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ΜΕΣΟΓΕΙΑΚΗ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗ ΕΤΑΙΡΕΙΑ  
ΠΕΘΥΜΝΟ 2021

**“The Erotic Goddess of the Syme sanctuary, Crete”  
Additions and corrections to the 2009 article**

*Angeliki Lebessi*

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# ΕΥΛΙΜΕΝΗ

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**Βιβλιοκρισία – Book Review**

Jasna Jeličić Radonić, Hermine Göricke-Lukić and Ivan Mirnik, *Faros. Greek, Graeco-Illyrian and Roman Coins III* (Biblioteka Knjiga Mediterana 99), Split 2017, 305 pages [ISBN 978-953-163-454-0 (KKS). ISBN 978-953-352-017-9 (FFST)].  
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## Περίληψεις / Summaries / Zusammenfassungen /

### Sommaires / Riassunti

**Angeliki Lebessi**, “The Erotic Goddess of the Syme sanctuary, Crete”: Additions and corrections to the 2009 article, *EYAIMENH* 22 (2021), 1-8.

Η πρόσφατη δημοσίευση των 238 αναθημάτων από πηλό, τα οποία εικονίζουν μορφές διαφορετικού φύλου και οντότητας (υπερβατικής ή θνητής) κατά περιόδους της λειτουργίας του ιερού της Σύμης, όπως και η ολοκληρωμένη μελέτη της κεραμικής της 2ης χιλ. έως και του 4ου αι. μ.Χ. καθιστούν αναγκαίες ορισμένες προσθήκες στο τιτλοφορούμενο άρθρο. Παράλληλα επιβάλλουν και την αναθεώρηση μερικών υποθετικών εκτιμήσεων μου, οι οποίες σχετίζονται με την Ερωτική Θεά του ιερού της Σύμης.

Following the recent publication of the clay anthropomorphic votives from the Syme sanctuary (Crete) and their comparable thematic relation to the anthropomorphic bronze offerings from the same sanctuary published back in 1985, I realized that certain hypotheses, which I had formulated in my 2009 article concerning the Erotic Goddess at Syme, were wrong. The isolation of two transcendental female figures out of a total number of 238 anthropomorphic votives, which depict both male and female figures either mortal or immortal, necessitates additions to and, even more so, the revision of my erroneous assessments in the 2009 article.

**Alexandros Mazarakis Ainian – Alexandra Alexandridou – Kornilia Daifa – Eleni Chatzinikolaou**, Sacred, Communal or Private “Oikoi”? Ambivalent edifices of the Archaic period on the island of Despotiko in the Cyclades, *EYAIMENH* 22 (2021), 9-40.

Το πλούσιο αρχαϊκό ιερό του Απόλλωνα, που βρίσκεται στη θέση Μάνδρα στο Δεσποτικό, δυτικά της Αντιπάρου, αποτελεί τον κύριο πόλο ερευνητικού ενδιαφέροντος για την ακατοίκητη νησίδα. Ωστόσο, η εν εξελίξει ανασκαφή έχει φέρει στο φως μια εκτεταμένη εγκατάσταση, που περιλαμβάνει 22 κτίρια, που εκτείνονται χρονολογικά από την Πρώιμη Εποχή του Σιδήρου έως την ελληνιστική περίοδο.

Η κατανόηση του χαρακτήρα και της χρήσης αυτών των κτηρίων είναι ουσιαστική για την ερμηνεία της θέσης. Η αποσαφήνιση των ορίων μεταξύ «λατρευτικού» και «κοσμικού» σε χωροταξικό επίπεδο μπορεί να επιτευχθεί με την εφαρμογή αυστηρής μεθοδολογίας.

Στο πλαίσιο Ερευνητικού Ευρωπαϊκού Προγράμματος προορισμένου για υποψήφιους διδάκτορες, επιχειρήθηκε η συστηματική μελέτη της αρχιτεκτονικής και της υλικής σκευής συγκεκριμένων οικοδομημάτων που χρονολογούνται πριν την διαμόρφωση του αρχαϊκού ιερού με στόχο τη διασαφήνιση της λειτουργίας του.

