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The Aegean Garden

MARIA C. SHAW

To the memory of my parents

Abstract

In this paper I attempt to identify possible gardens, as opposed to natural landscapes, in Aegean artistic depictions. Scenes of nature occur in various media, but most extensively in frescoes. The Aegean garden remains elusive in art because of the artists' tendency to render plants and floral settings in idealized and fantastic ways. An exception is a possible formal garden depicted in the well-known floral fresco from the Minoan villa at Amnisos. Generally, however, the Aegean garden must have consisted of a natural landscape that was modified only in limited and subtle ways, through cultivation and other means. Important in the search for clues for such modifications are representations of cultivable types of flora, and activities in which people and animals interact with floral settings. It is suggested here that a Minoan garden may have existed in the east wing of the palace at Phaistos. This is a rocky outcrop with fissures and holes that may have been planted with flowers. As can be seen from a newly made topographical plan, the rock was trimmed with tools and incorporated in the architectural plan of that area of the palace.*

One of the most common themes of Aegean art is nature, particularly in Late Bronze Age I, roughly the mid-second millennium B.C. The efflorescence of a naturalistic style is most evident in the frescoes,[1] in which portrayals of the many faces of nature abound: flowering landscapes, fields, orchards, mountains, caves, marshes, and riverine and marine settings.[2]

The floral landscape, which forms the focus of this paper, is depicted sometimes solely in its vegetal or floral aspect, and sometimes as a sanctuary of wildlife—birds and animals. Occasionally people are pres-

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* This article is the outcome of a lecture I gave on the Minoan garden in the colloquium "Gardens of the Ancient Mediterranean," held at the University of Western Ontario on 13 October 1990. Despite the kind invitation by that university to publish my text in the proceedings in the *Journal of the History of Gardens*, I was unable to do so at the time. A revised version of the lecture was then given in the Seventh International Cretological Congress held in Rethymnon (25–31 August 1991). It is thanks to the encouragement I received on both occasions, and especially from Jörg Schäfer, who has been working and publishing recently on the same topic, that I am emboldened enough to publish on a subject related to botany, which I know rather little about. It should be understood that the emphasis here is on artistic visions of gardens and related settings and not on a scientific analysis of Aegean horticulture. Attention should be called to ongoing research by Ray Porter, which should result in an interesting and uniquely illustrated study on "The Natural History of Minoan Floral Depictions."

I would also like to thank a number of people who read my manuscript at various stages and made useful comments: Dawn Cain, Karen P. Foster, Barbara Ibronyi, Sara Immerwahr, Jeremy Rutter, Joseph W. Shaw, and Robin A. Shaw. I am nonetheless solely responsible for the opinions expressed here.

The following abbreviations are used:

Art and Religion	*N. Marinatos, Art and Religion in Thera: Reconstructing a Bronze Age Society* (Athens 1984).
Festòs II	L. Pernier and L. Banti, *Il palazzo minoico di Festòs* II (Rome 1951).
Immerwahr	S. Immerwahr, *Aegean Painting in the Bronze Age* (University Park, Pa. 1990).
Morgan	L. Morgan, *The Miniature Wall Paintings of Thera: A Study in Aegean Culture and Iconography* (Cambridge 1988).
Schäfer	J. Schäfer, "The Role of 'Gardens' in Minoan Civilisation," in V. Karageorghis ed., *Proceedings of an International Symposium: The Civilizations of the Aegean and Their Diffusion in Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean, 2000–600 B.C., Larnaca, 18–24 September 1989* (Larnaca 1992) 85–87.
TAW II	C. Doumas ed., *Thera and the Aegean World* II.1–2. *Papers Presented at the Second International Scientific Congress, Santorini, Greece, August 1978* (London 1978 and 1980).
TAW III	D.A. Hardy et al. eds., *Thera and the Aegean World* III.1–3. *Proceedings of the Third International Congress, Santorini, Greece, 3–9 September 1989* (London 1990).
Thera I–VII	S. Marinatos, *Excavations at Thera* I–VII (Athens 1968–1972, 1974, 1976).

[1] Publications on Aegean frescoes include Immerwahr; *Thera* I–VII; *Art and Religion*; Morgan; and C. Doumas, *The Wall-Paintings of Thera* (Athens 1992).

[2] For illustrations of such themes, roughly in the order in which they were mentioned, see Immerwahr pls. VII, 23, XIV, 30, 28, XIV, and 27. For a survey of this phase of Aegean wall painting, see Immerwahr ch. 4. See also W. Schiering, "Elements of Landscape in Minoan and Mycenaean Art," in R. Laffineur and J.L. Crowley eds., *EIKΩN. Aegean Bronze Age Iconography: Shaping a Methodology* (*Aegaeum* 8, Liège 1992) 317–22.

ent. These themes are rendered with varying degrees of detail, scope, and specification in a wide range of other artistic media besides frescoes: glyptic art (seals, signet rings, and carved stone vases), embossed and inlaid metalwork, and painted pottery.[3] The main geographical areas involved are Crete and Thera, whose cultures and art were closely interconnected at the time in question. Mycenaean art of the later Bronze Age (Late Helladic III) plays a lesser role in my considerations, largely because it copies from earlier art and because its themes are concerned more with people and their actions than with nature. The collective art of these areas is referred to generically as "Aegean"—a term with both geographical and chronological connotations.[4]

Given the popularity of floral landscapes during the early part of the Late Bronze Age, the question arises whether gardens were sometimes represented, and, if so, what criteria might we use for identifying them? Paradoxically, the answer is far from obvious, even when cultivable plants are present, for there are inherent inconsistencies and ambiguities in the information contained in the depictions. Indeed, the overwhelming theme in art seems to be nature in its wild, or untamed, state.

Scholars have concerned themselves with the Minoan attitude behind this apparent glorification of nature. Some 40 years ago, for instance, H. Groenewegen-Frankfort interpreted "scenes of nature" as channels for "mystic communion" expressing the joy of life in all its manifestations; the scenes, according to her, were set in timeless and unlocalized contexts.[5] Comparable perceptions of Aegean representations of nature are reflected today in epithets like the "religious" and "conceptual" landscape.[6]

Such views should not surprise us, for they recognize the human exultation and solace often found in nature, which can be seen as a mental and spiritual haven. Nature, however, can sometimes be judiciously modified by the human hand and still be perceived as "sacred." A modern parallel is provided in Chinese gardens that are considered sacred, even when the natural outdoor setting has been modified through horticulture and landscaping.[7] Is it possible that some of the idealistically rendered, and presumably "sacred," Aegean floral settings did not always allude to pure and untamed landscapes? A recent interpretation of a fresco from Amnisos, discussed below, suggests that there may have been Minoan sacred gardens.

Gardening as an art was already prevalent in the Bronze Age, most conspicuously in ancient Egypt,[8] but also in other areas of the Near East.[9] In Egypt there is clear evidence for specialized cultivation. Agricultural produce, orchards, decorative trees, bushes, and flowers are recorded in depictions from the Old Kingdom on. Normally cultivated in discrete areas in the earlier period, these kinds of flora were later combined in what have been recently classified as "luxury gardens," a type that became common in aristocratic domiciles in the New Kingdom.[10] The new emphasis on luxury in the private domain, in a civilization that had stressed for centuries the cult of the dead more than the transitory comforts of the living, could well reflect a desire by affluent Egyptians to emulate the way of life some had witnessed in other countries, especially since the New Kingdom had introduced an international era in Egypt. Such taste for the exotic is evident in the famous Expedition to Punt (probably Somaliland), undertaken during Queen

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[3] References to seals will be mostly to *CMS*. For stone vases the main study is P. Warren, *Minoan Stone Vases* (Cambridge 1969). For embossed and inlaid metalwork see bibliography for chs. 7 and 8 in S. Hood, *The Arts of Prehistoric Greece* (Harmondsworth 1978) 286–87. For vase painting see P. Betancourt, *The History of Minoan Pottery* (Princeton 1985); and G. Walberg, "Minoan Floral Iconography," in Laffineur and Crowley (supra n. 2) 241–46.

[4] For a definition of the term "Aegean," especially as applied to wall painting, see Immerwahr 1–5. Special studies have shown that, though very similar, Minoan and Cycladic art each has its own idiosyncrasies. See E.N. Davis, "The Cycladic Style of the Thera Frescoes," in *TAW* III.1, 214–27; and L. Morgan, "Island Iconography: Thera, Kea, Milos," in *TAW* III.1, 252–66.

[5] H.A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement* (London 1951) ch. 5.

[6] For references to such views, see Schäfer passim. For a recent discussion of nature in Aegean art, see *Art and Religion*, ch. 7.

[7] M. Keswick, *The Chinese Garden* (New York 1978) passim.

[8] A short but informative account of the Egyptian garden is given in a publication of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Egypt's Golden Age* (Boston 1982) 37–39. The garden and its association with buildings is extensively discussed in A. Badawy, *A History of Egyptian Architecture: The First Intermediate Period, the Middle Kingdom, and the Second Intermediate Period* (Berkeley 1966); and Badawy, *A History of Egyptian Architecture: The Empire* (Berkeley 1968). Two recent studies are J.-C. Hugonot, *Le jardin dans l'Égypte ancienne* (Frankfurt 1989); and Hugonot, "Ägyptische Gärten," in M. Carroll-Spillecke ed., *Der Garten von der Antike bis zum Mittelalter* (Mainz 1992) 9–44. In the earlier publication, Hugonot describes the following types of gardens: "jardin de rendement," "jardin de luxe" or "jardin d'agrément," and "jardin cultuel" (pp. 268–74).

[9] See J.C. Margueron, "Die Gärten in Vorderen Orient," and V. Karageorghis and M. Carroll-Spillecke, "Die heiligen Haine und Gärten Zyperns," in Carroll-Spillecke (supra n. 8), respectively, 45–80 and 141–52.

[10] Hugonot 1989 (supra n. 8) 268.

Hatshepsut's reign and recorded in inscriptions and reliefs in her temple at Deir El Bahri. The purpose of the expedition was to import plants, trees, and even animals, in addition to other precious materials. A botanical garden that the queen dedicated to the god Amon was thus created at Deir El Bahri.[11]

Thus, the functions of the Egyptian garden included producing food to sustain life and afterlife, as well as providing a place for leisure and relaxation and for the conduct of ritual and worship. That Egypt was also in contact with the Aegean during this period is reflected in the paintings of the *Keftiu* people, generally believed to be from the Aegean. Interestingly, the first such paintings appeared in the tomb of Senmut, the architect of Amon's temple during Hatshepsut's reign.[12] Although the nature of these contacts is difficult to ascertain, Egypt and the Aegean were not living in "splendid" isolation.

The state of our knowledge of and the evidence for Aegean horticulture needs only be summarized, as aspects of it have already been dealt with in greater detail by botanical experts. Some of this evidence is tangible or scientifically ascertained, and some inferred from ancient illustrations. The former is disappointingly limited, the latter often ambiguous. Another difficulty is that, in contrast to the dry climate of Egypt, that of Greece does not allow for the preservation of normally perishable vegetal remains. Such information is equally lacking for Greece in the later periods.[13]

The discovery in excavations of flowerpots—clay and faience vessels with an aperture at the base—clearly indicates some cultivation of flowers or other plants in the Aegean, and there are also representations in art of vases containing flowers, but these may have been receptacles for cut flowers.[14] Artistic depictions of domesticated and wild varieties of flora have also been identified by archaeologists and botanists.[15] Linear B tablets mention a number of agricultural products (wheat, barley, millet, peas, beans, olives, figs, grapes, almonds) and spices, condiments, and herbs (coriander, cumin, fennel, sesame, mint). Evidence for some of these products has occasionally been found in excavations in the Aegean. Little is said about flowers in the tablets, but poppies, safflowers, and roses are mentioned, the roses indirectly and in connection with the making of perfume. There is also possible mention of saffron.[16] Evans, on his part, saw connections between certain flowers and plants and certain Minoan hieroglyphic and pictographic signs, such as one apparently depicting saffron crocuses.[17] Pollen deposits are unfortunately rare and inconclusive and do not inform us about flowers and gardens. Examination of carbonized vegetal remains, though a part of excavation analysis more and more, is still a relatively recent practice.

The search for information on Aegean horticulture is also complicated by certain peculiarities of representation among Aegean artists. While Egyptian depiction is relatively pragmatic and, when used judi-

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[11] See Badawy 1968 (supra n. 8) 488–89, for references to the reliefs and to the garden of Amon.

[12] See J. Vercoutter, *L'Égypte et le monde égéen préhellénique* (Cairo 1956); and S. Wachsmann, *Aegeans in the Theban Tombs* (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 20, Louvain 1987).

[13] M. Carroll-Spillecke, *Kepos: Der antike griechische Garten* (*Wohnen in der klassischen Polis* 3, Munich 1989).

[14] The evidence for both types of vessels has been reviewed recently by M. Platon, "Γλάστρες καὶ ἀνθοδοχεῖα στὸ Μινωϊκὸ κόσμο," in *Εἰλαπίνη: Τόμος τιμητικὸς γιὰ τὸν καθηγητὴ Νικόλαο Πλάτωνα* A (Herakleion 1987) 227–34, passim. What look like flower vases, rather than flowerpots, can be seen in the painting in the West House at Akrotiri, Thera, where each jamb of a window is painted with such a vase filled with lilies (*Thera* VI [pl. vol.], pl. 3).

