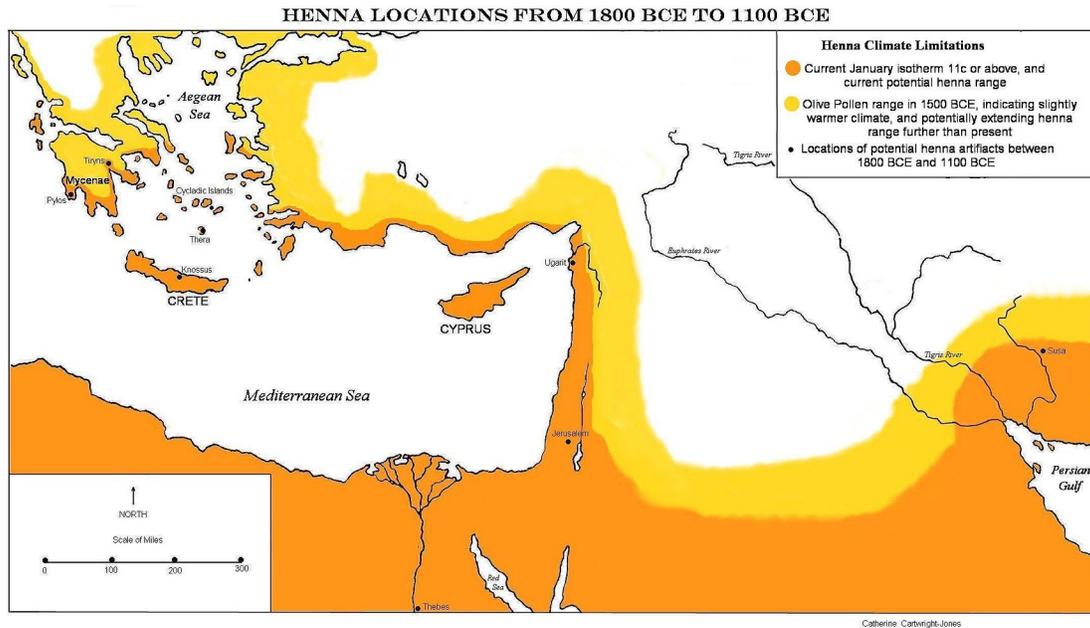


Ancient Sunrise® Henna for Hair Chapter 2, The History of Henna Hair Dye

Part 1: The Evolution and Migration of Henna into Cultural Practices

Section 2: Henna, Astronomy, and the Agro-Ecology of the Mediterranean Bronze Age



Map of the potential range for henna growth in the eastern Mediterranean Bronze Age, orange areas show climate suitable for henna native growth.

The above map is prepared from Bottema's¹ olive pollen data from 1000 BCE, *Quercus Ilex* pollen data from the later Holocene² and current climate data. The orange area indicates a present potential growth range for henna, as established by olive, avocado, lemon and other citrus production, and climate records. In many areas, henna growth would be marginal, only in sheltered areas, and subject to occasional winter kill. Henna will survive an overnight temperature of 6 C, but will not survive a frost. The yellow area on the map shows the zone between the current 3C isotherm and the 3 C isotherm for 1000 BCE derived from Bottema's olive pollen map. This map shows that the Bronze Age climate was warmer than now, and that henna could have grown in the Aegean and east coast of the Mediterranean between 1800 BCE and 1000. The locations of the Ras Shamra texts, Akrotiri paintings and early Biblical writings are all well within the mapped area of Bronze Age henna-friendly climate.

¹ Bottema, S.; "Pollen Proxy Data from Southeastern Europe and the Near East""Evaluation of Climate Proxy Data in Relation to the European Holocene" Paleoclimate Research Volume 6 Special Issue: ESF Project "European Paleoclimate and Man ~ 1" ed. Frenzel Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur Gystav Fischer Verlag 1991

² Watts, Allen, Huntley, Fritz; "Vegetation History and Climate of the Last 15,000 Years at Laghi I Monticchio, Southern Italy" *Quaternary Science Reviews*, Vol 15, pp 113- 132, 1996, Pergamon

Red Cosmetics in the Ancient Aegean Civilizations

The red hand prints on the walls of Çatalhöyük dated around 6000 BCE from Shrine VII.23³ may be linked to the red hand markings on figures of women from the Cycladic Islands around 3000 BCE.⁴ Though these might have represented henna markings on hands, there is insufficient evidence to either confirm or dismiss henna use in that area at that time. The climate during the occupation of Çatalhöyük was warmer than the present period; the people cultivated pistachios, semi-arid zone tree crops which do not tolerate temperatures below 15° F. Henna requires temperatures not fall below 33° F. Henna could have grown in nearby warmer, sheltered areas, but probably not on the inland Turkish plateau. The isotherm during that period was consistent with a henna-possible climate in the nearby Aegean islands as well as to the south on the Levantine coast.

Alkanet is indigenous to the Mediterranean region, and alkanet's use as a reddish-purple dye for wool and wood can be confirmed by the Minoan period. Alkanet will not stain palms and soles readily as henna does. Alkanet requires an extended period of simmering at 140F with alum as a mordant to dye wool (keratin) which excludes alkanet as a functional stain for living skin. There is archeological evidence that by the Minoan period, other red cosmetics such as rouge were made with minium,⁵ a naturally occurring form of lead tetroxide, $Pb^{2+}_2Pb^{4+}O_4$, also known as red lead. This mineral cosmetic would not have been useful for hand and foot markings, but could be what was represented as cheek markings on women in pottery and on wall paintings.

Neolithic red markings on hands and bull iconography at Çatalhöyük may be culturally connected with red hands and bull eco-agricultural symbolism in the Bronze Age eco-agricultural symbolism in the same region, but with a three to four thousand year gap between the two, the subject is moot.

