Petras, Siteia
The Pre- and Proto-palatial cemetery in context

Acts of a two-day conference held at the Danish Institute at Athens, 14-15 February 2015

Edited by
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This volume is dedicated to all those individuals who participated over the years in the excavation, conservation, study, site development and publication of the results.

This lofty vision for Petras and its region was made possible by their hard work, dedication and support.
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Abbreviations

### Archaeological periods

- **EBA**: Early Bronze Age
- **EH**: Early Helladic
- **EM**: Early Minoan
- **FN**: Final Neolithic
- **LH**: Late Helladic
- **LM**: Late Minoan
- **LN**: Late Neolithic
- **LBA**: Late Bronze Age
- **MBA**: Middle Bronze Age
- **MH**: Middle Helladic
- **MM**: Middle Minoan
- **MN**: Middle Neolithic

### PTSOU
- **PTSOU**: Petras Rock Shelter

### Other
- **A.S.L.**: Above Sea Level
- **diam.**: diameter
- **gr**: gram
- **h**: height
- **kg**: kilogram
- **w**: width
- **wt**: weight
- **th**: thickness
- **lt**: liter
- **MMD**: Mean Measure of Divergence
- **MNI**: Minimum Number of Individuals
- **NISP**: Number of Identifiable Specimens
- **SM**: Archaeological Museum, Siteia
- **vol.**: volume

The form of the English language for the native speakers (British or American) was the author's choice. For the non-native speakers the American form was used.
Bibliographic Abbreviations

AAA – Archaiologika Analekta Athinon
ActaPalaeobot – Acta Palaiobotanica
AJA – American Journal of Archaeology
AJPA – American Journal of Physical Anthropology
AJS – American Journal of Sociology
AmJHumBiol – American Journal of Human Biology
AR – Archaeological Reports
Arachne – (on-line access to the CMS, with corrected information and enhanced illustrations) http://arachne.uni-koeln.de/drupal/?q=de/node/access date March 2016.
ArchDelt – Archaiologikon Deltion
ArchEph – Archaeologike Ephemeris
ASAtene – Annuario della Scuola Archeologica Italiana di Atene
BAR-IS – British Archaeological Reports, International Series
BCH – Bulletin se correspondence hellénique
BICS – Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London
BSA – Annual of the British School at Athens
CMS – Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel, Berlin 1964-2000, Mainz 2002-
CretChron – Kretika Chronika
EtCret – Études Crétoises
JAS – Journal of Archaeological Science
JMA – Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology
Kentro – Kentro: The Newsletter of the INSTAP Study Center for East Crete
MA – Monumenti Antichi
OJA – Oxford Journal of Archaeology
Prakt – Praktika tes en Athenais Archaeologikes Etairias
SIMA – Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology
SMEA – Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici

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The Petras ‘Sphinx’? An essay on hybridity*

Anna Simandiraki-Grimshaw

Abstract
This paper will begin with a presentation of one of the recent finds from the Petras cemetery, a fascinating anthropozoomorphic vessel. Because the latter combines human, bird and other elements, it can be characterised as what, in later centuries, is called a ‘sphinx’. The Petras Sphinx is a unique find for a number of reasons, some of which will be explored. However, the main focus here, after the presentation of the artefact, will be one of its unique facets: its hybridity. More specifically, the paper will argue that this vessel is an essay on a) animal-human hybridity, b) artefact-vessel hybridity c) vessel-human hybridity, d) intercultural hybridity and e) corporeal states hybridity. In this way, this vessel will be contextualised and evaluated within and beyond a funerary setting, towards an understanding of its wider role and significance.

Introduction and aims
Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic vessels from Bronze Age Crete form an intriguing and important aspect of material culture.¹ One reason is that each of them is an individual artefact, but is also clearly distinguished from vessels and figurines respectively. Another reason is that almost all of them can be said to come from ritual contexts, therefore adding another exceptional dimension to their existence. Yet another reason which makes them important and worthy of study is their ability to transport contents as well as to be transported themselves. A final main reason for their importance is perhaps their agency, i.e., not only the visual and symbolic messages that they were meant to convey, but also the way in which they were supposed to do so, i.e., their behaviour and changeability.

Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic vessels have tended to be studied largely separately in Aegean scholarship, for two reasons. One is the different focus of attention of these studies. For example,

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* I would like to thank a few people without whom my study, paper and even presence at the second Petras conference would not have been possible. I owe my sincere thanks to Dr. M. Tsipopoulou, who has entrusted me with the study and publication of this extraordinary find. I also thank her for inviting me to the Symposium, but also for freely and keenly providing material and discussions vital to my study. G. Kostopoulou has been very helpful with practical matters and access. Dr. T. Grimshaw, Dr. M. Zeimbekis, Prof. L. Platon, Prof. P. Warren and Prof. F. Blakolmer have been instrumental with references. Dr. Grimshaw’s considerable practical help with some almost insurmountable obstacles has made it possible for me to attend the conference. My warmest thanks to all.

¹ For a formal definition, see Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, 20-21.
Warren’s,² Cadogan’s³ and Goodison’s⁴ attention when studying particular anthropomorphic vessels has been on their religious, and to some extent gendered, significance, while this author’s attention has focused on the conceptualisation, limits and behaviours of their humanity.⁵ Studies such as Emily Miller’s,⁶ while taking into consideration anthropomorphic parallels, have approached specifically zoomorphic vessels in order to explore their significance in cult and animal–human relations. We are therefore here presented with the opportunity not only to study a unique animal-human-vessel creation, with all its gendered, symbolic, religious, cultural or other implications, but also to reconsider the dichotomy between anthropomorphic and zoomorphic vessels. These were in fact often found in close proximity with each other and additional animal and human depictions as well as biological remains, and may well not have been considered as distinct by their original makers and users as they are by modern archaeologists.

However, this is a short paper and, although it is useful to highlight the archaeological and interpretative potential of this piece, space does not allow here for its exhaustion. The detailed presentation, contextualisation and discussion of this find from the cemetery of Petras are planned for a longer publication. Instead, there are three aims for this short contribution:

1. The first preliminary publication of Petras vessel PTSK12.1018 (excavational facts, descriptions of the piece, parallels, characterisation and dating);
2. The brief exploration and theorisation of what, to this author, seems to be its major characteristic: hybridity, including reference to its function;
3. A short discussion on its identity and significance.

Let us now turn to the first of these aims, the presentation of the anthropozoomorphic vessel from Petras.

**Presentation**

**Excavation**

Petras vessel PTSK12.1018 was discovered during excavation of the Petras cemetery (formerly Tsakalakis property) on 7th June 2012. It was found in the north part of the cemetery, just outside and level with the floor of House Tomb 10, by Wall 109 (Fig. 1). It was also found close to plaster fragments (Fig. 2a). It was lying on its side, its head towards the north and the body on an E–W axis. In addition, the artefact was tilted, so that the head was 10 cm lower than the tail, perhaps indicating that it had fallen from a height. It came from what has turned out to be a MMII context. Associated finds other than plaster included obsidian, two cups and

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³ Cadogan 2010.
⁴ Goodison 2009.
⁵ Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, esp. 17-19 for a detailed overview of relevant bibliography.

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![Fig. 1. Location of PTSK12.1018 within the Petras cemetery. Plan Petras excavations archive. Photo Chr. Papanikolopoulos.](image-url)
some jug fragments (Fig. 2b). Post-excavation, it has thus far been cleaned, preliminarily reconstituted, photographed, drawn and macroscopically studied.

**Description**

Looking at it from above, the artefact is composed of a piriform torso, with a head on one end and a rear/receptacle on the other end (Fig. 3). The torso is rounded on top and becomes narrower towards what could be a tail. Two antithetical coils start from the nape of the head and spread to the widest part of the body. Looking at it from the underside, the torso is slightly squashed/straight. There are two surviving feet below the receptacle and traces of another two (now missing) feet directly below the coils. The surviving feet have toes noted by incisions, flat fronts and an indication of soles, which make standing more stable at the back of the receptacle.

