MINOAN AND MYCENAEAN WALL HANGINGS.
NEW LIGHT FROM A WALL PAINTING AT AYIA TRIADA

For Vincenzo La Rosa: Archaeologist, Poet, True Philhellene, and Friend

The present article takes advantage of information recently made available in Pietro Militello's impressive publication of all wall paintings found at Ayia Triada since the start of excavations there in 1902. The specific fresco that forms the focus of this study was found in what the original excavators nicknamed the «Villa Reale», a large complex of palatial quality and scale. It involves a fine decorative pattern, but one that pales in comparison with the famous fresco from Room 14 in the same building (fig. 1), which depicts a Goddess with her female attendants in a lush landscape teeming with wildlife. There is, however, an important iconographic link between the two compositions in that both provide important information about Minoan patterned textiles. In the figural scene the patterns appear on the skirt of the Goddess; in the decorative mural they constitute the whole composition, which seems to depict either a curtain or a wall hanging.

It is exactly this use of cloth that makes the decorative fresco quite unique for the information it imparts: it is nearly the only known depiction in wall painting that illustrates the use of patterned textile as interior décor, rather than as male or female dress. Such a use, on the other hand, is well represented in wall and ceiling paintings in the other areas of the Aegean and in Egypt – the cloth in the latter generally believed to be Minoan and to

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1 Militello 1998.
2 Here I would like to thank Kessa Laxton, graduate student in the Department of Fine Art at the University of Toronto, for her research of the historiography of the Ayia Triada painting, for her perceptions, and the fine digital rendering of the reconstruction (fig. 4). As usual, the article benefited from the critical reading of J. W. Shaw. The dedication to V. La Rosa is appropriate because he has been the main mover behind publication of the old excavations at Ayia Triada.
3 Relatively recent views that Ayia Triada actually consisted of two adjoining buildings are summarized and documented in V. La Rosa, La 'Villa Royale' de Haghia Triada, in R. Hägg ed., The Function of the 'Minoan Villa' (Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 6-8 June 1992), Stockholm 1997, pp. 79-89. La Rosa, however, believes that the Villa was a unified whole, approximating a palace in status and function.
5 Shaw 2000, pp. 56, 59, fig. 3.
6 This specific issue has been discussed in Shaw 2000. The one exception could be what is considered a ceiling painting from the Palace of Knossos (PM III, pp. 30-31, pl. XV) that may go back to the idea of a canopy.
have been imported by the elite 7. The painting from Ayia Triada thus fills a lacuna and even suggests that the apparent omission in representation in Crete may simply be an accident of preservation. Such uniqueness warrants that the painting's iconography, potential location, and possible function within the particular building be pursued in some detail and that the theme be put in some perspective with regard to other types of Aegean interior decoration.

Provenance

Some ambiguity surrounds the provenance of the plaster fragments, partly because they seem to have been widely scattered, partly because of the limited and sometimes contradictory information in the excavation reports 8. Plaster fragments in the area, which the Italian excavators refer to as the «Quartiere Signorile di Nord-Ovest», were found in Portico 11 and the nearby Corridor, but the main concentration was in Room 13. This room is known also as «La Stanza dei sigilli» because of the many sealings that were found in the same level as the plasters 9, leading to the question of whether they had fallen from a room on the upper story or from the walls of

7 For the export of Minoan textiles, Barber 1991, pp. 330-331.
8 Barber 1991, pp. 72-73, for comments on the occasional contradictions.
9 Banti 1977 p. 87. For an earlier use of this nickname, cf. F. Haehner, Resti dell'Étà micenea scoperti ad Hagia Triada presso Phestos [rapporto sulle ricerche del 1902], in MonAnt 13, 1903, coll. 6-74, especially p. 29.
Room 13 itself. These possibilities are best considered later on, when a better understanding is gained of the area involved, but it should be noted at this point that L. Banti, one of the chief earlier examiners of the fresco, was rather convinced that the fresco had decorated Room 13.  

Many of the scattered plasters were monochrome, while those patterned proved to belong to two compositions; the decorative one already noted and one with a floral landscape that Militello restored and labeled in his publication «Composition B».

Interestingly, both paintings were partially rendered in relief.