Στο παρόν άρθρο συζητείται η μεθοδολογία που υιοθετήθηκε για την επίτευξη των παραπάνω, καθώς και τα διαφορετικά τεχνολογικά μέσα (φωτογραμμετρία, Γεωγραφικά Συστήματα Πληροφοριών [GIS] και τα Εφαρμοσμένα μαθηματικά). Έμφαση δίνεται στα πρώτα αποτελέσματα της συνδυαστικής μελέτης των αρχιτεκτονικών καταλοίπων και των κινητών ευρημάτων.

The recent discoveries at the site of Mandra on the island of Despotiko in the Cyclades is here used as a case study for showing the blur and rather unnecessary divisions between these notions and the need to adopt a more inclusive view of life and activity in the early Aegean.

In the frame of the Research Project Sacred, Public or Private Buildings? Ambiguous sites and structures in the Early Cyclades, a strict methodology has been adopted, aiming at deciphering the “character” of a number of buildings. The adopted methodology has been based on the detailed documentation of the architectural remains and the related finds. In the former case, the photogrammetry of the buildings, including ground plans and wall sections, has been combined with a structural analysis mainly involving the descriptive representation of the architectural remains and the examination of the techniques and materials used during the construction process. The various types of finds from each building have not been only classified according to their types, but an emphasis has been placed on their spatial distribution revealed through the use of the Geographic Information System (GIS). On this basis, a synthetic study both of the architectural remains and of the artefacts in their original context was possible, elucidating the function of the selected buildings and their components. At the same time, a list of material correlates was created to provide a basis as secure as possible for designating each building’s “character”.

**Μαρία Γκιώνη,** Η κατοικία στην επικράτεια της Κορίνθου από την Αρχαϊκή έως και την Ελληνιστική περίοδο. Μια πρώτη κριτική προσέγγιση, *EYAIMENH* 22 (2021), 41-111.

The examination of the evolution of the Corinthian houses from the Protocorinthian to the Hellenistic period through published material has shown that their walls were mostly made of stone foundations, on which were placed mud bricks. Initially the walls are sometimes curved and tangled in slightly blunt or acute angles. Gradually this trend tends to be reduced until the 4th c. BC. The openings between the inner rooms probably didn’t bear doors.

During the Protocorinthian period the houses are carefully constructed. They already have courtyards, whose place is not yet at the southern part of the house. The arrangement of each house is very different. The great majority of the archaic houses in Greece had just one or two rooms, so the number of five or six rooms of Houses 2 and 6 (see Appendix 4 with the catalogue of houses) respectively in the city center displays a complex social differentiation in Corinth during the Protocorinthian period, that is relevant with the commercial and industrial bloom of Corinth, as well as the making of the city-state. In the 6th c. BC the houses are equally good constructions, almost rectangular in plan, some of them more irregular. The court appears in the middle and there are series of rooms around it. From the 5th c. BC onward the tile roof appears, the courtyard is located in the southern part or in the center of the house, and a *pastas* appears at its north or west. *Pastas* is absent during the centuries to follow, even though it occurs elsewhere during this period, e.g. at Olynthus. During the 5th c. BC the houses had no regular plan or common size. However, in the houses that were not erected on previous constructions one can better discern the new characteristic elements of the era, such as the direct course of the walls, the right angles, the big cut stones for the walls.



Even in the 5th c. BC, the spaces cannot be identified with a certain use, except for the court. In the beginning of the 4th c. BC the cellar for the storage of food appears. Cellars are also used in the Hellenistic times. In a fourth c. BC house the possible traces of the evolution of the *pastas*, the *peristyle* was also found. In the 3rd c. BC the Long Building no. 28 in the Panagia Field and the long 5-room Building in the north side of the Rachi settlement at Isthmia probably were used as storage buildings that served houses with industrial character. The houses themselves on Rachi have a simpler plan than those of the previous period, less rooms with more linear arrangement, but they usually include a court at the south. Pits for storage amphoras with a formed floor occasionally occur through all the periods examined.

During the whole period examined there are a lot of examples of house industry, however due to lack of further evidence we do not know the percentage of them in relation to the non-industrial houses. A new type of house industry emerges on the Rachi settlement in the 3rd c. BC, with alike pressing rooms for making oil or wine. The character of the settlement on Rachi suggests that there was a central organization of its enterprise, probably forced by the Macedonians who held Corinth at the time.

