

## THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CORRELATES OF RELIGION: CASE STUDIES IN THE AEGEAN

How can archaeologists study religion? That is to ask, how can scholars who study virtually only the physical remains of past societies learn anything about the metaphysical thoughts and beliefs of them? In recent years various scholars have begun to explore this question in different ways. Colin Renfrew has concentrated on the archaeological recognition of worship and he claims to have established criteria for studying religion, but in fact has only succeeded in creating a method for identifying places of worship<sup>1</sup>. His approach recovers little about belief and practice, the structure of religion, and its role in society. Surely these are major questions for which some form of answer needs to be made? I believe that archaeologists can make considerable progress in the reconstruction of ancient and lost religions by recognizing that religious behavior, as an expression of commonly held societal beliefs and values, is almost always symbolized in physical form, as in objects of worship, in the spaces of worship, as well as in the configuration of other social spaces<sup>2</sup>.

Some definitions are required. First is *belief*. A common definition found is that belief is a "tenet or body of tenets held by a group", but a more active one is sought, one that recognizes that believing involves the construction of Self and Other in Nature and in the Unknown. Belief, therefore, generates both cosmology and values<sup>3</sup>. Cosmology is a model of the structure and organization of the universe, and cosmogony is a model of its origins. They include a pantheon of supernatural beings, myths that narrate the events in the lives of these beings, and substantive beliefs about space and time<sup>4</sup>. Thus belief can be broken down into components for analysis. It follows that belief requires *practice*, human action

1 C. RENFREW, *The Archaeology of Cult. The Sanctuary at Phylakopi* (1985) 18-20, 24-26. This article went to press before I was able to see C. RENFREW and E. ZUBROW eds., *The Ancient Mind: Elements of Cognitive Archaeology* (1994). The following abbreviation has been used:

WALLACE = A. WALLACE, *Religion, An Anthropological View* (1966).

2 This is a materialist version of the position advocated by Emile DURKHEIM in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (English translation of 1926). It is based on the definition of religion offered by Anthony WALLACE, 107: "Religion is a set of rituals, rationalized by myth, which mobilizes supernatural powers for the purpose of achieving or preventing transformations of state in man and nature". My view is informed by the writings of Pierre BOURDIEU, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (English translation, 1977), especially the notion of *habitus*, and on the philosophically grounded relationship between self-consciousness and the material world and the process of symbolizing that results from the need to communicate perceptions of reality to the self and others. See C. BELL, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (1992); E. ZUESSE, "Meditation on Ritual", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 43 (1975) 521-24; C. TAYLOR, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man", in P. RABINOW and W. SULLIVAN, eds., *Interpretive Social Science, A Reader* (1979) 25-71; P. RICOEUR, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text", in RABINOW and SULLIVAN eds. (*supra* this n.), 73-101; J. WRIGHT, "The Spatial Configuration of Belief: The Archaeology of Mycenaean Religion", in S. ALCOCK and R. OSBORNE, eds., *Placing the Gods, Sanctuaries and Sacred Space in Ancient Greece* (1994) 37-78.

3 WALLACE, 71; C. GEERTZ, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), 98-100.

4 WALLACE, 71-75.

that affirms belief. Practice is ritual<sup>5</sup>. The pantheon, myths, and beliefs about space and time are arranged in sequences, such as the telling of a story, and these sequences are the central organizing principle of ritual<sup>6</sup>. Belief and practice exist within a *structure*, by which is meant the organization and integration of religion with respect to society<sup>7</sup>. As such, it should be understood that structure changes as society changes<sup>8</sup>. We may note also that as the structure of religion changes, so does practice. Within any religion belief tends to be an unchanging stage upon which practice and structure play<sup>9</sup>.

As cosmology belief is represented by symbols. These symbols are used in rituals. They are coordinated to perform a ritual, and, as groups of symbols, rituals themselves may be coordinated into a larger ritual<sup>10</sup>. Thus there are many levels at which symbols operate, from simple prayer to complex ceremonies<sup>11</sup>. Different social groups will use different rituals, and the structure of religion will coordinate them into a comprehensive whole<sup>12</sup>.

