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JEWELLERY, ADORNMENT AND TEXTILES IN THE AEGEAN BRONZE AGE

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REMARKS ON FEMALE ATTIRE OF MINOAN AND MYCENAEAN CLAY FIGURES

1. Our knowledge of Aegean anthropomorphic plastic art has been recently improved thanks to a good number of updated studies.¹ Matters related to Minoan figures and figurines have been in particular discussed systematically by G. Rethemiotakis, whose work forms the basis for a comparative approach to the subject from a comprehensive long-time perspective.²

While many points have been grasped and thoroughly illuminated, some aspects remain nevertheless uncertain and do not find shared explanations in the scholarly debate.

The relationship between Minoan and Mycenaean components in Late- and Postpalatial times figures among the themes not completely clarified yet.

The inception of a Mainland production of figurines coinciding with the Mycenaean-Minoan encounter in LM II-III A Knossos seems to justify the opinions of some scholars claiming a substantial dependence of the well-known Mycenaean T-, Phi- and Psi-figurines on patterns codified in the previous Minoan tradition, all the more so as the development of figurines according to the "Mycenaean" stylistic language is attested by some evidence in LM Crete as well.³ By contrast, the large wheel-made figures, which in the LH III world are considered as markers of cult places, are so far not attested in Crete and seem therefore to be characteristic of an independent Mainland development.⁴ The exclusive distribution of these items, involving in particular Mycenaean centres such as Mycenae, Tiryns and Midea, has influenced their explanation as instruments of palatial control in the field of religion.⁵

As for Crete, it is well-known that a well-rooted tradition of figurines existed in the island since the proto-palatial period: recent studies have provided evidence demonstrating a red thread of continuity between the earlier productions and the later ones dating to the end of the Bronze Age by emphasizing a substantial number of products which can be considered transitional in style – namely intermediary between the naturalistic Minoan and the stylized Mycenaean components

- 1 For literature on Aegean figurines and figures see *infra* n. 2, 3, 4 and E. BORGNA, "Osservazioni su forme e luoghi del culto in età micenea," *ASAtene* 87 (2009-2010) 169-190.
- 2 G. RETHEMIOTAKIS, *Ανθρωπομορφική πηλοπλαστική στην Κρήτη από τη νεοανακτορική έως τη υπομινωική περίοδο* (1998); G. RETHEMIOTAKIS, *Minoan Clay Figures and Figurines. From the Neopalatial to the Subminoan Period* (2001); also G. RETHEMIOTAKIS, "Minoan Clay Figures and Figurines. Manufacturing Techniques," in *TEXNH* 117-122.
- 3 See in particular C. LAVIOSA, "Sull'origine degli idoletti fittili minoici," *ASAtene* 41-42 (1963-64) 7-24; on Mycenaean figurines: E. FRENCH, "The Development of Mycenaean Terracotta Figurines," *BSA* 66 (1971) 101-187; E. FRENCH, "The Figures and Figurines," in C. RENFREW (ed.), *The Archaeology of Cult. The Sanctuary at Phylakopi* (1985) 209-280; see also E. FRENCH, "Mycenaean Figurines: 50 Years on," in C. GALLOU, M. GEORGIADIS and G.M. MUSKETT (eds.), *Dioskouroi. Studies presented to W.G. Cavanagh and C.B. Mee on the Anniversary of their 30-Years Joint Contribution to Aegean Archaeology* (2008) 59-63; A.L. SCHALLIN (ed.), *Encounters with Mycenaean Figures and Figurines. Papers presented to a Seminar at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 17-29 April 2001* (2009); for the Minoan influence on the Mycenaean figurines see already S. MARINATOS, "Τόργωνες και γοργωνεία," *ArchEph* (1927-28) 7ff.; S. ALEXIOU, "Η μινωική θεά μεθ' ὑψωμένων χειρῶν," *KrChron* 12 (1958) 179-299.
- 4 Among the most recent perspectives see, with literature, H.W. CATLING, "A Mycenaean Terracotta Figure from the Menelaion," *BSA* 90 (1995) 183-228; K. DEMAKOPOULOU, "A Mycenaean Terracotta Figure from Midea in the Argolid," in Ph.P. BETANCOURT, V. KARAGEORGHIS, R. LAFFINEUR and W.-D. NIEMEIER (eds.), *MELETEMATA. Studies in Aegean Archaeology presented to Malcolm H. Wiener as he enters his 65th Year*, *Aegaeum* 20 (1999) 197-205; FRENCH (*supra* n. 3); A. MOORE, "The Large Monochrome Terracotta Figures from Mycenae: The Problem of Interpretation," in E.B. FRENCH and K.A. WARDLE (eds.), *Problems in Greek Prehistory, Papers Presented at the Centenary Conference of the British School of Archaeology at Athens, Manchester, April 1986* (1988) 219-228; A.D. MOORE, in A.D. MOORE and W.D. TAYLOR, *The Temple Complex (Well Built Mycenae* 10, 1999) 46-62; E.B. FRENCH, "The Mycenaean Figures," in *POTNIA* 275-276; for further literature see BORGNA (*supra* n. 1).
- 5 J.C. WRIGHT, "The Spatial Configuration of Belief," in S.E. ALCOCK and R. OSBORNE (eds.), *Placing the Gods. Sanctuaries and Sacred Space in Ancient Greece* (1994) 75-76.

