

# CHILDREN'S WORK: GIRLS AS ACOLYTES IN AEGEAN RITUAL AND CULT

by *Paul Rehak*

Children are the true “neglected people” in the ancient Mediterranean world.<sup>1</sup> High mortality rates among infants and the very young in antiquity, the poor survival of their skeletal remains, and their relative lack of representation in Classical art and texts compared with adults have all conspired to create and reinforce their invisibility.<sup>2</sup> Until pubescence, children in Classical antiquity were usually considered members of a third, neuter gender, their identities dependent on either the social or economic status of their parents and guardians. Boys were sexually important because they ensured the political continuation of the family (Greek *oikos*; Latin *domus*) and the transmission of its rights and property, and girls represented the potential for future legitimate offspring.<sup>3</sup> Outside the depiction of a handful of significant mythological children in Classical art (e.g., Erichthonios, Herakles, Perseus), few children appear as subjects in Greek art before the Hellenistic period,<sup>4</sup> while Roman children were seldom depicted before the beginning of the imperial period.<sup>5</sup> Our sources of knowledge about children

1. Some of this material was presented at one of the “Before 1500” seminars at the Hall Center, University of Kansas, February 3, 2003. I am grateful to Jeremy Rutter and Ada Cohen for the occasion to present an earlier version of this material at the “Constructions of Childhood in the Ancient World” conference held at Dartmouth College November 6–8, 2003. J. Rutter allowed me to read his catalogue essay (2003) in advance of its publication. I have received further encouragement and many suggestions from three colleagues at the University of Kansas: Tara Welch, Elizabeth C. Banks, and John Younger. [Paul Rehak passed away on 5 June 2004. This contribution edited by J. G. Younger, is based on the text presented for discussion at the Hall Center, Univer-

sity of Kansas, February 3, 2004, with additions drawn from his notes written during the conference held at Dartmouth College in November 2003.] Rühfel 1984a; Golden 1990; C. Müller 1990; Chamberlain 1997; Kamp 2001. For possible children's toys, see Gates 1992.

2. See Becker and Lagia, this volume; see also Moore and Scott 1997.

3. Vollkommer 2000, with relevant ancient sources.

4. Exceptions: children on *choes* (small wine pitchers) produced for the Anthesteria festival, when boys were acknowledged as legitimate members of their fathers' phratries: Hamilton 1992; Wienke and Neils 2004; Smith, this volume. Pollitt 2000 discusses the groundbreaking appearance of children on the Parthenon sculptures. The sex

of the child in the east frieze of the Parthenon is debated (e.g., Younger 1997, and, contra, Boardman 1999, pp. 314–321). The children on Classical grave stelai are attributes of deceased grownups rather than subjects of commemoration in their own right; see Grossman, this volume. Children are included in family groups on a number of Late Classical and Hellenistic votive reliefs; see Lawton, this volume. Hellenistic royal children deserve to be studied in their own right.

5. Some children are shown in Etruscan art, often as terracotta or bronze votive statuettes; see Ammerman, this volume. The Ara Pacis Augustae (13–9 B.C.) is the first Roman state monument to depict children and women in significant numbers.

are even sparser as we move back into the prehistoric period before 1000 B.C., the focus of this study.<sup>6</sup>

Until relatively recently, our direct evidence for children in the Bronze Age Aegean was restricted to a few well-studied burials and the disturbing evidence of dismembered juvenile bones from Knossos.<sup>7</sup> Linear B tablets from the end of the period (ca. 1200) document the roles of some children as dependent workers who, with their adult caretakers, received rations from the major palace centers.<sup>8</sup> At that time our representations of children amounted to a few figurines in ivory, terracotta, or bronze, a scattering of images on seal stones, rings, and clay sealings, and a small corpus of fragmentary paintings, most from Knossos on Crete and a few mainland centers.<sup>9</sup>

In 1967, this situation changed dramatically as the result of Spyridon Marinatos's pioneering excavations at the site of Akrotiri on the island of Thera (Santorini), now continuing under the direction of Christos Doumas. Like Pompeii and Herculaneum in Italy, Akrotiri was destroyed in a cataclysmic volcanic eruption ca. 1627 or 1530 (the precise date is debated).<sup>10</sup> Many of the buildings at the site are relatively well preserved, often with their original fresco decoration preserved in situ. One freestanding structure, Xeste 3, included an extensive program of paintings, in which new roles for children have been revealed. This one discovery, however, should serve to remind us how quickly our picture of prehistoric Aegean children may change as new evidence emerges.

My goals in this contribution are three. First, I summarize what the Xeste 3 frescoes reveal about the Bronze Age conception of Aegean children, particularly girls. Second, I use this iconography to identify other representations of children that have been overlooked or misunderstood. Third, I examine how the social roles of girls in the Aegean Late Bronze Age resembled or differed from those of the historical period.

The following criteria for identifying children are relevant:

1) Girls can sometimes be recognized as the relatively smaller females in scenes that include more than one individual. (This criterion is not absolute, however, for relative size can be an indication of importance or status.)

2) Girls wear a short (calf-length) version of the long (ankle-length) robe with short sleeves that adult women wear. Thus, girls are represented

6. For overviews of this period, see Cullen 2001; Rutter 2003. Contemporary children are well represented in Egypt, less so among the Hittites; see Canby 1986.

7. The children in the Shaft Graves at Mycenae spring to mind. For children's bones showing deliberate cutting and saw marks at Knossos in a LM I B context, see Wall, Musgrave, and Warren 1986.

8. B. Olsen 1998; Nosch 2001.

9. Such representations of children in media other than frescoes included:

a. 2 "prince's" heads on two seal-

ings from the Knossos Hieroglyphic Deposit: *CMS* II 8, nos. 41, 42 (*PM* I, p. 272, fig. 201b; Hood 1978, p. 218, n. 64, fig. 217; Rutter 2003, p. 37, fig. 7); the cropped hair of these figures may identify them as girls.

b. "boys" heads on seal stones: *CMS* IX, no. 6Da, and X, no. 278 at right (authenticity of both seals has been questioned).

c. crawling bronze boy, Psychro cave: Hood 1978, pp. 112, 113, fig. 98; D. Evelyn 1999, fig. on p. 178; Neils and Oakley 2003, pp. 237–238, fig. 38; Rutter 2003, p. 37, cat. 38.

d. two ivory boys, Palaikastro: Bosanquet and Dawkins 1923, pp. 125–127, fig. 108, pl. 27; Pendlebury 1930, pp. 32–33, nos. 52–53, pl. 3; Hood 1978, p. 120 and fig. 108; Karetsou 2000, p. 301, no. 295a, b and color figs.; Rutter 2003, p. 38, figs. 8–9.

e. two girls on a gold ring from the Acropolis Treasure at Mycenae: *CMS* I, no. 17; Rutter 2003, p. 43, fig. 19.

10. For a summary up to 2002, see Wiener 2003; see also Warren and Hankey 1989; Manning 1999.

to some degree as miniature adults. This Minoan costume is open at the front above the waist to expose the chest, even in cases where the adult breasts have not yet started to develop. Over the robe, both girls and women may wear an apron wrapped around the waist and secured with ties. Both the robe and the apron may be special costumes rather than ordinary daily wear. Boys in Aegean art are always nude.

