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RITUAL PERFORMANCES IN MINOAN LUSTRAL BASINS. NEW OBSERVATIONS ON AN OLD HYPOTHESIS

In 1984, N. Marinatos proposed for the first time to recognize in the frescoes from the Xesté 3 lustral basin at Akrotiri the representation of a ceremony concerning a female rite of passage performed in the room¹. In the following years, this interpretation has been widely discussed but substantially accepted by many scholars². Until now, however, no one has systematically explored the possibility that this ritual could have taken place also in Cretan lustral basins³. This is not the place for an exhaustive discussion of the question⁴. I will limit myself to an emphasis on some similarities in the architectural morphology and plan arrangement of Theran and Cretan lustral basins, which in my view strongly suggest that all these devices were used for one and the same ceremony, concerning a female rite of passage.

SIMILARITIES IN THE ARCHITECTURAL MORPHOLOGY OF LUSTRAL BASINS

From among the about 30 lustral basins until now identified in Crete⁵, no two examples are the same. However, they all share some very specific morphological features such as: a sunken floor, a short staircase embellished by a balustrade and one or more columns, a fine facing of alabaster slabs and/or surface decoration with frescoes or stuccos, one or more windows or passageways or tribunes around the basin. These features, combined in different ways, define a very specific and recognizable architectural type. This strong uniformity poses the question if these spaces were used for different ritual purposes or if their very specific morphology was exclusively linked to a single type of performance. An interpretative approach emphasizing the symbolical dimension of material culture⁶ could point towards the second option. A ceremony is *par excellence* a moment when participants, actions and spaces acquire a symbolical meaning. During the performance, a symbolical code is in action and a relevant part of this code consists of the spaces designed for the

¹ MARINATOS 1984, 61-84.

² DAVIS 1986; DOUMAS 1987; GESELL 2000; HÄGG 1985; KOPAKA 2009; REHAK 2004.

³ This possibility is only briefly mentioned in REHAK - YOUNGER 1998, 144; C. Kopaka proposed to see Cretan lustral basins, or *adyta*, as spaces for the ritual seclusion of women in occasion of menses and/or childbirth (KOPAKA 2009, especially 191ff.).

⁴ In this paper, I briefly introduce some remarks that will be dealt with in a more complete way in the research I am accomplishing at the *Université Catholique de Louvain* under the title 'Built space, ritual action and society in palatial Crete: the case of architectural complexes with lustral basins and polythyron halls'. A short version of this paper was presented at the XIth International Cretological Congress, Rethymno, 21-27 October 2011. For a wider discussion on some aspects of the subject, see also PUGLISI 2011. I thank J. Driessen, P. Militello and the anonymous referees of the *Annuario* for useful remarks on the text, and K.

Abend for correcting my English. Obviously, I am solely responsible of the ideas here expressed.

⁵ In 1985, G. C. Gesell (GESELL 1985, 149) listed 27 lustral basins in Crete. We can add to this list new cases from Chania Odos Daskaloianis (ANDREADAKI VLASAKI 1988), Galatas, North-East Quarter of the Palace and Building 6 (see, respectively, WHITLEY 2004, 110, and <http://chronique.efa.gr>, n° 265), and Knossos Sphakianakis plot (BLACKMAN 1998, 114), while the identification of a lustral basin in Zakros, House Delta room Theta (GESELL 1985, 141), has probably to be rejected. Furthermore, three other examples have been plausibly identified by Driessen and Sakellarakis (DRIESEN - SAKELLARAKIS 1997, 70) at Vathypetro, West Building (room 17), and by Driessen at Palaikastro, East Building in area 6 (room E1; see MACGILLIVRAY *et alii* 1998, 255-256) and Mallia, *Maison Delta Gamma* (room 9; see DRIESEN 1982, 69, footnote 137).

⁶ As promoted by post-processual archaeology: see, e.g., HODDER 1982; HODDER - HUTSON 2003.

ritual⁷. Thus, it is hard to imagine that a space so characteristic as a lustral basin could have been adapted for different ritual situations. But I think that we can approach the question also in a less theoretical way. Passageways, tribunes or windows placed around lustral basins are some of the more typical features of these rooms. Their presence, pointed out for the first time by R. Hägg and N. Marinatos⁸, was especially emphasized in 1989 by M. Andreadaki Vlasaki when she published the lustral basin from Odos Daskaloiannis in Chanià⁹. In this case an exceptionally evident passageway was preserved on the east side of the basin (Fig. 1). Similar devices are also attested in other cases, such as in the Little Palace at Knossos, room 17; in the north wing of Phaistos Palace, room 83 (Fig. 2); in the Chalara Mansion, room Zeta; in the west wing of Zakros Palace, room XXIV; in the new example identified in Building 6 at Galatas. In other cases, such devices could result as less evident because of the poor preservation of the structures and a different plan arrangement¹⁰. Andreadaki Vlasaki convincingly concluded that their function was to permit “only a few spectators to attend an event” taking place in the lustral basin¹¹. But what was this event and who were the spectators?

