Abstract: The study of Middle Minoan (MM) closed-context deposits, mostly containing ceramic assemblages, is revealing some aspects of the Minoan social hierarchy. Such deposits have been labelled generically as “foundation”; “floor”; or “ritual” deposits, but religious rituals are typically rigidly established and repetitive, whereas the deposits can be noted for their variability. Within the palaces the deposits start as highly symbolic, but soon split between depositions of valuable broken objects linked to the elite and depositions of materials used in ceremonies or feasts where participation was socially stratified. Moving out from the inner areas of palaces, similar deposits can be still found, but these always suggest some evidence of communal ceremony (albeit limited in numbers) and broken objects are occasionally placed within these assemblages. A typical “public” versus “private” analysis fails to categorise the deposits since it is obvious that the religious idea or cult is one in all cases, and there was also an audience probably in all cases. It appears therefore that the differences in the composition of the deposits depend upon the social dynamics in which the agents depositing the materials where involved. The palatial elite seems to have embraced an established ritual attempting to reserve to itself some aspects of it (depositions of broken objects), while it attempted to stress social ranking at communal feasting ceremonies. Different deposits from the palatial area also suggest that the palatial elite attempted to associate some materials and behaviours to specific social groups. Closed-context deposits reveal how the Minoan elite attempted to create a pyramidal society and place itself at the top, and how this process was far from being concluded at the end of the Middle Minoan period: as far as these deposits are considered, social hierarchy broke down just a few metres away from the residence of the elite.

Introduction

Closed context deposits are often time capsules of specific events and can reveal details and stories about single individuals. They are usually a completed record of such events and therefore they differ from much of the available archaeological evidence, which is partial. For their uniqueness, they represent an exceptional opportunity to reveal the lives of our ancestors, though they will have much less importance in generalisations. The first issue encountered studying closed-context deposits is their proper recognition as intentional depositions. Accidental deposits may occur at times of turmoil or destruction events. Recognising the intentionality of the deposits is of paramount importance because their materiality is the result of conscious choice, as opposed to fills of debris accidentally sealed, which include an incoherent range of materials present. In a deliberate closed-context deposit, the absence of some materials is as important as the presence of artefacts.

Funerary archaeology provides the best set of methods for such deposits since funerary assemblages from burials are closed-context deposits. For burials, the social status of the buried, long-standing rituals and practices as well as any political statement by the mourners play a part in justifying the ceremonies, which can be interpreted as a compromise of different ideas. The ceremony may mean different things to different people, and some of the actions may be interpreted diachronically. In Minoan Crete secondary burials are common. Some ritual practices can be very old and may have lost their original meaning. The tomb is a symbolic artefact and its full interpretation may escape the knowledge or understanding of the participants to the ceremony and deposition. The case of closed-context deposits is no different.
context deposits differs from non-funerary contexts because these deposits occur at irregular intervals and do not involve the repetition and general involvement of the community that can be assumed for funerary rituals. No established practices are usually involved; the deposits represent a synchronic act of the participants. The symbolism associated with the deposits must have been understood by all the participants as there are no actions practised with sufficient frequency to be perceived as appropriate for the event and automatically performed. The decision to perform the activity or ceremony leading to the deposit is extraordinary as we can understand from the irregularity of the event, and it is not rare just in the life of some individuals, but uncommon across the entire community. The closed-context deposit is the product of a single, deliberate and often unique, in its specific form, performance. It is an attempt by the participants to communicate a specific message through a symbolic language that is understood and at least partly developed by the participants. Daily or frequent practices can be inserted in the performances, but in a different context, with the specific meaning understood at that time by the performers. The interlocutor may be the same community or members of the community as well as entities in the natural or supernatural domains. Any interpretation of such deposits needs to be coherent and determine the main reason for the deposit to have been created. Alternative or uncertain interpretations are not possible: either the event resulting in the deposit is understood to some degree or it is not. One key reason triggered the performance leading to the creation of the deposit.

