

**DEALING WITH INEQUALITY
IN EARLY BRONZE AGE CRETE**

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To the memory of Annette B. Weiner
Χρέος

και στο Απολλωνάκι

Abstract

This study seeks to shed light on problems associated with current views of social inequality as they have been applied to the Early Bronze Age in Crete. The aim is to elucidate the epistemological status of the concept of inequality in Aegean archaeological discourse and to disclose the tacit assumptions that have made problematic our dealings with the phenomenon of inequality. My critique of classic approaches to inequality stems from two facts: first, from their inclination to treat inequality as a phenomenon limited in time and space and second, from their largely untheorised treatment of the relationship between wealth and relational inequalities when it is exactly this relationship that needs to be brought into the open. Wishing to deal with critique in a constructive manner, I suggest a few ways in which one may go beyond current approaches to inequality, toward a new and more rewarding way of inquiring into the matter. This is supported with an archeological example from the Early Bronze Age cemetery at the site of Mochlos.

The central argument is that inequality is a universal social fact and that by continuing to pursue its origins we perpetuate the arbitrary and misleading ethnocentric constructions of modernity. There is no such thing as a division between egalitarian and hierarchical social formations but rather societies as *moral* communities. Being is not fixed but is recursively formed through processes of valuation always presenced within the realm of social practice and interaction. Both power and what we call 'status' are transactional affairs as well as practical accomplishments. People do not simply find themselves in relations of power; they achieve, perpetuate, reinvent or resist debts and structures of influence. The value of different resources, the efficacy of debt obligations and structures of influence are realised in *usage*. In the case of resources this is achieved in the manner of their employment, in that of debts and influence this is attained as lived commitments among agents. Drawing upon the concept of performance, I suggest that an alternative approach can enable us both to rethink inequality along more productive lines and to answer questions that previous accounts have been proved incapable of dealing with.

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Abbreviations and chronology used in the text

Abbreviations

EM, EBA:	Early Minoan, Early Bronze Age
MM, MBA:	Middle Minoan, Middle Bronze Age
LM, LBA:	Late Minoan, Late Bronze Age

Chronology

EMI:	3300-2900 BC	
EMIIA:	2900-2550 BC	
EMIIB:	2550-2300 BC	
EMIII / MMIA:	2300-1900 BC	(EMI-MMIA: Prepalatial)
MMIB / IIA-MMIIB / IIIA:	1900-1700 BC	(Protopalatial / First palace period)
MMIIB:	1700-1600 BC	
LMIA-LMIB:	1600-1450 BC	(MMIII-LMIB: Neopalatial / Second palace period)
LMII-LMIIIA / B	1450-1200 BC	
LMIIC:	1200-1150 BC	

The above tables are borrowed from Hamilakis (2002: x). All dates are approximate.

Introduction

Setting the scene: Inequality in Aegean archaeology

It was in a small corner of the European map – on the island of Crete – that the Bronze Age witnessed the original establishment of an economically ‘stratified’ society. Replete with evidence of social inequalities and rigid structures of power, the Minoan ‘civilisation’ was the *first* of a long lineage of great European civilisations. This statement constitutes one of the most common assumptions of prehistoric archaeology in Europe. But let me continue. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, the excavations of Sir Arthur Evans at Knossos brought to light a cultural landscape adorned with impressive architecture. The site appeared to document the existence of an advanced cultural development during the Bronze Age, the first that could be logically described as a ‘civilisation’. Reclaimed from the earth after centuries of being buried in darkness, Knossos however was not lost from human memory. The myths of king Minos, Theseus, Ariadne and the terrible Minotaur remained lodged in the fabric of Greek folklore. Influenced by the myth of the legendary Minotaur, Evans interpreted the complex spatial order of Knossos as the residence of the fabled king, who, according to legend, built the celebrated labyrinth to house the monster – the Minotaur. Inspired by the myth, it was Minos’s name that Evans gave to this earliest of civilisations.

It may well be true that Knossos – even before its rescue from oblivion by archaeologists – was a partial reflection of a world in which a powerful leader had left his stamp. In any event it is probably one of the rarest cases in history in which an entire past society has been so firmly associated with the character of a single ruler. Minos became the enduring symbol of the Cretan Bronze Age, a crucial period in human history which is taken to mark the emergence of a world divided into rulers and the ruled. Hierarchical society was finally personified. At the same time, Early Bronze Age non-state, non-palatial societies were viewed either as completely lacking structures of power or as evolutionary stepping-stones containing the early but steadily blossoming seeds for the social asymmetries observed during Palatial times¹.

The main argument of this thesis takes a different approach. This study seeks to demonstrate that while the issue of social inequality as a topic of pursuit has a long history in

¹ See for example, Cherry (1983, 1984); Watrous (1994); Branigan (1988); Halstead (1988); Renfrew (1972); Soles (1988).

Aegean archaeology, it is a poorly conceived and only superficially understood phenomenon. It is a common assertion that inequality is the basic ingredient of so called complex social formations. Yet the concept itself has not seen any serious theoretical investigation. I will argue that the idea of inequality is vested with a series of taken for granted and unwarranted assumptions that completely ignore the most significant issues. More precisely, I challenge the current archaeological practice of dealing with inequality that begins with questions of its historical emergence. I centre the review of this evolutionary model of inequality on the Early Bronze Age because in the accounts of the transition from Early Bronze Age to Middle Bronze Age (MMIB) one confronts in a clear way the logic and fallacies of the evolutionary agenda. Inequality, as I hope to show, is a universal social fact and the hunting down of its origins is a trivial and meaningless task – one loaded with ethnocentric mythologies that I suggest should be abolished from our research agendas. Thus instead of trying to prove the existence of paradise lost, I argue that there were never such paradises to be regained. From a political standpoint, this may seem to be an unpleasant or even conservative premise. However, to my mind, it is nothing more than an argument against the illusions and utopias of mass consumption inherited from our modern condition.

I have divided this analysis into three parts. The first part is offered as an exercise of self-awareness for Aegean scholarship. It traces the way we have come to study inequality as well as the tacit assumptions inherent within it. The most problematic one revolves around the relationship between wealth and inequalities of power. This relationship is usually taken for granted resulting in narratives that spirit away any understanding of its workings. For the most part wealth is taken to transform automatically into power, yet the meaning and the details of such transformations usually remain elusive. The second part seeks to reveal the impact of modernity in our dealing with inequality and to offer future directions for inequality's pasts in archeological research by establishing a new theoretical and methodological agenda. Central to my thesis is the abandonment of the current language of inequality. The language of inequality not only deals with asymmetries in a descriptive and static manner that cut us short of understanding their active constitution, but also perpetuates the fictitious division between single and complex societies. The concept of performance is subsequently offered as a more robust tool in dealing with inequality. The third part provides an extended case study staged in the Early Bronze Age site of Mochlos in eastern Crete. Here I show that an alternative way of dealing with inequality is applicable and more rewarding for understanding the very fine grained details of past social life.

PART I:

**AEGEAN ARCHAEOLOGY
AND THE STUDY OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES**

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Chapter 1

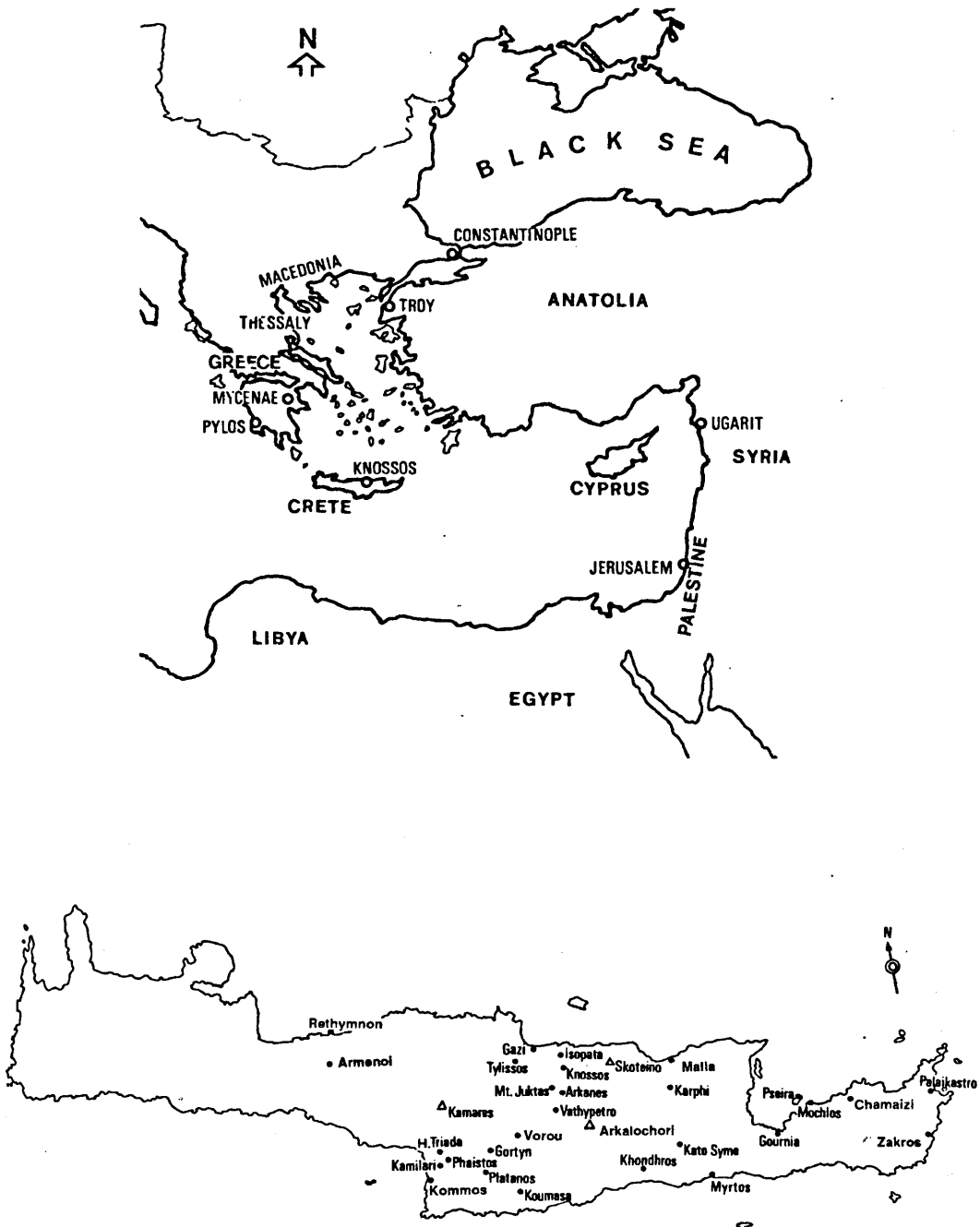
The legacy of Renfrew

Introduction

All roads in the study of Aegean prehistoric society lead to Colin Renfrew's *The Emergence of Civilisation*. This work has captured the imagination of archaeologists working on social change and the rise of social inequalities for over three decades. There are two different yet linked ways of approaching Renfrew's work on social inequalities. One of them is to look at his general theoretical and epistemological agenda inspired by the neo-evolutionary and systems paradigms of the sixties. The other one is to concentrate on the specific models he proposed under the influence of this agenda in order to explain the emergence of 'palatial' society in Bronze Age Aegean. For most of us working on the Aegean Bronze Age, Renfrew is better known for the latter rather than for the former aspect of his work. This is quite understandable since our field of enquiry is the Bronze Age societies of this particular corner of the world. On the other hand, it is this aspect of Renfrew's work that makes the geographical area of our interest, namely the Aegean archipelago, central in discussions of a wider archaeological latitude (Plate 1). For Renfrew saw society in the Aegean Bronze Age, most notably in Crete, as the first hierarchical society in Europe. In Bennet's words, the significance of Cretan Bronze Age archaeology 'lies in its status as explaining the origins of *European* civilisation' (2002: 215, emphasis in the original).

Although I am concerned mainly with Renfrew's work on the Aegean, his models have been the product of a particular theoretical background. This cannot be taken for granted in the examination of his Aegean research, for it dictated its character, conceptual foundations and logic. Renfrew's perception of social inequality is deeply rooted in evolutionary theory. Thus before presenting his models for the emergence of palatial society I will turn to the rarely explored¹ aspect of Renfrew's work, namely, the neo-evolutionist paradigm in order to reveal its intellectual underpinnings which not only gave shape to his Aegean models but also directed the research questions and priorities of a whole generation of Aegeanists. There is no doubt that Renfrew's work left us an impressive patrimony. However, the time has arrived for its heirs to assess its worth and make the best of it in the light of new intellectual approaches.

¹ But see Hamilakis (1995, 2002) for a thorough critique of Renfrew's neo-evolutionist paradigm.



Map of eastern Mediterranean showing the Aegean Archipelago and map of Crete showing major archaeological sites (source: Marinatos 1993: 3, Fig. 1, 2).

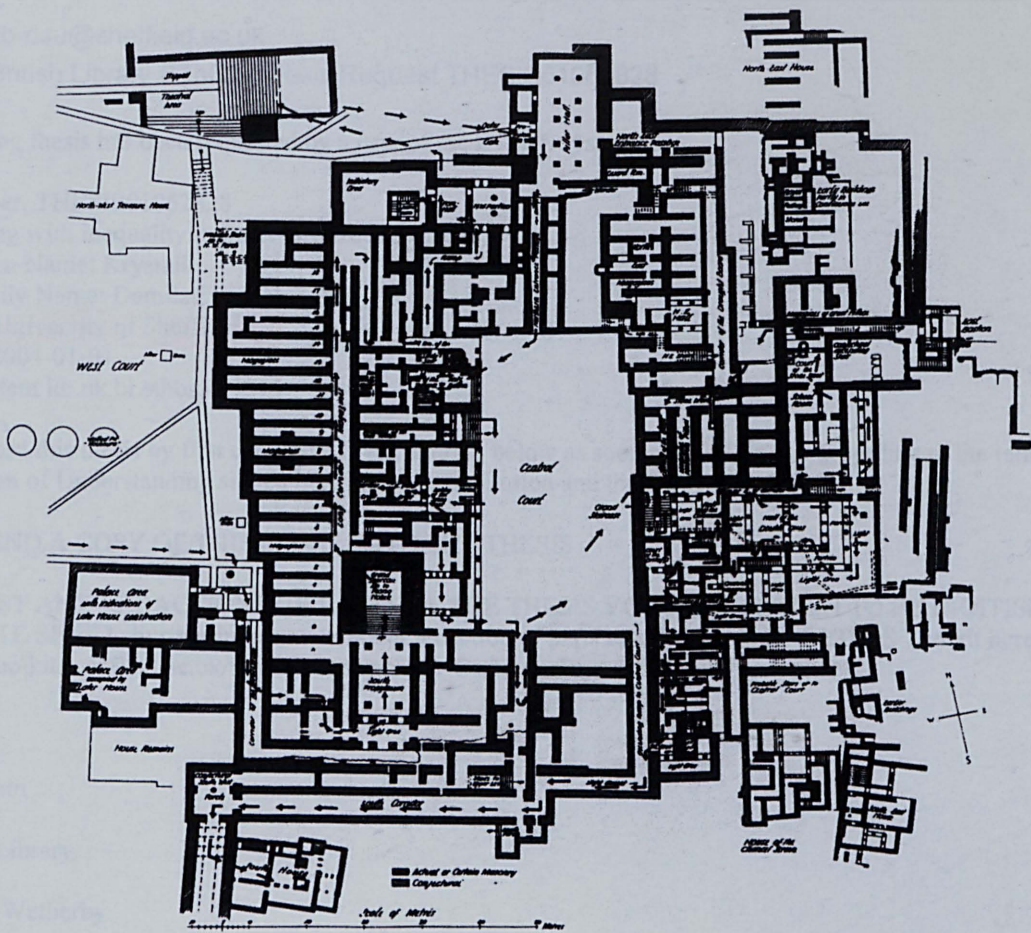
Renfrew's journey to civilisation

I have come to believe that [the] widely diffusionist view, that the Aegean civilisation was something borrowed by Europe from the orient, is inadequate ... Despite the many contacts which clearly did occur between the early Aegean and the Orient, it no longer offers a satisfactory explanation for the first emergence of civilisation in Europe (Renfrew 1972: xxv).

These were the words used by Colin Renfrew in his germinal work *The Emergence of Civilisation* to dispute the long-held conviction of an *ex oriente lux* explanation of the formation of Aegean palatial societies. According to his view, Aegean civilisation could more appropriately be seen as an indigenous development that owed little to influences from an external more complex culture in the East. But what did the emergence of civilisation consist of? For purposes of explanation it seems useful to confine Renfrew's description of the content of social change experienced in the Aegean during the second millennium BC to a small number of basic tenets, even if this entails some degree of simplification.

To begin with, Aegean prehistoric societies are seen to move from a series of absences to a series of presences both socially and technologically. Renfrew (1972) portrays both the Neolithic and dawn of the Early Bronze Age communities as small farming villages of a few families making their living by cultivating cereals and legumes. For Renfrew, these communities display no motive towards, or indeed convincing evidence of social inequalities, craft-specialisation and division of labour beyond the family unit. Each household produced enough food for their own needs with limited scope for overproduction and wealth accumulation. On the other hand, the large architectural complexes of the Middle and Late Bronze Age commonly known as palaces are taken to represent a larger social landscape with central places of political authority, a state apparatus, a highly structured economy, apparent indications of social differentiation, wealth disparities, division of labour, technological developments and craft and agricultural specialisation. Drawing on the above proposed differences, Renfrew charted prehistoric Aegean societies according to a scheme of multiple binary oppositions: simple/complex societies, barbarism/civilisation, stateless/state societies, societies characterised by mechanical solidarity/societies characterised by organic solidarity, egalitarian/hierarchical societies.

Most significantly, the Minoan *palaces*, 'the very heart of Minoan civilisation' (Renfrew 1973: 216), are seen as the material manifestation *par excellence* of relationships of inequality (Plate 2). According to Renfrew, not only do Minoan 'palaces' suggest agents of a central power but also their construction signifies the historical emergence of *marked* social inequalities. Moreover, civilisation in a generalised sense is taken to be a specific cultural stage, a particular sort of culture that has *evolved*, *developed* and *progressed*. The transition from non-state to state societies is seen as a narrative of gradual growth or 'ascending plotline'; the advanced stages of the Early Bronze Age are viewed as the evolutionary



a) Plan of the palace of Knossos (source: Marinatos 1993: 41, Fig. 34)



b) Knossos, view of the South Propylaeum (source: courtesy Efi Kartsonaki).

stepping-stones towards the supposed state social formations and inequalities of the Middle Bronze Age. Thus, between the 'simple village subsistence economy' and the 'full palace civilisation', Renfrew (1972: 52) hypothesised an intermediate stage more advanced than the former but not yet possessing the qualities of the latter. This intermediate stage, termed phase IV by Renfrew and corresponding to the Early Bronze Age, was felt to hold the key to the transformation of the simple farming communities of prehistoric Crete to full palace civilisation:

At [the] beginning [of phase IV] the Aegean was the home of rather isolated communities without the effective use of metal and without any evidence for a developed economic or social structure. It is *during phase IV* that all these features emerged, so that at its end we see the emergence of palace civilisation in Crete ... the focus of attention ... falls therefore upon this phase IV (Renfrew 1972: 52-53, emphasis added).

The underlying assumptions about the content and tempo of social change in Cretan prehistory that Renfrew first systematically outlined persist today in Aegean archaeology. Of course this smooth and upward-swinging evolutionary model of social change is common not only in Aegean archaeology (Plate 3a). It is characteristic of every archaeological theatre which deals with state societies, from Mesoamerica to Mesopotamia. As Stephen Shennan (1993) has summarised, the assumptions that ground these approaches imply a teleological view of non-state societies as containing the seeds of future states. Under such a conceptual framework, non-state societies are examined not for themselves but rather as supposed links to so called more complex social formations. Significantly, the evolutionist paradigm is founded upon several unwarranted assumptions about human history that have further implications for the study of early social formations and their structures of inequality. This is, of course, too large a topic to embark upon here in detail but some brief comments can be made.

