



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



**Gesture – Stance – Movement
Communicating Bodies in the Aegean Bronze Age**

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Abstracts

Oral presentations

Did the Goddess with Upright Arms have a Bench Shrine in the Inatos Cave?

Prof Philip P. Betancourt, Temple University Philadelphia, USA

Bench shrines displaying multiple examples of the female figure known in modern times as the Goddess with Upraised Arms are known from a series of Late Minoan IIIB to IIIC sites in Crete. Up to now, they have only been recognized from small buildings situated in settlements. The female figure is identified both by her gesture with the elbows bent and the hands raised above the head and by her association with cylindrical stands (called snake tubes) and the conical bowls they supported (called kalathoi). Some of her shrines also have flat clay plaques with raised borders. All of these elements are present in the material excavated in 1962 in a rescue excavation at the cave shrine of Eileithyia at modern Tsoutsouros (ancient Inatos).

Inatos is on the seacoast in South-Central Crete, east of Phaistos and west of Myrtos. The cave shrine at this site was active from EM III/MM IA until Roman times. An inscription identifies the deity as Eileithyia, protector of childbirth and motherhood, and offerings that are proper for this goddess include figurines of pregnant women, embracing couples, and images of Bes, the Egyptian god of childbirth. However, a series of female clay figurines with the same gesture as the Goddess with Upraised Arms from the cave can be dated from the end of the Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age. In addition to the figurines, several snake tubes are present along with the kalathoi they supported, and one fragment of a clay plaque with a raised border is in the assemblage. The figurines with upright arms from Inatos are particularly interesting because they show some development through time. One of the Iron Age figurines rides side-saddle on a horse or donkey, which is an interesting addition to the iconography of this figure.

Beyond the Body: Facial Expression, Human Interaction and Narrativity in Minoan Iconography

Prof Fritz Blakolmer, University of Vienna, Austria

Although the depiction of facial expression can be observed only sporadically in the iconography of the Aegean Bronze Age, its forms and meanings deserve a closer discussion. Especially in images from Neopalatial Crete we observe mimic expressions such as different versions of open mouth and closed eyes of individual human figures. Based on the iconographical context of examples such as the so-called ‘Harvesters vase’ from Agia Triada and a series of seal-stones, this contribution aims at analysing their meaning as well as the question of a

possible interrelation between several of these images. It is clear that these examples constitute the exception to the rule, a standardised, multivalent depiction of the human face that can be defined as ‘the Clint Eastwood syndrome’; however, all the more challenging is the question of how and why facial expressions were attributed to selected figures. What were the alternatives to mimic expression in Aegean iconography for depicting psychological insight into the character and feeling of a figure in distinct situations such as pain, fear, mourning and other kinds of emotional expression? Were the faces of children, people of advanced age and dead persons depicted in a manner that differs from the Aegean facial stereotype? Additionally, two other issues have to be discussed in this context: the question of individual portraiture in so-called ‘portrait gems’ and the meaning of the aniconic heads of female and male figures in Minoan ritual scenes.

All Too Human? An Evolutionary Approach to Bodily Movement and Gesture in Aegean Art

Prof Anne P. Chapin, Brevard College, USA

Aegean artists are admired today for their sensitive and naturalistic depictions of the human body in wall paintings, relief art, figures and figurines, jewellery, and glyptic art. In particular, artists of the Neopalatial period (MM III-LM I) recorded subtle details of human growth and development from childhood through maturity. This combined with a keen observation of costume and hairstyle permit the identification of male and female age grades and prehistoric attitudes towards gendered social identities. Bodily comportment, too, was an important focus of artistic attention. Distinctive poses (e.g., “Minoan salutes”) and repeating patterns of movement and gesture suggest that Aegean artists and their audiences recognized specific forms of bodily comportment appropriate to Aegean social contexts, including cult and ritual. Recent research indicates that not all bodily vocabulary, however, is culturally determined, and some forms of emotional expression (e.g., anger, aggression) may be universal since they reflect basic human needs and desires. This study investigates Aegean artistic images of bodily comportment, gesture, and expression through the lens of human evolution in an effort to distinguish culturally-specific Aegean gestures from bodily movements and expressions that transcend any single culture and can be understood as biologically human.

Image and affect: The Curious Case of Tanagra

Dr Anastasia Dakouri-Hild, University of Virginia, USA

Representations of emotion, such as art, reflect paradigmatic scenaria in a culture and/or an emotional community within. How can we access knowledge of the ‘affective field’, i.e. the ways in which emotional responses were conditioned and encoded in a particular culture, that endows art with emic meaning? The famous Tanagra larnakes from Late Bronze Age Boeotia are frequently discussed in Aegean scholarship using the language of emotion research: the scenes are ‘unforgettable’, full of ‘dignity’ ‘sensitivity’, ‘astonishment’ and ‘despair’; ‘powerful’, ‘remarkable and moving’; ‘unrestrained and raw’, ‘grim’ (e.g. Vermeule 1965; Immerwahr 1995; Burke 2008; Kramer–Hajos 2015; Middleton 2017). The goal of this paper is neither to decipher what the Tanagran images connote in terms of crystalline emotions, nor to validate or discount prior views on what exact emotions such images express. In order to examine the affectivity of larnax representations, we need to look beyond isolated gestures or figures. Moreover, the larnakes are not just images, but parts of broader funerary performances that made places sticky with emotions, memories and experience. On the premise that emotions are communicated through images and that funerary images are especially emotive contending with the drama and social rift of death, I show that the affectivity of Tanagran images was brought about through a miscellany of embodied, culturally contextualized cues that are frequently gendered. Moreover, the spatial convergence of multiple painted larnakes, sometimes placed side-by-side in a single tomb, offers distinct affective potential to be explored. Subsequently, I cast these observations in the perspective of a broader

affective habitus by exploring beliefs, practices and visual traditions pertaining to emotions and the funeral in the Aegean and the encompassing Bronze Age world.