Ancient Egyptian culture, ceremonial life, and belief systems were tied to the annual flooding of the Nile, the influx of water being caused by the monsoonal flows to the south. Water was dispersed naturally through the Nile Delta, and artificially through irrigation canals. Water was a managed resource, independent of localized drought; the fertility of the soil was renewed with the sediment of the floods. The people living along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, presently Greece, coastal Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine, Cyprus and Crete were dependent on rainfall and vulnerable to seasonal drought. Their cultures, ceremonial cycles, and belief systems tied to seasonal but unpredictable amounts of rainfall, with long summer droughts in between the winter rains. The fertility of the land was fragile and there was

³ Özdemir, U. , Neolithic Site of Çatalhöyük, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/131747> accessed Nov 27, 2016

⁴ Getz-Gentle, P 2013. *Personal Styles in Early Cycladic Sculpture*, Wisconsin Studies in Classics p. 21

⁵ Sotiropoulou, S., V. Perdikatsis, Ch. Apostolaki, A.G. Karydas, A. Devetzi, and K. Birtacha. 2010. "Lead pigments and related tools at Akrotiri, Thera, Greece. Provenance and application techniques." *Journal Of Archaeological Science* 37, no. 8: 1830-1840.

no annual flow of sediment to nourish the soil. The coastal Mediterranean soil was thin, rocky, and easily degraded through population pressure.



Terracotta bull-headed rhyton. 1300-1200 BCE. Mycenae, Greece^{6,7}

Baal, the great bull god, was the symbol of the coming of the rains in the eastern Mediterranean, and bull-shaped containers may have been used in seasonal ceremonial actions associated with rain for Bronze Age agriculture.

Wheat agriculture and domestication of cattle and other ruminants began in the Levant in the 10th century BCE, eventually producing the basis for early complex cities such as Çatalhöyük and Jericho. Some theorists believe women may have been largely responsible for the discovery, development, and labor involved in the early grain and dairy agriculture system, based on forensic evidence from bone wear patterns. Dependent on emerging seasonal cycles in the early Holocene following the retreat of the Ice Age, but without a calendar, people, and women in particular, may have looked for and mythologized markers for the progression of the year. Their time keeping was read in the movement of sun, stars, and planets through the night sky. People noted these markers and their coincidence with seasonal growth and maturation of plant life.

The eastern Mediterranean coastal region has three agricultural seasons. There is a three-month season of cool, stormy, rainy winter season begins at the fall equinox, followed by a four and a

⁶ “Ceramics.” Boundless Art History. *Boundless*, 21 Jul. 2015. Retrieved 02 Sep. 2015 from <https://www.boundless.com/art-history/textbooks/boundless-art-history-textbook/aegean-civilizations-5/the-mycenaeans-61/ceramics-326-10875/>

⁷ http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/gr/r/ritual_pouring_vessel.aspx

half month period of warming weather, the spring growing season. Another four and a half month period of heat and withering drought begins in early summer.



Taurus and the Pleiades as depicted in the astronomical treatise *Book of Fixed Stars* by the Persian astronomer Abd al-Rahman al-Sufi, c. 964⁸

The spring equinox during the Bronze Age was marked in the sky by the sun entering the constellation we call Taurus the bull.⁹ Within the constellation Taurus is the star cluster we call the Pleiades.¹⁰ The onset of the rainy season coincided with the constellation Pleiades appearing as an evening star around the fall equinox. The Pleiades appeared in the spring as a morning star cluster in Taurus; its disappearance into the daytime sky signaled the onset of the dry season during the Bronze Age. The Pleiades reappeared in the autumn in the evening sky; at the Mediterranean shore; the star cluster would have been a noticeable, bright, sign that the time of heat and drought was ending, and life-giving rains would come again.

⁸ [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons

⁹ Because of procession, the vernal equinox presently occurs as the sun actually appears in the constellation Pisces. When modern astrology was formulated two thousand years ago, the vernal equinox was

¹⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pleiades>



A woman's hand with hennaed nails from the left side of the fresco, "Mistress of Animals" and Crocus Gatherer, Room 3a, first floor, north wall, and in "Lustral Basin", North Wall, Adorants, Xeste III, at Akrotiri, dated prior to the eruption of Thera in the first half of the second millennium BCE¹¹

The Pleiades, the star group known in the Mediterranean Bronze Age as 'the Seven Sisters' (alternate interpretations of Ugaritic text are the seven brides, or the bride and her maids)¹² and the visible stars were also symbolic of hennaed fingertips of a woman's hand. In Arabic, this constellation was 'the hennaed hand', *Kaff al-Hadib*.¹³ In "The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba'lu According to the Version of Ilmilku," The 'Seven Sisters' hennaed their hands and went to seek their husbands as the Pleiades disappeared as a morning star, as if the sisters were disappearing into the dawn sun.¹⁴

*CTA 3: B.2-3*¹⁵
*kpr*¹⁶ . *šb* . *bnt*¹⁷ .
rh gdm w'anhbm

[Translation] henna of the seven girls,
 Scent of saffron and purple-snails¹⁸

¹¹ Xeste 3, "Lustral Basin" North Wall: Adorants, photograph by J Liepe, Coumas, 1992

¹² De Moor, Johannes C. "The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba'lu According to the Version of Ilmilku" *Verlag Butzon & Berker Kevelaer*, Neukirchen – Vluyn, 1971 p. 85

¹³ Allen, R. 1899. "Star-names and Their Meanings" G.E Stechert, London. p. 144

¹⁴ Further supporting the 'henna of the seven sisters' as being an event in the spring

