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## Mobility of deities? The territorial and ideological expansion of Knossos during the Proto-Palatial period as evidenced by the peak sanctuaries distribution, development, and decline

### ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a new explanation of the intriguing distribution pattern of peak sanctuaries in Crete during the MM period, and the reasons for their fast expansion in the late Proto-Palatial period, followed by a sudden decline soon afterwards. The working hypothesis presented here is based on my intensive fieldwork carried out during the last decade and is supported by several recently identified sites which shed new light on these problems. At present about 40 sites in Crete can be classified as peak sanctuaries. They are mostly grouped in three regions: central Crete, the East Siteia peninsula and the Rethymnon isthmus, with a few "anomalous" sites beyond these regions. It is indisputable that the earliest, the most important and the longest-lived peak sanctuary was louchtas, closely related to Knossos. louchtas became a model-site, the idea of which spread to other parts of the island. Some regions, however, as for example those controlled by Malia and Phaistos, showed strong resistance to it. It will be argued in this paper that the peak sanctuary on louchtas did not reflect a universal idea of a mountain deity shared by all Cretans, but rather represented a local Knossian concept of a holy mountain which later became the sanctuary of a young storm-god (?), the protector of Knossos. The distribution of peak sanctuaries may thus represent the territorial and/or ideological expansion of Knossos during the MM IB and MM II periods and not the popularity of a mountain deity in Crete. The abandonment of most of the peak sanctuaries, at the end of the MM IIB or in the MM III period, was caused neither by natural disasters, nor by changes in religious concepts at the beginning of the Neo-Palatial period, but was a simple result of their intentionally short-lived, extraordinary function.

**KEYWORDS:** Aegean prehistory, Aegean religion, Bronze Age cult places, peak sanctuary, Crete, louchtas, Knossos

### INTRODUCTION

The Cretan peak sanctuaries, because of their visual and functional "attractiveness", are a category of archaeological sites frequently discussed and analysed in regard to different aspects of the Bronze Age Cretan civilization (e.g. Nilsson 1950, 68-76; Dietrich 1974, 290-307; Rutkowski 1972, 152-188; Peatfield 1987; Haggis 1999),<sup>1</sup> yet have rarely been properly

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<sup>1</sup> My fieldwork on the subject in Crete (from 1983 onwards) was possible due to the kindness of the Greek archaeological authorities. I would like to thank all the Ephors and other members of the Archaeological Service who

investigated in the field. It cannot be surprising, therefore, that key problems concerning the peak sanctuaries, such as their origins, chronological development, the role they played beyond a strictly religious function, changes in their distribution through the period of use, and the reasons for their decline/very restricted continuation after the Proto-Palatial period, remain hypothetical, uncertain, or speculative. The major reason for continuing confusions, and the drifting away of the subject from the geographical and historical reality, is the fact that too many “creative” theoretical models and ideas, rather than archaeological evidence, have dominated the discussion. Creating ideas was tempting to some scholars (and not only scholars); looking for evidence and publishing it in an adequate way was quite a different matter. During the last fifty years or so, only a few scholars have contributed something valuable in this latter aspect of research, through surveys (Faure 1965, 1967, 1969, 1972; Rutkowski 1986, 1988; Peatfield 1987, 1990, 2009; Nowicki 1994, 2008, 2012) or excavations (Karetsou 1976, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1990, 1991, 2003, 2014; Peatfield 1992; Chrysosoulaki 1999b, 2001; Rethemiotakis 2012; Tzachili 2016). The subject cannot be understood, however, solely by new theoretical approaches and new methodology (including GIS), as proposed by some scholars in the past (Kyriakides 2005; Briault 2007; Soetens et al. 2003, 2006; Driessen and Frankel 2012). First the existing evidence should be verified and the most controversial points clarified regarding peak sanctuary topography and place in the settlement pattern and their chronological development. Then, instead of proposing another doubtful theoretical model to explain the intriguing features in peak sanctuary history, work should be invested in searching for missing elements/evidence which might help to illuminate some of these features.

