



The Bull-Leaping Fresco from below the Ramp House at Mycenae: A Study in Iconography and Artistic Transmission

Author(s): Maria C. Shaw

Source: *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, 1996, Vol. 91 (1996), pp. 167-190

Published by: British School at Athens

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30102546>

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

https://www.jstor.org/stable/30102546?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

British School at Athens is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Annual of the British School at Athens*

THE BULL-LEAPING FRESCO FROM BELOW THE RAMP HOUSE AT MYCENAE: A STUDY IN ICONOGRAPHY AND ARTISTIC TRANSMISSION¹

(COLOUR PLATES A–D; PLATES 36–37)

DISCOVERED over half a century ago, the fresco under consideration is familiar from its discussion in publications, but it has not yet been the subject of the special study that it deserves.² As far as fresco representation is concerned, the theme of bull-leaping has been known until recently solely from the Palace of Knossos and from some palatial sites on the Mycenaean mainland, as is the fresco under consideration, which comes from the Acropolis of Mycenae (FIG. 1).³ To these can now be added frescos recently found by the Austrian

¹ The author wishes to thank the Managing Committee of the British School at Athens and the Director, Dr E. French, for permission to study and illustrate the plaster fragments from the Ramp House and to reproduce Cameron's reconstructions of the Knossian Toreador Fresco. Study of the fragments in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens was made possible thanks to Dr K. Demakopoulou and her assistant Demetra Kokkebe-Photiou. Fragments 8 and 9 were studied as part of an earlier project in 1977, with the kind permission of the Greek Archaeological Service.

The following illustrations have been kindly provided: colour slides of the Ramp House fragments and of the Tiryns Toreador Fresco (Archaeological Museum in Athens) by Dr K. Demakopoulou; slides and colour prints of Cameron's reconstructions of the Knossian Toreador panels (Cameron Archives in London) by Dr S. E. Waywell.

A generous grant from the Institute for Aegean Prehistory of New York has made possible the printing of colour illustrations and has helped with the costs of preparing the article. Smaller grants from the University of Toronto (administered through the Division of Humanities, Scarborough College, and the Fine Art Department) in 1995 have helped with other expenses, including travel for the delivery of a paper ('A bull-leaping scene from Mycenae: a new reconstruction'; abstract in *AJA* 99 (1995), 343) at the 96th Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America, Dec. 1994, in Atlanta.

I am most grateful to Drs Elizabeth French, Sara A. Immerwahr, Joseph W. Shaw, and Peter Warren and to Ms Dawn Cain (graduate student at the University of Toronto), all of whom read and made valuable comments on my paper, though any errors in judgement or form are ultimately my own. Special abbreviations:

Cameron 1975 = M. A. S. Cameron, 'A general study of Minoan frescoes with particular reference to unpublished wall painting from Knossos' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1975); copies at the British School of Archaeology in Athens and in the

University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada)

Hägg and Marinatos 1987 = R. Hägg and N. Marinatos, *The Function of the Minoan Palaces: Proceedings of the Fourth International Symposium of the Swedish Institute in Athens, 10–16 June, 1984* (Stockholm, 1987)

KFA = A. J. Evans, *Knossos Fresco Atlas*, with catalogue of plates by M. A. S. Cameron and S. Hood (Farnborough, 1967)

PM = A. J. Evans, *The Palace of Minos at Knossos* (4 vols and index; London, 1921–36)

Rehak 1995 = P. Rehak (ed.), *The Role of the Ruler in the Prehistoric Aegean* (Aegaeum, 11; Proceedings of a Panel Discussion presented at the Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America, New Orleans, Louisiana, 12 December 1992; Liège and Austin, 1995)

² One of the more extensive recent analyses of the painting is by S. A. Immerwahr, *Aegean Painting in the Bronze Age* (University Park and London, 1990), 110–11, 190, with references to earlier publications.

³ The literature on bull-leaping frescos is immense. For bibliographical references and for a detailed list of Aegean frescos and painted stucco reliefs see appendices A and B in M. C. Shaw, 'Bull leaping frescoes at Knossos and their influence on the Tell El Dab'a murals', *Ägypten und Levante*, 5 (1995), 91–120, esp. 113–20. For occurrences in other artistic media see J. G. Younger, 'Bronze age representations of Aegean bull-games, III', 505–42, and B. P. and E. Hallager, 'The Knossian bull: political propaganda in Neo-Palatial Crete', 547–56, both articles in vol. ii of R. Laffineur and W.-D. Niemeier (eds), *Politeia: Society and State in the Aegean Bronze Age* (Aegaeum, 12; Proceedings of the 5th International Aegean Conference, University of Heidelberg, Archäologisches Institut, 10–13 April 1994; Liège, 1995). Published after submission of the present article to *BSA*, the last two studies could not be taken into consideration in my discussions. For the religious significance of bull-leaping see N. Marinatos, *Minoan Religion: Ritual, Image and Symbol* (Columbia, SC, 1993), 218–20.

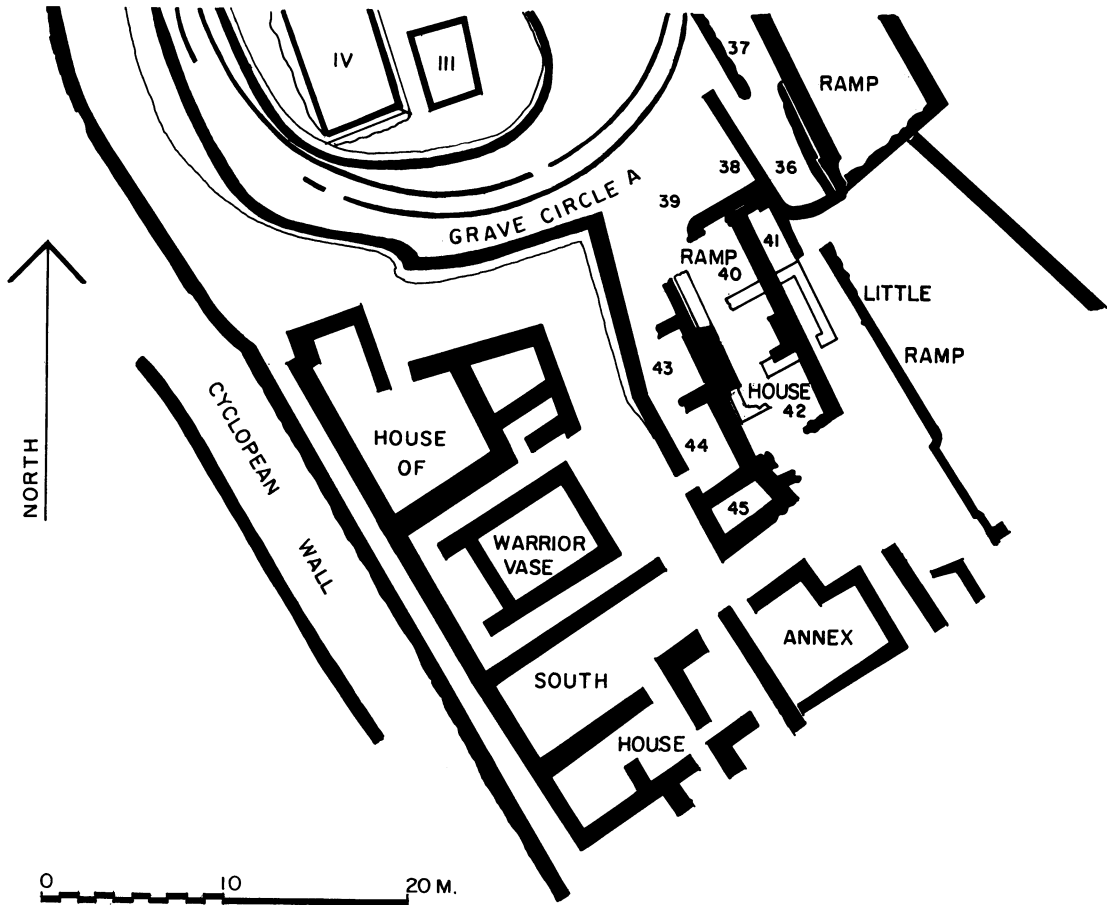


FIG. 1. Plan of the Ramp House and adjacent area. (After Wace (n. 13), pl. xiii c, and O. Dickinson, *The Aegean Bronze Age* (Cambridge, 1994), fig. 8. 12.)

archaeologist M. Bietak at Tell El Dab'a or Avaris, the Hyksos capital in Egypt.⁴ A date at the beginning of the New Kingdom has recently been assigned by the excavator to these frescos, which show definite Minoan or Aegean artistic connections.⁵

The aim of the present study is twofold: to propose a tentative reconstruction of the

⁴ M. Bietak, 'Die Wandmalereien aus Tell El-Dab'a/Ezbet Helmi: Erste Eindrücke', in M. Bietak, J. Dorner, I. Heine, and P. János, 'Neue Grabungsergebnisse aus Tell el-Dab'a und Ezbet Helmi im östlichen Nildelta 1989-1991', *Ägypten und Levante*, 4 (1994), 20-58, esp. 44-58 and pls 14-22; M. Bietak and N. Marinatos, 'The Minoan wall paintings from Avaris', *Ägypten und Levante*, 5 (1995), 49-71. See also three recent studies in W. V. Davies and L. Schofield (eds), *Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant: Interconnections in the Second Millennium B.C.* (London, 1995); P. Warren, 'Minoan Crete and Pharaonic Egypt', 1-18; L. Morgan, 'Minoan painting and Egypt: the case of Tell el-

Dab'a', 29-53, esp. 40-4; M. Bietak, 'Connections between Egypt and the Minoan world: new results from Tell el Dab'a/Avaris', 19-28, esp. 23-4. For comments specifically on the bull-leaping fresco see Shaw (n. 3).

⁵ The frescos were first assigned to the end of the Hyksos period, and the absolute date specified by Bietak was the later part of the 16th cent. BC. The origin of the sport itself and of its depiction in art are questions that lie beyond the scope of this study. Suffice it to note here an interesting article by Dominique Collon, 'Bull-leaping in Syria', *Ägypten und Levante*, 4 (1994), 81-5, in which she claims that the representation

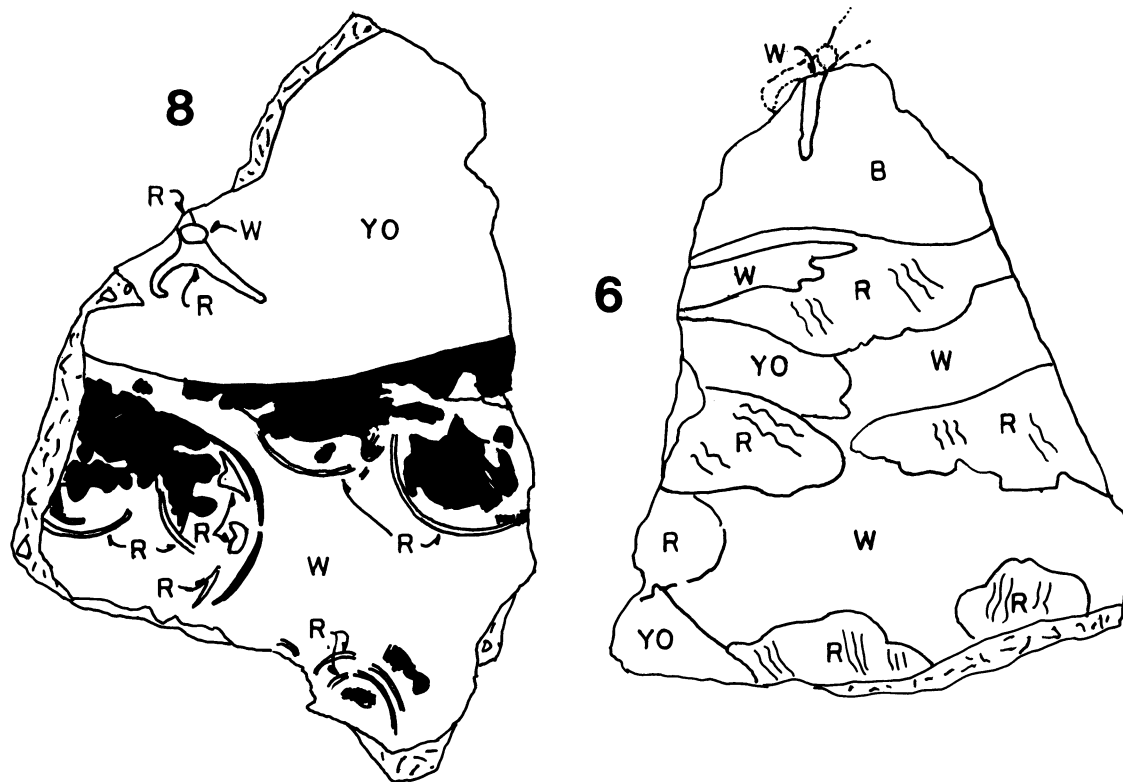


FIG. 2. Depictions of bulls and leapers, Ramp House Fresco. (Drawings by M. C. Shaw and G. Bianco.) Colour Code (also for FIGS. 3-5): B blue; DR dark red; R red; YO yellow ochre; W white. Black rendered in black.

Mycenaean mural under consideration, and to search for artistic prototypes and sources of inspiration for the style and conventions evident in it. In order to document the primary evidence for the reconstruction, the individual fragments (with one exception to be discussed below) are illustrated here both in colour photographs (COLOUR PLATE A) and in 1 : 1 scale drawings (FIGS. 2-5).⁶ In the reconstruction (COLOUR PLATE B) the preserved areas of the mural are rendered in colour, those restored graphically in black and white.