“It’s in the Hands”: A Gesture of Reverence or Strength?

Dr Eleni Drakaki, The American College of Greece, Greece

In Aegean Bronze Age glyptic, there are numerous representations of female and male figures depicted upright with one arm raised and bent at the elbow and the hand brought near or touching the chest, a gesture that has been associated with ritual practices. There are however only a handful of examples of a variation of this gesture, where (only) male figures are shown with both hands raised and either held towards the chest or touching the chest. This paper will examine the chronological/iconographic development of this gesture in Aegean glyptic in conjunction with the contexts of the seals in question. The possibility of identifying a ‘mainland sub-variation’ to this type of gesture will also be investigated and discussed along with interpretive suggestions of its religious and/or social significance; to this end, iconographic parallels from other contemporary cultures will also be presented.

Two Embracing Men: A Mysterious Gold Pendant from the Cemetery of Petras, Siteia, Crete

Dr Susan C. Ferrence, INSTAP Academic Press, USA

Prof Philip P. Betancourt, Temple University Philadelphia, USA

Dr Alessandra Giunlia-Mair, AGM Archeoanalisi, Italy & Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia

Prof James D. Muhly, University of Pennsylvania, USA

The excavation of the Early and Middle Minoan cemetery of Petras in eastern Crete continues to reveal new and interesting information about the people who were buried there before the foundation of the palace at Petras. In 2018, an Early Minoan II primary female burial was excavated in a lower level beneath House Tomb 2, which was founded in Middle Minoan IB. The woman wore a necklace of various types of jewels including a very small gold pendant cast in the lost-wax technique. The iconography of the piece depicts two male bearded figures in an embrace with specific hand and arm gestures as they kneel and face each other. The imagery of the gold figures, which measure only 1.75 cm in height, is quite unique for Early Minoan Crete and also for the Aegean region during the Early Bronze Age. The pendant represents a level of naturalism not normally seen at this time in the Aegean region. The kneeling embrace of two men is an enigmatic motif among all the cultures around the eastern Mediterranean during the Early and Middle Bronze Age. Nevertheless, the meaning of the pendant is explored, and it sheds light on the customs and beliefs of the élite people of Petras before their palace was built.

The Function of Minoan Cheironomy

Dr Katerina Giannaki, Educator, LTES Language Technology & Education Services, Greece

The arms and hands are the main body parts in a non-verbal form of communication which follows a semiotic code of meaning in a specific context. Minoan hand gesture or ‘cheironomy’ is in line with this principle. Minoan cheironomy features a significant variety of schemata, i.e. distinct configurations of arms and hands, each intended to convey determinate meaning(s) in the context(s) where it appears. These schemata, whether they are contextualised or depicted individually in a two- or three-dimensional representation respectively, can be classified into two major categories, according to the outwards or inwards orientation, position and/or placement of arms, hands and palms: firstly, the open and communicating ones with outwards configurations, which portray the figure connecting/interacting with another entity, be it a living or an inanimate agent, and, secondly, the closed and self-containment schemata with inwards configurations, which render the figure in a self-connectedness state. Thus, in order to effect specific results, the arms and palms can function as conduits of

energy: in the former, transmitted to or received by the external agent and, in the latter, inwardly focused. There can also be a combination of both attitudes displayed by the same figure. Furthermore, the schemata demonstrated may constitute different phases of the same cheironomy, or entirely independent and autonomous cheironomies, in terms of schema and content. Ultimately, irrespective of the possible interpretation we can assign to each schema and its iconographical or archaeological context, this primary distinction is a critical common denominator for the function of Minoan cheironomy.

Expressions of Grief and Gestures of Lament in the Neopalatial Period

Dr Ute Güntel-Maschek, University of Heidelberg, Germany

Descriptions and representations of lament are known from many cultures of the ancient eastern Mediterranean. However, although lamenting or grieving figures have been occasionally identified in Minoan imagery, the structural significance of grief and lament in Late Minoan I ritual and belief has not received substantial attention.

In this paper, which is based on my ongoing iconographic and contextual analysis of gestures in Minoan two- and three-dimensional anthropomorphic representations, I will argue that a considerable number of gestures commonly associated with adoration or the ecstatic invocation/vision of divine epiphanies, should indeed be understood as gestures of lament. Exploring depictions on gold rings, engraved gems, and other pieces of jewellery, in wall-painting, and in bronze and clay figurines, I will demonstrate that lamentation was a major theme in Late Minoan I visual narratives and chosen by the élite for items of personal and administrative display and use, for the mural decoration of rooms such as lustral basins, and for votive figurines offered in peak/open-air sanctuaries, caves, ‘villas’, and funerary contexts of the Late Minoan I period. The gestures as well as their pictorial and physical contexts reveal different causes of grief, including the death or absence of a deity, hero, or ordinary person, or the uncertain fate of seafarers and warriors. This study thus sheds light on an important aspect of Minoan visual narratives and ritual practices, and on the eminent role of élite groups in expressing grief and performing ritual lament in the Late Minoan I period.