Firstly, evolutionist narratives carry an ethnocentric understanding of different historical realities as parts of a single grand history of cumulative growth and continuous progress. This point of view sees different social contexts determined by a finite number of general historical processes (Trigger 1989) that forced them to follow a specific direction towards characteristics reflected in contemporary Western society such as increased economic advancement, social complexity and more rigid structures of power. Ironically, evolutionary models of society have failed to recognise that human history and particularly Western history is more a series of radical and unpredicted dislocations and transformations than one of continuous progress (Giddens 1984a; Barrett and Damilati 2002, forthcoming). Equally important, the belief that social change is determined by a finite number of general historical processes has given rise to models that depict social change as the outcome of cross-culturally operating stimuli or mechanisms. More specifically, when social change is seen to involve the

rise of social inequalities, there has been a common tendency in different archaeological contexts to look for an explanation in a limited array of so called prime movers, most notably those associated with surplus food production or the invention of metallurgy.

Secondly, by assuming a particular pattern of history as an inevitable and progressive journey towards more complex and advanced forms of society, evolutionary approaches try to render history predictable. But if history is the interaction of social structure and human action (Abrams 1982; Giddens 1984a) we cannot avoid asking: does the evolutionary paradigm make history comprehensible? I doubt that it does, for human actors are seen as merely living in a time-vessel that journeys towards a fated change, which follows an independent logic unto itself. Hence, time becomes identical with change and change becomes identical with cumulative progress and complexity. In Shanks and Tilley's words, the perception of time apparent in evolutionary narratives aims to lend 'justification to the idea of necessity in the historical process, that things [cannot] be otherwise, they [have] to happen this way' (1987a: 147). Approaches to history that make human agency central to the question of social processes are alien to the evolutionary paradigm. Instead, in evolutionary narratives as Abrams (1982: 6) has aptly put it, the only sensible action available to individuals is to adapt their behaviour to the laws of evolution. Consequently, neo-evolutionist models propose not only universal but also impersonal mechanisms of change where human intention and creativity play little or no role at all. We may note here that among the most oft-cited mechanisms of change that appear in neo-evolutionist accounts have been the nature of the environment or the way environment structures behaviour (cf. McGuire 1992: 179). Linear models of social change are unable to account for the internal destruction of social institutions by their subjects. Moreover, they are unable to deal with the dynamics of historically specific cases (Gailey and Patterson 1986) which elude the anticipations of the evolutionary model of change. A more detailed elaboration on the last issue will be provided later on in this study, by examining the cemetery of Mochlos, a characteristic *null case* within the Aegean archaeological context of evolutionary narratives².

Finally, in evolutionist accounts such as that of Renfrew's, we confront another intellectual fallacy, that of 'homological compression' (Giddens 1984a). This is clearly evidenced when he suggests that 'the savage hunter lives in an environment not so different in many ways from that of other animals' (1972: 11). Most evolutionists believe that there is 'a homology between the stages of social evolution and the development of human personality' (Giddens 1984a: 239; Shennan 1993). This is why, for many evolutionist scholars like Renfrew, 'the transmutation of animal man into the human being represents a movement from primitive barbarism to civilisation' (Giddens 1984a: 240). When not quite perceived as an

² See chapter nine.

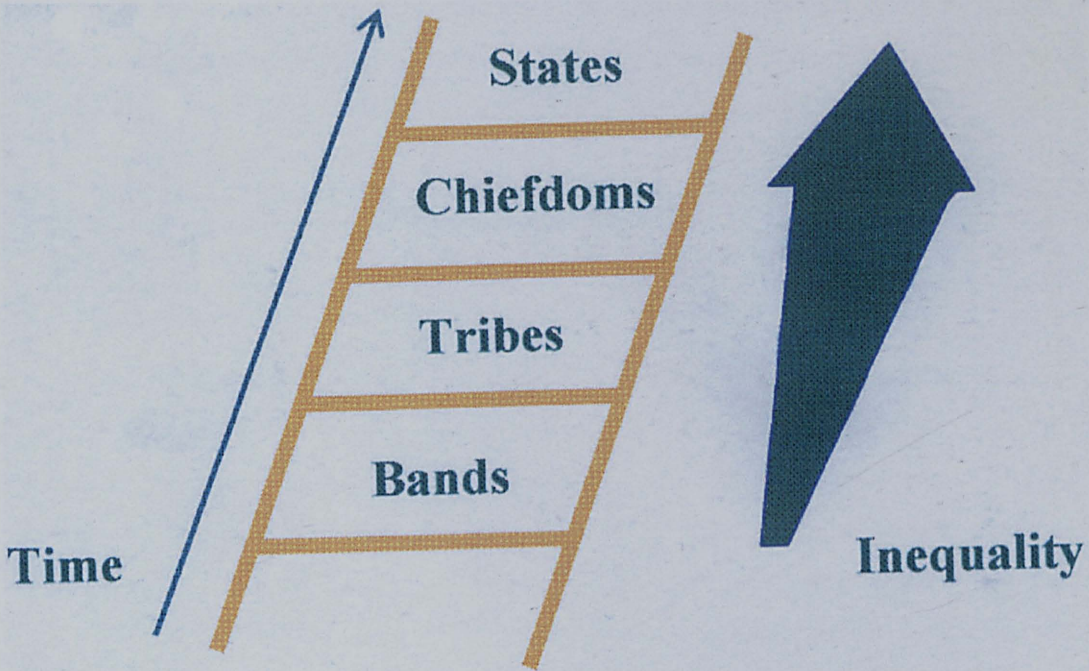
animal, the so called primitive woman or man is depicted as lacking adult intellectual maturity and displaying a type of cognition and rationality similar to that of a child (Giddens 1984a: 239-241). Most significantly, the childish idiosyncrasy attributed to so called primitives is held to permeate all aspects of their life, their social being and most commonly their economic choices. Thus, we *intellectually mature Westerners* arrive at ethnocentric evaluations of *primitive* socioeconomic institutions. Arguably however, these evaluations do not reveal (as many of us mistakenly believe) their economic irrationalities but rather stand as obstacles to our understanding of both their *otherness* and *sameness*. More specifically, ethnocentric perceptions of 'primitive' societies' economic structures constitute a serious source of misunderstanding concerning their socio-political make up, given the common assumption that the base determines the superstructure. On the other hand, when we deal with economic structures of early 'civilisations,' we tend to write what Moreland has called *histories of the Same*, namely 'primitive version[s] of our present, which teleologically evolve into it'(2000: 2). For example, Renfrew wrote the history of the Greek Neolithic and early phases of EBA as a history of the 'Other' whereas the mature phases of the EBA and the Middle and Late Bronze Age were thought to resemble the modern acquisitive societies where the saying 'the more you have, the more you want' (Renfrew 1972: 499) applies.

Renfrew on inequality

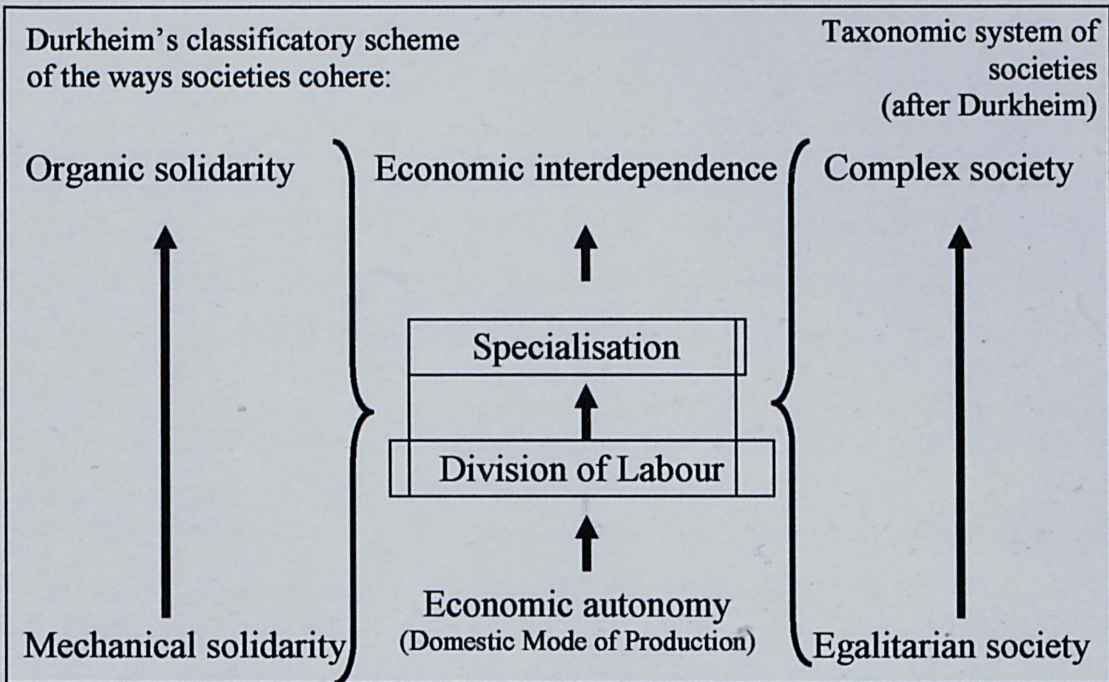
Arguably, according to Renfrew, the emergence of inequality is closely linked with the emergence of civilisation. In fact, it has been taken to epitomise the most fundamental parameter of the social change that he tried to explore in the context of Cretan prehistory. For Renfrew,

When all relationships are symmetrical we are dealing instead with an egalitarian society characterised by what Durkheim called mechanical solidarity ... the exercise of power in societies implies asymmetry, then and it is moreover, the kind of asymmetry which results from centrality (1984: 25).

The term 'simple egalitarian' society is held to refer to a society of equals in which no one outranks anyone, to a community of people where social integration in Durkheim's (1933 [1893]) view is based on a shared cosmos of rules and guidelines within which inequalities have not yet been constituted. This state of common conscience is supposed to bring society together at that 'stage'. On the other hand, 'complex societies' according to the conventional wisdom are those where, as a natural law, mechanical solidarity is replaced by organic solidarity (Plate 3b). Organic solidarity is based upon interdependence among the unique/differentiated individuals which the division of labour tends to generate by eroding the old form of integration which was based on likeness. At this point, it is useful to inquire



a) The evolutionary stepladder (adapted from Yoffee 1993: 61, Fig. 6.1).



b) Schematic representation of Durkheim's classificatory scheme of the way societies cohere.

further into the way social relationships are assumed to be performed in societies in which, according to Durkheim (and, thereby, to Renfrew), mechanical solidarity operates. In the archaeological literature, these societies are assumed to present no division of labour beyond the household unit and thus no division of labour among households. They have been thus associated with Sahlins's (1972) Domestic Mode of Production:

The domestic mode anticipates no social or material relations between households except that they are alike. It offers society only a constituted disorganisation, a mechanical solidarity set across the grain of a segmentary decomposition. The social economy is fragmented into a thousand petty existences, each organised to proceed independently of the others and each dedicated to the homebred of looking after itself (Sahlins 1972:95 cited in Renfrew 1982a: 270).

Here we can see a paradoxical way of integration; although individual households are autonomous they are alike. In Rousseau's words, '[their] needs, far from bringing [them] nearer [their] fellows, drive [them] away' (1964: 221-222 cited in Sahlins 1972: 96). Thus there is a lack of need for cooperation. At this 'stage', society coheres because of an individuality based on likeness. Individual households share similar needs but pursue them independently so there is a lack of interaction and competition which prevents the destabilisation of society. The moral/social order is sustained exactly because there is no need for cooperation since there is autarky and independence. This independence together with a lack of differentiation in fact makes society cohere through incoherence. In Herbert Spencer's (1969 [1876]) words, this kind of social integration (which in Durkheim's vocabulary is known under the term mechanical solidarity) is called incoherent homogeneity. I focus on this term because I think it is more indicative and descriptive than that suggested by Durkheim of the structure of social relations assumed for so called simple societies. On the other hand, the term coherent heterogeneity is again more indicative of the form of structure assumed for the so called complex societies. The structure at this 'stage' becomes, through the division of labour, heterogeneous, that is, differentiated:

Structural differentiation is a process in which different tasks or functions are increasingly separated out from one another and attached to specific social positions or roles (Abrams 1982: 22).

In simple words this means that people become *specialised*; the producer of pots, for example, is not also the producer of tools, the craftsman is not also a farmer, a merchant is not also a craftsman; and it might also be the case that the producer of grain is not also the producer of other kinds of food staples. In becoming more specialised, however, people become more involved with and dependent on one another. Social integration is now rooted in interdependence. Paradoxically, the individual becomes at once more individual and more solidary (Abrams 1982). In Durkheim's (1933 [1893]) view, the only common imperative for the division of labour to generate structural differentiation (and thus the replacement of

mechanical by organic solidarity) is the natural tendency of people to exist as unique personalities. This brief résumé leads to the commonplace assumption that the distinction between so called simple and complex social formations can be traced in the ways they integrate; that is in the coordination of individual action within a society. However, the historical connection between the two distinct types of society is reduced to a law of evolutionary necessity concerning human nature, namely the struggle of people to become full individuals. This general law stands as an explanation for the emergence of the division of labour – the latter is conceived as the natural outcome of the former. In Durkheim's words,

It is a historical law that mechanical solidarity which first stands alone, or nearly so, progressively loses ground, and that organic solidarity becomes, little by little preponderant (1933 [1893]).

Quite clearly, the above account speaks about a historical law, but it is profoundly unhistorical. Durkheim does not establish at all the historically specific details of the shift from the one type of society (characterised by mechanical solidarity) to another (social configurations characterised by organic solidarity). The natural tendency of people to exist as unique personalities, giving birth to the division of labour, does not explain by itself anything. Rather the division of labour seems to arise in some natural, spontaneous way. The question remains: if the struggle for existence as a true individual is a universal feature of all humankind, why does it stimulate the division of labour and the rise of a new social formation at a given time and in a given social milieu? The answer is reduced to a consideration of societies as mechanical agents or automata, willy-nilly proceeding towards a state of social being which constitutes an inevitable fate. In a nutshell, for Durkheim, the central motor towards inequality, namely the division of labour, arises as a natural law, divested of any historical value and spontaneously promoted by the desire of people to acquire a true individuality. On the other hand, following Durkheim's intellectual journey Renfrew (1972) sought to explain in a more elaborate way the emergence of inequality, complexity and centrality in the Aegean, as this seemed to culminate in the establishment of the so called 'Minoan palaces' which he thought to be the hallmarks of civilised and complex society. In trying to interpret the rise of structural differentiation in the Aegean, he pursued specific mechanisms that might have promoted specialisation necessitating interdependence. At the same time, by perceiving social change as the transition from structural homogeneity to structural differentiation, Renfrew saw structural differentiation as a temporally limited phenomenon that could be traced in some societies and not in others. Furthermore, he assumed an original state of autonomy (incoherent homogeneity) that societies have to surpass if they are to become complex. This assumption constitutes a key theme that, as we shall see below, reappears in most Aegean accounts of the 'emergence' (see for example,

Gilman 1981; Gamble 1979, 1981, 1982; Halstead and O'Shea 1982) through the fiction of the historical erosion of the self-sufficiency of the Domestic Mode of Production.

Behind the overt concern with different forms of social integration and, by extension, with a taxonomic distinction between 'simple' and 'complex' societies, the debate on inequality has a hidden theoretical agenda, always present but scarcely raised explicitly. I only mention it here in passing, and will elaborate later on its implications: inequality is held to have a spatial and temporal locus of origin. Hence, it can be present in specific spatial and temporal contexts, yet absent in others. *The Emergence of Civilisation* is remarkably indicative of the attraction of the above view since civilisation, inequality, centrality and complexity are conceptually conflated. Similarly, more recent Aegean accounts of inequality perpetuate Renfrew's assumptions by continuing to frame the issue of inequality around starting points. The logic which directs Aegeanists' enquiry into social inequality is obvious in the statement offered by Soles:

Any discussion of social ranking in Prepalatial Crete must begin by demonstrating its existence. This is necessary since it is currently being argued either that there is no evidence at all for ranking in this period or, what is very much the same thing, that whatever evidence there is appears only very late in the period, perhaps in the last 200 years before the palaces themselves appear (1988: 49).

Perhaps it would make sense to seek inspiration in Renfrew's book, and follow its plan in dealing with inequality and the issue of social integration in the Aegean Bronze Age. What was it that held that particular society together – the specific mechanism that forced interdependence and brought about inequality? As I have already pointed out, the central argument of *The Emergence* was that social change, the transition from 'simple' farming villages to 'complex' hierarchical societies must be seen as a local development. In one sense, the tendency to view change as internally generated has been strengthened by the scientific achievements prior to the publication of *The Emergence*. Radiocarbon dating in particular proved that cultures that were previously held to be younger inspirations of more complex neighbours were in fact older than them. To use Renfrew's words, 'it came as a shock to learn' that the impressive megalithic tombs of western Europe once believed to be an architectural concept borrowed from the 'more advanced Egyptian civilisation' had actually been built many centuries before the pyramids (1973:16). Similarly, the new dating showed that the Mycenaean civilisation could no longer be seen as the forerunner of the British Bronze Age. The sophisticated monumental structure of Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain for example, was unlikely to have been an inspiration of Aegean architectural prototypes since it had been already completed before Mycenaean civilisation had even begun (Renfrew 1973). Consequently, it was felt that local cultural developments should be sought through

mechanisms that were internal to native societies themselves rather than in any kind of diffusionist scenario.

At the same time, drawing on systems theory Renfrew viewed society as a system consisting of several interacting subsystems that were supposed to represent various fields of activity; the subsistence subsystem, the technological subsystem, the social subsystem, the projective or symbolic subsystem and the trade and communication subsystem. According to the point of view adopted, social change, in terms of the rise of individuality or of social inequalities, was explained by the multiplier effect in action:

... this mutual interaction in different fields of activity, this propensity of human systems that an innovation [and its adoption] in one subsystem favour innovation in another, this interdependence among subsystems which alone can sustain prolonged growth (Renfrew 1972: 488).

Renfrew did not limit himself to a theoretical description of the mechanism of change; he identified several positive couplings of the subsystems, and tried to offer a detailed account of the rise of Aegean hierarchical societies. Two models, known as *Craft Specialisation/Wealth* and *Subsistence/Redistribution*, have dominated the attention of Aegeanists. The latter in particular, had a profound impact on the construction of subsequent narratives about the rise of inequalities. This might not be a surprising finding in itself. What other subsystem could provide, as a starting point for studying interactions and mechanisms that promote interdependence, a more internal look at the workings of the system, and at the same time exemplify a more secure materiality towards the construction of objective scientific statements? Both these were the core components, the principal imperatives of the new research programme that Renfrew proposed under the influence of the 'New Archaeology'.

Furthermore, the decades after the Second World War, when the 'New Archaeology' and 'New geography' made their first steps, were an era of economic and material innovation. This betterment was conceived in economic and technological terms; man's mastering of his environment (Trigger 1989: 289; Urry 2000: 10). More significantly, by this time the USA, where 'New Archaeology' with its neo-evolutionist spirit of economic determinism first developed, had become a powerful political hegemony, entering a period of prosperity, innovation and industrial expansion. Within this intellectual environment, Renfrew saw civilisation as a stage where humans manage nature rather than being part of nature. In his words,

... whereas the savage hunter lives in an environment not so different in many ways from that of other animals ... civilised man lives in an environment very much of his own creation. Civilisation, in this sense, is the self made environment of man, which he had fashioned to insulate himself from the primeval environment of nature alone (Renfrew 1972: 11).

In view of what has been argued, it is not surprising that social domination was associated with the domination of nature (Rowlands 1989). Notions of inequality were commonly

founded on modernist perceptions of difference constructed around the dualism of woman and nature; the subordination of nature to human ends and the progressive control of the material world seemed to replicate the subordination of one person to another. As humans convert their relationship to nature from one of encompassment to one of bringing nature under their control, they become hierarchised; this process differentiates the agents themselves whose achievements may be compared (Strathern 1987: 278-285). External trade is not abandoned in the writings of Renfrew, but is treated circumspectly and never as a possible motivation towards change. In other words, perceiving culture as a bounded system leads to stressing spatial isolation at the expense of long-distance interactions and historical influences from outside.

