

BACK TO THE BEGINNING
REASSESSING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL COMPLEXITY ON
CRETE DURING THE EARLY AND MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

Edited by
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and Jan Driessen

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Cover image: The northwest corner of the EM III Northwest Terrace System at Knossos, behind it is the northwest wing of the Court Complex and in the background is the north face of Arthur Evans' modern reconstruction of the Throne Room System.
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Preface

This volume owes its origins to a workshop, organised at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven early in 2008, and to the lively, but always constructive discussion that took place. Each of the papers originally presented was integral to the coherence and success of this workshop and we are thus grateful to all the original contributors for their commitment and patience in ensuring that all of these made it into the final publication. We are equally grateful to Peter Warren and Borja Legarra Herrero for writing papers especially commissioned for the present volume. We would also like to thank Gerald Cadogan, Peter Day and Peter Warren for making the journey to Leuven, chairing sessions and anchoring the discussions. The workshop could not have taken place without generous funding from the Institute for Aegean Prehistory and the Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek-Vlaanderen. The editors would also like to thank Tim and Delia Cunningham, for their hospitality during the course of the workshop, and the Maurits Sabbe Library at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, for their assistance in the production of the image that appears on the back cover.

8

Emerging Authority: A Functional Analysis of the MM II Settlement of Phaistos

Pietro Militello

Following wider discussion on the evolution and operation of archaic states (e.g., Feinman and Marcus 1998; Yoffee 2005), Aegean scholars have recently challenged the traditional interpretation of Middle Minoan Palaces as redistributive centres, seats of strong hierarchical power exercising their authority over well defined territories. New research has highlighted differences from the later and more obviously bureaucratic Mycenaean states (Dabney and Wright 1990; Driessen and MacDonald 1997: 70) and the possibility of chronological and geographical variations (Driessen and Schoep 1995). Furthermore, new interpretative tools have been introduced, such as heterarchy (Schoep and Knappett 2004), factional competition (Hamilakis 2002) and the decentralised segmentary state (Knappett 1999a; 1999b; but see criticism of the segmentary state concept in Marcus and Feinman 1998: 7–8). According to these approaches, the ‘court-centred buildings’ in Crete lose many of the functional characteristics that have traditionally been ascribed to them (Warren 1985; Cherry 1986). On the other hand, the plurality of definitions and contrasting opinions (Warren 2002; Betancourt 2002) demonstrate that a general consensus among scholars is far from being reached.

Following these premises, this paper aims to improve the definition of the Protopalatial state through analyses of the circulation and consumption of goods in the Phaistos region and the functional use of space within the excavated area. Since the standard publications by Pernier (Pernier 1935; Pernier and Banti 1951) and Levi (Levi 1976; 1981; Levi and Carinci 1988), Middle Minoan Phaistos has been the focus of systematic research by a team under the direction of Vincenzo La Rosa (2000; 2003; 2007; 2010). This work has clearly shown that the Palace possessed a more complex history than previously thought. It is

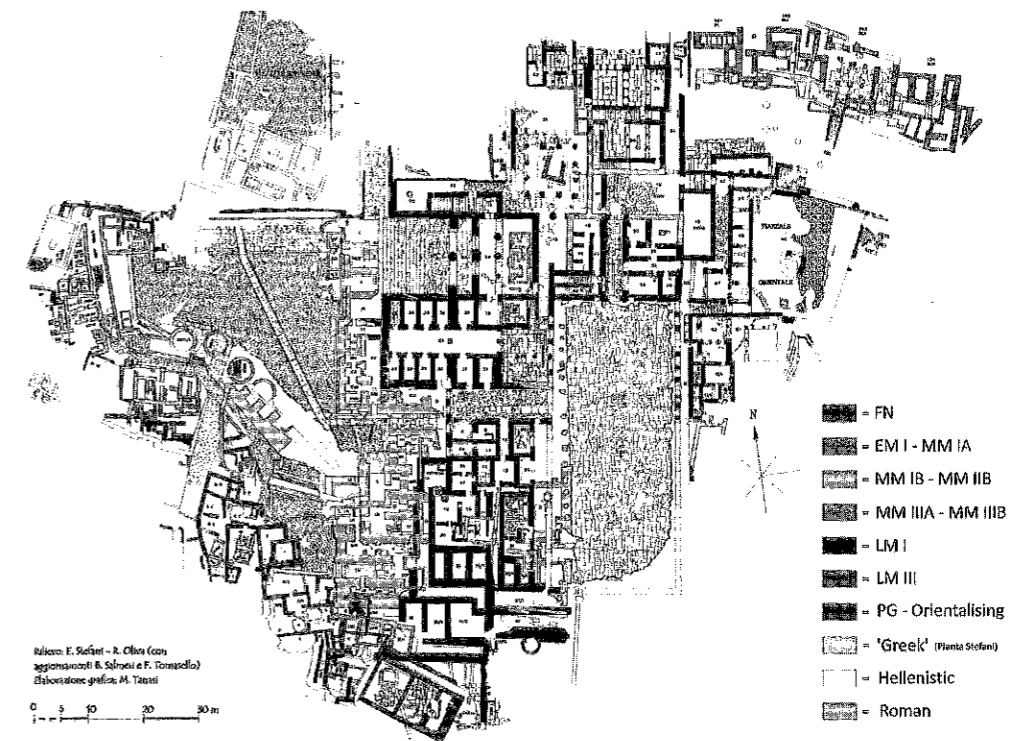


Figure 8.1. Plan of Phaistos (Courtesy of V. La Rosa).

important in a functional analysis to concentrate on a well defined moment to avoid the superimposition of data pertaining to different periods of use. Middle Minoan II appears to be a good choice as it presents a stage in which a clear and coherent functional analysis of Phaistos is possible and the physical organisation of the settlement is more easily understood. This choice could be considered inappropriate in a symposium devoted to the formative stages of the Minoan Palaces, but it is justified by the consideration that ‘it is difficult to understand a state’s rise and fall if we do not comprehend what it looked like at its peak’ (Feinman and Marcus 1998: xiii).

The chronological sequence

A major problem when studying Protopalatial Phaistos is chronology. Doro Levi preferred to refer to the development of the entire site in terms of three successive phases, which he identified in the Southwest Quarter (see Table 8.1;

Levi (1951; 1976; 1981)	Platon (1968) Zois (1965)	Fiandra (1962; 1980; 1997; 2006)	Tomasello (1999; 2001)	La Rosa (2000; 2007; 2010)
Phase Ia (MM Ia-b) Southwest Quarter only, First floor	Construction (Zois: end of MM Ia) (Platon: beginning of MM IB)	Period I (MM Ib) Southwest Quarter only	Northwest and Southwest Quarters not linked together. Monumental Entrance to the South	Old Northern Facade Southwest Quarter and Lower West Court (LXX)
Phase Ib (MM IIa) Southwest Quarter only, First floor and Rooms I.VI- LVII		Period II (MM IIa) North Quarter, Propylon. Unitary complex Acme of the Palace	Northwest and Southwest Quarters linked together. Propylon (II) Rooms LVI-LVII	final MM IB-IIb Unitary complex
Phase II (MM II) Southwest Quarter only, Second floor				MM IIb Mature Propylon Acme of the Palace
				Partial destruction (Advanced MM IIb)
		Period III (MM IIb) Rooms LVI-LVII, V- VIII, LXIV (Shrines)	Phase of the Shrines (Fase dei Sacelli)	Phase of the Shrines (Fase dei Sacelli) Rooms V-VIII LXIV
	Destruction (MM IIb)	Destruction (MM IIb)		Final Destruction (MM IIb)
Phase III Whole Palace Second floor of the Southwest Quarter (MM III)		Period IV Reoccupation (MM IIIa)		

Table 8.1. The Protopalatial sequence at Phaistos according to Levi, Platon, Zois, Fiandra, Tomasello and La Rosa.

Figure 8.1; Levi 1951: 351–52; 1981; 1976; Levi and Carinci 1988). This scheme was subsequently questioned by Fiandra, Zois, Platon and Damiani Indelicato respectively (Fiandra 1962; 1980; 1997; 2006; Zois 1965; Platon 1968; Damiani Indelicato 1982). Recent research (La Rosa 1995; 2000, 2002; 2003; 2010; Tomasello 1999; 2001; Carinci and La Rosa 2003; 2007; 2009; 2010) has abandoned Levi's system and has identified several additional building phases, during which existing structures were restored or enlarged. The following represents a summary of the evidence.¹

The first phase of the Palace, dated to MM IB, saw the construction of at least two wings, the Southwest Quarter and the Northwest Quarter, together with the Central Court (XXXIII), the Lower West Court (LXX), the pavement and part of the Middle West Court (I), a baetyl in the Middle West Court (I) and a few houses in the region to the West Palace are now dated to the beginning of MM IB. The northern part of the West facade had a complex history: the original one (MM IB) ran some meters to the east, almost coincident with the future Neopalatial one, and only afterwards (MM II) was the one visible today built (La Rosa 2007), as its different building technique confirms (Tsakanika-Theohari 2006: 96).

By the end of the second phase, dated to MM IIA the Palace had already assumed its final form. The Middle West Court (I) was enlarged and the Theatral Area, the plastered basin (XXX) and the Propylaeum (II) were built. The Southwest Quarter was also reorganised with new access points, rooms (LVI–LVII) and an entrance (LIX). During MM II the Middle West Court (I) was paved with stone slabs and obtained its entrance landing, the Kouloures were built, as were the houses to the west of the Middle West Court (I) and to the west and south of the Lower West Court (LXX). An earthquake in the final MM IIB phase led to several further changes which constitute a third, short-lived phase, the so-called Fase dei Sacelli (Phase of the Shrines). In addition to the shrines (V–VII), which opened onto the Middle West Court, this phase saw the construction of the oven in the south street and the first phase of the 'House to the South of the Ramp' (hereafter House E); The quarter to the west of the Middle West Court was abandoned and Room LXIV of the Palace underwent a major transformation. This third phase was brought to an end by a second earthquake at the very end of MM II.

Open spaces were developed at the same time as the Palace in all three main phases: early MM IB (Lower West Court, Middle West Court, Central Court), late MM IB–Early MM IIA (North Street, basin XXX, the Theatral Area); MM IIA–B (Kouloures). The portico of the Central Court can now with certainty be dated to MM IIIA (La Rosa pers. comm.).

