



Ritual context

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Robert Koehl

INTRODUCTION

Despite the loss of its face and costume, the chryselephantine statuette from Palaikastro, the Kouros, preserves two iconographic elements which are crucial to an interpretation of its meaning and significance, namely its pose and hairstyle. Prior to its discovery, the pose and simplified variants of its hairstyle were familiar from terracotta figurines of male youths discovered at several peak sanctuaries, especially Petsophas, the peak sanctuary of Palaikastro (e.g. *PK II*, 361–7, pls. 9–10; Rutkowski 1991, 58–74, pls. 3–22, 38–9, 52). However, its size, combination of precious materials, extraordinary craftsmanship, and find context distinguish the Kouros from the terracotta figurines in significant respects. Based on this combination of unusual characteristics, it may be fair to conclude that the Kouros depicts a Minoan divinity, or a divinised hero, while the terracotta figurines represent his mortal age grade equivalents.

If this is true, its implications are not insignificant. It suggests that the Minoans believed a special connection might exist between a divinity and a specific age group and gender (as women are never depicted in its pose), similar, perhaps, to the relationship between Hermes, Apollo and their respective age grades in the Classical period (see below; also Graf 1979). How this connection was maintained must surely have been through ritual actions which are themselves likely to have been modelled on the role(s) ascribed to this divinity in the Minoan cosmology. Indeed, the mere existence of this kind of relationship implies, in the very least, that, as in Classical Greece, there was a certain amount of overlap between the social and religious spheres in the Minoan world.

If the rituals appropriate to this age grade could be reconstructed and the role of the divinity identified, it might then be possible to understand just how these two spheres were linked. The following study considers the evidence bearing on these questions in hopes of gaining a fuller understanding of the relationship between the secular and religious, or mortal and divine, in the Minoan (and Thera) world. The iconographic evidence which links the Kouros to other Minoan objects, their similar hairstyle and pose, implies an identification between these two groups based on gender and age.

Thus it may also be assumed that the rituals performed by the mortal equivalents of the Kouros were gender and age specific, especially if they were modelled on his cosmological function. The one universally attested class of rituals which pertain specifically to age and gender and, at the same time, link the social and religious spheres in society, is known generally as 'rites of passage'.

Shortly before the discovery of the Kouros, the present author had compared the various male hairstyles depicted in Minoan (and Thera) art and, also taking physical development and attribute into consideration, suggested that Minoan male society was organized by age grade, not unlike the social structure of historical Crete.¹ It was suggested furthermore, that Minoan society practised 'rites of passage,' a class of rituals commonly practised in societies structured by age grades (Koehl 1986, 104–10). Based, primarily, on an interpretation of the 'Chieftain Cup' from Agia Triada, a group of bronze votives from Kato Symi, and a text from the historical period, the rituals appropriate for one age grade of Minoan youths, perhaps of the aristocracy, was reconstructed (Koehl 1986, 104–10).

In addition to the Kouros, the recently published male figures painted on the walls of Xeste 3 at Akrotiri supplement and enlarge the corpus of male hairstyles from the early years of the LBA Aegean. One of them, the youth who holds a cloth (Doulas 1992, fig. 113), can be linked through pose and hairstyle to the Kouros as an age grade equivalent. An analysis of the narrative context of the Xeste 3 paintings not only sheds light on the role played by this youth in the age grade rituals, but helps explain the cosmological function of the Kouros.

We begin by introducing the concept of 'rites of passage' generally and touch on some of the social institutions with which they are commonly associated. The evidence for age grade rituals from post-Bronze Age Greece and Crete are briefly discussed as possible models for reconstructing analogous social structures in the Minoan era. Surely it is at least worth comparing the post-Bronze Age literary evidence with the Bronze Age

¹ Koehl 1986, 100–03; for the female equivalence on Thera, see Davis 1986.

archaeological evidence to see whether they are compatible or contradictory. The new discoveries from Palaikastro and Akrotiri are examined and incorporated into a more refined sequence of Minoan male age grades and rituals than was suggested in 1986 (Koehl 1986, 100–03).

THEORIES OF 'PRIMITIVE' RITES OF PASSAGE

The rituals which celebrate the critical events of life, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death, and the transitional stages of maturation, are known collectively as 'rites of passage'. This term was introduced into the ethnographic and anthropological literature by A. van Gennep in his seminal study of 1909 (Gennep 1960). In this work Gennep examined the rituals from many different cultures which accompany these events and stages and found that they were all based on a similar tripartite ritual structure comprised of rites of separation, rites of transition, and rites of incorporation (*ibid.*, 1960, 11).

After ninety years, Gennep's tripartite scheme still forms the basis for many studies concerned with rites of passage (e.g. Turner 1967; Pentikainen 1986, 1–24). After Gennep, perhaps the most influential scholar to investigate rites of passage in a cross-cultural context was M. Eliade (1958; cf. Ries 1986, 13–26). Eliade concentrated on the symbolic elements in these rituals which express the idea of death and rebirth (Eliade 1958, xii–xiii, 13–37). Thus the rituals which celebrate the departure from one stage of life often contain elements which allude to death, while entry into the next is accompanied by rituals which suggest rebirth.²

Comparative studies in cultural anthropology and ethnography have shown that groups which practice rites of passage often share other social institutions. Frequently, the populace is separated by gender and age grade (e.g. Eliade 1958, 4–10; Van Baal 1984, 131–2). While both male and female children will normally live at first with their mothers, once male children begin their initiatory process, they are separated and live afterwards primarily in the company of men. These societies often have a special building, the men's house, where boys are taught tribal myths, songs, and dances, men dine communally, and secret rites are performed (Webster 1932; Gennep 1960 29, 35). The presence of women is usually taboo, as they may be perceived as having a weakening effect on the males (e.g. Allen 1984, 117).

The data upon which these studies are based derive largely from observations by early European ethnographers and travellers or on the memories of tribal elders. Unfortunately, many of the rituals are no longer practised, having been prohibited by European colonists and missionaries who replaced traditional tribal customs with European Christian values (Thomson 1949, 35–6). Hence the accurate reconstruction of these rites and

their interpretations are widely debated (e.g. Herdt 1984, 1–81).

rites of passage in Archaic Greece and Dark Age Crete

These caveats are even more pertinent to the student of ancient societies, where the data derives exclusively from secondary sources and thus are subject to an even greater degree of unreliability. No documents survive from ancient Greece which explicitly claim to describe rites of passage. However, scholars of the Classical world have recognized in the surviving literary sources, archaeological remains, and myths, some of the same initiatory patterns and concomitant social institutions identified first by anthropologists.³

E. Harrison has recently garnered epigraphic and iconographic evidence to show that during the eighth and seventh centuries BC Athenian aristocratic youths were organized into age groups similar to those of Sparta, Thera and Crete (discussed below).⁴ Harrison proposes that the *orchestai* mentioned on the earliest surviving Attic inscription, from the third quarter of the eighth century BC, were a group of aristocratic adolescent boys who danced together under the patronage of Apollo.⁵ She notes that Athenaeus, quoting Theophrastus, states that as a boy, the poet Euripides poured wine for the *orchestai* who were boys from the first families of Athens that danced around the Temple of Delian Apollo (Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 4.423).

