CHAPTER 5

Conclusions: The History and Functions of the Monumental Minoan Buildings at Kommos

Joseph W. Shaw, Maria C. Shaw, Jeremy B. Rutter, and Aleydis Van de Moortel

1. Introduction

Chapter 1 in this volume described materials and building forms as they were used during Middle Minoan IIB through Late Minoan IIIB in the Civic Center at Kommos. At the same time the chapter focused on the material evidence for use as represented by courts, interior spaces, successions of floor levels, and other stratigraphy, drawing when possible from more detailed discussions in other chapters dealing with pottery, plasters, and miscellaneous finds. Chapter 2 discussed the types and forms of both painted and unpainted plasters used to decorate and strengthen walls, floors, and ceilings. Chapter 3 delineated the varieties of pottery and decorative styles of more than five hundred years of Bronze Age occupation and use. The analyses there, sometimes definitive enough to isolate previously unnoticed stylistic changes, provided much of the relative sequencing in Chapter 1, aside from furnishing evidence for area use. Chapter 4, on miscellany, contributed to the latter as well.

By contrast, this chapter first attempts (Chap. 5.2) to elicit from the architecture, stratigraphy, and finds the possible significance of building forms, their intended uses, and how they may fit into already partly defined contexts. It also explores (Chap. 5.3) Kommos as a harbor
andsomeaspectsoftheevidenceforvisitorsandtradersfromabroad,asisdemonstrated
mostclearlybytheimportedforeignpotterydelineatedtypologicallyandchronologicallyby
AleydisVandeMoortelandJeremyRutter.Chapter5.4focusesonKommosaspartofan
often-dynamic,changingharbor镇,thefortunesofwhichwerecloselylinkedduring
muchofthesecondmillenniumB.C.withthos eofthe neighboring inlandcentersofAghia
TriadaandPhaistos.

2. Architectural Forms and Their Uses
Joseph W. Shaw and Maria C. Shaw

Building AA (Pl. 1.5)
Of the monumental civic buildings, “civic” to the extent that they must represent major re-
gional socioeconomic outlay, MM IIB Building AA was probably the first to be constructed
at Kommos. It was set on a huge artificial terrace retained around its periphery by broad
walls of medium-sized horizontal slabs (Chap. 1.2). The construction is unusual in that the
walls, of which one is the widest on the Kommos site, are so massive. Moreover, on the east,
linked walls were used to form compartments containing fill brought in from elsewhere.
There are at the moment no clear large-scale parallels for this technique on Crete, although
a partial platform can be pointed out at Knossos,¹ and the creation of courts adjacent to built
spaces by cutting huge “steps” into hillslopes was a common approach.² Another unusual
feature is that the overall plan of AA, at least on the east and south, probably on the north,
and possibly on the west, was a huge rectangle (Pl. 1.5). The same concept is reflected in the
plan of Building T (Pl. 1.7), which reused the same raised platform. The usual palatial fa-
cades, with their projections and recesses, are simply lacking in both cases.³ One cannot know
the cause of this departure from the usual approach. Did, for instance, the rectangular shape
of the platform dictate the overall shape of the buildings? Was it simply a solution arrived
at by the engineers and apparently not used elsewhere? Or could the Egyptian custom of
building a huge platform, often of mud brick, have served as inspiration?⁴

As already mentioned, AA was built in MM IIB Early, after the time (MM IB) that major
palaces such as Phaistos and Knossos had already been founded. Might there have been a
predecessor to AA at Kommos? Possibly, if we consider the long, broad “walkway” (Pls.
1.63–1.64) as evidence. That it predates the pebble court, and therefore is earlier than AA,
seems more than likely. Also, such walkways, as pointed out in Chap. 1.2, characterize pal-
atalwestcourtsandnotcentralcourts. Itispossible,therefore,thatthewalkwayledupeastwardfromthesea to a building no longer visible but once located at a point in about the
middle of the East Wing of AA. Perhaps remnants of it still lie undiscovered below the later
walls and floors there, but then any such structure may have been razed when AA’s platform
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was constructed. Thus one could argue that Kommos might have played a role in the building program of earlier, MM IB times when the Phaistos palace was founded.

Unfortunately, save for AA’s general outline, its razing when T was set in left little to provide material for an extensive discussion of its function. That there was a central court with at least one, and probably two, stoas is nevertheless clear. There is one significant use deposit, just east of the South Stoa in a *sottoscala* (Chap. 1, Location 12; Chap. 3.2, Group L). This deposit is characterized by large-sized vases and an unusually large number of cooking pots and lamps while lacking small pouring vessels and sizable numbers of cups, suggesting to Van de Moortel that the building perhaps had a ritual or ceremonial function (Chap. 3.2). The plaster tables in the same deposit, some of which may go back to that period, hint further at ceremony (M. C. Shaw, Chap. 4.5). Of particular interest there is the large lentoid flask imported from somewhere in the Aegean or the East (*L/27* in Pl. 3.20), the earliest foreign pot found in a use deposit (as opposed to a fill) on the Kommos site, suggesting foreign contacts connected with AA’s use. In a similar vein, the appearance of Cycladic, possible South Anatolian and other foreign sherds used in the fills of AA (Van de Moortel, Chap. 5.3) is evidence for seaborne commerce even before AA was constructed. Here one must inquire into the origins of the fillings within the foundation of AA, the most obvious answer being the area of the town. Although similar in context to the AA construction material, however, the fresh nature of the pottery there makes it unlikely that a source for the AA filling is there. Alternatively, the source may have been from within the putative predecessor of AA. The point to be made here, in any case, is that from an early date (MM IB) interchange involving trade with East Crete, the Cyclades, and other areas was ongoing, hinting that at least one of AA’s roles may have been to service that interchange.

**Building T (Pl. 1.7)**

As mentioned already, T’s overall shape is largely based on that of AA, save that T’s roofed area in its East Wing was extended farther east. Neopalatial T, with its massive orthostate facade, also seems to have introduced coursed ashlar masonry to the site. Not all of T can be inspected, however, either because sections remain covered by later building that cannot be removed or, on the west, have been destroyed by the sea. Nevertheless, one is still surprised by the lack of entrances. Only two are known: a single door into T5 on the northwest (Pl. 1.34) and another (Pl. 1.114) leading into Room J (Space 43) on the southeast. A possible entrance has been restored in T’s northeast corner (Pl. 1.7), perhaps explaining the shifting of the eastern boundary of T to the east of AA’s roofed area. To this extent T’s plan differs from other palatial plans, where there are wide, often unroofed corridors leading into the central courts from outside the palace periphery (Knossos, on the north; Phaistos, on the west; Malia and Kato Zakros, on the south). Nor at Kommos are there broad stairways leading from the Central Court into room complexes on the upper floors in the various wings.
Surely this arrangement in T was intentional and if “read” correctly can be used to discuss the intended use of the building. The lack of a welcoming entry, combined with the austerity of the monumental facades must reflect, for instance, a desire for security, for protection of the contents and the activities carried out within. Only on special occasions, one is led to conclude, were the Central Court and its adjacent stoas the scenes of large gatherings. Various considerations could have led to such a situation, for instance, hostile forces that might have swept in easily from the adjacent sea, although there is no sign, aside from the monumental exterior walls themselves and the limited entrances from the outside, that T was in any way a “fortified” structure.

Another major consideration is the relation between the town and the Civic Center. For instance, at most of the other palatial establishments the palaces with their courts lie surrounded by houses of the communities that erected and used them. That at Gournia is perhaps the most completely preserved example, with the palace there being set at a high point within the town landscape. At Kommos, however, the palace was deliberately isolated from the town by a broad east-west street (Frontispiece A, 17), and it lies at the lowest point of the settlement yet excavated, closest to the sea.

One must also compare T, with an estimated overall size7 of some 5,120 m², and the Neopalatial town with an estimated size of 35,000 m². This gives a proportion of 5,120/40,000 or about 1:7.8 By comparison, some of the palatial sites of which the town size can be estimated are 1:21 (Gournia); ca. 1:45–1:60 (Knossos); 1:46 (Malia); 1:53 (Phaistos), and 1:23–1:28 (Kato Zakros).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Palace</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gournia</td>
<td>1,800 m²</td>
<td>38,200 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knossos</td>
<td>13,200 m²</td>
<td>600,000–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>800,000 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kommos</td>
<td>5,120 m²</td>
<td>35,000 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malia</td>
<td>10,000 m²</td>
<td>460,000 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phaistos</td>
<td>8,300 m²</td>
<td>450,000 m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zakros</td>
<td>3,250 m²</td>
<td>75,000–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>90,000 m²</td>
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As compared with the size of its town, Building T appears “oversized,” even if we have considerably underestimated town size. T is at least three times the size of Gournia’s palace and almost four times that of the palace structure at Petras (1,400 m², approximated from Tsipopoulou 1999), both of which are related to moderate-sized towns like that at Kommos.
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This, combined with the fact that T (and its predecessor, AA) were set next to (but not within) their respective settlements, as most other palatial centers were, suggests that the building may have functioned somewhat differently than the others, and that its relative size and unusual plan may be attributable to commercial and political aspirations and its position at the gateway by sea to south-central Crete. The ambitious architectural form, contrasting with the simpler forms and materials used in the houses of the contemporary Kommos town, suggests that T (and AA, by inference) could very well represent not so much the economic resources of its nearby community but, rather, those of the controllers of the western Mesara (J. W. Shaw 1984b: 286). By analogy one could consider whether Knossos chose a similar approach and established a special “gateway” structure at either of its two harbor towns, Katsamba and Amnisos.10

Because of later LM III building over much of T, partial destruction and desertion in the northeast and east, and reuse (e.g., of the North and South Stoas), T’s original spaces remain difficult to interpret. If we begin, for instance, with the West Wing, we have a room that appears rather like a lobby leading to a series of rooms as well as, via a stairway, to an upper floor (Pl. 1.35). A doorway on the northeast led into an area perhaps originally enclosed on at least two sides, the north and east. The arrangement suggests a desire for security.

The two stoas, North and South, unusually deep and with a daring intercolumniation (Chap. 1.4), could only have been intended for the comfortable gathering of groups for various purposes. The plaster tables (Pl. 4.38) found associated with both stoas suggest ceremonial, perhaps ritual, occasions (M. C. Shaw, Chap. 4.5, and 2004, passim), as do the “drinking services” found (Chap. 3.3, Groups 1, 6–8, 9a–b, 12, and 23–24, and Rutter 2004). Cooking often accompanied such activities, as shown by the cooking pots sometimes associated with the drinking vessels. (For more evidence of food preparation, including grinding and cooking, as well as consumption, see M. C. Shaw 1990.) These cooking vessels cover the span of the LM IA–II periods, occurring first on the south, in Room I in LM IA Early (Chap. 3.3, Groups 9a, 9b), then near the North Stoa area in Room 22 during LM IA Final (Chap. 3.3, Groups 23–24), then during LM IA Final–II in Space 7, in the area of the northwestern corner of the Central Court (Groups 37e, 40, 44a, 44b, and 45). Remains of food in Space 42 (a pantry?) and in 19 raise the question of whether the latter room served as a dining area, given its fine mural decoration (M. C. Shaw, Chap. 2.2).

