

The
GODDESS
and the
WARRIOR

*The Naked Goddess and Mistress of Animals
in Early Greek Religion*

NANNÓ MARINATOS



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PREFACE

What prompted this study is the seeming paradox that female nudity in the Near East is not only an indication of fertility but also a sign of sexuality and danger. This conclusion was reached thanks to iconography which is the primary vehicle for interpreting religion in this book.

I gained a great deal of inspiration from Othmar Keel's work which eloquently stresses the autonomy of images *vis-à-vis* the texts. He also organized an entire series, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis*, which deals with Near Eastern religion and images.

I am grateful to Walter Burkert for opening up paths of inquiry which led to the relationship between myth and ritual in the Near East. He has taken the trouble to read the manuscript and suggested various improvements. I must also thank Mario Torelli for inspiring articles and discussions in the summers of 1997 and 1998 on liminality and rites of passage.

Angeliki Lebessi has discussed several issues with me. I thank her for her support and for suggestions on the bibliography while the manuscript was being written.

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The errors remain mine.

Nannó Marinatos

ABBREVIATIONS

AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AnnArchStorAnt	<i>Annali di Archeologia e Storia Antica</i>
AntKunst	<i>Antike Kunst</i>
ArchEphem	<i>Archaeologische Ephemeris</i>
ArchDelt	<i>Archaiologikon Deltion</i>
AsAtene	<i>Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiani in Oriente</i>
BCH	<i>Bulletin de correspondance hellenique</i>
Bib. Helv. Rom.	<i>Biblioteka Helvetika Romana</i>
BSA	<i>Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
CMS	<i>Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel</i> , ed. F.Matz and I.Pini, Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz, 1964–
Evans, PM I–IV	Evans, A.J., <i>The Palace of Minos at Knossos, I–IV</i> , London, 1921–36
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
LBA	Late Bronze Age
LIMC	<i>Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae</i> , Zurich and Munich, 1974–

THE NAKED GODDESS AND MISTRESS OF ANIMALS IN THE NEAR EAST AND GREECE

The naked goddess and the goddess who lifts her skirt

That the naked figures in Greece of the Orientalizing period are of Near Eastern derivation has been universally acknowledged.¹ What might be worth re-thinking is the meaning of their nudity. Does it always denote fertility, which is the most common assumption, or can their nudity also have another meaning? 'A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become nude', says A. Stewart.² Our female figures are nude in this sense because their nudity is charged with sexuality.

Examining the narrative context of the nude figures on Near Eastern seals may be rewarding. On cylinders or their imprints, the naked females do not stand alone but are associated with other figures, animals and symbols. We thus get a visual context which is missing when we study solitary clay or bronze figurines of similar appearance.

We shall consider the females on cylinder seals whose main characteristic is nudity. Some of the naked figures are inactive, others draw their dress to the side in order to reveal their pubic triangle. They appear most frequently in Syrian glyptic, although there are examples also from the Babylonian, Capadocian and Anatolian regions.³ It must be admitted that regional and chronological variation affects the interpretation of glyptic scenes as does also context.⁴ Further, not all naked females are unanimously accepted as goddesses, but good arguments have been made to the effect that they are.⁵ Despite these limitations, the examples which will be discussed fall into a pattern in which sexuality is coupled with power.

One frequent assumption must be challenged. If the naked figures are goddesses, they are for the most part not major figures of the pantheon, Ishtar or Anat. On seals we often meet with a minor naked goddess, whose name we do not even know, but who seems to be linked with sorcery and magic, and who has the role of an intermediary.⁶ She makes contact between the worshipper and his gods possible.

We shall start with an Old Babylonian seal dating to the second millennium BC (Figure 1.1), where the naked goddess appears together with a man of equal size, a ruler perhaps.⁷ She has her hands folded on her chest, a gesture which may



Figure 1.1 Second millennium BC Old Babylonian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 102

suggest passivity. To the left is a guilloche pattern which divides the field in two registers. Above are kneeling men with spears (warriors), below two fierce winged griffin-demons and a suckling goat. The symbols juxtapose two worlds: on the one hand fecundity and motherhood, warriors and fierce demons on the other.⁸ One might argue that the warrior symbols symbolize the male god, the suckling goat the naked goddess. As we shall see further on, however, the goddess can also be associated with motifs of danger. Another point worth considering is that men, rather than women, are associated with the nude goddess.

Another example, dating to the early second millennium BC (Figure 1.2), shows a naked, frontally depicted goddess of size equal to the god (or ruler) who touches her. To the left a monkey worships her which indicates her divine status. Further yet to the left are three figures who, to judge by their gestures, may be worshippers. The two principal figures are involved in an interaction of a clearly erotic nature.⁹ Again the emphasis is on sexuality, rather than fertility.

On an Old Babylonian provincial cylinder of the same date as the previous example (Figure 1.3), another pattern is evident. The naked figure stands on a podium, her hands are below her breasts, as on figurines (see Figure 1.22). To her left are two contesting bull-men one of whom has an erect phallus, a clear reference to sexual arousal. To the right of the goddess, a male god stands on a bull. He may be a weather-god, her partner. The podium may well reflect the actual cult practice of statues or statuettes placed on bases.¹⁰ Sexual union between the god and naked goddess is implied on this seal also; there is no evidence of fertility.

On one more second millennium BC Babylonian cylinder (Figure 1.4), the naked goddess stands on a podium worshipped by a monkey. One difference from the previous examples is that she is clearly subsidiary to two major figures, most likely gods, who are facing each other. An astral symbol features between the two gods. To the right is a stylized palm tree.¹¹ Because the naked goddess is not the focus of the scene, she is not herself involved in a sexual encounter. Rather she acts as a sign for sexuality; she is a magical image, a function which she also has when found on pendant amulets to be discussed on page 13. Despite her



Figure 1.2 Second millennium BC provincial

Babylonian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 81



Figure 1.3 Second millennium BC Old Babylonian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 85

marginality it cannot be doubted that the naked figure is a goddess because she stands on a podium. In addition, she is occasionally worshipped by monkeys (Figures 1.2, 1.4).¹² However it should be stressed that her small size reveals a low rank in the divine hierarchy.

On two more Old Syrian cylinders of the second millennium BC (Figures 1.5, 1.6), the naked goddess stands passively between two figures. On Figure 1.5, a deity with a tall hat stands next to a stylized palm and holds a cup as if to receive a libation; a monkey worships to the right. Next is the naked goddess facing the opposite direction. Her attitude is passive. Behind the naked goddess is a worshipper. Thus, the function of the naked figure here is that of an intermediary.¹³ On Figure 1.6 the naked goddess appears twice. To the left she stands on top of a kneeling man flanked by lions while she herself is flanked by sphinxes. To the right she appears between two men with tall hats. Is the duplication due to



Figure 1.4 Second millennium BC Old Babylonian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 95

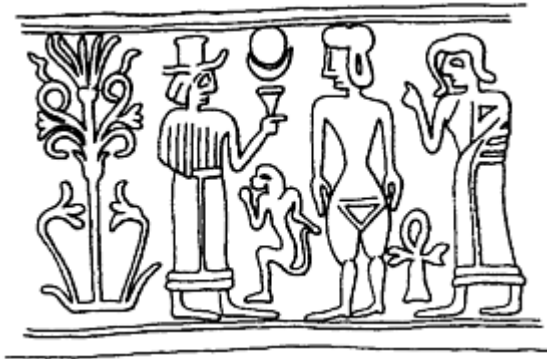


Figure 1.5 Second millennium BC Old Syrian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 130

symmetry, or is it magical reinforcement?¹⁴ At any rate she is powerful, dominating and unambiguously associated with men.

A small naked goddess with folded arms appears on a Kassite seal of the second millennium (Figure. 1.7) where she mediates between a god and a suppliant (king?); below her are goat heads; above her is a griffin. The motifs are references to power (griffin) and nature (goats).¹⁵

In short, the main role of the nude figure has been established as that of a sexual female who is sometimes an intermediary between major gods and humans. In all cases that we have seen, she is associated with men, not women. Further, she has attributes which link her with nature which means that she cannot be completely detached from the concept of fertility/nature goddess. Goats, fish and birds designate the different realms of the natural world. We shall meet with similar features in the mythological persona of Greek Circe (Chapter Two).



Figure 1.6 Second millennium BC Old Syrian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 131



Figure 1.7 Second millennium BC Kassite cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 139

A second iconographical type of a sexual female divinity will be examined next: the figure who reveals her genitals. She is not passive, and is never fully naked. This means that sexuality is even more pronounced since the goddess reveals her genitals by her own initiative.¹⁶ An (often seated) male normally receives her attentions. He may be a ruler or a king; the distinction is not always easy to make and sometimes both a god and a ruler are present.¹⁷ This type of representation is mostly found in Syria.¹⁸

In many cases the goddess who lifts her skirt stands on a bull, which shows her divine nature and which also may represent the attribute of her male divine partner (compare with Figure 1.3). The bull also indicates her own dominance over the animal world. On an Old Syrian seal (Figure 1.8), the partner is a young war god, and the goddess stands on his sacred animal. In her hands, the goddess holds

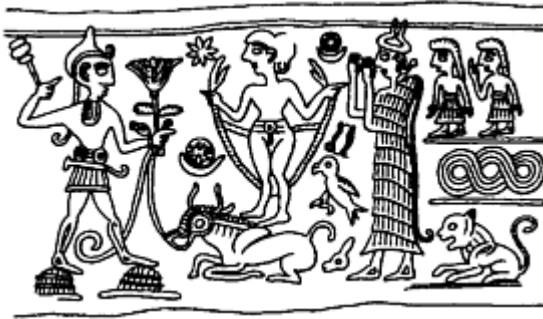


Figure 1.8 Second millennium BC Old Syrian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 269



Figure 1.9 Second millennium BC Old Syrian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 270

something like a rope which has been plausibly interpreted as an abbreviation of her skirt. The skirt is pulled open.¹⁹ On his part, the god stands on two abbreviated mountains and holds insignia of power in each hand: a mace, an aggressive weapon, and a snake coupled with a plant. The plant is probably an erotic symbol, but the snake is an enemy overcome.²⁰ A hawk with the Egyptian crown to the right may be a symbol of power. Behind the bird is another figure (goddess with a long garment and a horn crown?) with raised hands. Two small figures with slightly bent heads above the guilloche are worshippers. A roaring lion at the right edge of the scene, a symbol of power is also worthy of note. This seal presents a whole array of images alluding to sexuality and power. There is no question here that the goddess who opens her skirt is the focus of the scene and that union with her partner is implied.

Two more Old Syrian cylinders (Figures 1.9, 1.10) show the goddess on a bull encountering the war god.²¹ In Figure 1.9, the god again stands on the two abbreviated mountains in a attitude of aggressive display of the weapons which he holds in each of his hands. In Figure 1.10 the bearded god faces the naked female who opens her skirt. A sacred marriage is implied.



Figure 1.10 Second millennium BC Old Syrian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 271



Figure 1.11 Second millennium BC Old Syrian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 281

The role of the goddess in these scenes is to animate and sexually arouse the war god. Note that the human worshippers are men in both the above examples.

On other occasions, the goddess pulls her skirt aside for a seated man, as on an Old Syrian cylinder (Figure 1.11). The man has no divine attributes and can plausibly be interpreted as a ruler, perhaps a deified dead ruler; an exact interpretation is difficult. Another male follows the goddess, who is most likely the owner of the seal.²² He is the worshipper on whose behalf the goddess intercedes by lifting her skirt. Thus, the goddess who reveals her genitals can also be an intermediary and a 'magical image'. It is as though her sexuality would mediate between the enthroned figure and the worshipper. The side motifs, a flying bird and a fish, symbolize the realms of air and sea respectively and add another dimension to the goddess, relating her to fecundity in nature.²³



Figure 1.12 Second millennium BC Old Syrian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 300

Finally, let us consider a third scheme in which both types of sexual goddesses coexist. On another Old Syrian seal (Figure 1.12), a goddess whose pubic triangle is revealed stands on a podium and faces a bearded ruler.²⁴ Yet here we also meet our familiar naked goddess with the folded arms who stands on a podium. She is of much smaller size, and she is not interacting with the bearded ruler. To the left is a greeting Lamma (intermediary) goddess. It is thus possible to have both types of sexual deities on the same seal. The small naked goddess is a magical image rather than a principal actor, her job being to reinforce sexuality.²⁵ The rest of the scene focuses on the sexual encounter between the larger goddess and the ruler.

In short, the function of the goddess revealing her genitals is to activate the sexuality of the male god, although, on some occasions, she uses her sexuality to mediate or placate on behalf of a worshipper. In addition to being erotic, she is unmistakably associated with animals.²⁶ The small naked divinity, on the other hand, is sometimes not a participant in the narrative. Her function is to guarantee the efficacy of the encounter and reinforce sexuality.

Sexuality has therefore a double meaning on the cylinder seals. It may signify 'sacred marriage' or it may be magic, ensuring success (and by extension protection) to the owner of the seal.

Sexuality and danger: the naked goddess on Syrian seals

We shall now turn to another aspect of the naked goddess on seals: aggression and danger revealed by the accompanying filling motifs on the field of the cylinders. These filling motifs are a type of sign language; they expand the range of associations of the main scene and reveal concepts that are important.

On an Old Babylonian seal (Figure 1.13), the principal scene consists of a man (or god) and goddess facing each other.²⁷ On the left side, the subsidiary representation consists of two naked goddesses engraved horizontally, forming the dividing border between scenes of violent contests. In the top row of motifs,



Figure 1.13 Second millennium BC Old Babylonian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 100

predators attack their prey. In the lower row (right) a griffin attacks a man and (centre) two men are engaged in a boxing contest. To the left, there is an erotic encounter between two figures. This particular grouping of motifs suggests a connection between eroticism on the one hand, and danger/aggression on the other. The two longitudinally engraved goddesses share in all these aspects, they are the dividing line but also the link that brings sexuality and danger together.

On another Old Babylonian seal (Figure 1.14), a naked goddess with folded arms is engraved above a lion attacking a goat.²⁸ To the left is a bullman with a weapon. The main scene is at the right: a god, who grabs the goat's horn, a Lamma goddess, and worshippers in a vertical mirror-like arrangement. Our interest is in the naked goddess who, despite her passive attitude and small size, looms large on the symbolic level. Predatorial killing has no obvious narrative connection with the naked goddess. The message lies in the efficacious juxtaposition of seduction and danger, life and death. Aggression is further suggested by the bull-man on the upper left who holds up a sword(?) to the naked goddess. References to the world of nature are not lacking either, since a worshipping monkey and a stylized palm frame the scene to the left.

Another Old Babylonian cylinder seems to betray a Syrian influence.²⁹ In Figure 1.15, we see a naked figure offering a drink to a bearded god; behind her, on the lower register, is a predator who threatens his prey with an open mouth; above are scorpions. The predatorial attack signals the dangerous side of the goddess.

On a Mitanni seal of the second millennium BC (Figure 1.16), a naked goddess with folded arms faces a bull wrestler who steps on a subjugated bull.³⁰ Behind the pair, to the right, are two predatorial scenes above and below a guilloche pattern: two griffins and two lions respectively attack a goat.

These glyptic scenes show that the naked goddess is not only a carrier of erotic connotations: she is also dangerous, as the scenes of predatorial killing indicate. Sexual females in Near East iconography can be aggressive and terrible.³¹



Figure 1.14 Second millennium BC Old Babylonian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 98



Figure 1.15 Second millennium BC Old Babylonian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 108

According to one interpretation of a problematic Ugaritic text, Anat swallows the genitals of her partner during intercourse; she becomes pregnant but her partner's sexuality is destroyed for ever.³² Other texts have Anat killing soldiers and enjoying their blood.³³

Most moving is the story of Aqhat, a beautiful young warrior who falls victim to the violent goddess Anat. Aqhat has a bow which Anat covets. The goddess tries various tricks to obtain it but Aqhat refuses, evidently thinking that females should not own weapons. After both threats and promises fail to persuade the young man to give up his weapon (symbolic of his male identity), Anat decides to have him murdered. She hires a drunken sailor who takes the shape of a vulture and attaches himself to the belt of the goddess. The two constitute a terrifying duo combining feminine charms and violence. The vulture tears Aqhat up. There follows lamentation, perhaps even regret, from Anat (the text is fragmentary). The core of the story, however, remains the violence of Anat's actions.³⁴



Figure 1.16 Second millennium BC Mitanni cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 141

Other Near Eastern goddesses also are known to destroy their lovers, such as Kybele and Ishtar.³⁵ The conclusion is that the sexuality of females in the Near East has an ambiguous and highly dangerous character. We shall return to this issue when we discuss amulets and plaques of nude goddesses.

The naked goddess as a Mistress of Animals on Near Eastern seals

We have seen that the naked goddess is associated with animals in various ways. As a mistress of beasts she can be shown in either of two schemes. She may be standing on an animal (as in Figures 1.8 to 1.10) or she may hold an animal forcibly in each hand.

It is the second scheme which will be explored here. It originated in Syria in the second millennium BC. Earlier examples in Mesopotamia featured only male Masters of Animals.

The naked Mistress combines sexuality with power. Let us note first that subjugation of animals is a sign of an ordered universe in the Near East.³⁶ The naked Mistress of Animals combines two sources of power: she has the potency of the female nude body and the power to subdue wild animals.

Let us begin with a negative example. On a Mitanni seal (Figure 1.17), a naked goddess with folded arms is flanked by goats. Next to her is a palm tree of life surmounted by birds.³⁷ She is not a Mistress of Animals in the way that I have defined because she does not hold the animals forcibly. On another seal of the second millennium BC, however, a schematized goddess (apparently naked) holds a goat by its horns with one hand and seizes a lion by its ears with the other. Two goats flank a tree of life whereas a griffin flies above (Figure 1.18).³⁸ Here the goddess looks more dangerous than the previous case and appears to have supremacy over both predator and prey.



Figure 1.17 Second millennium BC Mitanni seal impression

Source: Winter (1983) figure 144

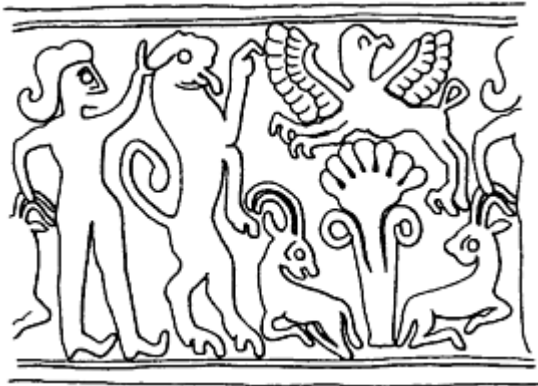


Figure 1.18 Second millennium BC cylinder seal of unknown provenance

Source: Winter (1983) figure 147

The heraldic scheme Mistress of Animals appears on a Middle Assyrian imprint. She is in the nude and holds animals upside-down; next to her is a bull-man also a Master of Animals (Figure 1.19).³⁹

We now move from the second millennium BC to the first and come closer to the Orientalizing period of Greece. The next example dates to the Iron Age. From North Syria comes a seal with a nude goddess who holds a predator lion and an ungulate prey by a hind leg. Two more lions to the side indicate the violent aspects of her nature (Figure 1.20).⁴⁰ Later we shall come back to this scheme on other media dating to the end of the Bronze Age and the Iron Age.

We must conclude the discussion of seals with an important point. They were not only used on administrative documents, but saved as amulets as well, engraved with magical images which protected the owner and conferred good luck to him.⁴¹ Our investigation of female nudity shows that the naked goddess is not only powerful in terms of controlling the natural world but that she is apotropaic as well. She brings good luck to him who wears the seal, wards off evil and thereby



Figure 1.19 Second millennium BC Middle Assyrian cylinder seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 146



Figure 1.20 Iron Age cylinder seal

Source: Barnett (1957) figure 29b

protects the seal-owner. Further, she is dangerous. It is important to keep these conclusions in mind for they will prove useful in understanding the so-called Astarte or Aphrodite naked images of the Orientalizing period in Greece.

Naked figurines from Syro-Palestine

Naked figurines are ubiquitous in the Syro-Palestinian corridor. They are also found in Mesopotamia, Syria and even Egypt throughout the Bronze Age and early Iron Age. As Pritchard notes, ‘they have been found in every major excavation in Palestine’.⁴² Naked female figurines come in many forms and materials. They are free standing, made of clay or metal or they can be incorporated in articles of toiletry, such as fly-whisks or mirror handles. It will be argued here that, in most cases, the figures functioned as protective devices bringing good luck, health and

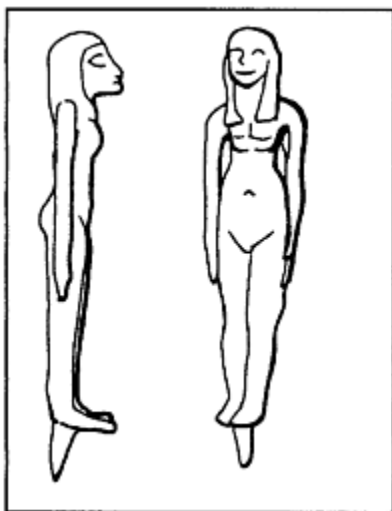


Figure 1.21 Canaanite metal figurine

Source: Negbi (1976) figure 127, no. 1591

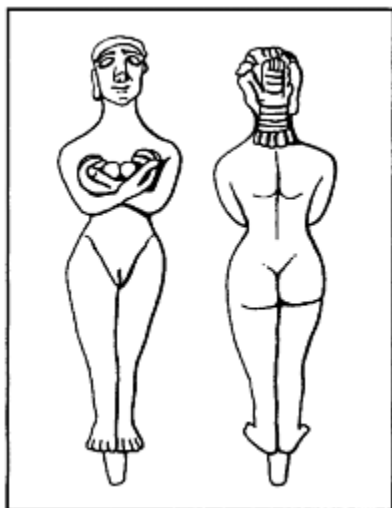


Figure 1.22 Canaanite metal figurine

Source: Negbi (1976) figure 85, no. 1551

beauty, perhaps even success in love: a mirror or a fly-whisk is a very personal object. A function of some naked figurines as fertility charms is not excluded.

The iconographical types have a few variants.⁴³



Figure 1.23 Iron Age terracotta plaque from Bet Mirsim

Source: Winter (1983) figure 45

- The nude female has her arms down alongside her body (Figure 1.21).⁴⁴
- The hands are folded on the chest as on the engraved examples on the cylinder seals. A variant gesture is a display of the breasts (Figure 1.22).⁴⁵
- The nude female holds her breasts and or covers the pudenda (Figure 1.23).⁴⁶

What the various types have in common is a passive attitude and an emblematic, non-narrative character. More importantly: there is a pronounced emphasis on sexuality.

Distinct from clay figurines are plaques made of clay or metal (bronze, silver or even gold) depicting naked goddesses. They have a similar typology. The terracotta ones, which are most often found in domestic contexts, were mass produced by use of moulds from the late Bronze Age. They were probably set up against the wall in private households; occasionally they are found in sanctuaries or graves where they presumably protected the dead.⁴⁷ Few examples show one or more nude figures within an edifice.⁴⁸

The more costly plaques were worn as personal ornaments at least when they have a suspension device to be hung around the neck (Figure 1.24).⁴⁹ They are mostly found in Syria. The goddesses have Hathor hairstyles, which connects them with the goddess of love (this is not the case with Greek versions where the Daedalic hairstyle prevails). Often they are mistresses of animals, and may step on lions or hold inverted animals (Figure 1.24).⁵⁰

On Figure 1.24 a and b, the goddess is flanked by snakes who curve sharply on each side of her hips.⁵¹ On Figure 1.25 she is holding lotus plants and steps on a half moon.⁵² Lotus plants have erotic connotations, whereas the snakes are



Figure 1.24a Late Bronze Age gold amulet from Minet el Beida, Syria

Source: Winter (1983) figure 42

magical. It is interesting to note that snakes are interchangeable with plants on these figures.⁵³ As we shall see, these attributes also appear in connection with Egyptian Qu-du-shu who combines the magical and erotic properties of the nude female.⁵⁴ These attributes do not appear in connection with nude figurines manufactured in Greece.

One important point concerning the Syro-Palestinian metal plaques is that they were pendant amulets with an apotropaic function.⁵⁵ A beautiful golden pendant with a naked Mistress of Animals was found in the shipwreck of Ulu Burun, off the coast of Turkey. It may have belonged to a Syrian sailor, or have been brought as a valuable commodity to the Aegean.⁵⁶ In this instance we have concrete evidence of the exportation of the magical plaques from Syria to places abroad.

As for the figurines, they are normally interpreted as denoting fertility. However, this assumption has been called into question recently and a connection with initiation of young women has been proposed.⁵⁷ I suspect that this is the right way of viewing them, although I suggest that they were used by young men as well. They could have been protective icons in the household and were perhaps subsequently dedicated in the temples. We shall review the evidence for this below.

The important feature that explains the function of the figurines is nudity; yet it is not necessary to identify them with Astarte since aspects of the naked figures



Figure 1.24b Late Bronze Age gold amulet (Canaanite)

Source: Negbi (1976) figure 128, number 1698

do not correspond exactly to any particular deity. This conclusion has also been reached by Pritchard and other scholars in their study of Near Eastern figurines.⁵⁸

One further object will be discussed. It is a cult-stand from Ta'anach, Ancient Palestine dating from the Iron Age (Figure 1.26). The stand is divided into four zones and is decorated with sphinxes and lions. On the second tier from the top, two lions flank two goats who guard a tree of life. The stand thus represents a microcosm. On the bottom tier, at the foundation of the entire structure, stands a naked Mistress of Animals holding two roaring lions by their ears. The cult stand is a kind of shrine model, which the Mistress of Animals protects and supports.⁵⁹ Note that she is not an image inside the model temple but she guards it. Likewise, the wild predators and sphinxes act as guardians.

The following points should be stressed in conclusion. First, the Mistress of Animals denotes power and sexuality. On the plaques and on the seals she has an apotropaic character.⁶⁰ Second, the power is reinforced when she is naked. Third, the naked figurines, found in domestic and sacred contexts, may also have had a apotropaic character and, by extension, a protective function in the family house-shrine, although they do not hold animals. The naked figurines correspond to the solitary naked goddess on seals (Figures 1.4 to 1.7).

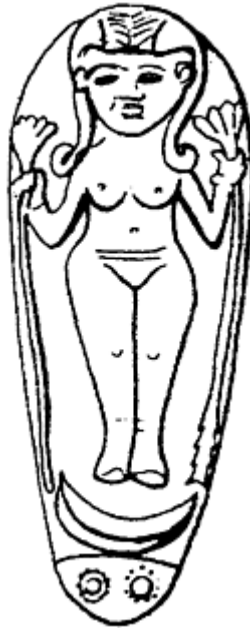


Figure 1.25 Late Bronze Age gold amulet from Minet el Beida, Syria

Source: Winter (1983) figure 43

Egyptian Qu-du-shu

As a rule, there are no naked goddesses in Egypt. However, naked small figurines occur from the eleventh dynasty onwards. Some were found at Hathor's temple at Denderah, others come from a tomb at Beni Hassan. Eighteenth dynasty examples from Deir el Bahri are said to be votives.⁶¹ In short they occur in domestic, burial and sanctuary contexts, in graves of children as well as adults, males as well as females.⁶² One interpretation is that they ensure fertility: 'Placing the figurines in the vicinity of a higher power, such as a deity or a transfigured spirit, charged them with *heka* to act as fertility charms at all stages from conception to the rearing of infants'.⁶³

Slabs engraved with the imagery of a frontal naked goddess who normally holds snakes and plants in her hands, however, seem to have a different function. This deity makes her appearance in the New Kingdom. She was called by the Egyptians 'Qd-s', a west Semitic word which may mean 'the sacred one', a title which becomes a name (Figure 1.27). She is a goddess of magic. She brings good luck in various situations of life crises, especially in matters of health and sexuality. She is often depicted with male partners, specifically, the ithyphallic god Min, as on a *stela* now in the British Museum.⁶⁴ Sometimes her partner is Re, other times Seth (Figure 1.28). Once only, she is greeted by a woman.⁶⁵ Qu-du-shu, as she is often transliterated, is a Syro/Palestinian import to Egypt. She represents the erotic

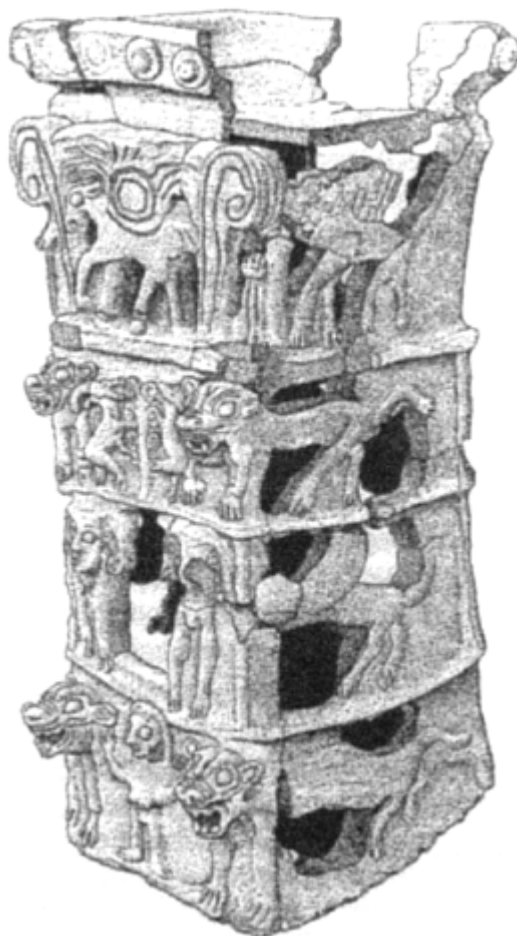


Figure 1.26 Iron Age cult stand from Ta'anach

Source: Mettinger (1995) page 165 figure 7.14

and magical (apotropaic) aspect of female deities. Principally she is the naked goddess of Syria, but can also be seen as a culmination of Sekhmet, Isis and Hathor. It is important to consider her aspect as Mistress of Animals which is a signal of power, seduction and danger.⁶⁶ Yet she is not a fertility goddess *per se* but rather a deity of magic; her entourage consists of males rather than females. The snakes that she holds in her hands show that she is a magician and a snake handler, whereas the lotus plants emphasize her erotic side.⁶⁷

The dedicators of the *stelai* engraved with Qu-du-shu images were sometimes Egyptians, sometimes Syrians. It is clear that the potency of the naked female image was spreading throughout the eastern Mediterranean by the late Bronze Age. As far as the place of origin of Qu-du-shu is concerned, it has been suggested



Figure 1.27 Qu-du-shu on a New Kingdom Egyptian stela

Source: Keel (1994) figure 96

that she originated in Egypt and was transformed in Syria-Palestine under the influence of the naked goddess. Another, more persuasive alternative, however, is the opposite. The origin is Semitic, as the name shows, but Qu-du-shu syncretized with Egyptian elements.⁶⁹ The large Egyptian *stelai* are the equivalent of the smaller Syrian plaques and amulets.⁷⁰

The naked goddess on armour

A very important argument in favour of the apotropaic function of nude figures is their presence on weapons. An axe from Zincirli in Anatolia is engraved with the image of a naked goddess stepping on a lion and holding two more lions by their hind legs (Figure 1.29).⁷¹

We now move to Crete. Two shields found in the Idean cave on Crete (but most probably of Syrian origin) represent frontal nude females. They date to the eighth century BC. On one, the goddess has outstretched arms (Figure 1.30) and grabs with each hand enormous felines (panthers?) by the ears.⁷² The figure is so small compared to the beasts, that a visual paradox is created. How can such a small



Figure 1.28 Qu-du-shu on a painted New Kingdom Egyptian stela

Source: Winter (1983) figure 37

figure control large felines? The paradox is in itself the clue to the answer. It is the sexuality which empowers the nude female. On another shield from the same Cretan cave, of which only a small part is preserved (Figure 1.31), a nude figure is flanked by sphinxes.⁷³ Like the Egyptian Qu-du-shu, she holds lotus or papyrus plants which intensify her erotic nature.⁷⁴ The occurrence of lions and sphinxes together remind us of the naked goddess on the Old Syrian cylinder of Figure 1.6. A third shield with a naked goddess flanked by two lions was found at the cemetery of Eleutherna, Crete; it dates to the late ninth or early eighth century BC.⁷⁵

If the naked goddesses signify fertility, how is their appearance on armour to be explained? Indeed such an interpretation is incompatible with the function of the shields.

Two more pieces of armour from a warrior's tomb in Salamis, Cyprus should be mentioned. They also are of Near Eastern derivation but betray Egyptian influence. The first bronze piece is described as a head band and depicts three nude females, on whose heads stand three males with Egyptian hairstyles. Above is a winged disc, three lions and uraei.⁷⁶ The second piece is a bronze ornament belonging to the horse of a warrior. It shows a nude Mistress of Animals:

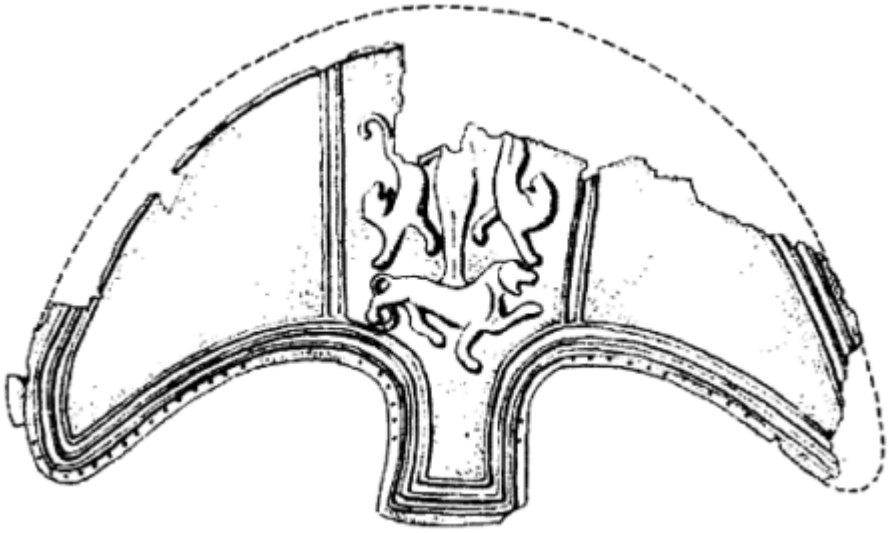


Figure 1.29 Bronze axe from Zincirli, Anatolia

Source: Böhm (1990) figure 13a. Drawing: V.Pliatsika



Figure 1.30 Bronze shield from the Iden cave, Crete; late eight century BC

Source: Kunze (1931) plate 5.2. Drawing: V.Pliatsika

A winged nude Ishtar [is] in the centre, holding a lion in each hand and standing on the backs of two other lions. The lions above are attacked by griffins and those below hold calves in their mouths. There is a winged solar disc and Hathor's head above the head of Ishtar.⁷⁷



Figure 1.31 Bronze shield from the Idean cave, Crete; late eighth century BC

Source: Photo, DAI, negative: Kreta, 231

The identification with Ishtar is doubtful. The iconography exhibits the very associations that we noted in connection with the naked goddess on seals, plaques and other objects (Figures 1.13 to 1.16). On the Salamis piece, sexuality is expressed by the nudity of the central figure as well as by the head of the love goddess Hathor above her, which functions as an additional amulet. Danger is expressed as multiple attacks by predators of high rank. The griffins attack lions, lions attack calves, the goddess controls all. The hierarchy of nature, as well as danger and sexuality, form one single coherent complex which is part of the warrior's ideology. The nude deity is his protectress. The same hierarchy of nature is present on a horse piece from Samos (below, Figures 1.33, 1.34).