Harrison identifies the existence of an older age group from a reinterpretation of the finds discovered in the sanctuary of Zeus Ombrios on Mt. Hymettos (M. Langdon 1976). She ascribes the graffiti, small jugs, cups, and animal bones to aristocratic youths 'pursuing their training for adulthood: learning to write as in Thera, hunting and feasting in the country as in Crete' (E. Harrison, see n. 4). Harrison's reference to Thera involves the seventh century BC inscriptions found on the terrace near the dancing ground of Apollo Karneios written by *epheboi* who danced there in honour of the

2 Turner 1967, 96–9; for death symbolism in Classical Greek initiations see Jeanmaire 1939, 342–3; Nagy 1986, 73–88; Dowden 1989, 36; for parallels between marriage and funerary rituals, see Gennep 1960, 92; for Classical Greece particularly, see Jenkins 1983, 141–2.

3 Thomson 1949, 7, 45–9; Cole 1984, 233–44; Sergent 1984; Sergent 1986; Doumas 1987, 153–4; Dowden 1989, 35–47; Dacosta 1991, 9; Kennell 1995, 74 ff.

4 Professor Harrison's ideas were first presented in a keynote address delivered at the first annual symposium of Classical and Mediterranean Archaeologists in Southern States, March 1987. It is with her kind permission that I am able to make reference to her unpublished ideas (personal communication, October 20, 1997).

5 On the inscriptions, see Immerwahr 1990, 7; Jeffery 1990, 68; for Apollo as a god of male initiations, see Graf 1979, 2–22.

god.⁶ Apparently youths on Thera were organized in groups similar to the Athenian *orchestai* (see also Sargent 1986, 357–69).

By the Classical period, age grade initiation rites had become part of the civic educational system of the *polis* (discussed below) and a condition for participation in certain cults, such as that of Artemis Brauronia. Kraters and krateriskoi from Brauron depicting little girls in short dresses dancing in procession towards an altar and nude girls with long hair and legs running races may portray two different age grade initiations.⁷

According to some scholars, certain enigmatic rituals performed at Greek athletic competitions might also be survivals of 'archaic' age grade initiations. At the games for Zeus Lykaeos in Arkadia, for example, participation was open only to young men who had completed a mandatory nine year period of abstinence lasting from age sixteen to twenty-five, during which time they were called 'wolves' (Burkert 1983, 100; also Eliade 1958, 109). At the age of twenty-five the men could compete in the games and if successful, marry and enjoy the rights of full citizenship. These adult men were now called 'acorn eaters'.⁸

Scholars have also detected survivals of primitive age grade initiations in the civic educational institutions of Athens and Sparta. In Athens, the maturation process of young males was divided into three stages: age six to fourteen, fourteen to eighteen, and eighteen to twenty (Willetts 1962, 47–8; Cole 1984, 233–6; Vidal-Naquet 1986, 106–28). The transition from the first to second stage was marked by an offering of the boy's hair and his receipt of a new garment (Picard 1960, 98; Cole 1984, 234). For entry into the last stage, the hair was cut again and a new cloak given, marking the boy's initiation as an *ephebe* (Willetts 1962, 48). Changes in hairstyle, often involving cutting and/or shaving, and the receipt of new garments, are typical age grade initiation rituals, which serve to proclaim publicly the initiate's new status.⁹

The *agoge*, the term generally used for the organization of Spartan male youths, is the most familiar educational system from the Classical period based on age grades and initiation.¹⁰ Children in Sparta remained at home until six years of age at which time they were enrolled in an *agela*, or herd, where they stayed until the age of twelve. Graduation from the herd was marked by a severe haircut (Doulas 1987, 153). Childhood in Sparta was thus organized on a tripartite initiatory structure like that identified by Gennep: separation at age six; transition from six to twelve; incorporation at age twelve.

Upon graduation, the cycle of initiations would start again. The youth would now leave the city, a rite of separation, to survive for a year, weaponless or light-armed, hunting, stealing, or killing in the country, all the while hiding from the view of any Spartan citizen; hence its appellation, the *krypteia* (Willetts 1962, 46; Vidal-Naquet 1986, 112–14, 147–50). The *krypteia* is

thus a liminal or transitional stage. Upon its completion, a youth was incorporated into society as an *ebion* and remained one until the age of eighteen. At nineteen, a youth was regarded as a *melleiren*, or a future *eiren*, at which point he was entitled to speak in the assembly and lead a group of soldiers.

While scholars usually focus on the *krypteia* as the decisive element in the education of Spartan adolescents (e.g., Vidal-Naquet 1986, 112–14), Harrison draws attention to figurative scenes on Archaic Laconian pottery which depict bearded men and beardless youths hunting together (Stibbe 1972, pls. 78.1 [220], 91.2 [275]). It is these activities, she maintains, which would have instilled the values of comradeship and mutual dependence that formed the backbone of the Spartan hoplite infantry, more so than those learned in the *krypteia* (E. Harrison, see n. 4). By way of comparison, she cites the Cretan institution of the *philetor* and *parastatheis*.

Literary and archaeological evidence indicate that age grade initiations played a significant role in the social structure of Archaic and Classical Crete (Jeanmaire 1939, 421–7; Willetts 1955, 7–17; 1962, 46–7; Sargent 1984, 17–73). The youngest boys on Crete, the *paidai*, were also called *apageloi*, meaning that they had not yet joined an *agela* (Willetts 1955, 11). Perhaps during puberty the cycle of initiations would begin. The boys would leave the city, a rite of separation, and spend two months in the country, during which time they were known as *skotioi*, since they were secluded from view (Willetts 1955, 14; 1962, 47; Vidal-Naquet 1986, 116). This liminal or transitional phase would thus be equivalent to the Spartan *krypteia*. Upon return, the boys were incorporated into society by joining an *agela*, where they received preliminary military training, and also served in the *andreion*, the men's communal dining hall. However, the boy was still considered a minor, called an *apodromos*, i.e., someone who was not yet permitted to exercise in the *dromos*, the Cretan gymnasium (Willetts 1955, 11). Upon graduation from the *agela* at twenty, the young man, now called a *dromeus*, would join an *andreion* and a *dromos* (Willetts 1955, 1), and marry in a communal ceremony (Strabo 10. 4.21 C482). Graduation from the *agela* and enrolment in an *andreion* were

6 IG xii. 3. 540, 543, 546; see also 533–7, 573, 767, 1414, 1416, 1437, 1461; Jeffery 1990, 319.

7 Kahil 1977, 86–98; 1983, 231–44; Lloyd-Jones 1983, 87–102; E. Simon 1983, 83–8; Cole 1984, 238–44; Sourvinou-Inwood 1988; Dowden 1989, 25–47; Reeder 1995, 323–6, nos. 98–9; cf. Eliade 1958, 2–3.

8 Burkert 1983. On rites of passage and the origin of the Olympic Games, see Nagy 1986, 71–88.

9 Leach 1958, 147–64; Gennep 1960, 75, 84–7, 166–7; Van Baal 1984, 132–6; Serpenti 1984, 297–8, 305–06; for haircutting in the ancient Near East, see Karageorghis 1990, 67–71.

