

The seascape in Aegean Prehistory

Edited by *Giorgos Vavouranakis*

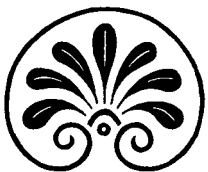


Monographs of the Danish Institute at Athens
Volume 14

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Giorgos Vavouranakis



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*To Matti Egon,
– a distinguished representative of Greek maritime culture*

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The seascape in Aegean Prehistory
Monographs of the Danish Institute at Athens
Volume 14

General Editor: Erik Hallager
Graphic design: Erik Hallager
Printed at Narayana Press

Printed in Denmark on permanent paper
conforming to ANSI Z 39.48-1992

The publication was sponsored by:
Institute for Aegean Prehistory
Cypriot Ministry of Education and Culture
Matti Egon
The Psycha Foundation
Konsul Georg Jorck og hustru Emma Jorck's Fond

ISBN: 978-87-7934-571-3

Distributed by:
AARHUS UNIVERSITY PRESS
Langelandsgade 177
DK-8200 Århus N
www.unipress.dk

Gazelle Book Services Ltd.
White Cross Mills, Hightown
Lancaster LA1 4XS, England
www.gazellebooks.com

The David Brown Book Company (DBBC)
P.O. Box 511
Oakville, CT. 06779, USA
www.davidbrownbookco.uk

Front cover:
Motif from lost Mochlos ring
Drawing G. Vavouranakis with the assistance of G. Manginis

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A view from the sea*

John G. Younger

The West House frescoes, Akrotiri, Thera: a description and interpretation

The eruption of the volcano of Thera, at the end of the late 17th century BC,¹ preserved the harbor town, now known as Akrotiri (Fig. 1), on its south coast. Its buildings still stand to two storeys and their fresco decorations are well preserved. Some of the most impressive come from the upper storey of the West House (Fig. 2).² Two rooms contained frescoes: room 5, entered from the foyer room 3, had two life-sized fisherboys and a long miniature frieze just below the ceiling (at the *epikrinitis* level) showing ships and cityscapes; and room 4, a more private room south of room 5, had paintings of a life-sized girl with an incense burner and ship cabins (*ikriai*).

Visitors entering room 5 (middle of the east wall) would have first seen two life-sized paintings in the southwest and northeast corners of the room. Two nude fisherboys hold strings of dolphin fish and tuna;³ they face in to the windows and the north corner.⁴ Above them is the miniature frieze that encircles the room;⁵ again visitors standing in the entrance would have easily read the frieze from left to right, first townscapes and other vignettes spreading above the west and north walls and continuing slightly, with one townscape (Town 1), to spill onto the east wall above the door to a make-shift closet. Then a separate episode, the Nilotic fresco, spanned the rest of the east wall, above the heads of our visitors. In the south wall, above the doorway leading into room 4 and over a pair of cupboards, was the Naval Procession fresco.

Much of the frieze has survived fairly well:⁶ the Meeting on the Hill and other scenes (north wall), the Nilotic fresco (east), and the Naval Procession (south); little has survived of Town I over the west wall.

The surviving fresco on the north wall is complicated (Fig. 3):⁷ left to right, a large ship (like some in the Naval Procession) and a boat, men gathered ('Meeting') on a hill, herdsman with cattle, men gathered above (beyond) a building, pots at a well, two women carrying waterjars on their head, a man driving sheep from a corral

* The title comes from Morgan 1988, 32. She writes that the Naval Procession frieze in the West House, Akrotiri, 'offers more of a total view of the land than The Landscape. It is a view 'from the sea', one which any traveller in the southern Aegean would recognize'. Also see Shaw 2000. Many of the points discussed here are also touched on in Press 1991 and Renfrew 2000. I am grateful to Giorgos Vavouranakis for the invitation to contribute to this volume, his patience, and his deep knowledge of theory. I am grateful too for his comments, those of the anonymous reader, and those of Erik Hallager. I grew up near the sea and thinking about it has been most satisfying.

¹ Manning *et al.* 2006.

² Doumas 1992, 44-97; Doumas 2005; N. Marinatos 1984; Morgan 1988; Televantou 1994. Although the building is oriented northwest to southeast, it is conventional to label the walls as if the building were oriented to the north; the main entrance to room 5 is therefore in the middle of the east wall.

³ Economides 2000; and Mylona 2000.

⁴ In the northeast window was found the elegant plaster altar; N. Marinatos 1984, fold-out fig. 17.

⁵ Televantou 1994, fold-out drawings 9-13.

⁶ Televantou 1994, 187-201: west frieze, Town I (color pl. 25); north frieze, the Meeting on the Hill, shipwreck, rural scenes, soldiers, Town II (color pls. 26-44); east frieze, Town III and the Nilotic frieze (color pls. 45-53b); south frieze, Town IV, Naval Procession, and Town V (color pls. 54-70b).

⁷ Televantou 1994, fold-out drawing 1.

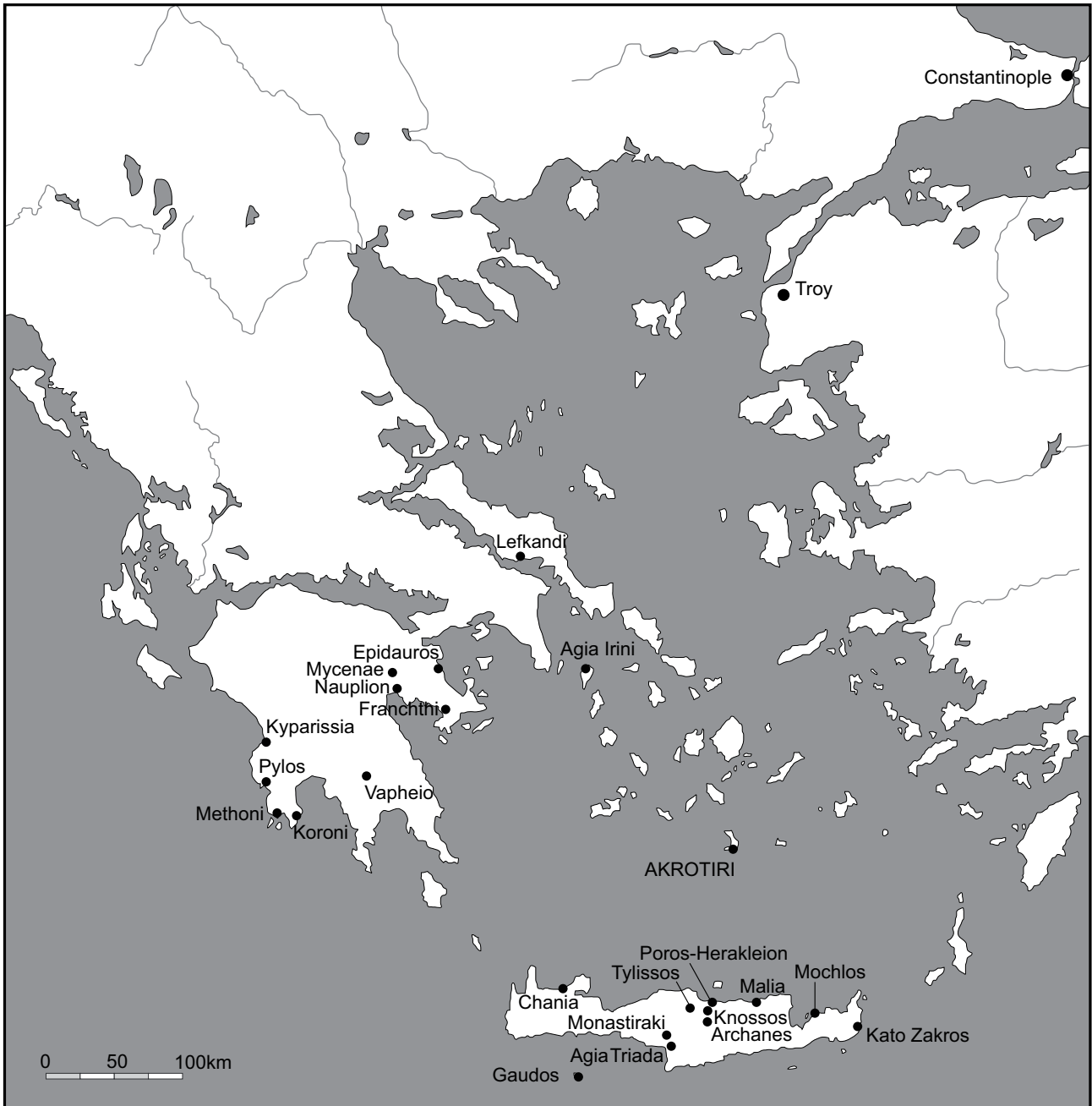


Fig. 1. Map of the southern Aegean with Akrotiri and other main sites and places mentioned in the text (basic map after Daniel Dalet/ d-maps.com; modified by G. Vavouranakis).

around a tree, another man leading goats to it, and near the shore a line of marching warriors wearing boar's tusk helmets and carrying lances, swords, and tower shields toward a town. Beyond the warriors is Town II with buildings on a hill and on the coast, the latter with a series of triangular projections down one wall (a fort?). And below all this is the sea, on which are at least five ships, but in it (below

the women watercarriers) nude men flounder, probably drowning from a shipwreck; they have a distinctive tufted hairstyle and one of them carries an ostrich-wing shield; Herodotos would identify these as the Libyan Makai.⁸

⁸ S. Marinatos 1974, 40-1, 44-5; *Hdt.* IV.175.

