Painted “Ikria”¹ at Mycenae?

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(Pl. 26, fig. 1)

Abstract

A little known wall painting from a small room north of the Megaron at Mycenae, restored here for the first time in the light of related Theran frescoes, provides important information about symbols of marine power used during the Mycenaean period. Pertinent representations from other Late Helladic III mainland sites as well as from Egypt are considered.

In 1886, in the excavations which led to the discovery of the Late Bronze Age palace on the hilltop of the citadel of Mycenae, Ch. Tsountas found two important groups of painted stucco fragments, one in the Megaron, the other in a room directly to its north. The first group of fragments was the basis for extensive discussion and partial restoration of the figurative composition which once adorned the walls of the Megaron. The wall painting of the other room, depicting a series of intriguing objects decorated with various patterns (pl. 26, fig. 1), was, however, never restored or sufficiently analyzed, although a substantial part of it had been preserved. The present article proposes that the objects depicted in it might be interpreted on the basis of frescoes found recently in the LB I site of Akrotiri on Thera, and offers a pictorial restoration (ills. 3-7) which may serve as an aid for further consideration of the motifs by others.

The “panels” and their restoration

A study of pl. 26, fig. 1, a photograph of a watercolor copy of the fragments, as published by Tsountas, makes it clear that we are dealing with four separate and similar objects, the features of which are rendered with a certain consistency, suggesting that the artist had a well known model in mind. The drafting in the ancient painting is clear, but not always careful, to judge from some uneven lines and irregularities in the patterns. The palette is varied, consisting of black, red, yellow, blue, a greyish green and one instance of brown, but the colors are applied flatly without any attempt to produce textures or shading. Outlines and interior details are rendered in thick black lines and the general background is off-white.

¹ The Homeric term ἵκρα, used recently by S. Marinatos (Excavations at Tera, 7 vols. and Suppl. Pl. Vol. 6 [Athens 1968-78]); henceforth Tera 1-7. For this reference, see Tera 6,35), in reference to the ship cabins in frescoes from Thera, is now generally adopted as a convenient term. The term ἵκρα in Homer seems to describe deck beams or planks, forming partial decks at the fore and aft of a ship (R.J. Cunliffe, Lexicon of Homeric Dialect [London 1924]). Since the decks could and did serve as a platform on which to stand, walk and sleep, the word ἵκρα came to mean in post-Homeric times “scaffolding” or “benches/seats” on which to accommodate theatre spectators (P. Chantraine, Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque 2 [Paris 1970] s.v.). It should be made clear that nowhere in Homer does the term clearly imply “cabins.”

² These and other frescoes, found elsewhere at that time on the Mycenaean acropolis, were noted by Ch. Tsountas in two reports: Praktika 1886, 59-79 and ArchEph 1887, 160-69 and pls. 10-12. References to these reports will henceforth be abbreviated as Tsountas, ArchEph or Praktika.

³ Besides Tsountas’ discussion (supra n. 2), the main studies on the fresco are those made by G. Rodenwaldt in: “Fragmente mykenischer Wandgemälde,” ArchMitt 36 (1911) 231-50; Der Fries der Megarons von Mykenai (Halle 1921); “Mykenische Miscellen” in Episkyrotion Tsountas (Athens 1941) 434-37. With the resumption of excavations in the area of the palace by British archaeologists, further fragments were found in the Megaron and these were discussed by W. Lamb in BSA 25 (1921-23) 164-71 and 249-55 (henceforth Lamb, BSA), and reviewed by Rodenwaldt in Gnomon 2 (1926) 241-47.

² Pl. 26, fig. 1 is a photograph, at a reduced scale, of the color reproduction of the fresco fragments published by Tsountas, ArchEph pl. 12. Panel c is here shown upside down. Besides Tsountas’ mentions of the fresco, there are some brief discussions in: G. Rodenwaldt, Die Freiheit der Paläste in: Tiryns, Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen des deutschen archäologischen Instituts II (Athens 1912; hereafter Tiryns II) 232, 234 and Jdl 34 (1919) 102; H. Reusch, Die kretisch-mykenische Textilornamentik (Diss. Berlin, 1945; hereafter Reusch, Textilornamentik) 103-105; Lamb, BSA 257-59. These studies are discussed infra.

⁶ Infra pp. 169-70. My article was much improved thanks to useful comments by my husband and Professor J.W. Graham.