East of the North Stoa, substantial pithos fragments in Room 25 indicate storage in a secure part of the building during T’s early history. There is also evidence for weaving in the form of the many loomweights from Room 29 (Pl. 1.72). It is a pity that more of T and its contents are not preserved; but we should recall that we are dealing with an area that went through a number of phases and was probably cleaned out before it went out of use even during LM IA. Then it was reused sporadically, rather than suffering destruction at the end of LM IB similar to that at nearby Aghia Triada, which was still vibrant and, because of destruction by fire apparently during a time of use, was found with much of its material intact.
Perhaps the greater mystery of Building T lies in its East Wing (Spaces C–J in Pl. 1.7). These spaces, lying as they do below walls and floors of LM III Building P, have only been glimpsed. Their floor levels, when preserved, are often only centimeters below the later ones. Of the former at least one (E, Space 27 in Pl. 1.88) was completely paved, another (I, Space 36 in Pl. 1.106) at least partly paved, and another (F, Space 28 in Pl. 1.92) was floored with plaster, either plain white or blue depending on the time of renewal. Few groups of finds can be associated with them aside from, in F, small tools and intriguing copper strips that suggest that some kind of artisan work was going on, an activity that eventually blended in, but still within LM I, with the subdivision of the floor space into low compartments that perhaps were used for the segregation of produce. As to the general forms of Rooms C–J, the east-west walls are the best known (a few have not been seen), suggesting that the wing was made up of long parallel spaces terminated on the east by the facade wall. As to the rooms’ terminations at the Central Court to the west, it would appear that one room (J) was lightly closed by a wooden framework set between pillars. For the other spaces there are no identifiable remains of closure.

We should also summarize here T’s reuse even during LM I, a matter dealt with in more detail in Chap. 1.2 and brought up in other chapters that deal with the evidence for its reuse or architectural modification. This reuse is most clearly seen in the South Stoa where a pottery kiln was installed, presumably after the stoa had already collapsed and the southern wall had been partially dismantled. The sequence of reuse in the North Stoa was more complex, for the stoa was roughly converted into at least three separate spaces (Pls. 1.55a, 1.55b). One of them, obscured below Greek Temple C, has not been seen. Another, to the east, was used as a grinding establishment; later it was used for the disposal of metalworking debris. All three activities (pottery making, grinding, metalworking) are probably not to be associated with the original use of the stoas. Even later, during LM II, the northwestern corner of the Central Court (Space 7 in Pl. 1.36) and probably the interior of Room T5 were used for cooking and associated activities.

Building P (Pl. 1.12)

With slabs and ashlar blocks from T’s walls, many of which were razed in the process, a new building, P, was constructed in LM IIIA2 on T’s East Wing (Chap. 1.4). P was apparently built in stages, beginning with P1 and P2, over a number of generations, that continued into LM IIIB, when the building was completed (see Rutter, Chap. 3.3). P was almost square, being about 38.51 m east-west by 39.60 m north-south. It consisted of six broad spaces, which we have called “galleries,” oriented east-west and facing west toward the shore. According to our estimates, most of T’s West Wing (except for less exposed parts of T5) had already been destroyed by the sea, perhaps even partly quarried by the builders of P1-P2 and Building N, so the way to and from the shore was now open. The galleries, as far as one can tell
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(thethecentralandeasternpartsofGalleries4–6havenotbeenexcavated)averaged5.44min
width,althoughthesixthone,thelasttothesouth,wasnarrower(4.43m)(Pl.1.68).

AsdocumentedinChap.1.3,P’sfloorswereuniformlyofearthratherthanbeingfloored
withslabsoroccasionallyplastered,asT’shadbeen.Theseearthenfloors,withevidencefor
multiple renewals, are characterized by burning—some had hearths, and at least one had
ovens set into the floors in LM IIIB (Pl. 1.98). Characteristic of the pottery, invariably in
fragments, are the ubiquitous short-necked amphoras, often stained by hematite on their
interiors, a form of vessel introduced at Kommos in LM IIIA2. As Rutter has suggested in
detail (Chap. 3.3 and 2000), at least part of the explanation of P’s function(s) lies in the use
of these transport amphoras. Their identification at other Cretan sites (now minimal) and
abroad (an ongoing project) would certainly enhance further interpretation.

Concerning the primary use of these galleries, the detailed argument has already been
made that they were shipsheds that housed ships during the winter, nonsailing months.12
That argument has been based on a number of grounds: (1) The form of the galleries, long
and broad, suggests storage, as shown by analogies within Minoan as well as other Mediter-
ranean cultures.13 (2) The unprecedented breadth and length of the galleries, as compared
with other Minoan storage facilities (e.g., the West Magazines at Knossos or those in the East
Wing of the Malia Palace, both about 2 m wide, and both designed for pithos storage), must
be explained. This size, combined with the lack of pithos fragments in P, suggests that P’s
storage functions were unusual in the present Minoan archaeological record. (3) The lack of
closure with doors and walls, pillars, or columns in five of the six galleries (with the excep-
tion of the sixth, discussed above, with its later blocking/retaining wall [Pl. 1.110] and the
mound of the LM IA kiln [Pl. 1.125] in front of its entrance) suggests that whatever was
stored was accessible but not easily portable. (4) P was next to the shoreline at a known
harbor town. (5) Similar, but rock-cut, installations are near Nirou Khani, presumably of BA
date (J. W. Shaw 1990; J. W. Shaw and M. C. Shaw 1999 offer comparative documentation).
(6) Finally, the closest well-known parallel to such an architectural form is the Classical Greek
shipshed built to house military vessels (triremes).14 The P galleries are comparable to these
Classical 
neosiokoi in size and proportion; also, the galleries are parallel to one another and
face the sea. The major difference is that the seaward ends of the Greek examples were set
slanting down into the water so that the ships could be drawn up and then, when the time
came, launched more easily. This was possible because, partly for military considerations,
the Greeks often chose naturally sheltered harbors that could be partially enclosed by fortifi-
cation walls, with towers at a harbor entrance that could be linked by chains. During the
Aegean BA, however, open shorelines, often in combination with a small offshore islet, were
chosen as harbor sites, so any buildings along the shore might be exposed to almost the full
force of waves driving onshore. Since Minoan building technique had not reached the point
at which jetties and quays could be built, all structures near the sea would by necessity have
had to be situated some distance back from the highest onshore wave reach, which, in the
case of Building P, was not far west of the western edge of the former Central Court of Building T (Pl. 1.4). That ships would actually be drawn up on the shore is shown in the miniature fresco from Akrotiri on Thera (Marinatos 1974, col. pl. 9) as well as in a passage in the *Iliad* (ll. 1.485–86):

But when they had come back to the wide camp of the Achaians they hauled the black ship up on the mainland, high up on the sand, and underneath her they fixed the long props.\textsuperscript{15}

Published reception of the proposed identification of P as shipsheds has generally been positive (e.g., Warren 2000a: 24 [“probable”]). On the basis of plan and location, colleagues have recently identified Hawes’s “Shore House” at Gournia as performing a shipshed function.\textsuperscript{16} Moreover, Doumas has concurred (pers. comm.) with M. C. Shaw’s identification of the possible shipshed in the LM IA fresco from the West House at Thera (M. C. Shaw 1985: 23, pl. IIIb). As argued by Georgiou (1993: 360), a BA ship emptied of cargo and ballast could surely be dragged up on shore. This would happen only once a year, with the help of log rollers on which the ships could also slide, with numerous people pulling ropes to drag the ships, and with some props to keep the ship level. As proposed by Gifford (1995: 76–81), local relative sea level in the Kommos area has continued to rise, so that at its present level P’s floor is at +3.30 m. During the time that P was used, with an approximate difference of 2–3 m in sea level between now and then, the same floor level was at +5.30–6.30 m. This means that the building was not threatened by the waves, which would have reached then not much higher than +4.00 m. The distance from P to the shoreline was about 130 m, calculated as the distance from it to the present shoreline (80 m) plus the 30 to 50 m to be added for the ancient shoreline that was farther out.

The preceding proposal for P is based, as has been seen, on architectural form and relative size, location, and analogy. It remains to be proved, however, by definitive discovery of sufficient nautical equipment connected with such galleries. Also, at least at the moment, this type of building remains clearly defined only for the LM III period. Possibly, like megaron-like LM IIIA2 Building ABCD at Aghia Triada, it will remain unique to the Postpalatial architectural resurgence in the western Mesara. However, the analogous building at Gournia, mentioned above, along with others still undiscovered, could extend the range back into Neopalatial times. One must also consider earlier iconography that may reflect actual building tradition, as in the LC IA miniature fresco from Thera, mentioned above, as well as the LC I frescoes from Kea (J. W. Shaw 1990: 422, fig. 2 for the latter).

In this connection it is worth introducing the issue of whether the potentially equally long but narrower rooms (C–J) of Neopalatial Building T (Chap. 1.2) were the predecessors of P either in shape or function, or in both.\textsuperscript{17} An argument that they were could be based on the fact that in these only partially excavated rooms there is so far no evidence that cross walls interrupt their length, aside from possible small rooms at the back, on the east. Also, aside
from Room J in Gallery P6 (a wooden frame[?] set into the sides of two opposed pillars), there is little clear sign of closure along the east side of the court. An argument that the rooms are not analogous with P, and therefore functioned otherwise, can be based on the significantly greater width of P’s galleries and the obvious differences in floor material (slab-paved areas and, especially, delicately plastered floors that would seem unsuitable for ship storage). Possibly a form used for one purpose in Building T was adapted through enlargement for another purpose in a succeeding structure (P). It is probably best to leave this question unanswered until further excavation at Kommos or elsewhere provides material affecting the argument.

Building N (Pl 1.9)

N was set above the northwestern corner of T, reusing T’s ashlar blocks for its eastern facade as well as some of its southern walls. Threshold S 2332 (Pls. 1.21, 1.133) was removed from its former position between T5 and T10 for reuse at a higher level between N5 and N7. The reuse of wall blocks was similar to that in P save that N’s walls, unlike P’s, did not incorporate vertical or horizontal timbers, perhaps because N was built on a smaller scale and architecturally was less adventurous. General construction style, however, and the ceramic chronology based on the fills associated with N and P1-P2 (Chap. 3.3) suggest that both buildings were constructed early in LM IIIA2, and thus they may well be associated in original concept. The floors and court of N were elevated about 40–50 cm higher than those of P, presumably because N was closer to the shore, where the relative sea level had gradually risen during LM IIIA1 (above; Chap. 1.1–1.3), and old floor levels were inundated during a heavy surf pushed eastward by offshore winds. Farther to the east, however, removed some distance from the wave reach, P’s floors almost coincided with earlier ones of T. Some of N’s walls relied on the original walls of T5; the remainder (N4, 6, 12, 13) were newly founded on fill brought in from somewhere nearby. Thus N’s plan, aside from part of its northwestern corner, was largely original to the extent that it reflected a new design rather than simply a rearrangement of earlier walls.