3) In large-scale (megalographic) paintings that include much detail, the developmental stages of the face and body can be estimated as individuals grow toward maturity.

4) Girls and boys apparently went through several stages of hair growth and cutting before maturity. For girls, the juvenile stages of this process can be recognized by shaved heads or crania where short locks have been allowed to begin growing. Generally, a short lock is maintained over the forehead along with a longer lock or ponytail at the back of the head, which may be looped up and tied; the former appears to have been cut at maturity. The hairstyles of some children do not conform to this linear evolution, indicating that there were alternative roles for some.

### THE GIRLS OF XESTE 3

Two walls of an upper-story room show a goddess and four girls in a rocky landscape with clumps of blossoming crocus plants.<sup>11</sup> A third wall shows a marshy landscape with vegetation and animals, while the fourth depicts a procession of mature women, most of whom hold bouquets of different flowers.<sup>12</sup> Downstairs, a small compartment was painted with the figures of three boys and a man; a separate sunken area or “lustral basin” contained wall paintings showing two young adult women and another girl. Much work has been devoted to the identification of age grades among the figures from Xeste 3 based on considerations of relative scale, physiognomy, hairstyle, costume, and jewelry.<sup>13</sup> Although some details continue to be contested, there is now general agreement that we can recognize several ages among the children depicted, and we can turn our attention to an investigation of their roles.

We can begin with the composition that extends over the north and east walls of the upper floor (Fig. 11.1). The figures are painted against a white plaster background with a repeating design of yellow crocus clumps with lavender petals and dark red stigmas, in a pattern that resembles wallpaper. Set against this background are multicolored rocks, which suggest a mountainous landscape, perhaps that of Thera itself. The east wall shows two girls picking crocus flowers with stigmas, which they deposit in wicker baskets.<sup>14</sup> One girl holds her container and turns her head back as if speaking to her companion; the other has set her basket on the ground behind her so she can pluck flowers with both hands.

The adjacent north wall of the room, interrupted by a window, continues the narrative sequence of activities depicted on the east. To the right of the window, a girl with red hair and a blue eye balances a filled basket on her shoulder and carries it to the left, in the direction of an architectural platform that consists of a row of beams (some of them painted to

11. Crocus stigmas are used today as the source for saffron, a potent but fugitive yellow dye, an herbal ingredient in cooking, a pharmaceutical aid that facilitates menstruation, and a source of vitamin B and carotenes. See Amigues 1988; Rehak and Snihurówych 1997; Rehak 1999a.

12. Some have interpreted Aegean landscapes as genre scenes, while others view them as appropriations of a source of power by an elite. See Cameron 1987; Chapin 2004.

13. N. Marinatos 1984a; E. Davis 1986; Rehak 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2002; Chapin, this volume.

14. Doumas 1992, pls. 116–121.



**Figure 11.1. Xeste 3 at Akrotiri: upper floor frescoes.** Computer-enhanced reconstruction after Doumas 1992, pls. 116, 122, 129

indicate wood grain) supported on blocks or “incurved bases” of Minoan type. At the far left, on the lowest stage of the platform, a girl empties her crocus blossoms from a basket into a large pannier.<sup>15</sup> On the next higher stage to her right is another, smaller pannier, from which a blue monkey has selected just the crocus stigmas culled from the blossoms; the animal offers these stigmas to an enthroned woman at the highest level. Behind her to the right is a griffin with extended wings, as if it has just flown in through the open window; it wears a red collar and has a red leash that is painted as if tied to the real window frame.

Since this scene was first reconstructed, all scholars have agreed that the enthroned woman represents a young goddess (note the shallow curve of her exposed breast), who has as her attendants the monkey, the griffin, and the young girls.<sup>16</sup> Thus she can be considered a “Mistress of Animals” (*potnia theron*) and protectress of maidens, both of which well describe the later Artemis and other goddesses.<sup>17</sup> The association of this goddess with crocus and saffron also seems undeniable:<sup>18</sup> she has a crocus blossom painted (or tattooed) on her cheek, and her loose, diaphanous blue blouse is decorated with these flowers and is hemmed with a band decorated with rows of crocus blossoms. The one preserved short sleeve carries a design of circles that resemble beam ends in representations of palaces and shrines in Aegean art.<sup>19</sup> A blue and white flounced apron encircles the lower body.

The seat of the goddess is not a conventional throne or chair, but rather a stack of yellow cushions, which could represent bales of saffron-dyed cloth or even a pile of yellow-dyed garments. The cushions most resemble the folded textiles in some Archaic vase paintings and in marble relief on the east frieze of the Classical Parthenon.<sup>20</sup> In Athens, Athena

15. Similar baskets are used for offerings at a peak sanctuary on a stone relief vase fragment from Knossos: Alexiou 1959, pls. ΛΔ, ΛΕ; Rehak 1997, fig. 7; and a monkey employs a similar container for crocus flowers on a Knossian fresco: Hood 1978, pp. 48–49, figs. 27–28. The blue figure in this painting was originally misidentified as a “Blue Boy.”

16. Niemeier 1992, pp. 98–99.

17. *LIMC* II 1984, pp. 737–740, s.v. Artemis (L. Kahil); but see comments by Barclay 2000a, 2000b regarding the later *potnia theron*.

18. N. Marinatos 1987.

19. For a similar pattern on the hem of the skirt of a woman or goddess in the LM II Procession Fresco from the palace at Knossos, see *PM* II.2, p. 729,

fig. 456a.

20. For an example, see an amphora by the Amasis Painter that shows women weaving at a warp-weighted loom on one side and folding and stacking cloth on the other: New York, Metropolitan Museum, Fletcher Fund 31.33.10; Neils 1992, p. 108, figs. 66a, b.

was offered on her birthday a saffron-dyed dress (peplos) embroidered in purple; this costume was woven by women and two girls (the *Arrephoroi*), both of impeccable reputation and chosen from among the best families in the city.<sup>21</sup>

The detailed rendering of the four girls deserves additional comment. All are richly bejeweled, with bracelets and earrings, but each is barefoot, which seems impractical for walking over the rough terrain depicted here. Only one girl, the redhead with blue eyes, wears a necklace, composed of a single strand of red (possibly cornelian) beads. In addition, each girl wears a band across the forehead and has a rectangular blue patch in front of the ears: the latter is an artistic convention for showing shaved sideburn areas.<sup>22</sup>

Their principal garment is a short robe or dress with short sleeves; the ornamental tassels of beads or threads hanging from the robe at the elbow may represent the gathered warp threads, some of which are tasseled as well.<sup>23</sup> Over the robe, a patterned apron is wrapped around the hips and secured at the waist with ties.<sup>24</sup> These garments clearly do not make up an everyday costume, a plainer version of which we see (for example) in the West House miniature fresco at Akrotiri, but rather a special costume like today's "Sunday best" wear.<sup>25</sup> Their calf-length robes are an indicator of their juvenile status—as noted above, adult women wear a robe that reaches to the ankles. The bodice of both the girls and the women is open at the front to expose the torso from the base of the throat to the waist; I have suggested elsewhere that the exposure of the chest was a way for Aegean women to monitor the stages of development of their breasts as they matured.<sup>26</sup> In the case of the girls, the artist has indicated the nipples with reddish dots, even though the breasts have not yet begun to "bud."<sup>27</sup>

Despite the apparently similar age (probably eight to ten years old and thus prepubescent) and task of the girls, the artist has accentuated their individuality by noting differences in costume and hair growth, though all have a lock over the forehead to be cut at puberty and a long tress at the back of the head (adult women have no forelock, and their single long tress has become full and luxuriant). Thus, though these are not portraits in the modern sense, each girl is carefully distinguished from the others by the artist, as if her individuality is important.