This paper's limited aim is to discuss only one, very important problem that may shed a new light on the wider historical background of the social and political changes in Proto-Palatial Crete. It proposes a new explanation of the curious distribution pattern of peak sanctuaries in Crete during the MM period, and the reasons for their fast expansion in the latest phase of the Proto-Palatial period, followed by a sudden decline soon afterwards, in MM III. The working hypothesis presented here is supported by several recently identified sites which offer new evidence on some key questions concerning the subject.

The most updated list of peak sanctuaries contains 45 sites (Fig. 1). Of these, ten were discovered recently (Kontopodi et al. 2015; Nowicki 2016). These discoveries allow us to challenge some hypotheses regarding, for example, peak sanctuaries' origins, the non-religious aspects of their role in the socio-political structure of Palatial Crete, and the reasons for their decline after the Proto-Palatial period, as previously proposed (Branigan 1969; Rutkowski 1972, 185; 1986, 95; Peatfield 1990; Haggis 1999, 53; Soetens et al. 2006). Additionally, several ritual sites have been recently discovered in central Crete, especially along the eastern edge of the Pediada plain, between Nipiditos and Liliano, showing some, but not all characteristics known at true proper peak sanctuaries. Minor differences, especially in the repertoire of votives (frequent cups, occasional animal figurines, but lack of pebbles) and the arrangement

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were particularly supportive throughout all those past years: Costis Davaras, Villi Apostolakou, Maria Vlasaki, Charalambos Kritsas, Alexandra Karetsou, Georgios Rethemiotakis, Metaxia Tsipopoulou and Adonis Vasilakis. The field work related to this paper was possible thanks to the grant of National Science Centre (NCN, Poland) no. 2012/07/B/HS3/03436.

