

# FROM SMALL FRAGMENTS TO LARGE ANIMALS<sup>1</sup>

## A Large-Scale Animal Fight in ‘Palace F’ at Tell el-Dab‘a

By Johannes Becker, Johannes Jungfleisch and Constance von Rüden

At the site of Tell el-Dab‘a in the eastern Nile delta a palace district of the early 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty was brought to light in the area of ‘Ezbe Helmi on the eastern bank of the Pelusiatic branch of the Nile (for a general plan see the preliminary report of the wall painting project in the same volume, p. 131, fig. 1). Within this district three palatial structures on high mud brick platforms were arranged around an artificial lake. Directly northeast of two of the complexes, ‘Palace F’ and ‘G’, large assemblages of lime plaster fragments with ‘Aegean style’ fresco decoration were found at the base of the access ramps leading to the entrances. Obviously the fragments had been thrown into these dumps after they had fallen from the walls of the buildings.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the large amount of excavated material from these dumps only a small percentage of the palatial wall decoration is preserved and these preserved pieces are often highly fragmentary. The identification of motifs, themes or even pictorial programmes is therefore a true challenge. In many cases only the parallels in the motif repertoire of the Eastern Mediterranean can give us an idea of what the paintings might have depicted and how they were possibly arranged on the walls. Despite the fruitfulness of this method, it implicitly bears the danger of a circular argument. By the use of Aegean or Egyptian models to identify motifs we always run the risk of promoting either the ‘Aegeanness’ or the ‘Egyptianness’ of the paintings while other aspects might be neglected; this bias has to be always kept in mind when discussing the material. This particularly holds true for the reconstruction of large-size imagery within the corpus. While

single fragments of small-scale paintings can depict even whole iconographic scenes, fragments of large-size motifs mostly show only very small sections, for example just the black outline of a human figure or the monochrome area of an animal skin. The information we can gain from these fragments is often comparatively little, although in the meanwhile the huge gap of knowledge can be filled with the archaeologist’s conscious or unconscious fantasies and convictions. This is also a danger in the interpretation of a small group of fragments with the depiction of the large-scale speckles on a whitish background which will be the focus of this paper.

The fragments were recovered from several areas in the precinct of the small ‘Palace F’.<sup>3</sup> Except for two plaster scraps from a large disturbed area above the casemate walls in the south-western part of the building (square H/I-m/19, outside the section of the given plan) (**Cat.-No. 16** and **Cat.-No. 17**) their distribution concentrates in two areas at the eastern flank of the building (fig. 1).

The first cluster is located north-east of ‘Palace F’ at the base of its entrance ramp. Three pieces were discovered within various levels in square H/I-k/25 in the surrounding of a large deposit of dispersed fresco paintings, mud brick and limestone debris (**Cat.-No. 1**, **Cat.-No. 8** and **Cat.-No. 20**), whilst another fragment was found in a similar deposit directly east of this square in the northern section of H/I-k/26 (**Cat.-No. 19**). Both find spots probably derive from an enormous plaster dump, which extended over a large area at the foot of the access ramp.

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<sup>2</sup> BIETAK, MARINATOS & PALLYVOU 2007, 13–43.

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, there is one fragment (**Cat.-No. 10**) whose exact find position cannot be given here.

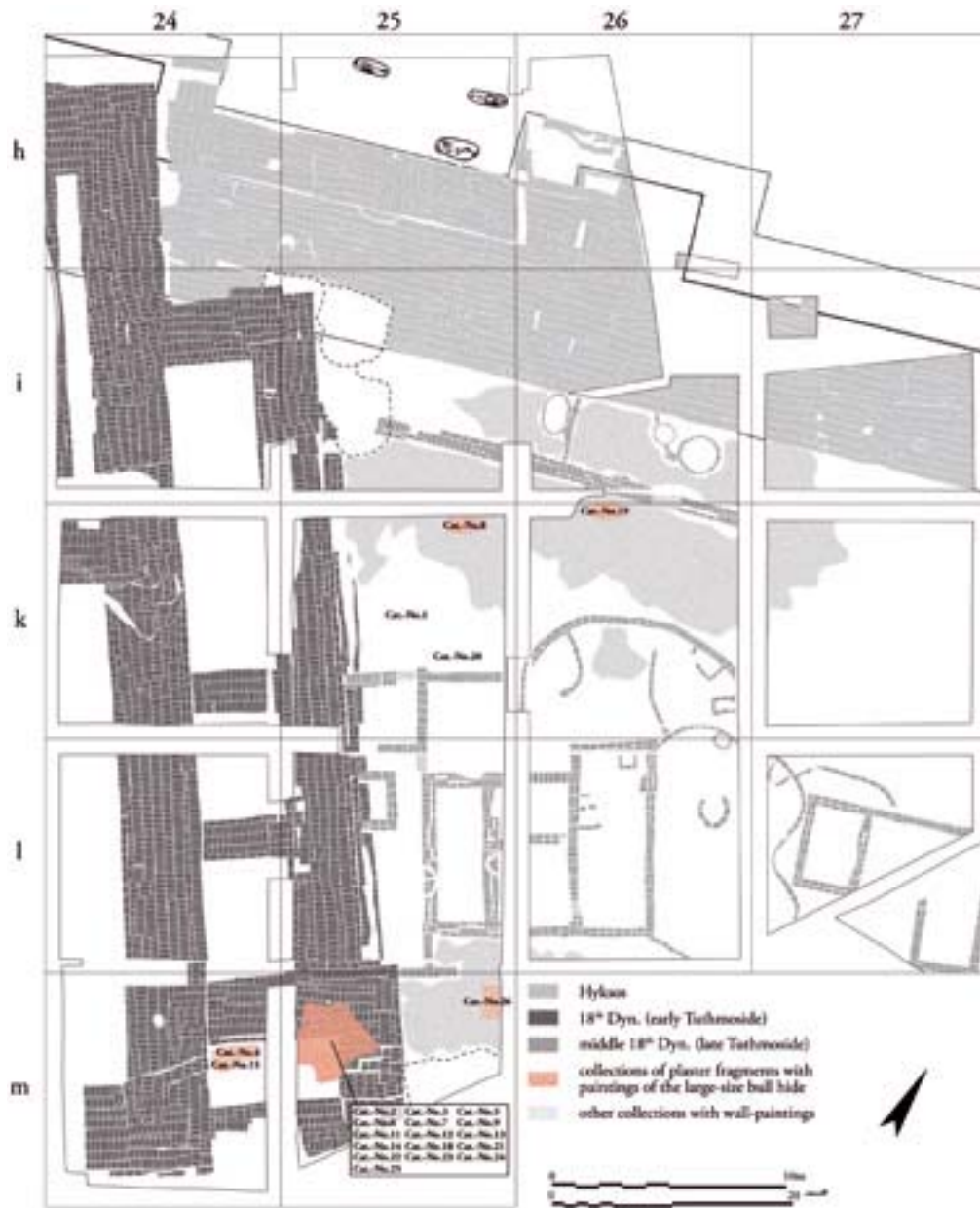


Fig. 1 Plan of the entrance area of 'Palace F' with the find spots of the fragments marked in rose  
(Based on BIETAK, MARINATOS & PALYVOU 2007, 27 fig. 24)