Looking at the artefact from the side, we can also observe that there are traces of a tail, in the form of an attachment directly opposite the narrowest point of the vessel, as well as a now missing/lost attachment along the narrowest point, aligned with it length-wise. This tail would have been upturned, vertical and arching, beginning from the edge of the receptacle and ending on top of the narrowest part of the torso. This would also have served as a handle. In the middle of the chest and parallel to the neck is a spout. It is horizontal, slightly upturned, amalgamated and hollow (functioning).

The head is a composite of human and animal features (Fig. 4, top row). The human facial features include two bulging round eyes, rendered by attached pellets of clay. Two relief eyebrows (one partly surviving) terminate in anticlockwise swirls/curls either side of the face. They join to form a protruding nose with nostrils. A rectangular chin-cum-beard and an incised grin under the nose and spanning the width of the eyes complete the face. The two triangular protruding ears (partly surviving), behind and above the eyebrows, resemble feline ones. There is also a serrated, horizontal relief line, which starts at the join of the eyebrows and continues atop the head towards the torso, until it meets the nape, where it turns into the two afore-mentioned coils.
The receptacle back end is semiglobular, with thin, pronounced, everted rim (partly surviving), which is amalgamated and internally connected to the main body. It is possible to observe part of the receptacle through the spout.

**Manufacture and decoration**

From a technical point of view, the torso was made first. It was perhaps partly wheel-made together with the spout, then flattened underneath and amalgamated with other pieces. The receptacle, also wheel-made, was created next, then amalgamated with the main torso (Fig. 5). The feet, as far as one can judge from the hind surviving ones, were added next, making sure that the soles were flat, so perhaps there was some applied pressure. They were subsequently incised to denote toes. Depressions were made internally to stabilise the fusion and to aid firing by reducing the thickness of the clay locally. The head was made separately, perhaps partly by moulding, partly by sculpting. It was subsequently fused with the torso and further details were added to it. The
coils were done independently: they were strips of clay which were rolled and coiled, then stuck on the top of the torso. This was done rather lightly (without much pressure, in order not to disturb their relief), but with some attempt to slightly raise the background clay in their periphery. This has resulted in an incomplete attachment, because they detached easily, but unintentionally, from the surface of the vessel after firing, leaving an attachment ‘ghost’. PTSK12.1018 was subsequently smoothed throughout its exterior surfaces, with a noticeable direction of strokes (e.g., around the chest, along the tapering back etc.). It nevertheless also preserves some fingerprints, e.g., in the area of the surviving feet.

Apart from the sculptural elements described above, the piece’s decoration also included paint. It is uncertain if the whole vessel was painted (Fig. 4, bottom row). However, most surviving paint is concentrated on the area of the head: the background was a creamy white colour, while the eyes were painted red. The area between the left side of the face, the eyebrows, neck and upper shoulders preserves small crimson spots. The best preserved area of this decoration is that immediately next to the now missing left swirl.

**Fragmentation**

PTSK12.1018 was found in a fragmentary state. Ca. 90% of it survives in 14 fragments. Careful excavation has not yielded the missing parts. As could be expected, the most fragmentation is to be found in the protruding decoration, e.g., the coils, feet and posterior. Not all may have broken or detached during a single event, as original damage may have been succeeded by further taphonomic wear. It is not certain whether its fragmentation was accidental or deliberate (there are good reasons and parallels for both cases). Although this author leans towards...
an accidental cause of fragmentation, based on the breakage of the naturally fragile protruding pieces rather than the main structure of the artefact, the absence of the front feet and the tail is perhaps significant. They may have been retained in antiquity, which would mean that the piece was deliberately partly ‘dismembered’ after an original accidental or deliberate break. In fact, the breakage edges of the front feet and part of the receptacle (onto which the tail would have been attached) are blunt, i.e., show greater age prior to final deposition, compared to the detachment traces of the coils/wings, which indicate, in all probability, taphonomic and not prior separation.