The Iconography of the Knossos Snake Goddesses Based on their Gestures, Stances, Movements and Attributes

Dr Bernice R. Jones, Independent Scholar, USA

Among the major works of art from Bronze Age Crete, none epitomize the Minoan civilization more than the three faience statuettes known as “The Snake Goddesses” and none have more intriguing gestures, stances, movements and attributes. All three, identified here as HM 65, HM 64 and HM 63, have hourglass figures and erect stances with swayed back and breasts pronounced. The two large goddesses thrust their arms forward on a downward diagonal with elbows locked. The smaller goddess, HM 65, gestures somewhat as a Mistress of Animals, but with upper arms stretched at shoulder level to the sides and forearms raised upward. These gestures, comportment and snake attributes are unique in MMIIIB-LMII. Evans’ snake reconstructions on HM 65 have been questioned but this study argues for their authenticity. The only parallel for these snake handlers appears on an Egyptian statuette of Beset (protector of pregnant women, childbirth and babies), with moveable arms holding the heads of snakes forward in an apotropaic position. Since Beset appears in Crete already in MMII, I propose that our goddesses adopted and adapted her gestures, attributes and iconography. I further propose that she is the Minoan precursor of Eileithyia, the historical goddess of childbirth who appears at Knossos in Linear B as e-re-u-ti-ja of Amnisos, the cave where she was worshipped from Neolithic through Classical times. With these apotropaic gestures, the goddesses thrust the heads of the serpents forward to spit their venom at the evil demons that threaten pregnant women and newborns.

“Hands on Abdomen”: Unveiling the Polysemy of an Aegean Gesture

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By the term “Hands on Abdomen” we define a widely known Aegean gesture, which is depicted mainly on clay female figurines coming from Minoan peak sanctuaries. In this type of gesture, the figures lay their hands on their belly, sometimes with their hands touching, while at other times not.

This gesture is usually interpreted as a sign of respect and as a pleading towards the worshipped deity for the devotee to have a safe pregnancy or to conceive. Indeed, many figurines of this type display enlarged bellies, a fact that supports the “pregnancy” interpretation.

However, in the case in which the belly is not formed, the gesture may accommodate various interpretative approaches. In this study, we would like to propose a different interpretation of the gesture. More specifically, we will attempt to interpret this kind of figurines under the prism of a female rite of passage regarding the menarche. Female and male rites of passage appear to have been performed in some peak sanctuaries and other types of Minoan sanctuaries, as other studies have shown in the past.

What usually escapes researchers’ attention, when analysing the “Hands on Abdomen” gesture, is that the same or similar movements are rarely performed by male figurines. In this case, most of the above interpretations cannot be applied. On the contrary, we will attempt to approach the male gesture as a movement that, on the one hand, expresses the figures’ emotions and, on the other hand, projects their social status and identity.

The Mycenaean Lunge and Thrust

Prof Robert B. Koehl, Hunter College City University of New York, USA

The discovery in 2015 of the so-called Combat agate in the Griffin Warrior tomb at Pylos generated an international response on account of its magnificent intaglio. However, while it was universally accepted as a “Minoan” masterpiece, its composition and narrative content are argued here to be entirely Mycenaean. As will be shown, all the relevant parallels come from Mycenaean contexts, including two gold bead seals and a stone amygdaloid seal from Shaft Grave III, a gold ring from Shaft Grave IV, and an amethyst amygdaloid seal from Tholos IV at Pylos (CMS I 290). On all examples, one figure stands in a killing gesture called here, the “lunge and thrust.” This consists of two movements involving a shift in body weight: a back move to gain momentum and a lunge forward accompanied by a sword thrust. The seals depict one or the other. This talk will also consider previously cited Minoan parallels. While the Minoan manner of depicting the male body surely inspired Mycenaean artists, Minoan compositions and narrative contexts differ fundamentally, depicting either hunting, where a kill is never shown unlike the “lion duels” on Mycenaean seals, or boxing, where the pugilists stand with both feet planted on the ground for balance and the punch is thrown from the shoulder. While the “lunge and thrust” is argued here as a quintessentially Mycenaean gesture, its iconographic connections with cultures outside of Aegean will be touched upon, as well as its resonances regarding power, dominance, and perhaps kingship.

Gestures in Minoan and Egyptian Art

Prof Nanno Marinatos, University of Illinois at Chicago, USA

Gestures in Egyptian art are well understood because they are accompanied by hieroglyphic signs. In Minoan art, we are lacking textual support: this presents difficulties which, however, may be partially overcome by careful consideration of the iconographical context.

It is proposed here that an additional tool for deciphering Minoan gestures is the comparison between similar ones in Egyptian representations, although we must be cautious not to infer meanings unsupported by

context. The following gestures will be studied: gestures of mourning and pain, dominance and submission, worship, intimacy, and on the mythical level, the up-holding of the firmament by the Minoan goddess.

