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Andrew Shapland. *Human-Animal Relations in Bronze Age Crete: A History Through Objects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022, 290pp., 59 illustr., hbk, ISBN 978-1-009-15154-2)

This book is a wonderful contribution to the field of Human-Animal Studies and human-animal relations in the past. For the Bronze Age Aegean, nonhuman animals and human-animal relations have received some attention (e.g. Halstead & Isaakidou, 2011; Harris & Hamilakis, 2014; Pappi & Isaakidou, 2015; Recht & Morris, 2021; papers in Laffineur & Palaima, 2021), but this is the first full-length monograph dedicated to the topic with this approach, and the first to focus specifically on Crete. Arguably, the book's importance lies just as much in its contribution to the study of Bronze Age Crete more broadly.

The book is organised into chapters addressing the theoretical approach, history

of research, and a range of specific practices related to nonhuman animals. Thus, Chapter 1 focuses on the history of research on Bronze Age Crete and how that history has shaped and continues to shape the discourse today. Importantly, this includes the by now well-known narratives of peace-loving Minoans and their association with early European 'civilization' as the base of modern Europe. Implied in these narratives is a (hierarchical) nature-culture dichotomy in which nonhuman animals are placed on the nature side and often reduced to symbols or passive objects that humans do things to. This divide is one that Shapland aims to challenge throughout the book because it prevents us from fully

understanding and appreciating human-animal relations and how they impact social changes. The chapter ends with an outline of the chapters to follow, including a short introduction to some of the theoretical and analytical concepts employed in the book.

The theoretical approach is discussed in detail in Chapter 2, 'Looking'. The title of the chapter seems to be a reference to the main focus of the book: the various types of art or material culture depicting non-human animals from Bronze Age Crete. With it also comes an implication of the gaze, not Edward Said's (1978) western gaze or Laura Mulvey's (1975) male gaze, but the human gaze and objectification of nonhuman animals. Despite the stated focus on visual evidence, much to the author's credit, other types of evidence have been carefully researched and are integrated throughout (from faunal remains and administrative records, but also, for example, comparative case studies and work from ethnoarchaeology).

The chapter starts with a discussion of art, the interpretation of ancient art, and some of the effects of placing ancient material culture in museum displays. Shapland argues that a certain level of 'disnification', or commodification has happened to Minoan art. Along with traditional analyses that often treat Minoan images of nonhuman animals as naturalistic (and realistic) 'animal studies', this has led to a focus on identifying species in a purely Linnean classification system, and a reduction of animals to symbols or objects. Instead, research broadly defined as within the field of Human-Animal Studies attempts to decentre humans and put greater emphasis on the *relations* and interaction between humans and other animals, sometimes employing flat ontologies (i.e. placing human, nonhuman animals, and things on equal footing). The book does not exactly employ a flat

ontology, but it does tap into these developments, and Shapland is especially inspired by the work of scholars such as John Berger, Philippe Descola, Erica Fudge, and Bruno Latour. The concept of 'affordances' is adopted from Gibson (1979), 'highlighting what [animals] do rather than what they are' (p. 59). Similarly, Latour's idea of 'collectives' (a concept akin to Deleuze's 'assemblages' or Ingold's 'meshwork') is effectively employed throughout the book as, for example, 'animal collective', 'mortuary collective', 'local collective', or 'palatial collective' (e.g. Latour, 2005). Although not explicitly labelled as such, materiality is also a concern throughout, and most appropriately so, considering the centrality of objects to the analysis. These and the other analytical concepts introduced here and in the previous chapter provide the basis for the statement that 'Naturalistic animal depictions were not a reflection of the nature-loving Minoans' worldview but rather the material trace of a palatial collective centred on Knossos' (p. 63). This statement nicely exemplifies what I would consider the greatest contribution of the book: its analysis and acknowledgement of the impact of nonhuman animals on social, ideological, and economic developments on the island.