21. Mansfield 1985; Barber 1992.

22. We can tell this because hairy stubble is visibly beginning to grow out on these patches, including red stubble on the cheek of the girl with red hair. Thus, the shaved patches cannot represent ornaments as Ellen Davis notes (1986, p. 402), following Arthur Evans: *PM* II.2, p. 702, fig. 442A.

23. Representations of Aegean jewelry are discussed in Younger 1992, representations of costume by Jones 1998. For the actual construction of Bronze Age costumes, see Barber 1991, 2003; for a typology of bead shapes, see

Xenaki-Sakellariou 1985, pp. 292–312. A comprehensive study of surviving jewelry remains to be written.

24. N. Marinatos 1984a, pp. 100–101, fig. 70. She calls the apron a "flounced kilt." See also Barber 2000, p. 355, who identifies it as a garment "traditionally given to girls when they reached maturity." The girls with aprons from Xeste 3, however, are clearly prepubescent.

25. L. Morgan 1988; Doumas 1992, pls. 38, 48, for women in the West House who wear white robes with black trim (note that some of these costumes

are restored). For the identification of the robe and apron as special garments, compare Lee 2000, who identifies the Classical peplos as a rare garment in the 5th century that harkens back to an earlier heroic past.

26. Rehak 2002, p. 36. One woman from the House of the Ladies at Akrotiri has a breast with a pronounced nipple, which may suggest that she is a nursing mother, first noted by N. Marinatos 1984a, p. 101.

27. See B. Cohen 1997 for the revealing of the breast in Classical art.

A girl on the east wall has just had her head shaved, and stubble is just beginning to grow on her scalp.<sup>28</sup> Two others, one on the east and the redhead on the north, have scalp hair that has grown enough to form tight curls. To underscore the importance of these curls, the artist incised the spiral locks with a sharp tool or stylus after the scalp was painted. The fourth child, on the north wall at the foot of the platform, is at a still more advanced stage of hair growth: the short curls are no longer incised; instead, they have grown into a fluffy mass of hair. Thus, within our group of juvenile figures, three distinct stages of hair growth seem indicated, though on the basis of body type the girls are developmentally similar.

Since the girls' body types are similar, I suggest that these differences in hairstyle were meant to reflect different stages in a period of service to the goddess, which may have extended over some months when girls were eight to ten years old. Perhaps immediately after the initial haircutting, which included shaving of most of the scalp and the sideburn areas, select girls acted as crocus gatherers. If the flower in the frescoes has been correctly identified as *crocus sativus*, which blooms in October, we may be able to place the first haircutting in early autumn. Girls who had served longer, perhaps from the previous year and had begun already to grow out their hair, may have been given a more advanced task, that of presenting the flowers at the architectural platform near where the goddess was thought to appear. Classical girls who served Artemis at Brauron exhibit differences in hairstyle and even body type, similarly indicating a broad range of age.<sup>29</sup>

The goddess is even more elaborate (Fig. 11.2), but certain traits connect her with the nearby girls rather than with the adult women depicted in Xeste 3. By far the most elaborately rendered figure in Xeste 3, she has a forehead lock, long hair piled up on the crown of the head, a mass of long hair that cascades down her back, and a single long tress that trails alongside the head. Some of her hair is gathered in a knot or bun, and is encircled by a long string of red (possibly cornelian) beads that outlines the separate long tress that hangs down her back. Only the red-haired girl from the upper floor and a girl from the lustral basin fresco below wear similar (but shorter) strands of red beads—the diaphanous yellow veil of the latter also seems to be embroidered with them.<sup>30</sup> The jewelry of the goddess and girls is far richer than that of any other surviving figures in Aegean art. Clearly, these five figures are significant individuals.

Like the flower-picking girls, the goddess wears a forehead band, uniquely edged with tiny red beads. On her cheek a large crocus blossom hangs over her ear (this could also be painted or tattooed on her flesh), and a large gold earring outlined with red beads hangs from her visible earlobe. Her other jewelry includes a blue necklace, a string of duck-shaped beads alternating in red, blue, and white, and another necklace of pairs of blue and yellow dragonflies. Several bracelets encircle each wrist: one, of red beads, has blue (possibly silver or glass) pendants of a distinctive lunate shape (a jewelry mold from Mycenae has two matrices for producing beads of this shape).<sup>31</sup>

The lunate beads may have a special significance. Two similar examples were painted at the back of a necklace that encircles the throat of a contemporary nipples ewer from room Delta 3 at Akrotiri,<sup>32</sup> and several centuries

28. Compare the ivory heads (of male children?) from a palatial building at Archanes: Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1997, p. 108, fig. 83, p. 707, fig. 817, p. 714, fig. 829, p. 708, color fig. 818, p. 709, fig. 819. One of the heads has short stubble; on the other, the cranium has only been roughed out. The heads were found with separate arms and legs (p. 109, fig. 84, pp. 710–712, figs. 820–826), also in ivory. None of the figures appears fully finished.

29. For illustrations, see Reeder 1995. For the cult, see (among other studies) Kahil 1963, 1965, 1977, 1981; Cole 1984, 1998; Bodson 1986; Sourvinou-Inwood 1988; n. 16 above.

30. Jones 2003.

31. Citadel House mold: Megaw 1967, p. 9, fig. 13; Rehak 1992, p. 218, fig. 1 drawing; R. Evelyn 1992, pp. 29–31, pl. 4. I thank Lisa French for allowing me to examine this piece in 1993.

32. *Prakt* 1970, pl. 269.



Figure 11.2. Detail of the Xeste 3 goddess at Akrotiri. Rehak 2002, fig. 2.7

later a similarly shaped bead occurs as the centerpiece of a painted necklace on a terracotta figurine found in a LH III C shrine at Tiryns.<sup>33</sup> Several actual beads of this kind, which may have functioned as protective bullae, have been found in Bronze Age graves, including that of a mother and child who were buried together in a grave at Eleusis.<sup>34</sup> A gold necklace from Chamber Tomb 10 at Dendra has been recomposed from scattered lily and lunate gold beads excavated by A. Persson, with which we can compare a similar but unproven necklace, also in gold, in the Benaki Museum.<sup>35</sup> In historical times, the Greek lexicographer Hesychius described the lunate bead as an item worn by children, but because of its resemblance to the crescent moon, Helen Hughes Brock has suggested that it was a symbol of female fertility as well as of children—perhaps specifically of girls.<sup>36</sup> In this case, the beads of the Thera goddess might be a direct allusion to her role as nurturer and protector of the flower-picking girls.