The Protocorinthian wells were a distance of a few meters away from the houses they served. From the 6th c. BC onward the wells appear in the courtyards, in the course of change of the house plans towards a more introverted character. In the Hellenistic settlement of Rachi at Isthmia, one single well and one pear-shaped cistern served the whole of the settlement, showing that the settlement was under central management. During the Hellenistic period pear-shaped cisterns are dominant. The first example lies beside House no. 41 at Perachora.

The great cisterns that were used as part of a house industry appear in the 4th c. BC. The hard plaster with which they are covered inside shows their probable use as rainwater collectors.

The floors of the Protocorinthian houses are quite elaborate. Pebble floors are mostly preferred at the time. In the 5th c. BC the most common floors were made from clay or from plaster. The plaster floor appears then for the first time and is mostly used in the *andrones*. From the end of the 5th c. BC appear the pebble floors with a presentation of animals or plants that are used in the *andrones* as well. The floor from chipped limestone is used in the courtyards because of its great endurance. The pebble and the hard plaster floors are more elaborate to construct, whereas the clay floor is more careless.

The first *andron* appears in the 6th c. BC at Perachora. This innovation maybe has to do with the nearby Heraeum which at that time was an important centre of circulation of ideas from all over the known world, especially from the East. In the 4th c. BC *andrones* occur at the Houses nos 12 and 40, but then they disappear.

In the Archaic Era no traces of decoration have been saved. From the end of the 5th c. BC there is a tendency to decorate the interior, for example with painted walls, pebble mosaics in *andrones* and a peristyle. In the circumference, Perachora doesn't follow the trend for decoration. In the 3rd c. BC there is a turn towards industrial or rural houses, probably due to the Macedonians holding Corinth at the time.

Three Protocorinthian houses in the city centre were built in linear alignment, which is a characteristic element of the making of the *asty* throughout the Archaic era.

The same alignment appears at the same spot in the 4th c. BC during the erection of three new houses, however, we're left with no other traces for a similar system of city blocks in the city. In the 5th c. BC the houses (especially those with older phases) have a lack of symmetrical elements in plan, and the public streets follow the course of the irregular house walls. The houses at Perachora are mostly solitary structures and not parts of an organized settlement plan. In the Hellenistic period the Rachi settlement grows in between streets that cross each other at right angles, however the houses are irregular in plan and different in size.

Aqueducts are used for the first time along with wells in the 5th c. BC and continue in the 4th c. BC. In the 3rd c. BC only one example of a house aqueduct is known.

In the 6th and 5th c. BC local sanctuaries were occasionally established over abandoned houses within the *asty*, a practice not found elsewhere.

**Mariusz Mielczarek**, Rhodes and the Bosphorus. A contribution to the discussion, *EYAIMENH* 22 (2021), 113-120.

An inscription dated to the reign of King Pairisades II (284/3-ca 245 BC), the son of King Spartocus III (304/3-284/3 BC) and carved on the base of a monument aroused great interest, becoming the main argument in the discussion about the relationship between Rhodes and the Bosporan state in the 3rd c. BC.



## **“THE EROTIC GODDESS OF THE SYME SANCTUARY, CRETE”: ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS TO THE 2009 ARTICLE\***

Following the recent publication of the clay anthropomorphic votives from the Syme sanctuary (Crete) and their comparable thematic relation to the anthropomorphic bronze offerings from the same sanctuary published back in 1985<sup>1</sup>, I realized that certain hypotheses, which I had formulated in my 2009 article concerning the Erotic Goddess at Syme, were wrong. The isolation of two transcendental female figures out of a total number of 238 anthropomorphic votives, which depict both male and female figures either mortal or immortal<sup>2</sup>, necessitates additions to and, even more so, the revision of my erroneous assessments in the 2009 article.