LUSTRAL BASIN MORPHOLOGICAL SIMILARITIES IN THE LIGHT OF XESTÉ 3 FRESCOS

In my view, crucial evidence to answer these questions is provided by the frescoes in Xesté 3 lustral basin at Thera¹². According to most scholars, the human figures depicted on the walls around this basin are strictly linked to the ritual actions effectively performed inside it. Three female figures are depicted on the north wall of the room (Fig. 3), the central one being, according to Marinatos and P. Rehak¹³, the initiate who has to descend into the basin to accomplish a rite of passage. According to Rehak, the blood on her foot could be a reference to the menarche¹⁴. Ethnographical parallels confirm that this physiological event is often used as a mark for starting rites of passage introducing the social stage of female sexual maturity¹⁵. Only male figures are depicted in the nearby room 3b (Fig. 4). According to some scholars, they are engaged in a male rite of passage parallel to but autonomous from that reserved for the women in the adjacent lustral basin¹⁶. Following Marinatos¹⁷, instead they are involved as assistants in the same female ceremony of the lustral basin. This second option seems to me more convincing for at least two reasons. The first one arises from an analysis of the nature of the actions depicted in room 3b. The so-called Yellow Ochre Boy, the Cupbearer and the Clothbearer are bearing objects probably of a ritual nature, while a fourth one, the so-called Man with a Jar, in a seated position, is pouring some liquid from a bronze ceremonial ewer. The final target of all these actions seems to be external to the scene represented in room 3b. If we consider that a window on the east side of room 3b opens directly on lustral basin 3a (Fig. 5)¹⁸, it is easy to suppose that all these ritual actions were part of the ceremony performed in the adjacent room. Another point in favor of this reconstruction is represented by the existence of similar windows, passageways or tribunes in other Cretan lustral basins. The ledge in room 83 at Phaistos or the passageways both in Little Palace and in Odos Daskaloiannis

⁷ The symbolical dimension of ritual practices has been emphasized by anthropologists such as V. Turner and R. A. Rappaport. For the definition of ritual and its relationship with archaeology, see KYRIAKIDIS 2005; more recently, INSOLL 2011.

⁸ HÄGG - MARINATOS 1986, 63

⁹ ANDREADAKI VLASAKI 1988.

¹⁰ I will discuss elsewhere all the evidence. As a case in point, I would here mention the lustral basin in *Maison Zeta Alfa* at Mallia. Driessen (DRIESSEN 1982, 52) noticed the bases of a polythyron on its west side. Thus, the basin was accessible by a staircase from the north room while it was open to observation from the west room.

¹¹ ANDREADAKI VLASAKI 2002, 161.

¹² VLACHOPOULOS 2007; 2010.

¹³ See MARINATOS 1984; REHAK 2004.

¹⁴ The hypothesis is accepted by Kopaka (KOPAKA 2009).

¹⁵ See BRELICH 1969, 21-22; BRELICH 2008, 153-156; LA

FONTAINE 1985, 14, 102-116. On this point, we have to remember the difference between the physiological achievement of sexual maturity and its social acknowledgment. Obviously, ritual practice focuses only on this latter, usually stressing the change in the social role of the initiate and assigning to him a new status.

¹⁶ See DOUMAS 1987; VLACHOPOULOS 2007; 2010. In support of this hypothesis, these authors emphasize the role of a pit in the floor in the north sector of the room that, in their opinion, could have been used for men in a similar way as the nearby lustral basin for women. This pit, however, is not recorded in the architectural studies of the building by C. Palyvou (PALYVOU 2005). Furthermore, it does not find analogies in parallel Cretan evidence.

¹⁷ MARINATOS 1993, 209-11

¹⁸ Following the reconstruction in PALYVOU 2005, 166, fig. 245.

