and preserved very little of the pottery). Overall, a bit more light is shed on the Late Bronze Age at Kourion in the paper, and it is to be hoped that the long term project of which the paper is a part will remedy the lack of publication of much of the material from old excavations that is alluded to (p. 175).

In general, then, this is a very varied collection of papers covering interesting material and offering valuable insights on many topics.

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Susan E. Poole. *A Consideration of Gender Roles and Relations in the Aegean Bronze Age Interpreted from Gestures and Proxemics in Art* (UCL Institute of Archaeology PhD Series, vol. 3; BAR International Series S2980). pp. 184, figs 264 (many colour), tables 4; 3 appendices, additional tables and illustrations of Part II available for download from barpublishing.com/additional-downloads.html. Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2020. ISBN 978-1-4073-5428-6, paperback; 978-1-4073-5429-3, e-format £47.

This is a difficult book to review, partly because of the sheer mass of material covered. Besides the figures in the text, there are many more in the Part II downloadable from BAR (this contains 3 appendices listing figures from frescoes (905), from glyptic material (157), and three-dimensional items (31) that were considered, all given some description, also 17 tables). Surprisingly, only a few figurines out of the many from Aegean contexts receive much attention. The explanation may be found in the word "proxemics" in the title (a new word, to the reviewer), which means spatial interaction between individuals; but interesting evidence is offered by some classes of figurine for the interpretation of gestures and poses, and this does receive some attention. The difficulties of coping with this mass of material and the discussion of it are compounded by the lack of an index, typical of BAR but making consultation and checking of references to a wide range of instances and to complex theoretical approaches a lengthy and often frustrating business. The author concentrates on topics of gender interaction and gender roles, and after her introduction, discussions of relevant previous research and of a theoretical framework for analysis, and setting out the methodology and an overview of the material examined, her chapters have significant titles: Are There Gender-Distinct Activities, The Way Bodies Occupy Their Surrounding Space, In What Ways Do Figures Orientate Towards Each Other, Can The Seating Of Figures Reveal Anything about Gender Status, and What Might an Examination of Processions Reveal. In her theoretical framework and methodology she calls on a great deal of modern art theory and interpretation, which the reviewer does not feel qualified to discuss, let alone dispute (although he does feel that the supposedly 'subordinate' gesture of the second woman in 7.29 is more likely to display surprise or alarm, in the setting). Also, there is no space for examination of the mass of interpretations proposed for particular examples or groups of material, and he must leave it to other experts in particular fields to comment and maybe criticise the analysis and interpretations.

But the reviewer does feel competent to comment on the author's account and use of archaeological evidence, which seems rather patchy, depending more on knowledge of the arguments about some particular interpretation or class of material than a full appreciation of the context in which the material is found. He finds it striking that, while reasonably dismissing the ideas derived from Evans's theories that Minoan society was matriarchal and almost monotheistic in its devotion to a 'Mother Goddess', she questions the whole notion of a Minoan Goddess (p. 25). In the context, this seems likely to refer to the notion of an all-powerful goddess and to respond adversely to commonly occurring comments interpreting some particular representation as showing "the goddess", as if there was only one; maybe she would accept a situation in which a goddess was the leader of a mixed pantheon that would include other goddesses (cf. Goodison and Morris 1998, ch. 6, a source that she does not cite), and in whose worship elite females could well have taken the lead. But she does not offer a detailed picture of how she imagines Minoan society and religion to have been organised, although her general comment on the way that high quality art of the Minoan kind could be used to establish the ideologies of 'a dominant group of people' (p. 2) gives the impression that she felt the religion was manipulated, and her general viewpoint seems to be that men would have been dominant in, if not constituted, this group.