Date

All ground floor spaces mentioned above had floors paved with slabs. All fresco fragments above the slabs were found in a stratum of LM IA date, which marks the final destruction of the Villa. Indeed, many of the fallen plasters (along with plaster still adhering to the walls) were badly burnt. Of the murals mentioned, at least the grand composition with the goddess in Space 14 can be bracketed chronologically between an early stage of LM IA – the date of sherds found under that room’s slab floor – and the LM IB destruction dated by the debris from the last use of the floor throughout the building. The two compositions represented by the scattered loose fragments might belong to the same chronological horizon if they had, indeed, been on the walls of Room 13, for this room featured distinct architectural features (the slabs on the floors, the pier and door partitions, etc.) present also in the adjacent and interconnected rooms on the ground floor, suggesting a one-time planning and construction for the whole group. One normally expects that fresco decoration follows soon after construction or renovation is complete, what would suggest a possible date for the execution of the frescoes during LM IA.

Iconography and Reconstruction of the Decorative Fresco

Our knowledge of the iconography relies on the two to three fragments that preserve patterns, the rest merely painted in solid red. The crucial patterned pieces have been catalogued in Militello’s volume as C4-C5 and C1 – labels that will be maintained here. Of these, C4 and C5 were illustrated in that volume by color photographs, C1 by a watercolor. Of the first two pieces, the smaller, C4, will not be discussed here, since the part of the pattern it preserves simply repeats what is better represented in C5. New line drawings of C5 and C1 are offered here (figs. 2-3) as it was deemed important for the discussions that follow that the fragments be shown in the orientation thought to be that of the original painting. In addition, these drawings clarify some of the details that are unclear in photographs.

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10 BANTI 1977, p. 86.
11 MILITELLO 1998, pp. 72, 172-180, restored in pl. 21b.
12 The information is thanks to the archival research of La Rosa, who located a photograph of the sherds found in a sounding under the floor (MILITELLO 1998, pp. 68-71, fig. 7).
14 Regrettably, it was not possible to inspect the actual fragments before undertaking this study, but we are grateful to Militello for his ongoing clarifications and for sending us a color slide of C1. The drawings have been traced, respectively, from the color photograph in Militello, taking into consideration also earlier black and white photos published in BANTI 1977, p. 89, and fig. 55, right.
C5 (fig. 2a) tells us the most about the character of the decorative pattern. This consists of a blue area that acted as background and as frame for two types of panel to be referred to as «rosette panel» and «zig zag panel». The former is white and nearly square (ca. 4.5 m on each side), and it contains a circular red ornament which was identified by Militello as a rosette with eight-petal. The term «rosette» is used here loosely, since the rendering here replaces petals with lines, the former being the more typical in the Aegean painting. The other panel is nearly rectangular, with a blue interior. White was used to outline the panel and to render a zig zag line that crosses it in the interior. A technical detail worthnoting is that the outlines of the panels and the edges of the blue area were painted in darker blue to add further definition to the adjacent linear elements. The darker tone is indicated by denser dotting in figures 2a and 3.

Fragment C5 likely belongs to the top of the painting, which is marked by a dark horizontal line, perhaps part of the picture’s upper frame. Below this line appears what Militello refers to as «an arcade pattern» — a term used for a decoration that usually appears on vases15. The pattern is painted in solid red and consists of adjoining arcs, their points of junction marked by a nodule visible between adjacent rosette panels (fig. 2a).

Quite likely, a nodule existed behind the upper corner of each rosette panel which nearly touches the horizontal line of the painting, as well. Fig. 2b offers a restoration of what the «arcade pattern» may have looked like, imagining it with the row of rosette panels momen-

tarily removed. Further, it can also be seen from both fragments C5 and C1 (fig. 3) that the rosette and zigzag panels were arranged in alternate horizontal rows, resulting in what is known as a «lozenge network», which is typical of depictions of Minoan and other Aegean textiles\(^\text{16}\). The particular patterned cloth in this case, interestingly, gives the impression that it was either suspended from the horizontal line, or attached at alternate nodules of the «arcade pattern». These suggestions are easier to follow in a new restoration of the painting, offered here in Col. Pl. A. If the idea that a hanging was represented is correct, one needs to consider next whether there is a better explanation for the «arcade» than merely that of a decorative pattern. One last iconographic detail to be kept in mind in this context are the triangular spaces between the panels of the top row. They are painted yellow, and the idea will later be explored that they two represent fabric attached to the panels of the top row.

