

# A Minoan Fresco from Katsamba

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## Abstract

A small Minoan fresco fragment, found some years ago in a MMIII-LMI house at Katsamba, the harbor town of Knossos, implies, by the design preserved on it, that large scale figurative representations occurred in mural decorations of that site. More specifically, the design preserved, partially rendered in miniature style, seems to depict embroidered and/or textile patterns and thus is possibly a decoration upon the dress of a female figure of the general type and scale of the "Ladies in Blue" fresco from the palace of Knossos and of analogous compositions from elsewhere in Crete or the Cyclades.

In 1955, during his excavations at Katsamba, the harbor town of Knossos, Ephor S. Alexiou found three minute fragments of painted stucco in a Minoan building, dated by its pottery to the MMIII-LMI period.<sup>1</sup> The fragments joined to form no larger a piece than that illustrated in Fig. 1, measuring a maximum of 12.8 cm. in length, by a maximum of 8.1 cm. in height. The painted representation had been rendered in Miniature style, a type of wallpainting prevalent in the Knossos area during the MMIII-LMI period.<sup>2</sup> Because of the minuteness of scale, even small fragments from such paintings often provide enough pictorial information for one to define the particular motifs preserved on

<sup>1</sup> The building was only partially excavated, for it lies largely under modern houses. Its construction and use were originally attributed to the MMIII-LMIA period, with its destruction being assigned more recently to the LMIB period. Compare S. Alexiou in *Praktika* 1955, 314-18 with S. Alexiou, *Ysterominoikoi Taphoi Limenos Knosou (Katsamba)* (Athens 1967) 2. The specific location is at Anemomylia, where in 1922 Evans had conducted some digging with the hope of locating the source of sealings of MMIII date, reportedly found there; *PM* II, 255 and *Praktika* 1955, 318.

<sup>2</sup> M.C. Shaw, "The Miniature Frescoes of Tylissos Reconsidered," *AA* 1972, 171, n. 1 gives references to miniature paintings from Knossos and vicinity. We must now add the recently discovered miniature fresco from the LMIA site of Akrotiri, at Thera, S. Marinatos, *Excavations at Thera I* (Athens 1968), II (1969), III (1970), IV (1971), V (1972), VI (1973); hereafter cited as *Thera I* etc.; *Thera VI*, 38-44 and Col. Pls. 7-9. The date of the miniature style in wallpaintings in Crete is discussed in *PM* III, 31-37.

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Dr. S. Alexiou for permission to study, photograph and trace this fragment, work done in the summer of 1973 during research related to a larger project on certain

them and, sometimes, to form an idea about the larger compositions from which they came. The small Katsamba piece allows a few such comments.<sup>3</sup>

Ill. 1, based on a direct tracing from the fragment by the author, varies slightly from one published earlier.<sup>4</sup> The most readily recognizable feature is a frieze of birds, ca. 3.2 cm. high, bordered at the bottom by a black band 1.1 cm. high, and possibly by another black band at the top.<sup>5</sup> The area below the lower band is badly worn, but its design is partially recognizable as will be seen later.

A brief description of the painting technique<sup>6</sup> and state of preservation is prerequisite to any attempt at an interpretation of the theme. The plaster backing, 1.8 cm. thick, is very hard, medium grained, off-white to grey in color and rather flat at the back, the last suggesting that it was applied on a smooth, even wall surface. The pigments were applied after a fine slip of white plaster, ca. 1 mm. thick, was added on the plaster surface. Next the general background colors were painted on: a vivid bright blue for the sky in the bird frieze, and possibly red for the lower half of the fragment, the surface here being too worn to be certain.<sup>7</sup> The next phase was to render the motifs (birds, the rockwork below them, and other ele-

Knossian frescoes. The latter research was supported by a grant made by the Canada Council (Grant S73-0386) and undertaken jointly with Dr. M.A.S. Cameron. Fig. 1 is from a color slide, courtesy of Dr. Cameron who photographed the fragment. I would also like to express here my appreciation to my husband, as well as to Professor J.W. Graham and Dr. Cameron, for reading the article and making helpful comments.

<sup>4</sup> The earlier drawing, made by the artist T. Phanourakis, is reproduced in a somewhat reduced scale in *Praktika* (1955), 318, Fig. 2. See also W.S. Smith, *Interconnections in the Ancient Near East* (New Haven 1965; hereafter cited as Smith, *Interconnections*) Fig. 111.

<sup>5</sup> The blue ground of the frieze terminates above in a straight line with traces of black paint above it. Black paint painted onto the blue occurs clearly in the bottom band. Apparently the blue was applied here first, serving as a general background against which the birds were painted and also as a ground for other decorative motifs.