⁶ The exact hue and quality of the brushwork of the painting and details of technique cannot be discussed here since the present study had to rely exclusively on the modern color copy (supra n. 4) which is, nevertheless, adequate enough for an iconographic study, such as the present one. The only “panel” with a clear blue color is a in the friezes of the “arc” or “scale” patterns (ill. 3, pattern 1).
Ills. 3-6 here offer restorations of the individual objects, ill. 7 a suggestion of a possible overall composition. The labels a-d refer to the individual objects which, for the sake of convenience, will be referred to as “panels,” while the arabic numerals on the sides refer to the decorative patterns. Color is indicated only on the preserved fragments to help differentiate them from the restored parts (see Key to Colors used, ill. 1).

The most instructive of the painted fragments is that at the top right of pl. 26, fig. 1, in which we recognize a rectangular object, our panel a, painted against an off-white background. The form can be briefly described as a wide rectangle, divided horizontally into four patterned friezes separated from each other by narrow yellow bands, and vertically by an upright, upwards-tapering, black “pole,” marked by off-white X’s between off-white horizontal lines, forming hourglass patterns. The “pole” starts from the black band at the bottom of the panel and projects beyond a red band at the very top. It probably stops just below the first of a series of horizontal bands and stripes seen at the

![Key to colors used in restorations and in ill. 13](attachment:image)

**ILL. 1.** Key to colors used in restorations and in ill. 13
I.I.L. 3. Restoration of “panel” $a$

I.I.L. 4. Restoration of “panel” $b$

I.I.L. 5. Restoration of “panel” $c$

I.I.L. 6. Restoration of “panel” $d$
top of the fragment. Diagonal and perhaps also horizontal black “lines” starting at the top part of the pole help “attach” it to the sides of the panel. These are better preserved on the right side, where we see two slanting lines, one short, one long, reaching to the side. There seems to be a more complicated arrangement on the left, but, because of the poor preservation of paint and plaster at this point, the situation is impossible to define further. A tentative solution is suggested in ill. 3. Another odd detail is that the top narrow blue band of the panel is left unpainted where it extends on the left of the pole. The “scale” pattern (pattern no. 1) of the top frieze is repeated twice, in both cases on a blue ground; the “marbled” pattern of the second frieze (pattern no. 2) appears once, but is balanced by what may be a related design (pattern no. 3) in the bottom frieze, in both cases on a red ground. In general, the friezes are of somewhat unequal heights.

Panels b-d (pl. 26, fig. 1 and ills. 4-6) would seem to preserve bottom sections of the objects. From them we can derive further information: that the pole starts just at or within the bottom band, but does not extend below it; that this bottom band, which is clearly the base of the object, projects slightly beyond the sides of the panel with rounded ends and is painted sometimes in solid color, sometimes with patterns; that narrow yellow bands between friezes are typical; that the patterns of each panel are rendered against two alternating colors, blue and red in panel a, red and a greyish green in the other panels, and that there seem to be two basic patterns on each of these three panels. We should finally note that some of the friezes are made taller by means of what we might call “accessory” narrow bands in the same color, sometimes plain, sometimes with a different design of a simple nature, a wavy line or vertical bars. It seems quite likely that these accessory bands are a device to help the artist maintain the desired overall height of each object, when the character of the pattern does not allow a frieze to be tall enough.

With this information in mind, we can now restore panel a with a degree of certainty, as in ill. 3. As restored, and without counting the projection of the pole at the top, this rectangle is ca. 0.63 m. high and 0.55 m. wide.7 Ambiguous points in its restoration are the details of the “attachment” of the “pole” to the left side of the panel, for reasons explained above, and the extent of the course of the horizontal black lines extending outwards from the top of the pole. These could extend indefinitely, linking the individual panels, or they could ter-

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7 All measurements given in the present study are deduced from Tsountas’ color copy (supra n. 4), which must have been ½ the original scale of the actual fragments, rather than ¾ as Tsountas states in ArchEph 168. This apparent discrepancy is inferred from the specific measurements of the sections illustrated as quoted by Lamb (BSA 258):

1. Nat. Mus. Athens, No. 2786: 0.85 x 0.62 m.: here panel a.
2. Nat. Mus. Athens, No. 2787: 0.52 x 0.39 m.: here panel b.
3. Nat. Mus. Athens, No. 2788: 0.55 x 0.17 m.: here panel c.
4. Nat. Mus. Athens, No. 2789: 0.39 x 0.31 m.: here panel d.
minate at the sides of the panels, as in ill. 3. The completed panel a, nevertheless, can now act as a model with the help of which one can easily complete the other, much more poorly preserved, panels, although a few points of doubt still remain.