– as well as in technology, as such products seem to illustrate a slow and gradual transition from the MM tradition, mostly based on handmade and mixed techniques joining solid and hollow terracotta parts, to the LBA wheel-made standardized manufacturing of hollow figures.⁶

Within such a continuous tradition, however, two points of discontinuity may fuel claims about a Mycenaean influence on the Late Minoan productions.

The first discontinuity is to be framed at the beginning of the Late Palatial phase, when modes and techniques of figurines' manufacturing seem to have been largely converted into the organization of fine painted pottery production, a field where the integration with the Mycenaean component seems to have been particularly intense.⁷ Such a phenomenon, however, has to be evaluated from a wider Mediterranean perspective as it concerns the assimilation of Mycenaean patterns of pottery production and consumption at a large scale. The social contexts of the life-cycle of pottery including social agents and their relationships in the processes of production, distribution and consumption of vessels must be viewed as crucial for understanding interaction dynamics. Ceramic craft organization in the Mycenaean world was probably not strictly centralized and, on the contrary, at least partially based on free individual agency.⁸ This circumstance, while favouring the integration between Mycenaean agents and their interlocutors "abroad", might have affected the modes and scale of production also in other craft-activities, such as the production of figurines, which would have been in the hands of semi-independent, subelite social components, the same which most probably played an important role in the making of a Minoan-Mycenaean identity in Crete. A quick survey of the depositional contexts of figurines and figures in both Late Palatial Crete and the Mainland seems to confirm this assumption, namely that these objects circulated and were deposited mostly within not-official and not-exclusive social contexts. In my view both LM painted figurines and Mycenaean figures do not hint at palatial involvement and served rather to express beliefs and ritual values of peripheral and subelite social components.⁹

The second discontinuity coincides, as is well-known, with the appearance in Postpalatial Crete of the so-called Goddesses with Upraised Arms, namely terracotta figures that distinguish themselves from the previous products for both their larger dimensions and their fabrics and technology, far from the context of fine painted pottery production;¹⁰ due to both their size and their high stylization such figures have been considered as Mycenaean influenced.¹¹

When placed under closer scrutiny, however, these artefacts seem to draw rather heavily on the local tradition for both technological features and the emphasis on the huge tubular stand, which hints at a basic element of the Minoan female clothing, namely the large skirt tight at the waist.¹²

6 For continuity see in particular RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2, 1997; 2001, 119); cf. R.A. HIGGINS, "Terracotta Figurines", in M.R. POPHAM *et al.*, *The Minoan Unexplored Mansion at Knossos* (BSA Suppl. 17) (1984) 197-202.

7 Cf. RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2, 1997) 119: the production of figurines with lustrous slip and firmly applied painted decoration should be referred in particular to a LM II-III A Knossian workshop.

8 On the complex situation and the extreme variability as for patterns of ceramic production see now, with literature, K. SHELTON, "Citadel and Settlement: a Developing Economy at Mycenae, the Case of Petsas House," and M. GALATY, "Wedging Clay: Combining Competing Models of Mycenaean Pottery Industries," in D.J. PULLEN (ed.), *Political Economies of the Aegean Bronze Age, Papers from the Langford Conference, Florida State University, Tallahassee, 22-24 February 2007* (2010).

9 BORGNA (*supra* n. 1).

10 And closer to the production of pithoi and coarse pottery: cf. RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2, 1997) 120; C. GESELL and C. SAUPE, "Methods used in the Construction of Ceramic Objects from the Shrine of the Goddess with Upraised Hands at Kavousi," in *TEXNH* 123-126.

