1991 in Charlesworth, 2010, p.31.

²¹⁷ Serpent symbolism see: Henderson & Oakes, 1990; Morgan, 2008; Mundkur, 1983; Charlesworth, 2010.

²¹⁸ Mundkur, 1983.

²¹⁹ Philo of Byblos (BNJ 790 F 4) in Babejova, 2011, p.28. Philo of Byblos lived c.64-141CE.

²²⁰ Arist. Hist. an. 8.VI; 8.XVII; 8.XIX; 8.XXVIII; 9.II.

²²¹ Meier, et al., 2006.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Charlesworth, 2010, p.32-59.

²²⁴ Becker, 2005, p.263-5.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Lapatin, 2002, p.80; Tylour, 1970, p.278.

²²⁷ Lapatin, 2002, p.80.

Section b: Symbol of Protection

Positive snake symbolism is seen in the *oikouros ophis*, a snake that guarded the temple on the Acropolis in Athens, protecting the city.²²⁸ If the physical manifestation of this snake refused to eat offerings left by the priestess, it was an omen that the goddess had deserted the Acropolis.²²⁹ When this happened prior to the Persian invasion, the Athenians abandoned the city.²³⁰

There is no evidence of a public sighting of the *oikouros ophis*, except in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* when a chorus woman complains of insomnia after seeing the 'great serpent'.²³¹ It is debatable whether there was real snake being fed by the priestesses, or just a metaphorical representation of Athena, or Erichtonius.²³²

As discussed in Chapter 3, snakes are said to have lived in the groves of Asklepieia.²³³ Pliny says remedies were obtained from snakes, which is why they are sacred to Asclepius.²³⁴ Becker discusses the various medical properties that serpents possess from their skin and bite, and the antidotes and medicines that can be made from snake venom.²³⁵

²²⁸ Ogden, 2013, p.348-9; Hdt 8.41.

²²⁹ Hdt 8.41; Nilsson, 1927, p.428.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ogden, 2013, p.349; Ar. *Lys.*

²³² Ogden, 2013, p.349. Erichtonius see: Chapter 3.

²³³ Ogden, 2013, p.347.

²³⁴ Pliny. NH. XXIX. 72.

²³⁵ Becker, 2005, p.263-5.

Serpent and mother goddess imagery is found at Neolithic shrines and cultic areas including Katom, Chorio, and Ierapetra, where a seated woman with the lower body of a snake was found at the temple, interpreted as representing the fertility of the earth.²³⁶ Tablets at Knossos say honey offerings were left to “da-pu-ri-to-jo po-ti-ni-ja” (Potnia of the Labyrinth); they are understood to be left to the serpents, as the Goddess is represented by a serpent in the labyrinth under Knossos.²³⁷ This Cretan Potnia is now seen as the Minoan Goddess (Persephone discussion in Chap.2).²³⁸

The Minoan Snake Goddess as a protective household divinity was elevated by Evans’ contested identification of the goddesses as the ‘Great Goddess’ in his 1921 work,²³⁹ despite previously dismissing the idea of a Mother Goddess as an intrusive form in his 1895 publication.²⁴⁰ Gere argues that Evans brought the Mother Goddess with him to Knossos.²⁴¹ Alternatively, Eller argues the Mother Goddess is a later edition to Evans’ work, an influence from Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*.²⁴² Frazer argues the Great Goddess is a common religious pattern found globally.²⁴³ However, it is possible that these ‘great’ goddesses only appear because of the search in each culture for a figure to take this role.

²³⁶ Charlesworth, 2010, p.57.

²³⁷ Ibid, p.92.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Nilsson, 1927, p.428; Lapatin, 2002, p.80.

²⁴⁰ See Eller, 2012, p.77-8 for Evans’ references.

²⁴¹ Gere, 2009 in Eller, 2012, p.75.

²⁴² Eller, 2012, p.75.

²⁴³ Frazer & College, 1944 in Eller, 2012, p.89-90.