Parallels, characterisation and dating

After the presentation of this artefact, it is now time to consider in brief its wider context and influences. Our first, traditional point of departure for the interpretation of PTSK12.1018 is to look for parallels. This approach is taken here not just for the purposes of comparison and dating, but also in order to give us a way of apprehending and defining its hybride identity later on. As stated above, this is a unicum. As such, direct parallels are impossible, but parallelisms between specific elements of this artefact and other known specimens are attempted here (Fig. 6). One of these elements is the seemingly feline quality of several of its characteristics. Comparable MMII and LM I cats’ heads, in the form of seal iconography, a faience feline head rhyton and plastic vessel attachments, come not only from Malia, Gournia, Palaikastro and Zakros, but also from Petras it-
I would particularly like to draw the reader’s attention to a Petras ‘monster’, depicted on a recently found and published seal from the same cemetery, whose bulging eyes, pronounced ears and probable tail may indicate an ideological rather than stylistic connection to our item here. Furthermore, several pieces depicting cats’ heads, which originally formed part of the relief decoration of a MM II vessel from the same cemetery, are currently under study and publication by the author.

The rendition of the eyes, nose and to some extent eyebrows of ME 12-1018 finds the closest parallels in LM III figures and heads of anthropomorphic rhyta from Phaistos, Gournia and Hagia Triada, and a fountain head from Zakros, although earlier comparable examples, of Protopalatial date, also exist. The spout’s closest parallel is on a twin jug/anthropomorphic vessel from the Giamalakis collection, generally dated to LM I–II. However, there is at least one other, earlier specimen of an anthropomorphic vessel with a frontal spout, a MM I vessel from Archanes.

The swirls and coils are slightly more difficult to find parallels for. The closest thing to the serrated hairline, and the back coils, is perhaps the head of a MM II anthropomorphic vessel from Phaistos. Nevertheless, it is recognised here that the coils on the back of the Petras artefact are probably meant as a cross between hair or mane, stylised wings and perhaps snakes. As such, it would perhaps be useful to draw parallels with plastically rendered coiled snakes, e.g., from peak sanctuaries. In fact, there is an almost identical coil from Petsophas (now in the Royal Ontario Museum), which has been comprehensively interpreted as a votive basket with offerings. I believe it was instead meant to represent a stylised snake. The feet of the Petras artefact are even more difficult to find parallels for. Although not a close parallel, a LM III centaur from Hagia Triada perhaps gives us an idea of how our artefact would have stood. The closest parallel for the feet, however, is on an MM II artefact examined below, although in low relief rather than fully three-dimensional.

Characterising the torso is the crux of this vessel’s identification. When I first encountered and examined it, I was of the impression that the torso is shaped like a dove. In fact, it may well be the case that it was fashioned using a life-size dove as a prototype. This is why I originally named it a siren. There is, to my knowledge, only one other vessel in the Aegean Bronze Age that crosses what seems to be the body of a bird with four distinct legs, and that is a LH III vessel from Hagios Stephanos. But is the Petras torso really that of a bird? Looking at other, mostly earlier, examples of bird-shaped zoomorphic vessels, one may observe that they tend to have a very different shape, resembling that of a boat. The closest parallels to the shape of this torso, are, in fact, to be found in the rendition of a rather different animal, that of a lion/feline. If that is the case, the swirls, serrated line, ears, and even dots would make sense, as would the feet/paws. One can see a contemporary lion parallel for the torso of the Petras vessel on a seal from Phaistos. In such a case, it is most likely

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12 Tsipopoulou this volume, “Ceremonial Area 1”.
13 Krzyszkowska 2012, fig. 8; cf. also Weingarten 2013 and 2015, where this hybrid is compared to Bess and Tawaret.
14 Dimopoulou-Rethemiotakis 2005, 295.
15 Rethemiotakis 2001, figs. 28, 115; Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki 2005, 94.
16 Rethemiotakis 2001, figs. 77, 94.
17 Platon 1995, pl. ΠΣΤ, fig. 3, pl. ΠΠ”, fig. 5, pl. ΠΠΕ, fig. 1.
18 E.g., from east and central Cretan peak sanctuaries, Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki 2005, 91, 93.
19 Rethemiotakis 1998, 21, no. 014, pl. 17.
23 Rethemiotakis 2001, figs.77, 151.
24 Koehl 2006, fig. 3, no.31; Cf. Miller 1984, pl. 286, TC 157.
that this anthropozoomorphic vessel, combining a human face with a lion’s (or even leopard’s) body, was actually intended as a depiction of a sphinx.

