

Chapter 1

AEGEAN PAINTING IN THE BRONZE AGE

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*The frescoes discovered on the Palace site constitute a new epoch
in the history of painting.*

SIR ARTHUR EVANS, MARCH 1901¹

ON 5 APRIL 1900, new excavations led by Sir Arthur Evans at Knossos, Crete, were barely two weeks old when a mysterious figure in fresco was uncovered near the south propylon (Fig. 1.1). “A great day,” Evans recorded in his journal as he noted the figure’s noble profile, beautifully modeled arms, and tiny waist. It was, he observed “far and away the most remarkable human figure of the Mycenaean Age that has yet come to light.” Evans noted how even his workmen felt the painting’s spell, regarding its discovery as miraculous, the icon of a saint. The next morning, the Cretan man posted to guard the new find told a story of how the wrathful saint had woken him at midnight. The animals lowed and neighed, and there was, he said, “something about – but of a ghostly kind – φαντάζει [*fandázi*] – it spooks!”²

This incident more than a century ago encapsulates the reception of Aegean Bronze Age art, in which, even today, a lively mixture of fact, imagination, and emotion continues to influence its interpretation. In the case of the Cupbearer Fresco, as it came to be called, the fresco helped to identify and define the painting tradition of prehistoric Crete. Before Evans’s excavation at Knossos, almost nothing was known of the island’s early habitation. In contrast, Mycenaean archaeology had been established decades earlier as a field of study by Heinrich Schliemann,



Figure 1.1 Knossos, palace: Cupbearer Fresco. LM IB–IIIA1, c. 1625/1525–1350 B.C. Crete, Herakleion Museum. (Photo: A. P. Chapin)

who, in his pursuit of the historical truth underlying tales of the Trojan War, had opened excavations at Troy, Mycenae, and Tiryns in the 1870s and 1880s. Yet where Schliemann ignored the first fragments of fresco uncovered at Mycenae (Fig. 1.2),³ Evans extolled the paintings of Knossos.

Consequently, even though the Cupbearer Fresco was by no means the first Aegean fresco to be discovered, Evans employed it and others

to draw international attention to Knossos and to publicize the quality of its surviving artwork. At the same time, Evans quickly recognized that Knossos was not Mycenaean (the culminating phase of Bronze Age culture on the Greek mainland), but the product of a distinctly different culture. He re-identified his “Palace of Mycenaean Kings” as the “Palace of Minos” and named the culture “Minoan” after the legendary ruler of Knossos.⁴ In addition to promoting the excellence of his finds, he strove to place them in the context of the great artistic traditions of antiquity, and his persistent and favorable comparison of Minoan art with that of the Classical world helped to establish prehistoric Minoan painting as a completely new and equally worthy artistic tradition. In the Cupbearer Fresco, for example, he saw an “almost classically Greek profile” that showed “an advance in human portraiture foreign to Egyptian art, and only achieved by the artists of classical Greece.”⁵

Today our understanding of prehistoric Aegean painting is far more extensive and detailed. A growing volume of archaeological and scientific information continues to shape our understanding of these prehistoric peoples, but the historical and literary texts that would throw light on their history, culture, and religion remain missing despite the fact that both the Minoans on Crete and the Mycenaeans of mainland Greece developed writing systems. The stories preserved in later Greek mythology – tales of Theseus and the Minotaur, for instance, or the epic of the Trojan War – might conceivably have some basis in fact, but they cannot be relied upon for valid insights into prehistory. As a result, our knowledge and understanding of Aegean art and culture depend almost exclusively on analysis of the fragmentary remains discovered in archaeological fieldwork. This chapter reviews the evidence for major monuments of Minoan, Cycladic, and Mycenaean painting, on both plaster and terracotta. It offers a critique of the conjectures and controversies dominating current scholarly research and places the monuments



Figure 1.2 Mycenae, Ramp House deposit: women at the window. LH IIIA, c. 1425–1300 B.C. Athens, National Museum. (Photo: A. P. Chapin)

within their cultural contexts as currently understood. Finally, the text examines these artworks as evidence of the distinctive identity and outstanding achievement of Bronze Age Aegean painting.

balanced by shared commonalities, creating a complex and shifting web of cultural relationships that are subsumed under the label “Aegean”.

AEGEAN GEOGRAPHY

Aegean art as an art historical period takes its name from the Aegean Sea, which is that piece of the Mediterranean bounded by mainland Greece to the north and west, modern Turkey on the east, and Crete to the south. Shaped by powerful plate tectonics, the Aegean is a rugged and mountainous region frequently rocked by earthquakes. Overland travel is slow and difficult, so sailing traditionally provided the primary means of transportation. Arable soil remains scarce, and early inhabitants also looked to the sea for important food resources. The Aegean Sea thus supports, separates, and links the three most important geographic regions of prehistoric Greek civilization – Crete, the Cycladic Islands, and the Greek mainland. Each area is defined by a regional distinctiveness that is

AEGEAN CHRONOLOGY

Bronze Age Aegean chronology is a complicated topic with a large bibliography (Fig. 1.3).⁶ In general terms, Greek prehistory is divided into two eras: the Stone Age, with its stone tool technologies, and the Bronze Age, characterized by the introduction of metallurgy. These eras are divided into Early, Middle, and Late periods, which, in the Bronze Age, correspond roughly to the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms of Egypt (c. 3000–1100 B.C.). The cultural distinctiveness of the three principal geographic zones of the Aegean – Crete, the Cycladic Islands, and the Greek mainland – necessitates regional designations: “Minoan” for Crete, “Cycladic” for the Cyclades, and “Helladic” for the Greek mainland. Each of these regional chronologies is further divided into phases and sub-phases from the study of relative chronology, principally

through stylistic analyses of pottery. Architectural chronologies based on the construction phases of monumental buildings have also been identified for the Aegean. After more than a century of excavation and study, these regional relative chronologies are well developed and most Aegean archaeological sites can be dated to specific phases of prehistory.

Attaching calendrical dates to these ceramic and architectural phases, however, remains difficult and controversial. Lacking historical sources, early archaeologists relied upon correspondences with Egyptian and Near Eastern archaeology to assign calendrical dates to the various phases of the Aegean Bronze Age. Recent advances in scientific technology, however, have yielded new – but sometimes conflicting – evidence for absolute (calendrical) dating. The most spectacular example of this problem is illustrated by efforts to date the eruption of the Santorini volcano in the Cycladic Islands. Ceramic studies demonstrate that the affluent prehistoric town of Akrotiri was buried by volcanic deposits in the first phase of the Late Bronze Age (Late Cycladic I), and comparisons with known historical chronologies in Egypt and the Near East suggest an eruption date of c. 1500 B.C. But radiocarbon testing and dendrochronological dating of organic samples buried in the volcanic ash place the event in the late seventeenth century B.C., more than one hundred years earlier than historical comparisons would suggest. The proposed dates cannot both be right, and scholars today who need to assign calendrical years to art historical monuments are thus left with following either the “high” chronology suggested by scientific data or the older “low” chronology supported by historical comparanda (Fig. 1.3).⁷

THE RISE OF MINOAN PICTORIAL PAINTING ON CRETE

Agricultural immigrants settled on Crete around 7000 B.C., but Aegean pictorial

painting did not appear until complex palatial culture arose in the Middle Bronze Age, after c. 2000 B.C. In the intervening millennia of subsistence living, the early population began in the Final Neolithic period, c. 3500 B.C., to cover some floors and walls of their more important buildings with monochrome red plaster made of lime mixed with clay. This practice continued into the Early Bronze Age and anticipated the frescoes of the later Bronze Age.⁸

Throughout the third millennium B.C., the Early Minoan (EM) population of Crete expressed only modest and small-scale interest in pictorial art. Seal stones, associated with the rise of local trade and economic complexity, were usually decorated with abstract patterns favoring random lines, crosshatching, and cross designs, but some, such as a seal from EM II Mochlos, were ornamented with pictorial designs that anticipate later figural art (CD/W 1.1a).⁹ By the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, a growing and increasingly stratified population was regularly trading with Egypt and the Near East, and foreign influence is sometimes evident in new seal designs. An ivory cylinder seal from Tholos B at Platanos in the Mesara Plain dated to Middle Minoan IA (MM IA), for example, reflects Syrian influence in its imported material and head-to-tail (*tête-bêche*) lion design (CD/W 1.1b).¹⁰ Another ivory seal from Platanos depicts dolphins swimming about a sailing ship (CD/W 1.1c).¹¹ MM II seal impressions from Phaistos introduce the Minoan “genius”, a mythical creature imitating the Egyptian goddess of childbirth, Tauret (CD/W 1.1d),¹² and the griffin, a fantastic creature from Near Eastern art with a lion’s body and the head and wings of a raptor (CD/W 1.1e).¹³ Native interests are reflected in a seal impression depicting an *agrimi*, a wild goat indigenous to Crete, cornered on a high rock by two dogs (CD/W 1.1f).¹⁴

Ceramic decoration also favored abstract designs for much of the Early and Middle Bronze Age. Early Minoan ceramic production was regional, and decoration typically favored linear

AEGEAN CHRONOLOGY					
Traditional Chronology Dates B.C.E.	High Chronology Dates B.C.E.	Crete	Greek Mainland	Cycladic Islands	
Before 3000 to about 2000		EM I	EH I	EC I Grotta-Pelos Group Kampos Group	Early Prepalatial Period
		EM IIA	EH II	EC II Keros-Syros Group Kastri Group	
		EM IIB			Late Prepalatial Period
		EM III	EH III	EC III Phylakopi I Group	
2000–1625	2000–1725	MM IA	MH I	MC I	Protopalatial Period of First (“Old”) Palaces on Crete
		MM IB	MH II	MC II	
		MM IIA			
		MM IIB			
		MM IIIA	MH III	MC III	Neopalatial Period of Second (“New”) Palaces on Crete
		MM IIIB			
1625–1525	1725–1625	LM IA	LH I	LC I	LM IA: Theran Eruption
1525–1450	1625–1500	LM IB	LH IIA	LC II	Late LM IB: widespread destruction across Crete
1450–1425	1500–1425	LM II	LH IIB		Final Palatial Period on Crete: Mycenaeans at Knossos?
1425–1300	1425–1300	LM IIIA	LH IIIA	LC III	Mycenaean palaces built; Knossos destroyed in LM IIIA or IIIB
1300–1200	1300–1200	LM IIIB	LH IIIB		
1200–1125	1200–1125	LM IIIC	LH IIIC		Postpalatial Period: Fall of Mycenaean civilization

Figure 1.3 Aegean chronology.

patterns (incised or painted). In EM IIB, c. 2200 B.C., mottled designs produced by controlled firing were characteristic of Vasilike Ware and express a developed artistic aesthetic.¹⁵ Contemporary ceramics introduced trickle decoration, a simple but striking approach to ceramic painting that persisted for centuries. An EM IIB pithos from Myrtos, Crete, for example, was decorated with thick blobs of paint (slip) that were allowed to run down the sides of the jar (CD/W 1.2).¹⁶ Likewise, Spatter Ware, a fine ware of the MM IB period (c. 1900 B.C.) manufactured around Petras in eastern Crete, was produced by splattering light-colored vase surfaces with reddish-brown or dark brown slip (CD/W 1.3).¹⁷ The resulting designs are vivid, dynamic, and fully abstract, and although it may seem a simple task to generate the splatter effect, the painting process required careful control of materials. Like the later “Jackson Pollock style” of Late Minoan (LM) I ceramics, this form of ceramic decoration may have been influenced by a desire to imitate abstract patterns found in nature, including speckled or banded rocks, sand, or eggshells.¹⁸ Yet these decorative styles also reveal a developed taste for abstract art and a process-oriented means of creating it. As such, they anticipate contemporary Western art movements, particularly abstract expressionism, by more than three thousand years.

The Middle Bronze Age (c. 1900 B.C.) also saw the establishment of a palatial civilization on Crete. Peak sanctuaries were founded on Cretan mountaintops as important foci of religious belief, and work began on the first palace at Knossos in late MM IA or early MM IB, with additional palace construction occurring in MM IB at Phaistos and Mallia.¹⁹ These palaces – the hallmarks of Minoan civilization – functioned for centuries as important ceremonial, religious, economic, and bureaucratic centers, but our understanding of these buildings in the early phases of the Protopalatial period of the Middle Bronze Age is incomplete. Extant remains date primarily to the early Late Bronze Age (the

Neopalatial period, c. 1500 or 1450 B.C.), when the palaces are characterized by large central courts, west courts, labyrinthine plans, and areas for storage, cult practice, and craft production. They were multi-storied, built of ashlar, wood, rubble, and mud-brick, and used open shafts (light wells) to illuminate interior rooms. “Minoan halls”, which became widespread in the Neopalatial period, employed pier-and-door partitions (*polythyra*) to create flexible circulation patterns in areas of the palace that may have had ceremonial or residential functions. Ironically, although these structures are called “palaces”, it still is not entirely clear that they were the residences of royal authority. After more than a century of excavation, there are still no identifiable portraits of rulers, no historical documents naming kings or queens, and little archaeological evidence that royal families lived in the palaces.²⁰

Evidence for painted plaster in the Protopalatial period (c. 1900–1750/1700 B.C.) demonstrates technical advances in the introduction of a high-purity lime plaster and improved pigments but no pictorial designs.²¹ Among the earliest examples is a floor fresco of repeating brown quatrefoils decorating Protopalatial Phaistos.²² The Loomweight Basement at Knossos produced a MM IIB dado design of curving bands painted in yellow, gray, red, and white, perhaps imitating variegated stone (CD/W 1.4).²³ The use of string impressions to mark upper border bands demonstrates the true fresco technique of painting on wet plaster. A piece of MM IIB relief fresco was uncovered in the Knossos Royal Road excavations of 1957–1961,²⁴ and plaster fragments sponge-painted with imitation conglomerate stone were found in monumental Building AA at Kommos; their MM II date seems likely and their technical excellence is notable.²⁵

Kamare Ware, the finest pottery of the Protopalatial period, employed elegant curvilinear motifs and early pictorial designs that anticipate elements of later monumental wall painting. Named for the cave on Mount Ida in which the

pottery was first found, Kamares Ware is a wheel-made ceramic characterized by light-on-dark polychrome decoration in red, orange, yellow, and white on a dark background.²⁶ A jug from the palace at Phaistos represents the “Classical Kamares” style (Plate 1.1).²⁷ The globular shape of the jug’s dark body is enhanced by a torsional design of creamy white radiating spirals and balanced by abstract patterns in white and red to either side. Its raised spout embellished by a molded dot encircled in white evokes the likeness of a bird’s head atop a fat round body, imparting an organic quality to the ceramic decoration that enlivens even non-pictorial Minoan art.

A large MM III Post-Kamares amphora from Knossos decorated with white palm trees illustrates how individual abstract elements from earlier Kamares decoration were combined to form pictorial subjects (Fig. 1.4).²⁸ The artist used repetitions of antithetic J-spirals to paint the trunk and leaves of the palm trees; palm fruits were then added in red to enhance the likeness.²⁹ While the highly pictorial quality of this vase suggests inspiration from wall painting, there is scant evidence for contemporary pictorial frescoes. Gisela Walberg has therefore suggested that early Minoan fresco painters borrowed pictorial motifs from vase painters rather than the reverse and that the two groups of artists may have worked closely with one another.³⁰

Middle Cycladic (MC) bichrome vases recently discovered at Akrotiri on the island of Thera may lend support to this hypothesis. Painted in red and black with fully pictorial subjects, one jug preserves a libation scene with two male figures, and a large tub features an expansive landscape of goats, birds, crocuses, and a hunter.³¹ A later example of this tradition, a bichrome pithos jar painted in the advanced stage of the Middle Cycladic period and found as an heirloom in Akrotiri’s West House, preserves two subjects: a terrestrial scene with a bull, two goats, plants, and flowers; and a marine subject with leaping dolphins and flying ducks (Fig. 1.5).³² Although the painting style seems simple

and undeveloped, the scene nonetheless possesses a closely observed sense of intimacy. The wide-eyed dolphins arch their bodies above a lively rendition of a choppy sea, streaming droplets of water behind them. The ducks, abstractly rendered with little detail, nevertheless seem startled and strain to lift from the water. This class of painted decoration, as observed by Christos Doumas, anticipates the subjects and style of later frescoes.³³ The pictorial designs, moreover, do not depend on Kamares painting, but rather seem to reflect an independent artistic tradition.³⁴

From an archaeological perspective, an Aegean-wide network of trade and exchange existed in the Early and Middle Bronze Ages and extended to Cyprus, Syria-Palestine, and Egypt. The rise of the palaces on Crete and the need for the Minoan palatial elite to communicate with their people, combined with significant exposure to the monumental artistic traditions of Egypt and the Near East, probably provided the inspiration for the transformation of small-scale pictorial efforts represented by seal decoration and ceramic painting into monumental painting. But the last key ingredient – space upon which to paint – became available only after earthquakes and fires destroyed Minoan sites across Crete and brought the Protopalatial period to a close. The major rebuilding of MM III inaugurated the Neopalatial period and also heralded the birth of Aegean monumental wall painting.

AEGEAN PAINTING IN THE NEOPALATIAL PERIOD

The Neopalatial period, traditionally dated c. 1700–1450 B.C. (or c. 1750–1500 B.C. in the high chronology), represents the florescence of Minoan civilization and art. The palaces at Knossos, Mallia, and Kommos were rebuilt, and new palaces were founded at Galatas and Kato Zakros. Smaller palatial structures were constructed at Gournia,



Figure 1.4 Knossos, palace: Post-Kamares amphora with palm trees. MM III, c. 1725 B.C. (high chronology) or c. 1625 B.C. (low chronology). Crete, Herakleion Museum. (Photo: Hirmer Archive)



Figure 1.5 Akrotiri, Thera, West House: bichrome pithos with dolphins. MC, c. 1725 B.C. (high chronology) or c. 1625 B.C. (low chronology). Thera, Museum of Prehistoric Thera. (Photo: Courtesy, Thera Excavations; Doumas [1992])

Petras, and elsewhere, and a hotel, or caravanserai, was established at Zominthos, on the Minoan road to the sacred cave on Mount Ida. Some peak sanctuaries, such as the one on the summit of Mount Juktas, were embellished with monumental architecture and received numerous offerings, while others founded in the Protopalatial period went out of use. Significantly, a new type of building, the Minoan “villa”, became popular throughout Crete. Smaller than a palace but larger than an ordinary house, Minoan villas incorporated a variety of palatial features into their structures, including ashlar stone construction, stepped facades, courts, pier-and-door partitions (*polythyra*), stone

piers, wooden columns, light wells, lustral basins, and fresco decoration. Many of the archaeological finds from villas, moreover, seem palatial in both quality and quantity, suggesting that the inhabitants of these villas were members of an elite class who enjoyed affluence and participated in the governance of Minoan Crete. Finally, thriving towns at Ayia Triada, Gournia, Kato Zakros, Kommos, Mochlos, Palaikastro, and Pseira demonstrate that the “average” Minoan shared in the economic and artistic prosperity of the time.³⁵

Identifying the first pictorial wall paintings, however, remains difficult. The archaeological contexts of fragmentary frescoes are often mixed, and

Figure 1.6 Knossos, palace: Saffron Gatherer Fresco. Probably MM IIIA, c. 1750 B.C. (high chronology) or c. 1650 B.C. (low chronology). Crete, Herakleion Museum. (Watercolor drawing: 938.66.3 by Piet de Jong, Toronto, with permission of the Royal Ontario Museum © ROM)



early excavators were not always careful in their documentation. Frescoes, moreover, can remain on walls for decades or centuries, as demonstrated by Michelangelo's famous frescoes in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, now five hundred years old. A building's destruction date does not necessarily indicate when a fresco was painted, but provides only a *terminus ante quem*, or the date before which it must have been painted. Conversely, a building's construction date provides the *terminus post quem*, or the time after which a fresco was painted. The long and complicated architectural histories of many prehistoric buildings, characterized by frequent repair and remodeling, mean that dating Minoan frescoes remains a difficult and uncertain exercise.

The Saffron Gatherer Fresco from the palace at Knossos illustrates these problems. Sir Arthur Evans, together with Émile Gilliéron, père, restored a fresco (discovered in 1900) depicting a blue boy, naked but for a harness, collecting saffron crocuses in a rocky landscape (CD/W 1.5). Evans noted that certain details of the composition had a Kamares character: low bowls in the composition are painted with white spots and red

bands on dark ground, typical of Kamares Ware, and the shapes of the crocus flowers find parallels in Kamares decoration as well. He assigned the fresco a date of MM IIB and declared it "the only example of a figured wall-painting surviving from the Early Palace walls."³⁶ Then the problems began. The composition's early date was questioned as early as 1936 on the basis of the mixed stratigraphy of the fresco's find-spot, and since then, dates ranging from MM IIIA to LM IIIB have been proposed.³⁷ In 1939, J. D. S. Pendlebury recognized a tail among the fresco fragments and correctly re-identified the blue boy as a monkey (Fig. 1.6).³⁸ A revised reconstruction incorporating fragments of a second monkey in a frieze-like arrangement was put forward in 1947, and in 1974 Mark Cameron added a third monkey.³⁹ Today, the archaeological context of the Saffron Gatherer Fresco remains uncertain, leaving the Kamares character of the painted vases and flowers as the best evidence for the fresco's date. Renewed study finds good parallels with MM III Kamares Ware, thereby suggesting, but not proving, an early (MM IIIA) date for this composition in the eighteenth or seventeenth century B.C.⁴⁰

Unfortunately very few pictorial frescoes can be dated by archaeological context to the earliest phase of pictorial painting. Excavations along the Royal Road at Knossos in 1957–1961 reportedly yielded fragments of grasses, reeds, spirals, and other motifs from MM IIIA contexts, along with new orange and green colors, but the paintings remain mostly unpublished.⁴¹ More recently, excavations at the newly discovered Minoan palace at Galatas produced a fresco fragment from a MM IIIA context depicting an abstractly rendered plant growing from an undulating ground.⁴² This scant evidence suggests that pictorial wall painting rose as an art form early in MM III and that the first representational subjects favored landscape designs.⁴³

Minoan Frescoes from the Palace at Knossos

After the Knossos palace and town suffered destruction by another major earthquake at the

end of MM III (variously dated from c. 1725 to 1625 B.C.), the subsequent rebuilding was so extensive that Sir Arthur Evans called it “the Great Restoration” (Fig. 1.7).⁴⁴ At this time, artists decorated the palace with numerous wall paintings that have suggested the designation of the “Frescoed Palace.”⁴⁵ These paintings probably served the prevailing ideology of the ruling elite, although the rulers’ identities and their principal concerns remain unknown.

THE PRIEST-KING FRESCO

Perhaps the best-known painting of the Neopalatial period, the Priest-King Fresco, was restored from fragments found at Knossos in 1901 as a crowned, athletic male figure striding to the left, one arm clenched against his chest, the other stretched behind (Fig. 1.8).⁴⁶ The figure wears the belted loincloth and codpiece typical of male Minoan costume and a plumed lily crown that finds its



Figure 1.7 Plan of the later palace at Knossos showing the find-spots of frescoes. (Drawing: A. P. Chapin after O. Dickinson, with additions)

closest parallels in images of sphinxes and priestesses. A garland of *waz* lilies is draped across his shoulders, and jewelry adorns his neck and wrist. Evans believed the figure was a priest-king and the ruler of Knossos, the adopted son on earth of the Minoan Mother Goddess.⁴⁷ The fresco, however, is composed of three non-joining fragment groups, which Evans initially believed belonged to separate figures. But by 1905 Evans concluded that they formed a single individual, and the elder Émile Gilliéron began work on the first of many restorations.

