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Source: *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 99 (1979), pp. 115-129
Published by: The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/630636
Accessed: 13/10/2009 08:25

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THE MINIATURE FRESCO FROM THE WEST HOUSE AT AKROTIRI, THERA, AND ITS AEGEAN SETTING*

Εἰς μνήμην Spyridon Marinatos, Denys Page

THE mansion known as the West House or House of the Admiral at Akrotiri, Thera, was excavated by Spyridon Marinatos in the 1971 and 1972 seasons.[1] The miniature fresco, one of the most important monuments of Aegean art yet found, decorated room 5, which was the north-west corner room on the upper, first floor of the building. This room, approximately 4 × 4 m internally, had wide windows of three and four frames respectively in the north and west walls, an exit eastwards into the central part of the house and a door in the south-east corner into room 4 and the adjacent bathroom, 4a (FIG. 1). Although its function cannot now be demonstrated room 5 was probably a living room, with its wide windows and reasonable size. But a curious vessel, which may have been a ritual sprinkler (*Thera* VI 31–2 and pl. 70), was found in the south-west corner among the fresco fragments and carries a hint of other functions.

LOCATION

Although the upper parts of the walls of room 5 did not survive and all the fresco fragments were found fallen from them, the very careful excavation, recording, planning and publication of find spots (*Thera* VI 23–5 and plans 5–7) enabled much of the fresco to be reconstructed accurately and the sequence of episodes on the frieze to be determined approximately. The floor of room 5 had been paved with schist slabs laid over wooden beams; those against part of the west wall and the whole of the north wall survived *in situ* and several pieces of fresco were found on or above the north wall slabs (*Thera* VI plan 5) (FIG. 1). The remainder of the floor had collapsed and much of the fresco was recovered from the fill of the basement room below, at depths from just below the floor level of room 5 down to 3 m below. Although Marinatos did not say as much the fresco, a long frieze, can only have been situated above the window frames in a continuous band. The wall spaces at window level in the north-east and south-west corners of the room were each occupied by the superb painting of the boy fisherman holding large bunches of fishes.[2] That in the north-west corner had slid down a little from its position, but was still upright.[3] The dado level below the windows was decorated with a fresco imitating banded stone or wood graining.[4] For a continuous band or frieze fairly high on a wall we may cite the partridge fresco round the interior of the Caravanserai at Knossos.[5]

* This paper was first given as a lecture to the Classical Association at Southampton University on 30th October, 1975. A summary was published in the undergraduate *Bull. U. Birmingham Archaeol. Soc.* xiv (1975–6) 58–66. The fresco has been extraordinarily well published in colour by Sp. Marinatos (n. 1) and I was also able to study the originals in the exhibition of the National Archaeological Museum, Athens, on 23rd July, 1976.

That the paper can be published with colour plates is due first to the kindness and generosity of Dr Christos Doumas, Director of the Thera excavations, who supplied me with colour transparencies, and to that of the University of Bristol Publications Committee and the A. G. Ellinger Charitable Trust who provided grants for the production of the plates. I sincerely thank them and Dr Doumas, Mr A. G. Ellinger and Mr R. P. Radnedge of the University of Bristol Printing Unit. I am also most grateful to Mr M. S. F. Hood and Dr N. G. Calvert for the loan of the negatives for PLATE VI and to Mrs Lyvia Morgan Brown and Dr Oliver Rackham for kindly sending me the papers referred to in nn. 10 and 22, in advance of their publication.

Special abbreviations: Evans, *PM* I, II, III, IV: Sir Arthur Evans, *The Palace of Minos at Knossos* i–iv (1921–35). Marinatos and Hirmer: Sp. Marinatos and M. Hirmer, *Crete and Mycenae* (1960). *Thera* VI: Sp. Marinatos, *Excavations at Thera* vi (1974). Sakellariou: A. Sakellariou, 'La scène du "siège" sur le rhyton d'argent de Mycènes d'après une nouvelle reconstitution', *Rev. Arch.* 1975 195–208.

[1] *Thera* V 17–20 and pl. 97b; *Thera* VI 19–31, 38–60, pls 42a, 91–112, colour pls 7–9 and plans 3–7.

[2] *Thera* VI pls 42b, 85–90 and colour pl. 6.

[3] *Thera* VI pls 38b, 42b.

[4] *Thera* VI pl. 38a–b.

[5] Evans, *PM* II (1928) 109–16 and fig. 49. M. A. S. Cameron, 'On Theoretical Principles in Aegean Bronze Age Mural Restoration' in P. Betancourt (ed.), *Temple University Aegean Symposium 1976* 40 n. 55 and fig. 1 E. For a valuable discussion of the position of fresco friezes, with a list and measurements, see Cameron, 'Savakis's Bothros: a minor Sounding at Knossos', *BSA* lxxi (1976) 6–8 and n. 17.

Date

The period of occupation of the great houses at Akrotiri was Late Minoan IA, *c.* 1550–1490 B.C. The date of their destruction was beyond any reasonable doubt within this period. The recent attempt by Professor J. V. Luce[6] to bring down the date to the following Late Minoan IB period, and so make the destruction of Thera and of all the great Cretan sites contemporary, cannot, unfortunately, be accepted. Among the many hundreds of painted vases from the excavations, which I was permitted to study at Akrotiri through the kindness of Dr C. Doumas, not a single one belongs to the Late Minoan IB Marine Style or to any other of the classic styles of that period.[7] It is the case, however, that two pieces from Thera, while not being in the classic Marine Style of octopuses, argonauts or sea plants and shells, do have marine themes of dolphins amid rock-work. One is a magnificent pithos, not yet published, the other the equally fine plaster tripod table from the south window sill of room 4a on the upper floor of the West House.[8] We may conclude therefore that the development in decoration reached at the time of the destruction of Akrotiri cannot be far from the classic LM IB Marine Style, though the absence of even one characteristic vase shows that that stage had not yet been reached. The end of LM IA is therefore the best date available at present for the destruction of Thera and so too of the miniature fresco. It could have been painted at any time in that period.

Description

The following description is intended only to make clear the subject of each scene, with attention to details where they are significant for the subsequent analysis. The fresco was described and magnificently illustrated in colour by Marinatos and, more recently, by Sir Denys Page.[9] The ships and their occupants have been fully discussed by Marinatos, Buchholz and Lyvia Morgan Brown.[10] The colour illustrations (PLATES A–B) accompanying the present article enable details to be studied visually which are not exhaustively described.

West Wall. There is no published evidence that the frieze decorated the west wall and some slight indication that it did not. Whereas pieces had clearly fallen from the other three walls (*Thera* VI plans 5–7) (FIG. 1), none appears to have fallen from the west, even though the floor paving, which did hold fresco fragments along the north wall, was preserved along more than half the length of the west wall. The absence of fallen fragments here, if in fact the west wall was

[6] J. V. Luce, 'Thera and the Devastation of Minoan Crete: a New Interpretation of the Evidence' in *AJA* lxxx (1976) 9–16 (with Addendum by K. Bolton, 17–18).

[7] For the Late Minoan IB marine and other styles see R. C. Bosanquet, 'The Pottery. The Late Minoan Period. Late Minoan I and II' [=LM IA and B], in R. C. Bosanquet and R. M. Dawkins, *The Unpublished Objects from the Palaikastro Excavations* (BSA Suppl. Paper No. 1: 1923) 21–54 and pls XVIII–XXI; J. and A. Evans, *Index to the Palace of Minos* (1936) 132–5; A. Furumark, *The Mycenaean Pottery: Analysis and Classification* (1941) 158–65; M. R. Popham, 'Late Minoan Pottery: A Summary', *BSA* lxii (1967) 339–43 (on LM IB); N. Platon, *Zakros. The Discovery of a Lost Palace of Ancient Crete* (1971) figs on pp. 106–14, 117, 121–3; *Ζάκρος. Τὸ νέον μινωϊκὸν ἀνάκτορον* (1974) figs 15–6, 45–7, 49–51, 53–4, 56–7; J. N. Coldstream in J. N. Coldstream and G. L. Huxley (eds), *Kythera. Excavations and Studies* (1972) 123–48, 291–303; P. Betancourt, 'The Polyp Workshop: a Stylistic Group from LM IB' in *AJA* lxxvii (1973) 333–4; 'Some new Attributions to Minoan Ceramic Workshops', *Abstracts of Papers Delivered in Art History, College Art Assoc. of America* (1975) 14; 'Economic Implications of the Reed Painter's Vases' in P. Betancourt (ed.), *Temple University Aegean Symposium 1976* 15–17; 'Further Observations on the Marine Style' in *AJA* lxxxi (1977) 561; 'Marine-Life Pottery from the Aegean' in *Archaeology* xxx (1977) 38–43; P.-A. Mountjoy, 'A Note on the LM IB Marine Style at Knossos' in *BSA* lxix (1974) 173–5; 'A Later Development in the Late Minoan IB Marine Style' in *BSA* lxix (1974) 177–8; 'A Late Minoan IB Marine Style rhyton from Pseira' in *Athens Annals of Archaeology* ix (1976) 83–6; 'Attributions in the LM IB Marine Style' in *AJA* lxxxi (1977) 557–60.