At the same time, putting emphasis on the causal association of agriculture as a food production technique with the rise of inequalities has denied the existence of inequalities in societies like hunter-gatherers where the practice of farming does not constitute a subsistence regime (cf. Bender 1989). Farming is traditionally viewed as a precondition, a starting point, and an attribute of complexity and inequality. This has been provided under the following reasoning: farming implies sedentism and labour inputs – in the form of preliminary preparatory work – on which there are delayed returns. This in turn means that people create bonds with each other, they have to cooperate, to depend on one another during the agricultural cycle, since agriculture is a lasting activity because of its delayed production. Moreover, agriculture demands storage of the product as well as management of both the tasks and the product (Meillassoux 1972, 1978a, 1978b, 1981). Thus, agricultural production appears to present a strong case for the emergence of social inequalities since it is seen to enable economic interdependence and social integration. On this score, as Bender summarises, ‘the great epochs of human progress have been identified more or less directly with the enlargement of the sources of subsistence’(1989: 83). brought about through significant changes in the forces of production.

To summarise, so far, I have sought to disclose some of the basic neo-evolutionist assumptions inherent in Renfrew’s programme on inequality that bear significantly on our current understanding of inequalities as well as on the methodological direction Aegean scholarship has so far followed towards their exploration. This programme can be defined in three points:

- 1) Inequality is an evolutionary phenomenon associated with increased social and technological complexity. It has emerged historically as a consequence of local developments that promote social integration.
- 2) Social integration should be sought in mechanisms of economic interdependence that erode an assumed original state of domestic self-sufficiency opening the road from egalitarian to hierarchical societies.

3) The erosion of self-sufficiency is played out in the subsistence sector of society.

In the next chapter I shall present three popular narratives that have explored the issue of social inequalities in the Aegean along these lines.

Chapter 2

Three 'green' stories or the subsistence discourse

Introduction

In this chapter I present three different models that have been proposed by Aegeanists to account for the rise of inequalities in Bronze Age Crete. Their common point of reference is concern with the role of subsistence in promoting economic interdependence, and in turn transforming a supposed simple egalitarian society into a complex hierarchical one. Although there are now several models that follow a similar path in accounting for the emergence of social inequalities in the Aegean, in this chapter I choose to concentrate on the works of Renfrew (1972), Gilman (1981) and Halstead and O'Shea (1982). This is not only because the models proposed are the most representative in revealing the subsistence bias in the search for origins, but also because they are the most detailed and theoretically informed.

In Renfrew's *Subsistence/Redistribution* model the division of labour envisaged in the specialisation of agriculture eroded the domestic mode of production and brought about interdependence between individuals, making society cohere in a novel way. Subsequently Gilman as well as Halstead and O'Shea have proposed mechanisms, which they argue promoted economic interdependence in an alternative way. For Gilman (1981) it was the adoption of capital intensive techniques, such as the cultivation of tree crops resulting in changes to property relationships, which brought into being a stratified society. For the *Social Storage* model proposed by Halstead and O'Shea (1982), the decisive factor for social integration was the risky heterogeneous environment of southern Aegean. This environment demanded a specific survival strategy that promoted cooperation and interdependence between individual households.

Each model has attempted to explore the moral character of elites' power as well as the nature of the relationship between rulers and their subjects. For Renfrew, the emergence of BA leaders is linked to their role as benevolent and dedicated public servants. In other words, leadership emerges in order to serve the smooth functioning of society; it is a problem solver in the service of the common good. In contrast, Gilman sees BA leaders to have acquired their position due to their coercive and exploitative features. Gilman draws on Marxism to argue that the emergence of ruling classes can be understood without reference to collective well-being. Finally, Halstead and O'Shea, while they do not fully reject an altruistic component regarding the character of BA elites, also stress the element of exploitation as integral to the

foundation of their power. Be that as it may, the important thing to keep in mind is that the three models in question structure the study of inequality around determining its temporal origins within the BA sequence. In this scheme, Neolithic communities appear as the lost paradises of an original self-sufficient state of being. It is then held to be significant to discover how the self-sufficiency of domestic units was undermined giving rise to considerable social inequalities. However, as I will argue below, the question is a red herring. The principle of insufficiency exists at the very basis of human life and is not a matter of historical emergence (cf. Bataille 1998). My argument will be that insufficiency is inherent to the unfinished nature of human bodies.

The subsistence redistribution story

Presentation of Renfrew's model

Colin Renfrew's *Subsistence/Redistribution* (S/R) model has been perhaps the most influential explanation ever proposed for the emergence of social inequalities in Aegean prehistory. Influenced to an extent by Durkheim, Renfrew's formulation of the appearance of social asymmetries was explained as the outcome of processes, internal to the Aegean, that could have eroded the autonomy of the Domestic Mode of Production, producing interdependence and thus organic integration. To support this model of indigenous development, Renfrew introduced the idea of Mediterranean Polyculture. According to this theory, the introduction and systematic exploitation of olives and grapevines, supplementing the cereal dominated agriculture of the Neolithic, was *fait accompli* as early as the beginning of the Bronze Age (third millennium BC).

To support his premise, Renfrew pointed to archaeological evidence from the Aegean archipelago. Specifically, evidence that suggested the domestication of olives included two vessels he interpreted as oil lamps and a small jug which contained trace amounts of oil all found in a Naxian grave of the Keros-Syros culture (EBII). To this he added two olive stones recovered from EMI/EMII deposits at the Royal Road in Knossos and Myrtos respectively (Renfrew 1972: 285). The early domestication of vines in southern Aegean was inferred mainly from samples of grape pips found in EHII Lerna, EMII Myrtos, and EBII (Korakou culture) Aghios Kosmas. An additional source of evidence consisted of a couple of vessels assumed to be either wine containers (a pithos from Aghios Kosmas) or equipment for wine manufacture (a vat from Myrtos). At the same time, the proliferation of drinking vessels during the Early Bronze Age was seen as a further indication of wine consumption and thus vine domestication (Renfrew 1972: 281-284).

Building on this evidence, Renfrew maintained that the rise of the palatial institutions was the result of diversification and the intensification of crops, particularly the extensive cultivation of olives and vines. Additionally, he emphasised the prominence of an olive, vine and cereal based diet in most of the southern part of the country today. He then suggested that modern figures for diet in Greece seemed to indicate a 'subsistence pattern [that] corresponds precisely to the extent of the Minoan-Mycenaean civilisation' (Renfrew 1972: 302). Most significantly, it was asserted that the soil and climatic conditions of southern Greece, being particularly suited for the cultivation of olives and vines could have enabled their early domestication. This idea had important implications for how Renfrew chose to explain the cultural diversification between the south and the north 'observed' during the third millennium BC. According to current consensus, the northern regions did not follow the cultural and economic headway of the south (see Halstead 1994; Renfrew 1972; Van Andel and Runnels 1988; Webster 1990). Instead, they entered a period of cultural decline. Remarkably, these northern regions (Macedonia and Thessaly) have been viewed as focal points for economic advancement during the latter stages of the Neolithic (see Halstead 1994; Van Andel and Runnels 1988). Renfrew attempted to highlight the reasons behind the different historical trajectories between the north and south. He assumed a causal link between the suitability of the south with its Mediterranean climate, which was beneficial for the adoption of new plant species, and the region's cultural and economic advances:

The terrain in south Greece is such that a single village can be within reach of both arable land and of hill slopes suitable for olive cultivation and viticulture. The suggested consequence is that a redistributive system emerged *within* the village, favouring the emergence of local chieftains (Renfrew 1972: 481-482).

Let us now take a closer look at the line of reasoning that prompted Renfrew to suggest a causal link between the adoption of Mediterranean Polyculture and the emergence of social inequities in southern Greece. The Mediterranean Polyculture permitted a new flexibility in subsistence strategies and brought with it a rapid population growth. More precisely, the new species encouraged the exploitation of ecologically diverse areas, as well as an intensification and an increase of production. Olives and vines can be cultivated in more marginal environments such as hill slopes and therefore they do not compete with pulses and cereals for land and human labour. Hence, previously marginal land was now brought under exploitation. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the introduction of olives and vines was the diversity they brought to the subsistence system by increasing the range of crops produced. The diversity in the subsistence system promoted specialisation of single commodities in local contexts which was then followed by regional specialisation since some crops were better suited in some areas than in others. In simple words, the producer of olives was not the producer of grapes or the producer of grain. This radical transformation of the

homogeneous Neolithic farmscape subsequently produced *economic inter-dependence* where producers of specialised commodities were forced to enter in exchanges to maintain a balanced consumption of goods. In turn, this situation stimulated the need for a central organisation to reallocate agricultural products among locally specialised individual units of production. Elites therefore emerged in order to carry out the function of the regulation of exchange and redistribution that became necessary due to the economic interdependence brought about by agricultural specialisation (Renfrew 1972: 304-307).

The morality of social integration and inequality: The altruistic leader

The S/R model led to a predominantly managerial definition of the so called palaces and their residents. To Renfrew, evidence of a system of documentation and accounting consisting of seals, sealings and tablets, reflected empirically both the organisational requirements of a redistributive system and a prehistoric lifestyle of managers and public servants. Similarly, the storage facilities of the 'palatial' complexes strongly reinforced their interpretation as economic institutions whose primary role was the performance of the central administrative function of redistribution. Thus, the need for redistribution was considered as a causal factor in the evolution of social inequalities. In Renfrew's words,

The real significance for the Aegean prehistory of the 3rd millennium redistributive system is that it clearly enhanced the status of the elite, the leaders, with consequences at least as important socially as they were economically (1972:464).

Under this notion, BA elites were seen to be responsible for the collective well-being of their subjects. The basis of their power was their managerial skills in terms of the economic control of the redistribution (Renfrew 1973: 231). It should be noted that the link between increased productivity, ecologically determined agricultural specialisation, redistribution and the emergence of a benevolent central authority was not a novel idea in modern research. Renfrew drew on Elman Service's (1962) original thesis for Hawaii according to which certain productive technologies operating in ecologically heterogeneous environments result in specialisation and redistribution.

We may now examine how Renfrew's model is related to Emile Durkheim's theory of social integration. First and most obviously, Renfrew is at one with Durkheim in seeing the division of labour as the source of social inequalities as well as the motor towards the transformation of 'simple' to 'complex' societies. Where Renfrew and Durkheim part company most decisively however, is in their view of the historical connection between 'simple' and 'complex' societies. A few pages back I argued that for Durkheim, the emergence of the division of labour and the transition from 'simple' to 'complex' society were matters of a law of evolutionary necessity regarding human nature. Durkheim felt that

chronologically or historically this transition was a matter of anticipation; societies sooner or later move from simple to complex because the division of labour will develop as a self-activating response to the natural tendency of people to become full individuals. In this respect however, Durkheim's account seems to be a transhistorical generalisation and therefore unhistorical, for if the battle for individuality is a universal human trait one might ask why it stimulates the division of labour in some societies earlier than in others. Taking his cue from Durkheim, Renfrew attempted to trace the historically specific details of the emergence of the division of labour and the shift from one type of social formations to the next. Hence, in the Aegean version of Durkheim's paradigm of social change, structural differentiation in southern Greece is held to be the outcome of the division of labour reflected in agricultural specialisation. Most significantly, as we have already noted, Renfrew suggests that the division of labour was facilitated because of specific ecological conditions operating during the Early Bronze Age *only* in south Greece. On the other hand, it was felt that the societies of northern Greece, lacking the suitable climate for the domestication of olives and vines, stagnated rather than developed. The cooler environment of the north worked as a brake on agricultural specialisation and its concomitant division of labour, and so northern Greece failed to see the emergence of 'palatial' elites that was symptomatic of complex cultures.

Nonetheless, Renfrew's driving force of the Aegean Bronze Age history, namely the stimulus towards the division of labour, is reduced to a combination of new agricultural practices and ecological conditions – the introduction of new crops and the favourable environmental diversity of south Greece. In this sense, he represents a continuation of the Durkheimian tradition in that he constructed a mechanistic scheme where human agency is dropped from view. It is useful to stress here that although Durkheim attributed individuality to peoples of 'complex' societies he did not however offer them the status of active authors in the creation of their history. His view of history and social change was rather naturalistic. For Durkheim appeared to assume that the only contribution of human actors to the making of history, actually the only action available to them, was to follow gradually their psychological motive of attaining a unique personality. Consequently, history was portrayed as a self-ruling subjectless process.

Returning to Renfrew's account of the emergence of the division of labour in the Aegean, both its emphasis on environmental stimuli and its focus on a taken for granted human response to these stimuli manage to perpetuate the shortcoming of the Durkheimian legacy of a passive portrayal of human agency. Thus, Renfrew advances a reductionist materialist type of argument where social change is seen as the mere outcome of environmental drives and people's adaptation to them. Apparently, in the absence of environmental drives BA social actors would have remained self-sufficient and autonomous following the destiny of their

Neolithic predecessors. Stated simply, humankind's striving for individuality remains latent until external factors crop up and create problems in the maintenance of self-sufficiency. Notably, it is only in this way that Renfrew can substantiate his argument for the *historical* emergence of inequalities. More particularly, inequalities and leadership are depicted as functional necessities since they are seen to emerge in order to solve a critical-resource allocation problem¹. Yet, as Godelier has aptly remarked, 'as soon as a society exists, it functions, and it is tautological to say that a variable is adaptive because it fulfils a necessary function in the total system' (1972: xxxiv).

One cannot avoid the impression that Renfrew's argument appears to rationalise or sanctify the existence of dominant classes. This functional perception of hierarchical order – that has been strongly criticised by Marxist theory of social change – betrays another common stance between Renfrew and Durkheim. For the French sociologist, social integration was perceived as a matter of morality – 'of the coordination of individual activity within a social system on the basis of personal commitment to collective standards and rules' (Abrams 1982: 23). And although he believed that so called simple societies were a morally cohesive world whereas the complex society and by analogy the civilised world is a world of moral anomy and antagonistic instincts he was reluctant to accept that social integration and coherence evaporate in the competitive and egotistic industrial world. His main concern was the pursuit of coherence because he believed that society exists only through coherence. In his view, although the division of labour undermined the old type of social solidarity, it would eventually bring a new type of solidarity based on interdependence between individuals with distinct roles. The stress on a well-integrated society continues in the work of Renfrew. By now it should be clear that Renfrew saw the emergence of hierarchical societies as the outcome of an invariable common response of people to their environment – one which was thought to serve the collective good. Yet, this is a 'postdiction' characteristic of functionalist models where explanation is given by reference to ends that determine the course of a phenomenon and not by references to causes which bring about the phenomenon in question (Hempel 1959).

Arguably however, if there is no justification in social theory for the *emergence* of inequalities, as I shall try to show later on in this study, there is even less in arguments that hold that inequalities exist in order to serve the common good or that rulers are benign parental figures². Significantly, Earle's (1977, 1987a, 1987b) re-examination of Service's

¹ However, it is not clear why a system already in equilibrium should itself move towards a 'more equilibrated one' (Lemonnier 1992: 10).

² As Paynter (1989: 374-375) remarks, palaeopathological studies reveal that participation in large political units had usually a negative effect on the health of commoners. Moreover, there are well-known cases where elites arranged settlement patterns to serve their interests, thereby creating significant transportation burdens on their subjects.

theoretical assumption and the ethnographic evidence that seemed to validate it has refuted the idea that leadership is a problem solver in the service of collective well-being. It is worth mentioning that redistribution may cover several institutional forms, among them mobilisation which involves the concentration of services and goods for the benefit of a group not conterminous with the contributing members (Earle 1977). To return to the Aegean BA, Cherry (1978), Halstead (1988, 1992a, 1992b) and Killen (1994: 67) have convincingly made the point that the Linear B texts appear to suggest upward mobilisation – which involves the gathering of services and goods for the benefit of rulers – rejecting the altruistic profile of the ruling elites proposed by Renfrew.

Agricultural specialisation and the erosion of self-sufficiency: Critical comments

As we saw, for Renfrew, the introduction of Mediterranean Polyculture was thought to bring changes that undermined the self-sufficiency of prehistoric households and compelled them to enter into exchange relations. However, his idea that local specialisation is the logical outcome of subsistence diversification can be seriously disputed. Notably, it comes in direct contradiction to his own argument that diversification stimulates subsistence security and so is likely to have been a goal for most farmers. On this score, subsistence diversification should have promoted economic autonomy rather than economic interdependence (Halstead 1988: 522). Renfrew's assumption that farmers will have preferred to specialise in single commodities rather than pursuing subsistence security gained from the cultivation of many different species seems questionable. Agricultural specialisation is a risky practice since it increases immediate output at the expense of long-term security. This is more so in vulnerable environments (Colson 1979). Equally significant, Renfrew failed to recognise that local specialisation cannot be adequately performed without the benefit of a market economy which guarantees security in consumption to specialist producers since other crops can be bought in the market place (Halstead 1988: 522; Hamilakis 1999: 43, 2000).

In fact, agricultural diversification rather than specialisation has been documented throughout contemporary rural communities, in Greek Neolithic (Cherry 1984; Hansen 1988) and classical antiquity (Osborne 1987). It is worth considering for a moment the historical evidence from the cities of ancient Greece. Osborne's detailed research has shown that ancient farmers aimed at subsistence self-sufficiency by cultivating a variety of crops. The same strategy was also utilised by cities. By diversifying their subsistence resources, farmers

can have a little of everything and this promotes autonomy rather than interdependence³. Besides, as Halstead's ethnographic testimony makes clear,

... if one talks to rural Greeks today about how they operate their broad-based economy, most of the villages tend to have territories exploiting a wide range of the environment, and in that situation the broader the base – one could argue – the more cushioned they are against the sort of situations demanding greater social organisation. This would be the opposite of [Renfrew's] viewpoint – only in situations where you get villages exclusively on monocrop land might one expect a forced exchange of products between communities, ultimately encouraging more complex social organisation (1977: 63).

Equally important, Earle (1977, 1987a, 1987b) showed that there is no direct link between ecological heterogeneity and agricultural specialisation. Thus, despite the ecological heterogeneity of Hawaii, different villages were not in fact specialising in particular commodities. Accordingly, Renfrew's argument that subsistence specialisation was the natural outcome of the introduction of olives and vines because individual households would have selected whichever crop was best suited to their own land, seems empirically unfounded. We may also point out that Renfrew's premise for local specialisation ignores the edaphic and climatic tolerances of most Mediterranean crops (Halstead 1994: 210). Stated simply, although we can trace throughout Crete or the Mediterranean as a whole several distinct microenvironments, each best suited to specific species, this fact does not inevitably lead towards monocrop agriculture since other crops can be also grown alongside those for which the particular microenvironment is best suitable⁴. If this is so, it seems more realistic to assume the existence of communities which produced lesser or greater quantities of the same subsistence goods. Finally and perhaps more importantly, the textual evidence from the Aegean palatial centres does not document local subsistence specialisation. Halstead (1992a) has plausibly shown that the selective concern of the archives with wool, olive oil and cereals implies specialisation but only on the part of the palaces.

³ One may note here, Golson's (1982) ethnographic research which has shown that the introduction of new species advocates a democratisation and not a tendency towards wealth inequalities in subsistence. Golson made a further interesting point. Unlike Renfrew who did not explain why Aegean farmers adopted the vine and olive, Golson traced the reasons behind the introduction of sweet potato in New Guinea. He found that the new species was introduced in order to feed pigs. This was a social demand due to the prominent place of pigs as valuables in ceremonial exchanges.

⁴ For example, cereals can be grown on a wide range of soils. Additionally, as Halstead (1988) remarks, there is little, if any cultivable land in Greece which is suited exclusively to vines, or olives or cereals. For a detailed account of various examples of inter-cropping see Hamilakis (1995).