However, she offers no detailed account of how the art that she is discussing was actually

'commissioned' and how the 'ordinary population', who were supposed to be impressed by it, would see it. Frescoes in palaces and other monumental buildings (of which Xeste 3 at Akrotiri is one, it should be stressed; it is not an ordinary 'private house') are most unlikely to have been seen by members of the 'ordinary population', and one might question whether they would have a chance to see the sealstones and seal-rings that showed many themes clearly relating to ritual and the supernatural, either. How, then, would they absorb the ideology that the 'dominating group' wanted them to accept? Public open-air ceremonies such as processions and occasions of offering would presumably be the natural occasions at which 'ordinary people' could absorb any religion-related ideas. But the idea that elite women might 'commission' representations that could be taken to represent themselves in 'goddess' form seems anachronistic and far-fetched, while what seems a general attempt to downplay the importance of female priesthoods is based on a very dubious parallel with Classical Athens (p. 25; the female priesthoods that were temporary appointments were not the great ancient cults, like that of Athena Polias, but newly established ones). In this context, it is worth noting that the historical Greeks, though notably patriarchal, took the worship of goddesses very seriously and often revered them as patrons of their cities (as in Athens itself), attitudes that they are more likely to have inherited than developed in historical times. Some communities (including in Crete) even saw certain goddesses as overseers of very important features of community life, including the transition from childhood to adulthood and, if male, to some form of recognition as a 'citizen'. The historical Greeks also seem to have inherited from their prehistoric ancestors a tradition that goddesses should have female priests, which is not a common feature of the contemporary Near Eastern civilisations, though there are some exceptions.

It is possible to sympathise with the author's avoidance of discussing Minoan society and religion in any detail, since there is a vigorous continuing debate on precisely these themes; however, her comments often strike a somewhat false note, e.g. in speaking, in her brief historical survey, of a wider 'Minoan civilisation' in the Second Palace Period, of which Melos and Thera are implied to have become part (p. 3, cf. p. 33, material from Akrotiri cited as 'Minoan' without qualification), she is going further than the most enthusiastic proponents of a 'Minoan thalassocracy'. The relationship between the Minoan culture of Crete and that of Thera, though heavily Minoanised (much more so than Melos, Naxos or Kea, where Minoan elements have also been noted), is more complex. In commenting on the fact that there seem be more 'warlike scenes' from Cretan sources than mainland ones, she seems to imply that she believes that items found in mainland contexts were made on the mainland (e.g. p. 116), a very outdated view. In fact, as Krzyszkowska implies (2005, pp. 140 and 250), many of the finds showing 'warlike' scenes found in mainland contexts may be of Cretan manufacture, as Davis has argued for two notable examples from Shaft Grave IV that the author cites, the 'Battle Krater' and 'Siege Rhyton' (1977, pp. 222-30).

The reviewer has not noticed any direct statement of the year in which the PhD that this book publishes was submitted, but the latest dates of sources consulted in the Bibliography are 2007 and 2008. One is bound to wonder why it has taken so long to publish and to feel that, as a result, it already seems a bit out of date. For not only have there been important publications, as of the frescoes from the North-East Bastion at Ayia Irini, Kea (Morgan 2020), which almost entirely show scenes of varied male activity in a miniature style, and of new reconstructions and discoveries of frescoes from the palace at Pylos (mostly summarised in Davis 2022, pp. 51-53), but there have been some remarkable new finds, which are extremely relevant to serious points discussed by the author. Thus, an ivory pyxis lid from Mochlos of Second Palace Period date, found in 2010, shows a female seated on a very elaborate structure, with a small but clearly female figure hovering above, and in front of her a large male apparently leading a smaller male to be presented, with two females standing behind them. Precise interpretation will probably continue to be debated (see most recently Jones 2023), but the seated female is surely at the very least an authority figure who is the active focus of an important ceremony. Even more remarkable in some ways are the four gold rings in purely Minoan style from the 'Tomb of the Griffin Warrior' at Pylos, datable to the fifteenth century BCE (Davis and Stocker 2016), of which one shows a bull-leaper scene with a male, but the others show solely female figures, all with strong hints of supernatural settings (in one, a figure seems to be descending through the air). Particularly remarkable is the scene in which two elaborately dressed and tall-hatted females stand on one side of a shrine building, putting hands to their foreheads in the well-known gesture of reverence, while on the other side of the shrine is a group known from other depictions (cf. fig. 7.15), of one large and two smaller females, all in the most elaborate dresses and standing (or perhaps dancing) with arms akimbo, a gesture that has been taken to suggest power and authority (p. 14). It is very tempting to interpret these as a major goddess

and her attendants, comparable to the group of Ishtar and her two attendants found in various Near Eastern sources of Bronze Age date, receiving worship from important priestesses or similar.

