

The Master of Animals in Old World Iconography

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BUDAPEST 2010

With the generous support of the Center for Etruscan Studies,
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Cover illustrations

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Volume Editor

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ISBN 978-963-9911-14-7

HU-ISSN 1215-9239

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2010

ARCHAEOLOGUA ALAPÍTVÁNY

H-1250 Budapest, Úri u. 49

Copyediting by Julia Gaviria

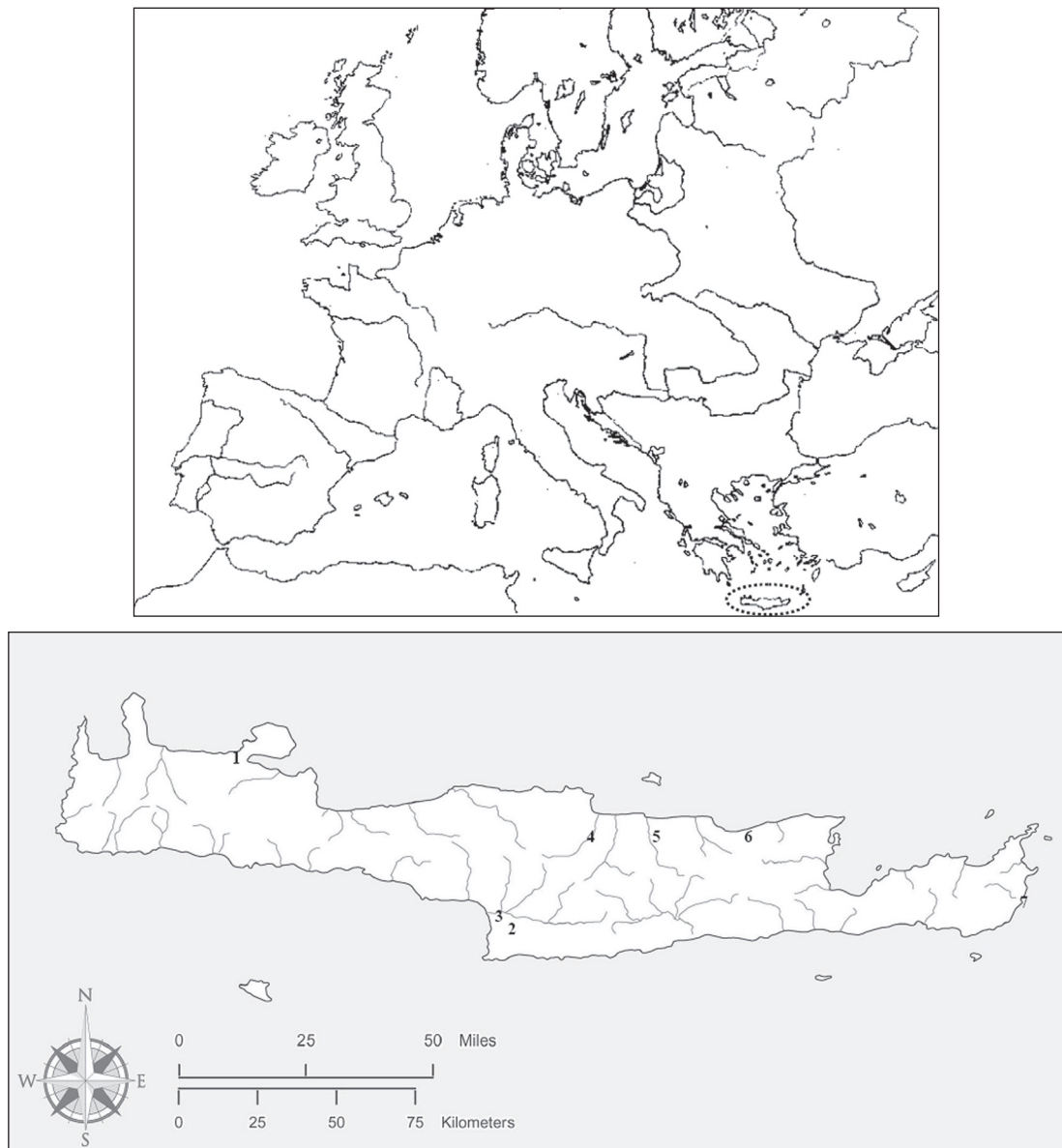
Desktop editing and layout by Rita Kovács

Printed by Prime Rate Kft

Minoan Animal-Human Hybridity

ANNA SIMANDIRAKI-GRIMSHAW

Crete was a hub of internal and external processes, exchanges, and identities for most of its prehistory (the so-called Minoan period, *ca.* 3100–1100 BC) (*Fig. 1*). During these two millennia, notions and depictions of animals and the human body changed significantly. The emerging human relationships with animals encompassed complex expressions, from practical, such as herding and hunting (BORIĆ 2007:especially 88; TAPPER 1988:52–53; SHAPLAND 2009), to symbolic, such as the motif of humans mastering animals. This chapter does not attempt to draw a picture of the Master/Mistress of Animals in Minoan Crete or the Aegean (for that, see BARCLAY 2001:373 ff.; CROWLEY 1989; HILLER 2001;