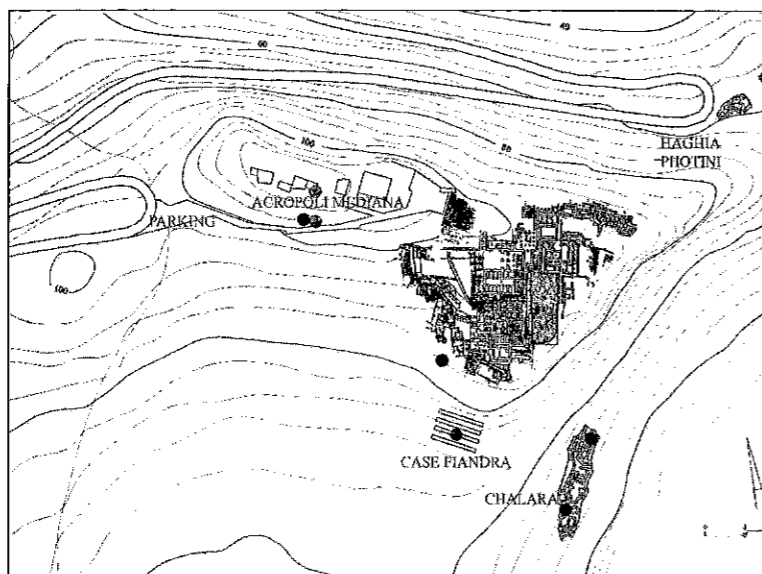


Figure 8.2. Phaistos, Lower and Middle Acropolis (from La Rosa 2002: fig. XXVI).

The plastered ramp, termed by Levi the 'Strada Nord' to the west of the Middle West Court (I) and the so-called Bastione Ovest or West Bastion (which should not be confused with Bastione I-II in the Lower West Court) all have a connected history of use. Both the ramp and the street were used from MM IB through to MM IIB, while the Bastione Ovest was built and underwent modifications during MM II up until the 'Phase of the Shrines'.

It is also important to clarify the different implications of Levi's Phase III, which has been used as a label to indicate both a ceramic phase, corresponding to MM IIIA, and an architectural phase (recognised not by pottery but by architectural stratigraphy), corresponding to the second floor of the Southwest Quarter and some other rooms built at the same level as the Middle West Court, which were coloured light blue on the published plan of Phaistos in contrast to the deep blue of Neopalatial (Carinci 1989; 2001a). The fact that both Pernier and Levi placed this phase in their Protopalatial period has caused a lot of confusion, especially amongst scholars who do not read Italian. In reality Phase III architecture belongs mainly to MM IIB (some, however, such as House E, are MM IIIA), while Phase III ceramic deposits belong, in reality, to MM IIIA or in some cases MM IIIB (a definitive assessment of MM III structures is now to be found in Carinci and La Rosa 2009; for a recent publication of MM III pottery deposits see Girella 2010).

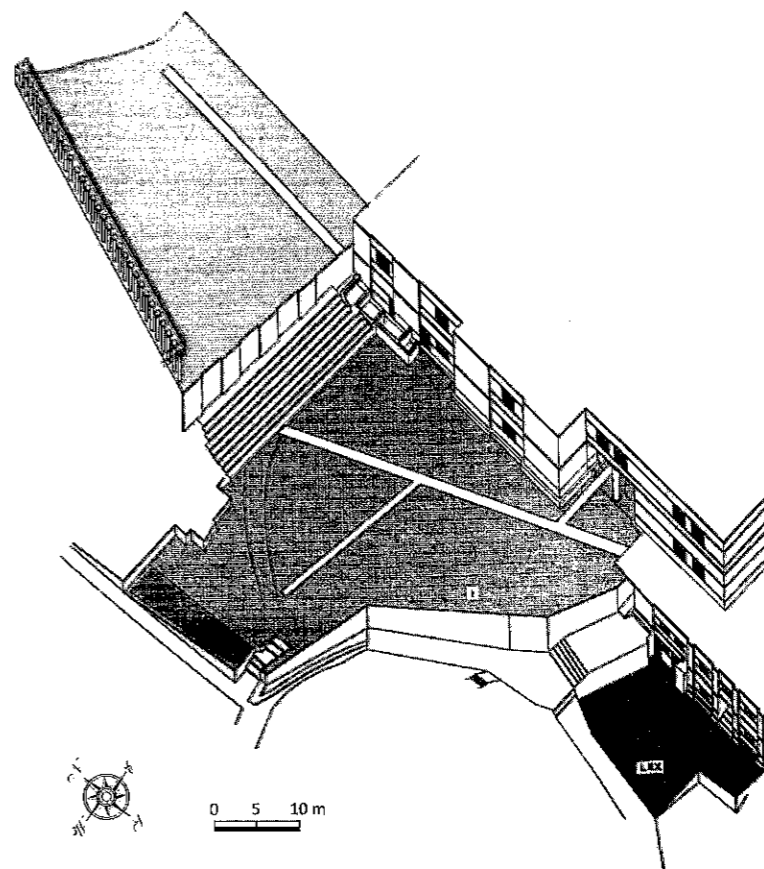


Figure 8.3. The West Front of the Palace at Phaistos in MM IIA (after Tomasello 1999: fig. 6).

The Palace

In early MM II the Palace assumed its most complete and organic form (Figures 8.1 and 8.3). The Northwest and Southwest Quarters certainly existed, while the evidence relating to the other wings is ambiguous. In the Southwest Quarter the narrowing of the great southern entry (Lower Propylon, Tomasello 1999: 82, fig. 4), divided between Rooms L-LVI-LVII and the opening of Entrance LIX, dates back to this period. The MM II rooms may have communicated with the Central Court (XXXIII), which was situated 5 m higher than the Southwest Quarter, through an arrangement of terraces. Such an organisation is suggested by the fact that the MM II floors discovered in Rooms 8, 10 and 11, under which Neolithic layers were detected, are two metres lower than the level of the Central Court. On the first floor the inner circulation was oriented east-

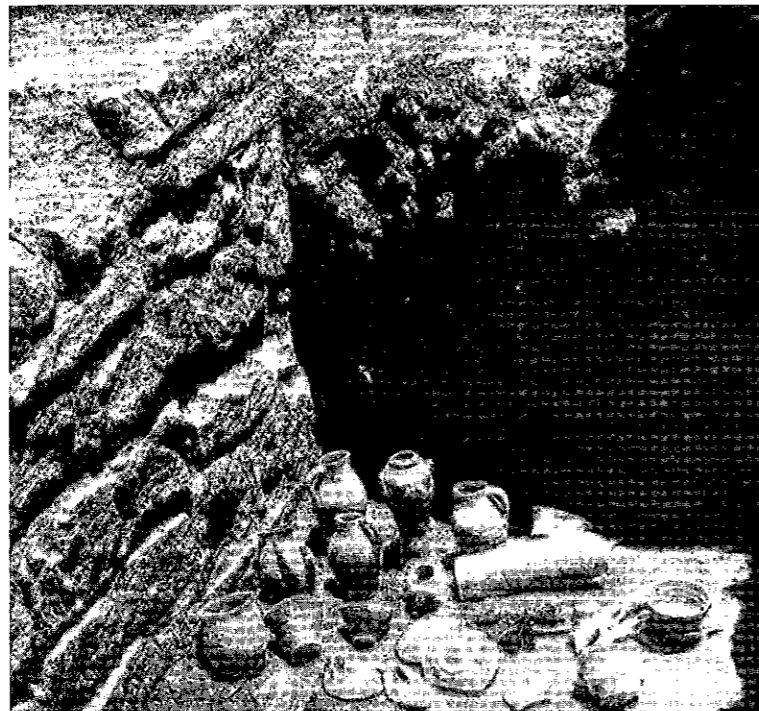


Figure 8.4. Phaistos, Protopalatial Room 88 (Pernier 1935: fig. 202).

west, on the second floor it was oriented north-south (Tomasello 1999; 2001; Militello 2001a; see especially Carinci 2006). In the Northwest Quarter the inner circulation seems to be oriented north-south as suggested by the access systems and the alignment of Room XXXIV and the room beneath Room 25.

The access system to the Palace looks to have been strictly controlled both to the southwest (Corridor LII and Room LVII) and west, where on the middle Terrace it focused upon the Great Propylon (II). The northern and southern blocks were connected via Room II, its third floor, the Great Propylon and Room XIX. Moreover, Entrance XIX gave direct access to the rooms of the northern sections, mainly storerooms, in what seems to be a but-and-ben system. Such an arrangement is entirely different to that of the Second Palace, where storerooms were entered only from inside the building.

In the area of the later North wing most walls that were labelled as Protopalatial (Rooms 45–47, XXXVII, XXVIII and 91–92) should probably be dated to the Neopalatial period, as the masonry seems to show (see also Schoep 2004: 252). Levi's excavations failed to detect pure MM II layers in this area but from the

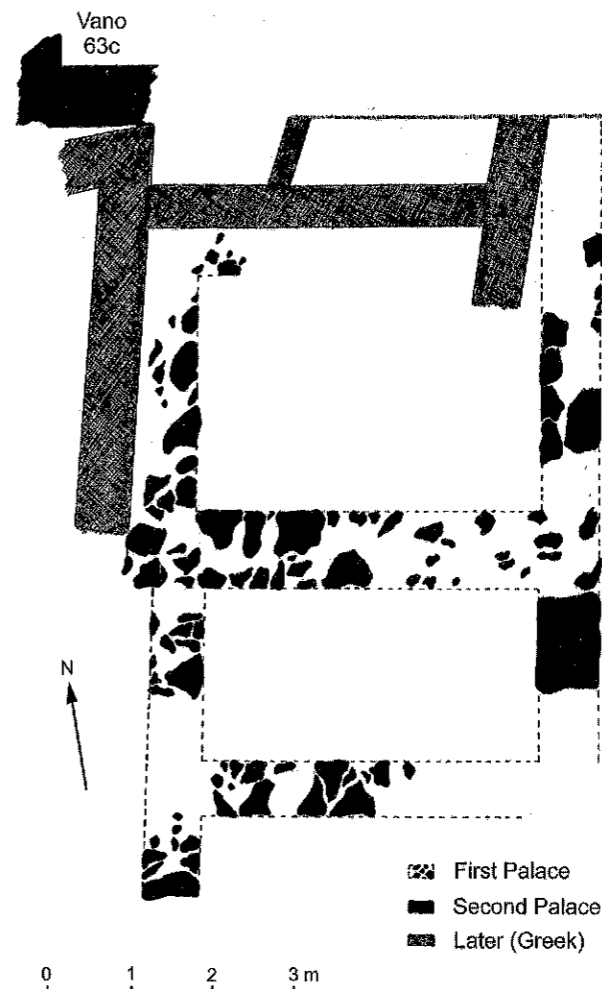


Figure 8.5. Phaistos, Protopalatial structures to the east of the Central Court (after Pernier and Banti 1951: fig. 5).

old excavations an MM II room full of pottery was found by Pernier near Room 88 (Figure 8.4; Pernier 1935: 338, fig. 202; see also Carinci and La Rosa 2009: 259–61). Thus the possibility that something existed in this area during MM II cannot be excluded, although this area may have been more like an open area, serving as an access to the Central Court (XXIII).

