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# **KOSMOS**

## **JEWELLERY, ADORNMENT AND TEXTILES IN THE AEGEAN BRONZE AGE**

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## JEWELLERY AND ADORNMENT AT AKROTIRI, THERA: THE EVIDENCE FROM THE WALL PAINTINGS AND THE FINDS\*

After forty years of excavation and the uncovering of some fifteen buildings, only three of which have been investigated fully, very few items of jewellery have been found to date in the settlement at Akrotiri. Of course, the picture of a city damaged by earthquake, which had been generally evacuated but was potentially functioning when it was finally destroyed by an unprecedented volcanic eruption<sup>1</sup> is hardly conducive to drawing secure conclusions. The earthquake was followed by coordinated efforts to clear the rubble, set up worksites and reconstruct the buildings.<sup>2</sup> The time interval required for such operations was more than sufficient for the complete and coordinated removal of valuables, and it is reasonable to assume that pieces of jewellery, the most personal and immediately redeemable of such goods for the needs of each social group, were among the first valuables that the inhabitants took with them, not least because of their small size.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, certain precious objects remained intact and undisturbed in the settlement, such as the gold ibex figurine found inside the 'House of the Benches'.<sup>4</sup> The reason why eludes us. Was it perhaps left behind because no one was authorized to remove it? Or was it perhaps left intentionally in its place, in order to protect the city from the imminent catastrophe?<sup>2</sup>

More information on the art of jewellery in the period is obtained from the wall-paintings, in which all the female figures without exception, several of the male ones, the children, and even the monkeys, are depicted wearing jewellery.<sup>5</sup> Most abundant and most varied is the jewellery worn by the young female figures. Indeed, in the case of the Saffron-gatherers and the Mistress of Animals or Potnia, from Xeste 3, the quantity would seem to be excessive.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, the desired effect was for the jewellery to impress the beholder of the wall-paintings with its splendour and, possibly, to suggest with its symbolism.

Jewellery, adorning the body and the garments, appears in all the wall-painting ensembles brought to light so far in the settlement at Akrotiri, with the striking exception of the procession of men in the staircase of Xeste 4,<sup>7</sup> to which we shall refer in due course. The many-figured

\* We are grateful to M.-L. Nosch and R. Laffineur for inviting us to the KOSMOS conference and for all their initiatives to achieve an organizational labour against the will of strong natural forces. We wish also to thank Dr A. Michailidou and our colleague K. Birtacha for criticism and useful comments on the text as well as Prof. G.S. Korres for permitting to use illustrations of the jewellery found at Peristeria, Messenia.

1 Ch.G. DOUMAS, *The Early History of the Aegean in the Light of the Recent Finds from Akrotiri, Thera* (2008) 9-13 figs 2-6.

2 ΧΡ. Γ. ΝΤΟΥΜΑΣ, "Ανασκαφή Ακρωτηρίου Θήρας," *ΠΑΕ* 1999 (2002) 193, pl. 133; ID., "Ανασκαφή Ακρωτηρίου Θήρας," *ΠΑΕ* 2000 (2003) 170, 171, pl. 119a; ΕΙΡ. ΝΙΚΟΛΑΚΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, "Ακρωτήρι Θήρας. Η πόλη σε κατάσταση έκτακτης ανάγκης," in A. ΒΛΑΧΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ and K. ΜΠΙΡΤΑΧΑ (eds), *Αργοναύτης. Τιμητικός τόμος για τον καθηγητή Χρ. Γ. Ντούμα*, 571-572 (2003); DOUMAS (*supra* n. 1) 9 figs 2, 3.

3 A. MICHAILIDOU, *Weight and value in pre-coinage societies, Vol. 2. Sidelights on measurement from the Aegean and the Orient (Meletemata* 61, 2008) 265.

4 ΝΤΟΥΜΑΣ (*supra* n. 2, 2000) 79, figs 78-79; ΝΤΟΥΜΑΣ (*supra* n. 2, 1999) 172 pl. 109; DOUMAS (*supra* n. 1) 37-41 fig. 47.

5 *WPT*; Φ. ΓΕΩΡΓΙΑ, *Οι τοιχογραφίες από το Κτήριο Β του προϊστορικού οικισμού Ακρωτηρίου Θήρας*, Αδημοσίευτη Διδακτορική Διατριβή, Πανεπιστήμιο Ιωαννίνων (2010); A. VLACHOPOULOS, "Mythos, Logos and Eikon. Motifs of early Greek poetry in the wall paintings of Xeste 3 at Akrotiri," in S. MORRIS and R. LAFFINEUR (eds), *EPOS. Reconsidering Greek epic and Aegean Bronze Age Archaeology. Proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> International Aegean Conference, Los Angeles, UCLA - The J. Paul Getty Villa, 20-23 April 2006, Aegaeum* 28 (2007a) 107-118; ID., "Disiecta Membra: The wall paintings from the 'Porter's Lodge' at Akrotiri," in Ph.P. BETANCOURT, M.C. NELSON and H. WILLIAMS (eds), *Krinoi kai Limenes: Studies in Honor of Joseph and Maria Shaw* (2007b) 131-138; ID., "The wall paintings from the Xeste 3 building at Akrotiri, Thera. Towards an interpretation of the iconographic programme," in N.J. BRODIE, J. DOOLE, G. GAVALAS, and C. RENFREW (eds), *Ορίζων. A Colloquium on the Prehistory of the Cyclades* (2008) 491-506.

