

Summary

This study aims at a new understanding of Minoan wall-painting as an integral part of regularly frequented places and built spaces of the Aegean Bronze Age. As an underlying methodological premise, I understand beings, objects and symbols depicted in wall-painting against the backdrop of their general use in Minoan imagery. In order to make this approach work, it is essential to first conceptualise images in a semiotic way as instances of a symbolic system. This is followed by the analysis of selected pictorial elements with regards to the contexts of their occurrence, their properties and the patterns and principles of their contextual integration in order to reconstruct the reasons and modes of their representation in wall-paintings in particular locations. Three assemblages of fresco fragments from the Monopalatial²²³⁸ palace at Knossos serve as case studies on the basis of their preservation and find circumstances, which allow reconstructing the relationship between pictorial representation on the wall and human activity on site: the *Corridor of the Procession Fresco* (Chapter 4), the halls and hallways of the East Wing, including the *Hall of the Double Axes*, the *Queen's Megaron*, the *Loggia* opposite the *Grand Staircase* and the *Corridor of the Painted Pithos* (Chapter 5), and the area of the *Throne Room* (Chapter 6).

The first step in each case study is an analysis of the architectural history and the possible uses of the respective built space in order to understand the Monopalatial wall-paintings not only with regards to the spatial conditions of their visibility and perception as part of people's activities on site, but also with regards to their place in the complex history of the palace at Knossos. The second step is a detailed analysis of those pictorial elements which are considered the visually most dominant parts of the preserved wall-paintings in each place. The purpose of these analyses is to reconstruct the general use of each pictorial element within the visual language of Minoan art in order to get a more precise idea of the contextual integration of each pictorial element, and the role it played in visualising a particular content. Based on the contexts in which pictorial elements were used, concepts of meaning are defined and structural patterns revealed.

In this way, it is possible to work out both the properties of the 'immediate objects' of the pictorial elements (that is the object which can be immediately recognized when looking at a pictorial element, as opposed to any further ideas which this object might represent), and the structural principles dictating their use within pictorial contexts in accordance with these object properties. In the third

2238 Throughout this work, I largely follow the periodisation introduced by Erik Hallager (1978; 1988); see Table 2.1 in Chapter 2.

step of the analytical process applied in each case study, these insights are then projected onto the pictorial elements depicted on the walls of the built and decorated space under consideration, in order to get a clearer picture of how and to what purpose and effect the pictorial elements had been positioned on the wall. The fourth and final step is to bring together the results from the previous analyses and to link the architectural history and usage of each particular place with the concepts of meaning which had been reproduced in each place through the selection of pictorial elements on its walls. The aim of these final parts of each case study is to reconstruct the interplay of images, architectural space, people and human activity in the construction of what I call *Bild-Räume*, i.e. spaces consisting in the dynamic relationship of *real* people, things and activities and *depicted* beings and objects in a particular place (fig. 3.4). It is assumed that pictorial elements depicted in wall-painting were chosen deliberately in order to provide a visual framework to the function, perception, experience and use of a space which completed its appearance not only through the visual effect of depicted beings and objects and their interactive relationship with people on site, but also, and more importantly, by relating a decorated space and all that happened within its limits to more general concepts, religious beliefs and social and cultural ideas of the Minoan world.

The first case study is dedicated to the *Bild-Räume* in the *Corridor of the Procession Fresco*, one of the main access routes into the palace for those coming from the west court. In its Monopalatial state, both walls of the corridor were decorated with the representation of a procession heading into the palace, thus complementing in a most impressive way the function of the built space, whose architectural layout constitutes our most monumental example of a *bent-axis approach* (figs. 4.1–4.3; 4.15). In contrast to previous studies, more emphasis is given to the fact that the procession fresco on the east wall and its equivalent on the opposite west wall were decorating an elongated passageway. The composition therefore, based on parallels in Neopalatial wall-paintings, was certainly not centred on a figure placed in the middle of the preserved fragments. This interpretation is further confirmed by a small detail of the Procession Fresco, which was never considered in previous scholarship, namely a step in the ground line representing the floor, just in front of a group of male figures turned in the opposite direction and standing on a slightly raised level due to this step (fig. 4.5). This observation forms the basis for a review of the processional event and its participants as depicted on the walls of the *Corridor of the Procession Fresco*.