In the area of the later east wing some spaces and walls appear to be of an orientation and technique that suggests they are comparable to those of the Southwest Quarter (Figure 8.5; Pernier and Banti 1951: 18–30, fig. 5). It is

important to stress that this building is not indicated on the published plan, but on the plan of another building of later (Greek) origin.

To the south it appears reasonable to surmise the existence of a terrace wall that retained the Central Court, this being some 4 m higher than the next terraced level to the south. It seems probable that such a retaining wall ran along the line of the northern walls of Rooms 97 and 98. Further south, in fact, a MM II house was revealed in a sounding in Room 98. As a consequence of this direct access to the Palace from the south seems unlikely.

The MM II Palace would appear, therefore, to have comprised a western wing, a southern retaining wall and some currently ambiguous structures around the Central Court to the north and east. It is not possible to say if these buildings were isolated or if they were architecturally linked together. If the latter is the case, it must be concluded that LM I building activity has erased most of the existing structures in this area. Between the Palace and the town, lay a series of public or communal spaces (see also Todaro this volume), represented by the three West Courts, the ramp, a rectangular basin, perhaps to be used in rituals (Vasca XXX) and the Kouloures (leaving open the function of the latter, whether storerooms, silos, or cultural devices).

The town

Only a few areas of the town have been excavated. In the main excavated area, immediately to the west and south of the Palace, it is possible to distinguish several MM I–II structures situated adjacent to open spaces (*i.e.*, the Lower (LXX) and Middle (I) West Courts, Kouloures, Theatral Staircase and roads) and arranged on terraces following a southern orientation (for the houses see Levi 1976; 1981; further bibliography below). In the area west of the Middle West Court (I) several houses have been recognised (Figure 8.6): House A on the upper terrace to the north (Rooms XCVII–XCVIII, IC, CII; Caloi 2007), House B on the middle terrace (Rooms C, CI, CIII; Caloi 2007), House C (Rooms LXXXI–LXXXVI, XCIV–XCV; Speziale 2001) and House D (Rooms CIX–CXIV; La Rosa 2000) on the so called lower terrace. In addition, House E, to the south of the ramp, already surely existed in the last phase of MM II, but it is probable that an earlier building occupied its area in MM II (La Rosa 2003). Around the Lower West Court (LXX), scattered walls have been detected beneath a room of Geometric date which appear to correspond to at least two houses: one to the north of the West Court (House F; Rooms LXXIX–LXXX) and another to the south (House G; Rooms LXXV–LXXVII). To the south of

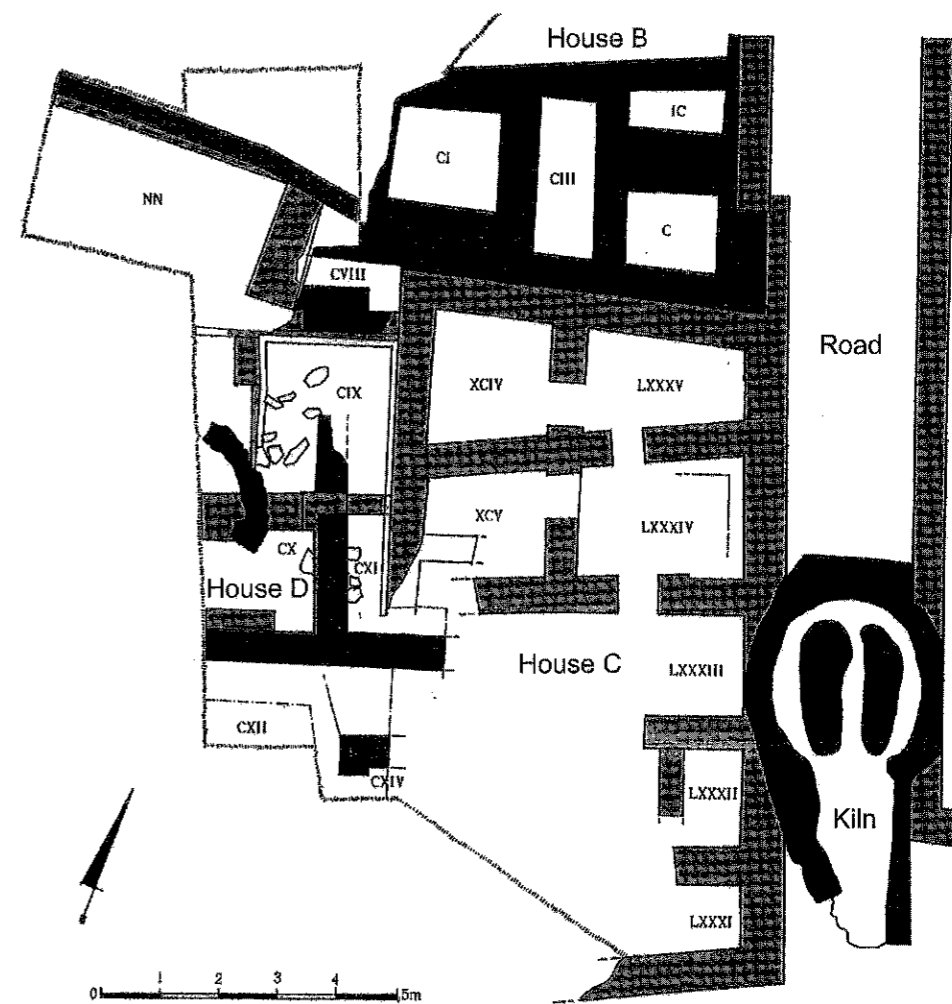


Figure 8.6. Phaistos, Houses B, C and D (after La Rosa 2000: pl. vi).

the Palace House H, comprising Rooms LXVII–LXIX and XCLI, had a different orientation, while another house (House I) can be identified on the basis of walls below Room 98 of the LM I Palace. Other structures in this area (*i.e.*, 'House of the southern slope'; Room XCVII), which were once considered Protopalatial, should now be dated to MM III. It is important also to stress that the whole area to the south of House E was entirely erased when a court was created there in the Hellenistic period (La Rosa 2003). Adjacent to the Lower West Court (I), the so called 'Bastione Ovest' had a more complex history and function (see Carinci and La Rosa 2009). Further away to the west two other buildings

can be detected: the building on the Acropoli Mediana (Rooms CV–CVII; House L; Levi 1976: 603, fig. 7) and the building in the area of the Car Park (Levi 1976: 600). Other houses have been excavated to the south of the Palace (Fiandra 2000) and in the quarters of Ayia Photini and Chalara.

Generally these houses have a broadly rectangular plan, enclosing an area of ca. 80 m² and subdivided into two rows of rooms, usually of small dimensions (ca. 5.4 m²). An exception is Room CIX in its final phase, which is larger at 9.6 m² (4.80 × 2.0 m). Internal circulation followed the ‘but-and-ben’ system. The presence of a second floor is suggested by the presence of staircases. Some rooms appear luxuriously decorated with stuccoed flooring and painted panels (e.g., Room CIX) or have walls dressed with stone slabs (e.g., Room CVIII), others are storerooms or suggest a more private function, judging by the presence of hearths (e.g., Room CX; Room LXXXV; Room Gamma at Ayia Photini).

Houses H and L seem to stand apart from the other houses. The former is not only wider, but has an unparalleled internal arrangement comprising a group of three large rooms, divided by a staircase, and a central room (Room LXVIII) with benches set against three walls in a manner similar to Room LV in the Palace and Room CV. House L comprises two rooms, separated by a corridor (possibly a storeroom or a Sottoscala); one of the rooms (CVII) is long and narrow (8.50 × 2.16 m) and has a bench along its walls (Figure 8.7).

By combining the excavated data with the data from the Phaistos survey (Watrous *et al.* 2004), the size of the Protopalatial settlement of Phaistos has been variously estimated at 60 ha (Watrous *et al.* 2004: 225–227; see also Whitelaw 2001: 33), 40 ha (Branigan 2001: fig. 3.1), 31 ha (Whitelaw this volume) and 15 ha (Driessen 2001: 61). Such diverse conclusions bespeak the difficulty of linking scattered excavations and surface finds to the urban area and raise the question of whether habitation was at a high density, such as would be the case in a nucleated settlement, or a lower density, in the form of isolated farms. Interpretative differences have emerged mainly due to the fact that the Hellenistic settlement sometimes overlapped with or erased underlying prehistoric structures. Nevertheless, certain topographical considerations allow the area under examination to be further refined, above all the unsuitability of the steeper slopes for habitation (e.g., the Christos Effendi hill; the slopes of the Phaistos hill to the north and east of the Palace, which were steeper prior to the collapse of the southeast sector of the Palace). The existence of scattered pockets of Protopalatial settlement are further demonstrated by the apparent absence of Middle Minoan buildings from the so called ‘Middle Acropolis’ (Levi 1976: 596–600) and from the area tested in 1994 near the Phylakion (La Rosa

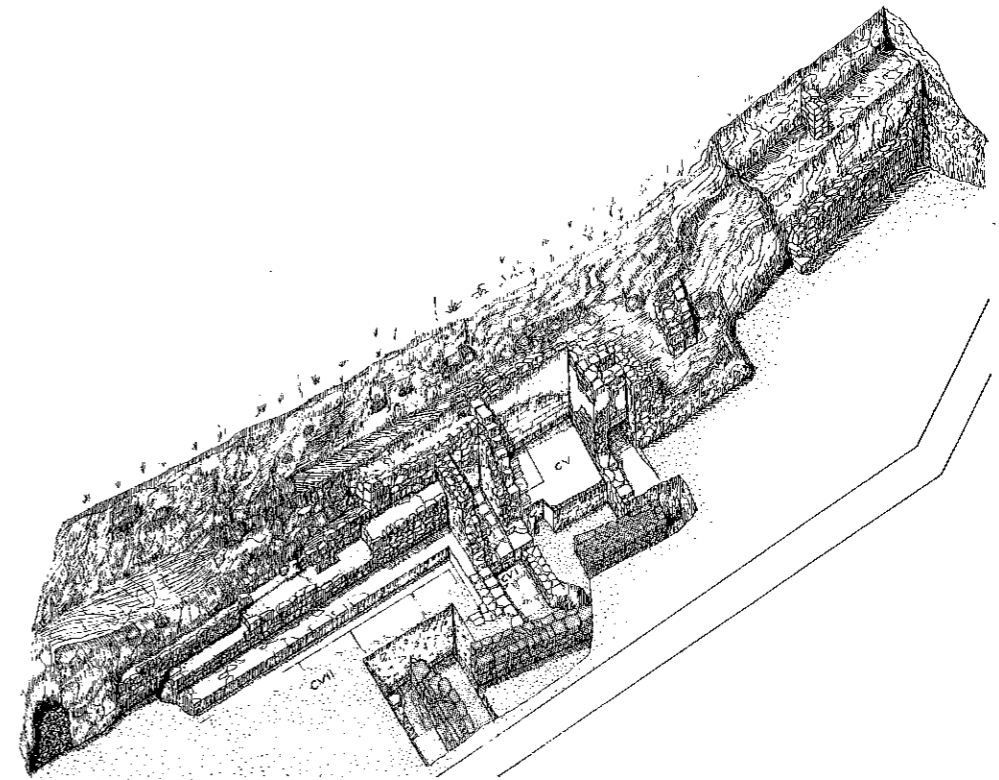


Figure 8.7. Phaistos, House L (Levi 1976: fig. 7).