11 The discussion on the Mycenaean component depends in large part upon C. RENFREW, "Questions of Minoan and Mycenaean Cult," in R. HÄGG and N. MARINATOS (eds), *Sanctuaries and Cults in the Aegean Bronze Age. Proceedings of the First International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens (12-13 May 1980)* (1981) 27-33; most recently, with literature, G.C. GESELL, "From Knossos to Kavousi: the Popularizing of the Minoan Palace Goddess," in *XAPIΣ* 131-150; BORGNA (*supra* n. 1) n. 29.

12 Cf. the sequence put forward by HIGGINS (*supra* n. 6) 98.

2. A curious find from the “Casa a ovest del Piazzale I” at Phaistos, an eminent Postpalatial structure to the west of the palace site,¹³ may be useful for filling some voids in the context of the present discussion.

It is a hollow tubular object (Pl. LXXIVa-b), 18cm long and with a diameter ranging from 7.6 to 10.8cm; it is wheel-made with a very fine light yellow fabric, a creamy slip and a lustrous brown paint; broken at both ends, it slightly tapers towards the lower one and presents a huge disc-shaped expansion at the opposite side, where the thin walls present a strongly concave profile and flare out. The object, which is densely decorated by means of a close banding alternating with circumcurrent patterns such as zig-zag and wavy lines, hanging triangles and strokes, comes from the uppermost level of Room 2, a level which can be considered neither close nor homogeneous, though most materials point to a date within an advanced phase of LM IIIC.

After a detailed comparative survey which took into consideration several classes of objects ranging from tubular stands to *rhyta*,¹⁴ I considered rather safe to explain the object as part of a female wheel-made figure, which could have got a height of ca. 35cm originally (Pl. LXXIVc).

The partition by close banding does not fit well the repertoire of pottery decoration and seems rather to hint at a garment, all the more so as single decorative patterns find comparison in obvious representations of decorated textiles, as is the case with the wavy line on the skirt of the right goddess in the well-known fresco of the Mycenae Cult Centre.¹⁵ A rather good piece of comparison for the decorative configuration is possibly represented by the Lady of Phylakopi,¹⁶ whose densely decorated surface probably hints at a textile fabric (Pl. LXXIVd).

In my view, two details help in particular to identify the object as part of a female figure, the one relating to structure and morphology, the other to decoration.

As for the former, the tubular shape provided with a disc-shaped projection may be referred to the stand/skirt of standard Late Minoan figurines and figures according in particular to some exemplars such as a well-known figurine of the Shrine of the Double Axes (Pl. LXXVa), one from Myrsini and even a few Goddesses with Upraised Arms, such as one from Gazi, one from Karphi and the figure no. 2 from Vasiliki Kephala.¹⁷ The stand of such figures is marked

13 On the context see: E. BORGNA, “Il periodo Tardo Minoico IIIB/C: la Casa ad ovest del Piazzale I,” in *I cento anni dello scavo di Festòs, Giornate Lincee, Roma, 13-14 dic. 2000* (2002) 273-298; E. BORGNA, “LM IIIC Pottery at Phaistos: an Attempt to Integrate Typological Analysis with Stratigraphic Investigation,” in S. DEGER-JALKOTZY and M. ZAVADIL (eds), *LH IIIC Chronology and Synchronisms II: LH IIIC Middle, Proceedings of the International Workshop held at the Austrian Academy of Sciences at Vienna, October 2004* (2007) 55-72; E. BORGNA, *La casa a ovest del Piazzale I (scavi 1965-66)* (in press); the object is currently at the Iraklion Archaeological Museum; I had the opportunity of access and study thanks to the courtesy of the Director, dr. A. Kanta; drawings are by G. Merlatti, photo by the author.

14 For possible comparisons with special classes of *rhyta* see A. KANTA, *The Late Minoan III Period in Crete. A Survey of Sites, Pottery and their Distribution* (1980) e.g. pls. 84, 1-2; 111, 4; p. 167; R.B. KOEHL, *Aegean Bronze Age Rhyta* (2006) in particular pls. 5; 39 no. 615; fig. 26; even when the object resulted in being part of a *rhyton*, the reference to the anthropomorphic image of the goddess would be retrievable in the morphological and decorative structure, as is the case with a well-known *rhyton* from Moires whose partition by means of a central band seems to refer to the waist: see RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2, 2001) 28-30.