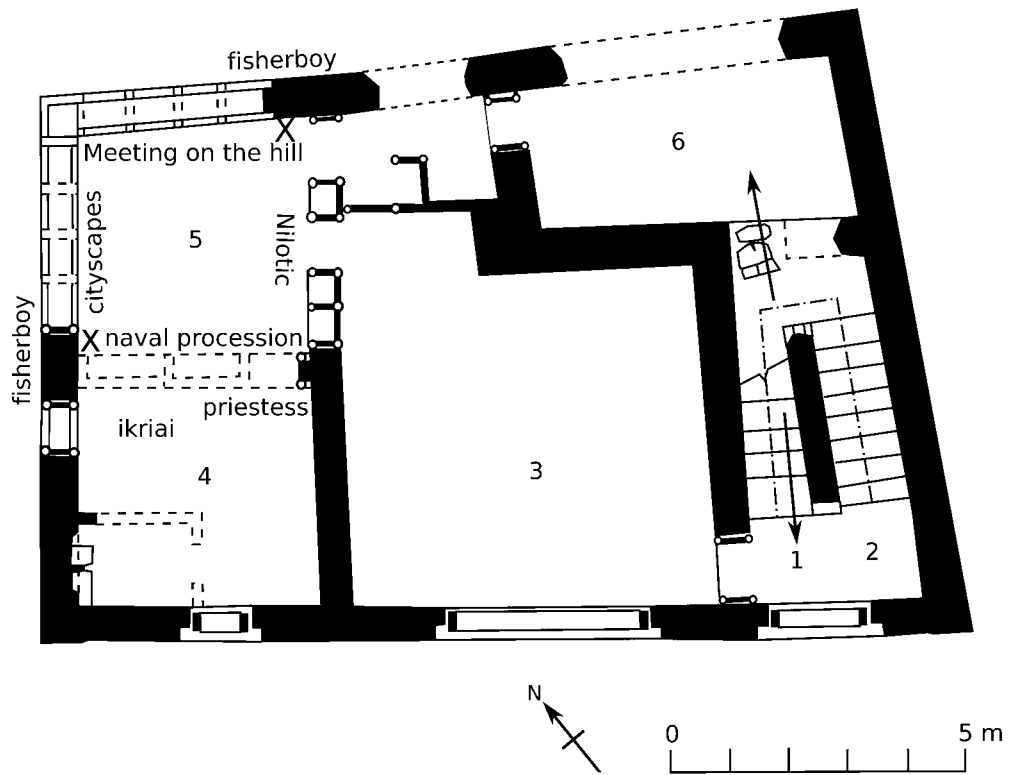


Fig. 2. Labeled plan of the upper storey of the West House, Akrotiri (after Morgan 1988, figs. 1 & 2, and Televantou 1994, fold-out plan 9; modified by the author and redrawn by G. Vavouranakis).

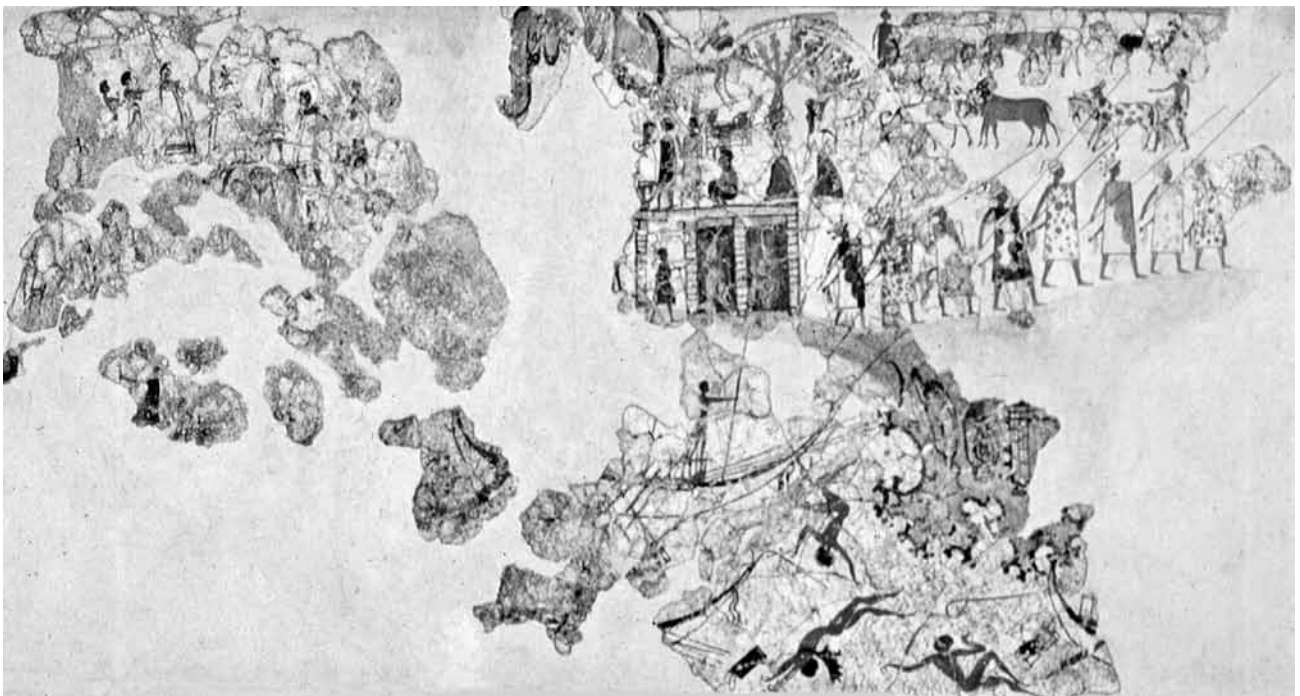


Fig. 3. West House, Akrotiri, part of the north fresco ('Meeting on the Hill') (modified from Doumas 1992, pls. 26-29).



Fig. 4. West House, Akrotiri, part of the south fresco ('Naval Procession'), Arrival Town (modified from Doumas 1992, pl. 38).

The Nilotic fresco that survives on the east wall⁹ is slightly shorter than the rest of the fresco, and half as high. Through it runs a wavy river flanked by palms, reeds, and 'easter egg' rocks, colorful boulders that are a hallmark of Minoan riverine scenes.¹⁰ Along the river a feline (lioness?) hunts waterfowl, and a griffin in flying gallop chases a deer (?) on the other side of the river.

Although this room's frieze is unique in several aspects, most of the individual elements are known from other media.¹¹ The shipwrecked sailors recur on fragments of a niello dagger from the Vapheio Tholos; soldiers also march along the coast on fragments of a stone vase from Epidauros; and Vapheio cup A presents a corral-like net for ensnaring bulls.

Other elements are common enough to be *topoi*. *Topoi* consist of frequently repeated scenes; they contribute to an official art, one that was meant to reinforce society and social control. They constitute the building blocks of the Aegean or Minoan symbolic self-view, a symbolic reality that is 'more or less equivalent to "collective understandings" or "social attitudes"'.¹²

Townscapes are common enough to comprise such a *topos*: the Town Mosaic from Knossos, the Silver Siege rhyton from Mycenae, sealings from Chania (*CMS VS*, 1A, no. 142) and Kato Zakros (*CMS II*, 8, nos. 218, 219), and frescoes from Agia Irini, Tyllissos, and the Mycenae Megaron all present individual towns. West House Towns I, II and III, however, are odd: they have isolated, triangular projections, painted solid black, atop their walls, while Town II also has a series of such projections down the side of one wall (perhaps to hinder a siege).¹³

The Nilotic fresco, in its entirety, also includes *topoi*: the river and felines hunting waterfowl occur on a niello dagger from Shaft Grave IV, and a griffin runs in flying gallop on a sword from Shaft Grave V.¹⁴

In the Naval Procession on the south wall two headlands jut from either side toward the middle and on each is a cityscape.¹⁵ Between them is the open sea, spreading also to the top and bottom of the fresco with ships and boats moving to our right; among the ships cavort dolphins. The Departure town (Town IV, at our left) consists of a cluster of buildings with a gate by a shore lined with reeds. Men stand looking at the ships. A small stream surrounds the town¹⁶ and connects to another stream at the top left of the fresco, where a lion hunts stags. This stream seems to lead to the Nilotic fresco on the east wall. The Arrival town (Town V, at our right) has a city wall and a large gate; Horns of Consecration top several walls. Both men

⁹ Televantou 1994, fold-out drawing 2.

¹⁰ See the Partridge fresco from the Caravanserai at Knossos (Immerwahr 1990, 174 Kn No. 20).

¹¹ Morgan 1988, 150-4.

