

THE 'SACRED MARRIAGE' IN MINOAN RELIGION AND RITUAL

Some years ago Sjöflund suggested that two forms of marriage co-existed in the Aegean Bronze Age: a group marriage and a sacred marriage, or *hieros gamos*.¹ Evidence for the former is based on Strabo, quoting the 4th century historian Ephoros, who relates that boys were organized on Crete into groups called *agelai*, or herds (Strabo X.4.16). Upon graduation from the *agela*, those who were selected were forced to marry in a collective ceremony (Strabo X.4.20).² In Greek mythology, the *hieros gamos* denotes the marriage of the predominant divine couple in each successive generation of gods: Gaia and Uranos, Rhea and Cronos, Hera and Zeus.

The sacred marriage is also a prominent motif in Near Eastern mythology where it refers to the union of a fertility goddess and her youthful male consort.³ While the names may change according to locale – be they Innana and Dumuzi, or Ishtar and Tammuz – the myth recounts the annual death of the male at the end of spring or early summer and his rebirth in the autumn when he reunites with the goddess.

This myth also underlies a cycle of ritual activity through which Near Eastern societies sought to insure their continued survival.⁴ While the goddess mourned her absent lover, the community conducted mourning rituals that included lamentations for the deceased lover, fearing that on account of his absence the dry summer months would never end.⁵ Their reunion, coinciding with the autumnal equinox, brought on the rainy season and marked the start of the New Year. The New Year's festival in the ancient Near East generally lasted for twelve days, culminating on the tenth day, with a ritual re-enactment of the *hieros gamos*.⁶ The king of each city-state would perform the role of the consort, while the queen or high priestess was the avatar of the goddess.⁷

A variety of sources converge to suggest that people in the Aegean believed in similar myths and practiced similar rituals during this same season, at least until c. 1400 B.C.E. In Greek mythology, the divine couple in the *hieros gamos* was composed of an older female and younger male. Thus, Gaia gave birth to her consort Uranus and together they created Rhea before Cronos, while Cronos and Rhea conceived Hera before their last child Zeus. Unfortunately, the age grade dominance of the female is obscured to modern eyes by the conventions of Classical Greek art. Although Zeus might still be depicted as a youthful lover in the seventh century,⁸ by the early Classical Age, he was a bearded, mature god.⁹ Perhaps Classical artists reversed the age grade dominance of the couple to reflect contemporary social conditions.

1 G. SjöFLUND, "Cretan and Thera Questions," in *Sanctuaries and Cults* 198-200.

2 For discussion, see R.F. WILLETTTS, *Cretan Cults and Festivals* (1962) 112, 175-176.

3 See, e.g., T. JACOBSEN, *The Treasures of Darkness. A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (1976) 25-73.

4 H. FRANKFORT, *Kingship and the Gods. A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (1948) 314-316.

5 JACOBSEN (*supra* n. 3) 47-63; FRANKFORT (*supra* n. 4) 288, 315-316; D. WOLKSTEIN and S.N. KRAMER, *Inanna Queen of Heaven and Earth. Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer* (1983) 124-125; W. BURKERT, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (1982) 100.

6 J. GRAY, *Near Eastern Mythology* (1969) 26-29; FRANKFORT (*supra* n. 4) 317-333.

7 GRAY (*supra* n. 6) 29; FRANKFORT (*supra* n. 4) 295-298.

8 K. SCHEFOLD, *Myth and Legend in Early Greek Art* (n.d.) 51-52, Pl. 39.

9 See e.g., M. ROBERTSON, *A History of Greek Art* (1975) Pl. 69d.

Crete is exceptional, where Zeus continued to be worshipped as a young god even into the Classical period. For example, the coins of Gortyn depict Zeus *Welkhanios* as a beardless youth.¹⁰ A second century B.C.E. inscription from Palaikastro refers to two sets of cult statues that stood in the Temple of Diktaian Zeus; among the older set was one that depicted Zeus as beardless.¹¹ Furthermore, Cretan Zeus was worshipped as a resurrection divinity who was nurtured and died on Crete; hence, according to Kallimachos, Cretans were regarded as liars, since the prevailing sentiment held that the gods were immortal.¹²

