

# ***The Fantastic Creatures of Bronze Age Crete***

***Vol. 1: Text***

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## *Abstract*

This thesis studies the imaginary beings of Minoan iconography with the aim of understanding their functions and meaning within the iconography of Bronze Age Crete. Two broad categories of Minoan fantastic creatures can be discerned, namely the imported and the locally created hybrids. With the exception of investigations of the griffin, previous studies have focused mainly on matters of typology and style and, more importantly, have detached the illustrations of imaginary beings from their context of creation and use. Consequently, griffins and sphinxes are vaguely classified as “royal monsters”, the dragon is merely considered as the transporter of deities, the reasons behind the creation of the bird-lady and the “Minotaur” are still unfathomable and the demonic creations of the Zakros workshop have not been explained at all and are simply viewed as meaningless. On the other hand, conjoined animals and less popular monsters, like the winged goats, have been more or less overlooked.

In an attempt to remedy this, this study places the fantastic creatures of the Minoans within their context. The iconography of the Prepalatial, Protopalatial, Neopalatial and Final Palatial periods is examined sequentially so as to determine the degree to which the functions of demons and monsters changed through time in the Minoan repertoire. Variations in the choice of media for their depictions, the consideration of their find contexts, of religious and socio-political developments in each period and of the development of monstrous iconography in the mainland, the Aegean islands, the Near East and Egypt, all help towards a better appreciation of the fantastic world of the “Minoans”.

As a result, generic characterisations of the Minoan imaginary beings are rejected and the multiplicity of their roles, their ability to evolve and their significant role in the expression of the Minoan mindset are established. In short, the demons and monsters of the Minoans are revealed as reflections of the multifaceted, complex society of Bronze Age Crete and articulate the fears, concerns and beliefs of its different members.

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## *List of Abbreviations*

(Bibliographical abbreviations are cited in the Bibliography section)

<i>ANM</i>	Athens National Archaeological Museum
<i>CPG</i>	Cretan Popular Group
<i>EBA</i>	Early Bronze Age
<i>EC</i>	Early Cycladic
<i>EH</i>	Early Helladic
<i>EM</i>	Early Minoan
<i>HM</i>	Herakleion Museum
<i>LBA</i>	Late Bronze Age
<i>LC</i>	Late Cycladic
<i>LH</i>	Late Helladic
<i>LM</i>	Late Minoan
<i>MBA</i>	Middle Bronze Age
<i>MC</i>	Middle Cycladic
<i>MH</i>	Middle Helladic
<i>MM</i>	Middle Minoan
<i>MPG</i>	Mainland Popular Group
<i>MSS</i>	Multiple Sealing System
<i>n.</i>	Note
<i>no(s).</i>	Number(s)
<i>SH</i>	Stringhole
<i>SM</i>	Sub-Minoan
<i>SSS</i>	Single Sealing System

### *Note*

The imaginary beings discussed in the text (in bold numbers corresponding to their catalogue no.) are listed in the Catalogue, Vol. 2.

Extensive bibliographic references to the depictions of fantastic creatures discussed in the text can be found in the Catalogue, Vol. 2.

# *Chapter 1*

## *Of demons and monsters*

### *1.1 An introduction*

The study of the demons and monsters of any culture provides insights to the religious beliefs of its people. Since they form part of the symbolic system of the specific culture, their examination will contribute to our understanding of “how people used their minds and formulated and utilised useful concepts, in early societies” (Renfrew 1994a: 5).

The appearance of these beasts in the art of the ancient world has been attributed to the human attempt to control hostile powers, such as the weather, illness, misfortune, accidents and other events outside the control of the individual. In the absence of “advanced science” it is magic that the people of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt and Aegean turned to, in order to manipulate such phenomena. The core of magic rituals according to Reiner (1987: 30) is the personification of evil in a material form so that it can be disposed of.

By giving them first of all a visual form, they decreased part of the terror surrounding such incomprehensible and unpredictable forces, since the unseen and formless is far more frightening than what can be seen (Porada 1987: 1). Since the human mind can conceive and understand in terms of its own experience, “in the attempt to visualise a fantasy, it automatically draws on the actual, however surrealistic the combination, exaggeration or distortion so created” (Gill 1963: 2). In that way a system of fantastic beings was developed in various ancient civilisations, some malevolent, others beneficial to humans with the ability to influence man and nature and protect them from the former group.

The selection of specific animals to make up the images of evil or benign powers becomes then comprehensible: the mightiest, fastest, most venomous beasts would be appropriate to represent the force of nature and the dangers imposed on the inhabitants of each natural environment and, at the same time, the forces capable of providing protection. The “power of the beast” (Morgan 1996: 17) constitutes an engaging and potent phenomenon for people in close interaction with the animal world, who have to encounter and overcome, or use animal strength. Mesopotamians chose among others the lion and the eagle, Egyptians the crocodile and the hippopotamus and so forth. The same animals would be used to render the benevolent forces, as they would possess the strength to confront and overcome their malicious adversaries.

It becomes then apparent that the role of a composite creature is not absolutely defined by its features. When referring to the notion of monstrosity in classical Greece, where monstrosity was repeatedly used in the myths as a theme for their narratives, Buxton (1994: 206) maintained that “the monster is chaotic, conforming to no existing class. As the case of the benevolent centaur Cheiron shows, monsters are not necessarily characterised by the savage violence of a Minotaur or a Medusa. But monster is always by definition an outsider.” Their character did not remain constant, as can be clearly observed in Near Eastern images for example, where their meaning changed according to the context of the accompanying figures. Fantastic beings could symbolise and signify both life and death.

The lack of textual evidence however in most cases, makes it necessary for the interpretation of the symbolism behind the fantastic creatures to be based on the pictorial evidence to a greater extent. On the other hand, whenever texts

accompany the narrative representations, Voelke (1987: 103) warns against the presumption of a precise correspondence of text and picture, even in more modern (i.e. Christian) illustrations. In Egypt there is a purposeful relation between text and picture, but Near Eastern artists made no effort to elucidate the meaning of the composite creatures by providing an accompanying text (Black & Green 1998: 26; Hansen 1987: 53 ff.; Reiner 1987: 27 ff.).

The transformation, not so much in form as in function and meaning, of various monsters as they were transferred from one culture to another is an aspect that also merits attention in the study of fantastic creatures. For instance, the figure of Taweret, which gradually developed into one of the important divinities in Pharaonic Egypt, worshipped along with the Theban triad, became a cult servant in libation scenes in Minoan and Mycenaean art. Analogous transformations should be expected in the transference of any given motif.

## ***1.2 Aim of the thesis***

“No-one could doubt that all representations are symbols” (Renfrew 1994a: 8) and that certainly includes the depictions of Aegean prehistoric monsters. But what is it that they symbolise? Hitherto separate investigations of them have appeared in the bibliography, each restricted to winged animals, the griffin, the genius, the sphinx, the dragon and the “Minotaur” (see literature review, section 1.9). Their origin or, in the case of foreign imports, the mode of transference of imaginary beings into the Aegean, has already been extensively studied, even if in certain cases has not been resolved (de Moor 1997; Weingarten 1991a; Crowley 1989; Gill 1964; eadem 1963; eadem 1961b; Dessenne 1957a; Bisi 1965; *PM*). Nevertheless, their role, function, meaning and

development as a group of specialised representations, differentiated from natural animals and human beings, in a few words their symbolism, has not yet been thoroughly studied. Such an investigation however, would increase our understanding of the Minoan-Mycenaean attitude towards the supernatural, as well as the activities that were related to it.

Accordingly, the aim of this thesis is to provide an overall study of the fantastic creatures of the Minoan and Mycenaean art; to observe innovations in the media of their depiction, the abandonment or addition of 'monster' types, novelties in their representation, the relation of all these to the religious, political and economic developments of the various periods; and to establish meanings for this system of symbols and the way it was used within the Minoan and Mycenaean societies.

- A corpus of the published examples of mythical beings will be presented to provide an overview of the available material and will constitute the basis of the study. No recent assemblage of all the examples published up to now has been compiled. It is considered necessary, since "the modern interpreter can come to a complete misunderstanding of an image without a fairly thorough knowledge of the entire range of the material." (Hansen 1987: 60)
- Subsequently, a methodology will be developed in order to study the records collected in the database. This will involve discussion of the iconography (types of figures, narrative), of the choice of material for the depiction of the fantastic creatures (sealstones, ivory, clay, stone), and of context (find context, religious context, social context and so forth).

- An attempt to determine the reasoning behind the acceptance of particular motifs and the rejection of others will be made. Although M. West (1997: 10) cautions that the transfer of artistic motifs need not in itself signify any intellectual exchange between peoples, since “native artists may simply draw inspiration from imported objects that come into their hands”, a brief study of the variety and meaning of their equivalent types/parallels in the East and their comparison with the first Aegean examples may help towards this direction.
- The function of the fantastic creatures will be analysed, to the degree this is possible for symbols belonging to such early societies, without textual evidence to support any definitions. The limitations and the dangers in attempting to read too much into the Aegean iconographic repertoire are not to be underestimated. As Renfrew (1994a: 8) has pointed out, “the functioning of material symbols at a superficial level is often plain enough, although to analyse, more completely, precisely how they functioned can be more difficult”. He used the example of the Egyptian pyramids to demonstrate his point: although they undoubtedly had a special place in the Egyptian belief system, it is rather cumbersome to determine the various and more precise functions of this symbol.
- Moreover, Renfrew (1985: 443) has pointed out that further work needs to be done in order to determine “the degree to which the prevailing religion was in fact used to legitimise the existing social system”. The study of the fantastic creatures as part of the Aegean religious-symbolic system will be incorporated within the scope of such a scheme of research so as to investigate their role (if any) in the reinforcement of the society’s social,

economic, political organisation. For instance, the changes in their depiction will be studied so as to determine if they were related to the rise and fall of the palaces both in Crete and the mainland.

- Their temporal development and the regional differences in the representations of the fantastic creatures within the Aegean will be examined too, with the objective of understanding if and how they changed after their initial introduction from the East. An attempt will be made to examine whether stages in the development of Aegean fantastic creatures can be established. Similar work has already been conducted on the images of monsters and demons of the Mesopotamian and Iranian arts. The changes in types, shape, roles, action and so forth were used to establish phases in their development as a specialised group of motifs (see Literature Review).
- The importance of the griffin and the sphinx as symbols of royal power has been noted (see literature review, section 1.9). However, mostly Near Eastern or Egyptian parallels have been used for such interpretations of the motifs. Other studies have looked into the apotropaic, the establishment of fantastic creatures as servants of the gods, as minor deities themselves, as figures in mythical narrative, and, on a more psychological plane, as embodiments of evil, misfortune, death and the power of the supernatural. The Aegean evidence will be examined so as to justify, confirm, clarify, expand or reject these generally *a priori* accepted theories.

### ***1.3 Chronological scope***

Monsters appeared in Aegean iconography early in the Bronze Age and continued to be depicted throughout antiquity. The present thesis will focus on BA depictions, starting with the earlier examples on Crete (EM-MM 1A) and ending with examples up to the destruction of the Minoan palatial civilisation. Illustrations of imaginary beings from the Aegean islands and the Mycenaean mainland (LH I-IIIB2) will also provide the background so as to reconstruct the development of the group throughout the Aegean Bronze Age.

As to the absolute chronology of the prehistoric Aegean, that is a rather heavily contested issue, universal agreement on which has not yet been reached (for differing views see: Manning 1990; Warren & Hankey 1989; Cadogan 1983). Its discussion however is out of the scope of this thesis. I have chosen to follow the chronology provided in *Review* (2001: 159, 332, 391) for the absolute dating of the BA, that is, the Aegean modified chronology combined with the Egyptian low chronology given therein.

### ***1.4 Thesis outline***

In the following sections of this introductory chapter I shall discuss the background to my approach, identify the monster types attested in the prehistoric Aegean and present the method that will be followed in the study of depictions. The previous literature on the subject will also be assessed in order to present the results of earlier studies and pinpoint the gaps in the research of Aegean fantastic creatures.

The various types of imaginary beings (isolated or grouped) will be discussed according to their proposed or generally accepted date of manufacture



in the following chapters. This approach will allow the examination of contemporary creation in the same or other *media* and the incorporation of the artefact within the *iconographic repertoire* of the period. Moreover, it places the product and its parallels within the *social/religious/international contexts* of each period, which are considered as significant as the find context for the comprehension of iconography and its themes. As Betts and Younger (1982: 120) noted, “a dated context for a seal or sealing only dates the time and identifies the place of the seal’s last use”. This observation may be extended to other entries in the catalogue, for example wall paintings and ivories, and therefore it is deemed necessary not to ignore the context at the time of creation of artefacts. In short, chronological examination of the evidence emphasises the *context of change*.

Thus, *Chapters 2, 3 and 4* will deal with the Prepalatial, Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods on Crete respectively. The Phaistos sealing deposit will be examined more extensively in *Chapter 3* due to its special significance – with the first securely dated and stratified examples of the griffin, sphinx and genius, while parallels from the Cyclades and the mainland will be used in the analysis of the Neopalatial monsters in *Chapter 4*.

*Chapter 5* will focus on the Kato Zakros sealing deposit, not only because of its impressive size and the fact that a number of monster types appear almost exclusively therein, but also because their “peculiar” nature merits a separate discussion. Although Weingarten’s excellent study on the Zakro Master (1983a) has advanced our understanding of these motifs greatly since their first discovery by Hogarth, additional thoughts on the iconography and its use will be discussed.

The monsters of the “Mycenaeanised” Crete will be discussed in *Chapter 6*, which will present the LM II-III evidence for the depiction of fantastic creatures. It is the time of the so-called *international style*, the Mycenaean *koine*, when motifs not only travelled between regions in the Aegean and beyond, but, as will be shown, also a period of widespread cultural and ideological exchanges.

Descriptions and extensive references on the examples will not in general be included in *Chapters 2-6*, since they can be found in the catalogue (and in abundance in the relevant bibliography, even if varying in many cases). Emphasis will be placed on the context of the finds and consequently, attention will be paid to aspects of the iconographical context, of media use, of social organisation, of wealth and authority, of religious practices and of the level of artistic skills (see definition of *context* in section 1.8).

### ***1.5 Understanding Aegean monsters: problems and difficulties***

The study of symbols and iconography in order to understand the hidden meanings behind images is hindered by a number of factors. Renfrew (1994b: 53) has pointed out that it should not be presumed that symbols “are directly representational in the figurative sense. It is not necessary that we recognise human beings or deities or forms that depict entities already known to us from the world of nature.” The interpretation of any iconographic representation is then proved an arduous task and even more so in the case of monsters.

Regarding Aegean iconography, the existence of numerous written records would potentially assist significantly the undertaking of this examination, as it has in the case of Egypt and the Near East. However, there is a distinct silence regarding monsters in the Linear B records despite tentative efforts to

equate *a-pu-wa* with *Αρπυιαι* (Godart cited in Rousioti 2001: 308) or *Dipsioi* – *di-pi-si-jo(i)* with genii (S. Marinatos 1966: 265-274), which have not met with acceptance though.

## ***1.6 Definition of monstrosity and monsters***

“How *can* one actually define a ‘monster’? As a being of vast size, terrifying, malevolent or wild, overwhelmingly strong? As an imaginary creature, combining incongruous elements from more than one essential category of being (e.g. human/animal, mortal/immortal)? As something rare and extraordinary? As something which deviates from the normal course of nature? As a portent or a marvel, a sign which ‘demonstrates’ (lat. *monstrum*), warns about or presages divine will?”

Lada-Richards (1998: 43-44)

A definition of the term monsters/fantastic creatures is the obvious first step towards the establishment of a methodology for their study. Atherton (1998: viii-ix) theorised about comprehending the role of monsters today “with a modish blend of pop psychology, some rather hackneyed cultural anthropology, and a dollop of cynicism about the entertainment industry”. However, she went on to realise that such analyses are not fruitful in all cases and that a closer look at contemporary culture reveals a number of difficulties in the study of modern “monsters”, which are not always easily identified. “In both highbrow and popular cultures, and in many products that cross the boundaries between them, an abundance of films, poems, novels, plays, paintings, statues, comic strips, and advertisements of wide influence and lasting popularity, make it plain instead that that very question of the definition of the ‘monstrous’ is both unsettled and

unsettling” (Atherton 1998: ix). If modern monsters are so difficult to define, how can one hope to define the term in regards to ancient images?

One of the traditional functions of monsters is to “signal or presage event or advent, even more terrifying or violently destructive than the monster itself” (Atherton 1998: vii). That is the interpretation prevalent in the classical era and modern times, when monsters bear invariably negative, in most cases destructive associations. However, the monsters of the Near East and Egypt were seen in a different, more diverse way by the cultures that created them, and the variety of the roles that they performed is greater than those of the modern era (see Weingarten 2005: 12, especially n. 36), as will be demonstrated below in relation to Aegean monsters too.

Accordingly, the term *monster* is not used in this dissertation in the more familiar modern meaning of the word, that is, as a creature horrid and terrifying, which will eventually cause harm and misery to humans directly or indirectly. It is not the beast, fiend, or even “bogeyman”, but rather signifies an unearthly, powerful and extraordinary being, whose presence and/or actions may be benevolent, malevolent, or even both depending on the circumstances. *Monstrosity* is not associated with a creature’s evil character or role for the prehistoric inhabitants of the Aegean, but is attributed to its appearance, which is abnormal (due to tremendous size and/or added excrescences) or hybridised (versatile constituent parts coming from natural animals and/or humans).

### ***1.6.1 On segregating monsters from natural animals***

Not only the meaning of the term ‘monster’, but also the types of creatures to which it will be ascribed require clarification. The term *fabulous beasts* has been used in the past to incorporate animals both real and composite (Gill 1963: 1, n. 3). The former would include the “cynocephalus ape” (cf. *CMS I* 377, *CMS I Suppl.* 114, *CMS II.3* 103, *CMS II.7* 24, *CMS II.8* 719, *CMS I Suppl. IA* 131 & 159, *XII* 135, Sakellariou 1958: nos. 108, 355, 359, 372), the “blue monkeys” (seen in Knossian and Theran frescoes), and the “hippopotamus”, that is, animals of the natural world, exotic or rare in the Aegean.

Even the lion, one of the most commonly depicted animals in Aegean art, may be included in this category, since it is still debatable whether it was native to the Aegean or a symbol imported from the Near East. The animal does not appear to have been common in Bronze Age Greece – only five individuals have been discovered so far in prehistoric sites (Bloedow 1999: 53, n. 1; Morgan 1995a: 173). Two teeth from LM IB-II Ayia Irini, Kea, and a foot bone from LH IIIB Tiryns may have been used as amulets, while the find context of a shoulder bone, also from Tiryns, indicated that lion’s flesh was eaten there perhaps as a magical source of courage (Morgan 1995a: 173, n. 9). The endemic presence of lions on Aegina has been doubted despite the presence of one lion in the skeletal remains of MBA Kolonna (Forstenpointner et al. 2006).

According to Krzyszkowska (2005: 89) the lion depictions on Minoan seals were not inspired by nature, but were probably based on borrowed images. It has also been suggested that the lion came to palaces as a gift and “there paraded about as a palace showpiece” (Younger 1988: xi). According to the above scenario, exotic animals may have been imported to the island of Crete -

and perhaps elsewhere – and lived in specially constructed gardens where they would have been available for study by the artists (N. Platon 1974: 244-245). In any case, lions first appeared in the Prepalatial glyptic repertoire and were popular on ivory seals (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 32). They may have been endowed with magical powers and were incorporated in symbolic (cf. the lions of the Lion Gate at Mycenae) and cultic iconography (e.g. the monkey crocus gathering fresco of Xeste 3 at Akrotiri or the seated ape in the enigmatic scene of *CMS II.8* 262).

Cats may be considered in the same group with lions given the fact that they were not indigenous, but had been imported to Crete. Furthermore, both animals, cats and some lions were “curiously stylised” on MM II-III seals (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 89). The Protopalatial prism *CS* 174 demonstrates this trait clearly in that it shows a cat with an outsized eye-catching frontal head. Cats, at least initially, must have been bestowed with special powers as indicated by their use as frontal, apparently apotropaic, motifs on early Minoan glyptic (e.g. *CMS II.2* 3, *CMS II.8* 90 and *CS* 174; hieroglyphic signs accompany the cats of *CS* 174 and *CMS IV* 156). Lion heads were put to a similar use in Minoan art and Xenaki-Sakellariou (1958: 80-82) listed “gorgon heads” and “lion masks” in her discussion of apotropaic figures.

However, neither will be investigated in the present dissertation, nor will the “exotic” monkeys. The “alerions”, i.e. frontal birds with displayed wings – classified as monsters by Younger (1983: 126) – are likewise not included in the types of Aegean fantastic creatures in this dissertation<sup>1</sup>. Instead, it will be the composite and/or oversized creatures that will form the core of the study. These

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted though that transitional types between these birds and the bird-ladies are occasionally encountered.

are creatures given extraordinary features (e.g. size), incorporating parts of various natural animals and/or humans, or, even plants in rarer occasions, so that the final result is that of beings not found in the natural world.<sup>2</sup>

By no means should this segregation be taken to imply that the Minoans and the Mycenaeans would have recognised such distinctions. On the contrary, it is actually more likely that the numerous, popular throughout the Bronze Age Aegean, Near East and Egypt, fantastic creatures would have been considered as real as the animals comprising the herds tended to by shepherds. Monkeys seen possibly in gardens on Crete, most likely accessible to a restricted number of viewers, would have been as real as the griffins feeding their babies in the nest on the LH IIIC Lefkandi pyxis (De Moor 1997: no. 1417, fig. 935; Mountjoy 1993: 99, fig. 263; *Pictorial*: 144, XI.91; Popham & Sackett 1968: 18, fig. 35; Popham 1964-65: 19, fig. 22).

The fact that the Minoans and Mycenaeans probably believed that such hybrids did exist does not preclude the latter's supernatural character (*contra* Younger in discussion session in *Politeia II*: 505). One finds gods who assumed human, animal form or even a combination of both composing the rich pantheon of the Egyptians. As the former would have been *real* for the believers, so would the monsters described in the Book of the Dead – the “Devourer of the Dead” or the “Book of what is in the Țuat” fiends and devils (Budge 1967: cxxix-cxxx), demons such as Bes, or griffins.

That worldview with plenty of room for the “fantastic” was certainly shared among prehistoric peoples and did not change until the modern era (if it actually ever changed that much – consider for example contemporary religious

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<sup>2</sup> Henceforth, the terms fabulous/imaginary/fantastic/composite beings/creatures animals/beasts, monsters and demons - the latter without the modern negative connotations - will be used interchangeably to refer to any of the examples of fantastic animals studied.

beliefs). In fact, even as late as 1652, Andrew Ross (see Mayor 2000: 286) believed that the ancient sources on griffins described an unusual, albeit real animal. As a rule though, modern beliefs and perception have been greatly altered through advances in science mirrored in the wider knowledge of the natural world and its laws, in industrialisation, and simplicity of communication, to mention but a few of the most obvious factors. It is thus only natural for people today to distinguish between the real and imaginary when confronted with the image of, for example, a griffin attacking a bull, whereas a Minoan might have seen images springing from tales of travellers, mythical events or perhaps even from personal experiences of religious ecstasy.

This modern, arguably arbitrary (see Atherton 1998: xxiv on possibility of non-arbitrary taxonomies and their effect on social sciences), separation of reality from fantasy can offer a closer look at the worldview and beliefs of the prehistoric inhabitants of the Aegean through a better understanding of the meaning(s) and role(s) of those creatures.

### ***1.6.2 “Bastards”: fabulous beasts or artistic slips?***

Doumas (2000a: 17) has argued that “pictorial representations lend themselves to a variety of interpretations, depending on the standpoint from which they are approached and depending on the scholarly and ideological backgrounds of those who study them”. However, even before attempting to interpret symbols, there are further difficulties in identifying monsters in Aegean art. Although, as already mentioned, composite beings are classified among imaginary beings, there are creatures that have been identified as hybrids, even though the original intention of the artist might have been the mere depiction of a



natural animal. *CMS II.4* 40 constitutes a good example, since it may be taken to depict a boar with lion's head or simply a stylised animal.

Another similar instance is that of a LH IIIB pictorial krater (*Pictorial*: V.58) in the British Museum decorated with four "rather eccentric" animals, which have been puzzling so far for researchers. Their classification has been disputed; Furumark (1941: 249-250, FM 6, fig. 29) included the animals in the goat motif group, but did so with scepticism, since he could not eventually decide whether the motif constituted a hybrid, a deer or a goat with diverging horns and a long tail. The animals were classified as goats with bull's heads and dog's tails in *Pictorial* (V.58).

On the other hand, Rystedt (1988: 267-270) insightfully considered them to be "bastards" rather than hybrids. According to her analysis of the krater, the long tails and the less compelling – to be forming part of the bull iconography – horns, eyes and head shape demonstrate that the artist did intend to depict bulls. She attributed the failure of the painter to present bulls convincingly to the fact that, presumably, he was "too much of a chariot krater man" (Rystedt 1988: 269). "It is less a question of a painter's more or less deliberate combination of different iconographical types than his coping with unaccustomed iconographical schemes using, in part, his conventional tools" (Rystedt 1988: 270; for bastards in pictorial vases see also Benton 1961: 44-55).

Gill (1981: 89-90) expressed a similar reasoning on the discussion of *CMS VIII* 141, a seal depicting a bull with a slender, waisted body, paws and tail of a lion. She concluded that, although there is the possibility that the hybrid was intentional, it is more likely that the artist wished to portray a contorted bull and copied seals depicting perhaps contorted lions (cf. seal from the Hermitage

Museum, eadem 1981: 89 n. 37), forgetting though to adapt the shape of the body.

The identifications by Kenna (*CMS XIII, XII, VII, VIII* and *Cretan Seals, Together with a Catalogue of Minoan Gems in the Ashmolean Museum* – henceforth *CS*) are among those that demonstrate a tendency towards classifying “bastards” as monsters and best exemplify the need for careful descriptions and categorisation of the motifs. For example, the figures on *CMS VII* 262, *CMS XII* 206, 281 and 282 have all been misinterpreted as depicting fantastic creatures – generally as “variants” of monsters, “reduced beetle with eyes and cantharus handles” and “bird-ladies” – when a closer look at them reveals nothing of the sort. In fact, only crude renderings of animals, talismanic motifs or natural birds can be discerned on these seals. Such examples are plentiful in Aegean – particularly in glyptic – artistic products and it is often difficult to distinguish between schematised natural animals that were probably rendered without precision and imaginary creatures (see *Appendix A* for a short list of examples mainly from seals, including those mentioned in this section).

### **1.6.3 Types of Aegean monsters**

The main types of Minoan and Mycenaean fantastic animals are formed and described as follows (in the order according to which they will be discussed in the following chapters). It should be mentioned that these are the “canonical” forms of the monsters, as encountered in the Minoan and Mycenaean repertoires, and that variations will be mentioned in more detail in the following chapters.

**Griffin (fig. 1):** by far the most commonly depicted monster in the Aegean, it is a quadruped with a lion body, wings and usually crested head of a

bird of prey (generally identified as eagle or hawk). It is only rarely seen as female or wingless. Sometimes they wear collars and their wings in Aegean art are characteristically decorated with spirals and zigzag lines. the so-called *adder mark* or *notched plume*.

***Sphinx (fig. 2)***: composite quadruped with a lion body, wings of a bird and human head. In contrast to the male Egyptian sphinxes, their Aegean counterparts are winged with only very few early exceptions. They typically wear plumed diadems; their wings are decorated in the same way as those of the *griffin* and, also like the latter, they occasionally wear collars.

***(Minoan) Genius (fig. 3)***<sup>3</sup>: upright hybrid figure inspired by the Egyptian goddess Taweret. Accordingly, its first examples resembled closely the hippopotamus-shaped goddess and have pendulous breasts and swollen bellies. Soon after its introduction to Crete, however, the body of the *genius* became more slender – in certain examples it acquired a bee-like waist, its dorsal appendage was clearly defined and its head developed into that of a lion or a donkey. Generally speaking though, the species of animals represented on the heads of *genii* are not readily identifiable and have been recognised at times as not only lion and donkey, but even horse and boar (Cook 1894: 103-169).

*Contra* Jon van Leuven (“The geni” (sic), *Aegeanet* [online]) who claimed that “genii and several other kinds of Aegean ‘anthropomorphic creatures’ were usually depicted in certain numbers in groups, usually pairs” and that any explanation of them must, among other features, take this into account. *genii* are depicted alone quite often too, especially on the earlier examples on seals, but also on wall paintings and ivories. Although its presentation in groups

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<sup>3</sup> Also known as Minoan demon in the bibliography.

has to be considered, interpretations of the demon should not be restricted to that, since its depiction as a single figure is of equal significance and frequency.

**(Minoan) Dragon (fig. 4):** quadruped with a disproportionately small head, elongated snout and short pointy ears, an elongated tubular – occasionally spiked along the back – body decorated with short strokes or dots, stout short legs and tail raised over the back. Depicted mainly on seals and ivories, it is alone or in pairs and often carries a female figure. The name is borrowed from the similarly rendered *Babylonian dragon*, which is thought to have inspired the Aegean monster. Its appearance on ivories has been disputed, since many examples are taken to show crocodiles instead of *dragons* (see for instance 542 and relevant discussion in section 3.1.4).

**Bird-lady (fig. 5):** these are mostly upright composite figures with heads of birds, displayed wings in place of arms and human lower bodies. The head is regularly rendered in profile, the upper body and wings in frontal view, and the lower body, i.e. the feet discerned below the skirt, again in profile. The *bird-lady* is usually dressed in a flaring or flounced skirt.

Winged male figures are seen in the work of the Zakros workshop, but will be considered under the *animal-headed men* category since they do not have bird heads. Actual *bird-men* are only encountered once or twice in Aegean iconography (856, 857, 858 and possibly on 855 – although the figures on the latter sealing are rather obscure and perhaps better classified as men with bird-attributes, possibly wearing masks or unidentifiable hybrids) and their representation is rather schematic. Although on earlier Protopalatial examples many male figures possess bird-like characteristics, these are better seen as the iconographic forerunners of the typical Aegean *bird-lady*. In view of the

available evidence, *bird-men* cannot be considered to represent a set type of Aegean monsters.

***Bull-man or “Minotaur” (fig. 6):*** upright figures combining a bovine head and upper body with a human lower body (legs) almost always shown in contorted position. With the available evidence, there is only one seal showing a bull-man with a male in place of a bovine torso (625) indicating that the figure is possibly wearing a mask. Only rarely is a female figure (*bull-lady*) encountered – in fact only on a group of three look-alike sealtypes – and is once again restricted at Zakros, so it cannot be taken to represent a well-known or established type.

The well-known term “*Minotaur*” is used in the text, although it should be preferably avoided due to its classical mythical associations that cannot be presumed to have been established as early as the Bronze Age or at least should not be accepted without corroboration from the iconographical evidence. Finally, the Aegean *bull-man* should in no way be confused with the Oriental bull-man (e.g. 907 and 908) that has an upright bovine lower body, human arms and head.

***Animal-headed man (fig. 7):*** male upright figures that, like the *bull-man*, have human lower bodies often shown in contorted position, but instead of a bull head and torso, they may bear a goat, a lion or an unidentifiable animal head shown in profile or en face. So creatures like the *lion-man (-lady)*, the *goat-man (-lady)*, the *agrimi-man* and the *stag-man (-lady)*, are included in this group. It should be noted that the female versions of the *animal-headed people* are mostly seen in the Kato Zakros sealings with only rare exceptions from elsewhere.

***Conjoined animal-headed men (fig. 8):*** subcategory of animal-headed men, whether bull-, goat-, lion- or other, conjoined in the waist, sharing thus one pair of human legs. One or both heads may be frontal or in profile. It is normally

two animal-headed men that are conjoined to one pair of legs, although there exists a restricted number of examples with three. A variation in this theme is the double pair of legs springing out of the body of a single demon.

***Gorgon heads (fig. 9):*** mask-like frontal human(-like) faces, circular or triangular, with monstrous facial expressions and characteristics (often fantastic and/or foreign imports). Encountered mostly in glyptic, their eyes are as a rule round and are thus conceived as bulging. They occasionally have prominent teeth and incorporate imported elements (e.g. “Hathor locks”) in the resemblance of wings flanking the face, and/or snake-like spiral lines flowing out of the neck. Their “ears” are not always naturally attached to the head and it is in consequence difficult to determine whether they are meant to be read as ears or earrings.

Although Xenaki-Sakellariou (1958: 81-82) distinguished two groups of apotropaic figures, the “*Gorgon heads*” and the *lion masks* (eadem 1958: 81, nos. 120, 183, 396, 397, 398; *PM I*: figs. 492d & e), the latter are excluded from this study. They are undoubtedly of emblematic/symbolic nature and most likely protective, but are usually no more than stylised lion masks without any fantastic elements (the Zakros sealings once again forming a notable exception).

As to the name of the creatures, as in the case of the *Minotaurs*, it should not be taken to necessarily imply a connection with the classical Gorgons other than that of the frontally depicted monstrous face, which is the common element between the two.

***Conjoined animals (fig. 10a-b):*** usually antithetic and/or inverted to one another foreparts of natural quadrupeds (lions, dogs, bulls, rams and so forth) conjoined in a common torso, the earliest examples forming an S-shaped

creature. It is also usual to encounter antithetic animals (mostly bulls or lions) conjoined in a frontal common head. The animals conjoined may or may not belong to the same species and on a few examples they are fantastic creatures (e.g. sphinxes) or monster-like (resembling snakes or dragons) rather than natural animals.

***Marine monsters (fig. 11):*** marine creatures, namely fish-like, mostly known from glyptic and a few pictorial vases. They can be gigantic in comparison to other figures on pottery or smaller than them in glyptic illustrations, but as a rule aggressive, on both seals and pottery. It is thus their attitude and association with the other figures on the scenes and not so much their appearance that reflects their unnatural character. They are often associated with chariot scenes and, on pottery, frequently have bird-like attributes (beaked heads).

***Various Hybrids (figs. 12-15):*** various occasionally unidentifiable, fantastic or natural animals, often combining attributes of different animals in an organic, almost natural manner, like the previous categories of fantastic creatures (e.g. monsters with reptile traits, human headed quadrupeds, giant birds, creatures combining bovine and/or swine characteristics, animal-headed birds).

Various types of *hybrids* are encountered on seals and sealings, larnakes and pictorial pottery. They are all studied as a group in the thesis since each on their own achieves neither popularity nor longevity in the Bronze Age, appearing in a small number of examples for a restricted period of time. Therefore, they do not develop specific stylistic traits so as to form a distinct popular group, like that of the *griffin* or the *sphinx*. In fact, some of the examples are unique and seem to be isolated or chance creations, perhaps even failed attempts at depicting an

identifiable, well-known animal or monster, that is, they constitute Rystedt's "bastards" (1988: 267-270).

The term 'hybrids' was preferred to 'composite creatures' as encompassing a larger group of illustrations. It is a more general term describing monsters the constituting parts of which are not always identifiable. A few *hybrids* however can be recognised as originally belonging to a specific animal category and/or have more than one examples.

- *Winged quadrupeds* (fig. 12): often goats, agrimia or lions, but also unidentifiable natural quadrupeds, with wings.
- *Giant birds* (fig. 13): the name defines this type as well, which actually is an over-sized bird with wings that have been claimed as too small to be able to carry the bird in flight (Karageorghis 1958: 383-387). It is encountered on LBA pictorial pottery in association with chariots and is thought to have been inspired by oriental myths, in particular the myth of Anzu (S. Marinatos 1964b: 6-12; Karageorghis 1958: 383-387). Large birds are also seen on larnakes contemporary with pictorial vases (e.g. 890 and 891). A creature of Mycenaean art essentially, it will not be discussed in the present thesis, but is only mentioned as one of the types of Aegean fantastic creatures.
- *Goat-bird* (fig. 14a): identified as part-goat, part-bird hybrids. The forepart is that of the goat, usually horned, while the hind-part forms a tail. The name *goat-bird* was given to the creature by Vermeule and Karageorghis (1982) in *Mycenaean Pictorial Vase Painting* (henceforth *Pictorial*) following Hiller's publication (1975) of an Early Pictorial jug from Aegina depicting the creature (892). There are only four examples (892-895) so far on Mycenaean pictorial pottery, two of which may in fact be just *bastards*.



As the depictions of the creature are not Minoan, it will not be discussed in this study. However, on a cursory note, it is perhaps better justified to interpret it as a *goat-fish* rather than a bird hybrid in view of the similarities in its illustration with the goat-fish of the Oriental repertoire (fig. 14b). Attested in reliefs and apotropaic foundation figurines, they are used in monumental sculpture and are named in rituals at least as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC, in the Middle Assyrian period (Green 1984: 25).

- *Centaurs* (fig. 15): creatures with a human head, torso and arms and quadruped (equine, bovine or other unidentified) lower body, well known in classical Greece. A rather problematic group because the extremely limited number of examples is restricted only in the later part of the Bronze Age. Like the giant birds and the goat-birds, it is an essentially Mycenaean creature and as such will not be discussed here. On Crete, it appears only after the fall of the palatial culture; thus it falls beyond the chronological scope of this thesis.

The following groups are creations of the Kato Zakros workshop and are rarely depicted outside this area.

***Bird-lady and animal-headed man variants (fig. 16a-b)***: not a category of creatures on its own, but rather a subgroup of the bird-ladies<sup>4</sup>. It includes variations of the “canonical” type with *bird-lady* examples one of the characteristics of which has been replaced by “atypical” motifs (e.g. helmets or animal heads in place of bird heads, arms in place of wings and so forth). It should become apparent that in the Zakros deposit the two otherwise quite

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<sup>4</sup> The reasons behind this distinction will be discussed in the course of the Zakros sealings analysis (Chapter 5).

distinct categories of animal-headed men and bird-ladies frequently overlap, as occasionally *animal-headed people* are winged, thus forming a group of creatures linking the *animal-* and *bird-people*.

***Fantasy masks (fig. 17):*** often schematic frontal animal heads (mostly bucrania or lion heads) combined with characteristics of other animals (e.g. boars) or with added unrealistic traits, such as horns ending in bird heads, floral elements and so forth. The Zakros sealing deposit presents an impressively large variety of such fantastic combinations and – with the exception of two more seals now in the Ashmolean Museum, **865** and **866** – has actually produced all of the so far existing examples of *fantasy masks*.

***Fantastic combinations (fig. 18):*** the term is borrowed from the *CMS* volumes and refers to combinations of monsters, animals (birds and/or quadrupeds), human figures (or parts of figures) and even plants that hardly ever appear organic. *Fantastic combinations* seem to be intended to bring together and emphasise the attributes of the chosen components in each case and are restricted to seals/sealings. They are characteristic of the LM IB Zakros sealing deposit (including a small number of the Ayia Triadha and a few more scattered examples), which demonstrates an impressive variety of *fantastic combinations*. Although a number of the Zakros creatures are more ‘naturalistic’, ‘organic’ and are thus included in the hybrids’ categories, the motifs in this group incorporate even plant elements and are the most intriguing and challenging at interpreting.

### ***1.7 After the definition – What?*<sup>5</sup>**

While classifying the imaginary beings of the Aegean, the impression is formed that a certain number of the depictions appear isolated and products of a specific time and place, namely Neopalatial Zakros. Moreover, other types may be too few to promote conclusive interpretations in contrast to creatures like the griffin and the sphinx whose illustrations are quite numerous and have been studied almost exhaustively. Thus, it becomes apparent that definition of the terminology – and consequently identification of the study object – is only a small part in the development of a satisfactory and fruitful methodology and that more steps need to be taken towards a better understanding of monsters and their roles.

It has already been stated that one of the objectives of this dissertation is the compilation of a corpus of the published depictions of the fantastic animals in the Bronze Age Aegean sufficient in size for the study of the subject. Although Nijhowne (1999: 11) observed that “what constitutes adequate is subjective”, especially when the study in question covers an extended period of time, the catalogue formed presents a reasonable quantity of material so as to give as much as possible unbiased results, to allow remarks and comparisons. Specifically, the database is composed from more than 900 depictions of imaginary beings in various forms: seals and sealings, wall paintings, ivory and glass objects (plaques and so forth), metal objects (e.g. daggers), figurines, larnakes and pottery. The greater numbers and variety of hybrids is found on glyptic art objects, i.e. on seals, sealing rings and sealings.

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<sup>5</sup> Title borrowed from Peatfield, A. (1994) “After the ‘Big Bang’– What?” In *Placing the Gods*: 19-36.

### *1.7.1 Gathering the material for the catalogue*

Unpublished examples have been ignored as a rule, even if they have been reported to depict fantastic creatures (e.g. seal with a marine monster from an unpublished German private collection mentioned in *CMS II.4*: LXVIII), unless there is an adequate amount of information on the type of monster, the find context, date and/or location. The preliminary excavation reports regularly published in the *ArchDelt*, *AAA*, *AR*, *BCH* and occasionally in other journals such as *OpAth*, which inform us of recent developments in Greek archaeology, frequently omit or mention briefly the finds relevant to this study, without detailed description or at least dating. In any case they do not comprise final publications and are therefore subject to revision by the excavators. Thus these objects are included in the database only when sufficient information is given in the initial reports, but are omitted from the general discussion in the chapters.

Although it would be virtually impossible to produce a complete catalogue of all the Aegean occurrences of imaginary beings, a sufficient number of BA depictions has already been published. These published examples offer an excellent overview of the patterns of occurrence of fantastic creatures and, consequently, a glimpse into their symbolism and the rationale behind their use in Aegean art. The corpora, publications of bodies of certain types of artefacts, have proven to be particularly useful tools in the gathering of the material for the present study, since information on the bibliography, context, and date, essential to the research, is included in all the following volumes.

In relation to the examples from seals, the *CMS* (1964-2004) volumes form a solid body of work, essential to the beginning of any examination of the topic. Starting from the earliest volume, *CMS I* (1964) with the seals and sealings

from the Athens National Museum, up to the latest publication of the Knossos sealings in *CMS II.8* (2002) and of smaller collections in Greek museums in *CMS V Suppl. 3* (2004), all the *CMS* volumes offer essential information on the date, parallels, context, and further bibliography on the finds. Similarly to other general studies (see literature review), a short investigation of a few fantastic animals can also be found in certain *CMS* volumes (cf. sections on bird-ladies and griffins in *CMS II.4*). Moreover, the series has been accompanied by volumes (*CMS Beihefte*) dedicated to the research of Aegean glyptic and offering, among other studies, insights into the depiction and roles of the fantastic creatures.

Occasionally, the writers of *CMS* series purposely leave out examples that are now missing or misplaced and are thus known only from the excavation reports and publications in which they were originally mentioned, although not always described in detail. For example, two seals from chamber tomb 3 at Varkiza mentioned in *AAA I* (1968): 111 were not included in the *CMS* volumes, since they could not be recovered in the museum. In that case, the material was not included in the database either, unless of course there is a short description in the preliminary report or final publication of the site (e.g. a number of the Little Palace sealings or lentoid seal **887** with a centaur-like creature from tomb LXVI at Prosymna, now missing).

It has to be mentioned that the *CMS* volumes are not without errors or omissions and in particular the earlier ones. Among other problems, chronological attributions are not to be trusted in the volumes edited by Kenna (*CMS VII, VIII, XII* and *XIII*) and errors have been made in the identification of bone and ivory seals (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 59, n. 12, 321; see pp. 343-348 for a

concise critique of the series). Furthermore, seals and sealings have not always been published in the series following the same standards. Direction of stringhole of the seal has been omitted in the early volumes. Tentative attempts at identifying the shape and material of the seals that produced the impressions – although not for all the Phaistos sealings – were first introduced by Pini as late as 1970 in *CMS II.5*. For sealings in particular, the latest re-examination by the *CMS* team of the material from Pylos (Müller et al. 1997) supersedes the previous publications of the material and is essential reading.

Immerwahr's *Aegean Painting in the Bronze Age* offers up-to-date information on the Aegean wall paintings and the iconography of the *larnakes*. According to her, the griffin on the north wall of Xeste 3 in Akrotiri has a protective role on the side of the goddess, together with the monkey in adoration (1990: 62). The two animals “remove the scene from the realm of reality”. Immerwahr compared the griffins of the Knossos Throne Room with those of the *megaron* in the palace of Pylos and although she drew attention to the fact that in both cases they are wingless, in contrast to the usual Minoan and Mycenaean types, she does not explain why.

Moreover, Vermeule and Karageorghis (*Pictorial*) compiled a catalogue of the available examples of Mycenaean pictorial pottery with most types of the fantastic creatures, excluding the Cretan examples. They associated the Melian bird vases with their demonic birds or griffins and the griffin iconography of the Shaft Graves at Mycenae.

Similarly, most of the Mycenaean depictions of fantastic figures in ivory are cited in Poursat's *Catalogue des Ivoires Mycéniens du Musée National d'Athènes* (1977a) and *Les Ivoires Mycéniens* (1977b). The two volumes deal with

Mycenaean ivories, which comprise the larger part of such material in the Aegean with occasional references to and comparisons with Cretan or Eastern finds in the course of the stylistic analysis. A description of the motifs and references to similar representations accompany the catalogues, while the author also devotes sections to the analysis of genii, sphinxes and griffins on ivory (1977b: 58-68, 222-223). However, he refuses to identify his “crocodiles” (1977b: 88-90) as Minoan dragons and, thus, was not able to incorporate them into the Aegean repertoire and compare the ivory finds with the glyptic examples, but considers them a foreign decorative motif (1977b: 222).

The studies of Xenaki-Sakellariou (1958) and Kenna (CS) are supplementary to the *CMS* series, yet indispensable tools for the study of Aegean glyptic. They published seals not included so far in the *CMS* volumes, i.e. the Giamalakis Collection at the Herakleion Museum and the Minoan seals from the Ashmolean Museum. Xenaki-Sakellariou dedicated short sections on two fantastic creatures, the “gorgon heads” and the “Minotaur”. Her analysis of the “Minotaur” (1958: 64-65) focused on the origin and character of the monster and she concluded that it was not associated with cult or ritual in view of its exclusion from religious scenes and its solitary appearance on seals. Similar status was also ascribed to other animal-headed demons. Kenna (CS: 132) suggested the possibility that the seals depicting Minoan genii may have been thought to possess an amuletic or religious character, but due to the fine work on them, they cannot be included “in the class of ordinary talismanic seals”.

It should be noted that the above corpora, with which the gathering of the material began, are not necessarily up to date (with the exception of the ongoing *CMS* series), since new examples are being discovered continuously, which will

inevitably lead to omission of data from this catalogue. Moreover, detailed publications of excavated sites and their finds rarely follow soon after the completion of the excavations. Thus, the recently discovered gold ring and lentoid with griffins from Dimini, Thessaly (Adrymi-Sismani 2005) are not included in the catalogue, since they have not been published properly yet and insufficient information is available on their find context and associations.

### ***1.7.2 Dating the material***

The available data span virtually the entire Bronze Age in the Aegean. The earliest albeit scanty examples date already to the Early Minoan period, while the depiction of fantastic animals on various media continues after the fall of the Mycenaean palaces and the end of the Bronze Age. The tracing and analysis of changes through time in the usage, iconography and the media on which such illustrations are found can be challenging.

Among other impediments, the difficulty lies with the problematic dating of not only small finds themselves, but also of architectural remains, i.e. their find context. However, dates given in thorough older publications have been challenged and their revision in the light of recent research has been proposed (Niemeier 1981: 91-104). Setting the problem of dating the find context aside for the moment, assigning dates to the records themselves is rather complex. For example, seals, along with stone relief vases or ivory reliefs, belong to a category of objects “the date of manufacture of which cannot assumed to be given by the context in which they were found” (Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 63; earlier noted by Betts & Younger 1982: 112, 120).



Moreover, in the case of glyptic examples, inadequate illustrations and the illegibility, worn state or uniqueness of seals and sealings does not permit their safe stylistic and chronological assignment (see discussion with critical review of previous scholarship and more references in Betts & Younger 1982: 104-121). For example, Younger (1987: 47) calculated that ca. 7% of seals and 14% of sealings in his working files at the time remained unattributed “largely because ... they are not well illustrated” (for the significance of accurate drawings and the research problems caused by erroneous illustrations see also Krzyszkowska 2005a: 7-10). The frescoes may similarly cause problems, since they may be found *in situ* or discarded and the date of their painting can be disputed. Immerwahr (1990) analyses the problem of assigning dates in her study of Aegean frescoes, while Driessen & Macdonald (1997: 62-64) give examples concerning not only wall paintings but also seals and other material.

In order to avoid such pitfalls and since the chronological problems are outside the scope of this study, I used the chronology already assigned to the various finds in their publications, and, preferably, in the various corpora, when available (whether these were based on typological criteria or context). Immerwahr’s dates (1990) are the ones adopted for the wall paintings with minor refinements by Hood (2005: 45-82) in the case of the Knossos frescoes. *Pictorial* and *Tiryns XII* were the guides for pictorial vases, although it should be noted that occasionally they conflicted with the attributions by Sakellarakis 1992. The dates given by Poursat (1977a & 1977b) are followed in the case of ivories. Some of the records however are not included in the corpora and are known from excavation publications or only preliminary reports. In those cases the

chronology given by the excavator is the one recorded in the database as the *terminus post quem non*.

As for the glyptic evidence, I generally followed the dates assigned by Younger (1989b, 1987, 1986, 1985 & 1984) in his series of articles on Late Bronze Age stylistic groups and workshops rather than those by Kenna in the *CMS* (see list above) and *CS* volumes. The dates assigned in the *CMS* volumes edited by Pini were not changed. For example, 660 and 642 were given a broad Neopalatial and LM II dates respectively by the *CMS* writers (van Effenterre and Kenna respectively, with dating by the latter being notoriously imprecise), but should be assigned to the LM IIIA1 “Spectacle-Eye Group” according to Younger (1986: 135; Müller 2000: 186-190 questioned Younger’s wide definitions of the “Speckies”). Thus, whenever those collided, it is Younger’s dates that were preferred as a rule, although his attributions have been debated occasionally (see for example critique by Krzyszkowska 2005a: 326-328). Still, as Krzyszkowska (2005a: 327) herself admitted, no systematic refutation of his attributions has been published and at least in the case of the MPG, Younger’s grouping was largely confirmed by the study of Dickers (2001). Finally, it should be noted that the Cut Style seals are given a LBA I-II (LM IB-II) date in view of the mounting discoveries of such seals in LM IB contexts, although the floruit of the style is traditionally placed in the LM II and its production is thought to have continued through the LM/LH IIIA1 (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 147, 202, n. 35).

Seals, sealings and rings comprise the largest group of imaginary animals’ depictions and it is noteworthy that unfortunately they come too often with unknown provenance. In fact, as much as almost 55 % of the seals and sealings depicting imaginary beings are of unknown, disputed, unpublished or

undatable findspots<sup>6</sup>. These can only be useful in the study of iconography and the detection of trends in the various periods. Moreover, it is not unusual to unearth seals of earlier dates in later contexts, demonstrating their use as heirlooms over long periods of time. In such cases the iconography of the seal will be considered under the chapter on the respective period, while the context may be used tentatively to indicate the possible significance of the motifs in later periods.

### ***1.8 The significance of ‘context’***

The completion of the first two steps, i.e. giving adequate definitions and collecting the available data, needs to be followed by the establishment of an approach to the study of the examples. The examples collected represent a virtually intact source of data for the study of symbolic behaviour. Not only seals, but also most objects in the catalogue, have been published and studied extensively, as can be seen in the literature review. However, with a few exceptions, the general concern of the authors of the various corpora lay with trying to date the objects, to identify stylistic distinctions, foreign or domestic influences, and so forth. Study of the objects within their context, whether social, economic, religious or find context has rarely been attempted (for instance, Laffineur 1990 constitutes an exception).

Nevertheless, the view taken here is that examination of any ancient artefact, architectural monument, written record and symbol is successful in producing conclusions and interpretations closer to the ‘truth’, when the context into which it was created and used is taken into consideration (see Wright 1995:

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<sup>6</sup> Krzyszkowska (2005a: 10, n. 23) reaches a similar “rough” estimate of the unprovenanced Aegean seals and sealings, at over 50%.

342-343 on context significance in relation to interpretation of symbols and ritual). In her study of Mesopotamian cylinders seals Nijhowne (1999: 11) stressed that their “removal from the context in which they were made and used has limited the kind of interpretation that has been possible concerning what seal compositions may have meant”.

The notion of *context*, as will be developed in this thesis, needs to be clarified (Hodder 1986 & 1987 are coherent presentations of contextual archaeology that views material culture as an active element in social interaction; for a brief historical account of the approach of Aegean archaeologists to the idea of “archaeological context” and its role in the interpretation of archaeological remains see German 2005: 72-73). The idea of “context” here is influenced by the model put forward by Goodison and Morris (1998a: 14-16 & 1998b: 113-132) who argued for the need to “recontextualise” ancient artefacts and can be divided into categories, ranging from the *specific* to the more *general*. Any given artefact lends itself to a number of different approaches that can be employed to understand its function and associations within the environment in which it was created and thus several questions can be raised on the examples of fantastic creatures that make up the catalogue.

### ***1.8.1 Context of the image and its medium***

The first stage is the description of the object itself, which assists in understanding the purpose for which it was manufactured and puts it within the context of similar artefacts. This will involve the examination of its iconography (whether exceptional to the general trends or not) and the choice of medium for

its depiction. *Accurate descriptions of the motifs* are then necessary in order to recognise and categorise monsters (extensive discussion in Pini 1992a: 11-22).

As has already been mentioned, a quick review of only the glyptic examples reveals that the identification of a creature as a “monster” or “monstrous quantity” or demonic in general has been often dependant on the researchers’ point of view and their arbitrary interpretations. These differentiations are explained by the simple fact that monsters are frequently defined in relation to modern standards of what is good, acceptable, normal or natural (see above section 1.6.1 on segregation of fantastic vs. exotic creatures). “So that it is we who decide – in some sense of ‘decide’ – what counts as monstrous; and so that in different times, places and cultures, or from different viewpoints within a single culture, different answers will emerge” (Atherton 1998: x). Such problems are frequently encountered in the publications by Kenna (see section 1.6.2), whereas significant progress can be observed for example in the work of Crowley and Younger (Crowley 1992: 23-37; Younger 1992: 257-294; idem 1988 to mention but a few publications).

Accurate descriptions are not sufficient though, since they only form the first stage of the process to understand the Aegean monstrous beings. Symbols can be defined as “signs drawn from one cultural context (where they acquire meaning in relation and contradiction to other signs) applied metaphorically in another” (Furley 1981: 98). or as Renfrew (1994a: 5) simplified it, “something which stands for or represents something else”; and it is that “something else” which is of interest now.

The *iconography* will be further looked at, but not in regards to typology and style as these have already been studied by various scholars. The

development of new iconographical themes and the transformation of the pre-existing ones are of greater interest to the present study. The political and/or religious iconography of the Aegean BA was presumably sensitive to changes in Minoan and Mycenaean social, political and economic life and conditions and it will be attempted to determine the degree to which this “sensitivity” influenced the iconography of the imaginary beings. So, although stylistic innovations and characteristics will be mentioned, they will only serve to demonstrate the combination of iconographic changes with the introduction of the themes to new media and contexts. The latter two are of primary interest to the study, rather than the novelties and/or (i.e. foreign) influences in style and rendering of the fantastic animals.

*Comparisons with the symbolism of natural animals*, e.g. the popular in the BA motif of the bull, may help towards this direction. The animals making up the composite creatures can be examined to determine the characteristics of their depiction in the iconography of the period and the symbolism behind that. Moreover, implications of the interchangeable animals in the iconography, natural or fantastic, are also of significance in the interpretation of motifs and will provide clues as to the understanding of the monsters’ role(s).

Although Boardman (1970: 53) has noted, with reference to Minoan glyptic, that “iconography gives no encouragement to attempts to identify the functions of particular demons, let alone name them or equate them with later Greek monsters”, this view may be too pessimistic. Iconography can promote our understanding of the function of motifs when, among others, the factor of the *medium* on which it appears and its function are also considered. Exclusive examination of frescoes for example, will only provide us with a partial view of

the depiction of imaginary beings. Similarly, it has been claimed that seals, at least in the Near East, may virtually act as extensions of their owners, a kind of substitute for the person itself (Black & Green 1998: 27). It follows that the appearance of a motif on a seal – even an Aegean one – will be understood differently from the same motif on a vase and, consequently, the study of one medium alone is not adequate for the general understanding of any given motif. Thus, the possible preference for particular media or the equal representation of monsters on all of them should be investigated.

### ***1.8.2 Find context***

The significance of context and surrounding finds can be well demonstrated in the study of wall paintings. Doumas (2000a: 17) addressed the problem of ‘slippery interpretations’ in relation to the Thera wall paintings and concluded that “the architecture of the building, its use, its furniture and its equipment in general not only affect the thematic repertoire but are also affected by it. Consequently, they should not be neglected during the attempted interpretation”. As a result of this approach he (2000a: 18) cannot justify the interpretation of the West House female figure as a priestess in view of the fact that she is placed next to a sanitary facility in the building.

Renfrew (1981: 67) also addressed the difficulties met in such attempts and observed that “the key findspots, where the artefacts are found actually *in situ*, are regrettably few both in Crete and in the Greek mainland, and some even of these, while establishing undoubtedly significant associations, do not document the context of primary use”. This is clear in this study of moveable objects such as finds from tombs: although certain artefacts were especially made

for funerary use (e.g. the Shaft Grave cut-outs), there are also those that had been used by the deceased during their lifetimes and consequently primary use cannot be readily established.

In short, the *find context* is considered essential in the understanding of the imaginary beings in the Aegean. “The ‘cult’ or ‘ritual’ or ‘religious’ significance of artefacts found in archaeological deposits can only be established, in the absence of very circumstantial written records, by their association” (Renfrew 1981: 67). Likewise, the administrative, apotropaic, emblematic and decorative roles of any given motif may be established based on a contextual analysis. Therefore, the place of their discovery, whether intentional or accidental, a primary or secondary deposit will have to be examined first in order for their function to be established. Patterns of repetition and their association with other finds will highlight the meaning and use of these symbols.

### ***1.8.3 Socio-political, economic and technological contexts***

Moreover, association with the *social context* of the period in question can provide hints to the function of the fantastic animals. “...Since people do not produce artefacts in a vacuum, material remains must be interpreted as much as possible in reference to their original cultural setting” (Nijhowne 1999: 1). Nijhowne (1999: 6) emphasised that post-processualist thought is characterised by the importance attached to the role of material symbols as they relate to shaping ideology, power, and religion within a society and the emphasis on the active role material culture plays in the construction of social reality. Consequently, the socio-political and economic, even the technological backgrounds, that is, the “evidence ... available for understanding the society



which produced and used” the artefacts (Goodison & Morris 1998a: 15) is of major significance.

#### ***1.8.4 Religious context***

The religious nature of fantastic animals is indisputable and, at first glance, their symbolism is closely related to the religious rather than the secular sphere of beliefs, as much as these can be separated. Iconographical transformations will be associated if possible with changes in religion and its performance throughout the Bronze Age. As Wright (1995: 343) has pointed out, “it is important to view religion in the *context of change*, to see how it evolves and to study that evolution in relation to a society and its institutions”. Architectural remains of sacred places, identification of special equipment for rituals performed there, depiction of ritual practices and acts and the development of specific artistic representations for use in those areas, all will provide the background, since symbols (and by association monsters?) were used to focus attention on the sacred zones and consequently on the rituals exercised there and implied the presence of the deity (Renfrew 1994b: 49-51).

#### ***1.8.5 International context***

The lack of evidence as regards the find context can be occasionally compensated with the presentation of parallels from culturally homogeneous areas. For example, although Dumas (2000a: 18) was cautious in attributing religious significance to the monkeys fresco from Room Beta 6, the greater part of which was washed away by a later torrent leaving hardly any evidence of its associations, the existence of other monkey frescoes from Crete may lead to

interpretations of the Thera fresco too. It is in this sense that the *international context* will be looked into, with the emphasis placed on the areas with which contact was more intense and influences, especially in certain periods, more prominent and reciprocal.

The mainland, the Aegean islands and Cyprus are the primary areas of such contacts with Crete. Their counterparts in the Orient may also have had some influence on the depiction and function of the Aegean imaginary beings, even indirectly and long after their introduction in Crete. Furthermore, the meaning of hybrids on the Greek mainland, Cyprus, the Near East and Egypt may provide parallels and analogies for the Aegean. Crowley (1995: 484) for example concluded on the basis of parallels from other traditions that hybrids are supernatural creatures and belong to the “power elite” of the Aegean. The study of the Cypriot, Near Eastern and Egyptian monsters and demons is of significance then, albeit perhaps not primary, in that these may have inspired similar interpretations, attitudes, or even imitation by the Minoans and Mycenaeans.

## ***1.9 Literature review: past research and new prospects***

Monsters and demons became part of the Aegean iconographic repertoire – and consequently of its symbolic system – during the Bronze Age. Their first examples made their appearance in the Early Bronze Age with only an extremely small amount of rather problematic examples and more decidedly in Middle Minoan Crete. Many of these first hybrids and monsters disappeared with the end of the Bronze Age – a few only temporarily – while others appeared in classical times to replace the ones lost. The fantastic creatures of later antiquity hold a well-documented part in classical mythology, are frequently featured in literature and played a significant role in the art of the Aegean region until (and beyond) the end of antiquity.

We know of the classical monsters through the works of the various Greek and Latin writers, such as Herodotus (*Histories II* 44, *III* 116, *IV* 13-27), who referred to the griffins as the “gold-keepers” of the north inhabiting the lands beyond Issedonia. Mounted nomads, the one-eyed Arimaspeans, fought with the griffins and stole their gold. Aristophanes (*Frogs* 928-938) mentioned the griffin-eagle, along with other hybrids, namely horse-cocks and goat-stags. Aeschylus was the first writer to associate the (wingless) eagle-beaked griffins with the land of Scythians the desert of which the monsters inhabit in his tragedy *Prometheus Bound* (790-805). Pliny also described the griffins as creatures that dig up and watch the gold in the Scythian gold mines, and discussed their appearance and their habit of tossing up gold when making their nests (*Natural History* 7.10, 10.136). Finally, Pausanias (1.24.5-6, 8.2.7) described the griffin leonine bodies, their beaks and wings of eagles and noted that gold emerges near or on the surface of the earth in their land.

In *Theogony* (326) Hesiod referred to the sphinx as a threat to the Thebans. The offspring, according to one of the versions of the myth, of Typhon and Echidna was also discussed by Apollodorus (3.5.7-8) and was featured in Euripides (*Phoin.* 1018-1032) and in one comedy by Nikokhares (cf. also *Pausanias*, 9.26.2-3; Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 67).

The Minotaur (Apollodorus, 3.3.3-4, 3.15.8; Plutarch, *Moralia*, *Greek Questions*, 35), the centaurs (Apollodorus, *Epitome* 1.20; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9.123, 12.210, 12.504; Nikokhares, a lost comedy featuring the creature), and the Sirens (Homer, *Odyssey* 12.39 ff., 12.165) to name but a few, all played their parts in the adventures of gods and heroes together with many more monsters and composite creatures. They were occasionally divinities themselves and in other instances the tools of divine will, personifications of evil or wisdom.

A view different from that of poetry and myth is offered through the work of the philosopher Empedokles who included mythical monsters in his cosmology. He discussed such extinct species including for example human-headed oxen and ox-headed humans probably in an attempt to give a scientific explanation for the beings so heavily featured in mythology (see Sue Blundell in Mayor 2000: 216). He argued that they arose naturally, but due to their inability to defend, feed, or reproduce they eventually died out (Mayor 2000: 215-216). Lucretius (*On the Nature of Things* 4.726-743, 5.93-292, 5.787-933) continued with the “scientific” approach and wrote that, although hybrids of physically incompatible species, such as centaurs, were biologically impossible, nature had in the past produced many different monsters and big sized animals. Coinciding with Empedokles, Lucretius also claimed that those died out due to lack of food and their inability to reproduce. Even Aristotle was claimed, probably

mistakenly, to have written two works titled *On Composite Animals* and *On Mythical Animals* (Mayor 2000: 220).

Evidently, the modern scholar is well acquainted with both the nature and types of representation of classical monsters and of the attitude towards them through iconographic evidence, but also – and more importantly – through texts. In literature, imaginary beings are involved in myths, are talked of or even have leading roles in theatrical plays, are rejected or explained by philosophers. This, however, is not the case for their Bronze Age predecessors for which analogous perceptions, functions and meaning cannot be deduced merely on the basis of later (i.e. classical) texts and iconography has been hitherto the only tool for their understanding.

### ***1.9.1 General studies and publications of material<sup>7</sup>***

Modern scholars who have written about mythical beasts in the prehistoric Aegean will be mentioned briefly in chronological order and some of their concerns and interpretations will be presented. Although only a few are exclusively concerned with the Aegean monsters, an adequate number of articles or chapters in books is devoted to their study. The development of the Near Eastern and Egyptian imaginary beings, according to the present state of research in the field, will also be sketched. In that manner the need for analogous studies in the Aegean area and new approaches to the subject will be stressed.

Publications of sealing deposits and other finds as well as iconographic studies of Minoan and Mycenaean glyptic or other arts have occasionally mentioned and summarily interpreted a few of the imaginary beings, at times

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<sup>7</sup> An unpublished doctoral thesis should be added to the works referenced here, although I have not been able to access it: N. Schlager (1981) *Dämonen-darstellungen in der minoischen und mykenischen Glyptik. Eine Typologie* (Archaeological Institute of Vienna).

drawing attention to the fact that more research should be conducted. They have mainly focused on the griffin, sphinx and/or genius, usually grouped together under the general title “monsters” or “fabulous creatures”. Stylistic matters and the place of origin are the primary questions of most relevant studies, and the nature of the Aegean imaginary beings is generally considered as sufficiently interpreted through such iconographic analyses.

An intriguing variety of fantastic creatures is depicted on the Zakros sealings. Hogarth (1902), who excavated and published the larger part of the assemblage, organised them in groups according to the types of wings, compared them with similar figures from other Aegean sites and acknowledged an Egyptian origin for the griffin, sphinx and the “minotaur”. He thought of the vast majority of those fantastic beasts as locally produced, as simple “variations of a very few types” and maintained that, with the exception of the Minotaur types, they have nothing to do with cult. According to him, the Zakros figures are “a product of a yet further stage of art, which has passed from monsters with a meaning to monsters that are purely fancy” (1902: 91; see also *PM I*: 701 for a similar view by Evans).

Among more specialised publications, *L’Arte e la Religione Preellenica* of Milani (1905) should be mentioned. It concentrated on the head cover of the bird-women of Zakros, the topic that G. Mylonas also examined in “The Figured Mycenaean Stelai” (1951) by comparing their helmets/head covers with similar ones of military use.

