The Master of Animals
in Old World Iconography

Edited by
DEREK B. COUNTS and BETTINA ARNOLD
The Aegean Master of Animals:
The Evidence of the Seals, Signets, and Sealings

JANICE L. CROWLEY

Finding the Aegean Master

The most often illustrated examples in Aegean art showing the animal world and indicating humans’ power over it are the scenes of animal attack and the hunt on the fine inlaid niello daggers, the ornamented weapons, and the gold work from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae and in the wall paintings of the great palaces of the Late Bronze Age (LBA, all dates here follow the chronology in Olga Krzyszowska’s seminal work, *Aegean Seals: An Introduction*, 2005). To these can be added representations of the Mistress and Master of Animals and fantastic creatures like the griffin and sphinx on gold and ivory ornaments and some seals. However, when all the known seal evidence is taken into account, the picture changes enormously. Of the thousands of seal designs available to us, the overwhelming number depict animals, both wild and domesticated, and to a lesser extent birds, insects, marine life, and some fantastic creatures. Bulls, goats, sheep, pigs, and stags are shown standing or recumbent, some animals are in action poses, some fall prey to violent predators, females suckle their young, the birds perch, take off, or are in full flight, dolphins leap and dive, and the griffin assumes most of the terrestrial animal roles. Depictions of overt human power over animals, which seem in the other media to be at least as important as the animals themselves, form only a subset of the small number of seals that have humans or human hybrids in their design. The subset featuring human control or mastery includes scenes of tending the herd, of the hunt and the bull sports, of animal sacrifice, and of grand figures accompanied by their familiar (companion and identifying animal). The Master and Mistress of Animals are there too, very well represented in comparison with other human roles, assuming a popularity that cannot be adduced from the other media.

The Importance of the Seals

The first point to make here is that the glyptic art form, comprising the seals, signet rings, and sealings, is of special import in the Bronze Age Aegean because it provides the largest number of examples of art with the greatest range of subject matter, as well as the most expansive chronological and geographical spread. Pottery does have more examples and more coverage in time and place, but the subject matter is extremely limited, and human figures come into regular use in ceramic decoration only very late. So, it is the seals that provide the art historian and iconographer with the best (and sometimes only) opportunities for research. The seal evidence comprises more than 10,000 seals, signets, and sealings involving some 12,000 images on the different seal faces that range from excellent condition to damaged or fragmentary. However, when the whole span of seal production and use is considered, from the Early Bronze Age (EBA) in Minoan Crete (Early Minoan [EM] II) to the destruction of the Mycenaean palaces (Late Helladic [LH] IIIB) in mainland Greece in the Late Bronze Age (LBA) some 1,400 years later, it is clear that only a small percentage of all the seals made now remain to us, perhaps only 3–5% (Krzyszowska 2005:1, 329). Some of these are from well-documented excavations but many are accidentally preserved and/or from unknown sources. For all these reasons the material is not conducive to statistical analysis, and we are sometimes in the situation of having only one example that must be
taken into consideration because it is a sealing from a stratified site or it is a particularly finely cut seal or gold signet ring.

The second thing to note is the problem with all Aegean Bronze Age material, including the seals, and that is the lack of textual evidence. The Minoan texts are not yet translated, and the one text that can be read, Mycenaean Linear B, an early form of Greek, concentrates on subject matter important for palace economies in the late period. However, even if all the texts were translated, we would still lack a close gloss on the art. This is because Aegean art does not place textual comment alongside images, as is the case with the arts of the Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and later Greek traditions. Where one might have expected that the art of a sophisticated palatial society from Middle Minoan times onward would tell us the meaning of its artistic symbolism, it is, in that sense, mute. We are in the same situation with the study of the Aegean Master of Animals as with so many other Master figures in prehistory (see, e.g., KENoyer, this volume), making iconographic analysis one of our main avenues of enquiry.

The third thing to be kept in mind as one works with the seals is the quite special nature of the material. Though these pieces are small in scale (and therefore often overlooked because of it), each seal was very precious to its owner because it was both beautiful jewelry to wear and her or his own chosen insignia. In the discussion below the shape and material of the seal will be noted to highlight the jewelry aspect. The color and sheen of the specially chosen stones such as lapis lazuli, carnelian, agate, and rock crystal made them items of beauty even before the careful intaglio carving set an image upon the seal face, the string hole was bored, and a suspension cord threaded so the jewel could be worn around the neck or at the wrist. The shining gold of the signet rings was enhanced by the exquisitely wrought designs on the oval bezel, designs that can readily be enjoyed as the hand is held up in the bright light. However, even the humble seals made of local stone cut with sketchy lines or schematic animal shapes have a voice that we must heed. They tell us that the use of seals was widespread and that it was not only the elite who commissioned seals to use in storing their goods and to wear as insignia. This is particularly so in Minoan Crete from early times, and it makes clear that the desire to own a seal was embedded deep in the Minoan psyche. The Mycenaens were heir to this long tradition, already 1,000 years old when they came to power in the Aegean world, and they used seals till the last days of their palace administration (the end of LH IIIB). However, the Minoans and Mycenaens were different peoples, and the images may have taken on different meanings on the Greek mainland. Establishing the differences between Minoan and Mycenaen usage is another of the difficulties inherent in this material.