¹² Knappett 2005, 4. Cf. Lacan's symbolic reality, the rules of society; Žižek 2007, chap. 2.

¹³ Televantou 1994, 265-7, compares these to projections atop other buildings in Aegean art, but notes eventually that their singular isolation and solid, triangular shape are unique.

¹⁴ Niello dagger NMA 765 (Marinatos & Hirmer 1960, color pls. XXXV top, XXXVII top); griffin sword NMA 747 (Karo 1930, pls. XCI, XCII).

¹⁵ Televantou 1994, fold-out fig. 3.

¹⁶ Streams that run year round in the Cyclades are rare. The most famous is the Inopos on Delos that ends today in a marsh, much like the Perissos in Naxos.

and women watch the fleet advance. Two women and a male child (Fig. 4) are on a parapet at the extreme left of the town; the two women wave to the approaching fleet. Below, youths, some nude, some in loincloths, stand on solid ground, perhaps a wharf, while other nude youths run along the top of the ridge at upper left to a small cluster of buildings, a look-out.

There is a variety of vessels in the Naval Procession fresco: canoes, small boats, sailboats, and elaborate, paddled ships. In the middle of the strait, one vessel is the most impressive: it has a lion-aegis stern, necklace-like rigging, sequin-like decorations on the high prow, and niello-like decorations on the hull (lions running in flying gallop). Eight (?) pairs of men sit cloaked beneath a canopy from which hang their helmets; a man (captain of the ship? admiral of the fleet?)¹⁷ sits in a separate stern cabin, in front of which a pilot holds a steering oar; and some 21 paddlers (therefore a total of 42?) bend over the gunwale.¹⁸

In back of this principal ship is a second, almost as grand; it lacks only the necklace-like rigging. In front of the pilot a youth stands with arms crossed, perhaps beating out the rhythm for the paddlers.¹⁹ Four other ships in the procession have cabins and stern and prow decorations; these too are paddled.

The occasion of the Naval Procession fresco has been debated but it may celebrate the opening of a conventional sailing season in the spring – certainly the decorative rigging and ornamentation imply a festive occasion, one that probably recurred.²⁰ I am reminded that the Athenians celebrated Theseus's departure on 6 Heketeria (late April) and return on 7 Pyanopsion (late October); these dates could refer to the opening and closing of a similarly conventional sailing season.²¹ I say 'conventional' because in reality, boats sailed and still sail the Aegean at all times of the year – the sea may be dangerous, but it facilitates communication.²²

The length of the large boats and number of paddlers may identify them as longboats suitable for hunting tuna or other large fish,²³ to which the frescoes of the two fisherboys with their catch also refer. It has been pointed out that the larger boats are toward the top of the fresco, and this position implies that these are farther out at sea – the

viewpoint of the Naval Procession's artist therefore may have been from inside the caldera of Thera.²⁴

While the occasion of the Naval Procession may have been specific, that same specific moment does not seem to apply to the other cityscapes and events depicted on the west and north walls (the Meeting on the Hill, warriors, drowning men). Instead, the entire miniature fresco of room 5 should convey a wider narrative with a long timeline.²⁵ The individual vignettes could then refer to adventures during a sea voyage, identifying landmarks, both familiar and strange, and celebrating the triumphant return of the sailors.²⁶

Besides the sense of familiarity with some elements in the West House frieze, and the comfort these may have given its audience, there is another striking familiarity, the opposition of some of the scenes. They are not, as has been remarked, unconnected.²⁷ The gay flotilla and leaping dolphins contrast sharply with the sober watercarriers and

¹⁷ S. Marinatos 1974, 43, 54, opts for 'admiral' of the fleet, and for narrative purposes I shall adopt this identification.

¹⁸ Marangou 1990. Broodbank 2000, p. 343 n. 3, comments that the ships 'are being propelled over what is clearly a short distance by swarms of paddlers (not rowers) in a manner similar to the technique required for an EBA longboat some 500 or more years earlier' and he wonders about this 'curation of archaisms'. Forty men row the impressive ship on the Late Geometric bathing dish ('louterion') in the British Museum (Langdon 2008, 21 figs. 1.1-3).

¹⁹ Morgan 1988, 118. Younger 1998, 46: contemporary Egyptian 'chironomists' directed singing and instrumental music.

²⁰ Morgan 1988, 161-2.

²¹ Broodbank 2000, 94-6; also Lambrou-Phillipson 1991, 12.

²² Davis 1999; Berg 2007, xv & 19-22, points out that it is easier to go by sea from one end of a Cycladic island to the other than it is to go by land.

²³ Broodbank 2000, 256-8; also Koutsouflakis 1999.

²⁴ Strasser 2005; Strasser 2010 forthcoming. Compare Shaw & Luton 2000.

²⁵ Dumas 2005, 74. Morgan (1988, 165) comes to the conclusion that the vegetation in the frieze refers to the months of May to June. This is hardly surprising; what would be surprising would be a painting that refers to winter.

²⁶ N. Marinatos 2000, 907-8; Shaw 2000, 269; and Televantou 1994, 337-8. Cf. Gell's discussion (1998, 248-9) of reality and art objects as stopped time, the realized moments of discontinuity in time's continuous flow.

²⁷ Morgan 1988, 150.

herders, while they in turn contrast sharply with the marching warriors;²⁸ the orderly confrontation of the Meeting contrasts with the scatter of drowning sailors below; and the departure Town IV is of course shabbier than the fancier arrival Town V. Such contrasts are the stuff of literature. On other examples of Aegean art we see contrasting similes: as lions chase their prey so men run down their enemy (stele NMA 1427 found over Mycenae Shaft Grave V) or even hunt the lions themselves (the two sides of niello dagger NMA 394 found in Mycenae Shaft Grave IV).²⁹ I am reminded of similar structuralism in the ‘Shield of Achilles’ (*Il.* 18.478–617, esp. 509–26), the opposition of war and peace: war leaders in council, warriors and herders, lions and cattle. One could stand in the room and narrate the frieze as a moralizing *ecphrasis*.

What part does the Nilotic fresco with griffin and lions play? Scholars assume that, because of the palms, lion, and griffin, this world is exotic to the Aegean, an ‘other’ world apart from the townscapes. There have been long-standing debates, however, as to whether palms and lions are instead native to the Aegean,³⁰ but we all know that griffins are imaginary. We all ‘know’ this, but did the Aegeans? From the fact that one is depicted leashed to a real window in Xeste 3, I assume that the Aegean artist and audience thought griffins were as real as the goddess they attend. Medieval Europeans thought unicorns were real –they had physical evidence for them, the tusks of the narwhal brought back from exotic expeditions.³¹ Likewise, it is possible the Aegeans thought griffins were real because they also had physical evidence for them, the giant eggs (ostrich eggs to us) that they imported from Egypt.³² Late in the Bronze Age griffins are depicted with babies in nests, so the Aegeans may have thought griffins laid eggs and raised griffin chicks.³³

Let us assume therefore that the Nilotic fresco merely presents an exotic world, a world that few Aegeans actually saw (palms, felines, large rivers) and therefore could embellish with further exoticisms (griffins) that they did not see but could imagine due to the large eggs (‘griffin’ eggs) that implied their existence.

What then would be the narrative function of the Nilotic fresco? The Nilotic section forms only

an episode in the miniature frieze, but from its placement (on the east wall directly following the adventures detailed over the west and north walls and preceding the south wall’s Naval Procession), it could be read as the final episode, preliminary (ante-climax) to the fleet’s home-coming. Its narrative position and its exotic character have parallels in our earliest Greek travel literature. The end of Menelaus’s *nostos* is signaled by his side-trip to an island off the coast of Egypt where he battles the ‘Old Man of the Sea’ in order to learn the whereabouts of the ‘true’ Helen (*Hom. Od.* 4.410–425). And Odysseus’s voyage to the fantastic land of the Phaiacians precedes his actual home-coming to Ithaca (*Hom. Od.* 6–7, 13). We may even assume that such fantastic elements, conveying to us the danger of the ultimate stage of the journey and the despair *in extremis* of the hero, only heighten the exhilaration of a safe return.³⁴

It is thus possible to incorporate all the elements of the West House frieze into a holistic interpretation: it represents a ‘real’ voyage taken by real people, who traveled amongst distant lands and experienced dangerous adventures, the last understandably climactic before the joy and celebration of a safe return.

²⁸ Compare Renfrew 2000, 136–7.

²⁹ Marinatos & Hirmer 1960, color pls. XXXV & XXXVI and B/W pl. 146, respectively.

³⁰ Palms: Morgan 1988, 24–8; lions: Thomas 2004.

³¹ Pluskowski 2004.

³² Rehak 1994, 83. Ostrich egg imports, Sakellarakis 1990.

³³ Adult griffins: with chicks in a nest on the pyxis from Lefkandi (Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, no. XI 91, 144 discussion; also Demakopoulou 1988, 128 no. 68), and with chicks above them on a Pylos sealing (*CMS I* no. 304). Compare the large Archaic bronze plate from Olympia which depicts a mother griffin and her chick (Hampe & Jantzen, 1936–7, 90–2, pls. 34, 35). There is only one other Bronze Age female monster depicted with her infant: on the fragment of a krater also from Lefkandi (Vermeule & Karageorghis 1982, no. XI 65), a mother sphinx tends her young.