6 *WPT* pls. 122, 125-126; VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5, 2008) figs. 41.21.

7 *WPT* 176-179, pls. 138-141.



Miniature Frieze from the West House is a singular case, since the small scale of its figures rather inhibits the rendering of details.<sup>8</sup> However, the rich decoration of the ships' cabins<sup>9</sup> in this frieze refers to known types of beads of the period, examples of which occur among the finds from the settlement, such as the gold three-lobed flower bead from Room 9 of Building Complex Delta<sup>10</sup> (Pl. XIIa), which is the same as that encountered in the decoration of Flagship 13 in the wall-painting of the flotilla,<sup>11</sup> as well as on one of the life-size cabins, the so-called 'ikria'.<sup>12</sup> In both cases the ornaments hang from twine. Analogous ornaments in the form of a rosette decorate another life-size cabin (LP. XIIb).<sup>13</sup> By contrast, the large-scale human figures in the wall-paintings from the West House are bedecked with plain necklaces, in the case of the young fisherman,<sup>14</sup> and with more pieces of jewellery, in the case of the young so-called priestess.<sup>15</sup>

A greater concentration of jewellery appears in the compositions from Xeste 3, in which every one of the female figures wears jewellery,<sup>16</sup> but not the four male figures in the adyton<sup>17</sup> and the two better distinguished figures of hunters in the antechamber.<sup>18</sup> Two of the four monkeys (Pl. XIIc) in the composition from the first storey of Room 2 of the same building wear gold earrings,<sup>19</sup> but this is not the case with the similar monkeys from Building Beta.<sup>20</sup> Recent study<sup>21</sup> of the male figure that Marinatos erroneously dubbed an 'African', from the so-called 'Porter's Lodge', the antechamber of an unexcavated building in the northern sector of the settlement, has resulted in its completion (Pl. XIIId), showing that in addition to the gold earring and the double feather crest observed on the head, this man wears a necklace of blue beads and possibly a matching anklet, like the one worn by the left boxing child from Building Beta.<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, the recently completed study of the wall-paintings from Building Beta (Pl. XIIIa) added no new data to the number of pieces of jewellery in the representation of the Boxing Children from Room 1. The child on the right wears no jewellery,<sup>23</sup> in contrast to the one on the left, the profusion of jewellery on which is comparable only to that of the Potnia from Xeste 3.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, one wonders how a bracelet can be worn on the wrist, over the boxing glove, and, moreover, in the moment of contest.

The commonest items of jewellery depicted in the Akrotiri wall-paintings are gold hoop earrings, silver diadems and beads on the forehead, small beads on the headdresses, necklaces of beads or metal sheet cut-outs on the neck, bracelets, armbands and anklets, and also ribbons. All have been presented in detail by Ch. Televantou,<sup>25</sup> and commented by R. Laffineur<sup>26</sup> and J. Younger.<sup>27</sup>

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- 8 WPT pls. 26-29, 35-48; ΧΡΑ. ΤΕΛΕΒΑΝΤΟΥ, *Ακρωτήρι Θήρας: Οι τοιχογραφίες της Δυτικής Οικίας* (1994) pls. 26-27, 32, 34-38, 54, 56-68.
- 9 WPT pls. 35-40; ΤΕΛΕΒΑΝΤΟΥ (*supra* n. 8) pls. 58-63
- 10 ΧΡ. ΝΤΟΥΜΑΣ, Μ. ΜΑΡΘΑΡΗ and ΧΡ. ΤΕΛΕΒΑΝΤΟΥ, *Μουσείο Προϊστορικής Θήρας. Συνοπτικός Οδηγός* (2000) 66, pl. 69.
- 11 WPT pl. 37; ΤΕΛΕΒΑΝΤΟΥ (*supra* n. 8) pls. 61-63.
- 12 WPT pl. 50; Ε.Μ. ΚΟΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΙΔΙ, *Jewellery revealed in the burial contexts of the Greek Bronze Age* (2001) fig. 19b. Beads of the same type come from the Chamber Tombs in Mycenae; ΤΕΛΕΒΑΝΤΟΥ (*supra* n. 8) pls. 6, 8-9, 11.
- 13 WPT pls. 51, 55, 61; ΤΕΛΕΒΑΝΤΟΥ (*supra* n. 8) pls. 4-5.
- 14 WPT pls. 19, 23-25; ΤΕΛΕΒΑΝΤΟΥ (*supra* n. 8) pls. 21-22.
- 15 ΤΕΛΕΒΑΝΤΟΥ (*supra* n. 8) pl. 19.
- 16 WPT pls. 100-108, 116-126, 129-134; VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5, 2008) figs. 41.19-41.21, 41.33-41.34.
- 17 WPT pls. 109-115; VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5, 2008) fig. 41.51.
- 18 VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5, 2008) figs. 41.3-41.6, 41.51.
- 19 WPT pls. 95-96; VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5, 2008) fig. 41.17.
- 20 ΓΕΩΡΜΑ (*supra* n. 5), vol. II, 55-56, 58.
- 21 VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5, 2007b) pl. 15.5, 15.19.
- 22 WPT pls. 79, 81; ΓΕΩΡΜΑ (*supra* n. 5) 46, 48-49, pls. 86-87.
- 23 WPT pls. 79, 81; ΓΕΩΡΜΑ (*supra* n. 22).
- 24 Cf. *Supra* n. 6.
- 25 ΧΡΑ. ΤΕΛΕΒΑΝΤΟΥ, "Κοσμήματα από την προϊστορική Θήρα," *AE* 123 (1984) 14-54.
- 26 R. LAFFINEUR, "Dress, hairstyle and jewellery in the theran wall paintings," in *Wall Paintings of Thera*, 999-1007.
- 27 J. YOUNGER, "Representations of Minoan-Mycenaean Jewelry," in *EIKON* 257-293.