Most of if not that entire plan is known, at least on the east. N was a single-storeyed building with one covered room (5) opening onto a partly open space (7) on one side of an open, pebble-paved court (6), with three (later reduced to two) rooms bordering the court on the east. A small room (4) was set into the northwestern corner of the court. The only entrance known (there might have been another farther west somewhere) led upslope, then through a door built in the southwestern side of the court (Pl. 1.10). The plan is an unusual one, perhaps unique so far in the archaeological record for LM III, but probably reflecting, although on a vastly reduced scale, the plan of Building T, with rooms on the side of a rectangular court oriented north-south.

As to room function, as discussed in Chap. 1.3, N12 and 13 were at least partly work areas
(metalworking, possibly food preparation) during two successive periods. The combined area N5 and 7, as based largely on the LM IIIB pottery accumulation on its floor, consisting of many large storage vessels and cooking pots, was ostensibly used for domestic purposes. It is tempting, nevertheless, to envision N and P, built and apparently deserted at the same time, as both related to harbor functions. That of P has already been argued. As for N, it could also have had a specialized function (J. W. Shaw 1984b: 287), perhaps that of an administrative structure, during its first phases, used by supervisory personnel monitoring P’s use. To that extent it may reflect the role of previous T5 and connected rooms, directly below. N’s unusual feature of a closed court, and the privacy offered by the southern entrance, are rather reminiscent of that in Room T5, which was interpreted in Chap. 1.2 as a probable security arrangement. In contrast with T, however, in which T5 was entered from the north, is the fact that N, turning its back on the great east-west road, was entered from the south. N’s sitting and access thus focused on the area directly in front of P’s galleries.

3. The Harbor Town and Its International Connections
Joseph W. Shaw, Aleydis Van de Moortel, and Jeremy B. Rutter

The Kommos Harbor
Joseph W. Shaw

During the Aegean BA mariners often chose two types of harbors for anchorage and/or for beaching their ships (J. W. Shaw 1990). The first, like that of Aghia Irini on Kea,21 was on both sides of a peninsula, with the town occupying all or at least part of the peninsula. This arrangement provided two harbors, of which one might be preferred depending on wind conditions. It also allowed for the possibility, as at Kea, of protecting the town from the landward side by a fortification wall built across a narrow part of the headland. Such a peninsular town is probably depicted in the “Arrival Town” in the well-known miniature fresco from the West House at Akrotiri on Thera, a depiction that by chance, design, or pictorial custom may well mirror the positioning of the actual Akrotiri settlement.22 The second preferred harbor type was one featuring an offshore islet that provided at least some shelter for ships approaching the coast. Two examples of this are Amnisos, a harbor town of inland Knossos (Schäfer et al. 1992) and Kommos, the epineion of Aghia Triada and Phaistos.23 “Inner harbors,” excavated out of the shoreline itself, such as those known along the Nile in contemporary Egypt, or along the Palestinian coast of the Mediterranean, have not yet been confirmed for the Aegean.24

From what we understand of the early MM settlement at Kommos, the first inhabitants built their houses on the hillside with their few small structures scattered south of where the great east-west road was to be set later. The hillside was probably preferred, since houses
there would be protected from the prevailing northwest winds. There was still room for expansion, however, to the north, east, and south—the beach and the cliffside limited it on the west. Excavation has not progressed farther east than shown in Frontispiece A, so we do not know the situation there. On the south, however, any expansion of the settlement was cut off when Building AA was constructed in MM IIB: The Civic Area had been established and, in one form or another, would remain there until ca. 1200 B.C. when the site was abandoned in LM IIIB (see Chap. 3.3). Thus by MM IIB, if not earlier (see Chap. 1.1), the pattern for the Kommos town was set, probably with house blocks separated by roads to the north of the east-west road and with a large, formal building or buildings to the south of there, next to where ships could be beached (see also Chap. 5.2).

Throughout its history, this shoreline served local fishermen, who simply pulled their boats up far enough to be secure, the distance probably depending on the weather and the season. Evidence for their fishing during the Minoan period is plentiful, including numerous bronze hooks (Pl. 4.5), barbed and unbarbed, from all parts of the site, especially from the houses on the Hilltop and Central Hillside, where many of the fishermen no doubt stayed.25 “Loomweights” (Pl. 4.14) may also have been used as line weights.26 As Rose describes the fishery from the evidence of the remains found throughout the site (1995: 204–39), the fish (e.g., bream, wrasse, parrotfish) were caught mainly in the shallow coastal waters, but tuna and grouper from deeper water are represented as well.

Aside from this local fishing industry, there is a good deal of evidence for actual interchange, by means of larger seagoing vessels between Kommos and areas outside Crete, both local (the Cyclades and the Greek Mainland) and international (Anatolia, Cyprus, Syria/Palestine, and Egypt to the east and Italy/Sardinia to the west). Also to be considered is an inscription on a funerary monument of Amenhotep III (1402–1365 B.C.) at Kom el-Hetan, which lists various Aegean towns in the itinerary of a voyage that also mentions Phaistos, no doubt visited by travelers after they landed at Kommos before their short trip inland.27 Of actual material evidence for such interchange at the Kommos site are an Egyptian glass vessel from an LM IIIA2 context in House X (J. W. Shaw and M. C. Shaw 1993: 154, pl. 27c) and the fragments of copper ingots, probably all Postpalatial, of which some number are from Building N (Chap. 4.1, 59–60). Of special importance are the two three-holed anchors reused as bases for construction in LM IIIA2 Building P (Pls. 4.24–4.25, Chap. 4.4, 45–46; J. W. Shaw 1995c). The anchors provide prime evidence to show that large ships were arriving at and leaving Kommos, for the anchors are of sufficient weight to make it extremely doubtful that they would have been brought to Kommos by land. Moreover, they can be shown to have been quarried in Syria or Cyprus. By far the best gauge for interconnection, however, are the foreign pottery vessels, both open and closed, found in numerous contexts throughout the Southern Area as well as in the houses of the town. In varying numbers and with varying origins, these occur in contexts ranging from MM IB through LM IIIB. They are described and interpreted in Chap. 3.4 and below.
Although the evidence for exchange at Kommos can be presented, a considerably more complex and vexatious subject concerns the sponsors who organized or carried out the trade itself. This subject applies to the Minoans who were receiving and sending goods or to others elsewhere who were carrying goods to Kommos and elsewhere in Crete and the Aegean, hoping to return with a cargo of sufficient value to make the hazardous voyage profitable. In the case of Kommos, it is proposed in detail elsewhere here (Chap. 5.2) that the raison d'être for the civic buildings rests not simply with the adjoining town but with its strategic position at the best available harbor site that could function as an epineion for an inland center. It might follow, therefore, using a model of centralized area control (by, say, Knossos during the early Neopalatial period) or one of localized control (by, say, Phaistos during the Protopalatial period) that at least on the Minoan side, those in charge of the region could establish and maintain control, if not a monopoly, over exchanges that took place.28 This scenario could also be consistent with what has been termed “ceremonial or gift exchange” (Knapp and Cherry 1994: 128) in which valuable raw materials and/or elite manufactured items could be exchanged between rulers who would expect reciprocal response. It does not rule out, however, the possibility of freelance or entrepreneurial trade on the part of local merchants, an activity attested elsewhere in the Near East (Knapp and Cherry 1994: 142–45).

Although sponsors for exchange might vary, whether the trade originated locally or internationally (or a combination of the two), the actual state and appearance of the Kommos civic buildings, as first seen on landing on the shore, differed from one period to the next. The buildings must have been most impressive and functioning during MM IIB (the lifetime of Building AA), MM III–LM IA Early (Building T), and LM IIIA2–B (Buildings P and N). There were, however, also periods when little in the way of formal, roofed architecture was available for storage or for harborside formalities, in particular, MM I29 and during LM IB–II–IIIA1 when areas of T were probably deserted, in ruins, or in informal reuse. Of some interest in this case is that during those very periods of disuse there is still ample evidence, in the form of non-Cretan pottery, to show that ships were arriving,30 especially from Cyprus and farther east.

Ceramic Evidence for External Contact: Protopalatial (Pls. 3.18–3.20)31

Aleydis Van de Moortel

Whereas the first series of excavations in the Central Hillside and Civic Center published by Betancourt (1990) yielded little concrete information about Kommos’s external connections in the Protopalatial era, the results of the present study indicate that this principal maritime port of the western Mesara was indeed actively engaged in overseas trade with nearby destinations as well as the Aegean, and probably also with the East Mediterranean. Pottery imports show that Kommos’s participation in maritime commerce began at its foundation in the MM IB phase and continued throughout the Protopalatial era. Images of Minoan-type cargo ships with Egyptian-type rigging on Late Prepalatial and Protopalatial seals from tholos tombs in the Mesara provide evidence that this area was an active participant rather than
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a passive recipient of this trade. It seems highly likely that the sudden expansion of the settlement at Kommos in the MM IB phase as well as the construction of the large and impressive Building AA early in MM IIB—and perhaps its predecessor in MM IB/IIA—were the results of the Phaistian ruling elite’s interest in this overseas trade and its desire to control it.

The new excavations at Kommos have yielded over 35 fragmentary vases identified as coming from outside Crete—more than have been reported from any other Protopalatial Minoan site.32 A comparison of Aegean and East Cretan pottery imports at Kommos and Knossos reveals that the two sites imported different vase shapes and thus likely maintained their own separate trade networks (Chap. 3.4). Thus it appears that Phaistos was capable of developing its own maritime contacts with the East Mediterranean, and there is some evidence that it did so, even though securely identified Eastern imports at Kommos are still lacking. The best evidence for direct Phaistian contacts with the East are Panagiotaki’s finding (2000) that faience makers of the Mesara and Knossos borrowed different techniques from Egypt or the Levant and Pini’s conclusion (2000) that a Mesara workshop borrowed Egyptian technology for manufacturing glazed scarabs. Phaistos may also have adopted Egyptian rigging for its ships independently from Knossos, since the earliest Minoan sailing ships on seals come from East Crete (especially Malia) and the Mesara, but not Knossos (cf. Wedde 2000: nos. 701–845). Thus it seems that we now have sufficient evidence to reject Carinci’s (2000) hypothesis that Phaistos was entirely dependent on Knossos for its East Mediterranean imports. The presently available data rather support Phillips’s (1991) assessment that Phaistos played a pivotal role in East Mediterranean trade. This implies that Phaistos and Knossos may have borrowed different Eastern ideas when developing their palatial societies.