The form and significance of the worship of Zeus on Crete is best characterized by the so-called Diktaian Hymn, also from the Eteocretan town of Palaikastro.¹³ In the hymn Zeus is never addressed by name, but called either the *Megistos Kouros* or the son of Kronos and Rhea, both of which emphasize his youth. Perhaps the name of Zeus was avoided on account of its association by that time with a mature god. The *Megistos Kouros* is an annually dying god whose resurrection brings fertility, like Dumuzi or Tammuz.¹⁴ Thus, the god is petitioned to return to Dikte at the turn of the year, to “spring up” in the wine-jars, the flocks, the fields, the towns, the ships, and the young people. The term *thoré*, translated as “spring up,” is associated with fertility; it is the verb which describes how gods are born, and is also the word for impregnation and semen. West has even speculated that a sexual act played a part in fertility rituals celebrated when the hymn was recited.¹⁵

Recently, a Neo-palatial chryselephantine statue of a standing male youth, or *kouros*, was discovered at Palaikastro, only a few feet from the Classical temple of Diktaian Zeus (Pl LXXVIIIa-b).¹⁶ That the statue depicts a divinity, rather than a mortal, is evident from its material, scale, and original location in a shrine, facing onto the town’s public square or *plateia*.¹⁷ Although most of its face and costume are lost, its erect pose - with arms bent and hands clenched in fists, resting on the chest - is familiar from a series of terracotta figurines, the best examples of which were discovered at the Peak Sanctuary of Petsophas, overlooking Palaikastro.¹⁸ The approximate age of the males represented by these figures may be surmised from their hairstyle.

In an earlier study I proposed that Minoan male society was organized by age grades and that rituals accompanied the transition from one grade to the next, a practice known generally as “rites of passage.”¹⁹ Van Gennep has suggested that rites of passage occur in a tripartite pattern consisting of rites of separation, rites of transition, and rites of incorporation.²⁰ My own studies suggest that Minoan and Theran society viewed maturation as a tripartite process, separated into childhood, youth, and adulthood, each of which was separated further into three phases. A new hairstyle accompanied the passage to each successive phase (Pl. LXXVII).²¹

10 WILLETTS (*supra* n. 2) 250-251.

11 WILLETTS (*supra* n. 2) 210-211.

12 WILLETTS (*supra* n. 2) 219.

13 M.L. WEST, “The Dictaeon Hymn to the Kouros,” *JHS* 85 (1965) 149-159.

14 The following discussion is based on WEST (*supra* n. 13) 154-159.

15 WEST (*supra* n. 13) 158.

16 J.A. MacGILLIVRAY, J.M. DRIESSEN, and L.H. SACKETT (eds), *The Palaikastro Kouros: A Minoan Chryselephantine Statuette and its Aegean Bronze Age Context* (2000).

17 On its context and setting, see J.M. DRIESSEN, “Part I.2, The architectural environment,” in MacGILLIVRAY, DRIESSEN and SACKETT (*supra* n. 16); J.M. DRIESSEN, “Part III.6, A Late Minoan IB town shrine at Palaikastro,” in MacGILLIVRAY, DRIESSEN and SACKETT (*supra* n. 16).

18 Cf. B. RUTKOWSKI, *Petsophas. A Cretan Peak Sanctuary* (1991) pls. A (1-2), B (1), III, IV, V (4-6), VI, VII (1-3), VIII, IX, XI (1-3), XII-XVIII, XX, XXI, XXII (1,4); J.L. MYRES, “Excavations at Palaikastro. II. The Sanctuary-Site of Petsofā,” *ABSA* 9 (1902-1903) 356-387.

19 R.B. KOEHL, “The Chieftain Cup and a Minoan ‘Rite of Passage’,” *JHS* 106 (1986) 99-110.

20 A. VAN GENNEP, *The Rites of Passage* (trans. M.K. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee) (1960) esp. 11.

21 Discussed in R.B. KOEHL, “Part III.11, Ritual Context,” in MacGILLIVRAY, DRIESSEN and SACKETT (*supra* n. 16). The sequence of hairstyles and age grades presented here supercedes KOEHL (*supra* n. 19) 100-103, Fig. 1.

According to my sequence of hairstyles, the Palaikastro *kouros* would belong to the initial phase of youth; the long locks of childhood having been cut and the sides of the head shaved, leaving a row of short locks down the center.²² This is also the phase in which the Fisher Boys and the tall youth holding a cloth from Akrotiri belong (Pl. LXXVIIIc).²³ Iconographic evidence gathered below will show that the *kouros* was believed to represent the consort of a more mature fertility goddess in an Aegean *hieros gamos* and furthermore, that the mortal age grade equivalents of these divinities reenacted the sacred marriage in the Aegean New Year's festival. Participation in this ritual reenactment may also have comprised the culminating rite of incorporation for an Aegean male's entry into the initial phase of youth.

