

the Hellenic Society of Humanities, and he has received Honorary Doctorates not only from Oxford, but also from Trinity College, Dublin, and the universities of Newcastle, Hull and Bristol; moreover he has been invited to deliver the Dean West Lectures at Princeton, the Flexner Lectures at Bryn Mawr, the Sather Lectures at the University of California and the Jackson Lectures at Harvard, all of which are invitations of great distinction. I know of hardly any living classical scholar who can boast of such honours.

Greece, Sir Denys, with which you have close and old ties, not only because you have devoted so much of your life to the study of its classical and post classical poetry, but because it was here that as a young man you met your future wife, then Miss Katharine Elizabeth Dohan of Philadelphia, welcomes you very warmly indeed, and the Academy of Athens, as the president Professor Louros has already said, is proud to have you to-night as its guest. Your visit I have no doubt will strengthen greatly the ties between the British Academy and the Academy of Athens, a link we greatly value.

ΟΜΙΛΙΑ ΤΟΥ SIR DENYS PAGE
ΜΕΛΟΥΣ ΤΗΣ ΒΡΕΤΑΝΝΙΚΗΣ ΑΚΑΔΗΜΙΑΣ

THE MINIATURE FRESCOES FROM ACROTIRI, THERA (PL. I-III)

A huge volcanic eruption, one of the biggest on earth since the last ice-age, occurred on the island of Thera about 3400 years ago. The island, a sea-girt mountain, disintegrated. Pumice and ash lay deep over the fragments of the mountain-base (even today, up to 150 feet and more in some places), burying but also to a large extent preserving the dwellings and possessions of a people whose culture was closely related to that of Minoan Crete. Excavation in a ravine near the village of Acrotiri, where erosion had reduced the ash-layer to a relatively thin mantle, was begun by Professor Marinatos in 1967 and continued by him until his death in 1974. This excavation, and the products thereof, have become world-famous. I had the advantage of Professor Marinatos' hospitality and guidance at Acrotiri on numerous occasions, and I now offer some comments on the most enchanting of the works of art recovered from the ruins, the Miniature Frescoes.

These frescoes were found in a building called 'West House'; quite a large building, two storeys with a frontage of nearly fifty feet, built across a corner of an open square,

not without inconvenience to the passerby, who can hardly squeeze through the gap (about a foot wide) left at the south-west angle.

The room of the frescoes, Room 5, was severely damaged by the action of the volcano. Nothing remained of the western wall, and there is no proof that it was painted¹. From the other walls, all severely damaged, the painted plaster had slipped to the floor and broken. The fragments² lay for the most part in more or less orderly relative positions, but even so the piecing together of the jigsaw is a wonderful achievement.

The frescoes extended over the whole four-metres' length of each wall. Those on the North and South walls are c. 40 cm. broad; that on the East Wall, c. 20 cm. They are something quite new in the art of the prehistoric Mediterranean world, if indeed they portray, as at first sight seems probable, an historical event soon after its occurrence. So far as we know, nothing of the sort was ever done again for about a thousand years; and it seems out of character in the Minoan-Mycenean world. The obvious parallels from Egypt and the great empires of the Middle East are different in style and in purpose; especially different inasmuch as they are official records set up as public monuments. The Miniature Frescoes from Acrotiri are neither public nor official; they are simply, as it were, the wall-paper of a sitting-room in a private house,—pictures apparently reflecting the personal experiences of a man who had lately returned from an expedition overseas, installed in his own house for his own pleasure.

Interpretation must depend on a description, as full and as accurate as possible, of what is actually to be seen in the originals; I therefore describe first and comment afterwards.

The North Wall (Plate I, b):

A steep hill with polychrome rocks. On the peak, two persons facing each other, bare-headed and beardless. Their arms are not preserved. They wear long cloaks open in front, with three dark bands of colour at the edges above and below and two bands

1. Marinatos told me that he had found one painted fragment in a position which suggested that it belonged to this wall.

2. Pictures of the greater part were published by Marinatos in *Kreta, Thera, und das Mykenische Hellas* in January 1974. Pictures of the whole first appeared in *Thera VI*, the excavation-report for 1972, published in the summer of 1974. I first studied the originals in 1974, soon after the reconstruction was completed, and I discussed an early draft of the present paper with Marinatos two hours before his death by accident on the site on 1 October 1974. My obligations to him, both in general and in detail, are great and will be obvious. The frescoes are now (1976) exhibited in the Thera-Room in the National Museum at Athens.

PLATE I



a. Cabin-screens from Room 4.



East wall.