We remain largely in the dark about the nature and intensity of Phaistos’s overseas exchanges with the Aegean and the East Mediterranean in the period of the Old Palace. Certainly, the impressive size of Building AA at Kommos suggests that large quantities of goods were stored in this building on their way into or out of the Mesara. Copper and tin must have been major import items needed on a regular basis for the manufacture of weaponry and tools. Bronze seems to have been worked at Kommos both before and during the lifetime of Building AA, as remains of crucibles indicate. Hippopotamus ivory and Egyptian as well as Near Eastern scarabs, seals, and amulets found their way to the Mesara as well, but their quantities are relatively modest and need not indicate busy trade connections (cf. Krzysz- kowska 1983). Of other Eastern goods imported at Kommos in later times, such as oil, pistacia resin, or wine, there is no trace in the Protopalatial era. As for Phaistian return trade, it is not likely that it consisted only of Kamares vases. However much we appreciate their artistic value and labor intensity, these vases may not have been considered particularly valuable or socially prestigious in the East. For instance, in Egypt they are not found in elite areas but in middle-class contexts (Kemp and Merrillees 1980: 285 and passim; for short overviews of Minoan pottery imports in the Levant, see Betancourt 1998: 6; Watrous 1998: 20 n. 7). Minoan imports mentioned in royal correspondence of Zimri-lim from Mari and in documents from Ugarit—if one accepts the identification of Kaptara and Kaphtor as Crete—
are weapons, clothing, leather goods, grain, oil, and a fermented beverage (Heltzer 1989: 13–15; Knapp 1991: 37–38; Wiener 1991: 327–29; Buchholz 1999). Some or all of these goods may have been exported from Phaistos, but no clear trace of their passage has been found at Kommos, except perhaps the evidence for purple dyeing in Building AA (Chap. 4.7), which may have served in part to prepare textiles for export. Being located inside AA, the purple dye industry probably was under official control. With regard to Phaistos's relations with the Aegean, Cycladic pans and trays found at Kommos show specific technical correspondences with Mesara cooking vessels, suggesting more than casual contacts. Nevertheless this Cycladic pottery as well as the Aiginetan bowl and the possibly Aegean lentoid flasks are few and are unlikely to have been the main objects of trade. Rather, it may have been Phaistos's objective to obtain lead, copper, and silver from the Cyclades. Melian obsidian seems to have been of little interest, since it is rarely found in the western Mesara. Phaistos may have sought to acquire products from other areas in the Aegean as well. The discovery of a lentoid flask with Mesara fabric in the recent excavations at Miletus could signify that Phaistos took an interest in this access route to the minerals of the Anatolian plateau, but more evidence is needed (Raymond 2001: 20–22, figs. 2, 4).

In addition to this far-flung maritime trade, pottery evidence indicates that Phaistos maintained overseas ties also with nearer destinations such as East Crete and the islet of Gavdos. From East Crete we have a variety of high-quality and utilitarian household pottery—probably again by-products of exchange—as well as a number of containers that may have transported more regular trade items. From Gavdos we mostly have transport jars. In neither case do we know what commodities were carried in those vessels. The scarcity of Protopalatial floor deposits in Building AA and in the settlement at Kommos does not allow us to determine which social classes were recipients of foreign ceramics in this period. The absence of any pottery coming from overseas at Phaistos, on the other hand, suggests that the harbor authority at Kommos may have enjoyed a certain independence vis-à-vis the Phaistian ruling elite.

Finally, pottery movements show that Kommos and Phaistos also developed inland relations with other areas of Crete, which are of interest for geopolitical reasons. By establishing close administrative ties with Monastiraki in the Amari Valley in the west and a commercial relationship with the Pediada region in the east, the ruling elite at Phaistos in effect created two communication routes to the north coast that not only were independent of Knossos, but encircled that site, and may have been directed against Knossian interests. Contacts between the western Mesara and Knossos did exist, as is evidenced by similarities in their ceramic styles, but if pottery movements are any indication, actual exchanges were rare until an advanced stage of MM IIIB, when Knossos imported large amounts of Phaistian Kamares pottery.

Of considerable significance are the developments in pottery imports at Kommos and Phaistos at the end of the Protopalatial period. When the Old Palace and settlement at Phaistos was destroyed, it was more than a mere collapse of buildings. Phaistos's failure to erect again a complete palace until LM IB, the short lifespan of Building T at Kommos, and the sudden decline of activity at the Kamares Cave sanctuary were accompanied by the break-
down of Phaistos’s inland connections with the Amari Valley and the Pediada. Monastiraki was destroyed for good, and Pediada pottery imports to the western Mesara came to a complete halt. On top of this one sees a drastic decline in Kommos’s overseas pottery imports. All these developments, happening simultaneously, certainly appear to indicate a major weakening of Phaistos’s influence. The agent of Phaistos’s distress may well have been Knossos, which in the Neopalatial period established very close ties with the Pediada, seemingly breaking Phaistos’s eastern route to the north coast. Knossos may likewise not have allowed the rebuilding of Monastiraki in the Amari Valley. In the Neopalatial period, Knossos definitely emerged as the dominant palatial society on Crete, its cultural, if not political, influence being felt all over the island, including at Phaistos.

From a methodological viewpoint the described drop in pottery imports at Kommos and Phaistos after the destruction of the Phaistian Old Palace are interesting as well, since they appear to match closely the fortunes of the Phaistian polity. Thus it seems that pottery imports, even if relatively rare, can indeed be sensitive indicators of economic as well as political connections.

Ceramic Evidence for External Contact: Neopalatial and Postpalatial

Jeremy B. Rutter

In the preamble to his detailed assessment of the nonlocal pottery recovered from Late Bronze Age levels at Kommos, Watrous presents a cogent rationale for not putting too much weight on the evidence of ceramic imports in coming to conclusions concerning the kinds of trade in which Kommos participated during this period. Although his points are as valid today as they were when initially published, the more comprehensive analysis of this evidence made possible by a half dozen additional seasons of excavation, the examination of the material by a large number of additional specialists, and fuller study of more Neopalatial deposits in particular warrant a more positive approach to the topic.

Ceramic containers, of course, constitute merely one kind of evidence for the nature and degree of external contacts. They obviously cannot provide much information about exchanges in raw materials like ivory and stone, or processed substances such as glass, that did not require containers for transport. Moreover, only some ceramic vessels served as transport containers in the first place; a fair number were exchanged for their own sake rather than for their contents. Yet, even though imported pottery cannot tell anything approaching the whole story of a culture’s interactions with neighboring regions, it surely furnishes more evidence for external contacts during an era such as the second millennium B.C. than any other class of material that one can expect to find in the excavation of on-land sites in the Aegean basin. Although these vessels may not reveal the cultural identity of those who brought them to Kommos, they do identify at least some of the cultures with which the inhabitants of Kommos were ultimately, even if sometimes indirectly, in contact; and the relative numbers of the vases in question, when compared diachronically with the finds from earlier or later
phases at the site or synchronically with other sources of similar items, surely have something to say about differential levels of intercultural exchange either through time or across space. Written documents may provide more specific information about many aspects of trade, but they are all too rarely available or intelligible, and in most cases they describe only portions of a culture’s overall range of exchange networks and are therefore no less incomplete as a source of evidence than are imported pots or any other category of raw or manufactured material. Only ongoing and repeated considerations of all the possible sources of evidence, whether these are the physical imports themselves or texts and pictorial depictions relevant to the exchange of goods, will gradually lead to a fuller and more complete story of the trade and exchange networks in which Kommos played a part during the Bronze Age.

Since the publication of Watrous’s *Kommos III: The Late Bronze Age Pottery* in 1992, several new sources of imports to Kommos have been identified. Perhaps the most important of these is Western Anatolia, which appears suddenly to have emerged as an important trading partner in the LM II period. From what has been learned about the political geography of Anatolia from contemporary Hittite documentary sources, the region from which Kommos was probably receiving this material is likely to have been the kingdom of Arzawa, at least during the fifteenth and early fourteenth centuries B.C. A couple of other important trading partners have been more narrowly identified in both spatial and temporal terms. For example, “Italy” no longer properly describes Kommos’s principal trading partner in the far west nor did contacts in that direction begin as early as LM IIIA1. This partner may now be more precisely described as Sardinia (indeed, perhaps southern Sardinia only) and the duration of the trading relationship with Kommos limited to the LM IIIB period, that is, the thirteenth century B.C. Approximately half of all the Syro–Palestinian jars found at Kommos may now be shown to have originated in the central and northern Levant, between the northern coast of Israel and the northwestern coast of Syria. None of the remaining Syro–Palestinian imports need have come from the southern Levantine coast, but where they did in fact originate remains to be established. Relatively minor sources of imports have been recognized on the tiny, nearby islet of Gavdos southwest of Kommos as well as on the larger island of Kythera, a good deal farther away to the northwest.

It is now also possible to identify with some confidence which areas of the central and eastern Mediterranean that were active participants in intercultural exchanges in the LBA are not represented by ceramic imports to Kommos. Nothing identifiable as Trojan (or northwest Anatolian) has been found at the site, nor anything from the Italian peninsula. With respect to contacts with Mainland Greece, nothing from farther north than Boeotia or central Euboea can be identified, and certainly nothing Macedonian, Thessalian, or Thracian. Somewhat surprisingly, nothing at all of MM III or later date from the island of Aegina in the center of the Saronic Gulf has yet been recognized at Kommos, despite the fact that Aegina was a major exporter of numerous different classes of pottery throughout the west-central Aegean during that period.
What substances were traded to Kommos during the LBA, and where did they come from? The list can be only a partial one, of course, but a number of the items are nevertheless of interest. From coastal Lebanon and northern Syria came oil (in Syro–Palestinian jars), perhaps beginning no earlier than the end of the fifteenth century and possibly ending as early as the end of the fourteenth B.C. Since imported olive oil is unlikely to have found much of a market in the Mesara, oil is more likely to have been made from some other plant, probably sesame. From coastal northern Israel came pistacia resin (again in Syro–Palestinian jars), a commodity that initially appeared at Kommos before the end of the Neopalatial era (late sixteenth or early fifteenth century B.C.) and that continued to find a market in the Mesara until well along in the thirteenth century B.C. Metal scrap, most or perhaps even all of which came from Cypriot sources, reached Kommos by way of Sardinia in the thirteenth century B.C. Decorated tablewares were imported from Cyprus in small quantities from the very beginning of the Neopalatial period but enjoyed local peaks in popularity during LM IA Final–IB Early and again from LM IIIA1–IIIB. Small amounts of Mycenaean tablewares arrived at Kommos from the late Shaft Grave era (Late Helladic I) onward, almost invariably, as in the case of the analogous Cypriot imports, in the form of drinking and pouring vessels. Occasionally, a piece intended primarily for display purposes was imported from the Mainland (probably the Argolid), such as an LH IIA Palace Style jar 47/21 or an LH IIIA2 amphoroid chariot krater (C 9126 is the shoulder fragment, C 12079 probably the base of the same vase). Perfumed oils came to Kommos from both Egypt (in small but plain lentoid flasks) and the Greek Mainland (in small, handsomely decorated stirrup jars), beginning in the later fifteenth century but with increasing frequency during the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C. Wine was perhaps also imported to Kommos, most notably from the Arzawan kingdom in western Anatolia but perhaps also from Cyprus, in both cases in plain jugs. Cypriot pithoi could have contained all types of materials, but at least in some instances they are likely to have been the containers in which Cypriot tablewares arrived on Crete. Only after the destruction of Knossos ca. 1375 B.C. does Kommos appear to have become a net exporter of raw materials or agricultural produce. A new form of transport container, the short-necked amphora, was designed for this purpose (Rutter 2000). Kommos’s Building P is likely to have been the major distribution point of these vessels and whatever they may have contained. In at least some cases, the substance being shipped in these amphoras was hematite, or red ocher, but they could equally well have been used for liquid produce such as olive oil.