Although doubts have now been raised about the accuracy of the restorations, the Priest-King Fresco nonetheless represents an excellent example of Minoan relief fresco. The fragments are sculptural in their conception, being modeled in low relief so that, unlike purely two-dimensional paintings rendered in solid color, the details of the figure's anatomy – muscles, bone, and tendons – are rendered with meticulous care.⁴⁸ This attention to anatomy allowed Jean Coulomb, a physician, to determine that the figure's left arm should have been raised higher than was restored by Gilliéron. Coulomb further suggested that the fresco depicts a boxer facing right (Fig. 1.9, left).⁴⁹ Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier later presented a competing proposal, noting that the fist clenched to the chest, together with the extended arm, suggests the stance of a male deity holding an outstretched staff (Fig. 1.9, right).⁵⁰

Ironically, despite the attention to anatomical detail, the figure's male gender has been questioned. Aegean artists employed a color convention borrowed from Egyptian art in which male figures are painted dark red whereas females have white skin. Presumably this convention reflected something of prehistoric reality, when men were active outdoors whereas women tended to domestic duties. But Egyptian artists as early as the Old Kingdom also depicted women with yellowish skin tones, and in the Eighteenth Dynasty some female figures have the same ruddy tones as men.⁵¹

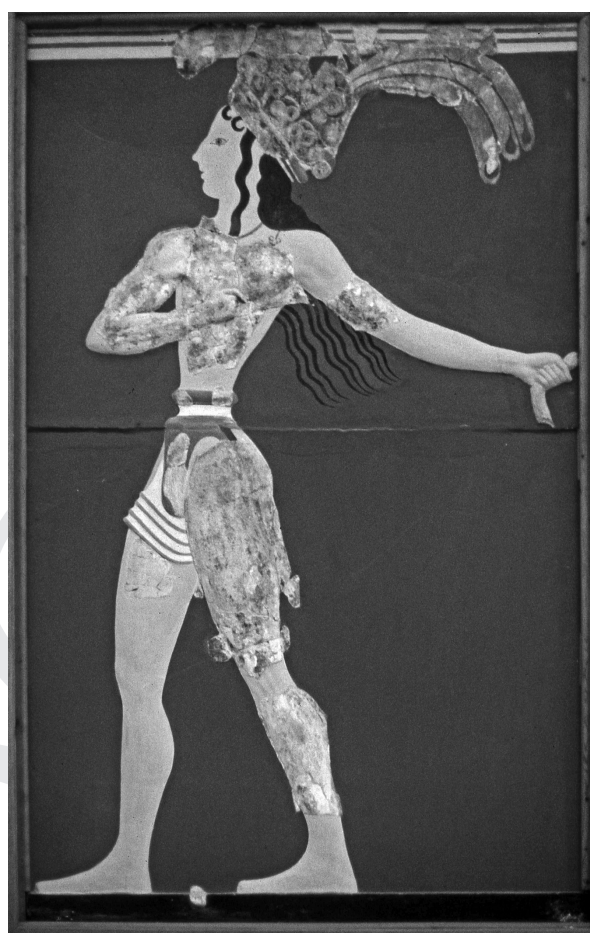


Figure 1.8 Knossos, palace: Priest-King Fresco. LM I, c. 1725–1500 B.C. (high chronology) or c. 1625–1450 B.C. (low chronology). Crete, Herakleion Museum. (Photo: G. A. Bauslaugh)

Other variations in the Egyptian color convention include the depiction of male Asiatics and Libyans with yellowish skin and sub-Saharan Africans with black skin. Scholars are only just beginning to understand that similar subtleties may have existed in Aegean painting.⁵²

The pigments available to painters, who generally worked in the true fresco method (*buon fresco*) by painting on damp plaster, are known from scientific testing. Aegean artists used a limited color palette similar to that of Egyptian painters, generally obtaining black from carbon, white from lime, and reds and yellows from earth ochres. A blue color known as Egyptian blue was synthesized from copper compounds, but

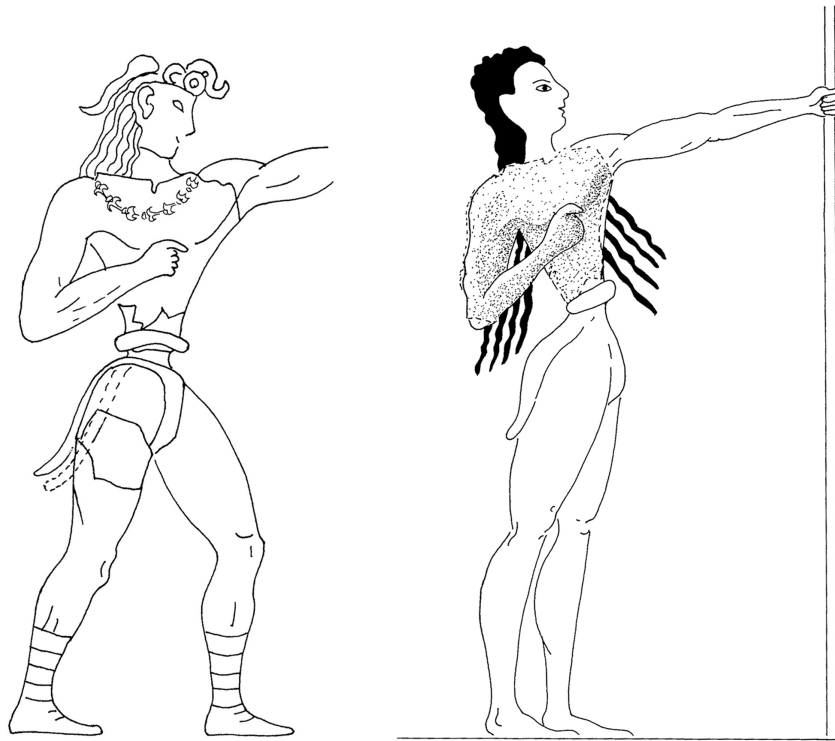


Figure 1.9 Knossos, alternative restorations of the Priest-King Fresco. (Drawing: M. C. Shaw after J. Coulomb and W.-D. Niemeier)

blue pigment was also obtained from riebeckite and glaucophane, available on Crete and in the Cycladic Islands. Pinks, grays, greens, and browns were usually manufactured by mixing colors, but the techniques of shading that were extensively developed by Greek painters in the fourth century B.C. (see Chapters 4–7) were rarely employed by the Aegean artist.⁵³

These artistic materials and practices suggest, then, that a male figure in Aegean art should have red skin tones. Today, however, the Priest-King's skin surface appears light colored and worn, with only hints of red pigment, while the background is clearly deep red. The figure's presumed male gender, then, cannot be confirmed by conventional color coding.⁵⁴ If originally red, then it was painted against a red ground. Though not common, such red-on-red figures are occasionally found in Aegean art.⁵⁵ If the figure was white, then the fresco could have depicted a female athlete wearing a male costume, perhaps a bull leaper. According to this view, the figure's substantial musculature and lack

of breast development could be explained as pre-pubertal physiology similar to that of some female gymnasts today.⁵⁶

Thus the most iconic of Minoan frescoes is also the least understood. Future testing might identify the pigments applied to the painted skin surfaces, but in the meantime, renewed study has thrown new light on the composition. Visual inspection of the fragments by Maria Shaw confirms that no black hair can be seen above the Priest-King's right shoulder. This small but significant detail indicates that the figure's head was turned to the viewer's left, as Evans believed. The reconstructions of the Priest-King as a boxer or a deity with its head facing right, appealing as they are, become untenable. Shaw suggests further that the Priest-King Fresco could represent a crowned male athlete.⁵⁷ Certainly its powerful physique seems more male than pre-pubertal female, however athletic. Conclusive evidence regarding the fresco's identity, however, remains lacking and the composition continues to elude definitive interpretation.

ATHLETES AND TAUREADORS

Other frescoes from Knossos are extremely fragmentary but offer evidence for the palace's Neopalatial pictorial program. Stucco reliefs of athletes (boxers, wrestlers, and taureadors) underscore a palatial interest in athletics,⁵⁸ and bull frescoes ornamented the palace's entrances. The north entrance passage had a monumental relief fresco of a bull-grappling scene,⁵⁹ and the west porch featured a life-size bull charging to the left above a painted imitation of a stone dado.⁶⁰ The appearance of this subject on three layers of plaster demonstrates its repeated renewal into LM III.

FRESCOES OF WOMEN

Women were prominent in Neopalatial painting at Knossos, particularly in large-scale compositions known as the Ladies in Blue and the Lady in Red.⁶¹ Relief fragments of female breasts modeled over conical cups and fragments of leashed griffins hint at divine imagery similar to that of Xeste 3, Akrotiri, Thera, discussed later.⁶²

Miniature Frescoes. Two compositions, the Grandstand Fresco and the Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco, probably belonged to a pictorial cycle decorating a room on an upper floor of the palace. Painted on a miniature scale in which the largest figures measure only 6 centimeters, the Grandstand Fresco, also known as the Temple Fresco, depicts a group of women in court costume seated about a tripartite shrine painted with downward-tapering columns and horns of consecration (Plate 1.2).⁶³ Since Evans identified an actual tripartite shrine facade built along the west side of the central court at Knossos, the Grandstand Fresco has been thought to depict a prehistoric gathering staged there.⁶⁴ Painted architectural details, however, do not exactly match the Knossos structure. Long, low courses of masonry, possibly grandstands or steps, and high masonry piers with brackets supporting wooden poles seem somewhat different from excavated remains, although a white rectangular border frames what

could be a courtyard filled with people. An alternative suggestion places the events of the fresco outside the palace.⁶⁵ The fresco's architectural setting seems palatial in scope, then, even if it is not recognizably topographic in detail.

The crowd behind and above these structures is rendered in the Minoan shorthand technique. Broad areas of color – red for males, white for females – were painted on damp plaster, and then details were picked out in black, yellow, and white paint. The event the crowd has gathered to watch, perhaps bull games, as some suggest, is not selected for representation. Rather, the people constitute the primary subject, particularly the women gathered about the tripartite shrine. These ladies wear colorful flounced skirts and short-sleeved bodices designed to expose the women's breasts. Evans characterized them from his own Victorian perspective, recognizing them as "Court ladies in elaborate toilet" who concerned themselves with jewelry and fashions.⁶⁶ Later in the twentieth century, in the wake of the women's movement, Mark Cameron identified them as attendants of a goddess-impersonator and priestesses officiating at a major public festival.⁶⁷ But lacking ritual action, the ceremony (and the priestly status of the women) remains hypothetical. These divergent readings are symptomatic of the interpretation of Minoan art, where the evidence is limited and the gaps are easily filled with unconscious assumptions that reflect the interests of the era in which they were produced.

The Grandstand Fresco's companion composition, the Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco, depicts another group of Minoan women in flounced skirts performing a slow dance before a large crowd rendered in shorthand in an outdoor setting established by olive trees (Fig. 1.10).⁶⁸ A line of youthful male figures stands on what Evans identified as a low isodomic wall but which may actually represent the paved walkways of the west court painted as if seen from above.⁶⁹ But if so, then where is the exterior palace facade? Mark Cameron alternatively suggested that two tiny fragments of an

ashlar structure represent a shrine, the setting for a ritual epiphany of a goddess, but supporting evidence for this hypothesis is thin.⁷⁰ As with the Grandstand Fresco, then, it remains difficult to recognize a topographical view of Knossos, although a palatial setting seems likely.

While admittedly fragmentary, these two frescoes present vivid depictions of social relations in Neopalatial Crete, and their importance for understanding Minoan society should not be underestimated. At a basic level, the compositions underscore the importance of communal activities in palatial life, with the palace and its environs the likely focus of events. Among the throngs that attended, elite

women occupied places of prominence, yet the communal aspect of group membership also seems emphasized, and no one individual clearly stands out as leader. While the specific nature of Minoan rulership continues to elude definition, these frescoes present good evidence for the priorities of the Minoan ruling class: public performance, elite display, and communal identity.

Landscape Frescoes from Minoan Villas

The world of nature emerges as an important subject in the villas of the Minoan elite. Surviving

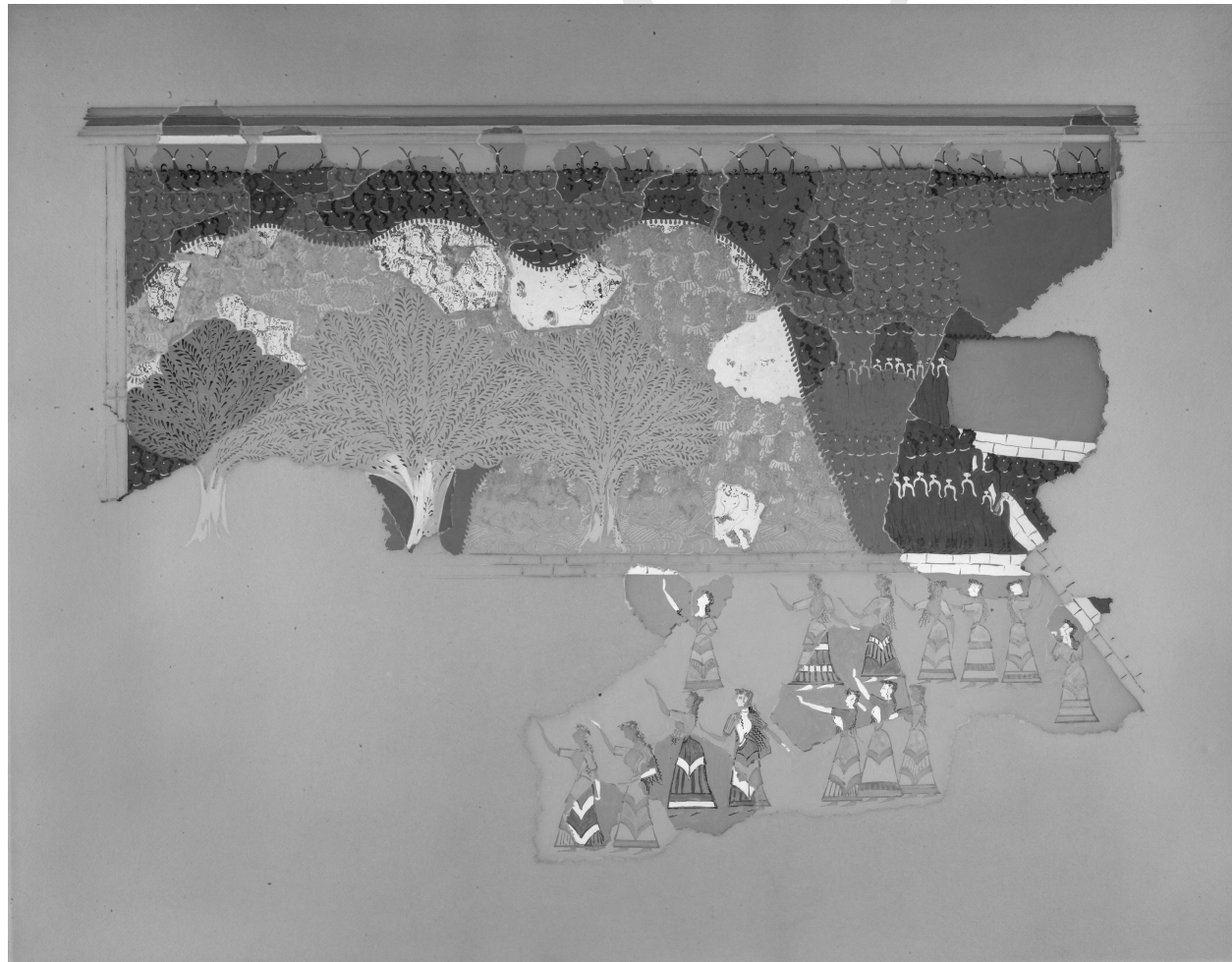


Figure 1.10 Knossos, palace: Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco. LM I, c. 1725–1500 B.C. (high chronology) or c. 1625–1450 B.C. (low chronology). Crete, Herakleion Museum (Drawing: É. Gilliéron, père. Photo: Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College)

frescoes feature vibrantly painted rocky terrain, exotic depictions of flora and fauna, and spatial conventions that defy easy comprehension. Most important, these landscapes are among the first paintings in the world to portray plants and animals in their natural environments without human presence. Produced with masterful brushwork and an expansive approach to composition, the frescoes often wrap around the walls of a room, ignoring corners and surrounding the viewer with lively depictions of nature. Their popularity as room decoration in elite estates with mixed public and private functions suggests that the art form functioned as an important form of social display. The religious symbolism incorporated into many compositions further implies that landscape painting visualized certain core religious beliefs that were foundational to the theocratic structure of Minoan palatial society.

THE HOUSE OF THE FRESCOES, KNOSSOS

Excavated by Sir Arthur Evans in 1923, the Monkeys and Birds Fresco from the House of the Frescoes at Knossos was first restored as three separate scenes. The first section depicts a monkey (perhaps an imported African vervet) climbing across a rocky landscape of dwarf irises, crocuses, ivy, and flowering reeds, all set against a red background. A second panel features a blue bird, probably a rock dove, roosting in a rocky landscape of wild peas, dwarf irises, roses, and *pancratium* lilies (Plate 1.4). The background undulates in rich red and white zones, enhancing the composition's decorative appeal. The third scene, later restored as a short frieze, depicts a second monkey hunting in a marshy landscape of papyrus plants and reeds. In 1968 Mark Cameron published additional fragments of monkeys, birds, and flowers and suggested that the three scenes belong to a single frieze extending across three walls of a room. Its subject, he proposed, was a troop of monkeys hunting for birds' eggs (CD/W 1.6).⁷¹

For Sir Arthur Evans, the Monkeys and Birds Fresco represented "the high standard of civilized life in the great days of Minoan Crete."⁷² To him the fresco was evidence of the artistic and cultural superiority of the Minoans over other Bronze Age civilizations. But the composition is also interesting for its extraordinarily abundant depiction of nature. Even though the flora are not painted with botanical realism, the wide variety of identifiable plants, each depicted in full bloom, imparts a supernatural character to the composition. Other plants exhibit fantastic combinations of floral elements (e.g., reeds sprouting papyrus flowers). The fresco, then, does not mirror nature, but instead presents a highly idealized – even eternal – landscape suggestive of supernatural power.⁷³ This careful manipulation of iconography, in light of recent re-evaluation of the fresco's likely placement within a Minoan hall on the ground floor of the House of the Frescoes, suggests that both the painting and its architectural setting may have served important ceremonial or ritual functions.⁷⁴

FRESCOES FROM AYIA TRIADA

The "Royal Villa" at Ayia Triada in southern Crete featured a small but richly frescoed chamber known as room 14.⁷⁵ Though burned in a destruction fire at the end of the Neopalatial period, details of the fresco program, which spread across three walls, can be seen in watercolor copies of the largest fragments and in scholarly reconstructions (CD/W 1.7). These show, on the north wall, the lower portion of a female figure kneeling in a lush floral landscape. This figure, long assumed to have been picking flowers, was probably kneeling before two *baetyls*, or sacred stones.⁷⁶ A mythic or supernatural context is bestowed upon this act of piety by the composition's floral iconography, in which painted violets, lilies, and crocuses bloom simultaneously despite their different flowering seasons.

Opposite this devotional composition, the south wall was painted with an expansive depiction of wild nature (Fig. 1.11). Hoofed animals (probably



Figure 1.11 Ayia Triada, Royal Villa: cat stalking a bird, fresco fragments. LM IA Final–LM IB, c. 1650–1500 B.C. (high chronology) or c. 1550–1450 B.C. (low chronology). Crete, Herakleion Museum. (Drawing: É. Gilliéron, père or fils, courtesy Harvard University Art Museums, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Gift of Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, 1926.32.48. Photo: Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College)

agrimia, Cretan wild goats) bound across a rocky landscape and wild cats stalk pheasant-like birds amid a profusion of crocuses, ivy, and other plants. The painting on the fragments reveals almost astonishing levels of naturalism. The cat, with its lowered head, pricked ears, and tense muscles, stalks its prey with carefully observed intensity. Flowering ivy spreads across undulating rocks and cascades from overhanging crevices, suggesting a steeply mountainous setting. This vivid portrayal of wild animals in their natural habitat is an outstanding example of the exceptional achievement of Minoan artists in the development of landscape painting.

The room's pictorial program was completed by a second female figure painted beside a stepped structure on the east wall (CD/W 1.8). Surviving pieces indicate that her arms were raised and her knees were slightly bent. The stepped platform is similar to others depicted on Minoan signet rings, seal impressions, and a fresco from Xeste 3, Thera (as discussed later), where they function as a raised seat for a presumably divine female figure. Accordingly, the female figure by the stepped platform in the Ayia Triada composition has been identified as a goddess or her priestess, and room 14 recognized as a religious shrine.⁷⁷

This appealing identification, however, calls attention to the limits of our current understanding of Minoan cult practice. Tripartite shrines, peak sanctuaries, and caves were clearly important foci for religious devotion, but the west and central courts of palaces also probably served ritual or ceremonial functions, as did lustral basins and *polythyra*. The plan and architectural features of room 14, however, do not quite fit these known categories of Minoan sacred architecture. Though opening onto a *polythyron*, room 14 is a remodeled space, subdivided from a larger room and possibly equipped for a bed. By this view, the frescoes of room 14 could have functioned as luxurious bedroom decoration.⁷⁸

Compounding these problems of interpretation are the many questions that surround the identification of Minoan deities. Evans was convinced that the Minoans worshipped a Great Mother Goddess.⁷⁹ This idea has had a lasting impact on the modern understanding of Minoan material culture, but evidence for a monolithic cult of a single female deity is less than convincing and textual evidence remains wanting. The wide variety of offerings made at peak sanctuaries during the Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods could suggest that Minoans worshipped a variety of deities.⁸⁰ Indeed, every other contemporary culture in the eastern Mediterranean was polytheistic. Linear B tablets from Knossos and Chania written in Mycenaean Greek supply the names of deities recognizable from later Greek cult practice. There is no guarantee, however, that the non-Greek Minoans worshipped these same gods. Further complicating matters is the fact that Minoan representations of cultic figures are not identified by textual inscriptions or individualized attributes, and it is thus difficult to distinguish divine personages from those with priestly status.⁸¹

At Ayia Triada, the presumed goddess wears an elaborate but undistinguished Minoan costume. She preserves no specific attributes and the fresco bears no explanatory inscriptions. The crocuses,

lilies, cats, and *agrimia* from the adjacent paintings could serve indirectly as attributes, marking her as a nature goddess and a Mistress of Animals (Potnia Theron), but these iconographic elements do not appear together consistently in other artworks. The Monkeys and Birds Fresco, for example, depicts crocuses and lilies but not cats and *agrimia*. These paintings must have had specific meaning for the ancient Minoans, but today we know virtually nothing of the legendary and mythic beliefs that informed their religious practice. In sum, the frescoes of room 14 at Ayia Triada have strong religious symbolism and were surely intended to impress the viewer with a powerful visual experience, but their exact meaning remains elusive.

THE CARAVANSERAI, KNOSSOS

The LM IA Partridge and Hoopoe Fresco from the Caravanserai at Knossos, believed by Evans to have been a traveler's rest, featured partridges and hoopoes in an abstract landscape of undulating bands, brightly colored pebbles, and a variety of plants, including myrtle, chicory, and perhaps a small acacia tree (CD/W 1.9). It decorated a "pavilion" apparently accessible to the public from a nearby road approaching the Knossos palace. Neither the fresco's architectural context nor its iconography is notable for religious associations, and there are few parallels for many of its pictorial motifs. The composition may therefore have served, as Evans imagined, as expensive wall décor for a well-appointed building designed to impress visitors to Knossos.⁸²

Minoan Floor and Ceiling Frescoes

The evidence for decorative floor and ceiling frescoes in Minoan Crete remains slim. In addition to the monochrome plaster floors of earlier periods, Minoans occasionally painted floors to imitate stone slabs.⁸³ Fragments resembling exotic

imported animal hides, perhaps zebra and leopard skins, possibly formed a floor fresco uncovered during the Royal Road excavations at Knossos.⁸⁴ More recently, a geometric design of spirals molded in plaster relief has been restored to a MM III floor from the north stoa of monumental Building T at Kommos (CD/W 1.10 and 1.11).⁸⁵ It has been suggested but not demonstrated that the Dolphin Fresco from Knossos was a floor fresco.⁸⁶ A similar design of octopus, dolphins, and fish dating to LM IIIA decorated the floor of a shrine at Ayia Triada.⁸⁷ From Knossos also comes a spiral fresco in relief, identified as a ceiling fresco by Sir Arthur Evans.⁸⁸

Cycladic Painting in the Neopalatial Period

Minoan cultural influence was so pervasive across the Aegean during the Neopalatial period that the term “thalassocracy,” or a rule by the sea, is often used to describe Minoan power. This concept was first described in the fifth century B.C. by Thucydides, who wrote (I. 4): “Minos, according to tradition, was the first person to organize a navy. He controlled the greater part of what is now called the Hellenic Sea; he ruled over the Cyclades, in most of which he founded his first colonies, putting his sons in as governors after having driven out the Carians.”⁸⁹ Although the historical truth of this ancient testimony remains unconfirmed, the impact of Minoan culture is clearly evident at prehistoric sites throughout the Aegean. Minoan influence became so strong in the Cycladic Islands, particularly at Akrotiri on Thera, Phylakopi on Melos, and Ayia Irini on Keos, that, as some scholars speculate, Minoans (or their descendants) may have lived there.

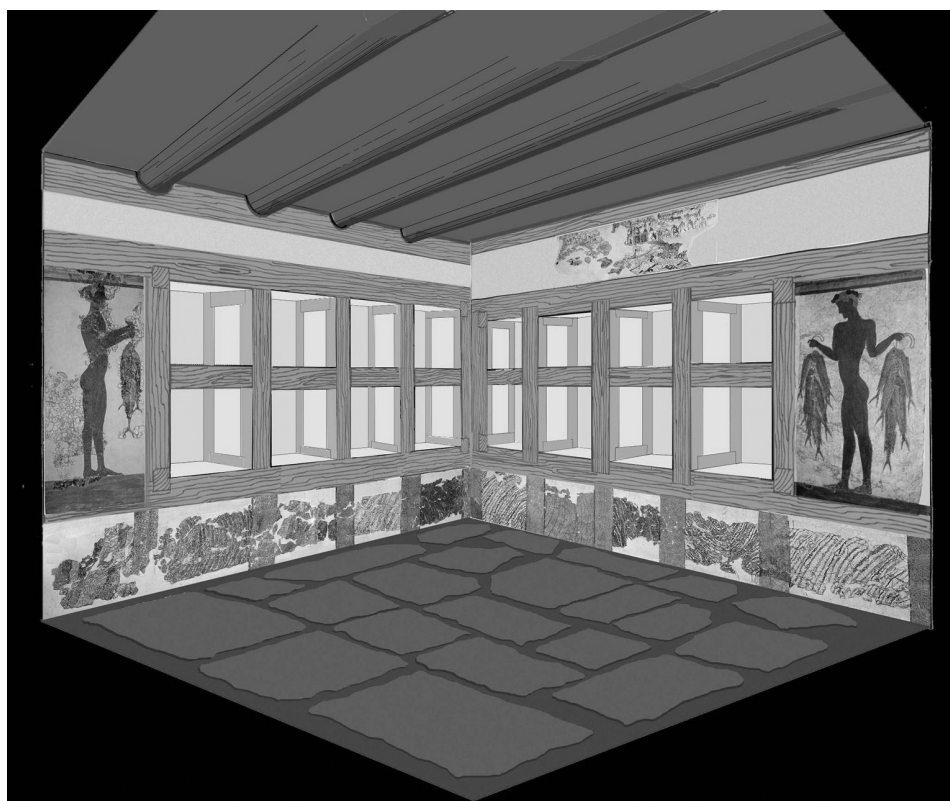
FRESCOES FROM AKROTIRI, THERA

Akrotiri, notable for its Middle Cycladic production of pictorial bichrome vases, was heavily

damaged by an earthquake early in the Late Cycladic I (LC I) period (contemporary with the early LM IA period on Crete). The town was subsequently rebuilt using technologies and features characteristic of Minoan architecture, including ashlar walls and *polythyra*.⁹⁰ The inhabitants used the Minoan Linear A script, imported large quantities of Minoan pottery, produced their own local imitations of LM IA ceramics, and followed the Minoan pattern of dense island settlement. Altogether, the picture painted by Akrotiri’s archaeological remains is of a prosperous community with many close cultural and economic relations with Crete.