³⁴ All three episodes (Menelaus’s wrestling match, Odysseus’s stay in Scheria, and the Nilotic scene) could illustrate situations 14 and 15 (magic and guidance in overcoming difficulty) in Propp’s schema of folktales (1984); these situations must precede the homecoming, situation 20, but not necessarily directly (the intervening situations do not need to occur in Propp’s schema; they are simply elaborations).

As a holistic narrative, the West House Miniature Fresco may find parallels in a miniature fresco recently found at Tel Kabri in Israel: two small boats move below a cape toward a town with buildings and people standing on their roofs.³⁵ This discovery tempts me to imagine that a prehistoric ‘Odyssey’ was already a *topos* in the eastern Mediterranean.³⁶

Cartography: itineraries, maps, and portolans

In its ribbon-like layout, the West House miniature fresco resembles a rolled-out, illustrated map, identifying towns, surrounding landscapes, and coastal regions. In concept, and perhaps in fact, such maps may have existed in the Late Bronze Age.

Until recently, circumstantial evidence for boats (Melian obsidian and tuna bones at mainland sites like the Franchthi cave) suggested seafaring in the Mesolithic period,³⁷ but recent evidence from the south coast of Crete and from the southern island of Gavdos now pushes seafaring back into the Palaeolithic period.³⁸ In the Early Bronze Age (ca. 2300–2200 BC) incised images on clay ‘frying pans’ of the Cyclades give us an idea of what such tuna-hunting boats looked like.³⁹ We may suppose that inter-island travel was frequent, as it is today, and that it often assumed conventional routes and behaviors,⁴⁰ as well as spontaneous sailing from place to place.⁴¹

To navigate their way across the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean, sailors would have to have relied on several aids. Navigation at night by the stars was not only possible, but even necessary at times.⁴² Still, the waters of the Aegean and south Anatolian coast are so treacherous, with many capes, rocky islets, and sudden gusts of wind, that day sailing, port hopping, and hugging coasts that offered periodic shelter must have been normal.⁴³ We can imagine, therefore, that these sailors must have had the various ports of call firmly in mind (at least as a cognitive map).⁴⁴

Might early sailors have had something more tangible to rely on as they sailed? For the Classical period, for instance, a few formal naval narratives,

the *periplous* (‘sailing around’ or circumnavigation), and, for the Medieval period, the *portolan* (naval charts) give short written and sometimes illustrated accounts of typical sea journeys, sea geography, coastal towns, and their harbors and amenities.⁴⁵ Such charts and accounts, however, may have existed earlier.⁴⁶ Certainly from the time of the first boats in the Aegean we may imagine that some kind of portolan existed, even if it were only conceptual or anecdotal, incorporating the viewpoint of the sailors at sea as they sailed from port to port, describing the coast as they saw it.⁴⁷

But real accounts do survive from the Bronze Age. For instance, an Egyptian inscription on a statue base of Amenhotep III (ruled 1391/1388–1353/1351) at Kom el-Hetan lists 14 Aegean place names (Fig. 5): Crete (a heading), Amnisos, Phaistos, and Kydonia (modern Chania); Mainland (a heading), Mycenae, ‘Tegai’ (Thebes? Tegea?), ‘Messana’ (Pylos? Messana?), Nauplion, Kythera, Ilios (Troy), Knossos, Amnisos (again), and Lyktos (Classical Lyttos).⁴⁸

With little modification, we can imagine the Egyptian itinerary. In the eastern Mediterranean naval circulation was primarily counter clockwise,

³⁵ Niemeier & Niemeier 2000; see also Cline & Yasur-Landau 2007.

³⁶ Elster 2007.

³⁷ Ammerman this vol; Broodbank 2006; Broodbank & Strasser 1991.

³⁸ Kopaka & Matzanas 2009; Kopaka & Matzanas 2011 forthcoming; Mortensen 2008; Strasser *et al.* 2009, 2010 forthcoming.

³⁹ Koutsouflakis 1999.

⁴⁰ Graziadio 1998.

⁴¹ Agouridis 1997; Artzy 1998; Mavridis & Tankosic 2008; Stampolides 2003. Dogan & Michailidou (2008) note unexpected sea routes.

⁴² Davis 1999.

⁴³ Callender 1998, 6.

⁴⁴ Tolman 1948 coined the phrase ‘cognitive map’. For the international flavor of such ports, see Watrous 2007.

⁴⁵ Reinders 2001; and Diller 1952.

⁴⁶ Janni 1998 argues against the existence of maritime charts before the Hellenistic period, but his definition of such charts may be too limiting.

⁴⁷ Marangou 2002, 15, conveys the tenor of such descriptions.

⁴⁸ Bachhuber (2006, 345) gives the basic bibliography; and Wachsmann 2000.



Fig. 5. Map of the eastern Mediterranean, including the places mentioned in the Kom el-Hetan inscription. For a more detailed map of the Aegean see Fig. 1 (basic map after Daniel Dalet/ d-maps.com; modified by G. Vavouranakis).

from Egypt north along the Levantine coast, west along the south Anatolian coast and Cyprus, to the Aegean, and south from Crete across open water to Libya and Egypt again.⁴⁹ The Egyptian embassy should have entered the Aegean at the southeast corner, run along the north coast of Crete to Amnisos (port of Knossos), with an overland side-trip south to Phaistos, before sailing west along the north coast to Chania and then up to the Argolid, with side-trips to Pylos, Thebes, and Troy, then back to Crete. The last addition, Lyttos (at the eastern edge of the Pediada), might refer to Malia since Classical Lyttos's port was at Chersonisos, just west of Malia.

A set of five Linear B texts from Pylos similarly list towns along the coast of Messenia but in a precise order, north to south: *ku-pa-ri-so* (modern Kyparisia), *me-ta-pa*, *pe-to-no*, *ro-o-wa* (Classical

Pylos?), *a-ke-re-wa* (modern Pylos?), *ka-ra-do-ro* (Phinikous near Methoni?), and *ri-jo* (Koroni).⁵⁰ (We might wonder if the 'Catalogue of Ships', Hom. *Il.* II, incorporated information from similar Linear B lists.)⁵¹

It is obvious that both the Egyptians and the Mycenaeans had a good cartographic sense of the Aegean landscape. In fact, one of the earliest surviving maps in the modern sense is that preserved on the Turin Papyrus dating to the third year in the reign of Ramses IV (1155/1151-1149/1145 BC). We even know who drew and annotated the map: the Scribe-of-the-Tomb Amennakhte, son of Ipuw, who also drew up the plan for Ramses's tomb (KV 7).⁵² The map depicts the eastern end of the wadi Hammamat (south is at the top) with its *bekhen*-stone (graywacke) quarry, gold mines, and mining village – the geological and topographical detail is startling, down to trees, different geological strata, and abandoned blocks. On the back of the map Amennakhte made notes.

Few naval accounts have survived from the Classical and Roman periods: for example, the fragmentary account by Pytheas of Marseilles describing his voyage to the north Atlantic and circumnavigation of Britain *c.* 300 BC⁵³ and the 'Periplus of the Red Sea' by an anonymous Alexandrian probably dating to the reign of Nero.⁵⁴

Another type of early naval map is the Medieval portolan. One of the earliest to survive is the well known Peutinger Table (13th century AD) that copies a late Roman map (early-mid 5th century),⁵⁵ its narrow and long format (H. 0.34, L. 6.75 m) is probably not coincidentally similar to that of the earlier papyrus scroll-maps, like that

⁴⁹ Lambrou-Phillipson 1991; Wachsmann 2000; Watrous 1992, 169-83, fig. 11. Fragments of faience plaques have been found at Mycenae that bear the name of Amenhotep III and may be testaments to this voyage, even if they might have been locally made (Lilyquist 1999).

⁵⁰ *Docs* 2, 183-94; and Chadwick 1972; Chadwick 1977. Also see Wachsmann 1999.

⁵¹ Dickinson 1999.

⁵² Harrell & Brown 1992a; Harrell & Brown 1992b.

⁵³ Cunliffe 2002.

⁵⁴ Casson 1989; Megalommatitis 1994.

⁵⁵ Bibliotheca Augustana 1996.