[8] *Thera* V 18, pls 24b, 25, 102 and colour pl. c. Cf. *Thera* IV pl. 82, from Delta Room 8.

[9] 'The Miniature Frescoes from Akrotiri, Thera', *Πρακτικὰ τῆς Ἀκαδημίας Ἀθηνῶν* li (1976) 135–52 and pls I–III.

[10] Sp. Marinatos, 'Das Schiffsfresko von Akrotiri, Thera', in D. Gray, 'Seewesen', *Archaeologia Homerica* i G (1974) 140–51 and pls XIII–XVII; H.-G. Buchholz, 'Bemerkungen zum Schiffsfresko von Thera' in *Hellas, ewig unsere Liebe, Fest. W. Zschietzschmann* 5–14; L. M. Brown, 'The Ship Fresco from Thera; some Thoughts on the Iconography' in *BICS* xxiv (1977) 144–5; 'The Ship Procession in the Miniature Fresco' in C. Doumas (ed.), *Thera and the Aegean World. 1. Papers Presented to the Second International Scientific Congress, Santorini, Greece, August 1978* 629–44.

decorated, is all the more remarkable since the head fragment of the south-west corner fisherman was found on one of the western slabs (*Thera* VI plan 5). It may be that the west wall collapsed outwards and fresco fragments are yet to be found in the street debris on the west side of the house (cf. *Thera* VI 24). So far, however, we know of nothing on this wall, other than Marinatos's reference *(ibid.)* to a single fragment.

From the published plans of the fallen pieces, of which FIG. 1 is a composite sketch plan, we can determine that the north wall depicted, somewhat to the left of centre, the scene with the sea-shore battle of the ships and marching warriors above (scene 2 below, FIG. 1, 1–2); to the right of centre came the scene with bulls and the continuation of the sea-shore battle (scene 3, FIG. 1,

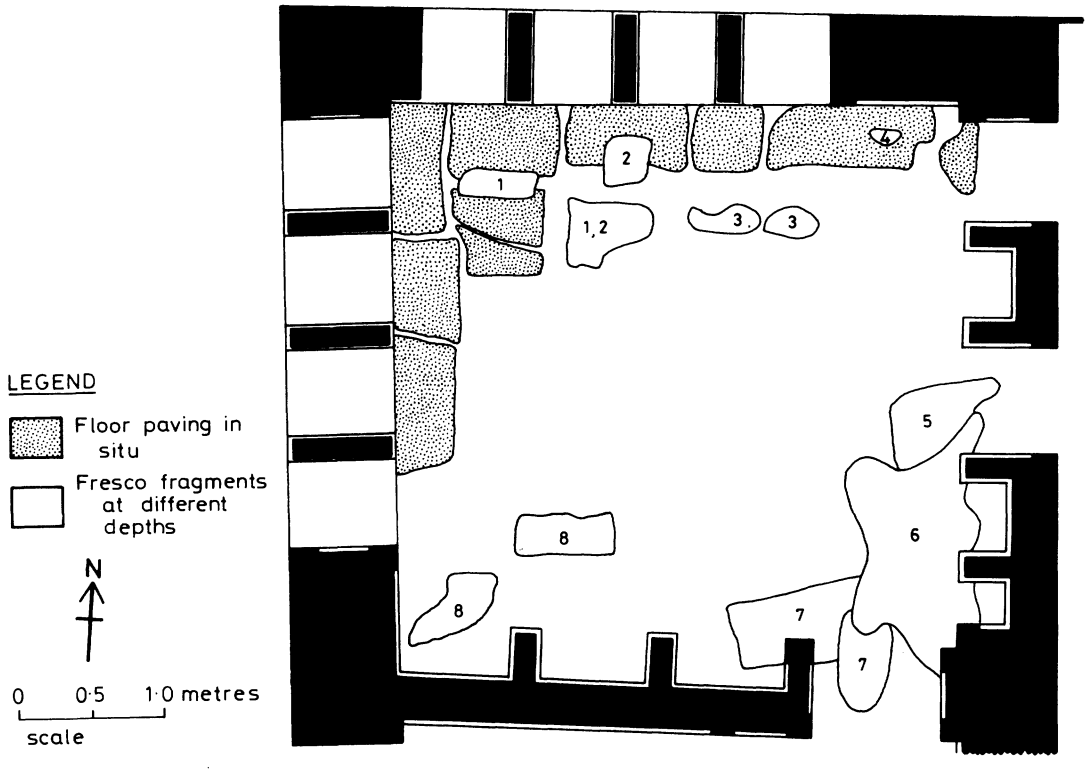

FIG. 1. Thera, West House, Room 5. Composite plan (after *Thera* VI plans 4–7) to show find-places of miniature fresco. 1: sea battle and drowning men. 2: marching warriors. 3: cattle. 4: drowning man. 5: river scene. 6: sea-shore, riverside town. 7: fleet. 8: home port.

3–4). On turning to the east wall we find nothing in the published plans for the left hand part, while the central area clearly showed the river scene (scene 4, FIG. 1, 5); the right part (*Thera* VI plan 5) or, less probably, the first or left part of the south wall, showed the sea-shore town at which the river terminates in two branches (scene 5, FIG. 1, 6); the south wall was chiefly occupied by the great fleet, departing from the river town, at sea (left of centre and central part of wall) and arriving at its home port (right part of wall, up to the corner) (scene 5, FIG. 1, 7–8). This scene at the home port seems to mark a definite end to the story of the frieze, here in the south-west corner of the room.

We do not know the nature of the transition at any of the corners of the room except the south-east; here, wherever the vertical corner line actually came in the fresco, it is clear that the scene turned the corner, disregarding its existence, since the frieze shows a continuous episode, almost completely preserved, from the river town through the fleet to the home port. This disregard of a room corner occurs on other Theran frescoes, notably that of the monkeys from Block B above room 6 and that of the papyri from the House of the Ladies.[11] In this interesting

[11] Monkeys: *Thera* V colour pl. D. Papyri: *Thera* V colour pl. F; P. Warren, 'Did Papyrus grow in the Aegean?' in *Athens Annals of Archaeology* ix (1976) 89–95.

treatment of space the constraints of architectural form, the right-angle corner of a room, are subservient in the artist's mind to the continuance of the story; his primary perception is, as it were, a single imagined surface for his scene and this he carries out in complete disregard of real-life corners, with no scenic division at the right-angle. Precisely the same conception is found at Knossos in the artist of the fresco of the Blue Monkeys as it was reconstructed by M. A. S. Cameron.[12] It may well be that the whole miniature fresco in room 5 was a continuous scene from the north-west corner round three sides to the south-west, though this cannot be proved from the fallen fragments. The total length of the three walls is 11·86 m (*Thera* VI plan 4) and about 7·50 m of fresco are preserved, an astonishing amount by Cretan standards. The height is about 40 to 43 cm on the north and south walls, about half that for the river scene on the east wall (*Thera* VI 42).

The fresco as reconstructed is described from the north-west corner clockwise to the south-west (*Thera* VI 40–4).

(1) PLATE A*a*, left part. A scene on a mountain peak with male figures in long white or blue-grey robes or in short white kilts ascending from each side to meet in a sort of heraldic confrontation at the top; both robes, white and blue-grey, have counterparts in the following scenes; the kilted figures hold their arms forward, bent at the elbow in a specific gesture.

(2) PLATE A*a*. A complex scene with, at the bottom, an attack by long ships on a sea-shore position with a masonry building, parts of three ships, one of which has had its prow broken; skilled representations of defending soldiers, defeated and drowning; two have smooth hairstyles, the other hair rising in a crescent of separate strands; they are naked, save for a short skin cloak, somewhat resembling a chlamys, on one, but they had carried short, tower-shaped body-shields and what may be a grappling hook; the victorious, attacking warriors march in a line up above; they wear boar's tusk helmets and long body-shields and carry very long spears; they appear to be marching up to the peaceful top scene which depicts a goatherd taking his animals to a fold and a shepherd leading his (plus a tame deer) from it; nearby two long-skirted women carry water in jars (like modern *stámnes*) on their heads from a built well, on which are two more jars; below the well-head is a masonry building with two men in front; on the roof four long-robed men face left; they have the crested hair style of the drowning figure. Although there is no physical join between this scene and the mountain scene, no. 1, the men on the roof may well be looking towards the mountain group and so not be far from them; they wear white and grey-blue robes just like the men on the mountain peak.