For archaeologists working in preliterate and protoliterate societies a fundamental problem is to recognize and interpret symbols<sup>13</sup>. Again a definition is necessary. Symbols are consistent, repeated, patterned human behavior intended to carry a consistent meaning for a circumscribed socio-cultural context<sup>14</sup>. Thus a symbol can be an action, such as a salute or the sign of the cross; or a simple object, such as a double ax; or a complex object, such as a building like Stone Henge or a cathedral. The interpretation of groups of symbols is critical to the archaeologist's task, since they are statements of practice. Groups of symbols form the language of ritual, and to decipher this language meaning can only be assigned through an understanding of context. Contexts are multiple, differentiated

5 These are cultural actions largely constructed around instinctual ones; on the relation between practice and ritual, see BELL (*supra* n. 2) 69-88.

6 BELL (*supra* n. 2) 19-29.

7 I conceive of structure somewhat mechanically, as in 'molecular structure', although in cultural settings it is never so neatly perceived. Compare, however BOURDIEU's study, "The Berber House", in M. DOUGLAS, ed., *Rules and Meanings* (1973) 98-110; see also I. HODDER, *Reading the Past* (1991) 35-56; A. GIDDENS, *Central Problems in Social Theory* (1979); IDEM, *The Constitution of Society* (1984).

8 Structure and Society are not independent variables, rather they are aspects of human behavior and modified by human practice, which for Bourdieu is the outcome of habitus, the governing habits, or dispositions of human behavior. For a summary of these views see I. HODDER, *Reading the Past* (1986) 73-79.

9 In general consult WALLACE, 71-75, *passim*.

10 See V. TURNER, *A Forest of Symbols* (1967) esp. 20-33; WALLACE, 75-88, defines these larger rituals as "institutions".

11 TURNER (*supra* n. 10) 19, 45, talks about the "smallest units of ritual", what WALLACE, 83, calls 'particles', for example, prayer, song, exhortation, feasts, congregation, etc.

12 WALLACE, 75-88.

13 In a relevant comment on the state of the study of religion in anthropology, Clifford GEERTZ (*supra* n. 3) 25, observes that "anthropological study of religion is ... a two-stage operation: first, an analysis of the system of meanings embodied in symbols which make up the religion proper, and, second, the relating of these systems to social-structural and psychological processes. ... To discuss the role of ancestor worship in regulating political succession, of sacrificial feasts in defining kinship obligations, of spirit worship in scheduling agricultural practices, of divination rites in propelling personality maturation, are in no sense unimportant endeavors... But to attempt them with but the most general, common-sense view of what ancestor worship, animal sacrifice, spirit worship, divination, or initiation rites are as religious patterns seems to me not particularly promising. *Only when we have a theoretical analysis of symbolic action comparable in sophistication to that we now have for social and psychological action, will we be able to cope effectively with these aspects of psychological life in which religion (or art, or science, or ideology) plays a determinant role*" (my italics).

14 On symbols see TURNER (*supra* n. 10); C. PIERCE, "The icon, index and symbol", in C. HARTSHORNE and P. WEISS, eds., *Collected Papers of Charles Pierce*, II (1960) 156-173.

by function and structure, which themselves are caught in the changing flux of culture. Thus, meaning is full of ambiguity, variation and change, what Turner termed "multivocality", and cannot simply be understood by knowing the code<sup>15</sup>. Recognition of this should lead archaeologists to understand the limits of archaeological knowledge of religion. In order to probe beyond the meaning of code it would be necessary for archaeologists to know the specific context of any ritual action. Probably the best we can do is to work at a coarser level of analysis which will admit some level of differentiation. I suggest this may be achieved by modeling the organization of the society under study. Commonly this is characterized by a level of organization, which means the degree of socio-cultural integration of a society, normally encapsulated within such standard anthropological terms as egalitarian, ranked and stratified, or as band, tribe, chiefdom, and state<sup>16</sup>. But it is also useful to consider other, non-hierarchical models, such as one of heterarchy, which has a non-deterministic structure (as, for example, in cloud formations), if only because they provide a check on our tendency to place humans at the center or apex of the models we use<sup>17</sup>. Because belief generally remains the same while the structure and practice change, it is important to view religion in the context of change, to see how it evolves and to study that evolution in relation to a society and its institutions<sup>18</sup>. By viewing religion as a process we can gain a better knowledge of the beliefs that generate it.