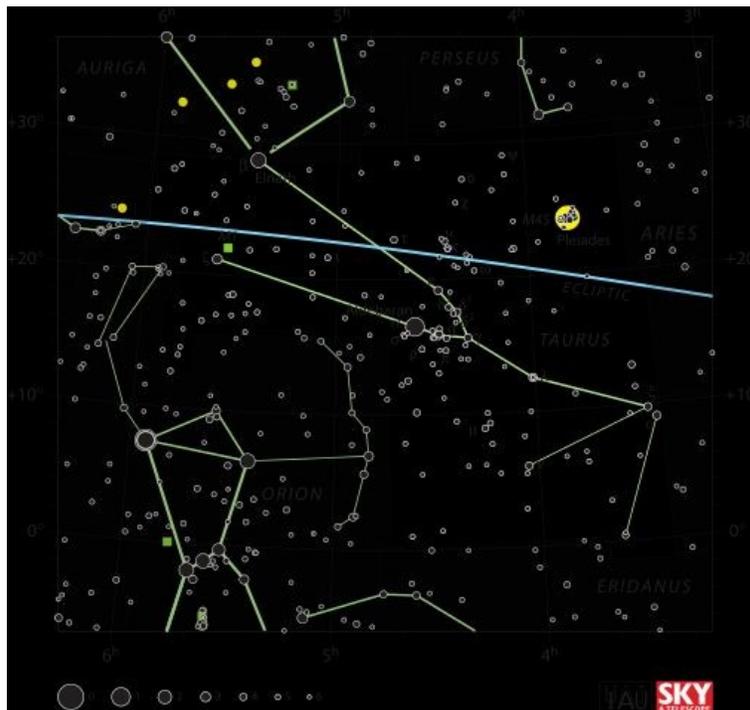
¹⁵ De Moor, Johannes C. "The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba'lu According to the Version of Ilmilku" *Verlag Butzon & Berker Kevelaer*, Neukirchen – Vluyn, 1971 p. 85

¹⁶ *kpr* is translated as 'henna', linguistically related to 'camphire', the Latin word for henna and 'kopher' the Hebrew word for henna, and *PKR*, the root word for henna in Phoenician, *poenikos*.

¹⁷ De Moor interprets this as probably referring to seven lady's maids, as in Esther 2:9

¹⁸ Lytle, E. 2006. "Marine Fisheries and the Ancient Greek Economy" Dissertation, Classical Studies Department, Duke University. P. 304-7 The scent of snails supports this text as a spring event, when creels were filled with

Henna bushes were present in this area on the beaches and near water holes any time the winter was frost-free. If winters became cooler, henna would be reseeded by birds migrating north from Africa, in the spring as the weather warmed, by excreting henna seeds they consumed as berries. As long as the climate remained warm, henna would have been available for women to adorn themselves in the spring, and again in the fall as the rains returned. The appearance of new growth of henna was synchronous with the appearance and disappearance of the Pleiades. The Pleiades were mythologized as brides, and a hennaed hand. The Pleiades, hennaed women's hands, and the fertility of the land became symbolically associated with each other in these cultures where domestication of dairy animals and grain agriculture were dependent on rainfall in a warm, semi-arid climate.



Pisces and the constellation Taurus¹⁹

People in the Mediterranean Bronze Age were neither new nor unique in associating the Pleiades with a constellation thought to resemble a bull: as early as 17000 BCE in the cave paintings of Lascaux, painting of Aurochs #18 has six dots over the bull's shoulder in the correct position for the Pleiades²⁰ though at that time, the sun would not have been Taurus at the spring equinox, it would have been in the autumn. Around 5000 BCE, spring equinox would have been in Taurus close to the star Aldebaran. By 2000 BCE, equinox entered Aries, so Bronze Age Taurus would

murex shells for dye extraction; the scent of crocuses would also have been associated with spring.

¹⁹ "Taurus IAU" by IAU and Sky & Telescope magazine (Roger Sinnott & Rick Fienberg) - [1]. Licensed under CC BY 3.0 via Commons - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Taurus_IAU.svg#/media/File:Taurus_IAU.svg

²⁰ Sheehan, W. 2010, "A Passion for the Planets: Envisioning Other Worlds, From the Pleistocene to the Age of the Telescope." Springer Science, New York, p 61 ...

have a warmer month and the disappearance of the Pleiades into the dawn sun would have been a harbinger of summer heat. This places the understanding of the Pleiades as a symbol of a hennaed hand, a bride, and the fertility of the spring around 2000 BCE.²¹

Women in the Levant²² used henna to adorn themselves in two parts of the eco-agricultural myth cycle of Baal and Anat marked by the constellation of Taurus and the star cluster Pleiades. Baal, the Bull God, was identified with thunder and life-giving rain.²³ His sister/consort, Anat, was a fertility goddess and a virgin warrior goddess.²⁴ In myth cycle, Baal was annually killed by Mot, the god of summer heat. When Baal was killed, the rains stopped through the summer drought. Mot scorched the earth, sent dust storms, and the earth became hard and cracked. When Anat brought Baal back in the early autumn, the rains returned, and plant life recovered, and it was possible to plow the earth again through the months that Taurus and the Pleiades were visible in the night sky. Near the time of the vernal equinox, when the Pleiades disappeared with the helical rising at dawn, young women hennaed their hands and went to seek their husbands at a fertility festival. The grain was harvested, and the cycle of death and rebirth began again.