Kept in the Dark: Bodily Movement as Multisensorial Experience in Minoan Cavernous Spaces

Dr Maria Mina, University of the Aegean, Greece

The proposed presentation focuses on the study of anthropomorphic figurines, which date to the Proto- and Neo-Palatial periods and have been recovered from caves on Crete. On a first level, the anthropomorphic figurines deposited in cavernous contexts are studied in terms of the modelled posture and gesture, anatomical details and attire-related features, which can elucidate aspects related to the depicted gender, age and status. The mentioned attributes are further examined in relation to figurines recovered from synchronous settlements and peak sanctuaries, to assess whether the depicted postures/gestures are context specific. On a second level of analysis, the anthropomorphic figurines are studied in connection with the dark and concealed setting of caves. The context of use and deposition of figurines constitutes the setting in which the modelled posture and gesture may have been instigated through the handling and visual perception of figurines. Furthermore, the study is carried out within the framework of haptic perception to illuminate how figurines, as well as other movable finds, may have transferred movement from the fingers to the mind. Specific features (e.g. burials), as well as finds deposited in caves (such as stone libation tables, clay or stone vases, communion cups and even sistra), suggest that particular practices took place within their walls, which presupposed physical bodily movement on the part of the participants and the attendees. The proposed combined study of depicted posture and gesture of figurines, together with associated features and movable finds, aims to reconstruct movement and bodily comportment by integrating figurines in three-dimensional, multisensorial experience of cavernous spaces.

The Human Body as a Shrine or the Breast of Both Worlds: The Application of Sociobiology and Evolutionary Psychology to the Study of the Iconography of the Human and the Divine in Bronze Age Crete

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The present paper will apply a standard metrical methodology of waist-to-hip ratio (WHR), sexual dimorphism in stature (SDS) and leg-to-body ratio (LBR) used in the fields of Sociobiology and Evolutionary Psychology for the assessment of sexual attractiveness and mate preferences in culture-specific social environments. I will evaluate my findings and analyze some of their possible implications on the social dynamics in the Bronze Age Crete. Stance, gestures, body language and comportment will be analyzed as these relate to the modes of interaction and communication between the sexes. This work will venture into an analytical signification of a broad cultural context and iconographic evidence as these pertain to self-perception, self-presentation and body image. I suggest that the iconography of the human representations in the Bronze Age Crete appears to be centred on sexual desirability to potential mates. I would like to suggest that the human body in Minoan Crete was the place of manifestation, application and worship of the divine. I propose that the centrality of focus on the female breasts as a form of the sexual dimorphism provides a key for our understanding of Minoan culture, religion and society.

Gesture and Movement in Wall Paintings as Directives of Viewing

Dr Lyvia Morgan, Independent Scholar, UK

The paper examines the relationship between human figures in Aegean wall paintings within their architectural context and potential viewer reception. Large scale figures are inextricably bound to their spatial positions in communicating meaning, and it is the relationship between these and the bodily action of the viewer as they move through space that elicits response. Small scale figures lead the viewer's eyes between passages of

meaning. In both, communication between painted figures within the image and between the image and the viewer is orchestrated through gesture, stance and movement. The paper will explore directionality and positions on walls in relation to stasis and movement, on the premise that communicative action is the key to viewer response to painted figures within architectural space.

Tense Bodies and Formal Salutes: Examining Representations of the Male Torso

Dr Céline Murphy, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

The male body in Aegean Bronze Age two- and three-dimensional iconography has formed the subject of many archaeological discussions. The latter have principally revolved around identifying the figures' age, social ranking and occupation by analysing their facial features, the orientation of their heads, the position of their arms and legs, and their hairdos, clothing and accoutrement. Less frequently is attention placed on the way in which the body is held, including on how tense the figures' torso is. Although the torso has been observed in relation to the positioning of the arms, it has not independently formed the subject of much research.

I therefore here propose to examine the male torso in more detail. More specifically, I analyse representations of male figures with arched backs and bulging chests. I suggest that, although subtle, depictions of tension in the upper body played an important role in the indication of the figures' intended communication and thus also possibly, by extension, their social role. Moreover, the recurrence of this bodily comportment in scenes of interaction (be other figures depicted or not) indicates that it also served as a form of greeting and possibly as a form of personal introduction. I examine this hypothesis by comparing depictions of this stance in both two- and three-dimensional iconography and by establishing its patterns of occurrence.

Powerless Images (?). (Mis-)reading Gestures and Stances in Aegean Iconography

Prof. Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, Heidelberg University, Germany

After Paul Zanker's classical study, the "power of images" became a dominant buzzword in Classical Archaeology and related disciplines, referring to the 'magnetic' force that images unfolded by informing, educating, and manipulating the ancient viewer. So far, however, little or no attention has been given to the other direction of this visual interaction, namely the agency that human actors exercised on images, when the first implemented the latter as a medium of visual communication. In most of these cases, the depicted beings or actions were as a rule totally powerless against any attempt by the human actors to understand, translate, or fill them with new meaning. The inability of images to resist alternative readings becomes very obvious especially when modern scholars try to impose on them their own understanding, by providing new – and sometimes wild – hypotheses. The present paper strives to address this hermeneutical problem and focuses on specific gestures and stances in Aegean imagery which have attracted increasing scholarly attention in recent years. The discussion revolves around following key questions: Is the semantic ambiguity of Aegean gestures and stances intended or just an unavoidable obstacle of our etic perspective? What makes a gesture/stance to an image of a straightforward visual message that defies erroneous or new readings? And finally, is there any possibility to predict whether (or how many of) the new interpretations that will be presented in our conference will be valid for the next couple of years?