If we investigate along those lines, the closest such intra-Cretan parallel \textit{par excellence} would be the MM II clay applique sphinx from Malia,\textsuperscript{26} although others can be drawn. Despite the fact that the Petras artefact seems cruder in its rendition, there are some telling stylistic and notional similarities: the beard, the eyes, the tail, the posterior and the hind legs, even the curls of the mane. The top of the mane from the Malia artefact may, in fact, have been translated into the serrated line atop the head of the Petras vessel. But the ears are still without parallel. For that, we have to go further afield, to Egypt itself, for extra-Cretan influences and perhaps prototypes. There we find the sphinx of Amenemhet III (12th Dynasty), i.e., roughly equivalent to MM I–II and subsequently reused by four pharaohs until the 22nd Dynasty.\textsuperscript{27} This would explain a number of elements: the leonine ears, the spots, the beard, the tail, even the serrated line which starts from the forehead and eventually turns into snake-like coils. The fact that this sphinx type already existed by the time that the Malia and Petras specimens were created, and the fact that it was one of a very popular series of sphinxes which were subsequently reused, only adds to the possibility that the creator of the Petras artefact had either seen it or, more probably, was given accounts of it by people who had, and then adapted and adopted its features selectively.

In terms of dating, therefore, there are several parallels of individual elements which span the period between MM I and LM III. The most focus is on MM II and LM III. I am tempted to give this artefact an earlier date, for three reasons. The first reason is the artefact’s excavational context: it belonged to an extensive MM II ritual deposit in that area and depth of the cemetery, and, although there is some infiltration of LM III elements from a later (re)use of areas in its vicinity, it seems to me that this vessel not only is congruent with other ritual paraphernalia from the same MM II context, but also echoes other such apparatus, e.g., the aforementioned (and currently unpublished) MM II cat vessel. The second reason is the combination of decorative elements, e.g., feline characteristics and polychromy, especially the use of cream and crimson, both popular on MM II (mostly) palatial finds, such as on the highly sculptural polychrome vessel from Malia,\textsuperscript{28} which depicts wild cats. The third reason favourable to an MM II dating is the more general influx and popularity of cat and sphinx iconography across a variety of media (vessels, seals etc.) during this period, reflecting specific and ongoing Egyptian and Near Eastern influences. Conversely, there are also two negative reasons for a LM III chronology. One is that, although some facial characteristics do present similarities with specimens of this period, there are earlier parallels, as noted above. The second reason is that, although (Mycenaean) sphinxes are popular during LM III, their appearance usually tends to be rather different, e.g., crouching, with plumed hats and outstretched birds’ wings,\textsuperscript{29} fully human heads etc. It is therefore here argued that PTSK12.1018, the ‘Petras Sphinx’, is of MM II date. If this is so, it is one of only four anthropomorphic vessels on Crete from the Protopalatial period (Fig. 7) – three of which bear Egyptianising influences –\textsuperscript{30} as well as being the only male one at that time, and the first lion-bodied vessel in the Aegean. Furthermore, this is the first Aegean vessel (as distinct from figurine) thus far to depict a sphinx, to the best of the author’s knowledge.

\textsuperscript{26} Poursat 1973; Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki 2005, 228.
\textsuperscript{27} Pirelli 2000, 133.
\textsuperscript{28} Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki 2005, 229.
\textsuperscript{29} Cf. D’Albiac 1995.
\textsuperscript{30} Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013.
Hybridity

From a conceptual point of view, there are, in my opinion, five types of hybridity enacted in/by the 'Petras Sphinx', hence the title of this paper (Fig. 8). In this section, these will be outlined, so that, in combination with the above data, they will lead us to the final preliminary discussion of this artefact.