[15] M. Möbius, "Planzenbilden der minoischen Kunst in botanischer Betrachtung," *JdI* 48 (1933) 1–39 is one of the best earlier studies. Recent publications, mostly on specific aspects of Aegean flora, include S. Amigues, "Le crocus et le safran sur une fresque de Théra," *RA* 2 (1988) 227–42; C. Diapoulis, "Prehistoric Plants of the Aegean Sea," in *TAW* II.2, 129–40; I. Douskos, "The Crocuses of Santorini," in *TAW* II.2, 142–46; O. Höckmann, "Theran Floral Style in Relation to That of Crete," in *TAW* II.1, 605–16; Morgan, esp. 17–41; O. Rackham, "The Flora and Vegetation of Thera and Crete before and after the Great Eruption," in *TAW* II.1, 755–64; Rackham, "Observations on the Historical Ecology of Santorini," in *TAW* III.2, 384–91; P. Warren, "Did Papyrus Grow in the Aegean?" *AAA* 9 (1976) 89–95; Warren, "The Miniature Fresco from the West House at Akrotiri, Thera, and Its Aegean Setting," *JHS* 94 (1979) 115–29; and Warren, "The Fresco of the Garlands from Knossos," in P. Darcque and J.-C. Poursat eds., *L'iconographie minoènne: Actes de la Table ronde d'Athènes (21–22 avril 1983)* (*BCH* Suppl. 11, 1985) 187–208. A very recent study is Walberg (supra n. 3).

For comparisons with modern flora see W. Greuter, "Floristic Report on the Cretan Area," *Mémorias da Sociedade Broteriana* 24 (1974) 131–71; A.J. Huxley, *Flowers of Greece* (London 1972); Huxley and W. Taylor, *Flowers of Greece and the Aegean* (London 1977); A.D. Niebuhr, *Herbs of Greece* (Athens 1970). H. Bowman, *Ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ Χλωρίδα* (Athens 1984), first published as *Die griechische Pflanzenwelt* (Munich 1982), deals with modern flora and its reflections in ancient art and literature.

[16] For discussions of the subject in the Linear B tablets, see M. Ventris and J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (Cambridge 1956) 129–31, 213–31. An interesting study is also C. Murray and P. Warren, "PO-NI-KI-JO among the Dye-plants of Minoan Crete," *Kadmos* 15 (1975) 40–60. Roses and the perfume industry are discussed on the basis of tablets and archaeological paraphernalia at the palace of Pylos in C. Shelmerdine, *The Perfume Industry of Mycenaean Pylos* (*SIMA-PB* 34, Göteborg 1985).

[17] *PM* I, 281–85.

ciously, a good source for botanical information,[18] Aegean representations tend to be impressionistic and to stress aesthetic qualities, often at the expense of accuracy. Aegean representational art also combines the real with the unreal, both in a broad sense, as, for instance, the realms of the human and the divine,[19] and in iconographic detail. One of the most common instances of the latter practice is botanical hybridization, that is, the combination of elements of different flowers or of different species of the same flower in a newly created composite type.[20] Equally confusing is the apparently contradictory situation in which only one type of flower is shown growing, as if through selective cultivation, in a wild landscape (see fig. 22, below). Perhaps the one safe conclusion that can be drawn is that this ambiguity reflects the character and extent of Aegean "gardening," which involved only a limited and discrete human tampering with the natural landscape. Finally, Minoan depictions, as discussed earlier, are not intended to convey concrete details but rather the spirit of nature, whether wild or tame.

FLORAL SETTINGS IN GLYPTIC ART

Glyptic art and frescoes constitute the major areas of artistic representation of flora. Carved stone vases are limited in number, but they depict floral settings, some of which are incorporated in discussions below. Much more extensive is the iconographic information found in carvings in seals and signet rings, the rings often being late in date and usually found in Mycenaean contexts. There are, however, inherent limitations in such depictions. The small field available for representations results in less detail and more emphasis on symbolic rendition, when compared to frescoes. What is very clear, nevertheless, is the role played by nature and by flowers. Among the most expansive scenes, human figures, mostly women, are involved in activities that take place in the open. The scenes show the offering of flowers to a goddess, a gathering of divinities and adorants in a field of lilies, the placing of flowers on altars, and orgiastic behavior on the part of men and women interacting with plants, trees, shrines, and other elements in outdoor settings. Although one is aware of the all-pervasive force of nature and the role played in ritual by plants and flowers, there is little information about cultivation.[21]

More interesting, for our purposes, are specific motifs in glyptic depictions. Trees and plants often rise from the top or from within structures, some possibly built in stone and acting as small shrines, and others perhaps made of timber, to judge from what look like sticks, slats, or posts. While some of these structures may have been fixed and permanent, some may have been movable and used for transporting trees and plants.[22] The structure depicted in a carved scene on a signet ring from Mochlos seems to be such a device.[23] It contains a small tree, or a large plant, and it is being transported in a boat in which a woman sits. Perhaps the purpose of the voyage is to transplant the tree, or seedling, unless it is already planted in the small structure.

Horns of consecration are often shown on top of stands or altars with plants and flowers rising from them. It cannot be determined whether they were equipped with sockets to hold the flora, or if they served as vases or planters.[24] Interesting also is a very common seal design in which either a kantharos or a ewer is set in the midst of floral sprays and other vegetation. Although the allusion here is probably to divine providence and its gift of water, rather than to

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[18] For discussions of ancient Egyptian flora, see R. Germer, *Flora des pharaonische Ägypten* (Mainz 1985); Hugonot 1989 and 1992 (supra n. 8); L. Keimer, *Die Gartenpflanzen im alten Ägypten* 1–2 (Hildesheim 1967, Mainz 1984); L. Manniche, *An Ancient Egyptian Herbal* (Austin 1989); and M.F. Moens, "The Ancient Egyptian Garden in the New Kingdom: A Study of Representations," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 15 (1984) 11–53.

[19] An example is the wall painting from Xeste 3 at Thera (infra fig. 15), which shows a goddess accompanied by a griffin in the same scene as a woman saffron gatherer, the only mark of separation being a monkey who seems to act as an intermediary between divinity and mortals.

[20] See I. Cerceau, "Les représentations végétales dans l'art égéen: Problèmes d'identification," in Darcque and Poursat eds. (supra n. 15) 181–84.

[21] For some interesting scenes, see *CMS* I, nos. 17, 127, and 279; *CMS* II, pt. 3, nos. 7 and 51. For a study of botanical import based on seals, see P. Warren, "Of Squills," in *Aux origines de l'hellénisme: La Crète et la Grèce* (Paris 1984) 17–24.

[22] These little structures were first brought to my attention by J. Younger (personal communication, 1990). Examples abound in depictions in seals. The structure of the first type is illustrated in *CMS* I, no. 126, and the second type in *CMS* IX, no. 115. In *CMS* I, no. 123, an unusual device at the base of a tree can be seen. It is marked by two crossed diagonal lines at the center flanked by what look like loops or handles. Perhaps the motif represents a carrier for transporting the tree, or rather a seedling.

[23] The Mochlos seal is illustrated in *CMS* II, pt. 3, no. 252.

[24] For some examples, see *CMS* I, nos. 231 and 279; and *CMS* II, pt. 3, no. 7.

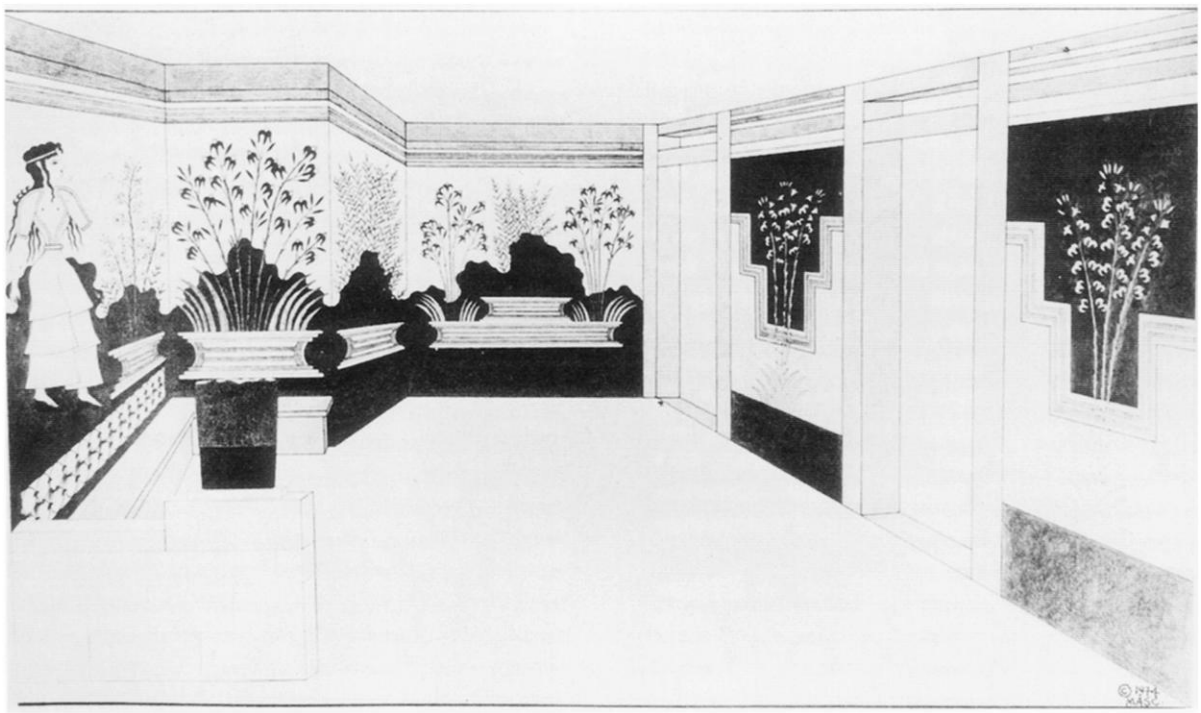

Fig. 1. Restored fresco from the Minoan villa at Amnisos. (M.A.S. Cameron in *TAW* II.1, 581, pl. 1)

a human horticultural activity, we can also consider the possibility that these vases were actually used for watering.[25]

FLORAL SETTINGS IN FRESCOES

Much more revealing for our quest are the frescoes, because of their relatively large scale and because they employ color. Both aspects enhance definition. Important in the frescoes is also the role played by human figures, one that is not always merely symbolic, but also quasi-narrative and descriptive. Such figures, who are mostly women, are often shown interacting with natural floral settings. Although themes of this type are encountered in seals, in frescoes a wider range of activities is represented. One of the problems in matching themes in the two media may be the fact that excavations at Akrotiri, Thera, have recently yielded massive information on frescoes but hardly any seals. One theme that is repeated in both media is the offering of cut flowers, lilies and other types.[26] In a fresco from room 3b in Xeste 3 at Thera, some of the women in a procession are carrying bouquets of flowers to an unknown destination.[27] The conventionalized offspring of this theme appears later in processions of women holding flowers in Mycenaean palatial frescoes.[28]

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[25] For examples of such vessels, see *CMS* II, pt. 3, nos. 242, 260, and 261. Such a vessel was typically seen held by the Minoan Genius (see *CMS* II, pt. 5, no. 322). The idea that at least the ewer in seal depictions may have alluded to rain as nourishment for vegetation is discussed in J. Weingarten, *The Transformation of Egyptian Taweret into the Minoan Genius: A Study in Cultural Transmission in the Middle Bronze Age* (*SIMA* 88, Partille 1991) 12, n. 51.

[26] For the offering of lilies to a goddess, see *CMS* I, nos. 17 and 279.

[27] Doumas (supra n. 1) pl. 133. Here, only one woman can be said with certainty to be carrying flowers. She is wearing a diaphanous blouse decorated with lily blossoms, with a heavier garment on top, pinned over her right shoulder. Red rosettes appear over this garment and could be part of its embroidered or woven decoration. On the other hand, in the non-joining plaster fragment (bottom right in the illustration), the rosettes spread beyond the garment, which is painted in ocher, over a white area that seems to be the woman's bare bosom. There is another woman from the same composition who definitely carries a bouquet of lilies, and who is not included in the above publication. She can be seen in a black-and-white photo in *AR* 1980, 5, fig. 2.

[28] For Xeste 3 see *Thera* VII, pls. 65–66 and a reconstruction of the scene in *Art and Religion*, fig. 44. For Mycenaean women carrying flowers, see E. Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age* (Chicago 1964) pl. XXVII.

In the frescoes, certain settings are clearly natural landscapes. Such is the topography in the painted miniature friezes from the West House at Thera, with their panoramic views of towns with mountains, rivers, marshes, and bays, and in the "Tropical Landscape," though it has been suggested for the last that it depicts a cultivated area, a kind of "landscape garden."[29] Turning to "gardens," and keeping in mind the assumption expressed above that there may have been little tampering with the natural landscape in order to produce a garden, it becomes clear that one needs more than the presence of cultivable plants to identify a garden. Evidence for a frequent and intimate human use and modification of particular outdoor locations also needs to be examined. Such evidence could well be found in the close association of floral settings with architecture and architectonic structures, real or portrayed.

A fresco from Amnisos, northeast of Knossos, seems to belie the idea that the Aegean people, in this case specifically the Minoans, did not have formal gardens (fig. 1). The mural was found in 1932 in an opulent house built during the Middle Minoan III–Late Minoan IA period. As usual with Aegean frescoes, except for those at Thera, the mural was preserved only in fragments collapsed from the walls. Two panels were restored and placed on display in the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion.[30] In one, a clump of lilies with symmetrically arranged stems rises within a stepped or "battlement" pattern (fig. 1, right, where it appears twice). The other panel in the museum depicts a variety of plants and flowers rising from broad, low structures with incurved sides against a background of stylized rockwork painted red, below a white area representing the sky (fig. 1, center).

Cameron's restoration of this fresco, which incorporated unpublished fragments stored in the museum in addition to the panels displayed, has recently come under criticism; it has been pointed out, for instance, that there is no evidence for the woman he restores (fig. 1, left).[31] The mural decoration is also likely to have been less extensive, if, as has been proposed recently, the painting had decorated a loggia rather than a regular room with four walls.[32] I might also add that we cannot be certain that the lily compositions formed separate panels, as restored both in the museum and by Cameron. The battlement motif, whatever its meaning, may have instead continued behind clumps of lilies for the entire width of the wall. If so, the Amnisos landscape would have looked more like the scenery that spreads uninterruptedly across several walls in the well-preserved Spring Fresco from Thera (see below, fig. 22) or in the painting from the House of the Frescoes at Knossos, as restored (fig. 4, below). None of these comments, however, detracts from the fact that the scheme and the iconographic details of this unusual fresco convey the impression of an organized setting, by all appearances a formal garden.

