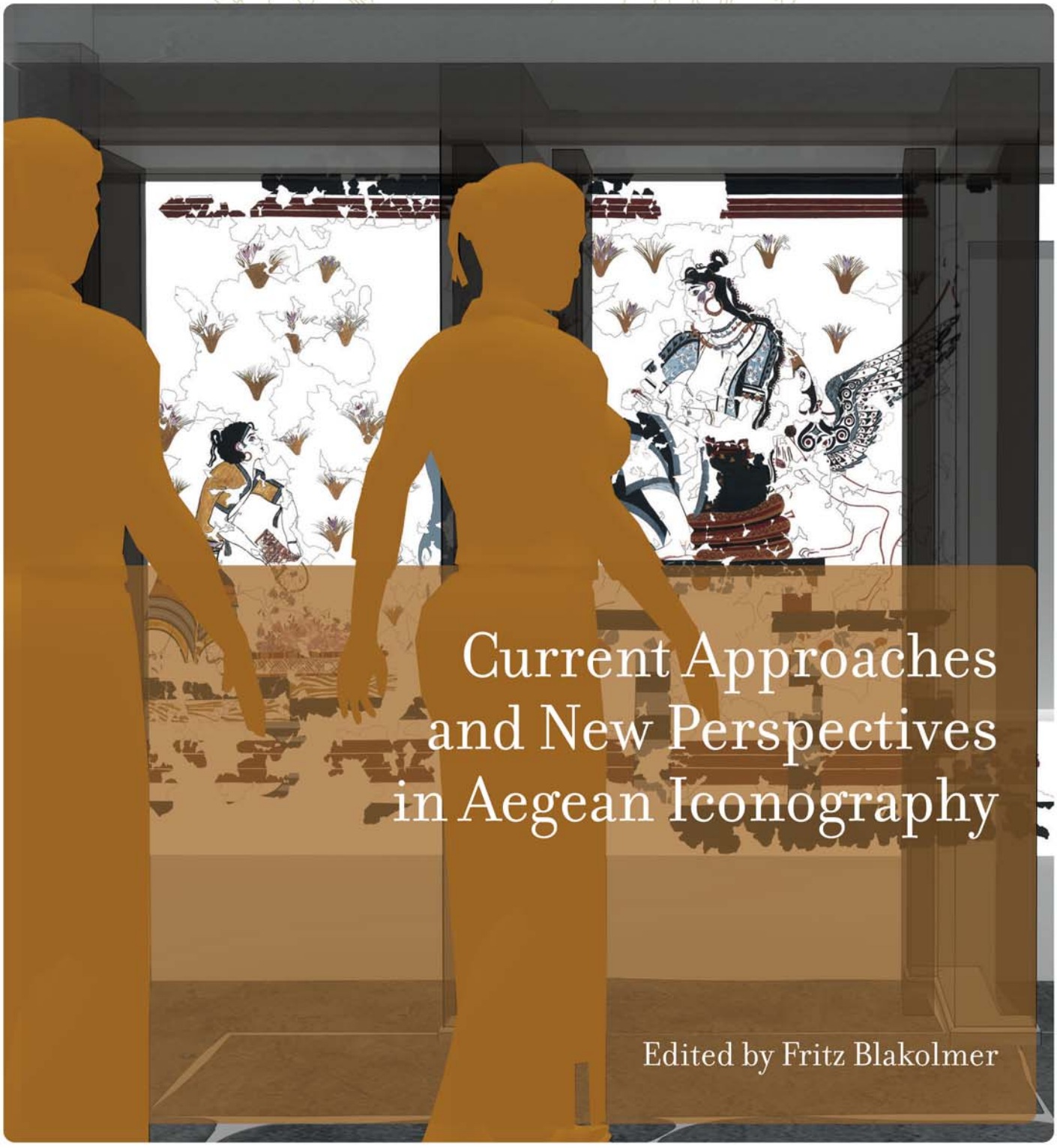
aegis 18

·actes·de·colloques·



Current Approaches and New Perspectives in Aegean Iconography

Edited by Fritz Blakolmer

PUL PRESSES UNIVERSITAIRES DE LOUVAIN

Current Approaches and New Perspectives in Aegean Iconography

Edited by Fritz Blakolmer

Printed with financial support from the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies of the University of Vienna and the Institute of Aegean Prehistory (INSTAP).

universität wien
Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies

INSTAP

http://pul.uclouvain.be
Registration of copyright : D/2020/9964/29
ISBN : 978-2-87558-968-2
ISBN pdf version : 978-2-87558-969-9
Printed in Belgium by CIACO scrl – printer number 100758

Cover design : Marie-Hélène Grégoire
Cover image : model of polythyron hall 3, Xeste 3 in Akrotiri, Thera, by Ute Günkel-Maschek (based on the drawing in A. Vlachopoulos, The wall paintings from the Xeste 3 building at Akrotiri, in *Horizon. A Colloquium on the Prehistory of the Cyclades,* edited by N. Brodie et al., Cambridge (2008), 458, fig. 41.19. Courtesy: A. Vlachopoulos – Akrotiri Excavations / Drawing : Maria Kriga)
Volume set in Arbortext Advanced Print Publisher by Roman Jacobek, Vienna, Austria

Distribution: www.i6doc.com, on-line university publishers
Available on order from bookshops or at
Diffusion universitaire CIACO (University Distributors)
Grand-Rue, 2/14
1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium
Tel: +32 10 47 33 78
Fax: +32 10 45 73 50
duc@ciaco.com

Distributor in France:
Librairie Wallonie-Bruxelles
46 rue Quincampoix
75004 Paris, France
Tel: +33 1 42 71 58 03
Fax: +33 1 42 71 58 09
librairie.wb@orange.fr

Part of the Puzzle: Reconstituting Meaning in a Painted Plaster Fragment from Kea

Lyvia Morgan

Abstract: This paper takes a single large fragment from the Miniature Frieze from the Northeast Bastion at Ayia Irini on Kea as a case study in the interpretation of Aegean wall paintings. As ancient Aegean wall paintings survive only in fragmentary form, decipherment of their iconography is challenging and depends on a cumulative process of analysis. Images frequently need deciphering, a task that rests on an understanding of the relationship between form and technical approaches to the medium, as well as an awareness of the comparative iconography of the culture. But this is only part of the process. Wall paintings *in situ* are experiential, their reception dependent on architectural space and the social and environmental context of the time. Establishing how fragments related to one another within the frieze is a step towards contextualizing the images. How the frieze might have appeared within the architectural space of the room, what function the room might have had, and how the building related to the town and the surrounding environment are all equally crucial. The fragment chosen for analysis proves to be a pivotal scene, key to the reconstitution of meaning within a painting of profound social significance.