Fragment C1 (fig. 3) supplements the information about the possible hanging in another important way. Preserved on it is what should be the bottom row of the panels below which the blue background continues and ends with an undulating edge, bordered by a white band. The latter helps separate the blue area from one painted solid red below it. Interestingly, the blue area is in relief, that is in red is flat. Possibly, the relief was intended to convey the idea of volume or mass of the cloth, while the red area simply represented the flat surface of a wall painted red over which the patterned textile was hung. Important also is the fact that the cloth could be raised up, as suggested by the undulating hem, which raises unevenly. An excellent parallel for this last aspect is a fresco from the so-called House of the Ladies in the Late Cycladic IA site of Akrotiri at Thera, but the hanging here is a net of stringed beads ornamented with silver stars, rather than a woven textile\(^\text{17}\). The net in the Theran painting lifts just enough to make room below for a scene of women engaged in what seems to be a ritual activity.

One is tempted to ask if what we are seeing in various cases are hangings or curtains, but perhaps such a question is a futile attempt to over-define materials and objects that then had multiple purposes. For instance, the net in Thera may have hung from the ceiling, away from a wall, pulled up when not in use, dropped down to serve as a room partition. It could also have served as a stage backdrop during ritual activity. One positive observation, however, can be made, as far as our specific quest for a solution of the method of hanging. This is that these fabrics were pulled up rather than sideways, one intention possibly being to allow the decorative patterns to be fully visible. For this reason, I would like to suggest that the «arcade pattern» in the Ayia Triada fresco was a device that had two functions. One was to keep the fabric taut, i.e., to keep it from gathering sideways, a purpose also served by the yellow pieces of cloth that kept the distance between the projecting corners of the panels constant. The other function could be related to the system used for the suspension of the hanging. Comparable

\(^\text{16}\) For a description of the «network», see Barber 1991, p. 319. For a fine example, see its use on the kilt of one of the men in the Procession Fresco from the Palace of Knossos (Shaw 2000, p. 54, fig. 1C and 2C, and p. 56). As far as the filling motifs in the Ayia Triada fresco, Miletello has called attention to the «rosette» that occur on one of the faience girdles from the Temple Repositories at Knossos, while the zigzag motif is more difficult to match. See Miletello 1998, p. 182 for both motifs, and Furrmark, Mycenae Pottery... cit., pp. 386-389, motif 61, fig. 67 on p. 383, for the variants of the zigzag.

\(^\text{17}\) The parallel (Doumas 1992, pp. 38-39, figs. 6-8) has been noted by Miletello 1998, p 182. For the identification of net and metal stars, as well as wall hangings, see B. Blakolmer, Ikonographische Beobachtungen zu Textilkunst und Wandmalerei in der bronzezeitlichen Ägäis, pp. 2-27, in ÖfG 63 (1994 Beiblatt), in which he also identifies the stars as being of metal and the depiction as being that of a net.
information is unfortunately lacking in the Theran fresco, where the net is shown disappearing or continuing under the multicolor bands that form the upper frame of the painting.

As far as the idea that the «arcade pattern» has a functional role, information paradoxically comes from an altogether different and unexpected quarter. I refer to certain specific depiction of a Figure-Eight Shields, one of which illustrated here was painted on the upper part of the body of an LM I pitcher from Chania (fig. 4). The detail of interest is the mysterious device that seems to be attached to the top of the shield’s rim. It consists of two short adjoining curves or arcs marked by solid globules, one at center top, the remaining two at the lateral ends of the arcs. The device could hardly be interpreted as merely an ornament. If a hanging device it is also unlikely that it was attached to the shield itself, as it seems to be of a rigid form, perhaps made of metal, and would have been cumbersome when the shield was in use. The fact that the side globules overlap the shield’s rim should not be a deterrent to the idea that the contraption was independent from the shield, for the artist might have been interested in showing this detail as a way of explaining the device by which the shield was hung. Why this may have been the case, will be discussed by first turning back to the device associated with the Ayia Triada hanging, for it seems that the two paintings provide complementary information.