PLATE II





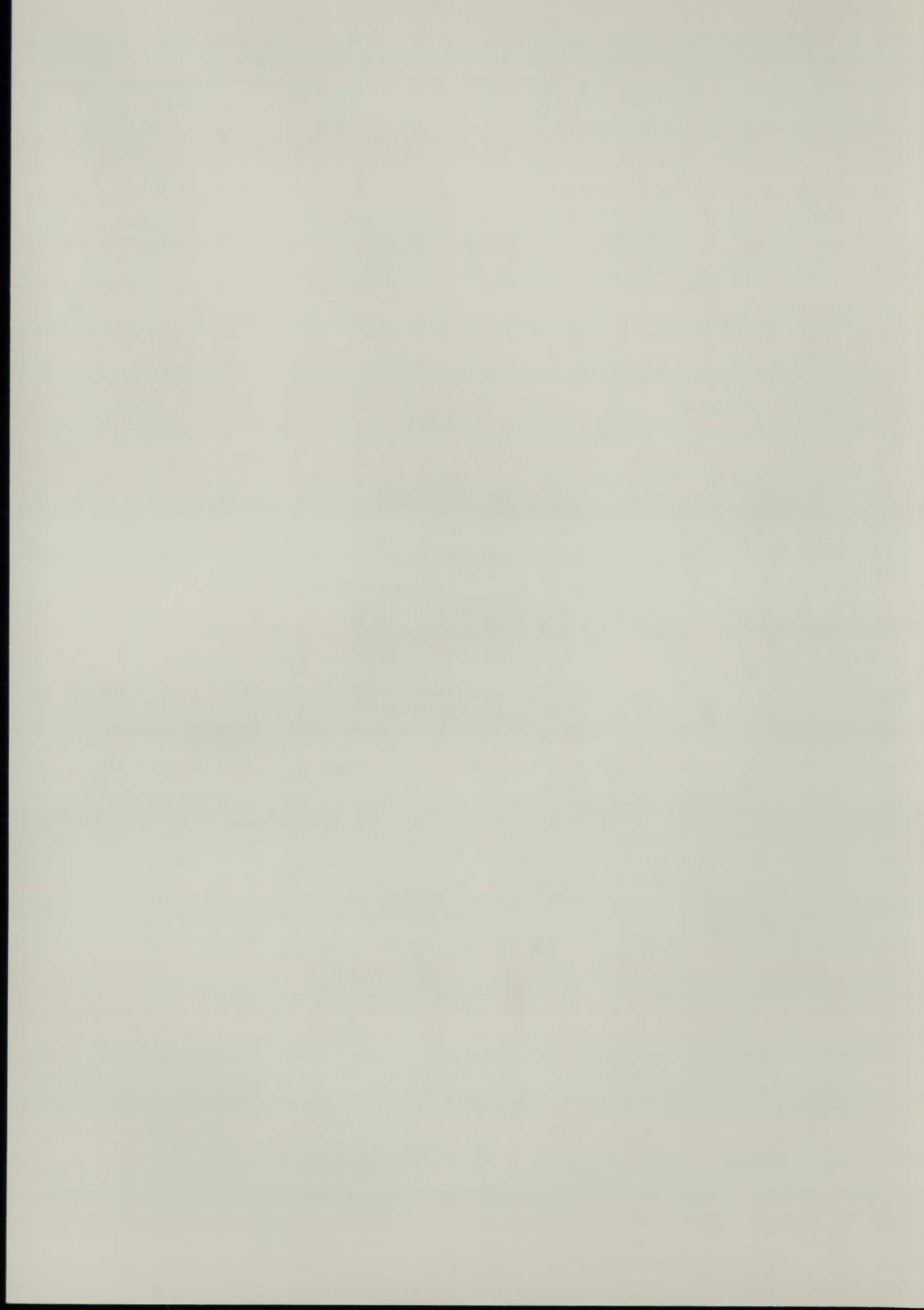


a. A negroid warrior in the flagship.

b. South wall.

PLATE III





down each vertical edge; ties at the neck in front and behind. Behind the left-hand person, two slighter figures wearing only the Minoan loin-cloth; both make the same gesture with extended arms, one arm raised at the elbow. Behind the right-hand person, two figures in knee-length cloaks, followed by one in a black cloak, and a fourth behind him. On the left of the hill, the feet and legs of two persons and part of a third climbing the hill. Below, a black-cloaked figure holding a staff or spear.

There is no direct join between this scene and the next (Plate I, c), but their positions on the floor prove that they were very close together.

Below, to the right, a section of coast (the black-edged blue is rock). Near the shore, part of a building: a square stone pillar; lintel of two courses (not monolithic). Rock shows through the opening; this must therefore be a portico. On the left edge of the pillar, black triangles, not easy to interpret; the truth may be that the brown rock on the left of the portico has a jagged edge, and the black is merely background.

In the sea, parts of three ships. The best-preserved has a platform forward supported by four uprights. On it stands a man holding a long pole; his only garment, a high-waisted kilt. Three long poles project over the prow; they are pointed, and have discs near the tips, like a shooting-stick. Behind the platform, three unmanned oars and an upright which a later scene will show to be a support for an awning amidships. The oars are crossed by two similar objects, presumably oars adrift. The long thin bowsprit rises high; it carries two hooks, and two ropes are attached below. This ship looks like an attacker, not a defender; but the warships on the South Wall have no such platform forward.

The lower ship has suffered in the fighting. Its bowsprit is bent over between the hooks. Four oars and two dangling ropes are shown. This may be a sunk ship, on or near the sea-bed; the drowning men may be of its company.

The naked men drowning are warriors, not oarsmen: each has an oblong shield sinking beside him. The upper shield is dappled, of ox-hide, the second has a loop, the third has a notch to fit the neck. These shields are much smaller than those of the warriors in the line above. The object resembling a walking-stick is a grappling-iron. The upper man has tufted hair. The middle man has a strange object attached by a loop to his chest; not, as has been suggested, some sort of shield,—this person's shield is shown sinking beside him. Whatever this object is, it is something which the other two lack; I think it is a garment, probably a short tunic of rough hide¹.

1. Marinatos (*Thera* VI, 44) believed that the middle man is circumcised; I have not been able to convince myself that this is absolutely beyond doubt.

Of the ship on the right-hand edge, only the stern with part of a cabin and a steering-oar.

The drowning men are drawn with uncommon realism and emotion; especially their fingers. I am not competent to judge whether more than one painter has been at work. To the layman, the drawing of the drowning men, and of the animals above, appears exquisite, whereas the great majority (not quite all) of the other human figures throughout the frescoes may seem to attest (to put it mildly) no great talent.

Above, part of a building : four pillars built of square-looking drums, stone like lier than brick, surmounted by a continuous beam; beneath this, lintels between each pair of pillars. The two inter-columnar spaces on the right are painted blue, presumably walls; the two on the left are open, showing the landscape beyond. On the roof, four men facing left. The first one, crouching, has a crinkly hair-crest and wears a dark garment, stiff and voluminous, surely of animal-hide. The next man wears a long pink cloak with a black band at the neck. The third has crinkly hair and wears a dark cloak mostly hidden by what looks like a long black shield. The fourth wears a white cloak with two black bands at the lower edge. The third and fourth men carry staves (possibly, but not obviously, spears). Above and to the left, polychrome rock.

Behind these men, two females facing right. One looks as though she is standing on the roof; but as her neighbour is not, neither is she; they are on the hillside just beyond the building. They wear bell-shaped skirts and upper garments with sleeves to the elbow. They carry pots on their heads. Behind them, a square structure of brick, obviously a well-head, with two pots on the rim. Behind the women and partly overlapping them, an elliptical enclosure, stone-walled, with two shade-trees inside; plainly a fold for the livestock seen on the right. The women are coming from the well and watering the animals. One extends her arm in greeting to a handsome goat which leads two pairs of cattle driven by a herdsman. Above, a black-cloaked herdsman drives out three sheep and a cow which have had their turn. The first of these sheep has bristles along the spine, the second has a shaggy chest. Below, in front of the building, a person in a stiff black cloak, carrying a pole on his shoulder, walks to the right; in the space behind him, two legs (of an animal, I think).

On the right, a file of warriors (seven certain, one restored in a gap) advances uphill from the shore; the leader has reached a building (traces of masonry are clearly visible). These men are obviously invaders; their helmets, of the well-known boar's-tusk fashion, indicate that they are men from the Minoan-Mycenean world. They carry

body-shields notched at the neck¹ and long spears; they have swords in sheaths with ribbons attached (presumably bandages²). Two helmet-tops are well preserved: one is crowned with a single plume; the other is of an unprecedented type, having bulbous attachments radiating round the crest.

Throughout these scenes all visible feet are bare; all males are red-skinned, the females white.