Before we leave the subject of armour, we must consider several horsepieces which were decorated with nude divinities. Although these objects do not constitute armour in the strict sense of the word, they are part of the warrior's equipment. Many ivory examples were found in Nimrud, others in the Syro-Palestinian corridor; most date from the Iron Age. On some of the Nimrud ivory pieces the erotic side of the goddess is indicated by large lotus plants which she holds in each hand (Figure 1.32); often she stands on lions or lion's heads similar to the Egyptian Qu-du-shu.⁷⁸

A bronze horse piece made in North Syria made its way to the sanctuary of Hera at Samos (Figures 1.33, 1.34). It dates from the ninth century BC, and deserves special mention. It has an Aramaic inscription which gives its pedigree and origin: it was originally a gift to King Haazel of Damascus and was dedicated to Hera at



Figure 1.32 Iron Age horse ornament from Nimrud

Source: Winter (1983) figure 163

Samos at a later occasion, whereas a similar piece, also a gift to the same king, found its way to the sanctuary of Apollo in Eretria.⁷⁹ The route of this piece illustrates the complex ways by which *orientalia* penetrated Greece as gifts to the gods. The piece shows a mistress of lions who stands on a lion's head. She herself acts as a support for three more nude females two of which are also standing on lion's heads. This acrobatic complex of triplets maximizes the effect of the nude female by means of multiplication. The goddesses exert control over wild felines (as on the cult stand Figure 1.26 and shield Figure 1.30). On the sides of the same horse plaque are miniature engraved images of predators attacking prey (Figure 1.34): a visual reference to predation which validates the relationship of power.

A similar horse piece from Samos features four goddesses, the central one acting as a support (Figure 1.35). Two stand on lion's heads which are held by the central goddess at the bottom. Two recumbent bulls frame the upper side of the plaque.⁸⁰

These horse ornaments of North Syrian manufacture are also found in Phrygia.⁸¹ On one North Syrian example (Figure 1.36), the naked goddess holds her breasts and stands on a lion's head. On her own head sits a bird of prey with an unusual head.⁸² We shall see in the next chapter how birds of prey occur together with naked goddesses. For the moment let us observe that this goddess is flanked by



Figure 1.33 Horse ornament from Samos; ninth century BC

Source: Photo, German Archaeological Institute, Athens, negative: 88/1022



Figure 1.34 Detail from [Figure 1.33](#)

Source: Photo, German Archaeological Institute, Athens, negative: 90/581

male masters of animals holding (libation) cups and up-side-down felines. In this complex power structure the central position of the naked goddess shows how she is an axis of a hierarchical and structured cosmos.

Why the naked goddess on horse ornaments? Before this question is answered another observation is pertinent. The naked deities hold their breasts in several cases. This cannot be a fertility gesture given the context: here it is a feature of sexual display. The nude females are apotropaic and obviously protect the warrior and rider. Thus, the horse ornaments are unambiguously connected with male, and not female worshippers.⁸³ Given that the horse pieces are North Syrian imports, even if they were found in Greece, we have concrete archaeological evidence of how the idea of the dangerous naked goddess arrives in Greece.⁸⁴

Jewellery

It is not surprising that the nude goddess appears on jewellery since amulets are primarily worn as ornaments serving the dual function of adornment and protection. Even today, the most common ornament in Christian countries is the golden cross around the neck.

Naked goddesses appear on Syrian diadems or head bands which made their way to Cyprus.⁸⁵ A clay pendant, made in Greece and found in Gortyn, depicts a naked Mistress of Animals.⁸⁶ A gold foil ornament with a naked Mistress holding animals up-side-down (probably worn on a dress) was found in a tomb at Eleutherna, Crete; it dates to the early Orientalizing period.⁸⁷ Clothed Mistresses of Animals also occur as jewellery in Greece.⁸⁸

It should be remembered that many of the Syro-Palestinian bronze plaques discussed above were worn around the neck. Some amulets were abstract: they had a triangular shape and indicated only the head and the pubic triangle of the female body.⁸⁹ This abstraction summarizes the essential features of the nude goddess.

It is interesting that jewellery with the Mistress or Master of Animals appears also in Italy in the Iron Age although the naked aspect is not so prominent there.

We have no way of determining whether the jewellery was worn by men or women. Given the contextual association of naked goddesses with male figures on cylinder seals and indirectly with males on their armour, it is probable that it was worn by men although proof is lacking that males were the exclusive bearers. At any rate, the jewels most probably had protective properties.

Naked figurines and plaques in Greece in the Orientalizing period: the case of Gortyn

Naked goddesses appear in Greece in the eighth century BC, flourish during the seventh, the Orientalizing period *par excellence*, and vanish by the sixth. They represent the short-lived but important courtship of Greece with the Near East which has been stressed recently by many scholars.⁹⁰

What does nudity mean on Greek figures? My concern here will be to show that naked females even when manufactured in Greece seem to have an apotropaic and protective function, similar to that we have established for Syria and Egypt.



Figure 1.35 Horse ornament from Samos; ninth century BC

Source: Photo, German Archaeological Institute, Athens, negative: 88/1023

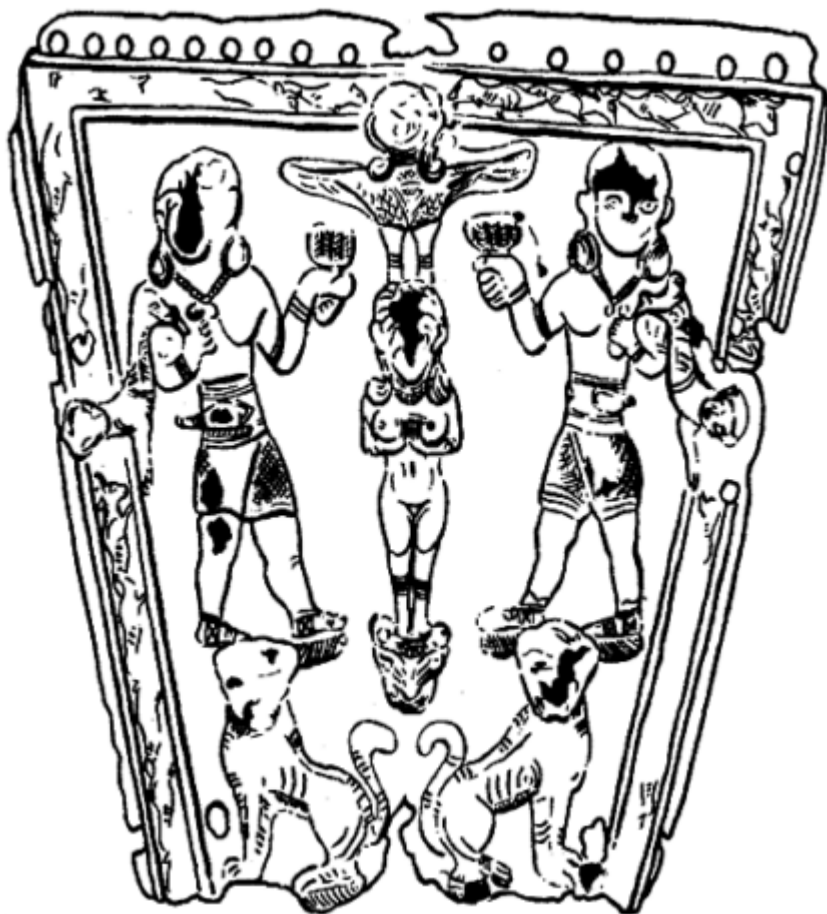


Figure 1.36 North Syrian horse ornament

Source: Barnett (1964) 23, Figure 1

Naked figurines and plaques have been found in many Greek sanctuaries as well as graves (in a similar context as in the Near East) and have been the subject of a thorough work by S. Böhm.⁹¹ Some of the figurines were not autonomous but functioned as handles for a mirror or similar articles of toiletry; such examples were found in the Kerameikos cemetery and the Idaean cave on Crete. We have good Assyrian parallels for naked females as flywhisks or mirror-handles.⁹²

Most of the specimens were made of clay and come from Crete.⁹³ Other places too have yielded them: Sparta, Ephessos, Delphi, Olympia, Tegea, Perachora and, of course East Greece: Rhodes, Miletus and Samos.⁹⁴ Notable are the plaques from the temple of Athena at Gortyn, on Crete, and Artemis Orthia, at Sparta, where the figurines as well as plaques were made locally, and mass produced by use of

moulds (Figure 1.37).⁹⁵ The gestures replicate those of the Near Eastern figurines: the hands either rest along the sides of the body or they touch the breast and pubic triangle (Figures 1.37 and 1.38). Above we have seen that these gestures denote sexual display. The production by means of moulds suggests there was a *local* need for the figurines or plaques, that their use had been adopted by Greeks, and that there was a large demand which could not be satisfied by imports.

For example, the sanctuary of Athena at Gortyn in Crete yielded numerous small plaques and figurines of naked goddesses with many variants reminiscent of their Syro-Palestinian counterparts (compare Figures 1.22 and 1.38). Of similar appearance is a clay plaque from Western Crete (Figure 1.38). The goddesses are depicted frontally, with their arms hanging down close to the body or touching their breasts and/or pubic triangle (Figures 1.37, 1.38) The hairstyle is daedalic, distinguishing the Greek types from their Syrian counterparts, which have Hathor hairstyles. Some of the figurines wear *polos* hats. The plaques from Gortyn were found in the terraced area outside the temple where votives were displayed according to a recent study (Chapter Four).⁹⁶ It is therefore certain that they were brought by worshippers.⁹⁷

Who dedicated them and why? Uehlinger suggests that the Near Eastern examples may have been dedicated by girls upon initiation into womanhood.⁹⁸ I am sympathetic to the initiation scenario as already mentioned above, but I would suggest that young men could well have been the dedicators since the naked goddess need not be associated with females alone, indeed quite the opposite was the case in the Near East. At Gortyn many of the other votives were evidently expressive of male values: horses, warriors, heroes combatting monsters, young men with a stringed instrument (chorus group?) etc.⁹⁹

An additional argument in the case of Gortyn is this. From the sixth century BC onwards, the votive statuettes found at Gortyn take the form of the goddess Athena, (in Sparta where there are similar votives that of Artemis).¹⁰⁰ The question arises therefore why Athena, the virgin and warrior goddess, whose asexual nature is stressed by the myth of her birth as well as the rejection of male partners, should be represented by nude figures? And why the virgin Artemis? And why were the othostates from the temple of Athena at Gortyn decorated with two naked goddesses flanking a walking male (see Chapter Four)?

In my hypothesis, the naked figures are related to the early form of the patron deity. As such, they fit quite well in sanctuaries of poliadic goddesses. One painted fragmentary plaque shows a woman being touched on her chin by a (no longer extant) man. The scene suggests marriage, commemorating an initiation ritual.¹⁰¹ Slightly different is the iconographical scheme on a clay plaque from Arkades, where a naked frontal female is touched by two men who flank her (Figure 1.39). Although it has been suggested that the men try to force her (abduction of Helen by Peirithous and Theseus), this theory has been correctly criticized; the figure is a goddess.¹⁰² There exist two more representations of this iconographical type although the central female is not always nude.¹⁰³ The gestures of the men indicate desire for contact (perhaps for good luck, or vigour) rather than possession. Here

again the naked female is a source of sexuality rather than fertility. Touching the nude female may in itself be an echo of Near Eastern ritual practices. On a Babylonian seal (Figure 1.2) the ruler with the tall hat touches the figure in the nude.

From Gortyn comes another scheme featuring naked goddesses. A plaque shows three naked figures with tall *polos* hats within a building, a *naiskos*. The plaque is very similar to the *naiskos* from Tel Qasile and other models from South Palestine.¹⁰⁴ Here we have triplet goddesses who reside in a *naiskos*; the number three intensifies the effectiveness of the apotropaion.¹⁰⁵ The building most likely represents a shrine. I have already stated my suspicion above that such mini-shrines were originally placed within private houses and were subsequently dedicated to sanctuaries.

Be that as it may, it is certain that male concerns were represented at what seems to have been the main sanctuary of the settlement of Gortyn during the Orientalizing and Archaic periods. Most importantly, the naked figures consistently appear with men not women, as we have seen throughout this chapter. This argues against their function as fertility charms.

We shall end with the Near East where we started. There is a mythical tradition that a nude female can make her enemy harmless: for example, the story of naked Ishtar who renders a monster impotent.¹⁰⁶ That danger is associated with a sexual goddess may also underlie a story in Herodotus I, 105: Scythian invaders of Palestine plundered a sanctuary of 'Aphrodite' (a naked goddess sanctuary?) As a result they were afflicted by the 'female' sickness (impotence?).¹⁰⁷ The stories explain the logic of the amulet. The owners of amulet-figurines must have had faith that their enemies would fall victim to the naked goddess. We shall pursue this thread of reasoning with Circe in the next chapter.

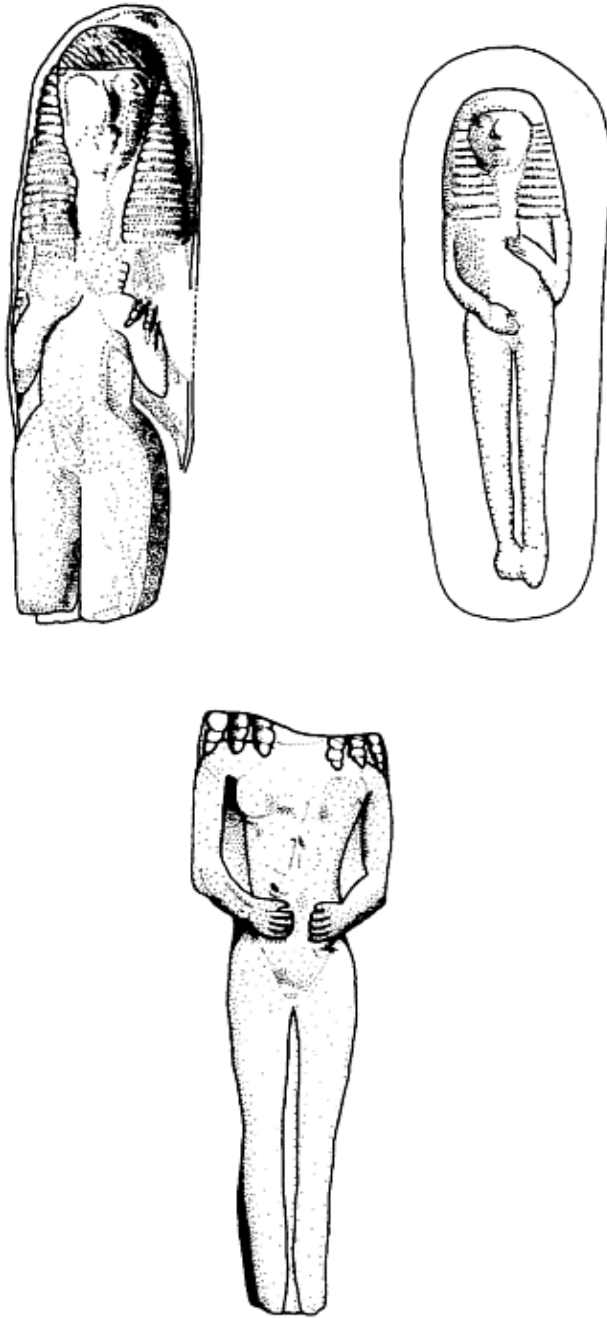


Figure 1.37 Clay figurines and plaques from sanctuaries of Artemis Orthia at Sparta and of Athena at Gortyn, Crete; seventh century BC

Source: Böhm (1990) plate 25, TK 2; plate 23, TK 14, 16. Drawing O.Apergi



Figure 1.38: Clay figurines from Chania, Crete; seventh century BC

Source: Photo, German Archaeological Institute, Athens, negative 252

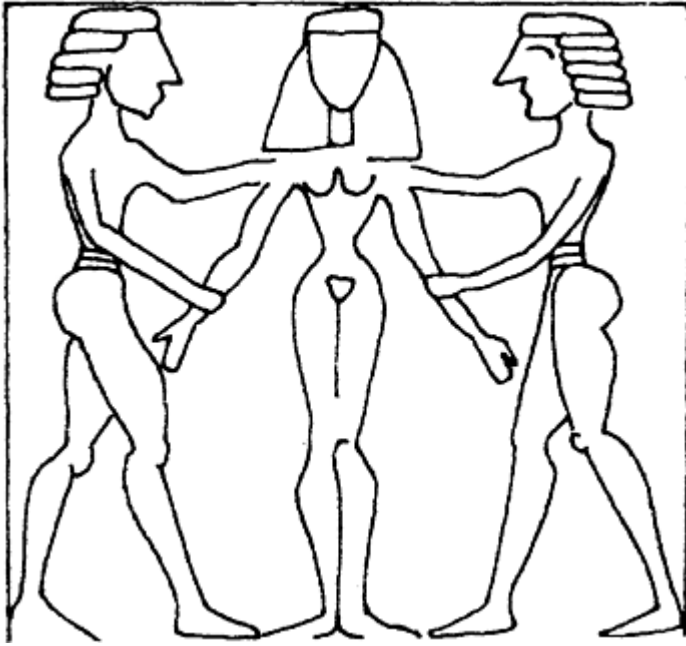


Figure 1.39: Seventh century BC clay plaque from Arkades, Crete

Source: Beyer (1976) plate 37.2

CIRCE AS THE LEGACY OF THE NAKED GODDESS IN GREEK MYTH

Circe's name: female hawk

In the previous chapter, the apotropaic and protective function of the naked goddess and the naked Mistress of Animals has been discussed. These functions can only be explained if danger and sexuality are seen as a nexus of interrelated concepts.

Near Eastern ideas and forms did not influence iconography and religious ritual alone, but myth as well. Although the naked goddess eventually disappears in art, the concepts which underlie her personality found a more permanent place in myth. There is one particular figure which most obviously reflects this Near Eastern legacy, the figure of Circe in the *Odyssey*.

Let us examine the name first. 'Kirke' is the feminine form of 'Kirkos': hawk. Circe thus means the female hawk, a name which seems puzzling, given the fact that hawks appear nowhere in the narrative of the *Odyssey*.¹ M. West explains the etymology by suggesting that Circe has connections with the sun, and the hawk is a solar bird.²

Another path we can pursue, however, is the iconology of birds of prey in relation to sexual goddesses.

The hawk and its connection with Near Eastern and Egyptian goddesses

On an Old Syrian cylinder (Figure 2.1), a goddess reveals her lower parts and encounters a god or ruler.³ She seems to be offering him a bird of prey with a curved beak. Two subsidiary motifs are present: antithetical lions above the guilloche, and a griffin attacking a goat below it. The motifs signal danger and are not to be dissociated from the unambiguously erotic content of this scene.

On another Old Syrian seal (Figure 2.2), a bird of prey is depicted behind a naked goddess. The bird is above a guilloche pattern, whereas a griffin lies below.⁴ The main deity is clearly the seated male to the left worshipped by a ruler and a



Figure 2.1 Old Syrian cylinder

Source: Winter (1983) figure 298



Figure 2.2 Old Syrian cylinder

Source: Winter (1983) figure 128

monkey; the naked goddess is thus not the main protagonist of the scene, but a 'good luck image'.

On a third cylinder, the naked goddess is more prominent. She stands on a bull and receives a predatory bird within her winged shrine (Figure 2.3).⁵

On a Middle Assyrian glyptic scene (Figure 2.4), a naked goddess is holding a flying bird, the long beak of which shows that it is a predator.⁶

An Anatolian cylinder from Kültepe shows the naked goddess standing on a donkey encountering her male (warrior?) partner, whereas a flying bird of prey is directed towards the naked deity (Figure 2.5).⁷ Lion predators are among the subsidiary motifs which means that aggression in nature accompanies the erotic encounter.

On an Old Syrian seal a goddess pulls her skirt open revealing her private parts (Figure 2.6). She is flanked by female protective twin goddesses, which is



Figure 2.3 Old Syrian cylinder

Source: Winter (1983) figure 135



Figure 2.4 Middle Assyrian cylinder

Source: Winter (1983) figure 148

exceptional and may point to Egyptian influence. The lotus flower on one of her hands points to an Egyptian influence and is erotic. A bird of prey as well as a monkey are on each of her sides.⁸

On another seal (Figure 1.12), there are two types of naked goddesses. Above the smaller one flies a bird of prey. The banquet scene on the side suggests that the encounter is of an erotic kind.⁹

On a Syrian seal of the Iron Age, (Figure 1.20) a naked goddess holds animals by their hind legs. Above her, to the left and right, are two birds which can be plausibly identified as a vulture and a hawk. The latter is distinguished by its tail and its slightly curved beak.¹⁰

We have looked here at a number of cylinders most of which originated in Syria and date to the second millennium BC. The deity is depicted with a hawk, or other



Figure 2.5 Anatolian cylinder (level IB c. 1850–1750 BC)

Source: Winter (1983) figure 77

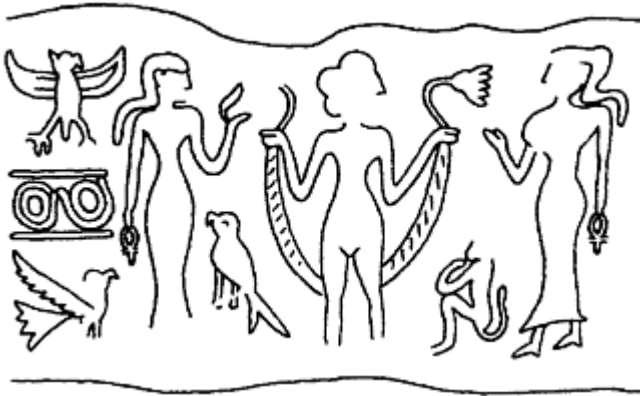


Figure 2.6 Old Syrian cylinder

Source: Winter (1983) figure 286

predatory birds. She is either the protagonist of the scene or a ‘good luck image’, but the sexual association is always there.¹¹

Naked goddesses with hawk wings are at home in the Near East. On scarabs and other stamp seals of the Syro-Phoenician culture of the eighth century BC, they form the main subject, functioning as protective amuletic images (Figure 2.7).¹² The demon Lilu or Lilith (possibly a manifestation of Ishtar) is also a seductive naked figure with hawk wings and the talons of a bird of prey.¹³ The hawk combines the erotic and the dangerous.

If we turn to texts, we find an explanation as to why Anat, the sexy but violent goddess of Ugarit, is associated with vultures:



Figure 2.7 Syro-Phoenician seal stamp

Source: Winter (1983) figure 180

She destroyed men of the sunrise.
Under her were heads as (with) vultures.¹⁴

Anat is here described as a vulture hovering about its victims. In another passage Anat attaches her assistant Yatpan as a vulture to her belt so he can assist her in her bloody work:

Turn (to me),
Yatpa(n), and [I shall tell you]:
I shall put you as an eagle in my sheath
as a bird of prey in my
scabbard. [As] Aqht [sits down]
to eat, and the son of Danel
to a meal,
the eagles will soar [over
him, flocks of] vultures will
look down (on him).
Among the eagles I myself
will hover.¹⁵

The bird of prey is unequivocally violent in these texts, signalling the dangerous and bloody nature of Anat. In the images the significance of the bird of prey is more complex. It does not only stand for aggression, but protectiveness as well. This side of the hawk is evident in Egyptian imagery. The sister goddesses Isis and Nephthys have hawk wings which they spread to envelop those whom they favour. On many representations Isis or Nephthys will spread their wings over the king (Figure 2.8).¹⁶ These goddesses occasionally take the form of the bird itself, appearing as kites or hawks.¹⁷ Why are hawks symbols of protection? Possibly



Figure 2.8 Nephtys and Isis on Egyptian papyrus of the twenty-first dynasty

Source: Keel (1978) page 191, figure 262

because hawks were considered good parents, protecting their young and being dangerous to their enemies. The parenthood side might explain also the erotic associations.

The hawk, or at least a bird of prey, appears as an attribute of female divinities, especially of Artemis Orthia at Sparta. In her sanctuary a number of small ivory or bone plaques were found, representing a mistress of predatory birds. It has been recognized that the imagery derives from Near Eastern prototypes.¹⁸ An amulet of a winged goddess flanked by two birds of prey is illustrated on Figure 2.9.¹⁹ The small plaque had a loop at its top: it was an amulet to be worn around the neck.

The hawk, or a similar bird of prey is associated also with Hera and other female goddesses of the Orientalizing period. At this time the usual attributes of divinities had not as yet crystallized in the formulae of the sixth century BC.²⁰ On a bronze *hydria* from South Italy (possibly of Laconian inspiration) a Mistress of Animals holds hares in her hands (Figure 2.10). These animals are attacked by lions on each side. Two more lions flank the Mistress's head being situated on the rim of the *hydria*. A large bird of prey sits on her head.²¹ Here the hierarchy of nature, expressed as the relationship of predator to prey, reveals the dangerous side of the goddess. The bird belongs to her attributes.

In summary, the hawk signals danger and power on the one hand but, on the other, it is protective of its brood which it covers with its wings. Isis is not a dangerous goddess but she fights for her loved ones. The naked goddess on seals



Figure 2.9 Ivory plaque from the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta

Source: Dawkins (1929) plate XCI, figure 1A

of the Near East is both sexually alluring and dangerous. The ‘female hawk’ or ‘Kirke’ must combine danger with protectiveness as is indeed the case. The story of Circe is one of a dangerous goddess who turns protectress.

Circe as a Mistress of Animals in the *Odyssey*

In my view, Circe’s original persona was that of a divine figure who was connected with the sun on the one hand and the underworld on the other.²² She was at the same time a sexual goddess and Mistress of Animals.²³ The origins of Circe have been related to the Near East, and her affinities with Ishtar and other Near Eastern females have not been missed.²⁴ The Circe episode has been related to the underworld and the Epic of Gilgamesh.²⁵ She is a dangerous goddess who has power to harm men. Ultimately, however, she becomes an advisor and helper of Odysseus: the dangerous goddess turns protectress.²⁶

As mentioned above, Circe is a Mistress of Animals in the *Odyssey*. Her house is surrounded by wolves and lions, animals that are dangerous predators. Yet Odysseus’ comrades are astonished at how tame and subjugated they are.



Figure 2.10 Bronze hydria, now in Bern, Switzerland

Source: Schefold (1960) plate 107

Prowling about the place were mountain wolves and lions, actually the dragged victims of Circe's magic...But these were wolves and lions with great claws that were gambolling in this way round men.

(*Odyssey* 10, 212–18; trans. E.V.Rieu)

The poet clarifies that these animals were tame because they were once human, transformed into their beastly form by Circe. Lions and wolves are in fact depicted on vase paintings of the Archaic period (see below [Figure 2.11](#)). As a Mistress of Animals, Circe dominates and subjugates beasts as well as men. The logic behind the mythical persona is explicable by ritual: the magical pendants discussed in



Figure 2.11 Cylix, now in Boston, USA

Source: Canciani (1992) LIMC VI, number 14

Chapter One. As we shall see further on, the motif of the goddess who transforms men into animals is an Oriental one.

Odysseus will tame the Mistress of Animals; indeed he will take her to bed and will like her well enough to spend a year in the island, although we hear no details of the lovers' bliss.

We have now isolated four elements in Circe's persona: she is associated with birds of prey, she is Mistress of wild Animals, she has a dangerous side connected to sexuality and magic, and she turns into a helper. These are the properties of the amulet of the naked Syrian goddess explored in the previous chapter.

Circe as a sexual goddess: sexuality and danger on Archaic vases

The above elements are also mirrored in Early Archaic vases. Circe is depicted in the nude, although naked females have virtually disappeared from Greek art by the mid-sixth century BC. The vase paintings concentrate on two moments: either on Circe's triumph, as she turns men into animals, or her terror as she confronts Odysseus threatening her with a drawn sword. It seems that these two moments sum up Circe's story, her dangerous side but also her ultimate subjugation.

On a kylix, now in Boston (Figure 2.11), Circe is depicted naked, facing a pig-man to whom she hands over a cup which presumably contains the magic potion. Her nudity has been commented upon as 'startling'.²⁷ Yet, an explanation lies close at hand: it is through the nudity that art conveys the danger of a sexual trap. The swine-men beside Circe remind us of the dangerous side of her magic. It is interesting that other types of animal men appear as well: a ram-man, a lion-man, a dog or wolf-man. The variety shows that Circe is a virtual mistress of animals.

Odysseus is present as well. He is running in her direction from the left, his sword drawn out. At the right side, a man runs away in terror. In this composition, the Mistress of Animals dominates, seductive and dangerous. Her power is alluded to by the fleeing man, while her ultimate defeat is signaled by Odysseus's approach from the left.

On a pseudo-Chalcidean amphora (c. 530 BC), (Figure 2.12) a naked Circe is framed by two variants of swine-men.²⁸ Odysseus faces her bravely, his hand resting on the pommel of his sword. Although (as the spectators know) he will succumb to her attractiveness, he will do so as a victor not as vanquished. Here, the triumphant moment belongs to Odysseus.

On a clay altar from Sicily (Figure 2.13), a naked Circe faces a pigman.²⁹ There are no other elements which advance the narrative of the story. Here the artist concentrates on Circe's magical power. We might add that the other sides of the altar show Heracles combatting monsters, a centaur and the Triton. The iconographical scheme, concentrating on heroes and adversaries, categorizes Circe as a dangerous rival.

The iconography of Circe in the Archaic period focuses on essential elements omitting secondary details of the narrative. The message of sexuality and danger is surprisingly similar with that of Syrian seals (Chapter One) although the iconographical elements are quite different.

Literary prototypes for Circe in the Near East

Near Eastern literary sources affected the narrative of Circe. Two of the most relevant here are the stories of two goddesses Ishtar and Ereshkigal.

There are two features of Ishtar to which I would like to draw attention. The first is that she is dangerous to her lovers, as indeed Gilgamesh is ready to point out to her in the epic with the same name. When Ishtar offers her sexual favours to Gilgamesh, he reminds her of the ill fate of all her lovers. Not only does she send her husband Dumuzi/Tamuz to the netherworld, but she transforms her other lovers into animals by smiting them with a wand. Gilgamesh complains:

Yet you smotest him, turning him into a wolf. (61)
Thou smotest him and turnedst him into a mole. (76)³⁰

The smiting gesture of Circe is so reminiscent of that of Ishtar that there can be no doubt as to how much the Greek literary tradition owes to the Near East.³¹

Another Near Eastern text may be linked with Circe's *persona*. This is the text of Ereshkigal, the goddess of the underworld, and Nergal, a male god who resides in heaven. Because the male god Nergal has been disrespectful to the goddess, he is sent to the underworld, presumably to pay his respects to Ereshkigal and make up for his previous lack of courtesy. Two dangers lurk which may prove fatal and hinder his return to heaven. First the food that Ereshkigal offers (equivalent to



Figure 2.12 'Chalkidian' amphora

Source: Canciani (1992) LIMC VI, number 19

Circe's potion), secondly sexual seduction. Ea, the chief god, has warned Nergal before his departure:

When a baker brings thee bread, thou must not go and eat his bread;
 When a butcher brings thee meat, thou must not go and eat his meat;
 When a brewer brings thee beer, thou must not go and drink the beer...
 [and later on:]
 She will reveal to thee her body
 Thou must not...[what is normal for m]an and woman.³²

The two dangers that are pointed to by wise Ea are of an elementary nature and represent the fundamental preoccupations of living beings: food and sex. Despite the fragmentary nature of the text, we are to understand that Nergal did not resist the temptation of sex; even so he managed to return to his heavenly home. Ereshkigal is displeased: she sends her vizier, a certain Namtar to seize Nergal and bring him back. She says: 'Send [that god] to me that he might be my husband, that he might lodge with me.'³³ In her anger she threatens the destruction of mankind: she will send the dead that they might devour the living.

The narrative has a happy ending. Nergal does indeed return to the underworld (not without force). Upon arrival he exerts his dominance, seizes Ereshkigal by her hair and goes to bed with her, a situation reminiscent of Odysseus threatening Circe with a drawn sword but ending up having sex with her.

According to West, there is a striking similarity between Circe and the helper Sidouri in the *Gilgamesh* epic.³⁴ The hero's quest is for immortality. On his way



Figure 2.13 Clay altar, now in Sicily

Source: Canciani (1992) LIMC VI, number 4

he is helped or obstructed by various creatures. Everybody advises him to go no further. Finally he comes to the shore of the sea, where he meets a woman: Sidouri the ale-wife. Is it an accident that her speciality is the brewing of beer and that Circe too prepares a potion? At any rate, her capacity may be related to the sphere of eroticism.³⁵ Sidouri is at first scared of Gilgamesh and only later does she consent to talk to him, not without use of force. Further details of the story are not of interest here. Suffice it to say that Sidouri's initial reluctance and her subsequent willingness to help are reminiscent of Circe's actions.