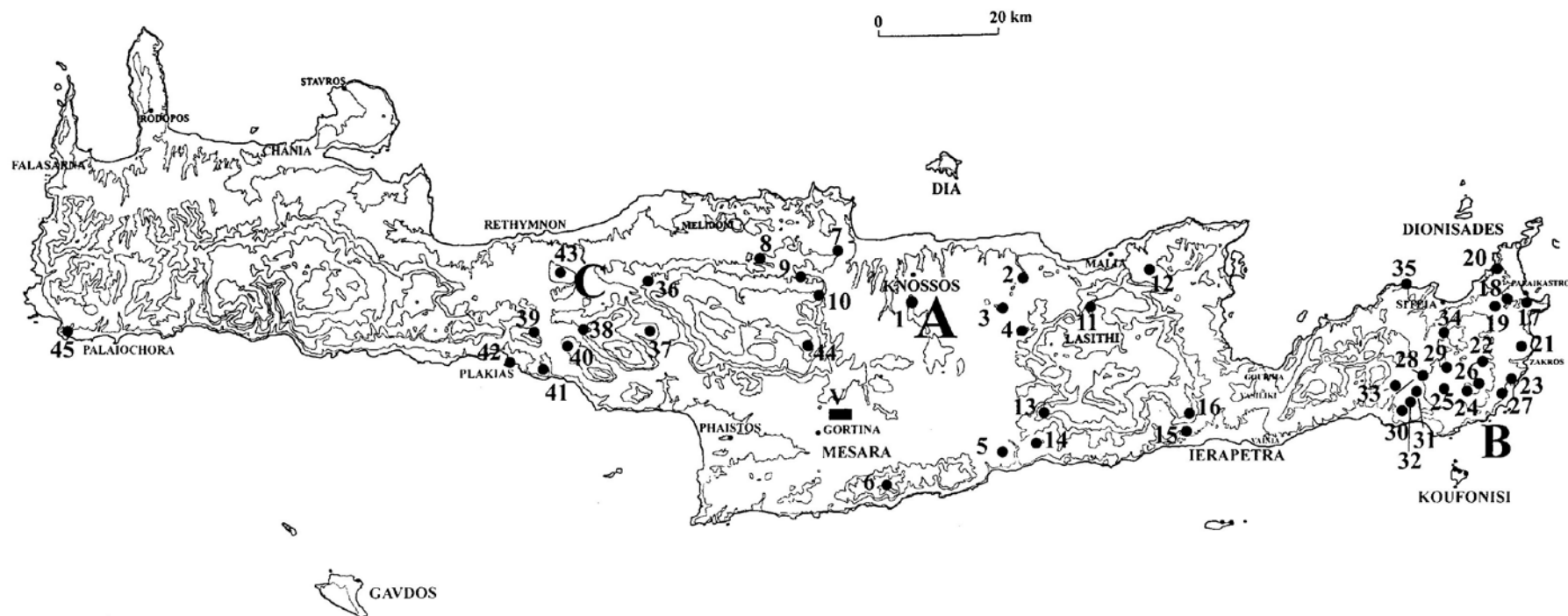


Fig. 1. Peak sanctuaries in Crete: 1: Iouhtas, 2. Maza, 3. Sklaverochori sto Mameloukou, 4. Liliano Kefala, 5. Demati Chousakas, 6. Kofinas, 7. Tylissos Pyrgos, 8. Gonies Filiorimos, 9. Keria, 10. Krousonas Gournos Korfi tou Tarou, 11. Kera Karfi, 12. Anavlochos Vigla, 13. Miliarado Koupa Mikro Kastellos, 14. Chondros Anginara Roukouni Korfi, 15. Anatoli Pandotinou Korifi, 16. Anatoli Estavromenos, 17. Petsofas, 18. Palaikastro Lidia Kefala, 19. Modi, 20. Kalamaki, 21. Traostalos, 22. Zakros Vigla, 23. Sfaka Korakomouri, 24. Ziros Plagia, 25. Ziros Rizoviglo, 26. Korfi tou Mare (?), 27. Xerokampos Vigla, 28. Etiani Kefala, 29. Katelionas Xykefalo, 30. Kalo Nero Alona, 31. Pervolakia Koutsouvaki, 32. Pervolakia Vitzilokoumi, 33. Lithines Katsaroli, 34. Prinias, 35. Faneromeni Trachilas, 36. Mavrou Korfi, 37. Samitos, 38. Spili Voryzi, 39. Atsipades Korakias, 40. Xiros Oros Ag. Pneuma, 41. Preveli Mesokorfi, 42. Plakias Paligremnos, 43. Vrysinas, 44. Gyristsis, 45. Kryos (Ag. Kyriaki) Gremnakas.



Fig. 2. View from the hills east of Nipidithos towards Iouchtas (1);  
(2, 3) ritual places between Nipidithos and Geraki.

of a ritual space, between this latter group of ritual places and the peak sanctuaries proper, should not discourage us from regarding these sites as important elements of the same Proto-Palatian ritual landscape, to which the peak sanctuary also belonged. None of these sites has ever previously been mentioned in published archaeological reports and they are especially valuable for further research. Their locations and topographic characteristics (Fig. 2) introduce several new elements to the discussion on extra-urban cult places, not only concerning the character of the cult and its origin, but first and foremost on their political and social function in the visual marking of territorial divisions between Proto-Palatian states. The sites in question must have been related in some way to the general religious concept behind the origins of the Cretan peak sanctuaries, and to the central role played in the sanctuary network by Iouchtas.

#### THE PRE-PALATIAN ORIGINS AND PROTO-PALATIAN EXPANSION

The phenomenon of cult places located on hilltops and mountainous summits was fairly common in the Bronze Age in the East Mediterranean in the regions where the landscape characteristics allowed for it. Although later myths linked the most sacred of the Cretan peak sanctuaries, that of Iouchtas, with Greek Zeus, the origin and at least some characteristics of the main deity worshipped on the summit of this mountain may have been strongly related to religious concepts in the East Mediterranean. Placing some of the pantheon deities on mountains, liminal spaces between the real world and the heavens, is well attested in Hittite Anatolia during the second millennium BC (Haas 1992; Taracha 2009). This was the closest region for which abundant and very informative textual sources exist on the character of religions and ritual performances in the Late Bronze Age – something entirely missing from Proto-Palatian and Neo-Palatian Crete. The form of the Cretan peak sanctuaries may indicate that Middle Bronze Age Crete belonged to that broader Syro-Anatolian geographical zone with religious elements