Social scientists have provided some useful analytical models for the study of religion<sup>19</sup>. Anthony Wallace coined the term 'cult institution' to refer to general categories that relate to stages in the evolution of religion. He defines cult institutions as "a set of rituals all having the same general goal, all explicitly rationalized by a set of similar or related beliefs, and all supported by the same social group"<sup>20</sup>. These categories are (1) Individualistic, (2) Shamanic, (3) Communal, and (4) Ecclesiastical<sup>21</sup>. Each category reflects increasing societal complexity in the following manner. Individualistic institutions have no specialists and require no intermediaries between the individual and the supernatural. Therefore they often correspond to personal and family belief and practice. Shamanic institutions require part-time specialists and are the simplest form of the division of labor in religion. As such they may be found in tribes or in groups which live together, as in villages. Communal institutions require the management of calendrical and critical rituals as well as the organization of the lay population. Characteristically they

15 TURNER (*supra* n. 10) 20-33, illustrates how symbols are often in contradiction or are totally unrelated, yet are formed together into a coherent whole in religions, thus he argues some symbols are dominant, for example, the Christian cross, or the oak tree of the Germans, while others have more limited functions, such as those of sensory or ideological nature.

16 For socio-cultural integration see J. STEWARD, *Theory of Culture Change, the methodology of multilinear evolution* (1955) 43-63; for the terms of such integration see: E. SERVICE, *Primitive Social Organization* (1971); IDEM, *The Origins of the State and Civilization* (1975); M. FRIED, *The Evolution of Political Society* (1967).

17 The dichotomy between hierarchy and heterarchy is not necessary, since hierarchies can be devised which place humans in a peripheral position: see for example, the placement of humans in S. GOULD's model of evolution ("The Evolution of Life on Earth", *Scientific American* 271 [1994] 84-89); for 'heterarchy' see: C. CRUMLEY, "A Dialectical Critique of Hierarchy", in T. PATTERSON and C. GAILEY, eds., *Power Relations and State Formation* (1987) 155-169.

18 See TURNER's comments (*supra* n. 10) 28.

19 M. HARRIS, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (1968) 199-211; R. BELLAH, "Religious Evolution", in W. LESSA and E. VOGT, eds., *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach* (1972) 36-50; M. BLOCH, "Religion and Ritual", in A. KUPER and J. KUPER, eds., *The Social Science Encyclopedia* (1985) 698-701.

20 WALLACE, 75.

21 WALLACE, 86-88.



have elaborate pantheons, multiple rituals, and an emerging bureaucracy. They correspond to stratified societies, such as chiefdoms, where populations begin to be managed by an established authority. Ecclesiastical institutions are the most complex forms with formal offices, strong lines of authority, clearly defined divisions of labor, highly elaborated rituals, and a highly developed pantheon. They are found only in states. Although the evolution of society is not Wallace's theme, it is clear that he considers these categories to be closely related to societal complexity, but it is equally important to observe that they are not mutually exclusive, rather are nested within each other from simplest to complex<sup>22</sup>. Thus the societal structures that support each category often continue to exist and are necessary, to some degree, for the next higher order of organization.

Seen as stages or processes in the evolution of religion, this outline has important consequences for archaeologists. Since archaeologists are dependent on extant and recoverable symbols, they must find sufficient patterning in the archaeological record to recognize a symbol. A single and unique object is not necessarily a symbol--or if it is a symbol, it is not one we can easily read or place in its context. In our search to understand religion, we must recognize that religious activity will be represented by a multiplicity of symbols operating on many different levels, such that among different societies and among differently organized societies there will be different and more complex symbols and assemblages of symbols used in various ritual settings. In Individualizing and Shamanic cults, for example, the degree of repetition might be minimal or hard to detect because symbols will be largely personalized or localized. Even if, for reasons of similarity of belief, many individuals or groups share the same or similar symbols or ways of symbolizing, the religion that they reflect need not be highly organized, controlled or uniform. Thus, following Karen Vitelli, the wide distribution of Middle Neolithic Urfirniß pottery may be explained through the simple mechanism of exogamy rather than through a central agency<sup>23</sup>. Such distributions are not strongly centralized--neither stylistically nor geographically--and most likely reflect familial or kin networks<sup>24</sup>. Another study of Middle Neolithic figurines by Lauren Talalay provides similar insight into the process by which ideas operated as agents of social interaction<sup>25</sup>.

