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***The Question of Narrative
in
Aegean Bronze Age Art***

by

Candace Dawn Cain

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

History of Art Department
University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

The Question of Narrative in Aegean Bronze Age Art

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Those who study the cognitive development of *Homo sapiens* maintain that our specialized communication skills evolved from the desire to narrate. Societies define themselves through their histories and their traditional stories; the socio-political significance of narrative in any given civilization is considerable.

Until quite recently, narrative in visual media has been identified with recognizable story content, particularly of a mythological or historical nature. The figural arts of the Aegean Bronze Age have, consequently, been largely overlooked in discussions of pictorial narration in ancient art. The present study seeks to correct the omissions of earlier writings by favouring a broad conception of narrative derived from the field of narratology, employing a system of analysis that concentrates on the essential features or structures of narrative relating, and assessing pictorial texts in terms of degrees of narrativity.

Chapter 1 introduces the subject, situating this project within the art historical tradition. Chapter 2 reviews research on the topic of pictorial narrative that has been conducted in the areas of Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Assyrian, and Greek art, with a view to isolating models of use to the present investigation. Chapter 3 sets out the

methodological approach employed in Chapter 4, where, after an overview of pertinent literature in the field of Aegean scholarship, the narrative possibilities of three monuments from the Aegean Late Bronze Age are analyzed. Some concluding remarks and observations are given in Chapter 5.

Although the story matter of Aegean figure scenes is often minimal and we shall never be able to "read" these images with the facility and sophistication possible in cultures where extra-pictorial information is available, we are remiss to ignore the narrative potential of Aegean art. Indeed, this examination discloses that some of the presentations of visual narrative produced in the Aegean Bronze Age represent early and precocious statements in pictorial storytelling, notwithstanding their generalizing and conventional character.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Topic

1.1 Narrative Media: Word vs. Image

In colloquial usage "narrative" denotes an "account or narration, a history, tale, story, recital of facts."¹ The story or narrative may be "long or short; of the past, present or future; factual or imagined; told for any purpose; and without much detail."²

Of the various sign systems utilized by human beings to communicate their ideas, emotions and experiences, language - the spoken or written word - has traditionally been considered the most appropriate for narrative transmission. G. Lessing's influential *Laocoön*, written in 1766, strongly advocated this view by stressing the differences between painting and poetry as "means of imitation." Lessing asserted that pictorial expression was limited by being a spatial and necessarily static art, a characteristic that he felt made it both inappropriate for, and virtually incapable of, articulating ideas and the kind of progressive action considered to be essential to telling stories.³

While one may still encounter similar thoughts about the expressive inadequacies of the visual arts in art historical literature, numerous authorities have challenged the validity of Lessing's assessment. To the charge that it is impossible for a picture to convey abstract ideas, for example, W. J. T. Mitchell has replied that this is often achieved in art "by means of allegorical imagery, a practice which approaches...the notational procedures of writing

1. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989 (2 ed.), 10: 219-20. The word "narrate" derives from the Latin *narrāre*, (to relate, recount), which in turn comes from *gnārus* (knowing, skilled). Hence narrative has been seen as a "solution to a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate knowing into telling" (White 1980, 5).

2. *Random House College Dictionary* (rev. ed.), 1975, 885.

3. See Lessing 1874, 130, 131-34, 139, 143, and Mitchell 1988, 40.

systems" (Mitchell 1988, 41). The image of an eagle may depict a bird of prey, but it can also express the idea of wisdom, thus functioning as a hieroglyph or pictograph.⁴ Images with this kind of referential content have a long history in political and religious iconography. Pictures may also convey intellectual concepts and emotional states through

more dramatic, oratorical terms, as did the Renaissance humanists who formulated a rhetoric of history painting complete with a language of facial expression and gesture, a language precise enough to let us verbalize what depicted figures are thinking, feeling, or saying. (Mitchell 1988, 41)

Pictorial communication of this sort has an ability to convey relations perhaps even more quickly and effectively than words.⁵

If Lessing's view that images are unable to convey ideas can be questioned, what about his statement that a fixed entity like a picture cannot represent temporality and hence is not capable of narration? A narrative of any description recounts one or more real or fictitious events (an "event" being defined as a "change of state"), and canonical narration has been described as "the representation of a series of events oriented in terms of a goal" (Prince 1987, 28, 59). Events are obviously processes that involve time, and no one would doubt Lessing's observation that language is especially well-suited to this requirement of narration.

Words, following one another in a linear sequence that is fixed for the reader, can clearly distinguish who acts or reacts and how, what the outcome of any actions (or happenings) are or might be, as well as where and when the actions or events that concern the narrator took place and why - that is, what logical and/or causal relationships exist between the agents and events recounted. In a language text, descriptive or ornamental

4. Mitchell 1988, 41.

5. See Gombrich 1974, 259. Gombrich's analysis of the different potentialities of the image in communication remains one of the most instructive and readable accounts.

detail performing no obvious functional role in the narrative can usually be discriminated easily from "the narrating."⁶

In contrast, a picture is not directly able to "demarcate any property of actors, events, times and places as significant in or *as* the narrative; ...in depiction every instance of narrating is also describing, and some proportion of that description inevitably exceeds what the narrative requires" (W. Davis 1992, 249). Images or "depictive texts" are present to the eyes of a beholder in their entirety, and unlike the pages in a book, which produce a clear order of telling, it is harder to fix the order of seeing or reading in a picture or pictorial ensemble.⁷ Viewers can be aided in this process by visual or artistic conventions that carry strong connotations and serve to reduce or even eliminate the range of possible readings permitted by an image construct.⁸

The fact remains, however, that images are polysemous, and without a knowledge of their content and the visual rules employed, indeed often without an identifying caption, images are highly ambiguous.⁹ Psychological tests like the well-known Rorschach ink blots capitalize on this characteristic. They also underscore the fact that the interpretation of meaning in images requires intelligible cues (Gombrich 1974, 247). For in a picture there are no straightforward equivalents of words like "before," "then," "after," "next," "if," "when," "not," "therefore," etc. (cf. W. Davis 1992, 248-49). And, as one author has stated, "painting

6. W. Davis 1992, 249; cf. Chatman 1978, 30.

7. W. Davis 1992, 242-55, provides a lengthy discussion of pictorial narrative wherein the distinctions between natural language text (NLT) and depictive text are examined. See Elkins 1991, 350 on the "order of telling" in pictorial narrative; it may be linear, deductive, or associative.

8. Miles 1985, 30, also notes that artistic conventions can carry strong connotations for the viewer although she cautions that the latter can also "ignore the message and substitute a meaning...in accordance with his interest." Elkins 1991, 351, mentions formal markers to the order of reading: e.g., a spatial organization that presents a dominant central element or one which is perceived as being closest to the viewer is read first.

9. See Gombrich 1974, on the ambiguity of images, and compare similar insights by Barthes 1964, 197, and Bal 1991, esp. pp. 9, 34-38, 178-81.

knows nothing about proper names... ." (Varga 1988, 204).

Although it is patently easier to express specific relations and time summary in a narrative composed of "natural language" with its chains of "word signs" (Lotman 1975, 333), this appears not to have deterred visual artists from attempting what Lessing viewed as the impossible. It is a truism that practitioners of every art form have a tendency to challenge and transgress the presumed limits of their medium:

Poetry tries to detach itself from time and make itself immobile; painting wants to escape from space and give the illusion of movement. The paradox of the picture which suggests the evolution of an action is...from the time of Greek vases to present day films, old and banal.¹⁰

In our century, scholars in the relatively young discipline of narratology have commented extensively upon the seemingly boundless scope of narrative discourse, disregarding Lessing's critical distinctions between literature and the visual arts. The enthusiastic musings of R. Barthes in this regard are often quoted:

There are countless forms of narrative in the world. First of all there is a prodigious variety of genres, each of which branches out into a variety of media, as if all substances could be relied upon to accommodate man's stories. Among the vehicles of narrative are articulate language, whether oral or written, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all those substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, drame [suspense drama], comedy, pantomime, paintings..., stained glass windows, movies, local news, conversation. Moreover in this infinite variety of format it is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; indeed narrative starts with the very history of mankind; there is not, there has never been anywhere, any people without narrative;...all human groups have their stories,...narrative remains largely unconcerned with good or bad literature. Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural.¹¹

10. Varga 1988, 194. Compare similar observations by Lotman 1975, 337, and Mitchell 1988, 98.

11. Barthes 1975, 237. Barthes's essay was originally published in French in 1966; this passage is quoted from the first authorized English translation. A slightly different translation appears in his *Image - Music - Text* (Noonday Press, New York, 1977), p. 79.

1.2 Art Historical Studies of Visual Narrative: from Illustration to the Autonomous Narrative Picture

The earliest significant discussions of visual storytelling commenced late in the nineteenth century and centred on ancient Greek black- and red-figure painted vases. C. Robert seems to have established the direction that most future studies would take in *Bild und Lied; archäologische Beiträge zur Geschichte der griechischen Heldensage* published in *Philologische Untersuchungen* (Heft 5) in 1881. Robert understood pictorial narrative in terms of illustration or representation of textual narrative, in his case, the ancient Greek myths and epics. His treatise raised a number of issues unique to this kind of representation, perhaps the most intriguing to later scholars being the notion of episodic sequences, in which the artist repeats figures to indicate different moments in the story.¹²

Themes like these were explored more fully in subsequent publications. In his study of the Vienna Genesis (*Die Wiener Genesis*, Vienna, 1895), F. Wickhoff developed a terminology for describing categories of solutions - called "narrative modes" - employed by the ancient painter to represent temporal progress.¹³ Analysis continued along similar lines in the mid-twentieth century when K. Weitzmann extended Wickhoff's classifications and applied them to medieval serial manuscript illumination in the now classic *Illustrations in Roll and Codex* (1948).¹⁴

12. Boardman 1990, 57, and Lavin 1990, 1, in particular acknowledge the importance of Robert's observations to later scholarship.

13. These modes were called "monoscenic," "polyscenic," and "continuous." The monoscenic narrative presents a single characteristic scene from a story with the main figures being shown only once. More than one moment is represented in the polyscenic narrative, which illustrates two or more episodes in a story, again without repeating figures. The continuous format represents the same figure more than once in a continuous setting, acting out various episodes of the story.

14. See Weitzmann 1970 edition, 12-46, and compare Lavin 1990, 2. Weitzmann's terminology for the three main categories of pictorial narrative is slightly different: "simultaneous," "continuous," and "cyclic."

Weitzmann's categories and methods, still utilized today, influenced many of the contributions to an important early symposium on the topic of "Narration in Ancient Art" held in Chicago in 1955, on the occasion of the 57th annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America. The conference papers, published in the *American Journal of Archaeology* (Vol. 61, 1957), featured studies by experts in the cultures of Egypt, Babylonia, Anatolia, Syria, Assyria, Greece, Rome, and the early Christian period.¹⁵ These articles remain fundamental to research about narrative in ancient art, even though their emphasis on the relations between text and image, and the rather limiting criteria that they established for discussions of visual narrative have been criticized in more recent times.¹⁶

The parameters of the symposium were stated as follows:

The participants agreed further that they would exclude from intensive consideration, the typical and casual material, typical harvest scenes, typical cult acts, etc., even though their representation may be broken down into a succession of scenes...It has been assumed that narrative art, strictly speaking, could be identified as such only where the purpose of the artist was to represent a specific event, involving specific persons, an event, moreover, that was sufficiently noteworthy to deserve recording. (Kraeling 1957, 43)

Given the stress on specificity and artistic intention in their terms of reference, it is not surprising that the members of the 1955 symposium found instances of "true" pictorial narrative to be rare and to occur rather late in the corpus of ancient representational art (Kraeling 1957, 43). Dynastic monuments with images accompanied by inscriptions that permit one to identify the persons and events depicted form the majority of works isolated for discussion in these articles. While some authors acknowledged the narrative character of certain anonymous ritual and siege scenes, the issues raised by distinctions like

15. The list of contributors is very impressive, including Weitzmann himself as well as H. Kantor, A. Perkins, G. M. A. Hanfmann, and P. H. von Blanckenhagen.

16. Critical assessments of the 1955 conference appear in Brilliant 1984, 19; Kessler 1985, 8; Lavin 1990, 2; Holliday 1993, 4.

"generalized" *versus* "individualized" narratives fell outside the scope of this conference.¹⁷

A very different strategy was taken at a symposium held in Baltimore in 1984, published in 1985 as *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity* (*Studies in the History of Art* Vol. 16).¹⁸ In response to the AIA conference and to another colloquium entitled *Text et image*, which had been held in Chantilly in 1982, the organizers asked their contributors to "set aside the question of textual sources and to focus instead on the visual aspects of pictorial narrative" (Kessler 1985, 8). Robert's notions of artistic narrative as illustration, and the capacity of pictures to depict a literary prototype, were not abandoned, merely treated as distinct from the ability of the visual image to serve as a text in its own right.¹⁹ It is a measure of how much thinking had changed in three decades that the authors attending the Baltimore meeting could not agree upon a single definition of pictorial narrative, and that no clear differentiation was made between narrative and other kinds of art (icon, for example).²⁰

Beginning in the 1980s, revisionist approaches to the study of pictorial narrative have often used as models narratological analyses of oral and written literature informed by structuralist theories. R. Brilliant's *Visual Narratives: Storytelling in Etruscan and Roman Art* (1984) is a frequently cited example. Brilliant was interested in the neglected questions of narrative processes, the structures of narrative presentation, and the ways in which the observer receives narrative content or "perceives that there is a narrative content to be comprehended" (Brilliant 1984, 19). Defined by an interconnection of causal and temporal

17. See Kantor 1957, 45-47.

18. There were several studies on various aspects of narration in pre-Hellenistic art published before the important 1984 and 1982 symposia under discussion. They include Moscati, 1963; Schefold, 1966, 1978; Himmelmann-Wildschütz, 1967; von Steuben, 1969; Hölscher, 1973; Gaballa, 1976.

19. Lavin 1990, 2, adroitly summarizes the differences between Robert's sense of narrative and the approach taken in Baltimore: "in the first case 'narrative' is used as an adjective to modify elements such as poses, expressions, settings. In the second 'narrative' is used as a noun, meaning the plot as a whole." Compare Bal 1991, 35-39.

20. See Kessler 1985, 8.

factors, in Brilliant's analysis, narrative images are ultimately "narrated" by the beholder, who changes the single or multiple images he or she sees into some form of "internalized verbal expression" (p. 16).

This stress on viewers, and the conceptual operations and conventions that shape what they do, is central to contemporary studies of visual narration developed from a semiotics perspective.²¹ Here, too, the impulse is to explore narratives that communicate in direct visual terms, as distinct from the analysis of visual allusions to verbal narratives (Bal and Bryson 1991, 206; cf. Lavin 1990, 3). The theory of sign and sign use, semiotics posits the essentially anti-realist view that human culture is composed of signs, each of which stands for something other than itself.²² In a semiological analysis it is untenable to consider an image as being "realistic" or representationally direct; in art there is no uncoded access to nature.²³ There is also no one fixed reading of a given artwork, for the meanings we construe are always determined at "specific sites in a historical and material world."²⁴

21. Bal and Bryson 1991, 184, note:

Semiotic analysis of visual art does not set out in the first place to produce interpretations of works of art, but rather to investigate how works of art are intelligible to those who view them, the processes by which viewers make sense of what they see.

The process of signification or "semiosis" in the logic system devised by C. S. Peirce is tripartite. It involves a perceptible sign or *representamen* that stands for something else; the thing for which the sign stands - the *object* or *referent*; and a mental image or connection, called the *interpretant*, that the recipient forms of the object. A few paintings are analyzed in terms of Peirce's three positions of semiosis by Bal and Bryson 1991, 188-91. The authoritative publication on Peirce's many philosophical writings remains *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vols. I-VI (especially vol. II for his theory of signs), C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss, eds., Cambridge, Mass. 1931-1935, and vols. VII-VIII, Arthur Burks ed., Cambridge, Mass., 1935-1966. Semiotic theory is also mentioned below in the context of methodological concerns; see Chapter 3, section 3.3.

22. Bal and Bryson 1991, 174.

23. Bal and Bryson 1991, 191: "Even when we think the image is 'realistic,' we are in fact imbued with the convention that suggests that certain kinds of pictorial signs stand for 'reality' more clearly than others."

24. Bal and Bryson 1991, 180. Compare Sourvinou-Inwood 1989, 241: "...we do not make sense of images in some objective, timeless, unchanging manner, but through perceptual filters constituted by culturally determined presuppositions, assumptions, and expectations."

Proponents of semiotic approaches to art history challenge certain positivist views of knowledge by questioning the possibility and even relevance of accounting for "the historical status of images, their origins, original intentions and even the ways in which they were interpreted by their contemporary audience."²⁵ Hence, discussions of narrative art in the framework of semiotics dwell less on how images are able to narrate stories and more on the act of "reading" itself: the various "codes" viewers activate as they process a strange image into a familiar mind set "produce a 'narrative,' a satisfying interpretation of the image" that accounts for every detail.²⁶

The impact of discussions issuing from a mélange of structuralist, post-structuralist, and semiotic premises is investigated in *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art* (ed. P. Holliday), a collection of articles that appeared late in 1993. Each paper in this volume isolates a specific, usually well known monument for examination, in contrast to many earlier studies in which attempts were made to summarize the narrative practices of an entire culture or period.²⁷ Perhaps in keeping with reigning post-structuralist sentiments, a single definition of visual narrative was eschewed by the scholars involved, each of whom formulate the notion in distinct terms. The editor's comments are of interest in this regard: "...one might say that an image becomes a visual narrative - an object of narrative reading - only when the intention of such a reading exists."²⁸

25. Bal and Bryson 1991, 206. This is especially true of the post-structuralist phase of semiotics; compare comments by Holliday 1993, 3.

26. Bal and Bryson 1991, 202. In his book *S/Z* (1970), Roland Barthes theorized that readers activate five codes which aid them in understanding what they read: the proairetic, hermeneutic, semic, symbolic, and referential. Bal and Bryson suggest that art historical studies of narrative might benefit from the adoption of some of Barthes's ideas. W. Davis (personal communication) on the other hand, finds Barthes' work problematic for application to the pictorial sphere.

27. Holliday 1993, 3.

28. Holliday ed. 1993, 3. Holliday here acknowledges the reasoning of R. Barthes in "On Reading" in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. R. Howard, 1986, New York, pp. 33-43, especially p. 34: "the object I read is founded by my *intention* to read: it is simply legendum, to be read, issuing from a phenomenology, not from

The conceptual distance separating this series of papers from the pioneering studies of C. Robert and the symposium members of 1955 is substantial. The shift in emphasis from image-text relations to examinations of the unique properties of pictures and the role of the beholder/narrator in the production of visual narratives seems to have fostered an appreciation for the concept of an autonomous visual story. Several offerings in *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art* discuss narratives generated by the juxtaposition of images in specific contexts, expressing views akin to observations by A. Varga that "pictures suggest tales independently of any text...images, as soon as chance or whim arranges them in a series, invite us to invent tales."²⁹

It is significant that among these articles is the only one dealing with objects from the Bronze Age Aegean ever to be included in a publication on narrative art (see N. Marinatos 1993a).

1.3 The Question of Narrative in Aegean Bronze Age Art

There are various explanations for the reticence of earlier scholarship regarding the subject of narrative in the figural art of the Aegean Late Bronze Age. Comprised of the geographical areas of Crete, the Cycladic islands, and southern and central mainland Greece ca. 1600 to 1200 B.C., this is a culture to which normal historical access is barred.³⁰ The Cretan Linear A script has not yet been deciphered, and the situation is only slightly better

a semiology."

29. Varga 1988, 204. See in particular, articles in *Narrative and Event in Ancient Art* by Marinatos, Pollini, and Holliday.

30. Hood 1978, 19-26, provides a good historical summary and description of the geographical and chronological parameters of the Aegean Bronze Age. Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 185 ff., remains the most eloquent assessment of the unique nature and appeal of Minoan art.

with the later Linear B tablets from Knossos and the Greek mainland, whose utility is circumscribed by the largely commercial nature of their contents.

For some, the enigma surrounding the civilizations that posterity has dubbed "Minoan," "Cycladic," and "Mycenaean" merely heightens their appeal. For many, "the sense prevails of a world intellectually and morally beyond our grasp" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 185). Like novice ballet patrons without a programme, we are faced with the confounding task of reconstructing meaning in the absence of contextual ciphers: to employ the parlance of semiotic theory, we want for an "interpretant."³¹

The surviving corpus of pertinent artifacts presents other, more material impediments to the researcher. Wall paintings, particularly those from Crete and the mainland, are fragmentary and often restored in an imaginative manner; collections of sealstones - the main iconographic source for this art - are interspersed with modern forgeries and specimens of unknown provenance; gold repoussé vessels, daggers with figural inlays, and other tomb goods pose problems of chronology and artistic authorship. And for the majority of the monuments we can only speculate about their original functions.

One may add to these possible obstacles to investigating matters like visual narrative and pictorial programmes in ancient Aegean art the character of the representational imagery most often reproduced in books devoted to the subject. Longer known to scholarship, Minoan figural art is commonly seen to be religious in content, featuring scenes relating to goddess worship, processions of gift bearers, incidents from ritual bull sports, and other "genre elements of sacred festivals"³² (see Figs. 4-9). Noticeable is the scarcity of

31. See Liska 1989, on Peirce's notion of the interpretant. Essentially it refers to "the proper significate effect" of a sign (p. 22); as students of archaeology and art history we devise our own rules of translation, but we lack entirely the "contemporary interpretants."

32. Cameron 1975, 128, 661; cf. Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 205, and Koehl 1993, 51.

discernible individuals; if a Minos-like figure did exist, he was not predisposed to royal propaganda in the pattern of his Egyptian or Near Eastern counterparts.³³ Similarly, attempts to match up the gods/goddesses named on the Linear B tablets with the many representations we have of important female figures prove futile. In fact, the Minoan artist rarely depicts a personage who is, at least to our modern eyes, unambiguously divine: often we cannot distinguish mortals from gods, "priestesses" from goddesses.³⁴

Seemingly unconcerned with depicting "individual human achievement" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 186), the goal of Cretan art has been summarized by one of its most knowledgeable authorities as the characterization of "the continuity of action, timeless, effortless and graceful..." (Cameron 1975, 263). Although monuments less conforming to the general rule do exist in Minoan art, it is understandable that students in the field, especially those following the restrictive definitions of pictorial narrative prevalent in the formative stages of art historical dialogue, felt no compulsion to pursue the issue.

The situation is slightly different with Mycenaean art, which is generally perceived as favouring more secular, and hence in some opinions, more narrative themes (e.g. Immerwahr 1990, 122-34). Numerous objects from the shaft graves at Mycenae and later wall paintings from architectural complexes at Mycenae, Pylos, Tiryns, and Orchomenos feature depictions of warriors in various combat situations and men engaged in hunting activities (see Figs. 10-18). The martial aspects of these monuments, according well with

33. Koehl 1993, 51, stresses the lack of narrative themes devoted to the glorification of kingship in Minoan Crete and the consequent "non-historical" nature of its art. Concerns like these were earlier addressed by E. Davis 1986, 216, who speculated that "if the art of the Aegean served a political purpose, it was not to propagandize the power of the king, but rather the potency of the cult." Recently N. Marinatos 1993b, 243, has explained the absence of ruler iconography thus: "the ruling class had such an investment in portraying itself in a divine form that the imagery of the ruler(s) and gods fused."

34. Virtually all commentators observe this characteristic of Minoan art. Especially interesting comments in this regard are made by Crowley 1989a, 169; Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 215; Hallager 1985, *passim*; N. Marinatos 1993b, chapter 7, and p. 243; Niemeier 1989; Wedde 1992, 1995a, 1995b. See too the analysis of the Isopata Ring below in Chapter 4, section 4.2.

references in some of the Linear B tablets to inventories of weaponry (Chadwick 1987, 38-39), seem to reflect the interests of military leaders (Cameron 1975, 615-19). Many authors have been tempted to view this imagery in terms of the much later and more familiar world of Homeric heroes and Greek mythology. For example, L. Banti, following A. Evans and others, identified in the Mycenae battle scenes "a true epic spirit," asserting with regard to the hunt frescoes that "if names had been added we should have no difficulty in recognizing mythological scenes, the forerunners of the Calydonian boar hunt..."³⁵

As it stands, however, it is not always easy to discern the precise subject matter of the monuments in question. In her book on Aegean painting S. Immerwahr mentions the "formulaic quality" of the mainland battle and hunt frescoes, which "often seem to have a generic rather than a specific meaning" and whose themes "cannot always be distinguished" (Immerwahr 1990, 122).

Although scholarship is ordinarily mute on the narrative possibilities of Minoan and even Mycenaean art, well-preserved representational works from the Cycladic islands have generated an impressive volume of literature, some of which broaches the topic of pictorial narrative. The miniature wall paintings discovered at Akrotiri on Thera in the 1970s have aroused the greatest amount of interest and speculation (Figs. 19-21). At the risk of oversimplifying the diverse responses of the authors involved, opinions on the matter of narrative that surfaced with the Thera finds have tended to fall into two groups: those who deny the narrative character of Aegean art in general and the West House miniature frescoes in particular, and those who argue that the latter wall paintings constitute a unified narrative ensemble, many details of which occur in other more fragmentary monuments

35. Banti 1954, 310; cf. Rodenwaldt 1912, 121; Evans *PM* III, 89; W. Stevenson Smith 1965, 46; Hooker 1967, 269-81.

from Crete and mainland Greece - monuments that also, conceivably, betray narrative features.³⁶

That different minds should make dissenting judgments about the same data is neither unusual nor, in itself, problematic. Epistemological and methodological concerns do emerge, however, when one asks whether an image or group of images has a narrative status or, alternately, constitutes some other form of artistic signification. For instance, exactly what properties define pictorial narrative? Does narrative art display specific stylistic or compositional traits that distinguish it from other, non-narrative imagery? Are there different forms of visual narrative and varying degrees of narrativity? What function does the "reader" play in the efficacy of a picture story? Whither narrative - can we wonder about the possible origins and purposes of narrative imagery in any given cultural context?

The writers who have ventured to describe certain monuments in the corpus of Bronze Age Aegean art as "narrative" have undoubtedly pondered similar questions. Nevertheless, very few scholars have examined them in print. Rather, commentators have focused on the interpretation of pictorial content (an admittedly fascinating subject), largely omitting from mention explications of terminology and the concepts or assumptions that have informed their systems of inquiry.

An exploration of the question of narrative in Aegean Bronze Age art that endeavours to redress this situation will, therefore, be a first step along an uncertain, but nonetheless promising path.³⁷ The course taken consists of five parts: having introduced

36. The bibliography on the West House frescoes is too extensive to note here; however, much of it is given in Morgan 1988, 212-23. The latter author may be cited as a supporter of the 'non-narrative' side: see Morgan 1988, 164-65, while Televantou 1990, 309-26, and 1994 *passim*, especially 323 ff., and Doumas 1992, 23-24, are prominent among those representing the opposing view. The miniature friezes from the West House are examined below in Chapter 4, section 4.3.

37. The present study does not aspire to develop a typological formulation for the figural art of this period. If narratological research has any relevance to studies of visual narrative, the productive value of taxonomical categories - whether centring on the form or substances of narrative content - is moot. See for example,

the topic and situated the study within the art historical tradition in this chapter, the chapter immediately following reviews how the subject of pictorial narrative has been treated in the art of other ancient cultures, with a view to isolating models or controls of use to the present investigation. Chapter 3 sets out the methodological approach employed in Chapter 4, where, after an overview of pertinent discussions in the field, the narrative possibilities of three monuments from the Aegean Late Bronze Age are analyzed in some detail. The conclusions of the study are presented in Chapter 5.

Chatman 1978, 84. Both Chatman and Bal 1985, 16, 92, view such practices as questionable, acknowledging the considerable role "intuition" plays in making distinctions about narrative form and content.

CHAPTER TWO

A Comparative Analysis of Studies on Pictorial Narrative in Ancient Art

Students in the arts and sciences often engage in comparative studies as a way of obtaining a more complete understanding of their subjects of interest. "Comparative linguistics," "comparative anatomy," "comparative religions," and the like are thus familiar courses in colleges and universities, their existence based on the premise that the distinguishing aspects of an entity are defined with respect to the similarities or differences it bears to other entities of its class or kind. In seeking to elucidate what pictorial narrative is and how it works, a corresponding approach is taken in this chapter, which examines some of the research on visual narrative in the representational art of Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, and Greece.¹ Although few of these cultures present situations fully analogous to the Bronze Age Aegean, the exercise serves both to accent the peculiarities of the Aegean pictorial world within the context of other, some even contemporary, ancient cultures, and to disclose what appear to be constant features or elements of narrative art.

Investigations into the topic of narrative representations in ancient Egypt introduce us to some of the procedural approaches or biases, problems, and disputations that occur when attempts are made to distinguish narrative formulations from other (presumably different) kinds of pictorial expressions. One of the more intriguing concepts that emerges from these studies is the notion of a hierarchy of narrative representations, something seldom articulated but frequently implied in many of the commentaries. There is a sense

1. The research discussed in this chapter cannot claim to be comprehensive. Most of the monuments examined are well known and discussed in a multitude of scholarly publications: familiarity with the copious body of literature that has amassed for each one of these ancient cultures would be quite untenable. The most pertinent studies, namely those that have sought specifically to examine the topic of pictorial narration, have for obvious reasons been the focus here.

that renditions of "historical" events are, for example, more truly or fully narrative than other subjects, and battle themes are widely perceived as narrative. In a similar vein, despite the rather significant role that artistic formulae seem to play in Egyptian narrative art, imagery characterized by unique features and details is usually seen to evince a higher level of narrativity than less particularized representations. The Egyptian material also provides early examples of text-image relations: representations range from those whose stories are essentially apprehensible with no textual guide, to those whose pictured events are legible primarily through inscribed, non-pictorial information.

2.1 Egypt: Power Politics and the Art of Narration, ca. 3000-1200 B.C.

The classic formulations of Egyptian art are familiar to the most uninitiated viewer. In successive chronological periods, from the Old to the New Kingdom (2675-1075 B.C.),² tomb and temple walls were decorated with figures in friezes arranged in superimposed rows. These figures are usually shown performing the activities associated with ritual and the pleasures or tasks of daily life. Their actions are supposedly overseen and certainly compositionally "bracketed" by the much larger image of a king, god, or tomb owner (Fig. 22). The conventional character of this art, referred to as the "canonical tradition"³ has long been appreciated. The seeming invariability of ancient Egyptian art is so striking, and the preferential value placed upon the typical over the particular, the symbolic over the real, and the eternal over the transitory, is so dominant, that for many the prospect of pictorial

2. The chronology of Egypt, indeed, of the ancient Near East in general is still an area of much debate. Here the dates suggested in Sasson et al., 1995, have been followed. The dates noted for the individual monuments most often are those accepted by the authors cited in each case.

3. W. Davis 1989, 1, defines this term.

narrative has been a non-issue. However, even Egyptian art has its "heresies" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1970, 120-21), and contemporary scholarship suggests that the canonical principles served a multitude of functions - symbolic, biographical, historical, and narrative.⁴

2.1.1 A Primer for Egyptian Narrative Art: The Scorpion Macehead

Discussions of narrative possibilities in Egyptian representational art often take as their starting point a series of monuments dating to the late Predynastic or early Dynastic periods.⁵ The fragmentary reliefs on the limestone "macehead of King Scorpion" (ca. 3100-3000 B.C.) found at Hierakonpolis usually figure prominently in the sequence (Fig. 23).⁶ Various considered to be an early but confused "attempt at pictorial narrative" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1970, 113), a "pictorial narrative in the full sense of the word" (Gaballa 1976, 16), and a "kind of dated temple gift" with no narrative pretensions whatsoever (Millet 1990, 58-59), the Scorpion Macehead introduces some of the distinctions in terminology and divergencies of opinion that occur in the relevant publications.

As reconstructed, the top register of the macehead features a continuous line of standards from which hang captive birds or bows, while below this, occupying a much larger field, are the remains of what appear to be two scenes.⁷ The section of primary interest pictures a large male figure identified as a ruler of Upper Egypt by the distinguishing "white

4. See W. Davis 1989, 201-2.

5. The main explorations of narrative in Egyptian art are: Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, and 1970; Kantor 1957; Gaballa 1976; Moscati 1963; W. Davis 1989, 1992, and 1993.

6. See the excavators' comments in Quibell and Green 1902, 9, with pls. XXV, XXVI-c. The macehead is now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

7. My descriptions of the macehead are informed by the lengthy accounts of the object provided by Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 1970; Gaballa 1976; and Millet 1990.

crown" he wears and the rosette and scorpion signs adjacent to his face.⁸ Holding a hoe in his hands, he stands on a somewhat uneven surface, which from the undulating parallel lines below it may be understood as the bank of a waterway. Two diminutive fan-bearers stand immediately behind the king, and before him, in the lower portion of this pictorial zone, is a slightly bent figure holding a basket followed by another badly damaged standing figure. Behind the fan-bearers appear two short superimposed clumps of papyrus plants to the left of which are two rows of figures - women possibly clapping or dancing in the lower row, and two figures seated in portable litters in the upper row. These figures all have their backs to the king, apparently belonging to another (related?) scene. Directly below the king's feet the waterway curves, encircling a (fenced-in?) palm tree and at least two rather active men, whom some commentators interpret as workers in the process of forming the banks on opposite sides of a canal. Vestiges of shrine structures are visible to the left of the labouring men.

Given the macehead's sorry state of preservation, one should not expect to obtain a very satisfactory reading of these reliefs. Most authors propose that an important event, probably involving the ceremonial opening of a canal or lake by King Scorpion, is depicted.⁹ And for certain scholars, it is the "representation in a coherent form of an event, real or fictitious, significant or trivial" that essentially comprises a "narrative or story told."¹⁰

8. Gaballa 1976, 15, says the signs indicate the figure's title rather than his name. Most sources refer to him as "a king called Scorpion" (e.g., Groenewegen-Frankfort 1970, 113).

9. See, for example, Gaballa 1976, 15-16; Groenewegen-Frankfort 1970, 113; and Millet 1990, 58.

10. Groenewegen-Frankfort 1970, 113; compare Gaballa 1976, 5:

... a representation of an event, unspecific in its characters or location, is still acceptable as narrative. The only thing that could not be tolerated is the absence of a specific event...the specific event is the keystone in every story...if this is absent the other elements will certainly not form a significant story and the representation will not be a narrative, but a typical action.

It should be noted that neither author provides a definition of "event," in contrast to scholars within the field of narratology (see Chapter 1, and Prince 1987, 28).

But does every pictured "event" a narrative make? For H. Groenewegen-Frankfort at least, the answer is negative; certain conditions must be met. In the visual arts the integral characteristics of narrative for her are drama, tension, emotion, actuality, and a sense of momentariness and singularity.¹¹ "True narrative," she maintains, conveys an impression of the life and disposition of a specific person or event, and to produce this in a pictorial medium an artist must achieve "space-time actuality," combining the spatial and temporal aspects of the event related to represent a "coherent spatial unit."¹² Groenewegen-Frankfort is not so much impressed by the ability of the images on the macehead to convey apprehensible relationships between the individual characters and their actions - indeed, she observes that "as a story told it is vague and confusing" (1970, 113). Rather, she is struck by the attempt, unusual in Egyptian art, to integrate some of the figures with their setting. Thus she writes:

the twisting stream and the landscape features scattered in an amorphous space lend *actuality* to the inadequate narrative; we seem to witness an event "taking place."¹³

Whether the activities illustrated on the Scorpion Macehead really did transpire is unimportant in Groenewegen-Frankfort's analysis of what makes for an effective picture story. The nature of the event depicted is irrelevant; the composition's ability to communicate the kind of immediacy she equates with visual narrative is entirely dependent

11. Various passages in her 1951 book make reference to this, e.g., pp. 33, 59-60, 85. See also Groenewegen-Frankfort 1970, 113, where "dramatic actuality," and p. 120, "dramatic tension" are cited as narrative qualities.

12. Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 60, 103. Groenewegen-Frankfort's stated purpose in this first work was to explore the "eccentricities" of spatial rendering in Near Eastern art (p. xxiii). It is clear that the conception of pictorial narrative she articulates in both publications was greatly influenced by her interest in compositional structure and the ancient artists' employment of poses and gestures to convey both the "timelessness" characteristic of Egyptian art, and, in those rare cases she notes, more ephemeral qualities like dramatic tension and psychological interaction between humans or animals. Her concentration on what one might call narrative techniques provides an instructive contrast to the approaches of most other authors.

13. Groenewegen-Frankfort 1970, 113. Compare her earlier comments, 1951, 7: "Spatial and temporal definition, here brought into relation, will both enhance what we shall henceforth call the *actuality* of a scene."

upon the artist's manipulation of his means of expression.

In this Groenewegen-Frankfort contrasts markedly with G. Gaballa, author of *Narrative in Egyptian Art* (1976), the only monograph yet produced on this subject. Potentially narrative images for Gaballa are those representations of an event that have the character of a specific, historic fact, their historicity being determined either by identifying inscriptions or by details that may be associated with "real" events. While the former author focuses almost exclusively on formal devices as indicators of narrative, Gaballa assesses the narrative character of a scene largely on the basis of its perceived content.¹⁴ Consequently, Groenewegen-Frankfort can only view the Scorpion Macehead as a notable but flawed "attempt" at pictorial narration (1970, 113), whereas Gaballa, presumably because of signs denoting the main figure, and an extrapolation that the activities depicted are similarly unique, believes:

We have all the elements required to make a pictorial narrative...The main character is the king himself who is acting as a real, historic person on an actual and specific occasion...This transitory occasion is limited to a particular point in time and confined to a particular place. All these combined together emphasise the uniqueness of the representation in producing a first class pictorial story...a highly realistic representation.¹⁵

14. Some problematic aspects of Gaballa's notion of pictorial narration are astutely assessed by Vandersleyen 1978, 275-78. Vandersleyen finds most contentious Gaballa's restriction of "narrative" to scenes of presumably specific, historical content, omitting to consider that there may be narrative images of typical and purely imaginative events in addition to events concretely lived, and that the distinctions between "typical" and "specific" may not be all that clear (p. 276).

15. N. Millet has recently questioned the long standing view that the scenes on monuments like the Scorpion Macehead and the Narmer Palette (discussed below) were designed to "celebrate historical or other events" (1990, 59). He suggests that the main purpose of the images adorning these objects was "simply to name the year in which the gift was made and offered to the god" rather than "to extol the intrinsic importance of the events mentioned" (pp. 53, 59). By analogy with the kinds of year names mentioned on the famous Palermo Stone, he thinks that as a dated temple gift the images on the Scorpion Macehead might be read as signifying the "Year of the Opening of the Lake of...; Harpooning the Hippopotamus" (p. 58). Millet thus sees such images as essentially hieroglyphs or picture-writing: for a counter argument see W. Davis 1992, 253, and compare another new interpretation by Fairservis 1991.

2.1.2 Symbol and Story: The Narmer Palette and Its Reception

The opposing judgements that may result from different approaches to the analysis of pictorial narrative are even more pronounced in the case of the well-preserved Narmer Palette (ca. 3000 B.C.). One of the most frequently photographed artifacts of early Dynastic Egypt, the large schist object was ostensibly fashioned to grind cosmetic pigments, and is carved on both sides with images that champion the authority of a ruler named Narmer (Figs. 24-25).¹⁶

The organization of the various figural elements on the palette within horizontal register lines (particularly on the obverse), in tandem with the use of hieroglyphs, ideographic signs, and the adoption of a hieratic scale for depictions of the king, make this work a precocious forerunner of the classic Egyptian style.¹⁷ In some minds such features also mitigate any narrative value that the palette's imagery might have. In contrast to the lower portion of the Scorpion Macehead, where the landscape setting introduced spatial connotations and functional relationships that Groenewegen-Frankfort felt "enhanced the singleness of the occurrence" depicted (1951, 21), the predominant groundlines on the Narmer Palette eliminate depth, resulting in what Kantor describes as a "spaceless, neutral background."¹⁸

16. The Narmer Palette, now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, was also found in the Hierakonpolis temple: see Quibell and Green 1902, 10, pl. XXIX. The palette is slightly over 62 cm tall, something worth bearing in mind when W. Davis's theories about it are discussed. One of the best colour photographs appears in Michalowsky 1969, pls. 57, 178.

17. For similar comments see W. Davis 1989, 136, and 116-91; and Gaballa 1976, 19.

18. Kantor 1957, 45. Kantor's analyses here and elsewhere in her article are much influenced by Groenewegen-Frankfort's earlier publication, a source that she readily credits. Compare Groenewegen-Frankfort's comments on the Narmer Palette and "the insidious potentialities" of its groundlines and registers:

The groundline binds figures to a definite unspecified locality. None of them can longer float

The most impressive image on the palette, representing Narmer poised to smash the head of an unfortunate foe with his mace, epitomizes the essentially timeless, emblematic character of the piece to Groenewegen-Frankfort:

from the Narmer Palette coincidence and continuity are barred and the king's more violent gesture has therefore the peculiar static quality of a symbol...the actualities of a great historical battle are ignored. The king's posture, mace lifted in one hand, a captive enemy held in the other, is not the prelude to an act, it is a symbolic statement of victory...without striving for pictorial narrative. (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 20 and 1970, 113 and 115)

One must wonder, however, to what extent a discernible intent or "will to narrative" resides in the eyes of the beholder. Certainly Gaballa, without denying the absence of time and place particulars, nor the symbolic tenor of the figure scenes on the Narmer Palette, voices a very different conclusion regarding the narrative status of its imagery (1976, 16-18). In his analysis, the fact that the name of the main figure is inscribed near his person privileges a reading that attributes precise historical meaning to the palette's depictions. The event pictured involves the "triumph of a king of Upper Egypt over a Delta Chieftain or province," an undertaking Gaballa associates with actual episodes in the historical unification of Egypt (1976, 16-17). He asserts:

our knowledge that these representations do commemorate certain historic events incorporating recognizable characters will make us accept the representations of this palette as a whole as narrative; and there is little doubt that this was part of the artist's intention. (Gaballa 1976, 18)

Instructively, although Gaballa and Groenewegen-Frankfort each cite "actuality" as the primary criterion for identifying visual narratives, it is evident that for the former writer the word has distinct historical or documentary associations, while to the latter it connotes

in an amorphous or confused setting. But this same depthless and anonymous locality, this line, bans all figures to the pictorial surface and limits their spatial coherence to movement or interaction in one plane and on one level. There is no possibility for figures on superimposed groundlines ever to achieve some kind of spatial relationship. (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 20)

dynamism and dramatic verisimilitude. Gaballa's pictorial narratives may therefore include images of a "symbolic" cast, whereas symbol *per se* is anathema to the essence of narrative representations as Groenewegen-Frankfort perceives them.

Is one author right and the other indisputably wrong in this matter? Does each viewpoint have some merit? Or, are the rationalizations of both scholars misdirected, narratively speaking? An interesting case for the last option is made by W. Davis, whose analyses of the Narmer Palette and related monuments are unique in arguing their conclusions from the standpoint of recent narratological thinking.¹⁹

Narratable images for Davis do not require actuality in any sense:

the "actuality" of an image is an entirely independent matter with no bearing on pictorial narrative as such. Narratives may relate actual or non actual events, stories about ahistorical, supra historical, or unreal situations; to look for narratives only in the depiction of actual, historical takings place would be to rule narrative out of all religious or mythological images, among many others. (W. Davis 1993, 53)

In Davis's schema Groenewegen-Frankfort's distinctions between "static" or symbolic, non-narrative representations and narrative images characterized by movement and "dramatic actuality" are the result of an "overly narrow conception of pictorial narrative," one that fails to appreciate that it is the "discursive structure" of a representation and not its particular form that determines its narratability.²⁰ He proposes an alternative definition of narrative:

As understood by semiologists and narratologists, narrative is conceived as the

19. W. Davis 1992, 234-35, explains that his methodology has been guided by structuralist and semiotic theories, and that certain narratological concepts (e.g., fabula, story, text) are central to his analysis of Egyptian figural art. He is critical and somewhat dismissive of all preceding studies of pictorial narrative that do not issue from theoretical biases similar to his own (see W. Davis 1992, 242-44, and 1993, 53). The efforts of Groenewegen-Frankfort, Kantor, and Gaballa are especially censured by Davis, to an unjustifiable degree, in fact, since their work antedates by decades much of the literature that has contributed to his notions. It seems imprudent to reject these earlier analyses entirely, particularly when some of the issues they address are still crucial and worthy of examination.

20. W. Davis 1992, 277; 1993, 119.

verbal designation or the graphic, sculptural, or other kind of depiction - broadly, the discursive "recounting" - of a transition from one state of affairs to another state of affairs. The transition entails and requires change in some but not necessarily all of the properties that events, actors, times, and places in the story are initially represented as having. (W. Davis 1993, 49)

The disparate images on the two sides of the Narmer Palette, which combine quite descriptive with completely ideographic modes of representation, are in Davis's reading connected by a narrative sense or "structure" as episodes in a story meant to be viewed in a certain order. Register bands in this interpretation, rather than destroying narrative aspects, play an essential role in the composition of the narrative by delimiting and organizing the various passages of the picture-text (1992, 166). The viewer/narrator, upon scanning the images on the palette, can discern the logic or "fabula"²¹ of a narrative that involves four episodes, the causal and chronological transitions of which can be reconstructed in the following way: (1) enemies flee a ruler (reverse, bottom zone); (2) ruler - in the form of a bull - takes enemy citadel (obverse, bottom zone); (3) enemies are brought to ruler for judgement (rebus of hawk with enemy head on reverse, top right); (4) enemies are executed and ruler celebrates victory (obverse, top zone).

To apprehend the image-text in this order however, one must, as Davis says, "chase

21. In keeping with narratological practice Davis distinguishes "levels" of narrative relating: "fabula," "story," and "text." These levels are essentially logical constructs justified on the basis of analytical rigor: see W. Davis 1992, 240-41, and 1993, 49-50. Level one, the fabula, involves the basic "story material" - the chronological and causal logic of the narrated situations and events. Level two, the story, refers to the "particular arrangement of the chronological successions and causal links in the narrative; it is the fabula presented in a particular fashion." The text, or third level of narrative relating is defined as "the particular manner of relating the story as its particular manner of relating the fabula" (1992, 338). In pictorial narrative the viewer/reader can only know the fabula and story through or by the image/text: "The image involves what we should properly call the viewer's 'fabulation,' 'storying,' and 'narrative textualization,' his or her narrativization of the image" (1993, 52).

It should be noted that not all narratologists make the same distinctions or employ identical terminology (notwithstanding the existence of reference guides like Prince 1987). For instance, M. Bal (1985, 5) prefers the term "layers" to "levels," and to some authorities a narrative has essentially only two main parts or components - "story" and "discourse" (e.g., Chatman 1978, 19-22, whose system is adopted in Chapter 3). Having assimilated the literature in the field of technical narratology and followed much of that tradition back to its philosophical assumptions, Davis's theoretical framework is very much an original product, one that both synthesizes and supersedes its sources, none of which were primarily concerned with the peculiarities of pictorial world.

the view" or narrative from side to side and zone to zone, through physical or "conceptual" flips of the palette (1992, 174, fig. 40; see our Fig. 25).²² The process of story-making is facilitated by devices that clarify the dynamics or relationships between the actors within each band of depiction. The most noteworthy of these to Davis are placement, bodily orientation, and the direction of the gaze (W. Davis 1992, 154). The beholder thus perceives the two naked figures in sprawling poses on the reverse bottom zone of the palette as enemies who are, by their features and backward-facing heads, linked not only to the representation of the trampled victim on the obverse bottom zone, but also, by their up-turned faces, to the unfortunate soul about to be bludgeoned by the ruler in the large pictorial field directly above them.

Further "signposting" (W. Davis 1992, 83) or visual markers to reading the Narmer Palette are provided by the image of the ruler's retainers mastering two "serpopards," which frame the pigment-grinding depression on the palette's obverse. This scene is usually considered to be an entirely nonfunctional or decorative element,²³ but Davis sees it as the viewer's "key to the cipher" of the object's narrative representations:

...the two serpopards are the two sides of the palette to be twisted around one another in the viewer's hands. Whatever their role as metaphors for the ruler's victory, the figures of the retainers...are depicted as moving in a clockwise circle (from obverse flipping right over left hand toward reverse). (W. Davis 1992, 178-79)

Whether the beholder - ancient or modern - would (or could) actually perform the dizzying pattern of palette flips Davis postulates to be the "canonical form of the narrative image available in the Narmer Palette" (1992, 182) is less important for our purposes than the implications his analyses have for pictorial narrative in general, and Egyptian art in

22. W. Davis 1992, 154 ("conceptual" flips), and pp. 173-200.

23. Gaballa, for example, describes the serpopard motif as a "mere decorative pattern without symbolic or specific meaning" (1976, 19), further noting its probable derivation from Mesopotamian sources.

particular. With respect to the latter, Davis's examinations disclose that the pervasive iconic or symbolic features of Egyptian art do not, in themselves, destroy any narrativity a given artwork might have.²⁴ On the contrary, emblematic depictions like the rebus and the smiting ruler manifest narrative, symbolic, and metaphorical dimensions within the story Davis reconstructs from the representations on the Narmer Palette.

The prominent figuration of Narmer, for example, serves the narrative role of picturing the "ruler's blow that the fabula requires as taking place throughout the story" (W. Davis 1992, 185): it logically connects with and explains (Davis would say "narrativizes") the palette's scenes of celebration, defeat, and execution. As well as the functional part it plays in the narrative, this image of the king also represents or stands for the palette's narrative and likewise states its "metaphorical content...[i.e.] the continuousness and universality" of the ruler's blow (W. Davis 1992, 44, 48).

Complex interrelationships like these have convinced Davis that the Narmer Palette "is probably one of the most ingenious narrativizable images" in Egyptian art (W. Davis 1993, 53). Reasoning from his premises, more Predynastic and even later canonical representations may demonstrate a narrative capacity hitherto unrecognized by others.²⁵

24. See in particular W. Davis 1992, 247, 275. Davis 1992, 253, questions the tendency to classify representations as either decorative, allegorical, symbolic, or narrative (the first three are usually considered to be non-narrative modes of representation):

'allegory' and hieroglyphs are not, of course, incompatible with pictorial narrative, for a narrative can also be an allegory or a decoration; conversely, allegories and hieroglyphs can be incorporated in an image that is also narrative.

The categories appear to be "cross-cutting," a phenomenon observed by several other scholars Davis cites; see 1992, 198.

25. W. Davis 1992, 32, asserts that all or most of the Predynastic palettes he examines are narrative. That is not to say that he wishes to deconstruct entirely the prevailing notions of narrative art, nor that he proposes that "the distinctions between narrative and non-narrative pictorial text should be abandoned," rather, he advocates that investigators in his field re-examine images with a view to observing structures that "may turn out to be partly or wholly narrative" (W. Davis 1992, 252).

2.1.3 Narrative and Conflict: Scenes of War in Egyptian Art

There is less dispute among commentators regarding the narrative position of several Egyptian Old and New Kingdom monuments that treat themes concerned with the vicissitudes and aftermath of battle.²⁶ Prototypical, are two separate scenes of towns under siege, inserted among the more common representations of ritual and harvesting in the Sixth Dynasty (2350-2170 B.C.) tomb chapels of Inti at Deshasheh²⁷ in Upper Egypt and Kaemheset at Saqqara.²⁸

The inventive composition and vivid figural characterizations of the Deshasheh reliefs have engendered the greatest commentary, and understandably so. As a drawing makes clear, the artist pictures a number of happenings: assorted groups of men fight outside a town or fortress; bound male, female, and child prisoners are led away by their captors; the walls of the town are scaled and mined; and inside the threatened stronghold a chief or governor, his family, and retainers react in diverse ways to their distressing circumstances (Fig. 26).²⁹

It is not obvious from the compositional organization how the scenes are to be read, or even whether the successive episodes of the siege have been arranged in a way expressive

26. W. Davis does not comment on any of these Old and New Kingdom monuments. Most authors tend to ascribe a narrative status to scenes of conflict and the hunt. In Moscati's view, themes of this kind are "historically inspired" (1963, 82) and interestingly, in Egyptian art they are often treated in highly innovative ways, the canonical prototypes either being rejected or vastly altered by their designer(s) (compare W. Davis's remarks in 1989, 83).

27. The much-damaged Deshasheh reliefs were first published by Petrie, 1897, pl. IV. The date is usually given as mid-Sixth Dynasty, although Gaballa argues for a date late in the Fifth Dynasty (1976, 31-32, with fig. 2a).

28. The initial publications of the Saqqara reliefs include: Quibell and Hayter 1927, frontispiece; Smith 1949, 212, figs. 85-86.

29. The myriad details of the scenes, particularly the incidents taking place within the citadel, are most thoroughly described by Gaballa 1976, 31-32.

of their chronological sequence.³⁰ Indeed, it has frequently been noticed that Egyptian artists of this and subsequent periods rarely represent events in their actual chronological order with strict observance of linear temporal progress, even though the register system is ideally suited to this purpose, and there was an evident interest in showing consecutive stages of certain activities (usually of a religious, festival or agricultural nature).³¹

Nevertheless, in the Deshasheh relief the "characteristic incidents of a siege" (Kantor 1957, 46) are readily perceptible and logically reconstituted by the beholder. It is therefore inconsequential to most writers that only a few words of the inscription remain to facilitate our interpretation of the events represented, and enable us to identify the persons involved and the place and date of the battle - if particular personages and locations are in fact indicated. Such anonymity, even the situation in ancient Aegean art, is exceptional in the figural art of Dynastic Egypt, and it may explain H. Kantor's designation of "generalized narratives" for scenes which *seem* narrative in character but do not render verifiable-historical individuals.³²

There is little doubt as to the identities of either the protagonists or the subject matter of several later monumental reliefs portraying memorable military campaigns in the reigns of Nineteenth Dynasty pharaohs Seti I (1290-1279 B.C.) and Ramesses II (1279-1213 B.C.). Representations of a battle fought by the younger king embellish a few of his

30. Compare Kantor's remarks, 1957, 46. She feels the successive episodes of these siege scenes are "combined without any expression of their chronological sequence."

31. See for example, comments by Kantor 1957, 46, and W. Davis 1989, 192-93.

32. Kantor 1957, 46. Kantor does not explain the term any further. Her comments suggest, however, that anepigraphic representations like these often have a narrative feel or quality simply by virtue of the vivacity of their figural rendering. By making distinctions of this kind, Kantor implicitly questions the adequacy of the AIA conference's "working definition" of pictorial narrative, and raises some of the same issues examined subsequently by scholars like: Brilliant 1984; Kessler 1985; Winter 1981, 1983, 1985; W. Davis 1989, 1992, 1993; and Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995.

buildings; the version on the interior wall of his enormous temple at Abu Simbel³³ is possibly the ultimate expression of this sort of "historical" art. The one great military event of Ramesses II's rule, the battle in question was fought near the Hittite city of Qadesh.³⁴ In reality, the conflict was of indecisive outcome. Surviving artistic and literary accounts, nevertheless, present a much less ambiguous impression of ultimate victory for the king and his troops.

The shallow reliefs at Abu Simbel actually accommodate lengthy inscriptions of the official record of the contest, a highly propagandistic epic otherwise known as "the Bulletin," which recounts in great detail the topographical particulars, tactical manoeuvring, and changing fortunes that marked the altercation. The main incidents in the saga can be summarized thus: (1) an enemy ruse results in the king and part of his armed forces being placed in a most precarious situation; (2) the king manages to capture two Hittite spies who reveal the true location of their camp; (3) a messenger is sent by Ramesses II to summon more troops; (4) the Hittites attack the royal camp; (5) the king, failing to break through the enemy ranks, conceives the stratagem of pushing the battle toward the banks of the Orontes River where, with the aid of reinforcements, he drives the enemy into the water; (6) the town is not captured, but Ramesses II takes prisoners and departs (cf. Gaballa 1976, 115-17).

Groenewegen-Frankfort has proposed that the pictorial versions of heroic achievements of this sort necessarily involve either summing up a complex event in one

33. Ramesses II decorated temples at Abydos, Luxor, Thebes, and Abu Simbel with reliefs illustrating the Qadesh battle. Kantor 1957, 50-51, pl. 15; Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 128-38; Gaballa, 107-19, 139, fig. 9; and Moscati, 86, mention the different ensembles in varying detail. Most authors reproduce illustrations of the Qadesh reliefs published in Wreszinski 1914-25, pls. 169-78. The written accounts of the Qadesh battle are given in Breasted 1906, III: 125-57.

34. Gaballa's account of the Qadesh reliefs is the most extensive (1976, 107-19), and forms the basis for much of the detail noted here.

"actual and pregnant moment," or providing a "sequence of pictorial statements" that in combination yield the full story.³⁵ At Abu Simbel the latter strategy has been adopted. In a manner faintly akin to the Deshasheh reliefs, the artist has divided the wall and the historic event into two parts, which represent two distinct locations ("camp" and "battlefield"), and two broad temporal phases of the renowned campaign (Figs. 27-28).³⁶

Despite the wall's clearly defined compositional fields, the imagery presents the modern viewer with certain challenges, especially in the camp scenes on the lower section of the wall. For instance, in the centre of this bottom zone, the larger figure of the seated pharaoh in audience with his military leaders is depicted to the right of the rectangular enclosure that represents the threatened Egyptian encampment. Knowing the story, we must suppose that this scene is actually taking place inside the camp proper, in the royal pavilion shown in abbreviated form to the left, within the camp boundaries. The inscriptions tell us that this vignette illustrates the moment when the king first learned that the enemy was closer than expected. In fact, it is questionable whether the true sequence of the incidents presented could be reconstructed without the appended text. If one were to assume that the images represent the events as they happened, reading either from left-to-right (assembled troops; camp in turmoil and armed conflict; king in council; armed conflict), or right-to-left (armed conflict; king in council; camp in turmoil and armed conflict; assembled troops), one would find that neither reading reproduces the precise progression of events as they are said to have transpired. In this lower wall we have instead been given both a snapshot, Egyptian-style, of the Hittite attack on the royal camp with the

35. Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 132. W. Davis, and narratologists like Bal (1985) would likely propose that there are more representational options than the two Groenewegen-Frankfort mentions.

36. Gaballa notes that all the known versions of the Qadesh battle reliefs are divided into episodes that belong either to the "camp" or "battle" locales, although the specifics of each set of reliefs are somewhat different, see Gaballa 1976, 114-17.

ensuing *melée*, and a digression in the narrative that is designed to highlight a specific incident within the chain of actions documented in the literary account.

The band of confronting Hittite and Egyptian chariots that issues from the right and left respectively, meeting head-on in the centre of the wall, separates part one of the military encounter from the climactic events of part two, on the upper wall. These chariots convey a sense of ongoing combat and they also symbolize (perhaps unintentionally, as one author feels) the undecided character of an equal battle (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 137).

The main episodes of this battle are pictured above the charioteers, where strict "registration" has been suppressed in favour of a kind of panoramic vision, the action advancing (with a few awkward transitions), from left to right. Here we see Ramesses II on the extreme left, hotly pursued and literally surrounded by the enemy. Closer to the middle of the composition are shown the drowned bodies of the enemy, enclosed within curving lines representing the river into which they were forced by the king's chariots. On the other side of the city the Hittite ruler Muwatallis flees the scene of carnage, while at the far right of the pictorial field, beyond the hilly landscape of the battle place, is pictured the aftermath of "victory" - Egyptian scribes counting the amputated hands of the slain enemies. Finally, Ramesses II is shown a second time, now glancing back at the site as he exits the scene, stage right.

Experts of Egyptian art history find the extent of artistic invention in the Qadesh battle series, especially at Abu Simbel, to be most significant. Often mentioned is the very limited use of a hierarchical scale of proportions, and the rendering of the pharaoh as an active participant in a situation where his life is in jeopardy, and victory is far from

certain.³⁷ To Groenewegen-Frankfort traits like these evince a truly "epic" sensibility in which "no single event or single figure predominates," and the "narrative coherence" of the representations is ensured by the fact that "events are unfolded in time as well as fixed in space" (1951, 137).³⁸

The presence of entirely conventional imagery in these reliefs, such as the standard Egyptian picture-formula for representing a typical Syrian fortress that is used here to portray the Hittite city of Qadesh, should not be overlooked. Just as abstraction and reality tend to be integrated in the small assemblage of Egyptian monuments authors have isolated as "narrative," there is often a similar coexistence between formulaic and quite singular modes of description. S. Moscati has observed that Egyptian historical narrative is characterized by typological and iconographic schemata that "are used over and over again;" it is rare to be presented with "elements of a real descriptive chronicle" no matter how historically unique the event(s) depicted.³⁹

2.1.4 An Interest in Particulars:

The Picture Chronicle of Punt and the Narrative Capacity of Amarna Art

Ramesses II's Qadesh reliefs are solidly regarded as the climax of Egyptian

37. See Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 133; Kantor 1957, 51; and Gaballa 1976, 114-17.

38. Boardman 1990, 59, finds most interesting the fact that the strict unity of time and place one tends to expect in a unified or single tableaux format has here been relaxed and even ignored in favour of a "synoptic" vision. Similar strategies are observable in Assyrian and Archaic Greek art. Even the much more modern paintings of J. M. W. Turner may, Boardman feels, make use of this as a deliberate narrative device.

39. Moscati 1963, 20, 72. Moscati notes that you do get modifications in the conventions Egyptian artists employ in an attempt to "distinguish the single events to which they are applied." To that author the pervasive use of iconographical schemata in "historical" art tends to make the monuments seem "more symbolic and allegorical than mimetic," and they further "create an impediment to temporal definition in narrative" (pp. 73-74).

experimentation in pictorial narrative.⁴⁰ They were indebted artistically to other works commemorating military accomplishments commissioned by his predecessor for a temple at Karnak.⁴¹ But both monument groups were preceded by an extraordinary cycle of reliefs recounting the particulars of a trade expedition sent to Punt by the famous female pharaoh Hatshepsut (1478/72-1458) of the Eighteenth Dynasty.⁴²

Covering three walls of the middle colonnade of her funerary temple at Deir el-Bahri, different episodes of what was probably the most important event in her reign are rendered in a fairly logical and chronological sequence, reading from the bottom register up and from left to right (i.e., south wall to north wall) (Fig. 29).⁴³ A kind of directional realism, or to use Kantor's phrase, "conceptual spatial localization" is also evident in that Punt, situated south of Egypt on the Somali coast, is shown on the southern wall, while the figure of the queen who remained in the north, as well as activities associated with the expedition that took place there, are placed on both the northern side of the west wall and the short north wall.⁴⁴

The compositional format is traditional: an enormous Hatshepsut stands to one side

40. Kantor 1957, 50, refers to these reliefs as the "culmination of Egyptian narrative art." Compare similar remarks by Moscati 1963, 86; Gaballa 1976, 139, 188.

41. For commentary on the seminal reliefs of Seti I see: Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 120-7, and 1970, 119, 121; Kantor 1957, 50; Moscati 1963, 84-86; Gaballa 1976, 100; and Pittman 1996, 349.

42. The Punt reliefs were initially published by Mariette 1877, pls. 5-8, and fully published by Naville 1896-97, 11-21, pls. LXIX-LXXXVI. The scenes are also described and their texts translated by Breasted 1906, II: 252-95.

43. The Egyptian artist typically defined and respected the corners of a room artistically (see for example, plates in N. Davies, 1935). According to W. S. Smith (1965), the Punt cycle is notable for not observing the standard practice in this regard. In the opinions of many authors, Moscati 1963, and Groenewegen-Frankfort 1970, among them, continuous compositions of this sort are the most effective vehicle for rendering visual narratives. Indeed, it is often implied that such compositional formats have an inherent narratability - a notion challenged by W. Davis 1992, 251.

44. Kantor 1957, 48. Gaballa 1976, 53, observes that the artist has depicted the events presumed to be taking place in Egypt rather solemnly, in the "time-honoured typical mode" while those scenes taking place in Punt have a more vivid and "realistic spirit."

of the sequence of registers that depict the different phases and circumstances of the expedition. Physically detached from the activities represented, the figure of the queen is nevertheless associated with them both by her gaze and through her distinction as the virtual author of the actions pictured - on her command the ships were sent, and it is to her that the ships and their precious cargo returned.

What makes the Punt reliefs so exceptional and "in every sense a narrative" for many experts, is the high level of specificity and verisimilitude achieved both in renditions of aspects of the Punt landscape and built environment, and in figure studies like the perspicacious and amusing portrayals of the Puntic leader and his astonishingly corpulent wife (Fig. 30).⁴⁵ Clearly, the more information or descriptive detail a narrative work in any medium has, the more heightened is its ability to evoke the kind of atmosphere that brings the story it relates alive for the viewer/reader.

Commentators on Egyptian art who have made it a criterion of pictorial narration that only specific (or "actual") events merit the determination of "narrative" are sometimes perplexed by Amarna art. The Amarna period (1353-1322 B.C.), which is often considered revolutionary for Egyptian image-making, post-dates Hatshepsut and pre-dates Seti I and Ramesses II, encompassing a rather brief span of time during the reigns of Amenhotep IV (later known as Akhenaten), Smenkhkare, and Tutankhamun.⁴⁶ The "revolution" in artistic terms has to do with the abandonment of many of the established compositional and figural conventions in favour of approaches that display a new interest in demarcating place (e.g., specifying aspects of the terrain and representing existing buildings) and a sensitivity to

45. See Kantor 1957, 48; Moscati 1963, 83-84; Gaballa 1976, 51.

46. See Gaballa 1976, chapter 6, 68 ff., on the Amarna period.

mood.⁴⁷ The latter distinction is achieved by means of spatial organization and expressive gestures and poses conveying a kind of psychological individuation that engages the viewer, or as one writer puts it, causes the viewer to feel "face to face with a human presence rather than a typical figure."⁴⁸

This kind of presence is often detected in the Amarna rock tomb of Mahu, once chief of police in the regency of Akhenaten (Fig. 31).⁴⁹ Painted reliefs there depict the official in what may be both incidental as well as high points of his career. Mahu is pictured listening to his superior, commanding a patrol and capturing criminals, relating a story to a colleague, being rewarded by the king and queen, accompanying the king on a visit to his temple, and so on.⁵⁰ Together the registers with the repeated figure of Mahu in numerous situations present a portrait of a man whom Groenewegen-Frankfort describes as "small, officious, likeable" (1951, 103). Shown in diverse attitudes or dispositions - "eager," "alert," "deferential," "vigorous" - Mahu and his personal history has been, in that author's estimation, "treated frankly with a view to space-time actuality and true narrative."⁵¹

Gaballa and Kantor are much more reluctant to see the Mahu reliefs as "true narrative," largely because they cannot be certain that those reliefs, or others featuring

47. Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 96 ff., discusses at length the revolutionary nature of Amarna art and its relationship to the ideas of Akhenaten; her account is still widely cited. See also Gaballa's synopsis, 1976, 70-83, and W. Davis 1989, 204.

48. Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 92, 103.

49. Published first in N. Davies, 1903-8, Vol. IV. See Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 103-4; Kantor 1957, 49; Gaballa 1976, 83-84.

50. Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 103, describes the various scenes. It seems certain that at least the reward scene is meant to represent a singular event, as according to D. B. Redford, this occurred only once in any given official's career (personal communication).

51. Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 103. This author sees Amarna artists as having, by virtue of artistic concerns like these (especially their interest in mood and "actuality"), an "exclusive preoccupation with narrative" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 109), even though she later notes that Amarna art is generally "disappointing from a narrative point of view" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1970, 121) because its narrative subject matter (largely biographical accounts like those in Mahu's tomb) is rather limited or repetitive. For Kantor and Gaballa its quiet, homey themes are what make Amarna art "typical."

similar biographical subject matter, satisfy their main requirement of pictorial narrative, namely that it depict specific events, i.e., events that happened only once.⁵² The unease these two authors express in perceiving a "narrative quality" in the Mahu composition (in fact in much Amarna art) despite what may be the "typical" nature of the events shown⁵³ calls attention to the difficulty of making distinctions like typical and specific in representational art. In strictly pictorial terms (without extra-pictorial information or textual aids) the only way an event becomes specific or individualized is through the provision of descriptive details and compositional devices that contribute to scenemaking.⁵⁴ Yet, as Gaballa's research has shown, events we know to be singular often appear "in typical guises" in Egyptian art, "while typical events may be rendered with specific details" (Gaballa 1976, 141; cf. Moscati 1963, 45-60, 71-75).

2.1.5 Summary and Observations

It was noted above that the Qadesh battle reliefs are generally acknowledged as representing the apex of accomplishment in ancient Egyptian narrative art. Many of the authors consulted also see these reliefs as signalling the conclusion and virtual renunciation of the Egyptian artists' rare and infrequent interest in pictorial narrative. That interest is most often detected in depictions featuring unique details and novel compositional approaches, and it seems to be the case that representations of historical subjects are the

52. See Gaballa 1976, 5 (his definition of narrative) and p. 89, for the essential elements of narrative art as he discerns them, and compare Kantor 1957, 44, and Groenewegen-Frankfort 1970, 113.

53. Kantor, 1957, 49; compare similar comments by Gaballa 1976, 70, 77, 84.

54. On the problem of distinguishing between typical and specific and a critique of Gaballa's biases, see Vandersleyen 1978, 276. Comments by Brilliant 1984, 17-18, and Prince 1982, 163, 166, regarding the enhanced narrativity of works with greater descriptive detail are also instructive in this regard.

main focus of these innovations. Describing the essence of historical art as "the commemoration of specifically individualized persons and events," Moscati suggests that narrative "as a species of art" has its ultimate genesis in the historically inspired works of ancient Egypt.⁵⁵ In his account, historical narrative art, like the celebrative annals that are its literary analogues, arises from and is most characteristic of

centralized states and absolute monarchies, which find in that art an instrument for...affirming...their ideal of power and for effectively carrying out their programmes of propaganda and intimidation.⁵⁶

The discernable signs of narrative art in ancient Egypt differ, as we have seen, from writer to writer. Some feel emblematic or symbolic elements lessen narrativity, whereas others recognize that "different modes of textuality"⁵⁷ (descriptive, hieroglyphic, etc.) may have a narrative function in any given pictorial work. Likewise, certain authors feel narrative scenes may occur in single⁵⁸ as well as multiple image compositions, while others insist that a "juxtaposition of actual episodes" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1970, 113) is essential to provide the unfolding of phases properly required in the relating of any story.

There does seem to be a prevailing sense, at least in the formative literature, that complex and continuous compositional formats and the monumental media of wall painting

55. Moscati 1963, 12, 16, 99, 105. Moscati's assertion that most Egyptian art is "historical" is debatable, but it cannot be gainsaid that themes of myth or fantasy are noticeably absent from the extant large-scale reliefs. A study of papyri and ostraca might, however, modify this impression (cf. Smith 1981, 377-85).

56. Moscati 1963, 12, 40. Gaballa 1976, 21, 32, and Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 21-24, 82, make similar observations about the ancient Egyptians' concepts of divine kingship and centralized power, their spiritual values regarding life and death, and the impact these ideas have on Egyptian art from the Old Kingdom forward. For a critique of authors who look at Egyptian monuments as "straight forward pictorial documents of or for the events and processes of state formation" see W. Davis 1992, 14.

57. W. Davis 1993, 39.

58. See, for example, Gaballa 1976, 140: the single scene narrative, a method of presentation often chosen when space is limited, is dubbed "culminating scene" as the most significant moment of the event and the most important character(s) are featured. Compare Kantor 1957, 47-48, and Moscati, 75-76. Groenewegen-Frankfort is more restrictive, 1970, 113, in asserting that all of the actual episodes of the event must be rendered to merit the appellation "narrative." She writes: "even when a known story is evoked by depicting a pregnant moment in it...it should not be called a pictorial narrative."

and large-scale relief sculpture are the appropriate and the most successful expressions of pictorial story making. Views like these may have more to do with modern biases about what pictorial narrative should be or do, than with the artistic realities of ancient cultures. The most current studies have, alternatively, proposed not only that the sites for narrative may be more inclusive, but too that there may be many kinds of narrative and many ways of narrating in Egyptian art. For example, it was noticed that few of the monuments discussed relate events pictorially with the chronological linearity the contemporary viewer might expect. W. Davis's observations are paralleled somewhat in a study of Amarna tomb art which also maintains that narrative patterns may be manifested in continuous or sequential images as well as in non-sequential or juxtaposed images or image groups (Meyers 1985).

The notion has been advanced by one commentator that narrative imagery need not exhibit the same features either in different historical contexts within Egypt or, for that matter, in other societies.⁵⁹ The following summary accounts of investigations into visual narrative in early Mesopotamia, Assyria, and Greece tend to lend credence to this view.

2.2 Early Mesopotamia: Picturing the Events of Sacred and Secular History 3000 - 2300 B.C.

H. Frankfort opened his classic volume on the art and architecture of the ancient Near East with the statement "Mesopotamia is ill-defined" (Frankfort 1969, 1). The artistic history of Mesopotamia is indeed complex, displaying a collection of artifacts that, particularly to one familiar with Egypt, exhibits a "startling lack of stylistic coherence and

59. See W. Davis 1992, 253.

continuity."⁶⁰ Often referred to as the birthplace of western civilization, Mesopotamia encompassed the territory between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, covering what is now Iraq, northwest Syria, and part of southeast Turkey.⁶¹ Nineteenth-century excavations in these areas exposed towns, palaces, and temple complexes as well as written records in the wedge-shaped cuneiform script, all of which revealed that Mesopotamia enjoyed a degree of cultural sophistication comparable to that in Egypt from at least 3000 B.C. onward.

The most famous artworks from this region, associated with the earliest inhabitants, are the statues (ca. 2500 B.C.) discovered by Frankfort in the Temple of Abu at Tell Asmar (Eshnunna) near Baghdad (Frankfort 1969, pl. 13). Representing the god Abu, a "mother goddess," and attendant priests, these statues with their abstracted conical forms, uplifted faces, and enormous eyes exemplify for many commentators the outstanding concern of Mesopotamian art: the sacred.⁶² Few would challenge the assertion that the primary aim of this art was "the representation in fixed schemata (banquet, sacrifice, building), of events of 'sacred history'" (Moscati 1963, 104). The rather anonymous, impersonal nature of much early Mesopotamian art is paralleled in the oldest written documents, which consist largely

60. Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 145. She adds:

In short, Mesopotamian art as a whole, is complex and varied; whatever links the different phases lies beyond the range of form-critical catchwords.

One can readily imagine that contributing to this variety of artistic expression was the historical situation of Mesopotamia itself; a culture comprised of distinct regions and independent city states, frequently at war with one another over land and access to precious water resources. Some sense of the rather tumultuous history of this area to the year 1500 B.C., is proffered in Reade's highly accessible British Museum publication (Reade 1991).

61. See Reade 1991, 4, and Roaf 1990.

62. The spiritual quality of these small statues, whose large eyes seem imbued with the presence of the divine, has occasioned a great deal of lyrical description in art historical literature. On the religious nature of Mesopotamian art generally, see, for example, Parrot 1960, especially the preface by A. Malraux, p. xix: "The *primum mobile* of Mesopotamian art is the sacred rendered in a vein of fantasy."

of bureaucratic records, binding contracts, and the much-studied cryptic "word lists."⁶³

Early Mesopotamian art has been considered especially germane to discussions of pictorial narrative by those who recognize it as the ultimate source of an artistic tradition that finds its apogee in the celebrated achievements of Assyrian narrative relief sculpture.⁶⁴ A thoughtful first look at the subject was ventured by A. Perkins in her contribution to the 1955 Archaeological Institute of America symposium on pictorial narrative. At the outset of her study Perkins expressed sentiments shared by many other researchers dealing with visual data from remote prehistoric contexts:

it is often impossible to be sure that a given Oriental monument is narrative in the restricted sense in which the term is used here: depiction of a specific person engaged in specific acts. Often the most one can do on intrinsic evidence and by analogy with other works is to suggest the probability of a certain monument being narrative. (Perkins, 1957, 55, n. 6)

2.2.1 A Matter of Interpretation: The Warka Vase

Despite the tentative nature of such identifications, and her sense of the predominately "decorative or symbolic intent" of much early Mesopotamian art, Perkins determined that even in the Late Prehistoric period there existed a "desire to commemorate significant events and the idea of pictorial depiction of a story" (1957, 54). The tall limestone Warka Vase (ca. 3000 B.C.), found in a temple treasury in the city of Uruk, is one of her "earliest narrative monuments" (Figs. 32-33).⁶⁵ The cylindrical cult vessel is

63. On the Mesopotamian word lists see: Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 148; Reade 1991, 27-28; Roaf 1990, 150-51.

64. See Moscati 1963, 90-92, 95, and Winter 1981, 11, where some of the artistic conventions of Assyrian narrative reliefs are linked to prototypes in Mesopotamian art.

65. Warka is the modern name of its find place. The vase was first published in Heinrich 1936, 15 ff., and pls. 2, 38. The vessel measures 92 cm in height and 36 cm across at the rim, and was apparently damaged and repaired in antiquity.

embellished with four bands of figural decoration that represent, from the bottom up: a row of cultivated plants (identified as barley and date palms); a somewhat smaller band of alternating rams and ewes; a larger band of naked men bearing vessels of different shapes, apparently containing foodstuffs; and the biggest register, where, in front of a (partly damaged) robed figure, a nude vessel-toting male faces a robed female who, judging from the man's position and the objects depicted behind her, is the intended recipient of the goods he and probably the men on the second register carry.

Through comparison with later monuments, most authors identify the female personage as Inanna, the Babylonian goddess of love and war and city goddess of historical Uruk.⁶⁶ Impressions diverge, however, on the nature of the actions presented, which have been described as "mere offering scenes," "a supremely important but recurring event, the sacred marriage of the goddess Inanna," and a "specific ruler performing a presentation ritual on a specific occasion."⁶⁷ This interpretive range is reminiscent of the varying opinions encountered in our discussions of uninscribed Egyptian monuments. And it surely

66. The possibility that the female figure is a priestess and not the goddess herself is noted by some authors, e.g., Roaf 1990, 71. The whole question of how, or indeed whether, one can distinguish humans from divinities, particularly in early Mesopotamian art, is still a matter of debate, especially in regard to metal statuettes (see Moorey 1984). On the Warka Vase the objects directly behind the female figure are variously described as symbols of the goddess in the form of "reed bundles" (Roaf, 1990, 71) and "symbols of a shrine" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 151). The figure herself is damaged and it is now impossible to make out what sort of headdress she was initially wearing. It is generally accepted by researchers in Near Eastern art that in slightly later representations the divine status of a male or female figure is indicated by headpieces capped with the horns of cows or bulls.

