Power and ritual in Neopalatial Crete: a regional comparison

Ellen Adams

Abstract

Ritual provides the forum for both the expression of cultural identities and the articulation of social strategies. Studies that analyse ritual sites and artefacts in isolation fail to recognize this tension fully, and also tend to assume a sharp distinction between 'religious' rituals and 'non-religious' rituals. This article seeks to shed new light on the relationship between power and ritual in Neopalatial Crete (c. 1700–1450 BC), by analysing the distribution of objects of dedication across the entire landscape of north-central Crete. The comparison of the Knossos and Malia regions indicates that this relationship differs substantially in this part of Crete alone. While artefacts common to ritual sites have been found widely throughout the Knossian region, further east they tend to be concentrated at the site of Malia. Furthermore, the ritual sites from the Knossian region fall into distinct categories, which suggests that they performed various roles.

Keywords

Bronze Age; Crete; ritual; regionalism.

Introduction

This article has two main aims. First, it explores the relation between power and religion in Neopalatial Crete. It has always been assumed that a close relationship existed between regional centres and ritual sites, but this has not been supported by a close comparison of the artefacts reported from both kinds of sites. Second, this article investigates regional variation in this relationship, by comparing the two regions of north-central Crete. The homogeneity in the material culture of Neopalatial Crete has long been recognized, and a collective, probably cultural, identity was clearly expressed across the central and eastern parts of the island. However, a closer look at the objects deposited and dedicated should shed light on the social strategies of regional élites. The culture of Minoan Crete is most clearly distinguished by its palaces, enigmatic complexes that surround a central court. The first palaces were built in the Protopalatial period (c. 1900–1700 BC), but the Neopalatial period (c. 1700–1450 BC) is the 'Golden Age' of this culture, when

World Archaeology Vol. 36(1): 26–42 *The Object of Dedication*
 ISSN 0043-8243 print/1470-1375 online
DOI: 10.1080/0043824042000192678

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

conspicuous consumption reached its apex. Many more palaces and villas were built, and ritual sites were more wealthy and monumental than they had been previously. This article focuses on the north-central region, since many ritual sites are found to have been located in the area around Knossos, whereas the Malian region is remarkably void of them (Fig. 1).

This article is divided into four parts. The first part sets out past approaches to Minoan religion and introduces the case study. An overview of Minoan ritual sites will be presented, followed by a discussion on methodological problems encountered when defining ritual in settlements. The second part of this article analyses the ritual sites, while the third examines the distribution of certain ritual objects in the various types of settlements. In both parts, regional differences in the ritual sites and in the objects found in settlements will be drawn out. The final part concludes this article.

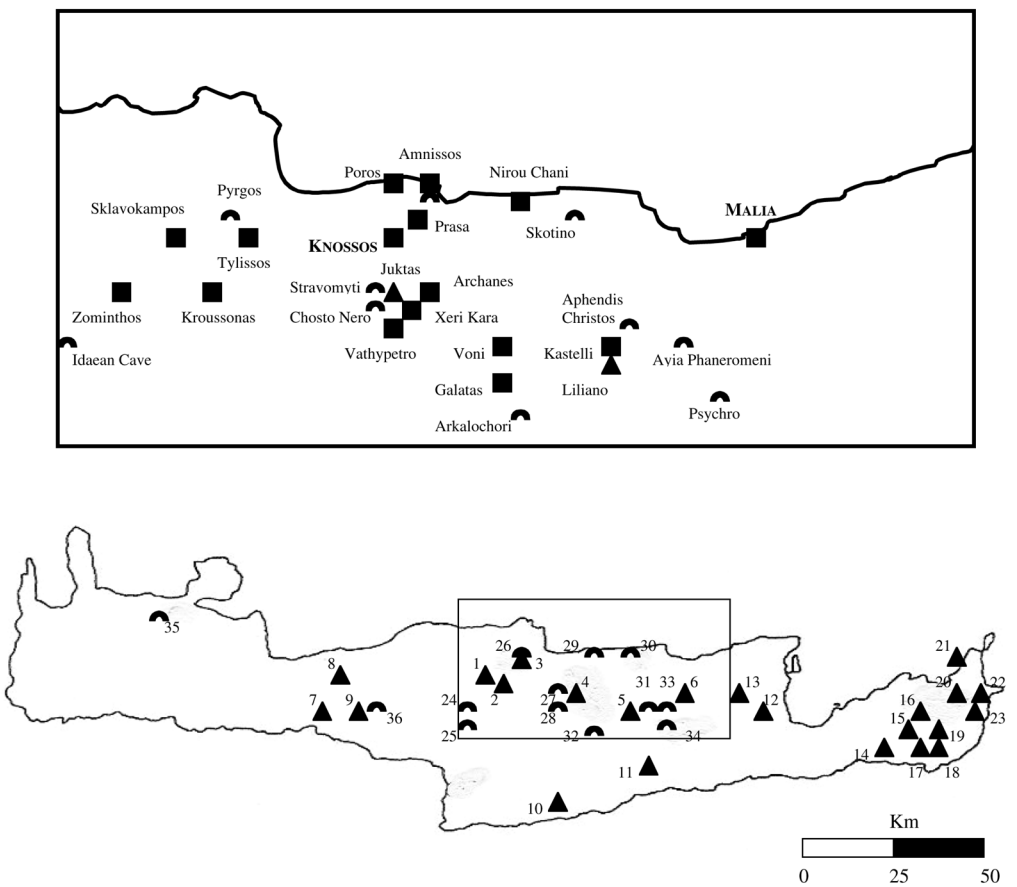

Figure 1 Ritual sites in Minoan Crete ■ Settlements, ▲ Peak sanctuaries ◠ Caves. See Table 1 for the names of numbered ritual sites. Inset: ritual sites and settlements mentioned in the text.