Panel b (ill. 4) is a most interesting one, because of the use, in two of its friezes, of nautilus, the only figurative motif to appear in the entire painting. The nautili appear on a greyish green ground, which also serves as the color of the base; the other pattern, a network of lozenges, is preserved in two friezes on red. The higher nautilus frieze is further provided with an accessory band, marked by vertical bars, which brings it up to the combined height of the bottom nautilus frieze and the base of the panel. Because of the relatively small heights of the friezes here it was necessary to restore five of them, in contrast to the four taller ones of panel a. On the basis of the bisection of each panel in equal halves by the pole, we can estimate the width of this panel, which proves to be slightly narrower than that of a.

Panel c (ill. 5) preserves the complete height of two friezes and part of a third. These are of unequal heights, the bottom one being approximately half of the one with the wavy lines, including the latter's barred borders. The narrow frieze on the bottom is in red, which is also the color of the patterned base; the taller one is greyish green. On the principle of an alternation of colors, patterns and, here, heights of friezes, it has been necessary to restore a total of four friezes to bring this panel up to the height of panel a. The width of the rectangle cannot be estimated, but would probably be roughly that of a.

Panel d (ill. 6), which is very poorly preserved, utilizes the same pattern of wavy lines that we encountered in panel c, here also on a greyish green background. The accessory band is marked by a wavy line, instead of being barred as in c. The motif of its second frieze is uncertain, but it might depict stylized leaves, as suggested in the reconstruction. Four friezes have been restored for this panel, of which the top one is half the presumed height of the one with the leaf patterns. That halving the height of a frieze does not go against the principles of construction attested in our panels, can be seen in panel a, where the bottom frieze is essentially half the height of the third one from the bottom, which has the marbled design.

For the overall composition we must rely on certain pictorial clues provided in a number of the fragments, and also on certain presumed principles of pictorial arrangement. The section of the fresco with panel a (pl. 26, fig. i and ill. 3) preserves at the top a series of painted bands which undoubtedly form the upper framework of the painting. Starting at the top, there are: a broad brown band, edged by a narrower red one below it; a medium-sized band in black, separated from the two bands above and from the next narrow red band below it by strips of unpainted plaster. Unpainted plaster also occurs at the top and the sides of panel a and at the bottom and left side of panel b (ill. 4). The sections of the fresco with panels c and d (ills. 5-6) moreover, instruct us that below an unpainted area, ranging from 0.04 to 0.07 m. in height, at the bottom of each panel, there is a fairly broad black band, of which the full height is not preserved. This band, which presumably forms part of the lower framework of the composition, could have been part of a series of bands, like those at the top, or, more likely, since bands at the bottom of a composition are unusual in Aegean painting, it could have been part of a painted dado. Fragments with panels c and d provide the crucial information that the objects depicted were aligned, although their distance from each other cannot now be estimated. The repetition of identical objects and their alignment suggest a frieze (ill. 7), of which the maximum preserved height is about one meter with the upper and lower bands included, or ca. 0.70 m. without them. The maximum preserved margin between panels being ca. 0.08 m. and the width of each panel ca. 0.55 m., the maximum preserved length of the frieze is about 2.60 m.

Where exactly on the walls of a room such a frieze might have appeared is now a matter of conjecture. If it had been the only wall painting in the room, as one might be tempted to conclude from the lack of other fresco fragments, it might have occupied a prominent position, perhaps at or below the level of the lintels of any windows and doors. There it could have run as an independent frieze, or it may have surmounted a painted dado. Unfortunately little is known about the heights of doors.
in Aegean buildings. In Minoan architecture, in a few examples where the height could be estimated, it ranged from 1.60 m. to 2.00 m. If this range also applies to Mycenaean architecture a dado here might cover an area some 0.60 m. to 1.00 m. in height. As a frieze the painting could well have appeared on more than one wall.

The specific architectural context of the painting is important in any consideration of its meaning and purpose. Here we are confronted with a problem. Although Tsountas, in his Praktika report, was quite specific and clear about the room in which the stucco fragments were found, namely in Room 30 (ill. 2), subsequent authors (W. Lamb, A.J.B. Wace and others) attributed the painting to a more elaborate nearby room with plastered benches (here ill. 2, Room 33). Since the discrepancy in attribution was not argued or explained, I assume that it was a matter of misunderstanding, perhaps from over-reliance on the brief Ephemeris report, where the reference to the location of the painting is indeed vague.