DISCOVERY, PROVENANCE, AND EARLIER STUDIES

Romance and drama can be said to surround the history of the discovery of the fresco, fragments of which were found on two separate occasions. The first time was in 1876, in Schliemann's momentous excavation within the citadel of Mycenae, where he came upon the now famous Shaft Grave Circle A. It is no wonder that the importance of the few plasters

started in Syria, as shown by seals and sealings of the 17th century BC. For a different view see N. Marinatos, 'The "export" significance of Minoan bull hunting and bull leaping scenes', *Ägypten und Levante*, 4 (1994), 89-93.

⁶ I am grateful to Mrs Giuliana Bianco, who executed the watercolours and made the final drawings of the individual fragments, based on my tracings of the fragments.

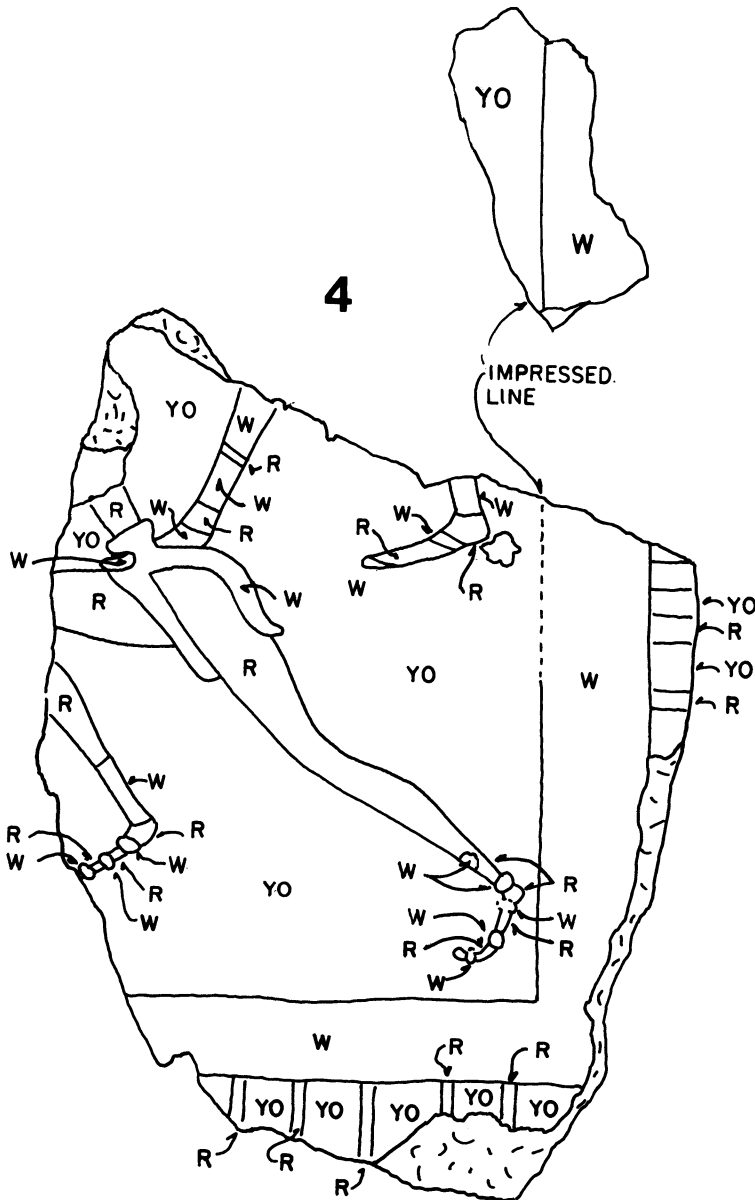


FIG. 3. Depiction of possible leapers, Ramp House Fresco. (Drawing by M. C. Shaw and G. Bianco.)

found in that area paled next to the brilliance of the far more spectacular tomb offerings that, for Schliemann, seemed to vindicate Homer's formulaic description of Mycenae as *πολύχρυσος*, or 'rich in gold'.⁷ The plasters themselves were mentioned only in passing, and in fact were thought by the excavator to be archaic Greek, even though he noted that they came from prehistoric levels.⁸

⁷ *Il.* vii. 180, xi. 46; *Od.* iii. 305.

⁸ H. Schliemann, *Mycenae: A Narrative of Researches and*

Discoveries at Mycenae and Tiryns (1880; repr. New York, 1967) 130.

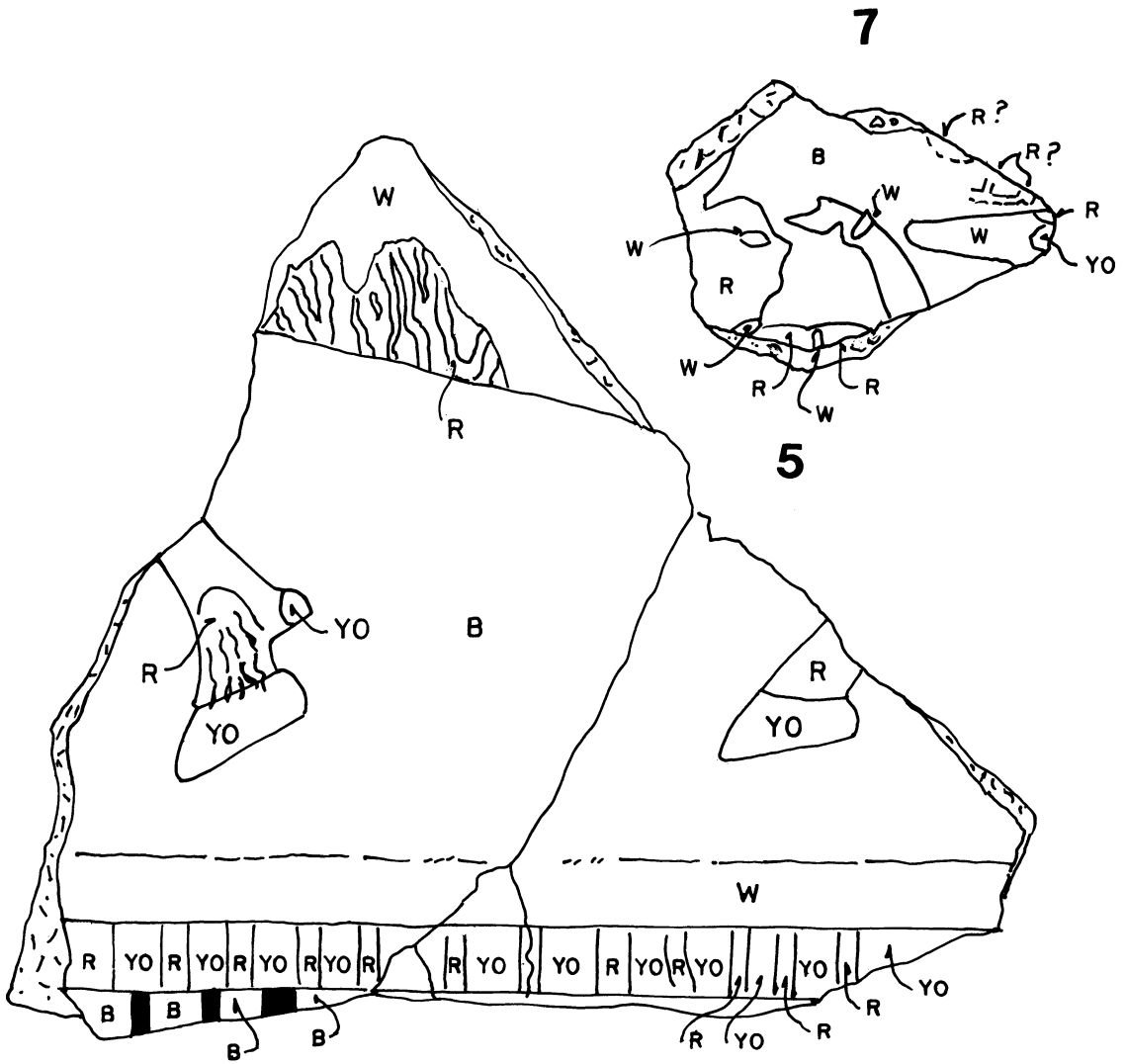


FIG. 4. Depictions of man (no. 7) and bull (no. 5), Ramp House Fresco. (Drawings by M. C. Shaw and G. Bianco.)

Due attention was given to two of the plaster fragments (but more may have been found) some thirty-five years later, when the renowned German scholar Gerhardt Rodenwaldt rediscovered them in the storerooms of the National Museum and included them in a study encompassing a number of miniature fresco representations from Mycenae.⁹ One fragment displayed an architectural façade with women looking out of windows (COLOUR PLATE A. 9), the other parts of a bull and a leaper (COLOUR PLATE A. 8).¹⁰ Though Rodenwaldt's study

⁹ G. Rodenwaldt, 'Fragmente mykenischer Wandgemälde', *AM* 36 (1911), 221-50.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pl. ix. 2 and 1, respectively.

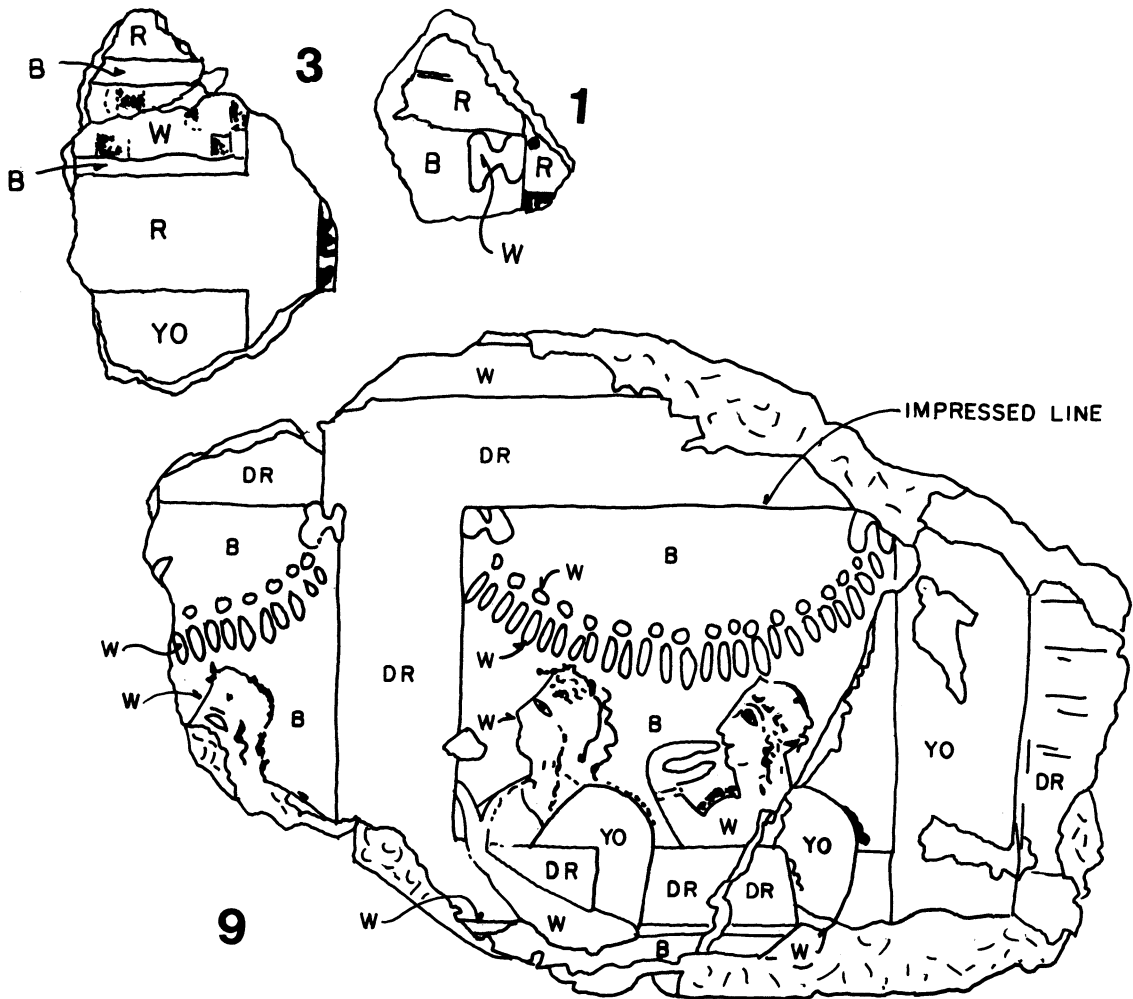


FIG. 5. Depictions of buildings and spectators, Ramp House Fresco. (Drawings by M. C. Shaw and G. Bianco.)

leaves little that can be added today to an iconographic analysis, especially of the architectural representation, much of the information about this particular fresco, including the matter of its provenance, was lacking at the time.