2000: 112–14) as well as the apparent isolation of Building CV–CVII, found along the modern access path to the archaeological site.

With these data in mind, it seems likely that the settlement of MM II Phaistos had a loose arrangement perhaps originating in villages (Ayia Photini to the north, Chalara to the southeast, the Fiandra houses to the south and the area west of the Palace), which might have progressively converged upon the Palace hill. It is probable that the town did not extend as far as the alluvial land, but stopped at about the 40 m contour line, since the excavations for the road below Chalara did not yield any structures. This implies that the area of the modern village of Ayios Ioannis was most likely beyond the Protopalatial urban area, and that the MM IB–II pottery deposit to the south of it or the MM IB one to the west of the Christos Effendi (Watrous *et al.* 2004: 277) should belong

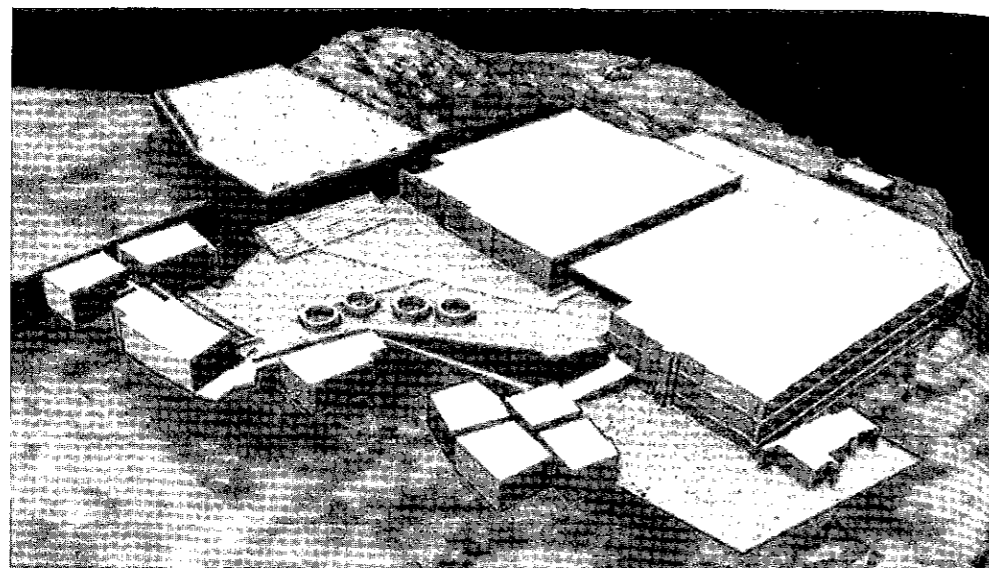


Figure 8.8. Phaistos in MM IIB (reconstruction simulation by Domenico Sangregorio).

to separate hamlets. Calculated in this way, the overall size of the MM IB–II settlement comes to ca. 26–31 ha.

Within this fragmented settled area, the principal roads should be traced in a northeast direction, between Ayia Photini and the northern part of the Palace and between Chalara and the Lower West Court (LXX), passing probably via House F (Figure 8.2). A road should also be hypothesised as running directly between Ayia Photini and Chalara. It would be important to be able to confirm the absence or presence of occupation on the higher-lying sectors of the hill, whose relationship with the Palace would have been visually quite different. In the case of the former, the Palace rises as the highest point within a lower-lying settlement, in the latter the Palace lies at the centre of the settlement, but is also overlooked and visually suffocated by it (Figure 8.8).

Palace and Town: Patterns of Distribution

Thanks to the publications of Levi (1981), Levi and Carinci (1988) and La Rosa (2000; 2003), it is possible to put forward a comparative analysis of the use and consumption of building materials, techniques and artefacts between the Palace and other structures.²

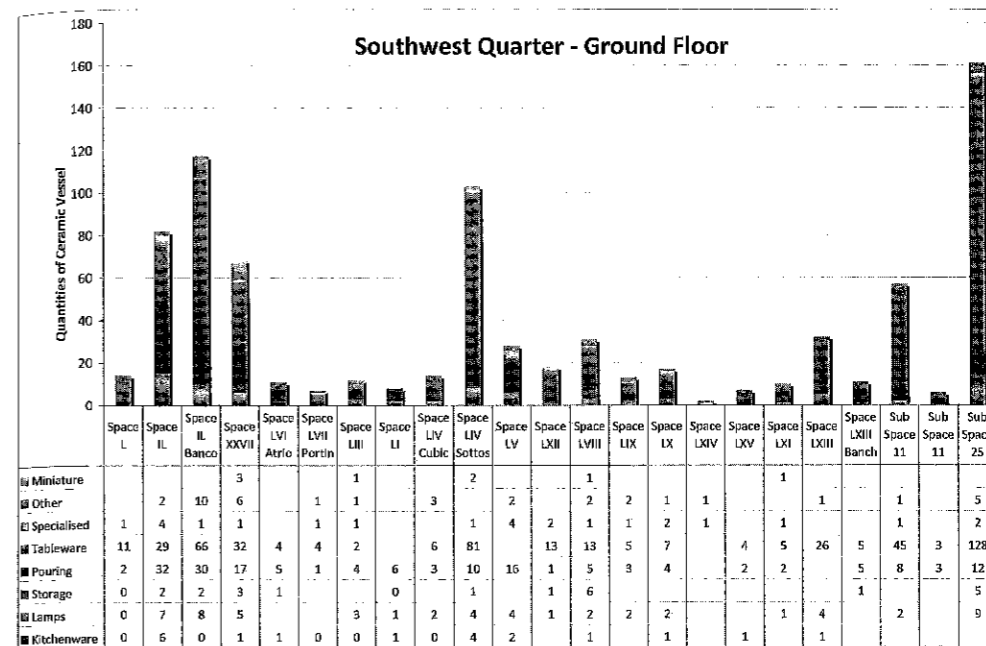


Figure 8.9. Frequency and type of pottery from the Ground Floor of the Southwest Quarter (Levi Phase I).

Architecture

The masonry of the Palace does not differ from that of the houses, since the walls of both are dressed with small stones and plastered according to the same code of colours (simple white, yellow, polished white, blue and red; Militello 2001a). Substantial differences are nevertheless represented by the usage of orthostats in the facades of the Palace (that to the southwest dated to MM IB, that to the northwest to MM IIA) and alabaster slabs and timber within it, the latter probably related to a need to support multiple floors (Tsakanika-Theohari 2006). The sizes of rooms in the Southwest and Northwest Quarters are also different, often reaching ca. 13 m² (Rooms IL, LVIII, LIX, XV, room

Area	Invent. Vases
Southwest Quarter (ground floor)	829
Southwest Quarter (first floor)	108
Bastione	12
Houses A and B	39
House C (La Rosa 1966)	270
House D (La Rosa 1994)	70
House L (Acropoli Mediana)	111
Total Inventoried Vases	1448

Table 8.2. Inventoried vessels from the Palace and houses.

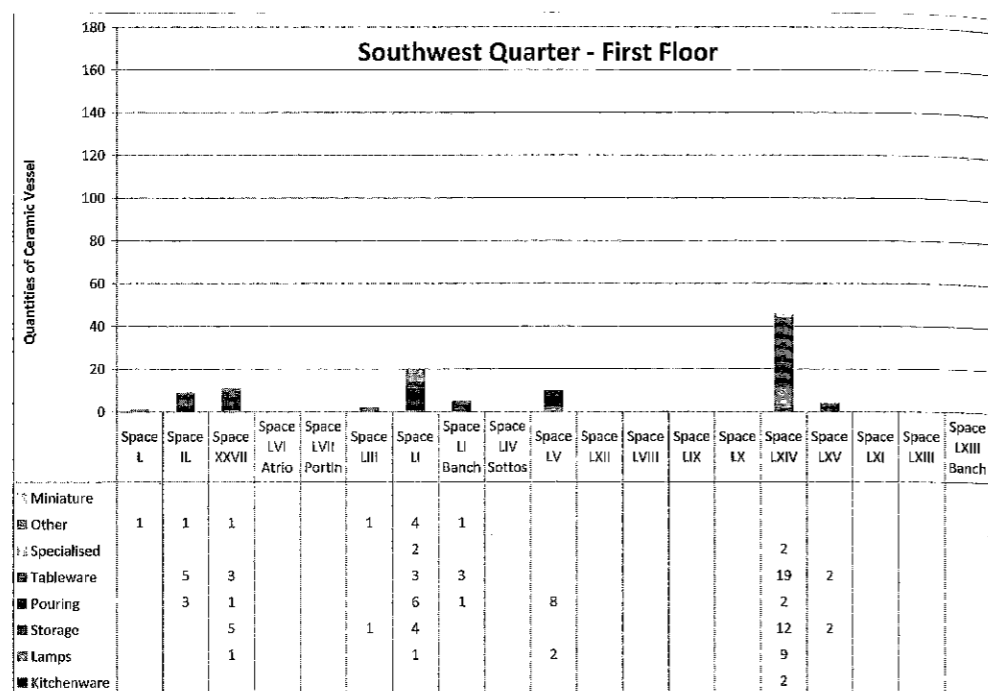


Figure 8.10. Frequency and type of pottery from the First Floor of the Southwest Quarter (Levi Phase II).

under Room 25). Moreover, the Palace provides the only examples of painted Protopalatial architectural decoration (*e.g.*, the floor of Room LIV or the stylised palm motif discovered in the filling of the Kouloures (Levi 1976: pl. lxxxvib; Militello 2001a: 134, fig. 18, pl. B). Also exclusive to the Palace are the motifs and kernoi carved in the Theatral Area, on the threshold of Room II and on the staircase of Room LIX (Ferrari and Cucuzza 2004). Outside the Palace precinct the only kernos to be found is in Room LXXXIX of House D and is a later (late MM II) addition.