The second concentration is situated in two adjacent squares, H/I-m/24 and H/I-m/25, at the south-eastern corner of the building. Whereas two fragments originated from the mixed top soil, partly covering a disturbed wall in the north-eastern section of square H/I-m/24 (**Cat.-No. 4, 15**), the major part was found in the adjacent square H/I-m/25 (**Cat.-No. 2, 3, 5–7, 9, 11–14, 18, 21–26**). In the latter case the pieces, with the exception of one fragment (**Cat.-No. 26**), originate from a de-

posit situated directly below the modern surface on top of a large foundation wall forming the landing of the entrance ramp. One of these fragments (**Cat.-No. 23**) joined with a plaster fragment which derived from a dump context in the southern part of square H/I-l/25, a deposit which covered a considerable area just east of the aforementioned landing including the areas H/I-l/25, H/I-l/26 and H/I-m/25.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Following M. Bietak's observation some of the wall paintings "were found on top of the filling in secondary position at the same height as the surface of the walls." Obviously "the dumps were cut through and reshifted by the later build-

ing attached to the ramp." Cf. BIETAK, MARINATOS & PALYVOU 2007, 27 fn. 56. This would explain the joining fragments from two different contexts (**Cat.-No. 23**).



Fig. 2 Cat.-No. 6, section of a black and white speckled bull hide (left the original, right with enhanced colours)

The fragments under consideration share certain technical characteristics. They consist of up to four layers of lime plaster with a finish comprising a thin fine slip. On the latter a whitish coat of paint is applied partly covered by the black colour of the speckles and on some pieces additionally by red or blue. The surfaces of the paintings are clearly compacted as a result of extensive burnishing; it can therefore be assumed that they originally had a shiny appearance. Where the whitish coat occasionally flaked off, reddish drawings can be observed directly on the slip of the plaster. In comparison with other life-size figures from Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> they can be interpreted as preliminary sketches or even *sinopie* (see for example **Cat.-No. 1** (fig. 9), **3**, **5**, **13**, **15**, **19**, and possibly related **Cat.-No. 20**, (fig. 10) s. below).

In iconographical terms most of the fragments share the same motif of quite large black spots painted on a whitish ground. Their outlines are delineated with rows of convex bows, a typical characteristic for the depiction of bull or cow hides in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>5</sup> One of the most significant pieces is the quite large fragment **Cat.-No.**

**6** (fig. 2) (19.9 cm × 17.7 cm). Its central part is covered by a big, horizontally arranged black spot ending in the upper part in an irregular curved outline and in the lower part in the typical convex bows. On the fragment's right edge a very small section of the underlying whitish coat is visible and gives us an indication of the spot's lateral end. Another speckle with similar characteristics can be recognized at the lower left edge. Variants of the same spot-motif can also be observed on fragment **Cat.-No. 2** (fig. 3), whose complete lower left part of the surface is covered by such a spot, and on far smaller pieces as for example **Cat.-No. 3**, **4** (fig. 4), **5**, **7** (fig. 5), **8** (fig. 6), **Cat.-No. 9** (fig. 7). The same holds true for the fragment **Cat.-No. 1** (fig. 8) which will be discussed in detail in the second part of this paper. The size of the spots as well as the radii of the bow-shaped sections of the outline gives us a broad indication of the dimensions of the illustrated hide and we can surely assume a large-size, if not life-size depiction.

There are plenty of parallels for this speckled pattern in the iconography of both the Aegean and Egypt and to a certain extent quite similar conven-

<sup>5</sup> About the orientation of most of the fragments no clear statement can be made.



Fig. 3 Cat.-No. 2, section of a black and white speckled bull hide (left the original, right with enhanced colours)



Fig. 4 Cat.-No. 4, section of a black and white speckled bull hide (left the original, right with enhanced colours)

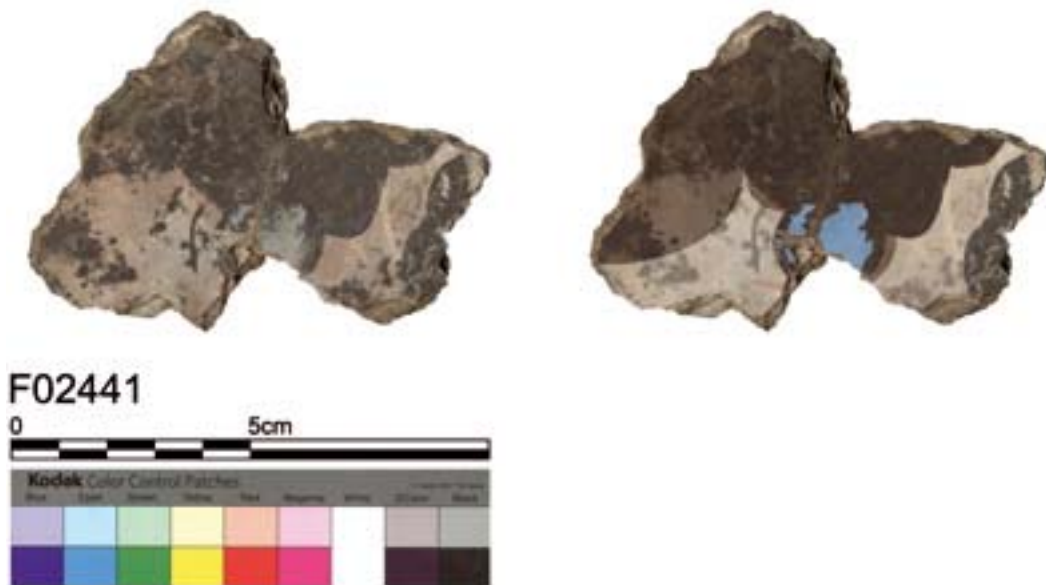


Fig. 5 Cat.-No. 7, section of a black and white speckled bull hide with traces of blue (left the original, right with enhanced colours)