These two scenes (Plate I, b and c) occupy the greater part of the left-hand half of the North wall. The right-hand half was blank when *Thera VI* was published, but already in 1974 the gap was partly filled with small blocks of marvellously pieced-together fragments. These additions show, above, a black-and-white galloping bull (almost all but the head); below, parts of two ships; and in the lower right-hand angle of the wall a wonderful drawing of a drowned man, naked, face-down on the sea-bed; his hair is very thick but not fuzzy. The additions are of great importance: they prove that the pattern of the first two scenes — land above and the sea below — extended across the whole length of the wall, and that the sea-battle is still in progress at the far end of the wall.

It is thus evident that this wall portrayed an invasion overseas by men from the Minoan-Mycenean world. Whether there is any clue to the location I shall consider later. The meaning of the scene on the hill-top is obscure; I confine myself to a few brief comments:

1. The hill is close to the building on the right; the scene on the hill-top is what the men on the roof are looking at so intently.

2. The small acolytes in loin-cloths are presumably 'Minoans' from Acrotiri, so therefore is the man behind whom they stand. The two men facing each other are not differentiated in type. Perhaps both are priests from Acrotiri, engaged in prayer on behalf of the armed forces of their country.

The invasion-scene is well composed: above, a peaceful pastoral scene, in contrast with the violence of battle below; and, between these two scenes, a sinister file of invaders already ashore. The rustics above are unaware that their defenders are already defeated and drowning, and that the enemy is ashore and not far off.

The East Wall (Plate II; the upper section overlaps the lower):

Of the length of 4 metres, 2.20 are lost, mostly from the left-hand half. It is a fair guess that the river shown in the preserved half was the subject also of the

1. Marinatos, *Athens Annals of Archaeology* 6.3 (1973) 494.

2. *Ibid.* 497, *Thera VI*, 60, n. 39

missing half : this fresco is only about half as broad as the others; the river with its flora and fauna occupy the greater part of the band, which is too narrow for any action comparable with the other walls.

The river is seen as if from above. The banks should be regarded as vertical. Between the blue of the river and the brown of the banks, on each side, runs a thin black line with anvil-shaped projections, black, lying flat on the water; probably (as Marinatos suggested) tufts of vegetation. On and near the banks, numerous large boulders. The land beyond the banks is very pale yellow, presumably sandy desert. Palm-trees line the banks, some swaying right, others left. There are least three other kinds of tree or plant, including the papyrus.

Below, on the left, the profile of a bird in flight. Next, above, a gryphon at full stretch. Across the river, a dappled short-horned short-tailed animal, evidently a gazelle. Next, above, a spotted feline, panther or leopard (seldom distinguished by the ancients) at full stretch with open jaws, in pursuit of a long-necked bird with curved beak preening itself; this bird is unaware of danger, while another bird, represented by a wing, is already in flight.

Why a whole wall should be reserved for a river, and what river it may be, are questions to be considered later. At first sight the papyrus, an Egyptian plant, the panther and gazelle, animals specially associated with Libya, and the gryphon, a creature of Egyptian origin, may suggest that the scene is North Africa¹; but we must wait and see. At present I stress only the fact that the next wall begins with a river, and it is reasonable to suppose that it is the same river; that is to say, the river on the East wall is not isolated but apparently integrated with the action shown on the South wall; to which I now turn.

The South Wall (Plate III, b; the upper section overlaps the lower) :

First, the scene on the left. The blue band along the hill-tops is rock, not river. The river descends from a saddle and divides into two branches which enclose a semi-circle of land. The river has, what the blue band along the hill-tops has not, the anvil-shaped tufts lying on the water, like those of the river on the East wall. Instead of palm and papyrus, oak and umbrella-pine. A lion chases three stags agape and frightened.

1. *The panther* : Sophocles fr. 11; Herodotus 4.192; Opp. Cyn. 4.322; Keller, *Antike Tierwelt* 1, 62; RE 18.3.747. *The gazelle* : Herodotus l.c; Keller 1.286. *The gryphon* : Dio Chrys. *Libyan Myth* 5; RE 7.1912.

Near the right bank of the river, buildings of peculiar form (but quite like the watch-tower on the hill-top in the landscape at the other end of this wall). Two are round-looking towers, each tower half-hiding a lower building, square-looking and single-storeyed. Between these two, a more elaborate complex, difficult to articulate. All three buildings are surrounded by hedge-like enclosures except on the seaward side.

Near the shore, two persons in conversation across the river; one sits, the other stands. Their skin is red, the hair thick and woolly-looking, the lips thick, the nose short and bulbous. They wear long fur-coats with stiff ties at the neck, presumably the feet of the animals.

Within the semicircle, a small town; the style of building is quite different from that of the dwellings described above, and resembles that of the town at the far end of this wall. The shore is thickly lined with plants, perhaps rushes. On a flat roof, five head-and-shoulder men and one woman; another man alone on another roof. In front of the town, two persons, and on the shore two more. They wear smock-like robes of various colours (white, grey, brown; none of animal-hide). All are beardless and short-haired; none has a tufted hair-crest.

There is an apparent contrast between the persons and buildings outside the town and those inside it. Outside, a small village and fur-clad snub-nosed natives of the coast; inside, a Minoan settlement and more civilized inhabitants. It looks as though the men from Acrotiri, having subdued the natives on the North wall, and having taken possession of the splendid river shown on the East wall, have established a settlement at the river-mouth close to a native village. Now the warships, their mission accomplished, set sail for home.

What the people in the town are watching is a fleet at sea, accompanied by a dozen leaping dolphins; the central theme of this wall. Six of the vessels are large warships, one is a smaller ship under sail, one a small rowing-boat which more probably belongs to the settlement at the river-mouth than to the fleet. The ships are in two columns; I number them from left to right, I-III above and IV-VIII below.

The warships:

The warships carry figureheads astern: lions in I and IV and perhaps V also, hawks in III, VI, and VIII.

The first plank below the gunwale in I, II, III, and VIII is decorated, for the whole of its length, with a scroll-design within a blue band; a simple blue band in VII. Below

this, lions and dolphins are painted on the side of II, doves in flight on the side of VII.

Each of the large warships has an appendage astern, identified by Marinatos as a landing-step, which served also as a lavatory during the voyage. Two ladders lead from this platform to the deck.

Cabins stand on platforms aft (except in the small boat, IV; this has only a screen). The profile of the cabin shows three vertical poles with cross-bars near the head and foot and in the middle. The cross-bars are decorated with painting or painted carving. The side of the cabin, up to about half its height, is protected by a mottled screen with sinuous upper-rim, plainly oxhide. Festoons hang from the upper cross-bar in I and VI, in III rather a fringe than a festoon. In II, but not in the others, the outer uprights are crowned with decorative objects. The cabin has no roof; the head of the occupant appears above the top cross-bar in V. It is now to be noted that another room in West House, Room 4, had its walls painted with no less than seven (perhaps eight) large cabin-screens of this type. It is a likely inference that West House was the residence of the admiral of the fleet; his flagship was presumably II, the largest and most ornate of the vessels.