Pottery

A great part of the ceramic repertoire from the Palace and the houses is essentially identical and high quality pottery is also found in the town (Tables 8.2–4; Figures 8.9–11). This holds true both qualitatively and quantitatively. In fact, even if the palatial assemblages are richer, the greatest concentration of vessels was found not in the Palace, but in a single room (XCV) of House C. This assemblage comprised 533 complete and 186 fragmented vessels, pertaining to 50 shapes out of a total of 67 documented inside the house (Speziale 2001). The

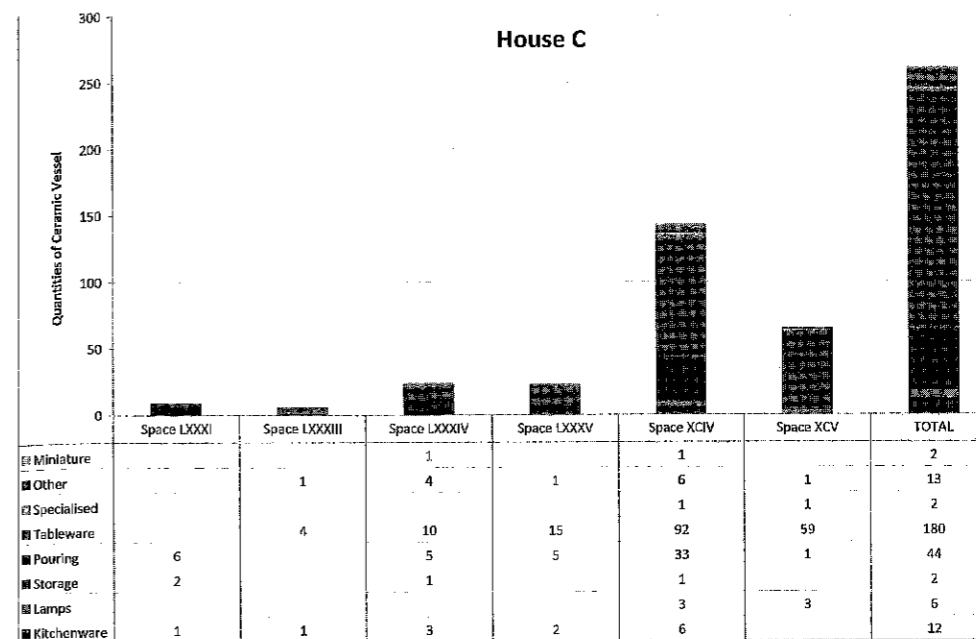


Figure 8.11. Frequency and type of pottery from House C.

vessels, which according to Speziale showed signs of use, were stored on shelves placed along the north and west walls of the room. No ceramic assemblage of comparable size has been found either in this or in any other house. A few rooms inside the Palace, stored comparatively broad collections (*i.e.*, Rooms 25, II, XXVII–XXVIII and Sottoscala LIII–LV). For example, Room 25 yielded about 400 jugs, at least 40 conical cups, several cups and smaller quantities of other vessel types (*e.g.*, lamps, pithoi etc).

Having considered the similarities, however, it is necessary also to emphasise some of the differences. Pithoi in houses are small and almost all middle- and large-sized storage containers are found inside the Palace. Within the Palace a substantial size difference can also be observed in the pithoi from the Southwest Quarter (*i.e.*, oval-mouthed and bucket-shaped, with a maximum diameter of 50 cm, height of 70 cm and capacity of ca. 150–200 litres) and from the Northwest Quarter (*i.e.*, large, with a maximum diameter of 90 cm, height of 130 cm and capacity of ca. 431 litres) (Militello 2001b: 183 and n. 29, 531 mistaken for 431). These differences seem to refer to different kinds of storage and, in the case of the Southwest Quarter, Carinci (2006) has convincingly allocated the pithoi to a smaller number of people. A different storage function for the southern and northern storerooms is further confirmed by the composition of

the rest of their ceramic assemblages. The Northwest Quarter primarily contained pithoi, while the Southwest Quarter contained pithoi together with smaller-sized vessel types (*e.g.*, bowls, amphorae and tableware). The heterogeneous character of the ceramic assemblages from the Southwest Quarter finds an echo in the heterogeneity of other find types, such as stone vases and loom-weights. Other shapes that are found only in the Southwest Quarter are horn-shaped vessels, pilgrim flasks and birdcage vases (Levi and Carinci 1988). From the same area come the only examples of figural decoration in the Kamares style to have been recovered: in Room LIV the exceptional fruit-stand depicting a dance scene and perhaps the crocus harvest; in Sottoscala LIII–LV a cup with dancers and a fetish; in Room LVIII a pitcher with a human figure and a crocus (Levi 1976: pls. lxvi, lxvii–b; Stamos 2001).

Stone vases

The stone vases from Phaistos deserve special consideration, thanks not least to the recent publication of the entire corpus by Palio (2008). Their distribution is analogous to that of other objects with the same shapes (mainly cups, lids and conical bowls) found in both the houses and the Palace, albeit in different quantities. Groups of two to three vessels are common in the houses, larger sets of five in the Palace. Room IL yielded 25 stone vases on the ground floor and 13 on the upper floor. Some shapes are, however, exclusive to the Palace, namely lamps, which could be viewed as stone versions of more humble ceramic specimens, offering tables, small tablets and big cups. The only two examples of zoomorphic decoration have been found the Palace and this distribution is not accidental, given the high number and wide distribution of stone vases across the site.

Tools

Lithic tools are similarly found in both the houses and the Palace, but in different quantities. Single tools, amongst which decorated slate spatulas and bone awls, occur in the houses and in almost every room of the Palace. Usually one or two specimens are found, raising doubt regarding their value as indicators of productive activity, since they could simply represent tools for daily domestic activity. Only in the Southwest Quarter are stone tools found in high concentrations: *e.g.*, hoards of polishers and pestles, particularly in the Room XXVIII, where it is possible to identify at least 20 polisher and millstones that are partly used for ochre or colour production (Militello 2001a: table XV, 1); 12 pestles and millstones were found inside Room LXIV and 8 on the pavements of the rooms under Courtyard 40 (Militello 2001a: fig. XV, 1–2).

Concentrations of obsidian blades and splinters were found in Rooms XXVIII and LI (along with flint and shells) and in Room LV.

Potter's wheels are only found inside the Palace (two specimens in Room IL and LXII). The same can be said for the perforated ceramic cylindrical objects, considered loom-weights, as the experimental analysis carried out at the Danish Centre for Textile Research in Copenhagen seems to confirm (Nosch *et al.* in press). These clay cylinders are found in groups in multiple of tens in Rooms IL (17), LI (5 on the upper floor), LIII (11 on the upper floor), LIV (14 on the floor and two in a cupboard, LIII–LV (8), LVIII (13), LXIV (20) (Militello 2006); in some cases they are sealed with motifs not present among the sealings from the 'archive' in Room 25 (Militello 2002). Their weight makes them suitable for the specialised production of a veil-like textile. Similarly, the above mentioned limited distribution of the horn-shaped ceramic vessels could also be explained in the context of textile activities.

Other artefacts

Figurines are almost exclusively found outside the Palace. The few specimens known appear to pre-date or post-date MM II and are found in open areas, mainly in the Lower (LXX) and Middle (I) West Courts, but also inside single buildings. In particular, House L produced 3 figurines (F 6134, 6450 from Room CV, F 6273 from Room CVII), 3 animal shaped rhyta (F 6451, 6436, 6563) and a house model (F 6446). Two more figurines are said to come from the area of CV–CVII. Most decorated examples originate in the Southwest Quarter of the Palace and inside the so called 'Grande Frana'. Among the other objects, shells of great size and decorated with incised patterns are found in Room IL (upper floor deposit). In Room LV murex shell was found along with agrimi horns and two fossilised shells. Agrimi horns were also found in the ground floor deposit from Room IL.

Archival data

True administrative documents (sealings and tablets) have only been found in the MM IIB Palace, whereas seals are diffused throughout the settlement, with a distribution that meaningfully seems to distinguish the single households, with one seal in almost each house to the west of the Middle West Court (I) (Militello 2001b; 2002). Within the Palace, archival documents exhibit different patterns of distribution in the northern and southern areas. In Room 25 (Northwest Quarter) the great majority of sealings are direct object sealings, only 9 were noduli (flat-based nodules, applied to perishable documents (Hallager 1996), 6 were roundels (a sort of contract) and four were hanging-

nodules (rolled around a string hanging from an object). This means that by far the majority of documents registered internal movements. Tablets from the Northwest Quarter are of elongated and rectangular shape. Almost every nodule had been sealed, one or more times, by a sealing. A single seal motif is commonly represented by very few sealings, a restricted group of motifs occurs on about 50 sealings and only three seals had been used more than 90 times. Consequently, three classes have been identified, possibly reflecting a hierarchy or diverse function within the local administration (Weingarten 1994; Militello 2000: 227–28; for a different explanation, which clarifies several aspects of the Room 25 documents; also Relaki this volume). A different picture emerges from the Southwest Quarter, where only two tablets were found, one of which (PH 6; Room XXVIII) was peculiar insofar as it lacked numerals and was thus seemingly not an administrative document. Among the sealings, no seal-motif occurs that might be linked to the so called 'Archive' in Room 25; moreover the type of direct-object sealing that was applied to door handles is completely absent. Conversely, in Room LIII four roundels and four flat-based nodules were found. In contrast to Room 25, the majority of the documents from the Southwest Quarter, due to their typology, seem more likely to be the result of external than internal movements of goods or information (see below).

The Functional Use of Space

Theoretical and methodological problems regarding the identification of activities in space have been widely debated (*e.g.*, Costin 1991, Platon 1993). At Phaistos, the Southwest Quarter represents a perfect example of the ambiguities of the archaeological record and the different interpretations, which have been put forward by scholars over the years. It has been described variously as a cultic area (*i.e.*, Lower West Court Sanctuary Complex, Gesell 1985), a complex of workshops (Branigan 1987), a storage area (Damiani Indelicato 1982) and an administrative department (Fiandra 2006).³ Most recently Carinci (2006) has carried out a functional analysis which might be considered a plausible mediation between these extremes.