(3) A scene (not published) to the right of no. 2 depicting a continuation of the sea-shore battle with parts of two ships and two more drowned figures (one complete), above which are two magnificent bulls, black, white and bluish in colour, perhaps objects of capture by the attackers, like the animals and women in the previous scene.

(4) PLATE A*b*. A scene, not preserved at its left end and so not joined to no. 3, depicting a winding river with a subsidiary stream below and an interesting series of fauna and flora along its stony banks; fauna: bird (duck family), griffin, an animal looking like a hyena, jackal or lynx, but perhaps a young dappled deer before its antlers have grown, a spotted animal like a leopard or panther, and geese; flora: palm trees small and large, reeds, papyri and a spiky shrub.

(5) PLATE A*c–d*, B*a–d*. A landscape and seascape packed with detail; the left end is not physically linked to the river of scene 4 and, although 5 seems from the position of fallen pieces (FIG. 1) to have begun on the east wall before turning the corner into the south wall, we do not know how it related to the river in the centre of the east wall; the blue, undulating line coming in at the preserved left edge of 5 (PLATE A*d*) may be the river, since it has flora and fauna on its edge like the river, but is more likely to be the convention for a mountain top,[13] since a very similar convention is used for the mountain crests above the home port (PLATE B*d*); the blue line here at the beginning, moreover, does not have the golden outlining band on its top edge standing for the river bank, while this feature is present on both sides of the river itself.

Along this mountain top a lion chases three fallow deer with big palmate antlers amid trees which look like pines (PLATE A*d*); from the mountain top a river emerges and branches into two streams to surround a sea-shore village with buildings on different levels; there seem to be

[12] 'Unpublished Paintings from the "House of the Frescoes" at Knossos' in *BSA* lxiii (1968) 1–31, especially fig. 13.

[13] *Cf.* Page (n. 9) 140.

(b)

(c)

(d)

(a)

THERA, WEST HOUSE, MINIATURE FRESCOES
(*a*) Hilltop, Sea-battle, Warriors, Flocks and Women
(b) River
(c) Sea-shore town and departing fleet
(d) Sea-shore town with rivers

(*a*)

(*b*)

(*c*)

(*d*)

THERA, WEST HOUSE, MINIATURE FRESCOES
(*a*) Promontory and rear ships of departing fleet
(*b*) Fleet with flagship and Sailing Ship
(*c*) Fleet arriving in port
(*d*) Home port with welcoming population

COLOUR PLATE B

indications of another stream descending the mountain on the right; some of the buildings in the foreground have two storeys, others behind and higher up may have just one; the artist (or the tradition in which he paints) has skilfully mastered the problem of depth in his rendering of buildings on a slope rising up from the shore, in that if one examines the constructions in the centre of the village, immediately left of the two figures standing on the shore, one can see no less than five buildings convincingly rising up each behind the other, with overlapping edges, corners and frames—the use of five or six different colours heightens the effect; to the left of the village two men in long goat-skin robes tied at the neck with the goat's feet (*Thera* VI pls 98–9) converse across one branch of the river, with small, freestanding, out-of-town houses to the left.

Within the village, ten robed men watch the departure of a fleet, seven great ships with a smaller vessel at the rear, offshore before the village (PLATE A*c*, *d*, B*a*); the context is entirely peaceful; the fleet at sea is surrounded by a school of about thirteen leaping and plunging dolphins, recalling in their realism those of the painted plaster table from room 4a and those of the dolphin fresco from the Queen's Megaron at Knossos (PLATE B*a*–*b*).

It is not my purpose to discuss the large and complex subject of the ships and their construction, a matter already skilfully treated by experts (see n. 10). With regard to their complements, however, we may note that each has a white-kilted steersman with his huge steering oar, behind him the commander in his elaborately decorated stern cabin (represented, as Marinatos pointed out, in the large-scale frescoes of the adjacent room 4 [*Thera* VI colour pl. 4] and thus suggesting the close association of the West House with the fleet); on either side of the steersman sit either two or three robed figures, while on one ship a tall, kilted figure stands in front of the steersman (PLATE B*a*); his arms are bent and a possible interpretation, offered by Marinatos (*Thera* VI 49 and pl. 100), is that he is giving time to the crew; the crew are always shown bent right forward with their heads at gunwale level and they face the direction in which the ships are moving; each man's arms are held right over the side, gripping the means of propulsion; there are no indications of rowlocks and from the position of their arms the men are clearly not rowing in the Mediterranean fashion (facing forward) but paddling, as in Polynesian war canoes; in the two best preserved ships twenty-one and probably twenty-three paddles are visible, indicating a crew of at least forty-two; only one ship has no paddlers; this is because it is the only vessel under sail (PLATE B*b*); hence it needs two steersmen with steering oars to manoeuvre it; above the crew sit robed passengers facing each other in compartments; in some cases (PLATE A*c*, B*c*) boar's tusk helmets are hung above their heads, which must indicate that at some stage on their voyage they expected to be fighting; these passengers number from seven to nine, in the longest ship there may have been about thirteen. In the best preserved ship, sailing above the town peninsula (PLATE B*a*), there are fifteen persons visible above deck and an implied crew of forty-two. In the ship entering harbour (PLATE B*c*) the numbers were probably thirteen and forty-six; the small ship at the rear of the fleet (PLATE B*a*) has a commander, steersman and five visible rowers, backs to the direction of travel. If we allow the doubling of visible crews we have nearly four hundred persons represented in the fleet.

The fleet is entering its harbour town, the first ship running in along a rocky promontory (PLATE B*c*); a small boat is rowed out to meet the ship, five others are still in harbour (PLATE B*c*–*d*); excited men, apparently naked but possibly intended to be red-kilted, rush up to buildings on the summit of the promontory to watch the fleet enter harbour, other men rush down to bring news to the harbour town or to man the remaining rowing boats in order to help the fleet in; two other men, perhaps fishermen, unconcernedly carry baskets suspended from sticks across their shoulders; a party of four men in long goat-skin robes has left the town and moves across to the promontory summit; the harbour town itself (PLATE B*d*), again skilfully rendered with masonry buildings on several levels and a great opening which might be a shipshed or arsenal, is crowded with spectators waiting to welcome the fleet; six or seven women, white painted and with one breast exposed, and up to seventeen men are visible at the windows and on the rooftops, one of the women waving her arm in greeting, while a line of about twenty-four men, one apparently bringing an animal, moves along the harbour front below in the direction of the fleet. The context is entirely peaceful, the men are unarmed and the rowing boat in mid-harbour is clearly going to help the first ship in; the right and left edges of the roof masonry of the town are adorned

with four white horns of consecration (*Thera* VI pls 103b, 105), just like that found fallen near (*Thera* VI 34 and pl. 83a) and now set up on the north-east corner of Block Delta.

Analysis

(i) *Artistic achievement*

At least two major artistic achievements may be observed. The first is the artist's mastery of several distinct techniques of landscape representation. Intermingled with the rendering of features such as mountains, seashore, plants and animals along the river bank and town façades as viewed from ground level are two aerial techniques. One is to show parts of a scene as if viewed diagonally from above, as with the sheepfold in scene 2 (PLATE A*a*) and the depiction of plants and animals along both sides of the river (PLATE A*b*); the full view of *both* sides of the river would not be achieved if the viewpoint were at ground level, nor would the flora and fauna look thus if the viewpoint were vertically above. This diagonal viewpoint has been used by the artist to give a sense of depth to the painting.[14] The vertical or map viewpoint is however used for the river itself and for part of the shore by the sea battle in scene 2. The artist's success in combining these landscape techniques, level, diagonal and vertical, is astonishing; the sense of depth is nowhere more apparent than in that part of the river scene with two tall palms growing in the foreground, with the river and its two banks set behind them. More could hardly be expected of a pre-perspective age and many Classical and Roman paintings are no more advanced in landscape technique. We might contrast the achievement with the very different, but equally successful rendering of depth on the Aghia Triadha stone relief vase with the procession of 'harvesters', where a technique of increasingly shallow relief is used for figures in a row receding from the spectator's viewpoint.[15]

A second achievement is the painter's conception and portrayal of *narrative* art. Scenes are planned as individual units, but at the same time lead on from one to another in a continuous narrative technique whereby the parts are logically or psychologically dependent. The victory on the seashore leads temporally to the march inland (PLATE A*a*), where the women and herdsmen are skilfully shown unaware of what is rapidly to befall them. The sequential, narrative conception is again realized, though differently, in the fleet scene; we first have a farewell from the river and seashore town, then the voyage and then the observed homecoming, the distinct parts of this great scene harmoniously leading from one to the other.