Much more was learnt in the next phase of discovery, some forty-three years after Schliemann's excavations, when British excavators under the direction of A. J. B. Wace turned their attention to the area south of the shaft graves, in and around the so-called Ramp House, which was located directly west of the Little Ramp (FIG. 1. 39-45). Depictions on the plaster pieces were rendered in two different scales; those that were larger apparently came from a composition portraying women clad in richly patterned textiles. The miniature class depicted parts of buildings and bull-leaping, and W. Lamb, one of the excavators, soon realized that they most probably belonged with the two pieces found by Schliemann and published by Rodenwaldt, judging from similarities in scale, style, and certain iconographic

details.¹¹ Particularly useful in Lamb's publication was a watercolour copy made by Piet de Jong of the new miniature fragments that has since been reproduced in a recent publication.¹²

The provenance of the fragments was discussed both by Lamb and by Wace,¹³ but unfortunately neither reported particular findspots, or even whether the large and miniature scale patterns were from different locations—though lack of comment may imply that they were found together. The locations appear to be both within the area of the Ramp House (FIG. 1. 40–5), the plan of which was described by Wace as that of 'a megaron type', and outside it. Of the rooms, only the largest (40) preserved some stratigraphy in the form of two partially preserved white clay floors. Fragments of frescos were found at the level of the lower clay floor and lower, and thus they belong to a period before the construction of the Ramp House. According to Wace, in both strata the latest sherds were earlier LH III, but the pottery also included great amounts of LH I and LH II date that outnumbered the LH III sherds in the lower stratum. Underlying the Ramp House were poorly preserved walls with a different orientation. The next layer down to bedrock was MH, a period in which the area had been used for graves, one of which was discovered immediately beneath space 40. Plasters from outside the house were located next to the grave circle (space 39), presumably where Schliemann had found his pieces; in corridor 41, between the Ramp House and the Little Ramp itself; and finally at the foot of the Little Ramp (space 36).

In all cases Wace noticed ceramic sequences that were less defined, but comparable, nevertheless, to those encountered in room 40. This led him to the conclusion that both the Ramp House and the Little Ramp had been built 'in the general reconstruction and the enlarging of the citadel that took place early in the fourteenth century B.C.'¹⁴ Later on, G. Mylonas decided that there had been several remodellings, and he attributed the addition of the north-west extension which encloses Grave Circle A to the LH III B period, i.e. to the thirteenth century.¹⁵ Finally, some of the pottery from the Ramp House itself has since been restudied by E. French, and the bulk of it found to contain more material that postdates LH III A than originally thought by Wace.¹⁶ On the basis of such conclusions, LH III B must be accepted as the *terminus ante quem* for the date of the fresco itself, the other end of the chronological spectrum being the LH I and LH II sherds found in fresco deposits which stratigraphically predate the construction and use of the Ramp House. The customary name 'Ramp House Fresco' is thus hardly accurate as a description of the original location of the wall-painting, but is conveniently retained here as a nickname.

Much speculation surrounds the possible original building decorated by the fresco. Wace and Lamb believed that the fill which contained the plasters was debris brought over for levelling purposes at the time of the construction of the Ramp House from the ruins of earlier houses not too far away—probably from the hillside above the ramp that led to the acropolis summit.¹⁷ Referring specifically to the fragment with the depiction of women looking out of a

¹¹ W. Lamb, 'Frescoes from the Ramp House', *BSA* 24 (1919–21), 189–94.

¹² *Ibid.*, pl. vii; Immerwahr (n. 2), pl. xvi.

¹³ Lamb (n. 11), 189–91; Wace's comments on the stratigraphy of the Ramp and the Ramp House (pp. 71–84) are in his contribution to A. J. B. Wace, H. A. Hertley, and W. Lamb, 'Excavations at Mycenae', *BSA* 25 (1921–3)—the report of the 1919–21 excavation campaign, whose

publication occupies the entire volume.

¹⁴ Wace (n. 13), 71–4.

¹⁵ G. E. Mylonas, *Mycenae and the Mycenaean Age* (Princeton, 1966), 25–7.

¹⁶ E. French, 'Late Helladic III A 1 pottery from Mycenae', *BSA* 59 (1964), 241–61; P. A. Mountjoy, *Mycenaean Decorated Pottery* (SIMA 73; Göteborg, 1986), 51.

¹⁷ Lamb (n. 11), 190.

building (COLOUR PLATE A. 9), Evans attributed it to a composition which he assigned to the earliest painted decoration of the Mycenaean palace.¹⁸

One other possibility has never been entertained, but is, I believe, worth some consideration. This is that the original mural adorned a building which was located close to where the fragments were found, perhaps even next to and under the Ramp House, where ruined walls were found. Given the hallowed character of the nearby ancestral graves—an area eventually enclosed by the parapet wall and marked as sacred by the Mycenaeans—one might even speculate that the building was not just a house and that its decoration with a bull-leaping scene, a theme possessing apparent palatial associations,¹⁹ may have suitably alluded to the high status of the venerated ancestors. Not irrelevant, perhaps, for a later period is the funerary iconography detected in some of the frescos from the Cult Centre, which was located in the same general area, not far from Grave Circle A.²⁰

Such suggestions, however, remain speculative, and the nature of the building to which the fresco belonged may elude us for ever. Moreover, given the fact that the original stratigraphy was disturbed, we cannot arrive at a secure date using objective archaeological criteria. Taking into consideration the numerous early sherds in the associated fills, and the iconography and stylistic features, Lamb came to the conclusion that the bull-leaping scenes probably belonged to LH I–II, while the mural with the large female figures most resembled processional frescos involving women from the earlier palace at Thebes, which was destroyed in LH III A.²¹ The latter opinion is also upheld by Immerwahr, who does not, however, express a definite view on whether the miniature scene should be dated to the same period as the large-scale compositions, though she suggests that it postdates certain Knossian and Theran miniature frescos.²² A tentative date is also arrived at below, but the first task here is to describe the actual plaster remains.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PICTORIAL ELEMENTS AND RECONSTRUCTION

Comparative analysis in this section and the detailed descriptions of the fragments are intended to clarify the fragmentary representations and to provide the necessary foundation for the proposed reconstruction. In order to complement the already detailed catalogues by Lamb and Rodenwaldt, the fragments are separated into two major thematic categories, ‘bulls and leapers’ and ‘spectators and buildings’, and are analysed comparatively. To facilitate cross-reference to Lamb’s catalogue, her numbers 1–7 are retained, while numbers 8 and 9 are newly assigned to the two additional pieces published earlier by Rodenwaldt.

There are problems regarding two of the fresco fragments found in the British excavations. One is Lamb’s no. 2, depicting a half-rosette motif, which unfortunately could not be found

¹⁸ *PM* i. 444. Lamb (n. 11), 190, finds it unlikely that the fill with the plasters would have been brought from as far as the palace, some distance uphill from here.

¹⁹ For the possible palatial associations of bull-leaping see Shaw (n. 3) and Hallager and Hallager (n. 3).

²⁰ Unfortunately, I have not yet had the opportunity to read Lyvia Morgan’s ‘The cult centre at Mycenae and the duality of life and death’, her contribution to a forthcoming volume dedicated to M. A. S. Cameron’s memory; but her title is suggestive. Funerary iconography in the frescos was

also detected and discussed by Josée Sabourin, a graduate student in the Ancient Studies Program, University of Toronto, in a seminar report (Mar. 1995) and written paper.

²¹ Lamb (n. 11), 189–91.

²² Immerwahr (n. 2), 110–11, comments that the architectural façade in the Mycenaean fresco is more simplified and symbolic than the façades respectively represented in the Grandstand Fresco from Knossos and in the miniature painting from the West House at Akrotiri in Thera.

either in the National Museum in Athens or in the Archaeological Museum in Nafplion.²³ Though not represented in my drawings and photographs with the other fragments, the design was copied from Piet de Jong's watercolour and incorporated at the correct relative scale in the reconstruction (COLOUR PLATE B. 3, lower middle section). The other fragment, Lamb's no. 20, was deliberately omitted, for though it was included in Piet de Jong's watercolour along with the bull-leaping depictions, there is reason to believe with Lamb that it may not belong with the same composition. This is further discussed below.

BULLS AND LEAPERS (nos. 4–6, 8)

No. 5 shows the belly and two lower legs of a bull trotting towards the left. The colour of the hide is white with dapples in brown red, and with fine black and/or red wavy lines that represent the hair, as seen on the belly and just above the hoofs. Hoofs and fetlock are painted ochre yellow. The sky-blue colour of the background was applied over the entire fragment first and the bull was painted next in a solid white silhouette, the white serving in turn as the backing for additional pigments that render other details. Given the superposition of several pigments, it is surprising that they still adhere to the successive painted surfaces relatively well, a fact that suggests that the artist was working at some speed, as required in fresco technique. This swiftness of execution is all the more surprising since traces of an ochre yellow line defining the belly and of a black outline around the hoofs represent preliminary sketching, and imply a rather meticulous artist who invested much care in the drafting stage of the work. Preserved at the bottom of the fragment is the scene's frame: three consecutive bands, the innermost plain white, the two remaining ones alternately painted ochre yellow crossed transversely by red bars, and blue crossed by black bars.

No. 6 shows another white bull, again with red dapples and diagonal black lines indicating the hair, but also with ochre patches of indefinite shape. Here too the blue background was applied over the entire area of the fragment and the rest of the colours were added on top, in the sequence and manner described for the previous piece. White was also used to render what is almost definitely the hand of a leaper (as in no. 8) suspended vertically over the back of the bull. The direction in which the bull faces cannot be determined with certainty; but the posture was probably that of a flying gallop which typifies such scenes.

No. 8 preserves the hand and lower arm of a red leaper wearing a white bracelet. The hand is conventionally rendered as if made of two parts: the thumb by itself and the remaining fingers shown collectively by a slim, slightly triangular form (the part preserved in no. 6). Animation is enhanced by showing thumb and fingers, wide apart, describing a V shape. The rendering is exactly that of the hands of the drowning men in the LC I A 'Shipwreck Fresco' from the West House in Thera, and can serve as an example of the tenacity of artistic convention in Aegean painting.²⁴ The colour of the background in no. 8 is ochre yellow, again applied first, with white forms and then other colours added in succession. Where the pigment of the solid blue-black patches of the dapples has worn off, one can see curving red lines, which seem to be preliminary sketches or cartoons. Here too the direction of the bull cannot be determined.

²³ I thank the staff of the Nafplion Archaeological Museum for allowing me to look for the fragments, and for their assistance.

²⁴ Ch. Doumas, *The Wall-paintings of Thera* (Athens, 1992), 63, pl. 29. Interestingly, monkeys' paws are also depicted this way in the Thera frescos: *ibid.*, pls 85–6, 122.

No. 4 is different from the preceding fragments, for it does not preserve a bull, although it still most probably belongs to a bull-leaping scene. It is possible that the bull in no. 8 belongs with it, since the background in both fragments is ochre yellow. In this case the bull would have to be moving right, to face the two human participants in no. 4.

No. 4 comes from the lower right corner of the composition, and preserves evidence that the barred bands, described above for no. 5, bordered both the bottom and the vertical side(s) of the painting. Of the figures, the forward one assumes a posture of imminent action, with the left leg extended diagonally backwards, the right leg flexed, as if the person is getting ready to pounce or jump. Red used for the skin declares the figure to be a man, while white added over the red renders his apparel. He wears a white codpiece, white leggings (that of the right leg has flaked off) and footwear, the latter marked by white blobs. Three blobs mark the foot of the flexed leg, four the other. Lamb suggested sandals, which may explain the use of bands and straps, but I doubt that toes would have been exposed in such a rough activity. Perhaps a soft shoe or thick sock with a leather sole was worn instead, and the feet were further bandaged with cloth or leather bands to provide strength and guarantee flexibility. Strain, but also flexibility, is conveyed both by the pose of the lower leaper and by the way his left foot is flexed with the toes firm on the ground and the heel raised.²⁵ Wrists and hands of leapers were occasionally wrapped with bands to strengthen them, as we know from the Knossian Toreador Fresco (COLOUR PLATE C. 3).²⁶

Of the second person in the same fragment, only parts of the legs and feet are preserved, shown wide apart as if in a striding or steadying posture. The shoes show alternating white and red areas. That action is not imminent in this case is indicated by the fact that the feet rest flat on the ground.

Lamb suggested, but without explanation, that this second figure was a woman. There are reasons to agree. Note, for instance, how although, like the male figure, this one wears a white legging that stops at mid-calf, here the garment has a red band at its edge, which allows white also to be used for the upper leg. Other proof that the figure was white—the colour widely accepted as indicating female gender in Aegean painting—derives from a technical observation. Both figures were first painted in a solid colour that represented their skin (itself added over the yellow ochre of the background). Next, further details were added on top in contrasting colours. The skin colour, white in this case, is revealed where the superposed red pigment used for the footwear has worn off, as in the case of the heel of the rear foot.

SPECTATORS AND BUILDINGS (nos. 1–3, 7, 9)

Of the five pertinent fragments, the best preserved is no. 9, with a detailed architectural representation. A large double window with a blue interior is defined by colourful timber construction. The boards or planks are mostly dark red in colour, except for a yellow ochre vertical feature on the right side of the fragment that overlaps the sill and may have continued below it. Though its function is not clear, something can be said about the interpretation of the red vertical post to its right, which is marked by much-faded black features resembling upside-down 'pi' shapes, familiar from other Minoan depictions of architecture. These are generally thought to represent tie beams located at the ends, or antae, of transverse walls.²⁷

²⁵ See the terracotta model of a Mycenaean shoe in S. Marinatos, *Crete and Mycenae* (New York, 1960), pl. 236.

²⁶ *PM* iii, pl. xxi and 217, fig. 148.

²⁷ See the discussion with bibliographical references in Lamb (n. 11), 191, and Rodenwaldt (n. 9), 224.