In his study “Le Cretule di Zakro” and “Le Cretule di Haghia Triada” (1925/1926) Levi dated the figures from both sites, analysed them aesthetically, and compared them with similar creatures both from mainland Greece and the

East. He re-examined the sealings from Zakros and was the first to publish those from Ayia Triadha, thus forming the fullest catalogues until the recent re-examination of the finds by the *CMS* authors.

Evans published the finds from his excavations at Knossos in the *Palace of Minos (PM I-IV)* and expressed his thoughts on the griffin, the sphinx, the “Minotaur”, the Minoan genius and the winged creatures of Zakros. He sought their origin in Egyptian examples and took their appearance as evidence of religious syncretism between Crete and Egypt (*PM I: 14-19*). Specifically, he interpreted the wealth of religious scenes and symbols in the Neopalatial period as indicative of a fusion of beliefs between Crete and Egypt, with the frequent depictions of griffin, the sphinx and the genius and the adoption of the Egyptian waz and ankh symbols as its most prominent examples (*PM I: 14*). He proposed that the bird-women of the Zakros sealings may have been the prototypes for the Classical Harpies (*PM I: 701*), just like the dragon on the Ring of Nestor (37) may have been a forerunner of the Cerberus. Evans (1925) also wrote an article in which he used the iconography of the Ring of Nestor to reconstruct the Minoan beliefs in the afterlife. His examination of the Ring of Nestor and its alleged connection with the afterlife beliefs of the period led him to propose an interesting role for the griffin depicted on it, that of the “chief inquisitor” (*PM III: 154*). He (*PM III: 316*) recognised no religious content in the motif of the “Minotaur” and sought its origins in the oriental bull-men (*PM I: 69*). However, the Near Eastern bull-men are in fact hybrids with human head, torso and arms and bovine hindquarters, and thus fundamentally differ from their Aegean namesakes.

In the view of Kunze (1932), the griffins and the sphinxes were the original familiars of the Mistress of the Beasts, and represented the visible embodiments of demonic forces, analogous to the later sirens of the archaic and classical periods. In his discussion of the bull-man Persson (1942: 98) recognised in it the so-called Priest-King of Knossos represented in the form of the “divine bull”.

In his *Kingship and the Gods* (1948), Frankfort looked into the institution of kingship in the ancient Near East throughout the Bronze Age, until ca. 650 BC, and its association with the motif of the sphinx. He saw the sphinx as representing the king, not only as a being of superhuman physical power, but of a quality of power, which is, in Egypt, characteristic of the gods.

Furumark (1949) had of course followed the development of the griffin and sphinx motifs and his work still remains a useful guide to their study on pottery. He observed that the representations of quadruped animals and men (including the fantastic animals) in Minoan Crete “are connected with special types of composition; they never became stock motives of a purely decorative significance”. It was those Cretan models that, according to Furumark, inspired the first MH II appearance of the griffin on the mainland, where the motif became eventually more popular (idem 1949: 199, 232).

Nilsson (*MMR*<sup>2</sup>) studied the origin and the presence of the winged animals in the Minoan and Mycenaean religion and interpreted the birds that appear in religious scenes, as epiphanies of the gods, just like the hovering figures. However, he thought of hybrids as forces protective to the humans and separated them from the Minoan demons, which were not gods, but servants to them, ministers of their cults. He also assigned (*MMR*<sup>2</sup>: 374) a cultic role to bull-



men, based on the religious symbols often accompanying them, namely horns of consecration, figure-of-eight shields, stars and impaled triangles.

Xenaki-Sakellariou (1958: 80-82) reviewed the apotropaic motifs of the Gorgon heads and established the main characteristics of the type. The discovery and publication of the Phaistos sealings by D. Levi (1957/1958), which predate those of Zakros, provided new material and induced a re-examination of the fantastic creatures, their first appearance in the Aegean, their date and origin.

Boardman (1970: 52-53, 58, 60-62) discussed briefly the monsters of BA glyptic in his survey of Greek glyptic covering a period beyond the end of the Bronze Age. He included the depiction of bull-men, the commonest new monstrous creations, in his discussion of the novelties in LM II-III A1 and stressed that the reminiscence through these images of the classical story of the Minotaur may be quite fortuitous. He assigned the role of the demon-guardian to the griffin but noted that in many scenes griffins, sphinxes or lions appear interchangeable and suggested that particular powers may not have been attributed to different beasts. As to the genii, Boardman (1970: 53) proposed that, had they any religious significance, it may have been as weather spirits, although they also hunt and carry animal bodies. Finally, he dated the introduction of the “bird goddess” (i.e. the bird-lady) in LM IIIB-C.

N. Platon (1970: 59-68) conveniently summarised the contemporary views on the Creto-Mycenaean world of demons and supernatural beings. Demons are the intermediaries between gods and humans; they perform in rituals and practice their beneficial power derived from the gods. He expressed the general difficulty on recognising demons perceived as real by the peoples of the Aegean or as beings created by the fancy of the artists with the purpose of

establishing variety and uniqueness in their products and distinguished between apotropaic gorgon heads, bull-men and genii, cynocephaloi and bird-headed demons. He associated the latter and the griffin with a chthonic cult based on the iconography of the Nestor Ring (37) and thought that griffins and sphinxes represent extensions of divine powers accompanying gods and their representatives (kings and high priests) or symbolising the presence of gods.

Schliemann (1976, reprint edition) falsely accepted an Indian origin for the griffin while publishing the gold ornaments of griffins from Grave Circle A. The creature, according to him, came to Greece from India (where it was sacred to the sun) as an attendant of Dionysus and thus became the symbol of wisdom and enlightenment.

The study of Weingarten (1983a) on the “Zakro Master” and his workshop is extremely significant in that it went beyond mere stylistic analyses of the ‘Master’s’ work and investigated the Cretan monster tradition prior to LM IB. She discussed the local origin of many of the Zakros monsters and included earlier gorgon heads and bird-like figures as sources of inspiration for the generally unexplained types depicted on the Kato Zakros sealing deposit (Weingarten 1983a: 19-100). For the first time since their discovery by Hogarth, a scholar attempted to incorporate those demonic figures within the Minoan tradition and did not see in them only creatures of fancy.

Morgan in *The Miniature Wall Paintings of Thera* (1988) connected the depiction of the griffin in the exotic landscape of the Theran fresco (288) with the lion and the warriors of the adjacent paintings. The decorations on the stems of ships in procession are probably also meant to be griffins (289 - Immerwahr 1989: 75; Hood 1978: 64; Immerwahr 1977: 173-191). Furthermore, she

examined the griffin and the context of its illustration throughout the Mycenaean world (e.g. its appearance on Shaft Grave weapons), reaching interesting results about its interpretation as a protective emblem of the warrior-status men, a role similar to that of the lion. “By sympathetic magic the warrior may have wished to absorb the strength and speed of the feline killers, even if it involved the legendary killing of the creatures themselves as a means of usurping their power” (1988: 53). She suggested a more general symbolism for the early Mycenaean imagery, in contrast to the later 13<sup>th</sup> century ivories, which might “illustrate a mythic tale” (1988: 54).

Younger (1988) compiled a catalogue of the LBA seals about 7% of which depict monsters. He drew attention to the fact that types other than the griffin, sphinx, genius and dragon have been relatively understudied and listed among those “minor monsters” the bull-woman, calf-man, lion-man, winged agrimi, agrimi-man and -woman, lion- and lady-eagle, and a large fish that attacks animals and chariots. Younger (1988: xi) suggested that the latter may pay honour to the shark and the former ones may hypothetically represent people “dressed up in the garb of totemic animals”. At the same time he noted how little the iconography of seals conveys about the concepts that informed the depicted activities, the Minoan-Mycenaean society or everyday life (idem 1988: xi-xii).

Bernal (1991) considered the sphinx a direct Egyptian import and took it as yet another piece of evidence connecting the Boeotian Thebes with Egyptian Thebes during EH III. He attempted to prove in that way the existence of an Egyptian colony at Thebes at the time, further substantiated, according to him, by the tombs of Amphion and Zethos, the draining of the Lake Kopais, and the association of the sphinx with the sun (1991: 18-19).

Crowley's study on the cultural interrelations between the Aegean and the East (1989) focused on the transference of artistic motifs within the eastern Mediterranean. She has concluded that the griffin was transferred to the Aegean inspired by Mitannian art, while the sphinx and the genius were inspired by the Egyptian tradition (1989: 182). An interpretation of the motifs and an attempt to justify their acceptance or rejection accompany her comparative study of the appearance of the griffin, the sphinx and the genius in the regions investigated. She explained for example the appearance of the griffin and especially its Mycenaean popularity through a brief comparison between the eastern examples and the Aegean ones. She reached the conclusion that it was a symbol of the power; the "Griffin" residing with the royal house of Pylos (297) was something similar to the much later Apteris Nike. Perhaps it was a symbol for the Mycenaean fearsome aggression or, as she suggested, there was a link between the Mycenaeans, the Mitannians, and northern people, a link which cannot as yet be clearly discerned, but which would account for the Mycenaeans' ardent adoption of the griffin motif. However, once more the only monsters examined are the griffin, the sphinx and the genius, whereas the large variety of other Aegean fantastic creatures was overlooked.

Weingarten (1992: 25-37) included the Zakros sealings in her study of the "multiple sealing system" (the *MSS*) of Minoan Crete, along with the sealings from the MM IIIB Temple Repositories at Knossos and some from MM IIB Phaistos. Although her relevant work did not feature the role of the fantastic creatures as such in the iconography of the seals and sealings under study, it is still innovative in inspiring a new approach to the subject. She has pointed out some of their peculiarities: the Zakros seals owners participating in the system.

which seems to have been the predominant sealing system at the LM IB palaces, were restricted to *MSS* affairs only; around 65% of the sealtypes depicted monsters, almost all by the hand of the 'Zakro Master'. There seems to be an intentional similarity among the seals, perhaps with the aim of exercising similar authority.

N. Marinatos (1993) incorporated a brief reference to the griffin and the genius in her examination of the Minoan religion. Besides their role as guardians and companions of deities (griffins) or ministers of cult (demons), she also underlines their predatory character, suggesting that the Minoans perceived them as superior to the natural predators (e.g. the lion) and this may well have been the reason behind their invention. Dickinson (1994: 122) assumed that all these peculiar combinations of human and animal parts on the sealings from Zakros may well have a special explanation related to administrative needs, rather than being of an exclusively religious character.

Mayor (2000) and West (1997) expressed quite interesting ideas on the griffin, even though they both focused on its occurrence in later contexts. Mayor (2000: 16) saw the griffin as no simple composite but as a creature of folklore grounded in naturalistic details, not belonging with other imaginary creatures of Greek myth (Pegasus, Sphinx, Minotaur, and Centaurs), in which it played no part whatsoever. According to her argumentation (2000: 44-45), the form acquired by the griffin was the result of observation of fossil dinosaur bones, which people reconstructed using traits of animals already familiar to them. Thus, "the griffin was much more than a static decorative motif; it was imagined and depicted as a real animal with recognizable behavioral traits" (eadem 2000: 26). West (1997) suggested a connection with the Hebrew cherub, and justifies it

with the possible relation of their names and their similar function, since they both serve as divine mounts.

Güntner (*Tiryns XII*: 2000) gathered the known representations of sphinxes and demonic creatures on pottery and corrected some of the examples in *Pictorial* (in relation to their date or descriptions). Furthermore, he added two new examples of sphinxes found on the pottery from the latest excavations at Tiryns.

### ***1.9.2 Specialised studies and articles on the Aegean fantastic creatures***

The griffin and the sphinx are the two fantastic creatures that have been most thoroughly examined. Their appearance in the Aegean art and its relationship to the N. Eastern, Anatolian and Egyptian civilisations have intrigued the archaeologists who investigated their origin, roles and development in their representation.

Before the book of Tzavella-Evjen (1970), no comprehensive study of the winged creatures of the Aegean art had been undertaken. She examined both the fantastic and natural winged animals and their origin, interpreted their presence in the Aegean pictorial scenes, and assembled a catalogue of their depictions on various media. She suggested that the basic difference between the Eastern and Minoan representations is that the Eastern ones are mythological, while the Minoan ones are worship scenes; in the Aegean griffins and sphinxes appear as symbols of the power of the gods, whereas in Egypt they embody the might of the Pharaohs (1970: 101).

In her thesis Rhyne (1971) examined the Aegean “animal style”, analysing aesthetically the griffin and the sphinx in the contexts of the “violent”

Mycenaean and “peaceful” Minoan arts. Her catalogue is comprehensive, although naturally more examples have been unearthed and published since then.

The then current stage of studies specialising in hybrid figures was summarised in the collection of papers *Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* edited by Fakkas, Harper and Harrison (1987). The papers in the volume summarised the work already conducted, ranging from prehistory to the medieval period and covering the Levant, Egypt and Europe and presented the problems in their study (i.e. lack of accompanying texts in Mesopotamia). However, with the exception of the Minoan genius, the Aegean fantastic creatures were not examined, making thus even more evident the need for an overall investigation of the Aegean monsters and demons.

D’Albiac (1995) studied the wings of monsters in the Aegean with the aim to offer insight into the manner and date of the motifs’ transference from the Orient. She based her approach on the fact that the hybrids have often been perceived as signs of the contact between different civilisations as it is improbable that they were imagined in the same way in different areas simultaneously and argued that the two monsters had been imported as symbols and guardians of vegetation. According to her, it was to this function that the decoration of their wings with the stylised ivy motifs and the spirals alluded, at least originally.

### *1.9.3 The griffin<sup>8</sup>*

The griffin has been the subject of various studies and is in fact mentioned quite often in the literature. Frankfort (1936/1937) wrote a specialised study, in which the history of the Cretan griffin can be followed and a Syrian origin is established. More specifically, in his “Notes on the Cretan Griffin”, Frankfort suggested a Syrian source both for the Aegean and the Egyptian griffin. Moreover, he sought an interpretation for the griffin and the winged griffin-headed demon considering the former a terrifying power and the latter a protective, prophylactic figure, perhaps even two aspects of “a great cosmic force” (1936/1937: 120). Finally, he maintained that the griffin is connected with funerary beliefs, acts as an “angel of death”, and in that sense may be compared with the later soul-birds, the Harpies and the Sirens, all creatures related with the terror inspired by death.

In the article of Leibovitch “Les Griffon dans le Moyen-Orient Antique” (1955), the roles of the griffin in the Eastern civilisations and the names given to it are under study. His earlier publication, “Le Griffon” (1946), while focusing on the Egyptian griffins, also mentioned typological characteristics of the Minoan and Mycenaean griffins, talked of motif transferences between Egypt and the Aegean and associated the monster with Nemesis (as did Flagge 1975).

Dessenne (1957b) investigated the griffin, as it is represented in the eastern civilisations and the Aegean during the second millennium BC, and the cultural interrelations within the eastern Mediterranean. His study however was not simply comparative, but mainly typological, accompanied by an incomplete catalogue. According to Dessenne (1957b: 212-213) there is a hierarchy between

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<sup>8</sup> For a useful summary of previous studies on Aegean griffins see also Tamvaki 1974: 288-292.



the griffin and the sphinx, with the latter heralding over the griffin due to its human head. Benson (1959) classified the griffins as offensive, war-like, seated and peaceful, in his short article “The griffin in the Minoan-Mycenaean World”.

Goldman (1960) studied post-BA griffins starting with the griffin-protome cauldrons of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. He compared them with their earlier and contemporary representations in the east through his study “The development of the Lion-Griffin” and arrived at the conclusion that the griffin was connected with a solar symbolism, originating in the Near East and Egypt.

Bisi (1965) published a book on the griffin of the Aegean, Near Eastern and Egyptian arts, which has been widely criticised for chronological mistakes and omissions. The focus however was once again on the typology of the creature and any interpretations were made without the consideration of the contexts in which it was used.

In her study of Creto-Mycenaean griffin iconography, Delplace (1967a) distinguished themes occurring exclusively on Crete, commented on the rapid adaptation of the type soon after its introduction from the East and concluded that it represented the divine protection offered to Minoan and Mycenaean kings. In another paper (1967b), she investigated the role of the griffin in the Creto-Mycenaean religion and its association with the Potnia Theron, the pillar cult and the cult of the dead. Delplace interpreted the griffin as a servant to the gods, the Potnia Theron (whether one goddess or many) and the Master of Animals, winning victories on their behalf, sometimes over other monsters (e.g. as on **224** from the area of Perseia at Mycenae with two griffins flanking a column and standing on a bull-man). Delplace also commented on the role of the griffin as the guardian, a role shared with the sphinx and the lion. Finally, she (1980) also

investigated the archaic, classical, Hellenistic and Roman depictions of the griffin.

In his *Untersuchungen zur Bedeutung des Greifen*, Flagge (1975) sought to understand the role of the griffin in ancient cultures (mainly classical Greek and Roman) and devoted a short chapter on the Minoan and Mycenaean evidence. Through contemporary parallels and sources from Egypt and the later antiquity, the Aegean monster was seen as used to draw the chariots of gods, acting as a guide of the dead to the afterlife under the ever watchful eyes of the gods and was associated with Nemesis (Flagge 1975: 25). Reed (1976) examined the development of the motif in post-Minoan Crete of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

The Greek publication of *The Griffin through the Ages* constitutes a compact review of the monster's history from its first appearance in Elam and Egypt to its depictions in the Italian Renaissance the movement of Neoclassicism. The authors referred to the interpretations of the griffin offered in older works. Thus, it is viewed as a "symbol of the vigilant guardian" (Petridis & Tsakirakis 1983: 8).

The latest investigation of the monster by De Moor (1997) followed its evolution in the arts of the Near East, Egypt and Greece from its first appearance down to ca. 550 BC. After defining the various forms assumed by the creature throughout its long history in these regions (i.e. the bird-griffin, lion-griffin, snake-griffin, hierakosphinx and so forth), the author noted that its origins remain hazy despite the numerous previous studies of the creature. Accordingly, the aim of the thesis was to use the monster as a case-study in the artistic interplay between regions and periods and to trace the emergence of the motif in

Archaic Greece. Admittedly, this thesis is ultimately a research in motif evolution and exchange without taking into consideration the motives underlying the acceptance or rejection, the changes and the various uses of griffins in each region and period. Nevertheless, its major contribution lies in the fact that, apart from comprising an excellent corpus and source of reference, it elicits the value of cross-time motif examinations.

#### ***1.9.4 The sphinx***

Dessenne (1957a) investigated the motif of the sphinx throughout the Aegean and the Orient, covering practically all the Bronze Age and the early Iron Age. His catalogue, though outdated, is still very useful in that it provides many Near Eastern and Egyptian examples. He stressed the role of the sphinx as the embodiment of the all-powerful divine Pharaoh and traced its transference to the Aegean through the Near East.

Levi (1973) stressed the difficulties that the scarce examples from the First Palaces period present us with in the interpretation of the sphinx representations. His article concerns a sphinx clay relief (396) from Mallia, Quarter Mu, which was probably applied to a vase. He emphasised the differences of this early Aegean type, both in form and in signification, from the original Egyptian art and from the later Mycenaean and Minoan arts.

Demisch (1977) studied the sphinx from its appearance up to the modern era and devoted a short chapter on the Cretan and Mycenaean depictions, including therein griffin types. His analysis was predominantly typological and followed the evolution of the type from the early examples to the LM IIIC Ayia Triadha figurines and the 7<sup>th</sup> century artefacts.

Mylonas (1980) emphasised that the creature was introduced to mainland Greece through the Minoan Crete, and the decorative and peaceful manner in which sphinxes are depicted in Aegean art. He separated the depictions of the monster into three categories: one with single lying sphinxes, the second with two lying sphinxes and the third with standing sphinxes. He noted though that, although the griffin appears to be connected with the goddess of war and victory, the sphinx cannot be likewise associated with a Minoan or Mycenaean deity (1980: 352-353). He also opposed the general view that interprets the plaster head (395) found at the Mycenae Cult Centre as a sphinx (see *PM III*: 519 ff.; Tsountas 1902: 1). He attributed it to a goddess instead, probably the Mycenaean Hera, based among others on its facial decoration, which is absent from any other example of sphinxes in Minoan and Mycenaean arts. Finally, Mylonas (1980: 358-359) drew attention to the typical head-dress of the sphinxes, i.e. the diadem with the crest on top. The female figure from the Cult Centre wall painting (295) and the so-called “White Goddess” from Pylos palace also wear the diadem, which further appears on the “goddess” of the Tiryns ring (478), although in this case without the crest. He suggested that the crest implies/symbolises high religious office and is not the symbol of a goddess, in contrast to the simple diadem that may be worn by a goddess.

#### ***1.9.5 The Minoan genius***

The article by Cook (1894) on “Animal worship in the Mycenaean age” is a characteristic example of the confusion around the nature of the genius in the early stages of Aegean Bronze Age archaeology, but, more importantly, exemplifies the point made by Weingarten (1991) on the dangers of comparing

evidence from different time periods. Cook curiously distinguished the ass-, the lion-, the bull-, the horse- and the swine-headed genii and examined them together with the stag- and goat-headed figures extrapolating literary evidence even from Pausanias and Ovid. He then reached the conclusion that “the animal-worship of the Mycenaean age must be considered intermediate between Totemism and Anthropomorphism: its ritual relates to the former; its conception of the animal-god to the latter” (Cook 1894: 159).

Gill dealt with the iconography of the Minoan genius in her doctoral thesis (1961b) and in a number of papers (1964: 1-21; 1970: 404-406). She assembled the representations of the animal known at the time and followed its typological development in the Bronze Age. She also linked the genius with an Egyptian origin and determined that Taweret inspired the Aegean motif.

Crouwel (1970: 24) interpreted the genius as “sacerdotal”, superior to man and animals, but subservient to the gods and, because of its association in the Aegean iconography with a tree and branches, playing a role in the promotion of the vegetation. He suggested that the “amphiq<sup>u</sup>oloi” of the Linear B tablets might refer to the genii. His view however that seal 458 from Kakovatos (showing a demon helping a man against a lion) may offer “a glimpse of a heroic myth” is quite interesting (followed by Crhyssoulaki 1999 as an event from the ‘mythic action’).

*L’Iconographie Minoenne* (1985) formed an introduction to the theory of iconography and the ways it can be approached. It included an article by Baurain (1985: 95-118), who attempted to determine which aspect of Taweret was transferred to the Aegean and tried to resolve whether it was a mere transference of iconography or also a transmission of ideas. He concluded that it was Taweret

of the Book of the Dead that inspired the Minoan genius. He also emphasised the marine connotations of the iconography of the genius and associated it with funerary beliefs and the Minoan idea of regeneration and purification through water.

Sansone (1987: 1-17) attempted to decode the gender of the genius, while Elsaadani (1987-1988: 63-70) proposed that the genius was the protector of women and the royal family.

Weingarten (1991) examined the transmission and the transformation of the Egyptian Taweret into the Minoan genius, covering the Middle Bronze Age. She disagreed with Baurain and distinguished between the apotropaic demon of the Middle Kingdom, maybe a “demonic divinity”, and its development into the goddess Taweret. According to Weingarten, the Minoans imported two forms of Taweret, the lion-headed and the hippopotamus-headed, demonstrating thus close familiarity with this demon. As the iconography itself suggests with the performance of the same functions, the Minoans did not distinguish them as different creatures, arguing thus for the transference not only of the motif, but also of complex symbolic values.

Weingarten's publication with Hallager (1993) of five roundels from Mallia provided significant “missing links” for the iconographical development and understanding of the genius. The new MM III(B?) impressions reinforce the connection of the lustrating genius with a baetyl cult. She also noted that the first true rhyta appear roughly contemporary with the importation of Taweret and argued that the adoption of the Egyptian goddess by the Minoans influenced significantly the expansion of libation rites as represented by new cult assemblages (i.e. at Mallia and Phaistos).

Finally, Chryssoulaki (1999: 111-117) associated genius with afterlife beliefs and proposed a function as the ‘psychopompos’ for the creature.

#### ***1.9.6 The Minoan Dragon***

The monster was first identified by Levi (1945: 270-280) who called it Babylonian dragon due to its Oriental origin and identified the Mesopotamian serpent-griffin as its source of inspiration that reached the Aegean through Syria. The serpent-griffin (snake-griffin or snake-dragon – see De Moor 1997 on definitions of various types of “griffins”) was a hybrid combining the horned head of a snake, scaled body, tail of a scorpion and lion or eagle paws.

Hood (1953: 86) on the other hand proposed the horse as the source of inspiration for the Minoan monster and provided Anatolian parallels for the elongated body. His hypothesis, however attractive, cannot be sustained since it does not account for such iconographic traits of the dragon as its tail and the griffin-like paws.

Gill (1963) gathered the known representations of the dragon at the time and claimed that any demonic qualities the hybrid may have held in Mesopotamia faded in the transit to Crete, where it was a sacred animal performing the task of transporting the god, but without any signs of a previously opposing force. While pointing out that the Minoan version of the monster differs from its Eastern prototypes as much in appearance as in meaning, Gill accepted Levi’s theory on the origin of the monster as certain, being in her view the only one accounting for its profile, proportions and function in the Aegean. She thought the Minoan dragon as “strangely elusive of definition because its direct prototype is not in nature but in art, and like a translation of a translation

bears but distant resemblance to the original” (see Gill 1963: 2-3 for references to earlier studies and various readings of dragons in Minoan and Mycenaean art).

Poursat (1976) divided the representations of the dragons into three categories – carrying the goddess, isolated walking and isolated lying – and distinguished them from crocodile depictions. He convincingly questioned the Babylonian Dragon as the source of inspiration for its Minoan namesake proposing instead Egyptian influence based on Aegean “crocodile” illustrations, Egyptian depictions of Astarte riding a horse and the prominence of the papyrus plant in the iconography of the monster. He also stressed the need for an examination of the historical and social circumstances that led to the popularity of creatures like the griffin, the sphinx and the dragons in the Aegean.

Palaiologou (1995) analysed stylistically the representations of Minoan dragons, stressed their slight resemblance to the oriental original (first commented upon by Gill 1963) and associated them with the afterlife, water and the function of transporting deities.

#### ***1.9.7 Bull-man, centaur and other hybrids***

S. Marinatos devoted an article (1927/1928a) to the study of “Τοργόνες και γοργόνεια”, motivated by the discovery of a 6<sup>th</sup> century Gorgon relief at Palaikastro. He drew parallels from classical Greece and in particular the cult of Artemis so as to establish the apotropaic character of the motif and proposed that the Gorgoneion was handed down to the Greeks by the Minoans. Gerogiannis (1927/1928) on the other hand rejected any Minoan inspiration and published an extensive article on the Gorgon Medusa, for the archaic type of which he postulated an origin in the apotropaic frontal lion heads.



Malten (1928: 135) had agreed with Evans on the oriental origin of the bull-men but followed a different approach in interpreting the motif. He believed that originally the monster derived from an ancient solar divinity represented by a bull, although, by the time it was depicted in Aegean art, it had already been long alienated from its initial character. Consequently, in the Minoan era it should be seen as a mere monstrous figure inherited from ancient traditions, while the well-known legend was created much later in order to explain its composite appearance.

S. Marinatos (1964) attempted to see associations with Eastern mythology in the Mycenaean iconography and sought the explanation of marine monsters, giant birds and dragons in the East. Tzavella-Evjen (1968: 263-267) accepted a local origin for the themes of fantastic animals on the Phaistos sealings and proposed Egyptian and Syrian influences for their MM III-LM I development. She suggested that the hybrids were introduced to the mainland through the Cyclades or directly from Egypt during the Hyksos period, but excluded the monstrous bird of Cycladic vases and MH kraters as independent of both Cretan and Oriental inspiration. Mycenaean centaurs formed the subject of a paper by Belgiorno (1978), who compared the problematic figure on larnax 3 from Tanagra tomb 51 (416) with the Ayia Triadha figurines dated to the end of the Bronze Age and similar Cypriot figures.

In his paper “Minotauros in der ägäischen Glyptik”, Schlager (1989) attempted to distinguish between various groups of hybrids recognised as “Minotaurs”, disagreed with the identification of almost all animal-headed male figures as “Minotaurs” and analysed them stylistically. This is the only study dedicated exclusively to the motif, which has been investigated mainly as part of

general surveys of Aegean glyptic or religion (see references to Xenaki-Sakellariou 1958, *MMR*<sup>2</sup> and *PM* in sections 1.7.1 and 1.9.1).

Finally, Mylonas Shear (2002: 147-153) published two Mycenaean centaur figurines (926 and 927) and analysed their features ending the debate on whether the type did exist in the Bronze Age (see Karageorghis 1965; idem 1964; Blegen 1937: 277; Demargne 1929: 117-128).

### ***1.9.8 The fantastic animals in the Orient***

#### ***1.9.8.1 Near East***

A large number of studies have focused on the demons and monsters of the Near East, which have been found occasionally in the Aegean depicted on cylinder seals. Collon's studies on Near Eastern cylinder seals (1988 & 1990) provide us with information on their use and, consequently, clues as to the interpretation of representing fantastic beings on them. Davaras' list of the cylinder seals found in the Bronze Age Aegean is the latest catalogue concerning one of the most popular means of depicting monsters (1995).

As in the case of the Aegean, Bisi (1965) and Dessenne (1957a) included Near Eastern and Egyptian examples in their seminal studies of the griffin and the sphinx respectively, thus providing us with the starting point for any relevant investigation of the subject. Still, it should be kept in mind that their views, such as Dessenne's Syrian origin for the Minoan sphinx, are questioned by more recent finds (see section 3.1.2). Frankfort (1970) interpreted the use of the numerous imaginary creatures in the art and architecture of the ancient Orient and connected them with the notion of "divine kingship" at the period (1948).

The sphinx was introduced to Syria in the second millennium BC and was transformed in relation to the Egyptian prototypes (see also section 3.1.2). Canby (1975: 234), following Dessenne (1957a: 28, 176), noted that Syrian artists deprived the Egyptian sphinx of its original meaning and viewed the scenes with sphinxes merely as pleasing compositions delegating them the role of filling motifs in secondary registers. Still, *contra* Dessenne, Canby (1975: 234, 246) proposed that Anatolia, where the sphinx had been at home during the second millennium being seldom used as a simple filling motif, was the area that gave the sphinx to Syria. It should be noted that Canby treats the second millennium as a whole, thus the temporal development of the sphinx in Anatolia is not readily discernible. Having said that, its use in monumental Hittite architecture suggested to Canby that Anatolia borrowed the sphinx from its original source, i.e. Egypt, rather than from intermediaries.

The monsters of the Mesopotamian and Iranian art have been extensively studied and the terms “monster” and “demon” have been taken to correspond to creatures on all four and two legs respectively. Demons are not *a priori* malevolent towards humans; the word is used to denote a being with a divine nature and in fact it appears that the more “human” the image, the more beneficial to man it would be (Porada 1987: 1).

Five stages in the development of monsters and demons have been discerned in Mesopotamian and Iranian art. The first one is the formative, covering the late 5<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> millennia BC. During the Agade period (2340-2150 BC) narrative scenes appear on cylinder seals and depict the apprehension and punishment of vicious monsters, while the Old Babylonian period (2000-1595 BC) is characterised by a more frequent balance in the representation of both evil

and well-disposed monsters. An abundance of animal-headed demons follows, as can be observed on the seal designs of the Mitannian, Kassite and middle Assyrian styles (1600-1000 BC). The fifth and final phase (Neo Babylonian: 612-539 BC) produced the horrifying aspect of the demons Lamashtu, who had first appeared in the second millennium and Pazuzu (Goodnick Westenholz 1998: 77-78).

“Probably the persons who created such forms felt sufficiently secure to render the monstrous creatures in all their horror without being prevented from portraying such dangerous demons by the fear that they would avenge themselves in some manner” (Porada 1987: 2). However such an explanation challenges the belief that the depiction of the malicious forces diminishes in a way the terror they produce and at the same time supposes that, up to that point, fear prevented artists from depicting evil powers in the form of demons and monsters.

The dictionary of *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* by Black and Green (1998) demonstrates the deficiencies of research in the Aegean area in relation to the study of the fantastic animals as a group and their interpretation. It comprises a full listing of the elements in the religious art of Mesopotamia and accounts for their presence in it.

#### ***1.9.8.2 Egypt***

As for Egypt, Schweitzer (1948) looked into Egyptian sphinx depictions dating from the Old to the New Kingdoms, dated them precisely and compared them with the iconography of lions in the area demonstrating that throughout the millennia they both comprised the favourite representations of the pharaohs.

Although the former constitutes a composite being created deliberately to symbolise pharaonic power, the latter probably prevailed over the bull as the preferred image for the Pharaoh.

The studies by David (1982) and Frankfort (1961) offer a first glimpse of the ancient Egyptian religious beliefs and their interpretation. The fantastic creatures are incorporated in that belief system in various ways. The most usual representations of the Egyptian monsters are found on scarabs and other charms and it is very probable that they first became known in that form outside Egypt. One can discern a plethora of images including the human-headed animals that manifest the might and magnificence of the Pharaoh, double-bull motifs along with double lions, serpo-felines, human-faced charms with bovine ears and horns, the lion-man, falcon-headed jackals and many others.

The desert seems to have been the natural habitat of monsters in Egyptian iconography, at least until the 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty. The griffin, while making its debut at the beginning of the Protodynastic period, is depicted as early as in the Old Kingdom in a desert background (Elmer & Wenig 1974: pl.1). Besides the desert, the netherworld seems to have provided an equally favourable environment for the proliferation of hybrid creatures, since it gave unlimited scope to the imagination.

The composite creatures assumed slightly differentiated forms through time in Egyptian art. The sphinxes, for example, were rendered in various ways (wearing occasionally a crown, others with human arms instead of animal forelegs, etc), which Fischer (1987: 14) connected with "a suggestion of shape-shifting, of metamorphosis, that is appropriate to the king who is, uniquely, the

link between mankind and the gods, and stands constantly on the threshold of these two worlds”.

The variety and numbers of monsters in Egyptian iconography, although far more impressive than those of the Aegean, is not as great as one would expect given the nature of the art itself; this is a hieroglyphic art and hieroglyphics tend to form composites (Fischer 1987: 26). This is further supported by the attitude of the Egyptians towards natural abnormalities (dwarfism, exotic animals etc). It seems that such deviations from the norm were quite interesting, sometimes valued by them, although in representing themselves they tended to create idealised forms (with the occasional exception of using naturalism for the lower classes and the king). From the Old Kingdom onwards women are illustrated as young and slim and this is also the case for the majority of men.

The *Book of Two Ways* gives precise details of the realm of the dead and its features; the deceased, among other obstacles, have to face hostile demons whose names they must know in order to pacify them (Taylor 2001: 33). In the New Kingdom *Book of the Dead* the monsters are in most cases allies of the deceased. Still, there is one demon, “the Devourer” (Ammut), who devours the dead when their judgement reveals that they lived a life of wickedness. It is a hybrid creature, sometimes male, others female, with the head of a crocodile, the body of a lion and the hindquarters of a hippopotamus.

### ***1.10 Discussion: the gaps in the research***

A review of the relevant studies reveals that the fantastic creatures of the Minoan and Mycenaean arts have not been studied as a whole, but mainly as parts of publications of collections or in separate investigations of each creature. i.e. the griffin, sphinx and genius and to a lesser extent the Minoan dragon (noted also by Younger 1988: xi). Thus, the development of the motifs of the griffin and the sphinx can be followed in the archaic and classical Greek art, when even more “monsters” make their appearance alongside these descendants of the Minoan and Mycenaean fantastic animals. The belief that “of all the myriad monsters and fantastic beings in the imagery of the ancient world, only the griffin and related sphinx captured the imagination of the Aegean peoples” (Morgan 1988: 50) is indicative of the importance that has been attached to these two fantastic creatures.

Nevertheless, most studies, however significant, are dated and, as will be seen in Chapter 1, the evidence for the sphinx at least requires re-investigation. Moreover, even though the origin of the imported monsters has been extensively analysed, Krzyszkowska (2005a: 90) justifiably remarks that, all things considered, “we cannot be sure of their homeland, much less the routes they travelled to Crete”. The research concerning the Minoan genius constitutes an exception (especially Weingarten 1991a), since it has succeeded in not only pinpointing the creature’s point of origin, but also in defining the attributes conferred to it upon its first appearance on Crete.

On the other hand, the lack of studies on the “minor”, less frequently documented fantastic creatures such as the bull-man, the lady- and man-eagle, the centaur, the winged-goats, -agrimia and -people is evident. With the

exception of a few articles and some vague suggestions that they may represent people dressed up in the guise of “totemic” animals, their interpretation and role in the Minoan and Mycenaean imagery is obscure. The significance of the symbolism of the lion, bird, and goat has been examined, but not in their depiction as parts of composite animals (Goodison 1989: 49 ff.). More investigation is required in order to obtain a clearer view of their first appearance, origin and development in Aegean iconography.

What most of the above mentioned studies (or, more commonly, sections) on Aegean monsters have in common is a restriction within the field of typological analysis, which, however useful, cannot be seen as the only criterion for their interpretation. Although comparisons and analogies have been frequently made with Oriental or Egyptian parallels, the find and social contexts of the Aegean artefacts have been largely ignored. However, it is these factors that will determine the functions of the motifs under investigation rather than solely the use of their equivalents in the neighbouring areas.

Finally, the apparent variation or expansion of the roles of the hybrid figures during the later parts of the Bronze Age, which for example includes their depiction in funerary contexts, requires further analysis. For instance, the LH IIIC pyxis from Lefkandi with the griffins feeding their offspring in a nest (De Moor 1997: no. 1417, fig. 935; Younger 1995: 188, no. 241; Immerwahr 1990: 152; *Mycenaean World*: 132, no. 68; *Pictorial*: 144, XI.91; Popham & Milburn 1972: 15; Popham & Sackett 1968: 18, fig. 35; Popham 1964-65: 19, fig. 22) implies that the roles of those fearsome creatures shifted significantly and offers room for further investigation of this development.



“Almost all art is capable of carrying multiple, sometime (deliberately) ambiguous messages; meanings are dynamically created by relationships with other symbols, and they may have been read differently at different times or by different groups” (Goodison & Morris 1998b: 126). This idea, however, has been largely ignored in earlier investigations and has led to a very static view of Aegean monsters. Again with the notable exceptions of excellent works on the Minoan genius (Rehak 2005b; Weingarten 1991a) and a small number of other brief studies (e.g. Morgan 1988: 53 on griffins in the Shaft Graves repertoire), most authors have seen temporal developments only through stylistic analyses or have interpreted monsters within the vague context of one “Creto-Mycenaean” art and religion (to mention only a few examples of such studies, see de Moor 1997; d’Albiac 1995; Delplace 1976b; Rhyne 1971).

The example of the griffin is characteristic; it is largely regarded as subordinate to gods and as a royal emblem. Its Neopalatial glyptic iconography led for the most part to the former characterisation and the frescoes in the Knossos and Pylos throne rooms directly associating it with the thrones therein justify the second. Its association with Pharaohs in Egyptian iconography has also played its part in this interpretation (cf. Tzavella-Evjen 1970). This decoration of the Throne Rooms (292 and 297) though comes late in Bronze Age art, while the depiction of the monster with ‘gods’ and ‘goddesses’ does not appear before LM I, when it had already a history of up to 100 years in the Aegean; are we to unquestionably accept that it had been viewed in the same way by the inhabitants of Crete, the Greek mainland and the Aegean islands ever since its first appearance on MM Crete until its depiction on the walls of the Mycenaean megaron at Pylos?

To conclude, the stylistic approach certainly has its merits in relation to chronology for example and is indeed an indispensable tool for archaeologists, but it should be supplemented with a closer look at the illustrations at hand within the wider context of each period.

## *Chapter 2*

### *The Prepalatial period*

*(EM I-MM IA: ca. 3000-1900 BC)*

#### *2.1 The evidence*

##### *2.1.1 The sphinx*

The earliest dated examples of sphinxes are attested in Crete before the emergence of the palaces, but have been considered as “foreign to the Minoan character” (Tzavella-Evjen 1970: 65). A Prepalatial ivory seal from the Giamalakis collection is shaped in the form of a sphinx (333, fig. 19a). This example bears both the mane – an Egyptian characteristic – and the Hathor locks, typical of the oriental female sphinx (Rhyne 1970: 89)<sup>1</sup>. One cannot be certain of its authenticity however, since there is always a chance that items in private collections may be forgeries and consequently the presence of the sphinx in Prepalatial art appears to be at best debatable.

Still, there is one more EM III-MM IA theriomorphic “white material” seal in the Mitsotakis Collection (334, fig. 19b) in the form of two antithetic wingless sphinxes with strong male characteristics on their faces. Although this is also an item from a private collection and of unknown provenance, the fact that both objects described are of contemporary date, similar types and shape may point to a possible introduction of the monster into Crete earlier than was previously thought, i.e. the Protopalatial period. Moreover, it is worth observing

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<sup>1</sup> Rhyne (1970: 89 ff.) mentions a few more early examples of the creature. Still, they are of even more questionable provenance.

that strong Egyptian influence is evidenced in the lack of wings and the male characteristics of the second example.

### ***2.1.2 Minotaur and animal heads***

Despite the existence of only one seal of Prepalatial date with a possible depiction of a “Minotaur”, the bull-man should be discussed separately from other hybrids due to the significance of the bull iconography in Minoan art and religion and the actual later appearance of the motif. The story of the bull-headed monster was among the most prominent and well-known Cretan myths.

An EM four-sided steatite prism (619) from the Ayios Onouphrios tholos tomb may bear on one of its sides the first illustration of the Aegean bull-man rendered with the human lower body and bovine upper. The specific illustration was classified within the “*Tiermenschliche Akrobat*” group by Schlager (1989: 237) and is a stylised male figure, apparently horned. In the background there is a linear motif in the form of a jug.

Admittedly, the male figure cannot be recognised as an early form of the Minotaur with absolute certainty (the “horns” could represent hair or even a schematic head-cover). Unfortunately, the lack of any other examples of the Minotaur from MM II and the inability to associate it with them, or with a group of similar objects, greatly restricts the proper analysis and interpretation of this particular creature. Moreover, given the dispute over the identity of the above example, in all likelihood it is only the first stage of experimentation in the depiction of the popular monster that we witness now and not the proper introduction of the theme in the Minoan repertoire. This is supported by the fact that no known proper depictions of the demon come from Protopalatial contexts

– although other animal-headed figures are encountered, a ‘disappearance’ not easily explained. Thus, the identity of the motif is highly problematic.

However, it still demonstrates most features of the bull-man proper (as was defined in section 1.6.3) and most likely represents the first step towards the creation of the demon. Such an early documentation would be justifiably expected given the importance of the creature within the local religious system, evidenced in both the prominence of the bull, even as early as the Prepalatial period (for bull-shaped ritual objects, i.e. vases and figurines, in settlements see Gesell 1985: 7-8 and for those found in tombs see Soles 1992: 229-230, 233) and in the later hybrid created from bull and human.

This view is supported by another contemporary three-sided steatite prism (668, fig. 20), which depicts two antithetic apparently animal-headed female (?) figures flanking a solar or stellar rayed symbol on one of its sides (see similar symbol on the band from Chalandriani mentioned in section 2.1.3). They each hold up one arm and Kenna (*CS*: 93; followed by Goodison & Morris 1998b: 121) has hypothesised that the scene may illustrate some kind of sacred dance. The rendering of their heads in the form of animals with long snouts and pointy ears, which connects this with the Marathokefalo seal, is of major importance. As is the case of the “bird-people” (see section 2.1.3), an interest in animal and bird disguise is evident in the iconography of the period (noted also by Goodison & Morris 1998b: 120) and that connects the two scenes with the animal or bird hybrids of the Protopalatial and Neopalatial eras.

### 2.1.3 “Bird-people” or schematic professionals?

EM steatite three-sided prisms from Crete (see Appendix B, Table 1) often depict schematic male, bird-faced figures (fig. 21a-f). The one on fig. 21a (*CMS I* 414), holds what appears to be a schematic wheel, that of fig. 21b (*CMS I* 415) walks to the right and the figure of fig. 21c (*CMS I* 416) is sitting. All three figures have triangular bodies and, together with the rest of the examples from Appendix B, Table 1 (as well as the Protopalatial examples of Table 2), they may be associated with the bird-lady type, although lacking in most cases recognisable wings, according to the typical definition of the creature (given in section 1.6.3).

A number of these seals depict figures that are almost, but not quite, “typical” bird-people displaying several of the characteristics of the group and could also belong to the catalogue of monsters together with their presumed descendant or at least associated figures. For example, the figure of prism *CMS I* 426 (fig. 22a) has feather-like arms and is depicted in the characteristic pose of the bird-women, i.e. with displayed “wing-like arms” and the head in profile. Similarly, the later Protopalatial Phaistos sealing 855 (fig. 22b) clearly depicts two bird-faced hybrids, which may be close to, but do not conform with the typical bird-lady depictions.

This association may be considered problematic, since these early figures are only vaguely reminiscent of their claimed counterparts in later glyptic representations, the bird-women. The latter are naturalistic, with unmistakable bird heads and have developed easily recognisable wings in place of arms. Moreover, the seemingly common, every-day nature of the scenes on the Prepalatial seals makes it difficult to connect these bird-faced men with the

fantastic LM demonic beings. For instance, the figure of fig. 23a (*CMS V Suppl. 1A 325*) holds an object resembling a saw, the figure of fig. 23b (*CMS VII 3*) may be a fisherman, while that of *CMS XII 28* may represent a potter.

As to the first point, the seals in Appendix B do demonstrate the mannerism of early Minoan glyptic, which dictated that profile human faces were often depicted as beaked. This can be attributed to technical reasons rather than to a conscious choice of the engravers, as exemplified by the gradual abandonment of the trait after the technological developments of the years between 1700 to 1550 BC (Younger 1993). Nevertheless, human figures on Prepalatial seals are also rendered schematically with simple round heads without any bird characteristics (see for instance fig. 21a-side c *CMS I 414* or the Protopalatial *CMS II.2 164, 174 and 224*). These figures, including the extraordinary man with the “petaloid loop” nose on fig. 24 (*CMS II.1 222*; Immerwahr 1990: 26, fig. 8c; Boardman 1970: pl. 3; *CS*: fig. 41; *PM I*: fig. 87.6; Xanthoudides 1918: 15 ff.), exhibit the existence of alternative options for the depiction of the human face.

Moreover, the seemingly “everyday” nature of the scenes may in fact be misleading. The function of the items on which they appear further supports the interpretation of the scenes as more than the performance of everyday tasks. One of the functions of seals would have been their use as amulets (Younger 1977). Therefore, the depiction of “everyday” scenes may have ensured protection for the seal owner in the performance of these tasks. Ritual and/or magical associations are not unthinkable even for the earliest EM examples. For instance, the scene with the man carrying a pole with vases on *CMS VII 17* is one of the first examples of the formula that was taken up in the iconography of genii later

on (see section 4.1.5). Such magical, perhaps even ritual, connotations would have facilitated the eventual connection of bird/human hybrids with supernatural powers.

Bird-faced people are also – in fact more commonly – depicted isolated, without any connection with an occupation (*CMS I* 415, *CMS I* 416, *CMS I* 426, *CMS I Suppl.* 103, *CMS II.1* 145, *CMS II.1* 477; more examples in Table 1, Appendix A), their occasional vivid gestures and movement (*CMS XI* 5, *CS* 40) offering perhaps insight to their function. An EC III fragmentary silver band from Chalandriani may aid in clarifying the issue, even though it is not a Cretan product. It clearly depicts a bird-faced, possibly female, figure together with an animal and a solar symbol (Tsountas 1899: 123-124, pl. 10). The association here is not with an everyday activity, but probably with religion or ritual. In fact, Tamvaki (1976: 63, no. 2) classified the illustration as a cult scene. In short, ritual associations should not be excluded, but may be better understood through the discussion of similar Protopalatial finds (see sections 3.1.5, 3.3.5 and 3.4.3 in the following chapter).

To recap, as Immerwahr (1990: 28) herself noted, these Prepalatial and some Protopalatial similarly rendered examples “hardly seem the precursors of the [male] figures in the later frescoes”. Instead, their birdlike faces, exaggerated gestures, and occasional wing-like apparitions in place of arms (Appendix B, Table 1) connect them with the bird people of the Neopalatial period. Whether the initial motivation behind the rendition of the human face with bird attributes was practical or conscious, it was still the first step in a long process that created familiarity with bird-human hybridisation in Minoan art, probably promoted its connection with magic, religious ritual action and ultimately, combined with



various other factors (cf. discussion of bird-ladies in section 4.1.8), resulted eventually in the creation of the Neopalatial bird-lady.

#### **2.1.4 Conjoined animals**

The EM III prism **813** (fig. 25a) may show a “composite monster” or perhaps two spiny “monsters” conjoined. This motif of conjoined animals is illustrated clearly on the MM IA prism **815** (fig. 25b) with the foreparts of two dogs (?) conjoined antithetically. A third three-sided prism (**814**) is engraved on one of its sides with an S-shaped serpent, in each extremity of which there is a head. Once again these examples are from unknown find contexts. However, they do demonstrate that the well known mannerism of LBA glyptic that conjoined animals into one head or one body with two heads has its roots in the early Minoan glyptic and need not be attributed to Mycenaean influence. Together with the two sphinx theriomorphs, the “bull-man” from Ayios Onouphrios and the “bird-people”, the conjoined animals comprise the total of Prepalatial hybrids.

#### **2.1.5 EM prisms: hybrids, bastard or schematic animals?**

Two prisms dated to EM III (*CMS XII* 12 & 14, cf. *Appendix A*) bear two “monsters” that seem to share the same long spiky bodies and might be intended to illustrate the same creature (fig. 26a-b). They too originally come from a private collection and their lack of context prevents us from comprehending or analysing the motif further than suggesting a possible association with snakes.

On one more EM steatite prism from the Philadelphia University Museum (fig. 26c - *CMS XIII* 85, cf. *Appendix A*) a schematic quadruped is

illustrated on one side, but the creature on the second should probably not be read as a natural animal. It has a long snout, upraised front-paw and scaly features on its body. Its inverted hindquarters are by no means the usual animal legs, since the creature seems to have a fish-like extremity (a possible forgery. fig. 26d - *CMS XIII* 19D, shows an animal with similar extremities – cf. Appendix A).

The resemblance of these four examples to two later (MM II) motifs, although perhaps accidental, may elucidate their identity. Firstly, their similarity to the “hound” of a later steatite prism (fig. 26e - *CMS XII* 44) should be pointed out; if the latter reading is correct, then possibly the two earlier examples are schematised images of natural animals too. Fig. 26f, *CMS XII* 71 shows on one of its sides the “schema of an animal, with long horns and inverted hindquarters” (Kenna’s description of the illustration in *CMS XII*). The “long horns”, however, seem to be a rather mistaken reading. *CMS XII* 71 with its spikes and long body may be closer to *CMS XII* 12 and 14 than *XII* 44.

These illustrations share certain characteristics, namely the unnatural position of the animals and the scaly features on their long snake-like bodies. The latter may indicate early attempts to depict a creature resembling the later Minoan Dragon, or at least reflect a trend towards animal depictions that have been given snake-like traits. This familiarity with the appearance of the ‘Babylonian Dragon’ (fig. 27a-c) – the presumed source of inspiration for the Minoan Dragon (Gill 1963: 1-12) – perhaps facilitated its introduction from the Orient. The Minoans may have recognised in the Near Eastern illustrations of the monster and Egyptian depictions of the crocodile features already familiar to them from early depictions such as those described above.

## ***2.2 Context discussion***

The published representations in the EBA-early MBA Aegean do not offer conclusive evidence of the import or local creation of fantastic animals at the time. Firstly there are not enough known examples to allow for general conclusions to be drawn, and the ones that are published come in their vast majority from private collections or are of unknown origin, and consequently do not allow a study of the context in which they were unearthed. Moreover, the items in the Giamalakis collection in particular have been often challenged as to their authenticity.

### ***2.2.1 Medium and iconography***

Seals are apparently the only medium bearing depictions of imaginary beings in the Prepalatial era. Less than two dozen sealings have been discovered so far for the entire Prepalatial period, marking vases and “loom-weights” or as direct object sealings (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 59, 77-78). In LN Knossos and Phaistos cylinder seals were used to impress patterns in designated zones on pottery (Manteli 1996: 134). As to the subsequent periods, no EM I nodules have been recovered so far. One sealing with at least three impressions was found in an EM IIB context in Myrtos-Fournou Korifi, probably used as a door sealing to Room 29 or, alternatively, as a stopper (Warren 1972: 226-227, no. 134). Recently EM II-III nodules were also reported in Psathi and Mochlos (*CMS V Suppl.* 3 119 & 345), an EM III jar stopper came from Knossos (*CMS II.8* 6) and a nodulus from a MM IA context at Mallia (Hue & Pelon 1992: 31-32, figs. 33-34).

The apparent lack of sealings had led Weingarten (1986a: 279-280) to suggest that the Minoans were slow in developing administrative systems and demonstrated no signs that they comprehended that seals were to be used in a “sphragistic manner”, at least not before MM IIB when the Phaistos deposit was sealed (see Schoep 1999: 268-273 for the opposite view). An interesting point relating to the problem was raised by Krzyszkowska (2005a: 21) who stressed the wide variety of seal shapes in the EM II-MM II, larger than a solely sphragistic role requires, as opposed to the almost exclusive cylinder seal use in contemporary Mesopotamia. Keeping in mind that Knossos, Phaistos and Mallia “have proved notoriously unreliable in preserving sealings” mainly due to continuous occupation (eadem 2005a: 78), it may be argued that *widespread systematic* sphragistic use of seals cannot be safely established before the rise of the First Palaces, at least with the amount of existing evidence and the small number of excavated settlements of this period.

Thus, it is possible that Prepalatial seals were jewellery (used for personal adornment or for the decoration of pottery) and/or amulets and only infrequently administrative tools. Younger (1977: 148) argued that seals worn as bracelets were considered not only jewellery but also amulets “in the sense that may have connoted some physical connection between the wearer and his divinity, either by protecting him apotropaically from evil or by bringing him divine favor; in much the same way a Christian wears the cross”. There is no reason why this observation cannot be applied to Aegean seals of all periods, especially since their stringholes demonstrate that they were intended to be worn by the seal owner, as pendants or bracelets.

The study of their iconography and the evaluation of the materials used for their manufacture further highlight their function(s). Accordingly, the material of the two sphinx-shaped seals reveals their high value, since ivory was imported to Crete and ivory seals with intricate designs were most likely produced by specialised craftsmen (Cherry 1983: 33-45). The artificially created material of the “white pieces” (or “white paste”) indicates that they too were manufactured by specialists (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 76). Soft stone seals on the other hand may not require specialist workmanship of the same level and steatite is a local material although its precise source has not been discovered yet (eadem 2005a: 81). Still, the complicated figural motifs would call for more than simple rudimentary skills for their engraving. Branigan (1993: 73) stressed the staggering overall variety and individuality, even within the common standardisation of form, as well as craftsmanship and artistry that Prepalatial seals reveal and concluded that “they were highly personal items, the equivalent perhaps of an identity card!” Although this is purely hypothetical and there is hardly enough data to process so as to reach such definite conclusions, undoubtedly the possession and display of these prestige items would signify higher status in the early Minoan society of growing complexity (Karytinis 1998: 78-86; see however review by Younger, *JNES* 60 2001: 220).

As to their iconography, Immerwahr (1990: 26-28) distinguished between the iconography of the early ivory and steatite Cretan seals (see also Krzyszkowska 2005a: 60-76 for a more detailed overview of Prepalatial glyptic repertory). Immerwahr (1990: 26-28) observed that the former depict lions, spiders, scorpions, while “more benign and local fauna apparently based on real-

life observation” are characteristic of the latter. She concluded that the steatite prisms appear to be in a more ‘purely Minoan style and iconography’ than the ivory stamp seals (23 of the 25 prisms of Table 1 in Appendix B are made of steatite). The slightly later (EM III-MM IA) ivory seals from the Mesara tholos tombs that apparently demonstrate a closer affinity with the steatite prisms are the exception to this general tendency of the two types (Immerwahr 1990: 28).

Animal illustrations are “potent pictures” and more so those of animals dangerous to humans. The first group of depictions would certainly fall under this category and the seals bearing them would then certainly have apotropaic and protective uses. It is perhaps no coincidence that one of the two sphinxes is of ivory, is thus associated through choice of material with Immerwahr’s first group and of shape to the “potent pictures”. The probable amuletic and apotropaic use of seals may imply a similar function by association for the first fantastic creatures in the Aegean, most likely an apotropaic/prophylactic function.

### ***2.2.2 Technological context and iconography***

The intentional adornment of human figures with bird-like traits may in fact be presumed and the “beaks” on the faces need not be attributed merely to poor technique. It is commonly accepted that Protopalatial art does not depict individuals but types of people and activities and that seems to apply to Prepalatial iconography as well with the more or less repeated motifs and standardised way of their rendering (Nikolaidou 2002: 85; Younger 1995b: 331-348). Both scholars remarked – in relation to Protopalatial iconography – that the quality of the raw material and the technique of execution are indeed among the

reasons explaining its apparent standardisation. Additionally though intended use of the artefact and “culturally specific notions of humanness and identity” (Nikolaidou 2002: 85) or possibly a combination of all the above will also affect the outcome. Although the degree of influence of the last two factors is more easily observable in the art of the First Palaces, e.g. in the intended use of seals as sphragistic tools, it should also be taken into account in the Prepalatial era.

### **2.2.3 Find context**

As already noted in sections 1.8.1 and 1.8.2, the type of artefact and its find context, when it represents its primary use, best exemplify their intended use. It is thus unfortunate that, at least in connection with the Prepalatial seals of Appendix B, Table 1, there is a marked lack of examples from known contexts. *CMS II.1* 145, 222 and 477 are the only exceptions, having been discovered in the Koumasa tholos tomb A, Marathokefalo tholos B (?) and Mochlos tomb XVIII respectively, even though these represent secondary deposition contexts. Generally speaking though, from EM II or III through MM II, most of the early Cretan seals were generally found in the tholoi of the Mesara plain (Immerwahr 1990: 26) and, consequently the examples with unknown findspots may be better understood within this context.

This in turn is also an arduous task, since most of the Mesara type tholoi (ca. 70 certain examples and 20 probable or possible tombs) for which dating evidence survives, were subject to repeated burial usage throughout the EM I-MM I period. At least in sites with continuous habitation some were still used into LM III (Kanta 1997: 233; Pelon 1976: 443-453). Archanes tholos tomb B constitutes a fine example of such repeated use, having produced LM IIIA1

pottery (Kanta 1980: 104). Moreover, occasional clearance, fumigation and episodic looting prevent the study of secure contexts and the identification of offering associations with specific burials (Branigan 1993: 12, 57).

Nevertheless, even though the Cretan tholoi are not generally considered elite tombs like their later mainland counterparts, Whitelaw (1983: 336-343) suggested that they were family tombs and seals found therein were exclusive possessions of the heads of nuclear families. It has also been suggested that the clans from which the village chiefs were drawn built some of the larger and richer Mesara tholoi (Branigan cited in Soles 1992: 258).

The total quality, wealth and numbers of finds from the Koumasa and Marathokefalo tholoi place them among the richest of the period and indicate external exchange and long distance trade (although tholos A at Koumasa had been plundered and is the smallest of the three tholoi in the cemetery). The Koumasa tombs contained a variety of practical and ritual objects, all mixed with the burials (Goodison & Morris 1998b: 117). What is more, small rectangular tombs were located among the larger tholoi at Koumasa, apparently belonging to the general population (Soles 1992: 258, n. 42). Thus, the owners of the Koumasa and Marathokefalo tombs may be identified as leading members of rather wealthy families. This comes in contrast to Mochlos tomb XVIII, which is but a rock-shelter and is listed among the poorer tombs of the Prepalatial cemetery (Soles 1992: 105-106, 257).



#### ***2.2.4 Socio-political context***

Unfortunately, the best picture of the period comes only from settlements without later occupation, namely Debla in west Crete, Myrtos and Vasilike in the east. Tombs constitute the main source of information on the social conditions of Prepalatial Crete, but the factors preventing a detailed study of specific find contexts, are also impediments in understanding the society of the period. Relatively recent studies have highlighted the evidence for growing social stratification from tombs (Maggidis 1998 for Phourni; Soles 1992 mainly for northeast Crete). Soles (1992: 254-258) has quite convincingly put forward the case for social stratification evidenced in house and tholos tombs. Especially the house tombs appear to have been the burial places of the elites, e.g. tombs in the North Cemetery at Gournia and on the West Terrace at Mochlos. Branigan (1995: 33-41) has talked of changes, such as an increase of individual burials, in Prepalatial burial patterns contemporary with emerging elites. Murphy (1998: 27-40) proposed that access to burial in the Mesara tombs may have been related to control of particular sections of land. She also argued for a cult of the dead in Prepalatial Crete that was exploited by the rising elites who acted as mediators between the community and the dead (also hinted at by Hamilakis 1998: 115-132). These predecessors of the palatial elites, “who should probably be identified as chiefs who ruled over small geographical areas and actually monopolized ritual or religious activities, also made use of religion to legitimize and consolidate their authority” (Soles 1992: 242). Soles (1992: 242) also noted that it is no coincidence that, when this elite was expanding and consolidating their power in MM IA, shrines sprang in Crete in various sites to play their role in unifying the society that was organised hierarchically.

### ***2.2.5 Religious context***

The evidence for Prepalatial cult comes from peak sanctuaries (Peatfield 1990: 117-132; Rutkowski 1986: 94-95), the Mesara type tholos tombs (Branigan 1993) and the house tombs of eastern Crete (Soles 1992: 238). In fact it has been suggested that the Prepalatial communal tombs were the most important Early Minoan cult places (Branigan 1993; Peatfield 1990: 125; idem 1987: 90). The lack of numerous settlement cult places (only three mentioned in Gesell 1985: 7-8) seems to confirm that. Dickinson (1994: 178) rejected this view as an unsupported generalisation and stressed the localised and/or insufficient character of the evidence, which demonstrates the diversity of Prepalatial culture, as opposed to the “admittedly quite homogeneous culture” of Neopalatial Crete. Still, it remains a fact that “most, if not all, cemeteries appear to have contained at least one shrine” and occasionally two shrines can be associated with the same tomb (Soles 1992: 237).

In any case, the few provenanced examples do come from tombs although they cannot be associated with the cult performed there. Their iconography indicates a prominence of the snake and bird symbols. As to the first, in the Prepalatial period most information again comes from tombs and pertains to funerary ritual, while in late Prepalatial times snake figurines are found at peak sanctuaries (Gesell 2001: 36). Based on Subminoan evidence from Kavousi, Gesell (2001: 36) proposed the use of live snakes in ritual, as happened with bulls and other animals that appear as symbols and are known to have been sacrificed. Minoan iconography consistently connects snakes with ritual contexts and images of the female (Goodison & Morris 1998b: 209, n. 32). However, the

ritual importance and religious associations of snakes in Prepalatial times are rather vague.

On the other hand birds present more interesting associations with the depictions discussed. They appear for the first time in tombs during this period, like horns of consecration, double axes and triton shells (Gesell 1985: 17). Various vases containing clay appliqué offerings have been found in cult contexts and as ritual offerings in tombs nearly all dating to MM I-II (Soles 1992: 228). Although small quadrupeds are the most common offerings, accounting for five out of about twenty examples, doves have been discovered in the Petsofas peak sanctuary and one example was listed among other funerary ritual offerings (Soles 1992: 228).

The earliest zoomorphic Minoan vessels come mostly in the form of birds and are found commonly in the Prepalatial period especially in funerary contexts, being especially popular in the Mesara (Soles 1992: 233). An EM III dove rhyton comes from a foundation deposit found between the court and the house tomb at Myrtos-Pyrgos (*AR* 1977-1978: 73, figs. 6 & 7). Their ritual use is established by their appearance in domestic cult contexts as early as MM I, such as in the House of the Monolithic Pillars at Knossos and in the Pillar Crypt of House Θ at Mallia (Gesell 1985: 13; *PM I*: fig. 107). The popularity of the bird shape of this period is not repeated in such large scale until the end of LM III (Soles 1992: 233). It appears as though depictions of bird-women, starting with the early “bird-people”, replaced those of actual birds, which reappeared to assume once again their place in ritual when bird-women were no longer depicted on seals.

As Goodison and Morris (1998b: 117-120) pointed out, the finds from the tombs reflect a variety of religious concerns and ritual acts including perhaps

some kind of ancestor cult, a preoccupation with the sun and “alignment to the cycles of the natural world” (on eastern alignment of EM-MM tombs see also Branigan 1998: 13-26). They concluded that the focus of Prepalatial religion seems to be the natural world including animals and plants. “Ritual activities apparently included dance, animal and bird disguise, touching parts of dead animals, carrying vegetation, concern with bones and possible sun worship” (Goodison & Morris 1998b: 120).

### ***2.2.6 International context***

The third millennium BC marks the Prepalatial Minoan Period, during which trade expanded and contact with Egypt, the Near East and Anatolia increased (Gesell 1985: 7).

#### ***2.2.6.1 Near East***

The Near East during this period has already developed a rich repertoire of imaginary figures. Various fantastic creatures appear on cylinder seals in Mesopotamia at least as early as the beginning of the third millennium. An Early Dynastic II sealing from Fara bears a peculiar figure with human upper body and the lower body in the form of two “hand-standing lions ... their tails, which end in small profile lion heads, are grasped by the figure itself” (Hansen 1987: 56). An engraved shell plaque in the Bible Archaeology Foundation shows a divinity kneeling before a monster with a speckled body and tail, seven serpentine necks and lion heads. In other Early Dynastic representations this monster may have only three or five heads (Hansen 1987: 60).

An Early Dynastic III cylinder seal from Ur is particularly rich in representations of imaginary beasts. It includes a bearded walking sphinx with lion's ears, a bull with human head, a bird with human head and arms, and a winged lion that is similar to the Predynastic Egyptian "griffins" (see relevant reference in section 2.2.6.2). The Newell cylinder of the same period (Frankfort 1939: pl. XIX) depicts a scorpion with human head and arms.

The seal impressions from Lagash, dating approximately to the later part of the Early Dynastic Sumerian period (ca. 2500-2450 BC), offer ample evidence for the variety of demons and monsters during this period. A royal seal of Eannatum depicts a bull-man in combat with a heroic figure. The monster's lower body is of a bull, the torso and arms human, but the head "is a fusion of both bovine and human elements" (Hansen 1987: 58). A thick curl - turning up at the bottom - falls down his back. Another sealing depicts the "ibex demon" with a long tress similar to that of the bull-man. A cylinder of the Akkadian Period presents a theme well known in the Aegean, i.e. the sphinx tethered by a bearded figure (Dessenne 1957a: 17).