10 Kennell 1995; also Jeanmaire 1939, 449–512; Willetts 1955, 15–16; 1962, 45–6; Sallares 1991, 160–2.

celebrated on Crete during certain festivals, especially at the *Thiodaisia* (Willetts 1962, 200–04), the *Ekdysia* at Phaistos (Willetts 1962, 175–8; Dowden 1989, 65–8) and the *Periblemaia* at Lyttos (Willetts 1962, 294). The latter two refer to rituals involving changes in dress, a custom mentioned above as typical of rites of passage. The *Ekdysia* may emphasize the removal of the old garments of youth, while the *Periblemaia* emphasizes the putting on of new ones denoting manhood (Willetts 1962, 294).

While these initiation rites provided an educational and social structure for the general citizenry, a more exclusive set of age grade initiations seem to have been practised on Crete only by an aristocracy. Strabo (10.4.21 C483–4), quoting the fourth century historian Ephoros (*FGrHist* 70 F 149), describes a peculiar erotic custom wherein a young man, called a *philetor*, would abduct an adolescent, called a *parastatheis*, and with the help of the boy's friends, take him to the young man's *andreion*. After giving the boy presents, the *philetor*, the boy, and his friends, would leave the city for two months hunting and feasting in the woods. Upon returning to the city, the *philetor* would give the boy three gifts required by law: military gear, an ox, and a drinking cup. The *parastatheis* would then hold a feast for his friends where he would reveal intimate details about his lover. Thereafter, the boy received special honours, assuming the choice position in dances and races, and wearing distinctive clothes. After reaching manhood, he would be known as a *kleinos*, or 'famous one.' A *parastatheis* would thus be equivalent in age grade to an *apodromos* during his period as a *skotios*, while a *kleinos* would be equivalent to a *dromeus*.

Bethe was the first scholar to explain this passage as a form of ritualized homosexual behaviour associated with rites of passage (Bethe 1907, 438). Later Jeanmaire hypothesized that it documented a social system by which an aristocratic warrior elite was perpetuated through recruitment from the general citizenry, his so-called 'society of *kleinoi*' (Jeanmaire 1939, 450–5). Since Jeanmaire, nearly all scholars have accepted the interpretation of this passage as a puberty initiation ritual.¹¹ What has not been emphasized in these discussions is its tripartite ritual structure. The abduction is clearly a rite of separation; the two months secluded hunting and feasting in the woods would be the rites of transition; the return to the city, the giving of gifts by the *philetor*, and the banquet offered by the *parastatheis* would be the rites of incorporation.

Particularly relevant to the present study is the question of the antiquity of these rites. Since Ephoros describes them as a *nomimon*, or custom, they surely predate the fourth century BC. While Jeanmaire believed that they antedated the Dorian arrival on Crete (Jeanmaire 1939, 422, 425), most scholars regard them as essentially Dorian.¹² In a previous article, the present author proposed however, that the passage quoted by Strabo describes an initiation rite which was actually Minoan in origin.

THE MINOAN RITES OF PASSAGE

The evidence for its Minoan heritage derives from the present author's iconographic interpretation of the Chieftain Cup and a comparative examination of male hairstyles and physiognomy in Minoan and Theran art (Koehl 1986, 99–110). The latter investigation revealed a pattern of distinctive hairstyles which corresponded to the various stages of male maturation.¹³ It is clear that Minoan and Theran artists rendered the anatomical changes which occur naturally during the male ageing process in an intelligible, at times exaggerated, manner.¹⁴ As already mentioned, rituals involving hair are characteristic of societies which practice age grade initiations. Haircutting rituals were also performed at Classical Greek festivals, especially those concerned with young men coming of age and girls about to marry.¹⁵ It was therefore proposed that Minoan and Theran male societies were separated into age grades, not unlike those of the historical period, discussed above (Koehl 1986, 103). Furthermore, the imagery on the cup was interpreted in light of the passage by Ephoros, as a depiction of the rites of incorporation for a Minoan *parastatheis* (Koehl 1986, 104–07; discussed further below).

The Palaikastro kouros and the male figures painted on the walls of Xeste 3, room 3, at Akrotiri now allow for a more complete understanding of male age grades and their characteristic hairstyles than was first suggested in 1986. A new sequence of hairstyles and their equivalent age grades is proposed below (see FIG. 11.1). Again, evidence from both Crete and Thera is taken into account. Prior to the discovery of the kouros, two hair styles were known to be used in common for the same two age grades.¹⁶ Since the kouros now provides

11 E.g. Brelich 1969, 35, 84 f., 120 ff.; Calame 1977, I, 421–7; Bremmer 1980, 283–7; Buffière 1980, 52–63; Patzer 1982, 72–84; Sergent 1984, 17 ff.; 1986, 380 ff.

12 E.g. Bremmer 1980, 283; Buffière 1980, 52–3; Patzer 1982, 73; for possible Indo-European antecedents, see Sergent 1984, 26–55; also Sergent 1986, 402, 548 ff.

13 Koehl 1986, 100–03, fig. 1; for female figures from Thera, see Davis 1986, 399–406.

14 See also Withee 1992, 336; Morgan 1997, 39–40; discussed further below.

15 E.g. Eitrem 1915, 395–6; Nilsson 1941, 126, 143–38, 221, 356, 464; Willetts 1962, 81; Cole 1984, 234–6; Vidal-Naquet 1986, 109–17; E. Harrison 1988, 247–54.

16 See below, stages II.b and II.c; also Morgan 1988, 198, n. 95; Morgan 1997, 39. The present study does not include the evidence from bronze and terracotta figurines. These will be taken into account by the present author in a forthcoming monograph on Cretan Bronze Age social institutions. Preliminary investigations indicate, however, that the hairstyles depicted on these figurines are mostly comparable to those seen on the frescoes, ivory figurines, seals and relief stone vases. For bronzes, see now Verlinden 1984, 93–5, and Sapouna-Sakellari 1995, 145–7.

evidence for a third (see below, stage *II.a*), it is not unreasonable to expect that the others were also the same.

The male figure appears in Aegean art depicted in all three phases of maturation: childhood, youth, and adulthood. Based on hairstyles and anatomical renderings three subsidiary stages can be recognized within each phase, giving a total of nine stages, each with its own characteristic hairstyle. As will be proposed below, the ritual sequence which determined the change from one hairstyle to the next corresponds closely with the tripartite structure for rites of passage first identified by Gennep.

An outline of the sequence of male hairstyles is presented here with each hairstyle briefly described; comments and discussion follow. A representative example of each hairstyle is illustrated in FIG. 11.1. Reference is also made to the best preserved and most conveniently illustrated examples (for other examples, see illustrations for Chapters 8–9 above).

I. Childhood

- a. Scalp shaved: ivory figurines, Palaikastro (*PKU* pl. 27).
- b. Scalp shaved around short looping back lock, small front lock: yellow boy, Xeste 3, Akrotiri (Doulmas 1992, fig. 112).
- c. Scalp shaved around long looping back and long side lock, full front and top locks: Boxing Boys, House Beta, Akrotiri (Doulmas 1992, figs. 79–81).