15 See, with literature, P. REHAK, “Tradition and Innovation in the Fresco from Room 31 in the Cult Center at Mycenae,” in *EIKON* 39-62, in particular 42 no. 31; cf. *Aegean Painting*, 120; 191 My no. 6. For the wavy line as belonging to the textile decorative repertoire cf. RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2, 1998).

16 FRENCH (*supra* n. 3) 214-215, fig. 6.4; pl. 31.

17 Shrine of the Double Axes: RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2, 1998) 66-68, 154-155, fig. 28; M. ANDREADAKI-VLAZAKI, G. RETHEMIOTAKIS and N. DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKIS (eds), *From the Land of the Labyrinth: Minoan Crete ca. 3000-1100 BC* (2008) 210-211, no. 167, with literature; Myrsini: K. DEMAKOPOULOU (ed.), *The Mycenaean World. Five Centuries of Early Greek Culture 1600-1100 BC*, National Archaeological Museum, 15 December – 31 March 1989 (1988) 144 no. 101; RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2, 1998); Gazi: RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2, 1998) 37 no. 40a-b; Karphi: RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2, 1998) pls. 59-61 no.18; 2001, 40 figs. 42, 56); Vasiliki Kephala: Th. ELIOPOULOS, “A Preliminary report on the Discovery of a Temple Complex of the Dark Ages at Kephala Vasiliki,” in V. KARAGEORGHIS (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Symposium Eastern Mediterranean: Cyprus – Dodecanese – Crete 16th-6th c. B.C.* (1998); Th. ELIOPOULOS, “Gournia, Vronta, Kavousi, Kephala Vasiliki: a Triad of Interrelated Shrines of the Expiring Minoan Age on the Isthmus of Ierapetra,” in L. PRESTON DAY, M.S. MOOK and J.D. MUHLY

at the upper end by a kind of moulding hinting at a true disc-shaped projection. In all cases the stand with the moulding seems to emphasize the important role of both skirt and belt in the female attire.

As for the latter detail, concerning decoration, we can but notice that the circumcurrent strokes on the upper side of the disc-shaped projection of the Phaistos object match the treatment of the waist with belt on a good number of both figurines and figures, ranging from the well-known Neopalatial faience Snake Goddess (Pl. LXXVb) and the mentioned exemplar of the Shrine of the Double Axes to figurines from Kalou and Tylissos and even a LM IIIC figure from Karphi, where similar strokes are recognizable.¹⁸

While confirming the identification of the Phaistos object as part of a female figure, this decorative pattern may be useful also for testing a chronology well into LM IIIC, as the thin stripes of the earlier figurines are here translated into the “necklace pattern,” a marker of LH IIIC Middle advanced and Late pottery repertoire.¹⁹ Such correlation may be taken for granted by considering that at Phaistos several synchronisms with LH IIIC Middle advanced-Late horizons have been already proven in the context of pottery.²⁰

3. The presence of a large wheel-made female figure at LM III Phaistos, which has been manufactured according to a stylistic language peculiar to fine painted pottery, may be explained as an evidence of a complete Minoan-Mycenaean integration in the field of both craftsmanship tradition and religious imagery, an evidence even stronger than that offered by the Goddesses with Upraised arms in the bench shrines. At the same time, such evidence constitutes a striking indication of a persisting autonomous tradition, as pointed out by the long-lasting emphasis on such pieces of cloth as the skirt and the belt: both garments seem to be basic components of Minoan female clothing and even religious symbolism.

In exploring Minoan iconography in the field of clothing, scholars have generally commented upon two substantial types of female waist-garments: the thick belt rolled once or twice and tied with a knot in the back or at one side, and the large band-like one tight at the waist and usually decorated with stripes.²¹ Whether such stripes represent woven patterns or hanging ornaments is hard to answer. Some evidence might refer indeed to girdles embellished with sewn jewels or pendant ornaments: the mentioned figurine from Tylissos, for example, seems to justify the reference by Rethemiotakis to Homer, who describes the belt of Hera as having “hundred of fringes” and uses the same words for the aegis of Athena, the fringes of which are made of gold.²²

The deep connection between textile production and jewellery in the Aegean clothing has been indeed underlined by many scholars, who envisage in several representations the practice of sewing or sticking jewels and beads on clothes.²³

(eds), *Crete beyond the Palaces, Proceedings of the 2000 Conference* (2004) 86, fig. 6.6.

