

intended for relatively large gatherings rather than everyday cooking, and so probably had 'elite' overtones, which may be one of the reasons why the type became rarer in later Mycenaean times, when the social hierarchy had probably become more established and competitiveness for status more contained. In Crete, however, although its history clearly varied in different parts, the tripod cooking pot seems to have been socially embedded enough to be widespread still in the final stages of the Bronze Age.

Outside Crete, tripod cooking pots and other elements of the Minoan tradition are found alongside local forms in the early Late Bronze Age. Later, a more specifically 'Mycenaean' tradition seems to develop, not merely at mainland sites but on Kos, where all types continued to be produced in local fabrics but there may be evidence of Mycenaean influence on wheel-throwing techniques and so on the types produced (p. 93). Some of the more specialised types that appear, such as cooking trays and dishes, also seem to be Minoan in origin, but the 'griddle' and types associated with grilling such as spit-rests seem to appear earliest at mainland sites. These too may have 'elite' associations, but the precise function and method of use of the 'griddle' have been a question of debate, though much elucidated by Hruby's account, which is helped by some useful experimental archaeology. This is also deployed to considerable effect in Morrison's discussion of the Mochlos material, which helps to bring out what may be a fundamental distinction between a 'Minoan' preference for stews and a 'Mycenaean' for roasting and grilling (especially p. 114). This provides a reminder that the preferred types of cooking pot will reflect the kinds of food preferred in the society of which they are characteristic.

But a third important conclusion to be drawn from the various accounts is that the introduction of 'foreign' types of pottery, and so the types of food that they were used to produce, need have no bearing on the arrival of foreign *people*, except possibly potters who were skilled in making these specific types of pot. The careful analysis of the different elements in the cooking pot range at Ayia Irini, for example, provides further arguments against the suggestion that it was a Minoan 'colony'; the reviewer suspects that a similar analysis of the range at Akrotiri on Thera would have a similar result. These and other cases also provide evidence of the various histories that different types may have; some can be absorbed and help to form a new tradition, while others, used for a while, may ultimately be rejected. Only when, as in Cyprus, there seems to be a major replacement of a previous native tradition by a new, 'Mycenaean'

one, not only in cooking pots and the hearth styles that were appropriate to them but in the fine wares, does it seem reasonable to suspect the arrival of a major new element in the population, and even here the adoption of the new types is only partial at some sites (p. 142). Interestingly, tripod pots did not become established (nor in other regions where a 'Mycenaean' or Aegean migration has been postulated), indicating that what was happening will have been more complex than the traditional view of an 'invasion' or 'migration'. Some settlements may have been dominated by a new population, but in others display of knowledge of exotic novelties may have been seen as a way to achieve status, or simply reflect attraction to and appreciation of what was foreign.

Overall, this book is to be welcomed as a very interesting and thought-provoking collection of studies that offer ideas about historical and social development as well as information on local sequences and the history of particular types. The reviewer hopes for further work of this kind.

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**Iphiyenia Tournavitou. *The Wall Paintings of the West House at Mycenae*. pp. xxiii+190, 39 figs, 39 pls. 2017. Philadelphia: INSTAP Academic Press, Prehistory Monographs 54. ISBN 978-1-93153-488-8 £55.00.**

This book is an exceptionally full and thorough publication by Iphiyenia Tournavitou (with some further contributions by others) of wall painting fragments from the West House at Mycenae, the westernmost of the group of four buildings that lies to the west of the Mycenae Citadel and to the south of Grave Circle B. This group consists of the House of Shields, the House of the Oil Merchant and the House of Sphinxes as well as the West House, and is sometimes otherwise known collectively

as the Ivory Houses. They were erected in the early thirteenth century BC, and destroyed by fire sometime around the middle of the same century, during the Late Helladic IIIB period. That they were very closely associated with the Mycenae palatial institution was clear from quite early on, not only from the discovery of Linear B tablets in them, which record a variety of different activities, including transactions related to textile manufacture and disposal, lists of personnel and rations and allocations of olive oil, but also from the large quantities of luxurious materials such as worked ivory found within them, which has led to the conclusion that they acted as secondary workshops as well as depots for the storage and distribution of various commodities and secondary administrative centres for a variety of bureaucratic activities. The presence of fragments of wall paintings associated with at least three of these buildings adds to the sense of their being 'palatial' appendages, since, with a few exceptions (e.g. perhaps those from the Panagia Houses and the House at Plakes at Mycenae, discussed briefly on p. 96 of this volume), figured wall paintings are still primarily associated with what are otherwise identified as Mycenaean palace centres on the Greek mainland, and indeed, along with Linear B records, remain one of the criteria for recognising the existence of a 'palace'.

The West House fragments were originally discovered by Nikolaos Verdelis in 1958, during his excavation of the building, but only a few pieces were illustrated in his preliminary reports in 1958 and 1963. In 2004, they were 'rediscovered' in the storerooms of the new Mycenae museum, whither they had been transferred from storage at Nauplion on the establishment of the museum in 2003. They consist of a total of 138 fragments, each described in detail in the Catalog (Chapter 6) of Tournavitou's volume and illustrated individually in colour or in black and white in the Figures and Plates.