A massive eruption of the Santorini volcano later in the LC I period, however, destroyed the site, reshaped the island, and probably changed the course of Minoan civilization. The eruption, estimated to have been one of the largest in human history, produced disastrous pyroclastic ash flows and tsunamis. Parts of the outer island ring were destroyed, sections of its caldera collapsed, and more than 60 meters of ash were deposited near the surviving island center. In the course of this geological cataclysm, the town of Akrotiri was entirely buried under ash. The eruption’s devastating impact, moreover, was felt elsewhere in the Aegean. Significant deposits of ash discovered on eastern Crete suggest that ash fall would have smothered or choked animals, humans, and crops alike. Further, new evidence indicates that one of the tsunamis was at least 9 meters high when it swept across Palaikastro on Crete; the same event presumably overwhelmed much of Crete’s northern and eastern coasts. The horrific effects of modern tsunamis triggered by the Krakatau eruption of 1883, the Indonesian underwater earthquake of 2004, and the earthquake off the coast of Japan in 2011 suggest that the prehistoric tsunamis had catastrophic effects on the Minoans, destroying ships and killing thousands of coastal inhabitants. The Santorini eruption, then, dealt an enormous blow to Neopalatial civilization.⁹¹

Figure 1.12 Akrotiri, Thera, West House, room 5 (restored view). LC I, c. 1630 B.C. (high chronology) or c. 1500 B.C. (low chronology). (Drawing: C. Palyvou)



What was a complete disaster for the inhabitants of Akrotiri, however, is now a time capsule for archaeologists. Better preserved than any other Bronze Age site, Akrotiri rightly deserves its reputation as the Pompeii of the Aegean. And like those of Pompeii, the houses of Akrotiri were richly adorned with frescoes. The paintings are numerous, are of excellent quality, and were fairly new when they were destroyed, having been produced after the seismic destruction of early LC I. Small bowls of pigment found in the West House even suggest that artists were at work just before the eruption began. What is more, the volcanic ash preserved the frescoes so well that their colors still appear fresh today. The frescoes of Akrotiri, then, rival those of Knossos in both quantity and quality, and they are much better preserved.⁹²

Frescoes from the West House, Akrotiri. The West House is typical of Thera construction, having a ground floor, an upper story, and a small third level opening to the flat roof. The upper story featured a large columned chamber (room 3) that gave access

to an extensively frescoed two-room suite (rooms 4 and 5) fitted with pier-and-window installations, built-in cupboards, and a plumbed lavatory (CD/W 1.12).⁹³ The window jams of room 4 were painted with panels depicting cut lilies arranged in stone vases, and its walls were embellished with life-size representations of sea captain's cabins (*ikria*) painted over faux stone dadoes, giving rise to the suggestion that the building may have been owned by a prosperous sea captain (CD/W 1.13).⁹⁴ Room 5 likewise had faux stone dadoes and, at eye level, frescoes of nude youths holding fish. Below the ceiling was a long miniature frieze depicting riverine and nautical subjects (Fig. 1.12). Finally, a large panel depicting a girl carrying an incense burner may have decorated a doorjamb between rooms 4 and 5. Together, these paintings constitute one of the richest pictorial programs known from Aegean prehistory.⁹⁵

Deciphering the program's symbolic and cultural meanings presents many challenges, but the images – these snapshots of prehistoric life – offer



Figure 1.13 Akrotiri, Thera, West House, room 5: sea raid. LC I, c. 1630 B.C. (high chronology) or c. 1500 B.C. (low chronology). Thera, Museum of Prehistoric Thera. (Photo: Nimatallah / Art Resource)

a rare view into prehistoric Aegean society. Not surprisingly for an island culture, maritime themes predominate. First and foremost, the Flotilla Fresco, a miniature fresco from the south wall of room 5, depicts a fleet of seven ships crossing an expanse of water between two Aegean towns (Plate 1.3). On the left is the departure town, a seaside village of clustered houses set in a hilly landscape suggested by brightly colored undulating bands. Townspeople in humble cloaks of wool or animal hide gather to watch the departure of the fleet, which is shown with great detail: ships are manned by large crews, captains sit in raised stern cabins (*ikria*) beside their helmsmen, and high-status passengers relax under awnings (CD/W

1.14). The richly adorned ships have decorative bow sprits, animal figureheads on the sterns, and hulls painted with lions, dolphins, rock doves, and spirals. The central ship is festooned. Interestingly, all ships but one are propelled by paddlers. This impractical and antiquated method of propulsion ignores the ships' sailing capacity and could signal a ritual event. Accompanied by leaping dolphins, the fleet passes a rocky headland guarded by a watchtower and enters the harbor of the arrival town. This settlement, significantly larger than the departure town, is fortified by an ashlar wall pierced by a gateway. Townspeople watch the approaching ships from roofs as a procession of youths meets the ships.⁹⁶

Explanations and interpretations of the Flotilla Fresco abound. Its excavator, Spyridon Marinatos, believed that the composition recorded a voyage to an exotic locale, possibly Libya, but detailed study of the fresco's many iconographic elements confirms the Aegean location of events, perhaps even the island of Thera itself. The paddling locomotion points to a short voyage, and the ship decorations suggest a festal occasion, possibly a nautical festival.⁹⁷

The north frieze, though not as well preserved, offers a counterpoint to the festive events of the Flotilla Fresco. Two scenes survive: a meeting on the hill, in which male figures in white robes gather on a rocky prominence, and a sea raid on a coastal town (Fig. 1.13). In the latter section, armed warriors march past a pastoral community of shepherds and herdsmen towards a town; below, damaged ships and drowning men struggle in the sea. The marching warriors wear boar's tusk helmets, a type of protective head gear usually associated with elite Mycenaean soldiers. Similar helmets hang from pegs on several ships in the Flotilla Fresco, and a newly restored composition from Xeste 4 at Akrotiri features a frieze of boar's tusk helmets, indicating that this emblem of prestige hunting and soldiering was also valued by the Theran population.⁹⁸ Although the aggressive character of the sea raid finds no parallel in contemporary Minoan painting, martial themes do appear on some Minoan seal impressions from Knossos, Ayia Triada, and Kato Zakros, and battle scenes are familiar from contemporary mainland art.⁹⁹ The compositional focus on men and their exploits, moreover, offers a potent contrast to the prominence of women in the Knossos miniature frescoes.¹⁰⁰

Interestingly, the subjects of the miniature frieze can be compared to the themes, formulae, and episodes of Homeric epic poetry. The fleet of seven ships, for example, brings to mind Homer's Catalogue of Ships, and the arrival town recalls Homer's descriptions of harbor towns. The

meeting on the hill could illustrate an embassy or war council, and the sea raid evokes campaigns recounted by Achilles in the *Iliad* (9.328–329).¹⁰¹ Scenes of cities at peace and war, and of country life, recall Homer's description of the shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18, 478–607).¹⁰² Extensive parallels can also be drawn between the narrative structure of the miniature frieze and that of the *Odyssey*.¹⁰³ These parallels suggest a contemporary (but lost) poetic source for the frescoes and remind the modern viewer that multiple layers of meaning may well be embedded in the pictorial imagery.

Two large-scale frescoes of nude youths holding lines of fish are also prominent in the frescoes of room 5 (Fig. 1.12).¹⁰⁴ One fragmentary panel depicts a youth in profile – an experiment in naturalism rarely encountered in Egyptian painting. His better-preserved companion, however, combines frontal shoulders with profile hips and legs to create a composite figure typical of Aegean and Near Eastern artistic convention. Although identified as fishermen at the time of their discovery, their unusual hairstyles featuring locks of hair on partially shaved scalps are now accepted as indications of their youthful, adolescent status.¹⁰⁵ More recently, attention has been drawn to the carefully observed description of their physical development: broadening shoulders, swelling arm and leg muscles, trim waists, and developing genitalia all suggest that the youths are depicted in mid-puberty.¹⁰⁶ They carry lines of valuable dolphin fish and tuna and face the room's northwest corner, where a plaster table painted with dolphins was found on a window sill. It has been suggested that the youths' actions are ceremonial, that the lines of fish constitute ritual offerings, and that room 5 is a shrine.¹⁰⁷ Yet the luxurious suite with its private toilet looks domestic in function, and the ceramic finds suggest that social gatherings may have been hosted in room 5.¹⁰⁸ As yet, no single interpretation of this complex fresco program has met widespread acceptance.

Frescoes from the Xeste 3, Akrotiri. Women's lives provide an important focus for the extensive fresco program of Xeste 3.¹⁰⁹ This building, named for its ashlar facade (from Homeric *xeste*, meaning "dressed stone"), contains approximately 535 square meters of interior space and is comparable in size to a Minoan villa (CD/W 1.15).¹¹⁰ Many of its rooms were frescoed. Newly restored scenes depict a predatory lion amid palm trees and male figures subduing a bull and a goat, but the most important paintings come from room 3, a large interior space on two floors divided by partition walls and *polythyra* and notable for its Minoan-style lustral basin (Fig. 1.14). The lustral basin (3a) on the ground floor was painted with large-scale frescoes of two young women, a veiled girl, and a shrine facade crowned by horns of consecration and a tree. The figure on the left is the "necklace bearer", a nubile young woman wearing a flounced skirt over a loose, sheer robe open in front to display

her bare breasts (Plate 1.5). Bejeweled and adorned with a crocus garland, she walks to the right with a bead necklace in her left hand. To her right is an enigmatic figure enveloped from head to foot in a sheer veil, her head partially shaved to indicate her youth. She steps to the left but turns her head back towards the shrine facade. The middle of the composition oddly shifts locations to a rocky landscape in which an injured figure, the "wounded woman", grasps a bloody foot; she holds her other hand to her forehead in a gesture of distress. This figure wears a transparent blouse with a distinctive skirt made from strips of cloth. Recognizable as a variant of the string skirt, a traditional item of clothing in European folk costume symbolizing sexual maturity, this figure is thus far unique to Aegean iconography.¹¹¹ The location of the fresco in a lustral basin – a chamber believed to have ritual functions – suggests that the depicted bloodshed may be of a ritual character, perhaps associated with a puberty

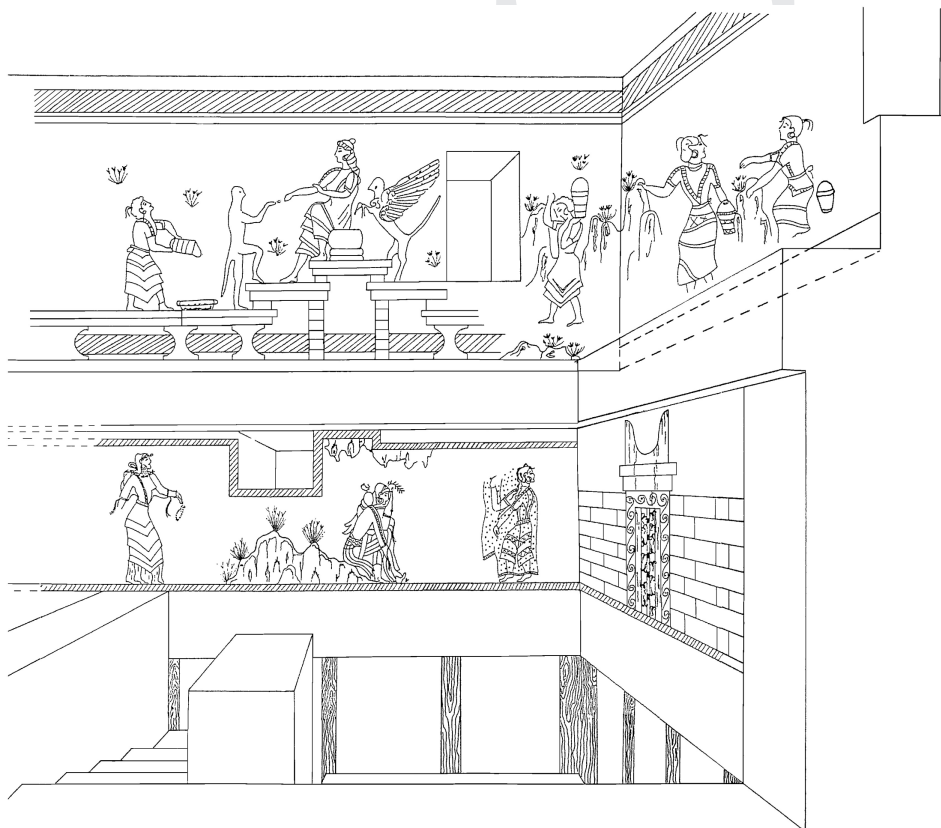


Figure 1.14 Akrotiri, Thera, Xeste 3: fresco program of room 3, in LC I, c. 1630 B.C. (high chronology) or c. 1500 B.C. (low chronology). (Drawing: A. P. Chapin after C. Doumas)

rite or (what seems more likely considering her ample bosom) a marriage rite.¹¹²

Upstairs, immediately above the lustral basin, is a painting of an enthroned goddess whose divine status as a Mistress of Animals is established by an attendant monkey and a leashed griffin (Fig. 1.14). Youthful and dressed in a Minoan-style flounced skirt and a chemise decorated with crocus blossoms, the young goddess wears necklaces of pendant ducks and dragonflies. These jewelry designs link her symbolically to an adjacent landscape fresco depicting living ducks and dragonflies and confirm her association with nature. She sits on a tripartite platform similar to that depicted in the Ayia Triada fresco on Crete and extends her hand to receive an offering of saffron from a blue monkey. The animal thus acts as the intercessor between the goddess and her human attendants, who collect crocus flowers.

Two attendants depicted on the adjacent eastern wall in the Crocus Gatherers Fresco pick crocus flowers in an undulating landscape of red, yellow, and blue rocks (Plate 1.6). Nearly perfectly preserved, the fresco's colors remain fresh and the painting is crisp. Clearly a master was at work. The crocuses (perhaps *Crocus cartwrightianus*) are painted with a rare and expensive (but now fugitive) purple color manufactured from murex mollusks. Crocus clumps spring from the undulating ground and are scattered throughout the background like wallpaper, reinforcing their symbolic importance but also alluding to the receding space of the hilly landscape, a sophisticated application of Aegean spatial conventions.¹¹³ Like the enthroned goddess, the crocus gatherers wear elaborate costumes but are younger in appearance, their open bodices revealing the early pubertal breast development of girls approaching menarche. Details of their short hairstyles indicate further that the head shaving of childhood has ended and that hair is being grown to adult lengths. As attendants to the enthroned goddess, these girls seem to serve their goddess much as the *arktoi*, or young "bears",

served Artemis – another Mistress of Animals – in Classical Athens.¹¹⁴

Upper-story frescoes depicting a procession of mature women with heavy breasts and bound hair complete Xeste 3's programmatic focus on girls and women (CD/W 1.16). These figures demonstrate that the iconographic theme of the female procession, so popular in later Mycenaean art, originated in the Neopalatial period. The women carry flowers – roses, crocuses, and white Madonna lilies – into room 3 on the upper floor, and their presence imparts a multi-generational aspect to the fresco program. Altogether, the frescoes of Xeste 3 illustrate complex narrative action that combines elements of drama with distinctively costumed actors, suggesting that the program could depict a lost mythic cycle, perhaps re-enacted by the island participants.¹¹⁵

Building Beta. Two rooms in Building Beta received fresco decoration: room 6 was painted with a monkey fresco, and room 1 featured boxing boys and antelopes (Plate 1.7). The boxing boys are physically characterized as children by their large heads, soft bellies, and light musculature. Red-skinned and nude but for exercise belts and a single glove, they display the distinctive hair locks of youth. The boy on the left wears jewelry that may signify his higher social status. Together they engage in a boxing contest that confirms the importance of athletic training in prehistoric Aegean culture. On nearby walls, exotic antelopes are masterfully painted in calligraphic outline, their body masses suggested by sinuous lines of varying thickness. Above, an undulating red band unifies the compositions, as does an upper frieze of ivy.¹¹⁶

The Spring Fresco of Building Delta. Decorating three walls of a small room in Building Delta, the lovely Spring Fresco depicts a brightly colored rocky landscape of swaying lilies and darting swallows (Plate 1.8). The lilies take the form of Madonna lilies but are colored red against the plain plaster background, their stems bending from

the weight of flowers blown by an unseen breeze. The swallows are painted calligraphically in black outline except for a spot of red at their heads, and their agile flight is depicted with uncanny skill. One bird reels in the air with its wings foreshortened in a three-quarter view; another rolls onto its back in mid-flight, wings foreshortened, its legs held tightly against its body as it engages in aerial combat against its nimble rival. The swallows all flaunt the long tail feathers of adult male birds, and their aerial acrobatics are closely observed natural behavior associated with territorial displays. The artist's command of foreshortening is a notable achievement of Theran painting and seems almost modern in its evocation of the freedom associated with flight. Yet this lifelikeness is combined with a persistent taste for abstraction in the bright primary colors used for the lilies and the rock formations that, like the swallows, seem to defy gravity. The best Aegean art thus engages a dynamic tension between abstraction and naturalism to create an artistic idiom pulsating with vibrant energy.¹¹⁷

Tools of the Trade. The tools and techniques employed by Theran artists to create their striking compositions are now better understood. Upper and lower border bands were marked off by strings snapped against wet plaster, and artists used a grid of either nineteen or twenty-one squares adapted from the Egyptian canon to establish the proportions of individual figures. Interestingly, Theran artists did not follow their own grid system as rigorously as their Egyptian counterparts but instead adapted it to the needs of the individual composition. Some artists utilized devices rather like templates or French curves to help them paint the fluid, confident lines that characterize the best Theran wall painting.¹¹⁸

CYCLADIC PAINTING ON MELOS AND KEOS

Cycladic painting is also represented by frescoes from settlements situated near key resources. From Phylakopi on Melos, a prosperous site made

rich from the obsidian trade, come fresco compositions featuring female figures, lily flowers, and the famous Flying Fish Fresco (Fig. 1.15).¹¹⁹ Like the Spring Fresco from Thera, the Flying Fish Fresco depicts the world of nature without human presence, yet its focus is on marine life. Once common in the Aegean, the flying fish soar above the lightly brushed water surface, their counterbalancing curves forming a dynamic rhythm across the narrow space of the frieze. This composition celebrates the fertility of the sea upon which the islanders depended.¹²⁰

Excavations at Ayia Irini on Keos, a settlement strategically located near the copper and silver mines of Lavrion in Attica, produced a miniature fresco similar to (and contemporary with) that of the LC I West House on Thera. Like the better-preserved Theran painting, the Kean frieze features ships, towns, and people (CD/W 1.17), but also horses and a chariot. Other fragments preserve a hunter and a deer hanging lifelessly from a pole, and white dogs chasing fallow deer (Fig. 1.16).¹²¹ This extensive, though highly fragmentary, composition connects the Minoan interest in richly detailed landscape painting with the mainland interest in the hunt, evident in contemporary art from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae and elsewhere. Interestingly, frescoes from Ayia Irini found in LC II contexts (equivalent to LM IB on Crete) also preserve scenes with subject matter drawn from nature, including dolphins and a frieze of blue-colored doves, but these compositions seem further removed from the actual animals and landscape settings that inspired them: the dolphins are abstractly colored and are set against an unpainted background, while the doves stand against a plain yellow ochre ground devoid of the varied pictorial elements that enliven earlier compositions such as the Monkeys and Birds Fresco from the House of the Frescoes at Knossos.¹²² This summary treatment of figure and ground becomes a regular stylistic feature of later Aegean painting, and thus the Ayia Irini frescoes document an emerging trend



Figure 1.15 Phylakopi, Melos: Flying Fish Fresco. LC II (ceramic equivalent to LM IB) c. 1625–1500 B.C. (high chronology) or c. 1525–1450 B.C. (low chronology). Athens, National Museum. (Photo: Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism / Archaeological Receipts Fund)

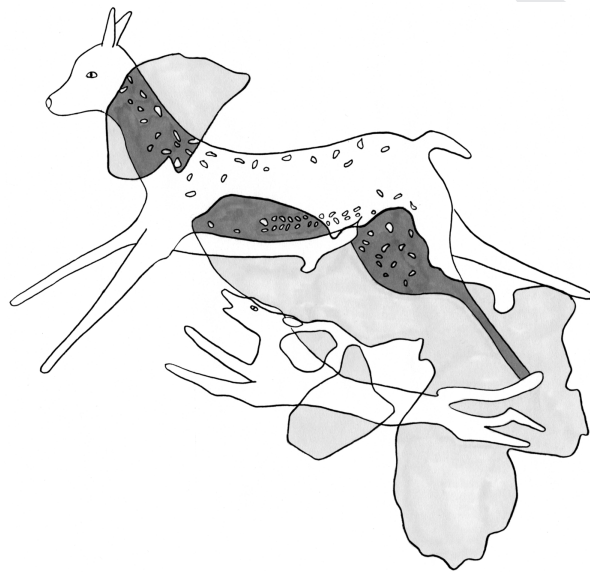


Figure 1.16 Ayia Irini, Keos, area M: dog chasing a deer, from the miniature fresco. LC I, c. 1625–1500 B.C. (high chronology) or c. 1525–1450 B.C. (low chronology). Kea, Archaeological Museum. (Drawing: L. Morgan)

towards simplification in painting of the later Neopalatial period.

MINOAN AND CYCLADIC STYLES

The relationship between Minoan and Cycladic painting is the subject of continuing study.¹²³ First, both Cycladic painting style and subject matter seem strongly related to Minoan art. Figural fresco painting first appears at Akrotiri in early LC I, equivalent in Minoan terms to early LM IA, when the town was rebuilt under Minoan influence. Earlier compositions were geometric and abstract in design, suggesting that the adoption of figural decoration owes something to the impact of Minoan culture. Yet certain elements of style have come to characterize a Cycladic school of painting, including a preference for light-colored backgrounds and the use of thin washes of paint

to create transparency, in contrast to a Minoan taste for polychrome grounds and opaque color.¹²⁴ But exceptions to this rule suggest movement and the exchange of ideas.¹²⁵ Indeed, a recent study of unusual splash-pattern fresco fragments found at Ayia Irini on Keos, at Trianda on Rhodes, and at Petras and Knossos on Crete offers compelling evidence for traveling fresco painters.¹²⁶ Given the historical mobility of painters and the persistent anonymity of Aegean art, it may yet be premature to postulate regional schools of painting.

Aegean Artists Abroad

New light was recently cast upon Aegean painting by the discovery of Minoan-style frescoes in Egypt at ancient Avaris (modern Tell el-Dab^a), the capital of the Hyksos pharaohs during the Second Intermediate period. The Hyksos were Egyptianized Asiatics of Syro-Palestinian background who seized the Egyptian crown with the fall of the Middle Kingdom and founded the Fifteenth Dynasty. These foreign kings ruled much of Egypt from their fortified capital at Avaris for more than a century, until Kings Kamose and Ahmose of Thebes expelled the Hyksos and founded Egypt's New Kingdom.¹²⁷ When frescoes were discovered at Tell el-Dab^a in 1991, they were believed to date to the period of Hyksos rule, but they have since been reassigned to the early Eighteenth Dynasty during the reign of Tuthmosis III (1479–1425 B.C.). The non-Egyptian character of the frescoes, which were found in two major deposits, is evident from the use of string impressions (indicative of the true fresco technique, in contrast to the Egyptian practice of painting on dry plaster) and by their subject matter, which includes lion and leopard hunt scenes, griffins, acrobats, palm trees, reeds, and landscape elements with characteristically Minoan “Easter-egg” pebbles.¹²⁸

The Bull and Maze Fresco from Tell el-Dab^a finds numerous parallels in Minoan painting

(Plate 1.9).¹²⁹ First and foremost, the fresco depicts bull leaping, an activity most closely associated with Minoan Crete. Contemporary Minoan images illustrate the sport's perils: fully grown bulls with unblunted horns charge at acrobats who perform leaps, somersaults, and handsprings over the bulls' backs. The sport seems impossibly dangerous and skeptics have doubted whether such stunts were ever performed, but depictions of gored and trampled acrobats mark the tragic end of some athletes.¹³⁰ Comparisons have been made to Spanish bull fighting, but closer parallels can be drawn to *Recortes* (a lesser-known style of Spanish bull fighting) and American bull fighting (practiced by rodeo clowns). In these modern contests of speed and agility bulls are unharmed, and competitors have even been known to leap over the animals' backs.

The Bull and Maze Fresco depicts at least four bulls and three acrobats, while another two figures on the left subdue a kneeling fifth bull. The animals are arranged in two levels across a maze-like background of interlocking red and black lines painted against a white ground. Laid out by snapping strings against the damp plaster, the design recalls a fresco fragment from Knossos depicting a labyrinth pattern.¹³¹ Undulating black and white bands separate the maze pattern from an upper red zone in characteristic Aegean fashion. Below, a half-rosette frieze, a motif known from Aegean palatial art, defines the composition's lower edge. The bull leapers, too, seem Aegean in identity. Computer enhancement shows that the acrobat of Plate 1.9 wears a Minoan-style arm band with spiral decoration and a cushion-shaped seal stone around the wrist. The partially shaved scalp indicated in blue with long trailing hair locks recalls Theran hairstyles and may be a sign of the leaper's youth. His yellowish skin tone is notable. For Manfred Bietak, the site's excavator, these stylistic features demonstrate the Minoan character of the paintings, which could have been

commissioned to celebrate an inter-dynastic royal marriage.¹³² But similarities with representations of bull leaping on Syrian cylinder seals of the Middle Bronze Age have been noted, and certain details of Minoan-style kilts and loincloths seem misunderstood by the painters. Parallels with Mycenaean and Cycladic art suggest that the Tell el-Dab'a painters were broadly versed in international themes and artistic conventions, and overall, the Tell el-Dab'a frescoes seem more Aegeanizing than Minoan. Indeed, the term "Minoan" might be better restricted to archaeological finds of purely Cretan origin. Other Aegean-style frescoes have been excavated from Tell Kabri in northern Israel and from Alalakh and Qatna in Syria. Recent technical studies further suggest that itinerant artists working at a variety of eastern Mediterranean sites were painting in an Aegean style and technique.¹³³ An international style patronized by palatial cultures of the Mediterranean would perhaps explain how Aegeanizing frescoes came to be painted in Egypt and elsewhere.¹³⁴

Minoan Vase Painting

Neopalatial ceramics (MM IIIB–LM I) are distinguished by a shift to a dark-on-light style of painting that contrasts the earlier light-on-dark decoration of Kamares ceramics from the Protopalatial period. This change was made possible by new technologies for clay preparation, renewed interest in burnishing, and firing at higher temperatures, resulting in harder, smoother, and more lustrous clay surfaces. Shapes include cups (conical, semi-globular, pedestalled, and straight-sided [Vaphio]), ewers, bridge-spouted jugs, rhyta, stirrup jars, amphorae, and pithoi decorated with ripple patterns, spirals, and floral motifs typically placed in registers (CD/W 1.18). Many of these motifs, particularly floral designs, show a close relationship with fresco painting.¹³⁵

LM IB VASE PAINTING AND THE DECLINE OF MINOAN CRETE

The period after the Theran eruption, from late LM IA through LM IB, is characterized by significant changes in the archaeological record. The era was perhaps longer in duration than previously believed, and ceramic sub-phases of LM IB can now be identified at some sites. A number of villas were remodeled to increase their storage and production spaces, and some ritual spaces (such as lustral basins) were filled in. The palace at Phaistos, which had been destroyed by an earthquake at the end of the Protopalatial period and only partially rebuilt, was now finished. The palace at Galatas was abandoned, but the palace at Gournia was expanded even as parts of the town remained empty. Settlements at Mochlos and Pseira seem to have grown. Trade routes shifted, but valuable commodities (e.g., ivory, copper, tin) continued to be imported from the eastern Mediterranean. Some have proposed that LM IB Crete is a period of decline, but the archaeological evidence remains mixed.¹³⁶

It is within this context of cultural change that eye-catching floral and marine designs were produced, especially on vases manufactured by Knossian workshops belonging to the Special Palatial Tradition. Vase shapes are refined and probably reflect the influence of metalwork, and the decoration shows the influence of monumental wall painting. A Floral Style jug from Phaistos by the Reed Painter, for instance, is painted with interlocking reeds growing from an undulating groundline (Fig. 1.17). The decoration, like a landscape fresco, wraps around the vase with neither beginning nor end, even extending to its neck and spout. Each leaf is carefully painted with two brushstrokes, and each stem grows sinuously upward, the tips of the leaves just crossing one another to create a vibrant abstract pattern of light and dark. Like the best Aegean painting, the vase's decoration balances lively naturalism with a striking pattern of positive and negative space.¹³⁷