67. Groenewegen-Frankfort (1951, 151) cites the then prevailing view that the representations on the Warka Vase were mere offering scenes, countering with her own reading that it is the divine marriage of the goddess Inanna to her son, the god of fertility, that is pictured. In historical times this wedding was re-enacted in a yearly religious ritual designed to ensure the fertility of all creatures. Perkins (1957, 56, n. 10) criticizes Groenewegen-Frankfort's identification as being promoted "without qualification," in turn submitting her own somewhat liberal interpretation, namely that a specific historical figure is pictured on the occasion of a specific ritual event (a reading discounted entirely by Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 151). More recently, Pittman (1994) discusses such renderings as "religious narratives," and Wiggermann (1995, 1868 ff., fig. 1) follows Perkins's lead, perceiving that the event pictured on the vase reflects an actual ceremonial occasion at which the "EN" or lord of the city receives confirmation of his office, the image effectively illustrating the "political model" of ancient Mesopotamia.

issues from the same phenomenon, namely the descriptive limitations that all visual sign-systems share (see Gombrich 1974), limitations even more dramatically apparent in cultures like these where physiognomic individuation is not a primary means of characterization in figural art (cf. Moscati 1963, chapter 2). If one's definition of pictorial narration follows the traditional position, in which the central criteria for establishing the narrative tenor of an image(s) are whether it depicts specific acts/events performed by specific personages, then distinguishing narrative from non-narrative depictions in Near Eastern art entails a certain amount of creative argumentation.

Admitting that on the Warka Vase the "story itself is uncertain," Perkins maintains that viewed together the top two registers comprise a narrative recounting the definitive acts of a lengthy ritual involving the bestowing of gifts upon the goddess by a ruler, possibly in celebration of a military success (Perkins 1957, 56). The lower bands of plants and domesticated animals would thus either represent further offerings to the deity, or have a more metaphorical relationship to the upper scenes, referring perhaps to the deity's role in ensuring the fertility of the land and of those dependent on its bounty.

Perkins states that the nature of this kind of early Mesopotamian narration is more suggestive than determinate; rather than explicitly telling a story, the artist here alludes to it by picturing the "culminating scene - one group of figures, one moment of time, at the climax of a series of events" (Perkins 1957, 55). The author surmises that this method of narration:

was undoubtedly intended to arouse in the viewer's mind recollection of the complete story and in addition to stand as a symbol of the deeper lying ideas, beliefs, or psychical orientation of the community, as in our society the crucifix is expected to recall the entire Passion story and also the fundamental

Christian belief in the redemption of mankind by the sacrifice of Christ.⁶⁸

Although many would concede that in theory any event rendered in visual language constitutes a narrative of some kind, authors commenting on ancient Near Eastern art, like their colleagues in Egyptian studies, have tended to isolate only historical subject matter, notably the battle, for examination within the purview of pictorial narration. This is doubtless because the actions represented are readily accessible to the beholder; combat images require much less cultural and textual knowledge to decode them than do, for instance, religious subjects. As I. Winter has remarked:

In the very depiction of historical events, as opposed to ritual or mythological events, we are presented with a complex internal sequence and development, through time and across space, which permits us to "read" the monument itself.⁶⁹

2.2.2 A Simple Story of War and Victory in Six Parts: The Standard of Ur

A monument like the Warka Vase may remain a questionable or problematic expression of early Mesopotamian storied-imagery to some observers, whereas the somewhat later Standard of Ur (ca. 2500 B.C.) generally occasions far less intellectual discomfort

68. Perkins 1957, 55. Perkins's narrative as "culmination scene" is analogous to Wickhoff's "monoscenic" or Weitzmann's "simultaneous" method of pictorial narration (see Chapter 1, endnotes 13 and 14 above). More recent discussion on the nature of single scene narratives and the viewer's need to know the story in order to read the image successfully, is given in Bal 1991, 102-4.

69. Winter 1985, 12. Indeed, in her insistence on defining as narrative only those representations where the "story is readable through the images" (p. 11) alone, and "we are not required merely to associate through them to an underlying text or tale" (p. 12), Winter sees the battle scene as the only class of representations in ancient Near Eastern art that are accommodated by her definition of pictorial narrative. Thus she writes:

In content, these works tend to refer to specific events in time and place; to contain "action" as it has been distinguished from "description;" and to be "told," as if in the third person and in the past tense. The subject matter of these monuments is neither religious nor mythological, but rather historical. Whether conveyed through the juxtaposition of successive episodes, or in a single image that nonetheless through its action enables one to "read" the events, these reliefs can by our definition be called "pictorial narrative"... (Winter 1985, 12)

(Figs. 34-35). Its actual function unknown, the Standard is a hollow box-like object crafted of wood with panels of inlaid shell and carnelian on a background of lapis lazuli.⁷⁰ Even though the figural elements that adorn the two long sides of the Standard are placed against a featureless ground that obviates the establishment of contextual relationships and the "specificity of time or place required for the truly historical narrative" (Winter 1981, 11), the discursive organization of the representations has been observed by several authors. Perkins and Winter, for example, both note the way coherent and more or less complete actions have been represented in individual registers that are also readable as a progressive sequence.⁷¹

This sequence begins on the "War" panel, where the main events of a military contest are best understood if read from the lowest register up, starting with an abridged version of the battle featuring identical pairs of armed warriors in siege wagons trampling naked adversaries (Fig. 34).⁷² The activities of war are followed by the consequences of victory, that is, the taking of prisoners shown on the middle register, and, finally, in the upper band,

70. The Standard of Ur was first published in Woolley 1934, 266-74, pls. 91-92. Measuring 47 x 20 cm, it is felt by some to be a casing for a musical instrument (Roaf 1990, 92), although a function as ensign or standard of some sort is often favoured because of its find spot - placed at the shoulder of a man in one of the royal graves at Ur. The smaller end panels, rarely illustrated (see however, Reade 1991, frontispiece) or mentioned in discussions of the object, are also decorated with inlays that Perkins dismisses as "having no connection with the narrative panels" (1957, 56, n. 15). One wonders if further consideration might reveal a dialectical relationship between the side panels's rows of plants, animals and man-animals, and the scenes of war and peace on the object's long sides.

71. See Perkins 1957, 56-57, and Winter 1981, 11, 12; 1985, 19. For Perkins the Ur Standard presents a complex story told in six registers and by combining the "episodic method" of narration with the "culmination scene" in that "each side is, as it were, summed up in a culminating scene at the top..." (p. 58). Winter more or less agrees with this characterization, although to her the abbreviated "serial episodes" (1981, 11) or "single-event strip narrative" (1985, 23) of the Ur Standard are still quite primitive or unsophisticated.

72. Rather than assuming that several different chariots are pictured on the active bottom band on the standard's War panel, as most observers have done, Perkins proposes a rather novel reading: she thinks that we are looking at one chariot shown in "different stages of action." Her rationale for this involves two observations: first, she feels the horses seem to be shown in a "progressive gait," that is they can be interpreted as going from a slow trot at the extreme left, to a full running position; second, she perceives that the soldiers in the wagons hold different weapons, and "since each chariot had a container holding several weapons, the appearance of the soldier with different weapons in successive representations is easily explained as indicative of different stages of action" (1957, 57, n. 16).

the presentation of these prisoners to a large centrally placed male, supposedly the successful leader, backed by his empty chariot and some military personnel. The saga can be perceived as continuing on the reverse or "Peace" side of the Standard, once more starting on the bottom band, where "the victorious soldiers of Ur" carry off booty, "including teams from enemy chariots" (Perkins 1957, 57) (Fig. 35). This activity is succeeded in the middle register by a scene depicting men carrying fish and leading animals possibly, as Perkins says, "for sacrifice or in preparation for the triumphal banquet" (Perkins 1957, 57). The upper register appears to represent the latter event - "the end of the whole story" (Perkins 1957, 57) - with the larger figure from the obverse now seated on the far left, facing six somewhat smaller seated males who, like him, hold goblets in their upraised hands.

The condensed serial episodes on the Ur Standard have been said to lack "particularity or syntax" (Winter 1981, 12), and when compared to Neo-Assyrian compositions of similar subject matter, they may well seem narrative in only the most elemental sense. The point worth stressing here, however, is that the narrative character of the representations has not been entirely compromised by this deficit of specificity. In fact, it is clear that in depictions of this kind the narrative quality of the imagery has nothing whatsoever to do with one's ability to establish the identities of the figures or their locations, and everything to do with the visual presentation of a series of actions in a manner that can be coherently reconstructed by the beholder.

2.2.3 Greater Intricacies of Narrative in the Service of the King: The Stele of the Vultures

Late Early Dynastic artists were also capable of producing image ensembles with a

higher degree of narrative complexity, as a contemporary monument known as the Stele of the Vultures demonstrates. This imposing carved limestone slab has been restored on the basis of seven fragments found in the late nineteenth century at ancient Girsu.⁷³ The relief figures covering the two large faces of the stele⁷⁴ are surrounded by inscriptions explaining that the stone was set up by Eannatum, a governor or ruler of the city state of Lagash in 2460 B.C., to memorialize a successful military engagement against the nearby state of Umma (Figs. 36-37).⁷⁵ The provision of proper names and background information certainly illuminates the pictured actions, although in a penetrating analysis of the stele, Winter stresses that these actions are not only comprehensible without the written text, but that "the correspondence between text and imagery is not exact...the visual imagery has its own agenda" (Winter 1985, 22, cf. 23).

This agenda is achieved on the front and back of the stele through different figural means or "pictorial modes" as Winter terms them, only one of which she considers to be fully "narrative." The obverse⁷⁶ is divided into two registers of unequal size and features. In the centre of the larger top register, a colossal male figure holds a mace in his right hand

73. Winter 1985, 29, n. 12, gives a complete bibliographic account of the publications where the various pieces of the stele were first discussed, and on p. 29, n. 14, mentions the literature dealing with numerous restorations of the stele. Six of the fragments were excavated at modern Tello, ancient Girsu, and installed in the Louvre (Louvre, AO 50+2436-2438). A seventh fragment, which was clearly plundered from the site and acquired by the British Museum in 1900 (BM 23580), was subsequently given to the Louvre (now Louvre, AO 16109) and is incorporated in its restoration. The restored dimensions of the stele are: 1.80 m high, 1.30 m wide, and 11 cm thick.

74. It should be noted here that the relief on the reverse of the stele actually "wraps around the two shallow sides as well" (Winter 1985, 13). For an illustration of these side fragments showing a continuation of the line of marching soldiers from the top two relief bands on that side of the stele, see Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, pl. LVIIIB.

75. A modified dating of 2450 B.C. is given in Sasson ed., 1995, Vol. IV, p. 2357. The history of the translation of the text on the stele is cited in detail by Winter 1985, n. 15. The most recent English translation is by J. S. Cooper in *Reconstructing History from Ancient Inscriptions: The Lagash-Umma Border Conflict*, 1983, (Sources from the Ancient Near East, vol. 2, fascicle 1) Malibu: 45-47.

76. Winter refers to this as the principal or obverse side, but her usage is not universal: Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 158, refers to the other side as the "obverse," calling this one the "reverse," as does Perkins 1957, 58.

and a lion-headed bird with outstretched wings in his left. The fantastic bird, apparently an emblem of some sort, has two profile lion heads at its tail and caps a net filled with small naked humans shown as a confusion of limbs and heads, one of the latter providing a solid resting place for the giant mace. The image of absolute dominance, comparable to conceptions of the ruler/god in contemporary Egyptian art, likely represents the deity Ningirsu in whose name the stele was erected and Eannatum's victory over Umma accomplished.⁷⁷ If the most recent reconstructions are sound, the god is pictured on the lower register as well, there in a chariot facing the same female figure ⁷⁸ who stands behind him in the upper scene.

The subject matter on this side of the monument has been defined as symbolic or "iconic," and opposed to "narrative" in that it is concerned less with the relating of an event(s) than it is with the conveyance of an idea (see Winter 1985, 16). That idea or message involves the superior power of the god, a power all mortals must accept. Winter brings to our attention that the *way* in which this symbolic content is presented - its visual formulation - is also characterized by "iconic" features (Winter 1985, 20). Drawing upon some of M. Schapiro's theories regarding the expressive value of the "format of the image-sign" in art, specifically his comments on size where "size is correlated with position in the field and with posture and spiritual rank" (Schapiro 1969, 220), Winter underscores the use of only two registers here, and the fact that the god on this side occupies considerably more

77. There is no consensus as to the identity of this mighty figure: Winter 1985, 14, presents a well-reasoned argument for seeing him as Ningirsu, but other authors think he represents Eannatum (e.g., Perkins 1957, 58; Frankfort 1969, 158). Debates of this kind are common in art historical literature dealing with the ancient Near East, and strike a familiar chord to students of Aegean Bronze Age art, where similar difficulties in determining human from divine personages are frequently encountered (see, for example, Hallager 1985, and below, Chapter 4, section 4.2).

78. On the basis of her headdress of "splayed (cow?) horns" and the maces that protrude from her shoulders in "the traditional manner of showing divine attributes," Winter 1985, 14-15, thinks this female figure is Ninhursag, "Lady of the Mountain" and mother of Ningirsu - another reason why Winter feels justified in seeing the dominant male figure before her as the latter god and not as king Eannatum.

space than any other figure on the stele (Winter 1985, 20). If this were not enough to signify the symbolic thrust of the depiction, the fact that the primary figure is not shown "engaged in action" further emphasizes his status as emblem.⁷⁹ The absence of actual conflict here is counter-indicative of truly narrative representations to Winter. For in the latter, she asserts, "the necessary action and setting of the tale" is shown, and the depicted actions actually "tell" and do not merely imply or "refer" to a story: "the narrative is located in the representations, the story readable through the images."⁸⁰

To observe this narrative mode of pictorial expression, one must turn instead to the reverse of the stele where scenes of "direct military encounter" (Winter 1985, 16) and other non-combative subjects are portrayed, significantly, in Winter's analysis, on four registers of more or less equal dimensions (Fig. 37). Each band of figuration depicts at least one event. The topmost register, read from left to right following the direction of the insistent row of warriors, whose raised shields and forward-pointing spears appear poised for action, shows an army on the move, trampling fallen men as they advance behind Eannatum (identified by an inscription near his head). He in turn faces - beyond a few missing relief sections - a pile of victims, ultimately surmounted, in the curving apex of the stele, by vultures carrying heads and various human appendages in their beaks. The next, much damaged register, also contains a scene of armed contest, with the difference that now two

79. Winter 1985, 20. Winter also cites Alpers 1976, 16, who argues that visual narration is de-emphasized or suspended by the use of a static or fixed pose.

80. See Winter 1985, 11; cf. Winter 1981, 2. In this emphasis on a "telling" structure where some appreciable progression of events is depicted, as opposed to images that may present "very abbreviated segments to stand for the whole sequence" or the selection of one moment in the event or tale, "where the completion of the story was to take place in the viewer's mind" (Winter 1981, 2), Winter follows Güterbock 1957, 62, favouring a more exacting definition of pictorial narration than does Perkins. It is not clear, however, that Winter would refute entirely the narrative identification of those more referential or allusive images, and she does say: "...it is essential to recognize that there are many types of narrative. The term may be applied equally to representations of myth, lore, and ritual, or, as in the present case, to the representation of a specific historical event... ." (1981, 2).

vertically arrayed rows of soldiers march with their long spears pointed skyward behind a chariot-driving Eannatum who emerges from the left with his own spear held over his head, possibly aimed at a now missing foe. The third register from the top presents activities of another kind: to the left of centre workers are shown seemingly in the process of covering a hill of corpses with the contents of the baskets they carry on their heads, while in the middle of the band, a scene of libation and sacrifice is depicted before a partially preserved, large skirted figure. What little remains of the bottom register indicates another martial theme: the tip of a spear issuing from the hand of a soldier at the left touches the forehead of a bald figure placed in the centre-right zone.

In Winter's terms, each of the four registers on the reverse "depicts some contained action and can be individually read as a narrative, given our requisite of event told not just referenced" (Winter 1985, 18). Some authors have also tried to connect the registers successively, that is, as has been done with the Ur Standard, to follow a narrative relating that progresses not just "synchronically" across each register, but also "diachronically" down or up the register bands. A satisfying sequential reading has, however, yet to be produced. If, for instance, the registers are read from the top of the stele to the bottom, proceeding from (1) battle and enemy dead to (2) continued or new battle to (3) burial and ritual sacrifice/celebration to (4) battle, the last event appears incongruous. For, "why after sacrifice and celebration, would Eannatum resume battle with anyone...[the] dead are already heaped up above?" (Winter 1985, 19). Reading the registers from the bottom up, like the Warka Vase and the Ur Standard, does little to remedy the problem, for one still reads: (4) battle; (3) burial and ritual sacrifice/celebration; (2) battle; (1) battle and enemy dead.

Winter suggests that a sequential understanding of the registers is permitted only

when "the imagery is read in conjunction with the text" (Winter 1985, 19). To that end she has placed especial importance on portions of the inscription that mention previous conflicts between the two city states, and describe an oracle Eannatum is said to have received from Ningirsu in a dream before the battle with Umma, foretelling that "a mound of enemy corpses would reach up to the very base of heaven" (Winter 1985, 19). She posits that the pictured tale does indeed proceed from the bottom upward, where register three portrays Eannatum and his prophetic vision rather than any kind of post-battle ritual or ceremony. The narrative progresses from this pre-battle event to the marching army in register two, and the army in full attack formation on the top register, ending there in the right corner with the promised heap of enemy dead. And register four? This lowest zone causes Winter some difficulty, although she suggests that it too is read best "if it is seen as setting the scene for the subsequent action."⁸¹ Even though an appreciation of the stele's written message aids in deciphering its representational scheme, the inconsistencies between the inscribed and the pictorial texts on this monument tell against a strictly illustrative role for its narrative imagery: once more it is apparent that the two sign systems operate in different ways and may, in fact, be employed to address different concerns, even different kinds of viewers.⁸²

81. Winter 1985, 20. Winter proposes that the previous contests between Umma and Lagash mentioned in the inscription on the stele could thus be pictured here. If her notion that the tale recounted on these four registers pictures antecedent historical events (a "flashback"), oracular visions, and subsequent acts of war, the artist has employed a method of pictorial narrative that, interestingly, corresponds to none of the categories described by Weitzmann et al.; see Chapter 1, section 1.2. While Weitzmann's interest was in describing imagery used to picture literary content, Winter states that:

On the Stele of the Vultures, the literary and visual trajectories meet but are not yet either truly parallel or identical in structure and content....It is, instead, an "autonomous narrative" method, if we may call it that, in which the figural representation on the stele has its own logic of organization and emphasis quite distinct from that of the text. (Winter 1985, 23)

82. Winter 1985, 23, further notes that the text and image on the Stele of the Vultures differ both in content and intent:

The reliefs detail the immediate action(s), while the text emphasizes the longer-range

In her insightful explanation of what functions the two visual modes on the Stele of the Vultures serve and how they connect and interrelate,⁸³ Winter proposes that in Early Dynastic "historical narratives" like the one on the stele's reverse, the choice of a narrative picture strategy was politically motivated: images of the ruler fervently contesting his enemies served most effectively to legitimize his elevated earthly status (Winter 1985, 27). The picture story here thus has a subtext and the means of expression is purposeful. Some of Winters's comments on these issues are edifying:

...it seems evident that narrative is but one representational code among several. Nothing demands that a historical battle be represented as narrated action...Pictorial narrative is therefore selected as a mode of representation because it meets the requirements of the particular individual, period or culture...narrative requires less prior knowledge than other sorts of codes,...it is a particularly effective means of transmitting an ideological message, simply because it is seductive in coercing the viewer to read along with what is given and so be brought to a desired and seemingly inexorable conclusion. (Winter 1985, 28)

2.2.4 Stories on a Small Scale: Ritual, Myth, and the Problem of Narration on Cylinder Seals

The Stele of the Vultures, albeit unique, is one of several well known stelae

antecedents and consequences...The text serving the legal case of the legitimacy of Lagash's claims over Umma and the Gu'eden at the highest (literate) levels, its audience both internal and external; the visual portion addressed more to an internal (not necessarily literate) audience, its message related to the hierarchy and power of the state itself.

Russell 1993, 72-73, makes similar observations about the written and pictorial elements in the decorative programme of Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh. Bal 1991, 34-35, and W. Davis 1993, 50, also offer instructive comments regarding the fact that even when literary and image texts relate, the image always projects its own construction of the story.

83. Just as symbol and event can be seen to interact in a storied relationship on the Narmer Palette, so too the hieratic visions of the god on the obverse of the Stele of the Vultures are not completely unconnected to the more overtly narrative representations on its reverse: see, for example, Winter 1985, 16, 26.

commemorating singular events of the state through script and picture.⁸⁴ The typically tall, flat surfaces of these stone pillars were both suited to, and favoured for the task. In contrast, cylinder seals, the most ubiquitous form of glyptic art in the Near East, would seem to be the least appropriate medium for visual narration of this sort. Yet, a few "historical" scenes, and many more figural representations associated with stories from Mesopotamian epic and mythology, are included among the greater majority of miniature masterpieces distinguished by their primarily heraldic or "decorative" motifs.⁸⁵

Of the frequently discussed Early Dynastic sealings from Warka bearing unusual secular subjects, one reconstructed from a number of impressions pictures the outcome of a battle (Fig. 38).⁸⁶ Striking Frankfort as "an astonishing subject for a seal design" (1939, 23) both he and Perkins align the sealing with the class of memorial monuments described above, in which specific contests and their protagonists are recorded.⁸⁷ The sealing's

84. Erected in sanctuary areas as well as on boundary lines for territorial markers, several other important Mesopotamian stelae are mentioned by Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, Perkins 1957, Moscati 1963, and Frankfort 1969, in the context of commemorative monuments and "historical narrative." Foremost among these are the victory stele of King Naram-Sin, the large but fragmentary stele of Ur-Nammu, and the famous Code of Hammurabi. For the purposes of this study it was not deemed necessary to discuss these additional objects nor to address related themes rendered in wall paintings of the palace of the kings at Mari.

85. Authors studying Mesopotamian sealstones all stress the primarily ornamental quality of their motifs. This does not mean, of course, that said motifs do not have symbolic or religious value or significance. It may be the case, as several commentators note, that the preferred format of the Mesopotamian seal carver, namely the cylinder as opposed to the stamp seal, predisposed them to thinking in terms of pattern rather than tableau. Observe, for example, Groenewegen-Frankfort's comment on the cylinder seal format:

Here the seal impression is a strip of indefinite lengthwise extension and this will always make even a coherent scene appear a repetitive design. (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 154)

86. See Frankfort 1939, 22-23, fig. 6, and Perkins 1957, 56, n. 11, for bibliographic references on this sealing. Perkins dates it contemporary with the Warka Vase, ca. 3000 B.C. The Early Dynastic period is now usually dated from 2900-2350 B.C., as in Sasson et al., 1995, II: 808. Amiet 1980a also reconstructs this sealing in a slightly more peopled composition and illustrates it along with a few others characterized as "scenes de victoires" on pl. 47, figs. 660, 661, 663; cf. pl. 46, fig. 659, another scene of war/defeat, here apparently in proximity to a shrine or temple.

87. See Perkins 1957, 56, and Frankfort 1939, 23. For a contrary opinion, see Goff 1963, particularly p. 64. Goff advocates that the scenes on Mesopotamian seals of this and indeed most periods are properly characterized as symbolic not realistic, and generic rather than specific. Comparing depictions of human battles or their aftermath to the many representations of animal fights on the sealstones, she prefers to see them as rendering the themes of conflict and success in a general way, speculating that imagery like that on

appeal as "narrative" to these authors cannot, as they seem to imply, issue from the knowledge that a singular historical moment is recounted, for in this instance the claim is patently unverifiable (i.e., there is no inscribed identifier). Rather, it appears to be the combination of a subject that is inherently narratable with what is, given its minute scale, a remarkably expressive representation, that prompts the viewer to read the image as story. The bound, naked men dispersed at various levels on the otherwise empty pictorial field are perceived as unlucky survivors of a conflict that is represented only *in absentia* by their current state, and by the male figure who holds a stick-like weapon in striking position over one of the captives. Whether taken as occurring at the same time as, or posterior to the foregoing activity, the accompanying image of petition before a larger skirted figure implicates resolution to this simple rendition of a contest won.

More frequently the scenes picturing human action on early Mesopotamian cylinder seals involve events of a ritualistic or religious cast. Subject matter of this kind would be in keeping with what E. Porada sees to be the main function of Near Eastern seals: "as amulets whose representations were meant to protect the wearer," and "to have a propitious meaning for and influence on the life of the owner" (Porada 1980, 3, 9). Often male figures carrying animals, vegetation, and/or unidentifiable inanimate objects, are shown before a small building usually thought to represent a shrine (Fig. 39).⁸⁸ Also ubiquitous are representations of men (priests? kings?) standing before a deity or superior being in an attitude of offering, worship, or greeting. None of these scenes are determined to be

the sealing in question "may be the way men represented in symbols the fights they had to face in life, whether in actual battles which they hoped to win, or in the difficulties of daily living."

88. The seal impression illustrated comes from Frankfort 1939, fig. 2, p. 19, and was first published in H. H. Von der Osten, *Ancient Oriental Seals in the Collection of Mr. Edward T. Newell*, Oriental Institute Publications XXII, Chicago, 1934. Many more examples of such subjects are discussed by Frankfort 1939, and Amiet 1980a.

"narrative" properly speaking. Perkins prefers to call them "descriptive" (Perkins 1957, 61, n. 37), maintaining that instead of presenting a specific event with specific persons, such images represent "only the general idea of adoration on recurrent occasions" (Perkins 1957, 61, n. 38).⁸⁹

In some cases, scenes of sacrifice and offering include imagery that is more difficult to associate with the (assumed) cult activity pictured. Another Uruk-period sealstone, for example, combines a representation of three male figures holding various objects before them and approaching a building flanked by "ringed standards," with, on the other side of this "shrine" or temple structure, a representation of three men in a boat (to be precise, one seems actually to hover above the vessel) that also points toward the building (Fig. 40). This seal is commonly placed under the rubric of ritual scenes and is not usually discussed as narrative.⁹⁰ Yet, a natural response to the depictions is to connect the details of the ceremony or procession on land with the sea-placed action, that is, to explicate the imagery as story. Even Frankfort, while professing that without textual knowledge the seal essentially "defies explanation" (1939, 19), succumbs to this temptation, locating in the pictured ritual activity motifs common to later tales involving the legendary hero-king Gilgamesh.⁹¹

89. Perkins's rather casual distinction between mere "description" and narrative proper is an early contribution to a discussion that has occupied several much more contemporary theorists in the fields of both narratology and art history. Without clearly defining her terms, Alpers 1976, 15, also asserted that descriptive or imitative values in painting are different than narrative action. Narratologists like Blanchard 1978, 265, and Bal 1985, 129-30; 1991, 41, point out, however, that description is an essential and inextricable part of any narrative. Bal feels that the dichotomies Alpers devises between description and narration are ultimately ill-conceived and false (1991, 403, n. 43).

90. See Frankfort 1939, pl. IIId, and p. 19-20; compare rendering in Amiet 1980a, # 656, pl. 46. Pittman 1994 is an exception to this rule in describing a few such renderings as religious narratives.

91. Frankfort finds especially significant the fact that of the three figures facing the shrine on land, the middle kilted figure "seems to approach the shrine in a mood and function" differing from the other two. When he adds the "two heavy objects" this figure seems to carry on his shoulders, with the "boat with plants" on the other side of the shrine, Frankfort is tempted to equate the former with the "stones which Gilgamesh tied to his feet in order to reach the depths of the primeval waters in search for the plant of life" (1939, 19).

This inclination to relate Early Dynastic and later seal designs picturing heroic combat to known texts like the *Epic of Gilgamesh* has been strong among traditional Assyriologists. Distinctive figurations like the "bull-man," for example, are often identified with Enkidu, fighting companion and loyal friend of Gigamesh.⁹² The current tendency is to deny that seal depictions like these refer to or illustrate scenes and figures from ancient literature, largely because the literary texts in question usually belong to a later period. P. Amiet hypothesizes that the seal carver pictured generalized "types" rather than individuals and that it is preferable to see most Near Eastern glyptic representations as very original creations that illuminate concepts or mythological themes.⁹³ In the end, as Frankfort judiciously noted, "neither standpoint is susceptible of proof" (Frankfort 1939, 62, cf. 63).

Commentators both inclined to, and critical of, utilizing literary sources to interpret scenes on Near Eastern glyptic art, observe that in relation to earlier and even later chronological phases, many more seal representations from the Akkadian period (2350-2190 B.C.) seem to contain mythological content. Akkadian cylinder seals are conspicuous in discussions of pictorial narration in Mesopotamian art apparently for this very reason, since

Frankfort then ponders whether the later *Epic of Creation* thus preserves traces of ancient ceremonial lore. Biblical scholars and other authors engaged in studies of religion have historically tended to believe that most, if not all myths have their origins in rituals, J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1922) being seminal in this regard. McCall 1990, 37, notes that while there is undoubtedly a connection between myth and ritual:

We cannot know in many instances which came first, the myth or the ritual, and there are certainly myths in other cultures which have no apparent ritual association at all. The relationship between the two is complex and variable.

92. See the translated passages from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* describing Enkidu in McCall 1990, 39. Frankfort 1939, 60-61, 64-65, addresses the merits and perils of identifying the bull-man on sealstones with Enkidu, noting that this strange composite figure may have many meanings and even represent "a whole class of heroic or daemonic...mythological figures...shown in the same guise" (p. 60). The epic as we know it appears to have been composed early in the second millennium, but another version was already in existence by ca. 2150 B.C. (McCall 1990, 19, 38).

93. Amiet 1980b, 37, 47; cf. similar sentiments, particularly with respect to Early Dynastic sealstones, by Goff 1963, 60, 64, 65.

authors dealing with the subject have tended to mark as "narrative" only those monuments whose iconographic details invite comparison with incidents mentioned in the surviving texts. A few of the more renowned examples are shown in Figs. 41-43.

The first of these presents two distinct image groups featuring deities, identifiable as such by their horned crowns (Fig. 41).⁹⁴ In what Perkins views as the "main scene, judging from the scale of the figures," one god is shown with mace in hand, apparently about to kill a kneeling deity as a third god, whose head is facing the action though his lower body is turned in the opposite direction, raises his arms in a gesture of exclamation or "jubilation" (Perkins 1957, 58). The adjacent scene shows the construction of a building by six gods, all but one of whom are, like the gods in the other scene, naked save for their headgear. This vigorous depiction is nicely described by Perkins:

Various stages of the work are scattered about the field without any discernible order. One god hacks up the earth and puts it into a basket, another with a trowel mixes it with water to form the bricks, a third climbs to the roof of the building carrying a basket of bricks on his head. A god at the top waits to receive him while another, kneeling, is apparently about to catch a brick tossed up by a god standing on the ground. (Perkins 1957, 58-59)⁹⁵

Perkins and Frankfort have interpreted the two virtually self-contained compositions as relating separate events recounted in the Mesopotamian *Epic of Creation*, a sacred text recited during the celebration of the New Year's Festival at Babylon (see McCall 1990, 52-59). In this reading the strife scene is taken to picture one of Marduk's many conquests over the gods of chaos, specifically his defeat of Qingu, while the building scene relates the final episode of the epic. For, after his victory over Qingu, the lesser gods acclaimed Marduk supreme among them and in their gratitude vowed to provide him with a suitable

94. This seal was first published by D. Opitz, "Studien zur altorientalischen Kunst," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 6 (1930-31), 61, pl. III, 2. The unsightly groove carved across the centre of the seal was added at some point after its manufacture.

95. Compare Frankfort 1939, 131, and Amiet 1980a 183, #1485, pl. 112.

home:

Now, O Lord, thou who hast caused our deliverance,
What shall be our homage to thee?
Let us build a shrine, a recess for his abode!⁹⁶

Of course, the untutored observer could never construct a narrative reading of this sort. Nevertheless, he or she might sense that they are in the presence of a story in picture form, if only due to the intricacy of the scene depicted. Perhaps because the surfaces in question are so small and artistic abbreviation and compositional peculiarities are to be expected, commentators have paid little attention to the "narrative mechanics" of the scenes they recognize as relating mythic tales on Near Eastern sealstones. And, as the essential focus of research has been to identify subject matter evocative of written documents, examinations of more exclusively visual signs or cues to possible narrative relationships in the figural elements on these tiny objects have not been undertaken.

The second sealstone illustrated here also pictures two seemingly independent scenes (Fig. 42). On the impression's left side an unusual species of bull-man⁹⁷ controls two rearing lions, while a man holding an object terminating in a spiral-like curve faces the trio and thus appears to look on.⁹⁸ Two goat(?) heads and a scorpion appear in the field. To the right of this contest, in a watery locale indicated and to an extent bounded by three horizontal and one vertically placed fish, is a boat containing three male passengers. Two

96. This translation is cited in Perkins 1957, 59, and comes from Tablet VI, lines 49-53. Slightly different translations are given by Frankfort 1939, 131-32, and McCall 1990, 58-59.

97. He is "unusual" in that he has human legs, and not the tail and legs of a bull; see Frankfort 1939, 61, for a description of the typical bull-man.

98. The seal is now in Berlin, in the Vorderasiatische Abteilung der Staatlichen Museen, item #6700. In Frankfort's list of illustrations the representations are described as "towing of a boat and hero between lions," yet in his text (1939, 67) Frankfort does not connect the standing male holding a curved object in his hand to the boat scene. Indeed, there seems no good reason to do so: if the boat is being towed by the standing male, it is curious that the "rope" he is thus presumably holding does not appear to be attached to the boat, and why, then, would there be need of an oarsman? In terms of the size, placement, and directionality of the figural elements on the seal, it is preferable to associate the standing man with the combat scene to the left of him.

are seated facing one another, the figure on the right grasping a forked object. The third man stands with the steering oar in hand, and a rather large bird is placed over his shoulder, above the stern. To someone familiar with the story of Gilgamesh's journey to discover the secret of everlasting life after the death of Enkidu - a quest that entailed the consul of an immortal named Utanapishtim and the retrieval of a sacred plant of rejuvenation from the bottom of the sea - it may seem natural to recommend, as Frankfort does, that the boat scene on this seal portrays:

Gilgamesh holding the herb of life, while Utanapishtim, wearing the crown of divinity, sits opposite him in a craft poled by the boatman Urshanabi. (Frankfort 1939, 67)

Unaddressed by Frankfort is the question of the relationship, if any, that this nautical image has to the other, larger representation on the seal's face. Are the two scenes linked in some way (narratively? allegorically?)? Is the bull-man here Enkidu as lion slayer? Or, is only one element of the composition "narrative," strictly speaking? And what do the animal heads and scorpion signify?

In fact, few of the sealstone representations quite reasonably perceived to depict mythological incidents, are fully intelligible as portrayals of known Mesopotamian stories. One may, as is widely done, recognize the man riding a large bird on an Akkadian cylinder seal (Fig. 43) as the childless king Etana, who was flown to the heavens to obtain the plant of birth after he rescued an eagle imprisoned in a pit for breaking his promise not to raid the nest of a serpent sharing the same tree.⁹⁹ The bird with wings extended, hovering above the tree on the left side of the seal impression, would then represent the eagle before his punishment, and the curving object placed in a parallel relationship to his right wing

99. See: Frankfort 1939, 138, and McCall 1990, 62-65. The seal was first published in *Catalogue of the Collection of Antique Art formed by James, Ninth Earl of Southesk*, edited by Lady H. Carnegie, London, 1908, #24. Compare another cylinder seal impression picturing the "flight of Etanna" discussed by Porada in Sasson et al., 1995, IV: 2708, fig. 14.

could even be construed as a serpent of sorts. However, less amenable to explanation in terms of the myth are the numerous active figures in the central part of the composition, and the pairs of lions(?) that occur to either side of the tree, and again directly below the airborne bird and his human passenger. It could be, as certain writers have speculated, that in the Akkadian period mythological motifs from different sources were combined in visual and verbal compositions that were part of an oral tradition. Or, as Amiet submits, perhaps some of these scenes are better viewed as elaborating the phenomenological notions that underlie the later written versions of myth and epic, rather than as simple illustrations of the texts themselves.¹⁰⁰

The pictorially complex sealstones just described are exemplary and for that reason have been the object of much scholarship. The more prevalent artistic strategy in figural representation on Akkadian seals appears to have been to render a less populated, single scene or event, something in the manner of Perkins's "culmination scene." Frankfort's assiduous study of Near Eastern iconography, although rather dated now, organized most of these seals according to thematic categories, and made some interesting observations in the process. For example, in comparing all known versions of a given subject to written documents in hopes of finding possible parallels, he noted that when "narrative" content is suggested in seal motifs, one sealstone rarely tells the whole story. He did discover, however, that taken together the depictions on various Akkadian seals create quite vivid reconstructions of events recounted in the ritual and mythological tablets. Hence, he illustrates several scenes involving the capture, judgement, and execution of a bird or bird-

100. Amiet 1980b, 35-36; cf. points of both agreement and contradiction voiced by Porada 1980, 9. Amiet does not address the subject of visual narrative as such.

man, which *in toto* comprise a visual and quite dramatic presentation of the Myth of Zu.¹⁰¹

It appears that Akkadian artists commissioned to depict events of a mythic or ritualistic nature did so with a certain amount of creative license, for, notwithstanding the use of artistic formulae, few of these representations are alike in their details. This remarkable diversity abated after the Akkadian period when writing on seals became almost universal, maybe, as Frankfort felt, because "it was no longer on the design that the individuality of the seals depended" (1939, 145). Even in the monumental arts, especially after 2000 B.C., the tradition of narrative art that Perkins feels existed for about a millennium in Mesopotamia,

seems to die out, or at least to diminish markedly...narrative art as a record of action has changed to narrative epitomized in a stereotype whose chief value is symbolic. (Perkins 1957, 61)¹⁰²

2.2.5 Summary and Observations

Before looking at the renaissance of the Near Eastern narrative tradition in the first millennium B.C., it may be useful to make a few general observations about the studies on Mesopotamia cited here, especially in view of what has been said about Egyptian pictorial narration.

101. See Frankfort 1939, pl. XXIII, and compare his analogous exercise with various scenes involving the Sun god, pl. XIXa-d, pp. 105-6; 132-34. Perkins 1957, 59, n. 25, notes Frankfort's research and also views these representations as illustrations of myth, although she does not include them in her main discussion of Babylonian narrative imagery. I. Sakellarakis 1972, found a similar phenomenon to exist in Late Bronze Age Aegean sealstones. When taken together, the depictions on several seals and sealings portraying scenes of sacrifice, procession, and offering, recreate progressive stages of a ritual sequence; this notion is discussed further in Chapter 4, section 4.1.4.

102. Varga 1988, 202, makes similar comments about the reduced narrativity of Rembrandt's versions of Biblical tales in comparison to earlier treatments: by reducing a story to its "essence," Rembrandt gives us "the effect and meaning of a tale, its emotional message...only the rhetorical message remains." But the situation is never this simple: Bal's (1991) "readings" of Rembrandt's Old Testament themes effectively expose their narrative complexities.

A shortage of stone in these areas probably prohibited the production of carved relief on the massive scale that existed in Egypt (see Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 153, 160), but the early Mesopotamian artist found surfaces for visual narrative on cult vessels and sizeable stone stelae, as well as on the inlaid sides of ephemeral wooden objects and even, albeit improbably, on the confined surfaces of cylinder seals. The activities pictured on this diverse range of objects issue from the realms of history and fantasy, recounting the events of gods or heroes as well as those of man himself, in contrast to Egyptian narrative imagery where there is a decided preoccupation with the accomplishments of the pharaoh.

Though not expressed directly, comments by Winter and others imply the existence of degrees or gradations of pictorial narrative, from the simple, generic depiction of an event, to more involved representations in which the actors can be identified either by attributes or labels and the scenes are incorporated into a reasonable sequence without much effort by the beholder. As was the case with studies in Egyptian art, the perceived degree of narrativity in the examined figural scenes depends on the individual researcher and the demands they place upon the material. Authors who assert that proper pictorial narrative requires the rendition of a singular story or event performed by specific agents encounter the same problems with differentiating "specific" from "typical" that were noted in the context of non-labelled Egyptian representations. In this paradigm, an argument for considering as narrative the scenes of procession and offering on an uninscribed monument like the Warka Vase is essentially based on an intuition or personal belief that the event and figures shown are indeed unique and specific.

Winter has been more expansive than many authors by enumerating the distinguishing features of narrative imagery: she feels the descriptor "narrative" should only apply to representations that display "organized action, progression through time, reference

to a specific event, and readability rather than mere reference" (Winter 1985, 20). She implies, however, that even when the event pictured is not unquestionably "specific," if it is presented in a fashion that is easily processed by the viewer, it is more "narrative" than, say, imagery that may relate an incontestably specific incident but in a manner that is allusive rather than "telling." This sentiment is also familiar from the Egyptian material, and relates to Winter's distinction between "iconic" or emblematic versus "narrative" modes of artistic representation, modes that are sometimes combined in the monuments studied.

Just as certain pictorial strategies have a more narrative quality than others, some subjects are more easily rendered and apprehended as visual narrative. A ritual or religious event, or an incident from a folk tale translated into visual form, requires much more in the way of extra-pictorial information for the beholder to be able to recognize and interpret what he or she sees, than does a pictorial representation of a battle event where, for the most part, the actions speak for themselves. When the pictorial field is restricted to a few centimetres, the ability to "tell" a story obviously diminishes; even so, some of the representations on Mesopotamian sealstones are remarkably detailed and suggestive. They are usually mentioned in discussions of pictorial narrative only when the depicted characters and situations evoke characters and situations described in later sacred and mythological writings. It is thus the content of their imagery - perceived as depicting a known story or event, rather than the manner in which it has been rendered, that has been the primary focus of analysis where cylinder seals and sealings have been concerned.

2.3 Assyrian Palace Decoration: Stateroom Statements, the Narratives of Empire ca. 1000-612 B.C.

The palatial¹⁰³ decoration of Assyria ca. 1000-612 B.C., holds an esteemed position in histories of art. As some of the most remarkable formations of visual narration preserved from the first millennium, these works in relief sculpture represent not only the culmination of earlier tendencies in Mesopotamian art, but also, by virtue of their scale and the complexity of their designs, a departure. And this departure prefigures later, equally momentous declarations of artistic storytelling like Trajan's Column (cf. Smith 1965, 127, and Barnett 1975, 26).

Although the essential compositional component in Assyrian royal staterooms consisted of usually square, two to three meter high panels of gypsum stone, the individual slabs were secured to one another by lead dowels and clamps and placed against the lower parts of the mud brick walls, creating long uninterrupted carving surfaces for the artist.¹⁰⁴ These continuous friezes were often embellished with visual accounts of events associated with the ruling monarch that were carefully selected to vaunt his abilities, most notably in the masculine pursuits of war and wild game hunting. Interestingly, as we shall see, the extended narratives fashioned by the kings' artisans are not always told in a consecutive or strictly linear way, and the diversity of narrativities apparent in the monuments described

103. Assyrian temple decoration is another matter altogether: see Reade 1980b, 76 and Winter 1981, 29. While "historical narratives" abound in the palaces, in the temples symbolic and mythological subjects predominate. The examples of palace decoration discussed in this section comprise only a few of the best known ensembles. Reade 1980b gives some idea of how much more narrative sculpture the palace complexes contained in rooms of all functions, including bedchambers and bathrooms.

104. Reade 1983, 17, and Meuszyński 1975, give relevant data on the size of the slabs and techniques used to affix them to the walls. The slabs are generally ca. 25 cm in thickness, and were set 50 cm into the floor in the Northwest Palace. For often-cited speculations on the possible origins of such continuous friezes of orthostats in the Hittite palaces, see Güterbock 1957, 64-65, and Barnett 1975, 25. A fresh look at the formative stages of these extensive Assyrian historical narratives is undertaken by Pittman 1996; I thank M. Koortbojian for informing me about this article.

below complicates the accepted impression of Assyrian narrative art.

2.3.1 Sequence and Ellipsis in Pictorial Narrative: The Northwest Palace Throneroom of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud

The reliefs found in the throneroom (Room B) of Ashurnasirpal II's Northwest Palace at Nimrud have been well studied from the standpoint of programmatic decoration and as expressions of narrative art (Figs. 44-46; note that plan is oriented to south).¹⁰⁵ Installed in their original location sometime between 865-859 B.C., and currently housed in the British Museum (except for fragments held by museums in Germany, India, and North America), a fairly comprehensive reconstruction of these sculptures has been produced through the efforts of several researchers.¹⁰⁶

Best preserved on the south wall of the long, narrow room, the reliefs of narrative interest were situated in two main areas: on four slabs to the left of the dais, commencing at the southeast corner, and on an additional nine slabs placed farther down the wall, terminating at the southwest corner.¹⁰⁷ The figural scenes on each of these stones are divided into two registers that are separated by lines of the Standard Inscription, a text enumerating the qualities and activities of Ashurnasirpal II that is carved *in toto* on every

105. The initial publication of the reliefs from Room B is Layard 1853. Güterbock 1957, 66 n. 25, gives other essential references. Along with Güterbock, the major studies on narrative aspects of the reliefs are Barnett 1975; Reade 1979a-b, 1980a-b, 1983; Meuszyński 1975; Winter 1981, 1983; Pittman 1996, 341-48.

106. The reign dates for Assyrian kings vary slightly from source to source. Most recently, in Sasson et al., 1995, the accepted reign dates for Ashurnasirpal II are 883-859 B.C. Dates for specific works given in Reade and Winter have been followed here. The reconstruction illustrated is by Meuszyński 1975, 71-73.

107. The room measures 45 m x 10 m. Not enough is preserved on the north wall to know whether it had sculptures disposed in a similar manner; see Winter 1983, 15. Based on the slab fragments remaining next to the west door, Pittman 1996, 347, conjectures that the relief scheme of the north wall matched that of the south.

stone panel in the palace.¹⁰⁸ In style, scale, and subject, these reliefs contrast with the colossal, protective "genii" that flank doorways on the north, south and east walls of the room, and with representations of the king and attendant genii shown twice, as in a mirror image, to either side of a "sacred tree." It is a combination of symbolic and more apparently realistic representational manners that, as has been demonstrated above, also occurs in Egyptian art and recurs often in the thronerooms and reception suites of many other societies (cf. Winter 1981, 16).

The various functions performed by each image type within the context of this kind of architectural space, as well as the relationship between artistic form and the promulgation of state ideology, have been fully considered by others and are of less consequence here than are the ways in which the reliefs present their royal subject's adventures. It appears that the central entrance on the throneroom's north wall was conceived as the principal means of access from the palace's outer court,¹⁰⁹ yet there are two other doorways on this side of the room, and it is not clear whether the visitor's approach to the seated regent was controlled in a specific way (Fig. 44). As such, there is no way of knowing if there was an imposed pattern of viewing the reliefs preserved from the south wall. Descriptions of them always go from east to west, a line of reading justified partly by the fact that action in the panels "generally proceeds down the wall away from the throne" and also from the observation that in most instances "the king is shown facing down (i.e., west), as he would be facing when seated on the throne, while the individuals who approach him on the reliefs

108. Winter 1983, n. 29, gives extensive references for translations of the inscription; cf. Winter 1981, 6, 18. In the case of figures that occupy the full height of the slab, the text of the inscription is carved across the representation.

109. The door in question is larger than the others and faces the same image of the king with attendant genii and sacred tree that appears behind the throne. See instructive comments in Winter 1981, 10; 1983, 17. Pittman 1996, 345, assumes that the visitor to the throneroom would not have used the doorway on the east end of this north wall, positing the two western doorways along the north wall as the only possible entry points.

come from the western end, as would any actual audience" (Winter 1981, 14).

The narrative connections between the contiguous slabs do not, nonetheless, follow a single model, nor are the reading schemes consistent from one set of reliefs to another. For example, the first two panels (nos. 19 and 20) are read most legibly as distinct units; their upper and lower registers picture similar actions in nearly identical compositions yet the events shown on the pair of panels are not reasonably linked as being continuous (Fig. 45). Rather, each slab relates a separate hunting incident: the first depicts the king in his chariot grappling with an injured bull while a slain one is trampled by the horses' hooves; the second shows the king in like attitude only now with bow and arrow in hand, about to finish off a lion. The hunting tale continues on each panel in the lower register, where the king leans on his weapon and ceremoniously raises a cup - presumably a libation to be poured over the animal corpse at his feet. The narrative play in these first two panels is thus "from top to bottom of the divided registers on the same slab...where the action of the story...takes place in the upper register, and the consequence...is depicted below" (Winter 1981, 14).¹¹⁰

The next two panels (nos. 18, 17) exhibit a similar up-and-down, action-and-consequence type narrativity, with an additional narrative relationship between the adjacent panels on each register. Hence, in the upper band we may link the scene of the king and his men besieging a walled city (no. 18a) with the adjoining representation (no. 17a) of men in flight who swim toward another city that is also being attacked by a few of the king's archers. The outcome of these military episodes - the victorious king receiving tribute and prisoners - is indicated in the lower registers of the two panels (nos. 18b, 17b), which are

110. Winter's comments follow observations by Güterbock 1957, 63, 66, who cites earlier artistic juxtapositions of hunt and sacrifice as prototypes for this kind of narrative composition.

obviously meant to be viewed together as continuing action.

When the double register format resumes, west of the entrance on the south wall, narrative links between the upper and lower relief bands are no longer discernible. The battle theme is featured exclusively now, and episodes of actual fighting as well as pre- and post-war events are depicted on both registers. The essential stages of military engagements are also treated more expansively; actions can unfold across three or even four slabs with the king being shown only once. The top registers of slab nos. 11-8 do just that, picturing Ashurnasirpal II with his soldiers in chariots and on horseback, fighting and overwhelming unmounted archers in images that utilize an artistic vocabulary harkening back to the Ur Standard (Fig. 46 a-b). The next three upper panels (nos. 7a-5a) show consecutive actions, but the order of reading is reversed, going from right to left. They present post-battle activity; the king and his men enter their camp from the west, their victorious status signalled by the decapitated bodies that float in the field above the king's entourage. The directional course returns to its original left to right orientation in the last two upper panels (nos. 4a-3a), where a lively siege scene is under way with the king, here facing west, at the heart of the action.

The abutting image groups contained in slab nos. 11a-3a do not, therefore, read as a continuous story, even though "some have taken it for granted that the scenes are consecutive" (Reade 1979b, 64). And while it has been determined that a consistent narrative sequence of "approach, conflict, and consequence" is "distributed over both top and bottom registers" of the panels (Winter 1981, 14, cf. 1983, 19), the progression is actually conflict (11a-8a), consequence (7a-5a), and conflict (4a-3a) for the top series, and approach (11b-8b), consequence (7b-half of 5b), and conflict (half of 5b, 4b-3b), for the lower reliefs.

The narrative segments are linked, just not in a strictly linear way. In both the upper and lower registers, rational and cognitive connections can be made between the centrally positioned scenes of tribute and return and the representations of approach and siege that bracket them (cf. Reade 1979b, 63-4). The more centrally placed images of the king's camp, which include scenes of preparation, prognostication,¹¹¹ and tribute, represent both the starting point and the concluding moments of successes in the different fighting activities pictured to either side of them. In a similar reading, the depictions in the middle of the bottom register showing the king's men riding past an apparently friendly town and the king himself receiving a dignitary behind whom appear a line of prisoners and tribute, convey implications of arrival and outcome that respond both to the wonderfully detailed views of Ashurnasirpal II and his men fording a river to reach their destination on the left, and also to the siege scene on the right, in which the king and the dignitary from the central tribute scene combine their forces to attack a town from two sides.¹¹²

The absence of explanatory captions thwarts a more "optimal" reading of these narratives, though they are usually designated as being more particularizing than generic in nature, and as doubtless alluding to historical events of the sort recounted in the Standard Inscription.¹¹³ The artistic language of the images, like that of the inscription, is marked

111. See Reade 1983, 29-30, fig. 36, for more detailed descriptions and photographs of the camp scene,

112. For alternative readings of this imagery see Güterbock 1957, 66-67; Winter 1981, 14, and 1983, 19; and Russell 1991, 215-16. Pittman 1996, 346-47, concentrating on the overall design of the reliefs, emphasizes the compositional relationships between some sections of the frieze's upper and lower registers, where certain scenes visually complement one another to create a certain unity and balance.

113. For example, Moscati 1963, 92-94; Winter 1983, 19. Winter also discusses "optimal" and "minimal" levels of reading (1983, 27-28), and stresses the structural similarities between the throneroom's narrative reliefs and the Standard Inscription (1981, 21; 1983, 24). Reade is sceptical of such relationships in Assyrian pictorial narrative generally (1979b, 64-65), suggesting that "chance" has as large a role to play in the iconographic schemes of the throneroom and other early relief groupings as does "design." Little is known about the processes involved in the creation and planning of palace decoration, nor of the relationship between artist and scribe, although the well known scene on Band X of Shalmaneser's bronze gates (discussed below), which seems to show a scribe "supervising" the carving of a stele of the king, is suggestive (Reade 1983, 15).

by a formal, conventionalized phraseology, and a grammar that makes good theatrical use of the set piece. Such similarities between text and image do not extend into the sphere of content, and Güterbock noticed early on that the reliefs do not illustrate the inscription, but instead tell their own story (Güterbock 1957, 67). This story is produced through a pattern of viewing that takes the beholder to the centre, outward and back again, in a staccato rhythm of telling where the temporal relationships between scenarios are recursive rather than progressive or continuous.

2.3.2 Questions of Medium and Narrative Presentation: The Bronze Gates of Shalmaneser III

Ashurnasirpal's throneroom decoration functioned as potent propaganda for the king's position, and, as Winter has demonstrated, through its pictorial scheme that space represented the "symbolic 'center,'...a physical microcosm of the state" in which the visual narratives served to validate the ruler's status and his many territorial acquisitions (Winter 1983, 24, 27). Narrative compositions appear in other areas of his palace as well, some in different media, including glazed tiles - objects that also give us an impression of now lost wall paintings - and embossed metalwork (see Barnett 1975, 26, and Reade 1979b, 65). The latter survives primarily in the form of bronze bands that were attached to the large wooden gates of his temple and palace complexes. Those belonging to Ashurnasirpal's reign show many affinities with the throneroom reliefs, but they have received much less attention than the larger, better preserved bronze gate reliefs that were found at nearby Balawat and produced for his son, Shalmaneser III (858-824 B.C.).¹¹⁴

114. The doors dating to Ashurnasirpal II's reign, which have yet to be fully published, belong to the smaller interior gates of a temple. These door leafs measured ca. 1 m in width and 3.3 m in height, and their relief bands included bull and lion hunts with captions: see Barnett 1970, 17, 1975, 27; Winter 1981, 23.

Attached to doors over 2 m wide and nearly 7 m high, the Balawat reliefs represent a number of campaign activities arranged on sixteen double register bands provided with short captions (Fig. 47). An inscription summarizing Shalmaneser III's deeds also runs along the vertical edges of the door leaves: the relationship between this more extensive text and the imagery is indirect, with only a few of the military operations shown on the horizontal strips being noted in the inscription (cf. Güterbock 1957, 67). Those who have studied the reliefs with a view to establishing whether a larger narrative programme determined the placement of the eight bands on each door conclude that their positions do not correspond to "historic logic," nor is there an apparent relationship among the bands in terms of the geographical location of the events pictured on them.¹¹⁵ They were fashioned separately, and as rivet holes and obscured portions indicate, their creators were likely not fully appraised of, nor responsible for, their ultimate siting. If there was an organizing principle at work behind the positioning of the bands on each door, it could have been conditioned more by aesthetic and political factors than by a concern to produce a kind of chronological or successive narrative relating from band to band (see King 1915, 15; Reade 1979b, 71).

Consequently, authors dealing with narrative aspects of the representations have concentrated on isolated bands. Measuring 2.4 m in length by 27.9 cm in height (King 1915,

Shalmaneser's gates are most fully described in King 1915. Their size is variously given; Barnett 1970, 17-18, estimates each leaf to have been ca. 2.2 m wide and 6.9 m high. The width of the metal used to fashion the relief strips is very thin (ca. 2 mm), indicating that they had a primarily decorative function.

115. See Güterbock 1957, 67, n. 31, for references on the various reconstructions of the bands. Most authors follow seminal research by E. Unger, notably his doctoral dissertation *Zum Bronzetor von Balawat*, Leipzig, 1912, and Unger 1920. Unger also reconstructs bands N-P, which are not in the British Museum. Reade 1979b, 64-72, gives the most recent and accessible account of the bands' placement on the doors. Only King 1915, 12-13, offers a different and unacceptable placement, arranging the strips following a chronological order of events established by other textual sources instead of realizing, as Unger and his followers have, that the original arrangement is readily reconstructed by observing the gradual downward tapering of the wooden door pins around which the band ends were fitted (cf. Barnett 1970, 17).

12), each bronze strip offered the same sort of extended surfaces afforded to Ashurnasirpal's sculptors - seemingly an ideal format for the artistic recollection of significant military happenings. Even so, the kind of continuous or strip-cartoon arrangement that we might think the most obvious narrative structure to adopt in such circumstances was rarely chosen by the artisans. Instead, a variety of compositional schemes were used to represent a repetitious cycle of activities involving ritual sacrifice, battle, and tribute.

Sometimes the two parts of a band treat the same subject, usually a fighting or homage event that occurs in one location (e.g., bands Va-b, VIa-b, VIIa-b, Xa-b, XIa-b), while in other instances, the upper and lower registers of a band picture military events that took place in different cities within the territorial limits of a given campaign (e.g., Na-b, Ia-b, IIa-b, IIIa-b, IVa-b, VIIa-b, IXa-b, XIIIa-b). On the majority of registers the king appears only once, near the centre of the register, and most frequently he is facing outward, toward the door posts (cf. Reade 1979b, 70). Occasionally he issues from the register's edge with his army behind him, either facing the enemy head on or forming one side of a two-directional assault on an enemy fortress. The attack scene is variously followed by episodes in the Assyrian camp and more images of attack (e.g., VIIa), by scenes of tribute and booty (e.g., Nb, Va, VIa), or by representations of cities under siege (e.g., VIIIa-b).

Although one assumes that events shown behind the king precede those in front of him, the temporal relations between the different incidents on each register are not always straightforward, a characteristic they share with Ashurnasirpal II's throneroom reliefs. For example, on register XIIb, where the more central portion of the band shows the Assyrians attacking a city from two sides, it makes sense to see the camp depicted behind the king (who here faces right, away from the door post) as the place from which he and his

contingent set forth (Fig. 48 a-e). What then seems discrepant, in terms of the kind of time construction these two pictorial elements imply, is the file of prisoners and animal booty represented behind the camp, at the extreme left portion of the register (King 1915, pls. LXVI-LXVII).¹¹⁶ We can still construct a narrative of war events from the causal connections suggested in the scenes of "camp," "attack," and "booty," but pictorially the before-during-after links are not readily comprehended in terms of the depictions' spatial ordering and require some work on the part of the viewer to establish.

There are also cases where "motion through time and space" is insinuated, as on band XIIIa where assaults against three different enemy towns appear to be consecutive because the most persistent direction of movement is from left to right, and the "last town has a despairing ruler on its walls" (Reade 1979b, 65).¹¹⁷ There is only one clear instance, however, where the scenes on a band show action from one register continuing on the other.¹¹⁸ This is on band Xa-b, the sole portion of the door's ornamentation customarily reproduced or discussed in treatises about pictorial narrative, probably as it alone satisfies modern expectations of how visual narrative should work.

The story begins on the left side of the bottom register (b) where the king in his chariot with an infantry escort advances from the Assyrian camp (King 1915, pls. LIV-LIX, and pp. 30-31). The chariot faces two Assyrian foot-soldiers whose animated gestures suggest that they are informing Shalmaneser of the events that have transpired in the taking of the city shown in flames to the right. The situation there is one of extreme carnage.

116. Reade 1979b, 65, tries to explain this incongruity by suggesting that the line of prisoners and booty may relate to the scenes of siege on the upper register, but his argument is unconvincing.

117. See also King 1915, pl. LXXVII; compare too bands Ob and XIIa.

118. It might be possible to make a case for similar readings of continuing action from one register to the other for bands I, VI, and VIII, though this sort of temporal relationship is not nearly as evident on these bands as it is on band X.

Outside the gates of the burning city, which are festooned with the heads of enemy soldiers, an Assyrian amputates the hands and feet of another victim destined to be impaled on a post like the man behind him, provocative sentinels of defeat. The conventionalized city is identified in the caption on this lower register, which reads:

Kulisi, the royal city of Mutzuata, I captured, I burned with fire...I entered the sources of the river; I offered sacrifices to the gods; my royal image I set up.
(King 1951, 30)

Those post-battle events are rendered beyond the ruined city to the right of centre where the king is shown once again - a unique instance of such iteration - now on horseback travelling over a watery surface, with his body-guard behind him and a bull and ram being led in front of him (Fig. 49). Nearby an artist carves an image of the king on the rock face of a grotto, close to the mouth of a tunnel. Scenic details like the waterway denoted by a pattern of lines and spirals, the rocky terrain formed by an undulating mass of conical "scale" motifs, and the subterranean course of the river, indicated by means of rectangular openings in the scarp "through which men are seen wading waist-deep and carrying plants or torches," (King 1915, 31) effectively place the action in a specific setting.

The resumption of the hilly setting on the upper register at the right corner, in concert with the depiction of a sacrifice involving animals identical to those seen in the lower register, signals quite plainly the recommencement of this train of action. Behind the sacrifice scene the direction of reading changes and a group of Assyrian soldiers now faces left, behind their king, forming part of a self-contained scene in which Assyrians are also shown on the far left behind another man - presumably the chief of Kulisi - who appears in an attitude of submission before Shalmaneser. Reade has summarized the representations of massacre, sacrifice, and review on Xa-b in the following way:

These are then three items from a strip-cartoon, starting at the left end of Xb and ending at the left end of Xa, with the king appearing once in each.

(Reade 1979b, 69)

Given the congruence of pictorial solutions like this it is curious that the artist(s) responsible for the sixteen relief bands did not apply them again. In contrast, the majority of scenes that appear in the bands contain less descriptive detail and more stereotypical elements, a practise that sometimes causes the viewer problems of interpretation. This happens with band Pb, for instance, where the enemy army uses chariots identical to those of the Assyrians and some of their foot-soldiers also look indistinguishable from those shown in the Assyrian camp (cf. Reade 1979b, 65, and Unger 1920, Taf. 2). It is surely not fortuitous that this rather confusing combination of stock motifs belongs to a band located at the highest, least accessible portion of the gate. The finest craftsmanship appears on the bands placed closer to eye-level, where a few of the more politically significant events seem to be portrayed, and the artist has obviously appreciated the enhanced narrative value of providing a more convincing stage for the action, rendering settings defined by distinct topographical signs (King 1915, 15; Reade 1979b, 71).

2.3.3 Pictorial Narrative and the Panoramic View: The Lachish Reliefs of Sennacherib

The figural art of some of Shalmaneser's successors demonstrates a continued interest in the creation of scenic space as a narrative device. Exceptional in this respect are twelve relief slabs recovered from a small room in the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.) at Nineveh.¹¹⁹ Now installed in the British Museum, the reliefs depict the

119. A.H. Layard excavated Sennacherib's palace between 1847-1851. Detailed publications of the Lachish reliefs include Layard 1853, Paterson 1915, Ussishkin 1982, and Russell 1991, 1993. The revised dimensions of Room XXXVI as ascertained by Ussishkin 1982, 71, are 4.90 m long by 11.45 m wide. The original series of slabs covered a total length of 26.85 m; the length of the missing portion is calculated to be 8 m. The height of the slabs was approximately 2.74 m. Although not a throneroom, the space, especially as framed by the rather ceremonious approach to it, admits a formal or stately significance fittingly captured in

salient events of a successful Assyrian assault on the biblical city of Lachish, in the Kingdom of Judah (Russell 1993, 56, pl. 8). The sculptures originally covered all four walls of the small Room XXXVI and are read from left to right. The ensemble starts with a series of missing reliefs on the short south and southeast walls that purportedly represented contingents of Assyrian cavalry and charioteers advancing to the right (Ussishkin 1982, 71) (Fig. 50). The preserved reliefs continue on the west, north, and northeast walls, where extensive scenes of attack and tribute are followed by a view of the Assyrian camp. These kinds of actions and the tale they relate are familiar from earlier Assyrian art; what is unusual here is the form of the "telling."

Rather than adopt the traditional format that arranged imagery on two horizontal registers divided by a section of text, Sennacherib chose to exploit the entire expanse of the wall for his compositions, incorporating brief captions at significant points only. This new extended picture field opened up a number of narrative possibilities. For, unlike the register, which fosters the placement of figures in single rows and a narrative direction that is likewise horizontal, in an unsegmented field figures can be disposed in a variety of ways, and there is the potential for greater narrative intricacy:

The narrative may flow vertically and diagonally as well as horizontally...with figures above and below the primary ones contributing additional information, or...with several rows of characters arranged one above the other, each telling its own story. (Russell 1993, 58)

The artist is also granted the opportunity to develop ways to create a consistent spatial context for the events pictured. In the Lachish reliefs an environmental surround is evoked through the rendition of natural features like the uneven contour of the landforms bounding the composition at the top of each panel, the clumps of trees and smaller

Ussishkin's reconstruction (fig. 60).

vegetation scattered throughout the composition, and the ubiquitous scale motif, which marks the entire background area as representing rocky hillside. The superposed files of attacking soldiers and deported captives who walk, run, or collapse against this backdrop on groundlines that rise and fall with the slope of the land, also effect an impression of spatial extension into depth where "higher figures are understood to be more distant than lower ones" (Russell 1993, 58).

This interest in perspective has its most original expression in the scenes dominating the centre of the north wall, opposite the entrance to the room, where the climactic happenings of the Lachish siege are rendered. Spanning parts of three panels (Ussishkin 1982, nos. II-IV), the many defense towers of the city are perched on a high hill, in a discontinuous or irregular configuration. As the Assyrian rear or reserve forces volley arrows and stones on the viewer's left, the most intense action occurs on panel III to the right, where dozens of armed men and at least seven siege machines ascend a series of steep, diagonal ramps paved with timber planks (Figs. 51 a-c). The attempt to represent a siege mound in perspective has been characterized as "valiant" (Barnett 1975, 29) and "weird in the extreme" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 178).

Its "weirdness" derives partly from our inability to establish a single or definite viewpoint for the observer.¹²⁰ That, coupled with the usual oddities resulting from figures

120. Russell 1991, 193 ff., and 1993, 57-58, is very informative on the kinds of conventions used to indicate spatial relationships in Sennacherib's reliefs, particularly "horizontal overlapping" and "vertical stacking." Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 177-78, first observed how difficult it is to define the sort of perspective utilized by Sennacherib's artists in scenes like her fig. 37, p. 176, a "battle in the mountains" and in the Lachish reliefs as well:

One might be tempted to use the term cavalier perspective here, but strictly speaking both it and 'bird's eye view' presuppose a definite, if unusual, spatial relation between observer and things observed, which is absent here....It is, however, undeniable that some illusion of recession has been achieved. (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 177)

Compare comments by Russell 1991, 193. In her doctoral dissertation on landscape depictions in Aegean Bronze Age art, A. Chapin (1995) discloses similar challenges faced by the researcher seeking to describe the

shown only in profile view, complicates our understanding of how such a scene might have appeared in reality, making it difficult to know exactly what we are looking at. Groenewegen-Frankfort wrote that the siege scene's "wild pattern of diagonals nowhere achieves the illusion of recession or of topographical coherence," but she also notes that "the boldness of this attempted short cut at landscape perspective on a vast scale is astounding" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 178). The artist's concern with producing the illusion of space may have arisen from the desire to make a visual story that has all the drama and excitement of a first-hand account, a motivation that could, as Winter believes, further stem from a conviction that "the 'truer' the space, the greater the degree of historicity" (Winter 1981, 24).

"True" pictorial space of this sort also has implications for the way we perceive temporal duration in the relief's narrative. J. Russell assesses the relationship thus:

In this relief series, space is used as an analogue of time. The progression of figures through the continuous space represented in the reliefs is used to express temporal sequence...the more expansive landscape patterns of Sennacherib's reliefs provide a strong visual link between episodes, emphasizing the continuity of location from one episode to the next and thereby strengthening the unity of the narrative. (Russell 1993, 63-64)

In comparison with the reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II, where the narrative was divided into separate scenes of action presented in an order that did not always follow a unidirectional sequence of reading, the flow of action in the Lachish reliefs from approach to capture to the taking of prisoners, booty, and tribute, is cogent and effortless.

This is not to say that we are consistently "presented with simultaneous action within a single space" as has been attested by some (e.g., Winter 1981, 24). The inclusion in the siege scene of events that could conceivably take place only after and not during the

various strategies conceived by Aegean artists for rendering scenic space and the disposition of figural elements in depth. The terminology devised by Chapin is among the most useful developed to date.

storming of the city,¹²¹ reminds us that visual narrative in the ancient Near East frequently contravenes reason, and often follows the dictates of pictorial economy by associating the future with the past in an image ostensibly framed to capture the "present" moment.

2.3.4 The Dance of Death in Simultaneous and Slow Motion Time: Ashurbanipal's Tales of the Hunt

Sennacherib had referred to his sumptuously appointed building as the "Palace Without a Rival" (Ussishkin 1982, 60), and it is likely that his grandson Ashurbanipal (669-627 B.C.) sought to challenge that title when he constructed his North Palace at Nineveh. The wealth of reliefs recovered from Ashurbanipal's state apartments attests to the high degree of skill possessed by his craftsmen. Perhaps it was his confidence in the ability of these artists to convey his official history in pictorial form that prompted the king to limit inscribed text in his decorated rooms to the epigraphs that accompany some of his battle and hunt narratives.¹²² Ashurbanipal may have been influenced by Sennacherib in the precedence he gives to storied imagery, but the younger king also had quite different aesthetic proclivities, the most conspicuous being the rejection of his predecessor's experiments in quasi-illusionistic recession for an ordering of figural scenes in single, double,

121. What is referred to here is the line of prisoners being led out of the city gates, and the foreground scene showing Assyrians impaling men on stakes. Such events, as Ussishkin 1992, 102, also notes, clearly represent later stages in the conquest of Lachish, yet are pictorially integrated with scenes of the siege proper. The pictorial "siege" formulation which incorporates images of exiting prisoners and impaling the vanquished with actual siege activity, continues as an artistic topos in battle narratives of Ashurbanipal's reign: see his depictions of a campaign against the Elamites, illustrated in Reade 1983, fig. 99.

122. P. Garardi, who is currently researching inscriptions associated with Ashurbanipal for the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project in conjunction with the University of Toronto, has observed that he was the only Assyrian king to omit the use of lengthy inscriptions on threshold blocks, across the protective genii that habitually flank palace doorways, and on other wall surfaces of the palace complex: "Cartoons, Captions, and War: Neo-Assyrian Palace Reliefs," lecture delivered at the University of Toronto, May 10, 1995, and personal communication.

and even triple rows of registers. Whether his compositional preferences were motivated by a hyper-refined artistic sensibility (cf. Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 178), a deliberate archaism, or an appreciation for the advantages multiple registers proffer in "cramming yet more narrative, with figures on a yet smaller scale, into the limited space available on orthostates" (Reade 1980a, 74; cf. Winter 1981, 26), the sculptures produced during his reign are regarded as the highest achievement in Assyrian visual narrative.¹²³

The most remarkable representations picture Ashurbanipal engaging in that venerable royal pastime, the hunting of wild game. It is a theme treated in several parts of the palace, although those reliefs located in the west entrance portal "S" and the connecting corridors "R" and "A" have been studied more comprehensively (Figs. 52-53). The recurrent story of the hunt may be said to begin and end on the opposing walls of the sloping passageways A/R (Güterbock 1957, 69; Reade 1980b, 83). The southwest walls illustrate a long procession of servants apparently heading out of the palace on their way to the hunt; they bear weapons and an assortment of hunting equipment and are followed by the king's hounds and chariot. A small portion of the return trip is preserved on the opposite (northwest) wall of R, where servants file back into the palace, carrying the carcasses of slain lions. All representations occupy a single register and are in a scale two-thirds lifesize.

The middle part of the narrative, that is, the events of the hunt(s) proper, occurs on the back (south) wall of chamber S.¹²⁴ There the eleven panels forming the wall surface

123. The most significant collection of sculpture surviving from Ashurbanipal's North Palace was divided between the British Museum and the Louvre. The palace's excavation history, candidly related by Barnett (1970, 31-33; 1976), is a fascinating tale in itself. Gadd 1936, is the primary source for details on the reliefs discussed here, especially his pp. 172-98, 202-8.

124. The study by Meissner and Opitz 1939, provides the most extensive foldout reconstructions of the hunt reliefs from Room S, as well as drawings of the friezes from Corridor R. See too Gadd 1936, 183-87, and Barnett 1976, 19. The subject of the hunt was also featured on now-missing, single register compositions located on the short southwest wall of Room S. Slab numbers 3, 4, and 5 there showed the king lion hunting from oared galleys on a river. Single register hunt scenes in a landscape setting were likewise positioned on the opposite walls, beside the entrance pillars (slabs 17-21; see Barnett 1976, 19).

(nos. 6-16) have been divided into three horizontal bands that relate at least "six individual hunting adventures" (Güterbock 1957, 69). Each register represents an independent unit; there is no evident continuity in the depictions from one register to another. The registers may be viewed in any order, although there is a tendency to reconstruct or narrate the action from the bottom band up, following an unfolding of events that escalates in terms of the challenging nature of the prey and the dramatic intensity of the encounter shown (see Meissner and Opitz 1939, Taf. III) (Fig. 53). The lowest band contains two separate scenes. At the extreme left the king fires arrows from behind a hillock at gazelles that have been herded in his direction by a servant. The adjacent scene extends over the remaining seven panels of this bottom register, depicting the king again, but now on horseback, firing arrows at a flock of wild asses that are further assaulted by packs of dogs and more of the king's servants.

These are portrayals of simultaneous action, unlike the scenes of lion hunting in the middle and top registers where distinct stages of the hunt are represented. On the middle band the king appears three times in what may be three separate incidents, one located to the left and two to the right of a central image of Ashurbanipal and his men surveying two of the dead animals.¹²⁵

This interest in picturing certain critical parts of the hunt is pursued even farther in the topmost band (Fig. 54). There the king's encounter with a lion is shown in a kind of cinematic slow motion, where the animal, rendered several times, "is successively transformed by the temporal progress of the narrative" (Russell 1991, 222). First, to the left of an unrelated scene, we see the lion released from a wooden cage. It is then hit by the

125. None of these images are accompanied by inscriptions and there are, of course, other possible interpretations. For example, it could be argued that the same lion is featured in the scenes on panels 10 and 8 if one postulates that the king first attacks the animal with his mace and then finishes him off with his spear.

king's arrow, lunges at Ashurbanipal (well-protected by his servant's shield and spear), and is subsequently bested by the king's dagger. If the images themselves were not enough to suggest that we are looking at a stop-action rendition of the killing of one lion, the interpretation is also substantiated by another, almost identical representation found in the same room, which bears a descriptive label that makes the artist's intention quite clear.¹²⁶

The same strategies are employed in related large-scale hunts disposed in single registers adorning the so-called "lion room" (Room C), a corridor connecting A/R with the inner court.¹²⁷ The hunt imagery there, which includes familiar episodes of released and assailed game, along with more unusual anecdotal scenes of civilian spectators, often integrates or merges contemporaneous action with representations showing sequences of events in which the king is repeated in strip-cartoon fashion.¹²⁸ Noting the considerable number of lions - eighteen on the north wall alone (Reade 1983, 54) - some authors have supposed that we have here additional instances of the same animal being represented more than once:

we are not meant to imagine as many lions as are represented, the large number depicted being the same four or five shown in successive actions, as in a "still" film. (Barnett 1970, 31; cf. Reade 1983, 54)

In comparison to their artistic precursors in the throneroom of Ashurnasirpal II, the series of hunting narratives in Ashurbanipal's palace are extremely complex, both in their elaborated treatment of the theme through the addition of episodes and a third register, and

126. The inscribed representations, though found in Room S, fell into that space from an upper storey room. See Meissner and Opitz 1939, taf. XV-XVI, and Gadd 1936, 187 (BM 124886, 124887). The epigraphs on these slabs were first published in H. C. Rawlinson, *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia I*, 1861, London, R. E. Bowler: pl. 7, no. IX, A-E.

127. See descriptions of the panels in Gadd 1936, 181-3, 186-7. The ensemble in Room C has not been completely published, but Barnett 1970, 31-33, 1976, 12-13, and Reade 1980b, 83 and 1983, 53-60, are most informative. Excellent plates are found in Hall 1928, pls. XLVII-XLIX; Barnett 1976; Reade 1983, figs. 77-78, 80-83. Like the hunt scenes on the walls of Room S, those in Room C have no captions.

128. Reade 1979b, 106, refers to such representations as having "internal strip-cartoons."

in the manifold ways in which the beholder can activate the tales told by the pictures (cf. Winter 1981, 26). Winter has deftly observed the intricacies of reading permitted by the multi-registered format, where "Ashurbanipal plays with both register and field," and "visual rhythms that aid the reading of the narrative are established not only across a single register, but from register to register...so that one takes in the movement of all registers at once" (1981, 26).

The pictorial richness made possible by additional registers and the increased amount of information they can accommodate has the potential to confound as well as enlighten, perhaps even to the extent that the beholder is distracted from the narrative(s) they contain. L. Bersani and U. Dutoit have concentrated on this aspect of Assyrian art, highlighting the "formal relationships" observable in the hunt reliefs from Room S that work to subvert the visual story, "encouraging us to emphasize what might be called counternarrative organizations and identifications" (Bersani and Dutoit 1985, 9).¹²⁹ Positioning their arguments in terms of psychoanalytic criticism, these authors find Ashurbanipal's narratives most instructive as visual elaborations of fetishism, desire, and sado-masochistic tendencies: the lion hunt reliefs are seen to contain compositional features that shift our focus away from their apparent subject - violence and the king's skill in killing - toward other, non-narrative representations and aesthetic relationships/pleasures.¹³⁰

Studies following conventional approaches to pictorial narrative through analyses of style, iconography, and the use of texts to establish meaning in imagery will obviously produce conclusions quite different than these. They will also tend to ask and seek answers

129. See also Bersani and Dutoit 1979, on Ashurbanipal's lion hunt narratives, especially pp. 18-21. Insightful comments on their theories are made by Winter 1981, 26, and in two book reviews by W. Davis (1988a-b).

130. See, in particular, Bersani and Dutoit 1985, 24-39, 41, 108, on sado-masochistic aspects of the relief's formal structures, and pp. 110-25, on "desire."

for different questions. When art is seen as a manifestation of the subconscious mind, for example, the researcher soliciting explanations for the given culture's artistic practices may tend to wonder about what "‘formal relations’ signify in the registers of perception, desire, and reflection, and for whom, for which system of the self or social group" (W. Davis 1988a, 447). If, on the other hand, artistic production is assessed with a view to its relationship to the physical world, and/or to religious or socio-political matters, the researcher's queries may be closer to those articulated by Barnett in his musings about the lion hunts in Room C of Ashurbanipal's palace:

what are we to make of this...slightly improbable scene of wholesale slaughter by a royal huntsman of unerring skill, dressed in such unsuitable attire? Is it simply a sort of ritual or symbolic scene in which the king is traditionally pictured as defender of his people...against the beasts of the untamed desert? Did it really happen? Or was it merely the exaggeration and flattery suitably offered to an oriental despot? (Barnett 1970, 31-32)

2.3.5 Summary and Observations

The problematic questions of identity and definition that face researchers absorbed with early Egyptian and early Mesopotamian visual narration are absent in the literature dealing with Assyrian art. The survey given here is intended to point out not only the varied nature of narrative art in this culture, but the main approaches that have been adopted for analyzing it. As represented by the selection of palace reliefs surveyed above, Assyrian narrative imagery yields an unexpected multiplicity of responses to the challenge of telling stories in stone and bronze. And it is on the ways and means of such telling that the relevant publications have concentrated.