The excavations down to bedrock, wherever this was possible, and the recent completion of the study of the pottery of the 2nd and the 1st millennia BC down to 300 AD by Dr Kostis Christakis and Dr Antonis Kotsonas respectively, allows us to date the earliest use of the sanctuary in the transitional MM IA/MM IB period<sup>3</sup>. Since its foundation, the use of the sanctuary was continuous down to the 7th c. AD. The date the last pilgrims visited the sanctuary is based on the recent study of lamps which were found next to the spring and inside building C-D of the Hellenistic and Roman period which had undergone many repairs; the latest examples of lamps date to the 7th c. AD<sup>4</sup>.

The changes in dedicatory practices during so many centuries are numerous. However, there are two radical socio-ideological changes that are reflected in the offerings of worshippers. The first, which appears in the sanctuary during the early 9th c. BC, manifests the trickling down of the Minoan-Postpalatial past, as is evident from the bones of sacrificed quadrupeds<sup>5</sup> and the traditional rituals of binding, self-flagellation and tree worshipping that are represented on five votives from the sanctuary<sup>6</sup>. In contrast, the

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\* Lebessi 2009. For reasons of convenience, it was deemed necessary to translate this article into English as was the case for the one published in AJA in 2009. Dr. Anastasia Lampropoulou and my collaborator in the Syme sanctuary excavations Dr. Poly Muhly undertook the translation.

<sup>1</sup> Lebessi 2021, 1985 and 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Lebessi 2021, 3-4, 275-282.

<sup>3</sup> Compare the plan: Lebessi 2009, 113, fig. 2 with the final plan of the site: Lebessi 2021, color pl. A.

<sup>4</sup> Lebessi 2021, 188-189; Muhly (forthcoming). For the date of the reconstructions based on lamps, cf. Vogeikoff-Brogan 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Lebessi 2021, 181-183.

<sup>6</sup> Lebessi 2021, 101-102, 194-195, 117-118, n. 461 and 197-199 (respectively).

second change that appears in the 4th c. AD renounces the pagan past of the sanctuary. This ideological rupture is marked by the Christian practice of a female burial in the north side of the newer of the two chapels; the woman was probably the donor for its reconstruction<sup>7</sup>.

The innovative change that took place from the early 9th c. BC on is limited to the transcendental entities of the sanctuary whose properties are rendered by color and individualized gestures<sup>8</sup>. On the contrary, Minoan religion perceived the presence of the divine as a momentary visionary communication. The trait of individualization which characterizes the iconography of the Protogeometric and Geometric style does not pertain to mortal female figures as I had mistakenly assumed in my article concerning the Erotic Goddess of the Syme sanctuary<sup>9</sup>.

The absence of mortal female figures in the mountainous forest environment of the sanctuary is justified since the area was the place for male activities; moreover, men outnumber women during all periods of the use of the sanctuary with the exception of Early Christian times. However, due to the changing social conditions in the course of the 7th c. BC there is an increased presence of women in the otherwise male dominated sanctuary of Syme; these female worshippers were probably members of prominent families (*oikoi*)<sup>10</sup>.

After the excavation in depth conducted in squares H-Θ50-51 my earlier hypothesis for the presence of a xoanon in the narrow eastern room of building L dating to the late 2nd millennium BC became untenable<sup>11</sup>. The shallow, off-center pit containing carbonized wood remains and the ruined paved floor, where fragmentary ritual vases of the LM IIIC and the Subminoan periods were found (fig. 1), are probably the result of successive natural disasters that affected the area of the sanctuary<sup>12</sup>.

The final results of the excavations do not substantiate an in situ performance of the ritual of binding within any of the structures of the sanctuary, as was erroneously noted in my earlier article on the Erotic Goddess. Nor is it probable that figurine 20020 of the early Protogeometric style (fig. 2) was the votive offering of a prominent female worshipper, since the sanctuary was not accessible to women during the Protogeometric and the Geometric periods of its use<sup>13</sup>. Even though the iconography of the votive offerings does not provide any information concerning the structure where the ritual of binding took place, nevertheless, there is an offering which sheds light on its origins.

A fragmentary miniature figurine dating to the Subminoan period that was found scattered around the site preserves painted binding bands around the feet, the hips and the upper torso; the way they are rendered as a web of fine lines gives the impression of a dress (fig. 3)<sup>14</sup>. It may be indirectly surmised that the miniature female figure would have

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<sup>7</sup> Lebessi 1999, 193-195, figs 1-2, pl. 114.