(ii) *Artistic intention*

The artist or the person ordering the painting may have had one of three intentions: to depict one specific voyage; to give a generalizing picture of more than one actual voyage, that is a genre work, a traditional theme, incorporating the main types of incident or purposes on such voyages; or, thirdly, to create a purely imaginary work of travel overseas, not based on one or more than one voyage, but using the conventional iconography for peoples and places. This third possibility, despite the presence of a griffin, seems to me much the least probable. While some frescoes, such as the lilies and swallows or the monkey fresco from Thera or the great landscape with monkeys at Knossos (see n. 12), exhibit a fascinating combination of imagination and naturalism, the fresco of the ships and the associated works discussed below all convey the strong impression of being concerned with reality, with people and topography familiar down to the smallest detail, even if features of the landscape like mountains or rocks or rivers are shown in a somewhat stylized manner. Of the other two postulated intentions, the two types of realistic painting, it seems to me that the second, a genre work, is the more likely. Aegean artists and their masters are not otherwise known to have desired representation of specific events, such as the Egyptians did for the battle of Kadesh, and in this painting the occurrence of separate and different episodes seems more in accordance with a generalizing intention than with one specific event. The large class of

[14] The analysis made independently of mine by P. Betancourt, 'Perspective and the Third Dimension in Theran Painting' in P. Betancourt (ed.), *Temple University Aegean Symposium* ii (1977) 19, reaches similar conclusions.

[15] Marinatos and Hirmer pls 103–5.

related works, to be discussed below, showing the same type of activity may also be more easily understood as depicting a recurring form of activity than just one event.[16] But while one rather than the other of these intentions cannot be proved the intention to paint a real world of known people and episodes seems clear.

(iii) *Location*

If the 'realistic' intention of the artist is accepted we may pose two major and related questions: where is this remarkable painting set and how, in consequence, is it to be interpreted?

The main published interpretation is that of Spyridon Marinatos[17] and the recent study by Sir Denys Page (see n. 9) supporting Marinatos's argument. We may call this the North African or Libyan interpretation. The object was an expedition to the North African coast, the Libyan peoples, taken to extend as far west as Tripolitania; there flowed the only river west of the Nile described by Herodotus (iv 175), the Kinyps, located 18 km east of Leptis Magna; it is to be identified with the river of our east wall. The first scene (PLATE A*a*) represents an attack on unfriendly Libyans, presumably for booty in the form of women and animals, the second scene is the river, the third a peaceful visit to a Libyan town, the fourth the voyage home to Thera. The major purpose of the expedition may have been for corn supplies from the rich grain lands in the area of the Kinyps (Page). Specific indications of the Libyan setting are the maned and hairy-chested sheep of African type (PLATE A*a*), the river with such African flora as palms and papyrus, animals like the panther and lion and various negroid or north African attributes of the population—the drowning defenders (PLATE A*a*), one with crested or tufted hairstyle like that of some modern North African tribes, and the ancient Makai described by Herodotus (iv 175), another with an ostrich wing, perhaps used as a shield, like the ostrich wings used by the same Makai, the non-Aegean nudity (Page) and possible circumcision (Marinatos) of these figures, the skin-dressed people of the town surrounded by rivers (PLATE A*d*), recalling Herodotus's mention (iv 189) of north African peoples wearing skins dyed red with madder, and the snub noses of negroid types which some of the figures have.

Before discussing the North African hypothesis we must refer to another non-Aegean view, that of Dr Agne Sakellariou.[18] Her interpretation is that we have peaceful Minoans visiting foreign, but not specifically located countries. This view involves some very difficult and complicated hypotheses: (1) the town architecture and the women on the fresco and on the silver siege rhyton from Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae (see below, pp. 125–6) are of Minoan form because they are part of an iconographic cycle of Minoan origin (with which I agree), but are used on these works to indicate non-Minoan, non-Aegean towns and women; (2) while the attackers on the rhyton are Mycenaeans, the armed warriors on scene 2 of the fresco, despite their thoroughly

[16] Comparable interpretations in favour of composite, syncretizing imagery were offered by E. Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age* (1964) 102, and Sakellariou 195–208, esp. 206, in relation to the scenes on the silver rhyton and silver Battle Krater from Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae and the faience Town Mosaic from Knossos.

[17] *Thera* VI 34–60, esp. 54–7; *Athens Annals of Archaeology* vii (1974) 87–94.

[18] This point has been accepted, though not argued, in an interesting and valuable paper by Dr Sara Immerwahr, 'Mycenaeans at Thera: Some Reflections on the Paintings from the West House' in K. H. Kinzl (ed.), *Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean in Ancient History and Prehistory. Studies Presented to Fritz Schachermeyr* (1977) 173–91. Dr Immerwahr argues for quite strong Mycenaean influences at Akrotiri and for Mycenaeans and Minoans in peaceful co-existence and co-operative ventures here on the fresco and elsewhere in the Aegean. I am not so sure about this proposed friendly collaboration—the composition of the fleet does argue for it (officers in Minoan dress and passengers with Mycenaean helmets), but the sea battle on the fresco and several scenes on the comparative works cited in my discussion below make for difficulties; but I feel that among the many independent Aegean communities, raiding for booty and friendly co-operation are modes of living each as likely to have been practised in Late Bronze I as they undoubtedly were in all subsequent periods of Aegean history.

A further relevant paper is L. M. Brown, 'The Ship Procession in the Miniature Fresco' in *Thera and the Aegean World* (1978) (see n. 10 above). Here too the Aegean setting is accepted, with an argument that the ships are equipped for a short voyage, perhaps for a nautical festival at the Resumption of the Navigation Season. This paper is exceptionally valuable for its analysis of the ships; while the particular interpretation is well argued, I feel that the presence of armed warriors, their hung boar's-tusk helmets indicating that they have been fighting or expected to fight, is still in favour of an interpretation at least partly concerned with raiding, as in the earlier scene on the fresco. Note that the earlier, north wall scene displays ships damaged in battle and of the same type and construction as those of the fleet on the east and south walls.

warlike appearance, are not attackers but some kind of bodyguard; (3) the fleet and, by implication, the bodyguard are peaceful Minoans visiting a foreign country; (4) the naked people in the sea by the ships in scene 2 are swimmers exercising themselves in harmonious movements (Sakellariou 207).

Most of these points in relation to the fresco seem to me to run counter to the obvious and to be very difficult to sustain. Even if one did not accept the narrative sequence I have postulated for scene 2 it seems clear that the armed warriors are attackers, as on the rhyton, that they are Mycenaeans, as (with Sakellariou) on the rhyton and by their absolutely typical armour; that the figures in the sea are not peaceful swimmers but drowning defenders, as seems clear not only from their lost shields but also from the broken ship; and finally, as will be argued below concerning the details of the iconography, that the places visited are Minoan (and on the rhyton too). Agne Sakellariou's main reason for rejecting the rhyton town and its defenders as Minoan is that the latter are nude slingers and archers, primitive peoples (204), like the (for her non-Minoan) 'swimmers' in the fresco. But she uncharacteristically forgets that it was precisely as slingers and bowmen that the Cretans were famed in warfare throughout historical antiquity.

Let us return to the North African interpretation. Although it cannot be excluded, I shall argue that a more convincing interpretation is that the whole scene is set in the Aegean.[19] An initial point which would seem to tell against North Africa is the requirement of crews having to paddle for all or part of the vast distances across the southern Mediterranean to the Kinyps, almost 800 km each way from south-west Crete and almost 1000 each way from Thera, in quest of booty or a load of corn for which the African regions would seem to offer no significantly greater advantages or potential than equally fertile regions nearer home.

When we turn to examine the proposed Libyan features summarized above, we find that all of them can be plausibly argued or precisely documented in Crete or Thera. Just the type of sheep depicted, with their curled horns (PLATE A*a*, top), appear on Minoan seals from Lyktos and Lasithi[20] (PLATE VI*a*). The circular or oval built fold to and from which the animals are brought is a typically Cretan *mandhra,* a pen for sheep or goats such as occur on the Nidha plain[21] or, personally examined, on the hillside north-west of the palace of Zakros. The river (PLATE A*b*) with its tall and low palm trees can be closely compared with perennial streams similarly fringed with tall and low palms in Crete[22] (PLATE VI*b*, *d*), while the palm is well known in Minoan art.[23] The presence of the papyrus plant is more complicated. An initial difficulty for the Libyan location is that we would be required to accept the river as the Nile, the ancient African region of the papyrus, not the Kinyps; to sustain the Kinyps it would be necessary to argue that this really is the Kinyps, but the flora of the Nile is used to depict it. This weakens the Libyan case by making necessary a very generalized and mixed view of the whole North African landscape. There is, moreover, nothing else in the entire fresco to suggest any connexion with Egypt. In contrast to all

[19] Sakellariou 204–7.