18 For the Snake Goddess: PM I, 500-506; cf. with literature: K.P. FOSTER, *Aegean Faience of the Bronze Age* (1979) pls. 7-11; M. PANAGHIOTAKI, *The Central Palace Sanctuary at Knossos* (BSA Suppl. 31, 1999) 96-103, 161-62, pl. 17; J.-C. POURSAT, *L'art égéen. I. Grèce, Cyclades, Crète jusqu'au milieu du II^e millénaire av. J.-C.* (2008) 221-222, pl. 75; Shrine of the Double Axes: *supra* n. 17; Kalou: RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2, 1998; 2001, 83, fig. 102; 122, fig. 134); Tylissos: RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2, 1998; 2001, 54, fig. 59; 60, fig. 64); Karphi: *supra* n. 17.

19 P.A. MOUNTJOY, *Mycenaean Decorated Pottery. A Guide to Identification* (1986) 155; 156 (the pattern appears at the beginning of IIIC Middle and becomes more common in the later part of the phase); 157, fig. 200 no. 27; IIIC Late: 183, fig. 235 no. 21; more recently and from a perspective comparing Mycenaean and Minoan contexts, P.A. MOUNTJOY, “A Definition of LH IIIC Middle,” in DEGER-JALKOTZY and M. ZAVADIL (*supra* n. 13) 223-224.

20 BORGNA (*supra* n. 13, 2007) 63-65.

21 RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2, 1998); cf. S. MARINATOS, *Kleidung, Haar- und Bartracht* (Arch Hom IA,B) (1967) 11; 25; Ch. TELEVANTOU, “Η γυναικεία ενδυμασία στην προϊστορική Θήρα,” *ArchEph* (1982) 126-127.

22 HOMER, *Il.* II 448; XIV 181; RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2, 1998); cf. MARINATOS (*supra* n. 21) 11.

23 Cf. MARINATOS (*supra* n. 21) 25ff.; *Prehistoric Textiles*, 314ff.; cf. B. JONES, “Veils and Mantels: an Investigation of the Construction and Function of the Costumes of the Veiled Dancer from Thera and the Camp Stool Banqueter from Knossos,” in K.P. FOSTER and R. LAFFINEUR (eds), *METRON. Measuring in the Aegean Bronze Age, Proceedings of the 9th International Aegean Conference, New Haven, Yale University, 18-21 April 2002*, *Aegaeum* 24 (2003) 442-443; A. MARCAR, “Aegean Costume and the Dating of the Knossos

After a look at the Aegean frescoes and in particular at the wall-paintings from Thera, we are compelled, however, to state that the large bands tight at the waist of many female figures seem in most cases to reproduce true woven patterns, as has been shown in some experimental studies.²⁴ The same may be stated for the Snake Goddess (Pl. LXXVb), which, according to the classification proposed by E. Barber, represents the “classical Minoan” attire, consisting of a large flounced skirt, a girdle or belt and a bodice open at the breast.²⁵

In this attire, stating the “akme” of textile decoration, ornaments and pieces of jewels such as necklaces, earrings, armlets have been widely used for completing or supplementing the decorative effect of female clothing, as is possible to infer from both figurines and frescoes.²⁶

Instead of supplementing, jewels seem to have more often substituted textile motifs by means of direct application to the clothes in both Greece and Crete during the Late Palatial times, when the representation of the “classical Minoan” attire was matched by a new look consisting of a square tunic or robe, mainly a long one-piece dress, mostly plain.²⁷ In association with this new attire, small sketchy patterns, such as dots, crosses, rosettes, short wavy stripes, scattered on a blank background, seem to hint more at attachments than at woven motifs. We get such an impression from various media: the long tunic of the wheel-made figure from Aigina (Pl. LXXVc) on the one hand and the dotted cloth of the goddess in both the Tiryns ring and the fresco at Mycenae may serve as useful examples.²⁸

As for female clay figures, the scarce familiarity of the Mycenaean crafters with the textile patterns of decoration may be verified by considering the simple linear banding system used in many Mainland figures, the decoration of which clearly draws on pottery, as some examples from Mycenae and Midea indicate.²⁹ Only rarely does the reference to textile emerge in figures and in such a case the only decorated part of the cloth are the vertical edging bands of the tunic: the multiple impressed circles marking the hem of the dress of a well-known figure from Tiryns may be understood as beads or, possibly, embroidered motifs.³⁰

Frescoes,” in G. CADOGAN, E. HATZAKI and A. VASILAKIS (eds), *Knossos: Palace, City, State, Proceedings of the Conference in Heraklion organised by the British School at Athens and the 23rd Ephoreia of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities of Heraklion, in November 2000, for the Centenary of Sir Arthur Evans’s Excavations at Knossos* (2004) 227-228.