*Fig. 1. Map of Crete with major sites mentioned in the text:
1. Chania; 2. Phaistos; 3. Ayia Triada; 4. Tylissos; 5. Knossos; 6. Mallia; 7. Zakros.*

KOPIKA 2001; THOMAS – WEDDE 2001; YOUNGER 1988:156–158, 182–183; see also CROWLEY and HITCHCOCK, this volume) but rather explores the notion of animal mastery from an unorthodox perspective: through animal-human hybridity.

Animal-human hybrids have already been studied, along with multianimal hybrids, by numerous Aegean scholars, particularly in the context of microglyptic (e.g., BAURAIN 1985; GILL 1969, 1970; KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005; SAMBIN 1989; WEINGARTEN 1985, 1991, 2000, 2009; YOUNGER 1988:211–215, 252). Such useful studies have addressed the issue of hybridity mainly as a series of imports, innovations, and even creations of whim. However, animal-human hybridity, although rightly contextualized as part of wider hybridizing tendencies, may also be studied as somatic and cultural mastery. This chapter considers animal-human visual relatedness and presents two types of hybridity. It concludes with a contextualization and some thoughts on the possible meanings of such fusions. Through the deconstruction of token hybrid images, we see that distinguishing different types of hybridity may provide us with new conceptual tools toward the analysis of animal mastery.

Animal-Human Relatedness and Hybridity

To understand animal-human hybridity in Minoan Crete, we must first consider animal-human relatedness in iconography more broadly. A simplistic definition would be three-fold (for a thorough exploration, see SHAPLAND 2009):

1. Coexistence: animals and humans might share the same space and their connection may be ambiguous, such as a woman flying behind a griffin (DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI 2005:127 top).
2. Liminality: the relationship between humans and animals exists in a liminal zone, thus demonstrating a loose temporal interface prompted by the agency of one or more parties. Examples include marine depictions encircling a human corpse in a larnax (MEROUSIS 2000:Pl. 9, no. 24).
3. Engagement: full- and long-term interface between humans and animals through various activities, including hunting, sacrifice, tethering, and bull leaping (e.g., SAKELLARAKIS – SAPOUNA-SAKELLARAKI 1997:II, 654, Fig. 720).

Three zones of conceptual proximity between animals and humans can, therefore, be distinguished. They range from the possible disengagement of one party from another to their full engagement, whereby the focus is the physical and notional “third space” that the interaction provides. Hybridity is not far removed from this last notion of “third space”.

Minoan animal-human hybrids can be categorized as heterosomatic and homosomatic. Heterosomatic are those hybrids arising from artifacts or depictions that invest distinct, whole humans with detachable animals or animal parts, real or simulated (MESKELL – JOYCE 2003:89, 91). Such hybrids seem to span all Minoan eras and are encountered mostly in figurines, frescoes, jewelry, and (cult) apparatus. For example, the long sides of the Ayia Triada sarcophagus depict several living people half-covered by hides (DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI 2005:170–175, especially 172, 174–177, 180–181; LONG 1974) and one man, widely considered as the deceased, completely covered/dressed in a similar hide (*Fig. 2b*). Actual animals were also used on the human anatomy, for example, boar’s tusks to make up a helmet (e.g., LAND OF THE LABYRINTH 2008:108, no. 80). But was a human only making a mastery statement by wearing the equipment of an animal (appropriating strength, colors, shapes, textures, movement) or was s/he turning her/himself into a complex physical and notional, temporary hybrid (MESKELL – JOYCE 2003:92)? The aforementioned boar’s tusks were intended to encircle a physical human head as a protective device that changed the wearer from everyday human to warrior. A human neck or other display surface becomes not just a somatic backdrop for a piece of ornamentation but a pond in which



Fig. 2. Examples of heterosomatic hybridity (not to scale): a. “snake goddess” faience figurine (detail), early Neopalatial, Knossos; b. the “deceased”, fresco on a sarcophagus side, Postpalatial, Ayia Triada.

a frog bead leaps and duck beads slide (DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI 2005:63, 327). It thus becomes the heterosomatic interface-cum-hybrid of physical human body and simulated animal(s) (SHAPLAND 2009; the issue of worn animals is studied in more detail in SIMANDIRAKI–GRIMSHAW – STEVENS, forthcoming).