Nilsson argues that the Mycenaean-Minoan Mother/Snake Goddess would have been kept in house shrines as protector of the house,²⁴⁴ Branigan agrees that this house shrine was a principal element of the household god from EMI to EMII.²⁴⁵ Nilsson attempts to link this idea of the Mother Goddess in the house shrine to Athena's Palladium at Troy, a statue of Athena that protects the city from destruction.²⁴⁶ The Palladium was said to have been a gift from Athena and the name comes from her other name Pallas,²⁴⁷ it either fell from the sky or was brought to Troy by Dardanus.²⁴⁸

Serpents also protected shrines in ancient Rome.²⁴⁹ In Virgil's *Aeneid* during Aeneas' father's funeral a snake emerges from the shrine, eats the offerings and then 'harming no one' goes back under the tomb.²⁵⁰ The snake, described as either the 'genius of the place' or the father's spirit, ultimately is a good omen as Aeneas continues the funeral rites with an uplifted spirit.²⁵¹ This use of snakes as protectors of the home continued in Rome, where they represented the Pater Familias and were depicted on parents' tombs,²⁵² an interesting movement from female to male association.²⁵³ Pliny and Aristotle both allude to snakes

²⁴⁴ Nilsson, 1927, p.428.

²⁴⁵ Branigan, 1969, p.35.

²⁴⁶ Nilsson, 1927, p.429-30.

²⁴⁷ Moret, 1975 in Prescendi, 2006; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.12.3.; Hom. *Il.* 6.92; 273; 303.

²⁴⁸ Fallen from the sky see: Pherecydes FGrH 3 F 179; Dion. Hal. Ant. 2.66.5; Ov. Fast. 6.421f. Dardanus see: Dion. Hal. Ant. 1.68f. P. Demargne, s.v. Athena, LIMC 2.1, 1019, 1029 1040 in Prescendi, 2006. Many cities in history have claimed to have the Palladium see: Sordi, 1982; Dubourdieu, 1989 in Prescendi, 2006: Rome claimed that Diomedes took it to Lavinium (Cassius Hemina fr.7 Peter; Serv. Aen. 2.166; Sil. 13.51-78), or Aeneas (Paus. 2.23.5). Although *xoana* statues were common in Greek temples and not always female.

²⁴⁹ Becker, 2005, p.263-5.

²⁵⁰ Verg., *Aen.* 5.80-100.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Charlesworth, 2010, p.167.

²⁵³ Olympias, Alexander the Great's mother is associated with serpents. Plutarch says she was found by Philip sleeping with Pythons (Plut. Vit. Alex). In later versions she is impregnated by Jupiter Ammon disguised as a snake (T, 1797, p. 176).

being kept as pets, which is possibly why snake imagery appears in the home,²⁵⁴ mainly because the snakes would kill vermin.²⁵⁵

Section c: Juxtaposing the Chthonic Snake vs Fertility

Serpents appear to embody juxtaposing chthonic and fertility symbolism. Charlesworth considers the serpent to represent human existence, being both good and evil, sickness and health; exhibiting the vagueness of human life.²⁵⁶ A serpent's bite can evoke death through its venom,²⁵⁷ therefore, being an 'evil' symbol and representing humans, who have the ability to kill. But a serpent also symbolises new life, resurrection, immortality and rebirth by the seasonal shedding of its skin,²⁵⁸ therefore, becoming a 'good' symbol and a characteristic of health and healing, also a part of human nature. Aristotle compares the casting of the skin to an infant emerging from the chorion.²⁵⁹

Van Buren argues for snakes as a fertility symbol which Eliade presents as a common religious symbol;²⁶⁰ which is expanded upon by Charlesworth and Johnson who emphasise the contradiction between the phallic nature of the serpent and its association with female figures.²⁶¹ Conversely, Amiet argues that, although there is seemingly a sexual implication of entwined serpents, focus should shift to their connection with water, and fertility of vegetation.²⁶² Van Buren's fertility argument also focuses on springs, the underworld, and

²⁵⁴ Plin. *HN*. XXIX.72 in Charlesworth, 2010, p.185, 167; Bodson, 1981.

²⁵⁵ Babejova, 2011, p.97.

²⁵⁶ Charlesworth, 2010, p.41.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.39.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.39; 57.

²⁵⁹ Arist. *Hist. an.* 8.XIX.2-3.

²⁶⁰ van Buren, 1935 in Buchanam, 1971, p.5; Eliade, 1958; Frazer & College, 1944.

²⁶¹ Charlesworth, 2010, p.31; Johnson, 1991.

²⁶² Amiet, 1966 in Buchanam, 1971, p.5.

the 'water of life', so, despite disagreement over the sexual implication of the symbol, both van Buren and Amiet share the idea of a snake associated with both the underworld and fertility, therefore chthonic and fertility dualism.²⁶³

The chthonic aspect is multi-fold, their deadliness and their inhabitation, and hibernation (as Aristotle discusses) in underground burrows.²⁶⁴ The retreat underground in the winter mirrors the seasonal development into winter (see Persephone discussion in Chap.2). Therefore, the serpent takes on the important duality of chthonic and fertility symbolism that will come to be seen within the goddesses.