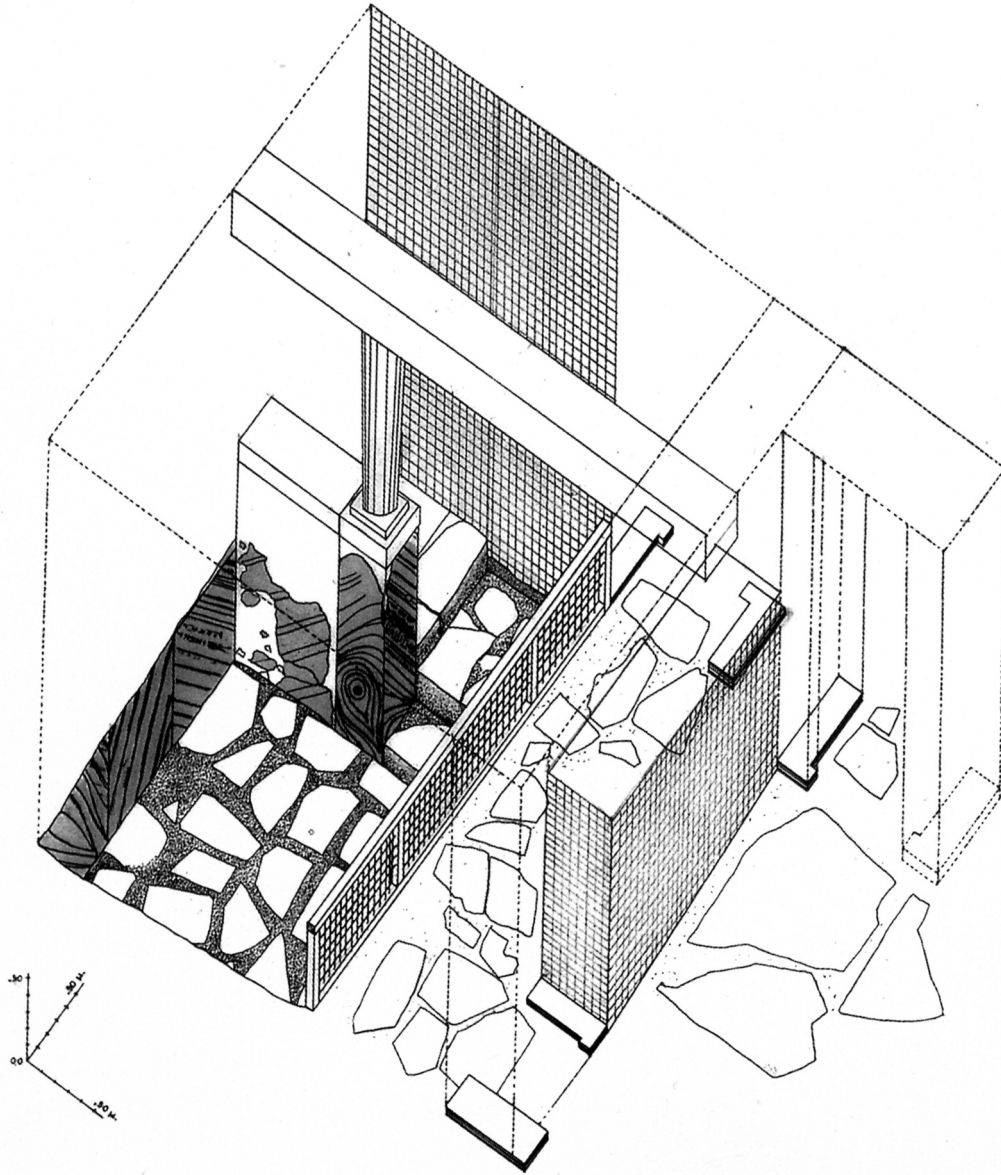


Fig. 1 - Odos Daskaloianis lustral basin in Chanià: axonometric reconstruction (after ANDREADAKI VLASAKI 1988)



Fig. 2 - Lustral basin 83 in the Phaistos Palace with the tribune on the east side (after PERNIER - BANTI 1951)

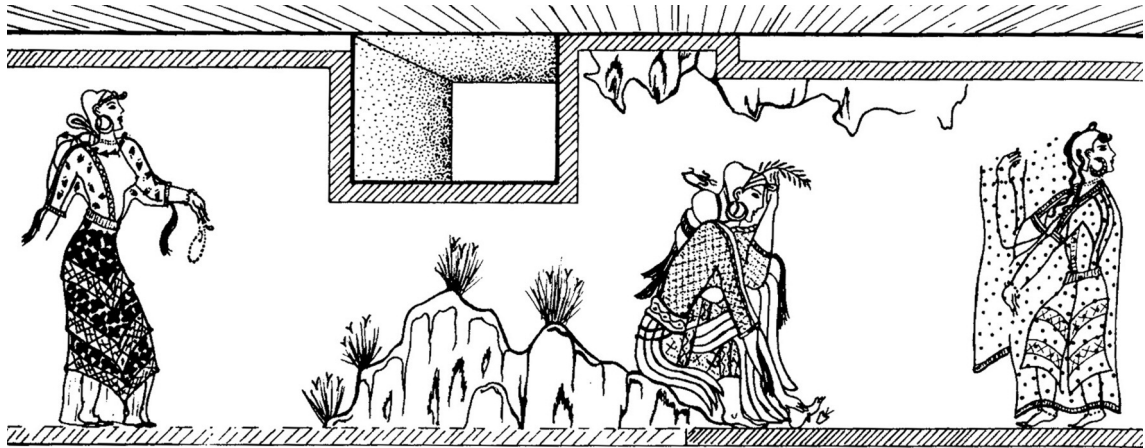


Fig. 3 - Female figures on the north wall of the Xestè 3 lustral basin (after MARINATOS 1984)



Fig. 4 - Male figures from Xestè 3, room 3b (after VLACHOPOULOS 2010)

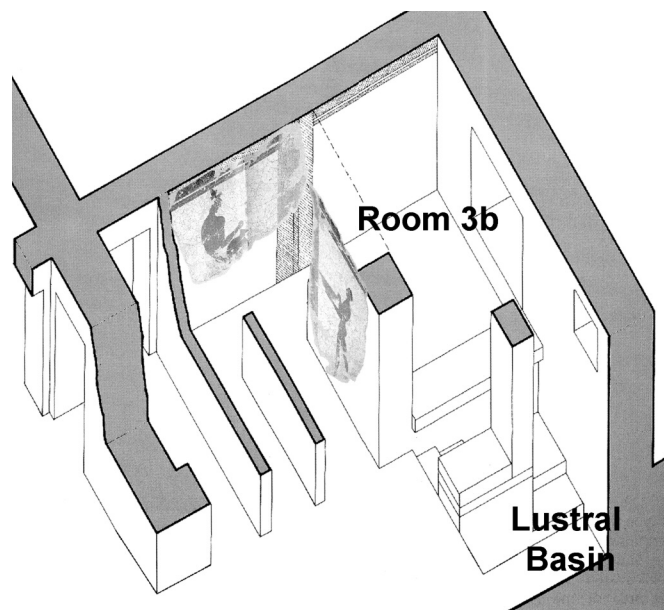


Fig. 5 - Reconstruction of Xestè 3, room 3b (adapted from PALYVOU 2005)

lustral basins, do not provide enough space for different and parallel ceremonies. Rather, they appear as auxiliary spaces for the activities performed in the nearby lustral basin. So, an initiatory ritual centered on the segregation of participants according to sex (and maybe age) can be reasonably supposed not only for Thera but also for Cretan lustral basins¹⁹. Can we suppose that this ritual was always and exclusively reserved for young women to be introduced to the social stage of sexual maturity? Ethnography shows that rites of passage can be many and different according to the age and sex of the protagonists and the occasions to celebrate in their life²⁰. So, can we affirm that the few spectators conjectured by Andreadaki Vlasaki at Chania were always males, while the initiate in the lustral basin was always a young woman being introduced to adulthood after menarche?