Yet even with all of the problems just mentioned, it is clear that an investigation of the seal, signet, and sealing evidence is crucial for understanding the role of the Master of Animals in the Aegean world. In the iconographic analysis undertaken here, all seals are identified by their number in the standard publication Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel (CMS I–XIII). The 46 examples of the Master published in the CMS are discussed by illustrating 30 of them, as well as 15 comparisons with the Mistress and other male authority figures. All illustrations are the CMS drawings of the seal impression.

The Aegean Master of Animals

Iconographic Paradigm

The subject matter of the earliest Minoan seal designs includes animal forms, flower and foliate shapes, and geometric compositions, especially those based on the spiral. The human figure appears in Early Minoan (EM) times but is treated schematically (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005, 66–67). Accordingly, it is
difficult to be certain of the earliest Master of Animals motifs. The ivory stamp from Trapeza (Fig. 10), showing an indistinct human shape between two animals, is possibly one of the earliest. In Late Minoan (LM) times, interest in a more naturalistic portrayal throughout the arts, including the seals, provides detailed representations of humans and animals, and the iconography of the Master is clearly defined from LM I down to the late examples on the Mycenaean mainland (Figs 1 and 8).

Fig. 1. Master of Animals (jasper signet ring, excavated Mycenae [CMS I 89])

In this Aegean paradigm of the Master of Animals, the full spirit of the Master is on display as he grapples with wild animals and effortlessly subdues them. The antithetical group motif organizes the design content of the human and two animals. The human figure is depicted in the Aegean combination pose, head in profile with the upper torso frontal and swiveled at the waist to render the lower torso in profile, the regular pose for Master figures. He is depicted as a muscled man clothed in belt and kilt and so full of power that he holds both lions clear of the ground, one by the neck, the other inverted and suspended by a hind foot with head regardant (for heraldic poses of animals, see CROWLEY 1989).

Attendant Animals

There are eight Aegean Masters known from the seals, and each is named for the animals he subdues. The attendant animals are two fantastic creatures, the genius and the griffin; three wild animals, the lion, agrimi, and stag; two domesticated animals, the bull and the hound; and the dolphin from the sea. These Master roles are seen in the paradigm types (Figs 2–9).

Fig. 2. Genius Master (white/brown agate lentoid, acquired [CMS XI 290])

In this example the Master is dressed in minimal Minoan clothing, indicated by the cinch belt, has a rounded coiffure (as does the Hound Master in Fig. 5), and shows his control over the attendant genius figures by grasping one of their ears. The geniuses are shown in their characteristic upright pose holding a vessel of particular shape, the Minoan ewer. Compare the Genius Master in Figs 28 and 29.

Fig. 3. Griffin Master (clay sealing, excavated Thebes [CMS V 669])

A rather more sketchily delineated Master here controls his attendant griffins by holding out his arms over them. They are crouchant along the perimeter groundline, with wings barely elevated, one griffin being addorsed. Compare the Griffin Master in Figs 8, 11, and 30.

Fig. 4. Lion Master (hematite lentoid, purchased 1909 [CMS IX 153])

The Master here, again wearing only the belt, holds each lion by an ear, suspending them clear of the ground as they raise three of their four paws to him. Compare the Lion Master in Figs 10, 12, 13, 16–24, and 30, CMS II.8 252, V Sup1B 49, 62, 154, VI 312, and VII 173.

Fig. 5. Hound Master (onyx lentoid, purchased Poros 1940 [CMS II.3.193])

The Master stands hands to chest as in Fig. 15, and the hounds pose rampant facing him. Compare the Hound Master in Figs 14, and 25–27.
The Aegean Master of Animals: The Evidence of the Seals, Signets, and Sealings

Fig. 6. Bull Master (red jasper lentoid, acquired [CMS VIII 147])

The Master holds a “ball” in each raised hand while the bulls stand statant on the perimeter groundline, the seal cutter using the same space-saving compositional device as in Fig. 3. The Bull Master is a rare image in the seals.

Fig. 7. Agrimi Master (clay sealing, excavated Mycenae [CMS I 163])

The two agrimia stand rampant facing the Master who holds them at the neck. Compare the Agrimi Master in CMS IV D38 and V Sup3 370.