<sup>6</sup> For techniques specifically related to painting done in the miniature style see Shaw (*supra* n. 2), 182-83.

<sup>7</sup> *Infra* n. 15, and below in the text.

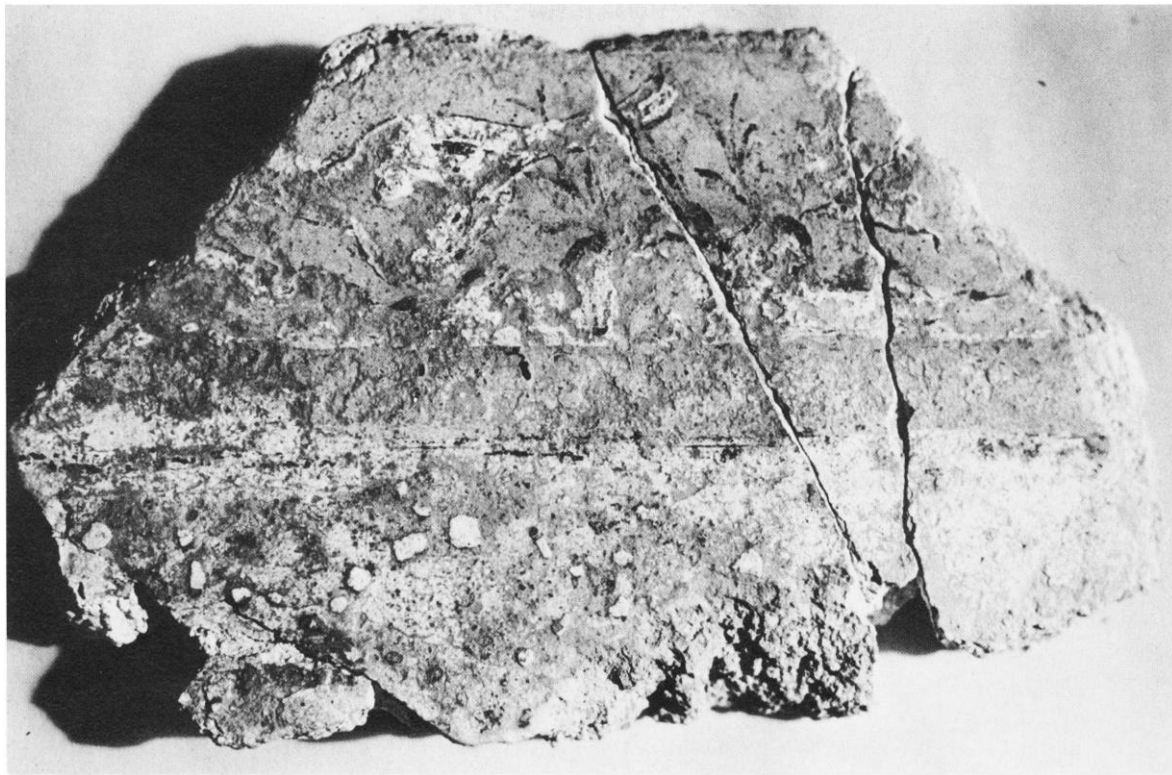


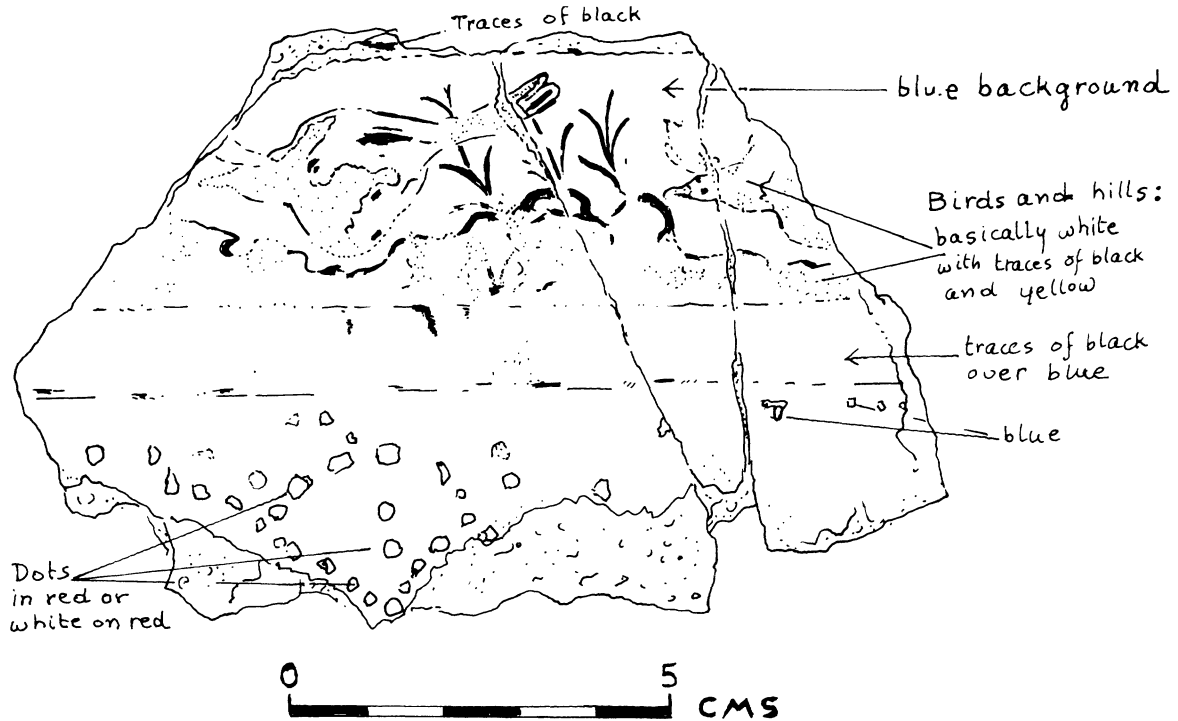
FIG. 1. Photograph of the Katsamba fresco fragment, slightly larger than actual scale.

ments in the lower area) in silhouette fashion in rather thickly applied white paint. It appears that the blue pigment may have been allowed to dry first for where the thick white paint has flaked off the blue is often intact underneath. The evidence is not clear, however, for in some places the blue surface is slightly depressed where the white has flaked off, which implies that the surface was still damp when the white pigment was added.

Black and yellow were the other two colors used for the frieze. Black was used for the band/s bordering the frieze, and also for partial outlining, appearing as a very fine line along the contours of the birds and as a somewhat thicker edging for the rockwork. It also served to depict details of the feathers, some of the veining of the rockwork, and the reed-like plants. The extent to which yellow was used is not clear, because of the poor preservation of the white paint on which yellow was applied. There are clear traces of yellow, however, on the head and neck of the bird to the right and on the wing of that on the left. Yellow also

appears in the form of veining on the rockwork. A straight-edge was clearly used to help the artist draw the lines of the band/s, but, otherwise, the painting was executed free-hand. In the few spots where the uppermost painted surface is preserved, there is some indication of polishing.

The interpretation of the bird frieze will concern us first. Visible are parts of two birds, both facing left and placed in two low areas of the terrain, on either side of a prominence marked by a number of rounded heights with reed-like plants rising from some. Both birds which appear in front of some of these plants are