[20] Evans, *PM* I (1921) 685 and fig. 503 a–b.

[21] Sp. Marinatos, 'A "*Γλῶσσα*" of Hesychius', *Athens Annals of Archaeology* iv (1971) 229–31 and fig. 2.

[22] S. Hood and P. Warren, 'Ancient Sites in the Province of Ayios Vasilios, Crete' in *BSA* lxi (1966) 181 and pl. 39 a–b. This is the Megas Potamos at A. Savvas; low palms are visible in the middle between church on the left and river, and tall as well as low ones grow a short way into the Preveli Gorge, just off the picture. For the palm-fringed Almyros river at Gazi, see below p. 125 and n. 40.

It has been argued by L. M. Brown (n. 10) 144 and by O. Rackham, 'The Flora and Vegetation of Thera and Crete before and after the great Eruption' in *Thera and the Aegean World* (n. 10), that the palms in the river scene on the fresco are cultivated date palms (*Phoenix dactylifera* L.), not the Cretan endemic palm, *Phoenix theophrasti* Greuter; this suggests (Rackham) that the river scene is in north Africa or the Near East. While the poorly formed fruit of the Cretan palm is scarcely edible—see W. Greuter, 'Beiträge zur Flora der Sudägäis 8', *Bauhinia* iii (1967) 243–50; C. Murray and P. Warren, 'PO-NI-KI-JO among the Dye-Plants of Minoan Crete' in *Kadmos* xv (1976) 46–7—the argument that date palms mean a non-Cretan setting is open to criticism: it has not, I think, been shown that all palms in Crete are of the endemic species and the date palm has been thought to have been introduced to Crete early in Minoan times (Evans, *PM* III [1930] 177 n. 1). But even if it is the case that no palm in Crete is *Phoenix dactylifera* the fact remains that, whether or not the artist of the fresco intends to convey the point that the stems of the low palms have been deliberately trimmed (which seems to me doubtful, and could in any case have been to provide useful foliage, without any connexion with fruiting), the combination of tall and low palms in the river scene is extraordinarily reminiscent of palm-fringed rivers in Crete, such as the Megas Potamos (Hood and Warren, above) or the Almyros at Gazi (below p. 125 and n. 40).

[23] Evans, *PM* II (1928) 493–9; IV (1935) 271–2, 366–9; P. Pelagatti, 'Osservazioni sui ceramisti del I palazzo di Festos', *Κρητικὰ Χρονικά, ΙΕ′–ΙΣΤ′* (1961–2) 105–8 and pls *Ζ′–ΙΒ′*.

this, however, there are good reasons for thinking that the papyrus grew in the Aegean in the Bronze Age;[24] it grows today in Israel,[25] Sicily[26] and, introduced by what means is unknown, in the museum garden at Khania in Crete. Aegean artists were constantly familiar with the whole plant, a circumstance more likely if it grew in their region than if they were dependent on descriptions, on occasional visits to Egypt or on stems alone, imported for paper-making. Moreover, all other identifiable plants depicted by Aegean artists grew in the Aegean.

As for the animals along the river, whether they are imaginary or real, the Aegean case is again strong. If you wanted to meet a griffin in the Late Bronze Age would it not be wiser to shun the African deserts and perambulate in Crete, the place *par excellence* of the griffin, common enough on Minoan seals and frescoes? The iconography of felines pursuing and attacking ducks or geese is found elsewhere in the Aegean, on the inlaid dagger from Shaft Grave V at Mycenae and on the ivory comb from Routsi.[27] The lion attacking the deer could be African, but we may note first that the type so realistically shown here (PLATE A*d*) has the short mane of the Syrian/Anatolian type, not the long, shaggy mane of the African lions. It is, moreover, by no means impossible that there were lions in Crete in the Bronze Age. They are frequently depicted on Minoan seals, and occur as an emblem on ships in the fresco and were equally familiar to the Minoan or Mycenaean artists and the users of Minoan or Mycenaean works of art on the mainland, as is amply demonstrated by the inlaid daggers and seals of the Shaft Graves and other Mycenaean tombs.[28] Moreover, the lion existed in northern Greece throughout antiquity down to Classical and perhaps even Late Roman times.[29] The deer above the riverside town are carefully rendered (PLATE A*d*); it is therefore to be noted that they do not have the branched antlers of red deer or roe deer, but the big palmate antlers of fallow deer. Bones of fallow deer, *Dama dama*, have recently been identified by M. R. Jarman among the faunal remains of Knossos from Middle Minoan I onwards, when the species appears to have been introduced into Crete.[30]

We come now to the human population. The crested or tufted hairstyle is to be observed not

[24] P. Warren (n. 11). The two finest representations are on the inlaid dagger from Shaft Grave V at Mycenae (Marinatos and Hirmer pls XXXV top and XXXVII top) and in the House of the Ladies at Thera (*Thera* V pl. 94, colour pls F and rear cover; Warren, *op. cit.*).

[25] I am much indebted to Dr K. Thompson, University of Waikato, for an advance copy of his paper (with J. Gaudet), 'A Review of Papyrus and its Role in Tropical Swamps', to appear in *Archiv für Hydrobiologie*. Thompson has collected information on the growth of the papyrus in Israel (as well as throughout the world), in particular Lake Huleh in the Jordan River basin; some authors consider it indigenous here, due to dispersal by birds (especially storks) on the migration route north-east from Africa. He observes that several other aquatic, tropical plants occur in this lacustrine environment and may be likewise explained. We may add that precisely the same mechanism could have brought the papyrus to Crete, which is the first landfall for the spectacular annual migration of birds moving north from Africa. I witnessed the astonishing variety (bee-eaters, golden aureoles, hoopoes, white egrets and many others) of the migration at Zakros on 9th April, 1969.

[26] N. Lewis, *Papyrus in Classical Antiquity* (1974) 18–20. These papyri, fringing the Fonte Ciane stream near Syracuse, were examined by Dr O. Rackham, Mrs E. Warren and the writer in August, 1973.

[27] Dagger: see n. 24 above. Comb: J.-C. Poursat, *Les ivoires mycéniens* (1977) 46, 196, 200 (NM 8357); *Catalogue des ivoires mycéniens du Musée National d'Athènes* (1977) pl. XLI.

[28] Evans, *PM* IV (1935) 525–40. Marinatos and Hirmer pls XXXV–VII and 198–9 (attacking deer among palms), 208 and 210 (attacking bulls). For a lion pursuing a deer on stele 1427 from Mycenae, Shaft Grave V, see G. E. Mylonas, 'The Figured Mycenaean Stelai' in *AJA* lv (1951) 141 fig. 6. For the frequent occurrence of the lion in scenes of animal pursuit and combat on Mycenaean ivories see the detailed study of J.-C. Poursat (n. 27, above) 79–82.

[29] Hdt. vii 125–6 is the *locus classicus*: lions attack Xerxes' camels in Thrace; Herodotus goes on to say that all northern Greece (from the Nestos to the Akheloos) abounded with lions and wild cattle. This juxtaposition neatly parallels the frequent depiction of a lion attacking a bull on Minoan and Mycenaean ivories and seals (see n. 28, above). Aristotle, *Hist. An.* vi 31, 519a, accepted Herodotus's statement. For evidence that the lion may not have become extinct in northern Greece until the third or fourth century A.D. (Parthenius, Aelian, Themistius) and not until after the sixteenth century A.D. in Turkey see H. Schliemann, *Ilios* (1880) 110–11 (quoting Tchihatcheff, *Asie Mineure: Description physique* 582); N.-G. Gejvall, 'The Fauna of the Successive Settlements at Troy: Second Preliminary Report' in *Kungl. Humanistika Vetenskapssamfundet I Lund, Årsberättelse (Bull. de la Soc. Royale des Lettres)* (1938–9) 5, quoting Barker Webb (no reference, probably P. B. Webb, *Topographie de la Troade ancienne et moderne* [1844]) on the zoology of the Troad; L. J. Daly, 'The Mandarin and the Barbarian', *Historia* xxi (1972) 368. The likelihood of lions in Greece had already been noted by Evans, *PM* III (1930) 120, 122, in relation to the evidence of Herodotus. More tangible evidence for the Aegean comes from Keos where, among 400,000 animal bones, were two adult lions' teeth (one of them LM IB/LH II). I owe the information to the kindness of Professor J. L. Caskey. The faunal remains from Keos are being published by Dr Jennie Coy.