At the level of Communal organization, i.e. when stratification and the attendant issues of economic and political control come into play, the repetition and organization of symbols becomes intense enough to be evident within localities, such as villages and cemeteries. A study by Vernon Knight of Mississippian burial mounds in the south central United States has persuasively documented the emergence of communal cults in a classic example of a chiefly society<sup>26</sup>. At this stage the repetition and organization of symbols is controlled. The society establishes rules of orthodoxy administered by specialists. In highly complex societies, different cult institutions emerge, each with its own priesthood and formalized ritual structures. These are multiplied in direct relation to the number of

22 WALLACE, 88, 256. He points out, 132, that there is no known instance of a society with only the individualistic level of cult institution.

23 This assumes, on the basis of ethnographic analogy, that women are potters. Using exogamy to model this phenomenon is of course one way of looking at trade, but it also supplies a way of thinking about the transmission of knowledge, ideas and beliefs.

24 K.D. VITELLI, *The Greek Neolithic Patterned Urfirniß Ware from the Franchthi Cave and Lerna*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (1974) 216-218; see now T. CULLEN, "Social Implications of Ceramic Style in the Neolithic Peloponnese", in W.D. KINGERY, ed., *Ceramics and Civilization, 1: Ancient Technology to Modern Science* (1985) 77-100.

25 L. TALALAY, "Rethinking the Function of Clay Figurine Legs from Neolithic Greece: An Argument by Analogy", *AJA* 91 (1987) 161-169.

26 J. KNIGHT, Jr., "The Institutionalization of Mississippian Religion", *American Antiquity* 51 (1986) 675-687; IDEM, *Mississippian Religion* (1981).

sects or groups of different ethnic or associational identity incorporated into the society. At this point we witness the establishment of a formal religion, which normally is accompanied by hieratic texts and calendrical schedules<sup>27</sup>. This stage is classically achieved by states<sup>28</sup>.

So far this argument has been drawn from ethnographic and cultural studies of religion. Let us now turn to examine instances in the study of Aegean religions that illustrate some of the points made here. I begin by reiterating that formalism and complexity of religion at the state level are a result of the needs to control the belief and practice of a large and diverse population<sup>29</sup>. We should not expect to find the same structure in simpler societies. Even though the same society at a simpler stage may exhibit the same core beliefs and practices, many of the rituals of the complex society will not be evident, since they would result directly from the need to integrate diverse populations with their own differing sets of beliefs and practices into the more complex society, or they may result from the need to reinforce the controlling hierarchy of the complex society. Therefore, the reconstruction of the religion of the earlier stages of a given society will not succeed by simplistically working backwards from the religion of the complex stage. It is first necessary to separate out those beliefs and practices particular to the the complex stage, and then to distinguish those that remain and are attributable to an enduring core set of beliefs.

I will give an example from Mycenaean culture. How do we recognize the core beliefs of Helladic culture of the Middle and Late Bronze Age? Surely all would admit, as Hägg has argued, that we would extract those elements of religion that are borrowed or adapted from the Minoans<sup>30</sup>. Thus, in examining the iconographic display of symbols during the Mycenaean palace period, such icons as the 'Warrior goddess', Figure-8 shields, Minoan genii, the griffin, and the bull, would be discarded, since they are readily interpretable as either part of the apparatus of a controlling hierarchy or as adaptations from Minoan religion<sup>31</sup>. The core Helladic beliefs and practices must be those that most strongly identify with Helladic social structure, and they must be at their core Indo-European customs.