Significantly, the goddess wears not the ankle-length robe of adult women but a short, calf-length robe typical of prepubescent girls like the crocus gatherers.<sup>37</sup> The goddess's robe, painted a diaphanous blue, is visible beneath the hem of her apron. Even allowing for her seated pose, the robe exposes each leg nearly halfway up the calf. Though she has curved breasts suggestive of young adulthood, her short robe suggests girlhood

33. Nauplion 26171: Kilian 1981, fig. 6; Demakopoulou 1988, p. 95, cat. 25, pp. 96–97, color pls.; also Kilian-Dirlmeier 1978–1979.

34. Wrede 1975.

35. Dendra: Persson 1942, p. 94, fig. 105, pl. III. Benaki Museum 2068: Deppert-Lippitz 1985, p. 41, fig. 16.

36. Brock 1999, p. 280.

37. Doumas 1992, pp. 158–159, color pl. 122.



Figure 11.3. Mature woman from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri. Rehak 2002, fig. 2.8

and would be particularly appropriate for a deity who is eternally ageless as well as immortal.

Let us return to the scene as a whole. In this composition, both proximity and costume serve to emphasize the close association between goddess and girls. The girl standing at the foot of the platform actually gazes up with open mouth at the divinity, as if astonished at the epiphany of the goddess. The monkey, standing between them, acts as intermediary between the human and supernatural realms and presents the flower stigmas. The girls participate in a gendered activity separate from men and adult women, both of whom are depicted in nearby areas. Parallels for such activities abound in later Greek myth (Persephone and her companions) and cult (the period of service for Artemis at Brauron for Athenian girls). But unlike Persephone, who was carried off while gathering flowers in the Rharian meadow near Eleusis, the presence of the goddess in Xeste 3 suggests that her attendants are under her immediate protection or influence.





Figure 11.4. Lustral basin figures from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri. Rehak 2002, fig. 2.4

The detailed renderings of the girls in the Theran painting allow us to explore several thematic connections within the building's program of paintings. For example, one matron, also from the upper story across from the flower-picking girls, carries a basket and wears a crocus flower or tattoo on her cheek, perhaps alluding to her earlier service while a girl (Fig. 11.3).<sup>38</sup>

Three older girls, pictured on the walls of the lustral basin downstairs, may have completed their service to the goddess (Fig. 11.4). One still wears a short skirt, but she is both slimmer and taller than the girls from the upper floor, and has wrapped herself in a fine, transparent yellow veil densely sprinkled with red dots, which could be painted or embroidered, or might represent cornelian beads sewn onto the veil (Fig. 11.5). In terms of body type, hairstyle, and even costume, the Veiled Girl is most similar to the young "priestess" from the West House (Fig. 11.6), except that the latter has one ear painted red and her yellow veil is not transparent, lacks red dots, and is draped around her body as a mantle.<sup>39</sup> The correspondences between these two figures deserve renewed attention.<sup>40</sup>

The two other lustral basin figures, a Necklace Swinger and a seated Wounded Woman, appear more mature, and represent a stage of young adulthood following puberty: they wear long skirts that hang to the ankles, and their breasts have developed. All three of the lustral basin figures, however, wear costumes whose crocus-decorated garments connect them with the goddess above: I have argued elsewhere that such costumes have a special significance in Aegean art.<sup>41</sup>

To summarize the evidence thus far: the Xeste 3 paintings provide sufficient evidence to allow us to distinguish between girls and women on the basis of skirt length.<sup>42</sup> Both girls and women may also wear an apron that wraps around the waist and is tied with strings, but this part of the female costume may be related to special activity rather than to age. Shaven or partially shaven heads seem characteristic of girlhood, with the hair allowed to grow long as the girls mature. Prepubescent girls had their heads shaved and grew their locks out several times before most of them grew their hair long to symbolize adulthood; postpubescent women

38. An adult woman in *Ar. Lys.* 641–647, describes her service as a girl to the goddess Artemis.

39. Hood 1978, p. 55 and fig. 38; Doumas 1992, pls. 24–25.

40. Televantou 1992, on artists' hands.

41. Rehak 2002, 2004.

42. Numerous parallels exist for such a costume change in later cultures, including that of the United States.



have long hair. If these distinctions were consistently followed by Aegean artists during the Neopalatial era, then we have important visual clues for evaluating the relative age of females in the surviving representations and for identifying girls. Let us test the validity of some of these criteria.

## MINOAN GIRLS

On an ivory pyxis fragment from Ayia Triada in southern Crete (Fig. 11.7), a pair of girls with short hair and calf-length robes garland the uprights of at least two small shrines or pavilions with slender columns and floral capitals that support a horizontal entablature crowned by a row of “horns of consecration,” a Minoan religious symbol.<sup>43</sup> Because of its small size

43. Halbherr, Stefani, and Banti 1977, pp. 97–98, figs. 64, 65; Rehak and Younger 1998, p. 237, n. 82, pl. XXVIc. The design is incised, rather than carved in relief as on some other

Neopalatial pyxides. The meaning of the “horns of consecration” is debated, but they are more likely schematic renderings of mountain peaks than animal horns: D’Agata 1992, pp.

**Figure 11.5 (left).** Veiled girl from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri. Drawing Rehak after Doulas 1992, color pl. 107

**Figure 11.6 (right).** West House (Akrotiri) “priestess.” Computer-enhanced reconstruction Rehak and Younger after Doulas 1992, color pl. 24

251–252. For garlands suspended between uprights, see the garlanded stern cabins or *ikria* in room 4 of the West House at Akrotiri: Doulas 1992, pls. 49–56, 59–62.

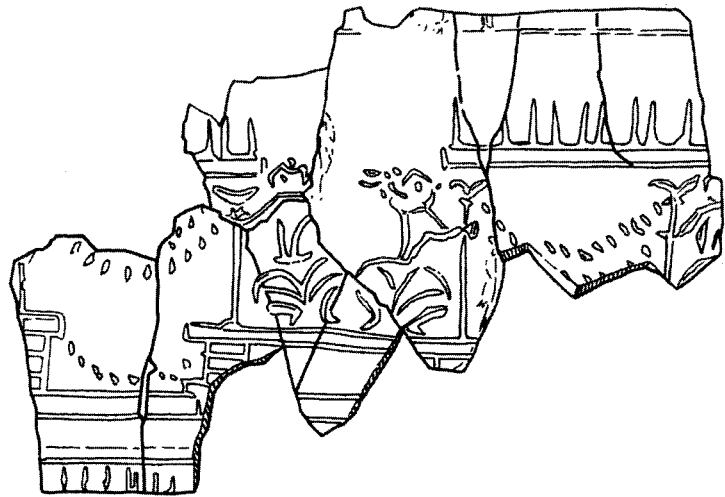


Figure 11.7. Ayia Triada pyxis.  
Drawing Rehak

and fragmentary condition, the piece has not received much attention, but Bryan Burns has noted that ivory toilet articles (pyxides, combs, mirror handles) in Aegean contexts tend to be gendered female.<sup>44</sup>