- 24 B. JONES, “The Minoan ‘Snake Goddess.’ New Interpretations on her Costume and Identity,” in *POTNIA*, 263, who refers to a large band attached and folded over; cf. *Prehistoric Textiles*, 313, who points to heading bands from warp-weighted looms.
- 25 *Prehistoric Textiles*, 314; JONES (*supra*, n. 23, in part. 263); cf. also E. TRNKA, “Similarities and Distinctions of Minoan and Mycenaean Textiles,” in *Ancient Textiles*, 128.
- 26 See in particular Ch. TELEVANTOU, “Κοσμήματα από την προϊστορική Θήρα,” *ArchEph* 1984 (1986) 14-54; J.G. YOUNGER, “Representations of Minoan-Mycenaean Jewellery,” in *EIKΩN* 273-274 (dress-beads); R. LAFFINEUR, “Dress, Hairstyle and Jewellery in the Thera Wall Paintings,” in *Wall Paintings of Thera*, 890-906; in plastic arts cf. I. KILIAN-DIRLMEIER, “Zum Halschmuck mykenischer Idole,” *Jahresbericht des Instituts für Vorgeschichte der Universität Frankfurt am M.* (1978-1979).
- 27 Such as e.g. on the Ayia Triada sarcophagus; cf. MARINATOS (*supra* n. 21); *Prehistoric Textiles* 314; MARCAR (*supra* n. 23) 232; JONES (*supra* n. 23) 448-449; for reference in Linear B see M.-L. NOSCH and M. PERNA, “Cloth in the Cult,” in *POTNIA* 471-477.
- 28 For the Aigina figure see. K. PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS, “A Mycenaean terracotta Figure from Mount Oros on Aigina,” in C.H. MORRIS (ed.), *Klados. Essays in Honour of J.N.Coldstream* (1995) 229-234, figs. 1-3; for a comment on both the Mycenae fresco and the Tiryns ring (CMS I, no. 179) see, with literature, REHAK (*supra* n. 15) 39-62, in particular 42 n. 31.
- 29 For Mycenae see in particular FRENCH (*supra* n. 3); MOORE (*supra* n. 4); Mycenae, Chamber Tomb 40: Ch. TSOUNTAS, “Ανασκαφαί τάφων εν Μυκηναίς,” *ArchEph* 3, 1888 (1889) pl. 9, 15; CATLING (*supra* n. 4) 191; cf., from a house within the acropolis of Mycenae: G.E. MYLONAS, “Ανασκαφή Μυκηνών,” *Praktika* 1962 (1966) pls. 60β-61α; cf. Ph.P. BETANCOURT, *Introduction to Aegean Art* (2007) 174, fig. 8.23; for Midea: K. DEMAKOPOULOU (*supra* n. 4); K. DEMAKOPOULOU and N. DIVARI-VALAKOU, “Evidence for Cult Practice at Midea: Figures, Figurines and Ritual Objects,” in *POTNIA* 181-190.
- 30 K. KILIAN, “Zeugnissen mykenischer Kultausbübung in Tiryns,” in R. HÄGG and N. MARINATOS (eds), *Sanctuaries and Cults in the Aegean Bronze Age. Proceedings of the First International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens (12-13 May 1980)* (1981) 49-50; see with literature CATLING (*supra* n. 4) 191; cf. DEMAKOPOULOU (*supra* n. 17) cat. no. 160; see also some women in the frescoes, e.g. at Tiryns itself: *Aegean Painting*, pl. 55.

As for belts and girdles, a nice figurine in the Sparta museum, produced probably in a LM III Knossos workshop for a Mainland demand, would suggest the same practice of embellishing plain garments.³¹

Turning now to the archaeological evidence, scholars have already drawn our attention to some LH III burial furniture provided with attachments or beads used for the embellishment of waist garments,³² a practice of lavishly decorated clothes, which also seems to be attested by the many golden cut-outs found in several Early Mycenaean tombs. We are therefore inclined to suppose that the Mycenaeans, by inheriting the techniques of textile craft from the Minoans, did not manage to match their level of decorative elaboration and were content with a much simpler clothing,³³ whose decorative effects were enhanced by the contribution of other crafts. In this context, the Homeric tales about female belts, such that of Hera and the golden belt of Kalypso,³⁴ would be dependent upon a Mainland tradition acquainted with attached jewels to both belts and pieces of cloth or even upon the misrepresentation of an earlier attire encountered throughout the visual perception of female imagery.