Indo-Europeanists, such as Emile Benveniste, who have studied the linguistic evidence of religion have recovered much information about modes of behavior that may be described as religious<sup>32</sup>. One example is the process of exchange, as in gift giving, which is involved with sacrifice, economic exchange, and justice. Another is the concept of kingship which is directly involved with power conferred by the gods, but kingship in the Mycenaean era is also closely bound up with the notion of heraldship, of being the staff or skeptron-bearer, which Benveniste thought non-IE, and Palaima has recently suggested, quite correctly I believe, is Minoan<sup>33</sup>. Much of the linguistic evidence of religion centers

27 WALLACE, 132.

28 In this model I rely on BELLAH (*supra* n. 19).

29 Compare V.G. CHILDE's characteristics of urbanism in, "The urban revolution", *Town Planning Review* 21 (1950) 3-17; and R. McC. ADAMS, *The Evolution of Urban Society* (1966) 10-11.

30 R. HÄGG, "Mycenaean Religion: The Helladic and the Minoan Components", in A. MORPURGO DAVIES and Y. DUHOUX, eds., *Linear B: A 1984 Survey* (1985) 203-25.

31 See P. REHAK, "New observations on the Mycenaean 'Warrior Goddess' ", *AA* 1984, 535-545; IDEM, "Minoan vessels with figure-eight shields", *OpAth* 19 (1992) 115-124; J. WEINGARTEN, *The Transformation of Egyptian Taweret into the Minoan Genius* (1991).

32 E. BENVENISTE, *Indo-European Language and Society* (1973) 53-65, 445-528.

33 BENVENISTE (*supra* n. 32) 323-326; T. PALAIMA, "The Nature of the Mycenaean Wanax: Non-Indo-European Origins and Priestly Functions", in P. REHAK, ed, *The Role of the Ruler in the Prehistoric Aegean. Proceedings of a Panel Discussion at the Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of*

around special acts, such as oath taking, libations, sacrificing, prayer and supplication--all of which are concerned with the right way of acting and behaving. As Benveniste points out, however, there is no common IE term for religion, and he argues that in part this is due to the lack of separation of religion as an institution from other societal institutions<sup>34</sup>. Obviously these activities are not likely to be manifest archaeologically. If, however, we look to certain customs that reflect such behavior, perhaps we can detect some core practices and beliefs. One of these, I have recently argued, is that of drinking, probably associated with feasting<sup>35</sup>. Drinking involves oath-taking among men and libations to the gods. Feasting involves exchange among men and sacrifices to the gods. At the core of these, I have argued, is the hearth and the sacred fire it holds. In the hearth, which is well manifest archaeologically from Middle Helladic onwards down to the time of the formalization of the central room of the palaces, we have a symbol of the relationship between humans and divinities. The hearth is mediated to us by the father-chief-king, who oversees right behavior to maintain the order of his territorial *damos* and his community *laos*<sup>36</sup>. The hearth is then a central and enduring symbol in Mycenaean religion, often at the center of the Middle Helladic household, always at the center of the Mycenaean palace. That more is not recoverable of the purely Helladic components of Mycenaean religion does not mean that everything else was Minoan, or that Helladic religion did not have a cosmology. Here we encounter the problem of the limits of archaeological knowledge since we enter a realm with few materials traces and, apparently, a fluid and diffuse form of organization. Perhaps what is missing archaeologically is the network of local beliefs and practices that obtained in different areas--in Lakonia, Messenia, Arkadia, Argolis, Corinthia, Achaia, Elis, Attica, Boeotia, and elsewhere. Of these we have virtually no information because both the level of societal integration and the corresponding archaeological evidence for regional cultures during the Middle Helladic is too negligible to have left much trace<sup>37</sup>. Nonetheless, there must have been local beliefs and rituals that were incorporated into the emerging state religion centered at the Mycenaean palaces, and there are some probable traces of this in the Linear B records, such as TN 316, a religious text that refers to a list of names of deities, some of whom, such as *ma-na-sa*, do not fit the normal pantheon. Perhaps there are reflections of these local beliefs in extra-palatial sanctuaries, such as at Epidauros and Aegina, and especially those that endured after the fall of the palaces: at Tiryns, Mycenae, and Asine, and also at Amyklai and Phylakopi and throughout Crete<sup>38</sup>. This is an issue that bears further investigation.