The wall above and below the window was rendered in different colours: white above and blue below. Fine impressed string lines define the lower edge of the lintel, while a thin black line marks the right edge of the dividing central post. The red colour of the lintel appears to divide horizontally in two zones, the upper one being slightly lighter in colour; but this is more likely to be the result of a new brushstroke with the pigment more diluted than an actual structural division. Attached to the upper corners of the windows are little white double axes, between which hangs what looks like a white bead necklace.

The women, with their rather matronly figures, were first painted in solid white against the blue background, with further details added on top in other colours. An overgarment, in yellow ochre colour, looks like a himation that crosses the torso diagonally, partially covering a white undergarment with faint linear patterns rendered by thin black lines. Black lines also define the eyes, which are almond-shaped and slanted, the arched eyebrows, and the curly hair. Only faint traces of the latter are preserved around the head, running down over both shoulders and in long locks in front of the ears. The apparent baldness of the women is the result of the flaking off of the black pigment that was added too late, after the underlying white pigment had dried. Such accidents were bound to occur,²⁸ but in this case should not detract from the fact that meticulous attention was bestowed upon the painting, in terms both of iconographic detail and of preliminary sketching.

All three women turn (to our) left, and of these only the two on the right preserve parts of the body and arms. Their arms and hands assume a variety of gestures. The woman on the right has one arm hanging down over the balustrade or façade of the building, while the other arm is bent with the hand, crudely made, turned towards her face, perhaps in a greeting or cheering gesture. Of the woman on the left, only one arm is shown, bent at the elbow and slightly raised.

A clear pictorial link exists, as already noted by Lamb, between this piece and the next tiny fragment, no. 1. The pattern again is a window with blue interior and a tiny white double axe tucked within its upper right-hand corner. The blue was applied overall first. As far as restoration is concerned, the piece could not belong with the window in no. 9, since the vertical post just preserved to the right of the little axe in no. 1 was marked by the black brackets which, as mentioned above, indicate the anta or end of a transverse wall. Since the (missing) half-rosette motif (no. 2) usually appears in tripartite façades, as is discussed below, in my reconstruction I have assigned the window of no. 1 to the right flank of a building which seems to have such a façade (COLOUR PLATE B. 3).

The architectural details in no. 3 are less well understood. There are ochre and dark red vertical and horizontal beams, or wall areas, and a possible panel with white and black chequers. Once again, blue seems to have been applied first. The fragment has been tentatively placed in the central part of the restored building.

No. 7 remains to be discussed. This depicts a male figure turning right and raising both arms, the left one straight up just behind the head, the other bent with the forearm and hand turned towards the face. The figure was first rendered in red silhouette painted over a blue background. Next, details were added in white: the eye, necklace, armband, and bracelet. Problematic in its identification is the white, roughly conical, form that appears in front of

²⁸ A similar accident of preservation, partly caused by applying the black pigment for the hair *à secco*, accounts for

the apparent baldness of the so-called dancers in the Sacred Grove Fresco from Knossos (*PM* iii, pl. xviii).

the man's face. Possibly it is the top part of either a little offering table or a waisted altar,²⁹ but its position near the man's face is peculiar and his gestures do not indicate that he is interacting directly with the object, for instance, by placing something on it or removing an item from it.

More likely is the possibility that the man is confronted by a bull, which could explain the man's excited gestures. The white form which curves slightly at bottom right could then be the end of a horn, or of a tail, but is really too thick for either identification. If a horn, it would have to be the right horn of a bull approaching from the right side and shown with a frontal face. Frontal faces in bulls are rare in Minoan fresco representations; there is one in the sacrificial scene on the Haghia Triadha sarcophagus.³⁰ Few heads of bulls are actually preserved in frescos; but in glyptic representations the earliest known frontal face occurs in LM I B.³¹

The gestures of the hands of the man in no. 7 find parallels, but only for each hand separately. Thus, the arm raised straight up above the head is encountered in the cheering spectators in the Sacred Grove Fresco,³² and in the fragment from the same fresco showing a group of men, often interpreted as warriors, shaking javelins and cheering their leader.³³ The other gesture, a bent arm with a hand turned towards the face, seems to signify address or communication, whether welcoming, summoning, or simply greeting. It occurs among the so-called dancers in the Sacred Grove Fresco,³⁴ and the ladies in the window in our fresco (no. 9).³⁵ The hand in no. 7 seems to have a closed fist and is identical in shape to the fists of the 'warriors with javelins'.³⁶ There is also a similarity in facial physiognomy between the men in the last two frescos, which again makes one wonder whether this is due to the tenacity of convention or to very close dates for the two.

THE RECONSTRUCTION

From the above discussion, certain conclusions can be drawn about the overall thematic content and formal composition of the Ramp House Fresco.

The theme splits into two aspects: the bull-leaping itself and the spectators in an architectural setting. The game involves a number of bulls and leapers, rather than portrayals

²⁹ One thinks of a table-like object that appears in a miniature fresco from the palace of Tiryns (G. Rodenwaldt *et al.*, *Tiryns*, ii: *Die Fresken des Palastes* (Athens, 1912), pl. ii. 7). This table, however, rested on the ground rather than being shown at the eye level of a male figure depicted bending over it.

³⁰ Marinatos (n. 25), pl. xxviii. The other alternative—that the white form might be a tail—was suggested to me by the copy-editor of the present volume, Dr John Waś. The point he made was that the man in the fresco may be an assistant standing behind the bull, ready to receive the leaper. Even then, the gestures do not exactly match other examples of assistants, who tend to be shown with both arms extended forward (see COLOUR PLATE C. 1, 2).

³¹ J. H. Betts, 'New light on Minoan bureaucracy: a re-examination of some Cretan sealings', *Kadmos*, 6 (1967), 14–40, fig. 12 a.

³² *PM* iii, pl. xviii.

³³ *Ibid.* 82, fig. 45.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pl. xviii, bottom r. The women are more likely to be excited spectators than dancers.

³⁵ For the Sacred Grove see *PM* ii, pl. xviii, bottom r. A similar gesture is that of the women standing in balconies in the Arrival Town in the Fleet Fresco from Thera: their hands are raised in front of, but with the palms away, from the face. The scene makes it reasonable to assume that this is a gesture of welcoming or greeting (Doumas (n. 24), pl. 79).

³⁶ Details are most visible in M. A. S. Cameron, 'Notes on some new joins and additions to well-known frescos from Knossos', in W. C. Brice (ed.), *Europa: Studien zur Geschichte und Epigraphik der frühen Aegaeis. Festschrift für Ernst Grumach* (Berlin, 1967), pl. iv d, more specifically the second hand from the r. in the central fragment, with the characteristic triangular form of the fist.

of several incidents involving one bull. This can be deduced from the varying colours of the dapples, even if the basic colour of the bull is white, and from the presence of a number of both white- and red-skinned leapers. Such scenes were apparently set in panels framed all around by the three-band border described above, and most probably arranged in a frieze. The sequence of the panels was in part determined by the background colour, with blue and yellow panels probably alternating. Such a scheme was also adopted by Cameron in his restoration of the Toreador Fresco from the palace of Knossos, which I feel privileged to be able to reproduce here by way of comparison (COLOUR PLATES C. 1–3; D. 1).³⁷

The state of preservation of the Ramp House plaster fragments allows for the restoration of only three panels (COLOUR PLATE B. 1–3), but there must have been many more, for Aegean fresco friezes usually run on more than one wall. Each panel here is restored as c.0.30 m high, including the upper and lower bands of the frame. This makes the frieze less than half the height of the Knossian Toreador Fresco, where the figures were rendered on a larger scale, and whose frame included an additional band with patterns imitating stonework.

Of the restored panels of the Ramp House frieze, one (COLOUR PLATE B. 1) shows a leaping scene (no. 4) in which the two corner figures definitely belong together. The vaulting leaper and bull, also with a yellow ochre background (no. 8), may have been part of this panel. The figure standing behind the bull is hypothetical. It is based on the presence of leapers' assistants in the Knossian Toreador Fresco, a formula that may or may not have occurred in the Mycenaean mural.

One observation that can be made on the basis of this panel is that the two corner figures suggest that the game involved a number of leapers standing in a small queue and taking their turn at vaulting in quick succession. Further evidence is provided by the two alighting leapers in the miniature bull-leaping fresco from the palace of Pylos, in which the figures are shown very close to each other, having just touched the ground after performing a leap.³⁸ In another example, a fresco from a stratum above the Queen's Megaron in the palace of Knossos, two leapers again appear, one behind the other but in the process of leaping over the back of the same bull.³⁹ This seems to lend support to Evans's belief⁴⁰ that the toreador shown holding the horns of the bull in a number of instances in the Knossian Toreador Fresco is preparing for a leap rather than trying to steady the bull for the current vaulter. The latter attempt would have found much resistance from the bull!

Important to note, as evidenced more clearly from no. 8, is that the position of the hands of the leapers is close to that of the Knossian toreadors, except that the hands here do not quite touch the back of the bull. The manoeuvre may be that of the 'Diving Leaper' schema, a term coined by J. Younger, who suggests a date between LM I and LM III A for the type, based on his study of seal depictions.⁴¹ Later is Younger's 'Floating Leaper' posture,⁴² of which a well-known example is the toreador fresco from the palace of Tiryns (COLOUR PLATE D. 2). In this schema the leaper floats horizontally over the back of the bull holding on to the animal's neck with both hands.

³⁷ Cameron 1975, slides 47–50. For the fresco fragments see also *PM* iii. 203–32.

³⁸ M. L. Lang, *The Palace of Nestor at Pylos in Western Messenia*, ii: *The Frescoes* (Princeton, 1969), pl. c, 36H105, and the restoration, pl. 124.

³⁹ *PM* iii. 208–9, fig. 143.

⁴⁰ *PM* iii. 222–3, fig. 156. In his discussion of bull-leaping

manoeuvres, particularly in glyptic, Younger refers to this as 'Evans' Schema'. See J. Younger, 'Bronze age representations of Aegean bull-leaping', *AJA* 80 (1976), 125–37; 'A new look at Aegean bull-leaping', *Muse*, 17 (1983), 72–80.

⁴¹ Younger, *ibid.*

⁴² In his 1983 article Younger (n. 40) redated the third schema to c.1410–1380 B.C.

The big trotting bull has been placed in a panel by himself (COLOUR PLATE B. 1), but he must have been part of a scene.⁴³ An association with the gesticulating man in no. 7 has already been suggested. If true, the role of the man still remains uncertain, but he could be a marshal who signals for someone to lead the bull into the arena. The arrival of the bull following a charioteer driving a chariot has recently been suggested by Younger on the basis of his interpretation of Lamb's no. 20 as part of a chariot box, and a possible parallel in a fresco from Knossos; but the identification of no. 20 remains uncertain.⁴⁴ Whatever the case, the man preserved in no. 7 has come dangerously close to the bull, which leaves the possibility open that he may be a leaper, but one whose gestures admittedly deviate from the usual ones, or at least from what is known about such gestures.

One last comment needs to be made regarding the trotting or standing posture of the bull, which, unlike that of the 'flying gallop', occurs rarely in wall-painting. Examples are, however, known from other media, and two are worth mentioning. One is a bull-catching scene in repoussé on one of two gold cups of LH II date found in a tomb in Vapheio, where bulls stroll in the countryside unaware of the trap set for them.⁴⁵ The other, and more monumental, example occurs in a relief on the well-known gypsum slabs in the British Museum generally believed to have decorated the façade of the Treasury of Atreus at Mycenae.⁴⁶ Two bulls are there preserved, one in a flying gallop with the foliage of a tree appearing behind it, the other with its feet solidly on the ground.⁴⁷ Thus a juxtaposition of tame and wild, or still and active, bulls may have been adopted as a theme in representations for the sake of dramatic contrast. Poor preservation does not permit clearer identification of the activities represented in the two reliefs.⁴⁸

The third panel in the reconstruction is that of the architectural façade, whose symmetrical appearance has been explained above (COLOUR PLATE B. 3). It must be emphasized, however, that the fragmentary preservation does not allow us to ascertain whether this tripartite structure constituted the entire architectural representation, or was actually part of a more extended façade. The discussion below will show why this distinction is crucial. The women in the windows, whom we have no reason to assume to be priestesses, suggest a residential and secular use for the rooms they occupy.

As to the question of the order in which the panels appeared, one possibility is that the building façade was placed centrally in the frieze with bull-leaping activities unfolding to the right and left of it. In this arrangement it is likely that the hypothetical ladies restored in the windows of the right part of the building faced to the right. Alternatively, the building could have been placed towards the right end of the frieze, with all leaping activities concentrated in the area to its left and with all the women or other spectators looking left.

⁴³ A solitary walking or standing bull is an occasional type in both Minoan and Mycenaean seals, but more frequently in the latter.

⁴⁴ See Lamb (n. 11), pl. vii. Younger conveyed his view through the 'Aegeanet' computer network, following my AIA lecture on the Ramp House Fresco (see n. 1). For the Knossian parallel see M. A. S. Cameron, 'Unpublished fresco fragments of a chariot composition from Knossos', *AA* 3 (1967), 330–44 and reconstruction in fig. 12. Preserved are the rear part of a chariot with the charioteer followed by a bull, of which only the head is preserved. To my knowledge, chariots are not part of the conventional iconography of Minoan bull-leaping frescos. Whether the Ramp House Fresco was following a separate Mycenaean tradition is also questionable.