Women hennaed their hands in connection with a spring fertility festival as the Pleiades disappeared in the dawn, and in connection with the early summer harvest/victory celebration following. These times were ecologically appropriate for henna use, as henna put out new growth in the spring as the season warmed, and matured towards the summer solstice. In the spring, people enjoyed the fertility of the earth and the mild weather. When the six-month annual Levantine drought began in April, people began harvesting the barley, the wheat, and other crops before the searing heat withered the landscape. The goddess who oversaw the grain harvest and protected the fertility of the earth and harvest was Anat,²⁵ the Virgin Warrior Goddess. In the epic agro-ecological Ugaritic myth of Baal and Anat, she adorned herself with henna in a metaphor for the wheat harvest for the destruction of the god Mot, the god of summer heat, and all of his followers.²⁶

In the Ugaritic metaphor, the wheat harvest, the destruction of Mot, Anat prepared herself for a celebration for Mot, the god of summer heat. She hennaed her hands, kohled her eyes, braided her hair and put on her finest adornments. She went into the palace to the celebration and closed the doors behind her. She then slaughtered Mot and all the enemies of Baal. She beheaded Mot and then beheaded all of his dust-colored followers. The warrior goddess threw their heads across her back, and stashed their arms and legs into her waist sash, and continued until she waded through their bodies up to her knees. If this slaughter is a metaphor for Bronze Age grain harvest, the warrior goddess was not committing bloody carnage, but was a woman harvesting

²¹ The red hand prints on the walls of building 77, Çatalhöyük, built around 7000 BCE juxtaposed with bull bucrania with red hands may be related to the bull god and the hennaed hand of a bride in 2000 BCE, though precession would have placed Taurus as a time earlier in the spring. 7000 BCE had a warmer climate than 2000 BCE, so henna might have been available on the olian plateau, but the connection of henna, red hands, and the bull god at Çatalhöyük is moot. The connection is more thoroughly evidenced by the Bronze Age.

²² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levant>

²³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baal>

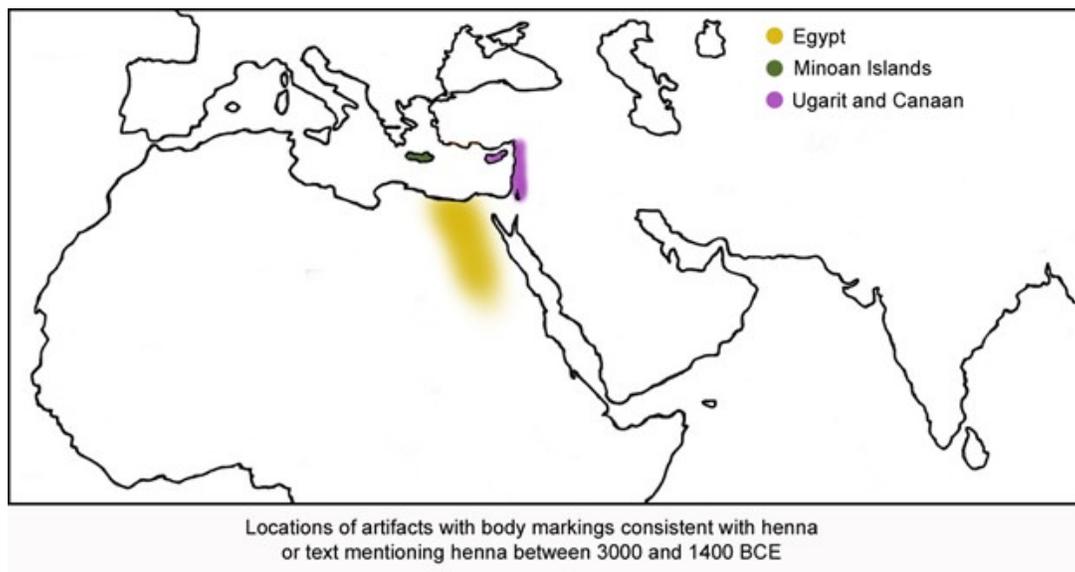
²⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

²⁵ <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/>

²⁶ Cassuto, U. 1951. "The Goddess Anath," translated from the Hebrew by Israel Abrams. The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem

grain. She went to her field to cut off the heads of the grain, and threw those heads into a sack on her back for later threshing and winnowing. She cut and stashed the straw from the grain into her sash, so that it could be used as bedding and fodder for to her cows, sheep and goats. She hennaed her hands before she went into the field. Neolithic women often harvested grain with a jawbone; a Bronze Age woman might have a stone knife or metal sickle. All of these hand-harvesting techniques were rough on women's hands, callusing, cutting and blistering them. Henna strengthened the skin on their hands and feet, and kept calluses firm and strong so they wouldn't crack and bleed. Henna would be there, on the way to the fields, to crush and apply to their hands, to make the harvest a little easier for them. The harvest had to be gathered. There was no time to waste on sore, cracked, cut, painful hands and feet.

The earliest traditions of henna as women's hand markings seem to have evolved from the coincidence of henna's seasonal growth patterns during the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age in the Levant, as part of a metaphoric myth of the agro-ecological calendaring of grain and dairy farming. Henna, the Pleiades, and the constellation Taurus provided people with a useful marker for the agricultural cycle as well as a dye that strengthened skin for harvest work. In the Levant, henna became a signifier of women's luck, fertility, and blessing. Women hennaed to mark themselves as brides. Women hennaed to mark the victory of the harvest. As long as the hennaed hand, the Pleiades, shown in the night sky with the bull god with Aldebran, the bright red giant star at his center, from autumn till spring, there was rain and luck for the people and the land.



Evidence of henna in the wall paintings of 1600 BCE lustral basin in Xeste III prior to the Santorini eruption

Much of the architecture at Thera was fixed in time and sealed by ash by the Santorini volcanic eruption. With careful archeological excavation and reconstruction at Akrotiri, we can view the

spaces, images and symbols that the Minoans produced, and begin to theorize what they represented. The Minoan belief system included a bull god and a fertility goddess, as did other cultures in the same region at the same time. The frescos on the walls of Xeste III lustral basin have figures of women whose fingernails, toenails, and soles have reddish markings consistent with the appearance of henna.