In common with the other ancient societies surveyed in this chapter, portraiture is absent; individuation and narrative significance is provided in the form of attributes (often

weapons), costumes, scale, and pose. The figures (human and animal) speak to us primarily through their placement in the composition and the use of body language. Some of these postures and gesticulations are self-evident in meaning, though many are ambiguous and defy explication; a formal study of them has not yet been produced. When inscriptions or labels accompany the images, the relationship between the two is indirect or complementary: generally the two media relate somewhat different narratives and information - another instance of the pictures not illustrating the text.

As was the practice in Egyptian art, in Assyria the types of events portrayed in narrative form were limited to military and hunt activities where both the starring role and the authorial voice belong to the king (cf. Winter 1981, 17). It has been surmised that in order to be effective, narrative presentations of such subjects require: action, profile views, directionality, sequentiality, and specific elements (Winter 1981, 2). The latter might involve various kinds of equipment and background details like architectural and landscape features which establish a setting for the action(s) represented. Sennacherib's experiments in perspective and the emphasis his artists place on scenic values appear to have been prompted by a desire to create "narrative clarity" even "at the expense of visual reality" (Reade 1980a, 72).

Often touted as being "as close as any art we know to linear non-transgressive storytelling" (Bersani and Dutoit 1985, 52), Assyrian narrative reliefs in fact rarely picture a story or event in an uninterrupted progress of action that takes us through it all from beginning to end:

The master artists selected mostly "climactic" scenes of actual battle or death of the enemy, perhaps from pre-existing formulae; there are few of the "beginnings" or "explanatory middles" like scenes of preparation for war, crossing territory, etc., we expect in other narratives. (W. Davis 1988b, 136)

And, as we have seen, though the Assyrian artist tends to order his stories in

registers that provoke a certain reading (e.g. from left to right, or in the case of multiple registers, bottom to top), his imagery does not always correspond to or "observe linear spatiotemporal laws" (W. Davis 1988b, 136). Some scenes in battle narratives - those of the home camp for instance - can serve double duty as the locus of activities that occur both before and after those depicted to either side of them. In such cases the sequence of events in the narrative is recovered through a viewing pattern that zigzags or leapfrogs from one image group to another and back again, rather than proceeding unidirectionally along the register band from one contiguous scene to the next. Moreover, action from different moments in time is sometimes combined in one scene, and any given pictorial ensemble may include subjects or events rendered in simultaneous, sequential, or even slow motion time. Occasionally the narrative is interrupted or "offset by entirely nonlinear structures, like symbolic as well as formal echoes between event types positioned above/below one another in two register orthostats" (W. Davis 1988b, 136; cf. Smith 1965, 118-25).

There is likely no all encompassing explanation for why the Assyrian artist chose certain solutions over others. The general perception is that pictorial narrative in Assyria from the ninth to the seventh century B.C., evolved toward more coherent and continuous compositions and increasingly sophisticated ways to illustrate events in time and space (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951; Güterbock 1957; Winter 1981). This reckoning may be more intellectually appealing than it is accurate. Numerous factors must have interacted to determine the forms visual narratives took in any given reign. The Bronze Gates of Shalmaneser III demonstrate not only that early Assyrian artisans possessed virtually all the skill requisite for the making of accomplished picture-stories, but too that the kind of material used, the monument type involved, and considerations like visibility all had a bearing on how a narrative relief was structured. The presence of multiform "narrativities"

in Assyrian reliefs has even been attributed to the character and flexibility of the "basic unit of composition" in Assyrian art:

A single one-register panel at least twice as long as high and containing a stereotyped "action formula" (e.g. town siege, king reviewing prisoners) - was handled quite variously in different cycles, from more or less "iconic" to more or less "continuous." The logic of these cycles is often difficult to reconstruct partly, I think, because the building-block method did not easily admit narrative at all, but retained some of the self-sufficient hieratic qualities of earlier and contemporary glyptic. (W. Davis 1988b, 135)

2.4 Greek Traditions of Visual Narration ca. 800-150 B.C.

Having a long history of contact with Egypt and the Near East, Greece was well-acquainted with and frequently influenced by the artistic accomplishments of those parts of the ancient world. Nonetheless, when narrative is detected in Greek art it has its own unique identity. The court-based artisans of Egypt and Assyria were attentive to the challenges of creating settings for the portrayal of significant events in multifigured, usually large-scale works. In contrast, the Greek artist concentrated on the human actor, displaying less regard for the incorporation of aspects of locality or environment; in Archaic and Classical art human deeds are often depicted in a pictorial void.¹³¹ And while commemorative and monumental objects are frequently the source of visual narrative in Egypt and the Near East, in Greece narrative representations appear in numerous media: pottery, wood panels, bronze fibulae and shield bands, ivory plaques, architectural and freestanding sculpture, and wall paintings (Shapiro 1990, 114). These objects are found in all Greek regions, though products issuing from the popular Athenian workshops have been favoured for examination by most authors.

131. Compare comments on this by Hanfmann 1957, 78.

It was mentioned in Chapter 1 that the first serious art historical discussions of visual narrative centred on Attic vase painting of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. Widely conceived as the representation of events from myth or epic, visual storytelling in Greek art has customarily been studied from the viewpoint of iconography. Such research often takes the form of a chronological charting of the way a story is presented over several generations, observing how time, place of production, and function affect changes in portrayal.¹³² Some studies attempt to establish the extent to which figure scenes mirror accounts in literary sources, although many authors admit that the prototypes for Greek narrative imagery are diverse: equally probable origins for picture-stories include oral tales and poetry, drama, contemporary history and politics, and the artist's personal vision and invention.¹³³ Even Robert's pioneering analysis recognized that in Greek vase painting we are seldom faced with a case of straightforward illustration; a separate tradition of *Kunst* exists.¹³⁴

In the 1990s iconographically based studies of Greek narrative art have been censured for neglecting "reading" and "interpretation" in deference to mere "identification" (Sparkes 1991, 71-73; Goldhill and Osborne 1994, 5). Those writers promoting an alternative, iconological method tend not to treat the subject of pictorial narrative *per se*.¹³⁵

132. An essential reference work in this sort of taxonomical study is the Kahil, L. ed., *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, (1981-) Zurich. See also comments by Sparkes 1991, 64-71.

133. Sparkes 1991, 63-65, mentions some of the formative literature and debates on these issues. J. Carter 1972, 27, argues that contact with the East conditioned the appearance of mythological narratives in Greece, while Powell 1992, 180-85, feels the introduction of the alphabet around 800 B.C. had the greatest impact on the narrative style in early Greek art. For various opinions regarding the notion that the Homeric verses were a compelling force behind the artistic urge to create picture stories see: Gombrich 1969, 127, 129; Carter 1972; Snodgrass 1979, 1987, ch. 5; Kannicht 1982; Boardman 1983; Hurwit 1985, 123; Benson 1988.

134. I thank Professor M. Miller for reminding me of this point; Robert's weighty contributions to the study of pictorial narration in Greek art are sometimes oversimplified and devalued in contemporary scholarship. See Robert 1881, and compare observations in a more recent study by Moret 1975, *passim*.

135. The impact of anthropological and structuralist thinking on studies of Greek narrative art is discussed by Snodgrass 1987, 138; Sparkes 1991, 71-73; Goldhill and Osborne 1994, 4-8. Questions about how to define visual narrative, when it originates, how it "works" (e.g. what pictorial devices come into play in narrative art),

Considering art from a more ahistorical, anthropological orientation, the iconologically minded analyst is generally curious about the artwork as a commodity of culture and ideology. His or her interest lies in what images tell us about social practices, institutions, and attitudes. Where the iconographer might, for instance, chronicle the appearance and development of Amazons in Greek art, detailing who is shown in what circumstances and how, the iconologist would concentrate on what the Amazon seems to say about the mind-set of ancient Athenian society, what Amazons meant or signified to those peoples.¹³⁶ In practise there is a certain amount of overlap in these approaches, but the literature cited below belongs overwhelmingly to the iconography "camp."

2.4.1 Narrative Beginnings: Geometric Figure Scenes and the "Typical or Particular" Debate Revisited

Researchers endeavouring to trace the genesis of Greek art's evident appreciation for storied imagery, invariably bypass the prehistoric, Minoan-Mycenaean past for the equally anonymous, but seemingly more accessible Homeric world of the eighth century B.C. The search normally entails the location of scenes that may be identified with tales of the gods or heroes.¹³⁷ In this investigation intense and divergent speculation surrounds the huge vessels serving as grave markers (and less often for actual inhumations) in the vicinity

are usually of little consequence in matters of iconology. As Goldhill and Osborne state, images do not just illustrate, they manipulate sets of associations, ideas, messages; to the "iconologist," the real story of interest is not always the one apparently pictured.

136. The catalogue and essay for the entry entitled "Amazones" by A. Kaufmann-Samaras and P. Devambez in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* vol. 1 part 1: 586-653, illustrates well the iconographical approach summarized here. For a representative example of an iconological investigation of the Amazon in Greek art, see: Henderson 1994, 85-137.

137. To the majority of authors the term "visual narrative" pertains exclusively to depictions of mythological subject matter. See, for example: Hanfmann 1957, 72; J. Carter 1972, 49; Meybloom 1978, 57; Hurwit 1985, 107; Boardman 1990, 57.

of Athens ca. 760-700 B.C. The intricate scenes on these monuments include funerary themes like the lying in state of the dead (*prothesis*), processions of mourners, and the corpse being brought by chariot to the grave (*ekphora*), as well as representations of land and sea battles.¹³⁸

Like all "Geometric" period monuments, so-called for the style of filling ornament featured and their angular, silhouetted human and animal forms, the character of these depictions is formulaic, with "figure types and figure schemes repeatedly employed in different combinations" (Ahlberg 1971b, 285). The inherent anonymity of this imagery makes it difficult, if not impossible, to determine narrative from non-narrative art as this venture has normally been undertaken, namely where the former is seen to comprise only renderings of persons and happenings identifiable from legend or myth (*Sagenbild*), and the latter comprises representations of the typical activities and rituals of everyday life (*Lebensbild*).¹³⁹

The scenes on a Late Geometric krater in the Metropolitan Museum of New York¹⁴⁰ exemplify the problematic aspects of applying this kind of stringent categorization in the context of Greek art of the eighth century B.C. (Fig. 55). On the first of three bands of figural representations a large warrior, so marked by his helmet, lies on a grand bier. Two much smaller figures appear in his proximity, one standing by his head touching his mouth, the other sitting near his feet (Fig. 56). Six additional figures are shown seated on chairs "below" (presumably "in front of") the bier. Facing this central image to the left are

138. The most specialized studies on these vessels and their iconography are by Ahlberg, 1971a, 1971b; and Ahlberg-Cornell, 1992.

139. Kannicht 1982, 72-76, discusses the inadequacies of these distinctions and the tradition of German scholarship that devised them, as does Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, 317-19 and n. 20, p. 332.

140. New York, Metropolitan Museum 14.130.15; attributed to the workshop of the Hirschfeld Painter. The bibliography on this krater is vast; the most current summary is given by Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, n. 49, p. 333. Thorough descriptions and illustrations occur in Ahlberg 1971b, 240-52, figs. 22 a-i.

eleven (female?) figures with arms raised, hands to their heads, in what is taken to be a mourning gesture.¹⁴¹ To the right, also facing the *prothesis* scene, is a row of warriors culminating with an unusual depiction of "Siamese twins," that is, a figure with one apparent torso, two heads, four arms and four legs. The helmeted soldiers wear swords at their waists and carry an assortment of food offerings (fish, fowl, quadruped). This uppermost band continues on the back of the vessel, featuring two warriors with Dipylon shields¹⁴² placed beside concentric ornaments and, further along, another depiction of Siamese twins, here facing a single warrior with whom they carry or grasp a tripod (Fig. 57).

The other two bands show processions of chariots. In the first frieze the vehicles are drawn by two horses. In the lower one warriors with Dipylon shields drive single-horse chariots, with the exception of "two chariots on the right that contain nude Siamese twins driving pairs of horses" (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, 324).

These odd double-figures, which appear four times on the krater, have stimulated argumentation over the question of whether the scenes represent a pictorial version of a passage in the *Iliad* where Nestor recalls the funeral games of King Amarynkeus (*Iliad* XXIII, 638-42). The text describes a notorious chariot race that took place at those games, in which Nestor was beaten by the "Aktorione-Molione," Siamese twin brothers whose biological anomaly gave them a certain advantage in this particular competition. Several authors have identified the scenes and figures on the New York vase with this incident, some even maintaining that the presence of the twin figures in three distinct activities - at

141. Observations on the gender of the figures and the meaning of their gestures are made by many authors: see, for example, Ahlberg 1971b, 240-52, and Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, 324.

142. This distinctive form of shield - essentially circular in shape with semi-circular cut-outs on each side - has been extensively discussed, and its meaning remains a matter of some controversy among Classical historians. Some see it as an adaptation of the Bronze Age figure-of-eight shield, which thus casts a certain heroic signification upon the Geometric representations featuring it, while other authors maintain that the shields are neither fictional nor indicative of heroic content, but are based on an actual Boiotian shield type. See Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, n. 51, p. 333-34, for a current review of the "Dipylon debate."

the bier, with the tripod, and in the chariot procession/race - intimates that the scenes are ordered in a way reflective of temporal sequence, hence representing a "prototypical" example of "continuous narrative."¹⁴³

Opposed to this explanation are commentators who see the shape of the "twins" either as an artistic device to indicate overlapping figures, such as is frequently used in the depiction of pairs of chariot horses,¹⁴⁴ or, more sceptically, as a curiosity of representation occasioned by a "shortage of space or carelessness" (Cook 1972, 35-36). For most observers on the dissenting side of the dispute, the monument in question, like dozens of other pots decorated with *prothesis* scenes, pictures the rituals and activities of contemporary life; lacking specific myth/epic associations, these sorts of representations are not, they feel, properly considered as narrative.

Hanfmann long ago declared the futility of attempts to detect mythological subjects in the "generalized" forms of Geometric art. He also inferred the existence of another class of pictorial narrative in Greek art of this period when he noted that although "the elements of specification and individuation are...slight," some Geometric representations do tell stories:

Their stories remain indefinite as to time and space, and general in their narrative content...We can read the actions in generic terms and respond to the emotional impact of the repetitive gestures of the mourners. (Hanfmann 1957, 72)

The populous, expressive figurations in Geometric art do indeed convey the impression that they "were drawn to tell something" (Ahlberg 1971b, 286), and this

143. Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, 324. It should be mentioned that there is some disagreement amongst Homeric specialists as to whether or not the ancient poet refers to twin, or Siamese twin brothers in this passage. For comments on this and on viewing the scenes as a continuous narration, see Ahlberg 1971b, 250-51; Froning 1988, 185-86 (where the scenes are called "eine Vorstufe der kontinuierlichen Darstellungsweise"); and instructive remarks and bibliographic references by Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, 324, and 334, nn. 53-54.

144. Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, 324, and 334, n. 55.

perception of their complexity and purposefulness has contributed to an undercurrent of reservation about the limiting delineation of the concept of narrative in examinations of early Greek art to date. In the last decade A. Snodgrass advocated "a wider definition of the term 'narrative'" in considering it to apply to "every scene in which even one distinctive action is shown, whether that action is taken from a recognized legend or from the ordinary experience of contemporary life" (Snodgrass 1982, 14-15). The most current enquiries likewise grant that myth represents only one possible source for, or manifestation of narrative in visual form. Pictorial narration can be specific or generic, mythological, historical, biographical, fantastic, religious, or any combination of the above (e.g. "mytho-historical" or "generalized heroic").¹⁴⁵ Observations like these point to the importance of distinguishing between the essential components of any story or narrative on the one hand, and the content or subject matter of a given story, on the other.

This is acknowledged in the newest contribution to the literature on Greek narrative art,¹⁴⁶ which states that an image providing the

potential for seeing...a series of actions or oppositions, a setting, and references to related stories, characters, or ideas fulfils the basic requirements of narration, regardless of whether a picture can be related to a specific mythological story and set of characters or not. (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, 319)

Using *ekphrasis* in the *Iliad* as his guide, M. Stansbury-O'Donnell gains insight into both "narrative structure" in Geometric vase painting and how these pictures were likely

145. Insightful observations on the nature of Geometric narrative and the interpretive range of the Dipylon representations are offered by Hanfmann 1957, 72, n. 5; Hemelrijk 1970, 168; Ahlberg 1971a, 67-69; 1971b, 285-87; 1992, 20-21 (seeing many "individualized" elements on the large Geometric vases, which she feels denote the actual life events or personal history of the deceased); Snodgrass 1980, 51-58; 1982, 16-18; 1987, chapter 5; Benson 1988, 69-76; Rombos 1988, 34; Coldstream 1991, 49-52; Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, esp. 317-20, 324.

146. My sincere thanks to Professor M. Stansbury-O'Donnell for providing me with offprints of his recent publications; it is unfortunate that his forthcoming book on the subject of narrative in Greek art was not available at the time of writing.

apprehended by the eighth-century viewer.¹⁴⁷ He is able to reconstruct a "past, present, and future set of events" from the complicated episodes on the New York krater, which recount the actions of many participants in the various phases of an elaborate ritual of death:

there clearly seems to be some kind of narrative at work, and incidents or objects can call forth a story to explain themselves. The present time seems to be the transition from the *threnos* performed by the mourners to the presentation of the offerings...The next stages of the story on the krater are probably indicated by the warriors who will present their offerings before the final deposition of the corpse. Here, the processions of chariots underneath the frieze with the bier and the disposition of the tripod...provide further depictions of the future events implied by the main scene. (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, 327)

The germ of a story may also be reclaimed in certain other Geometric figure scenes where the compositional format is much more basic. A scene on a krater fragment from Argos (ca. 750-735) provides an apt example (Fig. 58).¹⁴⁸ Bordered by solid bands and geometric designs, this scene depicts a figure wearing a high headpiece and handling a large horse with two reins in one hand and a long stick in the other. The animal stands against a dotted surface that is interrupted by a series of zigzagging lines at the bottom of the image. A crane-like bird at the lower left corner and two fish, one placed vertically to either side of the horse, obviously signify a watery locale, as do the wavy lines, while the dots below the horse could denote a pebbled shore. Four small naked figures with upraised arms and some sort of branch or vegetation in their hands are placed above the horseman and his beast, facing the right at the very top of the composition.

147. In particular, the description of the Shield of Achilles is used by the author as a "model for understanding the ways in which an eighth-century B.C. viewer might have understood a contemporary painting or relief, and more specifically, how they may have perceived a narrative within these compositions" (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, 317).

148. Argos Museum, C240. See Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, fig. 19.5, and bibliography on the piece, p. 334, n. 66.

Religious, mythological, and even emblematic affiliations have been proposed for the scene, all with some degree of conviction and skill. Especially pertinent to the present study is another reading by Stansbury-O'Donnell that focuses on the intrinsically narrative elements of this image, finding parallels between its organization of the story matter and that of the New York krater:

one could point to the actions of the horse-leader as comprising the essence of the present moment. The tether of the horse and the angle of the prod suggest a vibrant activity... . The dancers have accompanied the central figures to the shore, but now appear to stand to the side as observers. This shift in action from one part of the ritual to another is similar to that signalled by the arriving warriors who bear offerings on the New York krater, while the women on the other side of the bier stand more quietly. The dancer's palms and the horse-leader's headdress might have suggested a specific occasion or context for the scene...The other inanimate objects could also have provided clues to past or present, as well as to the future course of events. (Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995, 329-30)

The tale nascent in these pictures will never be recovered fully by us, and for some authors the question of whether such images represent the first examples of narrative art in Greece is still unresolved. In spite of this, it seems clear that many Geometric compositions exhibit the rudiments of a story, and they impel us to contemplate and fashion an explicatory narrative in response.

2.4.2 *Mῦθος*, *Χρόνος*, and the "Greek Revolution" in Naturalistic Representation: Essential Developments in Pictorial Narrative ca. 700-150 B.C.

The seventh century B.C. poses fewer conundrums to investigators of visual narrative, and, as with Assyrian imagery, the nature of the art admits the consideration of other matters. The emphasis in scholarship treating that century right down to the end of the Greek period proper shifts from troubling over the "if" or "what" of pictorial narration, to examining the various ways in which artists represent "men, time, and space...the three

major challenges which the task of storytelling presents to a sculptor or painter" (Hanfmann 1957, 71).

Solutions similar to those devised by artisans in Egypt and the Near East to facilitate characterization and recognition in their picture stories appear early in the mythological depictions of the Orientalizing phase of Greek art. Discussions about narrative in this period are usually introduced by a representation on the neck of an amphora from Eleusis (ca. 670-640 B.C.) executed in the short-lived "black and white style" (Fig. 59).¹⁴⁹ The scene shows a bearded giant seated at the extreme right of the composition, holding a cup in one hand while the other grasps a long stake that is being driven into his eye by three much smaller figures. Though not one of these actors is identified by labels, few familiar with the adventures of Odysseus would fail to appreciate this as a description of the blinding of the one-eyed monster Polyphemus by Odysseus and his men (*Odyssey* IX, 39-566). And to the cognoscenti the pictorial version of the story appears remarkably complete, despite its simple one-scene composition. For the artist has subsumed different stages of the story by showing "Polyphemus holding the cup which will lead to the drunkenness which will bring on the sleep which will give Odysseus the chance to blind him - as he is simultaneously shown doing" (Snodgrass 1982, 10). One could add to Snodgrass's analysis that even subsequent actions are indicated, since the Cyclops already motions to remove the poker from his eye.

This principle or method of visual narration, wherein two or more successive episodes of a story are included in one picture, was encountered above in the context of Egyptian and Assyrian battle scenes and has been variously named by authorities on Greek

149. See S. Morris 1984, 37-51, 122, pl. 6 (Eleusis Museum), for data on the Polyphemus Painter generally and this vase in particular. Some of the more instructive references to the piece in the context of discussions about visual narrative techniques include Hanfmann 1957, 72; Meybloom 1978, 59-60; Snodgrass 1982, 10 (with comparanda); Hurwit 1985, 166, 170-71; Shapiro 1994, 9.

art as "complementary," "simultaneous," or "synoptic" narrative.¹⁵⁰ Most frequently observed in works of the Archaic period (720-480 B.C.), examples of stories told by such means are fairly numerous in Greece and embrace monuments as diverse in materials, style, and chronology as the François Vase (ca. 570 B.C.) and the Parthenon pediments (438-432 B.C.).¹⁵¹ It may seem strange that the disregard for temporal and spatial unity characteristic of the synoptic narrative should be tolerated in the rational, sophisticated atmosphere of fifth century Athens. But J. Boardman reminds us that in the pre-camera universe, no visual story, particularly one contained in a single pictorial unit, was successfully transmitted without making reference to the causes and effects of the main action shown, allusions impossible in truly unified scenes (Boardman 1990, 59).

The notion of programmatic unity in the imagery of any given object or monument group is also in scant evidence among contemporaries of the Polyphemus Painter. Like the scenes on his name vase, which, below the blinding incident just described, features a lion and boar contest on the shoulder zone and a depiction of Perseus and the Gorgons on its

150. While Snodgrass 1982, 15, seems to agree with N. Himmelmann-Wildschütz (1967) that the method both he and Hemelrijk (1970, 166, 170) call "synoptic" was an early Greek "discovery," Boardman (1990, 59 and n. 10) rightly acknowledges its occurrence in earlier Egyptian and Assyrian art, and we have observed it above in both the Qadesh battle relief at Abu Simbel and Sennacherib's Lachish reliefs (see above sections 2.1.3, 2.3.2). The bibliographic development of the terminology for this kind of narrative picture, from Robert (1881) through Wickhoff (1895) and Weitzmann (1970), is well documented and summarized by Meybloom 1978, 70-72. Instructively, the typology of salient methods or styles of narrative presentation in Greek art has been modified very little since Weitzmann's book; Stansbury-O'Donnell's forthcoming monograph may alter this pattern. Boardman's objections to the applicability of the term "synoptic" notwithstanding, it is used here in preference to "complementary" or "simultaneous," as per Snodgrass 1982.

151. The synoptic treatment of a particular scene on the François Vase is discussed by Himmelmann-Wildschütz 1967; Snodgrass 1982, 11; and Shapiro 1990, 142. From Chiusi, the vase is housed in the Florence Museum 4209: essential data on the piece is given in Beazley 1956, 76.1, and plates of the whole pot as well as of the scene Snodgrass mentions occur in Carpenter 1991, figs. 1, 20.

The Parthenon pediments, well-illustrated in Stewart 1990, pls. 347-60, are cited as "splendid examples of complementary compositions" by Meybloom 1978, n. 134, p. 79; compare a similar analysis by Hanfmann 1957, 76. Pollitt 1986, 200, and Boardman 1990, comment upon the ambiguities of time/place relationships in Greek art generally, despite the Classical artists' propensity to "preserve a unity of time and space in narrative scenes" (Pollitt 1986, 200). For discussions of other instances of the synoptic approach in painting and sculpture from the Geometric period on, see Hemelrijk 1970; Meybloom 1978; Snodgrass 1982; Hurwit 1985, 170-1, 174, 263, 296; Shapiro 1994, 8.

belly, the mythological scenes on most seventh and sixth century B.C. vessels have at best a loose or allegorical connection (cf. Cohen 1983, 229-30; Hurwit 1985, 173). Exceptional in this sense is a relief pithos found on the Cycladic island of Mykonos (ca. 675-650 B.C.), whose depictions all relate events from the sack of Troy (Fig. 60a).¹⁵² The vase is further edifying in establishing that even in the early phases of Greek mythological narration, artists contrived different ways to tell a story. In this instance, the saga begins on the vessel's neck with an animated, synoptic account of the infamous wooden gift horse (Snodgrass 1982, 11; Hurwit 1985, 174). On the body of the pithos the bloody episodes that followed the Greeks' successful entry into Troy are illustrated in a number separate but contiguous panels disposed in three rows that combine to produce a kind of "serial narrative," anticipating the metopal arrangements of later Archaic and Classical buildings.¹⁵³

Although the synoptic approach is frequently seen, easily the most prevalent and economical form of visual story in Greek art is referred to as the "monoscenic" or "dramatic" narrative. Found in every phase but reviewed primarily in the context of vase painting of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., in this method only one poignant moment of a tale is portrayed in a single picture.¹⁵⁴ Climactic events are often chosen to convey the essential plot or outcome of a story: for example, Herakles shown in combat with the Nemean Lion

152. Currently in the Mykonos Museum, recent illustrations of the vase appear in Morris 1995, figs. 15.12a-d. Many publications mention this remarkable object. Most relevant here are remarks in Meybloom 1978; Snodgrass 1982; and Hurwit 1985.

153. The term "serial narrative" is used by Hurwit 1985, 173, who also describes a number of sixth century B.C. metopes with a similar "method of telling a single myth on a series of contiguous yet self-contained panels where the characters appear only once." This episodic form of storytelling is quite different than the "cyclic" and "continuous" methods discussed below, and underscores the great variety of narrative expression that exists in Greek art from an early date.

154. The monoscenic narrative evinces a more "rational" unity of time and place, and as such is usually associated with the Classical mentality (e.g. Weitzmann 1970, 14). See observations on monoscenic images by Hanfmann 1957, 73; Snodgrass 1982, 5; Hurwit 1985, 177; Markoe 1985, 60-63; Shapiro 1990, 7-8.

on an Attic black-figure amphora ca. 520 B.C.,¹⁵⁵ or Orestes in the act of slaying Aigisthos on a red-figure stamnos ca. 470 B.C.¹⁵⁶ A single tableau version of the death of Ajax painted by Exekias, on the other hand, finds the most telling moment to be the hero's preparation for suicide (Fig. 61).¹⁵⁷

In the opinion of certain authors it is moot whether monoscenic images like these, which excerpt from rather than recount a yarn in full, are properly considered narrative at all or are

narrative only for a spectator who recognizes the scene represented and, knowing the story to which the scene belongs, is able to associate it with its previous history and its outcome. (Meybloom 1978, 57)

Since these objects were created by and for a society well-acquainted with their iconic content, the objection may be somewhat academic. To the ancient viewer some monoscenic compositions would surely yield narrative potentialities as rich and resonant with meaning as single images of the crucifixion of Christ or Alice and the white rabbit do for us today. A. Stewart's comparison between "a single-figure personification" like the Nike from Samothrace (ca. 190 B.C.) and the complex chains of reliefs on the Pergamon Altar explains that the narrativity of these artworks does not dwell so much in their respective mono- and poly-scenic schemes as it does in the qualities with which the artist has imbued his subjects:

each encodes narrative values that prompt one to look for subtextual meanings and allusions: In each case the metanarratives are implicit in the renderings, lurking beneath and beyond its surface (Stewart 1993, 130).

The sculpted Nike, a magnificent winged female set on a base shaped like a ship's prow (Fig. 62), is for that writer a "full scale narrative" that makes the spectator the centre

155. Carpenter 1991, fig. 177, by Psiax; see entry in Beazley 1956, 292.1.

156. Carpenter 1991, fig. 354; data in Beazley 1963, 257.6.

157. Carpenter 1991, fig. 332. The vase is at Boulogne, Musée Communal inventory number 558; data in Beazley 1956, 145.18.

of an often-told story about the victorious return of the fleet (Stewart 1993, 143).¹⁵⁸ Several factors advance this process: the figure's momentary pose, the fact that she is provided with a setting for her actions, our understanding of what she signified culturally, and an appreciation of her siting within a sanctuary patronized by sailors.¹⁵⁹ Stewart's reading of the piece bears witness to its imposing capacity for narrativization:

A great sea battle has taken place, and we, the citizens, await anxiously on the shore for news. A ship pulls into view: Is it one of ours or an enemy? Suddenly, Nike alights on the ship, rushes forward, and throws out her arm to greet us with the news: The battle is won. (Stewart 1993, 143)

Notwithstanding the narrative connotations engendered by a monoscenic representation like the Nike, the modes of pictorial narration most accessible to the modern, if not the ancient, viewer of Greek art entail a combination of separate scenes. The mixture of images may be as elementary or as complicated as medium, artistic temperament, and story material decree. Some late black-figure pottery unites scenes on different parts of a vessel in an obvious, if abridged, narrative relationship, as when Exekias depicts the farewell of a nameless warrior on one side and the return of his dead body on the other side of an amphora in Berlin (ca. 540 B.C.).¹⁶⁰ P. Meybloom sees a "narrative trend" of another order on certain red-figure vases on which scenes drawn from myth and everyday life are juxtaposed and associated by theme or analogy. An example is a famous cup by the Foundry Painter, who portrays "men at work in a foundry" on the outside of the pot, while the inside "shows Hephaestus presenting Achilles' arms to Thetis, and thereby the

158. Stewart 1990, figs. 729-30, and 1993, figs. 48-50 (including a sketch reconstructing the approach and walled surround of the Nike statue), provides recent and readily attainable illustrations of this sculpture.

159. Stewart 1990, 215, and 1993, *passim*, gives an up-to-date synopsis of the excavation data on the Nike and discusses current issues regarding her dating, siting, and possible donor(s).

160. In Berlin's Staatliche Museen, 1718, from Chiusi; data in Beazley 1963, 144.5. Meybloom 1978, n. 89, p. 77, supplies extensive bibliographic references, and illustrates both sides of the vase in figs. 19-20.

foundry scenes come to symbolize the forge of Hephaestus" (Meybloom 1978, 61-62).¹⁶¹

These varieties of visual narration are not categorized in most typologies of Greek narrative art, which isolate only two main approaches to pictorial storytelling in multi-scene formats: the "cyclic" and "continuous" methods. Both terms have been revised or redefined somewhat since their initial uses by Robert, Wickhoff, and Weitzmann (cf. Chapter 1, section 1.2).¹⁶² The former, cyclic style usually refers to instances where a story is represented through a "sequence of several consecutive events each of which is portrayed as a separate visual unit" (Hanfmann 1957, 73). Essentially a series or "cycle" of individual monoscenic elements, this species of pictorial narrative may be used to represent single stories or to relate a group of stories or subjects about one protagonist.

In late Archaic and early Classical art, when cyclic narration develops, the heroic feats of Theseus and Herakles are popular topics (cf. Meybloom 1978; Hurwit 1985, 314, 347-9; Froning 1988). Numerous Attic vases, especially of the early fifth century B.C., picture legendary events from the life of Theseus in the manner of a cup by the Kodros Painter (Fig. 63).¹⁶³ On these pots two and three figure vignettes, each spotlighting the hero in action, are typically strung together against the dark, neutral background of the vessel, telling much of his personal history at a single glance. The square metopes of the

161. This cup from Vulci is in Berlin, Staatliche Museen, 2294. See references in Meybloom 1978, n. 95, p. 77, and data in Beazley 1963, 400.1. Illustrations of this vessel are numerous, the most available source being Boardman 1975, figs. 262.1-3.

162. Again, Meybloom 1978, 71-72, gives a comprehensive account of the various ways in which such terms have been used by different authors from Robert onward. More recent descriptions of these multi-scenic techniques of pictorial narrative (with further references) are found in Markoe 1985, 60-64; Pollitt 1986, 185-209; Shapiro 1994, 8-9.

163. This cup, which is in the British Museum, London, E 84, is noted and illustrated by Snodgrass 1982, fig. 1, p. 5. See also Beazley 1963, 1269.4. Carpenter 1991, 117-59, 160-83, gives full accounts of the iconographic development of the Theseus and Herakles imagery in these periods, and illustrates other quite similar "cyclic" vase paintings.

Doric frieze were optimal surfaces for this form of narrative art, and not surprisingly the most extensive versions of these heroic stories occur on public buildings like the Athenian Treasury at Delphi (510-480 B.C.), the Temple of Zeus at Olympia (470-458 B.C.), and the Hephaisteion in Athens (460-445 B.C.).¹⁶⁴

Iconographic research confirms that there is a certain amount of variety from monument to monument in cyclic renderings of the Herakles and Theseus epics, both with respect to what events are chosen for illustration and the order in which they appear.¹⁶⁵ In the continuous narrative, events in a story are broken down into successive stages wherein individual figures may also be repeated, but there is no explicit division of the picture into separate panels or units. The story tends to progress in a definite order, "thus creating a series of snap shots, so to speak, which have a unity of time and space within themselves but which must be viewed as a group in order for their meaning to be completely understood" (Pollitt 1986, 200).

Probably because it is a static equivalent of the film strip and hence familiar to the twentieth-century spectator, the majority of writers have defined pictorial narration in view of this one "genuine" technique of visual storytelling, against which all images of perceptible narrative interest are compared - usually unfavourably. In fact, instances of continuous narration are scarce and appear to be a contribution of the Hellenistic period (323-31 B.C.), although H. Froning has pointed out that precedents for the uninterrupted frieze-composition occur at various stages in the history of Greek art (Froning 1988). The

164. See plates and discussions of these respective monuments in Boardman 1978, figs. 213.1-8, pp. 157-60; 1985, figs. 22-23.6, pp. 33-50, and fig. 111, pp. 146-7, 169-72. See M. Miles, "A Reconstruction of the Temple of Nemesis at Rhamnus," *Hesperia* 58 (1989), 222, for the dating of these monuments.

165. See Carpenter 1991, 117-59, 160-83. Stewart (1996, 45) observes that the ancient painter in particular "avoided arranging episodes in a chronological sequence but grouped them according to what they thought would make a pleasing composition."

exemplification of this mode of picture story is the frieze carved on the interior face of the three walls forming the so-called Altar of Zeus at Pergamon (ca. 150 B.C.), located behind the Ionic colonnade of that structure's inner courtyard.¹⁶⁶ Measuring approximately 1.5 m in height with an estimated length of some 90 m, the subject of the frieze was Telephos, a fabled King of Mysia (the region of Pergamon) at the time of the Trojan War.¹⁶⁷

The birth to death *βίος* of this character as recorded by Apollodoros and other antique sources is long and convoluted. Highlights include his post-natal exposure on an Arcadian mountainside; being suckled by a doe and reared by shepherds; almost marrying his long-lost mother whom he recognizes just in the nick of time; a perennially festering wound caused by Achilles that can only be healed by rust from that hero's sword; the deliverance of the Greeks to Troy; and the founding of Pergamon where he dies after a long and gracious reign.¹⁶⁸

The myriad particulars of this life story are recounted in considerable detail on the frieze panels where the *dramatis personae* act out their parts in settings that range from a minimal indication of scenic elements to fully articulated environmental stages. Especially remarkable in this respect is the section representing the building of the box or raft upon which Telephos's banished mother Auge was set adrift by her father as punishment for her sexual impropriety with Herakles (Fig. 64).¹⁶⁹ Here the designers experiment with spatial effects by rendering the figures in a rocky background at different levels and in proportions

166. Stewart 1990, 210-11, notes that contemporary scholarship tends to identify the structure not as an altar to Zeus, but as "a hero-shrine for Telephos, the city's legendary founder." See Stewart 1990, figs. 712-16, and Pollitt 1986, fig. 312 (reconstruction drawing).

167. Dimensions are as cited by Stewart 1990, 211, whose descriptions of this monument, along with those of Pollitt 1986, 198-207, inform the account given here.

168. Tripp 1970, 550-1.

169. See Stewart 1990, fig. 713, and compare the new reconstruction drawings in Dreyfus and Schraudolph 1996.

that actually diminish in height near the top of the composition (Stewart 1990, 213).

Though physically uninterrupted, the frieze representations and the story they communicate are sectioned into discrete parts by quick changes of setting or by figures that turn their backs to one another (Stewart 1990, 212; 1996). The exact ordering of the scenes is uncertain, due both to the damaged nature of the remains and the fact that fragments of the frieze are dispersed throughout the world.¹⁷⁰ The viewer's experience is easier to reconstruct, and once more Stewart's description of the process is noteworthy:

The spectator's inability to take in more than short stretches at once encourages him to concentrate upon particulars...and to overlook repetitions. Forced to walk along the frieze in order to comprehend the whole, he becomes physically engaged in it "reading" the episodes like book chapters entitled "Telephos goes to Greece," "Telephos seizes Orestes," and so on. (Stewart 1990, 213)

The artistic language used is realistic and the ancient beholder/narrator would probably have had little difficulty following the story line. Nonetheless, he or she had to be quite familiar with the subject, for unlike the monumental Battle of the Giants depicted on the exterior side of the wall, here the names of the players were not inscribed as an aid to identification and interpretation.

E. Gombrich's influential writings of the 1960s persuaded many students of Greek art that the "Greek Revolution" in pictorial realism from the sixth to the fourth century B.C. was effected by the visual artist's desire to narrate the familiar stories of myth and legend with the same "eye witness" character seen in their literary narratives from the time of Homer onward.¹⁷¹ The gradual development and honing of the artists' skills in translating

170. The frieze was also not finished, as is evident in Stewart 1990, fig. 712; compare comments by that author p. 213, and see the new plan of the frieze in Dreyfus and Schraudolph 1996.

171. Gombrich 1969, 127-31. Authors like Snodgrass 1982, and Thomas 1989, 257-58, might be tempted to move the "revolution" back two centuries. Gombrich's "perceptualism" has come in for a great deal of criticism of late, e.g., Krauss 1982; Bryson 1983.

real world, visual experiences of human figures existing in space and time into immobile two and three dimensional objects was to reach its apex with the Hellenistic Age and sculptural masterpieces like the Nike of Samothrace. Art historically, the strategies of pictorial narration have been perceived to follow a corresponding evolution from early, one-act compositions marked by vague or non-existent spatial indication and quirky temporal expression, to the complex seriations of the Telephos frieze and later Greco-Roman art, in which depictions are more convincing and the story is disclosed progressively to the beholder. The continuous flow of landscape and action that unfurls on the Roman Column of Trajan (A.D. 113), where the recurring figure of that Emperor punctuates the story of his military conquests at regular intervals,¹⁷² customarily represents the endpoint of this grand narrative enterprise in ancient western art, until it is resurrected for different purposes in the Byzantine and Medieval Christian churches of Europe.

2.4.3 Summary and Observations

With its intense interest in the human actor, Greek art has given investigators of visual narration a considerable body of material from which to observe the operations of the picture story. So prevalent are scenes featuring key figures from myth and epic that even early unlabelled renderings of arming scenes and duelling warriors are habitually described as relating Homeric episodes (cf. Lowenstam 1992, 369). The large number of figure scenes, coupled with a general knowledge of the history and many of the myths and hero tales of the time, has allowed researchers to detect and quantify the narrative

172. Brilliant 1984, 90-123, provides the most fascinating analysis of the historical, docu-drama that is the Column of Trajan.

techniques outlined above. In common with Egypt and the Near East, these pictorial solutions express varying grades of narrative acuity. Synoptic and monoscenic story images are plainly more referential than explicit and demand greater erudition and familiarity on the part of the viewer than do some of the more fully episodic cyclic and continuous renderings. The conflation of events shown in the Polyphemus scene on the Eleusis amphora, for instance, is apprehended only by the informed beholder - to the ignorant simultaneous action is portrayed.

It is certain that the twentieth-century writers who created these four categories of narrative methods did not consider them to be exhaustive, and in fact there are many Greek monuments with a perceptible narrative content that do not fit precisely into this typology. The famous Parthenon frieze may serve as an example. Hanfmann fittingly characterized it as a sophisticated version of the sort of "pre-classical, timeless, 'expository' mode of telling a story" presented on the early Mesopotamian Standard of Ur (Hanfmann 1957, 76). Like Hanfmann, most writers refer to the Parthenon frieze as being a narrative work, even if there is much disagreement over the nature of the processional event alluded to in its lengthy composition (historical, mythological, and generic-ritual interpretations have been advanced).¹⁷³ Yet its continuous frieze does not present a "continuous narrative" in the terms of Robert and Weitzmann. Nor, clearly, do the descriptors synoptic, monoscenic or cyclic apply.¹⁷⁴ The storied relationships that sometimes exist between representations on different sides or segments of a given monument may also fall outside the parameters of the

173. Jenkins 1994 gives a good, recent summary (with references) of the diverse readings on the subject matter of the Parthenon frieze. See also Jeppesen 1963; Robertson 1975, 9-11; Boardman 1984, 210-15; 1990, 59; Harrison 1984, 230-34; Stewart 1990, 155-57; Jenkins 1995; Connelly 1996.

174. E. Harrison's comments on the narrative strategies of painters and sculptors in Classical Greece corroborate this observation. While some sculptural compositions evince "one-directional progressive narration," others have what she describes as a "centralized two-directional narrative that proceeds from centre to sides" (1983, 237). The south frieze of the Nike Temple belongs to the latter category (also termed a "centrifugal narrative"); my thanks to M. Müller for recommending Harrison's earlier study (1972).

narrative types described by these authors.

To date, few have advocated the amendment of the established classifications of narrative approaches in Greek art, although recent scholarship has recommended the adoption of a more comprehensive definition of pictorial narration. "Too many of our definitions of what constitutes pictorial narrative are conditioned by later developments, especially of the Hellenistic period" says Stansbury-O'Donnell (1995, 330), in reference to the tendency for writers to use continuous narration as the defining model for visual narrative in all periods. Not only is that strategy a latecomer but it is most unusual in Greek art, where stories tend to be shown as "a gathering of representative moments," rather than as the "chain of events" often portrayed in Roman art (Leander-Touati 1987, 30; cf. Boardman 1991, 82).

Working quite independently of Egyptologists and Assyriologists like Davis and Winter, but sharing their interest in articulating the principles and essential conditions of narrative in any medium, Stansbury-O'Donnell has revealed that the repetitive, generalizing nature of eighth century B.C. vase paintings does not belie their ability to recount stories with a great deal of detail and nuance. His observations carry the most relevance for considerations of narrative in Aegean Bronze Age art, where figure scenes are likewise anonymous, redundant, and replete with lively and anecdotal imagery.

2.5 Conclusions

The survey in this chapter was undertaken to satisfy several objectives. Any study positions itself in relation to its predecessors, the analyses of others often constituting the foundations for new investigations that extend their insights, and sometimes providing the

basis for antithetical discussion. The scepticism many scholars express toward the prospect of examining visual narrative in Aegean Bronze Age art is the direct consequence of some of the studies summarized here, particularly those written before the 1980s. This being the case, it was deemed necessary not only to see precisely what the authors of such works had to say about the subject, but also to reflect upon the implications of their premises, evaluating them both as systems of inquiry *per se*, and as possible models for this project. By puzzling through a number of principal monuments with them, we have also experienced what picture tales do and how they do it, giving us a kind of glossary of possibilities to consult when we turn to the images of prehistoric Aegean cultures. In addition, the exercise yields an art historical perspective on the question of visual narration, within which the characteristics or contributions of the Bronze Age Aegean may, eventually, be regarded.

A number of observations about the character and forms of art stories have been forwarded in the preceding synopsis of literature devoted to pictorial narration in certain ancient cultures, and it is worthwhile reviewing them collectively now. The lack of consensus in the way "narrative" is delimited by the investigators cited here is initially the most striking aspect of these studies. An earlier tendency to define narration as the depiction of important, usually historical events enacted by specific persons at specific locales and times has been revised in some newer commentaries, which include works of a more generalized mien wherein the integral ingredients of a story - events, actors, places - are, nonetheless, perceptible. This emphasis on the essential structure or components of narrative in any medium, whether conditioned by theories of narratology or simply by a perception that one is in the presence of a picture story, has the advantage of removing the researcher from the sticky and rather unsatisfying exercise of determining "specific" from "generic" subjects in prehistoric or unlabelled works of art. Hence, though images of

conflict - anonymous or otherwise - are quite widely recognized as presenting actions or happenings that are easily assimilated in a narrative relation by the viewer, many authors have also contemplated the narrative values of scenes portraying (seemingly) mythological, ritual, and fantastic events, submitting that the subject matter for picture stories is theoretically unlimited (e.g., Perkins 1957; Winter 1981; 1985; W. Davis 1993; Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995).

A concentration on elements or patterns of narrative has also provoked speculation about the operation and functions of narrative representations, and a few investigators have tried to describe what features rouse a beholder to narrativize an image or image group, as well as assess how dependent one's appreciation of a picture story is upon one's familiarity with the subject matter and learned codes of reading or interpretation. (Or, to paraphrase Goldhill and Osborne 1994, 5, to wonder about to what extent a picture tells a story, and to what extent narration is part of the *naming* of the picture.) Egyptian, Near Eastern, and Greek artists employed numerous devices both to clarify the relationships between the agents or performers in their image tales and to elucidate the nature of the situation or story pictured. Images incorporating or accompanied by written captions are common to most of these societies at some point in their development. They are one way to ensure that the beholder properly identifies the people and event(s) shown - provided, of course, that he or she is literate. Purely pictorial indicators or signals of narrative reading are imparted through the way figures are positioned in the compositional field, the orientation of their bodies, the direction of their gazes, and the expressive value of their gestures. These elements, as well as "stock" images used in tandem with particular details (of costume, setting, etc.), are the visual storyteller's lexicon.

The monuments illustrated here demonstrate that the way an art story is told may

vary considerably, not only from culture to culture but even within a given place and epoch. And then, as now, narrative art served a variety of purposes. It often recounts the ceremonies of life and death, and the exploits and activities (real and visionary) of those in a position to control or afford the services of the image-maker. Certainly, who commissioned the object, its function, scale, siting, as well as the abilities of the artist/designer, will all have had a bearing on its resultant form. Some writers have intimated that these forms manifest a greater or lesser level or degree of narrativity, depending on the amount of particularizing detail they present, their format, and the convincing nature of their depictions. In the hierarchy of visual narration suggested by the reflections of Groenewegen-Frankfort (1951, 1970), Gaballa (1976), Winter (1981, 1985), and Boardman (1990), images that recount an incident (preferably historical) with a clear directionality, a readily apprehended sequence of action, and a plethora of vivid and "telling" details are the truest or most perfect articulations of the art story; the farther away it is from this ideal, the less narrative the picture.

Few of the artworks introduced in this chapter approximate that paragon, though some do come closer than others. Instead, ancient pictorial narration, at least as indicated here, appears to be a more complex and hybrid creature, in which story, symbol, reality, and metaphor are frequently blended in compositional ensembles that are extraordinarily varied in the patterns of telling they employ. While it is reasonable in one sense to ascribe higher narrative status or value to depictions that display the sort of detail and pictorial continuity so many modern observers identify with the properly fashioned art story, it is not necessarily the case that images formulated with a minimum of particularization and a more associative or idiosyncratic temporal organization represented a diminished or "low grade" form of

narrative to the ancient viewer.¹⁷⁵

Indeed, research on the mentality of primarily oral cultures like these emphasizes that their notions of a story and story making are quite different from those of a literate culture such as ours (Brownlee 1995, 368).¹⁷⁶ The narratives fashioned by societies in which written communication is either absent or only partly practised tend to be highly formulaic and involve standardized themes in which the actors are types rather than individuals (Thomas 1989, 261-63; Donald 1991, 343; Lord 1991, 26-27, 36). The story line is not often a "strict linear presentation of events in temporal sequence" (Brownlee 1995, 368). Rather, the account may oscillate forward in time and back again, with events belonging to disparate moments frequently conflated.

Although these characteristics have been garnered from examinations of oral prose and not pictorial art, it is sensible to assume that the same properties would appear in various spheres, for "the habits of mind fostered by orality...are reflected in both the material products and the practices" of the [oral] culture (Thomas 1989, 260). Thus, for the prehistoric spectator there would probably be nothing odd or paradoxical about the "synoptic" mode of visual storytelling, nor would the digressive course of narrating observed in some of the works discussed above likely impress them as being anything other than "normal."

Informed by the diversity of narrative presentation apparent in the systems of visual narration in Egypt, the ancient Near East, and Greece, and too by the numerous means through which analyses of these picture stories have been constructed, we proceed now to

175. It is also important to bear in mind that "the better the subject is known, the less the artist is obliged to take precautions so that it will be recognizable" (Varga 1988, 197).

176. Brownlee 1995, 371, nn. 33, 34, cites a good selection of the more recent bibliography on the topic of orality and the defining features of the oral mind set, as does Thomas 1989, n. 19.

the next stage of the study, where the preferred course of approach for examining the question of narrative in Aegean Bronze Age art is expressed.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodological Concerns

3.1 First Principles: A Definition of Narrative

Everybody may not know how to narrate well but everybody...knows how to narrate...everybody distinguishes narratives from non-narratives, that is, everybody has certain intuitions - or has internalized certain rules - about what constitutes a narrative and what does not. (Prince 1982, 79)

As we have seen, the sentiments or rules to which Prince refers can differ greatly from one person to the next. Contrary thoughts about what makes up a narrative text are as pronounced among theorists of literary narrative as they are in treatises on pictorial narration, and, interestingly, in both spheres opinions deviate most over what is accepted as the lowest possible condition of narrative.¹

For the purposes of exploring the question of narrative in Bronze Age Aegean art a definition framed in the broadest terms is certain to be the most productive. A useful model for this is G. Genette's account of the "minimal narrative":

as soon as there is an action or an event, even a single one, there is a story because there is transformation, a transition from an earlier state to a later and resultant state. "I walk" implies (and is contrasted to) a state of departure and a state of arrival. That is a whole story, and perhaps for Beckett it would already be too much to narrate or put on stage. But obviously fuller, and therefore narrower, definitions exist. (Genette 1988, 19; cf. Prince 1987, 53).²

Genette concerned himself exclusively with narratives conveyed in a verbal medium, though the transfer of his notions to the visual domain has been adroitly managed by W.

1. Divergent opinions usually concern the number of events accepted as the minimum for the text to be considered a narrative proper (one or two): see Prince 1982, 83-87, and 1987, 58-60 (where the various views and their proponents are summarized); Bal 1985, 5; 1991, 100; Genette 1988, 19.

2. W. Davis 1992, 235, relates these comments by Genette to pictures thus: "An image necessarily depicts 'me walking' all at once. It may not simultaneously present pictures of earlier and later moments of my walking. Yet this constraint in itself does not prevent the image from being narrative."

Davis in his writings on Predynastic Egyptian art (see above, Chapter 2, section 2.1.2). The imprint of the French theorist's ideas is most conspicuous in the first of Davis's published descriptions of narration:

a narrative does not necessarily require, although it can certainly include, the relating of separate events or actions linked together causally and arranged in temporal order. A single event or action can itself be narrative or at least "narratable"; it can be related as a transition from one state of affairs to another. (W. Davis 1992, 235)

Similar influences and biases instruct the concept of narrative adopted here, which designates it to be: *the recounting - whether by verbal or artistic means - of one or more events*.³ An *event*, be it of a real or fictitious nature, is in turn defined as "a change of state," one that may be "an *action* or *act* (when the change is brought about by an agent: 'Mary opened the window') or a *happening* (when the change is not brought about by an agent: 'the rain started to fall')" (Prince 1987, 28). This explanation of narrative does not claim to be absolute or widely determinate. Indeed, lacking the erudition to resolve "the problem of definition" decisively, Bal's recommendation to "use a definition that is valid only for the particular study with which one is engaged" has been followed; it is in this light that the above denotation of narrative should be understood (Bal 1985, 5).

3.2 Epistemological Guides I: Narratology

Knowledge acquisition for the Aegean Bronze Age archaeologist or art historian necessarily involves the intellectual processes of induction and circular argumentation to a

3. Many definitions of narrative devised by narratologists describe the "logical structure" of narrative as an event or "event chain operating through time," and express this structure by the "formula xRy , where R is temporal succession" (Chatman 1981, 808). Prince 1987, 58-59, notes that theorists also try to distinguish "true" narrative - involving a temporal sequence - from "mere event description" or the recounting of "a random series of changes of state."

greater extent than is the case in fields where documentary sources can contribute information vital for a more objective and complete appraisal of the cultures and objects under examination. Many of the studies reported in Chapter 2, for instance, evaluated monuments that present relatively few obscurities either in terms of their probable find place, function, and audience, or with regard to the story represented. In those circumstances the analytical operations were largely deductive: a familiarity with the monuments' iconographical and verbal "pre-texts" combined with data given in labels or other contemporary texts, enabled the researcher to make various deductions about the imagery, and answer with minor difficulty the questions: who acts? what happens? how and when does it happen? and why does it happen?

Where contextual facts and non-pictorial aids were wanting, a few of the authors mentioned above looked to the construction of the image for features or relationships that suggested the presence of narrative subject matter (eg., W. Davis 1992, 1993; Winter 1981, 1985; Stansbury-O'Donnell 1995). The method of analysis in these cases proceeded from a set of ideas or precepts about narrative - a kind of hypothesis in fact - against which images were compared or "tested" to determine their status as a picture story. The narratives formed by Stansbury-O'Donnell to explain the figural components of the krater in New York and the pot fragment from Argos, for example, are in accord with and justified by his suppositions about how visual stories "worked" in eighth-century-B.C. Greece. His is a classic illustration of inductive logic, where the conclusions reached, though guided by his premises, do not follow necessarily from them.

Readers will ultimately judge Stansbury-O'Donnell's findings on the basis of their acceptance or rejection of his propositional statements regarding narrative. The same holds true for this project. The definition of narration endorsed above, as well as the explications

of narrative aspects discussed below, originate in certain writings from narratology, a field that contemplates and constructs theories about "the nature, form and functioning of narrative" (Prince 1987, 65). It must be admitted that the authors favoured represent a liberal branch of the discipline, in that they tend to promote the applicability of their analyses of narrative procedures to all media, rather than accepting the historic stance that sees narrative solely as a phenomenon of language.⁴ Lamentably, despite their optimistic sentiments, most of these authors have been disinclined to concentrate their efforts on the visual arts. Thus, while narratology promises to be a valuable guide for the examination of pictorial narration, we are left pretty much to our own devices in the appropriation of such thinking for the analysis of images.⁵

Narratology's systematic inquiries have especial pertinence to studies of visual narration in their elucidation of three topics: narrative structure, orders of narrativity, and the part the reader plays in narrative communication.

4. Chatman addresses the criticism of these more inclusive views of narration and critiques "language-oriented" theories of narration in various publications, especially Chatman 1981, 806:

Words, I argue, are not the ultimate components of narrative; those ultimate components are, rather, events and existents in a chain of temporal causality or at least contingency.

Visual media can represent events, existents and temporal relations; they just have to resort to what Chatman terms "special devices" to do so: the repeated figure in paintings and sculpted reliefs, or the "peeling calendar" used in old movies to indicate temporal progress are well-known examples.

5. W. Davis described the situation in a personal communication thus:

Models of a rigorous narratology applied to questions of visual meaning are few and far between...there are no established guides, no rules to follow (beyond the general rules, in any theoretically oriented work, to be consistent, well-defined, etc.), and no rights and wrongs...
.(August 4, 1994)

I wish to thank Professor W. Davis most sincerely for his considered responses to my inquiries. Having spent some time looking into the literature on narratology and feeling that certain aspects of the discipline could prove useful in this project, it was a great pleasure to discover Davis's research, and to see that an approach to visual narration informed by narratological ideas can help address some of the problematic facets of earlier efforts, and produce - at least in his case - interesting and original results.

3.2.1 Narrative Structure: Story and Discourse

One of the most important observations to come out of narratology is that narrative itself is a deep structure quite independent of its medium.⁶

Precisely how that "deep structure" is explained has been a matter of individual judgement, although, as with the various definitions of narrative, the terms and schemes developed by narratologists to describe narrative structure differ less in kind than they do in theoretical complexity.

One of the more appealing and accessible analyses is forwarded by S. Chatman, a writer who has also sought to accommodate the visual and performing arts in his reckoning of narrative processes. He argues that the "irreducible set of elements of any narrative are two fold:" Story and Discourse.⁷ The *Story* is the object or content part of the narrative,

6. Chatman elsewhere describes the semiotic character of narrative structure:

But narrative structure is also independently semiotic, that is, meaning-bearing in its own right. Not only does the surface structure of verbal narratives - that is, natural language - signify, but so does their deep level, a level which they share with narratives conveyed by nonsemiotic media. The deep level of a narrative is the level of events, characters and settings: these are signifieds, even where the signifiers are without independent signification. That is, narrative structure itself can endow meaningless objects with narrative signification. (Chatman 1979, 173)

He also fits narrative structure into the "traditional Saussurean-Hjelmslevian quadrilateral diagram" in his fig. 1, p. 174, entitled "The Code of Narrative Structure."

7. Chatman 1979, 176, cf. 1978, 19. The story-discourse levels of narrative distinguished by Chatman, Prince, and others simplify the three "layers" of narrative described by scholars like Genette and Bal. Bal's schema, for example, divides a narrative into: *Text* ("a finite, structured whole composed of language signs"), *Story* ("a fabula that is presented in a certain matter"), and *Fabula* ("a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors") (Bal 1985, 5-6). The three layers, though amenable to separate analysis, do not

exist independently of one another...that a text can be divided into three layers is a theoretical supposition...only the text layer, embodied in the sign system of language, is directly accessible. The researcher distinguishes different layers of a text in order to account for the particular effects which the text has upon its readers. Naturally, the..."average" reader...does not make such a distinction. (Bal 1985, 6)

and it in turn contains two basic components, events and existents, the latter being of two types, characters and settings. The events and existents that form the substance of a narrative may be drawn from anything in the universe of one's experience or imagination.

Essentially, the Story is the "what" of a narrative, the "narrated," in comparison to *Discourse*, which is the expressional means of presenting the story, or the "how" of narrative, the "narrating."⁸ The manner in which composers relate time, the order of events, the order of telling, point of view, etc., belong to this "surface level" of narrative, and their form is clearly affected by the communicative medium - otherwise termed the "substance plane of Discourse" (e.g., language, line, colour, photographic film, dance movements, music). Chatman and others point out that actions may be shown or just implied, while chronological duration in narratives can be logical, condensed, or even eliminated (ellipsis), with "anachronies" being commonplace.⁹

Many of these remarks about narrative structure have a familiar ring; in the pictorial investigations quoted in the last chapter, events, characters, and settings were frequently mentioned as being vital elements of narrative, and the peculiarities of time in ancient art stories were likewise noted. What those studies sometimes lacked is the precision of verbal expression and the depth of deliberation that characterizes the writings of narratologists like Bal, Chatman, Genette, and Prince. The rational divisions these theorists draw between Story and Discourse caution us to be careful in our descriptive language, to differentiate an

These differentiations, while understandable and important in light of the narrative theory Bal is constructing, were deemed overly sophisticated and less appropriate for our purposes, notwithstanding the fact that W. Davis adopted this model for his research on Predynastic Egyptian art stories (see: W. Davis 1992, 234-55, and 1993, 51, n. 1); compare comments above in Chapter 2, endnote 21.

In this and the following chapters, capital letters are used to distinguish the technical, narratological meanings of Story and Discourse from the ordinary, colloquial uses of those words.

8. See Chatman 1978, 19-22; 1979, 174; and compare Prince 1987, 19 (definition of Story).

9. Chatman 1978, 29-30; Genette 1980, 35; Prince 1982, 95; Bal 1985, 37, 100, 161.

"ur story" or story logic from its presentation in a given narrative text.

Indeed, some of the disagreements about the narrative tenor of images that were remarked upon in the context of Egyptian and Near Eastern art can be re-expressed in light of Chatman's schema as proceeding from a tendency to regard one level of narrative structure at the expense or exclusion of the other (e.g., Groenewegen-Frankfort's emphasis on Discourse - that is, artistic expression - as narrative, *versus* Gaballa's stress on Story - specifically historical story matter - as narrative).

3.2.2 Not all Narratives are Created Equal: Narratology and Orders of Narrativity

many people would agree that any representation of noncontradictory events such that at least one occurs at a time (t) and another at a time (t₁) following time (t) constitutes a narrative (however trivial)...there is also widespread agreement about the fact that different narratives have different degrees of narrativity, that some are more narrative than others, as it were, and "tell a better story." (Prince 1982, 145)¹⁰

The phenomenon of grades or degrees of narrativity was encountered in the last chapter, although its existence was normally insinuated rather than declared or discussed outright by the authors cited. In contrast, narratologists have formally pondered this feature of narrative communication, and once again their comments not only corroborate certain observations made above, but, more significantly, inject a measure of exactitude into the dialogue.

On reflection, it is apparent that in the process of defining visual narrative, some of the analysts mentioned in Chapter 2 confused the components of narrative with degrees of "narrativeness," conflating the essentials of narrative structure with traits like specificity in

10. Compare comments by Genette 1980, 162.

form or story content. A depiction whose event(s), character(s), and setting(s) are unknown to the beholder may be "generalized," as Kantor said of the battle relief from Deshasheh, but anonymity of subject matter only affects the image's degree of narrativity, not its status "as narrative." Similarly, the defining properties that Groenewegen-Frankfort attributed to "true" pictorial narratives - drama, tension, emotion, immediacy, singularity, and space-time actuality - are not in fact indispensable features of narrative. They are, however, characteristics whose presence or absence in a narrative text "make it more or less narrative" (Prince 1987, 64): to many readers the "best" narratives are marked by qualities like these and the "worst" or least successful narratives might lack them altogether.

In his methodical contemplation of "what...affects narrativity, what makes a story good as a story?" Prince has made several observations that are especially relevant to the analyses in Chapter 4:

1. A narrative text where "*signs of the narrated*" (i.e. story elements - events, characters and their actions) "*are more numerous than signs of the narrating* (referring to the representation of events and its context)" should have a higher degree of narrativity than where the reverse is true "simply because narrative is the recounting of events rather than the discussion of their representation" (Prince 1982, 146).
2. A narrative presenting "*many time sequences*" should also have "more narrativity than one presenting few because narrative is the recounting of events occurring at different times rather than at the same time" (Prince 1982, 147).
3. A narrative depicting "*conflict* of some kind should function better narratively than one depicting no conflict at all; characteristically, narrative represents a mediation through time between two sets of opposites" (Prince 1982, 147).
4. The way an event is described affects its narrativity: "clearly perceptible" temporal

relations and *specific, individualized events* "will contribute more to narrativity" than events that are generalized and presented in a loosely organized manner (Prince 1982, 148).¹¹

5. "When we read a text as a narrative we try to process it as a series of assertions about events...the *easier such processing proves to be*...the more narrativity that text will have. Similarly, a narrative where there is no continuant subject, no relationship between beginning and end, no (explanatory) description of a change in a given situation, a narrative made up of middles, as it were, has practically no narrativity" (Prince 1982, 150-1).

These declarations accord with and substantiate perceptions of a hierarchy of narrative representations that surfaced at different points throughout the research surveyed above. On the level of *Story*, that hierarchy finds pugilistic themes to have the greatest (inherent) narrativity, and the specific or individualized event evinces more narrativity than the non-specific, "generic" one. At the *Discourse* level, narrativity is enriched by a presentation in which the sequence of events is clearly portrayed and the characterization of actors and settings permits maximum recognition and assimilation.

Narrative texts may, thus, be ranked in terms of how much or how little narrativity they demonstrate on the two main planes of narrative, although valuations are bound to entail many subjective and unquantifiable variables. The contrasting opinions regarding the narrative stature of Amarna art, in particular the reliefs from Mahu's tomb (above, Chapter 2, section 2.1.4), vividly demonstrated the impact viewers' expectations and interests have on how they weigh or appraise narrativity.

11. Prince 1982, 148, gives the example that the general statement "every human being dies" contributes less to narrativity, and indeed is less characteristic of narrative, than something like "Napoleon died in 1821."

Before taking a closer look at the reader's share in narrative transmission, one more factor influencing narrativity should be considered. This is the *purpose for which any narrative is designed*. Whether or not an audience "gets the point," the intentions of the creator colour and impress their texts in numerous ways. Political and religious motivations often impinge upon and override strictly narrative concerns in the visual tales of Egypt and the Near East, where the "message" of the story was probably much more crucial to its producer than issues of narrativity. Prince has something to add here as well:

As in the case of legibility and readability...saying that one narrative has more narrativity than another does not necessarily mean that it is better or worse. Narrativity depends on the viewer and so does its value. Indeed, many narratives are valuable not so much *qua* narratives but rather for their wit, their style, their ideological content or their psychological insight... (Prince 1982, 160)

3.2.3 The Eye of the Beholder: Narrative Apprehension and the Viewer as Narrator

As active, experientially primary processes operating at the level of the reader's reading or the viewer's beholding of the text, the image involves what we should properly call the viewer's "fabulation," "storying," and narrative "textualization," his or her narrativization of the image...the viewer's actions in projecting a narrative are, literally, actions...they are something the viewer performs on and with the text in a given spatial setting and temporal duration.¹²

At certain points in the course of the last two chapters the term "viewer/narrator" was used to describe the part the beholder plays in visual narration. Narratological literature has also been concerned with revealing how narratives are perceived and processed by

12. W. Davis 1993, 52, cf. W. Davis 1992, 236-37, and the following comments by Brilliant 1984, 16, (also cited partially in Chapter 1, section 1.2):

Unlike words, even those fixed in a written text, visual images have an almost infinite capacity for verbal extension, because viewers must become their own narrators, changing the images into some form of internalized verbal expression. Accordingly, when artists arrange their images in a definite visual field, viewers are at greater liberty than listeners or readers to chose how and in what sequence to experience them.

receivers, and their attention to the viewer and not just the various "grammatical or compositional parts of the text" is instructive (W. Davis 1993, 50). Any narrative reading obviously involves the reader's recognition of what Bal calls the "elementary narrative syntagm" of a story, namely the subject-action-object relation (Bal 1991, 208). Some narratives demand less of their audience than others, though an author, artist, or filmmaker seldom gives us the whole story; consciously or not we "fill in" what has gone unexpressed (cf. Chatman 1978, 29-30; W. Davis 1992, 236).

In fact, we make a lot of inferences, drawing conclusions that seem reasonable:

Readers, intentionally or not, search for a logical line in...a text. They spend a great amount of energy in this search, and, if necessary, they introduce such a line themselves. No matter how absurd, tangled, or unread a text may be, readers will tend to regard what they consider "normal" as a criterion by which they can give meaning to the text.¹³

The persistence of the reader as Bal characterizes him/her speaks to the often-voiced assertion that humans have an innate and powerful desire to narrativize phenomena, specifically, to connect consecutive events causally. Chatman gives the example that when we hear "the king died and then the queen died," we seem "inherently disposed" to assume that there is a causal link, that the queen's death had something to do with the king's (Chatman 1978, 46-47).¹⁴ The determined attempts by Winter and others to construct a

13. Bal 1985, 12. The tendency to "ascribe well-formedness to questionable or as yet unidentified elements" in a text is also discussed by Chatman 1979, 172-73:

Much of narrative is implication, and reading narratives requires the skill of drawing well-formed inferences. Once we are set for narratives, all our inferences, whether correct or incorrect, tend, by definition, to be well-formed. We play the game. We make narrative inferences, just as we would make other kinds of inferences in the context of other kinds of texts.

14. Prince 1982, 39, expresses this phenomenon thus:

Given two events A and B, and unless the text explicitly indicates otherwise, a causal connection will be taken to exist between them if B temporally follows A and is perceived as possibly resulting from it.

As Prince further notes, Barthes (1975, 237) also felt that we naturally tend to "consecutiveness" and

sequential, diachronic narrative from the figural bands on the reverse of the Stele of the Vultures (above, Chapter 2, section 2.2.3) may be another illustration of this propensity to be intellectually primed for narrative relationships, to wish to construe what we see in a storied way.¹⁵

3.3 Epistemological Guides II: Semiotic Theories of Sign-Action and Sign-Interpretation

The emphasis on the reader/spectator in narratological ruminations parallels that in recent art historical approaches to "picture theory,"¹⁶ and in both fields it can be linked to the influence of semiotics. A branch of logic, semiotic theory, particularly as associated with C. S. Peirce and F. de Saussure, is an investigation of the "nature, properties, and kinds of signs" (Colapietro 1993, 179). The role of signs as "representational devices" in cognition and communication was of great interest to Peirce, whose model proposes a threefold procedure wherein a sign is related, via an "interpretant," to its object:

Logic, in its general sense, is...only another name for semiotic (σημειωτική), the...formal doctrine of signs. A *Sign* or *Representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *Interpretant* of the first sign. The Sign is a Representamen with a mental Interpretant...the Sign can only represent the Object and tell about it. It

"consequence" and that this is the most fundamental way in which a series of events is narrativized.

15. Varga's observation that juxtaposing images always gives rise to stories in the viewer's imagination has already been mentioned (Chapter 1, section 1.1). He substantiates his remarks by citing various examples. For instance, when individual narrative pictures are exhibited in one room or museum, spectators are often inspired to devise a "second-degree tale which relates the scattered tales...The meaning, which is revealed as one passes in the desired order from one painting to the next, is of a narrative type" (Varga 1988, 196).

16. Mitchell 1994.

cannot furnish acquaintance with or recognition of that Object.¹⁷

Visual art, like language and a myriad other symbol-systems is "semiotic," an "activity of the sign" (Bryson 1988, xx). Whether acknowledged or not, the art historian is continually entangled with semiosis, for motifs (as "signs") belong to the symbolic forms of a culture, and the historian's task is to reconstruct the "signifieds" of art - to render art intelligible.¹⁸ Semiotic paradigms make clear that denotation is always "cultured" or sublimated, that all reading, all understanding, involves socially constructed "codes" and one's competence in deciphering an image varies according to one's knowledge (practical, cultural, aesthetic, etc.).¹⁹ Peirce described the process of sign-interpreting as a "matted felt of pure hypothesis confirmed and refined by induction...making an abduction [a hypothetical inference or guess] at every step."²⁰ As F. Scott points out, we do this when attempting to interpret artworks:

Drawing on prior associations and information we engage in abductive induction in response to the question, "What does this work signify?" Primarily through iconic signs, we note a resemblance to familiar natural objects, locales, events, people, and emotions. We say things like "It looks like a clown," or "It expresses sadness," or "It is a symbol of the absurdity of the human condition." All of these remarks could conceivably occur in

17. Quoted from Peirce's essay "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs," in Danesi 1992, 11-12, reprinted from *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vols. I-II, ed. C. Hartshorne and P. Weiss (Cambridge, Mass., 1931-1935).

This definition is considered to be the "most intelligible" of many such explanations of "sign" devised by the philosopher (Edwards 1967, 7: 438). Peirce's theory of signs is complex and includes numerous "trichotomies." There are, for example, three fundamental classes of signs (*Icon*, *Index*, and *Symbol*), three types of signs (*Qualisign*, *Sinsign*, and *Legisign*), and three varieties of interpretants (*Normal*, *Dynamic*, and *Immediate*), with additional subclasses within some of these categories. Useful bibliography on Peirce and his writings is given by Innis, 1985, 1-4. Innis 1985, viii, and Colapietro 1993, 179-81, also describe and clarify the differences between Peirce's system and the "dyadic" model devised by F. de Saussure.

18. Bal and Bryson 1991, 191, point out that iconography, the art historical practice of studying conventions in art, can be seen as analysis "of the symbolic as a code" and is, "in this sense, a semiotic approach."

19. Compare Bryson 1988, xx, who notes that interpreting artworks involves the "activation of codes of recognition that are learnt by interaction with others in the acquisition of human culture." Morgan's discussion of guidelines for the methodology of interpretation in Aegean Bronze Age art elucidates the interpretive (hermeneutic) process in analogous terms (1985, 5-19).

20. Extracted from a longer quote given in Scott 1983, 165.

response to the same work of art or could be successive interpretations of the same person. It is possible for art to be expressed in as many subjective ways as there are perceivers with prior associations.²¹

The semiotic investigations of Peirce and others affirm that images (signs in general) do not have a "fixed, predetermined, or unified meaning" (Bal and Bryson 1991, 207).²² Does it follow that "anything goes," that "art means what I say it means?" Not exactly. As delineated by Peirce, a sign is a dynamic entity, an "event" taking place in a chronologically and socially distinct context, which, in the opinion of some commentators, we are remiss to ignore:

Sign events occur in specific circumstances and according to a finite number of culturally valid, conventional yet not unalterable rules...The selection of those rules and their combination leads to specific interpretive behaviour - that behaviour is socially framed and any semiotic view that is socially relevant will have to deal with this framing. (Bal and Bryson 1991, 207)²³

Pictorial semiotics has experienced a faltering progress over the past three decades. Efforts to unite the "divergent traditions of semiotics" (Sonesson 1989, 4) and to achieve a neutral, "transdisciplinary theory" of visual culture are ongoing (Bal and Bryson 1991, 175), but there is reason to be sceptical about the successful outcome of these endeavours.²⁴

21. Scott 1983, 171. Compare Bal and Bryson 1991, 188, on the subjective and reception-determined nature of deciding the object of a given painting.

22. A semiotically phrased explanation for the varieties of interpretation that may be generated by an image is proffered by Scott:

The sign through which a work of art becomes manifest may stand in a number of different relations to its object: that is, it may represent the object in more than one way at the same time (Scott 1983, 172).

23. Again, one may compare comments by Scott 1983, 172:

It is obvious that many interpretants are inappropriate and reveal more about the interpreter or interests the interpreter wants to support, than the work of art. The notion of process in Peirce's semiotic explains how an interpretant may be legitimate but incomplete. It may be an accurate interpretation of the sign as that sign relates to the object in a particular way but not as the sign relates to the object in all ways or for all times.

24. Bryson 1988, and other avowed practitioners of the "new art history" strongly advocate the relevance of semiotics to art studies, but without positing didactic formulas or rules for researchers to follow in their work. Sonesson's efforts seem to have been prompted by the feeling that semiotic ideas will only become a vital force

Scholars have yet to arrive at a consensus not only of approach but also of language, and as it stands semiotic jargon, which can be both turgid and mystifying, has questionable value in visual analysis:

The technical metalanguages of semiotics don't offer us a scientific, transdisciplinary or unbiased vocabulary, but only a host of new figures or theoretical pictures that must themselves be interpreted. (Mitchell 1994, n. 10, 14-15)

Authors preoccupied with those "theoretical pictures" are normally concerned to plot the ideological orientation of their research on a matrix where semiotics straddles the divide between structuralism and post-structuralism,²⁵ and the product of their labours threatens to disclose more about the creativity and intellectual finesse of the analyst than it does about their actual subject material:

The semiotics of art struggles to avoid becoming the art of semiotics, and yet at the same time it is fatally drawn toward this possibility (Steiner 1981, 2).

It is, in fact, debatable whether semiotics is the "science" of the "laws and regularities" of signs that writers like Sonesson present it as being. Peirce variously makes reference to the part instinct and inference perform in the operation of semiosis and too in the speculations and classificatory distinctions that comprise his formal account of same.²⁶ Like narratology, which to some extent rides piggyback upon the rational framework of

in picture analysis when the different "schools" of semiotic thought are reconciled and integrated into a new, widely applicable set of "pictorial concepts." Without commenting on the possibility or success of this enterprise, it may be noted that his book appears not to have captured the popular imagination; it is rarely cited. The papers in Steiner 1981, are instructive background reading for Sonesson's project, as they treat some of the issues, debates, and concerns regarding the practical application of linguistically derived and oriented semiotic models to the visual arts.

25. Compare comments by Steiner 1981, 2.

26. Witness, for instance, the central place "abduction" has in Peirce's hypotheses about how sign-action and sign-interpretation work (cf. comments and quotations in Scott 1983, 164-65). Narratologists also admit that determining what is narrative, and making classifications of narrative types, etc., is a decidedly non-scientific exercise entailing generous measures of inference, assumption, and intuitive selection: see, for instance, Chatman 1978, 56; Bal 1985, 9, 16.

semiotic theory, semiotics proffers only a general approach or methodology,²⁷ an analytical tool-kit that contains instruments of both exceptional and marginal utility, depending on the task at hand.

The achievements and ramifications of semiotics permeate much current art historical prose, bearing witness to what Mitchell describes as an omnipresent "postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visibility, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality" (Mitchell 1994, 16).²⁸ The analyses presented in sections 4.2 - 4.5 of Chapter 4 can also be regarded as informal exercises in semiosis; they assess and describe how images signify narration, essentially responding to the question "what is the signifying structure of pictorial narrative?"²⁹ These examinations are not, however, self-consciously semiotic, and the terms used to characterize the images studied belong largely to "the immanent vernaculars of representational practices themselves,"³⁰ and not to the area of philosophical inquiry that spawned semiotics.

27. For similar remarks see Scott 1983, 158, 164; Bal 1991, 59.

28. Perhaps the most profitable visual applications of semiotic ideas have been in the areas of modern cinema and advertising by authors keen to understand "how signs mean" (sign production); how these products of contemporary culture relay messages and how they relate "to what individuals and their leaders want" (Blonsky 1985, xxvii, xxxiv). Barthes chose an advertisement as the object for his important foray into pictorial semiotics precisely because such images are purposely constructed to send their "target audience" specific messages encoded in a visual language that is comprehended with very little effort by those conversant with the culture's customs and practices (Barthes 1964). In this country university courses in the semiotics of art also concentrate on modern and post-modern subject matter, with the occasional addition of Renaissance material.

