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TABLE DES MATIÈRES – СОДРЖИНА

Memoriae Fanoulae Papazoglou	5
<i>Marijana Ricl</i> : Fanula Papazoglu (1917-2001)	7–20
<i>Ratko Duev</i> : Written evidence for the Minoan God from Dicte	21–30
<i>Hasan Malay – Marijana Ricl</i> : Two new early-hellenistic inscriptions from Aiolis and Karia	31–38
<i>Snežana Ferjančić</i> : Veterans of the Roman army as members of the municipal elite in Moesia Superior	39–48
<i>Viktor Lilchikj Adams – Sasha Lilchikj</i> : An Agrianian-Paeonian city near Pčinja, Kumanovo region	49–60
<i>Nemanja Vujčić</i> : A City that Resisted Mithridates	61–70
<i>Nade Proeva</i> : <i>Dassaretia et Penestianae Terrae</i> à la lumière des données onomastiques	71–88
<i>Slavica Babamova</i> : New inscriptions from eastern Macedonia	89–96
<i>Vojislav Sarakinski – Vančo Gjorgiev</i> : Sur quelques problèmes de la toponymie macédonienne	97–114
<i>Елена Цукеска</i> : Формите на генитив сингулар од имиња со тематска деklinација на натписи од Линкестида, Пелагонија, Дериоп и Лихнид	115–124
<i>Lenče Jovanova</i> : A monument dedicated to Zbelsurdos by a gerousiast	125–144
<i>Витомир Митевски</i> : Миодраг Тодоровиќ (1947–2017)	145–147
Indices	149–154
Sommaire de l'année 67 / Содржина на 67-то годиште	155

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WRITTEN EVIDENCE FOR THE MINOAN GOD FROM DICTE

Abstract. – The attempt to explain the Linear A script using the phonetic value of the Linear B script indicates a familiar transliteration of words related to the worship of the god Zeus. But Linear A is undeciphered, and the reason for such interpretations is the most often reverse research methodology, beginning with commonly known testimonies from the historical period.

1. The development of Minoan palaces and their cultural ascendancy necessitated the need for a script. Following the discovery of the Knossos Palace by A. Evans on the island of Crete, it was found that in the Bronze Age there were three different types of scripts in use: hieroglyphic (pictographic, from about 2000 to 1700 BC), Linear A (circa 1750 to 1450, BC), and Linear B that replaced the Linear A in the 15th century BC. After M. Ventris deciphered the Linear B, attention turned to Linear A. After more than a century since its discovery, however, the tablets have remained mute. It is interesting that the so-called Cretan hieroglyphic script is found only on the island of Crete and occurs mainly in seals.¹ The Linear A² is most evident in Crete, southern Greece and Cyclades, but recently also in the northeastern Aegean, Asia Minor and Israel³. In his attempt to find its origins, M. Finkelberg⁴ references that distribution to dispute the old thesis of S.

¹ Recently also on the island of Samothrace (M. Finkelberg, *Greeks and Pre-Greeks. Aegean Prehistory and Greek Heroic Tradition*, Cambridge 2005, 58). The inscriptions are very faint to be able to speak of an attempt to decipher them, especially the infinite attempts and theses on the famous Phaistos Disc are hopeless.

² A. Evans (*Scripta Minoa. The Written Documents of Minoan Crete*, vol. I. Oxford 1909, 8) believed that Linear A replaced the older hieroglyphic script, but as new findings suggest, both scripts were likely used simultaneously for a period (M. Finkelberg 2005, 58).

³ Y. Duhoux, "Pre-Hellenic Language(s) of Crete," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 26, 1998, 1–39; I. Schoep, "The origins of writing and administration on Crete," *OJA* 18, 1999, 265–276.

⁴ M. Finkelberg 2005, 59ss.

Dow⁵ for its isolation, which has become a central topic in the last few decades since theories about the religion of the Minoans are based on archaeological findings, which, without written evidence, cannot be confirmed. The script, in addition to tablets, also appears on bronze, silver and golden tribute gifts, and is especially important on stone plates for sacrificial victims, which repeat a longer formula that specifically refers to its religious context.⁶