The two different traditions of cloth decoration – the Minoan mostly founded on elaborate woven patterns, the Mycenaean consisting of plain clothes provided with added pieces of ornamentation – should be evaluated in the framework of alternative systems of identity adopted in different cultural and social contexts, all the more so as personal attire and ornaments constitute crucial traditional instruments of social communication and identity negotiation.³⁵

Such alternative systems seem to confront each other in the above-mentioned fresco of the Cult Centre at Mycenae,³⁶ where the association of the flounced skirt provided with textile-derived patterns with the right goddess, who looks Minoan, contrasts the scarce ornamentation of the left goddess, who looks Mycenaean; this contrast, which does not seem coincidental, might point to a competitive confrontation. Consequently, a firm refusal of social interaction might be envisaged in the absolute absence of decoration in most figures from the Cult Centre: the monochrome clothes might in this case express a kind of taboo towards the practice of identity negotiation throughout personal attire and, at the same time, a message of social distance within a competitive ideological arena.

The fact that in Late Palatial times the only wheel-made figures that are richly decorated according to a textile look come from the Aegean islands – where textile crafts were well-rooted and founded on a noble tradition – should in turn be not accidental: both the Lady of Phylakopi, though produced in an Argolic workshop,³⁷ and the new piece from Phaistos seem to have been treated in order to satisfy users well-acquainted with elaborate textile decoration.³⁸

In conclusion, the evidence of the wheel-made female figure from Phaistos helps to attest the use in Crete, until the very end of the Late Bronze Age, of a common language active at an Aegean scale for ritual images; meanwhile, it testifies the autonomy of the local language,

31 RETHEMIOTAKIS (*supra* n. 2 1998, pls. 82-83; 2001, 16-18, fig. 22a-b).

32 Dendra-Midea: Tholos tomb, Pit III: A.W. PERSSON, *The Royal Tombs at Dendra near Midea* (1931) 40, 55, 15, fig. 12; Chamber tomb 10: A.W. PERSSON, *New Tombs at Dendra near Midea* (1943) 80, with literature on further documentation; cf. MARINATOS (*supra* n. 21) 28ff.; JONES (*supra* n. 23).

33 Might this circumstance be connected with the transition of the value attached to textiles from prestige products to mainly market items, as has been suggested by P. MILITELLO ("Textile Industry and Minoan Palaces," in *Ancient Textiles*, 44)? on modes of textile decoration see also TRNKA (*supra* n. 25) 128 with refs.

34 *Od.* V 231-232; cf. X 544-545.

35 Cf. E. BARBER, "Weaving the Social Fabric," in *Aegean Painting*, 173-178; E.W. BARBER, *Women's Work. The First 20,000 Years. Women, Cloth and Society in Early Times* (1994).

36 *Supra* n. 15; cf. *Prehistoric Textiles* 324.

37 FRENCH (*supra* n. 3) 215; P.A. MOUNTJOY, "The Cyclades during the Mycenaean Period," in N. BRODIE, J. DOOLE, G. GAVALAS and C. RENFREW (eds), *Orizon. A Colloquium on the Prehistory of the Cyclades* (2008) 472.

38 The difference between the intense and various use of decoration in textile craft in the Minoan tradition and the much more loose use by the Mycenaeans might also possibly be related to forms of work organization; the decentralized model proposed by MILITELLO (*supra* n. 33) for the Minoan world would have implied a much more intense social interaction involving multiple agents in the production and distribution of goods in comparison with the highly centralized and strictly controlled Mycenaean industry; cf. BARBER (*supra* n. 34, 1994) 217-223.

which continuously refers to a strong Minoan tradition, in this case in the domain of textile craftsmanship, female attire and religious symbols.

If this kind of figures, adopting the language of fine decorated pottery, co-existed in Crete, at the close of the Late Bronze Age, with the well-known figures of the Goddesses with Upraised arms, as it seems now to be the case, we could envisage in such a co-existence two ideological discourses confronting each other: the former seems to serve a communicative strategy of affiliation to an international Aegean style created – we do not know whether intentionally or not – by the hybridization of Mycenaean and local components,³⁹ while the latter seems to have been more exclusive and conservative by expressing a strategy of appropriation of the local past through the selection – in the choice of raw material as well as in craft techniques – of patterns of the earlier Minoan tradition of terracotta figures and figurines.⁴⁰

That the two discourses shared a language based on common religious symbols is however clearly demonstrated by several features, as the Phaistos figure can suggest. At the lower end of the object a thin layer of fine clay added to the inner surface seems indeed to have been useful for connecting the figure to a plastic element or base, which, on the basis of possible comparisons, might have been a throne. A reconstruction according to the pattern offered by the figure no. 1 of the temple of Kephala Vassiliki as an enthroned goddess seems reliable.⁴¹ This comparison, beyond relating the various LM figures to a common set of beliefs and cult practices, strengthens the possibility of identifying in LM IIIC Phaistos the presence of a shrine housing the figure of a powerful goddess.