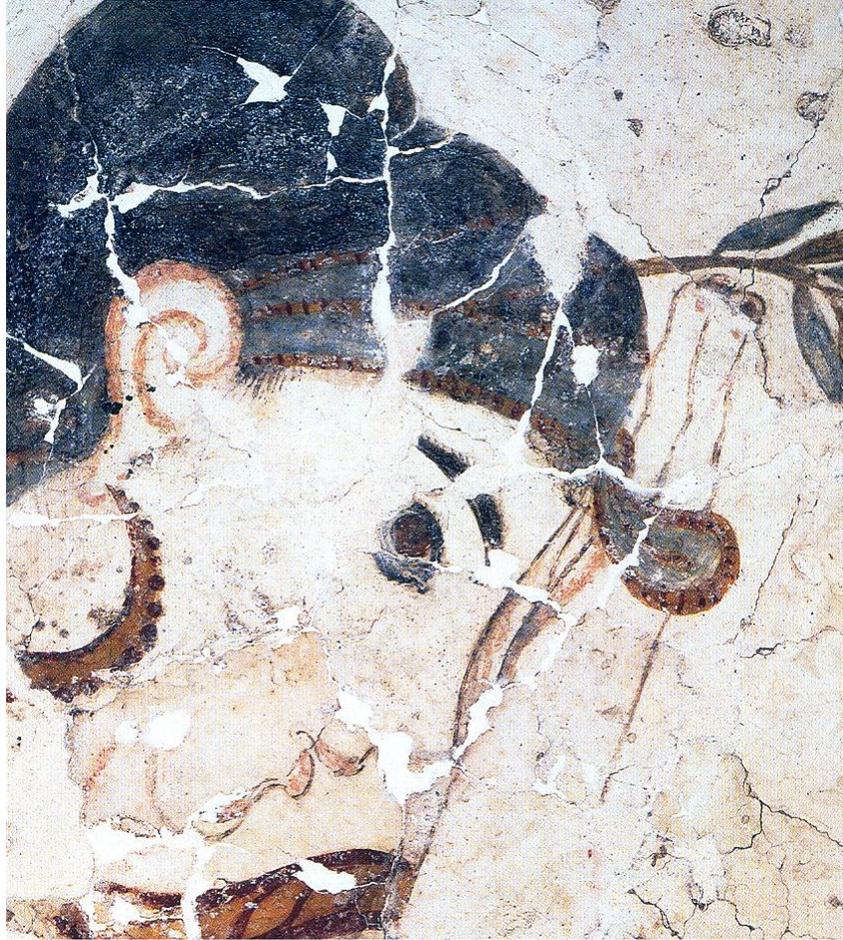
A woman's hand with hennaed nails from the left side of the fresco, "Mistress of Animals" and Crocus Gatherer, Room 3a, first floor, north wall, and in "Lustral Basin", North Wall, Adorants, Xeste III, at Akrotiri, dated prior to the eruption of Thera in the first half of the second millennium BCE²⁷

In 1984, Nanno Marinatos proposed that frescoes from the Xeste III lustral basin at Akrotiri are a representation of a ceremony concerning a female rite of passage performed in the room,²⁸ and this proposal has been generally accepted by scholars. Vlasaki concluded that the lustral basins were constructed so that only a few spectators could attend the event taking place in the lustral basin."²⁹ Puglisi interprets these spaces as "being designed to perform a two faceted ceremony involving female initiation and divine epiphany." Attention to the red markings on the women's feet and hands in the frescoes on the walls of these rooms may provide additional confirmation and interpretation of their work.

²⁷ Xeste 3, "Lustral Basin" North Wall: Adorants, photograph by J Liepe, Coumas, 1992

²⁸ Marinatos, N. 1984. "Art and Religion in Thera: reconstructing a Bronze Age Society." Athens, Mathioulakis.

²⁹ Andreadaki Vlasaki, M. 2002, "Are We Approaching the Minoan Palace of Khania:"in J. Driessen , Schoep, Laffineur (des), *Monuments of Minos. Rethinking the Minoan Palaces* (Proceedings of the International Workshop "Crete of the Hundred Palaces?", Louvain –la-Neuve, 14 15 December 200a), *Aegaeum* 23, 157 – 166, p 161



Woman with red-dyed fingernails consistent with application of henna to nails A woman's hand with hennaed nails and possibly hennaed palms, 3a, first floor, north wall, and in "Lustral Basin", North Wall, Adorants, Xeste III, at Akrotiri, dated prior to the eruption of Thera in the first half of the second millennium BCE.³⁰ Red markings on the palm of her hand are consistent with henna, and with sculptures of women from the same period with hands raised and marked.

The north wall painting of Xeste III lustral basin shows young women gathering crocuses. The women have body markings consistent in appearance with henna. Young women, henna, and crocuses are elements of the bridal reference in the myth of Baal and Anat.³¹ To the extent that hands and feet are visible in these paintings, each woman's fingernails and soles are stained a color consistent with henna, and the red line at the palmar edge of the thumb may indicate that the woman's palms were also stained.

This woman's companion is shown with red stains on the soles of her feet. Though Puglisi refers to these as 'bloody feet' or 'injured feet' the women also have red toenails and red fingernails

³⁰ Xeste 3, "Lustral Basin" North Wall: Adorants, photograph by J Liepe, Coumas, 1992

³¹ De Moor, Johannes C. "The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba'lu According to the Version of Ilimilku" *Verlag Butzon & Berker Kevelaer*, Neukirchen – Vluyn, 1971 p. 85

that would not be bloody or injured. The representation of the woman who presses her hand to her forehead shows red lines on the palm. A third woman wearing a spotted veil, to the right in the tableau, has a red stained toenail. On the east wall of room 3a, two women gathering crocus flowers also have fingernails stained in a color consistent with henna.³² There are no similarly marked male figures in either the palace frescoes or in any other Minoan images of males. The reddish-skinned young males are depicted as having fingernails paler than the surrounding skin.