Room 30 (ill. 2), which, trusting the word of the excavator, I believe to be the correct context of the painting, is about 4.80 m. square (an estimate derived from the plan) and somewhat irregular in shape. The walls are too badly preserved for us to know much about its original appearance; we are better informed about rooms in its immediate vicinity. Directly to its west were three adjacent units: the large room with benches, already mentioned above and described by Wace as the “Ante-room of the Domestic Quarters” (Room 33), and two contiguous narrow spaces (Rooms 31–32), generally thought to be the location of the two flights of a staircase which led to the apartments on the higher terrace north of the Megaron, and possibly also to the top of the Megaron. A sottoscala (Room 32), acting as a storeroom, under the southern flight could apparently be entered from the little Room 30, where there is a break in the west wall. The main entrance to the latter is unknown. Wace suggested that it was entered from the east, where the wall is now destroyed. Tsountas that one could descend into it from the rooms to the north. Its location, nevertheless, indicates clearly that it was part of the domestic quarters; Tsountas offered the suggestion that it may have served as a bedroom. The south wall of the room is the easternmost end of the north wall of the Megaron, while its north wall is closer in orientation to the north walls of the rooms to the west, rather than to the Megaron, but set a little further south than they. To its east there is a narrow room of unknown function with very thick walls.

From this survey one derives the impression that the room was created between pre-existing structures, and this in turn suggests that its construction may belong to an architectural phase late in the history of the palace. Wace, in fact, attributes the room to the latest remodellings of the palace, later than the construction of the Megaron, the Antechamber to the Domestic Quarters and the associated staircase as well as the blocking of the east end of the South Corridor, which had once continued further east. Assuming that the fresco was still on the walls of the room in the final days of the palace, we can reasonably infer a date as late as the LH IIIb period. W. Lamb notes that the stucco fragments were somewhat affected by fire (like those of the frieze of the Megaron), and this may well have been the fire generally associated with the final destruction of the palace at the end of the LH IIIb period.

The frequent occurrence of the patterns adorning our panels in LH IIIb contexts at other Mycenaean sites (Praktika 70). For Wace’s discussion of this area of the palace and the staircase, see BSA 25 (1921–23) 257–63 (hereafter Wace, BSA).
naean sites further supports the proposed date, although there is at present no systematic study of such patterns which can provide definite dating criteria. Eight major patterns occur, mostly well defined, some less so because of poor preservation. The patterns have been examined in some detail by H. Reusch in her doctoral dissertation, but a few comments can be added here and the information brought up to date.

Pattern no. 1 on a blue ground occurs twice in panel a (ill. 3). It consists of overlapping arcs, each outlined twice and with a series of little circles along the interior outline. The junctions of the arcs are occasionally marked by a filling ornament consisting of a chevron and small parallel lines. The pattern corresponds most closely to A. Furumark’s “Concentric arcs,” but it also relates to the generally more regularly rendered “scale” pattern, familiar from representations of textiles, but known also now from a painted floor in the LH III B palace at Pylos.

Pattern no. 2, occurring once in panel a on a red ground, simulates veined stone, such as alabaster or some types of marble (ill. 3). It consists of four groups of wavy and/or scalloped parallel lines, each group occupying a corner of the panels created by the bisecting of each patterned frieze by the pole. This arrangement leaves a roughly lozenge-shaped gap at the center. The closest parallel is on painted floors of Mycenaean palaces, but also, to use one of Furumark’s expressions, in a version which represents an “excerpt” of the more complete pattern, it is encountered frequently on painted dados as well, in Minoan, Tharan and Mycenaean buildings.

Pattern no. 3, appearing in the bottom frieze of panel a, also seems like an abbreviated version of pattern no. 2, or else one closely related (ill. 3). Successive wavy lines cross the frieze diagonally, possibly converging in groups towards the bottom. In the spaces in between are, here and there, a few small circles. The closest example in painting, but much more polychrome than our example and without the small circles, is the pattern of the painted dado in the Throne Room at Knossos. The pattern also occurs in figurative scenes as a subsidiary landscape feature, as for instance in one of the Vaphio cups, in which it clearly indicates a rocky terrain. A derivative of this pattern appears in LH III pottery of which examples are to be found under Furumark’s “Rock Pattern III.”

Although suitable for dados, to my knowledge the motif has not appeared on painted floors or as a textile design. It lends itself best to a narrow, frieze-like arrangement, and was probably selected for the same reason here, in lieu of the related broader rock pattern higher up in the same panel.