Fig. 6 Cat.-No. 8, section of a black and white speckled bull hide (left the original, right with enhanced colours)



Fig. 7 Cat.-No. 9, section of a black and white speckled bull (left the original, right with enhanced colours)

tions of use can be observed in both regions. It either indicates that objects were made out of bull or cow leather or it depicts the skin of the actual living animal. In Egypt this method of representation is known since the Old Kingdom. Irregular black and reddish-brown spots on a white ground are com-

mon, as are rather regular patterns of trefoil and quatrefoil dappling<sup>6</sup> and occasionally both styles were mingled.<sup>7</sup> The manufacture and the material of a whole series of objects such as fans, stools and clothing were characterised in this way.<sup>8</sup> When depicting the skin of the living animal, the motiv can

<sup>6</sup> Cf. for example the pattern on a statue of Hathor from the mortuary temple of Thutmose III in Deir el-Bahari. See SALEH & SOUROUZIAN 1986, No. 138.

<sup>7</sup> See DAVIES 1936a, pl. II. III. (tomb of Kaem<sup>o</sup>onkh, Giza – 6<sup>th</sup> dynasty).

<sup>8</sup> DAVIES 1936a, pl. V (depiction of a spotted fan, inner coffin of Nofri, Deir el-Bersheh, probably 11<sup>th</sup> dynasty). pl. XX–IX (Nubians wearing skirts made of bull hides, tomb of

Sobekhotep, Thebes, TT 63 – reign of Thutmose IV, 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty); DAVIES 1936b, pl. LXI (spotted stool cover, tomb of Nebamun and Ipuky, Thebes, TT 181 – reign of Amenhotep III, 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty). pl. LXXVIII (shields covered by spotted ox hides, tomb of Tutankhamun, Thebes – 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty); SALEH & SOUROUZIAN 1986, No. 73 (wooden models of Egyptian warriors bearing hide covered shields, tomb of Mesehti, Asyut – 11<sup>th</sup> dynasty).

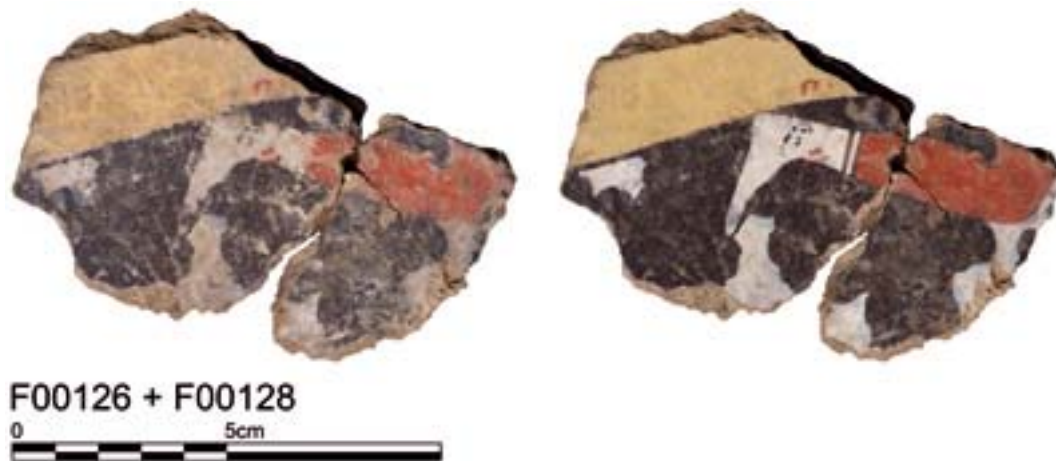


Fig. 8 Detail of a bull from bull-leaper scene at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> (BIETAK, MARINATOS & PALYVOU 2007, 104f. A38; digital reconstruction by María Antonia Negrete-Martínez)

be involved in different scenarios.<sup>9</sup> A wide range of subjects were taken from every day life such as the feeding and milking of cattle, work in the fields and the counting of cattle.<sup>10</sup> Another common topic in Egyptian iconography is the butchering and bleeding of speckled bulls, where the butchers slaughter the trussed animal and sever body parts so that jets of blood squirt from its throat.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore bulls are shown in hunting scenes involving lions as well as human hunters.<sup>12</sup>

Some similar uses of the dappled pattern can be observed in the Aegean. Shields, for instance, are also covered with speckled hides and are known from several murals. Examples are the ‘tower shields’ in the miniature frieze from the ‘West House’ at Thera<sup>13</sup> or the so-called ‘figure-eight’ shield, a popular motif in the later paintings of Crete<sup>14</sup> and the Greek Mainland.<sup>15</sup> Further inanimate objects are the depictions of so-called ‘*ikria*’ – some kind of portable ships’ cabins – in

<sup>9</sup> Cf. DAVIES 1936a, pl. II. III (cattle boats, tomb of Kaem<sup>o</sup>onkh, Giza – 6<sup>th</sup> dynasty). pl. XXXII (cattle, tomb of Kenamun, Thebes, TT 93 – reign of Amenhotep II, 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty). pl. XXXIV (decked out bull, tomb of Thanuro, Thebes, TT 101 – reign of Amenhotep II, 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty). pl. LXXX. LXXXI (Nubian tribute bearers with cattle, tomb of Huy, Thebes, TT 40 – reign of Tutankhamun, 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. SHEDID 1994, 90 fig. 146 (feeding scene, tomb of Khnumhotep II, Beni Hassan, BH 3 – reign of Amenemhat II / Senusret II, 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty); TIRADRITTI 2007, 118 (milking scene, tomb of Kagemni, Saqqara – 6<sup>th</sup> dynasty); TIRADRITTI 2007, 253 (cattle dragging a plough, tomb of Nakht, Thebes, TT 52 – 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty); TIRADRITTI 2007, 173 (model of cattle inspection, tomb of Meketre, Thebes, TT 280 – 11<sup>th</sup> dynasty).