Of the jewellery illustrated in the wall-paintings, only a very few items can be identified among the meagre finds of this kind from the excavation. Sporadic finds of beads (Pl. XIIIb), of carnelian, sard, agate, rock crystal, faience, bone or shell, spherical, biconical or disc-shaped, give a vague idea of what the actual necklaces or bracelets of the prehistoric Therans were like, but are only a pale reflection of the more luxurious counterparts depicted on the young boxer,<sup>28</sup> the man from the 'Porter's Lodge,'<sup>29</sup> the 'Adorants'<sup>30</sup> and the Saffron-gatherers.<sup>31</sup> Although we cannot say how a gold hoop-shaped bead (Pl. XIIIc) of very small diameter, such as this one found in the course of water-sieving the earth from the excavation, was made, it is obvious that the production of such tiny works in the minor arts demanded the use of magnifying lenses, moulds only a few millimeters in diameter and precision tools for the final surface treatment. By contrast, the rest of the beads found at Akrotiri are examples of the mass-produced ornaments of Neopalatial Crete and the Early Mycenaean Aegean.

Outstanding items among the rest of the jewellery recovered from the Akrotiri site are the rock-crystal pinhead from Xeste 3 (Pl. XIIIId), a few bronze (Pl. XIIIe) and bone pins<sup>32</sup> (Pl. XIIIIf), mainly from Building Complex Delta and Xeste 3, which were used as hairpins,<sup>33</sup> one ivory bucranium pendant (Pl. XIVa) and scant traces of gold-sheet ornaments.<sup>34</sup> Some silver open rings<sup>35</sup> (Pl. XIVb), from room 16 of the Sector Delta, with globular terminals were interpreted by Marinatos<sup>36</sup> as hair-rings (*sphelokotes*).

Jewellery is totally absent from the caches of accumulated goods uncovered inside the buildings, such as the 'chests' in Room 1A of Building Beta<sup>37</sup>, the 'shrine' in the House of the Ladies,<sup>38</sup> and the 'storage' spaces 18A and 18B in Building Complex Delta.<sup>39</sup> The very few items of jewellery in the settlement were found individually, not associated with each other, and in no case were beads found together, indicating that they formed a necklace or a bracelet.<sup>40</sup> Striking too is the absence of jewellery from spaces where lost small goods usually end up, such as in sewers, in debris or in rubbish.

Nevertheless, the few items of jewellery we have were found mainly in the Late Cycladic horizon. Notable exceptions are the rock-crystal sealstone (Pl. XIVc-d) with sphragistic device of a fish, circles and bands, which was found at the east edge of the settlement in a clear late Middle Cycladic level,<sup>41</sup> as well as the bronze pins, which come from the Early Cycladic level of pillar-pit 17 and are the earliest pieces of jewellery found at Akrotiri<sup>42</sup> (Pl. XIve).

In contrast to the small number of jewellery items from the Late Cycladic settlement, the number of sealstones, personal possessions of high economic value, perhaps used as ornaments, is significantly larger. However, no figure in the wall-paintings is shown wearing a sealstone around the wrist or on a necklace, just as no figure wears a finger-ring, a piece of jewellery that

28 *Supra* n. 22.

29 *Supra* n. 21.

30 WPT pls. 100-108; VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5, 2007a) pl. XXVIIIb.

31 WPT pls. 116-121; VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5, 2007a) pl. XXIX.

32 On pins, see KONSTANTINIDI (*supra* n. 12) 25. Usually bone, ivory, glass and silver was used for pinheads. Gold was used only in exceptional cases.

33 On hairpins, see KONSTANTINIDI (*supra* n. 12) 25. According to the author: "it is not always easy to distinguish between hair-pins and dress-pins and it is possible that at least some of those would have served both purposes." Cf. (*supra* n. 27) 260.

34 A piece of gold sheet is under study by Dr. A. Michailidou, whom we cordially thank for this information.

35 MICHAILIDOU (*supra* n. 3) 266, figs. V54-55. The author proposes a different use for the four silver rings, that of ring ingots of standardized weight. The small balance found in the same room would have been used for weighing them.

36 Sp. MARINATOS, *Excavations at Thera V, Season 1971* (1999) 33, pl. 77b.

37 Sp. MARINATOS, *Excavations at Thera IV, Season 1970* (1999) 29-31, pls 53-55; ΓΕΩΠΜΑ (*supra* n. 5) 72-73.

38 MARINATOS (*supra* n. 36) 13, pl. 5.

39 Compartment D18A: XP. NTOYMAS, "Ανασκαφή Ακρωτηρίου Θήρας," ΠΑΕ 1993 (1996) 181-183, pls. 108b-113; ID., "Ανασκαφή Ακρωτηρίου Θήρας," ΠΑΕ 1994 (1997) 162-163, pls. 89-93. Compartment D18B: ID., "Ανασκαφή Ακρωτηρίου Θήρας," ΠΑΕ 1995 (1998) 127-130, pls. 60-62a, 63.