From Chapter 3 onwards, we move to the discussion of specific types of human-animal relations or 'animal collectives' and their importance for 'palatial collectives'. Fittingly, we start with perhaps the most socially and economically impactful type of interaction for Bronze Age Crete: herding. The key role of sheep in a wool industry that reached astronomical levels in the Final Palace period according to the Knossos Linear B tablets is outlined. The low visibility of sheep in visual media (glyptics, figurines, frescoes, ceramics, etc.) stands in stark contrast to their economic role, and to that of cattle. Cattle, another

herded (but also hunted) animal, are instead so prominent in the iconography that they have become closely associated with Minoan and especially Knossian identity both in the public imagination and in modern scholarship, from the famous relief fresco and stone rhyta of bovine heads through bull leaping and sacrifice scenes. Although osteoarchaeological and other evidence confirms that they were working animals ploughing fields and providing a range of secondary and primary products, like dairy, meat, skin, and horns, these aspects are barely borne out in the objects depicting cattle. Full body renderings include both bulls and cows, but many of the most evocative and repetitively illustrated scenes, such as those of bull leaping, depict male cattle. This has led to a slip in language which also occasionally happens in this book, where bovine heads, such as the stunning serpentinite rhyton from the Little Palace at Knossos or the numerous frontally-rendered ‘bucrania’ on sealstones, are labelled bulls. There is a short discussion of ‘domestication’ towards the beginning of the chapter; but, given the clearly complex relations between humans and cattle (the latter not easily categorised as either purely wild or purely domesticated based on the imagery), it would have been interesting to offer here a more in-depth problematization of these concepts. Nevertheless, the sections on ‘domestic collectives’ and ‘palatial collectives’ outline very neatly the changes in relations in terms of herding from the Neolithic through to the end of the Bronze Age.

The fourth chapter concerns the last stage of human-animal relations: butchery. Cattle are again centre-stage here, and practices of hunting, killing, slaughtering, sacrificing, consuming, and displaying nonhuman animals are closely intertwined. As acknowledged by Shapland, a clear classification among these categories is

difficult and not particularly useful for understanding human-animal relations in Bronze Age Crete. Although perhaps a bit too reluctant to identify scenes of sacrifice (interpreting scenes of animals trussed on a table such as that on the Ayia Triada sarcophagus and a number of sealstones as merely part of butchering practices is, to me, too reductive and denies the saturation of symbols that are usually associated with them), he chooses instead to emphasize another aspect: the display and curation of animal bodies and body parts. This is an insightful analysis and understanding of a continued engagement with nonhuman animals after their death. Here, the materiality of the relations really comes to the fore, with the meshwork of animal, animal parts, bones, (composite) objects, material, human, and archaeological context (burial, palace, peak sanctuary, etc.) playing together and against each other. An interesting idea here is that animal heads that might have been displayed, either permanently or as part of specific events, could consist not only of the skull itself, but also of the skin and flesh, possibly even with added elements. This is to some extent supported by images on sealstones, which often depict a complete animal head rather than only a skull.

Hunting (Chapter 5) is an aspect of human-animal relations that was evidently a key concern in Bronze Age Crete, at least on an ideological and political level. As Shapland notes, at least in the Bronze Age, hunting was probably not only or even primarily for subsistence purposes. In the iconography, there is a preponderance of hunting scenes—both humans hunting animals like cattle, deer, agrimi, and lions, but also animals hunting other (non-human) animals. Many scenes, especially on sealstones, are abbreviated hunting scenes: for example, there are scenes of an animal on its own being hit by a spear.

Perhaps, as Shapland argues, more scenes than previously recognised could be interpreted as such, but there are also fascinating complexities with regard to what species are depicted as hunting and hunted, as well as inter-species dynamics and hybridization. An exciting aspect that is only briefly touched upon is that of interactions between humans and *agrimi* (an indigenous ovicaprid species) in particular scenes that appear to depict *agrimi* with a female figure. Certainly, a more complex relation that goes beyond hunting is represented in these scenes, whether or not one chooses to interpret the female figure as human or supernatural.