The majority of figures were shown as coming from the west court and approaching the inside of the palace. They were the participants of the procession itself, whereas the group of figures turned in the opposite direction is identified as members of a collective of palatial officials, based on the ‘hide-skirt’ worn by at least one of the figures (figs. 4.14; 4.16–4.18). This group was receiving the participants of the procession as well as their goods on behalf of the palace. The procession itself was made up of different groups of figures whose artificial presence on the walls of the corridor added to the creation of an ideal image of the composition, and to the grandeur of the depicted ritual event. Male figures dressed in long robes, a novelty of the Monopalatial pictorial repertoire, marched last in the procession. According

to parallels in other artworks, they may have been musicians or carriers of objects used in upcoming cult activities. They formed one group together with female figures clad in flounced skirts, who had been the most frequently represented female figures in Neopalatial images before being confined to only a few pictorial contexts in the art of the Monopalatial period (fig. 4.9). On the walls of the *Corridor of the Procession Fresco*, they continuously feature as members of that important class of women who were closely related to the female occupant of the throne in the *Throne Room*. Walking in front of them, groups of male figures wearing kilts represented those male members of Minoan society who in Neopalatial imagery used to depict themselves as warriors and hunters on the one hand, and on the other as offering bearers (fig. 4.11). On the east wall of the *Corridor of the Procession Fresco*, the men dressed in kilts appeared in accordance with this latter function, walking in pairs in the rear part of the procession and in single file further ahead, where they were carrying precious jugs, rhyta and stone vessels, some of them possibly filled with valuable contents, into the palace. A female figure wearing some sort of richly patterned long robe was heading the group of four kilt wearers walking in pairs. As opposed to the traditional understanding of this female figure as a centrally positioned goddess, priestess or queen, I identify her as the leader of the last sequence of the procession. Rather than being approached from two sides by groups of ‘adorants’, it was she who presented a fringed textile to the group of palatial officials welcoming the procession in an elevated position (figs. 4.16; 4.17). To anyone coming from the west court and walking through the corridor, this offering scene, which was perceived gradually as they moved on, would have represented a first key moment of the processional event depicted on the wall and, at the same time, delivered a clear message regarding the superior role of the palace in this ritual event, with the collective of palatial officials clad in ‘hide-skirts’ acting on its behalf.

The *Corridor of the Procession Fresco* thus created an important transitional sphere for the participants of the procession on their way from the outside to the inside of the palace. Having crossed the public sphere of the west court in the ostentatious spectacle of a grandiose procession of men and women clad in luxurious garments and carrying precious goods, and having walked past the *West Porch* decorated with a large bull-leaping scene, the powerful emblem of the palace at Knossos, the participants now found themselves on their more secluded route towards the inside of the cult centre: step by step, following the turns of the corridor and the trail marked by the central slab-paved pathway, a coherent *Bild-Raum* was created as the impressive dimension of the processional event depicted on both side-walls of the *Corridor of the Procession Fresco* unfolded, with its hundreds of artificial participants, their dresses and offerings, gradually building up an ideal picture of the Knossian cult community and the role of the palace as the superior authority (fig. 4.19). To the participants in a real procession, this visual event was blended with the awareness of being involved in a similar performance themselves, playing a part in the upcoming ritual events inside the palace and thus being part of a palatial society and system, whose constancy was claimed by the representations on the walls of the corridor leading into its heart. Thus, in the Monopalatial period, the *Corridor of the Procession Fresco* created an adequate and appropriate

route of access for those people who were about to participate, actively or passively, in ritual activities in the central court and in areas approached from there, such as the east wing with its grandiose halls or the area of the *Throne Room*.

The east wing of the palace at Knossos forms the subject of the second case study (fig. 5.1). In the Monopalatial period, the *Bild-Räume* created in its halls and hallways were dominated by friezes of running spirals and, in one case, by running spirals and figure-of-eight shields (figs. 5.2–5.5; 5.14; 5.15). The wall-paintings had been positioned in accordance with a new access route leading from the central court to the rooms in the east wing: The *Shield Fresco* which had been painted on the east wall of the *Loggia* on the first floor of the *Hall of the Colonnades* soon came into sight as people were stepping down the stairs of the opposite *Grand Staircase* (fig. 5.11). I propose a new reconstruction for the positioning of the *Shield Fresco* in the main zone of the wall, with the frieze of spirals running at mid-height of the main zone rather than at the height of the door lintel, as in previous reconstructions. The *Shield Fresco* must therefore have been intended to suggest the artificial presence of life-sized figure-of-eight shields placed next to one another along the wall, resting on or hanging just above the floor, in front of a wall painted with a frieze of running spirals (fig. 5.14).