Unfortunately, they were not accompanied by any records of where the individual pieces came from, although in his account of the excavation in 1958 Verdelis reported the discovery of clusters of fragments lying on the floor of the corridor which ran north-south through the middle of the house, especially at the southern end, south of the entrance to Rooms 1-3, along the east wall of Room 1. He was originally of the opinion that these had once decorated the walls of the adjacent rooms, but later suggested that they had probably fallen from the east wall of Room 1, against which they lay. Other fragments were found to the south of the West House, in a mixed deposit which appeared to have accumulated after the abandonment of a small

Middle Helladic III/Late Helladic I building, which had been levelled and covered over at the time the West House was built. The close thematic and stylistic similarities to the fragments found in the West House have led Tournavitou to conclude that this material was probably deliberately dumped here shortly before or after the destruction of the Late Helladic IIIB houses. The absence of signs of burning suggests to her, however, that the paintings were no longer on the walls at the time the West House was destroyed, but had possibly been stripped pending renovation. Much later, during the Archaic period, part of the east wing of the West House was reoccupied, which almost certainly entailed further clearance operations, while later still, in Hellenistic times, the east wing was practically stripped down to bedrock, and any remaining Mycenaean debris was presumably dumped elsewhere. This may account for the presence among the poorly preserved fragments of what is identified as a set of pieces (5 in all) belonging to a composition of Hellenistic date, described in detail in Appendix B of the book. These consist of curvilinear motifs in black and white paint against a red background, which otherwise need not seem noticeably different in design from those found on Mycenaean wall paintings (a somewhat sobering thought), but whose date is clinched by an alphabetic inscription (which, mysteriously, seems to read 'MONO') deeply engraved on the plaster while it was still wet.

The book contains six chapters and two appendices. The first chapter, from which the above summary is drawn, discusses the architectural context and chronology of the wall painting fragments in great detail. Chapter 2 addresses their state of preservation, the methods used to conserve them and the drawn restorations of certain scenes made by Douglas Faulmann of INSTAP (to which I shall return below). Chapter 3, the longest chapter at the heart of the book, discusses the fragments at length according to the types of scenes they are considered to belong to (including a heraldic scene and a hunting scene or scenes) or according to the kinds of motifs that characterise them (other human figures, other floral compositions, unidentifiable pictorial compositions, linear or curvilinear compositions, friezes and borders) and, finally, those that display only monochrome plaster. Exhaustive series of parallels in other Aegean wall paintings and media are discussed and illustrated in the Figures.

Chapter 4 (a shorter chapter) concerns the techniques of painting and construction, which include the question of whether they were painted *fresco* or *secco*. Contrary to received wisdom that Aegean wall paintings were typically painted *fresco*

(that is, that the paint was applied to freshly laid lime plaster while it was still wet), Tournavitou and her colleagues conclude that a sophisticated *secco* technique, in which the pigments were fixed to the plaster with the help of some organic binder, was employed. The detailed analyses using a wide variety of methods (microscopy, polarising light microscopy, VIL, XRF, XRD, SEM-EDS, micro-Raman spectroscopy, FTIR and GC-MS) on which this conclusion is based are presented in Appendix A by Hariclia Brecolouki, Sophia Sotiropoulou, Vassilis Perdikatsis, Anna Lluveras-Tenorio, Ilaria Bonaduce and Maria Perla Colombini.

In her Preface to the volume, Tournavitou confesses to 'an impatience for typology and stylistic trivia' (though she copes with these with a sure hand). Instead, for her the most fascinating questions raised by the West House wall paintings are the underlying narratives presented by the pictorial element that emerge tentatively from the fragments and the part played by these in socio-political strategies. This ultimate aspect of their interpretation is tackled in the concluding discursive chapter (5), which addresses aspects of the distribution, social context and ideology of wall paintings at Mycenae in general and on the wider Greek mainland. The West House paintings appear (though Tournavitou is commendably tentative about this) to fall into a somewhat standard repertoire of Mycenaean themes (such as hunting scenes) characterised by a standardised vocabulary of forms and pictorial syntax, and intimately related to their spatial contexts. In view of the detailed discussions in the rest of the book, this can all be seen as unexceptionably true, but one cannot help wondering if there is not a certain inevitable circularity involved.