The most frequent animal-human hybrids in Minoan Crete are homosomatic. Exclusively iconographic, they too span all Minoan eras, although there are discrepancies in their times and findspots. The most common homosomatic hybrids are:

- “Bird men”: crude, walking male figures in profile, with beaks and stylized depictions of wings, usually dating to Early Minoan (EM) and Middle Minoan (MM) (Table 1) and mostly found in the area of East Crete (e.g., Sphoungaras, Mochos, Mallia) but also South Central Crete (e.g., Phaistos). Weingarten categorizes these, together with “bird ladies” and “minotaurs” as “fantasy monsters” (WEINGARTEN 1983:91; also 1985:168). Although their gender is ambiguous, they resonate with contemporary depictions of men, which do not display prominent genitals.
- “Bird ladies”: detailed, leaping females in combinations of profile and frontal postures, with bird heads, human breasts, skirts, and open wings. There are, to my knowledge, no “bird ladies” in EM times; they appeared in the MM period (e.g., WEINGARTEN 1985:178, Fig. 37) and became very popular by Late Minoan (LM) times, including in Zakros. “Bird ladies” were also by LMI prominently human and animal, with voluptuous breasts and spread legs or skirts/slacks, as well as outstretched wings. Their posture became frontal and more dynamic, while expressions of their gender became unambiguous, even excessive. It is therefore not just the mode of depiction that changed according to the stylistic demands of the time but possibly the meaning or at least the

popularity of this hybrid. A future line of enquiry might be to research the relationship between these and female-bird connections from Cypriote contexts.

- “Minotaurs”: bull torsos and heads with human waists and legs. Most display fusion of distinct corporealities, such as human legs/skirts with animal torsos and heads. “Minotaurs” first appeared in LMII–III (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:201, 207; also SCHLAGER 1989; but see HOGARTH 1902:79, 91, Pl. VI, nos. 17-19). They are predominantly men, although exceptions do exist (e.g., YOUNGER 1988:214). They are almost always shown in exaggerated movement, with the human half leaping or running and the bull half in “flying gallop” (e.g., CMS III.1–2:no. 363). The bull-man fusion can also involve three beings: two animal bodies from the waist up and one human body from the waist down (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:207, no. 398).
- Miscellaneous, very rare, or *unica* hybrids include fusions of people with felines or lions (e.g., CMS VIII:no. 6) and “demon”-headed creatures (e.g., KARETSOU – ANDREADAKI-VLAZAKI 2000:160, no. 137). Minoan Genii are not included here, despite their hybridity and posture/behavior; they are not regarded as animal-human hybrids but as animal-animal hybrids.

Table 1. Date Abbreviations (all dates are BC, approximate and currently contested).

EM	= Early Minoan, 3100–2000. EMI=3000–2600; EMII=2600–2300; EMIII=2300–2100.
MM	= Middle Minoan, 2100–1600. MMI=2100–1800; MMII=1800–1700; MMIII=1700–1600.
LM	= Late Minoan, 1600–1100. LMI=1600–1430; LMII=1430–1400; LMIIIa1=1400–1375; LMIIIa2=1375–1330; LMIIIb=1330–1200; LMIIIc=1200–1100.
Prepalatial	= the period before the structures known as Palaces were built, 3100–1900 (EMI–MMIa).
Protopalatial	= the period when the Palaces were first built, 1900–1700 (MMIb–MMII).
Neopalatial	= the second phase of the Palaces, when they were rebuilt, 1700–1430 (MMIII–LMIb).
Final Palatial	= the final phase of the Knossos Palace, <i>ca.</i> 1430–1330 (LMII–IIIb).
Postpalatial	= the phase after the destruction of all the Palaces, 1430–1100 (LMII–IIIc, but 1330–1100, LMIIIb–c, for Knossos).

Another type of homosomatic hybridity sees a mostly human figure that nevertheless carries elements of one or more animals, instead of being a straightforward half-and-half division. Characteristic examples include:

- MM “bell-figurines” or masks: these sometimes combine three-dimensional horns on a bell-shaped body with painted human face (DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI 2005:121).
- “Gorgons”: almost always women, they appeared *ca.* MMII and became “rare in the Late Bronze Age” (WEINGARTEN 1983:92, 108). Findspots include Knossos, Phaistos, Sklavokambos, and Zakros. In some cases, their unusually frontal head emits “streamers” that may be interpreted as antennae or snake hair (CMSII.2:no. 251; WEINGARTEN 1983:108–109, Pl. 10K, 1985:Fig. 21). Women with ‘snake-frames’, who appeared *ca.* LMII, although generally not considered “gorgons”, may be an extension of the same theme (GILL 1969:94, Figs 4b, 4c, 4d, 5c; KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:204, 253 n. 79; WEINGARTEN 1983:114–115). A predecessor of these may be seen in the Protopalatial fruit stand depicting, among others, females whose seemingly human body (torso and moving/twirling arms) has possible snakes for hair, a bird beak and giant eye, and a hide skirt; that is, it combines human + snake + bird + ox (*Fig. 3a*) (LEVI 1976:Tav. I2, Pls. 65, 66; WEINGARTEN 1983:94–95, 1985:178, 179, Fig. 34 left).