Historiographical background

Since the work of Arthur Evans at the beginning of the last century, the cultural role of ritual and religion has taken a prominent position in Minoan studies (Evans 1901, 1921, 1928, 1930, 1935; Rutkowski 1986; Marinatos 1993). Evans' view of religion was based largely on iconographical data gathered from 'the length and breadth of Crete' and beyond (1921: 447). He moved readily from a particular example to generalized interpretations, presenting Minoan Crete as a coherent ideological entity, and blurring regional and contextual variations. Evans believed that the secular and religious spheres were so deeply intertwined as to be inseparable, a view that has been followed by many scholars since (Evans 1935: 960; van Effenterre 1980: 327; Hallager 1987: 176; Hood 1997: 105; Marinatos 1995; Koehl 1995; Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1997: 32). During the last twenty-five years, there has been a growing interest in the social role of religion in legitimizing the position of the élite (Cherry 1978, 1986; Peatfield 1987, 1989: 266–7). This is a sound approach, but there is a danger of producing a functionalist, biased interpretation of the role of ritual. Recently, post-processualist approaches have been applied to Minoan Crete, which recognize the blurring between the social, economic, political and ritual spheres (Hamilakis 1996, 1999). Ritual sites are generally analysed in isolation in Minoan studies (Faure 1964; Tyree 1974; Rutkowski 1986; Peatfield 1989; Watrous 1996; Rutkowski and Nowicki 1996; Jones 1999). Furthermore, scholars have tended to focus on either caves or peak sanctuaries. Other scholars have concentrated on ritual space within settlements (Hood 1977; Gesell 1985, 1987; Hood 1997). There are pragmatic reasons why this has been the case, but, as stated above, a close analysis of the two contexts is necessary for a more nuanced understanding of the relation between power and ritual.

Ritual sites: the Protopalatial background and island-wide Neopalatial picture

This section aims to highlight two phenomena characteristic of Minoan Crete: the expression of a wide collective identity in ritual deposits across central and eastern Crete and the concentration of ritual activity in the Knossian region. During the Protopalatial period, around twenty-five 'peak sanctuaries' were established (Fig. 1 and Table 1a). The ritual use of peak sanctuaries dropped dramatically in the Neopalatial period. In the study area, Kastelli-Liliano was in use during the beginning of the Neopalatial period, but the only peak sanctuary in north-central Crete to remain in use throughout the Neopalatial period (and beyond) was Juktas. Peak sanctuaries appear to have been popular, local community shrines (Peatfield 1990: 126), but their wide adoption indicates the aspiration to a pan-Cretan identity. This continued in the Neopalatial period, as indicated by the 'libation formulae', written in Linear A (Karetsou et al. 1985). These formulae have been found at both ritual and settlement sites: in the latter case they are not confined to palatial sites or to the palaces in palatial sites (Godart and Olivier 1982; Schoep 1994). However, there were some trends specific to the Knossian area. Few caves were used ritually in the Protopalatial period, but this changed in the Knossian region in the Neopalatial period (Fig. 1 and Table 1b). The shift in ritual in this region is highlighted by the change at

Table 1 Ritual sites: Protopalatial and Neopalatial use. a) Peak sanctuaries b) Caves. Shaded area: sites in the study area. X: marks use. ?: queried ritual use

Peak sanctuaries	*Protopalatial use*	*Neopalatial use*
1 Gonies	X	
2 Keria	X	
3 Pyrgos Tylissos	X	
4 Juktas	X	X
5 Kastelli-Liliano	X	(X)
6 Karphi	X	
7 Atsipadhes	X	
8 Vrysinas	X	X
9 Spili	X	
10 Kophinas	X	X
11 Roussos Dhetis	X	
12 Thylakas	X	
13 Tappes	X	
14 Etiani Kephala	X	
15 Xykephalo	X	
16 Zou Prinias	X	X
17 Plagia	X	
18 Korphi tou Mare	X	
19 Vigla	X	
20 Modhi	X	
21 Kalmaki	X	
22 Petsophas	X	X
23 Traostalos	X	X

Caves	*Protopalatial use*	*Neopalatial use*
24 Idaean Cave	X	X
25 Kamares	X	
26 Pyrgos Tylissos		X
27 Stravomyti		?
28 Chosto Nero		X
29 Amnissos		?
30 Skotino	?	X
31 Aphendis Christos		?
32 Arkalochori		?
33 Ayia Phaneromeni		X
34 Psychro	X	X
35 Mameloukos		?
36 Patso		X

Pyrgos (near Tylissos) from the use of a peak sanctuary to the use of a cave. In contrast to the Knossian area, ritual sites have occurred only on the fringes of the Malian region.

There were six ritual caves (and four caves possibly used ritually) and one peak sanctuary in use throughout the Neopalatial period in the study area (more specifically, the Knossian region). I propose that the best way to compare these ritual sites is to analyse the diversity, quality and general nature of the assemblage. I have concentrated mostly on the diversity of artefacts, then the quality and least of all the quantity. Also, variations in the location of ritual sites (e.g. altitude and proximity to settlements) will be taken into account.

Identifying ritual artefacts and space in settlements

I have presented an overview of ritual sites in Minoan Crete, where location can provide a key criterion for identifying ritual practices. Now I should like to consider how ritual artefacts and space in settlements might be identified. There are two issues that need to be considered: the distinction between ritual and prestige objects, and the relation between ritual artefacts, activities and space. The first is of lesser concern here, since the types of artefacts considered consist mainly of those found at ritual sites. While some circularity is evident in this approach (for example, double axes had ritual and mundane functions), with due caution I believe that it remains viable as a working methodology.