<sup>11</sup> For examples, see DAVIES 1936a, pl. I (tomb of Nebseni, Thebes, TT 108 – reign of Thutmose IV, 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty); TIRADRITTI 2007, 144–146 (tomb of Iti, Gebelein – 11<sup>th</sup> dynasty); MICHALOWSKI 2000, fig. 454 (tomb of Minnakhte, Thebes, TT 87 – reign of Thutmose III, 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty). 471 (tomb of Djoserkaraseneb, Thebes, TT 38 – reign of Thutmose IV, 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. GARIS DAVIES 1900, pl. XXI. XXII (tomb of Ptahhotep, Saqqara – 5<sup>th</sup> dynasty); BLACKMAN 1914, pl. VI. VIII. XXIV (tomb of Senbi, Meir – 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty).

<sup>13</sup> DOUMAS 1992, 28. 58 fig. 26. 60–63 fig. 28. For possible examples of rectangular body shields with the characteristic dappled pattern from Mainland Greece, cf. RODENWALDT 1912, 16 No. 21. pl. II, 3 (‘Inner Forecourt’, Tiryns, Argolis – LH IIIA/B); LANG 1969, 74 No. 30H64. pl. 21 (Hall 64, SW-Building, Pylos, Messenia – LH IIIB).

<sup>14</sup> For a large-size example from the Palace of Knossos, cf. IMMERWAHR 1990, 177 KnNo. 33 (‘Domestic Quarter’, Palace of Knossos, Crete – LM II). On ‘figure-eight’ shield in the Aegean Bronze Age painting in general, see IMMERWAHR 1990, 99. 138–140.

<sup>15</sup> See IMMERWAHR 1990, 193 MyNo. 14 (‘House of the High Priest’, Mycenae, Argolis – SH IIIB). 193 MyNo. 15 (‘House of the High Priest’, Mycenae, Argolis – LH IIIB). 201 ThNo. 5 (‘Kadmeion’, Thebes, Boeotia – LH IIIA). 203 TiNo. 10 (‘Inner Forecourt’, Tiryns, Argolis – LH IIIA/B); MAYER & FRENCH 1990, esp. 221–223 (‘Prehistoric Cemetery’, Mycenae, Argolis – LH IIIB?). For the miniature versions see LANG 1969, 78 No. 39Hne. pl. 26. C (found outside the palace, Pylos, Messenia – LH IIIB); IMMERWAHR 1990, 191f. MyNo. 7. pl. 62. 63 (‘Tsountas House’, Mycenae, Argolis – LH IIIB).

the wall painting corpus of Thera<sup>16</sup> or the assumed representations of hide hangings in the later palace of Pylos.<sup>17</sup>

Of course the living animal is also a very important and widespread subject in different scenic contexts of Aegean iconography. Prominent examples are the Taureador frescoes of the Palace of Knossos,<sup>18</sup> where, arranged in different panels, various scenes with acrobats leaping over bulls in flying gallop are depicted.<sup>19</sup> But the theme is not restricted to the Palace of Knossos, it is also popular in the later mainland palaces at Mycenae, Tiryns and Pylos.<sup>20</sup> The only example outside the Aegean is the small-scale bull-leaping scene in Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>.<sup>21</sup> Due to the fact that both paintings were found at the same site, it is perhaps not surprising that despite the difference in scale the style of the bull's spots is remarkably similar to our large-scale examples (fig. 8). Also the occasional blue framing of its speckles (fig. 8) recalls the traces of blue colour observable at the edge of the spot on *Cat.-No. 7* (fig. 5). Large-scale depictions of bull-leaping scenes seem to be less frequent, but some fragments of a charging bull and a possible bull-leaper in relief from the 'North Entrance Passage' of the Palace of Knossos are evidence for its existence.<sup>22</sup> Not necessarily a bull-leaping

scene, but surely a large-scale bull in flying gallop with the characteristic skin was again found in the Palace of Knossos, more precisely at the 'West Porch'. A foreleg and a fragment with a black spot are preserved and obviously the topic was of such importance that it was renewed at least three times at the same position – the last version dating after Evans to LM II, after Immerwahr and Hood to LM III.<sup>23</sup>

Not only aggressive and threatening bulls are important subjects of Aegean iconography, but also tame bulls (or cows), or at least calm animals, as for example the peaceful bulls or cows in the miniature frieze from the 'West House' at Akrotiri,<sup>24</sup> recumbent animals on seals<sup>25</sup> or calmly walking ones such as those on the famous Vapheio Cup are also shown.<sup>26</sup> Some fragments of large-size animals from Knossos also have to be seen as indications of calmly walking or standing animals. Two murals show the hoofs of bulls as calmly resting either on a low dado<sup>27</sup> or on the ground, embedded in shoots of vegetation.<sup>28</sup>

Bulls as sacrificial animals, a common theme in Egyptian iconography, only appear after the Neopalatial period on Crete or on the Greek Mainland. On the Agia Triada sarcophagus, on a seal from Livanates and on the wall paintings of the throne

<sup>16</sup> For life-size '*ikria*' in room 4 of the 'West House' in Akrotiri, Thera (LM IA), cf. DOUMAS 1992, 86–95 fig. 49–62; for miniature representations of spotted '*ikria*' as ships' stern cabins in the 'ship procession fresco' from room 5 of the 'West House' in Akrotiri, Thera (LM IA), see DOUMAS 1992, 68–79 fig. 35–38.

<sup>17</sup> On the 'rock-and-hide' dado in general, see LANG 1969, 167f.; IMMERWAHR 1990, 145f. For further details, see LANG 1969, 174f. No. 15D12. pl. 101 (room 12, 'Palace of Nestor', Pylos, Messenia – LH IIIB); 175 No. 16D46. pl. 102. 141; 175f. No. 18D46. pl. 104 (room 46, 'Palace of Nestor', Pylos, Messenia – LH IIIB).

<sup>18</sup> Another topic, probably related to bull leaping, which can be found on other media, is the so-called bull-catching, see YOUNGER 1995, 524–526.

<sup>19</sup> See MARINATOS & PALYVOU 2007; HOOD 2005, 79f. ('Court of the Stone Spout', Palace of Knossos, Crete – LM I-LM II).