Once more we return to art of the Near East, this time not seals of the second millennium BC but Phoenician bowls dating between the ninth and seventh centuries BC. Many of these bowls were decorated on the inside with narrative scenes. One in particular, found at Olympia (*Figure 2.14*), gives an indication that the naked goddess is a protectress.³⁶ The bowl is divided into segments which illustrate the adventures of a hero; obviously a story, now lost to us, was narrated in an abbreviated fashion.³⁷ In between the 'adventure' panels are twin naked goddesses whose role is not narrative but emblematic. Are they the equivalents of Circe and Calypso?

In summary, the sexually active goddess is dangerous, but she can turn into a helper. In narrative, the battle of the sexes finds its resolution in bed. In art, danger



Figure 2.14 Phoenician bowl found in Olympia

Source: Winter (1983) figure 412

and protection are combined in the naked figure which functions as an amulet. In ritual, the efficacy of the amulet consists of the very antithesis between attraction and destruction. We shall pursue this further on with two more figures who embody the attraction and destruction antithesis: Gorgo and Artemis. They also are dangerous but have the ability to protect the male hero.

GORGO: ADVERSARY AND PATRONESS OF MEN

Introduction

One of the most prominent monsters in Archaic Greek art is Gorgo. She is female and powerful, yet she is neither naked, nor alluring. She represents another model of the protective *apotropaion* by which terror is expressed by a frontal, threatening face and a masculine body. Even without nudity, the Near Eastern features that we have isolated in connection with the dangerous sexual goddesses will make their appearance here as well. Both protective and terrifying, she is a figure of marginality and transition.

The etymology of the word ‘Gorgo’ has to do with terror, perhaps derived from *gorgopos*, meaning ‘the staring one’. The mythical version speaks of three Gorgos (generic name) who are sisters. One of them, Medusa (meaning ‘the dominating one’), is singled out for particular treatment: she is killed by the hero Perseus. She has a respectable mythological pedigree which is as early as Hesiod (*Theogony* 270–82). This author also reports that she got pregnant by Poseidon and bore two sons: a horse, Pegasus, and a giant, Chrysaor. Alongside the mythical is also a rich and varied iconographical tradition where Gorgo appears either singly or in relation to Perseus her adversary. Alternatively, the sisters of Medusa, the ‘Gorgos’ pursue Perseus.

Although the mythology of Gorgo will not be ignored in this study (in fact myth is essential for the understanding of her function), it is mostly the iconographical tradition of the Archaic period which will concern us here. In specific, I shall focus, not on the narrative scenes, but on those where Gorgo appears as a single emblematic figure. Yet, images have a right to be read independently of texts and the iconographical schemata do reveal truths which myth does not articulate.¹ One of the messages of the imagery is that Gorgo is an *apotropaion* because she is a protectress. In combining danger with protection she has affinities with the ‘dangerous female’ of the Near East. The mythical narratives follow another path: they stress the role of Gorgo as an adversary and may have been directly or indirectly connected with initiation rituals for young men.

The issues which will be discussed are three:

- 1 Gorgo as a heritage of the Near Eastern dangerous female and Mistress of Animals.
- 2 Gorgo and Egyptian amulets such as Bes-Beset/Pataikos.
- 3 The role of Gorgo in initiation rituals.

First, however, it is important to state that the iconography of the monster underwent some experiments, which in itself demonstrates that there were various concepts at work in the shaping of the iconography. A thorough survey of Gorgo iconography is beyond the scope of this work especially since there exists an excellent exhaustive treatment.² Only a few characteristic examples will be mentioned.

On a seventh century BC monumental amphora from Eleusis, which served as a grave monument, the pursuit of Perseus is depicted by the sisters of the decapitated Medusa. The heads of the Gorgos are inspired by contemporary snake cauldrons.³ The broad mouths and many rows of teeth are reminiscent of a serpent. Additional snakes frame the head. The dress of the Gorgos is long as is appropriate for a female.

On a Cycladic relief amphora found in Thebes, now in the Louvre, Gorgo is depicted as a female centaur.⁴ On a sixth century BC shield blazon from Olympia she is a fish-like monster; there is even a sphinx variant.⁵ The winged variant is quite common.⁶

The fluidity of the iconography is no doubt due to the very ambiguity of the monster itself. As an adversary to Perseus it should be threatening and male looking; as an *apotropaion* it should be formidable. An essential aspect of Gorgo is revealed by her dangerous predatorial features, notably the fangs of a predator. In addition, she has almost always bent knees, a convention in Archaic art called 'knielauf' and which indicates that she is a pursuer.⁷ It is not insignificant that Perseus is frequently shown as pursued by Medusa's sisters one of whom is called 'Euryale'.⁸

Most important for the crystallization of the iconography are Near Eastern influences. The male monster Humbaba, an adversary to Gilgamesh, has played an important role in the shaping of the iconography.⁹ Humbaba even has spiky hair on some representations which may have inspired the snakes on Gorgo's hair.

Less convincing as a prototype for Gorgo is Lamastu, a Near Eastern female monster, which could almost be considered an anti-image of the sexual goddess. Lamastu also is a Mistress of Animals and holds snakes in her hands. However, she is primarily a demon who kills women and children and is therefore an adversary to the fertile female.¹⁰ Thus, although we cannot exclude a slight influence on Gorgo by Lamastu, there is a major difference: Gorgo has a relationship to males only.¹¹

In discussing the variants of iconography, we should stress the impact of Syro/Phoenician/Egyptian demons such as Bes. We shall pursue this further on. First, however, it is important to make a short digression of a historical nature. Because of the inevitable specialization of our studies, it is easy to overlook the fact that

the eastern Mediterranean was a unified world with a kind of cultural *koine*. Greeks in Asia Minor lived together with Phrygians and Lydians. In fact Lydian kings, such as Gyges and Croesus, or Phrygians, such as Midas, became incorporated in a local Greek mythistorical tradition. Phoenicians visited Cyprus, Crete and the South of the Peloponnese and brought with them script, metallurgy, amulets and magical practices; no doubt also some native religious customs.¹³ Samos, on the other hand, had close contacts with Egypt, a fact which is attested both archaeologically and historically by Herodotus.¹⁴ The close contacts between Greece and the Levant have been demonstrated archaeologically by an exhibition of finds recently presented on Crete.¹⁵ The Assyrian Empire was a strong organizing force which facilitated trade routes and guaranteed a stable market.¹⁶ Because of the extensive trade contacts, the people of the east Mediterranean, especially those who sailed, the Phoenicians, Cretans, Samians and Rhodians, must have known two or three languages: Greek, Semitic and Egyptian, not to mention Phrygian and Lydian. Nor should we lose sight of the fact that there must have been intermarriages which made easy the transportation of customs, practices and amulets from one culture to the next. A commonality of tradition in religion and myth has been demonstrated by Burkert in his *Orientalizing Revolution*. None of this is to say that the Aegean and Oriental cultures were identical. However, just as the blending of religious and mythical traditions of Egypt and the Near East resulted in a Syro/Egyptian culture in the Levant, we can assume something similar for Greece.

Given the above, it is obvious that demons crossed boundaries in the form of amulets, seals, magical wands, even magical papyri. Magic was always eagerly received, especially if it had foreign origins. Itinerant magicians and practitioners surely circulated widely in the Mediterranean.¹⁷ To the extent that our Gorgo is a magical image (which is precisely the thesis here), and not only a persona of myth, she was bound to syncretize with other demons in Cyprus, Syria, and Crete.¹⁸ Ultimately Gorgo is different, however. The combination of the terrifying face, the male looking body and the concept of a female monster is a unique creation of Archaic Greece.

The Mistress of Animals

Like the Near Eastern naked goddess, Gorgo is a Mistress of Animals. She holds birds by their necks (Figure 3.1), may be flanked by panthers (Figure 3.16 below), lions, wolves, and occasionally also sphinxes.¹⁹

Sometimes she appears as a protectress, holding a small deer or a horse in her arms (Figure 3.2).²⁰ Note the similarity with Egyptian Bes who embraces lions (Figure 3.3).²¹ It is worth noting that it is mostly horses, not lions or deer, that are Gorgo's special proteges.²² We shall return to this topic later because the connection of Gorgo with the horse is a signal of her relationship with male identity, especially with the *ephebe*.



Figure 3.1 Circe holding birds on a Rhodian plate

Source Krauskopf (1988) LIMC IV.2, number 280; drawing F.Evenson

Less often the animals are held violently, as on a seal amulet where Gorgo is juxtaposed to Heracles.²³

Why is Gorgo a Mistress of Animals? It has been suggested that her original persona was that of a goddess who was turned monster by the Greeks.²⁴ I do not believe in this developmental model of religion by which the original (allegedly chthonic) deity becomes a monster in later times.²⁵ As already stated above, it is more likely that varying traditions of Levantine and Egyptian iconography were conflated to shape the Greek Gorgo. If she appears as a Mistress of Animals, it is because she is an off-shoot of the dangerous and powerful female of the Near East. Dominance over animals expresses power. Another reason, however, is that Gorgo is an amuletic image, and we have seen that the Mistress of Animals is also a 'good luck image'. In the Near Eastern tradition of amuletic seals, the role of the the Master or the Mistresses of Animals, as well as that of Bes, is to enforce the cosmic order.²⁶ Dominating over the savage natural world and maintaining its equilibrium, Gorgo and Bes guarantee protection.

The case is made stronger if we consider a Cypriot cylinder seal most likely of Near Eastern origin with a single emblematic image: a frontally depicted creature with a large head and hair that resemble the antlers of an insect (*Figure 3.4*).²⁷ The eyes are bulging and loom large on the round face. The arms are folded on the chest as on the naked small goddesses of Near Eastern seals (*Chapter One*); it is



Figure 3.2 Metope from southern Italy

Source: Krauskopf (1988) LIMC IV.2, number 271; drawing F.Evenson

this very posture, in fact, that betrays the female gender of the creature. Large wings grow from the shoulders. Two animals flank this strange figure, a griffin and a recumbent goat. A half-moon and star may connect it with Ishtar. The image is important because it betrays the possible link between the seductive goddess and Mistress of Animals on the one hand, and the monstrous *apotropaion* on the other. There may have existed other such amulets which acted as additional stimuli for the creation of Gorgo. At any rate the conceptual links with the Near East are multiple.

Gorgo, snake-handlers and magicians

Snakes constitute an essential component of Gorgo's physical appearance. They grow from her hair and shoulders; sometimes they are wound around her waist (see [Figure 3.16](#)). Sometimes she handles those snakes, a scheme which is familiar from the Near East. Such examples are attested to on Archaic coins.²⁸ As a snake holder she appears also on gold ornamental plaques; one example comes from Delphi.²⁹ In some cases, she grabs the snakes that grow from her waist or shoulders.³⁰ On an Archaic vase ([Figure 3.5](#)), Gorgo is displaying a live snake and a plant in each of her hands. This scheme is close to Egyptian Qu-du-shu and the Syro-Canaanite amulets (Figures [1.27](#) and [1.28](#)), and one suspects that there is an affinity between these images. Most interesting is an a representation of Gorgo



Figure 3.3 Egyptian Bes in the shape of a cosmetic jar; late period

Source: Schoske (1990) page 127, number 109

which, despite the crudeness of its execution, reveals the essentials of the snake-holding formula. It is painted on a Corinthian cup found in Southern Italy, and is dated to the beginning of the sixth century BC.³¹ A female figure with a monstrous face displays a snake in each hand. To her right is a wolf with an open mouth displaying his teeth. No wonder the painter of this vase has been nicknamed ‘the Bad Wolf Painter’! At any rate Gorgo is here both a snake holder and a Mistress of Animals. Another example comes from a vase found in Tarent, now in Basel (Figure 3.6): Gorgo handles the snakes that grow from her body. As a snake holder, she appears also on a relief fragment from a *periranterion* found in Metapont,



Figure 3.4 Medusa-like monster on Cypriot seal

Source: Winter (1983) figure 169

South Italy.³² Even on scenes where she is confronted by Perseus, Gorgo does not abandon her snakes, as on a sixth century BC *olpe* attributed to the Amasis painter.³³ Yet, most often the snakes occur on emblematic images as on a bronze shield strap from Olympia, where Gorgo holds snakes coiling around her waist (see the bottom segment of Figure 5.11).³⁴ In many of the above figures, the snakes form an actual belt in her waist or rise above it. This is an exact imitation of Pataikos amulets (see Figure 3.7).

It is important to address the iconography of snake-handling specifically because snake-holders are magicians. The closest prototypes, apart from Egyptian Qu-du-shu and the Syro-Palestinian amulets (Figures 1.27 and 1.28), are Egyptian Pataikos amulets which are also closer in date to our Gorgos. Pataikoi are dwarf child figures with a protective function. One small amulet (Figure 3.7) made of blue faience is now in a collection in Munich and dates to about 600 BC.³⁵ He is naked, as befits Egyptian child iconography, and holds two snakes which, winding around his waist raise themselves upwards. Snake handling denotes his magical power. He is flanked by two goddesses (Isis and Nephthys) who are practically naked because their dress clings very closely to the body. We are thus back to the familiar theme of the sexually alluring female functioning as a protectress. This Pataikos amulet is very similar to the Gorgo-shaped unguent vessel from Tarent (above, Figure 3.6).³⁶ The latter, which probably contained perfume, was a personal article and was given the shape of an amulet. I believe that this similarity reveals an important affinity between the Egyptian and Greek demons. Further links with Egyptian amulets are furnished by Bes seals who handle snakes on scarabs and were found in the Levant in the Iron Age.³⁷ They confirm the wide distribution of Egyptian magical images in the east Mediterranean basin (Figure 3.8).

Another Egyptian demon must be considered: the female 'Beset'. Sometimes she combines the characteristics of the naked goddess (as simultaneously seductive, dangerous and protective) and the monstrous face of the demon Bes.



Figure 3.5 Archaic black figure vase

Source: Krauskopf (1988) LIMC IV.2, number 247

A wooden figurine of Beset, slender and seductively naked, was found in a cache of magical objects in a tomb in Egyptian Thebes (Figure 3.9).³⁸ In each of her hands, Beset holds metal serpents. The face is grotesque and leonine with a short wig. Multiple strands of amulet iconography converge here: the naked figure, the snake handler and the mask-like face. Gorgo shares the feminine gender, grotesque face and snake handling with Beset, but she differs in the form of her body.

In Egypt, snake handling was an attribute of the magician. Professional magicians held bronze wands in the shape of snakes, whereas the god of magic, Heka, holds serpents in his hands.³⁹ The 'magical child', Horus, also holds snakes when he is depicted on late period *cippi* which have apotropaic and magical functions.⁴⁰ The same is true of Pataikos who sometimes even eats the snakes.⁴¹ Aaron in the Old Testament was able to turn a rod into a live snake; this surely marked him as a magician. Egyptian magicians, too, claimed to turn rods into live snakes.⁴² The magical side of Gorgo is hard to ignore given this evidence.

This investigation leads us to Egypt. Let us look now at another demonamulet which must have influenced the iconography and meaning of Gorgo: the Egyptian Bes face. His role is that of a protector, mostly of mother and child, but also of men in general.⁴³ Although a benevolent spirit, he is powerful and terrifying, a fighter of enemies. Sometimes he is shown with knives and has a clearly aggressive posture. It is thought that he is syncretized with the aggressive god Aha.⁴⁴ Being a figure of popular religion and magic, Bes was often used as an amulet in the household shrine. His extraordinary and exaggerated features make his magic efficacious. Bes, like Gorgo, has a threatening face. Instead of hair he has a mane. His tongue sticks out to make the face apotropaic.

Bes amulets were very popular in Egypt especially in the eighth and seventh centuries BC when the Egyptians were in close contact with the Greeks. Gorgo has many common features with Bes: the large frontal face, the protruding tongue



Figure 3.6 Seventh century cosmetic Gorgo-shaped vessel from Tarent, now in Basel

Source: Krauskopf (1988) LIMC IV.2, number 262

and the beard which is out of place on the face of a female demon. The wings which we find in many Archaic Gorgo figures are a feature which occurs with Bes in the late period and also with the winged amulet goddesses of the Near East (Figure 2.7).⁴⁵

Another important fact is that Bes amulets, circulating both in and outside Egypt, sometimes took the form of heads. The similarity with the Gorgo heads (*gorgoneia*) is so striking (Figures 3.10 a, b) that influence is undeniable.⁴⁶ The head as an amulet has a value of its own. *Gorgoneia* perhaps originated in a tradition of amulets rather than masks (see below). Note also that both the Greek Gorgo and the Egyptian Bes take the form of cosmetic jars.⁴⁷ (see Figures 3.3 and 3.6). It has been stated in Chapter One that amuletic/protective figures are often connected with cosmetics or articles of toiletry, such as mirrors; naked goddesses, for example, decorate mirror handles or fly-whisks. Cosmetic jars in the shape of Gorgo figures protect the owner of the perfume vase.

In short, the snakes of Gorgo are not a sign of an ancient chthonic cult. Rather, they constitute an essential aspect of the magical image within the context of the East Mediterranean *koine*, a common language of iconography, religion and magic. Gorgo as a snake handler is derived from a Near Eastern and Egyptian



Figure 3.7 Faience Pataikos amulet holding snakes; late period

Source: Schoske and Wildung (1993) page 273

tradition. As an *apotropaion*, she averts evil; she is the Greek version of Bes/Beset and Pataikos and her function is to protect the owner of the object she decorates and to destroy his enemy.

The sexually threatening Gorgo

There are not many extant images which show the monster as a sexual figure. The few that exist, however, are well worth discussing because they reveal the diverse traditions which developed from the dangerous female and violent goddess of the Near East. We shall meet here with another ‘magical’ guise of Gorgo: the female with spread open legs.

On a Greek bronze, found in Etruria and dating from the sixth century BC, Gorgo is flanked by two lions, conforming to the type ‘Mistress of Animals’ (Figure 3.11). Although not naked she is depicted with spread legs and sagging breasts.⁴⁸

Another Gorgo has a crouching position which is akin (although not identical) to the spread leg posture. She takes the shape of the cosmetic jar discussed above



Figure 3.8 Iron Age Syro-Palestinian scarab seal

Source: Keel and Uehlinger (1995) page 249, figure 226b



Figure 3.9 Wooden figurine of Beset from Egyptian Thebes; c. 1700 BC

Source: Pinch (1994) page 57, figure 27

in connection with snake handling (Figure 3.6).⁴⁹ Both the pieces come from the margins of the Greek world in Italy. They reveal another aspect of the monster: threat expressed as explicit, if not grotesque, sexual invitation. The posture of open legs, without indications of birth, is clearly derived from an Oriental type, the so-called 'Baubo'.⁵⁰ Baubo is a girl, in the 'Homeric Hymn to Demeter', who made the goddess laugh by exposing her genitals. The obscene gesture breaks the spell of gloom since Demeter starts laughing. The story transforms the magical act into a literary narrative. The female with spread legs is, at any rate, a Near Eastern invention. The 'Baubo' creature first appears on Near Eastern seals of the second millennium BC (Figure 3.12) although the posture was already used in Neolithic times at Catal Huyuk (but there it is connected with birth). On the seals, the creature has a huge open mouth and spread legs. It is also a Mistress of Animals, surrounded



Figure 3.10a Egyptian Bes head-amulet

Source: Reissner (1958) plate IV, number 12656



Figure 3.10b Gorgoneion on Archaic plate

Source: Krauskopf (1988) LIMC IV.2, number 38

by felines, horses, snakes and goats.⁵¹ The first three types of animals occur also in connection with Gorgo. In addition, the Near Eastern creature is a source of sexual potency. One may well relate it to the origins of life. Yet, supersexuality, the unlimited potential for reproduction in a female, can be threatening rather than attractive. Gorgo's supersexuality is as threatening as her predatorial features.⁵²



Figure 3.11 Sixth century BC Gorgo on a bronze found in Etruria

Source: Krauskopf (1988) LIMC IV.2, number 89

The combination of this sexual display and the threatening face is another means towards the effectiveness of the *apotropaion*. The female demon Beset, mentioned above in connection with snake-handling and possible affinities with Gorgo (Figure 3.9), also appears naked with spread legs upon occasion (Figure 3.13).⁵³ It is thus certain that the sexually threatening Gorgo derives from Near Eastern and Egyptian traditions and belongs to the East Mediterranean *koine* of magical images.

Finally Gorgo occurs on jewellery (amulets) as does the naked goddess.⁵⁴

Gorgo, horses and the young hero

One similarity between Bes and Gorgo is that they sometimes embrace animals. Bes takes lions in his arms (Figure 3.3) which means that his benevolence (rather than dominance) extends to the animal world.⁵⁵ Gorgo embraces horses or, in one case, a deer, an animal which she borrows from the domain of Artemis.⁵⁶ Examples of Gorgo embracing a horse are found on a sixth century BC relief terracotta from South Italy (above Figure 3.2) and a panel on a bronze shield-strap from Olympia (Figure 3.14).⁵⁷ On an Archaic terracotta vessel from South Italy, Gorgo even rides a horse; other examples date to the early Classical period.⁵⁸

This aspect of Gorgo (as a protectress of horses) may prove important. It will take us to her specific realm, the realm of men. In this she converges with the Near Eastern goddess who protects males and whose naked image appears on horse-ornaments (Figures 1.32 to 1.36).

If iconography is a meaningful system of communication, and not an inaccurate rendition of myths which have accidentally been handed down to us, we do not need myth to explain Gorgo's association with horses. If she embraces this animal it is because she is a patroness of horses; likewise the Mistress of Animals is sometimes flanked by, or associated with, horses (see below Figures 4.7). The

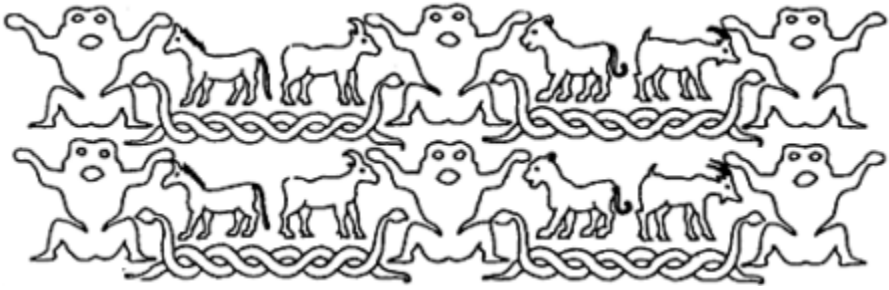


Figure 3.12 'Baubo' on seal impression from Uruk; end of fourth millennium BC

Source: Keel (1992) page 261, figure 271



Figure 3.13 Figurine of Beset with spread legs

Source: Bonnet (1971) page 117, figure 38

horse, in turn, has its own semiology. He is the companion of the warrior, youth and hero. Riders are no longer children but *ephebes*.⁵⁹ The reason why Gorgo protects both horses and youths, enfolding one in each of her arms, is related to her role as an initiatrix, a role which will now be explored.



Figure 3.14 Gorgo and horse on shield strap from Olympia, c. 600 BC

Source: Krauskopf (1988) LIMC IV.2, number 273

Medusa and Perseus: initiation in myth and ritual

It will be suggested here that the myth of Perseus, involving the decapitation of Medusa, is a narrative version of ritual. W.Burkert has argued that myth and ritual do not necessarily derive one from the other; rather they have a symbiotic relationship of mutually reinforcing messages. Sometimes narrative reveals what ritual implies. Other times the narrative supplies the logic of the ritual.⁶⁰ In the case of Gorgo, the message of the myth stresses the accomplishment of the hero Perseus at the expense of the monster that he kills. The message of the ritual is initiation into manhood.

The function of Gorgo in myth is to serve as an adversary to the hero Perseus which seemingly contradicts her role as an amulet and protectress.⁶¹ However, this contradiction exists only on the level of mythical narration. On the level of ritual, the monster-adversary initiates the hero because she brings about his transition to manhood; thus Gorgo is the hero's foster mother as well as his adversary. Here we should note that, in the Orientalizing period, Medusa appears also as a centaur who likewise has the dual role of adversary and tutor to the hero.⁶²

That the myth of Medusa reflects initiation rituals, and that it was enacted on special occasions, has been argued by M.Jameson in connection with an

inscription from Mycenae, dating to the Archaic period and alluding to maturation rites.⁶³ The article is quite important and the main points will be summarized here.

The inscription mentions Perseus in connection with ‘parents’ and a state function in which the recorders for sacred matters (*hieromnemes*) are to serve as judges. Jameson plausibly postulates contests of some kind, in which youths were the protagonists. In these contests there was use of masks such as those found at the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta. Some of these had terrifying features whereas others had the smooth and regular facial features of young men. Contests between youths and demonic creatures or old hags have been suggested.⁶⁴ It is further pointed out that, in art, Perseus is pursued by the sisters of Medusa, the Graiai or hags. Perhaps young boys were pursued by men wearing hag masks during these maturation rites. (They would be rites of separation from the mother, namely from childhood to adolescence, rather than adolescence to adulthood, suggests Jameson).⁶⁵ This might explain the gender of the monster Medusa who is the demonic version of the ‘hag’. The boy has to separate himself from the female-dominated household, in order to become a man. ‘Greek Gorgons, unlike the possible Near Eastern models...such as Humbaba...are always female’.⁶⁶

The hypothesis that the Graiai, the Gorgo-sisters, are the mythical versions of hags in ritual has much to recommend it. We must be careful, however, not to push this too far. Not all masks suggest female gender, and most importantly, no Gorgo masks have been found in connection with possible initiation rituals. The bronze *gorgoneion* found on the bench at the temple of Dreros, has recently been plausibly reinterpreted as a shield emblem.⁶⁷ Terrifying leonine masks have been found at another Hera sanctuary at Tiryns.⁶⁸ Although they have been considered early forms of Gorgo, they are not real Gorgo heads. True, they display frightening features, such as prominent teeth and deeply furrowed faces, but they lack the characteristic features of our monster. At the Artemis Orthia sanctuary at Sparta the masks did not represent Gorgo but varieties of terrifying faces (Figure 3.15a).⁶⁹ At the sanctuary of Athena at Gortyn, a model mask or head was found which was described by Rizza as ‘maschera gorgonica’.⁷⁰ Yet the characteristics rather fit a negroid face: deep furrows, thick lips, curly hair and bulging eyes which are reminiscent of Bes, if anyone, rather than Medusa (see also Figure 3.15b). The model mask was found together with plaques which depict young heroes accomplishing tasks which earns them the claim to heroic manhood: Bellerophon combatting Chimaera, Orestes killing Aegisthus.⁷¹ The context is important because the *pinakes*, or votive plaques, can be plausibly interpreted as visual and symbolic commemorations of accomplishments performed by young men. Finally, at the Kabeirion sanctuary in Boeotia, a terrifying bronze relief was a model, rather than actual mask.⁷² Thus, demon masks may well have been connected with rites of passage, but—and this is important—most are not *gorgoneia*.

Since many of the specimens were not functional, but only models, they may well have been commemorative of ritual. Very likely, young men would dedicate

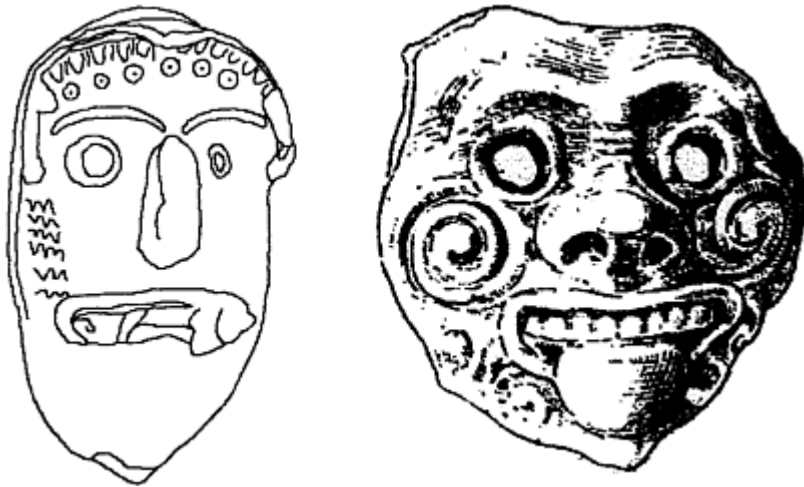


Figure 3.15a and b Masks from the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, Sparta

Source: Dawkins (1929) plate 56

such model masks at the completion of a successful contest. It must be remembered that real masks may have been made of perishable material and did not survive.⁷³

In conclusion, Jameson's thesis is very convincing as regards the connection of the Perseus myth and initiation rites. I suggest, however, that the discrepancy between myth and ritual is wider. In ritual, the demon mask is not a *gorgoneion* and therefore a wide variety of demons may well have been involved varying from place to place. The myth of Perseus represents a canonization of the narrative tradition which is panhellenic but the rituals may have retained their distinct regional identity.

To return to Gorgo: the initiation mask and the *gorgoneion* are very close but they are not identical. The *gorgoneion* is primarily an *apotropaion*, a protective device, whereas the terrifying mask was probably used in initiation contexts and embodied the terrifying pursuer, having explicit reference to monsters which the young men had to flee or overcome. However, there is no denying that there are affinities between the two.⁷⁴ Gorgo may be said to embody both aspects: the adversary and the protectress. Her connection to young men is ambiguous.

Gorgo as an initiatrix at the Temple of Artemis

It is a bit puzzling that the temple of Artemis at Corfu should have as its central piece Gorgo flanked by two leopards instead of the goddess Artemis (Figure 3.16a and b). The explanation generally given for this paradox is that Medusa, like Artemis, is a Mistress of Animals. The monster supposedly manifests the chthonic or demonic side of Artemis.⁷⁵



Figure 3.16a Reconstruction of the pediment of the Temple of Artemis at Corfu

Source: Rodenwald (1938) plate 37

Medusa embraces a winged horse and a youth who have been identified as her sons, Pegasus and Chrysaor. This interpretation is problematic because it involves a temporal impossibility:⁷⁶ the inversion of time sequence. The myth, which is as early as Hesiod (*Theogony* 270–82), states clearly that Pegasus was born after Medusa was decapitated. He sprang from her head along with the giant Chrysaor. Yet Gorgo/Medusa is very much alive on the Corfu pediment.⁷⁷ Art historians explain the temporal impossibility as a convention of Archaic art: the children of Medusa are mythological determinatives.⁷⁸ An alternative was suggested by R.Hampe who identified the young man as Perseus.⁷⁹ He reconstructed him as holding a sword, stepping on one of Gorgo's feet as on a metope of Temple C at Selinus, where Perseus has exactly the same stance as the supposed Chrysaor. Hampe has been criticized by both E.Rodenwald and E.Kunze, and his suggestion has been almost unanimously rejected with the exception of E.Simon.⁸⁰ Some of the arguments against Hampe's hypothesis are as follows: the monster is too large in comparison to the the young man; it is not breaking down; the young man does not have the sack (*kyboreion*) which is a necessary and standard accoutrement of his iconographical identity. The reconstruction of Hampe, by which Perseus supposedly had his foot on Medusa's leg, is rejected as impossible. Finally, it is stated that Perseus normally approaches Medusa from the left, not from the right as is the case in the Corfu pediment.⁸¹ The consensus of scholarship has therefore opted for the identification of the side figures as Pegasus and Chrysaor, the sons of Medusa, who are born from her decapitated head, despite the fact that, on the Corfu pediment, she is still alive.

Hampe was right in seeing major difficulties with this interpretation of the pediment. Chrysaor has no independent iconographical existence.⁸² Also, according to Hesiod Chrysaor was a giant. But the figure on the pediment does not look like a giant, lacking the grotesque face which normally characterizes giants in early Archaic iconography (compare with the giant whom Zeus assaults on the right edge of the pediment, see [Figure 5.6](#)); nor does he look like a child.



Figure 3.16b Detail of [Figure 3.16a](#)

Source: Photo: DAI

Rather, he looks like an unbearded youth, at the verge of manhood, much like Zeus ([Figure 5.6](#)). Thus, it must be said in favour of Hampe, that the supposed Chrysaor has the appearance of a young hero.

Rather than trying to label the participants on the pediment, let us accept ‘the right of the images to speak for themselves.’⁸³ The gesture of Gorgo reveals protection or patronage of a young man and (his) horse. I believe that this is the primary message here and not the mythological narrative which, by necessity, involves her decapitation. She posits here as an initiatrix of young men, assuming a positive rather than a demonic role. The iconography of the pediment may be interpreted in connection with the function of the sanctuary, which belongs to Artemis and may well have been connected with initiation.

We know little about the cult practices of the Corfu temple but initiation rituals for young men and women may be plausibly inferred (see also [Chapter Five](#)).⁸⁴ The pediment of the Artemis temple at Corfu focuses on the establishment of the hero’s identity after a successful encounter with adversaries and giants of the old order. There are two more iconographical arguments in favour of Gorgo’s role as an initiatrix.

First, on sixth century grave *stelai* from Attica (Figure 3.17) a youth may be depicted as the main figure whereas Gorgo features on a panel below.⁸⁵ It can be argued that Gorgo functions as an *apotropaion* averting evil from the grave. This explanation is not incorrect but it is insufficient, whereas Gorgo's connection with patronage of the young man provides a richer range of meanings. She signals that the young man has been initiated into manhood and Gorgo is his patroness.

Second, a panel from a bronze shield dedicated at Olympia (above, Figure 3.14) shows Gorgo embracing a youth and a horse as on the Corfu pediment. It dates a little earlier than the Corfu pediment, but not much. Another strap contains seven panels (Figure 3.18) which furnish an iconographical context for the meaning of Gorgo and the horse.⁸⁶ The iconographical scheme is as follows from top to bottom:

- a Two antithetical lions
- b Gorgo
- c Rider
- d Sphinxes
- e Two wrestlers
- f Male and Female facing each-other. The man grabs the woman's wrist which suggests marriage
- g Two antithetical lions.

The wild animals refer to the domain of the wilderness and the power of the Mistress of Animals. The humans on the various panels, however, all describe crucial instances in the life of a man, more accurately his transition from an *ephebe* to a warrior/hero. As a young man he is represented as a rider, and a contestant in athletics. Then he marries.⁸⁷ Gorgo's role in this context as a patroness of the hero is evident.

Conclusions and summary

Some thoughts arise about the nature of *apotropaia*, the magical devices that have a dual nature being protective and dangerous at the same time. A famous Ancient Greek apotropaic device is the *aegis*. In the *Iliad* it is described as a tasselled metal golden piece manufactured by Hephaistus (*Iliad* 15, 308). It was decorated with a Gorgo head, with the figure of 'Strife' and other personifications of strength (*Iliad* 5, 738). What interests us here is that the *aegis* is used by the gods to cause panic in men. Warriors stampede in panic when Apollo shakes his *aegis* in the *Iliad*. Zeus and Athena also use it for similar purposes. Yet Apollo uses the same device to protect Hector's body from decomposition (*Iliad* 24, 20).