Hybridity 1: Animal-human homosomatic hybridity

The first type is the physical hybridity between represented animals and human. The Petras artefact offers a three-dimensional fusion between human, cat, lion/leopard, perhaps bird and snake. This representation is supposed to depict a 'monster', in the sense of a new, unfamiliar, even violating composition of already familiar elements. This combination invites two observations. One is that there is a challenge to the Minoan craftsman to achieve what I have described elsewhere as "homosomatic hybridity". In other words, the different constituent parts have not just been chosen and brought together only to be kept separate and recognisable. Instead, these elements have been fused, amalgamated, to form a new creature. This has implications for the original theorisation of animal and human components, e.g., their notional and practical articulation, as well as

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32 Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010, esp. 96-98.
their potential inventive coexistence. In other words, the challenge for the maker is to create an image that is both disturbing (in the sense that it disturbs a normative expectation of a zoomorphic vessel, an anthropomorphic vessel, a lion, a cat, a snake etc.) and convincing as a persona. E.g., the (now missing) upraised/unfolded tail (=feline) is balanced by the equally arching, but retracted coils (=snake), which can also be construed as wings (=bird). The second observation is that the user/viewer/performer is also challenged to negotiate the multiplicity of natures represented here and to figure out how this creature would perform, even if there is no such ‘answer’. In other words, the natural reaction of the recipient of this vessel’s depiction and performance is to try to understand what the combination of its conventional elements symbolises and enacts, because this is a previously unencountered, and therefore as yet unclassified, creature.

**Hybridity 2: Artefact-vessel homosomatic hybridity**

The second type of demonstrable hybridity is that between artefact and vessel. There are a number of anthropomorphic vessels in Bronze Age Crete, i.e., combinations of represented humans and receptacles. There are also zoomorphic vessels and some rare zoomorphic vessel hybrids. But, to date, there have been few anthropozoomorphic vessels on Crete, and most are later in date. This has a number of implications. Firstly, the Petras artefact becomes for the first time a meeting point of animal + human + vessel, i.e., it combines three container categories. Secondly, and consequently, because this is a container, it presents a number of practical, interpretative and conceptual issues: the nature of animals and humans as containers of substance; the vessel as a skeuomorph of a reimagined hybrid creature, i.e., a three-dimensional imitation of a (fantastical) creature in clay; the interplay between surface/skin and internal spaces,\(^{33}\) which has been carefully thought out during the conceptualisation and execution of the ‘Petras Sphinx’ (also see below). This type of hybridity, therefore, attempts, and indeed succeeds, in casting a collection of beings and a vessel as a functioning, ‘living’ agglomeration to be interacted with. This leads us to the next type of hybridity.

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\(^{33}\) Cf. Warnier 2006.
Hybridity 3: Artefact-human heterosomatic hybridity

The third type of hybridity is that between the vessel, already complicated in its identity and composition, and the actual human with whom it interacts. During its original use, the vessel was most probably used for libation, as is also advocated by the related finds of jug fragments and cups. Assuming the contents to have been liquid, the latter would have been poured into the back receptacle, but would not have filled the vessel if that was stationary, because of the angle. Filling the vessel would have required it to have been held with its underside completely horizontal or even tilting forward, at the same time keeping the spout blocked; then the spout could be released, in order to give an uninterrupted, smooth flow, because the back receptacle’s rim (at this point an air vent) would have been wide enough to facilitate this. The best ergonomic position for this hypothetical function is as follows (for a right-handed person and accounting for the missing front feet): left hand holds its palm facing upwards and grasps the back, narrow side of the body between the thumb and the rest of the fingers; the right hand, palm facing ¾ upwards, rests the spout between thumb and index finger, closing the rest of the fingers to incorporate and steady the neck. The whole vessel would have been tilted upwards, as if in a ‘leaping’ motion, judging from the best angle for grounding its hind foot soles (which is parallel to the angle of the receptacle rim), as well as the angle of the spout. Even for today’s researcher, the artefact, in its current fragmentary state, commands similar, careful handling. What this actually means is that, for the artefact and the human action to be complete, the two must come together in specific, almost predetermined ways. In other words, the full potential of this vessel, in ritual animation, is only realised through its hybridic relationship with an actual human body.34

Hybridity 4: Cultural hybridity

The fourth type of hybridity is that between cultures. Firstly, as we saw previously, there is an interplay between Cretan and extra-Cretan ideas: on the one hand, we have long established elements, such as the face, spout, perhaps snake; on the other hand, we have newly imported elements, such as the feline features and the whole composition. There is hybridity here between different iconographic cultures within and beyond Crete and between civilisations (e.g., Crete, Egypt). In fact, it is noteworthy and perhaps not accidental that most of the Cretan artefacts drawn here as parallels come from coastal or near coastal locations, e.g., Malia, Gournia, Palaiokastro, Zakros, often on a circumnavigational path of motifs and ideas. Such places are not surprising as find spots, as they broker notional and physical interchange, at the same time being liminal places for ethnic, political and religious identities.35