A frieze of running spirals at mid-height in the main zone of a decorated wall was also found *in situ* on the wall of the *Corridor of the Painted Pithos* (fig. 5.12). This positioning of the frieze is therefore identified as a particular way of decorating the walls of passageways, as opposed to the friezes of running spirals filling the upper zones at and above the level of the door lintels in rooms designed for more stationary activities. As a consequence, the position of the *Shield Fresco* also reflects the Minoan understanding of the area formed by the *Grand Staircase* and the *Hall of the Colonnades* as a passage area which delivered access to neighbouring areas on three storeys.

Based on their pictorial contexts in Neopalatial representations, the figure-of-eight shields are identified as personal status objects which were carried in processions or parades, used for combat and hunting and which marked their carriers as adult members of the palatial elite and as successful bull leapers (fig. 5.24). In the Monopalatial period, the common representation of the figure-of-eight shield was that of an emblem added to bull-leaping scenes and animal motifs, which often imply the imminent killing or sacrifice of the animal. It is argued that the figure-of-eight shield was used in this emblematic form to refer to the shield-bearing members of the palatial elite as those who sacrificed the animal. Also in the Monopalatial period, the figure-of-eight shield served as a pictorial element designating a social group of warriors, hunters, bull-leapers and those making offerings. Painted on the east wall of the *Loggia*, the series of life-sized figure-of-eight shields dominated the construction of *Bild-Räume* in the passage area, whereas the frieze of running spirals behind the shields related the passage area to the important halls beyond the *Hall of the Colonnades*, the *Hall of the Double Axes* and the *Queen's Megaron*, the walls of which were decorated with the same powerful symbol. Having entered the *Upper East-West Corridor* and walked down the *East Stairs* to the ground floor in the Monopalatial period, a door opening led straight into the *Exterior Section* which gave access to the *Hall of the Double Axes*.

In analogy to the usage of *polythyron* halls in the Neopalatial period, I explore how the spacious area of the east wing could have been used in the Monopalatial period: the *Inner Hall* probably was the place where people attending a ritual event would have been standing and watching performances staged in the *Audience Chamber*, in front of the light well with double-axe signs incised into the wall, with the visibility of the performances being controlled by the multiple door openings of the *polythyron* (figs. 5.2–5.7; 5.25). As in the *Throne Room* and, possibly, also in the *Anteroom*, a structure with columns placed against the north wall of the *Audience Chamber* could have accommodated a seat of honour for a person who was either presiding over the ritual or forming the centrepiece of ritual themselves, with the seated appearance in left profile producing the same image of power as in the *Throne Room* (and *Anteroom*) (fig. 5.4). The *Dog's-Leg Corridor*, which was accessible through a door in the south wall of the *Audience Chamber*, connected the *Hall of the Double Axes* with the *Queen's Megaron*. Like the walls of the *Hall of the Double Axes*, the walls of the *Queen's Megaron* and *Queen's Bathroom* were decorated with double-axe signs and friezes of running spirals, respectively, suggesting that the use of this space was related to that of the neighbouring *polythyron* hall (fig. 5.15). The area of the *Queen's Megaron* was additionally served by the rooms of the *Service Section* located to the west, with which it was connected by the *Corridor of the Painted Pithos*. In contrast to the spiral friezes decorating the walls of the *Hall of the Double Axes* and the *Queen's Megaron*, the walls of this corridor were, as already mentioned, decorated with a frieze of running spirals placed at mid-height of the main zone, thus conforming to the function of this elongated space as a passageway (fig. 5.12).

The association of the double-axe sign and the running spiral is identified as a recurrent feature in Neopalatial architecture, on decorated objects and in Neopalatial images (fig. 5.19). In particular, friezes of running spirals played an important role in the decoration of buildings used for cult ceremonies. Moreover, the running spirals carved in stone and decorating the facades of the palace at Knossos were an integral part of the building's visual appearance towards the west court until its later stage. Due to the associations of the running spiral with cult and the double-axe sign, these stone reliefs denoted the cult functions and events located *within* the palace, thus representing an essential aspect of the function, use and meaning of the building itself towards anyone looking at it from the west court.