disproportionately large for the landscape within which they are fitted. Though very fragmentary, the birds, when closely examined, seem to have the same shape, posture and size. Rhythm and repetition of forms impart a decorative quality to the composition, but there is also a surprising degree of realism evident in the meticulous articulation of detail, especially impressive at this small scale. Interesting in this respect is a seemingly unorthodox feature, namely the ap-



ILL. 1. Drawing of the Katsamba fresco fragment (M.C. Shaw)

parent indication of both eyes of the bird on the right. The upper black dot could be residual paint from the black outline of the upper part of the head, but, although they are rare, frontal views of animals nevertheless appear in art of this period.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the degree of detail once in the original, the identification of the specific species of the birds and their particular posture cannot, because of poor preservation, be definitely ascertained. The form of the birds is traceable on the basis of the black outlines, remnants of white color with black and yellow brushwork on it, and finally by the shape of shallow depressions left in the blue surface, where the thick white paint in which they had

been rendered has flaked off.<sup>9</sup> There seems, however, to be little doubt that both birds are of the same species. In addition to their comparable size, their foreparts are also similar in color and shape. The presence of yellow on heads and necks and a crest-like element over their heads is, presumably, what led to their identification by the excavator as hoopoes.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the basically white coloring of the body, the long black bill with bent end of the right bird and the barred white and black tail of the left bird closely conform to the color and graphic conventions of the hoopoes of the Caravanserai Frieze.<sup>11</sup> The most unclear feature is the large globular lower body traceable in the left bird.