A Machiavellian device

Presentation of Gilman's model

Nearly ten years after the publication of *The Emergence*, Renfrew's emphasis on the beneficial integrative role of elites came into question. Several archaeologists, such as Gilman (1981, 1991), Gamble (1979, 1982) and even Renfrew (1982a) himself suggested that the emergence of central authority in Europe could be understood without reference to a common good. Gilman, in particular, sought to evaluate the reality of the functionalist view where ruling elites come to aid societies in the management and supervision of irrigation systems, warfare and redistribution of subsistence goods. His research demonstrated that activities that might offer benefits to the mass of the population do not necessarily demand a central authority for their organisation and supervision. For instance, ethnographic parallels suggest that irrigation systems – an asset which increases material security – can be built and operated by farmers themselves. Most significantly, according to Gilman, when a central authority appears to be involved in the organisation of irrigation, redistribution, and/or warfare, it is actually to the authorities' own advantage and does not benefit the majority of the population. For Gilman, this is clearly indicated in the European archaeological record itself. In his words,

In the cases for which [managerial] theories developed, managerial functions are at least plausible: these are cities, large public works, etc. In later prehistoric Europe, virtually the only evidence for social complexity is the wealth of the elites themselves (Gilman 1981: 3).

All of this led Gilman to question functionalist interpretations of the origin of social inequalities in the European Bronze Age. Drawing from ethnographic analogies, he offered his own theory on the evolution of social inequalities. He began with the premise that individuals in non-stratified societies could aspire to high status and positions of authority. These societies, according to Gilman, did not lack leaders but lacked a permanent ruling class and as a consequence leadership was fragile with the social order remaining broadly egalitarian. Gilman suggested that the maintenance of an egalitarian social order was attained by the facility with which an undesirable leader can be abandoned by his followers. His thinking is aptly described by Mann:

Egalitarian peoples can increase intensity of interaction and population density to form large villages with centralised, permanent authority. But they stay broadly 'democratic'. If the authority figures become overmighty, they are deposed. If they have acquired resources such that they cannot be deposed, the people turn their backs on them, find other authorities or decentralise into smaller settlements. Later, centralisation may begin again with the same outcomes (1986: 68).

In this sense, lineage segmentation and village fission seem to operate as 'safety valve' by which the self-aggrandisement of 'big-men' is checked. Gilman thus suggested that in order

to understand the rise of Bronze Age hereditary leadership we need to explore the mechanisms which impeded the social fission characteristic of tribal societies. Moreover, he stressed that the non-functionalist variables of the argument on the significance of exchange in the origins of social stratification proposed by Engels and later taken up by Childe, suffered from empirical difficulties at least in the context of prehistoric Europe. More precisely, according to these accounts, elites were seen to act in their own interest rather than as public servants. Yet it was also held that their positions of power and wealth were based on the control of networks of exchange (mainly in metals or foodstuffs) in which they participated as middlemen. Gilman thought that for exchange or trade to underpin the rise of social stratification, it had to involve essential goods. In his words, 'goods which the middleman can deny the household ... must be required for the household's livelihood' (Gilman 1981: 4). He then went on to propose that essential goods could be metal tools necessary for agricultural production or subsistence goods. However, since the majority of metal objects uncovered seem to have been luxuries having little if any utilitarian value, their nature as essential commodities was ruled out. Metal, Gilman asserts, should rather be seen as an index of inequalities in Bronze Age Europe and not as their stimulus. We are thus left with only subsistence goods. However, according to his thesis, the probability of foodstuff trade seemed slight since communities were apparently self-sufficient and the material record advocated that trade was mainly restricted to luxuries. Additionally, the very fact that subsistence goods are bulky creates a considerable obstacle given the primitive transport technologies of Bronze Age communities (Gilman 1981: 5).

Building on this reasoning, Gilman regarded the processes of subsistence production rather than the exchange of goods as the key to understanding the emergence of social stratification. 'Capital-intensive subsistence techniques' such as plough agriculture, irrigation, offshore fishing, and Mediterranean Polyculture were then proposed as mechanisms that prevented village segmentation by tying people to the soil. Subsequently, the adoption of such techniques which entailed a great investment of labour and delayed returns implied that the ambitions of aspirants to high status would be harder to check:

The investments of labour to insure future production would have to be defended. But the value of these same assets would dampen the potential for social fiction, so that it would be difficult to check the aspirations of those to whom the defence had been entrusted. In the face of a protector whose exactions seem excessive, the household's choices are limited ... and over the long term consistently favour the protectors. In the end there would have arisen a permanent ruling class (Gilman 1981: 7).

Among the capital intensive techniques suggested by Gilman, the one which was taken to be of key significance for the development of social stratification in the Aegean, was the adoption of Mediterranean Polyculture first addressed by Renfrew. Gilman did not oppose the significant role of Mediterranean Polyculture in the Aegean development of social

stratification. Instead, he shifted its emphasis. In the first place, Gilman argued, the adoption of Mediterranean Polyculture increased the material security of producers.

However, for him, the most prominent feature of Mediterranean Polyculture was the transformation of property relations. In contrast to Renfrew, Gilman suggested that the basis of elite power was not invoked through its involvement with managerial transactions concerning the regulation of exchange, since foodstuffs are bulky and consequently their movement would not have been substantial given the primitive Bronze Age transport technologies. He believed that Mediterranean Polyculture constituted a 'capital-intensification of subsistence' since tree crops required an input of preparatory work for several years before reaching maturity and yielding fruits. Accordingly, the investment of work into assets only realised over the long-term, which could not easily be relinquished, tied Early Bronze Age farmers to the land, cutting off their means of ignoring aspirant rulers. The implications of this perspective have direct relevance on Gilman's rejection of the functionalist view of ruling groups as public servants. Now elites were seen to emerge as more productive agricultural techniques developed without the elites' being required to set up and manage the productive improvements.

The morality of social integration and inequality: The coercive protector

The puzzling question of how social coherence came about continued in Gilman's work. Yet, the rosy image of an integrated society based on a consensus of interests like the one Durkheim dreamed of, and Renfrew so vividly depicted for Aegean prehistory, is far from that viewed by Gilman. According to him (Gilman 1984), Durkheim and his successors' views of society are problematical since they overlook the divisions and strains underlying social solidarity. With Gilman, Aegean archaeology embraces a Marxist view of social integration.

Unlike functionalists who believed that social institutions appear in order to contribute to the proper functioning of society, Marx perceived society to cohere through coercion. In Marxist theory the division of labour occupies a central position. However, its most salient feature is taken to be, not the production of functional interdependence linking people in a well-ordered family, as in the Durkheimian paradigm, but its association with profound social inequalities. For Marx, the division of labour was essentially seen as tantamount to the division of men and society (Abrams 1982: 36). More important still, in opposition to functionalists who believed that stability and equilibrium constituted natural tendencies of social formations, Marx emphasised that societies are constantly subject to change. To him social change was the outcome of contradictions and conflicting interests and not of a general consensus, working as functionalists championed, to correct likely abnormal deviations from the assumed norm of homeostatic stability. By refusing to see social stratification, and by

extension leadership, as a functional need of the social system and by stressing change and conflict, rather than stability and consensus, Marx put forward not just an intellectual position but also a political one. The fate of all rulers is challenged given the fact that change or 'social anarchy' (the product of dissension) is not in the interests of the ruling classes (cf. Shanks and Tilley 1987b: 53). Moreover, the mere presence of institutions that have appeared throughout history could not anymore be considered legitimate or justified as necessary by assuming their phantasmatic contribution to the smooth functioning of society. This comes in direct opposition to the functionalist view of social institutions whose theoretical standpoint may legitimise even dictatorial authorities by assuming that since they existed, they existed to serve the functioning of the system.

In Marxist theory, therefore, the emergence of social institutions like leadership *cannot* be explained as a benevolent contribution to the needs or stability of social systems since societies are not and cannot be stable and persistent structures. Simply put, *there is no need for stability because societies do not function in this way* as they are inherently unstable. It is the *dialectic* between contradictory interests and continual conflicts among social actors or the unity of the opposites, that brings change in the form of new institutions, such as leadership or the state (Hodder 1986: 57). As Bloch writes,

... dialectic means that the process of movement which characterises human history is not a smooth development but *a development caused by conflicts and contradictions* which lead to temporary resolutions, *like two people arguing with each other* (1983: 29, emphasis added).

From this point of view, society is seen as a battlefield of dissensus, which hinges on force exercised by some of its members over others. It is not viewed as a 'voluntary association of people who share certain values and set up institutions in order to ensure the smooth functioning of cooperation' (Dahrendorf 1969a: 488). By running the risk of oversimplification I may schematically summarise, drawing on Dahrendorf (1969a), the differences between the Marxist and functionalist views of society as in the table below:

Durkheim and Renfrew Consensus theory of society Functionalist approach	Marx and Gilman Conflict theory of society Non-Functionalist/Marxist approach
1.Society is a stable structure of elements.	1.Society is constantly subject to change.
2.Society is a well-integrated system.	2.Society is characterised by dissensus.
3.Every element in a society has a function, i.e., renders a contribution to its stability.	3.Every element in a society contributes to its disintegration and change.
4.Every functioning social system is based on a consensus of values among its members.	4.Every society is based on the coercion of some of its members by others.

At this juncture, it seems useful to take a closer look at Marx's view of the dialectic between oppositions as the source of social change. What kind of contradictions, in a dialectical intercourse, brings about change? The above discussion has probably led us to suspect a particular type of contradiction, namely that between the interests of different groups of social actors. As Hodder (1986) notes, this type of contradiction refers to class divisions in which a dominant group of people controls the means of production and appropriates the product of other people's labour to their own advantage. Here 'the interests of the two classes are contradictory since the expansion of the one class is at the expense of the other' (Hodder 1986: 580). Moreover, in Marx's theory, while in capitalist societies the extortion of surplus by the dominant group is taken to be achieved through control of the means of production, in precapitalist societies (where producers are usually found in possession of their own means of production) surplus is seen to be extracted through the exercise of power which may take the form of force (Wolf 1981; Gilman 1991).

As well as the first type of contradictions (incompatibility of interests), Marx suggested a second one that is held to underlie and be linked to the former. This type involves the contradictions between the forces and relations of production. The forces of production consist of the means of production (environment, technologies) and the organisation of the labour force participating in production. The social relations of production are those which determine the division of labour (who works and who does not), the use of the environment according to the technology available, and the forms of the product's appropriation and allocation (Friedman 1974: 446; Hodder 1986).

Drawing on Marxism, Gilman criticised Renfrew's functionalist account of the emergence of prehistoric chieftainships. Consistent with his Marxist standpoint, Gilman tried to trace the dialectic of contradictions between the forces and relations of production that brought about social stratification and permanently established ruling classes. Looking closely at the model we see that it represents an archaeological application of Marx's dialectic between the contradictions of the means and relations of production as the source of social change.

Prehistoric farmers are seen to adopt Mediterranean Polyculture in order to maintain or increase their material security and thus be self-sufficient. This obviously promotes further the maintenance of the egalitarian order for its goal is an ideal Domestic Mode of Production and consumption, which does not require exchanges that can create obligations and debts among households. In this sense, producers can remain independent. However, the new agricultural technology adopted, while on the one hand can be seen as a 'remedy' for the strengthening of the self-sufficiency of the Domestic Mode of Production and by extension for the negation of inequalities, bears a series of changes in relations of production. Mediterranean Polyculture was risky because it invited land disputes and raiding. In order to ensure the success of the new technology and the rewards of security and independence that it

facilitated, land had now to be guarded and required protectors. This led to internal contradictions between the means and relations of production within the system which resulted in social change; the new technology which aimed to promote the security of individuals (and by extension, the maintenance of an autonomous way of living) left farmers unprotected to relations of subjugation. Most significantly, to Gilman, the rise of leadership and social inequalities is a problem creator rather than a problem solver.

Be that as it may, Gilman's argument is as one-sided as that of Renfrew. The architecture of coercion is usually fragile and short-lived. In other words, although we should not naively see ruling elites as nurturant and altruistic figures, equally we should not lose sight of the fact that it is difficult to employ naked force to ensure the submission of subjects to dominant groups over the long term (cf. Kus 1982). The ideal for most societies, as Wiessner (1996: 7) points out, is the protective and generous leader, not the bully or the despot. Yet, protection and generosity alike can be used as subtle strategies to exert influence rather than expressions of disinterested affection.

Mediterranean Polyculture as capital intensive technique and self-sufficiency: Critical comments

According to Gilman, ruling elites did not emerge due to the erosion of Neolithic self-sufficiency. Yet, it was the striving of prehistoric farmers to maintain self-sufficiency that apparently, made them adopt the labour intensive technique of Mediterranean Polyculture. In his view, the high productivity potential of olives and vines would have been highly attractive to BA farmers seeking subsistence security and political autonomy. Nevertheless, the new technology brought about the unpleasant effect of tying people to their land cutting off their means of escaping aspirant leaders who sold protection. However, one may wonder as Hicks (1981: 12) remarks, from whom did the farmers seek to be protected. Gilman has not clarified this question in any detail. On the other hand, although he thought Mediterranean Polyculture would increase material security, it seems to be a risky choice for farmers. Olives do not yield fruits for ten to fifteen years and vines for three years after planting. On this score, we may ask why farmers would adopt such a practice. The profits of this form of agriculture, which are so temporally distant and force people to remain on the land, exposed them to predation by others. One may wonder why farmers would adopt Mediterranean Polyculture rather than moving on to other places. On balance, is the choice to move on to new land really a substantial risk?

Furthermore, it is not clear why Gilman connects the emergence of chieftainship particularly to the adoption of capital intensive techniques, such as Mediterranean Polyculture, since every form of agriculture entails investment, delayed returns and lasting bonds between cooperative units that impede social segmentation (see Meillasoux 1972;

1981). Bietti Sestieri (1981: 9) has made a similar point. Contrary to Gilman, she stresses that even slash-and-burn agriculture demands investment and thus can prevent social segmentation. More specifically, slash-and-burn agriculture promotes territorial fixity for several years, if farmers are to fertilise the soil by burning tree stumps at fixed intervals (Mann 1986: 45).

Finally, Runnels and Hansen's research has marked a turning point in our perceptions concerning the traditional causal link between the domestication of olives and the rise of ruling elites. As it was proposed, the pollen evidence indicates that for most areas of Greece, olive cultivation did not constitute an intensive agricultural technique until the end of the BA. Thus, as for the Early and Middle Bronze Age, Runnels and Hansen (1986) argued that the scarcity of ecofacts implies an opportunistic use of olives and does not confirm its rise to economic prominence. This notion is also reinforced by the absence of durable tools for processing olives for olive oil. Undoubtedly, the above realisation seems to shake the foundations of both the S/R model as well as Gilman's Marxist take.

Social Storage

Presentation of Halstead and O'Shea's model

A more recent economic consideration concerning the emergence of social inequalities and the development of central authority in the Aegean Bronze Age world has been established through the concept of *Social Storage* (O'Shea 1981, Halstead and O'Shea 1982, Halstead 1981a, 1988, 1989). According to this model which was developed through a reworking of the notion of redistribution and the Childean idea of surplus, the emergence of social disparities on Crete is held to be based upon reciprocal relations of provision and repayment of subsistence relief amongst prehistoric farmers. The bare outlines of the social storage model can be summarised as follows:

Parting company from the rosy images of primitive societies (such as hunter-gatherers) as the 'original affluent society' where everyone can find an abundance of food (Sahlins 1972), the *Social Storage* model emphasises recurrent shortages in food resources as a universal fact of life with which people have to cope if they are to survive. To minimize the risk of famine, if agricultural yields were insufficient because of periodic climatic variations, Bronze Age farmers could have stored the surplus from good years. However, the primitive storage technologies at this time made the asset of direct storage – especially in the case of a run of bad years – impractical. A second safeguard against periodic scarcity is by using some surplus grain to feed livestock. By this form of indirect storage, normal surplus from a good year can

be converted to animal food for subsistence in the event of a future harvest failure. An alternative solution is provided by the practice of 'social storage', under which 'surplus grain can be given to needy neighbours in the expectation that help will be reciprocated when circumstances are reversed' (Halstead 1988: 524). Hence, under the imperative of assuring survival, people can be locked in a situation of interdependence which in turn provides the germ of social differentiation.

More than this, the system of social storage, which is taken to be stimulated mainly by the heterogeneous environment of South Greece, involves transactions whereby foodstuffs may be exchanged for more valuable tokens (craftgoods) and/or labour that can later be re-exchanged for food in times of need. In the long-run, however, as it was suggested, social storage could have promoted further the growth of successful farmers' fortunes at the expense of the rest, as these amassed promises of repayment for subsistence relief which would have to be made in the form of craft valuables and/or labour. These unbalanced transactions amongst households seemed therefore to have set the scene for the rise of social inequalities since 'some social groups will have been net lenders and others net borrowers' (Halstead 1988: 525). In addition, the status of successful farmers could be further reinforced by the power of persuasion – through their ostensible capacity to mediate with supernatural forces in order to stop crop failure. In such ways, then, an elite could have developed, which increasingly expanded its power within society.

The morality of social integration and inequality: The successful farmer

Social Storage continues the tradition of previous models in that it brings to the fore the question of why Aegean prehistoric people gave up independent living in egalitarian communities for controlled life in state-ordered, hierarchical societies. Arguably however, it appears to provide a more balanced scenario based on cooperation and persuasion concerning the moral foundation of BA inequalities and leadership than those proposed by Renfrew and Gilman. Although the view of the imposition of power as functional necessity is not radically left behind, the model is more realistic in its assumptions for human nature. Leaders do not need to be necessarily altruistic parental figures motivated by the best intentions for their subjects, yet on the other hand, naked force or exploitation may not be particularly effective in the imposition and rationalisation of powerful elites.

As already noted, *Social Storage* suggests that ruling elites came into being through the transformation of initially reciprocal exchanges of food relief among prehistoric farmers. We may presume that what was involved at that stage was a communal commitment to a common good. However, this reciprocity is then seen to transform over time by the repayment for agricultural foodstuffs by non-food tokens and labour into an unbalanced relationship of dominance and subjugation. Under these circumstances, unlucky farmers preferring equality

to oppression will regrettably have starved. On the other hand, successful farmers could give food relief to their needy neighbours not so much motivated by pure altruistic instincts but rather driven by the opportunity to accumulate debt obligations by giving food they did not need anyway and thus develop into agents of power. Halstead further stressed the persuasive power of religion for the legitimation and reproduction of elite status. As Halstead himself remarks, the *Social Storage* model proposes 'a state redistributive system which provides quite tangible benefits for the many and at the same time mobilises resources for the few' (1988: 524). Finally, according to the point of view adopted, over time, the provision of food relief might have given way to an economy more and more dominated by exploitative mobilisation (Halstead 1988). This shift probably reduced palatial elites' capacity to cope with subsistence crises and subsequently provoked violent popular reaction which led to the collapse of the palatial institutions (Halstead and O'Shea 1982; Halstead 1988).

To support this theory, Halstead (1988) argued that the combination of archival, archaeological and analogical evidence implies a specific type of redistribution namely, one which incorporated both pooling and mobilisation. The palatial institutions seemed to have been involved in an alternative pooling system with a relief function buffering society in cases of extreme subsistence crises. Nevertheless, the most obvious function of palatial redistribution – which in contrast to the likely opportunistic redistribution of food relief documented in the Linear B archives – appears to be the mobilisation of resources for the benefit of palatial elites and their courtiers. This upward channeling of goods financed activities directed by the ruling elites for the legitimation of their own status. Halstead (1992b: 74) has suggested three types of such activities: the giving of craft-goods to reward service, the exchange of prestige objects as guest gifts with foreign elites and the performance of ritual ceremonies. Besides, as the documentary evidence reveals, the palatial authority was promoted by the levy of taxes in a range of non-staple commodities and perhaps of labour services. According to Halstead (1992b, 1994), the collection of taxes might have been decentralised. Still, taxation could be considered as an indirect coercive obligation for the population in a wider psychological sense⁵. Nevertheless, the specific obligation appears to have been kept upon a basis of tacit agreement. Its coercive nature might have been masked by the relief function of the palaces or other mechanisms of persuasion within a channel of cooperation between the palatial and non-palatial sectors. It is also likely that the palaces gave out specialised craft-goods or intangible services. It is worth noting however, that palatial generosity in the form of the provision of subsistence relief and other tangible and intangible resources could be considered as an effective vehicle for political domination bearing in mind

⁵ According to Dennis Wrong (1974: 27-28), the term force is not confined to physical force but also includes what one may call psychological force or moral violence.

that generosity entails the obligation of repayment. Additionally, as Halstead's review of the evidence suggests, the palatial control of economic activities was only partial. Thus, several commodities were produced in the non-palatial sector. On this score, cooperation between the elites and the population may be considered as a basic feature of their relationship. Still, it was also asserted that the centralised palatial mechanisms of risk buffering were only brought into play for major food crises whereas local institutions coped with minor shortages. Accordingly, the centralised 'emergency' mechanisms would have been vulnerable to failure since they were rarely used. 'To ensure their maintenance through a run of good years, they might have been embedded in other more regular institutions, such as religious festivals or ceremonial feasts' (Halstead 1988: 525). In this sense, the performance of rituals and festivals could be considered as an important component of the palatial ideological apparatus serving the embellishment of ruling authorities.