The Stages of Death in the Late Bronze Age Aegean: Before, During and After the Moment of Dying

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Vassiliki (Vanessa) Pappa, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

Representations of the injured and the dead are thought to be rare, but not uncommon, in the LBA Aegean artistic repertoire. Despite the fact that there was a conscious choice in not portraying violence and bloodshed,

in certain cases, the narrative of the dead or the about-to-be-killed are masterly presented. Already from the late MBA/early LBA, fallen warriors, injured hunters and combatants who are about to be struck, are depicted on a variety of surfaces. Examples on seals, daggers and wall paintings show wounded and dead males, while later in the Mycenaean palatial arts, the theme of the fallen warrior is occasionally met, and in the LH IIIC a few selected scenes include a dead/killed individual.

The aim of this paper is to explore the narrative of death as it is portrayed in different media (and materials) throughout a long period of almost six centuries. Despite the social importance of funeral practices, death is treated very selectively in the pictorial arts. The visual examples are limited suggesting that the theme of dying was neither unknown nor taboo, but was rather used selectively within certain ideological and symbolic contexts. The agony of the individual who is about to receive a fatal blow, to be attacked by a lion, or to be killed by a wild boar, serves certain iconographic codes and purposes, which will be discussed in this paper. Three stages can be identified: before, during and after the dying moment. This triptych is a rare yet integral part of the Aegean Bronze Age pictorial treatment of the body.

A Simple Touch? Reassessing Aegean Bronze Age Depictions of Human and Animal Figures Interacting with a Tree or a Column

Dr Laetitia Phialon, University of Fribourg, Switzerland

Glyptic imagery is central to understanding Aegean Bronze Age ritual activity and religious concepts. The notion of a tree cult in the Aegean, as articulated by Arthur Evans in the early 20th century, is commonly accepted in particular through the reading of glyptic images, whereas the idea of a pillar cult has been challenged. This raises the question as to how far trees, tree-pillars and columns may be interchangeable in iconography of Aegean cult in the Late Bronze Age.

This paper aims to explore how human, animal or fantastic beings are depicted interacting with trees and architectural elements such as the “grand pillar” in Minoan and Mycenaean glyptic images, referring notably to Janice Crowley’s classification. It will first focus on images involving individuals described as grasping, pulling or simply touching trees, drawing attention to the other iconographic components of ritual narratives such as the columnar shrine re-examined recently by Caroline Jane Tully. Particular interest will then be paid to antithetical group compositions. The nature of the attendants flanking a tree or column, their bodily attitude and gesture will be thoroughly discussed. I will argue for a subtle shift in the use of images of trees and columns going from the exploitation of cultic signs in Neopalatial Crete to that of politico-religious symbols in Mycenaean Greece. Finally, this paper is also the opportunity to better assess the significance of touching a column in the funerary sphere by adding two scenes depicted on a larnax from Tanagra to the debate.

Gesturing Age, Posturing Gender. The Neolithic Antecedents of Bodily Comportment in the Aegean

Paz Ramirez-Valiente, University of Nottingham, UK

The Neolithic Aegean represents the starting point of the diversification in bodily comportments in three-dimensional form. For instance, the Folded Arms gesture, typical in figurines from the Bronze Age Aegean, appears for the first time in the Neolithic. The study of anthropomorphic figurines may shed light on the symbolic construction of social identities of which gender and age are a significant factor. The conventionalisms employed by Neolithic sculptors in the representation of gestures and postures in figurines may help us understand the division in age-stages and the variety and ambiguity of gender in the Neolithic Aegean. The research presented in this paper classifies postures and gestures by type in the assemblages from Neolithic Crete and a selection of sites from Thessaly. Those types are analysed statistically in comparison with the sex of figurines. The aim is to distinguish whether or not the results suggest that bodily comportment is related to sex, and possibly also to gender and age. On the contrary, the differences in postures and gestures may be the

result of the materials employed to make the figurines or a chronological development. The preliminary conclusions suggest that different factors determine the modelling of bodily comportment in Neolithic bodies: a) The chronology and materials used for the manufacture of the figurines are related to specific postures and arm-positions. b) Gestures and postures that conceal or emphasise sexual attributes are possibly associated with different age-stages. c) Shared gestures and postures in figurines of different sexual categories may represent similar gender identities.

Overt and Covert Bodily Communication in Bronze Age Crete

Dr Anna Simandiraki-Grimshaw, Bath Spa University, UK

Aegean studies of gestures, stance, movement and bodily comportment have mostly examined, thus far, three things: a) certain classes of bodily depictions; b) whole bodies; c) bodily communication in specific eras or genres. While these approaches have produced very useful insights, they could be augmented, with the aim of enhancing our understanding of bodily communication in the Aegean Bronze Age.

This paper takes Bronze Age Crete as a case study. Firstly, I advocate a new methodological approach: to contextualise depictions in relation to other types of data which denote deliberate bodily communication, such as skeletal configuration and artefact ergonomics. To achieve this, the paper draws on a diachronic, inter-site database which the author has been compiling over a number of years, and which includes artefactual (depictions, epigraphy) but also skeletal data.

Consequently, through the combination of data which, thus far, have been kept separate from a methodological point of view, a survey of overt and (hitherto mostly undervalued) covert bodily communication is attempted. Through this, the paper identifies several phenomena. These include how bodily communication can change ‘in real time’ through manipulation, even in cases of presumed static depictions; and how the ergonomics of some finds is deliberately designed to choreograph bodily movements. They also include how the bodily comportment and actions of partible bodies and hybrids (2D and 3D) can reveal narrative subtexts, but also ontological discourses about what the human body was for its Minoan users – and what it could communicate.