Social power strategies in Middle Minoan Crete

The Middle Minoan period was a time of changes, with the palaces emerging for the first time, but also being destroyed and having to be rebuilt. The Minoan society was changing rapidly and the people associated with the palaces needed consensus from the larger population, to affirm their social ranking and maintain control. As a result of this social struggle, religion was employed as a tool to control the society. The recurring iconography of a Minoan goddess descending on a throne seems to have been a key element used in the legitimisation of the new social order. The goddess is not human in origin, she clearly comes down from above and appears to be separated from the general population: a mediator or interpreter is always needed according to the iconographic sources. This goddess differ significantly from the pre-existing, and still strong during the Middle Minoan period, idea of the ancestors as mediators between natural and supernatural worlds. Evidence of practices that can be referring to a cult of ancestors are known throughout Crete, and several examples have been published (e.g. Mesara tholoi; ceremonies with ancestors participating at Mochlos; etc.). It is obvious that the social power legitimised by ancestors depends on direct or perceived kinship with the ancestors, and broad respect for them. Social power transmitted through ancestors is generally scarcely dynamic as real changes can only happen with the passing of individuals or marriages. In such a system, it is the family or clan that raises or lowers in social rank through relatively long periods. It is a very stable system. Instead, the social power that may have been communicated directly by the goddess would be an immediate manifestation of supernatural will, and it would be subject to rapid and drastic changes as such system would be legitimised through immediate communication. This system is more in tune with the needs of the complex and

1 This particular representation has been recently found in a pyxis from Mochlos that has been only briefly presented in a short article in Soles and Davaras 2010. It matches also other depictions, especially the one on the so-called Ring of Minos, Dimopoulou and Rethemiotakis 2004.
3 Soles 2001; Soles 2010.
sophisticated palatial societies, where there must have been some competition, at least due to the larger sizes of the communities. Of course, natural phenomena may interfere with any manipulation of this system, since such phenomena would be interpreted by the population as legitimising or delegitimising the current rulers. To maintain control of the society, it was necessary to bind people directly and possibly include the ancestors into the new system. This was even more urgent after the destructions of the palaces, probably due to natural phenomena, which had stressed the new social order at a time when the palaces were not fully established across Crete.

The closed-context deposits of Minoan Crete are often associated with libations or feasting, and the idea of the ancestors often plays a role. The deposits are typically created in areas being restored or built, and are often labelled as foundation or floor deposits for this reason. The practice of producing foundation deposits was well established in the ancient Near East\(^4\) and Egypt\(^5\) during the entire Minoan period. In Crete however, deposits predating the later phases of the Middle Minoan are very rare, and it is only in the later phases of the Middle Minoan period that they appear with some frequency, to peak in the Neopalatial period. Furthermore, in the Near East foundation deposits follow established ceremonies, whereas in Crete a repetitive pattern cannot be recognised at least until the Mycenaean period. The deposits cannot be explained therefore as evidence of some established ceremonies, nor as evidence of the formation or establishment of such rituals because of their irregularity in both frequency and material assemblages. The solution must be found therefore in the social arena of the time when they were produced. In the case of the Middle Minoan period, the social struggle to affirm the palatial hierarchy and the new social order suggest that by introducing the deposits, the idea of the ancestors entered prominently the focus of the current religion. By producing a deposit, future generations would have to deal not only with the legitimisation apparently coming from the supernatural world directly and mediated to them by the elite, but material proof of the approval by the ancestors was also to be found. For this reason, there seem to have been no formalised and established ceremony in producing them in many cases, because through this act some people attempted to communicate with future generations, alerting them of the approval by their ancestors of certain decisions, often related to building or re-building architectural structures connected to the elite.