Fig. 8. Stag Master (clay sealing, excavated Mycenae [CMS I 324])

The Stag Master below is in running pose while the stags are statant addorsed (a Griffin Master with long ringlets is shown above). Compare the Stag Master in CMS V 594.

Fig. 9. Dolphin Master (green lapis lacedaemonius lentoid, acquired [CMS V 181])

In this rare example the Master stands with arms outstretched, holding in each hand a dolphin, diving down. Plants or seaweed are seen in the surround.

The Minoan genius is a fantastic creature of the Minoan imagination adapted from the Egyptian hippopotamus goddess, Ta-Urt or Thoueris (GILL 1964, 1970; REHAK 1995; WEINGARTEN 1991). The genius’ usual role is as carrier of the Minoan ewer, but he is also seen as the protector of a hunter fighting a lion in CMS XI 208, as a successful hunter himself spearing a bull in CMS II.7 31, and carrying the catch held over his shoulder, as with the bull in CMS IX 129, the stag in CMS XI 37, and the two lions in CMS XI 37, as well as a substitute for the Bull Lord in CMS VI 305 (see the discussion below on Lords). The lion and bull might have been expected as attendants because they have a long history as such in the arts of the Mesopotamian sphere; and the griffin too is originally a motif from the East (ARUZ 2008; CROWLEY 1989). However, while the lion and the griffin are taken up as attendant animals by the Aegean Master, the bull never becomes a favorite. It would seem that the bull already has another identity in the human/animal power struggle as the adversary to the bull leaper (YOUNGER 1995a). In its feature role in the powerful iconographic theme of the bull sports, it is sometimes victorious over humans, as in CMS II.6 39 and 40. This is in strict contrast to the Master of Animals icon where the human is always in control. The hound and the stag, though known in earlier arts to the east, are not preeminently attendants to the Master. It appears that their regular use in this role is a Minoan innovation, thus giving enhanced importance to the predator and prey of the hunt or the animal attack. A whole repertoire of animal action poses like the flying gallop, flying leap, reverse twist, and contorted poses, was created by Minoan artists to render these scenes where the predator might be an animal, fantastic creature, or a human warrior-hunter (see PINI 1985 on the lion attack; MARINATOS 1990 on the symbolism of the lion hunt; MORGAN 1995 on the parallels between men and animals; THOMAS 1999 on the Mycenaean lion; and MÜLLER 2000 on the Lion Master). The agrimi is the Cretan wild goat, indigenous to the island and much depicted in Minoan art, and has thus replaced the goat or ibex of the East (see also HILLER 2001). The dolphin belongs to the many depictions of the sea and sea creatures that help differentiate Aegean art from the Egyptian and Mesopotamian traditions. The dolphin is also an untamed creature and a swift predator of the sea.

In summary, three of the Aegean Masters have a specifically Aegean identity by virtue of their attendant animals, the Minoan genius, agrimi, and dolphin, while seven of the Masters are linked to the world of the hunt and the animal attack through the predator animals, the griffin, the lion, the hound, and the dolphin as well as the prey animals, the wild agrimi and the stag.
The Identity of the Master

Turning from the examination of the attendants of the Master to the depiction of the Master himself, we have already seen in the above examples that the Master is regularly shown as a muscled man in Minoan male dress of tight cinch belt, possibly with a brief kilt, and with the hair often tightly coiffured in rounded shapes. However, the Master is sometimes seen differently portrayed differently as examples in Figs 10–15 show.

Fig. 10. Early Master forms (hippopotamus ivory stamp cylinder, excavated at Trapeza [CMS II.1 442b])

In this early seal, the classic form of the Master of Animals is clear with the antithetical group of two felines flanking a male figure, who holds out his arms over them. The body shape of the Master is simplified, as are other depictions of the barely clothed male figures in this period. Compare the Master forms in other early seals, CMS II.1 105b and 469.

Fig. 11. Masters as robed male figures (blue-gray hematite cylinder seal, acquired [CMS X 268])

The rolled design of the cylinder seal allows for two interconnected antithetical groups, the animals at the tree of life as centered in the drawing and the Master of Animals with a Griffin Master holding by a leash (see Figs 19, 25, 39, 42) in each hand two griffins rampant elevated addorsed. The Griffin Master here is clothed in the diagonal robe that is a special dress for important males, as with the high-status figures in Figs 39, 44, and 45.