Introduction

Approaches and perspectives are intimately bound in the study of iconography, in which meaning is reconstituted through the interpreter. As a case study, I have chosen a large fragment of a miniature wall painting from the Northeast Bastion at Ayia Irini, Kea (**Fig. 1**). I have discussed these miniature paintings in depth in my book on the subject (Morgan 2020), but felt that a focused study of such an important, indeed unique fragment would aptly demonstrate the analytical process of the iconographic interpretation of Aegean wall paintings.

Wall paintings *in situ* are experiential. Through movements of body and glance, the viewer interacts with images that are inextricably linked to their architectural context and functional space and may also reflect outwards to the surrounding environment. Understanding the spatial context is essential to understanding the image within it. Excavation process, architectural layout, associated artifacts, approaches and views all constitute the context of the fragment, while technology and iconography go hand in hand in the interpretative process. Analysis is always a process and reconstituting meaning from a fragment in particular is multi-layered and cumulative.

Fragments

Aegean wall paintings invariably survive as fragments, each fragment a part of the puzzle that was originally a picture. Even the spectacularly preserved paintings of Akrotiri, Thera, some still clinging to the walls, were mostly found in small pieces. Covered in a murky film of soil and the debris of millennia, the images are rarely recognizable before each piece is carefully cleaned. It is the conservator who begins the process of reconstituting meaning.

After cleaning each piece, the conservator looks for joins, often focusing on the backs as much as the front surface, a process that continues during subsequent study. A 'fragment' is therefore frequently (though not always) composed of several joined pieces. The large fragment that is the subject of this study is composed of thirteen pieces, measuring in total $18.2 \times 15.4 \times 0.9–1.2$ cm (**Fig. 1**).[1] Preservation of the painted surface is not a good criterion for matching pieces, as is evi-

[1] Stella Bouzaki, conservator, was responsible for joining 12 fragments; the 13th (left cauldron) was added by the author during study. The fragment was amongst those originally studied by Katherine Abramovitz (1980: 62, 66 (cat. 90), pl. 6a–b). Preliminary discussion of the fragment and the frieze appeared in Morgan 1990; 1995; 1998; 2013; final presentation: Morgan 2020: cat. no. 67, pl. 7; *cf.* Morgan 2018: fig. 10a.

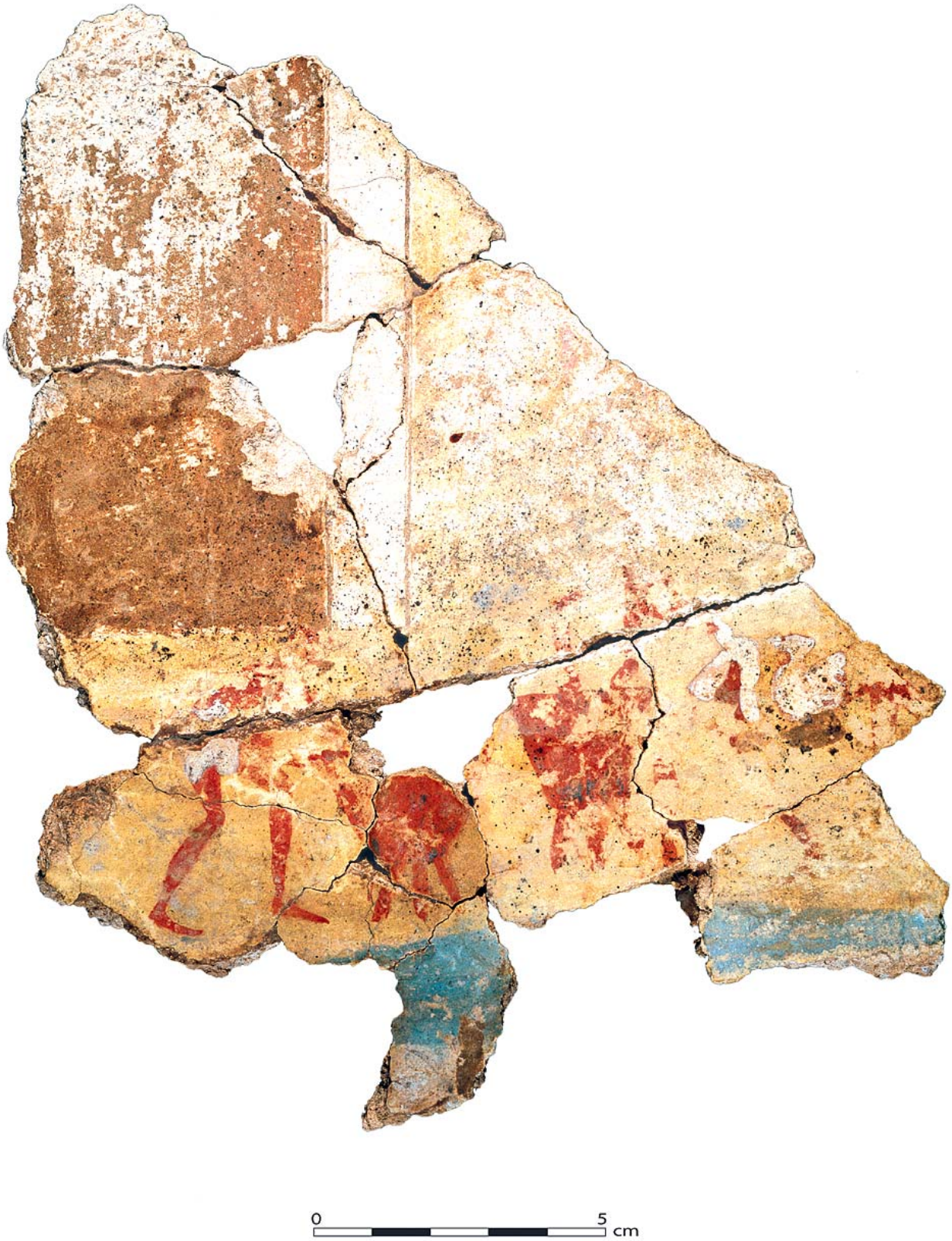


Fig. 1. The fragment at 1:1 scale, from N. 20 of the Northeast Bastion at Ayia Irini, Kea (after Morgan 2020: pl. 7; photograph by C. Mauzy)