40 NTOYMAS, ΜΑΡΘΑΦΗ and ΤΕΛΕΒΑΝΤΟΥ (*supra* n. 10).

41 Pillar Pit no. 67; CMS VS 3,2, 390.

42 KONSTANTINIDI (*supra* n. 12) 25. The first hair pins known come from the Cyclades and have round section, as the exact examples from Akrotiri; MICHAILIDOU (*supra* n. 3) 232, figs. 19-20.

has, in any case, not been found at Akrotiri.<sup>43</sup>

The four basic colours in the palette of the Thera painters, with the addition of white and luxurious purple,<sup>44</sup> were used to render a wide gamut of materials used in contemporary Aegean jewellery-making. However, despite the chromatic equivalence that we give to specific materials (deep green for jasper, light brown to black for agate, white for rock crystal, light blue for faience, dark blue for lapis lazuli, violet or purple for amethyst), in our opinion the choice of colours in the wall-paintings was dictated by the aesthetic demands of the compositions, rather than by the desire for similitude in rendering the semiprecious stones of the jewellery. Thus, the light green of lapis lacedaemonius, the deep orange of carnelian, the brown of agate and so many other hues are unjustifiably absent.

There are, therefore, indications that the quantity and quality of the jewellery items of the inhabitants of the settlement did not correspond to those depicted in the wall-paintings, since the plain jewellery items found bear little resemblance to the luxury and technical complexity of the ones illustrated. The pieces of jewellery represented in the wall-paintings did, of course, exist in this period, in the royal tombs in the Peloponnese and in Crete. Nevertheless, careful examination of the jewellery from Grave Circles A and B at Mycenae,<sup>45</sup> and from Peristeria in Triphylia,<sup>46</sup> indicates that most of these pieces were intended expressly for funerary use; they are made of thin gold sheet and could not have been worn in life. The jewellery items from tholos Tomb I at Peristeria<sup>47</sup> are of greater interest, although fewer in number. These gold-foil cut-outs (only some with holes for sewing to the cerements) represent an owl, insects (bees or dragonflies), swallows, seashells (tritons or nautili), ivy leaves, dog-rose flowers, spirals and rosettes, while on the repoussé sheets are papyrus flowers and geometric motifs. Their thematic repertoire is entirely consistent with the Creto-Mycenaean iconography and most of the motifs are present in the Thera wall-paintings, particularly those from Xeste 3. The rosettes with the double row of pointed petals (Pl. XIVf) are identical to those inscribed in the 'relief lozenges' from Xeste 3<sup>48</sup> (Pl. XIVg), as well as those from Building Gamma.<sup>49</sup> The ivy leaves refer to the spirals on the walls of the second storey of Xeste 3<sup>50</sup> (Pl. XVa-b), the shells to the snood on the head of the lady with dog-roses, and the cut-out quatrefoil flowers to those in her bouquet<sup>51</sup> (Pl. XVc-e). The swallows exist on the 'landscape' dress of the lady opposite her<sup>52</sup> (Pl. XVIa-c) and, of course, in the actual landscapes in paintings from Building Complex Delta<sup>53</sup> and Building Beta.<sup>54</sup> Last, the papyrus flowers are represented in the homonymous compositions from the

43 The depiction of sealstones in wall-paintings is extremely rare in Crete too, where the most clear example is on the wrist of the 'Rhyton-bearer' in procession, from the palace of Knossos *PM* II, ii, pl. XII; R.D.G. EVELY, *Fresco: a passport into the past. Minoan Crete through the eyes of Mark Cameron / Τοιχογραφία: ένα διαβατήριο για το παρελθόν. Η μινωική Κρήτη με τα μάτια του Marc Cameron* (1999) no. 21, 192. On other depictions of sealstones on male and female figures on Aegean wall-paintings, see YOUNGER (*supra* n. 27) 272-273, 276.

44 E. CHRYSSIKOPOULOU, "Τεχνολογία των χρωμάτων στο Προϊστορικό Αιγαίο. Οι τοιχογραφίες του Ακρωτηρίου Θήρας," in A. KYRIATSOULIS (ed.), *Althellenische Technologie und Technik von der prähistorischen bis zur hellenistischen Zeit mit Schwerpunkt auf der prähistorischen Epoche / Αρχαία Ελληνική Τεχνολογία και Τεχνική από την προϊστορική μέχρι την ελληνιστική περίοδο, με έμφαση στην προϊστορική εποχή, 21-23.03.2003 in Ohlstadt/Obb. Deutschland* (2004) 487-99; V. PERDIKATIS, V. KILIKOGLU, S. SOTIROPOULOU and E. CHRYSSIKOPOULOU, "Physicochemical characterization of pigments from theran wall paintings," in *Wall Paintings of Thera*, 103-18.

45 G. KARO, *Die Schachtgräber von Mykenai* (1930-33) chapters 11, 12, 14; Γ. ΜΥΛΩΝΑΣ, *Ο Ταφικός Κύκλος Β των Μυκηναίων* (1973) 328, 335, 353. Cf. KONSTANTINIDI (*supra* n. 12) 236.

46 ΣΠ. ΜΑΡΙΝΑΤΟΣ, "Ανασκαφαί Πύλου," *ΠΑΕ* 1962 (1966) 90-8.

47 ΣΠ. ΜΑΡΙΝΑΤΟΣ, "Ανασκαφαί εν Πύλω," *ΠΑΕ* 1965 (1967) 109-20.

48 *WPT* pls. 135-136.