Like the *aegis*, Gorgo is both a figure of horror and protection. We have traced her imagery in association with *apotropaia* of Near Eastern and Egyptian origin. When the main purpose is protection, the schemata which predominate are the amuletic frontal face (*gorgoneion*), which the Greeks owe to Egyptian Bes amulets, the snake-handling image which has affinities with Qu-du-shu and

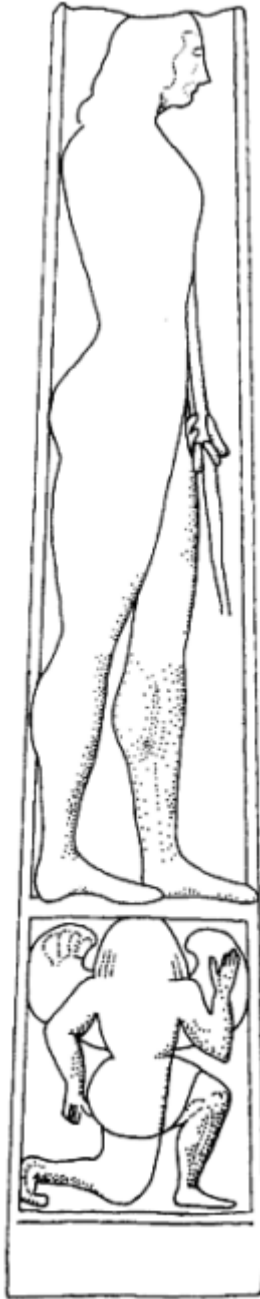


Figure 3.17 Gorgo on archaic grave stela

Source: Boardman (1978) figure 231



Figure 3.18 Archaic shield strap from Olympia

Source: Kunze (1950) plate 73, number 2

Pataikos amulets, and the iconography of the Mistress of Animals. When the purpose is to provide an adversary to the hero, the most obvious source is Near Eastern Humbaba who has the effect of masculinizing Gorgo/Medusa.⁸⁸ There exist variations of the two iconographical schemata: the snake handler may be depicted together with Perseus in decapitation scenes. This is natural because the origins of the iconographical formulae are quickly forgotten once Gorgo fused with the Medusa of myth. This fusion happened quite early and we should hardly expect a separation of iconographical types to correspond completely to the concepts that I have tried to keep distinct.

The result is that Gorgo/Medusa has a dual function in Greek iconography. She is both a patroness of the hero and his adversary. As a protectress she decorates articles of toiletry, cosmetic jars, seal-stones, drinking cups and plates. More telling even is the function of the *gorgoneion* worn by Athena and warriors on their shields, or other parts of their armour. Finally she is a protectress of the young hero and his horse. As a Mistress of Animals and patroness of men, Gorgo is a legacy of the naked goddess of Syria. Medusa, however, is a legacy of Humbaba in iconography. Her sole function is to be killed.

PATRON GODDESSES AND MALE IDENTITY

The Temple of Prinias

In this chapter the conclusions of the preceding sections will be shown to be connected. We shall return to the amuletic function of naked goddesses but the main focus will be the role of the Mistress of Animals as a patroness of men in the seventh century BC.

Traditionally, the Mistress of Animals on works of art of the Orientalizing period has been labelled ‘Artemis’, in some cases she has been given other names as well, Hera or Aphrodite.¹ My aim is to stress the concepts behind the visual categories as well as to correlate iconographical typology with cultic function. This seems preferable to an ambiguous assignation of names. The latter reveal the cultic persona of the deity only partially, because names may change from place to place and period to period. In this chapter we shall see that the Mistress of Animals plays an important part in the life of warriors during the Orientalizing and Archaic periods.

The topic of male identity in connection with female divinities needs to be seriously addressed. There is abundant evidence, especially on Crete where our discussion will concentrate.²

It is best to start with something specific: Temple A of Prinias, dated to the Orientalizing period and decorated with a rich array of sculptural friezes. It is situated on the low hill summit of Prinias between the north and south coasts of Crete.³ It was excavated by the Italian archaeologist L.Pernier early on in the twentieth century, but has been reassessed and re-examined in recent years (Figure 4.1). The settlement was already founded by the 12th century BC but the building named Temple A dates to the middle of the seventh century BC, at which time the urban space of the settlement seems to have been reorganized.⁴ The temple is a rectangular edifice with a central hearth and a base along its southern wall. Next to it was a second building (so-called Temple B), also containing a hearth, perhaps a council house. The hearth and calcified bones found in connection with Temple A show that communal dining took place in it. There were also *pithoi*,

both in the anteroom and the main room, presumably for storage of cereals, wine or oil.⁵

That Temple A was a sacred edifice is evidenced by sculptures of goddesses which will be discussed subsequently. Yet, it was not a conventional temple, such as we know from later Greece. Rather, it was a combination of a communal dining place and a sacred building. As to who dined there, it is certain that it accommodated only the elite, the *aristoi*, for its space is restricted.⁶

The sculptural decoration was confined mostly to the facade and consisted of three different thematic groups of blocks and friezes.⁷ Three alternative reconstructions of the facade have been proposed. The first by the archaeologist L.Pernier; the second (only slightly) modified by S. Stucchi, and a third by I.Beyer (Figure 4.2).⁸ The sculptures fall into the following thematic groups:

- 1 Seated three-dimensional goddesses who are clothed
- 2 Standing relief goddesses who are clothed
- 3 Naked relief goddesses (not included in Pernier's reconstruction)
- 4 A frieze of men on horseback holding shields and spears (Figure 4.3)
- 5 Two different friezes of animals one of which was not included in the reconstruction of Pernier (see Figures 4.2, 4.4).

Originally it was thought by Pernier that the cavalry frieze was placed above the door because the very tall legs of the horses were meant to be viewed from below. He disregarded the conventions of the local style of this period; as we shall see, Pernier was probably wrong and the cavalry frieze was located low on the exterior wall, closer to the human visitor. The seated goddesses were placed by Pernier at a high level above the door. They rest their feet on a frieze of wild animals, and this symbolizes their dominance over animals. Note that the underside of the lintel block, on which the seated goddesses rest, features two additional female divinities longitudinally carved head-to-head (Figure 4.4).

In his new study, I.Beyer identified fragments of two nude figures with one hand covering the pudenda, the other near the breast (Figure 4.5).⁹ This gesture is familiar from the Syro/Palestinian plaques (Chapter One). Beyer suggested a modification of the decoration as well as the architecture.¹⁰ The temple lost its portico and acquired a grand door at its facade. It was also given a gable roof, which is not accepted by everyone (Figure 4.2).¹¹ The frieze of wild animals and panthers was reconstructed as orthostates by Beyer, decorating the base of the facade; he placed them on either side of the grand door (Figure 4.2).¹² The two seated goddesses remained above the principal door. On the inner side of the door frame, Beyer situated the nude figures (Figures 4.5 and 4.6). The orthostates with the wild animals thus became linked to the nude figures since both were located at the lower level, in proximity to the visitor entering the building. This means that both the clad and the naked divinities were originally associated with wild beasts and can be designated as Mistresses of Animals. As for the cavalry frieze (Figure 4.3), it has already been mentioned that Beyer placed it on the lower level

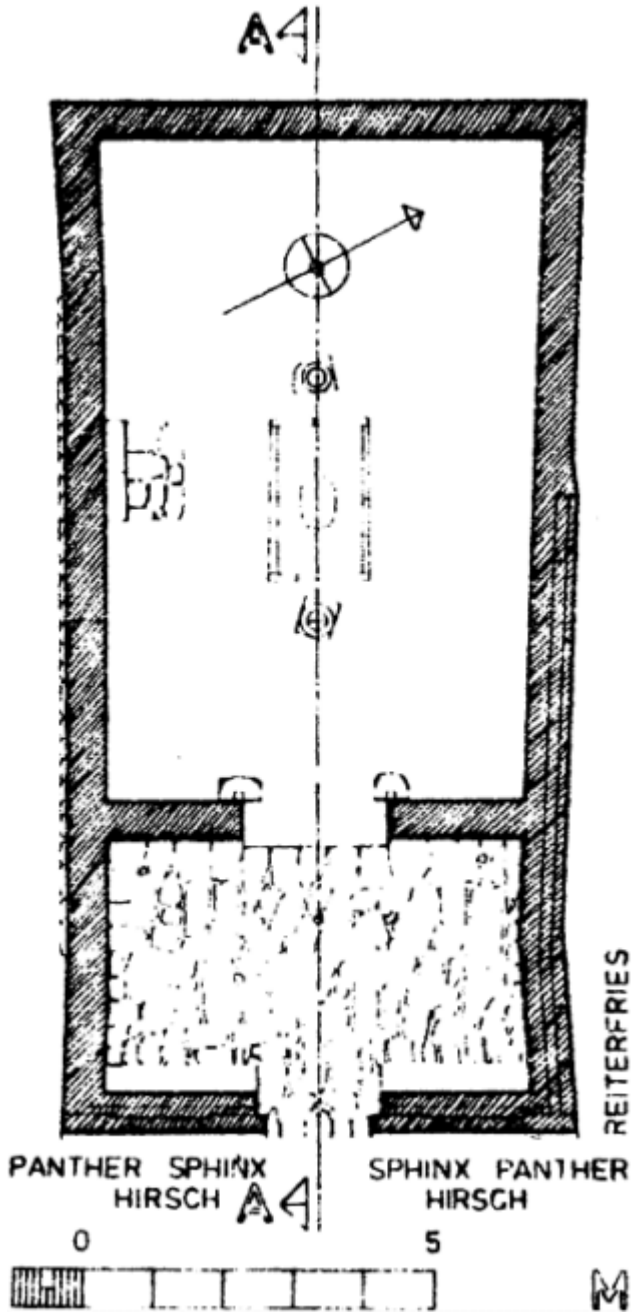


Figure 4.1 Temple A at Prinias; seventh century BC

Source: Beyer (1976) plate 12.2

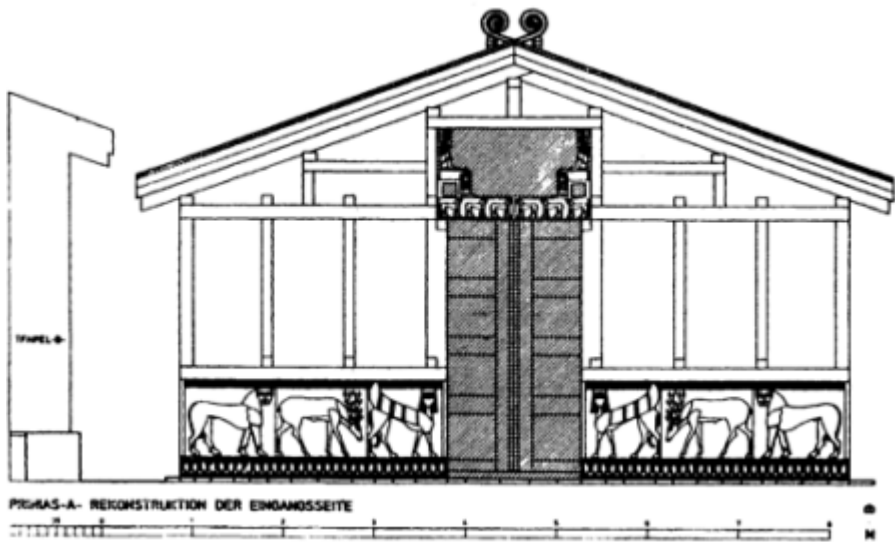


Figure 4.2 Reconstruction of the facade of Temple A at prinias

Source: Beyer (1976) plate 24

along the north and south exterior walls of the temple. Beyer's reconstruction has been emended by M.D'Acunto who proposed that some of the blocks with the men on horseback appeared on the front, turning around the corner, as it were.¹³ I am sympathetic to D'Acunto's view. In his reconstruction, the iconography of the facade includes both warriors on horseback and wild animals which guarded the entrance.

The inspiration about the orthostates on the lower level comes from North Syria, and this accords well with the general influence exerted by that region on Crete in the seventh century BC. In addition, a terracotta model from Ithaca, dating a little earlier than our temple, has paintings of riders and birds near the door at a low level.¹³ Beyer's reconstruction has found general acceptance, although one scholar has expressed disagreement seeking Egyptian models instead.¹⁴

The description and location of the sculptures on this temple is necessary as a prelude to the investigation of the role of the goddesses in connection with the function of the temple. A seeming paradox can be identified instantly: female deities naked and clothed are associated, not with women, but with warriors on horseback. Both types are Mistresses of Animals.

Let us look at the typology of the deities a little more closely. On the upper level, above the door, each of the goddesses is seated on a throne and has her arms on her knees (Figure 4.6 and 4.7). Each wears a tall *polos* hat and has a dress decorated with a sphinx, a feline, and a horse.¹⁵ The animals emphasize the nature of the goddesses as dominating over the wild. The thrones rest on a block which

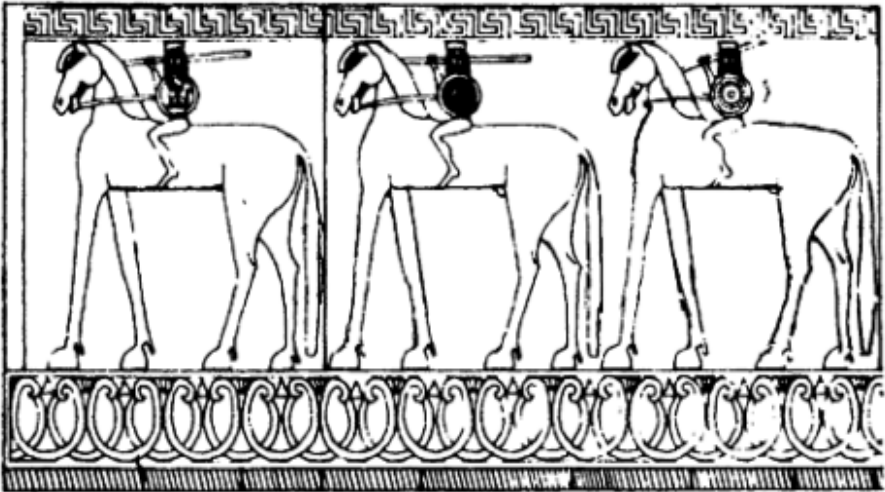


Figure 4.3 Horseman frieze from Temple A at Prinias

Source: Beyer (1976) plate 13.1

is engraved with a panther frieze, which implies that the goddesses step on the beasts, an expression of control (Figure 4.4).

On the underside of this block are the additional standing goddesses with tall *polos* hats and arms resting along the side of the body (Figure 4.4). They are engraved longitudinally head-to-head along the length of the block. Their posture is evocative of figurines and amulets (Chapter One). Two nude goddesses were embedded in the doorway (Figures 4.5, 4.6).

If we look at the disposition of these figures in the space, it becomes obvious that there is a duplication of motifs. Not only that, but the two sides converge in a symmetrical way at the central axis of the doorway. For this reason I think that the typological diversity of the goddesses (standing, seated, clothed and naked) has no mythological significance. The duplication of the figures must have had a magical purpose and is not an allusion to genealogical or family relationships of deities as expanded by myth.¹⁶ The goddesses are there to protect the entrance, and most importantly, those who enter and exit the temple.¹⁷ To use a Christian analogy, which may not be totally inappropriate in this context, they confer 'blessings' to the men who enter the temple. This explains why the two figures engraved along the length of the block face down hovering above the visitor as it were. Similarly, the primary function of the nude goddesses on the lower level was to protect the visitors. They too are Mistresses of Animals, as we have seen. They interact more directly with the visitors entering or leaving the temple, because they are closer to them and on the same level. The naked figures are therefore more immediately linked with mortals, perhaps they were even conceived as being lower in rank than the dressed goddesses of the high level. In addition, the nudity may be seen as an indication of otherness, compatible with

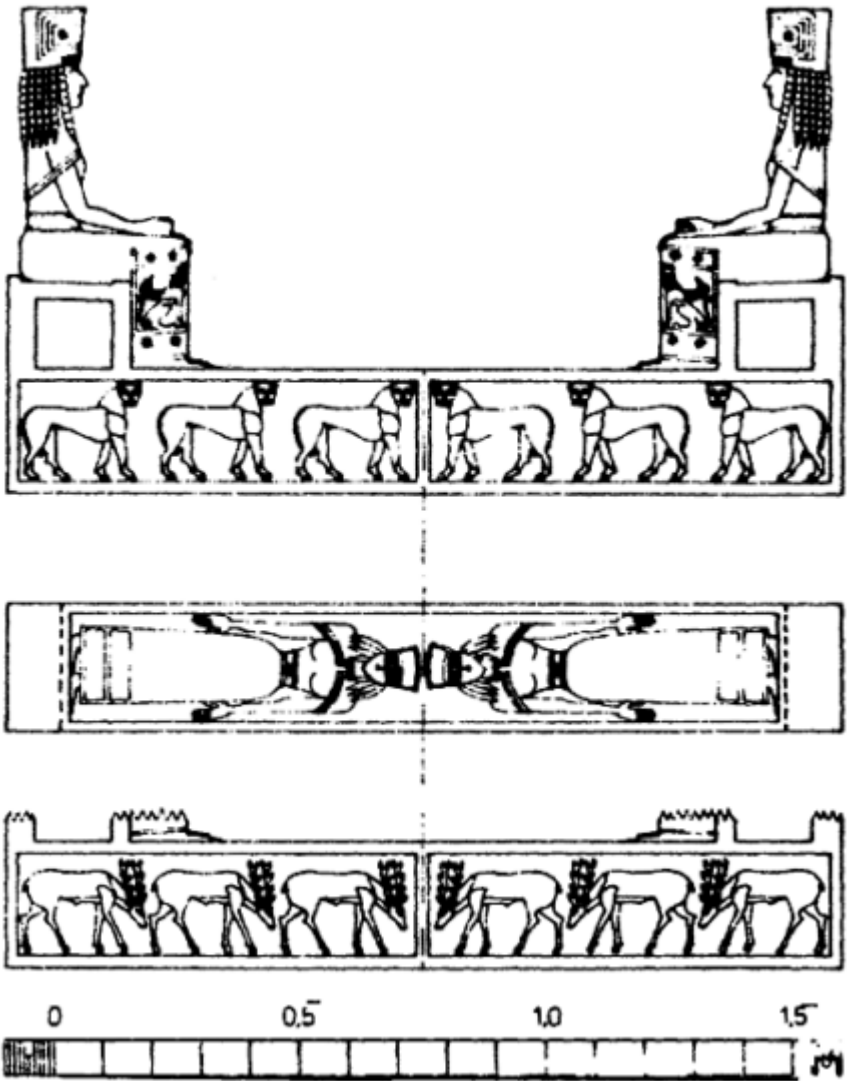


Figure 4.4 Stone sculptures of seated goddesses, animal friezes and horizontally sculpted goddesses above doorway and facade of Temple A at Prinias

Source: Beyer (1976) plate 21.1

the magical function.¹⁸ An important conclusion emerges from this analysis: given the fact that the Cretan temples include hearths and are virtual dining halls, the most likely visitors were the social male elite of the town of Prinias.¹⁹ Around the major edifices there was a square and a flourishing town.²⁰ That the two buildings A and B were the symbolic focus (political and religious) of the town is without

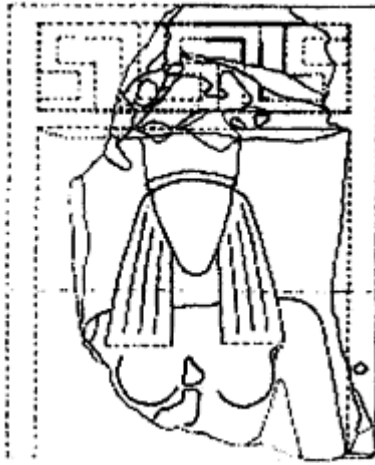


Figure 4.5 Nude goddess sculpture from doorway of Temple A at Prinias

Source: Beyer (1976) plate 15.1

doubt. As we can guess by the presence of the cavalry frieze, they were a place for the males of the community to gather. As for women, surely they also participated in rites associated with the temple. They must have been charged with the care of the temple and the cult images, they must have brought garments and other offerings and we know from inscriptions that this was the case in Classical Greece.²¹

A few words now about the deities worshipped inside the Cretan hearth temples. We suspect that the temples provided a dining hall for the male elite of the community; we might therefore expect a male warrior god to have been the patron.²² Instead, the evidence points to seated female figures. At another temple of the same period, at Gortyn, an enthroned female statue has been found in the terrace outside the temple.²³ From this temple comes also a clay statuette (c. 0, 307 m) with a skirt decorated with a wild goat and birds; she must have represented another female Mistress of Animals. A seated statue found at Astritsi was probably a cult image from a similar temple.²⁴ In short, there is substantial evidence pointing to a patroness of men in Crete during the Orientalizing period: the warriors ate with the goddess.

To end with some remarks about the naked goddesses. We have inferred an *apotropaic* and amuletic function in previous chapters. Is this conclusion compatible with the evidence from Prinias temple A? We maintain it is because the naked goddesses flanked the visitors entering the door.

We have no ready models from the Levantine coast to help us envisage decorative schemes in that region, although the affinities of the Prinias temple orthostates with those of North Syria have been pointed out. A set of clay models and stands, however, from the Syro-Palestinian area may prove useful in providing conceptual analogies. From Pella, Jordan, comes a shrine facade model

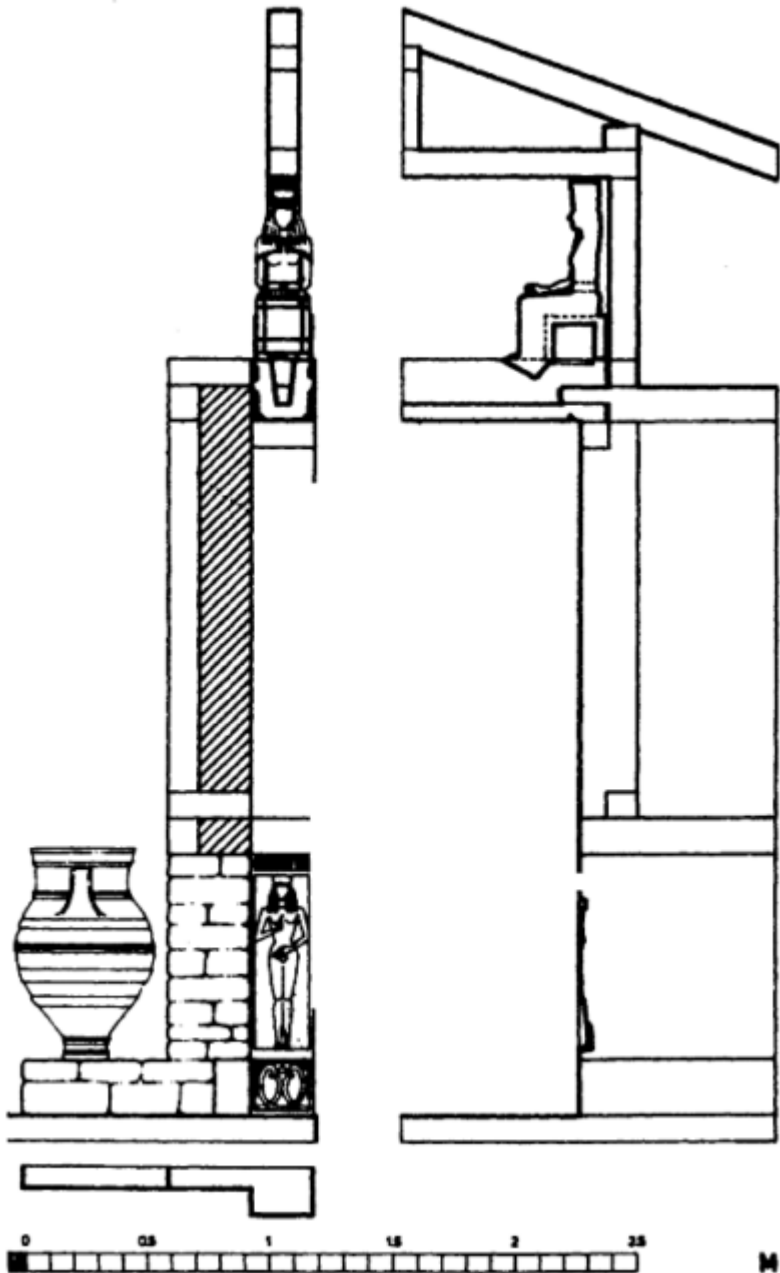


Figure 4.6 Elevation of Temple A at Prinias

Source: Beyer (1976) plate 22

(Figure 4.8).²⁵ The facade has an opening (door or window?) and is flanked by



Figure 4.7 Close-up of seated goddess sculpture from doorway of Temple A at Prinias

Source: Pernier (1914) figure 20, C 2

twin naked females. They stand on lions' heads.

The idea of twin naked figures protecting the opening or facade of the shrine is exactly what we find at the doorway of Prinias. There is also a great similarity with the orthostates of the temple at Gortyn to which we shall turn next.

Naked goddesses and magical triads

A special formula involving a triad will be investigated now: two females flanking a male. A monumental example of this iconographical pattern is a set of orthostate blocks which decorated the facade of the aforementioned Cretan temple of Gortyn ([Figure 4.9](#)).²⁶ They depict in a repetitive fashion three figures: a striding male flanked by two naked goddesses with *polos* hats.²⁷ Thus reliefs with naked

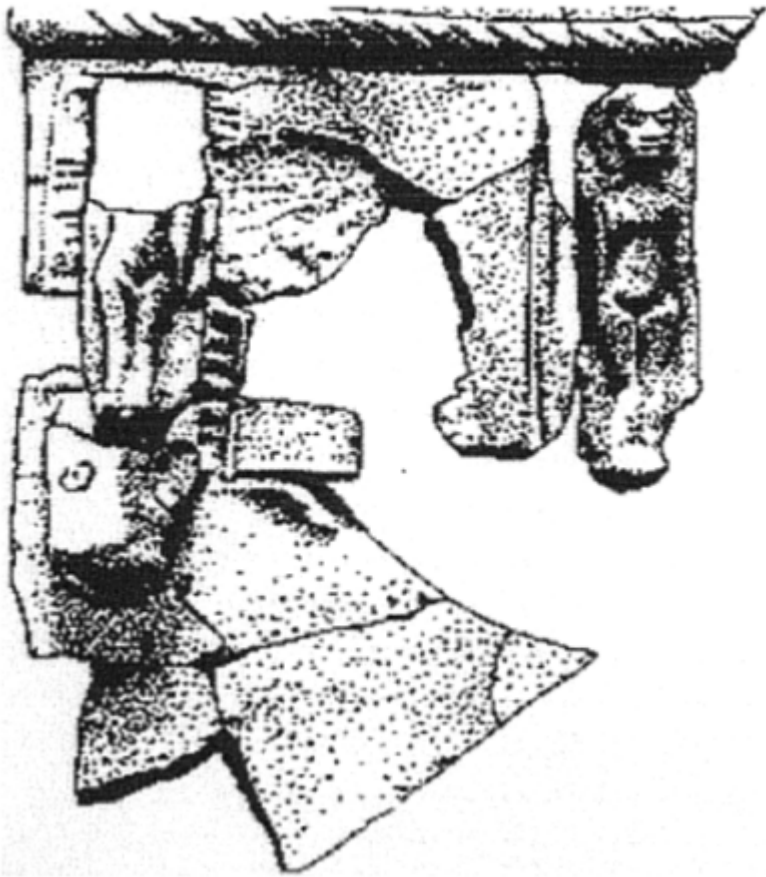


Figure 4.8 Iron Age cult stand from Jordan

Source: Keel and Uehlinger (1955) page 117, figure 126

goddesses function in absolutely the same way in both Cretan temples of Prinias and Gortyn. They are, first, associated with males and, second, they are placed at a low level, on the same plane as the visitors.

The triad is exemplified in groups attested already in the eighth century BC. A complex of three bronze statues of a male flanked by two females were found *in situ* on a bench inside another Cretan hearth-temple, at Dzeros.²⁸ They date to the late eighth century BC (Figure 4.10).²⁹ The female figures are here dressed and not identical in size; still they flank a male, and have their arms hanging on the sides similar to figurines discussed in Chapter One (see Figure 1.21). They supposedly represent Apollo, Artemis and Leto. Their mythological significance apart, the arrangement conforms to the formula of the triadic scheme where the females have a protective function.

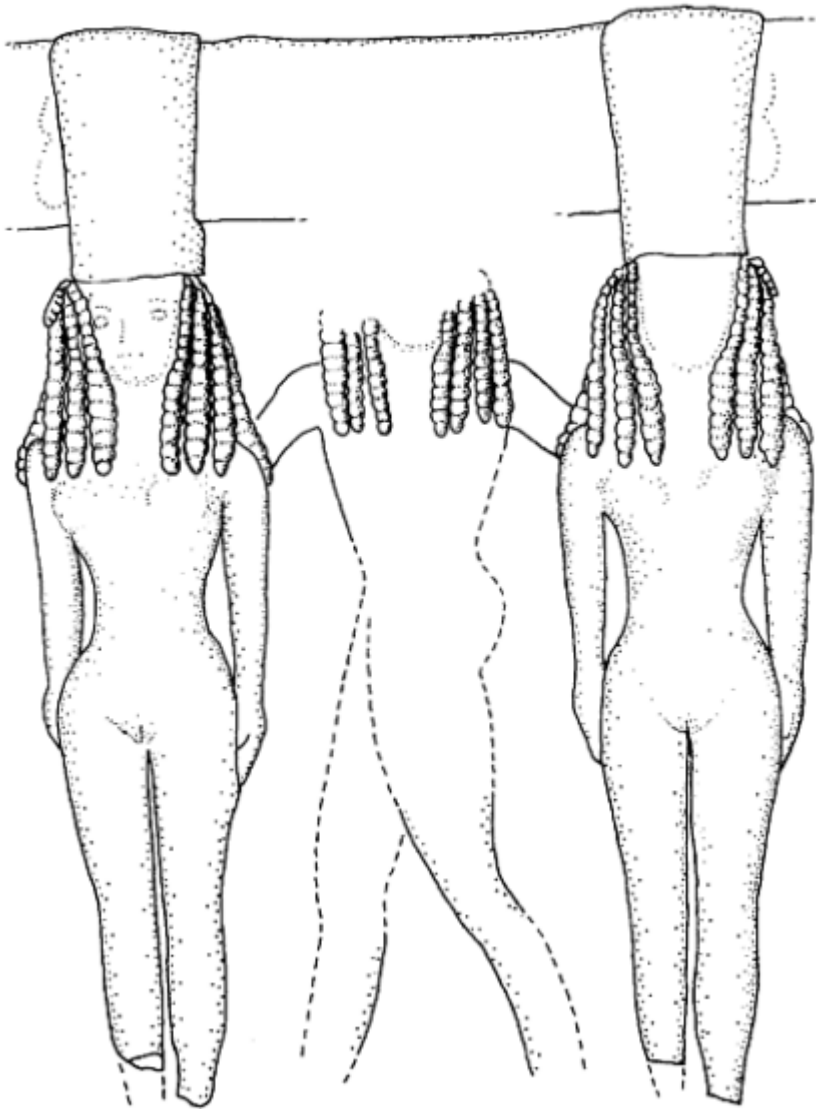


Figure 4.9 Gortyn temple: orthostates with naked goddesses protecting a male; seventh century BC

Source: Rizza (1968) plate IV. Drawing: O.Apergi

Another triad, likewise dating to the eighth century, consists of two females flanking one male on a bronze girdle which presumably belonged to a warrior (Figure 4.11 a, b). He was buried at Fortetsa, near Knossos, Crete.³⁰ All the figures

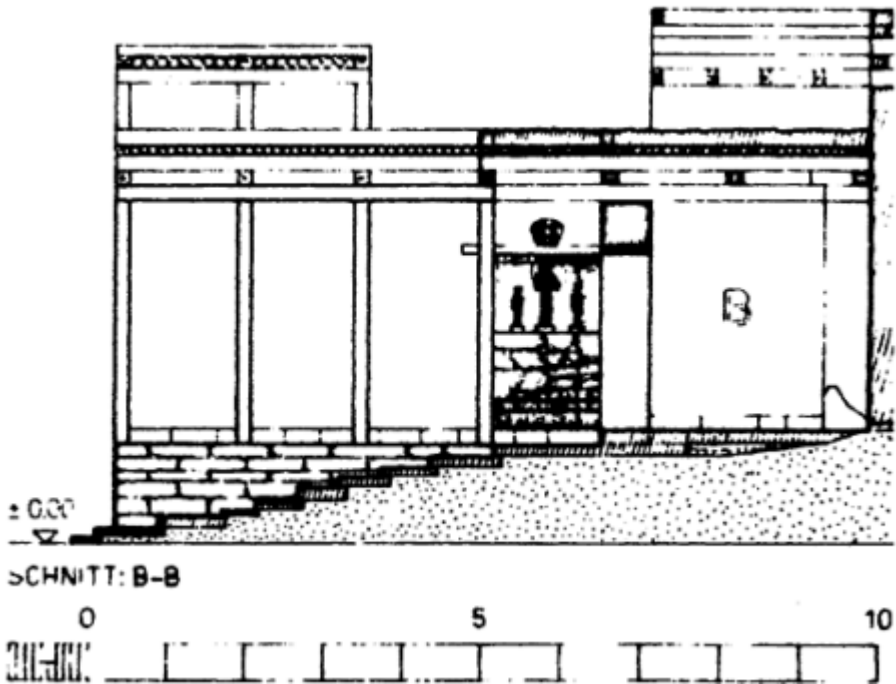


Figure 4.10 Bronze statue triad, from the temple of Dreros; late eighth century BC

Source: I. Beyer. Beyer (1976) plate 7

are situated within an edifice. The male stands in the centre and holds the two females (goddesses?) by their wrists (Figures 4.11 a). He is in a striding position like the man from Gortyn. The female figures are slightly larger than the man, mostly because of their tall *polos* hats, but this is unlikely to be without significance and may indicate their divine status. Outside the edifice are archers defending the figures within the building against approaching chariots (Figure 4.11 b). This scene has a narrative structure and reflects the widespread motif ‘city siege’ popular in contemporary Assyrian reliefs.³¹ The emblematic formula of the Gortyn temple orthostates is used on the earlier Fortetsa belt as an element in a story: a man, protected by two goddesses within a building, is under attack.³² He may be a ruler, or a god. At any rate, he is not differentiated from the warriors as he has a helmet identical to that of the archers. The interpretation of the edifice as housing both the ruler and the protective goddesses is compatible with the function of the Cretan temples as ‘men’s houses’, a combination of a sacred and secular building.³³

Examples of triads outside Crete, dating to the seventh century BC, will be examined next. An ivory votive plaque from the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta depicts two clothed female figures with *polos* hats (Figure 4.12). They flank

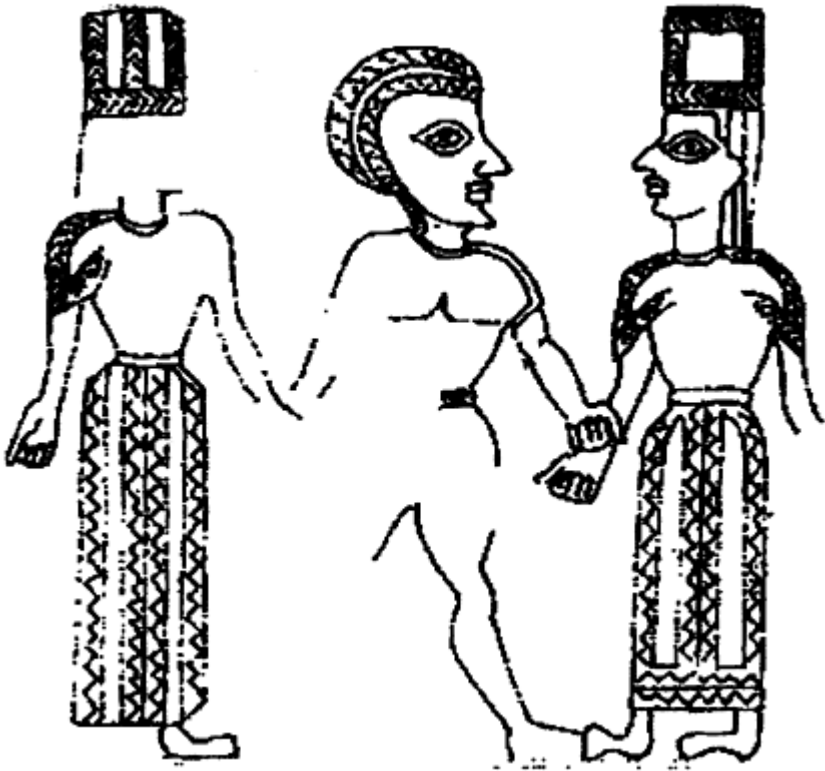


Figure 4.11a Triad on a bronze belt from a tomb at Fortetsa, Crete; late eighth century BC
 Source: Beyer (1976) plate 46.1

a male in a striding position. From the same sanctuary comes a clay plaque where a male is flanked by two naked females, each covering her pudenda with one hand. In this latter case, the naked figures are identical.³⁴

Some conclusions can be reached about the meaning of the triads: we have seen that the flanking females may or may not be naked. Thus, the Greeks took the nudity from the Near East but felt free to alternate between nude and clothed figures.³⁵ In the triadic groups it is the flanking scheme and the number three that are the crucial factors, not the nudity, since the deities may be clothed. It is interesting that the females are always passive. The male in the centre, on the other hand, is often in motion, indicated by a partial profile view and stride. He is the protagonist. That the male is Apollo in all cases is difficult to accept, for it would imply a nude Artemis and Leto both at Gortyn and Prinias; besides not all figures in Early Greek art must reflect deities or particular mythological heroes.³⁶ It is fair to conclude that the triadic relationship is a magical formula, rather than a statement of genealogy. The duplication of the figures in absolute symmetry, to the right and left of the door at the temple of Prinias, argues for a functional not



Figure 4.11b Narrative scene on a bronze belt from a tomb at Fortetsa, Crete

Source: Pray on (1987) figure 12

a mythological interpretation. In addition, in the other representations of triads, the two females resemble one another closely, as they do at Prinias and Gortyn and on the clay plaque from Orthia at Sparta.³⁷

What is the meaning of the triad?³⁸ Surely we have to look to Egypt first, since the formula is of Egyptian derivation, attested already during the Old Kingdom, as was pointed out by G.Rizza.³⁹ A good example is the marvellous sculptural group in which King Mycerinus is flanked by two divinities.⁴⁰ In the New Kingdom the same protective role is assumed by the two sisters Isis and Nephthys, especially in funerary art. The Egyptians thus retained the formula for thousands of years, although they varied the protagonists. This is because the triad is in itself magical.