II. Youth

- a. Scalp shaved leaving short front and top locks: Kouros, Palaikastro (PLATES 16, 17 *d*), Fisher Boys, West House, Akrotiri (Doulmas 1992, figs. 22–3), tall boy with cloth, Xeste 3, Akrotiri (Doulmas 1992, fig. 113).
- b. Top knot (or lock) with short hair in front, sides (possibly shaved), and back (possibly shaved): shorter figure on Chieftain Cup, Agia Triada (Marinatos and Hirmer 1976, pls. 100, 102 left); boy with cup, Xeste 3, Akrotiri (Doulmas 1992, figs. 111, 115).
- c. Waist-length back, side and temple locks; full front locks; short top locks: taller figure on Chieftain Cup, Agia Triada (Marinatos and Hirmer 1976, pls. 100, 102 right); slightly simplified on Boxer Rhyton, Agia Triada (Marinatos and Hirmer 1976, pls. 106–07).

III. Adulthood

- a. Top knot, short tapering side lock, short hair in front (back missing): seated figure, Xeste 3, Akrotiri (Doulmas 1992, fig. 114).
- b. Goatee, longer hair in front, back hair to nape of neck: 'chanting priest' seal, Knossos (*CMS* II.3, no. 13), 'priest' seal with animal heads, 'Anapolis' (*CMS* II.3, no. 196).

- c. Full beard, full front locks, shoulder-length back locks: seal with 'priest's' head (*CMS* IX, no. 6D, b); seal with 'priest', Malia (*CMS* II.3, no. 147); perhaps robed figure of Harvester Rhyton, Agia Triada who also has short top locks (Marinatos and Hirmer 1976, pl. 103).

Comments on the Sequence of Hairstyles and Age Grades

Before a reconstruction of Aegean tonsure rituals in Aegean age grade initiations is suggested, certain questions raised by the sequence need further explanation. In her article on youth and ageing in the Thera frescoes, Davis thought that the Fisher Boys were younger than the Boxing Boys, reasoning that the short locks of the former would grow into the waist-length locks of the latter.¹⁷

Doulmas considers the Boxing Boys the youngest children portrayed on the Thera frescoes, while the two boys depicted together on the Xeste 3 paintings (Doulmas 1992, figs. 112–13) and the Fisher Boys would belong to the next age grade, since they seem to have identical haircuts (Doulmas 1987, 155–6; 1997, 2). Their hairstyles are not, however, the same. The hair lock on the small Xeste 3 boy begins below the crown and loops at the back (Doulmas 1992, fig. 112), like the Boxing Boys', whereas the top lock of the tall boy begins at the crown and continues to the back (Doulmas 1992, fig. 113), like the Fisher Boys'. Unfortunately as the front of the tall boy's head is missing, it is impossible to know whether he also had a front lock.

Morgan prefers to group the small boy of Xeste 3 with the Boxing Boys, although she believes that the yellow skin tone of the former makes him younger (Morgan 1997, 39–40). His youth may also be understood from his significantly shorter stature and by the blue stroke painted in the white of his eye, an artistic device which Davis interprets as signifying youth (Davis 1986, 401). Morgan is unsure, however, where the tall boy from Xeste 3 and the Fisher Boys fit into the sequence of age grades (Morgan 1997, 40). Withee, like the present author, believes that the more muscular bodies of the Fisher Boys indicates they are older than the Boxing Boys (Withee 1992).

The last group, comprised of men in maturity, is the most difficult to document. At Thera, only the seated male from Xeste 3 seems to evince indications of a relatively advanced age, as witnessed by the slight paunch of his belly and the red strokes in the whites of his eyes.¹⁸ The most reliable evidence for the appearance of the mature male figure in Minoan art is comprised of a

17 Davis 1986, 399–401. In discussing this question, Davis has now changed her view to that of the present author's (personal communication).

18 Doulmas 1997, 2; 1992, fig. 114; on red strokes as a sign of 'old' age, see Davis 1986, 404.

CHILDHOOD (I)



a



b



c

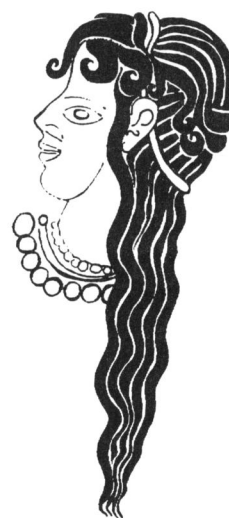
YOUTH (II)



a



b



c

ADULTHOOD (III)



a



b



c

Fig. 11.1. Sequence of Minoan and Theran male hairstyles by age grade (not to scale). Drawing by R. Porter, after R. Koehl.

(I.a) Ivory figurine, child, Palaikastro (after PKU pl. 27); (I.b) wall painting, yellow boy, Xeste 3, Akrotiri (after Doulas 1992, fig. 112); (I.c) wall painting, Boxing Boy, Building Beta, Akrotiri (after Doulas 1992, fig. 80); (II.a) wall painting, Fishing Boy, West House, Akrotiri (after Doulas 1992, fig. 114); (II.b) relief stone vase, shorter male, Chieftain Cup (after Marinatos and Hirmer 1976, pl. 102 left); (II.c) relief stone vase, taller male, Chieftain Cup (after Marinatos and Hirmer, 1976, pl. 102 right); (III.a) wall painting, seated male, Xeste 3, Akrotiri (after Doulas 1992, fig. 114); (III.b) seal, Knossos, 'chanting priest' (after CMS II.3, no. 13); (III.c) seal, unknown provenance, 'priest's head' (after CMS IX, no. 6D,b).

head-shaped rhyton from Phaistos (Marinatos and Hirmer 1976, pl. 139 lower) and the figures portrayed on a group of seal stones identified by some scholars as priests.¹⁹ Unfortunately neither the goatee of stage *III.b* nor the full beard of stage *III.c* is evident on the robed figure of the Harvester Rhyton as his chin is blocked by the curved stick he carries across his shoulder (Koehl 1995, pl. XIIa; Marinatos and Hirmer 1976, pl. 103).

Male Tonsure Rituals on Crete and Thera

The pattern of Minoan and Thera tonsure rituals reconstructed here is based on cycles of shaving and/or cutting and growing. Thus the hair is cut in a ritual of separation in stage *a*. Transitional phases, stage *b*, are periods of hair growth. The hair then reaches its maximum length in the incorporative stage, *c*, at the end of which it is cut and the cycle begins again.

Childhood (I): The completely shaved scalps of the smallest children (*I.a*) may represent a tonsure ritual in which the first tufts of birth hair were shaved, perhaps when the child was old enough to survive without his mother (cf. Herdt 1984, 297–8). This initial shaving would thus symbolize a separation from the mother. At some point during childhood (*I.b*), perhaps soon after the initial shaving, a front and looping back lock were grown, while the rest of the scalp continued to be shaved. By the end of childhood (*I.c*), all four locks would have reached their maximum length.

Youth (II): Perhaps at the appearance of the first signs of puberty a child ‘in the bloom of youth’ was given a severe haircut for entry into the next age grade. The side and back locks were shaved, while the front and top locks were cut short (*II.a*). The hair-style of the Palaikastro kouros is the most elaborate known from this stage. Here, the scalp was shaved, leaving a row of hair down the middle. The hair may then have been divided into locks which were twisted to meet tip to tip. When the top locks grew, they may have been made into the top knots of stage *II.b* youths. During this stage, the scalp was also left to grow, although it may still have been shaved low at the sides, as seen on the boy holding the cup from Xeste 3 (Doulas 1992, fig. 111). By the time that the back, side, and temple locks grew to waist-length tresses the youth would have reached his prime (*II.c*). Interestingly, it seems that the top knot was opened, although the locks were kept short (Koehl 1986, 103).