#### **2.2.6.2 *Egypt***

During the Predynastic period we encounter a creature, very similar to the griffin, with the body of a feline (perhaps panther), head of a bird of prey, equipped with wings that spring from the middle of its spine and are displayed parallel to its body. Dessenne (1957a: 12) maintained that it could not be the ancestor of griffin or the sphinx, since it is found again identical in the Middle

Kingdom decorating the magical sticks.<sup>2</sup> However, it is unlikely that it can be anything else than a griffin.

During the 5th Dynasty the theme of the griffin as the pharaoh, destroying his enemies – stepping on them would describe the scene more accurately – makes its appearance in the tomb of Sahura (Dessenne 1957a: 16). The sphinx will take up the role later. The tail of the griffin rises in a big curve that is characteristic of its depiction on relief or painting. Dessenne proposed that the sphinx type was modified under the influence of the griffin (1957a: 16).

Regarding the sphinx, its first known examples date to the Old Kingdom. One of them, the sphinx of Didourfi (4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty) is unusual since it is female, although it does not present significant differences from the male sphinx, which dominates Egyptian art (Dessenne 1957a: 15). The female makes its indisputable appearance only during the New Kingdom.

The sphinx of Giza represents the best-known Egyptian type and dates to the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, specifically to the reign of Khafre (Lehner 1991: 87). It is an immense (without precedent in such scale) crouching sphinx with the front paws in front of the strong leonine body and the back paws under it. Instead of the lion mane it bears the *Nemes* head-dress and the beard of Osiris. Lehner (1991: 381; see discussion of various interpretations of the Sphinx in pages 87-103) concluded that it is an image of Khafre as king and, since it is carved directly from the earth, it also befits as the image of the chthonic aspects of Atum, the sun god and first god king. “Whether this or other ideological notions were in the minds of the individuals who designed the sphinx, one can only

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<sup>2</sup> There is also an ivory example from Megiddo dated to the New Kingdom. Cf. G. Loud, 1939, *Megiddo Ivories*, pl. 203).

guess” (idem 1991: 381-382). It certainly acted as the prototype for later depictions and presents a fine example of symbol use in the service of royal propaganda (see Simpson 1982 in Lehner 1991: 382).

It seems that the traditional couchant type was established already in the Old Kingdom and it is in this form that the Minoans would probably first encounter it, as evidenced by the two theriomorphs (333 and 334) and the later Archanes seal (337). The sitting type, which was popular in the art of the Aegean, is represented only in minor arts and not in relief or painting. It is seen for example on amulets of the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> Dynasties (Dessenne 1957a: 16). Syrian art on the other hand developed a preference for the sitting pose of the sphinx and the Hyksos depicted it on their scarabs.

Taweret has been established as the prototype for the Minoan genius (Weingarten 1991). 6<sup>th</sup> Dynasty amulets depict the hippopotamus goddess, but are quite crudely made so that their iconography is not clear. They demonstrate though that she had not yet developed the features associated with Taweret in the Middle Kingdom (Weingarten 1991a: 3). The muzzle at her back is clearly shortened and there seems to be schematisation of her form. We encounter her on scarabs, amulets and the so-called magical knives. Taweret was particularly popular as an apotropaic figure on these knives, appearing on the vast majority of them. Her major role was apparently as protector of mothers and children (Weingarten 1991a: 5).

Other imaginary creatures are seen in wall paintings in the royal tombs of the Middle Kingdom, whose early phase is roughly equivalent to EM III to MM

IA. In Beni Hasan we encounter a variety of depictions where fantastic animals co-habit with real ones in the scenes of hunting in the desert, although they do not appear to be predators themselves nor are they hunted by man or predator beast (*Beni Hasan I*: pls. VI, XIII & XXX). This particular context demonstrates a distinction of the iconographic roles between the real and fantastic beasts. Such a differentiation, though, seems to be far from being a common characteristic of early Eastern art. Lions and griffins often perform the same deeds and are depicted in identical roles and poses, which questions our modern view of distinguishing between the real and the imaginary (Morgan 1996: 17).

In short, both Near East and Egypt have already developed a rich repertoire of imaginary beings and have indeed invented various roles for them in their art and religion. In that manner the background, the source of inspiration for the Minoans is by now available. The increased contact between these areas facilitated the transference of ideas and motifs, the results of which can be observed more clearly in the following period, the time of the first palaces in Crete.

## **2.3 Discussion**

Although the Orient has developed a great variety of types, only a few sporadic examples of monsters appear exclusively on seals at this time in the Aegean. The two creatures that may be present in the art of the period are the sphinx and most likely the bird-people, despite the possibility that the former may be forgeries and the latter allude to rather than truly display the qualities of the later bird-ladies. Still, their religious nature cannot be denied readily because



of the Syros parallel, the significance of birds in the religion of the period and their iconography in the following periods, which must have certainly originated in the Prepalatial era. However, even if one accepts such an early introduction of the themes, the lack of numerous examples and of clearly defined images implies experimentation rather than conscious acceptance of the motifs and their symbolic value.

There is no easily discernible distinction in the use of the motifs following social strata, although social stratification is already attested at least in the burial customs and the acquisition and display of exotic materials. If there is a distinction in the motifs chosen for different types of seals (Immerwahr 1990: 26-28), it is plausible to assume that different qualities, meanings and functions were attributed to them. Soles has indeed proven the manipulation of religion by the rising elites at the time. Nevertheless the picture that emerges is far from clear and definite and more data is required in order to comprehend further the symbolism of the period.

To sum up, Prepalatial evidence is as a rule unprovenanced, hardly sufficient in quantity to permit a satisfactory account of the Minoan attitude towards the monstrous at the time. If anything, it appears that the fantastic creatures, much like the images themselves, were hazily defined, still in the process of acquiring unique, clearly recognisable characteristics. The Egyptianising early sphinx examples need not signify transference of ideas, but would probably only bear exotic associations. Nevertheless, the first traces of monsters that are traditionally considered as Minoan creations (conjoined animals, animal-headed people and bird-women) are being slowly established perhaps in correlation with the period's cult and ritual beliefs and practices.

## ***Chapter 3***

### ***The Protopalatial period***

***(MM IB-MM IIB: ca. 1900-1750 BC)***

#### ***3.1 The evidence from the Protopalatial period on Crete***

The animal scenes in general, though not comprising the overwhelming majority of motifs as they do later, become more numerous and the griffin, the genius and the Minoan Dragon appear for the first time in Crete, together with a natural animal, the monkey (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 90). The fantastic creatures come only last in order of popularity, after the lions, bulls, agrimia, goats and other animals. Nevertheless, the examples of fantastic beasts have already increased in numbers and will continue to be depicted even more frequently in the following period.

##### ***3.1.1 The emergence of the griffin***

The griffin is depicted for the first time in the Aegean on three sealings from the Phaistos sealing archive (1, 2 & 3 – figs. 28a, b, c) in the sitting, standing, and striding poses respectively. An inspection of these illustrations demonstrates that the sealings illustrate different types of the monster. “Actually all [four] examples are alike in showing the profile of a single animal facing left in a pose which more or less fills the circular field, but within these bounds an astonishing amount of variety is introduced” (Rhyne 1970: 71).

The manner of their illustration was diverse enough to divide scholars as to the identity of the monsters. D’Albiac (1995: 64) interpreted the ones on 2 and

3 as “experimental” monsters that were given wings: a goat, or possibly a kind of griffin, with webbed feet and scaly chest, its wing perched on top of its back (2), and a lion-bodied creature with a feathery wing sprouting from its neck (3).

However, the wings are already present, decorated with long thick feathers rising abruptly from the neck or the back of the animal (1 and 2) and, like those of birds on contemporary and earlier seals and sealings, they are spread open over the body. The crest can also be seen as a single curl (2) or a triple crown (1). Finally, 1 bears a collar with a “curl” hanging from the neck (a feature that will be further discussed in association with Neopalatial depictions of the monster), while the breast of griffin 2 is decorated with a motif that was interpreted as scales (D’Albiac 1995: 64), feathers (Rhyne 1970: 71) or locks (*CMS II.5* 318). One trait that did not survive later was the bird feet, which are depicted on two of the sealings, namely 1 and 2 (Rhyne 1970: 70-85 for a more detailed stylistic analysis of the three illustrations; Yule 1980: 138, motifs 17: 4-6; Levi 1957/1958: 122 ff., nos. 243-4) and on 5 (see below).

A further example comes from Mallia; a MM I-II sealing (fig. 28d – 4) discovered in a MM II context depicting a griffin above a plant motif. Finally, a possible Protopalatial conical seal of unknown Cretan provenience, now in Germany (fig. 28e – 5), depicts a griffin with upraised wing, denoted only by three lines, and raised foreleg (Yule 1980: 43, 139).

The different stylistic traits of the first examples have provoked intense discussions of the exact source of inspiration for the Aegean griffins (Rhyne 1970: 78-80; *MMR*<sup>2</sup>: 387; Leibovitch 1955: 75 ff.; Frankfort 1936-37: 106-121). However, of multicultural origin or not, it is apparent that, as early as its first appearance on Crete, the imported motif of the griffin had already been modified

at least stylistically, so as to suit the tastes of the Minoan artists and their patrons. Furthermore, in spite of Crowley's hesitation (1989: 272), the Phaistos examples establish that it was via Crete that it arrived into the Aegean.

### **3.1.2 *The sphinx***

The first MM II example of the sphinx comes from Siteia (336, fig. 29a). The seal is a prism bearing a standing wingless sphinx with extensions on the head denoting horns or curls. Similar curls may be seen on contemporary representations of humans and owls (Yule 1980: 137-138). The mouth of the beast is open and its tongue protruding. All four paws are visible and the short tail, in the shape of a crescent, continues the line of the spine. In the background there is the S-spiral motif above the body and two concentric circles under it, between the paws.

Among the earliest MM II-III examples is a jasper seal from Archanes (337, fig. 29b) with a wingless sphinx, in a rather crouching pose, different from the Egyptian popular pose with the monster recumbant. It demonstrates an unusually detailed focus on the head and much use of curling motifs; the hair forms a curl, one more is rising from the chest and finally another is also used as a filling motif above the sphinx (Rhyne 1970: 86). The long curls are similar to those appearing on a representation of a human mask (Yule 1980: motif 1:1). All four paws are visible, shown parallel to the body. The tail is rigid and raised almost vertically (Yule 1980: pl. 11, motif 17: 2).

The Phaistos sealings have produced only one possible example of the sphinx (335, fig. 29c), and so badly preserved, that Rhyne (1970: 71-85) included it in the illustrations of the griffin and suggested that it might actually depict a

bird-hybrid, based on its alleged bird feet. The excavator regarded it as either a lion or a griffin (Levi 1957/1958: 124, no. 247). It seems more plausible that the figure should be treated as a sphinx; the long neck of the creature is not that of a bird, but would be more appropriate for a sphinx. The raised and spiralling wings of this sphinx, the first Aegean winged sphinx, show an early adaptation of the types that were closer to Egyptian or Syrian – in any case foreign – standards (Yule 1980: 138; Schachermeyr 1967: 32). The rendering of the slender body also indicates local adaptation of an imported motif.

Both the Siteia (336) and the Archanes (337) sphinxes have been considered primitive types, quite different from the Neopalatial sphinx (Xenaki-Sakellariou 1958: 21; Dessenne 1957a: 46). Evans (*PM III*: 124) has suggested that Gorgon heads with their “coiling locks” inspired their curious trait of the curls, while Dessenne (1957a: 45) recognised in the one in front of the chest (fig. 10b) a beard rendered with much liberty, anticipating the later creations of Zakros and Ayia Triadha. This early example has a Near Eastern rather than Egyptian character and Dessenne (1957a: 44) localised the pose as Syro-Cappadocian and the beard as generally Syrian. *Contra* this view, Rhyne (1970: 91) proposed an influence from the early Hyksos scarabs, although she did admit that the latter are essentially Syrian adaptations of Egyptian prototypes.

Egyptian rather than exclusive Syrian influence seem to be favoured with more recent discoveries. The Archanes and Siteia sphinxes have been compared with the terracotta appliqué sphinx (396, fig. 29d) that was discovered at Quarter Mu in 1972 (Poursat 1973a: 111-114, pl. XI 3; idem 1973b: 583). Poursat (1973a: 112, 114) detected Egyptian elements, for example, in the “portrait head”, the rendering of the wingless body and the short beard, inspired by

Osirian prototypes. This relief, together with more MM II pots with relief decoration also found at the palatial workrooms, indicated direct contact between Crete and Egypt during the period (Immerwahr 1990: 35). Knappett (2002: 180) incorporated the Mallia sphinx relief that “draws on Egyptian cultural symbolism and may have been adapted as a symbol of royal authority” into the aspects of exchange labelled by Warren (1995: 1-18) as ‘iconographic transfer’ or ‘symbolic exchange’.

It should be noted that, although consensus is likely to be reached in favour of Egyptian prototypes for the Minoan sphinx (as is the well developed and generally accepted argument for the Minoan Genius), all the aforementioned opposing views demonstrate even more clearly the uncertainty surrounding the early examples of Cretan monsters. Another most likely Protopalatial artefact, the gold pectoral with human head finials at either side (382, fig. 29e), part of the Aegina Treasure, now in the British Museum demonstrates the case. Higgins (1957: 42-57) suggested the faces represent sphinxes and Younger (1995a: 168, no. 91) actually compared them with the Mallia appliqué.

### ***3.1.3 The genius***

A late First Intermediate Period Egyptian scarab with the goddess Taweret in the so-called adoring position, i.e. with raised arms, was among MM IA-II finds from tholos tomb B at Platanos (517, fig. 30a). It is the earliest known representation in the Aegean of the goddess that was transformed into the Minoan Genius. The goddess has an open mouth, swollen belly and a dorsal appendage starting on the top of the head, descending to mid-leg and decorated with short horizontal lines, while the body of the creature is decorated with series

of small vertical lines. She is followed by a sitting baboon whose head, like that of the goddess, has an unclear form.

The monster itself, i.e. the Minoan adaptation of the Egyptians' demonic divinity known as Taweret, can be seen for the first time on Crete on the Phaistos sealings (439, 440 – figs. 30b, c). The genius of 439, illustrated on two sealings, features an elongated head, resembling a hippopotamus, with its mouth open. Its belly is swollen and it carries a single-handled ewer, in the typical Egyptian offering gesture (Weingarten 1991a: 7, fig. 2). A version of Taweret's dorsal appendage is discerned on its back, crosshatched, rising high behind the ear without touching the head and descending to mid-leg.

The second illustration, fig. 30c (440), is found on a sealing with seven incomplete impressions by a metal ring. It depicts a lion headed genius; again its mouth is open without any teeth showing. The head is outlined by a lion's mane and its belly is swollen. Evidence of breasts, pendulous, inside the body line, is clearer than in the previous seal impression. It also carries a ewer in the same manner as the first genius from Phaistos. The dorsal appendage, which descends from the ear almost to the ground, is decorated with vertical wavy lines and outlined with globules.

A sealing from Knossos (441) is dated probably slightly later than the Phaistos sealings since it has been attributed to the Knossos "Hieroglyphic Deposit" (Weingarten 1991a: 6; Yule 1980: 138; Gill 1961b: 87; for problems regarding the contents and date of the "Hieroglyphic Deposit" see Gill 2002: 103 and Pini 2002: 6-8; for a probable MM III date for it see Krzyszkowska 2005a: 112-116). Thus MM III constitutes the *terminus post quem non* for the seal (dated to MM II-III) that produced the impression. The genius has the typically

Egyptian elongated hippopotamus head and the dorsal appendage of Taweret, open mouth showing bared teeth, swollen belly, pendulous breast and lion's hind legs. It also holds a ewer in the Egyptian offering pose. The characteristics of this genius recall Egyptian images of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The discussion on the exact mode of transference of the motif to the Aegean has also divided scholars as in the case of the griffins and sphinx. Gill (1963: 10) suggested that the Minoan genius followed a route similar to that of the other two monsters. There is evidence from Byblos and elsewhere that the Egyptian goddess Taweret was known to the Syrians at that time, leading her to the conclusion that she came to Crete detached from her role and at least part of her functions in Egypt. Right from the beginning we trace the form that was characteristic of her later representations, including for example the holding of jugs, probably for libations (Gill 1963: 10).

However, Weingarten (1991a: 9) did not accept a Syrian involvement in the transference of the motif, which certainly demonstrates clear Egyptian characteristics in its typology. The late Prepalatial/early Protopalatial Platanos scarab (517), a direct Egyptian import, strengthens her argument. Moreover, Taweret was connected with lustration in Egypt and the association of the genius with vases and vegetation can be seen already in this period. The Minoans seem to have imported both the lion- and the hippopotamus-headed forms of Taweret and, like the Egyptians, did not make any distinctions in their function, as can be seen in the three earliest examples.



### 3.1.4 The Minoan Dragon and the problem of its origin

The Minoan dragon was first identified by Levi (1945: 270-280) on two Neopalatial sealings from Ayia Triadha, where the creature displays its most telling characteristics, the small pointed head, long strong neck and long tubular body. Today, the MM II-III bifacial jasper disc **524** (fig. 31) is considered the earliest known appearance of the ‘canonical’ type of the dragon. It depicts the monster on one side and a tectonic motif on the other<sup>1</sup>.

Although the origin of the motif has been discussed by Palaiologou (1995), Poursat (1976), Gill (1963), Hood (1953) and Levi (1945), it remains hazily defined and a satisfactory theory has yet to be put forth (see section 1.9.6). Levi (1945: 272-273; followed by Gill 1963, but *contra* Poursat 1976 and Hood 1953) was the first one to detect the common iconographic elements shared by Minoan and Babylonian dragons, i.e. the elongated tubular body, elongated head, the paws resembling those of griffins. His views, however, are not universally accepted, although the Mesopotamian origin is the working theory mostly favoured. The matter is rather complicated since the Minoan dragon seems to combine elements from both the Near Eastern and the Egyptian artistic monster traditions and/or its source need not have been a monster at all, but a natural animal such as the horse or even the crocodile (suggested by Hood 1953).

Poursat (1976: 467-468, 471) spoke of Egyptian influence and, after distinguishing between dragons and crocodiles, suggested rather convincingly that the initial source of inspiration was the crocodile (already endowed with special powers in Egypt). The identification of the exotic animal as the original

<sup>1</sup> Krzyszkowska (2005a: 90, n. 33) refers to Protopalatial CMS II 29D as depicting a dragon or a crocodile, but no such creature is illustrated on this hieroglyphic seal.

of the Minoan dragon is insightful and can be supported by the Egyptian elements in the iconography of the creature.

Having said that, Poursat's approach to the problem through the differentiation between dragons and crocodiles is arguably flawed. Firstly, the likelihood of identifying a depiction as a dragon or a crocodile with certainty is practically non-existent (also admitted by Poursat 1976: 471-472), as shown by the variety of identifications assigned to the creatures throughout the literature. For instance, the LM I Palaikastro ivory comb **538** has been taken to depict crocodiles (Poursat 1976: 468, no. III.3) and lizards (Bosanquet & Dawkins 1923: 126-127), while the LH IIIA Asine chamber tomb ivory lid **544** may be decorated with crocodiles (Poursat 1976: 468, no. III.4), dragons (Gill 1963: 8, no. 10) or even birds (Frödin-Persson 1938: 388, no. 2). Hood (1953: 86, n. 5) argued that the Neopalatial sealings of Ayia Triadha most likely depict horses and compared the "goddess" riding these "horses" with the Syrian Anat or Astarte. As for the Ayia Pelaghia cylinder (**44**), he thought that it depicts neither a horse nor any other real or imaginary animal.

Moreover, of the eight examples identified by Poursat (1976: 468-470) as representations of crocodiles, six are in fact later Mycenaean products, with the exceptions of the LM I Palaikastro comb (**538**) and the Shaft Grave III cut-outs (**539**, see section 4.2.6). The cut-outs though may signify a misinterpretation of the "canonical" type by early Mycenaean artists or, more likely, they may represent a transformation of the dragon through Egyptian stimuli (for Egyptian elements in Early Mycenaean funerary iconography see Gallou 2005: 42). Perhaps the dragon did eventually degrade into a crocodile or its Mycenaean iconography was influenced by crocodile depictions, but that appears to have

been a later development and is not necessarily connected with the problem of the origin of the dragon, but with its later development and transformation.

Furthermore, it is doubtful whether such attempts at distinctions are justifiable in the first place, especially in view of the well documented smaller or greater variations in the depictions of Aegean monsters (see for example the transformation of the Minoan genius and the sphinx from their MBA introduction to Crete until the LH III Mycenaean depictions). The general disagreement in the identification of this “monster” is in fact reminiscent of the earlier works on the Minoan Genius, in which the different iconographic types of the monster, i.e. the ass-headed or the lion-headed varieties, were treated as distinct demons with different attributes (cf. for instance A. Cook 1894). The differences between the types are better explained as stages in the development of the iconography of the dragon rather than as evidence for the depiction of two separate beings.

Finally, regarding the origin of the dragon, a factor that has been largely ignored by researchers is the fertile soil for the transference of the motif revealed in early images whose traits are indeed reminiscent of dragon characteristics (see section 2.1.5). These figures appear already in the Prepalatial and Protopalatial periods (see sections 2.1.4, 2.1.5 and 3.1.8 – see also the EM III *CMS XII* 12, Appendix A, engraved on one of its sides with what Kenna called an S-shaped “monster”). This longstanding history of the S-shaped elongated forms of quadrupeds, usually conjoined, also must have prepared the ground for the introduction of the dragon, at least visually, and might have been one of the factors that promoted the monster to the Minoans. But the end product of Minoan and subsequently Mycenaean arts was a creature whose functions was indeed

influenced by Near Eastern and Egyptian iconographic prototypes. Nevertheless, it was apparently embedded in the Minoan mythology and/or religion in a different fashion from that of Egypt and the Near East, even if in appearance it did occasionally resemble an exotic animal, the crocodile, or even the less exotic horses and dogs. As Palaiologou (1995: 198) observed, being hybrid creatures they “may incorporate features of whichever of these animals was known in the Aegean repertory and was familiar to the local artist”.

### ***3.1.5 The “bird-people”***

The sealing of fig. 22b (855) from Phaistos depicts two hybrids with beaked heads standing in mirror image of each other. The authors of *CMS* included the motif in the possible representations of genii, under the term “demon (?)”. However, the beaked head places the motif in the bird-people group and is closely reminiscent of the Prepalatial seals depicting figures with birdlike heads (see section 2.1.3 and Table 1 in Appendix B). Their rendering is not unlike that of the figures on the Kamares ware also from Phaistos discussed below.

“Bird-people” are quite common in this period and most appear on steatite seals. To mention but a few more examples, 817 from Workshop α at Mallia bears the illustration of a birdlike figure in front of whom lies a jug. One more hybrid with beaked head and wing-like arms is depicted on a haematite prism (*CMS I* 426, Appendix B). Workshop γ unearthed an even more interesting Protopalatial example: a female figurine with a beak and a triangular body on a steatite cone (*CMS II.2* 127, Appendix B, fig. 102). One seal probably from House C at Kato Zakros (*CMS II.2* 264, Appendix b, fig. 32) may depict a

“proper” bird-lady with the long beak of the figure shown in profile and the displayed down-turning wings.

Protopalatial pottery, specifically Kamares ware, has been decorated with figures with bird traits in only rare cases, among which a Kamares bowl and a “fruitstand” (Appendix B, figs. 33a, b) from the Phaistos palace, found together with cult objects in rooms belonging to the sanctuary complex opening onto the West Court. They are decorated with female figures with beak-like faces, and, together with an amphora decorated with a male figure, are unique, since the majority of Kamares vases were decorated with representational motifs only in MM III, at the end of the tradition (Stamos 2001: 63; Walberg 2001: 14; eadem 1976: 67-69). Both the findspot and the decoration of the first two Phaistos vessels associate them and the figures depicted on them with ritual in which the figures are apparently engaged.

The first one, a shallow bowl (fig. 33a), bears an “epiphany” scene, with a female figure flanked by two larger female dancers. The “goddess” has no arms, but the dancers bend above her with outstretched arms, while an outdoor setting may be indicated by the small lily blossom near the rim (Immerwahr 1990: 33). Branigan (1993: 136) recognised in the loops “snaking” down either side of the central figure’s body a similarity with the loops on the snake tubes found in Minoan shrines and stated that “there can be little doubt that the Phaistos dancers are performing in honour of the Snake Goddess”. He therefore associated the scenes on the bowl and the “fruitstand” described below with the cult ritual taking place in front of the Prepalatial Mesara tholoi that went out of use during the early palace period and considered them ‘snapshots’ of actual Protopalatial ritual.

The second vessel, a “fruitstand” (fig. 33b), is also decorated with a – larger this time – central female figure holding lilies with her upraised arms, a vegetation goddess according to N. Marinatos (1993: 148). Her flanking “votaries” are significantly smaller, while even smaller bent over figures with outstretched arms are depicted in groups of three around the rim. “Despite the schematic rendering of their bodies (in dotted robes) and limbs, they convey very well the sense of worshippers, especially in the bent heads with the hair hanging forward” (Immerwahr 1990: 34). Finally, four more dancing female figures are illustrated on the upper surface of the foot-plate. All the figures have beak-like faces, similar to those found on the Prepalatial and Protopalatial seals.

Goodison and Morris (1998b: 123) have commented on the beaked heads of the figures, suggesting an indication of bird-masks or other ritual headgear and pinpointed the central position, the focus of attention given to the flowers held by the “goddess”. The repeated movement of the dancers may be symbolic, since repetition can be a defining feature of ritual action. Nikolaidou (2002: 87) also talked of the Phaistos pottery scenes as “snapshots of sacred acts performed in the West Court sanctuaries of the palace” and compared them with a dancing figure on a bowl from Palaikastro, although the latter bears no bird characteristics.

The steatite seal figures can also provide parallels, as already mentioned. For example, prism (CMS IX 25 Appendix B, fig. 33c) with the two birdlike figures probably depicts such dancing, as both figures move to the left and hold hands raised high. A later wall painting fragment from a fresco dump at Ayia Triadha (Militello 1999: 345-252) can give an idea of the ritual dance most likely being performed. On the lower register of the fragment six or seven women are

shown with their arms extended resting on the shoulders of the one in front. The ritual dance that Immerwahr (1990: 102) suggested they might be engaged in is a close reminiscent of the illustrations on the Phaistos vases.

It is interesting that, whereas the earlier beaked figures are male (see Table 1 in Appendix B), Protopalatial “bird-people” feature female figures too. As seen in Table 3, in the Neopalatial period, by the end of which the bird-lady is very common, faces with bird attributes are restricted to the depiction of female figures. Gender associations seem to be undergoing changes and, for unfortunately rather enigmatic reasons, the significant avian element in Minoan religion seems to be attached gradually, albeit decisively, with female qualities. This trend culminated in the creation of the bird-lady type and the association of birds with the goddess with upraised arms in the later part of the Bronze Age.

Together with the inclusion of female beaked figures and its implications, the decisive association of such figures with ritual summarise the developments in the depiction of “bird-people” in this period, facilitating in terms of both iconography and function the appearance of the bird lady in the following phase.

### ***3.1.6 Animal-headed figures***

A triton shell plaque from the Phaistos palace bears four relief animal-headed demons walking to the left and wearing long robes (650, fig. 34a). The animal heads have been recognised as belonging to a swine, dog, goat and bird respectively and all the figures hold sticks in their right hands. One more animal-headed figure is seen on 651 (fig. 34b). The head appears to have a long snout and pointy ears, resembling a dog or perhaps a jackal. These two illustrations of animal-headed people may be too sparse, but especially the first is of particular

interest due to various reasons.

Firstly, it comes from Phaistos, which has also produced the aforementioned “fruitstand” and bowl, i.e. objects that offer glimpses to the ritual acts of the period. Furthermore, it shows for the first time a *procession* on a medium other than seals. Processions (or dancing?) are perhaps also depicted on *CMS V Suppl. 1A* 439, *CMS IX* 25 (fig. 33c) and *CMS XI* 8 (fig. 35), with three, two and three figures respectively. This plaque has been generally overlooked in the discussion of mask use in the Aegean. It seems however that, together with these three seals, it depicts one more aspect of Protopalatial cult. Processions have apparently already emerged in ritual and both bird-headed and animal-headed people are iconographically linked with them, in addition to the former group’s link with dance, forming thus a further association with ritual (on the central role of dance in Minoan ritual see Warren 1988; *PM III*: 68 ff.; criticism in German 2005: 70).

### **3.1.7 Gorgon heads**

Seven illustrations fall under the category of gorgon head in the Protopalatial period, while a Mallia steatite prism (551, fig. 36a) engraved with a gorgon head is most likely earlier than that and dates to MM I. 557 (fig. 36b) from tomb X at Mochlos depicts a grotesque human head with horns or antennae on the head and schematic eyes, nose and mouth and arms raised on either side of the head. The MM IIB prism 555 (fig. 36c) shows a face with locks flowing out on either side, spread out as wings and terminating in coils. It has prominent teeth, protruding ears and small globular earrings and is flanked by two hieroglyphic signs. Three more MM IIB examples are part of the Giamalakis



Collection. The first (553, fig. 9) depicts a monstrous triangular face with round eyes, triangular nose and bristly hair, while the face on the second (554, fig. 36d) is circular, as are the eyes. It has prominent teeth, the so-called Hathor locks and a spiral line springing from either side of its neck. The third (552) is very similar to the other two. Only one pottery example can be dated in this period, the gorgon head from Mallia (568, fig. 36e).

Ethnography provides interesting insights for the interpretation of these figures. Ethnographic and archaeological evidence indicate that decapitation is a powerful statement surfacing in the iconography and burial customs of many cultures and is often associated with the concept of continuity and rebirth. The significance attributed to the head ranges from wisdom and virility to personhood and fertility (Freeman 1979: 236, cited in Talalay 2004: 156). Albeit scant, the Aegean prehistoric evidence also suggests that this type of dismemberment was not necessarily linked with acts of violence and death, but rather with notions “about the fluid or shifting nature of identities” (Talalay 2004: 140). Contemporary Anatolian evidence is even more compelling as it includes post mortem treatment of skulls and the preference for the placement of crania or headless individuals in domestic contexts (eadem 2004: 140-146). One should not forget that the first inhabitants of Crete are believed to have migrated from Anatolia.

In any case, parallels from the Orient, e.g. the Mesopotamian Huwawa masks, their combination on the seals with hieroglyphic signs (555), their frontality and monstrous characteristics, all make it highly improbable that they were meant to depict mere humans. The function of frontal monstrous heads in eastern iconography is mainly prophylactic and it appears that the MM gorgon

heads should be interpreted in the same way.

### ***3.1.8 Conjoined animals***

Roughly ten rather stylised depictions of conjoined animals date to the Protopalatial period. **822** (conjoined foreparts of two animals, fig. 37a), **819** (conjoined animal foreparts, fig. 37b), **820** (foreparts of two “dogs” conjoined), **821** (foreparts of two “dogs” conjoined, fig. 37c), **823** (conjoined foreparts of two animals, fig. 37d). Three of the examples come from Mallia; **816** (two inverted to one another conjoined water birds – heads missing) and **817** from Workshop  $\alpha$  (conjoined foreparts of two “dragons” or lions), while the sealing **818** (conjoined foreparts of dogs) is of unknown precise find context. Finally, **824** is a chalcedony theriomorphic stamp seal in the form of two conjoined animal foreparts (lions).

With the exception of the sealing **818** and the chalcedony theriomorph, all are steatite three-sided prisms and only **821** is of black marble. An iconographical trait they all share, apart from the theriomorph again, is that the conjoined animals form an S-shaped figure. A probably slightly later illustration (MM II-III) on a steatite prism (*CMS XI* 233), shows the foreparts of two quadrupeds forming a s-shaped motif, though without being connected. The shape of the hybrids and the choice of seal shape and material demonstrate that the snake-like monsters of the Prepalatial prisms did not completely disappear, but were still being engraved on similar seals.

Although most examples are of unknown origin, they demonstrate the continuous popularity of the theme of conjoined animals on Minoan Crete. Possibly the combination of two animals into one was seen as a means to

augment their powers – the powers that magically protected the seal owners who may have believed in the appropriation of the animal strength through the seals they wore.

### **3.1.9 Various hybrids**

One of the earliest figurines of a composite creature (**851**) comes from Room CV. Its shape is half-human, half-ape (fig. 38a). A fragment of an offering table decorated with black curvilinear designs was also found in the room, along with pottery including a conical cup and a tube (Gesell 1985: 132). The figurine, which might be a button handle for a lid (Levi 1976: 555-560), has only one other parallel from the same site. The latter (**852**, fig. 38b) was discovered in Room XCVII-XCVIII, situated in the residential quarters of the MM II Phaistos Palace. Both figurines are female, very rotund and **851** has pendulous breasts, a feature that led Gesell (1985: 12) to tentatively suggest a possible fertility cult (followed by Carinci 2000: 33-35). The shape of their bodies and their pose – they are both shown in the birth position – appears to support this theory. A third similar grotesque being, an appliqué for pottery, comes from Mallia (**853**, fig. 38c).

Weingarten (1983a: 99, n. 22) rejected the idea of an Egyptian origin for these figures and proposed a common origin that has not been identified yet. Nevertheless, Carinci (2000: 32-35) returned to the Egyptian origin of these figures and recounted the Egyptian tradition that dated back to the Middle Kingdom and associated Taweret and Bes with the protection of pregnant women and women giving birth. The two demons/divinities shared not only common functions, but also iconographic elements, such as breasts and protruding bellies.

that are also encountered on the Cretan artefacts. Thus, the appliqué and the figurines (or lids) could bear similar connotations. There is no reason to reject the acceptance by the Minoans of one more role of Taweret in addition to its lustration/ablution functions that were embodied in the Minoan genius.

However, these figurines/appliqués did not survive in later periods and, together with a Knossos pendant with a similar illustration (Carinci 2000: 33), still remain unique in the Aegean archaeological record. Therefore, any associations with beliefs they may have articulated must remain hypothetical. The argument for a rather strong Egyptian influence in the adoption of the first Minoan monsters, which fits in well with the appearance of the Mallia terracotta sphinx as well as a few glyptic sphinxes (see above), appears to be standing on firmer ground. The openness of the palatial officials to such foreign influence is indeed obvious at a time when they still experimented with various hybrid forms. It appears that it is not until the Neopalatial that the monstrous depictions crystallise in the well known Aegean fantastic creatures.

### ***3.2 The sealing deposit at Phaistos and its significance***

The Phaistos sealing deposit requires further examination as it represents arguably the earliest administrative use of sealings on Crete (Weingarten 1992: 25) and provides well stratified and dated evidence for the adoption and adaptation by the Minoans of the griffin, the sphinx, the dragon and the genius.

### ***3.2.1 Presentation of the deposit, its context and surrounding finds***

The Phaistos deposit, consisting of more than 6500 direct object clay sealings and representing 325 sealtypes, was discovered below the colonnaded Room 25 of the LM palace sealed in the ruins of the third phase of the First Palace (analysis of stratigraphy and discussion of pottery in Walberg 2001: 13; eadem 1981; Fiandra 1963). Two floors of the Neopalatial period were followed by a layer of *calcestruzzo* (cement filling) that, in turn, covered the deposit of the sealings.

Linear A tablets were also found together with the sealing archive in Room 25, inscribed with signs in the earliest form of the Linear A script (Levi 1964: 9). In fact, practically all administrative documents from Phaistos come from the Old Palace and were concentrated in two areas of the West Wing, namely Room 25 and in and around Room LI (*Minoan Roundel*: 64). Room 25 produced most of the tablets (four) and roundels (four or five, lacking seal impressions), seven two-sided bars, an odd inscription on a small label, two (perhaps four) hanging nodules, one of which was inscribed, seven noduli and some fragments (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 104; *Minoan Roundel*: 64-65; Weingarten 1995: 286; Levi 1976: 385-405). Apparently two scribal traditions were at work in the palace: while some tablets were clearly written in Proto-Linear A, the script on the two-sided bars has confused specialists as to it being Linear A or hieroglyphic (Weingarten 1995: 286).

The pottery finds included piles of conical cups, one-handled cups (decorated and undecorated), decorated jugs of different sizes, and larger decorated jars (Levi 1976: 393-397). More importantly, however, objects connected with cult were also unearthed in the same room. Specifically, a large

clay tube with cuttings on the sides was interpreted as an incense burner (Levi 1976: 397). A number of small conical cups had been deliberately placed upside-down around one of the two “double-plates” found in situ on the floor. Three “*vasi a corna e unguentari*” found in the area of the EW opening probably also represent cultic material (*Minoan Roundel*: 67).

Nonetheless, while quite tempting, the association with the cult objects emerges as far from secure. Fiandra (1968: 383-384) disagreed with Levi’s association of them with Room 25 itself, based on the fact that a large number of them were still coated with cement. By all means, Levi did not demonstrate that the sealings were actually found on the floor, adding weight to Fiandra’s view that they must have been brought from elsewhere in the palace and used as filling for the *calcestruzzo*.

Hallager (*Minoan Roundel*: 68) summarised the arguments for the provenance of the sealings and concluded that it would only be safe to consider the sealings either as fallen from a room above, or as discarded administrative documents, in agreement with Fiandra’s theory. The first hypothesis appears more attractive since the pottery was discovered comparatively well preserved, apparently having been sealed by the *calcestruzzo* layer soon after a catastrophe, whereas filling material is in a worse state of preservation as a rule (Walberg 1981: 243-244). Still, “in either case, the sealings would not have been directly connected with the floor deposit of vano 25” (*Minoan Roundel*: 68). All the same, even though the Phaistos finds cannot be safely associated with the cult objects of Room 25, they still represent a group of sealings concentrated in one small part of the palace rather than “scattered in a departmental system” as at Knossos (Weingarten 1988a: 13).

The majority of the sealtypes consisted of ornamental/geometric motifs that have their roots in the preceding period, although it is the Phaistos early naturalistic designs that are better known (detailed publication in *CMS II.5*; also, overview in Krzyszkowska 2005a: 85-89, 104-108; Weingarten 1995: 285, n. 1). Some of the sealing motifs and the seals that impressed them are early – Prepalatial and the mainly ornamental MM I-II (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 85), while others can be dated to MM II-III and correspond to Classical Kamares motifs. Kamares pottery was also found beneath the concrete layer in Room 25 (Walberg 1981: 246-247). The Phaistos sealtypes do not include human figures as a rule. However, the contemporary prisms feature humans in seemingly everyday activities that, as Krzyszkowska (2005a: 90) pointed out, hardly presage the multi-figured cult scenes of the Neopalatial period.

### ***3.2.2 The Phaistos Sealing System and Administration***

Although there is a distinct lack of evidence that would enable us to trace the development of sealing practices in the early Protopalatial period (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 99), the dating of the Phaistos deposit in MM IIB offers insights into a palatial administrative system of the end of the period (even though the nature of the deposit is still disputed; see for instance Weingarten 1994: 261-296 and criticism by Poursat in discussion and Younger 1996: 164). According to the excavator, for the most part the thousands of sealings had sealed small ovoid jugs, which were “probably destined to contain precious wines, perfumed oils and unguents dispatched to the princes of Phaistos from their subjects or from other Cretan princes in more distant cities” (Levi 1964: 9).

In addition to her disagreement with Levi on the deposit’s association

with the floor, Fiandra (1968: 283 ff.) also challenged his interpretation of the sealings. Following a re-examination of the finds and analysis of 1544 essentially intact nodules, she concluded that most likely none of the sealings had sealed Levi's small jars. Quite the reverse, only about 10% had secured various kinds of identifiable goods, such as jars or rush matting, while the vast majority of them (ca. 90%) had sealed flaring wooden pommels or small wooden cylindrical pegs, which in turn would have been used to seal doors, boxes or chests. Hallager (*Minoan Roundel*: 68) also questioned Levi's reconstruction of the sealing process. Pini (*CMS II.5*: XI; supported by Walberg 1981: 246), in agreement with Fiandra, contested the notion of vano 25 functioning as an archive room, and instead proposed it had been part of the palace where different vessels were sealed and opened.

Weingarten (1986a: 279-280) postulated that the sealings of Phaistos manifest the adoption by the Minoans of an Egyptian or Near Eastern system of storeroom administrative controls. Characteristic of this deposit is the placing of sealings directly on objects, demonstrating thus the system's rather recent importation from the Near East, in all probability Egypt (Weingarten 1988a: 1). The practice of sealing objects directly started at Phaistos at least as early as it did at Knossos. Soon after Weingarten (1992: 33) detected the links of the *Multiple Sealing System* (henceforth *MSS*) at Phaistos with the similar administrative use of seals at Karahöyük, Level I, postulating a common source, probably Anatolian, for both systems. She (1992: 25) suggested that "the *MSS* is a new and objective factor to be added to the known, if often disputed, glyptic relations between MBA Anatolia and Minoan Crete" (on the affinities between the glyptic arts of Phaistos and Karahöyük see: Immerwahr 1990: 29; Yule 1987;



Davis 1979; Levi 1969: 257-259). The system though is in its earliest form at Phaistos, and only constituted a tiny part of sealing practices there.

The analysis and comparison of the MM sealing systems of Phaistos, Mallia and Knossos (up to the destruction of the palace) by Weingarten (1988a; 1986a) exhibited that the Phaistos elite/non-elite sealing pattern corresponds to intensive internal administration, not with incoming goods (table 1). Since, clearly, neither doors nor very large chests can be regarded as portable goods, the seal-owners who had sealed the pegs and large pommels must have been residents in the palace. “This seems to be confirmed by the highly-intensive system of seal use, that is, relatively few seals were responsible for a disproportionately large number of sealings; just 44 of the 327 seal-owners – 13% of seal owners – accounted for 37% of all sealings, a kind of concentrated sealing authority best explained by resident seal-owners repeatedly sealing and unsealing on-the-spot” (Weingarten 1995: 285-286).

	No.	%
Top Individual	175	(7.9)
Individuals 2 + 3	200	(9.1)
Next most active (+10 sealings)	1172	(53.1)
Least active (10- sealings)	660	(29.9)
	2207	(100)

Table 1: Elite/non elite sealing behaviour at MM IIB Phaistos.

(After Weingarten 1988a: table 8).

“With the exception of the leading triumvirate, this pattern compares closely with Ayia Triadha; both reflect storeroom administration carried out by seal-owners on the spot. The difference between the structures of Phaistos and Knossos/EW, on the other hand, leaves no doubt that, though equally palatial and equally sealing objects, they are not carrying out the same duties.” (Weingarten

1988a: 13) Thus, the Phaistos sealing system best fits resident bureaucrats, rather than external seal-owners and the sealings are not incoming from spread sources. It is an intensive sealing system, with a 6.8 average number of nodules stamped by each seal-owner (Table 2).

Average no. top three individuals	125
Average no. next most active	39.9
Average no. least active	3.1

Table 2: Average number of sealings stamped by each seal-owner at Phaistos.  
(After Weingarten 1988a: 16)

### 3.2.3 Use of seals with fantastic animals within the Phaistos sealing system

A similar analysis of the seals that were employed to impress the sealings with the fantastic animals will serve to demonstrate the patterns of their use and, consequently, of the activity of their owners. None of the seals with fantastic animals were used as part of the *MSS*; on the contrary, they were all employed in the *Single Sealing System* (henceforth *SSS*). Assuming that each owner possessed a single seal, it becomes obvious (Table 3) that the owners of the seals with the griffins, the sphinx, the genii and the hybrids were amongst the least active individuals in the Phaistos sealing deposit, with the exception only of the owner of the seal with the griffin motif 3.

Apparently he/she belonged to the larger group of seal-owners, namely the “next most active individuals”, according to Weingarten’s categorisation (Table 4). Still, with only 23 sealings, he/she demonstrates activity well under the average of the group (see Table 3). What is of interest though is that the seal with the griffin 3 was already worn at the time it was used to impress the Phaistos sealings (Pini: *CMS II.5* 319), which indicates an already earlier long-

term use of the signet.

Motif No.	No. of sealings	No. of individual impressions	Seal-owner
1 (griffin)	2	5	Least active
2 (griffin)	1	1	Least active
3 (griffin)	23	23	Next most active
335 (sphinx)	1	Several	Least active
439 (genius)	2	2	Least active
440 (genius)	1	7	Least active
855 (hybrid)	1		Least active

Table 3: Frequency of use of fantastic animals’ motifs in the Phaistos deposit & sealing behaviour of the seal-owners.

The fantastic creatures as a separate sub-group of motifs in the Phaistos deposit not only comprise a minute part of it – only 2.14% of the sealtypes published in *CMS II.5*, but they were also among the least used seals in the deposit. Does that occur because of chances of excavation? The well-worn seal of 3 supports this suggestion. Or can it be attributed to a restricted quantity of responsibilities of their owners and, accordingly, their inferior, lower position in the bureaucratic hierarchy can be assumed? Still, it is of interest that 440 was impressed with a gold ring, when no more than five gold rings were in use by the Phaistos officials (*Crete-Egypt I*: 155-156)<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, its advanced naturalistic motif is perhaps relevant to the frequency of its use within the deposit (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 108).

Finally, it should be noted that the assumption on which the above analysis was made, i.e. that each sealtype represents one seal-owner, is not unassailable scientifically. Quite the contrary, there is later evidence (see for instance the Vapheio finds on the mainland) that an individual could own more

<sup>2</sup> The first attempt to identify the original materials and seal shapes of sealings was made in *CMS II.5*, but not all the seals that impressed the Phaistos sealings were identified.

than one seals and it is possible that a seal may have been used by more than one official sharing responsibilities or functions (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 98; Younger 1996: 164). Nevertheless, this short analysis demonstrates that the use of the specific seal types was rather restricted in the Phaistos deposit.

### ***3.3 Placing the Protopalatial fantastic creatures in their context***

It is true that there are not many examples of imaginary beings in this period and certainly significantly fewer than the more popular themes of physical animals, which gradually become more popular with goats/wild goats being the most frequently illustrated, followed by bulls, dogs or wolves and occasionally boar (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 89). To interpret the presence of the monsters and demonstrate with certainty their function – religious, administrative or other – in the art of the Minoans, perhaps appears too ambitious a task with so little evidence. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, the specific find-context of the representations of fantastic animals in each case, whether administrative, funerary, secular or religious, is of vital importance in order to understand their function.

#### ***3.3.1 Fantastic creatures and the media for their depiction***

It is immediately apparent that a larger variety of media were used in the Protopalatial period in comparison to the restricted illustration of monsters on seals in the preceding era. Pottery, a triton shell, figurines, (gold) rings and gold jewellery, seals that were used sphragistically, all are now employed for the depiction of imaginary beings.

The objects on which they appear are of interest themselves. “Fruitstands” may have been designed for ritual use and, since numerous examples are found in funerary contexts, it is possible that these at least were designed for use in tombs (Soles 1992: 227). Although Walberg (2001: 17) maintained that Kamares ware “seems to have played an important role in Minoan society and economy, but not primarily as a power tool for the elite within Crete”, the size of the Phaistos “fruitstand” in combination with the effort and skill involved in its production suggested to Goodison and Morris (1998b: 121) that it was certainly no ordinary secular object carrying an everyday scene.

The triton had already been associated with cult as early as the Prepalatial era, while the possession of gold would certainly be the privilege of the few. Similarly, it is assumed that the seals used in the palatial administrative systems were in the same manner owned by the palatial elites.

The problem of identifying the sources of certain materials (bearing implications on their value) is exemplified by the cases of the hard stones rock crystal and jasper<sup>3</sup>, both of which occur in Crete and elsewhere in the Aegean. However, as Krzyszkowska (2005a: 82-83 with a discussion on the origins of the imported amethyst, carnelian, blue chalcedony and lapis lazuli, all used for Aegean seals) points out, their origin has not been pinpointed with scientific methods yet and it appears that, at least for Crete, the local sources were probably soon depleted, thus necessitating imports. Access to these imports

<sup>3</sup> The following five rock crystal seals are engraved with monsters: the Neopalatial lentoid 487; the LM II lentoids 461 and 827; the LM II-IIIa ring-stone 143; a LM III lentoid from Psychro (184). As for jasper seals, these are more numerous (18 in total): the MM II “Petschaft” 337; the LM 203; the LM IA 40 from Thera; 42 from Mochlos (LM I); the Neopalatial 52 and 524; the LM I-II 77, 81 and 620; the mainland finds 121 (LM IB?) and 134 (LH IIA); the LBA I-II (?) 535; the LM II 674 and 874; the LM II-IIIa1 145; the LH IIIa-B 537; finally, 618 and 880.

would have been limited to the elite, who would act as the patrons of craftsmen (eadem 2005a: 98).

It is true that three-sided prisms, used so frequently for the illustration of bird-headed figures, gorgon heads and conjoined animals, may not be so securely associated with the elites in view of their long history on the island and their easily accessible inexpensive material, mostly steatite (for the increasing use of steatite in the manufacture of soft stone seals in the Protopalatial period see Krzyszkowska 2005a: 81). Still, it is of importance that a large number of those did come from palatial workshops, namely the Mallia workshops, and that they were used for sealing purposes by the palatial administration (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 93), contrary to older beliefs that interpreted them as mere amulets (CS: 21-23).

### **3.3.2 *Find context***

As to the find contexts of the Protopalatial illustrations of composite beings, the frequency of artefacts from the Phaistos palace and their association with cultic assemblages is striking. The association of the West Wing of the Phaistos palace with cult activities has been supported by Gesell (1980: 9-12) and Carinci (2001: 23-24). The latter attempted to clarify the significance of the area, the activities taking place in it and the identity of its possible occupants or the people operating in it through the study of the circulation patterns and the finds. He concluded that the southern part of the Protopalatial West Wing was not only given to cult, but should be identified as the part of the palace reserved for a high ranking individual, supporting his theory with sealing evidence and the ceremonial pottery found therein (the pictorial Kamares ware amongst it). "This

person was possibly a woman, a priestess, who had control within the palatial organisation of an independent quarter, with its own storerooms and a decentralised administration” (Carinci 2001: 24).

The palace of Mallia with the adjacent Quartier Mu (that displayed functions comparable to those of the palaces) and its workshops also follow as a wealthy source of material. The geographical distribution of the first examples of fantastic creatures reveals a close association with the seats of the newly established ruling elite(s) on the island. Admittedly, superior archaeological knowledge of central and eastern Crete is certainly partly responsible for the pattern that emerges. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly not by accident that the majority of examples come from the palace of Phaistos and its surrounding areas (Platanos<sup>4</sup>, Kofinas), Mallia or from the vicinity of Knossos (Archanes). What is more, even illustrations from more remote areas or of uncertain origin are stylistically connected with products of the palatial workshops. For instance, seal 336 from Siteia has been attributed to the “Hieroglyphic Deposit Group”, while 856 is close to the “Mallia Workshop Subgroup” (Yule 1980: 137-138). The contrast between the palatial centres – and in particular Phaistos – with their advanced pictorial motifs and the provincial areas, where mainly decorative motifs are used, becomes apparent with the comparison of the Phaistos and the Monastiraki sealings (Godart et al. 2000).

Moreover it is possible to discern a more specific pattern within these regions in the distribution of Hieroglyphic seals, documents in Hieroglyphic script and steatite prisms, which seem to be absent from Phaistos (Krzyszkowska

<sup>4</sup> Particularly in association to the Platanos tholos, although the exact identification of the users of the tomb is still disputed (see discussion of Mesara tholoi in section 2.2.3), this site, like Koumasa and Porti, has produced small rectangular tombs around the larger tholoi, interpreted as a sign of social stratification with the tholoi belonging to “elites” (Soles 1992: 258, n. 42).

2005a: 96). This concentration of the first examples in north-central (Knossos), south-central (Phaistos) and eastern (Mallia) Crete indicates that it was these areas that first adopted the eastern images of the griffin, the sphinx, the dragon and the genius. The phenomenon of regionalism that is well established for Prepalatial Crete (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 59) has not given way to a *koine* in art and beliefs yet (see for instance the co-existence of conservative and innovative workshops in MM IIB and the variations in sealing practices – eadem 2005a: 80, 104), while the palatial authorities apparently played a leading role in iconographic innovations.

### **3.3.3 Socio-political context**

A brief account of the major events of the period under study should begin with the construction of the palatial centres and the developments in social stratification that these represent, together with the less-easily defined “palatial” structures at Kommos (J. W. Shaw 2002: 99-110), Petras (Tsipopoulou 2002: 133-144), Archanes (Sakellarakis & Sakellaraki 1997: 120-127) and Monastiraki (Kanta 1999: 387-393). In the Protopalatial period the first Minoan palaces at Knossos, Phaistos and Mallia were built, naturalistic representational figural art was suddenly introduced (MacGillivray 2000: 123) and the themes of fantastic animals were immediately included in the figural art of the period. MM II also marks the period of the Classical Kamares ware, which, as defined by Walberg (1976), is a high quality palatial ware (however, see Krzyszkowska 2005a: 80, n. 5 for difficulties in placing a time for transition and transformation in Neopalatial society, pottery and glyptic).

A range of theories has been put forward as to the origin and



development of the First Minoan Palaces (for references and a brief account of theories concerning the matter see Rehak & Younger 2001; Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 11). Influence from abroad has been argued widely, whether that came from the Near East generally (Watrous 1987: 65-70; Weingarten 1990a: 95-105), or more specifically Egypt (MacGillivray 2000: 123). Rehak and Younger (2001: 394) cautioned against the “usual romantic notions about what constitutes a palace” and, since there is no evidence that the first palaces were the seats of a king or a queen, proposed instead the use of the term “regional centre”. Cherry (1986: 19-45) interpreted the first palaces as multi-functional centres controlling the political, economic and religious activities around the island. They may have acted initially as the cores amongst thriving communities (Cadogan 1994: 57-69) and later apparently retained control of cult activities and religion.

It has in fact been suggested that the initial function of Knossos and the other palaces was religious, through which some sort of social control could be applied (Davaras 1997: 126; Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 11; cf. also *Function of Palaces*). After reviewing the relevant theories on the function of the Minoan palaces Driessen (2002: 13) concluded that it was not primarily political and residential, although they still served as the main political arena, “erected by a community for the fulfilling of religious and ritual tasks”.

Religion then probably constituted, if not the *raison d'être* of the first palaces, at least the driving force behind their establishment:

“In the Bronze Age religion was all-pervasive. It was an important if not dominating element in the life of all societies then. It may indeed be the key to the structure and development, if not origin, of the civilised societies of early times in the Near East.”

Hood, S. (1997: 105)

So, the reconstruction by Evans of horns of consecration on the top of the walls of the Knossos palace, if correct, would openly declare the ritual significance of the site. The religious and ceremonial elements that date to its earliest phase seem to support this theory and indeed a religious function for the palaces would not be surprising in this early society.

### ***3.3.4 Religious context***

A general proliferation of shrines marked the opening of the MBA in Crete, not only in tombs, but also in caves, on mountain tops and in certain domestic contexts, culminating in the first palaces and villas (Gesell 1985: 9-18). “It is part of a widespread religious fervor that may have had its roots in the political developments of the period” (Soles 1992: 238). Sacred caves are attested to have been used for the first time as sacred sites with cult offerings at MM I-II, just before or at the beginning of the Protopalatial period (MacGillivray 1997b: 22).

Peak sanctuaries flourished during the Old Palace period, while their earliest phase is dated to EM III-MM II (Nowicki 2001: 31, 36) and can perhaps be correlated with the demise of the earlier communal tombs that, as was mentioned in the previous chapter (section 2.2.5), had served as *loci* of public cult and ritual (Peatfield 1990: 125). The Yuktas peak sanctuary, which is closely associated with Knossos, offers the earliest known evidence, since it served as a cult place already in EM II (idem 2001: 32). Other peak sanctuaries seem to develop concurrently with the first palaces (MacGillivray 1997b: 22; Peatfield 1997: 117-132; Rutkowski 1986: 73-118). In fact the palaces, or at least

Knossos, probably appropriated the peak sanctuary cult, as indicated by the Loomweight Basement deposit at Knossos, which consisted of objects that had fallen from the “sanctuary” above it. The cult objects belonging to it suggest that the cult practised there was a modification of peak sanctuary cult adapted for performance in the palace (Gesell 1985: 13).

By the end of MM II most peak sanctuaries were for their most part abandoned, with the exception of the larger ones near settlements that seem to have grown in importance (Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 55; MacGillivray 1997b: 23; Peatfield 1997: 117-132; Rutkowski 1986: 73-118).

Pillar crypts and lustral basins appear in settlement contexts and palaces, despite being far from common (Gesell 1985: 14-15). Offering tables, rhyta – many bull or bull-head –, natural and imitation triton shells, horned pots, all make up the ritual equipment of the period, while the double axe and horns of consecration are not yet as common as in later periods (eadem 1985: 15-18).

Regarding the character of the cult, it became more clearly defined and differentiated during the Protopalatial period. Soles (1992: 242) associated its transference from Prepalatial house tombs to palaces and the various common architectural features they shared, e.g. the pillar crypts, not with a chthonic aspect of Minoan cult, but with the status of those buried in house tombs. They “were the very ones who were bringing about the unification of the island in a number of highly centralised palatial polities, and ‘religious sanctions’ and the ‘manipulation of ideological symbolism’ were among the more important means that they employed to achieve their goals” (idem 1992: 242). Goodison and Morris (1998b: 132) have also noted that the rise of the palaces with the elite structure that they represented, provided the context “for a greater emphasis on

anthropomorphic deities and an apparent shift from immanence to transcendence”.

Gesell (1985: 16, 62) has discussed the significance of the bird symbol as it appears on objects at Knossos and Phaistos and on bird shaped vases. She (2001: 36) later continued along this line of research by investigating the possibility of use of live birds (or snakes) in ritual. Although bird figurines are found on peak sanctuaries throughout the period, no actual examples are attested in the sacred caves (Gesell 2001: 36).

### ***3.3.5 Ritual, masks and human-like monsters or animal-like men***

The significance of ritual in Minoan life and the various forms it may have assumed throughout the BA has been demonstrated by the studies of Goodison (2001), Wedde (1999), N. Marinatos (1993; 1989b; 1986), Hägg (1990a; 1990b; 1983), Warren (1989), Mountjoy (1985), Boulotis (1985), Branigan (1970), Sakellarakis (1970) and various other researchers<sup>5</sup>. Rituals linked with sacrifice, libations, (sacred) clothing, flowers, trees and baetyls, others involving dancing, the importance of performance and movement, rituals of divine epiphany re-enactment, the role of heavenly bodies and specialised equipment for the practice of ritual as well as its communal aspects, all have been addressed in depth and continue to intrigue scholars. Driessen (2001: 363) in fact suggested that it was rituals, the acts themselves, which acted as the mediators between mortals and gods in contrast to for example Egypt where the Pharaoh ensured this link.

<sup>5</sup> These are but some of the latest studies on the subject and in no case do they comprise a complete catalogue. Nevertheless, they will refer the reader to the previous fundamental works such as Nilsson's *MMR*<sup>2</sup>, Persson (1942) and the *PM* volumes.

The role of “magic” was also tackled and the difficulties in separating it from “religion” in view of the fact that “magic acts” are often incorporated within the “official ritual” were stressed (see for example Boulotis 1986; *CMS Beiheft 2*).

Ethnographic studies have indicated that the face is “the main point at which human identity is communicated, and communication largely passes through the face” (Tonkin 1992: 226). Therefore, to change or hide the face (with a mask) implies at least a change of identity and at the most a change of essence. Morgan (1995b: 135-149) associated frontal faces (disembodied or not) in Minoan art specifically with death and argued that they allude to liminal states of consciousness.

The notion of masking and shifting identities was not unknown in the Neolithic Aegean. In fact, there was a decided preference for the skull in secondary interments, while the site of Achilleion produced a group of possible interchangeable faces for figurines (Talalay 2004: 150). On Minoan Crete, a group of Protopalatial bell-shaped objects from Poros, Tylissos, the Knossos MM IA houses beneath the *kouloures* of the West Court and other sites (HM cases 20 and 24) come in support of this theory. They have been interpreted as representing horned masks worn by priests at certain ceremonies (Gesell 1985: 13, 17; *MMR*<sup>2</sup>: 191-193; N. Platon 1948: 842; *PM I*: 175). A particular specimen from an apparently sacrificial deposit at Poros (Gesell 1985: pl. 161 – HM, case 23) is made of faience and shows painted facial features, while another is made of clay and was discovered in the Yuktas peak sanctuary (Sakellarakis 2003: 23). They are also found in funerary contexts such as at Phourni, Archanes (tombs 3, 5 and 6) and Vorou A (Soles 1992: 230; Gesell 1985: 16; *PM I*: 175).

Most objects are limited to north central Crete, dating to MM I – a few in MM II, and have been interpreted as votive bells, votive robes, or female idols. N. Platon (1948: 833 ff.) proposed their interpretation as horned masks and associated them with the cult of Hathor of the First Dynastic Period in Egypt, due to the presence of a disc between the horns. In view of the Poros painted specimen, Gesell (1985: 17) maintained that this reading is the most reasonable suggestion. Thus, ritual disguise in Minoan cult emerges as a rather sound possibility.

Ethnography further supports the ritualistic function of monsters: the penetration of beasts and animals into religious and mythic traditions is quite extensive throughout antiquity. It is evident in various aspects of religious and ritual activity like hunting, cave painting, totemistic religious systems, in the gargoyles and bestiaries of later history, in the habit of naming after animals, in the myths of metamorphosis and in the “initiatory identification with beasts such as bears and wolves” (Dowden 1998: 115-116). The psychological implications of such activities are not to be underestimated. Dowden (1998: 125) has drawn attention to the sense of wonder and awe provoked by animal display. Thus, the ‘people-monsters’ (term borrowed from Younger 1988: 352) may in fact be associated with people dressed or masked as lions, bulls, goats or agrimia (suggested by Younger in discussion session in *Politeia II*: 505).

Wedde (in discussion session in *Politeia II*: 505) argued against mask use based on the lack of Minoan scenes showing such figures. However, this argument is proven as unconvincing. On the contrary, in view of the evidence for the significance of the bird and bull symbols in both Prepalatial and Protopalatial periods in combination with the ritual(s) most likely illustrated on the Phaistos

vessels and triton shell plaque and earlier and contemporary finds, disguise in such garments appears as an attractive proposition for the depictions of these early bird- and animal-headed figures.

### ***3.3.6 Technological context***

International contacts seem to have resulted in the introduction not only of the griffin, the sphinx and the genius, but also in the adoption of “Egyptianising features” in Minoan iconography (see for example the rendering of water and the representation of donkeys in the Town Mosaic faience plaques). The techniques of moulded faience and furniture inlay probably came to Crete via Egypt or the Egyptianised Levant in this period (Immerwahr 1990: 68).

Technological advances are also reflected in the finds from Phaistos. Room 25, together with the Mallia Workshop, provides the earliest context for seals drilled in hard stones with the horizontal bow-lathe, whose introduction marks the beginning of the middle period of Aegean glyptic (Younger 1989a: 54). The Phaistos sealings, possibly a generation later than the seals of the Mallia Workshop, reflect the end of the experimental stage in using the horizontal bow-lathe and developing new motifs and shapes. With the new tool older patterns were given more precise treatment and “expressive unconventional compositions” were eventually introduced (Younger 1989a: 60).

### ***3.3.7 International context***

The first Minoan palaces at Knossos, Phaistos and Mallia were built during the early years of the Egyptian 12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, which correspond roughly to the MM I-II, and saw the first major expansion of Aegean trade with Egypt and

western Asia (Kantor 1947: 18). Kamares pottery was found outside Crete at a number of Asiatic and Egyptian sites such as Kahun, Haraga, Abydos and Aswan in Egypt (Immerwahr 1990: 6; Kantor 1947: 18-19).

Apart from the already mentioned Egyptian scarab from Platanos, many artefacts on Crete itself confirm the extent of contacts with the Orient. A lapis lazuli cylinder (419) found below a MM IIIA horizon and has been attributed to various stylistic groups (Akkadian, Kappadocian, or the “Provincial Babylonian Group”) (Kenna 1968a: 327 ff.; for more references see Buchholz 1967: 154, no. 25; PM IV: 423 ff., 350). It bears the images of the Oriental bull-man, a winged male (?) figure, a sphinx and a winged lion. The griffin is depicted on an Old Syrian (?) cylinder (302) that found its way to Palaikastro (Eccles 1939/40: 45, 47, fig. 18, no. 28).

### ***3.3.7.1 Anatolia, Mesopotamia and surrounding areas***

Dickinson (1994b: 176) stressed the tendency of Near Eastern religions to change over the centuries; “not only did the divine hierarchy change over time, but in different contexts different gods might be given prominence”, but “wholesale adoption of another culture’s religion is never attested”. Like the cults of the Near East, demons and monsters also underwent changes throughout prehistory. They came in great variety and performed numerous roles in the Near East at this time. The interpretation of the sphinx is different in Mesopotamia from that in Egypt. In the latter it represents the pharaoh and in that way the passage from the lion to the sphinx is easily explained. Dessenne (1957a: 19) suggested that this role is the probable explanation for the birth of the sphinx: the substitution of the head of the lion with that of a human was an innovation aimed



to mark better the divine character that the lion had already acquired in Egypt.

However, although the lion becomes part of the Mesopotamian repertoire already in the Uruk period, it does not seem to be of particular significance (Dessenne 1957a: 18). A cylinder seal depicts a lion tamed by a genius (Frankfort 1939: pl. IV 1), a theme that develops largely in the Predynastic Period (Frankfort 1939: pl. XI c-d, g, m-n). It is encountered for example on a cylinder with two tethered lions drawing a chariot led by a genius and followed by bulls. In contrast, sphinxes usually appear in the scenes that Frankfort calls “The Sun-God in a boat” (1939: 67, 108 ff.).

Old Babylonian seals (up to ca. 1595 BC) depict sometimes demon’s heads as “filling motifs”, a term that is misleading. It is most probable that those motifs were added at the express wish of the seals’ purchasers and had a special meaning, rather than being chosen randomly by the designers. The demon’s head is generally believed to represent the giant Humbaba (or Huwawa), beheaded by Gilgames while guarding the cedars of Lebanon (Collon 1990: 52-53).

The literature of the period provides us with even more examples of mythical beasts: the scorpion-men guard the entrance to magic landscapes in the Gilgames epic, while Gilgames has to fight against the demonic figures of Humbaba (or Huwawa) and Anzu. The Babylonian “Gottertypentext”, of later date, is essentially a list of hybrids, providing information on their shapes, paraphernalia and posture. However, hardly any have been identified in the glyptic imagery of Mesopotamia (Reiner 1987: 29).