49 Sp. MARINATOS, *Excavations at Thera II, Season 1968* (1999) 63, pl. 59,2; Α.Γ. ΒΛΑΧΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, "Η διασπορά των τοιχογραφιών στον ΥΚ Ι οικισμό του Ακρωτηρίου. Τα δεδομένα μετά τις πρόσφατες ανασκαφές," in *Χρ. Ντούμας (επιμ.), 1967-2007: Σαράντα Χρόνια Ανασκαφής Ακρωτηρίου Θήρας* (forthcoming).

50 ΧΡ. ΝΤΟΥΜΑΣ, "Οι εργασίες στο Ακρωτήρι κατά το 2008," *ΑΛΣ* 6 (2008), 7-10, εκ. 1-2, 4.

51 *WPT* pls. 133-134.

52 Α.Γ. ΒΛΑΧΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ, "Βίρα-Μάϊνα: το χρονικό της συντήρησης μίας τοιχογραφίας στο Ακρωτήρι," in Α.Γ. ΒΛΑΧΟΠΟΥΛΟΣ and Κ. ΜΠΙΡΤΑΧΑ (eds), *Αργοναύτης. Τιμητικός τόμος για τον καθηγητή Χρ. Γ. Ντούμα* (2003) 505-526; VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5, 2007a) pl. XXXb.

53 *WPT* pls. 69-76.

54 *WPT* pl. 46; ΓΕΩΡΜΑ (*supra* n. 5) vol. II, 74-75, 79.

House of the Ladies<sup>55</sup> and the dragonflies on Potnia's physiocratic necklace from Xeste 3<sup>56</sup> (Pl. XVIIa-b). Thus, we see that the subjects encountered in the jewellery and in the wall-paintings, subjects that impinge on aesthetic trends, customary beliefs and death, draw upon the same stock of motifs, forming a cosmological pictorial vocabulary with minimal deviations, virtually identical.

So, we may ask: Are the jewellery items that adorn the figures in the wall-paintings, for all their technical perfection and the careful rendering of details, perhaps not all real but more 'functional' of the acts depicted, that is 'ritual'? Could it perhaps be that the predominant affinity of jewellery/bejewelled is to be found in the field of the activity represented and only this, and not in the rendering of the individual/personal adornment of the actors? If this hypothesis is valid, then the adornment of the humans (and in one case of the monkeys) constitutes part of the represented action - cultural practice - ritual re-enactment, and should be examined in this hermeneutic perspective. It is, after all, difficult to imagine that the gathering of saffron in a rocky landscape difficult of access was done by young and mature ladies bedecked with earrings, bracelets, armllets, anklets and diadems, when even their beautiful coiffure was in danger of falling out of place as they bent over to pick the stamens and carried the saffron on the rugged ground, such as that on which the red-haired Saffron-gatherer walks. Likewise, the boxing game cannot be practiced by richly bejewelled boys.

The differentiation as well as the analogies in the jewellery worn by the figures in the wall-paintings by building is noteworthy. The ladies from the 'House of the Ladies'<sup>57</sup> wear less sophisticated jewellery than the ladies from Xeste 3,<sup>58</sup> while the male figures from the 'Porter's Lodge'<sup>59</sup> and Building Beta<sup>60</sup> - possibly works by the same painter - wear identical necklaces and anklets of blue beads. The big beads (perhaps here of precious lapis lazuli) add weight to the adornment and most probably echo the status of the two male figures. Secular status in the case of the young boxer to the fore, religious status, most probably, in the case of the wreathed mature man who bends over in front of a three-branch palm tree, perhaps performing a sacred act,<sup>61</sup> in which he is accompanied possibly by a griffin or sphinx. In this perspective, all the highly bedecked female figures in Xeste 3, from the ground floor and the upper storey of Room 3, echo corresponding status and social distinction<sup>62</sup>. Even so, the four mature ladies represented in the corridor of the upper storey of Xeste 3 (in two pairs) and the fifth lady on the wall opposite it, in the south part of Room 3, form a discreet group.<sup>63</sup> These ladies wear some unique pieces of jewellery of singular form. Why, we wonder? This observation is reinforced by a second one, the extensive decoration of their garments with elements from the world of Nature.

The Mistress of Animals presides over the ritual saffron gathering. Seated on top of a real three-stepped dais and at the centre of the many-figured, other-worldly assembly, she contains in her attire, jewellery and aspect the units-symbols of a universe, physical, ideal, customary, cosmological, cultic and perhaps mythological. It is in this perspective that the jewellery and the embroidery on her garments should be interpreted, and it is meaningless to identify her two necklaces of zoomorphic beads with actual jewellery of secular use, instead of seeing them as real ducks and dragonflies in the reed beds of the adjacent walls, over with the goddess reigns.

On the very fragmentarily preserved lady opposite the Potnia, the branch of a fruit-bearing olive tree<sup>64</sup> (Pl. XVIIc) adorns her snood but it is not an 'ornament': it is an actual olive branch, yet another reference point to Nature, as are the crocus flowers, the swallows and the lilies which flood Xeste 3. Correspondingly, the leafy branch projecting from the

55 WPT pls. 2-5.

56 WPT 125-126; VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5, 2008) fig. 41.21.

57 WPT pls. 6-7, 9-12.

58 WPT pls. 100-108, 116-126, 129-134.

59 VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5, 2007b) pls. 15.2, 15.5.

60 FEQPMA (*supra* n. 22).

61 VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 57).

62 VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5, 2008) pl. 41.51.

63 VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5, 2008) pls. 41.33-41.40.

64 VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 5) pls. 41.10-41.11.

forehead of the ‘injured adorant’ (Pl. XVIIId) was obviously cut from the leafy tree growing inside the precinct of the neighbouring shrine. The sole precious jewellery item retrieved from the settlement, the rock-crystal pinhead from Xeste 3,<sup>65</sup> finds a functional but not typological parallel in the hairstyle of this same figure, which is elaborately braided with ribbons and has a hairpin with finial of a pomegranate flower or an iris.