Shapland is rightly cautious of understanding these and other depictions of animals as naturalistic 'animal studies'. However, they do frequently suggest real-life observations of nonhuman animal behaviour, and thus imply actual interaction and understanding of these animals. Prey animals are often shown fleeing in the conventional flying gallop, or as reacting to being wounded with a turned head, collapsing legs, or even tongue sticking out of the mouth. While such details may seem trivial, they demonstrate a deep knowledge of animal behaviour and observation of aspects such as animal experience and pain.

Importantly, this chapter includes discussions of fowling, and of the use of animal bodies for military-related products. Evocative large and medium-sized mammals tend to receive the most attention, and are perhaps assumed to make a more prestigious catch, so it is refreshing to see that human-bird relations are also examined. The visual evidence is not as prominent as that for mammals, but nevertheless indicates that fowling was a recurrent practice.

Today, we are often distanced from products obtained from animal bodies. But for the Minoans, links were explicitly

acknowledged, for example, in the emphasis on the dappled patterns of the hide used for so-called figure of 8-shields or in the visibility of boar tusks maintained in boar's tusk helmets. The power and value of these objects may have partly resided precisely in the connection with the animals from which they were obtained. Finally, this chapter also carefully situates nonhuman animals spatially in the Cretan landscape and its diverse human presences at palaces, towns, villages, cemeteries, peak sanctuaries, and so on.

Aquatic creatures also tend to be overlooked, but Chapter 6 on fishing very much makes up for this. Bronze Age iconography from Crete is replete with sea animals, most evidently in the famous Marine Style pottery, characteristic of the Neopalatial period. Dolphins, fish, cuttlefish, octopuses, shells, sponges, crabs, and triton shells decorate vessels, frescoes, and sealstones, sometimes accompanied by topographical markers such as seaweed, rocks, and corals to denote an underwater scene. The background colour of frescoes and the colour and material of sealstones may have served a similar purpose. Shapland outlines some of the evidence for various types of fishing and gathering of aquatic resources, including line and hook fishing, fishing from a boat at night, traps, and spearing. Beyond consumption, some animals were used in production (e.g. murex shells for purple dye or crushed shells in construction). Like the iconography of hunting, Shapland interprets the images of marine creatures as not those of mundane or everyday activities, but as part of the 'palatial collective'. Nowhere is this better illustrated than with the palatial Marine Style pottery, which also becomes increasingly schematic over time. The curation, transformation, and play with material of objects shaped like aquatic animals further reflects this,

with for example painted and modified shells found in the Temple Repositories in the palace of Knossos, or stone rhyta shaped like a triton shell.

Chapter 7, 'Collecting', covers a wide range of animal species present in the visual evidence from Crete but not yet discussed in much detail; these are labelled 'exotic' animals, but this is a bit of a misnomer. Since it is intended to refer to animals brought to the island by humans, by this criterion, any previously discussed species are also exotic. Many of these species represent types of relations only briefly encountered up to this point—for example (working) companions, such as dogs and horses, dangerous, hybrid, or supernatural creatures such as lions, leopards, griffins, and dragons, and prestige material from animal bodies such as ostrich eggshell and elephant or hippo ivory. Some of these are understood as indexing a world beyond Crete, especially at a time of intensive 'internationalism', and they are again particularly dominant in the 'palatial collective'.

In the conclusion, Shapland neatly circles back to the discussion of the first few chapters concerning 'the naturalistic spirit' of art in Bronze Age Crete, and summarizes his ideas about the various 'collectives' encountered and their diachronic developments, animal affordances, and how 'animal things' act as indices (for example, to previous events or to the animal itself).

The book is well-researched, well-illustrated, nicely laid out, and written in a clear and eloquent style. I highly recommend it, both for human-animal relations in Bronze Age Crete, and for a deeper understanding of the developments on that island during this formative period. I also hope that it inspires further research with an even greater emphasis on the complex interactions between humans and other animals, including aspects of gender, ancient knowledge of other animals,

nonhuman animal experiences, and non-human animals as social actors.

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