The second issue is more problematic, due mainly to the difficulties involved in distinguishing between 'religious' rituals and 'non-religious' rituals, where the former may be said to involve gods and other worlds and the latter to have socio-political considerations. Renfrew sets out a checklist of archaeological features that could demonstrate religious ritual space on the (modernist) assumption that such rituals were performed in spatially defined contexts in all past societies (Renfrew 1985). (See Peatfield (1992) and Watrous (1996: 20ff.) for its application in Minoan archaeology.) The checklist does not distinguish between religious and secular rituals. Offerings, worship and 'focal point' (to name some of the criteria) can be aimed at a divinity or a human; in other words, they may be part of political and/or religious practices. Renfrew recognizes this problem, but does not solve it (Renfrew 1985: 20, 1994). I have preferred to employ the term 'ceremonial' or 'ritual' in a more general manner, deliberately avoiding the issue of whether rituals were religious or not. In fact, I suggest that ritual lies at the heart of the tension between cultural symbolism, collective identity and social differentiation strategies, and that the study of ritual is the main starting-point for examining how different affinities of identity and status can be articulated and aspired to simultaneously. Religion and rituals serve an important, and somewhat contradictory, role in both binding the wider social group and asserting (both 'real' and aspired-to) social differentiation (Kertzer 1988; Shore 2002: 2).

Certain methodological questions arise at the more basic level of the identification of ritual space, before considering how to interpret it. How many ritual artefacts are needed to indicate ritual space? Artefacts may be stored for use and dedication elsewhere. The relationship between activity areas and activity artefacts is not only historically specific, but also likely to vary within societies (Rapoport 1990). The natural and cultural post-depositional processes need to be borne in mind, and one should not fall foul of the 'Pompeii premise' (Binford 1981; Murray 1999). On the other hand, the presence of certain artefacts may indicate participation in certain rituals, even if they were not performed in that same space.

Ritual sites in north-central Neopalatial Crete

The first point to re-emphasize is that these sites lie mainly within, or on the border of, the Knossian region. Second, caves tended to be used in this area, in contrast to the more general island-wide use of peak sanctuaries. Of the twelve caves in Figure 1, ten are in the study area. In terms of the objects of dedication deposited within the ritual sites in this

Table 2 Ritual sites in north-central Neopalatial Crete: location and artefacts

	Alt. (m)	*Nearest settlement*	*Figurines*	*Libation table/ altars*	*Bronze tools*	*Precious metal*	*Other prestige artefacts*	*Ashes/ bone/ pithoi, etc.*
Juktas	811	Knossos, Archanes (highly populated area)	Clay human; clay animal; bronze human; bronze animal (?); lead human	Stone offering tables (including inscribed); altar; kernoi	Double axes; daggers, tools	Gold beetle amulet; beads	Sealing and seals; clay house model; Horns of Consecration; bronze jewellery	Ashes; animal bones; burnt seeds; pithoi; conical cups; dishes, etc.
Kastelli-*Liliano*	? low hill	Kastelli	Clay human; clay animal	–	–	–	–	–
Idaean Cave	1500	Zominthos	Bronze human; bronze animal	Stone offering tables; kernoi	Double axe; votive weapons; tweezers; ingot fragments	–	Crystal seal; bone needles; crystal necklace	Ashes (?); animal bones (?); pithoi
Psychro	1025	Plati and hamlets in the Lasithi Plain	Clay human; clay animal; bronze human; bronze animal; stone fragment	Stone offering tables (including inscribed); altar; clay libation table	Double axes; lance heads; tools; toilet articles	–	Stone seals; stone vases/lamps; bronze jewellery; glass and crystal beads	Ashes; animal bones; braziers; pithoi; cups, etc.
Skotino	230	Gouves? Hamlets nearby	Bronze human	Natural altar; clay kernos	Double axe	_	Crystal beads	Ashes (?); animal bones (?); pithoi
Ayia Phaneromeni	780	Avdou (hamlet)	Bronze human	Stone offering tables	Double axes	Gold double axes	–	–
Pyrgos Tylissos	685	Tylissos	Bronze human	–	–	–	–	–
Chosto Nero	780	Archanes	Clay animal	–	–	–	–	–
Arkalochori	? low hill	Galatas	_	Altar	Weapons; double axes (including inscribed); unformed pieces	Gold and silver double axes; gold and silver votive weapons	–	–
Amnissos	30	Amnissos	–	–	–	–	–	–
Stravomyti	400	Archanes	–	Altar?	–	–	–	Pithoi
Aphendis Christos	?	Kastelli	–	Fragments of stone offering table	–	–	–	–

region, figurines (clay and bronze, human and animal) are the most common indicators of a site being ritual (Rutkowski 1986; Verlinden 1984; Peatfield 1990: 120–2, 1992: 72–4), and all certain ritual sites have them. Libation tables and/or altars are the next most common finds, followed by bronze tools. Libation tables inscribed with Linear A have been found at Juktas and Psychro, whereas inscribed double axes were found at Arkalochori. Figurines and libation tables occur in ritual sites widely across Crete, but double axes tend to occur only in the central region (including Kophinas and Kato Syme outside the study area: Jones 1999: 77ff.). Some sites outside the central region have produced libation formulae (such as Vrysinas to the west and Petsophas to the east), but not Neopalatial double axes. Finally, many of the richer and more elaborate sites have also yielded pithoi, ashes and animal bones, which indicate animal sacrifice and possibly feasting.