<sup>8</sup> Lebessi 2009, figs 3-4, 14-18.

<sup>9</sup> Lebessi 2009, 524.

<sup>10</sup> Lebessi 2021, 9, 101-102, AK 13, pl. 5, fig. 27.

<sup>11</sup> Compare the plan: Lebessi 2009, fig. 2 with the final plan of the site: Lebessi 2021, color pl. A-B

<sup>12</sup> For the history of excavation of building L: Lebessi 1980, 417, pl. 220β, insert pl. I; 1985, 266, pl. 127ε, insert pl. 127. For details concerning natural disasters in the excavated area of the sanctuary, cf. Muhly (forthcoming).

<sup>13</sup> Lebessi 2009, 528-529, fig. 6.2. For example: Lebessi 2021, AK. 65-69, pl. 26 and AK 87-90, pls 30-31.

<sup>14</sup> Lebessi 2021, 9, 101-102, AK 13, pl. 5, fig. 27.

been depicted with upraised arms since there are no traces of arms in the preserved part of the torso. The bonds are rendered in accordance with the style of the female figurine, and this is evident not only in the case of the figurines from Syme (figs 2-3), but also in the figure of the “Goddess with Upraised Arms” of the early LM IIIC period that was found in a deposit at Gazi, Heraklion (fig. 4). On the latter, the bonds on the face and the crossing of the bonds on the neck make their identification as decorative cloth bands highly unlikely<sup>15</sup>.

On the basis of the above representational data, we may conclude that the bearer of the binding ritual was the local population who gets incorporated into the renewed state polity system from the 10th c. BC on. The same mechanism is at work in the case of other rituals such as libation, self-flagellation and tree-worship which are depicted in terracotta and bronze anthropomorphic votives of the sanctuary from the Protogeometric-Geometric period down to the 7th c. BC<sup>16</sup>.

The origins of self-flagellation can be traced in figurines of the LM IIIB or early LM IIIC period<sup>17</sup> and that of libation in Minoan seals<sup>18</sup>. Despite the persistence of the worshippers of the 1st millennium BC in performing the ritual of tree-worship, the rite maintains its autonomy whenever and wherever it appears<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, contextual evidence from the Syme sanctuary indicates the successive transformation in mortals’ perception regarding the effect of tree-worship.

In the case of two cutout plaques of the late Middle Daedalic period we have the depiction of the ritual itself (fig. 5) and its incarnation in the figure of Hermes who appears among tree branches (fig. 6). On a late 6th c. BC cutout plaque the property of Hermes, who is here depicted as an archer, is indicated by two tree branches that sprout from his hair (fig. 7)<sup>20</sup>, while the concept of tree worship is concealed under the epithet ΚΕΔΡΙΤΑ (Kedrites). This epithet for Hermes is only used in the case of Syme and is found inscribed on utilitarian vases of the Hellenistic period, where, next to the adjective of the honored god, there is also the name of the votary and of the city he comes from. The same epithet referring to Hermes, the honored god in the sanctuary, is also found in a dedicatory majuscule inscription of the 3rd c. AD<sup>21</sup>.

Such an early representational annotation of rituals of the past is nowhere attested in the iconography of mainland Greece. It is not until the 5th c. BC that we have xoana statues of Artemis in the sanctuary of Rhamnous, while in the 4th c. BC there are examples of statuettes depicted with bonds; moreover, there is plenty of testimony in late literature that indicates the use of xoana from perishable material, which, however, remains to be proved<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Lebessi 2009, 526-527, figs 4-5. For an opposite view, cf. Rethemiotakis 1998, 114-115, fig. 53; 2001, 66, fig. 76 and 138-139.

<sup>16</sup> Libation: Lebessi 1985, AK A11, pl. 6, 42; 2002, AK 21, pl. 20; 2021, AK. 34, pl. 14, fig. 31. Self-flagellation: 2002, AK 14, pl. 14; 2021, AK 53, pl. 19. Tree-worship: 1985, AK A22, pl. 15 and 54.

<sup>17</sup> Lebessi 1991, 104-112.

<sup>18</sup> Marinatos 1990-1991, 79-83.