This ‘adorant’s’ skirt of strips of blue cloth, a dress item of unique type in the Aegean iconography, is difficult to distinguish from a garment-ornament, since its functional substance is doubtful, intensifying the need for re-evaluation of these figures as real persons in the life of the Therans. By the same token, on scrutinizing the intricate geometric decoration of these garments, which too verges on extravagance, one wonders whether it was embroidered, painted, printed or ... imagined.

The production of large quantities of textiles at Akrotiri is documented by the Theran-clay tablets in Linear A script, while the Therans’ ability in weaving elaborate textiles and combing them with hand-embroidered ones, has been demonstrated by the team of Y. Spantidaki and Chr. Moulherat.<sup>66</sup> The scant remains of actual textiles of linen and wool at Akrotiri attest to their existence, while the cocoon of a wild silkworm, studied earlier by E. Panagiotakopoulou,<sup>67</sup> hints at the production of flimsy and diaphanous textiles of silk. However, the combinations of luxurious textiles and, mainly, the lavish decoration and the impracticability of the garments in the wall-paintings make us cautious about accepting that these were worn when carrying out tasks such as those represented.

Indeed, it is quite possible that the hairstyles too in the wall-paintings reproduce idealized models, presumably of ritual expediency, and perhaps also propaganda, aimed at impressing the public of mortals by the *thiasoi* of immortals, gods or heroes. The stereotype persistence in the depiction of the female figure with naked breasts and bare feet also raises questions concerning the actual public and private attire of the women in the Aegean in the second millennium BC, since this comes up against practical difficulties of everyday life.

We believe that the reproduction of the mortal woman in the image and likeness of the Potnia is linked with the mystical processes and the roles that these presuppose, rather than echoing sartorial styles of the women’s appearance in daily life. And this applies too in the case of the men, since, for corresponding reasons, we find it hard to believe that all the boys and adolescent youths of the city went about naked, without head-covering and without footwear. Yet, the adult athletes taming wild or feral animals in the antechamber of Xeste 3 have well-made shoes, while their pleated loincloths seem somewhat bulky for their dangerous acrobatic leaps.<sup>68</sup>

The men in Xeste 4<sup>69</sup> wear neither jewellery nor footwear, and in their dress display significant variations in their colourful loincloths or *zomata*, while in one (unique) case a man is dressed in (or he carries) a long-sleeved himation or chiton, from which protrudes the tip of his hand with ‘manicured’ nails. One would reasonably expect there to be a necklace around the neck of these important persons or a bracelet on the vigorously gesturing wrist, at least of the

65 An exact parallel of the rock-crystal pinhead from Xeste 3 comes from Mycenae, Grave Circle A, Tomb III: KARO (*supra* n. 45) 57 pl. XXXI.102. In Mycenae, rock-crystal heads preserved with their bronze pin body, come from Grave Circles A and B. They are usually found by the right shoulder or in the middle of the chest of the dead and suggest their use as a dress-pin. ΜΥΛΩΝΑΣ (*supra* n. 45) 30, 203, 326-7, 353 πίν. 20α.2, 82α.1-2 Cf. KARO (*supra* n. 45) 57 pl. XXXI.103; KONSTANTINIDÍ (*supra* n. 12) 28, tab. 9a, 14.

66 On the Linear A tablets: Χρ. ΜΠΟΥΛΩΤΗΣ, “Οι πινακίδες Γραμμικής Α από το Ακρωτήρι (THE 7-12): Όψεις της οικονομικής ζωής του οικισμού,” in Χρ. ΝΤΟΥΜΑΣ (επιμ.), 1967-1997: *Τριάντα Χρόνια Ανασκαφής Ακρωτηρίου Θήρας* (2008), 67-94. On the textiles from Akrotiri: Ch. MOULERAT, Γ. ΣΠΑΝΤΙΔΑΚΗ, Ι. ΤΖΑΧΙΑΗ, “Υφάσματα, δίχτυα, σπάγκοι, κλωστές από το Ακρωτήρι Θήρας,” *Αράχνη* 2 (2004) 15-19; Ch. MOULERAT, Y. SPANTIDAKI, “Premiere attestation de laine sur le site protohistorique d’Akrotiri à Théra,” in C. ALFARO, L. KARALI (eds), *Vestidos, Textiles y Tintes. Estudios sobre la producción de bienes de consume el la Antiquedad* (2008) 37-42.

67 E. PANAGIOTAKOPOULOU, P.C BUCKLAND, P.M. DAY, Ch. DOUMAS, A. SARPAKI and P. SKIDMORE, “A Lepidopterous cocoon from Thera and evidence for silk in the Aegean Bronze Age,” *Antiquity* 71 (1997) 420-429.