<sup>20</sup> For the bull-leaping fresco from Mycenae, cf. SHAW 1996 ('Ramp House', Mycenae, Argolis – LH II-LH IIIA). For the bull-leaping fresco from Tiryns, cf. RODENWALDT 1912, 162–165, pl. XVIII; IMMERWAHR 1990, 202 ('Small Court north-east of bathroom', Tiryns, Argolis – LH IIIB?). For the bull-leaping fresco from Pylos, cf. LANG 1969, 77, pl. 124,

C ('Wine Magazine', room 105, 'Palace of Nestor', Pylos, Messenia – LH IIIB).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. BIETAK, MARINATOS & PALYVOU 2007. This fairly widespread theme is also used to decorate other media and is preserved on several Aegean seals and seal impressions. For a summary see MARINATOS & PALYVOU 2007, fig. 100.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. EVANS 1930, 158–191; IMMERWAHR 1990, 174 KnNo. 21; HOOD 2005, 56–58 ('North Entrance Passage', Palace of Knossos, Crete – MM IIIB?).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. EVANS 1928, 677 fig. 429; EVANS 1935, 894f. fig. 873; IMMERWAHR 1990, 176 KnNo. 29; HOOD 2005, 66 ('West Porch', Palace of Knossos, Crete – last version LM III).

<sup>24</sup> See TELEVANTOU 1990, 318 fig. 10; MORGAN 1988, 56.

<sup>25</sup> See for example CMS V, Suppl. 1A, 139 (Chania, Crete – LM II-LM IIIA1); CMS II.6, 57 (Agia Triada, Crete – LM I).

<sup>26</sup> BIETAK, MARINATOS & PALYVOU 2007, 66 fig. 70.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. EVANS 1935, 893 fig. 872; HOOD 2005, 65 'Throne Room's Anteroom', Palace of Knossos, Crete – LM II/LM IIIA).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. EVANS 1935, 892; HOOD 2005, 73 (Upper floor of West Portico of 'Hall of the Double Axes', Palace of Knossos, Crete – LM II).

room of Pylos the animal is depicted trussed on an altar while it is ritually killed.<sup>29</sup>

But while most of the bull-related topics in Aegean iconography were also preserved as wall paintings, one is so far depicted only on seals and ivories from Crete and the Greek Mainland.<sup>30</sup> Since the beginning of the Late Bronze Age these objects show bulls also in hunting scenes and animal fights, mostly as the prey of lions<sup>31</sup> or griffins.<sup>32</sup> The only example of such a scene on murals is outside the Aegean on a small-scale painting at Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>, which thus gives us an idea of a possible composition of the scene when it is not constricted to the small pictorial field of a seal or an ivory pyxis.<sup>33</sup>

The fragments described above can be clearly assigned to a speckled bull hide, however it is still difficult to draw further conclusions considering the overall theme. Further hints might be offered by another fragment. On **Cat.-No. 1** (fig. 9) red paint was applied to the usual black spots.<sup>34</sup> Eight brush strokes run nearly vertically, but in an irregular manner across the surface overlying the whitish coat as well as the black paint. Their widths vary between 0.2-0.5 cm and occasionally very fine red colour traces are visible between them. Similar strokes can be found on **Cat.-No. 20** (fig. 10). Here the original surface is only preserved in the upper right part of the fragment, while the



Fig. 9 Cat.-No. 1, section of a black and white speckled bull hide with dripping blood (left the original, right with enhanced colours)

<sup>29</sup> For the Agia Triada Sarcophagus (LM IIIA2), cf. MILITELLO 1998, 154–167; CMS V, Suppl. 1B, 3 (Livanates, Phthiotis – LH II-LH IIIA1); for the wall painting from Pylos, cf. MCCALLUM 1987, 132f.; LANG 1969, 109f. pl. 53. 125 (‘Throne Room’ (room 6), ‘Palace of Nestor’, Pylos, Messenia – LH IIIB).

<sup>30</sup> Hallager and Hallager question the existence of this topic, assuming that the bull “never appears at a disadvantage either hurt or as an inferior animal” in Neopalatial and earlier iconography. HALLAGER & HALLAGER 1994, 553.

<sup>31</sup> Lions are shown as predator on two wall paintings from Akrotiri – Thera, whereas the prey is in both cases not a bull. On the miniature frieze from room 5 of the ‘West House’

(LM IA) a lion is chasing deer, while a fresco from room 2 of Xesté 3 (LM IA) shows a lion attacking a goat or antelope. For the miniature frieze, cf. MORGAN 1988, 44–49; DOUMAS 1992, fig. 36. For the ‘Xesté 3’ painting, cf. VLACHOPOULOS 2008, 451. 455 fig. 41.7–9.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. PINI 1985, 154–156. Apart from bulls, goats and deer are also shown as prey of lions on sealings, see PINI 1985. A summary for the griffin as predator, see MORGAN 2010.

<sup>33</sup> MARINATOS 2010, 340f. fig. 21. 22.

<sup>34</sup> At the lower part of the fragment the uppermost whitish coat flaked off and therefore the underlying reddish preliminary drawing is visible.





Fig. 10 Cat.-No. 20, in the lower left part of the fragment preliminary drawings of the blood drips come to light under the flaked off surface



Fig. 11 Section of a pyxis lid from Evreti/Palaepaphos (photo: von Rűden)

strokes are painted on the layer below and have to be seen as a preliminary drawing for the same motif. While black speckles are well known from other pieces, the red strokes might be the clue to the identification of the topic. Their colour and way of execution suggests an interpretation as dripping blood. In small-scale depictions blood is often painted as a homogenous red area, but in large-scale images it is executed in single strokes, as for example in the case of the bleeding foot of a young woman in 'Xesté 3' in Akrotiri/Thera.<sup>35</sup> The animal fight scene on a pyxis lid from Evreti/Palaepaphos on Cyprus is, despite its late date and small scale, a nice illustration of a similar stylistic rendering of blood in other media (fig. 11).<sup>36</sup> Clearly the single drips are separately carved, comparable to the execution of the painted strokes on the

fragment described above. From these observations an inanimate object can be excluded and the depiction of a living or maybe better a dying animal is very probable.

On the basis of the above survey of possible topics two can be taken into consideration for the fragments from Tell el-Dab'a: a sacrificial bull leaping scene, which is known from Egypt and the Aegean, or an animal fight, involving in addition to the bull either a lion or griffin, as both have bulls as possible prey.<sup>37</sup> In the quite late offering scenes of the Aegean the blood is only marginally running over the animal's skin, but this is the case in some of the Egyptian scenes, where the blood jets are depicted in a manner similar to our example.<sup>38</sup> In favour of an animal fight scene is the observation by Lyvia Morgan<sup>39</sup> that the small-scale paintings of

<sup>35</sup> Cf. DOUMAS 1992, 142 fig. 105.