Juktas peak sanctuary

Juktas is a unique site in the study region. It is the only peak sanctuary in use in north-central Crete throughout the Neopalatial period. It is the most monumental site, with a processional way, platform and stepped altar (Karetsou 1974, 1981). A building was constructed nearby, with evidence for feasting (Karetsou 1975, 1976, 1978). Table 2 indicates the wide range and high quality of the finds here; Juktas is the only Neopalatial peak sanctuary in Crete to have produced seals and sealings (Peatfield 1989: 235). Evans suggested that there was a special relationship between Juktas and Knossos (Evans 1921: 66, 761), and Karetsou argued that the 'character and quality of the finds have a palatial character' (Karetsou 1981: 145). This claim is justified by the visual connection between Juktas and the central court of the palace at Knossos: the north–south orientation of the central court looks straight towards Juktas. The Juktas massif had no settlements located on it, and may have been sacrosanct (Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1997: 68). On the regional level, this peak sanctuary lies at the centre of the area in which caves were used ritually. Perhaps it became taboo for peaks to be used ritually in the area overlooked by the monumental Juktas, which is why the practices in this ritual landscape differed to such an extent.

The Idaean Cave and Psychro

These are the only caves in the study area that were used in the Protopalatial period, so a sense of tradition may have been attached to the sites by the Neopalatial period. Rutkowski notes certain physical similarities between the two caves (Rutkowski 1986: 48). Both caves are located at high altitudes far from the sea, and neither cave is located close to a large settlement. However, small settlements have been found on the Lasithi Plain close to Psychro (Dawkins 1914; Watrous 1982), whereas the Idaean Cave is much more isolated; even the 'caravanserai' at Zominthos is located at some distance from the cave. Table 2 indicates the diversity of the artefacts found at these sites, but also the many parallels in the range of artefacts discovered (including seals, as at Juktas). The wealth of finds at Psychro in particular indicates the degree of conspicuous consumption performed at the site, while at the Idaean Cave post-Minoan use has confused the Neopalatial evidence.

There are many caveats that should be noted when drawing analogies between prehistoric societies and better-known historical cases. However, there are some striking similarities between these two caves and later Greek pan-Hellenic sanctuaries (Morgan 1990). Both are set away from regional centres in areas that, politically, may well have been 'no-mans' land'. The nearby small settlements would have been essential for the day-to-day running of the ritual sites, but politically carried no importance. These Neopalatial sites are also located at the west and east extremes of the central part of Crete, where we have seen localized cultural practices, such as the use of caves for ritual and the deposition of double axes. Not only do these sites appear to have functioned as cultural markers for the north-central region, but also the wealth of the deposits suggests that they functioned as loci for socio-political competition between individuals and/or groups.

Skotino and Ayia Phaneromeni caves

Neither of these caves appears to have been used ritually in the Protopalatial period, although Protopalatial pottery has been found at Skotino. Rutkowski notes certain physical similarities between the two caves (Rutkowski 1986: 47–8). Table 2 indicates the similarities in the types of finds discovered at these sites, neither of which is located close to a regional centre. However, both are located equally far from Kastelli (in terms of walking time, not physical distance), on communication routes. Ayia Phaneromeni lies in a remote, mountainous area, overlooking the route between Malia and the Pediada plain, and roughly halfway along it (Rethemiotakis 1990). Skotino lies on the edge of the route running along the north coast. It is possible that these ritual sites were some kind of boundary markers (but not necessarily political ones). A similar argument has been made concerning extra-mural sanctuaries and the rise of the polis (de Polignac 1995; but see Hall 1995 for a criticism of this model). The similarities in the deposits and the fact that both caves were Neopalatial establishments may indicate a similar phenomenon here.

Pyrgos Tylissos and Chosto Nero caves

These caves were certainly used ritually in the Neopalatial period, but the deposits were considerably less diverse and poorer than those discussed above. They were also located close to regional centres (Tylissos and Archanes respectively). Bronze figurines have been found at Pyrgos Tylissos and the settlement at Tylissos, whereas both Chosto Nero and Archanes produced clay animal figurines. The proximity between these ritual sites and settlements suggests localized and convenient ritual practices involving the deposition of artefacts, but no evidence for sacrifice or feasting has been reported. Furthermore, Pyrgos Tylissos overlooked Tylissos: the contrast of above-earth (altitude) and below-earth (cave) highlights the liminal nature of Neopalatial ritual sites.

Arkalochori, Stravomyti, Amnissos and Aphendis Christi

Arkalochori lies just 3km from the palatial site at Galatas. The lack of figurines renders the ritual use of this site in doubt, although a small altar was apparently found there (Marinatos 1935: 215). The deposit resembles a hoard deposited on a single occasion,

rather than the remains of repeated ritual practice. Rethemiotakis (1999) has associated the assemblage with the palace at Galatas, which he suggests was involved in the circulation of metals and votives. This is indeed a more convincing interpretation.

The excavator at Stravomyti believed that it was a ritual site (Marinatos 1950: 257), but the reported remains consist only of pithoi and a possible altar, so the evidence for ritual use is unclear (Rutkowski and Nowicki 1996: 48). The material at Amnissos (the Cave of Eileithyia) has been re-examined recently, and the Neopalatial material appears to have been previously underestimated. However, whether it was a Neopalatial ritual site remains uncertain (Rutkowski 1986: 56–7). Fragments of libation vessels were found with Neopalatial pottery at Aphendis Christos, but the lack of figurines leaves the ritual use of this site in doubt (Tyree 1974: 23; Faure 1964: 185; Rutkowski and Nowicki 1996: 50).

Objects of dedication in settlements

Having established the kinds of artefacts that occur in peak sanctuaries and caves, it is now pertinent to compare the distribution of these artefacts in settlements (Table 3). In addition, stone vases were included, since they are the most widespread prestige artefact found in settlements, but are rarely reported from ritual sites. However, this is a very wide-ranging category (Warren 1969), and gradations of quality rather than mere presence need to be taken into account. The presence of prestige materials (gold, silver, ivory, rock crystal, etc.) is also noted. As one would expect, prestige materials are found in the more elaborate sites, and at the manufacturing town of Poros. In ritual sites, they occur in the regional sites of Juktas, Psychro and the Idaean Cave, and the hoard at Arkalochori. The acquisition of these imported materials appears to have been controlled by the regional centres, and they were occasionally deposited in the most important regional ritual sites.