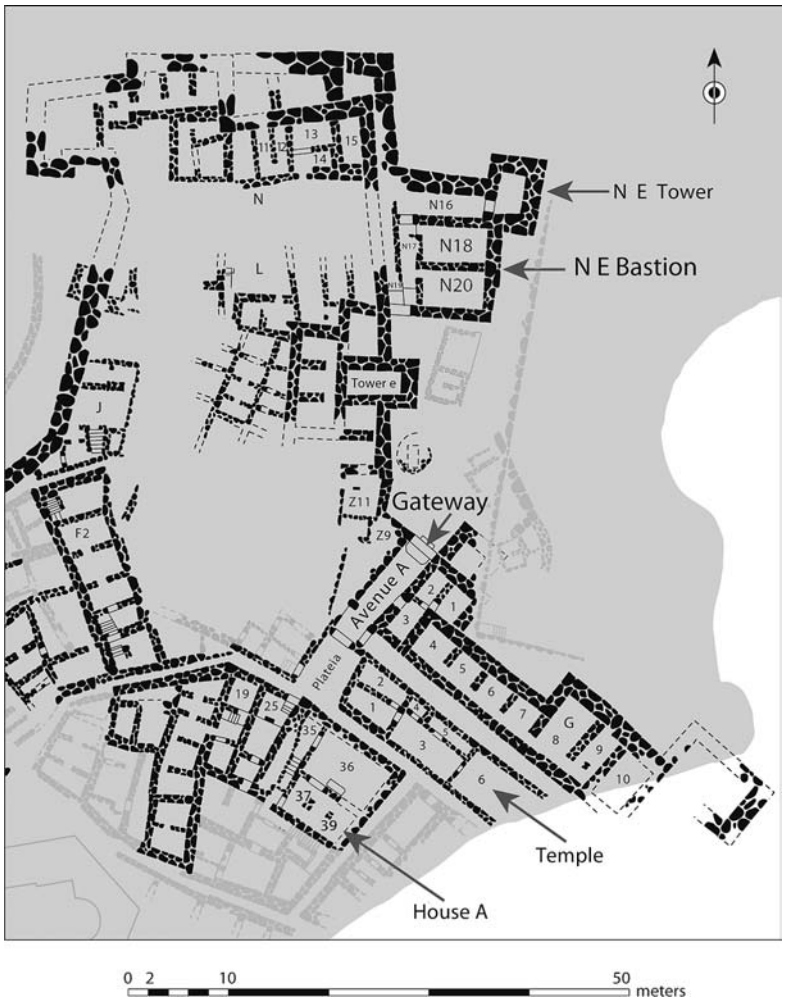
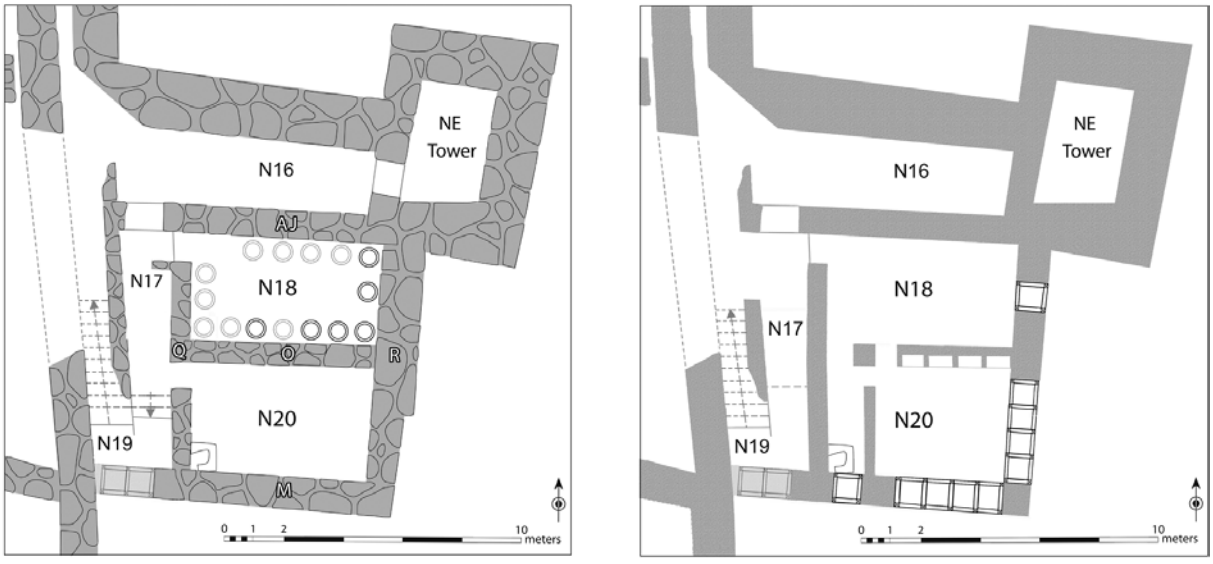


Fig. 2. Plan of the northeastern part of Ayia Irini. Dark walls indicate Period VI and earlier, light walls Period VII and later (adapted by the author from the site plan by R. L. Holzen)



a. Ground floor with existing walls

b. Upper floor with proposed windows, doorways and dividing walls

Fig. 3. Plan of the Northeast Bastion: (a) existing ground floor, (b) upper floor as proposed by the author (after Morgan 2020: fig. 1: 7, detail)

dent in this fragment, in which the joined pieces vary considerably in the degree to which the paint has survived, from minimal (top right) to almost complete (lower left). Similarly, the varying thickness is merely an indication of how much backing plaster has survived. The two critical criteria, both of which must be present, are the physical fit at the broken edges (the join) and the matching of the painted elements (even if only traces survive). This painted plaster fragment, cleaned and compiled, is the raw material from which the iconographer begins the task of reconstituting meaning. Yet a fragment is just that, a fragment of a whole. It is a part of a complex, contingent on context, technique, iconography, and reception, each indispensable in the task of reconstituting meaning.

Context

The fragment in **Fig. 1** was found in pieces in the basement of the Northeast Bastion at Ayia Irini, in the room designated N.20. The Bastion was composed of two large rooms with a staircase linking ground and first floor, with access from a broad corridor that led to a tower (**Figs 2–3**). This impressive complex, located on the edge of the town overlooking the approach to the main Gateway from the coast, was built as an extension to the fortification wall at the beginning of Period VI (LC I / LM IA) and was destroyed by earthquake at the beginning of Period VII (LC II / LM I B) (Gorogianni & Fitzsimons 2017: 148). At the time of excavation, the rooms were filled with earthquake debris, including painted plaster fragments and flagstones, which had both fallen from the upper storey. The ground floor walls of N.20 survived to such a height that evidence for parts of the upper storey walls and doorways could be gleaned.[2] The Miniature Frieze would have run continuously around the walls of N.20 and above the windows and doors (**Figs 3 b** and **7**). In the destruction by earthquake, the dividing wall between the two rooms fell northwards. The spread of the fragments, scattered between the two rooms but mostly in N.20, reflects both the positions on the walls and the direction of the collapse.

As a first step in piecing together the puzzle, each fragment received an identifying number according to its find context, laterally and vertically. From this information, I created a grid, charting the fragments in terms of context and subject. The cauldron fragment was found in the southeast part of N.20, at a depth that contained many other important elements of human action. A fine grid system at the time of excavation (as was done for the wall paintings at Akrotiri, Thera) would have greatly facilitated the task of finding associations, but only loose coordinates were given for the lateral spread. Even so, paintings disintegrate and collapse in what are sometimes unpredictable ways. Other means of identifying connections were necessary: architectural, technical and iconographic.