The deposits make sense in a framework of social struggle using religion and cults as tools to establish social hierarchies. Besides what the individual deposits may tell us about specific times and situations, their importance is also due to the evidence of the actual employment of religious ideas in political and social discourses. The iconographic and architectural evidence shows an idealistic view of how order in the world was conceived and perceived, whereas the deposits show how such ideas were being constructed using elements charged with symbolisms pointing to the supernatural world (including the ancestors). The assemblages of the deposits are made of everyday items, such as conical cups\(^6\). It seems that the suggestion of using a social struggle using religion as tool is justified: the supernatural world must have been perceived as very close, actually integrated into the real world. As the Minoan goddess could exit her supernatural domain and enter the human world at will, so humans could do the same, any day and probably every day, through a sophisticated symbolic language encompassing the entire material world. What are current humans, if not the

\(^4\) Ellis 1968.
\(^6\) Conical cups are indeed the commonest type of vessels found in the deposits discussed in this paper.
ancestors of future generations? As such, the battle against flying goddesses and ancient ancestors was on, or was it everyday politics?

Past research has analysed Minoan foundation and floor deposits by site (e.g. Shaw and Shaw at Kommos⁷), by general typology (e.g. Boulotis on foundation deposits⁸), or most frequently they have been described and interpreted as such individually. Attempts to link securely the practice of such deposits with the Near East or other Aegean regions have failed because there are no significant similarities. Whatever their meaning is, it is specific to Minoan Crete, not least because of their association with Minoan palaces and the relative late introduction. There have been attempts to include closed-context deposits in broader narratives, for instance Jan Driessen has integrated the possible foundation deposit at Nirou Chani with crisis cults dating to the period immediately following the Theran eruption⁹. I have little doubt that at times of major natural disasters rare cults (perhaps even involving human sacrifices such as at Archanes¹⁰) and modified cults may appear briefly as a direct consequence of the extraordinary situation faced by the people. Even today natural disasters are capable of disaggregate the structure and dissolve confidence of entire communities¹¹. Looking at extraordinary historical moments is important, but those moments often do not represent the society at normal times, and may be confused and confusing as chaos dominates the life of people.

A social approach seems a productive way of studying closed-context deposits. The deposits should not be bundled together in categories however, considering that no few meaningful categories can describe or represent the different practices and results. These deposits need to be considered case-by-case, considering other evidence from other contexts from the same area and same time. Methodologically there can be no forcing of a single interpretation when the actual material evidence is not homogenous. Not even a typical “public” versus “private” analysis can categorise the deposits. The resulting interpretations can and should be compared. The absence of recognisable patterns in the production of the deposits becomes a pattern itself. By looking at the iconography of Minoan palaces, there is the strong impression that some ideas were strongly held and well established since the iconographic production is often repetitive and standardized in the chosen motifs. The broader religious paraphernalia however is quite mixed, enough so to make impossible to state that the palaces were the focus of religious practices within Minoan Crete. Yet the palaces were the most complex architectural structures in Crete, and it is clear that social hierarchy and administrative tasks were most advanced there. It is also known that religious elements were the focus of the palaces: one has only to walk within the perimeter of a Minoan palace to recognise many structures probably connected to religious quarters, such as lustral basins shrines, and religious areas. The Throne Room in Knossos is a potent visual evidence of how religion and administrative power were intermixed in Crete. As much as the palatial elites inserted religious elements in almost every corner of their palaces, the palaces themselves are not so uniquely impressive in that regard: peak sanctuaries, cave sanctuaries, tholoi and other tombs are also

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⁷ Several floor deposits, defined as “purposeful discards”, have been reported in Kommos. See discussion in Kommos V, Rutter and Van de Moortel 2006, 275-377.
⁸ Boulotis 1982.
¹¹ The cases of the destruction of New Orleans following hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the crippling of the Japanese economy following the earthquake and tsunami in north-eastern Japan in 2011 are exemplary.
significant expressions of religious beliefs in Crete. The deposits, if anything, demonstrate the considerable variability of practices. There is, of course, a general similarity in the meanings and practices, particularly in the belief of the ancestors as mediators between the physical and spiritual worlds. Beyond that, it is difficult to recognise an established practice; actually the view from the deposits is that there was not one. I think that the lack of rigorous and established practices, which we should be able to recognise consistently in the material record even if understanding their meaning may be very problematic, suggests that the organisation of the Minoan society was dynamic and highly conflictual. The dynamism is confirmed by the emergence and morphing of the palaces. The conflictual state of the society is less clear, especially for a society often presented as pacifist. Yet, the marked differences in religious practices and the abundance of these are unlikely to have been lived peacefully, as any historical example of compressing different religion-based practices in a single community or society can demonstrate.