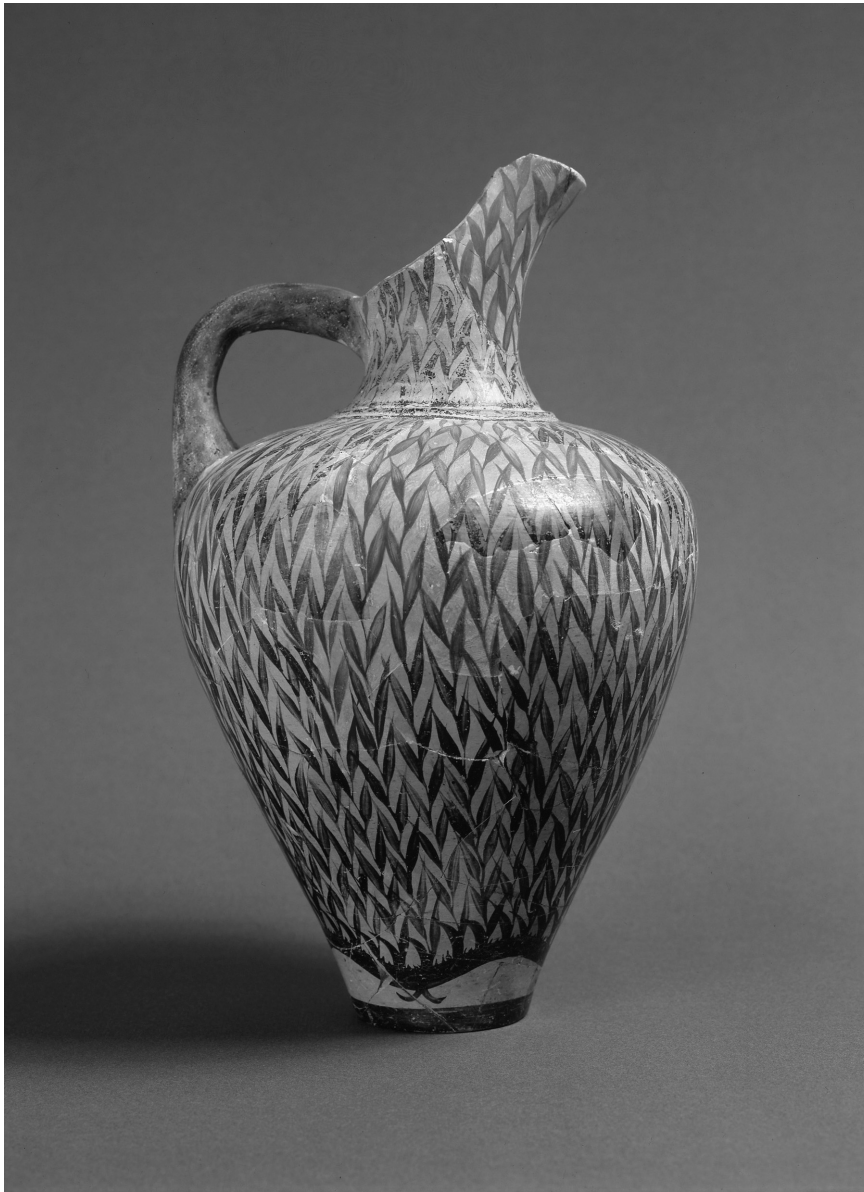


Figure 1.17 Phaistos, palace: Floral Style jug. LM IB, c. 1625–1500 B.C. (high chronology) or c. 1525–1450 B.C. (low chronology). Crete, Herakleion Museum. (Photo: Nimatallah / Art Resource, NY)

Marine Style pottery, also part of the LM IB Special Palatial Tradition, takes its name from its subject matter. Favorite subjects include argonauts, triton shells, dolphins, rocks, seaweed, and – most famously – octopuses. An eye-popping octopus appears on a splendid LM IB lentoid terracotta flask from Palaikastro, the work of the so-called Marine Style Master (Fig. 1.18). The sea creature is painted calligraphically in black against the light-colored ground of the vase, its undulating tentacles reaching out in all

directions as if to embrace the vase itself. Painted on a diagonal, the curving, swelling forms of the octopus's head are reinforced by its round, staring eyes and the many rows of circular suction cups lining its arms, so that the vase decoration as a whole complements and even enhances the spherical shape of the vase. In a case of *horror vacui* – a “fear of open space” – the areas between the undulating tentacles are filled with bits of seaweed growing from rocks, locating the living octopus in the sea while enhancing the



Figure 1.18 Palaikastro, Marine Style lentoid flask. LM IB, c. 1625–1500 B.C. (high chronology) or c. 1525–1450 B.C. (low chronology). Crete, Herakleion Museum. (Photo: Scala / Art Resource, NY)

energetic tension between positive and negative space. In sum, the octopus vase displays a masterly balance of naturalism and abstraction that characterizes the finest Aegean painting and

celebrates the native sea life that surrounded the inhabitants of Crete.¹³⁸

It has been suggested that the highly decorative vases of the Special Palace Tradition were

produced at Knossos and exported to Minoan settlements around Crete as substitutes for earlier types of prestige goods that had become scarce or unavailable in the LM IB period.¹³⁹ But this too ended with the destruction of palaces, villas, and towns across Crete at the end of LM IB, c. 1500 or 1450 B.C. The areas of devastation were many and widespread, and the human loss must have been terrible – less than 25 percent of LM I sites continue to be occupied in LM II. Even settlements in the Aegean Islands were affected. The exact timing of these destructive events remains uncertain, and natural disasters do not account for the scope of the damage. Destruction by fire is typical, so human involvement seems ensured even though the actual events remain elusive. It is possible that the Minoans succumbed to internal warfare or were overthrown by invading Mycenaean Greeks. Only Knossos emerged relatively unscathed, and when the dust had settled, the Neopalatial period was over and Minoan culture was permanently altered.¹⁴⁰

The truism that an end is also a beginning certainly describes the changes that appear in the material record after LM IB, but it is worth noting the artistic and cultural losses that accompanied the downfall of Minoan palatial civilization. Court-centered palaces and villas, *polythyra*, and lustral basins were abandoned as architectural forms, and the Linear A writing system was replaced by Linear B. Detailed bronze figurines ceased to be made, and naturalistic figural sculpture in ivory, faience, or composite materials all but vanished. Stone relief rhyta, stone chalices, and stone rhyta in the shape of animal heads disappeared.¹⁴¹ In painting, the artistic exploration of the natural world that characterizes the best Neopalatial painting, including detailed anatomical renderings of the human body in relief, artistic experiments in foreshortening, and naturalistic depictions of children and adolescents, all disappear in favor of a more formulaic and abstract approach to art.

MINOAN PAINTING IN THE FINAL PALATIAL PERIOD (LM II–III)

Knossos suffered little from the LM IB destructions that ravaged Crete and, as the most significant site remaining on the island, played an important role in the subsequent Final Palatial period (c. 1500/1450–1320 B.C.), but this stage of Minoan prehistory remains poorly understood. Even its terminology presents problems. Sir Arthur Evans believed that squatters occupied Knossos after a final destruction in LM IIIA, and this view contributed to the use of the term “Postpalatial” to describe the later phases of Cretan prehistory. But the decipherment of Linear B tablets excavated from Knossos and the Greek mainland as an early form of Greek indicates that Mycenaean Greeks were present at Knossos sometime after LM IB and that the palace functioned as a Mycenaean administrative center. The designation “Monopalatial” was, but the recent discovery of Linear B at Chania in early LM IIIB contexts points to the existence of a second Mycenaean administrative center in western Crete. The term “Final Palatial” is therefore now used to describe this third period of palatial activity on Crete.

There is little certainty as to exactly when the Mycenaeans came to Crete. Only Knossos shows evidence of functioning on a large scale in the Final Palatial period, but the building’s complex architectural history means that the more than three thousand Linear B tablets discovered in different areas of the palace remain difficult to date. Leonard Palmer presented strong arguments for a final destruction in LM IIIB and placed the tablets in this late phase, but there is a growing consensus that Linear B documents from the Room of the Chariot Tablets probably date to LM II or early LM IIIA.¹⁴² Other evidence for cultural change comes from post-LM

IB warrior graves found near the Knossos palace and in cemeteries at Archanes, Phaistos, and Chania. New funerary practices include non-Minoan tomb types, grave goods that include Mainland ceramic shapes, and burial of the elite individuals with weapons, jewelry, and bronze vessels.¹⁴³

Palace Style Ceramics

LM II ceramics reflect the growing interplay between Crete and Mycenaean Greece from c. 1500/1450 to 1425 B.C. Flat alabastra, produced on both Crete and the mainland in LM IB, became popular on Crete in LM II, and the Ephyræan goblet, a mainland shape, was produced in nearly identical forms on Crete.¹⁴⁴ Palace Style pottery also emerged late in LM IB but developed in LM II into a distinctive art form on both Crete and the Greek mainland. Favorite motifs include ivy, reeds, marine subjects, double axes, and floral designs, as seen in an imposing piri-form jar from Knossos (Fig. 1.19).¹⁴⁵ This tall, elegant, and monumental shape presents a large surface for painted decoration and features a graceful, balanced design of three luxuriant but imaginary flowers blossoming from slender, leafless stems. The design artistically hybridizes papyrus sprays with lily petals spinning into fanciful spiral flourishes. Deriving from the earlier floral designs of Neopalatial art, LM II–IIIA Palace Style painting abandons the more naturalistic representations of native plants in preference for abstract floral inventions. This trend towards greater stylization has been viewed as evidence of Mycenaean influence on Minoan painting, but Minoan art continually balanced decorative design with naturalistic observation, and the Palace Style can be understood as an increasing interest in the abstract, formal elements of design already present in “native” Minoan taste.

Frescoes from Knossos in the Final Palatial Period

Not surprisingly, numerous frescoes from Knossos date to its latest period of occupation. It might be expected that Mycenaean overlords would have made their presence felt by remodeling the palace to suit their needs, but evidence for this form of activity seems minimal. Instead Knossos retained much of its Minoan appearance, and many frescoes of the Final Palatial period are conservative in subject and technique.

THE CUPBEARER AND PROCESSION FRESCOES

Generally dated by style to LM II or IIIA (c. 1500/1450–1350 B.C.), the Cupbearer Fresco preserves a life-size, iconic Minoan male figure: youthful, idealized, and nude but for an elaborately patterned, belted kilt. With a broad torso and a trim waist, the curving contours of his body suggest the swelling muscles of an athletic physique (Fig. 1.1). His black hair is long, and his skin is dark red. He wears a lentoid seal stone around his wrist and carries a large conical rhyton, the ritual vessel used to make liquid offerings that gives the fresco its name. The painting is linked by theme and scale with fragments of a procession fresco found in situ on the walls of the Corridor of the Procession. Burned in the final destruction fire, the east wall preserves the feet and lower bodies of sixteen men and one woman converging upon a female figure – perhaps a goddess, as Evans imagined, or a priestess or some other woman of elite status (CD/W 1.19). Fringe (?) hanging beside her may constitute an offering of cloth. The men’s costumes are similar to robes worn by figures in the LM IIIA Ayia Triada sarcophagus (see Fig. 1.22), and at least one figure may wear a hide skirt. Farther along the hallway were three additional male figures wearing belted kilts and carrying offerings like the Cupbearer. The corridor’s west wall preserved the feet of another eight



Figure 1.19 Knossos, palace: piriform Palace Style jar with papyrus-lily decoration. LM II or IIIA, c. 1500/1450–1300 B.C. Crete, Herakleion Museum. (Photo: Hirmer Archives)

males in long robes and perhaps three female figures, all processing as if entering the palace.¹⁴⁶

From these extant remains, Evans imagined an extensive program of more than five hundred processional figures arranged in two registers, on the model of similar compositions in Egyptian art.¹⁴⁷ While there is little evidence for such a grand scheme, the debt to Egyptian art remains clear: the subject of offering bearers follows Egyptian models, the Minoan color convention derives from Egyptian art, and even Minoan proportions for the human figure develop from the Egyptian canon.¹⁴⁸ Yet the vitality of the human form realized in the Cupbearer Fresco remains a distinctly Aegean achievement. The communal character of the Cupbearer and Procession Frescoes, moreover, is unmistakable. One figure after another, both male and female, marches alongside the human visitor, serving as signposts and guiding the visitor into the heart of the palace. The palatial ideology of public performance, elite display, and communal identity conveyed by the miniature frescoes of Neopalatial Knossos, then, is reinforced by the imagery of the Cupbearer and Procession Frescoes.

The dating of the Cupbearer and Procession Frescoes remains problematic. The corridor walls were constructed in the Neopalatial period and remained in use until the palace's final destruction in the Final Palatial period,¹⁴⁹ so the frescoes could date to either era. The composition, moreover, sends mixed messages.¹⁵⁰ Neopalatial parallels can be found for the vases, impressed string lines in the textile patterns, and the costumes.¹⁵¹ The procession theme appears in Neopalatial art at Xeste 4, which had a staircase painted with a file of kilted male offering bearers.¹⁵² Even the Cupbearer's swelling muscles closely recall the athletic physiques of male figures in Theran art. But dress designs find good parallels in LM II–III pottery motifs, similar wavy bands appear in Mycenaean procession frescoes, and the repetitive quality of the composition could be Mycenaean.¹⁵³ Recent investigation suggests that comparison with images of the Keftiu in

Egyptian tomb paintings contemporary with LM II–III A does not offer a diagnostic tool for dating the fresco.¹⁵⁴ At this point, given the current understanding of the development of Minoan art, it is not possible to distinguish between the two phases, but if the Cupbearer Fresco is to be dated to LM II–III A, then it seems odd that no other Final Palatial period fresco, whether from Crete or Mycenaean Greece, preserves a similar sensitivity to the athletic male physique.

THE TAUREADOR FRESCO

Traditional Minoan themes are more clearly blended with later artistic style in the Taureador Fresco. The painting, one of the most famous from the Minoan world, depicts a team of acrobats leaping over a charging bull (Fig. 1.20).¹⁵⁵ A white-skinned acrobat grasps the bull by the horns, a red-skinned leaper performs a handspring over the bull's back, and a third athlete with white skin, more fragmentary than the others, prepares to catch the tumblers. Each taureador wears a male Minoan costume of a belted loincloth with a codpiece and calf-high boots. Long hair is unbound, arm bands adorn the wrists and upper arms, and some figures wear necklaces. The brown and white bull is rendered with long curving lines and charges in the flying gallop pose first encountered in the glyptic art of the Protopalatial period. Fragments from at least three other panels preserve pieces of three bulls and seven leapers.¹⁵⁶

Evans believed that the red and white skin tones distinguished male from female athletes, but recent attention focuses on the composition's ambiguous depiction of gender. The anatomical renderings of the red- and white-skinned figures seem more alike than different, and it has been suggested that skin color may not refer to sexual distinctions but instead could function as a narrative device identifying different stages of a bull jump.¹⁵⁷ Alternatively, the white figures have been interpreted as boys of pre-initiatory status, as gender-neutral adolescents, and as grown men.¹⁵⁸ It has also been argued that



Figure 1.20 Knossos, palace: Taureador Fresco. LM II or IIIA, c. 1500/1450–1300 B.C. Crete, Herakleion Museum. (Photo: G. A. Bauslaugh)

the similar body types of the red and white bull leapers indicate the use of a “Knossian template”, an hourglass form used as the model for both male and female figures upon which details of hair, costume, and pose were added.¹⁵⁹ This idea, if correct, illustrates Ernst Gombrich’s classic notion of the adapted stereotype and demonstrates the growing impact of the schematic form in art of the Final Palatial period. The bull leapers of the Taureador Fresco thus stand in sharp contrast to the individualized proportions of the children, adolescents, and adults depicted in Neopalatial art, and this decline in figural naturalism is a characteristic of the art of the later Late Bronze Age.¹⁶⁰

THE THRONE ROOM FRESCOS

The frescoes from the throne room also preserve Neopalatial cultural and artistic traditions into the Final Palatial period (Plate 1.10).¹⁶¹ Discovered in situ in the first weeks of excavation in April 1900, the frescoes bear the marks of the intense burning that engulfed Knossos in its final destruction (CD/W 1.20). As restored, the decoration features two antithetical pairs of recumbent, wingless griffins: the first pair flanks a doorway leading from the back service rooms into the throne room proper, and the second pair (though fragments of only one griffin survive) guards a stone throne

carved in the shape of a mountain peak. Entry into the throne room is from an anteroom frescoed in LM IIIA with bulls that in turn opened through pier-and-door partitions onto the central court. A low stone bench runs around the throne room, and a lustral basin (later filled in) is found on the south side. Evans believed that the throne room complex was a late intrusion into the palace plan, but a preliminary report of renewed excavation in the complex indicates that its architectural history dates to MM II or III. Extensively remodeled in the Neopalatial period (MM III–LM IA) and again in the later history of the palace (perhaps LM IIIA), the frescoes belong to the third and last phase of the throne room’s complex architectural history.¹⁶²

The griffins recline in an abstractly rendered landscape of flowering reeds, a palm tree, and undulating red and yellowish-white bands. Though heavily worn, the griffins reveal some unusual experiments in Aegean painting: cross-hatching along their lower bodies may preserve a rare Aegean attempt at shading, and blue streaks painted on one griffin’s head may represent feathers. Its beak was even painted yellow and covered with red speckles.¹⁶³ An imitation stone dado frames the lower border of the fresco, and incurved altars were painted on either side of the throne.

Although painted in the period of presumed Mycenaean rule, the iconography of the throne room remains traditionally Minoan. Griffins often appear in Neopalatial art in association with a female figure (presumably a deity), as in Xeste 3, Thera.¹⁶⁴ The Knossos throne room, moreover, was used continuously (albeit in various modified forms) from the Protopalatial through the Final Palatial periods. The surviving frescoes, then, may well represent a late renewal of earlier compositions, and one might wonder why the Mycenaean Greek administration would permit long-established Minoan traditions to continue at Knossos relatively unchanged. Perhaps a parallel can be found in Alexander the Great, who – more than a thousand years later – established himself in Egypt as pharaoh rather than attempt to transform Egypt, a far older culture, into a Greek polis. The Mycenaean overlords may have been similarly wise.

“LA PARISIENNE” AND THE CAMP STOOL FRESCO

While militant themes emerge in the Shield Fresco¹⁶⁵ and the Palanquin-Charioteer Fresco,¹⁶⁶ the Camp Stool Fresco reflects Mycenaean ceremonial activities.¹⁶⁷ As restored, the composition depicts a group of men wearing long robes with diagonal stripes and seated in pairs on folding camp stools, facing one another and raising a chalice or a long-stemmed kylix as if toasting (CD/W 1.21). The figures are arranged in registers against solid yellow and blue backgrounds, and at least two women painted on a larger scale were present. The better preserved is the famous “La Parisienne,” thus dubbed because her large eye, red lips, luxuriant black hair, and elaborate costume were equated with Parisian sophistication (Fig. 1.21). Her face is heavily outlined in black, indicative of the fresco’s later date, and extant portions of her striped costume do not seem to depict sleeves and arms. It is possible that La Parisienne belongs to a class of figures not intended to represent a living individual.¹⁶⁸

Alternatively, the sacral knot behind her neck implies a priestly identity, and the figure could be wearing a cloak that covered the arms. The relationship between La Parisienne, her female companion, and the mostly male gathering remains uncertain, though the formal arrangement of paired male figures with raised cups suggests the depiction of a drinking ceremony.¹⁶⁹ The use of registers, neutral grounds, and different scales for figures is new to Minoan painting but recalls Egyptian art and anticipates later Mycenaean painting.¹⁷⁰

These frescoes suggest both continuity with earlier Minoan traditions and elements of innovation in the face of Mycenaean domination of the Aegean. Traditional themes, particularly bull frescoes and the griffins of the throne room, suggest the maintenance of selected time-honored imagery and perhaps indicate that some elements of Minoan cult practice continued under the new Mycenaean administration. But the earlier Minoan emphasis on public performance, elite display, and communal identity seems changed in that the crowds and panoramic views of society presented in the miniature frescoes are no longer selected for representation. Instead, the Camp Stool Fresco suggests a new emphasis on male-dominated, regimental gatherings. The Palanquin-Charioteer Fresco, the Shield Fresco, and the kylikes of the Camp Stool Fresco indicate that the Mycenaean introduced elements of their own material culture to the palace’s fresco program. A stylistic preference for repeated pictorial motifs – taureadors, griffins, and toasting men – set against simpler or monochromatic backgrounds emerges in the later frescoes, and the human figure generally became simplified into a standardized schematic form. These features, which are further developed in Mycenaean painting of the Greek mainland, could reflect renewed artistic influence from Egypt. The late frescoes of Mycenaean Knossos thus represent both the end of Minoan monumental art and the emergence of a Mycenaean tradition for fresco decoration.



Figure 1.21 Knossos, palace: La Parisienne Fresco. LM II or IIIA, c. 1500/1450–1300 B.C. Crete, Herakleion Museum. (Photo: Nimatallah / Art Resource, NY)

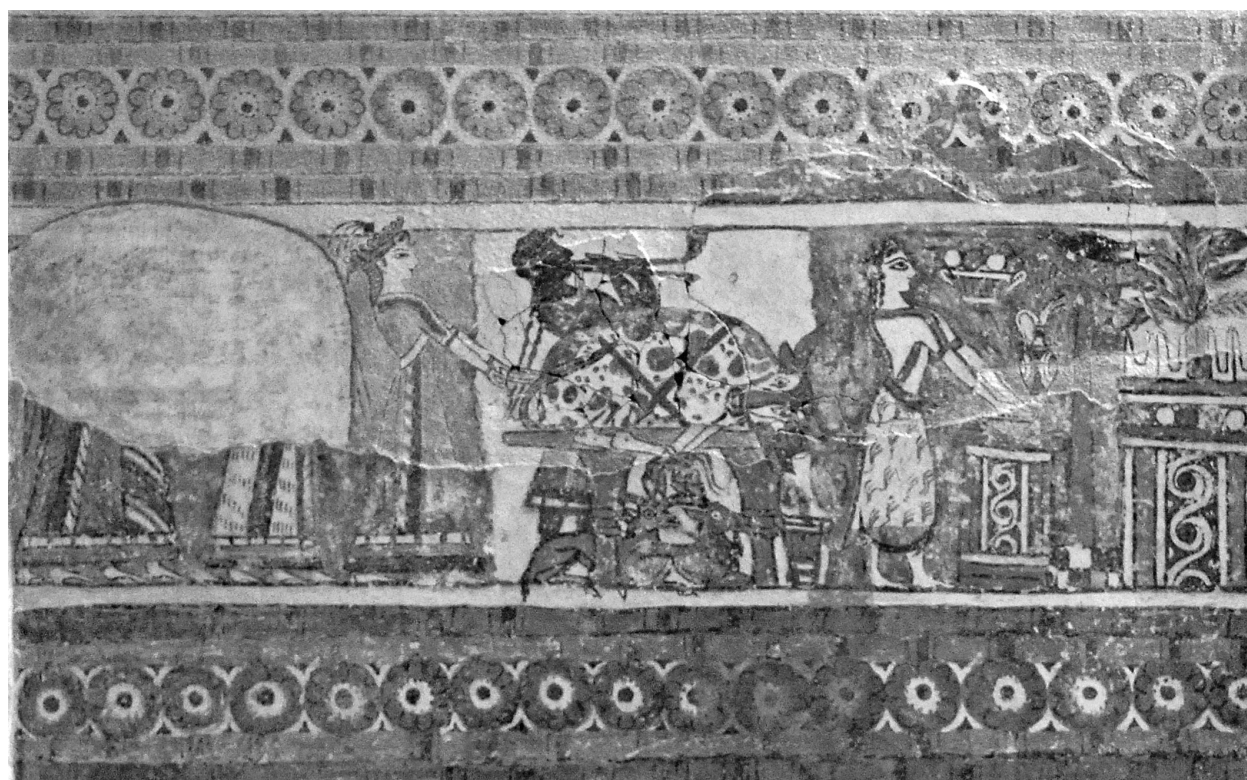


Figure 1.22 Ayia Triada: sarcophagus, side B. Early LM IIIA2, c. 1350 B.C. Crete, Herakleion Museum. (Photo: A. P. Chapin)

LM IIIA Painting from Ayia Triada

Only Ayia Triada has produced Late Minoan paintings comparable to those from Knossos. The site's recovery from the destructions of LM IB is marked by the construction in LM IIIA (c. 1425–1300 B.C.) of a monumental stoa, a shrine painted with a Marine Style floor fresco, and a megaron-like structure built over the remains of the earlier Minoan villa.¹⁷¹ A LM IIIA fresco deposit yielded fragments of processional figures and a scene of a woman leading two deer towards an altar,¹⁷² but the most remarkable artistic monument remains the painted limestone sarcophagus (Plate 1.11; Fig. 1.22). Discovered in 1903 in a tomb recently re-dated to early LM IIIA2, the Ayia Triada sarcophagus was fitted from limestone plaques, plastered, and frescoed. It belongs to a tradition of chest-shaped clay coffins known as *larnakes*, but the shape and material of this exceptional example find parallels in Egyptian

stone sarcophagi carved for noble families of the Eighteenth Dynasty.¹⁷³

The paintings, which are nearly complete, present a complex program of funerary scenes framed by friezes of running spirals, rosettes, dentils, and variegated stone patterns. The front panel (side A) is divided into two halves (Plate 1.11). To the right, a procession of three men in hide skirts carries models of calves and a boat to an armless figure standing before a structure, generally interpreted as the deceased before his tomb. To the left, a woman in a hide skirt at the head of another short procession pours liquid into a krater placed between two monumental double axes supported by stone stands; to the rear, a male musician in a long robe plays a lyre. The two scenes are distinguished by alternating white and blue background color and by their back-to-back outward processional movement, yet they are also linked by similarities in scale, costume, and a shared groundline. Side B depicts female processional figures, a bull

sacrifice, and a woman extending her hands over an altar set before a horned structure with a small tree (Fig. 1.22). Again, the vignettes seem separate yet thematically related. Finally, both ends of the sarcophagus were painted with pairs of female figures riding in chariots, one drawn by griffins and the second by *agrimia* fashioned from horses.¹⁷⁴

Details of the scenes mix Minoan and Mycenaean iconography, yet their character also seems influenced by Egyptian art. The costumes, monumental double axes, altar, and horned structure all seem thoroughly Minoan in inspiration, while the chariots and bull sacrifice look forward to similar subjects in Mycenaean painting. But the presentation of offerings to the armless figure is strikingly similar to contemporary Egyptian funerary images of offering bearers and the deceased in anthropoid coffins.¹⁷⁵ The painting style, too, seems less Minoan. The figures stand firmly on groundlines and fill the height of the registers in a manner that recalls Egyptian art. Backgrounds are neutral. Architectural and landscape elements are reduced to a minimum and serve as foils to human activity.¹⁷⁶ This artistic mixture of the old, the new, and the foreign characterizes the rapidly shifting cultural context that defines Mycenaean Crete.

Non-Palatial Painting in LM III Crete

The final destruction of the palace at Knossos brought an end to fresco painting on Crete, but even before then, ceramicists embraced pictorial painting in their decoration of the clay *larnakes* used as coffins in LM III Crete.¹⁷⁷ Their decorative programs draw upon earlier Minoan wall painting, but in contrast to the Egyptianizing style of the Ayia Triada sarcophagus, the non-palatial ceramic painters favored imaginative scenes of plants, animals, and people framed by abstract designs, especially running spirals and wavy lines. A LM IIIA2 chest *larnax* with a gabled lid from Palaikastro, for example, divides the long side of the sarcophagus

into two panels (Fig. 1.23). On the left, two panchaetium lilies spring from an undulating ground on either side of a post supporting horns of consecration and a double axe, Minoan religious symbols here presented in a funerary context. In comparison to the swaying lilies of the Spring Fresco from Akrotiri, Thera, the *larnax* lilies are abstract and emblematic. To the right, a winged griffin stands on rocky ground before a lone papyrus plant in what could be a vase painter's recollection of the throne room frescoes from Knossos; horns of consecration fill the upper space of the panel. The reverse of the coffin is painted with panels depicting a bird and a dolphin-like fish deriving from Marine Style decoration.¹⁷⁸ Many of the symbols and devices of the Neopalatial Minoan fresco painters thus reappear in a continuing tradition of LM III non-palatial painting, but in creative combinations and rendered in a distinctive manner that is indebted to Palace Style vase painting – that is, abstract, abbreviated, and emblematic.