The part of the genii in MM libation scenes becomes more prominent when compared to similar scenes in the Near East. The monkeys of Kanesh, the bulls and lions of Elam, the birdmen of the Old Hittite Kingdom, all perform the

same task of offering libations, but they seem to be only minor cult attendants (Mellink 1987: 66, 68). Their figures are usually smaller than others in the scenes and are set in the background.

### **3.3.7.2 Egypt**

The Middle Kingdom offers numerous monumental examples of the sphinx, but its type had not changed since the Old Kingdom, except in a few details. Those include the stylisation of the mane, which is decorated with vertical stripes, and the drawing of the front and sometimes the back paws to show the creature's claws. As in the Old Kingdom, the masculine form of the sphinx sometimes had a female head (Dessenne 1957a: 21). The sphinx did not change in its depiction during the Middle Kingdom and was still found mainly in sculpture representing the Pharaoh.

On the other hand the griffin was more easily disassociated from the monarch, probably aided by the fact that it does not have a human head and is thus found frequently in the minor arts (Dessenne 1957a: 23). The bird-of-prey Egyptian griffin acts as the defender of the king whose enemies he destroys, a role that is emphasised in one of his names – i.e. “*tštš*”. Another name of the griffin connects him to the shepherd, one who guards his land against the enemies, while a third means the “swift-one”, as he is often represented in pursue of his foes (Goldman 1960: 327; Leibovitch 1955: 76).

In relation to the third imported monster, the Minoan genius, there are four distinguished iconographical types of Taweret on the magical knives, based on the development of her dorsal appendage's outline and decoration, with each type representing a stage in her iconography. Weingarten (1991a: 5 ff.) suggested

that this typology can further be extended to other depictions of Taweret and thus include the general Middle Kingdom iconography of the goddess. The earliest (ca. 2000 BC) type shows a slender creature with a lion's mane outlining her head. Breasts are not usually shown and when they do appear, they are always pendulous, while the belly quickly (by 1950) becomes enlarged. Leonine features become more prominent later, so that finally both types of lion-headed and hippopotamus-headed Taweret are used at the same time, at least as early as the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Dynasty, without any functional distinction (Weingarten 1991a: 8).

### **3.4 Discussion**

A brief portrayal of the Minoan Protopalatial era evidently reveals that it was marked by innovations in several aspects of social life, religious behaviour and artistic expertise and that its short span of about 150-190 years was nevertheless enough to include changes in the Cretan towns and countryside. Administration, society, architecture, technology, art, religion, all went through transformations, which certainly should not be considered independently, but integrally connected with one another; thus the clarification of the introduction of foreign imaginary beings into the Minoan repertoire may be facilitated.

#### ***3.4.1 Adoption of foreign fantastic animals: why it happened and how they were selected***

Kopcke (comment during discussion session in *Politeia*: 285) proposed that "...the following question is really more interesting: could a foreign idiom have been adopted?" Although the question concerned the later Tell el-Dab'a "Minoan" frescoes, it can also be asked in the case of the transference of the

imaginary animals' motifs into the Aegean. During the discussion of the former subject, Wiener (comment during discussion session, in *Politeia*: 286), for example, expressed the view that the wall paintings had lost the cult significance they had held in Crete and may simply have been a status symbol by the time they reached Avaris.

In response to such questions, West (1997: 10) supported that “*the transfer of artistic motifs need not in itself signify any intellectual exchange between peoples. Native artists may simply draw inspiration from imported objects that come into their hands*” (my emphasis). It will be argued, however, that the Minoans were familiar with the original connotations and interpretation of the griffin, the sphinx and the genius, i.e. Taweret, and that is precisely why they chose to adopt them.

The introduction of new themes without any specific meaning contradicts the nature of ancient art in any given region. At least in connection to status/prestige/elite objects, their recognition as such also includes, among factors such as material and technology, the manner of their decoration. Consequently the motifs chosen to be engraved, incised or drawn on them constituted part of the symbolism surrounding such objects. The modern independence of art would be inconceivable, since “iconography is generally not used in Antiquity just for the sake of motifs” (Laffineur 1990: 117).

The seal engravers of the Protopalatial period would have had to follow the specific wishes of the people who commissioned the seals and to design them accordingly. Since the seals were mostly used by palace officials and their motifs are not isolated, but introduced in numbers – admittedly still quite small –, it is reasonable to see a purpose behind the motif selection. Therefore, I would

suggest that a senseless adoption of new motifs is out of the question in the case of the imported imaginary beings.

It is also worth noting that although there is an impressive variety of hybrid creatures, in both Egypt and the Near East during the EM and MM periods, the Minoans introduced only the griffin, the sphinx, the dragon and the genius into their repertoire. The acceptance of these particular beasts may reveal at least knowledge – if not sharing – of a number of ideas and beliefs, since it is based on purposeful selection of specific motifs and is not an unquestioned import of a larger variety.

It is not suggested here that the meaning of the griffin, sphinx and genius in Crete was identical with that of their Near Eastern counterparts. But it is presumed that the nature and roles performed by the latter in the cultures from where they originated motivated the transference of the specific monsters instead of any other from a large selection. The longevity of the motifs and the future transformation of their iconography in the Aegean (see following chapters, particularly sections 4.1.1-4.1.6, 4.2.2, 6.1.1-6.1.7, 6.2.2 and 6.3.1-6.3.2) come to support their acceptance as motifs with specific meaning by the few Minoans who were originally acquainted with them from their depictions in Egypt and the Levant.

Griffins, sphinxes and genii were incorporated into Minoan art at a time when the ruling elite(s) who had access to luxury materials and items, built the palaces and developed *palatial art*. Both processes can be linked with the possession of considerable wealth and marked efforts to display it. In that sense, the introduction and use of the imaginary creatures by the rulers can be seen as an effort to distinguish themselves and demonstrate their higher status by the

selection of exotic motifs for their seals.

The reasons behind the introduction of the specific creatures are more difficult to discern. Firstly, familiarity with the animals used to create the hybrid forms cannot have been an important factor, since the ones that were chosen include the lion, whose presence on Crete is anything but securely attested (Bloedow 1999: 53-61; idem 1992: 295-306) and the hippopotamus, which only a few travellers would have seen. On the contrary, the ones that were ignored by the Minoan repertoire include the native to the Aegean scorpion (with the possible exception of *CMS IX 24* (Appendix A), which might have been either a scorpion-man or a frog, but is most likely the latter). It can be claimed perhaps that the Minoans incorporated in their imagery the hybrids created from the most ferocious, “lethal”, powerful animals.

Moreover, there is definitely truth in the observation made by Morgan (1988: 45), that “the rarer the animal, the more likely it is to be endowed with symbolic meaning”. Bloedow (1999: 56-57) has added that this is mostly true of those beasts which are not encountered in real life, i.e. unicorns, dragons, griffins and sphinxes and, at the same time, of rarer creatures of the real world, which would appear to apply very well to lions. Apparently the imaginary beings are in fact more than merely unusual and it is no surprise that the ones combining parts of animals not only rare – and consequently already endowed with symbolic meaning, but also the strongest in the animal kingdom were chosen to form part of the Minoan artistic repertoire. Thus, lions and predator birds, connected with the symbolism of power, were naturally the most prominent components of the hybrids that were transferred from the Orient to the Aegean.

Furthermore, the popularity of the particular hybrid figures in the regions they came from must have played a significant role in their acceptance by the Aegean people. According to Crowley (1989: 269; cf. also p. 273-274 for an interesting hypothesis on the reasons behind the introduction of the genius), the extreme popularity of the motifs could be one of the factors that recommended them to the Aegean, although it would have constituted a necessary criterion on its own. Whatever their function when transferred to the Aegean, the role of beasts like the sphinx and the griffin, or the demonic divinity Taweret in the religious/symbolic systems of the cultures that created them was undoubtedly both very important and already long-lived. Their widespread distribution in the Near East and Egypt facilitated the first acquaintance for the Minoans and made their original meaning more easily understandable.

### ***3.4.2 Function of the transferred motifs: images of power or images of the divine?***

Is the religious character *per se* of the griffin and the sphinx the dominant feature of the new representations, or does their introduction at the specific time imply a more complex procedure and endow them with less simplistic associations? The character of the new forms would seem at first glance religious rather than politically oriented. It seems that at this stage of the Aegean prehistory they did not symbolise rule itself, at least not in the same sense as that of the monarchical Egypt.

Examination of the notions surrounding the lion, the main “component” of both hybrids, may shed more light on their symbolism. Dowden (1998: 129) spoke of the modern notion about lions, of the “noble carnivore, king of that

wonderful imaginary location, the jungle”. This ‘kingliness’ however was a widespread association of the lion in antiquity also; for example Mesopotamian kings associated themselves with lions (c.f. Dowden 1998: 130 for more examples from classical antiquity until the modern day).

In Egypt the motifs of the griffin and the sphinx symbolised authority and power. They are attested on statues, wall paintings and other media, always connected with the might of the Pharaohs. A political symbolism in the case of the griffin and the sphinx is evident in Egypt, surrounding the pharaohs and their divine status (having thus, in that fashion, religious implications). However, as Crowley noted (1989: 272, following Hooker 1983: 139 and Bennett 1961/1962: 327-356, who refuted convincingly the notion of a sacral kingship on Crete), no other area had pharaohs as rulers (see Frankfort 1948: 15-35 on the uniqueness of the Egyptian system, *contra* Forsdyke 1952: 13-19, who attempted to attribute divine status to Minoan rulers, similar to that of the Egyptian pharaohs). This fact immediately modifies the function of the monsters of both the Orient and the Aegean and distinguishes it from the role of the Egyptian imaginary beings. Moreover, perhaps it highlights the religious element in the introduction of the hybrids as merely a partial explanation of their first appearance in the area.

They made their appearance at the time of the construction of the first palaces in Crete and their first examples come from the palaces themselves, the centres of the newly established and complex administration system. The preference by the seal makers and, most importantly, by the users of the seals to depict them mainly on seals and not on any other medium, connects these hybrid figures with the administrative-economic system of the period, since the use of seals constituted an integral part in its operation. Weingarten (1997: 518) has



noted that storeroom officials were not themselves normally literate and the absence of any inscribed seals after MM IIB seems to support that. The situation may or may not have been different in the Protopalatial period, but the importance of *images* – and in this case images on seals – throughout Minoan history is nevertheless evident.

Davis (1984: 164) pointed out that ideology has often been used as a justification for the establishment of socially more stratified societies, and foreign symbols have been adopted in order to emphasise growing social status differentiation. In the Orient the griffin and the sphinx, in particular, were connected with authority more than anything else. Similarly, their function after their transference was probably that of denoting the recently instituted economic and ruling authority and its bearers, the members of the elite perceived them in that manner.

The griffin, the sphinx, the dragon and the genius were then brought in as insignia of high status, borrowed from Egypt or the Near East, and were perhaps gradually incorporated into the local mythology. “No-one could doubt that all representations are symbols” (Renfrew 1996: 8) and certainly the griffin and the sphinx were appropriate to symbolise and advertise the power of the latest Minoan rulers and their right to it. It is rather a case of legitimating authority and display of status not so much by claim to ancestral lineage, as by association to the influential monarchs of Egypt and the Near East, foreign powers that stood for wealth and stability at the time.

They are not however merely images of power. The religious function of the genius motif and the sense of “participation” are demonstrated in the so-called libation scenes, which were connected with the sphere of religion and

magic in Egypt. Weingarten (Hallager & Weingarten 1993: 12; Weingarten 1991a: 13) noted that the appearance of the “first true rhyta” is roughly contemporary with the importation of the Minoan version of Taweret. It seems that the new motif accompanied new or transformed libation rites, a form of offering sacrifice. In Egypt, Taweret was connected with the rites of purification and it was probably this aspect of the goddess that the Minoans adopted. The ewer in the hands of the Minoan genii can be plausibly explained in that sense and genii seem to undertake already their role as cult servants, which will characterise them throughout the Bronze Age, both in Crete and on the mainland.

Unlike the genius, the (religious) roles of the griffin, the sphinx and the dragon are not yet straightforward; they do not perform any deeds, but are static images. The apparent lack of exact religious attributions to the griffin and the sphinx in combination with their use in administrative contexts would further attest to the manipulation of religious motifs by the Minoan elites *as symbols of political power and social prestige*.

### ***3.4.3 Locally inspired monsters***

Their depiction on seals and sealings attributes a “religious-administrative” significance to the local monsters, as was also argued for the first appearance of the imported fantastic creatures. Still, although ownership of seals was a sign of high status and the use of seals during the period was bureaucratic, it is surprisingly late – only well into the Protopalatial period – that the Minoans apparently started using seals systematically as part of their administration, “in a sphragistic manner” (Weingarten 1986a: 279). Up to then seals themselves could have been dedicated as votive objects (Hansen 1987: 57) or may have been used

as amulets and jewellery (Younger 1977). The evidence from the Near East supports once more this hypothesis; the amuletic function of seals is there “corroborated by written sources, at least in the sense that the inscription on the seal often carries the wish that whoever wears it attain a long and prosperous life” (Reiner 1987: 27). So, since seals had not been put to systematic bureaucratic use until the end of the period, the earlier examples of locally created monsters must be seen as apotropaic and protective images or even as merely decorative.

However, the religious context of the period reveals a growing standardisation of cult and its symbols in question, such as the bird and the bull and the demons are just extensions of them. Changes in the iconographic repertoire betray changes in the roles of those locally inspired monsters too. The “bird-people” and the animal-headed figures seem to acquire specific functions in the Protopalatial era; they participate in scenes of ritual dancing and processions. Animals and hybrids take on the roles of humans in many early depictions, often impersonating the bearer of offerings, who might have been a priest or a king. Mellink (1987: 67) interpreted such figures as representing “the best of both worlds, adding animal potency to the action they are performing, while they ward off evil from the human being they stand in for”.

### 3.4.4 Conclusions

Even if the Protopalatial examples seem at first glance hardly sufficient in numbers to provide us with definite conclusions, their examination – firstly within their specific and then their more general, historical, socio-political, administrative, and religious contexts of the era – is surely illuminating. Symbols, as already stressed, are context dependent and accordingly, the presence of religious symbols in sphragistic, i.e. administrative, contexts highlights the manipulation of religious ideas and beliefs by the ruling elite(s) and denotes their motivation to accumulate control over socio-political and economic resources and religious institutions (Gallou 2005).

In any case, distinction between such terms as political vs. administrative vs. religious should not be applied arbitrarily to a society as early as that of the Aegean Bronze Age. Renfrew (1996: 47) made a point of the “embeddedness of religious actions within the everyday practices of life” and Mauss (1972: 19, 142) referred to the close association of magic with everyday techniques.

It is proposed that the appearance of imported monsters and the increase in “local” monster depictions in palatial iconography were among the innovations marking the first attempts to organise an *official religion* controlled by the Cretan elite groups. The manipulation of religion was accomplished via the transformation of ritual action, as displayed among others in the scenes with bird-headed and animal-headed figures, the importation of new religious symbolism (and perhaps mythology), evidenced in the new fantastic animals, and the increasing control of religious sites, as seen in the decline of the rural, remote peak sanctuaries by the end of the period and the integration of shrines within the palaces themselves.

As Walberg (1997: 79) noted in association with the Phaistos pictorial vases, “unprecedented in the Minoan tradition therefore, the impulse to show humans and deities in ritual action was arguably stimulated by the conceptual enrichment of cult and its growing importance in the environment of expanding palatial authority”. So, foreign monsters and imaginary figures of local origin were also employed in that process. They associated the elite(s) with the divine, so as to establish their right to their social, economic and administrative status, and, in a few words, were a force for political and social stability, at a time when the first palaces strove to secure their power.

Even though the larger part of the population would not have probably truly understood the meaning and the subtler Near Eastern and Egyptian associations of the new motifs, nevertheless their exotic, supernatural appearance undoubtedly reinforced the link to the sacred. The iconography will be further developed in the subsequent periods so that this tentative attempt at alliance with the divine becomes more apparent.

## *Chapter 4*

### *The Neopalatial period*

*(MM III-LM IB: 1750-1500 BC)*

#### *4.1 The developments in monster iconography and what they reveal about Neopalatial fantastic creatures*

Having set the stage in the Protopalatial period, the Second Palaces era marks the second phase in the iconography of Aegean monsters. This chapter will first examine the illustrations of imaginary beings in order to diagnose changes in their iconography and present the appearance of new types with the aim of re-interpreting them and establishing to some extent the role of demons and monsters in the Minoan worldview<sup>1</sup>. Since iconography alone is a poor guide in comprehending any given depiction, the second part of this chapter will deal with the various types, intended use and find contexts of artefacts on which the monsters appear with the aim of placing them within the general socio-political and religious contexts of the period. Although particular attention will be paid to a new medium in the depiction of monsters, the figural wall paintings, it should be stated at the outset that – as in the Protopalatial period – seals form again the largest corpus of material.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the Cretan Popular Group seals (henceforth CPG) will be examined in this chapter, although a number of them may have been manufactured in the LM II period following the LM IB destructions. Together with the Mycenae-Vapheio Group, they are the two dominant styles during LM I (Younger 1984; idem 1983).

#### 4.1.1 *The griffin*

The Neopalatial griffins have been studied by Delplace (1967a & b), Bisi (1965), Dessenne (1957b), Frankfort (1936-37) and Levi (1925/1926: 176-187) to mention but a few. As Rhyne noted (1970: 118), “the griffin in early Neopalatial Crete has been dealt with in so many studies that it would appear in need of no further investigation”. She herself analysed the representations known at the time of the monster so as to incorporate it in the “Aegean animal style”.

The illustrations of griffins increase markedly both in numbers and types during the Neopalatial period. A fragmentary carved ivory group of a griffin gripping a bull or deer (242) from the South House at Knossos dates to this period. Two more ivory fragments of a wing and curled plume from Knossos (243), although questionably reconstructed (Rhyne 1970: 133, n. 104), may have belonged to a griffin. A clay relief on a rhyton rim from Mallia (283, fig. 39) is in the form of a griffin in flying gallop.

Glyptic examples include 174 sealings from Ayia Triadha (27-29, 45-46 and 26, fig. 40, which may depict a griffin head), ca. 16 sealings from Zakros (see section 5.2.2), a few sealings from Knossos palace (e.g. 33, 34 and 49) and four sealings from the villa at Sklavokampos impressed by the same cushion seal (30). The most frequent griffin impressions at Ayia Triadha by far are the 102 sealings impressed by a hard stone lentoid (29) and are followed by the 45 impressions of the (probably) gold ring (26).

Rhyne (1970: 121) identified a gap, possibly accidental, in the Cretan evidence of the griffin from after the MM I-II Phaistos sealings until the late MM III representations of the Knossos wall paintings. “Reserving the possibility of future discovery of new evidence, the depiction of fantastic animals in Crete does

seem to have been eclipsed by the tremendous interest in naturalistic representation in the early MM III period” (Rhyne 1970: 122). Thus, she turned to the Cyclades to find the connecting links from the MM I-II griffins to the late MM III Cretan illustrations and, in particular, to the MC III (roughly contemporary with MM III early) Griffin Vases.

The Phylakopi “Griffin Vase” (274) is one of the many Cycladic bird and griffin vases found, apart from the Cyclades, on Crete and the mainland (see MacGillivray 1984: 153-158 and *PM I*: 558 ff. for examples from Knossos; Crouwel 1989: 155-165 for examples from Mycenae, which include 277 – fig. 41 – and 278). They were decorated in the MC III (cf. the sherds from Akrotiri, 275) and early LC I periods (vases 272-274 from Phylakopi, 279 from Ayia Irini and a number of vases again from Akrotiri – 280-282) with creatures resembling the ones on the Phaistos sealings<sup>2</sup>. These similarities include, among others, the extended foreleg and the ill-defined hind-parts (see Rhyne 1970: 122-124 for detailed stylistic analysis; however, Marthari 1998: 143-145 notes the strong connections of the LM I Cycladic griffin vases with the Thera frescoes). It was the Cycladic version of the griffin that inspired, according to Rhyne (1970: 125), not only some of the Neopalatial depictions of griffins and sphinxes, but also probably introduced the former to Mycenaean Greece in the Shaft Grave period (as opposed to Mitannian/Babylonian or Egyptian influences opted for by Bisi 1965: 174 and Dessenne 1957a: 127).

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<sup>2</sup> Two more “unpublished” griffin vases of the same date in the ANM (nos. 5762 & 5780) were reported by Tzavella-Evjen (1970: 22-23, nos. 32 and 33), but were not included in Atkinson et al. (1904).



#### *4.1.2 Griffins and palatial wall painting*

One of the striking developments in the period under discussion is the inclusion of the fantastic animal motifs in the monumental art of the Knossos palace and the non-palatial centres of Akrotiri, Ayia Irini and Phylakopi, which demonstrate strong associations with Neopalatial Crete. The Minoan griffin even reaches the Orient and is depicted on Avaris palatial frescoes, at the palace of Tel Kabri and at Alalakh. Wall paintings with abstract patterns were already produced in the First Palaces; it is the Neopalatial period however that has produced safe evidence for the introduction of figural frescoes (Immerwahr 1990: 21-22). The imaginary being that was selected for the wall paintings was the griffin, while the sphinx may have been depicted in only one Knossian wall painting (see section 4.1.4). These wall paintings represent the first illustrations of fantastic animals in monumental art of the Aegean. The Knossian frescoes are dated to MM IIIB-LM IA and the Cycladic have been dated to LM IA. They probably adorned the walls of the buildings in which they were found for some years before their destruction.

The depictions of griffins on Neopalatial frescoes comprise a group of representations requiring attention and study separately from illustrations on other media in view of the nature of the artefacts. These constituted more or less “permanent” exhibitions, placed within the major centres of administration and religion and they promoted palatial ideology at its most palpable aspect, thus constituting the most eloquent expression of palatial art. They most likely originated at Knossos and adhered to the traditional Cretan iconography strongly infused with religious beliefs (Immerwahr 1990: 17, 59-62, 160). They were intended to be admired by higher officials, foreign emissaries and presumably

they were accessible to a larger number of people on special occasions only, as indicated by the gradually increased restriction in access and the patterns of circulation of the Second Palaces (see section 4.2.7 for a discussion of the socio-political context).

It has been suggested that Knossos probably had the monopoly of painters who were based there and occasionally loaned out to decorate houses and villas in the immediate vicinity of the palace or in its wider territory. That is why the Knossian relief figural frescoes are unique among the Minoan palatial wall paintings, with the religious fresco of Ayia Triadha (Militello 1992: 101-113) and the stucco reliefs of Pseira being the only exceptions to this regional concentration (Immerwahr 1990: 2-3).

The first group of Knossian frescoes depicting griffins and possibly a sphinx (285, fig. 42a) was found in the fill above the North-South Corridor between its junction with the East-West Corridor and the late blocking wall across it. The wall paintings came from high in the fill and were restored by Evans as the decoration of the “Great East Hall” in the east wing of the palace. Perhaps they were originally buried as fill after the MM IIIB destruction. These famous high relief frescoes included athletes, male and female toreadors, fragments of bulls, part of a snake frame and chained griffins. Specifically, the griffins were flanking columns and they were in fact tethered to them, in the new artistic *topos* of the period. The relief decoration was probably renewed several times during the Neopalatial period (Rehak & Younger 2001: 412; for a LM IIIB date see Palmer 1969: 92-97). Stucco reliefs like this, are almost confined to Knossos and achieve a more lifelike effect. Hiller (2000: 43) proposed that the East Hall in the Knossos palace is a more likely candidate for the placement of a

cult installation in view of the minor frieze of griffins flanking columns. This painting linked the griffin with an exclusive Knossian theme, that of bull leaping. In contemporary residential contexts, bull leaping is represented only at Knossos and has been connected with royal symbolism (Rehak 1998: 217)<sup>3</sup>.

The second Knossian fresco group illustrating monsters came from the North-West Fresco Heap recovered in 1900 & 1901 from the area of the North-West Portico (286, figs. 42b-c). The North-West Heap was comprised of two fresco concentrations probably separated by a gap instead of forming a continuous deposit. The majority of the wall paintings from the two heaps date to LM IA, while some pieces must be of a MM IIIB date and even fewer LM II fragments might have been incorporated in the fill. They represented textile fragments, probably belonging to women's skirts, bucrania, a band with flutes, a row of lilies, wing fragments from a griffin (or a sphinx), winged griffins (fig. 42b) and a winged sphinx (fig. 42c), probably one of a pair confronting the bull's head. Although we cannot be certain of the original place of these frescoes, it is very likely that we can reconstruct at least part of their history. It seems possible that the Mycenaeans stripped the palace walls of these frescoes at the beginning of LM II and perhaps replaced them with others of their own choice (Hood 2005: 60). Three dumps, one on the eastern side of the "Queen's Megaron" complex in the "Domestic Quarter" and the pair of the "North-West Fresco Heaps" found on the northern edge of the palace, may reflect the stripping of walls after the Mycenaean occupation of Knossos (idem 2000: 29).

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<sup>3</sup> Wall paintings depicting bull sports have been uncovered also in the palace at Tell el-Dab'a and in later contexts at Mycenae. A number of Tanagra larnakes were decorated with bull leaping scenes, but these represent funerary contexts and should be read differently (see discussion in Gallou 2005: 125-127).

### 4.1.3 *The iconography of the Neopalatial griffin*

By the time the above mentioned miniature Neopalatial frescoes decorated the walls of the palace, the most significant characteristics of the wings of the Aegean griffin and sphinx were already established; the spiral decoration of the upper zone, and the notched plume. These “distinctive” wings were given exclusively to the two monsters and were not adopted by any other winged figure of the Aegean artistic repertoire. They were transmitted throughout the Aegean between c. 1600 BC and c. 1500 BC in the variety of media that depict griffins and sphinxes. In the Cyclades, for example, pottery provides evidence that this type of wing was transferred during MC III or at the beginning of LC IA (D’Albiac 1995: 64-67).

This Neopalatial media variety shows similar diversity in the iconography; the depiction of the griffin in groups with lions or other griffins (as on **29**, **45**, **47** and **112** – fig. 43a), the new hunting (or “contest”) scenes (including **19**, **25** that impressed an Ayia Triadha sealing<sup>4</sup>, the bifacial **64** - fig. 43b-c – and **87**) the first appearance of the female of the species (e.g. **40**, **60** – fig. 43d – and **88**), and the tethering of griffins by “human” figures or to “inanimate” objects (for example **34**, **43** – fig. 43e – and **56**), are among the innovations in the iconography of the monster from the early Neopalatial period onwards.

The first appearance of female griffins coincides with an increased interest in Minoan iconography for differentiation and emphasis on gender (see German 2005 for the Neopalatial performance of gender and age). Together with

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<sup>4</sup> It was not included in the CMS publication of the Ayia Triadha assemblage, but was reported by Levi 1925/1926: 117, no. 98, fig. 115.

the contemporary introduction of scenes with what appear to be the offspring of these monsters, these images are the first clear indications of the inclusion of the monster into the Minoan perception of the world. Apparently the “mythology” of the creatures dictated that they procreated like natural animals, an indication of how “real” the monster was for the Minoans.

The motif of the tethered griffin is also of particular interest; depicted both on seals and wall paintings, it soon reaches the mainland. Specifically, collared griffins flank columns to which they are attached, for instance on the Knossos East Hall wall paintings. On other occasions they are depicted drawing a chariot, as on **34** (impressed by a ring) and on the LH II ring from Antheia (**150**, fig. 44a), a theme that continues into the later phase of the LBA and is attested again on the Ayia Triadha sarcophagus (**300**, fig. 44b).

This new motif of tethered griffins can be associated with the collar depicted on a number of isolated griffins (sphinxes will be discussed in the following section). Isolated griffins wearing collars appear on numerous seals (e.g. **13**, **14** – the only griffin with collar in the Protopalatial period is found on **1**), while the slightly later LM (IB-)II **65** shows two collared, albeit not leashed griffins flanking a “Potnia” (fig. 45). Whereas the human presence is clearly attested on **99** with the male figure facing the collared monster and on the LBA IIIA1 ring **215** from the mainland (fig. 46), scenes with isolated collared griffins may imply the presence of another person and the tethering of the griffin by them. The abbreviated depiction of hunting scenes by showing animals with spears in their backs (see for example *CMS VII 65 & II.6 91*) is a well established mannerism of Minoan glyptic (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 139) and constitutes a comparable trait. As for the flanking of columns by griffins tethered to them, the

presence of a “human” figure may still be implied, since the ‘sacred column’ may be an aniconic representation of the deity, as usually presumed (Rousioti 2001: 309; Delplace 1967b: 6; Deonna 1948: 298-299; Evans 1901: 99-204), or as a symbol of a sanctuary, i.e. the abode of or at least a place favoured by the (occasional) presence of a god (*MMR*<sup>2</sup>: 244 ff.).

Finally, tethered griffins are shown accompanying human figures, e.g. on 134, the identity of which is disputed. A number of scholars have associated lions, griffins and sphinxes with deities (cf. Niemeier 1986: 74-75, 83; *MMR*<sup>2</sup>: 368-369). There is indeed no reason to assume that the theme of the Potnios/Potnia, which appears in the Aegean in LM I does not illustrate deities (for the Mesopotamian and/or Mitannian origin, the definition, and the Near Eastern variations of the Potnios/Potnia Theron composition see Barclay 2001: 373-381, who however remains doubtful of the divine, royal, heroic or even priestly status of the Aegean Potnios; cf. also Crowley 1989: 34-39, 271-272).

Still, the problem of figures with a single animal is not as easily decipherable. Crowley (1995: 484-489), who also believes that figures accompanied by griffins define deities, called these figures “Griffin Lords”. On the other hand, Kopaka (2001: 18) deduced that it is virtually impossible to distinguish with certainty between “men and their gods and to more clearly separate cultic from secular phenomena in the Aegean”, until such issues as social complexity, the character of represented human and/or divine elites and the sacred or profane role of iconographic themes are resolved. Along a similar line of argument and in relation to the problem of animal familiars, Thomas and Wedde (2001: 9 – my emphasis) stressed that “*the context, not the beast*” is

*determinant*<sup>5</sup>. They too accepted that the Potnios/Potnia Theron scheme may be used to designate divine status to a central standing or seated figure but noted that the same identification cannot be made for the motif of the seated figures with a single animal. In fact they (Thomas & Wedde 2001: 9) refuted the idea that any of the animals in Aegean art can be understood as appearing only with deities, as being, that is, their “familiar”.

This problem is further complicated by the garment of the figures on seals like the one from Vapheio (134) and in particular with the possibility of identifying figures as priests when they are depicted in fleece skirts or long robes. “Priests” are depicted on one more seal from Vapheio (*CMS I* 255) and on a glass amygdaloid seal from Routsitholos 2 (*CMS I Suppl. 1A* 345) and are generally identified as such on the basis of their “Syrian” robe (see for instance Crowley 1989: 169). Rehak (1994: 76-84; followed by N. Marinatos 1993: 132) however connected these long-robed figures with an awareness of Minoan iconography for individuals who may be administrators or rulers, but probably not priests.

Regardless of the identity of these figures, the ideas expressed in this type of illustration are of more interest in this thesis, as they signify important stages in the development of monster iconography and in particular in the iconography of the griffin and the sphinx. As meanings in art are dynamically created by relationships with other symbols (Goodison and Morris 1998b: 126), the depiction of the collar and the tethering of the griffin accordingly alludes to ideas of “taming” of the monster. This new notion of monster subjugation is perhaps

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<sup>5</sup> The term *context* is used in this case as the “linkages across series of depictions” (Thomas & Wedde 2001: 9).

not unrelated to a similar earlier trend in Near Eastern monster iconography. The second stage in the development of monsters and demons covered the Akkadian period (ca. 2340-2150 or 2371-2190 BC) when narrative scenes appeared on cylinder seals and depicted the apprehension and punishment of vicious monsters (Black & Green 1998: 63; Porada 1987a: 1-12). The viciousness in the appearance of the Minoan griffin is further emphasised in the Neopalatial period through the contest scenes in which griffins are the protagonists. Certainly, the new motif reveals a novel attitude towards griffins and demonstrates what Herva (2004: 174) has called “attempts to manipulate the environment”<sup>6</sup>.

The Prepalatial period was one of intense ritual action concentrated around the communal tombs of the period, while such activities were apparently located in the palaces in the Protopalatial period. The Neopalatial period sees a further formalisation of ritual under the auspices of the palaces (see below section 4.2.8), whereas the evidence for burial ritual is unfortunately lacking (see below section 4.2.5 for information from Neopalatial tombs). Nevertheless, the iconography of the griffin may indicate that the monster is increasingly associated with the landscape of death.

N. Marinatos (1984b: 115-122) has linked the palm tree with sacrifice, fertility and procreation, while Morgan (1988: 28) has pointed out its eschatological symbolism. Gallou (2005: 51) has cited ethnographic parallels and also envisaged the palm tree as a symbol of thriving life and overcoming of death. The iconographic link of the griffin with palm trees (150, 164), the griffin-

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<sup>6</sup> Genii are occasionally depicted wearing collars too (e.g. 443 and the earlier 440 with a richly decorated collar). Weingarten (Hallager & Weingarten 1993: 13; Weingarten 1991a: 8-9) interpreted the ornate collar on these early lion-headed genii as the remains of a lion's mane. It is true that genii do appear flanking humans but, according to the available evidence, this is a later motif.



drawn chariots, the predecessors of the Ayia Triadha larnax iconography, in combination with the monster's connection with hunting and by association with death may demonstrate that the "mythology of death" did engage the Minoan mind and that the griffin was becoming part of the landscape. As will be seen in Chapter 6 (section 6.1.2), this role is openly expressed in funerary iconography reinforced by find context associations, although its roots probably lie deep within this period.

#### **4.1.4 *The sphinx***

Like the griffin, the Neopalatial sphinx has also constituted a popular subject for study, having been investigated by various scholars, among which Mylonas (1980), Demisch (1977), Rhyne (1970), Tzavella-Evjen (1970), Xenaki-Sakellariou (1964) and Dessenne (1957a). The depictions of the creature come mainly from glyptic including a small number of sealings from Zakros (690, 691 – see section 5.2.2) and a lentoid (340, fig. 47) deposited with the LM IIIA burial in the Ayia Triadha tomb that also produced the well-known larnax. Seals with sphinxes were apparently kept as heirlooms, as indicated by the LM IB gold-plated ring (339, fig. 48) associated with a LM IIIA1 burial in tomb 7 at Zapher Papoura.

Although the examples of sphinxes are significantly less than those of griffins, they do present an equal variety in their media of representation. A steatite (or serpentine) figurine from the "enigmatic" tomb 5 to the south of the Ayia Triadha tholos B stands out (425, fig. 49). It was associated with Neopalatial material and is considered a 16<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century BC Anatolian or Mesopotamian import (Cline 1994: 133, no. 10; *MMR*<sup>2</sup>: 368; *PM III*: 424-427;

*contra* Dessenne 1957a: 134-135 & Levi 1925/1926: 187-188 who favoured local production)<sup>7</sup>. Perhaps the steatite fragments of curled locks from the Knossian Treasury Chamber (394) also belonged to a sphinx figurine as Evans (*PM III*: 419-422) suggested, but the find remains problematic in more than one ways; for example, Cline (1994: 240; *idem* 1991a: 138) included it in his “Dubious or Problematic Imports” and concluded that it is probably a local Minoan product.

In addition to the Mallia Egyptianising ivory figurine (423) that was probably used as an appliqué and like the Ayia Triadha steatite figurine (425), most likely imported (Cline 1994: 133, no. 8), there are a number of ivory objects dated to LM IB on stylistic grounds but are found in later contexts, e.g. the Katsambas comb (348, fig. 50) that was unearthed in a LM IIIA context. Both the Katsambas comb and the mirror handle from Zapher Papoura tomb 49 (349) are differentiated from Mycenaean ivories, in terms of the lack of the adder mark motif on the wings of the monsters (see D’Albiac 1995: 64-72 for the “diagnostic” wings of Aegean griffins and sphinxes).

Unlike its contemporary Minoan griffins and with the possible exception of the Knossos Miniature Fresco, the Neopalatial sphinx is not accompanied by human figures, always appearing alone. It is depicted either in profile, with its wings rising from the back, or in frontal position with both wings displayed (see the Kato Zakros examples in section 5.2.2). It does not engage in any action whatsoever, which is a significant contrast with the depictions of griffins. 338 (fig. 51), showing two hybrids usually identified as lions running along the

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<sup>7</sup> The similar Tylissos steatite figurine 424 on the other hand has been viewed with suspicion by a number of authors (e.g. Cline 1994: 239-240, no. 964; Dessenne 1957a: 134-135) as a possible modern forgery.

periphery of the seal, may constitute an exception to this lack of narrative scenes, but if the creature whose head is preserved, is correctly identified as a sphinx, the fact that it is wingless and most likely male recalls Egyptian prototypes rather than the well-known “Aegeanised” type. The absolute lack of narrative character in the iconography of the Neopalatial sphinx, in conjunction with the rather emblematic use of the monster and the relatively restricted number of its depictions, hints at the foreignness that still surrounded it.

#### **4.1.5 *The genius***

During LM I the depiction of the genius is restricted to Crete and no illustrations of it have yet been discovered on the islands or the mainland in contexts contemporary with LM I and the Shaft Graves. However, examples of the ewers that the Minoan genii are often depicted carrying have been found<sup>8</sup>. Grave A of Grave Circle B, for instance, produced a silver ewer, one of the best known examples (Mylonas 1973: pl. 16 a, c).

The monster itself underwent changes in its appearance between MM IIB and LM I, emerging in the LBA with a new body shape, notably slender without pendulous breasts, a transformed dorsal appendage and diminished adornment (Hallager & Weingarten 1993: 16). The Neopalatial lentoid **449** (fig. 52) depicts two hybrids, possibly recognised as a unique variation of the “canonical” type of the monster. These “demons” seem to feature goats’ heads, birds’ legs and bodies resembling the cloaks of the Minoan genius and they flank a column marked with chevrons.

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<sup>8</sup> The two Vapheio seals (**465** & **466**) are dated to the latest phase of the period stylistically (Younger 1985: 62, Almond-Eye Group; idem 1984: 56, Mycenae-Vapheio Circle) and belong to a LH IIA context (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1987: 197 ff.).

As to its iconography, the function of the genius as libation bearer was popular not only during the MM period, but continued into the LBA with numerous variations. The commonest theme on seals is that of a single genius with a libation pitcher (or ewer), while on the larger gold rings two or more genii are depicted (Rehak 1995b: 217). The focus of the libation may be a baetyl (443 and a now lost sealing, 492), an offering table or column (495, fig. 53a), an “altar” supporting horns of consecration (465, fig. 53b), a palm tree (as on the Protopalatial 440), or it may be omitted entirely (466). In fact a relatively recently published roundel from Mallia reinforced the connection of the illustrating genius with a ‘baetyl cult’ (Hallager & Weingarten 1993: 13). An interesting procession scene with a genius and a lion-man is depicted on sealings impressed by the LM IB-II 453 heralding the procession of the famous Tiryns ring (478, fig. 154).

Genii occasionally appear as hunters, e.g. on the LM I 686 from Zakros (fig. 54a) and the LM/LH I-II 458. They are also depicted carrying ‘victims’ e.g. on the MM III 442 (fig. 54b) discovered in a later context, on 447 possibly impressed by a ring or an amygdaloid seal and on the LM I-II 454. In the case of the LBA II-IIIA1 seal from Voundeni (479, fig. 54c) the genius carries a human body over its shoulder. In other examples, they balance their quarry at the ends of poles (462), a theme repeated in the LH IIIB frescoes at the Cult Centre at Mycenae (515, fig. 152), while in other instances, the poles support vessels (MM III roundel from Mallia 444).

The newly depicted association of genii with poles is an interesting theme that shows genii performing one more “human” role. Weingarten (Hallager & Weingarten 1993: 15, 18; Weingarten 1991a: 13-14) linked the motif with that of

humans carrying jars on poles, which is known as early as the EM III/MM IA (for example on *CMS II.1* 300 and on the MM II *CMS V Suppl.* 3 21) and disappears after MM IIB, after the first appearance of the genii in the Aegean repertoire (although note the woman carrying two vases on a pole in the libation scene of the LM IIIA2 Ayia Triadha sarcophagus). The carrying pole/vase glyptic formula was perhaps transformed into the theme of the genii bearing sacrificial animals or victims of hunting, first encountered in the early Neopalatial period. Hunting and sacrifice have been associated by various scholars (Rehak 1995b: 221; Weingarten 1989b: 310-312; Burkert 1985: 58, 151 ff.; N. Marinatos 1988b: 18; eadem 1986: 45).

In addition to glyptic evidence, the exceptional LM IB triton shell of dark steatite from Mallia is decorated with marine rockwork and a low relief of two genii (506, fig. 55). The antithetic demons perform a gesture of “ablution and purification” rather than simply one of libation (Weingarten 1991:12). The scene on the triton shell has iconographical parallels in both fresco and ivory work of the period (Rehak 1995b: 217). Of interest is the fact that the two genii are not of the same size. This feature is repeated on the LM I-II seal 456, on which two antithetic genii are engraved flanking a column. On the unattributed seal 500 two more antithetic genii are accompanied by a third of smaller size (fig. 56). This difference of size may imply age variations or even differentiation in rank. The fact that the demons of the Mallia vessel are differentiated not only in terms of size, but are also placed on different levels<sup>9</sup> implies that a hierarchy among the monsters has developed by this period.

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<sup>9</sup> In frescoes, depiction of figures in various levels is interpreted as denoting greater or smaller distance (see for instance the Akrotiri miniature wall paintings). This cannot be applied here since the genii in these examples apparently perform a task together.

While the griffin is gendered at this time, as the female of the species is clearly differentiated with the addition of breasts (e.g. on 60, fig. 43d), the sex of the genius remains a mystery (Sansone 1987: 1-17 discussed the matter). Weingarten (in Hallager & Weingarten 1993: 16) argued that the genius had been of female sex when introduced from Egypt (which explains the pendulous breasts of the early examples), but acquired an *asexual* nature in the later part of the LBA, perhaps as early as the MM III. Baurain (1985: 110-111), on the other hand, deemed the actions and character of the creature as suiting a masculine being, while Gill (1970: 404) believed that the genii are female due to their white skin colouration on the much later wall paintings from Pylos and Mycenae (fig. 152).

Admittedly, the pendulous breasts of the first genii on Crete indicate a female gender, but these have vanished by the Neopalatial period. At the same time, women in Minoan art are regularly illustrated with emphasised secondary sexual characteristics, whereas other anatomical features, such as detailed depictions of their faces, are often overlooked<sup>10</sup>. The labelling of “generous Minoan-scale female breasts” by Weingarten (2005: 2, in reference to the rendering of Kato Zakros figures) is characteristic of this mannerism in Minoan art. The fact that genii take on the roles of both men and women further complicates the matter since, as already seen, it was usually men that originally carried poles, while women carried animals without such supports, e.g. on *CMS I* 220-222.

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<sup>10</sup> Secondary sexual characteristics are defined as “the external characteristics that are not directly involved in human sexual reproduction (genitalia) but serve to distinguish males and females” (German 2005: 23). The female ones include breasts, wide curving hips and buttocks, while facial hair and broadened chest cavities are listed as male.

However, as noted by M. Cameron (1974: 122, n. 2) Minoan artists occasionally did neglect to portray breasts on large scale female figures (see for instance the “Lady in Red”). Alberti has argued that a division on the basis of physical sexual attributes was not necessarily primary and that the appearance of sexual characteristics was actually context specific (2002: 114; idem 2001: 189-205). This iconographic framework of “context specific” multiple genders is reinforced by the appropriateness of the genius for gender ambiguity. As a demon, this creature is an outsider and it is more likely that in fact it represented a “third gender”, defiant to the modern view of the bipolarity of sexes, but perfectly compliant with the Minoan and, as will be seen below, the Near Eastern and Egyptian background.

To sum up, in the Neopalatial period not only is its appearance changed, but also the functions of the genius appear to have expanded and to have encompassed a wider range of actions, which the creature or humans could perform interchangeably. The iconographic evidence suggests that by the era of the “second palaces” the demon had been fully incorporated within the Minoan belief system, within even the Minoan mythology, much like the griffin. The Kakovatos seal (458, fig. 57), which may be a mainland find but is only slightly later (Younger 1985: 62, Almond-Eye Group), could portray an event of the “mythic action” of the genius (to borrow the term from Chryssoulaki 1999). Rehak (1995b: 215-216) argued that the new roles of the genius as seen in the LM IA-B iconography perhaps mirror the reorganisation and increasing centralisation and complexity of the Neopalatial society. To this we should add that the apparent hierarchy which has developed in the “society” of genii points exactly to the same direction.

#### ***4.1.6 The Minoan dragon***

The Ayia Triadha sealings on which the Minoan dragon was first identified by Levi (1945: 270-280) include two roundels impressed probably by a ring (**531**, fig. 58a) and four flat-based sealings (**532**, fig. 58b) also impressed by a metal ring. The first sealtype shows a female figure holding a staff (?) and riding a Minoan dragon, while the second depicts a pair of these fantastic creatures, the one engraved before the other, with papyrus plants as filling motifs.

The monster appears mostly on seals and sealings in the Neopalatial period. Seals include the Talismanic sard lentoid **528** with a dragon depicted running and branches and the 'star/sun' ornament as filling motifs, the CPG steatite lentoid **533** with the dragon again accompanied by a plant-like motif, and the famous LM IB haematite cylinder **44** said to come from the Ayia Pelayia tholos tomb. This is engraved with a more complicated scene: at the left side, a standing man carries a winged griffin over his shoulder, while at right a female figure rides a Minoan dragon. Long papyrus stalks separate the two scenes and decorate the background. The Giamalakis collection has also produced two specimens of the monster, namely **529** and **534**; the former, a Talismanic style chalcedony amygdaloid with the 'sun/star' motif in the field, the latter a steatite lentoid with a dragon and a plant-like motif.

Regarding sealings, these include a now lost example from Gournia illustrating a female figure riding a Minoan dragon, two sealings from Kato Zakros House A impressed by soft stone seals (**688** and **689** – although the creatures on the second are tentatively identified as dragons), and finally a flat-



based nodule/packet impressed by a metal ring from the villa at Sklavokampos with a dragon and plant-like motifs (530, fig. 58c).

A LM IB comb with rosette decoration from Palaikastro (538) constitutes the earliest known example of the monster on ivory. The regarant dragons on the two panels of the comb are shown lying, have short feet and bear linear decoration on their scaly bodies. Although it is a unique find in the Neopalatial period, it heralds the later LH IIIA-B Mycenaean tradition when the dragon, together with the sphinx, is among the most popular themes for the decoration of combs.

The iconography of the animal was well developed in the Neopalatial period and was adopted promptly by the Mycenaeans as evidenced in the Shaft Graves and the early tholoi assemblages, e.g. the gold cut-out reliefs from Shaft Grave III (539) and seals 525 and 535 (fig. 59). It is not unknown on Cyprus either as shown by the sealing from a Bamboula sherd impressed by a cylinder seal (550). The dragon is depicted already from the beginning with developed characteristics that did not change essentially, but rather superficially, in a fashion less spectacular than that of the genius.

The scenes in which the dragon appears include dragons isolated or groups of two in a floral setting, ridden by a female figure in the prominent artistic *topos* of Oriental inspiration, which finds a unique Aegean parallel in a later Stathatos Collection figurine of the “goddess” riding a quadruped that resembles a horse (Poursat 1976: 464). Furthermore, dragons are engraved in multi-figured scenes in the company not only of human figures, but also griffins. The latter type of depiction is seen on the famous gold “Ring of Nestor” (37) of

uncertain authenticity. A Minoan dragon is shown running on the ground below the tree that dominates the illustration and divides the ring bezel into quadrants.

#### ***4.1.7 The bird-lady***

The “canonical” type of the bird-ladies appears in large numbers in the Neopalatial period. The vast majority comes from the sealings from House A at Zakros, demonstrating a large variety in the depiction of the creature and introducing a number of variations of the motif including male types (see section 5.2.3.1).

A Syrian prototype has been suggested for the winged creatures in the form of the kneeling griffin-man (for examples see Frankfort 1939: pl. XLI), which might have been interpreted by the Minoans as the eagle-women and created a native variation on the type (Gill 1963: 10, n. 4a). Still, local inspiration is more likely in view of the Minoan tradition of rendering figures with bird-like characteristics and of the definite iconographic link of the bird-lady with the glyptic flying birds/eagles (Younger’s “alerions”). For instance, the “birds” of *CMS I* 468 and 469 bear a striking resemblance with schematic bird-ladies generally and with the Zakros sealtypes in particular. Thus, although foreign influence cannot be ruled out completely, it was the Minoan repertoire that ultimately provided the inspiration for the “canonical” bird-lady type.

Neopalatial depictions of “typical” bird-ladies include seals **572** (fig. 60a), **616** (fig. 60b), **574**, the discoid **594**, a possible forgery in the Philadelphia University Museum and the LM I-II **589** (fig. 60c) and **592** (fig. 5). As for sealings, the fantastic creature is encountered on – among others – 67 sealings

from Ayia Triadha (**576** – fig. 60d, **577**, **578** – fig. 60e and **579**), all impressed by LM I soft stone seals – with the possible exception of **576**.

In regards to “filling” motifs, they are not common in the iconography of the bird-lady appearing in maybe one third of her known depictions. In one case (**578**) the creature is flanked by two “sun” (or “star”) motifs, while on **576** two vertical lines are engraved on either side of the bird-lady. Kenna (CS: 141) recognised two swords in the field on seal **607**, but that may be a misreading and until better drawings of the seal are produced, conclusions on the association of bird-ladies with weapons should be reserved. Branches are more frequent and are depicted on **572** (above the bird-lady, objects resembling branches or wings), **583** (a branch at right), **584** (bird-lady with branches on either side) and on a lentoid from the Giamalakis Collection (**599**). The bird-lady of **588** (fig. 60f) is surrounded by three birds and her fantail/skirt is reminiscent of the fantails of the winged creatures of Kato Zakros.

The bird-lady of seal **599** was identified by Xenaki-Sakellariou (1958: 63) as an official in ritual costume because the wings do not resemble those of bird-ladies **596**, **597** and **598** in the Giamalakis collection. She is accompanied by a bird and perhaps one more female figure. Xenaki-Sakellariou (1958: no. 378) gave a similar reading of seal **601** that depicts a group of two stylised bird-headed (?) winged female figures with wide skirts, seeing a bird-lady to the right and a female figure wearing wings to the left. *CMS II.3* 169 (Appendix B, fig. 61), a lentoid with two schematic female figures preserves the head of only the one in front and their wing-like arms. They have one “arm” raised upwards and the other pointing to the ground. They wear wide skirts and the one still visible head seems to feature a beak. The resemblance of these figures with the ones on

*CMS II.3* 17 is striking. There, two female figures dressed in flounced skirts move in a procession (or are they dancing?) and are depicted in the precise same movement, with one wing-like hand raised and the other pointing to the ground (Younger 1988 identifies this movement as saluting). Their heads are aniconic, as in the examples already mentioned. A similar figure is depicted on *CMS X* 262 (Younger 1983: CP Women & Men, fig. 28), again in the same pose.

To return to *CMS II.3* 169 (Appendix B), it is uncertain whether it represents a mask, the actual bird-lady type or is simply the schematised rendition of a human head. It is not improbable that the figures might take part in a procession or perform a ritual dance, similar perhaps to the scenes depicted on the Protopalatial Phaistos Kamares vessels. These three seals, together with cylinder 898 (fig. 62), a Cypriot import (?), would be the only illustration of the bird-lady in a group, if indeed they represent bird-ladies and not some other type of ritual involving mask wearing and/or disguising.

The scene depicted on 898 – found in a LM II settlement context – is rather complicated: a winged figure with bird's head and long cylindrical robe is flanked by two fish, most likely dolphins, turned upside down. Next to this group, there is a group of two water birds flanking a pole with a tripartite end formed of dotted tips. The cylinder though is problematic in terms of its origin, i.e. whether it is a Minoan or a Cypriot product and *CMS II.3* 169 (Appendix B), with the asymmetrically placed “wings”, does not show the “canonical” type of bird-lady. Similarly, little certainty may be placed in the identification of the figures as bird-ladies on a number of other seals that are engraved with isolated figures. For example, 580 depicts a figure that may be a transitional type between

a woman and a bird-lady, while the figure on **591** may in fact bear a goat rather than a bird head.

#### ***4.1.8 Investigating the meaning of the bird-lady: a review of its iconography***

Kenna identified the bird-lady as a divine being and described her depictions as “bird-goddess” or as “goddess in the form of a bird” (*CMS VII, VIII, XII* and *CS*). However, the existing evidence does not include any scenes with the bird-lady acting as the focus of worship, although in Minoan iconography birds are recurrently associated with female figures of authority generally presumed to represent “goddesses”. They are taken to declare divine epiphany when accompanying these “goddesses”, for instance on the Tiryns treasure ring with the genii (**478**) or on the Ayia Triadha sarcophagus (**300**). Alternatively, birds are interpreted as the epiphany of the god(-dess) in the form of a bird (Niemeier 1987b: 86-87; *MMR*<sup>2</sup>: 330). A lentoid (*CMS VII* 134) of possible LM I date shows the theme of the Mistress of Animals holding a bird in each hand and perhaps riding waves (?) in a clear case of “mastery of the animal world” (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 144). Birds are also often associated with the later “Goddess with Upraised Hands” figurines, like the one from the Shrine of the Double Axes at Knossos with a bird on her head, probably dating to LM IIIA (Gesell 2001: 253). Furumark (cited in Niemeier 1987b: 87, n. 121) believed that birds, initially symbols of the presence of the gods, may be regarded as a kind of divine determinative in view of their common depiction in Aegean art over the passage of time. Nonetheless, birds are not combined with humans to create hybrids in any cult scene, making it rather improbable that bird-ladies were perceived as deities.

The bird-lady is not included in “religious” or “narrative” scenes, but is depicted almost always alone in a rather emblematic manner and partakes in no kind of action (I believe that the above mentioned “bird-ladies” in groups are more likely disguised – or schematic – humans). The lack of even the simplest narrative scenes featuring bird-ladies (such as the plant watering of the *genii*) hinders substantially their understanding.

A trait of bird-ladies suggestive for their interpretation is the *frontality* demonstrated in the pose of the body and, more importantly, in their displayed wings. Frontality of the upper human body is usual in Minoan glyptic and can be attributed to technical necessity, as can the profile depiction of the head (and feet). However, there is no such restriction for the depiction of wings, which in the case of bird-ladies are always shown displayed. Frontality is also evidenced in the apparent stillness of the creature, creating the impression that the image stares back at the viewer despite the profile rendering of the head.

Since the lack of action prohibits the understanding of the creature, this should be sought in other elements of its iconography and specifically the prominent constituent avian element. As shown above, birds were connected with female figures throughout Minoan history and even more so in the Neopalatial period onwards (see for instance the theme of a female carrying a bird on *CMS II.3* 170). Apart from the presumed connection of birds with divine epiphany, the exact connotations of this trait are rather lost to us. The fact that the identification of the depicted birds is rather impossible hinders further the detection of those characteristics that made them appeal to the Minoans to create the composite being.

In Homer birds were interpreted as complex symbols that represent a wide range of things: they mediate between gods and humans; many of them fly so high that they seem physically divine – notably vultures, eagles, geese and swans; they act as metaphors for gods, with the eagle symbolising Zeus; doves and geese are the attendants of Aphrodite, who is the focal point in over half of the bird references; birds are implicated mainly in sexual or sexually related conflict and attraction (P. Friedrich 1997: 306-317, who makes frequent references to the symbolism of various birds in classical Greek mythology and religion). “The whole avian complex symbolises above all the underlying and nonobvious dominance of some meanings of Aphrodite, that is, the emotional syndrome of love, sex (including conjugal love and sex), and sexual jealousy” (idem 1997: 317). Birds like the nightingale and Halcyon can also symbolise the grieving soul and tears.

But are any of these associations relevant to the depiction of the bird-ladies? It is observed that, unlike the eastern “Griffin-man”, the Minoan bird-human hybrid is strictly connected with the female sex. With the exception of the Zakros figures that present unusual combinations of Minoan iconographic elements, the canonical type of bird-human hybrids excludes male parts as their constituent elements. On the contrary, female secondary sexual characteristics are accentuated with the large breasts and the contrast of the small waist with the implied wide hips in the flounced skirts.

This emphasis on gender and the accentuation of the female secondary sexual characteristics is noted in various Aegean motifs featuring women, such as the procession or dancing scenes. For instance, the LBA II *CMS I* 226 from Vaphcio exaggerates these female traits, as do the LBA III ring *CMS V Suppl. 1B*

114 and the ring *CMS II.3* 51 from Knossos, to the point that the female figures there are rendered with only vaguely shaped, aniconic heads, but with great detail on the breasts. Alberti (2001: 189-205, especially 200) diagnosed a context-specific expression of gender or asexuality in Knossian imagery. After examining the performance of sex in the Temple Repositories faience figurines, he reached the conclusion that the sexed body is produced when the breasts combine with a particular type of garment, the bodice and the flounced skirt (for the role of male garments in the Aegean expression of age and distinction of functions see Rehak 1996: 35-51). Thus, female sexed distinctions become apparent also in the depictions of bird-ladies. The combination of female anatomical details, their fixed stance and their garment, all contribute to the expression of a performed female body.

Whereas kinship ties appear to have been more prominent and more actively promoted in the Prepalatial period (Branigan 1993: 137-141) and probably still held at least some importance in the Protopalatial era, German (2005: 19-23) stressed the significance of social differentiation through gender and age on Neopalatial Crete. Among other examples, she invoked the Sacred Grove and Dance frescoes so as to attribute this trend to the ruling elites at that time. Although this association of the performance of gender with elite behaviour is questionable, gender expression is certainly linked with social age differentiation (on the articulation of age in Aegean art see E. Davis 1986b: 399-406; Koehl 1986: 99-110).

A final observation should be made at this point, as it may aid in unfolding the function of the new motif with greater precision. Even though motherhood admittedly is not celebrated in Minoan iconography (Olsen 1998:



380-391), the set of features coming together in the depiction of bird-ladies perhaps connects them with the female “coming of age” and by association with procreation. The squatting position of some bird-ladies in the Kato Zakros sealings (e.g. 727), i.e. the birth position, seems to reinforce this relation to procreation. Additionally, the Minoan interest in the protection of pregnant women and women giving birth was very likely expressed in the Protopalatial period through the Mallia and Phaistos grotesque appliqué and figurines lids (see section 3.1.9) that have been associated with Egyptian beliefs (Carinci 2000: 33-34). German (2005: 94) also proposed that gender differentiation and the emphasis on sex may have had a connection with fertility. The combination of the “protective” frontality with the female coming of age and giving birth implies that the bird-ladies were seen as powerful protectors of this Minoan social group.

In that respect, an association with Eileithyia appears inescapable. Artemis, who is interpreted as the heiress to the Mistress of Animals in historic times<sup>11</sup>, incorporated various local goddesses that had inherited features of the Potnia Theron, such as Aphaia in Aegina and Diktynna and Vritomartis in Crete (Lloyd-Jones 1983: 90). In historical times she was a goddess of birth and, as such, often acquired much of the benign character of the ancient goddesses Eileithyiai (idem 1983: 96). Burr Carter (1987: 379-380) has emphasised the association of Ortheia, a Potnia Theron, with Eileithyia; the sanctuary of Eileithyiai was very close to that of Ortheia and her worshippers apparently believed that she could influence the fertility of animals and men. Interestingly, Ortheia is often depicted holding a bird in each hand (eadem 1987: 379).

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<sup>11</sup> As opposed to various local ‘heiresses’, such as Athena Alea, the Argive and Samian Hera, who appear to have maintained only specific attributes and functions of the Potnia Theron (Lloyd-Jones 1983: 90).

Regarding the Bronze Age evidence, the Knossos Linear B tablets, namely Gg 705, Od 714 and 715, record the offering of an amphora of honey to the goddess Eileithyia (*Ereutija*) related to Amnisos known to be associated with the goddess in Odyssey and a renowned sanctuary of Eileithyia still in Strabo's time (Stella 1958: 29-30)<sup>12</sup>. However it is not known whether she was already worshipped as the goddess of labour, if she was known as a daughter of Zeus and what were her attributes that led to the historical double identification of Eileithyia with Demeter and Artemis. Finally, it is of interest, although by no means of any consequence to the argument here, that sealstones were called “γαλόπετρες” (milk-stones) by the modern Cretans and were used as amulets to protect new mothers.

#### **4.1.9 Gorgon heads**

Younger (1995: 165-168) included a number of the examples identified here as Gorgon heads in his list of ruler/high status people “Portraits”, classifying under this category faces both in profile and *en face*, used as main motifs or as fillers. However, this grouping is not accepted here primarily due to the significance of the frontal position of the *Gorgon heads*. Glyptic human heads depicted in profile as main motifs have been suggested to represent ruler portraits (Pelon 1995: 315; *PM I*: 8-9) or have been seen as type images of power in general (Crowley 1995: 481, 487). The latest discussion of the character of the so-called portraits by Pini (1999: 661-670, with references to previous research

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<sup>12</sup> The investigations conducted at Amnisos cave by Betancourt and N. Marinatos (1994: 306) produced no evidence that could be linked with the goddess. It appears that the cave had been used as a burial site in the Neolithic and EM periods. Its first cultic use dates to MM, but the finds bear no associations with those from other caves connected with Eileithyia.

on Minoan “portraits”; cf. also brief presentation of the topic in Krzyszkowska 2005a: 137) ignored the seals bearing frontal mask-like faces, apparently considering them of a different nature from the heads in profile, not unlike the position taken here.

The frontal pose seems to have also been reserved for human figures of elevated status in Aegean glyptic, such as the Masters and Mistresses of Animals. It has been claimed that frontality is a criterion specific for the representation of cult images (Hiller 2002: 43). The particular significance of depicting heads *en face* can likewise be observed in the illustration of animals, the frontal face of which has been connected with the symbolism of death (Morgan 1996: 30; eadem 1995b: 135-149) and of course in the *fantasy masks* (see sections 5.2.3.3 and 5.4.1 in following chapter).

It seems justified to approach faces rendered frontally as differing from those in profile view, for one more reason: the latter are typically realistic, without any fantastic elements. On the contrary, there seems to be an effort made so as to capture and distinguish personal characteristics, such as age difference (compare for example *CMS I* 5 with *CMS II.8* 40, *CMS VIII* 110b – fig. 63a, *CMS IX* 6D – fig. 63b, *CMS X* 278 and *CMS XI* 18). Finally, it is noteworthy that, although *Gorgon heads* are occasionally used as fillers in LBA glyptic (e.g. 641, fig. 66), the “portraits” are as a rule the main motifs (see three exceptions in Pini 1999: pl. CXLIIb-d).

An extraordinary example of gorgon head resembling closely the Protopalatial predecessors is depicted on a pictorial cup rhyton from the North House at Knossos (569, fig. 64). It was found together with at least 37 more vases, some unique, in the “Cult Room Basement” fallen from the first floor after

the LM IB destructions. The LM I(B) gorgon rhyton was discovered in a trickle pithos together with 12 more small vessels with pierced bases, apparently used as rhyta. A second pithos nearby contained more cult vessels and a third one probably burnt earth, children bones with knife-cut marks (more were found in the “Room of the Children’s Bones”), shells and edible snails. 79 loom weights (perhaps originally stored in a box) conclude the catalogue of finds from the room (Warren 1984: 22-24; idem 1980: 83-84). The gorgon head itself was painted among large squills and figure-of-eight shields in the Alternating Style.

Two more MC III/LC IA pottery examples were found in Phylakopi (fig. 65). The first (571), a beaked jug, shows winged round gorgon heads ending in an outward curve, with “goggle” eyes, grinning mouths, prominent teeth, high-set ears, tail-like bodies, “wings” with linear decoration and clawed limbs (Atkinson et al. 1904: 109, pl. XIV6a-c). The second vase fragment (570) is decorated with a similar creature (Atkinson et al. 1904: 109, 156, pl. XIV9). The last known illustrations of gorgon heads include two Knossos sealings (563) possibly dated to LM II-III (?). These show a central bucranium flanked by two antithetic animal (bull- or goat-) heads. Between the horns of the bucranium, there is a mask-like round human face with animal-like ears and short bristly hair. It features large bulging eyes, a round nose and a large mouth. A LM IIIA1 carnelian lentoid (641, fig. 66) is engraved with a bull-man and a gorgon head with triangular face, prominent eyebrows and large round eyes.

Another group of depictions differ from the previous examples in that the frontal faces are substantially more “naturalistic”. They are in essence male faces and only occasional small details in their rendering are of monstrous quality. The first seal is a LM I bifacial lentoid engraved with a religious scene on one side

and a beardless man's face with the hair combed back from the forehead on the second (558). A LM IA cylinder from the Mavrospelio cemetery (897) shows a man with an agrimi and one more quadruped, perhaps a lion, and a gorgon head above a hand. Similar depictions are found on the LM II 559, on 560, 561 and 562, on the LM IIIA1 564 and on the imported (?) 567.

#### *4.1.10 The changing nature of the Neopalatial gorgon heads*

The naturalism in the depiction of Neopalatial gorgon heads may imply an association with the deity (or deities) invoked for the protection of the seal owner. Given that some of the faces appear to be male, whereas the Protopalatial figures appear to be “un-gendered”, implies that it may be the “Young God” – often presumed to be the consort of the “Goddess” – who is called upon to provide protection.

It is not unlikely that the male form of the gorgon head is also associated with Mycenaean influence. The intense contacts during this period with the mainland, the iconography of which does not demonstrate the Minoan prominence of the female figure at this time (women are given a more prominent place in the Mycenaean iconography of the following periods, for instance on wall paintings) could have given rise to the importance of male figures and their power to protect. The LM IIIA1 lentoid 641 (fig. 66) that combines the two motifs of the gorgon-head and the Minotaur reinforces this connection with male vigour.

However, this naturalism is only one of the trends detected in the depiction of apotropaic/prophylactic figures in the Neopalatial period (see section 5.2.3 for the direction followed at Zakros in the illustration of apotropaic figures,

expressed in fantasy masks, animal-headed figures and fantastic combinations). Another aspect of the notion of bodily fragmentation is seen in the illustrations of the bird-ladies and the slightly later Minotaurs and other animal-headed men.

As in the depictions of the bird-ladies, frontality is a significant aspect of gorgon heads integrally connected with their apotropaic function. They are depicted on soft stone seals in the Protopalatial period; they are commonly found, like the seals with bird-ladies, in a variety of contexts and, when on seals, they are linked closely with their owner, acting as protectors. Few examples of gorgon heads have been dated to the Final Palatial period, not all securely. (561, 564 and possibly 563 and 641) whereas the popularity of the bird-ladies is still great on Crete.