Säflund identified a male figure on the miniature ship fresco from Akrotiri as a bridegroom in a *hieros gamos*.²⁴ However, this identification is hard to accept, especially since there is no corresponding bride. Säflund also suggested that a gold ring from Tiryns depicted a *hieros gamos*, interpreting its imagery in a sequence, with the bridegroom's arrival by ship, the meeting of the divine couple at the shore, and their union in the bride's sanctuary.²⁵ To my knowledge, such episodic sequential narratives do not exist in Aegean glyptic arts. Rather, I would suggest that the ring depicts a single departure scene, with one couple taking leave in a doorway and another on the shore, while the crew waits on board.

There are a few seals, however, which do depict male-female unions and on each of these, the female is clearly discernable as the dominant partner. Three seals show a couple holding hands or wrists.²⁶ On a Proto-palatial clay sealing from Phaistos the female's hand rests on top of the male's (Pl. LXXIXa-b).²⁷ Furthermore, her head is higher, although were the male to stand straight up, both would probably be about the same height. The male wears his hair short, perhaps with a row of locks along the top, like the boys in the first phase of youth, while the female's hair is long, perhaps another sign of her age-grade seniority.²⁸ Finally, the male is nude while female wears a rather elaborate long dress.

On a MM I ivory hemi-cylinder seal from Knossos the female stands on a slightly higher ground level and grasps the hand of the facing male (Pl. LXXIXc and e).²⁹ Again, the male's hair is short or shaved while the female's hair is long. And again, the female is clothed, now wearing a flounced dress, while the male is naked. The male's twisted pose, which emphasizes the breadth of his shoulders and chest, and the hunting dagger at his waist, suggest iconographic links with images of males in the initial phase of youth.³⁰ While Evans believed that this intaglio depicted a marriage, he did not comment on the dominant position of the female.³¹ He did note, however, that her garment was of Near Eastern derivation.³²

On a LH IIIA:1 electrum ring from Mycenae a male now grasps the wrist of a female (Pl. LXXIXd).³³ The female's towering scale, however, may indicate both her age-grade superiority and divinity. The relative youth of the male is apparent from his hairstyle which, like the coiffure of the Palaikastro *kouros*, seems composed of a short braid down the center

22 For detailed illustrations, see MacGILLIVRAY, DRIESSEN, and SACKETT (*supra* n. 16) Pl. 16.

23 C. DOUMAS, *The Wall Paintings of Thera* (1992) Fisher Boys: Figs. 18-23; Tall Youth with cloth: Figs. 109, 113.

24 SÄFLUND (*supra* n. 1) 198-200, Fig. 14.

25 CMS I, No. 180; SÄFLUND (*supra* n. 1) 200, Fig. 16.

26 A fourth seal, CMS II.2, No. 288, clearly shows two people in an embrace. However, the schematic rendering of the figures makes it impossible to identify their gender and age grade.

27 CMS II.5, No. 324; I owe this reference to L. Goodison.

28 On the age grade significance of female hairstyles in Aegean art, see E. DAVIS, "Youth and Age in the Thera Frescoes," *AJA* 90 (1986) 399-406.

29 PM I 197, Fig. 145. Although Kenna thought that the seal was a forgery, Gill has convincingly identified it with one described by MacKenzie in his Daybook of the Knossos excavations for 1903. See V. KENNA, *Cretan Seals* (1960) 154, pl. 20; M.A.V. GILL, "On the Authenticity of the Middle Minoan Half-Cylinder," *Kadmos* 6 (1967) 114-118. For Kenna's response to Gill, see V. KENNA, "The Authenticity of the Half-Cylinder AM 1938.790," *Kadmos* 7 (1968) 175-176.

30 KOEHL (*supra* n. 21).

31 PM I 197-198.

32 PM I 197-198.

33 CMS I, No. 101.

of the head, with the sides shaved. His divine, or semi-divine, status may be inferred from the fact that, like the female, he wears wrist and ankle bracelets. Their matching jewelry reinforces their identification as a couple. A sense of intimacy is also suggested by the unusual way that the female's skirt rises up to her knees. Unlike the other seals, the male here wears a breechcloth (see below and n. 50).