In current research there is a pervasive if somewhat tacit injunction to declare one's methodological procedures, something less common in literature of the first several decades of this century when the concepts that informed the data presented were mostly stated "between the lines." Semiotic theories join structuralist and post-structuralist notions as some of the more loudly proclaimed means through which to view and express one's insights into visual material, and their influence is felt in the fact that even those authors disinterested in or unfamiliar with these theory systems feel the need to defend their non-allegiance. Of course, the other side of this coin is the widespread recognition that art historians have always "done" semiotics, that is, have always sought to understand and describe the conventions of art and how art functions in society; in some ways all that has changed is their conscientious alignment to a theoretical paradigm.

29. It is accepted, with Chatman (1978, 22-25; 1979, 171-74) that narrative is a code, a semiotic structure, and that one may interpret visual elements in narrative images as "signs of syntactical connection, signs of causality" and so on (Bal and Bryson 1991, 206).

30. Mitchell 1994, 14.

3.4 Theory and Practice: Pictorial Guides and the "Signs" of Visual Narrative

Narratologists normally labour to define the elements and codify the expressive range of narration in literature, devising typologies that classify narrative texts in terms of plot designs, themes, character types, etc. (cf. Chatman 1978, 84). They determine the constituents of a story grammar, observing the regular functions that verb tenses, explanatory statements, and the like perform as structuring devices in verbal narration. It is doubtful that anything approximating the fundamental rules one associates with a proper grammar could be developed for the visual narrative (cf. Varga 1988, 205). Certainly, for the present the best we can do is to scrutinize and inventory the means by which artists relate a story pictorially and appreciate how these entities work to narrativize figure scenes.

The researchers mentioned in the last chapter proceeded, more or less, in this manner, and their findings introduced us to a number of the techniques active in the construction of art stories. The approach taken in the next chapter also follows this route: after an overview of previous discussions on narrative in Aegean art, the pictorial features of three monuments are analyzed with regard to how they operate to promote or discourage a narrative reading. The analytical systems discussed in the foregoing sections are involved in this enterprise to the extent that their postulations serve to inform explanations about the nature of the relations perceived and to illuminate the limits of our knowledge in this sort of undertaking.

In any pictorial investigation where iconography is identified and interpreted, the method or procedure entails an appraisal of the conventions of art - an "awareness of morphology and syntax that enables us to consider the image in light of cultural possibilities" (Morgan 1985, 8). Adequate "cross-referencing" with other contemporary artworks is also

imperative, and the examinations below seek to satisfy these directives. The process includes the gathering of evidence to produce a formulation (induction). The objective tone of the last statement is not intended to misrepresent the true nature of the beast, for, as with all hermeneutic tasks, the conclusions reached are tempered by the idiosyncrasies and shortcomings of the interpreter. And one is conscious that, as R. Arnheim expressed it, "all perceiving is also thinking, all reasoning is also intuition, all observation is also invention" (Arnheim 1974, 5).

CHAPTER FOUR

Appraising the Narrative Status of Aegean Figural Art: Overview and Three Case Studies

4.1 Questioning Narrative in Aegean Bronze Age Art: A Critique of Prevailing Perceptions

In Chapter 1 it was noted that although there has been no intensive discussion of narration in the art of the Aegean Bronze Age, the issue has arisen intermittently over the past century in reference to particular artworks. The responses of various scholars are examined more profitably at this point, in light of what has been said in the intervening chapters, and as a prologue to the analyses of the Isopata Ring, West House Friezes, and frescoes from the Pylos megaron complex, which follow this overview.

4.1.1 Images of Conflict Events: Subject Matter and Narrativity

Like many of the authors cited in Chapter 2, experts in Aegean art have commonly conceived of artistic narration in terms of story content; the question of narrative surfaces primarily in reflections on battle or hunt imagery. It was observed above that such "conflict" events not only possess an inherent narrativity, but that narratives of this kind always "function better narratively than one[s] depicting no conflict at all" (Prince 1982, 147; cf. Winter 1985, 12).

The battered fragments of the Siege Rhyton, found with a treasure of other luxury objects in Shaft Grave IV at Mycenae (ca. LH I),¹ have initiated many conversations in

1. Shaft Grave IV, in Grave Circle A at Mycenae, was first excavated by H. Schliemann (Schliemann 1878); the area was subsequently re-evaluated and published by Karo (Karo 1930-33). Now on display in the Athens National Museum, the pieces as restored measure ca. 23 cm, but Vermeule estimates that the original height

which narrative considerations are raised, and they are consequential in attempts to recover an Aegean pictorial cycle treating the theme of war.² The subject of a city under attack or besieged, later standardized in the visual and literary chronicles of Egypt and Assyria, finds an early³ and hence surprisingly confident expression in repoussé on this silver rhyton, a cone-shaped vase indigenous to Crete and frequently connected with religious ritual.⁴ Existing restorations of the piece are necessarily free and open to revision;⁵ nonetheless, certain critical features of the composition are quite clear (Fig. 65a-b).

The deeds related are set in well-defined locales that include the sea - delineated on the bottom of the vessel as an ascending pattern of curving arcs,⁶ the adjacent land - marked in places by trees and serpentine lines indicating hill contours, and a building

of the vessel may have been close to 30 cm (Vermeule 1972, 100).

The accepted abbreviations for Aegean Bronze Age dating are used throughout this paper, and the chronological chart published in Morgan 1988, xix, is reproduced here in Fig. 3. This chart reflects the traditional "low" chronology as advocated by Warren and Hankey 1989. Dating in Aegean archaeology is done on the basis of pottery styles, but the absolute dates of ceramic periods are not precise. The high/low debate is most critical with respect to the absolute dating of the LM IA period, when the volcanic eruption of Thera occurred. Manning (1988) places that catastrophic event at 1628-26 B.C., whereas Warren and Hankey (1989) put it at ca. 1500 B.C. Recently Matthäus (1995) has reappraised the archaeological evidence and seen it to be most consistent with the conventional low chronology adopted in this project.

2. See, for example: Evans *PM* III, 89-92; Sakellariou 1975, 195-208; 1980, 147-53; 1981, 532-38; Xénaki-Sakellariou 1985, 293-309; Negbi 1978, 649; Televantou 1994, 332 (like Negbi, Televantou speculates that the rhyton represents a different moment in the same event/story that is illustrated on the north wall of the West House miniature paintings in Thera, discussed in section 4.3 below). Authors are divided with respect to the origin of this cycle and the authorship of the vessel, some considering it a Cretan product (e.g., E. Davis 1983, 10, and Xénaki-Sakellariou 1985 - perhaps made for a mainland client), others seeing subject and workmanship as Mycenaean (e.g., Vermeule 1972, 103-4).

3. Vermeule 1972, 100, notes that the rhyton bears "almost the earliest known representation of the siege scene."

4. On Rhyta see Koehl 1981, 1996; N. Marinatos 1993b, 5-6, 302; Krattenmaker 1995b, 120-21.

5. The most frequently illustrated restorations are Evans *PM* III, figs. 50 a, b, c, pp. 51-54; Vermeule 1972, pl. XIV; Smith 1965, figs. 84-86 (with a history of the reconstructions given on p. 66). The following description of the rhyton's imagery cannot compete with the skilled and eloquent accounts given by Smith (1965, 66 ff.) and Vermeule (1972, 100-5).

6. The genesis of Aegean conventions for water is discussed by Crowley 1991, 219-30, and 1992, 24-25 (cf. Schiering 1992, 320-21). On the rhyton this device removes any ambiguity we might have about where these actions take place and recalls observations made by Reade 1980a, 71-74, that standard formulations like patterning to denote the sea or mountainous terrain are used by the ancient artist to provide "narrative clarity."

complex or town sited on high ground.⁷ In spite of their minute size, the extant cast of characters, some 38 persons, is carefully differentiated in their assorted roles by dress, pose, and gesture.⁸ There are naked men with close-cropped hair shown in the process of firing sling shots and arrows, men in stiff tunics who regard these activities, others in helmets and short-sleeved tops who may bear weapons of another kind (details are lost), unarmed men in prone positions (fallen victims?), and male and female figures pictured atop the walls of the town, with one or both arms raised in an emotional reaction to their perilous situation. These bits of relief, scrappy as they are, tell a tale that encompasses numerous events or "changes of state" which, as all descriptions of the vase reveal, are associated by the beholder in a general temporal-causal progression of approach (and perhaps confrontation) at sea, followed by armed assault on land. The energetic renditions are as evocative as the best Egyptian and Assyrian battle reliefs, and, like scholars of Egyptian and Near Eastern art, Aegeanists have frequently responded to this and other far less detailed treatments of similar topics, by attempting to particularize the elements of the picture story and fix them in historical times and places.⁹ A. Evans may have instigated this strain of interpretation when he declared:

This is not a conventional version of a traditional siege scene in general but a record of somewhat complicated episodes, either actually witnessed or as graphically described in some epic source. (*PM* III, 89)

There is, of course, no way of ascertaining whether unlabelled works like the Town

7. Chapin 1995, 97-97, 276, assesses the spatial character of the representations, which are taken to display a form of "vertical perspective" wherein "objects and figures that are farther from the viewer are represented higher on the picture plane..." (p. 417).

I am very grateful to Dr. Chapin for kindly allowing me to read and cite from her dissertation manuscript before it was made available through *University Microfilms International* (UMI); the page citations here may thus differ slightly from those of the UMI edition.

8. Presumably, the differences in dress and action would be readily equated with peoples of a particular group or rank by the contemporary viewer: see Leroi-Gourhan 1993, 350-57, on dress and gestures as social symbols and codes.

9. E.g., Smith 1965, 68; Giesecke 1983, 127; Hooker 1967, 271.

Mosaic,¹⁰ Siege Rhyton, and wall paintings of military themes from the Late Helladic period¹¹ illustrate specific incidents (real or legendary) or generic confrontations. E. Vermeule can venture - as assuredly as Evans - that the representations on the metal rhyton belong to "a generalized tradition of battle imagery which may be attached to different historical events through succeeding generations" (1972, 102), but neither position is unassailable. More importantly, with respect to the question of artistic narrative, neither viewpoint is especially relevant. Descriptive detail of any variety, be it unique or typical in nature, usually affects narrativity in a positive way, but, as was explained in the previous chapter, such detail is not an essential or distinguishing feature of narrative *per se*.

According to the criteria for narrativity outlined in Chapter 3 (section 3.2.2), by virtue of their theme (battle), the stress on characters and their activities ("signs of the narrated"), and the relative ease with which the viewer can read a temporal sequence into the actions the artist has rendered so painstakingly, the representations on the rhyton score very high, despite belonging to a visual tradition that develops its imagery through the creation and repetition of iconographic formulae.¹² Knowledge that the artist intended to record the essentials of a singular occurrence, and being able to identify the regional provenance and social rank of the participants, would obviously enrich the rhyton's narrative

10. Now normally dated to MM IIIa, these decorated faience plaques from Knossos, are discussed quite thoroughly in Immerwahr 1990, 36, 68-70, fig. 21, pl. 24, with bibliographic data to 1989. Contrasting interpretations regarding the nature of their imagery ("historical" narrative *versus* "typical" ritual scenes near the palace) are voiced by E. Davis 1983, and Waterhouse 1994.

11. Immerwahr 1990, 122-28, describes the LH III battle scenes from Mycenae, Pylos, Orchomenos, and Tiryns, under the heading "Mycenaean Narrative Compositions." These frescoes are not discussed here, but the reader may find comments of interest in Persson 1942, 29; Smith 1965, 46 (comparing Mycenaean battle scenes to those of Ramesses II); Morris 1992, 207-8; Xénaki-Sakellariou 1985; Yalouris 1989 (utilizing Linear B tablets and the *Iliad*, he identifies the pairs of combatants in Hall 64 at Pylos as Pylians and Arkadians pictured in an historic battle fought in the western Peloponnesus).

12. Morgan 1985, 1988, and 1989; Crowley 1991 and 1992; and Wedde 1995b all give excellent analyses of the conservative and convention-bound character of Aegean art. As Moscati 1963, 84, has said, it was not possible for the ancient artist to abolish iconographic schemata, but the latter could be used in harmony with, and to advance narrative interests.

status and its historical import, but it would not really modify our ability to apprehend the story as pictured - the depictions themselves lucidly articulate the key incidents.

The discursive mood of themes like this is so pronounced that they maintain a narrative disposition even when contracted to fit the tiny surfaces of gold rings and seals. One must, indeed, marvel at the proficiency of the pictorial solutions contrived by Aegean artists in answer to the requirement of rendering combat events on such a scale: they antedate astonishingly similar "single scene narratives" on Archaic Greek black- and red-figure wares by several centuries.¹³ The armed struggles illustrated on the objects in Figs. 10-12 were reduced to their most rudimentary components by engravers who chose to describe particularly "telling" phases of the combat scenario, when the action is approaching a climax and the outcome is insinuated in various ways. A gold ring from the same shaft grave as the rhyton demonstrates how effective these micro-narratives can be (Fig. 10).¹⁴ The two duelling warriors sharing centre stage are pictured in an extremely tense moment of their encounter; daggers are poised and that of the figure on the left looks like it has met its target. Although this contestant strikes his opponent, his own low body position, weight on one bent knee and the other leg splayed out behind him, makes him vulnerable to the helmeted warrior who rises above him in an attitude betokening control, superiority, and

13. Compare, for example, the seals and rings in Figs. 10-12 with the following scenes (some uninscribed or "generic" as well as those featuring mythic figures) illustrated in Boardman 1974, figs. 37, 52, 56, 68, 73, 96; and Boardman 1975, figs. 30.4, 90.1, 135, 186, 187.

14. Published in *CMS* I, n. 16, where essential bibliographic data is given. The ring is 3.5 cm long and 2.1 cm high and is dated ca. LH I.

It should be noted that all the descriptions of Aegean imagery on rings and seals given in this chapter are based on reading from the impression and not the original. This practice is usually defended by "the reasoning that the engraver intended his motifs to have meaning only when the seal was used sphragistically" (Younger 1988, xvi). Both Younger (1988, xiv) and Pini (1989, *passim*) observe, however, that in some instances the "right" way to read seals/rings does seem to be from the original. Pini's excellent article refutes earlier notions that the original was necessarily the correct view, especially in respect to hunt and combat scenes, concluding that when designing figural compositions for seals and rings Minoan and Mycenaean engravers appear not to have had set preferences, nor followed firm rules for viewing. Nonetheless, both scholars recommend that such representations always be described from the impression.

victory. As the lower figure looks up to this adversary, his profile appears to show an open mouth, and his free arm is raised in a gesture that, in accord with the tone of his body language, might reasonably be taken to denote submission or defeat.

Two other figures are involved in this scene: a bearded male without weapons and helmetless sitting on uneven ground to the right of the duellists, and, to their left, another warrior, wearing headgear like that of the "winning" combatant and grasping a tower shield and long spear which, though his body faces away from them, is aimed at the central pair. The seated figure props himself up to watch the fight and, given the context, is suitably interpreted as wounded. The chronological implications of the different actions represented on the signet ring - i.e. one figure about to strike, one struck, a third disabled and a fourth in counterattack - are such that J. Myres perceived a narrative of "two or more phases...combined into a single composition" in which "a sequence of...incidents...is presented in rapid succession".¹⁵

This narrative is undeniably "focused"¹⁶ or basic in nature - one could expect little more on so confined a face.¹⁷ Details of form and gesture, and even the setting, a surround of stylized landmasses at once decorative and indicative of space,¹⁸ could have held a significance for the ancient beholder/narrator that is unfathomable to us. The story

15. Myres 1950, 246. Myres compares the ring to the famous Lion Hunt Dagger (Athens National Museum 394, illustrated in Hood 1978, figs. 177-78; drawing in N. Marinatos 1993a, fig. 20; dated ca. LH I-II), which he says also shows sequential episodes as being successive through the repetition or multiplication of figures, picturing the various "phases through which any one warrior may pass" (Myres 1950, 245; see too comments by Snodgrass 1987, 138, who feels this is a strategy for "telling a story" in visual terms that is unique to the Bronze Age). The important essay by Effenterre and Effenterre 1992, 325-30, discusses the quality of time in glyptic images like these, where the representation of a result and its probable causes imparts a sense of the flow of time between the two events; as the authors say, on the gold ring the artist has found a way to make time enter into the struggle for life (p. 329).

16. This term is Younger's, 1995c, 337.

17. As Morgan 1988, 45, states: "seals are unable to accommodate complex narrative."

18. Compare comments by Chapin 1995, 126-28.

conveyed might be a familiar tale frequently told, or a fictive account produced for a patron enamoured of such subjects; then, as now, the viewer participated in its making, the viewer decides. At any rate, the narrative as opposed to conceptual quality of the imagery is preeminent, even though the pictorial elements have been ordered to satisfy aesthetic imperatives, and the "duel icon" is a story formula that "epitomizes the individual bravery and fighting skill of the 'warrior hero'" (Crowley 1995a, 488).¹⁹

4.1.2 Bulls, the Hunt, and Problems of Narrative Time in Aegean Bronze Age Art

Exploits in the arena of animal conquest featuring anonymous "hunter-heroes" or "bull-leapers" (Crowley 1995a, 488) may also be treated narratively in Aegean glyptic art and wall painting. Two gold cups found in 1888, in the subterranean pit of a tholos tomb at Vapheio, Greece (ca. LM I or LH I-II), depict the capture of bulls, a subject rendered in abridged and more symbolic forms on seals and rings.²⁰ The first author to comment upon the storytelling aspect of the cups was Evans, whose characteristically ingenious, if unconditional, readings have been adopted and qualified by subsequent researchers. The hunting scene on Cup A (Fig. 66a), the most "sensational design" in his eyes, is thought to portray three bulls in three episodes of a bull "drive" in which the animals were presumably

19. Myres 1950, 250, compares the "double character" of glyptic images like this to that of Homeric similes: both are "decorative enhancements of a narrative or discourse; but they are also self-contained literary achievements, small in scale but choice in diction and significant in content."

20. Excavated by Tsountas (*Ἀρχαιολογικὴ Ἐφημερίς* 1889, 136-72, pl. 9), the cups reside in the Athens National Museum (inventory numbers 1758 and 1759) and differ slightly in size: the Quiet Cup measuring 7.8-7.9 cm in height, and 10.6-10.7 cm in diameter, the Violent Cup being 8.4 cm tall. The dates and authorship of the cups are widely debated (i.e., Minoan, Mycenaean, or possibly one of each); the definitive study of the cups is E. Davis 1977, 1-50, 256-57, figs. 1-4, 8, 10, 14, 20. Effenterre and Effenterre 1992, 330, give examples of the abbreviated treatment of this subject on sealstones, and Morgan 1995c, is a fascinating study of the symbolism of the frontal face, which in glyptic representations of bulls alludes to the act of sacrifice, possibly the final outcome of the "bull sports."

hurried forward on a kind of obstacle race towards the point where their wild career was checked by a rope cradle stretched across the course between two olive trees, to the trunks of which the ropes were made fast... . The object immediately in view was, by checking the headlong rush of the animals, to afford the "cowboys" ambushed near the obstacle, an opportunity of showing their acrobatic skill of grappling the bulls. (Evans *PM* III, 180-81)

The artist encapsulates the various steps of this feat by representing one bull in flight to the right amid palm trees and hilly terrain;²¹ a second, distressed bull caught up in the rope trap in the middle portion of the composition; and, emerging from behind this ensnared beast, another charging to the left, where his advance has already overcome one bull-handler and endangers his partner, whose inverted pose, with legs and arms clasped about the bull's head, looks far less effectual in disabling the beast than Evans would have us believe. Certainly, this interpretation of the imagery is contestable: E. Davis, for example, prefers to see the bull grapplers' actions as being directed toward provoking the animals to "rush blindly into the net," and while admitting that "the scenes seem related to one another functionally," she sees no "temporal development" in them.²²

Cup B, best known as the Quiet Cup, illustrates a more subtle method of bull entrapment, in a presentation that is again recounted in colourful prose by Evans (Fig. 66b):

The story here depicted is simple enough...here too, it divides itself into three successive scenes...and its theme is the capture of a half-wild steer by means of a decoy cow. The successive stages of the capture are really three separate episodes, but these have been woven by the artist into one continuous composition. In the first scene the bull is depicted nosing the cow's trail; in the second his treacherous companion engages him in amorous converse, of which her raised tail shows the sexual reaction...In the third scene the herdsman takes advantage of this dalliance to lasso the mighty beast by his

21. Chapin 1995, 118-25, analyses the landscape settings of both cups, challenging earlier assessments by E. Davis (1977) and others, and postulating systems of "hillside" and "referential" perspective, whereby the artist attempts to create the impression of landmasses that proceed continuously from the lowest to the highest planes of the picture surface.

22. E. Davis 1977, 16. Davis does, however, feel there is a pictorial development in terms of dramatic intensity, the actions increasing in excitement from right to left. Effenterre and Effenterre 1992, 330, describe the temporal expression here in terms of "causal" not "sequential" time (i.e., the viewer senses a cause and effect relationship in the actions depicted).

hind leg. The bull is seen with his head raised, bellowing with impotent rage.
(Evans *PM* III, 183-84)

Scholarship generally agrees with Evans's assertion that three incidents are shown on this cup. Discrete zones on the picture surface are created by trees, the position of the animals' heads, and by the distinct activities represented. In addition, the uniform directional movement of the figures encourages uninterrupted viewing from right to left, beginning at the handle. As on the Violent Cup, considerable effort has been spent in creating "a legible outdoor setting for the narrative" (Chapin 1995, 125), the events of which transpire within a naturalistic landscape delineated according to Aegean conventions of perspective.²³ Nonetheless, the proposition that "the same bull is shown at three different moments in time, i.e., in true continuous narration" (E. Davis 1977, 14, n. 30) is vexatious to some commentators, for there is really no way of determining whether the artist portrays one or multiple animals.²⁴ Hence writers remain guarded about explanations that would essentially posit the Quiet Cup as "the first known occurrence of continuous narration in ancient art;" E. Davis discounts the possibility solely on the basis that "clear cases" of continuous narrative are not known from Egypt and the Near East until the 14th and 13th centuries B.C. (1977, 14-15, n. 31).

Even if time is expressed here not as a continuum, but more disjunctively in the manner of Cup A, where it is conjectured that separate moments in the endeavour are represented by the actions of different protagonists, our sense of the events portrayed is unaffected. Crucial elements of a bull-capturing exercise - to wit, the vital ingredients of

23. Again, see Chapin 1995, 118-25. Chapin's work revises that of Groenewegen-Frankfort (1951, 201), pointing out that while there may not be "illusionistic recession" in Cretan art, there is, nonetheless, both "near and far" and "up and down" in this pictorial tradition - it is a matter of learning how to recognize and read Aegean spatial conventions.

24. Compare the Assyrian lion hunt reliefs discussed above in Chapter 2, section 2.3.4, and comments on the problem of ambiguity in animal representations made by E. Davis 1977, 14-15, and Morgan 1989, 150.

a narrative - are still appreciable. A narrative-like relationship between Cups A and B is also palpable: these two renditions of animal domination, one of a dramatic cast where the objective is achieved largely by physical means, the other a tale of ends accomplished through intellect and guile, together form a kind of fable, the moral of which may have charmed and enlightened the "Vapheio Prince" who was buried with the cups placed by his hands.²⁵

Iconographically, scenes of bull capture are allied with the "bull games," possibly the most publicized and least understood cultural artifact of Minoan society. The Taureador Frescoes from Knossos (ca. LM II/III),²⁶ like the Vapheio Cups, have entered dialogues on visual narration because of the sense of temporal sequence that they impart. Restored by M. Cameron²⁷ as a frieze of up to five panels framed at top and bottom and divided vertically by bands of tooth or dentil pattern containing larger sections of variegated rock motifs, the "separate episodes" of bull leaping appear to have differed only in respect to the poses of the figures and details of their execution (Immerwahr 1990, 91). The best preserved panel²⁸ depicts three figures, each of whom wear short boots and codpieces and exhibit the wavy flowing hair and lithe bodies common to most representations of this subject regardless of medium, date, or find place (Fig. 5).²⁹ Against a blue painted

25. The juxtaposition of such scenes may also have occurred in more monumental media and could reflect the variety often associated with Minoan art; see comments by Shaw 1995, 99.

26. Discovered in 1901, in the Court of the Stone Spout, east wing of the palace of Knossos: *PM* III, 203-32, figs. 144-48, pl. XXI. Remains of three to five panels were found and are divided between the Herakleion Museum and Oxford's Ashmolean Museum (see Immerwahr 1983, 145; 1990, 90-91, 175). The figures in the panels range from 25 to 35 cm in height.

27. Cameron 1975, slides 46-52; also Cameron 1987, 325, fig. 12; cf. drawings in N. Marinatos 1993b, figs. 57-58.

28. This panel is in the Herakleion Museum, Gallery XIV, and is illustrated in colour in their guide book (Sakellarakis 1990, facing p. 120). A new colour drawing is provided by Shaw 1995, 94, pl. 3.

29. Shaw 1995, describes the treatment of the bull sports in various media, with special attention to the stylistic character of the Minoan-inspired bull leaping scenes recently discovered at Tell el-Dab'a in Egypt (see Bietak 1992, 1995, and Bietak and Marinatos 1995).

backdrop devoid of scenic details and groundlines, a large centrally placed bull with a dappled hide moves to the left, head slightly lowered and limbs airborne in the famed Aegean "flying gallop" pose. A white-skinned acrobat,³⁰ legs flexed and separated in motion, faces the bull, clutching its horns with both hands. Above the bull's back a red-skinned figure is shown upside down, one arm on either side of the animal, the feet of his arching body pointing toward the right side of the composition where another pale-skinned athlete stands facing him, arms outstretched and hands open, with fingers and thumbs separated.

What is so extraordinary about this depiction is the artist's aptitude for suggesting "intermediary stages" of purposeful movement via, as J. Perkins describes it, the "folding or unfolding of the body," creating the impression that the central jumper is "moving through a series of events in which the relationship between body parts will change" (J. Perkins 1988, 238). An often-stated explanation of the fresco recommends that the operations pictured may not be simultaneous. Rather, the artist represents the full line of actions that make up the bull leap by using different figures to illustrate successive stages of the undertaking.³¹ Davis, who accepts this explanation of the fresco, finds its method of rendering consecutive action comparable to that postulated for the Violent Vapheio cup, though others have deemed it an "unlikely" form of "narrative description" (Walberg 1986, 110). No one has suggested that the Taureador panels or their cognates in other media represent particular, "historical" happenings or personae; the bull sports were probably recurrent, albeit definitely

30. It has traditionally been accepted that white indicates females, and red, males in Aegean paintings. Some authors have recently questioned this assumption (N. Marinatos 1989, 23-32; Indelicato 1988), and until more convincing evidence surfaces, the issue remains open.

31. Myres 1950, 233; Snodgrass 1987, 135; Walberg 1986, 110, who notes similar interpretations of certain Egyptian representations. Younger's articles on bull leaping, however, seem to indicate that the images show simultaneous action (Younger 1976, 1983a, 1995b). J. Perkins feels the trouble we encounter in trying to decide whether the Taureador Panel shows three successive actions at once or a single moment in time stems from the Minoan artist's preoccupation with rendering the "pathways of movement" (1988, 235-38, 244).

momentous events associated with religious ceremonies that had predominant significance to the palatial community of Knossos (see N. Marinatos 1993b, 218-20; Younger 1995b; Hallager and Hallager 1995; Shaw 1995, 98, 105). In isolation such images relate only one feature of the games, and their narrative potential is limited. It is only through a familiarity with the range of figural compositions involving humans and bulls that

We can arrange these representations in a narrative sequence...I envision the following sequence of events. Minoans seem to have selected bulls or hunted them, to have ridden them informally, to have deliberately made them angry, to have leapt them, and to have sacrificed them.³²

To modern sensibilities the habitual employment of stock images to visualize action scenes like these diminishes their narrativity. Yet, we have seen that similar strategies occur in picture narratives from Egypt, the Near East and Greece, where standard forms are used to represent both unique and typical events, and their familiarity likely functioned to assist the viewer's recognition and comprehension of the incidents recounted. Extensive artistic renditions of hunt themes from the later phases of mainland Greek Bronze Age art have an even greater "formulaic quality" than Cretan works, though their "storytelling intention" is widely accepted (Immerwahr 1990, 122). The Late Helladic palace at Tiryns yielded fragments depicting a hunting enterprise that are assumed to have formed a "narrative composition in which the action unfolds" (Immerwahr 1990, 166), notwithstanding that their actual organization and context is uncertain. Inferences like this are easy to justify when the subject matter is somewhat "ordinary": the 250 plus pieces of this Boar Hunt Fresco³³

32. Younger 1995b, 508. The spectacular finds from Tell el-Dab'a promise to extend the sequence of events involved in the bull sports even further, adding purely acrobatic activities and "the bull's subjugation" - the latter possibly the "final episode in the bull-leaping sequence" (Bietak and Marinatos 1995, 51; cf. Bietak 1995, 23) - to the more familiar operations described by Younger.

33. First studied and published by Rodenwaldt 1912, 96-137, nos. 113-93, one should also consult Immerwahr 1990, 129-32, 202-3, pls. 68-70, for the pertinent data. Found in a dump on the west slope of the site, the composition of the wall painting is uncertain, and Immerwahr suggests that it may also have included scenes of deer hunting (Immerwahr 1990, 130). Some of the pieces are on display at the National Museum in Athens, others are in storage (cf. Chapin 1995, entry 159, pp. 405-6).

present actions which are satisfactorily combined as a chain of events. They show hunters departing in chariots and on foot with weapons and dogs, as well as scenes of the tracking and wounding of boars in a locale indicative of marshland (Figs. 17-18). The figure style is stiff and inelegant, but, as many have stated, the vignettes of dogs in full run and boars about to be speared or netted communicate something of the tension and excitement of the chase. S. Immerwahr tacitly acknowledges that narrative is a structure that can be signified in general or specific terms and also effectively characterizes the quality of Late Helladic visual narration when she calls these pictures of a "generic cycle of events" our "most completely understood examples of Mycenaean narrative painting" (Immerwahr 1990, 130).

4.1.3 Pictorial Accounts of Ritual Events: Narratives of Another Order

The narrative voice of mainland Greek depictions of "typical" crisis events like the Tiryns and Orchomenos hunt scenes is evident to most observers. But only a few Aegean specialists have commented upon the "narrative character" of some Minoan and Cycladic representations of "typical" sacred events;³⁴ for authors adhering to narrow definitions of pictorial narrative, the repeated and nonhistorical aspect of ritual actions precludes such reflections.³⁵ Even someone sympathetic to more all-encompassing meanings of the word might forsake examinations of prehistoric "religious art" in narrative terms: the impediments that the uninformed beholder encounters in attempting to decipher imagery illustrating ritual-ceremonial activities were noted earlier in the context of early Mesopotamian art

34. See Younger 1973, 232-35; 1992, 268; Dumas 1992, 24; Carter 1995, 291.

35. E.g., Morgan 1988, 164, and Weingarten 1989, 299; hence the criticism expressed by Weingarten in response to Pittman's use of the word "narrative" to describe certain religious scenes in the art of Uruk (Ferioli et al., 1994: 205-6).

(Chapter 2, sections 2.2.1, 2.2.4).³⁶ In contrast to profane and relatively universal undertakings like agonistic contests, whose essential developments in space and time can be grasped quite effortlessly, with ritual events it is hard to recognize the "elementary narrative syntagm" of the story content, the subject-action-object relation (Bal 1991, 208).

Events of this kind are also advised by and infused with myth and magic, the ultimate sources of their concern for "a sense of rightness, of correct sequence of the way things must be done" (Elsbee 1982, 132).³⁷ Some of the most involved representations from Crete and Thera portray people participating in cult-related exercises. The beliefs behind the proceedings shown are impenetrable, but it is sometimes possible to "read out" or reconstruct a simple narrative of ritual action or "process" from depictions that were unquestionably designed to report the central features of said events - in contradistinction to more formal representations of religious subjects where the images are intended primarily as "symbolic vehicles of ideas" (Arnheim 1969, 149).

This has been attempted for works like the wall paintings in miniature technique from the Palace of Knossos. Sections of possibly two separate paintings, the Temple (or "Grandstand") and Sacred Grove and Dance frescoes (ca. MM III/LM I) are considered to have formed either a series of thematically related panels, or a frieze covering two or more

36. Making sense of any event so "removed in space-time from current affairs" is difficult, requiring, as it does, "more historical or cultural information" for "the construction of a hypothesis of what the event is about" (Spiegel and Machotka 1974, 97-98).

37. In the discipline of anthropology, "magic, religion, ceremony, rite, lore, reportage, history, science" are considered to be specialized human "story" categories, in which an "event or process" is communicated; see Elsbee 1982, 132. Wright 1995a, 341-2, also addresses the relationship between myth and ritual, and the importance of sequence or proper action:

belief requires practice, human action that affirms belief. Practice is ritual. The pantheon, myths and beliefs about space and time are arranged in sequences, such as the telling of a story, and these sequences are the central organizing principle of ritual... .

walls of a small room (Figs. 7-8).³⁸ The remnants of these paintings picture large gatherings of people in different settings. In the Temple Fresco crowds of men and women - rendered as a mass of tiny profile heads - sit "above" and "below" a "tripartite shrine," a multi-levelled structure distinguished by checkerboard masonry, a rosette motif, and "horns of consecration" (Fig. 7). A few women in long flounced skirts stand on a platform or stairs to either side of, but some distance away from the shrine, while seated directly beside it to the left and right are two more small groups of women, whose elaborate costumes and larger size suggest an elevated or elite status (Fig. 67). These players appear to be spectators assembled to witness or participate in some significant happening. Similar crowds occur in the Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco, however there they are amassed about an area defined by low stone walls or pathways, amid trees that border a taller built wall at the left side of the composition (Fig. 8). Some male figures stand rather decorously, and once more women in long skirts and revealing bodices are featured prominently, now in the open foreground space, standing or moving in superposed rows toward the left where virtually all heads also face.

Because certain details in the frescoes correspond to archaeological remains from the site, it is sensible to imagine, as all scholars do, that a specific location is shown:

The setting of both frescoes seems to have been the immediate vicinity of the palace, probably the Central Court for the "Temple Fresco" and the West Court with its diagonal causeways for the "Sacred Grove." (Immerwahr 1983, 145; 150, n. 12)

38. See Evans *PM* III, 19 ff., and 42 ff., figs. 9, 12, 28-34, 36, pls. XVI-XVII, for the Temple Fresco, and *PM* III, 46 ff., pl. XVIII, for the Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco. Immerwahr 1990, 63-67, 173, pls., 22-23, gives an excellent account of the remains and reconstructions, which can be seen in Gallery XV of the Herakleion Museum. The average height of the standing figures in these "miniature class" paintings is ca. 6 cm. Suggestions for new or modified restorations of the Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco by N. Marinatos (1987, fig. 7), and E. Davis (1987, 156-61) incorporate a fragment of a large ashlar structure (a "shrine" according to those authors) noted as belonging to the composition by Cameron (1967, 66-69, figs. 7-8). Evans thought the miniature paintings, which were found on the late basement floor of a small room at the north end of the central court, decorated the walls of a shrine there, near the palace's North Entrance.

The nature of the event is much more obscure. Cameron postulated a "major public festival" involving a "sacred dance" outside the palace walls followed by continuing ceremonies inside the palace around the shrine in the central courtyard (Cameron 1975, 132; 1987, 325). N. Marinatos likewise perceives various phases of festal action in the "miniature cycle" Cameron reconstructs, though segregated processions of men and women, not dancers, are visualized, and their motions are directed toward cult structures in both settings (N. Marinatos 1993b, 58-59). More adventurous is the impression of G. Sjöflund, who links the frescoes with representations in other media and speculates that these paintings illustrate the final stages of an elaborate course of initiation rites for young Minoan men and women gathered to take part in "collective marriage ceremonies" (1987, 232). Sentiments like these emphasize that despite the uncertain and non-specific character of the events related in such "sacred genre" paintings, the frescoes' capacity for narrativization, that is their power to stimulate the viewer to unite their parts into a meaningful progression of action, is considerable.

The miniature style has apparent advantages when it comes to representing complex happenings with many characters and different venues. Even so, it was not used exclusively for these purposes,³⁹ nor was it the Aegean painter's only method of representing religious events. A set of paintings from an impressive "public" edifice (Xeste 3) located at the southwest corner of the excavated portion of Akrotiri, Thera, recount activities related to cult in dimensions that approach life-size.⁴⁰ These frescoes decorated the northern part

39. In his rather loose definition, small figurative works belonging to Evans's "miniature class" include not only autonomous compositions entirely composed of small figures like those just described, but also miniature figurations that occur in much larger-scaled representations, such as "the sphinxes and griffins that apparently adorned the dresses of lifesize women" (Immerwahr 1990, 63).

40. Excavated by S. Marinatos in 1973 (S. Marinatos 1976, 32 ff., pls. A-K, 58-66). See too Immerwahr 1990, 59-62, 186; Doumas 1992, 127-31, with excellent colour plates, 100-8, 116-21; N. Marinatos 1993b, 203-8. The frescoes date to LC I. Although still not available to the public, the Xeste 3 paintings are part of the permanent collection of the new museum on Thera, the opening date of which has yet to be announced. I

of similar rooms located on two storeys.⁴¹ On the upper or first storey, the east and north walls displayed scenes of young women gathering (east wall), transporting (north wall, northeast corner), and finally depositing crocus stamens (saffron) for presentation to a majestic female attended by a blue monkey and a winged griffin (Fig. 68a-b). The degree of individualization in these depictions is remarkable and unprecedented in Aegean art: no two costumes are precisely alike, and according to some authors, distinctions in the treatment of the flower pickers' hairstyles may signify either differences in age or initiatory status (E. Davis 1986b; N. Marinatos 1993b, 203-8; cf. Withee 1992). The "spatial environment of the narrative" (Chapin 1995, 106) is also well-articulated. All events, even the presentation scene on a raised construction, take place outdoors in a rocky hillside landscape, the clusters of crocus plants on the white background being non-illusionistic "references"⁴² to the encircling countryside.

The ritual reflected here, perhaps "undertaken in an enactment of a mythic event" (Morgan 1990, 256) is likely to have had a functional relationship with the architectural space these paintings embellish (see N. Marinatos 1993b, 205). The hallowed character of the rooms is reinforced by the design of the ground floor space, which constitutes an "adyton" or "lustral basin." An L-shaped room reached by descending steps, the adyton is otherwise known only from the palaces and villas of Minoan Crete, where it has sacred

am most grateful to C. Televantou for obtaining permission for me to view the paintings in the summer of 1991, and my thanks are extended to the museum's patient and considerate staff.

41. See plan in Doumas 1992, 126, and reconstructions in Immerwahr 1990, fig. 20, and N. Marinatos 1993b, fig. 211. The spacious rooms on both floors were divided by pier and door partitions ("polythera"), which could be manipulated to create accessible or completely private spaces (compare comments by Palyvou 1987, 200, and N. Marinatos 1993b, 203-5).

42. Chapin 1995, 106, discusses the function of the crocuses in these paintings: they create "the structure not the illusion" of the setting, referring to the hillside landscape (as noted above, she coins the term "referential perspective" for such strategies) without including all the information required to describe the setting fully, an exercise that might lessen the narrative importance of the figures and their actions. Compare earlier observations by N. Marinatos 1993b, 205.

connotations.⁴³

The paintings covering the walls above the adyton's sunken floor are more enigmatic, and less amenable to reconstitution as a continuous "sequence of actions" (Morgan 1990, 257) in the fashion of the compositions from the upper room. Here the east wall bears a representation of an "architectural structure surmounted by a pair of sacral horns" (Doumas 1992, 129).⁴⁴ The north wall, in contrast, pictures three female figures, isolated into "quasi narrative groups" (Younger 1992, 268) by their unique actions and the diverse objects of their attention (Fig. 69). The woman at the far left,⁴⁵ usually referred to as an adorant with an offering, is placed against a neutral ground and walks to the right, holding out a necklace of strung beads in her left hand. Just right of her, beginning under a highly placed window and resuming beyond it, is a hillside landscape with crocus clumps like that on the upper floor frescoes, save that now the colourful rock forms are also shown pointing downward below the solid upper border of the painting.⁴⁶ They enframe a second woman who too faces right but is seated on the hillock, her left hand to her head, the right stretched down to touch one of her feet, which seems to be bleeding. A crocus blossom by the injured foot implies that she had been picking flowers when the mishap happened. This mini-drama is terminated abruptly by the presence of the third figure who occupies the featureless space to the right of the wounded girl. She walks on a straight, dark groundline

43. There is no real agreement among experts as to the purpose of these rooms (see discussion by Graham 1987, 99-108), although, as Immerwahr says, "the religious iconography here leaves little doubt that this particular lustral basin served a cultic function" (Immerwahr 1990, 59).

44. Unfortunately, this section of the frieze is not illustrated by Doumas, so the drawings in N. Marinatos 1993b, fig. 214, and Immerwahr 1990, fig. 20, must suffice.

45. As restored, this figure was painted on the section of the wall that would be seen from the stairs leading down into the adyton, but would not be fully visible once the visitor was inside that lower space: N. Marinatos 1993b, fig. 211.

46. The downward-pointing rocks represent "craggy cliffs" in the distance (N. Marinatos 1993b, 207), in a manner typical of Minoan spatial conventions, which Chapin dubs "rocky referential perspective" (Chapin 1995, 110, 378, 414).

to the left, though her face, unobscured by the transparent dotted veil that covers most of her body, is turned backward 180 degrees toward the east wall with its "shrine."

These three self-contained scenes are like condensed theatrical tableaux. Their contiguity supports the notion that the figures and actions shown are connected somehow, though if their relationship is of a narrative kind, the "plot" is not immediately discernable. N. Marinatos has produced the most inventive and convincing reading of the entire pictorial ensemble, one that unites the series as a kind of expository narrative - a visual account of distinct stages in an initiation experience undergone by young Thera women of slightly different ages. She sees the adyton paintings as relating two phases of the initiatory process using different characters whose actions are properly understood only when considered in conjunction with the frescoes of crocus gathering/presentation on the upper floor:

On the occasion of a festival to the goddess, girls were sent out to the hills to collect large numbers of blossoms for the divinity. This exodus from the city corresponds to the period of seclusion that we so often meet in rites of passage. But this excursion was also an ordeal because, if the girls were required to be barefoot, sooner or later they would get bloody feet. Walking on wounded feet causes pain - which is precisely the purpose of the ordeal: to teach endurance of pain and familiarization with one's own blood. The cause of the wound can thus be linked with the crocus gathering depicted on the level above. (N. Marinatos 1993b, 208-9)

The employment of an "episodic method" (Weingarten 1989, 301) to depict ritual activities in chambers dedicated to cult or worship elicits comparison with visual narratives in Christian churches of the east and west, where image cycles recounting the Passion and Lives of the Saints function within the liturgical context in a number of ways: symbolic, inspirational, celebratory, didactic.⁴⁷ Although in form they are quite unlike the developed, multifigured compositions of Christendom, the picture groups on both floors of Xeste 3

47. Interesting observations on the nature of visual narratives in the Christian tradition are made by the following authors in various contexts: Wickhoff 1895; Weitzmann 1957; Ringbom 1965; Schapiro 1973; Belting 1985; Miles 1985; Lavin 1990; Bal 1991; Elkins 1991.

might be seen as "devotional narratives," serving a similarly varied array of interests, and possibly supplementing oral recitations in much the same manner that Christian iconography has traditionally done.

Ritual undertakings of a different type are represented on the renowned Hagia Triadha Sarcophagus, discovered in an LM III tomb at that site on Crete.⁴⁸ The figural friezes on the long stuccoed sides of the limestone coffin form the most extensively preserved pictorial accounts of Late Minoan/Mycenaean religious rites (Fig. 70a-d). Like many of the scenes on Geometric burial kraters of the eighth century B.C., the images on the sarcophagus are interpreted as detailing stages of "typical" funerary ceremonies performed on behalf of the dead. The "story material," that is the sort of events recounted, may be only passably successful *qua* narrative, but the artist has laboured to present the pertinent elements in a way that heightens their narrative potential. All implements, costumes, and built structures are depicted with an abundance of particularizing detail. Separate episodes of procession, animal sacrifice, libation, and offering are specified compositionally through the directional positioning of the figures and vertically defined colour fields.⁴⁹ It is primarily with respect to precisely how these activities should be combined as a progressive series and what kind of cult is involved, that scholarly opinion

48. The sarcophagus was excavated in 1903 by R. Parabini, who published his finds in *Monumenti antichi* 19 (1908), 5-86, pls. I-III. N. Marinatos (1993b, 253 n. 108) and Immerwahr (1990, 180-81) note the more pertinent studies on the sarcophagus, selecting from what is a very extensive bibliography. The measurements given by Immerwahr are 1.37 m long by 45 cm high, with the height of the figural zone being 25 cm (Immerwahr 1990, 180). The lid of the sarcophagus is missing, and Long (1974, 24) speculates that it too might have had figural decoration.

49. Immerwahr (1990, 101) and Chapin (1995, 193 n. 69) both comment on the role the background colour changes play in fostering compositional clarity and spatial coherence. A new and controversial interpretation of the vertical colour bands by Pötscher (1990, 171-91) proposes that they have a more meaningful function, namely that they denote the times of day when the various rituals were performed: blue indicating night, yellow indicating morning, and white indicating daytime. N. Marinatos raises serious objections to this reading in her review of Pötscher's book, *Classical Review* 42 (1992), 85-87. Notions regarding colour symbolism in Aegean paintings, though sometimes clever, are quite impossible to support; compare the equally intriguing suggestion by Indelicato (1988, 53) that the different skin colours of the bull leapers in the Taureador Panels from Knossos denote temporal phases in the leaping sequence.

varies. Some explanations may appeal more than others, but it must be admitted that no one reading is completely persuasive, something that is not surprising considering that we lack the esoteric knowledge required to fill in the artistic "blanks" of this particular class of visual narrative.⁵⁰

4.1.4 Journeys by Sea and Captive Women: "Rootless Narratives" on Aegean Rings and Seals

A favourite subject in the restricted repertoire of themes dealt with in oral narratives is that of a journey, particularly the "return of the hero" (Lord 1991, 199). Like contests of skill, trips to far off places are enterprises fraught with hazard and uncertainty, things that make for a good story in any medium. When such excursions are recounted pictorially in ancient art - one thinks of Hatshepsut's Punt expedition and numerous Attic vase paintings - the artist often selects scenes of leave-taking or arrival for illustration, perhaps because with any event it is "how it begins and how it ends - especially how it ends" that is the most "significant feature" (Spiegel and Machotka 1974, 91).

The ambitious miniaturist responsible for the weathered depictions on a gold ring from the Tiryns Treasure, chose a similar solution in what may be history's most

50. Matz 1958, 22 ff., separated the images unevenly on the two long sides into two cycles related to two separate cults: the cult of the dead and the divine cult. Cameron (1975, 190-5) agrees with how Matz relates the four sides, though questions the latter's assessment of two cults. Long (1974, pp. 39 ff.) challenges Matz (and Cameron), linking the representations on the front and back as depicting rites performed during the funeral of the person interred in the sarcophagus. N. Marinatos (1993b, 31-36) modifies the reading of Matz somewhat, connecting all four sides of the coffin, which are felt to be concerned with ceremonies for the dead (side A, plus short side with "chthonic goddesses" in goat-driven chariot), and ceremonies of renewal (side B, plus short side with "celestial goddesses" in griffin-driven chariot). R. Laffineur in *Kernos* 4 (1991), 277-85, compares the scenes to funerary ritual in the Homeric poems.

concentrated rendition of this story type (Fig. 71a-b).⁵¹ On an oval surface 2.0 cm high and 3.4 cm long, a total of eight figures are shown in various circumstances. At the right, facing one another "inside" a rectangular enclosure, are a woman in a flounced dress with her left arm bent and extended toward an apparently unclothed male whose own left arm is raised toward the woman's shoulder in a situation that connotes intimacy or intense interaction of some kind. To the left of this interior scene, another man and woman are rendered in a larger scale, standing in an open space at somewhat different levels but clearly addressing each other with identical gestures - one arm down, the other raised high.⁵² Just behind the woman's back, occupying the far left half of the composition, is a ship pictured at sea but close to land, if one accurately reads a fish-shaped form below the hull, and the irregular blobs and lines on the upper part of the field. Two figures sit within a small cabin underneath the mast. A third - male - faces them, and a fourth, much larger man stands at the right end of the vessel, his back to the other figures, head pointed toward the right.

Although it is not entirely obvious that the same persons are shown more than once, opinions consonantly hold that the ring presents three scenes placed side by side:

Three episodes are visualized simultaneously but meant to be understood

51. The so-called Treasure of Tiryns was not unearthed in a proper excavation, but was found in 1930, by a workman who chanced upon it in the ruins of what later proved to be a Middle Mycenaean house. The precious objects were probably "seized on a plundering raid" (Karouzou 1990, 40) and were stowed away in a large bronze vessel. On display in the Athens National Museum (no. 6209, Case 15, Mycenaean Room), the pertinent bibliographic data is given in *CMS* I, n. 180; the ring probably dates to the LH II-III period.

52. Gestures and their possible meanings in representational art of the Aegean Bronze Age is a topic that has only quite recently been discussed (see below, section 4.2). In the context of this representation, one tends to assume the raised arm expresses salutation or farewell. The brief examination of conventional gestures in Minoan frescoes by Cameron (1975, 50-52, fig. 5) includes one that he felt denotes enthusiasm or excitement, exemplified by the tiny male figures in the top section of the "Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco" who lift one arm high over their heads, thumb and fingers separated, the other arm apparently held down at their sides. It differs slightly from the gesture of the central couple on the Tiryns ring in that their arms have a more pronounced bend.

progressively, as if over time. (Weingarten 1989, 301)⁵³

How one reads the sequence of events depends upon whether the ship is seen as arriving or departing. M. Wedde has thoughtfully examined the ambiguities of ship representations in Aegean glyptic scenes, and while he personally considers the vessel to be beaching stern-end first, according to his data one is equally entitled to see the boat as heading away from land.⁵⁴ In the former scenario, reading moves from left to right: the ship docks, the couple greets one another on shore, the couple enters a building. The alternate option progresses from right to left with the couple leaving the building, bidding farewell on shore, and the ship departing.

A few classicists have proposed mythic identifications for the protagonists, Theseus and Ariadne or Helen and Menelaus being the most popular choices (see comments in Persson 1942, 80-81; Weingarten 1989, 300-1). Other scholars regard the scenes as typical accounts of homecoming or embarkation, and even religious explanations have been proffered for this and related images of sea travel, in which instance they are examined less as "literal narratives" and more in view of systems of belief (e.g., Goodison 1989, 93). In Princean terms (see above, Chapter 3, section 3.2.2) the narrativity of the depictions resides in the various situations shown and the way in which the designer has effected a perception of communication between individuals and between separate scenes, which are instinctively linked as consecutive events. Weingarten may be correct to assert that the ring does not portray "true narrative" in the sense of detailing a specific story, but the anecdotal character

53. Compare descriptions by Evans *PM* II.1, 245, fig. 142; IV.2, 956, fig. 926; Persson 1942, 80-81; Snodgrass 1987, 165-6; Effenterre and Effenterre 1992, 327. Arnheim's comments on A. Watteau's similar treatment of a departure scene are also of interest; he notes that the sequence of stages are "more spatial than temporal, compressed in a single episode...a linear action in time traverses the space of the picture" (Arnheim 1988, 190; *Embarquement pour l'île des Cythère*, 1717).

54. Wedde 1990, 1-24, especially p. 11 for the Tiryns ring.

of the imagery is unfairly devalued by her assertion that all such "generic" images are necessarily (and entirely) non-narrative (Weingarten 1989, 300-1).

Some representations are so unusual that they do "seem to have reference to a particular moment rather than a generalized event" (Younger 1973, 82, n. 19), and like most Aegean figural studies with narrative overtones, they stimulate our curiosity, provoking many questions that elude satisfying responses. Another small gold ring from a grave excavated in the Agora of Athens, presents a strange scene (Fig. 72a-b).⁵⁵ A large male wearing a loin cloth, a hat or headdress, and clasping a long pole or "sceptre" terminating in a trefoil shape at one end, is shown in profile view moving to the left, legs placed wide apart in a striding or running pose. Two curved lines (ropes?) extend from his waist to that of the first of two women. They too are depicted in profile facing left, but appear smaller than the man and are clothed in flounced skirts with coiled girdles at their waists and what may be high collars or "garlands"⁵⁶ around their necks. No hair or breasts are indicated on these women, and their arms assume a somewhat unnatural angle, thrust back behind them with the hands positioned close to the hip or buttocks.⁵⁷ Apart from the ground line beneath their feet, the only other objects in the composition are a small column with capital and base "floating" behind the second female at the extreme right of the oval field, and a tiny vertical "branch" with a three leafed form akin to that on the running man's staff, placed at the top of the composition, somewhat left of centre. These elements might indicate the setting of the action (e.g., the column standing for a "palace" or shrine),⁵⁸ or

55. See *CMS* V, n. 173, for the pertinent bibliographic data; possibly dated to LH III, the ring is 1.85 cm long, and 1.2 cm high.

56. Compare Younger 1992, 269.

57. Younger 1992, 268-69, and Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 14, feel this pose indicates that the hands of the women are tied behind their backs, though this interpretation is not convincing to all observers.

58. Krattenmaker 1995a, 51-54, and 1995b, 128-30, feels columns and columnar structures in Minoan iconography denote specific locations or building types, namely palaces or villas.

have a more metaphorical relationship to the imagery.

Today few commentators are likely to hazard explanations for the scene based on stories or representations from eighth to fifth century B.C. Greek literature or art, though earlier interpretations that the ring portrays the legendary Minotaur carrying off Athenian maidens or Hermes Psychopompos accompanying the souls to Hades are still repeated.⁵⁹ The current scepticism that many authors voice in regard to exceptional images like these and the question of narrative that they arouse may, in the interest of academic balance, err too heavily on the side of caution. In this vein, Weingarten queries whether peculiar details like the headgear and staff might be merely "an artistic device" and not attributes "identifying the character," concluding that:

Without some means of fixing the event in time and space, even a scene meant to be narrative risks sliding into generalization, here a typical scene of women carried off into captivity by a victorious warrior. (Weingarten 1989, 300)

The viability of determining singular from generic stories in uninscribed pictures is most doubtful, and has been mentioned countless times in the foregoing text. One wonders, nonetheless, how many spectators, then or now, would identify a running man wearing a brimmed (or horned?) headpiece and flourishing an ornate staff with a regular warrior. Surely the usual military gear - helmet, spear, dagger, bow - would have been chosen if that were the artist's intention. In fact, although we may not understand enough about the context of the event to produce an adequate reading, there is little in the imagery to sanction its classification as a "genre scene,"⁶⁰ especially one of the secular variety.

A pendant image (Fig. 73a-b) occurs on a sealing from Chania (ca. LM Ib),⁶¹ its

59. E.g., Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 14.

60. Compare comments by Ahlberg-Cornell 1992, 14: "The fact that the women are tied to each other and to the man with a double rope indicates that it is not a genre scene."

61. Now published in *CMS* V, Supp. 1A, n. 133.

shared components implying a "common prototype" or story (Younger 1973, 234; 1992, 268-69). This version, incompletely preserved, is acted out under wavy lines analogous to those denoting landscape features in late Minoan frescoes⁶² and differs in a few minor details: the running man is hatless and carries a plain staff, and the twin ropes he holds terminate around the neck of at least one, if not both of the figures being led behind him. Puzzling as "such rootless narratives"⁶³ are, when contemplated with other glyptic scenes where the theme of tied or "captive" women is also in evidence, it may be possible to extend the story episodes, as Younger has dared to do, to create an account or narrative in which the running man, a "Grand Lady," and her tied female charges effect a sequence of actions involving abduction and flight in a landscape, and delivery or worship/service at a shrine or sanctuary.⁶⁴

4.1.5 Overview Summary

The preceding sections have introduced us to the principal documents mentioned in discussions where the idea of narrative in Aegean art has arisen: one flagrant exception is the miniature frieze from Thera, which is treated below (section 4.3). A somewhat artificial order was imposed upon this material by highlighting certain subjects (war/hunt, ritual events) and issues (time, uniqueness) that have been instrumental in provoking specialists

62. Chapin 1995, 365, entry 60: "Above the scene two wavy lines undulate in a manner that recalls the rockwork above the Cupbearer in the Procession fresco from Knossos."

63. This term is Weingarten's, 1989, n. 11.

64. Younger 1992, 268-69, the related monuments being: *CMS* I n. 159; Hagia Triadha sealing 140 (Herakleion Museum n. 505); *CMS* II.3, n. 218; *CMS* V, n. 173; *CMS* V, Supp. 1a, n. 133; *CMS* I, n. 108; *CMS* I, n. 126. Younger wonders whether the final act in this ritual drama (if *CMS* I, n. 126 is included in the sequence) involved the sacrifice of one or both of the bound women over a low table (Younger 1992, n. 32, p. 269). Crowley 1995a, 484, has coined the name "Grand Lady" to refer to the few representations of a large female "VIP" accompanied by two smaller female figures similar to those on the Athens ring.

in the field to contemplate narrative matters. Since the majority of commentators did not actually set out to examine the question systematically, it is not unexpected that the word "narrative" is rarely defined, or that it is sometimes employed rather perfunctorily to describe any figural scene. When a succinct definition of pictorial narration has been given, the limiting nature of its terms has effectively thwarted the exercise: if the only works considered "narrative" are those that recount singular and significant events involving specific individuals, there is very little one can say on the subject within the context of the Aegean Bronze Age.

A disquieting tension results from this co-existence of approaches to the question of narrative that are either too vague or too restrictive. The analyses below attempt to ameliorate this problem by utilizing the more feasible definition stated in Chapter 3, section 3.2.1, and applying a method for evaluating narrative features that concentrates on both elements of narrative structure (Story and Discourse) in assessing the narrativity of each monument.

4.2 The Isopata Ring

If an observer is presented with only the visual stimuli of an untitled event about which he has no specific prior information, then he will try to attach event and role tags to the stimuli, beginning with the primary, biological roles, in the construction of a hypothesis of what the event is about...The relation of space-time setting to body communication will be especially pertinent to such matters as costume (dress and ornamentation), cosmetics, posture and gesture. (Spiegel and Machotka 1974, 97-98)

As viewers, our principal reaction to images that have what Bal calls a "sense of narrative," is to ask ourselves what is taking place, for in recounting an event or events, narrative pictures will always convey the impression that "something is happening" (Bal 1991,

224). The engraved scene on a gold signet ring found in one of the chamber tombs at Isopata near Knossos,⁶⁵ elicits this reaction (Fig. 74a-b). It presents four women performing different motions in a landscape setting defined by groups of lily (and crocus?) plants. Their breasts are bared, and they wear long flounced skirts of varying design. Near the upper central portion of the oval field there are several additional elements: a large eye; a few serpentine forms with one bulbous and one pointed end, often called snakes or "streamers;" a conical shape with a small circular top, identified as a "chrysalis" or a vessel of some sort; a long, narrow, segmented element thought to depict a "vegetal frond;" and a small female figure shown in profile wearing a beehive-shaped skirt.⁶⁶ This tiny creature has the right arm extended out in front of her, the other perceptible only as a rounded protuberance at her back or left side, and her feet point downwards. Like the four larger women, her head is rendered as a blank oval and the hair as a series of dots.⁶⁷

The picture has a bewildering, dreamlike quality, resulting from the portrayal of

65. The Isopata Ring is published in *CMS* II.3, n. 51, with bibliographic references. On display in the Herakleion Museum (precious metals inventory number 424), the dimensions of the ring are 2.25 cm long and 1.16 cm wide. It was found on the floor in the western part of chamber tomb 1 at Isopata, which had been robbed in antiquity. The only pottery sherds recovered in the same area date to LM IIIA. I. Pini thinks it most probable, however, that the sherds belong to the later, adjacent tomb (1a), preferring to date the ring on stylistic grounds to LM IA-B (Pini 1983, 39-49), a range also favoured by Younger 1983b, 134-35, and 1995a, 154.

It must be stressed at the outset of this section that while seals are preserved in numbers far surpassing any other extant examples of Aegean artwork (there exist something in excess of 4500 seals, sealings, and signet rings bearing imagery of some sort), according to Younger's calculations only 15% of the seal types (one-third of these being rings) depict the human figure "and a few others, like those with netted bulls or collared dogs and lions, imply it" (Younger 1988, x). The Isopata Ring - undoubtedly a luxury object few could afford - belongs to a small circle of monuments within this inclusive grouping, the imagery of which is best characterized as "specialized."

66. See the various explanations of these motifs given in: *CMS* II.3, n. 51; Persson 1942, 47-50; Evans, *PM* III, 68; Pini 1983; Crowley 1995a, 486; Chapin 1995, 366. P. Warren 1987, 489-90, compares the conical shape with the small circular top on the Isopata Ring to a similar form either held or just positioned near to the right hand of the central male on the infamous Ring of Minos: in Gillieron's drawing it appears to be a small jug or vessel, but judging from the copy of the ring in the Ashmolean Museum, Warren feels it is "an object of Minoan religious symbolism, seen on the...Isopata, Sellopoulo...and Archanes rings, namely a small chrysalis."

67. Compare descriptions of the renderings of these figures by Younger 1995a, 154, especially regarding their "blobby and featureless aniconic heads."

human action in a more or less realistic manner combined with features that are at odds with normal life experience. There is, in fact, nothing exactly like it in Aegean art. The image does, however, share certain traits with a select collection of monuments, mostly rings and seals, and these representations have been used to clarify the theme and the character of the activity depicted. The component that may be considered the most consistent and thus the most significant in this sense is the diminutive floating figure. Hovering figures of diverse descriptions are represented on the monuments illustrated in Fig. 75a-g. Of these examples, the only two females - marked by their bell-shaped skirts - are shown in settings quite unlike that on the Isopata Ring. One appears with her hands to her hips before a male in a space bounded on both sides by constructions capped with "horns of consecration" (Fig. 75d), and the other is placed above a boat with rowers, her extended arm pointing toward that of a man standing on land to the left of the vessel, beside a female companion (Fig. 75e). The additional instances of airborne figures portray males, possibly naked or wearing codpieces, who appear either in front of a single man or before one or two women, sometimes holding a staff or weapon in the extended hand (Fig. 75a, f), elsewhere assuming a gesture similar to that of the larger figure they face (Fig. 75b). None of the women in these scenes carry out the same movements as those on the ring from Isopata, although most are dressed like them.

A few more images are related to this "cluster"⁶⁸ by virtue of the non-anthropomorphic motifs that surmount or are otherwise affiliated with scenes of action (Fig. 76a-d). A couple of these representations are stylistically close to the Isopata Ring, perhaps

68. For the practice of "clustering" as a "framework for analysing imagery" in the Aegean Bronze Age, see Wedde 1992, 1995a, 1995b.

even by the same hand or workshop (Fig. 76b-d).⁶⁹ Variations of the eye and frond motifs occur on three of the monuments - all gold rings - but some in this group also include emblems of a rather different kind, and their scenes have a much greater correspondence with one another than they do with the imagery on the ring in question. The main activity involves male figures touching tree limbs or leaning over large irregular or ovoid-shaped forms (taken to be rocks or boulders), operations that in two cases are executed in the proximity of a female in a flounced skirt. A tripartite structure is clearly associated with the tree in one example (Fig. 76a), whereas slightly convex vertical elements placed to the left side of the compositions in the other scenes may depict built objects of a different sort which, at least on one ring (Fig. 76b), are also intimately connected with a tree.

There has been much discussion about who the people in these scenes are, what they are doing, and whether or how the various actions shown might be related temporally. An intricate "framework of inferences" has been developed in Aegean scholarship to explain the vagaries of images like these, and within that theory the enigmatic floating motifs on the Isopata Ring and corresponding monuments are taken to signify "a mythic, symbolic world - the realm of religion and cult" (Krattenmaker 1995b, 120). The symbols are seen as attributes or emblems of the supernatural powers of divine forces, and when they take the form of small "flying" or suspended figures, they are usually understood as representing the presence or actual manifestation of the deity him/herself.⁷⁰ This proposition has been

69. On the "Master of the Isopata Ring" see Younger 1983b, 134-35, figs. 52-55, and compare Pini 1983, 44 (positing a different hand for the ring from Vapheio). Although Warren (1987; 1990) and Pini (1987) have tried to restore the reputation of the Ring of Minos (Evans *PM* IV, 947-56) as an authentic work - with some scholarly acceptance, e.g., Niemeier 1989, 184 (Addendum) - owing to lingering scepticism, neither it nor the Ring of Nestor (Evans *PM* III, 145-57) have been included in this group. Wedde's diplomatic observations on the rather "eclectic" nature of the Ring of Minos are particularly edifying (Wedde 1992, 191-92), as are those of N. Marinatos on the Ring of Nestor (in Darcque and Poursat 1985, 51).

70. See, for example: Evans 1901, *passim*, cf. Evans *PM* III, 68; Nilsson 1950, especially his chapter on epiphany; Matz 1958 (inspired by Nilsson), *passim*; Hägg 1983 and 1986; Warren 1988 and 1990, 196; Neimeier 1989; Sourvinou-Inwood 1990a; Wedde 1992, especially 185-93; N. Marinatos 1993b, 175 ff.; Crowley 1995a,

maintained with such consistency that authors tend to speak assuredly about the "smaller size for divinity" as being the "established convention in Minoan Epiphany scenes" (Sourvinou-Inwood 1989, 248; cf. 1990a, 195), and some contemporary research has sought to define the necessary conditions or guidelines for distinguishing this category of scenes from other sorts of ritual representations.⁷¹

Assuming that the actions of the figures in these epiphany scenes are integrally connected with "numina," and that they participate in an incident of some metaphysical consequence, how does one proceed to assess the compositions in narrative terms? Narratives always involve a teleological accounting of characters and the objects of their actions. In order to reconstruct an event or chain of events one must grasp the internal order of the actions that constitute its plot or story, something we normally do based on "codes of inductive logic, pure chronologic" and the like (Chatman 1979, 178). As we have seen, the problem with representations of religious subjects is that without prior knowledge of their "story content" they often leave one at a loss to name the actions portrayed, and

486. Most authors suggest that the deity is actually presenting him/herself to those in the scenes concerned, though some prefer to consider these floating figures as "imagined visions" (Goodison 1989, 107), while others believe that they "simply articulate in visible terms what the ritual hoped to achieve, the presence of the deity who is shown as ideally present" (Sourvinou-Inwood 1990a, 195).

71. For example, Wedde 1992, is particularly interested in differentiating "epiphany scenes" from "scenes of adoration." In fact, Aegeanists use the term "epiphany" somewhat indiscriminately, and could benefit from the kind of exactness that van Straten has recommended to authors treating similar subject matter in Greek art. He observes that "epiphany implies that the god is seen by man," and as such "scenes with deities from which human figures are absent" are not rightly included in studies of epiphany iconography (Straten 1992, 47). Although he is discussing Classical Greek monuments, other comments made by that writer may have some pertinence to our understanding of the Isopata Ring and other works normally grouped with it:

Among the pictures including both divine and human figures, there is a large class in which the human figures do not betray any awareness of, or reaction to, the presence of the divine figures...these representations should [not] be interpreted as epiphanies. They are the result of an attempt by the artists working in a visual medium to depict the invisible divine presence...Only when the human figures clearly acknowledge the presence of the gods by their actions or gestures, [*sic*] an interpretation of the scene as a divine apparition may be considered. But even then, in many cases an alternative explanation is more likely... (Straten 1992, 47)

many religious activities defy logical explanation. In images any tale is told through the gestures of its figures - they identify individuals and their tasks or roles within the narrative. And so, whether one desires to re-create the spiritual universe of Minoan culture through an understanding of Aegean religious iconography - as has been the case historically - or, as here, to describe the narrative capacity of such imagery, gesture is the obvious starting point.

Properly defined, gesture is "a significant movement of limb or body" and comprises "any kind of bodily movement or posture which transmits a message to the observer" (Bremmer and Roodenburg 1991, 1). Gestures may accompany speech or substitute for it, like the sign language of the mute. Despite their multitudinous configurations, gestures are of two basic kinds:⁷²

1. *Spontaneous* or *functional* gestures: i.e., gestures that result from purely physical actions, like the poses intrinsic to the activities of walking, running, swimming, sneezing, scratching, working, and so on.
2. *Symbolic* or *expressive* gestures: i.e., gestures that denote attitudes or conditions of human feeling, states of mind. These run the gamut from gestures like thumbing one's nose or sticking out one's tongue, to the "performative" gestures of prayer and adoration, greeting, mourning, etc.

Although many spontaneous gestures are common to all human beings - the facial expressions of yawning, blushing, weeping, for instance - ethnologists stress that "gesture is not a universal language, but is the product of social and cultural differences" (Bremmer

72. While the terminology used by different writers may vary (e.g., Heuser 1954, 3 ["physical gestures/actions" and "significant/expressive gestures"]; Morris 1979, xvi-ii ["illustrators" and "emblems"]; Gombrich 1982, 80 ["spontaneous" and "symbolic"]; Arnheim 1988, 160 ["functional," and "symbolic,"]; Morgan 1988, 117-18 ["spontaneous" and "conventional"]), and some classifications are more sophisticated than others (e.g., Bäuml and Franz 1975, x), there is general agreement that gestures belong to one or the other of these two essential classes.

and Roodenburg 1991, 3).⁷³ The Canadian visitor to Italy is often surprised to learn that the local gesture for declaring "Come here quickly" is identical to our gesture for "Go away now," while in Tibet an extended tongue is a friendly greeting (Boardman 1991, 81). Even within the same cultural environment a given gesture may have different meanings; "the gesture of thumb and forefingers forming a circle can indicate satisfaction or obscene abuse" (Boardman 1991, 81). Indeed, there is ample evidence to support the deduction that "gestures tend to be polysemous and their meaning can be determined only by the context" (Bremmer and Roodenburg 1991, 4).

It is patent that in pictorial narrative a figural image without gesture has little or no story-value or narrativity: in visual narration the individual's hands and limbs "speak," they enable viewers to conjecture about the character(s) and the theme, permitting them to confirm or refute various interpretive possibilities (cf. Bal 1991, 187-88). Unambiguous poses or gestures obviously enhance our ability to apprehend and narrativize the elements of a figural work more than do obscure ones. Because of their religious context, the motions made by figures in Aegean compositions fitting the criteria of epiphanic or cult events are believed to be symbolic or formalized gestures having a ritual purpose.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, scholarship aiming to establish what some of the more suggestive and

73. Compare the observations of an anthropologist quoted by Goodman 1968, 48:

In so far as I have been able to determine, just as there are no universal words, sound complexes which carry the same meaning the world over, there are no body motions, facial expressions, or gestures which provide identical response the world over. A body can be bowed in grief, in humility, in laughter, or in readiness for aggression.

Hence dictionaries of gesture tend to restrict themselves to special areas. Bremmer and Roodenburg 1991, 3, note that today the study of gesture is the business of anthropologists, linguists, and social psychologists, with "kinesics" being a new term often used to describe the phenomenon and study of communicative body movements.

74. As has been mentioned above, in Aegean studies the "circular argument" is a troublesome but fairly indispensable instrument of knowledge acquisition; in this sense it may not be surprising to learn that gesture is among the criteria established for determining whether a scene pictures cult activity or relates some other kind of subject (see Krattenmaker 1995b, especially pp. 120-24).

recurrent among these gestures might denote, and to which type of individual they seem to be characteristic, has produced dissenting and indeterminate results.⁷⁵

The Isopata Ring holds an important place in these dialogues, illustrating both the "broad semantic capacity" of visual gestures (Bal 1991, 105),⁷⁶ and the consequent improbability of arriving at a consensus of meaning where such religious representations are concerned. In total, four poses are enacted by its featured players, and we shall consider them in turn:

1. The gesture of the diminutive floating figure whose one (right) arm is held out fairly rigid in front, the other possibly bent at the elbow (the minuscule size of the rendering makes it hard to recognize the position of the left arm).
2. The gesture of the central, partly frontal female, who has one (right) arm bent at the elbow, hand placed to the side near head level, the other (left) held down alongside the body.
3. The identical gestures of the two females shown in profile on the right of the composition, who hold both arms straight out before them raised above eye level.
4. The gesture of the partly frontal female on the left, where both arms are bent at the elbows with forearms slightly diagonal to the body, hands level with the head.

Beginning with the stance of the airborne figure, we have already seen that it has a

75. The exercise is, of course, based on the presupposition of "a coherent gestural system with some sort of 'grammar'" (Sourvinou-Inwood 1990a, 197). It is also assumed, although not necessarily stated, that particular gestures always either mark a specific type of individual, and/or that they always have the same general meaning. The laudable attempts but often discrepant findings of investigators like Matz (1958), Brandt (1965), Demisch (1984) and Niemeier (1989), bear witness to the obfuscations intrinsic to such undertakings. For a recent assessment of the failings of previous studies seeking to distinguish between mortals and deities on the basis of gesture see: Wedde 1995a, particularly pp. 495 ff. It is hoped that Professor Sourvinou-Inwood's long-anticipated monograph - *Reading Dumb Images: A Study in Minoan Iconography and Religion* (in preparation) - will prove more illuminating on the issue of gesture.

76. Visual gestures may assume different meanings in any given "text," and thus Bal notes that sometimes "gestures may not be as denotative as certain other iconographic signs" (Bal, 1991, 187).

variant in the representations associated iconographically with the Isopata Ring: the hand of the extended arm sometimes holds a stick or "sceptre" (e.g., Fig. 75a, g). There are no sure cases of females shown bearing such implements among the monuments most comparable to our ring, although the "Mother of the Mountain" sealing from Knossos⁷⁷ demonstrates that this version of the pose was not exclusive to the male gender (Fig. 77). Any gesture displayed by the small human forms placed in the upper zones of figural compositions on Minoan and Mycenaean glyptic art is defined - somewhat tautologically - as an "epiphany gesture" by Niemeier,⁷⁸ based on the premise that all such floating figures are deities. However, the pose of the outstretched arm grasping a stick, spear, or long staff is also adopted by normal and super-sized beings in contexts that could have a ceremonial aspect, but which are not always of a religious nature.⁷⁹ These examples make it clear that while the gesture of the outstretched arm generally appears to connote "authority" or "command," it may be exhibited by mortals as well as gods, and is not in itself an indicator of divine identity.⁸⁰

77. The image illustrated is not, in fact, derived from a single sealing. Evans restored it on the basis of some fragmentary impressions found in the area of the Central Shrine - a set of rooms located off the west side of the central court at the Palace of Knossos: Evans *PM* II, 808, fig. 528; Evans *PM* III, fig. 323; Gill 1965, 71, M1-5 and pl. 11. Krattenmaker 1995a, 49 n. 2, gives a useful summary of the problems associated with establishing a date for the sealings: LM II is the date normally accepted, but it could be earlier. The clay pieces are housed in the Herakleion Museum (numbers 141, 166, 168). They were likely produced by a gold ring approximating the size of the one from Isopata.

78. Niemeier 1989, *passim*. In his general characterization of Minoan religion and cult action as "epiphanic" Niemeier follows and readily acknowledges the scholarly contributions of Matz (1958).

79. The appropriate works are all discussed in Hallager 1985; included among them are the Chieftain Cup, where the pose is read as a "gesture of sovereignty" ("herrscherlichen Gestus"), and a couple of the figures holding staffs/sticks in the miniature frescoes from the West House on Thera. Compare the analysis of Morgan 1988, 117-18, who characterizes the gesture as "ceremonial," at least within the context of the Thera frieze. Krattenmaker 1995a, 49 ff., examines the pose as part of her study on "the iconography of legitimacy," and Younger 1995a provides the most current and comprehensive study of this gesture, with a complete catalogue of monuments.

80. Similar pronouncements are made by Koehl 1995, 24 (arguing against Niemeier 1987, 83, and 1988, 240). Gods and mortals also use the same gestures in ancient Near Eastern art, and scholars in that field have likewise commented on gestural ambiguity, especially in religious representations: see Gadd 1936, 3; Barnett 1970, 13; Moorey 1984, 78-80; Güterbock and Kendall 1995, 54-55.

In two of the depictions coinciding with the "epiphany structure" of the Isopata Ring the suspended figure with the outstretched arm faces and is seemingly responded to or addressed by a larger one(s) (Fig. 75a, e). The woman in Fig. 75a holds one or both arms up, bent at the elbow with hands near the face - a so-called adoration or votive stance known from numerous statuettes,⁸¹ whereas the male in Fig. 75e mimics the action of the hovering form, extending his left arm almost straight out, the right placed back and down, his hand possibly touching that of the female behind/beside him. These renderings contrast with those on the Isopata and "Ramp House" Rings (Figs. 74, 75g), in which there is little or no indication that the gesture of the floating deity is seen or acknowledged by the larger women in the compositions, giving the small beings a more symbolic or pictographic signification within these particular scenes.

The woman nearest to the airborne deity on the Isopata Ring shares the latter's elevated position in the pictorial field, but has her feet and head pointed to the left, away from the epiphanic figure. Spatially, she is isolated from the other large females in the composition, and the impression of detachment or dissociation that this imparts is

81. The study of Cretan bronze statuettes by Verlinden 1984 identifies eight different types of gestures that she associates with goddesses/priestesses, worshippers, and/or attendants. The "adoration gesture" normally refers to the pose where one hand is raised to the forehead and the other is pendant or held at chest level, though in Niemeier's typology, the gestures assumed by "adorants" include a number of other poses (see Niemeier 1989, Abb. 1). The "adoration gesture" with hand raised to the forehead has recently been studied in depth by K. Giannaki, in her M. Phil. thesis entitled *Gesture in Minoan Art: A Preliminary Approach*, submitted to the Faculty of Arts, at the University of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, April 1996.

The comparison of poses known from three-dimensional figures with engraved representations is rather problematic. Not only are some of the arm movements on seals and rings "carelessly rendered" and "ambiguous in nature," but, as Wedde further observes, "the absence of three-quarter views raises occasional doubts as to whether a specific frontally depicted gesture is related to a similar rendering of the arms seen in profile view" (Wedde 1995a, 495). On the ring in Fig. 75a for example, it is not determinable whether the woman holds up both arms bent at the elbow with hands near the face/forehead, or if only one arm is so positioned, and the other held down at the side (the same holds for the male on the Mother on the Mountain sealing in Fig. 77). The following authors comment on various gestures connected with "adoration": Cameron 1975, 50-52; Niemeier 1989, 168 ff., (Group 1); Wedde 1995a, 495-46; Krattenmaker 1995b, 123. An especially interesting development in these recent investigations of gesture is the article by L. Hitchcock (in press), which examines six of the gestures that occur on figurines and in glyptic imagery in terms of their relationship to social practices and gender; my sincere thanks to Dr. Hitchcock for allowing me to read her article in advance of its publication.

augmented by the fact that she appears not to interact with them. If we rightly understand the Aegean artist's means of denoting space relationships, wherein higher up means farther away,⁸² this woman occupies a place somewhat beyond that of the others, and it is not apparent that their circular configuration depicts a "roundelay" as is frequently concluded.