In building up a jigsaw, one invariably begins with the edges. In the Aegean, the plaster for a miniature frieze was laid between two parallel wooden beams set into the wall and, as the plaster was spread, a bulging profile and flat edge was formed at the top and bottom as it pressed against the beams. These flat edges, along with mud, straw, and striations or ridges on the backs, and (less frequently encountered) curved plaster from the corners between two walls, provide the physical clues of architectural context.

Technique

Nowadays, fragments of wall paintings are scanned at high definition at the site. When I first studied the Kea fragments, in the 1980s, the fragments were photographed and I drew every one that

[2] Ayia Irini was excavated in the 1960s-70s by the University of Cincinnati, directed by John Caskey, under the auspices of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. The Northeast Bastion was excavated in 1964 and 1966 by John Coleman and William Kitteridge (Caskey 1971: 374–376). At the time, N.18 and N.20 were called M. I and M. II. Publication of the Northern Sector is being prepared by Rodney Fitzsimons and Evi Gorogianni. I am grateful to both for information on the Northeast Bastion architecture and pottery respectively.

was sufficiently well preserved to be able to determine form (**Fig. 4**).[3] The aim of the drawing was not to produce a facsimile but to record what was visible on the surface.

In order to see traces of paint barely visible to the naked eye, I used a powerful magnifying glass, whenever possible in the natural light of the sun. With this method, I was able to determine the layers of paint and the order of applying colours. Understanding which pigment overlies which enables one to determine the pattern of disintegration, a crucial step to understanding the original form. This is rarely possible from looking at photographs or scans, in which the three-dimensionality of paint layers is flattened. The ideal combination is to scan the fragment (or photograph), enabling one to enlarge the image later on a screen, along with first-hand study of the pigment layers in order to reconstruct their three-dimensionality.

How paints adhere or disintegrate has much to do with the techniques of application but also with the properties of pigments. Although the background colour may have been applied while the plaster was wet or dampened *(buon fresco* or *mezzo fresco),* the Miniature Frieze of Ayia Irini was largely executed in *secco* technique (using a binder such as gum, lime or egg), as indicated by the flaking of the pigment layers (see Morgan 2020: ch. 9). Some pigments, such as charcoal, disintegrate more readily than others. Other pigments adhere to the plaster better when white paint, made of thickly applied *(impasto)* calcium carbonate like the plaster itself, overlies them. This can be seen in our fragment, on which parts of the red bodies and almost all of the black hair of the men has disappeared, but the white loincloths and the red beneath them has survived intact. Similarly, the blue sea that ran all along the base of the frieze is best preserved in areas in which blobs of *impasto* white representing spume has been superimposed.

When searching for associations between fragments, technical considerations can be crucial. Blue pigment (whether the calcium-copper silicate known as Egyptian Blue, used throughout the Aegean, or the less frequently encountered mineral riebeckite) consists of larger grains than ochres and, therefore, adheres less easily to the plaster. While yellow ochre could be applied to damp plaster, blue would not have adhered well using this technique and is therefore likely to have been applied to dry plaster using a binder. In the Kea Miniature Frieze, large areas designated blue for the sea were left as reserved plaster when the yellow background was painted, and the surface roughened to facilitate adherence. This means that one could distinguish between a fragment of sea and a fragment of river or coast, since for the former the blue was painted directly onto the plaster and for the latter it overlaid the yellow ground.

Similarly, different pigments or combinations of pigments were used for specific iconographic elements. In the Thera Miniature Frieze, for example, Egyptian Blue was used for river, rocks, and town, whereas riebeckite was used for the sea (Vlachopoulos & Sotiropoulou 2012). In the Kea Miniature Frieze, the blue was dulled with a layer of grey or black for the depiction of rocks, distinguishing them from the clearer blue of the sea. When sorting hundreds of fragments, such clues are vital in piecing together the picture. Technical observations, iconographic interpretation, and reconstruction go hand in hand.

Iconographic Components

From the perspective of the modern viewer, the fragment is composed of a number of recognizable elements, a few ambiguous ones, and faint traces of indeterminate parts of the picture. Each of these

[3] When placed next to the photograph these study drawings (which were not originally intended for publication) proved to be useful guides to interpreting the distribution of colours on the fragment. It should be noted that the pencil outlines merely indicate form. The men in the drawing in **Fig. 4 (right),** for example, are not outlined in the original.

Fig. 4. The fragment at 1:2 scale (photograph by C. Mauzy; study drawing by the author; after Morgan 2020: cat. no. 67)

has features that afford interpretation on the basis of their components and technical approach. Unlike some fragments, there is no uncertainty as to orientation.

In the top left quadrant, there is a large expanse of brown next to a vertical strip of white (**Fig. 4**). This white strip is actually reserved plaster, bordered on both sides by string lines impressed while the plaster was damp. The brown was painted directly onto the plaster and not onto yellow ground; therefore the whole area was reserved at the time of planning the picture. Amongst all the fragments of the Kea Miniature Frieze, the only places in which string lines mark the divisions of elements is in depictions of towns (Morgan 2020: chs. 4, 10). This, then, is architecture. However, it is unusual in that there are no windows or doors. In addition, the tone of brown ochre is unmatched amongst the other buildings, while the find place of the fragment indicates that it was on the opposite wall to that of the town. To go further in the interpretation of this building, associated elements need to be deciphered.

Beneath the building lies the action: red ochre limbs and white loincloths identify the main participants as two men, bending forwards and reaching out to what are clearly recognizable as huge tripod cauldrons. The heads have not survived, but, on the left, specks of red, a white fleck of eye and a patch of black hair are evidence for a face in profile. A third figure can be discerned on the far right. This is an ambiguous element, as only the white loincloth has fully survived. However, the shape of the white is defined, hence recognizable as cinched waist, rounded buttocks, and frontal cloth hanging sideways rather than down, implying that the figure is seated, facing towards the right. This interpretation is supported by the surviving patches of red extending horizontally and down to the right, which could be the man's legs, and the brown ochre rectangle immediately beneath, which makes sense as a stool. In addition, although the torso has not survived, there are traces of red higher up, at the broken edge of the fragment, which are correctly positioned for the head of the figure, and resting above the red is a tiny patch of black, identifiable as hair. Given the poor state of preservation, interpretation of this element as a man facing to right, wearing a loincloth and seated on a