But there is also intercultural hybridity between the animal, human and vessel worlds represented here. Each of those components brings its own cultural load to the mix, a result, in each case, of hundreds of years of distillation. For example, the animal component comes from a very distinct culture of two-dimensional and three-dimensional animal representations, via peak sanctuary, funerary and palatial contexts. The human component comes from a different iconographic tradition, in which humans played varied roles and perhaps commanded different behaviours, as figurines, seals and amulets (cf. the somatic partiality represented by foot amulets), vase paintings, from peak sanctuaries, settlements, palaces etc. The vessel component comes from yet another culture, that of temporary or even permanent containment and content manipulation. Here, then, we have an admixture of cultures, i.e., ways of doing things, each bringing elements of its own history, many of which the user/viewer would have

34 Cf. Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2013, esp. 29-33, discussing the ergonomy of Minoan anthropomorphic vessels.

been familiar with individually, but not in these combinations.

**Hybridity 5: Corporeal states hybridity**

The fifth type of hybridity is that of corporeal states. As such, it displays a composite corporeality, whereby the moving liquid on the inside and the physical human body on the outside manipulate the artefactual body parts accordingly, changing their balance, weight, movement, temperature, sounds, containment and stability. Furthermore, it becomes important to revisit the artefact’s find spot here. It was found at the foot of a wall outside an entrance to a plaster-lined tomb, perhaps fallen from some height, face first, in a cemetery rich with finds, population, long-term ritual and symbolism. Indeed, this is not surprising, as most other anthropomorphic vessels are also found either in funerary contexts (e.g., near tomb entrances) or in similarly liminal locations, where people experienced physical, emotional, ritual, social and cosmological transitions. It is not inconceivable that this artefact, with its familiar yet also outlandish characteristics, with its striking decoration and fluctuating behaviour, was used as a living actor during transforming and transcending ceremonies.

**Discussion and conclusion**

As explained at the beginning of this paper, this is a short presentation and initial exploration of an artefact that warrants (and will be given) a much more thorough treatment. Nevertheless, some preliminary thoughts can be offered at this first stage of enquiry.

Firstly, as explained above, the 'Petras Sphinx' is both a recognisable but also unique artefact which represents a mythical/fantastical creature, derived from the fusion of a number of elements of other existing beings. As such, it defied classifiable beings and their behaviours, so it was a challenge to conceive, a challenge to make and a challenge to manipulate and decipher. In it, recognisable living creatures were 'disarticulated' and reorganised in a new whole and a new paradigm, much like the human remains recovered from the site (including those of the same period). Furthermore, the types of animals represented here may belong to contemporary hierarchies, something worth exploring further in future. Secondly, as it is a mixture of Cretan and extra-Cretan depictions, the vessel also posed (and still poses) the challenge of recognising/classifying which ideological and socioeconomic networks it incarnated. The sphinx in particular is one of a group of creatures connected to an MM influx of elite products and exotica. Their conspicuous consumption coincided with the apogee of the Protopalatial period, when palatial elites sought not only to prove their international connections by procuring and appropriating ‘outlandish’ visuals, but also to establish themselves as being at the top of local competition, by simultaneously acting as the gate-keepers of such iconography. It is therefore a pleasant but not an unexpected surprise to find this type of artefact at a funerary context at Petras. The palace had reached its zenith in a number of fields (architecture, artistic production, archives, imports etc.) by MM II and continued to play out intra-site elite competition in its cemetery. Hence, the presence of a number of exotica, precious materials, adaptations etc. in the material culture of the cemetery, drawing from...
long precedents of lavish differentiation in the mortuary goods arena (if not in the associated skeletal remains too), was a way for the palatial and other communities served by the cemetery to consolidate their potential and actual internationalism, as well as perhaps offer narratives of what lies beyond, physically, ideologically and metaphysically.