There are two main aims of this analysis: to discern the distribution of these artefacts within the two main palatial sites of Knossos and Malia, and to determine the distribution of these types across the landscape. The other settlements form two main categories in terms of architectural elaboration, ceremonial architecture and evidence for administration. The main buildings at Archanes, Tylissos, Galatas, Kastelli, Nirou Chani and Vathypetro possessed a high degree of elaboration, whereas Poros, Prasa, Sklavokampos, Zominthos, Voni and Kroussonas are less elaborate. Two points should be clarified here. First, the relation between the elaborate buildings in the first category and the rest of the surrounding settlement is poorly understood. Second, sites that have not revealed any of the artefacts listed in the tables have not been included in this analysis.

Figurines, which are the key artefacts for identifying ritual sites, have been found in settlements across the landscape, but tend to be few in number in any given case. Table 3 indicates that figurines at Knossos were concentrated in the palace (the Royal Road North Building was a workshop probably closely associated with the palace). However, the figurines recovered from the palace include faience 'snake goddesses' and other females, males and animals, and gold-plated bronze curls, i.e. not the standard types of figurines found at ritual sites. The bronze male figurine found in the south-west part of the palace is probably Postpalatial (Verlinden 1984: 72–4). The situation at Knossos contrasts with the evidence

Table 3 The distribution of objects of dedication in settlements and ritual sites

Knossos	*Figurines*	*Libation tables*	*Double axe (or stand)*	*Horns of consecration*	*Altar*	*Stone vases*	*Gold*	*Silver*	*Other*
Palace	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■
South House			■			■	■	■	■
Temple Tomb		■		■		■	■		■
Royal Road North	■	■		■		■			■
Southeast House		■	■			■			■
Little Palace			■	?		■			?
House Frescoes		■				■			
Caravanserai			■			■			
H. High Priest			■		?				
Strat. North House						■			■
Hogarth's H. A						■			■
Acropolis Houses						■			■
Hogarth's H. B						■			
H. Chancel Screen					?				
Royal Villa					?				

Malia	*Figurines*	*Libation tables*	*Double axe (or stand)*	*Horns of consecration*	*Altar*	*Stone vases*	*Gold*	*Silver*	*Other*
Palace	■	■		■	■	■			■
Epsilon	■	■	■		?	■			■
Zeta Beta		■	■			■		■	■
Delta Alpha	■	■				■			■
M. Façade Redan	■			■		■			
Zeta Alpha		■				■			
Zeta Gamma			■			■			
Delta Beta						■			■
M. Cave Pilier						■			■
Delta Gamma		■							
Epsilon Alpha		■							

from Malia, where the palace and three other buildings have yielded figurines typical of ritual sites. Their presence at Malia could be because the artefacts were stored in Malian buildings for deposition elsewhere. Or, they may have been placed in buildings in memory of previous pilgrimages. A third possibility is that the Malians preferred to perform rituals with these objects within the urban context. Protopalatial urban shrines have been discovered at Malia, which contained terracotta animal figurines, libation tables and a horn of consecration (Gesell 1985, 1987). This suggests that the dedication, or at least deposition, of figurines in an urban context was a traditional practice. The contrast between Knossos and Malia illustrates how shared cultural values may exist over a certain geographical area, but the artefacts and symbols involved were used in different ritual practices.

The evidence from the other settlements in north-central Crete complicates the picture further. Figurines typical of ritual sites are found in larger settlements (Archanes, Tylissos, Vathypetro and Kastelli), and also in less elaborate and smaller settlements (Poros,

Table 3 Continued

Other settlements	*Figurines*	*Libation tables*	*Double axe (or stand)*	*Horns of consecration*	*Altar*	*Stone vases*	*Gold*	*Silver*	*Other*
Archanes	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Tylissos	■	■	■	■		■	■		■
Poros	■		■			■	■	■	■
Nirou Chani		■	■	■	■	■			■
Vathypetro	■			■		■	■		
Galatas		■		■	■				
Kastelli	■				?				■
Sklavokampos	■					■			
Prasa		■				■			
Zominthos	■								
Kroussonas	■								
Voni		■							
Xeri Kara									■
Amnissos									?

Ritual sites	*Figurines*	*Libation tables*	*Double axe (or stand)*	*Horns of consecration*	*Altar*	*Stone vases*	*Gold*	*Silver*	*Other*
Juktas	■	■	■	■	■		■		■
K.-*Liliano*	■								
Idaean Cave	■	■	■						■
Psychro	■	■	■		■	■			■
Skotino	■	■	■						■
A. Phaneromeni	■	■	■				■		
Pyrgos Tylissos	■								
Chosto Nero	■								
Arkalochori			■		■		■	■	
Amnissos									
Stravomyti					?				
Aph. Christi		■							

Sklavokampos, Zominthos and Kroussonas). These settlements have tended to produce isolated examples, the exception being Archanes, which flourished in the latter part of the Neopalatial period. The wide distribution of figurines throughout the central building at Archanes suggests that they were regularly used in ritual activity at the site itself (Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1997: 506–29). Archanes is the closest large site to Juktas. While proximity alone does not imply a close relationship, the possibly sacrosanct nature of the Juktas massif has been noted above, so the settlement at Archanes may have been perceived as a buffer zone, marking the boundary between the sacred and the profane. To conclude from this analysis: the cultural practice of depositing human and animal figurines continued to be observed by a wide section of society, and was not absorbed and monopolized by élites in large settlements.