2. Attempts to decipher the Linear A are also related to the attempts to discover the ethnic origin of its creators. There are many attempts to decipher,⁷ which mainly depart from the possible origin of the Minoans, and in particular the possible mention of the god Zeus or the mountains Ida and Dicte, related to his later following. In any event, researchers agree that the language is not Greek. The display of ancient tradition is interesting, especially the Homeric memorial⁸ to the Eteocretans, the ‘True Cretans’ and the many other nations who lived on the island.⁹ Citing that work, W. Guthrie assumed that the island’s population before the arrival of Indo-Europeans was mixed, most likely of Indo-European origin.¹⁰ The first ones to forward the Indo-European theory are L. R. Palmer¹¹ and G. Huxley¹² according to the analysis of the Luwian language. Most of this theory was reinforced by newer excavations in Anatolia and the Aegean, the analysis of recent testimonies in the 1980s, and the works of C. Renfrew,¹³ but

⁵ S. Dow, “Literacy in Minoan and Mycenaean Lands,” *CAH* II.1, 1973, 557–608: “One comprehensive fact about Minoan literacy is clear, and is striking. This is its isolation.” (552) And especially, “Its distribution was wide but seemingly thin: Linear A has been found at no fewer than a score of sites in Crete, whereas outside Crete only one tablet is known at present (Kea) plus some individual signs on other objects, and of these signs many are potters’ marks and the like, which may not be, properly, Linear A at all.” (556). Cf. Chadwick, J., *The Decipherment of Linear B*, Cambridge 1967.

⁶ W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1985, 22, n. 1. From the knowledge of Linear B, the inscriptions are mainly administrative notes, there are no stories of similar formulas in offering sacrifices, especially libations.

⁷ For the most recent attempts, see G. M. Facchetti, “On Some Recent Attempts to Identify Linear A Minoan Language,” *Minos* 37-38 (2002-2003), 89–94.

⁸ *Od.* 19. 172ss.

⁹ Tradition reports that the Eteocretans remained in the western part of Crete until Hellenistic times, preserving their language and culture (E. Sweeney, *Gods, heroes and tyrants: Greek chronology in chaos*, New York 2009, 115).

¹⁰ W. K. C. Guthrie, “The Religion and Mythology of the Greeks”, *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. II, ch. XV, IInd ed., Cambridge 1961, 7.

¹¹ L. R. Palmer, “Luwian and Linear A,” *TPS*, 1958, 75–100.

¹² G. Huxley, *Crete and the Luwians*, Oxford 1961. V. Brown, E. L., “The Linear A signary: tokens of Luwian dialect in Bronze Age Crete,” *Minos* 27-28 (1992/93), 25–54.

¹³ C. Renfrew, *Archaeology and Language. The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins*, London 1987.

also in the publication of the inscriptions by L. Godard and J. P. Olivier.¹⁴ C. Renfrew's *Neolithic culture of Old Europe* puts him in the context of the Indo-European tradition, but he considers Linear A as still undeciphered, and therefore does not state that it is an Indo-European language. Renfrew opened the way for the emergence of many other theories, like the one by G. Owens, who even offers a sketch of the morphological structure of the IE language,¹⁵ and on the origin of Lycian by M. Finkelberg,¹⁶ driven by the numerous toponyms with the formants *-ss-* and *-nth-* in Crete and the western part of Anatolia and their concentration in Lycia. The thesis on the origins of Anatolia is primarily related to linguistic analyses and is the generally accepted position on Hittite and Luwian as IE languages.¹⁷ I. Singer, referencing accounts of the similarities in culture on both sides of the Aegean, from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age, believes that the whole Aegean Basin in the second millennium BC was a predominantly homogeneous cultural *koine*, and that it is possible that the origins of the Minoans and their language may be related to the Luwians.¹⁸

However, as C. D. Buck warned in 1926, all these doubts and theses are not based on the internal testimonies of the scripts themselves, but only on indications of the cultural ties between the populations on both sides of the Aegean.¹⁹ Knowing that, and lacking concrete conclusions about the script of the Minoans, is insufficient to solve the mystery. Furthermore, Y. Duhoux,²⁰ who devoted most of his life to

¹⁴ L. Godart, J.-P. Olivier, *Recueil des inscriptions en Linéaire A. Études Crétoises 21, vols. 1-5*, Paris 1976–1985.

¹⁵ G. Owens, "The Structure of the Minoan Language," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 27, 1999, 15–55; cf. "Pre-Hellenic Language(s) of Crete: Debate and Discussion," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 28.1/2, 2000, 237–253; J. L. Caskey "Greece and the Aegean Islands in the Middle Bronze Age", *CAH* II.1, 1973, 139.

¹⁶ M. Finkelberg 2005, 52.

