

May 28, 1944

Dear Dr. Kober,

I have before me your very interesting letter regarding the long pointed cup and what you postulate should be its significance regarding the kind of cattle with which it is connected.

Your trust in me, however, is in this case misplaced. I simply do not know. Did the Minoans have castrated bulls? On castration of this animal consult the article Rind in RE Suppl. VII, 1176 - 1177 and the literature mentioned there.

For human eunuchism the artikel Eunuchen in RE suppl. III yields nothing; it deals chiefly with castration for slavery purposes. For castrated priests you may find some information in Hepding's Attis and in Graillot, Cybele; perhaps also in Showerman's book on the Great Mother.

For Minoan times I am extremely sceptical as to the existence of eunuchized priests. Your analogy of Asiatic cults is of course tempting and occurred to me also. But I know of no representation of eunuchs in Minoan art; except of course what Persson in the book reviewed by me has to say; it seems to me unlikely. The bull cult of the Minoans, if there was such - see Nilsson, Min.Myc. Rel. - seems to me to point precisely in the other direction. Of course, eunuchism on the one hand and the conception of the bull as symbol of fertility can coexist in the same religion; thus the Galloi (see Cumont in RE s.v.) are priests of the Great mother, but in the same sphere we have the taurobolium (Cumont, Pagan Religions etc.) with distinctly the bull uncastrated. Lastly, I cannot see any possible connexion between the pointed cup and the idea of castration, unless perhaps you see in the vessel the receptacle for the blood shed and the genitalia; against this, however, makes the fact that in the Galloi ceremonies the genitalia were buried.

However, be not discouraged; the idea that the cup before the enumeration of the cattle may indicated what you would like to see is appealing. To me the chief difficulty is in our uncertainty as to whether the Minoans did castrate their cattle (by the way: I think castrated animals were not eligible as sacrifice; better look that up in Stengel's Opfergebraeuche - not accessible to me.) Somebody at an agricultural school interested in the history of his subject may be able to help you there.

My sending you the reprint of my review was meant also to reciprocate for your AJA article, which I read with interest and conviction.

A pleasant vacation to you.

Sincerely yours,

This is from Dr. Ernst Reiss; he forgot to sign it.