[30] Information kindly provided by Mr Jarman, who is publishing the faunal remains from Knossos.

only on the drowning defender and on the figures on the roof in scene no. 2 (PLATE A*a*). Two of the warriors in the flagship, one with his boar's tusk helmet hung just above him, have this style[31] (PLATE A*c*, second and third figures from left in compartments). He might be a Libyan mercenary, though he looks of a piece with the dozens of other robed warriors in the fleet; that all or even some of these, the élite warriors with boar's tusk helmets like those marching in scene no. 2, should be Libyans seems improbable. In any case there is no need to go as far as Africa for this type of hairstyle. It is found on one of the ordinary terracotta figurine heads from the peak sanctuary at Traostalos in south-east Crete[32] (FIG. 2). The supposed ostrich wing worn by another of the drowning defenders (PLATE A*a*) does not look like a wing at all, but more like a small hide cloak; it is, moreover, certainly not a shield, since these defenders' short body-shields, entirely Aegean,

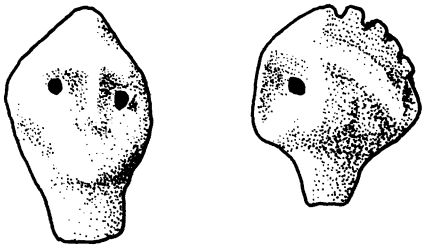

FIG. 2. Terracotta head, front and side views, ht 3·2 cm, from Traostalos, eastern Crete. Herakleion Museum 16503 (after Davaras, *Kadmos* vi [1967] pl. 1).

appear in the water nearby. There is thus no correspondence whatever with the ostrich skin shields which Herodotus (iv 175) says the Makai carried.

Among the other human attributes snub noses may be negroid, but in this painting some of the warriors and the 'admiral' in his flagship[33] (PLATE A*c*) also have them and it would be hard to imagine he was a Libyan. The famous amethyst head from grave circle B at Mycenae[34] has an upturned nose; he is also bearded and in both these details and his top hairstyle resembles the 'admiral' in his cabin. Not even Marinatos challenges the Aegean identification of the amethyst head. Clearly no special significance should be attached to this facial feature. With regard to the non-Aegean nudity of the drowning defenders, it would be necessary to argue likewise for the young fisherman of the large frescoes from room 5, despite the bunches of Aegean *coryphaena* fish they are holding. We have seen too that some of the men at the home port might be naked. Again no topographical significance can be given to this aspect.

Finally we have the wearing of long, skin robes by men. Here we must note that the inhabitants of the riverside town, supposedly Libyan, and those of the home port, taken to be Thera, are linked, since exactly the same garment is worn by the men conversing across the river (PLATE A*d*) and by the four men leaving the harbour town to climb the hill and watch the arrival of the fleet (PLATE B*d*). The Makai tribe were said to wear skins dyed red with madder and some of the robes on the fresco are red (others are blue-black or white). But Cretans could as easily have worn skin robes (as the priestesses on the Aghia Triadha sarcophagus do, though of a different shape) and they had plenty of madder, *Rubia tinctorum*, and other plants to dye them red with.[35] Lastly, in the matter of clothes, we may note that the women at the well-head in scene no. 2 (PLATE A*a*) wear the long skirt so typical of ordinary Minoan women such as those represented in the figurines of Petsopha and Piskokephalo,[36] while some of the men in the mountain scene, no. 1,

[31] *Thera* VI pl. 107. The reader is referred to this plate for reproduction at an adequate scale for observation of the crested hair.

[32] C. Davaras, 'Zur Herkunft des Diskos von Phaistos', *Kadmos* vi (1967) 101–5 and pl. 1 a–b.

[33] *Thera* VI pl. 108. The reader is again referred to this plate for adequate reproduction.

[34] Conveniently illustrated by Marinatos at *Thera* VI pl. 109.

[35] For madder and other red dye-plants and substances in Crete see C. Murray and P. Warren, 'PO-NI-KI-JO among the Dye-Plants of Minoan Crete' in *Kadmos* xv (1976) 47–57. See also R. J. Forbes, *Studies in Ancient Technology* iv (1956) 106–7 (ancient sources) and K. H. Rechinger, *Flora Aegaea* (1943) 582 (find spots of *Rubia tinctorum* in Crete).

[36] Marinatos and Hirmer pls 15 and 17.

like the steersmen on the ships, and perhaps some of the men at the home port, wear the typically Minoan short kilt with its curved lower border.

While there may have existed a conventional way of rendering village architecture, we must observe that there is no trace of Egyptian or North African features among any of the buildings; these, from the animal pen to the masonry-built houses with their windows, resemble the elevation of Minoan buildings very faithfully. We need only compare the façades of the riverside house with windows (PLATE A*d*) and that in the centre of the highest buildings at the home port (PLATE B*d*) with faience and ivory plaques of house façades from Knossos[37] and with the elevation of the Arkhanes terracotta house model.[38]

All these points indicate that we need look no further than the Aegean for the setting of the fresco. The people at all the locations are obviously at home, in their own surroundings; these surroundings, as well as the people themselves, can all be demonstrated or argued (lions and papyrus) to have close Aegean parallels. It seems almost inconceivable that all this mass of detail was in reality intended to depict a non-Aegean setting and non-Aegean peoples; moreover, with the arguable exception of lions and papyrus, not one non-Aegean topographical or anthropological feature is introduced in support of a supposed non-Aegean setting.

There are two points more. The first is offered merely for interest and the topographical case does not depend on it. Could the seashore village surrounded by its two rivers and probable third stream represent not just a typical Minoan coastal settlement, but a specific site? We shall probably never know, but may point out that the painted scene bears a remarkable resemblance to the topography of Minoan Gazi west of Herakleion and its river systems, as represented by the master Venetian topographer Marco Boschini[39] (PLATE VI*c*). Here, with a similar mountain background, we find just east of the Almyros river[40] the Gazanos (ancient Triton) branching into two streams, which flow into the sea, and we even descry palm trees by the adjacent Giophyros river (a few still survive between these rivers), like those which border the river in the immediately preceding scene on the fresco. The photograph at PLATE VI*d*, made from a colour transparency of the Almyros taken a few years ago by Dr N. G. Calvert, actually shows low palms growing in and along the Almyros, as on the fresco river and like the palm-fringed river of southern Crete, the Megas Potamos, referred to above (n. 22).

The second point is urged as a more important part of the topographical case. The first scene, the meeting on the hill (PLATE A*a*), is surely a representation of a gathering at a Minoan peak sanctuary. Not only are the heraldically opposed figures in white robes meeting on the summit of a mountain, but the Minoan-kilted figures behind them hold their arms forward and bent in a Minoan gesture of worship exemplified in the MM III–LM I bronze figurine in Leyden (FIG. 3).[41] Since the mountain peak ceremony consists of figures in robes and kilts exactly like those on board the ships it might be that this first surviving scene, possibly the beginning of the frieze, was the seeking of blessing for the success of the expedition. However, given the probable relationship with the men on the roof near the animal pen in scene no. 2, it is perhaps more probable that the mountain peak scene was located in the place to which the ships were going.

If the case presented here for the Aegean setting is accepted the fresco can now be seen as one member of a class of famous Aegean objects, closely (LH I/LM IA) or approximately (MM III–LM I) contemporary with the painting. The significant point to emerge is that all of them appear to be concerned with the same theme, raiding expeditions in search of booty within the Aegean.

The most obvious connexion is with the silver siege rhyton from Mycenae,[42] discussed above

[37] M. F. S. Hood, *The Minoans* (1971) pls 22–3.

[38] A. Lembese, '*Ο οἰκίσκος τῶν 'Αρχανῶν*', *'Αρχ. 'Εφ.* (1976) 12–43 and pls 6–11.

[39] *Il Regno tutto di Candia* (1651) pl. 21.

[40] Pausanias (i 27. 9) told the story of a river Tethris in the kingdom of Minos in Crete, around which a bull made havoc until it was killed by Theseus. I recall the tale in view of the fact that (i) the river Tethris has been placed near Knossos, though not at Gazi (R. Pashley, *Travels in Crete* [1837] i 204), or at the Almyros (K. Hoeck, *Kreta* [1823–9] map) and (ii) the river scene on the fresco is preceded by the scene with leaping bulls on the east part of the north wall. Too good to be true.

[41] Chr. Zervos, *L'art de la Crète néolithique et minoenne* (1956) pls 496–7. For Minoan gestures see E. Brandt, *Gruss und Gebiet. Eine Studie zu Gebärden in der minoisch-mykenischen und frühgriechischen Kunst* (1965); S. Alexiou, *Gnomon* xxxiv (1967) 609–13.