Pattern no. 4, a frieze of nautili, appropriately appearing on a greenish ground, perhaps evoking the sea, occurs twice in panel b (ill. 4). The motif is one of the most favored ones in Aegean art and its use in various media hardly needs illustration. Suffice it here to state that in the present form, as a frieze, it occurs in several wall paintings in the Palace at Pylos, where it frequently is a subsidiary band to larger scenes. Nautili are also known to have appeared along with octopuses and types of fish on painted panels of Mycenaean floors, as pointed out by Reusch. To my knowledge it is not known as a pattern, woven or embroidered, on clothing, although such use is not inconceivable.

18 Reusch, Textilornamentik 103-105. The lack of illustrations in this dissertation greatly hampers its usefulness.

17 A. Furumark, Mycenaean Pottery. I. Analysis and Classification (Stockholm 1972, reprint; hereafter Mycenaean Pottery): pattern no. 44, pp. 348-50 and 345, fig. 58. There is also a “scale” pattern marked by little circles on the kilt of one of the procession male figures in a painting at Knossos (PM II, 729, fig. 456 b). For further examples of the motif on Aegaeon dress, see E. Sapouna-Sakellaraki, To Minoikon Zoma (Athens 1971) 168-69 and M.C. Shaw, “A Minoan Fresco from Katsamba,” AJA 82 (1978) 30-31. For the floor pattern from Pylos, see C. Blegen and M. Rawson, The Palace of Nestor at Pylos I (Princeton 1966; hereafter Pylos I) fig. 73.

19 For its use as a floor pattern, see Pylos I fig. 73. Examples on dados abound: Thera 6, pls. 3-5; PM I, 356, fig. 255; M. Lang, The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia II (Princeton 1969; hereafter Pylos II) pls. 140 and K, no. ID64. It is of interest that comparable imitations of variegated stone occur on floors and walls in palaces in the East, at Qatna and Mari, dating to the first half of the 3rd millennium (W.S. Smith, Interconnections in the Ancient Near East [New Haven 1965] 18, 49, figs. 31 and 128).

20 PM IV, 921, fig. 895.

21 Mycenaean Pottery, pattern no. 34, p. 327, fig. 55, where Furumark also illustrates a parallel used in a scene of swimmers on an inlaid dagger from Pylos.


23 Reusch, Textilornamentik 104; Tiryns II, 225. No illustration has been provided for the latter.
since birds, flying fish, butterflies and various fictitious animals occur among such patterns. Pattern no. 5, which appears twice on a red ground in panel b, is an ennobled version of Furumark’s “Diaper Net” (ill. 4). It is formed of small independent lozenges set within a network of larger ones, clearly an expansible surface pattern, curtailed here to fit the narrow frieze. A stem with leaves appears in each lozenge as a filling ornament. Although networks with rhomboidal units occur on painted Mycenaean floors, there is no exact parallel for the rectilinear version with floral motif. On the other hand, rectilinear variants of the motif, with or without a floral ornament, occur frequently in Aegean representations of dress; one such motif has also been used on a painted dado at Pylos, and on what looks like the facade of a building in a miniature fresco recently found at Thebes.

Pattern no. 6, which occurs once, possibly twice, against a red background in the existing part of panel c is difficult to identify, as only a small part of it is preserved (ill. 5). At the bottom frieze we note some leaf- or petal-like patterns in two overlapping layers, somewhat reminiscent of half-rosette fizeses in carved stone or painting, where such an overlapping of petals occurs. Whether the “petals” were arranged in one direction, as shown in our restoration, or met antithetically at the median point at the pole is now impossible to determine.

Pattern no. 7, occurring in both panels c and d on a greyish green ground, has been identified by Reusch as a simulation of woodland graining, which is quite plausible (ill. 5). More realistic versions than the ones on our panels occur in broad bands in wall painting where their meaning as wood is clear. Whatever its original derivation, the pattern also occurs in a close variant on belts and bands of Aegean dress.

Pattern no. 8, appearing on a red ground in panel d, calls for little comment, since its restoration is largely conjectural (ill. 6). It could be a “ribbed” pattern, as Reusch suggested, or a foliate band of which examples abound in vase painting from LM IA on. It is known both in a simple version, as restored in the top frieze of panel d, or as leaves arranged on either side of a stem, as in the broader lower frieze. In its simple form it seems to relate to a pattern used in bands in Aegean dress.

In addition to the above patterns there are some subsidiary motifs, such as the barred border above the nautili of panel b, a wavy line above the woodgraining of panel d and what looks like a “rope” pattern at the base of panel c. The simplicity of design of the first two makes it unnecessary to discuss them in detail. Suffice it here to note that they both occur in narrow bands and borders in representations of female dress and that the barred border, in this simple or in more elaborate versions, is a common motif for bands framing various painted representations. The “rope” pattern occurs occasionally as a border pattern in carved metal and ivory objects, but is also known to have been used as a decorative band in Theran representations of dress.