68 VLACHOPOULOS (*supra* n. 18).

69 WPT pls. 138-141. The material from the Xeste 4 is not yet conserved nor published. These are preliminary comments on its iconography.

man leading the many-figured procession and holding to the fore the revered 'sacred' emblem. It is clear that the role of all the men is expressed through the objects they hold.<sup>70</sup> Here, only the pose and the hairstyle could function as diacritic of their social role, since one man at least, represented with dishevelled hair locks, is in a pose of ecstasy, and perhaps too the colour of the hair, as the sole redhead, leader of the procession, indicates.

We could say that the answer to many of the questions raised in this paper lies only in the cemeteries of the city at Akrotiri. For it is in the cemeteries, both in contemporary Minoan Crete and mainland Greece of the emergent Mycenaean civilization, that actual jewellery has been found (but also many decorative, exclusively funerary pieces) and – where research permitted – these items have been attributed to gender, age, lineage. Certainly the Therans too will have provided their dead with grave goods. However, until the other 'city' of Akrotiri or another settlement on Thera is found, that of the dead, the many-figured wall-paintings that adorn the buildings and the few actual pieces of jewellery from the settlement will continue the interpretative game on unequal terms.

Andreas VLACHOPOULOS and Fragoula GEORMA

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70 Ch. BOULOTIS, "Aspects of religious expression at Akrotiri", *ΑΛΣ* 3 (2005) 31 fig. 8.

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b

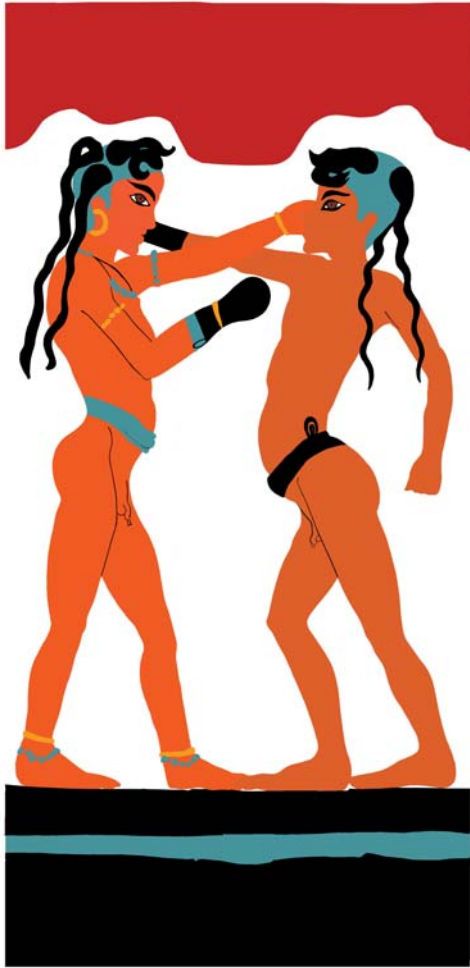
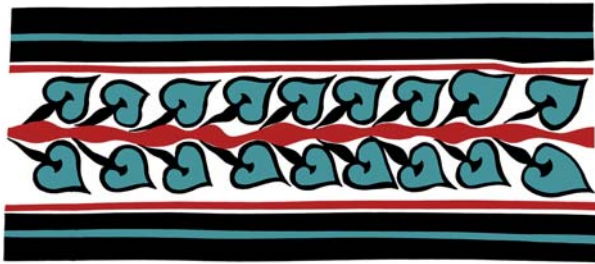


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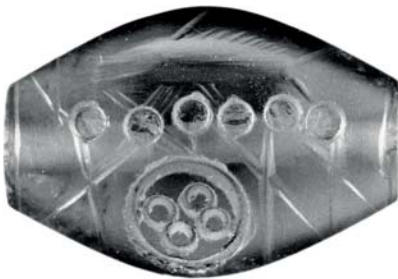