Fig. 12. Master as warrior-hunter (light brown banded agate lentoid, acquired 1931 [CMS VI 313])

The Lion Master here wears a straight gown or tunic covering his body to the knees and thus giving a distinctly different shape to the Minoan cinched-in waist. He also wears the boar-tusk helmet of the Mycenaean warrior and hunter. In the field above is a cloak knot (sacral knot), a symbol regularly seen carried in procession with the double axe as in CMS II.7 7 or placed beside the figure of eight shield and weapons as in CMS I 219 and II.7 5. It is also used symbolically in seals with animal subjects, a bull as in CMS XII 268, lions as in CMS I 54 and VI 364, and, most significantly, a lion successful in the hunt and carrying an agrimi in its mouth as in CMS VII 125. In other animal examples it is paired with the figure of eight shield, as beside the bull as in CMS XIII 32 and 33, or beside the double axe, as with the bull head in CMS XI 259. It now seems clear from the newly available seal examples that the cloak knot is the rolled and folded version of the cloak worn by warriors in procession in CMS II.6 11 and V Sup3 394. More work needs to be done to tease out the full meaning of all these overlapping warrior-hunter-cloak-weapon-animal-predator-prey links, but it is at least clear that the Master participates fully in the associations.

Fig. 13. Master as genius (meteorite lentoid, excavated Mycenae [CMS I 172])

The Lion Master here is a fantastic creature, the Minoan genius, which at other times is shown as the attendant animal. In Fig. 27 the genius is a Hound Master. This deliberate layering of meaning by the substitution of one figure for another is a very powerful tool in the Aegean glyptic artist’s repertoire, allowing another set of associations to work within the confines of the original motif (CROWLEY 2010).
Fig. 14. Master as hybrid human (hematite lentoid, acquired Cyprus [CMS VII 126])

The Hound Master here is a hybrid human, a genius man, created by the fusion of the upper torso of a genius and the lower torso of a man with cinch waist and wearing a kilt. The attendant animals are shown only as protomes, a compositional device that allows more detail of the upper animal bodies to be shown within the small compass of the seal face. Compare the winged-man hybrid as Master in CMS V Sup1A 123.

Fig. 15. Master as Lord (green lapis lacedaimonius lentoid, acquired Crete [CMS V 201])

Here the Master is the expected muscled male with coiffured hair and he has two special attendants, a genius carrying his ewer and an agrimi with wings. Having different creatures is a variation seen also in Fig. 30 and is not unusual, whereas the Master figure is atypical in that he is not standing on the ground but within double horns, signifying exalted status as a Lord, a deity. Further, he is not holding out his arms in power over his attendants but instead flexes his arms and places his hands to his chest, as also in Figs 5, 18, and 25, in the distinctive gesture of the Mighty Lord. Thus, the identity of the Master and the Mighty Lord are brought together in one striking image. This deliberate layering of meaning by coalescing two pieces of standard iconography, termed duality, doubles the impact of the image since both meanings are projected to the viewer (CROWLEY 2010). Another powerful example of duality at work is found in the Knossos sealing CMS II.8 256, this time with a Mistress of Animals figure. A Staff Lady is seen above a scale mountain in the “appearing on high” position, but at the same time she is a Lion Mistress because of the attendant lions rampant flanking the mountain. This deft manipulation of images and meanings through duality and substitution (as in Fig. 13) is one of the clearest indicators we have that the Late Minoan artists were working with a very sophisticated iconography and that the Minoan viewer was cognizant of all its intricacies.

So, the Aegean Master takes many forms. His most frequent portrayal is as a muscled male in Minoan dress, even in late seals found on the Mainland. However, he can also be a Mycenaean warrior, a genius or a hybrid human (see SIMANDIRAKI-GRIMSHAW, this volume), a robed Griffin Lord or the Mighty Lord. If the Minoan male and Mycenaean warrior-hunter are indeed mortals, then they are among the elite of their society, representing the best and the bravest (for hunting as an elite activity in later prehistoric west-central Europe, see ARNOLD, this volume). The other Masters are at an even more elevated level since, as creatures of fantasy, they belong to the spirit world and, as Lords, to the realm of the gods (LANGDON, this volume, looks at similar overlapping identities in Iron Age Greece). Certainly all these portrayals are specifically Aegean and testify that the Master was happily domiciled in Bronze Age Crete and Greece.

Aegean Masters: Iconographic Detail and Innovation

As noted above, the most popular representations of the Aegean Master are those with lions or hounds as animal attendants. We use these to examine the particular aspects of iconographic variation and detail of animal poses and how the Master exerts his power, remembering that variation in subject matter and artistic detail is the stock in trade of the glyptic artist who uses it to make each seal unique, a true signature for its owner.

Fig. 16. Lion Master (green lapis lacedaimonius lentoid, acquired Crete [CMS XI 177])

The Master holds lions rampant. Compare the rampant poses in Figs 5, 7, 11, 12, 15, 17–19, 26, 27, and 30.
Fig. 17. Lion Master (gray/white porphyry [burnt], acquired [CMS XI 257])

The Master holds his arms out over lions rampant, their forepaws on Minoan incurved altars. The “arms-out” pose is the most frequently used means of showing the Master’s power, seen in Figs 1–4, 6–10, 20–24, while a similar use of the altars is seen in stylized form in Fig. 11, in CMS I 46, and on the Lion Gate at Mycenae.