What does the gesture of this central figure tell us? Turning again to the cluster of related images for possible insights, the closest analogues for it are found on two other gold rings from Crete (Fig. 76a, d). On the lost ring from Mochlos,⁸³ the gesture is made by a woman seated in a boat with an animal-head prow (Fig. 76d). She is usually thought to be a goddess arriving at a sanctuary or shrine. In favour of this interpretation is the special character of her vehicle and the appearance of floating symbols⁸⁴ in the upper portion of the representation. Nevertheless, without other individuals to clarify her status by their actions this reading is tentative and easily disputed. It is not discernible whether her head is turned to face the small structure to the left of the craft, or if she looks frontally, at the beholder. In any case, some writers have assumed that in this situation the gesture of one raised and one inactive arm denotes a "greeting,"⁸⁵ though the suggestion that it is another "epiphany pose"⁸⁶ is equally feasible. The very different circumstances of the pose on the Isopata and Mochlos rings should, perhaps, inhibit the formulation of restrictive judgements about its use or specific significance.

82. See Chapin 1995, "vertical perspective," and pp. 52, 55, and catalogue entry 62, p. 366, on the Isopata Ring.

83. The ring was discovered in R. Seager's excavations of Mochlos in the context of an LM IB burial (Seager 1912, 89 ff., fig. 52) and placed in the Herakleion Museum; it was stolen in 1910.

84. These include a "pillar," chrysalis (?) or figure-of-eight shield, and a double oval object with vegetation: compare comments on the ring and its symbols in Persson 1942, 82-84 (especially on the oval object as being the marine plant *Scilla maritima* - the sea onion or squib); CMS II.3, 252; Sourvinou-Inwood 1973; Warren 1984 and 1990 *passim*; N. Marinatos 1993b, 163-64 (with references to earlier studies in nn. 66, 67, 69).

85. E.g., Effenterre and Effenterre 1992, 327 (she gestures "hello" or "goodbye").

86. E.g., Niemeier 1989, 181 ff. (Group 6).

The pose of the statuesque woman on the Archanes Ring⁸⁷ (Fig. 76a) more clearly resembles that of the central figure on the ring from Isopata, except that in this instance the left arm is raised⁸⁸ and the head held erect, its blobby appearance making it hard to determine if she looks askance or at us. She is flanked by two figures who appear engrossed in their endeavours and are either unaware of or oblivious to her. The individual on the left grasps with both hands a tree that is visually "on top of" a shrine structure. His knees are bent, the left leg lifted off the ground behind him, creating a wildly active posture. His counterpart on the right kneels directly on the paved surface, awkwardly positioned both in front of, and yet partially leaning over and clasping an elongated rounded object, his back also to the large female and to the array of symbols (butterfly, dragonfly, "pillar," eye, and frond) placed in the space between them. A comparison of this representation with several others where tree grasping and "baetyl" hugging are pictured has influenced many observers to explain those gestures as being "ritual actions performed to call upon the deity" (Niemeier 1989, 175; cf. Warren 1988, 16-20 and 1990; N. Marinatos 1993b, 175-92). Following this line of reasoning, some make further sense of the scene by speculating that

87. See Sakellarakis 1967, especially p. 280; the ring was found in a burial dated on the basis of other finds to MM IIIA.

88. It should be mentioned here that some authors place great significance on matters of right and left in these scenes. In her study of certain gestures and their meaning within ancient Aegean and early Greek religious iconography, Brandt 1965 - reading Aegean seals and rings from the original, not the impression - proposed that their engravers followed the same practices as the makers of bronze votive statuettes, concluding that worshippers always raised their right arm and lowered the left when calling upon deities in epiphany-conjuring rituals (compare Verlinden 1984, and L. Hitchcock in press, for the bronze figurines). Thus Brandt stated that when the goddess is shown among her worshippers, she can be identified as such by the fact that she "mirrors" the gesture of her suppliants, raising the *left* arm and lowering the *right* (see for example Brandt 1965, 5-8). Sourvinou-Inwood (1989 and 1990a) also reads Aegean seals and rings from the original, and in her attempt to isolate "universal or constant rules and conventions" (1989, 246) in Aegean glyptic figure scenes she maintains that one of the "constant properties of [Aegean] iconic space" is "the differential value of right and left" (1989, 249). The fact that right and left are frequently distinguished in the rituals of many religions is used to support her views that similar rules prevail in Minoan religious iconography. Nonetheless, the research of Pini 1989 (refuting Biesantz 1954) casts doubt upon the idea that all or even most seals and ring images were intended to be read from the original, making determinations of meaning based on "right and left" rather problematic: compare comments on Sourvinou-Inwood's methodology by Wedde 1995b, n. 23, p. 276.

the central woman on the Archanes Ring is a goddess appearing in answer to the "calling up" activities of the two petitioners.⁸⁹ Her impressive size and privileged compositional placement,⁹⁰ as well as the supernatural "floating objects...understood in this connection as symbols characterizing the appearing goddess" (Niemeier 1989, 168) are cited in favour of this explication. When this identification is sanctioned, the gesture she exhibits is correspondingly described as "one of epiphany" (Niemeier 1989, 176-77). But like that of the hovering figure, this pose is not restricted to a divine user: similar postures are displayed by females in compositions where their participation as offerants or worshippers is quite unequivocal, in which case the motion of one raised and one prone arm becomes an "adoration gesture."⁹¹

Returning to the central figure on the Isopata Ring with the analogous pose, it seems that a number of interpretive options present themselves. The fact that she is "higher" than the other large-scale women, literally on a par with the floating figure and the display of emblems, and that she appears self-possessed, could be argued to indicate a signification similar to that assigned by some to the central woman on the Archanes Ring, namely that she is a deity responding to the prayers or invocatory actions of suppliants. If we pursue this train of thought, there are interesting ramifications for how the roles and gestures of the other three large women involved in this "epiphany event" are perceived. The two women located below her in the right foreground plane are best seen as votaries, raising

89. E.g., Sakellarakis 1967; Hood 1971, 138; Warren 1975, 99; Niemeier 1989, 176; 1990, 168. For contrary interpretations of this central figure as a "high priestess" see N. Marinatos 1993b, 185-86, and as a votary, Evans in *PM* III, 68.

90. See Arnheim 1988, *passim*, and Schapiro 1969, 214, on the expressive qualities of the compositional centre in art.

91. See Niemeier 1989, 176-77, and his Group 1 pp. 168-69, and Abb. 1, various examples. Brandt (1965) also acknowledges that mortals and deities use the same gestures on rings and seals (albeit in "mirror-image" for the deity, see above, n. 88). Wedde 1992, 188, also discusses the use of this pose by worshippers, citing rings from Midea and Berlin as noteworthy examples (his pl. XLVII, figs. 6 and 12); compare the more extensive discussions in Wedde 1995a, 495-96.

their arms and faces upward toward her, displaying another form of "adoration gesture."⁹² And in this interpretation, the woman on the left with both arms bent at the elbows, would probably also be a worshipper making a gesture suitable to the occasion. W.- D. Niemeier, following earlier studies, has recently interpreted the Isopata Ring in this manner, with the additional characterization of the latter figure as making a "dancing gesture," venturing that in the rite shown here, a dance replaces tree grasping and boulder hugging as the operative activity of invocation.⁹³

This explanation is complicated and controversial. One challenge to such a reading is to wonder - if the wee airborne figure represents an epiphany (i.e., the actual appearance of a deity) as is frequently stated, how are we to interpret the manifestation and adoration of a second goddess? Are two deities being summoned? A counter-reply to these queries submits that separate phases of divine manifestation are shown on the ring: the hovering figure depicts the goddess approaching from afar, and the central one the goddess's arrival and reception.⁹⁴ A few examples of Aegean imagery in which distinct moments of an event seem to be shown in one composition were encountered above (e.g., sections 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.4), so this notion is not entirely fanciful. In fact, if the figure on the left with the upraised hands is accepted as a dancer, and the *conjuring* ritual of dancing preceded the moments of *divine manifestation* and *adoration* - the three phases of epiphany ritual as enumerated by Wedde (1992, 198) - then the chronological nuances of the actions pictured

92. Niemeier 1989, 178. The shared gestures of these two figures are also characterized in the following ways: "epiphany invoking" (e.g., Wedde 1992, 187; Sourvinou-Inwood 1990a, 195), "dancing" (Brandt 1965, 5-8; Demisch 1984, 260), and "ecstatic worship" (Matz 1958, 8).

93. Niemeier 1989, 178. Compare the impression of Matz 1958, 9-10, adopted in turn by Brandt 1965, 5-8, that the lively gestures of the women in this and related scenes denote an ecstatic dance performed to bring about the appearance of the deity.

94. Niemeier 1990, 169. This explanation seems to have originated in a discussion of Niemeier's 1989 paper, in which comments on the possibility of two or more phases of action being included in one image were made by Jung and Schiering: see Niemeier 1989, 186.

are even richer than has been proposed. The argument that the Isopata Ring shows a deity in consecutive stages of her manifestation is, however, undermined by the dissimilar gestures and costumes of the two pertinent figures, features one would expect to remain constant from first "sighting" to final "touch-down."⁹⁵

There is also much uncertainty about the meaning of the other women's postures. The straight upward extension of both arms is a gesture rarely seen in Aegean iconography, the only substantial parallels being the poses of a few of the women in the foreground of the Sacred Grove and Dance fresco from Knossos (Fig. 8). As its name declares, the various female participants in that rendering were originally judged to be performing a dance, and by analogy it has been recommended that the shared gestures of the women on the right of the Isopata Ring be translated as dance movements.⁹⁶ But do the women in the miniature painting dance or merely progress with a certain formality toward an unseen destination? The only sure representations of dancing in Aegean art depict figures holding hands or with their arms on each others shoulders in a circle dance.⁹⁷ Not only is it moot whether the two women on the ring dance or hold their arms up in gestures of worship,⁹⁸ address, or invocation,⁹⁹ but the shared object of their attentions is also doubtful: do they direct their actions to the tiny floating figure whose back is to them, or to the large woman

95. Compare similar remarks by N. Marinatos 1993b, 283, for whom the central woman's gesture - associated only with priestesses in Marinatos's view - is an additional reason to question this reading.

96. Matz 1958, 8; Brandt 1965, 5-8; Demisch 1984, 260.

97. Alexiou 1967, 611-12, mentioned this in his critical review of Brandt's book, and more recently Krattenmaker makes the same point, Krattenmaker 1995b, 125, n. 26, and figs. 1.11-12 - representations of the circle dance on seals. Warren 1988, p. 14, discusses "dance rituals" in Minoan religion, illustrating one of the clay sculptures of dancing figures from Palaikastro (fig. 4, p. 15).

98. Matz 1958, 8; Sourvinou-Inwood 1990a, 196; Krattenmaker 1995a, 157.

99. Sourvinou-Inwood 1990a, 195; Wedde 1992, 187.

in the centre of the composition?¹⁰⁰

Although perceptions of their gestures differ, there is nothing about the part these two figures play in the scene that encourages the viewer to see them as anything other than mortal beings. In this sense, the status of the woman on the left is more dubious because the pose she assumes is later appropriated for sculpted representations of goddesses where the upheld hands may be a symbol of divine blessing or salutation.¹⁰¹ For that reason a few commentators have identified her as a deity, and the other three large females as votaries whose gestures are defined accordingly.¹⁰² In reality, as far as such things can be surmised from the figural evidence, just like the poses of the floating figure and the central woman, the gesture of the "erhobenen Hände" may be adopted by both worshipper and "worshipped," once more making it risky to produce identifications like these merely on the basis of gesture.¹⁰³

The persistent attempts of writers to grasp the meaning of these gestures and the roles of those employing them testifies to the compelling narrative potential of the scene on the Isopata Ring. Groenewegen-Frankfort characterized it as "a dynamic representation

100. E.g., Matz 1958, 8-9, sees the small floating figure as the target of these women's gestures, yet Niemeier 1989, 177-78, and Sourvinou-Inwood 1990a, 195, perceive that they turn to the central figure (though in the latter author's view the central woman is not a deity but a "priestess standing for the goddesses" as part of an "enacted epiphany").

101. Numerous clay statuettes of the "Goddess with the upraised arms" have been found at various Cretan sites in LM III contexts, most notably from Gazi near Knossos, and from Kavousi east of Gournia (see Hood 1978, figs. 91-93; Gesell 1985; Gesell et al., 1988 and 1991).

102. See, for example, Alexiou 1958, 293; Platon in *CMS* II.3, n. 51, p. 61; and comments by Sourvinou-Inwood 1990a, 195.

103. Matz 1958 and Brandt 1965 associate the gesture of the upraised hands with epiphanic dancing rituals, noting that both deity and worshipper may assume the pose; Niemeier 1989 follows this tradition. Demisch 1984 considers the pose of the "erhobene Hände" the "Ur" gesture ("Urgebärde") of religious life, tracing its appearance in the artistic record from ca. 6000 B.C. to the Christian period. His study illuminates the many connotations connected with the upraised hands, including prayer, adoration, mystery, dancing, fear, pleasure, and grief. New observations on the gesture are made by Wedde 1995a, 496, and Whittaker von Hofsten 1995, 204-20, provides a very thorough discussion of it in the context of her examination of LM III sanctuaries on Crete, stressing that its meaning in Aegean art is most ambiguous, particularly in the MM-LM I-II periods, and that, at least before LM III, it "cannot be seen as exclusively denoting divinity" (p. 208).

of a religious event," adding that "however elusive the meaning of their gestures, however indefinite their actual relationship, what is rendered is a concrete, not a symbolic situation" (1951, 214).¹⁰⁴ Although all impressions of such images must be provisional, there is general consent among scholars examining the group of monuments affiliated with the Isopata Ring that the event Groenewegen-Frankfort refers to involved epiphany-conjuring activities, that is, that the participants hoped by their actions to cause a divinity to appear.

With respect to appraising the narrativity of the Isopata Ring's composition, it thus seems that, at least on the level of Story (the "what" of a narrative), the representation meets the essential requirements: it pictures an event involving characters and a setting. It has, however, been well demonstrated that ritual undertakings of any description have low narrative value and are especially perplexing for the non-initiate to integrate in a narrative way. Admittedly, not all cult-related events are equally cryptic; depending on the number of actors involved and the intelligibility of their actions, certain religious events recounted in pictorial form may be assimilated rather readily and hence evince more narrativity than others. Compared to the ritual activities illustrated on the upper level of Xeste 3, for example (above, section 4.1.3), epiphanic events present a more complex series of actions and greater ambiguity in terms of the participants' gestures, i.e., they have less narrativity, especially to an ignorant audience. Having accepted the prevailing theories regarding the sort of epiphany ritual thought to be portrayed on the Isopata Ring, most commentators would agree that the basic "story line" runs as follows: worshippers beckon a goddess to

104. The judgment that complex figure scenes on Minoan and Mycenaean seals and rings give us excerpts of actual ritual undertakings, the "part standing for the whole" (*pars pro toto*), is condoned by most if not all Aegeanists. This understanding has obviously motivated many of the scholars who have laboured both to clarify the major functions of Minoan and Mycenaean religion, and restore certain "cult practices" largely on the basis of engraved and painted imagery (e.g., Warren 1988, 12, providing a synopsis of the history of such scholarship, and innumerable efforts to reconstruct the procedures of the Minoan bull "sports" - e.g., Younger 1976, 1983a, 1995b).

appear, and when her presence is either "felt" or actually perceived, they make appropriate gestures of acknowledgement and adoration. Where authors differ, and quite dramatically so, is in how the separate actions and identities of the individual figures are understood, something that is due more to their/our inability to restore the precise sequence of actions constituting these epiphany events/rituals using simple logic (as we can, for instance, with conflict events) than it is to any inadequacy on the part of the artist.

In fact, on the level of Discourse (the "how," the narrating), the image contains a respectable amount of "telling" detail. The location is clearly demarcated as a hillside by the uneven dispersal of the figures and the clumps of identifiable flowers. And while we tend to appreciate the assortment of floating symbols primarily as indicators of the sacred character of the activity shown, to the ancient viewer they likely performed a more informative function, having a specific relationship to the event pictured, possibly as elements associated with the appearing deity, or as references to offerings commonly given to her (N. Marinatos 1993b, 172). Although the women featured in this scene are "types" common to numerous renderings and their heads are strangely "aniconic," the artist has carefully differentiated their costumes, and their bodies, alternately poised, arched, and bowed, are cogent with animated movement, even if the actual significance of the poses they exhibit is indefinite.

The best of narratives will relate the elements of their story material in a way that facilitates our comprehension of who is doing what and when. Despite its vivid and rather convincing portrayals, the layers of uncertainty resident in the imagery on the Isopata Ring ultimately baffle attempts to establish narrative connections between the pictorial elements, and our *a priori* understanding of the event presumably depicted is not, as the above passages have shown, convincingly reconciled with what we see. Even if one adopts the

least complex reading of the scenario, postulating that all four of the large women are worshippers and the floating figure is a deity - either seen or symbolically present - it is impossible to ascertain from this or related images whether the actions performed are to be understood as simultaneous or consecutive. The women - who form three distinct groups by virtue of their gestures, placement, and the direction of their featureless heads - may act together, but it is also conceivable that they represent different moments in a protracted sequence of actions, as a few observers have speculated to be the case for certain Minoan representations of bull capture and leaping (see above, section 4.1.2). If they do perform contemporaneously, which moment(s) are shown? Do all figures invoke the deity, albeit in diverse ways, or do they all acknowledge her presence/arrival? Or, alternatively, do some call upon the goddess unaware that she is present, at the same time as others welcome her "epiphany"?

Some of the interpretations noted in the preceding paragraphs attempted to answer such questions, but it is apparent that unless or until the meanings of the actions can be fixed more precisely, and their temporal relationships established with some degree of confidence, no single reading can claim precedence. In the final analysis, even though the evocative qualities of the representation are indisputable, and many viewers will share Groenewegen-Frankfort's opinion that a "real" ritual event is recounted here, we are strained to process the depicted activity as "story," and the narrative value of the image is therefore fairly low.¹⁰⁵ In light of this evaluation it may seem rather paradoxical that Aegean historians have reconstructed Minoan religion and ritual entirely on their understanding - one might properly say their narrativization - of images like this.

105. A quantitative analysis of the ring appears in Appendix Table B1. This appraisal, like the others below, concentrates on the narrative features or characteristics of the representation, leaving others to explore different aspects or facets of the imagery (e.g., symbolic, mythic, didactic).

Interestingly, the long-held conviction that in Minoan cult an "ecstatic epiphany" was achieved through the "orgiastic dancing" of female votaries or priestesses rests almost exclusively on the pictorial evidence presented by the Ring from Isopata.¹⁰⁶

4.3 The Miniature Wall Paintings From the West House

The scene engraved on the Isopata Ring fits Schapiro's description of "reductive imagery," in that it is understood only by the viewer cognizant of the story, event, or customs behind what is depicted (Schapiro 1973, 9; cf. Winter 1981, 29). Groenewegen-Frankfort mused that such uncommon and "purely religious" representations might appear just on rings or seals, "small objects meant for the private use of religious or semi-religious functionaries" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 212). The narrative aspects of portrayals like these have been the primary interest here, but it must be recognized that ring and seal designs performed functions of identification and administration, and it is also likely that they were valued for their amuletic properties.¹⁰⁷ When we turn to the friezes painted in Akrotiri's West House on the island of Thera, we shift from images evincing what Winter refers to as a "magic consciousness" to representations of actions that require less intensive decipherment and are characteristic of a more theatrical or "spectatorial consciousness" (Winter 1981, 3).

106. Matz 1958, 6-10, is the seminal champion of the idea of the divine epiphany induced by orgiastic dancing, a notion based on his reading of the Isopata Ring, which is in turn taken to explain the activity pictured in the miniature Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco from Knossos. He has been followed by many other influential commentators, including Evans *PM* III, 68; Brandt 1965, 5-8 and *passim*; Hägg 1983 and 1986; Warren 1988, 14.

107. The speculations voiced by Weingarten with respect to the mystical function of cult scenes on Early Mesopotamian seals might also be applicable to images of ritual activity on Minoan and Mycenaean seals and rings; she proposes that "the single scene on a seal not only stands (*pars pro toto*) for a whole sequence of events but actually - magically - primes and starts those events" (Weingarten in Ferioli et al., 1994, 206).

Since their discovery in 1972, these remarkably well preserved miniature wall paintings, especially the portion depicting a flotilla of ships, have been "the most talked about fresco[es] in Aegean art" (Crowley 1992, 35).¹⁰⁸ Initial discussions either followed or responded to evaluations of the paintings by S. Marinatos. Director of the Thera excavations from 1967 until his unexpected death in 1974, Marinatos viewed the friezes as quasi-historical documentation for Minoan military expeditions and foreign relations in the second millennium B.C.¹⁰⁹ A decade or so later, a very different conclusion was reached by L. Morgan in her superbly comprehensive iconographic examination of the West House miniatures: local Thera "aquatic activity and its celebration" is thought to be the subject of the images, and Morgan prefers to speak of thematic unities rather than narrative sequence when describing connections between pictorial elements on the different walls of the room containing the friezes.¹¹⁰

Subsequent articles comparing the structure and motifs of the paintings to epic poetry,¹¹¹ as well as the recent appearance of C. Televantou's extensive study and revised reconstructions of the West House friezes,¹¹² have redirected attention to the question of visual narration. Many authors use the words "story" and "narrative" when describing these works, and according to one prominent Aegean scholar, now "nobody would deny a

108. The paintings from the West House were originally published in S. Marinatos 1974. Currently displayed in the National Museum in Athens (Room 48), they are destined to be moved to the new museum in Thera. The introductory passages of Morgan's book provide interesting background data, and note the major bibliography on the frescoes to ca. 1985: Morgan 1988, xvii-xviii, 1-10, and 175, n. 1. The literature continues to expand. Significant contributions not available to Morgan and of interest to this work include S. Morris 1989; Hiller 1990; Immerwahr 1990; Televantou 1990, 1994; Doumas 1992; Crowley 1992; Thomas 1992.

109. S. Marinatos 1974, 54-57; the Aegean fleet is thought to be visiting a "Minoanized" settlement in Libya.

110. Morgan 1988, 1, 164-65; cf. similar notions in N. Marinatos 1984, 34-61. The latter author has, however, had a change of heart: see N. Marinatos 1995, 39, where the friezes are thought to have a "semi-narrative character" and to chronicle the adventures of a Minoan fleet in the Aegean.

111. E.g., Morris 1989; Hiller 1990; Thomas 1992; Crowley 1992.

112. See Televantou 1990 and 1994.

narrative character" in these frescoes.¹¹³ Unlike previous writings, but profiting heavily from them, the ensuing analyses offer a more strictly narratological examination of the salient features of that "narrative character," assessing what is shown and how its presentation fosters and/or perplexes a narrative reading of the friezes. A few issues raised by others are reviewed along the way, among them the supposed opposition between genre, theme, and narrative, and the perennial and rather insoluble problem of "telling time" in Aegean art.

The plan of Akrotiri shows the West House near the centre of the town, its south facade facing onto the Triangle Square, accessible from a main street (Fig. 78). The current excavator describes it as "a long narrow edifice of medium size, with a ground floor [i.e., basement], first floor, and at least in its east wing, a second storey" (Doumas 1992, 45). To a certain extent, interpretations of the building's pictorial programme have been contingent upon judgements about the nature and function of the structure; most writers have tried to establish whether the West House was a public or private building, and if it was used largely for religious or domestic purposes. As is frequently the situation in Aegean prehistory, the data are not all that decisive, though an increasing number of experts tend to see the West House as a private dwelling inhabited by a figure with some authority or official standing in matters of seamanship.¹¹⁴

113. Niemeier in Laffineur and Crowley 1992, 345 (comment made in panel discussion).

114. An early and quite effective argument for seeing the West House as a public "cult centre" was made by N. Marinatos (1983, including tables of the finds from Rooms 4 and 5 on p. 11, and 1984, 31-51). Morgan admits that there "is no clear indication of whether this was a public or private house" (1988, 3), but seems to concur with the findings of the former author. Niemeier 1992, has recently reviewed the problem of "iconography and context" in Aegean art, noting critical reactions to N. Marinatos's suggestion. While the presence of cult objects in the West House influences him to agree that Rooms 4 and 5 "had some ritual function," he prefers to see the building not as a public shrine - in the manner of Xeste 3, for instance - but rather as a "repository for cult paraphernalia" (Niemeier 1992, especially pp. 99-100). The current excavator has a very different impression of the West House than N. Marinatos: like S. Marinatos 1974, 19-28, Doumas sees it as a secular and private building, interpreting Room 5 not as a "main shrine" (N. Marinatos 1984, 48) but a kind of living room, with Room 4 being a bed chamber, and 4a, which N. Marinatos associated with

Less debatable is the arrangement of the miniature frescoes within Room 5, the largest of a suite of first-floor rooms that includes adjoining spaces 4, 4a, and the smaller storage areas 6 and 7. The paintings appeared on all four walls, accommodated in a narrow strip above the windows, doors, and cupboards of the room, essentially forming a continuous frieze with an estimated total length of 16 m (Fig. 79a-b).¹¹⁵ The construction of the building's timber framework dictated the two different dimensions of the frieze - the width of the north and south sections being almost double that of the east and west sides (i.e., 40-43 cm, and 20 cm wide respectively).¹¹⁶ Although the salvaged segments far surpass the quantity of frescoes painted in the same miniature technique unearthed elsewhere in the Aegean,¹¹⁷ more than half of the frieze was lost in the volcanic explosion that destroyed the town and covered the whole island with a deep layer of finely pulverized lava sometime

ritual offerings and "purification with water" (1984, 49), representing a bathroom connected with the town's drainage system (Doumas 1992, 28, 45-46, 49). Observations corresponding to Doumas's understanding of the West House are made by Warren 1979, 115; Palyvou 1986, 184; Morris 1989, 513, n. 13; Televantou 1990, 312; Manning et. al, 1994, 222. S. Marinatos thought the West House belonged to the "Admiral" in the flagship on the South Frieze (1974, 43, 54); this reading has been supported by Schachermeyr 1978, 423-28, and seems probable if one considers the building to be a private residence.

115. See Morgan 1988, 4-5, 175-76, nn. 18-20, figs. 3-4, and compare Televantou's text and more detailed reconstruction drawings of Room 5 in 1990, 313-15, figs. 4-6, and 1994, pls. 9-13.

116. Cf. accounts in: S. Marinatos 1974, 19 ff.; Morgan 1988, 4-5; Immerwahr 1990, 187 (catalogue entry); Televantou 1990, 313 (where the particulars of the building's timber framing and its impact on the dimensions of the friezes is first explained).

117. Immerwahr (1990, 63-75, 82-83) gives a thorough summary of the miniature style in Aegean painting, citing examples found at Knossos (cf. above, section 4.1.3), Prasa, Tyliossos, Katsamba, Phylakopi, Akrotiri, and Ayia Irini, and providing catalogue entries with essential bibliographic data. Morgan 1988 likewise discusses the extant examples of miniature frescoes, giving more extensive references; see her index entries for these same sites. The miniature technique is considered to be a Minoan invention or tradition that flourished in the LM IA period. The West House and Ayia Irini miniatures (the latter dated to LM IB by Immerwahr and others), as well as those fragments of "Minoan" miniature frescoes found quite recently at Miletus and Kabri (Western Galilee), have initiated numerous speculations about the longevity and use of the style, and too concerning the possible extent of Minoan presence or influence abroad. For newer bibliography not included in Immerwahr 1990 and Morgan 1988, see Morgan 1990 (stressing the differences between Cycladic and Cretan iconography in the miniature technique); Morgan 1995d (on the current preparation for publication of the Ayia Irini miniature frescoes by Morgan and E. Davis); Niemeier 1991; 1995a; 1995b (on Minoan frescoes from Miletus and Kabri - the latter said to include birds, a "rocky shore" parts of boats and "ashlar houses" - and the suggestion of travelling Minoan artisans).

before the end of the LC IA/LM IA period.¹¹⁸

4.3.1 West Wall

The miniature paintings on the west wall suffered the most damage. The only remains attributed to this section of the frescoes are two pieces that "depict part of a city, the main characteristic of which is a large, triangular projection from the roof of most of the buildings" (Televantou 1990, 315) (Fig. 80). Televantou calls this Town I.¹¹⁹

4.3.2 North Wall

Much of the North Frieze is also missing, but enough has survived to permit the restoration of a fairly complicated assemblage of scenes (Figs. 81-82). Organized like the Siege Rhyton from Mycenae (see above, section 4.1.1), to which this fresco is often

118. Morgan 1988, 5-10, describes the problems of determining a precise date for the volcanic eruption of Thera, noting that such issues are ultimately of less import to her study than clarifying the "sequence of events which provides the time span for the paintings" (p. 5). Issues of absolute chronology are also irrelevant to this project. For representative essays on the high vs low debate see Manning 1988 (advocating a high chronology, which puts the date for the volcanic eruption at ca. 1628-1626 B.C.), and Warren and Hankey 1989 (preferring the low chronology that places the Thera eruption around 1500 B.C.). Two new articles - one by C. Renfrew, the other by P. Kuniholm, et al. - appearing in *Nature* 381 (1996): 733-34, 780-83, indicate that the controversy over absolute dating in this early part of the Late Bronze Age is still unresolved.

119. Compare Televantou 1994, 62, *εκ.* 17. The location of the West and North Friezes above the series of openings (*polyparathyra*) on these walls meant that they were more susceptible to damage during the earthquake tremors that appear to have preceded the final volcanic eruption on Thera (cf. Doumas 1978, 780-81; Morgan 1988, 4; Televantou 1990, 313-14). Televantou differentiates "towns" from "palaces" by the varied architectural forms the former exhibit and their dense and irregular organization (1994, 264). Depictions of towns or cities are rare in Aegean art, and both Morgan (1988, 81-82) and Televantou (1994, 264-67) discuss iconographic parallels/precedents. The distinctive cone-shaped projections on the buildings Televantou restores to this West Frieze also occur on some of the structures in the miniature frescoes from Ayia Irini on the island of Keos; see Televantou's illustration of the related comparanda in 1994, *εκ.* 57, and for more on the Keos frescoes, consult Coleman 1970; 1973; Sakellariou 1980, 148; and Morgan 1989; 1990; 1995d.

My reading of Televantou's Greek text was greatly facilitated by the patience and superior language skills of M. Shaw, and I wish to thank her heartily for her translation assistance; if errors or misrepresentations exist, they are my responsibility entirely.

compared, the lower picture plane is devoted to activity on the sea, with the top half of the frieze portraying land-based action. The newest reconstructions restore at least two boats, one above the other, at the bottom left corner of the field (Televantou 1990, 315-21, figs. 7-8). The largest is manned by paddlers who propel the vessel to the right, where some distance away, a few more ships are positioned near a rocky coastline, adjacent to a harbour construction that looks like a fortification wall.¹²⁰

In the unpainted white area between these ships and the shore are three of the most extraordinary representations of the human form in Aegean art (Fig. 83). Twice the size of the other figures preserved on this North Frieze, the three men, naked except for an irregularly shaped garment draped partly across the chest of one, are rendered as if in free fall, their overturned bodies, sprawling postures and strangely bent or "limp" hands composed to denote that they are either dead or drowning in the sea.¹²¹ Shields and a grappling or "boat hook" float around two of the figures, suggesting, in tandem with the broken bowsprit of the ship on the lower left, that these were fighters on the losing side of

120. Televantou (1990, 315-21, 1994 65-82, pl. 1) adds a number of elements to the original restoration of the North Frieze published by Marinatos (1974, pls. 91-94, colour pls. 7-9) and illustrated by all authors before her version appeared. This new reconstruction increases the numbers of ships, warriors, corpses, animals, and shepherds, as well as enhances the appearance of the town and harbour side buildings on the north wall. Televantou makes a sound case for seeing the unusual walls located near the coast and edged with "tiny black triangular projections from [their] sides and roof," as "the battlements of a defensive structure" (Televantou 1990, 319). Perhaps the only questionable aspect of the reconstruction is her acceptance of the earlier placement of figures "A 10-A11" in a small boat proceeding toward the left (Televantou 1990, 318, fig. 8). There is insufficient evidence for the boat, and the fact that these two figures wear cloaks and the best-preserved one holds out a short stick, makes them appear more like the shepherds shown on the hillside, making Morgan's suggestion that these figures be positioned in the upper field somewhere between the hilltop scene and the animal enclosure more feasible (Morgan 1988, 118 and 201, n. 10).

121. Morgan (1988, 97-98, 153-53) discusses the iconographic function of nakedness and sprawling poses as signs of "defeat" in Aegean art, citing analogues on the Siege Rhyton and an inlaid dagger from Vapheio, as well as comparable representations in Near Eastern and Egyptian art; cf. N. Marinatos 1993a, 83-86. Morris (1989, 524) compares these floating, limp-handed corpses to Homer's description of men drowned in a storm at sea in *Odyssey* 12.417-19. This reading of the figures as dead or drowning is accepted by most viewers, although Sakellariou (1980, 150) interprets the subject of the North Frieze as a festival, seeing these figures as "swimmers," and Giesecke (1983, 124) who also rejects a martial interpretation, thinks the "genre scene" depicts "sponge divers" in full action.

an armed confrontation that took place either on or near the ships.¹²²

Directly above this scene, to one side of a low structure with large openings that may represent shipsheds, a file of eight or nine soldiers equipped with helmets, rectangular animal hide shields, swords, and long spears march to a town sited on the slopes and crown of a hill on the right (Televantou's Town II).¹²³ Their progress is observed by at least two denizens, whose heads are visible beside one of the city's buildings. In the area above this line of warriors, two women dressed in long solid-coloured skirts and white bodices also walk to the right (cf. Morgan 1988, 98, pl. 2) (Fig. 84). They carry (much-restored) jugs on their heads, which one assumes they have just filled at the well shown behind them.¹²⁴ In the zone above their heads is a circular enclosure with two large trees that is usually interpreted as an animal pen.¹²⁵ Two rows of goats are depicted to the right of this enclosure. The topmost group of six overlapping animals is conducted toward the right from behind by a cloaked shepherd holding a short stick. The lower row of five goats heads instead toward the left, followed or prodded on by a striding male who is either naked or wearing a codpiece.

Returning to the section above the shipsheds, on the same level as the two women, but

122. See Marinatos 1974, 40, who feels a "sea battle" is the most likely explanation for these details; cf. E. Davis 1983, 10. Morgan (1988, 106-8, 150-54) examines the weaponry and the "genre" of the "shipwreck and warriors." Her reading of this scene as a shipwreck, and the floating weapons as means of identifying the drowned men as warriors defeated "by the sea," is quite at odds with the reading proffered here. Landström (1970, 108, 111, figs. 344, 345-48), notes that in Egypt, New Kingdom texts speak of warships, but sea battles are not mentioned until the end of that period; "the first sea battle in history" is said to come in the reign of Ramesses III, early in the 20th Dynasty (ca. 1190 B.C.).

123. Compare excellent descriptions of these figures and their weaponry in Morgan 1988, 104-15. For an early identification of the low building with large openings as shipsheds, see M. Shaw in *Hesperia* 55 (1986), 266, where the fresco is discussed as a parallel to the multi-galleried "Building P" at Kommos, which seems to be a unique discovery of a Late Bronze Age shipshed. Televantou (1994, 189) also identifies this structure (her "building K2") as shipsheds for Town II.

124. See Morgan 1988, 91, 159, and her analysis of the rectangular well in 1985, 8.

125. S. Marinatos 1974, 41 ("sheepfold"); Morgan 1988, 78, pl. 16. An alternate interpretation of the structure and the scene is given by Giesecke (1983, 124) who, rather curiously, sees the "animal enclosure" as a "cult centre" and the two women as assuming dancing positions.

turned to the left, is a gathering of four males clad in coloured cloaks, three standing and holding long staffs or sticks, one squatting on the ground (cf. Morgan 1988, 93-96) (Fig. 84). Above them grassy vegetation and multi-coloured, looping rock forms indicate a distant landscape. These men look toward an area where another scene of animal herding is shown: Televantou places fragments of superimposed bovines here, including at least two animals in the upper zone pointing to the right, and two below them being directed to the left by their handler (Televantou 1990, 317, fig. 10; 1994, pl. 1). The only remaining scene has been restored just beyond this one, well above the shore and ships at the far left portion of the composition. It pictures separate groups of men (at least four individuals in each) ascending the opposite sides of a steep hill (Fig. 85). The two central figures, dressed in long white robes of similar but not identical designs, address or face one another at the summit (cf. Morgan 1988, 100-3, 156-58). Behind the man at centre left, who is distinguished by a prominent forelock and the triple blue bands on his robe, are two figures in long loin cloths, holding their arms crossed over their chests and standing in a rather stately fashion. The men assembled behind the central figure on the right, in contrast, are dressed either in white robes or dark cloaks and appear more animated; the first one turns his head away from the confronting pair, extending his left arm out, as if communicating something to the men below him.¹²⁶

The narrative features of this North Frieze are normally contemplated in conjunction

126. E. Davis (1983, 10) also perceives the man on the right with arm extended and head turned away from the central men on the hilltop as communicating something - "apparently a decision has been reached" - though she feels he is addressing his communication to the four cloaked "spectators" above the shipsheds. In her examination of male costume in the friezes, Morgan (1988, 95) notices that this man with the extended arm wears a robe that is slightly different from his companions in that it has "a trailing fabric attached to his right-hand shoulder," and she seems rather averse to reading "motive" or narrative import into the man's pose, when she wonders:

Did the artist turn this figure's head and shoulder to the right in order to signify that he is looking backwards, or in order to display this feature [of his costume]?

with the painting on the opposite wall, for it is evident that the two compositions are interrelated. But the beholder can only view one wall at a time, and the four friezes, however associated, were also designed as independent units. Thus, while we shall eventually assess the narrativity of the whole pictorial ensemble, it is instructive to consider the narrative values of each wall in isolation.

Starting with the essential structural elements, on the Story plane the North Frieze seems to satisfy the basic content requirements of a narrative work. The actors include seamen, warriors, corpses, women, and shepherds, who sail, drown, march, work, spectate and converse in a variety of appropriate environments. The modes of expression chosen - i.e., the extended frieze format combined with the painter's miniaturist style - are, at least in theory, the perfect instruments for visual storytelling. They enable the artist to portray large numbers of characters, many actions, as well as an abundance of detail, and it is axiomatic that the potential narratability or "narrative mobility" of any figural representation increases with the quantity of scenes depicted (Varga 1988, 197). Here the diverse assortment of events - ships in propulsion, a sea battle (i.e., its aftermath), a military land procession, pastoral activities, and a meeting on a hill - are organized into near, middle, and distant background planes through the familiar method of vertical perspective¹²⁷ or "vertical stacking" (Russell 1991, 193), creating a space that rises "logically from the sea

127. See Immerwahr 1990, 71-72, on the spatial organization of this and the south wall frescoes, and especially Chapin 1995, 50 ff., on vertical perspective, the expression used to describe the "spatial configuration of Aegean art in which figures that are placed higher in the picture plane are meant to be interpreted as more distant" (p. 59). Chapin rejects terms used by previous authors, i.e., "cavalier perspective," "mountain view perspective," and "bird's-eye view," as being unsuitable for discussing Aegean spatial compositions, since they all make assumptions about the location of the intended viewer that she feels are unwarranted; in Aegean art "the observer's specific point of view...remains uncertain," the artist "simply utilizes one point of view for each object in his representation and depicts every element from its centre point" (Chapin 1995, 57; *contra* Morgan 1988, 70). She continues to explain that:

The outcome is the creation of as many viewpoints in a composition as there are objects...and when this practice is combined with vertical perspective, some of the viewpoints for individual figures seem elevated above others. (Chapin 1995, 58-59)

through the coast and up into the hills" (Morgan 1988, 159).

The immediacy of the imagery and the nature of its presentation encourage the viewer to seek out "chronological and causal transitions" between the distinct scenes, and connect them as moments in a story (W. Davis 1992, 83). But creating a coherent narrative from the individual parts of the North Frieze is not easily accomplished. Least problematic in this sense is the relationship of the sea battle to the depiction of soldiers marching from the coast to the hillside town. The moving ships on the left and the portrayal of floating corpses and landed warriors on the right are rationally assimilated as episodes in a series of actions that culminate in the advance of the winning side's troops toward the gates of the nearby settlement. This reading, stimulated by the prevailing direction of the boats and soldiers proceeding from left to right, accepts that the undertakings depicted in any given section of the frieze are not necessarily simultaneous, despite the apparent unity of the pictorial field. Indeed, at least on this part of the wall, the foreground elements seem to represent a time distinct from and prior to that of the events depicted in the middle/background zones.

Many authors propose similar interpretations of the sea and warrior scenes, but the actions of the "civilians" on the shore and in the distant countryside are harder to integrate into a narrative sequence. Near the shipsheds a man in a dark cloak carrying a stick across his shoulders strolls quite casually in a space that seems fairly close to the last marching soldier. Does his composed attitude indicate that the situation on land is now under control,¹²⁸ and/or that the soldiers are not enemies at all, but forces friendly to the

128. Televantou (1994, 329) implying that time on this wall is simultaneous, sees the calm demeanour of this and the other figures in the scene as being a sign that the military engagement is over, and the daily routine continues.

settlement?¹²⁹ Similarly unconcerned with the drama on the sea and shore are the juggling women and the shepherds, who can be construed as alternately departing from and approaching the area of the well and animal enclosure (cf. S. Marinatos 1974, 41; Immerwahr 1990, 72). If all the scenes on this frieze were understood as being contemporaneous, the nonchalance of these figures might be explained by the fact that they are located in the remote hillside, too far away to know what is going on in the harbour. Given the various temporal phases alluded to in the ship/battle/soldier scenes, however, it seems more feasible to perceive their actions as taking place at a time either before or after the sea fight: they may represent the normal, peaceful pattern of existence in this pastoral community ("life as usual") or the spoils of war, which by force or agreement belong to the victor.¹³⁰ Sharing the disinterest of these working people in the traumatic events on the sea is the small group of men (townsfolk? rural dwellers?) whose gazes are fixed instead on something happening to the left (the herdsmen? the hilltop encounter?). Proximate figures positioned back to back, as these men are to the two women, are a common device for indicating separate events and time periods in picture stories rendered in a unified field (cf.

129. Cf. N. Marinatos (1984, 39-40) who sees the warriors as friendly to the town and suggests the following narrative:

A conflict seems to have taken place, a naval engagement between Aegean warriors and non-Aegean enemies, and the outcome was victory for the Aegeans. The Aegean warriors arrived with their ships to protect the town and they have succeeded...they are marching on the shore in triumph. (N. Marinatos 1984, 40)

130. Doumas (1992, 47) takes the pastoral scenes to "portray the peaceful life of the hinterland, far removed from the martial atmosphere of the coast." Warren (1979, 126-28) who places the North Frieze in the iconographic context of the "beleaguered city theme," relates the warrior and pastoral scenes as part of a raiding enterprise carried out by the troops who will take the flocks as booty; cf. E. Davis 1983, 10, the locals "are collecting the livestock and provisions as their part of the bargain." N. Marinatos (1984, 40; 1993a 83-86) appreciates the juxtaposition of "order" or "normalcy" on the upper part of the composition with the "disorder and defeat" of the lower zone as a kind of "rhetoric" or narrative device.

Writing of the possible narrative relations between similar image groups on Egyptian palettes, W. Davis (1992, 140-41) observes a number of chronological possibilities for these sorts of juxtapositions, e.g., the peaceful scene could be seen by the viewer/narrator as "as a chapter of the narrative" that happens before, after, or even before *and* after the image of war.

Pollini 1993, 271), and here the men also create a visual connection between different parts of the composition.

Perhaps due as much to the accident of preservation than to artistic purposeness, the hilltop scene is plainly isolated as another distinct episode or event. Perspicacious observers will recognize that the parties on each side of the hill have cognates not only on this wall, but too on the South Frieze (cf. below, section 4.3.4). Taking just their North Frieze counterparts for now, the apparel of those on the right recalls that worn by the shepherds and the small group of spectators, while the men on the left, particularly the two wearing loincloths and standing rigidly with crossed arms, are dressed like the steersman at the prow of a ship in the battle scene, implying an identification as seamen. Can this exchange between sailors and farmers or townspeople be linked plausibly to the military encounter featured so conspicuously on the right portion of the wall? The nature of the scene may at first appear straightforward - a meeting or communication among men of different vocations, status, and/or regions and their leaders. But the exceptional location and the "conventional" gesture of the folded arms, which in other media is displayed by votaries, have led some authors to interpret the "hill" as a "peak sanctuary,"¹³¹ and the event as having ritual or ceremonial purposes.¹³² While this reading of the subject is not

131. E.g., Rutkowski, 1978, 661-64; Warren 1979, 125; Iakovides 1981, 58; Morgan 1988, 156-58 (extensive discussion and references).

132. It should, incidentally, be mentioned that there is no image even remotely comparable to this one in Aegean art. The pose of the men in loincloths has been related to "a Minoan gesture of worship" demonstrated in a few bronze and lead figurines found in funerary and other contexts; see Warren 1979, 125-26, fig. 3, and Morgan 1988, 117-18, fig. 62. The gesture also occurs on the South Frieze, again exhibited by a man wearing a long white loincloth, but there the circumstances are very different. Morgan feels "we must assume that it had a similar function in both cases," determining that the gesture is of "votive import" and, in turn, that the separate events shown on the two friezes also share a "common [i.e., ritual] basis" (1988, 118). The problem is that we have no real notion of how "fixed" the meanings of such poses are in Aegean iconography, and, given that there are so few distinctive postures in Aegean art, it is logical to assume that a pose like this one could also signify - in a more general way - a sense of protocol or formality appropriate variously to a ritual, a serious meeting, a processional entry into a harbour, and/or to a particular social station or occupation.

Certainly, one's conception of the scene influences how one translates this detail. Gesell (1981, 197-204)

unreasonable, the tradition of Minoan religious iconography, as well as the archaeological record of religious activity on Crete and mainland Greece, cause one to query the absence of any of the normal accoutrements of cult (altars, vessels, offerings, etc.) and wonder whether the occasion shown is inevitably or even essentially ritualistic.¹³³ For the beholder inclined to link the hilltop incident with the other images narratively, the most frequent and intellectually acceptable explanations of the former scene are to see it as a pre-battle conference, a post-battle settlement of terms, or a thanksgiving ceremony.¹³⁴

It is obvious that the loosely related collection of actions on this frieze recount "one or more events," but despite their narrative content they are fashioned into a chronological association only vaguely and with effort by the modern viewer, producing a few tentative story line options, all of which contain many gaps. The arrangement of the compositional elements on the north wall - a patchwork of diverse scenes - has been compared to the use of parataxis in epic poetry and the oral tradition in general, in which a tale is related as a juxtaposition of several motifs instead of a continuous string of narration.¹³⁵

The plan of episodes in most oral poems is paratactic, that is, the themes strung together are of equal status, interest and importance: they stand or fall on their own merits and not by their relation to each other...the Homeric poems...combine brief and strong dramatic plots with broad expanses of paratactic narratives. (Hainsworth 1992, 70)

views the friezes as illustrating a specific historical event - a marriage ceremony - and the hill scene is thus a pre-nuptial meeting. In contrast, N. Marinatos (1984, 40) considers the depiction to represent a solemn ceremony of "thanksgiving" for the victory at sea, a reading iterated by Televantou (1994, 329), whereas E. Davis (1983, 10) and S. Morris (1989, 522) see the hilltop scene as a gathering with more military or pragmatic overtones, the former author imagining a conference in response to a naval contest, the latter a "council between allies or enemies in different costume." S. Marinatos (1974, 40) discerned in the restless posture of the gesturing man on the right and the watchful demeanour of the men near the shipsheds "the tension of their spirits and a moment of crisis" - significant features that warrant consideration and assimilation in any interpretation of this scene.

133. N. Marinatos has voiced similar reservations, though not, as far as I know, in print.

134. E.g.: E. Davis 1983; S. Morris 1989, 522; N. Marinatos 1984, 40; Televantou 1994, 329.

135. See Morris 1989; Hiller 1990; Thomas 1992; Crowley 1989a, 192; 1992, 34-35; and cf. above Chapter 2, n. 176. "Parataxis" is defined by *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (sixth edition) as the "placing of clauses etc. one after another, without words to indicate co-ordination or subordination."

This brand of storytelling is thought to be characteristic of pre- or partly literate societies, and its pictorial manifestation could not be more remote from the relatively seamless continuity of the best Hellenistic visual narratives. To an author like Morgan, for whom "narrative is a continuous account of a story or factual event," and "space and time must be united in sequence and intention singular, before a work can be truly described as narrative," the frieze on the north wall falls far from the mark (Morgan 1988, 164). In addition to the fact that events on this wall are "not necessarily simultaneous or sequential in occurrence," for Morgan the "inclusion of genre scenes recalling typical rather than specific events" establishes the non-narrative intention or character of the painting (Morgan 1988, 159, 164).

However, it was observed in Chapter 2 that artistic topoi and conventional imagery are frequently incorporated into ancient picture narratives, even those recounting specific historical events (e.g., Chapter 2, sections 2.1.3, 2.2.3).¹³⁶ Indeed, within the framework of our guidelines for narrativity, the representations containing the most iconographically precedented or "generic" elements, i.e., the battle at sea and the pendant scene of marching soldiers, are not only the easiest to process narratively, but details like the human flotsam and damaged ship are among the most eloquent of the room's imagery. As with the Siege Rhyton, there is no way of determining if the intended audience for these frescoes might have associated the incidentals of human appearance, weaponry, and setting with events,

136. It is not hard to understand why the Aegean designer would likewise incorporate known artistic formulae into any kind of composition - "generic" or "specific" - for if there is a ready solution to an artistic problem that "works" or can be modified to suit different situations, why not use it? The fact is, that each of the iconographic parallels Morgan and others cite for these particular scenes on the North Frieze are rather dissimilar in the elements chosen and the way they are combined, so that even though certain motifs are repeated, "each image exhibits a distinct metaphors," that is, their textual meaning "is disjunct from one image to the next" (W. Davis 1993, 22-23). As Bal 1991, 185, advises, "the vocabulary of iconographic reading cannot be fixed" - any alteration, however slight, may signal a change in meaning (cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 1991, 396).

persons, or places known or remembered from life or legend. The question of whether this section of the wall paintings pictures a "particular or general event" is, as E. Davis has stated, "ultimately unanswerable, precisely because the artist is always using a general vocabulary of images" (E. Davis, 1983, 6).

In terms of our parameters of narrativity, we can say, in summary, that the North Frieze satisfies many of the criteria of a narrative communication. The Story components - identifiable events (including a conflict event), actants, and settings - are quite detailed, and a number of time sequences are shown or implied. Nonetheless, the temporal relations between certain scenes are not "clearly perceptible" (Prince 1982, 148): there is a sense of middles and endings here, but the imagery, at least as preserved and without taking into consideration the representations on the other three walls, demands quite a lot of the viewer/narrator.¹³⁷

4.3.3 East Wall

Most of the 1.8 m of painting restored to the frieze on the east wall portrays a colourful landscape in which a serpentine river, depicted as if seen from overhead, winds its way from one corner of the wall to the other (Fig. 86). An assortment of small rocks, plants, and animal life are shown in profile view and arranged against the white background on either side of the river's light-brown banks (cf. Immerwahr 1990, 73). Morgan's assiduous study of the flora reveals it to include vegetation indigenous to the Aegean (scrubby sedges and reeds), as well as plants more at home in Egypt (papyrus, palms).¹³⁸

137. See Appendix Table B2 for a quantitative assessment of the North Frieze.

138. Morgan 1988, 17-40, 146-50.

Those exotic species prompted S. Marinatos to refer to the frieze as a "Nilotic" or "subtropical" landscape (S. Marinatos 1974, 41-42), though it seems to be a matter of opinion whether the scene pictures an "orchard, garden or park" in the Aegean (Morgan 1988, 39-40, 149) or a "Nile landscape rendered in Aegean terms by someone who has doubtless never seen the Nile" (Immerwahr 1990, 73).

The fauna placed in this lush setting - six water fowl (ducks or geese),¹³⁹ one doe, a wild cat, and a griffin - also represent a blend of usual and unusual or extraordinary entities. The only "dramatic action" (Morgan 1988, 49) in the painting, proceeding toward the right, involves the predatory operations of the cat and griffin, who are both shown in hot pursuit of their respective quarry (Fig. 87). The encroaching attack position of the cat - "tail raised, ears forward, jaw open" (Morgan 1988, 41) - is counterpoised by the passive vulnerability of the preening bird in his sights, whose pose "gives the viewer an insecure feeling of the bird's oblivion to danger" (Morgan 1988, 65).¹⁴⁰ The head of the large griffin is missing, but the details of its plumed wings and leonine body correspond to several other Aegean representations of the composite beast, including that mentioned above from Xeste 3 (section 4.1.3).¹⁴¹ A section directly in front of the griffin is also lost, and while it is possible that another animal was included there, most viewers regard the spotted doe fleeing on the opposite side of the river in the foreground as the griffin's intended victim (Fig. 88).

Until quite recently the painting was thought to be dedicated entirely to these creatures

139. These numbers reflect Televantou's additions to the frieze, see Televantou 1990, 322.

140. The tension in this image recalls the famed Cat and Pheasant Fresco, itself an excerpt from a larger work found in an LM I villa at Ayia Triadha on Crete (see Immerwahr 1990, catalogue entry p. 180, pl. 17). Vermeule (1975, 25) describes that work as a "mild narrative" the outcome of which is uncertain, a characterization that might also apply to the scene under consideration here.

141. See Morgan 1988, 49-54, on Aegean griffins.

and their environment. But the additional pieces attributed to the wall by Televantou add a human presence: two fragments of a town (dubbed Town III by Televantou) with walls of varied construction, situated on sloping land close to a river's edge, are now restored at the far left portion of the East Frieze, near the north corner (Televantou 1990, 322, fig. 13; 1994, 265 ff., *εικ.* 19).

The East Frieze is visually appealing and frequently appreciated merely as a decorative interlude between the peopled friezes on the north and south walls of Room 5. Morgan's research brilliantly illuminates the artistic lineage of the "cat chasing fowl" scene, a picture formula that derives from Egypt and is here coupled with the earliest known Aegean representation of the griffin hunting in a landscape setting (Morgan 1988, 52, 54; cf. E. Davis 1983, 6). It is an intriguing and utterly fanciful union: most of the flora and fauna may belong to the perceived world, but this is no ordinary place, the fictitious beast marks it as an illusion of somewhere strange and fabulous.

Griffins, sphinxes, and lions often occur in decidedly symbolic representations and contexts in Aegean art, and with this in mind, Morgan has explored the underlying conceptual content of the iconography on this East Frieze (Morgan 1988, 49-54). It is a content that parallels and reinforces the dominant ideas of "predation" and "aggression" present in the frescoes on the south and north (Morgan 1988, 54, 147-50; cf. N. Marinatos 1984, 44). Morgan's determination that the animal imagery on the East Frieze stands in a metaphorical or symbolic relationship to the human activity pictured on the other walls is both insightful and irrefutable, and her account of this frieze omits little. Nevertheless, given that our interest is to assess any narrative aspects the paintings might exhibit, we shall supplement Morgan's associative reading with a brief and much more literal one, commencing with the observation that the messages this imagery encodes, like those of the

other friezes, appear in the form of an action scene related in the narrative mode. Granted, the event recounted, albeit of the "conflict" variety, is simple - a "minimal narrative" at best (cf. above Chapter 3, section 3.1). Moreover, despite the peculiar nature of at least one of the hunters, as well as the lavish ensценation of the chase, the fact that only one moment is represented greatly lessens the possible narrativity of the subject. The artist drops us into the middle of the pursuit. The "end" of one unsuspecting bird appears to be immanent, but that is about all there is to the story or story fragment recounted here.¹⁴²

4.3.4 South Wall

The frieze on the south wall, nearly complete at a length of 3.9 m, portrays a fleet or "flotilla" of seven large vessels travelling from left to right (east to west) between two settlements with quite dissimilar topographical and geographical features (Figs. 19, 20, 89a-b).¹⁴³ The community on the left, often called the Departure Town (Town IV to Televantou), is sited on a mountainous landmass punctuated by two streams that issue from the highest peaks (Fig. 90). One waterway partly surrounds the complex of buildings located near the shore, separating it from a cluster of much smaller structures. In the wooded regions beyond the town and close to the hilltops, a large lion chases a few deer toward the left. Past the boundaries of the land to the right, the open sea fills almost all of the available space, indicated by blue paint in many parts, and by numbers of dolphins shown cavorting "above" and between the ships of the fleet. Apart from two men in dark, hairy cloaks who converse across the east branch of the river (Fig. 91), all the inhabitants

142. A quantitative analysis of the East Frieze appears in the Appendix.

143. The topography and architectural characteristics of these towns are skilfully examined by Morgan 1988, 17-40, 68-87, 88-92. See also Televantou 1994, especially pp. 264-72, on the structural details of the buildings.

in and around this small settlement (nine men and one woman) face right, toward the expanse of water and the remarkable boats featured in the central section of the frieze.

The ships are arrayed on two levels, one near the bottom, the other close to the top half of the wall (Fig. 20). Every vessel accommodates crew members and passengers, all male. The crews include steersmen manipulating long rudder oars and paddlers. These paddlers, represented in a very sketchy fashion with darkish daubs for heads and thin, red parallel lines for arms,¹⁴⁴ are the sole source of propulsion for the six largest craft, while the small boat at the very back of the fleet is rowed, and a medium-sized ship near the front of the fleet on the bottom level travels under sail.¹⁴⁵ Passengers on the biggest ships are seated within open-sided deck constructions, except for one individual on each vessel - presumably its captain or a dignitary of some sort - who occupies a separate cabin made of wood and animal hide, located at the stern.¹⁴⁶

Helmets of diverse forms, some reminiscent of yet none exactly like those worn by the marching soldiers on the North Frieze, are set atop the vertical supports of four of the stern

144. The drawings in S. Marinatos 1974, fig. 6, and Morgan 1988, fig. 77, make these figures much more articulate than they appear in the usual photographs. One author has complained that the paddlers are too freely restored, maintaining that "the Thera ships were rowing ships with an auxiliary sail" and that the "arms" of the paddlers are in fact "trailing lines" for the oars fixed at the gunwale, with the "semi-circles" being the "rowers' figure of eight shields in the intervals between the gunwale and their seats" (Giesecke 1983, 141).

145. The seemingly inappropriate use of paddling for such large travelling vessels troubles many viewers and has contributed to theories about the ritual or ceremonial nature of the event(s) pictured in the West House Friezes: see Casson 1975, 3, 7, 9; Morgan 1988, 127, 143-45, 207-8, nn. 10, 17. The fragments of a similar boat restored by Televantou (1990, 1994) to the lower left of the North Frieze also appear to be paddled, though in that instance there seems to be little reason to posit a ceremonial explanation for same. At least two commentators with nautical expertise have suggested that the large craft in the flotilla have their stern (landing) planks in position and are being paddled because they are preparing to dock close to the harbour - perhaps even intending to "berth alongside each other" - operations made much easier by paddling, which takes up much less "sea room" than oars (Tilley and Johnstone 1976, 288-92). Are we then to assume that the large ship on the left of the North Frieze is being paddled because it too is getting ready for landing?

146. Morgan (1988, 137-42) discusses these stern cabins at length and in light of Egyptian examples. On each wall of the adjacent Room 4, large stern cabin motifs - some very similar in detail to the tiny versions on the ships in the Flotilla Fresco - are painted above an imitation marble dado, see Morgan 1988, figs. 5-6; Doulas 1992, 86-95 (excellent colour plates). The latter frescoes have helped scholars clarify "the constructional details" (Doulas, 1992, 49) of the stern cabins on the boats.

cabins, and several others hang above the heads of the passengers, serving "as a determinative signifying the martial role and possible status of the men" (Morgan 1988, 109, cf. p. 115.). A further military note is struck by the presence of long spears, which project behind some of the stern cabins and are also visible under the awnings of at least three of the deck structures (cf. Morgan 1988, 104-15, pls. 9-12). These craft could be specialized warships, although if comparisons with ancient Egyptian ships are any guide, it is more probable that such long, seagoing craft were multi-purpose vehicles employed in trade, colonization, and war (see Landström 1970, 108, 110).

One certainly gets the impression that they are special or distinctive vessels: most of the hulls are decorated with inanimate motifs like spirals, coral or sea patterns, and wavy blue lines, as well as leaping dolphins and, on one vessel alone, lions in the flying gallop pose and a unique star "ensign" (see Morgan 1988, 130-131, pl. 169).¹⁴⁷ Delicate looking ornaments - gold-coloured stars, birds, butterflies, and dolphins - are attached to their bowsprits, and in this respect too the ship with the lions and star on its hull is differentiated from the others. It has a huge butterfly emblem on top of its raised mast and crocus-shaped pendants alternating between pairs of spheres strung on two lines and suspended like giant necklaces from the mast to the two ends of the boat. There are also effigies of lions (on at least two ships) and what may be a kind of griffin (on three others) set on the stern posts behind the small cabins (Fig. 92). Both creatures appear as hunters elsewhere on the friezes of this and the east wall, and they are common motifs on Aegean weapons as well (Morgan 1988, 53). The nexus of associations between lions and warriors in particular, suggests to Morgan that

147. Morgan (1990, 253) mentions that the miniature frescoes found at Ayia Irini on Keos also include fragments of ships with similar motifs painted on their hulls, which are taken to indicate that seasonal festivals of the kind she reconstructs for the West House Friezes were also celebrated on that island.

The lion images have been applied to the ships so that the vessels might be infused with their power and thus be able to conquer the waves, and the warrior-occupants of the ship may be inspired with the valour of the "king of beasts." (Morgan 1988, 49)

These fighting men may be surrounded by battle gear, but they demonstrate no signs of readying themselves for combat. Rather, their elegantly trimmed ships appear to proceed at a fairly steady pace toward the rocky coasts of a grand city, the population of which anticipates and acknowledges their approach with differing expressions of enthusiasm and propriety (Fig. 93). Above the harbour area, where two men trudge along bearing sacks suspended on poles over their shoulders, three figures are depicted running up a steep incline, ostensibly headed for a kind of lookout structure on a hilltop (Fig. 94a-b). Two other runners proceed in the opposite direction, toward a group of men in shaggy cloaks standing somewhere outside the city walls. Within this so-called Arrival Town (Town V in Televantou's reckoning) heads peek out of windows or pop up from the rooftops. The few women among them, especially the two situated by the buildings closest to the fleet, are represented in proportions double that of the males, designating them as persons of some importance (Fig. 95). Just beyond the impressive masonry walls of the settlement, in the foreground on either side of its sizable entrance gates, are files of men wearing short loincloths and facing the ships. Most of them stand or walk slowly (legs barely parted), their arms down to their sides. Others hold one arm down and the other up to their chest, and still others are shown with one arm stretched out, possibly to touch the shoulder of the man in front. Although much of the fresco is damaged in this section, there are also fragments of two men leading a calf from the open space in front of the gates toward the men gathered along the shore (S. Marinatos 1974, 44; Morgan 1988, 57, pl. 81).

Like the North Frieze, though far less complex in its pictorial syntax, the painting on the south wall is "teeming with motion" and "many players" (Perkins 1988, 242). The

narrative character of the representations is perhaps so apparent to most writers that they have not seen the need to describe it as such, and statements like the following one by J. Crowley are fairly unusual: "there is narrative implicit in this large scale work and at least some of this comes from those icons which themselves contain an implicit narrative, like the arrival/departure icon" (Crowley 1992, 35).

It is unfortunate that Groenewegen-Frankfort's inspired essay on space and time in Cretan and Mycenaean art was written twenty years before the discoveries of Thera, for the West House miniature frescoes, and in particular this South Frieze, represent exceptional achievements in these areas, and may approximate more than any other prehistoric work the characteristics that for her defined the quintessential visual narrative. Not only does the Flotilla Fresco illustrate buildings and places that are distinct, connoting a "desire for a fixed point in space to which action could be allocated" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 106), but the movements and postures of the characters are declarative of their circumstances, "impulses," and "emotions": faceless paddlers strain at their work, bystanders engage in conversation, and men with the arched backs and open legs of sprinters in mid-stride are readily understood as messengers relaying news of the fleet's approach.¹⁴⁸ It has been said that "the most important aspect of the ship fresco is the creation within it of an unlimited and unbounded space" (Perkins 1988, 243);¹⁴⁹ we are presented with a truly panoramic vision in which vertical perspective once again orders near and far from the bottom up (cf. Chapin 1995, 56-58). In her inimitable analysis of spatial effects in ancient art

148. Groenewegen-Frankfort's ideas on narrative qualities in visual media were discussed above in the context of Egyptian art, in Chapter 2, sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2. Signs or characteristics of pictorial narrative for her include spontaneous gestures "dictated by human impulses or emotions" (1951, 40-41), "dramatic unity," and "spatial coherence" (p. 53). Alpers (1976, 15) makes similar comments in her discussion of narrative and non-narrative features in much later Western art traditions.

149. Smith (1965, 63) writing several years before the discoveries of Thera, already appreciated that the early Aegean artist had "an unusual interest...in portraying figures in relation to their natural surroundings." Betancourt (1977, 19-22) refers to the panoramic type vision of the south wall as a "deep stage."

Groenewegen-Frankfort observed that the skilled artist can construct narrative or "dramatic space," something that "occurs when figures are rendered in a tensional relationship which makes the distance between them a significant void" (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 38). J. Schäfer quite appropriately uses Groenewegen-Frankfort's terminology to characterize the quality of space in the South Frieze, specifically the "pictorial tensions" that intensify the distance between individuals like the two men talking across the river, or that separating the flotilla of ships and the intent gazes of the figures in the town (Schäfer 1977, 9).

There is no disputing that an event is recounted on this south wall, one involving a fleet of ships nearing the harbour of a city expectant of its arrival. There is, however, more to the Story than that, and in the course of trying to determine the precise nature of the event shown, who the characters are, and where the activity occurs, a profusion of explanations have been printed, each a revealing illustration of the frieze's narrative force.

The representations are obviously indicative of "departure and arrival," but it is not really possible to tell whether the ships have actually left the harbour of the town on the left, or merely pass by it on the way to the larger town on the right (cf. S. Marinatos 1974, 43). The spatial coherence of the South Frieze tends to impart a "sense of everywhere-ness, of action going on simultaneously at many points in space,"¹⁵⁰ but are we really to assume that only five ship lengths separate the two communities, and that the frieze pictures a single moment in time?¹⁵¹ Although a number of adventures may be had along the way, the essential pattern of activity in any sea journey entails leaving one location, travelling some distance on the water, and landing at one or more other locations before returning home. If such a journey is in fact the subject of the south wall miniatures, the integral

150. Perkins 1988, 243.

151. Cf. comments by Schäfer 1977, 9.

phases of action have been telescoped or condensed; they are understood but not fully rendered.¹⁵² Had the artist worked in the idiom of the contemporary strip cartoon, the separate stages of the event might be related less ambiguously, in the manner of Fig. 96,¹⁵³ although in this method of pictorial narration what one gains in temporal clarity one loses in aestheticism.

The majority of commentators not only read the South Frieze in this way, that is, as a voyage, but also view it as a narrative of homecoming, in which the Arrival Town represents the fleet's native port, and the settlement on the left pictures a more distant locale visited by the ships in the course of their travels.¹⁵⁴ It has already been noted that the two settlements have quite different built features - in this sense the gates of the larger town and its altars with horns of consecration are particularly interesting - and since their immediate surroundings are likewise differentiated, the urge to identify them as specific places is hard to resist. The Arrival Town is most often considered to be Akrotiri itself,¹⁵⁵ though sites on Crete have also been proposed,¹⁵⁶ while the smaller town with its rivers, wooded hills, and roving lions is variously thought to represent a town in the Nile Delta,¹⁵⁷

152. Cameron (1978, 319) also infers that a fairly long journey is shown, by his suggested locations of the two towns (Miletus and Thera). Immerwahr (1990, 71) correspondingly implies that time has been compressed in this image when she considers the presence of dolphins as supporting "the notion of a sea voyage and some...separation from the two towns depicted on the south wall, whatever the present activities of the fleet may be."

153. My sincere thanks to Barbara Ibronyi for producing this delightful translation of the South Frieze.

154. It is, of course, also possible to interpret the smaller town on the left as the home port and the larger town as a stop along the way, that is to say, this frieze could show the initial and not the final (homecoming) events of a voyage; so far E. Davis (1983, 3, 12) seems to be the only author to advance such a reading.

155. See S. Marinatos 1974, 44; Schachermeyr 1978, 423-28; Warren 1979, 128; N. Marinatos 1984, 42; Shaw 1986, 108-14; Morgan 1988, 92; Televantou 1994, 337.

156. E.g., Immerwahr 1977, 175; Gesell 1981, 197, 202-3 (Pseira); E. Davis 1983; Giesecke 1983, 125-27 (Amnisos).

157. Doumas 1992, 48; Televantou 1994, 335.

Miletus on the coast of Asia Minor,¹⁵⁸ Mycenaean Greece,¹⁵⁹ or the Minoan hamlet of Mochlos.¹⁶⁰

As ever, we can label the main characters only in general terms. That at least some of the ships' occupants are warriors is clearly stated, and the man with the jaunty forelock in the most elaborate vessel is unquestionably given celebrity status. The hull motifs and ephemera decorating the ships could serve several narrative purposes, perhaps even naming the vessels for the contemporary viewer.¹⁶¹ These ornaments definitely impart a festive air to the scene, and the procession of men waiting on land, some of whom lead a "sacrificial" animal, further suggests that a celebration is about to take place (cf. S. Marinatos 1974, 44; N. Marinatos 1984, 43). In this "return of the fleet" scenario, one imagines that the two women who gesture to the ships are especially dear to someone in the boats; like the warrior-hero in the fancy flagship, they have a starring role in this act, and at least one writer suggests they might represent members of his family (N. Marinatos 1995, 40).

Considered on its own, the South Frieze is eminently readable as Story, especially when the event represented is explained as a sea voyage, or more specifically, as the joyous return

158. Cameron 1978, 319.

159. Immerwahr 1977, 174; Giesecke 1983, 125.

160. Gesell 1981, 202.

161. Morgan (1988, 130-34) discusses these motifs, observing that some of the prow emblems (butterfly, dolphin, bird) may be "akin to a name device though not as specific since two ships carry the same [motif]" (p. 134). She further states that the star "is the one unifying emblem and may have acted as an insignia for the fleet; this would explain why the most important ship of the company carries the emblem on its hull as well as on its prow" (p. 134). The doves decorating the hull of the smaller sailing vessel have been significant in narrativizations of the imagery by authors like Gesell 1981, 204. In contrast to N. Marinatos (1984, 41, 60) and Morgan (1988, 144-45) who both stress the religious or ritual relevance of the ships' ornamentation, Morris (1989, 517) equates such emblems instead to the "poetic tradition of a catalogue of ships" and the epithets of Greek prose, which embellish "ships with flowers and visual decoration as a literary device." Morris thus suggests that on the South Frieze "the decoration of ships represents an ornamental, narrative device, not a ceremonial function" (1989, 517). The different motifs likely served numerous functions at once, symbolic and narrative; as with all such details, each modern beholder will explain them according to their perception of the scene's character (cf. Chatman 1979, 177-78, 180-81).

of a hometown fleet. Like battles, journeys at sea, indeed travels of any sort, are highly narratable affairs. We are naturally disposed to process this spirited and detailed picture text "as a series of assertions about" sea going events of that type (Prince 1982, 150-51). Temporal succession may be compressed into one unified image, but, as Bal remarks, chronological sequence is a "logical concept...it is a matter of logic to suppose that someone who has arrived must have departed first" (Bal 1985, 42), and with this fresco the beholder has little trouble determining past from present and future actions. The artist has also related the elements of his narrative with a level of particularization that encourages us to individualize the places and some of the people involved in these scenes, even though we cannot hope to verify such readings. This painstaking attention to detail extends to minute objects like the helmets hung on the ships, each one of which is unique, something that might have escaped notice when the frieze was viewed *in situ* from a distance of some 1.5 m (see Morgan 1988, 109, fig. 64).

Assessing the imagery on this South Frieze in light of Prince's basic guidelines for narrativity, it is quite clear that these representations are replete with narrative value in terms of Story and Discourse.¹⁶² It is also plain that the designer's storytelling concerns have been balanced with more purely artistic ones, resulting in a visual narrative that both delights the eye and stimulates the mind.

4.3.5 The West, North, East, and South Friezes *tout ensemble*: Narrative and Thematic Relationships

The preceding passages point out that each of the best-preserved walls in Room 5 of

162. Cf. the quantitative analysis in Appendix Table B4.

the West House depicts at least one event and may be understood narratively, albeit their picture stories are of unequal complexity and are reconstituted with different degrees of ease. As was intimated in the opening paragraphs of this section, however, the narrative question that has monopolized earlier studies pertains to whether these individual representations can be read diachronically, that is, whether together the miniature frescoes create some form of continuous narration. It is natural for the modern viewer accustomed to later traditions of Western art to expect this kind of relating, and in the same way that historians of Near Eastern art endeavour to generate longer stories by combining the single register narratives on the Standard of Ur and Stele of the Vultures (see above, Chapter 2, sections 2.2.2, 2.2.3), many Aegeanists have resolved that the three surviving paintings in the West House are "logically or psychologically dependant" parts of a whole (Warren 1979, 120).

There are several factors that support this thesis. Perhaps the most compelling reason for regarding the separate friezes as units of a lengthy narration is the appearance (or re-appearance) of particular individuals or character types on two of the walls. Although we cannot say so with surety, many have noticed that the man with the long triple banded robe and forehead curl who plays a principal role in the hilltop conference on the North Frieze also seems to occupy the stern cabin of the most illustrious vessel in the Flotilla Fresco on the south wall (Figs. 97-98).¹⁶³ Correspondingly, one of the men dressed in white loincloths who stand with their arms crossed over their chests behind the aforementioned figure in the hill meeting recurs in identical guise on the south wall, positioned in front of

163. See Televantou 1994, 329. Morgan 1988, 163 notes:

The men in The Meeting on the Hill and those under the awnings in the Ship Procession share the same ceremonial garments and, in one instance, gesture...Both garments and gesture are sufficiently unusual for it to be likely that the same men are represented in the two scenes.

the helmsman and stern cabin of the ship directly aft of that transporting the "forelock man" (Figs. 99-100). The boats represented on both north and south walls also appear to be alike in type, although those on the South Frieze are fitted for display or celebration not war, and as such it is harder to surmise whether they might be the same vessels as those preserved in more fragmentary condition on the north wall.¹⁶⁴ Weapons are likewise indicated on both wall paintings: helmets, shields, and long spears akin to those held by the troops on the North Frieze are exhibited quite visibly on most of the ships in the Flotilla Fresco.¹⁶⁵

The case for assuming a narrative connection between the images on the north and south walls is strengthened by the perception that in combination they manifest a certain Story logic. In narratological terms, together they can be comprehended as portraying a "continuant subject," and they suggest a certain "relationship between beginning and end" (cf. Chapter 3, section 3.2.2). The continuant subject or story concerns an extended voyage of an Aegean fleet.

Televantou composes a particularly forceful argument in favour of interpreting the four friezes as a unified narrative ensemble (Televantou 1990, 1994). The first frieze visible upon entering Room 5 from Room 3 is on the west wall, and notwithstanding that the two pieces of an Aegean or Cretan town¹⁶⁶ remaining from this West Frieze yield little information, Televantou commences the tale there, at the southwest corner. Her narrative progresses thence in a clockwise direction reading left to right across the north, east, and

164. Televantou (1990, 318) considers that both the large and smaller boats on the North Frieze are analogous to those on the south wall, the only difference being that the latter are decked out for a festive entry or "triumph" (cf. Tilley and Johnstone 1976; Prytulak, 1982). Morgan (1988, 134) also seems to recognize the possibility that the ships on the South Frieze may be dressed-up versions of the larger ships on the north wall.

165. Cf.: Prytulak 1982, 3-6; Morgan 1988, 104-15; Doumas 1992, 49 (noting the shields on the boats); Televantou 1994, 329.

166. See Televantou 1994, 327, for this identification.

south walls. First, the fleet controls their interests at a city - possibly a commercial port or colony - in the Eastern Mediterranean, assisting the locals by defeating hostile forces in a sea battle near the harbour (Televantou 1994, 327-33). The Aegean sailors then move on, stopping at a small riverside town in another East Mediterranean country, which is portrayed on the East Frieze (Televantou 1994, 333-34). Televantou resumes the saga on the south wall, where the country (Landmass Γ) pictured on the East Frieze continues on the east end of the South Frieze, though here the town and its landscape have a less subtropical and more Mediterranean character (Televantou 1994, 334-36). The narrative ends with the last stop on the fleet's victorious voyage, shown at the right of the South Frieze, where the ships - decked out in full colours for their homecoming - are welcomed back to Landmass or country Δ and Town V (Televantou 1994, 335-36).¹⁶⁷

Televantou's conviction that the miniature friezes form a "unified representation in the narrative vein, consisting of one scene on each wall, each scene being the narrative continuation of the other" (Televantou 1990, 323), emerged from a close study of the friezes and her addition of numerous pieces to the original reconstruction by S. Marinatos. She discerns a "smooth transition of the representation from the north to the east wall, and hence also to the south," which she describes in the following manner:

...the East Frieze was united with the central section of the North Frieze in such a way that the blue river of the former probably linked up with the sea of the latter...the representation on the North Frieze ended with ship Π7, while that of the East Frieze probably opened with the riverside Town III, thus conveying the impression that the ship was anchored outside the river estuary or just about to approach the city...the East Frieze was linked to the central section of the South Frieze in such a way that the river of the former, as it winds its way upwards, appears to have its source in the mountain range of the latter. (Televantou 1990, 323)

Not everyone will be satisfied with Televantou's reading; the pictorial "transitions" or

167. Doumas (1992, 47-49) follows this interpretation.

links between each wall are, as she says, "probable" and consonant with her schema, but they might not be as evident as some would wish. What has always mitigated or even negated the continuity of the West House Friezes for many viewers is the exotica or "Nilotic fantasy"¹⁶⁸ on the east wall, which seems more like a tangential "break in the narrative" (E. Davis 1983, 5), than a consequent episode.

For this, and other reasons (e.g., see above, section 4.3.3), when Morgan produced her monograph on the friezes, while observing that "to some extent, the paintings show evidence of approaching narrative sequence," she deemed that the frescoes could not be "described as true narrative" and instead privileged a reading of the friezes along thematic rather than narrative lines (Morgan 1988, 164).¹⁶⁹ The antithetical conclusions reached by Televantou and Morgan regarding the narrative stature of the West House miniature frescoes remind us that what we see is affected by what we know, what we expect, and how we chose to frame things, conditions referred to in Chapter 3 as the "beholder's share" (section 3.2.3). Televantou's orientation is generally macroscopic; she looks to or for the unities evident in the four walls, those elements consistent with the obvious Story values of the figure scenes on the North and South Friezes. Morgan, on the other hand, has examined the friezes with a microscopic vision, and her formidable knowledge of Aegean pictorial conventions, coupled with the adoption of a rather uncompromising definition of narration, inclines her to endorse a reading more observant of the iconographical parallels for the images¹⁷⁰ and

168. Cf. Morris 1989, 529-30; Manning 1994, 222.

169. It may be that Morgan's judgement has been revised somewhat since Televantou's publications, although unless she has accepted a broader notion of narrative and narrative relating, it is doubtful that her conception of the friezes will have been amended to any great degree by the new reconstructions.