The above observations, in combination with the chronological continuity of the motifs/monsters, make it tempting to suggest that the role of gorgon heads was taken up in the course of the Neopalatial period or in the early years after the LM IB destructions period by other demonic figures, namely the bird-lady and the bull-man and its associated creatures (lion-men and goat-men). The bird-ladies seem to have functioned in the same way as the gorgon-heads, i.e. as apotropaic/prophylactic motifs, but they took over the female side of the gorgoneia, whereas the bull-men were associated with male symbolism. It may be a problematic connection in terms of iconography since there is no iconographic link between the first motif and the two later, but nevertheless an association can be suggested with reference to their apotropaic-prophylactic function and the expression of body dismemberment and transformation expressed in all.

#### **4.1.11 Conjoined animals**

The long-standing iconographic tradition of Minoan glyptic that often depicted animals conjoined into one creature (see sections 2.1.4 and 3.1.8) continues uninterrupted in the Neopalatial period. However, only one example is safely dated to this period, namely lentoid **826** (fig. 67a). It is engraved with a man walking and the inverted foreparts of two lions conjoined into one body. Two more conjoined animal depictions come from the Zakros deposit, i.e. nos. **768** (fig. 67b) and **805** (fig. 67c), although the first cannot be identified with certainty as such since it is only partly preserved. This dramatic decrease in the number of Neopalatial depictions could be accidental or may be seen as a consequence of the rising popularity of the imported monster depictions both in elite and non elite contexts.

#### **4.1.12 Various hybrids**

A few examples of the less well known monsters date to the Neopalatial period including the “winged lion” of **862** from Ayia Triadha. The two sealings show a winged collared quadruped, possibly a lion in frontal pose with its head in profile. The style and the subject of the engraving is comparable to the work of the Zakros workshop. In fact, Weingarten (1983a: Appendix, A/7), who read it as a “lion-headed bird”, has attributed this and the sealtype it was combined with (**863**, fantastic combination) to the Zakro Master. At the same time though, the motif is iconographically connected to the notion of the subjugation of monsters already discussed in relation to collared griffins. As in the themes of animals flanking a central motif and contest scenes where either lions or griffins are the attackers, the lion once again replaces the griffin, retaining though the latter’s

wings. This monster, albeit originating in an animal well embedded in the Minoan iconographic tradition, is not a type that managed to become popular, but appears as an almost unique experiment.

Perhaps later but, since it is still unattributed (as is **870**, fig. 12), discussed here in combination with the Ayia Triadha example, is the winged lion of the agate lentoid **867** (fig. 68) from the LM IIIA-B chamber tomb at Maroulas (Papapostolou 1974: 252, pl. 189a). The wing(s) spring from the neck of the standing lion and one of the two horned animal heads engraved above the wing is placed in such a way as belonging to the lion's body. The sun/star filling motif is placed between the wing and the body of the lion.

#### ***4.1.13 A note on Minotaurs and other animal-headed figures***

Very few depictions of the bull-man ("Minotaur") and the associated animal-headed men have been dated to the very end of the Neopalatial or at the beginning of the following period (**620**, **621** and **673**) and these attributions are not safe. The conclusive appearance of the demon takes place after the LM IB destructions. Therefore, these few illustrations will be discussed with the later depictions in Chapter 6 (cf. sections 6.1.8-6.1.10 and 6.3.4).



## ***4.2 Exploring the context of the Neopalatial fantastic creatures***

### ***4.2.1 Technological advances and variety of media***

Minoan artistic and technical skills reached new heights during the Neopalatial period and the great number of monster depictions on different media, i.e. wall paintings, ivories, rings, seals and stone vessels, demonstrate the way they were conceived by the Minoans. Depictions of the Protopalatial period were almost exclusively on stone seals with rather emblematic illustrations (see section 3.3.1); these have not only been replaced by a broad repertoire of scenes, but are also seen on a range of materials.

Keeping in mind that most Neopalatial workshops and their products are connected with the palaces and major villas (Rehak & Younger 2001: 403), the conclusion that the art of the period was under the control of the ruling class and was employed to promote its interests and express its ideology seems inescapable. However, the evidence for the context of the media and for the find context of the discussed creatures leads to some unexpected results, as did the review of the iconographical context in the case of the “royal” sphinx.

### ***4.2.2 The imported monsters***

The versatile character of the griffin has been already noted in association with its iconography. The media used for its depiction emphasise even further the diversity of the motif in the Neopalatial period. The prominent place of the creature in the major arts and on seals and rings used in palatial administration and deposited in rich burials clearly demonstrates the association of the monster with the elite on Crete.

Of the imported monsters, the griffin alone appears to decorate the walls of the Knossos palace (the sphinx is encountered only once with certainty) and its prominence in the Neopalatial fresco repertoire is truly impressive. Religious painting in Minoan palaces and villas has been interpreted as reinforcing the dissemination of particular symbolic messages by the major palaces, a role apparently undertaken by certain villas also in the LM I period (Rehak 1997b: 163-175; Hägg 1985: 209-217). Immerwahr (1990: 53) argued that female figures on frescoes “are not only more numerous [than male], occurring at almost every site touched by Minoan culture, but they also show more the impact of the religious life and the court dress of the palace of Knossos”. Certainly equal eminence should be ascribed to griffin depictions. Already in the Neopalatial period it is encountered not only at Knossos, but has also reached the Cyclades where it decorated buildings identified either as having public functions or as the residencies of the local rulers. The inclusion of the griffin in the wall paintings of House A at Ayia Irini (291) as well as in the frescoes of Phylakopi (290) and Akrotiri (287-289), confirms the view that the strong local elites employed Minoan cultic paraphernalia and manipulated Minoan religious symbols “to reinforce power, status, and symbolic ties to Crete” (Hitchcock 1998: 172-173). The griffin occupies a prominent place in this group of Minoan religious symbols and it appears to promote the association of the elites with the divine not only in Knossos, but throughout the Aegean islands. In that manner, it becomes a powerful social symbol reinforcing the Neopalatial socio-political and official religious *status quo*. The inclusion of the griffin in the wall paintings of the palace at Avaris (330) is surely indicative of such close associations of the monster with Knossian palatial ideology, as those enjoyed by the famous bull

iconography (on bull iconography as political and religious Knossian propaganda see Rehak & Younger 2000: 286; Hallager & Hallager 1995: 547-556).

On the other hand, the popularity of the griffin on the CP Group of seals (e.g. on 49, 50, 59 and 95) shows the wide dispersion of the motif and its adoption by the lower classes, indicating a process of imitation of elite behaviour by the latter. The CPG, which is one of the two stylistic groups that dominate the period<sup>13</sup>, frequently depicts simple animals, monsters (bird-women, followed by griffins and dragons in popularity) and “cult scenes”. The large number of seals of the CPG that have been found throughout settlement areas and in domestic contexts led to the conclusion that “the practice of owning and wearing seals was not restricted to the upper classes” (Rehak & Younger 2001: 404). The soft stones used for the seals of the group are easily accessible on the island and consequently it is possible that their manufacture and distribution was not under administrative control, although some of them were used to impress nodules found at Knossos and elsewhere. In fact, Younger (1987: 48-49) conjectured that, apart from the CP and MP [Mainland Popular] Groups and perhaps a few others like the Fluorite Group, “all other seals were made possible by, created among, and intended for the palace bureaucrats and their retinues, in order primarily to adorn them suitably as befitted their exalted station”.<sup>14</sup>

It has been suggested that “the significance of a recognisably diffused element present in all levels of society is that if it can be shown to have originated

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<sup>13</sup> The other style being the Mycenae-Vapheio Lion group of the mainland with its monumental style, occurring mainly on hard stones (Rehak & Younger 2001: 404).

<sup>14</sup> Note that the Kato Zakros sealings came from seals not only contemporary with the CP, but also that those attributed to the Kato Zakros workshop were made of soft stone.

in the LG (meaning the higher hierarchy and the ruling class), then its dispersal throughout the community as a whole must represent an act of will on the part of an LG, acting towards its own advantage” (Hulin 1989: 92). In these terms, it can be said that the manipulation of the imported griffin by the Protopalatial and Neopalatial elites was indeed successful, since it did not only result in the adoption of the monster by presumably competing elites outside the island, but also achieved popularity among the “lower classes” within Crete, which embraced and celebrated the monster and the beliefs associated with it.

On the other hand, the situation is different for the sphinx, the genius and the dragon, which fall short of such distinction and appear to come second in the hierarchy of monsters of the period. Nevertheless, only the ‘imported’ monsters decorate seals made of hard stones, such as haematite, that were imported to Crete (see Krzyszkowska 2005a: 122-123 for a discussion of the imported hard stones). For instance, four out of the roughly 55 (i.e. an impressive 7.3 %) Aegean amethyst seals are engraved with monsters (for amethyst in the Aegean see Krzyszkowska 2005b: 119-129), namely seals **107**, **107**, **124** and **525**, the first three depicting griffins, the one a dragon, all dating to LBA I-II.

Apart from their sphragistic use, seals may have been worn as jewellery or used as amulets (Younger 1977) or as markers of status (for attempts to associate seal iconography with social status see Laffineur 1992; idem 1990; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1987; both scholars discussed the Mycenaean state of affairs). However, Krzyszkowska (2005a: 154-155) rightly observed that it would be impossible to identify ranks or offices through the iconography of seals and signet rings in view of the apparent carelessness with which a number of impressions were made, leaving the motifs partial or blurred. If anything, the

articles by Laffineur (1992; 1990) and Kilian-Dirlmeier (1987) and the review of the various contexts in which these artefacts were found establish that the only feasible association is an abstract link of such seals and rings with the elites rather than an unambiguous correlation with the functions of the seal owners.

The material of the seals has been largely ignored in attempts to link them with social rank, with the exception of the gold rings of course, which are *a priori* attributed to higher class members of the Minoan society (Rehak & Younger 2001: 404)<sup>15</sup>. However, imported materials should also be considered as indicating wealth and powerful far-reaching connections, as revealing the dexterity (or even magical powers – see Herva 2004: 144-145) of the artist and, consequently, as further markers of status of the owner. The same group of monsters that decorates hard stone seals is also preferred for the engraving of metal rings.

Ivory also proves a rather popular material for the depiction of imported monsters;

“Ivory, being an important and expensive material, was exclusively used for luxury art objects that would naturally be the sole privilege of the wealthier/ruling classes; this particular quality makes its occurrence a most valuable criterion for the habits/preferences and thus possibly the origin of these ruling classes” (Tournavitou 1997: 454).

The connotations of the material are exemplified above and by association so is

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<sup>15</sup> The high value of metal rings and their use as markers of social status is taken as self-evident in this thesis. However, Müller (2005: 175) expressed reservations on the matter and argued that only the amount of gold used and the investment of the goldsmith's work can point to the value of a ring. In his view, the only ring likely to have been worn by an individual of high social status is the Tiryns ring (478).

the significance of the motifs decorating those ivories. The (admittedly later) Pylos Linear B tablets, which place the emphasis on the material and the decorative details of the various furniture mentioned therein, but not as much on their shape, are indicative of the importance ascribed to the decoration of ivory artefacts in the Aegean (*Documents*: 332-348).

As regards the rest of the imported fantastic beings, the interpretation of the sphinx as a creature with a rather emblematic and still ‘foreign’ character – as deduced by its iconography – is actually supported by the choice of medium for a number of its depictions and by the imported examples themselves. The ivory pyxis and comb, the gold ring, the imported “figurines” and the possible inclusion of the monster on fresco cloth decoration at Knossos associate it unequivocally with the Minoan elite through the exotic and expensive materials exclusive to them. In turn, these items link the elite with the powerful Egyptian rulers whose image and power were embodied by the sphinx. At the same time, its adoption in the iconographic repertoire of the CPG may indicate the imitation of an elite behaviour and the establishment of the role of the sphinx as a guardian of sacred places. Unfortunately, neither its iconography nor the media chosen for its depiction point towards a more “diverse sphinx”.

The depictions of the genius, on the other hand, may demonstrate a similar pattern in the choice of medium, i.e. the ever-present seals, but its iconography reveals its association with a rich set of beliefs and variety of functions as contrasted to the role of the sphinx. As already seen, the genius is illustrated on a steatite triton shell from Mallia (506), which deserves more than a cursory mention. It constitutes a stone imitation of the shells that were probably

used as a trumpet in ritual (Rehak & Younger 2001: 407; *PM IV*: 111; *PM I*: 581) or, as the steatite example itself indicates, as rhyta (Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001: 214; Baurain-Darcque 1983: 3-73). The use of triton shells as trumpets is indicated by the scene with the “priestess” (or man according to Younger 1984: 61) blowing such an instrument on a rock crystal lentoid from the Idaean Cave (HM 24 - Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 1991: 72; Boardman 1970: pl. 188; *PM IV*: 111, fig. 162; *PM I*: 581). They are occasionally depicted on Minoan seals (for example *CMS II.5* 304-306, *CMS II.8* 151-152), while actual natural examples and imitations from different materials have been recovered at various Cretan sites. In fact, many triton shells have been found with their ends sawn as if to function as trumpets or rhyta (Soles 1992: 232; Younger 1988: 351) and there are many imitations in terracotta (from the Protopalatial period), stone and faience (Baurain-Darcque 1983; Foster 1979).

The earliest example associated with “sacred use” was a large triton painted with red ochre found under the central court at Phaistos (Levi 1957/1958: 341), while EM III examples are known from Myrtos (Soles 1992: 231; Gesell 1985: 7-8) and MM I from funerary contexts (for examples see Soles 1992: 182, 231; Gesell 1985: 4, 9, 13-16). By the Neopalatial period they are also commonly uncovered in domestic contexts and are frequently imitated in stone (Soles 1992: 231). A short list would include the triton shell most likely associated with a stone bench from the seaside settlement of Pera Galenoi (Tsivilika & Banou 1995: 744) and the one from the LM IB building AF at Mochlos found together with a bull head rhyton (Betancourt 1991: 443). Triton shells were deposited in the upper storey of the house tomb at Myrtos, Pyrgos, believed to have acted as a place for offerings to the dead (Soles 1992: 179). Three LM IB rhyton hoards

from Pseira buildings, all included a triton shell and bull-shaped rhyton (Betancourt 2001: 146-147). An obsidian triton shell rhyton was found at Tyliossos and a chlorite example in the Zakros palace, where another triton shell from the Northeast Lustral Basin was associated with pumice (Driessen 2001: 362; N. Platon 1974: 126, 203). Their use continued after the LM IB destructions and is known also from the mainland (for such examples on Crete see Shaw 1991: 405; and on the mainland Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2001: 213-214, pls. LXVIIc & LXVIIe; Karo 1930-1933: 64, pls. 148, 166). The Mallia triton shell was indeed used in ritual, not as a trumpet but as a rhyton as indicated by the double perforation that would have allowed liquids to pour through it (for a review of Aegean triton shells, their use and comparisons with Near Eastern and Egyptian examples see Lloyd 1994: 75-88).

As for the dragon, in addition to the well developed iconographic type and “cycles” into which it is incorporated, the variety of media of its depictions is suggestive of its wide-spread adoption into Minoan religion and its dissemination from the elite to the wider part of the population. It is encountered both on seals of various styles (e.g. CPG and Talismanic) and materials (for example soft local stones and haematite), on metal rings and ivory. It is apparent that the creature appears both on items associated with the elite and on artefacts manufactured of cheaper, more easily accessible materials. The geographical distribution and the find contexts of the motif are equally diverse: it is widespread in east and central Crete and was deposited in elite tombs, settlement areas, villas and administrative centres with close palatial associations.



#### **4.2.3 The local monsters: bird-ladies and the medium of their depiction**

The evidence from the chosen medium of their depiction can aid in providing clues as to the function of bird-ladies. Pini (in *CMS II.4*: XLIV) noted that this demonic figure appears exclusively on soft stone seals, mostly of serpentine. Indeed, the bird-lady proved one of the most popular motifs among the CPG seals, but, like the gorgon heads, it is absent from the iconographic repertoire of semi-precious sealstones, rings and ivories.

To commence the discussion of these glyptic depictions of the bird-ladies, it should be mentioned that the relationship of the motif with the stringhole of the seals on which they (and some other motifs) are depicted was argued to be of significance. According to Younger (1977: 154), lentoids and discs generally have vertical stringholes, so that, like most rings, they can be read as modern watches. He admitted at the same time to a large number of exceptions to this general rule, without a specific pattern, whereby the stringhole is horizontal to the motif (idem 1977: 155). Bird-lady depictions constitute such a variation from the general rule, since they are engraved on lentoids with horizontal stringholes. Thus, Younger suggested that since the seals that carry people often have horizontal stringholes, it could be an indication of the special nature of the scene (Younger 1988: xv; idem 1977: 153-157).

Pini (personal communication) however has offered another reason for the chosen stringhole direction and formulated a rule with fewer exceptions; the main engraving of the seal is the factor determining the direction of the stringhole. If it was horizontal (for example a standing goat or a crouching griffin), then the stringhole would normally be vertical, so that the engraver would have avoided crossing the main direction of the motif more than once. If

conversely the main engraving was vertical (e.g. a standing human figure), then the stringhole would normally be drilled along the horizontal axis. An exception to this rule, though unexplained for the moment, is encountered on seals bearing “talismanic” goats (see list in *CMS V Suppl. 3,1: 5*, n. 18) and a few isolated seals such as 40. So, although at first it appears that the potency of the bird-lady motif depended on the specific way it was worn by its wearer (since it is always on lentoids with horizontal stringholes, it is better suited for a necklace or pendant), in reality this is the result of technical factors rather than “special nature” of the motif<sup>16</sup>.

Still, the choice of medium *per se* and the style of the seals on which they appear do illuminate, at least partially, the role of bird-ladies. It was noted that bird-ladies are found exclusively on seals, an essentially very ‘personal’ artefact as contrasted with frescoes or clay vases for example. What is more, they are found on CPG seals, traditionally not connected with the elite of the island and not commonly used (at least on present evidence) in palatial administration. These facts hint at an interpretation of the bird-lady as a creature linked not with the “official” aspects of Minoan life and religion and therefore reveal its popular character on Neopalatial Crete. Unlike the griffin on CPG seals, the bird-lady is not a motif emanating from palatial iconography, but originates, at least iconographically, in the long history of seal carving and the ritual tradition of the Minoans.

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<sup>16</sup> As to Younger’s (1977: 154) observation that amygdaloids with genii have vertical stringholes in contrast to the general rule, which commands that amygdaloids bear horizontal stringholes, this happens only because the cut-off ends of the amygdaloids provide the only space to start a drill hole (Pini personal communication).

Another significant aspect in the interpretation of bird ladies is the date of their find contexts. Although most of the published examples are of unknown provenance, none of the dated contexts that produced bird lady seals (e.g. the Ayia Triadha villa) can be dated prior to LM I. The creature seems on present evidence to have appeared after the earthquakes of the MM III and possibly after the eruption of the Thera volcano that was surely felt on Crete. At Knossos, for instance, there is evidence for a destruction sometime in the MM III, another in the MM IIB/LM IA transitional and a third contemporary with the eruption of the Thera volcano, although no LM IB destruction horizon has been discovered (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 164). As to the unprovenanced examples that are attributed to the CPG style<sup>17</sup>, the traditional LM I-II date of the group, which places it in the later part of the Neopalatial period, comes to support the finds from dated contexts. Perhaps the anguish of the Minoans and their need for (divine) protection during this period of intense seismic activity and great destructions led to the creation of the creature as a means of protection against such natural disasters. The choice of the bird as the main constituent element of the hybrid is perhaps explained by its already well established association with female deities on Crete and the ability of birds to survive such catastrophes that leave humans and land animals helpless.

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<sup>17</sup> Unattributed bird-lady seals include: 605 (unpublished according to Tzavella-Evjen 1970: 55, no. 302); the unpublished seal from a LM IIB-C context, Knossos, Bougada Metochi, plot Th. Kampouraki (615); 616 (fig. 60b).

#### 4.2.4 Find context: the Cretan evidence

The review of the find context of the Neopalatial fantastic creatures reveals the wide range of environments in which their depictions are found. To begin with the glyptic evidence, palatial administrative contexts are the source of the greatest amount of material. Still, the find contexts of the Neopalatial Knossos sealings are notorious for their problematic dating. Pini highlighted the problem of attributing Knossian sealings to specific periods with certainty in his discussion of the difficulties in dating the Knossos palace find contexts (Pini 2002: 4-10 examining the date of the Hieroglyphic and the Eastern Temple Repository Deposits; cf. also debate in Krzyszkowska 2005a: 112-116, 164-165; Panagiotaki 1999: 146-148; Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 16-17, 22-23). Moreover, these Knossian groups are secondary deposits and too small to be used in the reconstruction of administrative hierarchy (as was attempted by Weingarten 1989a: 39-51; cf. criticism in Krzyszkowska 2005a: 165-166). The new sealings from Akrotiri comprise one of the most significant groups of LM IA finds. Almost all are imported flat-based nodules, i.e. they sealed parchment notes perhaps accompanying a Cretan shipment of goods, probably from Knossos (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 168). The sealings from Zakros House A (see Chapter 5), Chania, Ayia Triadha, Sklavokampos and Tylissos date to LM IB, at the end of the Neopalatial period (recently questioned by Pini in *CMS V Suppl. 3*: 37-38, although not convincingly). These are not without difficulties in interpretation either.

Specifically, the Chania Katré Street 10 assemblage was not found in a primary deposit, but represents LM IB destruction debris, perhaps the remains of an archive, that had been levelled for LM II-III A rebuilding (Driessen &

Macdonald 1997: 121-124; Minoan Roundel: 47-53). Still, taken in combination with the Kato Zakros deposit, it indicates that administration was not centralised to archives in the palaces, since the Katré Street deposit contains the largest amount of Linear A tablets after Ayia Triadha. Furthermore, it can be associated with House I where the irregular flat-based nodule with the 12 impressions of 10 different seals (including 338 and 448) was discovered *in situ* together with two Linear A tablets in a cupboard (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 173). This irregular nodule sealed something unusual, perhaps involving a complex transaction between numerous parties or with the presence of many witnesses (eadem 2005a: 176).

The reconstruction of the Ayia Triadha context is also problematic, given that the publication of the material did not disclose adequate information on specific findspots, therefore next to nothing is known for the specific find contexts of most sealings discovered in the villa. The examination of the find context of the Ayia Triadha sealings is thus unavoidably reduced to general observations on the finds from the complex and the place of the villa within the Neopalatial socio-political context. Ayia Triadha produced the largest collection of Neopalatial administrative documents, numbering 146 Linear A tablets and a total of ca. 1150 sealings (Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 200-205; *Minoan Roundel*: 41-45). The Ayia Triadha villa is in ways unique among the Minoan villas, the fundamental problem being its relation to the nearby palace of Phaistos. La Rosa (1997b: 79-89) in fact hypothesised a shift in power at some point during the Neopalatial era in the Mesara “kingdom”, which resulted in the transference of its bureaucratic and administrative centre from Phaistos to Ayia Triadha and probably also incorporated Kommos administratively (Cadogan 1997: 102). Such hypotheses highlight the importance of the site in the Second

Palace period and consequently connect the villa and its seal owners with the upper ruling, 'royal' Minoan class. Schoep (2002: 29) considered Ayia Triadha as the basis of a powerful elite probably with real political power. Palaima (1994: 307-330) also argued against an interpretation of the "villa" as merely concerned with local estate management in view of the vast quantities of produce dealt with in the tablets recovered from the site. The residents of this villa are thus elevated from the status of mere provincial, local chieftains, to rulers of perhaps equal authority as the palatial residents of Phaistos, Mallia and Zakros, and their iconography does not simply imitate palatial art, but represents and promotes the same ideology and beliefs underlying it.

The monsters in this assemblage (coming to slightly over 22% of the total seal types) are associated with elite seal use and the administration practised in this Neopalatial complex more actively than in the earlier Phaistos deposit (*contra* the arguments of Schoep 2002: 25-28; Weingarten 1988b: 89-114; eadem 1986a: 279-298; cf. criticism by Krzyszkowska 2005a: 169-172, who nevertheless admits that the assumption connecting the most active seals with resident officials is attractive as a working hypothesis; Pini in *CMS II.6*: XXX-XXXI).

Although Krzyszkowska (2005a: 160) noted that the large number of single-hole hanging nodules from Ayia Triadha may reveal a particular connection between sealing type and seal type, no pattern is detected in the examples of fantastic creatures from the site: both major types of hybrids appearing in the "deposit", i.e. griffins and bird-ladies, are impressed on single-hole hanging nodules. Only 862 and 863 (the two "Zakros type" monsters) appear exclusively on flat-based sealings, indicating perhaps that these were not

impressed locally (with the use of soft stone lentoids), but were imported from Zakros where the sealing type and the seal shape and material are very popular.

The ring 26, which is engraved with an aniconic male figure rowing a boat with the prow in the form of a crested griffin head and “wing” decoration on the hull, does provide some additional information. It impressed as many as 45 gable-shaped noduli found *in situ* on the window-ledge between corridor 9 and room 27. There, most likely a single individual was involved and their uniformity indicates that they had been prepared on the spot for distribution, that is, not for archival use (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 162). On the other hand, 29 impressed more than 100 hanging nodules (both conoids and “pendants”) and was one of the ten most active seals in the assemblage (that included 27 with griffins and the bird-lady 576 – fig. 60d). This led Krzyszkowska (2005a: 172) to suggest that perhaps more than one person made use of this lentoid. If this is correct, then the sealtype (two identical regardant griffins carved close to the outline of the sealing surface, in “rotation” movement accompanied by smaller griffins) might have represented a particular office or highly ranked officials in general and would be recognised as such.

The above mentioned group from Knossos (242) is the only (safely dated) Neopalatial representation of the griffin in ivory. It comes from the area outside the north wall of the South House, which had a residential function, but at the same time a physical linkage with the palace’s entrance system. This feature, in addition to its architectural elaboration, the existence in it of ritual rooms and finds, all “testify to its importance” (Mountjoy 2003: 34-35, who also reviews the theories on the residents of the House and their possible ritual role). It is in fact presumed that during MM III-LM I the Knossos palace bureaucrats lived in the

elegant residences situated around the palace, such as the Little Palace and the South House (Watrous & Blitzer 1997: 513). The find context of this ivory piece is problematic though in that its association with this building is far from secure and it is very likely that the artefact represents discarded material from the palace and is not associated with the South House (eadem 2003: 17). Although it is the unique ivory piece with a griffin safely dated to this period, it was during Neopalatial times that ivory was introduced as a palatial art, being up to then only a rarity on Crete (Tournavitou 1997: 445).

The Palaikastro ivory comb (538) concludes the investigation of residential find contexts for the Neopalatial imported monsters. House Chi 1-17, the find place of the comb, represents one of the wealthier buildings in the Neopalatial Palaikastro in terms of architectural elaboration and finds (Driessen 2005: 87). It consists of two wings separated by a projecting room and its finds included ivory carvings, stone vases, a bronze double axe, fallen painted plaster, a pillar base and a small pair of horns of consecration, all fallen from the upper floor of the house, which perhaps functioned as a house shrine.

#### ***4.2.5 The evidence from burials***

The evidence from LM I burials remains scanty. With the exception of the Knossos, Mochlos and Poros examples, LM IB funerary contexts are generally absent. Other modes of burial have been suggested for the period, including burial at sea (Marinatos in press cited in Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 71). Perhaps due to the lack of LM I funerary contexts, which as a rule yield wealthier finds than the settlements, a rarity of precious metals is observed on



Crete at the time (more in Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 67-69, on possibility of hoarding and plunder).

What the known Neopalatial burials seem to show is a lingering conservatism that “often distinguishes the burial methods of the ruling class” (Soles 1992: 115). Thus, the house tomb is still being used at palatial centres long after it has gone out of general use. Among examples at Myrtos-Pyrgos, Mallia (Chrysolakkos II), and the Temple Tomb at Knossos (a house-chamber tomb hybrid), are Tombs 3 and B at Archanes, the latter having undergone extensive renovation alongside the construction of building 17 to service the tholos (idem 1992: 115, 131). The so-called enigmatic Tomb 5 at Ayia Triadha, which appears to be Neopalatial in date, also belonged to this type and all its burials were disturbed, thus many of the finds cannot be securely dated (Soles 1992: 122; N. Platon 1954: 455-456; Banti 1941-1943: 23-26; Paribeni 1904: 719-755). These were located only in the pillar crypt and the eastern of the two central rooms well above floor level (Paribeni 1904: 719-755) and included the imported steatite or serpentine sphinx (Cline 1994: 133, no. 10).

Only three seals come from burial contexts of the Neopalatial period: a griffin seal from Herakleion Poros tomb 1 (7), the probable import 897 that depicts a “male” gorgon head and was found in Mavrospelio tomb VII associated with a LM IA larnax burial and finally a Protopalatial gorgon head from Mochlos Neopalatial tomb X (557, fig. 36b).

However scanty the evidence from Neopalatial burials, a social hierarchy has been discerned with the owners of the Temple Tomb at the top, those of the Poros chamber tombs ranking second and the Mavrospelio tombs third (Watrous

& Blitzer 1997: 512), a classification that fits well with the evidence from the seals mentioned above.

#### **4.2.6 Minoan monsters “abroad”: the islands and the mainland**

The Neopalatial period signifies the emanation of Minoan monster iconography to the surrounding areas, namely the Peloponnese and the Cyclades. This review will start with the evidence for fresco painting found in three islands of the Cyclades and will then continue with an appraisal of the mainland finds.

In addition to the already mentioned Griffin Vases, the Cyclades provide the only figural frescoes contemporary with the Cretan wall paintings. Specifically, figural wall paintings depicting griffins have been unearthed in Akrotiri, Thera. In Xeste 3, Room 3, fragments of wall paintings dating to LM IA were found fallen in the lustral basin off the polythyron (287). The paintings were eventually restored in four panels on two levels of the N & E walls (fig. 69a-b). The lower level featured the “Saffron Gatherers” and a sanctuary, while the upper level illustrated a “Nature Goddess” flanked by a griffin and a blue monkey, who apparently presented her with the saffron gathered by the girls.

The blue monkey was also depicted in Room B6 at Akrotiri (*Thera IV*: 45-46, pls. 114-115), in the House of Frescoes at Knossos (Hood 2000: 27-28; Papadopoulou-Kontorli 1996: 58 ff., no.31; Immerwahr 1990: 41-46; *PM III*: pl. XXII; *PM II*: 431 ff.) and in the Pillar Crypt area at Phylakopi (Morgan 1990: 252-266). It is seen in Aegean art as a predator (House of Frescoes), it is connected with various human activities (i.e. strumming a stringed instrument, brandishing a sword in Xeste 3, Room 4) and ritual action (attending the goddess and associated with the rite of gathering saffron in Xeste 3, Room 3, north wall).

The identification of the female figure of Xeste 3 as a goddess or her epiphany has been based on the presence of the monkey and the griffin, which are generally considered to remove the scene from the realm of reality and with their mediating role to allow the depiction of human and divine spheres simultaneously (Goodison & Morris 1998b: 126; Immerwahr 1990: 62). Therefore, the female figure is identified as the goddess “of nature and fertility, protector of young women and girls in their role as child bearers” (Immerwahr 1990: 62). Doulas (1992: 131) has pointed out the emphasised relation of the “Nature Goddess” with the animals that surround her, chthonic (suggesting that her lock of hair is in fact a snake), terrestrial (monkey), aerial (birds and insects on her jewellery) and fantastic (griffin), which justifies her recognition by S. Marinatos (*Thera VII*: 33) as a “Potnia Theron”. These wall paintings decorated the upper levels of the walls of a “lustral basin” and it appears that the building itself was an arena of religious ritual, albeit unknown to us in its precise details. Iconography though is not the sole guide that leads to such associations with religion and ritual. The size and architecture of Xeste 3, the arrangement of the areas under discussion, the imposing façades of the building and the lack of any domestic vessels therein, all lead to the interpretation of Xeste 3 as a building, possibly intended for public assemblies (Doulas 2000a: 19). These gatherings would probably have been of ritual or religious character in view of the thematic repertoire of the wall paintings, only one third of which is conserved to date (idem 2000a: 19).

Akrotiri yielded one more example of the griffin on a LM IA miniature wall painting from the West House, Room 5 (288). The wall painting was found fallen from the walls of Room 5 and originally was located above the level of the

windows and doors and ran around all four walls of the room (Televantou 1990: 313-322). It illustrated a number of scenes, among which the depiction of five “Towns”, the “Meeting on the Hill” (Doumas 1992: 47-48; *Thera VI*: 40), the “Shipwreck and Landing Party” (Doumas 1992: 47-48), “Ship Fresco” (Doumas 1992: 48-49; Morgan 1983: 85-105) and more. The griffin can be seen on the east wall among the fauna of the Nilotic landscape represented there. It belongs to the typically Aegean type and is depicted in flying gallop. Immerwahr (1990: 71, 73) suggested that this griffin may be an excerpt from an ivory or inlaid weapon and thought that the running leopard and fleeing deer in the same scene create a more decorative than pictorial effect due to the conventionalised way in which they are depicted.

The interpretations of this fresco vary greatly, but all need not be recounted here. It will suffice to relate the ones that meet with greater acceptance, although it will be seen that they occasionally contradict one another. It is of interest that, not only the landscape itself is “exotic”, but also that the “cat chasing fowl” detail, combined with the scene of the Aegean griffin in pursuit of quarry – in fact the first representation of the griffin hunting in a landscape setting (Cain 1997: 192) – is actually a formula derived from Egyptian art (Morgan 1988: 52, 54). Morgan (1988: 49-54, 147-150) read in the east wall fresco a symbolism or metaphor for the human activity depicted on the other walls of the room, reinforcing the ideas of predation and aggression expressed on the south and north friezes. She (1988: 49, 164-165) attributed the same symbolism to the lions decorating the sterns (and on one ship the hull) of the ships of the south wall fleet frieze (see below, 289) thus favouring a thematic over a narrative reading of the West house frescoes.

On the other hand, Cain (1997: 193, 202, 207) stressed the narrative character of the West House miniature frescoes and of the action scene on the nilotic landscape, albeit she admitted it belongs to the “minimal” type, since the temporal aspect of narration is ignored and only a moment of the chase is depicted. Other scholars have also proposed that the West House friezes constitute parts of a lengthy narration (Televantou 1994: 327-336; Doulas 1992: 47-49; Televantou 1990: 323) and saw the Nilotic landscape as complementing a small riverside town in a Mediterranean country, a place for a brief stop in the voyage of the Aegean sailors shown on the walls. Davis (1983a: 5) considered the east wall frieze as a break in the narrative rather than a part of it.

Griffins may also be decorating the sterns of the ships together with lions on the south wall Ship Fresco with the depiction of the fleet returning “home” (289). A MM II sealing from the Knossos Hieroglyphic Deposit (*CMS II.8* 89) represents an attempt to depict an animal decorated stern in glyptic and a LH IIIC Late stirrup jar from Skyros shows a similarly decorated boat (French 2002: 121, fig. 57; Mountjoy 1999: 737, no. 49, fig. 284). A now lost gold ring (Younger 1983: fig. 55; *PM IV*: 952, fig. 919; Seager 1912: fig. 52) from a LM IB burial at Mochlos may indicate such a connection with its illustration of the “goddess seated in the middle of a partly animal-shaped boat” (Tamvaki 1976: 73-73, no. 38). This animal may represent a fantastic creature, since its head recalls the elongated heads of the Minoan Dragons; alternatively, it may be a dog, as proposed by Younger (1983: 134) for the creature in a similar scene on a ring from Anemospilia. The aforementioned Neopalatial sealtype 26 (fig. 40) may also depict a griffin-decorated boat.

The Miniature Fresco has been a long-debated subject of Aegean iconography and a wide range of interpretations has been assigned to its themes. Hood (1978: 65) and S. Marinatos (*Thera VI*: 53-57; 1974: 87-94) saw in it a campaign of Minoans to Libya and the triumphant return of the victors. Especially the section on the south wall was seen as a kind of sacred regatta in memory of an old tradition (Xenaki-Sakellariou 1980: 150-151), as a symbolic representation of communications and contacts in the Aegean (Immerwahr 1977: 183), or even as a wedding procession (Gesell 1980: 204). Morgan (1983: 99) envisioned the depiction of an annual nautical festival, while Immerwahr (1990: 74) suggested it was a festival following a safe return. Moreover, Axioti-Sali (1992: 459-469) and Morgan (1989: 511-535) identified elements of the Miniature Fresco that were repeated in Homeric descriptions.

The West House miniature wall paintings should be considered in association with the frescoes that decorated the other rooms of the building. The *ikria* of Room 4, the Fishermen and the so-called Priestess with the incense burner depicted by the entrance to the room with the miniature fresco, all compose an iconographic programme with a nautical theme. Like the programme from Xeste 3 with its obvious religious and ritual associations, that of the South House appears to be implying a religious function of the building connected with seafaring (Immerwahr 1990: 74).

The variety of roles performed by the depicted griffins is of particular interest in the Akrotiri wall paintings. The griffin is illustrated in the form of the guardian in Xeste 3; he is the attendant to a female figure of elevated status and his subjugation to her is emphasised by the cord that keeps him tethered close to her; on the miniature wall paintings though he appears in all his might,

alternatively as the fierce hunter in what was presumably seen as his natural habitat and then as a powerful emblem, assuming the function of protecting and “advertising” the power of the fleet or of the people whose ships he decorates.

The Cyclades yielded more examples of the griffin on frescoes, practically surpassing Knossos itself in the number of depictions. A possible depiction of the griffin on a fresco is seen on the frescoes from Ayia Irini House A (291), the presumed residence of the local ruler, coming from an upper floor hall, which together with a light well formed a rather secluded unit within the building. Only part of a griffin (?) wing and adder marks are preserved today, thus the identification of the monster is tentative. Nevertheless, the exclusive association of the adder mark with griffin and sphinx depictions, the figured decoration of House A, the Griffin Vase uncovered in the same building, and the close ties of the site not only with Akrotiri but also with Crete, all indicate that such an identification is perfectly justified. The proximity of House A to the Ayia Irini Temple has not gone unnoticed (Morgan 1998: 202) and highlights the status of the building within the Neopalatial settlement at Ayia Irini.

The final wall painting originally depicting a griffin was discovered in Phylakopi, in Rooms 6-7 of the large building at G3, together with a flying fish fresco and is dated to LM IA (290). The griffin (?) was identified from fragments of wings that appear to have decorated the robe of an under-life-size figure, originally thought to be male, but now interpreted as a seated woman (Immerwahr 1990: 54, 62; Cameron 1975: 391 ff.; *PM III*: 40ff, fig. 26; Atkinson et al. 1904: 72 ff., figs. 60-1). She is wearing a robe decorated with either swallows or, perhaps, griffins, and drawing “net”, which may be a sacral knot.

The Shaft Grave Circles constitute the first significant source of imaginary beings on the Early Mycenaean mainland and the wealth of their finds comprises the richest deposit encountered in the Aegean during this period. They have produced examples of the griffin, most of which found on metal objects. The blade of a sword from Grave Delta in Grave Circle B (262) was decorated with engraved rows of griffins in flying gallop on both its sides (Mylonas 1973: 86). Grave Circle A provided more examples (Schuchhardt 1891: 197 ff.), among which are the gold leaves unearthed in Grave III (264-265). The two different diminutive griffin figures in gold sheet (265, fig. 70) were probably garment ornaments (Schuchhardt 1891: 197 ff.). These griffins formed part of a group of similar figures together with a sphinx, nude female divinities accompanied by hovering doves, clothed female figures, a pair of heraldic deer and pair of felines, all belonging to the same iconographical cycle, namely a “sacred”, Nilotic landscape (D’Albiac 1995: 66; Karo 1930-1933: 48, pls. 26-27). Grave IV produced an amphiconical pinhead, the lower half of which is decorated with two running griffins (266), and a dagger blade with a row of griffins (263). The sword blade from Grave V (267, fig. 71) with the four griffins in flying gallop concludes the metal finds with monster decoration from Grave Circle A, while the Griffin Vases (277, fig. 41 and 278 – cf. *PM I*: 558-559) constitute the only non-metal examples of griffins in these tombs.

In view of their ornamental nature, it has been considered uncertain whether the gold cut-outs from Grave Circle A had any religious meaning for the Mycenaeans (Whittaker 2001: 356) or even evident that they had no cultic connotations whatsoever (Hägg 1984: 121). The latter view has been rejected by Palaima (1995: 127-128, n. 29) who sees no compelling reason to argue against



the 'religious' meaning these items may have held for the rulers with whom they were buried, even if there is a distinct lack of comparable evidence from non funerary contexts. Moreover, their funerary character demonstrates the great interest of the Early Mycenaeans in display through funerary deposition and corresponds with the association of the griffin on Crete with funerary ideas and beliefs.

A comparison of the finds from the Grave Circles with those from contemporary burials demonstrates that the former housed the dead of the Mycenae upper classes, "who wished to differentiate themselves from the common people as much as possible" (Graziadio 1991: 412). In fact, the theory that the items accompanying the burials in the Mycenae Shaft Graves, and in particular the weapons that demonstrate the importance of military ideology, marked high social status and claims to socio-political power is not a new idea in Aegean archaeology (see for example Cavanagh & Mee 1998: 32; Mee & Cavanagh 1984). Palaima (1995: 127) has proposed that at least some of the tools for the success of this process, i.e. ideological notions, symbols and perhaps even the term "king" were borrowed from the Minoans.

The burials in Grave Circle A ceased in LH IIA when another form of elite burial was introduced at Mycenae, the tholos tomb, already in use in the south-west Peloponnese since the MH III (Rehak & Younger 2000: 289-290). Glyptic evidence of fantastic creatures comes mainly from these early tholoi of the mainland. The pattern of seal ownership that emerges there is different from that of contemporary Crete. Specifically, the lack of soft stone seals, as opposed to the hard stone products and gold rings accompanying exclusively these rich

burials, indicates that seal ownership was an elite privilege in the Early Mycenaean mainland (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 23).

These Early Mycenaean<sup>18</sup> semi-precious sealstones include examples of Minoan monsters. An interesting scene is depicted on a jasper lentoid from Vapheio (134, fig. 72), where a so-called priest leads a tethered griffin and appears to be singing. Crowley (1989: 169) proposed that some ritual scene may be depicted on the seal as on the later ring 215 (fig. 46) from chamber tomb 91 at Mycenae engraved with a similar scene.

Attempts have been made to investigate whether the seals with religious scenes and/or fantastic animals from mainland tombs allude to the functions of the deceased in (official) ceremonies or cult practice (Niemeier 1997a: 306, 308 on Warrior Graves seals; Laffineur 1990: 117-160 on Mycenaean seals generally; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1987: 197-212 on Vapheio tholos seals). Nevertheless, the results of these endeavours identifying ritual functions or prowess in hunting for the seal owner on the basis of the iconography of his/her collection are hardly convincing. In a different approach to the function of these early mainland seals, Rehak and Younger (2000: 277) have argued that, in contrast to the abundant contemporary evidence from Crete, seals buried in elite tombs constitute the best evidence for early mainland administration, as opposed to the few hints of contemporary administrative architecture.

However, these seals are best interpreted as prestige items selected by their owners on the basis of their materials and iconography, rather than

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<sup>18</sup> The term "Mycenaean" is used here to mark the place and time of these finds. It does not mean to imply a local manufacture of the seals especially in view of the confusion about the place of production of some Early Mycenaean artefacts (e.g. consider the issue of the origin of the Vapheio cups addressed in Rehak 1996: 48-49; Kilian-Dirlmeier 1987: 197-212; E. Davis 1977; Vermeule 1964: 127-130).

indicative of administration. Their function is highlighted when examined not only against their specific find contexts but also within the social context of the Early Mycenaean period. That is generally viewed as a competitive environment in which various groups strove to obtain and consolidate power within their separate regions primarily and interregionally secondly (Whittaker 2001: 356). The nature of the Early Mycenaean socio-political structure was rapidly changing in the late MH-LH (eadem 2001: 358) and resulted in the palatial states of the LBA.

As Whittaker (2001: 257) noted in relation to the double axe, whatever its religious significance on Crete, it was undoubtedly a symbol of palatial power and a fearsome weapon and as such it was easily assimilated into the military symbolism of the early Mycenaeans. The griffin is an equally aggressive and potent motif (see for example its use on the Shaft Grave weapons, later on the LH I-II cushion **123**, its association with a helmeted figure on **116** and so forth) and that must have constituted one of the reasons behind its adoption by the Mycenaeans. Moreover, its possible association in Minoan iconography with the deathscape would surely promote the monster to the mainlanders, since the arena of death was their chosen medium of displaying status and reinforcing political power.

The significance of the inclusion of the Minoan griffin, sphinx and dragon in the burial iconography of the Shaft Graves at Mycenae is highlighted by the particularly careful selection of iconographic elements that the Early Mycenaeans adopted from the neighbouring Mediterranean areas, namely Crete and Egypt, the latter being, for instance, the source of inspiration for the weighing scales (see relevant discussion with further references in Gallou 2005:

42; Michaelidou 2000: 128-149). The newly emerged rulers of the mainland appear to have used similar means with their earlier counterparts on Crete in order to establish their rule as manipulation of religious beliefs was also detected in the efforts of the Protopalatial elites with an ultimately quite akin aim, the establishment of their rule and of their entitlement to it.

#### ***4.2.7 Socio-political context***

Major MM II destructions, often by fire and/or earthquake, noted in Knossos, Phaistos, Mallia, Monastiraki and other Cretan sites mark the interruption between the Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods. The Neopalatial period does not, however, represent a homogeneous development, starting unvaryingly in MM III/LM I and ending at the end of LM IB. No significant break in Minoan culture accompanied the destructions, which were followed by “architectural and administrative consolidation” at these centres (Rehak & Younger 2001: 392). The Neopalatial period during which the Cretan countryside was exploited by means of the rural, permanently occupied settlements called ‘villas’, has been called the *Golden Age* of Crete (MacGillivray 1997b: 21). A succession of destructions and rebuilding took place in almost all sites, at different times and places, perhaps due to a variety of reasons. For example, earthquakes seem to have caused significant damage to a number of sites in the LM IA (Rehak & Younger 2001: 393). Apparently though, after the destruction at the MM IIIB/LM IA transition – largely contemporary with the first seismic destruction at Thera, there is a cultural continuity into the LM I (Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 37).

The new (second) palaces rebuilt in MM IIIA had more controlled access. An apparent reduction of the space for storage<sup>19</sup> and redistribution and a rise in number of areas for ceremonial activity may also be added to the new features of the Second Palaces (Rehak & Younger 2001: 395). MacGillivray (2000: 124) perceived in that development the Minoan reaction to their contacts with the Anatolian colonies and adaptation of some of their ideas.

There are indications that during LM IB many of the town and country houses were taking over certain palatial functions. This development has been given two conflicting interpretations; either that the palaces were losing control over remote centres, or that they were in fact extending their control over even more areas (Rehak & Younger 2001: 397). Driessen & Macdonald (1997: 44, 71-72) have advocated in favour of the second interpretation and have in fact suggested that the palaces of Knossos, Mallia and Phaistos before their LMIB destruction were not fully operational “but served mainly as storage and ritual nodal points and not as the symbols of their previous religious, political and economic authority”.

Krzyszkowska (2005a: 191-192) was among the critics of the reconstruction of events by Driessen and Macdonald and particularly of their suggestion that administration was less centralised than in LM IA. She stressed that their theory rested on mainly negative evidence (only the Temple Repositories and the Akrotiri sealings are dated to LM IA), but accepted that individual centres – palatial and non-palatial – do present signs of decline in the

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<sup>19</sup> See also Driessen & Macdonald (1997: 53) for more on the reduction of palatial storage facilities when the palaces were being rebuilt during early LM IA, as opposed to the later construction of storage areas in secondary settlements in mature LM IA or LM IB.

course of the Neopalatial period, which is only expected given that it lasted more than 200 years!

Villas and their place in Minoan administration and society have proved a long debated issue. Betancourt & N. Marinatos (1997: 91-98) talked of differentiations in the function of the 'country', 'manorial' and 'urban' villas - the latter being the most specialised in their activities - and proposed a role in the aristocratic control of Minoan society for them. Specifically, they (1997: 91) observed that "religion and cult are often centred in the villas", which certainly seems to be the case with the so-called 'Royal Villa' at Ayia Triadha, which together with Pseira are the two Minoan villas with religious frescoes (Rehak 1997b: 163-175; Militello 1992: 101-113; Immerwahr 1990: 49-50, 54, 161, 165, 180; Smith 1965: 77-79; see Koehl 1997:137-149 for a connection with the later Cretan *andreion*). The wall painting of Room 14, "what may have been the finest of all Minoan frescoes" (Immerwahr 1990: 49), also manifests the close relation of Ayia Triadha with the palaces, since it was probably executed with the commission of a Knossian artist (Militello, discussion session in Rehak and Younger 2000: 306; Immerwahr 1990: 161).

Rehak (1997b: 163-175) has pointed out that, apart from being economic centres supporting the palaces, villas might have served as local centres disseminating Neopalatial religion, which strongly implies the existence of a theocracy. N. Marinatos (in Betancourt & N. Marinatos 1997: 97) supported the existence of a theocratic state in Neopalatial Crete, with the lords of the villas acting not only as administrators, but also as priests, and priesthood being a mark of a certain social status and not of spirituality. As to the nature of the affinity that the villas had with the palaces, she observed that the key is "religious

performance. To hold the populace (indeed the empire) together under a peaceful rule, it was necessary to rely on the backbone of ritual. The palaces could not manage this alone. An entire elite had to co-operate in devising a common vocabulary and a common goal” (in Betancourt & N. Marinatos 1997: 97).

The fantastic beings on the seals of the administrators at Ayia Triadha and Sklavokampos can thus be seen as fully integrated in the elite’s symbolic system, once again ‘clothing authority with the garb of religion’, to borrow the expression of N. Marinatos (in Betancourt & N. Marinatos 1997: 97). These seal impressions, some identical to those uncovered at Sklavokampos, Knossos, Zakros, even Akrotiri, and perhaps Chania “tie the Ayia Triadha administration into a wider Cretan network” (Schoep 2002: 29). Moreover, let us not forget that the first appearance of the griffin, the sphinx and the genius was in fact in the Protopalatial sealing deposit of Phaistos, conveying a sense of tradition and continuity to the depiction of fantastic animals in the region and stressing the connection between the two sites.

#### ***4.2.8 Religious context***

A number of the sacred grottoes and the majority of peak sanctuaries appear to have been abandoned by LM IB with a few exceptions, namely those that were of great importance or in the vicinity of large settlements (Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 39). Of the 25 peak sanctuaries in use during the Protopalatial period, only eight associated with palatial or urban settlements continue into the Neopalatial (Peatfield 1997: 23; for a detailed list of peak sanctuaries and caves see Jones 1999: 22, table 10 & Appendix). Peatfield (1990: 127-129) also discussed this significant change in the use of peak sanctuaries between the

Protopalatial and the Neopalatial period and emphasised that the Neopalatial peak sanctuaries received a wealth of offerings in an apparent process of religious consolidation controlled by a palatial elite. This restriction of the cult to the sanctuaries of elite political centres and the type of offerings made to them suggest its transformation from a diffuse peasant/popular cult to a centralised, elite dominated cult (Peatfield 1994: 20; idem 1990: 117-131; idem 1987: 89-93). This reform of Neopalatial religion along official lines has also been implied by the disappearance of evidence on burial ritual (even burials for that matter) and the gradually richer and more complex palatial cult equipment (Rehak & Younger 2001: 433-434).

However, although a lot is known about Neopalatial cult places and equipment, hardly anything has been established concerning religious beliefs (Rehak & Younger 2001: 433). Many scenes on seals and frescoes have been dubbed religious, but disagreements still ensue over the identification of gods and goddesses in them. The presence of fantastic animals has been taken to signify them (see for example the Xeste 3 fresco 287 with the “Goddess of Nature” and the griffin). The theory of Evans about the Great Mother Goddess is still influencing the thought of most researchers today (scholars supporting the theory include Driessen 2001: 364; Warren 1989; for criticism see Dickinson 1994b).

Moody (1987: 235-241) described religion in Palatial Crete as a prestige activity with equal importance to elite domination as that of material resources control and prestige artefacts. During the Neopalatial period status and power was probably “primarily and perhaps exclusively expressed through participation in religious ritual” (Whittaker 2001: 357-358). The use of rings, which impressed



uninscribed sealings over leather documents, and the dissemination of prestige objects reflecting a specifically Knossian iconography of ritual seem to be closely associated with the religious sphere. These two traits “imply that the centralising process in Minoan administration may have been conducted along religious lines” (Rehak & Younger 2000: 287). This increasing role of Knossos (*contra* the model proposed by Driessen & MacGillivray 1997: 42 ff.) may be used to explain the presence of Knossian special-objects at non-palatial centres on Crete, in some of the Cycladic islands and the contemporary Shaft Graves.

#### ***4.2.9 Parallel developments in the Orient: the Near East and Egypt***

The Old Babylonian period (ca. 2100-1595 BC) formed the third phase in the development of monsters and demons in Mesopotamia and Iran (Porada 1987: 1). It is the stage of the “balance” between beneficial and adverse images. A “dark age” of almost two hundred years followed the fall of the first Dynasty of Babylon in 1595 BC and by the end of this period the north of Syria and Mesopotamia was under Mitannian rule. The Mitannian seals rarely depicted deities, a trait which continues after the collapse of Mitanni later into the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the tendency was to depict demons rather than deities (Collon 1990: 50).

The griffin in Near Eastern art was apparently of some religious significance being shown among other beasts of the gods. Black and Green (1998: 101) assume that it may have been “magically protective” but admit that its precise functions and associations are nevertheless unknown. The interest in Mitannian and Assyrian glyptic for images of Masters of Animals with griffins coincides with the preference for the depiction of the Potnia Theron with griffins

in LM I, i.e. the period that marks the greater popularity of these monsters in association with the female deity (Barclay 2001: 380, n. 46).

Examples of Aegean contacts with Early New Kingdom Egypt are difficult to pinpoint prior to the reign of Thutmose III (Cline 1998: 213). During LM IB though, and after a long interval, there was a sudden increase in Minoan and early Mycenaean products in Egypt. It resulted in a strong Egyptian impact on Minoan art, architecture and funerary rites in both this, and the following period. Even Egyptian political domination of Crete has been suggested for this period, under the reign of the powerful 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (MacGillivray 2000: 124, 168-169), the very beginning of which coincides with the end of the period (Rehak & Younger 2001: 390). The unification of Egypt under Ahmose and the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty marks the beginning of the New Kingdom around 1550 BC.

The Aegean griffin had certainly reached Egypt by this time as demonstrated in the finds from the tomb of Aahotep that produced a dagger (316) and an axe (317, fig.73) bearing griffins of the Aegean type. Additionally, as already mentioned (see above section 4.1.2), frescoes of Aegean character have been discovered in Tell el-Dab'a (330), Alalakh (331) and Tel Kabri (332), all from palatial contexts. The date of the Avaris frescoes (330) has been a thorny issue (see review of problem in Cline 1998: 199-219) but seems to be resolved now in favour of a date in the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty (Bietak 2005: 83-90), which would make the frescoes contemporary with LM IA-B. Apparently they had been stripped off from the walls of a monumental watch-tower after a short time of usage and include a frieze of bull-leaping set against a maze pattern in a hilly landscape with palm-trees. Another frieze shows a hunt with lions, leopards, a griffin, men and dogs and ungulates, all set in a hilly landscape with riverine

and other plants. Finally, a fragment of another large griffin came also from the watch-tower.

The Tel Kabri frescoes (332) also illustrate a miniature griffin among other flora and fauna, a rocky shore, boats and architecture. The wall paintings probably decorated a ceremonial hall in the palace. Two more or less contemporary large fragments of wings decorated with notched plumes and restored as belonging to a griffin were found together *in situ* as fallen from the “grand salon” at the palace of Yarim-Lim at Alalakh (331, fig. 74). Both the Tel Kabri and the Alalakh frescoes are contemporary with either the end of the Protopalatial or the early Neopalatial period.

#### ***4.3 The Neopalatial fantastic creatures in context: concluding thoughts***

The iconography of the Minoan fantastic creatures of the period has clearly developed in terms of the typology of the monsters on one hand and in the rendering of more complicated scenes on the other. The establishment of characteristic traits for the griffins, sphinxes, genii and winged figures, their inclusion in specific types of scenes and the apparent specialisation of tasks that they are to perform implies that by the Neopalatial period all these creatures not only surpassed the confines of the palaces but, more importantly, that their roles have been further expanded. The hybrids that had been introduced during the Protopalatial period appear to be forming part of the Minoan religious system of beliefs and mythology. Although the narrative character of scenes is rather restricted (see Cain 1997: 10-16 113-239 on narrative in the Aegean, its definition and the different orders of “narrativity”), the more complex roles

assigned to griffins, genii and dragons support this. The introduction of an even larger variety of fantastic animals would perhaps testify to the extent to which the local imagination was captivated by these exotic beings that were by now irrevocably a part of the Minoan beliefs connected with the divine. Crowley (1995: 475-491) has argued that, although it has been demonstrated that the Minoans did not express political dominance via the same iconographical channels as did some of their contemporaries (the issue of “the Missing Ruler” in Aegean art – see discussions in E. Davis 1995; Rehak 1995a; Niemeier 1987a: 89-93; E. Davis 1986a; Hägg 1985), still some Neopalatial symbols of power can be assumed. Examples of such symbols would include the pose of the figure with the outstretched arm, as a “stance of command”, the horns of consecration and bull iconography, and most probably the double axe.

The imported monsters, in particular the griffin and the sphinx, can be assumed to be also associated with the iconography of power. They still alluded not only to a direct association of the elite with the powerful empires of the Orient and demonstrated their wealth through access to and use of exotic materials. More importantly however, griffins, genii and dragons had been apparently established firmly in the beliefs and the mythology of the Cretans by the LM IB destructions. The preference for the depiction of these foreign monsters over the local creations on prestige items implies that the Neopalatial rulers did not need to appropriate “popular” symbols or institutions to justify their right to rule and perpetuate the socio-political *status quo*, as had been the case in the Protopalatial period (see for instance the appropriation of peak sanctuaries cult by the First Palaces). On the contrary, it was the Minoan elite

symbols and monsters that were emanated not only to the lower classes, but also to the competing elites of the mainland and the islands.

As to the local monsters, the Neopalatial bird-lady type emerges as an isolated frontal creature appearing exclusively on seals and particularly on the widely distributed CPG seals. Its iconography does provide clues to its association with gender distinctions, in particular with young women, possibly with pregnancy and/or giving birth. The alleged association between motif and stringhole direction though has no implications for its function(s) in the Minoan system of beliefs. The date of its appearance and the ever changing socio-political conditions during that time do highlight the particular need for a protective spirit. In view of all the above associations, i.e. the iconography, medium, find and historical contexts, the bird-lady emerges not as an ill-defined “goddess”, but as a creature that took form and satisfied the need for protection in a specific period of Minoan history and under specific circumstances.

The multiplicity in the function of the griffin, the genius and the dragon, the establishment of a hierarchy of monsters with the griffin firmly placed at the top, the newly introduced themes of the subjugation of monsters, of female griffins and their offspring and of genii differentiated by age and/or rank, the introduction of the bird-ladies with their accentuated sexual characteristics and on the other hand the acquisition of “male” associations by the gorgon-heads, all demonstrate that the social categories of religious beliefs, ritual expression, rank, gender and age are invoked in the Neopalatial representations of fantastic creatures. These transformations and novelties fit well within the Neopalatial social and religious complexity, which in turn is mirrored superbly in the development of the Minoan demons and monsters.

## ***Chapter 5***

### ***The Monsters of Kato Zakros***

#### ***5.1 Description of the deposit***

As in the case of the Phaistos sealings (see section 3.2), similarly the Zakros deposit requires independent discussion owing both to its size and to the peculiarity of its iconography. The find context of the deposit will be presented and the enigmatic local pattern of seal use reflected in it will be discussed. After a review of the previous scholarship on the infamous sealtypes of Zakros, these creations will be briefly presented and placed within their iconographical, geographical, cultural, religious and international contexts in an attempt to decode them and their place within the context of Minoan monster iconography.

##### ***5.1.1 Find context***

The 559 Kato Zakros sealings were found in room VII of the lower, terraced storey of House A (detailed accounts in Krzyszkowska 2005a: 178; *Minoan Roundel* 73-74; Weingarten 1983a: 2-4; N. Platon 1974: 17-22; Hogarth 1900/1901: 129-134). This room, located on the ground floor of House A, had been decorated with painted plaster, traces of which show a yellow pattern on blue ground and was paved with burnt brick tiles. The sealings, together with a group of other objects (vases, bronze tools, a stone lamp-stand, a roundel and a Linear A tablet) were found at a height of ca. 45 cm above the floor. They were concentrated in a small circular area of ca. 1 m. in diameter indicating that they had been probably stored in a basket before the destruction and had fallen from the floor above (Weingarten 1983a: 2-3). Rehak and Younger (2000: 285)

proposed that they could have been stored in tall cupboards set against the wall like those in the Archives Room in the palace and explained the distance of the sealings from the floor as the result of the collapse of the bricked upper part of the wall separating rooms VII and VIII. The adjacent room VIII produced storage pithoi, amphorae and 13 conical cups placed upside down.

House A, constructed of “cyclopean” masonry, is the most impressive of a group of twelve buildings in the area of the NE slope above the Zakros palace (Hogarth 1900/1901: 133). The ground floor of the building comprises of eight rooms, some accessible only from the upper floor, others partly separated with mud-brick walls and accessible through openings leading straight to the exterior of the building. A wine press was discovered inside the entrance of the House and a structurally redundant square pillar whose base was covered with blue plaster stood in the entrance hall (Weingarten 1983a: 2). The presence of two Marine Style rhyta in House A dated its destruction to LM IB, even though Evans (*PM I*: 699-701) had initially dated the deposit in LM IA (cf. Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 240 for the possibility of an earlier destruction in LM IA).

House A was connected with a complex of storerooms, the so-called House B. Unfortunately, the buildings of the area and certain rooms belonging to House A are not preserved well enough to permit a more detailed examination of the complex (N. Platon 1974: 17-18; Hogarth 1900/1901: 121-149). Nevertheless, various suggestions have been put forward regarding its function. Specifically, Mariani (cited in N. Platon 1974: 17) believed that House A was a temple because of its “cyclopean” architecture. N. Platon (1974: 18, 22), on the other hand, maintained that House A stored temporary archives and constituted an annex of the main centre of political and religious administration, the palace –

for the administrative function of which very little evidence escaped the LM IB destruction. In fact, he (1974: 218) suggested that the Artisans' Quarter, the Southwest Quarter and the West House Group at Mycenae, the Arsenal at Thebes and the Wine Magazine at Pylos were the equivalents of House A. The function of House A may have been that of a first-contact tax station in view of the abundance of administrative documents recovered from it (Rehak & Younger 2000: 282-285), although it is situated on the inland side of the town at some distance from the harbour. Weingarten (1983a: 4) proposed that House A contained "a modest replica of the administrative *cum* religious services", arguing for religious functions on the basis of the two Marine Style rhyta. Krzyszkowska (2005a: 180), however, remains sceptical about the status of the building within the context of palatial administration and leaves the question of its independence from or connection with it open. Evidently, the status of House A is a still unsettled issue. Still, it appears that N. Platon's suggestion is closer to the truth as the building may not be part of the palatial complex architecturally, but constitutes a contemporary administrative centre very close to it and can thus be compared with the Little Palace at Knossos

### ***5.1.2 The Kato Zakros sealing practices***

In addition to the seemingly unexplainable monstrous types, there is another factor emphasising the unique, or at least unusual, character of the Kato Zakros deposit, namely a pattern of seal use atypical of other Neopalatial period sites. The first irregularity is met in the types of sealings discovered. These include 350 standing flat-based nodules with two or three impressions each, a type peculiar to Zakros, and 50-60 hanging nodules, most of which are two-hole



prismatic with three impressions, another type known exclusively from this site (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 156, 161). Both types of nodules are used in the Zakros MSS. On the other hand, the 125 recumbent nodules found in House A are usually impressed only once, almost never with a Zakros monstrous type and participate in the MSS only rarely. It has not been established though whether these SSS sealings were impressed locally or if they accompanied shipments of goods from elsewhere (like the recently discovered sealings from Akrotiri). Finally, there are four disc-shaped noduli and only one roundel, while other types encountered elsewhere, such as pendants and single-hole nodules, are altogether missing (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 184).

The second unusual trait is the extensive use of “look-alikes”, such as 765, 766 and 767 (fig. 75a-c), or 774, 775 and 776 (figs. 18, 76a-b), which are encountered in double and triple versions respectively<sup>1</sup>. Weingarten (comment during discussion session, in Perna 2000: 247) defined look-alikes as seals which “look so much alike that they must have been created in order to serve some similar purpose or exercise some similar authority”. Mere resemblance between sealtypes is not a sufficient premise to identify them as look-alikes, since they “must be used in a similar way and preferably in a way that is *virtually interchangeable*” (my italics, Weingarten: comment during discussion session, in Perna 2000: 247). However, the term has met with scepticism, since it appears ill-defined and has been misguidedly applied to sealtypes that are linked merely by the same theme (see Krzyszkowska 2005a: 182 with more references). Even Weingarten (1997: 527), for instance, applied it to a number of seals and rings

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<sup>1</sup> The eight sealtypes that are assigned the letters A and B after their sequential number in CMS II.7 are not “look-alikes”, but seals that may have been re-touched or cleaned between impressions. These are: 706-707, 709-710, 729-730, 736-737, 741-742, 748-749, 765-766 (figs. 75a-b) and 798-799.

from Knossos, which are “so much alike that they must have been made intentionally similar in order to exercise some similar authority”.

Criticism notwithstanding, the term “look-alikes” is used here as a working expression and applies to the 30 (in total) motifs that have 66 slight variations in the deposit (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 184). It should be noted that this peculiarity is not restricted to the local monsters, but is also encountered on “mainstream” sealtypes, such as *CMS II.7* 16 and 17 that depict a procession of two figures or *CMS II.7* 37 and 38 with a bull leaping scene (eadem 2005a: 182).

These look-alikes appear to be “moving in the same way”, which constitutes the third peculiar trait of the Zakros pattern of seal use. This means that the combinations of seals impressing the sealings are stable (“invariable”) and are encountered almost always together, as are their variants. For instance, **718** (fig. 77a), **720** (fig. 77b) and **755** (fig. 77c) impressed ca. 14 nodules, while the group of their respective look-alikes **719** (fig. 78a), **721** (fig. 78b) and **756** (fig. 78c) also impressed at least three more nodules.