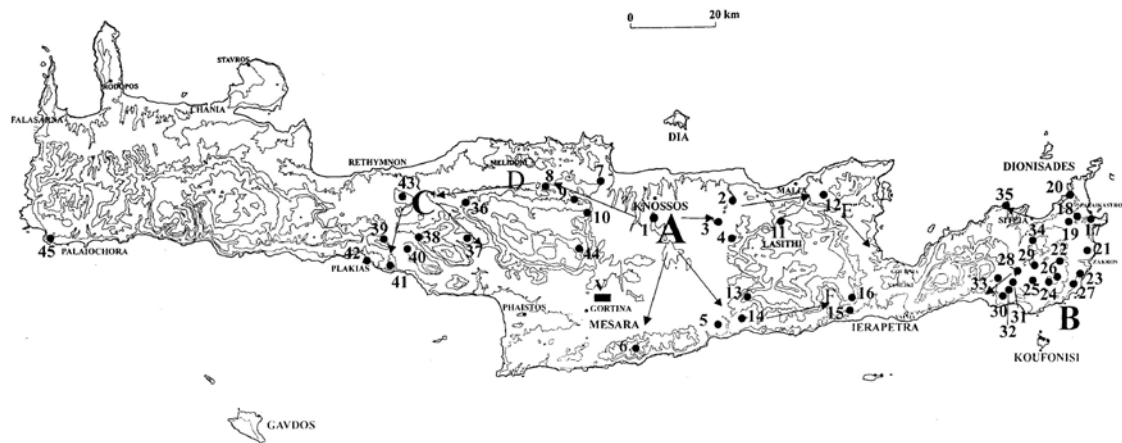


Fig. 3. Map of Crete with peak sanctuary zones (see Fig. 1) and the directions of expansion of the Knossos-louchtas territory (A) to the west (D and C) and east (E and F).

showing similarity or even common origins of some religious concepts, however distant back in time they were (Marinatos 2010, 7).

The peak sanctuaries are grouped in three regions (Fig. 3): central Crete (A), the East Siteia peninsula (B) and the Rethymnon isthmus (C) (Nowicki 1994). The central group, with the focus point on the mountain of louchtas, was connected with the western group through the Mylopotamos valley and the northern part of the Psiloriti Mts (D). The eastern group, however, was geographically isolated from the other two. Only a few sites have been so far identified beyond these three regions, and all of them represent a short-lived phenomenon at the turn of the Proto-Palatial period.<sup>2</sup>

The earliest, the most important and the longest-lived peak sanctuary was louchtas, closely related to Knossos in topographical and functional terms. The beginning of the cult place here can be securely placed in the MM I period (Karetsou 1978, 232), with probability of a somewhat earlier EM II/EM III date (Karetsou 2003, 49).<sup>3</sup> Well-organized and intensive religious use is attested from MM IA onwards. In the same period, or soon after, in MM IB, louchtas became a model-site, the idea of which spread to other parts of the island, especially to the East Siteia peninsula. Some regions, however (as, for example, those probably controlled by Malia and Phaistos), showed strong resistance to it.

This pattern and its rapid changes towards the end of the Proto-Palatial period suggest that the peak sanctuary on louchtas did not reflect a universal idea of a mountain deity shared by all the Cretans, but represented rather a local Knossian concept, perhaps borrowed from, or at least influenced by Near Eastern religions. Such a foreign influence on the Minoan religion was suggested in the past by a number of scholars (Dietrich 1974, 1-74; Marinatos 1993, 2010). Marinatos has argued for the significant role which this influence played in the shaping

<sup>2</sup> These are: Anavlochos Vigla, Anatoli Pandotinou Koryfi, Anatoli Estavromenos and perhaps Thylakas.

<sup>3</sup> Also Karetsou's unpublished paper presented in the international conference *Cretan Peak Sanctuaries: Distribution, Topography and Spatial Organization of Ritual*, Dublin 2010.



of the Minoan pantheon. If we accept those hypotheses, the most plausible scenario for the peak sanctuaries' earliest development would be as follows:

1. louchtas may have first been "worshipped" as a holy mountain (as was the case in East Anatolia and North Syria). louchtas might attain this status not only due to its appearance as an outstanding landmark for the whole of central Crete, but perhaps also due to its early history, which may have been mythologized during the late third millennium.
2. After some centuries of being regarded as a holy mountain, louchtas may have become, close to the beginning of the second millennium, the cult place of a young storm-god (?), the protector of Knossos.