I like to suggest here that the system of suspension represented in both was very much like that of a modern coat hanger consisting of hooks attached to a wall. In the depictions, the lateral nodules would be the ends of hooks that projected from the wall. A shield could be easily hung without a trap, by simply inserting the hook under the incurved inner edge.

18 H. Kyrieleis, Zur Genese des spätminoischen ‘Arkadornaments’, in Περιοδικό της Βραχίλης Συνδρομ (Χανιά 1986), Chania 1990, pp. 403-409, pl. 52. Other pertinent examples can be seen in N. Leipen, A clay alabastron with Shield Decoration, in Annual Art and Archaeology Division (Royal Ontario Museum, University of Toronto), Toronto 1961, pp. 27-34, pl. XII. Another is illustrated in Warren 2000, pp. 457-470, pl. 5.

19 The device is too distinct to relate to the simple curve shown at the top of shields, usually interpreted as a simple scrap that helped hang a shield (W.D. Niemeier, Die Palastkeramik von Knossos. Stil, Chronologie und Historischer Kontext, Berlin 1985, pp. 121-124, fig. 59, especially p. 123). A more elaborate rendering of the same design has, on the other hand, been interpreted as an anthropomorphic head (Warren 2000, p. 463, pls. 8, 9), but I suspect they are simply rendered rosettes.
of the shield's rim. In the case of the textile hanging, it is likely that the corners of the cloth panels were wrapped around or attached to the «invisible» nodules. As for the central nodule in both the fresco and vase painting, I would like to suggest that it represents the head of a long nail or wooden peg driven into the wall, to which the hooks were attached by means of lateral arcs, likely of metal. In the case of the textile hanging, each nail or peg would have alternated with a hook all along the upper edge of the cloth. In the case of the single shield on the Chania vase, there was need only for one peg and two hooks. I finally like to add to my proposal, that while shields may have hung on casual occasions, using a leather strap or the baldric attached to their interior, they may have required the installation of a sturdier and more permanent system of suspension in places intended for more permanent displays. That such displays were common is well attested in a series of Bronze Age Aegean frescoes of Figure-Eight-Shields, the latter's suspension on walls made iconographically clear by showing them overlapping a colorful spiral frieze, clearly a wall painting.

My first example is from the so-called Palace of Nestor at Pylos (fig. 5), and was partially restored from fragments found in staircase 54, located right next to the palace's Inner Forecourt. What is particularly interesting in this case is that the shields seem to be made of cloth, to judge both by the network pattern covering most of their surface and the flexible looking arcs that spread between them. The sewing technique used in this hanging may have been similar to that of quilting, which allows for padding to give the impression of mass or shape—for instance, to indicate that the shield was convex. Moreover, the combination of the bands/arc and the rosette that marks their junction at the top produces a design that is very similar to the «arcade pattern» in the Ayia Triada fresco. The rosette is very interesting, for it occupies the same position as the visible nodules in the Ayia Triada fresco, or the central nodule in the shield in the vase painting—what are interpreted here as «pegs». I would like to further suggest that the rosette represents a facing, perhaps made of metal, which covered the peg or long nail driven into the wall that helped hold the suspension system solidly in place.

The next example of a fresco of shields is from the Palace of Tiryns, its fragments found in theInner Forecourt of the Palace of Tiryns (fig. 7). In retrospect, this location makes one wonder if the Inner Forecourt was also the location of the Shield Fresco at Pylos, for a staircase seems to be a rather unlikely place for such a display. The rendering here differs

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20 For the shape in and out and other information about this kind of shield, see I. MYLONAS, Shear, Tales of Heroes. The Origins of the Homeric Texts, New York 2002, pp. 29-41.


22 Supporting the idea that the shields at Pylos were of cloth are the double-barred bands, which were shown to have been a common pattern for woven bands (BARRÉR 1991, pp. 324-26). The use of quilting seems to be implied by the painting of a network pattern from Xeste 3 in Thera, where undulating bands in relief are pinched together at intervals (held there by a ring) to form the individual lozenges (DOUMAS 1992, pp. 174-175).

23 This proposal counterbalances the claim by G. Mylonas who thought that a rosette was too flimsy an object to be used as a suspension design. He opted instead for the rosette allude to an anthropomorphic head, an idea clearly inspired by the iconography of the «palladium» on a painted plaque found on the Acropolis of Mycenae, where the head and arms of a goddess seem to project beyond her shield. For such opinions, also shared by others, see discussion and references in IMMERWAHR 1990, pp. 138-40, 145, 163.