The iconography and meaning of the Amnisos fresco have been the subject of a recent and incisive study by J. Schäfer, which concentrates on what he

[29] This was proposed by Morgan because of the cultivable types of palm trees that appear in the landscape (Morgan 39–40, figs. 4–7). I tend to agree with other scholars who objected that the cultivable species were illustrated simply because they were more familiar to the artists. The exclusion of human figures from the "Tropical Landscape," in contrast to the other friezes in the same room, suggests that the scene emphasizes the idea of an exotic landscape and a natural habitat of wildlife (M. Shaw, "Painted 'Ikria' at Mycenae?" *AJA* 84 [1980] 179). Recently, however, it has been suggested that this part of the frieze also contained a town, like the friezes on the north and south walls. The theory relies on the discovery of a new plaster fragment and its attribution to the "Tropical Landscape." Only a preliminary study has so far been published: C. Televantou, "New Light on the West House Wall-Paintings," in *TAW* III.1, 309–24, esp. 322.

[30] A color illustration of the panel with the lilies can be seen in S. Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae* (New York 1960) pl. XXII. For the other panel, see *PM* IV, pt. 2, suppl. pl. LXVIIa.

[31] M.A.S. Cameron, "Theoretical Interrelations among Theran, Cretan and Mainland Frescoes," in *TAW* II.1, 578–92, pl. 2B–C. For the fact that there was no evidence for a woman, see Schäfer 86.

[32] The loggia was directly above a lower portico on the ground floor, space 7a, where the plaster fragments were found fallen. See V. Stürmer, "Bemerkungen zur Rekonstruktion der Lilienvilla von Amnisos," in *Proceedings of the Sixth International Cretological Congress* A2 (Chania 1990) 299–304, esp. 302, figs. 1–3. The restoration of a loggia finds support in the discovery of a column base in the debris over the floor of the lower portico, as noted by S. Marinatos in "Funde und Forschungen auf Kreta," *AA* 1933, 290. Because of the distribution of the fallen plaster fragments, Marinatos realized that only three of the four sides of the room had been painted, but he thought that it was the eastern wall that was unpainted. I propose that it is the western side that did not have extensive murals, for even if this had been a closed room, rather than a loggia, that wall would have been the logical side to have windows. If the space upstairs were a loggia, the painting would have been limited to the long eastern wall, possibly with panels on the shorter walls at the north and south sides of the room, where doors need to be restored. Cameron's architectural setting for the frescoes should be reexamined in terms of such considerations.

See also Stürmer's most recent discussion of the painted room in the Amnisos villa in J. Schäfer, *Amnisos* (Berlin 1992) 129–50. This publication came out too late to be commented on here.

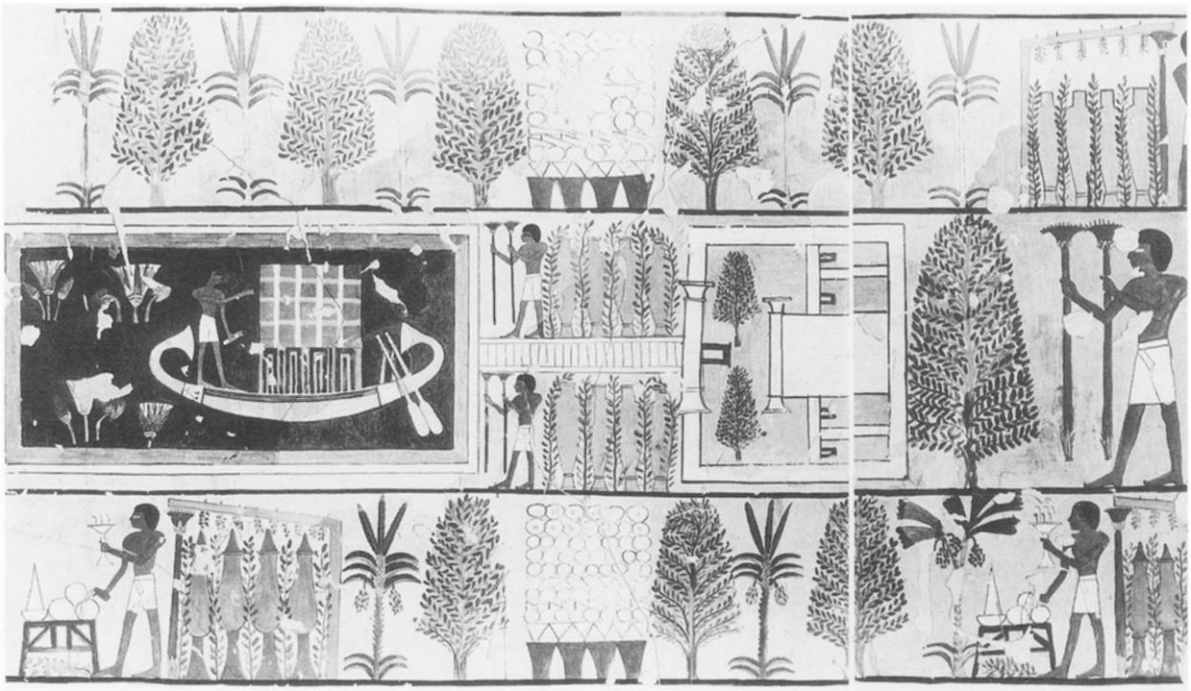

Fig. 2. Painting of a garden, from the tomb of Minnakhte. (C.K. Wilkinson and M. Hill, *Egyptian Wall Paintings* [New York 1983] 12, fig. 6)

sees as two Egyptianizing features.[33] One is the so-called battlement pattern seen in the panels with the lilies (fig. 1, right). Schäfer interprets the pattern as a reflection of the borders of pools of water often depicted in Egyptian wall paintings and usually rendered in cavalier perspective. Such pools were typical in "luxury gardens" in Egypt, and their plan was either rectangular or T-shaped, the latter described by Schäfer as a "channel-pool."[34] Figures 2 and 3 here illustrate a garden of the plain, rectangular variety, as

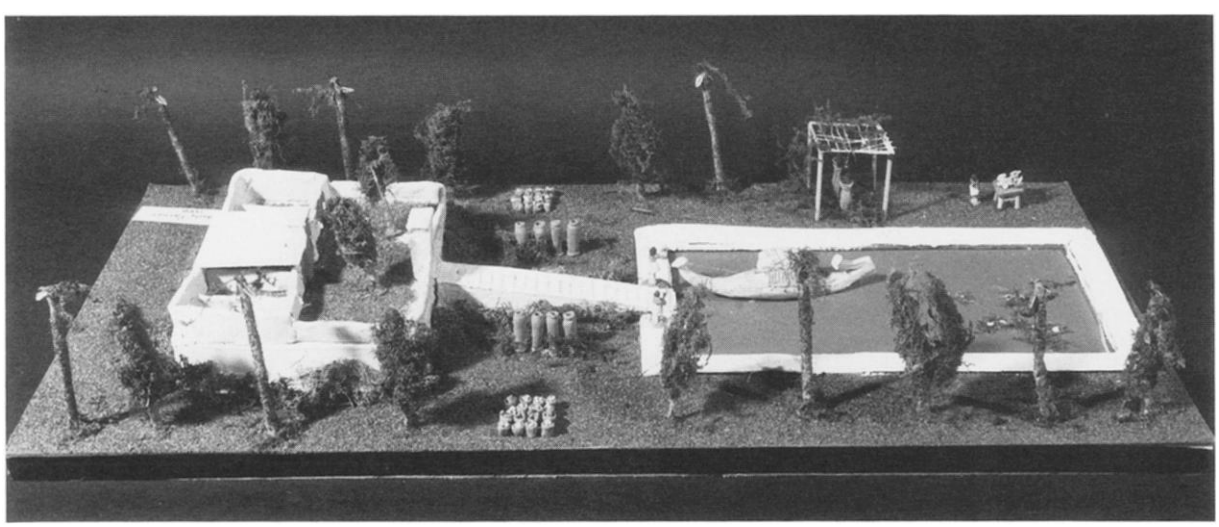

Fig. 3. Model of the painting shown in figure 2. (K. Parker)

[33] Schäfer passim. A new study of aspects of the Aegean garden has just been published by the same author—too late for his views to have been taken into account in my article. See J. Schäfer, "Gärten in der bronzezeitlichen ägäischen Kultur? Rituelle Bildsprache und bildliches Konzept Realität," in Carroll-Spillecke (supra n. 8) 101–40, esp. 112–26 and 133 for references to the Amnisos fresco.

[34] Schäfer 86.

seen in a painting from the 18th-Dynasty Theban tomb of the official Minnakhte and in a model version that conveys a more concrete impression of the setting.[35]

The second Egyptianizing feature that Schäfer examines in the Amnisos fresco is the form of the flower "receptacles" with incurved sides, which he connects, as S. Marinatos had done earlier, with the Egyptian hieroglyphic sign *mr*. The motif, Schäfer notes, also appears in the inlaid decoration of a cup from a shaft grave at Mycenae.[36] The *mr* sign, as made clear in Schäfer's study, was already known in Egypt during the Old Kingdom and was associated with the ideas of "lake" or "pool" or "channel filled with water." An iconic version of the sign also appears in Egyptian art, where it is used as a socket for plants with clear religious associations.[37] In noting these apparent affinities with Egypt in the Amnisos fresco, Schäfer comes to the conclusion that the Amnisos scene represents an actual sacred Minoan garden incorporating Egyptian traits, including *meru* receptacles for flowers.[38]

Such intriguing thoughts on interconnections, though difficult to prove with tangible evidence, now gain credibility in the light of recent discoveries at Tell El Dabʿa, ancient Avaris, in Egypt. The recently found frescoes from this site, the capital of the Hyksos, leave no doubt that Aegean fresco artists worked in Egypt, apparently during Hyksos rule, and that they were commissioned to decorate the palace. Actual Hyksos gardens have been excavated at this site.[39]

The uniqueness of the Amnisos fresco in providing evidence for Minoan gardens becomes more obvious when we turn to other wall paintings. Our next example, from the House of the Frescoes at Knossos, shows a scene of birds and monkeys in a rocky landscape, illustrated here in Cameron's restoration (fig. 4).[40] The flowers, some in hybrid guise, are of many types: crocuses, papyri, ivies, madonna and pancratium lilies, and roses.[41] The impression is of a wild landscape, and yet the monkeys, which were imported to Crete, were pets that would have been placed where they could be seen or used by their owners, rather than simply abandoned in the countryside.

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[35] The model was made in 1988 by Kimberly Parker, an undergraduate student at Scarborough College, University of Toronto, for my course on Egyptian and Aegean wall painting. It is a comment on the pictorial clarity of Egyptian representation that, once basic artistic conventions have been grasped, the images can be visualized.

[36] Schäfer 86–87. There, as at Amnisos, however, it is not clear whether the structures were hollow, and therefore "receptacles," or flat, and therefore "platforms." The same ambiguity exists in the case of what look like small tables with plants placed on them within the religious symbol of double horns encountered in seals (*CMS* I, no. 231; *CMS* II, pt. 3, no. 7).

[37] Schäfer 87.

[38] The *meru* receptacles bear a close resemblance to Aegean altars with incurved sides, also described as "waisted" altars. Though there may be some shared religious symbolism between the two objects, the difference is that any plant receptacles of that shape would have obviously been hollow and perhaps made of perishable or breakable materials (wood or terracotta), while the "altars" were solid, flat on the top and, to judge from examples actually found, were made of stone. For a discussion of such "altars," see M.C. Shaw, "The Lion Gate Relief of Mycenae Reconsidered," in *Φίλια ἔπη εἰς Γεώργιον Ε. Μυλωνὰν διὰ τὰ 60 ἔτη τοῦ ἀνασκαφικοῦ του ἔργου* (Athens 1986) 108–23, passim.

In addition to reflecting an Egyptianizing garden, the Amnisos fresco may also tie in with a Minoan pictorial tradition. A partial parallel in Crete may be a painting from the lustral basin in the north wing of the palace at Zakros. Only the lower part of the painting is preserved and has been recently copied and restored (M. Platon, "Νέες ἐνδείξεις γιὰ τὸ πρόβλημα τῶν καθαρτηρίων δεξαμενῶν καὶ τῶν λουτρῶν στὸ Μινωϊκὸ κόσμο," in *Proceedings* [supra n. 32] 141–55, pl. 27b). Large leaves, as if of a tall plant, rise from an architectonic base, part of which is referred to by M. Platon as an altar. Having seen the actual fresco at Zakros and the Amnisos painting in the museum, my impression is that the Zakros arrangement best resembles that of the lower part of the Amnisos panel with irises and other plants (fig. 1, center and left). In both cases the plants rise against red rock formations from what look like superposed structures marked by painted horizontal stripes. A larger published reproduction of the watercolor copy of the Zakros painting is necessary, however, to make closer comparisons possible.

[39] M. Bietak, "Minoan Wall Paintings Unearthed at Ancient Avaris," *Egyptian Archaeology* 2 (1992) 26–28. It is an interesting coincidence that the plaster dumps were found in an open area used as a garden during the period of the Hyksos palace. Here at least is one place where Aegean artists could have familiarized themselves with an Egyptian garden. Not only the technique (which appears to be true fresco) but also the themes of these wall paintings point to Aegean artists. Bull-leaping in particular points to the palace at Knossos as the likely origin of some of the Avaris painters. This and other matters were discussed recently in a symposium entitled "Egypt and the Minoan World: Recent Finds in the Nile Delta," held at the Art Institute of Chicago (12–13 February 1993). Two talks that supported close Knossian connections were M. Bietak, "Egypt and the Minoan World in the Light of Recent Finds at Tell El Dabʿa, Eastern Nile Delta," and M.C. Shaw, "Tumblers, Acrobats and Bull-Leapers in Aegean and Egyptian Wall Painting."