[42] The similarity of the buildings of the home port to those of the town on the rhyton was cited by Marinatos himself (*Thera* VI 43–4). For excellent illustrations of the rhyton see Evans, *PM* I (1921) 698; III (1930) 89–106; G.

(pp. 121–2) in relation to Dr Agne Sakellariou's interpretation. In this Minoan work, precisely contemporary (LH I context) with the fresco, we have, as noticed, a battle at a town near a seashore, the defenders including nude slingers and archers and warriors with short body-shields exactly like those of our drowning defenders. Moreover, several of the archers, slingers, bending figures and what may now be seen as drowning figures on the rhyton have crested hair, exactly like the fresco figures.[43] The town architecture, with men and women inhabitants, is very like the harbour town scene of the painting. The major difference between the two works is the outcome of the attack; on the fresco the attack in scene 2 has been successful at the shore; on the rhyton the defence has the upper hand, at least temporarily. The defenders are slingers and archers, for both of which Cretans were well known in antiquity.

To the scenes on the fresco and the rhyton we may also relate the so-called swimmers' dagger from the Vapheio tholos, studied and reconstructed by Marinatos and by Evans.[44] The nude

FIG. 3. Bronze figurine, ht 14·3 cm, from Phaistos. Leyden Museum (after Zervos, *L'art de la Crète* [1956] pl. 497).

figures thereon may now perhaps be seen as drowning men, similar to those of the fresco, and the dagger as commemorating the exploits of a Mycenaean prince at Vapheio.

To the archers of the rhyton we must relate the tiny fragment of a serpentine rhyton from Knossos depicting an archer with a scale pattern representing the sea behind him, clearly all that survives of another raiding scene.[45] A fragment of another relief stone rhyton from Knossos must also be introduced.[46] It depicts a helmet and a man dragging off a goat (FIG. 4). This may be seen as a moment in a raid for livestock just subsequent to the moment depicted in scene no. 2 at Thera, there the unsuspected but imminent arrival of the warriors at the animal pen, here on the rhyton the carrying out of the raid itself. Thirdly in stone comes the remarkable fragment of a rhyton from Epidauros, excellently published by Dr Agne Sakellariou[47] (FIG. 5). Its link to the sea battle and landing of warriors in our scene 2 is exceptionally close, since we see on it nothing less than the

Karo, *Die Schachtgräber von Mykenai* (1930–3) 106 no. 481 and pl. CXXII; Marinatos and Hirmer 168 and pl. 174; *History of the Hellenic World* i: *Prehistory and Protohistory* (1974) fig. on p. 287; Sakellariou.

[43] Evans, *PM* I (1921) 698 Fig. 521 b; III (1930) figs. 51–2, 54–5.

[44] Sp. Marinatos, 'The Swimmers' Dagger from the Tholos Tomb at Vapheio', in S. Casson (ed.), *Essays in Aegean Archaeology Presented to Sir Arthur Evans* (1927) 63–71; Evans, *PM* III (1930) 127 and fig. 181.

[45] Evans, *PM* III (1930) 100 and fig. 56; P. Warren, *Minoan Stone Vases* (1969) 85 (HM 257) and P 473.

[46] Evans, *PM* III (1930) fig. 128; Mylonas (n. 28) 144 and fig. 7 h; A. Xenaki-Sakellariou, 'La representation du casque en dents de sanglier' in *BCH* lxxvii (1953) 48 n. 1, 51 and 50 fig. 5; Warren (n. 45) 89 (AM 1938.698) and P 488 c; P. Cassola Guida, *Le armi difensive dei Micenei nelle figurazioni* (1974) 91 and n. 53 (with further references).

[47] 'Scène de bataille sur un vase mycénien en pierre' in *Rev. Arch.* 1971 3–14.

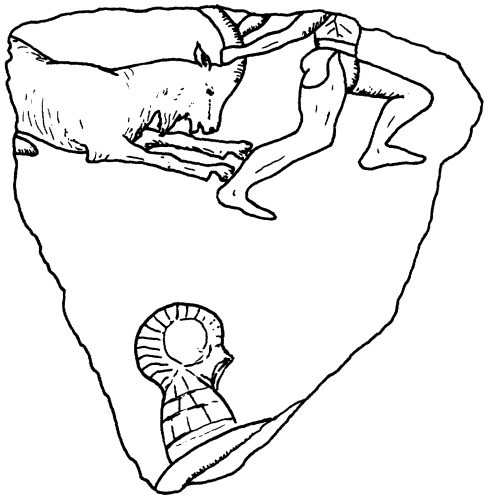

FIG. 4. Fragment of serpentine rhyton, ht 3·85 cm, from Knossos. Ashmolean Museum 1938.698 (after Evans, *PM* III fig. 128 and Warren, Minoan Stone Wares [1969] P488c).

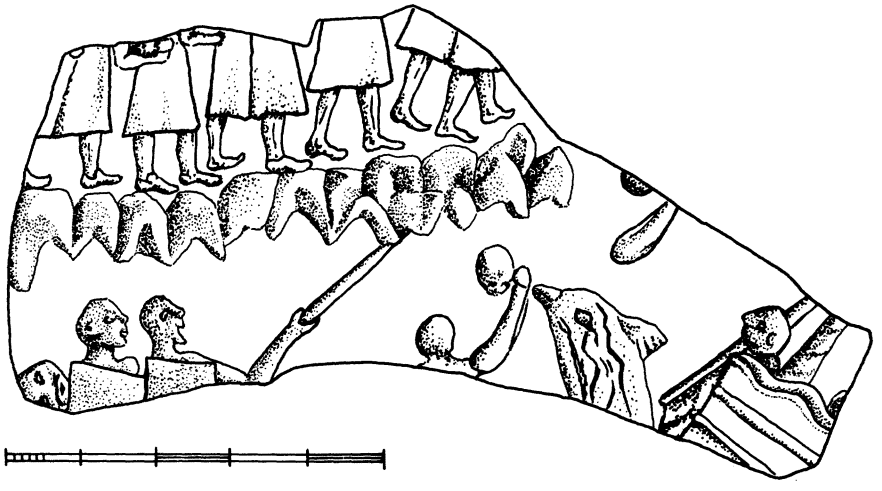

FIG. 5. Fragment of serpentine rhyton, from Epidauros. Width 11.4 cm. National Museum, Athens (after Sakellariou, *Rev. Arch.* [1971] figs 1–3).

stern cabin of a ship, like those of the Theran ships, the commander in his cabin and above a line of warriors marching inland. A dolphin completes the similarity.[48] In the placing of its elements the scene on the stone vessel looks as though it had been copied from a fresco.

The scene which the marching warriors on the fresco are approaching, the flocks, herds, animal-pen and women with their pots, may have been similar to that on another miniature fresco, the very fragmentary painting from Tylissos as it was reinterpreted recently, just before the Theran discovery, by Dr Maria Shaw.[49] The fragment depicting a building had already been put into the beleaguered city class by Evans.[50] Elsewhere on the fresco we have women and figures carrying pots. This could perhaps have been part of a raiding scene at about the same moment as the stone vase with the man, goat and helmet or, so fragmentary are the pieces, could have depicted a peaceful scene in the miniature style unconnected with a raid. Another fresco which may have belonged to the same cycle is that from Kea.[51] This is again a miniature fresco

[48] The parallelisms between the silver rhyton, Epidaurian stone vase and the fresco were carefully noted by Sakellariou 207.

[49] 'The Miniature Frescoes of Tylissos Reconsidered' in *Arch. Anz.* lxxxvii (1972) 171–88.

[50] Evans, *PM* III (1930) 88 and fig. 49.

[51] J. L. Caskey, 'Excavations in Keos, 1964–1965' in *Hesperia* xxxv (1966) 374 and pl. 90 a; K. Coleman, 'Frescoes from Ayia Irini, Keos, Part I', *Hesperia* xlii (1973) 296.

and the preliminary account of the fragments reports a town façade, a deer hunt, and men and women dancing and in procession. The context of both these frescoes is Late Minoan IB, although they could have been painted in LM IA or MM III.