- “Centaur”: ceramic four-legged versions of people, whereby the head (mainly) and legs are usually human but the torso and posture belong to a quadruped (D’AGATA 1999:64–86, nos. C.2.1–C.2.35; SAKELLARAKIS – SAPOUNA-SAKELLARAKI 1997:II, 524–525, Figs 518 bottom, 522). They seem to appear *ca.* LMIII in areas such as Archanes and Ayia Triada, that is, Central and South Crete. They are three-dimensional, viewable in the round, and their size is often somewhat bigger than that of other hybrids. They are relatively rare in Crete. D’Agata (D’AGATA 1999:64–65) characterizes them with the neutral term “animali fantastici”, because they cannot be clearly categorized as either “centaurs” (human-headed equines) or “sphinxes” (human-headed felines). I apprehensively call them “centaurs” here because their appearance, posture, size, media, and bodily fluctuations seem distinct from those of “sphinxes”.
- “Sphinxes”: lion bodies with frontal or profile human (male?) heads, and sometimes butterfly or bird wings, presumably of Egyptian or Near Eastern origin (KARETSOU – ANDEADAKI-VLAZAKI 2000:54; KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:32; WEINGARTEN 1983:91; 1985:168). According to Krzyszkowska, the several Neopalatial glyptic variations suggest “repeated borrowings from more than one source” (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:150). They are generally rare, first appearing wingless in MMII-III and assuming a “prominent role” in later phases, when they also acquire wings (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:32, 144, respectively). Provenance sites include e.g. Archanes (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:91, no.146), Mallia (KARETSOU – ANDEADAKI-VLAZAKI 2000:57, no. 33, 166, no. 145; DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI 2005:228), Phylaki in Apokoronas (LAND OF THE LABYRINTH 2008:112, no. 84), Katsambas in Herakleion (LAND OF THE LABYRINTH 2008:185, no. 149; DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI 2005:89), and Zafer Papoura (DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI 2005:86–87). Unlike other hybrids but like “gorgons” and “centaurs”, they represent a reversal of animal and human – the emphasis is given to an iconic human head (a generally rare phenomenon in Minoan art), which is attached to an animal body.