[40] M.A.S. Cameron, "Unpublished Paintings from the 'House of the Frescoes' at Knossos," *BSA* 63 (1968) 1–31, fig. 13 with restoration.

[41] *PM* II, 431–67.

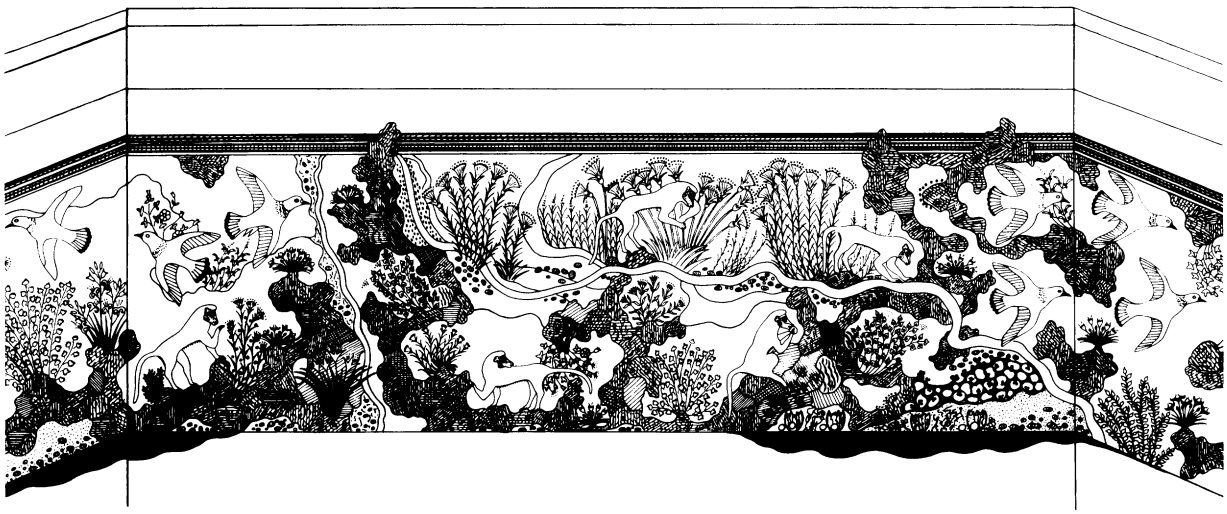

Fig. 4. Restored fresco from the House of the Frescoes at Knossos. (Detail from M.A.S. Cameron, *BSA* 63 [1968] 24, fig. 13)

Here the matter of the geographical location of the landscape needs to be raised. Does the scene in the fresco represent 1) a Minoan vision of the natural habitat from which these pets were originally obtained, 2) a Minoan landscape where the monkeys were left to roam freely, or 3) a nature sanctuary that the Minoans dedicated to a nature divinity, having populated it with imported exotic animals? In the case of the third alternative, the setting would have functioned somewhat like a modern zoo, in the sense that it would have been both used and visited by at least the owners of the animals. Such a use, naturally, would not qualify the setting as a garden.[42]

Similar questions can be raised in the case of a composition from Thera showing monkeys madly clambering among impressionistically rendered rocks near a river in a minimalist landscape devoid of vegetation.[43] Interestingly, that scene has been linked by N. Marinatos to one she restores on an adjacent wall, on the basis of associated plaster fragments found in the same room (B4). Marinatos's interpretation is that the monkeys, religious animals par excellence in the Aegean, are seen in the "environment of the divinity: the spring landscape."[44] If the two scenes go together, as appears to be the case, then there is a deliberate and meaningful antithesis in theme and mood between them. The wild monkeys and barren setting contrast dramatically with the peaceful calves or goats and the swallow gliding over a rocky landscape, but one graced with vegetation: reeds by the river, clumps of crocus flowers, and floral sprays. The contrast may well be one between a wild and a tamed landscape, complemented by appropriate animal behavior. An analogous dichotomy in the character of a seemingly continuous topographical setting is seen again in a fresco from the villa at Haghia Triadha (fig. 10), discussed below.

Figure 5 shows a detail of the painting of the Crocus Gatherer from the palace at Knossos. Further cleaning, after Evans's excavations of the space where the fresco was originally found, yielded more stucco fragments that show the painting to have been part of a frieze, rather than a panel. It too depicts monkeys who now pluck crocus flowers in a rocky landscape, rendered in typical Minoan perspective with rockwork hanging from the top to denote that it extended into the background (detail in fig. 5).[45] One crucial difference, however, distinguishes this fresco from those

[42] Here I disagree with N. Platon who interpreted the setting as a royal garden (N. Platon, "Ο κροκοσυλλέκτης πίθηκος: Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν σπουδὴν τῆς Μινωϊκῆς τοιχογραφίας," *CretChron* 1 [1947] 505–24, esp. 515). One of the details that gave Platon this impression is the so-called "jet d'eau" in the fresco, which, however, as first Evans and then Cameron suggested on valid pictorial grounds, represents a natural waterfall and not a man-made fountain. See Cameron (supra n. 40) 11, fig. 4c.

The question of the type of monkeys portrayed in Aegean art and the geographical areas that form their natural habitat is reviewed in E.H. Cline, "Monkey Business in the Bronze Age Aegean," *BSA* 86 (1991) 29–42, esp. 31, 40.

[43] *Thera* V, pl. D.

[44] *Art and Religion* 115–16, fig. 83, foldout D. Some doubt has recently been cast by Doumas (supra n. 1) 111 on Marinatos's belief that the two landscapes belonged to two adjoining walls.

[45] For the complete frieze as restored with more monkeys, see Platon (supra n. 42) col. pl. 29.

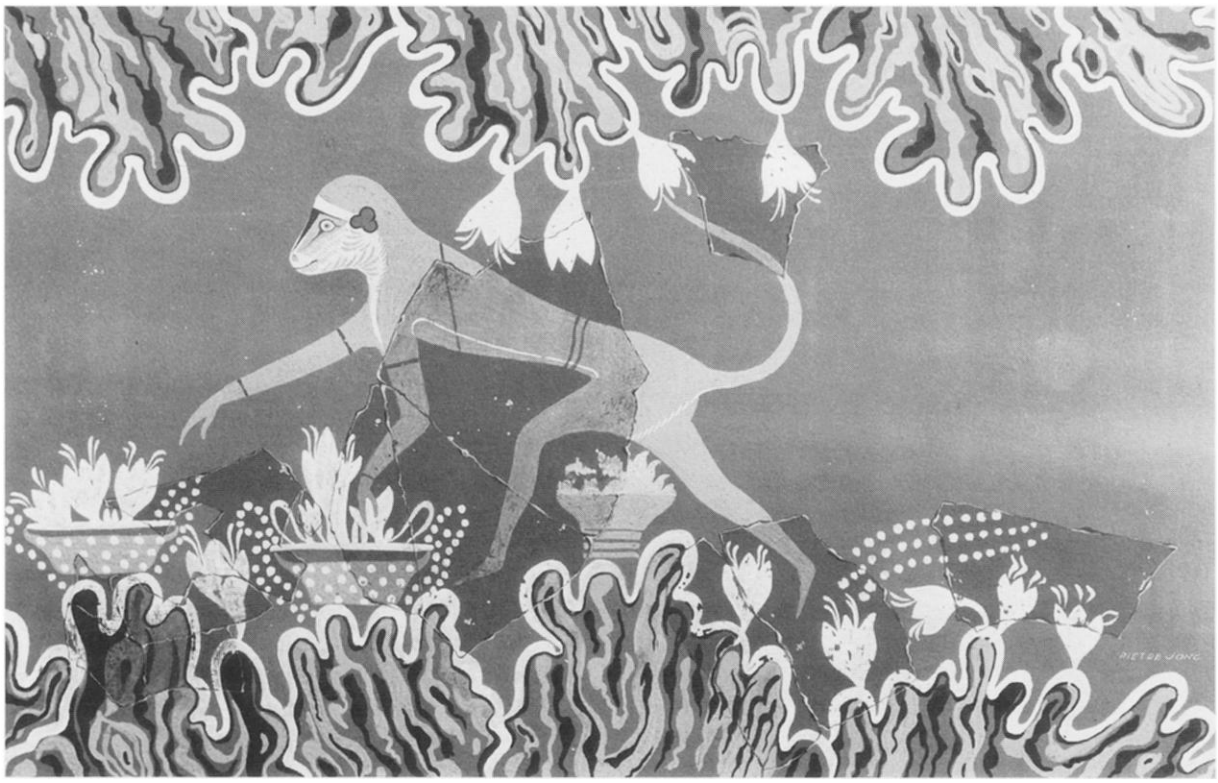

Fig. 5. Detail of the Saffron Gatherer Fresco from the palace at Knossos, as restored by P. de Jong. (Courtesy Royal Ontario Museum, 938.66.3)

already discussed: the best-preserved monkey is seen wearing a harness. The obvious implication is that this animal and probably the rest of the monkeys, which are poorly preserved, were pets. They were led there leashed by the people who owned them and could be taken, again leashed, to other places on certain occasions.

Can the place where the monkeys were kept be thought of as a garden, a place frequented regularly by people? Only crocus flowers grow in this landscape, and they are shown emerging not only from the rocky ground but also from vessels. It has often been assumed in the past that these vessels were flowerpots, and that the crocus flowers were being mischievously plucked from them by the monkeys.[46] A more convincing explanation is that the vessels were placed there to serve as receptacles for cut crocus flowers, or more likely just the blossoms, and they might even be baskets, broad and low, like the *paneri* used for collecting agricultural produce in Greece today. An excellent parallel for the shape of the container can be seen on a fragment of a carved stone rhyton from Knossos depicting a man, very much in the posture of the monkey in the fresco, placing a two-handled receptacle with hatched markings, most likely a basket, in front of a shrine.[47] A basket can be seen in the Theran fresco illustrated below in figure 15, also connected with the harvesting of crocus flowers.[48] The beads strung in loops and lines and attached to the vessels or baskets in the Knossian fresco may well have been decorative handles or some device for lifting and transporting the receptacles once they had been

[46] Platon (supra n. 42) 522.

[47] See Warren (supra n. 3) 85, pl. P476, where the receptacle seen in the carved scene on the stone vase is described as a basin. The hatching on it, however, suggests to me basketry weaving. Interestingly, the nickname "kalathos" has been assigned by ceramicists to a shape not unlike that of the vessels in the Crocus Gatherer fresco: P. Betancourt (supra n. 3) fig. 93. For evidence for baskets in the Aegean, see *Thera* III, 14 and pl. 12, top; J.-C. Poursat, "Vannerie," *EtCret* 26 (1980) 91–98; and P. Betancourt, L. Berkowitz, and R.L. Zaskow, "Evidence for Minoan Basket from Kommos, Crete," *Cretan Studies* 2 (1990) 73–77.

[48] See now the excellent illustration in Doumas (supra n. 1) pl. 122, in which one can see at the lower left a basket resting on the bench.

Fig. 6. Dwarf walking leashed monkey and dogs, from an Old Kingdom relief in Egypt. (After K. Klebs, *Die Reliefs des alten Reiches (2980–2475 v. Chr.)* [Heidelberg 1915] 34, fig. 21)

filled. The monkeys are clearly mimicking a human activity they had witnessed: the cutting and gathering of flowers.[49]

This association of crocus picking, crocus gatherers, and monkeys is implicit in other Aegean representations. It is quite possible that monkeys accompanied harvesters and may have even proved helpful on occasion. Although largely undependable, monkeys are capable of helping perform certain tasks under human supervision, especially in agricultural labor, as is the case in various countries even today.[50] More pertinent to the Knossian example are some scenes from ancient Egypt. An entire series of Old Kingdom reliefs (e.g., figs. 6–7) depict fruit harvesters at work and farmers heading for or returning from the field, accompanied by an often harnessed and leashed monkey, which they obviously purposefully brought with them. And the animal was not taken so that it could be a nuisance, but rather because it could prove useful—or amusing. In the Middle Kingdom, a well-known tomb painting from Beni Hasan shows a quaint scene of monkeys which had obviously accompanied the two men harvesting the figs (fig. 8). In the New Kingdom, monkeys are shown climbing to the tops of date palms to shake the branches and cause the dates to fall so that they could be collected (fig. 9). An equivalent job is the picking of coconuts by monkeys

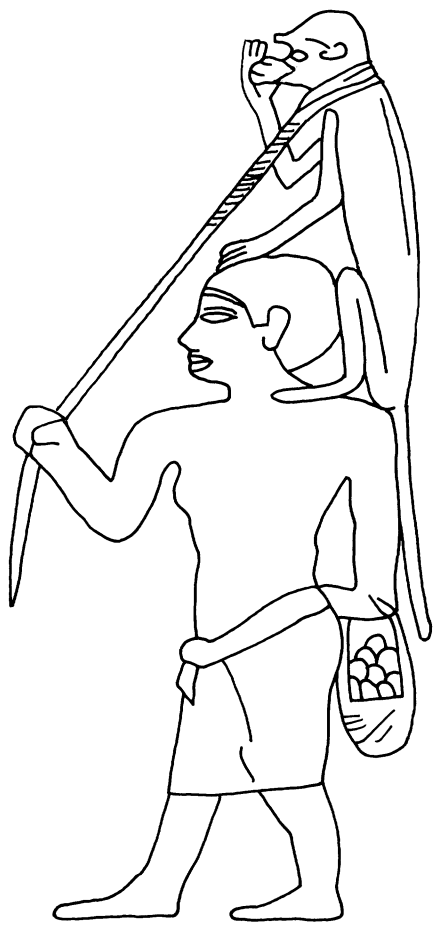

Fig. 7. Egyptian harvester carrying basket of figs and a monkey, from an Old Kingdom relief in Egypt. (G. Bianco, after K. Klebs, *Die Reliefs des alten Reiches (2980–2475 v. Chr.)* [Heidelberg 1915] 32, fig. 19)

[49] Because of the narrowness of the frieze and the scale of the monkey in the Knossian fresco, I doubt that human figures appeared along with the monkeys. The favorite scales for depicting scenes with human action in Minoan frescoes are either truly miniature, in which even crowds of people can be included (cf. Immerwahr pls. 22–23, 29), or they are very large, as in scenes covering entire walls, where depiction necessarily involves few figures (cf. infra figs. 10 and 12). The Crocus Gatherer fresco falls between these two categories and in scale it resembles most the Mycenaean equivalent of the Minoan miniature style, where figures are of an intermediate scale and the frieze covers a large part, but not the entire height, of a wall. In such frescoes there is room for a fair number of figures (cf. Immerwahr pls. 64, 66).