Categorizing the kind of trade in which Kommos participated continues to be extremely difficult. Current evidence suggests that large-scale exchanges of organic commodities such as oil, resin, and wine were a phenomenon principally of the LM II–IIIA2 Early ceramic phases, when Kommos served as a funnel for the entry and distribution of such substances throughout much of central Crete under the umbrella of the Greek administration centered at Knossos. It may be that when the dynasts resident at Aghia Triada took over the management of Kommos’s harbor in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C., more in the way of
such organic produce began to leave Kommos in short-necked amphorae than was coming in, whether in amphorae from Egypt, Canaanite jars from Syria, Lebanon, and northern Israel, jugs from western Anatolia and Cyprus, or transport stirrup jars from other regions of Crete. The market for fancily decorated tablewares seems always to have operated on a fairly small scale. During the MM III–LM IA Early stage of Kommos’s history, such imports were either Cycladic or Cypriot, but from the later LM IA period onward this trade was split between Mycenaean (chiefly Argive) and Cypriot sources of supply. Kythera seems to have been the source for a similarly small-scale traffic in specialized cooking pottery. The trade in valuable liquids such as perfumes appears likewise to have been relatively minor, with earlier containers coming from Egypt (C 288 = Watrous 1992: no. 1961; C 8006) and Cyprus (40/35) and later ones coming mostly from the Greek Mainland. How much of Kommos’s supply of copper and bronze during the thirteenth century B.C. was provided by the site’s contacts with Sardinia is impossible to estimate, since the percentage of imported scrap relative to imported ingots at that time cannot be determined; but the importing of metal in scrap form from a totally new source of supply presumably signals problems with the traditional supply networks involving this material.

Who were the carriers of all these trade items? They certainly need not have been the same people as those responsible for the preparation and packaging of the substances being exchanged. Given the wide variety of different goods being brought to Kommos, one is tempted to conclude that no single ethnic group can have been responsible for the delivery of all of them. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that the pottery being surveyed here is evidence for only those imports that required packaging of some kind. Numerous other kinds of goods—exotic stones, woods, ivory, and metals, for example—would have been distributed via Kommos throughout central Crete without leaving any sign of their passage. The international character of the only early floor deposit so far recovered from within Building P (56b/1–7) and of a contemporary deposit found just outside Gallery 1 to the northwest (56e/1–13) suggests that multiple ethnic groups were involved, even if Cypriots and other islanders from within the Aegean played a greater role than most. Oddities like the two Egyptian carinated bowls thus far recognized at Kommos (56b/7; C 7549) or the western Anatolian cup (52e/4) and basin (C 11911), ceramic types that are almost never found outside their region of production and that cannot have served as transport containers, are further evidence that foreigners from a number of different homelands came to Kommos for short periods of time. Thus far, however, no compelling evidence has been located anywhere on the site that a group of foreigners actually took up residence there. The discovery of imported containers throughout the town of Kommos in ordinary domestic contexts may be interpreted as evidence that the inhabitants of Kommos itself may have been important participants in overseas exchanges, especially from LM II onward.

One final aspect of the imported pottery at Kommos that merits greater attention than it has attracted is the evidence it furnishes for helpful cross dating of major cultural horizons
at the site with those of neighboring as well as of comparatively distant regions. In this regard, the very early LH IIIC date for one or perhaps two of the Mycenaean stirrup jars recovered (79/1; C 611 = Watrous 1992: no. 1422) is of particular importance inasmuch as it requires lowering the date for Kommos’s rather sudden and widespread abandonment from roughly the middle of LM IIIB to the very end of that phase. Few other classes of imported pottery at Kommos can be as narrowly dated as can Mycenaean fine wares, so it is unlikely that the find contexts of Cypriot, Egyptian, Syro–Palestinian, western Anatolian, or Sardinian imports will allow the Minoan ceramic sequence to be more precisely correlated with the ceramic sequences in these areas. Moreover, most of the pottery imported from these latter areas consists of long-lived, usually undecorated types that do not lend themselves to fine chronological distinctions (e.g., Cypriot White Slip II milk bowls, Base Ring cups and juglets, Plain White pithoi and jugs; western Anatolian reddish brown burnished jugs; Canaanite jars; Egyptian amphoras and lentoid flasks). Nevertheless, the opportunity for such more refined chronological correlations does exist, and in the case of the Sardinian imports in particular may prove to be of considerable value.

4. Kommos in the Mesara Landscape

Joseph W. Shaw

Numerous explorers first discovered and then excavated major Minoan sites in the western Mesara, which is defined for our purposes here as the area west and south of Gortyn, and north of Matala and the Asterousia range of hills. Among the explorers were Federico Halbherr, Luigi Pernier, and Enrico Stefani of the then-nascent Italian School of Archaeology. Beginning in 1900 (after Crete was opened up to archaeological investigation), they cleared large portions of Phaistos and Aghia Triada. During the same formative phase Stephanos Xanthoudides introduced the scholarly world to an array of Early Minoan tholos tombs (1924). After this first wave of investigation, Luisa Banti contributed major studies of Aghia Triada (1930–31, 1941–43) and, after World War II, was able to complete publication, naming Pernier, who died in 1937, as coauthor of volume II in the Phaistos series (1951) of which Pernier had already written the first volume (1935). Among other notable scholars was Doro Levi, who arrived in Crete in 1922. Levi was to add considerably to the vocabulary of sites in the surrounding area, especially the country mansion at Kannia (1959) and, to date, the best preserved tholos tomb in the Mesara at Kamilari (1961–62); but his greatest achievement was to excavate, below earlier excavators’ dumps, the huge and well-preserved western wing of the First Phaistos Palace, which he published in massive detail (1976–81). A third wave of exploration, in which many still living have had the privilege to participate, has featured reevaluations, detailed study of architecture and artifacts from earlier excavations, stratigraphic investigations focusing on chronology, exploration of new sites, and
regional surveys. Chief among the reevaluations were the responses to Levi’s interpretations of the Old Palace sequencing, which are commented on here by A. Van de Moortel (Chap. 3.2). Of special importance has been Levi and Carinci’s publication (1988) of the pottery and numerous other clay artifacts from the First Palace excavation as well as Carinci’s and others’ further revisions (e.g., Carinci 1989), which brought Levi’s Phaistian chronology into line with that of Evans, which is used for much of the rest of Crete. For Aghia Triada, Luisa Banti filled a gap created by incomplete publication when she published much of the earlier investigations (Halbherr, Stefani, and Banti 1977). Extremely important since then has been Vincenzo La Rosa’s formative work at Aghia Triada, for he conducted yearly excavation and soundings to review and establish appropriate sequences of already-explored areas (1977, 1979–80, 1985a, 1989, 1997a, 1997b). He also has encouraged numerous students, many now professionals, from the Italian Institute of Archaeology at Athens to restudy and publish old and new materials from the same site (among them, Cucuzza 1997b; Militello 1998).

Concerning new western Mesara sites outside the confines of the Phaistos–Aghia Triada ridge, the Italian School explored houses at Selí near Kamilari (La Rosa 1972–73, 1973–74; Cucuzza 1993, La Rosa and Cucuzza 2001). The Greek Archaeological Service is in the process of clearing the finely crafted mansion at Plakes near Pitsidia (Hatzi-Vallianou 1989: 438–41). Since 1976 our Canadian/U.S./international team has been excavating Kommos. The last is partly reported in this volume, but for its history see J. W. Shaw 1995a and 1995b. Allied with these initiatives, but with the aim of coming to a better understanding of the density of settlement patterns during different periods in the entire western part of the Mesara Plain, were two extensive surveys, the first to take place in the area. The earlier (Hope-Simpson 1995) included an area of roughly 25 km² around Kommos (from Matala on the south, north to Kalamaki, and east to Kamilari). The second (Watrous et al. 1993) covered some 22 km², extending north from where the Kommos survey ended, to Aghia Triada and then Voroi, then east to Kalivia and south to Kouses. Thus the entire area, from Matala north to Voroi, and from the Libyan Sea east to Kalivia (Kalivia is east of Phaistos) has, for the first time, been examined carefully by interdisciplinary surveys that reported on visible remains, especially sherd scatters and excavated and unexcavated building remains from all past periods of habitation.

These survey activities helped promote the examination of individual sites within their broader geographic landscapes. Ongoing reevaluation of neighboring sites, especially of Phaistos and Aghia Triada, also invited new observations concerning their relative roles over a long period of time. Moreover, study often focused on the development of pottery shape and decoration with the propitious result that phases of relative ceramic stages became more identifiable (Levi and Carinci 1988; Betancourt 1990, Watrous 1992, Van de Moortel 1997, also Chap. 3.2 and 3.3 by Van de Moortel and Rutter, respectively). These results, combined with study of architecture and further excavation, have allowed closer definition of relative prosperity at and around particular sites. Consequently, we are for the first time in a position
to begin to chart that material prosperity and, by inference, aspects of the socioeconomic welfare of individual communities. This study has led to comparisons of Kommos with Aghia Triada and Phaistos, especially during their Proto-, Neo-, and Postpalatial phases.

The first clear manifestation of that line of ongoing inquiry was a small conference that took place in Toronto in 1984 during the meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America, in which Canadian, U.S., and Italian colleagues offered possibilities. The proceedings were published as *A Great Minoan Triangle* (J. W. Shaw and M. C. Shaw [eds.] 1985), the title reflecting the geographic positioning of the sites, with Aghia Triada and Phaistos set on an east-west line as two of the three points of the triangle, and with Kommos to their southwest, the third point of the triangle. At that conference, also devoted to site definition, M. C. Shaw first proposed that the galleries of LM IIIB Building P, still only partially excavated at the time, were shipsheds sheltering the area’s vessels. Also, L. Vance Watrous examined the significance of varieties of imported foreign ceramics at Kommos, finds almost unknown at inland Phaistos and Aghia Triada. Philip Betancourt then asked provoking questions, among them: Was Kommos a dependency of Protopalatial and Neopalatial Phaistos, and then of Aghia Triada during the Postpalatial period? Could it have been a palatial center in its own right in LM I? Finally, Vincenzo La Rosa suggested that “the knot to untie is mainly of a political nature, one connected, that is, with the identification of a centre of power and with the determination of the influence of such power on the architectural, urbanistic features and artistic production of the other settlements” (1985b: 46; see also now 1995), a theme pursued further below.

Such frank discussions, combined with the nature of contemporary research mentioned above, have led to our Table 5.1 here, a tentative, joint effort to place the three sites and their vicissitudes in a diachronic array, an array that will no doubt change as new approaches and perceptions develop and as new discoveries shift the balance of power and/or the order/nature of apparent building, destruction, and disuse this way and that. It is beyond our purpose here to provide full explanations and documentation for all aspects of Table 5.1, for that would constitute a volume in itself. Rather, it is probably more appropriate simply to remark on some of the suggestions therein, by relative palatial period.