Libation tables are the second most commonly found artefacts at ritual sites. In settlements, they are usually made of stone and are isolated finds. At Knossos, they are found in the palace, in a variety of elaborate buildings and in the Royal Road North Building. At

Malia, they occur in elaborate mansions and less well-constructed buildings. This contrast suggests that, if indeed the ritual associated with them carried a certain degree of prestige, then this was more tightly controlled at Knossos than Malia. Otherwise, libation tables have been found in the elaborate buildings of large settlements (Archanes, Tylissos, Nirou Chani and Galatas) with the exception of two poorly understood exceptions (Prasa and Voni). To summarize: Table 3 reveals that libation tables were more widely distributed in palatial sites than figurines, but were less widely distributed throughout the landscape.

Double axes form a problematic category, since they have both a 'functional and a 'symbolic' purpose. For example, the double axes found in Zeta Beta and by Zeta Gamma at Malia appear to have had a practical purpose (Deshayes and Dessenne 1959: 66–9, pl. XX 1–3). It was noted above that ceremonial double axes (or double-axe stands) are found in ritual sites located in central Crete. At Knossos, they occur in elaborate buildings only, whereas at Malia the occurrence is more random: the palace has not revealed evidence for one, and outlying buildings employed them for functional purposes. They have otherwise occurred only in large settlements (Archanes, Tylissos and Nirou Chani), with the exception of Poros (a manufacturing and harbour town). The implicit association of power with the symbol of the double axe has similar connotations to that of the bull, and it is to the horns of consecration that we now turn.

There are strong similarities between the distribution of double axes and horns of consecration in the Knossian and Malian regions. Monumental horns of consecration have been found only at Knossos and Juktas (d'Agata 1992: 252), and the bull was a particular symbol of the palace at Knossos (Hallager and Hallager 1995). At Knossos, they occur in the palace and buildings associated with it. At Malia, a horn of consecration has occurred only in the palace, apart from the rather basic building Maison de la Façade à Redan (with figurines, including a bull one). Elsewhere, they have occurred only in the elaborate buildings of the larger settlements (Archanes, Tylissos and Nirou Chani). These symbols appear to have been not of a large, collective group, but of a highly prestigious and élite. Like Knossos, Nirou Chani has yielded many examples of both double axes and horns of consecration, but no ordinary figurines. This site lies at some distance from any ritual sites, probably looking outwards to the sea rather than inland, and playing a key role in trade and exchange. This may partly explain why it stored artefacts associated with ritual of a certain social status, and not the figurines that were associated with a more unassuming and all-embracing tradition.

While there are many cases of double axes deposited at ritual sites, the only reported case of horns of consecration is at Juktas. This is in conflict with iconographical evidence for ritual sites, most notably the stone rhyton from Zakros. However, this is a ritual artefact found within a (late Neopalatial) palatial context, and may in fact indicate an attempt to dominate traditional cultural loci by associating them with prestige (and power) symbols. In any case, this reinforces the importance of the site at Jutkas. The final artefact found at ritual sites to be discussed here is the altar. In settlements, they are heavily centralized. At Knossos, they occur only in association with the palace, apart from the possible examples in the 'Chancel Screen Halls', and the pattern is similar at Malia. Their occurrence in other settlements is limited to very large and elaborate ones.

To sum up: the most distinctive objects of dedication found in ritual sites, clay and bronze figurines, tend to be found in all types of settlements, and are generally isolated

examples. The two exceptions are Knossos (which lacked them) and Archanes (which has yielded a large number of them). The distribution of libation tables appears to have been more controlled, although a fairly wide range of buildings at Knossos and Malia possessed them, as well as settlements throughout the landscape. Double axes and horns of consecration were symbols that appear to have been tightly controlled, occurring in the central buildings of the most elaborate settlements. Both symbols were used from the Prepalatial period onwards, but actual examples of horns of consecration are surprisingly uncommon in ritual sites. Finally, altars are the most restricted piece of ritual equipment, being identified only at palaces and the central buildings at Archanes and Nirou Chani.

Conclusion

The main aims of this article have been to compare the objects of dedication in both ritual sites and settlements within a limited geographical area, while drawing out regional variations in such ritual practices. The theoretical standpoint was not to focus on ritual sites alone, but to appreciate the central role of ritual as providing the forum for both the expression of a wide range of identities and the communication of various socio-political aspirations and articulations of power. The distinction may not seem great, but it is important: ritual is not a subject to be analysed in isolation, precisely because it is the sphere in which all cultural and social concerns are created, reproduced and negotiated.

In order to accomplish this, a new methodology was required. It was hypothesized that, by comparing the distribution of certain ritual artefacts in ritual sites and settlements, light can be shed on the relation between religion and power. First, the ritual sites were analysed in order to discern the various types and the cultural and social roles that they may have fulfilled. The first observation was that ritual sites abounded in the Knossian region, whereas the Malian area appears to be a blank canvas. Second, ritual sites around Knossos tend to be caves, although the traditional and usual Neopalatial practice is to use peak sanctuaries. Although few examples of each type could be identified, certain patterns could be distinguished in these caves. I suggested that there were three categories of ritual cave in the Knossian region: caves that attracted pilgrims from far afield ('pan-Cretan' sites); caves that marked boundaries; and caves that were attached to an important settlement.