[50] My colleague F. Burton, Professor of Primatology at Scarborough College, University of Toronto, has amassed information that shows monkeys to have been used for a number of simple tasks by humans. To her I owe the reference to D. Morris and R. Morris, *Man and Apes* (New York 1966) 230–57, with its illuminating discussions of human exploitation of monkeys through time.

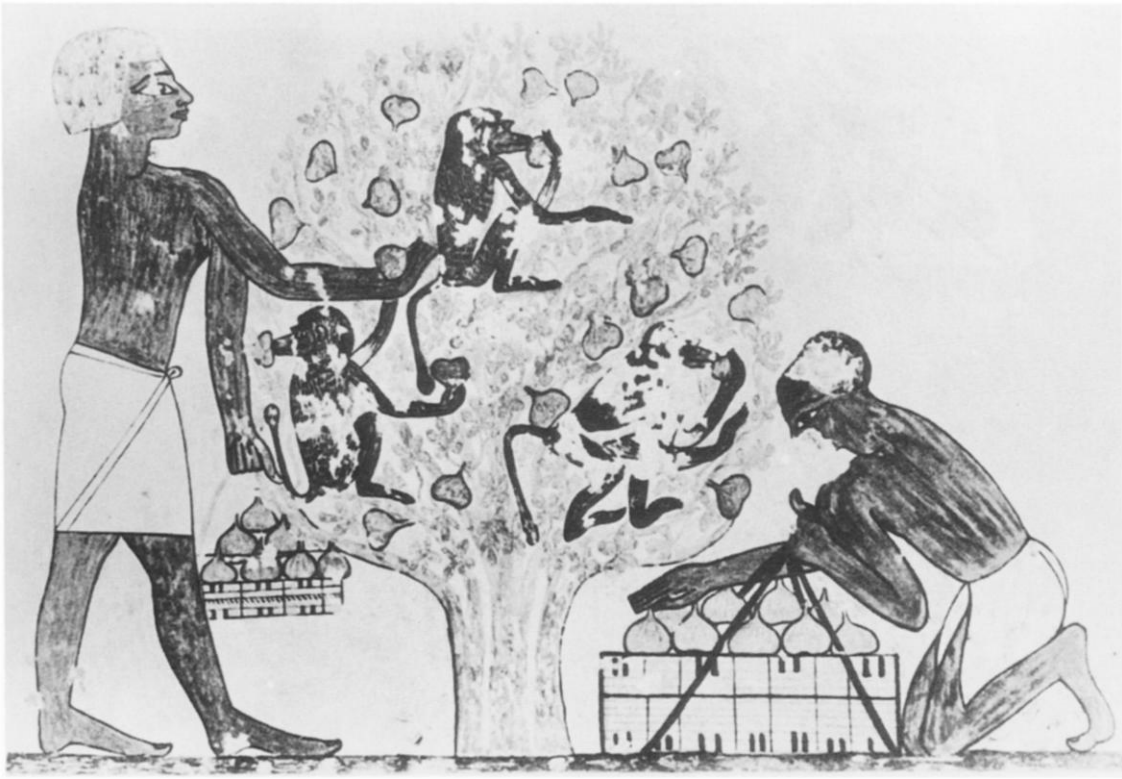

Fig. 8. Men and monkeys harvesting figs, from a Middle Kingdom painting in Egypt. (W. Stevenson Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East* [New Haven 1965] fig. 171)

Fig. 9. Woman and monkey harvesting dates, from a New Kingdom relief in Egypt. (J. Vandier d'Abbadie, *REg* 1966, 198, fig. 57)

in Southeast Asia, still practiced today.[51] Whether monkeys simply provided amusement for the Minoans in their outings to pick crocuses and other flowers or whether they actually helped is not certain. The connection with Egypt lies in the depiction of monkeys as harvesters, not in what was being harvested. Saffron, for instance, is not mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions or shown in representations. Newly published frescoes from Thera showing monkeys as musicians point to another example of the entertainment monkeys can provide, if not by their music, by their ability to mimic human musicians.[52] The itinerant musician with monkeys is as familiar a figure in Egypt and in other Near Eastern countries today as he seems to have been in ancient times.[53]

The flower-picking theme may have also been depicted in an LM I fresco from the villa at Haghia Triadha, illustrated here in Cameron's reconstruction (fig. 10).[54] The pertinent detail shows a woman kneeling next to a clump of crocus flowers, which she is presumably going to pick. It is unlikely that she has merely assumed a posture of genuflection, for such a

[51] See Morris and Morris (supra n. 50) 243–44.

[52] Doumas (supra n. 1) 134.

[53] C. Mendleson, "More Monkey Business," *AnatSt* 33 (1983) 81–83, with references to earlier bibliography on monkeys and their use in Mesopotamia.

[54] Cameron's restoration was published posthumously

Fig. 10. Restored drawing of fresco from the villa at Haghia Triadha. (M.A.S. Cameron in R. Hägg and N. Marinatos eds., *The Function of the Minoan Palaces* [Stockholm 1987] 326, fig. 10)

posture is unknown as a form of adoration in Aegean iconography of this period. The mural spreads on three walls, as if in a triptych, and the organization of its flora interestingly suggests selective cultivation. Lilies and crocus clumps appear on the left side in a rather serene, formal, and tidy setting, while on the right side other native plants, bushes, and wildflowers provide a sanctuary for animals, deer, goats, cats, and birds in a more animated composition. Are we not to see here a deliberate contrast between a milieu that has been tamed, cultivated, and used by people (hence the presence of the kneeling woman on the left side), and a pure and wild landscape, a natural sanctuary, on the right? Is the setting on the left a garden, even a religious garden? The goddess in the central wall symbolically bridges the distance between the two domains.

A more explicit scene of the harvesting of crocus flowers can be seen in the recently found fresco from Xeste 3 in Thera (fig. 11 and details in figs. 12 and 15).[55] Located in an upper story directly above a lustral basin in the building, the composition spreads on two adjacent walls. On the right wall one sees women walking on a rocky ground from which grow crocus flowers, while more clumps are scattered in the background (see also fig. 12). Each woman is provided with a basket to carry what she harvests. The harvesters' destination must be the setting shown on the left wall (fig. 11), where the product is delivered to a goddess seated on an elevated stool (see also fig. 15). Her identity as a goddess is apparent from the presence of a griffin and because the saffron is not handed directly to her by the first picker to have arrived there, but rather by a monkey acting as an intermediary. In published details of the fresco, it is clear that the monkey hands the goddess the stigmas. Stigmas are also being emptied into a basket from the smaller basket held by the girl picker.[56]

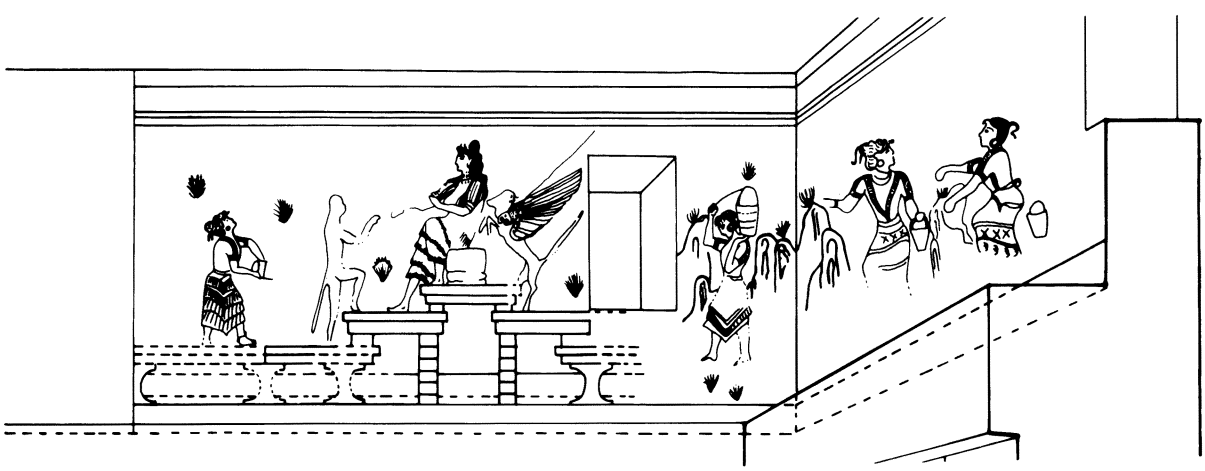

Fig. 11. Restored painting in room above the lustral basin in Xeste 3, Thera. (Detail from Immerwahr 60, fig. 20)

and, unfortunately, was incorrectly reversed (M.A.S. Cameron, "The 'Palatial' Thematic System in the Knossos Murals," in R. Hägg and N. Marinatos eds., *The Function of the Minoan Palaces* [Stockholm 1987] 321–28, fig. 10). Fig. 10, here, corrects this mistake. For details of this fresco, see W. Stevenson Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East* (New Haven 1965) figs. 106–107.

[55] See also the newly published illustrations of various details of this fresco: Doumas (supra n. 1) pls. 116–30.

[56] Doumas (supra n. 1) pls. 122–23.

Fig. 12. Detail of crocus harvesting scene, from painting above lustral basin in Xeste 3, Thera. (G. Bianco, after *TAW* III.1, cover)

It is interesting to question how the scenes on this and the adjacent wall might relate, spatially and temporally, to each other. Spatial continuity seems to be suggested by the clumps of crocus seen scattered throughout the background, on both walls. The intentional, almost mechanical repetition of crocus clumps obviously stresses the richness with which the plant grew in the area and has led one scholar to infer that this field of crocuses grows "as if destined for collection."[57] Experts agree that the flower is saffron crocus, but whether it is the wild *Crocus cartwrightianus* rather than the domesticated *Crocus sativus* is not certain.[58] It is also ambiguous whether the harvesters picked flowers, as harvesters do today,[59] or stigmas. Saffron blossoms are nearly impossible to detect in the fresco, even in the crocus clumps in the background, probably because the pigment used for the blossoms was fugitive and has vanished. This point and whether the girl on the right wall holds flowers or stigmas in her hands are details that can only be checked by direct inspection of the frescoes. If flowers were being collected, then we must assume a separate process in which the stigmas would be extracted from the blossoms. This would imply a lack of temporal continuity between the harvesting scene on the right and the delivery of the saffron on the left.

The saffron itself, which is derived from the stigmas only, was highly prized in antiquity for its many uses, such as dye for fabrics, food seasoning, and medicine, as it is prized in some ways today.[60] It is common knowledge that to produce even an ounce of saffron requires a huge supply of flowers.[61] Even if the scene

[57] Douskos (supra n. 15) 141.

[58] Douskos (supra n. 15) expresses two conflicting opinions about the type of crocus shown in the Theran fresco: on p. 141 she describes it as *C. sativus* (the domesticated variety), but on p. 143 as *C. cartwrightianus* (the wild variety). Ray Porter believes that the domesticated variety was probably not yet known (personal communication, 17 May 1991). By contrast, Amigues (supra n. 15) 230 is inclined to think that *C. sativus* is shown because of the large quantities of saffron suggested in the fresco.

[59] Amigues (supra n. 15) 231–32 and ns. 12–13.

[60] F.I. Ihde, "Saffron, Kashmir's Pot of Gold," *New York Times* (4 October 1987) X6:1.

[61] It has been estimated that some 50 stigmas will produce 0.4 g of saffron. See Amigues (supra n. 15) 232, n. 13.

Fig. 13. Women harvesting flowers, from painting of the late New Kingdom in Egypt. (J.-C. Hugonot, *Le jardin dans l'Égypte ancienne* [Frankfurt 1989] 266, fig. 255)

in the fresco depicts merely a ritual reenactment—and objections have been raised that the women are too well dressed to be workers—it must still reflect real settings and organized harvesting for utilitarian purposes. The handing-over of this rich product to the goddess is surrounded by an aura of magic. The monkey, clearly imbued with religious symbolism, as monkeys are in many cultures even today, adds to the mystery of the occasion.[62]

The Theran fresco allows us to understand better the Crocus Gatherer fresco from Knossos, which depicts similar acts, but with different actors. In the Theran fresco the monkey is honored as the agent who conveys the precious product to the goddess. In the Knossian fresco the monkey performs a related role: that of a harvester, real or symbolic. Among the humans involved, the women seem to be the designated crocus gatherers, as women often are in countries that produce saffron today (mostly in Spain and Kashmir on the slopes of the Himalayan Mountains). Like the ancient Egyptian farmers (who were generally male), the Aegean women harvesters may have had monkeys as pets and as work companions who could prove useful as helpers. In Egypt the harvesting of flowers is done by both women and men, sometimes working together (figs. 13–14). There is a striking resemblance in the way that the women make eye contact, as if conversing, both in the Egyptian example of women harvesters (fig. 13), and in the Theran fresco of the saffron gatherers (fig. 12). This is where similarities end, however, for the flowers picked are different.

Fig. 14. Men and women harvesting flowers, Old Kingdom relief in Egypt. (N. de G. Davies, *The Rock Tombs of Deir el Gebrawi* 2 [London 1903] pl. V)

[62] See *Art and Religion* 112–16, and N. Marinatos, "An Offering of Saffron to the Minoan Goddess of Nature," in T. Linders and G. Nordquist eds., *Gifts to the Gods* (Uppsala 1987) 123–32, where she has discussed the role of the monkey in this scene and in other Aegean depictions. For the sacred nature of the ape in other cultures, see Morris and Morris (supra n. 50) 10–26.