The effect of such discoveries is to offer considerable challenges to interpretative approaches that the author seems to favour, which effectively downplay the social importance of female-dominated ritual scenes on rings and of fresco compositions that portray female figures in apparently dominating positions. That these rings should have been buried on the body of the sole occupant of the grave, an adult male, along with weapons and armour, highlights the dangers of trying to identify clearcut divisions between 'male' and 'female' interests and spheres of activity. Further, a most striking seal from the same grave, the 'Combat Agate' (Stocker and Davis 2017), shows a vivid representation of a fight scene, of which the duel on the gold cushion seal from Shaft Grave III (figs. 2.25, 6.11), at least two generations older, is surely another, simpler version. Both are very likely to be Cretan products, as are other items with 'warlike' scenes, particularly from the Shaft Graves, as noted above, which suggests that there may not have been as much difference in basic ethos between Minoan and Mycenaean elite males as used to be imagined. It also raises the distinct possibility that some scenes on rings and sealstones are illustrations of incidents in traditional stories that would have been widely known in the Aegean. Such an interpretation, which the author does not seem to have considered, could also apply to other very unusual scenes involving direct contact or confrontation between males and females (cf. e.g. those shown in 6.28, 7.29, and 7.33). How far they relate to contemporary behaviour and relationships between the sexes might therefore be questionable.

Although there are far more examples of scenes representing males than females, overall, it does seem worth asking a general question, why, if men were so much in charge, are male figures not shown enthroned or dominating in the same way as female figures can be? They are often shown active, yes, and quite often dominating each other or animals, but poses embodying authority and power seem rare (the 'Priest King' or 'Lily Prince' is justifiably regarded as a highly questionable reconstruction). When so many of the female representations concentrate on scenes of purely female or female-dominated ritual activity or in positions suggesting authority, it seems hard not to see this as having more significance than the author seems willing to concede. The popularity of small female figurines in Mycenaean contexts from the fourteenth century BCE onwards, as well as the larger figures found in both Mycenaean and Late Minoan III contexts, and the prominence of a deity named simply Potnia, 'the Mistress' or 'The Lady', in the Linear B texts, help to create a picture in which female deities played an important role in Aegean Bronze Age culture after the Second Palace Period, to which so many of the finest representations belong. The reviewer is ready to believe that the general importance accorded to these deities and the rites apparently performed in their honour would have enhanced the prestige of the women involved in administering and participating in their cults, to the extent that their position might have been beyond ordinary male control, although their choice to hold such positions might have been made by males. Whether the importance of female deities could have fed through into general society, e.g. in the holding of socially recognised positions by females within family structure, especially in Crete, could well be considered a further possibility.

Overall, the author has gathered an enormous amount of material, which is in general well presented; it is particularly salutary to see how little remains of some frescoes, particularly Minoan ones, whose reconstructions are often confidently published, and to have well-argued criticism of some reconstructions. One minor error has been noted: the ivory plaque showing a spear-holding male (p. 88) is known to be, not from a mainland site, but from Delos. It should be said, the text does not seem to have been adequately proof-read; the reviewer has noticed several examples of missing words, and one very garbled figure caption (Fig. 2.21: the words 'Mycenae, 2nd PP' are surely intrusive). These are minor failings in a very considerable piece of work; but it remains to be seen how far specialists will accept some major features of its interpretations.