24 PM III, p. 304 ff., fig. 197. For further discussion, cf. IMMERWAHR 1990, pp. 16, 139, 165, 203; also pl. v.

25 The reasoning for such an attribution here is that, since only the bottom steps of stairs are usually preserved in Bronze Age buildings, and since the plaster fragments at Pylos were found right there, they may have actually fallen from the wall right above the
in that the background is packed with ornaments and there is what we might call a dissolution of form – obviously the result of artistic license as the artist became progressively more removed from the actual model and turned to copying other representations. This would explain why the arcs here look like streamers, and why they appear both at the top and the bottom of the frieze. There is, nevertheless, a detail in the painting that may well preserve the memory of a pragmatic detail and can clinch the explanation offered above for the rosette. This is the fact that the rosette appears between the pairs of «streamers» only above, not below, the shields, what makes sense if the rosette were a suspension device needed only at the top.

A third example of a painted frieze of shields comes from the Southwest Building of the Cult Center on the Mycenaean acropolis at Mycenae (fig. 6)\textsuperscript{26}. As in the Tynys Fresco, the shields are clearly shown hung on a wall, to judge by the underlying painted spiral frieze – a part that is not preserved (but it was probably present) in the Pylian fresco. The rendering of the suspension device most resembles that of the shield on the Chania vase in that the arcs topped by the rosette curve only slightly and they reach the upper part of the rim of the shield. Whether they swung to the sides between the shields is not clear, as the wider composition has not been restored in its entirety, and it seems to be very fragmentary.

**Location and Display of the Ayia Triada Wall Hanging**

We must once more return to the primary subject of this paper, to discuss the question raised earlier about the likely original location of the Ayia Triada painting. Like Banti and

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\textsuperscript{26} I. Κρητεα-Πρόβια, Τοιχογραφίες του Θυσιαστικού Κέντρου των Μυκηνών, Athens 1982, pp. 54-63, col. pls. 1; 17, pls. 12-18; and Immerwahr 1990, pp. 99, 121, 140, 193.
Militello, I believe that Room 13 is the best candidate, not least because of the high concentration of frescoes in this area of the Villa, including the spectacular painting of the goddess in Room 14. The latter room was in fact accessed directly and exclusively from Room 13, and which seems to have also played a central role in the circulation pattern in that area with regard to other spaces and rooms (fig. 1). In Militello’s analysis of the frescoes, one also supported by La Rosa in a recent article 27, the idea emerged that Room 14 was a Public Shrine, though, personally, I hesitate to use the term «public» given the room’s small and private character. On the other hand, this possibility becomes more acceptable if the «Shrine» consisted in a group of rooms including Room 14. The spacious Room 13 could have acted in that case as a lobby or a gathering space for those who were waiting their turn to enter Room 14, or for spectators watching officiating priestesses and/or priests entering and exiting Room 14, which may have functioned as an Inner Sanctum, in which, as in a Christian Church, entrance was restricted.

If such were the role of the also architecturally well-appointed Room 13 28, it would make sense for it to receive proper mural decoration like that of a wall hanging fresco. The western wall, in that case, would be the most suitable, for it is the only one in the room not given over to pier and door partitions. Likely, the fresco, including the red area below, took up most of the height of the wall.

Exactly how high the total composition was is difficult to gauge, but some estimates and assumptions were made in preparing the restoration (Col. Pl. A), which intentionally illustrates but a portion of the painted area of the wall. Part of the assumed width of the painting and part of the height of the red area were left out of the restoration to allow for larger reproduction and visibility of the more interesting areas, since the aim was not intended to show the painting within its architectural context. There were tall dados of alabaster slabs in the remaining walls, but Militello suggests that the dado of the west wall may have been shorter 29. A relatively arbitrary estimate of 0.65 to 0.80 m. has been here assigned to the dado, leaving room for a painting ca. 1.70 m high. The estimate takes into account the height of the room itself, from floor to ceiling, which could have been ca. 2.50 m. high, judging after the known height of another room at the site 30. The patterned area likely claimed most of the resulting free wall surface, height-wise, if we take as a model the fresco with the net from Thera, where the space under the net is shorter than that covered by the net. Using the known measurement of 4.5 cm. for the side of each rosette panel allows an estimate of 0.90 m for the maximum height of the patterned area counting from where the hem hangs lower. This allows for a maximum of 13-14 rows again calculating from where the hem hangs down the most.