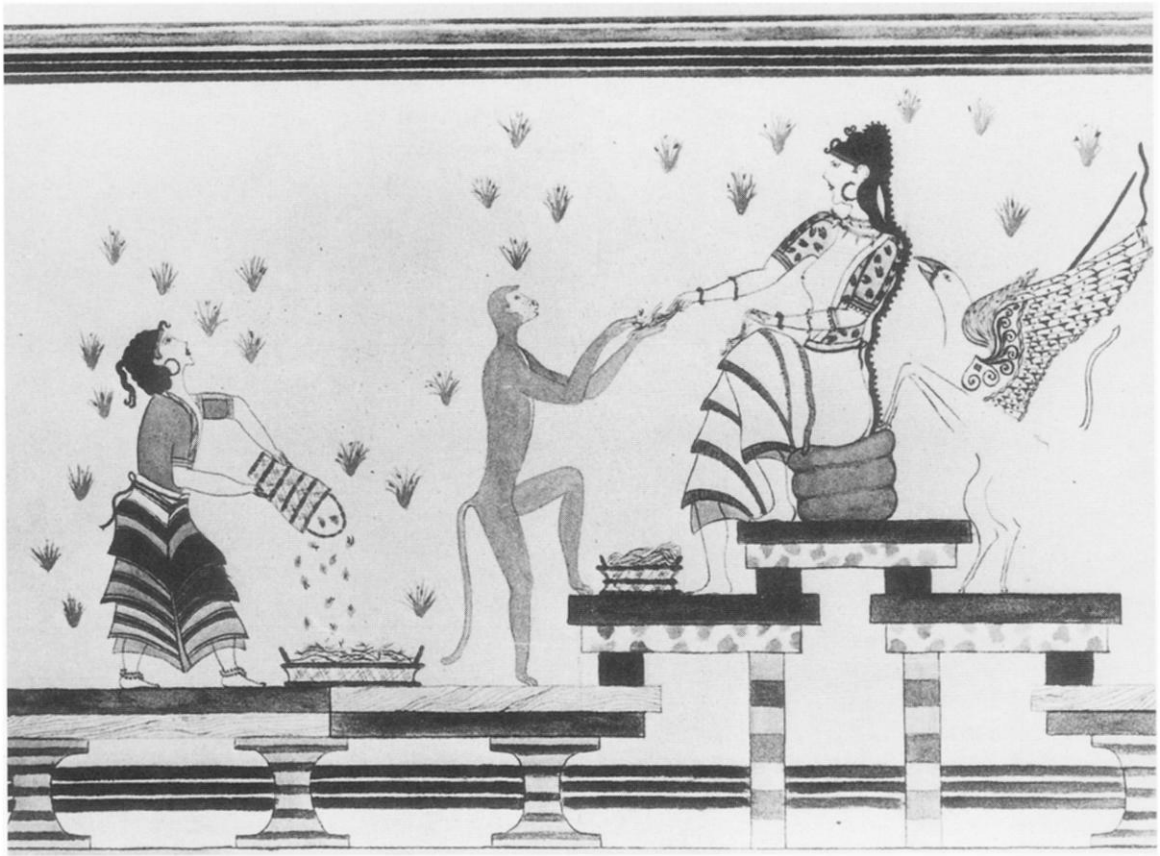

Fig. 15. Restored fresco from a room over the lustral basin in Xeste 3, Thera. (N. Marinatos in *TAW* III.1 [London 1990] 374, fig. 4)

Although chronologically distant, the Theran painting has affinities with the mural decoration of the Throne Room in the palace at Knossos, especially as it is considered here, as an integral part of its physical context. As I have discussed in an earlier publication,[63] there is a shared imagery between the Theran fresco and the painted room at Knossos, one that combines both the subject matter illustrated in the frescoes and the visual impact of the features of the room. Two drawings (figs. 15–16) help to illustrate this point. Benches occur in both cases: actual ones in stone at Knossos, painted ones at Thera. The benches flank a seat marked as special, either by the fact that it was central (the throne at Knossos), or because it was elevated (in the painting from Thera).[64] In the Theran fresco, the pedestals that support a plank or a board to form a bench assume the form of the well-known "waisted" altars. Four altars of this shape found together in the LM I building at Archanes may have also served as supports for such benches, which may have been set up in certain occasions in that building, perhaps in unroofed areas.[65] The benches at Knossos have no pedestals, possibly because they were built entirely in stone, while the Theran structure depicted was mainly made of wood, as is now clear from a recently published color illustration of

[63] Shaw (supra n. 38) 117–18, 120–21. The drawing in fig. 16 here combines information based on two drawings by Cameron (supra n. 54) 322, fig. 3 and 323, fig. 7, one a restoration, the other a detail of the fresco in back of the throne in the Throne Room at Knossos in its architectural setting. The palms seen in Cameron's restoration had been omitted in Gillièron's earlier reconstruction, even though at least one palm tree was still visible on the wall next to the throne when the room was excavated (see *PM* IV, 906, fig. 881). For an earlier version of the Throne Room fresco (without the palms), see also H. Reusch, "Zum Wandschmuck des Thronsaales in Knossos," in *Minoica und Homer* (Berlin 1958) pl. 6b.

[64] Perhaps the seat in the Theran fresco was also meant to be seen as central and the representation shows only a portion of the bench on the right, which thus looks shorter. Such structures may have been symmetrical, and intentionally reflected the appearance of the Minoan tripartite shrines.

[65] Shaw (supra n. 38) 120.

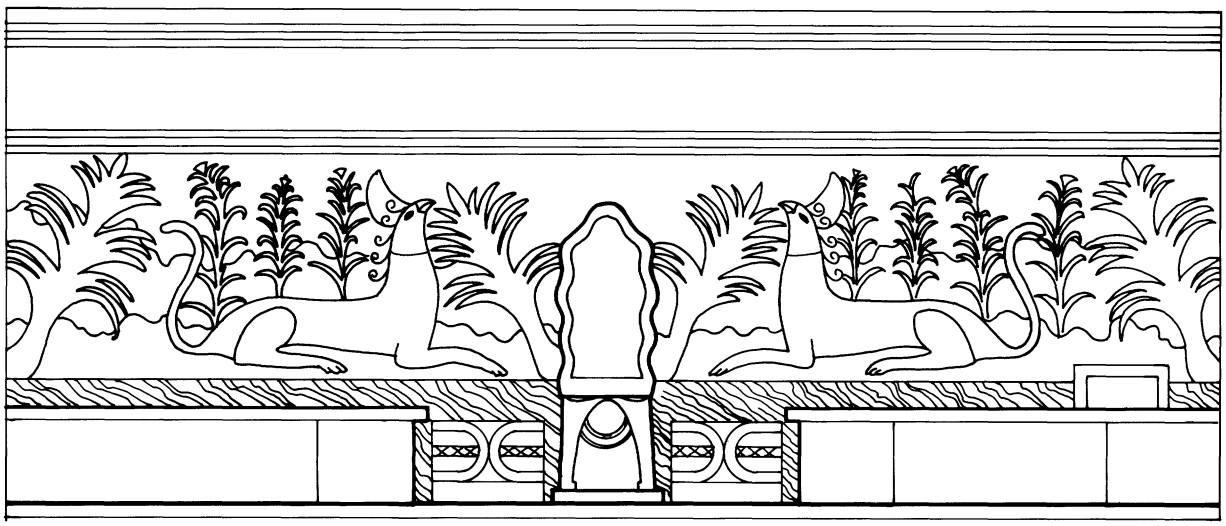

Fig. 16. Restored view of the Throne Room at Knossos. (Drawing by G. Bianco, adapted from M.A.S. Cameron in R. Hägg and N. Marinatos eds., *The Function of the Minoan Palaces* [Athens 1987] 322, fig. 3 and 323, fig. 7)

this detail.[66] Nevertheless, the symbol of the altar with incurved sides may still occur in the Throne Room at Knossos, if we agree with Evans's identification of two patterns painted on the wall on either side of the throne as two stylized altars. Amazingly, Evans offered this interpretation without the benefit of information now available in the Theran frescoes.[67]

To continue with correspondences between the Knossian Throne Room and the Theran fresco, the benches and the special seat appear against a floral backdrop in both cases. In the Theran fresco this is a field or meadow of crocus flowers. At Knossos it is a landscape of reeds and palms rising from rocky ground. Griffins, as protectors of the occupant of the special seat, appear in both occasions, as part of the scenery at Knossos and accompanying the seated goddess at Thera.

In a sense, at Knossos we seem to have a concrete and modified version of the painted bench and seat at Thera. Absent from Knossos are the monkey and the goddess. Various kinds of animals and monsters can serve as intermediaries between divinities and mortals, and this may be the reason for the lack of a monkey in the scene at Knossos. On the other hand, a crocus-gathering monkey appears in the fresco from the palace discussed above (fig. 5). As for the absence of a goddess at Knossos, it depends on who occupied the throne when the occasion arose, for the room was obviously set up for special occasions when a number of participants would gather. I tend to agree with H. Reusch's well-argued theory, proposed many years ago, that a priestess or a goddess sat on what I prefer to call "a seat of religious authority," rather than a throne, because of the term's misleading modern connotations of secular power and kingship.[68] The appearance or epiphany of such an individual would thus pull together even more closely the totality of images and symbols in the two rooms under consideration at Thera and at Knossos.

S. Mirié's important study has shown that the Throne Room (including the benches and other aspects of its plan) goes back to a much earlier period in the palace at Knossos.[69] In light of this interpretation, one might even consider the possibility that the Knossian fresco is closely linked to the symbolism of the room as defined in an earlier phase of its use. Conceivably, the fresco with the griffins and their exotic landscape may have had an iconographically

[66] Doumas (supra n. 1) pl. 122.

[67] The altars here are evoked rather abstractly by the negative spaces created between adjacent patterns in the form of half-ovals (see *PM* II, 607–608). At Knossos such "altars" are not shown in a functional role as pedestals, as they are in Theran frescoes. Their supportive role here may have been of a symbolic nature, conveyed by their being placed on either side of the throne and next to the benches.

[68] See Reusch (supra n. 63) 334–50. The idea that the Throne Room is where the epiphany of the goddess occurred finds support in a more recent study, W.-D. Niemeier, "Zur Deutung des Thronraumes im Palast von Knossos," *AM* 101 (1986) 63–95.

[69] S. Mirié, *Das Thronraumreal des Palastes von Knossos. Versuch einer Neuinterpretation seiner Entstehung und seiner Funktion* (Berlin 1979). This theory is supported by and further discussed in an illuminating way by Niemeier (supra n. 68).

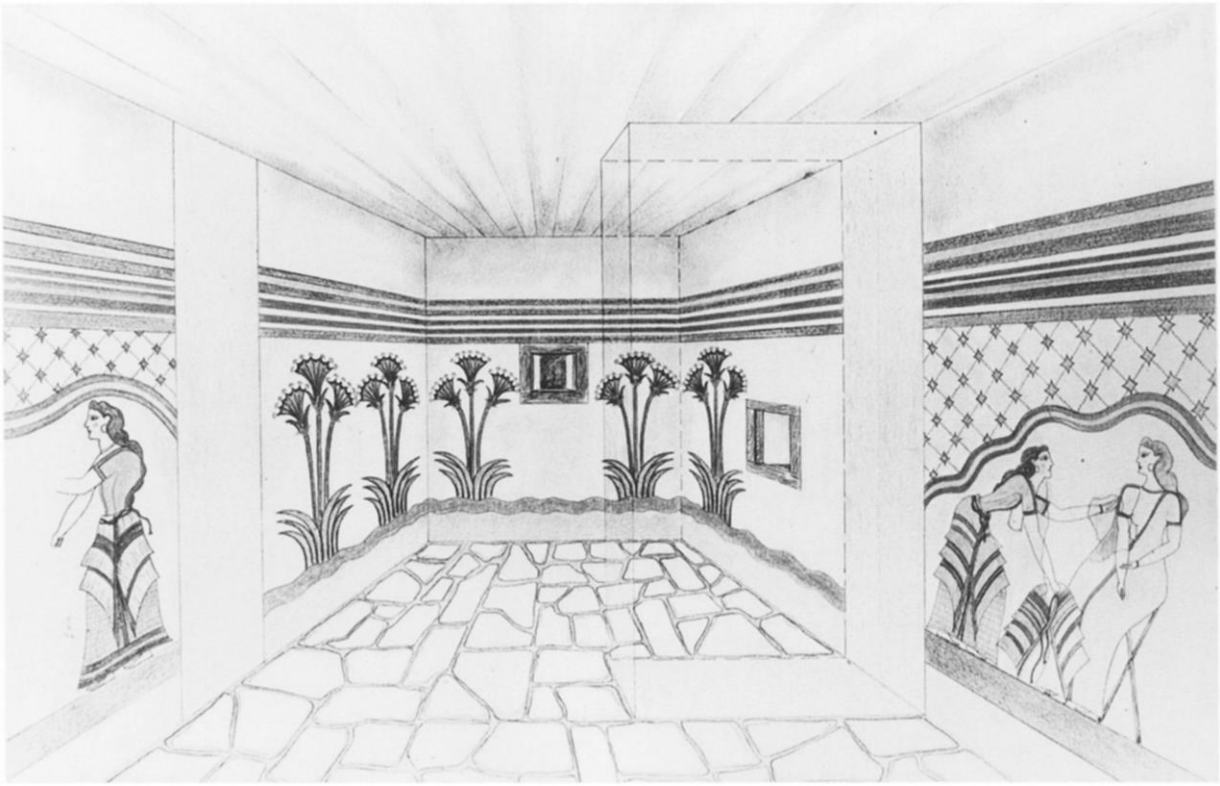

Fig. 17. Restored view of two painted rooms in the House of the Ladies, Thera. (Detail from *Art and Religion* 96, fig. 69)

similar predecessor, either specifically in the mural decoration in the room, or in themes prevalent in art in an earlier age, as is suggested from the painting from Thera.