What is significant about the Ayia Triada fragment is that the depicted structures stand on architectural bases resting on blocks, recalling the platform in Xeste 3 on which the goddess sits surrounded by her girl attendants, the monkey, and griffin, although no enthroned figure is preserved on the ivory. Some of the architectural elements visible on the ivory pyxis are also found in Minoan depictions of palaces and peak sanctuaries; such small platforms then may represent a temporary construction used at specific times.<sup>45</sup> We can compare a shrine with similarly slender columns from a fresco in Sector A at Akrotiri (Fig. 11.8).<sup>46</sup> Here the column has a double papyrus capital that supports an entablature crowned with horns of consecration. Two monkeys are also present.<sup>47</sup> The surface of the column is decorated with a vertical band of crocus buds enclosed between undulating lines, a motif that again finds parallels in the Xeste 3 paintings.<sup>48</sup> I suggest that young girls may have been responsible for erecting such temporary shrines.

In a small shrine in the Minoan villa at Ayia Triada, a frontal woman probably with upraised arms and usually identified as a goddess stands in front of a platform.<sup>49</sup> An adult (long-robed) attendant kneels nearby among clumps of crocus and lilies, while an opposite wall of the room depicts cats and wild goats (*agrimia*) cavorting in a rocky landscape.

44. Burns 2000.

45. Krattenmaker 1991.

46. L. Morgan 1988, fig. 25; Dourmas 1992, pl. 147.

47. One monkey crouches outside this building and raises its paws in a gesture that perhaps indicates reverence or respect; the curving tail of another monkey is clearly visible underneath the structure. A woman makes a

similar gesture before a similar shrine on the Ayia Triada sealing, *CMS* II 6, no. 3; here, the shrine is adorned with garlands.

48. This motif recurs on the belt of the seated Wounded Woman from the lustral basin in Xeste 3.

49. Rehak 1997, fig. 4; Militello 1998, pls. 4, D, E; Jones 2004; Chapin 2004, pp. 49–50, fig. 3.2.

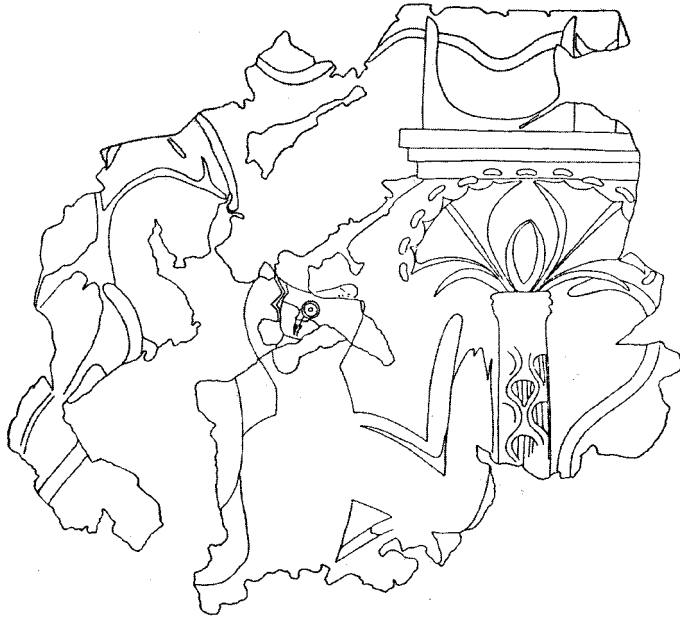


Figure 11.8. Monkey fresco, Akrotiri Sector A. Drawing Rehak after L. Morgan 1988, pl. 25

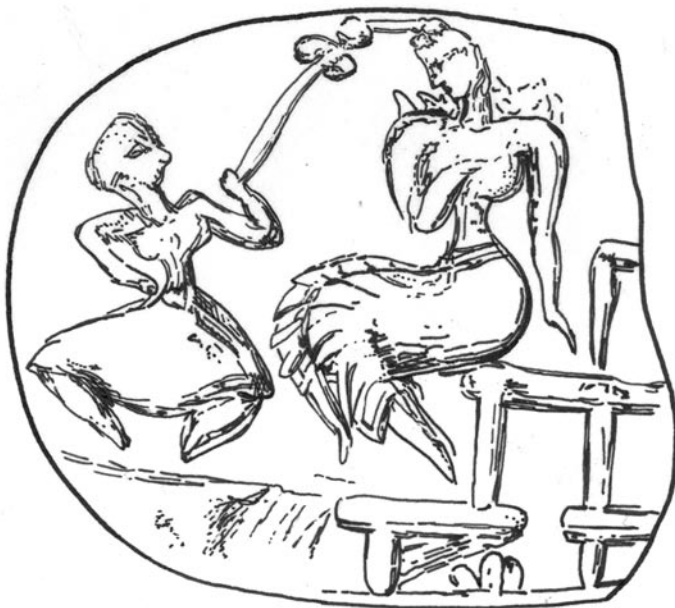


Figure 11.9. Clay sealing from Khania. *CMS*, V Suppl. 1A, no. 177. Drawing Rehak

In other scenes, mostly surviving on seals or sealings, a woman is seated atop a platform that sometimes has several levels.<sup>50</sup> The porch of a palatial building at Archanes near Knossos even contained four incurved bases of stone that could have been used as supports for one of these temporary platforms.<sup>51</sup>

Contemporary clay sealings from Khania in western Crete depict another large woman sitting on a platform, attended by a small, short-skirted girl who stands before her and raises a pole or stem that spreads out at the top (Fig. 11.9). Because of the small scale of the sealing, this handheld object has not been securely identified. We can compare it, however, to a similar object in a fragmentary wall painting from Tylissos that shows a

50. For seated figures, see Rehak 1995.

51. See M. Shaw 1986–1989 for a discussion of the incurved bases on the Mycenae Lion Gate.

slender stem rising to a spreading finial. The excavator, Joseph Hazzidakis, interprets this object as a fan, while Maria Shaw suggests it is part of a stylized triple-palm.<sup>52</sup> Since palm fronds could easily be used as a fan, perhaps both interpretations are essentially correct.

On a sealing from Ayia Triada a girl in a short skirt standing on a rocky outcrop offers a rhyton to a large woman seated in front of her on a rocky mass.<sup>53</sup> The latter extends one forearm so that her hand is directly under the pointed tip of the rhyton. The girl has sometimes been identified as the epiphany of a male god (Levi), a cult statue (Herkenrath), or a man (Nilsson), but the short skirt and smaller relative size indicate that this is a female child.

## GIRLS AT MYCENAE

Girls with cropped hair, calf-length skirts, and immature breast development occur in several media especially from Mycenae: gold sequins, ivory mirror handles, and other ivories, both reliefs and sculptures in the round. Most of these girls have not been recognized as such.