Over the greater part of the deck in all the warships (but not in VII) is an awning supported by uprights. Adjoining aft is a relatively small square structure. The vessel under sail (VII) differs, having no awning but (what the others lack) a protective sidescreen. The stern section of the awning is marked off by two pairs of uprights.

Amidships, a mast in I, II, and VII, but not in the others. The mast in I is well preserved: its head has five rings on either side, its stem has painted bands all the way up. The sail is lowered, the boom resting on the awning-top, the sail and yard resting on the boom. The rigging is unrealistic: the mast has no stays, indeed no rigging at all except halyards (the top three pairs of rings at the mast-head are vacant). There are no ropes at all in II, only festoons strung from the mast-head; the festoons consist of gold-painted beads with pendant flower-heads and culminate above in large butterflies. They presumably indicate to the home-town that the voyage has been successful. The rigging of the vessel under sail (VII) is less sketchy: there are no stays, but there are traces of halyards, shrouds, braces, and brailing-ropes.

The prow rises to a long thin bowsprit. The Y-shaped object is a rest for the lowered mast; it is seen in I, but also in VIII which has no mast. Near the junction of prow and bowsprit, two hooks with decorative attachments (sunflower and butterfly; a bird in V).

The warships are not armed with rams.

The crews and their equipment:

The cabin has one occupant, presumably the commanding officer. He sits aft (except in VI) and faces forward. A helmet crowns the central upright of the cabin-screen in I, III, and V, the right-hand upright in VIII; probably no such helmet in VI. Diagonally upward from the top rear angle of the cabin projects a spear with a disc-like attachment near the point. In V the upper part of the occupant's white cloak is visible.

In the warships (but not in IV or VII) sits a white-robed person with his back to the cabin. In front of him stands a steersman dressed in loin-cloth only, holding a long steering-oar with broad blade. The vessel under sail (VII) has two steersmen, both on the same side. In I, but not in the others, in front of the steersman stands another person clad in loin-cloth only, with left arm extended, right arm raised from the elbow; he is the man who gives time and rhythm to the oarsmen. Both he and the steersmen have curly top-knots on the crown of the head. Next, with his back to the square structure aft of the awning, a seated person faces aft; in VI, two such persons. Some of these wear white robes, others dark. Under the awnings in the six warships men are seated facing each other, one or two on each bench within compartments framed by the awning-poles. Their numbers vary quite widely. In the only completely preserved warship, I, the number of men seated under the awning is ten. In V the number was greater, at least eleven and probably thirteen. In VI, five certain, with space for only two or, possibly three more. The number of men wholly or partly visible under the awnings in the six warships is forty-six; the original total was probably a little over fifty.

Helmets hang over the heads of some; these will be fighting-men. At least eight helmets can be discerned: three in II, one in VI, four in VIII; but above the majority (more than twenty, at least) no helmet was painted.

Some of the men wear white cloaks, dark-edged down the front, with tie-ribbons under the chin (most clearly seen in the man facing forward in the second compartment of III). Others wear dark smock-like garments, apparently fur-cloaks like that of the standing person at the river-mouth at the beginning of this wall; the best preserved example is the man facing forward in the third compartment of VIII. It is not possible to be precise about the numbers of white and dark; the dress of about twenty-seven was more or less certainly white, of at least twelve dark. One of the dark-robed men is unmistakably negroid (the man facing forward in the second compartment of II). He has thick lips, a very broad upturned nose, and fuzzy hair. He has a helmet above his head, as other dark-robed men have (two in II, one VIII); this is clear evidence that men of negroid type served in the armed forces of Acrotiri.

The oarsmen :

There are twenty-one oars on the starboard side in I; presumably therefore forty-two rowing-men. In the six warships they face forward. Ancient oarsmen are always, so far as I know, represented as facing aft, as here in IV and in one of the small boats coming out to welcome the fleet; and that is surely the attitude to be expected of men rowing a large warship. Oarsmen facing forward may indeed be seen all over the world today, but not, I think, in vessels of the magnitude indicated here. The explanation may be that the oarsmen faced forward while manoeuvring the warship in shallow water near the coast; their attitude here (though they are shown on the high seas) may symbolize their return to harbour.

The drawing of the oarsmen leaning sideways with bodies and both arms down over the gunwale creates an impression of energy at the expense of realism. The oars are short and sketchy; the loom merges imperceptibly with the blade, which is narrow and leaf-like.

The landscape on the right :

This is a picture of the fleet's base in Thera. Common sense insists on this conclusion : the town to which the fleet is returning, and the town in which the return of the fleet is painted, must be one and the same. The landscape is therefore the southern extremity of the island of Thera, and the town is the one now being excavated at Acrotiri. The landscape is indeed an accurate picture of the south end of the island. First, a relatively low promontory, then a skyline of hills looking much as they do today. Between the promontory and the town are in reality two bays; and two bays are shown with small boats in them. The town follows immediately after the second bay; in reality a small hill intervenes.

On a hill-top is a line of small buildings, perhaps watch-towers; the foundations of small buildings, contemporary with the town, may be seen today on the hill ('Red Hill') immediately west of Acrotiri. Hard to interpret are the five rows of triangles separated by horizontal bands covering the lower half of the hill. It is a man-made structure; courses of stone or brick are visible on the left-hand edge. Mr Peter Smith of Bryn Mawr has noticed a certain similarity to a modern structure on Siphnos, combining the functions of a terrace-wall with bee-hives; I have no better explanation.

A man stands in the doorway of a building on the hill-top. Nearby three men run uphill, two downhill. Walking uphill are four men dressed in animal-hides (but not black-faced); they resemble the couple in conversation at the river-mouth. Having

seen negroids in the armed forces of Acrotiri, we are not surprised to see similar persons in the homeland also.

On the coast, a bay with three small boats, unmanned. To the right, two men, one at least with tufted hair-crest, shouldering a pole with a basket hanging behind, apparently about to embark in two small boats which closely resemble the small boat (IV) at the other end of this wall; in each boat a man is seated astern, protected by side-screen and facing an awning amidships. Below, a boat rowed by two men facing aft.