SIMILARITIES IN THE PLAN ARRANGEMENT OF LUSTRAL BASINS

To answer this question, we have to turn to a second point that I consider crucial for understanding the ritual function of Minoan lustral basins, that is the position that they usually occupy in the building's plan. We owe a relevant achievement on this point to J. W. Graham, who in 1959 detected for the first time a scheme occurring in the plan of at least 14 quarters of Minoan Palaces and Villas²¹. This scheme included three main elements: a more extended hall which he named "Men's Hall" and which was surrounded by polythyra (or pier-and-door partitions) and equipped with open columned porches on one or more sides; a smaller hall, often linked to the first by a short dogleg corridor, which he called "Queen's Hall"; and a lustral basin, always accessible by the smaller hall and which Graham interpreted as a room for secular (or in some cases ritual) baths²² (Fig. 6). In emphasizing the affinity in the plan of these suites of rooms, Graham pointed out that they were always well segregated from the rest of the building and reached by only one entrance; that they were often linked by more or less monumental stairways to the upper floor, which probably was part of the same functional system; and finally that they usually had a careful surface finishing with gypsum and/or frescoes. As for as their function, Graham followed the traditional assumption, proposed in 1886 by W. Doerpfeld at Tyrins and then assumed by Evans for Knossos²³, that Aegean Bronze Age great halls outfitted with polythyra, columned porches and walls decorated with frescoes, were the state and/or living rooms of the palace, in the same way as the Homeric "megaron" was the monumental core of the palace of Odysseus. A different, "ceremonial" interpretation of the function of polythyron halls was presented, at the end of the '80's, by Hägg and Marinatos²⁴, following the insights from the new excavations in Thera. Their thesis was based on the observation that, as in Xesté 3, also in Cretan buildings, polythyron halls were frequently associated with lustral basins or other very finely lined and/or frescoed small rooms without sunken floors, that they interpreted as cult places and called "adyta"²⁵. In their seminal work, however, Hägg and Marinatos avoided a more detailed definition of these ceremonies. In their perspective, a lot of different ritual practices could have been performed in these quarters, even if in some cases, such as the House of the Chancel Screen and Royal Villa at Knossos, they found some evidence in favor of a ceremony called by Hägg "enacted epiphany" consisting of a cult representation of the Minoan goddess embodied by an actress or priestess and honored by worshippers carrying offerings. The main clue in this direction was represented by a built throne placed, in both cases, on a side of the polythyron hall²⁶.

¹⁹ For a complete discussion, see PUGLISI 2011.

²⁰ See GENNEP 1909; BRELICH 1969, 25-44; BRELICH 2008. This variety is especially stressed in the case of groups where populace is separated by sex and age grade. For the hypothesis of a similar organization in Minoan Crete, see: KOEHL 2001; PUGLISI 2011.

²¹ GRAHAM 1959. His analysis focused on five cases (Phaestos Palace, north and east quarters; Knossos Palace, Domestic Quarter; Mallia Palace, north-west quarter; Villa of Hagia Triada, north-west quarter) but he recognized the so called "residential quarters" also in: Little Palace, House of the Chancel Screen and Royal Villa at Knossos; *Maison Delta Alfa* and *Zeta Alfa* at Mallia; Minoan Villa at Nirou Chani; House B at Palaikastro and Villas A and C at Tylissos.

²² See GRAHAM 1962 and GRAHAM 1977 for further re-

marks on this point.

²³ See Doerpfeld's contributions in SCHLIEMANN 1886, and EVANS 1901-02, especially 45ff.

²⁴ HÄGG - MARINATOS 1986.

²⁵ Small rooms similar in plan position to lustral basins but without a sunken floor are: the so called Queen's Bathroom in the Domestic Quarter at Knossos; rooms G and H respectively in Royal Villa and South-East House again at Knossos; room 14 in the North-West quarter of the *Villa Reale* at Hagia Triada. The latter has been identified as a cult place because of the patent religious significance of the frescoes on its walls by P. Militello (MILITELLO 1992) and P. Rehak (REHAK 1997).

²⁶ On this point, see also MARINATOS 1993, 104ff.