I argue that the motif of the running spiral fulfilled a similar place-indicating function in seal images, where it appeared together with scenes of bull-leaping, with processions of male figures holding figure-of-eight shields and with figures carrying a textile and a double-axe. In fact, in one case, a male figure carrying those two items was rendered in front of a frieze of spirals running at the height of his waist, thus reproducing the combination of a person in movement and a frieze of running spirals placed at mid-height on a wall next to him, just as it would have occurred frequently in the *Corridor of the Painted Pithos* (fig. 5.13a). Based upon this evidence, I argue that both the double-axe and the running spiral played an essential role in the visual rendering of ideas and concepts relating to what can be described as the Minoan 'cult of the double-axe'. In this context, the running

spiral not only recurred as a visual decorative element of the built environments where related cult activities took place, but it also referred to these places in seal images depicting activities associated with this cult, such as the carrying of double-axes and textiles, bull-leaping and processions of men with figure-of-eight shields. After all, the occurrence of figure-of-eight shields in these scenes provides the link to the representation of shields in front of a frieze of running spirals in the *Shield Fresco* depicted on the east wall of the *Loggia*, and I propose the hypothesis that the cult community who attended the performance of rituals associated with the ‘cult of the double-axe’ in the east wing of the palace at Knossos, consisted of those members of the palatial elite who identified themselves as warriors, owners of figure-of-eight shields, hunters and bull leapers.

The particular importance of the meaning or effect of the running spiral for male members of the palatial society was further confirmed by its frequent depiction on weapons, ships and male attire. Their owners, wearers and users obviously appreciated the running spiral as a symbol of their ostentatious, martial and cultic lifestyle, which ultimately reflected also the events taking place in the palace of Knossos. Both in the Neopalatial and Monopalatial period, carrying and using such items was thus characterised by a certain *corporate design*, which represented the ideas and concepts associated with the events taking place in the palace and at the same time identified the wearers and users of these items as members of the palatial elite. A more precise explanation for this phenomenon could certainly be deduced from the meaning of the running spiral itself, yet despite all recognizable patterns of using this abstract motif, its meaning remains elusive to us. Yet I believe it is fair to assume that the architectural spaces decorated with running spirals, figure-of-eight shields and double-axes in the east wing of the palace were used for activities in the context of the ‘cult of the double-axe’, with a predominantly masculine cult community standing in the *Inner Hall* and attending ritual performances and objects staged behind the pier-and-door partition in the *Audience Chamber* which possibly even involved a person seated in left profile on a throne-like structure. The main protagonists in the performance of these events could have been the palatial officials wearing the ‘hide-skirt’ as well as the female figures dressed in skirts with narrow horizontal stripes, as both groups of figures appear carrying the double-axe.

The third case study offers a reconsideration of the *Throne Room* area in the west wing of the palace. Together with the *Anteroom* and the *Inner Sanctuary*, the *Throne Room*, in the Monopalatial period, formed an area that had developed over centuries from an initial ‘lustral basin room’ to a representation area where, from the Monopalatial period onward, not only one but possibly two authority figures had their seats (fig. 6.1). I start my analysis by sketching out aspects of the Neopalatial *Bild-Räume* based on the position of the throne and its significant shape and on the possible use of the lustral basin, yet again emphasising an identification of the *Throne Room* as the seat of a female person of authority. The seated appearance of this person in left profile could have been prepared behind the closed doors of the pier-and-door partition between the *Anteroom* and the *Throne Room* and, upon opening the doors, would have reproduced a visual concept which was also found in other Neopalatial *polythyron* halls through the use of

wall-painting and on small-sized objects of art. This visual concept played a major role in Neopalatial ritual cycles, in which, apart from enthroned female figures of high-ranking or divine status, the ‘tree-shrine’ also featured as a focal object of ritual activities. Based on the representation of a ‘tree-shrine’ on the wall of a lustral basin, it is argued that lustral basins provided the architectural environment where these ritual activities actually took place in the Neopalatial period. The architectural layout and visual appearance of the *Throne Room* in its Neopalatial state thus combined central aspects and practices of Minoan ritual during that period of time. This link between the architecture of the *Throne Room* and the ritual scenes which were proliferated at the same time on various sorts of high-value objects of art reveals the importance of the area next to the central court and of the *Bild-Räume* established there during ritual ceremonies.