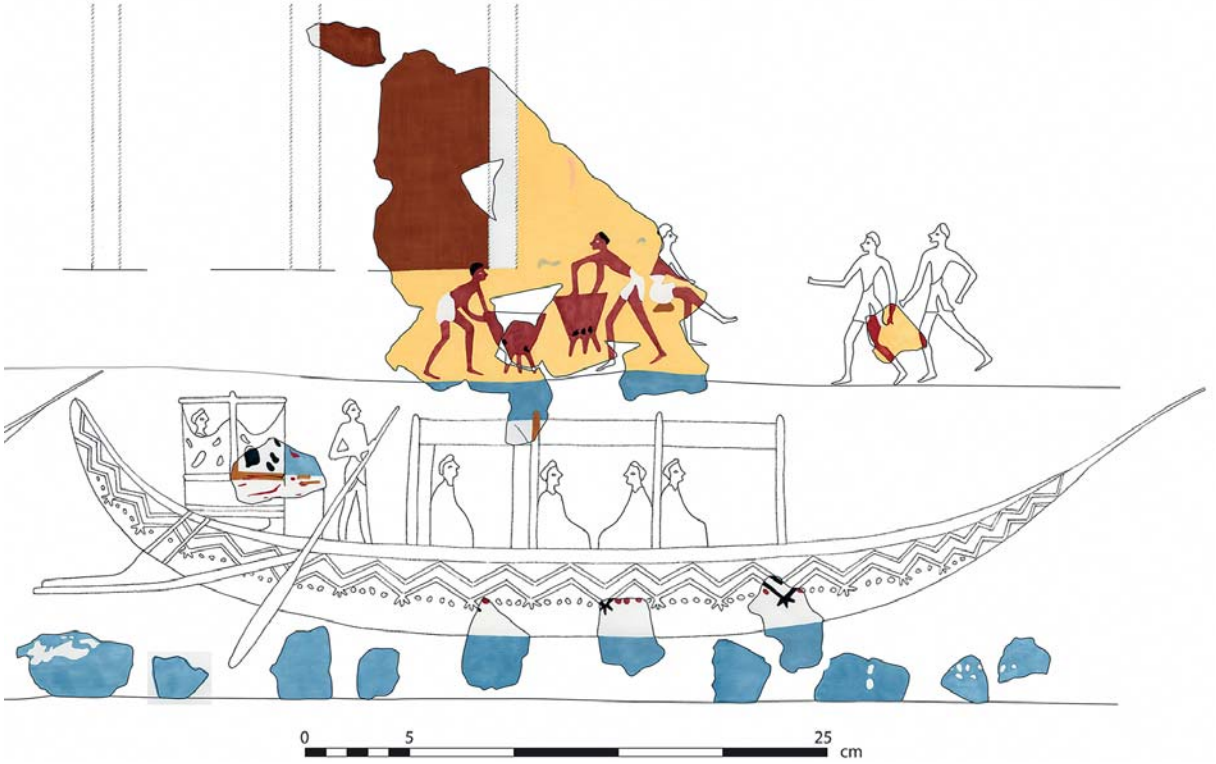


Fig. 5. Reconstruction coloured drawing with associated fragments by the author (after Morgan 2020: fig. 7: 8, detail)

stool, was dependent on a close examination of the relationships between surviving patches of colour in order to decipher what is left of the original form.

Beneath the action is a different zone, consisting of blue, divided from the yellow ground along a curved line, with, at the lowest part of the fragment, white and ochre. The blue is painted over the yellow at the division between the two but over roughened plaster further down. This technical approach indicates that the blue represents the sea. At the bottom of the fragment, a horizontal area of white with a faint curved black line is painted over the blue and is intersected by a narrow yellow ochre vertical structure. The most likely interpretation of this element, both structurally and contextually, is that it represents a sail with a mast. However, the curved line does not correspond to the ropes of a working sail but rather suggests material that is furled. Fortunately, a fragment of another ship has survived that clarifies the form (Morgan 2020: cat. no. 71, figs 7.8, 7.26, pl. 8). It shows the same relationship between blue sea, white horizontal and ochre vertical structure, but there the white area includes a design and is bordered beneath by a horizontal ochre structure of approximately the same width as the vertical one. This turns the interpretation towards an awning, a reading that is strengthened in the other fragment by the presence of blue painted beneath (the sea) with faint traces of red, suggestive of a male head. Several other fragments of ships survive, including one of a hull painted with dolphins (Morgan 2018: fig. 4a; 2020: cat. no. 72, pl. 8).

Comparanda

Up to this point, the interpretative process has focused on identification on the basis of form and technical considerations. Before examining the almost completely destroyed upper right quadrant, the time has come to consider each of these zones – building / men with cauldrons / sea and ship – in terms of iconographic comparanda, a crucial aspect of the interpretative process that goes hand in hand with the wider issue of pictorial meanings.

Fig. 6. Watercolour painting visualizing part of the Miniature Frieze by the author (after Morgan 2020: fig. 7: 26, detail)

The building is exceptional in terms of both structure and associations. All other buildings in the frieze have their surfaces broken up into definable units of colour and texture. Nor is it likely to be a fortification wall (like the one in the Arrival Town of the Thera Miniature Frieze[4]), as there are no indications of stonework. Such a large expanse of undifferentiated colour is unique. Equally significant is the fact that the other buildings, which together can be seen as a town, are associated with women, not men. This is the only one in proximity to men, whose activities all take place out-of-doors. Other related fragments suggest there was at least a second area of brown divided by white (**Figs 5** and **6**). The position of the building, in proximity to the coast and a ship, along with their windowless structure so uncharacteristic of the towns, suggests that it could represent shipsheds (Morgan 2020: chs. 4, 12). There may well be a parallel for this in the coastal building from the north wall of the Thera Miniature Frieze (Doumas 1992: pls 26, 28; Shaw 1985: 23–24; Shaw 1990: 430–431) and on a seal impression from Zakros (*CMS* II 7, no. 219). Shipsheds have been identified at a number of Cretan sites, notably Kommos (Shaw & Shaw 2006: 70–85).

The figures in the zone of action are painted in red ochre, the defining colour of men in Aegean Bronze Age art, and these figures wear loincloths which are male garments (Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1971; Rehak 1996). Gender is, therefore, a given. Had the figures been white, as in some of the Knossos Taureadors (Marinatos & Palyvou 2007), ambiguity would have pertained, despite the wearing of loincloths, and alternative interpretations sought.

All the figures in the Kea Miniature (some 70 men and 5 women) have animated movements or gestures appropriate to their actions. The flexed back foot of the two men with cauldrons denotes action and is echoed in walking figures, both in this and other paintings (*e. g.* Phylakopi miniature fragment, Morgan 2007b: frontispiece, fig. 9.11) and in glyptic scenes (*e. g.* *CMS* II 6, no. 29, Ayia Triada). Several other male figures from the frieze are clearly walking and, as they were found in the same context, were surely associated with this scene (**Fig. 6**).