In my view, the deposits show politics in action, in the attempt to bring together under a single roof (the palace) a fragmented community. The palatial elite seems to have embraced an established ritual (the eastern foundation deposit and/or the burying of non-functional objects and structures) attempting to reserve to itself some aspects of it (depositions of broken objects), while it attempted to stress social ranking at communal feasting ceremonies. Different deposits from the palatial area also suggest that the palatial elite attempted to associate some materials and behaviours to specific social groups. Closed-context deposits reveal thus how the Minoan elite attempted to create a pyramidal society and place itself at the top. I also think that sincere religious beliefs existed, and that people following different practices was not easy to convince that the palace could be the new focal point of their devotion. Until the destruction unleashed by the Theran eruption, the variability in practices continues.

**Meanings hidden in rituals**

The burying of broken objects and even the burying of destroyed buildings, be those houses or entire palaces, is a practice that is also neglected in existing studies. It is clearly connected to the ancestors and widely practised across Crete. However, the archaeological evidence still does not permit a sound analysis. There are floor deposits at Kommos that suggest intentionality in the practice, and some evidence of the awareness of pre-existing households in Mochlos along with evidence maintaining the memory of these. For the Minoan palaces there is evidence of preserving ancient structures with cement after the first destructive event, possibly an earthquake, but the situation remains confused given that the destruction originated by the Theran eruption occurs before the reconstruction. It seems that within palaces some control was exercised in maintaining the homogeneity of the reconstructive action, without individual floor deposits cropping up at every other room.

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12 Chapman 2007, 173-201, for a general overview of the significance of the action. In the Aegean Bronze Age the practice was widespread, from Early Bronze Age Keros (Renfrew, Philaniotou, Brodie and Gavalas 2009) to Late Minoan III Mochlos (Morrison and Park 2008). Morrison and Park (2008) have developed the theory of Proximate Causality which aims at identifying the fracture patterns of ceramic vessels through experimental archaeology in order to identify the methods of breaking that are meaningful and relevant to the interpretation of the artefacts in context. Their study proves that the intentional destruction of ceramic vessels such as those buried in the deposits may not be chaotic or unintentional. After a preliminary study of some deposits, I found highly probable that a few pieces of the smashed vessels were on occasion retained, probably as mnemonic tool to preserve memory of the event.
The feasting element associated with some deposits should not be ignored: communal feasting is another practice that is recycled in the rituals leading to the deposits. “Patron-role” feasting has been proposed by Knappett, and it seems a reasonable interpretation. Hierarchy in the form of a pyramidal structure is evident in some deposits predating the eruption of Thera, but this practice is just an additional symbolism adapted by the palatial elite to assert power. At the same time, there are deposits that are highly symbolic and not found at the heart of religious areas within the palaces. Thus, whilst the elite was trying to assert power, at the same time the people addressed may have understated the hierarchical division in their reception and simply recognised the symbolic practice.

The natural catastrophes occurred up to the reconstruction of the palaces and the “Mycenaean” period seem to have ripped apart the structure and texture of the Minoan society to such a degree that there is a hiatus between the two historical periods. Without adventuring on the issue of the control that may have been exercised by Mycenaean people on Crete, it is evident that the Minoan society had changed, the struggle was over, and unity from necessity replaced at once most attempts by the palatial elite to unite the Minoans. It is important to recognise that the simple fact that the Minoans united eventually (at least formally adopting the same homogenous Mycenaean culture), does not mean that the practices leading to the deposits were ultimately successful. The story from the deposits is one of differences and constant conflict and mediation. The centralisation drive does not move the society backward or forward, but it reconceptualises the ancestors in a different society.