How did this idea arrive in Crete and why does it fade away in the later periods? I feel reasonably certain that the imagery, as well as the concept, of the twin divine protectresses came to Crete from two different routes. The concept of the naked goddess as a protectress and as an *apotropaion* arrived on Crete in the form of Syro-Palestinian amulets, weapons and figurines. On shields found in Crete, as well as on other objects in use by warriors, naked goddesses are engraved as a device (Chapter One). Soon the Cretans reproduced the nude figures in moulded terracottas, such as have been found in Gortyn (Figure 1.37).⁴¹

The concept of twin protective goddesses, on the other hand, is primarily Egyptian although examples of dual goddesses (perhaps sisters) are frequently attested in the Near East (Figure 2.14).⁴² The Cretans would have been familiar with Egyptian amulets with Horus in the centre, flanked by Isis and Nephthys (Figure 4.13).⁴³ Such amulets dating to the Saitic period and later, namely from the seventh century BC onwards, were very popular (Figure 4.13, see also Figure 3.7). Note that, on the amulets, Isis and Nephthys look identical except for their differing headdresses. They are dressed, but the garment is so tight that the goddesses might appear naked to the non-Egyptian eye not accustomed to the



Figure 4.12 Seventh century BC ivory plaque from sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta
 Source: Dawkins (1929) plate 95

conventions of Egyptian art. It must be stressed that the idea of the naked goddess as a protectress is not evident in Minoan Crete.

In short, Egyptian and Syrian influences converge to shape the concept of the naked protectress of the male. The syncretism may have happened anywhere in the eastern Mediterranean not necessarily on Crete itself. At any rate this artistic and religious syncretism is evident in Syria and Cyprus as well.

The Greeks inherited the relationship of goddess and warrior but modified the formula by dressing the female divinities, although nudity remained present in some cases to reinforce the magical 'otherness' of the protectress.

Another question must be addressed next and it is an important one. Who are the males in the centre? Can we determine whether they are gods or humans? The answer is not easy and each case may need to be examined separately. What is certain is that the triads articulate a certain relationship between the genders in

which males and females have different types of power. Take Prinias, for example, where the visitors were symbolically flanked by female divinities. In his recent study of the temple, M.D'Acunto has made a case for identifying the men as the aristocracy of this Cretan community.⁴⁴ They are the *hippeis*, a special and privileged group. That the men on horseback represent the warriors is confirmed by Lebessi's important contribution to the iconography of social identity. By analyzing the figures engraved on the funerary *stelai* from the town of Prinias, she isolated four major groups: elders, mature and young warriors, mothers and maidens.⁴⁵ The category which interests us here is the second one, the men who belong to the warrior class and who defend the community.⁴⁶ At Temple A at Prinias, both societal rank and communal identity are expressed by the sculpture decoration. The men are under the patronage of female deities duplicated for effect. This ideology of female patronage paves the way for another special relationship which was to flourish in the Archaic period: the patron goddess and the young hero.

Further iconographical evidence

The Mistress of Animals as a patroness of the warrior and hero

Some more images will be examined next which illustrate the relationship of the Mistress of Animals to the warrior.

Let us start again in the Near East, with an example of Syrian/Egyptian syncretism. It is an ivory inlay from Ugarit, dating to the 14th century BC, and containing several panels (Figure 4.14).⁴⁷ The first one shows a naked goddess who looks to the right. Next comes a pharaoh killing a lion. Next a bearded (Syrian) warrior killing an enemy. There follow warriors and one figure bearing a lion cub. The right end of the strap shows a worshipper. Hunt and war are juxtaposed, and the overseer is a naked goddess. The object is an interesting blend of Syro-Egyptian iconographical elements and ideology, with the naked goddess as a patroness of the warrior male. The same idea is expressed on a Phoenician silver bowl found by the altar of Zeus at Olympia (Figure 2.14).

Next we return to the Cretan temple at Prinias. We have seen that all goddesses, nude as well as clothed, were associated with animal friezes and they can therefore be defined as Mistresses of Animals. In the *cella* of the same temple, a storage jar (*pithos*) repeats some of the iconographical elements of the temple sculptures. Its main decoration, on the neck, consists of a winged goddess flanked by horses. On the body of the *pithos* is a narrow frieze with men riding galloping horses and accompanied by running dogs.⁴⁸ Tripod vessels amidst the horses point to an athletic contest.⁴⁹ The goddess presides over a world of male athletics. If the riders symbolize the male warrior aristocrats, the Mistress of Animals, appearing here very meaningfully as a *potnia* of horses, is their patroness.⁵⁰ Another Cretan *pithos*, now in a museum in Israel, depicts a *potnia* and sphinxes in the neck of the vessel, whereas metopes with riders decorate the shoulders.⁵¹ Finally, a fragmentary



Figure 4.13 Egyptian amulet of late period

Source: Courtesy of Dr B.Schlick-Nolte and Dr P.C.Boll. Photo: U.Edelmann

votive plaque from Gortyn probably also shows a Mistress of Horses.⁵² The goddess is therefore a protectress of the athlete as well as the warrior; the votives may have been dedicated by a victorious athlete or one who aspired to win.

This association of patron goddess and warrior or hero and athlete is not unique to Cretan iconography. In other parts of Greece we also meet with similar visual connections. One example is furnished by a bronze shield strap from the *temenos* of Hera Limenia at Perachora, which is dated by Payne to late seventh/early sixth



Figure 4.14 Late Bronze Age ivory plaque from Ugarit

Source: Keel (1978) figure 383

century BC (Figure 4.15).⁵³ The stylistic rendition of the horse is close to the Prusias sculptures and I would be comfortable with a date within the late Orientalizing period. What is of interest here is the iconographical scheme, namely the conceptual link between the different panels of the strap. On top is a Mistress of Animals holding waterbirds by the neck. Next comes the monster Himaira (a combination of lion and goat, namely predator and prey). Next are the legs of a sphinx(?); a lion; a beardless rider; finally another fragmentary animal. The Mistress of Animals thus presides over the young rider, who may be Bellerophon to judge from the presence of the monster Himaira. At any rate, the theme of this strap is male valour (see also the shield strap from Olympia, Figure 3.18). The wild animals and monsters are the potential adversaries of the youth.⁵⁴ Note that the rider in this case has no armour; he is not a mature warrior but an *ephebe* on horseback. This is of interest to us because the patronage of the goddess to the warrior is eventually transferred to youths—the warriors of tomorrow—and, by a further extension, to young heroes. On Corinthian works of the same period, the hero Bellerophon is often depicted as a youth on horseback.⁵⁵ The non-narrative character of the panels from Perachora (Figure 4.15) enables the visual concepts of ‘hero’ and ‘youth’ to stand independently, albeit linked. In any case, the Mistress of Animals presides.

Interesting also is a vase in the shape of a goddess from Thebes, dating to the seventh century BC (Figure 4.16). Its neck and head have the shape of a female, while the body is decorated with warriors fighting over their dead comrades.⁵⁶ The female must be the divine patroness of the warriors. In this case the deity literally embodies the warrior.

Consider also a clay plaque with a goddess from Magna Graecia (Figure 4.17).⁵⁷ She has a dress decorated with panels and each of them focuses on the theme ‘young people’. The first scene shows a man carrying the dead body of a gigantic figure; the second has maidens holding hands in a dance formation; the third depicts male youths holding hands. It is evident that the youths are the protagonists and therefore an ideology of initiation of youths and maidens can be inferred. The

top panel refers to the special achievement of one male warrior who carries the dead hero twice his size. In mythology the hero is Ajax carrying the body of Achilles. The goddess, whose dress depicts the stages of initiation, can be termed a patron deity of the young. Although maidens are present, the emphasis is on male youths.

A new sensational reconstruction of three bronze statues (*sphyrelata*) from Olympia offers additional evidence for the concept of the seventh century BC patron goddess. Once more we find that the iconographical content of the deity's dress reflects aspects of her identity. B. Borell and D. Rittig combined two sets of bronze sheets to reconstruct a group of three statues (Figure 4.19). One set of the bronzes was manufactured by Greek craftsmen; it is suggested that they were itinerant Cretan metalsmiths who worked at Olympia.⁵⁸ The craftsmen attached their worked metal to some damaged Near Eastern bronze reliefs which had arrived at Olympia on a previous occasion, perhaps as dedications by a Near Eastern monarch.⁵⁹ The Near Eastern pieces include wild animals and demons (Figure 4.18). The Greek ones show wild animals, warriors and rider(s) (Figure 4.19). The reliefs decorated the garments of all three goddesses, who are both Mistresses of Animals and protectresses of the warrior.⁶⁰ The Olympia statues are a perfect example of Greek-Near Eastern syncretism on both the religious and the artistic level.

The role of the clothed Mistress of Animals partly coincides and dominates that of the naked goddess. It is precisely because of her protective function that the Mistress is featured on amulets. Lead pendants with holes for hanging, where a Mistress of Animals holds waterbirds by the neck, have been found at the sanctuary of Hera Limenia at Perachora; gold pendants depicting a Mistress of Animals with lions have been found in Rhodes.⁶¹ Fibulae with Mistresses of Birds were found in the sanctuary of Orthia at Sparta; a pendant comes from the Idaean cave, Crete, to mention only a few examples.⁶²

Is there any significance to the animals which flank the goddess? Surely the horses are symbolic of male identity: the riders as well as the athletes whom she protects. I am not sure how to interpret the choice of birds over felines, however.

As to what one should call the Mistress of Animals, various names such as 'Rhea' and 'Britomartis' have been proposed for the goddesses at Prinias, while dual aspects (chthonic and non-chthonic) have been deduced to explain the duplication of the enthroned goddesses above the door of the temple (Figure 4.2).⁶³ The designation 'fertility figures' or 'Astarte' are occasionally mentioned for the naked goddesses.⁶⁴ Artemis is still the preferred name.⁶⁵ Such names are arbitrary. For example, how do we know that the goddess of Prinias is Rhea? Giving a name is almost an attempt at veiling our ignorance by invoking the obscure. In truth, we know little about any cults of Rhea or Britomartis. As for the designations 'Fertility and Mother Goddess' they have the appeal of the ancient. They evoke the 'primitive' vegetation cults proposed by W. Mannhardt and J. Frazer, and also the naked Neolithic statuettes, which have been so often equated with the primeval mother-goddess, and which are icons of primeval religion.⁶⁶ That nudity and



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Figure 4.15 Shield strap from sanctuary of Hera Limenia at Perachora; late seventh/ early sixth century BC

Source: Payne (1940) plate 48

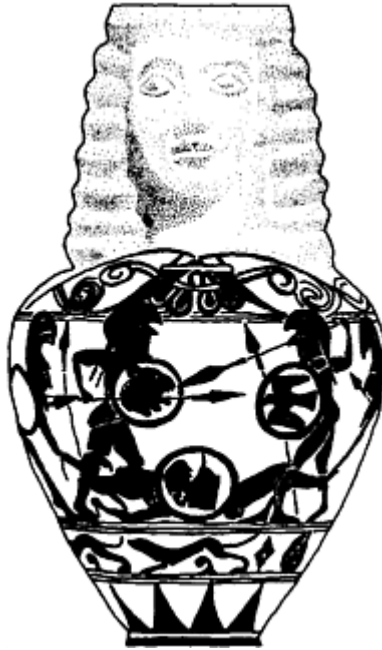


Figure 4.16 Seventh century BC goddess vase from Thebes

Source: Bandinelli and Paribeni (1986) number 89. Drawing: O.Apergi

fertility should coincide is not an unreasonable assumption. However, there is more to nudity than fertility and to assign to it one meaning only is to deny the richness and complexity of sexuality itself.⁶⁷ We have seen here that the nude goddess is consistently linked to a male, not a female, following.

In summary, two points need to be stressed. First, that it is important to take iconographical categories seriously as carriers of fundamental concepts.⁶⁸ Second, that the goddess of wild animals is a patroness of the male in early Greek religion. The exceptions are few.⁶⁹ What the Greeks called her in the Orientalizing period must remain hypothetical and is probably not important since the name may have varied from locality to locality. It is true that the Mistress of Animals was eventually identified mainly with Artemis but to claim an absolute equation of the two for the Orientalizing period may be limiting the cultic personae of both.

To return to the evidence from Crete: at Gortyn we witness the transformation of the persona of the deity in the votives. The naked figurines stop in the Archaic period; they are replaced by statuettes of Athena.⁷⁰ It is to be suspected that there was a shift in the way the patron deity of Gortyn was visualized. The dangerous but sexual goddess of the seventh century BC, is eventually replaced by the asexual virgin goddess Athena.

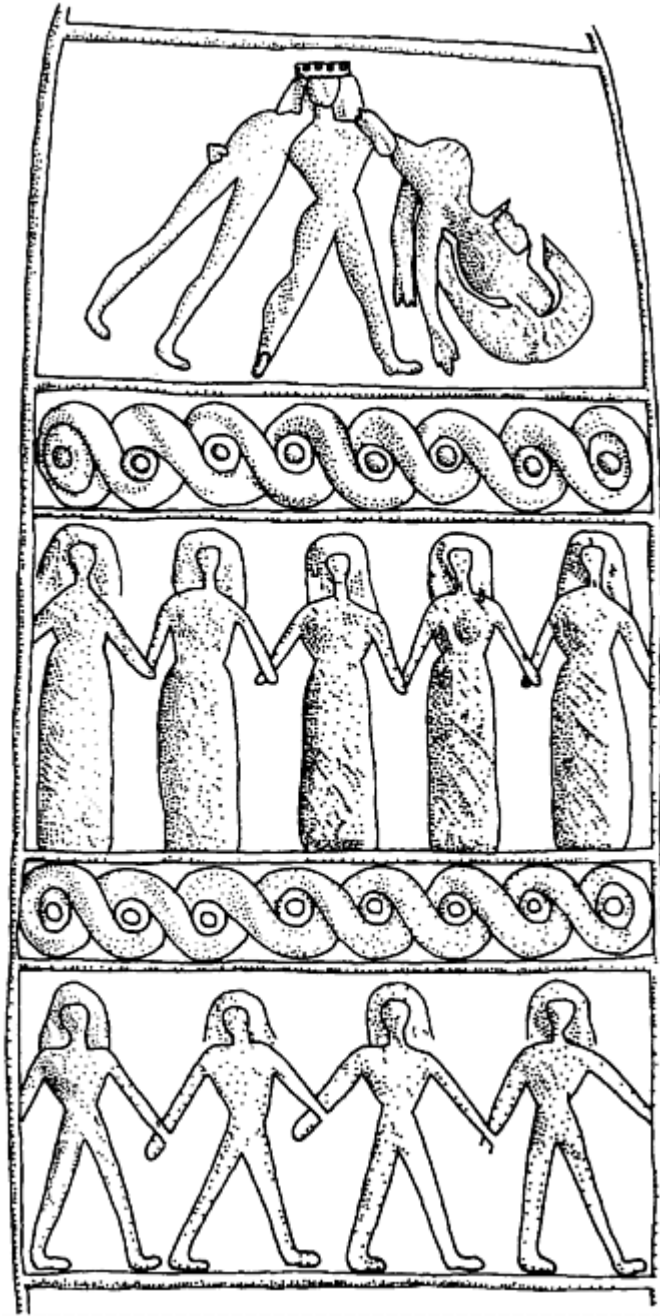


Figure 4.17 Seventh century BC fragmentary clay relief plaque from Southern Italy

Source: Schefold (1966) plate 32b. Drawing: O.Apergi

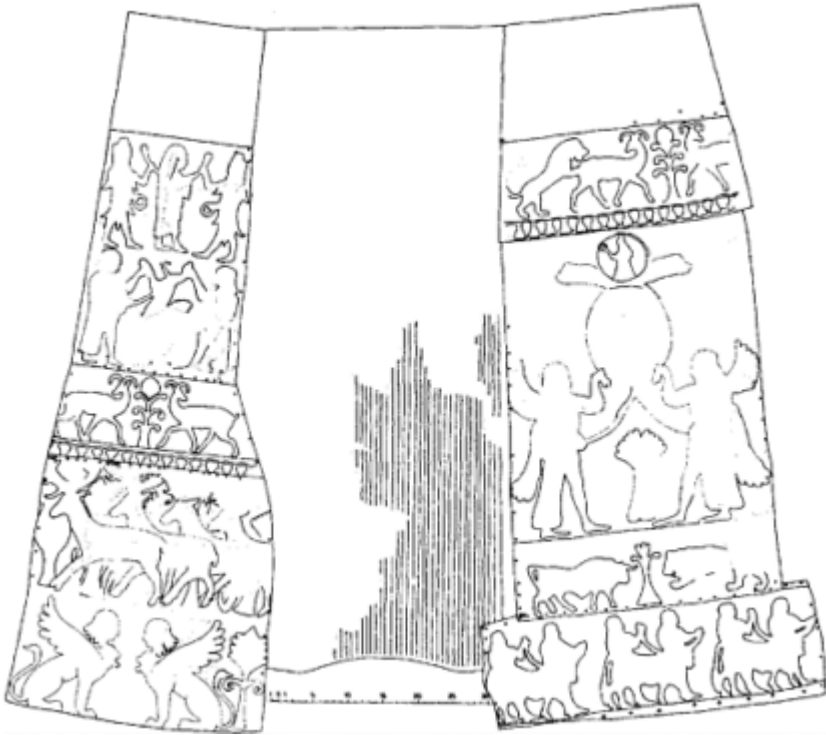


Figure 4.18 Reconstruction of statue-dress made of metal sheets, originating in the Near East and found at Olympia

Source: Borell and Rittig (1998) Plate 56

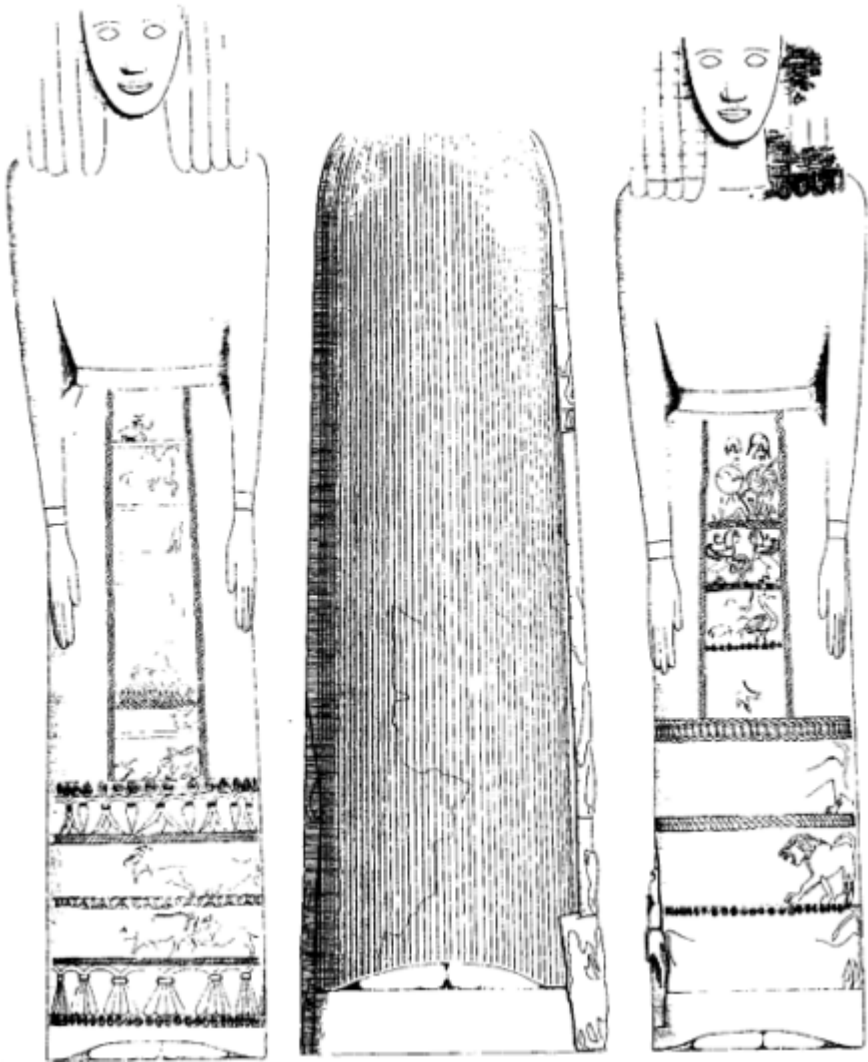


Figure 4.19 Reconstruction of statues made of metal sheets by Cretan artists and found at Olympia

Source: Borell and Rittig (1998) Plate 57

THE MISTRESS OF ANIMALS — ARTEMIS, GORGON AND THE ICONOGRAPHY OF VIOLENCE

Initiation and warrior ideology

Introduction

‘The chief heiress of the Mistress of Animals was Artemis’, wrote Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones.¹ Indeed, although other goddesses, notably Hera and Athena, inherited the role of the patroness of the warrior, it is mostly Artemis who remained the goddess of the wild and mistress of sacrifices, as W.Burkert has called her.² Artemis is only rarely a patron goddess of cities.³ She is, however, a patroness of males, especially of the young, the warriors-to-be. Her sanctuaries are often located in the margins of the city where she prepares youths to become the warriors of tomorrow.

My aim here is to evaluate the contribution of the Mistress of Animals to the persona of Artemis in the Archaic and Classical periods. Is she identical with the Artemis of Greek literature, myth and cult, as it is generally assumed, or does the divine persona of Artemis diverge a little from the Mistress of Animals reflecting further ideological developments of the Archaic and Classical *polis*?⁴ The answer is certainly closer to the latter alternative and Lloyd-Jones suggested precisely this when he wrote:

Artemis incorporated various local goddesses who had inherited certain features of the Mistress of Animals...but the virgin huntress, chaste and fair, who is already established in the Homeric epics, is very different from the Mistress of Animals.⁵

Indeed the girl who gets chastised by Hera in *Iliad* 21, 489–90 is a very different character from the powerful Mistress of Animals that we see in the images.

Another fact worth noting is the complete abandonment of nudity. The naked Mistress of Animals that we have met in Syrian art, especially on the bronze pendant amulets and armour ([Chapter One](#)), but also in the Cretan sculptures at the temples at Gortyn at Prinias ([Chapter Four](#)), totally disappears by the end of the Orientalizing period. As for Artemis, she is not only dressed but can be described as anti-sexual. She gets very angry if males make advances to her or see

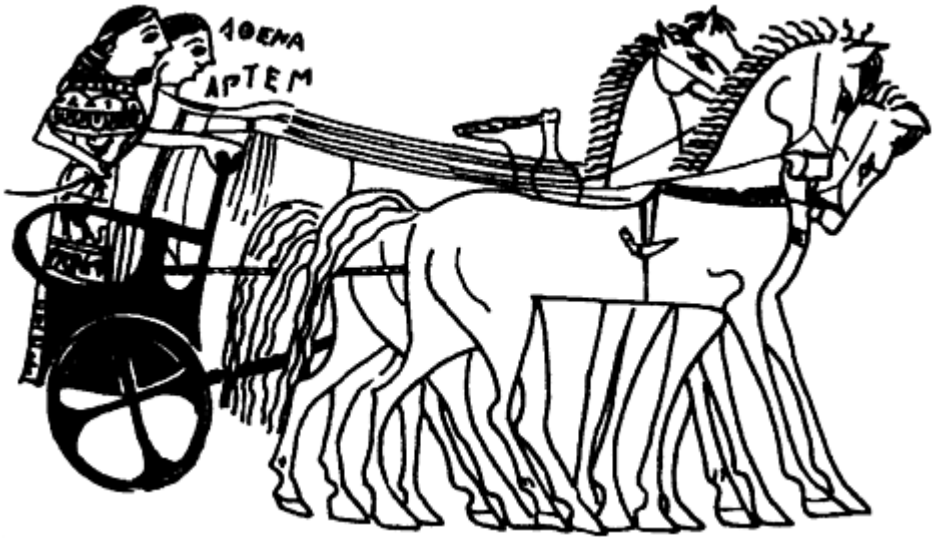


Figure 5.1 Athena and Artemis on the Sophilos Dinos, early sixth century BC

Drawing: F.Evenson

her naked. In some myths Artemis is a deadly adversary to hunters who are interested in her sexually.⁶ These myths articulate the distinctive identity of Artemis, an identity that we could safely label ‘Greek’ and which diverges from her Near Eastern equivalents.⁷ The Greek warrior rejects the patronage of the sexual female. Only an asexual Mistress is acceptable.

We shall now review the evidence that links Artemis to the Mistress of Animals of the Orientalizing period.

Some observations on the iconography of Artemis and the Mistress of Animals

It will be argued here that although Artemis had become identified with the Mistress of Animals by the sixth century BC, Artemis had a dual role as maiden and patroness of hunters and the young, whereas the Mistress of Animals remained exclusively associated with warriors.⁸ The *potnia* is almost never shown with women whereas Artemis can be.⁹

Let us be specific. On the *dinos* (wedding vase) by Sophilos, in the first quarter of the sixth century BC, the upper most frieze represents a procession of the gods during the wedding of Peleus and Thetis.¹⁰ Artemis is shown together with Athena riding a chariot (Figure 5.1). They are maidens, representing the category ‘daughters’ in the divine family.

On the Francois vase painted by Kleitias, dating a little later, we have a very similar procession.¹¹ Here Athena rides a chariot and is accompanied by another female, the name of whom is not preserved but, by analogy with the Sophilos vase, she may well be Artemis.¹² What is important is that the Mistress of Animals appears as well on the same vase and that she is independent of the divine family. She is painted twice on each handle of the vessel, a winged figure towering above the dead Achilles carried by Ajax (Figure 5.2). The style of representation is formal and emblematic; the Mistress of Animals does not interact with the other gods, she belongs to the sphere of the warrior. We are reminded of the votive plaque from south Italy (Figure 4.17) where Achilles carried by Ajax is embodied in the dress of the goddess. In both cases aspects of patronage are suggested.

Nor is Gorgo missing on the inner side of the handles of the Francois vase (Figure 5.2). She is, of course, the other patroness of the hero. Note that there is no name attached to the Mistress of Animals, which suggests that the artist was conscious of a difference between her and Artemis. The latter is a maiden in a codified divine family, whereas the Mistress is a warrior patroness of a former age. On the Sophilos vase the formidable goddesses (Figure 5.1) are like two young sisters going to their first party.

Another difference between the iconography of Artemis and the Mistress of Animals, is that the latter does not appear with a bow, nor is she normally a huntress. Note that the iconographical scheme 'huntress Artemis' has existed since the seventh century BC (Figure 5.3).¹³ Further, the huntress scheme involves motion and lends itself to narrative (Figure 5.4), whereas the *potnia* scheme is always formalistic and has more of an emblematic character (Figure 5.5).

The animals or birds that the Mistress subdues give an insight into her persona. She has to do less with hunting and more with control over the wild aspects of nature. The types of mammals and birds which are under her control inhabit the wilderness. Granted that these creatures represent the earth and sky respectively, it does not necessarily follow that the Mistress of Animals is a nature deity.¹⁴ She has no special connection with vegetation or fertility.¹⁵ Rather, the wild animals signify her relationship with that aspect of nature which is untamed and even violent. Savage predators and wild prey inhabit the forests and mountains; waterbirds are found in marshy areas: all are creatures outside the boundaries of the civilized *polis*. The relationship of the Mistress of Animals to savagery matches that of the warrior.

The Mistress of Animals survives into the mid-sixth century BC as exemplified by two works of the Amasis painter (Figure 5.5).¹⁶ She is differentiated from other Artemis images by her wings, a static stance, and the animals which are held by their neck or hind-paws. What is important: she is flanked by men with spears, naked youths or robed figures. Later examples exist as well, but the type eventually fades.¹⁷

All this suggests that the Mistress remains an emblematic image and does not develop into a figure with narrative potential. It has been mentioned above that the *potnia theron* is rarely a huntress.¹⁸ This is because she is the heritage of a



Figure 5.2 Mistress of Animals on the Francois vase (detail), early sixth century BC

Source: Isler-Kerény (1997) plate 14

Near Eastern type of goddess who has to do more with power over nature and less with the hunt.



Figure 5.3 Artemis on Corinthian aryballos; seventh century BC

Source: Kahil (1984) LIMC II.1 page 625; II.2, number 19.

Drawing: F.Evenson

By contrast, Artemis appears as a huntress early on; she acts out a role (Figure 5.4) and crystallizes into a maiden.

The eventual blending of the two personae in the cult finally resulted in an iconographical fusion, evident in terracotta statuettes characteristic of the sanctuaries of Artemis in Attica and at Corfu. On some examples, the goddess holds a small lion by the hind paw and a bow in the other.¹⁹ By the late archaic and Early Classical period the Mistress of Animals is assimilated into the huntress.²⁰

The relationship of Artemis to warriors

The temple at Corfu and shield straps from Olympia

We know that Artemis was a patroness of warriors even in Classical Greece. Spartan warriors sacrificed to Artemis.²¹ After Marathon, the Athenians thanked Artemis Agrotera with opulent sacrifices.²² Artemis Agrotera was a patroness of the *ephebes*, but her name implies a Mistress of the Wild.²³ In Sparta, she appears to play a role even during the Karneia, a festival with a military character.²⁴



Figure 5.4 Artemis as a huntress on a late archaic vase

Source: Kahil (1984) LIMC II.2, number 1439. Drawing: F.Evenson

It is this aspect of Artemis as a patroness of men which will be the focus of our inquiry. Thus, in the ensuing discussion, a whole range of Artemis cults will be omitted, such as her connection with animals and their young, marriage and childbirth, and the initiation of young girls.²⁵ It is obvious that the demands of Greek communities extended her range beyond male patronage. At Brauron we come across a softer Artemis, a protectress of girls. The late Archaic and Classical Artemis is a maiden who leads choruses of maidens. Nausicaa in the *Odyssey* is likened to her and it is in such a youthful guise that Artemis appears in the *Iliad*. Important as these sides of the goddess may be, we shall leave them out and focus only on her connection with male identity.