Reconstruction of the fugitive figure on the right of the fragment as seated is problematic, as a seated position is not characteristic of male figures in Aegean art. There are, however, some instances of seated men (Younger 1995: 168–170), including two of the men on land and those on the ships in the Thera Miniature Frieze (Doumas 1992: pls 28, 44: land; pls 36–38: ships), or occasionally on sealstones (*e. g.* *CMS* I, no. 263; V, no. 184b; VII, no. 130). None of these depictions have a visible built seat, though one of the men from the Thera frieze perches on what appears to be a boulder. Beneath the men on a seal impression from Knossos (*CMS* II 8, no. 242) is a crescent shape suggestive of a stool without legs, comparable to the ochre rectangle in the Kea painting. Tenuous though the reconstruction of the figure in the fragment may be, these comparanda demonstrate its plausibility.

[4] For illustrations and discussion of the Thera Miniature Frieze see Morgan 1988; Televantou 1994; and for extensive colour illustrations: Doumas 1992: pls 26–48.

Fig. 7. Visualization of how Room N.20 might have looked, showing the likely position of parts of the frieze. Design and watercolour paintings by the author; computer realization by N. Math (after Morgan 2020: fig. 7: 27)

The cauldrons are the key to the scene and, to a large extent, to the overarching theme of the frieze. A later painting from Hall 46 at Pylos shows men in procession carrying smaller cauldrons (Lang 1969: 21 H 48, pls 15, 116, 122). They wear greaves and are accompanied by men with hunting dogs, linking the cauldrons with meat from the hunt and no doubt feasting for which there is considerable archaeological evidence at Pylos (Bendall 2004; Stocker & Davis 2004). But there is no parallel in any known Aegean wall painting for the action shown in the Kea fragment. Such a scene survives only on a seal impression from Knossos on which two figures stand either side of a huge tripod cauldron (*CMS* II 8, no. 275; Morgan 2015: fig. 5; 2018: fig. 10b). They bend forward with outstretched arms towards what looks like the leg of a hoofed animal being put into the cauldron. A tree above denotes outdoor space. Cooking meat is surely the action depicted. On the Kea fragment a small but significant detail is revealing: at the base of each cauldron there are black marks indicative of burning, although no fire is shown. What is inside is evidently hot, and unless we entertain the unlikely idea that they are washing or dyeing clothes, cooking is the answer.

A Crucial Scene

In the previous sections, the process of iconographic interpretation has focused on the decipherment of elements in the fragment. This process rests on technical considerations, structural identification (in which an idiom is correlated to the physical world) and comparative iconography. It is now time to reflect on the significance of the scene within the frieze before ending with its wider spatial and temporal context. This stage of interpretation is only feasible after every readable fragment has been deciphered and, as far as possible, the relative position of each within the frieze has been ascertained. The way is then open for visualization of the painting within its architectural context (**Figs 6–7**).

The following designations are no more than appellations, since the fragments were not found adhering to the walls, but they are based on a close study of the find contexts of the fragments and their associations (Morgan 2020: ch. 7). On the north wall, opposite the scene of cauldrons and ships, was a town by a river associated with women (Morgan 2018: 276, fig. 5; 2020: fig. 7:1), as well as

a probable herding scene (Morgan 2020: fig. 7: 7). This represents the urban settlement associated with the overarching narrative and most probably reflects the town of Ayia Irini itself. On the adjacent east wall was a marsh scene. Devoid of human or animal action, this extraordinary landscape painting included a river, a marsh with riverlets of muddy water, riverine plants, and a wide expanse of sea beneath (**Fig. 7**, left; Morgan 2020: figs 7: 19–7: 22). It no doubt ran along the entire wall. On the opposite, west wall there was a hunt scene in which dogs chase fallow deer (Morgan 2020: figs 5: 1, 7: 17; *cf.* Marinatos & Morgan 2005: pl. 15: 2; Morgan 2018: fig. 9b). East and west walls, then, focused on the natural environment and animal action respectively. North and south walls are where the human action took place: largely female on the north, male on the south.

It is the south wall to which we can attribute the scene with cauldrons and ships. Also attributable to this wall is a rocky landscape (Morgan 2020: fig. 7.25). Looking now at the very poorly preserved top right quadrant of our fragment, we can just make out traces of blue and pink paint (**Fig. 4**). The only part of the frieze in which these colours appear in combination is the rocky landscape. As such, it is highly likely that the traces of pink and blue paint should be interpreted as the lower part of the rocks (**Fig. 6**). In making this association, I was left with a conundrum: above the rocky hills are multicoloured descending rocks, a characteristic feature of some Aegean art. However, no such pieces were found in association with the buildings. That discrepancy is reflected in the visualization in **Fig. 6**, which does not assume continuance of the rocks, leaving the question open. As an iconographic comparison for this combination of rocky hills, coast and ships, we need look no further than the Thera Ship Procession Frieze, both the Departure and Arrival Towns having such a setting (Doumas 1992: pls 35–38).

Significantly, also attributable to this south wall are scenes of men wearing white robes, bringing containers or greeting one another with raised hand gestures. Some were apparently walking in procession from both left and right (Morgan 2015: fig. 1a; 2018: fig. 6; 2020: fig. 7: 11), strikingly echoing the Meeting on the Hill from the Thera Miniature Frieze. Some meet by a river, others on rocks (Morgan 2015: fig. 1b; 2018: fig. 8; 2020: figs 7: 12–7: 14). All of these scenes are related contextually to the cauldrons and ships, as they were found in the same area at similar depths. From the same context came fragments of horses and a chariot (Morgan 2015: fig. 1c; 2018: fig. 7a; 2020: fig. 7: 10). This extraordinary find constitutes the earliest known representation of a chariot in Aegean wall painting and is an unequivocal sign of prestige and pageantry. Evidently there were processions on land and sea: men walking in robes, chariots, and ships. All of this points to an event of great significance. In addition, a single fragment of a hunter was found towards the west end of the wall, in the vicinity of the deer hunt on the adjacent wall (Morgan 2015: fig. 1d; 2018: fig. 9b; 2020: fig. 7: 16). He carries a pole from which hangs an animal carcass and walks to the left in the direction of the cauldron scene.

Putting all this together, a group of scenes with an associated narrative can be discerned. Dogs (trained by man) hunt deer; a hunter brings an animal carcass towards the cauldrons; men bring containers, most likely filled with gift offerings of food; men cook, presumably venison, in large cauldrons in an outdoor, public space. A feast is imminent. At the same time, men dressed in long robes and gesturing in greeting meet in ceremonial procession, and chariot(s) and ships process on land and sea. Pageantry is under way implying a public festival. Our fragment is the lynchpin to the narrative, crucial as it is both to the message of the imminent public feast and to the spatial significance of the sea.