<sup>8</sup> One such example is the frontal view of the head of one of the agrimia sitting on the roof of the shrine on the LMI Sanctuary Rhyton from the Palace of Kato Zakros. Similar experimentation can be seen in an inlaid dagger from a shaft grave at Mycenae, S. Marinatos and M. Hirmer, *Kreta, Thera und das Mykenische Hellas* (Munich 1973) Pl. 109, Col. Pl. LI, top (note fish with both eyes showing) and Col. Pl. L, top (note rear view of gazelle's head).

<sup>9</sup> M. Lang picturesquely refers to such motifs, recognizable only by means of the indentation left on the plaster surface when the basic pigment in which they were rendered wore off, as "ghosts," M. Lang, *The Palace of Nestor*, vol. II: *The Frescoes* (Princeton 1969) 10. The term "ghost" has been

analogously used in connection with Attic vase painting.

<sup>10</sup> The drawing by Phanourakis (*supra* n. 4) omits the white form over the head of the bird on the left. This corresponds to the better rendered crest of the bird on the right. It is possible that this omission led Smith, who may not have seen the actual fragment, to suggest that one bird is a hoopoe, the other a pheasant, Smith, *Interconnections*, 79.

<sup>11</sup> Parts of two hoopoes are preserved in the frieze from the Caravanserai. One is seen in the Frontispiece of PM II, part I, where its tail has been restored on the basis of the fragments preserved from the second hoopoe, the latter being illustrated in PM II, pt. 1, 115, Fig. 52.

This area, crucial both for identifying the species and for defining the particular action in which the birds are engaged, is unfortunately badly preserved. Is the globular form the belly of the left bird, in which case its identification as a hoopoe, a rather daintily built bird, would become doubtful? Or were there once linear details in this badly worn area which set off the front from the rear wing of a bird in flight, a posture admittedly not following general Minoan conventions for such action?<sup>12</sup> I am inclined to believe the latter, for a number of reasons. Birds in flight, just like animals in a "flying gallop," lend themselves admirably to stylized decorative compositions, as the frieze here seems to be, while, if a static pose is preferred, birds tend to be shown in more diversified, though still conventional poses, as the Caravanserai Frieze clearly illustrates.<sup>13</sup> A description based on first hand observation of hoopoe birds in Tunisia, where they apparently migrate from Europe in early spring, is pertinent here, for, justifiably or not, it seems to reflect the very scene of birds on the Katsamba fragment. The hoopoes are said to favor the well-bushed hillsides and they "may often be seen flitting from bush to bush, their strongly marked plumage rendering them conspicuous."<sup>14</sup>

The minute size of the bird frieze (3.2 cm. in height, without the band/s) together with the prominently decorative character of its composition, as analyzed above, suggest that the frieze was sub-

<sup>12</sup> There seem to be three basic conventions used to depict birds in flight in fresco and other representations: No. 1: Both wings are spread out on either side of the body, which is seen from below, but with the neck and head in profile; No. 2: One wing is up, the other hangs down below the body, now seen in profile; No. 3: Both wings rise up and overlap each other. Each convention can be illustrated as follows: For convention No. 1: Birds from wallpaintings in the House of Frescoes, as restored by Cameron, in *BSA* 63 (1968) 23, Fig. 11, A and Fig. 13, opp. 24; and a variant of that pose, in a swallow from a fresco at Akrotiri, *Thera* III, Pl. B. For convention No. 2: Bird on ivory pyxis from the Katsamba cemetery, the pyxis being dated by S. Alexiou to the LMIA period, *Ysterominoikoi Taphoi* (supra n. 1) 55, 71-75, pls. 30-33. For convention No. 3: A swallow from the Spring Fresco of Thera, *Thera* IV, Pl. 121, top. All three conventions are used simultaneously in the inlaid decoration on both sides of a dagger from Shaft Grave V at Mycenae, *PM* III, Pl. XX. The birds on the Katsamba fragment come closest to convention No. 2, provided we can assume that the badly worn area under the left bird could be a drooping wing.

<sup>13</sup> Animals in flying gallop are too familiar a motif in Aegean art of this period to need illustration. Birds flying over rock-work, dolphins leaping over waves, gazelles galloping over hills, are themes repeatedly appearing on pottery from Akrotiri,

usually to a larger theme, such as the decoration of a patterned costume. This impression is further supported by the identification of the design on the worn lower half of the fragment, to which we now turn. The presence of a scale pattern, rendered in white dots, possibly on a red background, was first brought to my attention by M.A.S. Cameron, who ingeniously suggested that the present red dots may be spots of original background surviving because once protected by the white overlay.<sup>15</sup> Using this observation as a guide, we can trace at least two practically complete adjacent scales and parts of more in the left area. From the best preserved scale it seems that two dots, one above the other, marked each center. One minor problem in the restoration relates to the few but definite traces of blue at the right upper section of this area (see ill. 1), for surface patterns tend to be uniform in color. The objection could be explained by the reasoning that the blue belongs to an item overlapping the costume, such as an apron, a trim, or an object held by or shown in front of the figure here presumably portrayed.