The next stage of this article was to reassess ritual objects found in settlements, in the light of the previous analysis. Figurines (clay and bronze, animal and human) form the most common cultural object of dedication in ritual sites, which may be why some sites, such as Knossos and Nirou Chani, eschewed them. On the other hand, certain symbols, in particular horns of consecration, were restricted to the élites of large settlements. Evidence for their presence in ritual sites is surprisingly rare, although iconographical images (found mostly at palatial sites) give the impression that they constituted a key element of ritual sites. Such misrepresentations and confusions in the material record accentuate the tension ritual embodies between cultural practices and symbols, needed for the construction and negotiation of social identities, and its role in the creation of and claims to social pre-eminence and power.

Another conclusion to be drawn from this study is the marked regional differences

between Knossos and Malia. The peak sanctuary on the Juktas massif overlooked the Knossos area, where the only other ritual sites were caves. Moreover, the ritual use of caves was concentrated in this area, as was the deposition of double axes in ritual sites. I have suggested that the caves at Ida and Psychro served as pan-Cretan sanctuaries: they may also have had the role of marking the extreme limits of the Knossian sphere of influence. In contrast, ritual artefacts are heavily concentrated at Malia in this region, where traditional types of figurines were also found (unlike at Knossos). This lack of interest or inability to adapt traditional symbols into prestige artefacts used to negotiate power throughout the landscape is probably mainly due to the lesser role Malia had in foreign relations and external trade than Knossos. The challenge for further work would therefore be to expand this approach to the rest of Crete and beyond.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to Sofia Voutsaki, Robin Osborne, Martin Millett, Todd Whitelaw and Carry Murray, who have all commented on various versions of this article. The responsibility for all errors lies with the author. I should also like to thank the two anonymous referees for their comments and suggestions. The research for this paper was conducted while receiving a grant from the AHRB. Additional support was given by Pembroke College and the Faculty of Classics, Cambridge.

University of Cambridge

References

Binford, L. R. 1981. Behavioural archaeology and the 'Pompeii premise'. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 37: 195–208.

Cherry, J. F. 1978. Generalisation and the archaeology of the state. In *Social Organisation and Settlement* (eds D. Green, C. Haselgrove and M. Spriggs). Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, pp. 411–37.

Cherry, J. F. 1986. Polities and palaces: some problems in Minoan state formation. In *Peer Polity Interaction and Socio-Political Change* (eds C. Renfrew and J. F. Cherry). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 19–45.

d'Agata, A. L. 1992. Late Minoan Crete and Horns of Consecration: a symbol in action. In *Eikon: Aegean Bronze Age Iconography* (eds R. Laffineur and J. L. Crowley). Liège: Université de Liège, Histoire de l'art et archéologie de la Grèce antique, pp. 247–56.

Dawkins, R. M. 1914. Excavations at Plati in Lasithi, Crete. *Annals of the British School at Athens*, 20: 1–17.

de Polignac, F. 1995. *Cults, Territory, and the Origins of the Greek City-State*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Deshayes, J. and Dessenne, A. 1959. *Fouilles exécutée a Mallia: exploration des maisons et quartiers d habitation (1948–1954)*, Vol. 2. Paris: Paul Geuthner.

Evans, A. J. 1901. The Mycenaean tree and pillar cult and its Mediterranean relations. *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 21: 99–204.

Evans, A. J. 1921. *The Palace of Minos at Knossos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos*, Vol. 1. London: Macmillan.

Evans, A. J. 1928. *The Palace of Minos at Knossos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos*, Vol. 2. London: Macmillan.

Evans, A. J. 1930. *The Palace of Minos at Knossos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos*, Vol. 3. London: Macmillan.

Evans, A. J. 1935. *The Palace of Minos at Knossos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos*, Vol. 4. London: Macmillan.

Faure, P. 1964. *Fonctions des cavernes Crétoises*. Paris: De Bocard.

Gesell, G. C. 1985. *Town, Palace, and House Cult in Minoan Crete*. Gotëborg: Paul Åströms Förlag.

Gesell, G. C. 1987. The Minoan palace and public cult. In *The Function of the Minoan Palaces* (eds R. Hägg and N. Marinatos). Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, pp. 123–7.

Godart, L. and Olivier, J.-P. 1982. *Recueil des inscriptions en Linéaire A,* Vol. 4, *Autres documents*. Paris: Paul Geuthner.

Hall, J. M. 1995. How Argive was the 'Argive' Heraion? The political and cultic geography of the Argive plain, 900–400 BC. *American Journal of Archaeology*, 99: 577–613.

Hallager, B. and Hallager, E. 1995. The Knossian bull: political propaganda in Neo-palatial Crete? In *Politeia: Society and State in the Aegean Bronze Age* (eds R. Laffineur and W.-D. Niemeier). Liège: Université de Liège, Histoire de l'art et archéologie de la Grèce antique, pp. 547–56.

Hallager, E. 1987. A 'Harvest Festival Room' in the Minoan palaces? An architectural study of the Pillar Crypt Area at Knossos. In *The Function of the Minoan Palaces* (eds R. Hägg and N. Marinatos). Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, pp. 169–77.

Hamilakis, Y. 1996. Wine, oil and the dialectics of power in Bronze Age Crete: a review of the evidence. *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 15: 1–32.

Hamilakis, Y. 1999. Food technologies/technologies of the body: the social context of wine and oil production and consumption in Bronze Age Crete. *World Archaeology*, 31: 38–54.

Hood, S. 1977. Minoan town-shrines? In *Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean in Ancient History and Prehistory: Studies Presented to Fritz Schachermeyr on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday* (ed. K. H. Kinzl). Berlin: de Gruyter, pp. 158–72.

Hood, S. 1997. The magico-religious background of the Minoan villa. In *The Function of the 'Minoan Villas'* (eds R. Hägg and N. Marinatos). Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, pp. 105–16.

Jones, D. W. 1999. *Peak Sanctuaries and Sacred Caves: Comparison of Artifacts*. Jonsered: Paul Åströms Förlag.