What we may then have in the Throne Room at Knossos is a recollection of an ancestral ritual in which a structure like the one seen at Thera was set up in the open, either occasionally for special events or as a permanent fixture that was used periodically for religious ceremonies.[70] In the Throne Room at Knossos, the benches are built, and the painted landscape is symmetrical and formal in appearance and style, as is to be expected from its later date and palatial context. The difference in flora between the two cases clearly suggests a different natural setting. The landscape at Thera appears to be native, that at Knossos exotic and fantastic. Perhaps the Knossian fresco no longer represented a real place, but rather the idea of a floral setting. What is ultimately important is the Minoan or early Aegean character of the Throne Room, even at this late date. That the use of such a structure may not have been uncommon is seen from its depiction in seals and possibly in the fresco from the villa at Haghia Triadha (fig. 10).[71] In this fresco,

[70] Perhaps the presence of a tripartite shrine in the palace at Knossos is another case in which a structure that was usually set outdoors was adapted for use indoors and is incorporated in the architecture of the palace. The best representation in art of a tripartite shrine is the carved relief on the LM I Sanctuary Rhyton from the palace at Zakros. For a discussion of this elusive type of a Minoan shrine, see J.W. Shaw, "Evidence for the Minoan Tripartite Shrine," *AJA* 82 (1978) 429–48.

For a view that the building in the Zakros relief was not set on a mountain, but was rather an integral part of the architecture of the palace at Zakros, see E.F. Bloedow, "The 'Sanctuary Rhyton' from Zakros: What Do the Goats Mean?" *Annales d'archéologie égéenne de l'Université de Liège* (*Aegaeum* 6, Liège 1990) 66–67. Such a connection, however, does not seem to find support in the actual architecture of the palace of Zakros. The rocky ground and apparent remoteness of the building in the relief suggest that the shrine was set in a thoroughly wild landscape, a mountainside. Here again, strangely, only crocus flowers seem to grow. An interesting talk on the rendition of space in the landscape of the Zakros rhyton was recently given at the 93rd Annual AIA Meeting by A.P. Chapin, "The Sanctuary Rhyton from Kato Zakros and the Representation of Space in Aegean Art of the Bronze Age," *AJA* 96 (1992) 334 (abstract).

[71] The suggestion that such a structure originates in Minoan iconography was made in a recent study by N. Marinatos, who has studied the occurrence of the bench and seat arrangement in artistic representation, especially in seals: "Minoan-Cycladic Syncretism," in *TAW* III.1, 370–76, esp. 372–74. The structure, which Marinatos has suitably called "the platform of the goddess," does not appear in seals in association with floral settings. Perhaps the omission is due to the abbreviated character of depiction in such a medium.

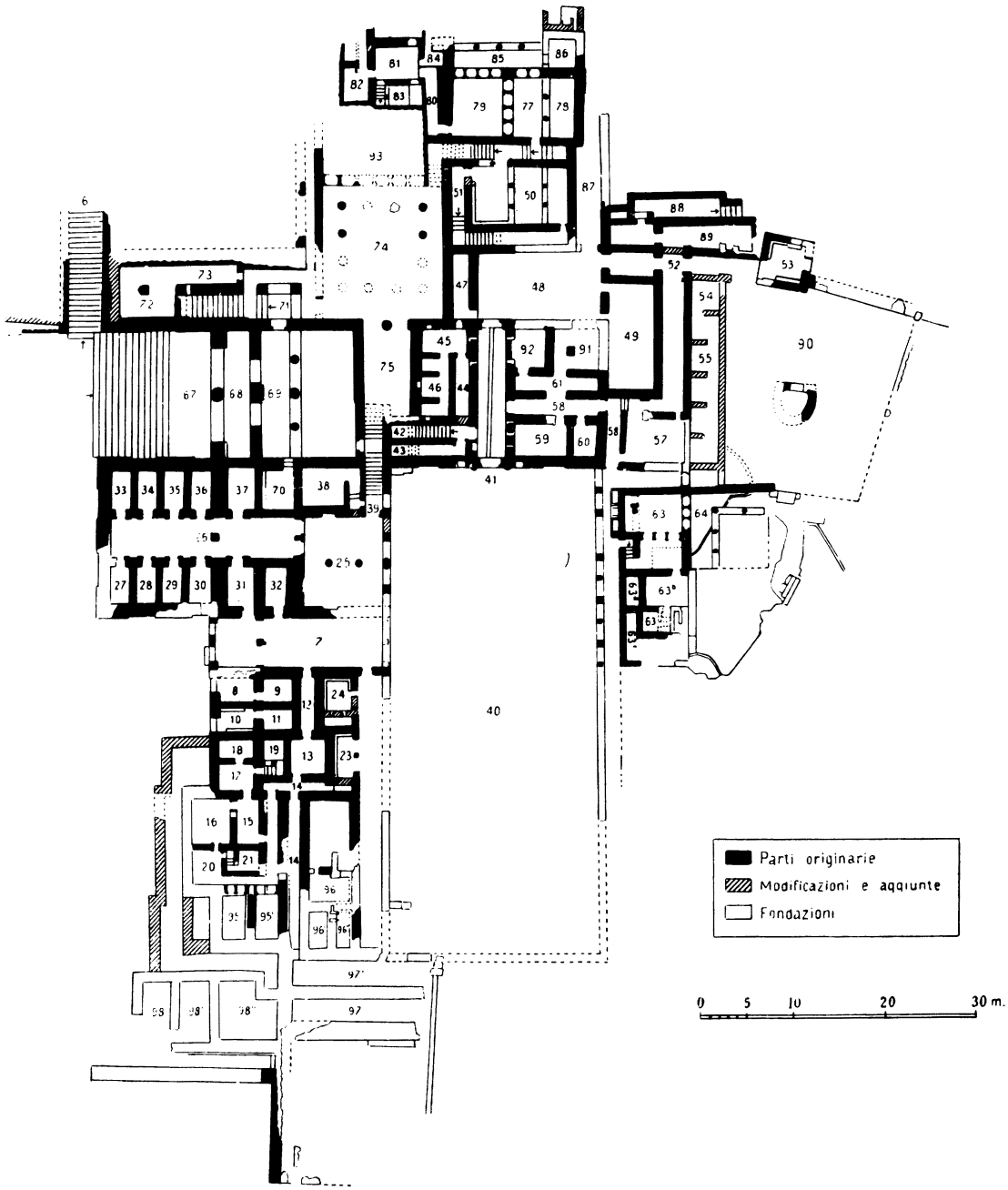

Fig. 18. Plan of the palace at Phaistos. (After *Festòs* II, 484, fig. 285)

a poorly preserved architectonic representation is in the center of the composition, once again associated with a woman or goddess, and once again placed within a floral setting.

In our search for connections between architectural and architectonic structures and the use of nature for their setting, the last example to be examined occurs in the House of the Ladies at Thera (fig. 17). Frescoes occur in two adjacent rooms: one depicting a ritual enacted in an indoor space, to judge from what appears to be a wall hanging with woven or embroidered patterns, the other a landscape with papyrus clumps rising from a ground rendered by wavy bands. It is with the latter that we are concerned, and once again, the question arises whether it represents selective cultivation of a religiously relevant plant (for papyrus was imported and had to be planted) or whether it is an imaginary landscape inhabited exclusively by symbolically appropriate flowers. Interesting is the sequence of indoor and outdoor settings in the representations of the two successive rooms. It seems to convey the idea of a room or a building set next to a floral setting, but whether cultivated or natural we cannot tell.

Fig. 19. View of rocky outcrop next to court 64 in the palace at Phaistos, from the south. (Photo J.W. Shaw)

ARCHITECTURE AND GARDENS

The idea that gardens may have occurred next to and as part of Minoan buildings is not novel. Sir Arthur Evans had thought that flowering plants may have been set in light wells in Minoan buildings and in the central courts of the palaces.[72] Other open spaces, like windows, now appear to have also been adorned with flowerpots or flower vases, as suggested by paintings of such items on the actual window jambs in the West House at Thera, already discussed. Excavators have upon occasion suggested gardens for their sites: N. Platon an orchard just southeast of the palace at Zakros, J.A. MacGillivray a possible garden between houses in the town of Palaikastro, and E. La Rosa a possible grove south of the Piazzale dei Sacelli at Haghia Triadha.[73]

It was, however, J. Walter Graham who first looked systematically for evidence of gardens in the context of his studies of Minoan architecture, and with special reference to the palaces. One of his interesting suggestions was that there were terraced gardens opening off porticoes. He restored such gardens outside the portico of the Hall of the Double Axes in the residential wing of the palace at Knossos, outside the portico in the north wing of the palace at Phaistos, and outside the portico at the north end of the west wing of the palace at Malia.[74] Graham suggested another garden at Phaistos, "along the edge of the steep slope to the valley" in the southeast corner of the east wing of the palace (fig. 18).[75] I would like to suggest that we can be more specific about the evidence in this case, and that there was a particular location that would have been perfect for a Minoan rock garden.

The feature concerned is a rocky outcrop that was intentionally incorporated into the landscaping of the palace (fig. 19). The area was surveyed by the author and Giuliana Bianco recently, and Bianco drew a plan and cross-section of the rock itself. Together, the drawings clarify the physical relationship between the rock and the adjacent architecture (figs. 18, 20).[76] The rock occupies an irregular area tucked in the corner formed between court 64 to the north and the complex of a lustral basin (63d) with a corridor and auxiliary spaces to the west. A rich deposit of ritual vessels and precious objects was found in the lustral basin.[77] The rock can be reached directly from the little court, but it is separated in part from the lustral basin complex by a wall. The only possible access from that

[72] *PM* III, 277–79.

[73] Some of these attributions are discussed with accompanying bibliographical references in Schäfer 85. For the information on Palaikastro and Haghia Triadha I would like to thank J.A. MacGillivray (personal communication) and E. La Rosa, who also supplied me with a reference to his published mention of the grove in *Kritiki Estia* 2 (1988) 330.

[74] J.W. Graham, *The Palaces of Crete,* rev. ed. (Princeton 1987) 87, 89, 91, 95, 123, and 241.

[75] Graham (supra n. 74) 91.

[76] The area was surveyed in the summer of 1992 by Giuliana Bianco with the help of the author. Permission to make a plan was kindly granted by the Scuola archeologica italiana di Atene and its director, A. Di Vita, and by the Greek Archaeological Service. I am also grateful to E. La Rosa for his encouragement and advice on this project.

[77] *Festòs* II, 171–78.

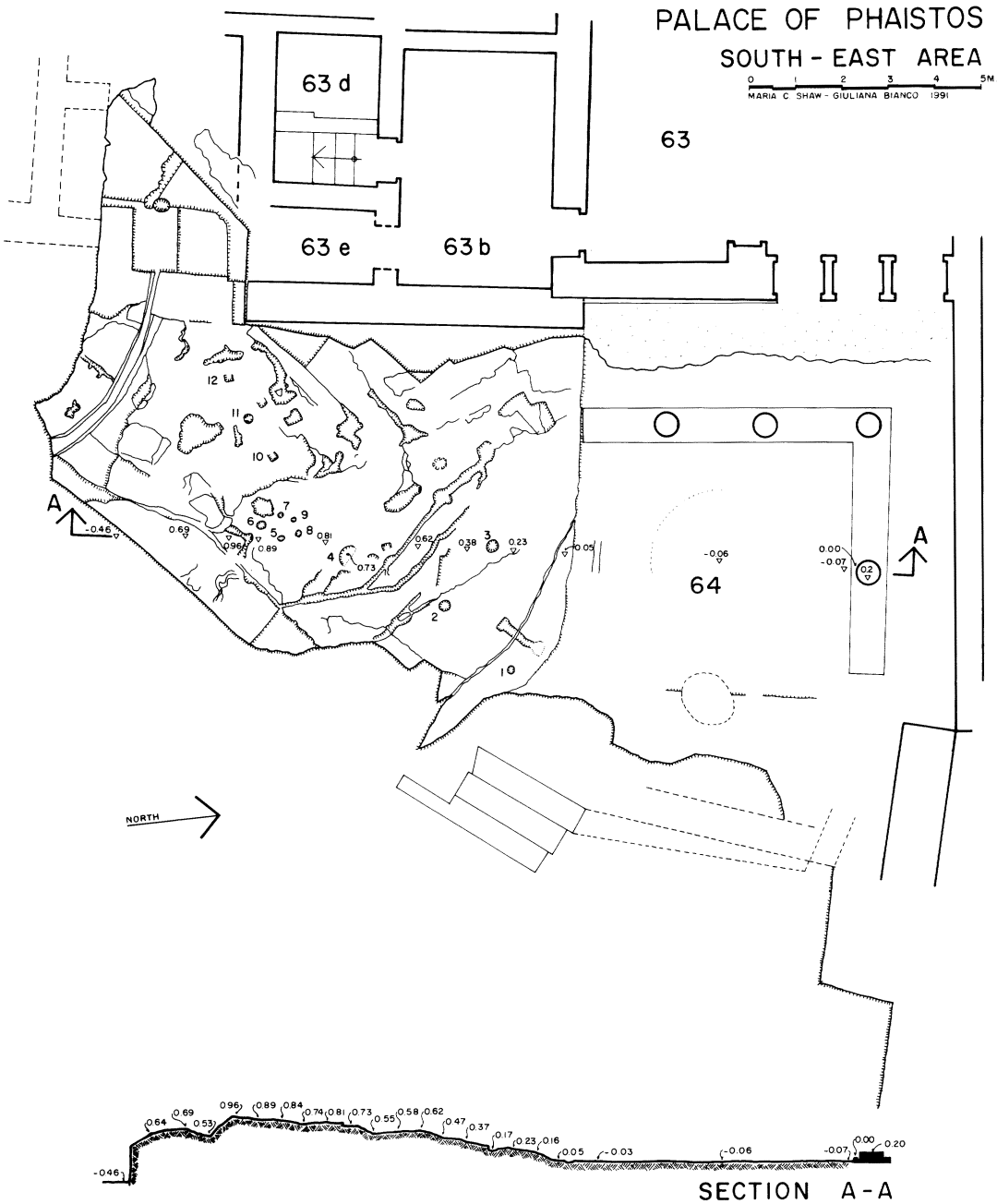

Fig. 20. Plan and section of rocky outcrop and adjacent architecture in the palace at Phaistos. (G. Bianco)

direction might have been through the south side of room 63e, but this is far from certain, for the wall is too destroyed to determine whether it had a door.