The scale pattern appears in Minoan wall painting in connection with costumes as early as the MMIII period and continues into Mycenaean times.<sup>16</sup> Scales are rendered sometimes in outline, sometimes by a series of dots, as in our fragment, and sometimes by a combination of both. Usually, each scale contains a small ornament at its base, in

usually in a frieze arrangement, sometimes with two types of animal shown in rapid movement covering front and back sides of the same pot. (*Thera* II, Pl. C, 7, 8; *Thera* VI, Col. Pl. II). For the Caravanserai Frieze see supra n. 11. Another stylized composition of static birds appears in a fresco frieze from Kea, K. Coleman, "Frescoes from Aya Irini, Keos. Part I," *Hesperia* 42 (1973) 286-88 and Fig. 1, 287.

<sup>14</sup> J.I.S. Whittaker, *The Birds of Tunisia* (London 1905) vol. II, 58.

<sup>15</sup> Suggested to me in the summer of 1973. The dotted scales are also clearly indicated in Phanourakis' drawing (supra n. 4).

<sup>16</sup> The earliest example in wallpainting seems to be on the stucco fragment found in a MMIII context at the west entrance of the palace of Knossos, *PM* II, 680, Fig. 430, c. For a Mycenaean example see one of the female processional figures from the palace of Tiryns, G. Rodenwaldt, "Die Fresken des Palastes," *Tiryns* II (Athens 1912) 71, Fig. 27 and restoration in Col. Pl. VIII. From a primarily ceramic point of view the Minoan use of this motif is discussed in A. Furumark, *Mycenaean Pottery. I. Analysis and Classification* (Stockholm 1972, reprint) passim, especially 144. Its use as a textile pattern, particularly for male costume, is discussed in E. Sapouna-Sakellarakis, *To Minoikon Zoma* (Athens 1971) 191-195, where further bibliography is given.

this case two dots and, in the more elaborate examples, one of geometric or floral character. A squared grid of lightly impressed lines, normally used to insure a regular repetition of the motifs, is here, surprisingly, absent.<sup>17</sup> The size of each scale can only be roughly determined, but it seems somewhat larger than that on a fragment from Knossos which Evans attributed to part of a figure on the scale of the Ladies in Blue, who are slightly under life-size.<sup>18</sup> It is conceivable that our fragment belonged to a figure of roughly such proportions.

While the scale pattern, with its simple form and repetitive reproduction, can be thought of as a woven pattern on the costume, the more irregular and complex design of the bird frieze suggests embroidery, painting or appliqué work. In this regard, it is important to consider a group of fragments of miniature frescoes, found in the North West Heaps of the Palace of Knossos, and interpreted by Evans as simulating embroidery patterns.<sup>19</sup> Affinities in scale, style, color and often composition between them and the Katsamba bird frieze further support the suggestion. In the Knossos fragments small motifs such as flutes (?), lilies, and fictitious animals appear mostly on blue backgrounds, either in repetitive fashion in a frieze, or presumably in heraldic, arched compositions, to judge from the fragmentary remains. The motifs are generally executed in white, like our birds and rockwork, with details rendered mostly in linear fashion, in yellow, red and black, the latter similarly used for partial, delicate outlining. The embroideries, if in a frieze arrangement, could have been executed on separate fabric bands, which

<sup>17</sup> Such grids are clearly visible in color photographs of details of the kilts in the Processional Fresco (in E. Sapouna-Sakellarakis [supra n. 16] Col. Pl. B, a-b) and in drawings of several other earlier examples from Knossos (*PM* II, 680, Fig. 430, c; *PM* I, 545, Fig. 397; also *Archaeology* 24 [1971] 37) as well as from the figures in stucco relief from Pseira, (R.B. Seager, *Excavations on the Island of Pseira, Crete* [University of Pennsylvania, The Museum: Anthropological Publications, III, No. 1, 1910; hereafter cited as Seager, *Pseira*] Pl. V).

<sup>18</sup> The example from Knossos referred to supra n. 16. For the Ladies in Blue see *PM* I, 546-51 and 545, Fig. 397.