Such an evolution, from a natural cult place, representing a more general concept of supernatural power, to the "house" of a particular god, emerging now as one of the major deities of the Knossian community (side by side with the Great Goddess?), helps to indicate that by the end of MM IA period Knossos reached an important step in its social and political development. This was further expressed by substantial construction works on the summit of louchtas during the MM IB or MM II period, suggesting more organized/controlled ritual procedures. A similar reconstruction of the early formation of the Knossian state has long been argued on the basis of a different body of evidence, namely the architectural development of the palatial hill. If the cult on louchtas was indeed devoted to a particular deity, regarded as the protector of Knossos, that could explain why no similar sanctuaries were founded in the vicinity of other palatial centres competing with Knossos over land and a political dominance, namely Malia and Phaistos. The changes in the distribution pattern of peak sanctuaries during the MM IB-IIA periods may represent, therefore, the territorial and/or ideological expansion of Knossos and not the growing popularity of a mountain deity among all the Cretans.

Such an interpretation is further supported by the geographical expansion of the peak sanctuary idea during the late phase of the Proto-Palatial period (MM II), which was then followed by its sudden decline, as represented by abandonments of most of these late-founded sanctuaries in MM IIB or MM III, after a short period of use. During the same late phase of the Proto-Palatial period we see serious changes in settlement patterns and political/administrative organization, including construction of fortified sites, relocation to refuge sites, and violent destruction of numerous major towns and settlements (e.g. Malia and Phaistos).

As a rule, the late and short-lived peak sanctuaries were located on mountains forming the most outstanding landmarks in the region, close to the hypothetical borders between the Proto-Palatial states or territories, of which Knossos, Phaistos, Malia and East Siteia are relatively well identified. Therefore, peak sanctuaries may have marked the borders of Knossian territory (central Crete) or Knossian (?) influence (eastern Crete) with the deity referred to being the same one worshipped on louchtas and holding the special status (as argued above) of a town/territory "protector" linked to Knossos. Because borders rarely remained fixed for long periods in the Bronze Age civilizations, we can expect that their markers ("border peak sanctuaries") had to move too, following territorial expansions/contractions.



Fig. 4. Samitos as seen from Kedros.

Chronological analysis of peak sanctuary distribution suggests that the expansion of Knossos to the east (Pediada) and the west (Psiloriti, the Mylopotamos valley and the Rethymnon isthmus) probably started in the MM IB period. By the MM II period, the peak sanctuary zone reached the Amari valley to the west, with a key “border sanctuary” on the summit of Samitos (Fig. 4), and the southern coast of the Rethymnon isthmus, between Preveli and Plakias, with sanctuaries on Xiros Oros (Fig. 5) and Preveli Mesokorfi. On Samitos pottery and pebbles are occasional, but clay animal figurines are relatively frequent. Pottery and figurines (Fig. 6) can be seen over an area 30 by 40 m, east of the concrete column, and east and south east of the chapel (Nowicki 2015, 172). On Xiros Oros I noted three fragments of bull figurines and two



Fig. 5. Xiros Oros as seen from Preveli Mesokorfi.



Fig. 6. A bull figurine at the peak sanctuary of Samitos.

fragments of building (or altar?) models. The figurines were seen close to the remains of a rectangular building situated 20 m south of the summit terrace. The building is probably much later (medieval/modern?) than the cult place. Pottery and pebbles are visible over an area 40 by 10-20 m, between the summit terrace and the building remains (2016, 171).

On the eastern flank of the hypothetical Knossian state, the expansion first targeted the Pediada plain towards the Lasithi Mts (with the sites of Maza and Liliano Kefala), to the west, and the Upper Mesara and the Asterousia Mts (with the sites of Miliarado Koupa Mikro Kastello, Demati Chousakas, Chondros Roukouni Korfi and Kofinas) to the south. Two of these sites were identified recently. The first is situated on the northern summit of Chousakas, 3 km southeast



Fig. 7. Chondros Anginara Roukouni Korfi from north.