MYCENAEAN FRESCO PAINTING

Monumental painting on the Greek mainland, as on Crete, was dependent on the rise of palatial civilization, but Mycenaean statehood, as represented in the archaeological record by palaces, citadels, and administrative documents written in Linear B, cannot be documented before Late Helladic (LH) IIIA, c. 1425–1300 B.C. Earlier, the prominence of weaponry in Middle Helladic (MH) III–LH IIB funerary remains suggests the existence of a warrior elite who later built heavily fortified citadels. Yet the decipherment of Linear B, a syllabic script preserving an early form of Greek, reveals that palace bureaucracies focused on non-military affairs, particularly economic production, and that the Mycenaeans, like the later Greek city-states, were organized into rival polities connected by language, culture, and trade. Mycenaean history and literature



Figure 1.23 Palaikastro, *larnax*. LM IIIA2, c. 1350–1300 B.C. Crete, Herakleion Museum. (Photo: Hirmer Archives)

unfortunately do not survive, and even though later Greek myths and legends probably owe something to prehistoric tradition, classical tales cannot be trusted as historical sources. Mycenaean culture thus remains stubbornly ahistorical, and fundamental questions about this warrior people remain difficult to answer. For these reasons, pictorial painting offers important information about Mycenaean cultural identity. Palatial complexes constructed in LH IIIA–B at Mycenae, Tiryns, Pylos, and Thebes were extensively frescoed, and these wall paintings functioned as important media of visual communication. This rich artistic tradition can thus be examined as an expression of Mycenaean culture, both at the local level and across regions.

The Rise of Mycenaean Painting

The Early Mycenaean period of MH III–LH IIA, also known as the Shaft Grave era, is known primarily from its tombs and cemeteries, some of which were filled with rich grave goods that presumably identify local chieftains vying for regional power. Few traces of monumental architecture, however, survive from this formative stage, and consequently, early fresco painting remains virtually unknown. It is possible that the first Mycenaean rulers lived in humble dwellings without fresco decoration and spent their accumulated wealth on fancy tombs and rich grave goods. Yet monochrome plasters painted in various colors were found in possible late MH contexts at Tiryns, and fresco fragments

dating to LH II were also reported.¹⁷⁹ Two small plaster fragments painted with plant (?) motifs were also found at Mycenae under the floor of the east lobby in LH IIA contexts, demonstrating that at least one Mycenaean building contemporary with Neopalatial Crete was decorated with pictorial frescoes (CD/W 1.22).¹⁸⁰ Finally, two pieces of relief fresco depicting a seated woman were identified by Gerhart Rodenwaldt from archaeological material excavated by Heinrich Schliemann at Mycenae or Tiryns (CD/W 1.23). It is tempting to conclude that these fragments were contemporary with similar relief frescoes from Neopalatial Crete and Thera, but unfortunately the fragments are now lost.¹⁸¹ These bits of evidence suggest that patrons from the Argolid could have played a key role in introducing pictorial painting to the aspiring elite of the Greek mainland. Additionally, new excavations at Iklaina, near Pylos in Messenia, have produced thousands of fresco fragments from a monumental Cyclopean terrace building dating to LH IIB–IIIA₁. A naval scene with a boat similar to those depicted in the Theran Flotilla Fresco and fragments of female figures are among those preserving pictorial decoration.¹⁸²

Mycenaean Frescoes of LH IIIA

In contrast to the rarity of LH I–II frescoes, evidence for fresco painting accumulates as monumental construction became more widespread in LH IIIA, c. 1425–1300 B.C. Palaces were constructed at Mycenae and Tiryns where they were enclosed by Cyclopean fortifications; and at Pylos, a new palatial complex replaced a (Minoanizing?) ashlar building. Mycenaean palaces served similar functions to their court-centered Minoan predecessors (administration, ceremony, production, and storage) but were organized around a different architectural unit known as a megaron, comprised of a columned porch, vestibule, and throne room. One such megaron replaced the Minoanizing mansion

at Phylakopi, Melos, in the Cycladic Islands, demonstrating the rise of Mycenaean power in the Aegean. Mycenaeans also built monumental tholos tombs for elite burials at major settlements, particularly at Mycenae. By LH IIIA the finest tombs featured ashlar masonry and decorated facades. Altogether, the extensive architectural and engineering works of Mycenaean Greece can rightly be said to anticipate the great achievements of classical antiquity.¹⁸³

THE THEBAN PROCESSION

Despite the new construction, LH IIIA frescoes are rarely discovered in sealed, stratified deposits. A female procession fresco uncovered in a palatial building at Thebes, however, may date to LH IIIA and offers an important example of the emerging Mycenaean artistic idiom.¹⁸⁴ As restored by Helga Reusch, the fresco depicts nine women, each life-size and clad in Minoan-style costume with colorful flounces and short-sleeved bodices exposing their breasts (Plate 1.12). The women carry sprigs of flowers, stone vases, and pyxides, and each figure is richly bejeweled with multi-strand necklaces and bracelets. Their hair is elaborately arranged, and, as a group, they preserve the image of beauty and luxury carefully cultivated by earlier generations of Minoan and Cycladic women. Reusch believed that the Theban ladies carried their offerings towards an altar or a representation of a goddess, but these pictorial elements cannot be identified among the surviving fragments.¹⁸⁵

The female procession quickly became a favorite theme in Mycenaean painting, appearing in later frescoes from Mycenae, Tiryns, and Pylos.¹⁸⁶ But the subject is not entirely a Mycenaean invention. Rather, the recently restored procession fresco of Xeste 3, Thera, demonstrates its source in Neopalatial art (CD/W 1.16). The horizontal wavy bands in the background of the Theban procession, moreover, recall the mostly-male Procession Fresco from Knossos, which adorned the palace walls in the LM IIIA era of Mycenaean rule

and could have served as a model for the Theban composition.

Stylistically, the Theban Procession Fresco exhibits an increasingly schematic approach to the human figure. The women process to the right with their heads and feet facing the direction of movement, but their flounced skirts are incongruously depicted from the front. Some are awarded a formulaic profile view with folded shoulders and a single large breast protruding beyond the arms; others are represented with frontal shoulders and waists but without breasts, and little attempt is made to harmonize the disparate body parts. In comparison, the artist of the LC I Necklace Swinger from Xeste 3, Akrotiri, endeavored to rationalize his composite view of the human form by suggesting a twist in the torso through costume

details and arm movement (Plate 1.5). While these Thera artistic solutions do not succeed in creating an organic form, they imply that the earlier artist was attempting to achieve a greater sense of lifelikeness. This pursuit of naturalism does not continue in Mycenaean painting, but is replaced by artistic formulae that suggest figural individuality through details of costuming.

THE RAMP HOUSE FRESCOES FROM MYCENAE

Additional evidence for LH IIIA painting is offered by fresco fragments discovered in mixed contexts under and around the Ramp House at Mycenae (Fig. 1.24).¹⁸⁷ One fragment preserves women looking out a window (Fig. 1.2); others belong to a fragmentary procession of life-size

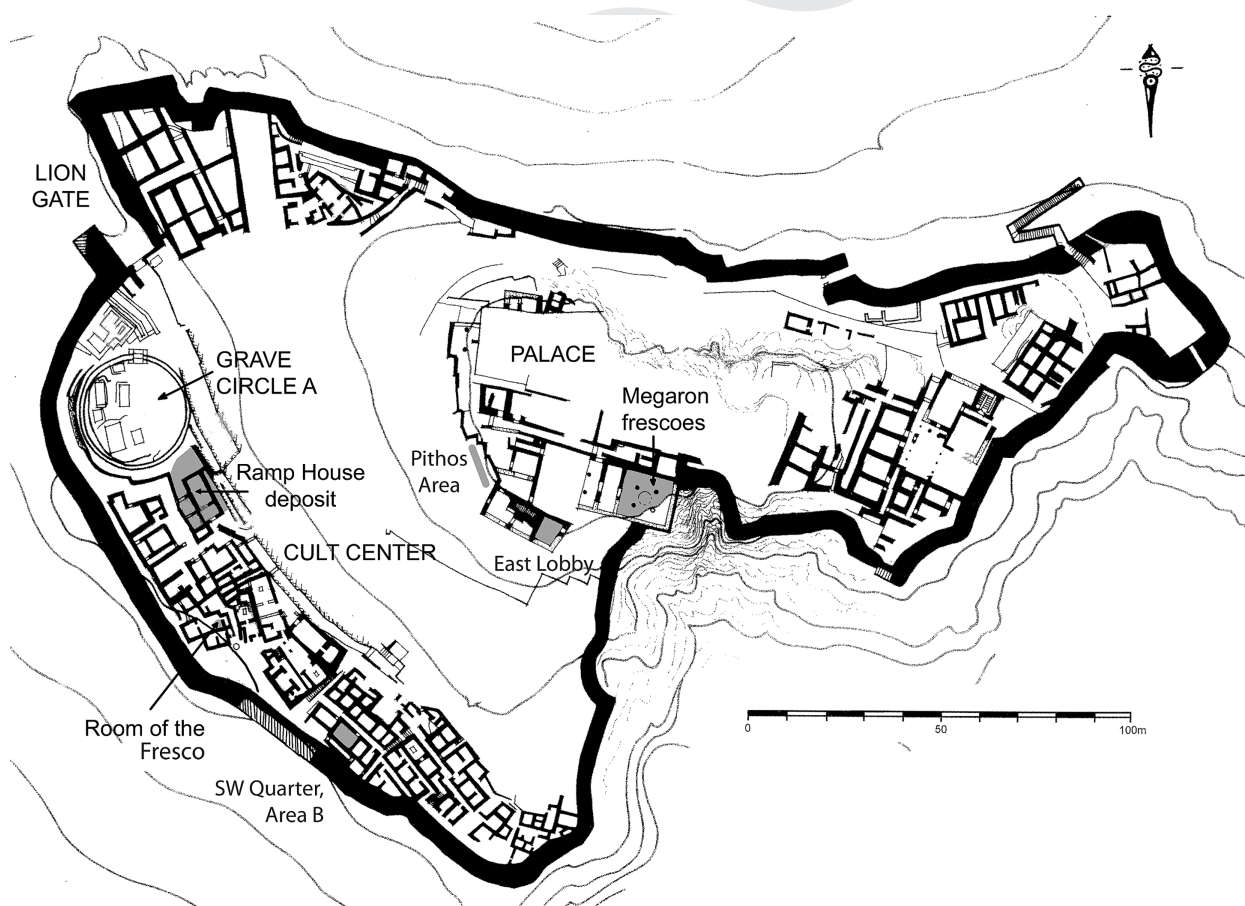


Figure 1.24 Mycenae, plan of the citadel and palace showing find-spots of the frescoes. (Drawing: After S. Postgate with additions by E. French, © Mycenae Archive)

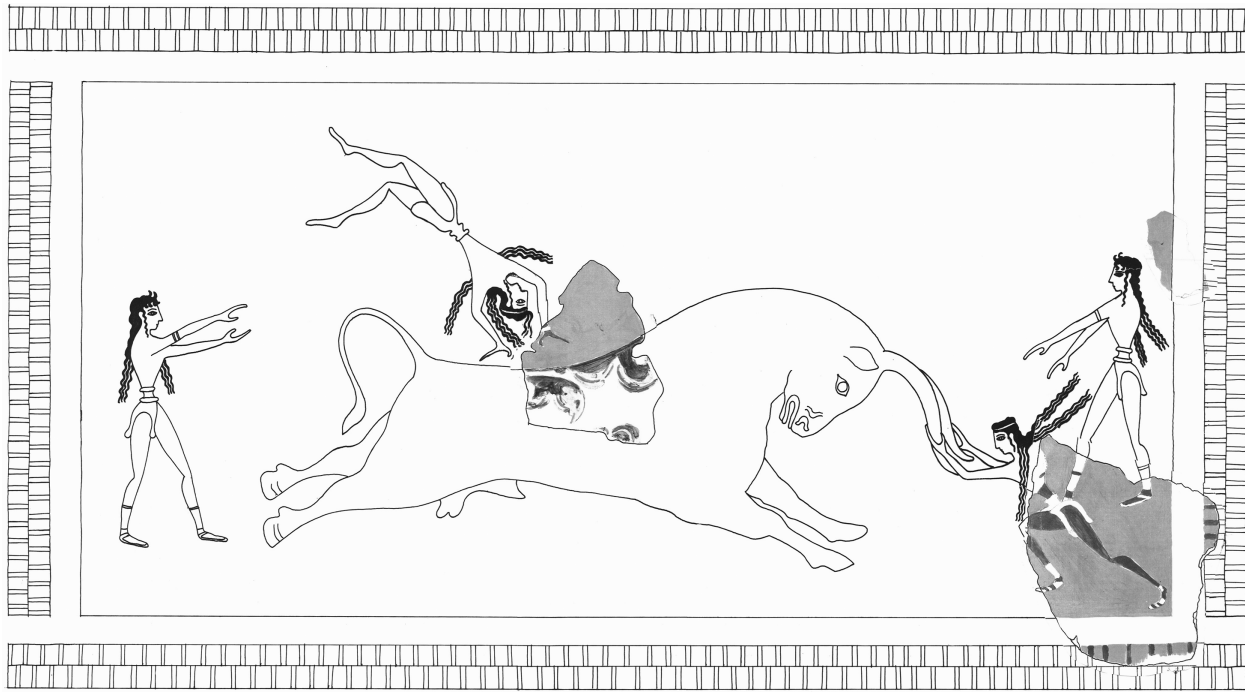


Figure 1.25 Mycenae, Ramp House deposit: Bull Leaping Fresco. LH IIIA, c. 1425–1300 B.C. Athens, National Museum. (Restoration: M. C. Shaw. Drawing: G. Bianco)

women similar to that from Thebes.¹⁸⁸ The best-preserved composition, however, depicts scenes of bull leaping painted in a small (almost miniature) scale on separate panels.¹⁸⁹ One section reconstructed from three fragments shows a taureador in mid-leap over a spotted bull's back; two other taureadors confront the beast head-on (Fig. 1.25). Like the Taureador Fresco from Knossos, no setting is indicated, and the figures are painted against a neutral yellow ochre background set off by a painted frame. Similarly, both compositions use dark wavy lines to suggest hair growth on the colored spots and indicate growth rings on the bull's hooves. These points of comparison suggest not only that the two frescoes are likely to be contemporary with one another, but also that there was communication among the artists and patrons of Mycenae and Mycenaean Knossos. Since bull imagery was closely connected with palatial authority at Knossos even in the LM II–IIIA period of Mycenaean rule, it is possible that the kings of Mycenae, when searching for

an iconography of power, selected the taureador theme as a venerable symbol of palatial authority and prestige – at least until the power represented by Knossos had collapsed for good. It may be no coincidence that bull-leaping imagery all but disappears from Mycenaean painting after the final destruction of Knossos (in late LM IIIA or early IIIB). Bull-leaping compositions represented by the Ramp House frescoes and by an early fragment of a taureador from Pylos¹⁹⁰ were not renewed in LH IIIB, leaving only the Taureador Fresco from Tiryns, notable for its clumsy rendering of the bull's tail, as the sole surviving illustration of the theme in later Mycenaean wall painting.¹⁹¹

OTHER LH IIIA FRESCOES

Dating other frescoes to LH IIIA (c. 1425–1300 B.C.) is difficult. Rodenwaldt's assignment of frescoes to the Older Palace at Tiryns is based primarily on stylistic considerations that have since been questioned.¹⁹² More likely to date to the fourteenth century are fragments found outside the palace at

Pylos or used as fill material in its LH IIIB construction. Themes drawn from nature, nautical imagery, architectural facades, warriors, and perhaps even a fragment of true miniature fresco continue subjects and styles from Neopalatial-era painting. But innovation is also apparent in a fragment from Pylos depicting a Minoan “genius” and others belonging to nautilus friezes.¹⁹³ Non-palatial paintings are found outside the citadel at Mycenae, where excavations under the House of the Oil Merchant yielded an early Boar Hunt Fresco.¹⁹⁴ From the nearby Petsas House, a ceramic warehouse, recent excavations have produced a splash-pattern fresco and decorative patterns related to textile and ceramic decoration.¹⁹⁵ From Argos in LH IIIA2 contexts come frescoes of male and female figures (some life-size) and fragments of deer.¹⁹⁶ Frescoes are also known from funerary contexts. A LH IIB–IIIA1 *tholos* tomb from Kokla near Argos was painted with a beam-end frieze and a design of lines on the smoothed rock surface above the tomb’s lintel.¹⁹⁷ A LH IIIA2–IIIB1 chamber tomb from the Kolonaki cemetery at Thebes (site 254) was embellished with frescoes reportedly including a funerary procession and a landscape.¹⁹⁸

Mycenaean Frescoes of LH IIIB

Most surviving Mycenaean frescoes date to LH IIIB, c. 1300–1200 B.C., a century in which Mycenaean culture enjoyed great prosperity, only to suffer calamitous losses towards its end. The first half of the thirteenth century saw the expansion of citadels and new palace construction. Populations grew, and the Mycenaean economy enjoyed widespread trade across the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean. It is in this period that Linear B texts offer valuable evidence for the structure of Mycenaean society and for the palatial administrations that commanded it. Written on clay tablets preserved by the accident of fire, these documents

record the daily bureaucratic affairs of the palaces. Although they do not preserve historical records, they describe a hierarchical society with the palace as the seat of authority. Study of the Linear B archive from Pylos reveals that the Pylian Kingdom was divided into Hither and Further Provinces with sixteen administrative districts. At the head of the political structure was the *wanax*, an important leader who presided over religious matters. At Pylos the *wanax* held large estates and had authority over certain craftsmen. The *lawagetas* – literally, the “leader of the people” – may have served as the second-in-command. This official held estates, had men working in his service, and made contributions of food and drink to the god Poseidon. His suggested role as a military leader, however, cannot be confirmed. Lower in rank were the *hequetai*, or “companions”, who owned slaves and may have had a military function, and the *telelestai*, who were landholders and served as officials. The *g^wasileus* is recognizable as Homer’s *basileus*, or “king”, but in the Mycenaean era this position was one of significantly lower rank, appearing in the Pylos tablets as the head of a group of bronze smiths. The tablets also document the existence of palace dependents and slaves, the division of labor by trade, and numbers of men working in a coastguard and serving as rowers.¹⁹⁹ The picture of Mycenaean society in LH IIIB, then, is significantly more complete than that of any preceding period.

FRESCOES FROM MYCENAE:

THE MEGARON

Frescoes from the LH IIIB palace at Mycenae are poorly preserved. Surviving fragments are small and many were burned at the end of LH IIIB, c. 1200 B.C. These scrappy remains, however, indicate that important rooms were frescoed and that the megaron received special attention (Plate 1.13). The walls of its columned porch, which opened onto a sizable courtyard, were painted with a frieze of half-rosettes and triglyphs. The vestibule’s floor was paved with gypsum slabs

around the base of the walls and plastered in its center with a geometric pattern of squarish panels featuring zigzag designs in red, blue, and yellow. The throne room received similar floor decoration, and even though it partially collapsed into the ravine below, enough survives to show that its raised circular hearth, originally surrounded by four wooden columns on stone bases, was covered in plaster and painted with two rows of flame patterns and a running spiral design in blue, red, yellow, and white. Ten layers of plaster can be distinguished, indicating that its decoration was frequently renewed.²⁰⁰

The throne room's frescoes are also fragmentary and burned. Excavated in three separate campaigns, the material was studied by Gerhart Rodenwaldt, who identified several subjects, including a harnessing scene with horses, chariots, and warriors (CD/W 1.24).²⁰¹ The horses are slender and rather small creatures with banded manes, and the men are clad in short, belted tunics, and greaves. Some men wear helmets and carry lances, emphasizing the military character of the scene. Other fragments depict slow-moving pairs of horses harnessed to Mycenaean dual chariots.²⁰² A man wearing greaves has sharply bent legs, as if he has jumped out of the chariot behind him, perhaps to engage in hand-to-hand combat, as described by Homer. All figures are spread across a plain pictorial ground devoid of any reference to setting, so that the images acquire an emblematic quality that transcends time and place.

Other fragments from the Mycenae megaron impart a more expansive view of events. One piece depicts two women standing before a palatial facade in a scene that intriguingly recalls the West House miniature frescoes.²⁰³ Two other joining fragments, frequently reproduced but poorly preserved, show a warrior falling before another section of palatial facade in a vignette that evokes armed combat before a city (Fig. 1.26).²⁰⁴ A dark area at the top, originally identified by Rodenwaldt as the belly of a racing chariot horse, may be the

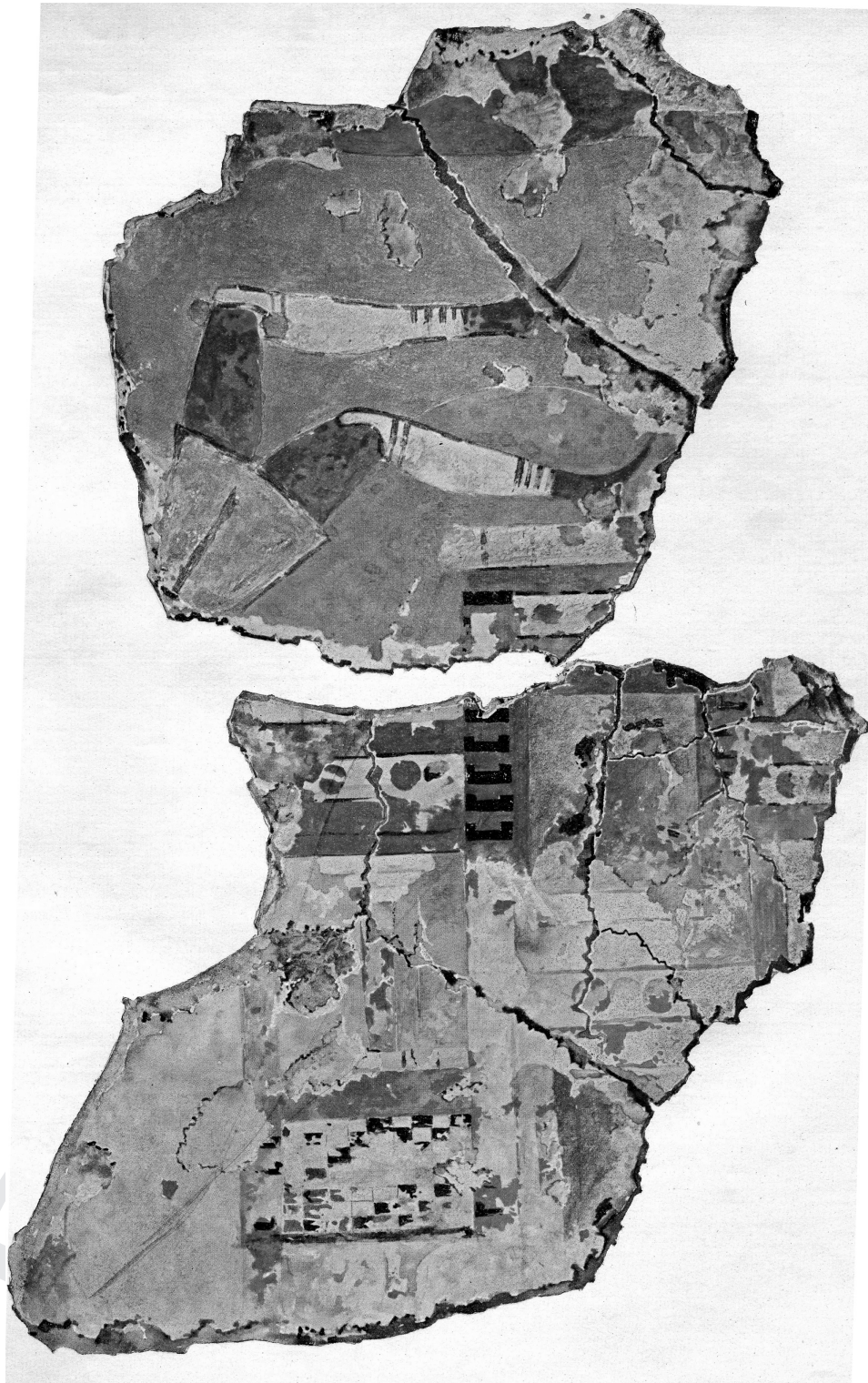
curving line of undulating terrain.²⁰⁵ The palace is a multi-storied structure with a Minoan-style column, painted beam ends, and a checkerboard pattern, all of which contribute to the building's Aegean character. Inside, a figure peers from a window. Outside, the falling warrior's relatively large scale suggests his narrative significance, while his tunic and greaves appear Mycenaean. Is he a fallen hero, valiant defender of the city? Or a defeated enemy? Either scenario suggests that the fresco depicts Mycenaean conflict. While today Mycenaean culture is generally regarded as a monolithic entity, it is clear from their heavily fortified citadels that Mycenaeans did not live together peacefully and, like later Greek polities, probably engaged in regional warfare. It seems likely, then, that the ruler of Mycenae surrounded his seat of power with images of Mycenae's military strength: warriors, chariots, and an epic battle for an Aegean city.

FRESCOES FROM MYCENAE: THE CULT CENTER

The militant character of the megaron frescoes is balanced by the religious tenor of the frescoes from the Cult Center, located on the southwest slope of the citadel near Grave Circle A. Religious facilities housed in small, somewhat irregularly planned buildings characterize the Cult Center; to the east is the Southwestern Building, a structure with large rooms and a regular plan dating to LH IIIB₂, which the excavator, George Mylonas, believed functioned as the living quarters of the priestly staff.