According to Carinci's analysis the Southwest Quarter had a complex functional articulation, which is evident in the layout of its mature phase and in the presence of a sector endowed with strong religious and ritual connotations (Figures 8.9–10). The ground floor is centred upon the interaction of an individual of high status and a small group making ritual usage of significant stone artefacts. There can be no doubt, however, that the Southwest Quarter

was also connected with the manufacture of pottery (potter's wheels), textiles (loom-weights) and perhaps also of ritual objects (triton shells with unfinished decoration). The storerooms (XXVII–XXVIII, LVIII, LXI–LXIII) were closely connected to the inhabitants of the sector and the accomplishment of these activities. The rooms of the first floor appear to have had a more domestic character, indicated also by the presence of a large water container for washing (Speziale 2000) and small, easily transportable storage jars (Carinci 2001b: 499). They could also have been working areas. In the absence of any assemblages, the function of the rooms of the second floor is highly uncertain, although it is possible to identify some rather undistinguished rooms (*e.g.*, the room beside the Central Court) and other areas which recall the activities of the first floor (*e.g.*, the space under Room 11). The religious and ritual activities that were carried out on the ground floor seem to be connected with the relationship between the Palace and the town (*e.g.*, flat-based nodules and roundels in Room II), particularly in the Lower West Court (LXX) which was the first stop for people who reached the Palace from the southern districts of Chalara and from the houses excavated by Fiandra.

The Northwest Quarter seems to have had a more specifically economic function directed towards the storage of large quantities of goods (including staples and precious objects made of gold, ivory and bone) and in situ transformation of small quantities of stored resources, as demonstrated by the sets of pestles and grinders from Room X and those from the niche in Room XXII–XXIII and by the press(?) in Room XX (Pernier 1935: 241–46, 275–77, 296–303). The movement of goods within the Palace was controlled through the sealings collected, after use, in Room 25. The tablets (*i.e.*, PH8 and PH28, the latter with at least 108 individuals) leave no doubt as to the existence of dependent staff; the jugs and conical cups from Room 25 are also suggestive of redistribution rather than ceremonial consumption. Evidence for the carrying out of rituals is also present in this area (upturned conical cups in Room 25), but may refer to the ritual formalisation of economic practices. In this way, although the architectural connection and internal communication between the Northwest and Southwest Quarters, mediated by the Propylon (II), confirms their close relationship, the functional analysis demonstrates that they had different, complementary, functions and were not duplicates of each other, as argued by Damiani Indelicato (1982).

The function of the West and Central Courts during the Protopalatial period is more difficult to define; specifically did these continue to function as communal spaces, as in earlier phases (Todaro this volume), or were they controlled by a central authority? These four open areas do not, in any case, represent the

repetition of a single architectural module, but appear to have been devoted to different goals. The Lower West Court (LXX) seemed to be a place, associated with some kind of religious area (so called Grotta M according to the name given by the excavators), where people and goods, arriving from the south, would have entered the area controlled by the Palace. The Upper West Court (XXXII) seems to have been a focus for ritualised productive activities (Todaro this volume), while the Middle West Court (I) with its formalised architectonic organisation (enclosed space with causeways and Theatral Area, Kouloures, baetyls etc) was surely devoted to the performance of collective ceremonies in which a major role was played by the Kouloures and in which the large amount of pottery stored in House C was probably used. The Central Court (XXXIII) appears to be the least easily characterised and is, in a sense, the least central of the open spaces. This need not imply, however, that it was of less importance, but could just reflect a long tradition of communal practices in this area (Driessen 2007; Todaro and Di Tonto 2008; Todaro this volume) which could not easily be manipulated and appropriated by the Palace.

In the houses, domestic activity (living areas, food processing) seems to be broadly associated with some kind of craft production, including stone working at a variety of levels (vessels, tools, seals) and perhaps also the manufacture of bone tools or items in perishable materials (*e.g.*, leather). There is also evidence for spinning, but not weaving. In some cases (*e.g.*, stone vases) productive output was surely not limited to internal use, but also devoted to the Palace (Palio 2008: 262) and perhaps also to the funerary areas of Kamilari and Ayia Triada (Palio 2008: 265, who does not exclude the possibility of a centre of production at Ayia Triada). In the same way, people living in the houses could have been involved in some way with the central administration, if my interpretation of the Star of David in a sealing from Room CX is correct (Militello 2000). Finally, two buildings, Houses H and L, which stand out for their internal arrangement and furniture, may have served as communal places for gatherings or meetings among peers (see below).

From Production to Consumption

Having discussed patterns of distribution and the function of the different sectors of the settlement, it is time to consider the general functioning of the settlement against the framework of production, circulation and consumption in order to explore further the relationships between the Palace and the houses and between public and communal spaces. Rather than simply identifying spaces

for working, storage or consumption, this section will seek to situate modes of production and consumption in their social setting.

Production

Some production activities are relatively well-represented in the archaeological record, but we should not forget the existence of wider spheres of production which have left few or no traces in the material record. Moreover, even the extant evidence related to the distribution of workshops and related production may be far from unequivocal,³ not least in the case of the retrieval of tools, which may have been used or simply stored in the spaces where they were found.

This is particularly true for the Palace. Tools are widely evidenced (*e.g.*, loomweights, chisels, several kinds of polishers, grinders, pestles, obsidian blades, wax moulds as well as moulds for the production of metal vases), but it has not yet been demonstrated that the related activities were carried out inside the Palace. In fact, the raw materials, which have been claimed to have been found (*i.e.*, obsidian cores and stone blocks; Branigan 1987: 247), are not mentioned in the excavation notebooks and the so-called debris from stone working is more ambiguous than is commonly held, as it consists of obsidian of uncertain origin (Evely 2000: 177; Palio 2008: 241), or core drills of stone vases, which could actually be proper tools (Palio 2008: 240). Moreover, it is impossible to establish for certain whether the traces of fire, the cooking pots and the tools found in Rooms LV and LIX served for the preparation of food for consumption as part of ritual activity or were used in more mundane contexts, such as the working of objects.

Turning to the area outside the Palace, Speziale (2000), Caloi (2007) and Palio (2008) have argued that craft production took place inside the houses. This appears to be clearest in the case of stone vases, given the presence of tools, unfinished items and working refuse. Palio envisages external production of stone vases and subsequent transportation to the Palace for ritual usage. I think it less probable that the seals found in Rooms CX and LXXXIV were unfinished items, rather than personal objects of a member of the residing household. In addition, it is highly likely that pottery was produced in the vicinity of the Middle West Court (I), probably to the north of the houses, as indicated by discarded vessels and the installation of a kiln a few metres to the west after the first MM IIB seismic destruction (La Rosa 2000: 51; Todaro this volume). This would be a continuation of a long Prepalatial tradition (Todaro this volume). We have no hint of whether bronze smelting also took place in the same area.

Regarding modes of production, some observations can be made in the specific cases of pottery, stone vases and textiles. The production of highly standardised, undecorated pottery in simple shapes (mainly conical cups and pitchers) would

hint at centralised production according to Sinopoli's definition (1988). The rich and technically complex production of Kamares Ware would in turn imply administered production; a view perhaps confirmed by two potter's wheels found in the Southwest Quarter. On the other hand, the redundancy of the polychrome decorative motifs of Kamares Ware may evoke vertical divisions and internal competition between elites, a view which is strengthened by the distribution of this ware, which mainly occurs in two areas, the Southwest Quarter and Room XCIV of House C. As for the stone vases, Palio has argued in favour of a production mode of united workshops of artisans, perhaps with different specialisations, connected to small groups, of which the artisans are real and important members. In such a context, the vases would have been produced partly to be used by the specific affiliated group (*e.g.*, in Room CV) and partly to be offered to the Palace. As noted above, a type of textile production using cylindrical loom-weights is found only in the Palace and is also uncommon beyond Phaistos, being absent from Ayia Triada and Kommos. The presence of different types and sizes of loom-weight as well as, in some cases, the addition of seal impressions seem to refer to the production of refined, high-status products for a restricted entourage of individuals. In the same way, the isolated moulds for sheet bronze vessels also seem to hint at palatial management or at least at palatial independence in the production of this class of artefacts.

Agricultural production is one of the most important economic spheres, but also one of the most difficult to detect. However, some hints about the scale of palatial involvement can be gained from a comparative study of the small number of administrative documents together with evidence for storage. In fact, Linear A documents shed light not only on the qualities and quantities of stored staples, but also on the way they were used. The quantities of staples (*i.e.*, wine, wheat or barley) recorded on the documents found in Room 25 could be easily stored in two or three capacious pithoi. Other insights can be gained if we look at the storage areas (Tables 8.3–4). Previous calculations have been based on a generalised estimate of storage capacity. However, as noted above, a clear distinction can be noted in the size of storage vessels in the storerooms in the Northwest Quarter, those in the Southwest Quarter and the Kouloures, if their identification as silos is accepted (*contra* Carinci 2001c). This consideration implies that Room XXXIV, which contained 31 pithoi, would have had a capacity of about 7200 litres; and if we take into account the containers found in the other rooms of the Northwest Quarter the capacity increases to 9400. This is an approximate estimate, however, which might be almost doubled if we take into account the area of the storerooms that has not been excavated

	Storage Capacity (litres)	Estimated Storage Capacity (kg) of wheat/barley (1l = 0.65 kg)	Estimated Storage Capacity (okades) (1 oka = 1.28 kg or ca. 2l)	Estimated Storage Capacity (okades) (3000 okades = 3840 kg/ha)	Implied area under cultivation (ha)
Southwest Quarter (real)	2140	1391	1086.71	0.36	1.93
Southwest Quarter (estimated)	2376	1544.5	1206.64	0.40	2.14
Northwest Quarter (real)	9400	6110	4773.43	1.59	8.49
Northwest Quarter (estimated)	20,000	13,000	10,156.25	3.38	18.08
Kouloures (estimated)	120,000	78,000	60,937.5	20.31	108.48
Palace	22,376	14,544.5	11,363.07	3.78	20.22
Total Estimated (without Kouloures)	142,376	92,544	72,300.31	24.10	128.71
Total Area of the Mesara				3000 ha	3000 ha

Table 8.3. Storage capacity of areas of the Palace and the estimated extent of agricultural land implied.