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Soles, J, with contributions by T. Carter, J. Cutler, G. Doudalis, D. Faulmann, J. M. Flood, A.R. Giumlia-Mair, A. M. Hussein, L. Kaiser, O. Krzyszkowska, E. Margaritis, J. Morrison, D. Mylona, M. Ntinou, K. Papayianni, Z. Stos-Gale, P. Westlake, J.S. Soles, C. Davaras, *Mochlos IVA. Period III. The House of the Metal Merchant and Other Buildings in the Neopalatial Town* (Prehistory Monographs 68). 2 volumes (1. Text; 2. Concordance tables, figures, and plates). pp. 568, colour frontispiece, 185 B/W figures; 118 B/W plates, 89 tables. Philadelphia: INSTAP Academic Press, 2022. ISBN 978-1-931534-33-8, hardback $150.00.

In 1908, Richard Seager commenced excavations on the prehistoric promontory of Mochlos (now an islet off Crete's northeast coast) which was inhabited between at least the Early Bronze Age (Early Minoan I/II) and the Late Minoan IIIB period - i.e. *c.* 2900-1200 BC, with Hellenistic and Roman re-settlement. This volume mainly addresses the results of further, systematic investigations, using more modern methodologies, of up to fifteen Middle Minoan IIIA-Late Minoan IB (c. 1750-1500 BC) domestic and ceremonial buildings partially excavated by Seager (some houses being multi-storey by their final use, with ashlar masonry construction, colour-plastered walls and floors; stone staircases; roof and street drains; kitchens with cooking holes/platforms and stone processing basins; storage and living rooms) located on the south coast of the present-day islet. Occupation was already present on the Cretan coast immediately south of the promontory by the LM IB period, and both areas had continued settlement and cemetery use into LM III.

Excavations were restarted in the zone at notable scale and length from the late 1980s under the direction of J. Soles and C. Davaras. Excavation is still ongoing while the project aims to issue complete data from past investigations in an ordered fashion: this is the latest, admirable instalment. Soles, surviving Davaras, has built close involvement between the project, its staff, INSTAP funding and the facilities of the INSTAP Study Center for East Crete. This connection has trained and supported specialists in the fields of artefacts, materials, technology, and palaeoenvironmental remains, and has involved highly engaged conservators and illustrators (D. Faulmann, producing all drawn and many of the photographic illustrations as well as related interpretation from work on site, is rightly included as an author here). This setup has enabled excellent recovery and presentation of data on metal artefact types, composition and provenance, including XRF and lead isotope analyses (Soles; Giumlia-Mair; Gale); archaeobotany (Margaritis); charcoal remains (Ntinou) and animal bone (Mylona). Pottery remains to be published in a separate volume, with findings summarised here by Soles in conjunction with Doudalis, Kaiser and Morrison. All other artefact items are presented here, with typically high-quality work by Carter with Flood (chipped and ground stone tools and other stone objects, including weights); Westlake (plaster) and Krzyszkowska (seals) forming reliable sources of reference and interpretation; Soles and Hussein study bone implements. Interesting additional types of specialist contribution appear, segmenting off textile tools as a distinct arena (a practice in my view not entirely justified, though ably done by Cutler) and microvertebrate remains (Papyianni) as another (perhaps worth doing for the high levels of detail it brings). Excellent sets of tables and charts illustrate specialist analyses and interpretations.

Regarding the broader history of Mochlos, the volume contains a very useful introductory summary of the settlement's history, drawing on previous publication of the LM IB 'Artisan's Quarter' south of the promontory (Soles, pp. 1-10). This is followed by two large chapters ('House C.3: The House of the Metal Merchant' and 'The House of the Theran Refugee and Other Buildings in the Neopalatial Town') on the architecture and stratigraphy of the excavated buildings: these are jointly written by the majority of authors and include finds lists for each architectural unit (pp.11-223). A reflective essay on the nature of life at the LM IB settlement by Soles (pp. 495-117) concludes the volume. In all this, there are mixed readings of exactly how the LM IB use of the promontory settlement ended. The significance of burning in different areas of the site is treated variably, although burning is found to have occurred regularly enough at the end of the LM IB phase to have preserved many vulnerable remains of the period, explaining why this phase is the focus of