Younger (1987: 48; followed by Weingarten 2005: 1-16) regarded the Kato Zakros deposit as representing a group of seals developed specifically for sphragistic functions and reflecting specialised seals, many of which he suggested were probably bifacial. His first observation juxtaposes Zakros seals to the large majority of Aegean seals, since throughout their long history, “from the Neolithic pintaderas to the late fourteenth century BC, their eponymous sphragistic function has actually always been an important but a secondary concern” (Younger 1987: 47).

The second observation could account for the *MSS* system used on the site. Hogarth (1902: 90) had also noted the high probability that the sealings with

multiple impressions were sealed by two- or three-faced seals, which are commonly found on east Crete. Weingarten (1983a: 9-10) only considered “the theoretical possibility” for the use of bifacial lentoids, but rejected the notion that three-sided prisms were involved in the *MSS*, as these were popular only in earlier times (EM and MM). The second reason for her dismissal of the theory was that only one of the 56 probable examples of LBA three-sided prisms that she was able to gather was attributed to east Crete<sup>2</sup>. It is for practical reasons though, as demonstrated by practical experiments in making sealings (*Minoan Roundel*: 245-246), that this discussion was finally settled against the use of bifacial or three-sided seals<sup>3</sup>.

This outcome complicates matters in various ways: since two or three different seals were used on each occasion, does that mean that we have the concurrent presence of the same two or three individuals at all times? Or is it more likely that a seal owner owned more than one seal and used them all at the same time? The second alternative is more convincing since funerary evidence demonstrates that indeed Aegean seal ownership was not restricted to one seal per person. In turn though, it raises the question of why the seal owners would impress the documents with more than one seals.

Rehak and Younger (2001: 425) observed that the sealing systems of Kato Zakros and Ayia Triadha appear “to reflect the management of an estate

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<sup>2</sup> Still, a review of only *CMS II.3* (mostly Neopalatial examples) contrasts her findings: 12 Neopalatial three-sided prisms from the *HM* are listed (*CMS II.3* 12, 31, 64, 82, 96, 112, 153, 203, 231, 254, 308 & 373). Of these, four (i.e. 33.33%) come from east Crete (*CMS II.3* 203: Geraki, *CMS II.3* 231: Gournia, *CMS II.3* 254: Mochlos and *CMS II.3* 308: Praissos), the remaining seven come from central Crete and one (*CMS II.3* 373) is of unknown origin. Weingarten (1983a: 10) also added that, of the 56 in her list (although she names only two, *CMS II.3* 64 & 112), only 21 produce impressions indistinguishable from those of lentoids like the Zakros impressions.

<sup>3</sup> The idea that mould-made glass seals impressed the Zakros sealings (Younger 1999: 953-957) was also dismissed by Pini (forthcoming, cited in Krzyszkowska 2005a: 198, n. 19).

rather than state-management”<sup>4</sup>. In fact, the multi-impressed types of sealings with look-alikes moving always in the same direction in this sealing system have been described as resembling labels and perhaps they did function as such (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 185). This remains the most attractive explanation of the Zakros sealing practices for the moment, contrary to the conclusions drawn in the earlier, more ambitious, studies by Weingarten (1992; 1986a; 1983b) who has tried to decipher the sealing practices at the site and to identify resident seal owners. In anticipation of more work on the deposit to clarify the issue, the identity of the officials or professionals that impressed the nodules and the procedures reflected in this assemblage have to remain open for the time being.

## ***5.2 Description and discussion of the sealtypes in the deposit***

Having presented the concerns surrounding the sealing practices of Kato Zakros, we turn now to the manner in which the unusual sealtypes have been handled in Minoan iconographic research. The issues arising from the previous research will then be discussed.

### ***5.2.1 The previous scholarship***

After their discovery by Hogarth in 1901, both he and Evans “were at a loss to explain the strange combinations of human and animal components depicted” (MacGillivray 2000: 209). Hogarth (1902) isolated and published 144 sealtypes soon after their unearthing and Levi (1925/1926) followed with the publication of 56 more (both studies are now superseded by the publication of *CMS II.7* in 1998).

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<sup>4</sup> Although Palaima’s (1994: 307-330) review of the seal use and tablets at Ayia Triadha demonstrated that the local officials dealt with produce quantities in a “palatial scale”.

In the view of their excavator (Hogarth 1902: 91), there is no association of the Zakros fantastic forms with cult, with the possible exception of the Minotaur types. He (1902: 91) maintained that they represent “the product of a yet further stage of art, which has passed from monsters with a meaning to monsters that are pure fancy”. Still, Hogarth (1902: 91-92) was the first one to note that the vast majority of the Zakros monsters “are of purely local derivation, being variations of a very few types” although he attempted to account for only a small number of “independent Monster types” (e.g. 773, 803). He sought the inspiration for these in Egyptian art through details such as wing characteristics including their long terminal quills, upcurving almost spiral wings and butterfly wings.

Likewise, Evans’ discussion of the deposit can be summarised in his firm belief that the images on the Zakros sealings are “pure monstrosities”, which “belong to no cult” and combine bizarrely human and animal elements (*PM I*: 699-708). He too allowed for only one exception, the first appearance therein of the Minotaur. Della Seta (1914: 158-160, cited in Weingarten 2005: 10) even accused the Zakros figures of being useless as demons, since in his opinion they could do nothing as they only possessed useless and pendent parts that they did not know how to dispose of!

Karo (1959: 66-68) has stressed the unusual character of the illustrations and argued that one has to look at 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries European art in order to come across comparable depictions in the works of artists like Hieronymus Bosch. Nilsson (*MMR*<sup>2</sup>: 310 ff.) has recognised a possible religious association for some of the Zakros figures, but in relation to the fantasy combinations, he too argued that they could be nothing more than the product of the Zakro Master’s

fever-stricken imagination without any religious value. It is increasingly evident that the characterisation of the “Zakro Master” as possessing a “nightmarish” or “feverish” imagination has been indeed popular with scholars. Nevertheless, Tzavella-Evjen (1970: 113-114) has accepted a religious function for some of the female figures and listed pictorial elements of the Zakros nodules, such as the wavy arches or snakes, as evidence for the religious connotations of these figures.

N. Platon (1974: 251), the excavator of the nearby palace, glimpsed in the Zakros repertoire a pantheon not unlike that of the other Minoan centres, albeit with a much richer demonic world, probably the product of “nightmarish imagination”. Furthermore, he opposed the belief that the variety of form of the depicted figures expressed the artists’ desire to render them unique. Based on the iconography of the sealings, on other Zakros moveable artefacts and architectural finds, he (1974: 252) postulated a theocratic system controlled by the Zakros rulers acting as the representatives of gods and insightfully put forward the suggestion that the demons were in keeping with beliefs commonly held by the Minoans.

The variety of views on the Zakros sealings and the frequent use of “grotesque” and “disturbing” in the descriptions of these “composite beings of nightmarish fantasy” (Gill 1981: 83-90) are characteristic of the studies conducted so far on them. In fact, Gill (1981: 85) was unable to find an explanation for these illustrations other than their providing “evidence of the frailty of their creator, a man mentally sick and suffering perhaps from a form of schizophrenia”. She (1981: 85) presumed that “his madness may have been regarded as the touch of the deity, his hallucinations as divine visions and his

seals as possessing special talismanic properties, which may account for the virtual absence of imitations despite their popularity, for their potency depended as much upon the hand that drew them as on the actual designs". The depiction of the bird-people on the sealings of Zakros was taken by Gill (1981: 86) to prove the imagination and originality of the Zakro Master, who was the first to depict these "lesser demons" in glyptic art, though certainly not their inventor. In her opinion, the sealtypes feature figures connected with the religious beliefs of the Zakros inhabitants, if not the Minoans in general, but in a novel, peculiar manner of presentation that eventually forestalled any imitation by later artists. As to the fantastic combinations, it was his alleged progressing illness that provided the explanation for engraving seals with what eventually became mere patterns, "meaningless abstractions, poorly executed" (Gill 1981: 86).

In her 1983a publication *The Zakro Master and his Place in Prehistory*, Weingarten examined stylistically the sealtypes represented in the deposit and attributed them accordingly to the hand of the "Zakro Master", for the existence of whom the *CMS* authors remain sceptical, or to his workshop. She also attempted to identify the origin of the various motifs and monsters, which she viewed throughout her study as mere fantasy creatures, as images from the "Master's" own imagination.

However, Weingarten (2005: 1-13) modified her views recently and admitted that her "Zakro Master" could not have been detached from the time and place in which he worked, very much like the view taken in this thesis. Accordingly, these sealtypes are a product as much of him as of the society and culture in which he lived. She (2005: 1-13) explored the aspects of gender expression in the sealtypes of Zakros in an attempt to determine the sex of these

demons. She commenced her investigation by declaring that attention should be paid to the emphasis placed by the seal engraver(s) on the breasts, arms/wings and legs rather than the head, body and feet of the individual figures and attempted to classify their sex on the basis of this presumption. Some of her groupings however are not truly convincing; for example, too many of the characteristics of her “female” demons are actually male, thus preventing their identification as female with reasonable certainty. Still, she appropriately questioned the value of skirts and fantails (the latter seem to constitute a visual metaphor for flounced skirts in the Zakros assemblage) in the identification of gender in this deposit.

Zakros gender issues were also discussed by German (1997: 46), who explored “the erotic and disturbing nature” of these illustrations and in particular the combination of human and animal parts that resulted in these provocative images. She concluded that these demonic figures acted apotropaically in Zakros’s inter-site dealings by means of their atypical appearance that would have seemed as abnormal to the Aegean viewer as they do to the modern.

The overview of the literature on the motifs of Zakros reveals the necessity for an objective analysis of the group and for its appreciation based on composed observation and discussion of the images, rather than on aphorisms and prejudiced argumentation.

### ***5.2.2 The “canonical” monster types of the Kato Zakros deposit***

Although frequently ignored in the relevant literature, the Kato Zakros deposit also includes a large number of sealtypes – as many as 234 in fact – decorated with “mainstream” Minoan motifs, among which “traditional” Minoan



monsters are encountered. As Krzyszkowska (2005a: 182) noted, surely some of these would have been engraved at Zakros and not all need be imports.

Among these “mainstream” demonic figures, the griffin is the one most frequently depicted, as observed throughout Bronze Age Crete. It is illustrated on **694** (fig. 79a) probably coming from a metal ring, perhaps on **696** (fig. 79b – soft stone lentoid engraved by the Zakros workshop), on **697** (fig. 79c – soft stone lentoid), **698** (fig. 79d – hard stone seal?), **699** (fig. 79e – soft stone lentoid), **700** (fig. 79f – ring?), **701** (fig. 79g – hard stone lentoid?), **702** (fig. 79h – soft stone lentoid), **703** (fig. 79i – metal ring), **704** (fig. 79j – soft stone lentoid), **705** (fig. 79k – unknown shape, perhaps a metal ring) and possibly on **811** (hard stone lentoid).

Dragons are illustrated on **688** (fig. 80) and possibly on **689** (fig. 81), which depicts two regardant quadrupeds in rotation movement around the edges of the seal (compare with Asine chamber tomb ivory lid **544**). Their bellies are decorated with motifs perhaps denoting teats. With their long bodies and short legs, their short and stout necks, the raised pointy ears and elongated snouts, the animals resemble female Minoan dragons. The genius **686** (fig. 54a) is also present in the deposit and is encountered on seven nodules impressed by the same hard stone lentoid in an unusual scene: the monster attacks a bull with a spear. Conjoined animals were most likely depicted on the partially preserved **768** and **705** (figs. 67b-c).

A sphinx was probably engraved on the soft stone lentoid used to impress one flat-based sealing (**695**, fig. 82). The sphinxes of **690** (fig. 83a) and **691** (fig. 83b) stand out with their butterfly’s wings. **691** is reconstructed as a sphinx due to its resemblance to the former example, although the female chest of **690** has

been omitted and the legs seem to start from the now missing head. The two monsters are depicted isolated, like their more “mainstream” counterparts, in frontal position with both wings displayed. The frontally viewed sphinxes constitute a new pose (see Rhyne 1970: 134-137 for full stylistic analysis and probable Egyptian origin of the pose), which is not only localised but also absent from both earlier and later depictions of the monster, whereas profile sphinxes continue throughout the Bronze Age. The style of their engraving is distinctly different from the “typical” Minoan sphinx illustrations and is best described as shorthand as it focuses on a concise depiction of the monster’s constituent parts.

Although the *CMS* authors avoided classifying them as such and preferred the neutral *phantastische Kombination*, two more depictions – **718** (fig. 77a) and **719** (fig. 78a) – can be included in the depictions of sphinxes as they essentially feature the same characteristics. The leonine paws are in this case much shorter and the emphasis is placed on the frontal human head and the wings, leading Weingarten 1983a (73-74, no. 78) to classify them as “cherubs”. These traits combined with the summary way of their illustration bring the monsters very close to the gorgon head images and it is plausible that they shared their protective/apotropaic role.

### 5.2.3 *The iconography of the Zakros monsters*

The presence of “typical” Aegean monsters in the deposit is certainly indisputable, but it is the types peculiar to Zakros that distinguish it from other Neopalatial deposits. Their iconography and its related problems will be discussed in this section and attempts will be made to correlate specific

iconographic elements with the older and contemporary Minoan glyptic creation and monster repertoire.

The Zakros monsters can be divided into three broad categories, namely the demonic figures of bird-ladies and winged animal-headed men; the “fantasy masks” and finally the “fantasy combinations” (see definitions in section 1.6.3). Although all three groups possess peculiar features to a greater or lesser degree, the first two are at first glance closer to the “mainstream” Minoan monster iconography. A few remarks will be made on their iconography before we move on to the discussion of the third category.

#### *5.2.3.1 Winged animal-headed people and bird-ladies: attempts to identify monster types and their gender*

The Zakros sealings demonstrate the largest concentration by far of winged creatures during the Neopalatial period and these include both upright figures and quadrupeds. A quick review of the relevant literature reveals that one of the distinct difficulties faced in the study of the Zakros bird-ladies and winged animal-headed men is the problem of definition of types. For instance, the look-alikes **748** (fig. 84), **749** and **750** have been considered both as bull-people (Schlager 1989: 235, fig. 10) and as variations of the bird-lady type (Younger 1988: 212, “eagle-woman with bull’s head”). However, Younger (1988: 215) identified the creature illustrated on **744** (fig. 85), a winged female with the head of an agrimi this time, as an agrimi-woman (also used to describe the figure on **591**) rather than an “eagle-woman with agrimi’s head”. His reasons for the employment of essentially double standards in these identifications are not stated. Similarly, **713** (fig. 86) and **745** (fig. 87) are both “agrimi-men” (Younger

1988: 215) despite their apparent bull heads and possible breasts of the first and the skirt and displayed wings of the latter. Finally, the figure of 754 (fig. 88) is another case of undecided identity: Weingarten (1983a: 15, 17, 62 (*MSS* 57) originally described the creature as a “Bird-Lady Gorgon with hairy ears”, although more recently she (2005: 6) recognised a “mixed-gender hybrid” with a pig’s head and a “female marker”, i.e. the fantail, but without breasts. The *CMS* authors (*CMS II.7* 150) leave the question of the head unanswered and state that it may be boar or lion. Younger (1988: 212), on the other hand, classified the figure as an eagle-woman, as did Tzavella-Evjen (1970: 53, no. 285).

The list could go on with more ambiguous illustrations, but the above examples demonstrate that the identification of animal heads on one hand and of consistent monster types on the other are among the most prominent problems in the study of the deposit. Although the recognition of species of animals is in any case a known problem in Aegean glyptic studies and as such need not be associated with the particular iconographic problems of the Zakros deposit, the lack of consistency in the description of the monsters should be addressed.

One solution would be to classify types by considering the head as the one decisive trait that reveals the identity of the creations. During his discussion of the Great Sphinx at Giza, Lehner (1991: 382-383) maintained that in mixed forms it is the head that conveys the essential identity (for the significance of the head and its symbolism in the Aegean, in particular Crete, see sections 3.1.7, 3.3.5, 4.1.9 & 4.1.0). Thus, one would indeed identify bull-ladies, agrimi-ladies and so forth. However, in that manner we end up with monsters unparalleled in Minoan iconography since, as a rule female creatures are given avian attributes

(as seen in sections 4.1.7-4.1.8) and male are given animal characteristics (cf. section 6.1.10.3).

It should be mentioned that a few sealtypes have been considered as exceptions to this general trend, namely **669** (fig. 89), **671** (fig. 90), **670** (fig. 91) and **672** (fig. 92). Still, the “animal-headed” ladies of **671** and **670** may be best read as female figures with aniconic heads rather than as monstrous types. Similarly, the figure of **669** is rendered too sketchily to permit an identification as either a bird-lady or an animal-headed lady. Regarding the figure of the LBA II/IIIA1 **672**, the so-called lion-lady (Morgan 1995a: 178-179, fig. 7; *CMS XI*: XXVIII, n. 84 & 85), there are in fact no compelling reasons to consider “her” as female. Apart from the frontality of the creature that may link it with bird-headed female figures, no trait can be exclusively associated with female iconography; there is no indication of breasts and “her” garment appears to be a long robe rather than a skirt. Long robes with diagonal stripes have been associated with priesthood in Aegean art (see discussion of the “Syrian” robe in Rehak 1994: 76-84). If correctly identified as such, it constitutes an item of clothing also worn by male figures in Minoan and Mycenaean iconography, for instance on **134** (fig. 71). In short, viewing the head as the determinant characteristic of the monster depicted does not appear as a satisfying solution to the problem of identifying monstrous types in the Zakros assemblage.

Wedde (1995: 271-284) proposed a framework for the study of Aegean imagery and maintained that given the nature of pictorial data, *clusters* (i.e. groups, types) constitute the only valid basis for formulating general statements, while single documents are best ignored in view of their possible status as

exceptions. “The cluster approach is the closest pictures can come to statistics and quantification” (idem 1995: 283).

The variations of the bird-lady motif in the Zakros deposit are impressive and in cases the types depicted would belong to the edge of the bird-ladies *cluster*, if the method employed by Wedde (1995: 284) is to be applied. Thus, sealings like 732 (fig. 93) are recognised as belonging to the *cluster* group with reference to the “canonical” bird-lady motifs (as defined in the introduction). The *variant-group* deviates from the “canonical” illustrations in the depiction of hands instead of wings (733, fig. 94), the omission of legs and skirts, which are replaced by a fantail and a helmet (735 – fig. 95, 729 and 730) or by an assortment of lines and dots (736 – fig. 96 – and 737). 739 (fig. 16a) and 740 show hybrids with animal heads and beak-like mouths, long necks, female breasts, wings and tails of birds. These would be considered *marginals* as the profile of their heads, the breasts and the wings are constituents of the canonical pictorial structure of the group, while the other elements may be considered to form variations on the main theme of the bird-lady.

Nonetheless, other winged hybrids may be more problematic. 744 (fig. 85) illustrates a hybrid combining the bearded head of a goat, spread wings of a bird and the lower part of the body of a woman wearing a skirt. No breasts are depicted. 748 (fig. 84), 749 and its look-alike 750 demonstrate even more variations on the same theme, with the hybrids featuring animal heads and wings, but this time the heads belong to bulls and the bodies to women with fantails. Apparently the gender categorisation and the definition of the type of winged hybrid for such examples is rather challenging as they can be understood to

belong to the *margins* of more than one *cluster*; that of the bird-ladies, the Zakros goat-men (743, fig. 16b) and the Zakros “Minotaurs”.

Another challenging example comes with 692 (fig. 97), which may again be part of two different *clusters*, that of the “bird-men” or the “sphinxes”. In fact, Weingarten (1983a: 72) included it in her “Sphinx Series”, seeing two winged warriors face to face. On the other hand, the *CMS* authors interpreted the legs of the creature(s) as the forelegs of an unidentifiable animal, thus removing it from Weingarten’s more humanoid creature(s), and adopted a neutral nomination for the hybrid, i.e. a “phantastische Kombination”. The published drawing is indeed perplexing and it seems on a closer look that the identification of two figures is rather speculative. So, once again, we are faced with the problem of placing a Zakros motif, 692 in this case, in its appropriate cluster. In short, a detailed analysis following Wedde’s proposed method does not appear to be helpful in identifying the Zakros types that seem to continuously overlap. Furthermore, it will not explain the reasons behind the preference for these “variant” and “marginal” types.

In addition to the complexity of identifying types of monsters, a major difficulty faced in the study of the Zakros demons is the inability to ascertain their gender. Look-alikes 745 (fig. 87) and 746 were singled out by Weingarten (2005: 4) and German (1997, cited in Weingarten 2005) in their exploration of gender issues in the Zakros deposit. These two winged goat-headed figures bear long horns on their heads and, at the same time, they are rendered with breasts and Minoan skirts. They are illustrated with a long line in front of their bodies, which has been interpreted by German as a phallus, by Weingarten as a tail and was left unidentifiable by the *CMS* authors. Another point of conflict in the

reading of these motifs is the “beard” that was noted under the chin of the demons by the *CMS* authors – although it was read as “some irregularity” by Weingarten. Accordingly, German favoured a male identity for the figures, while Weingarten did not doubt that the figures are female. Similar gender ambiguity surrounds more Zakros sealtypes, such as 709 (fig. 98) – 710 and 711 (sexed as female by Weingarten) and 744 (fig. 85).

In his discussion of the depiction of gender in LBA Knossian art Alberti (2002: 106) has argued that the clear depiction of breasts is theoretically the most secure means of identifying female gender. He (2002: 114; idem 2001: 200) added, however, that in itself it is not a sufficient criterion, as gendered identities are created by the combination of breasts with elaborate garments. The widespread legs of certain Zakros figures may be also considered as an indicator of female sex as they constitute the “universal” birthing position or posture of female sexual display. Both traits can be employed in the investigation of the Zakros figures but once again one is confounded by the uncertainty resulting from their combination with “male” traits (see for instance the above mentioned 745 – fig. 87 – and 746).

It can be claimed though that this uneasiness in matters of ‘categorisation’ at Kato Zakros is unjustified. This confusion of types and genders may be in fact intentional and perhaps scholars actually pose questions irrelevant to the reasoning behind the motifs. Alberti himself (2001: 192) has brought attention to the tendency of Aegeanists to interpret the material by classifying and ordering it “in a more systematic way”, which however may obscure other ways in which these images are organised. As noted by Hitchcock (2000b: 69-86), Bronze Age Crete existed within a contextual framework of



contemporary cultures “where sexual ambiguity, multiple genders, plurality, and difference played a sanctioned role in the dominant social order”. Additionally, as already observed, the well-known and widely discussed difficulty in discriminating among animals (Younger 1988: xvii-xviii) is one of the foremost factors leading to inconsistencies in the classification of seal types with animals in Minoan art. One cannot be certain of identifications and “it is quite likely that palace-based Minoans and Mycenaeans had similar difficulties” (Younger 1988: xvii). Lentoid *CMS VIII* 141 (Appendix A, fig. 99) constitutes a good example of this as it depicts an animal with a lion body and a bull head (Pini 1981: 143, n. 49). It is very unlikely though that the viewers of the seal would readily make such classifications. An obvious and precise distinction between horned (or not) quadrupeds, caprids bovines and between female vs. male genders would appear not to have been the goal of the Zakros engravers since these animals are on the whole interchangeable.

Additionally, the “bird-ladies” with variations in the depiction of the bird head, whether that is its replacement by a helmet, a plant motif or an animal head, may have parallels in more “naturalistic”, non-Zakros type depictions, as for example that on the steatite lentoid **591** (fig. 100). The pose, the displayed wings, the skirt and the human torso and feet, are practically all the distinguishing traits of a bird-lady. Thus, the variation in the depiction of the head, although by no means unimportant and meaningless, appears to give another aspect in the creature rather than denote a different monster.

In view of the above observations, the Zakros monsters become perhaps more legible. It appears that the depiction of beings completely differentiated from one another, with separate attributes, meanings and functions was not the

intention of the engraver(s). The predominance of look-alikes in the sealing system of Kato Zakros also points to that direction. All in all, in view of the intentional ambiguity in the illustration of the Zakros demons, is it even relevant to attempt to distinguish between types when it is apparent that this was not the aim of the artist and/or the seal owners? The conclusion that one is not justified in speaking of “Zakros monster types” but rather of “Zakros type monsters” appears inescapable. The different attributes of each sealtype would not have denoted a completely different creature, but rather aspects of a small group of demonic figures, i.e. the bird-ladies (and their variants) and animal-headed figures (and their variants).

#### ***5.2.3.2 The origin of the (animal-headed) bird-ladies & winged men***

The origin of this seemingly new type of monstrous depictions remains to be determined. While accepting the possibility of foreign influence, Gill (1963: 10, n. 5a) did not exclude an indigenous invention of the winged demons of the Zakros group. Indeed various features indicate that the primary source of inspiration for these figures can be sought in the Minoan iconographic tradition. In addition to the already mentioned 669 (fig. 89), which may or may not represent an animal-headed lady, a LM lentoid (857) uncovered in the Unexplored Mansion offers a parallel for the “male” winged figures of the deposit as it depicts two winged people flanking a papyrus plant (Popham et al. 1984: no. miscellaneous 10). Figures like the one depicted on the Protopalatial steatite prism (*CMS II.2* 264, Appendix B, fig. 32) from House C at Kato Zakros would support the theory for local inspiration of the bird-people and demonstrates an early tradition in the area of Zakros (see also list of such

illustrations in tables 1 and 2, Appendix B). The hybrid here must represent a transitional type between the Prepalatial figures with beaked faces and the later Minoan bird-ladies and Zakros winged men, since it already demonstrates, albeit in a schematic form, their main traits, i.e. the bird's head with a long beak in this case and the unmistakable wings in place of arms. Moreover, the LM IIIA1 **858** (fig. 101) that was read by the authors of *CMS* as a possible bull-leaping scene should perhaps be reconsidered, as the illustrated male figure bears wings in place of arms (identified as a winged man also by Younger 1988: 211 – for more possible parallels/prototypes see Weingarten 1983a: 93-95).

The poses of the Zakros animal-headed figures are not unparalleled in the Minoan repertoire either. There is a restricted number of postures and actions chosen for the depicted monsters; they can be running, standing or crouching. Those in frontal pose are numerous and at least in that respect, winged female figures seem to fall within the group of bird-ladies as defined in the introduction (see discussion in previous section and section 1.6.3). Additionally, the winged creatures of Zakros are often illustrated in the *Knielauf* pose, apparently inspired by Oriental models (Weingarten 1983a: 84-85) and with wide-spread legs (see for instance **732**, fig. 93). The wide-spread legs are encountered on a naked female figure on a Prepalatial Mallia jar (Weingarten 1983a: pl. 13b) and on a Protopalatial prism from the same site (*CMS II.2* 127, Appendix B, fig. 102). Weingarten (2005: 8) proposed that the Minoan wide-spread leg motif and the gorgon heads may be derived from a specific type of the Syrian “nude goddess” who is often depicted frontally, sometimes with wide-spread legs and occasionally with Hathor-like curls.

Besides the matter of the pose, Zakros demons are always depicted isolated and do not participate in larger scenes (religious or otherwise), in contrast with the imported imaginary beings, the griffins, genii and dragons. Bird-ladies were also mostly isolated (see sections 4.1.7 and 4.1.8). Minotaurs are often accompanied by “filling” motifs (see sections 6.1.8 and 6.1.9). Such motifs were not included in the seals created by the Zakros artists(s). “Non-Zakros type” illustrations depict occasionally animal-headed men in pairs, for example, 644 with the lion-man “pursuing” a bull-man, or even 673 (fig. 103). 681 and 682 with their conjoined animal-headed men. These differentiations may point to a development of the Minotaur and associated animal-headed people motifs from their first appearance in the Zakros assemblage to the standardisation of the type in LM II-III.

Stylistic variation notwithstanding, it becomes apparent that the Zakros monsters share numerous traits with contemporary “mainstream” fantastic creatures; The fluid sexual nature of the animal-headed people may not apply to such an extent to contemporary bird-ladies and the slightly later Minotaurs and other animal-headed men, but is well within the context of the Minoan attitude towards the monstrous as evidenced in the development of the genius and the gorgon heads. The exclusion of these imaginary beings from multi-figured cult scenes is also applied to the bird-ladies and the animal-headed men. The garment of the Zakros demons, i.e. flounced skirts, belts and shorts, is not different from that worn by the bird-ladies and the animal-headed men either. Finally, the sense of movement attested in the Zakros depictions is also encountered in the contorted pose of the later Minotaurs. It becomes apparent then that the

inspiration for all these Zakros “variant” figures essentially lies in Minoan iconography enriched by Oriental elements.

#### **5.2.3.3 *Fantasy masks and Gorgon heads***

The discussion of the iconography of the second large group of Zakros monstrous types, the fantasy masks, is also hampered by problematic definitions and difficulties in distinguishing between types. The common element in all depictions is the illustration of a central frontal animal head to which various imaginary traits have been added. For instance, **798** (fig. 104) – **799** and **800** may be seen as masks to which chance motifs have been added fortuitously and in an inorganic manner, as they feature a central frontal bucranium conjoined with human legs and two “half Snake Frames” or horns. Still, the elements of the image can also be interpreted as the basic constituents of an animal-headed man – perhaps a lion-man, as Younger (1988: 212) read them. This would support the notion that the Zakros engraver(s), while uninterested in naturalism, they still did not in reality stray from established fantastic forms, but chose to render them in an abbreviated manner.

A “proper” winged gorgon head is depicted on **723** (fig. 105). A human frontal face with bristly hair and exaggerated cheekbones is surmounted by a wing-like apparition. On certain other occasions, it is not an actual human or animal head that constitutes the central theme, but an allusion to one, made up by different components, i.e. on **758** (fig. 106) and **759**.

The preference of the Kato Zakros motifs for frontal images should by no means be considered as a local phenomenon. As seen in the previous chapters (see sections 3.1.7 and 4.1.9), frontal detached heads emerged as a common

motif in Minoan glyptic and occasionally pottery. The monstrous Gorgon heads seen earlier on seals and pictorial pottery are most likely connected in their apotropaic role with the *fantastic combination masks* of the Zakro Master. Frontal animal heads were also popular in glyptic (for instance lion and cat heads – see section 1.6.1; also Weingarten 1983a: 91-92 on lion and boar “masks”). In addition to the examples cited in the previous chapters, a lentoid in the Ashmolean Museum (865) depicts a similar “fantasy mask”, consisting of a bucranium, each horn of which is the neck and head of a shaggy dog. A tree rises from the bucranium and surmounts it, while on each side of the bucranium two hairy “reptiles” are also illustrated. Another lentoid from the Psychro cave (866) is engraved with a ram’s head which is surmounted by two goat heads antithetically disposed forming as it were a larger pair of horns.

The glyptic products then particularly demonstrate the widespread Minoan fondness of frontal protective figures; the gorgon heads and the bird-ladies fulfilled these needs, principally in the Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods respectively.

#### 5.2.3.4 *Fantastic combinations*

This third category of Zakros monster types is fundamentally incomprehensible to the modern viewer as it includes inorganic hybrid types that appear to be made up by irrational, casual combinations of components. Gill (1963: 10, n. 5a) viewed them as “an artistic convention without any religious significance”.

These perplexing images include 773 (fig. 107) that shows two back-to-back dog-like protomes with a ram’s horn (or plume, as Weingarten 1983a: 75

read it) between their necks and a boar's tusk helmet below them. Weingarten (1983a: 75) included it in her "miscellaneous monsters & related themes series". **808** was engraved with a plant-like motif decorated with dots, covered by three "leafs" (plume-like trefoil) and flanked by two motifs resembling double axes.

Parallels outside of Zakros include the soft stone lentoid **863** that impressed the two sealings from Ayia Triadha. Its sealtype – showing a combination consisting of lines and dots between displayed wings and bird fantail – demonstrates close stylistic affinities with the Zakros workshop. Younger (1988: 219) read it as a displayed winged monster, while Weingarten (1983a: Appendix A/7) read it as an "opposed lion-sphinx"; Tzavella-Evjen 1970: 54, no. 294.

This notion of bodily dismemberment expressed in its most extreme aspect in the depiction of fantasy combinations is not new in Minoan iconography. In addition to the already mentioned gorgon heads, detached bodily parts are evidenced in the Hieroglyphic seal iconography dating back to the Protopalatial period. Profile heads, hands dissected from bodies, "mutilated" feet and disembodied eyes, all were incorporated in the iconography of the undeciphered Hieroglyphic script. Moreover, the *horror vacui* observed in a number of Hieroglyphic seals (see for instance *CS* 174 and *CMS VII* 40) is also evidenced in the depictions of the Kato Zakros workshop, the engravers of which seem to be eager to fill every possible space on the seal surface by adding indiscriminately floral, human and animal elements in combinations nonsensical to us today.

This iconographic connection is reinforced by geographical and chronological links. Specifically, the extant examples of clay administrative

documents in the Hieroglyphic script are dated to MM II-III and are concentrated in the north-central and eastern parts of Crete (in the palatial centres of Knossos, Mallia and Petras), corresponding thus closely with the findspots of Hieroglyphic seals (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 96; see also pp. 70-72 for possible but unidentifiable connection of the Prepalatial “Archanes Script” with the Hieroglyphic Script). Although this association of the Zakros depictions with the Hieroglyphic script and seals is established geographically, temporally and iconographically, it is not implied that the inexplicable Zakros fantasy combinations are meant to represent “written documents”. These depictions are indeed considered to constitute a script, but only in the sense of symbolic writing, of communicating messages with artistic but not linguistic images. In short, what is proposed here is that the Protopalatial Hieroglyphic script may have provided one source of inspiration for these images.

In support of this suggestion, it should be mentioned that the elites of the Neopalatial period have been considered as functionally literate (Weingarten 1997: 517-535). This translates into the officials having enough knowledge of writing to carry out their administrative duties without the danger of misconduct. “Storeroom officials were not themselves normally literate” (eadem 1997: 518) and the absence of inscribed seals after the MM IIB seems to confirm it.

The images on the Zakros sealings might be seen then as a kind of “shorthand writing”, with which the artists use the most telling features of other, “complete” to the eyes of the modern scholar images. As was noted in relation to a ring from Sellopoulo showing a cult scene, but still applicable in the case of the Kato Zakros sealings, their style is “summary, a kind of shorthand, rather impressionist treatment” (Popham et al 1974: 217). This practice has already



been observed in the abbreviated depictions of hunting scenes (see Krzyszkowska 2005a: 139 and section 4.1.3 in this thesis for similar iconographic abbreviations) and was certainly not unknown in Minoan glyptic, but constituted a necessity given the restricted space of the sealing surface. The elements used to create the, to us, inexplicable motifs would make perfect sense to the people of Zakros who would come across the objects sealed with them, since they will stand for something else, symbolise an idea or an object lost to us today.

### ***5.3 Discussions of context***

Contextual analysis however may provide solutions or at least provoke some differently orientated reflections on the problem. The Kato Zakros sealings came from seals contemporary with the CPG. The ones attributed to the Kato Zakros workshop were made of soft stone and were invariably lentoids. Gill (1981: 85, n. 19) discerned the similarities between some of the sealings from Zakros and Ayia Triadha, which would demonstrate an exchange of influences between the two workshops, i.e. between eastern and central Crete. The naturalistic trends of the Ayia Triadha Master and his followers seem to have influenced the Zakro Master with their portrayal of action and exploration of perspective, and at the same time, the Zakros sealings had a similar mild impact on the Ayia Triadha engravers.

The overview of Aegean glyptic by Krzyszkowska (2005a) demonstrated that the development of Minoan glyptic was not linear and that different styles were in vogue at the same time in the Protopalatial period, with the coexistence of traditional and progressive workshops (eadem 2005a: 79-118). There is no

reason to suppose that the situation in the Neopalatial period was any different and indeed the identification of numerous contemporary and later stylistic groups and techniques (such as the Talismanic and the Cut Style, the Cretan Popular Group and the Mainland Popular Group) proves it.

Younger (1996: 163) hypothesised that, just as the transition from the Almond-Eye to Spectacle-Eye should mark the transition from Minoan to Mycenaean control at Knossos, likewise the monsters of Zakros mark a distinctive iconographic boundary separating east Crete from the rest of the island.

### ***5.3.1 Socio-political context***

Of the Second Palaces, only Zakros produced such a great amount of seals by a local artist/workshop, whereas the rest seem to share the products of many artists/workshops. This was taken by Betts and Younger (1982: 116) to imply that before the LM IB destructions perhaps not every palace housed a workshop, but several palaces probably patronised workshops in common. Whether this was indeed the case or not, it is striking that it was the provincial, smaller in size Zakros palace standing out.

L. Platon (2002: 145-156) has proposed that Knossos exercised a strong cultural influence at Zakros in the LM IA. This influence was then transformed into a policy of intervention and the newly built palace at Zakros was under the direct control of Knossian rulers. Pittman (1994: 177-204) has noted that the introduction of figural motifs was contemporary with state formation in Mesopotamia and interpreted iconographic differences between sites in proto-literate Mesopotamia as reflecting their political relationship. Thus, the glyptic of

the “colony” at Susa focused on manufacturing of goods, the birthing of animals and threshing, whereas the dominant iconography of the “metropolis” Uruk featured mainly military and ritual scenes. She (1994: 177-204) considered both writing and visual narration (expressed in figural glyptic art) as forms of social control. This model can be also applied in the situation at Zakros. The recently founded palace and its officials adopted a new imagery inspired by local and foreign motifs as an attempt to legitimate their claim to power in the area. It is not yet proven whether these officials were Knossians or under the control of Knossos as proposed by L. Platon, but the formation of the palatial state at Zakros certainly prompted this newly emerged elite to implement a distinguishing artistic expression.

### ***5.3.2 Religious context***

In addition to the artistic peculiarities, the palace at Kato Zakros presents certain peculiarities in its cultic installations in comparison to the rest of the Cretan palaces. To start with, curiously enough, no pillar crypts have been excavated. The excavator (N. Platon 1974: 250) postulated a comparable use (i.e. the practice of chthonic cults associated with rituals of bloody and bloodless offerings) for the water-associated constructions (spring chambers?) within the palace, where in fact numerous remains of offerings were unearthed. These installations, including a large round pool (accessed through a polythyron from the central court) and a small rectangular fountain in the southeast court, are unique to the palace of Zakros (Hitchcock 2003: 7).

The importance of the west court is diminished as it was not the major public front of the palace and was in fact covered over with an annex of rooms

used for dying fabrics (Hitchcock 2003: 7; eadem 2000: 63-64, 66). This can be attributed to the geography of the area and need not signify peculiarities in cult practice. In contrast, the more prominent east courts and their particular architectural traits have been assumed to reveal the prominence of a local cult to a water deity (Hitchcock 2003: 8-9; eadem 2000: 94-97). This would fit well with the fact that eastern Crete has yielded the largest amount of Marine Style pottery and is thought to have been the place of origin of the style (N. Platon 1974: 29). The significance of water is apparent in architecture and the arts of the area.

### ***5.3.3 The problem of masks again and its implications on the Kato Zakros fantasy masks and demonic figures***

Examples indicating mask use have already been discussed (see section 3.3.5) and a few more should be mentioned here as the preference for frontal detached heads, the fantasy masks, is so prominent at Zakros. A LM II-III A1 seal (625, fig. 108) shows a “bull-man” with only the head being bovine, the torso, arms and legs belonging to a man. Its frontal pose, unlike the typical contorted or running pose of animal-headed men in Aegean glyptic, and the unique illustration of a human torso (as opposed to the usual animal torso and forelegs) could very well indicate the depiction of a masked person rather than a bull-man. A depiction of a similar creature comes from the Ayia Triadha villa and was engraved on a Neopalatial ring (670, fig. 91). There, an animal-headed (?) female figure clad in a long skirt stands with her hands raised in adoration in front of a shrine decorated with a garland.

Indications of masks may be detected in the iconography of seals and in particular those depicting animal protomes. The illustration of *CMS II.7* 217 has been interpreted by Younger (1988: 352) as “six lion heads with the faces omitted, as if cut out in order to function as masks”. A lentoid in Vienna (*CMS XI* 301) depicts a Potnios Theron flanked by two upside down lion protomes shown en face, which Younger (1988: 157) suggested that might be hanging from an undepicted yoke<sup>5</sup>. A parallel can be found on seal *CMS VIII* 110a depicting a bucranium hanging from a chain much like the one found on a larnax in Germany (*Pictorial*: V.103). The “Snake Frame” of the LM II Mistresses of Animals (Hägg & Lindau 1984: 67-77 argued that the Snake Frame had already developed as a symbol of the goddess by the LM IB) may be an elaborate headdress or a mask (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 204).

Possible mask use in association with (funerary) ritual is attested in the following Final Palatial period in the decoration of one of the larnakes from the Mochlos LM III cemetery (667). Specifically, the LM IIIA1 tub-shaped larnax from chamber tomb 10 was decorated just beneath the rim on either side of the interior with two unusual figures standing with hands on their waists, perhaps “performing a funerary dance” (*ArchDelt* 48 B2: 502). They both wear pointed shoes and possibly a dagger, “while one wears an animal mask that looks very like the head of a jackal” (Soles & Davaras 1996: 212-213, fig. 21 – compare with Mallia Protopalatial seal 651, fig. 34b). A similar interpretation was given to the horn-like projection on the head of a male robed figure on a LM IIIA2 larnax from Vathianos Kampos (Papaefthymiou-Papanthimou 1997: 97-98; Watrous 1991: 292; Kanta 1980: 44-45; N. Platon 1934: 247). The Calavardha

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<sup>5</sup> Perhaps though this sealtype demonstrates the power of the Potnios Theron over life and death in the nature world, especially in view of the association of frontal faces with death.

vase 513 with the dancing figures may similarly represent masked/disguised people rather than demonic creatures.

An actual example of a mask was recovered in the MM III-LM IA Building I near the Galatas “palatial complex” (Blackman 1999-2000: 130; Rethemiotakis 1994: 702). The building unearthed fresco fragments with floral and geometric motifs and an assemblage of ritual objects (i.e. “communion cups”, thymiateria and a lamp) that included a clay mask with plastic eyes and horns resembling the already mentioned MM IA bell-shaped “masks”.

Finally, it should be noted that the practice of ritual face or body decoration is well documented in the Aegean throughout the Neolithic and the Bronze Age (Papaefthymiou-Papantimou 1997). The extent and precise details of such practices are however unknown in relation to Minoan Crete (eadem 1997: 85-86). Nevertheless, the idea of ritual decoration is not dissimilar from the wearing of masks.

The idea of this (initiatory) identification with beasts may be connected with the Minoan architectural and iconographic evidence so as to help us comprehend the meaning of scenes with dancing ‘bird-people’, and the various ‘humanlike’ monsters of the Zakros and other deposits. A ritual scene with two fully vested figures is depicted on a LM lentoid from the Ashmolean Museum (CS: 129, no. 284). The garment of one figure appears to be derived from the skin of an animal. Although this scene does not include masked people as such, it nevertheless demonstrates that there was a relation between ritual and identification with animals or at least appropriation of their powers in the Aegean. Another example of figures wearing hide skirts in what appear as cult

scenes is seen on Zakros sealing *CMS II.7 7* showing a procession involving two male figures.

Beyond glyptic, the woman performing the libation at the head of the small procession on side A of the LM IIIA2 Ayia Triadha sarcophagus (300) appears to wear an animal hide skirt. The three men in the “presentation scene” of the same panel also wear hide animal skirts (fig. 109), as does the “priestess” of side B (see discussion of animal hides as garment with religious associations in the Aegean in Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1973: 299-301).

#### ***5.3.4 Masks and disguise in their international context***

Plentiful evidence for the custom of wearing bull-masks during ritual performances comes from LBA Cyprus, both from specimens of masks and from their depictions on seals (Karageorghis 1996: 15-16; idem 1971: 262). To begin with the iconographical evidence, a LC III cylinder seal from Nicosia (521) depicts an apparently religious scene, with a bull-masked figure offering an animal to a “god” and a “goddess”, while assisted by a Minoan genius holding the familiar jug. Another – unattributed – cylinder in the Colville Collection (520) shows, among other scenes, a bull-faced (masked?) Potnios in a long robe flanked by two leashed antithetic genii, perhaps with jugs. Nys (1995: 27-29, including a review of the relevant literature together with more examples for “masked” figures on Cypriot seals) however rejects the value of seals as evidence for use of masks on LBA Cyprus.

The actual examples of masks are 16 in total (13 anthropomorphic and three life-size demonic), are made of terracotta, are of various, even miniature, sizes and may have been votive offerings in sanctuaries (Karageorghis 1993: 33-

34). The ones from known find-contexts were discovered within or in the vicinity of sanctuaries (Nys 1995: 29), while masks actually used in ritual may have been made of light perishable materials such as cloth, wood, leather or a combination of the three (Karageorghis 1996: 15). Finally, skulls of bulls and other animals purposely shaped as masks were found in large numbers in two sanctuaries of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively at Enkomi. However, they date to LC III and are thus significantly later than the Neopalatial period (see Nys 1995: 19-20, 22-23, 25 & 27 for early Iron Age dating of the bucrania from Toumba tou Skourou and Enkomi, for a few more possible examples of clay “masks” and Syro-Palestinian and Babylonian evidence for mask use during the BA).

The practice of masking for ritual and ceremonial purposes was important also in Egypt from the earliest times (Wilson 2003: 1). Only a handful of actual objects have been recovered there and include a lioness or Bes-face mask from Kahun made of layers of linen coated with gesso and painted, with holes for the nostrils and eyes. Two painted clay Bes “masks” were found in a house at Deir el Medina while many thousands of extant masks have been recovered and are associated with funerary uses for “the ordinary individual” (eadem 2003: 2-3). However, on the evidence available it is difficult to say how common and widespread the practice of masking was in Egypt.



### ***5.3.5 Kato Zakros in its geographical context***

Kato Zakros is located on the easternmost part of Crete and constitutes a port, the major importance of which for the communication between the Aegean, Near East and Egypt has been noted by a number of scholars (Wiener 1987: 261-267; N. Platon 1974: 35). In fact Hitchcock (2000: 66, 87-88) has suggested that the economic focus of Kato Zakros centred on trade rather than agriculture. Whether this was true or not, the significance of trade for the site and its extensive contacts with the orient cannot be disputed. As Morgan (1988: 50) noted, the position of Zakros on the map of Crete “made it the natural repository for eastern ideas filtering through to the Aegean”.

Oriental influence was observed in iconographic elements like the “Knielauf” pose of the Zakros demonic figures and the Hathor locks of the gorgon heads (Weingarten 1983a: 85, 115). If anything, the transference of such elements to Crete demonstrates the ongoing interaction with the Orient, which remained a source of iconographic and ideological inspiration throughout the history of the Minoan civilisation.

### ***5.3.6 Fossils***

The recent discovery of the site of Aetokremnos on Cyprus confirmed the contemporary presence on the island of Pleistocene animals and the first settlers. “One suspects that similar events took place on Crete and it is only a matter of time before such a site is found” (Watrous 2001: 161). Lax and Strasser (1992: 203-204) suggested in fact that it was the first Neolithic inhabitants of Crete that caused the extinction of many Pleistocene animals through farming, pastoralism and the introduction of new species. Claiming that the memory of such

encounters between humans and Pleistocene animals, such as the pygmy hippopotamus and elephant, may have been preserved in tales and even iconography would be extremely hypothetical. Nevertheless, it may be not as tentative to suggest that actual remains of Pleistocene and older species could have inspired tales of monsters and, consequently, also Minoan iconography. As Mayor (2000: 3) remarked, “the Mediterranean world was once populated by giant creatures, and the ancients were continually confronted by their remarkable petrified remains”.

The fossil record of Crete itself is rather impressive (for details see Fassoulas 2001; van der Made 1996; Kuss 1980) and the northern and eastern parts are of particular interest. A series of caves where animal fossils have been discovered (Kuss 1980) is located around the Bay of Yerani on the north coast (to the west of Rethymnon). Numerous Pleistocene mammals and amphibians fossils including pygmy hippopotamus (*hippopotamus creutzburgi*) and *testudo* turtle remains (Fassoulas 2001: 81) were revealed in the plain of Katharo, already in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Recently locals discovered dwarf elephant (*elephas creutzburgi*) fossils, specifically parts of the tusks and a tooth (idem 2001: 36). Very well preserved leaf remains can also be seen in limestone not far from Katharo (Fassoulas 2001: 83) and plentiful plant remains at about 7 km to the east of the beach of Vai, where locals frequently report findings of kernels and pine parts (idem 2001: 88).

A recent significant discovery is reported at Petras Siteias, where a local found remains (upper jaw and tusks) of the elephant *deinotherium gigantum*, one of the largest members of the elephant family, as the name itself suggests. Pig fossils are also known from Siteia (Fassoulas, pers. comm.). Kato Zakros bay is

yet another region particularly rich in fossilised animal remains dated to the end of the Pleistocene. Pygmy hippopotamus (*hippopotamus creutzburgi*), elephant (*elephas creticus*), the rodent *kritimys carteus* and deer fossils are exposed in the south-west part of the area (Fassoulas 2001: 89; N. Platon 1974: 34). The same variety of fossils has been found in caves and other deposits on the Fangromouro Cape (Fassoulas 2001: 89).

Another common Eurasian fossil of unexpected size is the “progenitor ox” (*bos primigenius*), which disappeared in central Greece and Italy by about 1850 BC, although once widespread throughout Europe and the Levant. These giant wild cattle (or aurochs) stood 1.8 m at the shoulder and weighed about a ton, with horns 1m long and their fossils have been reported on Crete (Mayor 2000: 102, 256). She suggested in fact that it was this species depicted on the Knossos frescos “showing men and women performing acrobatic feats with king-size bulls” (eadem 2000: 102).

Although the Cretan fossil record is evidently particularly rich, it cannot be considered to have had somehow affected the imagery of the Bronze Age inhabitants of Crete unless it was accessible to them. That does seem to have been the case, since fossils on Crete can be found on the surface rather easily due to natural erosion or even on cave floors. Additionally, momentous events, such as earthquakes and floods, “continually expose layers of very old rocks containing fossils deposited in earlier geological eras” (Mayor 2000: 66). Like today, such discoveries must have happened frequently throughout antiquity on both Crete and the rest of the Aegean (Fassoulas, pers. comm.). The inhabitants of the island would surely be aware of such phenomena, since their familiarity with their natural environment greatly exceeded that of modern people. As J.

Ostrom (cited in Mayor 2000: 51) remarked, “ancient populations perceived much more about their local scenes than we modern, intelligent, educated descendants like to admit”. It is no coincidence that archaeologists depend on farmers/villagers for information on landscape features of possible interest. Moreover, most of the cited deposits are in the region of well known archaeological sites (e.g. Yerani, Petras, and Zakros) and chance would have led to discoveries, as it still does. Finally, not only chance, but also human activity (agricultural, quarrying and mining activities) would also have exposed such finds.

The sites of Fangromouro I and II located along the ancient route between Zakros and Xerokampos demonstrate that fossil remains were indeed known to the inhabitants of the region. The remains are found on the surface of the soil and there is plentiful evidence for human presence as large amounts of EM to LM pottery are strewn all over both sites (Schlager 1996: 37-38). These remains and others similar were assumed by Schlager (1996: 41) to have inspired the so-called Zakro Master who was certainly “a keen observer of the natural phenomena in his rural surroundings”.

The discovery of fossilised remains, either gigantic or out of context, such as seashells in mountainous areas, would not have gone unnoticed and must have been somehow justified. It could even be hypothesised that myths known from later sources (e.g. the flood myth) were related to similar finds, but such theories may represent fancy rather than facts. It is no use wondering whether fossils of large mammals were perceived as remains of long lost giant races, of humans bigger and better than the contemporary peoples (cf. the myth in Hesiod’s *Theogony*), of monsters, or something beyond our knowledge. Surely,

the Cretans and the mainlanders must have given some explanation of the fossils' presence and probably tried to visualise the original form of the creatures from which they originated. Still, it is the use to which fossils were put and their find contexts that will allow for more realistic conclusions to be reached.

However, fossils from archaeological sites were rarely reported and only recently, with the advent of zooarchaeology, have they attracted attention. In the past fossils were misidentified, discarded and certainly not published properly (Antonaccio 1995: 75-98, 128, 246-247). A triton shell fossil was recovered in a MM III-LM I house nearby the Mallia palace (Apostolakou 1995: 753). Given the religious connotations of triton shells (see section 4.2.2), it may be assumed that the same stands for the fossil too, although adequate information on the specifics of the find context is not available yet.

More information comes from the Orient. In Bronze Age Egypt fossils were used as pendants as early as the Neolithic, collected and dedicated to temples (Mayor 2000: 177), while a vertebra of an extinct Miocene cetacean had been carried to Troy and was deposited near an area of human burials in urns dated in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (eadem 2000: 178-180).

#### ***5.4 Placing the Zakros imaginary creations in their context***

Although a number of the Zakros sealtypes may at first glance appear out of context against the background of Aegean art, it is rather surprising that so many scholars were reluctant to identify the traits that place them within the Minoan iconographic imagery and demonic world. Indeed Evans (*PM I*: 699-708) and Hogarth (1902: 77-93) recognised the figure of the "Minotaur", but they refused to identify the close resemblance of other figures to the bird-ladies

or the link of the Zakros fantasy masks with the Minoan depictions of bucrania, cat and lion faces or the gorgoneia. This original disconnection of the Zakros figures from the Minoan “mainstream” monster iconography resulted in the commonly held belief that the Zakros images and especially the fantasy combinations were purely decorative and nonsensical, as much to the contemporary Minoans as to the modern viewer. After examining the Zakros motifs and their context in Neopalatial Crete, can we then agree with MacGillivray (2000: 209) in saying that the ones with the bovine heads are still the “most comprehensible”? Or, alternatively, have the more confusing for the modern scholar combinations, become any less perplexing?

Regarding the first category of Zakros monster illustrations, without a doubt the demons of Zakros are portrayed in a different manner from contemporary Minoan monsters, but the differences in reality end there, in the stylistic expression of the local workshop (the roots of these images in the Minoan repertoire were first noticed by Weingarten 1983a: 91-100; Schlager 1996: 39 rejected the association of the horned, winged and bull-like creatures with the LM II-III Minotaurs). These observations, namely that the Zakros seal use may indeed be odd and the style different, but the illustrations of demons are in fact deeply rooted in the Minoan repertory, are fundamental in taking us one step further. The realisation is inescapable that, if what we have here is in essence only a different way of depicting Minoan demons, then their functions cannot have been that different either.

#### 5.4.1 *The fantasy masks*

The Kato Zakros predilection for the depiction of frontal animal heads is striking and has been noted in the past (for instance by Krzyszkowska 2005a: 152). There is a reluctance however to identify these illustrations with masks – Krzyszkowska (2005a: 152) merely “cannot help wondering” whether these depictions allude to rites involving animal masks and capes. As seen in the relevant discussion in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.5), objections have been generally raised regarding the use of masks in Bronze Age Crete (Nys 1995: 21).

The fantasy masks of Zakros may appear as a discrepancy in the reconstruction of Neopalatial beliefs and preferences presented in the previous chapter (cf. sections 4.1.7-4.1.10, 4.2 and 4.3), but their prominence on the site need not contradict the rising popularity of bird-ladies as prophylactic creatures elsewhere on the island. Instead, it can be seen as one of the features distinguishing eastern Crete and in particular the port and palace of Zakros. The geographical position of the site places it in a crossroad between the Aegean and the East, the meeting point of influences and stimuli from all the neighbouring civilisations. As a counterweight to the foreign exotic images and beliefs, the Neopalatial popularity of fantasy masks at Zakros comes as a continuation of this eastern Cretan tradition.

The ‘fantasy masks’ of Zakros may in reality constitute parts of such garments worn in ritual action. Actually, the importance of ‘ritual’ and its prominence at Zakros is also evident in the production of the so-called “Holy Communion chalices”, of which Zakros may have been the exclusive source on Crete (Davaras 1997: 126). The distortion of the natural appearance of skulls through the addition of imaginary traits (whether animal, plant or other) would

stress the distinction between a mere prophylactic skull endowing animal characteristics and one used in ritual, also considered to possess the prowess, speed or other animal powers, but also bearing religious connotations.

#### **5.4.2 Conclusions**

Any attempt at comprehending the mysterious Zakros sealtypes would certainly benefit greatly by a reconstruction of the sealing practices in the area. Admittedly, the use of nodules not found in contemporary sealing deposits and of numerous similar types and look-alikes perplexes. Still, this issue is related more to the local use of seals *per se* and its administrative implications, which are beyond the scope of this study. It does not affect the nature of the motifs portrayed, over half of which, in the words of Krzyszkowska (2005a: 180), “would be at home at any Neopalatial context”. What it does affect is the intended use of these motifs and the problem of identifying the seal-owners, but, as was argued, that cannot be established unless the role of House A and the transactions taking place therein are convincingly reconstructed. Therefore, one has to turn to the evidence from the iconographic, socio-political, religious and even the environmental contexts in order to access the mentality behind the use of these “peculiar” motifs.

This phenomenon of regionalism identified in glyptic art (see above and Krzyszkowska 2005a: 80) is shown to extend beyond that, to more characteristics of the Zakros area and its palace. Although the Neopalatial period signifies the climax of the Minoan *koine*, a review of the socio-political, religious and even geographical context of the Zakros area underlines the features that distinguish it from the rest of the island and of the palaces in particular. Younger (discussion



session in Rehak and Younger 2000: 305) supported the idea of “iconographic territories” in Neopalatial Crete, at least in LM II, not necessarily in the sense of political rivalry between units such as Knossos and Zakros. A political function specifically for sealstones has also been suggested, depending on the popularity or appropriateness of different themes in different regions (Rehak & Younger 2001: 404, 406). In that way, the peculiar motifs of the Zakros sealings with their monsters would identify Zakros, while distinct types of bulls perhaps distinguished Chania from Knossos. Regional differences do not stop on sealing iconography and practices though. It was seen that architectural remains differentiate the palace of Zakros from the other Cretan palaces. Hitchcock (2000a: 91-98) defended the idea that each palace had a specific local cult, e.g. the bull cult at Knossos and the waterer Poseidon cult at Zakros, which would certainly be reflected in Younger’s ‘iconographic territories’ and may be used to interpret the unique character of the Zakros sealings. In fact, it is likely that this variation of style and expression can be interpreted as intentional.

Weingarten (2005: 10-11) argued that the Zakros iconography may represent the closest we shall ever be able to approach the belief system of the “non-elite Minoan social circles”. In her view the only appropriate place for these figures is the underworld. She used Oriental parallels according to which underworld demons are often depicted with bird-like characteristics to support this hypothesis (eadem 2005: 11, notes 31-34). However, these parallels cover a large chronological span, some going back to the third millennium, too far removed in time from the Neopalatial depictions. One of the traits of these Near Eastern demons is their disassociation with the sexual act and child bearing. This

though comes in direct conflict with the Zakros iconography, where sexual characteristics tend to be emphasised even if they are fluid.

Having said that, the decipherment of the “inorganic” fantasy combinations is undeniably challenging. It was proposed here that their placement within the physical context of the area and the consideration of Minoan glyptic conventions help towards this direction.

The reasoning behind this demarcation in types is far more intriguing, especially as it appears that it reflects a conscious choice by the local elites. It actually corresponds to similar strategies employed by the Protopalatial elites in their attempts at legitimatisation and consolidation of power, which included the manipulation of iconography and monstrous imagery. Specifically, it is very likely that the patrons (and therefore the seal engravers too) of the Zakros workshop turned for inspiration to older iconographic types of the area, namely the Hieroglyphic script, so as to establish lineage with the past elites. The intentional differentiation of the iconography from the “mainstream” Minoan glyptic can be placed within the same context. The local environmental peculiarities and the abundant Oriental iconographic stimuli from which the area benefited were also exploited in trade and communication in an attempt by the local administrators to distinguish themselves from the elites in the rest of the island. This re-invention of imagery is paralleled in the palatial architecture and religious orientation of Zakros and reflects the endeavours by the officials of the newly founded palace to establish the status of the local authority within the area of Zakros itself and the wider context of contemporary palatial Crete.

As evidenced by the few similar depictions found around Crete, these efforts may have met with at least partial success by the end of LM IB. More

importantly, their accomplishment is demonstrated in the eventual adaptation and popularity of the Minotaur and its related types in the Final palatial Period. Otherwise however, these attempts were cut short in the destructions at the end of the period, when the collapse of local authorities and the abandonment of the palace inevitably put an abrupt end to the Neopalatial “iconographic territory” of Zakros.

## *Chapter 6*

### *The Final Palatial period on Crete*

#### *(LM II-LM IIIB)*

### *6.1 The iconographic evidence*

#### *6.1.1 The griffin*

Griffins are still the most popular monsters in Minoan iconography. They are depicted standing, e.g. **143** (fig. 110a) and on two seals from Kamilari tholos tomb – **180** and **181**, sitting, for example on **148** (fig. 110b), or lying, e.g. on **139** (fig. 110c) and on a ring bezel of gold foil over a bronze core from chamber tomb 9 at Kalyvia (**137**). Another LM II-III ring bezel decorated with a griffin (**138**) was discovered in a much later context in the area of Knossos, in the LM IIIA1 warrior burial of Sellopoulo chamber tomb 4, apparently kept as a heirloom (Popham et al. 1974: 202, 217-219, 223, no. J7). The iconography of LM II-III rings is far less varied than in the Neopalatial era; there are no cult scenes and combats and, apart from bull leaping scenes, human figures are not depicted (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 201). However, griffins still decorate rings as evidenced from these two LM II-III bezels. The complex griffin attack on the LM IIIA1-2 **172** is seen as the exception to the otherwise unspectacular ring iconography (compare with **217** from Pylos) and is considered as the latest ring impression known from Crete (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 201, 209). It illustrates two griffins attacking a deer (or stag). Above them a sun/star motif is flanked by two water birds or baby griffins, as Younger (1988: 254) interpreted them. Griffins are also prominent in Cut Style seals, which are seen as the successors of the Neopalatial talismanic style (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 201).

Griffins participate in contest scenes attacking animals, as on **173** and **129** (fig. 111a), where a griffin and a lion attack a bull. A rather complicated contest scene is encountered on an amygdaloid (**175**, fig. 111b) from the plundered Phylaki Apokoronou tholos tomb, which also produced ivory plates decorated, among other motifs, with sphinxes. The LM IIIA seal is engraved with a deer attacked by a “dog-like” lion. Over the two animals, a flying griffin appears to be biting the lion on its back. Occasionally the outcome of the attack is shown, for instance on the bifacial **162** (fig. 111c) where the griffin bears an animal leg turned upside down and on **145** with the monster bearing a lion as quarry. Griffins in symmetrical compositions are also illustrated, for example on the LM IIIA1 **171** where a small bird or baby griffin (Younger 1988: 253) is shown between the two back-to-back larger monsters.

In a few examples the griffins interact with humans. An interesting scene is attested on the amygdaloid (**100**, fig. 112a) dated to LM I-II and has been cited as a parallel for the “Prince of Lilies” fresco (**410**). It illustrates a male figure walking or running accompanied by a tethered seated griffin. A frontal figure of unidentifiable gender with a griffin is also depicted on **211** (fig. 112b). The increasingly popular motif of the Potnia Theron replaces the complicated cult scenes of the Neopalatial period. She is often flanked by griffins as attested on three exceptionally large seals, **65** (fig. 45), **103** (fig. 113) and **72**. In this period, the Potnios is also introduced to the iconography of griffins and is encountered for instance on the LM IIIA1 **166** (fig. 114) where the Master of Animals is flanked by a lion and a griffin.

It is a popular theme on “Cypro-Aegean” cylinders, encountered for example on **307** (fig. 115), **310**, on **312** from Cyprus and on a cylinder reputed to

be from Kourion (311). The few Cypro-Aegean cylinders, whose place of origin has yet not been established, display “an eclectic mix of Eastern and Aegean imagery, style and syntax” (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 32).

### ***6.1.2 The griffin in LM III funerary contexts***

A new role is undertaken by the griffin, which appears in funerary iconography in the Final Palatial period. Specifically, the LM IIIA2 Ayia Triadha sarcophagus 300 (figs. 44b and 109) was decorated on one of its end sides with a griffin-drawn chariot ridden by two female figures, which are usually taken to be goddesses (Watrous 1991: 291; Long 1972: 214; Paribeni 1908: 5-86). The depiction of griffins-drawn chariots was also encountered in earlier Minoan glyptic (see section 4.1.3) and continues into this period, for instance on the LM IIIA1 cylinder 303 (fig. 116), possibly a Cypriot import. It is also encountered on Mycenaean pictorial vase painting, specifically on a LH IIIB krater from Enkomi tomb 48, where a griffin-drawn chariot is depicted on side A and antithetic sphinxes on side B (329, fig. 117).

The use of tomb 4 that housed the larnax appears to have been very short and was possibly followed by a removal of the offerings placed with the occupant of the larnax to the nearby tomb 5 (La Rosa 2000: 86-93). The iconography of the larnax has generally been connected with the Bronze Age cult of the dead and its associated religious ritual (Gallou 2005: 100; Immerwahr 1990: 100; Long 1974: 45-46; *MMR*<sup>2</sup>: 433-443) and is viewed as exceptional in the repertoire of Cretan larnakes. As a rule – and with the exception of larnakes from eastern Cretan cemeteries and Armenoi – the human figure rarely appears on Minoan sarcophagi, while the most usual designs are birds, plant forms, bulls

and other religious motifs, such as horns of consecration and the double axe (Watrous 1991: 285-307). Their themes have been taken to deal with the world of the living, especially hunting, or with ritual and to be connected with palatial art, thus they “lack the power of the mainland larnakes from Tanagra in conveying the meaning of death” (Immerwahr 1990: 158). Immerwahr (1990: 158) has pointed out that the iconography of the Ayia Triadha sarcophagus in particular has a palatial character, in contrast to many of the Tanagra larnakes “with their more contemporary iconography”. She (1990: 160) maintained that Cretans showed little preoccupation with the afterlife, unlike the inhabitants of the Mycenaean mainland. On the other hand, Watrous (1991: 285-307) saw in the iconography of the Minoan sarcophagi a glimpse into the Minoan vision of the afterlife that had adopted Egyptian and eventually Mycenaean elements too.

Apart from Ayia Triadha, griffins are attested in funerary iconography at Palaikastro and Mochlos. The Palaikastro larnax **301** (fig. 118) is decorated with a standing griffin on the right panel of one of its long sides. A papyrus plant is in front of the monster and the scene is set in a rocky landscape. A column surmounted by a pair of horns of consecration and a double axe is painted on the left panel. The upper zone features two pairs of horns of consecration and a sun/star motif (Bosanquet 1901/1902: 297-302, fig. 15, pls. XVIII, XIX). Watrous (1991: 293-294) has argued that the Palaikastro griffin constitutes a vase-painting-like imitation of the Knossos Throne Room griffins and performs the same apotropaic function. He further pointed out that the idea of regeneration is expressed through the double axe and the “spring” scenery that is reminiscent of the Thera Spring Fresco.

