

PREFACE

Manfred Bietak

This book has a long history of production and has undergone many changes. It is the first full publication of the wall paintings from a palatial complex of the Tuthmoside Period at ‘Ezbet Helmi/Tell el-Dab‘a excavated since 1991. The primeval version of the evaluation of the bull frescoes was presented at a symposium in honour of the world-renowned Aegean scholar Sinclair Hood on the 15th of April 1994 at Oxford (see p. 45, n. 100). Being a wider study within the context of Minoan paintings it was decided to take the book out of the Tell el-Dab‘a excavation-series and to develop a special way of presentation. This was especially appropriate after Nannó Marinatos (now Univ. of Illinois, Chicago) and Clairy Palyvou (now Technical University of Thessaloniki), both co-authors of this study, decided to incorporate their analysis of the Taureador scenes from Knossos into this book in order to present the paintings in Knossos and Tell el-Dab‘a in juxtaposition according to the same methods of evaluation. The longstanding co-operation with both colleagues and friends was for the undersigned an outstanding experience for which he will be always grateful.

Among the motifs from the paintings at ‘Ezbet Helmi Taureador scenes were chosen for a first study as they form a closed subject of their own and were more easily identifiable among the thousands of fragments of wall paintings, especially the fragments of the tableau with the maze background. The fragments were found in dumps before the access ramp leading up to Palace F, which was constructed on top of a mud brick platform. A similar collection was made in front of the platform of Palace G, which is not treated in this volume. As the fragments were submerged by and by in the course of millennia by rising subsoil- and irrigation water, some of the paintings suffered considerably. In their presentation the paintings have to be shown side by side with the original status in a reconstructed fashion. After using originally facsimile copies, Clairy Palyvou introduced the method of computer-aided reconstruction by adding faded colours and features up to 60% of their original appearance. This was done after scanning the fragments from photographs or – even better – by original surface scans into the computer. The fragments were put on the computer screen in the most feasible positions, which were discussed and tested by the authors in advance. As only 10–15% of the original fragments were found, the missing parts in between had to be reconstructed electronically in such a way as to distinguish the originals from the reconstruction. Computer technology also helped to create models of bulls and acrobats by assembling on the screen all available fragments of different bulls or acrobats thus finding typical standard postures to be used in the reconstruction work.

Successive computer generations raised the demands and workability with higher resolution in order to improve the quality of the pictures. This resulted in new scans and new reconstructions, which were done along to the lines of the original reconstruction with the methods of Clairy Palyvou who gained outstanding merits in introducing advanced sophisticated technology in analysis of ancient artwork. Rethinking and reflections over the composition led over the time to improvements and some changes. Maria Antonia Negrete Martinez (SCIEEM 2000) reworked in co-operation with the undersigned the individual fragments in detail and assembled the final illustrations of the bull friezes (Figs. 59, 60). Lubica Zelenková reworked Fig. 69 according to an original reconstruction by Clairy Palyvou, which was inspired by Vapheio Cup B.

A subject of potential criticism may be the fact that some of the most important fragments of the paintings will appear several times as illustrations. After long reflections we decided to do so, for two reasons: firstly, the objects are unique and secondly, in order to make this book particularly user friendly. We thought that whilst reading the relevant passages, the illustration ought to be found in context with the text to avoid the reader

having to continually shift pages to and fro within the book. When studying the reconstructions one should be able to notice the difference between the preserved original and the suggested reconstruction. It was also one of the aims of this publication to keep all references to a minimum.

To the skills of Nicola Math (SCIEEM 2000) we owe the illustrations of the first chapter and some of chapter II in part I. Ingo Pini (Marburg a.d. Lahn) kindly provided illustrations of requested seals from the CMS. Felix Höflmayer (SCIEEM 2000) and Vasso Pliatsika (Athens) kindly helped in organising illustrations. In the fresco lab at Tell el-Dab‘a the authors were helped in finding together fragments and their joins by Katharina Aslanidou, Lyla Brock and by our restorer Rudolfine Seeber who also handled the primary treatment of the plaster fragments in the field and most of the restoration work that followed.

The work profited from the expertise of visitors such as Ellen Davis (New York), Maria and Joseph Shaw (Toronto), Malcolm Wiener (Connecticut), Peter Warren (Bristol) and by Lyvia Morgan who has been working in our team for a number of years on other tableaus of the paintings. Lyvia Morgan and Peter Warren also kindly read parts of part I of our manuscript and offered valuable advice. Lyvia Morgan read the manuscript again and gave excellent suggestions for with we are grateful. For mistakes, however, the authors are responsible. We are also indebted to Constance von Rügen and Ernst Czerny for last minute reading.

In editing the text we were helped by Birgit Glück and particularly and with special commitment by Irene Kaplan (Vienna). For last moment advice we would like to thank Fritz Blakolmer and Ernst Czerny (Vienna). Kiki Birtacha (Athens) provided a first layout. Angela Schwab (SCIEEM 2000) produced under difficult circumstances and with a lot of patience and initiative the final layout in a new format and version. To her we offer our special thanks. We are also very much indebted to the team of the Philosophisch-historische Klasse of the Austrian Academy, General Secretary Herwig Friesinger and Mrs. Lisbeth Triska for the promotion and Hannes Weinberger for the production.

We would like to thank the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities of Egypt under the successive chairmen, First Undersecretaries of State Gaballa Ali Gaballa and Zahi Hawass for promoting our research. The thanks also go to the Director General of this organisation of the Eastern Delta Mohammed Abd el-Maksoud, Director Ibrahim Soliman and the Inspectors accompanying our missions. We also would like to thank the excavation team at Tell el-Dab‘a, especially my long-time colleague and deputy director Josef Dorner, his successor Irene Forstner-Müller and the senior researchers at this site, David Aston, Bettina Bader, Perla Fuscaldo, Irmgard Hein, Peter Jánosi and Karin Kopetzki. Special thanks we owe to the restorers of the frescoes Rudolfine Seeber, Aris Gerondas and Georgios Balis.

For promoting and financing the research on the frescoes we would like to thank very much indeed the Austrian Federal Ministry for Science and Research, The Austrian Science Fund (FWF), The Institute of Aegean Prehistory (Philadelphia), especially Malcolm Wiener (Connecticut) and Philip Betancourt (Philadelphia). For financing the production of the reconstruction and the high printing costs we are indebted to the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the University of Vienna and its Rector Georg Winckler, the Friends of the Austrian Academy, the Pullitzer Foundation at the Austrian Academy, and the City of Vienna. Such kind of research takes up endless time and revisions and would not have been possible without the interest, help and understanding of the above-mentioned institutions and people.

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PART I

TAUREADOR SCENES
IN TELL EL-DAB^cA (AVARIS)