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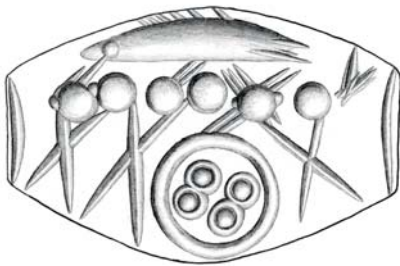
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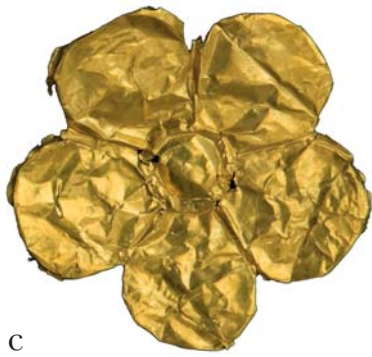
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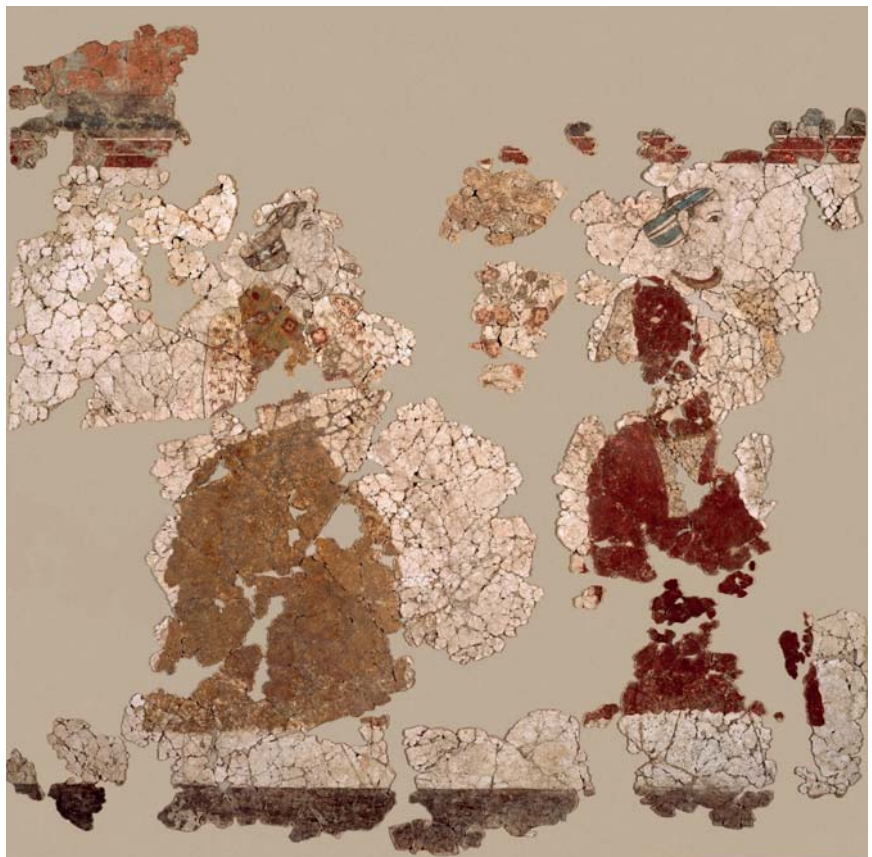
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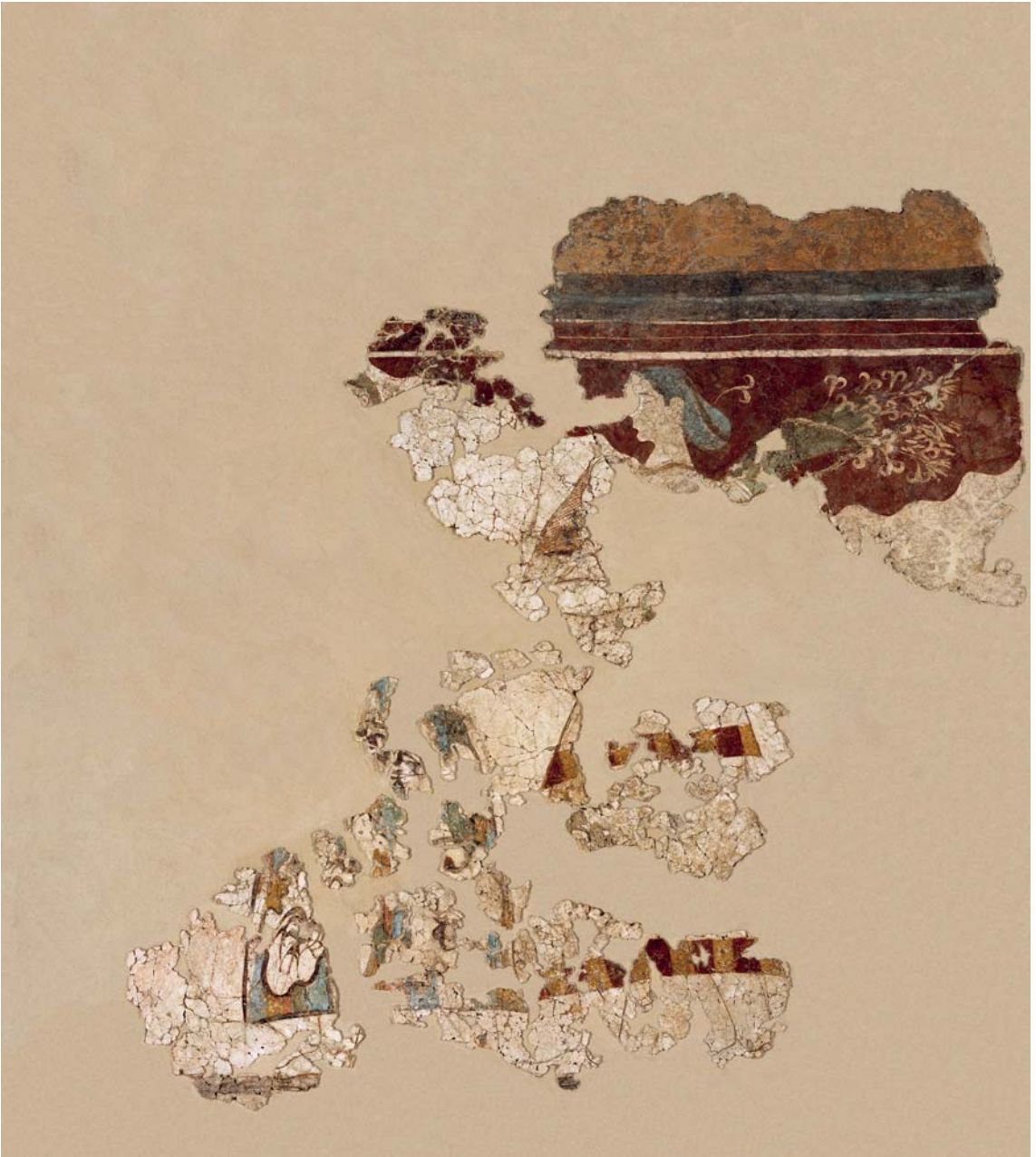
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