¹⁷ S. Davis considers it to be Hittite (*The Decipherment of the Minoan Linear A and Pictographic Scripts*, Johannesburg 1967). Recently, the Etruscan hypothesis is also favoured, especially in the attempts to present the Etruscan language as IE and its Asia Minor roots (M. Pallottino, *The Etruscans*, Harmondsworth 1955; O. Carruba, "L'origine degli etruschi: il problema della lingua," in *Paleontologia linguistica. Atti del VI convegno internazionale di linguisti*, Brescia 1977, 137–53; G. M. Facchetti, M. Negri, *Creta minoica. Sulle tracce delle più antiche scritture d'Europa*, Firenze 2003.).

¹⁸ I. Singer, "Cuneiform, linear, alphabetic: the contest between writing systems in the Eastern Mediterranean," in A. Ovadiah (ed.), *Mediterranean Cultural Interaction*, Tel Aviv, 2000, 15.

¹⁹ C. D. Buck, "The language situation in and about Greece in the second millennium BC," *CPh* 21, 1926, 1–26: "The strong suspicion that the language of these Cretan writings is related to those of Asia Minor is then not based on any internal evidence from the writings themselves, but upon indications of cultural relations between the early Cretan population and that of Asia Minor, and the evidence of place-names in Crete as well as in other parts of the Aegean including the Greek mainland" (4–5).

²⁰ "La langue du linéaire a est-elle antioienne?" in *Antiquus Oriens: Mélanges offerts au Professeur René Lebrun*, I, M. Mazoyer, O. Casabonne (ed.), Paris 2004, 207–28.

studying this subject, analyzed these attempts and pointed out that according to the approach taken to address the problem of cultural proximity, the possible Anatolian origin of the Minoans and their script cannot be confirmed. Although there are influences from Anatolia and other civilizations in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Minoans had cultural autonomy: original art and crafts, architecture, a letter, and religious representations that cannot be linked in any way with other civilizations.²¹

(j)a-di-ki-te-te-du-pu₂-re – ‘Diktaian Master?’

3. M. Valerio analyzed the interesting forms of *ja-na-ki-te-de-du-pu₂-re* and *(j)a-di-ki-te-te-du-pu₂-re*, inscribed on stone tablets found in Palaikastro and that are part of the standard Minoan votiv formula, the so-called “Libation Formula” (PK Za 8 and 15).²² His analysis begins with the search for the significance of *-du-pu₂-re* compared to the Hittite term *tabarna-* / *labarna-*.²³ The word *tabarna* cannot be brought under a reliable IE etymology; it is closest to the Lycian name *Dapara*.²⁴ Once again the relationship with the Labranios epithet to the god Zeus of Cyprus,²⁵ and the temple of Zeus Labraundos near Labraunda in Caria, comes to mind. Linking that with the Mycenaean form *da-pu₂-ri-to-* and *labyrithos*²⁶ as pre-Greek, M. Valerio accepts the reconstruction of I. Jakubovich of the South Anatolian verb **daBar-* with the meaning ‘rules’ and the noun **daBarā-* ‘power’, whose transmission, as a symbol of power, also has the meaning ‘ruler’.²⁷ Starting from this reconstructed form, I. Jakubovich finds a parallel between the Hittite wedge-shaped sign *BA* in the *tabarna-//labarna-* and the syllabogram *pu₂* in the myc. *da-pu₂-ri-to-jo*. This title is the only form in which the Hittite syllabogram *ba* is used, which is usually used to write the Sumerian *ba* and the Acadian *pá*,²⁸ as if it were adopted from a foreign sound, written as an atypical sound. M.

²¹ *Ibid.* 220.

²² M. Valério, “‘Diktaian Master’: a Minoan Predecessor of Diktaian Zeus in Linear A?”, *Kadmos* 46, 2007, 3–14.

²³ Forwarded by I. Yakubovich, “Labyrinth for Tyrants,” *Studia Linguarum* 3/1, Moscow 2002, 93–116.

²⁴ Greek. *Lapara* (C. H. Melchert, *A Dictionary of the Lycian Language*, Ann Arbor 2004, 92).

²⁵ I. Jakubovich (2002, 104s.) assumes that perhaps this epithet means ‘royal’ or ‘powerful’.

²⁶ *DMic* s.v. For the various forms of the name and the connection with *da-pu₂-ri-to-*, especially in. W. Pötscher, *Aspekte und Probleme der minoischen Religion*, Hildesheim 1990, 54ss., which gives a very detailed analysis of all forms, supported by the remarks of the ancient authors.