In a nutshell, *Social Storage* provides a more flexible and empirically sound answer regarding the moral basis of BA inequalities, since it strongly suggests that the distinction held by previous accounts between pure coercion, persuasion and cooperation as the basis of elite power constitutes a vain task. Undoubtedly, they co-existed and each of them played its part in games of power. Coercion, persuasion and cooperation might have been concealed one behind the other and altogether enabled the outcome of social discourse that made the dominant vehicle effective.

On the other hand, Halstead and O'Shea do not directly address how and why the *initially* reciprocal exchanges and sharing of food, which according to them promote egalitarian relations, were transformed through time into accumulation or hoarding of wealth for exploitative loans. In a more recent paper, Halstead (1995) suggests that such a transformation can happen because social norms are open to reinterpretation. We may note here, that inherent in this view is the long-established anthropological tendency to see forms of exchange as the basis for pigeonholing different societies' political structures on an evolutionary ladder from simple to complex. Echoing Fried (1967: 35), Halstead appears to suggest that the move from egalitarian to rank societies is basically a shift from an economy characterised for the most part by sharing and reciprocity to one giving prominence to redistribution, mobilisation and accumulation (1995, 1999). Interestingly, the shift in question is also perceived in moral terms as a shift from brotherly egalitarian relations to increased exploitation escalating in relations of domination. The notion of religion with its implications of moral solidarity and integration and unambiguous boundaries is projected by traditional accounts in the profane arena of life through the concept of reciprocity (Weiner 1992: 28-31 and 40-43). However, as recent advancements in anthropology have clearly revealed, this projection is based upon unwarranted assumptions (see Douglas 1990; Schneider 1974; Weiner 1980, 1992; Weissner 1996). More specifically, not only does the idea of evolution

from sharing and reciprocity to keeping and mobilisation find no real historical credibility but also sharing and reciprocity do not constitute philanthropic, interest-free acts. Following Weiner (1992, 1980), I suggest that reciprocity instead of neutralising power and cementing social cohesion forms the very core upon which hierarchy resides. As anthropologists have begun to make us aware, what promotes reciprocity is its opposite, namely the urge to keep something back from the pressures of give and take. Significantly, that which is not exchanged establishes difference between persons or groups. In Weiner's words,

The seemingly linear aspects of reciprocal give and take are merely overt attempts to become part of, to participate in, or conversely, to snare, what is not part of that exchange. Difference denies the concept of homogeneous circumstance in which the gift given merely elicits a reciprocal return without thought of an inalienable possession's radiating presence [and] political energy (1992: 42).

Climatic heterogeneity and the erosion of self-sufficiency: Critical comments

It should be clear that according to *Social Storage*, the decisive factor threatening domestic self-sufficiency was the risky heterogeneous environment of southern Greece. This called for a 'social storage' solution which subsequently resulted in the emergence of social inequalities. Yet, is it true, as Halstead and O'Shea (1982) argue, that social storage networks which promote economic interdependence occur in areas of heterogeneous environment? This, of course could be part of the story but the real test lies in how we are able to explain 'null cases'. In fact, the generalisation does not seem to hold true since there is no convincing empirical evidence. In other words, if we are to limit the existence of inequalities to societies that saw palaces or other monumental manifestations of inequality, why does palatial civilisation not find parallels throughout the Mediterranean, in areas characterised by a regime of precipitation similar to that of Crete. The question has been posed in the past by Cherry (1984) and Lewthwaite (1983). So far there is no satisfactory answer. Barker's (1981) examination of the case of central Italy suggests that the natural relief of central Italy, despite being Mediterranean, presents differences compared to that of Crete. Still, this study does not examine the issue of climatic heterogeneity that holds a prominent place in Halstead and O'Shea's model. Instead, it attributes the absence of palaces in central Italy to the late appearance of polycultural systems and the limited opportunities of the specific landscape for regional specialisation and redistributional mechanisms needing easy transport. Clearly, Barker's comparison between Central Italy and Crete relies on Renfrew's questionable model of agricultural specialisation and Mediterranean Polyculture and therefore cannot be used to substantiate Halstead and O'Shea's theory⁶. As for Sardinia, Lewthwaite (1983) commented

⁶ Halstead (personal communication) remarks that Central Italy is situated at a higher latitude and therefore may experience more precipitation so that yield variability should be less. Yet, this suggestion has not been tested so far.

that it does not display the heterogeneity observed for Crete but rather its inter-annual precipitation is similar to Thessaly, so the non-appearance of palaces there may validate Halstead and O'Shea's theory. On the other hand, the cases of the environmentally heterogeneous Corsica (Lewthwaite 1983) and Cyprus⁷ where palatial societies did not emerge strongly indicate that the *Social Storage* model is not of general validity.

Be that as it may, there is a further question in my mind, most specifically whether climatic heterogeneity could have automatically undermined subsistence self-sufficiency in Crete itself as assumed by *Social Storage*. Arguably, if heterogeneity was extreme in the sense that bad years could have affected some people within the community and not all, we could imagine together with *Social Storage* the appearance of wealth inequalities at an intra-communal level. However, although at first sight such a scenario appears to be a possibility, one may ask why farmers would have chosen to be involved in exchanges of food that inflicted debts and dependence and not practice agricultural diversification which could offer them subsistence autonomy.

By agricultural diversification I do not mean simply the cultivation of a variety of crops in a given plot. No doubt, such a strategy may operate as a safeguard against yield failure. Nevertheless, under severe widespread climatic conditions, all the crops cultivated on the same plot may perform badly, and this can be seen as the result of the severity of the climatic perturbation in combination with the particular topographical and environmental susceptibilities of the locality. It is interesting to consider a different kind of diversification not discussed in detail in *Social Storage*, namely the growing of a variety of crops in a variety of places. The adoption of this practice means that really bad years will be forfeited since it is extremely unlikely that there will be a year in which all the crops will perform badly in all places (Osborne 1987). In fact, the practice of fragmented holdings is well known to modern farmers of Crete and most significantly its roots can be traced back to classical antiquity. Osborne (1987) has intimated its prevalence in southern Greece and the islands. And I can remember my grandparents keeping scattered lands in their village on eastern Crete. To the sceptical reader such a strategy may appear ineffective because of the energy spent walking to the fields and the time needed for travel from parcel to parcel. However, as Osborne remarks, 'for the subsistence farmer it may be much more important to avoid years with no crops at all than to save time, a commodity which the family supplies in plentiful quantities' (1987: 38). For us the essential point is that, given the climatic heterogeneity assumed by *Social Storage* for Crete, the practice of fragmented holdings could have prevented economic interdependence among farmers since shortages in one plot could be balanced out by

⁷ Cyprus presents a picture of great environmental and climatic heterogeneity and moreover is an island of similar size to Crete. The great rainfall variability in Cyprus is clearly revealed by records of rainfall that are available for areas much more smaller than the *nomoi* of Crete (see Christodoulou 1979).

sufficient yields in other plots at the level of individual households. This is not to say that exchanges between different households did not take place at all, but rather that exchanges might not have been driven primarily from the risk of food dearth. At the same time, we cannot ignore that the success of the practice of keeping scattered plots varied among individual units depending on the size of their labour force. The point to be emphasised is that availability of a labour force rather than competition for land of any kind would have constituted the decisive factor concerning variations in yield histories among different households, given the small population figures of most EBA communities. At this juncture, one may raise serious doubts concerning the likely existence of the practice of keeping scattered plots I have assumed for BA farmers, since there is no empirical evidence to support it. Still, it is worth considering the answer given by present-day Cretan farmers to the question of why they keep scattered plots: 'that's the way our grandfathers did it'. This 'grandfather response' (Allad 1975 cited in Forbes 1989) very often legitimises agricultural practices pursued by farmers 'which appear to the field researcher as survival mechanisms' (Forbes 1989: 87). However, even if we find it difficult to accept that fragmented land-holdings were maintained in the remote prehistoric past, holdings consisting of a number of small plots scattered widely would possibly come about through inheritance and marriages, whether endogamous or exogamous. Exogamy, in particular could have reinforced the situation still further so that people might have kept plots not only in their own village but also in other places from which their partners came. Interestingly, exogamy not only produces alliances but also holds great economic potential since it expands the territory of resource exploitation and widens the exchange and sanctuary range of the community contributing to its perpetuation under adverse circumstances (Fried 1967). Unfortunately we cannot be certain about the exact form of post-marital residence patterns, since we do not know the particular rules of inheritance or the structure of kinship which would have determined place of residence after marriage and consequently the shifts of people and landed property in the landscape. Arguably however, there is no reason to rule out the possibility of the existence of an exogamous partner network given the small size of the majority of EBA communities⁸.

On the other hand, one may argue against an even distribution of inheritance among all the offspring. Certainly, the issue of which members of the sibling groups were the beneficiaries is a crucial one and we cannot rule out the possibility that only the offspring of a particular sex or seniority had rights to the parental property. This could have brought significant disparities among individuals in wealth. At this point however, we could mention a widespread and long-held practice in Crete regarding the inheritance of scattered plots.

⁸ Early Minoan II Myrtos for instance consisted of around six households (Whitelaw 1983). Similarly Vasiliki does not seem to have had a population of over 200 people at that time. Thus the residents of such small communities should have been forced to look for partners in a wider region.

Parents are reluctant to give to one child a whole plot of land situated in a specific place and to the others different whole plots situated in other localities. Rather they prefer to divide each individual plot of land into smaller shares as all the offspring retain a part of the parental property in each locality. I cannot help asking why this is so, or postulate likely reasons, such as justice of inheritance, sentimental principles or just tradition. However, such a practice seems to prevent significant inequalities in inheritance as far as the quality of land is concerned. Importantly, although we do not need to take for granted the idea of justice in inheritance that has prevailed 'as a moral code' for centuries throughout Greece and Cyprus⁹ (Christodoulou 1959), we may assume a relatively balanced division of land among offspring, bearing in mind the significance of agriculture in pre-industrial societies. This is not surprising, since in Greece and Cyprus until recently agriculture was nearly the only form of living and land the only form of capital (Christodoulou 1959: 86). In short, if we assume a similar situation for prehistory, we would expect inheritance to be divided – in terms of both quality and quantity – relatively evenly. All the children should have had some land to till and taste its fruits. One may remark that such an imperative for the division of land would have resulted, together with the acquisition of land by marriages, in a field layout of fragmented and diffuse land holdings, which could have spread the risk of total or extreme yield failure that undermines household subsistence autonomy.

Finally, in discussions I had with local agriculturists and old farmers at the neighbouring villages of Episkopi and Kato Horio in eastern Crete, I asked them about the scale of heterogeneity that they and their co-villagers experience in a single year. While they admitted that an uneven distribution of rainfall may lead to different yield figures among individual households, they stressed that these are not that extreme. Moreover, they added that the scale of heterogeneity in most cases has not to be seen so much as the product of climatic calamities but as the result of a combination of factors including not only climate but also human management and lack of human labour through death or disease. In particular, elders practicing agriculture before the fifties could recall lean years owing to extremely poor precipitation or other serious climatic perturbations, but stressed that these bad years were not really common and were experienced relatively evenly by individual households within the village. Besides, the most significant subsistence crisis documented by the local people was not the result of a natural perturbation but of the German occupation during the Second World War. However, as they intimated, even in that case the states of starvation on the island were not as severe as those recorded for the urban areas of Greece. Forbes's (1989) fieldwork on

⁹ As Christodoulou has pointed out 'parents are disinclined to wrong any of their children and children will not miss even a square food of their due share in the family property ... [moreover] ... every child will be given a portion of the property to start him off in life, or in the case of the girl, to marry her off' (1959: 86).

Methana confirms the fact that serious subsistence crises more usually than not are the outcome of social perturbations. To return to my local informants, they could not see how a serious natural disaster could have produced great variability in the availability of food within the same community. Most of them pointed out that even in exceptionally bad years some food is harvested and that indeed some farmers may cover minimally their alimentary needs while some others may do a little better. That more food is harvested by some households in a bad year does not mean however, that it is enough to cover through exchange the needs of the more unfortunate promoting thus significantly the fortunes of the givers. Bearing in mind the accounts of the local informants, it may be said that at least at a village level it is difficult to accept Halstead and O'Shea's theory of the existence of extreme inequalities in yield figures that could have seriously undermined subsistence self-sufficiency giving rise to village ruling elites. Plainly, this fact poses a serious challenge to *Social Storage*. This is especially so keeping in mind Haggis's apt observation that the picture of the Late Prepalatial society on Crete demonstrates the centrality of ritual in games of power, still the cemetery itself 'was clearly viable on the *local* level' (1999: 68, emphasis added).

The body as unfinished project: A replacement for self-sufficiency

I suggest that the historical question of inequality has been grounded on the fiction of a self-sufficient Domestic Mode of Production that can be undermined historically by the peculiarities of a specific environment and changes in this environment. In other words, people are forced to adapt and passively accept dominant elites imposed by outside forces which jeopardise their physical survival. People's insufficiency is recognised in subsistence because they are held to be above all bodies in a strictly organic sense. I would like to challenge this idea.

We should not ignore that the human body is simultaneously biological and social. One of the most obvious truisms about human beings is that in one sense they *are* bodies like any other animal. One noticeable feature of our corporeal existence is that it involves us in a daily 'labour of eating, washing, grooming, dressing and sleeping' (Turner 1984: 1). Traditionally, and as the Aegean models presented above exhibit, the physical needs of the body have been seen as constraining factors that people have to deal with in order to survive. Our bodies need food if they are not to perish as well as security and shelter in order to be protected from natural and extra-natural forces. Accordingly, my physical needs inherent to my biology mean that I am *not* a finished product or a self-sufficient entity at birth but rather a project to be constantly tended and laboured upon throughout my life-cycle as if towards a sense of completeness (cf. Ingold 2000; Shilling 1993). We might say that people's physical needs stimulate a various 'range of practices to take place. These might include food gathering, the

clearance of fields, the cultivation of plants, the breeding of animals, foraging for raw materials, the fashioning of tools and pots as well as innumerable other activities that involve a coming together of individuals, groups and resources. Yet, it would be misleading to argue that the human body's incompleteness and seeking of a sense of finality are merely the outcome of its needs, if we are to perceive needs narrowly as biological necessities. A common doctrine of social analyses is to see needs as necessities and desires as luxuries. However, this notion which bears significantly on the popular distinction between nature and culture and emanates from the idea that failure to satisfy needs results in biological malfunction and impairment is difficult to maintain. As Turner (1984: 27) has pointed out, the distinction between needs and desires is a value-judgement since what we take to be needs are in reality constituted by culture and more specifically by cultural expectations about what is normal or natural. More than this, we need to recognise that facts which point towards the body's incomplete nature such as biological reproduction or maintenance as well as the body's subjection to processes of birth, aging and death are not at all simply biological – in fact they are strongly embedded in society.

Above all, social action cannot be reduced to logistics of self-preservation and adaptation in a physical environment. All of this is not to say for example that people will not starve if they do not eat. Still, what they will chose to eat (even in periods of food scarcity), when, how and how much is not determined just by the physical instinct of hunger and may vary according to spatio-historical contingencies. 'People do not eat species, they eat meals' (Sherratt 1991: 221). Eating has a social dimension in the sense that people do not eat just to survive; they also eat to offer themselves gastronomic pleasure, to socialise, to celebrate, to display generosity, to make a statement about their identity, to remember an event or to indicate a religious belief (by having specific meals). It is noteworthy that there are cases where even in periods of food dearth¹⁰ people may abstain from food which is considered to be taboo or to contain a special meaning within their cultural milieu. One may recall the Jewish and Muslim food and drink prohibitions. Food consumption therefore is a socially meaningful arena and a communication code (Hamilakis 1999). Similarly, while caring for dress might appear as a need enforced by our organic nature, it is actually not merely a means for protection but also a medium of symbolic display culturally acquired (cf. Giddens 1991). Finally, the fact that the body changes, develops and perishes organically throughout one's lifecycle constitutes a theme of various social elaborations invested with work and meaning. It may be that the very fear and inevitability of death motivate a need to find or fabricate

¹⁰ The case of the Bantu Bemba people in Africa is illuminating regarding this matter. As Pearson notes: 'The Bemba tribe ... keeps chickens, but they do not use these for food, except for ceremonial occasions, or as presents of respect; nor do they ever eat the eggs. Pigeons are kept but very rarely eaten even in times of hunger ... "we like to see them flying about the village" says the native, "it is a sign of a man of rank"' (1957: 336).

answers to ontological questions and create theories of existence, namely cosmologies. They also light up the desire to secure permanence and immortality, to make memory persist, to transcend deterioration in a serial world that is constantly subject to loss and decay (Weiner 1992).

Accepting the unfinished nature of the body at birth enables us to recognise that all human bodies are socially constructed (Shilling 1993) and therefore non self-sufficient. Human babies are not born walking or talking (Ingold 2000: 377) or having table manners. It was the genius of Marcel Mauss (1973 [1935]) who first referred to the *techniques of the body*. That is, the socially and culturally specific ways according to which human beings know how to use their bodies. Seemingly natural bodily activities such as walking, jumping, running, swimming and even spitting are learned through *socialisation* and practice. Equally important was Mauss's conclusion that the techniques of the body can vary not only by age and gender but also from culture to culture¹¹. In a nutshell, the human body is an unfinished project that demands people to invest themselves and the world around them with work and meaning. For as Shilling (1993: 101-102) succinctly remarks, unlike animals whose instinctual structure at birth is specialised and directs them into a world with more or less completely determined possibilities, humans are very loosely programmed to survive within their environment. Their instinctual make-up at birth is not as specialised as that of animals and therefore their world and its territories and dangers are relatively open. Consequently:

Humans must make a world in order to survive. ... Humans must free themselves in action from the dangers to their survival which is inherent in the unfinishedness of their embodiment. This action consists of both physical intervention *and* investments of meaning. Because the world is not pre-set for humans, as it is for animals, humans need to manage the superabundance of data that threatens to overwhelm their senses. In effect, humans need to create a meaningful world for themselves by saturating their environment with meaning and shape. They must do this in order for there to be a world they can physically act on, in order to survive in (Shilling 1993: 102).

Up until now, I have simply spoken about bodies as if they operated in a dimension unto their own. Bodies are more than simply objects. They are conditions that relate us to our environment, other people and things (Harrison 2000). Above all, bodies are mediums through which the world is interpreted. At this stage, I would like to touch on some of the finer points of embodiment. Firstly, the Cartesian dualism between body and mind – a prevailing theme for discussion in Western philosophical tradition – is inadequate. The body is not the shelter of the mind but rather, understanding is a corporeal phenomenon; the mind is embodied (Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Crucially, the body is a basic means of self-identification (Giddens 1991). Notably, the exploration of the properties and contours of the body constitutes one of the original explorations of the world by the child. The child does not

¹¹ Mauss (1973 [1935]) was able to demonstrate the cultural contingencies of the techniques of the body by studying the different ways of marching between the French and British infantries.

Three 'green' stories or the subsistence discourse

understand the body as a separate entity 'because self-consciousness emerges through bodily differentiation rather than the other way round' (Giddens 1991: 56). Equally important, the body holds a significant role in the process of social interaction by sending out messages of intent through facial expressions, body movements and postures (Goffman 1990 [1959]). These entail a shared code of communication within a given social context.