Fig. 18. Lion Master (stone lentoid, acquired “Knossos” [CMS III 361])

The Master, hands to chest, stands between lions rampant addorsed. The Master’s power is signified by the chest gesture of the Mighty Lord as in Figs 5, 15, and 25. Examples of the addorsed pose are seen in Figs 3, 8, 10, 11, 14, 24, 26, and 27.

Fig. 19. Lion Master (clay sealing, excavated Knossos [CMS II.8 249])

The Master holds on a leash lions rampant gardant. The use of a leash/collar is seen in Figs 11, 25, 39, 41, and 42. The gardant pose is seen in Fig. 23.

Fig. 20. Lion Master (clay sealing, excavated Knossos [CMS II.8 250])

The Master holds his arms out with lions suspended. Other attendants shown suspended clear of the ground are in Figs 1, 4, 10, and 21–24.

Fig. 21. Lion Master (agate lentoid, excavated Elatia [CMS V Sup2 113])

The master holds his arms out with lions suspended inverted regardant. Other regardant heads are seen in Figs 1, 10, 12–14, 22, 24, 26, and 27 and inverted poses in Figs 1, 10, 22, and 24.

Fig. 22. Lion Master (agate lentoid, excavated Prosymna [CMS I Sup 27])

The Master holds his arms out over lions suspended, one inverted regardant.

Fig. 23. Lion Master (red carnelian lentoid, purchased 1873 [CMSXI 301])

The Master holds lion protomes inverted gardant. The unusual composition holds echoes of the carrying-the-catch pose of the successful hunter using a carrying pole in CMS XI 37.

Fig. 24. Lion Master (agate cylinder seal, excavated Thebes [CMS V 675])

The Master holds his arms out over lions suspended regardant, one addorsed.

Fig. 25. Hound Master (clay sealing, excavated Knossos [CMS II.8 248])

The Master, hands to chest, holds on a leash hounds sejant (damage?) erect. The static sejant pose is found in Fig. 13 while the other static pose, statant, is seen in Figs 6 and 8. For the head, the erect pose is seen in Figs 14 and 30. The Master here is shown in the naturalistic portrayal typical of LM I art, and, in keeping with this, the focus composition is not used but instead the group is placed in an outdoor setting, perhaps a mountainside, as indicated by the rocky ground on the preserved left section.

Fig. 26. Hound Master (clay sealing, excavated Knossos [CMS II.8 253])

The Master stands between hounds rampant addorsed regardant.
Fig. 27. Hound Master (clay sealing, excavated Mycenae [CMS I 161])

The Master stands between hounds rampant addorsed regardant erect. The genius is always rendered in full profile; so he cannot stretch his arms out in control, as is so conveniently the case with the frontal upper torso rendition of the human male. Here he holds one hound by the muzzle.

Fig. 28. Genius Master (rock crystal lentoid, acquired “Phigalia” [CMS XI 36])

The Master holds geniuses by the tongue. In Fig. 2 it is by the ear.

Fig. 29. Genius Master (carnelian amygdaloid, acquired Hydra [CMS VII 95])

The Master of Animals antithetical group where the animal attendant is centered and the Master figure is doubled is a known variant from the earliest times.

Fig. 30. Griffin Lion Master (steatite lentoid, excavated Knossos [CMS II.3 167])

The Master holds his arms out over a griffin rampant elevated erect and a lion rampant. The wing pose favored for griffin attendants is elevated as also in Figs 8 and 11. This composition is the variant where two different animals are shown as in Fig. 15.

The lentoid is the most popular seal shape in the Late Bronze Age and, with its circle border constraining the design, it is the most suitable seal shape for the Master of Animals designs. The antithetical group sits within the lentoid circle comfortably, and the heraldic poses can then be manipulated to fit within the confines of the seal perimeter while at the same time providing the variation needed to create a unique motif of identity. In almost all representations of the Aegean Master of Animals, the artist omits any background. This could have been a continuation of the compositional detail from the Near East, where background was also eschewed on the cylinder seal design, or it could have been the decision of the Aegean artist who was always at pains to preserve the clarity of the design and so regularly chose a blank background. However, in LM I Crete, despite the evident interest in the representation of the natural world in other contexts, it is notable that the Master of Animals motif rarely incorporates details of trees, flowers, or rocky ground, staples of the naturalistic landscapes in seal designs. The focused compositional technique appears to have been a deliberate choice to highlight the figures and place them outside space and time, suggesting supernatural identity. For the Master himself, the pose is the combination pose of the paradigm, and it does not seem to matter whether he faces to the right or to the left.