“The House of the Ladies,” room 1, east section, north wall, bare breasted female: detail of feet with red markings consistent with henna³³

This possibility has been much discussed, with some academics arguing that the lustral basin might be a women’s bath, and the position in the queen’s area of the palace might add support to the interpretation that it is a bath. Others argued against that possibility because the room had no drains to carry away the water. However, there are kinds of bathing that do not require immersion in water, or flowing water. A bath may be steaming and censing before oiling and scraping with a strigil, as was part of Roman bathing culture.³⁴

If one is to take an ‘Occam’s Razor’ approach to the appearance of red-stained fingernails, palms, and soles on women (and not on men) in the lustral basin room in the queen’s (not male and not public) area of the palace, in an area where the climate is suitable for henna plants, with texts of young women applying henna before going to seek their husbands, in an area where there is an extremely old and well-documented tradition of hennaing brides before their wedding, the proposal of bridal henna traditions being present in the Minoan civilization prior to the eruption at Thera succinctly solves the problem of identifying lustral basin body markings and hand marking on other Bronze Age figures of women simply and completely. The Occam’s razor approach to solving a problem is not proof of a solution, but in this case, I believe it should be given consideration alongside other proposals provided by the white, male, Eurocentric academic gaze which has historically been quite ignorant of henna.

³² Xeste 3, “Lustral Basin” North Wall: Adorants, photograph by J Liepe, Coumas, 1992

³³ Ibid

³⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strigil>

Artifacts showing markings consistent with a bride with hennaed hands in depictions of women in the Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean

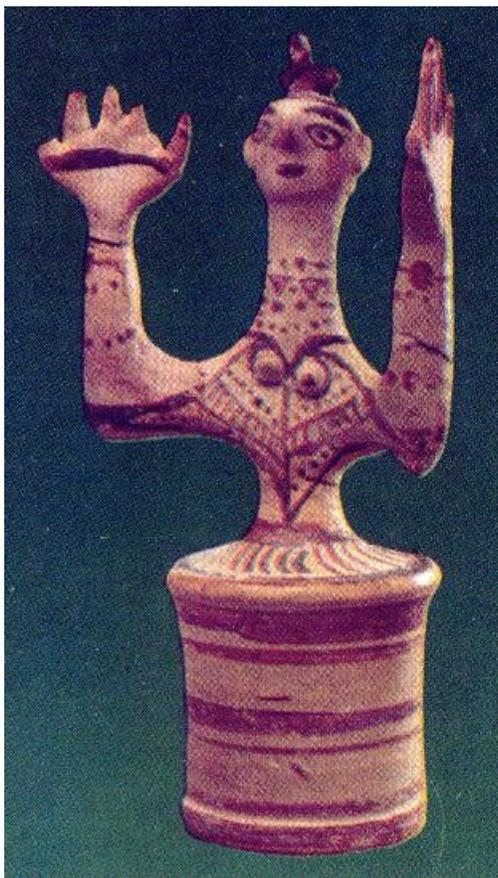


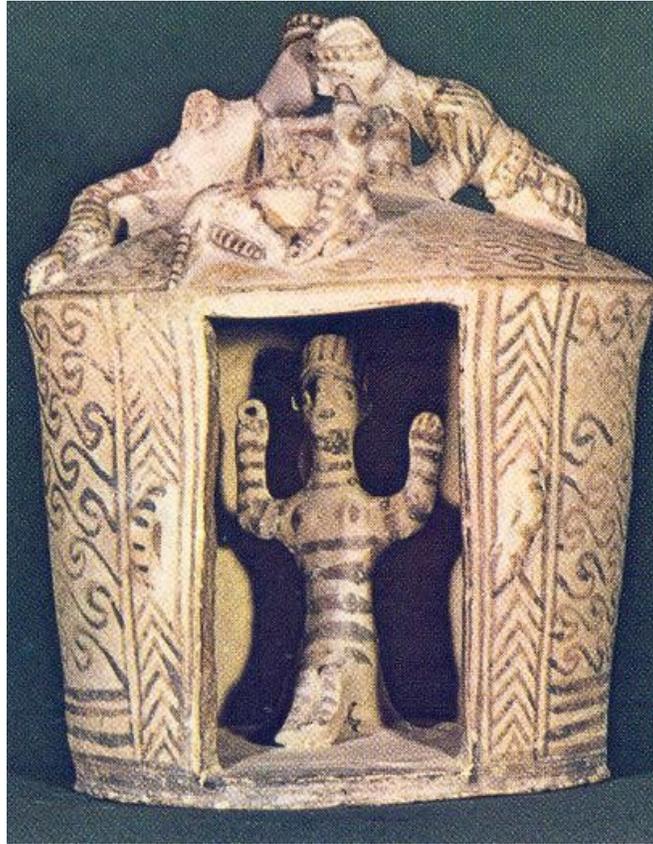
Figure of woman displaying hennaed hands, Figure from the Little Palace, Knossos Post-Palace Period, 1400 – 1100 BCE Gallery X, Case 140, figure 46, Herakleion Museum, Greece.³⁵

Images of women from Bronze Age Syria, Cyprus, Crete, Mycenae, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine occasionally have hand and foot markings that are consistent with henna stains. Not all images of women have marked hands; the figures that appear to be young women in an iconic bridal posture are most likely to have their hands marked. Some figurines of women from the Early Bronze Age, about 2700-2500 BC, from the Cyclades in the Aegean Sea, such as the ‘folded arm woman’³⁶ in the British Museum, are well enough preserved to have ‘paint ghosts’, raised areas where the surface was originally painted, some have traces of pigments. The ‘folded arm woman’ figure has red pigment on her fingers, a line at the knuckles, and traces of a dot pattern on the backs of her hands. The tradition of marking young women as fertile and fit may

³⁵ Sakellarakis, J.K., 1983, “Herakleion Museum, Illustrated Guide to the Museum, Ekdotike, Athenon, S.A., Athens.