Following a remodelling around the transition from the Neopalatial to the Monopalatial period, the new fresco programme continued along the lines of the ritual tradition established in the Neopalatial period, despite significant innovations in the stylistic rendering of the motifs (figs. 6.2–6.4). Embedded within the sacral-riverine environment of a papyrus-reed thicket, two pairs of crouching, wingless griffins, each positioned as guarding a central feature, highlighted two key areas of the *Throne Room* by creating an axial image: the throne and the door connecting the *Throne Room* with the *Inner Sanctuary*. In both cases, the axial image would have been further complemented by a person sitting on the throne or walking through the door, respectively, in which case the aspects of meaning and power associated with the axial scheme would have been activated for this human individual.

Griffins had been part of Minoan belief and imagination since the late Protopalatial period and appeared in images, *inter alia*, as invincible predators in ‘nilotic’ landscapes or together with anthropomorphic figures, highlighting the high-ranking or divine nature of these figures (fig. 6.10). In Egyptianizing fashion, the creatures depicted on the west wall of the *Throne Room* guarded the entrance to the *Inner Sanctuary*, which was likewise located in the midst of the papyrus-reed thicket and actually may have been conceived as a kind of sanctuary or sacred place accessible and served from the *Throne Room* in the first place. If, however, the *Inner Sanctuary* was used in the context of ceremonies, the griffins would also have guarded anyone entering the *Inner Sanctuary* through the door in the west wall, and framed their appearance upon leaving the *Inner Sanctuary* through the same door, thus creating a similar axial image for this person as in the case of a person occupying the throne (fig. 6.6). If nothing else, the *Bild-Raum* ensemble thus confirmed this person’s authority and power to enter the *Inner Sanctuary* guarded by the supernatural beings; and it could also well have been used on certain occasions, as proposed by Niemeier, to stage their appearance upon returning from the *Inner Sanctuary* into the *Throne Room*.

Next to the throne, the griffins were part of a more complex visual framework which also included ‘incurved bases’ and palm trees to complement the place and appearance of the throne and its occupant (figs. 6.4; 6.5). Like many of my predecessors, I argue in favour of a second griffin, palm tree and ‘incurved base’ mirroring the preserved representation on the other side of the throne, based on logical

reasoning regarding the spatial layout and decoration of the room and on the development of axial compositions centring on an important female figure in art during the Neopalatial period. On the wall next to the throne, the use of both the 'incurved base' and the palm tree continued the Neopalatial tradition of their association with seated female figures of high-ranking or divine status and with ritual foci: the 'incurved bases' characterised the immediate area of the throne as the place where the enthroned individual was approachable by members of the palatial elite (fig. 6.15). The palm trees were a typical element of the flora of Minoan sacral-riverine landscapes; in their specific rendering next to the throne, however, the palm trees served to frame and characterise the stone seat in the same way as they framed a 'tree-shrine' in seal images where the latter was represented as a focus of ritual activities by female figures (figs. 6.16; 6.18). Together with the griffins, the palm trees depicted in the main zone of the wall completed the location of the occupant of the throne within the sacral-riverine environment of the papyrus-reed thicket, whereas the 'incurved bases' painted in the dado zone of the wall further distinguished the area of the throne and its occupant within the built reality of the *Throne Room*, and emphasised the meaning of this particular area as location of ritual.

The ways in which the pictorial elements dominating the *Bild-Räume* in the *Throne Room* were understood also found expression in other forms of pictorial representation in the Monopalatial period. The representation of griffins in anti-thetic composition became more frequent, whereas the palm tree – now rendered in a more abstract style – and the 'incurved base' mainly appeared in the context of animal sacrifice and more abbreviated ritual scenes (figs. 6.9; 6.14; 6.17). Together with this change in pictorial expression, which occurred after the end of the Neopalatial period, the previous way of representing seated female figures of high-ranking or divine status also came to an end on Crete. Yet a female figure of authority still had her seat in the palace at Knossos, where the new decorative programme of the *Throne Room* continued the Neopalatial tradition of representing a female person of high status. For this reason, I would even go as far as to say that the palace of Knossos survived the destructions taking place on Crete towards the close of the Neopalatial period *just because it was the seat of this enthroned female of high-ranking or divine status*. This was now the only place where an enthroned female authority continued to have a seat in the Monopalatial period on Crete, after all other buildings of ritual use, including any artificial presences of seated, female figures or other ritual foci in wall-painting, had been destroyed or abandoned. The *Throne Room* had become the only venue where the live embodiment of the appropriate seated appearance in left profile of this high-ranking individual could be staged and approached as the centrepiece of attention in ritual ceremonies.