The Wider Context

Unlike all other buildings at Ayia Irini (except for the Temple), the Northeast Bastion had no evidence of household industries. Instead, the finds consisted of a wide variety of pottery suitable for drinking, pouring, eating, and storage and production of food (Fitzsimons & Gorogianni 2017; Gorogianni & Fitzsimons 2017: 146 and n. 8). Several pithoi were found *in situ* in the basement of N.18 and a few fallen from the upper storey. A service staircase linked the basement and the upper floor. Significantly, in the southwest corner of N.20 on the upper storey there was a drain (Caskey 1971: 376, fig. 10) near which were found concentrations of cups (E. Gorogianni personal communication). Evidence suggests that there were two doors through from N.18 to N.20 (R. Fitzsimons personal communication) and, as such, I have reconstructed a partition wall that would create a narrow room in the western part of N.20 to accommodate the drain along with storage accessible from the service staircase (**Fig. 3b**). Finally, in N.18 there were several panel paintings of plants, both reeds (echoing the marsh landscape in N.20 and the coast outside) and myrtle and blackberry brambles (both known ingredients in meat stews and wine) (Morgan 2018: fig. 11; 2020: figs 8:1–8:9).

Where each scene in the Miniature Frieze was painted on the walls of room N.20 was significant in terms of the wider context of the environment (*cf.* Morgan 2007a on orientation). As we saw, the marsh landscape was painted on the east wall. Looking out of the windows that must have existed beneath the frieze on this wall, one would have seen the coast. Today, this coast consists of a marshy strip between sea and land as well as a dried up riverbed leading northwards. We do not know what this coast would have looked like in the Bronze Age, but the coincidence is striking. On the adjacent north wall was the urban scene with town and women as well as the herding scene. On the south wall was the scene of men cooking in cauldrons by the sea, ships, and the rocky landscape. The town of Ayia Irini lies to the north of the open sea just as the painted town lies to the north of the painted ships. In life, as one approaches the northwestern part of the island of Kea, where Ayia Irini is situated, one sees the coast dramatically framed by hills, as one does from the site itself.

Windows beneath the south wall frieze would have directly overlooked the main Gateway to the town, with the sea beyond (**Fig. 2**). Depending on the sea level and the heights of other buildings, the view may have overlooked the eastern harbour. Between the town walls and the sea was an area that could have been used for the mooring of ships and there is a possibility that shipsheds existed on the coast.[5] If so, our exploration of iconographic significance leads to a further correlation between the painted scene and the contextual location, which would define the action within the scene in terms of space. Crucially, between the Bastion and the Gateway lay a large open space outside the fortification wall, ideal for large gatherings and a place in which one could easily imagine a public festival taking place involving cooking in large cauldrons. Inside and outside the Bastion appear to have been coordinated: interior painting with exterior place.

Reception

It is for all the reasons discussed above – iconography, finds, architecture, and the layout of the land and sea – that I have identified the Northeast Bastion rooms and their wall paintings as concerned with banqueting (Morgan 1995: 243; 1998: 202; 2020: ch. 12), an identification corroborated by recent analysis of the architecture and pottery (Fitzsimons & Gorogianni 2017; Gorogianni & Fitzsimons 2017: 145–149).

Like the Thera Miniature Frieze, the Kea frieze, and indeed the building in which it was housed, is dated to the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, a time of phenomenal expansion of contacts between

[5] A long wall to the southeast of the Northeast Bastion (**Fig. 2**, in grey) dated to the Hellenistic period may have belonged to shipsheds (Jack Davis personal communication 2012). Bronze Age moorings, if they existed here, would have been to the east of this, closer to the sea.

Minoan Crete, the Cycladic islands and the Mainland. Ayia Irini was a crucial port in the trade of metals and would have received many ships from abroad. Hospitality and commensal feasting would have been crucial in the context of intercultural relations. The Northeast Bastion was strategically placed, within the newly extended fortification wall, overlooking the approach to the town from the sea. As such, the large rooms provided an ideal location for commensal gatherings, no doubt for leading men of the town and important visitors from abroad.

Room N.20 was both inward and outward looking, protectively accommodating elite gatherings inside, while providing privileged views of the populace and approaching visitors outside in an open space in which public cooking, feasting, and display of pageantry could all take place. The cauldrons and ships scene provides the link between the two domains.

From the individual fragment to its broadest context, meaning accumulates and consolidates in the mind of the interpreter. At first a small but significant part of the puzzle, the scene gradually emerges as a crucial part of the overall picture through re-contextualization. As such, it provides a vital clue to reconstituting meaning in a once influential work of Aegean iconography. More broadly, in considering how the painting might have been received within the community and the impression it must have made on those who were invited into the room, it sheds light on the significant role that wall paintings played in facilitating social cohesion.

References

Abramovitz 1980
K. Abramovitz, Frescoes from Ayia Irini, Keos, Parts II–IV, *Hesperia* 49 (1980), 57–85.

Bendall 2004
L. M. Bendall, Fit for a King? Hierarchy, Exclusion, Aspiration and Desire in the Social Structure of Mycenaean Banqueting, in *Food, Cuisine and Society in Prehistoric Greece* (*Sheffield Studies in Aegean Archaeology* 5), edited by P. Halstead & J. C. Barrett, Oxford (2004), 105–135.

Caskey 1971
J. Caskey, Investigations in Keos. Part I: Excavations and Explorations, 1966–1970, *Hesperia* 40 (1971), 359–396.

Doumas 1992
Ch. Doumas, *The Wall-Paintings of Thera,* Athens (1992).

Fitzsimons & Gorogianni 2017
R. Fitzsimons & E. Gorogianni, Dining on the Fringe? A Possible Minoan-Style Banquet Hall at Ayia Irini, Kea and the Minoanization of the Aegean Islands, in *Minoan Architecture and Urbanism. New Perspectives on an Ancient Built Environment,* edited by Q. Letesson & C. Knappett, Oxford (2017), 334–360.

Gorogianni & Fitzsimons 2017
E. Gorogianni & R. D. Fitzsimons, Social complexity in Late Middle Bronze Age and Early Late Bronze Age Cyclades: a view from Ayia Irini, in *Social Change in Aegean Prehistory,* edited by C. Wiersma & S. Voutsaki, Oxford (2017), 124–158.

Lang 1969
M. L. Lang, *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia, II: The Frescoes,* Princeton (1969).

Marinatos & Morgan 2005
N. Marinatos & L. Morgan, The Dog Pursuit Scenes from Tell el Dab^{c}a and Kea, in *Aegean Wall Painting,* edited by L. Morgan (*BSA Studies* 13), London (2005), 119–122.

Marinatos & Palyvou 2007
N. Marinatos & C. Palyvou, The Taureador Frescoes from Knossos: A New Study, in M. Bietak, N. Marinatos & C. Palyvou, *Taureador Scenes in Tell el-Dab^{c}a (Avaris) and Knossos,* (*Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Denkschriften der Gesamtakademie* 43), Vienna (2007), 115–126.

Morgan 1988
L. Morgan, *The Miniature Wall Paintings of Thera. A Study in Aegean Culture and Iconography,* Cambridge (1988).