²⁷ M. Valério, 2007, 5, as an explanation for the frequent use of this root in Luo-Hittite personal names. To this M. Valerio adds a few personal names from Caria to *-dubr-*.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 6.

Valerio compares it to T. Palaima's and E. Sikkenga's argument that the *pu*₂ together for the signs *56 (*pa*₃) and *22 (*pi*₂?) make up the category of syllabogram that were retained by Mycenaeans during the adaptation of the Linear A script to Linear B so they could record typical Minoan sounds.²⁹ I. Jakubovich believes that the alteration of the sign *pu*₂ from the Linear B with the syllabic *bu* to *da-pu*₂-*ri-to-* and *la-byrinthos* indicates a distinct voice inherited from the pre-Greek substrate.³⁰ The fact is that according to its identification, the sign *pu*₂ in the Linear B script has a value of *phu*,³¹ leading M. Valerio to state that the word *da-pu*₂-*ri-to-* would be read as */daphurinthos/*, as opposed to *labyrithos*.³² The proven *da-pu*₂-*ri-to-* has a variant *da-pu-ri-to-* (KN Xd 140), which favors Valerio's thesis that it is because of the need of the scribe to write the *b* sound.³³ The interpretation of the palace in Knossos as a Labyrinth,³⁴ according to M. Valerio, does not accord with the older thesis that the word *labyrithos* is derived from the assumed leading word *labrys* with meaning 'double -axe', but comes from the word for 'ruler'.³⁵

Thus in reading the *j/a-di-ki-te-te-du-pu*₂-*re*, the first part, according to M. Valerio, refers to Mount Dikte,³⁶ and the second part, *-du-pu*₂-*re*, accepting Jakubovich's study of the Anatolian root **daBar*, would mean 'ruler, master',³⁷ and the whole phrase as "the Diktaian Master" in the dative, although the explanation of the affixes *j/a-* and *-(e)-te* remains problematic.³⁸ However, can such a demonstrated and well elaborated thesis be accepted?

²⁹ Palaima, T. G., Sikkenga, E., "Linear A > Linear B," in P. Betancourt, V. Karageorghis, R. Laffineur, W.-D. Niemeier (eds.), *Aegaeum 20 – MELETEMATATA. Studies in Aegean Archaeology Presented to Malcolm H. Wiener*, Liège/Austin, 602; M. Valério, 2007, 6.

³⁰ I. Jakubovich 2002, 109.

³¹ PY Na 520: *pu*₂-*te-re ki-ti-je-si*, has been identified as */phutēres ktiensil/* (DMic s.v.). The same sign occurs in non-Greek anthroponym, possibly Minoan like *du-pu*₂-*so* (KN Fh 343), *pu*₂-*ru-da-ro* (KN Uf 432) and *si-ja-pu*₂-*ro* (KN As [2] 116), but because of the lack of knowledge of Minoan phonology these names cannot be interpreted.

³² M. Valério, 2007, 6.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Which is nothing new from above.

³⁵ M. Valério, 2007, 7.

³⁶ The idea comes from G. Owens ("Minoan DI-KA-TA," *Kadmos* 32 (1993), 156-161).

³⁷ M. Valério, 2007, 9.

³⁸ The variation *ja/-a-* is also evident in the documents written with Linear A (*ja-sa-sa-ra-me* : *a-sa-sa-ra-me*; *ja-ta-i-**301-*u-ja* : *a-ta-i-**301-*wa*) and non-Greek anthroponym in the Mycenaean texts of Knossos (*ja-sa-ro* : *a-sa-ro*). There are other examples of *a-* like *si-ki-ra* (HT 8) : *a-si-ki-ra* (KH 20, cf. *si-ki-ro* on KN U 8210), after that *ta-na-te* : *a-ta-na-te*, in the myc. *wi-je-mo* : *a-wi-je-mo*. According to H. L. Melena (*ja-* is optional prefix member ("On the Untransliterated Syllabograms 56 and * 22," in *Tractata*, Skopje 1985, 222, n. 65). The particle *-(e)-te* Valerio describes it as a genitive/locative mark (2007, 9).

i-da-ma-te

4. On the two golden double axes from Arkalochori there were inscriptions discovered written in Linear A. Read as *i-da-ma-te*,³⁹ they drew great attention from researchers. It is more than obvious that the word greatly resembles the name of the later goddess Demeter. There was an inscribed stone vessel (perhaps a lamp) without a prefix like *da-ma-te* found on the island of Kythera (KY Za 2).⁴⁰ Although we should carefully approach these isolated inscriptions, the association cannot be avoided, which is why G. Owens is certain to mention the Minoan origin of the Greek goddess Demeter.⁴¹ Even the same author, searching for Indo-European elements and words in Linear A documents, identifies him as “the mother of Ida”.⁴² However, more attention should be paid to J. Chadwick’s⁴³ warning that the obvious etymologies can often be wrong, and there are no other testimonies that reveal the meaning of these inscriptions from a single word.