In the art of the Monopalatial period, the image of the enthroned female figure was replaced by the image of the 'Goddess with *snake frame*', a female figure often dressed with a flounced skirt like her predecessor and holding a *snake frame*, often framing a double-axe, above or in place of her head. Based on this evidence I argue that, after the end of the Neopalatial period, a change took place in representing key moments of ritual ceremony, resulting in an increased emphasis on the ceremonial presentation of the *snake frame* and the double-axe by an important

female figure. Based upon the available images, the *snake frame* is identified as an insignia carried in Neopalatial images by male figures wearing the ‘hide-skirt’ and, in addition, having their upper bodies and arms wrapped in a coat or mantle as a sign of distinction. Moreover, the co-appearance of the *snake frame* and the double-axe on insignia continued a tradition established already in the Neopalatial period in connection with male figures of authority, another indication that the wearer of the ‘hide-skirt’ bearing the *snake frame* as his insignia of power also acted under the sign of the double-axe. This conceptual relationship matches the representation on the Ayia Triada sarcophagus of a high-ranking official clad in a ‘hide-skirt’ with covered arms and shoulders and presiding over rituals performed in the context of the ‘cult of the double-axe’ (fig. 4.13).

I argue therefore that, in the Monopalatial period, it was precisely this high-ranking palatial official who was confirmed in his role by the female occupant of the throne and that the ceremony of presenting the *snake frame* and double-axe actually took place in the area of the *Throne Room*. By this time, in art, the performance of presenting the *snake frame* and double axe by the occupant of the *Throne Room*, a high-ranking representative of the class of women wearing flounced skirts, had taken priority over her interaction with members of the palatial elite. As a reason for this artistic change I suggest that, in the Monopalatial period, the role and importance of the high-ranking official carrying the *snake frame* and double-axe as his insignia had been transformed, also increasing the importance of the ceremony itself confirming his status and power. It is entirely possible that we have here the early beginnings of the *wanax*-ideology: the confirmation of power of a male ruler of the palace by a female figure of long-established divine powers and authority.

Last but not least, a possible seat of this high-ranking official can be tentatively identified with the wooden chair reconstructed by Arthur Evans against the north wall of the *Anteroom*. From the Monopalatial period onwards, a bull motif decorated the south wall opposite the alleged seat of honour, creating a *Bild-Raum* in the *Anteroom* which differed significantly from that in the *Throne Room*. Based on this evidence, I reconstruct the Monopalatial architectural ensemble of the *Anteroom* and *Throne Room* as the joint seat of two holders of power in the palace of Knossos: a female individual on the throne in the *Throne Room*, who most probably would have been a representative of the class of women dressed in flounced skirts, continuing the long-established tradition of seated females of high-ranking or divine status accompanied by griffins; and a male individual who was the highest-ranking representative of the collective of palatial officials dressed in ‘hide-skirts’ on the wooden seat in the *Anteroom*. Based on indications for a continued use after the end of the Monopalatial period, I further assume that this constellation of power continued to exist for at least some time into the Final Palatial period.

In sum, the Monopalatial *Bild-Räume* discussed in this volume clearly continued the Neopalatial tradition both in terms of motifs depicted in wall-painting and with regards to the interplay of mural images and spatial structure. Although innovations in style, motif and composition were noticed in the frescoes from the *Throne Room* and from the *Corridor of the Procession Fresco*, such as the

winglessness and the floral decoration of the griffins or the long robe as a new dress worn by the male figures walking last in the procession, these innovations were incorporated into the overall implementation of a pictorial programme that was entirely rooted in the visual concepts and cultural ideas of the Neopalatial period.

The refurbishment of the palace including its new wall-paintings at the transition from the Neopalatial to the Monopalatial period was more or less contemporary with the destruction of all other palaces and villas. In view of the developments during the later stage of the Neopalatial period, e.g. the 'elite burials', showing an increased interest in self-representation by members of the Knossian elite, it may be assumed that it was this elite who was mainly responsible for the refurbishment of the palace. The monopolisation not only of the seat of an important female figure but also of the ritual ceremonies within the confinements of the palace was probably an important step in renewing and consolidating the power of the local elite.