The town reaches down to the shore. There is a strip of sand between the sea and the massive seaward walls; reed-like plants on the right. On the edge of the shore lines of young men dressed in loin-cloth only walk towards the fleet. In the gateway, a man driving a calf, presumably for sacrifice (head and neck, hardly distinguishable in the photograph, are perfectly preserved); behind and above him, another man. The seaward wall is crowned with 'horns of consecration'. The gateway appears as a broad high passage through a building of several storeys; three rows of timber-ends are seen. Left of the gateway the town gives the impression of a number of houses on a slope rising from the shore. At windows, on verandahs, or on roofs, people look towards the fleet. In four places the spectators are females, white-faced, wearing striped upper garments apparently open in front; they are drawn much larger than the males. In two places on the left a lady raises her arm in greeting; behind one of them is a lively dark-faced child with tufted hair-crest, and in front of her a 'horn of consecration' is visible. On the hillside above the town, two men in long white robes.

I end this description with an observation made for the first time (so far as I know) by my wife. Room 5, where the frescoes were painted, is about 4 metres square : if you stand back three or four metres from the fresco of South wall, a remarkable effect of perspective follows. So long as you stand close, the painting appears flat; stand back, and the towns at the two ends of the South wall (these in particular, but also other scenes) acquire a third dimension of depth and distance.

* * *

I now raise a few questions about the interpretation of these paintings, beginning with the avowal that the longer I have studied them the more cautious I have become.

First, it is not to be taken for granted that the three walls tell a continuous story. I incline to believe that they do, and my principal reason is simply the relation of the North wall to the South : the one shows a fleet invading a foreign coast, the other shows a fleet returning home; it is reasonable to suppose, though the point cannot be proved, that these episodes are parts of the same story. But what about the East wall,

which separates the invasion from the home-coming and portrays simply a river, without human figures or action? There is one good reason for supposing that the river illustrates the same story: although the painting is not continuous from the East to the South wall, yet the South wall begins with a river and its mouth, and it is reasonable to suppose that the river which runs to the end of the East wall and the river which begins the South wall are one and the same.

Secondly, it is not to be assumed without question that the details of the painting are reliable evidence for such matters as the scene of the action and the nationality of the combatants. For example, it seemed reasonable at first sight to infer from the detail that the scene of the invasion on the North wall and of the river on the East wall is North Africa. The papyrus, the panther, the gazelle, the gryphon, together point in that direction; natives with fuzzy hair and cloaks of animal-hide would seem at home in North Africa, and so are sheep with bristles along the spine or long hair on the chest. It is nevertheless necessary to admit that this inference is doubtful. These frescoes are the work of a professional artist, not of a talented amateur in the armed forces; and it would be rash to assume that the artist was an eye-witness of what he portrays, that he accompanied the expedition for the purpose of making a pictorial record. Moreover the force of tradition is strong in Minoan art. For example, when the artist was told to paint a fine river, he needed no hearsay description; he already knew how to do it. In the Minoan-Mycenean tradition a fine river, wherever it may be, has papyrus growing beside it and a panther chasing birds on the bank, as on one of the dagger-blades from the shaftgraves at Mycenae. The panther and the papyrus in the fresco may be as conventional as the gryphon. Or again, the sheep with a shaggy chest is, as it happens, characteristic of North Africa; but the type is familiar to Cretan artists¹ and may be purely conventional in the fresco. For the same reason it must not be argued that the red deer above the river-mouth on the South wall prove that the scene is not Libya: it may be true, as Herodotus and Aristotle say, that the red deer did not exist in Libya²; but lions chasing deer are a traditional theme, and this fresco is a work of art, not an illustration to a text-book on the distribution of animals. Finally, fuzzy or tufted hair, though suitable to natives of North Africa, is not limited to them; it appears in figures from the peak-sanctuary of Traostalos in Crete itself³.

1. Evans, *Palace of Minos I*, fig. 303 a; I owe the reference to Professor Peter Warren. Cf. *Thera VI*, 59 n. 33.

2. See Orth in *RE* 8.1938; *cervus barbarus* was common then as now further west, and was known to Egyptian artists.

3. *Kadmos* 6 (1967) 104, *Tafel b*; I owe this reference also to Professor Warren.

Notice too that the men with tufted or fuzzy hair in the invasion-scene are all red-skinned, not black-skinned.

As the scenery, the plants, the animals, and the dress and features of the natives may be partly traditional and partly (like the gryphon) merely fanciful, it is risky to use them as evidence for North Africa or any other particular location. We can only guess which of the few possible regions is the most probable. An attack by Thera on the motherland, Crete, seems to me intrinsically very improbable, and I do not believe that the naked drowning man with fuzzy hair is any kind of Cretan. An expedition from Thera to the Nile-delta is, for more than one reason, not a likely event at this time. Of the few other possible choices (Rhodes, Cyprus, some other Aegean island, Syria, Asia Minor) I incline to believe that North Africa, especially Libya, is after all the likeliest. The reasons for this choice leave room enough for doubt, but are not lightly to be disregarded. There is no doubt that Acrotiri had for some time been in close contact with natives of negroid, and therefore North African, type; such persons actually serve in the armed forces. The best-preserved example (Plate III, a; described above, p. 143) sits in the admiral's flagship. I believe too that the artist intended to portray as negroid the two men at the river-mouth on the South wall; if so, it is likely that the scene is indeed North Africa. And although we admit that most of the details which suggested North Africa may be traditional motifs, there is one feature of the invasion-scene on the North wall which is surely not conventional: when the artist portrayed the drowning warriors as naked, he cannot have been thinking of men of Minoan or Mycenaean or any other Aegean type; their nudity is a strong indication (by no means conventional) of a remote and 'barbarian' scene, more probably in North Africa than anywhere else.

The prominence of the river is particularly easy to explain if the scene is Libya. As Marinatos first observed in this connexion, there was in antiquity a single river in North Africa west of the Nile worthy of mention. Herodotus (4. 198) says that a land and a river in Libya were called by the name 'Kinyps': 'This region is equal to the best of lands for producing corn, and is quite unlike the rest of Libya. The soil is black and well watered by springs. It is not worried about drought, nor harmed by excessive absorption of rain, — for there actually is rain in this part of Libya'. A little earlier (4. 175), speaking of the tribe called Makai, he described the river Kinyps: 'Flowing through them from a hill called The Hill of the Graces; it gives into the sea'. The Hill of the Graces is thick with timber-trees, whereas the rest of Libya. . . is treeless. The distance from the hill to the sea is 200 *stadia*. The Kinyps is identified nowadays with the Wadi Magar Grin, or Wadi Qaam, 18 kilometres east of Leptis

Magna (RE 11.483), the hill from which it flows is in reality less than two hours' walk inland.

When we ask what the artist's purpose may have been in devoting the whole of a wall to a river, the answer may be that the river was the objective of the expedition, the reason why the fleet went to that place and not elsewhere. Here, and here only on the North African coast from Egypt to Tripoli, is a life-giving river and a rich land, —'equal to the best of lands for producing corn', said Herodotus. It is not likely that the steep volcano which was Thera ever produced sufficient corn for its large population; among the chief glories of this expedition, perhaps the motive for it, was a rich corn-supply.