The Gesture of the Male Bronze Figurine from Katsambas

Dr Alexia Spiliotopoulou, Herakleion Ephorate of Antiquities, Greece

This paper offers a new interpretation on the gesture of the bronze male figurine no. X 1829 from Katsambas (near Poros) which is currently displayed at the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion. The gesture is to date unique in Minoan iconography. Initially published by Hatzidakis in 1916, the figurine drew the attention of scholars such as Evans, Verlinden, Sapouna-Sakellarakis, and Pelon among others, who all underlined its importance.

This exquisite specimen of Minoan craftsmanship was found by chance, and out of context, and therefore valuable data relating to its chronology, to the type of structure it was associated with, and to its use are lacking. However, its tall cap and eloquent gesture, clearly meant to be instantly recognized by its onlookers, are matters for discussion.

This reading of the gesture is based on insight gained from my study of the anthropomorphic figurines from the peak sanctuary of Kophinas (Asterousia). Strong parallels appear between the figurines in terms of body proportions and clothing. I focus on these common features as a means to define the identity of the Katsambas figurine and to possibly unveil the nature of the message its unique gesture conveys. I propose that the representation of these types of bodies served to communicate ideas of youth, strength and power, which were clearly matters of concern in the Neopalatial period of Crete.

Against Nature: Tree-Shaking Action in Minoan Glyptic Art as Agonistic Behaviour

Dr Caroline Tully, University of Melbourne, Australia

Minoan gold signet rings are well-known for their depiction of ritual events. Thirty-one ring images depict ritual scenes in which human figures interact with trees. The majority of figures approach the trees in a calm and seemingly reverential manner; however, eight examples depict the ritual participant clasping and vigorously shaking the tree. These appear on gold rings from Knossos, Archanes, Kalyvia, and Poros on Crete (LM IB-III); Vapheio and Mycenae on mainland Greece (LH II-III); as well as an unprovenanced stone seal in New York. The figures all display a particular body posture: standing with bent knees, sometimes bearing their weight on one leg at the front, while their back leg is both extended and supplying thrust, or kicked back and upwards. The pose is suggestive of active movement and is also seen in glyptic depictions of agonistic scenes such as warrior combat, boxing, weapon use, men in combat with real and supernatural animals, bull-leaping, running, men striding with captured women in tow, and hybrid figures such as Minotaurs, bird-men and -women. These iconographic parallels suggest that the tree-pulling pose indicates a coercive or even violent activity. These scenes may depict the attempt to ritually control the natural world through aggression and domination, and to promote the idea that the élite owners of the rings were supremely capable of establishing and maintaining order.

Triumph and Defeat. Emulating Postures of Near Eastern Rulers in Aegean Iconography

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The identification of rulers in Aegean iconography constitutes one of the most problematic issues, and is addressed in numerous studies. This situation is caused by the absence of written sources and clearly defined attributes of rulers, as well as by the way of self-presentation of the ruling élite, which is, at first glance, different from the practice known from Near Eastern cultural regions. However, it is especially the comparison with these regions which appears to be helpful in detecting earthly or divine rulers. Apart from head-dress and garments, inspired by Near Eastern prototypes, we also see some postures and gestures expressing higher status or domination over animals and human beings. This contribution focuses on an analysis of triumph and defeat in depictions of a victor and his enemy. A triumphant hero, ruler or god and defeated mortal or divine enemy constitute one of the most important motifs symbolizing the victory of civilization and its ruler over the wild nature, evil forces and chaos. This motif of a male standing figure in a dynamic posture, striking with a weapon, delivering a fatal blow, opposite a kneeling or laying enemy stands at the beginning of great empires in Egypt or Mesopotamia and was widespread in Levant, Syria and Anatolia. It is especially in the series of fighting scenes, most notably the exceptional Combat Agate from Pylos, that we can follow a fixed iconographic formula of positions and gestures, which is almost identical with the common Near Eastern motif. A detailed comparison of different Aegean and Near Eastern images reveals further evidence for the emulation of this motif, not only in known fighting scenes. Their distribution, contexts and their interpretation elucidate their meaning in the Aegean, as well as the reasons for their adoption and adaptation.

Ariadne's Dance: Staging Female Gesture in Neopalatial Soft Stone Glyptic

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This paper presents three closely related iconographic groups of Neopalatial soft-stone seals, an object group often skirted for its technological and material simplicity, that depict female anthropomorphic figures performing a selection of discrete gestures. Since corporal communicative practices are culturally highly specific, the gestures on these seals have in the past been variously interpreted as adoration, salute or dance. They are now classified and re-evaluated based on the evidence available from Neopalatial soft-stone glyptic and, on a second level, their appearances on other iconographic media such as signet rings and frescoes. The

corresponding gestures in the élite media suggest that these were expressions of an ideology of high-ranking social units communicated through bodily practices with the intention of enforcing or transforming social relations. This approach, combined with insights from the study of the seal contexts that are commonly related to palatial and urban centres, disproves previous assumptions about a general “humble” nature of soft-stone glyptic and its owners/commissioners. Since the seals appear within the tenure of higher ranking Neopalatial socio-political units, the selected gestures are analyzed as a possible device for a palatially instigated communication policy that reinforced social status through choreographed movement of the female body in the context of Minoan ritual.