From the Southwestern Building come two friezes of figure-of-eight shields and a large, finely painted fresco fragment preserving the upper body of a woman holding necklaces (Plate 1.14).²⁰⁶ Nicknamed "Mykenaiia", the figure is depicted on a monochrome blue ground with frontal shoulders and her head turned to the viewer's left. Its confident lines suggest considerable artistic skill, yet the artist has nonetheless incorrectly painted a

Figure 1.26 Mycenae, megaron: Falling Warrior Fresco. LH IIIB, c. 1300–1200 B.C. Athens, National Museum. (Photo: Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism / Archaeological Receipts Fund)



right hand on her left arm. The figure wears a yellow short-sleeved, open-fronted, V-backed jacket trimmed in red and white, and a snug yellow undergarment that covers the Mycenaean lady's

ample breasts. Her jewelry bespeaks wealth and social status, and her hair, elaborately arranged with ribbons and spiral curls about her forehead, features a short forelock similar to those worn by

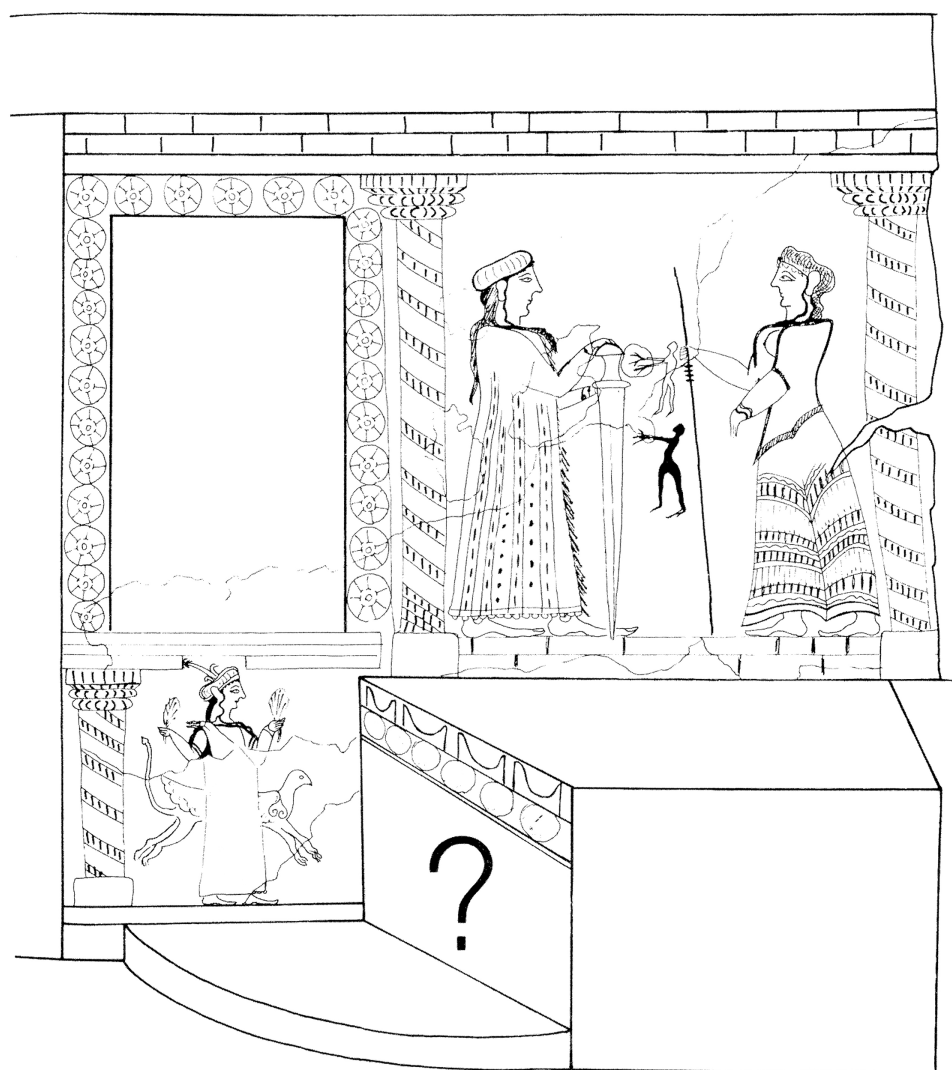


Figure 1.27 Mycenae, Cult Center: fresco from the Room of the Fresco (room 31). LH IIIB1, c. 1300–1250 B.C. (Restoration: N. Marinatos. Drawing: L. Papageorgiou)

the enthroned goddess of Xeste 3 and her devotees, hinting at continuity with earlier ritual hairstyles. Even the necklaces in her hand bring to mind the “necklace swinger” of Xeste 3.

The Mykenaia, in association with fragments depicting the lower body of a seated woman and other fragments of processional women, has been identified as a seated goddess.²⁰⁷ The lack of joins among the fragments, however, means that the Mykenaia’s seated position (and her divine identity) cannot be confirmed.²⁰⁸ In Mycenaean painting, too, as in earlier Minoan and Cycladic art, it is difficult to distinguish deities from humans performing priestly roles. This ambiguity remains

a characteristic feature of Aegean art through the Mycenaean era and stands in opposition to the clarity of Egyptian iconography, where images of gods, pharaohs, nobles, and offering bearers are clearly differentiated by inscription, position, and attribute.

Excavations undertaken in 1968–1969 in the central area of the Cult Center revealed an extraordinary composition in one corner of room 31, now known as the “Room of the Fresco”. Built in LH IIIB1, c. 1300–1250 B.C., the chamber’s cult function is recognizable from architectural features that include an oval hearth, a bench, and an altar-like platform painted with the frescoes (Plate 1.15; Fig. 1.27). This platform was awarded three raised

plaster disks; traces of ash suggest that they functioned as miniature hearths for burnt offerings. Other objects found inside the shrine, including a clay *larnax* used for cleansing, confirm the ritual use of the building.²⁰⁹

Room 31's fresco program is multi-faceted and complex. One side of the platform preserves fresco decoration of circular red and black beam ends that simulate the timbers supporting a real roof. These are topped with Minoan-style horns of consecration, as if the platform were an altar. Facing these decorations above a low curving step is a painting of a female figure holding flamelike sheaths of grain in her raised hands. While more crudely rendered than the Mykenaiia, details of her costume are clear: she wears a plumed cap, a seal-stone bracelet, a short-sleeved garment, and a mantle knotted over her right shoulder. She stands before a tapered column accompanied by a yellow animal preserved only by its tail and forepaws. Nannó Marinatos suggests a flying griffin, but its tawny color seems leonine.²¹⁰ The identity of the female figure also remains uncertain. Her cap and robe find parallels in Aegean images of priestly figures, her seal suggests participation in bureaucratic affairs, and her action – raising sheaths of wheat before the painted altar – seems votive. Yet the guardian creature could signal a divine identity.²¹¹ Once again, it is a mark of how incomplete our understanding of Aegean iconography is that divine and human figures still cannot be reliably distinguished. In this case, however, a parallel from contemporary Egyptian art might offer a solution to the puzzling iconography. The great pharaoh Ramesses II, who ruled Egypt for much of the thirteenth century B.C., was occasionally pictured with tame lions at his side.²¹² Might the Mycenaean figure also represent a similarly human – and presumably royal – personage whose high status is signaled by a subservient lion?

Directly above this scene is a painted door framed in rosettes, and to the right above the platform are two female figures depicted on a larger

scale, one facing the other between two tapering columns. The woman on the left wears a fringed robe resembling the costume of La Parisienne from Knossos. She holds a large golden sword, tip pointed down. Before her is the third female figure, clothed in a traditional Aegean flounced skirt and holding a slender pole, perhaps a spear or a staff. Between them are two small and crudely painted figures – one red and one black – who stretch out their arms to the sword bearer. Without parallel in Aegean painting, their meaning remains uncertain, though tentative identifications as souls or votaries have been put forward.²¹³

The architectural placement of the two female figures directly above the platform and the discovery of ash in the raised disks suggest that these two figures represent Mycenaean deities. Paul Rehak suggests that the female figure with the large sword could be a warrior goddess and compares her pole-bearing companion to the “peak goddess” of Minoan art.²¹⁴ His additional identification of the female figure with sheaths of grain as a deity results in a divine triad, each goddess distinguished by costume and attribute. This suggestion is supported indirectly by the evidence of Linear B tablets, which confirm the existence of a Mycenaean pantheon. Unfortunately, none of the painted figures is identified by inscription.

EXTRA-MURAL PAINTING AT MYCENAE

In the tradition of Neopalatial Knossos, many houses outside the citadel of Mycenae were embellished with frescoes. A large griffin or lion painted in sepia, for example, embellished the LH IIIB1 House of the Oil Merchant. The appearance of this theme, known from the throne rooms at Knossos and Pylos, in a non-palatial building is surprising, as is the lack of color. From the same building comes a composition of men, women, animals (probably horses), and architecture, also painted in sepia but in the Mycenaean miniature style, with larger figures than in Neopalatial miniature painting. The subject, according to Mark

Cameron and Adele Mayer, recalls the Theran miniature frescoes, suggesting that Mycenaean artists did not entirely abandon expansive views of people and events. Other compositions from the houses at Mycenae include stylized lilies from the West House and fragments of chariots and trees from the House of Sphinxes.²¹⁵ Frescoes from the Panagia Houses demonstrate that pictorial painting embellished even Mycenae's smaller houses.²¹⁶

Frescoes also occasionally decorated Mycenaean funerary architecture. Five chamber tombs at Mycenae were awarded stuccoed facades, three of which were frescoed. One of these, discovered in 1895 by Christos Tsountas (no. 53), was painted with rosettes in black, white, red, and yellow in a design that recalls the fictive doorway painted in the Cult Center's Room of the Frescoes. These tomb decorations probably functioned as displays of wealth and taste, and perhaps imitated the more elaborate stone facades of some *tholoi*.²¹⁷

FRESCOES FROM TIRYNS

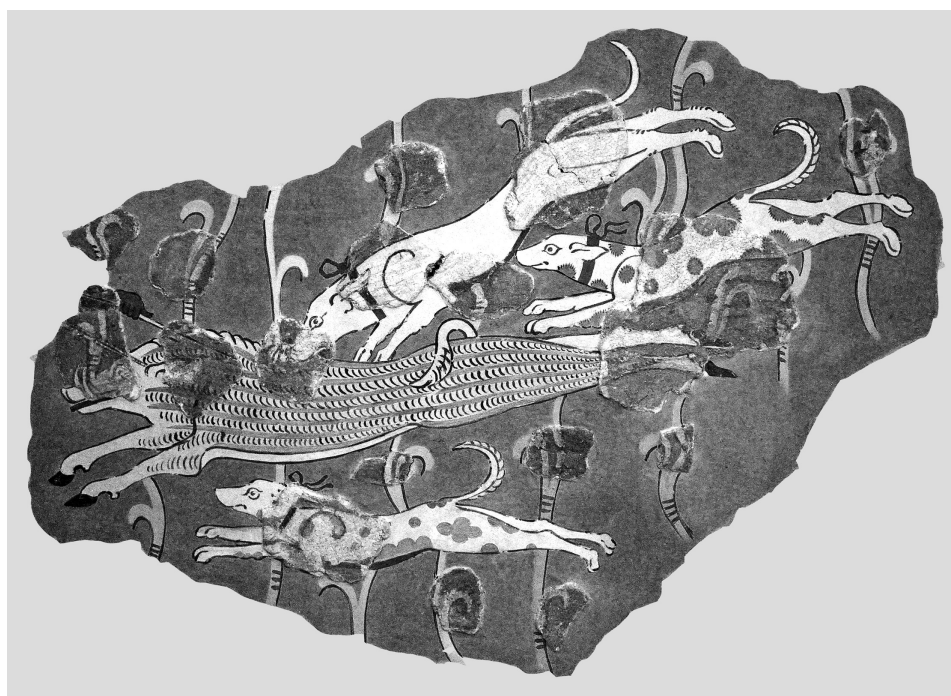
Published in 1885 by Wilhelm Dörpfeld, the frescoes of Tiryns were the first Aegean prehistoric paintings to be recognized for their archaeological and art historical value.²¹⁸ Although little of the palace's decorative program was preserved, Dörpfeld noted that each room was covered in layers of clay and lime plaster. The plaster floor of the megaron unit, as at Mycenae, was divided into rectangular panels. Around the throne room's perimeter, these were painted with scale or wave patterns alternating with heraldic pairs of dolphins and single octopuses.²¹⁹ Of the scant traces of wall decoration, one corner in the small megaron preserved stemmed rosettes,²²⁰ and the outer forecourt yielded fragments of an interlocking S-spiral frieze with fan-shaped papyrus flowers filling the interstices. This design, which derives from earlier Minoan decorative patterns, became popular in Mycenaean palaces, appearing in both older and newer palaces at Tiryns and at Mycenae, Orchomenos, and Thebes.²²¹

Ironically, the best-preserved fresco fragments had been intentionally destroyed, thrown into a rubbish pit on the citadel's west slope. Stylistically dated to LH IIIB, c. 1300–1200 B.C., these include a frieze of deer imaginatively colored pink, blue, and yellow²²² and a life-size procession fresco of women carrying offerings (a pyxis, a vase, and a terracotta figurine).²²³ Paintings of monumental sphinxes were also found, although Dörpfeld notes that they were painted with “little care” – an assessment of quality often associated with later Mycenaean painting.²²⁴

The Boar Hunt Fresco, also from the west slope rubbish pit, is represented by some 250 unburnt fragments.²²⁵ The opening of the hunt is represented by images of huntsmen leading large hounds on taut leashes and teams of horses drawing chariots at a sedate speed. One chariot team is driven by two white-skinned figures with long hair, presumably women, though little anatomical detail is preserved (Plate 1.16). The horses are rendered Egyptian style with double outlines, and together they draw a dual chariot with four-spoked wheels. Horses, huntsmen, and hounds alike walk on a groundline, and the heads of the charioteers approach an upper border, thereby establishing this portion of the composition's organization into registers. An odd-looking row of trees offers the only indication of setting. With their thin, branchless trunks crowned by artificially round, leafy canopies painted in unnatural colors, the trees look like modern tennis racquets or lollipops. As such, they illustrate the persistent trend in Mycenaean painting away from naturalism and towards the schematic form.

Another group of fragments depicts the kill. As reconstructed by Rodenwaldt, three spotted hounds chase a boar through a marshy field of wispy S-shaped plants towards two hunters, who spear the beast in its head and shoulders (Fig. 1.28).²²⁶ Boar and hounds alike are depicted in a flying gallop to suggest speed. The hounds are freely colored with blue and yellow spots. The

Figure 1.28 Tiryns, Boar Hunt Fresco. LH IIIB, c. 1300–1200 B.C. Athens, National Museum.
(Photo: A. P. Chapin)



boar's rough coat is striped, the abstract plants float carpet-like in a blue ground, and groundlines are avoided. One fragment shows a hunter grasping a spear at close range, only inches from the boar's sharp tusks. Another fragment, though not incorporated into the restored group, preserves a white hand gripping a spear, presumably a female hunter closing for the kill.²²⁷ Apparently Mycenaean hunters of both sexes took extreme risks.

FRESCOES FROM PYLOS

Frescoes extensively decorated the LH IIIB palace at Pylos in western Messenia, and despite being burned in the palace's final destruction, c. 1200 B.C., they present the most complete evidence for palatial Mycenaean pictorial programs (Fig. 1.29).²²⁸ Known as *pu-ro* in Linear B tablets, Pylos featured a carefully designed palace with a canonical megaron complex at its core surrounded by service rooms and storerooms. Stairs indicate the existence of a second floor over parts of the palace, and a small, secondary megaron is found in room 46 in the main building's southeastern corner. The earliest part of the palace

complex, however, is the Southwestern Building, which was probably built in LH IIIA2 (c. 1350–1300 B.C.) and features a non-canonical megaron unit composed of two rooms, halls 64 and 65, opening onto court 63.²²⁹ To the east, the wine magazine and the northeastern building offered additional space for storage and workshops. Excavation reveals that many rooms of the palace were plastered, but only the most important were awarded fresco decoration.

Hall 64. The frescoes of the Southwestern Building are best preserved in hall 64, a spacious chamber more than 10 meters long that served as the anteroom to the much-damaged megaron of hall 65. This room, central to the circulation of the Southwestern Building, had a columned porch opening to court 63, a central column supporting its roof, a large doorway into hall 65 marked by a sentry's stand, and a smaller doorway leading to private chambers. The frescoes of hall 64 must therefore have been highly visible to all who entered the structure. Moreover, the inward collapse of the room's northeastern wall preserved masses of painted plaster, making it possible to

determine hall 64's decorative program with considerable confidence.

As restored in Plate 1.17, hall 64 was painted with a series of friezes organized into superposed registers. A painted arc dado at ground level imitated veined stone and was found in situ. Above was a frieze of life-size hounds, each collared and crouching expectantly on a groundline. Next in order, slightly above eye level, was the frieze that included the main subjects – armed warriors, horse-drawn chariots, battle scenes, and possibly (the evidence is still under study) a naval scene. Though darkened and damaged by fire, the best-preserved fragments depict a fierce fight between Mycenaean warriors wearing boar's tusk helmets and

“barbarians” costumed in animal skins (Fig. 1.30). Pairs of figures engage in single combat reminiscent of Homeric battle, with daggers or short swords plunged into enemy chests as stricken warriors collapse. The sense of violent bloodshed is heightened by the lack of a descriptive setting. Wavy zones of blue and white color, vertically separated by thin black lines, function as a minimalist background, focusing the viewer's attention on the conflict and enhancing both its emblematic quality and brutality.²³⁰

The characterization of the enemy as a primitive barbarian people deserves further investigation. Mabel Lang remarks that real opponents of the Mycenaean warriors would have been unlikely to

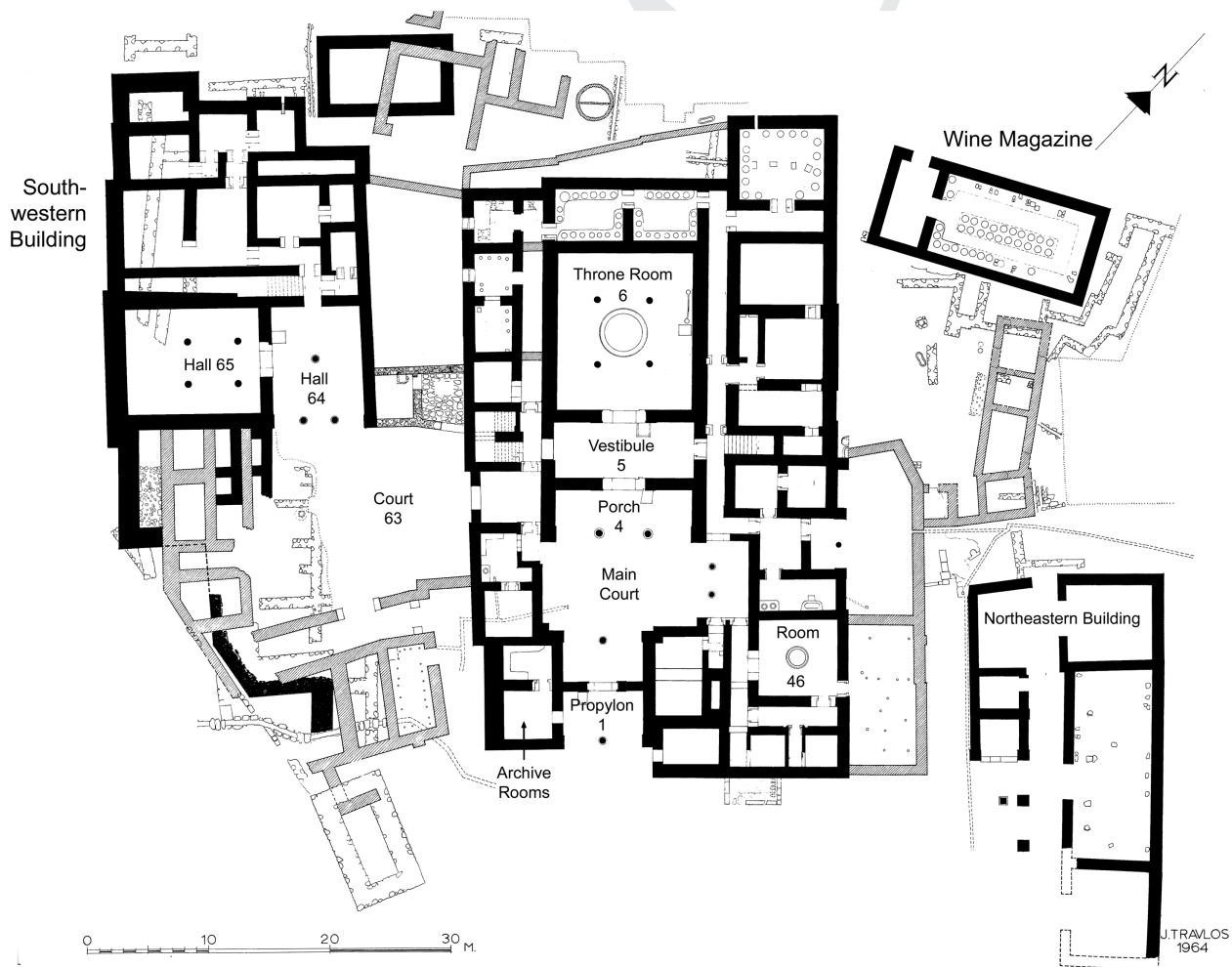
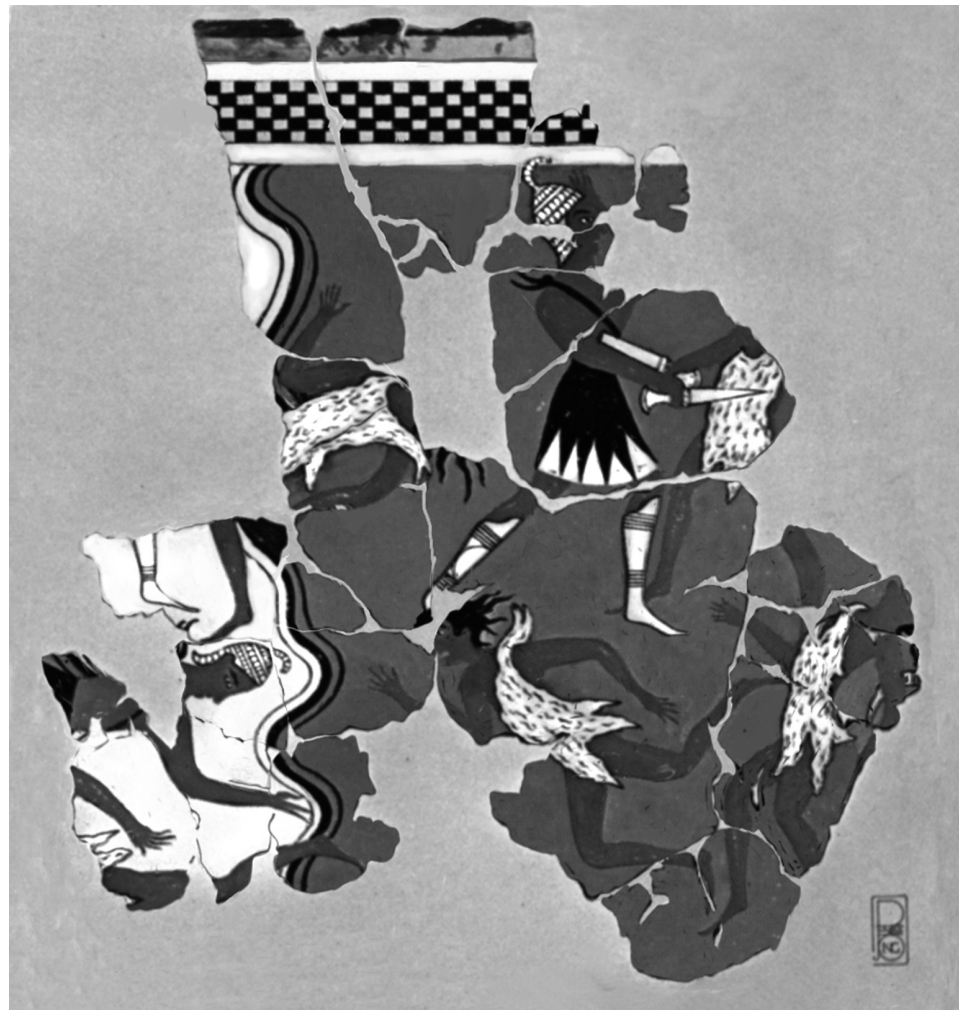


Figure 1.29 Pylos, plan of the Mycenaean palace showing the find-spots of frescoes. (Drawing: J. Travlos, courtesy of the Department of Classics, University of Cincinnati)

Figure 1.30 Pylos, hall 64:
battle scene (22 H 64).
LH IIIB, c. 1300–1200 B.C.
Chora, Archaeological
Museum. (Drawing: R.
J. Robertson after P. de
Jong)



engage in battle without armor, clad only in animal skins. For Lang, this artistic device demonstrates the high degree of conventionalization that characterizes Mycenaean art and therefore is not to be trusted as a reflection of prehistoric reality.²³¹ But as Jack Davis and John Bennet observe, the battle scene illustrates how the Mycenaeans of Pylos defined themselves as the antithesis of the primitive “other”. Mycenaean material culture, both in artistic representation and in the archaeological record, is to be contrasted and distinguished from that of non-Mycenaeans. As such, the fresco is significant for revealing how the Mycenaeans formed their own sense of identity.²³² But can this reading be taken one step further? Might the old-fashioned and unlikely costuming of the skin-clad warriors

indicate that the fresco represents not a contemporary conflict, but rather a mythic battle of the Mycenaeans’ own distant past? Like later Greek tales of epic struggles against primitive barbarians, such a visual narrative would celebrate Mycenaean achievements – military strength, heroic valor, and the triumph of Mycenaean civilization – just as it defined the current rulers of Pylos as the rightful heirs of that tradition. If this was the case, painting is here put to political purpose, that is, to promote an official ideology of military aggression and victory through the example of the heroic past.

Megaron Frescoes. In contrast to the militant theme of hall 64, the main megaron featured pictorial paintings of guardian creatures and scenes of procession and ritual (CD/W 1.25). The megaron

itself is canonical, having a columned porch, a vestibule, and a throne room equipped with a large central hearth, four fluted columns, and a low platform for a throne where the Mycenaean *wanax* presumably held court. Throughout, the stucco floors were divided into square panels and painted with linear patterns in red, yellow, blue, black, and white; the grid of the throne room, however, reveals errors in planning and execution, and only before the throne was there pictorial decoration in the form of a stylized octopus. The raised circular hearth was also stuccoed and painted with a flame pattern, notches, and spirals, as at Mycenae.²³³

The vestibule partially preserves a procession of men and one woman, together with an oversized bull, all depicted advancing slowly towards the door to the throne room.²³⁴ The throne room featured a life-size tawny lion and a white crested griffin painted to the left of the throne. A second lion-griffin pair was reconstructed to the right of the throne in a widely reproduced drawing by Piet de Jong, but evidence for this antithetical arrangement remains lacking. Rather, fresco fragments depicting a stone vase found near the base of the throne beside a shallow channel cut into the plaster floor might suggest that the painting represented an actual vessel used for pouring libations, thematically reinforcing the megaron's ceremonial focus.²³⁵

The famous Lyre Player Fresco was found on the other end of the wall (Plate 1.18). This unusual composition depicts a man sitting on a brightly striped rock and holding a lyre with bird's-head finials. Before him flies a pudgy bird – clumsy in comparison to the graceful swallows of Thera art – whose white color contrasts vividly with the composition's red ground; above, an undulating white band embellishes the composition's upper limit.²³⁶ It is tempting to see in this composition a prefiguration of Homer himself. Indeed, other fresco fragments suggest an audience of men seated in pairs at two tables. But the Mycenaean bard is not the primary compositional focus of the

megaron and seems only to supply musical ambience to ritual performance. Together with a large fragment identified by Mabel Lang as the shoulder of a sacrificial bull (19 C 6), the megaron seems painted with a unified pictorial program in which the processional bull of the vestibule (5) was sacrificed and served up as the main course in a ritual feast led by the *wanax*.²³⁷ Interestingly, this ritual iconography finds evidentiary support in a Linear B tablet (Un 2) found at Pylos listing food supplies (barley, olives, an ox, sheep, goats, pigs, and wine) for a feast held at Sphagianes “on the occasion of the *wanax*'s initiation”.²³⁸ Here art and text seem to offer converging evidence for Mycenaean rulership. Even the recent discovery that the fragment believed to represent a bull's shoulder may be misidentified takes little from the important programmatic focus on a ruling ideology of ritual and festival.²³⁹

The differences in both style and substance in the older and newer megaron halls of the Pylos palace have led some scholars to propose that these areas served different functions. The main megaron, with its emphasis on guardianship and ritual, should be the domain of the *wanax*, whereas halls 65 and 64, with its battle scenes and frescoed hunting dogs, would serve the *lawagetas*, the “leader of the people” for whom a military function has been suggested.²⁴⁰ Although this appealing suggestion cannot yet be confirmed, it offers a simple explanation for the striking differences between the two fresco programs.