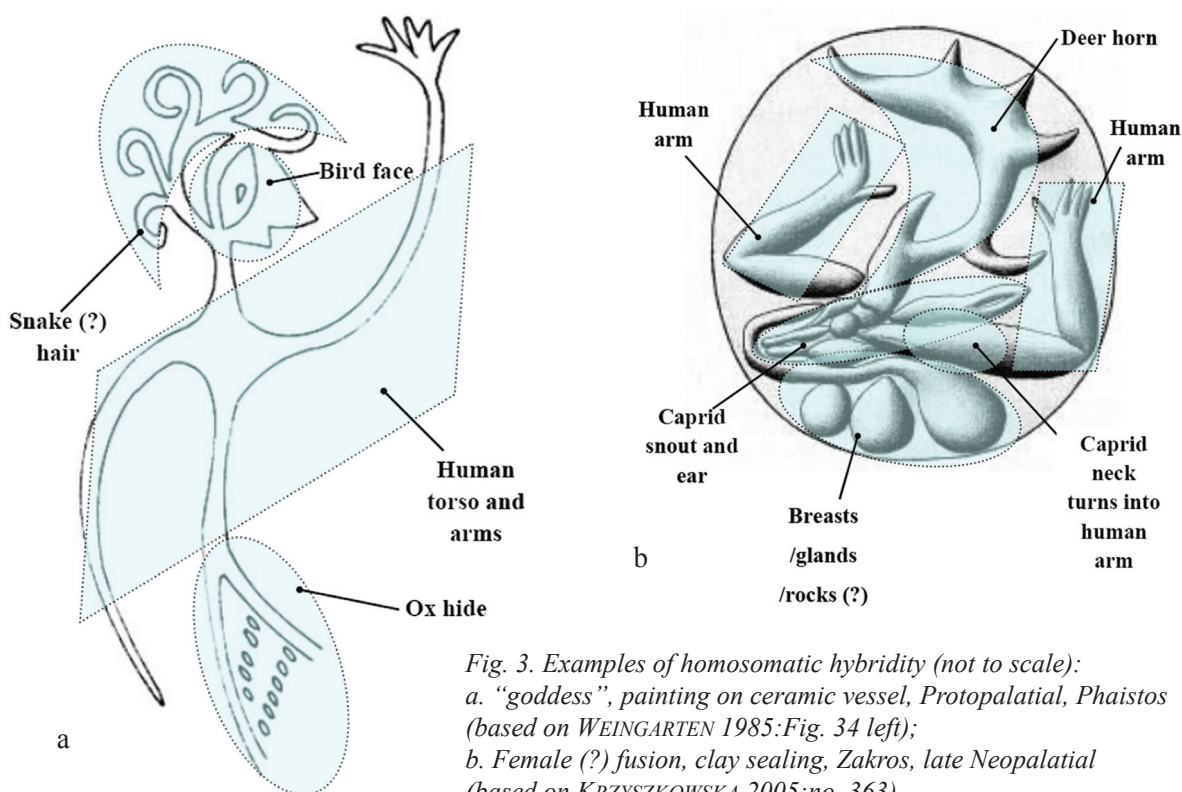


Fig. 3. Examples of homosomatic hybridity (not to scale):
 a. “goddess”, painting on ceramic vessel, Protopalatial, Phaistos (based on WEINGARTEN 1985:Fig. 34 left);
 b. Female (?) fusion, clay sealing, Zakros, late Neopalatial (based on KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:no. 363).

The third version of homosomatic hybridity, overwhelmingly represented in a hoard of LMI sealings (but no seals) from House A at Zakros, deserves special mention (CMS II.7; KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:150–153; WEINGARTEN 1983, 1985). It denotes a distinct workshop if not a particular master (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:151 n. 104). For, although the Zakros assemblage includes motifs found elsewhere, such as “gorgons” or “bird ladies” (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005; meticulously traced in WEINGARTEN 1983, 1985), its reinvention and combination of hybridic elements ranges from innovation and whim to psychedelia (GILL 1969; KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:151–152; WEINGARTEN 1985:167 n. 3). Double and triple hybrids are known, as in the representation of a woman with bird wings and tail and possible bovine head, whose spread-legged posture may symbolize sexuality or birth rather than mere vertical movement (CMS II.7:no. 145b; GERMAN 2000; KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:151, 152, 278; WEINGARTEN 1983:102, 1985:Fig. 2, Z43, 2009:142). “Goat men” and “goat ladies” may have been a Zakros specialization and thus localized in LMI East Crete (HILLER 2001). Versions of “goat-bird-men” and “goat-bird-ladies” and the aforementioned “sphinx” theme are also found in Zakros. Here, bi- or trisomatic hybrids represent a departure from the usual animal-human dualism or even the distinct animal-human corporeal mixes found almost everywhere else in Crete at that time. For instance, where one might expect a waist to be the boundary between humanity and animality, Zakros sealings deliberately blur this union, as in the case of the bird lady whose breasts seem to turn into feathers (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:183, nos. 358, 359). Another example is a sealing depicting the indiscernible fusion of the head, ears, and antler of a fallow deer, one or two upraised human arms, and formations that may represent human breasts, caprid glands, or even natural rocks (*Fig. 3b*) (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:183, nos. 362, 363, 364; WEINGARTEN 2009:144). Even though such complete dismemberment and remixing of both animal and human anatomies have prompted interpretations of the maker as mad (GILL 1969; WEINGARTEN 1985:167 n. 3), another interpretation is offered here. In short, just as there appear to be different zones in the (iconographic) involvement of humans and animals, their fusions seem to range from distinguished body parts put together to indiscernible fusions dissolving the boundaries between humanity and animality.

Hybridity in Context

The archaeological construct of what we call the Minoan Civilization, although evidenced by a distinctive material record, by no means reflects a homogeneous population, society, or political system throughout its two millennia, nor were its relationships static and unchanging (e.g., within and beyond Cretan regions). This is something most Aegean scholarship recognizes and researches. However, one of the enduring pitfalls, especially in iconography, remains the relative downplaying of temporal and regional variations, mainly caused by research impediments such as the dubious/unknown provenance of artifacts, particularly seals. To gain new insights into notions of animal-human mastery more generally, we need to contextualize animal-human hybridity in its different milieux.

During the Prepalatial period, heterosomatic hybrids seem mostly restricted to funerary contexts: animals as personal adornment or vessels representing three-dimensional, animal-human engagement, in which whole animals are used (e.g., the gold frog bead [DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI 2005:63] and the “snake-goddess” rhyton [BRANIGAN 1993:Fig. 07.11] from Koumasa). Homosomatic hybrids at this stage seem like another restrained category. We can note that Prepalatial “bird men” or early instances of *unica* hybrids are mostly found in funerary contexts and on seals, that is, decommissioned under relatively private and elite circumstances. They also pose an ambiguity of concept, meaning, and gender, because they may represent notions of animal-human hybrids envisioned not as the joining of distinct animal and human ‘natures’, but as animal anthropomorphism. It is also because we cannot possibly determine whether this hybridity/anthropomorphism was connected to funerary rituals, beliefs about death and

the afterlife, or a secular demarcation of the identity of the dead. Regarding gender, unsexed bodies are often considered male for lack of explicit genitals or breasts. But are they deliberately ambiguous? If so, do they represent human tokens beyond sexual specificity (MARANGOU 2009; WEINGARTEN 2009:especially 142, 144)?