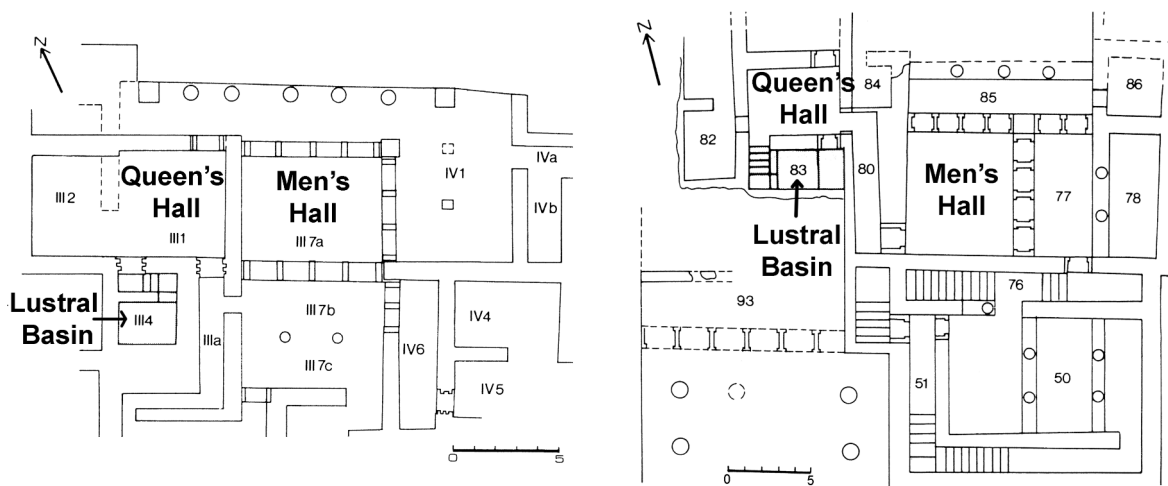


Fig. 6 - Graham's scheme in the northern quarters of the Palaces of Mallia and Phaistos (adapted from HÄGG - MARINATOS 1986)

LUSTRAL BASIN PLAN SIMILARITIES IN THE LIGHT OF XESTÉ 3 FREScoes

If we come back to Thera, we can observe that the scheme identified by Graham in the plan of Cretan monumental buildings seems to occur also in Xesté 3, even if not so clearly because of its disposition on two floors (Fig. 7). Also in the Theran building, we can find a lustral basin accessible by a small polythyron hall (room 3), corresponding to Graham's "Queen hall". This room is accessible by the exterior through room 4, and is linked to room 3 on the upper floor through stairway 8. As on the ground floor, also upper room 3 had polythyra on three sides, and a floor very carefully lined with stone slabs. Apart from the lack of light-wells or open columned porches²⁷, this room exactly corresponds to Graham's "Men's Hall". If we turn our attention to the frescoes, we can see that some female figures solemnly walking and carrying flower offerings are depicted in the corridor from stairway 8 to room 3²⁸, whereas on the east wall a poorly preserved picture shows a female figure probably seated and holding ritual objects²⁹. Beyond the north polythyron of the room, in the area corresponding to ground floor room 3a, we find the famous representation of the Potnia Theron seated on a throne, flanked by a griffin, and receiving crocus stamen offerings from a monkey³⁰. In 1985, Hägg, commenting on this fresco, wondered if it could represent an "enacted epiphany", but he concluded that it was only an ideal invocation of the goddess³¹. I am inclined, instead, to the first hypothesis. A strong clue in this direction is represented by the Clothbearer depicted on the groundfloor room 3b (fig. 3, second from the left). The representation is very naturalistic although a little equivocal, and so we cannot exclude that the figure is carrying a dress rather than a simple cloth. In this case, the boy could fall within a group of representations which is well known in Minoan iconography and usually interpreted as servants offering a ceremonial dress to the goddess³². This interpretation is only apparently in contrast with the hypothesis that the figures of room 3b are serving a female initiate in the nearby lustral basin. In fact, the Clothbearer, or rather the Dressbearer, could correspond to the servants of both the female initiate and the woman embodying the Minoan goddess in an "enacted epiphany". In other words, the iconography of the Dressbearer strongly supports the hypothesis that the Minoan goddess could have been embodied not by an actress or a priestess, as usually supposed, but by a young woman to be introduced to the stage of sexual maturity. Such a strong link between an initiate and the divine sphere does not have to appear so astonishing. In fact, ethnographical parallels show that neo-initiates are often isolated and considered dangerous as they are charged with superhuman powers³³.

²⁷ The absence of porches is a specific character of Minoan-inspired architecture of Thera, as it has been long since noticed by Palyvou (see Palyvou 1987, 200).

²⁸ VLACHOPOULOS 2007, 114, pl. XXX a-b.

²⁹ VLACHOPOULOS 2007, 114, pl. XXXI a-b.

³⁰ VLACHOPOULOS 2007, pl. XXIX b.

³¹ HÄGG 1985, 213-14.

³² DEMARGNE 1932; WARREN 1988; MURRAY 2004.

³³ BRELICH 1969, 38-39.

THE CEREMONY IN XESTÉ 3: CONNECTING RITUAL ACTIONS AND ARCHITECTURAL SPACES

Following the insights from the Xesté 3 frescoes, we can propose a reconstruction of the relationship between ritual actions and the spaces where they took place. The lustral basin was, as Marinatos said, “a place of separation”, that is a space completely different from the others around it because of its very small dimension, the sunken floor and the precious linings and frescoes. There, the initiate suffered by herself some exceptional experiences, which definitively marked her passage to another life stage. Among these experiences, there was probably also the view of the image on the east wall of the room, visible only from inside the lustral basin and depicting the door of a double horn sanctuary. Even if reserved for the initiate, the lustral basin was the focus of the ritual actions performed around it by assistants and spectators. So, room 3, corresponding with Graham’s “Queen hall”, was in fact the space where the participants were sorted according to their sex, age and ritual function. Males were sent to room 3b, while female assistants and spectators could have been interacting with the initiate through the polythyron opened to the south side of the lustral basin. The initiate, provided with a new garment and conveniently adorned, could have been lead upstairs to room 3a. As depicted on the walls of this room, some women could have carried offerings and/or performed ritual gestures in this space, corresponding with Graham’s “Men’s Hall”, while the initiate/goddess could have been shown by the north polythyron to the worshippers and spectators in room 3 and adjacent room 4³⁴. To sum up, the Xesté 3 frescoes suggest four main associations between ritual moments and the spaces where they were performed (Fig. 8):