<sup>36</sup> On the published illustrations of the pyxis lid the blood was never indicated.

<sup>37</sup> For lions attacking bulls, cf. below fn. 40. 41. 42. For griffins attacking bulls, cf. CMS V, 216 (Brauron, Attica – LH II-LH IIIA1); CMS VI, 395 (uncertain provenience (possibly Knossos, Crete) – LM IIIA1-LM IIIA2).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. fn. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. the section about the hunting scenes by Lyvia Morgan in the preliminary report of the wall painting project in the same volume (S. 139).



Fig. 12 Reconstruction of an animal fight in the small-scale painting of Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> (MARINATOS 2010, 341 fig. 22; digital reconstruction by María Antonia Negrete-Martínez)

‘Palace F’ often recall the large-size murals in Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup>. Transferring this idea to the material under consideration, the above-mentioned small-scale scene of a lion attacking a bleeding bull (fig. 12) makes the existence of a similar life-size scene highly probable.

Whether the composition of our large-size scene is similar to Nanno Marinatos’ reconstruction of the small-scale version is at present difficult to say. In comparison with Aegean seals there are a whole range of possible constellations. The predator might have attacked from above,<sup>40</sup> at the side<sup>41</sup> or in front<sup>42</sup> of the bull biting his neck or throat, while the prey is in full motion struggling for his life. In spite of all the open questions the evidence for a large-size

animal fight on the murals is exceptional. While the topic is popular in minor arts, as for example seals and ivories, animal-fight scenes are very rare on wall paintings and even there they are nearly absent as large-scale depictions. An exception is the mural from room 2 of ‘Xesté 3’ in Thera, where a lion attacks a goat in a wall-filling composition,<sup>43</sup> but a combination with a bull is unknown to us. The impressiveness of a wall-filling animal fight scene involving a bull and a lion on the walls of ‘Palace F’ in Tell el-Dab<sup>a</sup> has to be considered as one of the possible inspirations or even models for the multiple appearances of such scenes on the minor art of the Eastern Mediterranean.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. CMS I, 185 (Dendra, Argolis – LH II-LH IIIA1); CMS I, 252 (Vapheio, Laconia – LH I-LH II); CMS V, 678 (Thebes, Boeotia – LH II-LH IIIA1).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. CMS II.6, 274 (Tylissos, Crete – LM I).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. CMS I, 186 (Dendra, Argolis – LH II-LH IIIA1); CMS II.8, 347 (Knossos, Crete – LM I-LM II).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. VLACHOPOULOS 2008, 451. 455 fig. 41.8. 41.9.

## CATALOGUE

**Cat.-No. 1** (fig. 9)

Inv.-No.: F00942  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: k/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (to planum 1)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 8.2 cm, Width: 8.9 cm,  
 Depth: 4.3-2.4 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The medium-size fragment has a fine slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint to which black and then red paint are applied. The surface itself is burnished. In its centre and lower part the fine slip of less than a millimetre thickness is partly flaked off; in these areas traces of a reddish colour can be observed. The rear is preserved as is a part of a mud brick impression. At least four layers of plaster and a slip are recognizable.

*Description of the motif:*

On the white surface a black area is painted at the upper edge of the fragment. Its delineation towards the lower part is through connected irregular bows. Furthermore eight brush strokes run nearly vertically, but irregularly across the surface, on both the black and the white areas.

Their widths vary between 0.2-0.5 cm and between them very fine traces of red colour are visible.

**Cat.-No. 2** (fig. 3)

Inv.-No.: F00998  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western part of the square, above the wide wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 17.6 cm, Width: 21.7 cm,  
 Depth: 5.1-2.1 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

This large fragment is composed of five joining fragments and has a fine slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint over which black paint was applied. On the surface several cracks and traces of sinter are visible, and the black paint is partly eroded. The rear is preserved and shows the impression of mud bricks in the coarser floating. Three plaster layers of a fine lime plaster and a slip are recognizable. The brick impression gives some hints about the orientation of the fragment. Presumably the mud bricks were horizontally aligned, therefore the frag-

ment has to be oriented the way it is depicted in fig. 3 or turned 180°.

*Description of the motif:*

On the whitish slip the lower part of the fragment is mostly covered with black paint, whose outline ends in rows of irregular bows. The outline can be clearly discerned in the left and right part of the fragment, in the centre its delineation is not clear due to the bad preservation.

**Cat.-No. 3**

Inv.-No.: F02421  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western part of the square, above the wide wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 2.7 cm, Width: 4.7 cm,  
 Depth: 1.3 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The small fragment has a fine slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint onto which black paint is added. The surface is burnished, partly eroded and shows some traces of sinter. Below the black colour red paint is visible at the lower edge of the fragment. The rear is fairly flat and probably only the upper part of the lime plaster is preserved.

*Description of the motif:*

Most of the white ground of the fragment is covered by black paint ending in an outline of two consecutive irregular bows at the right edge of the fragment.

**Cat.-No.4** (fig. 4)

Inv.-No.: F02427  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/24  
 Planum: 0-1 (south of the wall and partly over disturbed wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 4.2 cm, Width: 5.9 cm,  
 Depth: 1.3 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The medium-size fragment has a fine slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint, onto which the black paint is added. The surface is burnished, partly eroded or flaked off. The rear is not preserved and two layers of plaster can be observed.

*Description of the motif:*

Most of the white ground of the fragment is covered by black paint ending in an outline of four irregular bows on the left side and two bows on the upper right side.

**Cat.-No. 5**

Inv.-No.: F02429  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western part of the square, above the wide wall)

*Dimensions:* Height: 1.8 cm, Width: 4.6 cm,  
 Depth: 1.9 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The small fragment has a fine slip mixed with ochre pigments producing an ochre background, on which red and then black paint are applied. The surface is burnished, partly eroded and shows some traces of sinter. The rear is irregular and parts of the lower coarser floating are preserved. Two layers of lime plaster can be observed.

*Description of the motif:*

Nearly the whole fragment is covered by black paint. Only in the lower area is the whitish ground partly visible, although the outline dividing both colours cannot be clearly understood, they might have been two bows.