**Protopalatial**

There seems to be general agreement that during this period the Phaistian hegemony in the western Mesara was complete (La Rosa 1985b: 47). There was little activity at Aghia Triada. During MM IIB, the period when all of the first Phaistos palace was in use, Building AA was constructed at Kommos. On the basis of the argumentation in Chap. 1.2 and 1.3, AA resulted from a regional effort. It follows, then, that AA can probably be connected with the general affluence of the time and, specifically, with decisions reached by rulers at Phaistos. We would propose, based on the evidence of East Cretan, Cycladic, and other imported pottery in the
Table 5.1. General historical developments in the western Mesara at the Minoan sites of Aghia Triada, Kommos, and Phaistos: Final Neolithic through Sub-Minoan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Kommos Southern Area</th>
<th>Kommos Town</th>
<th>Kommos House X</th>
<th>Phaistos</th>
<th>Aghia Triada</th>
<th>Other Sites in Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FN</td>
<td>Scattered sherds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acropolis and eastern slopes of the hill (Chalara) settled</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EM I–II</td>
<td>Scattered sherds only; settlement (and cemetery?) located nearby to southeast at Vigles</td>
<td>Acropolis and surroundings settled</td>
<td>Scattered settlement Tholos Tomb A in use (EM IIB)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EM III</td>
<td>Settlement; early paved walkway</td>
<td>Settlement; early paved walkway</td>
<td>Tholos Tomb A in use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM IA</td>
<td>Extensive settlement Early paved walkway reused</td>
<td>Scattered settlement and acme of deposits in Tholos Tomb A Cult area south of Tholos A: baetylswall</td>
<td>Patrikies Potter’s storage site or sanctuary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM IB</td>
<td>Scattered building; early paved walkway Dense occupation of Central Hillside, perhaps also of Hilltop</td>
<td>Construction and early use of Old (First) Palace: Levi Phase Ia Houses west of Palace and at Aghia Photini</td>
<td>Possible settlement on the northern and western slopes of the hill Construction of Tholos Tomb B and last use of Tholos Tomb A Continued use of cult area</td>
<td>Kamilari Tholos Tomb 1 constructed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM IIA</td>
<td>Extensive settlement Changes in Old Palace structures Levi Phase Ib early (deposits in Bastione II, Vano CVII, etc.)</td>
<td>Possible settlement on the northern and western slopes of the hill Continued use of cult area</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM IIB</td>
<td>Construction of Building AA Building AA destroyed at end of period (by earthquake?)</td>
<td>Continuing occupation of houses</td>
<td>Extensive settlement Last phase of Old Palace (Levi Phases Ib/Late II) Construction of “shrine” on the West Court and potter’s kiln west of Palace; first phase of town south of the ramp Old Palace destroyed at end of period by earthquake Settlement, likely on the northern and western slopes of the hill; paved areas and roads At end of period, probable destruction of settlement; substantial numbers of dumps and fills in the settlement area and “Settore Nord Est”</td>
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<tr>
<td>MM III</td>
<td>Construction of Building T5, then remainder of T Laying of new floors in Rooms T23–25 before end of period, possibly associated with postearthquake repair</td>
<td>Destruction of houses in Central Hillside at end of period (by earthquake?) Earlier MM house partly below House X destroyed and abandoned Construction of House X now or somewhat later</td>
<td>MM III Early: Tentative attempt to rebuild parts of Old Palace in northern and western parts (deposit under a slab in Vano 50; Vano 11; Vano 18, building northeast of Palace [with Phaistos Disk room]) House rebuilt south of ramp Settlement at Chalara and in Acropoli Mediana House south of ramp destroyed at end of period by earthquake Construction and initial use of Villa (foundation deposit in Corridor 74) as a unified complex Houses in the settlement with orientation different from that of Villa End of period: destruction of “Casa della Soglia Alabastrina”; fill under northern wall of Villa (Rooms 62, 65, 66) Acme of deposits in Kami lari Tholoi 1–2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LM IA Early</td>
<td>Major damage, including burning in northeast wing, suffered by Building T South Stoa and much of northeast wing abandoned</td>
<td>Damage to several houses on Southern Hilltop and Central Hillside, resulting in their abandonment Tentative date for construction of earliest version of House X Palace not in use Houses south and southwest of Palace continue in use Continued use Seli: construction and initial use of Volakakis house</td>
<td>(continued)</td>
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</table>
**Table 5.1 continued**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Kommos Southern Area</th>
<th>Kommos Town</th>
<th>Kommos House X</th>
<th>Phaistos</th>
<th>Aghia Triada</th>
<th>Other Sites in Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LM IA</td>
<td>Construction and use of kiln in South Stoa. Building T reused on a reduced scale</td>
<td>See preceding and following phases</td>
<td>First discrete use deposits from House X, Room 2</td>
<td>Scanty remains</td>
<td>Continued use of Villa Deposits Delta IV and Gamma III under the Shrine</td>
<td>Kannia: construction of Mansion now or in subsequent phases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM IA Final</td>
<td>Final use of kiln in North Stoa, Space T16, in concert with extensive use of cooking facilities in Room T22 Extensive remodeling within North Stoa area</td>
<td>Major rebuilding of town initiated by now, if not already in the previous phase</td>
<td>Earliest use material in Room X1</td>
<td>Building of the Mansion at Chalara, perhaps that of Aghios Georgios, and of the house at Aghia Photini Destruction levels of Rooms LXXII–LXXIV south of the Palace</td>
<td>Second phase of Villa, now or in subsequent period Deposits Delta III under the later Shrine Destruction of Edificio Ciclopio at end of period</td>
<td>Seli: final use of Volakakis house Pitsidia: construction of Plakes Mansion Kamilari: horizon of the group of figurines in Tholos Tomb 1; or perhaps the following period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM IB Early</td>
<td>Deposition of major dumps of pottery and plaster in T10 and T11 and adjacent area of court at end of phase Abandonment of T22 as a major cooking facility Area of Room F below P3 in East Wing for artisanal activity (bronze strips, tools)</td>
<td>Continued use of houses on Hilltop and Central Hillside</td>
<td>Continued use of house but no major depositions of occupational debris</td>
<td>Deposit in the Casella of Vano 50 Phaistos New Palace constructed</td>
<td>Continued use of Villa Kiln on the slope east of the Villa Numerous buildings now orientated as Villa (Bastione, Stoa 10, Casa del Lebete, Casa del Pistri-num, Casa dei Fichi, Complesso della Mazza di Breccia, so-called Tomba degli Ori)</td>
<td>Seli: construction of Sifakis House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM IB</td>
<td>Relocation of major cooking facilities to NW corner of court</td>
<td>Continued use of houses on Hilltop and Central Hills</td>
<td>Repeated relaying of floors in Rooms X2 (4), X3 (2), X11 (2)</td>
<td>Great destruction of New Palace by fire and earthquake(?) of Villa at Chalara and the house at Aghia Photini, at end of period</td>
<td>Continued use of the Villa</td>
<td>Seli: Sifakis House abandoned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kiln in Court 90</td>
<td>Settlement with the same orientation as the Villa</td>
<td>Kannia Mansion abandoned</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kiln on the slope east of the Villa</td>
<td>Destruction by fire and earthquake(?) of Villa and settlement at end of period</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Villa unplundered</td>
<td>Destruction, not by fire, of buildings in Settore Nord Est (Complesso della Mazza di Breccia and so-called Tomba degli Ori)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slab floor of Room T5 gradually covered with use accumulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deposition of metallurgical debris in pit in Room T16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LM II</td>
<td>Continued use of cooking facilities in NW corner of court</td>
<td>Continued use of houses on Hilltop and Central Hills</td>
<td>Abandonment of House X as a residence and installation in Room X7 of public shrine</td>
<td>Scattered sherds, also at Chalara</td>
<td>Scattered sherds, provisional structures (platform, or bema, on altar)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remodeling of interior of Room T5 and laying of new floor; northeast door blocked now if not already earlier in LM IB(?)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gradual burial of Room X10 under garbage dump</td>
<td></td>
<td>Probably a building in northern area</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Earliest periods of use of Rooms X8 and X9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LM IIIA1</td>
<td>Use of space below P3 as an industrial facility toward end of period</td>
<td>Continued use of houses on Hilltop and Central Hills</td>
<td>Floruit of public shrine Shrine and associated storage facilities in Rooms X4–X5</td>
<td>Partial “reoccupation” of Mansion at Chalara Scattered sherds around the Palace area</td>
<td>First phase of urban development of the Mycenaean settlement</td>
<td>Cemetery at Kalyvia: Warrior Tomb</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collapse of second storey into Rooms X4 and X16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reuse of Tholos Tomb B</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Final floor deposit in X8 Abandonment of Rooms 4, 5, 7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>Kommos Southern Area</td>
<td>Kommos Town</td>
<td>Kommos House X</td>
<td>Phaistos</td>
<td>Aghia Triada</td>
<td>Other Sites in Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>LM IIIA2</td>
<td>Construction of Gal-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>House over the Chalara Mansion</td>
<td>Second phase of urban development: Megaron</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>leries P1-P2 and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Structures in Acropoli Mediana</td>
<td>ABCD, small stoa and shrine in the southern</td>
<td>Reuse of Kami-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>refurbishment of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>area now or in previous phase</td>
<td>lari Tholos Tomb 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Room T5 of north-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Construction and initial</td>
<td>Continued use of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>west portion of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>use of the Tomb of the Sarcophagus</td>
<td>Kalyvia Cemetery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building T, as</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>End of period: profanation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>phase of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and destruction of the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tomb of the Sarcophagus and tipping of its</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>contents into nearby so-called Tomba degli Ori</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Intentional destruction of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>some buildings in the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>settlement (Casa delle</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Camere Decapitate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LM IIIA2</td>
<td>Use of Galler-</td>
<td>Continued</td>
<td>Partial use of</td>
<td>Occupation at Chalara</td>
<td>Third phase of urban development:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>ies P1-P2; relaying of</td>
<td>use of</td>
<td>this area at a</td>
<td>continues Structures in Acropoli Mediana</td>
<td>Houses of the settlement overbuilt with large</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>floors in those</td>
<td>houses on</td>
<td>higher level,</td>
<td>still in use</td>
<td>buildings: Northwest</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>galleries at the end</td>
<td>Hilltop and</td>
<td>badly</td>
<td></td>
<td>Building, Megaron P,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of the period and</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>destroyed by</td>
<td></td>
<td>Large Stoa (Agora), and</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>construction of</td>
<td>Hillside</td>
<td>seventh-century-</td>
<td></td>
<td>Casa dei Vanni aggiunti</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Galleries P3-P6</td>
<td></td>
<td>B.C. activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>progressivamente.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>in the same</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bastione reconstructed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM IIB Early</td>
<td>Abandonment of Buildings N and P</td>
<td>Abandonment of most houses</td>
<td>Abandonment of all major buildings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM IIB Final</td>
<td>Flimsy wall built over N7 now or in LM IIIC</td>
<td>Sparse evidence for continued occupation</td>
<td>Palace built over (altar in northwestern corner of central court)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mycenaean ramp; pottery deposits under Houses AA, BB, CC, O now or in subsequent phase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LM IIIC</td>
<td>Scattered sherds</td>
<td>Deserted</td>
<td>Scattered sherds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Minoan</td>
<td>Temple A constructed</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fortification wall in Acropolis Mediana</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kommos area even before AA was built (Chap. 3.2), that Kommos was already functioning as a harbor for arriving and departing ships, and thus a monumental complex of “palatial” character was designed and built to grace the western entranceway by sea to the Mesara. In this connection, it is probably not by coincidence that the earliest Minoan remains in Egypt known to archaeologists are Phaistian Kamares pottery (MacGillivray 1998: 107; Carinci 2000: 37). Minoan pottery appeared in Cyprus perhaps even earlier, in the form of an EM III–MM IA bridge-spouted jar from Lapithos (Grace 1940: 30) and an MM IB carinated cup from Karmi (Stewart 1963).