Karetsou, A. 1974. To iero korifis tou Yiouchta. *Praktika tis en Athinais Archaiologikis Etaireias*: 228–39.

Karetsou, A. 1975. To iero korifis tou Yiouchta. *Praktika tis en Athinais Archaiologikis Etaireias*: 330–42.

Karetsou, A. 1976. To iero korifis tou Yiouchta. *Praktika tis en Athinais Archaiologikis Etaireias*: 408–18.

Karetsou, A. 1978. To iero korifis tou Yiouchta. *Praktika tis en Athinais Archaiologikis Etaireias*: 232–58.

Karetsou, A. 1981. The peak sanctuary of Mt. Juktas. In *Sanctuaries and Cults in the Aegean Bronze Age* (eds R. Hägg and N. Marinatos). Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, pp. 137–53.

Karetsou, A., Godart, L. and Olivier, J-P. 1985. Inscriptions en linéaire A du sanctuaire de sommet du mont Iuktas. *Kadmos*, 24: 89–147.

Kertzer, D. 1988. *Ritual, Politics and Power*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Koehl, R. B. 1995. The nature of Minoan kingship. In *The Role of the Ruler in the Prehistoric Aegean* (ed. P. Rehak). Liège: Université de Liège, Histoire de l'art et archéologie de la Grèce antique, pp. 23–36.

Marinatos, N. 1993. *Minoan Religion: Ritual, Image, and Symbol*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.

Marinatos, N. 1995. Divine kingship in Minoan Crete. In *The Role of the Ruler in the Prehistoric Aegean* (ed. P. Rehak). Liège: Université de Liège, Histoire de l'art et archéologie de la Grèce antique, pp. 37–47.

Marinatos, S. 1935. Arkalochori. *Praktika tis en Athinais Archaiologikis Etaireias*: 212–20.

Marinatos, S. 1950. To spilaion tis Likastou. *Praktika tis en Athinais Archaiologikis Etaireias*: 248–57.

Morgan, C. 1990. *Athletes and Oracles: The Transformation of Olympia and Delphi in the Eighth Century* BC. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Murray, T. 1999. A return to the 'Pompeii premise'. In *Time and Archaeology* (ed. T. Murray). London: Routledge, pp. 8–27.

Peatfield, A. 1987. Palace and peak: the political and religious relationship between palaces and peak sanctuaries. In *The Function of the Minoan Palaces* (eds R. Hägg and N. Marinatos). Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, pp. 89–93.

Peatfield, A. 1989. The peak sanctuaries of Minoan Crete. PhD, London.

Peatfield, A. 1990. Minoan peak sanctuaries: history and society. *Opuscula Atheniensia*, 18: 117–31.

Peatfield, A. 1992. Rural ritual in Bronze Age Crete: the peak sanctuary at Atsipadhes. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, 2: 59–87.

Rapoport, A. 1990. Systems of activities and systems of settings. In *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space: An Interdisciplinary Cross-Cultural Study* (ed. S. Kent). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 9–20.

Renfrew, C. 1985. The archaeology of cult. In *The Archaeology of Cult: The Sanctuary of Phylakopi* (ed. C. Renfrew). London: The British School at Athens, pp. 1–26.

Renfrew, C. 1994. The archaeology of religion. In *The Ancient Mind: Elements of Cognitive Archaeology* (eds C. Renfrew and E. B. W. Zubrow). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 47–54.

Rethemiotakis, G. 1990. Malia-Liktos: Zitimata archaiologikis topographias tis eparchias Pediadas. *Pepragmena tou st'Diethnous Kritologikou Synedriou Chania 1986*, *Chania*: 241–8.

Rethemiotakis, G. 1999. To Neo Minoiko Anaktoro ston Galata Pediados kai to 'Iero Spilaio' Arkalochoriou. In *Krites Thalassodromoi* (ed. A. Karetsou). Herakleion: Ministry of Culture, pp. 91–111.

Rutkowski, B. 1986. *The Cult Places of the Aegean*, 2nd edn. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Rutkowski, B. and Nowicki, K. 1996. *The Psychro Cave and Other Sacred Grottoes in Crete*. Warsaw: Art and Archaeology.

Sakellarakis, J. and Sakellarakis, E. 1997. *Archanes: Minoan Crete in a New Light*. Athens: Ammos.

Schoep, I. 1994. Ritual, politics and script on Minoan Crete. In *Aegean Archaeology 1* (ed. B. Rutkowski). Warsaw: Art and Archaeology, pp. 7–25.

Shore, C. 2002. Introduction: towards an anthropology of elites. In *Elite Cultures: Anthropological Perspectives* (eds C. Shore and S. Nugent). London: Routledge, pp. 1–21.

Tyree, E. L. 1974. Cretan sacred caves: archaeological evidence. PhD, Missouri, Columbia.

van Effenterre, H. 1980. *Le palais de Mallia et la cité minoenne: étude de synthèse*. Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo.

Verlinden, C. 1984. *Les statuettes anthropomorphes crétoises en bronze et en plomb, du IIIe millénaire au VIIe siècle av. J.-C*. Louvain-la Neuve: Institut supérieur d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art.

Warren, P. 1969. *Minoan Stone Vases*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Watrous, L. V. 1982. *Lasithi: A History of Settlement on a Highland Plain in Crete*. Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

Watrous, L. V. 1996. *The Cave Sanctuary of Zeus at Psychro: A Study of Extra-Urban Sanctuaries in Minoan and Early Iron Age Crete*. Liège: Université de Liège, Histoire de l'art et archéologie de la Grèce antique.

Ellen Adams has just completed a doctoral thesis on Minoan Crete at the University of Cambridge. She currently holds a Leverhulme Study Abroad Award and is based at the British School at Athens.