	Estimated Storage Capacity (kg)	Estimated Storage Capacity (okades)	Rations (litres) of 0.5 oka/day (0.64 kg = 1 lt)	Implied annual dependent population (no. of individuals)
Palace storage areas	22,376	11,363.07	22,726.14	62.26
Kouloures	120,000	60,937	121,784	333.65

Table 8.4. Storage capacity of areas of the Palace and estimated dependent population implied.

and the possibility, suggested to me by Carinci, that some of the pithoi could have stored water. It would be more accurate to estimate an overall capacity of about 20,000 litres. The pithoi actually found in the Southwest Quarter have a capacity of approximately 1440 litres, while a generalised estimate of capacity would be 2376 litres. Finally, if we accept that the Kouloures were all used at the same time, then it is possible to estimate an overall capacity of no less than 143,000 litres (Privitera 2008). Interpreting the Kouloures as a storage area, in any case, does not imply that they should be considered as an enlargement of the original storage capacity of the Palace. Rather, the Kouloures represented an alternative way of storing cereals and other kinds of crops, while liquids and prestigious objects were stored inside the Palace.

On the basis of these estimates it is possible to calculate the extent of cultivable land necessary to produce such amounts of staples. Obviously such a calculation remains hypothetical, as it will be based upon the refutable assumption that they represent a single year's output. Moreover, we are not sure about the productivity of the Mesara plain in Minoan times. Output varies according to the production techniques used and the type of land. In the Balkans at the end of the nineteenth century, output of grain was measured at 1140 litres (*i.e.*, 740 kg) per hectare (Chirot 1976); in Italy, in the same period, at 1197 (*i.e.*, 719 kg) per hectare (Romeo 1959: 125); and in Crete before the Second World War we have two quite different sets of data: 303 litres (*i.e.*, 460 kg) per hectare according to official archives (Turco 1982: 82, n. 16) or 2112 litres (*i.e.*, 3200 kg) per hectare for grain and 2956 litres (*i.e.*, 4480 kg) for barley, according to a recent study (Watrous *et al.* 2004: 146, pl. 6.2). It is difficult to explain such a difference (9 times more) unless the lower figure does not refer to all of Crete and the higher one only to the Mesara, or are simply biased by political interests. In the following calculation both low (*i.e.*, 719 kg per ha) and high figures (*i.e.*, 3200 kg per ha) are taken into account (see Table 8.3). According to the lower figure, the total maximum account of 123,000 litres of wheat or barley (but obviously in reality there would have been also oil, wine, pulses, fruits etc) can be yielded by 128 ha of arable land; according to the higher figure by 22 ha. We should perhaps double the figure in order to consider also rotation of fallow land. This gives a final estimate of between 44 and 256 ha, far removed in both cases from the 8 km² (800 ha) that have been envisaged (even if on a different basis) by myself (Militello 1989) and Palaima (1994; see also Schoep 2002: 81) for LM IB Ayia Triada, but still only a minimal part of the total area of the Mesara plain (30 km² = 3000 ha).

Circulation and Consumption

We have seen that there is a relative homogeneity in the circulation of pottery and other artefacts, with the Palace distinguishing itself only in the presence of larger quantities of items and in the restricted use of some shapes. What must also be stressed is the absence of imported material, which indicates a significant regional independence for the settlement as a whole. This also holds true for prestige artefacts, where only very few items can be suspected to have been influenced by, let alone produced in, areas outside the Mesara, even though Middle Minoan Phaistian material has been found in Egypt (Carinci 2000). It is not the place here to discuss consumption as a description of the use of the artefacts, rather I would like to consider two specific forms of consumption, redistribution and ritual consumption.

Linear A documents, such as roundels, demonstrate the existence of different kinds of transactions usually without specifying their nature. Two tablets, however, hint at the existence of redistribution in the form of rations. PH 8 and PH 28 register groups of individuals, 102 people in the case of PH 28, 11 in the case of PH 8. On PH 8 these individuals are associated with ideograms of commodities, offering a clue towards the reconstruction of the ration system on PH 8a, in which 2 units of barley or wheat (Á 304) are allotted to 11 individuals. By adopting the Mycenaean weight system of 192 litres one is able to calculate this as 17.45 litres per person, a figure not far from the monthly Mycenaean ration of T2 or 19.2 litres. Insight into the size of the groups that might have been sustained by the Palace can be gained by considering the quantities of stored staples (Table 9.4). Branigan (1990: 147) has suggested that the Kouloures could have maintained up to 1000 people for one year. A separate calculation, based upon a mean ration of 0.64 kg of barley per day, in accordance with both ethnographic observations (Watrous *et al.* 2004: 126) and Linear B evidence (Ventris and Chadwick 1973: 56–59; Palmer 1989: 116) gives a lower figure: the 103,000 litres of the Kouloures thereby maintaining about 333 people each year, a figure very near to the number of seal types (326) present in Room 25 and to the individuals that might be able to stand on the stairs of the Theatral Area (ca. 320–384; La Rosa pers. comm.). Without the storage capacity of the Kouloures only 62 people per year could be maintained, against an estimated population for Phaistos of about 2750–5500 people (Watrous *et al.* 2004, 277). The present estimate of 21 ha, with a ratio of 150–200 people per ha (Branigan 2001: 46) would result in 3150/4200 people and thus falls within this range. Communal storage and communal redistribution for the Palace and the Kouloures can no longer be sustained, since they could not contain a

sufficient quantity of staple for such a large number of people. The function of the Kouloures, if silos, was to serve the inhabitants of the Palace and the staff working for it, such as servants and officials, or to be used as venues of conspicuous consumption, or both.

Another form of consumption is attested by the recurrence of groups of pouring and drinking vessels, suitable for public dining or feasting. Here three levels can be identified. The first is highlighted by the presence of assemblages of 10–20 fineware cups, found along with twice or three times this quantity of conical cups and an equal number of pouring vessels, mainly bridge-spouted bowls, all in plain, undecorated wares (Rooms IL, XXVII–XXVIII, LIII–LV). The agrimi horns and pig bones found together with ash deposits strongly suggest the consumption of meals and libations. Analogous amounts of qualitatively similar pottery (9 cups and 24 conical cups) have been recovered also in Room CVII of House L, confirming the function of the building as a meeting place.

Curiously, evidence for the existence of a second level, actually an amplification of the first, is present only outside the Palace. In House C Rooms XCIV and XCV contained 28 and 89 cups and 81 and 146 conical cups respectively. Room XCV also produced at least 48 bridge spouted jars, giving a ratio of 1:2 between decorated and plain cups, 1:2.4 between bridge-spouted jars and decorated cups and 1:7.1 between bridge-spouted jars and decorated and plain cups together. This ratio should be compared with the ratio of 1:7 noted between pouring and drinking vessels at Petras (Lakkos deposit) and 1:9 noted for Building AA at Kommos (see Haggis 2007: 756). Vessel groups such as these were clearly aimed to be used by more than 100 people, perhaps more than 344 if we take the overall quantity. It is perhaps significant that this figure is again very close to the theoretical capacity of the Theatral Area staircase, estimated at between 320 and 384 individuals and to the total number (326) of different seal motifs recovered from the archive of Room 25. The presence of elaborately decorated and strongly individualised cups may be interpreted as reflecting elite competition and is typical of the diacritical feast. The two to three times higher quantities of conical cups suggests instead the participation also of undiversified groups of lower status.

The third level is hinted at by the presence larger quantities of plainware. For example, the jugs (at least 400) and conical cups (at least 40) from Room 25 hint at the involvement of at least 400–500 people.

In the first two cases feasting or dining, depending on the scale of the activity is surely represented: a more restricted intra-group scale (10–20 people represented for example by the sets of fine cups in the Rooms of the Southwest Quarter) in

the case of the first level (Borgna 2004: 259, n. 49) and a communal scale (more than 300 people, as in House L) in the case of the second level. The presence of elaborately decorated and strongly individualised cups at the communal scale may be linked to the phenomenon of stylistic horizontal variation (Pollock 1983: 362–63) and intra-elite competition, while the occurrence at the intra-group scale of two to three times more conical cups may reflect vertical stylistic divisions, reflecting the participation of many groups, at least some of which of lower status. Interpretation of the third level (*e.g.*, the hundreds of conical cups in Room 25) is open to debate. Borgna (2004: 259) seems to consider the amount of plainware found in Room 25 as an example of large-scale feasting with 'intense social exchange'. However, this should not prevent us from considering other explanations, such as the more traditional view that these represent the redistribution of rations for workers, an interpretation also hinted at by tablet PH 8 (see above). Finally, the fragmented but completely restorable pots found embedded inside the bench of Room IL and thrown into the cist (*kasella*) of Room 11 are, in my opinion, to be considered to derive from the first level and are evidence that, at least on some occasions, vessels were ritually discarded.

Ceremonial dining and feasting should not be confused with religious observance. The restricted distribution of specialised cultic implements demonstrates (a) the use of elaborate ritual paraphernalia in the Palace (Rooms LI, LIV and LIII–LV); (b) the use of figurines in public spaces (the courts and Grotto M); and (c) the absence of ritual activity in the houses (the only exception being a triton shell from Ayia Photini). While the ritual paraphernalia in the Palace were clearly used in ceremonies, we do not know if the figurines from public spaces were cult implements or votives (a hypothesis valid above all for the figurines in Grotta M, located at the entrance to the Lower West Court (LXX). In any case, such a pattern of distribution permits a better definition of the range of sacred rituals and the identification of two levels of religious activity: a popular and inclusive form manifest outside the Palace and an elitist and exclusive one inside the Palace.

Conclusions

The Palace of Phaistos, defined as a Court Building, cannot be perceived simply as a place for communal meeting or communal consumption or simply as an arena for competition between elites living elsewhere. It is not possible, at the moment, to establish if the remains in the layer immediately before the First

Palace are part of a larger mansion or of single buildings (Todaro this volume), but until now no architectural remains, belonging to this phase (Phaistos X) can be compared, from a technical point of view, with those of the later building. The data presently available allow us to affirm that the planning of a single, large complex, the formalisation of the courts through their paving and the use of orthostats in the Southwest Quarter, are innovations,⁴ which represent a qualitative break with the past and presuppose the presence of careful architectural planning. I agree with Tsakanika-Theohari that 'Minoan palatial buildings are the result of high-level initial design' and not an 'incoherent arbitrary, agglutinative arrangement of space', as numerous scholars described it in the past (Tsakanika-Theohari 2006). Moreover, in the case of Phaistos, the expenditure of energy which was necessary for its construction, its formal articulation, which is clearly aimed at the segregation of inner spaces, and the privileged use of script for administration, make it the expression of a central authority not only managing part of the productive economy, but also controlling social relationships. The monumentality of its architecture underlines the central function of the Palace within the settlement, while the courts stress the physical distinction between Palace and town. The best defined court is the Middle West Court (I), which appears to be separated both physically and symbolically from the houses by means of terraced walls and enclosures.