Epiphany or illusion?

5. There are two key problems in the method of exploring the Minoan religion and culture in general:

- The Linear A script is undeciphered
- Reverse research methodology

a. No matter how obvious certain written testimonies and their interpretations are, however, the knowledge of the Minoan script, without being deciphered, is fragile and easy to dispute. The main problem in the research is that rich archaeological findings cannot be supplemented by written testimonies to fully confirm the assumptions about the beliefs and cults of the Minoans. Almost all approaches to the testimonies are tied to our knowledge of the later periods of the development of cults and culture in the Aegean.⁴⁴ The very name, Minoan, was given by its discoverer, A. Evans, referring to the literary

³⁹ Y. Duhoux, “LA > B da-ma-te = Déméter? Sur la langue du linéaire A,” *Minos* 29–30, 1994–1995, 289–294.

⁴⁰ G. Owens, S. Bennet, “Minoan Inscriptions in Mycenaean Greece,” *DO-SO-MO* 6, 2005, 52–69.

⁴¹ According to Y. Duhoux 1994–1995, 289–294.

⁴² G. Owens assumes that both toponyms Ida and Dicte have an IE origin, from the roots **wid* and **dik*, which describe the epiphany of the Mother goddess of the mountain (1999, 34). In the term of the formula for libation, found on the inscription from the Minoan peak sanctuary, *i-na-i-da*, he finds “Holly Mount Ida” (*Ibid.*), and *pi-te-ri* identifies it as “father” according to IE *pater*.

⁴³ J. Chadwick, *Discussion on L. R. Palmer, Res Mykenaeae*, 365.

⁴⁴ Cf. R. Laffineur, “Seeing is Believing: Reflections on Divine Imagery in the Aegean Bronze Age,” in *Potnia: Deities and Religion in the Aegean Bronze Age*, *Aegeum* 22, Liège 2001, 387, where the title itself clearly highlights the problem that has existed for a long time in research related to this issue.

myths about the legendary King Minos, the birth of the god Zeus, Kuretes, Europe, the epiphany of the bull, the island's descriptions by the ancient authors, the goddess Rea and the cult of the Great Mother, are motifs in almost all the research, which leads to a reverse analysis of testimonies. For example, the analysis of M. Valerio⁴⁵ is nevertheless guided by the testimonies of the Linear B script for the attested formula F(1) 1 + 31 *di-ka-ta-jo di-we* in a clear religious context, then *di-ka-ta-de* from Fp (1) 7. Therefore, the interpretation of I. Jakubovich is acceptable that *-du-pu₂-re* is 'master', because all researchers are in fact looking for the "Master of Dikte". On the other hand, Mount Ida and the myths associated with it certainly influenced the researchers to "find it easily" in written testimonies as goddesses,⁴⁶ as did the goddess Demeter, again due to the fact that Zeus in Crete resembled the god of vegetation associated with fertility. It is interesting that there are many testimonies of the Minoans' connections with other civilizations in the Eastern Mediterranean,⁴⁷ indicating that they were in touch with literate cultures from whom they could take signs and letters. Despite that, they created their own letter,⁴⁸ which has created many dilemmas that will probably have to wait for the new testimonies that are constantly revealed during excavations on the island to be resolved.

b. The Anatolian connection is influenced by the myth of Zeus, Dionysus and their epiphany in a bull. Following the Çatal Hüyük findings with progressive research methodology, the ritual symbols such as the double axe and the ceremonial horns can be linked to the religious tradition of Asia Minor.⁴⁹ However, later representations of the double axe as a symbol of the thunder of Zeus of Caria and Lycia have no confirmed connections with Minoan cult symbols, as is the case of the eponymous Mount Ida in Troas with that of Crete. That which connects the same period is the great role played by libations in the belief systems in Anatolia and the numerous vessels and tables found with inscriptions for libations in the sanctuaries of Crete, Hittite *sipandi*, Greek *spendein*.⁵⁰

c. That which can be derived from the archaeological findings of the Minoan civilization and religion does not coincide with the later

⁴⁵ M. Valério, 2007.