In the Protopalatial period stratified societies begin to expressly assert their individualism, specialization, and power for “exotic” networking. While heterosomatic hybridity continues with the use of, for example, whole-animal jewelry adornment from funerary contexts (e.g., the pendant/earring from the Mallia necropolis; DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI 2005:308), unambiguous homosomatic fusions “are first attested in the Phaistos sealing deposit or on contemporary seals” (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:148). The Prepalatial hybridic hesitation has evolved into renditions of hybrid creatures that are animal-headed (e.g., Protopalatial triton plaque from Phaistos; KARETSOU – ANDEADAKI-VLAZAKI 2000:160, no. 137), human-headed (e.g., the MMII clay appliqué sphinx from Quartier Mu, Building D, room 4; KARETSOU – ANDEADAKI-VLAZAKI 2000:57, no. 33), or even multianimal and human composites (see *Fig. 3a*) (e.g., the Protopalatial fruit stand from Phaistos; LEVI 1976:Tav. 12, Pls. 65, 66; WEINGARTEN 1983:94–95, 1985:178, 179, *Fig. 34 left*). Their gender often remains ambiguous, but differentiation beyond dress includes facial hair. Furthermore, as their iconographic repertoire expands, so does the range of their media (stone, shell, clay; for vessel, ornamentation), contexts (cemeteries, palaces, houses; for ritual, habitation, administration), and, presumably, audiences. In other words, distinct and explicit animal-human fusions could have been used by or worn about the physical living body, not just in the afterlife. They would have engaged with active human anatomy (seals), created “positive” from “negative” hybrids (sealings), served as consumption centerpieces (fruit stand). There may be value in a further investigation of whether this expansion of the hybrid repertoire at this stage may reflect new notions of human anatomy and animal-human entanglement, as well as whether some hybrids may have been taken as branding a particular administrative/political/ideological system or region (STODDART 2009).

In Neopalatial times, heterosomatic hybrids can be seen to continue themes from previous phases, such as snake handling, again with strong burial and elite connotations (see *Fig. 2a*) (DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI 2005:110–111; EVANS 1921:frontispiece, *Fig. 359*; RETHEMIOTAKIS 1998:no. 138, Pls. 24–25). We cannot, of course, determine whether their significance remained the same or whether they alluded to a remembered or imagined past, its beliefs, and practices. In the case of homosomatic hybrids, however, we know that new types or new incarnations “arrived from overseas to enrich the visual landscape” (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:132) but were critically and quickly adapted. “Bird ladies”, gradually eclipsing “bird men”, began to appear in seals and sealings in MM times (e.g., MMIII seal from Quartier XIII at Mallia Palace; WEINGARTEN 1983:110, Pl. 12H, 1985:178, *Fig. 37*) and by LMI had evolved into a distinct type, especially in Zakros but also in Chania and Ayia Triada, all from administrative contexts. Weingarten postulates that “bird ladies” might be an evolution of the very rare Mistress of Birds theme (WEINGARTEN 1983:99 n. 21, 119 n. 25) and that there is a “nearly reverse correlation between Bird-Ladies” and birds of naturalistic types at Zakros, Ayia Triada, and Chania (WEINGARTEN 1983:117 n. 15). Women with heads emitting “streamers”/antennae depicted on seals (e.g., MMIII seal from Mochlos Tomb X; CMSII.2:no. 251; WEINGARTEN 1985:*Fig. 21*) and further “sphinxes” on presumed embellishments complete the picture (e.g., 13th Dynasty/MMIII–LMI stone inlay; KARETSOU – ANDEADAKI-VLAZAKI 2000:166, no. 145; DIMOPOULOU-RETHEMIOTAKI 2005:228). The genders of animal-human hybrids now become more unambiguous, especially in the case of females. If the preponderance of female hybrids during this time reflects the whole of the original hybrid corpus, it may give an indication of a gender shift – from the general to the specific, from the male-oriented to a gender balance to a female bias. It is also interesting that homosomatic animal-human hybrids of this

period seem almost exclusive to the microglyptic context, which, if not due to taphonomic contingency, presents a variety of overlapping possibilities: (a) these hybrids are connected with particular people, products, services, quality, or provenance in administrative, financial, elite realms; (b) they restrict, but also expand, the ideology of animal-human hybridity (and perhaps mastery) among controlled, knowledgeable audiences; (c) their use discontinues in ritual or perhaps this ceases to be their main function; (d) their meaning changes because of the influence of ideas likely to have been attached to the newly imported motifs (WARREN 1991:432).