Fig. 8. A fragment of clay figurine on the surface at Roukouni Korfi.

of Demati (Nowicki 2016, 172). Pottery fragments and pebbles are scattered over an area 20 by 10 m. Pottery, represented mostly by cup and small jar/jug fragments, dates to the late MM II and probably MM III periods. Two broken legs from clay bull figurines were also recorded. The second peak sanctuary in this area is situated on the summit of Roukouni Korfi (Fig. 7), which is better known as the site of a “watch tower” of Greek-Roman date, excavated by Nicholas Platon (Platon 1960, 259). The identification and interpretation of the MM II/III cult place is based on surface pottery – mostly cups, five figurine fragments, including a male head (Fig. 8), a male torso, and a bull foot, and pebbles, recorded on the summit, immediately south of the aforementioned circular tower structure (Nowicki 2016, 171).

Especially important for the reconstruction of the peak sanctuary expansion in central Crete are the results of Rethemiotakis’s excavations at two sites in the Pediada. Sklaverochori stou Mameloukou, on the western edge of the Kastelli plain, functioned in MM IB to IIA and was replaced in MM IIB by Liliano Kefala, on the eastern edge of the same plain (Rethemiotakis 2012, 341-342; Rethemiotakis and Christakis 2011, 211). Liliano Kefala was abandoned in MM III, after a short life, like most of the peak sanctuaries founded late in the MM II period.

The central group of sites, centered around Iouktas, was geographically separated from the eastern group, centered at Palaikastro-Petsofas, during most of the Proto-Palatial period, by the territory which may have been partly controlled by the Malia state. Only after the destruction of Malia, at the end of the MM II period, did some limited and ephemeral activity of the “peak sanctuary” cult appear east of Malia, as is evidenced at the sites of Anavlochos Vigla and perhaps Thylakas, on the way to Mirabello, and Anatoli Pandotinou Korifi and Anatoli Estavromenos, around the southern slopes of the Lasithi Mts towards the Ierapetra isthmus.

The origins and development of the eastern group of peak sanctuaries is a separate intriguing problem, poorly understood due to the lack of proper studies of the sites’ chronology.

No pottery has yet been published from any of the sites, but the excavators' remarks and *in situ* examinations of surface evidence indicate that Petsofas and several other sites go back to the MM I period (Myres 1902-1903). Petsofas was probably the earliest peak sanctuary in the East Siteia region. It is unclear, however, whether it was founded as early as that on Iouktas, towards the end of the third millennium BC, or somewhat later – in advanced MM IA or even in MM IB? The first case might suggest a roughly contemporary influence behind the peak sanctuary idea, coming from the east. The second would indicate the Knossian influence, or even territorial expansion to this easternmost part of the island – the key-region for the control of communication/trade with Anatolia and the Levant.

The line marking the western extension of MM peak sanctuaries in the East Siteia region followed the natural geographical border, namely the westernmost extension of the East Siteia plateau, along and above the Siteia-Lithines-Analipsi valley, with the peak of Prinias marking the northern and Alona the southern points. Both sites are visible from each other. No peak sanctuary has yet been identified in the mountainous region west of the above-mentioned valley. Some changes took place, however, along the northern coast west of Siteia. The line along which the westernmost peak sanctuaries were located can be interpreted, therefore, as a "religious demarcation" between two different political/administrative territories, probably with a different (to some degree) composition of their pantheons and rituals.

However, the peak sanctuaries in the East Siteia peninsula were not founded at the same time and the aforementioned "demarcation line" can be dated no earlier than MM IB. The process of peak sanctuary expansion in this region probably started at Petsofas, which apart from serving the largest urban centre in this part of Crete, that of Palaikastro, may have been the main "focus point" for several other peak sanctuaries, in a pattern similar to that around Iouktas. Peak sanctuary distribution in the East Siteia region may represent, therefore, the territorial expansion of Palaikastro to the west and south, in a process similar to the expansion of Knossos in central Crete. In several cases peak sanctuaries can be linked to particular "forts"



Fig. 9. Peak sanctuaries of Pervolakia Vitzilokoumi (1) and Kalo Nero Alona (2) from northeast.