⁴⁵ Marinatos (n. 25), pls 182–3. According to E. N. Davis, 'The Vapheio cups: one Minoan and one Mycenaean?', *Art Bulletin* (1974), 472–87, the artist of this particular cup was Minoan.

⁴⁶ *PM* iii. 192–202. See also J. Younger, 'The Elgin plaques from the Treasury of Atreus: evidence for a new reconstruction of the façade', in W. Schiering (ed.), *Kolloquium zur ägäischen Vorgeschichte* (Mannheim, 1987), 138–50.

⁴⁷ However, both the exact positioning of the two slabs and the ethnic identity of the sculptor are issues which continue to be debated by scholars. See S. Hood, *The Arts in Prehistoric Greece* (Harmondsworth, 1978), 100 and nn. 95 and 96 on p. 254.

⁴⁸ For a restoration see Marinatos (n. 25), 162, fig. 25.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: THE SEARCH FOR PICTORIAL MODELS

That the question of communication between participants in the sport and of onlookers should be raised at all in the case of the Ramp House Fresco indicates recognition of an inherent, even if simple, form of narrative character, despite the disruption of the flow of action caused by the use of panels. This is where, I believe, the main difference lies between the Ramp House and the Knossian Toreador Fresco, despite their many formal similarities.

COMPARISON WITH THE TOREADOR FRESCO FROM KNOSSOS

The full artistic impact of the Knossos fresco can best be understood from Cameron's reconstructions, which, I have no reason to doubt, re-create the original effect—one clearly aimed to please with its internal symmetry and rhythmical patterns. The first panel—'first' because best preserved and not because it represents a narrative stage—illustrates the basic formula (COLOUR PLATE C. 1). A huge charging bull in flying gallop occupies the centre of the scene and is manipulated by three participants: one grabs the animal's horns, another vaults over its back, and a third waits to help the leaper land. All bulls in this fresco face left. Besides the change in the background colour, and the use of a different bull and of new participants in each panel, there are rather few variations in the act itself. The main variation comes with the person at the rear of the bull, who can be a leaper alighting after the somersault, or a participant who lends a hand to the descending leaper. Possibly the two variations in regard to the rear figure occurred in alternate panels, again stressing rhythm in a painting that concentrates on the performance and beauty of the leapers. Effortless torsional postures and weightless graceful descents give the act an air of timelessness—to echo some of the terms with which Groenewegen-Frankfort expressed her vision of Minoan art;⁴⁹ but there are also surprisingly realistic details, such as the adoption of oblique perspective.⁵⁰ But then, the Minoan artist does not find it difficult to reconcile what is lifelike with what is straightforwardly visionary or merely aesthetically attractive.

Less felicitous artistically, but dramatically expressive of the strain involved in the leaping manoeuvre, is the posture of the man restored in the Ramp House Fresco as grabbing the horns of a bull and readying himself for the leap (COLOUR PLATE B. 2).⁵¹ A sense of depth is also attempted, as already discussed, by overlapping the two figures and placing them at different levels. The contrast between the Knossian and Mycenaean paintings is analogous to that between Archaic and Classical Greek figurative architectural reliefs: where the former puts a premium on a clear and fully visible silhouette, the latter attempts realism through overlapping and oblique forms in an attempt to create an illusion of depth.⁵²

The Knossian Toreador Fresco has generally been dated to the LM II–III A period.⁵³

⁴⁹ H. A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, *Arrest and Movement: An Essay on Space and Time in the Representational Art of the Ancient Near East* (1951; repr. New York, 1972), 185–216.

⁵⁰ As in the astonishing posture of an alighting white-skinned leaper, whose torso is shown partly in a three-quarter view (*PM* iii. pl. xxi).

⁵¹ Almost identical is the positioning of the legs of a man who drags a goat by the horns, in a carved relief on a fragment of a stone vase found NW of the palace at Knossos (*PM* iii. 184–5, fig. 128). L. Morgan, *The Miniature Wall*

Paintings of Thera: A Study in Aegean Culture and Iconography (Cambridge, 1988), 59, suggests a scene which combines hunt with warfare, since part of the helmet is preserved in the lower edge of the fragment. I would suggest instead that animals are being taken away by the conquerors of a besieged town.

⁵² See the discussion of such principles in B. S. Ridgway, *The Severe Style in Greek Sculpture* (Princeton, 1970), esp. 12–28.

⁵³ See Hood (n. 47), 59–60, and Immerwahr (n. 2), 92; but an earlier date (late in LM I) is suggested by Evans (*PM* iii. 210).

Whether the differences from the Ramp House mural described above signify a difference in date, or are due to regional variation in style, is not clear, partly because no other bull-leaping fresco is preserved as well as the Knossos example. There is even a chance that the Mycenaean fresco is slightly earlier, if the scale of its human figures can serve as a criterion. This scale comes closer to that used in true miniature frescos, the heyday of which falls within the LM I period, with early examples represented both among the well-dated frescos from Thera and on Crete itself.⁵⁴ In later Minoan frescos and in Mycenaean adaptations of the miniature style human figures tend to be bigger.⁵⁵

The Knossian Toreador Fresco monumentalizes the act of bull-leaping, which seems to be its exclusive theme. By contrast, bull-leaping in the Ramp House Fresco is put in a more narrative context by adding related scenes: the spectators and the setting where the event takes place. For this kind of extended representation we need to turn to other miniature frescos from Knossos which contain similar motifs in varying degrees.

KNOSSIAN MINIATURE FRESCOS WITH ARCHITECTURAL FAÇADES

Interestingly, in at least two cases fragments with façades were found together with others that preserved parts of bulls, buildings, and (in one case) spectators. One context is the so-called Ivory Deposit, the other the space under the kasselles of the 13th magazine in the west wing of the palace of Knossos.

The Ivory Deposit Fresco consists of two fragments (FIG. 6 *a, b*).⁵⁶ One preserves the horn and ear of a bull rendered in delicate detail, the other an apparently colonnaded façade that is intercepted diagonally by an ochre curving form that Evans interpreted as the body of a bull. The drawing here shows the façade, details of which I have restored in dotted lines (FIG. 5 *b*).⁵⁷ Bordered above and below by pairs of alternately blue and yellow ochre bands with vertical black and red ones, respectively, is a frieze decorated with yellow ochre axes—the colour here probably indicating gold or bronze—alternating with blue waisted altars, probably in stone with carved grooves or mouldings—the horizontal black lines.⁵⁸ While the altar is a rare motif in architectural depictions of this type, the double axes occur frequently as ornaments, as seen in our Mycenaean example. The combination of altar and axe probably alludes to the ritual sacrifice of the bull.⁵⁹ No remains of leapers or spectators are preserved, so that one cannot be certain that a bull-leaping scene was actually depicted, except that this is also where the famous chryselephantine figurines were found, whose postures leave little doubt that they represent leapers. With them was also found the faience head of what must have been a complete bull statuette.⁶⁰ If both the sculptural group and the painted scene originally belonged together, the room where they were exhibited may well have been a shrine devoted to the cult of the bull.

⁵⁴ There is only one Theran miniature fresco known so far: the so-called Fleet Fresco (Doumas (n. 24), pls 26–48). Also of LM I date is the miniature painting from Tyllisos (M. C. Shaw, 'The miniature frescoes of Tyllisos reconsidered', *AA* (1972), 171–88).

⁵⁵ The figures in the Ramp House Fresco can be restored as 0.10–0.12 m tall, nearing the likely height of the leaper from the palace of Pylos. The Knossian toreadors are c.0.25–0.35 m high. Figures in true miniature fresco are c.0.06–0.10 m high.

⁵⁶ *PM* iii. 207–9, figs. 141–2.

⁵⁷ The new restoration varies only slightly from the one published earlier in M. C. Shaw, 'The Lion Gate relief of Mycenae Reconsidered', in *Φίλια έπη εις Γεώργιον Ε. Μύλωναν δια τα 60 έτη του ανασταφικού του έργου*, I (Athens, 1986), 108–23, and fig. 11.

⁵⁸ N. Platon, *Zakros* (New York, 1971), 167.

⁵⁹ N. Marinatos, *Minoan Sacrificial Ritual: Cult Practice and Symbolism* (Stockholm, 1986).

⁶⁰ *PM* iii. 428–35.

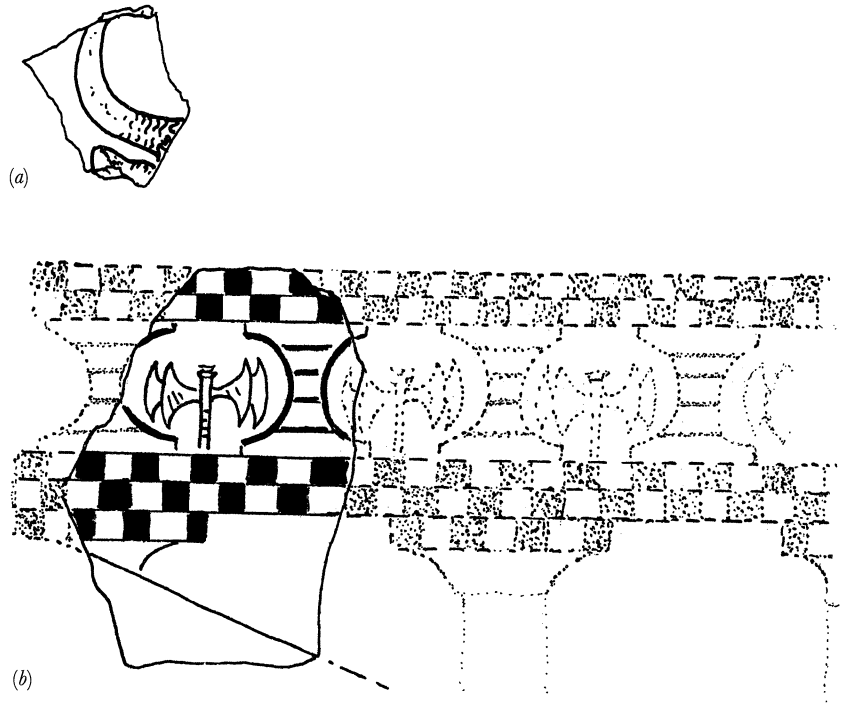


FIG. 6. Part of bull's head (a) and building façade (b) from the Ivory Deposit, Knossos. (Drawings and restoration of (b) by M. C. Shaw, after *KFA*, pl. e. c. 3 b, 3 g.)

The plaster fragments from the 13th magazine at Knossos are more numerous, suggesting an extensive composition, but one of which relatively little is preserved.⁶¹ Its date is a matter of debate, but LM I B–LM II is likely to be correct.⁶² Evans suggested that the plasters originally came from the mural decoration of a 'Sanctuary Hall', which he restored over the block of magazines 11–16, which projects slightly from the remaining parts of the west façade of the palace, and whose wall is marked by a shallow central recess.⁶³ Following J. W. Graham's theory that such recesses imply the presence of windows in the upper storey, R. Hägg has also recently restored a central window in that block, which he embellished with three columns that give it the appearance of a tripartite shrine. This restoration was apparently inspired by the depiction of what he interpreted as a tripartite façade in one of the fresco fragments from the 13th magazine (PLATE 36 a–b), which he thought might reflect the architectural appearance of that side of the palace.⁶⁴

The same fresco was also restored as a tripartite shrine by Cameron, who arranged bull-leaping scenes and spectators on either side of it symmetrically.⁶⁵ Crucial fragments from the deposit depicted the head of a swarthy bull with the curly strands of black hair visible under

⁶¹ *PM* i. 442–7, 526–9; ii. 599–606; iii. 32–4.

⁶² Evans suggested a pre-seismic MM III B date, but with good reason this has been criticized by others as too early. See the recent discussion in Immerwahr (n. 2), 173–4.

⁶³ *PM* ii. 588–605, plan C.; iv. 620, 631, figs. 605, 621.

⁶⁴ R. Hägg, 'On the reconstruction of the West Façade of the palace at Knossos', in Hägg and Marinatos 1987, 129–33, fig. 2.

⁶⁵ Cameron 1975, i, fig. 24, after p. 150.

the horn belonging apparently to the missing leaper (PLATE 36 *d*); a crowd of male spectators looking right from behind a white wall enclosure, seen against a background that is split horizontally in undulating ochre (lower) and blue (upper) zones (PLATE 36 *c*); an architectural façade decorated with panels of chequered and other patterns, with horns of consecration set on its cornice, little double axes attached to its columns (PLATE 36 *b*). Another small fragment preserved a minute part of what has been interpreted as a half-rosette and triglyph frieze⁶⁶—a symbol that seems to have had a special association with palaces.⁶⁷

Cameron's convincing incorporation of most of the above motifs in his restoration is additionally important because it demonstrates that in some Minoan miniature frescos the practice was to show leapers, architectural setting, and spectators together in a unified scene in one mural. Topographic and architectural features break up such compositions internally into informal sections, but there is no sign that panels were used. The Ramp House Fresco likewise brings all the above thematic elements together, but now in a frieze that has been rigidly broken up into panels. Compositionally, the Mycenaean fresco seems to stand between the miniature compositions and the Knossian Toreador Fresco.

We need to return to Cameron's restoration of the 13th Magazine Fresco, however, because of one problem: its unexplained omission of an important fragment found in the same fresco deposit (PLATE 36 *a*).⁶⁸ The missing piece depicts an elaborate building façade with a colonnaded porch decorated with horns of consecration and double axes, with a rosette frieze underneath. Inclusion of this façade, the scale of which is consistent with the other façades in Cameron's restoration, would make it appear as part of a larger building, rather than the self-contained, free-standing, tripartite structure he renders. This distinction can be crucial, as I shall attempt to demonstrate.