For example, several gold foil plaques from Shaft Grave III of Grave Circle A at Mycenae seem to depict girls. The plaques were apparently produced in molds and pierced in several places so they could be attached to a background or sewn onto cloth, like elaborate sequins. Two of these plaques depict frontal figures with rather squat proportions, rounded heads set directly on the shoulders, short arms and legs, and thick waists.<sup>54</sup> Their hair is rendered as a series of short dots across the forehead, while their patterned dress extends to just below the knees.

## MYCENAE IVORIES

Two ivory mirror handles found at Mycenae feature girls.<sup>55</sup> Because their contexts are usually dated relatively late, postdating the Cretan Neopalatial era, scholars have generally assumed that these mirror handles are Late Mycenaean works.<sup>56</sup> Their iconographic parallels, however, suggest an earlier date of manufacture.

52. Hazzidakis 1921, pl. IX; M. haw 1972, p. 179, figs. 10–11, 14 (reconstruction); see also S. Immerwahr 1990, p. 184, Ty No. 2.

53. *CMS* II 6, no. 8 (D. Levi 1925–1926, p. 142); *PM* II.2, p. 768, fig. 500; Herkenrath 1937, p. 414; Nilsson 1950, p. 346, fig. 157, “perhaps a man.”

54. Karo 1930–1933, no. 36, pl. XXVII (= NMA 36).

55. Some examples have been catalogued by Poursat 1977, but as a class these objects deserve renewed study. A related ivory mirror handle, found at Asine, lacks female figures but

has a handle carved with palm leaves and butterflies: Patrianakou-Iliaki 1996. While the palms could be purely decorative, the (woman’s?) throne in the throne room of the palace at Knossos was flanked by painted palm trees, and butterflies sometimes appeared with women as motifs on gold rings. Leto clutched the trunk of a palm tree on Delos when she gave birth to Apollo, with Artemis assisting as midwife: *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, 115–122.

56. Iliaki 1975; Papaefthimiou-Papanthimiou 1971.



Figure 11.10. Ivory mirror handle, Mycenae Chamber Tomb 55. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 2899. Computer-enhanced reconstruction Rehak and Younger after Poursat 1977, pl. XXII

Tsountas's excavation of a cist grave in the dromos of the Clytemnestra tholos tomb at Mycenae in 1892 revealed a pit with an apparent female burial that included two ivory mirror handles (NMA 2898, 2900).<sup>57</sup> His excavation of Chamber Tomb 55, likewise in 1892, uncovered a third handle (NMA 2899 [Fig. 11.10]). One of the handles from the Clytemnestra tholos (NMA 2898) depicts two antithetic, seated females, probably girls (they lack full breast development and the length of their robes seems short); they clutch something supple across their chests (perhaps a band or flower stalks like the fan handles held by the girls on the mirror handle from Tomb 55, NMA 2899; see below).

The other two mirror handles most certainly depict girls (NMA 2899 [Fig. 11.11] from Chamber Tomb 55, and NMA 2900 from the Clytemnestra tholos). Each handle is carved in the form of a palm tree, with the spreading fronds at the top supporting the antithetic girls in mirror-image poses.<sup>58</sup> Each individual can be recognized as a juvenile figure rather than a woman (pace Iliaki 1975) on the basis of her hairstyle and costume, both of which resemble those of the girls from Xeste 3: their hair consists of short, round curls, and they wear a short, calf-length skirt (in addition, the girls on NMA 2900 wear a headband).

57. Tsountas 1892; Wace 1921–1923, p. 368, pl. LIXA, B; Iliaki 1975, pp. 192–194, nos. 6–8; Poursat 1977, nos. 331, 332; Rehak and Younger 1998, p. 238, n. 97. The burial postdates the erection of the tomb; Wace suggests

that it represented the reburial of a body from the main chamber. Wace also notes (p. 370) that “the costume with the short skirts and short curly hair is remarkable and rather un-Mycenaean.” Other material from the

grave included an ivory (griffin?) with blue glass insets and a scrap of gold foil with butterflies and architecture with horns of consecration (a shrine façade?).

58. Marinatos 1984b discusses the significance of palms in Aegean art.



Figure 11.11. Dendra ivory fragment. Drawing Rehak

On the handle from the Clytemnestra tomb (NMA 2900), the girls hold birds, perhaps ducks, like those represented as beads in one of the necklaces of the Xeste 3 goddess.<sup>59</sup> The iconography of this bird has been summarized by Lyvia Morgan in her discussion of the miniature fresco from the West House at Thera; in Egypt, ducks are sometimes considered a sign of female beauty or sexuality, as on wooden or ivory cosmetic spoons.<sup>60</sup>

The mirror handle from Tomb 55 (NMA 2899 [Fig. 11.10]) carries a pattern of foliate bands on the haft, spreading out in curving palm fronds at the top; above is the pair of antithetic standing girls (note their short skirts) with cropped hair in short curls, rendered as beads.<sup>61</sup> Each girl holds a long stem terminating at the top in a floral ornament. Perhaps these are fans similar to the objects raised up by girls on the Khania sealings mentioned earlier (Fig. 11.9) and the painted fan/palm from Tyliisos. I have wondered as well if these objects could also refer to the slender poles with floral capitals used in the erection of small shrines like the one on the Ayia Triada pyxis fragment (Fig. 11.7) and on the painting with monkeys found in Sector A at Akrotiri (Fig. 11.8).

A similar coiffure of short curls appears on a burnt ivory fragment with a face in profile to the left, found in the wealthy “royal tholos” of LH II-III A date at Dendra in the Argolid (Fig. 11.11).<sup>62</sup> The coiffure and soft features of the face also seem to indicate that this is a young girl, and not a “negro” as the excavator assumed. Too little survives of the piece for us to know to what it belonged, but the depiction of another girl on a mirror handle or other cosmetic vessel is a possibility.

Another ivory object from Mycenae that features a girl is the so-called Triad found in 1939 in one of the palace rooms on the top of the citadel (Fig. 11.12).<sup>63</sup> The group has often been discussed and illustrated in hand-

59. NMA 2900: Wace 1921–1923, pp. 369–70, pl. LIX; Schäfer 1958, p. 79b; Iliaki 1975, p. 194, no. 8, fig. 111.

60. Morgan 1988, pp. 33–66. Egyptian examples in Kozloff and Bryan 1992, pp. 331–332, 347–348, fig. XI.1, pl. 365.

61. NMA 2899: Tsountas 1892, p. 57; Tsountas and Manatt 1897, p. 188, fig. 84; Schäfer 1958, p. 79c, fig. 34; Iliaki 1975, pp. 193–194, no. 7; Poursat 1977, no. 300; Xenaki-

Sakellariou 1985, pl. 72; Rehak and Younger 1998, p. 238, n. 97, pl. XXVIe.

62. Dendra tombs: Persson 1931, 1942. Ivory head with short curls: Persson 1931, p. 41, no. 6, p. 59, fig. 36, pl. 26; Rehak and Younger 1998, p. 247, pl. XXVIh.