170. It is easy to "overread" any monument, especially when our starting point is an exacting iconographic study of the sort Morgan produces. Bal (1991, 187-88) cautions that "overreading leads to underreading": if we pay "exclusive attention" to certain iconographic signs, other "sign events" are obscured in "favour of the recognition of theme, type scene, dogma..." While I tend to feel that Morgan's sharp focus on pictorial "pre-texts" may have diverted her from fully appreciating the narrative or "storytelling...impact of these frescoes" (Morris 1989, 511), I admit that by concentrating my own attentions on narrative qualities and structures, I

also of the obvious conceptual interrelations that exist among the depictions in this and the adjacent rooms of the West House. In her discussion, the "returning fleet" becomes a procession, part of a recurrent festival inaugurating the navigational season, and the enthusiastic greetings or "waves" of the two women in the Arrival Town - one of whom stands in the proximity of an altar with horns of consecration - are perceived as conventional votive gestures¹⁷¹ suited to the ritual occasion (see Morgan 1988, 118, 143-45, 164-65).

Morgan recognizes that the events on the North and South Friezes can be "construed as consecutive and united in purpose," but is more sympathetic to reconstituting their topical and temporal connections in a way compatible with her understanding of the depictions on the south wall. For her, the north wall's hilltop meeting represents another "ceremonial

am just as guilty of "underreading."

171. Most authors describe the gesture exhibited by these two prominent women on the South Frieze as a greeting of some sort, an interpretation Morgan censures as being framed "in terms of our own cultural experience rather than in terms of Aegean iconographic syntax" (see Morgan 1985, 15-16). Since all of the other instances of this gesture occur either in relation to architectural settings or shrines/altars with horns of consecration and not in association with ships, Morgan feels that the "recurring complex" of raised hand gesture and altar/horns must be the most important, i.e., the determining consideration in reading the gesture here as a sign of reverence not salutation (cf. Morgan 1988, 118). Morgan (1988, 118) does concede, however, that the somewhat smaller woman who is not located near an altar but also raises her hand in a manner close to if not identical with that of the woman on the left, may indeed be motioning to the fleet. Televantou (1994, 268), who interprets the gesture as a wave in the accepted sense, thinks the larger woman does not actually stand/sit on a projecting balcony topped with horns of consecration, as Morgan (e.g., Morgan 1988, 83-85) and others have explained it, but suggests instead that the horns are part of an altar that is separate and independent of the building where the woman stands; i.e., Televantou sees the altar as being positioned not in front of the woman but behind her in space, its details partly obscured by the cornice of building Γ and the woman's body (see Televantou's drawing, p. 114, *εικ.* 22). (Her interpretation of the row of horns visible to the right of the town's gate is similar; one is not to perceive them as sitting on the top of the wall, rather, they are placed on a low rectangular base located beyond the wall, Televantou 1994, 270, *εικ.* 22.)

For my part, the sentiments and reservations expressed above in consideration of the crossed arm gesture (see above, this section, n. 132) also apply to the gesture of the raised hand; the artist may use it differently in different circumstances. One woman could wave "hello," while the other gestures "reverently," perhaps performing a prayer, and/or the gestures might be "signs" for the role or occupation of the user (maybe the larger woman near the altar is a "priestess," as N. Marinatos [1995, 39-40] suggests). A raised hand/woman/altar association in a composition that also contains scenes of sea travel, two distinct settlements, and a flotilla of gaily decorated ships approaching a harbour is bound to have a different significance or cognitive range than a single-scene glyptic image depicting one or two women with a raised hand approaching an altar structure (again, note the admonitions of Bal 1991, 185).

scene," an "annual occasion associated with the summer movements of flocks on the part of a shepherd community," and the "shipwreck" imagery is thematically related to "what appears to be an impending coastal raid of piracy," in that they both illustrate "dangers" that "would only be of concern during the navigation season" (Morgan 1988, 165). Analyzed in Morgan's terms, it is evident that

rather than 'telling a story' in the manner of conventional narrative as we now understand it, the paintings present a series of images in which the nuances of visual ideas echo one another to convey a unifying theme pertaining to a specific time of the year. (Morgan 1988, 165)

Following from the terms of reference favoured in this study, it is assumed that although the potential narrativity of the paintings on the four walls is influenced by the mode of "telling" employed (i.e., the Discourse), the narrative status of the ensemble is neither contingent upon nor fully determined by their form of presentation. Picture stories recounted in a clear, continuous string of images - as Televantou posits for the West House friezes - are usually easier for the observer/narrator to process as a sequence or series of events than are those in which the pattern of relating or reading is more disjointed, and as such they have greater narrativity. Nevertheless, the continuous frieze format is not, in itself, a sign or determinant of pictorial narration (cf. Chapter 2, section 2.1.5; W. Davis 1992, 251). And it is clearly not the case that there is only one way to tell a story: the monuments described in Chapter 2 affirm that in art as in literature there are manifold means of relating narrative, the "manner of narrative as we now understand it" being only one of them (Morgan 1988, 165). It has also been observed above that narrative works may be generalized or specific, though the latter normally evince a higher degree of narrativity than the former. Morgan's preferred denotation of narrative conditioned the question she posed regarding the relationship of the three surviving West House paintings, i.e., "Narrative or Theme?" (Morgan 1988, 164). But here, theme and narrative are conceived as self-

supporting rather than mutually exclusive terms; every narrative has at least one, and sometimes many themes.¹⁷²

The method for appraising narrative and narrativity advocated in this project will undoubtedly produce a very different assessment of the West House friezes than that devised by Morgan et al., an assessment that is also tempered by the prejudices and proclivities of this particular viewer/narrator. In truth, and notwithstanding the ingenious interpretations of Morgan, it seems difficult *not* to connect the events pictured on the miniature paintings of the north, east, and south walls as "consequent actions," uniting them narratively as parts of a seafaring tale, as so many commentators have done. We quite instinctively tend to "understand the internal order of the action" presented in this cycle of frescoes, and perhaps because we are a species predisposed to narrativize phenomena (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.3), even the discordance of the East Frieze does not inhibit attempts to connect it in a storied way to the friezes on the north and south walls. This is done whether or not one accedes to Televantou's "continuous" reading of the friezes, an interpretation that, parenthetically, subdues the fanciful character of the representations on the east wall and makes little of the fact that there the narrative line changes from a story featuring "people" to one highlighting "place" and pursuant animals. When the North Frieze is explained as an early chapter in the adventures of a wandering fleet, and the South as its final, homeward voyage, the East Frieze is intuitively incorporated into the narrative as a kind of "tall tale" or sailor's yarn about the strange and surprising things experienced in such

172. Prince (1987, 97) gives a narratologically oriented definition of theme, and similar notions to those expressed above are found in Scheub 1975, 363; Prince 1982, 74; Bal 1991, 188. For comments more directly relevant to the relationship of narrative and theme in the visual sphere see Brilliant 1984, 23, 35; Pollini 1993, 280.

travels to far-off lands.¹⁷³

The rather abrupt change of tone and focus represented by this east wall "passage" has again recalled for many scholars the style of narration typical of oral and specifically Homeric poetry, in which, as was mentioned in our analysis of the North Frieze (section 4.3.2), juxtaposition is sanctioned over Aristotelian notions of organic unity in a narrative account; "Homer did not subordinate the parts to the whole, because he was obliged to concentrate his attention on each part as he came to it" (Hainsworth 1992, 66). The clear presence of metaphorical or thematic links between the three walls, examined so astutely by Morgan, also recalls certain strategies characteristic of the oral tradition. The oral narrator "regularly overlapped human and other spheres of life" (Thomas 1992, 219); the ubiquitous and amusing animal similes of Homeric prose are well known instances of this phenomenon.¹⁷⁴ Described in the language of semiotics and narratology, elements like the hunting animals spotlighted on the east wall and appearing in a "cameo" role on the south one are "paranarratives," aspects in a narrative that are "both separate from, and congruent with, the body of the narrative proper, which they enrich and help maintain" (Blanchard 1978, 237). The animal pursuits and motifs on the east and south walls echo the actions and concerns of the human actors on the north wall, reinforcing the central themes or messages contained in the greater narrative of the pictorial ensemble, namely,

173. Cf. Shaw 1980, 179, and Giesecke (1983, 125), who likens the East Frieze to "a sailor's tale, which the host, experienced in the ways of the world, occasionally dished out to his guests." Manning et al. (1994, 221-22), also speculate on the way the friezes would have been read or narrated in the context of this small "private" (upstairs) space where the "audience" would be limited to "a selected few within the community" and "reading" the images on the walls demanded some 'esoteric' knowledge to which only a few had access."

174. Scheub (1975, 355) notes the importance of metaphor in oral systems of storytelling. Myres (1950, 257-60) was so impressed by the ostensible similarity in "techniques and repertory" between certain images on Minoan sealstones and the Homeric use of naturalistic similes, that he ventured to postulate a direct influence from the earlier visual media to the later oral one. N. Marinatos (1993a) also broaches the subject of "pictorial similes" in Aegean art. Some interesting observations regarding animal metaphors on Greek vases are made by Hoffmann (1988, 152-53). Animal-man symbolism in Bronze Age Aegean art is most recently treated by Morgan (1995b).

as Morgan states, aggression and predation.

C. Thomas has contended quite persuasively that Aegean art should be appreciated and evaluated as the product of an oral or "proto-literate" mentality. She explains that the oral tradition "imparted a sense of activity rather than passivity; and fostered a tendency toward commonality of forms and focus on collective scenes rather than individuals" (Thomas 1992, 217, 219; cf. Sherratt 1990, 813 ff.). It follows from her propositions that narrative expression in the Aegean world will tend to illustrate "generic" not individualized subjects and to exhibit "universal patterns" and a "limited number of themes" (Thomas 1992, 218). When we adjust our expectations accordingly, it seems reasonable to see in Scheub's analysis of oral prose a reflection of the approach to visual storytelling perceptible in the West House miniature friezes:

The key to the narrative system is the transformation of images into models and the artistic manipulation of models to reveal theme. (Scheub 1975, 362)

In the final analysis, although certain details remain confusing or incongruous, the most obvious and intelligible way to connect the representations on the north, east, and south walls of the West House is to unite them as a story of a "journey," one entailing military exploits, foreign lands, and a homecoming celebration. The narrative merits of each frieze were described earlier using Prince as our guide, and there is little to add here except, perhaps, that in the reading recommended in this section, the sum of the West House miniature frescoes is greater, narratively speaking, than its individual parts.¹⁷⁵

175. Cf. the quantitative analysis in Appendix Table B5.

4.4 Frescoes from the Megaron Complex in the "Palace of Nestor" at Pylos

The West House appears to have served as a venue for secular and religious activities, spheres less separate and more integrated into the order of life in ancient cultures than they are in our world. A prominent building, but one without a demonstrable public character in terms of its layout and circulation patterns, the West House and its painted murals probably reflect the tastes and interests of its owners - people of some social stature, who had an intimate knowledge of the sea and a fondness for imported ceramic wares (cf. S. Marinatos 1974, 33). Even though the miniature friezes present a big-picture view of events in which no "single figure predominates,"¹⁷⁶ many observers sense that there is a story of personal experience in these scenes, that they are in some way biographical narratives.¹⁷⁷

In nature, style, context, and function the Theran miniature paintings stand in bold contrast to the frescoes decorating the megaron complex of the so-called "palace of Nestor" at Pylos in western Messenia.¹⁷⁸ Quantities of Linear B tablets found on the site confirm that the rambling structure on the hill of Ano Englianos was indeed a palace presided over

176. Some of the words Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 137, uses to describe the "epic" nature of the Abu Simbel reliefs are quoted here (cf. above Chapter 2, section 2.1.3, for that Egyptian monument). Indeed, were we to substitute "the West House friezes" for "the Abu Simbel reliefs" in the following passage, it would characterize the Theran frescoes rather well:

The Abu Simbel reliefs are epic in the sense that they aim at a coherent narrative in which not any single event or single figure predominates and where, in a more or less articulate setting, events are unfolded in time as well as fixed in space. This may appear an overstatement seeing the clumsiness of the transition of the scenes, the lack of clarity achieved, but these failures should be measured by the stupendous boldness of the attempt. (Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951, 137)

177. Cf. comments by S. Marinatos, 1974, 54; Schachermeyr 1978, 423-28. Dumas (1992, 49) asserts:

Whatever the story shown it must be connected with the master of the West House and concern an event significant for his status in Theran society.

178. First explored in the 1930s, the ongoing excavations at Pylos were initially carried out by C. Blegen, the data being published in Blegen and Rawson 1966; Lang 1969; Blegen et al., 1973. The palace dates to LH IIIB, its original design was slightly altered sometime before its destruction at the end of LH IIIB2 (see Blegen and Rawson 1966, 421). Many of the frescoes from Pylos are on display in the Chora Museum.

by a royal *wa-na-ko*, the *wanax* or king.¹⁷⁹ Here we are unquestionably in the arena of public or official art, and because excavations have "uncovered by far the best-documented fresco corpus preserved from a Mycenaean ruling centre" investigators are able to comment upon the palace's "decorative program" in some depth.¹⁸⁰ Our brief introduction to the formal staterooms of certain Near Eastern palaces, where the ideology of the reigning power was commonly coded in a mixture of emblematic and more overtly narrative imagery dominated by the figure of the king, might predispose us to expect similar expressions of political persuasion or legitimization in the most significant royal chambers of Late Bronze Age Greek palaces (see above Chapter 2, sections 2.3.1, 2.3.4). But in the great hall at Pylos there are no depictions of the leader testing his mettle on the battlefield or at the hunt.¹⁸¹ If the *wanax* does make an appearance in the representational scenes connected with the Throne Room, it is in a much more placid and ceremonial role, and the narrative content of the imagery entails ritual observance, not conflict.

Blegen's plan of the last phase of the Pylos palace shows a Main Building with

179. See Blegen and Rawson (1966, 92-100) on the Pylos archive rooms (7 and 8), and Ventris and Chadwick (1973) on the tablets and their contents. Chadwick (1987, 33-43), McCallum (1987, 12-18), and Palaima (1995), provide lengthy discussions on the Linear B tablets as historical documents and the function and status of the *wanax*. The story of Linear B and its decipherment is succinctly related by Chadwick (1987, 9-21). An early form of Greek, it appears that Linear B was used primarily for administrative accounts in the mainland palaces or their dependencies: "the contents of Linear B tablets are almost without exception lists of people, animals, agricultural produce and manufactured objects" (Chadwick 1987, 11). Unlike Near Eastern tablets, which were deliberately preserved as historical records, the Mycenaean tablets seem always to have been intended as temporary lists of goods and services received by or issued from the palaces, perhaps comprising no more than a year's worth of data (cf. Chadwick 1987, 33 ff.). The fires that destroyed these sites baked the clay tablets, accidentally creating permanent records.

180. McCallum 1987, 1; McCallum's study is devoted to the megaron frescoes. Lang (1969) examines fresco evidence from the palace as a whole.

181. The fresco decoration in the contemporary megaron at Mycenae did, however, include such themes. It is speculated that a frieze ran across all four walls of that palace's central hall, picturing chariots, preparations for a battle, and various fighting scenes. Some of the more interesting fragments depict a warrior "falling above a building," and women watching from windows (Immerwahr 1990, 123-25). McCallum (1987, 52) wonders if the choice to represent battle scenes in the megaron at one palace, and "subjects of procession, banqueting, and couchant animals" in the megaron at the other, reflects differing "political concerns" among their respective leaders. Battle narratives did occur elsewhere at Pylos, just not in its main hall (see our Fig. 15, from Hall 64 in the Southwestern Building at Pylos; Lang 1969, 71-74, 214-15).

structures to either side of it, all approached from a large court (58 on plan) (Fig. 101). The Northeastern Building is composed of workshop spaces and a cult area that includes an altar and shrine (92-93 on plan), whereas the Southwestern Building is thought to have served as the royal residence.¹⁸² Archive, storage, and reception areas in the Main Building point to its function as "the administrative centre of the palace" (McCallum 1987, 56). At the core of this building is the impressive suite of rooms that constitute the "megaron," i.e., anterooms 4 and 5 accessible off court 3, and the great inner chamber 6.¹⁸³ The form and prominent position of the megaron is consistent with similar rooms in contemporary palaces at Mycenae and Tiryns.¹⁸⁴ Dominated by a large central hearth surrounded by four columns that supported an open second storey balcony, the importance of space 6 is further indicated by its decorated floors and walls. Remains of a rectangular base for a perishable object were found mid-way along the northeast wall of the room, opposite the hearth, and most experts accept Blegen's suggestion that a wooden throne was placed there, the implication being that this was where the *wanax* received visitors and performed sundry official duties.¹⁸⁵

182. See Blegen and Rawson 1966, *passim*; McCallum 1987, 54-66.

183. Cf. McCallum 1987, 57-58. The term "megaron" is used to denote the most important chamber in the Mycenaean palace: at all sites it takes the form of a large, more or less square room entered at one side through one or more anterooms and a two-columned porch (cf. Dinsmoor 1975, 392; Biers 1987, 336). The other common element in these distinctive spaces is a great circular hearth placed in the middle of the room.

184. See discussion in McCallum 1987, 57.

185. Blegen and Rawson 1966, 87-88. McCallum (1987, 58) notes that the floor's grid pattern is oriented to this rectangular cavity - the only figural component in its design (an octopus) occurring directly in front of it. A similar situation exists in the Tiryns megaron, where a rectangular frame is also taken to be a throne platform (cf. Schliemann 1886, 226, pl. II). The carved stone chair or throne from the (?)LM II Throne Room at Knossos may give one some idea of the appearance of such seats of honour; Younger (1995a, pl. LXXVI) uses it as the model for the throne in his reconstruction of the decoration on the northeast wall of the Pylos Throne Room. A Linear B tablet from Pylos lists among the furniture stored in the palace, thrones decorated with ivory, lapis lazuli, and gold, perhaps indicating the sumptuous nature of the chair placed in Room 6 (see Chadwick 1987, 39).

Because the tablets at Pylos clearly mention a male ruler, the *wanax*, it is normally assumed that the central hall was his state room, and that he occupied the throne in the megaron (for example, see Hägg 1985, 216; 1995, 389-90; McCallum 1987, 137-38, 142-49; Carter 1995; Killen 1994, 70; Palaima 1995; Wright 1994,

The decorative scheme of the megaron has been studied most completely by L. McCallum, who links the figural scenes found in the Vestibule (Room 5) with those in the Throne Room proper (i.e., Room 6), considering them to be integral parts of an iconographical plan applied to these two main areas of the megaron complex.¹⁸⁶ McCallum's restoration of the only paintings preserved in the Vestibule is reproduced in Fig. 102.¹⁸⁷ All fragments found in this space are thought to have fallen from the northeast section of the northwest wall,¹⁸⁸ and notwithstanding the possibility that some might come from the Throne Room or even from an upper floor, because they "seem to form a unified group" (McCallum 1987, 78) they are restored to a large composition that would have been visible to the right of the doorway into Room 6 once one entered Vestibule 5 from portico 4.

Enclosed above and below by white and brown borders, the fresco portrays a number of humans, all but one of them male, forming a two-tiered procession¹⁸⁹ that moves

57; 1995a, 345). However, Rehak (1995, especially 109-12) argues on the evidence of iconographic comparanda in glyptic and fresco from various sites, particularly Knossos, that a female figure was enthroned in the megaron, her role being to oversee the communal drinking ceremonies or "symposia" that he believes were conducted there.

186. See McCallum 1987, *passim*. The frescoes excavated in the other rooms located along the main access route to the megaron (i.e., Propylon 1-2, Court 3, and Vestibule 4) are also discussed by McCallum (pp. 68-77), with reference to plates and text in Lang (1969). These wall paintings consist of ornamental friezes (nautili, imitation wood grain dados or "wainscotting") and representational compositions. The latter include a life-size male from the outer Propylon 1 - a possible procession according to Lang (1969, 190) - and from inner Propylon 2, separate panels depicting horses, architectural facades, deer, and seated women. No figure scenes were found among the few fresco fragments preserved in Portico 4 (cf. McCallum 76-77).

187. McCallum 1987, pl. VIII a-c. McCallum's rendering modifies that of P. de Jong (in Lang 1969, pl. 119) by adding fragments of two kilted men, and the soldier (greaved leg) omitted in Lang, and removing the representations of women on the upper portion of the composition, for which no evidence exists. The new drawing also incorporates a fragment with vegetal forms - at the upper left, below the banded area - placing the scene in an outdoor setting. The vertical element to the left of the figure who stands on a checkerboard surface has, in McCallum's version, been restored as an altar, not a shrine facade as per de Jong/Lang. Other fragments from Vestibule 5, including those from a rosette frieze found with pieces of the composition's brown and white border, are excluded in both reconstructions.

188. Blegen and Rawson, 1966, 75; cf. Lang 1969, 192-93; McCallum 1987, 78.

189. McCallum (1987, 85-86) convincingly justifies the "two-tiered composition" adopted in the reconstructions by her and by de Jong/Lang.

uniformly toward the left,¹⁹⁰ in the direction of the entrance to the Throne Room. No figure is preserved in its entirety, but the pieces indicate that they ranged from ca. 28 cm to 40 cm in height,¹⁹¹ making them much smaller than the average scale of figures in Aegean procession paintings (i.e., life-size or two-thirds life-size),¹⁹² but still quite a bit larger than figures in the miniature frescoes (i.e., 5-10 cm). These human participants were apparently dwarfed by an enormous bull, restored on the basis of fragments of the head to a height of 1 m, measuring "from the tip of the horns to the hooves" (McCallum 1987, 79).

M. Lang first observed that the people in the procession constitute separate groups distinguished both by costume and activity:

One group of men wears only kilts...they are obviously carrying a variety of objects which are for the most part uncertain; one clearly carries a table or frame resting on a pillow on his shoulders. The second group is composed of a dozen men, all wearing long straight robes of various patterns on white...one at least (9H5) is sufficiently well preserved to show that he is carrying a large tray or basket. (Lang 1969, 193)

Where detectable, the bent arm positions of the other robed men indicate that "they also carried elongated objects," except for the taller of two men dressed in garments with a kind of shawl draped over the shoulder - he alone holds the left arm down and slightly forward (McCallum 1987, 81; cf. Lang 1969, 67-68 pl. 10). The only bits of a woman show the lower

190. McCallum (1987, 83-84) notes that two unpublished fragments from Vestibule 5 (her catalogue number SNE:M:8) include what seems to be "a brownish-black column with pedestal and base, and to the right is a reddish-brown shape resembling the lower part of a long-robed figure facing right" (p. 83). She observes that "the lack of feet is rare, but does have certain parallels" (p. 83, n. 90), and judges that the figure would be rather small, "perhaps ca. 0.10 m in height" (p. 84). Because this is the only figure facing right, McCallum tentatively submits that he might "be the focus of part or all of the cortege, suggesting he held a special status, with the column...possibly representing part of a shrine" (p. 84). Unless the tiny figure portrays a "cult statue, or even less likely, a scene in the distant landscape" (p. 84) it is difficult to harmonize it with the rest of the fresco, and for such reasons McCallum opts to leave it out of her reconstruction.

191. See Lang 1969, 192; cf. McCallum 1987, 78-79.

192. Peterson (1981, especially 27-88) surveys processional frescoes in Aegean art, noting (on p. 84) that in terms of scale the closest parallels to the Pylos Vestibule paintings are the fragmentary LM III murals from Hagia Triadha, which are also discussed by Long (1974, 21, 61, 67, fig. 85) and Immerwahr (1990, 102, 181), and are most recently depicted in Younger 1995a, pl. LVI a-b (drawings).

part of a flounced skirt above her white feet, which are positioned parallel to, but not actually on the bands at the bottom of the wall painting.

Most of the figures move in a space barren of detail, and their feet, when preserved, either point slightly downward (e.g., the kilted figures restored to the top right section of the wall), or, like the lone woman's, are flat but stop short of making contact with solid surfaces. Intriguing in this respect is the fragment rendering the hem and feet of a robe-wearing male who stands "above" a checkerboard motif and in front of a straight vertical element that may represent a built structure (Fig. 103, far left). McCallum reconstructs the latter as "an altar or small shrine" (McCallum 1987, 81-82), in comparison with details on the Hagia Triadha Sarcophagus and a few sealstones (for the sarcophagus, see above section 4.1.3, and Fig. 70a-d). She suggests that the "gifts" brought by the robed men in the procession, "including a sacrificial bull," were being conveyed "in the direction of...an altar...where a man may have performed a ritual action" (McCallum 1987, 123).

Although the background of the composition is plain, it does shift chromatically from light to dark areas, the changes marked vertically and horizontally by waving contours (cf. Lang 1969, 21-24). The fire that destroyed the palace altered the pigments and it is difficult to determine the original hues of these "colour zones:" what now looks lavender may have been white, brownish-red could have been red or even yellow, and purplish-tan was probably blue.¹⁹³ A. Evans considered the undulating bands of colour in Mycenaean art to be a late development of the "simplified tradition of the rocky Cretan landscape," but it is not always manifest that they have a representational meaning.¹⁹⁴ Nonetheless, both McCallum and

193. See discussions in Lang 1969, 193; Peterson 1981, 84; McCallum 1987, 85.

194. Evans *PM* II, 728. Lang 1969, 22, is critical of Evans:

Although its similarity to what seems to be rock-work in natural scenes makes it tempting to assume that this is the origin and that all zone-changing stems from it, the more sober truth is

Chapin argue that the curving, light-coloured horizontal area preserved over the heads of the kilted men in the Vestibule fresco describes rockwork, albeit without the detail (veining, etc.) characteristic of more naturalistic Aegean conventions for showing rugged hillside terrain.¹⁹⁵ The proposition that the actions in this composition take place in an outdoor setting is strengthened by McCallum's restoration to the wall painting's upper left border of a hitherto unpublished piece representing "several irregular, coloured shapes...[that] stem from the white band, possibly representing 'pendant rockwork.'"¹⁹⁶ The inclusion of scenic elements necessarily modifies the reading of those who have imagined that "the artist was here representing a procession to the Throne Room" (Lang 1969, 193; cf. Hägg 1985, 209, and Säflund 1980, 244). McCallum reasons that:

although *depicted* indoors, the primary destination of sacrificial processions at Pylos was likely to have been an outdoor area where the animal would have been slaughtered and offerings made to the gods. (McCallum 1987, 120)

Processions are, by definition, orderly and ceremonious affairs. The monumental frescoes of persons in procession found at other mainland sites and on Crete, picture numbers of closely assembled, object-bearing figures marching in line with a rather tense formality (cf. Fig. 6).¹⁹⁷ M. Cameron proposed that at Knossos such images may have functioned as visual markers or "sign-posts" for actual processions into the palace.¹⁹⁸ The

that we have no evidence for a straight forward development from one to the other. Both rock-work and wavy horizontal zone-changing independently express the artist's desire for the moving curving line; it is enough that it should look right; it does not have to mean anything.

195. See McCallum 1987, 118-20; Chapin 1995, 265-68, n. 95. Chapin refers to the perspectival scheme employed here as "abridged composite referential perspective."

196. McCallum 1987, 87, and catalogue entry for 5:NE:N4, on p. 154.

197. See Peterson (1981) on processions in Aegean Bronze Age art; cf. Boulotis 1987; Immerwahr 1990, 114-18. It is believed that the processional theme entered Aegean art via influence from Egypt, where processions of stiffly aligned figures carrying tribute were a subject commonly rendered in tombs and temples from the Old Kingdom onward (Peterson 1981, chapter IV).

198. Cameron 1970, 165. Compare Hägg 1985, 216, and McCallum 1987, 119. While objecting to the proposition that the Vestibule fresco represents an actual procession into the Pylos Throne Room, McCallum does think Cameron's ideas have some relevance to these paintings:

procession shown on the northwest wall of the Pylos Vestibule contrasts with most other examples of the genre in that it is given a fuller context and hence is more anecdotal in tone, although these portrayals are far less detailed and animated than depictions of ritual activities executed in the miniature technique (cf. Figs. 7-8). In her broad examination of Bronze Age Aegean procession frescoes, S. Peterson designates the paintings in Vestibule 5 at Pylos as part of the processional corpus thus:

lively, jerky poses, toe stepping across a plain expanse of background, are unusual in a processional setting...the floating poses of the kilted figures and the changing heights of the robed figures are a deviation from processional iconography. (Peterson 1981, 84-86)

The "changing heights" Peterson emphasizes could illustrate real size differences, but more likely denote personages of greater/lesser power or rank. We could, in fact, be presented with a portrait of the Pylian establishment: the contingent of "elite" robe-wearing men are thought to be "palace officials" or "members of the priesthood" (McCallum 1987, 118; cf. Lang 1969, 193), the woman a "privileged female, whether priestess or member of the royal family" (Lang 1969, 193), the man in greaves a soldier, and the kilted men "porters to carry the more cumbersome objects" (McCallum 1987, 118). The unnaturally proportioned bull is definitely the most important element in the composition: he is the literal and symbolic centre of the painting, and within the procession scenario reconstructed by Lang and McCallum, his magnitude proclaims his significance as a highly esteemed object of tribute (cf. McCallum 1987, 117).

Assessing this Vestibule painting in narrative terms, on the Story level we may postulate a ritual undertaking involving over a dozen "characters," some of whom bring

Whether part of a sacrificial procession (without a bull) actually entered Room 6 at some point during its circuit is unknown, but it is probable that gifts were periodically brought to the throne's occupant in this hall. In this light, the gift-bearing procession painted in Vestibule 5 may have served indirectly as a "sign-post" for visitors bringing gifts to the ruler in the Throne Room. (McCallum 1987, 121)

donations destined for offering or sacrifice at a structure shown on the extreme left portion of the wall. If we are right to resolve that the procession - at least at this stage of its progress - culminates at an altar or shrine, a scheme that corresponds to several Aegean monuments, then at least one temporal sequence is represented on the fresco.¹⁹⁹ But the remains are meagre, and consequently the "relationship between beginning and end," and the narrative value of the composition as a whole, is quite tenuous (cf. Prince 1982, 150-51). From the imagery alone one can say little else about the nature of the event related. The dress of the actants discerns them as different "types," but without extra-pictorial data, neither the activity nor the players are perceived as specific or fully individualized.²⁰⁰

Fortunately, at Pylos records alluding to religious practices at the site provide an additional source of information that can amplify our ability to explain or narrativize these representations.²⁰¹ The documents note numerous dedications owing or issued to several deities, and it could be that the ancient viewer would, by reason of the participants and the offerings shown, identify the depictions in Vestibule 5 with a special form of ceremony or ritual affiliated with a particular god or goddess.²⁰² The Linear B tablets report that the *wanax* performed weighty religious functions in Pylian society, and that he was the most generous provider when it came to divine gift-giving. One tablet that records the *wanax* by

199. The same pattern of action is seen in ritual or sacred narratives like that on the early Mesopotamian Warka Vase discussed above in Chapter 2, section 2.2.1.

200. Cf. the quantitative analysis in Appendix Table B6.

201. By now it will be clear that while the narrativity of any figural representation is determined by the presence or absence of certain elements or structures, it is also true that the knowledgeable reader is able to recognize and narrativize story matter that might be only partially legible or even entirely undecipherable in a narrative way by the uninformed interpreter. Although the Linear B tablets at Pylos supply us with a fairly limited amount of cultural knowledge, that particle of insight into Mycenaean palatial society expands our interpretive range, enabling us to fashion more intricate inferences with a greater degree of confidence or justification.

202. See discussions on the pertinent Linear B texts in Ventris and Chadwick 1973, 284-89, 462-65; McCallum 1987, 111 ff.; Chadwick 1987, 42-43.

name - Ekkelawon - makes it clear that he is "the chief contributor of offerings for a sacrificial banquet to Poseidon" (Palaima 1995, 131, tablet Un 853), and elsewhere when Ekkelawon is mentioned, he is the only person in a list of several to offer a bull to that same god.²⁰³ It is quite feasible, then, that the Vestibule fresco illustrates "an important state sponsored procession" in honour "of a major deity" (McCallum 1987, 118, 123) - possibly Poseidon - and it is not inconceivable that the *wanax* himself is depicted here, fulfilling the sort of public religious duties attributed to him in the palace archives.²⁰⁴

It is regrettable that the frescoes in the megaron's great hall are as fragmentary as those in the Vestibule: P. Rehak estimates that "we have less than 5% of the decoration even of the best preserved wall" (Rehak 1995, 109). Pitiful as this sum is, the remains of wall paintings from Room 6 are our most informative indication of throne room ornamentation in Mycenaean palaces, and researchers continue to be interested in reconstructing an overall impression or plan of this room's pictorial features.

The greatest number of pieces were recovered near the northeast wall, where the rectangular throne base was also located.²⁰⁵ Bits of multi-coloured horizontal bands and sections of vertical dado "made up of black and yellow and white," as well as scraps of a "running spiral" are remnants of ornamental friezes that would have delimited the composition on its upper and lower extremities, in a fashion typical of Aegean Bronze Age

203. See McCallum 1987, 117-18, regarding tablet Un 718.

204. Palaima (1995, 133) states that "the scene depicts a procession making its way to an open-air shrine, and it would not be improbable that the *wanax* would participate." Kilian (1988, 300, n. 1) voices a similar opinion, proposing that the large figure without an offering restored at the front of the procession behind a smaller attendant or "acolyte" is the *wanax* himself (cf. Lang 1969, 67-68, 195, fragment number 13 H 5). Palaima adds that "the tablet evidence might be taken to suggest that the destination" for the procession depicted in Vestibule 5 "would have been *pa-ki-ja-ne*" the religious district "whose name means 'the place of slaughter'" (Palaima 1995, 131, 133).

205. Blegen and Rawson 1966, 70; Lang 1969, 194; McCallum 1987, 87 ff.

murals.²⁰⁶ There is also an irregular "rocklike line" (Lang 1969, 194) adjacent to these framing borders, directly above and below some of the extant figures, demonstrating that the latter are, like the figures in the Vestibule's processional scene, situated in a landscape.²⁰⁷ The representational pieces from this northeast wall form a mixed collection: fragments of a handled vase painted to resemble stone; a large-scale man dressed in a long white robe, sitting on swirling "Easter-egg rocks"²⁰⁸ and holding an ornate lyre; an oversized, fantastic bird - most recently identified as "a baby griffin"²⁰⁹ - with a crest on its head and a spiral on its chest; two tables, each restored with pairs of rather small-sized men in robes seated on short stools and facing one another - assumed to be engaged in drinking or eating;²¹⁰ pieces of a spotted bovine, possibly from the "Shoulder of a Bull;"²¹¹ sections of a large-scale lion and griffin.

Painted plaster from the other three walls is very scanty. The northwest wall seems to have been embellished with more "large-scale animals" and rockwork, "possibly in

206. Lang 1969, 194-6. It may be that instead of running across all four walls, the spiral frieze bands bordered the main pictorial frieze on the northeast and northwest walls only; cf. McCallum 1987, 139.

207. Cf. Chapin 1995, 265-68, on the landscape setting, which she describes as being rendered in the manner of "composite referential perspective."

208. Lang 1969, 80.

209. Rehak 1995, 110.

210. See McCallum 1987, 90-91, for the restoration of the Men at Tables, and pp. 130-32 for the explanation that they are "banqueters," based in large part on comparison with the LM II/IIIA Camp Stool Fresco from Knossos. The few significant pieces of the Campstool Fresco, which Cameron (1987, fig. 2) reconstructs as a double register frieze, depict pairs of men seated on folding "campstools," wearing long robes and facing one another. It appears that at least one man in each pair holds forth a drinking vessel - pieces of the fresco reveal that both the Minoan chalice and the distinctive Mycenaean goblet/*kylix* were represented - and a much larger woman also attends or oversees the drinking/toasting. See Immerwahr 1990, 176, for the essential bibliographic data on the Campstool Fresco, and more recent mention of that fresco in Wright 1995b, 292-303; Rehak 1995, 106-12; Younger 1995a, 189-90. McCallum comments that only "a few depictions of drinking scenes are known in Aegean art...no scenes of eating or feasting are preserved," and she deduces from this phenomenon that "in the Bronze Age Aegean the idea of banqueting was represented in art by drinking scenes" (McCallum 1987, 130).

211. Lang 1969, 109-10, 194.

conjunction with a life-size human figure."²¹² Animal scenes may also have appeared on the southwest wall; Blegen and Lang restore there a "large-scale pastoral-sylvan scene with deer and vegetation" (Lang 1969, 118- 19, 195), although McCallum believes these pieces belong to an upper storey room (McCallum 1987, 105). The only other fresco group supposed to have fallen from the southwest wall is "the curious 'Jug on Pithos' (6 M 16) that appears to represent a double vessel atop a tiered tan object set on rocks" (McCallum 1987, 105). The sole evidence for figural decoration on the southeast wall was found in the area southwest of the doorway; here there were badly burned sections of two men "apparently in procession to the right," wearing "pale green, lavender, and white garments," and measuring "about the same height as the larger figures in the Vestibule procession, ca. 0.40 m" (Lang 1969, 81; cf McCallum 1987, 103).

Apart from P. de Jong's imaginative rendition of the megaron decor,²¹³ which furnishes a snapshot view of the room from the angle of the northwest corner of the southwest wall, the only reconstructions of the frescoes in the Throne Room concern the important northeast wall. The versions by de Jong (in Lang 1969, pl. 125), McCallum (1987, pls. IX-X), and Younger (1995a, pl. LXXVI), illustrated in Figs. 104-6, differ in the way the bull is presented and where he is positioned, as well as in the number of lions and griffins restored. Both de Jong (Fig. 104) and Younger (Fig. 106) favour a symmetrical arrangement, matching the lion/griffin pair facing toward the throne on the left, with another pair facing it to the right. They also place the fragments of the large bovine in front of the Men at Tables and the Bird and Lyre Player, visualizing it as walking, in the

212. Lang 1969, 196; Lang admits that the identification of a life-size human on this wall is very uncertain, being inferred on the grounds of fragment number 1 N 6, which shows "jagged rocks" above and "below are what look like two wind-blown streamers of hair" (p. 126).

213. Illustrated in Higgins 1967, 85, fig. 90.

manner conjectured for the bull in the Vestibule fresco. McCallum (Fig. 105a-b), on the other hand, omits the second pair of guardian animals, for which, in fact, there is no proof, and on the support of an unpublished fragment "that seems to represent part of a dappled bull above a red platform," proposes that the beast is not upright, but instead lies prone on a sacrificial table, which she locates behind the Lyre Player/Bird/Men at Tables scene.²¹⁴

The relations between figures in procession, animals in couchant poses, handled vessels, a bull, a fabulous bird and harpist, and men seated at tables, are not directly appreciable, and Vermeule's reaction to this intermixture of pictorial elements is understandable:

There seems to be no unity of subject in the megaron decoration. One guesses...that the aim was to cover the walls with pleasant, often traditional motifs, but not to create a narrative or intellectual harmony. Only the heraldic animals by the throne seem symbolically fitted to their placement. (Vermeule 1972, 200)²¹⁵

Even components like the Lyre Player with Bird and Men at Tables, which share the same deep red background and are widely perceived as forming a "complete scene," are difficult to explain:

He appears to play for the seated banqueters, but why above them on a steep outcropping of rocks? And why does an overlarge, crested bird fly above him as if an essential element in the scene? And is the bull...intended as part of the scene? (Peterson 1981, 24, n. 68)²¹⁶

If the megaron was where the kingdom's ruler conducted certain official functions, one would expect its decoration and architectural traits to respond to the imperial situation and imperial demands (cf. Winter 1981, 18 ff.). Semiotically phrased, "all signs are related to

214. McCallum 1987, 95; catalogue number 6NE(Q3?):C:9, pl. XXIV (photograph), and pl. XXXIX (drawing). Some authors question McCallum's restoration, considering the evidence for the sacrificial table to be indeterminate; e.g., Palaima 1995, 133, n. 43.

215. Comparable judgements are made by Long (1974, 39), who feels the scenes in the Throne Room are "quite unrelated."

216. Cf. Hägg 1985, 216.

what individuals and their leaders want,"²¹⁷ and an acquaintance with palatial suites in other places and times reveals that their adornment is designed to communicate messages connected with state doctrine and the institution of rulership.²¹⁸ Much like the Near Eastern staterooms described in Chapter 2, in the Pylos Throne Room the messages conveyed pictorially are expressed by a blend of symbolic and semi-narrative formulations. An appreciation of the internal logic of these images probably requires a "degree of shared cultural experience"²¹⁹ unattainable by us. Readings advocating thematic associations between the paintings in the Throne Room and those in the Vestibule have, nonetheless, been produced by several authors. McCallum presents the most vigorous dialogue to this effect, asserting that "the Room 6 wall paintings provide strong iconographic continuity with the Vestibule 5 frieze:"

This is most apparent in the sequential activities of the procession with bull (Vestibule 5), bull sacrifice, and banquet scene (Room 6, NE wall)...These three activities were the main components of Classical Greek religious festivals... . (McCallum 1987, 123)²²⁰

The appropriateness of depictions of processions and ritual banquets to the megaron

217. Blonsky 1985, xxxiv.

218. Cf. Winter 1981, 29. Hägg (1985, 209) maintains that all ancient art was "functional, i.e., put in the service of the ruler, the community, and above all, of religion."

219. Winter 1981, 29.

220. Cf. McCallum 1987, 96:

The reconstruction of a bull sacrifice on the NE wall constitutes a unifying element in the megaron's wall decoration. It provides a logical conclusion for the Vestibule 5 procession with bull, and explains the Men at Table and Lyre Player as participants in a banquet celebrating the sacrifice.

Yavis (1951, 152-53) ascertains that the "successive steps in the ritual of sacrifice" for the Classical Greeks were: (a) ceremonial procession with the victim and with vegetal offerings; (b) invocation and libation, vegetal offerings consecrated; (c) slaughter of victim at altar, fire on altar lit; (d) apportioning of cuts, preparation of human meal starts; (e) incineration of divine portion, libation; (f) meal. Yavis observes that in Greek art the most frequently represented action was step "b" (invocation and libation), while steps "c" (slaughter of victim at altar) and "e" (incineration of divine portion) are rarely pictured. If McCallum's interpretations of the frescoes are valid, and a similar pattern of ritual action existed in the Bronze Age, we have steps "a" and "b" depicted in the Pylos Vestibule, and "c" and "f" in the Throne Room.

has been rationalized by the nature of the room and the vital position the *wanax* seems to have had in religious matters. The precise function of the megaron at Pylos remains a matter for speculation, but architectural, "artifactual," and iconographical features here and at other sites have convinced some researchers that the megara in Mycenaean palaces accommodated important state rituals.²²¹ In the great hall of the Pylos palace a tripod offering table with miniature drinking cups (*kylikes*) was found next to the hearth, suggesting that cult activity was carried out there.²²² Additional substantiation for the notion that ritual action occurred in this room may come in the form of two circular depressions connected by a shallow channel cut into the floor beside the throne base. Blegen believed that these odd cavities were for ritual libations, possibly poured from the aforementioned miniature vessels.²²³

It is reasonable to consider that the orientation of the throne to the hearth signifies "that the occupant of the throne, presumably the *wanax*, officiated in the rituals" (Wright 1994, 57). This assumption is justified somewhat by the archival evidence, which indicates that the *wanax* had "primarily religious functions" distinct from the responsibilities of the *lawagetas*, who handled military matters.²²⁴ It may be too presumptuous to characterize Mycenaean kingdoms as theocracies and the *wanax* as a kind of "stewart-king" or first

221. Hägg (1995, 389, n. 23) documents the main debates over the function of megara. Compare too, Kilian 1988; Killen 1994; Palaima 1995, 133; Wright 1994, 57 ff.; 1995b 301-2; Carter 1995, 304-7.

222. Blegen and Rawson 1966, 366, fig. 359. Cf. Säflund 1980, 241; Hägg 1995, 389-90; Wright 1995b, 302; Palaima 1995, 133.

223. Blegen and Rawson 1966, 85-88, esp. p. 88 with fig. 70; cf. Hägg 1990, 178; 1995, 389-90. The two hollows are stucco, like the floor.

224. See Palaima 1995, esp. pp. 119-34. The *wanax* apparently stood "at the pinnacle of the Mycenaean socio-political hierarchy" (Palaima 1995, 125), and Palaima constructs a strong case for seeing his powers as being "intimately connected with - and derived from - his religious associations" (1995, 129). The Linear B texts indicate that second to the *wanax* in status and rank was the *lawagetas*, the "chief military official;" it is not at all clear whether the *wanax* also played a significant role in warfare, see Palaima 1995, 129-30.

deputy of the gods,²²⁵ but it does seem probable that he controlled "the central rituals" of the society (Wright 1994, 59), serving as an "intermediary with the divine sphere" and thereby guaranteeing the welfare of his people (Palaima 1995, 131). The lion-griffin pair painted beside the throne are consistent with this explanation of the *wanax's* position. The supernatural griffin is a symbol of divine favour, and along with his earthly companion he is perceived to accompany and protect the enthroned ruler in perpetuity.²²⁶ The fearsome duo may also serve as metaphors for the ruler's physical strength (cf. McCallum 1987, 135, 138).

It is thought that the ritual activity overseen by the *wanax* in the Throne Room involved drinking ceremonies, not just because the Men at Tables suggest same, but also due to the tiny goblets found with the offering table there, and the astounding number of normal-sized drinking vessels stored in rooms bordering the megaron hall.²²⁷ One suspects that persons invited into the palace's inner sanctum to participate in such ceremonies would belong to the *wanax's* intimate circle of peers and associates - perhaps the *lawagetas*, the officers called *e-qe-ta* (the "followers"), landowners of various means, and the religious

225. Cf. Jaynes 1978, 178.

226. Similar comments are made by many authors; see for example, Long 1974, 29; Säflund 1980, 244; McCallum 1987, 97-101, 133-36, 138. See Morgan 1988, 44-54, on lions and griffins in Aegean art and their symbolic meanings (cf. above section 4.3.3). Lang (1969, 27) mentions that no "evidence has been preserved in other mainland frescoes of heraldic or symbolic animals." Indeed, the closest parallels to the griffins and lions in Room 6 as well as in other spaces within the Pylos palace, come from the Throne Room at Knossos. Immerwahr (1990, 176) provides the pertinent data on the Knossian Throne Room, which is dated LM II/IIIA.

227. Blegen and Rawson 1966, 121-32, figs. 323-28; cf. McCallum 1987, 130, n. 86. Rooms 18, 19, and 21, located just southwest of the Throne Room, contained vast quantities of ceramic wares, largely drinking vessels, which included over 3100 *kylikes* (one and two-handled, stemmed goblets), in addition to ca. 1025 cups, and 1100 bowls.

Many authors note the coincidence of such finds and practices with the tale recounted in *Odyssey*.III, about the visit by Telemachus and his companions to the palace of King Nestor at Pylos: the regent was celebrating a festival to Poseidon at the time of their arrival, and after feasting outdoors, he culminated the festivities with ceremonial drinking within a room in the palace, initiating the drinking by pouring a libation to Athena (cf. Wright 1995b, 301-2; Palaima 1995, 132).

personnel mentioned in the Linear B tablets.²²⁸ So informed an audience would have had little trouble processing the figural decoration in the megaron and recognizing the *wanax*'s place in order of things. McCallum surmises that the Vestibule and Throne Room frescoes served the ruler's objectives by reinforcing his "political strength and stability:"

the festival activities implied a desire to perpetuate rituals...and suggested the king's ability to provision such celebrations, as well as to provide the stability that festivals strove to ensure.²²⁹

Evaluating the Throne Room's northeast wall paintings narratively, it is plain that what few storied elements there are appear in conjunction with "stasis statements"²³⁰ like the inactive lion and griffin. These animals, which are removed from any "normal" narrative context (e.g., hunting in a natural setting), have no obvious story value. Rather, they operate explicitly as markers of the elevated station of the person associated with the throne, declaring that the figure possessing that honour is both extraordinary and inviolable.

The figural scene reconstructed to the right of the throne does appear to contain story matter, although we can produce only the crudest of readings. As we have seen, the characters are few - a lyre player, marvellous bird, four "banqueters," a bovine - and the

228. For discussions of the various groups of officials, landowners and specialized workers (some also landowners) associated with the palace and the *wanax* personally, see Chadwick 1987, 37; Palaima 1995, 120-34. Several authors presume that if drinking ceremonies were held in the Throne Room they were composed of the "elite" members of Pylian society: cf. Wright 1994, 60, 75-78; 1995b, 301-3; Rehak 1995, 112, 116-17; Carter 1995, esp. 300-12 (seeing the Pylos megaron as evidence for "elite feasting associated with a cult of the dead," and speculation that such ritual contexts/events were the origins of the later Greek *symposion*).

229. McCallum 1987, 142. Compare interesting comments regarding the priority of religion in the organization of political power in Mycenaean society by Wright 1994, 346; 1995a, 345; 1995b *passim*. Winter's statement about the decorative programme in the Throne Room of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud might also be applied to the Pylos megaron frescoes if the words "all-powerful king" were replaced with "the *wanax*:"

The whole Throne Room can be read as a statement of the establishment and maintenance...of the internal state through cultic observances achieved through the person of the all-powerful king. (Winter 1981, 21).

230. Davis (1992, 251) defines "stasis statements" as depictions of a "state of affairs with no implied transition." The static image can, however, be narrativized and/or included in a narrative scenario; cf. Davis 1993, 53. See similar comments by Bal 1991, 245 (contrasting "narrative" with "display"), and Alpers 1976, 15 (describing fixity of pose and other signs of suspended action as non-narrative traits).

related event includes music, feasting/drinking, and possibly an animal sacrifice, all in the open air. If McCallum's restoration is accepted, the depictions of animal sacrifice and feasting can be connected narratively as two different stages of a sacred festival. In turn, the frescoes in two rooms of the megaron complex may be linked as parts of a continuous, religious narrative - a proposition that is intellectually appealing and well-presented by McCallum.

While McCallum may be correct in viewing the Throne Room frescoes as representing later or subsequent stages of the ritual activity shown in the Vestibule, it should be recognized that the pertinent images in the Throne Room have a very different character than the Vestibule paintings. The disproportionate size of the Lyre Player in the megaron is not really consistent with McCallum's account of the scene as a simple illustration of the ritual banquet that follows the procession and animal sacrifice (see Fig. 105a). As she observes, when harpists are portrayed in the context of cult activity on contemporary monuments from Crete and mainland Greece, they appear to perform a subordinate or auxiliary role in the proceedings (cf. McCallum 1987, 124-25). Here the harpist's larger size and prominent placement are "conceptual distortions" that take at least some of the emphasis away from the "action," placing more stress on its meaning or significance.²³¹ Indeed, the depiction is endowed with numinous values: the harpist's size in relation to the toasting men, and the way he is poised atop a hill, make him appear super-human, as does his association with the strange bird, which flies "in the direction of the lion and griffin pair" (McCallum 1987, 129-30). The painting's striking red background further removes the image from the realm of the ordinary; in combination, all these features corroborate Hägg's perception of the scene as being somehow "symbolical or mythical"

231. Cf. Winter 1981, 12; Schapiro 1969, 220-21.

(Hägg 1985, 216).²³²

If we read the paintings in the two rooms as McCallum does, it seems rather critical to attempt to account for the evident differences in the designer's (or designers') approach to narrative expression, which, as we have seen, shifts from the relatively matter-of-fact treatment adopted for rendering the processional event in the Vestibule, to the more symbolically-charged quality of the depiction of the event in the megaron's hall. Perhaps these features can be explained by a requirement to underscore the gravity or import of the (presumably) ritual activity depicted, something that would be in keeping with the ceremonial aspect of the room itself, and may also have been in accordance with the determinations and prerogatives of the *wanax* who, in all likelihood, commissioned the works. For instance, if, as N. Marinatos submits, the music of the lyre was a means of invoking the presence of the gods at rites and festivals held in their honour, and the fabulous bird is seen as a messenger of the divinity appearing in response to the musical invocation, it is quite comprehensible that the artist would wish to emphasize these significant figures in a composition relating incidents of this sort.²³³

With respect to our analysis of the narrativity of the Throne Room's northeast fresco, it is evident that even though the essential elements of a Story are present, and at least

232. Cf. Immerwahr (1990, 133-34), who refers to the Lyre Player as "a Mycenaean Orpheus charming the animal world with his music." Lang (1969, 194) suggests the scene be renamed "The Bard at the Banquet." The use of a red background is not uncommon in Aegean frescoes (cf. Immerwahr 1990, 97-98), and while Long observes that on the whole "red does not seem to convey any particular meaning" (Long 1974, 29), she did consider that on the Hagia Triadha Sarcophagus the red background might be connected with the divine or spiritual sphere. The deep red field surrounding the Lyre Player and Men at Tables has a dramatic and surreal quality that suggests similar connotations.

233. McCallum points out that in Aegean art lyre players always wear long robes, "perhaps an indication of elevated social rank, or a traditional garb long associated with their *métier*" (1987, 126). Lyre players are sometimes shown with birds in the proximity of religious symbols like horns of consecration, making their connection with cultic activity quite clear (cf. McCallum 1987, 127-28). N. Marinatos (1993b, 139-40) cites the same iconographic comparanda as McCallum, and views the Pylos lyre player as a priest invoking the bird who is taken to be the celestial messenger of the gods.

some of those elements could be suggestive of unique circumstances or entities (i.e., the bird, harpist, setting), because of the nature of the theme, the viewer must make a number of assumptions about the representations in order to process the various components of the painting narratively. If one interprets the subject as a festival that entails at least two and maybe even more successive events (e.g., animal sacrifice, musical invocation, ritual toasting/feasting), the depictions can be reconstituted as a kind of ritual narrative, in which some phases of action are signified by a single creature or object (e.g., the bull standing for "sacrifice," the handled vase for a "libation"), and others that may or may not have occurred in succession are portrayed in one scene, as if contemporaneous. The narrative value of cult subjects is always rather minor, although the complexity of the account is enhanced if one considers the Throne Room scene as continuing and concluding the ritual undertakings initiated in the Vestibule frescoes. Either way, on the level of Discourse the descriptive style of the art does little to advance the narrative, such as it is.²³⁴

It is also possible, of course, that a different "story" altogether is being related in the Throne Room, and that the harpist and the wondrous bird represent figures that had specific identifications in Mycenaean society, whether cultic or legendary. In that case, lacking any foreknowledge, it becomes even more problematic to attempt to identify a continuant subject and connect or unify the players and their actions in a causal relationship. We have the "kernel" of a narrative, but can't quite correlate the raw data in a storied way. The tentative links between the Vestibule frieze and the frescoes in the Throne Room are also eliminated, and if there is a programmatic impulse behind the iconography in the Pylos megaron, with this option its essence or strategy is somewhat more

234. See the quantitative analyses of this (i.e., McCallum's) reading of the Throne Room, and Throne Room and Vestibule frescoes taken together, in Appendix Tables B7 and B8.

difficult to recover. Nevertheless, one may still appreciate that the imagery incorporates emblematic and narrative structures, and it remains informative that in the most consecrated and politically sensitive spaces of this Mycenaean palace it was deemed important to include scenes of people "doing things" with more consciously metaphorical depictions of power.

4.5 Summary and Observations

In the preceding sections (i.e., 4.2 - 4.4) the assumptions and precepts about narrative outlined in Chapter 3 were employed to assess the narrative traits of three Bronze Age Aegean monuments. The process of judging the narrativity of each monument entails a certain amount of subjectivity; it has been observed numerous times in the foregoing text that the narrative merits of any given visual document have as much to do with the disposition and proficiency of the individual beholder/narrator as they do with the actual pictorial data. The importance of the "beholder's share" in narrative transmission is highlighted by images relating events or incidents that are either unknown to the viewer and/or unamendable to reconstitution on the basis of reason. It is a fairly simple matter to establish whether a figural work contains the rudiments of a narrative on the level of Story (i.e., event[s], characters[s], setting[s]), but if we are unfamiliar with the subject, and/or unable to restore a chain of action from the representational elements themselves, we will ultimately perceive the depiction(s) as having little or no narrative value.

The narrative merit of the animated representation on the Isopata Ring is considered to be minimal both because of the nature of its Story material - the narrativity of cult events is always weak or low - and because we have difficulty interpreting the gestures of the characters and relating them in a temporal/causal sequence. In this instance the expressive

abilities of the artist cannot be faulted (i.e., the Discourse), for he/she has been incredibly articulate, particularly in view of the minute size of the ring's picture surface. The evocative quality of the ring's imagery is accentuated when one compares it to the Vestibule fresco from the megaron complex at Pylos, which pictures ritual activity of a different kind. While the painting is executed on a much grander scale and includes more players and fairly unambiguous acts, it has less narrative interest than the scene on the ring. Even when considered together as a continuous series of ritual events the narrative status of the Vestibule and Throne Room paintings is only marginally greater than that of the Isopata Ring (cf. Appendix Tables B1, B6-8, and Appendix Fig. 1).

The finest narratives captivate our imagination, pique our curiosity, educate us, and, most of all, entertain us. Although "religious narratives" like those on the Isopata Ring and the Pylos megaron frescoes are not completely wanting in such features, their limited narrative capacity is emphasized when they are contrasted with the miniature friezes from the West House (cf. Appendix Tables and Appendix Fig. 1). There the artist's exceptional descriptive skills are matched by the richness of the story content, and because that content is quite accessible we are able to reconstitute a lengthy narrative from the frescoes on the three surviving walls with relative ease. When we falter in restoring the story line it is, paradoxically, because we have been given too much information: the diverse scenes on the North Frieze indicate an intent to recount a story of some complexity, unfortunately, without actually knowing the tale in some detail - a common predicament with pictorial narratives - we are at a loss to put the visual text together in a manner that is fully satisfactory.

It will not have escaped the reader's notice that the three monuments analyzed above differ in medium, regional derivation, and chronology, as well as in terms of their type,

probable function, and intended audience or user. Up to this juncture we have been concerned primarily with evaluating the narrative potential of Aegean art. In the next and final chapter of the study the possible origins and purpose of narrative imagery in Aegean Bronze Age art are pondered and the Aegean contribution to pictorial narration is considered in a broader art historical context.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Ruminations

Those who study the cognitive development of *Homo sapiens* maintain that our specialized communication skills evolved from the desire to narrate - "to describe and define events" (Donald 1991, 257). Group narrative skills lead to a collective version of reality (Donald 1991, 257), and the socio-political significance of narrative in any given civilization is considerable. Societies define themselves through their histories and their traditional stories, which encapsulate and espouse the culture's dominant customs and moral values, serving as "encyclopedias of conduct" (Lord 1991, 2; cf. Scheub 1975, 362-63).

Although narrative is ordinarily deemed to be a product of language, we have seen that narrative is, in fact, a structure that may be signified in a wide variety of media (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.1). This understanding of narrative is rarely encountered in writings on art. An early instance may, however, be seen in the work of the talented ethnographer, anthropologist, and art historian A. Leroi-Gourhan, who remarked over thirty years ago that:

our living arts do not include a single example where the attributes of narrative appear without its form; concentrations of actors without action or stage never occur. (Leroi-Gourhan 1993, 396)

Until quite recently, narrative in visual media has been identified with recognizable story content rather than with particular formal constituents. The survey of research in Chapter 2 discloses that traditionally only depictions of singular events or known stories have been discussed as "true" narrative art, even though authors occasionally seem to appreciate that certain action scenes of a "generalized" or non-historical nature also evince narrative qualities. The pictorial products of the Aegean Bronze Age were apparently overlooked in the first important series of studies on visual narration because we are unable

to identify them with specific happenings or personalities and too because many of the images portray religious subject matter. The foregoing examination has sought to correct the omissions of earlier research by favouring a broad conception of visual narrative and employing a system of analysis that concentrates on the essential features of narrative communication, assessing pictorial texts in terms of degrees of narrativity. The aim has not been to categorize the entire body of Aegean art in narrative terms, nor to pursue a precise typology (cf. W. Davis 1992, 252-53). The intent was more realistic, namely, to raise the question of narrative in Aegean Bronze Age art, devise a means of addressing the question, and apply that method to evaluate the narrative status of three monuments.

Despite the fact that the monuments chosen are all quite unique, they are, at least superficially, representative of cultural distinctions in narrative expression and different categories of story content. We cannot, of course, use these monuments to construct decisive statements about the individual contributions or characteristics of various Aegean regions and chronological periods, but a certain amount of speculative commentary along those lines is, perhaps, permissible.

The Isopata Ring and the select group of gold rings related iconographically to it epitomize a Minoan accomplishment in "religious narrative" that has no real parallel in other ancient cultures. The fascinating imagery on the rings often combines a discursive attitude with more emblematic structures. When we fail to understand or narrativize the story material in these scenes it is partly due to our ignorance about the events shown, and also because the "re-presentation" of ritual acts was probably only one of the guiding principles organizing these tiny glyptic works (cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 1989, *passim*; Leroi-Gourhan 1993, 390). C. Sourvinou-Inwood notes that although there is an obvious desire to depict ritual events on Minoan rings and seals and it is "legitimate to use these images

in order to reconstruct ritual," the scenes also likely incorporate a network

of religious elements which expressed some fundamental aspects of Minoan religion and/or were believed to have the power to protect, or bring blessings of the gods to the wearer of an object depicting them. (Sourvinou-Inwood 1989, 245)

Larger scale projects like the miniature frescoes from Knossos (Chapter 4, section 4.1.3, Figs. 7-8, 67), which portray happenings attended by groups of people in surrounds that recall those of the actual palace, are less mysterious and transcendental in orientation. Their story value is limited by the nature of the events depicted - communal activities that we tend to connect with religious festivities. Nevertheless, they document specific actions in an exuberant narrative style that seems to be an original contribution of Cretan art. We may well wonder what objective or instrumental value narrative depictions like these had both in their architectural context and with respect to the ideology of the ruling power(s) at Knossos, which was, after all, the bureaucratic centre of the island.¹ H. Pittman's insights into the ritual narratives of early Mesopotamian art are usefully applied to the Minoan situation. She states that representations of religious activities

narrate social relations and social behaviour; through illustration, imagery communicated social norms and extended ritual. It stood outside the event; it conveyed [a] message through time and space that was clear to all who were literate in their visual system...Both writing and visual narration as systems of symbolizing were invented in the same crucible. Both were the externalization and concretization of information and both were tools of social control. (Pittman 1994, 191-92)

Narrative works, particularly those in public or official contexts, function in much the same way, regardless of the specifics of their story material: the narrative compositions in the Knossian Palace of Minos, the megaron at Pylos, and the temples, tombs, and throne rooms

1. Marcus (1995, 2487 ff.) makes some informative observations about the rather influential role visual texts can have in the expression of ideology, remarking that "material culture can take on the responsibility of carrying certain messages that a culture cannot entrust to language." She defines ideology as:

any intersection between belief systems and political power. It refers to the way in which signs, meanings, and values help to reproduce a dominant social power. (Marcus 1995, 2487)

of other ancient civilizations all performed a critical role in the maintenance of social order and "the shaping of thought" (Winter 1981, 31).

For some reason the sponsors of Minoan art saw no utility in developing the kind of narrative depictions designed to glorify the reigning authority that appear in Egypt and the Near East (cf. Koehl 1993, 321). The other notable art narratives of those cultures - pictures of mythological subjects and scenes recounting the "typical" events or activities of everyday life - also appear to be absent from the pictorial documents of Minoan Crete (cf. Cameron 1975, 130; N. Marinatos 1995, *passim*).

The miniature paintings from the West House on the island of Thera are artistic cousins of the miniature friezes from Knossos, yet represent a contribution to Aegean narrative art that may be distinctively Cycladic (cf. Cameron 1978, *passim*; Morgan 1988, 164; 1990). It is easy to overstate the art historical importance of these frescoes. Not only are the West House paintings considered precedential in the sphere of "landscape art" - their significance in that area has been compared to the Late Hellenistic Odyssey Frieze² - but they demonstrate accomplishments in pictorial space that are unmatched in Western artworks for several centuries. In the West House friezes "space is narrative place" (Heath 1986, 396); the spatial relationships between the animal and human actors are convincingly defined through the Aegean application of vertical perspective and all pictorial elements are treated with equal attention to detail. Perhaps even more momentous in terms of prevailing notions about the evolution of visual narrative, especially regarding picture stories of "historical" subject matter, is the sea battle shown on the fragmentary North Frieze. This scene and the related portrayal on the Siege Rhyton from Mycenae are among the earliest known examples of such battle narratives, and judging from the adeptness of their execution

2. E.g., Schäfer 1977, 3. See Pollitt 1986, 185-88, for the Odyssey Frieze (ca. 50 B.C.).

and the presence of shared compositional and iconographic features, they were not experimental or first efforts. If the West House was a private residence, the friezes were probably fashioned expressly for the amusement and entertainment of its owner. One imagines the proud patron honouring his guests with wine served in the ceramic ware found in an adjacent room, and leading them through the stories related on the walls, perhaps even embellishing them with personal anecdotes and memories.

The difference between these renditions and later Mycenaean wall paintings of similar events is considerable, and could have as much to do with the different temperaments of these two peoples as it does with what is often considered artistic ineptitude on the part of the Mycenaean craftsmen. Depictions of conflict events in Mycenaean art concentrate on human agents who often receive rather detailed treatment in terms of costume and weaponry. Space-time concerns held less interest for the artist and protagonists customarily play out their parts against a backdrop that is either blank or suggestive of place in only the most rudimentary way - a trait that, interestingly, also characterizes Greek art of the Classical period. Affinities like these are probably coincidental. It would be gratifying to trace the sophisticated visual narratives of the Greco-Roman age back to the pictorial tendencies of the distant Bronze Age past. But an undertaking like that is based on rather questionable premises and would, at any rate, require more data than currently exists.

Had the contributors to the influential 1955 conference on narrative in ancient art taken a more comprehensive view of the subject, it is certain they would have concluded that narrative structures or features are detectable almost from the commencement of figural representation in most cultures (cf. Chapter 1, section 1.2). It has been contended at various points above that there are many kinds of stories and many ways of telling them. It now seems an opportune time to recognize the limitations of previous studies on pictorial

narrative and acknowledge the rather remarkable presentations of visual narration that were produced in the Aegean Bronze Age.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Assessing Narrativity - A Quantitative Approach

In sections 4.2 - 4.4 of Chapter 4 the narrative features of three Bronze Age Aegean monuments are analyzed on the basis of the theories and assumptions about narrative discussed in Chapter 3. The simple framework devised for evaluating such features applies the points for assessing narrativity delineated by G. Prince, in combination with the observations of other narratologists (e.g., S. Chatman, M. Bal). While anyone interested in the question of pictorial storytelling might employ the methodology adopted in this project, it would have the most utility in circumstances where no supplementary (e.g., written) information for the reading or interpretation of visual images exists.

The system of narrative evaluation related in prose in Chapters 3 and 4, is here presented in a more schematic form. As we are describing degrees of "narrativeness" that range from nil/low to high, it is a fairly simple matter to assign a numerical value to these features and thereby compute a quantitative measure of the narrativity of a given figural representation. The passages that immediately follow explain and sometimes rationalize the various sections of Appendix Table A. The reader is cautioned that the descriptive data contained in those sections are not intended to be definitive: the chart is a heuristic tool that is meant to be used as a template, the particulars of which can be fixed by the individual analyst. Appendix Tables B1-8 should be viewed as quantitative complements to our earlier analyses of the Isopata Ring, West House Friezes (separately and together), and Pylos megaron frescoes (separately and together). These arithmetical versions have the advantage over words of simplifying the data such that the amounts and proportions of narrativity detectable in the constituent elements of Story and Discourse are readily

apprehended. The system charted in Table A also makes possible the production of graphical representations like Appendix Figure 1, which permits one to compare the narrativity "scores" of the three monuments at a glance.

Note on Computation of Narrative Value Scores in Appendix Tables B1-8

Values are computed by assigning a rating (between 0 and 3) for each variable. Ratings are then summed for each of the two narrative structural elements - Story and Discourse. This sum is then multiplied by a weight that reflects the assumption that Story and Discourse elements contribute equally to overall narrativity.

Appendix Table A: Guide to Assessing Narrativity

In the Table the main structural components of narrative, Story and Discourse, are treated in parts A and B respectively. The constituent parts of Story and Discourse are enumerated and assigned a value on a (notional) narrativity "scale." The spectrum of potential narrative values in Table A runs from 0 (nil) to 3 (high). Similar scales containing any number of gradations can be devised, but increasing the accuracy of a measuring tool does not affect the characteristics of the subject being measured.

A. Story

Story refers to the content or subject matter of narrative, which is comprised of events, characters, and settings.

Events - Defined as "a change of state," an event can consist of any action, activity or happening. At various stages in Chapters 2 through 4, it is observed that not all events are equal, narratively speaking. Many commentators note that conflict events like hunts and

battles, by virtue of their dramatic nature and the comprehensibility of their patterns of action, make much better story material than, for instance, events associated with ritual or religious practices. The Table reflects these biases, placing cult events at the low end of the narrativity scale and conflict events at its highest end. The process of judging such matters is not particularly objective, although there is bound to be more of a consensus on what event types best exemplify the extreme ends of the narrativity spectrum than there will be on the choice of an event characteristic of the median range. In this account, "journey" is given as an example of an event that "functions better narratively" (c.f. Chapter 3, section 3.2.2) than one of the "cult" variety, but is inferior in narrativity to a "conflict" event. None of these event categories are as discrete or clear cut as our chart makes them appear, and the somewhat arbitrary nature of the selection procedure is freely admitted.

Characters - Narratives involve entities doing things; here we are interested in the number of characters and their apparent degree of activity. Hence, a single, demonstrably inert character is rated lowest on the scale of narrativity on the content plane. At the opposite end of the range, a number of characters involved in a great deal of action enhances the narrative tenor of a visual text. Between these two poles, any combination of a single or small number of actors performing a great deal of action, or a large number of actors exhibiting little activity is deemed to have "medium" narrative value.

Setting - All events take place somewhere, and narrative value in terms of setting is affected by the degree to which a location for the characters and their actions is discernable. In cases where no setting is indicated no narrative value is assigned. If at least one venue is clearly identifiable a low score is suggested. Where two or more locations are clearly

indicated moderate or high narrative ratings are recommended.

B. Discourse

Discourse refers to the way a narrative is related, i.e., how the various elements of the story are presented, including the order in which events are recounted and the quality of descriptive detail.

Processing - To paraphrase Prince, in order for a text to be read as a narrative we must be able to process it as a series of statements about events. Where pictorial elements reveal no perceptible connections or relationships to one another - whether logical, psychological, or spatial - a negative narrativity score is assigned. When some connections or linkages between pictorial features are observable, even if their exact nature is uncertain, a moderate score is awarded. Top marks for narrativity apply to picture texts exhibiting clearly perceptible connections among pictorial elements.

Temporal Sequence - A narrative recounts actions or events that occur at different times; without time or chronological duration there is no Story. In a pictorial work, the complete lack of any such temporal sequences would elicit a low or nil narrativity score; as Prince states, if it is "impossible to establish any kind of chronology in a text...we are no longer in the presence of a narrative" (Prince 1982, 65-66). Conversely, representations in which a number of time sequences are detectable or implicit would rate very highly. In between these two poles are works wherein at least one, and preferably two or three moments or phases of action are either shown or implied by the imagery.

Quality of Description - Event, Characters, and Setting - When we come to consider how the quality of description affects the narrative value of a figural work, it is evident that in terms of all three Story elements - event, characters, and setting - a greater degree of specificity contributes more to narrativity. In Table A, all three elements are assessed separately because in any visual document the distribution of descriptive detail may be quite dissimilar or uneven (for instance, characters may be given much attention and setting none, etc.). Concerning events, those that are described in a highly generalized and loosely organized way have low or less narrative potential than descriptions of events or happenings that are either moderately precise or very specific or individualized. Since narratives involve either identifiable actors or character types, a pictorial treatment that renders figures in a way such that the viewer is unable to identify singular characters or character types (e.g., deity, athlete, warrior) merits a low narrativity rating. Occupying the middle of the range in this regard, are characterizations in which one or some, but not all actors are distinguishable as either individuals or types, whereas descriptions in which each and every actor or character type is clearly differentiated rank highest on the narrativity scale. As with events and characters, the details of setting can be given more or less attention, thereby allowing a greater or lesser degree of communicative power. For instance, a harbour setting could be rendered simply by a single line, marking where water meets land. This sort of description clearly has less narrativity than would a very elaborate treatment, in which buildings, landscape, and fauna are defined.