Adulthood (III): Upon entry into adulthood the hair was cut once again. The back locks were cut above the neck, the top locks were again drawn up into a top knot, and the long side locks were cut above the ear, leaving a tapering lock to hang in front of the ear (*III.a*). Unfortunately, the only extant representation of this stage, the seated man from Xeste 3, has considerable damage at the forehead (Doulas 1992, fig. 114). During the

middle phase of adulthood the front hairs were grown into bangs over the forehead, the side lock was combed back, the back hairs were grown to the nape of the neck, and a goatee was grown under the chin (*III.b*). In the last stage, the forehead bangs were fashioned into locks, the back and side hairs reached the shoulder, and the goatee may have grown to a full beard (*III.c*) (cf. *CMS* II.3, 147). The robed figure on the Harvester Rhyton also has the short top locks (Koehl 1986, 103; Marinatos and Hirmer 1976, pl. 103).

Images of Initiation in Minoan and Thera Art

N. Marinatos has correctly observed that men and women are rarely shown intermingling in Minoan and Thera art (Marinatos 1987, 23–34; 1995, 577–85). She explains this phenomenon as a reflection of the different roles played by each in the performance of religious ritual (Marinatos 1987; 1995, 584). Yet, it is on the gold rings, perhaps the least ambiguous depictions of religious ritual in Aegean art, that the sexes most often appear together (Marinatos 1993, figs. 178, 187–9). However, gender segregation, often a concomitant of societies which practise age grade initiations, does seem apparent on Thera and Crete from a wide range of figural representations. Particularly notable are the Minoan relief carved stone vases: all sixty-two of the human figures preserved on the vases and fragments are male (*MSV* 1969, 174–81, esp. 178, n. 2).

The Chieftain Cup

As noted above, the scene carved on the Chieftain Cup has been interpreted as emblematic of the rites of incorporation for an aristocratic youth, similar to those described by Ephoros (Koehl 1986, 104–07). The scene may represent a *philetor* having just presented his *parastatheis* with military gear: a sword, perhaps a whip, and three ox skins to be fashioned into ox hide shields (for further discussion of hunter/lovers, see below). The columnar structure behind the young man might represent the *andreion*, where the youth would have offered the oxen for his first feast.

The shape of the Chieftain Cup itself, a low stemmed chalice, may also link these rites with those practised at the rustic outdoor shrine of Hermes and Aphrodite at Kato Symi Viannou. While chalices are rare generally in Minoan Crete (*MSV* 1969, 37), chalices at Symi ‘occur by the thousands...in an endless variety of size and decoration’ (Lebessi and Muhly 1987, 110). However, the importance of the chalice at Symi may not be its only connection with the Chieftain Cup. Other archaeological remains point to Symi as the Bronze Age and post-Bronze Age locale for the two months of hunting

19 Discussed in Koehl 1995, 28–30, pl. XIIb, d, f, g; also Marinatos 1993, figs. 88–93, 95–8.

and feasting secluded in the woods, i.e. the rites of transition described by Ephoros.²⁰ This is partly based on the discovery of abundant faunal remains, cooking pots, and drinking paraphernalia, which the excavators have convincingly interpreted as the remains of feasts (Lebessi and Muhly 1990, esp. 324–8).

Hunter/Lovers

Votives from Symi also commemorate the erotic component of the customs described by Ephoros. Among the earliest is an eighth century BC bronze figurine depicting an ithyphallic helmeted male whose hand rests on that of a shorter ithyphallic helmeted male.²¹ Of the same date is a figurine of an ithyphallic male holding a chalice, the latest manifestation of the shape at Symi (Lebessi and Muhly 1987, fig. 11).

A connection between hunting and eros is further documented at Symi by a series of seventh century BC bronze cut-out plaques which portray youths carrying bows, arrows, and *agrimia* (Lebessi 1985, esp. 236–7). On one now in the Louvre, an elder, bearded male faces a younger, beardless male.²² The younger male holds an *agrimi* across his shoulders while the older male holds his arm under the younger male's arm in a supportive gesture. The older male also places his foot on top of the younger man's foot. Their mutual gaze underscores the intimacy communicated by their gestures.

A pair of Bronze Age hunter/lovers may also be represented on a gold ring, perhaps of Minoan manufacture, which was discovered in a LH IIIA tomb at Pylos.²³ In the centre is an altar in a rocky or mountainous landscape. To one side two males of different heights stand 'saluting' each other; on the other side is an *agrimi*. Eros is manifested by the taller male's ithyphallic state, a detail visible on photographs but omitted on all published drawings.

Another pair may be depicted on a fragmentary serpentine relief carved rhyton from Knossos (*MSV*, pl. 488c). A youth, identified by his belted codpiece, drags an *agrimi*; below is a boar's tusk helmet with an *agrimi* horn crest, which probably was worn by an elder male. Warren's interpretation of the scene as a 'moment in a raid for livestock' is unlikely in view of the *agrimi*'s natural mountainous habitat (Warren 1979, 126, fig. 4).

The Wall Paintings of Xeste 3 and Marriage

In the rites of passage discussed above, the initiate is a youth in the middle stage, *II.b*. Hairstyle places the Palaikastro kouros, however, in stage *II.a*, 'the bloom of youth.' While precise parallels for his hairstyle are unknown, the hair of the tall boy holding the cloth from Xeste 3 provides a fair comparison (see outline, above). Indeed, when viewed in profile, the locks of the kouros have an undulating contour, not unlike those of the Xeste 3 boy.

The poses of both figures are also comparable insofar as both emphasize the chest and shoulders. The

kouros stands in a familiar pose, with the fists placed on or below the pectorals (see also Chapters 8–9 above). The tall boy from Xeste 3 is shown in a twisted perspective, with his upper torso frontal and his legs in profile; his right arm is bent across his body, thereby obscuring the abdominal twist (Doumas 1992, fig. 113). By contrast, the other two young males are rendered in profile, a pose which in fact de-emphasizes the breadth of the torso (*ibid.*, 1992, figs. 109, 111, 112). The torso of the seated adult male is also hidden, as his right shoulder is brought forward, thereby compressing the upper body (*ibid.*, 1992, fig. 110). The tall boy may be distinguished further from the others by the objects they carry. While the tall boy holds one or more pieces of cloth, the others carry vessels: a bowl (or incense burner [Doumas 1987, 156]), cup, and a jug.

Nearly every scholar who has discussed the Xeste 3 paintings concludes that they document an initiation, primarily on account of the variety of age grades depicted. Marinatos interprets them as a female coming of age initiation (Marinatos 1984, 61–84; 1985, 222–8; 1987, 31–2; 1993, 203–11). Previously she proposed that the girl with the wounded foot impersonated the goddess painted directly above her (Marinatos 1984, 84; 1985, 228). Marinatos later modified that view and identified the girl as the main initiate who was literally wounded in an initiation ritual held during a festival of the goddess.²⁴ Knowledge of female blood, either from menstruation or childbirth, would be revealed at this time (Marinatos 1993, 207). For Marinatos, the men in the Xeste 3 paintings are 'marginal participants,' carrying offerings to the adyton (Marinatos 1984, 61) or attending to the women, even cleaning the initiate's bloodied foot (Marinatos 1993, 210).