One thing that has long worried me slightly, at least from a theoretical point of view, are the restorations of usually very fragmentary pieces of wall paintings, which one often cannot be certain actually belong together, into complete scenes, and the way in which these are frequently reproduced in general accounts, to the extent that these restorations become imprinted in people's minds as complete and definitive examples of Aegean wall paintings. This is particularly true of Arthur Evans' restorations of Knossos wall paintings, executed in order to make the palace alive and comprehensible to the widest possible public, but restorations have become a regular practice ever since. One only need think, for example, of E. Gilliéron's restoration of the Knossian wall painting called 'The Ladies in Blue',<sup>1</sup> in which only a very small and

disconnected proportion of the restored version actually exists, but which can be seen in countless picture books and websites, sometimes with little very clear indication of what is original and what is restored; and the same applies to numerous other fragmentary Aegean wall paintings, which have been constructed, somewhat incestuously, on the basis of other (often reconstructed) wall paintings and other forms of representational media. This is a perfectly reasonable way of proceeding (what else can one do?), but one worries about the inherent circularity in this, and the possibility that one may end up dealing only with the expected. I once tried an experiment with a group of children aged around 8-12, who had no prior knowledge of, or preconceptions about, Aegean art. I photocopied the Gilliéron watercolour restorations of two or three Knossos wall paintings (of which in most cases there are several differing versions), mounted them on a polystyrene backing, then cut out the original fragments and threw the 'restored' areas between them away. When I asked the children to see if they could make 'scenes' out of these fragments and fill in the missing bits, I was amazed by the imaginativeness of their restorations. Even though they were all quite different from the Gilliéron restorations, they were no less imaginative – and, perhaps more importantly, no less plausibly based on the surviving fragments. The same might be said, for example, of the several quite different versions of the Knossos 'Priest King'/'Prince of the Lilies'/'Princess of the Bull-Ring'/'Boxer'/'Prince of the Feather Crown' figure suggested respectively by (among others) Evans and the Gilliérons,<sup>2</sup> Mark Cameron,<sup>3</sup> Jean Coulomb<sup>4</sup> or W.-D. Niemeier.<sup>5</sup> Who is to say which is right in any objective sense, since each of them is based on the artistic parallels and analogies available to them at the time and makes use of informed imagination to draw on explicit or unspoken assumptions about the nature and meaning of the image that may have been portrayed?

This book offers limited and restrained colour restorations of five scenes constructed out of the sometimes not terribly well preserved West House fragments: a heraldic scene consisting of a deer and winged griffin confronting a female figure (fig. 9), constructed on the basis of one large fragment (WH F1); two hunting episodes (figs. 14-15), each also based on one large fragment (WH F7 and WH F9 respectively); a male figure carrying

reconstruction is in the Heraklion Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Evans 1928, col. pl. XIV; cf. Sherratt 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Cameron 1970, 164-165

<sup>4</sup> Coulomb 1979

<sup>5</sup> Niemeier 1987, figs. 24-26.

<sup>1</sup> Evans 1921, fig. 397; cf. Cameron 1971. Emile Gilliéron's original

a load (fig. 21 left), based on WH F52; and a pair of yoked horses pulling a chariot (fig. 22), based on the fragment WH F54. None of the scenes constitutes an extensive construction and all, with the exception of the heraldic scene, are based quite closely on wall painting scenes (themselves often heavily reconstructed) from contemporary Mycenaean sites, such as Pylos or Tiryns, or (in the case of fig. 21) the neighbouring House of the Oil Merchant. The identification of what is shown on individual fragments and the grounds for such reconstructions, along with the backgrounds to such reconstructed scenes, are very fully discussed in Chapter 3, and Tournavitou nowhere claims that they are anything other than suggestions. Nor am I arguing that such reconstructions should not be attempted, particularly with the restrained and tentative approach that Tournavitou brings to them. Yet I cannot help worrying that, once some of these reconstructed scenes find themselves reproduced in popular books or websites, there is a danger that they, too, will become ‘definitive’ examples of Mycenaean wall paintings, imprinted on the public mind forever and/or used as the bases for future reconstructions of yet to be discovered wall paintings. However, I do not see that there is anything that can be done about such anxieties of an essentially philosophical nature.

The book is very logically arranged and set out, but it is nevertheless so closely and densely written and with such a level of detail, that it can sometimes be difficult to re-find remarks or parts of discussion read several pages back – and for this reason one is immensely grateful for the very full index provided. In fact, in every way Tournavitou and her colleagues should be congratulated on having produced a *tour de force* – an exemplary publication that considers every aspect of the wall paintings and a fitting crown for the cycle of publications that she began in 1995 with her monograph on the Ivory Houses as a whole<sup>6</sup> and continued in 2006 with her study of the architecture and stratigraphy of the West House.<sup>7</sup>

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**Quentin Letesson and Carl Knappett (eds). *Minoan Architecture and Urbanism. New Perspectives on an Ancient Built Environment*. pp. 416, b/w illustrations. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2017. ISBN: 978-0-19879-362-5 hardback £90.**

The volume under discussion arises from a workshop held at the University of Toronto in 2015, entitled ‘From Static Data to Dynamic Processes: New Perspectives on Minoan Architecture and Urbanism’. It consists of 15 chapters, which are preceded by a list of figures, tables and contributors. A brief index can be found at the back. References are listed at the end of each individual chapter.

The Introduction, written by the two editors, provides an overview of past studies of the Minoan built environment. In the past, research on Bronze Age architecture has mainly focussed on studying elaborate architecture, seen on the Mainland in a specific focus on Mycenaean palaces and burials, and on Crete by a specific focus on the Neopalatial period, which produced a large amount of well-preserved settlements and buildings. Synthetic treatments mainly dealt with palatial or polite architecture whereby study revolved around architectural forms, functions, materials and techniques. Were earlier