However, other than in Neopalatial imagery, where members of the palatial elite had been shown in direct relationship to the seated female on different objects of art, possibly as a mode of representing their own important status, the abandonment of the motif of the seated female figure in the Monopalatial period led to new ways of visually demonstrating membership of the palatial elite, such as through the decoration of weapons, gold rings and vessels with pictorial elements and motifs, which reflected the decoration of the palace as well as the ritual and ceremonial events located therein. Yet, in contrast to previous studies, I think that the decoration of objects was not simply referring to or copying the mural decoration of the palace, but rather that the use of pictorial elements and motifs on both the walls of the palace and in the decoration of objects was grounded in their association with the ideas, concepts and activities reflected by these pictorial elements and motifs, although these latter activities were, of course, mostly located within the rooms and halls of the palace. For instance, members of the palatial elite were now wearing images which implicitly or explicitly showed their sacrificial activity in the context of rituals associated with the palm tree. A palm tree was also part of the Monopalatial pictorial programme framing the female occupant of the throne in the *Throne Room*, which became fully visible only at the moment one stepped in front of her – an action which was certainly reserved to only a few selected members of the palatial elite. It was thus this more complex and indirect interplay of images, activities and (access to) places through which members of the Knossian elite in the Monopalatial period gave expression to their affiliation with the palatial centre.

Furthermore, continuous contacts with Egypt and the Greek mainland during the later decades of the Neopalatial period are likely to have inspired the Knossian elite in terms of new ideas and forms of self-representation and habitus, which ultimately led to the new aspiration of monumentality which can be recognized in the alterations to the layout of the palace and in the rendering of the new painted programme. Moreover, the existence of a prince or leader who appears during the Monopalatial period in both Egyptian paintings and in Linear B texts could at the same time have found an expression in the palace itself by the installation of several seats of honour, as I propose them for the *Anteroom* next to the *Throne Room*

as well as for the *Audience Chamber*, which was part of the *Hall of the Double Axes* in the east wing of the palace. There is a real possibility that these new *Bild-Räume* now accommodated the staging of a ruler, or *wanax*, which would have been embedded into the framework of ritual ceremonies established in the same wings of the palace since the Neopalatial period.

The architectural structure and painted decoration which shaped the interplay of images, spaces, places, people and activities in the Knossian palace throughout the Monopalatial period had existed for about a century when, after destructions marking the end of the Monopalatial period, the use of the palace changed considerably. Out of the three areas described in the present volume – the *Corridor of the Procession Fresco* in the southwest wing of the building, the *Hall of the Double Axes*, *Queen's Megaron* and *Hall of the Colonnades* in the east wing as well as the area of the *Throne Room* – only the *Throne Room* seems to show signs of continued use into the Final Palatial period. In the south west wing of the building, remodelling took place to an extent which makes it likely that the previous use of the *Corridor of the Procession Fresco* and its mural decoration had come to an end. In the east wing, too, the removal of the friezes of running spirals from the walls – possibly a phenomenon similar to the removal of some wall-paintings with nature scenes after the eruption of Thera – together with the use of parts of the area for storage and workshops and the finds of pottery and Linear B tablets, indicate that palatial life in the Final Palatial period had been confined to the upper storey(s). Only the architectural ensemble of the *Anteroom*, the *Throne Room* and the *Inner Sanctuary* seems to have been used continuously as the seat of a ruling couple, though minor remodelling of the architectural layout could indicate changes in the visibility of the interior of the *Throne Room* and the abandonment of the lustral basin.

All in all, these changes point to the general abandonment of practices rooted deeply in the Minoan ritual traditions of the Neopalatial and Monopalatial period – processions, rituals carried out in lustral basins, the ritual ceremonies in the context of the ‘cult of the double-axe’ – during the last phase of the palace at Knossos²²³⁹. During the Neopalatial and Monopalatial period, the performance of these ritual practices by members of the palatial elite had been at the heart of what was happening at Knossos, with the palace at first being only one of the places, and later the only place, where these most important rituals of Minoan (palatial) culture were celebrated. In the Final Palatial period, however, these intrinsically Minoan ritual practices, together with most of the decorated spaces used to carry them out, had lost their importance to those operating the palace. These profound changes notwithstanding, the palace continued to serve as the seat of a local elite who maintained their upper-class life-style, who controlled palatial administration and economic processes, and who upheld the role of the Knossian palace within the Late Bronze Age *koiné* now dominated by the Mycenaean palaces.

2239 During the Final Palatial period, the ‘cult of the double-axe’ continued in Knossos in a somewhat altered form in the *Shrine of the Double Axes* in the southeast wing of the palace; see Chapter 2.3.