Doumas thinks that Xeste 3 was used for separate male and female initiation rites (Doumas 1987, 154–8; 1992, 128–30). While uncertain of their precise nature, he proposes that one of the naked men will be dressed during a coming of age ceremony conducted under the supervision of the eldest male (Doumas 1987, 157–8; 1992, 130). Morgan sees both male and female puberty initiation rites here, noting the similarity in the syntac-

20 Koehl 1986, 108; also Lebessi 1985, 188, 198, 237–7; on continuity of ritual practice at Kato Symi, see Lebessi and Muhly 1990, 327–8, 336.

21 Lebessi 1972, pl. 188d (= Lebessi 1976, fig. 4).

22 Koehl 1986, 107–08, nos. 50–1, pl. 7b; Lebessi 1985, 52–3, pl. 5; Hampe and Simon 1981, 113–14, 292, fig. 169.

23 *CMS* I, no. 292; Blegen *et al.* 1973, 105, 113, pl. 192. 9a, 9b. I am grateful to E. Davis for first bringing this ring to my attention.

24 Marinatos 1993, 206–09; on the identity of the female figure as a goddess, see e.g. Marinatos 1984, 61; 1985, 224; Davis 1986, 402; Doumas 1992, 130–1, figs. 122, 125–6; Marinatos 1993, 141, 151.

tic arrangement of the male and female figures (Morgan 1997, 41).

Davis was the first scholar to propose that these frescoes alluded to marriage (Davis 1986, 402–03). According to Davis, ‘the central figure, the young woman with the wound, seems to be in the process of losing her last childhood lock as well, the backlock’ (*ibid.*, 1986, 402). She interprets the wounded foot as a symbolic reference to the shedding of hymenal blood (*ibid.*, 1986, 402–03). Gesell observes her dishevelled condition: the hairpin slipping, thereby causing her ‘backlock’ to come loose; the skirt straps coming undone (Gesell 1997, 11). Gesell, however, finds it difficult to decide whether the frescoes refer to puberty or marriage rites (*ibid.*, 12), a dilemma shared by Niemeier (1992, 99).

Still, the general consensus among scholars points to the wounded girl as the female protagonist/initiate. If there is an equivalent male, he is less obvious. Morgan stresses directionality as a key to identifying protagonists in these paintings, the centrally placed figures upon whom the surrounding figures converge: the goddess, wounded girl, and the eldest male (Morgan 1997, 41–2). While there is no reason to question the importance of the goddess or the wounded girl, it is difficult to imagine that the male—with his stooped posture, sagging belly, and simple hairstyle and garment—functioned on any level of equivalence to either female. Karageorghis thought he might be a priest or an officiant in a hair-cutting ritual (Karageorghis 1990, 69 ff). If these wall paintings indeed relate to initiation rites, his relatively advanced age may help to identify him as an initiator, rather than an initiate (cf. Eliade 1958, 39). Ephoros mentions that the initiator of the youths on Crete was the father of the leading boy of the *agela* (Strabo 10.4.20).

Marriage in historical Crete also functioned as a component in the cycle of age grade initiations. Ephoros states that all those who were selected out of the *agela* were forced to marry at the same time (Strabo 10.4.82). He furthermore states that the boys did not take their wives home at first, but only when they were mature enough to manage their households (*ibid.*). Until then, the men may have lived in the *andreion*, or men’s house (Jeanmaire 1939, 423; Willetts 1955, 18–22).

Investigations of Aegean marriage rituals have previously focused on the very few scenes which portray men and women interacting.²⁵ The most relevant are a gold ring from Tiryns (CMS I, no. 180), and an electrum ring from Mycenae (CMS I, no. 101; Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985, 191, pl. 82 [297]). Säflund interprets the Tiryns ring as a *hieros gamos*, or sacred marriage, composed of three sequential vignettes: a ship arrives at a harbour with the bridegroom standing at the prow; the bridegroom is greeted on shore by his bride; the bride and bridegroom enter their house (Säflund 1981, 198–200). However, the hand-raising gesture made by the couple on the shore is more likely to denote departure; likewise the gesture made by the couple in the

doorway: the female touches the male’s elbow while he raises his hand toward her shoulder. Rather than depicting a sequential narrative, it is more likely that one moment is portrayed, with two couples parting as the crew waits on board.

The ring from Mycenae is perhaps the most persuasive depiction of the sacred marriage in Aegean art. What is not certain is whether the ring reflects only Mycenaean beliefs or beliefs which the Mycenaeans shared with, and perhaps borrowed from, the Minoans. However, the latter is more likely, as may be deduced from the worship of a youthful Zeus on Crete (for further discussion, see Chapter 13 below).

The divinity of the seated female is suggested by her towering scale, while the divinity of the male may be inferred from his grasping of her wrist. Their divine status might also be inferred from the matching wrist and ankle bracelets worn by both (PM III, 464). If this scene alludes to marriage, it would be that of a young god with a mature goddess, a coupling familiar from Near Eastern and Classical Greek mythology, e.g. Inanna/Dumuzi, Ishtar (Astarte)/Tammuz, Aphrodite/Adonis, Hippolytos/Artemis. In these myths, the protagonists are the ‘great’ fertility goddess and her young consort, an annually dying fertility god (e.g. Willetts 1962, 199–220; West 1965, 154–9; Jacobsen 1976, 32–47; Burkert 1979, 120). The youth of this god is apparent not only from his small stature, but also from his hairstyle which appears to be composed of a short braid worn down the centre of the head. Indeed, it is the hairstyle of the Kouros, stage II.a.

Evans was ambivalent about the significance of the ring. He identified the figures as a divine pair, acknowledging their age difference and the intimacy implied by the wrist-holding gesture and the short dress of the goddess (PM III, 463–4). Nonetheless for Evans, the pair signified ‘rather the relationship of a son to a mother than of a husband to a wife or mistress’ (PM III, 464).

Nilsson was also ambivalent about the *hieros gamos*. While he thought it likely that the Minoans believed in a ‘Great Goddess’ and her youthful dying consort (Nilsson 1950, 403–04), for him the ring’s *sacra conversazione* was more secular than religious in tone, although what he means by that is not clear (*ibid.*, 404). When discussing the *hieros gamos* festival at Gortyn, Nilsson proposed that the spouse of the goddess was the youthful Zeus Velchanos, concluding that the ‘peculiar character of the youthful Zeus and his associations make it certain that he is of Minoan origin’ (*ibid.*, 552, 555). Yet for Nilsson, the ‘*hieros gamos*’ itself was probably not Minoan (*ibid.*, 555).

25 Marinatos 1987, 31–2; 1995, 583. Gesell 1980, 197–204 (n. 204) and Säflund 1981, 198–200, have entertained the idea that the miniature fresco from the West House at Akrotiri depicts a ‘sacred marriage’.

Marinatos accepts the Mycenae ring as a portrayal of a sacred marriage, noting the erotic implications of the wrist-grabbing gesture (Marinatos 1993, 190). Though for her, the magnitude of the female does not denote her greater age so much as underscore her importance in reproduction (*ibid.*).