Conclusions

I recognise the closed context deposits as mnemonic tools that seal some sort of contract between different members of the society. They are physical reminders of the strong sensorial experiences deriving from the performances connected to the production of such deposits. These performances may be limited to simply remembering the ancestors or calling for the supernatural world to witness the event in which some collective agreement has been reached. Nonetheless, these were powerful acts that set apart those events from ordinary ones. Yannis Hamilakis has discussed feasting as mnemonic practice emphasising the connection between ritual and memory and the role of sensory pageantry. In particular, the analysis of a Minoan deposit has recognised the sensory pageantry and extended the range of sensory perceptions to include all senses (the zooarchaeological analysis of the available food and the recognition of burning add smell to the other senses represented in a feasting ritual). It has been possible to recognise also repetition in the acts. The analysis however still presents limits in understanding the reasons behind it because the formalisation of the ritual (feasting and production of deposits) does not allow for an easy examination of specific events. In my view, I recognise to varying degrees the same role of memory in such rituals, but I see such analyses revealing only the mechanics of the rituals. The basic stimulation of the brain through the senses with simple and easily accessible materials (foodstuff and for the most part conical cups,

14 Hamilakis 2008; Hamilakis 2010.
15 A discussion of the psychological and neurological mechanisms at work in rituals involving some form of sensory pageantry (like feasting) have been discussed in McCauley and Lawson 2002.
16 Harris and Hamilakis 2008.
17 I would also add gestures on the basis that the stimulation of senses and memories produces states of altered consciousness that tend to encompass the whole body. Gestures were necessarily performed in the acts of drinking and eating, but also at the time of breaking and/or burying the artefacts.
some of the simplest ceramic vessels) points to a series of rituals that avoid altogether the sophistication of social hierarchy, particularly considering that Minoan palaces and elaborated pageantries were in use at the same time. The deposits should be interpreted as evidence of collective agreements, sometimes involving only a few individuals and should be framed in the then broadly accepted set of collective beliefs and social practices.

According to this perspective, the people selecting rituals leading to the production of closed context deposits adapt existing rituals for their own political/social purposes. The deposits are semiotic signs that re-use existing rituals as a form of language to express original ideas. The rituals themselves play the same role that seals and written contracts play in social or economic transactions and agreements. The value of seals is typically conferred by the social and/or political authority of the owner, which must be known and trusted personally. In the case of modern written contracts, it is the state that guarantees the contract. The rituals instead do not appear to refer specifically to any recognised social or political authority (neither a political institution nor a divinity attached to such institution is recognisable, not even in palatial contexts), and are impersonal enough to exclude personal trust among the parts. The ancestors and their specific supernatural world guarantee the transaction. The ancestors perform in this view the same role that divinities perform in the Graeco-Roman world in case of magic spells and curses. Interestingly, there are no divinities involved, and the deliberate absence of both political and religious parties, as well as the exclusion of personal trust, suggest that the Minoan deposits were performed at times of great uncertainty, when little was uniting the community. Not even ancient ancestors seem to be involved. The events producing deposits necessitated to stimulate the senses so much to produce a memorable event in the present that could bring together separate social parties that apparently shared almost nothing. It should be noted however, that whilst this may be the explanation for the origins of the deposits, as time passed, ritual repetition may have formalised these events and may have led to their embedding in social, political, or religious strategies and practices.