<sup>19</sup> Burkert 2005, 31-32 for its performance in the sanctuary of Dodona and the intervention of the priesthood regarding the interpretation of the oracles.

<sup>20</sup> Lebessi 1985, AK 21-22, pl. 15 and 54, AK A58, pl. 32 and 34.

<sup>21</sup> For details, cf. Lebessi 2021, 197-200.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed discussion with pertinent bibliography, cf. Despinis 2004; 2007.

Based on the above discussion, I assume that the reason behind the early depiction of traditional rituals in Cretan iconography is due to social factors. Namely, the local population of the dynamic Minoan past gets gradually integrated into the transformed polity system and evolves during the 7th c. BC. From this time on, the consolidation of the oligarchic aristocratic polity of Cretan cities inhibited an individual initiative during the 6th c. BC and also any further involvement of the political regime during the classical period when other regions of Greece flourished<sup>23</sup> as is expressed by the presence of oversized xoana and votive statuettes depicted with bonds.

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<sup>23</sup> For the gradual development of the political system from the early 9th down to the 4th c. BC, cf. Lebessi 2021, 180-188.

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**Angeliki Lebessi**

Ypsilantou 76

18532 Piraeus





Fig. 1. Syme: East room of roofed building L.

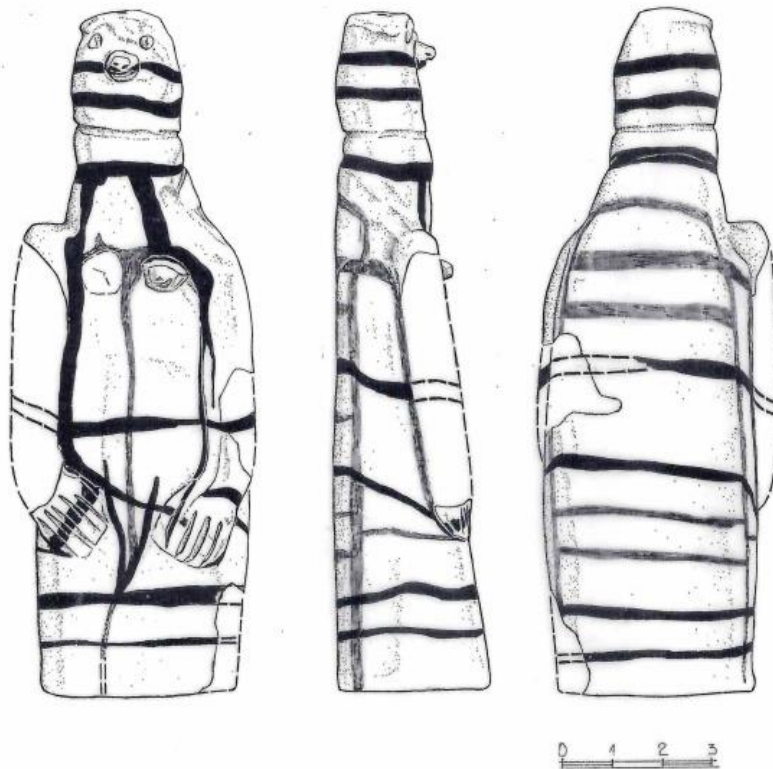


Fig. 2. Syme: Drawing of the figurine of the Erotic Goddess (Protogeometric style).

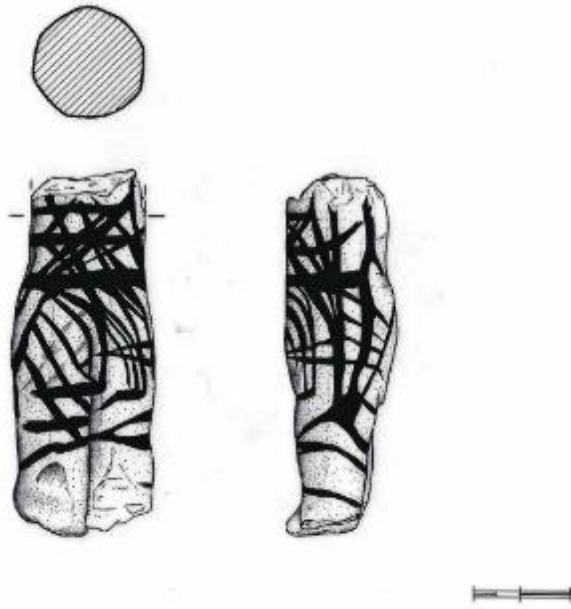


Fig. 3. Syme: Drawing of a female figurine (Subminoan style).