Morgan 1990
L. Morgan, Island Iconography: Thera, Kea, Milos, in *Thera and the Aegean World III, Proceedings of the Third International Congress, Santorini, Greece, 3–9 September 1989,* I, edited by D. Hardy, C. G. Doumas, J. A. Sakellarakis & P. M. Warren, London (1990), 252–266.

Morgan 1995
L. Morgan, The Wall Paintings of Kea, *BICS* 40 (1995), 243–244.

Morgan 1998
L. Morgan, The Wall Paintings of the North East Bastion at Ayia Irini, Kea, in *Kea-Kythnos: History and Archaeology. Proceedings of an International Symposium Kea-Kythnos. 22–25 June 1994,* edited by L. G. Mendoni & A. Mazarakis Ainian (*Meletimata* 27), Paris (1998), 201–210.

Morgan 2007 a
L. Morgan, Paintings, Harbors, and Intercultural Relations, in *Krinoi kai Limenai: Studies in Honor of Joseph and Maria Shaw,* edited by Ph. P. Betancourt, M. C. Nelson & H. Williams (*Prehistory Monographs* 22), Philadelphia (2007), 117–129.

Morgan 2007b
L. Morgan, The Painted Plasters and their Relation to the Wall Paintings of the Pillar Crypt, in *Excavations at Phylakopi 1974–76,* edited by C. Renfrew, N. Brodie, C. Morris & C. Scarre (*BSA* Suppl. 42), London (2007), 371–399.

Morgan 2013
L. Morgan, The Power of Paint: Kea and Beyond, *BICS* 56.1 (2013), 126–127.

Morgan 2015
L. Morgan, Why is No One Eating? The Iconography of Feasting in the Ancient World, in: *Ancient Mediterranean Interconnections: Papers in Honor of Nanno Marinatos,* edited by P. P. Creasman & R. H. Wilkinson (*Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 7: 3), Tucson, AZ (2015), 49–64.

Morgan 2018
L. Morgan, Inspiration and Innovation: The Creation of Wall Paintings in the Absence of a Pictorial Pottery Tradition at Ayia Irini, Kea, in *ΧΡΩΣΤΗΡΕΣ. Paintbrushes: Wall-Painting and Vase-Painting of the 2nd Millennium BC in Dialogue. Workshop held at Akrotiri, Thera,* 24–26 May 2013, edited by A. Vlachopoulos, Ioannina (2018), 277–291.

Morgan 2020
L. Morgan, *Wall Paintings and Social Context. The Northeast Bastion at Ayia Irini,* (*Keos* XI), Philadelphia (2020)

Rehak 1996
P. Rehak, Aegean Breechcloths, Kilts, and the Keftiu Paintings, *AJA* 100 (1996), 35–51.

Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1971
E. Sapouna-Sakellaraki, *Μινωϊκὸν Ζῶμα,* Athens (1971).

Shaw 1985
M. C. Shaw, LM I building J/T and LM III buildings N and P at Kommos: Their Nature and Possible Uses as Residences, Palaces, and/or Emporia, in *A Great Minoan Triangle in Southcentral Crete: Kommos, Hagia Triada, Phaistos,* edited by J. Shaw (*Scripta Mediterranea* 6), Toronto (1985), 19–25.

Shaw 1990
J. W. Shaw, Bronze Age Aegean Harboursides, in *Thera and the Aegean World III, Proceedings of the Third International Congress, Santorini, Greece, 3–9 September 1989,* I, edited by D. Hardy, C. G. Doumas, J. A. Sakellarakis & P. M. Warren, London (1990), 420–436.

Shaw & Shaw 2006
J. W. Shaw & M. C. Shaw, eds., *Kommos V. The Monumental Minoan Buildings at Kommos,* Princeton (2006).

Stocker & Davis 2004
S. R. Stocker & J. L. Davis, Animal Sacrifice, Archives, and Feasting at the Palace of Nestor, in *The Mycenaean Feast,* edited by J. C. Wright, Princeton (2004), 59–75.

Televantou 1994
Ch. A. Televantou, *Ακρωτήρι Θήρας. Οι Τοιχογραφίες της Δυτικής Οικίας* (*Βιβλιοθήκη της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* 143), Athens (1994).

Vlachopoulos & Sotiropoulou 2012
A. Vlachopoulos & S. Sotiropoulou, The Blue Colour on the Akrotiri Wall-Paintings: From the Palette of the Theran Painter to the Laboratory Analysis, *Talanta* 44 (2012), 245–272.

Younger 1995
J. G. Younger, The Iconography of Rulership: A Conspectus, in *The Role of the Ruler in the Prehistoric Aegean, Proceedings of a Panel Discussion presented at the Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America, New Orleans, Louisiana, 28 December 1992, with additions,* edited by P. Rehak (*Aegaeum* 11), Liège (1995), 151–211.

Contents

aegis

- rapports de fouilles
- thèses de doctorat
- monographies
- actes de colloques

This volume

In the archaeology of the Aegean Bronze Age our approaches and methods of analysing and interpreting pictorial images have changed throughout recent decades, and the questions we pose to the iconographic material have increased in complexity. As a consequence, the aim of this volume is to present an overview of current trends and individual methodological attempts towards arriving at an adequate understanding of Minoan, Cycladic, and Mycenaean iconography. Scholars active in this field of research have each contributed an article on a specific artistic object, an individual image, or a group of artefacts and their iconography, in order to illustrate the methodology they use in dealing with Aegean images and their wider context. The focus lies on the presentation of new, previously unpublished or neglected material from recent or old excavations, new reconstructions and interpretations of long-known artistic objects as well as superordinate pictorial subjects. The contributions focus on prominent artistic media such as seal images (on seals, signet-rings, and sealings) and mural paintings yet also include other artistic genera such as metal inlay work, relief images, pictorial pottery, and terracotta figurines. This collection of 18 case studies provides a representative cross-section that portrays up-to-date research on analysing and interpreting the iconography of the Aegean Bronze Age. This volume therefore makes visible current scholarly approaches and simultaneously provides new perspectives into Aegean iconography.

The authors

Fritz Blakolmer, Anne P. Chapin, Janice L. Crowley, Jack L. Davis, Veronika Dubcová, Ute Günkel-Maschek, Olga Krzyszkowska, Nanno Marinatos, Pietro Militello, Lyvia Morgan, Irene Nikolakopoulou, Diamantis Panagiotopoulos, Irini Papageorgiou, Lena Papazoglou-Manioudaki, Giorgos Rethemiotakis, Sharon R. Stocker, Evangelia Tsangaraki, Andreas G. Vlachopoulos, John G. Younger

The AEGIS (Aegean Interdisciplinary Studies) series attempts to make the results of new archaeological research on Aegean and especially Minoan societies available to the scientific and wider public at a rapid pace. Monographs, PhD dissertations, proceedings of scientific meetings and excavation reports complete each other to offer a general view of this time frame which is of primary importance to understand the ancient world and its historical, political, symbolical and social sequences.

100758 XXXX €
9 782875 589682