<sup>19</sup> *PM* III, 37-42 in particular, where Evans discusses their interpretation as embroideries. For two more fragments from the same location, one with a band of lilies, the other with a crested animal, see *PM* III, 130, Fig. 85 and *PM* I, 549, Fig. 400, respectively. Evans' interpretation of arched compositions on some of the above fragments also as embroideries has recently been questioned, in the light of a fresco from Pylos depicting two antithetically arranged sphinxes, clearly shown on an architectural facade (Smith, *Interconnections*, 80 and Figs.

could then have been sewn as trim onto the costume. The use of a figurative motif in the Katsamba example, instead of one of a geometric or abstract nature, would make it preferable for the frieze to appear horizontally or, at most, in a slightly slanting direction. The scale pattern below the frieze excludes the possibility that the embroidered band here would have appeared as trim at the bottom of sleeves, skirt or kilt.

I would like to make the suggestion that the frieze may simulate an embroidered girdle or belt, below which the costume would display an overall scale pattern. Although spirals and stylized rosettes appear on the belts of male figures in the Procession Fresco from the Palace of Knossos, a freer kind of design, to my knowledge, does not occur in connection with male costume.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, rather naturalistic floral motifs appear on one of the faience model girdles, and on two votive robes, found with the Snake Goddess and Votaries, all in faience, in the Temple Repositories.<sup>21</sup> The Lady with Net in a painting from Phylakopi has birds and rockwork presumably embroidered on her skirt,<sup>22</sup> and it should also be remembered that Evans suggested that certain "embroidery" designs on fragments from the North West heaps of the palace, many with figurative motifs, may belong to the robe of a goddess.<sup>23</sup> As for belts specifically, H. Reusch distinguished three types used in the MMIII to LMII period: two could be worn by both men and women, while a third, which she describes as often being richly embroidered, was worn exclusively by women.<sup>24</sup> Finally, it should be noted that evidence for figura-

115, a-c.) An interpretation of some of the above Knossian designs as architectural facades is not theoretically impossible, but because of their discovery with other fragments more plausibly identifiable as depicting embroidery motifs (especially those in *PM* III, 38, Fig. 21; 39, Fig. 23; 45, Fig. 27 and 130, Fig. 85) I am inclined to believe Evans's initial interpretation, until further evidence that such elaborate figurative decoration as that implied by the Pylos piece was actually used on buildings of Minoan Crete. It should also be remembered that not infrequently Minoan dress patterns seem to have an architectural origin (*PM* II, 729, Fig. 456 a and 731).

<sup>20</sup> For patterns on Minoan male costume see E. Sapouna-Sakellarakis (supra n. 16) 153-95.

<sup>21</sup> *PM* I, 506-23, Fig. 364.

<sup>22</sup> *PM* III, 43, Fig. 26.

<sup>23</sup> *PM* III, 42.

<sup>24</sup> H. Reusch, "Die zeichnerische Rekonstruktion des Frauen Frieses in Bötischen Theben," *Abh. der deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (1955, N. 1) 1956, 53-57. Shorter descriptions of belts and girdles in S. Marinatos, "Kleidung-Haar-und Barttracht," *ArchHom* (1967) A12, A16, A28.

tively ornamented belts is forthcoming from Thera, where during a short visit to the fresco storeroom I noted a painting of a female figure wearing a belt beautifully decorated with flying fish.<sup>25</sup>

The hypothetical lady wearing the belt seen on the Katsamba fragment should be considered in the context of other life-size and smaller representations of women in frescoes and stucco reliefs of the MMIII to LMI period, interpreted variously as goddesses or priestesses.<sup>26</sup> It is impossible at this point to define her status, when so little is known about the character of the partially excavated building on the walls of which she once appeared; but, if elaboration of design and her assumed size have a bearing to status, she must be granted some importance. It may be interesting in this connection to note that the dotted rendition of the scales of the skirt is reminiscent of the dotted decoration on the apron of the Snake Goddess. It may not be without significance that the stone figurine in the Fitzwilliam Collection, so close to the faience examples from the Temple Repositories, was reportedly found in the Harbor Town of Knossos.<sup>27</sup> It is tempting to see the painted lady and the Fitzwilliam statuette as possible manifestations of a cult similar to that practiced at Knossos in the MMIII period also present in the city's harbor town.