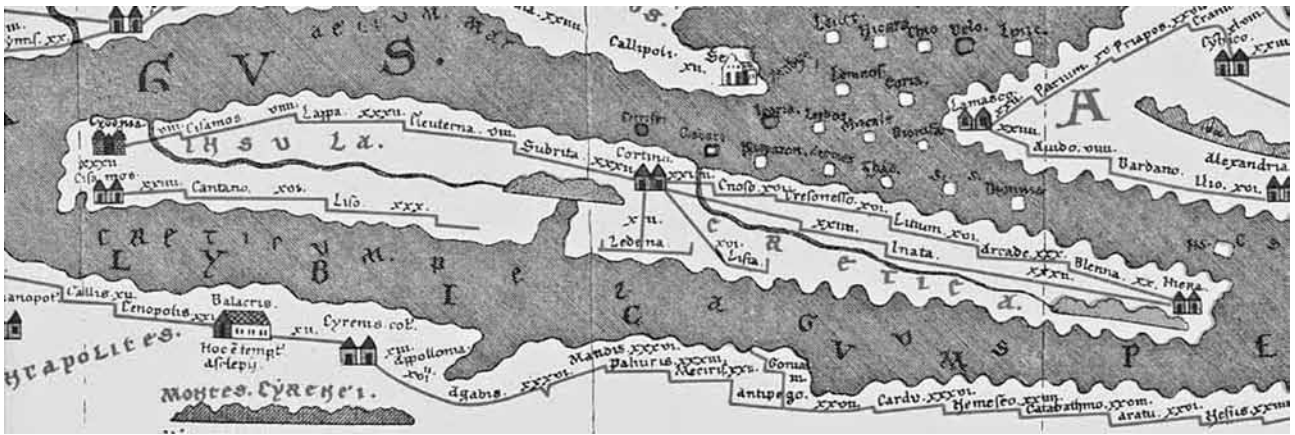


Fig. 6. Peutinger Table (13th century AD), Segments VIII and IX, depicting Crete and the Cyclades (modified from Bibliotheca Augustana 1996, /tab-pe10.html).

of Amennakhte. Segment IX of the Table depicts Crete and the Cyclades (Fig. 6). In Crete, small architectural icons denote important towns: a pair of buildings for Hierapolyta in the east, Gortyna in the center, and Kisamos wrongly in the southwest (it is actually in the extreme northwest of the island), and two fortification towers for Kydonia (Chania). The twin buildings are conventional, scattered over the entire Table. But the fortifications at Kydonia are like other special icons elsewhere on the map (the Pharos, for example, marks Alexandria and a seated god, helmeted and holding a spear, marks Constantinople, as if conflating the statue of Zeus from Olympia with the Parthenos from Athens).⁵⁶

With such *exempla* before us we can imagine a Bronze Age portolan also using special but recognizable icons to denote specific places: the ‘Master’ impression for Chania (below), the large Lion Gate at Mycenae (almost duplicated by a conversely small sealstone CMS I, no. 46),⁵⁷ two sealings from Kato Zakros (CMS II.7, nos. 218, 219) that depict clusters of tall buildings, and the Sanctuary Rhyton that portrays a peak sanctuary,⁵⁸ perhaps Traostalos north of Kato Zakros. Similarly, the details specific to each of the cityscapes in the West House fresco (like the coastal fort with triangular projections) could function as identifying icons for locating specific spots along the coast.⁵⁹

It may not be coincidental that the West House miniature frieze is in nearly the same format as the papyrus maps and the Peutinger portolan and of a

similar height (H. c. 0.42 m [the Nilotic fresco is half as high]; its length, under 16.00 m is more than twice that of the Peutinger table). Amennakhte’s map is in tatters but its height is preserved, 0.41 m (ca. 0.40 m is a conventional height for papyrus documents)⁶⁰ and its length survives to 2.80 m. The intact, and longer, Great Harris Papyrus (mid 12th century BC) contains a history of the reigns of Ramses III and IV;⁶¹ its height is conventional (0.46 m) but its complete unscrolled length (41 m) is two and a half times the length of the West

⁵⁶ The Zeus entered the Palace of Lausos after AD 395 (Kedrinou, *Hist. Comp.* I, p. 564), and it was destroyed in the fire of 475 (Bassett 2004, 99 & 101). The fate of the Athena Parthenos is uncertain: it may have been lost in a fire in the 5th century AD or it may have been seen in Constantinople in the 10th century (schol. Aristed. *Or.* 50, s.v. ‘ivory Athena’: ‘set up in the Forum of Constantine and in the Bouleuterion’ by Arethas archbishop of Caesarea; cf. Richter 1930, 220).

⁵⁷ The motif, two animals flanking a gate may have been a common icon: cf. the almost identical CMS I, no. 46 from Mycenae Chamber Tomb 28; CMS II.7, no. 74, a sealing from Kato Zakros with two recumbent lions flanking a gate, and a fresco fragment from Pylos (Immerwahr 1990, 198, Py No. 12, pl. 77) with a feline atop a building, restored as two felines atop a gate.

⁵⁸ Shaw 1978.

⁵⁹ Compare the much earlier Egyptian ‘Tehenu’ palette (ca. 3300–3200 BC; Petrie 1953, 15, pls. G19, G20) with abstract stockades enclosing identifying insignia, presumably those of captured towns in the Delta.

⁶⁰ Parkinson & Quirke 1995.

⁶¹ Grandet 1994.



Fig. 7. The 'Master' impression (CMS VS.1A, no. 142) from Chania, LM IB context (photo author).

House miniature frieze. The ribbon-like format of the West House frieze, and its iconography, may both derive, therefore, from real, ancient, papyrus scroll-maps.

If we regard the West House miniature fresco as an Aegean portolan, then we can mark surviving features that seem distinctive of specific geographies: the stream around Town IV, the Horns of Consecration atop buildings of Town V, and the distinctly Aegean costumes of all the people on land may all connote familiar places in the Aegean, while the triangular projections on buildings of Towns I-III, the tufted hair of the drowning sailors, and the ostrich-wing shield of one of them may denote the unfamiliar.

The artist assumes a viewpoint far from his subjects, in the caldera of Thera or out at sea. In fact, this viewpoint, from out at sea looking back to the land, is often assumed by the Minoan artist. On the Mochlos ring,⁶² we see a woman in a boat saluting an enclosure on land; in the boat, there is a stepped altar containing a tree.⁶³ We know in what direction the boat is heading since it incorporates typical features of Aegean boats: a regardant animal head ('aegis') tops the stern, and the prow consists

of a long spit with gathered clumps at the end.⁶⁴ The Mochlos woman is thus landing the boat, bringing the tree to the enclosure (in fact, all other such depicted enclosures have the tree already in them).⁶⁵

The sealing from Chania with the 'Master' impression presents another view from the sea (Fig. 7):⁶⁶ a man in a kilt stands in the 'Commanding' pose, holding a staff in front of him, on a cityscape consisting of buildings and two large gates flanking what could be a grotto.⁶⁷ Below the cityscape are typical Minoan sea rocks (looking like flat omega curves) and, below that, a net pattern, a shorthand for water.⁶⁸ Because the impression was found at Chania and Chania is on the sea with a good harbor, it is tempting to identify the cityscape as a portrait of Chania. If so, we viewers of the Master impression are standing out at sea (or on the north mole of the modern harbor), looking south to the acropolis (the grotto, if such there were, must lie behind the tall Venetian Arsenal at the base of the acropolis, Fig. 8).

Out at sea, looking back to land, is also the viewpoint of portolans, which give us the coastline with illustrations of identifiable landmarks along the way, landmarks that would have been familiar to travelers, like the towers on the Peutinger Table indicating a considerable settlement at Kydonia, possibly with military installation, or the Pharos to mark Alexandria. The statue that marks

⁶² CMS II. 3, no. 252.

⁶³ Compare CMS VS.1A, no. 55 from Makrygialos, and II.6, no. 20, a sealing from Agia Triada.

⁶⁴ Wedde 1990 gives the criteria for distinguishing stern from bow (and incidentally proves that the woman on the Ring of Minos is poling her boat backwards); also Hiller 2000.

⁶⁵ See, for example, the Agia Triada Sarcophagus: Marinatos & Hirmer 1960, color pl. XXVIII.

⁶⁶ Hallager 1985; CMS VS.1A, no. 142. Valério 2007. Valério 2008 has recently demonstrated that this pose constitutes the origin of Linear AB sign *du*, and the Minoan men in this pose as DU-PU₂-RE, or 'lords'.

⁶⁷ Hallager 1985, 17, identifies the central element as 'the clearly marked summit' of a 'mountainous landscape'.

⁶⁸ Crowley 1991. See, for example, the Silver Siege rhyton (Sakellariou 1975), a fragment of a stone relief vessel from Knossos (Evans 1930, 100, fig. 59), and a sealing from Knossos (CMS II.8, no. 264).



Fig. 8. View of the acropolis of Chania, from the north quay (photo author).

Constantinople would be a slightly different kind of illustration, probably not indicating a landmark seen by passing ships but rather a monument seen by visitors, two chryselephantine statues which would conceptually mark the city's status as the capital.

The artist as agent: collective and individual

Similarly, the artist of the Miniature Fresco also included distinctive features of the landscape both to identify landmarks necessary for the sailor and to enrich the geographical narrative. Most of the features of the fresco that survive are Aegean in character, from the jewelry-like rigging of the ships in the Naval Procession to the costumes of the men in the Meeting on the Hill. In any narrative we would expect something similar: the incidental would be familiar in order to contrast with the unfamiliar, which in turn drives the narrative.