Human beings therefore, embody the world as sensory organs. Engaging with others and the environment around them, they selectively relate to and make distinctions between objects, people, places that come into their sensory array in order to create understanding. For Bataille (1998) bodies are contextual in the sense that they found their perception of the self upon a web of interrelationships with other people and their environment. According to him, unlike animals which are entire to themselves and only communicate in a rudimentary way, human beings separate themselves as they start to define themselves as a species. This is a process of objectification, which as Bataille suggests implies a relation of subordination. The incompleteness of human body at birth helps us understand that human beings are not self-sufficient ready-made entities. People, I suggest, wish to bind themselves to others and things seeking to heal the absence and incompleteness they feel in themselves. On the whole, when we communicate with other people, we do so with the realisation that we are incomplete beings, not relating directly but communicating across the gap of our mutual incompleteness and insufficiency (Bataille 1998).

The course of history can no longer be seen as a gradual ascent from an original Eden of an isolated domestic self-sufficiency that celebrated freedom to a self-sufficiency achieved through a poisonous socialisation that trades liberty for subjugation and dependence. Inequalities do not *emerge* because ecological stimuli force people to recognise suddenly the common good, or wake up their latent egotistic interests and Machiavellian characters. The issue is not whether inequalities emerge because of an awareness for common good or because people are inherently bad and manipulative, but whether the question of emergence has any justified basis. Interdependence is universal and we do not need to invent either a heterogeneous climate or an ecologically driven subsistence specialisation to account for it. For even if households can be self-sufficient in subsistence matters and therefore without the need for economic exchange, an opening towards other people is necessary for the reproduction of the productive unit. Unlike the productive cycle, as Meillassoux (1978b: 162-163; see also Friedman and Rowlands 1977; Paynter and Cole 1980) has long ago remarked, the reproductive cycle is not self-sufficient. Domestic units as portrayed by Sahlins may be capable of appropriating the environment and reproducing technologies. However, production requires labour force as well as raw materials and tools to transform the raw material. Thus, domestic units are not self-sufficient, if they are to reproduce the conditions of their existence. In other words, 'we need a notion of household that can transform raw materials with

reproducible labour force and technologies' (Paynter and Cole 1980: 91). Accordingly, as Paynter and Cole (1980) point out, the logic of the household economy does not contradict or negate society it requires society. Notably, so called domestic values such as biological reproduction and nurturance as well as cosmologies underwrite political and economic actions in *material* ways that decisively break down the traditional domestic/public boundaries (Weiner 1992: 4). For all these values do not bring just people and ideas or questions of ontological security together but also resources which are not simply ideologies located outside material production and consumption. One may note here that cosmologies are material in the sense that they consist of sacred objects and other material implements. Equally, the exchange of wives or various initiation rites marking the social becoming of bodies cannot be thought, or acquire efficacy, without the production and manipulation of specific material possessions.

Moreover, I would like to suggest that once we recognise societies as moral communities in the sense that human beings have always evaluated and acted on their evaluations in order to create a meaningful world to act upon, the question of the emergence becomes redundant. Every society must produce and reproduce certain elements of value in order to achieve continuity (Weiner 1980). Evaluation, I believe, is closely linked to our incomplete and non-sufficient nature at birth. The association between value and inequality will be examined in detail in a later chapter.

Chapter 3

The materiality of inequalities and the problematic of wealth

Introduction

The primary aim of the previous chapter was to reveal the intellectual linkage between different models of the emergence of social inequalities arising from a tendency to lay a great emphasis on patterns of economic interdependence originating from the subsistence sector of everyday life. Notably, the above models seem to assume a kind of unequal control and distribution of wealth built into the agricultural domain of economy. This in turn is thought more or less to have promoted, or at least translated into, the inequalities whose material manifestations are witnessed in the Minoan archaeological record in the form of ‘palaces’, golden ornaments, exotic imports, etc. Looking critically at this perception one can of course agree that wealth may bring about or manifest power. However, the automatic correlation of wealth with power that many Aegeanists tend to employ in their models of the emergence of inequality, requires further reflection. For instead of creating a solid platform for research, it utilizes a series of taken for granted assumptions that begs more questions than it answers and undermines the fruitful study of inequality.

What is missing from most of the above accounts is a detailed examination of political economy. I argue in this chapter that although models of the emergence of inequality are concerned with the implications of economic action in the creation of relations of power (namely with the domain of political economy) in fact they usually offer accounts of the domain of economy restricted to economic processes¹ in the sense of agricultural technologies. At this juncture, it must be noted that for years there has been much discussion among economic anthropologists about the kinds of activities that can be defined as economic (see Firth 1965 [1939], 1967; Godelier 1972, 1978; Nash 1966; Schneider 1974). At the moment, I will not attempt to offer my view on what the term economic may encompass but comply with a popular definition offered by the economic anthropologist Maurice Godelier (1978). For Godelier, the economic domain is comprised by operations whereby people produce, distribute and consume

¹ Economic processes constitute a different type of economic phenomenon from economic relationships (Cohen 1974: 22). This will be discussed in detail below.

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the material means of their existence as well as services which involve use and exchange of material means.

To return to the Aegean models of inequality, the introduction of new species, the production of different food staples such as grapes, olives, pulses and grain, agricultural specialisation, capital intensification practices, the management and distribution of specialised products, the storing and exchange of a normal surplus – all these appear to be economic activities if we follow the above definition. People undertake such activities (certainly not without any risks involved) to secure and/or enlarge their material means of existence that are necessary for achieving various goals. This is to say that the ends pursued in the economic domain are in agreement with ambitions in other fields of everyday life (Nash 1967: 9). Furthermore, it is not out of place to remark that successful carrying out of economic activities such as those mentioned above may result in increased material outputs that is a kind of wealth².

Despite the fact that someone has accumulated wealth as a result of economic activities, this accumulation cannot spontaneously offer the individual high status or put other people under the shadow of their power. In other words, it does not go without saying that wealth and power or status are synonymous (cf. Godelier 1999: 205; McKay 1988: 135; Pader 1982: 31). Unequal distributions of wealth may inform us about economic inequalities among different people (that is the ‘distributive’ aspect of inequality), but unfortunately they do not say a lot about the ‘behavioural expression’ (Berreman 1981) of those inequalities or their bearing on relations between people (the ‘relational’ aspect of inequality)³. This has to be an object of investigation.

In simple words, I suggest that the passage from an economic to a political economic approach is necessary to the study of inequality – particularly if one speculates that there is a kind of association between wealth and relational inequalities. However, this can only be achieved by showing what this wealth (the likely product of economic activity) can promote or entail in political terms. Thus, what we need are narratives that can account for the ‘relational’ aspects of wealth and inequality not just their ‘distributive’ ones. Hence, if one accepts that wealth can be the basis of authority they should illustrate its operation by dealing with two key questions. First, how established wealthy elites acquired their wealth in the first place and second and most importantly, how wealth is transformed into power over other people. In this chapter, I will try to show that the above questions which concern what I call the ‘how’ problem of the link between

² That is not to say, as I will attempt to show later on, that wealth is defined merely as a quantity of goods.

³ For the distinction between the ‘distributive’ and ‘relational’ aspects of inequality see Bêteille (1969a, 1977, 1981) and below chapter 5.

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wealth and relations of inequality have rarely received any serious consideration. Instead, wealth is usually seen to convert into power in an automatic way.

It seems to me that these are questions of political economy since they refer to the instrumentality of wealth in the formation of political relations. The reason that they have not been very thoroughly explored by current accounts – with the exception of Halstead and O’Shea’s (1982) *Social Storage* model – is that wealth is seen to acquire instrumentality only in the hands of already established elites. The presence of elites is taken to signal the presence of political economy; conversely, before elites there is no political economy, but simply subsistence economy. In subsistence economies people are assumed to be solely involved in the hunt for security and survival, and therefore have very limited economic interests. Over time, mysteriously, something suddenly takes place and people become more conscious in economic terms. Nevertheless, although people now appear to have more advanced economic interests, these are not directly related to the political structure, namely they do not directly shape or inform a field of political action. In short, human actors have reinvented themselves as economic animals but not yet as political ones.

No better demonstration of this enigmatic process can be found than in Renfrew’s *Subsistence/Redistribution* model. At the end of the story we find elite minorities who now understand how to use their resources and economic profits in order to legitimate their authority. Economic interests and material assets appear at this juncture suddenly to relate to the political structure. It is only at this stage that Renfrew triumphantly discovers man the political animal. The transformation of *Homo sapiens* into *Homo economicus* into *Homo politicus* has been completed. Like Renfrew, Gilman perpetuates the idea of an emerging political economy. To him, however, the route of human evolution is from a *Homo politicus* to a *Homo economicus*. Yet, in both accounts we gather the impression that for a great part of human history *Homo economicus* and *Homo politicus* cannot coexist in the same human body. They are therefore seen to constitute two different species. Then all of a sudden, a single species, *Homo economicus-politicus*, emerges out of an inexplicable immaculate conception and finds its shelter in the bodies of the higher echelons of society. In other words, political economy is seen to emerge and evolve. It is the victim of the evolutionary paradigm of understanding social phenomena in the same way that wealth and inequalities are.

However, the problematic treatment of wealth by current accounts is not exhausted by the ‘how’ problem. There is a further problem. The recognition of some apparent types of wealth in the material record encourages an arbitrary point of insertion for the incipience of social

inequalities into a chronological timeline. This has additionally resulted in what I call the ‘when’ problem, regarding the relationship of wealth and inequality.

There is a widespread assumption among archaeologists (not only among Aegeanists) that a ranked society is one which expresses ranking in material wealth (cf. McKay 1988; Webster 1990) and that this wealth should take particular forms of material manifestation. Significantly, although most Aegeanists concur that there is a baseline, namely wealth from which we can measure the rise of asymmetrical social relations, they are not in agreement when this happens. In the following chapter I will try to show that the controversy rests on different poorly conceived understandings of how wealth transforms into power as well as on the visibility (in material terms) of this relation. I also hope to show that the two issues – the ‘how’ and ‘when’ of wealth – are closely related in the Aegean accounts of inequality; and that seeking to reveal the assumptions to one of them may offer some answer to the other.

An obvious conclusion may be drawn from the above discussion: If our aim is to reveal the ways relational social inequalities are produced by drawing on material resources that is a study of political economy, we cannot afford to postpone anymore an analysis of wealth. As Foucault has aptly put it, ‘the analysis of wealth is to political economy what general grammar is to philology and what natural history is to biology’ (1989 [1966]: 182). In ending this preliminary discussion about wealth, one last point needs to be brought into the open. Paradoxically, the reader has been left with a salient absence; we have encountered wealth throughout the text but we have not defined it clearly. Here, as we will later see, the aim has been to be purposely provocative. Following most Aegean accounts, the question of what wealth may include has been presented as an unproblematic given. Only Renfrew (1972: 370, 1986a) begins to make an attempt to define it: as the ownership of desirable transferable goods. Yet even here, it raises the question of how certain goods and not others acquire this necessary desirability, which transforms them into wealth in the first place. The question is far too encompassing to deal with in the short space available here as it deals directly with the way value systems are constructed. For the time being we will deal with the more modest issue of what types of desirable goods are taken to represent wealth in the archaeological literature.

The usual suspects of wealth and inequality

I have already had the occasion to mention that according to current consensus, a particular architectural form, the so called palace, constitutes the material indicator par excellence of inequalities and power in Cretan prehistory. Along with this there are other types of architectural appearances (‘villas’, elaborate tombs), objects called ‘valuables’ and tangible traces of more or

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less prosaic projects (storehouses, craft workshops, meeting places, shrines, transportation systems/roads) where inequalities are supposed to be reflected by their material image. In common parlance, we are used to referring to the above types of material culture as wealth repositories or 'valuables' because we perceive them to indicate, concentrate, absorb and store a kind of value. This value may be anchored in the skilful workmanship of objects; in the skills required for the procurement of raw material; in the labour consumed for their construction and in the scarcity and/or distant origins of both the finished product and its raw material. At the same time, mere possession of some types of objects is held directly to confer high status. For example, metal daggers or golden diadems are taken to operate like language, bestowing power and authority to their holders (Hodder 1994). That is, they act as symbols of power in themselves in a more direct way without always making reference to the time or skill invested in their manufacture. On the other hand, projects of a labour intensive nature imply political organisation on a larger scale; they do not only declare the 'personal glory' of high status people but also attest to political unification and a central agent of power able to initiate, plan, finance and maintain such projects as well as to afford, coordinate and mobilise manpower (Trigger 1974: 197). Significantly, it is in this latter context that inequality is commonly held to emerge in its most dramatic form by escaping the boundaries of a so called segmentary, autonomous and cellular domestic level, and realising a spatial implication of centrality associated with the emergence of the state. All the above categories of material culture constitute not only a kind of wealth but also the usual suspects for tracing inequalities both distributive and relational. Most importantly, their first appearance in the archaeological record is traditionally taken to reflect the first appearance of inequalities.

However, for some scholars the importance of wealth does not stop in its dimension as a carrier of information (see Renfrew 1972: 370, 494-499; Halstead and O'Shea 1982; Halstead 1987; Pullen 1992: 53; Cosmopoulos 1995: 31). It does not only signify the existence of inequalities and their 'initial' emergence but also how inequality comes about. Wealth may constitute the basis and not only the material indicator of inequalities. It is a means of building social status and relations of power. Unfortunately, most of these scholars have not elaborated on the specific ways whereby the particular process is realised. It is also worth stressing that according to Aegean models of inequality different types of physical wealth, such as those mentioned above, constitute material transformations of agricultural surplus wealth. Put simply, one type of economic value is held to convert into another. Before discussing this transformation, I will explore how agricultural wealth is seen to come into the hands of the elite minorities in the first place.

Transforming wealth into power: the 'how' questions of wealth

How wealth is acquired in the first place

In a penetrating paper Webster (1990) has made the point that while most recent accounts of the emergence of social stratification in Europe emphasise the differential command and management of material wealth and resources by elite minorities they fail to show or neglect to detail how elites come to control material wealth in the first place. Webster (1990: 337) argues that such models are problematic, for elites would appear to need the prior existence of power to acquire, use and defend capital investments and material wealth. Moreover, he attacks prevailing theories of social stratification because, as he points out, they arbitrarily assume that since stratified social formations are characterised by uneven distributions of material wealth these will have been the primary motors behind their initial creation. Webster's position is that material wealth should rather be seen as the privilege of established chieftainships instead of the determining factor in their constitution. He finally claims, taking his lead from the African ethnographic record, that control over human labour constitutes the fundamental resource of power. Webster's model puts an emphasis on chiefs as accumulators of a 'greater retinue'. Most importantly, differential command of the labour force was seen to precede differential command of material wealth. In Webster's words,

This interpretation does not deny the eventual importance of dominance and/or control by later 'palace elites' of trade, technology, agricultural and craft production, and redistribution ... it does, however, support the argument that, in the Aegean, labour control preceded and provided a basis for such prerogatives of power and hence the rapid development of stratification (1990: 345).

One of the author's major points is that labour control is of fundamental significance in the *emergence* of stratification, yet, as stratification matures the control of wealth and capital becomes more important. According to this point of view, what made one a leader in the first place was their skill to recruit and control the surplus labour of both kin and non-kin. The larger and the more economically productive a family was the greater the chances it had to attract greater retinues and establish with them a patron-client dependency. Moreover, Webster felt that the development of social stratification is more possible and rapid under particular environmental circumstances such as agricultural risk, high productive potential, socio-environmental circumscription, and diversity in natural conditions.

At first glance Webster's essay appears to offer some interesting insights into the relationships between wealth and power and between labour and power. In particular, the argument that command over human labour power should be seen as basic in the creation of

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relational social inequalities adds an important parameter of investigation to the study of power. One cannot avoid to stress the importance of the mobilisation of labour especially during palatial times in view of the large amount of energy consumed in the construction of the so called palaces. Furthermore, the author's thesis that aspirants to high status and power can be found in all societies proposes a productive avenue to follow in the study of social inequalities. Its main merit rests on the fact that instead of seeing human agency to evaporate under the needs and rationality of a subjectless system it invites us to consider individuals as purposeful and intentional protagonists and makers of their lives. Long ago Claude Lévi-Strauss went even further by throwing into relief the psychological dimension of leadership, stressing that political anthropologists should pay more attention to the idea of 'natural leadership' (1967). He felt, in his own words, imperiously led to the conclusion that there are leaders in every human group because there are always individuals who unlike their fellow human beings find pleasure in *prestige for its own sake* (Lévi-Strauss 1967: 61). At the same time, Webster's point about going beyond material wealth as the basis for power relations and for tracing how wealth is acquired – although not pursued in detail by the author – invites us to recognise that more light needs to be shed on the largely neglected issue of wealth production. Nonetheless, Webster's paper is not without its problems⁴.

For instance, like older accounts Webster's model frames the study of inequality around starting points. Underlying Webster's view is the old issue of origins. Although the author maintains that aspirants to high status occur in every society, one cannot avoid the impression that there is an implicit assumption throughout the essay that *real inequalities of power* are those which are crystallised along class lines. For Webster, this happened during the second millennium BC. Non-state tribal societies are seen to contain only seeds of real power – a kind of *pseudo-power* that *emerges, evolves*, only to become a *real power* once it *matures*. As a consequence, non-state social formations are treated as stepping-stones to state-societies. In bare essentials therefore, like previous models, Webster's narrative of inequality has been built on an evolutionary theoretical edifice. The only difference with previous accounts is that the origins of embryonic power relations are traced back to the Neolithic. Accordingly, truly egalitarian societies should be sought earlier than the petty chiefdoms of fifth and fourth millennium Europe.

Most significantly, the distinction between wealth and labour is quite crude since it is presented as an unanalysed given. It might be said that such a distinction is not so sharp (cf.

⁴ Here I am mainly concerned with aspects of the essay which are directly related to the issues of wealth and inequality. For a detailed critique on various aspects of Webster's account see the comments following Webster (1990) in *Current Anthropology* 31 (4), pp. 347-355.

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Gilman 1990: 349; Hamilakis 1995: 66; and Milisauskas 1990: 353). I would justify this statement by proposing that the distinction between material wealth and labour is not as acute as Webster seems to assume if we recognise that material wealth is a particular type of tangible transformation of human effort (labour). In other words, it is not simply the product of human labour but labour (human effort and time) materially congealed. That said, it is worth pointing out that not all materially congealed labour can be thought of as wealth. For example, take the large plastic rubbish bin outside almost every house in the UK. Although it apparently constitutes a form of materially concentrated labour it can hardly be thought of as wealth – at least in this context. At the same time, labour can be thought of as a potential materially uncongealed form of wealth. In addition, Webster's distinction between wealth and labour control and the proposed priority assigned to the latter becomes even more perplexing if we keep in mind that wealth may be thought of as one of the two principal ways by which people can *buy*⁵ access to labour. As Ossowski (1963: 23-32) echoing Marx has shown, access to other people's labour can be gained through wealth or power (even in the form of physical force⁶). In particular, the connection of wealth with labour can be thus seen in two complementary ways that form a cyclical relationship rather than a sharp distinction. It is not only that individuals or groups who have command over other people's labour can make a profit and thus become rich, but also that wealth itself is instrumental in permitting access to human labour which in turn is crucial for further expansion of wealth:

Wealth or physical force are the sources of exploitation [of man by man]...the labour of the worker multiplies the wealth or power of those *whose wealth or power compel him to labour* on for their benefit. This [is] *a vicious circle* (Ossowski 1963: 26, emphasis added).

Ironically, Webster's insistence on the causal primacy of labour over wealth is shaken by the model itself. Here, it is more apparent than Webster would admit, that it is property and wealth (mainly in the form of land and agricultural produce) that enable patrons to hire the labour of a non-kin external clientele. That is, without the wealth variable Webster's model is at pains to explain the expansion of power beyond kin units:

⁵ One of course needs to note here that according to Marx the capacity of wealth to buy labour is not an inherent quality of wealth but rather it emerges historically with capitalism. To Marx, labour is a capability of people, not a commodity for sale; the only reason for people to offer their labour for sale is when they have been deprived of the means of production (Wolf: 1982: 77). However, anthropological perspectives (Nash 1966; Meillassoux 1978a: 146) suggest that the provision of wealth in the form of gifts and food constitutes a way to mobilise (*buy*) labour in simple societies, although the tactics of such exchanges *deny a sale* character to the transaction.

⁶ The point that brute force can be used as a way for the recruitment of labour force has been also made by Gregory (1982: 119-120).