Evidence for textile patterns in Minoan frescoes goes back to the MMIII period, to judge from fragments clearly datable to that period, which provided Evans with comparative evidence for a relative dating of the Ladies in Blue.<sup>28</sup> The Lady Holding a Net in a painting from Phylakopi, although much smaller in scale, is attributable stratigraphically to the same period, and, by inference from all the above evidence, Evans also assigns fragments from the North West Heaps, discussed

above, to the same date.<sup>29</sup> That the vogue of such compositions may have continued into the LMI period is not unlikely. Recently Cameron published a fragment of a female figure, the "Lady in Red," from the Palace of Knossos, whose style he considers a little later than that of the "Ladies in Blue," closer to early LMIA than to the end of MMIII.<sup>30</sup> The ladies in stucco relief from Pseira, as well as the women in a fresco from the Villa of Haghia Triada, both stylistically dated by Evans to the end of the MMIII period, do not come from stratigraphically precise contexts.<sup>31</sup>

Evans considered the true miniature style as extinct by LMI, but, if minute scale and detailed, careful execution are salient features of this style at its prime, there are indications that it flourished for a longer period. First we must remember that the incorporation of miniature designs in large-scale compositions depicting ladies makes the dates of these two styles to some degree correlative. The lady with a belt decorated with flying fish in small scale, in the unpublished painting from Thera mentioned above, indicates that this association continues into the LMIA period. Following the above reasoning, the "embroidery" designs from the North West Heaps of the palace of Knossos dated by Evans stylistically to the MMIII period could also be a little later. The brilliant miniature fresco with coastal towns and other landscapes from the West House at Akrotiri in Thera displays great naturalistic and high artistic qualities which could mean that it was made in the early part of the LMIA period.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, in the Katsamba fresco, the delicate drawing of the reeds, the concern with which fine details have been indicated on the wings of the birds and the veining of the rockwork suggest that the piece may not be far off in date from the Thera fresco and

<sup>25</sup> This was in the summer of 1973, when my husband and I, on a visit to Akrotiri, were kindly allowed by the late Spyridon Marinatos to look at the recently discovered frescoes in the process of being cleaned and mended in the storerooms of the excavation.

<sup>26</sup> *PM* III, 42. More recently Cameron suggests priestesses for the type represented by the Ladies in Blue, "The Lady in Red," *Archaeology* 24 (1971) 43.

<sup>27</sup> *PM* II, 235-37 and 236, Fig. 133. The figurine was fully published in A.J.B. Wace, *A Cretan Statuette in the Fitzwilliam Museum* (Cambridge 1927).

<sup>28</sup> *PM* II, 679-82 and *PM* I, 546-51, include discussions of these compositions and their relative dates, respectively. See also supra n. 16. Cameron recently expresses the opinion that

these two groups are by the same artists (supra n. 26).

<sup>29</sup> *PM* I, 547 and *PM* III, 37-42.

<sup>30</sup> Cameron (supra n. 6) 39.

<sup>31</sup> For Evans' dates for the reliefs from Pseira and the wall paintings from Haghia Triada see *PM* III, 38, and *PM* I, 539, respectively. The stucco reliefs from Pseira were found with LMI pottery (Seager, *Pseira*, 15, 32-34 and Pl. V). The villa at Haghia Triada, though built in the MMIII period was destroyed in LMIB (L. Pernier and L. Banti, *Guida degli Scavi Italiani in Creta* [Rome 1947] 28-29). The women in the Haghia Triada fresco can be seen clearly in watercolour copies by Gillieron, reproduced in Smith, *Interconnections*, Figs. 106 and 107.

<sup>32</sup> This fresco has the LMIA destruction of Akrotiri as its *ante quem* point, *Thera*, VI, Col. Pls. 7-9.

quite close to the miniature frescoes from Tyllissos and the town of Knossos, an early LMIA date having been suggested recently by the present author for those from Tyllissos.<sup>33</sup> Finally, stylistically the Katsamba fresco seems to antedate the miniature frescoes of Kea, though a more complete publication of these is needed before a definitive statement can be made.<sup>34</sup>

So far the evidence seems to point to an early phase of the LMIA period for the Katsamba fragment. Such a date seems further supported by an evaluation of the motifs here preserved as well as their arrangement. I do not know whether one can trace a typological development of the scale pattern, but the simplicity of that depicted may indicate an early stage. More significant is the role of the bird frieze. The exclusive portrayal of animals in nature automatically brings to mind comparable scenes, for some the essence of Minoan art, glorified in wallpaintings, particularly of the MMIII to LMI period. Such themes are epitomized in the compositions of the House of Frescoes, or, outside Crete, in the Spring Fresco from Thera, to mention only two of the more complete examples.<sup>35</sup> The Katsamba bird frieze, however, although displaying naturalism in its details, comes closer in terms of format and decorative impact to another series of paintings, some datable to the post-MMIII period. The characteristic here is that birds, seen in a landscape, arranged in a frieze, become the exclusive theme. Foremost among these paintings is the Partridge and Hoopoe Frieze, the landscape of which, incidentally, was suggested by Evans to