There remains the “hour-glass” pattern on the black poles, preserved in panels a and b (ills. 3-4). Reusch suggested that the pole was tied with light-band on a woman’s dress in a painting from Thera (Thera 7, pl. I and fig. 64). Evidence that it may well derive from wood graining is provided by another painting from Thera where it appears on the trunk of a tree (Thera 2, 53, fig. 43).

M. Lang summarizes the uses of the half-rosette pattern in dades and/or fizeses in Pylos II, 246-47 and pl. 139.

For general parallels in clothing patterns see PM II, 729, fig. 456 c and p. 731, fig. 457 a; Thera 2, 54, fig. 44 and 7, col. pls. B-E. For the use of the motif in architectural ornament see Pylos II, pl. Q, bottom, where it appears on a dado and Delion 26 (1971) pl. 25, illustrating fragments of the miniature scene.

For its use on dress see Pylos II, pl. N, top, right and pl. O; as a picture frame see Tsountas, ArchEph pl. 10, 2.

For its use on dress see Pylos II, pl. N, top, right and pl. O; as a picture frame see Tsountas, ArchEph pl. 10, 2.

The pattern can be seen on the belt and on an ornamental
colored strings and the closest parallel in Mycenaean painting I can discover is the strapping of the yoke in chariots, as in the Hunting Scene fresco from the Palace of Tiryns.³⁶

INTERPRETATION

With these general conclusions about the appearance, context and possible date of the composition in mind, we can now turn to the problem of interpretation. One of the difficulties at the time of discovery, as Rodenwaldt pointed out, was that this type of wall decoration was unparalleled, and the main clue had to be provided by the patterns associated with textile and painted floor decoration. On the basis of the latter type, Rodenwaldt offered the best interpretation possible at that time, namely that the painting depicts a series of wall hangings. This explanation supported his earlier suggestion that Mycenaean painted floors simulated patterned carpets, especially as the same odd combination of marine and abstract designs was found both on floors and in the painting under consideration.³⁷ This interpretation was generally accepted, first by H. Reusch, who concentrated on an analysis of the motifs, later by W. Lamb, and by A.J.B. Wace who referred to the objects depicted as “curtains,” a convenient nickname which was adopted in later literature.³⁸

There is no doubt that Rodenwaldt’s interpretation points in the right direction, but, as he himself admitted, there are difficulties associated with it. The theory that these are curtains, whether seriously meant or not, is not plausible, for the heavy framework of the objects would be superfluous in that case. So far there is no evidence for depictions of curtains in Aegean painting, except perhaps for one case in a small bedroom in the Old Palace of Phaistos, where D. Levi interpreted traces of a simple wall painting behind a bench-bed as possibly simulating curtains.³⁹ The character of the framework in our objects, on the other hand, raises doubts also about Rodenwaldt’s interpretation of suspended rugs. If we bear in mind that the attachment of the central pole to the sides implies further upright supports there, presumably concealed behind the fabric, and that the base, the top band and the yellow bands between friezes may have been in wood, rather than in cloth or other flexible material, we are confronted with an unnecessarily heavy frame. A tapestry or rug could easily be kept taut if suspended from the two upper corners and, if excessively bulky and heavy, could be supported further by a couple of wooden cross-bars at top and bottom. The pole was clearly not used for carrying the object around, in the mode of a standard, for then it should have extended below the base. Such a sturdy framework suggests to me that we have a three-dimensional object of which we only see one side.

On the above reasoning, I would like to propose that the Mycenae Fresco represents boat cabins, mainland versions of the LB I type familiar now from two wall paintings from Thera: one a miniature fresco depicting among other scenes a fleet, the other a frieze in which cabins in one-to-one scale are the exclusive motif.⁴⁰ Two samples of Thera cabins are reproduced here in ills. 8 and 9, one from each painting.

A glance at the Theran examples and our reconstructed motifs from Mycenae shows that there are admittedly some radical divergencies but also crucial similarities between the two sets. These can be summarized as follows: 1. the overall proportions, those of a wide rectangle, are typical in both cases; 2. the “walls” in each case are made of a flexible material, clearly leather at Thera, possibly woven fabric at Mycenae; 3. narrow horizontal bands divide the surfaces, in the case of Thera supporting a continuous piece of hide, at Mycenae acting both as a frame and as a point of junction of separate segments of fabric; 4. instead of the three poles we see in the Theran examples, only a central one occurs at Mycenae, although, as pointed out above, there may have been further upright supports at the sides.