As Mycenaeanization occurs in Final Palatial (Knossos) and Postpalatial times, some notions of heterosomatic animal-human hybridity continue in iconography, such as three-dimensional ornamentation used on the body depicting animals (e.g., LMIIIa2–b gold pendant from Ayia Triada; KARETSOU – ANDEADAKI-VLAZAKI 2000:187, no. 177). An earlier tendency is nevertheless enhanced: the use of animal parts on either the physical or the depicted human body (e.g., LMIIIa2–IIIb1 boar's tusk helmet from the Armenoi cemetery, Tomb 167; LAND OF THE LABYRINTH 2008:108, no. 80). Many examples come from funerary contexts. Some homosomatic animal-human hybrids are abandoned or altered and others are introduced during a general hybridic decline. "Centaur's", most from ritual contexts, women with 'snake-frames' and the popular "minotaurs" appear in LMII–III (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:201, 207). The latter "have no clear antecedents in neo-palatial glyptic, even among the Zakros fantasy creatures, and their production during LMII–III was probably short-lived", even though they survive into the Iron Age (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:208). As an iconographic and perhaps conceptual device, they are not that far removed from LMI bull leapers, in similar postures, and also resemble LMIII "floating leapers" (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:206, 210). But why would LMII–III have witnessed the transformation of previous pervasive bull-leaping narratives into tokenistic "bull men"? Similarly, why do three-dimensional sizable "centaur's" appear at this stage? They may indicate the ideology of a new administration. Perhaps they were considered sufficiently different from Neopalatial (administrative/financial/political?) values but were also deliberately in tandem with new and more public visual vocabularies in Crete. "Sphinxes" reappear in a variety of materials (clay, ivory, stone) and shapes (vessel appliqué's, figurines, seals, comb, inlays, a mirror handle), but they come almost exclusively from funerary contexts. If, again, this is not due to archaeological contingency, it may mean that this hybrid, although still restricted to elite contexts, reverts to being more diffused, perhaps ideologically loaded and animated in more complex ways. A mirror with a "sphinx" on the handle, if used before burial, would have been both intimate and displayed, physically manipulated by a human hand (not just seen or worn). It would have fused a depiction of a human-headed hybrid with a physical reflected head. Equally, a comb depicting a "sphinx", if/when immersed in hair, would create the illusion of the hybrid sitting on a human head.

But how does all this relate to mastery? Much Middle–Late Bronze Age Aegean imagery of the Master/Mistress of Animals renders the human body as frontally and centrally positioned, holding animals in unnatural postures (e.g., upside down, as the Potnia Aigon in the gold diadem from Zakros; PLATON 1971:15–16, Fig. 5). This is perhaps a straightforward allusion to the mastery of human over animal. It is, in fact, interesting that (in microglyptic contexts) "representations of human figures decline sharply during LMII–III.... In their stead, depictions of the Mistress or Master of Animals, flanked by various creatures of the land, sea or sky, gain in popularity" (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:204). If we want to understand notions of animal-human mastery before and beyond the Mistress/Master of Animals theme, itself a presumed import to Crete, we need to examine animal-human hybridity as mastery.

Animal-human hybridity is, first, somatic mastery and thus the understanding of anatomical elements. As bodily depiction generally progresses from integral to compartmentalized bodies, such as figurines made of lumps of material to ones made of limbs occasionally of different materials or loose limbs, hybrids progress from possibly deliberately unsexed animal-human integral bodies to the fusion

of desomatized and occasionally exaggerated animal members with often explicit human attire and (sexual) anatomy. At the same time, there is perhaps an intended, progressively increasing amalgamation, from distinct Protopalatial combinations to indiscernible Neopalatial fusions. This choice of animal and human tokens could reflect visions in altered states of consciousness or real-life practices of enacted transfiguration, during which people may have been dressed as hybrids using masks, hides, and so forth. Although I do not discredit such readings, I do not find them fully satisfactory. The somatic relationship between human and animal in hybrids seems complex, ambiguous, and shifting, and such interpretations do little to explain other aspects, such as the correlation of animals and human genders (e.g., the sexual hybridity pointed out by WEINGARTEN 2009:142) or the connection between token limbs and edibility. For example, animals that occupy the head and arms or front legs of homosomatic hybrids, leaving the lower half to be human, are almost always edible, herbivorous, and less aggressive (TAPPER 1988:54), as opposed to animals in other hybrid configurations (e.g., the homosomatic hybrids with human heads). Of course, this might be a result of the diverse historical contingencies of homosomatic hybridity in Crete across eras and regions (Andrew Shapland, personal communication, 18 November 2009; MESKELL – JOYCE 2003:81; WEINGARTEN 2009:143). But it may also have been meaningful; are we to read this as human mastery over animal foodstuffs or as possession of humans by their animal sustenance (MIRACLE – BORIC 2009:103)? Does this imply a correlation of perceived somatic similarities or simply an elusive character from a literary or mythological narrative (WEINGARTEN 2009:144–145)?