Posters

Vessel-Based Gestures in Aegean Bronze Age Iconography

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The use of vessels was a fundamental aspect of life in the Aegean Bronze Age. Necessary for cooking, preparing and presenting food, eating and drinking, storing foodstuffs, liquids and material culture, crafting, washing and as portable light sources, they were also incorporated into ritual acts such as libations. These practices required specific gestures and precise engagement with the correct vessels, facilitated by affordances such as handles and stems, that were learned by the body through physical interaction. Analysis of the shapes, affordances and functions apparent within the Bronze Age Aegean vessel corpus provides an overview of the potential range of bodily gestures, which this paper will compare with the known examples from contemporary iconography.

The wide role of vessels and their presence within culturally significant arenas of commensality and religious ceremonies encouraged them to be conceptualised as extensions of the body, as indicated on the Campstool Fresco, or even as bodies or body parts in their own right, such as animal-themed rhyta. Yet only a small subset of vessels is depicted and the variety of associated gestures is equally limited. Why were particular aspects of use emphasised and what meaningful information was conveyed by the repetition of certain gestures? The processes of selection that lay behind such choices form the primary target of investigation for this paper, and the impact these had on the categories of personhood shown engaging with vessels is also discussed.

do-ra pe-re: Bodies in Ritual Action(s) in the Aegean 2nd Millennium B.C.

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One of the most important practices (apart from libations and communal feasting, animal sacrifice) of official cult in the Aegean during the 2nd millennium B.C. is ritual procession. Since the rulers expressed their authority not through political or warrior imagery, but through the manipulation and control of ritual, Aegean Late Bronze Age two-dimensional iconography, especially wall paintings, provide rich documentation while additional evidence is offered by related representations on other media such as on golden signet rings, sealstones and clay sealings, painted sarcophagi, stone and clay vessels. My presentation will focus on the bodies and the gestures of participants in ritual processions and the pictorial formula that enables the viewers to identify them. What messages were conveyed by the bodies of the worshippers in line (female, male, or even fantastic creatures, such as the so-called Minoan Genii) carrying, in their stretched out hands, cult equipment and objects of various kinds intended as gifts for a deity or her impersonator? What is the role of the clothing which covers their bodies? Were there formalities (or informalities) in the ritual processions of the Aegean 2nd millennium B.C. or did they just comply with a universal norm of ritual procession?

Gesture, Action and Conflict: Hunters and Prey in Mycenaean Wall Paintings

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The introduction of figurative representation is an important component of the pervasive changes which took place in the southern mainland at the transition to the Mycenaean period. The imagery of the early Mycenaean period (MH III/LH I – II) is characterized by an obsession with fighting and hunting scenes, involving male figures and wild animals. These action scenes become a recurrent motif in Mycenaean iconography, attested on different media (e.g. seals /rings, jewellery, precious vessels, weapons and stelae), but remain localised in élite contexts (primarily the Mycenae Shaft Graves, or rich tombs). In this sense, fighting and hunting scenes provide a privileged point of view for an investigation on the way human bodies were conceptualised and depicted in a context of aggressive interaction. In this paper I would like to provide a systematic study of fighting and hunting scenes in early Mycenaean imagery. More specifically, I would like to investigate how warriors and hunters were depicted, how their bodies were rendered – e.g. whether facial or anatomical details were emphasized or omitted – how they were dressed and groomed, and how they interacted (bodily posture, gestures). I also want to examine the degree of variation or standardization observed in these different aspects of hunting and fighting scenes, also considering the medium of representation and its social context of use and deposition. I would like to conclude with some thoughts about a) the ideological significance of fighting and hunting, i.e. the élite ideal of the young, athletic and beautiful warrior/hunter and the metaphorical relationship between the two activities, and b) the construction of personhood in relation to the natural/animal world.

Mirror Images: Dual Bodies and Illusion in Aegean Art

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The frequent use of symmetry in Aegean art has long been recognized. Drawing on Near Eastern imagery, animals in particular are often shown reflected about a central figure or object, or addorsed to either side of a vertical void. In mainland jewellery and appliqué, however, it sometimes happens that two creatures are posed belly-to-belly with no intervening space or feature, and so together form a melded image. This paper investigates such arrangements in light of these resulting composited forms, which it is argued often assumed the general appearance of other recognizable motifs. Paired argonauts, for example, transform into octopuses or sacral ivy. This use of mirrored bodily comportment to create double meanings, I further contend, was not accidental but served as a form of intentional visual “play,” replete with symbolic meaning and comparable to optical illusions evident in other Aegean artworks.

The Last Man Standing – Body Poses of Defeated Warriors in Late Bronze Age Aegean Iconography and Their Egyptian Comparanda

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Warrior iconographies played an important role in the formation of warrior identities in the early stages of the Late Bronze Age Aegean. It is self-evident that the warrior identity was created in reference to the representations of successful and victorious warriors, rather than the defeated ones. Consequently, representations of defeated warriors were addressed less frequently. This paper analyzes the representations of defeated warriors depicted in the early Late Bronze Age Aegean iconographic sources. It focuses on the body poses of defeated warriors, as well as the relationship to their conquerors. Most of the depictions of defeated warriors represented in the Late Bronze Age Aegean iconography have their parallels in Egyptian iconography. Through a comparative analysis of depictions of defeated warriors in Egypt and the Aegean, this paper aims to provide a better understanding of cultural connotations that different body poses might have held in different parts of the Late Bronze Age East Mediterranean. The paper suggests a close connection in the way that the

positions of the body were used to depict defeat, fear and obedience both in Egyptian and Aegean representations of defeated enemies. Moreover, the paper argues that the depictions of the ultimate Aegean warrior or a hero, usually represented as a victorious swordsman defeating enemies, are an Aegean appropriation of the Egyptian motif of a pharaoh smiting enemies.

