

## Mycenaean “Peak Sanctuaries” on the Late Bronze Age Greek Mainland

Some of the most distinctive phenomena of Minoan religion and ritual on Crete are peak sanctuaries, termed for their position atop mountains. Especially notable is the intervisibility between the sanctuary and a nearby settlement, creating a unique visual relationship between the two sites. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, many archaeologists termed any Minoan shrine situated on a mountain a so-called “peak sanctuary,” but they did not specify archaeological features of these sites which might also distinguish them from other religious phenomena on Crete. Peatfield (2001; 1994; 1990), largely in response to the increasing number of sites called peak sanctuary in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, has noted that in addition to the distinct topographical location of peak sanctuaries, there are also noticeable parallels in the material evidence of these sites, which he later calls “criteria” of Minoan peak sanctuaries. For example, figurines, pottery, and pebbles are consistently present in large quantities at all peak sanctuaries on Crete.

Still relatively unexamined, however, is a full exploration of open-air sanctuaries on the Mainland and their relationship to the Minoan tradition of peak sanctuaries. Using the archaeological records of three known Mycenaean open-air sites, Mt. Kynortion, Mt. Lykainon, and Mt. Konstantinos, as case studies, this paper questions whether certain Late Bronze Age (LBA) open-air sites on the Greek mainland could also be called peak sanctuaries. Through a close examination of the topographical and material remains of these sites, I reveal parallels between Minoan peak sanctuaries on Crete and Mycenaean open-air sanctuaries on the mainland. While there is not necessarily intervisibility between these mainland sanctuaries and a nearby site like that of the peak sanctuaries on Crete, they do exhibit similar archaeological remains. Pottery and figurines, for example, have been uncovered at each of the three mainland sites.

While applying Peatfield's criteria to the archaeological remains of these three sites reveals clear parallels between LBA open-air sites and Minoan peak sanctuaries, also evident are some topographical and archaeological distinctions. These differences can be explained through an understanding of both local Mycenaean traditions and also of the broader relationship between Crete and the Mainland in the LBA. These sanctuaries are Mycenaean in character (Hägg 1996), developing out of longstanding Mycenaean cultic activity on the mainland (Whittaker 2002; 1997), but do appear to also exploit specific Minoan cultic practices of the peak sanctuary. These mainland open-air sanctuaries are thus representative of the convergence of mainland and Cretan traditions in the LBA. Applying such contextually specific terminology that is the name "peak sanctuary" to Mycenaean religious phenomena would not suffice, and indeed should not be done. By understanding these mainland sanctuaries in their appropriate contexts, however, and adjusting the criteria of peak sanctuaries accordingly, then one can indeed call them "Mycenaean peak sanctuaries."

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