In support to such a perspective, I can offer the evidence that such deposits are found clustered around times of difficulty or change (e.g. foundation of palaces; MM III earthquakes; Thera eruption; beginning of Mycenaean influence) and it is likely that at those times the society broke down forcing people to move in a sudden way producing the estrangement of many people from their usual place of residence and the people they knew. This must have had catastrophic effects on a society where the cult of ancestors (and therefore the memory of their own past) was so important to them. In our present time, people unable to prove their identity and unable to prove a connection with the place

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18 Most of the available archaeological evidence in the form of frescoes and depictions is dating to the Late Minoan period, but some pageantries must have emerged earlier along with the palaces.
19 In agency theory, they may be referred to as “agents.”
20 The presence of the ancestors as agents can be identified by the recurring of practices aimed at maintaining memory of the event. There is no particular need for calling ancient ancestors: because anything agreed at the point of the event is projected to the future, such as the reconstruction of the palace sealed by foundation deposits at the very start of the reconstruction, the participants themselves may be the ancestors, and by agreement be denied peace in the grave unless the contract is fulfilled. Provided that all parts share the same beliefs in afterlife, such a contract would be as serious and binding as any modern legal contract can be.
21 Betz 1986; Tomlin and Hassall 2011.
22 The available archaeological evidence is able to recognise the presence of ancestors, who are typically present with their own bones at the location of the event, in both tombs (e.g. Mesara; Branigan 1993) and settlements (e.g. Mochlos; Soles 2010).
they have arrived at are usually detained in some form (e.g. migrant refugees) and securing their welfare and access to the larger society constitutes one of the most difficult (and politically heated) challenges of our time. Whilst it may be assumed that in ancient times assistance and protection for people in difficulty was made available in the short term, the problem of people unable to prove their identity and asking to relocate would have posed mighty challenges to the members of the Minoan society as we know it.

Feasting and/or libation were performed in all known instances involving closed context deposits with ceramics. Commensality however had a long history in Crete and it may have acted as recognised language to communicate agreement rather than as a non-symbolic statement. I do not use the word “language” lightly: both the involvement of ancestors and the act of feasting together were activities inserted in communication strategies and therefore relevant in semiotics. Both can be compared to words. In the case of the MM and later deposits, “ancestors” and “commensality” are given altered meanings and embedded in a new meaningful ritual practice exactly as words in a language.

Social hierarchies are always represented only within palaces. Significantly, these deposits appear in palaces as much as in other contexts. The palatial elites embraced this particular ritual as an acceptable form of communication. Although foundation deposits had existed for long in palatial contexts and other contexts of social power, the vast majority of Cretan deposits differ significantly from Near Eastern examples, regardless of the contexts. It appears that the Cretan deposits represent an attempt to re-negotiate social power, but they also suggest weakness on the side of the then established holders of social power for this became a necessity. The rituals and the deposits seem very much originating from the need for re-establishing some form of social unity after a social collapse. The persistence of the deposits in the archaeological record suggests that this unity was not achieved within a limited amount of time, since the ritual practice continues well into the Iron Age.

I regret that very few closed context deposits as discussed here have been properly published. Since the deposits are also unique and cannot be easily categorised, it would be futile to summarise but a few of them here. I am studying some of the deposits, and I have seen many related assemblages. My conclusions therefore are founded on such on-going study, and should not be treated as theoretical speculations from preliminary publications or unsubstantial data. I recognise the deposits and the associated ritual practices as related to the state of social chaos apparent in Middle Minoan Crete following a series of earthquakes that most famously destroyed the palace of Phaistos. Subsequently, the Thera eruption (Late Minoan IA) and beginning of the Mycenaean influence on Crete seems to have prolonged the breakdown of the Minoan society. It is in this context of social