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... non-kin clients typically exchanged their surplus labour for protection, and more important, for indirect use rights to the lands and herds to which the patron kin-group possessed direct hereditary rights (Webster 1990: 340).

Keeping these in mind, we could say then that Webster's corrective to previous accounts, (namely the substitution of labour for wealth) is problematic since it is based on a distinction which upon closer consideration does not seem to be so acute. Instead of being perceived as the parts of a distinction where priority has to be assigned to one of them, wealth and labour can be more profitably examined as parts of a *vicious circle*, as Ossowski puts it, where they constitute conditions for each other.

Despite these problems, I think that Webster puts his finger on something important when he points out that current discussions of the *emergence* do not specify the precise processes which could throw light on the ways in which some human actors transform themselves into agents of power through material wealth in the first instance. His main point is that adherents to an approach that sees wealth as instrumental in the formation of power relations would need to elaborate on how some individuals managed to amass wealth in the first instance. As I noted earlier, this constitutes a significant question, yet, as I shall try to show at the end of this section, it needs some rectification. What is more important is that Webster's essay prompts us to recognise that there is something problematic regarding the treatment of wealth in the existing archaeological literature. Although he pinpoints the problem, he does not push his argument far enough and by offering a similarly problematic substitution of labour for wealth he ends up perpetuating the problem that he intended to resolve in the first place. Webster's unique contribution is that he provides us with the stimulating challenge to attend to the puzzle of wealth. At this point, it is useful to take a closer look at how Aegean models of inequality deal with the problem of wealth's acquisition by elite minorities in the first instance.

Material advance in general and wealth in the form of agricultural surplus in particular, as motors behind the emergence of relations of dominance and subjugation, occupy a modest place in the *Subsistence/Redistribution* model (Hamilakis 1995: 5). At first sight, Webster's criticism does not seem to apply to the subsistence/redistribution model. For as the model holds Cretan chieftains came about through a need for redistribution not through the appropriation of strategically or competitively acquired wealth in the form of agricultural surplus. Renfrew therefore offers a scenario where the struggle for power was not grounded in the struggle for wealth. Wealth is attracted to managerial elites as a reward of their office. Some groups establish themselves as managerial elites and *as a result* they become able to control surplus staple produce and convert it into other types of wealth which elites use in order to finance their governmental institution. It might be said that Renfrew provides a partial account of two different types of

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economic phenomena namely economic processes and economic relations. It has been argued (Cohen 1974: 22) that economic processes refer to interactions between individuals and available resources whereas economic relationships refer to person to person interactions in the course of economic processes. Conversely, in the subsistence/redistribution model, the introduction of grapes and vines, agricultural specialisation, the cultivation of formerly marginal land all these can be seen as particular economic processes as defined by Cohen. What is less obvious however, is the nexus of the economic relationships these enable or constrain between different individuals or groups as well as the bearing of these economic relationships in the formation of power relations.

Obviously, according to Renfrew, people (though not the Neolithic ones) do not seem to lack economic interests and motives; that is why they decide to specialise in different foodstuffs. Their motive is a higher productivity, a surplus of produce, 'a willingness to invest income and hence to accumulate what might be regarded as capital' (Renfrew 1972: 34). Moreover, although Renfrew at some points seems to remember that this is dictated by social factors, the general impression stemming from the model is that increased production is better than zero growth. In such models economic intensification is treated as an independent operation (from the political domain) dictated by the pursuit of individual economic advantage and economic efficiency (Brumfiel and Earle 1987: 1). Ostensibly, commoners are not concerned with aspirations of authority but simply wish to gather material assets. A phantasmatic obsession for wealth (its motive is never clearly specified by Renfrew) influences Bronze Age farmers to accept a managerial leadership. For managers could provide farming populations with an organisational structure under which they could (without the distraction of having to provide for their families), specialise in particular foodstuffs and increase wealth in the form of agricultural surplus. But one may wonder what different actors wish or actually do with their increased agricultural produce? What kind of relationships do they establish by drawing on them? Why do uneven grades of economic success in the carrying out of agricultural activities not constitute an issue of examination at this level of human conduct? Most importantly still, why does wealth not matter in the formation of relational inequalities?

The model turns a blind eye at this routine scale of economic conduct as well as the relationships that this involves, and looks directly to a *Deus ex machina*⁷ imposed elite. It is at this level of analysis that political economy appears on the stage and questions relevant to it are asked. Hence, according to the *Subsistence/Redistribution* model, wealth acquires instrumental

⁷ *Deus ex machina*: In Greek and Roman drama, a god brought on to resolve a seemingly irresolvable plot.

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significance only in the hands of already established elites. It serves the political ends of elites, legitimising their authority by funding their political apparatus. On the other hand, in the period before the establishment of elites, wealth (in the form of agricultural produce) is perceived as an end in itself.

Renfrew seems to ignore an old commonplace tenet of economic anthropology; there are no economic motives, but only motives appropriate to the economic sphere (Nash 1967: 9). This also means that neither competition over physical resources (Clark and Blake 1994: 18) nor the production, acquisition and accumulation of wealth are ends in themselves (cf. Baines and Yoffee 2000:16; Spielmann 2002). To be fair to Renfrew, he suggested in a later paper, that the incentive towards increased production need not necessarily be a purely economic one but may have social underpinnings (1982a). This is the only time he discusses this at any length. He suggests that the desire to undertake tasks that will improve productivity are governed by the individual perception of what is required to fulfil social, and exchange obligations as well as the maintenance of an acceptable standard of living. But if social and exchange obligations stimulate, as Renfrew suggests, the incentive for increased productivity and wealth accumulation, the issue of power arises within them not after them. Apparently, political economy operates already in these routine transactions. More specifically, all of this leads us to understand wealth not as an end in itself but rather as an instrumental resource. I am hardly the first to make this point. Baines and Yoffee have also suggested that wealth might be more profitably seen 'as an essentially enabling factor whose potential is released, but also harnessed and contained, by societies' (2000: 16). In other words, wealth is an instrumental resource which mediates relations between people. It is a form of political resource which dialectically forms a structure of relations while at the same time is drawn upon to create new ones. Wealth is an active instrument which must be understood in context; it has no beginning or end; but rather it is manifested in different ways in different places and times.

Yet, the challenge of accounting for the precise form of such 'social' incentives – that aimed to increase production and material advances and dictated particular agricultural strategies (such as Mediterranean Polyculture) – once again is not taken up into detailed consideration, nor the possibility that the struggle for power or status elevation might itself be the crux of the matter behind choices of economic conduct that increase material outputs. Consequently, 'in Renfrew's functionalist account power comes as an epiphenomenon to serve abstract – socially disembodied – economic interests. More paradoxically still, although Bronze Age people in general are depicted as economically greedy personalities, those who establish themselves as elites are held to have done so without any reference to their economic action. Accordingly, chiefs acquired

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their position in the first place not because they assumed any special successful role as economic actors (cf. Brumfiel and Earle 1987: 1). In other words, economic differentiation is not seen to play any significant part in the formation of relational social inequalities. Hence, the economic and the political are presented as two unrelated fields of action. There is some question, however, about the validity of this separation. Following Marx, Cohen (1974: 22-23) reminds us that relationships between people in the processes of production, exchange and distribution, namely economic relationships, are relations of power and therefore essentially political, and economic interests and political interests interpenetrate, act and react with each other:

In both institutions [economic and political] relationships are manipulative, technical, contractual and instrumental, as men in different situations use one another as means to ends and not as ends in themselves (Cohen 1974: 23).

Significantly, Renfrew's peripheral treatment of the unequal generation of wealth by prehistoric actors in the subsistence/redistribution account is at odds with other statements about wealth's instrumental significance found scattered in his germinal book, *The Emergence of Civilisation*. For instance, Renfrew writes:

The possession of wealth confers honour; it is an invidious distinction. Nothing equally cogent can be said for the consumption of goods, nor for any other conceivable incentive to acquisition, and especially not for any incentive to the accumulation of wealth (1972: 497).

One may wonder whether Renfrew's limited investigation of the instrumentality of wealth's generation is due to pure and simple omission or whether it is deliberate and having mainly to do with his perception of elites as public servants. For if one is to portray prehistoric chiefs as altruistic agents, then they are at pains to find an explanation not only for the uneven distributions of wealth witnessed in the Minoan archaeological record but also for the generation of wealth. Obviously, one way out of this problem is to overlook deliberately the matter. In other words, if Renfrew had directly stressed the significance of wealth inequalities in the emergence of powerful groups, he would contradict his functionalist argument according to which elites came into being not as exploiters of economic opportunities aiming primarily in their self-interest, but rather as benevolent public servants.

Gilman's (1981) view is somewhat different. To be fair, we cannot apply Webster's criticism to Gilman. For at least he does not see material wealth as the basis of relational social disparities. Material wealth for Gilman is just the trappings of established elites – the symptom of power not its cause. In the model of the emergence of social stratification proposed by Gilman wealth appears as a passive carrier of information regarding the distributive aspect of social inequalities in Early Bronze Age Europe. Of course capital-intensive techniques (such as Mediterranean

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Polyculture) can increase agricultural productivity. However, it is not the increased agricultural produce that brings power, according to Gilman, but rather the opportunity these subsistence technologies offer to some aspirants to high status for bullying the mass of the population. By being a bully one becomes first a leader and then a wealthy person. Gilman, like Renfrew, does not take into account the instrumental role of economic differentiation and wealth disparities in the development of social stratification. However, unlike Renfrew, Gilman's marginal consideration of wealth is not a matter of mere omission – deliberate or otherwise. It rather stems from his clearly expressed belief that the significance of wealth in prehistoric Europe is limited in its display potential by already established elites. Once again, political economy is seen to evolve. For if wealth is held to possess any instrumentality at all, this is only at the chiefs' hands, legitimising elite institutions through conspicuous display.

The *Social Storage* model proposed by Halstead and O'Shea is a very appropriate case study with which to take the enquiry further since it describes in a more sophisticated way the mechanisms that led to an uneven distribution of wealth on prehistoric Crete through a process of economic interdependence (1982; see also O'Shea 1981; Halstead 1981a, 1988, 1992a). Moreover, Halstead (1987) has directly confronted the problem of how the rich first got rich in antiquity, since farming, according to past historians, seems to offer limited potential for accumulating wealth. A brief summary of the model is necessary at this point.

Set in the context of the heterogeneous environment of southern Greece, the hypothesis is that cycles of agricultural production and consumption involved risk and uncertainty as they were carried forward from one year to the next. However, primitive technology makes direct storage an ineffective safeguard against a run of lean years. Consequently, the effective strategy might have involved indirect storage, where surplus production is used as animal feed, and social storage where surplus is given to needy neighbors in the expectation that help will be reciprocated when circumstances are reversed. The development of the system then arises from variable productivity (dictated by temporal climatic fluctuations) in different localities and from a 'normal surplus' in successful localities granting the repeated success of particular households and the repeated failure of others. The latter are driven deep into debt obligations, the repayment of which shifted from food reciprocity to labour obligations and material tokens. Accordingly 'the stability of tokens then permits the sustained, unequal accumulation of wealth and its transmission across generations within a corporate group' (Halstead 1988: 525). In such a way then, an elite could have developed which expanded its wealth and power within the community. Here we come upon a difficulty regarding the sustained uneven accumulation of wealth.

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Long-term uneven distribution of wealth, based on success in subsistence matters seems difficult to achieve in such an unstable environment as that assumed by Halstead and O'Shea for Crete. I have suggested in chapter two that the likelihood of maintaining scattered plots could be a practice that would have countered the erosion of household autonomy in subsistence matters, thus making unnecessary any option for social storage. However, even if we leave aside this possibility, and we treat climatic heterogeneity in the model's terms, there is again a difficulty. Whereas we can admit that households may differ in wealth matters at any specific moment, the heterogeneous environment (periodic climatic fluctuations in rainfall) assumed by the model forces us to recognise that each family or corporate unit might expect to experience great fluctuations in harvest yields through time. One cannot completely disagree with Halstead (1987) that occasional windfall profits could have made a contribution to the income of some households resulting in economic differentiation in wealth matters. In this sense, the *Social Storage* model gives a satisfactory answer to the question raised by Webster, namely how wealth is acquired in the first instance. No doubt, climatic variability by resulting in uneven crop yields can be seen as one determining factor in the creation, at any moment, of a society of 'haves' and 'have nots'. At the same time, the model emphasises the issue of *the long-term and permanent/amplified accumulation of wealth* by some corporate units as basic to the mechanism by which well to do farmers transform themselves into leaders. Hence, O'Shea, the co-author of the *Social Storage* account, has rectified Webster's question by stating that

The issue, therefore, is not the existence of asymmetries in the productive potential of wealth of kin groups but the conditions under which these asymmetries are amplified and made permanent (1990: 353).

It is the long-term uneven accumulation of wealth, according to Halstead and O'Shea, that makes economic differentiation permanent and enables net lenders of subsistence relief to stabilise their position against net borrowers by creating continuous obligations of repayment. Simply put, one can be a chief only if they are able to achieve a constant agricultural surplus in order to keep on accumulating obligations of debt by needy receivers. The system, therefore, depends on amplification of wealth inequalities in agricultural produce.

Yet, while periodic climatic variability creates temporary wealth inequalities, it negates the consolidation of permanent groups of givers against receivers of agricultural surplus, that is stable groups of 'haves' and 'have nots'. I find it difficult to assume, as the model does, that occasional windfall profits (based on periodic variability in rainfall) could have resulted in a sustained long-term wealth accumulation by some farmers. As Van Andel and Runnels have noted 'because each unit must anticipate that it might need the surpluses accumulated by others at some time, none is

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able to accumulate at the expense of others' (1988: 241). Everybody has to tighten their belts at some point. Likely, differences in wealth, if these are assumed to be primarily and simply a result of the impact of the alteration of good and bad years in people's fortunes, would probably tend to be short-lived. It would be difficult for economic disparities in agricultural produce to attain a constant amplification and permanent consolidation. In short, one might argue that the 'well to do' farmers would change not only from generation to generation but also within a single generation. The successful farmer of a single year or even of a longer run can easily be transformed into a needy neighbour in another year, or longer run, and reconvert the tokens acquired via past good yields for food. This leads me to ask: how then does long-term amplification and accumulation of wealth happen?

There could be a way out of this problem if the model did not propose a single causal factor as a motor toward economic differentiation. Broadly speaking, uneven distributions of wealth in the form of agricultural produce – at any moment and in any society – might be the result of several factors both social and environmental. Following O'Shea (1990) and Gilman (1990), among others, I suggest that opportunities for economic differentiation arise in every society. It might be the case that you and your family are skilful and hardworking farmers whereas I and my kin are people of leisure rather than of labour. Crop pests or drought might ignore your plot and choose mine. An accident of fire, theft, raiding, or a crisis of death or illness might strike at someone else's household depriving labour hands at a critical stage of the agricultural cycle. And it might be a rumour that my neighbour's exceptionally good harvest is caused by a secret technique that she is reluctant to share. The possibilities and their combinations are endless. One may also note differential success (among corporate units) regarding calculations in options over the use of resources and time, as well as an uneven devolution of inheritance among siblings depending on seniority and/or sex. It follows from this that we do not need to assume a single cause to account for the generation of wealth inequalities and economic differentiation. Harold Schneider (1974: 211-213) long ago asserted in his ground-breaking study of economic anthropology that even the most so called primitive societies display economic variability as a result of a wide range of parameters – with variability in rainfall being only one of them. At the same time, there is no reason to suppose that agriculture constitutes the primary sphere of economy where wealth disparities can be built and observed. Without going into detail, it might be argued that it is our tendency to perceive wealth mainly as a quantity of goods that privileges the significance of agriculture in the production of wealth. This is because agriculture appears to be the type of production *par excellence* involving material movement from a lesser to a greater quantity. The inception of this idea goes back to Ricardo (Gudeman 1986):

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Corn feeds into itself and into all other economic processes which, being dependent upon agriculture are not themselves productive. Agriculture occupies a core position in [Ricardo's] model precisely because the input arrow runs in one direction only, from it to manufacture (1986: 56).

One may also note that nature (land and sea) might be seen as the source of all material wealth since it provides the raw material, that is the resources, that human effort transforms into wealth. This transformation, however, is not realised only through farming as the Physiocrats⁸ of Enlightenment France had mistakenly believed (Gudeman 1986: 71-89). One can add hunting, gathering, fishing, pastoralism, and craft production. Nature is the source of wealth not agriculture. Agriculture is only a technology to extract resources that might, but are not always transformed into wealth. More significantly, although nature is a repository of various resources that have the potential of being perceived as wealth, there is nothing more misleading than directly calling amounts of resources wealth. Wealth is a social construct. Ten sacks of grain can only be wealth if they are socially desirable.

At the same time, in some contexts the crafting of a modest material like wood could produce a carving of such exceptional beauty that it is desired by all. This is again a kind of wealth – a socially desirable object. Yet, here we are still speaking of wealth disassociated from social relations where the material object does not entangle webs of social obligations. For wealth to be transformed into a vessel of power, it needs to possess a further quality, namely to establish relations among people. Thus, we have to tackle two questions: (1) how do some resources and not others acquire a social desirability that transforms them into wealth? (2) And how do some kinds of wealth establish relations between people?

In the beginning of this section I introduced the question raised by Webster, where he observes that current discussions of the *emergence* do not specify the precise processes which may throw light on the ways in which human actors transform themselves materially into agents of power in the first place. This question is an important one, because it makes us attend to the problematic treatment of wealth, but it needs rectification because there is no single factor responsible for economic differentiation. *Social Storage* attempts to find an answer, but it is only partial because we should not find a single cause. The importance of *Social Storage* is that it attempts to see how wealth fits into the dynamic of the formation of political relations.

However, we should not ask how wealth is produced in the first place in order to find a single answer because there are endless possibilities, and economic differentiation is universal. O'Shea and Gilman shift the focus of the investigation on how wealth differentiations that can be

⁸ A school of economists in eighteenth-century France whose central tenet was that agriculture constitutes the unique productive source within the economy. For a detailed account and critique of Physiocracy see Gudeman (1986).

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observed at any time and in any society become permanent. I would go one step further and suggest that this shift in emphasis might account for the ways that economic disparities are reproduced and amplified. That is how the rich become richer. Yet, if our main question is how wealth transforms into power, long or short-term wealth disparities equally. The question therefore is not how wealth is amplified, but what people do with both their short-term or sustained wealth that enables them to establish relations of power with other people.

How wealth transforms into power and the materially productive dimension of wealth

Wealth is a necessary but not sufficient condition for power relations. In this section I will try to show how interdependence in the subsistence regime is traditionally thought to be transformed into value that promotes asymmetries of power and prestige. One therefore might ask how rich farmers or managers of agricultural produce use their wealth (surplus in agricultural production) in order not only to attract other types of wealth but most significantly to impose their power over the mass of the population. Unfortunately, the destination of this particular kind of wealth, namely the way it was used to create relational social inequalities, rarely constitutes an issue of theoretical expansion in Aegean archaeological literature. Hamilakis has suggested that

the accumulation and unequal distribution of wealth is one thing and the acquisition of power is another. In other words, most of the models above do not explain how surplus in agricultural production or possession of valuable items are transformed into power over other people. The link is not automatic or obvious, and needs explanation (1995: 68).

Likewise for Trigger:

In more complex societies, the relative wealth of clan groups or of age and sex divisions within such groups may be apparent from differential distributions of material possessions, but this does not reveal how such differentials were socially regulated and supernaturally justified (1974: 100).

Paralleling these scholars, Brumfiel and Earle make the point more succinctly:

... no single [archaeological] model adequately explains *how wealth operates as a political resource* (1987: 7, emphasis added).

To the reservations of the above scholars I am adding a further one. If one is disposed to accept the simple correlation where a particular type of wealth is produced or accumulated and results in inequalities materially reflected in other types of wealth, one should go further and ask: how does the transformation of particular material items (and not others) into socially desirable objects, that is wealth, happen? And how do some forms of wealth become vessels of power or representations of high status? In other words, how do people assign value to objects?