Funeral or ‘Biography’? Re-considering the Potential Identities of Figures on the LM III Hagia Triada Sarcophagus

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While interpretations regarding the specific meanings of the painted scenes adorning the famed limestone sarcophagus from Hagia Triada have varied, their characterisation as depictions of funerary rites has been overwhelmingly favoured. Of the numerous human figures illustrated, one—the stiffly posed male ‘recipient’ in a processional scene—has been singled out as the deceased individual for whom the sarcophagus was produced. This paper aims to highlight the tenuousness of such ideas given the lack of corroborating contextual/iconographic evidence. Although it cannot be assumed that the iconography portrays the sarcophagus’s occupant(s), a more sustainable explanation is that it was used for the burial of a high-status female. Women—perhaps the same individual depicted multiple times—occupy the prominent position in all but one narrative scene. Together with their elaborate attire and spatial relationship to other figures, gesture and bodily expression serves to communicate their role as the leading agents in the ceremonial activities depicted. The thematic relationship with frescoes from the nearby settlement suggests the iconography of the sarcophagus was intended to draw a connection with these spaces (cf. Privitera 2016), and thus may relate important ritually-charged events connected with the biography or occupation of the deceased. This interpretation is consistent with the broader socio-political context of burial container decoration during Crete’s Post-palatial period, when styles and themes associated with elite art (including palatial wall paintings) were re-adapted for clay larnakes, underlining an expanded ideological role for funerary events following the decline of the palaces as centres of religious and ceremonial activity.

From the Here and Now, to the There and Then: The Most Powerful Woman in Minoan Crete?

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Nowadays, when we think of figurines and Palaikastro, in our minds’ eye, we see the famous Palaikastro “kouros”, a dazzling chryselephantine statuette, remarkable for the artist’s stunning attention to detail and realism. However, other figurines were found at Palaikastro that attract little attention in the here and now. I would like to suggest that at least one of them was likely quite famous and powerful in the there and then, despite a lack of individuating features and a diminutive size of just 4.5 cm in height. The figurine is stylistically dated to the Neopalatial period and was found in an urban deposit, likely a pit containing ritual material, dated to the final palatial period. The area designated as X41 was a Neopalatial doorless space, defined by LM I foundation walls. Although her facial features were not well defined, she is unusual for being the only bronze figurine from Crete with her hands placed on her hips, a gesture associated with status on seals and sealings. She is also one of only two female bronze figurines wearing jewellery in the form of a necklace. The deposit also contained white ashes, pottery, four to five clay bull heads, fragments of twenty clay lamps, and bovine bones and horn cores. Based on recent studies of foundation, repair, and termination rituals, this study reconsiders the significance of this figurine and concludes she was far more important than originally believed, perhaps the most powerful woman in Minoan Crete.

Talking from the Grave: Communicative Gestures and the Creation of Communal Ties in EBA Burials from the Petras Cemetery, Siteia, Crete

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The human body is a powerful medium of communication that is not only is subject to, but also shapes, social and religious narratives. Until recently, the understanding of these narratives was largely approached through the detailed examination of the body as was portrayed in iconographic representations. Advances in theoretical and methodological approaches, however, emphasized the role of embodied and corporeal experiences in the negotiation and re-invention of personal and communal identities and stressed out the fact that the body itself should be seen as material culture since it can be altered by social and cultural practice. In this respect, the present paper examines the symbolic plasticity of the body during the EBA funerary ritual through osteological evidence, ranging from the different modes of placing and interacting with the defleshed or the still decomposing human remains to the particular gestures and stance evident in the few primary burials of the Petras cemetery. Similarities in the form of disposal as well as the role of gender and status are examined in an attempt to understand the social and religious claims that constructed these embodied identities. These identities, despite fractal, seem to be shared as the repeated modes of interaction and the recurring gestures suggest. The very fact that some of these gestures have iconographic counterparts implies the presence of a prevalent Minoan cosmology which in the ritual dialectic is being used for the negotiation, re-creation, and establishment of social structures.

Non-Narrative Rendering of Individual Identity: The Diagramming of Femaleness in the Adorants Fresco

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The tripartite scheme of ritual transformation invented by van Gennep as a pattern of the rites of passage has been warmly welcomed in other interpretative disciplines. In Minoan studies, the *Adorants Fresco* has become the case study of this approach (e.g., Marinatos, Davis). Even though this analytical category has undergone partial critique in ritual studies from the nineties (Grimes), in specific historical and geographical areas of the study of religion (e.g., Classical Greece) slightly later, it is still often suggested in Minoan studies when the low narrativity of the depiction is correlated with its ritual significance.

My paper will propose to focus again on the missing narrative unity of the *Adorants Fresco* (Marinatos 1993, Cain). No internal communication between the figures is depicted, including views and body postures, or other communicative body movements. Combined with the absence of the fixed point of the external viewer, typical for Minoan frescoes (Chapin), the whole "dynamics of focalization" (Bal) seems to be missing. The fresco does not present any dramatic scene for the acting figures, thus no ritual enactment.

As an alternative interpretation, the fresco's diagrammatic organization will be suggested. Arguing for the non-narrative rendering of the subject theme and contrary to Immerwahr, the de-individualized identity of the depicted figure(s) will be accentuated. The fresco presents possibly three aspects of a woman's life, thus depicting female identity as almost fragmentary, with far-reaching consequences for our interpretation of its cultural construction.