While Marinatos may be correct in emphasizing the female role over the male in procreation, evidence suggests that the male role in fertility was not only acknowledged but worshipped on Crete. The god addressed in the Palaikastro hymn as the *megistos kouros* is a male youth whose annual return to earth brings 'fertility and prosperity' (West 1965, 157). The *megistos kouros* is exhorted to 'spring up' (θόρε) in the wine-jars, flocks, fields, towns, etc. (*ibid.*, 150–1, translation). The word θορεῖν (θρόσχω) is also used for gods being born, impregnation, and semen (*ibid.*, 157–8). Indeed, West has speculated that a sexual act may have played a part in fertility rituals connected with this hymn (*ibid.*, 158). If the Palaikastro kouros represents the Minoan equivalent of the *megistos kouros*, then he must surely be identified as the youthful, annually dying divine consort of the 'great goddess' in the Minoan sacred marriage, like the short-haired *megistos kouros* portrayed on the Mycenae ring.

Archaeological and mythological evidence appear to converge on the question of the sacred marriage with regard to the dominant gender in the asymmetrically age-ranked divine couple. In Classical mythology, the divine couple in each successive generation of the sacred marriage, be it Ge and Uranus, Rhea and Kronos, or Hera and Zeus, was composed of an elder female and younger male.

A similar iconographic interpretation should also obtain for a MM I(?) ivory hemi-cylinder seal in Oxford, Ashmolean Museum number 1938.790. Although Kenna regarded it as a forgery, Gill has argued forcefully in favour of its authenticity, and has plausibly identified it with a seal excavated at Knossos and described by MacKenzie in the Daybook of the Knossos Excavations for 1903 (Kenna 1960, 1154; Gill 1967). On one side the seal depicts a long-haired woman wearing a mid-calf length flounced dress, who grasps the wrist or hand of a naked facing male. The relative youth of this male seems apparent from his short-cropped or shaved hair, while the older age of the female is suggested by her long tresses. Evans regarded the seal as a depiction of a marriage but, while pointing to the Near Eastern parallels for the female's garment, did not take account of the difference in their ages (*PM I*, 187–98). Yet the twisted pose of the male, which emphasises his frontal chest, and the short dagger worn at his waist, clearly associate him iconographically with the age grade of the Kouros. That the dagger is for hunting, rather than military use, may be inferred from the presence of a dog, depicted just below the two figures. Indeed, a hunting scene is clearly depicted on the seal's reverse

side. In the middle, the same youth, or another with the same hairstyle, kneels while holding a bow and takes aim at an *agrimi*. A tree placed between the youth and the *agrimi* alludes to its outdoor setting; a dog stands behind the youth.

If, as stated in the introduction, the Palaikastro Kouros portrays a divinity and the terracotta figurines with the same pose and hairstyle portray his age grade mortal equivalents, it is fair to conclude that these mortal youths modelled their identities on that of the *megistos kouros*. Furthermore, if their association with the *megistos kouros* was maintained through the performance of rituals which were modelled on the mythological function of the god, it is worth investigating their possible role in Minoan (and Thera) marriage ritual.

Davis and others have surmised that the wall-paintings from the ground floor of Xeste 3 allude to marriage. If it is the standard Thera marriage, rather than a singular ceremonial occasion, evidence suggests two possible models for reconstructing the ritual. Ephoros describes a group marriage ceremony, celebrated upon graduation from the herd. Iconographic evidence and mythological parallels imply a belief in a sacred marriage.

The most likely candidate for a bride in the Xeste 3 paintings is surely the girl with the wounded foot. Indeed, Rehak has recently compared her skirt, apparently made from vertical straps of fabric, to the European 'string skirt', a type of see-through garment, which 'advertises sexual maturity' (Rehak 1999, 194). As already discussed, the bridegroom is unlikely to have been the elder male. Once he is eliminated, the remaining male and female figures appear to connect as three couples: the yellow child and the girl with the veil; the tall boy and the wounded girl; the boy holding the cup and the girl holding the necklace. If the wounded girl is the bride, then the tall boy must be the bridegroom. It is he who was linked to the statue of the *megistos kouros* from Palaikastro via hairstyle and pose. Indeed, his physique, lively gait, and prominent penis exude youthful virility.

Obviously, there is a notable difference in age between the putative bride and bridegroom; likewise the other two couples. In all three the female is one age grade or more ahead of the male. However, as noted above, iconographic and mythological evidence at least for the sacred marriage indicate that it was composed of a female dominated, asymmetrically age-ranked couple. Thus, the bridegroom belongs to stage *II.a*, whereas the girl's hairstyle makes her equivalent in age to stage *II.c* (Davis 1986, 402). After having cut the last locks of girlhood, she and the girl holding the necklace 'are now nubile, at the height of their youthful beauty' (*ibid.*). As Davis states, 'the new rite of passage implied by their haircutting was most likely one related to marriage, the most important event in the life of a young person after the onset of puberty' (*ibid.*). If the young woman is not

interpreted literally as a girl with a wounded foot, then the open skirt, dishevelled back hairlock, and bloodied foot may be understood as emblematic references to sex.

Thus the presence of female dominated, asymmetrical age-ranked couples on these paintings may mean that if they indeed allude to an actual marriage ritual, it was apparently patterned on the *hieros gamos*. For Marinatos, the idea of the *hieros gamos* with a predominant female 'subconsciously... may even be revealing a biological truth: the female must choose a powerful and young mate because it is she who has the greatest investment in the offspring; it is she who is supreme in the chain of life' (Marinatos 1993, 192). That an Aegean marriage ritual may have been modelled on a religious belief, or *vice versa*, should not surprise. It is, after all, the Xeste 3 paintings which best illustrate how the natural and supernatural worlds could intersect in Aegean religion. The more mature bride thus represents the 'great goddess', like the one painted directly above her, while the youth would be the local *megistos kouros*.

The implications of this marriage ritual are significant, particularly regarding the social structure of the Aegean family. If, as is being proposed here, the Minoan and Theran marriage ritual was modelled on the *hieros gamos*, the bride would have been significantly older than the bridegroom. Furthermore, it is suggested that this bridegroom was a youth who, based on his age as surmised from pose and hairstyle, has just entered puberty. Marriage may thus have formed the ritual of incorporation for youths of stage *II.a*, who then joined an *agela*. Odd as this sequence may seem, it is consistent with the biological explanation for the sacred marriage suggested by Marinatos (1993, 192), and with the lack of iconographic evidence for the nuclear family in the Minoan/Theran world. As noted above, the first ini-

tiation for a male may have occurred when he was separated from his mother, perhaps to spend more time in the company of men as in historical Crete. Interestingly, the only male and female shown together on the miniature fresco from the West House at Akrotiri is the large woman with the small boy in the 'arrival' town (Doulas 1992, fig. 79; Televantou 1994, pl. 67). The child's bushy hair and small frame may reveal his pre-initiatory state; thus he is still with his mother (Marinatos 1987, 28; 1995, 583). If family scenes do not exist in LMI/LCI art, the possibility that the nuclear family did not comprise the basic social unit in Minoan Crete and Thera must be given serious consideration and alternative social structures investigated.