**Cat.-No. 6 (fig. 2)**

Inv.-No.: F02431  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western part of the square, above the wide wall)

*Dimensions:* Height: 19.9 cm, Width: 17.7 cm,  
 Depth: 2.1-1.7 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The large fragment is composed of seven joining pieces. It has a fine slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint (partly discoloured) and over it the black paint was applied. The surface is burnished, in some areas it is slightly flaked off and sintered. On the rear, impressions of mud bricks are not preserved, only the upper and finer part of the lime plaster; three layers of lime plaster can be recognized.

*Description of the motif:*

On the white background irregular black spots are painted – a larger one in the centre and a small section of another one at the lower edge. The outlines of the one in the centre end at the upper edge in a wavy delineation, and at the lower edge with connected irregular bows. The outlines of the lower spot show a row of irregular convex bows.

**Cat.-No. 7 (fig. 5)**

Inv.-No.: F02441  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western part of the square, above the wide wall)

*Dimensions:* Height: 6.2 cm, Width: 9.1 cm,  
 Depth: 1.7-1.5 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The medium-size fragment is composed of two joined pieces. It has a fine slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint, on which black and blue paint are applied. The surface itself is burnished. The colours are partly flaked off; black discolouration on the surface is visible probably caused by fungi due to deposition in the humid earth in which they were found.

A stroke of a bright reddish paint can be observed at the lower edge of the fragment's left part (the reddish colour is possibly a result of discolouration by the binder within the black paint). Brushstrokes or traces of smoothing can be observed within the white areas. The rear of the fragment is flat and the coarser part of the lime plaster seems not to be preserved; three layers of finer lime plaster can be recognized.

*Description of the motif:*

On the white background clearly two, and possibly also a third, black spot can be recognized. The central one ends on its right side in a row of three irregular, convex bows, and on its lower side in at least two bows. Because of the condition of preservation of the fragment the rest of the outlines are hardly traceable. Due to the discolouration of the white surface in the left part one can only possibly trace another bow up to the left fragment edge. Another possibility would be that after a quite straight outline on the left part of the fragment, two smaller, convex bows are at the left edge. Centrally over the black paint of this spot traces of blue are visible. The outline of this application is not pre-

served in such a way that it can be definitely described, but it may follow the outline of the black paint under it.

Towards the right edge of the fragment another smaller segment of a black spot can be recognized, whose delineation can be described as a row of two convex bows.

At the central part of the lower edge a 0.6 cm long bright red line can be traced on the white background, which was originally black (s. above). Another black spot may be traceable at the lower left edge of the fragment, but the black discolouration allows no definite identification.

**Cat.-No. 8** (fig. 6)

Inv.-No.: F02444  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: k/25  
 Planum: 1-2  
*Dimensions:* Height: 7.4 cm, Width: 9.3 cm,  
 Depth: 1.6 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

One medium-size fragment with a fine slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint onto which black paint is applied. The surface and paint are partly flaking off. The rear is flat, and probably only the finer layers of plaster are preserved. Three plaster layers can be recognized.

*Description of the motif:*

The whole lower part of the white background is covered by the black paint. The precise outline of the limits of this area cannot be discerned, but possibly it ends in an irregular line with a slightly convex bow in its centre.

**Cat.-No. 9** (fig. 7)

Inv.-No.: F03232  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western half of the square, above the wide wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 3.4 cm, Width: 8.3 cm,  
 Depth: 2.3-1.7 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The medium-size fragment has a fine slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint, on which black paint is applied. The surface is generally burnished, but it is partly flaked off as indeed is the paint. On the rear few remains of the coarse floating are partly preserved and three layers of the finer lime plaster are recognizable.

*Description of the motif:*

On the white background is a segment of an irregular black spot. In the central part of the fragment the outline of the spot consists of a row of convex bows.

**Cat.-No. 10**

Inv.-No.: F04094  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: -  
 Planum: -  
*Dimensions:* Height: 4.1 cm, Width: 2.9 cm,  
 Depth: 1.3 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The small fragment has a fine slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint onto which reddish paint (partly worn) was applied. The surface is burnished. Traces of floating are visible on the left side of the surface. Discolouration due to fungi is visible at the left upper part of the fragment. Two layers of lime plaster are recognizable; the rear is not preserved.

*Description of the motif:*

On the whitish background three reddish wavy bands orientated in the same direction can be observed, who most probably were painted with one stroke.

**Cat.-No. 11**

Inv.-No.: F06048  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western half of the square, above the wide wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 5.0 cm, Width: 5.2 cm,  
 Depth: 2.3-1.1 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The medium-size fragment is composed of two joined pieces and has a fine slip, on which black paint is added. The surface is burnished and its colour is partly flaked off. Black discolouration due to fungi can be observed.

The rear of the fragment is not preserved and at least three layers of plaster can be recognized.

*Description of the motif:*

On the assumed original white background remains of a black spot can be observed. Due to the bad preservation the upper outline of the spot is very

difficult to define. Nevertheless two convex bows can be recognized.

#### Cat.-No. 12

Inv.-No.: F06049  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western half of the square, above the wide wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 2.8 cm, Width: 5.4 cm, Depth: 2.0-1.7 cm

##### *Description of the fragment:*

The medium-size fragment has a slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint onto which black paint is applied. The surface is burnished and small parts have flaked off. The rear is fairly flat; three plaster layers are preserved.

##### *Description of the motif:*

The black paint almost covers the whole surface of the fragment. Only at the upper right edge the paint shows a convex outline and the white ground is visible.

#### Cat.-No. 13

Inv.-No.: F06050  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western half of the square, above the wide wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 3.5 cm, Width: 3.2 cm, Depth: 1.3 cm

##### *Description of the fragment:*

The small fragment has a fine slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint onto which black and red paint is applied. Below the slip traces of reddish colour are visible. The surface is partly eroded and the paint has flaked. A crack runs centrally through the whole fragment. The rear is not preserved; three plaster layers are recognizable.

##### *Description of the motif:*

On the whitish surface a black spot can be observed, whose lower outline describes a bow. Additionally in that part of the fragment traces of red colour can be detected on the slip. Below the slip reddish remains of colour can be seen where the original surface has flaked off.