There is overwhelming evidence that Artemis was an initiatrix for male youths, and it is unnecessary to argue the point here anew.²⁶ What might shed further light on the religious aspect of Artemis as a patroness of males is the iconography related to her domain of male warriors or heroes. We shall start with the sculptures on the pediment of her early sixth century BC temple at Corfu reviewed in the previous chapter (Figure 3.16). I am assuming that the scenes of the pediment were not randomly chosen but symbolized aspects related to the cult and the ideology of the culture to which the temple belongs.²⁷

Gorgo dominates the pediment of the temple. In Chapter Three, it was argued that the role of Gorgo, embracing the hero and his horse, was that of an initiatrix.



Figure 5.5 Artemis on a vase by Amasis painter; mid-sixth century BC

Source: Kahil (1984) LIMC II.2, number 34. Drawing: V.Pliatsika

If she is a patroness of the hero, it is logical that she should be the central figure in a pediment which deals with heroic exploits (Figure 3.16). Let us look at the sculptures at the edges of the pediment and see how they may relate to initiation.

The scene on the right edge represents the young god Zeus with a thunderbolt striking a giant (Figure 5.6).²⁸ Zeus is represented as a young man with an unbearded face, whereas the giant is identifiable by his large size and grotesque face.²⁹ The left group (Figure 5.7) represents an enthroned figure with a long robe raising his left hand in supplication. Behind him is the back of the throne or the 'city-wall' of a town. The seated figure has been variously identified as Priam or Rhea; to me it seems certain that he is male and a figure of authority, a seated king who may be Priam or Aegisthus.³⁰ The older man is threatened by a killer of whom only the spear point remains, clearly visible over the left shoulder of the enthroned suppliant. At the edges of the pediment are slain giants.³¹ If the sculpture groups are related, which I believe they are, the connecting link is killing: legitimate killing in combat to the right (Figure 5.6) and murder of an enthroned king who is a suppliant to the left (Figure 5.7).³² It is clear that the left scene can be regarded as morally ambivalent, in the sense that a helpless, older figure is being murdered. If however, the young man is Orestes killing Aegisthus, the murder would be legitimate. Whatever the case may be, it is an accomplishment since an adversary is about to be overcome. The hero, initiated in the middle, acts out his exploits in the periphery. The unbearded Zeus (Figure 5.6) may be regarded as a

representative of youths in general. The killer figure to the left (Figure 5.7) is not preserved, but, in analogy with similar compositions, he is most likely to be the young hero Orestes.³³

Thus, the emphasis is on youths and their achievements, an iconography compatible with the possible function of the sanctuary of Artemis as a place for initiation. Now we can also understand the relationship of Gorgo to Artemis. Both have the same function as patron goddesses of young men. We have already remarked that they appear together on the handles of the Francois vase (Figure 5.2).

The above analysis of the pedimental scenes may seem arbitrary. Here it is important to stress a striking overlap with another set of connected images attested on armour, specifically on Peloponnesian shields which were dedicated at Olympia and other sanctuaries (Figures 5.8 and 5.10). Their date is approximately the same as that of the Artemis pediment: late seventh/early sixth centuries BC, some date a little later.

The shield straps were divided into panels, some of which depict murder: a warrior or a young man slays an older figure who sits on a throne or an altar. In Figure 5.8 the old bearded man is seated on an altar and his hand is raised in supplication; he is usually identified as Priam.³⁴ In Figure 5.9 c, the man is on a throne. Is he Aegisthus? The iconographical formulas are the same as those of the left sculpture group of the Corfu pediment.

The formula of a god killing a giant or monster (see Figures 5.9 d, and 5.10) is attested on the Corfu pediment as well as on the Olympia shields. On Figure 5.10 a young god (?) stabs a giant with his sword.³⁵ It is hardly necessary to stress the similarity of the scheme of Figure 5.10 with that of the right sculptural group of the Artemis temple at Corfu (Figure 5.6). There are further affinities between the shields and the temple pediments. In both, Gorgo features as a solitary figure, although she sometimes embraces a youth and a horse (Figure 3.14). In Figure 5.11e, Gorgo appears at the bottom panel; on Figure 5.12 at the top one.³⁶ Her association with the Mistress of Animals and the warrior has been stressed repeatedly (Figure 5.2).

It is important now to look at the contextual relationship between all the panels of the shield strap on Fig 5.11. On top there is young man (*ephebe*) appearing as a rider. The second panel shows two antithetical lions. Next comes the exploit of a god killing a monster (Zeus and Typhon), and the exploit of a hero (Theseus and Minotaur). Gorgo is shown as a patroness of male achievements. On Figure 5.12, Gorgo dominates. Below her is the monster Himaira, partly lion and partly goat. She is an adversary to the hero Bellerophon who is depicted as a young rider on the next panel. The next scene is not preserved. At the very bottom we have two antithetical lions (we might imagine them as flanking Gorgo). On one more shield strap (Figure 3.18) Gorgo appears again on top, above a rider.³⁷

The connection of Gorgo with male exploits on the shield straps matches perfectly her position in the Corfu pediment as a central figure among acts of heroic valour. She thus seems to be an integral part of the warrior ideology of



Figure 5.6 Sculpture group from temple at Corfu, early sixth century BC

Source: Rodenwald (1938) plate 24. Drawing: V.Pliatsika



Figure 5.7 Sculpture group from temple at Corfu, early sixth century BC

Source: Rodenwald (1938) plate 29. Drawing: V.Pliatsika

Archaic Greece where even murderous acts are depicted as male accomplishments.



Figure 5.8 Panel showing old man supplicant and warrior from shield strap from Olympia; early archaic

Source: Kunze (1950) plate 31, X, c

The savagery of murders must be accepted as belonging to a warrior's range of possible exploits.

It is now time to return to Artemis, the patroness of the temple. The iconography of achievement discussed above is often related to her aspect as a Mistress of Animals. On a tripod leg from Olympia (Figure 5.13), a Mistress of Animals is depicted on the top panel.³⁸ Below is a man and woman sharing a stringed instrument and a wreath. They are linked in marriage which represents an important stage in a man's maturation process. (In Sparta, marriage marked the real entry into society).³⁹ Next come three wandering warriors; they are travellers because of the pouch which is hanging from the spear of one. At the bottom, a warrior is about to kill a child which is forced to climb on an altar.⁴⁰ Scheffold identified the myths behind the scenes: Theseus and Ariadne, the embassy to Achilles, the murder of Troilus. Their thematic link was not addressed, and is perhaps not so obvious. Yet, if we look at each myth as an exemplum of a life stage or one achievement of the 'hero', we may recognize a common theme: 'the crucial stages in a hero's life'. First, marriage, a sign of maturity and achievement of adult status which may well be symbolized by Theseus' marriage to Ariadne. Second, departure for war or a mission. If the scene is the embassy to Achilles, it represents a mission of responsibility. Third, brutal murder of a child, be it Troilus or Astyanax. This is the climax of a warrior's career. He is acting in madness or rage which involves extreme (almost unnatural) violence. It manifests the ultimate shedding of all inhibitions; the warrior must do this in order to qualify as a soldier.

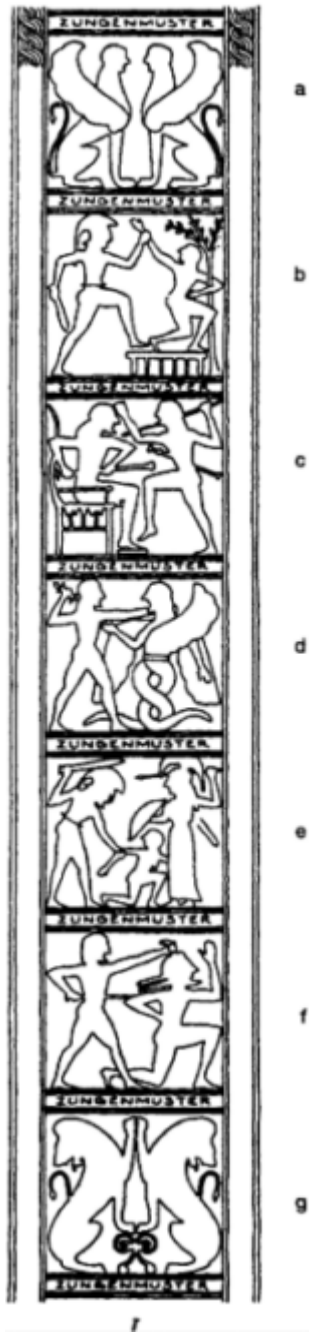


Figure 5.9 Shield strap from Olympia; early archaic

Source: Kunze (1950) plate 71.1



Figure 5.10 Panel showing Zeus and Typhon from shield strap from Olympia; early archaic
Source: Kunze (1950) plate 8, I, f

The winged Mistress of Animals presides at the top, legitimizing even the extreme violence.⁴¹

Artemis appears on another piece, a shield strap from Olympia (Figure 5.14).⁴² She is at the bottom panel together with her brother Apollo. In the scene above them, a child is being murdered. Above still is the birth of Athena. Thus, on this piece, the murder of the child is framed by the warrior goddess Athena above, and the gods of initiation Artemis and Apollo below.

We have looked at a variety of scenes ranging from acts of valour to murders. They are connected with Artemis (mostly as a Mistress of Animals) or Gorgo. I suspect that rituals of initiation (such as may in fact have been connected with the temple of Artemis at Corfu) helped give shape to both the myths and images.⁴³ I do not suggest that the iconography is inspired directly by ritual. Yet it is fair to say that image, myth and ritual are three distinct forms of the same normative system. The pedimental sculptures at Corfu and the images on the shields of the warriors express the same concern with male valour, even if violence is involved. In the ensuing section we shall see that violence was an integral part of male initiation rituals in the Dorian educational system.

Artemis and violent initiation

It is indeed striking how many bloody rituals are connected with initiation in sanctuaries of Artemis. Although many of the authors who constitute our sources, such as Pausanias and Plutarch, lived in the Roman period, the accounts of earlier

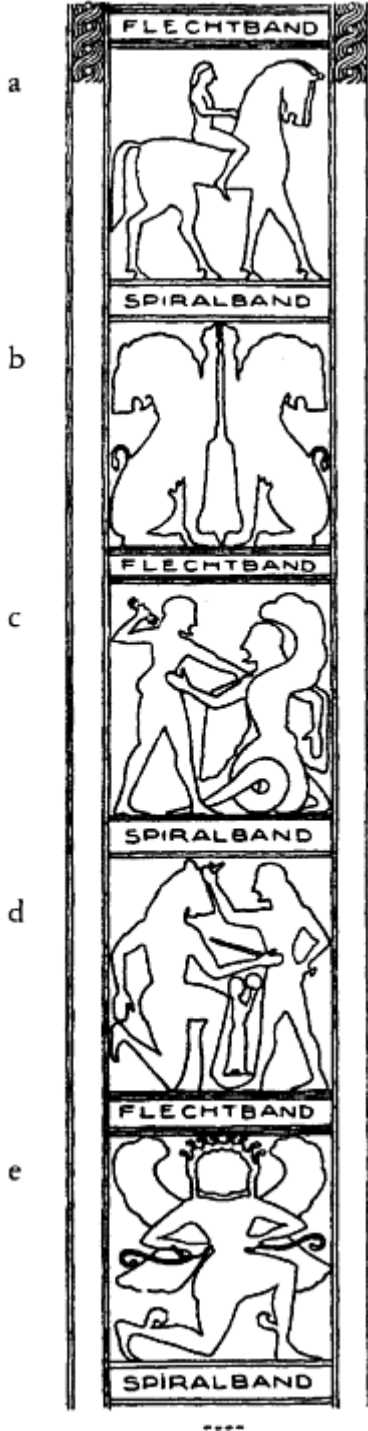


Figure 5.11 Shield strap from
Source: Kunze (1950) plate 72, VII

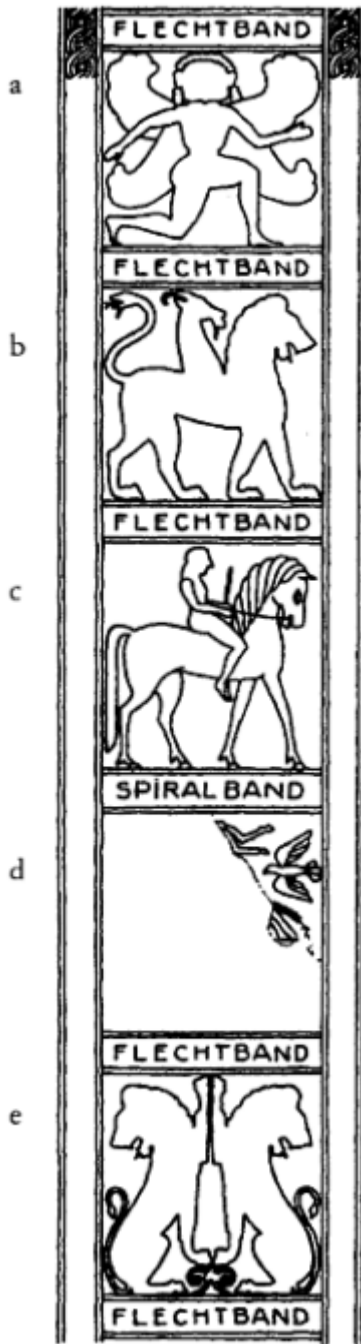


Figure 5.12 Shield strap from Olympia; early archaic

Source: Kunze (1950) plate 72, VIII

scholars, Plato, Aristotle and Xenophon, suggest that the origins of violence are rooted in the old history of Sparta.

A most violent custom was associated with the Spartan *Krypteia*. Young Spartans (*ephebes*) roamed around in the wilderness, wore little clothing and had to steal their food. A trial of valour was the murder of *helots* in the night, should they be caught.⁴⁴ Not all youths were *Kryptoi*. Armed with a dagger, a few of them constituted an elite commando force who terrorized *helots*.⁴⁵ The *krypteia* may have been the culminating phase of the Spartan educational and training system, the *agoge*.⁴⁶ Because the men were youths, a connection with initiation seems certain. Jeanmaire adduces as a parallel phenomenon the panther men of West Africa, an elite group which committed violent acts of murder and which was viewed with awe and fear by the rest of the community. As in Africa, the *Kryptoi* were members of an elite group.⁴⁷ The exploit must have had one purpose: the familiarization of youths with acts which involved shedding of blood even from helpless victims.

But the warriors-to-be were themselves submitted to violence (and this is a good way to prepare one for committing savagery). In Sparta of the Roman period, young men had to undergo strenuous flogging until the altar of Artemis Orthia was smeared with blood.⁴⁸ This ritual flogging was called *diamastigosis* and was a test of endurance connected with the Spartan *ephebeia* of Roman times.⁴⁹ Although the late period falls outside the scope of our enquiry, there is a story by Pausanias regarding the discovery of the statue of Orthia which is worth citing as it may have some roots in the past.

Astrabakos and Alopekos, the sons of Irbos and the descendants of Agis through Amphikles and Amphisthenes, suddenly went *mad* when they found this statue [of the goddess], and when the Spartans of Limnai, Kynosouria, Mesoa and Pitane sacrificed to Artemis she cursed them through this statue with *quarrels* and then with *murders*; many of them *died at the altar* and disease devoured the rest. This is the reason why they bloody the altar with human blood. They used to slaughter a human chosen by drawing lots; Lykourgos substituted the whipping of fully grown boys and the altar still gets its fill of human blood.

The names Astrabakos and Alopekos signify 'mule' and 'fox'. It is tempting to see behind these names codes for Spartan age grades of the *agoge*, the Spartan educational system. Just like in Attica the young girls in the service of Artemis were called 'bears', so in Sparta the young men were 'foxes'.⁵⁰ This means that the statue was discovered by the youths; it had a special connection with them and their rituals of initiation.⁵¹ The story that the sight of the statue makes one mad has been linked by F.Graf to a period of abnormalcy, a suspension of order, during which unspeakable things happen.⁵² This fits well with a scenario of initiation. One should add that the focus is unmistakably murder. The concept of killing is underlined by the fact that the statue induces murderous rage. The goddess



Figure 5.13 Bronze tripod leg from Olympia; early archaic

Source: Schefold (1966) figure 28



Figure 5.14 Shield strap from Olympia; early archaic

Source: Kunze (1950) plate 73, IX

demands blood as an expiation for blood. Human sacrifice, murderous rage, the shedding of blood all are connected with the altar of the goddess: this is the visual world of the murder panels on the shield straps discussed above.

The older form of the Roman flogging ritual which lurks in Archaic times is the cheese-stealing ritual cited by Xenophon.⁵³ He says that there were contests at the altar of Artemis involving two opposing groups of young men. One defended the altar, the other tried to steal cheese stored on it. One group of youths obviously acted as outsiders trying to steal the food that belongs to the goddess, while another group represented the establishment.⁵⁴ Here the central idea is a violent beating in defence of the altar (representing the city?) in a context of initiation. We have references to *mastigoforoi*, 'whip bearers', who may be linked to this event, although it is more likely that these formidable officials were the assistants of the 'disciplinarians' (*paidonomoi*) in charge of maintaining order.⁵⁵ At any rate a statuette of a self-flagellant dating to the Geometric period found in Kato Syme on Crete, testifies to the antiquity of the whipping ordeals.⁵⁶ Self flagellation is attested also in our sources 'The Laconians used to whip themselves in an initiation ritual', says a scholiast.⁵⁷

There is more evidence of violence. Artemis Tauropolos in Attica demanded a (mock) sacrifice of a man whose neck was scratched by a knife.⁵⁸ The fictitious *aition* behind this ritual is presented by Euripides in *Iphigeneia in Tauris* (1450–7) where it is regarded as a barbaric custom. It is significant that the priestess and the king, namely the establishment, were involved in the human sacrifice at Tauris. Euripides' intention, of course, is to show that none of these rituals happened in Attica. He wants to present a 'softer', more enlightened cult of Artemis appropriate to her Attic persona in the fifth century BC. I believe that he is consciously trying to divorce the Tauropolia from its less agreeable aspects; however the testimony means that Artemis was generally associated with the shedding of human blood.

A story which links Artemis to defensive war is reported by Xenophon and concerns the battle of Plataia. The Spartan general Pausanias made offerings to Artemis; his troops supposedly repelled the enemy with sacrificial knives.⁵⁹

Another myth of killing might fit in. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Artemis demands that the king kills his own daughter. The reason is ambiguous. The paradox of her demand is that it is connected with an omen: two eagles tear the belly of a pregnant hare. Artemis hates the feast of the eagles. And yet she demands of Agamemnon to act according to the omen: to sacrifice his daughter. Does she forestall Agamemnon's hubris, and the Greek savagery at Troy, before the crimes have been committed?⁶⁰ Is she punishing Agamemnon before he has even sinned? It is hard to understand such logic. Perhaps a different reasoning underlies her demand: Artemis requests the sacrifice of Iphigeneia to test Agamemnon's ability as a warrior. The omen is thus expressing the very aggression which constitutes the warrior's identity. Such an interpretation is dictated by the structure of the myth. The sacrifice of Iphigeneia does not serve the purpose of saving her city or its men.⁶¹ Rather, it is a prerequisite for a successful expedition of war, for aggression. In the practice of her cult, a goat was sacrificed to Artemis Agrotera

before battle and this must be seen as an analogy to the sacrifice of the maiden. The sacrifice precedes, and even incites, the act of violence. Artemis' demand on Agamemnon may well have been a trial even an ultimate initiation: is he a warrior primarily or a father? Does he have the ability to be savage against his own fatherly instinct? Where are his priorities? Just as Jahweh tests Abraham's loyalty in the Old Testament by demanding the sacrifice of his son, so Artemis demands of the warrior the ultimate test: to kill his own child.

In summary, Artemis presides over achievements of the warriors, even such as can be termed 'savage'. Yet this savagery is constrained by rituals and warrior ethics dictated by the Greek *polis*. Young men had to learn to defend their city and this could not be done without harsh, even brutal training. It may well be that the altars represented in the scenes where a warrior slays a child are altars of Artemis. The violent goddess of the Near East has taken a Greek mould. She has lost her sexuality but not her dangerous side. The warrior's aggression is incited by the goddess—it is a necessity for the preservation of the city to which the goddess and the warrior both belong.

THE AEGEAN MISTRESS OF ANIMALS AND THE GODDESS WITH THE UPRAISED ARMS

Introduction

When dealing with history of religion, it is customary to start the discussion with the most distant past and trace (or assume) development over time. I have done the opposite here, I have began with the Greek Mistress of Animals and her Near Eastern affinities, deliberately ignoring her possible origins from Minoan Crete and the Mycenaean mainland. Instead, I have left this subject for the epilogue.

There are a few reasons for this reversal of the usual methodology. First, this work is about the Greek Mistress of Animals, not the Minoan/ Mycenaean one; I wanted this separation to be made very clear. This inquiry so far has therefore concentrated on Early Greece and its Near Eastern neighbours. Second, the assumption that continuity can be assumed needs to be questioned. If we have a clear picture of the Greek Mistress of Animals, it might be easier to assess what she did not inherit from the Aegean Bronze Age. Third, the 'inverted historical approach' expresses an attempt to break from the developmental/historical model of religion which assumes a primeval mother-nature and fertility goddess as the origin of many Greek female divinities.

Unfortunately, all too often, the Bronze Age is a period on which Greek (even Roman) texts and customs are projected without sensitivity to conceptual differences revealed by iconography and the architectural plan of the sanctuaries. Sir Arthur Evans, the excavator of Knossos, took it for granted that the Minoan goddess survived to become Artemis, Rhea and several other Greek goddesses, even Kybele.¹ A search for the origins of Greek religion was in M.P.Nilsson's mind as is evident from the title of his famous book: *Minoan Mycenaean Religion and its Survival into Greek Religion*. According to this Swedish scholar, Athena, Hera and Artemis are suspected to have their origins in a Mycenaean citadel goddess.² E.Simon started her learned and much appreciated discussions of the iconography of Greek gods by examining their supposed Minoan/Mycenaean antecedents.³ C.Christou saw a more general mother-deity common to the entire east Mediterranean, a pre-Greek mother-nature goddess who encompassed all aspects of nature, life as well as death, and who was differentiated only by the

post-Homeric Greeks.⁴ L.Kahil suggested that the Mistress of Animals is the heritage of the Creto-Mycenaean goddess. However she qualified her statement with 'probably'.⁵ Most popular in recent years has been the theory of M.Gimbutas that the mother goddess had a long lasting history. She originated in the Neolithic period and was gradually suppressed by the Indo-Europeans.⁶ The above represents a restricted, if characteristic, sample of views.

The decipherment of Linear B, and the proof that the names of Greek gods existed in Mycenaean times, have strengthened the conviction of continuity although, in the archaeological record, sequence of cult practice is seldom evident. There are some exceptions, notably the sanctuary of Hermes and Aphrodite at Kato Syme on Crete; Apollo Maleatas, Kapalodi and the Amyklaion on the mainland. However, most sites give evidence of disruption rather than continuity.⁷

Only rarely do scholars voice a different opinion. W.Burkert has stressed the impact of the Orient on Greek religious practices, myths and magic. S. Morris has pointed out that there existed Near Eastern elements in Cretan culture since the latest phases of the Bronze Age, that they increased during the Iron Age and reached their peak in the eighth and seventh centuries BC.⁸ She stresses Levantine influence in rituals of sacrifice (an abundance of pigs), in the form of temples with benches (see [Chapter Four](#)), in laws and the arts. The nature of Levantine influence is difficult to assess but there is no doubt that there exists a peculiar connection between Crete and the Levant as well as north Syria. Even the myth of Minos and his reign over many cities better fits the proto-urban phase of Iron Age Crete than the Minoan domination of the islands.⁹ That there was an intrusion of Near Eastern elements in Crete is a fact which deserves serious consideration and it is methodologically sound to raise some doubts about unqualified continuity of myth and religion being affected by the impact of the Orient.¹⁰ Finally, we need to stress that no culture can undergo violent changes, as did Greece during the Late Bronze Age, without some change in the cult practices and beliefs. If the Greek *polis* represents a different type of social organization than the palaces of Minoan Crete and the Mycenaean mainland, so the gods too must have been reshaped to reflect the new social needs.

Nevertheless, the survival of certain religious traits of Minoan religion into post-Minoan and Dorian Crete cannot be denied.¹¹ Indeed we shall see that some elements are common to goddesses of the Bronze Age and Greek Iron Age. However, it is necessary to distinguish the Minoan goddess who survives into the Iron Age from the Mistress of Animals as we have examined her here.

To turn to the focus of our inquiry, I do not believe that the Minoan nature goddess(es) contributed much to the Greek version of the Mistress of Animals, much less to the naked figurines. If the iconography of Minoan female divinities is studied consistently, it will reveal that the Aegean *potnia theron* differed considerably in her role from her Greek counterpart. This evidence will be reviewed in the next section.

The Minoan/Aegean goddess

What we mean by the ‘Minoan’ or ‘Aegean’ goddess requires a rigorous definition for all too often we hear about ‘the Great Minoan goddess’ without acknowledgement of the possible complexity of the pantheon of Aegean culture during the Bronze Age.¹² First, it is very unlikely that there was one goddess. All the ‘high-cultures’ of the eastern Mediterranean were polytheistic, and had Crete been different it would have been an anomaly.¹³ Second, Minoan/Mycenaean iconography does not support the monotheistic position, because several deities may appear on rings or seals simultaneously, most notably on some newly discovered gold rings from Poros, near Herakleion, Crete.¹⁴ In my discussion, I shall be using the term ‘goddess’ to designate a conceptual and visual category. It is impossible to do more than this for Minoan religion anyway, since we have no texts.

To start with the relationship of Minoan goddesses with animals, as we shall see further on, it is a harmonious one. The Snake goddesses from Knossos, who are the best known pieces of Minoan culture, deserve a separate discussion.

Two faience statuettes from Knossos are well preserved, although restored; there were also fragments of more. Both figures hold snakes in their hands, although the gestures differ. One has her arms extended in an attitude of display (Figure 6.1).¹⁵ The scheme is familiar to us from the Syrian plaques, and especially from the Egyptian Qu-du-shu, the sacred one (Figures 1.27 and 1.28). The main difference is that Qu-du-shu is naked. In the post-palatial period on Crete, the tradition of divine figures handling snakes continued. There exist clay goddess idols from Knossos, Gournia, Prinias and Kannia (see below, Figure 6.9) with snakes wound around their arms.¹⁶

It is most likely that the Minoan snake goddesses are magical snake handlers, like their Near Eastern equivalents, and not chthonic divinities.¹⁷ The view that snakes are chthonic entails a projection of concepts of Greek religion on to the Bronze Age. Indeed snakes are related to the cult of the dead and heroes in the Greek period but they are never handled by female divinities. The Near Eastern scheme, on the other hand, which involves throttling or handling snakes, has a specific significance: the snake, although polyvalent, can be an enemy. It is fought by male gods or ‘tamed’ (namely handled) by females.¹⁸

In short, snake handling was a common theme in the eastern Mediterranean from the Bronze Age onwards. It might be remembered that in addition to Qu-du-shu, the Egyptian Pataikos holds snakes (Figure 3.8) and so does the child Horus appearing on magical *cippi* of the late period.¹⁹ Nor should we forget Gorgo (Figures 3.5 and 6). Egyptian magicians also held bronze snakes as emblems of their status (Chapter Three).²⁰ Even in Etruscan paintings augurs hold snake wands.²¹ Thus, the Minoans may well have adopted the Near Eastern scheme to express a special type of power.²² At any rate it must be noted that the Greek Mistress of Animals does not handle snakes.²³ Thus, she derives neither from the Minoan Goddess nor the Qu-du-shu type.



Figure 6.1 Snake goddess from Knossos; LBA (mid-second millennium BC)

Source: Evans (1921) PM I, Figure 362a

We now turn to another aspect of Minoan female deities: nurture. The aforementioned statuettes from Knossos ([Figure 6.1](#)) were contextually connected with images of other animals. With them were found two faience plaques, inlays for furniture, with representations of nursing ungulates (for the scheme see 6.3).²⁴

They are of different sizes and each may have been an ornament on a wooden throne or podium where the statuettes were placed; thus each goddess may have been associated with one suckling ungulate. Even if this were not the case, there is little doubt that the faience statuettes were somehow connected with the nursing ungulates. Thus, they represent the female divinity as a controller of nature, fertility and motherhood. The motif of the suckling ungulate is very widely spread on Minoan seals as well, where it may have had an amuletic value (Figure 6.3).²⁵ The cow and calf motif occurs frequently in the Near East; on seals it appears together with female divinities. It even occurs with naked goddesses from Syria (Figure 1.1).²⁶ This means that throughout this region the cow symbolized motherhood.²⁷ In some regions the goddesses take the very form of cows: Ishtar and Ninhursag in the Mesopotamian region, Hathor in Egypt.²⁸

The cow and calf motif, so common in the Bronze Age in both Minoan Crete and the Near East does not occur with the *Greek potnia*, the Mistress of Animals.

The animals that attend the Minoan/Aegean goddess are submissive out of their own will. Scenes on seals and rings give evidence that she has an affectionate relationship with beasts. One type of scene, on seal-stones, shows a seated goddess feeding or caressing animals, lions or goats (Figure 6.2).²⁹ When she is flanked by beasts on seals, be it lions or griffins, she does not force them.³⁰ They are submissive of their own volition and are not subdued by force, nor are they held upside-down.³¹ The heraldic iconography is quite common, especially on seals found on both Crete and the mainland. Its most monumental expression is the painting of the throne room at Knossos where a personage of high status (queen?) sits on the stone throne and is flanked by griffins.³²

Apart from flanking or being fed by goddesses, animals can transport divinities. Goddesses ride animals or have them yoked to a chariot.³³ But the Aegean deities do not stand or step on lions or bulls as their counterparts in the Near East (Figures 1.8, 1.9, 1.10 and 6.5).

Are there any cases where the animals are forced into submission? There are some exceptional instances in which creatures are held by force, but this applies only to birds, never mammals. On certain seals, a female figure holds water-birds by the neck.³⁴ The iconographical scheme is clearly Near Eastern (compare the Master of birds from the Aegina Treasure) and it is not especially popular on Crete itself.³⁵

There is further evidence for a goddess of nature (although not in connection with cows) in the iconographical scheme of a building from the island of Thera near Crete. One house, Xeste 3, included a painting with a goddess flanked by a griffin and a monkey (Figure 6.4). The composition is Near Eastern: the goddess is centrally placed, seated on a wooden podium and framed by two animals. To her left, a monkey offers saffron, acting as a worshipper, whereas to her right a griffin guards her. The goddess is a mistress of nature. This is shown by her jewellery. Around her neck she has a triple necklace with round beads, dragonflies and ducks. It has even been suggested that she has a snake on her head but this is not correct.³⁶ Nevertheless, she is associated with a wide range of living creatures



Figure 6.2 Goddess feeding animal on seal impression from Chania; LBA (midsecond millennium BC)

Source: Photo courtesy CMS V S. 1A, 175

representing different realms of nature. The griffin is mythical; the monkey represents a terrestrial animal; the ducks and dragonflies the marshes. As for the crocuses which adorn her dress, they indicate mountainous terrain. Marshes are particularly evocative because they brim with life. The Egyptian cow goddess Hathor also appears in marshes surrounded by reeds.³⁷ As we have seen in [Chapter One](#), these animals occur also in the Near East with female divinities, sometimes even in this exact scheme.

Compare a late Bronze Age Syrian seal ([Figure 6.5](#)) which has a scheme remarkably close to that of the Aegean goddess from Thera. The Syrian deity is also seated and accompanied by a griffin. She holds a sword, steps on a lion, and faces warriors instead of a monkey.³⁸ Despite the similarity of the scheme, important differences are apparent. The Syrian seal represents the goddess as a patroness of warriors and she steps on a subjugated beast. The Theran goddess does not dominate her griffin or her monkey, she is in harmony with nature and has a female, not a male, entourage.³⁹

The Greek Mistress of Animals, flanked by wild animals in unnatural positions and associated with men, has more affinities with the Syrian goddess ([Figure 6.5](#)) than the Aegean one ([Figure 6.4](#)).

The attendants of the Minoan, as well as the Mycenaean, female deities are normally women. A few exceptions occur which will be discussed separately.

At first glance, the Aegean goddess resembles the Near Eastern and later Greek Mistress very closely since both are flanked by animals, but this is only a superficial impression. In fact there is a big difference between the Minoan/



Figure 6.3 Seal with cow and suckling calf from Knossos; LBA (mid-second millennium BC)

Source: Photo courtesy CMS V S. II. 3, number 88

Mycenaean scheme on the one hand, and the Near Eastern/Greek one on the other. In the Aegean Bronze Age the goddess does not force the animals. Her hands are free, often raised to the level of her head, to support her huge horn-crown ([Figure 6.6](#)).⁴⁰ The meaning of the heraldic scheme in the Aegean Bronze Age denotes power but not forceful dominance. Its main significance is to provide a formalistic frame for the goddess which may have corresponded to ritual epiphany enactment in the palaces.⁴¹ The animals act as guardians in Aegean Bronze Age religious iconography, whereas the Greeks adopt the Near Eastern scheme in order to stress subjugation and control of the ‘wild’.

Turning to Mycenaean paintings, a fresco with a female figure and a lion, from the cult centre at Mycenae, will be described here briefly ([Figure 6.7](#)). The scenes were painted above and on the sides of a bench.⁴² On the upper level two goddesses face each other. Below them is another female figure, accompanied by an animal, a griffin or lion.⁴³ She does not step on the animal nor does she force it into submission. It is simply her companion.