For the familiar (against which the unfamiliar stands in marked contrast), the Thera artist selected elements from two sources, the stockpile of Aegean, mostly Minoan, *topoi* and the normal activities of Aegean life. In selecting *topoi*, the artist was participating in a collective consciousness of what was expected and what was considered proper to depict. But the other source of inspiration for the West House artist was life itself, the real *ephemera*, corresponding to the real world:⁶⁹ women fetching

water, men bringing in or taking out their flocks, the nude youths running to glimpse the arriving fleet. Modern illustrated maps may include similar, typical aspects of everyday life,⁷⁰ which may serve little or no topographical function, but they do contribute a comforting familiarity.

For the *topoi*, the artist turned to what was socially acceptable, a stockpile of proper images, perhaps, or to a patternbook, real or conceptual. The artist's inclusion of *ephemera*, however, depended upon his own creative sense, his personal imagination; in selecting real life, the artist would be acting as an individual.⁷¹ He would have had to break free of the social constraints to include only *topoi*, and this is something that Aegean artists rarely did – Minoan or Aegean art does not usually treat the everyday. Instead, the usual subjects in Minoan art are formal, focusing on ritual action and elite personages (e.g., the robing scene from the House of the Ladies; the phases of girlhood in the frescoes from Xeste 3; and processing men in Xeste 4).⁷²

We can characterize this official art as art commissioned by the authority in power to

⁶⁹ Cf. Lacan's real reality, a reality that happens on its own, not because of society or our construct of it: Žižek 2007, chap. 2.

⁷⁰ A rare illustrated map of Kansas (1930), for instance, includes small pictures of cows, potatoes, farmers: Glazer 2009.

⁷¹ Cf. Lacan's imaginary reality, one that we construct: Žižek 2007, chaps. 1, 4.

⁷² For the themes of the Xeste 3 frescoes, see Rehak 2002; Rehak 2005; Rehak 2007.

replicate its concerns, primarily the maintenance of public and divine order. We see the concerns of state in the later Linear B tablets: the offerings to divinities, preparations for feasts, ordination of officials, disbursement of troops and *corvée* labor, and allotment of raw materials to be turned into goods fit for trading. Thus, official art would include the insignia of power (e.g., Horns of Consecration) and the depiction of repeated state-sponsored rituals, processions, and other events like bull-leaping, banquets, and warfare.⁷³ As the maintenance of order is manifested through precise repetition in state-sponsored art, events, and ritual, so repeated *topoi* are the art-analogues for these repeated events that affirm order and control.⁷⁴

The official, monumental, and ritual quality of most Aegean art must reflect central social values, a felt social propriety, that art should serve a purpose, presumably that of the state (howsoever that is conceived). If this is true, Aegean artists would not have been totally free to depict what they wanted – or rather, if they depicted what they wanted to depict, it had to dovetail with what was thought proper to depict and what was commissioned for depiction. Most of what we see in Aegean art therefore has been carefully selected for us to see by the authority in power (or by societal expectations) and by the artist adhering to the state's ideals. In other words, *topoi* refer to the constant maintenance and affirmation of power – they contribute to the social meaning of art.⁷⁵

Themes that do not exist at all in Aegean art are, conceptually, legion if not infinite. I mention three examples that involve women:⁷⁶ we see no mothers nursing their infant,⁷⁷ no women playing musical instruments,⁷⁸ and no women working textiles.⁷⁹ There are a few depictions of women with girls⁸⁰ and women dancers,⁸¹ and lots of depictions in fresco, on seals, and in ivory of women wearing the elaborate textiles that they did indeed weave. But I assume women nursed children and worked textiles (as the Linear B tablets tell us) and I hope they created music. So I interpret the total lack of these scenes to some kind of social prohibition.

Themes that exist in only a few depictions are perhaps even more intriguing. It would be tempting to view these as artistic renegades that escaped the

ensorship of social propriety, perhaps attesting even to a resistance against it – were there not the tendency among Aegean archaeologists to view any rare scene as religious.⁸²

⁷³ Aegeanists speak of two kinds of art, fixed (frescoes, architecture) and portable, the latter constructed especially for display in processions. We see items like vessels, textiles, and double axes portrayed in processions on sealings from Agia Triada and Kato Zakros (CMS II 6, nos. 9, 10; CMS II 7, no. 7) and in such frescoes as the Cup Bearer from Knossos (Immerwahr 1990, 174–5, Kn No. 22). Such portable art was apparently mass produced, sometimes in the same workshop (Younger 1978, Younger 1981).

⁷⁴ Repeated *topoi* form the core of an artistic lexicon for constructing a particular, symbolic view of society, in this case of central Minoan society (cf. Lacan's symbolic reality, a construct of society: Žižek 2007, chaps. 1, 6).

⁷⁵ Langdon 2008, 23, might disagree: 'Comparison against an external framework of parallels can check speculative excess, but cannot ultimately explain meaning'.

⁷⁶ I mention women here because I am interested in ancient gender and sexuality, and because I am Director of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Kansas University.

⁷⁷ On the lack of mothers in Aegean art, see Kopaka 2008, Pomadère 2008. There are few preclassical kouroutrophoi; cf. the Late Neolithic terracotta figurine from Sesklo (Pomadère 2008, p. XXXIa), and the late Neopalatial or early Final Palatial terracotta figurine (HM 8345) from Mavrospelio Tomb VIIB (Forsdyke 1926–7, pl. XXI). Most preclassical kouroutrophoi take the form of Mycenaean terracotta figurines (French 1972, 142–4; Demakopoulou 1988, 224 no. 209, fig. on 222; Pomadère 2008, pl. XXXII). And there are two Minoan feminiform vases that have holes in the nipples for pouring out whatever liquid had been put inside: HM 5499 from Mochlos and HM 8665 from Malia (for both, see simplified drawings, Goodison 2008, pl. XXXg, h).

⁷⁸ Younger 1998, esp. chapter 2, 'Music and society'.

⁷⁹ There are no depictions of textiles workers, either men or women, but according to the Linear B tablets women do most of that work (Shelmerdine 2008, 141).

⁸⁰ Younger 2008.

⁸¹ The 'Sacred Grove and Dance' fresco from Knossos (Immerwahr 1990, 173, KN No. 16), the miniature fresco from Agia Irini, Kea, and, restored, Tyllissos House A (Immerwahr 1990, 189 A.I. No. 4, and 184, TY No. 1, respectively). Interestingly, there are no depictions of male dancers.

⁸² Arthur Evans provides a wealth of examples of this tendency to identify odd objects as religious (e.g., 'Horns of Consecration,' 'Temple Repositories,' 'Sacral Knot,' 'Snake Goddess,' 'Lustral Basin'). Macaulay 1979 spoofs this practice by describing the excavation of an American motel by a Howard Carter-like archaeologist, who identifies various objects as religious (a shower cap as a 'Ceremonial Burial Cap' and a toilet as a 'Sacred Urn'). The short, illustrated book is

Taking just frescoes from Akrotiri as examples, we could follow this trend and see virtually everything as religious. If the wall-paper design of crocus in Xeste 3 refers to a ceremony involving preadolescent girls gathering saffron, then do the repeating large clumps of papyrus (House of the Ladies) or the repeating ship cabins (West House) also refer to formal events?⁸³ Do the Boxing Boys (building Beta), different in status (one wears jewelry, the other not), also refer to a similar coming-of-age ceremony, but for males?⁸⁴ The pair of antelopes (building Beta), are they about to mate and therefore is the scene about fertility (is that also the ‘meaning’ of the Spring fresco from Delta room 2)?⁸⁵ If a blue monkey attends the goddess in the upper Xeste 3 fresco, and another decorates a shrine (sector Alpha), then do the blue monkeys that mimic musicians and soldiers (Xeste 3, room 4) or simply cavort in a colorful landscape (building Beta) also refer to religious events?⁸⁶ Arguments in this vein reduce everything to a single, simple explanation (it is religious) whose very monotony robs it of meaning.

Let me take one more image, interpret it as religious before re-interpreting it as real and personal. One image from the Procession Fresco depicts two women and a boy on a parapet at the left side of the Arrival town; the two women wave to the incoming fleet.⁸⁷ The woman in front also holds on to the boy; surely she is his mother (the other could be an aunt, nanny, or friend). The two women seem like everyone else in the Arrival Town, eager to greet the fleet. But the balcony on which they stand has a ledge on which sit two Horns of Consecration.⁸⁸ Two terracotta architectural models preserve similar balconies, one from Monastiraki with a small Horns of Consecration⁸⁹ and a second from Archanes with a figure standing on the balcony (no Horns of Consecration).⁹⁰ Is the mother and her son just another religious *topos*, a blending of two *topoi*, ‘balcony with Horns of Consecration’ and ‘woman on balcony’?

If so, the artist has taken this *topos* and, in its narrative context, given it a new life. For these three people are prominent; they are the only ones within the town that make any gesture (a few boys outside on the wharf raise their hand).⁹¹ I imagine

the women waving to the arriving fleet because they are intimately involved, the front woman and boy being, we can imagine, the wife and son of one of the men in the fleet, perhaps the ‘admiral’.⁹²

Such everyday scenes are not found in Crete; they come from the islands. A fresco somewhat similar to that of the West House comes from the Northeast Bastion at Agia Irini, Kea: ships, a townscape, waiting women, and a deer-hunt.⁹³ We may see additional narrative touches in the frescoes from Xeste 3:⁹⁴ one of the girls gathering crocus stamens has red hair and blue eyes, and the goddess’s griffin is leashed to a real window so it will not fly away. A surprise is the earliest example of perspective, again from Xeste 3, a deliberate shift in the angle of the rings in the tapestry fresco from room 9.⁹⁵

often required reading in introductory courses to archaeology (a web-search on ‘motel of the mysteries syllabus’ will find many such courses).