On the other hand, it is clear that a large part of the economy, both agricultural and craft production, stood outside the direct control of the central building, which appears to have been more a consumer than a producer of goods, as demonstrated, for example, by the absence of written documents relating to the first stages of agricultural and textile production (Schoep 2001; Militello 2006). Comparison suggests that involvement in craft activity is clearer in the surrounding houses and that both the Palace and the town consumed the same types of material and symbolic culture, albeit at different scales. House owners belonged to groups, which were directly related to craft production (*i.e.*, as artisans themselves or as entrepreneurs of craft activity), and which also seem to have participated actively in the ritual management of the Palace through the offering of their artefacts. The small size of the houses need not be a reflection of low social status, but could have been determined by a tradition of dwelling, where the space available to individual households was formally defined and restricted.

It is not easy to find a formula that might explain such a complex relationship of participation and dependence. Material from other sites in Crete is not of help, since the picture elsewhere appears to have been different. At Malia, for

example, the large complex of Quartier Mu seems to have been the major agency in trade and innovation (Schoep 2006; Poursat this volume). Obviously, it is possible that the Quartier Mu of Phaistos has not yet been found, nevertheless it is strange that no hints have come to light, whether at Phaistos, Chalara or Ayia Triada, after one hundred years of excavation. Instead, the likelihood that a different situation prevailed at Phaistos to Malia (and perhaps also Knossos) is proof of the different trajectories and histories of development followed by the Palaces in Crete. It also serves to emphasise further the fundamentally agricultural basis of Phaistian society and its comparative lack of involvement in trade until perhaps the end of MM II.

A clue towards a better understanding of the situation at Phaistos can be gained by returning to the observations made above about pottery groups. Consistencies in the number and distribution of drinking sets in the settlement indicate that groups of 10–20 people gathered, ate and drank together in both the Palace (IV, LX and perhaps also Room IL) and in communal buildings H and L. We cannot say for certain whether these groups (those within and those outside the Palace) should be seen as families, clans or another type of social unit, perhaps craft associations, like Medieval Guilds. In other words, these groups could be the direct descendants of previous social groupings operating during the Prepalatial period. Judged from the same perspective, the large-scale celebrations that took place in the Middle West Court (I), provisioned by the sets of vessels from House C, and in the Theatral Area, might represent communal feasting involving all of these groups as well as of people of lower status.

From a heterarchical perspective, the relationship between a craft-producing elite and the inhabitants of the Palace could mirror, at least in the beginning, a model familiar from the 'Seafaring Republics' of Venice or Genoa during the Renaissance, which were administered by powerful families that periodically elected a figurehead leader, the 'doge', who lived in a palace. What remains to be clarified is the relationship of such a leader to land ownership, on one hand, and to trade, on the other. Did the same people involved in craft production also own the land or did there already exist an urban elite that relied on production and trade as its source of wealth? These are obviously questions that exceed the scope of this paper.

Regardless of the answer the structure of the MM II state of Phaistos seems to have been centred upon a group, which emerged within a society of peers and which developed more advanced techniques of management alongside traditional economic forms. Such a structure is probably the result of a dynamic process, which developed over a long period during MM IB–II. From this perspective,

it is a mistake, in my opinion, to consider MM IB–II as a unitary phase and to focus solely on EM III and MM IA as the periods in which to search for the emergence of the Palaces. Such a search will be futile or ambiguous, if it does not take into account the complexity of historical phenomena and the multiplicity of leaps in history (Foucault 1972: 4).

MM IB surely represents the moment when the Southwest Quarter was founded and perhaps also a forerunner of the Northwest Quarter (La Rosa 2007). It is also the period that sees an exponential increase in the number of known sites in the surrounding region (7 to 39 according to the Phaistos survey, Watrous *et al.* 2004). However, it is during MM II that the west wing of the Palace assumes its final form. Moreover, in the cemetery at Ayia Triada, while MM IB is a phase of strong continuity with earlier ritual traditions, MM II sees innovation in the management of the funerary area (Carinci 2003). Within the wider region, tholos tombs continue to be used up to the beginning of MM II, after which there is a notable decrease in use up to the end of MM II. Finally, the introduction of several key technological innovations, such as the diffused use of the potter's wheel and the bow drill, also date to MM II.

In conclusion, it is possible to detect at least three moments of fracture at several levels: the first moment, in MM IB, may be viewed as marking the end of a period of political and social fragmentation, and perhaps competition among groups, and the coalescence of some of these groups around a monumental structure. We cannot underestimate the architectural complexity, both in terms of expenditure and planning that such an enterprise involved. The permeability between the Palace and the outer world is confirmed by the opening of the Lower Propylon (including the area of Rooms L–LVI–LVII, Tomasello 1999). The second moment starts in MM IIA and implies a leap in the economic role of the Palace and probably an increased emphasis on the ritual sphere, as suggested by the construction, at the beginning of MM II, of the Northwest Quarter and the Kouloures and the production of representations of ritual activities, in the form both of figurines and of figured representation on pottery. Towards the end of MM II a third shift can be seen in the adoption of foreign iconographies into the corpus of motifs represented on seals: the reception of naturalistic motives and, above all, the appearance of imaginary animals, such as the sphinx and the genie, mark a dislocation with tradition and the assimilation of aspects of Egyptian and Oriental elite iconography. Such iconographies would have served to emphasise further qualitative differences between a Phaistian elite and the wider populace and probably hint at the beginning of a path towards kingship that was never completed.⁵

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Notes

- Both in the preliminary reports and in the final publication rooms and spaces of the Phaistos excavations are named according to their presumed chronology: Roman numerals refer to Protopalatial structures, Arabic numbers to Neopalatial ones and letters to Geometric or Hellenistic buildings. Inconsistencies can arise when the chronology has been subsequently changed (*e.g.*, Grotta M is in reality Protopalatial). In order to allow the reader to find places in the original publications, the original Italian names have been maintained in the case of words such as *Sottoscala* LIII–LV (cupboards under the staircase), *Vasca* XXX (basin), *Grande Frana* (huge landslide). In the case of the latter this is in reality a huge fill of discarded material from the clearance of the ruins of the First Palace (La Rosa 2000).
- As far as construction techniques are concerned, the data are drawn from studies by Tomasello (2001) and Militello (2001a). The artefactual data are taken from the catalogue in Levi and Carinci 1988. Three things must be kept in mind, however: first, the analysis includes only inventoried vases and thus only a portion of the total material recovered (compare, for example, the 172 inventoried vessels from House C against the 926 counted in Speziale 2001); second, there are many discrepancies between the data in this catalogue and those in the appendix to Levi 1976, to which, for example, Branigan (1987: 245–47) refers. In some cases the difference is noteworthy: 250 vessels are said to come from Room IL in Levi 1976, but only 85 in Levi and Carinci 1988; the change is due to a more correct attribution of the finds to the different levels in Levi and Carinci 1988. The third consideration relates to uneven recording and reporting, such as the comparatively few finds registered in Pernier and Banti 1951.
- Two caveats must be kept in mind: (1) diachronic changes that may affect or alter functionality; (2) the processes by which floor assemblages were formed. For example, in the case of Room LXIV, if the interpretation of the excavation data is correct, its floor assemblage implies a reoccupation after the destruction of the rest of the Southwest Quarter, during which ceramic vessels and other items found in the rubble were stored inside the room. This could imply that quite a large part of the floor assemblage was used as part of the activity of restoring the building and may thus not be typical of the activities taking place within the building during its normal functioning. In my opinion, this holds true for some polishers with traces of dye or plaster, which might be related, not so much to the presence of workshops, but to masons at work. It is worth mentioning in support of this interpretation that in this last phase the beautiful inlaid fresco floor of Room LIV was overlaid by a more humble floor of beaten earth.
- Innovation is not contradicted by the use of traditional masonry, but arises from the association of carpenters and masons working along traditional lines within an innovative project, a phenomenon which has been detected in other areas and periods, as in Sicily in the 13th–12th century BC (Militello 2004) or in Libya during the Roman period (Tomasello 2005).
- Addendum. In the span of time between the submission of my article and its publication, the final version of *Revisioni Festie II* (Carinci and La Rosa 2009) has appeared and other works have been published (*i.e.*, Girella 2010 on MM III pottery deposits; and Caloi 2009 on the MM I–II pottery sequence). New pieces of evidence have consequently been added. In particular, as far as the plan of the First Palace in Phaistos is concerned, the reexamination in 2008 of the wall between Rooms 47 and 48

in the northern sector revealed MM IIIA pottery, suggesting that the wall was added in MM IIIA over a preexisting paved court (Carinci and La Rosa 2009: 250–51). This can be a hint at the existence of a North Quarter already in MM II, but it does not exclude, in my opinion, my hypothesis of a simple paved area. As far as the Southwest Quarter is concerned, Carinci (pers. comm.) is currently working on a reconstruction of the organisation and circulation of the upper floors, suggesting a different reconstruction of the function of Rooms IL and XXVII–XXVIII and the existence of a sanctuary in the area over Room LIV, where the fruitstand found in Room LIV was originally located. Carinci also hints at the possibility that House C could also be dated to the 'Phase of the Shrines', in which case its pottery could be linked with the final MM IIB kiln nearby.

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Regional Elite-Groups and the Production and Consumption of Seals in the Prepalatial period. A Case-Study of the Asterousia Region

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Small-scale, local patterns are important for the understanding and explanation of social change. In particular, the study of the manufacture and exchange of pottery, lithic and metal objects has demonstrated how local patterns of production, supply and consumption can help us to understand regional interaction and socio-political complexity (Wilson and Day 1994; Day *et al.* 1997; Carter 1998; Knappett 2002; Relaki 2004). In this paper I will focus on the example of seal production in south-central Crete, specifically at Moni Odigitria and the wider area of the Asterousia. This will lead on to a discussion of the role of regional elites in the late Prepalatial period and the implications of patterns of seal production and consumption for social complexity in the wider region.

In the commonly held view, the Prepalatial Asterousia is an area with a dense settlement pattern of small communities, which was largely deserted as the process of urbanisation and political centralisation at Phaistos evolved (Blackman and Branigan 1977: 68–69; Branigan 1995: 35). Phaistos, being a powerful point of reference, takes the central role in discussions addressing questions of social complexity. The new excavations there point to MM II as the main period of growth and consolidation of the Palace, which was founded in MM IB (Tomasello 2001; Militello this volume). The western Mesara survey noted the urban nucleation of the regional population at the site of Phaistos in MM IA and saw the decrease of rural settlement as a result of land control by Phaistian elites (Watrous *et al.* 2004: 267–68). The survey results indicated marked settlement growth in the Protopalatial period, which was interpreted in terms of the development of a complex and socially diverse settlement hierarchy and attributed to the emergence of a Palace-based state (Watrous *et al.* 2004: 277–84). Yet what was the role of local kinship groups in this process? Was