- A) Initiate isolation in the lustral basin 3a;
- B) Initiate assistance and observation from room 3 (corresponding to the “Queen’s Hall”) and 3b;
- C) Ritual performance involving offerings and/or ritual gestures in upstairs room 3 (corresponding with the “Men’s Hall”);
- D) Display of the living goddess in upstairs room 3a, that is in the space behind the “Men’s hall” polythyron.

THE CEREMONY IN CRETAN LUSTRAL BASINS: SOME PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Can this ceremonial sequence be applied to all Cretan quarters with lustral basins? To answer this question, we need a systematic discussion of all Cretan architectural evidence, which will be accomplished in a more appropriate place³⁵. At the moment I will only focus on two arguments in my view supporting the hypothesis that all Minoan quarters with polythyron halls and lustral basins/adyta were designed to perform a two-faceted ceremony involving both female initiation and divine epiphany. First of all, the homogeneity in Graham’s scheme has to be conveniently valued: even if in a variety of different adaptations, we can observe a very strong persistence in the basic elements of the plan and in the way they are reciprocally linked. Can we explain this standardization only as deriving from a rigid and repetitive use of Minoan people in planning the residential spaces of their daily life? And if so, why does this scheme occur only in monumental buildings, often connected with ritual contexts and finds, and never, even in a more modest or simplified version, in smaller and common Minoan houses³⁶? On the other hand, if we accept a ceremonial perspective, standardization may be explained as the result of a repetitive sequence of ritual actions that could not be changed or changed only in an occasional and non-relevant way. Following this last interpretation, we cannot omit cases such as the North West and South East lustral basins in the palace of Knossos³⁷, or that of room 19 in the palace of Phaistos³⁸, or in room H5 in the Gournia palace³⁹ or, finally, in room LVIII in the Zakros palace⁴⁰. This group appears not di-

³⁴ Crocus gatherers around the goddess, being represented in a rocky landscape, seem to refer to an external and already concluded event, maybe the novitiate of the new initiate.

³⁵ See my ongoing work quoted in note 2.

³⁶ Graham’s scheme usually occurs in palaces, villas and Minoan houses of type 1 according to the classification of J. McEnroe (McENROE 1982).

³⁷ See, respectively: EVANS 1921, 405-414, and EVANS 1930, 8-15 for the North-West Lustral Basin; EVANS 1921, 574-75, and EVANS 1928, 331, for the South-East Lustral Basin.

³⁸ PERNIER - BANTI 1951, 122-130

³⁹ SOLES 2002, 125-126.

⁴⁰ PLATONOS 1990.

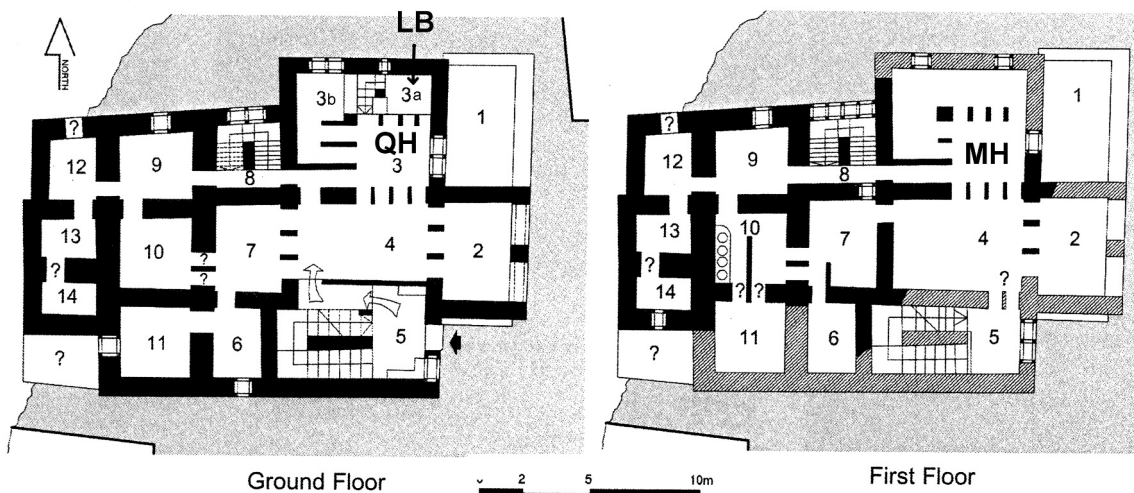
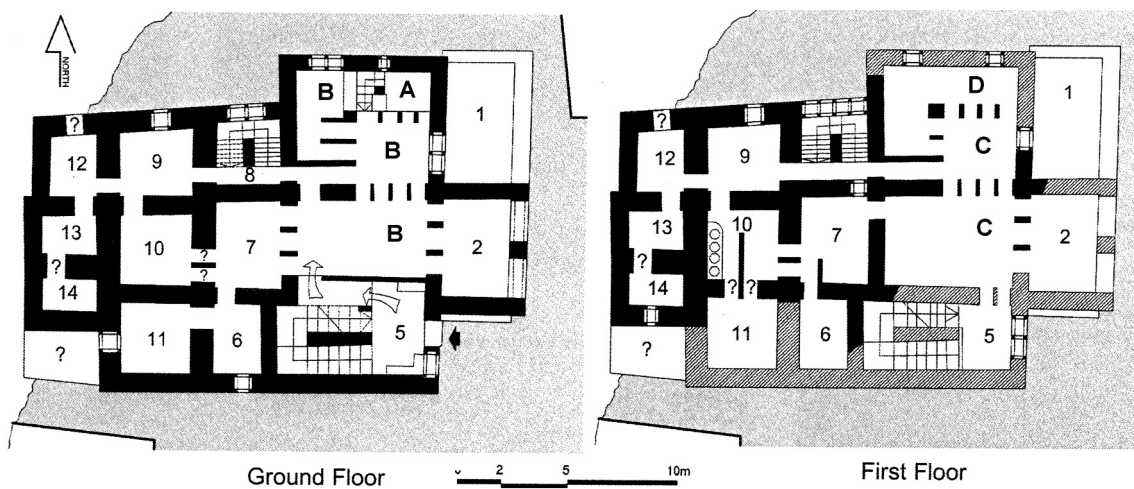