63. NMA 7711: H. 7.8 cm. Poursat 1977, pp. 20–21, no. 49, pl. IV; Hood 1978, pp. 124–126, fig. 114; Rehak and Younger 1998, p. 240, n. 107 (with

additional references); Shear 2000, p. 62, color fig. 88; French 2002, pp. 96–97, figs. 43, 44, nos. 39–165, 166, 167; Rutter 2003, pp. 38–39, fig. 11. A small white-plastered head (of a figurine?) found with the ivory group is probably that of a woman rather than a man, despite its rather strong, sharp features: French 2002, p. 97, no. 39–164, fig. 45 (NMA 7712: H. 6.5 cm).



Figure 11.12. Mycenae ivory triad. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 7711. Photo Rehak

books, but important traits have been overlooked. The group consists of two crouching women shown side by side, with a small child in front of them. All three figures are intimately linked by pose: one woman has her arm around the other's shoulder, and both share a shawl or mantle with a beaded surface wrapped around their backs (cf. the red-spotted yellow veil of the Veiled Girl from the Xeste 3 lustral basin).<sup>64</sup> In addition, one woman extends an arm to touch the shoulder of the child, who leans against the knees of the adult figures.

Although one of the women's heads has mostly sheared away, other details are preserved. It is clear that the adults wear hairstyles that include an array of long and short locks: the preserved head combines a partially shaved scalp with several long locks (cf. the Veiled Girl from Xeste 3), while the woman whose head is lacking nevertheless preserves a long, wavy tress that falls down her back to waist level (cf. the Necklace Swinger and Wounded Woman from Xeste 3).<sup>65</sup> Apparently, therefore, the two adult women are

64. Buchholz 1987. Sharing a mantle is certainly an intimate gesture; in the Classical period, depictions of people sharing a mantle or cloak have demonstrable erotic and even sexual overtones. See V. Müller 1921;

Guarducci 1928; Koch-Harnack 1989, pp. 109–185; Younger 2005, pp. 33–34, s.v. Cloak.

65. The faience "Snake Handlers" from Knossos have a similar long tress at the back (*PM I*, p. 503, fig. 361).



slightly different in either age or status (or both). The one preserved adult face had eyebrows and lashes inserted separately in another material. All three figures in the composition wear necklaces, and the two women are costumed in dresses with open bodices and elaborately patterned skirts with bands of flounces, while the child wears an ankle-length robe with a plain surface, belted at the waist.

Since the time of its discovery, almost all scholars have recognized the group as a Mycenaean work representing two women with a boy child, and have interpreted it along mythological lines as a representation of Demeter, Persephone, and a divine male child (usually Ploutos or Triptolemos).<sup>66</sup> On the basis of dress patterns, Elizabeth Barber once suggested to me that this may be a Minoan work of the Neopalatial period, while I have noted elsewhere that the robe of the small figure identifies it as a girl child—boys in Aegean art are shown nude.<sup>67</sup>

The resemblance of the adult women and their dress patterns to those on fresco figures from Neopalatial contexts on Crete and Thera has been noted. Moreover, the best parallel for seated or crouching women touching one another occurs in the so-called Grandstand Fresco from the Knossos palace, likewise of Neopalatial date.<sup>68</sup> These women cluster around a central shrine with columns and horns of consecration. Above and below the women, the artist has created large groups of smaller men and women, mostly rendered in an abbreviated, shorthand style. Clearly, the emphasis is on the group of elaborately clad women. If Ellen Davis is correct in her interpretation of the Grandstand Fresco as representing a palace ceremony at Knossos when adolescent girls are about to enter womanhood, then the ivory triad could commemorate the three most important stages of a woman's life: childhood, puberty, and maturity. Thus, the ivory triad could be a Neopalatial heirloom, though there are no closely comparable ivory figures of this period that have been found on Crete or Thera.

This reinterpretation of the piece opens up a variety of possible interpretations along gendered lines, which Bryan Burns has begun to explore in his study of ivory as a gendered material.<sup>69</sup> The apparent depiction of three stages of female development from childhood to maturity finds its most convincing parallel in the paintings from Xeste 3.

#### PAINTINGS FROM THE CULT CENTER AT MYCENAE

In the course of excavations in and near the "Cult Center" at Mycenae, Mylonas discovered a series of fresco fragments that belong to one or more compositions featuring girls (Fig. 11.13).<sup>70</sup> These include two parts of a composition showing an enthroned woman against a white background, facing right and wearing a calf-length skirt. One group of joining pieces shows a white foot resting on a footstool; her ankle and lower calf are visible, along with the diagonal hem of a short yellow skirt. This is not the horizontal hem of the typical unisex Mycenaean tunic but a costume resembling that of the Thera goddess, discussed above, and of some seated women in Minoan glyptic.

A second group of fragments shows both hands of the enthroned figure (Fig. 11.13). The long, tapering fingers with their clearly delineated nails

66. E.g., Wace 1954.

67. For both references, see Rehak and Younger 1998, p. 240, n. 108. For nude boys, see frescoes from Akrotiri: the young boys atop houses in the West House's "Arrival Town" (Doumas 1992, pls. 35, 38, 48) and the "Departure Town" (Doumas 1992, pls. 35, 36, 45), the fisher boys from the same house (Doumas 1992, pls. 18–23), and the boxing boys from Building Beta (Doumas 1992, pls. 79–81).

68. *PM III*, pp. 46–56, figs. 28–34, color pls. XVI, XVII; E. Davis 1987; S. Immerwahr 1990, p. 173, Kn no. 15, pl. 22.

69. Burns, pers. comm. at the TEKHNE Conference in Philadelphia, 1996; Rehak and Younger 1998; Burns 2000; see also Jones 2000.

70. NMA 11635–11636: Kritsele-Providi 1982, pp. 41–43, nos. B2, B3, pls. 6a, b; Mylonas 1983, p. 209, color fig. 165; Demakopoulou 1988, p. 183, nos. 152–153, color fig.; S. Immerwahr 1990, pp. 119–120, fig. 33.

grasp a diminutive white-skinned female figure who wears a red-dotted yellow tunic. The latter tilts her head back as if gazing up at the large woman who holds her, and extends both arms diagonally away from the body. The right arm is lifted, bent at the elbow with the forearm lifted (the wrist and forearm are missing); the left arm, which lacks the hand, is held downward. To accommodate this awkward gesture, the artist has depicted both shoulders thrust forward unnaturally.

Although the head of the small figure is not completely preserved, a thin black tress hangs in front of the ear next to her cheek and falls to the shoulder; the rest of the cranium is lighter in color. Ioanna Kritsele-Providi observes this detail in her publication of the piece, but she draws no particular attention to it.