The Xeste 3 paintings do not resolve the question of group marriages. If they existed, one might expect more people from the same age grade to have been represented. However, if the paintings are understood as emblematic narratives, as defined by Holliday (1993, xv), rather than literal depictions of Theran ritual life, they might be understood to portray a paradigmatic marriage. Certainly, the rooms of Xeste 3 could have accommodated small groups of people (Marinatos 1993, 203). With the boys and young women in separate rooms, couples could meet in front of the lustral basin and descend to consummate their union (FIG. 11.2, Room 3). The *polythyra* offered both privacy for and accessibility to the lustral basin (FIG. 11.2, Room 3a). Marinatos has drawn attention to the lamps discovered there, and to the atmosphere they would have created (Marinatos 1984, 84). The vessels held by the other Xeste 3 males could have had any number of uses in the context of sex, while the boy might have worn his cloth afterward, wrapped in a breechcloth or kilt (Rehak 1996, 39–41).

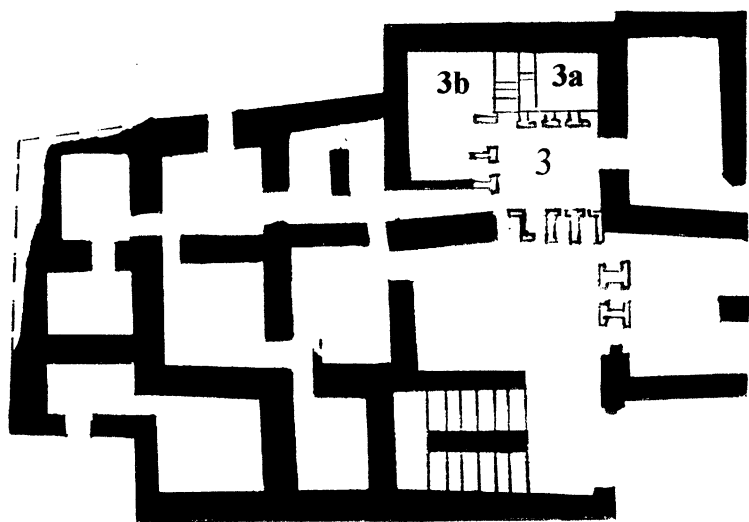


Fig. 11.2. Floor plan of Xeste 3, Akrotiri (after Marinatos 1984, fig. 51).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Palaikastro Kouros and the paintings in Xeste 3 show how the natural and supernatural worlds were perceived to co-exist in Minoan and Theran culture. This congruence of spheres is most readily apparent in the rituals relating to rites of passage. Anthropological literature records that age grade rites of passage normally comprise numerous rituals, most of which would leave no traces in the archaeological record. Thus the figural representations from Crete and Thera may reveal only small components of more complex ritual systems. However, based on the preceding discussions it may be possible to begin identifying some of the ritual elements in the cycle of male age grade initiations.

The first rite of passage for a young child in stage *I.a* was probably a rite of separation, of which the shaving of the first tufts of childhood is its only detectable ritual. A transitional period, *I.b*, has been inferred from the change in hairstyle, although there is presently no evidence for rituals to associate with it. The earliest initiatory stage whose rituals may be alluded to in Aegean art is stage *I.c*, the Boxing Boys from Beta 1, Akrotiri (Doulas 1987, 157; 1992, figs. 79–81). The initiate here may be the left-hand Boxing Boy. His thicker and longer hair locks may mean that he is slightly older, while his jewellery may indicate his higher status. Yet it is he who apparently receives the blow, to judge from the tilt of his head—note how the back lock swings forward—and his upward rolling eye (*ibid*, figs. 78, 80–1; *contra* Marinatos 1993, 212). Although this may refer to a literal defeat, his semiconscious state might also be interpreted symbolically as a death, to mark his departure from childhood.²⁶ The story of Glaukos, the Cretan prince who died as a child and was reborn as a youth, would be its mythological analogue (Willets 1959, 21–8, esp. 25–8; 1962, 62–6; Callaghan 1979, 24–6). It is now possible to associate three initiation rituals for a youth in stage *II.a*. Probably at the onset of puberty, the biological indicator of childhood's end and the beginning of youth, the locks were cut in a rite of separation. The youth may now have entered a herd, although entry may have been predicated on his completion of the rites of transition. These rites may be alluded to in the paintings of the Fisher Boys from the West House (Doulas 1987, 157; 1992, figs. 18–23; Marinatos 1993, 216–17; Mylona 1997, 42). Since there is presently no faunal evidence at Akrotiri for the two fish they are depicted holding, the dolphin and tunny, it may be surmised that fishing them, especially so large a catch, would have presented a formidable ordeal for a young boy (Mylona 1997, 44–5). These are open water, fast swimming fish, and catching them might even have entailed building a small raft (Economidis 1997, 16; Mylona 1997, 45). Upon returning from such a fishing expedition, the boy might have celebrated rites of incorporation, the marriage ceremony discussed already.

The rites of separation, transition, and incorporation for next age grade, *II.b*, were discussed above, in

the context of the Hunter/Lovers and the Chieftain Cup. What the evidence does not yet reveal is whether these rustic erotic initiation rites were celebrated by a hereditary aristocracy, the general citizen body, or specially selected individuals.

The length of time an individual remained in the incorporative stage of *II.b* may have corresponded to the amount of time it took to grow the hair to the waist length tresses of stage *II.c*. It may be useful to recall that youths in Arkadia remained as 'wolves' for nine years.

At present the most likely evidence for stage *II.c* initiation rituals are the depictions on the Boxer Rhyton from Agia Triada (Marinatos and Hirmer 1976, pls. 106–07; Säflund 1987, 212–14). The figures of victorious athletes may well signify the successful performance of initiatory ordeals (Marinatos 1993, 212–14). However, images of defeated athletes actually appear even more frequently on the vase. Besides the fallen pugilists of the lower two registers, the only extant bull-leaper, on the second register from the top, is depicted impaled on the bull's horn. On the top register, a figure has been restored crouching in an anatomically impossible position. The two lower legs which are preserved must belong to two individuals, probably a victor standing over another fallen athlete. If the images on this rhyton relate to initiation rituals, it is difficult to know whether they allude to ordeals of incorporation or transition, as emblemized by the victors, or rites of separation, as emblemized by the defeated. Rites of separation here would relate to the departure from youth, just as the rites of separation from childhood may have been emblemized by the defeated Boxing Boy.

Another tonsure ritual has been posited here as a separation rite for entry into adulthood, stage *III.a*. Unfortunately, no other evidence exists which may be associated with rites of passage for stage *III*. Most images of mature men portray them alone and inactive, only holding attributes such as axes. The Harvester Rhyton is an exception, although it is difficult to see the mature male here as the initiate, since all of the other figures are youths. Perhaps he is their leader-initiator (cf. Strabo 10.4.20). If these men are priests, as discussed above, their initiation rituals may have been conducted in secret and therefore never represented in art.

It is thus likely that there will always be gaps in our knowledge, especially of secret initiation rituals. Furthermore, the extent to which the divine world was reflected in these rituals will never be known. However, at present it may be fair to conclude that tonsure rituals played a significant role in all stages of male initiations on Crete and Thera. In this context it is interest-

26 I owe this suggestion to S. Manolakis.

ing to note that Watrous has identified the numerous LM I razors and tweezers discovered in the Psychro Cave as votive offerings left to commemorate these rituals (Watrous 1996, 50, 89–91). Thus new interpretations of familiar artefacts and new discoveries like that of the Palaikastro kouros and the wall paintings from Akrotiri should engender optimism for continued progress in our understanding of Aegean Bronze Age rites of passage.

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