Fig. 7 - Graham's scheme in the Xesté 3 east sector (adapted from Palyvou 2005):
 MH = Men's Hall; QH = Queen's Hall; LB = Lustral Basin



- A) Initiate isolation
- B) Initiate assistance and observation
- C) Ritual performance involving offerings
- D) Display of the initiate/goddess

Fig. 8 - Sequence of spaces and ritual actions in Xesté 3 (adapted from Palyvou 2005)

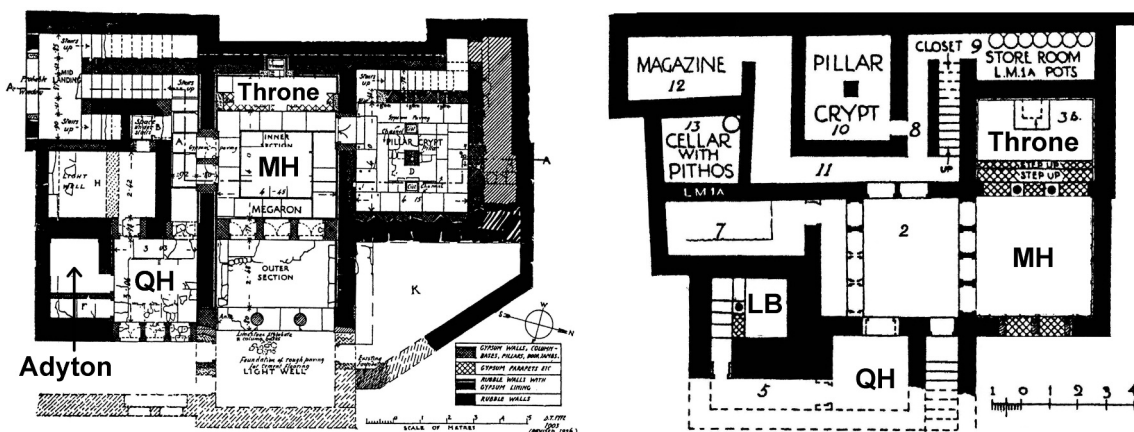


Fig. 9 - Thrones in Royal Villa and House of the Chancel Screen at Knossos (adapted from Evans 1921-35)

rectly connected with polythyron halls and so Graham's scheme seems to not be clearly detectable. In some cases, we cannot exclude that polythyron halls were placed on the upper floors and, therefore, that they have completely disappeared. But we also have to consider that all these lustral basins are linked with the central court of a palace, that to say with a space intended for collective and ceremonial gathering, as J. Driessen and others have plausibly shown⁴¹. Thus, we have to wonder if these spaces performed a role similar to that of polythyron halls, in order to accomplish ceremonies different in scale from but similar in nature to those carried out in the adjacent quarters where Graham's scheme is more clearly detectable.