A LM IIIA2 pyxis from chamber tomb 7 of the Mycenaean cemetery at Mochlos (284) was decorated in five panels with flirting birds in a meadow, floral net pattern, a goat among flowers in a rocky landscape and an iris net pattern. The fifth panel shows a griffin with solar elements near a pair of horns of consecration. Thus, the decoration of the pyxis closely recalls the iconographic conventions of the Palaikastro larnax. Banou (2001: 13) suggested that the religious-funerary character of the scenes alludes to the afterlife. The pyxis motifs are not uncommon in the Minoan funerary repertoire as seen in contemporary larnakes and pictorial pottery recovered from tombs (for a review see Watrous 1991: 285-307; Kanta 1980). In fact, a pyxis from tomb 9 of the same cemetery (Papadakis 1990: 228-232) is decorated with a nilotic scene, horns of consecration, floral motifs and a figural scene, thus comprising together with the griffin pyxis “good examples of the Minoan funerary pictorial code as crystallised during the post palatial period” (Banou 2001: 13).

### ***6.1.3 The Knossos Throne Room***

In addition to the glyptic, larnakes and pottery examples, a significant Final Palatial depiction of griffins is encountered in large-scale figural painting. Specifically, the Knossos Throne Room (292, fig. 119) produced two pairs of life-size wingless griffins, one flanking the throne, the second the doorway to the “inner shrine”. Palm trees and papyri also flanked the throne and provided the setting. Parts of the griffins were still in place when Evans excavated the area constituting the best preserved painting still on the walls of the palace at the time of its final destruction (Hood 2000: 31; Evans 1899/1900: 35-42).



The Throne Room fresco constitutes the most controversial painting of the Final Palace period from Knossos and the debate surrounds its date and the function of the room it decorated. With reference to the function of the complex, construed at first as the newly built seat of the wanax at Knossos during the “Mycenaean occupation” of the area, it has subsequently become evident that the layout of the room dates to the Protopalatial period and that it was in continuous use since the MM II period (Immerwahr 1990: 97). In addition to the initial interpretation of the area as an actual throne room, other readings include its use as a sacred courtroom (N. Platon 1970: 65). The generally accepted reconstruction views this room with the lustral basin, the jars of anointing oil found therein, the throne and the two adjoining rooms as one of the most sacred areas of the palace (Goodison & Morris 1998b: 123-124; *PM I*: 463-523). The possible original unity of the Knossos Throne Room with the later disconnected pillar crypt points to a long history in the religious/ritual use of the room and supports the idea of sanctity of the area before the arrival of the Mycenaeans (Betancourt & Marinatos 1997: 95). Architectural evidence, such as parallels with the House of the Chancel Screen and the Royal Villa at Knossos, has also been invoked as incorporating the Throne Room into a group of ritually employed complexes of similar size. The emphasis is on an “enthroned personage” also officiating in the shrines, the pillar crypts and the adyta located in close proximity of these ‘throne’ rooms in the villas and the palace (Betancourt & Marinatos 1997: 95).

As regards the decoration and its date, Immerwahr (1990: 84, 96) has pointed out the difficulty of distinguishing between decoration that may have been put on the walls as early as LM I and that added later in LM II-III A. A date

in LM II is now accepted for the fresco (Hood 2005: 65).the position of the griffins on either side of the throne is without doubt a Minoan conception, since they occur in similar arrangements in earlier Minoan seals (Immerwahr 1990: 167). The earlier composition of Xeste 3 **287** (figs. 69a-b) with the seated “goddess” flanked by a griffin and a monkey (fig. 69a-b) also attests to that. Another close iconographic parallel, albeit later, is attested in the still unpublished sealings of a gold ring found in Thebes (**149**), which show an enthroned female figure – a Potnia Theron – on a two-tiered platform resting on three incurved bases. Two genii with pitchers and griffins flank her (Rehak 1995a: 103, 105; idem 1995b: 223, no. 74; Younger 1995a: 179, no. 162; Piteros, Olivier & Melena 1990: 102-184). The small height of the throne and glyptic parallels depicting the Snake Frame Potnia Theron flanked by griffins or lions (**52**, **65** – fig. 45, **72**, **103** – fig. 113, **498**) have been employed as evidence to defend its function as the seat of a woman and not a man (D. Cameron 1997: 517, n. 8; E. Davis 1986a: 216). Niemeier (1987a: 163-168) and Reusch (1958: 334-358) advocated a ritual use of the complex that involved the enactment of divine epiphany by a priestess. “Supported by her two sacred animals on each side of her... representing the Cretan Goddess, the chief priestess or priestess/queen no doubt conducted important ceremonies from this seat” (D. Cameron 1997: 513). Thus, the “priestess” seated in the throne would constitute the focus not only of the painted composition behind her, but also of the cult ritual performed in front of her.

However, differences with the glyptic illustrations, which depict standing instead of seated female figures, the absence of thrones and the winged upraised griffins of the seals, in contrast to the lying wingless monsters of the fresco, led

Hiller (2001: 43) to challenge the connection of the Throne Room exclusively with cult. He proposed instead that the glyptic scenes should be read as pictures of cult images rather than narrative depictions and that the East Hall in the Knossos palace is a more likely candidate for the placement of a cult installation. “Since griffins are no less acceptable as associates of masters than of mistresses a male owner of the seat of honour in the throne room cannot be excluded. And a ruler of theocratical nature still remains an adequate subject within the iconography of the throne room fresco” (idem 2001: 43). Nevertheless, the interpretation of the East Hall as a cultic centre does not necessarily preclude a similar function for the Throne Room. Whether the ritual of the enacted epiphany actually took place or not, it is beyond doubt that the Throne Room was a religious centre rather than an administrative one, at least before the arrival of the Mycenaeans.

Goodison (2001: 77-88) stressed the significance of light for the choice of location and architectural setting of the Throne Room and therefore for the rituals performed therein at specific dates throughout the year, for instance at the solstices and equinoxes. Her observation is supported by the fact that the east wings of the Second Palaces – Phaistos, Mallia and Knossos itself – were relatively unimpressive in height in comparison to other wings; at Galatas the east wing was even partly lower than the central court (Driessen 2005: 83-88). As Driessen (2005: 84) implied, they could have been kept deliberately low so as to allow free flow of light at the time of the equinoxes and solstices. Further evidence for the Minoan interest in the movement of the sun has come from the early tholos tombs (Branigan: 1998: 13-26) and from the peak sanctuaries of Traostalos and Petsophas, a major function of which was to keep track of the

motions of heavenly bodies (Henriksson & Blomberg 1996: 99-114). All these elements unite in supporting the idea that the Knossos Throne Room not only was primarily a locus of ritual activity but also that this activity probably revolved around the motion of the sun.

The inclusion of the griffins in its decoration was very likely a conscious choice and as such it implies a close association of the monster with the sun. Sun/star images are used as filling motifs. In fact, it has been suggested that the griffin symbolised the solstices in Leo and the Eagle (MacGillivray 2005: 14). Perhaps this belief somehow survived in the classical consecration of the griffins to the sun and in their status as animals sacred to Apollo, the sun-god. It seems probable that the religious associations of the Knossos Throne Room were incorporated in the wanax ideology of the Mycenaeans in an effort to accommodate and assimilate Minoan cult into their own system in order to give an impression of continuity and consolidate their power on the island (Whittaker 2001: 359; Niemeier 1987a: 163-168).

#### ***6.1.4 The griffin as a signifier of liminal zones***

The Xeste 3 frescoes (including 287) are commonly believed to depict performed rituals; initiation rites (Morgan 2000: 925-944; N. Marinatos 1985: 222-228; eadem 1984a: 61-84), rituals connected with the crocus gathering and offering, which in turn allude to rituals of female (and male) coming of age and marriage (Gesell 2000; E. Davis 1986b: 402-403). Koehl (2001: 240-242) even suggested that the ritual of *hieros gamos* was enacted in the building. The areas decorated with griffins in the Knossos Throne (292, fig. 119) room are where the re-enactment of the goddess epiphany is thought to have taken place (Niemeier

1987a: 165-166). The occupant of the Pylos throne that was also flanked by griffins (297, fig. 120) performed rituals to invoke the presence and perpetual favour of the gods and was probably ranking high in the religious hierarchy of that state.

The Ayia Triadha griffins (300, fig. 44b) are believed to draw the chariot of the goddesses that will lead (the soul of) the deceased to the afterlife. Griffins are also depicted on a number of LM larnakes and are often shown on seals and frescoes flanking columns, occasionally even tethered to them. Tombs are the liminal zones between this world and the hereafter (Gallou 2005: 63-74) and ‘sacred columns’ are commonly interpreted as symbolising shrines, e.g. the abodes of or places favoured by the gods.

In a few words, the iconography of the monster demonstrates that one of the most important functions of griffins is apparently to stand guard at ‘doorways’ where different aspects of the world of the Minoans and the Mycenaeans met, at passages from one state of being to another: from childhood to adulthood, from the absent “faraway” goddess to her presence among her adorants, or in the journey of the soul to the afterlife. They seem to reside in liminal zones protecting and serving the ones crossing them (whether human or divine) and in that fashion facilitating communication between the different spheres.

### 6.1.5 *The sphinx*

As noted by N. Marinatos (1997: 281-282), the sphinx is absent from the Minoan funerary decoration of the period. Furthermore, there are very few illustrations of the monster in the glyptic production of the period, although it is prominent in the decoration of ivory toiletry items such as combs and mirror handles especially on the mainland. LM II-III seals depicting sphinxes include **420** (fig. 121), a haematite cylinder from Poros Katsamba, which may be an import. A LM IIIA1 lentoid with a sphinx (**343**) was discovered in chamber tomb 3 at Mochlos, which constitutes the most carefully designed and richest tomb in the cemetery (Soles & Davaras 1993: 502). The seal belonged to the latest burial in the chamber dated to LM IIIA2-B. The LM IIIA1 **344** was also found in a later context at the Hellenistic settlement of Tripitos Siteias.

More illustrations of sphinxes come from a diverse group of media. A LM II-III ivory plaque (**350**) from the tholos tomb at Phylaki Apokoronou is also decorated with a sphinx (Rehak & Younger 1998: 246, with more references). The pyramidoid handle **351** of a LM IIIA ivory spatula from Milatos ends in the lower part in a pillar shape on which rest the forelegs of a sphinx (Davaras 1980b: 521-523).

The monster was depicted on a clay relief plaque (**399**) discovered in the “shrine complex” at Kannia fallen upside down on the south bench of Room V, which featured a hearth or altar and two benches. Snaketubes, a small goddess with upraised arms, parts of many more “goddesses” and other ritual equipment, some on the benches and some on the floor, were also found in the same room. The LM IIIA2-B plaque is decorated with antithetic relief sphinxes, the so-called dancing sphinxes, flanking a stylised palm tree (Foster 1982: no. 46; Levi 1959:

247, fig. 19). Gesell (2001: 256-257) proposed an Oriental origin for the theme and cited Near Eastern and Cypriot parallels. The settlement at Kephala Chondrou near Viannos produced two more possible depictions of sphinxes on two LM III clay plaques (397-398, fig. 122) discovered together with a ritual assemblage that included a figurine head, a triton shell and a conical rhyton (Foster 1982: 88, no. 47; N. Platon 1957b: 144-145, pl. 72β). However, both plaques – probably coming from a three-footed offering table – are fragmentary and preserve only the (rear) legs of the creature (fig. 122). Therefore, its identification as a sphinx is not certain.

Gesell (2001: 257) has identified plaques like the one with the “dancing sphinxes” from the LM IIIA2-B Kannia shrine complex as parts of ritual equipment in the shrines of the goddess with the upraised arms. They belonged to a set that included the figurine of the goddess and snake tube and may have served as sacred markers. “The suggested parallels for the dancing sphinxes are near eastern or Cypriote themes” (eadem 2001: 257).

A sphinx might have decorated the walls of Knossos as part of the famous Prince of Lilies fresco (410, fig. 123). The extremely fragmentary state of the wall painting has caused much speculation regarding its subject. A life-size relief figure was restored by Evans (*PM II*: 774-795; *PM I*: 1 ff) as the “Prince (Priest-King) of Lilies” leading a griffin and by Niemeier (1987b: 65-98) as a god with the preserved feather crown as coming from the head of a sphinx or a female figure. Hitchcock (2000b: 69-86) offered yet another reconstruction and proposed that it is not unreasonable to suggest that the “Priest King” was in fact a “Priestess-Queen” having herself depicted as a male, a bull leaper and a sphinx, thematically linked by the lily necklace and the lily crown. A male appropriating

the female symbols of fair skin and the lily-crown in order to legitimise patriarchal ascension was another possibility put forward by her (Hitchcock 2000b: 69-86). The above suggestions are theoretically valid but cannot be confirmed or indeed refuted in view of the fragmentary state of the material; we have no secure knowledge of the number, “sex” or even species of the depicted figure(s) and no definite conclusions can be reached as to the representation of gender in this fresco.

#### **6.1.6 *The genius***

Unlike the sphinx, the Minoan genius is still rather popular in the Final Palatial period. Depictions of antithetic genii include a lentoid from Psychro (**486**), **482** (fig. 124) from chamber tomb 9 at Kalyvia and an unpublished ivory plaque from the tholos tomb at Phylaki Apokoronou decorated with two genii with jugs flanking a throne (**502**, Younger 1995a: 192, no. 271). The themes of libation and of the carrying of animals are also continued and are attested on **462** (fig. 125), **474** (fig. 126), **476** and the Cypro-Aegean cylinder **518**. The unprovenanced **483** (fig. 127), **480** (fig. 128) and **461** (fig. 129) are decorated with Potnioi flanked by genii.

The popularity of the genius appears to have extended to Cyprus as evidenced by a LM IIIA-B (LC III) haematite cylinder (**521**) found in Enkomi engraved with a religious scene. On a frieze of Minoanising figures, a bull-masked votary offers an animal to a “god” and a “goddess” assisted by a genius holding libation jug. The “goddess” holds a bird as her emblem. The “god” also holds something, but his emblem is not preserved (Karageorghis 2002: 51, fig. 101). Another Cypro-Aegean cylinder (**519**, fig. 130) was discovered in



Palaikastro on the floor of a crushed and broken LM III clay larnax burial on the cliff SE of House A.

In terms of iconographic glyptic developments, chariot and combat scenes in essence disappear, while hunts and men carrying their quarry are very rare (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 204, 205). Nevertheless, allusions to hunting are seen on seals with genii carrying animals on poles (**462**, fig. 125); genii also replace men leading tethered (sacrificial?) bulls – see for instance **459** and **463**. On other occasions these demons stand in for women carrying animals (**467**, **474** – fig. 126). This transference of roles from both sexes underscores the already mentioned difficulty in assigning a gender to the genius (see section 4.1.5).

#### **6.1.7 Minoan Dragon**

The dragon is practically absent from the Cretan seal iconography of the LBA II-III and is only illustrated on a mainland lentoid (**536**, fig. 131) discovered near the Clytemnestra tholos tomb. It depicts the well known theme of a female figure riding a dragon and is dated to LBA II-IIIA1. However, the dragon frequently decorates LM II-III ivories, namely a comb from the Phourni Burial Enclosure (**543**, fig. 132), another from Maphese tomb (**547**) and a possibly imported pendant from Milatos (**542**).

Krzyszkowska (2005a: 208) suggested that, since the dragon is attested on ivories, its absence from the glyptic repertoire of the Final Palatial period may be coincidental, while Palaiologou (1995: 199) noted that the dragon was less popular than the griffin and the sphinx, as it is encountered only on seals and ivory artefacts, but not in wall paintings or pottery. She attributed this lack of variety in the media of its depiction to its restricted role in rites and religious

ideas. Still, the dragon during the Neopalatial period appeared in complicated religious scenes presumably in occasional connection with the afterlife. Indeed in this period it acquires more “earthly” traits resembling thus closely the crocodile and is used only emblematically. Having said that, the possession of ivory objects still attests to the wealth and high status of the owner and accordingly their iconography serves the same purpose.

#### **6.1.8 The Minotaur**

A new motif makes its appearance in the LM II period, the “typical” form of the Minotaur. *Contra* Krzyszkowska (2005a: 208) who dismisses this connection, Zakros may be the ultimate origin of these figures since it is there that male figures with bull heads appear for the first time. Admittedly the Zakros figures are unrelated stylistically with the Final Palatial Minotaurs, but they essentially constitute the same type of composite creatures and do share certain traits with the “typical” Minotaur, such as the prominent sense of movement in their depictions. This was expressed with the Knielauf in the Zakros deposit, while it is torsion that is preferred in LM II-III. It seems that the early conception of the type, which included even female figures, such as that of **748** (fig. 84), was transformed and standardised in the Final Palatial period resulting in the figure of Schlager’s (1989: 230-235) “tiermenschliche Akrobaten”. Many of the LM II-III Minotaur depictions originate in Knossos, which led Krzyszkowska (2005a: 208) to propose that this area was the home of the image.

The earliest depictions may be **652** (fig. 133), **620** (fig. 134) and **673** (fig. 103), probably manufactured after the LM IB destructions, even though they were included in the *CMS II.3* volume that published the Neopalatial seals of the

Herakleion Museum. The LM II-III examples of the demon illustrate the bull-man in a contorted pose and/or running. In several occasions the demon is depicted with filling motifs, such as impaled triangles (639, fig. 6) and figure-of-eight shields (642, fig. 135), in one case both (637). A shield together with an unidentifiable motif is illustrated on 630, while on 647 (fig. 136) the bull-man is encountered together with a figure-of-eight shield, a fish and a plant. Plant motifs are not uncommon in the iconography of the Minotaur (622, 648 – fig. 137) and are also combined with other motifs, for instance on 643 (fig. 138) where a bucranium and a plant, possibly a palm, are depicted. The Minotaur of 636 (fig. 139) is accompanied by a small “dolphin” and a motif resembling the “cardiac muscle”, while a gorgon head is engraved on 641 (fig. 66) and the sun/star motif on 631 and 632 (fig. 140).

The demon is occasionally conjoined with more animal foreparts to create figures falling on either side of the human legs (683) or conversely two pairs of legs are conjoined to one bull forepart (674, fig. 141). Krzyszkowska (2005a: 207) associated the theme of conjoined animals to one pair of human legs with the scenes showing genii carrying animals on poles or hung over their shoulders.

#### ***6.1.9 Animal-headed demons: goat-men, lion-men and stag-men***

Not only bulls, but also lions and goats are conjoined with human legs to create animal-headed men, although they are not as numerous as the Minotaurs. They too are attested for the first time in the Zakros deposit, where depictions of lion-headed creatures include 687, 692 (fig. 97) and 804. Goat-headed demons are illustrated on 741, 743 (fig. 16b), 744 (fig. 85), 745 (fig. 87), 746 and 747. Stag heads are depicted on 774 (fig. 18).

The LM II-III depictions of animal-headed demons cannot be considered separately from those of the Minotaurs as they appear contemporaneously on seals and they feature the same arrangement, garment and filling motifs. Thus, a goat-man in contorted position accompanied by a plant motif is depicted on the LM II 656. A LM I-II sealtype from Knossos (654) very likely illustrates a lion-man, while the identification of the precise type of animal head and foreparts is not possible on a contemporary depiction from the same site (655). Likewise, the two demons featured on the Neopalatial (?) 652 (fig. 133) have been classified as bull-men (*CMS II.3* 10) or a lion-man and a stag-man (Younger 1988: 215). As in the case of the Minotaur, other animal-headed types are occasionally conjoined to one pair of legs falling on either side of them, e.g. on 673 (fig. 103), where one of the animal foreparts may actually belong to a bull or a caprid, while the second is leonine.

The difficulty of distinguishing between different animals has already been stressed (see section 5.2.3.1). The different attributes of animal-headed figures overlap not only in the work of the “Zakro Master” and his workshop, where they merge with each other continuously, but also in the LM II-III depictions. Although it would be too hypothetical to suggest that such separations were not of significance and therefore little care was given to the rendering of animals, it may not be as tentative to accept that this notion is manifest in the depiction of animal-headed monsters that reach high numbers only when considered as a group. Their animal foreparts seem to be interchangeable, whether goat-, stag-, deer- or other and their identification as such seems to depend to a great degree on the personal views of the scholars interpreting them. Their poses, actions and media of depiction are likewise

shared, so that they seem to have performed the same type of function. The fantastic combinations of conjoined animal-headed figures also point to the same direction as they are always comprised of different animal foreparts, but without a pattern in preference of some over others. It should be noted though that it is not proposed here that in no case did Aegean artists show any interest in rendering specific animal heads and foreparts. The preference for the Minotaur type is too overwhelming to be attributed to mere chance. Still, this prominence of the bull in the formation of hybrids can be attributed to the significance of the animal in Minoan religion and symbolism. It is proposed though that the symbolism of the animal-headed demons lay in the juxtaposition of human and animal strength expressed with the use of bulls, lions and generally male animals, as well as with the speed and agility evident in their poses.

#### ***6.1.10 Interpretations of the animal-headed demons***

Krzyszkowska (2005a: 208) noted that uncertainty rather than confidence surrounds our grasp of the Minotaur. Various hypotheses have been put forward as to the meaning of the animal-headed figures. Associations with bull leaping sports, with hunt and sacrifice and disguise in animal hides and/or animal masks have been proposed (see differing views in discussion section, Schlager 1989: 237-239). Even the wall paintings of Avaris may be associated with the issue as they include a large scene of bull leaping with a maze in the background (Cline 1998: 205; Bietak 1996: 73; Morgan 1996: 17-32). It has led to the hypothesis that perhaps the scene “recalls/foreshadows the myth of ‘Theseus and the Minotaur’ and may indicate that the story could be nearly 1000 years older than previously thought” (Cline 1998: 205).

#### **6.1.10.1 Minoan animal sacrifice and bull-men**

Rehak and Younger (2001: 437) have noted that it may be of significance that the first evidence for bull sacrifice comes at the same time as the appearance of the bull-man motif (cf. Sakellarakis 1970 for a LM III instance of bull sacrifice at Archanes; also the iconography of the Ayia Triadha larnax). The actual exercise of animal sacrifice prior to the Final Palace Period has been disputed. For instance, Rehak and Younger (2001: 437) have rejected the notion of the practice of the ritual before the LM IB destructions, whereas N. Marinatos (1988b: 9-20; eadem 1986) is in favour of an earlier date. Evans (*PM II*: 302) hypothesised that one or more oxen were sacrificed in one of the houses south of the Knossos palace after an earthquake in MM IIIB. A possible indication of the practice of bull sacrifice comes from the LM I “Gournia” palace, a slab in the North Portico of which was proposed to have been used for sacrifices following bull sports in the court (Soles 1991: 46-47, 71-72, n. 48). According to Ward (1968: 121-122) the final stage of bull games, this “intense physical activity of youths and adolescents”, was the sacrifice of the bull (rejected by German 2005: 48).

Clearly the evidence from the archaeological record is for the time inconclusive, but the iconography does imply an early introduction, not least in association with another demonic creature, the genius. Bucrania were often associated iconographically with double axes and this depiction of animals accompanied by symbols like the impaled triangle and the figure-of-eight shield has been claimed to denote an association with sacrifice, the animals in question being the victims (N. Marinatos 1986: 51-72). Admittedly, the exact connotations of the figure-of-eight shields are not established and they are

generally interpreted as religious symbols (Rehak & Younger 2001: 437-438 with more references). Still it was observed that these symbolic determinatives also appear frequently in the illustrations of animal-human hybrids. Thus, a scheme of symbolic depiction of ritual action involving animal sacrifice can be plausibly recognised in the motifs of animal hybrids.

#### ***6.1.10.2 Masking and animal-headed demons***

“If the minotaurs represent men in masks, they may be appropriating some of the powers associated with the bull for symbolic, even shamanistic, purposes” (Rehak & Younger 2001: 437). Karageorghis (1971: 261) also associated the Aegean Minotaur and the Oriental bull-man with the use of masks in ritual. “The idea of entering into a direct association with the god by putting on the divine image led to the invention of masks which were worn during religious rituals” (idem 1971: 261).

Minoan religious architecture has been interpreted as guided by the notion of going through ‘stages’ in order to approach indirectly the central point of the cult. This “bent-axis approach” has been discussed, for instance, in connection to the Minoan polythyron, as demonstrated both in the palaces (Hägg & Marinatos 1986: 73), and the villas (Davaras 1997: 123). The long narrow meandering corridors and the generally maze-like plan of the palaces should be added. Apparently, Minoan ritual required the devout not to reach directly the cultic centre. Such a notion is pervasive in later Greek rituals of initiation and could be applied correspondingly to similar ceremonies in Minoan Crete, as indicated by the architectural data. The combination of the architectural evidence with the iconographic indications of ritual disguise in animal hides and masks, as

well as the iconographically well-documented bull games, may provide the inspiration for the Minotaur. This association with ritual masking has already been mentioned in relation with the bird-ladies and the Zakros monsters. However, none of the Minoan demons should be considered to merely represent disguised humans. The appropriation of animal strength and qualities through masking should be viewed as the starting point of these pictorial expressions. In time such figures acquired specific forms and further complex associations and eventually came to constitute entities that mediated between the worlds of the humans and the gods.

#### ***6.1.10.3 Social gender, age and bull-leaping: the associations of animal-headed demons***

The representations of bull-men seem to highlight gender distinctions. The broadened chest cavities of the animal-headed men as contrasted to their small waists and their well-defined musculature stress the idea of masculinity in their form. This accentuation of male characteristics is attested also in LM depictions of human male figures. For instance, it is emphasised in the combat scene of *CMS II.6 17* from Ayia Triadha and in the form of the man standing before a lion in the “command stance” and holding a long staff, thus underlining the aspect of dominance over the animal world, on a sealing from Knossos (*CMS II.8 237*).

Generally men and women do not trade roles in performed acts represented on glyptic, excepting bull leaping (see Younger 1995c: 507-545; idem 1976: 125-137 for a reappraisal of the relevant depictions) and the theme of the Potnia/Potnios Theron (German 2005: 26). The poses of the animal-headed



men are certainly reminiscent of bull leaping scenes. However, the gender of the bull leapers in figural wall painting is not as straightforward as to be classified merely by the colour of their skin. For instance, N. Marinatos (1993: 219-220, 260, n.162) has objected to the identification of male leapers based on the white colour of their skin on wall paintings, their articulated musculature and the absence of breasts. In addition to these traits, they also feature male costumes, broad chests and narrow waists (German 2005: 44; *PM II*: 22). Still, bull sports can be associated with the LBA male identity, as promoted by German (2005: 33-49), who has argued that the sexual nature of bull leaping scenes is implicit. Knossos is the only Minoan palace that was decorated with such scenes and it has been observed that the LBA Knossian artistic conventions as regards the reconstruction of gender “are not marked in a clearly binary fashion” (Alberti 2001: 189). In agreement with German’s (2005: 21-23) conclusions regarding the gender identity of bull leapers, Alberti (2001: 200) maintained that sexed differences do not seem to have pre-existed in Knossian imagery. Instead, they were expressed performatively with the combination of garment, adornments, pose, acts and media of representation of the bodies. In that fashion, bull sports and their related animal-headed figures are associated with the performance of male gender (see also section 4.1.8 for the comparable female gender performance by the bird-lady figures and contrast with the fluid gender of the Zakros demons – section 5.2.3.1).

The articulation of social age may also be implied in the depiction of animal-headed figures, particularly in the various types of the Minotaurs. As in the case of lion- and ass-headed genii, Schlager’s (1989: 225-240) distinction between calf- and bull-men certainly appears useful in terms of stylistic analysis

and perhaps dating, but should not be viewed as identifying different types of demons. The invariable preference for the contorted pose and the common “filling” motifs indicate a shared meaning and function for all these creatures rather than a meaningful distinction between them. Instead, such differentiations may be associated with the expression of male social age. Olsen (1998: 383) has noted the distinction between “older” and “younger” children in the Knossos Linear B tablets. They are further distinguished by sex, with the “older” boys being the only social group of children – although their exact age is unclear – associated with men, usually “for the purpose of instruction in their trade” (eadem 1998: 383). It is such different social stages of age that may be reflected in the various “ages” of the bull-men.

Age distinctions and their entailed functions can also be approached through an examination of the garment of these figures who are often depicted in belts or shorts. Belts were also worn by the Akrotiri Boxers who have been considered to perform a ceremonial sport paralleled in the nearby fresco of the Antelopes, thus juxtaposing scenes of ritual combat between young human and animal males (Morgan 205a: 37; eadem 1995a: 171-184). Rehak (1996: 41-50) pointed out that both Minoan and Mycenaean representations depict men wearing shorts often in hunting and contest scenes (e.g. the LM IA *CMS V Suppl. 1A* 135 and the Danicourt ring, *CMS XI* 272). In fact shorts appear to have been the standard garment for male figures in the Shaft Grave era, followed by long and short tunics in later frescoes and pictorial pottery (Rehak 1996: 48-50). This type of garment he suggested represents a heavy form of kilt appropriate for intense activities. Whether this is correct or they are in fact short trousers encasing each leg, their suitability for rigorous action is not affected. Rehak (1996: 50) has

argued convincingly that clothing may denote differences in age and roles in Aegean art with the “breechcloth with codpiece/backflap” signifying intense physical activity of youths and adolescents (e.g. in harvesting, bull-leaping and combat), while the simple breechcloth is used in religious contexts as it is worn by rather poised figures of “votaries” in bronze and in glyptic examples. In short, in addition to the pose and the accentuation of strong musculature, the garment of the animal-headed demons also points to the symbolism of male youth or early adulthood and is associated with rigorous activities.

All the above indicate connotations of male social and physical power and even of fertility in the form of the animal-headed demons. Loughlin (2004: 1-8, cited in German 2005: 46) maintained that bull sports should be placed within a social context of control of cattle in agricultural, rural and sporting contexts. It would be tempting to suggest that the standardisation of their iconography also served to offset the figure of the bird-lady with her female connotations.

#### ***6.1.10.4 Animal-headed figures and their media of depiction***

The numbers of soft stone seals were dramatically reduced after the LM IB destructions and their repertoire also contracted sharply in LM II-III (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 212). Hybrid creatures are very rare in these late soft stone seals and “their characteristics seem at best half-remembered” (eadem 2005a: 213). Perhaps this rarity of soft stone seals lies behind the eventual abandonment of the bird-lady motif. Like the bird-ladies, bull-men are also

depicted exclusively in glyptic art<sup>1</sup>. However, unlike the bird-lady, the minotaur is depicted on hard stone seals. A few sealstones depicting Minotaurs are of haematite (628, 631, 632, 682) and lapis lacedaemonius (630, 637, 642, 643) and many of agate (622, 624, 639, 640, 644, 645, 647, 683). Numerous seals of carnelian are also attested (626, 627, 629, 635, 636, 641, 652), while 648 may be of chalcedony. The authenticity of the three known glass seals (633, 634, 649) has been questioned (Pini 1981: 135-158, especially 150).

As for other types of animal-headed demons, Pylos nodules 677 and 678 with conjoined goat-men were probably impressed by hard stone seals. Knossos nodules were also impressed by the hard stone lentoids, namely 655, 664 and 675. Sealtype 662 was perhaps engraved on a metal device. 658 (fig. 142) and 659 that depict lion-men and 657 engraved with a goat-man are of agate, while 673 (fig. 103 – lion-man conjoined with caprid-man or bull-man) is of haematite. Porphyry was used for 660 (fig. 7) illustrating a goat-man and lapis lacedaimonius for 680 (conjoined animal-headed figures) and 661 (stag-man – fig. 143). 679 (fig. 8) that depicts conjoined animal-headed figures is possibly of hard stone. Sealings 453 and 663 and seal 656 form exceptions as they represent soft stone seals.

The overwhelming majority of seals illustrating animal-headed figures are made of hard stones most of which were imported, although their exact sources are not safely identified (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 122-123). It has been suggested that the hard stone seals may have been commissioned by the

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<sup>1</sup> Tzavella's (1960: 136-138) pictorial Minotaur is probably only a "bastard" and represents a goat. Likewise, the LM IB-II Agora ring (621) may represent a mythic event, but the male figure is merely engraved with an aniconic head and is by no means a bull-man (for discussions of the ring see Schlager 1989: 235-236; Younger 1985: 63; Tamvaki 1976: 377, no. 19; Immerwahr 1971: 107, 156, 190-192, 3: T. 8, no. 6, pl. 41.6; Nilsson 1955: 356, pl. 26.4; Banti 1954: 309-310; *MMR*<sup>2</sup>: 40, fig. 8; Persson 1942: 101; Shear 1940: 261-309; eadem 1933: 540, fig. 1).

administrative centres and distributed at formal occasions (Rehak & Younger 2001: 404). Moreover, the iconography of the animal-headed figures alludes to elite interests and practices, i.e. bull leaping (see German 2005 for association of bull sports with LBA elite action) and (bull) sacrifice – attested for instance in wealthy funerary contexts. All the above associations, in combination with the connection of the “canonical” type of the demon with Knossos, the only palace still functioning after the LM IB destructions in central and eastern Crete, may reveal the emblematic character of the demonic figure linked with elite ideology.

#### ***6.1.11 Winged goats and lions***

Goats appear early in Minoan art, but their illustrations increase in numbers and thematic contexts in the Neopalatial period. During that period they are depicted in hunting and sacrifice scenes, in scenes of “peaceful animal life” and as attendants of divine figures or their “symbolic substitutes” (Hiller 2001: 293). Winged goats are an even later phenomenon in Aegean iconography as they appear only in LH IIIA1. They comprise a short list of five depictions, all on seals (159, which very likely represents a griffin, 483– fig. 127, 869 and one seal from Zygouries, 871). Seal 870 (fig. 12) is still unattributed (only loosely dated in the LBA) and the creature of 868 (fig. 144), which may be of earlier date, is perhaps a griffin rather than a winged goat in view of its elongated beak.

Despite the early prominence of the goat in the Minoan repertoire, the winged version may originate in the Orient. Rehak (1995b: 227) noted that the rampant goat and the vegetation on the Dendra pyxis fragment suggest Near Eastern connections, while Hiller (2001: 297) emphasised the popularity of the winged goat motif in Oriental art. A Kassite cylinder seal (Hiller 2001: pl.

XCV28.c) shows a rampant winged goat. It is likely that the motif was adopted from the East sometime in the LBA III period in the spirit of the “international style” of the era.

The limited number of Aegean examples and the lack of any narrative elements in them may be taken to indicate that the motif of the winged goat had a rather decorative character without any symbolic or religious connotations. However, it is noteworthy that only aegrimia and lions are given wings in the Aegean iconography. Only three depictions of winged lions have been published, namely **867** (fig. 68), **862** – an illustration in the style of the Zakros workshop, perhaps indicating an Oriental origin of inspiration for the winged lion also and possibly **693**. Both aegrimia and lions are popular attendants of the Potnia and Potnios Theron (for the Master/Mistress of goats see Hiller 2001: 293-304; for the Master of Lions see Müller 2000: 181-194, especially 181, notes 4-6 where he lists all the attributes of the Potnios). Actually, on one occasion a winged goat is indeed attested as the attendant of a Potnios, together with a genius, on the LM IIIA1 **483** (fig. 127). In contrast, animals that do not perform this function of attending central deities, e.g. bulls or dogs, are never winged, even though the former plays a prominent role in Minoan religion and the latter is popular in the Minoan artistic repertoire.

It is also probably of significance that aegrimia are inhabitants of the Cretan mountains and are often depicted in association with peak sanctuaries, for instance on the Neopalatial rhyton from Zakros. Therefore, the addition of the wings could be interpreted as a means of symbolising association with the deities worshipped at peak sanctuaries. It can be hypothesised, albeit only tentatively, that the Potnioi and Potnies Theron were among them, although we do not know

which god(s) or goddess(es) were worshipped in peak sanctuaries and which in sacred caves, palaces or other urban sites and it is even uncertain whether the various loci of Minoan religious action represented the worship of different gods.

#### **6.1.12 Marine monster**

The marine monster most likely appeared in the Minoan repertoire in LM II when it is encountered on **874** (fig. 145). The identifications of a marine monster on the MM III-LM I **872** and the LM II **873** (fig. 146) are at best debatable in view of the definition of the type (see section 1.6.3)<sup>2</sup>. The “Skylla” of some Temple Repositories flat-based nodules (**872**) is not safely identified as a monster due the fragmentary state of the illustration, while **873** may illustrate a fish as a mere filling motif. The LM IIIA1 **875** from Gournes in central Crete illustrating the creature as attacking a bull constitutes the only depiction of the marine monster discovered on Crete.

Mainland examples include **880** (fig. 147) from Mikro Kastelli at Thebes. Marine monsters are engraved on the unprovenanced **876** (fig. 149), **877**, **878** (fig. 150) and **879** (fig. 11), all decorated with scenes of marine monsters, occasionally with bird attributes, attacking land animals. Cypro-Aegean cylinders also incorporated the creature into their iconography as evidenced by a LBA IIIA1 seal from Mycenae chamber tomb 47 (**900**, fig. 148), possibly of Cypriot origin (Pini 1980: 81, 101-102, no. C6) and **925**.

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<sup>2</sup> There is no reason to presume that *CMS VII* 184 and *CMS VII* 188 (Appendix A) are marine monsters despite Kenna's identification as such.

In addition to the glyptic repertoire, the marine monster is encountered on pictorial vase painting. A LBA IIIB/C krater from Ugarit (920, fig. 151) is painted on both sides with a male figure leading two horses, while large fish dive upon them. The iconography of this krater is very close to that of the glyptic depictions, whereas a LBA IIIB1 pictorial krater from Enkomi (921) presents an unprecedented scene, again painted on both sides almost identically. Specifically, it involves a chariot with two bent human figures pursued by a giant fish with bird attributes.

Prior to the introduction of the monster, only one example of a marine attack has been attested in Aegean art, that of a fish devouring a squid on an early Neopalatial sealing from the Knossos “Hieroglyphic Deposit” (*CMS II.8* 157). Therefore, this preoccupation with “contest scenes” involving creatures of the sea is a new phenomenon in the arts of Crete and the mainland. None of the above scenes are set in a marine setting and illustrate the interaction of animals from different environments, i.e. marine and mainland. Similarly unrelated motifs are combined on the LM larnakes painted with all kinds of land and sea creatures. However, the find context and the intended use of the two categories of items are different and consequently their interpretation should differ accordingly. The “aggressiveness” of the marine creatures is not attested on the larnakes iconography either. Thus, although the decoration of the sarcophagi has been generally taken to illustrate scenes from the afterworld, the same cannot be said of the seals or the kraters.

An Eastern origin of the type or at least Eastern influences may be assumed. That would be supported by the occurrence of the monster on Cyprian-Aegean seals and the find contexts of the two kraters. The type may have been



inspired by dangerous sea creatures like the shark, but is used at the end of the LBA to convey other messages – perhaps danger on land coming from the sea – and as such the marine monsters should not be viewed as merely sharks or fish, but as having a “monstrous”, “otherworldly” quality.

## 6.2 Context

### 6.2.1 Discussion of media

The provenance and attribution of seals and ivories is especially problematic in this period. Whereas for earlier periods one could identify with reasonable certainty the origin of such items, in LM II-III it is markedly difficult to determine whether they were manufactured on the mainland and travelled to Crete or *vice versa*, as production centres were active in both areas and there are close affinities in style, technique and iconographic repertoire<sup>3</sup>. Still, soft stone seals can usually be identified as Cretan or mainland products with relative certainty and particular conventions on hard stone seals may have been developed on Crete (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 196).

The quantity of LM II-III seals has been greatly reduced and the seals that can be associated with lower social strata (i.e. the soft stone seals) also represent a significantly smaller percentage in the archaeological record. Additionally, the sealing types from the final palace at Knossos differ greatly from the Neopalatial varieties (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 217). No sealings in the Knossos palace were impressed by seals dated later than LM IIIA (Pini 2002: 10), nor have any been found at Chania and Mallia (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 193).

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<sup>3</sup> Younger's articles in *Kadmos* attempted to address attribution issues for glyptic products, often with success. However, see criticism in Krzyszkowska 2005a: 326-328; Müller 2000: 186-190.

As regards ivory, figurines and inlay pieces represented LM IB ivories and the Knossian Royal Road workshop provides the best context for their study, whereas in LM II-III it is funerary contexts that provide the evidence for ivory working on the island (Tournavitou 1997: 446). The decline in production implied by the absence of workshops has been considered as indicative of changes in the political-economical administration (eadem 1997: 453). Poursat (1977b: 166, 169) attributed the introduction of new forms and the transformation of the repertoire on LM II-IIIA1 ivories to the Mycenaean presence, while Tournavitou (1997: 454) saw at least influence. LM IIIB ivories are very few and quite scattered, the art having been abandoned apparently after the collapse of the palaces and the lack of raw material (Tournavitou 1997: 445).

### ***6.2.2 Pictorial painting: the case of genii and dragons***

The discussion of media in this period concludes with a look at the problem of the genius and the dragon, namely an attempt to determine the reasons for their exclusion from Minoan large-scale figural art. Whereas the griffin and the sphinx were included in the thematic circle of the Minoan, Cycladic and Mycenaean frescoes, the genius appeared in only two mainland palaces, Mycenae and Pylos, while there is no evidence for the dragon.

Specifically, wall paintings with genii have been unearthed at Pylos (514) and Mycenae (515-516) and not surprisingly, since they are considered to be the leading mainland centres for the development of Mycenaean wall painting (eadem 1990: 113). The small Pylos (514) fragment was discovered in a dump to the northeast of the palace, apparently having been stripped off its walls and thrown away before the final destruction. Thus, there is no indication of its

original place in the palatial complex (Immerwahr 1990: 111-2; Gill 1970: 404-6; *Pylos II*: 40, pls. 26, C). This early material was ascribed a date in LH IIIA-B antedating the construction of the last palace.

Fortunately, more is known on the context of the Mycenae fragments, which came from the Cult Centre and are dated to LH IIIB, i.e. probably slightly later than the Pylos painting. Tsountas (1887: 160-162, pl. 10, I) originally discovered a fragment showing three genii (**515**, fig. 152) and later Mylonas (1966: 167, fig. 124) found new pieces (**516**) joining iconographically with the former piece during the new (1970-72) excavations of the Cult Centre area.

The paintings with genii “stand out by their unusual iconography which sets them apart from the regular palace themes” (Immerwahr 1990: 111). Both mainland frescoes show the genii on blue background, the Pylos monster with its paw raised to a “sacral knot” or flounced skirt, while the Mycenae genii are depicted with palm trees and carry a pole. Together with the (female) figure carrying a griffin from the same area (**296**, fig. 153), they are reconstructed as having decorated the upper level of the Tsountas Shrine with a scene showing genii approaching a shrine next to which there is a palm. All this takes place in the presence of the “female warrior deity holding her emblem, the griffin” (Morgan 2005b: 170).

The scene of the Mycenae piece will be discussed first as it is a well established theme in Minoan and Mycenaean iconographies. Specifically, genii carrying poles are known from glyptic encountered in identical scenes and variations in a number of seals (e.g. **462**, **474**, **476**, **484**). On **476**, a plant motif is in front of the demon, on either side of whom a star is engraved. Their grouping in a procession is also attested on the gold ring **478** from the Tiryns Treasure (fig.

154). All these give us an idea of what the subject of the fresco might have been; one can imagine that the genii of the Mycenae fresco were part of a procession and were meant to be involved in a sacrifice, the victims of which they must have been carrying on the pole.

The combination of the genius with a “sacral knot” on the Pylos fragment is unique, although this intriguing motif is one of the most prominent religious symbols of Minoan iconography. The observation by Krzyszkowska (2005a: 201, n. 31) that sacral knots might actually represent an item of clothing serves to highlight the role of the genius in ritual. The relation of textiles with the performance of ritual was demonstrated by Hiller (1984: 139, 144, 149), who associated the offering of textiles and wool with the ritual of *te-o-po-ri-ja*, i.e. the carrying of a god image as a part of religious ceremonies. The term appears in the Knossos Linear B tablets together with wool (*Documents*: 315, 585). Gallou (2005: 57-58 with further examples of Mycenaean depictions of this ceremony) has developed a reconstruction of the *theophoria* ritual in association with funerary rites in Mycenaean Greece. Minoan iconographic parallels would include a sealtype from Zakros depicting a procession of two figures, one of which holds a double axe and the other a “sacral knot” (*CMS II.7* 6). The MM IIIB/LM IA Jewel Relief Fresco (fig.155) from Knossos most likely illustrates a robing ceremony for a “priestess” (Morgan 2005a: 28; N. Marinatos 1993: 141-145), while the Xeste 3 frescoes include a female figure carrying an item of clothing, presumably an offering to the “goddess” guarded by the griffin (287, fig. 69a-b).

The glyptic evidence combined with the fresco depictions reveal the connection of the genius with not one but two types of ritual expression. In

addition to sacrifice and clothing ceremonies, the association of the genius with the rituals of libation and purification has been contended ever since its first appearance in Protopalatial Crete. The find place of the Mycenae fresco in the region of the Cult Centre, namely the area that – together with the Grave Circle A – was reserved for public ritual in the LH IIIB acropolis, further supports the association of the demon with ritual performance.

All the above imply that these demons constitute “ritual monsters” – to borrow the term referring to specific monsters connected with initiation rites and attested in various cultures. This type of demonic creature combining human and animal parts or merely featuring exaggerated or diminutive physical characteristics served to “startle neophytes into thinking about objects, persons, relationships, and features of their environment they have hitherto taken for granted” (Turner 1967: 105). Although we can only speculate on the precise nature of the rituals depicted and associated with genii as it is uncertain whether these were rites of passage rituals, funerary or fertility and fecundity ceremonies, or even annual festivals and perhaps formal procedures of renewal of kingship, there is no denying that the demon played an integral part in them.

Furthermore, it is very likely that certain rituals involved ceremonial disguise as the demon by the participants or, more likely, the officiants of the ceremonies, the priesthood. The Minoan depictions of ritual masking and disguise have been discussed in previous chapters (cf. sections 3.3.5 and 5.3.3-5.3.4). In addition to these earlier depictions, more corroborating evidence surfaces in the LBA with a number of scenes on pictorial vases. A LBA IIIA1 rhyton from Kalavarda (513) is decorated with what appears to be a scene of figures dancing as they hold rattles (?) and a high-handled kylix. The identity of

these figures is not agreed upon. Kritseli-Providi (1982: 23) classified them as genii, while Vermeule and Karageorghis (*Pictorial*: 227) described them as either boars or men in boar costumes. Mee (1975: 163) was hesitant and saw them as “animals of bizarre appearance and uncertain species”, possibly lions. A similar depiction is seen on the LH IIC pictorial strainer jug from Naxos (*Pictorial* XI.67) with the illustration of a dance performed by six schematic human figures, four of which appear to be animal-headed.

Both scenes can be incorporated into the group of Aegean depictions unveiling the practice of ritual masking and animal disguise. Its association with the genius is not only inferred by the actions the demon performed but is further established through specific features of the iconographic development of the Minoan genii. Specifically, although the ability of the Bronze Age Cretans to adapt the images of imported monsters according to their own tastes and fashions has been frequently appreciated, no attempts have been made to unravel this process and decipher the motives behind it. Rather, the adaptation of foreign images is usually viewed in terms of the Minoan innovative spirit. However, the portrayal of the genius as a ritual demon can elucidate the process of humanisation it underwent in the Neopalatial period. Its transformation from the clearly Egyptianising demon with the swollen belly and pendulous breasts of the Protopalatial era into a humanised wasp-waisted, broad shouldered creature reflecting the contemporary Minoan depictions of the human body is best rationalised on the basis of the increasing involvement of the genius in ritual practice and performance.

The above discussion was stimulated by the appearance of the genius on Mycenaean wall painting and served to highlight the role of the demon in

Minoan and Mycenaean religion and ritual performance. However, it has not revealed the reasons for the lack of interest in depicting the genius and the dragon in Minoan paintings. An explanation could be sought in the find context of the Mycenae fragments that are clearly associated with an area reserved for religious practice. The depiction of a ritual demon is an appropriate theme for the Cult Centre at Mycenae and possibly functioned as a constant re-enactment of the ceremonies performed therein. Such distinct differentiations between “religious” and “secular” areas are not easily made in Minoan palaces as evidenced, for instance, in the ongoing discussion regarding the function of the “lustral basins” and the Knossos Throne Room. Alternatively, their absence from large-scale painting can be attributed to chance of excavation and the fragmentary nature of the evidence itself. One has only to consider the amount of information provided by the Akrotiri frescoes to realise what a sorry state the study of Aegean wall painting would be in without their discovery. Still, this observation is certainly not a sufficient answer in itself. For the moment, the question unfortunately has to remain open.

### **6.2.3 Find context**

Beyond Knossos, only sporadic LM II-III sealings have been discovered (see Krzyszkowska 2005a: 230-231 for a review of these). Consequently, any reconstruction of seal use in official administration and transactions has to rely heavily on the finds from Knossos. However, the scattered pattern reflected in the findspots of the Knossos nodules hampers any attempt to interpret the sealings themselves and their association with the Linear B tablet administration

(see accounts in Krzyszkowska 2005a: 223-230; Gill 2002: 101-128; Pini 2002: 1-23).

Nevertheless, a few observations can be made in reference to the identity of the officials that impressed these sealings. The sealtypes of the Knossos LM II-III sealings often occur only once. Indeed, of all the imaginary beings motifs, only **453** occurs on 20 sealings (a procession scene that includes a genius and a lion-man) and **872** is encountered on six nodules (the so-called Skylla, which however most likely does not represent a monstrous type). These sealtypes may represent resident officials, while the rest of the monstrous types in the palace occur only once, at most three times in fewer occasions. Additionally, 94% of the two-hole hanging nodules were found broken, which suggests that they accompanied shipments incoming to the palace and had been discarded afterwards (Müller in *Pepragmena of Cretological Congress 9*, forthcoming, cited in Krzyszkowska 2005a: 226, n. 116). Thus the non-intensive pattern represented by the small frequency of the various sealtypes combined with the treatment of the sealings hint at non-resident seal owners.

Ca. 9% of the legible sealtypes illustrates demonic figures<sup>4</sup>, mostly griffins. This is indeed a large percentage, but in view of the above observations it seems impossible to connect them with their seal owners as we have no clues as regards their place of origin. Do they represent Mycenaean seal owners on Crete or the mainland, who adopted Minoan motifs or “Minoans” that held on to

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<sup>4</sup> I.e. ca 55 out of 610; the total sum of sealtypes is bigger, but it includes many illegible motifs (CMS II.8 611-718) and two imported seals (CMS II.8 719-720).



their iconographic tradition? It appears more appropriate to make social associations based on the iconographic evidence rather than attempt to solve issues of ethnicity. Nevertheless, one point of interest is that the late sealing types of Knossos are virtually indistinguishable from those of the mainland palaces (Müller et al. 1997: 68-69), a similarity that extends to tablet administration.

#### ***6.2.4 The evidence from tombs***

In contrast to LM IB, when elites manifested themselves through architecture throughout the island, during LM II “they are hardly discernible at more than a handful of sites with a massive concentration of evidence, however, at Knossos” (Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 71). Even at Knossos and its major satellites palatial style architecture disappears at the end of LM IIIA1. This development highlights the significance of burial evidence for the period.

Burial customs underwent changes in LM II Crete onwards with the appearance of chamber tombs at the Knossos area in new cemeteries and at Kalyvia near Phaistos, of built tholos tombs, shaft-graves and pit-caves (Kallitsaki 1997: 213). These were equipped with plentiful bronze offerings, a custom not generally practised earlier in Crete (Haskell 1997: 189). LM II also introduced the shift from communal to individual burials (Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 71). This suggests “not only a reduction in the importance of group membership, but perhaps also an increase of social stratification with greater emphasis on personal achievements in particular domains” (Watson 1994: 3, cited in Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 71). Additionally, in contrast to LM I, from LM II onwards the small number of sites that were still occupied or were rapidly

reoccupied exhibits a conspicuous display of funeral offerings in newly established cemeteries, consisting mainly of single graves (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1985: 196-214).

Soon after followed the appearance of the decorated larnakes whose newly introduced iconography has been associated with Egyptian funerary beliefs (Watrous 1991; *PM III*: 145-157). N. Marinatos (1997: 281-282) focused on common iconographic and stylistic elements of both areas (e.g. hunting scenes), also shared in the pictorial pottery iconography, and attributed them to the Aegean *koine* of the LBA. Rethemiotakis (1997: 421) has commented that a cluster of pictorial motifs (including birds, fish, argonauts, octopuses, various animals and vegetation) “may acquire a certain religious significance, thus forming a standard iconographic code”. The conditions under which such significance can be given to the discussed motifs are provided by their context. Thus, it is perfectly acceptable to see these at first glance unconnected and random groups of images as symbols “of the dominion” of the god(s) or as symbols “of the underworld, perhaps of a Minoan Elysion” (idem 1997: 421).

In reference to Knossos burials, the LM II-III tombs exhibit a distinct social hierarchy with the owners of the Isopata and Kephala tombs at the top (none of which produced seals or other artefacts decorated with monsters), those of the Warrior Graves being second and those buried in the poorer graves with only a few toilet articles and pottery third (Watrous & Blitzer 1997: 512). The richest tombs in new Knossos cemeteries (Isopata, Ayios Ioannis and Kephala) have been seen as intrusive elements in local society (Watrous & Blitzer 1997: 513). The fourteen new LM IIIA tombs at Kalyvia, the “Tombe dei Nobili”,

contained very rich offerings, in contrast to the more common finds from the contemporary Ayia Triadha tombs (including tomb 4), and – like the earlier Knossos tombs – have been seen as evidence of the presence of a new militarised group at Phaistos (Watrous & Blitzer 1997: 513).

Only rich graves in LM II-III A1 Knossos produced seals and signet rings, the former usually contemporary creations, while the latter were occasionally LM I heirlooms (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 215). The same situation is encountered in other LM III A1-2 cemeteries of central Crete, such as Archanes and Kalyvia at Phaistos, and the numbers of seals from burials of central Crete seem to decrease even further in LM III A2-B. Specifically, the 100 tombs of the Zapher Papoura cemetery produced only 11 (two are engraved with monsters), while exclusively LM I heirlooms were discovered in only two of the 18 tombs of the Gypsades cemetery (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 194). By contrast, chamber tomb III of the Ayios Ioannis Sanatorium tombs unearthed four seals (Hood & de Jong 1952: 243-277) and the LM III A1 Sellopoulo tomb 4 three more, as well as two rings (Popham et al. 1974: 195-257). This phenomenon led Krzyszkowska (2005a: 215) to suggest that seal ownership in LM II-III Crete may have been limited to “the great and the few”. Although funerary evidence alone may be misleading, the dramatic reduction in the numbers of soft stone seals (see above section 6.2.1) seems to confirm this conclusion. Therefore, seal ownership appears to have undergone changes as evidenced in the LM II-III tombs of central Crete.

Few LM III A2-B intact burials contained seals in central Crete and these are earlier than their context (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 195). This is verified in the case of fantastic creatures, evidence for which comes only from the LM III A2-B1 Sellopoulo tomb 1. It had been plundered prior to excavation and unearthed the

LM IIIA1 lentoid 639 (fig. 6). More evidence for LM IIIA2-B1 seal ownership comes from western Crete and reinforces the pattern that emerged in central Crete, i.e. the mixture of LM I heirlooms with LM IIIA seals (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 195). For instance, the LM IIIA2-B tholos tomb at Phylaki Apokoronou produced the LM I-II 71 and the LM IIIA 175. We also have the LM I-II 583 from the LM IIIA2-B1 Armenoi chamber tomb 55, while the LM IIIB male burial in chamber tomb 4 at Chania was furnished with a LM II-III seal (657). As for eastern Crete, the latest burial of the LM IIIA2-B Mochlos chamber tomb 13 was accompanied by the LM IIIA1 lentoid 343.

To turn to burial offerings besides sealstones, the ivory (or bone) spatula with a sphinx (351) and the ivory pendant in the form of a dragon (542) that were discovered in one of the Milatos chamber tombs (*Anatolike Mesogeios*: 88-89; Davaras 1980: 521-523), which belong to the same cemetery as the “Prehistoric Tombs” of Knossos, accompanied a particularly rich female burial<sup>5</sup>. The funerary offerings that included nine Baltic amber beads, the greatest concentration of this material on Crete at present, distinguish the burial from the known assemblages from the Milatos tombs (Davaras 1980: 521-523). The larnax itself was unusual in that it was decorated with two relief bucrania on one of its short sides (not on the lid as usual) on either side of the handle.

The two examples from Archanes (the ivory comb 543, fig. 132, with dragons and the gold ring 43, fig. 43e) come from the newly built shaft graves and the largest building in the cemetery, Building B, respectively. The Archanes

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that, in contrast to Poursat’s view on the previous ivory objects, the authors in *Anatolike Mesogeios* (88-89) stress the Mycenaean character of the finds from larnax B.

cemetery is of special interest since most of its buildings appear to have had a religious function in addition to their use for burials and this “dual nature of the site as necropolis and religious center may account for its uninterrupted use through nearly the whole duration of Minoan-Mycenaean civilization” (Soles 1992: 131).

The early LM IIIA2 Burial Enclosure at Phourni, Archanes constitutes a case of burial architecture unique in Crete (see however Burke 2005), but the burials exhibit traits in common with the Knossos tombs (Watrous & Blitzer 1997: 513). Moreover, the emptied larnakes, the stelae and the bothros – associated with the cult of the dead – are all unparalleled in the island (Kallitsaki 1997: 220). Building B on the other hand, reused in LM IIIA, had an upper room most likely decorated with colourful frescoes, fragments of which were found fallen in the pillar crypt below together with the gold ring (Soles 1992: 134-135; Sakellarakis 1967b: 151-161).

The growing body of evidence that LM IA was a great period of stability at Knossos, whereas LM IB may have been a difficult period, led Macdonald (1997: 268) to suggest that Knossos was not functioning properly as an administrative or religious centre at the time of the LM IB destructions. He further proposed that Archanes could have taken over some of the palatial activities, an early indication of the importance this site acquired in the Mycenaean period, while the Knossos palace was undergoing major repair (idem 1997: 273).

As for Ayia Triadha, the tomb of the painted sarcophagus, also built in LM IIIA (Paribeni 1908: 5-86; idem 1904: 713-719), represents an ‘anomaly’ according to Soles (1992: 115) since it is a house tomb, a type long gone out of

use. Still, it too housed the dead of “very special individuals” following the general use pattern of the type (idem 1992: 115). LM IIIA1 saw a re-occupation of Ayia Triadha and its rise in importance accompanied by the construction of public works (i.e. a road) and buildings/areas of public use (La Rosa 1997a: 255). By LM IIIA2 it was among the most significant Cretan centres, “une capitale” in an advanced stage of urbanisation with two distinct poles, the political-religious and the administrative-commercial and an intense building programme associated with the final – according to the author of the article – Knossos destruction (idem 1997a: 255, 263-264). A public character is indicated in the structures of the period by their size and the use of features including frescoes and ashlar masonry (Cucuzza 1997: 83), while the Mycenaean influence is also emphasised (La Rosa 1997a: 263). “In the context of different architectural traditions present ... particularly at Haghia Triada, a current of Mycenaean influence of major importance for any historical evaluation is certainly present on this site” (Cucuzza 1997: 83).

The LM IIIA2 burial enclosure at Archanes and the contemporary, albeit smaller, tomb 4 at Ayia Triadha show similarities in their location near older Minoan cemeteries, the rectangular plan, the placement of the entrance to the east and the interment of the deceased in larnakes. The builders of both burial places appear to have wished to distinguish the group buried within the enclosures from the general population (Burke 2005: 411). The architecture of the tombs and the offerings to the dead demonstrate earlier Minoan elements – seen for instance in the long history of house tombs (Soles 1992), the use of larnakes on Crete (Preston 2004; Watrous 1991), elements of the Ayia Triadha sarcophagus decoration such as the depiction of “anachronistic” types of vases (Burke 2005;

Long 1974). At the same time, the Mycenaean traits they also share (i.e. the chariots of the Ayia Triadha sarcophagus) indicate that both structures are parts of the emergent Mycenaean ideology in central Crete (noted by Burke 2005: 411).

#### ***6.2.5 Socio-political context: Mycenaean Crete***

The LM IB destructions do not appear to have occurred at the same time in eastern and central Crete and it is rather likely that sites of central Crete were destroyed earlier than those in the east (MacGillivray 1997a: 276).

The date of the arrival of the Mycenaeans in Crete is a heavily contested issue (discussion of Mycenaean Crete in Rehak & Younger 2001: 446-461; also cf. *Crète Mycénienne*) and the event itself or at least its variables have recently been challenged (Preston 2004: 321-348; 1999: 131-143). Although a LM IIIA-B presence of Mycenaeans on the island is generally accepted, for instance at Chania (Hallager 1997: 175-185; cf. however Hägg 1997: 167 for a slightly differing view), the LM II state of affairs is still disputed (review of problem in Haskell 1997: 187-193; Driessen 1990: 124-125).

The prevailing view is that Knossos passed under Mycenaean control after the LM IB destructions, at the beginning of LM II (Burke 2005: 403, Hood 2000: 28 & Niemeier 1997a: 297, n. 1 cite numerous studies in favour of this theory), and is based on the introduction of various new features at the time. These include the Knossos area 'Warrior Graves' (references in Demakopoulou 1997: 101-102); alterations to the Throne Room and other parts of the Knossos palace; the introduction of new pottery shapes and decoration, among which the Ephyraean goblet (French 1997: 149-152) and the Palace Style jars; the Knossos

Linear B tablets (bibliography in Demakopoulou 1997: 101-102; Driessen cited in Gulizio, Pluta & Palaima 2001: 453, n. 2, for LM II date of the Chariot Tablets; idem 1997: 113-134); changes in administration with the adoption of simpler sealing practices than those of the Neopalatial period (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 193). In relation to the evidence from the written record, Gulizio, Pluta and Palaima (2001) stressed the warlike attributes of the deities mentioned in the Knossos Chariot Tablets and the distinctively Greek character of this archive with the reference to deities also known from the later Greek pantheon. All the above features and their parallels on the mainland have been taken to suggest “that Mycenaeans were now in control of Knossos and were perhaps the agents of destruction at other Cretan sites” (Immerwahr 1990: 78).

There are of course those opposing the above theory. The Herakleion-Poros ‘warrior burial’ for example gave the opportunity for a reconsideration of the evidence concerning the Warrior Graves as it demonstrated that the burial offerings pattern ascribed the LM II-III A Warrior Graves existed already by MM III-LM IA at least in this case (Kilian-Dirlmeier 1985: 208-209; at least two more are reported in Demopoulou 1994: 708; for further bibliography on ‘non-traditional’ interpretations of Knossos Warrior Graves see Niemeier 1997a: 297, n. 1).

Preston (2004: 322-343; 1999: 131-143) has questioned the validity of the generalised equation of the new burial assemblages with ethnic groups (i.e. the Mycenaean vs. the Minoan element) and supported the view that individuals rather than ethnic groups manipulated burial symbolism in order to assert their status. Furthermore, she (2004: 321) emphasised the connection of Final Palatial and Postpalatial rich burials with individuals and groups that either aspired to or



had achieved an elite status within the local hierarchy. These assemblages, correlated with the evidence from their associated settlement contexts, highlight the importance of these sites and can be used to document the activities of the elites within them.

Another objection has been raised in reference to the scheme of the Potnia flanked by animals, mostly griffins. Although, it had been listed among the signs of Mycenaean influence (Boardman 1970: 52; Hood 1978: 228), heraldic compositions can be found already in the LM IB Zakros and Ayia Triadha sealings. The scheme may have been adopted in Crete from earlier depictions such as the snake frame probably flanked by griffins in the Knossos East Hall (285) and from there transferred to the mainland (Niemeier 1997a: 302; Hägg & Lindau 1984: 77). Another example of this standard iconography associated with the epiphany of the goddess can be seen in the Knossos Throne Room (292, Niemeier 1986: 76, 83-86). Thus, Niemeier (1997a: 297-306) who examined the LM II-III A mainland influences in Minoan glyptic art, particularly on the seals discovered in the Warrior Graves, concluded that the first certain evidence for foreign influence in Crete comes with the Island Sanctuaries Group seals in LM IIIA2-B Knossos. That is then the date he supports for the Mycenaean conquest of Crete occurred, in agreement with the conclusions of Hallager's independent studies (Niemeier 1997a: 306; Hallager 1978 & 1977 cited therein).

The widespread destruction at Knossos at the beginning of LM IIIA2, also evidenced at Phaistos, Ayia Triadha and Kommos, can be used as a marker to divide the period to LM II-III A1 and LM IIIA2-B2 (Haskell 1997: 187-188; Watrous & Blitzer 1997: 511, 516). The date of the Knossos palace final

destruction is another issue dividing archaeologists. Two main opposing views date the catastrophe in late LM IIIA1-early IIIA2 (proposed originally by Evans; modified by Popham 1997: 375-385) or around IIIB2 (proposed by Palmer 1984: 26-115; followed by Watrous & Blitzer 1997: 511-516; see Pini 2002: 9-10; Niemeier 1983: 217-236 for more references and summaries).

“There can be no real doubt that Knossos was a major power in the Aegean at the time of its destruction, and the crushing of that power must have had considerable repercussions” (Popham 1997: 375). In fact, Krzyszkowska (2005a: 230) who favoured a date in LM IIIA2 or transition to LM IIIB1, associated the final destruction of the palace with the demise of Minoan glyptic art.

#### ***6.2.6 Religious Context***

It is generally accepted that “the expression of Minoan cult” changed in the Final Palace period, especially during LM IIIA (Hägg 1997: 166; Gesell 1985: 41-56, 61-67). After the LM IB destructions, much of the Neopalatial cult equipment disappeared and tombs re-emerged as focal points for funerary cult, “indicating that in some way the destructions mark a rejection of the Neopalatial religious system and a re-emergence of long-held beliefs and customs” (Rehak & Younger 2001).

The Linear B tablets from Knossos indicate in Hiller’s opinion (1997: 205-210) that a considerable part of the pantheon mentioned therein was of Mycenaean origin, whereas the female deities were mostly Minoan. He observed that the palace seems to have served as the main cult place, particularly for the

worship of the mainland deities, while it also sent offerings to at least 20 more cult places, not too distant, all the while monitoring them and their functionaries.

It is probable that in the period following its destruction, the north walls of the Mallia palace acted as a marker for the establishment of a cult in the area, in the “*bâtiment oblique*” with its surprising orientation, while residential re-occupation can be detected only in Quartier E, neighbouring the palace, in LM IIIB (Pelon 1997: 341-355). It is very suggestive that the palace itself was viewed with reverence not only in the years following the fall of the Minoan civilisation, but well established already as early as LM III.