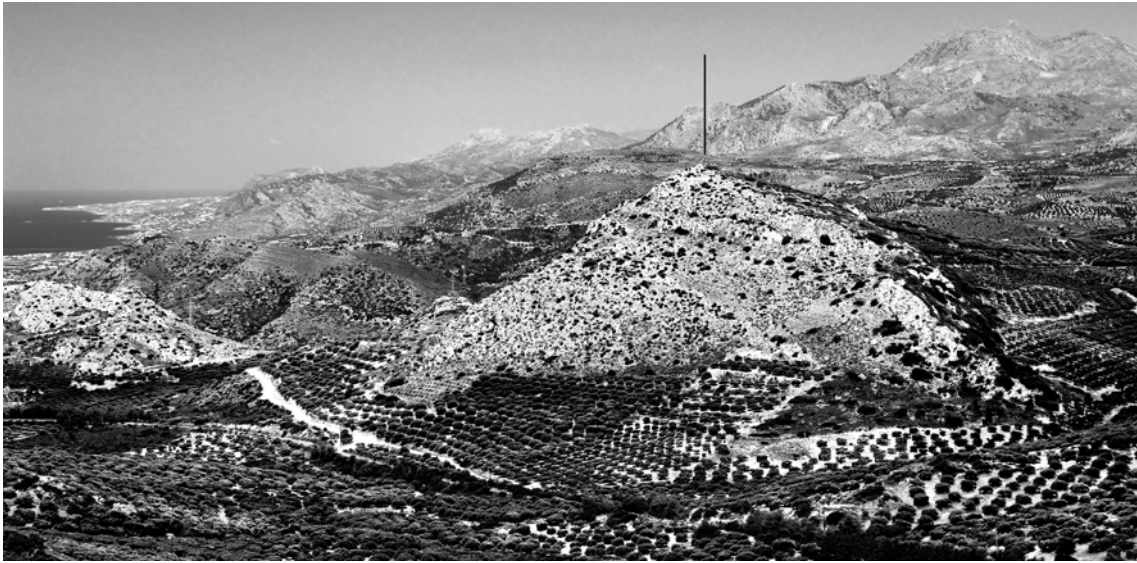


Fig. 10. Peak sanctuary of Lithines Katsaroli from east.

or “guard houses” as described by the “Minoan Roads Project” (Chryssoulaki 1999a). This is the case with the sanctuaries of Korakomouri and Xerokampos Vigla (Schlager 1995; Nowicki 2008, 15), while the “border” function of Kalo Nero Alona, in the very southwestern part of the East Siteia region, is suggested by a nearby MM “guard-station” on the southwest slope of the same mountain, facing the Diaskari coast.

The southern element of the East Siteia group of peak sanctuaries was probably established later than the northern one. The large concentration of peak sanctuaries in the region between Pervolakia-Kalo Nero-Lithines, with two main cult places on Vitzilokoumi and Alona (Fig. 9), and at least two secondary ones on the summits of Katsarola (Fig. 10) and Koutsouvaki, may have resulted from the dynamic character of the expansion process of the East Siteian territory towards the southern coast around Diaskari. The latest and northern element of this westwards expansion was probably an “anomalous” MM II peak sanctuary on the Trachilos promontory, northwest of Faneromeni Siteia (Nowicki 2001, 36).

The above-discussed “border peak sanctuaries” were usually orientated towards the outer (enemy?) territory where no peak sanctuaries have so far been identified, and were not related to the local MM I–II settlement patterns. The best example of such a site is the above-mentioned peak sanctuary on the summit of Samitos in the middle of the Amari valley. The ritual place was located on the summit and the gentle slope facing south-southeast, with a spectacular view of the Mesara plain and the Asterousia Mts. The hill of Phaistos and the peak of Kofinas are well visible from Samitos, but there is no visual relationship between this peak sanctuary and the main Proto-Palatial town in the region, that of Monastiraki. Apparently, the peak sanctuary on Samitos did not serve the inhabitants of Monastiraki and it is highly probable that its foundation took place immediately after this town’s destruction. A very similar explanation can be proposed for the short-lived peak sanctuary of Anavlochos Vigla facing the Neapoli valley. It may have marked an extension of Knossian dominance after the destruction