Where exactly the floral landscape appeared in Room 13 is difficult to say. One might envision it below the patterned hanging, creating a «trompe-l’oeil» impression of looking outdoors beyond a raised window curtain, as in a Pompeian 2nd Style painting 31. but, in fact, there is really not enough space to accommodate both compositions on the same wall. The landscape seems to have contained no figures, and, likely, was no more than a narrow frieze. The latter could easily fit above the pier and door partitions, its width possibly similar to that

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28 BANT 1977, p. 86.
29 MILITELLO 1998, p.73.
30 The model is a room at Hagia Triadha, marked by a window of which the sides are well preserved (J.W. SHAW, Minoan Architecture, Materials and Techniques (Annuario XLIX, [N.S. XXXIII] 1971), Rome 1972, p. 177, figs. 205b and 206.
31 For an example, see N.H. RAMAGE, A. RAMAGE, Roman Art, 1996 (2nd ed.), pp. 76-77, figs. 2.40-2.41.
of the Tropical or Nilotic Landscape in the West House in Thera\textsuperscript{32} or of the frieze of the landscape populated by birds that ran along the top part of at least three walls of the Pavilion in the Caravanserai building at Knossos\textsuperscript{35}.

**Reflections on Hangings of Patterned Textiles and of Figure-of-Eight Shields**

This concluding section offers some comparative comments on the two types of hangings, regarding their contexts and possible meanings or ideological purposes. The comments will be rather cursory here, as these subjects require much more detailed research and thought than can be afforded within the scope of the present paper.

With the help of the Theran parallel, the rather unique painting at Ayia Triada can now be put in a larger perspective. It is fair in a comparison to say that both these paintings come from residential quarters, but where the particular rooms along with the paintings have religious associations. In the case of Thera this is more directly expressed: a ritual scene involving women evolves directly under the star-speckled net. In the case of Ayia Triada, one can see the wall hanging as part of a larger decorative program that includes the scene of the goddess and the women in Room 14, as well as the landscape – this, assuming that all these paintings belonged to the ground floor level of the Villa. It may not, too, be a coincidence that a landscape (this of papyri growing along a river)\textsuperscript{32} should have decorated a room adjacent to the one with the ritual scene in Thera. Lastly, the presence exclusively of women in the two related frescoes in Crete and Thera seems to attach a gender distinction to the representations, an impression that is intensified by our knowledge that the hangings in the paintings may well be the handicraft of women. E. Barber has made the interesting point that, in pre-industrial society, weaving was a task basically carried out by women.\textsuperscript{35}

The distinction along gender lines is one that, by analogy and to a degree, can apply to wall hangings consisting of shields. The most evident ideological message here is likely to be

\textsuperscript{32} Doumas 1992, pp. 64-67, figs. 30-34.

\textsuperscript{33} PM II, pp. 109-16, figs. 49, 51-54 and Frontispiece.

\textsuperscript{34} Doumas 1992, pp. 36-37, figs. 2-3.

\textsuperscript{35} An association of women and cloth, comparable to the painting in the House of the Ladies in Thera, is the case of two women in two separate paintings from the Cult Centre at Mycenae, who are shown below an undulating hanging with textile associations. For the paintings, see Kritzeal Ppomai, cit. (above no. 26), pp. 37-40, 73-76, col. pls. β:β, γ:γ. Of these, one woman (nicknamed by G. Mylonas «H Mognyalas») holds a necklace, the other a flower. This aspect of these paintings is being explored by the main author of the present article in a separate study, in progress.
that of military valor and prowess, especially as the physical context of the display of the symbols is a large and public space in a palace. It is significant in this respect, too, that the examples of Shield Frescoes belong basically to the Mycenaean period, when warfare was a popular pictorial theme, if not a way of life, though there may be precursors of such art and mentality in Thera. As for Crete, Shield Frescoes exist there too, in the Palace of Knossos. The most famous is one of which the fragments were found in the large and official Hall of Colonnades. The reason why this example was not mentioned above is its poor preservation, which does not allow any inferences to be made about the suspension method, which is the main line of enquiry here. Perhaps this location, not far the Hall of the Double Axes, which also contains what has been called a throne, can be compared with that of most of the Mycenaean examples that were shown in a large open space not far from the Megaron, which also contains a throne. The date is generally accepted too that the Knossian painting belongs to the time after the presumed fall of Knossos to the Mycenaeans.