⁴⁶ For example, E. Kaszyńska ("Greek IDA battle of the Minoan origin," *Kadmos* 41, 2002, 137-140) also extracts the meaning of the inscription *i-da-ma-te* on the golden double axes found in the sacred cave in Arkalohori, and the presence of representations of female deities on the mountain sanctuaries. It is clear how the author came to the reading "Mother of War", how likely is this statement?.

⁴⁷ T. Bryce, *The Trojans and their Neighbours*, Routledge 2006, 89s.

⁴⁸ S. Dow, "Literacy in Minoan and Mycenaean Lands," *CAH* II.1, 1973, 552C. Just as the Hellenes took the Phoenician letters.

⁴⁹ Cf. W. Burkert 1985, 37.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 36.

tradition. There are no portraits of kings,⁵¹ nor is there confirmation of the tradition of the Minoan thalassocracy, but there are many testimonies of developed maritime trade with the Aegean, Anatolia, Canaan, and Egypt.⁵² On the other hand, Minoan belief systems are rather different than those from Egypt or the Middle East.⁵³ Representations of goddesses are predominant, but there is no evidence of a matriarchal society.⁵⁴ There are no traces of the cult of the Great Mother and her lover-god of vegetation,⁵⁵ nor have there been any testimonies of a tomb or death as a religious motif. It is interesting that there is no reliable representation of the existence of more deities, but this cannot negate the polytheism of this period.⁵⁶ Most often, even god was portrayed to look like the goddesses as “the Master of the animals”.⁵⁷ Any attempt to seek connection with Demeter or Artemis on the basis of previous testimonies is a step too far, as is speaking of chthonic or celestial deities.⁵⁸

d. From the present knowledge, the role of the Minoan gods and their cults cannot be determined, except their connection with animals⁵⁹ and the possible role they play as protectors of cities. There are attempts to link the representation of the seal of a god standing on horns accompanied by a goat and daimon with the myth of Amalthea, who nurtured the infant-god in a cave.⁶⁰ Then there is the imprint found in Chania where a figure with a scepter is placed on the highest tower is considered a god.⁶¹ From the other representations, however,

⁵¹ F. Matz, “The Zenith of Minoan Civilization”, *SAN* II.1, 1973b, 572.

⁵² F. Matz, 1973b, 573.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ M. Gimbutas puts Minoan beliefs in her “Neolithic context”, and even considers the Minoans as descendants of the Old Europeans, which implies that the cult of the Great Mother held a central place in their beliefs and that it was recognized in all representations of goddesses (1991ss.). But the idols of the snake goddess cannot be linked with Neolithic figures.

⁵⁵ Fraser’s model was accepted by Evans, which survived as the only deity on the island in the Minoan period. Certainly, idols, such as the seated deities of the rings, are female (W. Burkert 1985, 41), there is no representation of a woman with a child (kourotrophos type), nor a representation of a group of deities. However, according to the various at different sites, one can challenge the theory of A. Evans that the island believed in only one goddess.

⁵⁶ N. Marinatos *Minoan Religion: Ritual, Image, and Symbol*, University of South Carolina Press 1993, 165s.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* in Fig. 6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 126.

⁵⁹ In Fig. 7 the so-called. “The Master of the Animals,” according to the representations of the seals of a god accompanied by lions, griffins, bulls, goats, etc. (N. Marinatos 1993, 167).

⁶⁰ There are other such representations in *Ibid.*

⁶¹ E. Halager, “The Master Impression,” *SIMA* 69, Göteborg 1985. Like the later statues of Poseidon (N. Marinatos 1993, 167).

one cannot draw conclusions on the roles and functions of the gods in Minoan beliefs and cults. As I mentioned above, the problem is that the interpretation is drawn from the later testimonies. Retrograde methodology is usually aimed at confirming later views. However, if investigated synchronously, it must be acknowledged that there are no testimonies of the “Master of Dikte”, nor for deities of the type of the Anatolian Greater Mother and her lover God. The only thing we can consider as an allusion to the myth of the Cretan Zeus is that possible written and archaeological testimonies are tied to the eastern part of the island, the area around Palekastro and probably the Mount Dikte.

It is normal to ask: where do all the subsequent legends and myths tied to Crete come from? Past testimonials cannot help us with the answer, although we must not exclude the possible historical background of the same.

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