FRESCOES FROM GLA

The frescoes of Gla, an impressive fortress protecting the Copaic Basin, demonstrate that Mycenaean decorated a surprising variety of non-palatial buildings with wall paintings. Built in a single campaign at the end of LH IIIA2 or the beginning of the LH IIIB1 period, c. 1300 B.C., but excavated in fits and spurts over the course of a century, Gla features extensive Cyclopean fortifications measuring 2,800 meters, an unusual complex of storage and housing facilities

in a central enclosure, and the melathron – a large double residence with quasi-palatial features perhaps built to house two Mycenaean officials. Fragments of frescoes, stucco floors, and engaged fluted columns made of plaster were found in the melathron, but even more fresco material was discovered in the central enclosure in rooms identified as a kitchen (M₃), a granary (H₄), and residential apartments (Z₉ and N₁). In fact, the wide distribution of fresco painting across Gla prompted its most recent excavator, Spyros Iakovides, to observe that nearly every building seems to have been decorated with wall painting.²⁴¹ The recent identification of blue pigment made from lapis lazuli – a rare and expensive pigment not hitherto identified in Aegean painting – further underscores the significance of the Gla frescoes.²⁴²

The most important fresco deposit was discovered outside room N₁, an apartment of modest size that received a dolphin fresco in the first half of the thirteenth century (Fig. 1.31). Reconstructed from some ninety fragments, the composition depicted at least seven dolphins leaping over a watery blue ground suggestive of the open sea.²⁴³ In Mycenaean painting, dolphins are known from floor frescoes at Tiryns and Pylos, but only as isolated motifs removed from nature and framed in panels.²⁴⁴ The appearance of a school of lively, leaping dolphins in the Gla fresco, then, demonstrates the unexpected persistence of an Aegean interest in subjects drawn purely from nature and recalls earlier compositions, such as the Knossian Dolphin Fresco. Indeed, details of the Gla dolphins, including their yellow side stripes, large eyes, and vertical tail flukes and the streams of water trailing off their fins, reveal that the animals were modeled not from nature but from earlier artistic models.²⁴⁵

Mycenaean Ceramic Painting

Mycenaean ceramics of the LH III period reflect a growing independence from earlier Minoan influence. LH IIIA–B pottery shapes (stemmed kylikes,

cups, bowls, alabastra, pyxides, piriform jars, stirrup jars, kraters) were increasingly standardized through mass production at major centers. Great quantities of pottery remained undecorated, but some vessels were embellished with bands and simple geometric patterns. Designs deriving from a limited range of Minoan-inspired motifs, such as flowers, papyri, and whorl shells, became increasingly abstract and non-naturalistic in the hands of Mycenaean vase painters (CD/W 1.26). Many of these wares were used as containers for exchange commodities (e.g., oil, wine, perfume), but other vessels, such as cups, goblets, kylikes, and pictorial vases, were also exported. Mycenaean pottery was thus a major trade item, distributed widely across the Aegean and shipped to the Anatolian coast, Cyprus, the Near East, Syro-Palestine, Egypt, and the central Mediterranean (Sardinia, Sicily).²⁴⁶

PICTORIAL STYLE VASES

Mycenaean pictorial vases are among the most interesting art objects produced by Aegean artists and are widely appreciated today for their clarity of form and for a liveliness of decoration that anticipates Pablo Picasso's cubism by more than three thousand years. Pictorial Style vases first appeared late in LH IIIA₁ and continued to be produced through LH IIIC, c. 1350–1125 B.C. Favorite subjects include human figures, horses and chariots, birds, animals – particularly bulls (CD/W 1.27) – and sea creatures, such as the octopus. Because many Pictorial Style vases were found in tombs on Cyprus, it was long thought that the island was a center of production. Clay analysis has now shown, however, that pictorial vases were produced in the Argolid (principally, Berbati) and shipped abroad as an export commodity.²⁴⁷

A chariot krater from Maroni, Cyprus, dating to LH IIIA₂, exemplifies Pictorial Style painting (Fig. 1.32). The chariot scene is organized into a wide register at the vase's shoulder, with three horizontal bands functioning as parallel ground-lines. Two chariots are pulled by teams of horses,

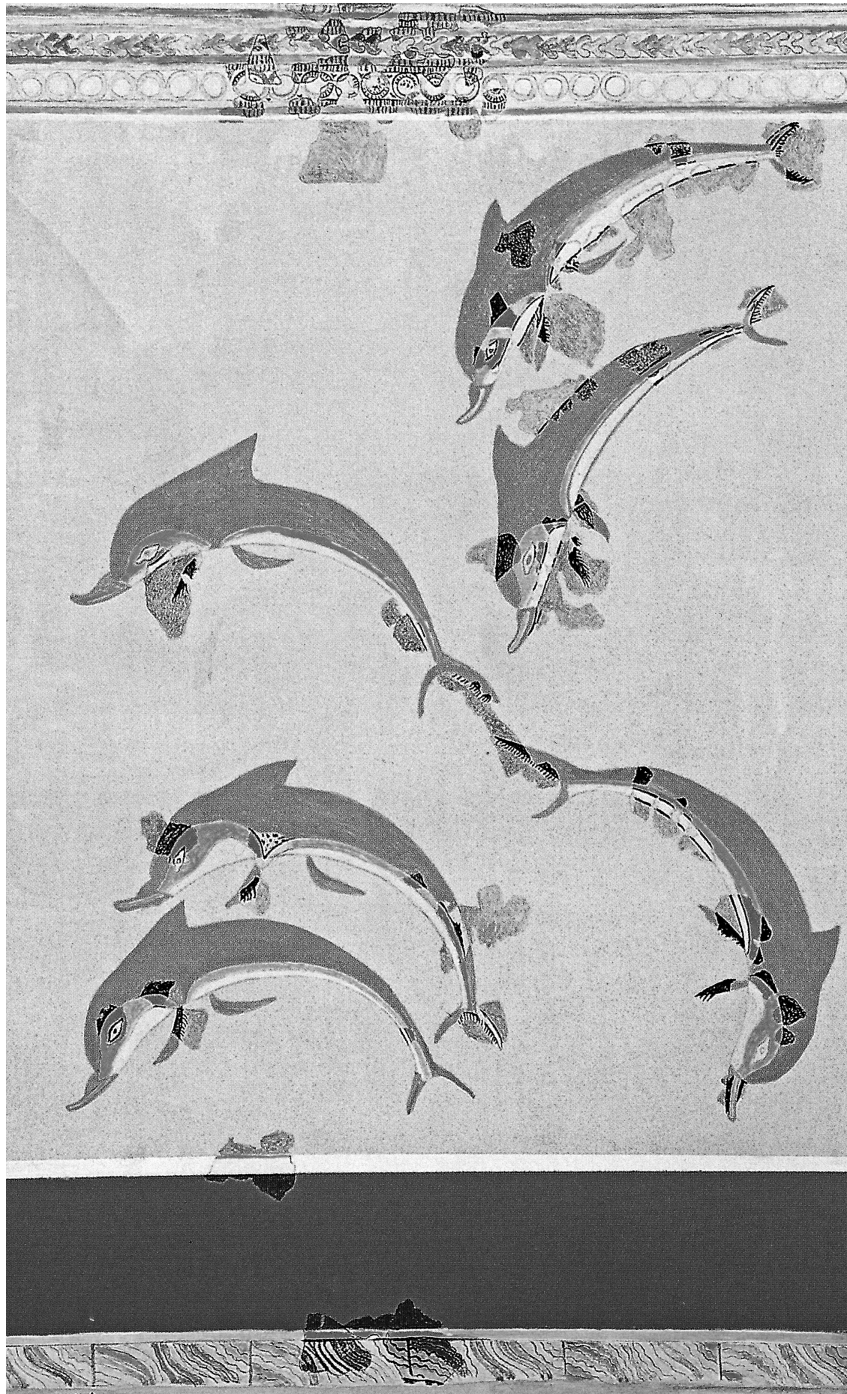


Figure 1.31 Gla, central enclosure (N1): Dolphin Fresco. LH IIIB1, c. 1300–1250 B.C. Thebes, Archaeological Museum. (Photo: Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism / Archaeological Receipts Fund)

each rendered with a single body and two heads, two tails, and two sets of legs. Four reins lead the eye to abstractly rendered pairs of figures in each chariot. With shapeless cloaked bodies decorated with a rash of dots and heads dominated by large eyes and noses, these figures are characterized by graphic clarity and humor, whether intentional or

not. A long-stemmed voluted “flower” with spiral leaves – the artistic descendant of the graceful lilies and papyri of Neopalatial painting – separates the two chariots while framed chevrons fill every space around the figures in a tour de force of *horror vacui*. Compositions such as this may be inspired by contemporary chariot frescoes, yet the vase’s

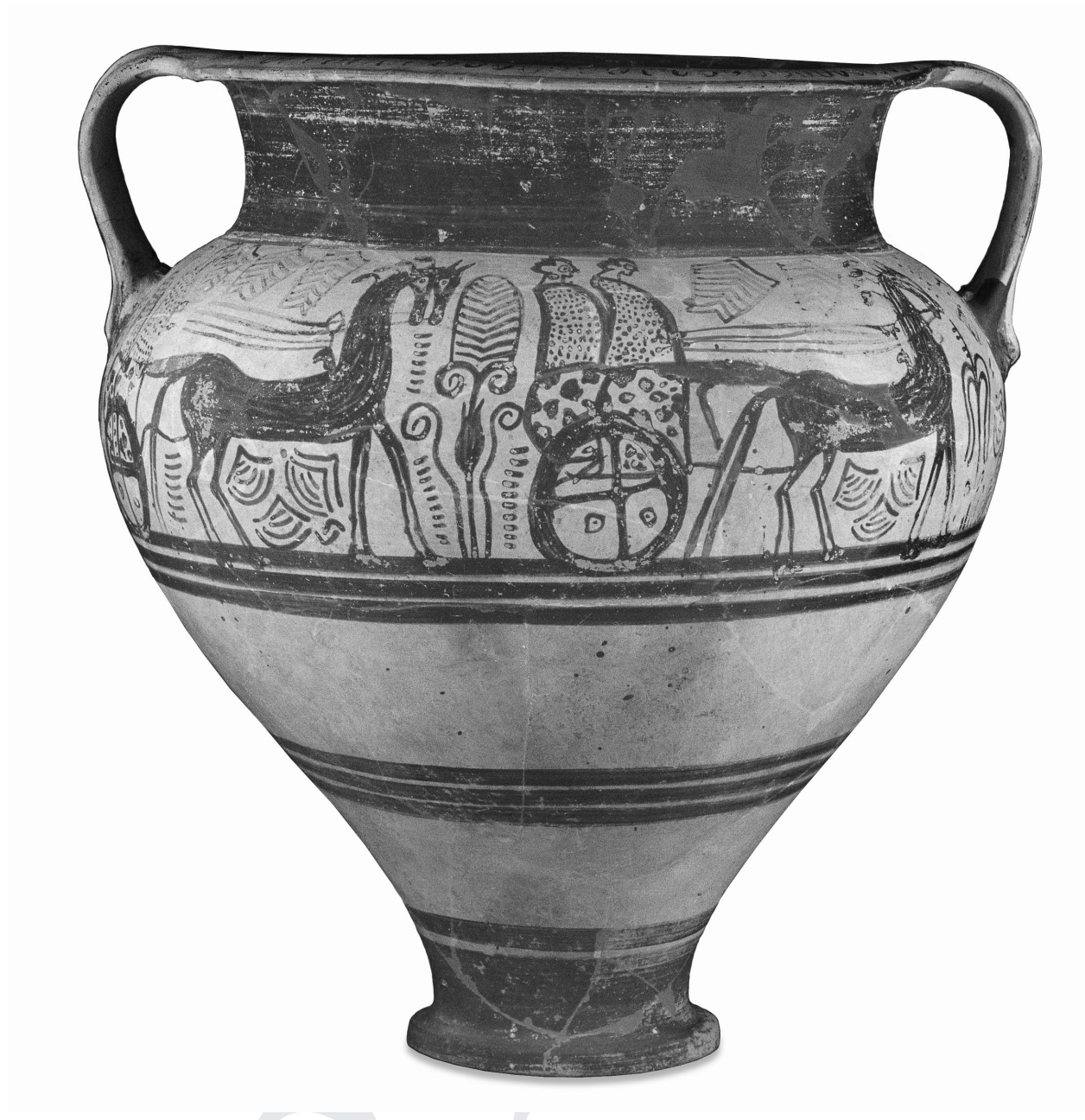


Figure 1.32 Maroni: Pictorial Style chariot krater. LH IIIA2, c. 1350–1300 B.C. London, British Museum. (Photo: © Trustees of the British Museum)

powerful sense of design and lively abstraction are missing from known wall paintings, and there is as yet no comparison in figural wall painting to the ceramic filling ornament.²⁴⁸

TANAGRA LARNAKES

Mycenaean ceramic painting is further represented by a series of painted *larnakes* from Tanagra, an

important Mycenaean cemetery located near Thebes in Boeotia. Though prominent in the funerary remains of LM III Crete, terracotta sarcophagi remain rare in Mycenaean material culture, and the Tanagra *larnakes*, which date mostly to LH IIIB, c. 1300–1200 B.C., represent a unique class of objects. Their rather crudely painted imagery preserves rare depictions of Mycenaean funerary

rites. Processions of mourning women, images of priestly figures, guardian sphinxes, and *prothesis* scenes (a laying out of the dead) all distinguish the Mycenaean *larnakes* from the idyllic or fantastic decorations of their Minoan counterparts.²⁴⁹

A bichrome *larnax* richly painted in red and black matt paint, no. 1 from Tomb 22, offers an elaborate depiction of funerary rites (Plate 1.19). Rectangular in shape, pictorial fields are divided into two registers framed by architectonic checkboard patterns and bands. Side A depicts a procession of mourning women rendered in alternating red and black silhouette. With their stick arms raised as if pulling their hair and dressed in simple ankle-length skirts, this subject seems to derive from Mycenaean procession frescoes, and yet both subject and style are transformed into something altogether new to Mycenaean painting, a pictorial focus on emotions of grief and sorrow. Below, antithetical chariots recall similar images in frescoes and pictorial vases, yet here they probably participate in the funeral. Between them, two stick figures may represent boxers engaged in funerary games as described by Homer. The narrow ends of the *larnax* depict two silhouetted figures laying the body of a child to rest in a *larnax*, their sorrow vividly communicated across the centuries. Side B depicts a herd of goats with a male figure in the center, prodding (or stabbing?) a large goat with a swordlike implement (CD/W 1.28). Below, a scene of bull leaping illustrates that this iconic Minoan sport, while rare in Mycenaean art, was not completely unknown. But rather than leaping over the heads of charging bulls like Minoan tau-readers, these athletes take the safer route across the bulls' backs. Suspended in midair, they seem nearly as motionless as the bulls themselves.²⁵⁰

The Tanagra *larnakes* mark an important point of transition in Aegean art. The manner in which the figures are painted recalls contemporary Mycenaean pictorial vase painting, while the bull-leaping scene links the *larnakes* to the artistic traditions of Minoan Crete. Yet most of the imagery

looks forward. The processions of mourners and chariots, athletic contests, and *prothesis* scenes present themes that characterize the funerary imagery of Greek Geometric painting of the eighth century B.C. In this way, the Tanagra *larnakes* form an important link between prehistoric and later Greek artistic traditions.

LH IIIC AND THE DECLINE OF PICTORIAL PAINTING

The deterioration of palatial Mycenaean society is marked by a series of disruptions and recovery efforts that accelerate past a disastrous point of no return at the transition to LH IIIC, c. 1200 B.C. Yet ironically, the second half of LH IIIB, c. 1250–1200 B.C., is also a period of ambitious construction. The fortifications at Mycenae and Tiryns were expanded while workshop and storage spaces were enlarged at Pylos. New construction at Mycenae, Tiryns, and Athens towards the end of LH IIIB2 sought to secure water supplies, hinting at growing instability and the threat of siege warfare. This is followed by a wave of destructive events across the Greek mainland: the palace at Pylos was burned, Mycenae experienced destruction by an earthquake and fire, Tiryns suffered from an earthquake and flash flood, and many other sites were damaged, destroyed, or abandoned. Linear B tablets from the final destruction context at Pylos speak cryptically of men watching the coast, and texts from the Hittite Empire, Egypt, and the Syro-Palestian coast describe attacks from the formidable if mysterious Sea Peoples. Yet the causes of disaster remain unknown. Warfare, internal strife, foreign attack, and natural disaster (earthquakes, climate change, drought) have all been suggested, and it is likely that a combination of these factors contributed to the demise of Mycenaean palatial society.²⁵¹

The collapse had a devastating impact on Aegean fresco painting. Like Minoan painting before it, Mycenaean wall painting depended on palatial society and affluent patrons who could

afford highly trained and specialized artists. These patrons in turn owed their wealth to their privileged situation within the palatial Mycenaean social and economic system. With its downfall, palaces lay in ruins, bureaucracies were broken up, and the market for wall painting disappeared.²⁵² A limestone stele found reused in a chamber tomb at Mycenae, stuccoed and painted with registers of warriors and deer in mid-LH IIIC, c. 1150 B.C., marks the end of the fresco technique in the Bronze Age Aegean.²⁵³

Pictorial vase painting, however, continued well into the LH IIIC period (c. 1200–1125 B.C.) and is marked by the appearance of polychrome decoration, perhaps intended as a substitute for the lost art of fresco painting. The Warrior Vase, the most famous example of the craft, was found by Heinrich Schliemann at Mycenae in an area south of Grave Circle A (Plate 1.20). Large, semi-globular, and painted in reddish-brown, yellow, and white, the vase features marching foot soldiers placed in a wide register defined by striped bands. Like earlier Mycenaean depictions of soldiers and hunters, the figures are abstractly and inorganically rendered with no indication of musculature and little attention to naturalistic proportion. With their overly prominent noses, weak chins, and long necks, these men seem more like cartoon figures than fearsome warriors. Yet the vase painter imparts a wealth of detail about their armor and gear. Each soldier wears a corselet over a fringed (leather?) tunic, a crested horned helmet, knee-high greaves, and laced footgear; white dots on the tunics and helmets could represent protective metal studs. Each carries a semi-circular shield and a spear upon which is tied a bag for provisions. To the left, a woman raises an arm in a gesture of mourning or farewell.²⁵⁴ The vase thus represents an important point of transition as the failed Mycenaean society slid inexorably into decline. The chariots of the palace aristocracy are gone, replaced by foot soldiers who anticipate the hoplites of later Greek armies. The Mycenaean

may have suffered social collapse, but their warlike spirit endured.

A LH IIIC Close Style stirrup jar from Attica painted in the Octopus Style offers additional evidence for Postpalatial ceramic traditions (Fig. 1.33). Its energetic depiction of a wide-eyed octopus can be traced back more than three hundred years to its origins in the Minoan Marine Style. Yet the Mycenaean artist took even greater delight in the power of graphic design to create vibrant visual effects: tentacles turn into spinning spirals, concentric circles create eyes pulsating with energy, and delicate filling ornament seems transformed into beads of water sprayed from thrashing legs. The incipient naturalism of the Minoan model seems distant, yet the manipulation of abstract form and pattern to create arresting, eye-catching design remains fully developed. Indeed, this very latest expression of the Mycenaean artistic spirit seems almost modern in its conception.²⁵⁵

CONCLUSIONS

The collapse of Bronze Age palatial society was not a single event. Cultural disruptions occurred throughout the transitional period of LH IIIC (c. 1200–1125 B.C.) and eventually yielded a distinct era known today as the Iron (or Dark) Age, c. 1125–900 B.C. What emerged thereafter is identified as Geometric Greece, c. 900–750 B.C., when the cultural and artistic achievements of the Bronze Age – the Age of Heroes – had long since slipped into the hazy memory of myth and legend. The significance of Aegean painting for later Classical art is thus difficult to define. After all, Aegean painting had disappeared into artistic nothingness more than four hundred years before the beginning of the Archaic period and was rediscovered only in the modern era. But while Minoan, Cycladic, and Mycenaean painting may not have influenced later Greek painting directly, there are certain elements that seem,



Figure 1.33 Attica: Octopus Vase. LH IIIIC, c. 1200–1125 B.C. Copenhagen, Danish National Museum, Octopus Vase in the Close Style, inv. no. 13517. (Photo: Department of Classical and Near Eastern Antiquities, Danish National Museum, Copenhagen)

uncannily, to prefigure the great achievements of Classical art.

First is the Neopalatial Minoan and Cycladic interest in naturalism. While distinctly balanced by a persistent appreciation for the clarity and power of abstract, graphic design, Minoan artists produced such detailed renderings of the human form in relief fresco (and elsewhere in small-scale sculpture) that life study is suggested and comparisons can be made to Greek Archaic art. Prehistoric artists also created what may be the world's first naturalistic images of children, endowed with the distinctive proportions of youth and anticipating late Classical images of children by more than a thousand years. On Thera, artists masterfully painted foreshortened views of swallows in flight, breaking free of older artistic formulae in their pursuit of naturalism even as they engaged the dynamism of calligraphic brushwork. In addition, a rich tradition of landscape and marinescape characterizes Neopalatial painting, among the first in the world to depict flora and fauna in an environment untouched by human activity. Whether it is a Floral Style vase painter creating a vibrant field of reeds on a jar or a fresco painter suggesting the grace of lilies nodding in a passing breeze, the Minoan artists' pursuit of naturalism is combined with an interest in ideal form and abstract pattern that yields a lively and unique artistic style.

Second is the surprising variety of Aegean iconographic themes that broadly anticipate similar subjects in Classical Greek art. Neopalatial artists depicted athletes and athletic competitions nearly a millennium before Greek painters did the same. The themes, formulae, and episodes of epic poetry appear many centuries before Homer in the Thera miniature frescoes. The battle for an Aegean city painted in the megaron at Mycenae foretells Homeric descriptions of war, as do images of Greeks fighting barbarians in hall 64 at Pylos. Homer the bard again springs to mind when one views the Mycenaean Lyre Player Fresco from Pylos; the musician's audience of banqueters looks

forward to Classical symposia. Even the depictions of individualized anthropomorphic deities in the Cult Center frescoes of Mycenae foreshadow the development of historical Greek iconography and mythological representations. Finally, the chariots painted on Mycenaean pictorial kraters and the funerary scenes decorating the Tanagra *larnakes* suggest some degree of cultural and artistic continuity with the Geometric era.

Aegean painting is, then, best understood not as a creative dead end, but as foundational to the later artistic achievements of Classical Greece. It is in the Bronze Age that painting first became central to the visual culture of Greece. Aegean frescoes communicated complex messages about power and ritual, social hierarchies and cultural priorities, and the all-important relationship between the natural world, human activity, and divine presence. Terracotta sarcophagi (*larnakes*) were painted with Greece's first funerary scenes, and painted ceramics, from the Kamares Ware of Minoan Crete to the pictorial kraters of Mycenaean Greece, first acquired significant value as objects of art, both at home and abroad. That these achievements could all occur within a few centuries and in such a limited geographic space – the small territory that is the Aegean, bound by mountains and connected by sea – seems all the more remarkable.

ADDENDUM

Since this chapter went to press, a Minoan pictorial fresco depicting swallows in a landscape setting was excavated west of the palace of Knossos (Crete) in association with Protopalatial ceramics (Roussaki [forthcoming]). The composition's early date, if confirmed through continued conservation and study, could significantly impact the current understanding of the rise of pictorial painting in the Aegean. Additionally, new excavations at Ayios

Vasileios, an important Mycenaean site near Sparta (Laconia) on the Greek mainland, have uncovered Linear B tablets, monumental architecture, and large deposits of LH IIIA frescoes, currently under study (Petrakos [2010] 33–40; [2011] 29–31). Brecolouki et al. (2012) report the discovery of organic binders and a secco painting technique on some fresco fragments from the Pylos palace.

NOTES

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- 1 Evans (1901) 124.
- 2 Evans (1901) 125; MacGillivray (2000) 178–179.
- 3 Rodenwaldt (1911) 222–230, pl. 9.2; Lamb (1919–1921), 191–192, pl. VII.1–3; Immerwahr (1990) 110, 190 (My no. 1a), pl. 54. Discovered in 1876, Schliemann's fresco fragments lay forgotten in a storeroom until their rediscovery decades later.
- 4 MacGillivray (2000) 191.
- 5 Evans (1901) 125; MacGillivray (2000) 194, quoting Evans and Hogarth (1901) 5.
- 6 For an overview, see Dickinson (1994) 9–22; for detailed discussion, see Åström (1987); Warren and Hankey (1989); Bietak and Czerney (2007).
- 7 Manning (1999); Wiener (2003); Manning et al. (2006); Warburton (2009).
- 8 Cameron (1972); Blakolmer (1997) 96–97; Militello (2001) 35, 185–188, pl. I.1.
- 9 Branigan (1970) 138–139, fig. 29.4.
- 10 CMS II, 1, 321a; Yule (1980) 208–209; Younger (1988).
- 11 CMS II, 1, 287b; Yule (1980) 166; Immerwahr (1990) 28–29, fig. 9f.
- 12 CMS II, 5, 322; Yule (1980) 138; Immerwahr (1990) 29–30, fig. 10b.

- 13 CMS II, 5, 319; Yule (1980) 138; Immerwahr (1990) 29–30, fig. 10a.
- 14 CMS II, 5, 258; Hood (1978) 218, fig. 218; Immerwahr (1990) 29–30, fig. 10j.
- 15 Betancourt (1985) 23–63.
- 16 Warren (1972) 110 (P77), fig. 44; Betancourt (1985) 48, 50, fig. 30a.
- 17 Haggis (2007) 731–737, figs. 5d, 13–16.
- 18 Warren (1996); Haggis (2007) 737.
- 19 For an overview, see Watrous (2001) 182–213 and essays in Shelmerdine (2008) and Cline (2010); on Knossos, see MacGillivray (1994) 46–48; Macdonald (2005) 25–56.
- 20 Rehak and Younger (2001); Fitton (2002); Hitchcock (2010).
- 21 Immerwahr (1990) 21; Jones (2005) 203; for a detailed study of Aegean plaster technology within its international context, see Brysbaert (2008).
- 22 Levi (1976) I, 85, pls. XXIV, LXXXVa; Immerwahr (1990) 22, 186 (Phs no. 2), fig. 6c; Militello (2001) 45–46, pls. II.1–2, A.1.
- 23 PM I, 251–252, fig. 188a–b; Immerwahr (1990) 22, 145, 179 (no. 3); Hood (2005) 48–49, 76 (no. 29), fig. 2.27. A sponge print design is probably later (Hood [2005] 56).
- 24 Hood (1978) 71.
- 25 Shaw and Shaw (2005) 182 (no. 96), 224–225, pl. 2.38a.
- 26 On Kamares Ware, see Walberg (1976), (1987); Betancourt (1985) 90–102; Van de Moortel (2006).
- 27 Betancourt (1985) 101, pl. 11d; Walberg (1987).
- 28 PM I, 253–256, fig. 190; Betancourt (1985) 109, pl. 12.i.
- 29 Walberg (1986) 77–81, (1987) 49–50, 60–61.
- 30 Walberg (1986) 60–88, esp. 86–88; see also Blakolmer (1999).
- 31 Doumas (2003) 51–53, figs. 17–19; Kriga (2003) fig. 16; Nikolakopoulou (2010).
- 32 Doumas (1999).
- 33 Doumas (2003) 51–53.
- 34 See also pictorial MH pithos fragments from Kolonna, Aegina (Siedentopf [1991] 18–19, 24–25, 55 [no. 75], 62 [nos. 158, 162], fig. 4, pls. 14, 35–38); the Fisherman Vase from Phylakopi, Melos (Immerwahr [1990] 18, pl. 2); and the Griffin Jar from Ayia Irini, Keos (Cummer and Schofield [1984] 111–112 [no. 1318], pl. 79).
- 35 For an overview of Neopalatial Crete, see Rehak and Younger (2001) and essays in Shelmerdine (2008) and Cline (2010); on Neopalatial architecture, see McEnroe (2010).
- 36 PM I, 265–266, pl. IV.
- 37 MM III: Snijder (1936) 28; MM IIIA: Hood (2005) 62 (no. 5); MM IIIB/LM IA: Immerwahr (1990) 41–42, 170 (Kn no. 1), pls. 10–11; LM II/IIIA1: Cameron (1975) 460, 599, 693–695; LM IIIB: Palmer (1969a) 78–79.
- 38 Pendlebury (1939) 131–132 credits Luigi Pernier with the monkey identification. Piet de Jong made a revised reconstruction of the fresco depicting a monkey (Smith [1965] fig. 102).
- 39 Platon (1947) 505–524; Evely (1999) 50, 119–121, 237; Hood (2005) 62.
- 40 Walberg (1986) 58–62; Hood (2005) 62.
- 41 Cameron (1975) 725–726, fig. 108, pls. 109B1, 138B, 191C1.