Section d: Snake/Serpent Imagery across Religions and Cultures

Charlesworth's lists serpent iconography globally including contemporary images like the Rainbow Serpent of Australian Aborigines and ancient serpents like Aztec Quetzalcoatl, spreading from Africa, Central America, China, and India, showing the prevalence of the symbol.²⁶⁵ Snakes as guardians are seen in the Celtic Cernunnos who holds a large serpent, the Celtic double-headed guardian snake, and in India where the snake is viewed as a guardian.²⁶⁶ This abundance of snake imagery shows their importance across cultures and magnitude of what a snake can represent, while providing an insight into how societies have developed the same symbolism from snakes without connections.

²⁶³ Van Buren and Amiet in Buchanam, 1971, p.5.

²⁶⁴ Arist. *Hist. an.* 8.XVII.1.

²⁶⁵ Charlesworth, 2010, p.36-7; Becker, 2005, p.264.

²⁶⁶ Charlesworth, 2010, p.36-7.

There are depictions of ‘serpent goddesses’ from the Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age in Syria, at sites such as Catalhoyuk, Gobekli Tepe, and in Thessaly at Achilleion.²⁶⁷ Buchanan and Bonney sees the Snake Goddess from Crete as a hybrid, directly influenced by Syria following a geographical path linking these cultures.²⁶⁸

Charlesworth argues that in pre-Christian societies the snake was a positive symbol, given negative connotations by Christianity in the 4th century AD to diminish the previous religion’s power.²⁶⁹ The Judaic conception of the snake from the Bible, details the ‘crafty’ serpent tempting Eve to eat the fruit from the tree of ‘good and evil wisdom’.²⁷⁰ Here the serpent becomes a cursed animal and at the same time the woman becomes cursed with the pains of childbirth.²⁷¹ Interestingly the connection between snake and women appears as evil, perhaps it was this relationship that was unsettling for Christianity causing snakes and women to become demonised.²⁷² It is a clear juxtaposition to the previous representation of fertility and nature.

Arguably, the ‘evil’ serpent from the Garden of Eden has influenced scholarship’s view of the serpent as a negative symbol, instead of the positive symbol of kingship and divinity of pre-Christian societies before the 325 AD iconographic change.²⁷³

²⁶⁷ Gimbutas, 1989, p.132. Neolithic and Early Bronze Age serpent imagery and goddesses see: Mundkur, 1983; Goodison & Morris, 1998.

²⁶⁸ Buchanan, 1971, p. 16; Bonney, 2011, pp. 178-9.

²⁶⁹ Charlesworth, 2010, p.182-6.

²⁷⁰ Genesis 3. NIV. Within biblical scholarship there is a much more in-depth discussion on the snake and whether it symbolises the devil, which will not be discussed here.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² For discussion, see: Chakraborty, 2017.

²⁷³ Charlesworth, 2010, p.186.

Serpentine association with motherhood or protection is identified globally. The Mayan Goddess, Chac Chel, the goddess of birth and midwifery, is often depicted with a crocodilian reptile who connects the sky (life) and earth (death).²⁷⁴ The Indian Goddess Manasa is also often viewed as a protective mother goddess and worshipped within the home.²⁷⁵ She represents the duality between life and death having the ability to take and revive life.²⁷⁶ Her rituals involve playing with snakes to appease the goddess with the priests allowing the snakes to bite them.²⁷⁷ If they die it is believed that they are not worshipping correctly, but their survival proves that they are truthful and that the goddess has healed them.²⁷⁸ In Lithuanian folk tradition, snakes are seen as dualistic deities who are guardians of health and fertility, and deceased ancestors.²⁷⁹

Interestingly, in the Mayan and Yazidi (Iran) cultures the snake goddesses are associated with the Flood Myths due to their connection to the earth.²⁸⁰ Chac Chel is said to have caused the flood at the end of the third creation starting the fourth;²⁸¹ while the Yazidi are secretive about their religion, one interpretation is that the snake held a role in their flood myth.²⁸²

²⁷⁴ Hoopes & Mora-Marin, 2009, pp. 316-7; 323.