APPENDIX TABLE A
NARRATIVE ELEMENT ASSESSMENT GUIDE

< Less narrativity		More narrativity>	
0	1	2	3
A NARRATIVE STRUCTURAL ELEMENT - STORY			
◦ the what, the narrated - events & existents (characters, setting)			
1. Event - change of state; action or happening.			
NO EVENT SHOWN	CULT EVENT	JOURNEY	CONFLICT (hunt, battle, etc.)
2. Characters - actors and/or figures involved; agents that perform actions.			
NO ACTORS NO ACTION	ONE ACTOR/SOME ACTION	ONE ACTOR/MUCH ACTION MANY ACTORS/LITTLE ACTION	MANY ACTORS/ MUCH ACTION
3. Setting - where the event takes place.			
NO SETTING	ONE SETTING INDICATED	AT LEAST TWO VENUES CLEARLY INDICATED	MORE THAN TWO VENUES CLEARLY INDICATED
B NARRATIVE STRUCTURAL ELEMENT - DISCOURSE			
◦ the how, the narrating - point of view, order of telling.			
1. Processing - relationships or connections among pictorial elements (logical, psychological, spatial).			
NO CONNECTIONS	VAGUELY PERCEPTIBLE CONNECTION(S)	SOME PERCEPTIBLE CONNECTIONS	CLEAR CONNECTIONS
2. Temporal Sequence - chronological relationships among distinct events or happenings.			
NO TIME SEQUENCES	ONE TIME SEQUENCE SHOWN OR IMPLIED	A FEW TIME SEQUENCES SHOWN OR IMPLIED	MANY TIME SEQUENCES SHOWN OR IMPLIED
3a. Quality of Description - event			
NO EVENT SHOWN	GENERALIZED	MODERATELY SPECIFIC	SPECIFIC
3b. Quality of Description - characters			
NO CHARACTERS	NO SINGULAR CHARACTERS/TYPES	SOME SINGULAR CHARACTERS/TYPES	ALL SINGULAR CHARACTERS/TYPES
3c. Quality of Description - setting			
NO SETTING	MINIMAL INDICATION	SOME DETAIL	COMPREHENSIVE DETAIL

APPENDIX TABLE B1**Narrative Element Assessment: Isopata Ring**

A STORY	
◦ the what, the narrated - events & existents (characters, setting)	
1. Event - change of state; action or happening.	
Cult event: epiphany of deity?	Score: 1
2. Characters - actors and/or figures involved; agents that perform actions.	
Many actors, little action: four large women (adorants?; adorants and one deity?), one small "floating" woman (deity?).	Score: 2
3. Setting - where the event takes place.	
One setting: hillside with flowers.	Score: 1
Score for Story Element	Subtotal: 4
B DISCOURSE	
◦ the how, the narrating - point of view, order of telling.	
1. Processing - relationships or connections among pictorial elements.	
Vaguely perceptible connections: characters are linked by action(s) but relationships are ambiguous.	Score: 1
2. Temporal Sequence - chronological relationships among events or happenings.	
One time sequence implied: possible invocation and/or adoration of deity; manifestation of deity.	Score: 1
3a. Quality of Description - event	
Moderately specific: distinctive gestures and floating symbols (e.g., eye, "streamers").	Score: 2
3b. Quality of Description - characters	
Some singular characters: women with specific gestures in distinctive costumes; minute floating figure.	Score: 2
3c. Quality of Description - setting	
Minimal indication: hillside inferred by the different levels of figures and flowers.	Score: 1
Score for Discourse Element	Subtotal: 7
Subtotal Story times weight equals <i>Story Score</i> : $4 \times 5 = 20$ of possible 45	
Subtotal Discourse times weight equals <i>Discourse Score</i> : $7 \times 3 = 21$ of possible 45	
Total Score out of possible 90: 41	

APPENDIX TABLE B2**Narrative Element Assessment: West House Frieze - North**

A STORY	
◦ the what, the narrated - events & existents (characters, setting)	
1. Event - change of state; action or happening.	
Conflict event: sea battle with land march; hillside meeting; pastoral scenes.	Score: 3
2. Characters - actors and/or figures involved; agents that perform actions.	
Many characters, much action: sailors, corpses, soldiers, shepherds, women, etc.	Score: 3
3. Setting - where the event takes place.	
More than two venues clearly indicated: sea, harbour, hillside, town.	Score: 3
Score for Story Element	Subtotal: 9
B DISCOURSE	
◦ the how, the narrating - point of view, order of telling.	
1. Processing - relationships or connections among pictorial elements.	
Some perceptible connections: sea action is linked to land march, but relationship between these events and hillside meeting and pastoral scenes is more ambiguous.	Score: 2
2. Temporal Sequence - chronological relationships among events or happenings.	
A few time sequences shown or implied: ships at sea, battle (implied), and aftermath - soldiers marching on land. Hillside meeting may precede or follow sea action.	Score: 2
3a. Quality of Description - event	
Moderately specific: details of ships, battle scene, distinctive configuration of hillside meeting and actions of shepherds and women at work.	Score: 2
3b. Quality of Description - characters	
Some singular characteristics: warriors with distinctive equipment, men in various costumes e.g., men in long cloth robes, sailors in short kilts, peasants in furry capes.	Score: 2
3c. Quality of Description - setting	
Some detail: particulars of hillside venue, harbour buildings, town, water well, and animal pen.	Score: 2
Score for Discourse Element	Subtotal: 10
Subtotal Story times weight equals <i>Story Score</i> : $9 \times 5 = 45$ of possible 45	
Subtotal Discourse times weight equals <i>Discourse Score</i> : $10 \times 3 = 30$ of possible 45	
Total Score out of possible 90: 75	

APPENDIX TABLE B3**Narrative Element Assessment: West House Frieze - East**

A STORY	
◦ the what, the narrated - events & existents (characters, setting)	
1. Event - change of state; action or happening.	
Conflict event: animal hunt.	Score: 3
2. Characters - actors and/or figures involved; agents that perform actions.	
Many actors, little action: cat, bird, doe, griffin.	Score: 2
3. Setting - where the event takes place.	
One setting indicated: riverine landscape with riverside town.	Score: 1
Score for Story Element	Subtotal: 6
B DISCOURSE	
◦ the how, the narrating - point of view, order of telling.	
1. Processing - relationships or connections among pictorial elements.	
Some perceptible connections: pairs of animals are linked by actions/reactions; cat stalks bird, griffin pursues doe.	Score: 2
2. Temporal Sequence - chronological relationships among events or happenings.	
One time sequence implied: prey unaware of threat, the pursuit and (implied) the capture.	Score: 1
3a. Quality of Description - event	
Moderately specific: fabulous beast lends an air of myth or fantasy to the hunt event, making it somewhat extraordinary.	Score: 2
3b. Quality of Description - characters	
Some singular characters or types: "supernatural" winged griffin.	Score: 2
3c. Quality of Description - setting	
Comprehensive detail: riverine setting is fully articulated, with water, colourful pebbles, plants.	Score: 3
Score for Discourse Element	Subtotal: 10
Subtotal Story times weight equals <i>Story Score</i> : $6 \times 5 = 30$ of possible 45	
Subtotal Discourse times weight equals <i>Discourse Score</i> : $10 \times 3 = 30$ of possible 45	
Total Score out of possible 90: 60	

APPENDIX TABLE B4**Narrative Element Assessment: West House Frieze - South**

A STORY	
◦ the what, the narrated - events & existents (characters, setting)	
1. Event - change of state; action or happening.	
Journey: sea voyage.	Score: 2
2. Characters - actors and/or figures involved; agents that perform actions.	
Many actors, much action: town and country dwellers, paddlers, helmsmen, warriors, commanders (or "elite").	Score: 3
3. Setting - where the event takes place.	
More than two venues clearly indicated: small coastal town, hills, woodlands, open sea, large coastal settlement.	Score: 3
Score for Story Element	Subtotal: 8
B DISCOURSE	
◦ the how, the narrating - point of view, order of telling.	
1. Processing - relationships or connections among pictorial elements.	
Clear connections among pictorial elements: towns readily associated with fleet as ports of call in a sea voyage.	Score: 3
2. Temporal Sequence - chronological relationships among events or happenings.	
A few time sequences shown or implied: departure, sailing on open sea (implied), arrival.	Score: 2
3a. Quality of Description - event	
Moderately specific: differentiated towns and fleet with distinctive vessels makes event description more specific than generalized.	Score: 2
3b. Quality of Description - characters	
Some singular characters or types: man with forelock, large women in "arrival town," helmsmen, sailors.	Score: 2
3c. Quality of Description - setting	
Comprehensive detail: features of towns, landscape and seascape are richly detailed.	Score: 3
Score for Discourse Element	Subtotal: 12
Subtotal Story times weight equals <i>Story Score</i> : $8 \times 5 = 40$ of possible 45	
Subtotal Discourse times weight equals <i>Discourse Score</i> : $12 \times 3 = 36$ of possible 45	
Total Score out of possible 90: 76	

APPENDIX TABLE B5**Narrative Element Assessment: West House Friezes (together)**

A STORY	
◦ the what, the narrated - events & existents (characters, setting)	
1. Event - change of state; action or happening.	
Conflict event: journey, battle, homecoming.	Score: 3
2. Characters - actors and/or figures involved; agents that perform actions.	
Many actors, much action: sailors, warriors, corpses, women with vessels, townspeople, shepherds, griffin, lions, cat, birds, etc.	Score: 3
3. Setting - where the event takes place.	
More than two venues clearly indicated: several towns possibly in different regions, riverine landscape, seascapes, pastoral settings, etc.	Score: 3
Score for Story Element	Subtotal: 9
B DISCOURSE	
◦ the how, the narrating - point of view, order of telling.	
1. Processing - relationships or connections among pictorial elements.	
Some perceptible connections: North and South Friezes are connected by similar characters (e.g., "forelock man," "helmsmen," with crossed arms), ships, and military regalia. The relationship between East Frieze and the others is more tentative.	Score: 2
2. Temporal Sequence - chronological relationships among events or happenings.	
Many time sequences shown or implied: a sea journey that entails sea travel; a sea battle; sea travel; and homecoming or arrival reception.	Score: 3
3a. Quality of Description - event	
Moderately specific: distinctive vessels and environs suggest a degree of specificity at least as regards the fleet and locales.	Score: 2
3b. Quality of Description - characters	
Some singular characters or types: numerous character types are pictured, some suggestive of distinct individuals (e.g., man with forelock in hillside meeting and flagship).	Score: 2
3c. Quality of Description - setting	
Comprehensive detail: in combination, the friezes present a variety of settings, each suggestive of distinct locales.	Score: 3
Score for Discourse Element	Subtotal: 12
Subtotal Story times weight equals <i>Story Score</i> : $9 \times 5 = 45$ of possible 45	
Subtotal Discourse times weight equals <i>Discourse Score</i> : $12 \times 3 = 36$ of possible 45	
Total Score out of possible 90: 81	

APPENDIX TABLE B6

Narrative Element Assessment: Pylos Vestibule

A STORY	
◦ the what, the narrated - events & existents (characters, setting)	
1. Event - change of state; action or happening.	
Cult event: procession with sacrificial animal.	Score: 1
2. Characters - actors and/or figures involved; agents that perform actions.	
Many actors, little action: at least 19 characters march in procession.	Score: 2
3. Setting - where the event takes place.	
One setting: action takes place outdoors.	Score: 1
Score for Story Element	Subtotal: 4
B DISCOURSE	
◦ the how, the narrating - point of view, order of telling.	
1. Processing - relationships or connections among pictorial elements.	
Vaguely perceptible connections: figures with objects and bull are related as elements in a procession involving offerings.	Score: 1
2. Temporal Sequence - chronological relationships among events or happenings.	
One time sequence implied: though shown as if simultaneous, the implication is that the destination of the figures and bull in procession is the altar on extreme left, where someone already appears to be making an offering.	
Score: 1	
3a. Quality of Description - event	
Generalized: no unusual gestures, symbols, etc.; event appears generic in nature.	Score: 1
3b. Quality of Description - characters	
Some singular characters or types: soldier, "porters," robed men (priests, officials?).	Score: 2
3c. Quality of Description - setting	
Minimal indication: landscape setting indicated only by wavy lines and fragment of stylized vegetation.	Score: 1
Score for Discourse Element	Subtotal: 6
Subtotal Story times weight equals <i>Story Score</i> : $4 \times 5 = 20$ of possible 45	
Subtotal Discourse times weight equals <i>Discourse Score</i> : $6 \times 3 = 18$ of possible 45	
Total Score out of possible 90: 38	

APPENDIX TABLE B7

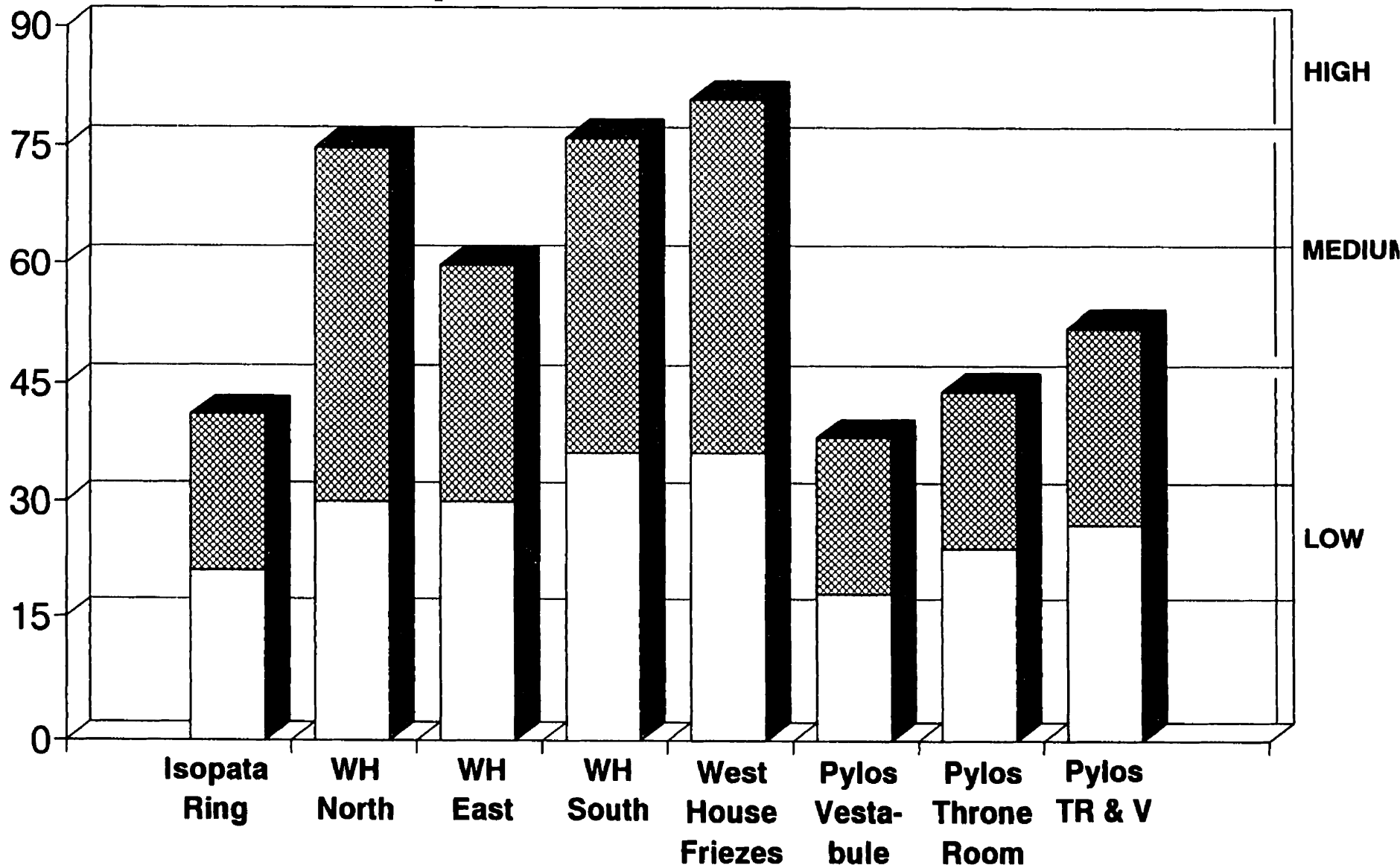
Narrative Element Assessment: Pylos Throne Room

A STORY	
◦ the what, the narrated - events & existents (characters, setting)	
1. Event - change of state; action or happening.	
Cult event: banquet/drinking ceremony with lyre player, bird and possible animal sacrifice.	Score: 1
2. Characters - actors and/or figures involved; agents that perform actions.	
Many actors, little action: at least four men at tables, lyre player, fantastic bird, bull.	Score: 2
3. Setting - where the event takes place.	
One setting indicated: same landscape setting assumed for all elements; it is not clear that more than one venue is indicated.	Score: 1
Score for Story Element	Subtotal: 4
B DISCOURSE	
◦ the how, the narrating - point of view, order of telling.	
1. Processing - relationships or connections among pictorial elements.	
Vaguely perceptible connections: lyre player and men at tables against red backdrop are associated with one another as parts of celebratory event; relationship of bird and bull to scene is less apparent.	Score: 1
2. Temporal Sequence - chronological relationships among events or happenings.	
One time sequence implied: if bull is related to scene of banqueting as animal sacrifice that precedes the meal, then two stages of a ritual event are shown; this reading is, however, tenuous.	Score: 1
3a. Quality of Description - event	
Moderately specific: some care has been taken in detailing of compositional elements; fantastic bird and "larger than life" lyre player make event seem extraordinary.	Score: 2
3b. Quality of Description - characters	
Some singular characters: lyre player on colourful rock with fantastic griffin/bird.	Score: 2
3c. Quality of Description - setting	
Some detail: wavy lines indicate landscape, colourful rock form, bits of vegetation; renderings are stylistically inelegant.	Score: 2
Score for Discourse Element	Subtotal: 8
Subtotal Story times weight equals <i>Story Score</i> : $4 \times 5 = 20$ of possible 45	
Subtotal Discourse times weight equals <i>Discourse Score</i> : $8 \times 3 = 24$ of possible 45	
Total Score out of possible 90: 44	

APPENDIX TABLE B8**Narrative Element Assessment: Pylos: Vestibule + Throne Room**

A STORY	
◦ the what, the narrated - events & existents (characters, setting)	
1. Event - change of state; action or happening.	
Cult event: procession, sacrifice, banqueting.	Score: 1
2. Characters - actors and/or figures involved; agents that perform actions.	
Many actors, much action: gift bearers, banqueters, musician.	Score: 2
3. Setting - where the event takes place.	
Two (proximate) venues indicated: it is assumed that processional setting is not identical to area of banqueting activity.	Score: 2
Score for Story Element	Subtotal: 5
B DISCOURSE	
◦ the how, the narrating - point of view, order of telling.	
1. Processing - relationships or connections among pictorial elements.	
Vaguely perceptible connections: no figures seem to be repeated, but occurrence of bull in each fresco group may substantiate a reading of successive ritual undertakings.	Score: 1
2. Temporal Sequence - chronological relationships among events or happenings.	
A few time sequences shown or implied; when viewed as continuous ritual activity, procession followed by sacrifice and banqueting.	Score: 2
3a. Quality of Description - event	
Moderately specific: certain details endow the event with special significance, although we are unable to decipher its precise nature.	Score: 2
3b. Quality of Description - characters	
Some singular characters: lyre player on colourful rock with fantastic griffin/bird.	Score: 2
3c. Quality of Description - setting	
Some detail: wavy lines indicate landscape, colourful rock form, bits of vegetation; renderings are stylistically inelegant.	Score: 2
Score for Discourse Element	Subtotal: 9
Subtotal Story times weight equals <i>Story Score</i> : $5 \times 5 = 25$ of possible 45	
Subtotal Discourse times weight equals <i>Discourse Score</i> : $9 \times 3 = 27$ of possible 45	
Total Score out of possible 90: 52	

Comparative Narrative Values



APPENDIX FIGURE 1

DISCOURSE STORY

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ILLUSTRATIONS

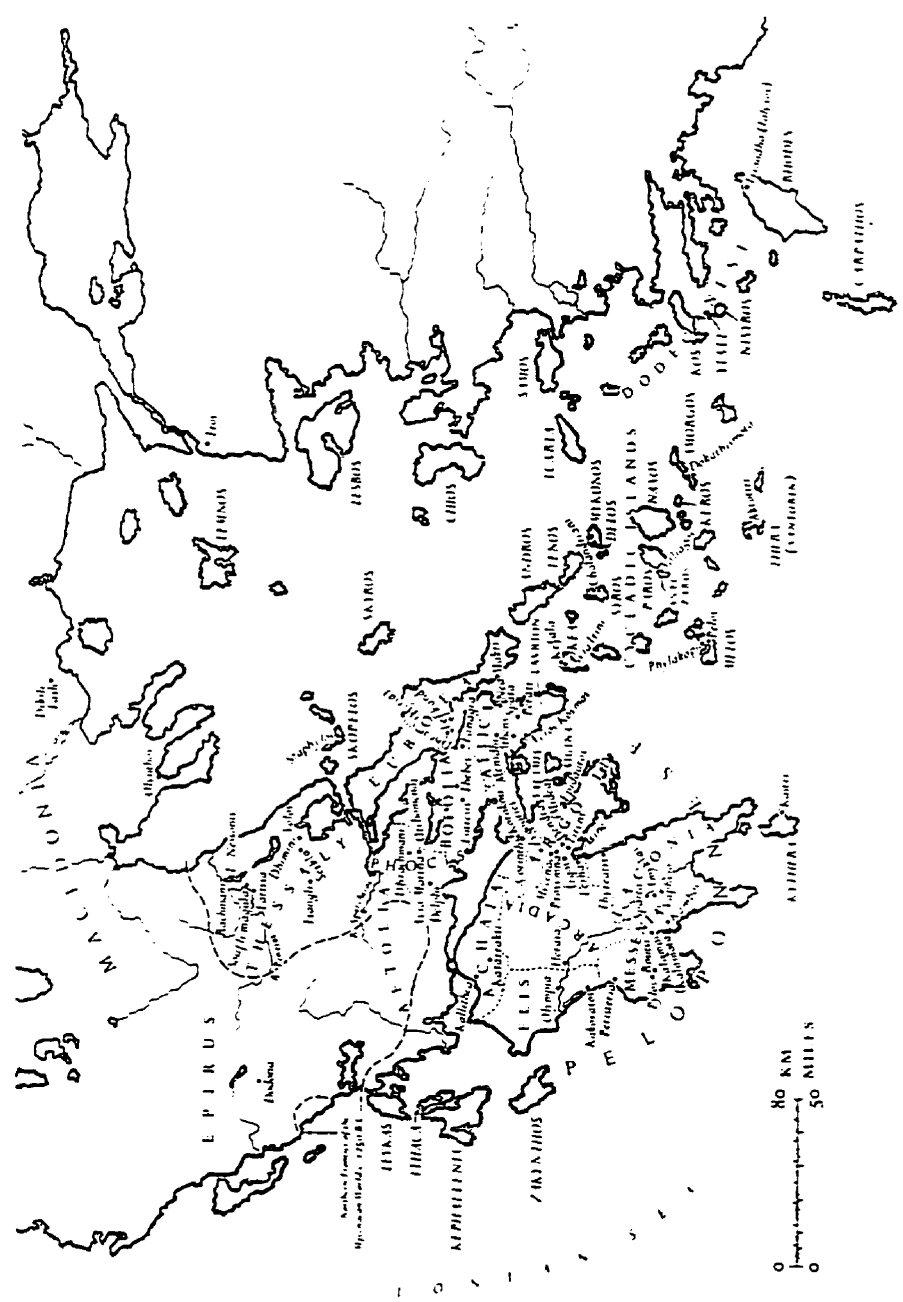


Figure 1 Map of Bronze Age Greece

YEARS BC	CRETE		CYCLADES	MAINLAND	EGYPT			
		NEOLITHIC	NEOLITHIC	NEOLITHIC	PRE DYNASTIC			
3000 –	PRE- PALATIAL	EM I	EC I	EH I	EARLY DYNASTIC	I		
2900 –						II		
2800 –						III		
2700 –					IV			
2600 –		EM II	EC II	EH II		OLD KINGDOM	V	
2500 –							VI	
2400 –	1ST PALACES	EM III	EC III	EH III	1ST INTERMEDIATE	VII–X		
2300 –						XI		
2200 –		MM I A B			MIDDLE KINGDOM	XII		
2100 –								
2000 –		MM II A B			MC	MH	2ND INTERMEDIATE	XIII–XVII
1900 –								
1800 –	MM III A B	LM I A B	LC I	LH I			NEW KINGDOM	XVIII
1700 –								
1600 –	LM II A B	LC II	LH II A B					
1500 –								
1400 –	LM III A B C	LC III	LH III A B C		XIX			
1300 –								
1200 –						POST- PALATIAL		
1100 –	SUBMINOAN		SUBMYCENAEAN		LATE DYNASTIC	XX		
1000 –								

All dates are approximate. Aegean divisions represent ceramic phases with the exception of the Palatial periods of Crete.

Abbreviations:

EM, MM, LM: Early, Middle, Late Minoan.

EC, MC, LC: Early, Middle, Late Cycladic.

EH, MH, LH: Early, Middle, Late Helladic (Mycenaean).

Figure 3 Chronological Table

Figure 4a Gold Ring from Isopata
Original



Figure 4b Gold Ring from Isopata
Impression (drawing)

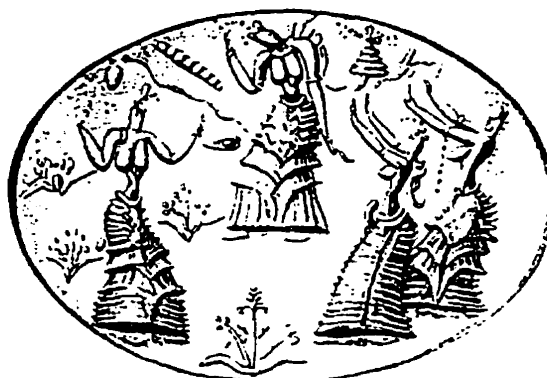


Figure 5 Taureador Fresco, Knossos

Figure 6 Gilliéron's Reconstruction of Procession Fresco, Knossos

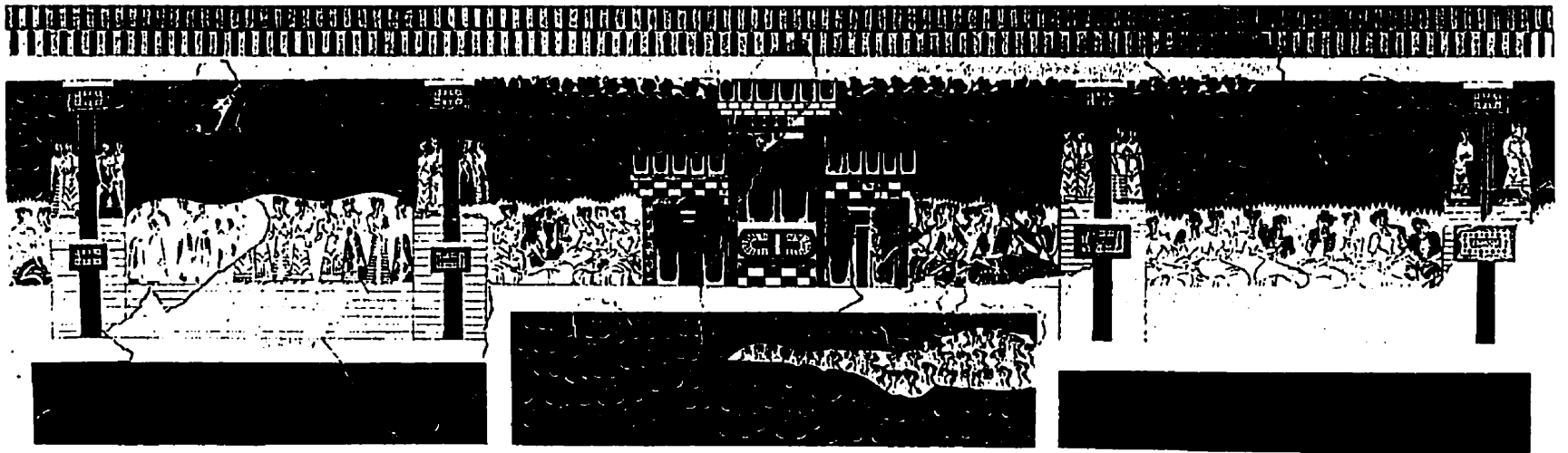
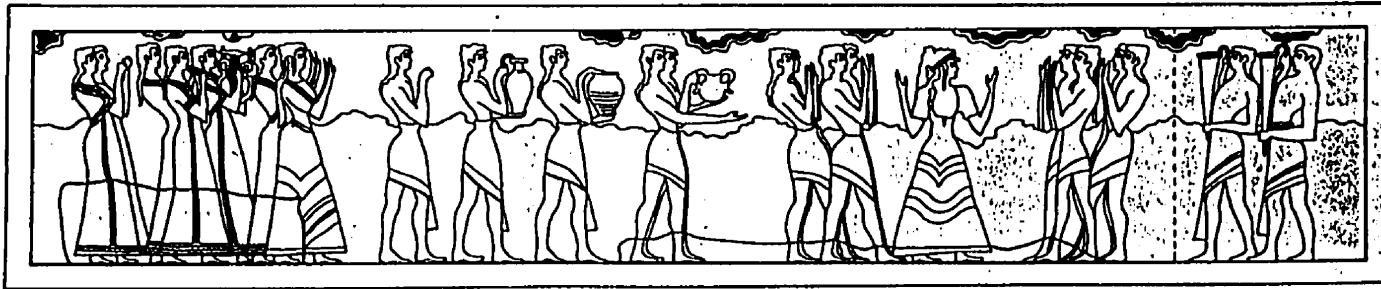


Figure 7 Temple Fresco, Knossos



Figure 8 Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco, Knossos

Figure 9 Gold Ring from Archanes



Figure 10 Gold Ring from Mycenae, Shaft Grave IV



Figure 11 Gold Ring from Mycenae,
Shaft Grave IV



Figure 12 Gold Seal from Mycenae
Shaft Grave III

Figure 13 Lion Hunt Dagger, Mycenae Shaft Grave IV

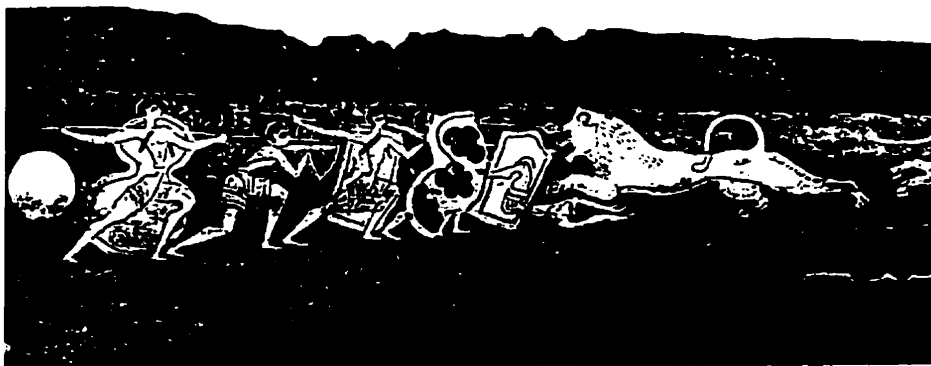


Figure 14 Seal Stone from Mycenae, Shaft Grave III



Figure 15 Battle Scene, Hall 64, Pylos

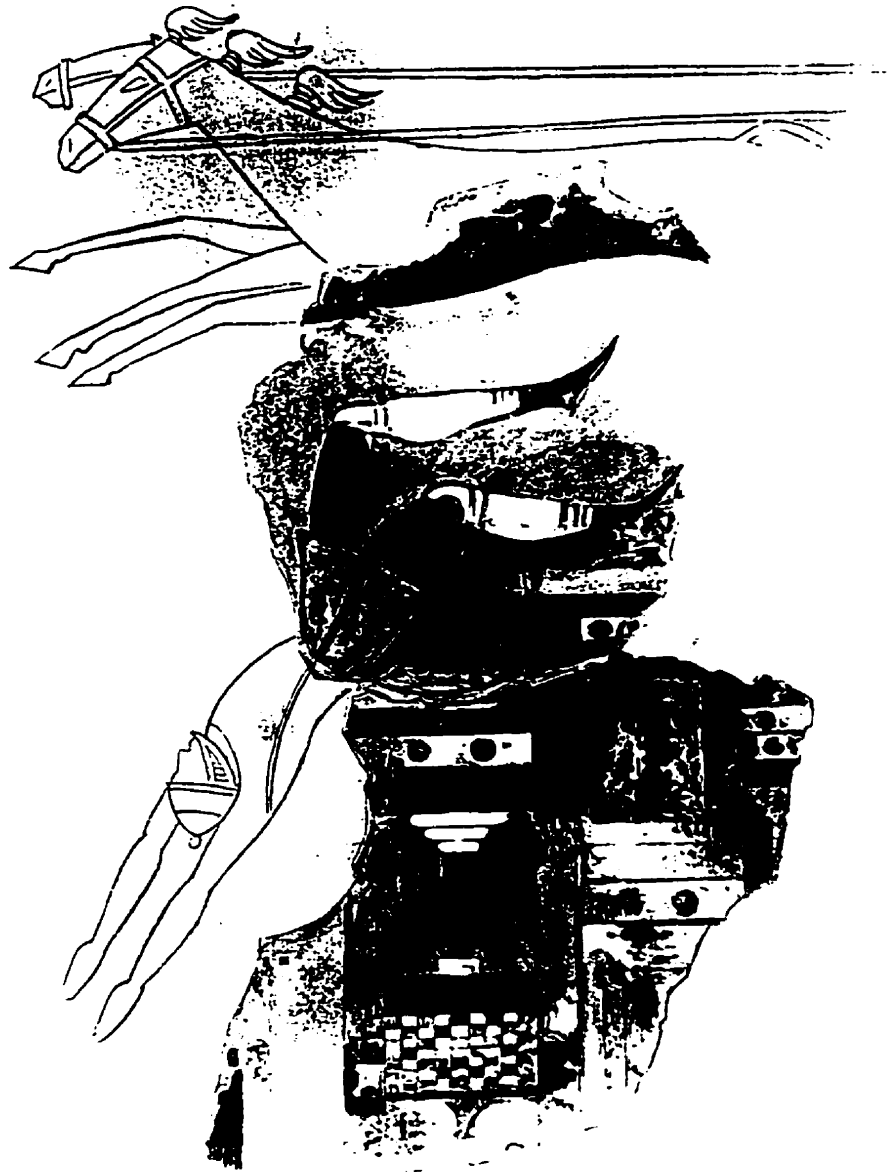


Figure 16 Falling Warrior, Battle Scene from Megaron Frieze, Mycenae

Figure 17 Hunter and Dog, Boar Hunt Fresco, Tiryns

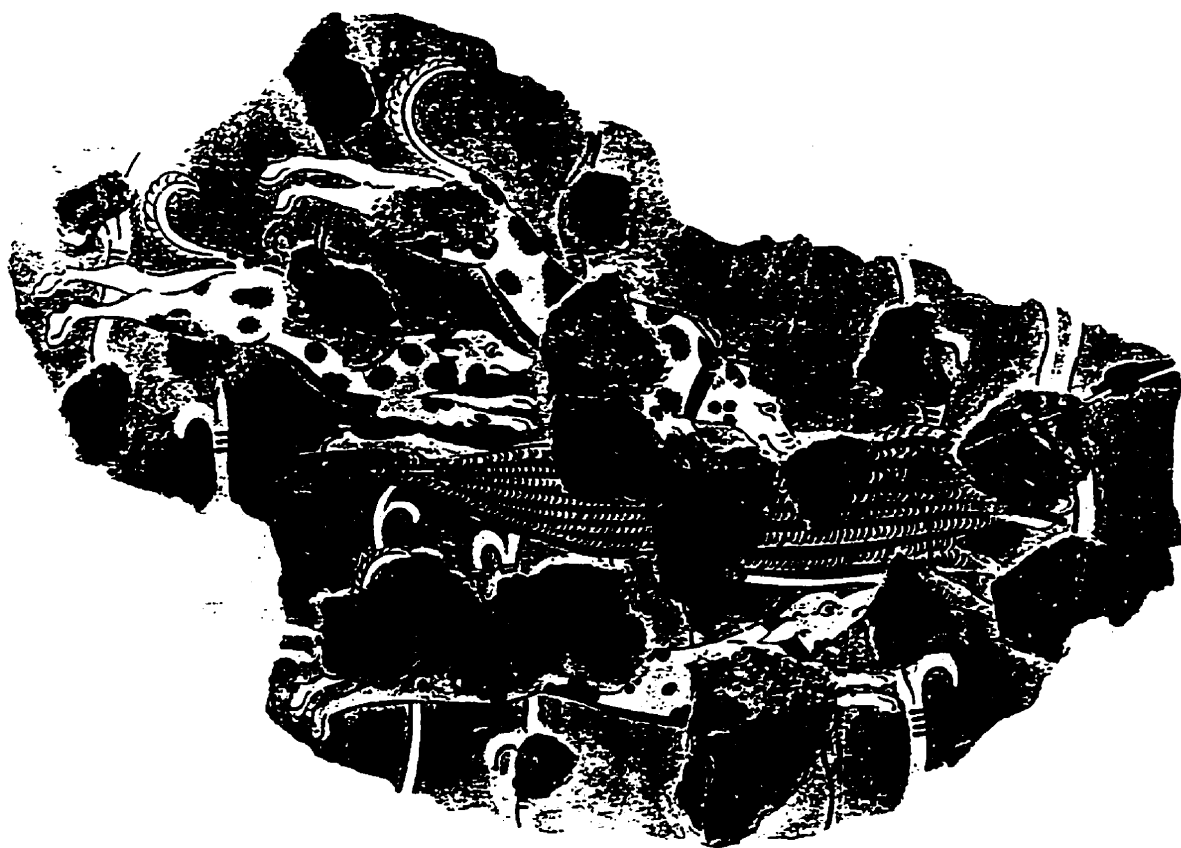
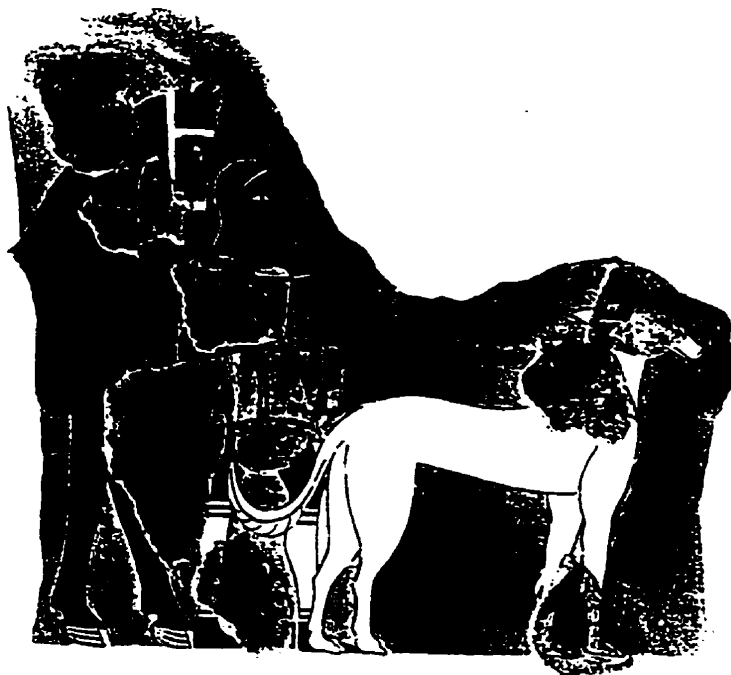


Figure 18 Boar Attacked by dogs, Boar Hunt Fresco, Tiryns



Figure 19 Miniature Frieze, Thera, South Wall (detail)

Figure 20 Miniature Frieze, Thera, South Wall (detail)

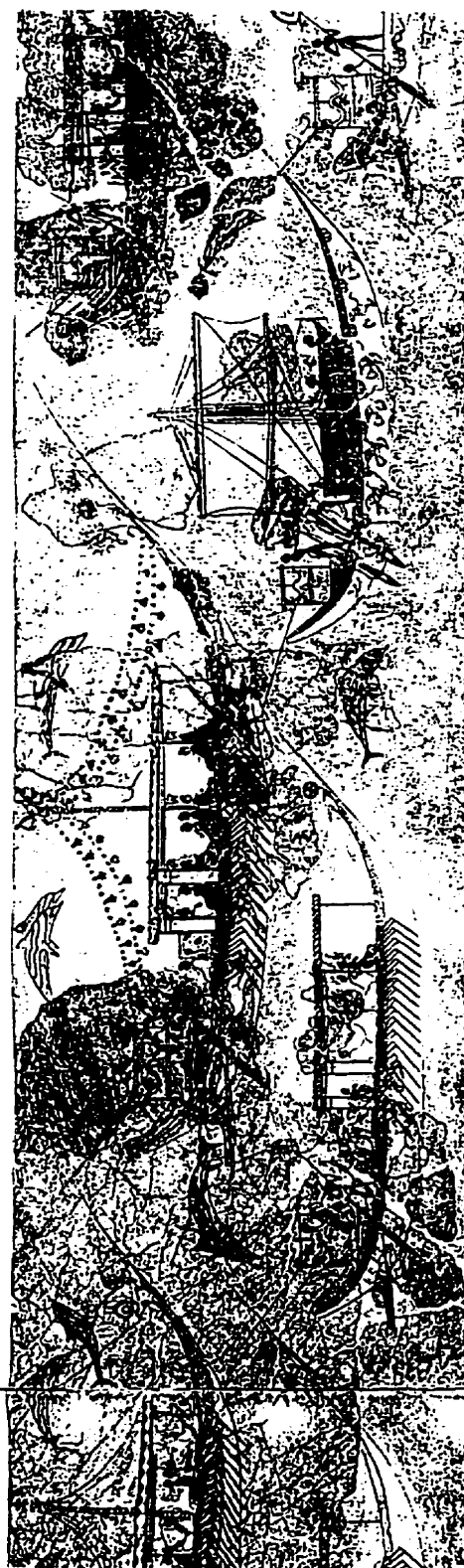




Figure 21 Miniature Frieze, Thera, North Wall (detail)

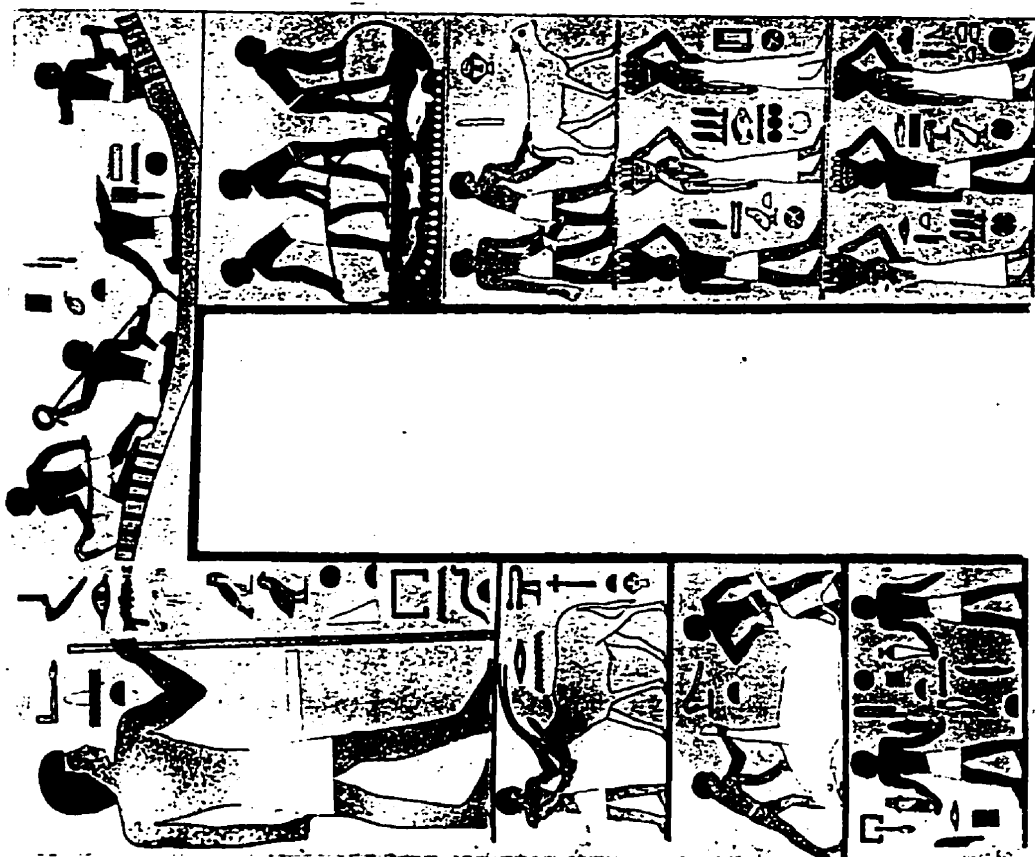


Figure 22 Painting from the Old Kingdom Tomb of Rahotep

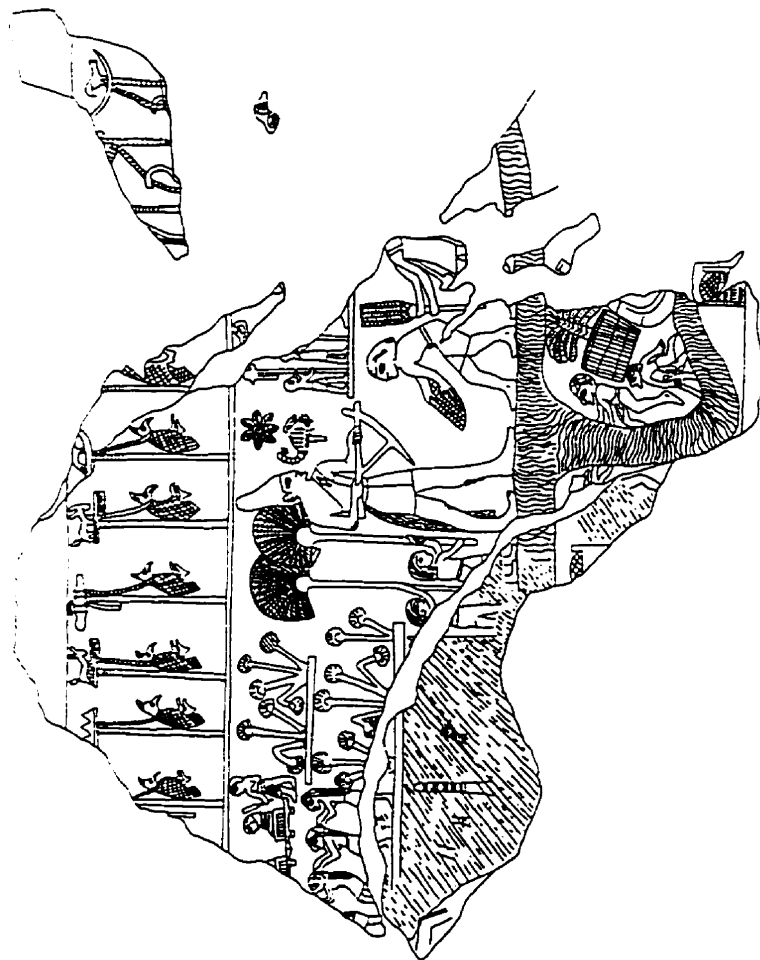
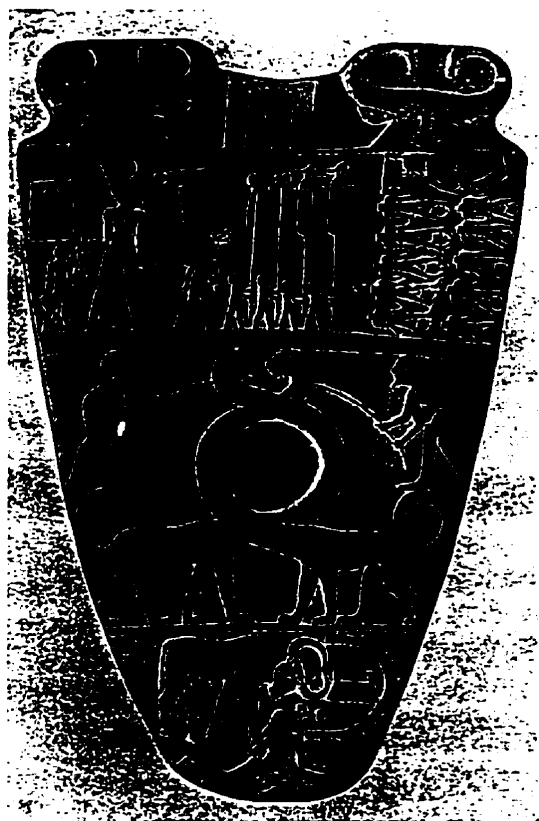
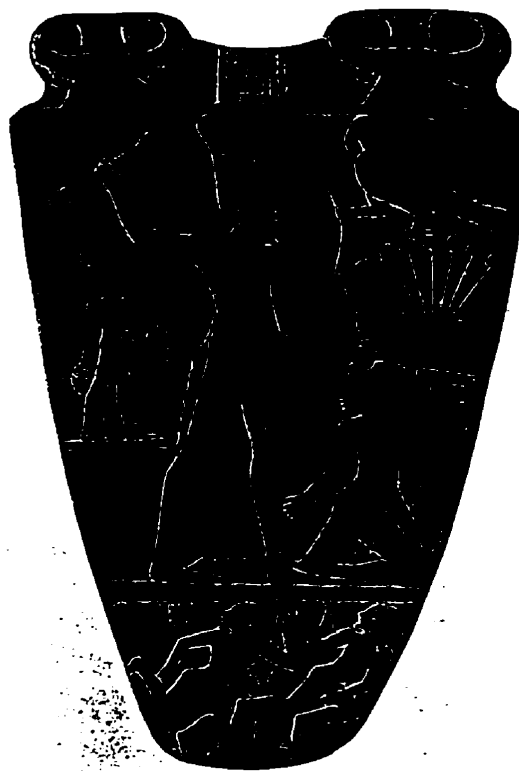


Figure 23 Macehead of King Scorpion



a. obverse



b. reverse

Figure 24 Photograph of the Narmer Palette

Figure 25 Drawing of the Narrative Structure of the Narmer Palette

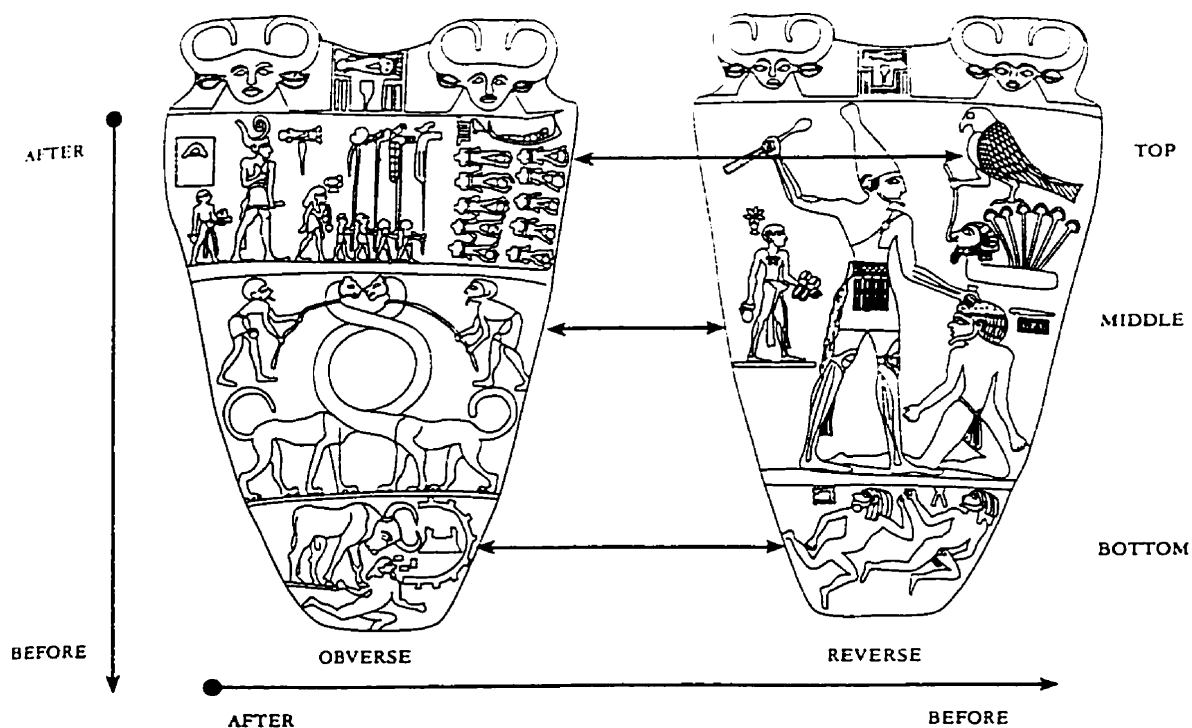




Figure 26 Drawing of Relief of Siege Scene, Deshasheh

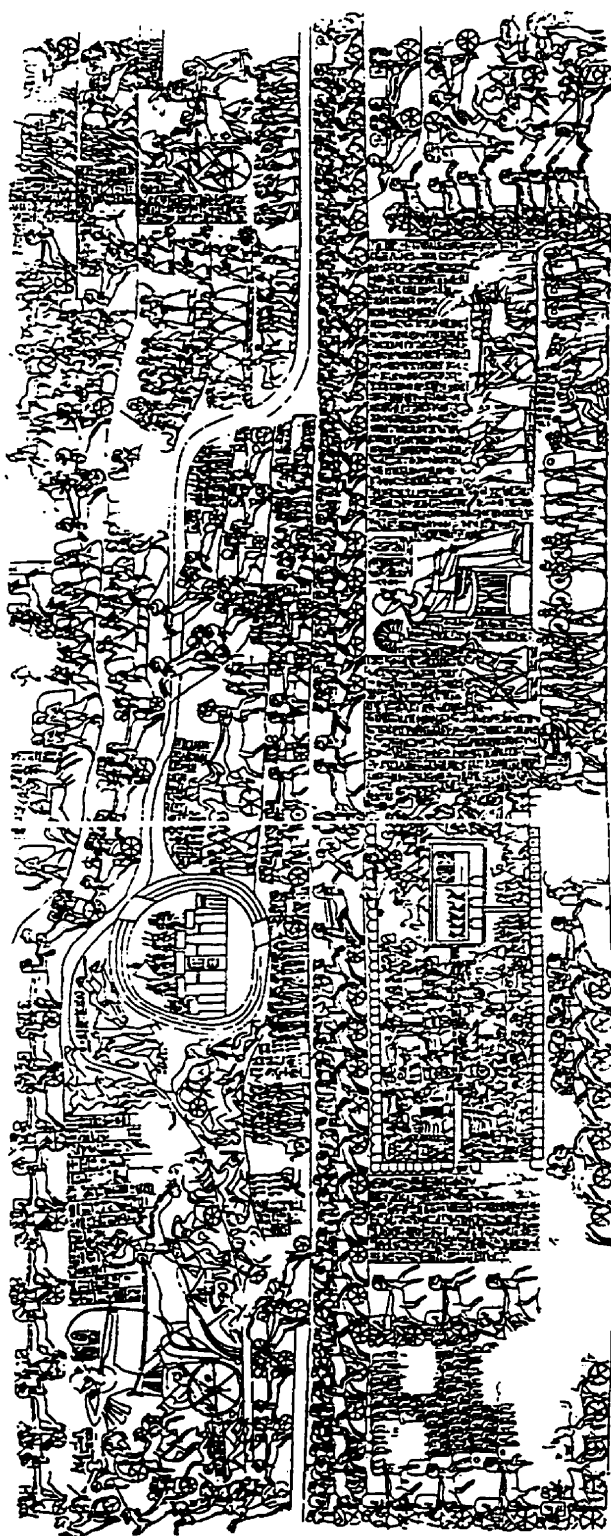


Figure 27 Drawing of the Battle of Qadesh Reliefs at Abu Simbel

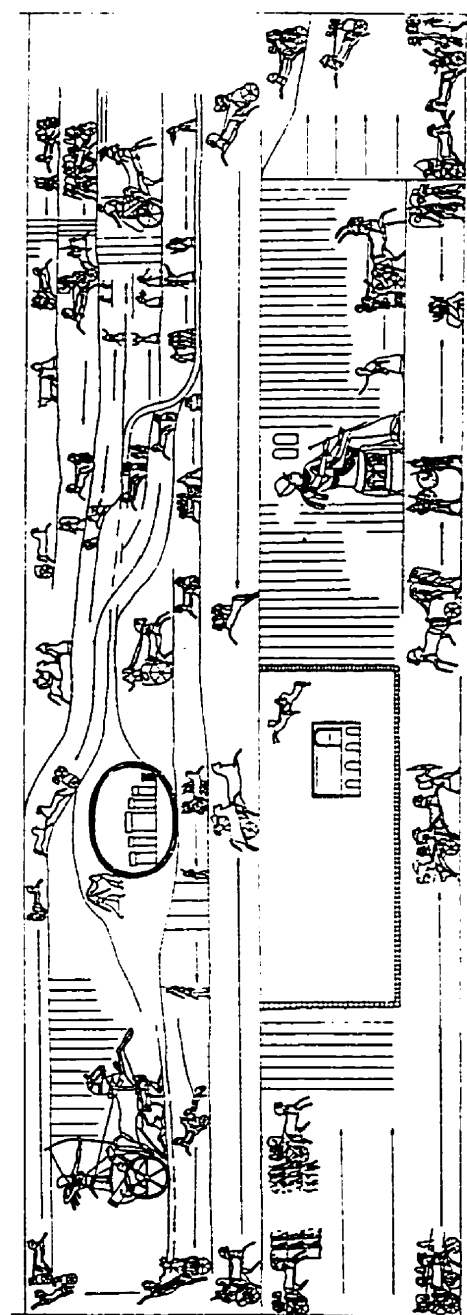


Figure 28 Diagram of the Battle of Qadesh Reliefs at Abu Simbel

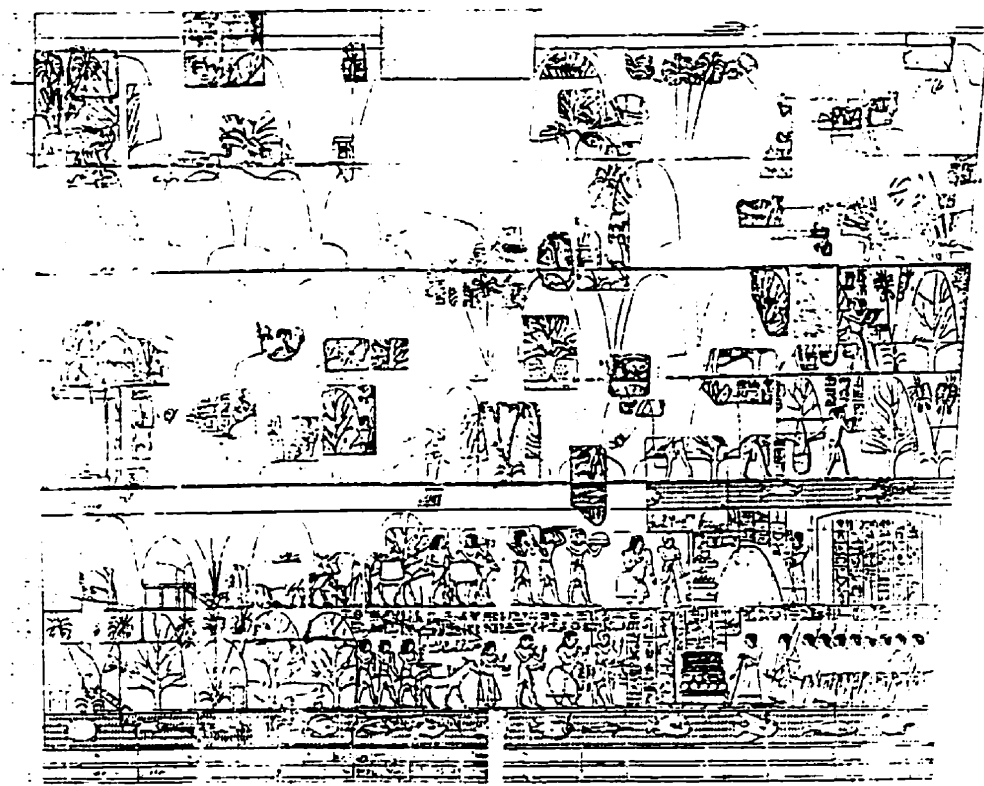


Figure 29 Drawing of the South Wall of Hatshepsut's Punt Reliefs, Deir el-Bahri

Figure 30 Photograph of Punt Leader and Queen,
Detail of Hatshepsut's Punt Reliefs, Deir el-Bahri





Figure 31 Drawing of Reliefs, Tomb of Mahu (detail), Amarna;
"The Capture of Three Criminals"

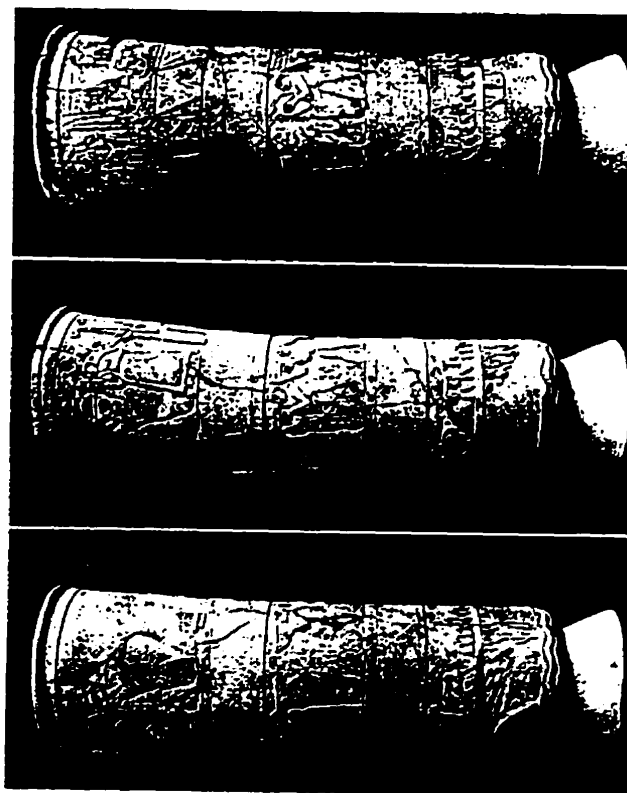


Figure 32 Photograph of Warka Vase

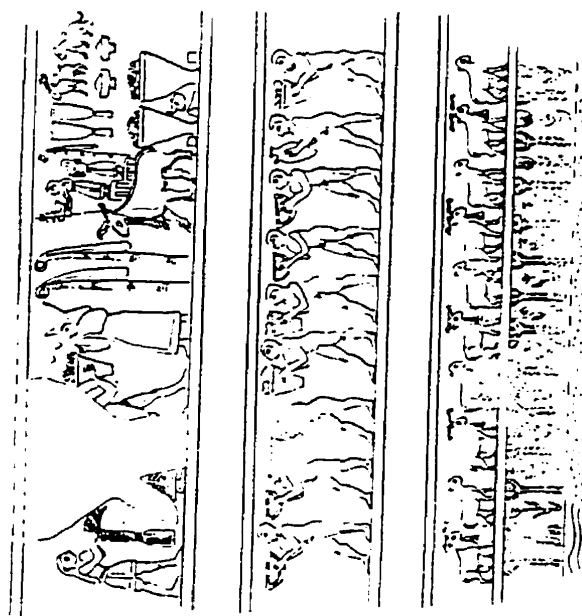


Figure 33 Drawing (detail) of Warka Vase

Figure 34 Photograph of Standard of Ur. War Panel

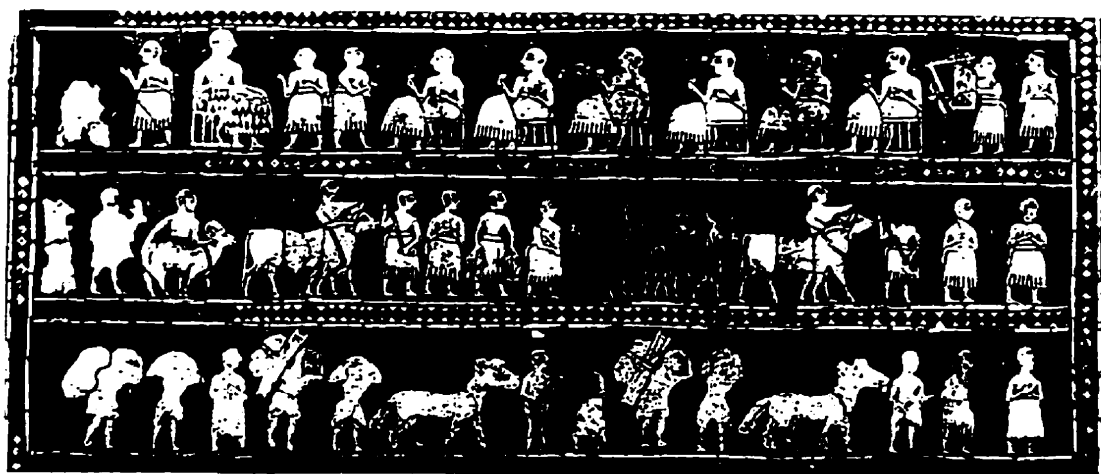
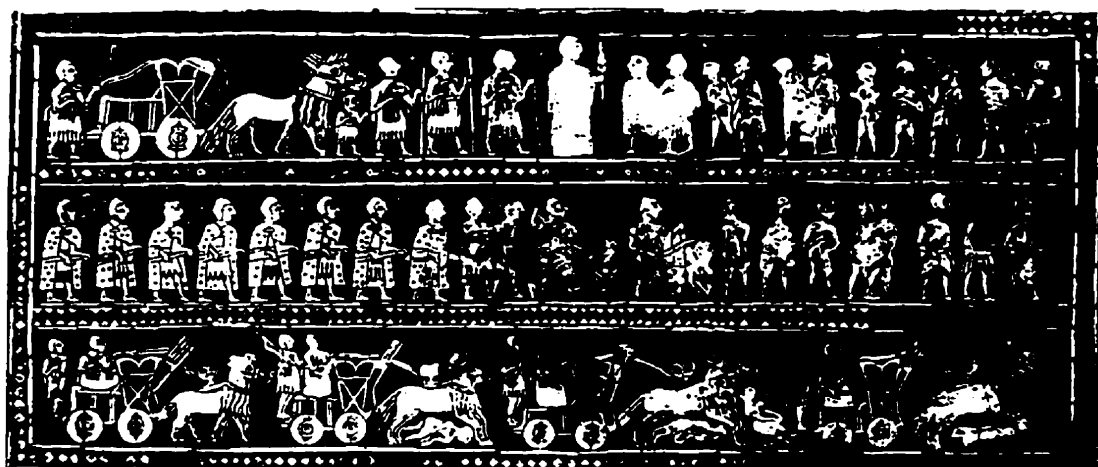
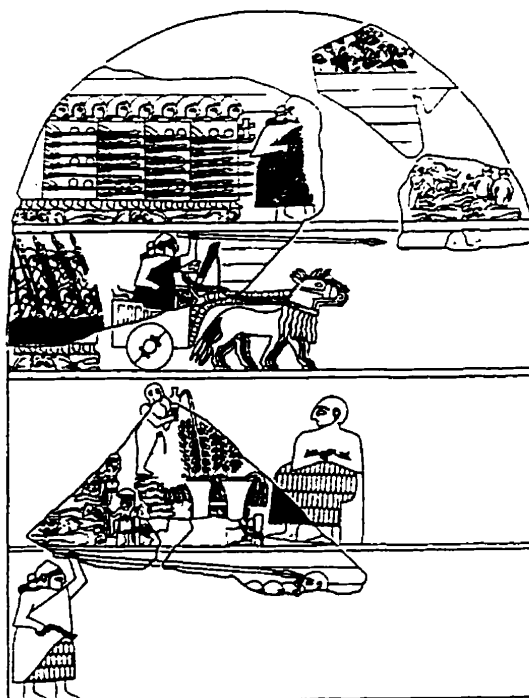


Figure 35 Photograph of Standard of Ur, Banquet Side



Figure 36 Drawing, Stele of the Vultures, Obverse

Figure 37 Drawing, Stele of the Vultures, Reverse



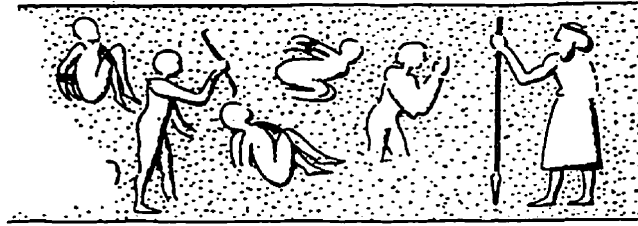


Figure 38 Drawing, Early Mesopotamian Cylinder Seal Impression with Battle Scene



Figure 39 Drawing of Early Mesopotamian Cylinder Seal Impression, Offerings at a Shrine



Figure 40 Photograph of Uruk Period Cylinder Seal Impression; Men, Boat and Shrine



Figure 41 Photograph of Akkadian Cylinder Seal Impression, Deities Building Temple

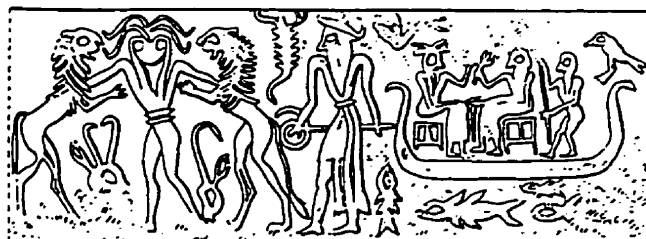


Figure 42 Drawing of Cylinder Seal Impression; Bull-man and Boat Scene



Figure 43 Photograph of Cylinder Seal Impression; Etana and the Bird

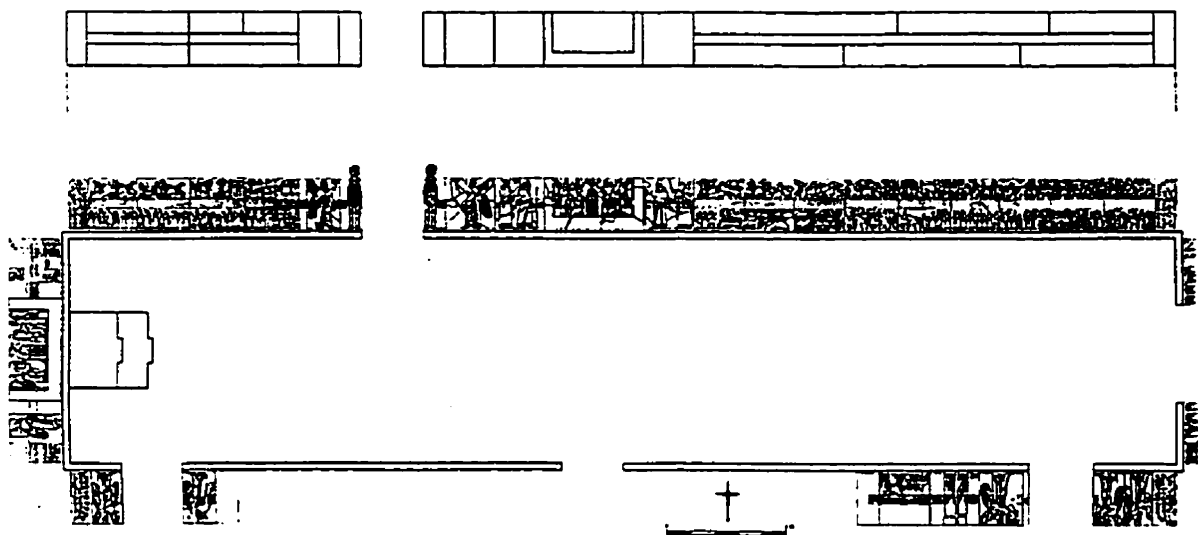
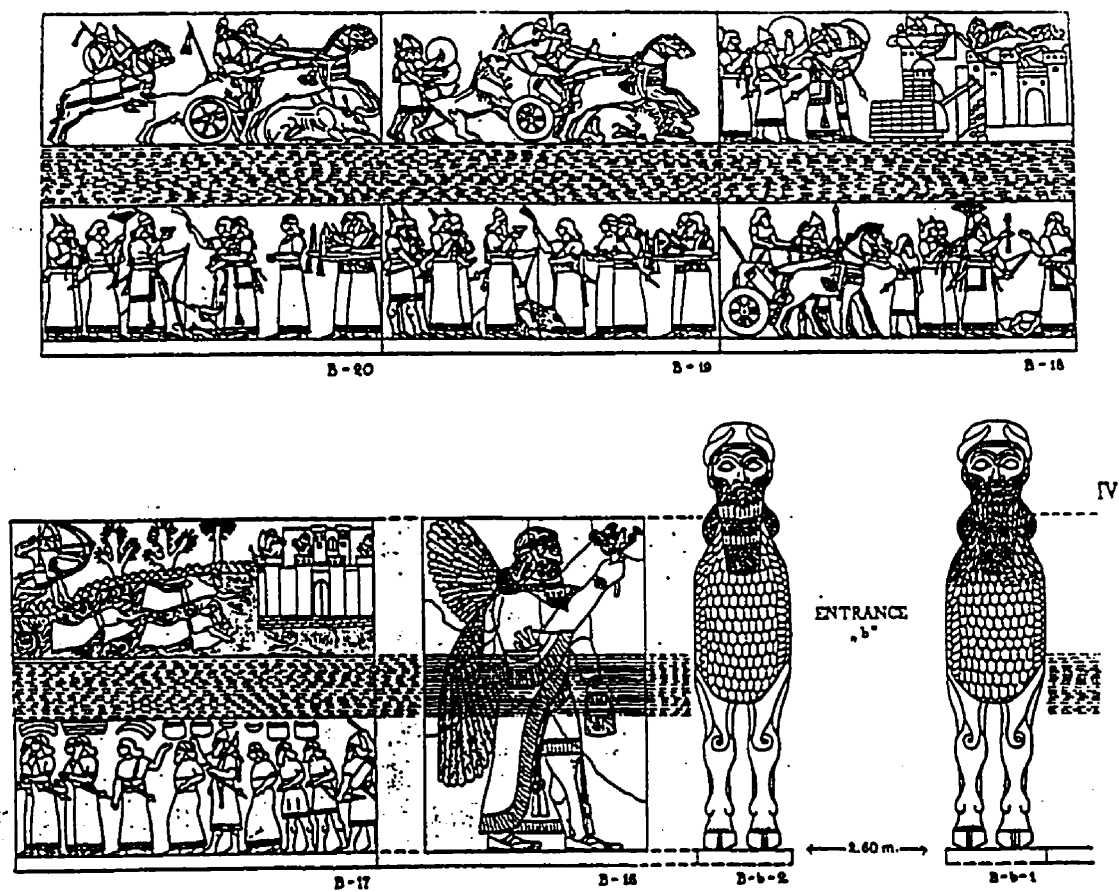


Figure 44 Plan of Ashurnasirpal II's Throne Room at Nimrud

Figure 45 Drawing of Relief Bands 17 - 20, Ashurnasirpal II's Throne Room at Nimrud



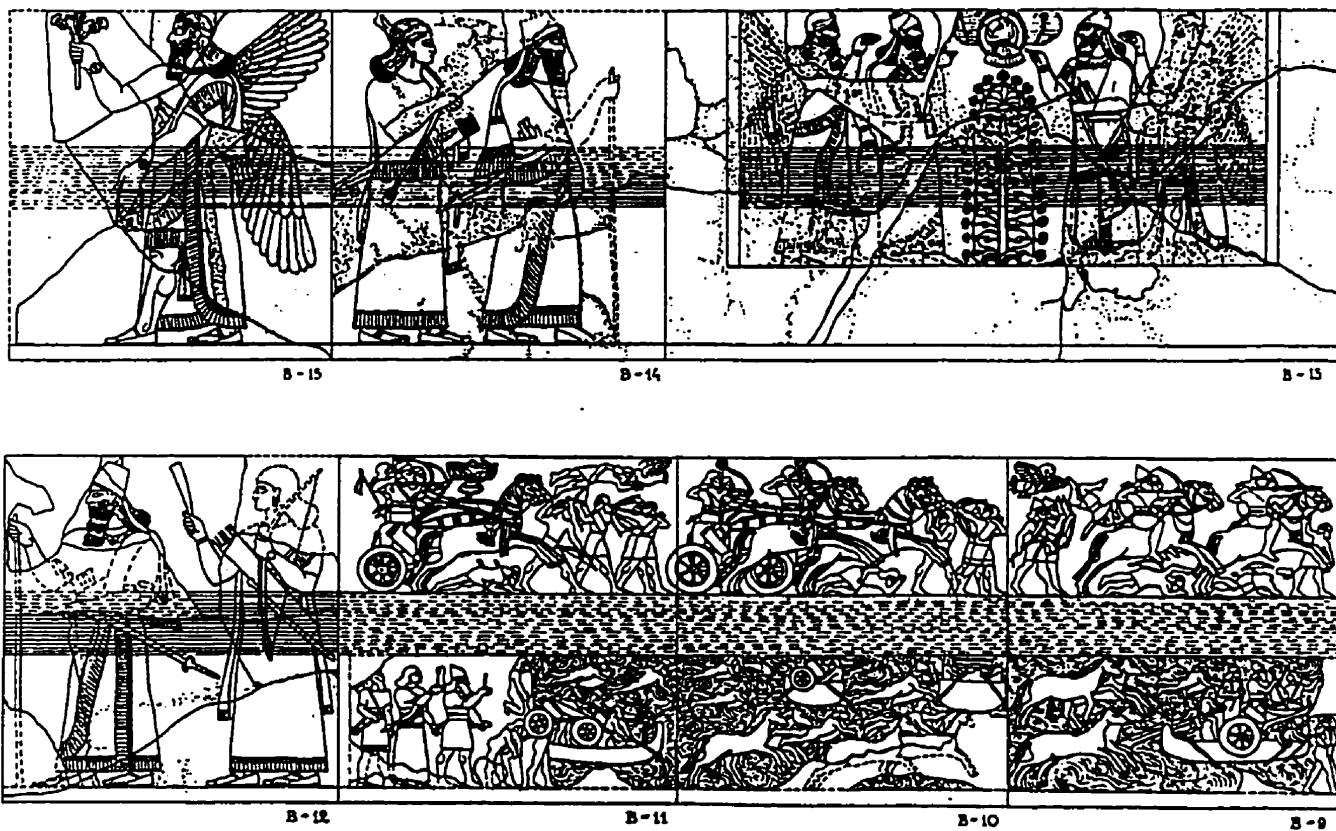


Figure 46a Drawing of Relief Bands 9 - 15, Ashurnasirpal II's Throne Room at Nimrud

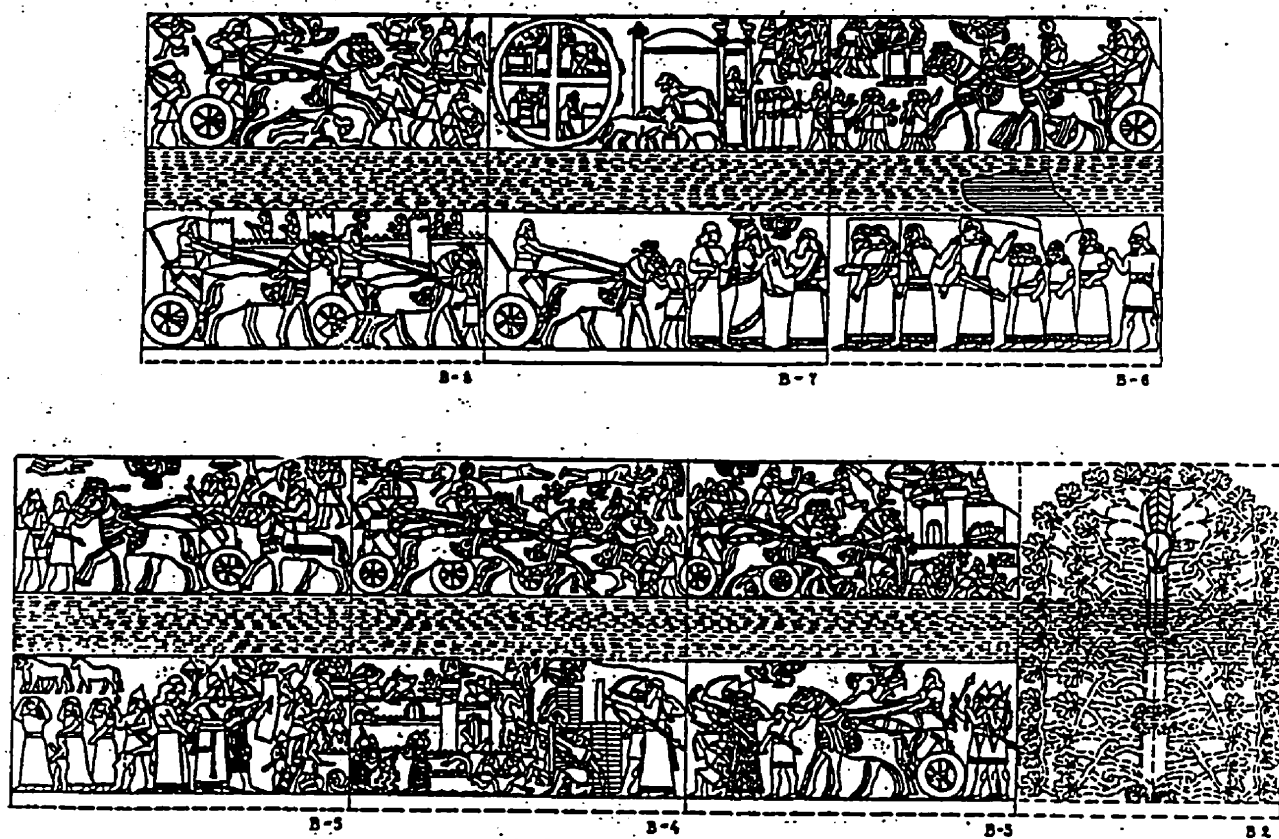


Figure 46b Drawing of Relief Bands 2 - 8, Ashurnasirpal II's Throne Room at Nimrud

P a	chariots	→	enemy	→	attack (K)	→	camp
P b	attack (K)	→	enemy	→	chariots	→	camp
N a	Assyrians (K)	→	limber	→		→	sela
N b	Assyrians (K)	→	tribue	→		→	town
V a	town	→	tribue	→	town	→	tribue
V b	tribue	→	tribue	→	town	→	tribue
VI a	town	→	tribue	→	town	→	tribue
VI b	town	→	tribue	→	tribue	→	town
IX a	attack	→	town	→	attack	→	camp
IX b	Assyrians	→	town	→	booy	→	Assyrians (K)
X a	camp	→	Assyrians	→	Assyrians (K)	→	sela
X b	camp	→	Assyrians (K)	→	town	→	Assyrians (K)
VII a	enemy	→	attack	→	camp	→	attack (K)
VII b	town	→	tribue	→	Assyrians (K)	→	camp
XII a	attack	→	town	→	attack (K)	→	camp
XII b	town	→	booy	→	camp	→	attack

O a	Assyrians (K)	→	attack	→	town	→	attack
O b	Assyrians (K)	→	attack	→	town	→	enemy
VIII a	Assyrians (K)	→	attack	→	town	→	attack
VIII b	Assyrians (K)	→	attack	→	town	→	booy
III a	town	→	tribue	→	Assyrians (K)	→	camp
III b	camp	→	Assyrians (K)	→	booy	→	attack
IV a	Assyrians (K)	→	attack	→	town	→	attack
IV b	camp	→	Assyrians (K)	→	attack	→	town
XI a	Assyrians (K)	→	tribue	→	town	→	
XI b	camp	→	Assyrians (K)	→	tribue	→	town
II a	Assyrians	→	booy	→	town	→	attack (K)
II b	attack (K)	→	town	→	booy	→	Assyrians
I a	sela, sacrifice	→	King, Assyrian advance	→	camp	→	
I b	camp	→	attack (K)	→	town	→	attack
XIII a	attack	→	town	→	attack	→	camp
XIII b	camp	→	Assyrians (K)	→	booy	→	town

Figures 47a, 47b Schematic Plan of the Relief Bands on the Gates of Shalmaneser III at Balawat



Figures 48a - 48e Photographs of Band XII of Shalmaneser III's Gates at Balawat

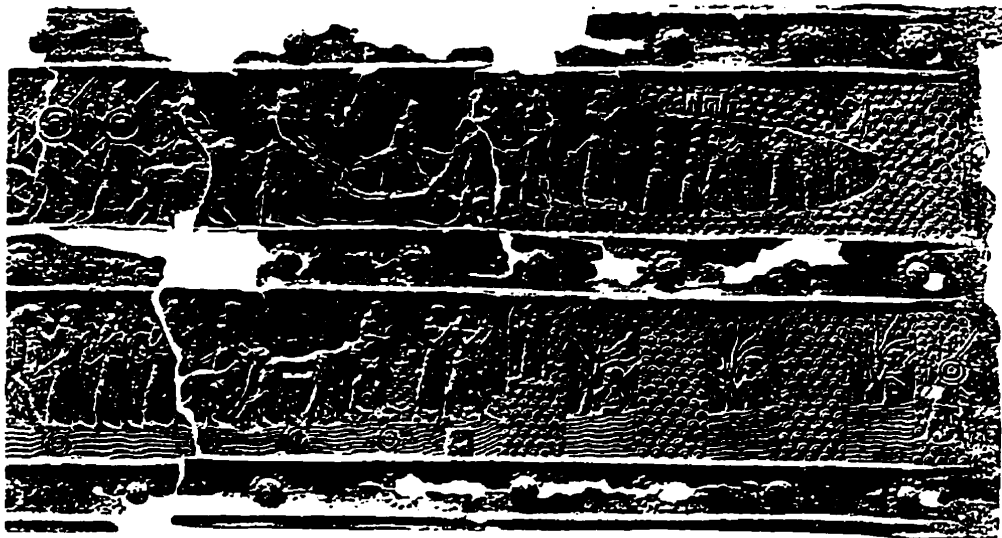


Figure 49 Photograph of Band Xa-b (detail), of Shalmaneser III's Gates at Balawat