The one exception as to context is that of the Figure-Eight Shield Fresco from the Cult Center. Such location seems to give support to theories about the religious dimension of the shield noted earlier. Most likely, the particular type of shield partakes both of the secular and the sacred. In a forthcoming article, Lyvia Morgan sees cult objects and artistic representations in the various shrines and related buildings in that area as symbolizing what she describes as the "duality of life and death". Indeed, a shield protects the warrior in the battlefield, but the image of a shield is also a reminder of the occasion when life can be taken away. In this scenario, a "warrior goddess" or a "nature goddess" can monitor the balance between life and death.

There is one other area where the dual symbolism of life and death applies. I refer to real armor and weapons dedicated as "kterismata" in tombs of Aegean warriors, or even paintings on vessels with depictions of armor found in tombs. There is, for instance, the LM II amphora from a chamber tomb at Katsamba, painted with boar's tusk helmets, seemingly flowing in water, that may even refer to men lost in battle at sea. There is also the vase from the Tomb of Double Axes at Knossos, which depicts both a shield and a helmet as if hugging over a wall painted with a spiral frieze. Whether actual shields were ever suspended on tomb walls, as they seem to have been on palace walls, we may never know, but the most likely tomb to have


37 There could be predecessors to these examples of at least other types of armor, as suggested by a recent discovery in Thera (AR 2001, p. 121, fig. 174). This is a fragmentary fresco depicting helmets (parts of two preserved) arrayed in a frieze and overlapping multi-colored bands, as shields do in the painted friezes.

38 PM III, pp. 299-318. For the illustrations of the shield fresco, see fig. 196 and col. Pl. XXIII.

39 Though Evans believed that the fragments belonged to the decoration of the loggias overlooking the light well/court surrounded by the columns on the ground level, the painting may have appeared on the ground level or both there and the loggias. For the seat, see PM III, pp. 333-338, and figs. 222-224.

40 Immerwaehr 1990, p. 177.

41 I thank the author for allowing me to refer to this aspect of her study, to be entitled: "The Cult Center at Mycenae and the Duality of Life and Death", to be published in a forthcoming honorary volume for M.A. Cameron entitled: Aegean Wall Painting.

42 Warren (2000), prefers the idea of a nature goddess, whom he sees as actually inhabiting the Figure-Eight-Shield, and enabling the continuation of life through the gift of fertility.

43 W.-D. Niemeier, Die Palaststikeramik... cit., pl. 8, XVII A 2.

44 (PM III, pp. 308-311, fig. 198). Conceivably too, the Chania vase (which is part of a private collection) may come from a tomb too.
been thus adorned is the so-called Tomb of Atreus at Mycenae. Indications, there, are the holes that appear at regular intervals at certain heights in the walls in the interior of the dome. These were for the insertion of nails. W. Dörpfeld proposed that they might have held rosettes and other metal ornaments.\(^\text{45}\)

Maria C. Shaw - Kessa Laxton

**ABBREVIATIONS**


**ABSTRACT**

Facilitated by the recent publication of frescoes found in old and new excavations at the Bronze Age site of Aghia Triadha (Militello 1998), this study identifies and restores a probable representation of a wall hanging from the so-called «Royal Villa». An apparent suspension device in the depiction, in turn, illuminates similar details in frescoes of other types of wall hangings, and specifically the well known friezes of Figure-of-Eight Shields. The use of the two types of hangings (textiles and shields) reflects respective female and male perceptions and differing societal roles. The textile hanging at the Royal Villa appears to have decorated a room immediately adjacent to the Shrine with the famous painting of the Goddess. Textile and Goddess may have formed part of a larger decorative program that pulled together women, cloth, and the observance of ritual.

\(^\text{45}\) For Dörpfeld’s view, see G.E. Mylonas, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age*, Princeton 1966, p. 121. I thank J.W. Shaw for reminding me of this important case.