The small scale of the second figure has led scholars to propose several interpretations. Though there is general agreement that the enthroned figure is a goddess, the smaller individual is problematic. Kritsele-Providi mentions both a girl and an *eidolon* (figurine) as possibilities, while Katie Demakopoulou states that she represents a woman. Sara Immerwahr instead proposes that the small figure represents a facsimile of a human being, “perhaps conveying the idea of dedicating a child.”<sup>71</sup> The naturalistic tilt of the head and the odd pose of the arms, however, are not those of a statuette, and they convince me that this is a living girl, not an inanimate object. The backward tilt of her head, moreover, recalls the girl who stands on the platform of the Thera goddess and gazes up at her. But the hairstyle and pose of the body virtually duplicate those of the Veiled Girl from the Lustral Basin at Akrotiri (Fig. 11.5). While the Mycenae figure wears no veil, her long yellow tunic with red dots resembles the pattern of the Thera girl’s veil. I suggest, therefore, that the small Mycenae figure represents a girl who is shown literally “in the hands of a goddess,” in this case presumably another young (short-skirted) divinity.<sup>72</sup>

From the same general location come fragments showing another short-skirted figure against a white background that includes architectural elements.<sup>73</sup> She is rendered at about the same scale as the girl mentioned above, though it is not entirely clear whether she faces right or left. Additional frescoes from the Mycenae Cult Center show women in yellow robes against a blue background, perhaps part of a different composition.

Though the fresco evidence from Mycenae is admittedly slender, we can perhaps envision a narrative composition involving a goddess and at least two girls, along with several processional women. If this hypothesis is even partially correct, it would suggest that one or more religious rooms at Mycenae depicted a goddess like the Thera divinity, who was garbed as a short-skirted woman and associated with both girls and women—if this is Artemis, then we have documentary evidence for her in a couple of Mycenaean texts.<sup>74</sup>

71. Demakopoulou 1988, p. 183; S. Immerwahr 1990, p. 119.

72. If the goddess is a Minoan Artemis, is the girl in her hands a Minoan Iphigeneia? See Lloyd-Jones 1983;

Larsen 1997.

73. Kritsele-Providi 1982, pp. 43–44, nos. B4, B5, pl. 7a.6.

74. In PY Es 650.05 a slave of *a-te-mi-to* farms land (Ventris and Chad-

wick 1959, pp. 277–278); and PY Un 219 lists commodities given to important persons and deities, including *a-ti-mi-te* (line 5); see Aura Jorro 1999, vol. 1, pp. 115–116, for bibliography.



Figure 11.13. Mycenae Cult Center fresco fragments. Computer-enhanced reconstruction Rehak after Kritsele-Providi 1982, pl. 6a

## GIRLS AS ACOLYTES

The ornate costumes and jewelry of the Xeste 3 girls suggest that their crocus-picking activity was an important one. This is not simply an illustration of an economic activity—the collection of crocus for the saffron-producing stigmas—but one that puts them into direct contact with a goddess.

Anthropological studies suggest that the role of children as acolytes in ritual activities served important social functions like those of the *paidēs amphithaleis* in the Classical Greek world or of modern altar boys and girls by educating them in ritual customs and by preparing them for adult duties. The liminal state of such children is underscored by the transitory—and precarious—nature of prepubescence, during which sexual abstinence is not only assumed but also generally protected by the surrounding community.

In addition, Athens in historical times offers a model for interpretation of the prehistoric evidence. At some age, apparently any time between eight and fourteen, young girls from good families were called on to serve

Artemis at Brauron for a period of time, during which they assumed a saffron-dyed costume (the *krokotos*) and “played the bear” (*arktein*), while engaging in a variety of symbolic activities that would help prepare them for puberty and the eventual assumption of adult roles within the community. The comic poet Aristophanes has one of his female characters describe in general terms her service to Artemis,<sup>75</sup> and I have suggested above that one of the mature women depicted in Xeste 3 might have been a crocus gatherer as a girl, since she wears a yellow garment, carries a flower basket, and even has a crocus on her cheek like the goddess painted on the other side of the room.

What is striking about the Xeste 3 frescoes is the depiction of girls as separate from other individuals of *either* sex. The flower pickers occupy a wall space dominated by a goddess and supernatural animals, not by adult men or even adult women. This situation stands in direct contrast to the male figures from the closet on the ground floor, where male figures from childhood through adulthood are grouped together: clearly, the girls from the upper floor are separate from all others.

## GIRLS AND PLANTS

There is also a striking contrast between the carefree depiction of girls in a flowery landscape in the Xeste 3 frescoes and the later Greek conception of the flowery meadow as a locus for sexual insecurity and the physical violence of rape. Perhaps best known is the seizure of Persephone in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* while she is gathering flowers with her girl companions (5–15), a leitmotif that Moschus was later to use as the basis for the rape of Europa (63–71). The locus has a long history, for Hesiod also uses it in the *Theogony* (279) when Poseidon rapes Medusa in a flowery meadow. In Euripides’ *Ion*, the Athenian princess Kreousa is seized by Apollo while she gathers flowers and is carried off to a cave where she is raped by the god (887–893; author’s translation).<sup>76</sup>

You approached me, your hair flashing with gold, when I was gathering in my lap saffron petals, which to adorn with flowers †reflected golden light† on my robes. Gripping my pale white wrists you led me, to lie down in a cave as I loudly cried, “O Mother!”

Another mature and powerful divinity like Hera is able to use such a setting to her own advantage when she seduces Zeus on Mt. Ida in the course of the Trojan War (*Il.* 14.346). She arms herself with a magical charm (*kestos*) belonging to Aphrodite (*Il.* 14.214) to beguile her husband, while Earth assists her by causing crocus and hyacinth to blossom to cushion the divine lovemaking.

Just as the flowery meadow is a metaphor for the unspoiled sexuality of young girls,<sup>77</sup> so the motif can be applied to the brief “flowering” of young men and women, or as an aspect of their physical attractiveness. And the crocus was an especially important flower for adolescent females. I have already mentioned the saffron-dyed tunics given to Athena on her birthday

75. See n. 37 above.

76. There is a problem with the text at 890:

887 ἦλθές μοι χρυσῶι χαίταν  
μαρμαίρων, εὐτ’ ἐς κόλπους  
κρόκεα πέταλα φάρεσιν ἔδρεπον  
890 ἀνθίζειν χρυσανταυγῆ  
λευκοῖς δ’ ἐμφύς παρποῖσιν  
χειρῶν εἰς ἄντρον κοίτας  
κραυγὰν ὦ μᾶτέρ.

77. Schiering 1999 identifies girls gathering flowers on the well-known MM II fruitstand and bowl from Phaistos; it may be that the sexual association of girls and flowers dates as early as the rites of passage for adolescent men (Younger 2005, pp. xv, 4, 91–93).

and worn by the young “bear” girls at the Arkteia. At Eleusis, the site of Demeter’s Mysteries, the unmarried daughters of the royal couple Keleus and Metaneira were said to have hair that flowed like the crocus, and initiates in the Mysteries tied threads dyed saffron yellow at their elbows and on their legs. Demeter herself was given the crocus as an attribute.<sup>78</sup>

Clearly, the final word has not yet been written on the roles of girl children in the Aegean world. Nevertheless, we now have solid iconographic grounds for detecting them in a variety of media. This short survey of the evidence suggests that the roles of girl children in Aegean societies were both more complex and more important than previously recognized. The once silent girls of prehistoric Greece will begin speaking to us more and more clearly as the numbers of their surviving representations grow.

78. Sophokles mentions the gold-gleaming crocus (*OC* 681–685), and the scholiast to these lines states that the playwright attributed the crocus to Demeter in his lost *Niobe*; see also Eur. *Ion* 889.