I have said that we cannot rely upon all details of the painting; it is now necessary to go further, and to ask whether the whole conception of these frescoes may be traditional. Military expeditions by a navy against a foreign coast with natives of exotic type are attested by the Town Mosaic from Cnossos, the Siege-vase from Mycenae, and the battle-scene on a vase from Epidauros¹. How would one refute the opinion that the Acrotiri frescoes represent not an actual expedition but a traditional theme? I begin by observing that scenes of this type are very rare, and that there is no particular reason to suppose that the other examples are merely traditional; they may all represent actual events which some persons desired to commemorate. And if I incline, as I do, to believe that the Acrotiri frescoes represent an actual event, it is for two reasons, of which the second weighs the more heavily.

First, I point to the difference between these frescoes and the other scenes. The fact that not only the invasion but also the home-coming of the fleet is shown, combined with the elaborate detail of the representation, gives the frescoes a strong impression of reality and a quality of continuous narrative which is not to be found elsewhere and which is more readily understood as fact than as fiction. Secondly (and this is what moves me most) I draw attention to the context in which the frescoes were found. They were painted round the walls of Room 5 in West House: and the walls of the adjoining Room 4 were painted all round with pictures of cabin-screens (Plate I, a), not less than seven of them. What sort of man orders the artist to paint such extraordinary objects, screens for the cabins of warships, all round his sitting-room? It is reasonable to suppose that he was a man to whom the fleet was something familiar and dear, not just a pretty subject for the wallpaper. The man who has cabin-screens painted

1. My attention to this last example was drawn by Professor Sakellarakis, who showed me the actual sherd. I learnt much from a long conversation with Professor Sakellarakis and his wife.

round one room and a life-like naval expedition round another is more likely to be commemorating fact than indulging in fancy. There can be (I repeat) no certainty about this; but common sense is quite often right.

Consider finally what the frescoes may imply about the political relation of Acrotiri to Crete. The culture of Acrotiri is in essence Cretan, and the question is asked whether Minoan settlements abroad were politically dependent on the motherland. There is no way of answering this question, but our frescoes may give an indication. What they portray is a purely Theran enterprise; there is no suggestion that the ships from Acrotiri were merely a squadron of a fleet commanded by admirals from Crete. If the frescoes tell the whole truth, we learn that the armed forces of Acrotiri could go invading and (apparently) settling overseas quite alone, independent of the great men at Cnossos. But of course we allow that the frescoes may tell not the whole truth but the half-truth. We can only say that such independence would not be a surprise to us. The culture of Acrotiri is basically Cretan; but only basically. Acrotiri is by no means a replica of a Cretan town. In architecture and in the arts and crafts it goes its own way; the proportion of imports from Crete is astonishingly small. Acrotiri is an unique blend of elements, a place with a character entirely of its own. Many surprises have come from its excavation, none more remarkable than this adventure of the fleet; it is the most informative document of its kind from the Minoan-Mycenean world, and one of the most enchanting of works of art recovered from the prehistoric world.

Π Ε Ρ Ι Λ Η Ψ Ι Σ

Μικρογραφίες τῆς Θήρας (πί. I - III).

Οἱ τοιχογραφίες - μικρογραφίες ἀπὸ τῆ Θήρα ποὺ ἀνακαλύφθησαν τὸ 1972 συγκαταλέγονται ἀνάμεσα στὰ πιὸ γοητευτικὰ καὶ ἱστορικὰ ἐνδιαφέροντα ἔργα τέχνης διατηρημένα ἀπὸ τῆ Μινωικῆ - Μυκηναϊκῆ περίοδο. Βρέθηκαν στὸ πάτωμα τοῦ δωματίου 5 ἐνὸς κτιρίου ποὺ λεγόταν «Τὸ Δυτικὸ Οἶκημα». Οἱ τοιχογραφίες ἀπλώνονταν σ' ὅλους τοὺς τοίχους ποὺ εἶχαν μᾶκρος 4 μέτρα. Στὸ βόρειο καὶ νότιο τοῖχο τὸ πλάτος τῶν τοιχογραφιῶν εἶναι περίπου 40 ἑκατοστὰ, στὸν ἀνατολικὸ τοῖχο μόνο 20 ἑκατοστὰ. Ὁ δυτικὸς τοῖχος καὶ τὸ παρακείμενο πάτωμα καταστράφηκαν ὀλοκληρωτικὰ ἀπὸ τὴν ἔκρηξη τοῦ ἠφαιστείου καὶ δὲν εἶναι γνωστὸ ἐὰν αὐτὸς ὁ τοῖχος ἦταν ζωγραφισμένος ἢ ὄχι.

Ἡ μέθοδος ποὺ ἀκολουθῶ σ' αὐτὴ τῆ διάλεξη εἶναι : α) νὰ περιγράψω λεπτομερῶς τί εἶναι ζωγραφισμένο σὲ κάθε τοῖχο, ἀρχίζοντας ἀπὸ τὸ βόρειο τοῖχο

καὶ συνεχίζοντας μὲ τὸν ἀνατολικὸ καὶ νότιο καὶ β) μὲ τὴ βοήθεια αὐτῆς τῆς περιγραφῆς, νὰ πῶ ποιά συμπεράσματα μποροῦν νὰ βγοῦν ἀπὸ τὶς τοιχογραφίες σὰν σύνολο.

1. Περιγραφή.

1. Βόρειος τοῖχος (πίν. I, b καὶ c).

Ὁ βόρειος ἄρχιζε μὲ μιὰ σκηνὴ στὴν κορυφὴ ἑνὸς λόφου. Δύο ἄνθρωποι (πρόσωπα), μὲ ἀκολουθοῦς πίσω τους καὶ ἄλλους ποὺ ἀνεβαίνουν πάνω στὸ λόφο, ἀντιμετωπίζουν ὁ ἓνας τὸν ἄλλον στὴν κορυφὴ. Τὰ πρόσωπα στὰ ἄριστερὰ εἶναι προφανῶς μινωικοῦ τύπου, ἀλλὰ ἡ ἐρμηνεῖα τῆς σκηνῆς εἶναι ἀμφίβολη. Ἡ εἰκόνα συνεχίζοταν μὲ μιὰ ζωντανὴ καὶ καλὰ διατηρημένη σκηνὴ γεμάτη δράση. Ἀπὸ κάτω μιὰ ναυμαχία κοντὰ στὴν ἀκτὴ, ἓνα πλοῖο βυθίζεται, ἓνα ἄλλο ἔχει καταστραφεῖ, ἄνδρες πνίγονται, οἱ ἀσπίδες τους βυθίζονται δίπλα τους.