- 42 Rethemiotakis (2002) 57, pl. XVIa.
- 43 The rise of landscape painting from an earlier tradition for faux-stone frescoes uncannily anticipates the First and Second Styles of Pompeian painting.
- 44 *PM* II, 2, 347–364.
- 45 Macdonald (2002) 35–36.
- 46 *PM* II, 773–795, figs. 508–511, 513–514, col. pl. XIV (frontispiece); Immerwahr (1990) 52–53, 171 (Kn no. 7), pl. 19; Evely (1999) 122–123, 239–240; Sherratt (2000b).
- 47 *PM* I, 3; Sherratt (2000b).
- 48 On Minoan relief frescoes, see Kaiser (1976); Blakolmer (2006). Blakolmer's recent discovery of a Knossian head fragment in relief disproves earlier suppositions that the heads of figures in relief frescoes were flat ([2006] 15, fig. 6).
- 49 Coulomb (1979).
- 50 Niemeier (1987a), (1988).
- 51 See, e.g., women in the tomb chapel of Nebamun, Thebes, Egypt (Robins [1997] figs. 69, 159).
- 52 Chapin (2012). See, e.g., the "Captain of the Blacks" fresco fragments from the House of the Frescoes at Knossos (*PM* II, 2, 755–757, pl. XIII; Immerwahr [1990] 96, 176 [Kn no. 27]) and the face painted dark yellow from the Porter's Lodge at Akrotiri, Thera (Vlachopoulos [2007] 135, pl. 15.16).
- 53 Immerwahr (1990) 15–16; Jones (2005). For possible shading, see the later discussion of the Knossos throne room frescoes.
- 54 Niemeier (1988) 238; Shaw (2004) 77–79.
- 55 See, e.g., the miniature frescoes from Tylissos (Immerwahr [1990], 66–67, 184).
- 56 Cameron (1975) III, 122, 164–165.
- 57 Shaw (2004).
- 58 *PM* III, 495–508, figs. 342A–B, 345, 348A–B, 350–353, suppl. pls. XL, XLI; Cameron (1975) 700, 702; Hood (1978) 71–72; Immerwahr (1990) 85, 171 (Kn no. 8); Hood (2005) 75–76, pl. 27.1.
- 59 *PM* III, 158–191, figs. 109b, 110, 113–120; IV, 7–18; Immerwahr (1990) 85–88, 174 (Kn no. 21); Hood (2005) 56–58 (no. 2), figs. 2.5, 2.6, pl. 27.2.
- 60 The composition, which was not removed, is now lost. *PM* II, 674–678, figs. 428, 429; IV, 893–895, fig. 873; Immerwahr (1990) 98, 176 (Kn no. 29); Hood (2005) 66 (no. 14).
- 61 Ladies in Blue: *PM* I, 545–547, figs. 397, 398; Cameron (1975) 698–699; Immerwahr (1990) 58–59, 172 (Kn no. 11); Evely (1999) 84; Hood (2005) 78–79, fig. 2.29, pls. 20.2, 28.1. Lady in Red: Cameron (1971); Immerwahr (1990) 59, 172 (Kn no. 12).
- 62 *PM* III, 508–517, figs. 354–359, suppl. pl. XLIC; Hood (1978) 71–72; Immerwahr (1990) 171 (Kn no. 8d, e).
- 63 *PM* III, 46–65, figs. 28–34, 36, col. pls. XVI–XVII; Immerwahr (1990) 63–65, 173 (Kn no. 15), fig. 34e, pl. 22; Hood (2005) 63–64 (no. 6), figs. 2.12, 2.13, pls. 10.1–3a–c, 11a–g.
- 64 Cameron (1975) 135–136; Davis (1987) 160.
- 65 Warren (1994) 190–194, supported by Shaw (1996) 186–187.
- 66 *PM* III, 49, 50.
- 67 Cameron (1975) 135, (1987) 325.
- 68 *PM* III, 66–74, col. pl. XVIII; Immerwahr (1990) 65–66, 173 (Kn no. 16), pl. 23; Hood (2005) 63–64, figs. 2.12, 10.2.
- 69 Platon (1959) 239; Graham (1962) 74; Immerwahr (1990) 65; Marinatos (1987).
- 70 *PM* III, col. pl. XVIII, left; Cameron (1967a) 65–67, fig. 7A, (1987) 325.
- 71 *PM* II, 2, 431–467; Cameron (1968); Immerwahr (1990) 42–46, 170 (Kn no. 2).
- 72 *PM* II, 2, 406.
- 73 Chapin (2004b) 56–58. See Marinatos (1984) 92 for the composition as a fertility landscape representing the ideal spring and Marinatos (1993) 194–195 for the composition as a renewal of nature.
- 74 Chapin and Shaw (2006).
- 75 Halbherr (1903) 55–60, pls. vii–xi; Cameron (1987) fig. 10 (reversed and with errors of reconstruction); Immerwahr (1990) 49–50, 180 (A.T. no. 1), pls. 17, 18; Militello (1998); Militello and la Rosa (2000).
- 76 Militello (1998) 250–253, pl. 2.
- 77 Rehak (1997a) 174; Militello (1998) 250–282.
- 78 Halbherr, Stefani, and Banti (1980) 92; Kopaka (1990).
- 79 *PM* III, 457–458, 468–473.
- 80 Watrous (1995).
- 81 Goodison and Morris (1998); Kopaka (2001); Laffineur (2001); Rehak and Younger (2001) 433, 438–439.
- 82 *PM* II, 109–116, figs. 49, 51–54, frontispiece; Immerwahr (1990) 78–79, 174 (Kn no. 20); Schofield (1996); Shaw (2005).
- 83 Hirsch (1977) 7–22; Shaw and Shaw (2006) 208–211.
- 84 Evely (1999) 248.
- 85 Shaw and Shaw (2006) 146, 225–229, pls. 2.5, 2.7, 2.17, 2.39, 2.41 top.
- 86 *PM* I, 542–544, figs. 394–395; III, 377–381, figs. 251, 252; Immerwahr (1990) 102, 171 (Kn no. 6); Hood (1978) 71, (2005) 71–72 (no. 21), pl. 42.5; Koehl (1986).
- 87 Militello (1998) 148–153, 321–335, figs. 36–38, pls. 11b, 12–13.
- 88 *PM* III, 30–31, col. pl. XV.
- 89 Trans. Warner and Finley (1978) 37.
- 90 Palyvou (2005).
- 91 Driessen and Macdonald (1997), 85–95; Friedrich (2000), (2006); Bruins et al. (2008).
- 92 Thera I–VII; Doumas (1983), (1992).
- 93 Palyvou (2005) 46–53, figs. 46–61, pls. 2–3.
- 94 Thera VI, 54.
- 95 Doumas (1992) 45–49, pls. 14–64.
- 96 Thera VI, 38–60, pls. 91–94, 96–108, 110, col. pls. 7–9; Morgan (1988); Televantou (1990), (1994), (2000).
- 97 Thera VI, 44–57; Morgan (1988) 144–145; Strasser (2010).
- 98 Akrivaki (2003).
- 99 Morgan (1988) 150–154.
- 100 Chapin (2007a).
- 101 Morris (1989).
- 102 Hiller (1990).
- 103 Watrous (2007).
- 104 Doumas (1992) pls. 18–23.
- 105 Thera VI, p. 47; Davis (1986) 399.

- 106 Chapin (2007b), (2009).
 107 Marinatos (1984) 34–38, 48–51.
 108 Thera VI, 54; Watrous (2007).
 109 Thera VII, 22–28, 32–38; Doumas (1992) 127–131, pls. 93–137; Vlachopoulos (2008).
 110 Palyvou (2005) 54.
 111 Barber (1994) 42–70, esp. 59.
 112 Marinatos (1984) 73–84, (1993) 205–211; Davis (1986) 402–403; Rehak (1999) 11–12; Chapin (2002) 23.
 113 Chapin (1995).
 114 Davis (1986) 403; Rehak (1999) 13; Chapin (2002) 19–20.
 115 Marinatos (1984) 79–84; Boulotis (2005) 38.
 116 Thera IV, 28, 46–49, pls. D–F, 51–61, 117–120; Immerwahr (1990) 51–52, 185–186 (Ak no. 4), pls. VIII, X; Doumas (1992) 109–111, pls. 78–91; Chapin (2007b) 240–241, (2009) 177.
 117 Thera IV, 20, 49–53, pls. A–C, 33–35, 37–41, 121–126; Doumas (1992) 99–100, pls. 66–76; Harte (2000) 690–695.
 118 Birtacha and Zacharioudakis (2000); Guralnick (2000); Papaodysseus et al. (2006a), (2006b).
 119 Atkinson et al. (1904) 70–79, figs. 60–62, pl. III; Morgan (1990); Immerwahr (1990) 47–48, 189 (Ph nos. 1–3); Morgan (2007).
 120 Marine subject matter, however, seems a Cretan rather than a Cycladic invention and first appears in Minoan art during the Protopalatial period (Immerwahr [1990] 48).
 121 Immerwahr (1990) 81–83, 189 (A.I. no. 4); Marinatos and Morgan (2005); Morgan (forthcoming).
 122 Coleman (1973); Abramovitz (1980); Immerwahr (1990) 79–80, 188 (A.I. nos. 1–3).
 123 Cameron (1978); Morgan (1990).
 124 Davis (1990). Compare, e.g., the use of color in the West House miniature frieze and the Grandstand Fresco of Knossos.
 125 Chapin (1997) 9–11.
 126 Davis (2007).
 127 Bietak (2000) 33; Bietak and Marinatos (2000) 40–42.
 128 Bietak (1996), (2000); Bietak and Marinatos (1995); Marinatos (1998), (2010); Morgan (2010a), (2010b).
 129 Bietak, Marinatos, and Palyvou (2000), (2007).
 130 Younger (1995).
 131 *PM I*, 357, fig. 256.
 132 Bietak (2000) 37–40.
 133 Niemeier and Niemeier (2000); Brysbaert (2002), (2008); Cline, Yasur-Landau, and Goshen (2011); Pfälzner (2008); von Rueden (2011).
 134 Feldman (2006).
 135 Betancourt (1985) 115–119, (2007) 85; Dickinson (1994) 115–116; Momigliano (2007).
 136 Driessen and Macdonald (1997); Rehak and Younger (2001) 392–394; Hallager (2010) 152–153; Brogan and Hallager (2011).
 137 Betancourt (1985) 145–146, pl. 21A.
 138 Betancourt (1977), (1985) 144–145, pl. 20G.
 139 Driessen and Macdonald (1997) 61–64; but see also Brogan and Hallager (2011).
 140 Driessen and Macdonald (1997); Rehak and Younger (2001) 440–441; but for a different view on the existence of a Middle Helladic “maison de chef,” see Maran (2010) 724–725.
 141 Rehak (1997b).
 142 Palmer (1969b); Driessen (1990).
 143 For recent reviews, see Rehak and Younger (2001) 444–445; Preston (2008); Hallager (2010).
 144 Mountjoy (1983).
 145 *PM IV*, 328, fig. 271. On the Palace Style, see Betancourt (1985) 155–158, pls. 24–25; Niemeier (1985).
 146 *PM II*, 2, 675, 682–684, 704–712, 719–755, figs. 428, 441–445, 450, 452–454, 456, col. pl. XII, suppl. pls. XXV–XXVII (15); Cameron (1975) 673–675; Boulotis (1987); Immerwahr (1990) 88–90, 174–175 (Kn no. 22); Evely (1999) 192–193, 226–232; Hood (2005) 66 (no. 15).
 147 *PM II*, 2, 720.
 148 Evely (1999) 157–160; Weingarten (1995), (2000).
 149 Macdonald (2002) 37–39. The date of the final destruction remains uncertain.
 150 Various proposed dates include the following: LM II: Cameron (1975) 596; Hood (2005) 66; LM II/IIIA: Immerwahr (1990) 174–175 (Kn no. 22); Rehak and Younger (2001) 447–448. Macdonald (2005) 219–220 favors LM II or IIIA but acknowledges that LM IB makes sense of the architectural phases. For Minoan character: *PM II*, 2, 682; Boulotis (1987); Davis (1990) 214.
 151 Morgan (1988) 93–97; Davis (1990) 214; Shaw (2000).
 152 Doumas (1992) 176, pls. 138–141.
 153 Marcar (2004); Immerwahr (1990) 89.
 154 Rehak (1996), (1998).
 155 *PM III*, 209–232, figs. 144–146, 148, 164B, col. pl. XXI; Cameron (1975) 698–699; Immerwahr (1990) 90–92, 175 (Kn no. 23), pls. 41–42; Younger (1995) 510–511, 515–516; Hood (2005) 7980 (no. 33), pls. 12.1–3, 40.1–2.
 156 Cameron (1987) fig. 12; Bietak, Marinatos, and Palyvou (2007) 115–124.
 157 Damiani-Indelicato (1988).
 158 Marinatos (1993) 219–220; Rehak (1996) 41; Bietak, Marinatos, and Palyvou (2007) 127–128.
 159 Alberti (2002) 109–115.
 160 Gombrich (1961) 63–90; Chapin (2007b), (2012).
 161 *PM IV*, 909–913, figs. 884–886, col. pls. XXXII–XXXIII (frontispiece); Cameron (1975) 679–80; Immerwahr (1990), 96–98, 176 (Kn no. 28); Evely (1999) 56–59, 65, 202–203; Shank (2007).
 162 Mirié (1979); AR 1987–1988, 68; Macdonald (2005) 115–116.
 163 *PM IV*, pl. XXXII; Cameron (1975) plate vol., 110; Shank (2007).
 164 Reusch (1958); Mirié (1979); Niemeier (1987b); Shaw (1993) 676–679.
 165 *PM III*, 301–314, fig. 196, col. pl. XXIII; Immerwahr (1990) 138–140, 177 (Kn no. 33), pl. 49; Hood (2005) 74–75 (no. 26), pl. 48.3. The fresco was on the palace walls at the time of its final destruction, so dating is by style.
 166 *PM II*, 770–773, fig. 502–503; *PM IV*, 398–399, fig. 332; Cameron (1967b); Immerwahr (1990) 92–95, 175–176 (Kn no. 25), fig. 27; Hood (2005) 69–70 (no. 19), fig. 2.20, pl. 20.4a–c.

- 167 *PM* I, 433, fig. 311; IV, 379–396, figs. 318, 319, 323–325, 330, col. pl. XXXIA–H; Immerwahr (1990) 95, 176 (Kn no. 26), fig. 26e, pl. 44; Hood (2005) 61–62 (no. 4).
- 168 Cameron (1964).
- 169 Cameron (1964) 51–52; Immerwahr (1990) 95; Wright (1995) 292.
- 170 Hood (1978) 68–70.
- 171 For the fresco, see note 87, this chapter. For Ayia Triada in LM III, see La Rosa (2010) 503–505.
- 172 Militello (1998) 132–148, 283–320, figs. 33–35, pls. 9–11a, I, L, M.
- 173 Watrous (1991) 290; Militello (1998) 154–167, 283–308, pls. 14–16.
- 174 Paribeni (1908); Long (1974); Hood (1978) 70–71, figs. 53–54; Immerwahr (1990) 100–101, 180–181 (A.T. no. 2), pls. 50–53; Burke (2005).
- 175 Watrous (1991) 290–291, supported by Hiller (1999); see also Burke (2005).
- 176 Immerwahr (1990) 101–102.
- 177 See Rehak and Younger (2001) 446, n. 440 for a recent bibliography.
- 178 Watrous (1991) 293–294.
- 179 Müller (1930) 178; Kilian (1987) 213.
- 180 Wace (1923) 155–159, pl. 25b.1–2, (1949) 71, 86–88; French and Shelton (2005) 176–177, pl. 18.
- 181 Rodenwaldt (1923–1924) 275–276, fig. 3; Kaiser (1976) 306, fig. 473b, pl. 26; Immerwahr (1990) 194.
- 182 Cosmopoulos (forthcoming).
- 183 For overviews see Vermeule (1972); Chadwick (1976); Taylour (1983); Schofield (2007). For LH IIIA construction activities, see Shelmerdine (2001) 350–351; French (2002) 51–64; Davis (2010) 684–686; Maran (2010), 724–725.
- 184 The structure, named the “House of Kadmos” in honor of the city’s founding hero, became known as the “Old Kadmeion” when a second (?) Mycenaean palace was identified nearby, to distinguish it from the later “New Kadmeion.” The construction date of the House of Kadmos remains uncertain and could trace back to LH II. See Symeonoglou (1985) 40–50, figs. 2.9–10; Demakopoulou and Konsola (1981) 23–26; Dakouri-Hild (2001). Reusch (1956) dated the fresco to LH II, but Immerwahr (1990) 200–201 finds LH IIIA more likely.
- 185 Reusch (1956); Demakopoulou and Konsola (1981) 50–51, pl. 21; Immerwahr (1990) 115–117, 200–201 (Th no. 1), fig. 32d–f, pl. XXI; Boulotis (2000) 1095–1149.
- 186 Immerwahr (1990) 114–118.
- 187 For overviews with further references, see Shaw (1996) 169–174; Mountjoy (1993) 146–147.
- 188 Immerwahr (1990) 117, 190 (My no. 1c).
- 189 Rodenwaldt (1911); Lamb (1919–1921); Immerwahr (1990) 110–111, 190 (My no. 1b), pls. XVI, 54; Shaw (1996).
- 190 Lang (1969) 49–50, 77 (36 H 105), pls. 24, 116, 124, C; Hood (1978) 78, fig. 59; Immerwahr (1990) 110–111, 196 (Py no. 1), pl. XVII.
- 191 Schliemann (1885) 303–307, pl. XIII; Rodenwaldt (1912) 162–165, pl. XVIII; Immerwahr (1990) 110, 113, 202 (Ti no. 1); Younger (1995) 511.
- 192 Rodenwaldt (1912) 1–5; Lang (1969) 223–224; Immerwahr (1990) 113.
- 193 Lang (1969).
- 194 Cameron and Mayer (1995) 282, 784–792 (F001, F003–006, F013, F178–180, F185, F497).
- 195 Shelton (forthcoming).
- 196 AR 1978–1979, 13–14, fig. 14.
- 197 Demakopoulou (1990a) 113, 116, fig. 4.
- 198 Symeonoglou (1985) 52, 54; Immerwahr (1990) 201 (Th no. 7).
- 199 Chadwick (1976) 70–83; Shelmerdine (2001) 358–359; Duhoux and Davies (2008), (2011).
- 200 Wace (1949) 76–77, figs. 89–91, 95–97a; Mylonas (1983) 96–103, figs. 79–80.
- 201 Rodenwaldt (1921) 21–45; Lamb (1921–1923); Immerwahr (1990) 122–125, 192 (My no. 11), figs. 35a, 38c, pl. 65.
- 202 Crouwel (1981).
- 203 Lamb (1921–1923) 249–255, pls. XLII–XLIII; Vermeule (1972) 200, pl. XXXIb; Immerwahr (1990) 125, 192 (My no. 11b), fig. 35a.
- 204 Rodenwaldt (1921) 38–40, fig. 20, Beil. II, col. pl.; Vermeule (1972) pl. XXXIa; Immerwahr (1990) pl. 65.
- 205 Crouwel (1981) 130–132.
- 206 Kritsili-Providi (1982) B-1: 37–40, pls. Å, 4–5; Immerwahr (1990) 119–120, 166, 191 (My no. 3), fig. 32h, pl. XX; Jones (2009); for shield fresco, see Kritsili-Providi (1982) B-32–47: 54–63, pls. Å, ÓÖ, 12–18; Immerwahr (1990) 140, 193 (My nos. 14, 15).
- 207 Kritsili-Providi (1982) B-20–23, 49–51, Å, 9–10.
- 208 B. Jones (2009) offers strong arguments in favor of a striding, offertory stance.
- 209 Taylour (1969); Rehak (1984), (1992), (1999b); Marinatos (1988); Immerwahr (1990) 120–121, 165, 191 (My no. 6), pls. 59–61; Morgan (2005b).
- 210 Marinatos (1988) 246; for leonine identification, Rehak (1992) 54–55.
- 211 Rehak (1992) 54–58; Morgan (2005b) 168.
- 212 Houlihan (1996) 93.
- 213 Marinatos (1988) 248; Rehak (1992) 48–49.
- 214 Rehak (1984), (1992) 49–50, (1999b). For the “Mother of the Mountain” sealing from Knossos, see *PM* II, 809, fig. 528.
- 215 Cameron and Mayer (1995) 280–283.
- 216 Shear (1987) 136–143, pls. 43, 44.
- 217 Tsountas and Manatt (1897) 61, fig. 16; Kontorli-Papadopoulou (1987) 152–153.
- 218 Schliemann (1885) 296.
- 219 Schliemann (1885) 214, 224–225, 226, fig. 116; Rodenwaldt (1912) 222–237, figs. 80–83, pls. XIX–XXI; Hirsch (1977) 22, pls. 12–13; Demakopoulou (1988) 101 (cat. no. 30).
- 220 Schliemann (1885) 296–297; Rodenwaldt (1912) 166–169, fig. 72; Immerwahr (1990) 144, 204 (Ti no. 15).
- 221 Schliemann (1885) 298–297, pl. V; Rodenwaldt (1912) 175–179, nos. 241–253, figs. 74, 75, pl. VII; Immerwahr (1990) 142–143, 203 (Ti nos. 11, 12).
- 222 Rodenwaldt (1912) 140–154 (nos. 199–222), figs. 60–62, pls. XV, XVI.2–3, XVII.2, 4, 5, 8; Immerwahr (1990) 130–132, 203 (Ti no. 7), fig. 36.
- 223 Rodenwaldt (1912) 69–94, nos. 71–111, figs. 27–34, 37, pls. VIII–X; Boulotis (1979); Immerwahr (1990) 114–117, 202

- (Ti no. 4), figs. 26g, 32g, 33b, pls. 55–56. For the publication of new frescoes excavated in 1998–2001 from the area of the western staircase, and the results of the restudy of the procession fresco, see Maran, Papadimitriou, and Thaler (forthcoming); Papadimitriou, Thaler, and Maran (forthcoming).
- 224 Schliemann (1885) 299–301, pls. VI, VII, XII; Rodenwaldt (1912) 160–161; Immerwahr (1990) 137–138, 203 (Ti no. 9).
- 225 Rodenwaldt (1912) 96–137, figs. 40–42, 47–50, 52, 54, 55, 57, pls. XI–XIV; Crouwel (1981) 172 (W46–68); Immerwahr (1990) 129–130, 202–203 (Ti no. 6), pls. 68–70.
- 226 Fragments of a strikingly similar Boar Hunt Fresco unearthed at Orchomenos in 1974 suggest the existence of itinerant artists and/or copybooks (Immerwahr [1990] 132, 195 [Or no. 3]).
- 227 Rodenwaldt (1912) fig. 55, pls. XIII, XIV.1. On women's participation, see Rodenwaldt (1912) 121; Lang (1969) 45–46, supported by Crouwel (1981) 137; Immerwahr (1990) 129–130, 217 n. 19.
- 228 Blegen and Rawson (1966); Lang (1969).
- 229 Davis and Bennet (1999) 108 n. 11.
- 230 Lang (1969) 214–215.
- 231 Lang (1969) 227.
- 232 Davis and Bennet (1999) 111–115.
- 233 Blegen and Rawson (1966) I, 45–92, esp. 82–83; II, pls. 56, 65–73.
- 234 Lang (1969) 192–193, pls. 119–120, N; McCallum (1987) 77–87, pls. VIIIa–c.
- 235 Blegen and Rawson (1966) 88, pl. 70; Lang (1969) 194–196; McCallum (1987) 97–101, pl. IX; Shank (2007).
- 236 Lang (1969) 79–81 (43–44 H 6), 194–195, pls. 27, 28, 125, 126, A.
- 237 Lang (1969) 109–110, 194–195, pls. 55, 125, A; McCallum (1987) 138–141.
- 238 Killen (1994); Davis and Bennet (1999) 116. On the Mycenaean feast, see Wright (2004).
- 239 Stocker and Davis (2004) 70.
- 240 Davis and Bennet (1999) 115–118, with further references.
- 241 Iakovidis (2001) 138–141.
- 242 Brysbaert (2006).
- 243 Iakovidis (2001) 138–141, pls. VII–IXa.
- 244 Rodenwaldt (1912) 222–232, figs. 80, 81, pls. XIX, XXI.3; Blegen and Rawson (1966) 211–215, pls. 163–166.
- 245 For dolphins in Aegean art, see Morgan (1988) 60–63.
- 246 For summaries with bibliography, see Mountjoy (1993); Dickinson (1994) 118–130; Rutter (2010).
- 247 On pictorial vases, see Vermeule and Karageorghis (1982); Immerwahr (1990) 149–154; Sakellarakis (1992); Rystedt and Wells (2006).
- 248 Vermeule and Karageorghis (1982) 26, 197 (IV.1); Mountjoy (1993) 73–74, no. 153.
- 249 Vermeule (1965); Spyropoulos (1970); Demakopoulou and Konsola (1981) 82–85, pls. 42–44; Immerwahr (1990) 154–158, fig. 41, pls. XXII, XXIII; Immerwahr (1995).
- 250 Demakopoulou and Konsola (1981) 83, pl. 42; Immerwahr (1990) 156, 157–158, fig. 41e, pls. XXII, XXIII, (1995) 110–112. For the leaper, see Younger (1995).
- 251 Dickinson (2006) 24–57.
- 252 A LH IIIB fresco fragment from Mycenae depicting a woman holding a lily was mistakenly attributed to the LH IIIC period. See Kritseli-Providi (1982) Å-1, 73–76, fig. 8, pls. B, 24; Immerwahr (1990) 120, 191 (My no. 5).
- 253 Immerwahr (1990) 151, 194 (My no. 21), pl. 84.
- 254 Schliemann (1880) 132–137, figs. 213, 214; Vermeule and Karageorghis (1982) 130–132, 222, XI 42; Demakopoulou (1990b) 147–148; Sakellarakis (1992) 36–37, fig. 32; Mountjoy (1993) 100, fig. 266.
- 255 On this class of vessel, see Mountjoy (1993) 101–102.