This brings me to a question that relates in general to the Minoan tripartite shrine, whose character and development have already been expounded in a thorough study by J. W. Shaw.⁶⁹ A point I would like to stress here is the critical difference that may exist between two basic variations in the shrine's occurrence. As we can deduce from artistic depictions and from actual architectural remains, the shrine could either be part of a building or an independent and more or less self-contained structure.⁷⁰

For the former type, there is the concrete example of the tripartite shrine in the west façade of the Central Court of the palace of Knossos, identified by Evans on the basis of actual architectural remains.⁷¹ A free-standing type (discounting the temenos walls) is depicted on the Peak Sanctuary Rhyton from the palace of Zakros, there clearly set on a hillside.⁷² The question of which type of shrine historically came first—-independent or part of the palace—

⁶⁶ *PM* ii. 604, fig. 377.

⁶⁷ It may be of interest here that the half-rosette motif does not appear in representations of the tripartite shrine such as the one in the well-known Zakros Rhyton, or in two Mycenaean gold repoussé reliefs, one from Volos (E. Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age* (Chicago and London, 1964), 170, fig. 32 *a*), the other from Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae (J. W. Shaw, 'Evidence for the tripartite shrine', *AJA* 82 (1978), 429–48, 429 fig. 1). By contrast, the half-rosette adorns shrines which are depicted as either in or near a palace, as will be further discussed below. For the use of the half-rosette motif in palatial contexts, including carved stone reliefs used for architectural decoration, see *PM* ii. 590–6.

⁶⁸ The piece is illustrated in *KFA*, pl. v. 1. In *PM* i. 443, fig. 319, the illustration omits the rosette frieze, which, however, seems to join with the architectural façade.

⁶⁹ J. W. Shaw (n. 67).

⁷⁰ The difference has been noted already in my comments on the role of the half-rosette above (n. 67). See further J. W. Shaw (n. 67), 446; Vermeule (n. 67).

⁷¹ *PM* ii. 803–8.

⁷² J. W. Shaw (n. 67) 432–41; A. P. Chapin, 'The Sanctuary Rhyton from Kato Zakros and the representation of space in Aegean art of the Bronze Age', *AJA* 96 (1992), 334 (abstract of her lecture at the 93rd Annual AIA Meeting).

has concerned some authors, and in my view the case is far from obvious.⁷³ What is important here is that identification of the type represented in a fresco can have a bearing on the overall interpretation of the composition.

For example, the tripartite shrine depicted in the Knossian Grandstand Fresco (PLATE 37) seems to be a free-standing structure, as suggested by the fact that it is surrounded by spectators on three sides. It is only loosely connected with structures that Evans identified as grandstands.⁷⁴ However, others believe these structures to be ‘stairs and piers’, which they identify with the west façade of the Central Court of the palace.⁷⁵ However, the ‘stairs’ (the long white bands set between the ‘piers’) seem to lead nowhere, and the ‘piers’ (the taller features also divided in horizontal bands) do not function as weight-carrying architectural members, as one would expect had they been part of a proper building. That the ‘piers’ are platforms or stands and not staircases, as even Cameron proposed,⁷⁶ is clear because of a basic fact: whenever a pier is shown, there is also a pole set against it; for this is the way in which poles were steadied and attached. Evidence for both the method of attachment and the identification of the forms as masts or poles—rather than columns or posts in superposed tiers, as Evans restored them—derives from Egyptian representations of such poles and also from their inclusion in the depiction of the tripartite shrine seen in the Zakros rhyton.⁷⁷ The lack of a continuous façade in the Grandstand Fresco has been recognized as a problem by those who favour the Central Court Façade identification, but who claim that Evans failed to incorporate all of the existing relevant fragments in his reconstruction. Two fragments were specifically mentioned,⁷⁸ one of which is a miniature representation of a woman standing in a balcony. This piece, however, was found in a different space—albeit not far away—and it could as easily belong to the missing sections of the Sacred Grove Fresco, or to an altogether separate composition.⁷⁹ The second piece, which depicts part of the entablature and cornice

⁷³ Hägg (n. 64), 132, claims that the monumental West Façade of the palace, where he restored a tripartite shrine on an upper storey, was ‘the prototype of the Minoan tripartite-shrine iconography’ (Hägg and Marinatos 1987, 132). A similar view is expressed in N. Marinatos, ‘Divine kingship in Minoan Crete’ (in Rehak 1995, 37–48, esp. 44–5), who claims that ‘The “Tripartite Shrine” is . . . an iconographical formula derived from, and inspired by the palace façade itself, which was tripartite’. But the West Façade of the palace of Knossos, to which reference is presumably made, is not really tripartite architecturally speaking, even if we accept with Graham that there may have been a window in the central recess of the block that contained magazines 11–16. This block is but a small part of an elaborate façade with more blocks and possible windows in central or other recesses. For an alternative origin of the shrine see M. C. Shaw, ‘The Aegean garden’, *AJA* 97 (1993), 661–85, 678 n. 70. K. Krattenmaker, ‘Palace, peak and sceptre: the iconography of legitimacy’ (in Rehak 1995, 49–59), accepts palace and shrine as independent entities in a study that investigates the ‘legitimacy’ of Minoan rulership, but she does not concern herself with the question of which came first.

⁷⁴ In *PM* iii. 63–4 Evans describes the piers as built ‘oblong blocks’.

⁷⁵ More recently E. N. Davis, ‘The Knossos miniature frescoes and the function of the central courts’, in Hägg and

Marinatos 1987, 157–61, esp. 159; M. A. S. Cameron, ‘The “palatial” thematic system in the Knossos murals’, in Hägg and Marinatos 1987, 320–8, esp. 325.

⁷⁶ Cameron 1975, i. 69–70 and restoration in fig. 11 a.

⁷⁷ For the consistent position of the poles see the more complete reproduction of the Grandstand Fresco in *KFA* pl. 2. The tie-blocks were probably made of wood and attached to the side of the pier with pegs, tenons, or nails—perhaps the blue and red discs marking the rectangular objects seen in the Sacred Grove Fresco, which Evans took to be capitals set on superposed pillars (*PM* iii. 63–4). The analogy with Egyptian flagpoles has been discussed by S. Alexiou (‘Μινωϊκοί ἴστοι σημαίων’, *Kr. Chron.* 17 (1963) 339–51; ‘Ἰστοὶ Μινωϊκῶν ἱερῶν καὶ Αἰγυπτιακοὶ πυλώνες’, *AAA* (1969), 84–8) and further clarified by the depictions on the Peak Sanctuary Rhyton from Zakros (J. W. Shaw (n. 67), 438–9).

⁷⁸ Davis (n. 75) 159.

⁷⁹ For a discussion of the possible attribution of this fragment (*PM* iii. 59, fig. 59) to the Grandstand Fresco see Davis (n. 75), 159, who believes that the fresco depicts a façade facing the Central Court of the palace. That building façades may have appeared in the less well preserved Sacred Grove Fresco is clear from the join of a fragment to the left part of the composition made by Cameron (n. 36), figs. 7, 8, which modifies Evans’s earlier restoration (*PM* iii, pl. xviii).

of a building, was originally restored as the roof of the central room of the tripartite shrine (PLATE 37), but was later removed, mainly on the grounds that it lacked the chequerboard pattern which adorned the cornices of the flanking rooms.⁸⁰ There are several reasons, however, for believing that the first restoration was the correct one, foremost of which is the presence of a chequerboard panel, or dado, at the base of the central room of the shrine, which would make it redundant, or unnecessary, for this ornament to be repeated at the top as well.⁸¹

In the light of the above observations, information from recent archaeological discoveries (1971–3) by P. Warren throws further light on the matter of what may have been the setting represented in the Grandstand Fresco. The answer lies in the discovery directly south of the so far exposed west end of the Royal Road—some 160 m from the Theatral Area and along a south-easterly branch of the Royal Road—of a long ashlar structure which the excavator interpreted as a platform reached by a staircase. Warren cites as an iconographic parallel the Grandstand Fresco, and entertains the possibility that people could have stood on the platforms he found in order to watch special events ‘such as the bull sports, on the open ground to the south’.⁸² While in general agreement with Warren’s suggestions, I prefer to believe that the setting shown in the fresco is the Theatral Area and whatever stands may have existed immediately east of it along the Royal Road and directly west of the palace, rather than further west, where houses have been found alongside the road.⁸³ The lack of houses or other proper buildings in the location I suggest would match my impression that the fresco depicts only staircases, platforms, and stands, not buildings with interiors and several storeys. Other reasons for my choice are given below, after discussion of the question of the tripartite shrine in the fresco.

While the idea that the grandstands, rather than a palatial façade, were depicted in the Grandstand Fresco has been defended above, the presence of the tripartite shrine warrants a comment. My impression is that its relative size, compared with the crowds of people that surround it, and the fact that no one is within it seem to correspond to Shaw’s theory that such shrines had little actual depth, and may have served at times as ‘backdrops’ for

⁸⁰ For the later restoration see *PM* iii, pl. xvi. For an illustration of the fragment in question and the reasons for its elimination from the original restoration see *PM* iii, 83–5, fig. 47.

⁸¹ The preserved part of the representation suggests that, putting aside the inherent tripartite structure of the shrine, perfect symmetry was hardly intended. Note, for instance, how each room is painted a different colour, and how columns vary both in colour and in details of shape. We should also note that the dismissed fragment preserves part of a barred band, which matches the lower band of the border of the fresco. The architectural cornice below this band on the fragment is at the right distance for it to belong to the elevated central room of the shrine. Perhaps Cameron also doubted the amended later restoration, for his own restoration of the shrine matches the original one: Cameron (n. 75), 326, figs. 8–9.

⁸² P. Warren, ‘The Minoan roads of Knossos’, in D. Evelyn, H. Hughes-Brock, and N. Momigliano, *Knossos: A Labyrinth of History. Papers in Honour of Sinclair Hood* (Oxford and Northampton, 1994), 189–210, esp. 190–2, fig. 1, and n. 18,

with references to his preliminary reports. The evidence for a platform was a peculiar structure whose façade wall had a rough interior face and lacked doors, its undivided interior being filled with a rubble core. It was built in LM I and used into LM II, if not later. Reasonably, Warren visualized it as one of a whole line of grandstands that would have extended eastward, culminating at the ‘bastion’ on the S side of the Theatral Area.

⁸³ For the Theatral Area and vicinity see *PM* ii, 578–87. That some of the stands may have been associated with columns, at least those further w, is suggested by Warren’s discovery of a column base. It was rebuilt into a later wall next to a large staircase that Warren believes led to the platform (‘The Minoan roads of Knossos’, pl. 28, above; pl. 32, r.). Warren considers the possibility that the column base was originally part of that staircase (ibid. 192–4). Quite possibly, the column that stood on it helped support a roof to provide shade. I still maintain, however, that the known fragments from the Grandstand Fresco itself (*PM* iii, pl. xvii) do not feature any columns, except those within the Tripartite Shrine depicted in it.

ceremonies.⁸⁴ The shrine in the fresco could represent such a light, shallow structure, built as a display of pageantry and as a backdrop for grand occasions that brought multitudes of spectators to the area west of the Palace. Alternatively, it could have been a more permanent fixture, but still not a real building with a functional interior.⁸⁵

As for the related Sacred Grove Fresco, I tend to agree with its interpretation as the West Court of the palace of Knossos,⁸⁶ with the additional suggestion that the now missing part of the painting may have exhibited parts of the West Façade as well. The similar provenance and character of the two compositions make it likely that they either decorated adjacent walls in one room, or walls in adjacent rooms,⁸⁷ and it would then make sense that the area they described was one and the same: one west of the West Façade and south of the Royal Road. Since crowds of spectators are shown in both frescos, one of the most likely spectacles to have been watched from those locations could well be bull-leaping—a crowd-pleaser comparable in appeal to today's ball games. The arena would have been outside the palace, and far enough from where the spectators stood so that people could escape if the need arose. The drawing provided here (FIG. 7) does not attempt specific restoration, but is intended simply to give a general impression of the setting, the people, and the game.⁸⁸

The question arises of how the components of bull-leaping scenes may have been arranged on a wall, or possibly in a composition that covered adjacent walls. Since only isolated fragments remain, this is impossible to determine, though the direction of the spectators' glances provides a clue as to where in the painting the spectacle was shown. Some spectators (mostly women) watch from indoors, from balconies or windows,⁸⁹ but most are massed together and standing outdoors. The behaviour of the spectators in the central part of the Grandstand Fresco remains puzzling, for they are either talking to each other or else are distracted, their heads turning in various directions (PLATE 37). E. Davis sees the focus in this painting as being 'the crowd itself'.⁹⁰ Alternatively, the lack of concentration may imply a stage when the spectacle has not yet started, or is approaching but not yet within the field of vision of these spectators. By contrast, in the Sacred Grove Fresco masses of people are absorbed by what is happening in the area to their left.

In these and other related miniature frescoes which have been generally dated in the LM I B–II range⁹¹ the impression one gets is that the compositions adopted what we might call a paratactic perspective, in which buildings, spectators, and performers are placed adjacent to each other—probably in a continuous frieze. Such a compositional scheme may have been the

⁸⁴ J. W. Shaw (n. 67) 438, 448.