Evans acknowledged the divinity, age difference, and intimacy of this couple although he concluded that they signified "the relationship of a son to a mother (rather) than of a husband to a wife or mistress."³⁴ Nilsson called the scene a "sacred conversation," with secular, but not sexual, overtones.³⁵ Indeed, Nilsson was ambivalent, even self-contradictory, on the subject of the *hieros gamos*. While he thought that the Minoans probably believed in a Great Goddess with a youthful consort, he did not think that their relationship was sexual.³⁶ Marinatos accepts this seal as a depiction of a sacred marriage, but rather than see the couple composed of an elder female and younger male, she thinks the female's magnitude reflects her greater role in the process of reproduction.³⁷

The only depiction in Aegean art of a couple actually engaged in sexual intercourse is an EM III ivory seal from Viannos (Pl. LXXIXf-g).³⁸ Here too, the female, identified by the depiction of her breast as the figure on the right, is clearly the dominant partner. Her head is higher than the male's, although this could be due to her central position in the circular field of the seal. Still, it is she who embraces the male. Also, she holds a long cloth in the hand of her outstretched right arm, which rests on the male's shoulder. The appearance of this cloth suggests an iconographic link with the paintings from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri.

While most scholars think that the Xeste 3 paintings depict initiation rites,³⁹ Davis has proposed that they allude to marriage, interpreting the wounded foot of the seated girl as a symbolic reference to the shedding of hymenal blood (Pl. LXXVIIIId).⁴⁰ Gesell has noted the girl's disheveled condition, witnessed by the loosened belt straps of her skirt and the slipping hairpin, which causes her back lock to come undone.⁴¹ Recently, Rehak has compared her skirt, which is apparently made from strips of fabric, to the European "string-skirt," a type of see-through garment that, according to Barber, advertises the nubile status and sexual availability of the wearer.⁴² If the wounded girl is depicted in a post-coital state, hence her disheveled condition, perhaps her coital partner is nearby.

Although Marinatos and Rehak think that the men painted on the walls across from the wounded girl are marginal figures,⁴³ Doumas and Morgan believe they were also participants in an initiation ritual.⁴⁴ Hairstyle and physical development indicate that they belong to different

34 PM III 464.

35 MMR² 404.

36 MMR² 555.

37 *Minoan Religion* 190.

38 CMS II.1 No. 446. I owe this reference to L. Goodison. I am also grateful to S. Manolakakis for a very helpful discussion of this seal.

39 E.g., C. DOUMAS, "Η Χεστή 3 και οι κυανοκεφαλοι στην τεχνη της Θηρας," in *ΕΙΛΑΠΙΝΗ. Τόμος τιμητικός για τον Καθηγητή Ν. Πλατόνα* (1987) 154-158; DOUMAS (*supra* n. 23) 128-130; N. MARINATOS, *Art and Religion in Thera. Reconstructing a Bronze Age Society* (1984) 61-84; N. MARINATOS, "The Function and Interpretation of the Thera Frescoes," in *L'iconographie minoenne. Actes de la Table Ronde d'Athènes* (21-22 avril 1983), *BCH* suppl. XI (1985) 222-228; *Minoan Religion* 203-211; L. MORGAN, "Form and Meaning in Figurative Painting," in *Proceedings of the First International Symposium. The Wall Paintings of Thera, 30 August-4 September 1997* (2000) II, 925-944.

40 DAVIS (*supra* n. 28) 402-403.

41 G.C. GESELL, "Blood on the Horns of Consecration?" in *Proceedings of the First International Symposium. The Wall Paintings of Thera, 30 August-4 September 1997* (2000) II, 947-956, esp. 953-954.

42 P. REHAK, "The construction of gender in late Bronze Age Aegean art: a prolegomenon," in *Redefining Archaeology. Feminist Perspectives* (1999) 194; E.J.W. BARBER, *Prehistoric Textiles* (1991) esp. 257.

43 MARINATOS (*supra* n. 39) 61; P. REHAK, "The Aegean Landscape and the Body: A New Interpretation of the Thera Frescoes," in *From the Ground Up: Beyond Gender Theory in Archaeology. Proceedings of the Fifth Gender and Archaeology Conference, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, October 1998, BAR International Series 812* (1999) 11-22.