However, it is in the variation of iconographic detail of how the Master exerts his power over his attendant animals that the Aegean artists show their complete familiarity with the Master image. The Aegean love of animal subjects provided great scope for portraying details of body and pose (see YOUNGER 1988 for an extensive survey with schematic drawings of animal poses), and with the attendants of the Master all the expected heraldic poses for animal bodies were used – statant, sejant, rampant, addorsed, and inverted – but a new one, suspended, was added to the repertoire. The rampant and suspended poses were favored over the static poses of statant and sejant, as if it were important to show the Master’s complete control over even strong and active attendants. Wings were shown in the preferred elevated pose. The normal head pose in line with the body was regularly used, as were the gardant and regardant poses. A new pose, erect, where the head was stretched back to put the nose (or beak) vertical in the air, is also seen. In all, the glyptic artists’ familiarity with the focus composition and their facility with heraldic poses as well as their innovative use of new poses suggest that the Master of Animals repertoire was well ensconced in Aegean glyptic design and had gained more popularity in LB II–III (KRZYSZKOWSKA 2005:204–205, 211, 253, 256). These glyptic designs can be compared with
examples from the other media (CHITTENDEN 1947; YOUNGER 1995b:184–187). It remains now for us to look for comparisons of human power over animals in other Aegean images.

Parallels with the Aegean Mistress of Animals

The Aegean Mistress of Animals is well represented on the seals in the typical antithetical group motif, seen in Figs 31–34, 37, and 38, as well as in a newly created variant, the Mistress with Animal, Figs 35 and 36.

Fig. 31. Griffin Mistress (veined agate lentoid, excavated Ialysos, Grave 20 [CMS V 654])

This paradigmatic case depicts the Mistress in Minoan dress, bare breasted and with a flounced skirt, in the Aegean combination pose. In this particular example she is wearing a double-horn bow (snake frame) hat topped by a double axe, and she raises her arms to her headdress and thus also over her attendants, griffins statant elevated. For other Griffin Mistresses, see CMS II.3 63 and 276, V Sup3 72, VI 314 and 317, XIII 39, and perhaps the Throne Room at Knossos (but see HITCHCOCK, this volume, who offers other possibilities).

Fig. 32. Lion Mistress (carnelian lentoid, excavated Mycenae, Grave 515 [CMS I 144])

The Mistress is in similar pose and clothing to the Mistress in Fig. 31. The attendant lions are rampant. For other Lion Mistresses, see CMS I 145 and 374, II.8 256, IV 295, V Sup1B 195, VI 315 and 316, X 242, and XI 112.

Fig. 33. Hound Mistress (clay sealing, excavated Knossos, Palace Grand Staircase [CMS II.8 254])

The Mistress wears a very elaborate skirt and hair coiffure while the attendant hounds are rampant addorsed regardant. Their mouths are open, thus allowing the Mistress to show her power over them by holding their jaws. See also CMS VII 118 for a Lion Hound Mistress.

Fig. 34. Bull Mistress (clay sealing, excavated Pylos, Palace southwest slope [CMS I.379])

This late sealing has a rare image of a Bull Mistress and unusually a pair of geniuses to accompany her.

Fig. 35. Mistress with Animal, Agrimi Mistress (clay sealing, excavated Kato Zakro, House A, Room VII [CMS II.7 23])

A regular variant of the Mistress of Animals, termed the “Mistress with Animal,” shows a Mistress with one attendant as with the agrimi here and the ram in Fig. 36. The animal is always stretched up rampant addorsed with the upper body and head resting over the Mistress’s shoulder, sometimes obscuring her face. Here the animal is identified as a juvenile agrimi because of its body shape, long ears, and short tail but absence of distinctive horns. Many of the animals listed as quadrupeds in Fig. 36 below may also thus be agrimia. A possible full antithetical group Agrimi Mistress may be the damaged sealing CMS II.8 255.

Fig. 36. Mistress with Animal, Ram Mistress (carnelian lentoid, excavated Vapheio, Tholos [CMS I 221])

As in Fig. 35, the Mistress wears a frilled skirt. The ram is held upright resting its head on the Mistress’ shoulder. For other Ram Mistresses, see CMS I 220, V Sup1A 369, V Sup3 38, VI 322, and XII 239. There are also 12 examples that clearly represent the Mistress with Animal motif but where
The Aegean Master of Animals: The Evidence of the Seals, Signets, and Sealings

The animal cannot be securely identified and so is simply termed a quadruped, as in CMS I 222, II.3 86, 117, and 287, II.4 35 and 111, III 359, V Sup1A 130, VI 323, VIII 144, XII 276a, and XIII D5.