Some of the most important sacred caves and sanctuaries in Crete, i.e. the Idaean Cave and the sanctuary at Amnissos, seem to have been formally visited again from LM IIIA1 onwards and often continuously into the Roman period, after abandonment in LM IB (Driessen & Macdonald 1997: 39; Rutkowski 1986).

In LM IIIA cult rooms were reduced in their simplest form, that of the bench sanctuary (Gesell 1985: 147) with the bench used for the display of cult objects and the goddess with upraised arms constituting the best known of these (Alexiou 1958: 179-299), often accompanied by snake tubes, head vases, plaques and hut-urns (Gesell 1985: 61-67). These objects, but not the bench shrine, are all considered as non-Mycenaean and most of them cannot be found in the mainland (Hägg 1997: 167). Rhyta on the other hand are prominent in missing from this catalogue of popular at the time Minoan cult objects (Gesell 1985: 61-67).

## ***6.3 Placing the LM II-III monsters in context: concluding remarks***

### ***6.3.1 Monsters and the realm of death***

Weingarten (2005: 12, n. 36) has remarked that “it hardly needs stressing that we know next to nothing of the Minoan underworld or its inhabitants”. Although our understanding of Minoan burial practices and the beliefs surrounding death has been augmented in the last years, her observation still stands largely true on the subject of the Minoan underworld scenery. The relation of griffins with death has been mentioned by Frankfort (1936/1937: 106-122) who viewed them as “angels of death” and Flagge (1975) who interpreted them as guides of the dead to the afterlife.

Specifically in regards to the Ayia Triadha larnax (300, figs. 44b, 109), Burke (2005: 403-422) has reviewed the architectural and cultural evidence from the site and the iconography of the sarcophagus and argued that it is connected with an emergent Mycenaean ideology and constitutes an expression of power by sophisticated Mycenaean elites asserting their dominance by “cultural hybridity”. Through deliberate use of both Minoan and Mycenaean iconographic elements, the sarcophagus links the LBA state of affairs with “a well-crafted view of the Middle Bronze Age past” (idem 2005: 403).

A similar approach was employed by Militello (1999: 345-350), who has proposed that the LM IIIA1-2 decoration of the adjacent villa may not have been simply the result of the local ruler’s wish to imitate Knossian prototypes. He linked the sarcophagus decoration with the general iconographic context of the site at the period and concluded that the frescoes of the Mycenaean era should be better attributed to a plan for the control of the area by the conquerors. This plan included the “deification” of the dead official in the famous sarcophagus

(Militello 1999: 350). The depiction of the griffin-drawn chariot fits in well into these reconstructions and it most likely reflects a conscious choice of the local rulers as it stresses the contrast with the mainland where the sphinx was the primary monster inhabiting the afterworld and creates bonds with the Minoan tradition.

It can be shown that this association of the griffins with the afterlife originated in elite beliefs and their desire to preserve the *status quo* and social stability. As noted by MacGillivray (2005) religious scenes should be viewed as not only depicting scenes from the “Mythic Action” but also as indicating the correct way of behaviour, illustrating an ethical code with symbolic images of retribution (griffin contest scenes), of safe passage to the afterworld (“griffin” or “dragon” headed boats, griffin-drawn chariots), of the exotic scenery in that realm and the presence of the gods and their servants. These images were certainly used as political propaganda by the elites. Thus, the study of the fantastic animals of the Aegean Bronze Age and their incorporation into religious scenes and funerary iconography stresses the significance of symbol as “formative constituent of human behaviour” (Morgan 1985: 5-19).

### 6.3.2 *Griffins vs. sphinxes: evidence of a monster hierarchy?*

According to Dessenne (1957b: 212-213) there is a hierarchy between the griffin and the sphinx, with the latter heralding over the griffin due to its human head. However, both Neopalatial and Final Palatial evidence reveals a pattern of use that does not support that. The attitude of the Minoans towards griffins, as expressed in iconography, demonstrates the variety of roles allocated to them, as opposed to the apparent restriction in the functions of the sphinxes. Griffins enter the realm of the dead, but the evidence supporting a similar function for the Cretan sphinx is limited and indirect. Moreover, griffins adorn the Minoan (and Mycenaean) cultic installations and/or stately rooms in the palaces. They are included in Aegean non-palatial wall paintings, often associated iconographically with religion and ritual, decorating elite houses on the mainland and the islands. In terms of the permanent representations then, they appear to be a motif “for the few”. In glyptic, they were also initially found in palatial administrative contexts and were eventually adopted in the iconography of seals associated with the non-elite elements of the island.

Sphinxes are also encountered on CPG seals, but their iconography on Crete never expanded beyond the role of the guardian. On the contrary, its popularity on prestige items of personal adornment and display (ivory combs and pyxides) may reveal their continuous association with the elite, but this connection appears as merely emblematic in nature rather than based on the active role of the sphinx in the mythology or religious beliefs of the Minoans. Only towards the end of the Bronze Age does the sphinx acquire a more interesting and active role in Minoan religion as evidenced in the clay plaques from shrines and, more importantly, in the figurines from caves and the open-air

sanctuary at Ayia Triadha, Piazzale dei Sacelli. However, this development falls beyond the chronological scope of the thesis and cannot be discussed in detail.

Perhaps the failure of the motif of the sphinx to obtain the importance it had in Egypt can be understood through the notion of the Aegean “missing ruler iconography” – to borrow the expression by E. Davis (1995). Minoan and Mycenaean political and religious propaganda was not expressed through the promotion of individual figures and therefore an identification of the sphinx with significant figures of the Minoan and Mycenaean societies, analogous to that evidenced in Egypt, was not essential. In that fashion, the griffin was probably more appropriate to function as an emblem of the ruling elites and was effortlessly assimilated into the Aegean religion. Therefore, if one looks for a hierarchy, it appears that the griffin would rank higher in the Minoan society.

### ***6.3.3 Bird-ladies, gorgon heads and the Mycenaeans***

The bird-lady type is restricted to Crete during the Neopalatial period and, with a few exceptions (i.e. the LM IB-III A1 610; the vaguely dated as “Postpalatial” 611; 616, fig. 60b, remains unattributed and is also vaguely dated in the LBA; a LM IIIA-B Cypriot cylinder, 923; the LM IIIB 612 and 613; the LH IIIC (?) 617<sup>6</sup>) did not survive in the following centuries either. The latest safely dated bird-lady examples are best placed in LM IB-II (e.g. 581, 587, 591 – fig. 100, 592 – fig. 5, 593). Not only bird-ladies, but also birds vanish from the glyptic record after their last appearance in LM II Cut Style seals (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 208). Likewise, there is no evidence that the gorgon head was still

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<sup>6</sup> Kenna’s dates of the last three examples should be viewed with caution in view of his tendency to date soft stone seals to the “post-palatial” era (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 321). They are most likely incorrect, since they do have good parallels (and indeed more numerous) in the Neopalatial period.

engraved on Final Palatial seals or that it was adopted by the mainlanders. The only exception is found on LM IIIA1 641 (fig. 66) where a triangular frontal face with prominent eyebrows and large bulging eyes is engraved together with a bull-man.

The apparent disappearance of the type from the Cretan archaeological record may be a mere chance and future discoveries will perhaps change this situation, especially in view of the above sparse depictions that may demonstrate a continuation, albeit restricted, in the production of the motif. Still, an explanation for this abandonment or at least dramatic decrease in the depictions of bird-ladies may be sought in the possible adaptation, even if not wide-spread, of the social status of women in Crete under the Mycenaean rule. Olsen (1998: 380-392) has talked of the differences in the depiction and expression of women in the Minoan and Mycenaean iconographies, although their treatment in the Linear B texts of both Pylos and Knossos is indistinguishable. Nevertheless, in iconography women appear to participate more actively in Minoan social life before the arrival of the Mycenaeans, whereas an interest in family and the role of motherhood seems to be of greater significance in the Mycenaean repertoire. A review of mainland Mycenaean mortuary evidence, even if admittedly somewhat sketchy, since many of the skeletons cited have not been scientifically sexed, led Mee (1998: 165-171) to similar conclusions. He has argued that the status of women in Mycenaean Greece was ascribed rather than achieved and was defined mainly through their roles within the family group, perhaps with the exception of some religious officials.

In the view of Olsen (1998: 389-392) the Minoan expression of gender ideology, as seen in the iconographic repertoire, did not change significantly after



the arrival of the Mycenaeans on Crete. She focused her analysis on human nurture scenes or, more correctly, their absence from the Minoan repertoire. Indeed, iconographic sources like the LM III Ayia Triadha larnax and LM II-III Knossian wall paintings, which do emphasise the “social rather than the biological, the public rather than the domestic”, do support her argument, but are best seen as part of the official ideology that sought to incorporate Minoan elements as a means of legitimisation of the newly established Mycenaean elite.

The differing attitude of the Mycenaeans towards female status surely would have had an impact on the Minoan population of the island, at least in the areas of Mycenaean presence and this is supported by the glyptic evidence. As was already seen, seals are personal items that can be used to promote (official) elite ideology. Bird-ladies however did not form part of that process in the Neopalatial period, but reflected non-elite associations. Thus, they would not have been perceived as necessary or even desirable elements in the iconography of the mainland intruders and that may explain the absence of the motif from the LM III sealing deposits of Knossos, Chania and Mallia. Moreover, as already mentioned, our clearest picture of LM II-III patterns of seal ownership comes from tombs of that period and in particular rich tombs in cemeteries, like Zapher Papoura, Sellopoulo and Kalyvia, with distinct Mycenaean traits (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 193-195). Although the scheme of the “Warrior Grave” has been shown to have predated the arrival of the Mycenaeans (cf. the Poros finds), still the rich tombs that yielded seals are best understood as representing a new elite or at least an elite orientated to and communicative of a new ideology that merged official Minoan values with Mycenaean beliefs. This “Mycenaeanising” ideology and worldview had no room or use for the motif of the bird-lady.

In addition to social issues associated with the Mycenaean presence behind the abandonment of the motif, the apotropaic/prophylactic function presumed here for the bird-ladies (see sections 4.1.8 & 4.2.3) may further clarify why it was not taken up by the Mycenaeans. In Mycenaean iconography<sup>7</sup>, an apotropaic role has been attributed only to a group of idols and the snake figures found with them in the Room of Idols at Mycenae. In fact Kopaka (2001: 20), in discussing the physical appearance of Potnia in classical Greek literature, associated the casting of terror from her eyes (“dreadful-eyed Potnia”) with these figures. The idols in question have big rounded eyes, a wide mouth, an almost triangular face and the painting of their faces accentuates these features. Indeed, this association could be made perhaps with another group of earlier Minoan and Cycladic depictions, the gorgon heads. The raised arms may also link them iconographically with the gorgon head of the Mochlos seal 557 (fig. 36b).

Nevertheless, French (2001: 275-276) rejected the notion of any apotropaic function for these idols and incorporated their decoration within the recorded Mycenaean figurine tradition. More importantly, she (2001: 276) noted that there is no evidence for any form of apotropaic representations in Mycenaean art apart from the arguments presented on the Room of the Idols assemblage. The fact that an apotropaic motif held no interest for the inhabitants of the mainland is then only consistent with their rejection of the bird-lady and the gorgon heads.

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<sup>7</sup> “Iconography” as opposed to practice and ritual. For the latter see Kilian (1988c: 115-152), who investigated figurines found in connection with doors and hearths at Tiryns and ascribed prophylactic/apotropaic functions to them. This pattern highlights a Mycenaean ritual practice designed to protect buildings and their inhabitants through magical reinforcement of architectural liminal zones.

Finally, soft stone seals were shunned by Mycenaean workshops until the LHI IIIA (Krzyszkowska 2005a: 306); thus, the fact that motifs illustrated exclusively on Minoan soft stone seals would have held no appeal for the Mycenaeans is not inconsistent with this preference.

#### ***6.3.4 Minotaur and animal-headed figures***

The review of the Minotaur and the associated animal-headed figures in their iconographic, socio-political and religious context certainly reveals more about the identity of this hitherto illegible creature. Firstly, it is observed that these demons constitute an ideal expression of the Aegean “symbolic parallel between men and animals”, to borrow the expression of Morgan (1995a).

To take this one step further, Weingarten (2005: 9-10, n. 28) has pointed out that the change in demonic iconography crystallised in the survival of the male Zakros figures and the abandonment of the female ones in the following Mycenaean period could reflect social changes with the monsters serving as markers showing what is considered strong and what weak. Indeed, the garb of bull-men in shorts, a garment evidenced in Crete and on the mainland as the preferred type of male clothing in the Shaft Grave period; the expression of physical youth and intense activity as evidenced in their garment, their prominent musculature and contorted poses; the interest of the Early Mycenaeans in bull leaping sports (German 2005; Rehak 1996: 49) and their appropriation of the Knossian bull iconography; the identification of LM II (Mycenaean?) Knossos as the centre of emanation of the standardised Minotaur iconography and the adoption of this demonic figure both on Crete and on the mainland, as contrasted to the rejection of the bird-lady by the Mycenaeans; the certified introduction of

bull sacrifice contemporaneously with the appearance of the demons; finally, their engraving on seals of mostly imported hard stones, all shed light on the mystery of the transformation of the Minotaur and the other animal-headed figures in LM II-III. A Mycenaean stimulus behind the standardisation of the animal-headed types and their iconography may be tentatively hypothesised. It is possible that Mycenaean “newcomers” or in any case local elites adopted an older Minoan form and combined iconographic and ideological elements originating in both cultural backgrounds.

This employment of symbolism from diverse cultural origins was emphasised by Preston (2004: 325-343) in relation to the burial evidence from LM II Knossos and other sites, particularly in central Crete, during the LM III period. This alternative model of explanation for the newly introduced cultural elements is certainly very attractive and appears to be valid also in the case of the imaginary beings iconography. Thus, the “Mycenaeanisation” of Crete can be seen as a multifaceted process of cultural and economic domination (as advocated by Preston 2004: 343), evident also in the iconography of the Minoan repertoire of the monstrous. This selective introduction of iconographic elements from the mainland and the fusion of ideas from both cultural horizons were observed in the development of demons and monsters, “foreign” and local alike, in LM II-III and find their parallel in the Protopalatial eclectic adoption of foreign demons and monsters.

## ***Chapter 7***

### ***Conclusions***

“Human freak or mythical beast, then, lethal or benign, uncanny mirror of divine mind or lucrative creation of Hollywood producers, the Monster is ubiquitous. And yet, despite this haunting permanence, the beings or natural phenomena that people of all lands and ages have termed *monstra* possess no fixed, secure, inherent attributes which can attract or justify such a denomination. If we were to look for one single element of constancy within the ever- changing borders of ‘monstrosity’, this would almost certainly be the relativity of the ‘monster’ as a humanly constructed concept, that is to say, the simple truth that its prerogatives and its essence are powerfully interlocked with the perennial dialectic of ‘Otherness’ with respect to ‘Norm’. And, as norms are culturally determined, ‘monsters’ too become inevitably culture-specific products.” (Lada-Richards 1998: 46).

It was argued in the introduction of this thesis that one should examine the contexts in which Minoan artists created their art in order to understand the overall conditions that motivated and inspired the inclusion of imaginary animals in Minoan art. As MacGillivray (2000: 123) puts it in connection with Neopalatial art and, specifically, the Palaikastro Kouros, “we must review the history of the Cretan palatial period, defined by dominant personalities and influential leaders, whether political, religious or artistic, who shaped the events which left their mark in the artistic and archaeological record.” So has consideration of their iconography and of the contexts in which they are incorporated deepened our appreciation of their functions?

#### ***Iconographical context***

The study of details and associations with non-monstrous iconography helps in the understanding of the function of imported and local monsters since the Minoan fantastic animals are not as widespread in the artistic repertoire as the natural animals with religious/symbolic character (for example the lion and the bull), with which they are occasionally used interchangeably, or as other official

symbols, such as the double axe and the horns of consecration. But because of that, their use is more selective, therefore less ambiguous and their functions become more specific. The study of the iconographical context has demonstrated the complexity (or not) of their roles and by association the extent to which the transference of foreign motifs was meaningful and successful and at the same time aided in deciphering the invention of the local types.

Moreover, the ability of some Minoan imaginary beings (cf. the genius, the dragon and the gorgons) to reshape their appearance was emphasised. This process has parallels in later antiquity when even the monstrosity of a *specific*, a named, monstrous creature could gradually or suddenly be re-negotiated (Lada-Richards 1998: 47-48). For instance the Siren did not always enjoy a static definition as a human/bird hybrid. Hassig (1995: 105) described how the medieval image of the siren changed and a new description appeared in the *Liber Monstrorum*, which stated that the siren is half human, half fish, followed soon after by third cross-breed, the woman-fish-bird Siren. Such changes in appearance did not necessarily qualify as transformations into a new monster with completely altered functions: the gorgon heads in all their variations continued to be used apotropaically and the genius was always associated with vegetation. The remodelling however of their outer shell did signify expansions and/or specialisation of roles or even the reduction of the monster to a mere emblematic motif: the more slender figure of the genius accompanied its inclusion in complicated scenes, while the ambiguity of the dragon/crocodile probably owing to Egyptian inspiration eventually supplemented its use in an emblematic way.

The thesis that the varied constructions of and confrontations with monsters and the monstrous by the Greeks and Romans were part of their own self-construction (Atherton 1998: xxxiv) certainly applies to the Aegean. It has been shown through their iconographic development that, in the end, monsters were but a mirror of the Minoan world, reflecting its ever changing geographical, temporal and social complexity.

### ***The context of media and technology***

The study of the media chosen for the depiction of monsters clarified their associations with distinct social groups of the Minoan society, while a look at the technology, changes of which paralleled transformations in monster iconography, shed light on the relative value of these artefacts. The identification of the genius as an essentially ritual demon was made possible by the comparative examination of the demon's depictions on selected media. It is through this approach to monsters that notions about the "royalty" of the sphinx were discredited and its eventual reduction to an essentially decorative motif in Final Palatial Crete was observed, as contrasted with its more prominent role and funerary associations in contemporary mainland iconography.

### ***Find context***

The study of find context has also proven valuable in the investigation of the Minoan fantastic creatures as it showed how the palaces were focal points in the production of visual images (also concluded by German 2005: 75) and iconographic innovations. It also proved the association of such innovations as the imported monsters with the elites of the island, given that they were

apparently associated with social authorities through the palatial prestige, administration and personal wealth. In the later periods, their adoption by the lower social strata was evidenced through the find context and the materials used for such depictions. Local monsters were shown to be connected with mainly non-elite behaviour and beliefs and at the same time deeply embedded in the local iconographic tradition.

Still, a cautionary note that the study of find context should not be undertaken in isolation, but needs to be placed within wider notions of context. has to be added at this point. For instance, the distinction between primary and secondary deposits entails that we cannot always reconstruct the history of artefacts merely on the basis of their find contexts. Niemeier (1981: 91-104) demonstrated this in relation to seals and their study. He pinpointed the problems caused by the lack of find context for a large amount of glyptic products hampered by the varied quality of publications. Additionally, he questioned the usefulness of detailed accounts of find contexts for seals that reveal only when the seal was last deposited, perhaps even by accident.

For example, seals and wall paintings are found in palaces, but so are stone tools. Caution notwithstanding, a review of the find contexts of seals has revealed patterns of seal ownership and particularly of seal ownership of seals depicting monsters. The close association of imported animals with palatial settings and rich burials and the link of the bird-lady demon with lower social strata were evidenced by the review of their respective findspots.



### ***Religious context***

The generally accepted character of many Minoan monsters as religious necessitated the examination of the contexts in which they were formed and developed. Moreover, E. Davis (1986a: 11-20) concluded her discussion of the lack of a Minoan “ruler iconography” with the suggestion that, since it is impossible to imagine a BA civilisation without a “king” in view of later Greek traditions and the international context of the period, the apparent absence of powerful ruler images implies that the political use of Minoan art, if any, was to advertise not the power of the king, but the potency of cult. This proposition formed one more stimulus for the examination of the Minoan religious contexts so as to substantiate whether the Minoan monsters were incorporated within the alleged BA political use of religion.

The changes in the religious scenery and equipment accompanying the introduction of the genius indeed clarified its functions and provided one more motive for its adoption by the Minoans. The formalisation of cult and its increasing regulation by the palaces and the villas throughout the Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods also elucidated the roles of the griffin, the sphinx, the genius and the dragon at the time of their introduction to Crete and later on. These new motifs expressed attempts at establishment of a common religious awareness, that is, of an official religion. This effort provided the counterweight against which locally created monsters were later set, namely bird-ladies and related demons including the Kato Zakros figures. Finally, the prominent place of diverse ritual action in Minoan religion helped to ascertain the notion and expression of “ritual demons” in BA Crete (and the mainland).

### *Socio-political/historical context*

A number of researchers (Thorne 2000: 162; Nijhowne 1999: 11, 74) have stressed the connection between the formation, ascendancy, and collapse of socio-political systems on one hand and the processes of development and adaptation of myth and iconography on the other. This connection was indeed verified during this investigation. In that manner, the suggestion that in complex societies “symbols of political legitimation, including relationships between present rulers and the gods or ancestors and other aspects of ideology account for much ‘artistic’ activity in ancient state” (Hays 1993: 82-83) was applied to the Minoan iconography of monsters. The review of the socio-political context reconstructed for the four main stages of Minoan history validated and reinforced the tentative conclusions of the find context analysis, clarified the reasons behind the appearance of the imported and the local monsters in specific points in place and time and aided in the comprehension of their development.

The reconstruction of the Prepalatial socio-political circumstances with an emphasis on regionalism and growing social stratification and the view of the society of the time as a field for striving elite formation and establishment was mirrored in the fragmentary, scanty illustrations of fantastic creatures. The group of Oriental monsters that were introduced to Crete during the time of the first palaces was understood as an element incorporated within the legitimating expressions of authority by these early palatial elites. In the second palace period, the firm establishment of the palatial organisation of the Minoan society and the – at least temporary – stability of the regime resulted in the emanation of these components to the lower social strata, signifying the successful outcome of their earlier accommodation within the symbolism of power. It provided the backdrop

for multiplicity in artistic expression reflected in the variety of monstrous types of the period. Finally, the transformation of the socio-political conditions of the Final Palatial era signified the necessity for new symbolic expression that was materialised in various ways. These included the abandonment of older types associated with popular beliefs, the introduction of new fantastic creatures and the appropriation by the newly established Mycenaean rulers of older types.

### ***International context***

“There is little in the religion or thought of the Minoans, as far as can be discerned from their art, that was derived from Egypt. Apart from one Egyptian divinity, the hippopotamus goddess Taurt, who became the beneficent Minoan genius, there was little connection in their religions. Crete apparently showed little preoccupation with an afterlife, unlike the Mycenaean mainland, nor was there any emphasis on divine kingship or in imparting historic specificity to human representations” (Immerwahr 1990: 160). Merrillees (1972) reviewed the archaeological and literary evidence for Egyptian-Aegean relations during the early 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty and likewise concluded that the Minoans had only indirect connections with Egypt at that time.

However, Crowley (1989) presented the exchange of artistic motifs between Egypt and the Aegean throughout the Bronze Age. Cline (1994), Lambrou-Phillipson (1990) and Pendlebury (1930) have catalogued Egyptian imports in the Aegean including Neopalatial artefacts, while Carinci (2000: 31-37) talked of the interconnections between Crete and Egypt in the Protopalatial period. This association between the two regions extended beyond the simple transference of images and artefacts as evidenced for instance in the development

of parallels in human-animal symbolism (Morgan 1996: 17-32; 1995a: 171-184). The iconographic development of the Minoan dragon was influenced by Egyptian stimuli (see section 3.1.4) and Hiller (1999: 361-368) discussed the Egyptian elements in the decoration of the Ayia Triadha sarcophagus. Influences and differences in the frescoes of Egypt and the Aegean have also been investigated (Bietak et al 2000: 77-90; M. Shaw 2000: 267-282; Bietak 1995: 19-18; N. Marinatos 1994: 89-93). Graham (1970: 231-239) saw imitations of Egyptian “luxury trappings” in the Phaistos palace architecture, for instance in details of decoration, the banquet halls and the monumental reception – the latter two constituting shared features of Minoan palaces. It is apparent that numerous studies have demonstrated that the relations of the Aegean and Egypt started early in the BA and reached their peak in the Neopalatial period, thus forming a complex link between the two regions.

Thorne (2000: 162) argued that the prolonged existence of a number of strong, interrelated states, both in the Aegean and in the Near East, provided the basis for the encounter, adoption, incorporation and diffusion in the Aegean repertoire of motifs of Oriental mythology. Oriental mythology and religion were certainly among the sources that produced the imported fantastic creatures and sovereign symbolism should be grouped with them. This foreign origin of many Minoan monstrous types necessitated the review of the international context, essentially defined as “outside of Crete”, which transpired to be fundamental in this study given that it has refined our understanding of the imported monsters (as in the case of the genius for instance).

It should be noted that the stages of the Near Eastern monster iconography are not mirrored precisely in the Aegean. The first formative stage

would correspond to the iconography of the Protopalatial period and the second stage of apprehension and punishment of vicious monsters may find a distant parallel in the ideas of subjugation of griffins and sphinxes in the Neopalatial period. The fourth stage of Near Eastern monster iconography, namely the abundance of animal-headed demons, is reflected in the Neopalatial and Final Palatial periods alike. Closer affinities though cannot be established beyond these few similarities.

The pertaining views and interpretations on the variety of imaginary beings of the Near Eastern repertoire have already been presented (cf. section 1.9.8.1). It will suffice here to repeat that they are classified in terms of appearance as demons (two-footed) and monsters (four-footed) (Goodnick Westenholz 1998: 77-78; Porada 1987: 1). A similar distinction between demons and monsters can also be applied to the Aegean fantastic creatures. Demons will include the Minoan genius and the animal-headed people as well as the bird-ladies. They are upstanding figures with human bodily components and share “human” traits in their attire (including skirts, loincloths, shorts belts and jewellery). The intentional humanisation of the genius was evident already in the Neopalatial period in not only its appearance but also in the ritual actions it performed and was completed in the Final Palatial. As in the case of the Near Eastern demons, the word does not entail an *a priori* negative or threatening meaning. Griffins, sphinxes, the Minoan dragon and the remaining, less frequently illustrated, creatures are better described as monsters rather than demons since they have both a more animal-like appearance and behaviour.

### *Directions for future research and concluding thoughts*

Ultimately, this thesis has produced as many answers as it has created new questions and wrought pathways for future research. The mainland use of and attitude towards demons and monsters requires more study; the prominent role of the sphinx in the LH III funerary iconography of Boeotia needs to be explored and it remains to be answered whether this role was restricted to the area (cf. useful introduction to the topic in Gallou 2005: 49-51). The contrast with the Cretan association of the griffin with the Minoan deathscape is of particular interest.

Nijhowne (1999: 74) has recounted the different strategies in the production of material symbols in the case of cultural decline. The modification of the existing repertoire and the appropriation of legitimating symbols by new groups or their unqualified abandonment are featured among these. This is the context in which the abandonment of the imaginary animal motifs after the collapse of the BA civilisations can be interpreted. The sense of safety and the prosperity ensured by the Minoan and the Mycenaean states apparently waned with the destruction of the palaces, and along with that the symbols of that ruling hierarchy also faded. However, this is but a first tentative approach to the matter, which certainly requires further detailed research so as to account for particular issues such as the revival of the sphinx in LM IIIC open-air sanctuaries and caves and the contemporaneous introduction of the centaur that became exceedingly popular in classical Greece, but is often indistinguishable from the LM IIIC sphinx depictions (overview of finds from A. Triadha, Psychro and Patsos in d'Agata 1997: 92-99; for an example from Juktas see French 1989-1990: 71).

This thesis has made a small contribution towards a better appreciation of the Aegean monsters and their place in the worldview of the BA peoples. Admittedly, it has relied heavily on seal iconography and use, which alone may seem a poor guide in the area of beliefs and ideas, especially when one takes into account that probably no more than 5% of the original output has survived (Krzyszowska 2005a: 1, 329). Nevertheless, it was perceived that the evidence from other media corroborated rather than refuted the results of the glyptic iconographic analysis. Thus, the “fantastic” world of the Minoans proved to be more intricate than previously believed and more stimulating than expected, as it has been observed that a single motif may be employed in a variety of contexts serving different sets of beliefs, expectations, fears and ideas. It has thus become increasingly apparent that there should be no generalisations in the characterisation of the monsters in the prehistoric Aegean.

For instance, the identification as “royal monsters” should not be applied carelessly to all Aegean griffins and sphinxes as their functions are far more intricate, while the rejection of the Zakros demonic figures as meaningless turned out to be pointless itself. Moreover, the study of the locally inspired monsters revealed the more “popular” aspects of the Minoan beliefs that can be juxtaposed against with the “official” worldview of the Minoans.

As a final point, monsters have been considered as “chaotic and always outsiders” (Dowden 1998: 114, n. 2). However this is not the picture emerging from the study of the Aegean Bronze Age fantastic creatures. They do not surface as chaotic, but on the contrary as living organisms that actively participated in and aided towards the socio-political and religious stability of the Aegean societies and the well being of their members.

## *APPENDIX A*

### *Problematic illustrations*

The following examples are but a few of the depictions that have been interpreted as monsters or natural animals (see discussion in Chapter 1, section 1.6.2). Still, their identification as fantastic creatures cannot be accepted at face value, since most objects (seals, pottery and an ivory plaque) are too worn or bear illustrations too schematic to allow secure conclusions. Nevertheless, the early Prepalatial examples especially demonstrate a tendency to depict snake-like creatures, often with spiky backs.

In addition to the glyptic examples, pottery illustrations have proven problematic in their interpretation. These however are included in the Catalogue of Fantastic creatures, as they have been identified as hybrid types that are well-known from glyptic or other arts or at least have associations with contemporary Near Eastern illustrations (e.g. the “giant birds” of LBA pottery, the Mycenae Minotaur and the “genius” figures of the Kalavarda and the Phylakopi vases). The LH IIIB1 sherd that was identified as a “unicorn” (*Pictorial*: 217, X.54, ANM 3678.7[1269]) is not listed among them. Since the type it allegedly represents is not illustrated anywhere in the prehistoric Aegean, it is therefore considered a bastard creature in this thesis.

The entries are organised in the following order: reference number (if published in corpora – i.e. *CMS* or *CS* number), location of object, description, date, provenance and references.



**1. CMS XII 12**

NYMM (26.31.92).

Three-sided prism, steatite. A: A s-shaped “monster”. B: A bucranium. C: 2 birds.

EM III

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

Kenna 1964b: 3, 7, pls. 1, 3, no.2.

**2. CMS XII 14**

NYMM (26.31.89).

Three-sided prism, steatite. A: Two bull’s heads. B: A “monster”. C: A regardant dog to left.

EM III

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

**3. CMS XII 58**

NYMM (26.31.77)

Three-sided prism, steatite. B: “A composite animal with the attributes of a goat”.

Prepalatial

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

Tamvaki 1976: 209, no. 7.

**4. CMS XIII 85**

Philadelphia, University Museum (MS 4788).

Three-sided prism, steatite. A: animal with prickly back. Its legs form a cross. B: “Animal” with inverted hindquarters. Similar to *CMS XII 72* etc.

EM

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

**5. CS 1**

OAM (1938.742)

Three-sided prism, steatite. B: Design resembling lion’s mask. C: An ant or other insect with what appear to be the foreparts of an animal. Horn-like projections on head?

EM

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

Tamvaki 1976: 526, no. 16; CS: 87, no. 1.

## **6. CS 5**

OAM (1938.754).

Three-sided prism, steatite. A: Man holding pole with four suspended storage vessels. B: Two animals (?), perhaps monsters or serpents, antithetically disposed. C: Regardant goat running to right.

EM

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

Tamvaki 1976: 526, no. 17; CS: 87, no. 5.

## **7. CS 10**

OAM (1938.753)

Three-sided prism, steatite. A: Bucranium flanked by two toothed objects. B: Bird. Grass (?) in the field. C: "An S-spiral perhaps derived from two conjoined animal forms".

EM

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

CS: 88, no. 10.

## **8. CS 18**

OAM (1938.773).

Three-sided prism, steatite. A: "Quatrefoil with 4 circular sinkings". B: Perhaps composite animal but more probably a stylised rendering of a Cretan goat into a S-spiral form. C: Goat.

EM

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

CS: 89-90, no. 18.

## **9. CS 24**

OAM (AE 1190)

Three-sided prism, steatite. A: "Man & fence or circular enclosure". B: Monster with many feet (schematic insect?).

EM

Unknown provenance, Crete. Donated by Sir Arthur Evans, 1895.

CS: 90, no. 24.

## **10. CS 66**

OAM (1925.57)

Three-sided prism, steatite. A: "Fish, whose curly tail seems to have been

taken from the scorpion models”. Two chevrons in the field. B: Ship. C: Two leaves divided by a stem.

MM

Unknown provenance, Crete (?). Acquired in Athens.

CS: 97, no. 66.

### **11. CMS IX 24**

Paris, Cabinet des Medailles (M 7563).

Three-sided prism, steatite. A: Frog or scorpion-man? B: Circular motif. C: Shell.

MM IB-IIB

Unknown provenance. Purchased in 1910.

### **12. CS 129**

OAM (1938.921).

Theriomorph in the shape of a collared kitten, chalcedony. Engraved on the base: forepart of a cat emerging from a scroll or C-spiral. “The cat’s body is given a sinuous quality so that it is an integral part of the scroll.” Lunette, lily and part of gate (?) in the field.

MM IIB-IIIB

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

CS: 106, no. 129.

### **13. CS 141**

OAM (1938.924, 1910.236)

Bead with convoluted back, chalcedony. “Four signs inscribed on base: cross, perhaps the sepia sign, snake and butterfly or lion mask or a combination of both”.

MM IIB-IIIB

Gortyna, precise find-context unknown.

CS: 108, no. 141.

### **14. CMS IV 33D**

HM (1298), Metaxas Collection.

Discoid, sard. Hybrid with long, possibly beaked head and a highly schematic body, possibly a crocodile. Identified as a lark in *CMS*.

Style similar to that of the Talismanic Group, which dates as early as the MM III (or forgery?).

Kapetaniana, unknown context.

Yule 1980: 138-139, pl. 11, motif 17: 15.

**15. CS 204**

OAM (1938.955)

Cushion, chalcedony. Two “tumblers” in a field of lilies wearing feathered caps and loincloths. “The fantastic treatment of the bodies of the tumblers should be noticed”.

MM III-LM I – Forgery?

Said to have come from the Knossos area, north of the palace. Precise find-context unknown.

De Moor 1997: fig. 476f (griffin-men); Younger 1977: 155, n. 74 (forgery); Boardman 1970: 42, pl. 60; CS: no. 204.

**16. CMS XII 184**

NYMM (26.31.180)

Three-sided prism, burnt sardonyx or carnelian. A: Double axe in fragmentation. B: “Marine monster” (?) in schematic form. C: “Burgeoning flower combined with spider’s body” (?).

LM I

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

**17. CMS XII 188**

NYMM (26.31.221).

Amygdaloid, rock crystal. SH horizontal. The field divided into 2 parts: at l., a geometrical design reminiscent of the “architectural facades of the Second Transitional Phase”; at r., a “marine monster”.

LM I

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

**18. CMS XII 200**

NYMM (26.31.272).

Amygdaloid, chalcedony. “Two vertical beetles antithetically disposed so that they have one leg common to both. Vegetation sprays spring from their foreparts instead of antennae”.

LM I

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

Kenna 1964b: 10, pl. 1, no. 32, pl. 3, no. 33.

**19. *CMS II.4* 50**

HM (93)

Lentoid, steatite. SH vertical. According to *CMS* and Younger, not a griffin, but quadruped, unclear motif above its back and bird with displayed wings placed diagonally above the head of the quadruped.

LM IB-II

Crete, unknown precise findspot. Said to be from Mallia.

*CMS II.4*: LXIV; Younger 1983: 124 (CP Lions).

**20. *CMS XIII* 19D**

Philadelphia, University Museum (29.62.20).

Lentoid, black marble. "Animal, perhaps a lion". It resembles the animal on *CMS XIII* 85 (B). Groundline with spiky features. Probably just a lion, in the hasty, schematic style of the CP.

LM IB-II

Unknown provenance.

Younger 1983: 124 (CP Lions).

**21. *CS* 25P**

OAM (1925.47)

Lentoid, green slate. Griffin (De Moor) or more likely deer (Younger, *CS*).

LM IB-II

Unknown provenance, Crete (?). Acquired in Athens.

De Moor 1997: no. 1473; Younger 1983: 125 (CP Deer); *CS*: 150, no. 25P.

**22. *CMS VIII* 72**

JMDC

Lentoid, red jasper. Hybrid combining forepart of ox & spotted body of unidentifiable animal. Deer forepart in the field. Perhaps originally the depiction of a deer, on the body of which a bucranium was added later.

LM IB

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

**23. *Rectangular ivory plaque***

Rectangular ivory plaque with a bird (peacock, heron, or hybrid?). Rocks (?) in the background.

LM II

Palaikastro, LM II House in Block X, Room 17. Also from room (with 2 stone benches): bronze sickle, clay “firebox”, stone weights, marble pommel of sword or sceptre, 2 stone vessels, fallen painted plaster.

Karo 1959: 64, 90, fig. 38 (“Wundervogel”); Bossert 1937: 151, fig. 263 (heron); Dawkins 1904/1905: 284 (peacock).

#### **24. *CMS XII* 309**

NYMM (26.31.303)

Lentoid, steatite. Two back-to-back animals with “bovine and swine-like characteristics”.

LM II-III A1

Unknown provenance, mainland (?).

Younger 1985: 73 (Dot-Eye Group, Miscellaneous), does not identify species.

#### **25. *CMS VII* 124**

LBM (GR/R 1874.3-5.8).

Lentoid, lapis lacedaimonius. “Foreparts of a Cretan goat conjoined to the body and hind quarters of a lion”, each part being inverted with respect to the other. Younger (1986: 134) identifies an agrimi instead of a hybrid.

LM III A1

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

Younger 1986: 134 (Spectacle-Eye Group), fig. 28; *CS*: 56, 59, 79, no. 20; Furtwängler 1900: vol. I, pl. 3, fig. 36.

#### **26. *CMS VIII* 141, Fig. 99**

Kenna Collection

Lentoid, agate. Kenna: Cretan bull. Pini (1980: 143, n. 49): bull head attached to lion body.

LM II

Unknown provenance

#### **27. *CMS XII* 265**

NYMM (26.31.247)

Lentoid, agate. “Monster” to right with a captive bull. Figure-8 shield in the field.

LM III A1

Unknown provenance, Crete (?).

Younger 1988: 215 (dog vs. bull); idem 1986: 120, 135 (dog or lioness – Spectacle-Eye Group), fig. 36.

**28. CMS X 147**

Basel, H. & M.-L. Erlenmeyer Collection.

Amygdaloid, steatite. SH horizontal. Winged griffin (or more likely bird?) with head to left and displayed wings.

LBA

Unknown provenance.

*CMS X*: 33; Erlenmeyer & Zai-Boerlin 1961: pl. 6, 83.

**29. CMS VIII 157**

Mrs Dilys Russell Collection.

Lentoid, ivory (?). Quadrupe to l. combining attributes of lion & bull. The bird above probably engraved later.

LM IIIB

Unknown provenance, mainland (?).

**30. Pictorial V.58**

LBM (BMC 410)

Pictorial krater. Rystedt: “bastard form”; *Pictorial*: goats with bull's heads & dog's tails; Furumark: animals with goat's beard, but maybe a deer or “cross form”.

LH IIIB

Cyprus, Hala Sultan Tekke.

Rystedt 1988: 267-270, pl. XXXVI; Sherratt & Crouwel 1987: 334;

Furumark 1941: 249-250.

## APPENDIX B

### “Bird-people”

Tables 1, 2 and 3 include examples of bird-like (mostly bird-faced, i.e. with beaked faces, occasionally with wing-like arms) figures of Minoan glyptic art and pottery. These do not claim to comprise a complete list (for example, among others, the seals from *CMS V Suppl. 3* are not included; furthermore, worn seals – e.g. *CMS II.2* 266, *CMS II.2* 307, etc – have also been omitted), but rather a comprehensive list.

**Table 1: Prepalatial depictions of figures with bird attributes<sup>1</sup>**

Re. No.	Location	Find Context	Description	References
<i>CMS I</i> 414	ANM (4580)	Crete, unknown provenance.	Sitting bird-faced male figure towards r. With his outstretched hand holds a wheel. Man & dog on other sides of the prism.	Tamvaki 1976: 528, no. 50; Matz 1928: 108, 124, 132, pl. 3, 4; Stais 1915: 120.
<i>CMS I</i> 415	ANM (4581)	Crete, unknown provenance.	B: Standing bird-faced male figure to r. A, C: Dog & 2 parallel branches.	Tamvaki 1976: 527, no. 29; Matz 1928: 108, 132, pl. 3, 2; Stais 1915: 120.
<i>CMS I</i> 416	ANM (4583)	Crete, unknown provenance.	A, B: 2 water birds & parallel lines. C: Sitting bird-faced male figure to l.	Tamvaki 1976: 527, no. 30; Matz 1928: 117, pl. 3, 5; Stais 1915: 120.
<i>CMS I</i> 426	ANM (4582)	Crete, unknown provenance.	Prism, haematite. A: Male bird-faced figure to r. Wing-like arms, displayed. B: Group of 4 circles C: Branches.	Matz 1928: 124, 132, 133, pl. 3, 3.
<i>CMS I Suppl.</i> 103	ANM (9972)	Unknown provenance.	Pyramidoid, green steatite. Bird-faced figure to the l. with spread legs & displayed arms. 3 parallel lines on the arms, resembling wings.	
<i>CMS II.1</i> 145	HM (528)	Koumasa, th. t. A., the smaller of the 3 tholoi at Koumasa. The tomb had been plundered. EM IIa deposit.	Stamp cylinder, ivory. Male figure with triangular body. Beak on face?	Xanthoudides 1924.
<i>CMS II.1</i> 477	HM (774)	Mochlos cemetery, t. XVIII. 6 EM II-III vases reported from the t., all small.	Cylindroid, steatite. Stylised male figure with beak (?).	Soles 1992: 105-106; Kenna 1964b: 917 ff.; CS: 16; Frankfort 1939: 301; Matz 1928: K 33; <i>PM I</i> : 94; Seager 1912: 70.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated in the Description field, all seals are steatite three-sided prisms.



<i>CMS VII 3</i>	LBM (GR/R 1947, 9-26, 3).	Unknown provenance.	A: Goat & bird in reversed positions. B: Man with beaked mouth with branch or pole; under his feet unidentified motif. C: 3 insects.	Goodison & Morris 1998b: 121, fig. 53e (branch); Immerwahr 1990: 28 (fisherman).
<i>CMS VII 6</i>	LBM (GR/R 1947, 9-26, 2).	Unknown provenance.	A: Cretan dog. B: Squatting man with beaked mouth. C: Bucranium. Possibly remains of 2 smaller bucrania in the field.	CS: 22, n. 3.
<i>CMS VII 11</i>	LBM (GR/R 1936, 7-21. 3).	Unknown provenance.	A: 2 insects. B: 3 fish. C: Man with beak-like mouth & wavy object in l. hand.	
<i>CMS VII 15</i>	LBM (GR/R 1934, 1-20, 6).	Unknown provenance.	A: Man with beaked mouth bending down towards a toothed object or fence. B: Insect. C: Bird with long beak & wide wing.	
<i>CMS VII 16</i>	LBM (GR/R 1876, 5-13, 5).	Unknown provenance.	3-sided prism, black steatite or marble. A: 2 men with beaked mouths & dot-eyes crouching to r. Schematic wing-like arms. B: 2 oxen. C: 2 concentric circles. A lunette at either end of the field.	Tamvaki 1976: 214, no. 27.
<i>CMS VII 17</i>	LBM (GR/R 1934, 11- 20, 3).	Unknown provenance.	3-sided prism, black steatite or marble. A: 2 arrowheads & 2 branches. B: Man with a pole & 5 storage vessels. Beaked mouth, head to r. C: Dog with a rounded object in the field, perhaps a ball.	
<i>CMS IX 5</i>	PCM (AM 1623, 14 =Δ27).	Unknown provenance. Donation by J. Demargne 1911.	A: Bird-faced figure with raised legs. B: Motif from 6 rays ending in fish heads (?). C: Unidentified motif, perhaps Cretan dog.	Boardman 1970: 388; Matz 1928: 25.
<i>CMS IX 11</i>	PCM (M 5818).	Unknown provenance. Purchased in 1904.	A: Bird-faced figure without arms sitting to r. (similar motif on CMS V Suppl. 1A 43). Triangle & lines in front. B: 3 spiked circles arranged in a triangle. C: 2 goat heads.	CS: 21-22, no. 10.
<i>CMS XIII 1</i>	Ann Arbor, Kelsey Museum (26181)	Unknown provenance. Crete?	A: Figure with beak walking to r. B: 2 insects (?). C: Bucranium.	Bonner 1954: 142, no. 14, pl. 34, no. 14.
Xenaki- Sakellariou 1958: no. 79	HM (3119)	Crete, unknown provenance, Siteia (?).	A: Boat. B: Z motif. C: Beaked figure with triangular torso to r.	Xenaki-Sakellariou 1958: 14, no. 79, pl. XVIII.
Xenaki- Sakellariou 1958: no. 84	HM (3000)	Crete, unknown provenance, Lasithi (?).	A: 2 amphorae. B: Male figure. C: Beaked figure to r. Large rectangular body. In front, vertical pole with spherical vases.	Xenaki-Sakellariou 1958: 15, no. 84, pl. XVIII.
CS 6	OAM (1910.242)	Crete, Mirabello province. Unknown exact context. EM date.	A: Man with 7 vessels. B: Man (beaked face) with goat in reverse positions. C: Man with 3 vessels.	CS: 88, no. 6.
CS 8	OAM (1938.752)	Unknown provenance. Crete? EM date.	A: Bird-like figure (similar with <i>CMS V Suppl. 1A 43</i> ). Thorn-branch in the field. B: 2 monsters conjoined. C: 2 goats' heads.	CS: 88, no. 8. Cf. this seal in fantastic creatures' catalogue too.
CS 11	OAM (1910.241)	Crete, Milatos. Unknown exact context. EM date.	A: Bird-faced man with wing-like arms. B: Ox-head. C: 2 ant-like insects.	Tamvaki 1976: 525, no. 11; CS: 88, no. 11.
CS 36	OAM (1938.763)	Crete, Mallia. Unknown exact context. EM date.	4-sided prism, steatite A: "Hunter" carrying pole with 2 Cretan wild goats. B: Fish. C: Quadruped. D: Bird-faced man to l.	Boardman 1970: pl. 8; CS: 92, no. 36; <i>PM IV</i> : fig. 466 (3).

CS 38	OAM (1938.745)	Crete, Kastelli Pediadha, Laske Tourleti. Unknown exact context. Date: late EM.	A: Bird-like figure (cf. CS 8) seated to l. under a tree (playing game at table?). Raised hand. B: Male figure with 2 pots. C: 2 Cretan hounds.	Boardman 1970: pl. 5; CS: 92-93, no. 38; <i>PM IV</i> : fig. 464; <i>PM I</i> : fig. 93a.
CS 40	OAM (1938.764)	Crete, Milatos. Unknown exact context. Date: late EM.	A: 2 fish. B: 2 bird-faced men in reverse positions extend hands as in greeting. C: Cretan wild goat.	CS: 93, no. 40.

**Table 2: Protopalatial depictions of figures with bird attributes**

Re. No.	Location	Find Context	Description	References
<i>CMS II.2</i> 104	HM (1774)	Mallia, Stonecutters' Workshops, Workshop α.	A: Bird-faced figure walking to l. Frontal upper body.	
<i>CMS II.2</i> 127 Fig. 102	HM (1799)	Mallia, Stonecutters' Workshops, Workshop γ.	Cone, steatite. A female figurine (?) with upraised arms, with 3 fingers each. Round beaked head in profile. 3 lines denote hair. Triangular lower body (with the top of the triangle facing down).	Alexiou 1958: 224, pl. 1A, fig. 5.
<i>CMS II.2</i> 153	HM (1825)	Mallia, Stonecutters' Workshops, Workshop δ.	A: Figure walking to r. Frontal upper body (triangular) & displayed arms. The "beak" profile is rendered with 3 small lines. Horn-like object on head. B: Rotation motif with branches. C: Scorpion to r. D: "Lily".	
<i>CMS II.2</i> 157	HM (1829)	Mallia, Stonecutters' Workshops, Workshop δ. Unfinished work.	A: Standing man to r. 1 arm raised, holding an amphora from 1 of its 2 vertical handles. Horizontal line above. B: 4 circles.	
<i>CMS II.2</i> 219	HM (69)	Pediadha Eparchy, Mochlos. Unknown exact provenance. Probably bought by the Filekpaideftikos Syllogos.	A: 2 antithetical figures with opened beaks without arms (cf. <i>CMS V Suppl. 1A</i> 43) inverted to each other. Plant between. The r. figure has 2 spikes at the back. B: Vertical motif with 4 loops. Pot? C: 3 fish.	CS: 21-22, 33; Matz 1928: 25, pl. 21, no. 8a-c; Evans 1897: 333, pl. 10, no. 16a- c.
<i>CMS II.2</i> 233	HM (379)	Crete, Mallia, unknown context.	A: Bird-headed figure to r. Branch in front. Cf. <i>CMS V Suppl. 1A</i> 43. B: Whirl-motif with 4 dots. C: Geometric motif.	CS: 21; Matz 1928: pl. 4, no. 2a-c, 15, 36a-c; Xanthoudides 1907: 163, no. 36, pl. 6.
<i>CMS II.2</i> 242	HM (90)	Crete, Mallia, unknown context.	A: Bird-faced man seated to l. (on stool with back?) with raised arms. Plant in front. B: plant motif & water- bird. C: Wheel (?).	CS: 33; Matz 1928: pl. 15, no. 11a-c; Xanthoudides 1907: 155, no. 11, pl. 6.11a-c.
<i>CMS II.2</i> 262	HM (567)	Palaikastro, House B, Room 37, from the bottom of a sunken LM II pithos used for purifying oil. The seal, old at the time, probably used as a <i>charm</i> .	A: Horned quadruped to r. Unclear motif (murex shell?) in front. B: Bucranium. C: Bird-faced figure to r. In front, an unidentified motif (spider?).	Younger 1977: 143; CS: 33; Eccles 1939/40: 44, no. 1, fig. 8a-c.

<i>CMS II.2</i> 264 Fig. 32	HM (223)	Kato Zakros, House C (?). 1901 excavations by Hogarth. Seal probably found on the floor of a rock-cut basement cellar room in totally destroyed House C, together with numerous bronze objects. LM IB.	A: Bird-like figure, practically a schematic bird-lady. Head with a long beak in l. profile. Displayed wings pointing to the ground. Beak resembles that of <i>CMS IV</i> 161. B: 2 goat heads. C: Z-motif. Rotation motif.	Weingarten 1983a: pl. 12G; Matz 1928: pl. 15, no. 29 a-c; Xanthoudides 1907: 162, no. 29, pl. 6; Hogarth 1900/01: 121 ff.
<i>CMS II.2</i> 267	HM (1508)	Crete, Olous, unknown precise provenance.	A: Geometric motif. B: Male to r. flanked by unclear motifs (fish or animal heads?). C: Male to r. Plant in front. Cf. <i>CMS V Suppl. 1A</i> 43.	CS: 21-22, 72.
<i>CMS II.2</i> 305	HM (871)	Crete, unknown provenience.	Badly preserved. A: 3 figures to r. They seem to have beaks & horns (?). B: Figure to r. Water bird in front. C: Unidentifiable motif.	
<i>CMS II.8</i> 39	HMs (132)	Knossos palace, north end of Long Corridor ("Hieroglyphic Deposit"). MM II sealing.	Flat-based sealing. Female (?) figure with beaked face (?) wearing long robe to r. Both hands on the chest. 2 strings with round ends hang from her waist. Similar motif above.	Weingarten 1995: 305, fig. 12; Gill 1965: 67; CS: 40, fig. 60; <i>PM I</i> : 274, fig. 203.
<i>CMS V Suppl. 1A</i> 43	ANiM (11.856)	Crete, Ayios Charalambos, Gerontomouri cave (close to Psychro cave). Mainly used as an ossuary for hundreds of dead throughout the Neolithic-MM II/III. Few primary burials.	B: 4 individual motifs (hieroglyphic signs?). Bucranium, amphora, group of 3 dots & bird-faced male figure without arms to r. (cf. bowl with goddess & dancers from Old Palace, Phaistos). C: 3 bird-faced male figures to r. with 1 arm out-stretched. Hieroglyphic sign (?) resembling Cycladic figurine. Late MM II date.	Davaras 1988: 49, 57, pl. 56; idem 1986: 22-33, vo. 12, fig. 8 α-γ, pl. 5 γ-θ (with details on context).
<i>CMS V Suppl. 1A</i> 325	Chania, Mitsotakis Coll.	Unknown provenance.	A: Man with bird features (beak) to l. holding object (saw?). Perhaps sitting on vertical element behind him with 2 pointed protrusions. B: 2 daggers. C: Schematic bucranium between 2 plant motifs.	
<i>CMS IX</i> 25 Fig. 33c	PCM (N 4424).	Unknown provenance. Purchased in 1915.	A: 2 bird-faced men walk or dance to l. B: Lion to r. C: 2 spiders.	Tamvaki 1976: 217, no. 39.
<i>CMS XI</i> 7	BSMA (FG 62).	Crete. Unknown provenance.	A: A naked figure to r. holds pole with 5 bowls. B: 3 fish. C: 2 men to r. 2 "insects" in front.	Yule 1980: 121, Men 22(a), 136 Fish 4(b); Matz 1928: pl. 17, 7; Evans 1925: 22, fig. 25; idem 1894: 339, fig. 59.
<i>CMS XI</i> 8	BSMA (FG 63).	Crete. Unknown provenance.	A: 3 figures; the 2 at r. have opened beaks, perhaps also the 3 <sup>rd</sup> . B: Quadruped, plant motif & perhaps neck & head of a water bird. C: Quadruped to r. Hieroglyph (?) in front.	Yule 1980: 121 Index: Men 24; Tamvaki 1976: 210, no. 9; Matz 1928: pl. 18, 7; Evans 1894: 344, fig. 69.
<i>CMS XI</i> 206	MSA (283).	Unknown provenance.	A: pithos with conical foot & 2 vertical handles. In front of a folding chair (?) a figure with 1 hand over the vase (a potter?). B: 2 animal foreparts conjoined in a s-shaped motif. C: 2 bucrania.	Also in monsters catalogue.

<i>CMS XII 44</i>	NYMM (26.31.86)	Crete. Unknown provenance.	A: Hooked cross. The face has been fractured & partly engraved in the semblance of a body, head & "mouth" (beaked). B: Hound. C: Wild boar within hatched border.	
<i>CMS XII 67</i>	NYMM (26.31.116)	Crete. Unknown provenance.	4-sided prism, steatite. A: Man en face with beaked head turned to r. Slim, wing-like arms. B: 2 registers, sprouting form in the upper. C: S-shaped motif. D: unidentifiable motif.	
<i>CMS XII 2D</i>	NYMM (26.31.88)	Crete. Unknown provenance.	A: Beetle. B: 2 fish. C: Seated figure to l. with a rather small beak & what resembles a crest. Unidentifiable motif in front.	
Fig. 33b	HM (10576)	Phaistos palace, Lower West Court Sanctuary Complex, Room LIV (preparation room). Plastered floor & bench, cupboard. Also from LIV: stone kernos with 12 cupules (2 stone vases found in situ in cupules), stone lamp with double axe depression, grinding tools, pottery (1 more fruitstand). MM II date. Since fragments also from Room XXVIII A, it may have been used in an upstairs room.	Kamarea fruitstand. Large central female figure ("goddess") holding lilies with her upraised arms. Her flanking "votaries" are significantly smaller (all look to r.) & have 1 arm raised (dancing?). Even smaller figures, bent over with outstretched arms & dotted robes, depicted in groups of 3 around the rim. 4 more dancing female figures shown on the upper surface of the foot-plate. All have bird-like faces & wear skirts of animal hide. Flowers suggest outdoor setting.	German 2005: 58-59, fig. 78; Nikolaidou 2002: 87, fig. 5.5; Stamos 2001: 63; Walberg 2001: 14, fig. 11; Goodison & Morris 1998b: 121-123, fig. 54a-c; Walberg 1997: 77-79; N. Marinatos 1993: 148; Immerwahr 1990: 34, pl. III; Gesell 1985: 12, 17, 124-127, no. 103g, pl. 39; Tamvaki 1976: 266, no. 4; Levi 1964: 38, fig. 25.
Fig. 33a	HM (10583)	Phaistos palace, Lower West Court Sanctuary Complex, Room LIII (anteroom to Complex), found in the closet (full of cups: drinking area?). Also from LIII: circular clay offering table, pottery. MM II date.	Kamarea shallow bowl. "Epiphany" scene, with female figure flanked by 2 larger female dancers. The goddess has loops that snake down on either side of her body, but no arms. The dancers bend above her with outstretched arms. All 3 have bird-like faces & wear hide skirts (except for the "goddess"). The small lily blossom near the rim may indicate outdoor setting.	German 2005: 58, fig. 77; Stamos 2001: 63; Walberg 2001: 14; Goodison & Morris 1998b: 121-123, fig. 54d; Branigan 1993: 136, fig. 7.12; Immerwahr 1990: 33, pl. II; Gesell 1985: 12, 17, 124, no. 103e, pl. 40; Tamvaki 1976: 267, no. 5; Levi 1964: 38, fig. 24.

	HM (10610)	Phaistos palace, Lower West Court Sanctuary Complex, Room LVIII (storeroom, built over in Neopalatial). Room divided into 5 sections. Amphora from section d with a niche. Also from there: MM II pottery including horned “firebox”, miniature vases, fruitstand, pithos.	Kameres amphora. Male figure with beaked head standing to r. L. hand raised. Saluting large plant depicted next to him?	Stamos 2001: 63; Gesell 1985: 125, no. 103j; Weingarten 1983a: 93, pl. 11H; Levi 1976: 116-118, pl. LXVIIb, fig. 161; idem 1957/58: 201- 204.
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Table 3: Neopalatial depictions of figures with bird attributes

Re. No.	Location	Context	Description	References
<i>CMS II.3</i> 124	HM (919)	Tylissos villa. No context given in the publication.	Lentoid, steatite. Female figure with aniconic head to r. Perhaps bent arms suggest rotation. In the field pair of lines & branch (?).	Kenna 1966: 73, pl. 6; idem 1964b: 939; Chatzidakis <i>ÉtCrét III</i> : pl. 4i, cited in <i>CMS II.3</i> 124; idem 1912: 215, no. 9.
<i>CMS II.3</i> 169 Fig. 61	HM (1607)	Knossos area, label reading “Ayios Ioannis, from tholos tomb N. Paspati”.	Lentoid, steatite. SH diagonal. 2 female figures to l., each with their r. arm raised (schematic arms). Bird-heads to l. & upwards. Long skirts.	Kenna 1966a: 72, pl. 3.
<i>CMS II.4</i> 112	HM (1282)	Knossos, “House of the Frescoes”. 1923.	Lentoid, steatite. Female figure with wide skirt. Schematic representation. Perhaps the arms were meant to represent wings?	

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### *Journals and Series*

<i>AA</i>	Archäologischer Anzeiger
<i>AAA</i>	Αρχαιολογικά Ανάλεκτα εξ Αθηνών
<i>AE</i>	Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς
<i>AEA</i>	Aegean Archaeological Studies and Monographs in Mediterranean Archaeology and Civilisation. Warsaw
<i>Aegaeum</i>	Aegaeum: Annales d'archéologie égéenne de l'Université de Liège
<i>AfO</i>	Archiv für Orientforschung
<i>Agora</i>	The Athenian Agora. Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Princeton 1953- : American School of Classical Studies at Athens
<i>Ägypten und Levante</i>	Ägypten und Levante: Internationale Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Archäologie und deren Nachbargebiete. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Ägyptische Kommission
<i>AJA</i>	American Journal of Archaeology. The Journal of the Archaeological Institute of America
<i>AM</i>	Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung
<i>AnatSt</i>	Anatolian Studies. Journal of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara
<i>AnnPisa</i>	Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa
<i>AntCl</i>	L'Antiquité Classique
<i>AntCr</i>	Antichità Cretesi

<b><i>Antiquity</i></b>	Antiquity. A Quarterly Review of Archaeology
<b><i>AOAT</i></b>	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
<b><i>AR</i></b>	Archaeological Reports (supplement to <i>JHS</i> )
<b><i>Archaeology</i></b>	Archaeology. An Official Publication of the Archaeological Institute of America
<b><i>Archaeometry</i></b>	Archaeometry. Bulletin of the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art, Oxford University
<b><i>ArchDelt</i></b>	Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον
<b><i>ArOr</i></b>	Archiv Orientální
<b><i>ASAtene</i></b>	Annuario della Scuola archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni italiane in Oriente
<b><i>Athenaion</i></b>	Αθήναιον
<b><i>Atiqot</i></b>	Atiqot. Journal of the Israel Department of Antiquities
<b><i>BABesch</i></b>	Bulletin antieke beschaving. Annual Papers on Classical Archaeology
<b><i>BaM</i></b>	Baghdader Mitteilungen
<b><i>BAR-IS</i></b>	British Archaeological Reports, International Series
<b><i>BASOR</i></b>	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
<b><i>BCH</i></b>	Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique
<b><i>BCH Suppl.</i></b>	Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique. Supplément
<b><i>BdA</i></b>	Bolletino de l'Arte
<b><i>BÉFAR</i></b>	Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome
<b><i>BICS</i></b>	Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London

<b>BMFA</b>	Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
<b>BOREAS</b>	Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Boreas. Uppsala Studies in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Civilizations. Uppsala: Uppsala Universiteit.
<b>BSA</b>	Annual of the British School at Athens
<b>CJ</b>	Classical Journal
<b>Clara Rhodos</b>	Clara Rhodos. Studi e Materiali Publicati a Cura dell'Istituto Storico-Archeologico di Rodi
<b>CMS</b>	Corpus der Minoischen und Mykenischen Siegel
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<b><i>CretChron</i></b>	Κρητικά Χρονικά. Κείμενα και μελέται της κρητικής ιστορίας.
<b><i>CronCatania</i></b>	Cronache di Archeologia e di Storia dell' Arte, Università di Catania, Istituto di Archeologia.
<b><i>DenkschrWien</i></b>	Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Wien, Philosophisch- historische Klasse. Denkschriften.
<b><i>Ergon</i></b>	Το Έργον της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας.
<b><i>ÉtCrét</i></b>	Études Crétoises. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner.
<b><i>Expedition</i></b>	Expedition. Bulletin of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania.
<b><i>Hesperia</i></b>	Hesperia. The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.
<b><i>Hydra</i></b>	Hydra. Working Papers in Middle Bronze Age Studies.
<b><i>IJNA</i></b>	International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and Underwater Exploration.
<b><i>INA</i></b>	Institute of Nautical Archaeology.
<b><i>Iraq</i></b>	Iraq, published by the British School of Archaeology in Iraq.
<b><i>Jdl</i></b>	Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts.
<b><i>JEOL</i></b>	Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-egyptisch genootschap "Ex Oriente Lux".
<b><i>JHS</i></b>	Journal of Hellenic Studies
<b><i>JMA</i></b>	Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology
<b><i>JNES</i></b>	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
<b><i>JPR</i></b>	Journal of Prehistoric Religion
<b><i>JRGZM</i></b>	Jahrbuch des Römisch-germanischen Zentralmuseums, Mainz.

<b><i>JRIBA</i></b>	Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects
<b><i>Kadmos</i></b>	Kadmos. Zeitschrift für vor- und frühgriechische Epigraphik.
<b><i>Klio</i></b>	Klio. Beiträge zur alten Geschichte
<b><i>MarbWPr</i></b>	Marburger Winckelmann-Programm
<b><i>MemRodi</i></b>	Memorie pubblicate a cura dell'Istituto Storico-Archeologico F.E.R.T. e della R. Deputazione di storia patrica per Rodi
<b><i>Minos</i></b>	Minos. Revista de filología egea
<b><i>Mnemosyne</i></b>	Mnemosyne. Bibliotheca classica batava
<b><i>MonAnt</i></b>	Monumenti Antichi: Pubblicati per cura della R. Accademia dei Lincei. Roma
<b><i>OA</i></b>	Oriens Antiquus
<b><i>OJA</i></b>	Oxford Journal of Archaeology
<b><i>OpAth</i></b>	Opuscula Atheniensia
<b><i>PAE</i></b>	Πρακτικά της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας
<b><i>PBF</i></b>	Prähistorische Bronzefunde. Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz. Seminar für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt a. M. Seminar für Ur- und Frühgeschichte der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster. München: C. H. Beck Verlag; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
<b><i>PP</i></b>	La parola del passato
<b><i>PZ</i></b>	Prähistorische Zeitschrift
<b><i>QAL</i></b>	Quaderni di Archeologia della Libia
<b><i>Qedem</i></b>	Qedem. Publications of the Institute of Archaeology, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem
<b><i>R.A</i></b>	Revue archéologique

<b><i>RDAC</i></b>	Annual Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus
<b><i>REG</i></b>	Revue des études grecques
<b><i>Rendiconti</i></b>	Rendiconti dell'Accademia di archeologia, lettere e belle arti. Napoli
<b><i>RLA</i></b>	Reallexikon der Assyriologie und voderasiatischen Archäologie
<b><i>SBWien</i></b>	Sitzungsberichte, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Wien), Philosophisch-historische Klasse
<b><i>SIMA</i></b>	Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology
<b><i>SIMA-PB</i></b>	Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature. Pocketbook
<b><i>SkrAth</i></b>	Skrifter Utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen, Series in 4°
<b><i>SMEA</i></b>	Studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici
<b><i>StMat</i></b>	Studi e Materiali. Soprintendenza ai beni archeologici per la Toscana
<b><i>Syria</i></b>	Syria. Revue d'art oriental et d'archéologie
<b><i>Talanta</i></b>	Talanta. Proceedings of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society
<b><i>Tiryns</i></b>	Tiryns I-XII: Forschungen und Berichte. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Athen. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern
<b><i>UMI</i></b>	University Microfilms
<b><i>ΕΕΦΣΠΑ</i></b>	Επιστημονική Επετηρίς της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής του Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών
<b><i>Πελοποννησιακά</i></b>	Πελοποννησιακά. Περιοδικό της Εταιρείας Πελοποννησιακών Σπουδών.

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