³⁶ GR 1971.5-21.1, AN34844001, British Museum, http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/gr/m/marble_figurine_of_a_woman-1.aspx
http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=462322&partId=1&searchText=GAA6128&page=1

have begun at the beginning of the Bronze Age in this areas, or earlier. The grave goods of these women included palettes and mortars for cosmetics, with hematite, cinnabar, and azurite. If henna was available, it would not have been preserved for four thousand years, so there isn't proof that the red markings on early Bronze Age hands represent henna, but there is credible evidence for henna in later objects.



A young woman in a bath enclosure with dog and viewers on roof from Archanes, Crete, Proto-Geometric style 11th c BCE, Case 181, Herakleion Museum³⁷

In the hammams of the Levant, when a women's bathing is ceremonial as for a bride, this process also includes applying henna as part of steaming and censing.³⁸ Benches in this room are appropriate for several women spending an extended period of time in the room for an activity that requires a length of time sitting still, and such benches existed in hammams to the modern era, where women often applied henna. Representations of hennaed hands and feet in this room

³⁷ Sakellarakis, J.K., 1983, "Herakleion Museum, Illustrated Guide to the Museum," *Ekdotike, Athenon, S.A.*, Athens.

³⁸ Coincidentally, the traditional preparation of a hennaed bride in Sudan involved the bride sitting for several days in a small, round hut over smoldering incense, being repeatedly massaged with oil, hennaed, and scraped until her skin was cleansed, permeated with scent and henna patterns. Identical ceremonial sequences were done for women to be ridded of malevolent sprits. Boddy, J. 1989. "Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zar Cult in Northern Sudan" *University of Wisconsin Press*.

may be a clue to the nature of this women's ceremonial chamber process. The comparison of this lustral basin with other lustral basins from the same time and area by Puglisi may provide context and support that lustral basins were hammams, not dissimilar to hammams in later centuries, and that they included the application of henna for women's ceremonies.³⁹

The lustral basin provides the necessities of a room to prepare a young woman with henna to be a bride as was done in the women's culture of the Levant up through the modern era. This is in no way inconsistent with the proposals of the lustral basin at Xeste III as a room to ceremonially prepare a young woman at menarche to be an adult, and a bride; the addition of a 'night of the henna' to their interpretation may be fit and complementary, as well as explaining the numerous statuettes who raise their marked hands and fingers.



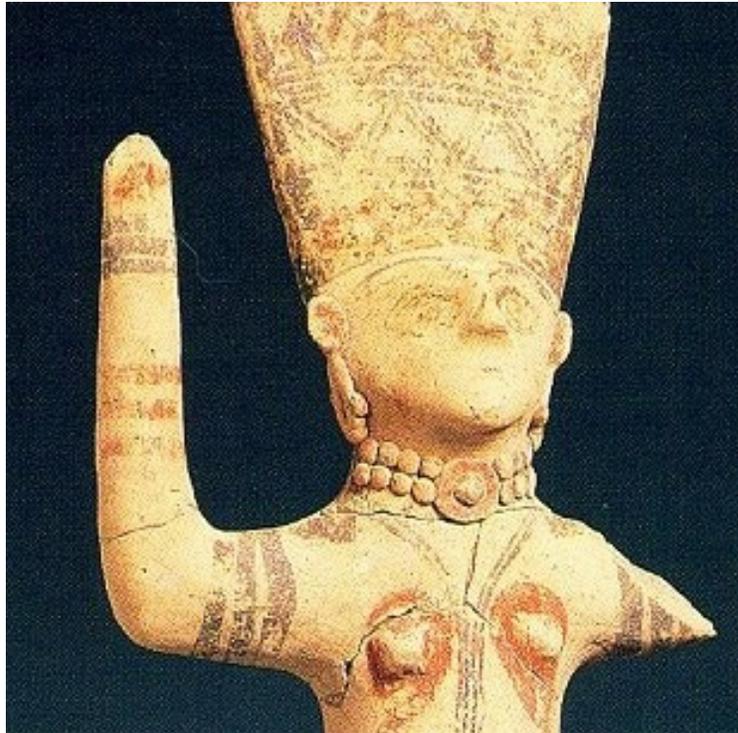
Figure of a woman with raised arms from Gazi, item 9306, case 133, Herakleion Museum, from a ceremonial room used by the community

In the Herakleion Museum, item 9306 figure from Gazi is interpreted as a goddess greeting, blessing, or praying.⁴⁰ There remains a line still marked across the knuckle side of her fingers. The museum has other similar Minoan terracotta statuettes with raised arms such as this and the "Goddess with raised arms" from Karphi, dating from the Late Bronze Age Crete, 1100-1000

³⁹ For further information on the Lustral Basin in Xeste 3, and the potential for it to have been a place of women's ritual activity, read: Puglisi, D., 2012. "Ritual Performances in Minoan Lustral Basins: New Observations on an Old Hypothesis." *Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene e delle Missioni Italiane in Oriente LXXXIX (2012) [2013]*, 199-211

⁴⁰ Sakellarakis, J. A., 1983. "Herakleion Museum, Illustrated Guide to the Museum." *Ekdotike Athenon*, S. A. Athens

BCE. These are often interpreted as goddesses blessing, or priestesses in orante position, the posture of praying or pleading. This genre of statuettes frequently shows the women's fingers marked in a way consistent with their hands being hennaed, when the hands are shown and the fingers intact. The frequency of hand markings on these images might indicate a different interpretation: that they are displaying their hands. I propose that these figures are brides/goddesses displaying their ceremonially hennaed hands and that these figures, and the lustral basin of Xeste III are precedent for what is now referred to as the 'night of the henna' which precedes the presentation of the bride to the community throughout cultures of the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, and the Middle East.