At the end of MM IIB, the Phaistos Old Palace was destroyed, probably by an earthquake (Levi 1964: 9; La Rosa 1995, 2002), a seismic event for which there is evidence at Knossos as well (MacGillivray 1998: 102). If such an event actually did occur, it should also have affected Kommos. We propose, therefore, that AA, built in MM IIB, also went out of use at the end of the same period (Chaps. 1.2 and 3.2, supported by the sottoscala deposit below P6). Of AA, however, little save foundations remains. If the building was, indeed, completed (and we have no reason to think that it was not), then its destruction by earthquake would then seem plausible, with the tumbled, uncut slabs from the upper structure probably being reused for inner and upper walls when Building T was constructed in the Neopalatial period.

Neopalatial

In MM III there was one or more destructions by earthquake. One apparently prevented completion of any restoration work at Phaistos (Levi’s Phase III) and may have affected Aghia Triada as well as Archanes (La Rosa 1995: 889; MacGillivray 1998: 79). We also suspect one or more at Kommos (Gifford 1995: 74; J. W. Shaw 1996b: 392; Rutter Chap. 3.3, passim). Building T at Kommos was built during this period (Chaps. 1.3 and 3.3). Apparently, the Villa Reale at Aghia Triada was constructed during the same, MM III, period, as suggested by a foundation deposit discovered there by La Rosa and his colleagues (1995: 889; 2002: 72; pers. corr.).

During LM IA the Phaistos palace may still have been in ruins, and the splendid building as we see it now may actually date to LM IB (Carinci 1989: 79–80; Palio 2001b: 384, 422; La Rosa 2002: 83). Its architectural opulence was paralleled by that at Aghia Triada until the end of LM IB, when both sites were destroyed by earthquake(?) and fire. At Kommos in the meantime, while the settlement apparently flourished, Building T went into decline during early LM IA, after which portions of the East Wing went out of use, and the two spacious stoas were used for pottery and, probably, limited food production.

Notable in Table 5.1 are the newly introduced subdivisions of LM IA and LM IB. These are based on work by Van de Moortel (1997), also on her chap. 2 in J. W. Shaw et al. 2001, and on Rutter in Chap. 3.3. There is reason to be confident that the same relative subdivisions
can be discovered at other Mesara sites, but only further research can show to what extent the subphases are, indeed, relatively uniform among sites.

Our colleagues at Aghia Triada and Phaistos, noticing the unevenness of building activities at Phaistos and the concomitant rapid and high-quality construction at Aghia Triada, have suggested that the importance of Aghia Triada increased during MM III–LM IA to the point that rule passed peacefully from Phaistos to it (La Rosa 2002: 95). This suggestion is based on the contraction of the size of the New Palace at Phaistos, the absence of Neopalatial settlement in areas that were previously settled, and the scarcity of finds of special value (e.g., pictorial frescoes, quality stone vases, tablets) in the Phaistos palace, as compared with Aghia Triada’s prosperous settlement and the plethora of tablets, metals, and other artifacts found in the building (La Rosa 1985b: 47–49; 1997; 2002). This perception has been incorporated into our Table 5.1.

Postpalatial

During the past years, studies at Knossos, Kommos, and Chania have shown conclusively that LM II pottery represents a separate chronological period at sites where the ceramic assemblage appears to be widespread (Popham 1984; Betancourt 1985a: 149; Hallager 1997; Watrous 1992). At Kommos major deposits occur in a dump south of the House with the Snake Tube (Watrous 1992: Deposit 16), in various places in House X (Watrous 1992: Deposits 18–19), and in the court in the northwest corner of Building T (Watrous 1992: Pottery Group 22; also Chap. 3.3 here with Group 45). This sitewide use of LM II pottery at Kommos contrasts with the situation at other Mesara sites, for instance, Chalara on the eastern side of the Phaistos acropolis (Levi 1967–68: 140, 142, 144), and Aghia Triada (La Rosa 1997b: 251), where LM II remains are found. How does one explain this phenomenon?

If potters in the Knossos area developed the ceramic assemblage, which combines Mainland and Cretan traditions, then sent their products south by land into the Mesara, one would expect more examples to have appeared at the inland sites, even if only in modest dwellings (like those at Kommos, where they do appear) not affected by the conflagrations that engulfed the palatial structures at Phaistos and Aghia Triada. An explanation may lie in drawing on the analogy of the foreign, non-Cretan wares brought into Kommos by ship, wares rarely sent inland (Watrous 1992, passim; Cline 1994; Rutter 1999). A link by sea with the north coast of Crete, presumably with the Knossos area and its ports, Katsamba and Amnisos, would probably fit the evidence. This may help explain why, outside the general Knossos area, LM II pottery tends to appear in sufficient number only at seaside towns that would be visited by trading vessels (Pelon 1970 [Malia], B. P. Hallager 1990 [Chania], MacGillivray 1997 [Palaikastro]).

After the LM IB destructions at Aghia Triada and Phaistos the palace of phaistos lay essentially abandoned, and Aghia Triada may have had a building in the north area, whereas at
Kommos, which had not been visited by a similar devastation by fire, occupation continued in the houses of the town. For reasons still to be determined, perhaps the demise of Knossos, in late LM IIIA1/A2 Early, there was a major regional renaissance at both Aghia Triada and Kommos—Phaistos apparently lay almost deserted at the time. At Aghia Triada were built a freestanding shrine, a presumably administrative building (ABCD) bordered on the south by a large court, a small stoa (EF), an immense stoa of unprecedented design (the Mercato), as well as other structures (Halbherr, Stefani, and Banti 1977; La Rosa 1977, 1985b, 1997b; Hayden 1981; Cucuzza [1997b] places them in sequence). At about the same time Building P, also a “public” structure, appeared at Kommos, as well as Building N, already described and interpreted here in Chaps. 1.3 and 5.2.

With the exception of the Aghia Triada shrine, all these buildings were found devoid of finds that could reveal their exact use (there were a few storage pithoi in the large stoa, however). Their relative shapes suggest, however, that they are of complementary natures: administration (ABCD, after the possible model of a Mycenaean structure with an axial entrance [J. W. and M. C. Shaw 1997]); also N at Kommos, which may have housed guardians/supervisors of Building P’s activities); religion (the freestanding Aghia Triada shrine, for which there was no equivalent then at Kommos); public gatherings (confined to the court alongside ABCD and two stoas at Aghia Triada), and commerce/storage (implied by the portico and rear storage rooms of the large stoa at Aghia Triada and by the shape and location of Building P at Kommos). The lack of evidence for maritime commerce at Aghia Triada, compared with the plentiful material at Kommos (imported pottery, anchors) suggest that we are dealing with differing but appropriate venues for internal, overland, and short-range versus external and long-range maritime exchange.

Given this combination at two neighboring sites, and assuming a lack of separate religious and social/communal structures at Kommos, there seems little doubt that if the two complementary groups of buildings functioned in tandem, Aghia Triada would have been in charge of regional decisions (as per La Rosa 1985b; also J. W. and M. C. Shaw 1997: 434), just as during the later Greek period when inland towns connected with a harbor town along the shore (Phaistos and Matala and, later Gortyn and Matala/Leda) were the seats of decision-making.

How do the Knossian Linear B tablets affect the above picture? Certainly they show production attributed to specific sites in the Mesara (e.g., pa-i-to [Phaistos?] and da-wo [Aghia Triada, Kommos?]), and it is tempting to conclude that the western Mesara was subject to Knossos, at least until its “final destruction” in LM IIIA2 Early.47

To arrive at an understanding of the LM IIIA2–B period in the Mesara, the dating of at least some of the Knossos Linear B tablets is crucial, although that matter cannot be decided definitively at this point. From the point of view of architecture there is no doubt that the unusual Aghia Triada and Kommos structures already mentioned represent innovations without parallel in Crete, far different from the rest of the island, where the pattern at most sites is the reuse of previous spaces by subdivision and/or extension. Apart from these two
Mesara sites, there are few sites where there was significant new building.\textsuperscript{47} The LM IIIA2–B period was also apparently one when the population was expanding (Watrous et al. 1993: 228).

At least at this point in discovery, there are no monumental buildings at Knossos that can be pointed to as having been constructed during this period. Is it realistic, therefore, to suggest that Knossos, if it were in charge of the Mesara during LM IIIA2–B, would commission massive architecture elsewhere when it was not building up the home base but, rather, reoccupying the ruins of an earlier palace? Thus a strong case can be made that this late development in the Mesara was largely independent of what was happening to the north. Shelmerdine, reviewing the recent evidence showing that the Knossos Linear B tablets are from different time periods, came to the conclusion that the main Knossian archive should be dated to LM IIIA1/A2 Early, and that, after the major destruction at that site, LM IIIA2–B was a period of “dispersed authority” with “increased autonomy,” rather than one with a dominant administration center (1992: 585–587).\textsuperscript{48} Merousis recently proposed a similar situation, with a decentralized administration during LM IIIA2 followed by regionalism (2002: 167–69).

Notes

1. At Knossos, part of the northwestern area was set on a partial platform retained by a massive slab-built wall retaining fill (Catling 1974: 34, dated there to EM III [Prepalatial]), but see also MacGillivray 1994: 49–51, who also cites MM IA and IB as possibilities suggested by others.

2. At Knossos, in the area near the Grand Staircase in the East Wing, the Neolithic tell was cut into to a depth of at least 8 m, and a massive north-south retaining wall was built to support the Central Court on the west and to accommodate the residential area on the east (Evans 1921: fig. 247). At Phaistos a similar cutting was made into the southwestern slope, with a resulting difference of at least 6.20 m between the Central Court and the lower floors of the Protopalatial storerooms (Levi 1976: vol. I(2), pl. L). A similar method was used to set in the lower rooms of the Aghia Triada “Villa” complex west and north of the large court there (Halbherr, Stefani, and Banti 1977, foldouts 2 and 3, a difference of about 3.5 m).

3. The form of the west “wings” of both buildings, now washed away by the sea, however, remains unknown.

4. Such platforms were often partly of thick mud-brick walls that underlay the walls projecting above ground level, as in Bietak 1996: fig. 56 (early New Kingdom palatial fortress at Avaris). At Early Bronze/Middle Bronze Marki Alonia in Cyprus builders constructed a frame of walls that served as the bases for the main part of a building, and after the interior of the frame was filled with rubble and debris, the lighter walls were built on the level thus created (Frankel 1998: 246).

5. In a deep sounding north of the east-west road and east of the Classical Round Building was a large pottery deposit dating to an early stage of MM IIB (contexts 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12 [Trench 20B] in Betancourt 1990, dated there to MM IIA; see Chap. 3.2). Being largely mendable and homogeneous in date, this pottery is very different in character from the largely unmendable, mixed MM IB–IIA–IIB Early pottery in the construction fills of Building AA, and cannot have been the source. Another consideration is the amount of kouskouras clay bedrock found in so many of the AA fillings. Some would, of course, be available from the bedding trenches excavated in the Southern Area for new walls, but certainly less than was needed. It is doubtful that this clay was removed from the enclosed AA area, since the aim of the builders was to
create a platform by elevating a preexisting slope. Could the clay have been excavated from a slope to the east, presently under meters of sand? It may have come from excavation for even further building (of houses?) north of the east-west road, an area where the Protopalatial levels are relatively unknown at this point.

