

## ASPECTS OF MINOAN RELIGION

MÜLLER (K.) *Methodische Zugänge zu 'Kulträumen' der minoischen Palastzeit. Eine exemplarische Analyse gebauter ritueller Räume in archäologischem Befund und bildlichen Darstellungen*. Pp. 369, colour fig., b/w & colour ills, maps. Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2022. Paper, €78. ISBN: 978-3-8325-5011-0.

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Minoan religion is a topic that, despite plenty of attention since A.J. Evans's original discussion of Minoan cult ('The Mycenaean Tree and Pillar Cult and its Mediterranean Relations', *JHS* 21 [1901], 99–204), remains a subject of much speculation, partly because reliable textual information is lacking and most studies depend solely on iconography and archaeological remains. These sources are also the ones used in this monograph focusing on the built environment of cult, the result of M.'s doctoral dissertation at the Humboldt University of Berlin. Heavily influenced in its methodological approach by C. Renfrew's seminal work on Bronze Age Aegean cult (*The Archaeology of Cult: the Sanctuary at Phylakopi* [1985]) and M. Prent's study of Late Minoan III C cult practices (*Cretan Sanctuaries and Cult. Continuity and Change from Late Minoan III C to the Archaic Period* [2005]), M. examines 144 possible cult spaces and buildings on Crete and the Minoanised islands (esp. Santorini and Milos).

A lengthy introduction (Chapter 1) analyses previous studies of Minoan cult and cult places before addressing the question of what a Minoan cult space is and what a Minoan cult act was (Chapter 2). Rather than providing a definite answer, M. accepts a place or context as cultic if it responds to six criteria: an exceptional topographical situation, a special architectural form and accessibility, the presence of permanent installations (cf. Renfrew's attention-focusing devices), special mobile finds, the spatial effects of the room itself ('Raumwirkung'), and the spatial context and surrounding rooms. It is not entirely clear whether all six criteria need to be present, however, for a context to be convincing and one retains this uncertainty in Chapter 3, where the archaeological evidence of the cult places is discussed and a catalogue is provided. The chapter, however, is somewhat unbalanced: sacred caves are not treated at all – since only built space is considered –, and most peak sanctuaries without architecture are omitted while only a few spring sanctuaries and pillar shrines receive detailed discussion. In view of the many peak sanctuaries (many without architecture) and other types of cult contexts, one cannot escape the notion that only a partial view of Minoan cult expression is presented. While M.'s approach is systematic and quite rigid in terms of coherently applying methodological criteria, the data base is too extensive, and perhaps it would have been more appropriate to limit the study to spring and pillar shrines rather than addressing the entire spectrum of built cultic manifestations. Following L. Goodison's lead (e.g. 'From Tholos Tomb to Throne Room: Some Considerations of Dawn Light and Directionality in Minoan Buildings', in: G. Cadogan et al. [edd.], *Knossos: Palace, City, State* [2004], pp. 339–50), potential astronomical features (equinox and solstice orientations) of the Middle Bronze Age remains beneath the Minoan Hall of the Palace at Malia and the later examples at Knossos are discussed at length, and some unique cases, such as the building of Anemospilia at Archanes, receive attention. Many other contexts do not. Moreover, the information in the catalogue of 144 potential cult spaces is insufficient and limited to date and identification ('palatial'; 'häuslich'/domestic;

‘freistehendes Heiligtum’; ‘Naturkult’ etc. or a combination) without a discussion of why such an identification is given. One may also wonder if hard categorisations as proposed here are really necessary. In Chapter 4 iconographical sources are discussed, largely summarising previous research. It also contains a rather unexpected excursus on Cypriot terracotta cult scenes. A fifth chapter synthetically combines the archaeological and iconographical evidence, concentrating on water cults, pillar rooms and some other well-known contexts. Again, one cannot escape the impression that M. should have focused only on water and pillar cults.

In general, the study is too much of a dissertation rather than presenting new, stimulating ideas. Several recent studies on peak sanctuaries, such as those by S. Soetens (*Minoan Peak Sanctuaries. Building a Cultural Landscape Using GIS* [2006]) or W. Megarry (*Experiencing the Mountain in Minoan Crete: Exploring the Evolution of a Bronze Age Sacred Landscape using GIS* [2012]), or reconsiderations of the Anemospilia evidence by S. Müller (‘Caring for the Dead in Minoan Crete. A Reassessment of the Evidence from Anemospilia’, *Aegaeum* 39 [2016], 547–56) or by the reviewer (‘Crisis Cults on Minoan Crete’, *Aegaeum* 22 [2001], 361–9), to name a few, are lacking, but then the literature on the topic is immense. A sharper discussion of the differences between cult, religion and ritual would also have been welcome. There are some other features that would have begged for more discussion: when framing the work chronologically (p. 11), the *Altpalastzeit* is made to start c. 2250 BCE (i.e. after Early Minoan IIB), and Table 1 (also p. 12) introduces a new chronological scheme with *Altpalastzeit* I (EM III–MM IA) and II (MM IB–IIB), *Neupalastzeit* I (MM IIIA) and II (MM IIIB–LM IB) without further explanation. The structure of the work is somewhat incomprehensible, and there are several mistakes in the chronological attributions in the list of potential shrines, but the study is well illustrated with 155 images, some in colour. All in all, M. remains with her feet on the ground, sticking to the evidence and not venturing into more esoteric discussions of religion or suggesting Near Eastern influences.

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## ASPECTS OF MALE NUDITY

MURRAY (S. C.) *Male Nudity in the Greek Iron Age. Representation and Ritual Context in Aegean Societies*. Pp. xxvi + 322, b/w & colour pls, map, colour pls. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Cased, £90, US\$120. ISBN: 978-1-316-51093-3.  
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As I write this review, headlines are filled with heated reactions to the resignation of a Florida charter school principal over the showing of Michelangelo’s *David* without prior content warning. These outcries demonstrate the perennial power of the nude figure and the complicated, changing social constructions of nudity. Perhaps no culture is more associated with the celebration of the male nude than the ancient Greeks, and the