From the above observations, it is clear that at Mycenae we may have a humbler version of a cabin, the main objection being that structurally m. high and 1.01 m. wide (Thera 5, 41). Here ill. 8 reproduces a drawing of a cabin from the large frieze (Thera 5, 42, fig. 6) to which I transferred the upper stripes as they appear in the color plate (Thera pl. vol. 6, pl. 4); ill. 9 gives part of a drawing of one of the best preserved ships from the miniature frieze (Thera pl. vol. 6, pl. 9).
there is a basic difference in the termination of the objects at the top. It is now difficult to determine whether the walls of the Mycenaean cabin were shorter than the height of a man seated inside, and open at the top, like the Theran ones, or whether the later model, if this is what we have, may have been roofed. A stone vase with relief decoration from Epidaurus depicts a boat with an unroofed cabin, while the well known signet ring from Tiryns featuring a ship shows a roofed structure set amidships with two figures seated inside (ills. 10-11). This could be a cabin, or a schematized rendering of the awning which appears in several of the ships in the Theran miniature fresco. In view of the ambiguity one wonders whether our Mycenaean "cabins" also combine various elements in one hybrid symbol, and whether the central pole with the strappings evokes the idea of a mast overlapping a cabin amidships or a sail.

41 The relief on the stone vase fragment from Epidaurus is of uncertain date, but is probably not far removed in time from the Theran examples of boats. It is of interest that no lateral poles seem to be indicated for the cabin. I believe that the dolphin here is not meant as a live one, but is rather a figure head attached to the ship (A. Sakellariou, "Scène de bataille sur un vase mycénien en pierre," RA 1971, 3-14, figs. 1-3). For the signet ring see F. Matz ed., CMS 1, No. 180, Inv. No. 6209, p. 204. Ill. 10 is a partial copy of a drawing in PM II 245, fig. 142.
The matter of composition could not be without significance and we might note in this connection that in both cases the "cabins" are arranged in a frieze-like manner, marked by a series of stripes at the top and with a dark band at the bottom—the beginning of a dado at Thera, but of uncertain restoration at Mycenae. As pointed out above, the decorative nature of the Mycenaean composition requires that the objects be placed at a limited distance from each other, much in the fashion of the cabins in the Thera frieze.

One final note of interest is that both frescoes may have decorated rooms of comparable function. The Thera frieze ran on the four walls of a unit interpreted by the excavator as a bedroom, and the same function was suggested for the little Mycenaean room by Tsountas.\textsuperscript{43} Whether a bedroom or not, the latter was certainly located within the domestic quarters of the palace at Mycenae and was not a state or formal room.

Up to the time of the discovery of the West House frescoes at Thera, the predominant symbols of Aegean military power known from wall painting had been those connected with armor, the outstanding example of which is the figure-eight shield, familiar from both narrative scenes and decorative friezes, where it was used in a manner comparable to that of the cabins in the Thera frieze.\textsuperscript{43} Considering that the Aegean peoples had been primarily seafarers and that maritime supremacy, echoed in historical times in the writings of Thucydides, was clearly a crucial matter, it was surprising that ostentation of naval power did not play a more significant role in painted scenes. The existence of such representations has, however, long been suspected through possible reflections in the minor arts, foremost among which is the scene on the silver Siege Rhyton from the shaft graves at Mycenae, and to a limited extent through depictions of ships on rings and seals.\textsuperscript{44} Thera now in part fills this gap and raises the hope that more such scenes may be found in future excavations, and also that some unrecognized remnants of these themes will be understood with the help of this new information.

I would also like to propose two more identifications of fresco scenes, one certain, the other rather speculative but worth mentioning. In the light of the well-executed ships in the Thera Fleet Fresco, we can now recognize the painting of a ship on two stucco fragments from the palace of Pylos, preserving part of the mast with rigging, an upper framework in checkerboard pattern, and part of a sail or central awning (ill. 12).\textsuperscript{45} Tentatively, two

\textsuperscript{43} Thera 6, 24; Tsountas, Praktika 71. I should also point out another important analogy between the two sites, noticed by Nancy Westread Leonard, namely that there exists a "parallel juxtaposition of a siege scene and ikria mural in the buildings at Mycenae and Thera." To be sure, the interpretation of the two figurative scenes (the Megaron frieze at Mycenae and the Miniature frieze in room 5 of the West House at Akrotiri) as scenes of siege is arguable. For our present purposes, however, it is important to note that they are comparable in terms of their frieze-like composition, the small scale of the motifs and iconography. For illustrations of the Mycenaean fresco, see supra n. 3.