Ἀπὸ πάνω τέσσερις ἄνδρες ἐμφανίζονται στὴ σκεπὴ ἑνὸς κτιρίου, κυττάζοντας τὴ σκηνὴ στὴν κορυφὴ τοῦ λόφου. Δύο γυναῖκες, ποὺ κουβαλοῦν νερὸ ἀπὸ ἓνα πηγάδι, περπατοῦν πρὸς μιὰ σειρὰ μὲ πρόβατα καὶ κτήνη. Ἐπάνω ἀπὸ αὐτά, ἓνας βοσκὸς ἀπομακρύνει τὰ πρόβατα ἀπὸ μιὰ μάντρα. Ἐπτὰ πολεμιστὲς, ὅπλισμένοι κατὰ τὸν μινωικὸ τρόπο, προελαύνουν πρὸς τὰ κάτω ἀπὸ τὴν ἀκτὴ. Τὸ ἀνατολικὸ ἥμισυ τοῦ βορείου τοῖχου δὲν εἶναι καλὰ διατηρημένο, ἀλλὰ εἶναι βέβαιο ὅτι τὸ γενικὸ σχέδιο ἦταν τὸ ἴδιο : μιὰ ναυμαχία ἀπὸ κάτω, μιὰ εἰσβολὴ ἀπὸ πάνω.

Ὁ τοῖχος ἀπεικόνιζε τὴν εἰσβολὴ ἀνδρῶν μινωικοῦ - μυκηναϊκοῦ τύπου σὲ μιὰ χώρα πέρα ἀπὸ τὴ θάλασσα.

2. Ἀνατολικὸς τοῖχος (πίν. II).

Ὁ ἀνατολικὸς τοῖχος τοῦ ὁποίου μόνο τὸ νότιο ἥμισυ εἶναι διατηρημένο, δείχνει ἓνα ποτάμι νὰ κυλάει σὲ μιὰ ἀμμώδη ἔρημο. Διάφορα δένδρα καὶ φυτά, στὰ ὁποῖα περιλαμβάνονται φοῖνικες καὶ πάπυροι, ἀναπτύσσονται δίπλα στὸ ποτάμι. Στὶς ὄχθες παρουσιάζονται ἓνας πάνθηρας, μιὰ γκαζέλλα, ἓνας γρούπας καὶ διάφορα εἶδη πουλιῶν.

3. Νότιος τοῖχος (πίν. III, b).

Ὁ νότιος τοῖχος ἀρχίζει μὲ τὴν ἐκβολὴ τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ εἰκονιζομένου στὸν ἀνατολικὸ τοῖχο. Στὶς κορυφές τοῦ λόφου κοντὰ ἓνα λιοντάρι κνηγᾷ τρία ἐλάφια. Τὸ ποτάμι χωρίζεται σὲ δύο παρακλάδια ποὺ ὅπως χύνονται στὴ θάλασσα, περικλείουν ἓνα ἡμικύκλιο γῆς· ἔξω ἀπὸ τὸ ἡμικύκλιο στὰ ἄριστερὰ ὑπάρχει ἓνα

σύμπλεγμα ἀπὸ μικρὰ κτίρια, κατὰ τὰ φαινόμενα ἓνα χωριὸ τοῦ τόπου. Δύο πρόσωπα στὶς δύο ὄχθες τοῦ ποταμοῦ ντυμένα μὲ ἀκατέργαστα δέρματα ζῶου μιᾶνε μεταξύ τους. Ἔχουν κόμη κατσαρωτὴ καὶ πυκνή, παχειὰ χεῖλη καὶ νεγροειδεῖς μύτες. Μέσα στὸ ἡμικύκλιο εἶναι μιὰ πόλη μινωικοῦ τύπου. Ἄνδρες στέκονται στὶς στέγες καὶ στὴν ἀκτὴ κοιτάζοντας ἓνα στόλο στὴ θάλασσα. Ἡ ἱστορία ἕως ἐδῶ φαίνεται νὰ μᾶς λέγει ὅτι Μινωῖτες ἀπὸ τὸ Ἄκρωτήρι, ἀφοῦ ὑπέταξαν τοὺς ντόπιους μιᾶς ξένης ἀκτῆς στὸ βόρειο τοῖχο καὶ ἀφοῦ κατέλαβαν τὸν περίφημο ποταμὸ τὸν εἰκονιζόμενον στὸν ἀνατολικὸ τοῖχο, ἐγκατέστησαν μιὰν ἀποικίαν στὴν ἐκβολὴ τοῦ ποταμοῦ κοντὰ σ' ἓνα χωριὸ Ἰθαγενῶν. Τώρα τὰ πολεμικὰ πλοῖα ἀφοῦ ἐξεπλήρωσαν τὴν ἀποστολὴν τους ἀποπλέουν γιὰ τὴν πατρίδα.

Ὁ στόλος πὸν συνοδεύεται ἀπὸ δώδεκα δελφίνια πὸν πηδᾶνε, ἀποτελεῖται ἀπὸ ἕξι μεγάλα πολεμικὰ πλοῖα, ἓνα μᾶλλον μεγάλο σκάφος μὲ ἀπλωμένα τὰ πανιά καὶ μιὰ μικρὴ βάρκα μὲ κουπιὰ. Τὰ σκάφη καὶ οἱ καμπίνες εἶναι διακοσμημένα μὲ λεπτομέρεια. Ὁ ἐπὶ κεφαλῆς κἀθεται στὴν καμπίνα τῆς πρύμνης. Μέσα στὰ πλοῖα οἱ πολεμιστὲς κἀθονται σὲ πάγκους κάτω ἀπὸ μιὰ τέντα. Ὁ ἀριθμὸς τους ποικίλλει ἀπὸ 6 μέχρι 12 σὲ κάθε πλοῖο καὶ μερικοὶ ἀπ' αὐτοὺς εἶναι νεγροειδοῦς τύπου. Κάτω ἀπ' αὐτοὺς εἴκοσι ἓνας κωπηλάτες ἐμφανίζονται στὴ δεξιὰ πλευρὰ τοῦ πλοίου.

Εἶναι γυρισμένοι μπροστά, ὄχι πίσω πρὸς τὴν πρύμνη (ὅπως συνηθίζεται στὴν ἀρχαία τέχνη). Ὁ στόλος πλησιάζει μιὰν ἀκτὴν, ἢ ὁποία εἶναι προφανῶς ἡ πατρίδα. Εἶναι πραγματικὰ μιὰ ἀκριβῆς ἀπεικόνιση τῆς νότιας ἐσχατιᾶς τῆς Θήρας.