²⁷⁵ Silver, Hood & Williamson, 2013, p.29-30.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, p.20-28.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, p.20-28.

²⁷⁹ Balkute, 2009, p.213.

²⁸⁰ Hoopes & Mora-Marin, 2009, pp. 316-7; Nicolaus, 2011.

²⁸¹ Hoopes & Mora-Marin, 2009, pp. 316-7.

²⁸² Nicolaus, 2011.

The universal element of snake symbolism is that their chthonic element holds both good and destructive natures in tandem.²⁸³ Whether this is the duality between life and death, represented by the snake goddesses, or the Sumer 'Lord of the Tree of Truth' who is a serpent and master of the mystery of rebirth, as well as a ruler of fire and water (a dual pairing themselves) and said to represent both the male and female organs.²⁸⁴

Mother Archetype

The snake often appears with Jung's 'mother archetype', with both Neumann and Jung suggesting that the 'threatening serpent' appears as an element in the dualism of the 'loving and terrible mother'.²⁸⁵ However, Jung states that each image should be interpreted within their own context,²⁸⁶ therefore the assumption of a snake as an evil symbol could be incorrect, as snake imagery for the Minoans, Mycenaeans and Classical Greeks represents protection and fertility.

Frazer presents the Great Goddess with a son or consort as a common mythic relationship in religious practices across the world.²⁸⁷ De Beauvoir discusses how the male god emerges beside the Mother Goddess but ultimately seizes power, comparing this across religions with Rhea and Zeus in Greece, and Astarte and Adonis in Phoenicia.²⁸⁸ Jung and de Beauvoir associate the Goddess with agricultural fertility.²⁸⁹ Frazer describes women as personifying

²⁸³ Nicolaus, 2011, p. 58.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Jung, 1956, p.312; 1980, p.15-6; Neumann, 1955, pp. 4-6.

²⁸⁶ Jung, 1956, p.312; 1980, p.15.

²⁸⁷ Frazer, 1994, p.343 in Eller, 2012, p.90.

²⁸⁸ De Beauvoir, 2011, p.85.

²⁸⁹ Jung, 1980; De Beauvoir, 2011.

nature's reproductive aspect,²⁹⁰ while de Beauvoir discusses the idea of early societies combining women and agriculture with birth and nurturing as proof of fertility.²⁹¹ Frazer and Jung agree that an increase of separation from the female ancestors gradually enabled deification and transition into goddess figures.²⁹²

The global symbol of snakes and goddesses, and their duality, cannot have come from one singular original being, therefore their reappearance in similar guises is questionable. It could be a fundamental idea that is ingrained within our unconscious and our belief systems, as in Jung's archetype theory and the patterns that Frazer and Eliade noticed.²⁹³ There is no proof of a diaspora of the belief from the earliest prehistoric society that could have led to the same snake imagery appearing in the Balkans, Africa, America, and Greece.

Perspectives on serpents develop and change with socio-historical contexts. Therefore, it could be argued that contemporary viewers' interpretation of the snake forces each cultures' snake and goddess to conform to the guise that is desired or perceived. Bodson claims that literature focuses on dangerous aspects of snakes, with their protective aspects receiving scant textual attention.²⁹⁴ The ancient Greeks understood the different degrees of danger surrounding different snake species.

²⁹⁰ Frazer, 1994, p.314.

²⁹¹ De Beauvoir, 2011, p.77-8.

²⁹² Frazer, 1994, p.390; 395; Jung, 1980, p.14.

²⁹³ Jung, 1980; 1956; Frazer, 1994; Eliade, 1958.

²⁹⁴ Bodson, 1981.

Conclusion

This dissertation concludes that although there is continuity between the Minoan world and Classical Greece, it is not manifested in snake imagery connected to the Minoan Goddess and the Classical deities, despite the hopes and expectations of scholarship. The deciphering of Linear B has shed light on the continuity of deity names from Mycenaean to Classical times, and perhaps if Linear A is deciphered then other connections might appear. However, this research demonstrates that it is seemingly impossible to find a transition from the Minoan Goddess to the Classical deities.