⁸⁵ It is quite possible that much of the construction seen in the Grandstand Fresco was made of wood. The horizontal bands can easily represent a construction using planks or boards, as an outer facing for a rubble core or some other rough construction. Horizontal bands without vertical dividers also characterize the façades of some buildings or rooms, mostly those at the top, in the Arrival Town in the Fleet Fresco from Thera, and in some of the huts in the left area of the 'Departure Town' (Doumas (n. 24), respectively pls 79–78, 71). None of these bands can be steps. The problem of recognition may arise from the fact that in some cases (as possibly in the Grandstand Fresco) the planks were shown as white, and can now easily be confused with steps.

⁸⁶ Davis (n. 75), 156–7.

⁸⁷ As suggested in a restoration by Cameron (n. 75), 327, fig. 11.

⁸⁸ I am grateful to Niki Holmes Kantzios for her beautiful drawing. The left side of the area gives an impression of the N side of the West Court and illustrates my view of how stands and steps seen in the Grandstand Fresco may have looked if they had actually existed. Pugilistic competitions of the type depicted in the Boxer's Vase from Haghia Triadha (Marinatos (n. 25), pls 106–7) may also have been performed.

⁸⁹ The motif is one of the most widespread and long-lasting in Aegean iconography, and is known from Minoan, Cycladic, and Mycenaean frescos (Cameron (n. 36), 67; Morgan (n. 51), 82–3).

⁹⁰ Davis (n. 75), 160.

⁹¹ See Hood (n. 53) and Immerwahr (n. 2).



M. Holmes-Kantziros

FIG. 7. Artist's impression of bull-leaping suggested to have taken place in the area w of the palace of Knossos. (N. Holmes-Kantziros and M. C. Shaw.)

progenitor of the use of contiguous panels, like those used in the Ramp House and the Knossian Toreador Frescos.

The paratactic scheme may have been preceded by one in which spectacle, architecture, and spectators were integrated in the same section (or wall) of the painting, layered horizontally and with occasional partial overlapping. An excellent example of this, though with a different theme, is the 'Seashore Battle Fresco' from the West House in Thera.⁹² While the main drama unfolds at the bottom of the composition, in the foreground, other and progressively less crucial events are relegated to the higher layers, ending at the top of the frieze with a pastoral landscape in the distant background. This well-known Aegean convention of evoking space by placing what is further back higher up has been the subject of detailed study by A. Chapin, who appropriately labels it 'vertical perspective'.⁹³

Among bull-leaping frescos, it is quite possible that the one from the Ivory Deposit also used vertical perspective combined with overlapping—if we agree with Evans that a bull was shown against the building (FIG. 6 *a*). To judge from the style, the delicate workmanship and small scale adopted in this painting might suggest that it is somewhat earlier than the other miniature frescos under consideration from Knossos.

Another case in which a bull-leaping scene was rendered in vertical perspective is the fresco from Tell El Dab'a mentioned earlier.⁹⁴ A recent restoration by the excavator shows several bulls and leapers simultaneously involved in the sport, arrayed in two successive horizontal rows with part of the countryside, including hills and vegetation, rising above them at the top of the painting.⁹⁵ That this painting is pertinent to our concerns for prototypes is suggested by the fact that it is strongly inspired by Knossian prototypes, aspects of which it may reproduce, albeit somewhat modified through adaptation.⁹⁶ If this evaluation is correct, we might even see in it a reflection of the notion conveyed by some Knossian frescos that the arena for the bull-leaping sport was located in a large open area rather close to a building, the Knossian palace itself.

CONCLUSIONS

Bull-leaping is a topic surrounded by innumerable issues, of which only a few could be discussed in the context of this article. In particular, the question of the models that the Ramp House Fresco may have followed and of the meaning of its iconography provided an opportunity to explore some of the stages involved in the exchange and transmission of the theme. That it is a matter of borrowing and assimilation is clear. At the same time, it must be reiterated that the execution of the motifs is one of the finest, and that something of a mainland spirit—perhaps that touch of realism in the depiction of action—should be granted the artist, who did not simply copy slavishly. Additionally, these are qualities which might accord with a relatively early date for the Mycenaean fresco, which I would place tentatively

⁹² Dumas (n. 24), pl. 58.

⁹³ A. Chapin (n. 72); also ead., 'Landscape and space in Aegean bronze age art' (dissertation submitted to the Department of Art, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1995). Compare too the early discussion of space in Thera wall-painting by K. Iliakis, 'Morphological analysis of the Akrotiri wall-paintings of Santorini', in Ch. Dumas, *Thera*

and the Ancient World, i (London, 1978), 617–28, esp. 618–21.

⁹⁴ Bietak (n. 4); M. C. Shaw (n. 3).

⁹⁵ M. Bietak, *Pharaonen und fremde Dynastien im Dunkel* (Vienna, 1994), 197, no. 221.

⁹⁶ Like Dr Bietak, I assume the source of the theme to be the palace of Knossos, though I also see representational differences (Shaw (n. 3)).

somewhere between LH II and early LH III A, somewhat later than the date entertained by W. Lamb. It seems that this is a time when the actual Minoan works, rather than copies of copies, were probably still visible and could serve as the direct prototypes. The transmission may well belong to a time when the Knossian palace was still functioning as a palace, but by this time probably run by Mycenaeans.

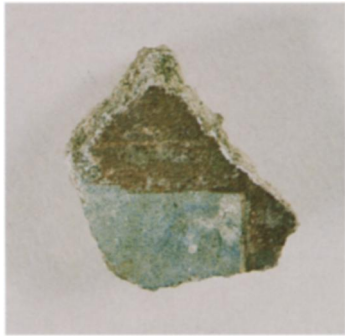
Derivation from Minoan models also removes the need to explore the identification of the locale shown in the Mycenaean fresco in terms of actual topography, for it is unlikely that bull-leaping occurred outside Crete,⁹⁷ or even, I suspect, beyond the palace of Knossos. The theme of bull-leaping was most probably copied in the Mycenaean mainland as a powerful symbol of the authority that had once resided in the palace of Knossos. Was the façade in the Ramp House Fresco also purely an imitation of the type of building represented in Minoan miniature frescos, or did it reflect an actual palatial façade at Mycenae? I would tend to think the former, although the discovery of stone slabs carved with the triglyph and half-rosette frieze, both at Mycenae and in the Knossian palace,⁹⁸ suggests that real architectural ornament was also one of the transmitted, or perhaps shared, artistic elements. However, that the plans of the actual palaces in the two sites remained so entirely different from each other testifies to the fact that Mycenaean borrowing was selective and limited to the adoption of Minoan visual symbols and artistic embellishment. In real life the Mycenaeans knew how to respect and follow their own independent traditions.

University of Toronto

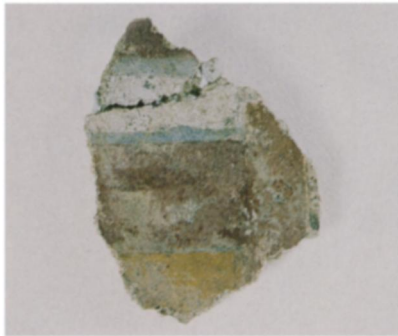
MARIA C. SHAW

⁹⁷ Similar views are entertained by Younger (n. 40), *passim*.

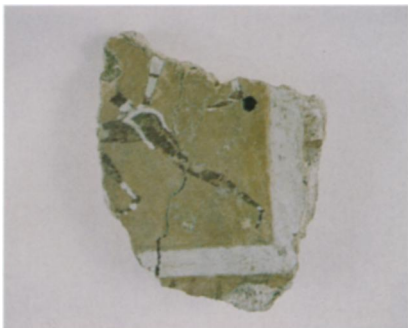
⁹⁸ *PM* ii. 162–6, 593, figs. 83–4, 370; iv. 225, 396.



(1)



(3)



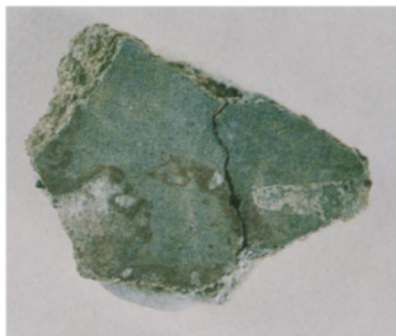
(4)



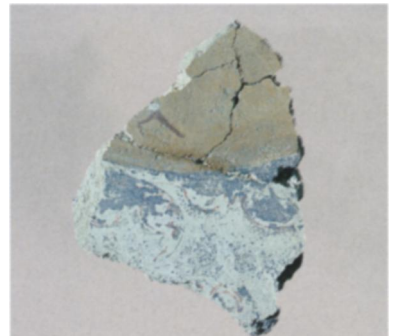
(5)



(6)



(7)



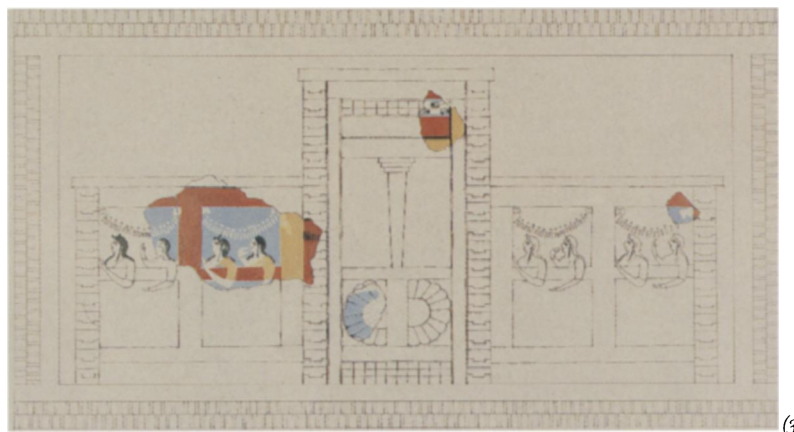
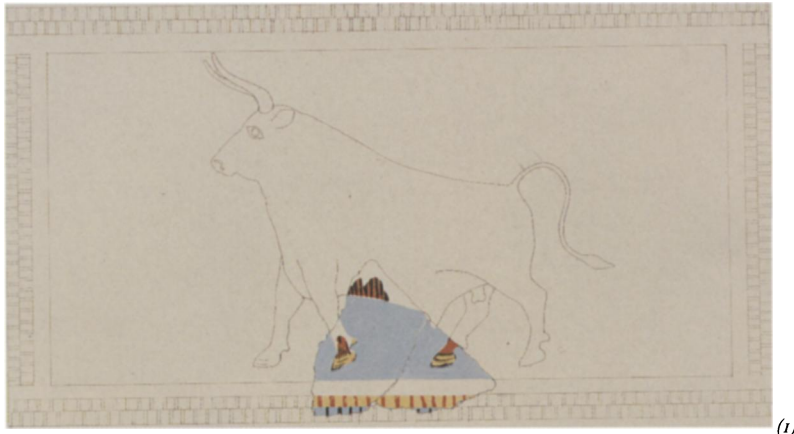
(8)