The rock was cut back and trimmed with the use of tools on several sides. In the southwest area, remnants of tooling are evident on the rock next to the walls on the west, including some rectangular cuttings that look like beddings for two to three building blocks. Perhaps the purpose of the cuttings, however, was simply to level the area, so that it could be used in conjunction with a drain that was cut diagonally through the south end of the rock. The Italian excavators interpreted space 63c, directly east of the lustral basin (63d), as a bathroom, the drain being used to carry water away.[78] Whether room 63c was a bathroom or whether there was a drain inside it can no longer be ascertained, again because much of its south wall is missing.

[78] *Festòs* II, 178–81.

Fig. 21. Holes and cracks in rocky outcrop depicted in figure 19. (Photo J.W. Shaw)

Further north, the rock was also cut in a straight line to define the south side of the little court, space 64 (fig. 20).[79] Indeed, the rock had originally extended further north and was cut back and leveled to make room for the court, the leveled part of the rock serving as the bedding for the court's floor. This is now destroyed, but it seems to have been once paved with a mixture of earth, plaster, and pebbles. The court was provided with an L-shaped portico that had three columns on the west and one column on the north, all set in a low stylobate built of limestone slabs. The portico would have provided shade and a unique point from which to contemplate the beautiful landscape unfolding before one's eyes to the east and south. From here were visible a large valley below and mountains beyond, for there was no further construction on this side where the hill slopes down steeply.

From the court and the portico one could gain direct access only to the west to the large Minoan hall 63, which in turn led through a series of pier and door partitions to the lustral basin complex. To the north of the court a wall blocked direct access to the rooms and other spaces of the northeast wing of the palace. It appears, then, that all the spaces described in connection with the court and portico formed a self-contained architectural unit that enjoyed a degree of privacy. On the southeast area three steps led down toward the hill slope.

[79] The straight line of the rock on the southeast side is probably accidental due to natural cleavage. Note, for instance, what may be another line of cleavage parallel to the edge. The rock, as the section shows (fig. 20), is at its highest along the edge with the vertical face.

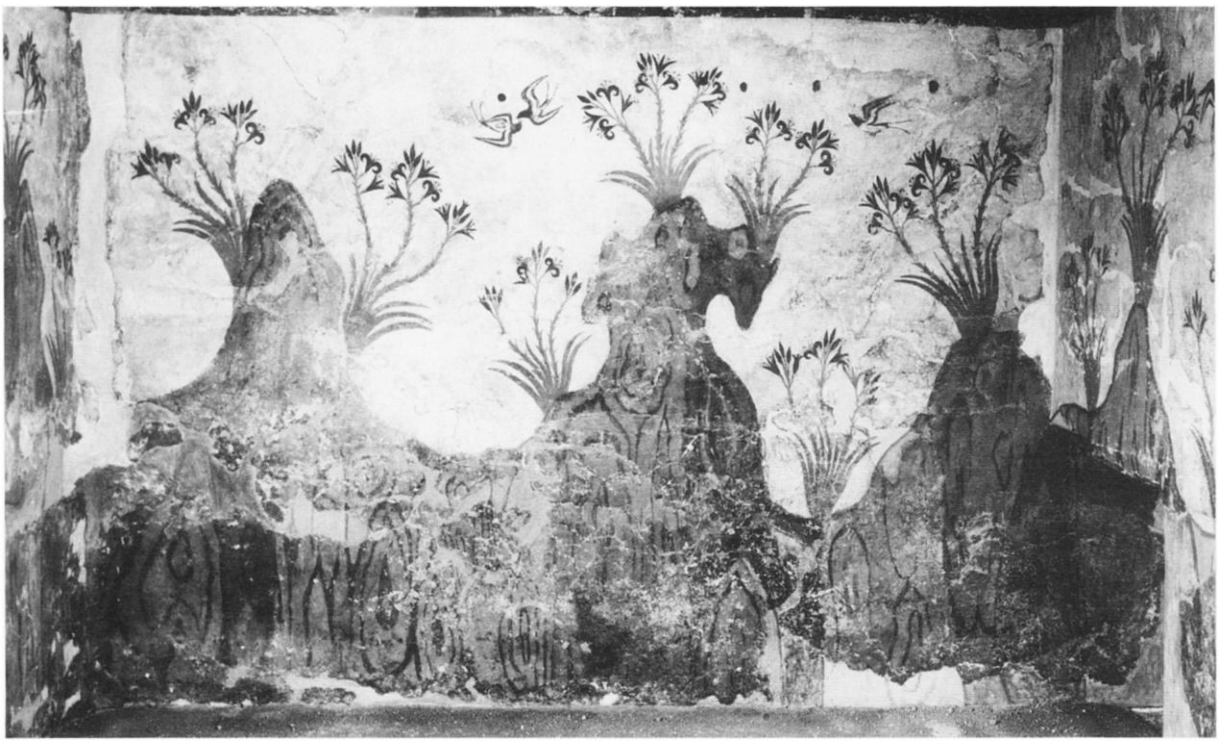

Fig. 22. Spring Fresco from Thera. (Courtesy TAPA)

The rock is now bare of soil, but this may be the result of energetic excavation and gradual erosion. Most interestingly, its surface is marked by roundish holes: some perhaps natural, but others almost certainly man-made, being relatively deep and cylindrical in shape. The holes were unevenly scattered, but were largely concentrated on a slope near the court (figs. 20–21). Typically, the rock is also marked by natural fissures where earth could accumulate. The varying sizes of the holes (mostly in the range of 10–30 cm wide and 6–10 cm deep),[80] as well as their uneven distribution, make it clear that they could not have supported a scaffolding, as Banti hesitatingly suggested, though one or two squarish ones may have had a comparable but undefinable function.[81] Possibly pots with planted flowers were placed in the larger and shallower holes.

Some of the holes themselves may have been used for planting bulb or corm plants.[82] R. Porter has advised me that wild saffron with its small corms requires holes at least 8–10 cm deep, and the domesticated variety 18–25 cm deep.[83] The size of the holes at Phaistos is such that clearly only wild crocus corms could have been accommodated, unless the ample width of the holes compensated for their relatively shallow depth (figs. 20–21). Other plants, such as miniature iris (*Iris unquicularis*) and fragrant violet (*Cifola odorata*), ivy, and aromatic herbs, could also have been planted.[84] One concern of some of my botanical advisors, however, was the matter of water-

[80] The main holes have been labeled with Arabic numerals in the plan here (fig. 20). A few were drawn, but not numbered, and are probably natural. The measurements of those numbered are given in centimeters (length × width × depth): 1) 17 × 14.5 × 10; 2) 24 × 21 × 10–20; 3) 24 × 27 × 1–6; 4) 41 × 30 × 6; 5) 15 × 12 × 9–15; 6) 18 × 14 × 10–12; 7) 10 × 10 × 5–6; 8) 10 × 8 × 4.5; 9) 10 × 10 × 5; 10) 20 × 20 × 10; 11) 19 × 20 × 10; and 12) 15 × 18 × 0–8.

[81] *Festòs* II, 186. A well that was cut into the court is of unknown date. The presence of Middle Minoan pottery in it suggests that this was the well's actual date, and it may have been reused in Hellenistic times, for there is evidence for use in the larger area during that period (*Festòs* II, 183–85).

[82] I have consulted a number of botanists and horticulturalists on this matter. I would like to express my thanks to Reeves's Nursery in Woodbridge, Ontario, O. Rackham (for his letter of 1 January 1991), and especially Ray Porter (correspondence mainly in the spring of 1991).

[83] Letter of 17 May 1991.

[84] As suggested to me by R. Porter (letter of 29 September 1991).

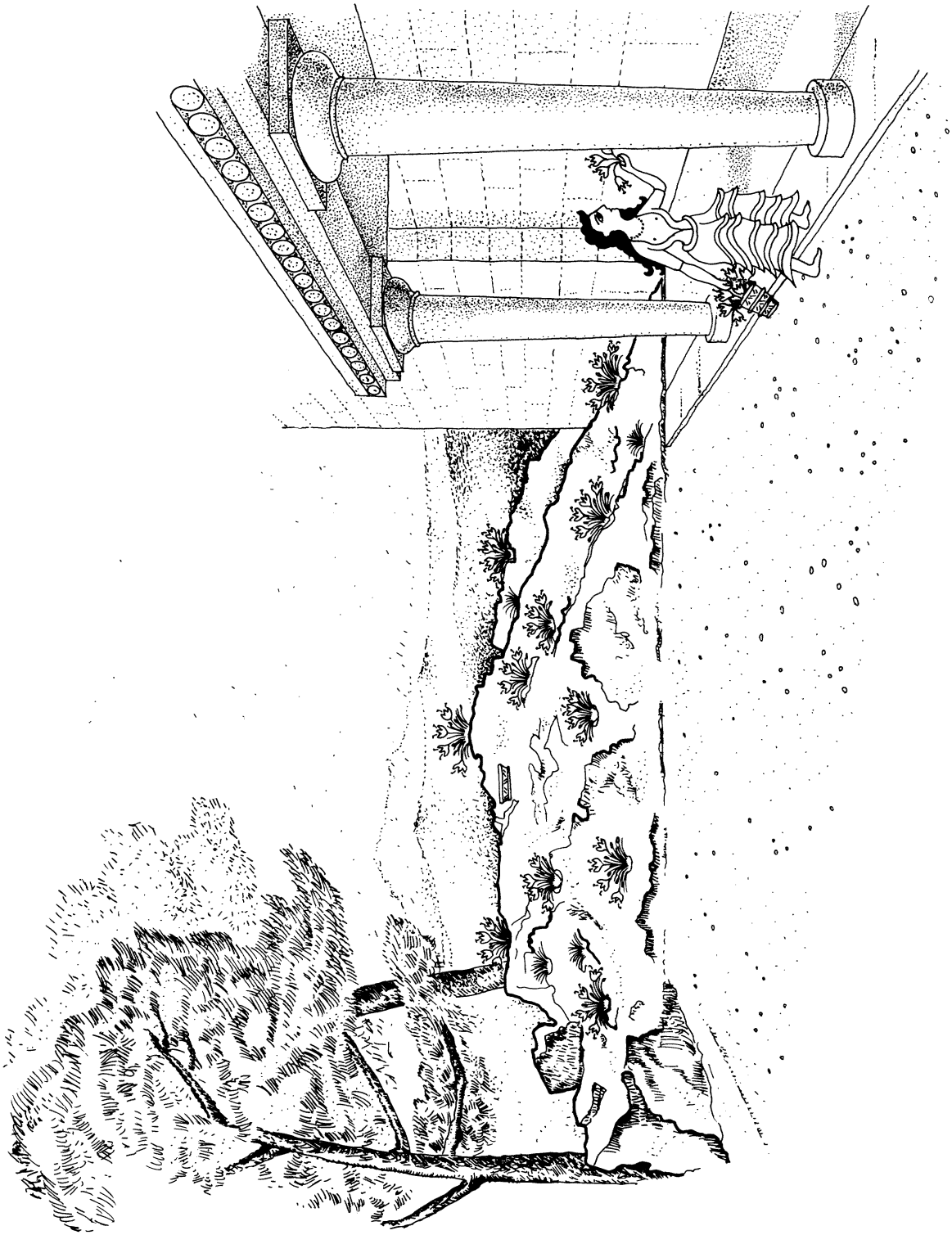

Fig. 23. Tentative restoration of a rock garden in the palace at Phaistos. (M.C. Shaw and G. Bianco)

logging. Such a problem would be eliminated to some extent, I was told, if the bulbs were removed and renewed seasonally. The plants could have first been forced indoors in pots and then brought outside. Some of the holes are shallower on one side and many are on a slant, since they are on a slope, which would have helped with drainage, as would the possible use of gravel at the bottom of the holes. Perhaps waterlogging was not such a problem, given the relatively dry Cretan climate and the fact that the rock itself is rather porous.

The planting of varieties of wildflowers, especially for religious purposes, is practiced even today. R. Porter called to my attention, for instance, the planting of white wild lilies at Easter time in Greece today.[85] When we turn to Minoan Crete with its obvious connections between flowers and ritual, the likelihood increases that the Minoans also planted wild and other flowers on special occasions. At Phaistos wild and other flowers that were seasonally changed may have been cultivated. The use and deliberate exposure of the rock in the court would thus be partly explained. Lilies, possibly along with other flowers, could have been planted in other Minoan rock gardens that may have escaped notice (at Phaistos the holes were too small for the large bulbs of lilies). The Spring Fresco, from room D2 in one of the houses at Thera (fig. 22), depicts only lilies gracefully rising from the rock and helps us visualize what such a garden might have looked like. The garden suggested to have existed at Phaistos is shown in our restoration (fig. 23) as if planted only with saffron crocus, as it might have appeared in autumn. Perhaps selective cultivation was intended to emphasize the one plant that Minoans considered expressive of the essence of a season: lilies for spring, saffron crocus for fall.

Given the particular location of the garden at Phaistos, it is also tempting to think that it might have been connected symbolically with the lustral basin nearby, and that it may have had a religious meaning, in addition to being a pleasure to the eyes. If so, it would have been a sacred garden that was also cultivated, one in which the naturalness of the original landscape was largely maintained. Had such a garden been portrayed in a fresco, it might well have appeared not as a real garden, but as an untamed landscape, especially when compared with the still unique formal garden shown in the Amnisos fresco.

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[85] Personal communication, 17 May 1991.