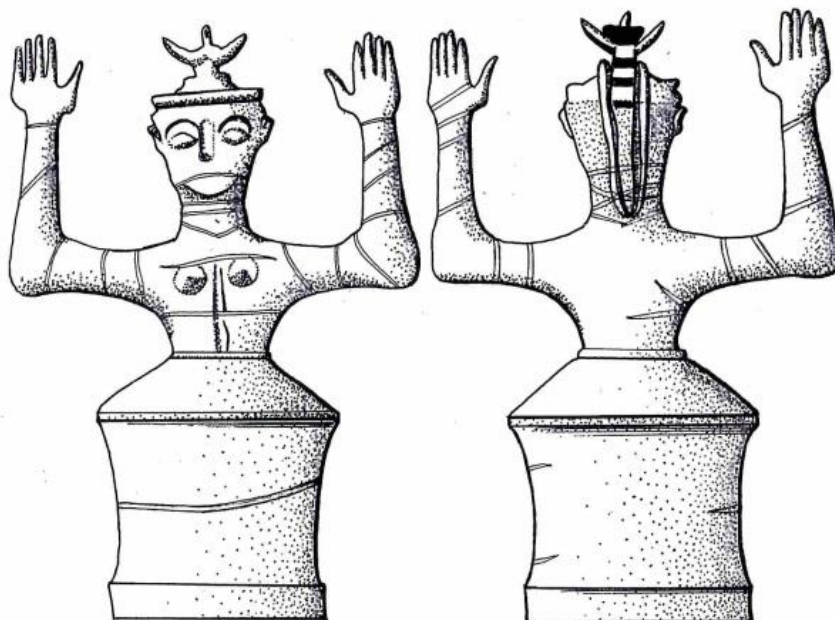


Fig. 4. Gazi, Heraklion: Figurine of the bound "Goddess with Upraised Arms" (LM IIIC period).

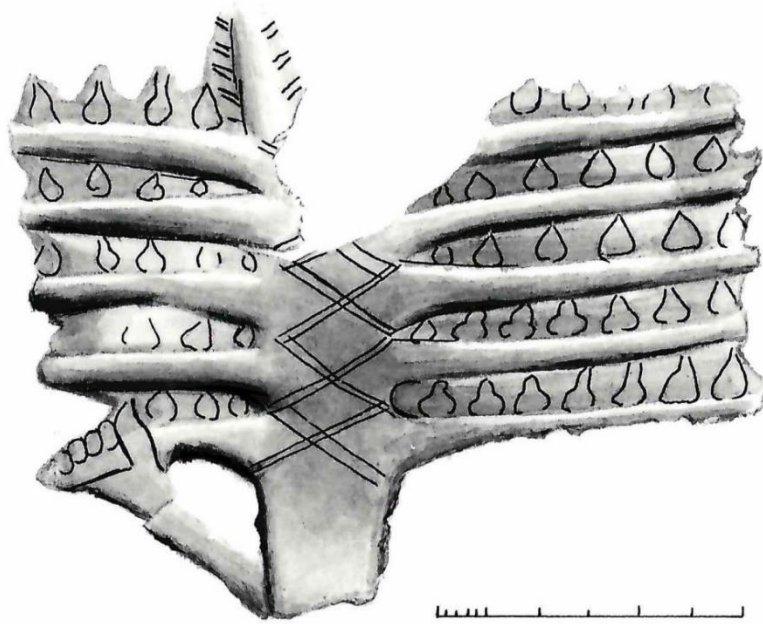


Fig. 5. Syme: Cutout plaque depicting tree worship (650-630 BC).



Fig. 6. Syme: Hermes in epiphany among tree branches (650-630 BC).



Fig. 7. Syme: Hermes as archer with tree branches sprouting from his hair (530-510 BC).