Παρατηρητήρια φαίνονται στὶς κορυφές τοῦ λόφου καὶ πρὸ χαμηλὰ κάτω ὑπάρχει ἓνα μεγάλο κτίριο πὸν δείχνει ὀριζόντιες γραμμὲς χωρισμένες μὲ σειρὲς ἀπὸ μαῦρα τρίγωνα, ἓνα πρόβλημα ὄχι λυμένο ἀκόμα. Πολυάριθμοι ἄνδρες παρουσιάζονται στὸ τοπίο, ὅλοι προφανῶς ἐνθουσιασμένοι ἀπὸ τὸ πλησίασμα τοῦ στόλου. Ἡ πόλη (τὸ Ἄκρωτήρι) φαίνεται στὸ τέλος τοῦ τοίχου. Ὁ μινωικὸς τοῦ τύπος δηλώνεται μὲ διάφορα χαρακτηριστικὰ, ἀκόμα καὶ ἀπὸ ἱερὰ κέρατα. Στὴν ἀκτὴ μιὰ σειρὰ ἀπὸ νέους ἄνδρες περπατοῦν πρὸς τὸ στόλο καὶ ἓνας ἄνδρας σέρνει μιὰ ἀγγελάδα γιὰ θυσία. Στὶς σκεπὲς τῶν σπιτιῶν τῆς πόλεως ἄνδρες καὶ γυναῖκες καλωσορίζουν τὸν ἐρχομὸ τῶν πλοίων. Μιὰ γυναῖκα προβάλλεται ἰδιαίτερα. Ἴσως ἢ σύζυγος τοῦ ναυάρχου.

II. Ἑρμηνεῖα.

Εἶναι ἀπαραίτητο πρῶτα νὰ αἰτιολογηθεῖ ἡ ὑπόθεση ὅτι οἱ τρεῖς τοῖχοι παριστάνουν μιὰ συνεχεῖ ἱστορία. Ἡ σχέση μεταξύ τῆς ἐκβολῆς στὸ βόρειο τοῖχο

καὶ τῆς ἐπιστροφῆς τοῦ στόλου στὸ νότιο τοῖχο εἶναι ἀρκετὰ φανερό. Ὁ λόγος γιὰ τὸν ὁποῖο πιστεύω ὅτι ὁ ποταμὸς τοῦ ἀνατολικοῦ τοίχου ἀποτελεῖ μέρος τῆς ἴδιας ἱστορίας εἶναι ὅτι συνεχίζεται καὶ ἀπὸ τὸν ἀνατολικὸ τοῖχο πρὸς τὸ νότιο τοῖχο, ὅπου ἐξελίσσεται ἡ ἱστορία. Ἐπίσης εἶναι ἀπαραίτητο νὰ τονίσω τὸ γεγονός ὅτι αὐτὲς οἱ τοιχογραφίες εἶναι τὸ ἔργο ἑνὸς ἐπαγγελματία καλλιτέχνη καὶ δὲν εἶναι πιθανὸ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἦταν ἕνας αὐτόπτης μάρτυρας τῆς σκηνῆς πὺν ζωγράφισε. Τὸ πορτραῖτο του ἴσως βασίζεται σὲ κάποια μαρτυρία καὶ συνεπῶς εἶναι παράλογο νὰ βασιστοῦμε στὶς λεπτομέρειες σὰν ἀποδεικτικὸ στοιχεῖο γιὰ τὴν τοποθέτηση τῆς ξένης ἀκτῆς καὶ τὴν ἐθνικότητα τῶν κατοίκων τῆς. Οἱ φοίνικες καὶ οἱ πάπυροι δίπλα στὸν ποταμὸ, ὁ πάνθηρας καὶ ἡ γκαζέλλα καὶ οἱ ἰθαγενεῖς μὲ τὰ φουντωτὰ μαλλιά καὶ τὶς κάπες ἀπὸ δέρμα ζώου ὑποδηλώνουν ὅτι ὁ τόπος τῆς εἰσβολῆς εἶναι ἡ Βόρεια Ἀφρική.

Ἄλλὰ πρέπει νὰ θυμηθοῦμε ὅτι πάνθηρες, φοινικόδεντρα καὶ πάπυροι εἶναι συνηθισμένα μοτίβα σὲ σκηνὲς μὲ ποτάμια στὴ μινωικὴ τέχνη καὶ ἐναλλασσόμενες ἐξηγήσεις μπορεῖ νὰ βρεθοῦν γιὰ σχεδὸν ὅλες τὶς λεπτομέρειες πὺν φαίνεται νὰ ὑποδεικνύουν τὴ Βόρεια Ἀφρική.

Ὁ γρύπας εἶναι μιὰ προειδοποίηση ἐναντίον τῆς ὑποθέσεως ὅτι ἡ παράσταση εἶναι ρεαλιστική.

Πάντως ἡ ὑπόθεση ὅτι πρόκειται γιὰ τὴν Βόρεια Ἀφρική καὶ εἰδικὰ γιὰ τὴ Λιβύη εἶναι πολὺ πιὸ πιθανὴ ἀπὸ κάθε ἄλλη. Ὁ ποταμὸς εἶναι πιὸ πιθανὸ νὰ εἶναι ὁ *Kinyras* παρὰ ὁ *Νεῖλος*. Ἔτσι δίνεται μιὰ ἐξήγηση γιὰτὶ ἕνας ὀλόκληρος τοῖχος χρησιμοποιήθηκε γιὰ τὸ ζωγράφισμα αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποταμοῦ. Ἡ διάλεξη τελειώνει μὲ τὴν ὑπόθεση ὅτι ἡ δραστηριότητα τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἀπὸ τὸ Ἀκρωτήρι, ἡ ὁποία παρουσιάζεται σὲ τρεῖς τοιχογραφίες ὑποδεικνύει ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἦταν πολιτικὰ ἀνεξάρτητοι ἀπὸ τὴ Μητέρα - Πατρίδα, τὴν Κρήτη.

Τὸ Δυτικὸ Οἶκημα, ὅπου βρέθηκαν οἱ τοιχογραφίες, εἶχε ἕνα ἄλλο δωμάτιο ζωγραφισμένο ὀλόγυρα, μὲ ἐξαιρετικὰ διακοσμητικὰ παραπετάσματα καμπινῶν (πίν. I, α), ὅμοια μὲ ἐκεῖνα πὺν ὑπάρχουν στὰ πολεμικὰ πλοῖα στὸ βόρειο τοῖχο. Τὸ σπῆτι ἦταν κατὰ τὰ φαινόμενα ἡ διαμονὴ τοῦ ναύαρχου τοῦ στόλου ἢ εἰκόνα τοῦ πίνακος III, α δείχνει τὸ πορτραῖτο τοῦ ναύαρχου πὺν κάθεται στὴν καμπίνα τῆς ναυαρχίδας του.