Ogden claims that it was the assumption of the Minoan figurine with a snake as being a protective goddess that developed into the idea of Athena's continuation. He suggests further alternatives for a comparison between the Minoan Goddess and Classical Greece with either the Erinyes/Furies or Maenads.²⁹⁵ Perhaps the serpents peeping over the goddess's head indicate she is closer to the Gorgon; a similarity also discussed by Lapatin.²⁹⁶

Due to gaps in research it is not possible to prove cultic continuity at most sites. Many archaeological sites, such as Athens, are unable to provide evidence for their earliest occupation levels, so claims of site continuity are not conclusive. There are also pitfalls in scholarly discussions surrounding Classical deities, such as Hestia, which require knowledge of the ancient language to fully understand and draw comparisons. The only site offering a possible continued cultic connection regarding to the goddess from Minoan/Mycenaean times

²⁹⁵ Ogden, 2013, p.9 citing: Nilsson, 1967; Picard, 1948; Leveque, 1973, 1975; Mitropoulou, 1977; Bodson, 1978; Gourmelen, 2004.

²⁹⁶ Ogden, 2013, p.9; Lapatin, 2002, p.77-8.

onwards appears to be Delphi. Larson's focus on site-specific research is of great interest,²⁹⁷ and this is where further research is required.

The snake image is significant, but it appears globally and is not solely connected to ancient Greece. It is possible that Jung, Frazer, and Eliade's arguments for religious patterns could be relevant.²⁹⁸

It is clear that although there is cultic continuity from the Minoans to the Classical Greeks,²⁹⁹ this continuity does not take form in the transference of the snake image to an association with the Classical Greek deities.

It may be that sometimes a snake is just a snake.

²⁹⁷ Larson, 2007.

²⁹⁸ Jung, 1980; Frazer & College, 1944; Eliade, 1958.

²⁹⁹ Ogden, 2013, p.9.

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Appendix 1: Maps

1.1: Eastern Mediterranean in the Late Bronze Age



Eastern Mediterranean Map. From <http://maritimehistorypodcast.com/ep-012-minoan-thalassocracy/>.

1.2: Map of the Aegean during the Mycenaean Period



Mycenaean Greece and Crete Map. From Wikipedia

1.3: Map of Attica – showing Eleusis and Athens



Map of Attica (Eleusis and Athens). From <https://www.plato-dialogues.org/tools/attica.htm>.

1.4: Location of Delphi Map.



Location of Delphi Map. From <https://educated-traveller.com/delphi-athens-greece-map/>.

FINAL GRADE

73/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

First marker:

This is an excellent piece of work - exemplary research, good clear and logical structure and confident writing style. engages with an area of research that has long excited the interest of classical scholars - the link between the Bronze Age civilisations of the Aegean and later Classical Greece. Here approach for doing this is original - focusing on the imagery of the snake goddess (and wider use of the snake in Min-Myc religion and later practices). This she explores theoretically, drawing upon cultural memory theory (which she deals with confidently) and syncretism

. is fully engaged with the relevant literature -which is vast (Minoan and Mycenaean archaeological texts, theoretical texts and studies of Classical religion. She also considers the symbolism of the snake and how this was integrated within religious practices and beliefs. The breadth of reading and the facility with which this is assimilated and presented to the reader is excellent for an undergraduate piece of work.

What I would have liked to see however, was a little more of ... coming through. She has mastered academic critique and presentation, but now needs to develop confidence in her own independent voice.

Second marker:

This is a well-written essay that makes decent attempts to grapple with theoretical perspectives (particularly Cultural Memory Theory and Syncretism) and

appropriate methodological approaches. Possibly the concept of hybridity could have been brought into play as well, although this is more an observation than criticism. There is also an undertaking to embed the wider discussion within the context of past scholarly discourse on the topic, though the literary survey is perhaps somewhat laconic.

The juxtapositioning of connected imagery and discussion was helpful. A nice range of examples are drawn upon and discussed in some depth. Indeed, the breadth of your research is quite impressive for a third year dissertation.

Maran's chapter on Mycenaean cultural engagement with the Minoan world, and the manner in which that should be framed might have added an interesting perspective to your discussion (again I note this more as an observation rather than a major criticism). This is not so much directly in relation to the snake goddess topic, but more broadly in terms of the issue of cultural adaptation. Reference: Maran, Joseph (2011), 'Lost in Translation: The Emergence of Mycenaean Culture as a Phenomenon of Glocalization', in Toby C. Wilkinson, Susan Sherrat and John Bennet (eds.), *Interweaving worlds; systemic interactions in Eurasia, 7th to the 1st millennia BC*, Oxford: Oxbow books, pp. 282-94.

The conclusion provides a useful weaving together of the main threads of the discussion. I think your overall cautious perspective is warranted.

Nice work.

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