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23 Rituals are intended here as a form of language, see Vianello 2004.
24 Especially outside Crete.
25 Probably caused by natural catastrophes and later the arrival of the Mycenaeans.
26 Harris and Hamilakis 2008, 164, recognise as the desired result of the rituals, feasting and deposit at Nopigeia the creation of homogeneity and unity. To my knowledge, this may have been true at Nopigeia as well as in many other non-palatial contexts, but the same rituals were also used to preserve social distinction within palaces, especially during the MM III. This is the key reason for my interpretation of the rituals as a form of language: the same ritual practices were used for different purposes across Crete and throughout the Bronze Age. The idea of language provides the dynamism and flexibility that is not usually associated with rituals.
turmoil that most deposits can be dated. In general terms, the significance of memory and sensorial perceptions seems confirmed for deposits found across Crete. There is however significant variability in the deposits and specific rituals, and even the deposits found at Akrotiri on Thera, the Cycladic island closest to Crete, cannot be easily compared with the Cretan ones. It is my current opinion that the deposits are connected to very ancient practices, especially associated with the cult of ancestors and relevant to the formation and preservation of identity among the Cretan islanders. The ideological origin of the deposits is therefore to be found outside the palaces, although some of the earliest examples are to be found within the palaces. This apparent contradiction may be explained by the deliberate attempt by the palatial elites to engage the surviving population after the earthquakes\textsuperscript{27} in order to re-negotiate social power by using the most appropriate language. The rituals were used as a form of elementary language that overused sensorial perceptions and parted from any complex construction, including any religious belief towards the ancestors. This is evident because the rituals avoid distinction as much as possible and differ from deposits related to the cult of ancestors by removing the physical presence of them through the absence of their remains, in stark contrast with previous practices.

The deposits found in palatial contexts appear to support the distinction of different social groups, and some deposits, such as those at the Temple Repositories at Knossos, are clearly aimed at emphasising that even the palaces had ancestors that could protect them. The ancestors may be recognised in the iconography of religious depictions connected with the palaces, but the Minoan goddess appears to have been the primary supernatural agent employed by the palatial elites to preserve legitimisation and social power. Her absence from the rituals producing the deposits must be significant, and suggests to me that the Cretan population may have lost faith in a cult promoted by the still relatively recent (in MM III) palaces against pre-existing cults. The palatial elite seems to have attempted to continue using religion as a tool to negotiate social power, but had to change the primary supernatural agent to please the crowds and to their convenience. This particular adjustment in religious beliefs held and rituals practised in palaces provides an excellent insight into how the Minoan elite negotiated social power and was justifying the creation of a pyramidal society by using religion.

The deposits themselves provide little information about social hierarchy or motivation: their simplicity and recurrence suggests a concerted attempt to recreate unity among the society, at least as all people members of the same society, though social distinction could still play a role. The continued production of the deposits and their homogeneity, bordering anonymity, suggests that the Minoan society never fully recovered from the series of disasters. The rituals and deposits were probably used to forge new communities founded on the presents rather than attempting to reconstitute old ones. Much more data would be necessary to pronounce whether the deposits are a reliable indicator of social instability and which areas where most hit. My impression is that with time the rituals became an established practice that probably confirmed the identities of the participants or their appurtenance to some community rather than providing an identity to people without any. For the period between the earthquakes and the Thera eruption, I feel more confident with the data that I have to state that such deposits provided some local identity\textsuperscript{28} to displaced

\textsuperscript{27} Or any other event that produced the apparent state of chaos in Crete.

\textsuperscript{28} In many cases, the issue of identity may have arisen from the problem of validate agreements among different individuals of a community. Regardless of the specific reason that prompted the creation of the
people or reconstituted communities on the basis of the living and present, when the rituals were performed outside public spaces or the palaces. Within the palaces, the formation of a pre-fabricated pyramidal society was attempted, but the diversity of the deposits and their presence outside the palaces suggests that the deposits and associated rituals failed in this particular purpose to the point of challenging the authority of palaces. It is possible that the same rituals may have played a role after the beginning of the Mycenaean influence on Crete, perhaps distinguishing native communities from overseas conquerors, or once again bringing together different people.

Here I wish to bring attention to the challenges in forming and preserving a hierarchical society in Minoan Crete, due in part to some resistance to new cults and political establishment, and in part to the apparent disaggregation of the Minoan society towards the end of the Middle Minoan period. The deposits have much to say about Minoan society at a crucial time of its existence.

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individual deposits, it seems apparent to me that the rituals provided, for one reason or another, a statement of appurtenance to the local community.
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