Terracotta figurine of the Goddess with uplifted arms from Palaepaphos, 7th century BCE
(1899,1229.1) British Museum

The 'goddess with uplifted arms' in the British Museum has hand markings consistent with a bride's hennaed hands, as well as markings probably indicating her ornaments: bracelets, clothing, necklaces, earrings and head wrap. A similar figure in the Metropolitan museum, standing female figurine of the "goddess with uplifted arms" type has reddish stains on her hands.⁴¹

⁴¹ Cypro-Archaic II Date: ca. 600–480 B.C., Cypriot culture, terracotta, The Cesnola Collection, Purchased by subscription, 1874–76 Accession Number: 74.51.1615

<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/241171>



Terracotta female figure with red markings on raised hands from the sanctuary of the lower acropolis of Tiryns, c. 1000 BC. Archaeological Museum, Mycenaean, Tiryns, 12th C BC, Nafplio Archaeology Museum, Greece⁴²

These figures of young women with markings on their hands supports the proposition that henna bridal traditions originated in the early Bronze age, were described in the Ugaritic Ras Shamra texts, existed in the Minoan, Mycenaean and Phoenician civilizations. The ‘night of the henna’ women’s tradition spread from there to the cultures which have hosted it into the modern era: across North Africa with their trade networks, also southward and eastward into Arabia and the Middle East. The night of the henna, even during the Bronze Age, was not limited to the Levant. In Assyria at 800 BCE, there is a record describing a women being hennaed for her marriage.⁴³

Henna in Mycenae at the End of the Bronze Age

Henna was part of the perfumery industry in Mycenae, 1600 – 1100 BCE.⁴⁴ The texts indicate that henna paste was formulated there to dye hair, specifically the hair on horses’ tails for festivals. In Mycenae and Crete, in the 14th century BCE, the words for henna were PKR,

⁴² <http://dtcox.com/author/coxdavid55/> (accessed February 6, 2015)

⁴³ Aubaile-Sallenave F. 1982. “Les voyages du henné.” *Jatba : journal d'agriculture traditionnelle et de botanique appliquée : travaux d'ethnobotanique et d'ethnozoologie*, 1982/2/123

⁴⁴ Shelmerdine, C. 1983. “Henna in Mycenaean Perfumery.” *American Philological Association annual meeting*. Philadelphia, December 1983

*poinikion*⁴⁵ or KPR, *cyperus*.⁴⁶ Henna was used in Mycenae as hair dye, fingernail colorant, a stain for palms and soles, a component in perfume, and as every day and ritual body art.⁴⁷ There is Mycenaean evidence for henna use in the statuettes depicting young women with their hands raised, with markings consistent with henna, potentially representing hennaed brides.

Statuettes of horses and cattle during the Bronze Age in the eastern Mediterranean countries often have markings unlike what one would not expect that a cow or horse to have naturally; they are often marked with flowers and stripes. During this period, the climate in the Levant was becoming increasingly dry; the population of humans and their domestic animals stressed and degraded the fertility of the land. It became necessary in the spring to cull male livestock to lessen their load on the landscape, males being less efficient providers of protein and lipids for human consumption than female dairy stock.⁴⁸ Male yearling domestic animals were celebrated, hennaed,⁴⁹ and sacrificed for the survival of the community in the annual event. This event continued into monotheistic religions as Passover, Easter, and Id. In each of these religions, in regions where henna customs were part of the culture, it was often customary to stain the sacrificial animal with henna, and adorn it as a bride, with flowers, kohl, even a bridal veil.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Chadwick, J. 1976, "The Mycenaean World" *Cambridge University Press*. p 120-21)

⁴⁶ Sonini, 1798, Vol 1, p 300.

⁴⁷ Shelmerdine, C. 1985. "The Perfume Industry of Mycenaean Pylos" *Studies in Mediterranean Archeology*, *Paul Åströms Förlag*, Göteborg, Sweden

⁴⁸ Cartwright-Jones, C. 2001. "Id al-Adha: The Ecological and Nutritional Impact of the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice, and the Significance of Henna in this Sacrifice." *TapDancing Lizard LLC*, Ohio

⁴⁹ Fuller, A. 1961 "Buarij: Portrait of a Lebanese Muslim Village." *Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University*, Cambridge, Mass. 1961, pp 84-6

The first of the Thursday festivals, "Thursday-of-the-Animals", all animals were said to meet and mate, to reproduce their kind. Domestic animals didn't have to work on that Thursday, and got to enjoy themselves. Owners applied henna to their favorite work animals' and pets' foreheads, as a sign of blessing and life. This springtime festival was celebrated in variants through the Beqaa valley, from Syria into Lebanon, Jordan, into former Palestine, and may be related to springtime festivals celebrated with henna dating back to the Bronze Age in the same region.

On the last Thursday before Orthodox Easter, villagers from about 30k surrounding went to the domed shrine of Wali Zaur. The festival was often attended by around 2000 people. Villagers dressed up in their best clothes and came in by car, donkey, horse, horse and cart, and bicycle, until the festival area was crowded. Riders adorned their donkeys and horses with blue beads and colored garlands, and dyed their horses tails with henna. Arabian horses tend to carry their tails high, so the prized white Arabian horse's hennaed tails looked like brilliant red-orange plumes. Bicycle riders decked their bicycles with paper flowers and ribbons.

The crowd went to the Wali Zaur shrine for blessing, and women who wanted to become pregnant went to a well near the shrine for fertility, health and well-being. In the evening, when people returned to their villages, the celebration continued.

⁵⁰ Cartwright-Jones, C. 2002. "Henna's Significance in Amazigh Id, Circumcision and "Night of the Henna" Celebrations." *TapDancing Lizard LLC* Ohio

Ancient Sunrise® Henna for Hair Chapter 2, The History of Henna Hair Dye

Part 1: The Evolution and Migration of Henna into Cultural Practices

Section2: Henna in the Eastern Mediterranean Bronze Age

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