The second example I will take up here concerns the problem of how religion is used to integrate different populations into a centralized economic and political structure. The case is that of the religion of the protopalatial Minoan period. Continuing research by Alan Peatfield has focused the debate over the origins of the peak sanctuaries<sup>39</sup>. Were they

---

America, New Orleans, Louisiana, 29 December 1992, with additions, *Aegaeum* 11 (1995) 119-139; J. WRIGHT, "From Chief to King in Mycenaean Society", in the same volume, 63-80.

34 BENVENISTE (*supra* n. 32) 445-446.

35 J. WRIGHT, "Empty cups and empty jugs: The social role of wine in Minoan and Mycenaean societies", in P. McGOVERN, S. FLEMING, S. KATZ, eds., *The Origins and Ancient History of Wine* (1995 forthcoming).

36 WRIGHT (*supra* n. 2) 58.

37 See now: J. RUTTER, "The Prepalatial Bronze Age of the Southern and Central Greek Mainland", *AJA* 97 (1993) esp. 774-94.

38 WRIGHT (*supra* n. 2) 63-76.

39 A. PEATFIELD, "The Topography of Minoan Peak Sanctuaries", *BSA* 78 (1983) 273-280; "Palace and Peak: The Political and Religious Relationship between Palaces and Peak Sanctuaries", in *Function Palaces* 89-93; "Minoan Peak Sanctuaries: History and Society", *OpAth* 17 (1990) 117-31; "Rural Ritual



local cult centers for socio-economic groups that emerged prior to and independent of the process that created the first centralized palace complexes? Or were they part of the process of manipulating ideology by which the palace asserted its control over the economies and populations of areas peripheral to the core areas of control of the palace? The ultimate resolution to this problem will be found through continuing excavation of sites, such as the recent work by Peatfield at Atsipadhes, and a refinement of the dates of the founding of these sanctuaries, whether EM II, III/MM IA or IB <sup>40</sup>. On the basis of the model of religion I have here outlined, however, I would predict that the peak sanctuaries were first local places of cult. I would argue that such finds as terra cotta animals and human body parts reflect the widespread local beliefs in worship that maintains the natural order of things to guarantee health and the success of the agricultural economy and social organization of the locality <sup>41</sup>. I think we should be able to show that the interest of the palace centers in manipulating these cults to their advantage is a later phenomenon and is manifested in the appearance of specifically palace-related artifacts, namely male and female figurines denoting persons of high status, inscribed jars and libation tables, and symbolic items such as the double ax <sup>42</sup>. If this turns out to be the case, then the peak sanctuaries would well illustrate how the changing structures, here the increasingly complex economic and administrative systems of Minoan Crete during the Protopalatial period, elaborated new practices, for example rituals focused on the elite administrators of the palaces, upon the original and relatively unchanging prepalatial belief system, which formed the underlying cosmology of the inhabitants of prehistoric Crete.

In this example I have attempted to illustrate how a model of the evolution of religion may help us differentiate between levels of socio-cultural integration that we may describe as village and early centralized polities. What happens when the centralized polities achieve an even greater degree of organization, one that approaches statehood? <sup>43</sup> In considering this process I wish to focus on the role of religion in scheduling human affairs. Anyone who considers time will understand that it is a schedule to mark when certain things happen or are done. We may think of calendars as beginning when humans began to schedule their activities, and, as Norbert Elias has pointed out in his essay on time <sup>44</sup>, these calendars are socializing structures. Hunters and gatherers relied on the natural cycles of animals and wild plants, while agriculturalists, with sedentary residences, created a more complex calendar, to be sure reliant on the cycle of nature, but adding all the processing, transforming, storage, production, and exchange that agricultural activities entail. With the onset of urbanism a new method of reckoning time evolved that was driven by the need to control large populations, to schedule their behavior, their economic activities and their use of space, especially densely inhabited space.

---

in Bronze Age Crete: The Peak Sanctuary at Atsipadhes", *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 2 (1992) 59-87.