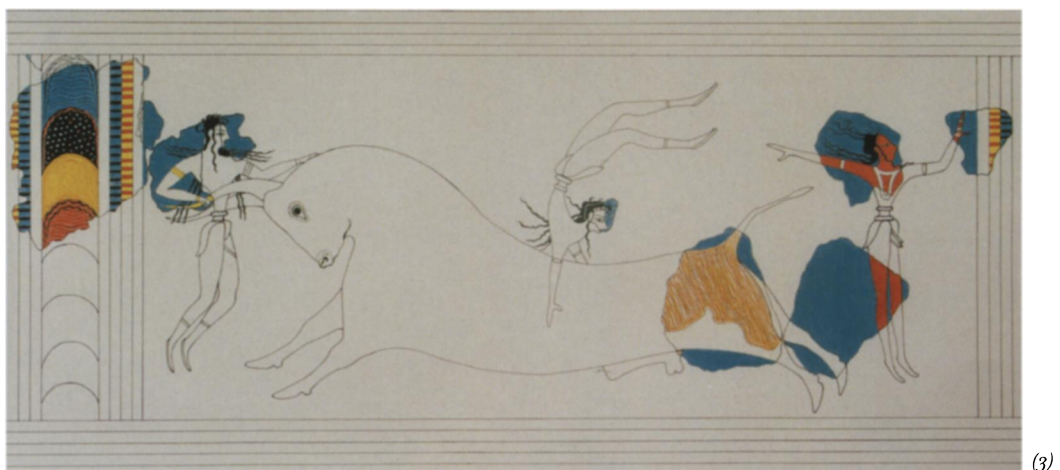
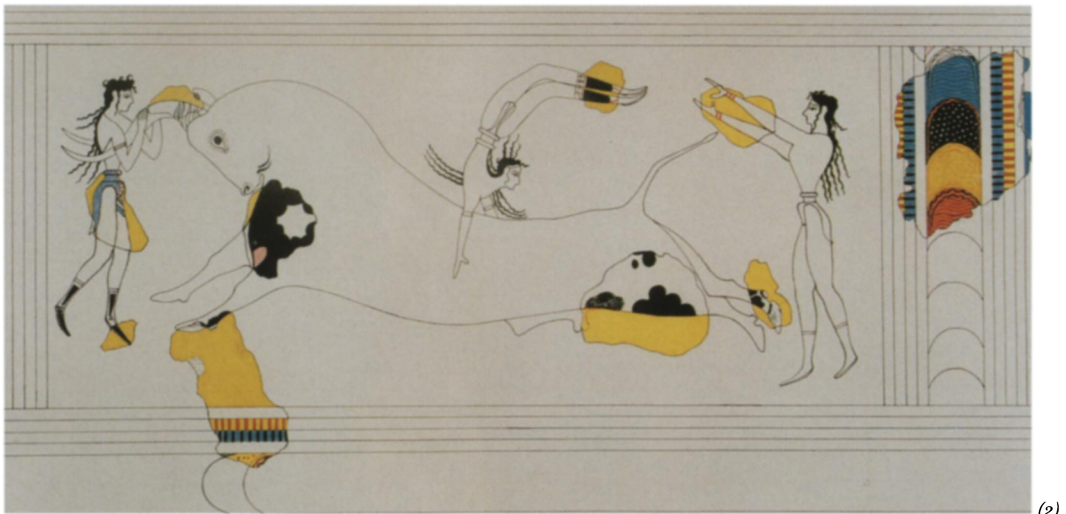
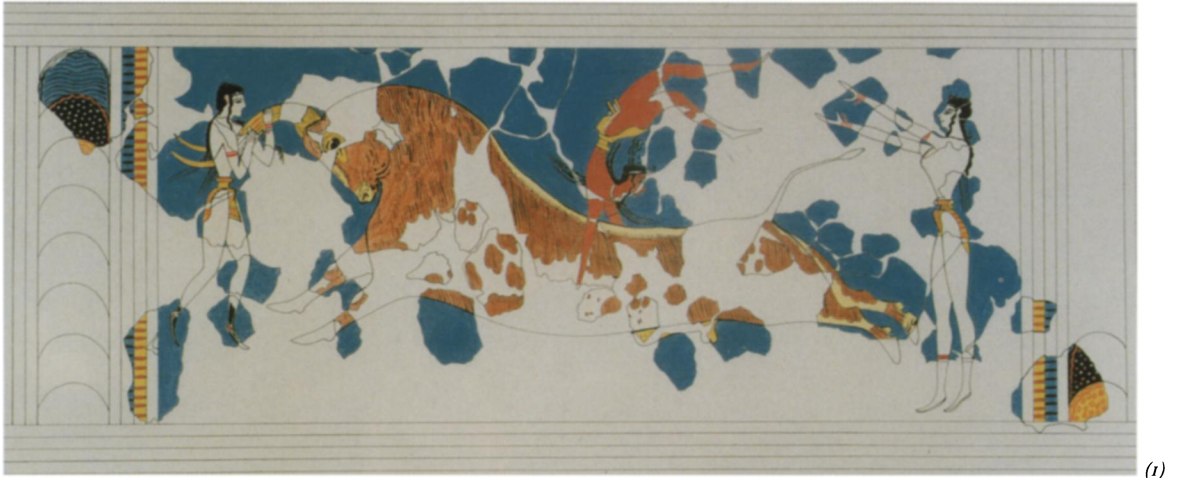
(9)

MARIA C. SHAW
THE BULL-LEAPING FRESCO AT MYCENAE
Plaster fragments, Ramp House.

PLATE B



MARIA C. SHAW
THE BULL-LEAPING FRESCO AT MYCENAE
Reconstructions of the Bull-leaping Fresco from the Ramp House (by M. C. Shaw and G. Bianco).



MARIA C. SHAW
THE BULL-LEAPING FRESCO AT MYCENAE
Reconstruction of three panels of the Toreador Fresco, Knossos (by M. A. S. Cameron).

PLATE D



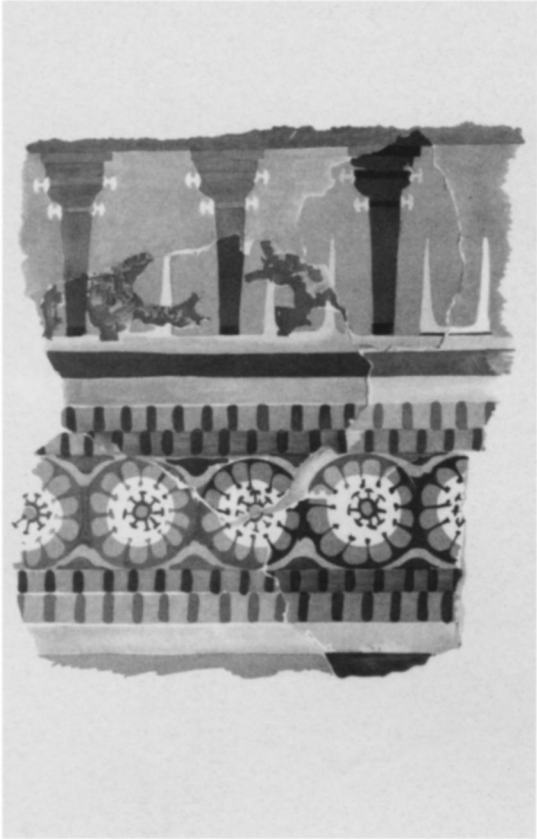
(1)



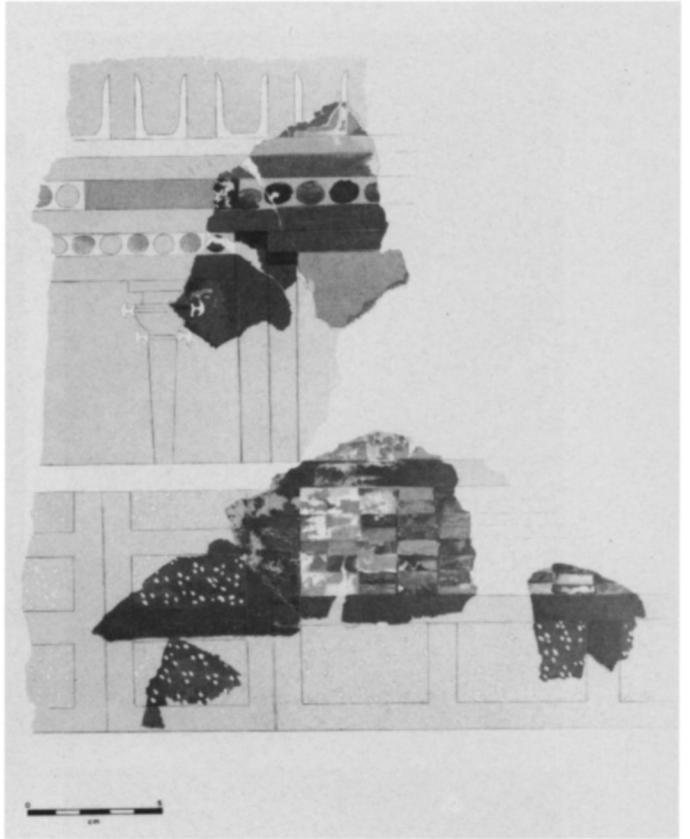
(2)

MARIA C. SHAW
THE BULL-LEAPING FRESCO AT MYCENAE

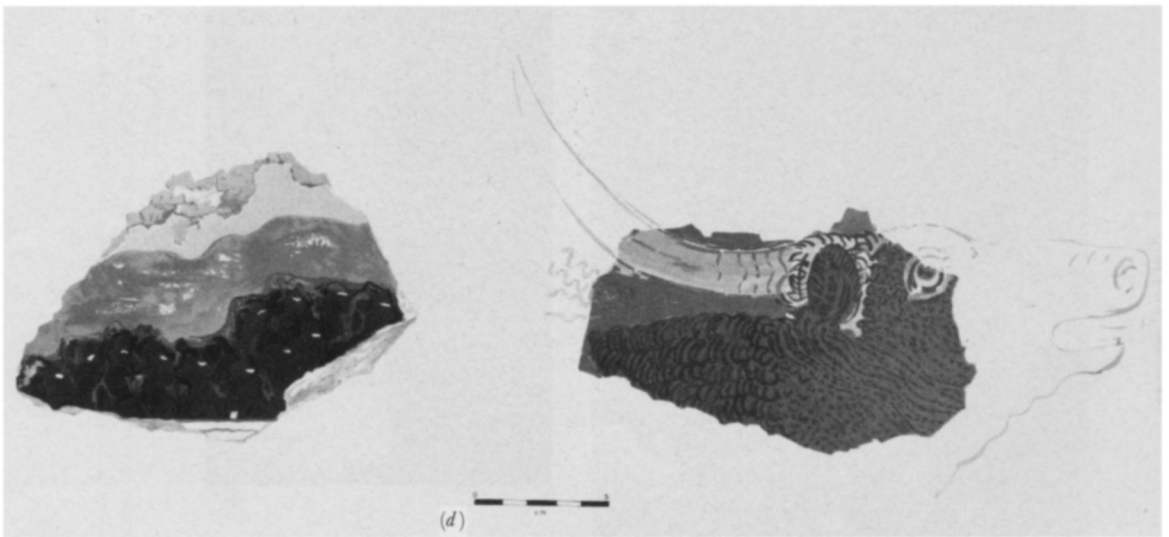
(1) Reconstruction of a fourth panel of the Toreador Fresco, Knossos (by M. A. S. Cameron). (2) A bull-leaping fresco from Tiryns.



(a)



(b)



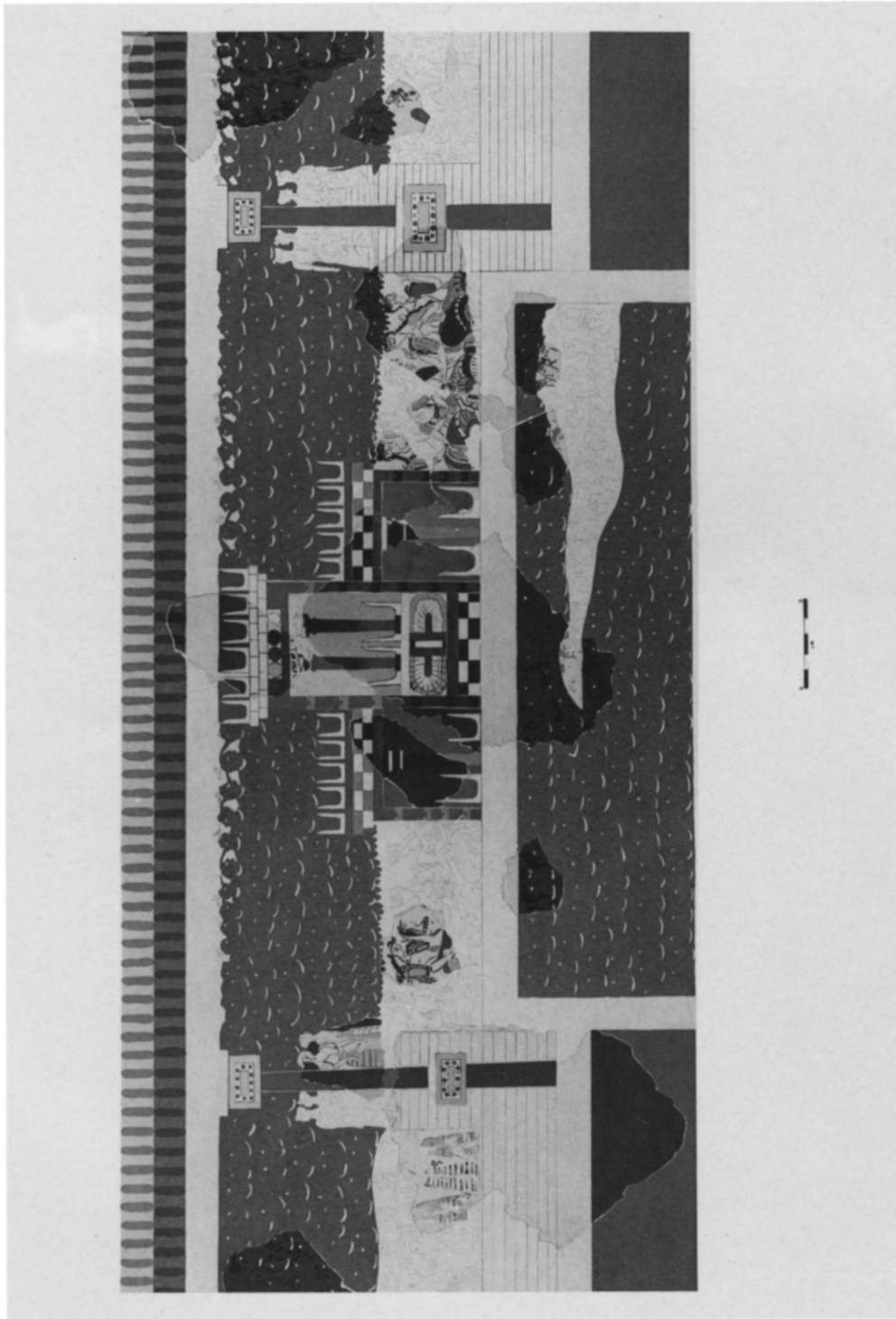
(c)

(d)

MARIA C. SHAW

THE BULL-LEAPING FRESCO AT MYCENAE

From the 13th magazine, Knossos. (a) Architectural façade (after *KFA*, pl. v. 1). (b) Architectural façade (after *KFA*, pl. v. 2, scale added). (c) Crowd of spectators (after *KFA*, pl. vi. 12). (d) 'Swarthy bull' (after *KFA*, pl. vii. 1).



MARIA C. SHAW
THE BULL-LEAPING FRESCO AT MYCENAE
Central section of Grandstand Fresco, Knossos. (After *KFA*, pl. ii *a*)