Brief mention must be made also of another figure on a fresco from Mycenae which has been interpreted as a war-goddess. The figure has a white face, wears a boar’s tusk helmet and carries a small griffin.⁴⁴ I am not convinced the figure is female just because the colour of the face is white (the rest of the body is not

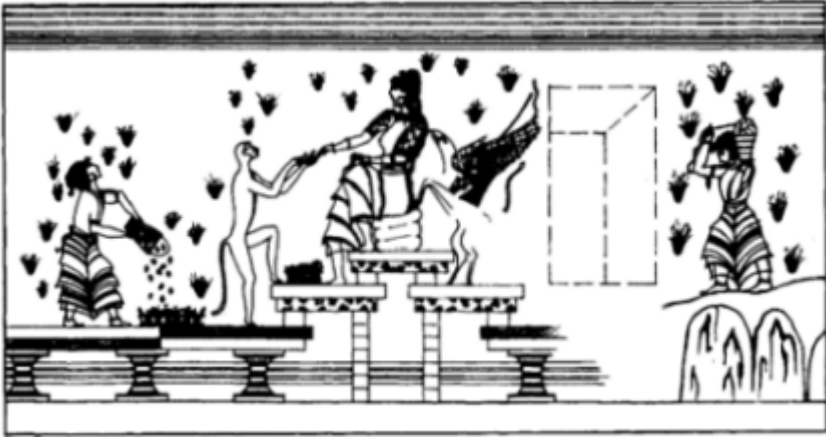


Figure 6.4 Fresco of goddess from Xeste 3, Thera; LBA (mid-second millennium BC)
 Source: Marinatos (1993) figure 122. Drawing L.Papageorgiou



Figure 6.5 Seal from Syria with goddess flanked by animals; LBA
 Source: Collon (1987) number 315

preserved).⁴⁵ The griffin may well be an ivory statuette, and the person who carries the griffin a votary about to dedicate this object. Goddess or not, the figure under discussion is not a Mistress of Animals. Thus, in Mycenaean iconography there is no dominant female holding mammals by their necks, hind legs or tails.

It may be argued that the word *poti-ni-ja* exists in Mycenaean Greek; there is even a reference to *poti-ni-ja iqe-ja*, mistress of the horse.⁴⁶ In my view the



Figure 6.6 Seal of goddess flanked by griffins, from Crete; LBA (mid-second millennium BC)

Source: Hägg and Lindau (1984) [figure 1.1](#)

linguistic designation does not necessarily refer to the iconographical scheme that we call *potnia theron*, Mistress of Animals. Any goddess will be a mistress, just like male gods are often called lords (*adon* in Semitic languages).

Another question will be addressed next. Is there any evidence that either the Minoan or the Mycenaean goddess(es) were patronesses of men and warriors? There is indeed some such evidence, but it is scanty.

A few scenes where a goddess confronts a man can be found in Crete. Most famous is a series of seal impressions made from the same ring and found by Sir Arthur Evans at Knossos.⁴⁷ He named the deity: ‘Mother of the Mountains’ (Figure 6.8). A goddess stands on a mountain top flanked by lions. To her left is a multi-storey structure which must be a palace, to her right is a man who greets her. He is most likely a king, if the structure to the left is a palace.⁴⁸ The goddess here may well be a patroness of the king, an interpretation which would fit well a society with a form of divine kingship.⁴⁹ Goddess and king both reside in the palace, as it were. Other glyptic scenes on seals and rings show a seated goddess and an approaching male but these may refer to sacred marriage rather than patronage.⁵⁰

In short, when Minoan and Mycenaean goddesses are associated with men, possibly as patronesses of the king, or the male elite, they are not depicted as



Figure 6.7 Fresco of goddess from cult centre, Mycenae; LBA (mid-second millennium BC)

Source: Marinatos (1988) 251, figure 1.1

holding animals forcibly. Thus, despite the *koine*, the religious schemata that Crete shared with the Near East in the Bronze Age, there existed important differences. On the contrary, the Near Eastern iconographical schemes of animal dominance affected Greek goddesses. If iconography reflects conceptual categories, the Aegean goddess was a product of a different mentality than the Greek *potnia*.

The goddess with upraised arms

Let us consider now which aspects of ‘the Minoan goddess’ did survive into Iron Age Crete. This is to be expected since there was uninterrupted continuity of habitation at several sites since the Late Minoan Third Century (c. 1190–1170 BC). Hagia Triada, Kato Syme, Prinias, and the Knossos cemetery are some of the sites that display this uninterrupted continuity.⁵¹

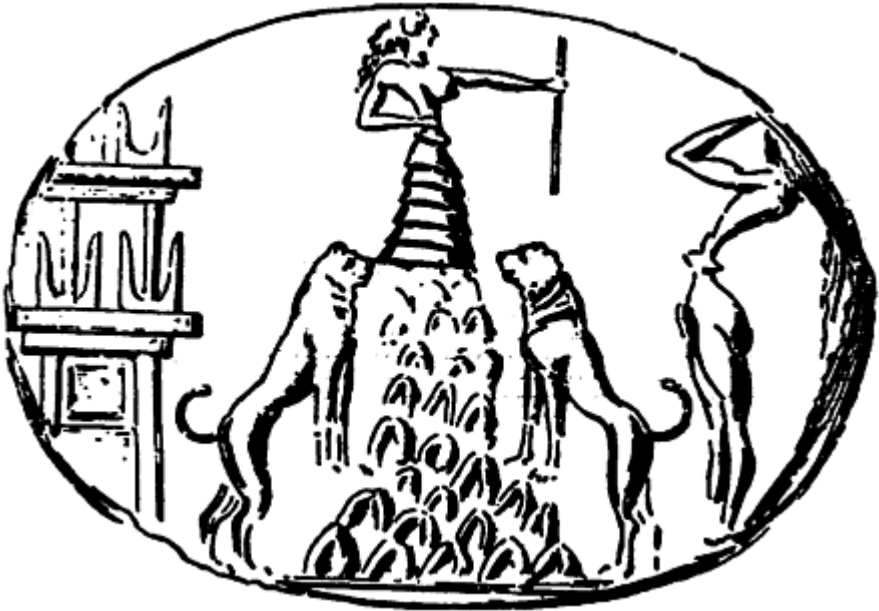


Figure 6.8 Seal impression of goddess and ruler (?); LBA (mid-second millennium BC)

Source: Evans (1921) PM III, figure 323

One aspect of the Minoan goddess is the gesture of upraised arms (Figure 6.9). Various sub-Minoan sites, such as Karphi and, more recently, Kephala in east Crete, have yielded clay goddesses with upraised arms but without snakes.⁵² Another sub-Minoan clay idol with upraised arms came from Vassilika Anogeia in Crete but the context is not known.⁵³ Some clay goddess figures were situated within clay model huts, such as the sub-Minoan one found by Evans in the Spring Chamber at Knossos (Figure 6.10).⁵⁴ Another hut with a clay goddess with upraised arms was found in a tomb; it dates later to about 800 BC.⁵⁵ It is not clear what the huts represent: temporary shelters for a cult image or vaulted tombs?⁵⁶ In any case they testify to a continuous presence of one type of divinity within Crete and Cyprus.⁵⁷

Apart from the clay figures, there also exist painted versions of goddesses with raised arms holding plants or birds. These mostly decorate funerary vessels. A *pithos* burial urn was found in a Protogeometric (ninth century BC) tomb near Knossos. Each of its sides was decorated with an image of a goddess with raised arms which N.Coldstream interpreted as a heritage of the Minoan goddess of nature (Figure 6.11).⁵⁸ One side depicts the goddess standing on a base with wheels. She has folded wings. In her raised hands she holds two water birds. She is flanked by stylized palm trees with volute leaves(?). On the left tree a crested bird is perched; the goddess turns her head towards it. The other side shows the

same type of figure although her dress has different patterns. Her wings are raised (as if she were ready to fly) and her hands are lowered; she seems to be dropping the birds. The trees flanking her have lost their volutes, the spiky leaves are drooping. The two sides, notes Coldstream, present opposing images of spring/regeneration on the one hand, and winter/departure, on the other. The platform is taken to be an abbreviation of a chariot or wagon. But why is a wagon necessary if the goddess has wings? W. Burkert interpreted the image as a conflation of ritual and fantasy: the wagon refers to the arrival of the cult statue of a deity. Such ritual arrivals of cult images are attested for Dionysus in his Attic festival of the Anthesteria, for Hera, Persephone and other Greek deities, but the idea finds parallels also in Northern European rituals, where gods arrive in wagons.⁵⁹ The tree goddess of Knossos is thus a bridge between the Minoan and Greek worlds. She is a nature deity, presiding over departure and return, winter and spring and, by extension, death and life. Her presence in a tomb shows that although a goddess of nature, she is primarily in charge of the dead whom she protects.⁶⁰ She may indeed be a heritage of Minoan female divinities. The wheeled platform and the stylistic rendition, on the other hand, reflect early Greek cult images.

Another Goddess with a curvy belt (not snakes as was originally thought) was painted on an eighth century BC funerary vase from the cemetery of Fortetsa near Knossos (Figure 6.12).⁶¹ From a later period, the seventh century BC, comes a painted image on an funerary urn from Arkades, Crete (Figure 6.13).⁶² This figure has no wings but resembles the Knossos 'tree goddess' of Figure 6.11 in that she holds palmettes in her hand. Her arms are upraised. Levi correctly associated the palmettes with the Tree of Life of Near Eastern art. The deity is flanked by two large waterbirds: she too is a goddess of nature. Her function on the urn is to protect the dead.

One statue of an enthroned goddess was found in a tomb near Knossos. Her arms are not raised and one of them rests on her knees. The date is not certain but the style would suggest late eighth or early seventh century BC. This seated goddess is flanked by figures wearing long robes (identified as women or men) as well as griffins incised on the stone (compare with Figure 6.15). The griffins remind us that this deity has affinities with the Mistress of Animals of Minoan times, only that the griffins look away from the central figure, rather than towards her. The typology of the seated female in stone is foreign to Minoan tradition but her presence in the tomb might be explained by the fact that she protected the dead, as did Persephone later on.

A clay plaque from Mathia (late Orientalizing period) seems to have originated in a tomb (Figure 6.14).⁶⁴ It depicts a goddess with raised arms but no attributes; she may have been placed in the grave to protect the dead.

This brief survey has served one purpose: to show that iconographical elements of the Minoan goddess of nature did indeed survive in Crete through the Iron Age into the Orientalizing period. But it is important to note two elements. First, the typology of the gestures. In the Greek period Cretan goddesses may simply raise their hands but equally often they hold something. Second, that the contexts are,



Figure 6.9 Goddess with upraised arms, from Kannia; LBA (end of second millennium BC)

Source: Photo: Y.Papadakis. H.M. number 15116

for the most part, (although not exclusively) funerary. The goddess of vegetation and regeneration also protects the dead. The duality is reflected in the relationship between Persephone and Demeter in Greek religion.

To turn to the mainland, here also we meet with the typology of goddesses with upraised arms. One well known example is the deity on a Boeotian relief *pithos* (Figure 6.15).⁶⁵ She is large and imposing, and is flanked by two figures with long



Figure 6.10 Goddess with upraised arms in a hut; LBA (end of second millennium BC)

Source: Photo: Y.Papadakis. H.M. number 7920

robes, the gender of whom is difficult to determine. Since the figures touch the belly of the goddess, it has been assumed that they are females. Two roaring lionesses, standing on their hind paws, revere the deity. She has some connection with vegetation because branches sprout from her crown. Is this deity a goddess of nature? It seems so, to judge from the animals and vegetation sprouting from her headdress. However, I am not entirely convinced that she is a birth goddess or a 'Hera'. In order to answer questions of identity, it would be necessary to examine all relief *pithoi* from the Aegean islands, from Crete and from Boeotia with regard to their iconographical schemes and symbolism.⁶⁶ This cannot be undertaken here. I have the impression, however, that the goddess with the upraised arms protects the dead on the funerary *pithoi*. Note that she does not dominate the animals, they are simply her attendants.

Snake goddesses in early Greek religion?

Brief mention should be made of the few instances of divinities associated with snakes in the Greek period. It is tempting to see them as survivals of the Minoan snake goddess, but it is equally easy, and methodologically more sound, to detect differentiation in the symbolism of the iconography. I have argued that snake handling in Minoan Crete was more likely associated with divine magicians and control, and less with chthonic aspects and the dead. It was rather the Greeks who associated snakes with chthonic powers, heroes and the dead, and this aspect has



Figure 6.11 Vase with tree goddess on an urn, from cemetery at Knossos; ninth century BC

Source: Coldstream (1984) page 96, figure 1

been simply projected on Minoan cult.⁶⁷ We must keep the polyvalence of the snake in mind and not assume a link between the Minoan and Greek world *a priori*.

A votive clay plaque found at a sanctuary west of the Areopagus in Athens, depicts a goddess with raised arms flanked by snakes which crawl upwards.⁶⁸ Strangely enough, she has been interpreted as a precursor to Athena, although she has none of the traits of the later goddess.⁶⁹ The reason for this puzzling identification is simply the assumption that there was a linear development of the pre-Greek goddess into the *polis* goddess Athena.⁷⁰ Do the snakes on the Athenian plaque allude to the dead?⁷¹ This seems likely. At any rate, this deity is

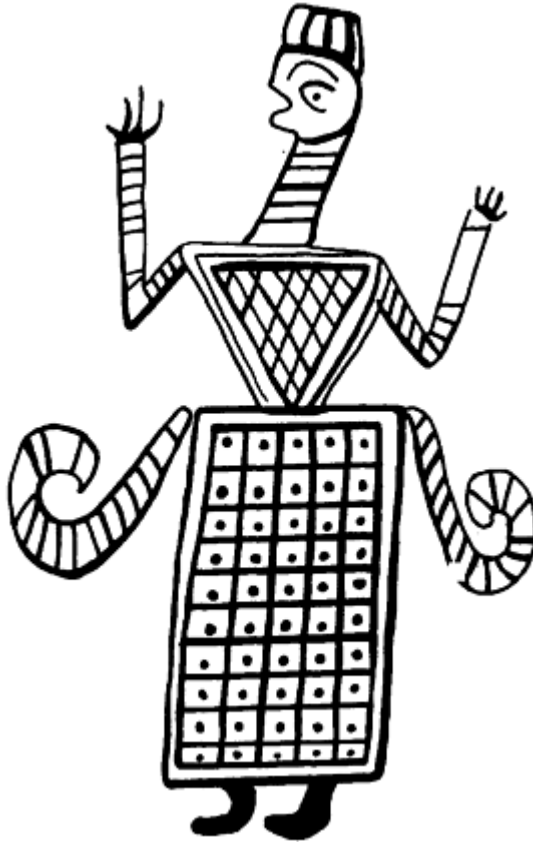


Figure 6.12 Goddess with raised arms on an urn, from Knossian cemetery at Fortetsa

Source: Brock (1957) plate 77. Drawing: O.Apergi

conceptually and iconographically far removed from the Minoan goddess as there is no snake handling involved.

A small plaque with a goddess and a snake, dating to the first half of the seventh century BC, was found at the sanctuary of Orthia at Sparta ([Figure 6.16](#)). It was part of a pin.⁷² The goddess holds a bird of prey on one out-stretched hand: a snake rises up and seemingly bites her sleeve. This iconography is obviously different from the earlier plaque from Athens discussed above and is difficult to interpret for lack of exact parallels.⁷³ Its significance may lie in the juxtaposition of bird and snake, the realms of sky and earth respectively. At any rate the stylistic features show an undisputed affinity with North Syria, not with Minoan Crete.⁷⁴ Besides, the bird of prey is associated with Near Eastern divinities (see [Chapter Two](#), [Figures 2.1–2.8](#) and [2.11](#)).⁷⁵ Let us also remember that this ivory piece was a pin, and very likely had an amuletic function. Birds and snakes appear together in vase



Figure 6.13 Goddess and waterbirds on funerary urn, from Arkades, Crete; seventh century BC

Source: Photo: Y.Papadakis. H.M.

paintings of the Orientalizing period, especially in Corinth, where they are a ‘visual *topos*’ acting as prophetic signs.⁷⁶ None of this is reminiscent of Crete.⁷⁷

Conclusions: ‘the right of the images to be seen’

In summary, the following points need to be stressed.



Figure 6.14 Goddess plaque from Mathia, from a tomb (?); seventh century BC

Source: Photo: Y.Papadakis. Courtesy Herakleion Museum

- 1 Goddesses with upraised arms on Crete and the mainland continue into the Iron Age and end in the Orientalizing period. Only in Cyprus do they survive until the sixth century BC.⁷⁸ On Crete they may represent survivals of Minoan goddesses.
- 2 Minoan snake goddesses are snake handlers. Snake goddesses *per se* do not exist in the Greek period. In the case of the examples from Athens and Sparta (Figure 6.16), the iconography betrays a different conceptual background than that attested on Minoan Crete.



Figure 6.15 Relief pithos with vegetation goddess, from Thebes

Source: Simon (1968) page 57, figure 51

- 3 The Greek Mistress of Animals, who holds animals forcibly, has no Minoan or Mycenaean antecedents. She must be distinguished from the goddess who is heraldically flanked by animals (Figures 6.4, 6.6, 6.8, 6.15).
- 4 Aegean goddesses flanked by beasts are not primarily associated with men. They may well have been patronesses of women (Figure 6.4).
- 5 The Greek Mistress of Animals in Orientalizing and Early Archaic Art is not a nurturing goddess.
- 6 Nudity is almost absent in the imagery of Bronze Age Crete.⁷⁹ The exposed breasts are a peculiarity of Minoan civilization with no exact parallels in the Orient or later Greece.

All the above indicate disruption of the religious tradition. The visual discontinuity cannot be dismissed as merely an artistic or stylistic trait; behind the choice of iconographical motifs lurk important conceptual categories. Following the Orientalizing period, subtle transformations were taking place. But one thing is certain: by the seventh century BC Crete and the mainland had at least two types of female deities: the vegetation goddess with the upraised arms (the latter may be flanked by beasts), and the Mistress of Animals who holds animals forcibly and who serves the needs of the warrior. The former was rooted in the Aegean past, the latter was shaped in Greece under influences from North Syria and the Levant.

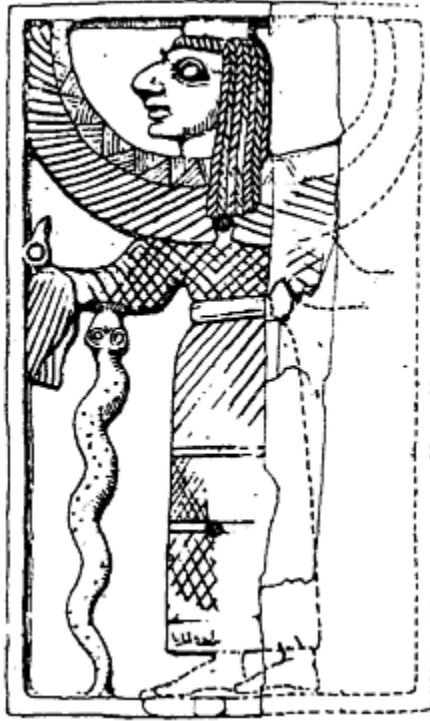


Figure 6.16 Ivory pin with goddess, from the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta
 Source: Dawkins (1929) plate 93

The Syrian goddess came to Greece and Crete at a moment when the social order was searching for new models of relationships between the divine and the aristocracy, when the focus was no longer the king but the warrior aristocrat and, eventually, the hero. The Mistress of Animals became bound to the aristocratic institution of the warrior. As the *polis* enlarged its range of military eligibility through the hoplite reform, the Mistress of Animals embraced the hero as the embodiment of all aristocratic warriors of the *polis*. Many goddesses assumed this function: Athena, Hera and especially Artemis.

This study of the Mistress of Animals ended with Artemis ([Chapter Five](#)), a goddess who supervised the training of the young so they could become hunters and warriors. Artemis is a virtual patroness of young men, the *ephebes*, although she remained a helper to the warrior as well. The Athenians and Spartans offered sacrifices to her after successful expeditions.

However, this is not the whole story. The demands of the *polis* extended the cult of Artemis so it could encompass more general aspects of protection especially as regards the initiation of young girls. In these cults we witness a softer version

of the goddess, feeding wild animals, protecting them and also protecting maidens. The images of softness mostly date from the late Archaic period and later.⁸⁰ They are evocative of the Minoan goddess. However, none of this proves that Artemis is a goddess of nature and fertility.⁸¹ Somehow the imagery has gone full circle, but this is not due to continuity from Minoan to late Archaic and Classical times but to spontaneous re-invention in accordance with basic human and social needs. It remains a fact that the naked female in her form as a Mistress of Animals is a patroness of men in the Greek world, and not of women. This seems paradoxical but the representations give this message clearly. As O.Keel has stated, images have a right to be seen.⁸²

NOTES

1

THE NAKED GODDESS AND MISTRESS OF ANIMALS IN THE NEAR EAST AND GREECE

- 1 For an overall assessment see Böhm 1990, Wiggermann 1988 and Uehlinger 1998, 46–64.
- 2 Stewart 1997, 25.
- 3 Uehlinger 1998, 55–64. On Old Babylonian seals the naked goddess has only a minor role but her status is higher in Syria where she was obviously considered more important: Winter 1983, 93–187. Winter 1983, 193–4, concludes that the naked goddess is of Syrian origin.
- 4 Uehlinger 1998, 56: ‘Dass die N.G. überall und zu allen Zeiten die gleiche Bedeutung gehabt hat, ist a priori unwahrscheinlich’.
- 5 Winter 1983, 192: Die nackte Frau ist eine nackte Göttin. For discussion and bibl. see pp. 192–3.
- 6 The thesis is developed by Winter 1983, 195: Die nackte Göttin gehört weder in Syrien/Palastina noch in Mesopotamien zu den Hauptfiguren des Pantheons. Similar conclusions are reached by Wiggermann 1998, 52 and Uehlinger 1998, 59. Different view in Böhm 1990, 132.
- 7 Winter 1983, 162, ascribes Syrian influence to this scene.
- 8 Keel 1980, 46f.
- 9 Winter 1983, 152.
- 10 A Sumerian text speaks of an alabaster statue based on a lapis pedestal: Wiggermann 1998, 77 with bibl.
- 11 Winter 1983, 158.
- 12 Discussion of this type of naked goddess in Winter 1983, 158–62.
- 13 Winter 1983, 194.
- 14 Winter 1983, 170.
- 15 Winter 1983, 173–4.
- 16 Winter 1983, 284ff.
- 17 Winter 1983, 275 with n. 351.
- 18 Winter 1983, 273ff.
- 19 Discussion of whether it is a dress or a ‘jumping rope’ in Uehlinger 1998, 62 with bibl.

- 20 Winter 1983, 274. On snakes Keel 1992, 198ff.
- 21 Winter 1983, 274–5.
- 22 Winter 1983, 279–80.
- 23 Keel 1994, 89ff, figs 45–6.
- 24 Winter 1983, 285: the male figure is identified as a ruler.
- 25 Winter 1983, 285: ‘Damit wird die Nacktheit der Göttin gleichsam potenziert.’
- 26 ‘Erotik und Fruchtbarkeit lassen sich im Alten Orient nicht ganzlich trennen...’ says Winter 1983, 198. Christou 1968, 170, 181, 210 etc. repeatedly comments that the goddess of nature encompasses all the realms of nature: sea, air, land.
- 27 Winter 1983, 161, fig. 100 with discussion of H.Frankfort’s view that the naked goddesses are minor figures of the pantheon, at least for the Old Babylonian period.
- 28 Winter 1983, 160.
- 29 Winter 1983, 163–4.
- 30 Winter 1983, 174, fig. 141.
- 31 Kapelrud 1969, 115.
- 32 Winter 1983, 323–7; 461 with previous bibl., follows Lipinski 1965, 44–73. See also Kapelrud 1969, 44, who accepts Lipinski’s translation.
- 33 Kapelrud 1969, 48–54; Gray 1969, 80.
- 34 Pritchard 1958, 118–32; Kapelrud 1969, 70–82.
- 35 Discussion in Burkert 1979, 99–122: ‘The female destroying the male seems to be an inversion of male dominance...’ (122).
- 36 Keel 1993, 69–104.
- 37 Winter 1983, 175.
- 38 Winter 1983, 442–3.
- 39 Winter 1983, 175.
- 40 Barnett 1957, 83, fig. 29b.
- 41 Collon 1987, 113–19.
- 42 Pritchard 1943, 87.
- 43 For the figurines see Pritchard 1943.
- 44 Negbi 1976, calls the pose ‘Egyptian’. See fig. 127f, no. 1591.
- 45 Metal figurine: Negbi 1976, fig. 85, no. 1551; plaque from Jaffa: Dothan and Avihav 1976, 543; Yadin 1960 pl. cxcv, 7–8.
- 46 For the various types in general see Pritchard 1943; Negbi 1976; Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 110–11; a more complete table with ten different types is proposed by Uehlinger 1998, 53.
- 47 For the context of metal pieces see Negbi 1976, 78–9; Wright 1962, 113, notes that they are so common that they are practically found in every home. He speaks of them as ‘magical objects’. Recently: Uehlinger 1998, 56.
- 48 Uehlinger 1998, 57.
- 49 Keel 1992, figs. 217–21.
- 50 Negbi 1976, 99 fig. 118, no. 1700; Winter 1983, 113–14 with n. 118, fig. 41. See also discussion in Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 74–8 and 174ff.
- 51 Negbi 1976, 100, fig. 119, no. 1701; Winter 1983, 114, fig. 42.
- 52 Negbi 1976, 99, fig. 117, no. 1699; Winter 1983, 114, fig. 43.
- 53 Pendant from Aleppo in Gray 1969, 77.
- 54 See discussion of origins and function of Qu-du-shu in Keel 1992, 203–9, figs. 203–4; Winter 1983, 110ff., figs. 40–3.
- 55 Winter 1983, 132.

- 56 Excellent picture in Bass, 1987, 718.
- 57 Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 122.
- 58 Pritchard 1943, 85; Winter 1983, 194–5; Uehlinger 1998, 59; Wiggemann 1998, 52.
- 59 Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 176–8; see also Mettinger 1995, who connects the symbols of the imagery with Asherah.
- 60 Thus also Winter 1983, 132.
- 61 Pritchard 1943, 51–2.
- 62 Pritchard 1943, 51–2.
- 63 Pinch 1994, 126.
- 64 Pritchard 1969, no. 473.
- 65 Pritchard 1969, 304. See also plates 161–4.
- 66 Excellent analysis in Stadelman 1967. See also Winter 1983, 110ff. Winter 1983, 198 notes that Qu-du-shu is not only Mistress of Animals but Mistress of the Heavens as well.
- 67 For snakes and magicians see Pinch 1994, 78. For the lotus as a plant with erotic connotations see the textual evidence adduced by Keel 1992, 111ff.
- 68 Stadelman 1967, 116–17.
- 69 *qds* means sacred in west Semitic languages, but *qedesha* means ‘whore’ in the Old testament, Genesis 38, 21. I owe this information to W. Burkert. Also Pritchard 1943, 41; Winter 1983, 125.
- 70 Stadelman 1967, 110ff; Keel 1992, 203–9; Winter 1983, 110ff.
- 71 Böhm 1990, 66, fig. 13a; Negbi 1976, 100.
- 72 Kunze 1931, 6, 191ff. p1. 3; Blome 1982, 70–1; Böhm 1990, B 12, p. 153; p1. 22.
- 73 Kunze 1931, 7, plates 7–9; Böhm 1990, plate 21, B13, B14.
- 74 On textual evidence from the Bible where love apples are erotic plants see Keel 1994, 256ff. with figs. 130, 149–51 on pages 223, 258 and 259. The love apples are visually connected with lotuses.
- 75 This shield functioned as a lid on a vessel: Stambolides in Stambolides and Karetsou 1998, 255, no. 319; Stambolides in Karageorghis and Stambolides 1998, 175–83.
- 76 Karageorghis 1969, 87, fig. 24.
- 77 Karageorghis 1969, 87, plate 49; Stambolides and Karetsou 1998, no. 322, p. 257.
- 78 Mallowan and Wiseman 1967, plate 30, no. 137; Winter 1983, 184–5, fig. 163.
- 79 Kyrieleis and Rolling 1988, 37ff.; Kyrieleis 1993, 125–53 at 146–7, fig. 7.15; Burkert 1992, 16; Morris 1992, 134.
- 80 Jantzen 1972, 58 B 1123, plate, 52; Böhm 1990, no. B30–1, p. 156.
- 81 Prayon 1987, 184, fig. 30.
- 82 Barnett 1964, 23, fig. 1. He tries to attach names to the naked figures but he finds that identification is impossible.
- 83 Winter 1983, 199, expresses this conclusion more cautiously: ‘Die nackte Göttin ist keine exklusive Frauengöttin. Das Interesse der Männer in ihr war mindestens so gross wie das der Frauen’. Note a horse head sculpture from Anatolia, with a naked goddess with folded arms engraved on it. The piece is now in Berlin. Keel 1978, 237, fig. 324a; Winter 1983, fig. 159.
- 84 Böhm 1990, 47–8. For a suggestion as to how such imports may have influenced Greek myth see Burkert 1979, 114–15; figs. 10–12. See also Morris 1992, 124ff.
- 85 Karageorghis 1969, fig. 23; Böhm 1990, plate 37b.
- 86 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 253 plate xii, 60a; Böhm 1990, plate 35, TK 14.
- 87 Stambolides and Karetsou 1998, 268, no. 336.

- 88 Boardman 1967, 101, fig. 59. See also the bone and ivory pendants found in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia: Marangou 1985.
- 89 Keel 1994, 174ff; Winter 1983, 309, figs. 322–4 with bibl.
- 90 Notably by Böhm 1990; Burkert 1992; Morris 1992; West 1997.
- 91 For figurines in graves see Karageorgis in Karageorgis and Stambolides 1998, 121–6.
- 92 Böhm 1990, 156–7, plate 6 nos. E. 1–4. For parallels see Barnett, 1957.
- 93 As Böhm 1990 establishes. She even has a sub-chapter with the title: ‘Die besondere Rolle Kretas...’ (p. 141). She correctly stresses the location of Crete close to the Syro-Palestinian corridor as a decisive factor.
- 94 For a complete catalogue see Böhm 1990, 145–76.
- 95 For a catalogue of moulded terracotta figurines and plaques see Böhm 1990, 73ff. For Spartan clay figurines including unpublished material see Böhm 1990, 161–2. Original publication: Dawkins 1929, esp. plate 36.
- 96 D’Acunto 1997.
- 97 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 160ff., plates xii–xv. For the interpretation of the terraces as a display area see D’Acunto 1997.
- 98 Uehlinger 1998, 58.
- 99 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, plate xxvii, no. 170; plates xxxii, xxxiv, xxxv, xxxviii–xliii.
- 100 There exists a statuette of a figure, which may have held a spear and would therefore be Athena, dating from the seventh century BC. (Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 161, no. 59, plate xi). At the same time, another seventh century statuette with a skirt decorated with wild animals, can be identified as a Mistress of Animals deity (Rizza 1966, 76, no. 103, fig. 244).
- 101 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 223, fig. 293. plate xiv.82; 145, fig. 320. Similar *pinakes* suggesting marriage have been found at Afrati: Lebessi 1987, 131, plate 2g. Lebessi has linked marriage scenes to initiation.
- 102 Fittschen 1969, 164f; Blome 1982, 82–3, correctly identifies her as a goddess. Similarly Lebessi 1987, 129.
- 103 Blome 1982, 81–2, figs. 13–15.
- 104 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, plate xxi.124. Parallels: Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 115, fig. 125; Uehlinger 1998, 57, 60, fig. 5; Hadzisteliou-Price 1971, 64.
- 105 Hadzisteliou-Price 1971, 68, speaks of functional triplication.
- 106 Winter 1983, 289; Hoffner 1990, 45–82. Hoffner names the goddess Šauska because he classifies the myth as Hurrian.
- 107 The Old Testament story of Judith and Olophernes may reflect the same fear. See Burkert 1979, 73–7. I owe the Herodotus reference to W.Burkert.

2

CIRCE AS THE LEGACY OF THE NAKED GODDESS IN GREEK MYTH

- 1 Christou 1968, 179–80.
- 2 West 1997, 405ff.
- 3 Winter 1983, 285.
- 4 Winter 1983, 170.
- 5 Winter 1983, 172.
- 6 Winter 1983, 175; Collon 1987, no. 148.
- 7 Winter 1983, 150.

- 8 Winter 1983, 281.
- 9 Winter 1983, 285–6.
- 10 Barnett 1957, 83, fig. 29b.
- 11 Note that doves also are associated with naked goddesses and have erotic connotations: Keel 1992, 140–68.
- 12 Winter 1983, 189–91.
- 13 Black and Green 1992, 118, frontispiece. There the demon has the attributes of Ishtar.
- 14 Kapelrud 1969, 49.
- 15 Kapelrud 1969, 77.
- 16 The protectiveness is expressed in one of the coffin texts see Rundle Clark 1959, 125–8, fig. 4; Keel 1978, 191, fig. 262.
- 17 Hornung 1992, 99, plate 66.
- 18 Marangou 1985, 15.
- 19 Dawkins 1929, 205, plate xci, 1A; See also Marangou 1985, 19ff, fig. 16.; Kahil 1984, LIMC II.1, 625; II.2, no. 17.
- 20 Christou 1968, 180.
- 21 Schefold 1960, 144, fig. 107; Kahil 1984, LIMC II.2, no. 47.
- 22 West 1997, 406–7.
- 23 Marinatos 1995, 133–40; West 1997, 408; Strasburger 1998, 12ff.
- 24 Christou 1968, esp. 179–80. He has correctly remarked that Circe and Calypso both originate as underworld goddesses who are at the same time Mistresses of Animals. More recently Nagy 1979, 169ff; Schmid 1996, 57–62; Brilliant 1995, 165–74; Crane 1988, 30–85.
- 25 Page 1973, 60–1; West 1997, 409ff. More recently Strasburger 1998, 12ff. with bibl.
- 26 Strasburger 1998, 13, sees Circe as a combination of the goddess (Ishtar) and the helpful female (Sidouri).
- 27 Shapiro 1994, 57, fig. 35; Canciani 1992, LIMC VI.2, 55–9, no. 14; Schmid 1996, 58, 60, fig. 2.
- 28 Canciani 1992, LIMC VI.2, no. 19.
- 29 Canciani 1992, LIMC VI.2, no. 4.
- 30 Gilgamesh (tablet II. O.B. version): Pritchard 1973 vol. 1, 53. For the affinities of the epic of Gilgamesh with *Odyssey* see supra n. 25.
- 31 West 1997, 404ff.
- 32 Pritchard 1975, vol. 2 p. 8; West 1997, 67.
- 33 Pritchard 1975, vol. 2 p. 14.
- 34 West 1997, 409ff.
- 35 Strasburger 1998, 13.
- 36 Winter 1983, fig. 412. On Phoenician bowls see Markoe 1985.
- 37 Burkert 1992, 104; West 1997, 98–101.