have been inspired from tapestries, to judge from the highly stylized forms and certain motifs in it which could derive from needlework.<sup>36</sup> Another bird frieze was found at Kea and has recently been published in a restoration where the birds appear in a landscape rendered in minimal detail.<sup>37</sup> Thirdly, the row of birds painted on the hull of one of the ships in the Miniature Frieze from the West House at Thera should be remembered in this context.<sup>38</sup> Of these examples the Caravanserai Frieze bears the closest affinities to the Katsamba fresco. Both paintings display the same odd combination of decorative and naturalistic features. Those of the Katsamba painting have already been described. In the Caravanserai Frieze the birds are rendered with great naturalism but their groupings and postures are dictated mainly, one feels, by a sense of compositional design. The landscape except for the flora is highly stylized. Finally the appearance of hoopoes in both friezes adds to the common features.

The Theran example just mentioned is interesting from another point of view. Since the birds there appear as decoration on the hull of a ship, it is clear that birds were depicted in media other than wallpainting. Indeed, birds and bird friezes seem to have enjoyed a certain popularity in the art of the Aegean, in the MMIII-LMIA period, to judge also from examples in the minor arts and particularly in vase painting, on pottery from the Cyclades and the mainland, some also imported into Crete.<sup>39</sup> Birds, however, do not seem to have cap-

<sup>33</sup> One can compare the delicate detail found here with the bush or tree in the miniature fresco from Tyllissos, *AA* 1972, 173, Fig. 2 and 184, Fig. 13, no. 2, and 183-88, for a discussion of its date. Cf. also the mouse and spikelets in a miniature composition, from the South East House at Knossos, attributed by Evans to the MMIII period *PM* I, 537, Fig. 390 and 531.

<sup>34</sup> Lately K. Coleman suggested a LMIB date for the frescoes from Kea, "Frescoes from Ayia Irini, Keos. Part I," *Hesperia* 42 (1973) 286.

<sup>35</sup> For the wallpaintings from the House of Frescoes see: *PM* II, 444-50 and M.A.S. Cameron, "Unpublished Paintings from the 'House of Frescoes'" *BSA* 63 (1968) 1-31. The fresco from Thera, an attractive but a less ambitious and less naturalistic work than the one from Knossos, is illustrated in *Thera* IV, Col. Pls. A-C.

<sup>36</sup> *PM* II, part I, Frontispiece and p. 114. Evans states that the Partridge Frieze is "practically contemporary" with the paintings from the House of Frescoes, i.e., of the MMIII-LMIA period. The stylized character of the landscape and of the composition, it could be argued, suggest a somewhat later date for the Caravanserai painting. For a recent dating of the ma-

terial from the House of Frescoes, see Cameron (*supra* n. 35) 26.

<sup>37</sup> Coleman (*supra* n. 34) 287, Fig. 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Thera* VI, Col. Pl. 9, ship at bottom, left.

<sup>39</sup> Marinatos notes birds flying over waves in gold repoussé from Shaft Grave III at Mycenae and links this work with pottery with bird representations, which he attributes to the early 16th century B.C., "Chelidonismata," *AAA* 2 (1969) 66. An example intriguingly close to the bird frieze of the Katsamba painting is the inlaid decoration of a dagger, of the type known from the Shaft Graves at Mycenae, and now in a private collection, depicting hoopoes flying over rockwork, E. Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age* (Chicago 1964) Pl. XIII, D. For discussions of vases with bird representations from the Cyclades and the mainland see *PM* I, 556-61 (557, Fig. 404, h showing an imported Cycladic vase from the Temple Repositories of the Palace at Knossos); S. Marinatos, 65-66; G. Mylonas, "Vases with Bird Representations," *AAA* 2 (1969) 210-12; G. Mylonas, "Vases with Bird Representations, II," *AAA* 3 (1970) 89-91; J. L. Davis, "Polychrome Bird Jugs. A Note," *AAA* 10 (1976) 81-83.

tured the imagination of the Minoan vase painters who relied either on abstract, floral and, more rarely, marine patterns for the decoration of their vases of the LMI period. On the other hand, it is possible that Minoan embroiderers and manufacturers of costumes may have responded more positively to the impact of birds and bird friezes in frescoes and other media, the small Katsamba fragment possibly bearing testimony to that fact. Such an interpretation could also explain the discrepancy between the decorative character of the composition and the concern with naturalistic de-

tail, both prominent features of the Katsamba bird frieze. The former would have been dictated by the general appearance of the object depicted, presumably an embroidered belt, the latter by the working habits of fresco painters in an era when naturalism and high finish were outstanding features of their art.

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