44 DOUMAS (*supra* n. 23) 128-130; DOUMAS (*supra* n. 39, 1987) 154-158; MORGAN (*supra* n. 39) 940-941.

age grades. The youngest is surely the boy with yellowish skin and short-cropped front and back lock,⁴⁵ while the eldest is undoubtedly the male holding the jug.⁴⁶ Based on my sequence of hairstyles and age grades, the youth holding the big gold cup would be second eldest,⁴⁷ while the tall youth holding the long cloth would be second youngest. To scholars who regard scale as the primary determinative for age grade ranking, I would argue that in this painting, the large scale of the boy with the cloth emphasizes his role or function. Furthermore, despite the small scale of the male holding the gold cup, he has red paint in the corner of his eye, an iconographic device which Davis maintains was used to symbolize maturity.⁴⁸

The tall boy with the cloth also stands out as the only one of the group not holding a vessel; originally the little boy held a silver cup.⁴⁹ In addition, while all of the other figures look ahead, the boy with the cloth turns to look back. As noted above, his coiffure places him in the initial phase of youth. And like all other representations of this age grade, his pose emphasizes the chest and breadth of the shoulders.

When the glyptic evidence presented above is considered alongside the literary evidence of the Palaikastro hymn, it seems reasonable to interpret the chryselephantine statue from Palaikastro as a Minoan representation of a *Megistos Kouros*, a young resurrection fertility god. The youth holding the cloth would then represent his mortal age grade equivalent. Following this line of thought, the girl with the wounded foot would represent a bride and the youth holding the cloth, a bridegroom, in a ritual reenactment of the *hieros gamos*. As the seal from Viannos suggests, the female would have held the cloth during coitus, while the youth held it aloft afterwards, to proudly advertise his newly acquired status. The cloth itself is most likely the young man's garment, either a breechcloth or kilt.⁵⁰

That this union occurred in the context of a religious ritual is suggested by the depiction of the goddess directly above her mortal age grade equivalent. The Xeste 3 paintings also reveal that, as in the Near East, Aegean people believed that the ritual reenactment of the *hieros gamos* was responsible for the rains that stimulated fertility. Thus, the *crocus cartwrightianus* is depicted in full bloom, a phenomenon that can only occur after the coming of the first rains.⁵¹ The Xeste 3 goddess herself might from her necklace composed of duck and dragonfly beads be identified as the "Potnia" of moisture and rain, and the depiction of their wetland habitat on the walls of the building's upper floor.⁵²

As noted earlier, the sacred marriage ritual occurred in the Near East as a pivotal event of the New Year's Festival. On Crete of the historical period, the New Year began, as in the Near East, in late September, around the time of the autumnal equinox, i.e., at the start of the rainy season.⁵³ I would thus suggest that the ritual reenactment of the *hieros gamos* also occurred in the Aegean in the autumn, suggested by the autumnal *crocus cartwrightianus* and that it occurred during the Aegean New Year's festival. At Akrotiri, the ritual itself might well have taken place in the lustral basin of Xeste 3.

45 DOUMAS (*supra* n. 23) Figs. 109, 112.

46 DOUMAS (*supra* n. 23) Figs. 110, 114.

47 DOUMAS (*supra* n. 23) Figs. 111, 115.

48 DAVIS (*supra* n. 28) 404.

49 I owe this information to E. Davis.

50 Although Rehak reconstructs the breechcloth as a sewn garment, it may actually have been constructed from a single piece of cloth, like the Hindu *dhoti*. P. REHAK, "Aegean Breechcloths, Kilts, and the Keftiu Paintings," *AJA* (1996) esp. 39-41.

51 G. SFIKAS, *Wild Flowers of Greece* (1981) 97-98; also R. PORTER, "The Flora of the Thera Wall Paintings: Living Plants and Motifs – Sea Lily, Crocus, Iris and Ivy," in *Proceedings of the First International Symposium. The Wall Paintings of Thera, 30 August–4 September 1997* (2000) II, 614-616; A. SARPAKI, "Plants Chosen to be Depicted on Thera Wall Paintings: Tentative Interpretations," in *Proceedings of the First International Symposium. The Wall Paintings of Thera, 30 August–4 September 1997* (2000) II, 660-663.