Second, hybridity is the mastery of animal-human cultures, the assertion of what a hybrid would inherit from the *modus operandi* of its constituent natures. We see the process of “inventive scavenging” (GILMORE 2002:21), whereby existing iconographies are reutilized and drawn from the experiential templates of makers and audiences. This is apparent not only in the fused physicality represented but also in the hybrid attitude and behavior performed. Birds can leap, but we do not see this in many depictions. Females leap, but we almost never see them leaping in depictions. “Bird ladies”, aided by powerful flying wings and strong jumping legs, do leap in seals. Bulls run with vigor on seals and frescoes. Bull leapers somersault over bulls on seals, frescoes, figurines, and vessels. “Bull men”, combining strength and somersaulting, tumble *ad infinitum* on the faces of round seals without a sense of ground-air orientation. Hybridity here represents mastery not as a distinct colonization of the “other” by the “I” (e.g., humans prevailing over animals) but as a complex phenomenon of negotiated, recursive, shape-shifting corporealities and performative potential (MESKELL – JOYCE 2003:79, 85; MIRACLE – BORIC 2009:107). Animal-human hybridity, in this sense, creates a ‘third space’ (COUNTS 2008, drawing on the postcolonial work of Homi Bhabha, especially 12 ff.). This third space, detached from full animality or full humanity (if these notions ever existed in Minoan societies), becomes a fertile ground for the actualization of hybridity as an autonomous and legitimate state of existence (MESKELL – JOYCE 2003:80). As Meskell and Joyce put it, this could suggest “a democratization of power and agency, a destabilization of the taxonomic hierarchy that we are familiar with” (MESKELL – JOYCE 2003:84).

Third, hybridity is the mastery of audiences. It appears and/or abounds at times of socio-political shifts, emerging hierarchies, and selective intra- and extra-Cretan networks, for example, in Protopalatial Mallia and Phaistos (STODDART 2009 and personal communication, 18 December 2009). It is restricted to spheres of visual intimacy (STEVENS 2007; WELLS 2008) and administrative control – in fact, most homosomatic animal-human hybrids are in small-scale low relief, except for (late) “centaurs” and “sphinxes”. Hybridity enacts private corporal and behavioral fusions on the physical human body (e.g., a moving “bird lady” seal on a hypothetical wrist). It introduces new (“minotaurs”, “centaurs”) or revives old (“sphinxes”) iconography to echo or even support political change (e.g., Mycenaeanization). It occurs in Knossos, Mallia, Phaistos, Zakros, and Ayia Triada, with some in Tyllissos, Chania, Poros, Sklavokambos, Archanes, and other places with or close to significant palatial, administrative, religious,

and harbor loci at times of potential socio-cultural developments and exchanges. LMI Zakros, for example, was a hive of local industrial activity, artistic adaptation, and international exchange, deliberately mixing pre-existing Cretan elements with extra-Cretan importations, making strong points as an artistic, administrative, and cultural locus. This is probably why “the Zakros types make no impact at all on neo-palatial glyptic” (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:152). Harbors and administrative centers often serve as liminal zones of commerce, culture, society, art, and corporeality, as “borderline places, inhabiting an ‘outside’ dimension” GILMORE 2002:12; see also MIRACLE – BORIC 2009:111–112; WEINGARTEN 2009:144, especially n. 30), as fields where “the reflexivity of cultural exchange” was perhaps being played out (see COUNTS 2008:23 also for an analysis of physical hybridity as an expression of cultural ‘third spaces’). In all these ways, animal-human hybridity went beyond mere fashions, imports, and adaptations of whimsical monsters, perhaps becoming an enactment of transformational power (MIRACLE – BORIC 2009:109), a tool for changing and discerning audiences, who deliberately chose to own and use this somatic diacriticality as a power lever (MESKELL–JOYCE 2003:81; STODDART 2009).

This paper examines Minoan animal-human hybrids without presupposing the mastering prevalence of either side by categorizing the types of hybridity encountered, by contextualizing these and by addressing hybridity as a set of expressions of wider mastery – of bodies, cultures, and audiences. Hopefully this approach contributes to a re-examination of prehistoric corporeal fusion beyond its iconographic boundedness, toward a better understanding of the multiple roles it may have played in artistic, corporeal, social, and political discourses.

Acknowledgments

This paper was first presented at the Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists, Zadar, Croatia, 18–23 September 2007. I would like to thank Derek Counts and Bettina Arnold for including me in their original session, for subsequently inviting me to contribute to this stimulating volume, and for our fruitful discussions on mastery and hybridity. I would additionally like to thank Counts for providing me with a copy of his 2008 paper “Master of the Lion: Representation and Hybridity in Cypriote Sanctuaries.” My thanks also go to Fay Stevens for introducing me to Wells’s *Image and Response in Early Europe* (2008) and for our very helpful discussions on this paper. I further benefited from exchanges with Marika Zeimbekis, Simon Stoddart, and Andrew Shapland, to whom my thanks also go. My research was partly facilitated by my 2009 Margo Tytus Visiting Research Fellowship at the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati. I would like to express my gratitude for this award. All opinions and errors remain my own.

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