\textsuperscript{44} E. Vermeule, Greece in the Bronze Age (Chicago 1964) pl. 14, offers a line drawing of the scene on the silver rhyton. For representations of ships on seals and elsewhere see S. Marinatos, "La Marine Crétéro-Mycénienne," BCH 57 (1933) 170-235 and the extensive bibliography provided recently by L.M. Brown, "The Ship Procession in the Miniature Fresco," in: Thera and the Aegean World I (London 1978) 642-44. To these examples must now be added a representation of a ship with the prow in the shape of a bird and with a steersman, engraved on an agate seal, found recently by I. Sakellarakis in what seems to be an MM III shrine at Anemospelies, at Archanes (Ta Nea, August 17, 1979, p. 3).

\textsuperscript{45} Pylos II, 186 and pl. 113, no. 19 M ne. The details of the mast can be compared both with the ship on the Tiriys signet
fresco fragments found with the Processional Fresco in the Palace at Thebes, which Reusch had already noted as possibly relating to the "wall hangings" at Mycenae (here ill. 13), may be identified as parts of ikria or sails. In fragment b one sees what may be the edge of a woman's skirt next to an object with a straight vertical side marked by a thick black line. This defines an area to the left divided horizontally by narrow and broad bands marked by decorative patterns, some easily attributable to the type of ornament that is characteristic of patterned fabrics. Fragment a seems to be part of the same or a similar object, and it further includes the interesting detail of a narrow yellow band, next to a barred border above and a band with rock-pattern below. If indeed the fragments preserve a depiction of objects similar to those at Mycenae, and if both are cabins or sails, we would have here a convenient chronological intermediary between the Theran example and the LH IIIA version at Mycenae.

It is not surprising that ikria should stand as a symbol of naval power and authority. In a recent article discussing the character of the Theran boats, L. Morgan Brown argues an analogous use of deck cabins as symbols of authority in some Egyptian painted scenes, some of her examples demonstrat-

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46 H. Reusch, "Die zeichnerische Rekonstruktion des Frauenfrises in boiotischen Theben," AbhBerl 1956, 29-30, pl. 13, figs. 38-39. Colors are indicated in our ill. 13 according to the Color Key Chart of ill. 1.

47 For a summary of views on the date of the Theban frescoes see Vermeule (supra n. 44) 341, n. 1. That these are representations of items other than clothing, such as robes, is also supported by Ch. Boulotis, who is completing his doctoral dissertation on Aegean Processional Scenes for the University of Würzburg, and who has had access to the original fresco fragments illustrated by Reusch and to other related pieces (oral communication, August 1979).
Theran cabins on the ships of the miniature frieze (here ill. 9), it has three posts on the visible side and a parapet wall, low enough to reveal the seated officer's head, shoulders and raised arm holding a staff. As at Thera, the baldachin rests on a raised platform and is movable: it can be used on and off the ship. As at Thera a guard or attendant is seated outside the cabin, knees bent, his back resting against its wall. One also wonders whether the presence of an animal, here a sphinx symbolic of the Queen's power, next to the baldachin, may not perform a function similar to that of the animals appearing by the cabins at the stern of the ships in the Theran miniature fresco.

In a wider context, the Fleet Fresco of Thera and, by association, the possible painted cabins at Mycenae, may be seen as a pictorial display of naval power analogous to the ostentatious enumeration of contingents in the Homeric Catalogue of Ships. This is not to imply that there is a direct and strict thematic connection, but simply that both painted fleets and cabins and the recited list of ships deal with subject matter deemed crucial and appealing to painter and poet alike and to an Aegean "public" that enjoyed and patronized these arts. On the analogy of the use of the theme of a besieged city, it would not be surprising if more of such motifs were shared. In the light of this thought, we might even see the tropical scene of the miniature fresco at 'Thera, whatever its historical locale and occasion, as an artist's vision of seamen's tales about far off and exotic lands, a vision romantically exaggerated like the enchanted places encountered by Homer's Odysseus. Thus Thera can be seen as part of that world which is in the background of the epics. This world, as the excavations now reveal, was one of intense internationalism and cultural ferment, in which Thera, and possibly more of the Cyclades, may have played the role of a center in which multiple cultural streams converged.

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Fig. 1. Fresco fragments from Mycenae
(*ArchEph* 1887, pl. 12)

Fig. 2. Berlin Amazon, belt

Fig. 3. Oxford Amazon, belt