52 A. VLACHOPOULOS, "The Reedbed Wall Painting from Akrotiri: Towards an Interpretation of the Iconographic Programme of Room 3b of Xeste 3," *BICS* 42 (1997-1998) 235-236; ID., "The Reed Motif in the Thera Wall Paintings and its Association with Aegean Pictorial Art," in *Proceedings of the First International Symposium. The Wall Paintings of Thera, 30 August–4 September 1997* (2000) II, 631-656.

53 WILLETTS (*supra* n. 2) 108-109.

While the foregoing discussion has focused on religious beliefs and ritual practices, it also offers insights into Aegean social structures. The iconography of male hairstyles places the Fisher Boys from the West House at Akrotiri in the same age grade as the putative bridegroom from Xeste 3. According to Mylona, catching the dolphin and tunny fish these boys hold would have entailed a tremendous effort, perhaps even involving the construction of a raft.⁵⁴ She considers the possibility that youths performed this ordeal as a rite of passage, perhaps for entry into the initial phase of youth.⁵⁵ Interestingly, the dolphinfish runs in the Aegean late in the summer, in August and early September.⁵⁶

Following van Gennep's tripartite model, the rites for this age grade would have entailed rites of separation - the building of the raft and the departure for sea - and rites of transition - the fishing expedition itself. The depiction of three large fish on the reverse side of the seal from Viannos seems to connect these preliminary, summertime initiation rites with the sexual union depicted on the seal's obverse, the rites of incorporation - the autumnal sacred marriage ritual - celebrated at their successful conclusion (Pl. LXXIXh).⁵⁷ Thus, the sacred marriage ritual occurred within the context of Aegean rites of passage, as the culminating male puberty rite.⁵⁸ At some point the youth would also have received a new haircut.

Thus, the sacred marriage intersects with three levels of Aegean culture: religious, ritual, and social. What remains unresolved is whether it comprised the only form of Aegean marriage or whether it existed alongside others, like the group marriage of the historical period or even individual, asymmetrical, age grade male dominant unions, as in post-Bronze Age Greece. Besides the ring from Tiryns, evidence for the latter is difficult to document in Aegean culture.⁵⁹

Evidence for group marriages is also ambiguous,⁶⁰ although the sacred marriage could have been performed in a group fashion. Boys graduating from their *agela* could have coupled with more mature women, when each gender was in its biologically most fertile stage.

However, if a single couple performed a sacred marriage for the benefit of the community, one male may have been chosen from his *agela* to enact the role of the *Megistos Kouros*. Strabo, quoting Ephoros, recounts how certain youths were selected from their *agela* on account of their exceptional bravery, manners, and looks, were accorded certain privileges in games and dances, and were permitted to wear special clothes which denoted their status as *kleinoi*, or famous ones (Strabo X.4.21). Yet, the other members of the *agela* might still have married in a group. These issues, however, are difficult to resolve now and will remain so until more evidence comes to light.

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54 D. MYLONA, "The 'Fishermen' Frescoes in Light of the Fish Bone Evidence," in *Proceedings of the First International Symposium. The Wall Paintings of Thera, 30 August-4 September 1997* (2000) II, 561-566.

55 MYLONA (*supra* n. 54) 562. Initiatory ordeals as rites of passage are discussed in E. ELIADE, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (1958).

56 See comments by J. PAPADOPOULOS in MYLONA (*supra* n. 54) 567.

57 On fish-offerings in the Near East, especially in the sacred marriage, see E.D. VAN BUREN, "Fish-Offerings in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Iraq* 10 (1948) 101-121; also G.R.H. WRIGHT, "Of Fishes and Men. Fish Symbols in Ancient Religion," *JPR* III-IV (1990) 30-44, esp. 40.

58 Up to now the author has focussed his attention exclusively on Aegean male rites of passage. Hence, the possible role of the sacred marriage ritual in female rites of passage remains unclear. Aegean female initiation rites will be explored in the author's forthcoming monograph on Aegean social institutions. For now, see DAVIS (*supra* n. 28).

59 N. MARINATOS, "Role and Sex Division in Ritual Scenes of Aegean Art," *JPR* 1 (1987) 23-34; N. MARINATOS, "Formalism and Gender Roles: A Comparison of Minoan and Egyptian Art," in *POLITEIA* II 577-585.

60 Davis thinks that the miniature "Dance in the Grove" fresco from Knossos may depict one; personal communication. See also E.N. DAVIS, "The Knossos miniature frescoes and the function of the central courts," in *Function Palaces* 157-161.

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(None are to scale)

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