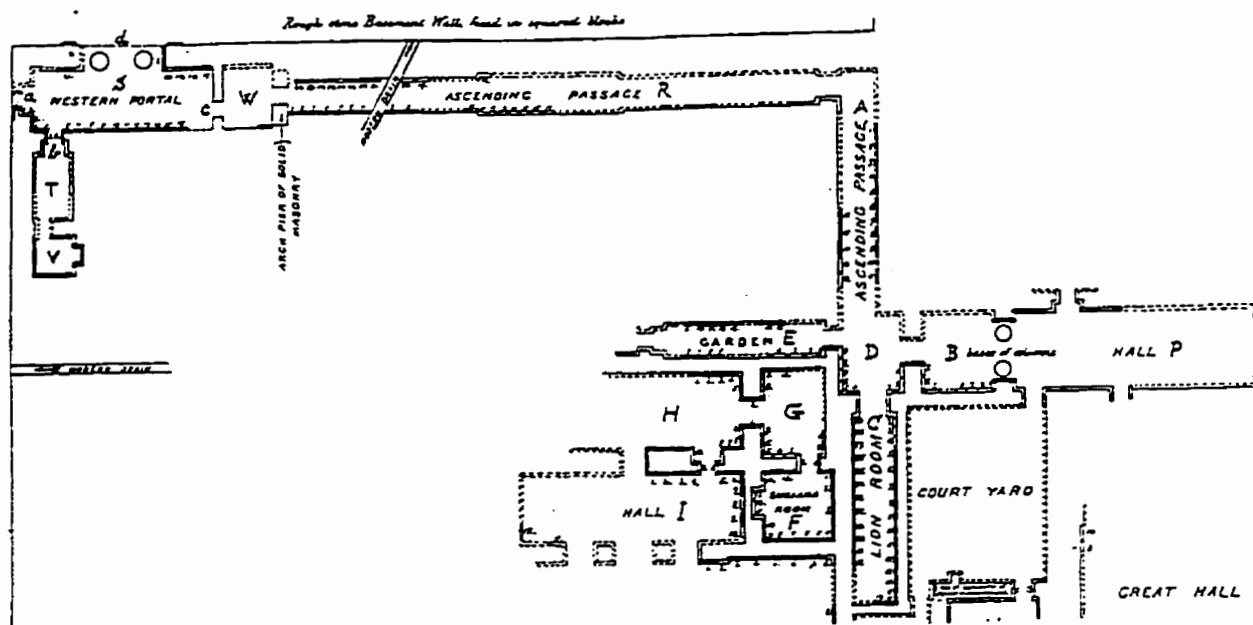


Figure 52 Plan (detail) of Hunt Reliefs in Ashurbanipal's North Palace, Nineveh

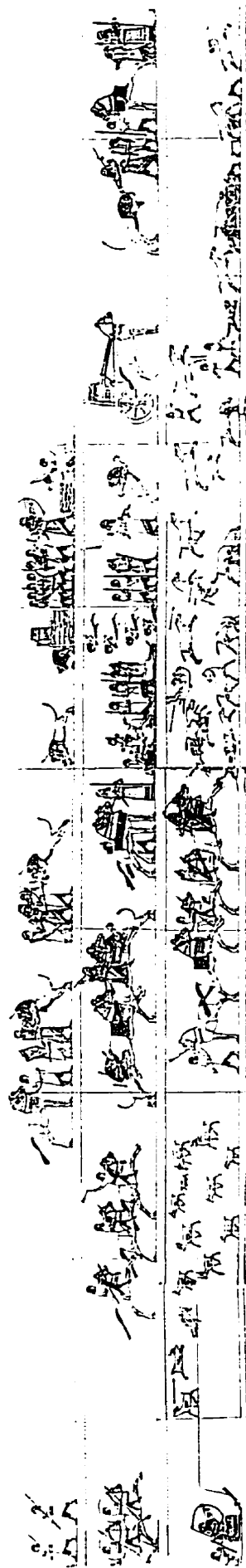
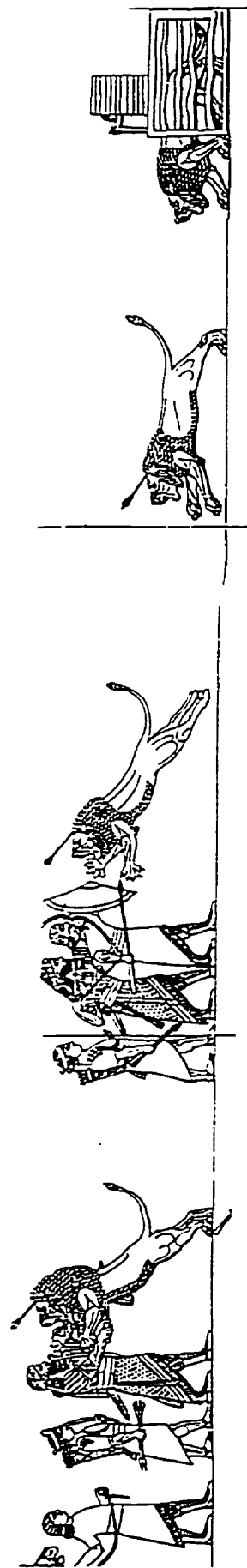
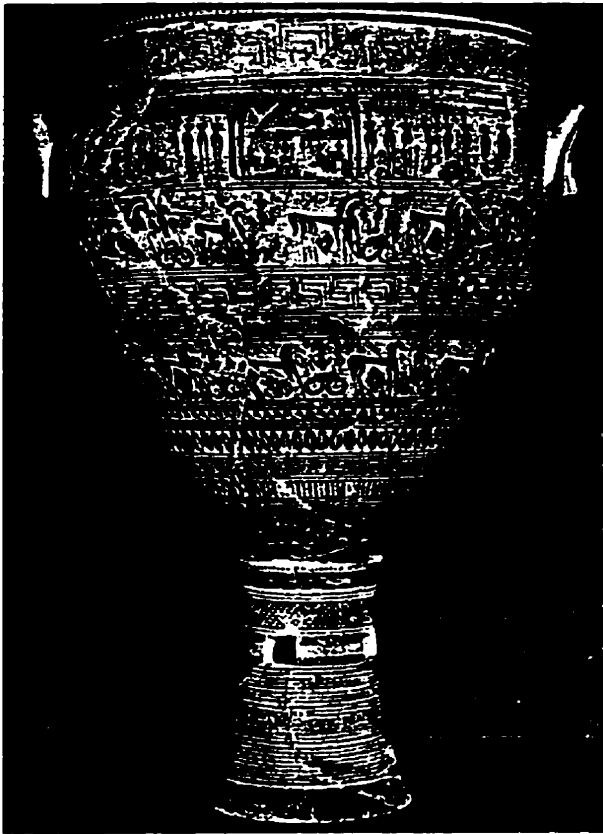


Figure 53 Drawings of Hunt Narratives, Room S, Ashurbanipal's North Palace

Figure 54 Drawing of Hunt Narratives, Top Band (detail), Room S, Ashurbanipal's North Palace





Figures 55a, 55b Photograph of New York Krater, Sides a (left) & b (right)

Figure 56 Photograph of New York Krater, Side a (detail)

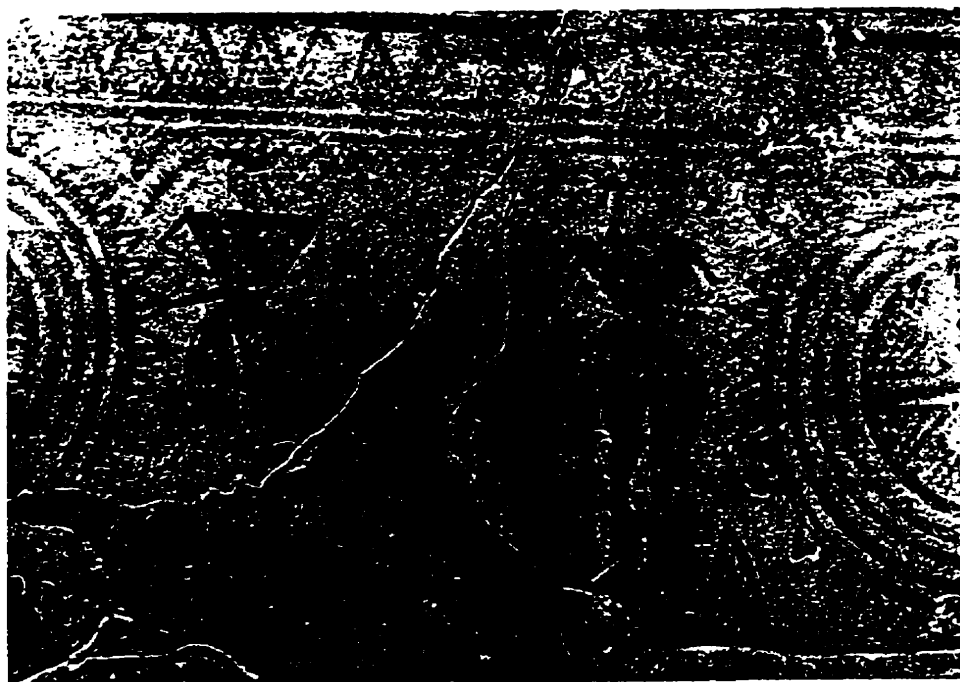


Figure 57 Photograph of New York Krater, Side b (detail)



Figure 58 Photograph of Argos Krater Fragment

Figure 59 Photograph of Eleusis Amphora (detail), Blinding of Polyphemus



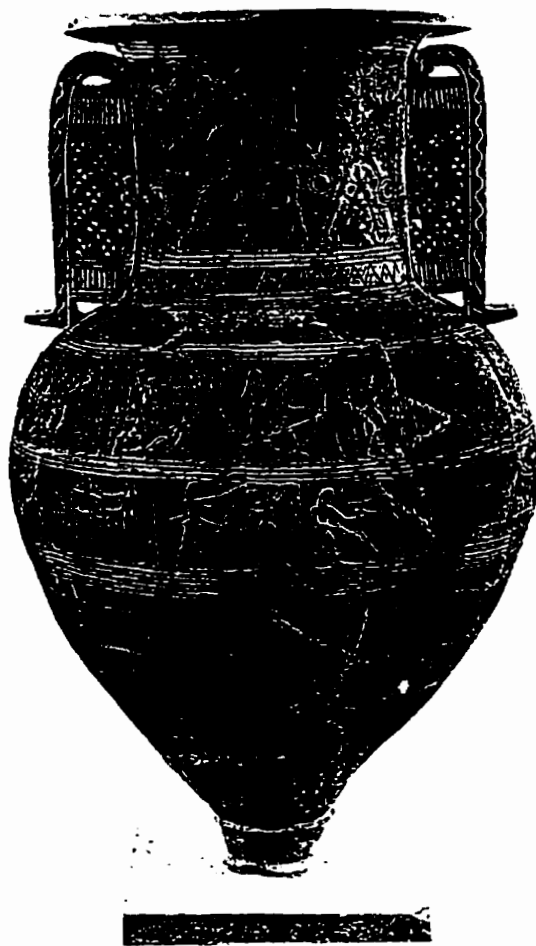


Figure 60a, 60b Photograph of Mykonos Relief Pithos. Scenes from the Sack of Troy





Figure 61 Photograph, Black-figure Amphora by Exekias (detail), Suicide of Ajax



Figure 63
Photograph of Red-Figure Kylix
by Kodros, Deeds of Theseus
(right, top)



Figure 64
Photograph, Telephos Frieze, from
Pergamon (detail), Auge Scene
(right, bottom)



Figure 62
Photograph, Nike of Samothrace

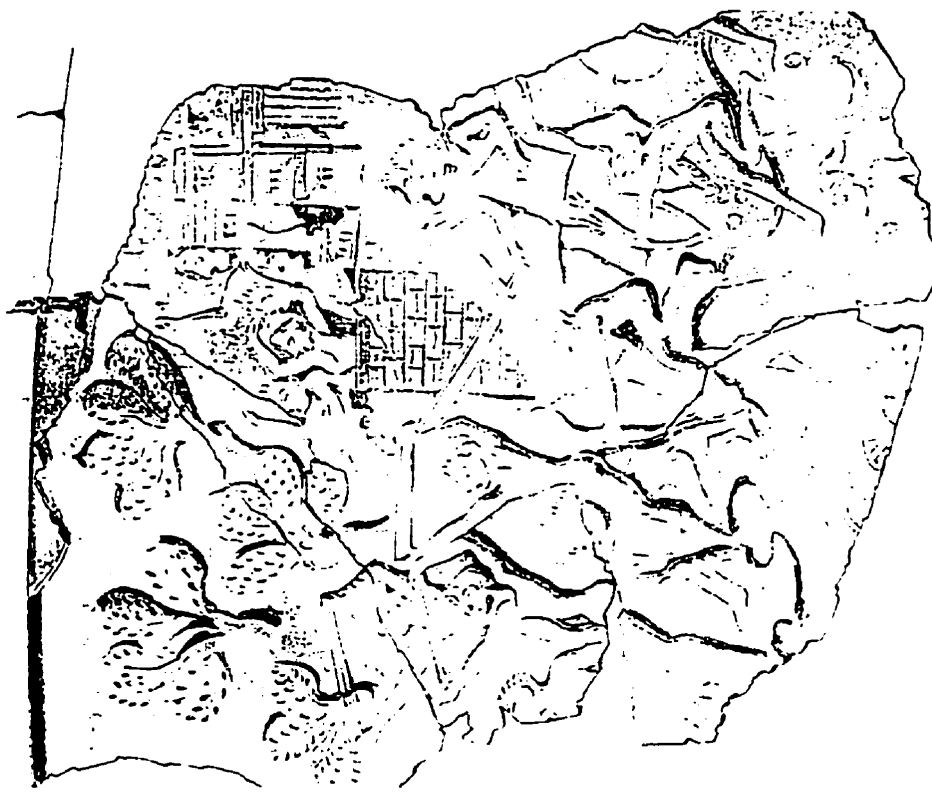


Figure 65b
Drawing of Siege Rhyton from Mycenae (detail)

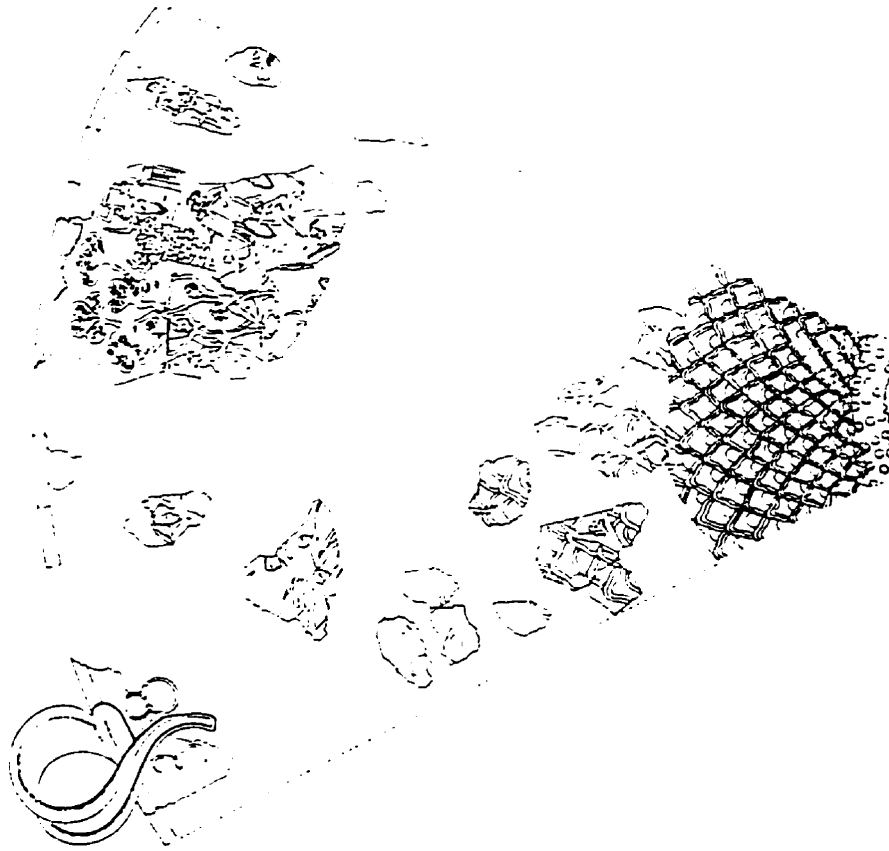


Figure 65a
Drawing of Siege Rhyton from Mycenae

Figure 66a Drawing of Gold Cup from Vapheio, Violent Cup



Figure 66b Drawing of Gold Cup from Vapheio, Quiet Cup

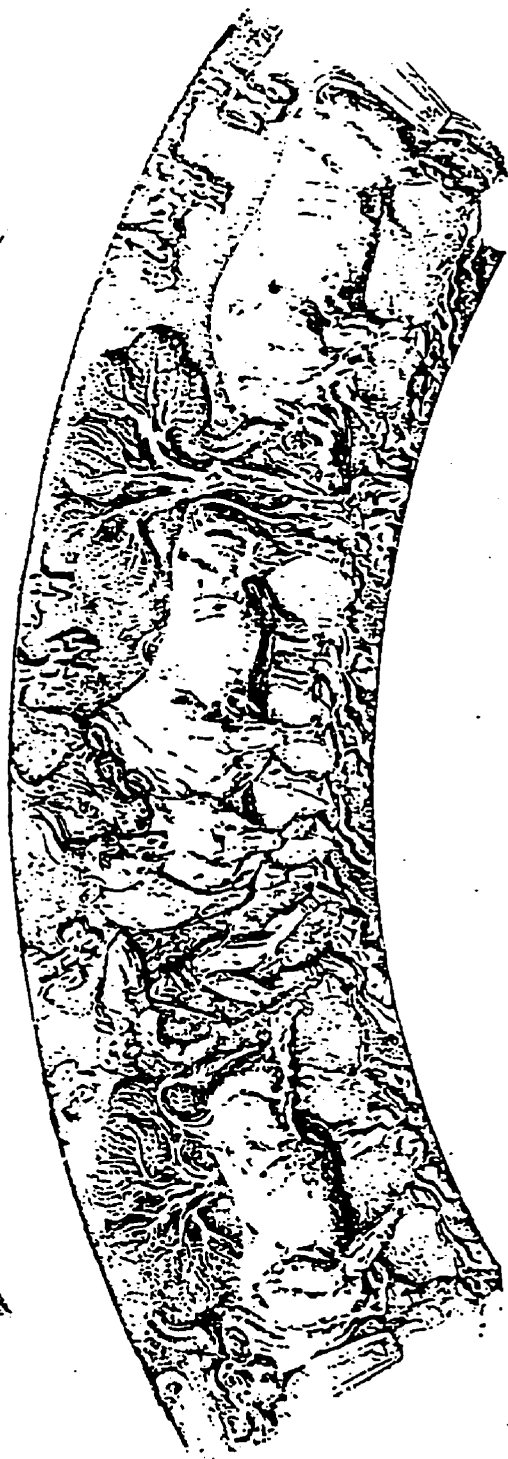




Figure 67 Drawing of Temple Fresco from Knossos, Detail of Seated Women

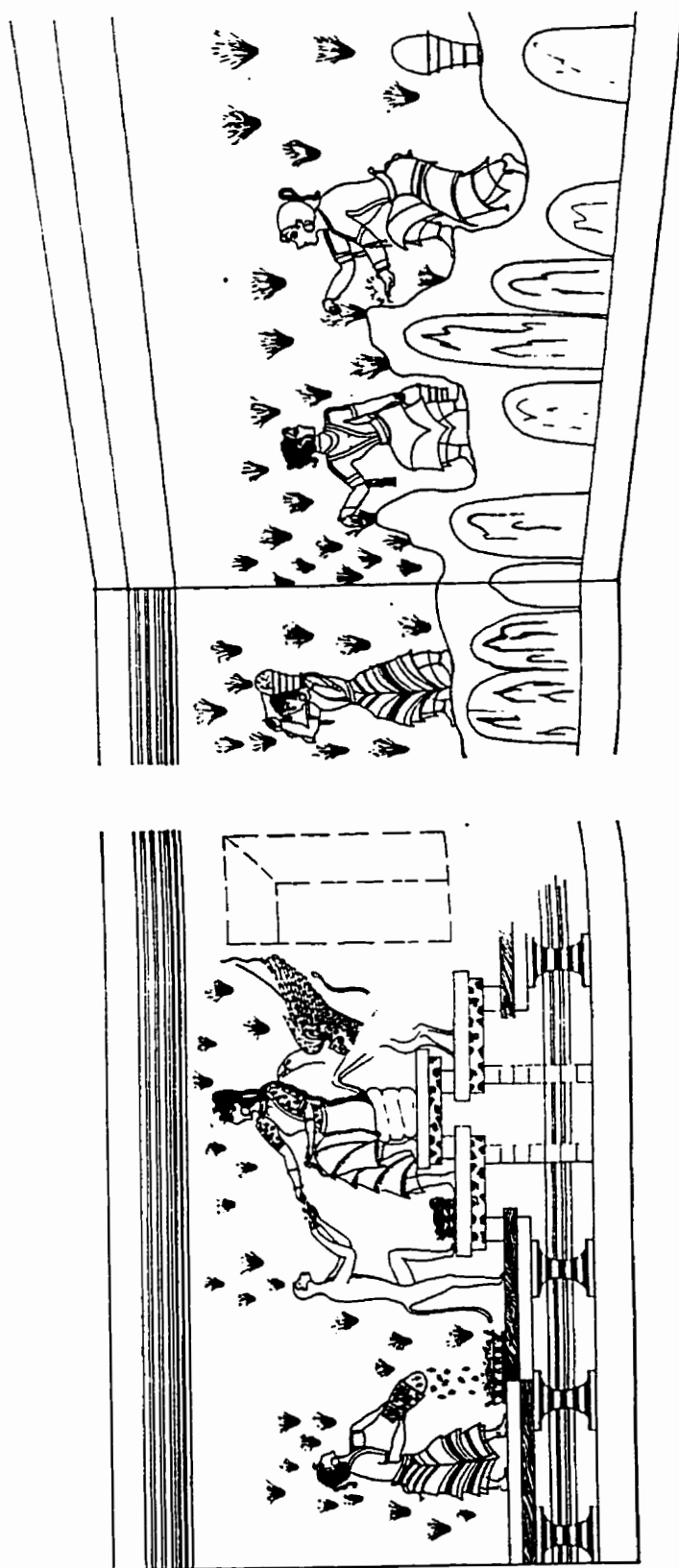


Figure 68a, 68b Drawings of Xeste 3 Frescoes from Thera, Upper Level

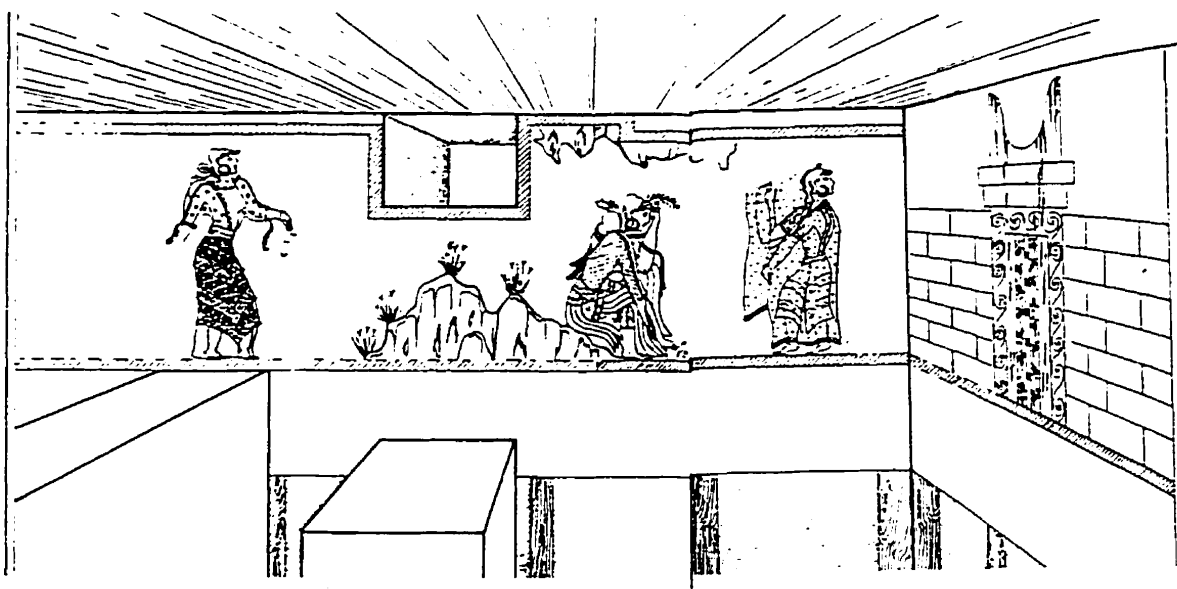


Figure 69 Drawing of Xeste 3 Frescoes from Thera, Lower Level



Figure 70 Photographs of Hagia Triadha Sarcophagus: a (top), b (bottom)





Figure 70 Photographs of Hagia Triadha Sarcophagus: c (top), d (bottom)



Figure 73 Drawing of Impression (a) and Photograph (b) of Sealing from Chania

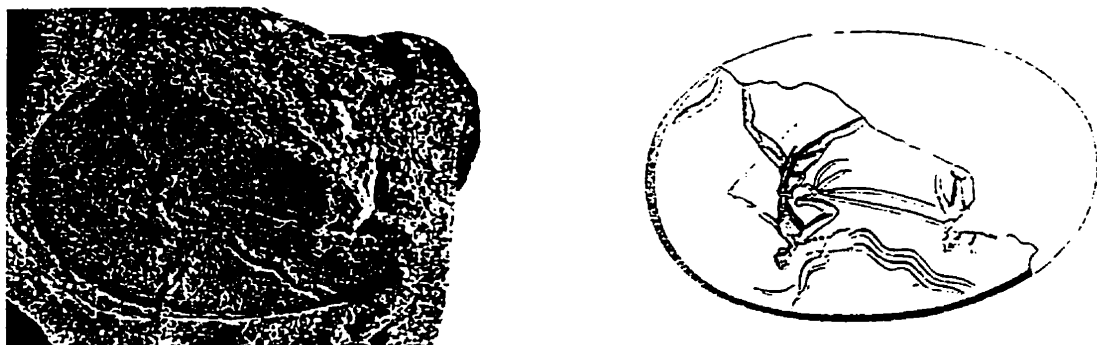


Figure 72 Drawing of Impression (a) and Photograph (b) of Gold Ring from Athens Agora

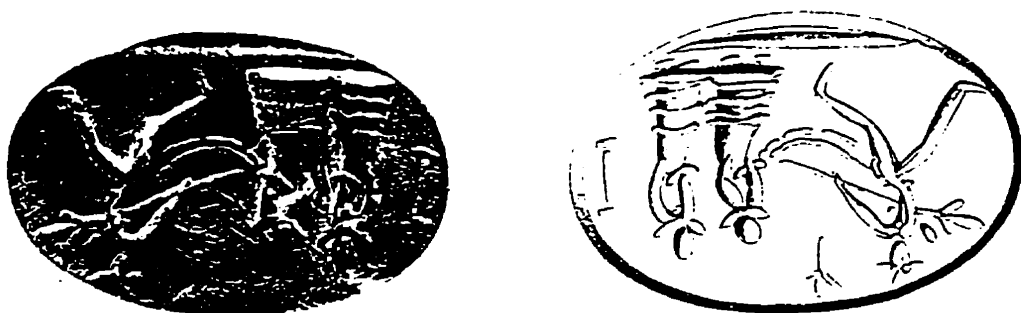


Figure 71 Drawing of Impression (a) and Photograph (b) of Gold Ring from Tiryns

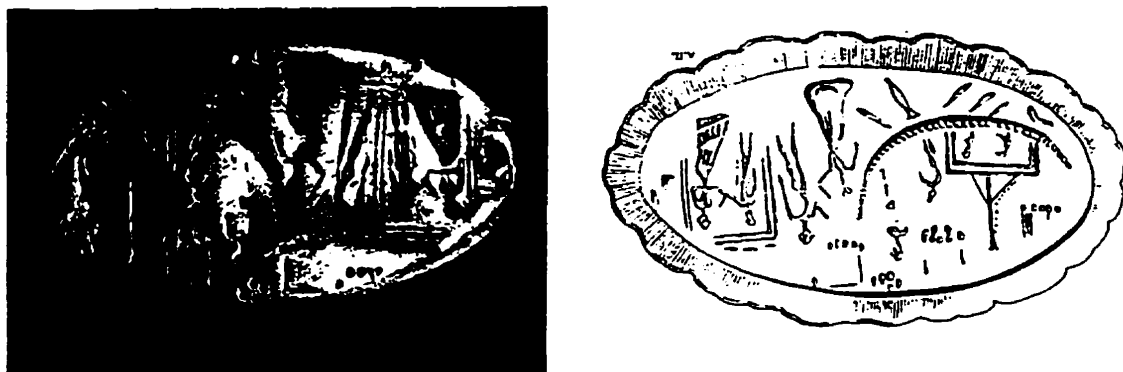


Figure 74a Drawing of Impression of the Gold Ring from Isopata

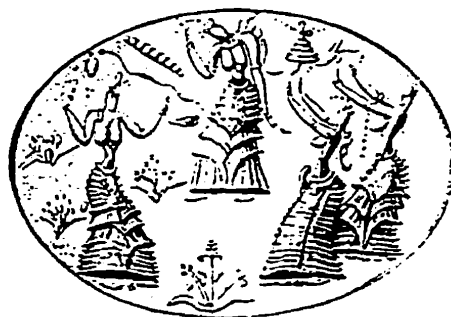


Figure 74b Photograph of Gold Ring from Isopata

Figure 75 Drawings of Impressions of Gold Rings

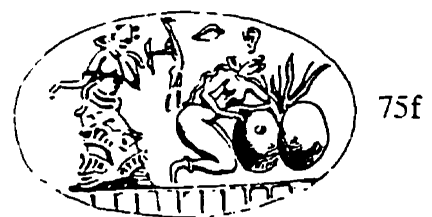


Figure 76 Drawings of Impressions of Gold Rings

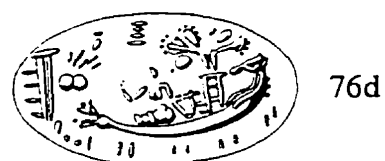


Figure 77 Drawing of Sealing "Mother of the Mountain"

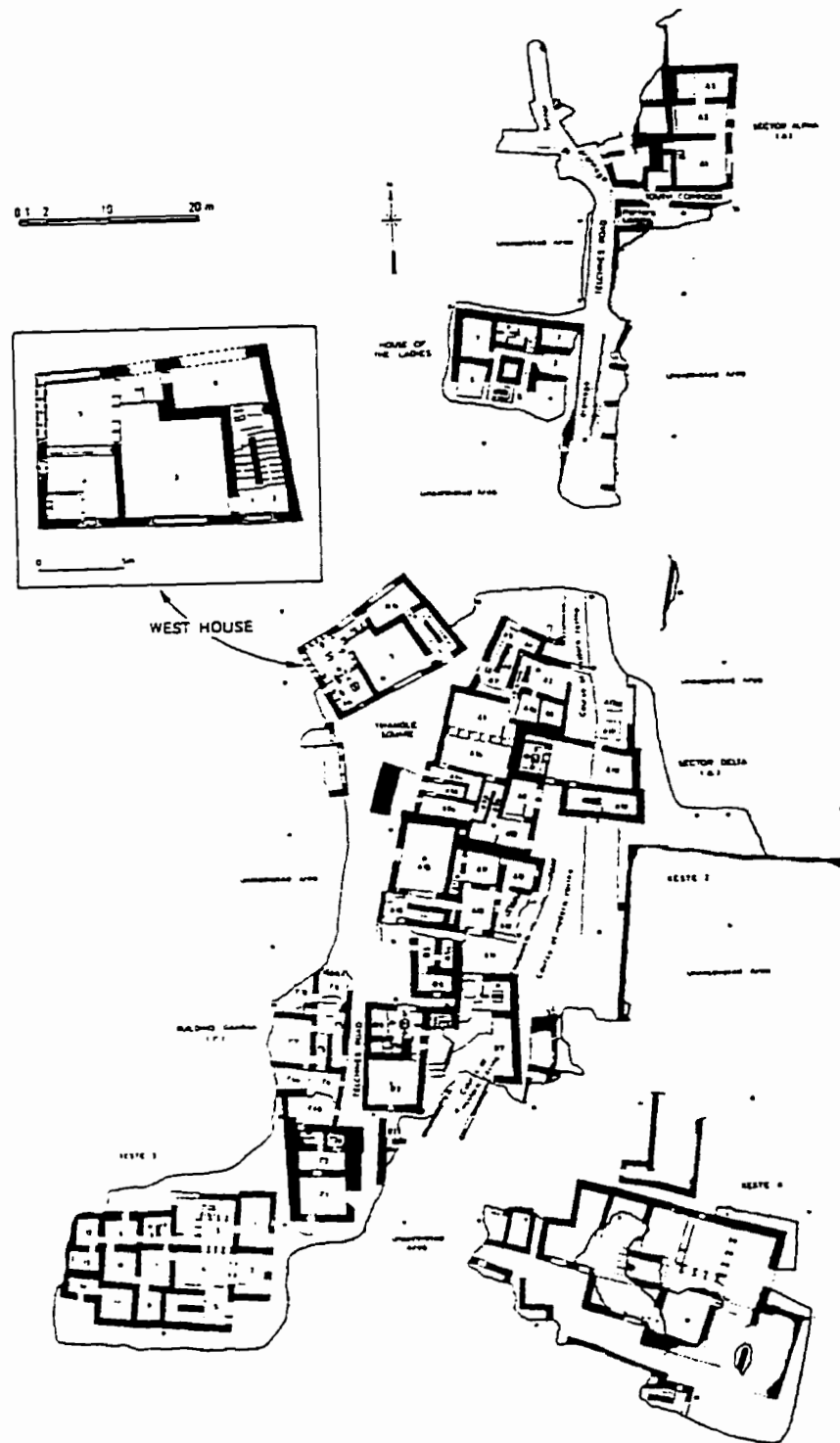


Figure 78 Plan of Akrotiri, Thera

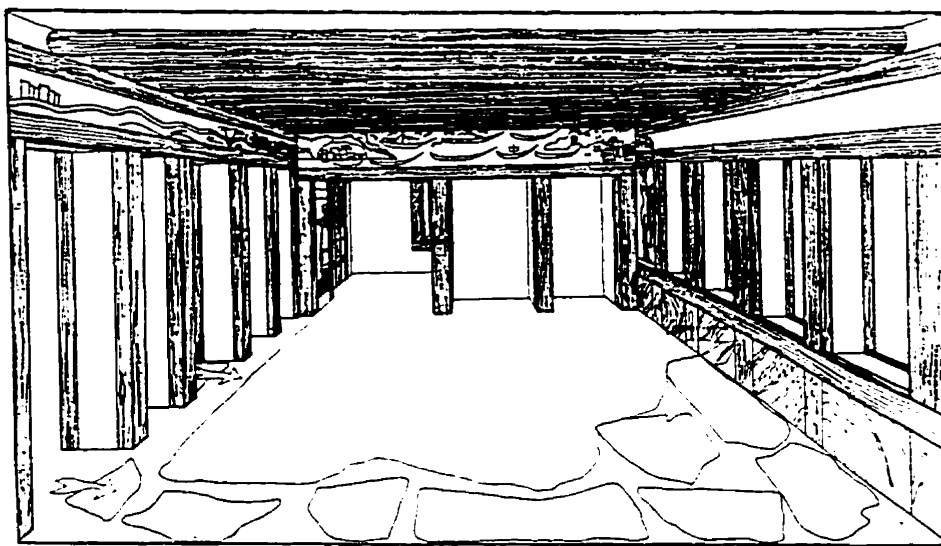


Figure 79a Reconstruction of Room 5, Frieze Position
(first floor, looking south)

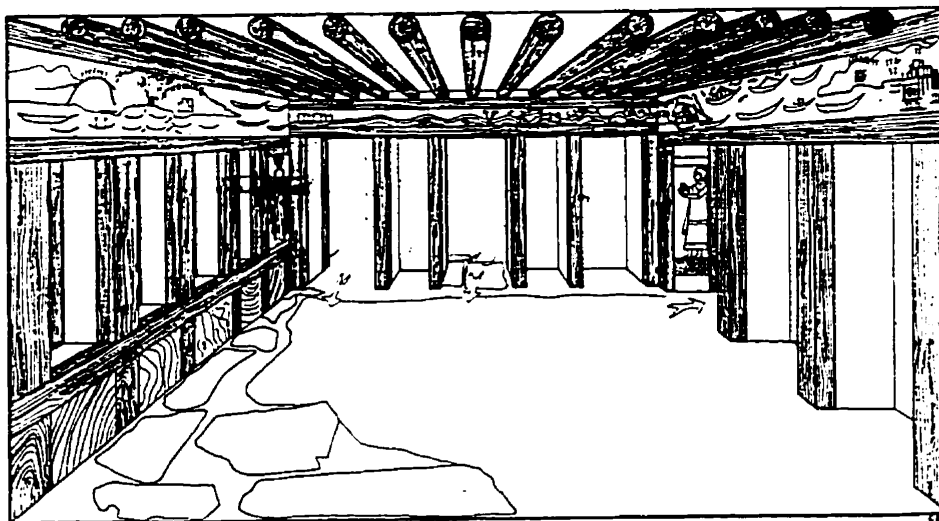


Figure 79b Reconstruction of Room 5, Frieze Position
(first floor, looking east)

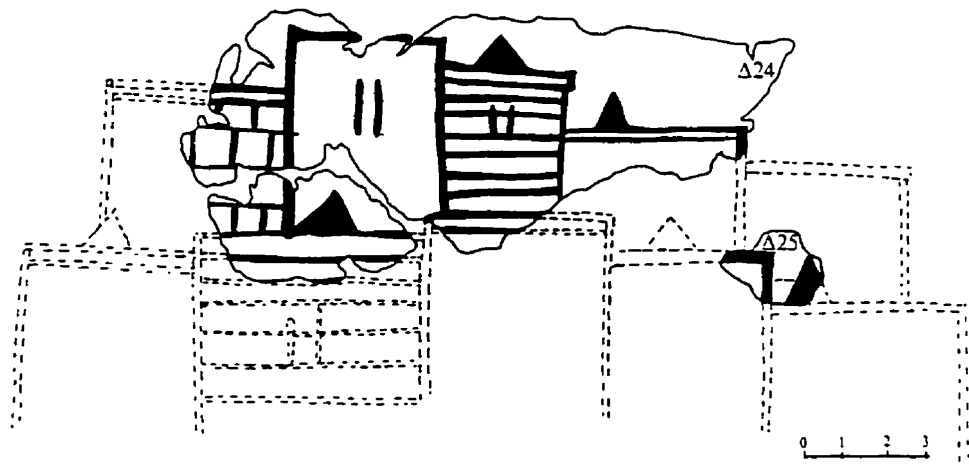


Figure 80 Town I, West Frieze



Figure 81 North Wall, Photograph



Figure 82 Reconstruction Drawing of North Frieze



Figure 83 Photograph of North Frieze, Detail of Corpses

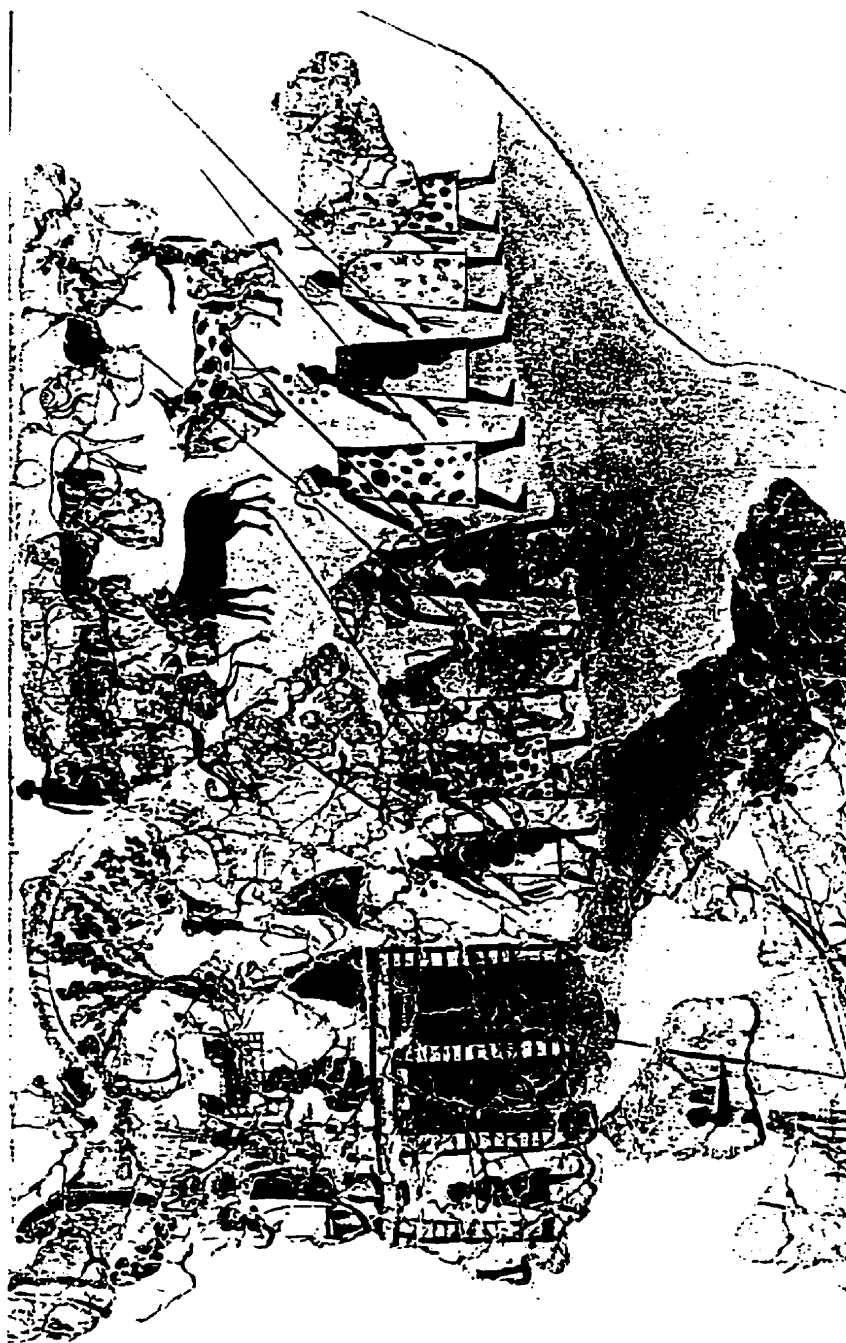


Figure 84 Photograph of North Frieze
Detail of Marching Soldiers, Women at Well, Shepherds, Spectators



Figure 85 Photograph of North Frieze, Detail of Meeting on Hill



Figure 86 Photograph of East Frieze



Figure 87 Photograph of East Frieze, Detail of Cat Chasing Bird

Figure 88 Photograph of East Frieze, Detail of Griffin Chasing Doe



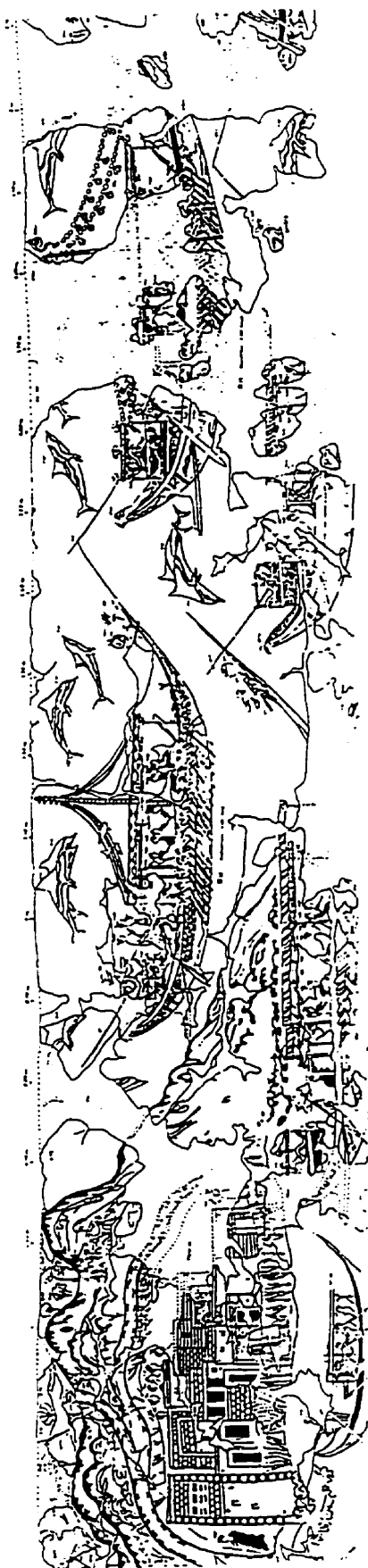
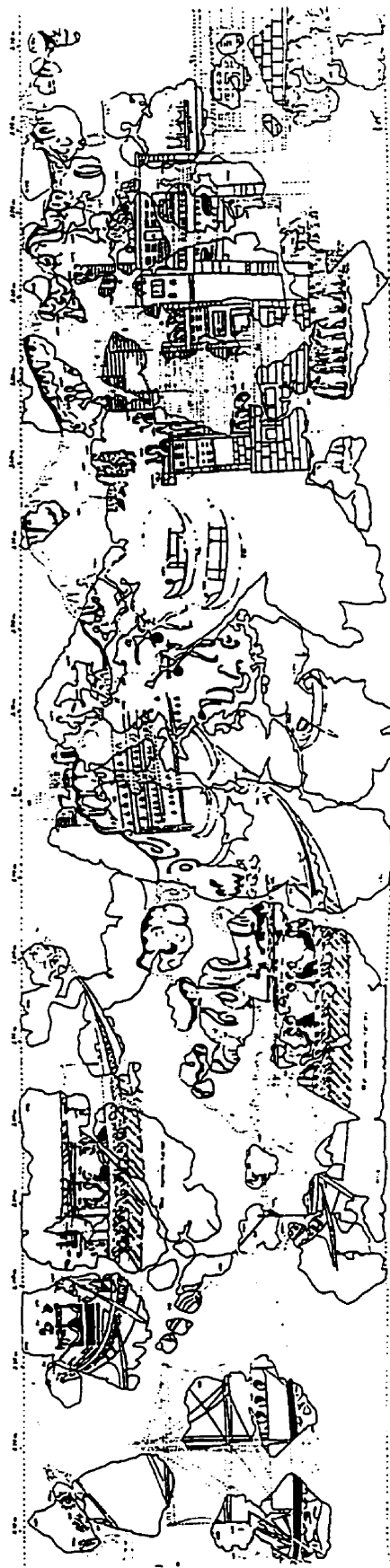


Figure 89a (top) & Figure 89b (bottom)
Reconstruction Drawing of South Frieze



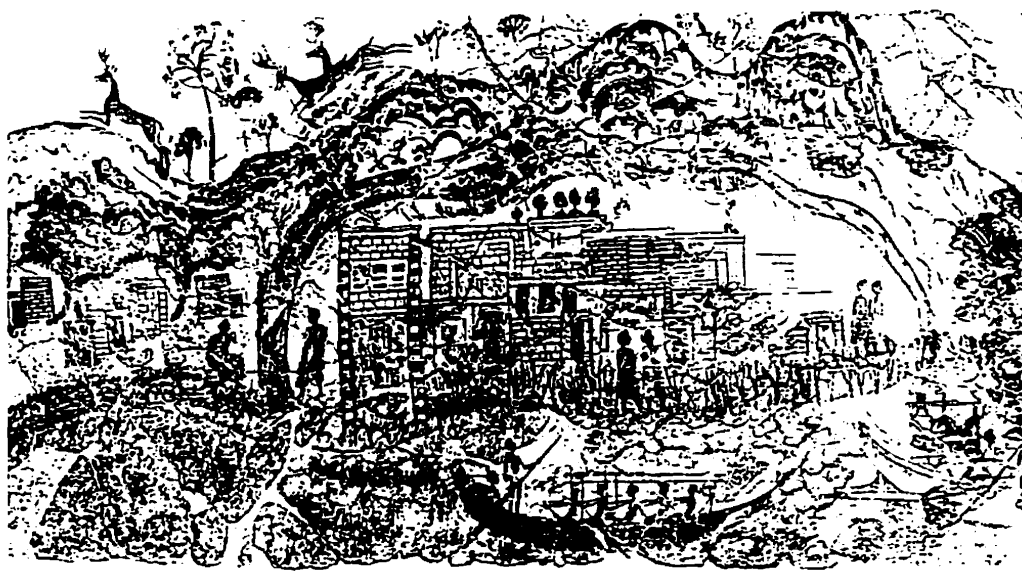


Figure 90 Photograph of South Frieze, Detail of "Departure Town"

Figure 91 Photograph of South Frieze, Detail of Conversing Men



Figure 92 Drawing of Hull and Stern Motifs on Ships of South Frieze

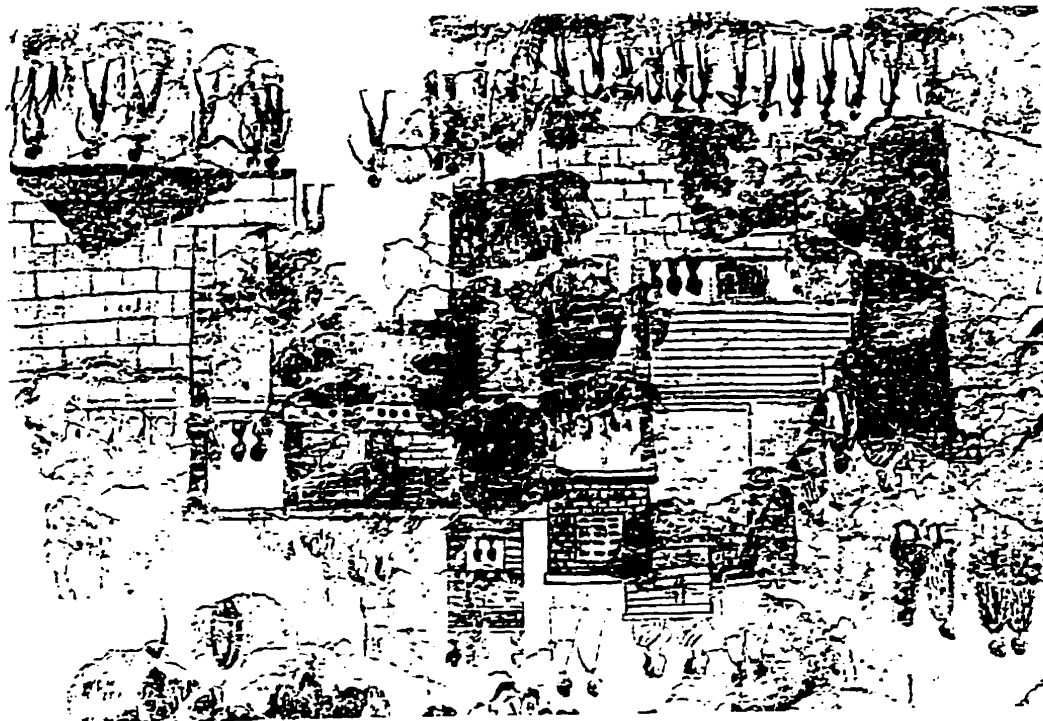
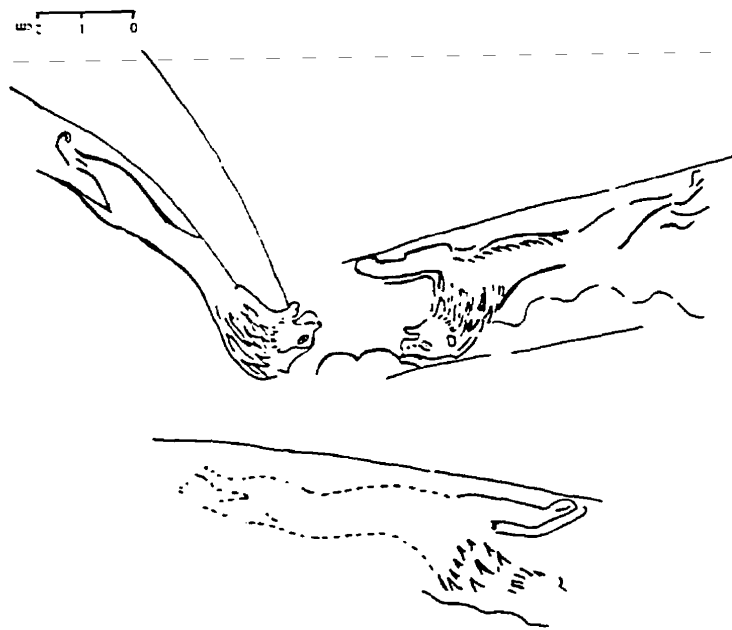


Figure 93 Photograph of South Frieze, Detail of "Arrival Town"



Figures 94a (top) and 94b (bottom) Photograph of South Frieze
Detail of Running Men (top) & Men with Bundles (bottom) in "Arrival Town"





Figure 95 Photograph of South Frieze, Detail of Women in "Arrival Town"

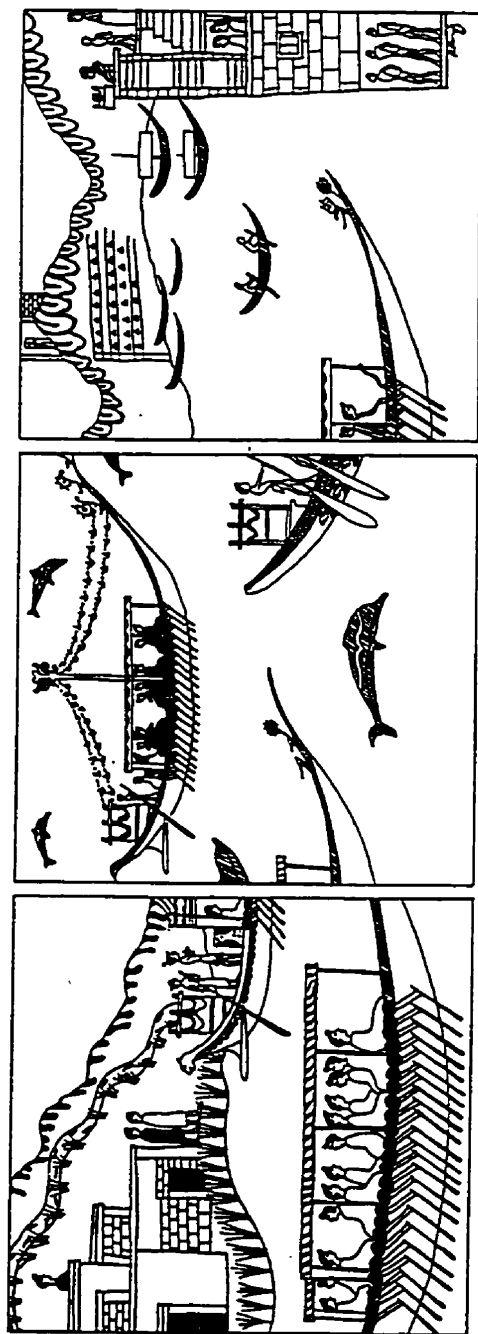


Figure 96 Cartoon Version of South Frieze

Figure 97 Photograph of North Frieze
Detail of Man with Forelock in Hilltop Meeting



Figure 98 Photograph of South Frieze
Detail of Man with Forelock in Flagship

Figure 99 Photograph of North Frieze
Detail of Men with Crossed Arms in Hilltop Meeting



Figure 100 Photograph of South Frieze
Detail of Sailor(?) with Crossed Arms

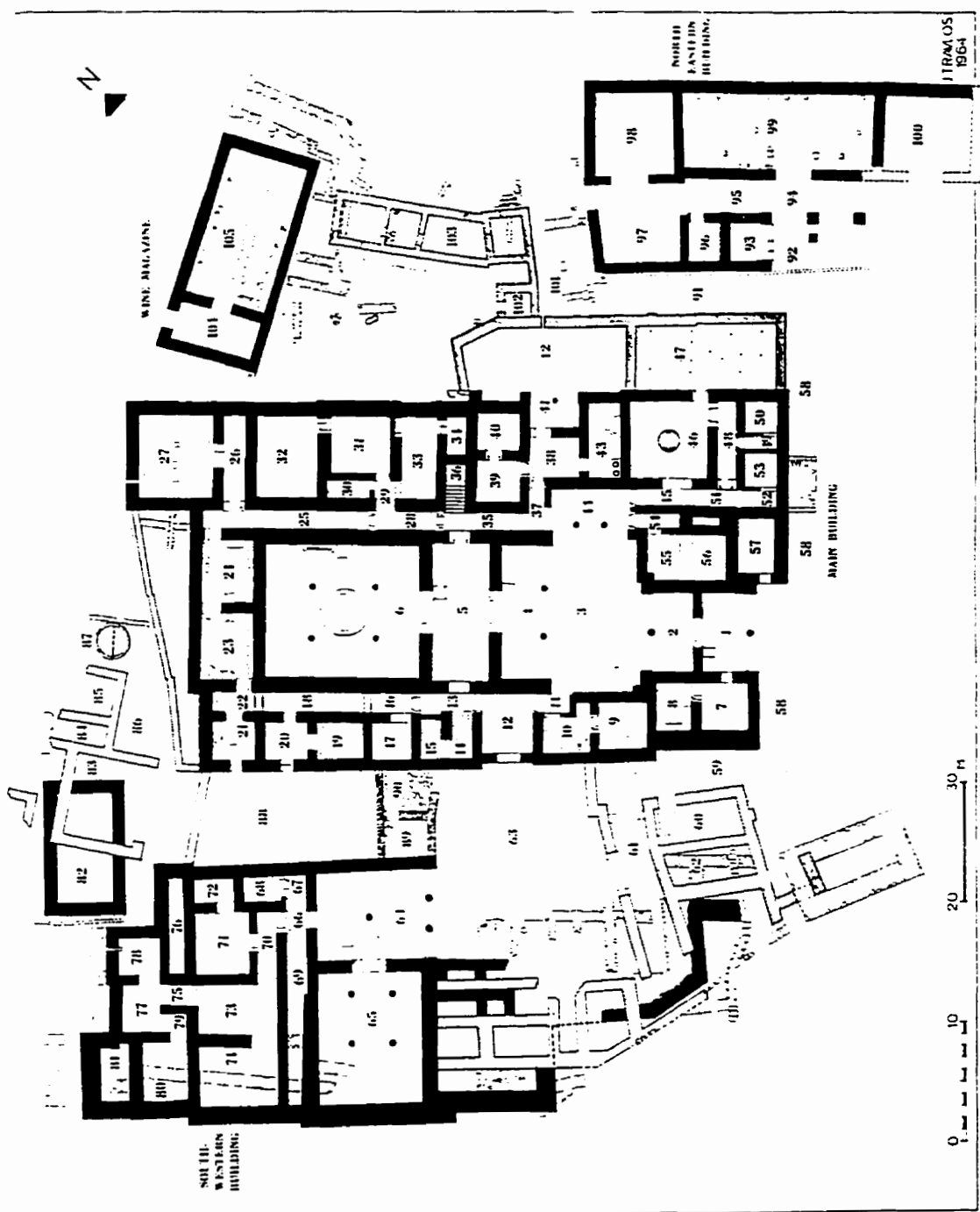


Figure 101 Plan of "Palace of Nestor" at Pylos (all phases shown)

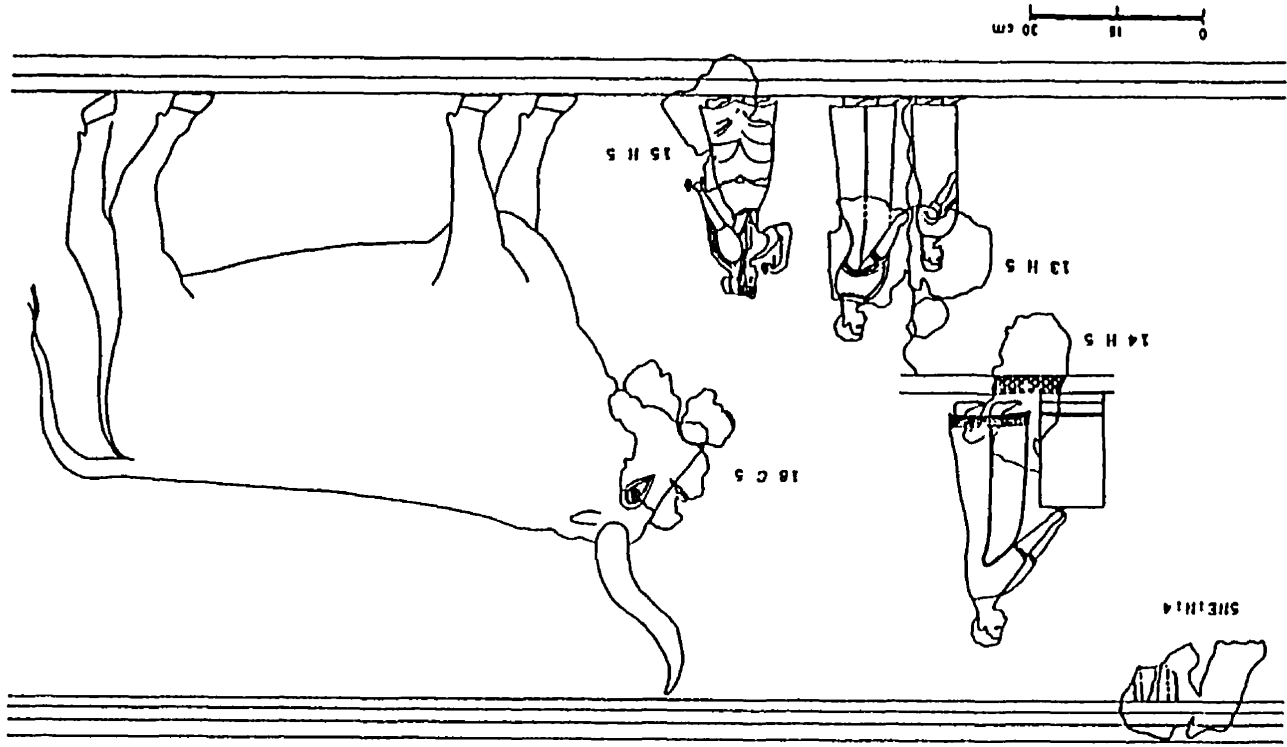


Figure 103 Reconstruction Drawing of Frescoes in Pyllos Palace Vestibule by L. McCallum, Detail

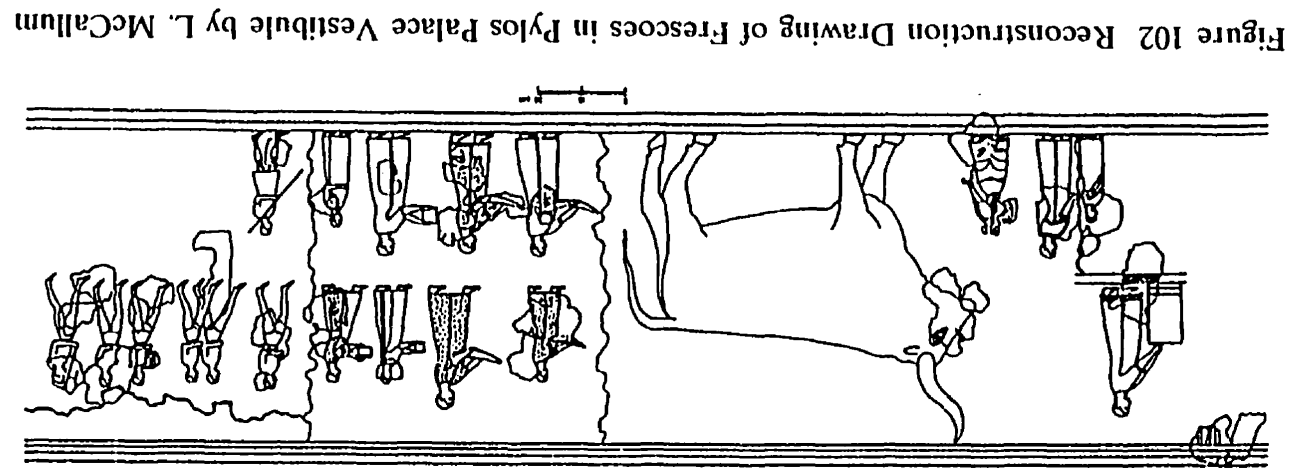


Figure 102 Reconstruction Drawing of Frescoes in Pyllos Palace Vestibule by L. McCallum

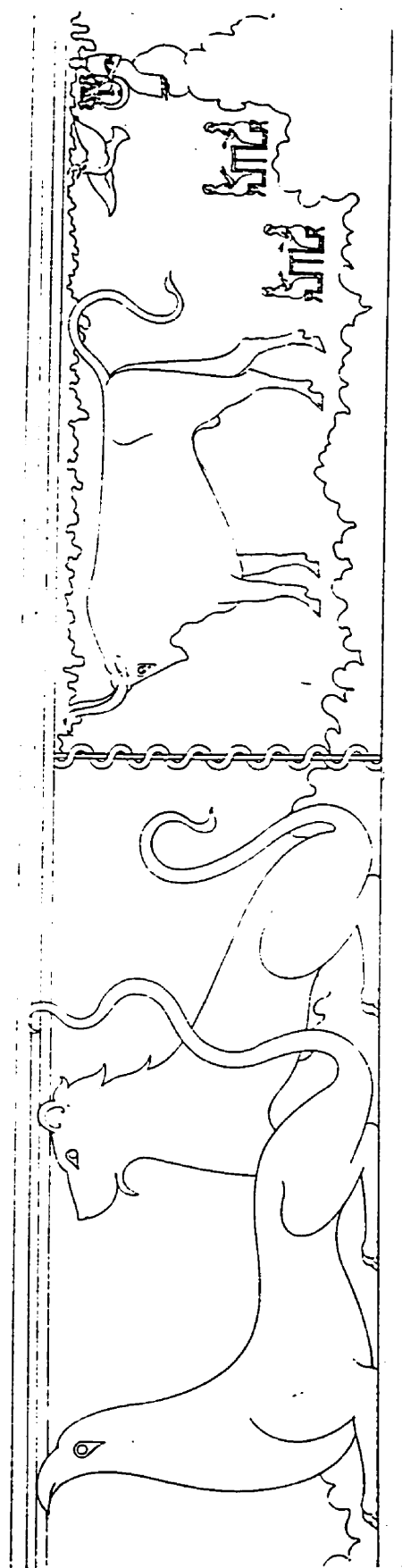


Figure 104 Reconstruction Drawing of Frescoes in Pylos Palace Throne Room by P. de Jong

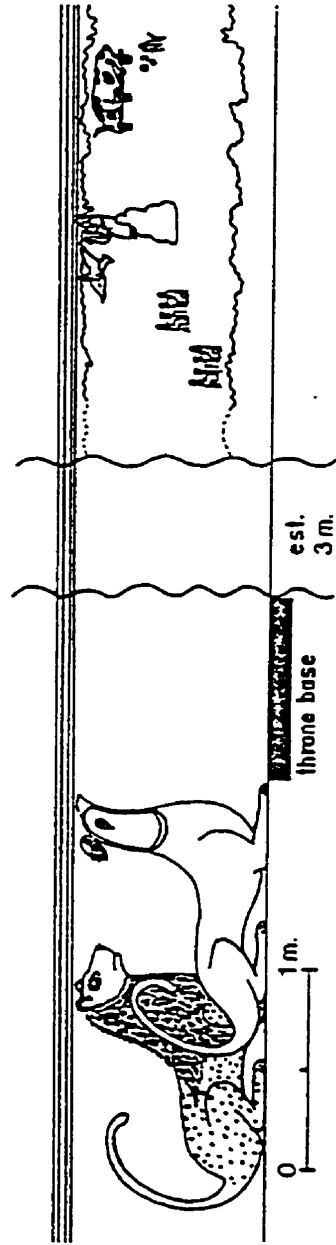


Figure 105a Reconstruction Drawing of Fresco in Pylos Palace Throne Room by L. McCallum

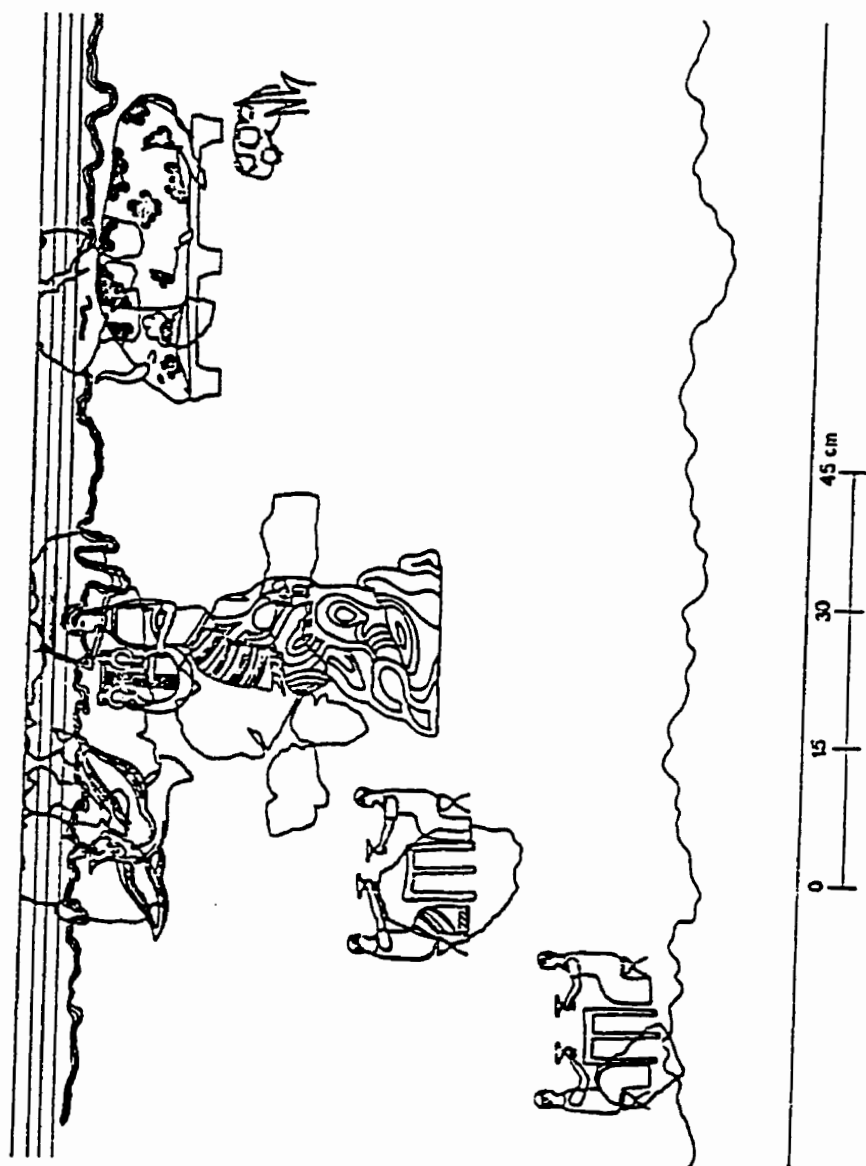


Figure 105b Reconstruction Drawing of Fresco in Pylos Palace Throne Room by L. McCallum

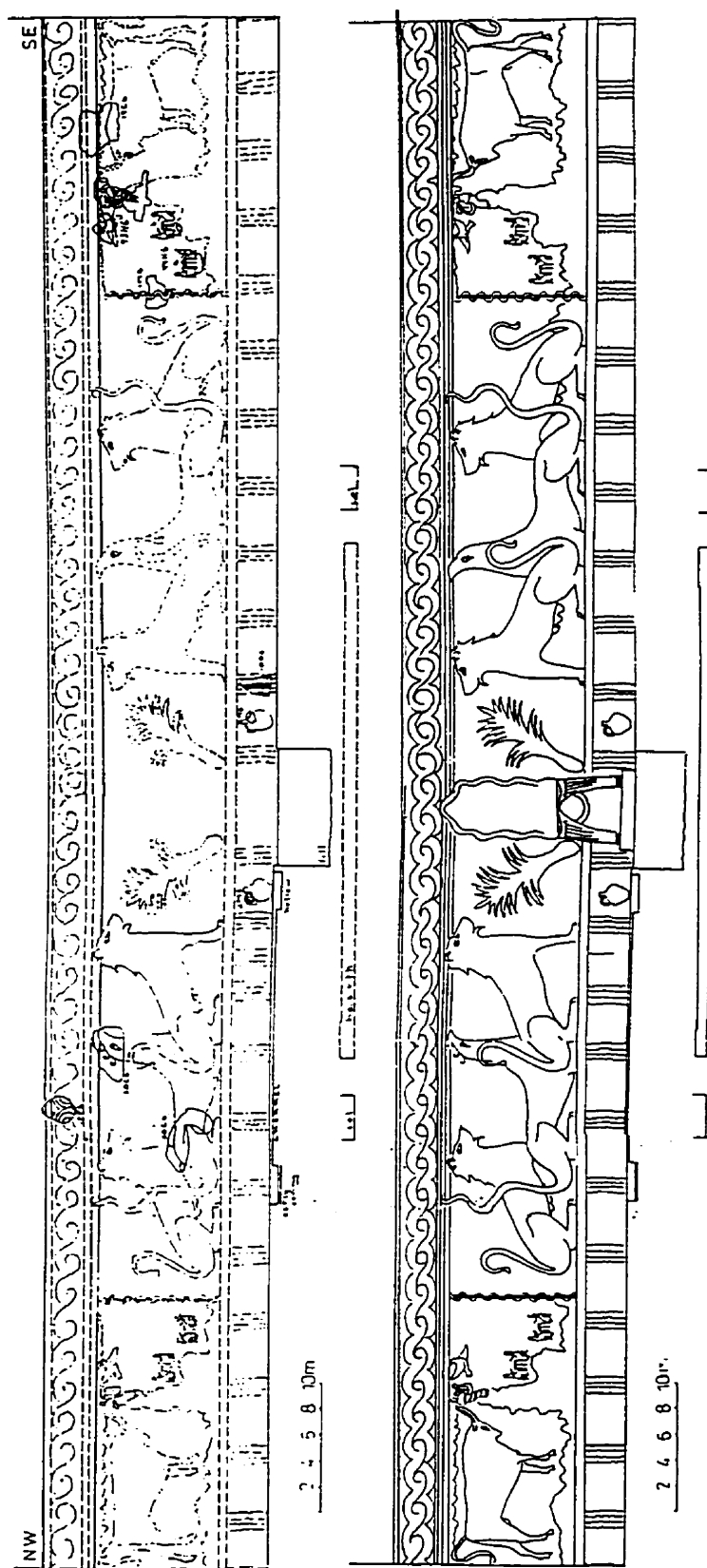
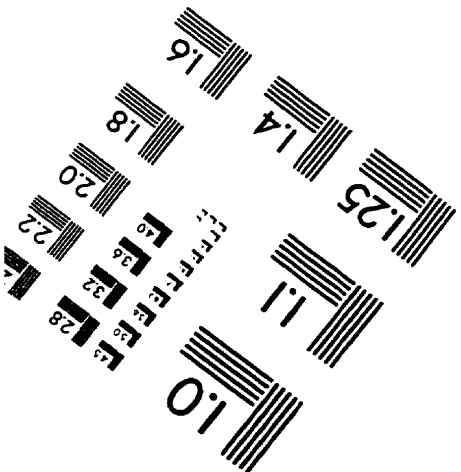
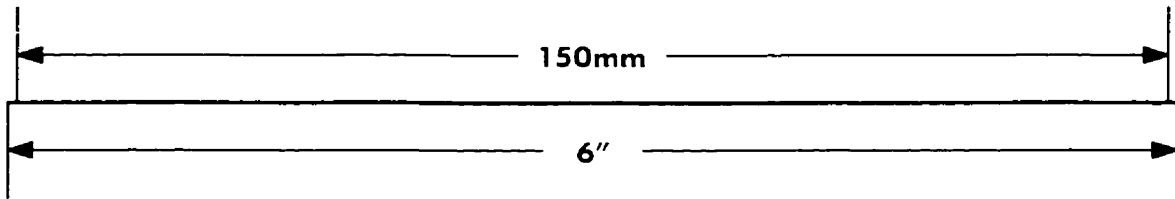
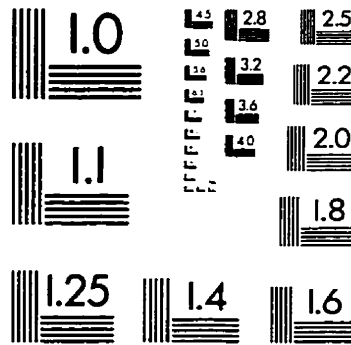
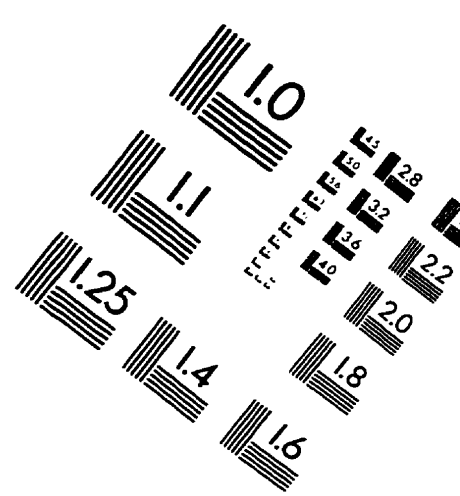
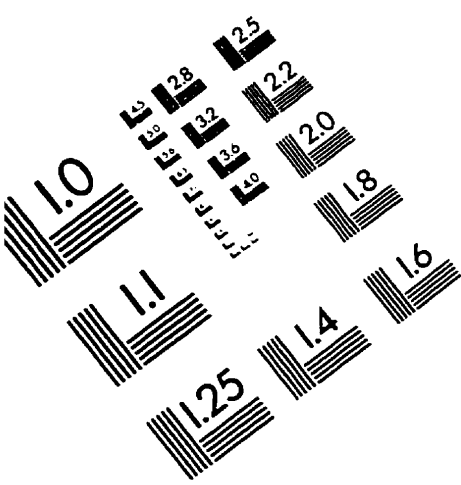


Figure 106 Reconstruction Drawing of Frescoes in Pylos Palace Throne Room by J. Younger

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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