Among the miniature frescoes at Knossos Evans interpreted one group as belonging to a beleaguered city theme.[52] He had explored this topic, with his usual brilliant insight, in relation to several of the fragmentary pieces discussed here. He associated a crowd of javelin throwers on one fragment with another piece showing a building façade decorated with horns of consecration (like the home port of the Theran fresco). Moreover, we can now observe that the javelin throwers are men with a single upward curling lock of hair just like that of the helmeted warriors nearing the flock and herd on our scene 2 and two of the steersmen and possible timekeeper on the ships of scene no. 5.[53] It is apparent then that a wall of an upper room just west of the North Entrance at Knossos was decorated with a fresco in the miniature style depicting an attack and at least one building. Could this work, surviving in only the most exiguous fragments, have been a prototype for copying on to precious objects in stone and metal, or even for the Theran painting itself? At any rate the subject, persons and style of the Knossian and Theran frescoes and the Mycenae rhyton seem to have been closely similar.

Finally we must bring in a group of objects which appears to bear an even closer relationship to the fresco of Thera. The famous Town Mosaic from Knossos is a collection of faience plaques apparently for inlay.[54] The house façade plaques could have been arranged like a walled town, as Evans thought, or grouped to resemble the form of either of the villages on the fresco. Less often illustrated,[55] but part of the same group, is the large number of other plaques depicting elements which are all found on the Theran painting or the silver rhyton, goats, plants, trees, a bow, helmeted heads presumably of warriors, wavy lines for the sea and nude figures looking very much like the Theran drowning men. Clearly the plaques comprised a movable scene closely related to the battles or raids on the silver rhyton, the stone vessels and the Knossian and Theran miniature frescoes. It is the latter fresco which now enables us to make an integrated study of the whole group of artefacts.

Interpretation and Conclusions

The topographical argument presented above suggests a Cretan setting, among Cretan people, buildings, flora and fauna, for the raid and the peaceful visit. The next matter is the identity of the raiders. They are indisputably Aegeans, with their boar's tusk helmets, long body-shields and spears. But who within the Aegean? With these accoutrements one would expect them to be Mycenaeans[56] (and we are in the period of the rich warrior Shaft Graves of Mycenae, LH I, contemporary with the Akrotiri settlement), but since the fleet seems to be returning to its home port on Thera, bearing warriors with their helmets hung up, and since the frieze adorns an important Theran mansion, a Theran element at least would be expected in the composition. We may therefore rule out Mycenaean warriors in a Mycenaean fleet. There remain the possibilities of Mycenaean warriors using a Theran fleet as mercenaries, or as allies, or Theran fleet. The rich mansions of unfortified Akrotiri do not suggest subservience to or dependence on Mycenaeans from the mainland. Theran warriors in a Theran fleet are possible and this identification would imply a single, homogeneous and harmonious unit from one centre, very suitable for representation on the walls of a Theran room. But although boar's tusk helmets are occasionally represented outside the Mycenaean world, on Cretan sealstones[57] and in the form of worked boar's tusks found in a Minoan tomb at Poros of the LM I period[58] (I know of none so far from

[52] Evans, *PM* III (1930) 81–106.

[53] *Thera* VI pl. 106.

[54] Evans, *PM* I (1921) 301–14. The close relationship of the Town Mosaic to the fresco, especially the home port, was fully discussed by Dr Sakellariou in her paper to the Fourth International Congress of Cretological Studies, Herakleion, 1976, '*Τὸ "μωσαϊκὸ τῆς πόλεως" καὶ οἱ μικρογραφικὲς τοιχογραφίες τῆς Θήρας*'.

[55] Evans, *PM* I (1921) figs 228–30.

[56] I agree with Dr Sakellariou 204 ff., that the attackers on the silver siege rhyton are Mycenaeans; *cf.* p. 122 above.

[57] Evans, *PM* IV (1935) 867 figs. 854 and 856, LM I seal impressions from Zakros and Aghia Triadha.

[58] A. Lembese, "*Ἀνασκαφὴ τάφου εἰς Πόρον Ἡρακλείου*', *ΠΑΕ* (1967) 208 and pl. 192 *β*, worked boars' tusks from an LM IA tomb at Poros, Herakleion. For boar's tusk plaques, perhaps from a helmet, from Kea see J. L. Caskey, *Hesperia* xxxiii (1964) 325 and pl. 52 f.

Thera), it remains true that this is the helmet *par excellence* of the Mycenaeans from LH I onwards.[59] It is therefore distinctly possible that the warriors with the fleet are Mycenaeans, the fleet itself Theran. Even if there was, as is very probable, at least a Minoan element in the settlement at Akrotiri, we do not know what part of Crete they came from, while origins in one Cretan community certainly need not have precluded raids on other Cretan communities.

The theme common to all these works is raiding or marauding of coastal towns or isolated buildings, apparently for booty, especially animals and women. There are obvious problems in the identification of attackers and defenders. But I would suggest that one point at least does emerge clearly: the context of the raids is the Aegean. The attackers could well be Mycenaeans, and we may note that historically the 16th and 15th centuries B.C. were a period of steady expansion of Mycenaean power, under the military skills of their warrior leaders, culminating in the takeover of Crete in the second half of the fifteenth century. The defenders could in all cases be Cretans; the iconography and topography in a host of small details can be argued to be Minoan—architecture, womenfolk, menfolk, styles of dress and appearance, animals, archers, slingers, farmers, peasants, landscape. The rich and abundantly farmed coasts of the island of Crete were the obvious place for the Mycenaeans, with or without Theran allies, to seek plunder, though the prosperous and unfortified coastal towns of Gournia, Khania, Mochlos, Palaikastro, Pseira or Zakro imply that the defence was often successful, or the raids concentrated on fertile parts away from towns. Nor need we suppose that Minoans themselves were immune from carrying out such raids, while the walls of Aghia Eirene on Kea and Phylakopi on Melos and the Miniature Frescoes of Knossos would suggest that they did so behave.

Exploits in such engagements were deemed worthy of record on frescoes, metalwork, stonework and faience. But is not this a familiar story? May we not see these exquisite yet silent works as the visual counterparts of oral poets, who have long been thought to have composed their tales of heroic exploits since the earliest Mycenaean times,[60] long before we have surviving accounts in the booty raiding tales of Nestor and the greatest Mycenaean raid of all, to the coast, plains and city of Troy? From Thera to Homer we may not need the aid of the clew of thread.

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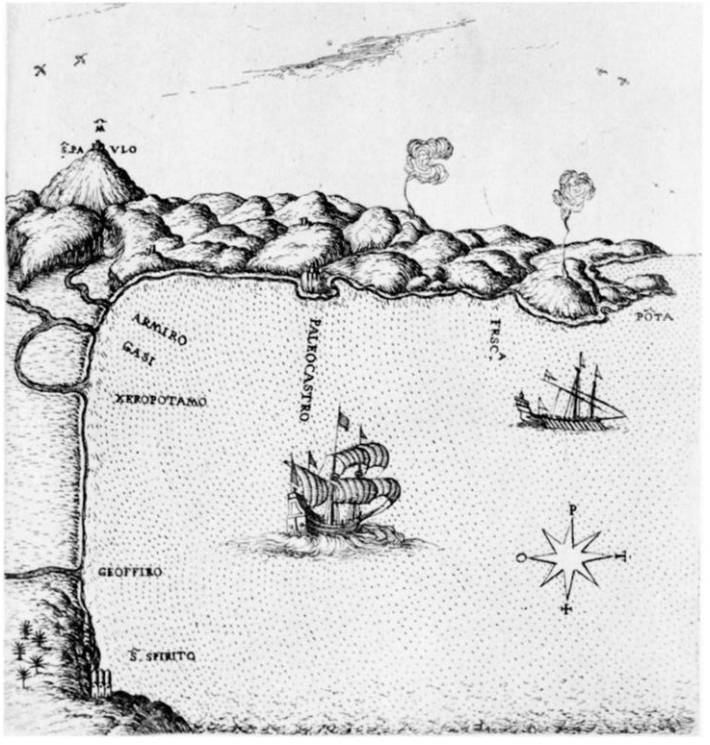
[59] J. Borchhardt, *Homerische Helme* (1972) 18–37 and pls 1–6; P. Cassola Guida (n. 46) 85–93 and pls II, XXV–XXVIII; A. Sakellariou, 'Un cratère d'argent avec scène de bataille provenant de la IVe tombe de l'acropole de Mycènes' in *Ant. K.* xvii (1974) 3–20 and pls 1–2.

[60] D. L. Page, *History and the Homeric Iliad* (1959) 232–5, 241.

(a) Late Minoan seals from Lyktos and Lasithi (after Evans, *PM* I fig. 503a–b).

(b) Megas Potamos, Aghios Savvas, southern Crete, fringed with palms and reeds.



(c) River systems and palms at Gazi and Almyros, west of Herakleion (after Boschini, *Il tutto Regno di Candia* [1651] pl. 21.)

(d) Almyros river with palms (centre) and reeds, west of Herakleion.

MINIATURE FRESCO FROM THERA