6. Concerning upper floors in T, we believe there was one above T5, as indicated by the stairway there (Pl. 1.34). The stairway in the southwest corner of the Central Court (Pl. 1.130) suggests that most of the largely missing West Wing had two storeys, and that the two stairways mentioned (rather than a third, leading up from the Central Court in the destroyed part of the West Wing) serviced that wing. Although an explanation can be made that the two stoas (especially the South Stoa) had an upper floor, this remains unproved. There was probably not a second floor in the East Wing, where only one narrow stairway (in Room J, in Pl. 1.114) has been discovered; perhaps it provided access to the roof.

7. As restored, T measured about 97 m west to east and 52.76 m north to south. See also J. W. Shaw 1996a: 7, which also discusses the rationale for a size estimate. A more relevant comparison might be between Protopalatial Building AA and its surrounding community, but there is more information in this case for the Neopalatial period.

8. Note that the ratio (unlike the proportion) is of the palace area to the settled area outside.

9. For the estimates see the more general comparisons of palatial centers to towns in J. W. Shaw 2003b.

10. At Katsamba (Poros) excavations have revealed tombs and manufacturing facilities (Di-moupolou 1997, with references to earlier work). Much of the town lies submerged in the shallow water offshore as well as below modern construction. At Amnisos (Karteros) to the east, there are partly submerged Minoan houses along the shore, and excavation has exposed a Neopalatial villa as well as a long ashlar structure alongside the western side of the hill there (summarized and illustrated, with earlier bibliography, in J. Schäfer et al. 1992; see also J. Schäfer 1991).

11. Rutter has pointed out recently that the latest pottery in fill below the initial floors of Galleries P3–P6 is LM IIIA2 in date, whereas the earliest floor pottery associated with those gallery floors is of LM IIIB vintage. One explanation may be that the four southern galleries, although built in LM IIIA2, were not used until significantly later. It seems doubtful, however, that such enormous spaces, once constructed, were not used. More likely, given the ceramic evidence, is that all of Building P, perhaps including the floors, was laid out in LM IIIA2 but that the walls and roofs of the southern galleries were completed later, after P1 and P2 had already been in use. Such an explanation could also account for the numerous irregularities in construction seen there (e.g., in use of timbering, masonry, care in building) already pointed out in Chap. 1.3.


13. For a variety of them drawn at the same scale see J. W. Shaw 1986: fig. 11.

14. For detailed discussion of Greek ship-sheds, see Blackman 1968.

15. Translation from R. Lattimore, The Iliad of Homer, Chicago, 1951.

16. Hawes et al. 1908: 19; Fotou 1993: 98, pls. XX–XXI. Watrous and, subsequently, Rutter and Van de Moortel, have inspected the building, which is quite eroded where it is next to the sea and still partly exposed on land. Of the three to four possible galleries, two are about 4 m wide. The building, oriented north toward the sea, was at least 15 m long, but boulders in the water suggest that another 10 m could be added to that length. Watrous reports (pers. comm.) that LM IB pottery was found associated with it.

17. Dario Puglisi (2001b) has recently made the proposal, one that would certainly have been recast had this volume been available to that author at the time, that Building T originally consisted of ten long galleries facing the sea, without stoas and without rooms to the west (e.g., T5). As has been shown here, T5 actually preceded the building of the rest of T, as did the original (AA) form of at least one of the two stoas. Thus Puglisi’s argument must be based on only eight of the galleries, the floor of one of which was plastered. Also, contra Puglisi, there is no evidence that the kiln in the South Stoa produced amphoras for trading abroad.

18. P6 was also closed on the west.

19. Rutter has suggested that the blocking
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here may have been made as early as LM II, which would imply that the threshold mentioned in the text was removed earlier and was not placed in its present position until LM III.

20. We do not know if N extended farther to the west, only that Room 5 probably had a western north-south wall set on the now-missing western wall of Room T5 (Chap. 1.2, 1.3). Compare Pl. 1.34.

21. For the plan, see J. W. Shaw 1990, fig. 2.

22. J. W. Shaw and M. Luton 2000. At the Theran Congress on wall painting, the authors argued that the Akrotiri settlement was established on a peninsula now masked by volcanic pumice. Recent excavation for setting in vertical supports for the new roof covering the site, especially those just east of Ashlar 4, revealed that the building was constructed on the edge of a steep slope down to the east, presumably leading down to the shore of the hypothesized eastern harbor of the settlement (C. Doumas, pers. comm.).

23. See also J. W. Shaw 1990, where other possible landing spots along shorelines are discussed.

24. Such an enclosed harbor has been proposed by Raban for Malia (1983: 239 and fig. 11; 1991: 139; but see J. W. Shaw 1990: 428, and Hue and Pelon 1991: 123 and n. 49). Further investigation of the possibility of a channel leading into an inland harbor was to be carried out by Alain Dandrau (pers. comm.). A possible enclosed port in a natural depression has been reported near Pylos in Messenia, but little evidence for dating and actual use has been furnished (Zanger et al. 1997: 617–23, 626).

To our knowledge, no one has yet suggested such an inner harbor at Kommos. If one were to do so, two major problems would have to be dealt with. The first is that, as in Pl. 1.3, the bedrock at Kommos is now at groundwater level (close to sea level) about 20 m south of the civic buildings. To replicate ancient conditions, when sea level during the Minoan period was some 1.5–2.5 m lower than now, the same ground level, given a similar slope, would be some 35 m farther south, leaving only about 50 m between that point and the corresponding hillslope farther south free (north-south) for an inner harbor. The second problem is silting, since the harbor mouth would have to be dredged continuously to remove the sand being carried southward by the wind and the waves along this part of the coast.

25. For Minoan fishhooks and bone tools that may have been used for net mending and manufacture, see Blitzer 1995: 497–500, 510–16. A number from House X (including a group of six barbed hooks corroded together) will be published together with the house. There are some from the civic buildings (Chap. 4.1, 18–20). For evidence for fishing during the ensuing Greek period see Rose 2000, passim.


28. One can only introduce the subject here, for which the reader is referred especially to detailed discussions in Knapp 1993 and Knapp and Cherry 1994 (especially 126–46), as well as in Rehak and Younger (1998: 136–40) who reviewed the subject most recently. See also Watrous 1994: 750. The best discussion, not by the excavators themselves, of Kommos as a port town is in Knapp and Cherry 1994: 138–41, where it is presented along with Ugarit in Syria and Enkomi in Cyprus. There it is suggested that the immediate Kommos area “enjoyed an independent existence, at least from LM I onwards.” Although independence remains a possibility, as pointed out in the text, however, there are reasons for considering Kommos during most periods as a satellite of one of the major inland sites.

29. Unless there was a building at the time (Chap. 1.2).

30. Given the nature of much of the foreign pottery, everyday rather than special, its relative date in primary contexts at Kommos probably comes close to the date when it was imported.

31. See n. 194 to Chap. 3 for a listing of publications discussing ceramic and other imports found at Kommos.

32. Acknowledgment of those scholars who have helped us identify the foreign origins of pottery as well as metal and stone artifacts found at Kommos is made in n. 194 to Chap. 3.

33. The term trading partner here should not be understood necessarily to imply that the inhabitants of Kommos ever established direct contact with the producers of the western Ana-
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tolian pottery imported to and eventually de-41. I am indebted to Aleydis Van de Moortel
posited at the site. The identity of the carriers of
not only this but all other classes of imported
pottery must remain unknown until such time
as evidence bearing directly on it is discovered.
34. For a detailed map of the Mesara, where
many of the sites discussed are indicated, see
J. W. Shaw and M. C. Shaw (eds.), 1995, frontis-
piece.
35. S. Marinatos (1924–25) also excavated
a house at Kouses. Unless specified otherwise, the
dates of publication are given rather than those
of the fieldwork.
36. For a more complete recounting of Italian
archaeological activity in the Mesara and Crete
in general, see Di Vita, La Rosa, and Rizzo 1984,
passim; also La Rosa 2000a for Phaistos and
Aghia Triada.
37. Outside the western Mesara proper, in the
bordering area of the Asterousia range of hills,
a valuable survey had already taken place. This
was directed by Blackman and Branigan (1975,
1977; see also Bintliff 1977: 605–41).
38. As this volume was going to press, L. V.
Watrous and others completed publication of
The Plain of Phaistos (2004), which carries for-
ward the survey published in 1993.
39. An unproved assumption inherent in the
title is that there are no other “major” Minoan
sites in the western Mesara. A “major” site
might be defined as one of perhaps 30,000 m²,
which is somewhat smaller than Kommos
(40,000 m²). The Kalamaki area, never excavated
on a large scale, remains a possibility (for the
area, see Hope-Simpson 1995: 367–74), as does
that of Kamiliari (Watrous et al. 2004: 278 and
fig. 10.1).
40. Especially important is the just published
monumental Watrous et al. 2004, which includes
detailed surveys of the western Mesara during
both the Prehistoric (Part III, Chaps. 7–10) and
Historic (Part IV, Chaps. 11–14) periods.
41. I am indebted to Aleydis Van de Moortel
for the information.
42. Since, however, MM II levels on the Hill-
top and Hillside have not been broadly exam-
ined because of superposition of later structures,
there is no evidence from the Kommos site to
corroborate the suggestion.
43. AA’s wall blocks would probably be indistin-
guishable from among other slabs in T, since
there is insufficient evidence to show that any cut
ashlar blocks are in secondary use in the original
construction of T, for which see Chap. 1.3 and 1.5.
44. We originally set T’s construction during
early LM I, but recent study places it somewhat
earlier (J. W. Shaw 1986: 6A; J. W. Shaw and
M. C. Shaw 1993: 161; see Rutter, Chap. 3.3 here).
45. In Chap. 1 we noted a burning in the East
Wing of Building T, in Rooms 25a and b, and
surrounding area, which may be associated with
earthquake damage during late MM III–LM I
Early (see Rutter, Chap. 3.3).
46. See also Knapp and Cherry (partly after
47. Bennet has noted (1985: n. 84) that we are
unsure of the nature of the control that Knossos
may have exercised over sites it names in its ar-
chive.
48. Reused blocks were used at both sites,
however, especially at Kommos. For LM III con-
struction of quality outside the Mesara, but on
a small scale, one must consider the small Tylissos
stoa (Hayden 1981: 44; 49; 1984: 41–43) and the
Gournia House (Hawes et al. 1908: House He on
p. 23; Oelman 1912; Hayden 1984: 45).
49. This also represents a reconsideration of
some of the views expressed in J. W. Shaw
1996b: 397. Bennet (1985: 249) reflected the view
that the majority of the Knossos tablets date to
the very end of LM IIIA1 or the beginning of
LM IIIA2 but allowed the possibility that the
Knossian system might also apply to the subse-
quently period as well.