#### Cat.-No. 14

Inv.-No.: F06051  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western half of the square, above the wide wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 4.8 cm, Width: 3.2 cm, Depth: 1.5-1.4 cm

##### *Description of the fragment:*

The small fragment is composed out of three joined pieces and has a fine slip producing a whitish surface on top of which red and black paint was applied. The surface is burnished and black discoloration due to fungi can be traced in some areas. Furthermore tiny parts of the black paint have flaked off. The rear is not preserved and two layers of plaster can be observed.

##### *Description of the motif:*

The black paint covers nearly the whole surface of the fragment. Only in the upper part does the black area end in an irregular, slightly wavy outline. The rest of the surface is left white. Red colour can be traced below the black paint in the central area of the fragment in areas where the upper layer of paint has flaked off.

#### Cat.-No. 15

Inv.-No.: F07622  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/24  
 Planum: 0-1 (south of the wall and partly over disturbed wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 3.2 cm, Width: 5.2 cm, Depth: 1.6 cm

##### *Description of the fragment:*

The medium-size fragment has a fine slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint onto which black paint is applied. Below the slip red paint is visible. Traces of red paint can also be observed on the slip. The surface is burnished and the colour is partly eroded and flaked off. The rear is not preserved and two layers of plaster can be observed.

##### *Description of the motif:*

Most of the white ground of the fragment is covered by black paint ending in two irregular convex bows on the upper left side.

**Cat.-No. 16**

Inv.-No.: F07623  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/19  
 Planum: found in a large disturbed area  
 over the wall  
*Dimensions:* Height: 3.2 cm, Width: 5.3 cm,  
 Depth: 1.8 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The small fragment has a fine slip, on which black colour is applied. The surface is burnished, and shows yellowish discolouration and traces of sinter. In addition discolouration due to fungi is visible. The colour is partly flaked off. The rear is not preserved and two layers of plaster can be observed.

*Description of the motif:*

Most of the white ground of the fragment is covered by black paint ending in an almost straight outline on the left side and two bows on the upper right side.

**Cat.-No. 17**

Inv.-No.: F07624  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/19  
 Planum: found in a large disturbed area  
 over the wall  
*Dimensions:* Height: 2.3 cm, Width: 2.8 cm,  
 Depth: 1.0 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The small fragment has a fine slip, on which black colour is applied. Brushstrokes or traces of smoothing can be observed on the surface. The surface shows yellowish discolouration and shows traces of sinter. The rear is not preserved and one layer of plaster can be observed.

*Description of the motif:*

The lower part of the surface is covered by black paint ending in a slightly curved outline. The upper part is unpainted.

**POSSIBLY RELATED FRAGMENTS:****Cat.-No. 18**

Inv.-No.: F02420  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western half of the  
 square, above the wide wall)

*Dimensions:* Height: 5.5 cm, Width: 14.8 cm,  
 Depth: 2.2-1.7 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The large fragment is composed out of three joined pieces and has a fine slip. The surface is completely covered with black paint, which is partly eroded and flaked off. The rear is mostly flat, but in one area remains of the coarser floating are preserved. Three layers of fine lime plaster can be observed.

**Cat.-No. 19**

Inv.-No.: F03201  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: k/26  
 Planum: 5 (northern baulk)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 3.2 cm, Width: 5.3 cm,  
 Depth: 3.3 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The medium-size fragment has a fine slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint onto which the black paint is applied. Below the black, red paint is visible at the lower edge of the fragment. The surface is burnished and shows traces of sinter. The colour has partly flaked off. The rear is not preserved. Three layers of fine lime plaster can be observed.

**Cat.-No. 20** (fig. 10)

Inv.-No.: F03234  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: k/25  
 Planum: 1-2 (in the eastern half of the  
 square, in the north of the  
 "building")  
*Dimensions:* Height: 7.6 cm, Width: 6.8 cm,  
 Depth: 3.8-1.8 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

On the fine slip of the large fragment is a whitish coat of paint onto which red, and black paint are applied. In addition tiny traces of yellow paint can be observed. The original surface is to a large extent eroded and in the area of the black paint discolouration due to fungi can be observed. The rear is partly preserved. Two layers of lime plaster can be observed.

*Description of the motif:*

On the smoothed surface four wide red brush strokes are applied, orientated in the same direction. Between and above them a reddish transparent

paint is spread. This painted surface is covered by a fine slip mixed with ochre pigments, on which black painting was added.

**Cat.-No. 21**

Inv.-No.: F07392  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western half of the square, above the wide wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 2.4 cm, Width: 2.3 cm, Depth: 1.4 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The small fragment has a thin fine slip and is completely covered with black paint. The surface is burnished and the upper layer of paint has partly flaked off. The rear is not preserved and three layers of lime plaster can be observed.

**Cat.-No. 22**

Inv.-No.: F07393  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western half of the square, above the wide wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 2.8 cm, Width: 2.2 cm, Depth: 1.2 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The small fragment with a thin fine slip is completely covered with black paint. The burnished surface is partly eroded and flaked off. The rear is not preserved and three layers of lime plaster can be observed.

**Cat.-No. 23**

Inv.-No.: F07394  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western half of the square, above the wide wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 5.6 cm, Width: 2.5 cm, Depth: 1.4 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The medium-size fragment has a thin slip and is completely covered with black paint. The burnished surface is partly flaked off. The rear is not preserved and three layers of lime plaster can be observed.

**Cat.-No. 24**

Inv.-No.: F07395  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western half of the square, above the wide wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 4.6 cm, Width: 4.5 cm, Depth: 2.0 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The medium-size fragment has a thin slip and is completely covered with black paint. The surface is burnished and partly flaked off and the upper layer of the black paint is mostly eroded. The rear is not preserved and three layers of lime plaster can be observed.

**Cat.-No. 25**

Inv.-No.: F07396  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: 0-1 (in the western half of the square, above the wide wall)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 17.4 cm, Width: 7.9 cm, Depth: 1.7 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The large fragment has a thin slip and is completely covered with black paint. The surface was burnished and is now partly flaked off or sintered. The rear is not preserved and three layers of lime plaster can be observed.

**Cat.-No. 26**

Inv.-No.: F07399  
 Area: H/I  
 Square: m/25  
 Planum: (found by excavating the earthen steps into the square)  
*Dimensions:* Height: 10.9 cm, Width: 9.3 cm, Depth: 3.5-1.9 cm

*Description of the fragment:*

The large fragment has a thin slip, on which is a whitish coat of paint, completely covered with black paint. The surface is burnished and is now partly flaked off or worn. The rear is not preserved and four layers of lime plaster can be observed.



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