A second argument concerns finds and contexts. Ritual actions are in their essence elusive and Cretan quarters with polythyron halls and lustral basins/adyta were usually empty at the moment of final destruction and lacking frescoes explicitly concerning ceremonies. In some cases, however, the contextual association of finds and interpretations seems to confirm the hypothesis that the four-step sequence of Thera was also followed in Crete. The first step - isolation of the initiate in the lustral basin and exhibition of cult images - seems to be supported by the archaeological evidence in three cases: the horns of consecration depicted in the north side of the lustral basin LVIII in the palace of Zakros⁴² and the stone models recovered in lustral basin 63 in the Phaistos Palace⁴³ and in the Little Palace lustral basin at Knossos⁴⁴. As for as the second step - initiate assistance and observation in the lustral basin - we have already discussed Andreadaki Vlasaki's observations about windows and passageways around Cretan lustral basins⁴⁵. Concerning the fourth and final step - enacted epiphany next to the polythyron hall - already Hägg and Marinatos noticed the presence of built thrones in the Knossian Royal Villa and House of the Chancel Screen (Fig. 9): in both cases, thrones are located beyond the polythyron of the "Men's Hall". In most cases (as in the Xesté 3), where thrones are absent, they could have been of a perishable material and/or exposed only during the performance. Furthermore, a ceremony centered on the preparation and exposition of a priestess, similar to that reconstructed by W.-D. Niemeier in the Throne Room complex⁴⁶, has been hypothesized for the Domestic Quarter of the palace of Knossos⁴⁷, while in the case of the eastern residential quarter of Phaistos, the rock garden that M. C. Shaw hypothesized in the space beyond the polythyron of the "Men's hall"⁴⁸, could have been connected with a ritual epiphany. Furthermore, Minoan iconography shows a strong link between divine epiphany and tripartite shrines, and an exemplar of this type has been recognized by Marinatos and discussed by J. W. Shaw and J. Driessen and I. Sakellarakis in the Vathypetro West Building⁴⁹, once again in front of a polythyron hall. Finally, in the Tourkogeitonià building at Archanes, where a lustral basin could still be located in the unexplored part of the building, four altars identical to those sustaining the throne of the goddess in Xesté 3 fresco were found just in the porch outside the "Men's hall"⁵⁰. This further expandable list shows that archaeological finds, even if in a fragmentary way, seem to confirm that the Thera model may also be applied to Cretan evidence. I am aware that this functional interpretation of Cretan quarters with polythyron halls and lustral basins/adyta strongly contrasts with some relevant and deep-rooted assumptions about Minoan society and architecture, especially with the idea that polythyron halls were exclusively designed to satisfy the sophisticated residential needs of Minoan elites. The pivotal role that both initiations and divine epiphanies played in the life of Minoans, however, is clear from the almost obsessive occurrence of them in iconography. In my view, this makes it less astonishing that such a relevant part of the monumental architecture of the Neopalatial period was mainly created to accomplish these two relevant ceremonial tasks⁵¹.

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⁴¹ See DRIESSEN 2002 and DRIESSEN 2004 with bibliographical references.

⁴² PLATONOS 1990, pl. 27.

⁴³ PERNIER - BANTI 1951, 177, fig. 109.

⁴⁴ According to Mackenzie's notebooks, a pair of horns of consecration in stone were discovered, *in situ*, on the gypsum ledge against the south wall of the lustral basin 17 (see HATZAKI 2005, 11, 186).

⁴⁵ See also PUGLISI 2011.

⁴⁶ NIEMEIER 1987.

⁴⁷ MACDONALD 2002, 48.

⁴⁸ SHAW 1993.

⁴⁹ See respectively SHAW 1978 and DRIESSEN - SAKELLARAKIS 1997.

⁵⁰ SAKELLARAKIS - SAPOUNA SAKELLARAKIS 1991, fig. 16.

⁵¹ On the political implications of initiation rituals in palatial Crete, see my preliminary observations in PUGLISI 2011 and PUGLISI *forthcoming*.

ΤΕΛΕΤΟΥΡΓΙΚΕΣ ΕΙΚΟΝΕΣ ΣΤΑ ΛΟΥΤΡΑ ΚΑΘΑΡΜΟΥ. ΚΑΙΝΟΥΡΙΕΣ ΠΑΡΑΤΗΡΗΣΕΙΣ ΣΕ ΜΙΑ ΠΑΛΙΑ ΥΠΟΘΕΣΗ. Η αρχιτεκτονική ανάλυση αναδεικνύει ισχυρές αντιστοιχίες, και από την άποψη της μορφολογίας και από εκείνη της οργάνωσης του χώρου, ανάμεσα στην Ξεστή 3 του Ακρωτηρίου στη Θήρα και τις συνοικίες με λουτρά καθαρμού της ανακτορικής Κρήτης. Ακολουθώντας τις ενδείξεις που μας προσφέρουν οι τοιχογραφίες με τελετουργικές σκηνές που σώζονται στην Ξεστή 3, διατυπώνεται η υπόθεση ότι μια όμοια τελετή, διαρθρωμένη σε τέσσερις κύριες στιγμές, λάμβανε χώρα και στη Θήρα και στα ανάλογα κρητικά ανακτορικά συγκροτήματα. Αναπτύσσοντας κάποια σημεία μιας παλαιάς υπόθεσης της Ν. Μαρινάτου, προτείνεται να ταυτιστεί η συγκεκριμένη τελετή με γυναικεία διαβατήρια τελετή, που πραγματοποιούνταν όταν έφταναν στη γόνιμη ηλικία και κατέληγε σε μια ‘αναπαριστώμενη επιφάνεια’ στην οποία τιμούσαν τη νεαρή μνημένη ως προσωποποίηση της μινωικής θεάς.

SCENE RITUALI NEI BACINI LUSTRALI. NUOVE OSSERVAZIONI SU UNA VECCHIA IPOTESI. L’analisi architettonica mette in evidenza forti corrispondenze, sia dal punto di vista morfologico che dell’organizzazione spaziale, tra la Xestè 3 di Akrotiri a Thera e i quartieri con bacini lustrali della Creta palaziale. Seguendo le indicazioni fornite dagli affreschi con scene rituali conservati nella Xestè 3, si ipotizza che una medesima cerimonia, articolata in 4 principali momenti, si svolgesse sia a Thera che negli analoghi complessi architettonici cretesi. Sviluppando alcuni spunti di una vecchia ipotesi di N. Marinatos, si propone di identificare tale cerimonia con un rito di passaggio femminile, praticato in concomitanza con il raggiungimento dell’età fertile e culminante in una “epifania recitata” nella quale la giovane iniziata veniva onorata come personificazione della dea minoica.

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