⁸³ Doulas 1992, pls. 2-5 & 49-62, respectively. N. Marinatos 1984, 9, describes the papyri as depicting ‘another “religious landscape”’.

⁸⁴ Doulas 1992, pls. 79-81; N. Marinatos 1984, 109-10.

⁸⁵ Doulas 1992, pls. 82-4 & 66-76, respectively. N. Marinatos identifies the antelopes and nearby Boxing Boys as examples of ‘ritual competition’ (1984, 112; n. 85, above), and the Spring Fresco as a ‘religious landscape’ (92).

⁸⁶ Doulas 1992, pls. 122, 147, 95-6, and 85-9, respectively. N. Marinatos 1984, 116: ‘the monkeys of B6 are depicted in association with the natural environment of the divinity’.

⁸⁷ See the reconstruction drawings, Pomadère 2008, pl. XXXId.

⁸⁸ In fact, Televantou 1994, 268-71, calls the ledge an altar.

⁸⁹ Karetsoú & Andreadake-Vlazake 2000, 63-4 no. 41.

⁹⁰ Morgan 1988, 79-83, pl. 111, esp. pl. 111B.

⁹¹ Morgan 1988, 118.

⁹² It is interesting that the only children in Linear B whose both parents we know are the sons of men rowers and women textile workers (Shermerdine 2008, 147).

⁹³ Immerwahr 1990, 189 A.I. No. 4.

⁹⁴ Doulas 1992, pls. 100-30; Rehak 2007.

⁹⁵ Doulas 1992, pls. 136-7. The next example of perspective is a similar shift in viewpoint for the vertical flutes in the column capital behind the ‘Sitopotnia’ in the Room of the Frescoes, Mycenae (Immerwahr 1990, 191 MY No. 6). Both shifts in perspective are simple: the rings and flutes in three-quarter profile from one side shifting, mirror-like, to the other side, on the other side of a vertical axis. S. Immerwahr (1990, 41, 71) notes an absence of any perspective and does not mention these examples.

The inclusion of everyday scenes, some narrative, some perspective, and the exclusion of obvious references to Knossian palatial art (no overtly religious ritual, no stately procession, no bull-leaping, banquets, or actual warfare) could distinguish Cycladic frescoes just as much as their unusual outline technique on white backgrounds and wallpaper designs.⁹⁶

The sea: a bridge and a barrier

We might even think of these special aspects as referring to a Cycladic resistance to Minoanization.⁹⁷ Two factors undoubtedly facilitated this resistance, the distance between Crete and the islands and the sea that spanned that distance. Knossos's central interest in people and processes seems to have dimmed the farther away they were; this can be demonstrated in the later Linear B documents.⁹⁸ And the intervening sea would have heightened this diminishing of control.⁹⁹

If Minoan central society exercised a grip on iconography in Crete,¹⁰⁰ that grip seems loose enough in Thera to permit the artist to see, and depict, a mother and son, perspective, and watercarriers, none of which occurs in Crete. So what precisely is the apparatus that allowed the Thera artist to see and to depict things the Knossian artist could not? To prepare us for answering this question, we first need to understand modes of seeing and their implications.

Modern art theory treats at length the modes of seeing, what is selected for viewing and how it and we the viewers are manipulated in the process. There are many ways to depict the act of viewing. Some art includes spectators who focus our viewing, but most depictions simply present the object being viewed, with no spectator in attendance, as if the scene was being relayed by an impartial camera.¹⁰¹

Modern discussions have often explored how the mere act of viewing eroticizes the person being viewed,¹⁰² for viewing involves an inequality of power: as the artist controls what is depicted/viewed, so the active viewer seems to control the passive viewed object. The 'gaze' 'signifies a

psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze'.¹⁰³

If the (active) viewer seems to control a (passive) viewed object, we may therefore characterize the process sexually: since 'control' is constructed as masculine in a patriarchal system, the active subject would be male and the passive object would be female. From this sexual characterization of viewing some psychologists have generalized a theory of social control that removes Freud's super-ego from the individual: it is society's 'gaze' (its 'supervision') that controls the actions of individuals in the same way individual men might view and control individual women.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁶ Immerwahr 1990, 79, 82–83.

⁹⁷ Berg 2007, xviii, speaks of the islanders negotiating their own degree of Minoanization. For descriptions of Minoanization see Hood 1983, Wiener 1983. Gell (1998) argues that works of art in general are political agents.

⁹⁸ Killen 2008, 168. There was probably stronger resistance to Minoanization on the mainland. As a total assemblage, the objects from the Mycenae Shaft Graves look more like a hodge-podge collection of *chachkas* (showy trinkets) of Minoan, minoanizing, Anatolian, Baltic, and Egyptian derivation, designed to impress their viewers and to refer to the importance of their owners rather than reflect the appurtenances of Minoan religious or social influence.

⁹⁹ Thera was not, of course, totally resistant to Minoanization. Many clay sealings were found in Delta rooms 18a and b, and these came from Knossos, presumably sealing messages from the palace written on vellum: CMS VS 3, nos. 391–401, 404–405 from Delta 18b, and 402 from 18a, the last found with the Linear A tablets. The clay of the sealings is probably Knossian but the clay of the tablets looks local.

¹⁰⁰ In my study of Minoan corseting (Younger 2000b), I likened this grip to the actual one that laced the corset the 'Snake Goddesses' wear.

¹⁰¹ Chandler 2000.

¹⁰² Compare the similar discussions of viewing in Roman art: Elsner 1995; Fredrick 2002 (most of the studies concern texts); and Zanker 2004. In Classical art women fetching water were eroticized; it was one of the few occupations that brought Athenian women out of the home. So men ogled and harassed them at the fountain house, and gazed at them as they walked, their bodies swaying to keep the waterjars balanced on their heads – the waterjars, too, often carry erotic scenes: Keuls 1985, 232–3; Younger 1997, 135; Younger 2005, 139 s.v. 'Water'.

¹⁰³ Schroeder 1998, 208.

¹⁰⁴ The erotic phenomenon of the 'gaze' was first explored by M. Foucault (1977); J. Lacan (1978, 72) used the gaze to re-interpret Freud's super-ego: society's gaze keeps us in line – I

I have detailed this theory of the gaze in this emphatic way because, while it accounts for the social prohibitions against depicting ‘improper’ scenes, I find it problematic in other aspects. For example, it does not explain what happens to us when we the spectators become superfluous or when the figures we see in a painting seem to watch us;¹⁰⁵ nor does it explain the psychology behind depicting male nudes.¹⁰⁶ And actually the theory fails to explain precisely how viewing an object controls it –I may stare at something or someone but I am not therefore in control of it/her.

This last type of viewing, staring, has implications for interpreting the West House miniature frieze. Staring is a purely passive phenomenon: I open my eyes and I view whatever comes into my vision.¹⁰⁷ This is the pose of the artist of the West House miniature fresco: out at sea in boat, sailing past the coast, recording what is seen.

There are thus three major iconographic issues in the West House Miniature Frieze: its overall structure and narration, the *topoi* (the familiar), and the *ephemera* (the special). The overall structure of the frieze, and its narrative content, very likely depended on the patron, the ‘admiral’, to whom the portolan format, the periplous subject, the specific Naval Procession, the ship cabins in room 4, and even the fisherboys might all be relevant.¹⁰⁸

The *topoi* are there because they suited the audience’s expectation of the socially and politically familiar. Without them, the fresco would have been too strange to be interpretable.¹⁰⁹

For the *ephemera*, the artist must have felt safe to present them because the separation between artist and subject, as created by the assumed viewpoint (the artist at sea, the subject on land), would imply a similar distance between artist and the Minoan social values that would have constrained him.

While the sea therefore is a bridge, facilitating a general Minoanization and the more specific progress of the fleet through the islands, it is also a barrier against the immense social and political control of Minoan formal art that threatens to overwhelm the Thera artist. Floating past his subject, he feels free to include it, whatever it might be.¹¹⁰ The larger social ‘gaze’ demands the formal *topoi*, but it is the artist’s personal ‘gaze’ and

see only from one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides’. The gaze is usually discussed as if gendered: if society objectifies us, so the male artist objectifies the female subject of his art: “because it is *women* who are thus detached from the action and objectified, the subliminal effect is to identify the act of looking as male: the ‘objectivizing’ power of the gaze is given over to men, who thus become the ‘subjects’ of vision, while women are ‘subjected’ by patriarchy as the ‘objects’ of vision” (R. Williams 2004, 250 emphasis original).