of Malia but before the conquest of the Mirabello region. It seems, therefore, that these “border sanctuaries” were founded not to serve the local population’s religious needs, but to demonstrate the extent of the power of the Iouktas deity, and thus the political domain of Knossos. Most of these sites were founded late in MM II and were used only for a short time into early MM III. Their abandonment was caused neither by natural disasters (earthquakes, the Thera eruption) (Rutkowski 1986, 95), nor by changes in religious concepts and the cult centralization in the Neo-Palatial period (Peatfield 1990, 131), but was a simple result of their extraordinary function. Once the Proto-Palatial enemies of Knossos were defeated, and their territories incorporated into the more or less unified Neo-Palatial kingdom under Knossian dominance, there was no need to emphasise its god-protector’s power in the same way any longer, and thus many of those “border-marking” or “intrusive” peak sanctuaries were abandoned.

In this short paper there is no space for a more detailed analysis of all the new evidence supporting the aforementioned interpretation of the peak sanctuaries’ origin, expansion and decline. Here, I would like, however, to make three important remarks:

- 1) the list of confirmed peak sanctuaries is longer than the 25 to 30 sites usually mentioned in the last three decades of research; there are over 45 sites which fulfill the following characteristics of peak sanctuaries:
  - a) Location on an outstanding elevated hilltop/summit at some distance from habitation sites. Three patterns of location have been identified so far: 1) located in visual relation to and above a settlement or group of settlements, 2) located in visual relation and facing the main peak sanctuary of the area, and 3) facing “enemy territories”.
  - b) Deposits reflecting no obvious domestic activity, but including three elements: figurines, a special repertoire of pottery with a vast majority of cups and some jugs/jars, and pebbles; the quantity of pebbles and figurines may vary considerably.
- 2) A large number of new sites were identified on elevated points which fulfill all the above-mentioned criteria apart from one: they lack either figurines or pebbles. These belong to different groups of cult places, probably related, but not the same as proper peak sanctuaries.
- 3) For a long time the dating of the peak sanctuary phenomenon was based on the wrong assumption that all or most of the sites were contemporary and were founded in the period proposed by Evans for Iouktas, i.e. MM I (Evans 1921, 158). This is not true. The new studies of surface pottery from unexcavated sites, supported by the publications of old excavations at Kofinas and Vrysinas (Karetsou and Rethemiotakis 1995, Karetsou 2014, Tzachili 2016), indicate that many sites, in particular those in central and western Crete, were probably founded late in the MM II period.

## SUMMARY

The most recent field investigations revealed numerous sites which shed new light on the origins, development and decline of peak sanctuaries, and their long-ignored role in the marking of the territorial expansion of Knossos, especially at the turn of the Proto-Palatial



period. Cretan peak sanctuaries were well-defined cult places with unique topographic characteristics which were associated with the dedicated deity's character (a young storm-god). The origin of peak sanctuaries must be sought in the little-known late Early Bronze Age phase of religious development in Crete, when the pantheon of deities was given a more advanced structural and functional shape. It cannot be surprising that the idea was born first in the Knossos region, which had the longest settlement continuity and the largest population potential in the island. The beginning of the cult on louchtas may have been directly or indirectly related to the settlement history of the Knossos-louchtas region during the EM II period or even before. By the MM IA period louchtas became a major element in the topography of cult in the region of Knossos. Then, during the MM IB-II periods, the peak sanctuary idea spread, probably as the result of growing political (and cultural?) influence, to some, but not all regions of Crete. Thus, we can interpret this somewhat puzzling distribution of peak sanctuaries in Crete as reflecting political and/or cultural differences related to the territorial division of Crete, with Phaistos and Malia being the strongest opponents to Knossos' expansion. The expansion of "provincial" peak sanctuaries in MM II and their decline at the end of MM II or in MM III may have had something to do with changes in settlement patterns which presumably reflected political development, mainly the Knossian territorial expansion, not always of a peaceful character, at the end of the Proto-Palatial period.

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