Fig. 37. Bird Mistress (green jasper lentoid, acquired [CMS VII 134])

The Mistress holds the large birds by the wing feathers as they arch away from her in flight with wings displayed. The hybrid birdwoman as in CMS II.3 4 and II.7 127 should also be considered here. For other Bird Mistresses, see CMS I 233b, II.3 72, and IX 154.

Fig. 38. Dolphin Mistress (carnelian lentoid with gold setting, excavated Aidonia, Chamber Tomb 8, dromos [CMS V Sup1B 116])

The Mistress reaches to touch her dolphins posed characteristically, one leaping up and one diving down. For other Dolphin Mistresses, see CMS I 34, II.3 279 and 327, and VI 333.

The Mistress has six of the eight animal attendants, as does the Master, and with a similar profile of usage. The griffin, lion, and hound are the most popular while the agrimi and dolphin are less so, and the bull is rare. The two animals missing from the Mistress corpus are the stag, that wild animal of the forest, and the genius, who is a protector of warriors and a successful hunter himself. These genius images suggest that he is a spirit intermediary or protector of males, while other images of the Mistress and the Lady (see below) suggest that the monkey may be the helper in the female sphere, but space precludes an analysis of these associations here. The Mistress does also have a ram attendant that so far is not known from the Master’s entourage repertoire, and the many examples of the Bird Mistress are not paralleled in seals with a Bird Master (though a kilted Bird Master is known from a gold piece in the Aigina Treasure). It would seem that the Mistress also has care of domestic animals and that her wild realm is the sky. The poses of the terrestrial attendants too show a differentiation. For the Mistress the favored poses are statant and rampant with no animals suspended or inverted. She does not hold her animals on a leash. It would seem that the Mistress exerts her control over her attendants in a calmer way than the Master, whose aggressive, even violent, controlling action is notable (for Mistress comparisons, see YOUNGER 1995b:182–184). It was once thought that the Mistress was the dominant figure in the Aegean and that the Master was a somewhat shadowy pairing. However, the combined evidence of the seals and sealings gives the Master almost the same number of representations as the Mistress, and the parallels and nonparallels between them are striking.

Comparisons with Other Male Authority Figures

The final task in exploring the iconography of the Master in Aegean glyptic is to compare him with other powerful male figures. Caution is needed in interpreting these as priests, kings, or gods (LAFFINEUR 2001; NIEMEIER 1989; THOMAS – WEDDE 2001; YOUNGER 1995b). However, the author has identified certain of these images by their consistent iconography, termed them “Lords,” and argued that they are male gods (see CROWLEY 2008, where the female figure in similar circumstances is termed “Lady” and is interpreted as a goddess). The group of Lords named by their animal familiars is of particular interest to our investigation of Master types.

Fig. 39. Griffin Lord (jasper lentoid, excavated Vaphio Tholos [CMS I 223])

The Lord wears the diagonal robe as seen in Figs 11, 44, and 45 and restrains his magnificent griffin familiar statant elevated regardant erect by a leash tied around the griffin’s neck with a bow and
tassel. See also CMS I 285 and 309, II.3 328, II.6 29, V Sup3 245a, VI 321, and CMS II.3 199 and V Sup1B 137 where the Lord drives a griffin chariot.

Fig. 40. Lion Lord (lapis lazuli lentoid with gold mounting [CMS II.3 24])

The Lord, wearing a round hat, controls his lion familiar statant by holding its mane. See also CMS I 133, 280 and 512, II.3 27, 221, and 329, II.6 36, II.7 27, II.8 237, V Sup1B 77, VI 306, VII 169, IX 114, X 135, XII 207, and CMS II.8 193 and V 585 where the Lord drives a lion chariot.

Fig. 41. Hound Lord (chalcedony cushion with gold mounting [CMS II.3 52])

The Lord, with companion, holds his hound familiar statant on an elaborate leash and collar. See also CMS II.8 136, V Sup1A 119 and 174, VI 325 and X 161.

Fig. 42. Bull Lord (mottled agate lentoid, acquired Crete [CMS VII 102])

The Lord holds his bull familiar statant on a leash tied around the horns. See also CMS II 509b, V Sup1A 173, VI 304, 305, and 326, VII 177 and X 259.

Fig. 43. Agrimi Lord (banded agate signet, excavated Avdou, rock-cut tomb XX [CMS VI 285])

The variant depiction has the Lord, with companion, driving his agrimi chariot much as the Griffin and Lion Lords drive their chariots. See also CMS I 199, II.3 33, and V Sup1B 88.

Fig. 44. Bird Lord (green jasper amygdaloid, acquired Knossos [CMS VI 318])

A rare example gives us a Lord wearing the diagonal robe holding a bird.