40 This I understand to be the issue raised by Watrous (this volume). To me it well illustrates our inability to discover the truth, if the definition of the pottery terms on which the relative and absolute chronology depends cannot be independently checked, for example by <sup>14</sup>C dates, or some other quasi-objective procedure.

41 An important aspect of this problem is the role of pastoralism and its relation to early peak sanctuaries. I owe my sensitivity to this issue to Evi Sikla, who has written an as yet unpublished paper on this problem: *Pastoralism in Bronze Age Crete: an outline and commentary* (October 1994).

42 See finds of these items in Quartier Mu: L. GODART and J.-P. OLIVIER, *Fouilles exécutées à Mallia: Le Quartier Mu, ÉtCrét* 23 (1978); B. DETOURNAY, J.-C. POURSAT and F. VANDENABEELE, *Fouilles exécutées à Mallia: Le Quartier Mu, ÉtCrét* 26 (1980).

43 For a discussion of this process, see: M. DABNEY (this volume).

44 N. ELIAS, *Time: an essay* (1987).

Rituals are strictly governed by time. Cosmological ones, such as Aztec sacrifice of humans to the sun in order to ensure its rising, occur daily. Economic ones, like the gathering of fruits, of sowing, plowing and harvesting crops are governed by the processes of nature. Social rituals and rituals of crisis celebrating birth, adolescence, senescence and death occur without regulation--although we attempt to mark them with numbers and also attempt to prolong the distance between them. It has long been acknowledged that the "Harvester Vase" from Ayia Triada may have represented an economic ritual underway. More recently, the Chieftain Cup has been interpreted as representing and even being a part of an initiation rite of passage into manhood, and excavations at Kato Syme may corroborate in broad outlines that such rites took place in mountainous, outdoor settings <sup>45</sup>. Likewise, if Nanno Marinatos' reconstruction of the frescoes from Zeste 3 at Akrotiri is correct, we have evidence for a complementary female rite of passage <sup>46</sup>. Examples such as these illustrate this important side of religious activity and help us to keep in mind the complexity of religious action. We need, in future research on this topic, to try to determine what elements of these examples cited here are core symbols of Minoan belief and practice and which are later additions that represent the control and regulation by the proto-state forms of the palaces. For example, is the elder male in the "hairshirt", who appears to be leading the procession on the "Harvester Vase", an elder of the village, a priest of the chieftdom, or an official of the villa or palace? If the last, then was his office invented as part of the centralized palace administration, or did it incorporate the activities of the other two functions? Similarly, concerning the frescoes from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri, we may ask if they reflect a "Minoan rite of passage" adopted at Thera or, following Amigues <sup>47</sup>, a special economic resource of the island, which, I would add, might have been ritualized as a way of focusing its importance to the society. In either case, what is the relation of this seemingly programmatic scene to the symbolic structure of representation in the Minoan palaces? How is religion a factor in the consolidation of power by centralized polities, and how is it used in expansion beyond the core region?

These questions and others that arise from applying the model I have presented reflect how the use of models may offer other ways of studying religion and its relation to society. This paper makes no pretense to answer these questions: it is not an attempt to rewrite the history of prehistoric Aegean religion as much as it is a challenge to consider the history of the study of this subject. It asks us to develop alternative ways of thinking about religion, specifically ways that adhere to a strict methodology, so that we may reign in our more speculative instincts while permitting a systematic reconstruction of the many facets of religious behavior that evolved in the different societies of the ancient Aegean.

James C. WRIGHT

45 R. KOEHL, "A Minoan Ritual of Initiation?", *JHS* 106 (1986) 99-110; A. LEBESSI and P. MUHLY, "Aspects of Minoan Cult. Sacred Enclosures: The Evidence from the Syme Sanctuary (Crete)", *AA* 1990, 315-36; J. WRIGHT (*supra* n. 35).

46 N. MARINATOS, *Art and Religion in Thera* (1984) 61-72; EADEM, *Minoan Religion* (1993) 203-11; for an alternative explanation, see S. AMIGUES, "Le crocus et la safran sur une fresque de Théra", *RA* 1988, 227-42.

47 *Supra* n. 46.