3

GORGON: ADVERSARY AND PARTNERESS OF MEN

- 1 As the title of Keel, 1992 suggests.
- 2 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV.1 285–330; IV.2 nos 2–338. For *gogoneia* see also Karagiorga 1970.

- 3 Mylonas 1957, 51–102; Schefold 1966, plate 16; Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV, 313, no. 312 with full bibl. The comparison with snake cauldrons is made by Hurwit, 1985, 169.
- 4 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 2, no. 290, with bibl. Good picture in Bandinelli and Paribeni 1986, fig. 63.
- 5 Discussion in Vermeule 1979, 196, fig. 19; Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1 316; IV. 2, no. 348.
- 6 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 2, nos. 234–6, 238 b, 241, 249 etc.
- 7 Sometimes it can also signify ‘breaking down’ when the knees touch the ground. Stucchi 1981, 7–86.
- 8 Hesiod, *Theogony* 277–8.
- 9 Hopkins 1934, 341–58; Burkert 1986, 25–40; Burkert 1992, 82–7.
- 10 Keel 1978, 79–80; Keel 1992, 228 examines such features of Lamastu as show her negative persona. See also Burkert 1992, 82–7.
- 11 See especially Burkert 1992, 82–7.
- 12 Burkert 1988, 55–73.
- 13 Boardman 1961, 150.
- 14 Kyrieleis 1993, 145–6.
- 15 Boardman 1961, 137; Morris 1992, esp. 150–72. For the exhibition see Stambolides and Karetsou 1998.
- 16 Morris 1992, 148.
- 17 Burkert 1992, 41ff.
- 18 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 322.
- 19 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 2, no. 288. For the types of animals with which Gorgo is associated see Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 321.
- 20 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 2, 283.
- 21 Schoske *et al.* 1990, p. 126, no. 109.
- 22 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 2, nos 271, 272.
- 23 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 311, no. 282.
- 24 Christou 1968, 136–53, has an excellent discussion of Gorgo as Mistress of Animals but he traces her origin to an older chthonic deity. Fuller discussion with bibl. in Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 320.
- 25 Selectively I mention here Christou 1968, 205, who speaks of the pre-Greek mother nature goddesses. See also more recently Robbins Dexter 1990, 11–12.
- 26 Argued by Keel 1978, 69–105, for the Near Eastern Master of Animals: he orders the cosmos and protects against chaos.
- 27 Winter 1983, 189, fig. 169.
- 28 ‘Gorgones in Etruria’, Krauskopf 1988 LIMC IV. 2, nos. 81, 201.
- 29 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 2, no. 251.
- 30 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 2, nos 250, 255, 258.
- 31 Pugliese Carratelli 1996, p. 181, cat. 136.
- 32 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 308; IV. 2, no. 255.
- 33 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 312; IV. 2, no. 293.
- 34 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 306; IV. 2 no. 239.
- 35 Schoske and Wildung 1993, 236–7.
- 36 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 308; IV. 2, no. 262.
- 37 Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 250–2, fig. 226 b.
- 38 Pinch 1994, 56–7, fig. 27.

- 39 Pinch 1994, 11.
- 40 Pinch 1994, 144–5, fig. 77.
- 41 Andrews 1994, 39, fig. 36.
- 42 Pinch 1994, 11.
- 43 Maniche 1987, 43–5, fig. 33; Pinch 1994, 129–32; Dasen 1993. Amulets: Reisner 1958, plate i, nos 1274–5; plate iii, 12643, 12646–7; 12640 (monkey); plate iv, 12651, 12656–7. Bes on toiletry articles: Schlick-Nolte and von Droste-Hülshot 1990, 218–27.
- 44 Altenmüller 1975, 722.
- 45 Gorgos: Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV.2, nos. 238, 234–6, 241, 249–51, 252, 258, 260, 269, 271, 280, 283, 291 etc. For Bes with wings see Altenmüller 1975, 722.
- 46 Gorgo: Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 291; IV.2, no. 38; Bes: Reisner 1958, no. 12656
- 47 Schoske *et al.* 1990, 126–7, no. 109.
- 48 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV.2, no. 89; Karagiorga 1970, plate 7.
- 49 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV.2, no. 262. Similar piece from the Peloponnese: Karagiorga 1970, 135.49, plates 17–21, 135–49.
- 50 Discussion of the Near Eastern type by Winter 1983, 343–6.
- 51 Keel 1992, 224; Winter 1983, 470–6 (goddess for sexual initiation).
- 52 On the meaning of this posture see Winter 1983, 343ff, who discusses the Near Eastern versions.
- 53 Bonnet 1971, 116–18, fig. 38.
- 54 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 295–6, nos. 85, 92, 96.
- 55 Schoske *et al.* 1990, 126–7.
- 56 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV.2, no. 283.
- 57 Kunze 1950, 65ff, plate 39/3; Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 320; IV.2 no. 27.
- 58 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 310; IV.2, no. 275; Karagiorga 1970, plate 8a.
- 59 Lissarague 1985, 51–72; Durand and Schnapp in Berard and Vernant 1985, 86ff.; Kennell 1995, 140 with n. 166.
- 60 Burkert 1979, esp. 56–8.
- 61 On monster adversaries in iconography and myth see Fittschen 1969.
- 62 Cheiron is a tutor, Pholos is an adversary. See Lebessi 1996, 149.
- 63 Jameson 1990, 213–23.
- 64 Carter 1987, 355–83.
- 65 It has been argued that early drama may also have had an aspect of initiation: Winkler 1990, 20–62.
- 66 Jameson 1990, 215.
- 67 Marinatos, S. 1936, 270–2; Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, no. 12, p. 289; D’Acunto 1997.
- 68 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 289, no. 2.
- 69 Dawkins *et al.* 1929, plate LVI.
- 70 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 183, 272, plate xxxii.215.
- 71 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 182, nos 210–12.
- 72 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV. 1, 289, no. 1.
- 73 In Egypt, a painted canvas Bes mask has been found in a house at Kahun (c. 1900–1750 BC), and although the context is not unambiguous, a case has been made that Bes masks may have been connected with initiation. Pinch, 1994, suggests that the mask ‘belong[s] to a hidden world of female magic’ (p. 132 cf. also p. 121, figs. 63, 71). See also Janssen and Janssen, 1990, 65.

- 74 The interesting thesis of Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, ch. 5, is that the frontality of the Gorgon face makes the viewer a participant; frontality is related also to death.
- 75 Christou 1968, 209–10.
- 76 Benson 1967, 52.
- 77 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV.1, 311–12.
- 78 Kunze 1950, 70.
- 79 Hampe 1935/36, 269–99.
- 80 Simon 1969, 171. Discussion and bibl. in Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV.1, 320.
- 81 Rodenwald 1939, 136ff.
- 82 Krauskopf 1988, LIMC no. 1, 321. The bronze relief from Olympia cited by Kunze as evidence for a parallel will be discussed below.
- 83 I am citing here the title of O.Keel's book: *Das Recht der Bilder gesehen zu werden*: Keel 1992.
- 84 For an analysis of votives in the sanctuary of another female deity, Aphaia at Aigina see Sinn 1988, 149–59. He arrives at the conclusion that initiation rites were performed there.
- 85 Richter 1961, 22, no. 27, fig. 84; Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV, 306, no. 238; see also Boardman 1978, fig. 231.
- 86 Kunze 1950, 8–9, plate 71, II.
- 87 Lebessi 1987, 125–38 at 131. Marriage as a crucial stage ending the *agoge*: Kennell 1995, 117ff.
- 88 Burkert 1992, 26, 28.

4

PATRON GODDESSES AND MALE IDENTITY

- 1 For the Mistresses of Animals see Blome 1982, 71–6 with bibl.
- 2 Important studies on Daedalic iconography of Crete are Boardman 1961; Lebessi 1976; Lebessi 1985; Blome 1982; Exhibition catalogue *Dädalische Kunst auf Kreta im 7. Jahrhundert v. Christ. Aufstellungs Katalog*, Hamburg 1970; Davaras 1972.
- 3 Pernier 1914, 18–111.
- 4 Dates discussed by Beyer 1976; D'Acunto 1995, 15–55 esp. 16–26.
- 5 D'Acunto 1995, 18 with discussion.
- 6 D'Acunto 1995, 52.
- 7 There is still a dispute about how the sculptures were arranged. See recent discussions by D'Acunto 1995 and Watrous 1998, 75–9.
- 8 Stucchi 1974, 88–119; for the most recent discussion Watrous 1998, 75–9.
- 9 Beyer 1976, 25, plate 15, 1.
- 10 Beyer 1976.
- 11 Coldstream 1981, 345; Watrous 1998, 77, fig. 8.1.
- 12 D'Acunto 1995, 24, fig. 9.
- 13 Beyer 1976, 26, plate 25.2. For temple models of the Iron Age from Palestine see Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 182–4 with figs. 188 a, b.
- 14 See review by Coldstream 1981, 344–5; Watrous 1998, 75–9 with reconstruction on p. 77. Watrous proposes an Old Kingdom *mastaba* as an inspiration of the temple, which seems unlikely.
- 15 Pernier 1914, Fig. 20; Beyer 1976, plate 21.2, cat. no. 25; D'Acunto 1995, 31.

- 16 Similarly: Hadzisteliou-Price 1971, 49–69; Beyer 1976, 27; Blome 1982, 76ff. For duplication effect see also the gold ring from Fortetsa: Lebessi 1975, 169ff.
- 17 Picard 1964, 259–66.
- 18 Lebessi 1987, 129, sees nudity as an indication of ‘otherness’.
- 19 Even the Gortyn temple at the hill-top may have had (a now lost) hearth according to D’Acunto 1997. Watrous 1998, proposes a slightly different interpretation: the cavalry represents young men in a ceremony of initiation (pp. 78–9). It is unlikely, however, that men with the gear of fully-fledged warriors would be initiates. In the seventh and sixth centuries BC the rider/*ephebe* has only a spear.
- 20 Rizza 1991, 331ff.; about the urbanization of the town: D’Acunto 1997.
- 21 Cf. *Iliad* 6, 297–304 when the queen Hecuba and other women bring a robe to Athena. However, they do so on behalf of the men. The inscriptions from the sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia found in the Athenian Acropolis make constant references to garments (also male garments) brought by women.
- 22 See Mazarakis-Ainian 1997 for comprehensive analysis.
- 23 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 156, plates ii, iii; D’Acunto 1997.
- 24 Davaras 1972.
- 25 Keel and Uehlinger 1995, 113–15, fig. 126 and fig. 124.
- 26 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, plate iv. Recently re-studied by D’Acunto 1997.
- 27 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 250ff.; Blome 1982, 80ff; Böhm 1990, 94ff. discusses also two triads attested on shield bands (plate 35d, e) but it is impossible to see the middle figures as females; their stance is typical of males. Consequently there exist triads which involve only males and which signify ‘combat’ as on Near Eastern seals cf. Keel 1992, 48, fig. 1.
- 28 Marinatos, S. 1936, 251–2.
- 29 Marinatos, S. 1936, 25 1ff. Re-examined by Beyer 1976. The dating to the eighth century BC is based on stylistic grounds. According to Lebessi it is similar to a statuette found at Aphrati which dates to the late eighth century BC by context. See Lebessi 1970, 458, plate 400d; Lebessi 1980, 87–95.
- 30 Brock 1957, 134–5, plate 168, no. 1568; Beyer 1976, cat. 46 with bibl.; Blome 1982, 78; Böhm 1990, 96–7.
- 31 Prayon 1987, 68–9, notes the stylistic resemblance of the horse with Assyrian and Phrygian horses. For eighth century BC siege scenes from the palace of Tiglath-Pileser III see Barnett and Falkner 1962. The ‘narrative’ of a town under attack is attested also on Phoenician bowls of approximately the same period and was obviously a common theme in the East Mediterranean: see Markoe 1985.
- 32 For a similar scene on a frieze from Chania see Davaras 1972, no. 9. fig. 8 with bibl. See also Lebessi 1987, 130, fig. 2. The Chania frieze shows an edifice under attack but only one goddess (statue) is inside.
- 33 The thesis that the origins of temples lie in chieftains’ houses is developed by Mazarakis-Ainian 1997.
- 34 Dawkins *et al.* 1929, 207, plate xcv; 159, fig. 114; discussion of both by Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 252; Böhm 1990, 96–7.
- 35 On the distinction between Near Eastern heritage and Greek creativity Blome 1982 *passim*; Böhm 1990, 134ff.
- 36 Lebessi 1987, 131 argues that not all figures in Orientalizing art are gods or heroes, and that the *polos* hat or wreath does not necessarily constitute divine attributes.
- 37 Blome 1982, 76.

- 38 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 250ff; Blome 1982, 79ff; Böhm 1990, 99.
- 39 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 251; Böhm 1990, 97.
- 40 Lange and Hirmer 1955, plates 46, 47.
- 41 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 160ff.
- 42 Wiggermann 1998, 52.
- 43 Schlick-Nolte and von Droste-Hülshot 1990, 214, cat. nos. 170–3; Andrews 1994, picture on back cover. See also T.Hadzisteliou-Price 1971, 48ff.
- 44 D'Acunto 1995.
- 45 Lebessi 1976.
- 46 A bearded man on a horse appears also as the main decoration on a funerary urn from the Cretan necropolis of Arkades: Levi 1931, 130, fig. 114; Beyer 1976, 56, 149, plate 36.
- 47 Keel 1978, fig. 383
- 48 Pernier 1914, 67ff., figs. 36–9.
- 49 Such a programme of contests is attested also on a Bronze breastplate from Olympia. On contests in association with goddesses see Lebessi 1987, 128–9. On the Olympia bronze: Schefold 1966, 42, plate 26.
- 50 Lissarague 1990, 191ff.; 97ff.. For more evidence see Lebessi 1987, 129.
- 51 Blome 1982, plates 16.4; 17.1; exhibition catalogue *Dädalische Kunst auf Kreta* plates 32–3.
- 52 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 186, no. 236, plate xxxv. The theory that a male master of horses was represented cannot be excluded.
- 53 Payne 1940, 146–7, plate 48.
- 54 Fittschen 1969, 9ff.
- 55 Lebessi 1987, 127, notes that on some of the votive plaques from Gortyn the protagonist Bellerophon 'is immersed in the anonymity of the warrior rider on horseback'. Thus at Gortyn there exist both versions: the narrative image where Bellerophon kills Chimaera, and the emblematic one of the single rider.
- 56 Bandinelli and Paribeni 1986, no. 89.
- 57 Schefold 1966, plate 32; Bandinelli and Paribeni, no. 144.
- 58 Borell and Rittig 1998, 154–61; 195.
- 59 Borell and Rittig 1998, 158.
- 60 Borell and Rittig 1998, 205, conclude that one cannot identify specific deities from the motifs on the dresses.
- 61 Payne 1940, 186, plate 85, 2–4; Boardman 1967, 101, plate 59.
- 62 Dawkins *et al.* 1929, plate cxi, 1a; xcvi; Blome 1982, 11, fig. 4.
- 63 Christou 1968, correctly emended by Beyer 1976, p. 37, who rather sees the duplication as related to symmetry. See also Hadzisteliou-Price 1971, 49–69.
- 64 Picard 1964, 259–66; Platon 1964, 149; Beyer 1976, 37–8; D'Acunto 1995, 43–4 with bibl. On the naked goddess the sound judgement of Böhm 1990 should be cited here: 'es war eher eine der möglichen Kultformen als Ausdruck eines speziellen Aspektes, der im übrigen verschiedenen Göttinnen eigen sein könnte (1990:140).
- 65 Blome 1982, 72ff. with bibl. Blome acknowledges the dangerous side of the goddess.
- 66 For criticism of W.Mannhardt and Sir James Frazer see Burkert 1979, 68ff. Their theories about vegetation demons are in themselves myths: 'it is a myth in the sense of a tale pattern transferred to furnish an explanation without being analyzed in itself.' The bibliography on the Mother Goddess is considerable. Suffice it to mention here the most popular work of Gimbutas 1989.

- 67 For the various aspects of nudity in Greek art see Stewart 1997. For the Near East see Uehlinger 1998, 57: 'Der Aspekt der Fruchtbarkeit spielt dagegen kaum (oder höchstens indirekt) eine Rolle'. Contrary opinion concerning the Cretan examples presented by Blome 1982, 72ff with discussion and bibl. Blome's main argument rests on the assumption that sexuality equals fertility. Moreover (without denying strong Near Eastern influences) Blome connects the Greek figures to the Minoan goddess whose domain was fertility and nature. It is also fascinating to see how sexuality is used in primates to foster communication and intrigue independently of reproduction (De Waal 1982, 155ff).
- 68 Cf. Blome 1982, 108: 'Man findet nicht immer Benennungen aber Kategorien der Deutung.'
- 69 It is rare that the Mistress of Animals is flanked by women. An exception is a lead group found in the sanctuary of Orthia at Sparta. A. Wace in Dawkins *et al.* 1929, 260, fig. 120.
- 70 Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 193ff., plates xlv–xlv.

5

THE MISTRESS OF ANIMALS, ARTEMIS, GORGO AND THE
ICONOGRAPHY OF VIOLENCE

- 1 Lloyd-Jones 1983, 101.
- 2 Burkert 1985, 152.
- 3 Clinton 1988, 7.
- 4 Cf. Simon 1969, 147ff; Kahil 1984, LIMC II.1, 739ff speaks of: 'Potnia Theron' and 'Artemis-Potnia'.
- 5 Lloyd-Jones 1983, 90.
- 6 Lloyd-Jones 1983, 99.
- 7 Marinatos, N. 1988, 114–25.
- 8 Kahil 1984, LIMC II.1, 760.
- 9 One of the few exceptions is a lead piece from the sanctuary of Orthia: see Wace in Dawkins *et al.* 1929, 260, fig. 120.
- 10 Boardman 1974, 18–19; Bakir 1981, plates I–II; Isler-Kerényi 1997, 68–73.
- 11 Schefold 1966, 58ff; Boardman 1974, 33–4; Simon 1981, no. 51 with bibl., plates 51–7, 69–77. On the differences between the Sophilos and Kleitias painters see Isler-Kerényi 1997, 67–81. *On the Mistress of Animals and Gorgo*, Isler-Kerényi 1977 (A), at 531–3.
- 12 Alternatively, Artemis rides with her brother Apollo; discussion of the procession in Stewart 1983, 62; Isler-Kerényi 1997, 76–8.
- 13 Kahil 1984, LIMC II.2., no. 109a, 110.
- 14 Christou 1968, 209 says: 'Der vorhomerische Name des Potnia-Theron-Bildtypus kann nur Erde-Chthon sein; und die verschiedenen Bildtypen sind also Erscheinungsformen dieser Gottheit aufzufassen.' See also Kahil 1984, LIMC II.2, 738.
- 15 Association with vegetation is rare. On the Arkades urn (Kahil 1984, LIMC II. 1, 11) see discussion in Chapter. 6, fig. 14. It is difficult to argue on such scanty evidence that the domain of the goddess extends to all life on earth and sky as Kahil LIMC II. 1, 740 argues.

- 16 Kahil 1984, LIMC II.2, nos 34, 35.
- 17 Kahil 1984, LIMC II.2, nos 739–40.
- 18 Exception Kahil 1984, LIMC II.2, no. 51; no. 20 (gem, perhaps fake), LIMC II.1, p. 625.
- 19 Kahil 1984, LIMC II.1, 743–4.
- 20 As Kahil 1984 puts it ‘encore qui’il soit souvent difficile en iconographie de décider quand et où une identification directe du type Ponia théron avec A. a été accomplie’ (LIMC II.1, 738).
- 21 Lloyd-Jones 1983, 101.
- 22 Aristotle, *Ath. Politeia*, 58, 1.
- 23 The designation *Potmia Theron* is found in Homer, *Iliad* 21, 470.
- 24 Pettersson 1992, 64, remarks that during the *Karneia* the priest was in the service of a goddess whom he identifies as Artemis.
- 25 Clinton 1988, 1–13.
- 26 Vidal-Naquet 1981, 179–82; Lloyd-Jones 1983, 91ff; Burkert 1985, 151; Graf 1996, 53–8.
- 27 For an overview of current opinions Stewart 1990, 113.
- 28 Rodenwald 1939, 86ff. This identification is generally accepted.
- 29 Rodenwald 1938, plates 24–6.
- 30 Discussion in Simon 1969, 171 (Priam); Schefold 1966, 54–5; Krauskopf 1988, LIMC IV.1, 311ff.
- 31 Rodenwald 1938, 24, plates 32, 33.
- 32 Simon 1969, 171, also emphasizes the killing and speaks of ‘Die tödliche Macht der Artemis’.
- 33 A similar scene from an Olympia shield strap is thus identified by Schefold 1966, 94–5, fig. 44.
- 34 Kunze 1950, plate 31, X, c.
- 35 Kunze 1950, plate 15, iii, e. See also plate 72, vii, c; plate 73, x, b.
- 36 Gorgo on the shield straps: Kunze 1950, 65–71, plates 8, I, f; 54.
- 37 Kunze 1950, plates 5, 73.II.
- 38 Schefold 1966, 75, fig. 28.
- 39 Kennell 1995, 132.
- 40 Touchefeu 1974, LIMC I. 1, 929–73; Morris 1995, 223; Blome 1997, 73–82.
- 41 For this reason murder seems to be evident on votive plaques or weapons in the seventh century BC. Rizza and Scrinari 1968, 241, fig. 334, plate xxxii. 212.
- 42 Kunze 1950, plate 73, IX.
- 43 The initiates must have consisted of both sexes, as is attested also in other cults of Artemis. At Brauron for example, ‘male and female initiation rites seem to have been combined together.’ (Lloyd-Jones 1983, 97) At the sanctuary at Corfu, there are some figurines of Artemis which have great typological affinities with those of Brauron, where Artemis was certainly an initiatrix. They date to the first half of fifth century BC, which is later than the pedimental sculptures by almost a century and half, thus reflecting more the Classical persona of Artemis and less the Archaic one. However, by analogy to votives at Brauron, the Corfu votives point to rituals of initiation. In the votive figures, Artemis sometimes holds animals upside-down: Kahil 1984, LIMC II, nos 601, 607. Other times the animal is upright, reaching up to her in affection. Most telling are figurines where Artemis has a little girl against her skirt: Kahil 1984, LIMC II, no. 723.

- 44 Plato, *Laws* III, 633 b; Jeanmaire 1939, 540ff; Vidal-Naquet 1981, 174, 213–14; Lloyd-Jones 1983, 98; Pettersson 1992, 46–8, 85ff.
- 45 Kennell 1995, 132.
- 46 Pettersson 1992, 89.
- 47 Jeanmaire 1939, 540ff.
- 48 Cicero, *Tusc.*, 2, 34; Pausanias 3, 169; Graf 1979, 33–41; Graf 1996, 53–8. Extensive discussion in Kennell 1995, 79ff. There is no reference to *diamastigosis* before Hellenistic times.
- 49 As Kennell 1995 correctly emphasizes, there should be a distinction between the Greek and Roman ritual.
- 50 The term *phouaxir*, ‘fox-time’, seems to refer to the period when the youths were separated from society: Kennell 1995, 74.
- 51 Kennell 1995, 137ff. esp. 146.
- 52 Graf 1979, 38–41.
- 53 Xenophon, *Lakedaimonion Politeia* 2.9. On the ritual’s antiquity see Burkert 1985, 152; Kennell 1995, 79ff
- 54 Kennell 1995, 129–
- 55 Kennell 1995, 120 objecting to Lebessi 1991.
- 56 Lebessi 1991, 99–123.
- 57 Lucian *Demon*. 4.6. Lebessi 1991; Kennell 1995, 154.
- 58 Graf, 1979; Lloyd-Jones 1983, 96ff; Dowden 1989, 37. The initiands at the sanctuary of Artemis at Halai could have been designated as ‘tauroi’, bulls. It is tempting to see connections with the Spartan *bouagoi*, an age group designation of the Spartan *agoge*.
- 59 Xenophon, *Res. Publ. Laced.*, 2, 9; Graf 1979, 38.
- 60 Lloyd-Jones 1983 suggests that the reason behind Artemis’s demand are the eventual massacres at Troy. This view is criticized by Clinton 1988, 1–13.
- 61 Euripides introduces this dimension by making Iphigeneia sacrifice herself willingly for the good of others in his *Iphigeneia in Aulis*. This shows that every tragedian gave a new meaning to the sacrifice of the maiden.
- 62 Aristotle *Ath. Politeia*, 58, 1.; Burkert, 1983, 69ff.; Burkert 1985, 151–2.

6

THE AEGEAN MISTRESS OF ANIMALS AND THE GODDESS WITH THE
UPRAISED ARMS

- 1 Evans 1921–36, PM IV, 45: Artemis Tauropolos; PM II, 250: Artemis Delphinia; Evans, PM III, 463: Rhea.
- 2 Nilsson 1950, 488ff.
- 3 Simon 1969, *passim*.
- 4 Christou 1968, 183, 205, 209–10.
- 5 Kahil 1984, LIMC II.1, 739.
- 6 Gimbutas 1989.
- 7 Burkert 1985, 47–53; recent summary with bibl. in Dickinson 1994, 293.
- 8 Morris 1992, 164ff.
- 9 In Morris’s view, the union of Europa and the bull are reminiscent of Baal (Morris 1992, 174–6). On the myth of Minos and the Near East see also West 1997, 451–2.

- 10 Burkert 1992, 2–27. Recently Karageorghis and Stambolides 1998.
- 11 Christou 1968, 171, argues that it cannot be decided conclusively whether the origin of the Mistress of Animals is from Minoan Crete or the Orient. I see the (iconographical type of the) goddess with the upraised arms as the main survivor into Iron Age Crete. The survival of Minoan traits is attested also in Homer who speaks of Crete as a place of many languages. Non-Greek names and festivals of gods in Crete also testify to Minoan survivals: Trümper 1997, 188–96.
- 12 Evans speaks consistently of the great Mother Goddess, e.g. Evans PM I, 160; Gimbutas 1989.
- 13 Nilsson 1950 stresses this. Recently Dickinson 1994, 257–60.
- 14 For example on the gold Isopata Ring CMS II. 3, 51. For recent overviews of Minoan male and female deities Marinatos 1993, 147–94; complete bibl. references in Ruud 1996, 44–54; N.Demopoulou and G.Rethemiotakis, personal communication.
- 15 Evans, PM I, 495–523.
- 16 Gesell 1985, 65, fig. 43.
- 17 Evans, PM I, 495ff. is the first exponent of the chthonic view. Nilsson 1950, 83–6; 312–29.
- 18 Keel 1992, 195ff.
- 19 Saleh and Sourouzzian 1986, no. 261; Keel 1992, fig. 268.
- 20 See ch. 3, n. 39.
- 21 Tomba degli Auguri: *Pittura Etrusca al Museo di Villa Giulia, Studi di Archeologia* 6, Rome 1989, plate xxiii.
- 22 Keel 1992, 209ff.
- 23 The seeming exceptions will be discussed below, [fig. 6.16](#).
- 24 Evans PM I, 510–11, figs. 366–7.
- 25 See CMS XIII, 28–30; CMS VS. 1A, 157; CMS VS.1A, 156; CMS VS. 1A, 155 among the many examples.
- 26 Keel 1980, 100–1, figs. 66–8.
- 27 Keel 1980, 104–5, figs. 73–4. There may be a difference in the conceptual schemata of Syria and Babylonia.
- 28 Keel 1980, 107.
- 29 Marinatos, N. 1993, 152–3, figs. 125–9.
- 30 Nilsson 1950, 358, fig. 169; 359, fig. 170; 360, fig. 172; 361, fig. 173. Collection in Hägg and Lindau 1984, 67–77; Marinatos, N. 1993, 154–5, fig. 134.
- 31 Noteworthy is a seal from the Metaxas collection Crete, CMS, IV, 295. It shows a goddess with raised arms (possibly wearing a horn crown) flanked by two lions at the edge of the seal. They are in semi-contorted positions but are not held by force. Thus, the power of the deity is felt by the animals but is not imposed on them.
- 32 Hägg 1986, 41–62; Niemeier 1987, 163–8; Marinatos, N. 1993, 108ff. with bibl.
- 33 Marinatos, N. 1993, 162–5.
- 34 See e.g. CMS IX, 154.
- 35 Nilsson 1950, 367, fig. 177.
- 36 What has been taken as the skin of the serpent is the bead-net that holds her hair.
- 37 See, for example, the statue of Hathor, appearing as a cow amidst papyrus and nursing Amen-hotep II Lange and Hirmer 1955, 66 plate 142.
- 38 Collon 1987, 70, no. 315. It is dated to Period V 1500–1100 BC.
- 39 For discussion of this painting see Marinatos, N. 1984, 61–84; Marinatos, N. 1993, 151–2; Marinatos, N. 1987; 123–32; Dumas 1992, 130.

- 40 Nilsson 1950, 358–65, figs 169–74; on horn-frames see Hägg and Lindau 1984, 73; in general Marinatos, N. 1993, 154–5.
- 41 Hägg 1986, 41–62; Marinatos, N. 1993, 103–11.
- 42 Taylour 1970, 270–80.
- 43 A lion seems more probable, rather than a griffin as I have reconstructed it. I accept P.Rehak's observation that griffins are never yellow.
- 44 Last discussed with previous bibl. by Kontorli-Papadopoulou 1996, 103ff; 161; Rehat 1999.
- 45 White in Aegean painting is also used for charioteers and bull-grapplers whose anatomy shows that they are male.
- 46 PY An 1281.1: Gerard-Rousseau 1968, 119; Palmer 1983, 286.
- 47 Evans, PM II, 809; PM III, 463; Nilsson 1950, 352–3.
- 48 Most recently Marinatos 1995b, 37–47 with bibl.; Krattenmaker 1995, 49–58.
- 49 Already suggested by Evans, PM I, 159; PM II, 794; Marinatos 1995, 37–47
- 50 Marinatos 1993, 188–92 with bibl.
- 51 Coldstream 1984, 94; Lebessi 1985; Gesell 1985, 57–9.
- 52 Good survey in Gesell 1985, 47ff. and 61–2; Marinatos, N. 1993, 221–9. For Kephala see Eliopoulos 1998, 301–12. The goddess from Kephala was seated on a throne which was perforated so that it could be carried in procession. She has upraised arms. I thank Prof. Karageorghis for information on this statue.
- 53 Stambolides and Karetsou 1998, 92–3, no. 68 with bibl.; Rethemiotakis 1998, 41, no. 154, plate 80.
- 54 Evans, PM II, 128–33; Hägg 1990, 95–107.
- 55 For discussion see Hägg and Marinatos 1985, 301–8.
- 56 Hägg 1990.
- 57 The continuity of gestures and attributes is proved by Alexiou 1958, 275–92; see also recent study of Rethemiotakis 1998, 127, with plates 59–81. For a clay idol with upraised arms from the eighth century BC see Karageorghis 1973, 136, plate 136. Karageorghis discusses the phenomenon as part of the migration pattern when the Achaeans arrived on Cyprus in the Late Bronze Age.
- 58 Coldstream 1984, 93–104.
- 59 Burkert 1988, 81–7.
- 60 Coldstream 1984, 99–101.
- 61 Brock 1957, 125f; plates 77, 163; Alexiou 1958, 287. Coldstream 1984, 94, speaks of this image as a revival of the Minoan snake goddess, but this can be contested on two grounds. Firstly the assumed snakes are a belt; secondly the Minoan snake goddess is a snake handler, the Fortetsa urn goddess is not.
- 62 Levi 1931, 331, fig. 431; Coldstream 1984, 97; Kahil 1984, LIMC II.1, 739; II. 2, no. 11 sees her as Artemis, an identification which seems arbitrary.
- 63 M.Bredaki and N.Stambolides in Stambolides and Karetsou 1998, 141.
- 64 According to Alexiou, 1958, 284 it was found in a (funerary?) *pitthos*. Gesell 1985, plate 58.
- 65 Anderson 1975, 291; Simon 1969, 57.
- 66 On relief *pitthoi*: Schäfer 1957; Anderson 1975.
- 67 Grabow 1998, 36ff, argues that snakes have a predominantly chthonic symbolism in the Geometric period but that by the seventh century BC they assume the connotations of the dangerous killer. Nilsson 1950, 77ff. and 321ff. associates snakes with the house cult noting that clay models of snake representations were found in

palatial and domestic contexts. However, note also the following assertion (324): 'it is well known...from all quarters of the world that the snake is the representative of the dead.... In Greek religion...the snake appears also as an attribute of certain gods. These gods are said to be chthonic.'

- 68 Burr 1933; Demargne 1984, LIMC II, 960, no. 27.
 69 Demargne 1984, LIMC II.1, 960.
 70 Nilsson 1950, 489ff.
 71 Marangou 1985, 19ff. considers it unlikely that chthonic power is the only meaning of the snakes, since the Athens clay plaque was not found in a chthonic context. Grabow 1998, 22, however, favours a chthonic association and relates the plaque to the sanctuary of the Eumenides.
 72 Dawkins *et al.* 1929, 207, plate 93; Marangou 1985, 19–23, fig. 14. Marangou mentions two further instances of a goddess with snakes on fragments of pottery. See also Carter 1985, plate 29.
 73 Marangou 1985, 17, considers all plaques with birds of prey a Laconian speciality, perhaps related to the cult of Orthia.
 74 Carter 1985, 287–8. Perhaps the symbolism can be decoded in connection with the signs of Babylonian Kudurru reliefs where snakes and birds occur frequently: Seidl 1989.
 75 Marangou 1985, 15, mentions Hittite prototypes in particular.
 76 For analysis of the 'Visual *topoi*' see Grabow 1998.
 77 The snake is also polyvalent on Crete but its meaning needs to be determined in each case by rigorous contextual analysis. Note the occurrence of a snake on an amulet: Nilsson 1950, 322, fig. 152.
 78 I owe the information to Prof. V.Karageorghis.
 79 Böhm 1990, 7–17 lists the few exceptions (note that some of the seal drawings from Chania are interpretations of the original). It is difficult to understand the semiology of Minoan female nudity but one thing is certain: it has no affinity with the Near Eastern scheme of frontal naked females.
 80 Kahil 1984, LIMC II.2, nos. 595; 600a; 642–5; 648; 651; 663b; 665; 667.
 81 Kahil 1985, 231–44 at 232, 240 etc.
 82 Keel 1992.

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