Fig. 45. Dolphin Lord (clay sealing, excavated Knossos Room of the Stone Drum [CMS II.8 258])

The Lord, clothed in a diagonal robe and carrying a mace, is followed by his dolphin familiar diving down in a characteristic pose.

The familiar is the Lord’s companion but also gives him identity. Note how he often holds his familiar on a leash like a pet, a theme discussed by Karen Foster, who allows the significance of the leash/collar but sees royal connections rather than divine (FOSTER 2008). The genius does not add the role of Lord’s familiar to his other roles of ewer carrier and warrior-hunter. Instead, he is able at times to be the substitute for the Bull Lord as in CMS VI 304 and 305. However, all the other familiars who are the companions of the Lords are the same animals who attend the Masters (Griffin, Lion, Hound, Bull, Agrimi, and Dolphin and Bird, if one takes the non-glyptic example). Similar parallels exist between Mistress figures and the Lady goddesses. The closeness of the many parallels suggests that the Lord and the Master figures and the Lady and Mistress figures are simply different ways of showing the same supernatural being and his or her links with the animal world.

The Master in His Aegean Persona

The many and varied representations on the seals, this most endemic Aegean art form, are the clearest indicators of the Master’s happy domicile in the West. He carries forward much of the iconography of earlier Near Eastern motifs, but he has also acquired distinctively Aegean characteristics. He has new Aegean names since he has gained new Aegean animal attendants, the Minoan genius, the Cretan agrimi, the dolphin, hound, and stag. His metamorphosis into the athletic Minoan male is seen in most portrayals, but he may also be a Mycenaean warrior-hunter, a genius, a hybrid human, or deity Lord.
identity through his animal attendants is paralleled by other male authority figures like the Griffin, Lion, Hound, Bull, Agrimi, and Dolphin Lords who, it is argued, are male deities. The parallels are so close that the case can be made that they have the same identity. The Aegean Master is a powerful spirit, even a deity, the controller of the wild animals of the chase and the animal attack, both predator and prey.

It is a pity that the absence of textual gloss prevents us from calling the Master by his Aegean name, or elaborating on just what is the nature of his control over the animal world or the full significance of the parallels with Mistresses and Lords. We must also recognize that the analysis of these images, particularly those on the seals, is still in the early stages of probing the meaning of this sophisticated polyvalent iconography. However, the images themselves declare that the Master of Animals has found a home in the Bronze Age Aegean and that he has taken on a distinctly Aegean persona.

Acknowledgments

I thank Walter Müller, Director of the Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel for his kind permission to use the drawings of the seal designs as the illustrations here.

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................................. 7

BETTINA ARNOLD – DEREK B. COUNTS
Prolegomenon: The Many Masks of the Master of Animals ............................................................. 9

SARAH COSTELLO
The Mesopotamian “Nude Hero”: Context and Interpretations ............................................................. 25

JONATHAN MARK KENOYER
Master of Animals and Animal Masters in the Iconography of the Indus Tradition ............................. 37

BILLIE JEAN COLLINS
Animal Mastery in Hittite Art and Texts ................................................................................................. 59

JANICE L. CROWLEY
The Aegean Master of Animals: The Evidence of the Seals, Signets and Sealings ............................... 75

ANNA SIMANDIRAKI-GRIMSHAW
Minoan Animal-Human Hybridity ........................................................................................................ 93

LOUISE A. HITCHCOCK
The Big Nowhere: A Master of Animals in the Throne Room at Knossos? ............................................ 107

SUSAN LANGDON
Where the Wild Things Were: The Greek Master of Animals in Ecological Perspective ..................... 119

DEREK B. COUNTS
Divine Symbols and Royal Aspirations:
The Master of Animals in Iron Age Cypriote Religion ........................................................................ 135

MARK GARRISON
The Heroic Encounter in the Visual Arts of Ancient Iraq and Iran *ca.* 1000–500 BC ....................... 151

BRYAN K. HANKS
Agency, Hybridity, and Transmutation: Human-Animal Symbolism and
Mastery among Early Eurasian Steppe Societies .................................................................................... 175

BETTINA ARNOLD
Beasts of the Forest and Beasts of the Field: Animal Sacrifice, Hunting Symbolism,
and the Master of Animals in Pre-Roman Iron Age Europe ................................................................ 193
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANTHONY TUCK</td>
<td>Mistress and Master: The Politics of Iconography in Pre-Roman Central Italy</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARTIN GUGGISBERG</td>
<td>The Mistress of Animals, the Master of Animals: Two Complementary or Oppositional Religious Concepts in Early Celtic Art?</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PETER S. WELLS</td>
<td>Meaning in Motif and Ornament: The Face Between the Creatures in Mid-First-Millennium AD Temperate Europe</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td></td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Contributors</td>
<td></td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>