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39 On such a concept see, in the Aegean literature, e.g. I. VOSKOS and A.B. KNAPP, "Cyprus at the End of the Late Bronze Age: Crisis and Colonization or Continuity and Hybridization?," *AJA* 112:4 (2009) 659-684, with refs.

40 For this phenomenon see already E. BORGNA, "Regional Settlement Patterns, Exchange Systems and Sources of Power in Crete at the End of the Late Bronze Age: Establishing a Connection," *SMEA* 45 (2003) 172.

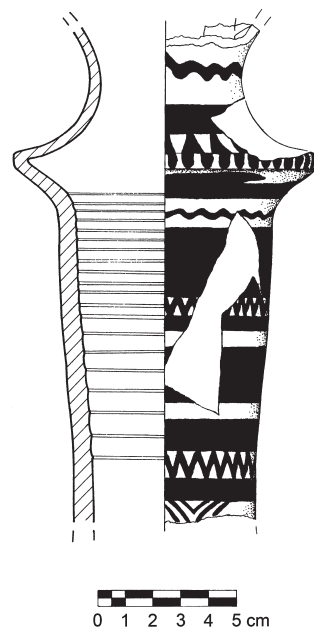
41 ELIOPOULOS (*supra* n. 17, 1998) fig. 14; GESELL (*supra* n. 11) 140, 147 no. 10.

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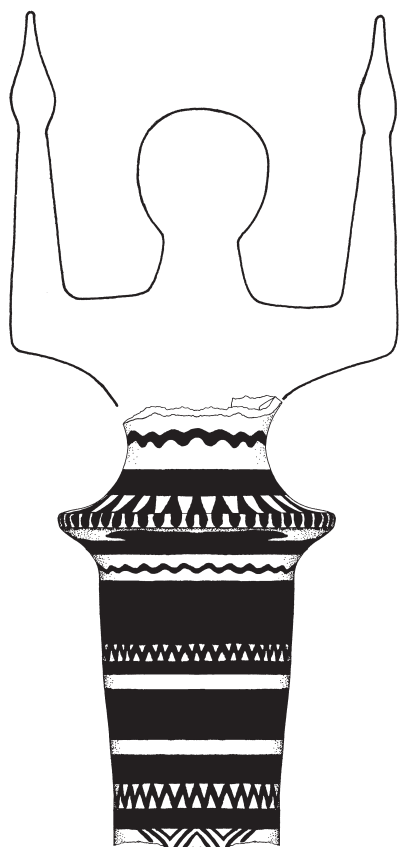
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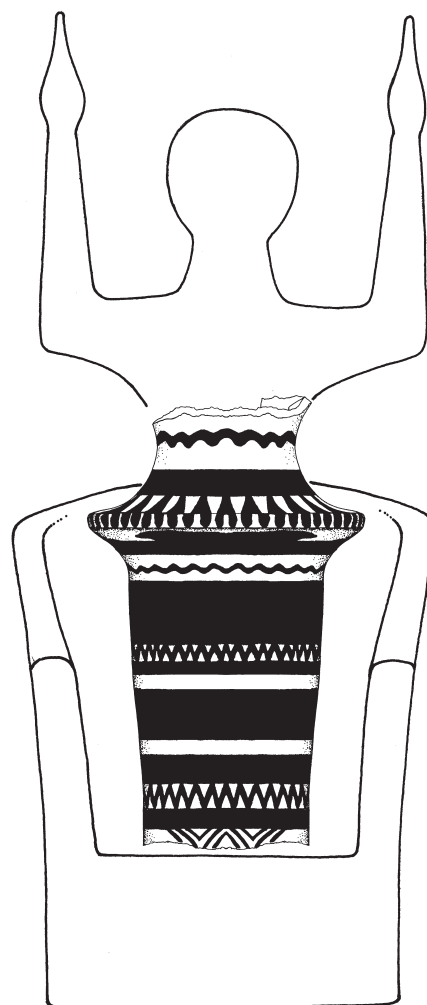
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b



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