¹⁰⁵ Roman third and fourth style paintings problematize what it means to be a spectator. For instance, while a couple has sex, chamber servants are often present, looking on (e.g., Marcadé 1965, pl. on p. 15: an erotic painting from the House of Caecilius Jucundus; and the ‘Warren Cup’, D. Williams 2006) –we spectators are simply not needed (Younger 2005, 138 s.v. ‘voyeurism’). Or in other paintings, small anonymous people stand in half-open doors and windows and on balconies, looking down at us, the real inhabitants of the room (e.g., paintings in *triclinia* p, ‘Ixion room’, and q in the House of the Vettii, Pompeii, Peters 1977, pls. 65–69; 73; figs. 16–21; 26).

¹⁰⁶ Why did Classical Greek art insist for so long on depicting males nude and females draped, even when it could depict the anatomy of both sexes relatively realistically? The question has been asked many times –with no scholarly consensus on an answer (Stewart 1998 *passim*; Bonfante 1989), though it might be simplistic to point out that male nudes show us their genitals which are the basis for citizenship, and clothed woman display what makes them useful, their product.

¹⁰⁷ The French author Alain Robbe-Grillet questions this presumed grip on reality (does viewing affect the object viewed?) in several of his novels, most notably *Le Voyeur* and *La Jalousie* (Robbe-Grillet 1955, 1957). In both novels, the narrator describes in numbing detail what he sees, and occasionally what he sees may be acts that he has caused — or imagined. In *Voyeur*, this is the murder (or not) of a young girl; in *Jalousie*, this is the adultery (or not) of the narrator’s wife with ‘Franck’.

¹⁰⁸ The patron, who is partially responsible for the fresco, is also its recipient (Gell 1998, 47–8) and, to the extent that the frieze depicts his own voyage, he is its subject (Gell 1998, 52–3: the ‘prototype as agent’).

¹⁰⁹ Eco 1986 notes how an audience depends on the familiar predecessors of objects in order to know how to deal with them (e.g., the doors of early elevators looked like doors to rooms). Bolter & Grusin (1999, 19) also stress that media ‘emerge from within cultural contexts, and they refashion other media, which are embedded in the same or similar contexts.’ I think of CDs and DVDs; they look like old phonograph records, so we know what to do with them. Laser scanners, however, can read any shape.

¹¹⁰ Aegean personal freedom is a subject that has not, to my knowledge, received any in-depth treatment. The Linear B documents mention officials who must have had some personal liberty; the Minoan roads in Crete suggest people traveled; the dedications at peak sanctuaries imply large numbers of visitors; and much trade was probably carried out by free individuals in ‘tramp vessels’ (Phillipson & Lambrou-Phillipson 1999,

personal freedom from convention, guaranteed by the sea that isolates and cushions him and his subject, that allow the ephemera.

Conclusions

The Miniature Frescoes from the West House contain elements of an official art emanating from the cultural center at Knossos (the naval procession as ritual, the townscapes and marching soldiers as examples of public order). But the frescoes add what seem to be idiosyncratic scenes: the two fisherboys, the girl with incense, the ship cabins. If we imagine a personal program, an iconography that had a relationship with the inhabitants of the building (S. Marinatos's 'admiral' and his family), then we could see the girl as his daughter, the fisherboys as his son or sons, the adult men in the 'Meeting on the Hill' as his ship captains, the townscapes as the locale of his voyages, the naval procession as his home-coming ceremony, and the woman with the boy as his wife and son.

Such an interpretation would then go on to see the rest of the Miniature Fresco as narrating events consonant with an actual voyage. This may seem plausible when it comes to the Meeting, drowning sailors, the marching soldiers, but it stretches credulity to imagine that men herding goats and sheep or women carrying waterjars constituted events worthy of depiction. Yet they do particularize the narration of that voyage; they present incidents that may connote 'peace' in contrast to the martial aspects of marching warriors and drowning sailors and even the threat of discord that seems to underlie the confrontational Meeting on the Hill. If any of this is plausible, then it may be safe to assume that the watercarriers and herders are there because they are real, just as real as the sea voyage itself, the admiral, and his safe return after dangers encountered in exotic lands –and because they suited a narrative desire to define the goal of the voyage: to reach home safely.

The artist deliberately placed the sea between himself and his subject both to convey the effect of the fleet itself moving through these waters and to remove control over what he saw and recorded.

This is not only his control of his subject matter but also the control of central Minoan society over what was proper for him to record. Putting the sea between him and his subject removed all control, Minoan and his own, separated both artist and viewer from what is seen, and dampened the immediacy of the viewer's experience.¹¹¹

The sea as barrier thus contributes to a sense of isolation that 'is redemptive, since it generates a consciousness' of what is (*ephemera*), instead of only what must be (the expected).¹¹² In addition, sailing encourages passive gazing. As a passenger on a ship, I look out as the landscape slips by (passing through my field of vision), and I see whatever is there, as if I were a subjective movie camera mounted on the gunwale producing a film strip¹¹³ that records the villages (*chorai*) tucked high into mountain folds, isolated farm houses in the plains, the *skalas* (small ports) along the coast.

It is not just the distance that objectifies what I am looking at; it is also the physical separation, the impossibility of crossing the watery divide to engage with what I see. I remember standing at Apollonia on Melos, looking across the strait (a kilometer or less) to Kimolos and watching a woman hang a red shirt on a line to dry – the air was so clear, I saw it flapping in the wind and her slight struggle

573). The relationship between artist and the state must have varied. Hard stone seals, for instance, were probably markers of specific administrators and therefore commissioned by the state (Younger 2000a), but the makers of soft stone seals, like those found in Poros-Iraklion, could have been working for private commissions (Dimopoulou 2000).

¹¹¹ Bolter & Grusin (1999, 11) assume that the sense of immediacy, of the 'you are there' effect, is a central goal of art: "to achieve immediacy by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of mediation." Putting the sea between spectator and subject, however, denies this immediacy.

¹¹² Lotringer 1974, 564, speaking of the structuralism of Michel Butor.

¹¹³ Considering the height of these miniature scenes (maximum c. 42 cm) and their combined length over four walls (ca. 16 m), the total effect is indeed like a cinematic film strip of scenes filmed while gliding along the shore; in fact, the separate scenes resemble separate stills in a movie film. Bolter & Grusin (1999, 4) would describe how the artist "experiences the world in a continuous, first-person point-of-view shot, which in film criticism is called the 'subjective camera.'"

to fasten it with clothes pegs. The distance made it impossible to assist her, but the intervening sea made even the thought of assisting her impossible. And so I watched, a voyeur with no emotional engagement – I watched with a detachment that was both affective and literal.

In the West House frescoes this detachment is presented as real (the artist out at sea), and it produces a fictional disengagement, a fictional impartiality, as if there were no artist at all (the fictitious subjective camera), merely an incorporation into the field of vision of whatever has passed across it.¹¹⁴ The result, an apparently random juxtaposition of ephemeral vignettes, creates a new dyad, view: viewed (not the structuralism of the theoretical ‘gaze’, viewer: viewed), in which the apparent elimination of the artist apparently freed him from the social obligation of producing only a series of conventional Aegean *topoi*.

The West House Miniature Fresco thus employs a host of structuralist dyads. In addition to the dyad view: viewed caused by the apparent elimination of the immediate artist, we have: a periplous over the sea mirrored in a circumnavigation around the room; vignettes of real towns and settlements encountered along a real voyage, but incorporating unseen fantastical elements that are crucial to the success of any story; peaceful images contrasting with scenes of violence; and *topoi* that give the narrative a formal, acceptable character, contrasting with real everyday events that tie the narrative to real lives as lived. And finally, the Naval Procession not only concludes the frieze’s narrative but also represents a radical summary: the final lap is short but it is a fractal of the whole, with a distinct beginning and end that echoes the longer voyage whose travails and marvels are summarized in the

fierce animals painted on the hulls and enchanting jewelry-like rigging of the important ships.¹¹⁵

The West House frieze around the room is like a portolan map in hand, but with the sea facilitating the gaze between eye and subject. The artist’s view from the sea would be a natural standpoint for any islander. And it brings with it two major implications: the sea both facilitates and hinders communication, the sea both isolates the voyager and frees him to go anywhere and to see whatever is in view. The two implications are linked, for out at sea the fresco artist had an unimpeded view of the coast, yet he is incapable of choosing, let alone controlling, what he sees there. And what he sees is a narrow strip of coast infinitely long, bounded above by blue sky and below by blue sea – exactly like the portolan itself.

An islander knows that the sea is both barrier and bridge. Across the bridge to Thera came Knossian dictates and influence. But as a barrier, the sea could also mitigate the Minoan grip. This metaphor of barrier-bridge emphasizes the end points, the departure and the arrival, but it is actually on the barrier/bridge – in the midst of the sea – that the artist is free.

¹¹⁴ Like Robbe-Grillet’s novels (n. 108, above), Jacques Prévert’s poem, *Dejeuner du Matin* (1946), describes the making of a cup of coffee in such detail that we know it masks the sense of loss. Similarly, the detailed ephemeral scenes in the West House frescoes create a narrative: even without the immediacy of the artist, we moderns are connected by these *ephemera* to the immediacy of ancient life.

¹¹⁵ Gell 1998, 69–71, discusses how intricate art ‘enchants’ the viewer, as if by magic.

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