Finally, one can also be led to observe that the 'Petras Sphinx' brings together the world of the living (performers of the anthropozoomorphic vessel, communities participating in ritual behaviour), the world of the dead (cemetery setting and tomb adjacency, taphonomy of the vessel) and the world of the in-between (the 'Sphinx' itself), where physical and notional boundaries, normative ideas about creatures and their inactivity and (re)animation were challenged, renegotiated and transformed, like their audiences, departing and present.

In conclusion, the 'Petras Sphinx' combined intercultural, corporeal, inter-material and interspecies discourses, articulated against a funerary, but also palatial backdrop. It is hoped that future research by the author will explore this exquisite piece in more depth and further highlight its significance for Cretan Bronze Age art, ideology, exchange and beliefs.
Discussion

Krzyszkowska: Thank you Anna for that fascinating paper. I have a couple of comments about seal parallels, which I will tell you privately.

Muhly: I remember very well when this piece was first brought into the INSTAP East Crete Study Center in the summer of 2012. It created quite a stir, and as Stephania Chlouveraki began the cleaning the story became more amazing almost every day. It has been wonderful to see this artefact again, and your excellent photographs, you have done a magnificent job in photographing this piece.

Muhly: What is the earliest representation we have of a siren? We have the mention in the Odyssey.

Simandiraki-Grimshaw: Probably Geometric or Archaic.

Tsipopoulou: Probably 7th century.

Simandiraki-Grimshaw: Yes, definitely there is nothing in the Bronze Age.

Muhly: It is an amazing piece.

Sotirakopoulou: The way of rendering the eyebrows and the pellets for the eyes remind me very much of the face-bowls from Troy and a similar piece from Assomatos on Rhodes and Hagia Irini on Kea.

Simandiraki-Grimshaw: Thank you.

Krzyszkowska: Just for the benefit of the others here, before I tell you about the parallels in private, there is a very curious hybrid creature on a four-sided prism of carnelian, from House Tomb 2, Room 3, published in the last Symposium that could possibly have been a sphinx and has some affinities with your creature.

Simandiraki-Grimshaw: Yes, it is one of my parallels.

Krzyszkowska: It is a very bizarre theme and it seemed to me that it does not conform to the normal figures of sphinxes. It is MM II and contemporary with the plastic vase.

Simandiraki-Grimshaw: I would like to ask Olga Krzyszkowska what would you prefer, as a term to be used for it – a sphinx?

Krzyszkowska: Sphinx.

Papadatos: Is this vase local or imported? Is it a local fabric, compatible with the rest of the pottery?

Simandiraki-Grimshaw: Yes, the fabric is local.
Η Σφίγγα του Πετρά. Σπουδή στην Υβριδικότητα

Η ανακοίνωση ξεκινά με την παρουσίαση ενός από τα πλέον πρόσφατα ευρήματα του νεκροταφείου του Πετρά, ενός συναρπαστικού ανθρωποξωμορφικού αγγείου. Η εικονιζόμενη μορφή συνδυάζει στοιχεία ανθρώπου, πουλιού και άλλων όντων και σε νεώτερες εποχές θα μπορούσε να είχε χαρακτηρισθεί “Σειρήνα”. Το εύρημα του Πετρά είναι μοναδικό για μια σειρά λόγων, μερικοί από τους οποίους θα ερευνηθούν. Όμως, κύριος σκοπός της ανακοίνωσης, μετά την παρουσίαση του αντικειμένου, είναι μια από τις πολλές πλευρές του και συγκεκριμένα η υβριδικότητά του.

Ειδικότερα η ανακοίνωση θα υποστηρίζει ότι αυτό το πλαστικό αγγείο αποτελεί σπουδή σε ποικίλες μορφές υβριδικότητας: α) ανθρώπου-ζώου, β) αντικειμένου-αγγείου, γ) αγγείου-ανθρώπινης μορφής, δ) διαπολιτισμικότητας, ε) σωματικών καταστάσεων. Με αυτόν τον τρόπο το αγγείο θα ενταχθεί στο πολιτιστικό του περιβάλλον και θα εκτιμηθεί εντός και πέραν της ταφικής λειτουργίας, με σκοπό την κατανόηση του ευρύτερου ρόλου και της σημασίας του.

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