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Returning to the question raised by Hamilakis, Trigger and Brumfiel and Earle, Max Weber describes a way in which wealth might be appropriated by intelligent people in order to expand its economic potential:

Remember, that money is of the prolific, generating nature. Money can beget money, and its offspring can beget more, and so on. Five shillings turned is six, turned again it is seven and threepence, and so on, till it becomes a hundred pounds. The more there is of it, the more it produces every turning, so that the profits rise quicker and quicker. He that kills a breeding-sow, destroys all her offspring to the thousandth generation. He that murders a crown, destroys all that it might have produced, even scores of pounds (Advice to a young tradesman 1748: 87 cited in Weber 1992 [1930]: 15).

He that spends a groat a day idly, spends idly above six pounds a year, which is the price for the use of one hundred pounds ... he that loses five shillings, not only loses that sum, but all the advantage that might be made by turning it in dealing, which by the time that a young man becomes old, will amount to a considerable sum of money (Hints to those that would be rich: 80 cited in Weber 1992 [1930]: 16).

Marcel Mauss offers an alternative way regarding wealth's appropriation:

... they hoard but in order to spend, to place under obligation ... on the other hand, they carry on exchange, but it is above all in luxury articles ... or things that are consumed immediately as at feasts (1990 [1925]: 96).

... thus one section of humanity, comparatively rich, hardworking, and creating considerable surpluses, has known how to, and still does know how to, exchange things of great value, under different forms and for reasons different from those with which we are familiar (1990 [1925]: 42).

The passages cited in Weber describe a situation where the primary property of wealth (which a clever person should keep in mind and take advantage of), is its potential for growth through constantly renewed productive investment. At first sight, the passages do not seem to connect wealth with status, but rather to offer a way of wealth amplification as an end in itself. This yet is not the case if one considers the social context of the eighteenth century when these words were stated. Concealed behind the economic conduct of ceaseless investment and *reinvestment* of wealth is as Weber claimed, a peculiar moral code that he called the Protestant ethic. The Protestant ethic aimed to provide guidelines for a socially appropriate design for living. Examining the tenets of this ethical code reveals that the earning of more and more money – worldly economic success – is only superficially an end in itself. According to the Protestant ethic's doctrine of predestination, economic success through ceaseless investment and *reinvestment* and combined with frugality in this life and avoidance of using wealth as a means to buy material luxury and pleasure, was taken as a sign indicating those who would be assured salvation in the next life, the elect of God's choice (Giddens 1992; Weber 1992 [1930]). To phrase it slightly differently, in this historical context, ceaseless wealth accumulation was above all a measure and medium of social standing, constructed in this world and cashed out in the

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Kingdom of God. The ceaseless wealth accumulators were not assessed simply as successful economic actors but they were ranked on the top of a pyramid of moral status as honest, persons of credit, and morally superior.

But this way of understanding the relation of wealth and moral status, which according to Weber seemed not only to characterise but also to have shaped the spirit of modern capitalism, is far from being the whole story, as the passages by Mauss reveal. What Mauss maintains is that the relation between wealth and prestige can also be seen in a different light, that from an ethnocentric 'rational' point of view might seem irrational. Whereas in the passages provided by Weber, what seems to empower the wealth bearers consists of actions whereby surplus value is appropriated in productive ways combined with worldly asceticism, in Mauss's ethnography it is the unproductive appropriation of accumulated wealth or its immediate and spontaneous consumption that might confer prestige or authority or both. We can, therefore, observe two distinctive ways whereby the possession of wealth may bestow status elevation and power: the one involves appropriation of the materially productive potential of wealth, the other draws on its materially unproductive dimension.

Both perceptions regarding the transformation of wealth into prestige (although not clearly into power) are present throughout the Aegean literature. Yet, it is only the materially productive dimension of wealth that has, more often, been associated with the emergence of relational power inequalities and has been more elaborately presented⁹. A significant milestone in the study of the political potential of the unproductive dimension of wealth has been offered by Voutsaki (1995, 1997) for the Mycenaean southern Greek mainland. Likewise, Day and Wilson (2002) have recently proposed that elite power at prepalatial Knossos was largely based on large-scale ritual consumption of food and drink and fine pottery rather than on craft production. Renfrew has considered the potential of the materially unproductive dimension of wealth to confer status through acts of conspicuous display and consumption but he has not incorporated this line of investigation in his elucidation of the original emergence of elites in the *Subsistence/Redistribution* model (1972: 497-498, 1986a: 162, 1994: 160). As noted earlier, according to Renfrew, wealth in the form of agricultural produce enables *already established chiefs* to consolidate their power and prestige. Early Bronze Age local chiefs and later palace households used part of agricultural produce to provide sustenance for craft specialists who in turn constructed valuable artefacts and symbolically charged paraphernalia manipulated by elites in ceremonial and public contexts, in order to display and embellish their power (Renfrew 1982a:

⁹ See among others, Bintliff's *Landholding* model (1982); Halstead and O'Shea's *Social Storage* model (1982); Pullen's (1992) *Subsistence/Wealth* model (1992).

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286). In this way, elites converted wealth in the form of foodstuffs into more durable forms that through ostentatious displays served the justification and perpetuation of their sovereignty. Moreover, external trade or exchange of valuable and prestigious craft-goods between elites of individual polities, could further enhance elite power both at home and beyond by offering leaders the opportunity to strive for higher inter-polity status in the spirit of competitive emulation (Renfrew 1982a: 286; Renfrew 1986b: 8; Cherry 1986: 41).

For Gilman, as we saw, the issue is not how wealth might have been transformed into power but rather how it was not. Wealth in the European Early Bronze Age, as Gilman (1981) argues, consists mainly of valuable tomb gifts and votive hoards. This I believe is a statement of paramount importance. For Gilman, while he talks about the presence of a particular type of wealth, he also implies the significant absence of another, namely utilitarian tools, traded bulky agricultural produce and large-scale public facilities implying central management of food production and distribution. If these could be traced to a great extent in the archaeological record of prehistoric Europe (and they have not been according to Gilman) they would suggest a completely different scenario where wealth could acquire an instrumental significance in the formation of relational social inequalities. Large public works associated with redistribution systems and elaborate utilitarian tools, would indicate that wealth in the form of agricultural surplus could have tied commoners into webs of social relations, mobilising labour forces and enhancing productivity. Simply put, rich producers could have used their surplus food to engage the rest of the population in activities that would enhance the material assets of the wealthy farmers at the expense of the needy. Non-cooperation by commoners to undertake these tasks would mean denial of necessary goods for the securing of livelihood (mainly food and tools facilitating agricultural production). Gilman mentions the absence of evidence for the exchange of foodstuffs and tools which could have helped substantially increase production to support the idea that wealth inequalities in the form of agricultural produce do not stand behind the emergence of European Bronze Age elites. Still, the materially productive dimension of wealth is not absent in Gilman's model. For he clearly suggests that capital investments (Mediterranean polyculture, plough, irrigation systems, etc) operated in order to increase wealth in agricultural produce. Yet, according to Gilman, the exchange value of this type of wealth is not supported empirically and consequently the circulation of wealth in the form of agricultural produce cannot be taken as the basis of social integration in prehistoric Europe. People invested in production in order to be self-sufficient, not in order to exchange with their neighbours. Exchange he suggests is mainly in luxuries. This wealth is rather a vessel for expressing an elite's lifestyle. It does not establish relations of authority. It is only wealth in items necessary for living (foodstuffs and

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means of production such as utilitarian tools) that has this instrumental potential because it establishes relations of exchange that people cannot afford to escape. However, since Gilman thinks that the European material record suggests self-sufficient households and a lack of tools of a practical value, he sees the instrumentality of this type of wealth to evaporate at least in this particular context. He then correctly shows that wealth was mainly manifested by luxury metal items deposited in tombs, which is a kind of materially unproductive wealth. However, he refuses to consider this type of wealth as instrumental in creating relations of dominance and subjugation. The ghost of Marx still haunts us. For it was Marx who first claimed that, in economic terms,¹⁰ it is primarily wealth in the form of the ownership of the means of production by some segments of society that enables some people to exploit their fellow human beings.

Wealth in the *Social Storage* model does not figure as an expendable and redundant concept. This account of power relations is unique in offering a mechanism by which wealth is transformed into power by enabling the establishment of networks of social relationships. As Leach (1982: 149-175) reminds us, in the absence of a social relationship there can be no power operation. All enduring social relations Leach argues, at the same time are structures of indebtedness since they involve an exchange of interactions which bear the potential to establish debt between the parties concerned. This is like gift-giving transactions which from the point of the participants are felt as debt rights and obligations. However, if a debt is fully repaid, the social relationship between the parties concerned ceases to exist and consequently the conditions for power operation disappear (Leach 1982: 152). In other words, power emanates from regular flows of debt (cf. Blau 1971; Gosden 1989a: 47; 1989b: 361).

Let us not forget that the creation of debt obligations occupies a central position within the social storage mechanism of exchange. But how is it then that obligations owed to the lenders of food are believed to be transformed into power? As we saw, the model asserts that successful farmers cash in obligations of debt in exchange for valuable craft goods (tokens) and/or the labour of unsuccessful farmers. In the first case, wealth in the form of agricultural produce is converted into a more durable storable form. Yet, one might ask what is the destination of the tokens and extra labour accrued at the hands of the lenders of subsistence relief? What do people

¹⁰ It should be recalled that Marx was trying to account for ways through which mobilisation of social labour is achieved and the emergence of capitalism, and not about the original emergence of social inequalities. As far as simple societies are concerned Marx (1967 [1894] cited in Wolf 1981: 50) felt that labour mobilisation through the control of the means of production is difficult to achieve, because in these societies the means of production are simple and so accessible to all. An alternative way of labour mobilisation suggested by Marx was through the exercise of domination and power (political force). By following this alternative (in the absence of control of the means of production) to explain the emergence of elites (and not the mobilisation of labour as Marx did), Gilman is very close to formulating a circular argument. He overcomes this somewhat by considering power as a naked force.

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make of these types of wealth subsequently? Presumably, valuable tokens and labour may be accumulated as hoarded wealth including display items and built structures respectively (the classic archaeological representations of inequality). What can this accumulated wealth promote, and how does this play out in daily life? How do the systems expand in greater economic inequalities and the perpetuation of relations of indebtedness signifying greater social disparities of prestige and/or power?

At this point the *Social Storage* hypothesis does not go into much detail, but some hints are present. As Halstead (1981a: 192) points out, the possession of valuable tokens may confer prestige. Furthermore:

[The] sustained, unequal accumulation of wealth and its transmission across generations...makes possible the symbolic and active manipulation of wealth ... and so provides the critical preconditions for the emergence of institutionalised social differentiation (Halstead and O'Shea 1982: 93).

In the first case, the ways in which these tokens can confer prestige are not specified at all. By accepting that material possessions directly correlate with prestige or power only half the story is told. It leaves open the question of what causes the transformation of trinkets into recognised symbols of status or vessels for the means of domination. In the second, although Halstead and O'Shea suggest the symbolic and active manipulation of tokens as a mechanism whereby social differentiation may be established, they do not directly specify what this symbolic manipulation involves. Here, one might suppose practices of conspicuous ceremonial consumption of wealth, such as active destruction (as in the spectacular rivalry potlatches), mortuary or ritual deposition. We now have sufficient anthropological and archaeological perspectives¹¹ to remark that these practices, although they are mentioned by Halstead and O'Shea (1982: 94; see also O'Shea 1981: 178-179) as potential solutions aimed at overcoming inflationary threats to the value of tokens, can be thought of as strategies pertinent to the games of status elevation. To complicate the issue more, a further question may be asked. Can we assume a prestige or status elevation based on the display of tokens acquired through blatant exploitation? (Your tokens, or you'll die from starvation!). It is certainly true that those facing famine would pay whatever price for a sack of grain, but who really loves or honestly respects the black-marketeer or the loan shark?

You have given gifts, but you have not given gifts of love, you have not given with a kindly heart. You would already have been robbed of your life, if I had known earlier of the danger (from the Edda saga cited in Mauss 1990 [1925]: 81).

¹¹ See for example, Bataille (1998); Bradley (1982, 1990); Godelier (1999); Gosden (1989a, 1989b); Kristiansen (1989); Manning (1994: 227 and n.7); Mauss (1990 [1925]); Morris (1986); Nakou (1995); Voutsaki (1997); Weiner (1992).

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While we can see that wealth could be manipulated symbolically to bring prestige, it seems difficult to conceive of in this context since it was arrived at under the conditions of duress that saw families being forced to hand over precious objects to their more fortunate neighbours. At this point, it should be recalled that we are dealing with small village populations where the actions of individuals or whole families cannot easily be hidden from public view. The ways you make your riches (either honest, or not), your cooking expertise as much as the way you clean your house, and attend to your farm and livestock constitute favourite subjects of village gossip. Economic success may, quite often, lead to resentful gossip, scornful nicknames, envy, ostracism, and even vengeful sorcery. At the Duau village of Papua New Guinea, for instance, members of the community who are affluent beyond the average person are not only the targets of malicious gossip but also the victims of envious sorcerers (Thune 1983: 361). Similarly, the Amatenango Indians of Mexico take this tension between ungenerous well to do people and the rest of the community to extremes. There, as Nash (1966: 79) informs us, men are known to have been jailed or even killed for being not just stingy but blatantly prosperous. That mere possession of wealth is not enough to guarantee respect has also been documented by Drucker (1937: 252 cited in Gould 1966: 86) for the Tolowa Indians of northwestern California. Equally, as Sahlins notes for the Kapauku of upland New Guinea, 'a selfish individual who hoarded his money and does not lend it, never sees the time when his words will be taken seriously and his advice and decisions followed, no matter how rich he may become' (1972: 215). Examples from world ethnography can be endlessly multiplied, yet one does not need to go beyond present day Greek villages to realise that mere possession of wealth does not automatically elevate status. Greek metaphorical expressions used to characterise people who make their wealth by exploiting others such as *karcharies* 'sharks' or 'blood suckers' are illuminating in indicating the fact that wealth can buy you resentment rather than prestige. Unlike the *Social Storage* model, the phenomenological dimensions of political behaviour cannot be ignored in accounts of prestige creation given the emic realities of political processes. Striving for prestige is not simply based in the possession of resources, but is underpinned by the way that people manipulate the meaning of these resources and the transactions in which resources are involved strategically in order to appeal to the public mind (Cohen and Comaroff 1976).

Furthermore, valuable craft goods exchanged for food by needy households figure in the *Social Storage* model as a rough equivalent to money¹², as a neutral medium of exchange, as

¹² There is now an extensive anthropological literature on money that cannot be presented in detail in the limited space of this chapter. For a detailed account of different anthropological perceptions on money see various contributions in the volume edited by Bloch and Parry (1989), *Money and the morality of exchange*.

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anonymous objects devoid of history. Yet, there is, a fundamental difference between money and valuable items; what sets valuable objects apart is that they are *unique* (cf. Graeber 1996). On the contrary, money is characterised by impersonality and anonymity (Nash 1966; Simmel 1990). It is a unitary media of exchange which demotes a wide range of activity to a single ladder of measurement (Nash 1966). As Graeber (1996: 6) has aptly put it, every dollar bill is exactly the same as any other, that is to say that money does not involve unique articles at all:

As a result money presents a frictionless surface to history. There is no way to know where a given dollar bill has been. Nor is there any reason one should care, because neither the identity of its former owners nor the nature of transactions in which it has previously been involved in any way affects its value. This is why transactions involving money can be said to be 'anonymous': the social identities of those transacting need not become part of the stakes of any transaction. (Graeber 1996: 6).

It is worth stressing that the symbolic possibilities of money to express the quality of a relationship are finite; one can pay more or can pay less, one does not ask what and how, but how much (Leach 1982: 174; Simmel 1990). Consequently, 'its *quantity* is its only important determination' (Simmel 1990: 259, emphasis added).

The authors of the *Social Storage* model by being silent on the nature of valuables (that is they rarely mention what type of objects their category of valuable craft goods consists of) dismiss the distinction between money and valuable tokens. Consequently, they turn the latter into an anonymous medium of exchange and standards of value (units of account) similar to money by stressing primarily its capacity to signal and define differentiation through its quantitative dimension. This can be illustrated by Halstead and O'Shea's assertion that 'if too many valuables exist relative to the potential of the system their value declines ... indirect storage networks may be faced with an inflationary problem'¹³ (1982: 94; O'Shea 1981: 178). In other words, like money the value of tokens is held to rest on quantity and their exchange value for goods (food in this case), as well as on the ways that this value based on quantity can be affected by the relationship between the demand and supply of goods. Valuable articles, however, do not follow the same principle as money mainly because they are unique. Take for example, Picasso's *Guernica* or a Trobriand *kula* armshell. These are unique objects in the sense that only one *Guernica* exists, and although there are other Picasso paintings, each is special in its own way. Similarly, a *kula* armshell differs from any other. Although some might have similar shape or colour or be similar in appearance, they are unlike any others: they have individual names, because they are associated with different and ranked histories of fame and reputation constructed

¹³ Inflation as Schneider points out refers to a situation where 'the demand of goods is increasing at a rate faster than the rate of increase in supply' (1974: 238).

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through their circulation in time, as they absorb the life stories of their successive owners (Weiner 1992). More significantly, a Picasso or a precious *kula* shell are not media for economic (commercial) exchange but media for building prestige and fame. The destination of money on the other hand, is reduced solely to the media of economic transactions.

Unlike money, whose quality is its quantity, the worth of valuable objects does not rest primarily on amount but on their individual biographies making them distinct from one another. According to some anthropologists (Mauss 1990 [1925]; Nash 1966: 26), in so called simple societies, livestock, salt, cocoa beans and durable objects, such as brass ingots, shells, woodpecker scalps, and many others may constitute media of exchange and units of account. Thus, they are taken to be a kind of primitive money or simulate aspects of monetary exchange. However, they are not an indifferent medium of exchange exactly like money since they are exchanged only for similarly valuable goods in a system consisting of separate and ranked circuits or spheres of exchange (Bohannan 1955; Nash 1966). Additionally, while we could see salt, cocoa beans, or pigs as money since they appear to be categories composed of indifferent things, the same cannot be safely asserted for more durable goods. In much of the literature it is not clear whether, for example, a shell or a brass ingot is like any other shell or brass ingot or if they have a personality like the Trobriand *kula* shells. As Dalton (1965, 1967) points out, in some cases these so called primitive monies have names and history, so they are not like our money. Different anthropologists seem to agree that neutral media of exchange like money have a feature that makes them unsuitable for use in the construction of obligations (Douglas 1967: 120; Mauss [1925] 1990: ch.2 n.29; Leach 1982: 166; Schneider: 1974: 176-177). That is the mobility which makes likely the discharging of a debt without any continuing social relationship. This point occupies a central position in Simmel's philosophy where money is seen as responsible for *non-committal relations* between people due to its power to discharge debts (Becker 1959: 221). Conversely, where complete obligation is pursued as a form of repayment there is no medium of exchange involved (Schneider 1974: 176-177). If there is one, the relation between the parties disintegrates, the obligation is repaid and the flow of power stops.

Returning to the *Social Storage* hypothesis, the reader should note that there is only one case where they are informed about the kind of things the category of valuable tokens may have consisted of. For the context of prehistoric Thessaly, these might have been polychrome pottery with paints from rarer minerals, a few metal articles, furs and skins, and spondylus shell bracelets (Halstead 1981a: 198). Now, there are two implications surrounding the game of power and prestige, depending on whether one sees the above tokens as unique or as indifferent media of exchange. As for the prestige game, if we accept that these objects derive their value from their

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unique social biographies, and not from exchange potential to buy food it seems difficult to see them conferring prestige to those who subsequently acquired them through exploitation. Obviously, Halstead and O'Shea's wealthy elites are not the successful *kula* players but black-marketeters who try to expand their wealth by exploiting the needy. At least within the local community, valuable tokens acquired through exploitation would more likely bestow upon their receivers notoriety rather than prestige.

On the other hand, if the *Social Storage* account had not treated tokens to a large extent like money, but had seriously considered their value to be grounded in their unique personalities, it would offer an important way whereby material wealth is transformed into power. I propose that if we choose to perceive the tokens as indifferent media of exchange like money, which as remarked earlier has the feature of discharging debts, we face a difficulty regarding the establishment of obligations which is essential to the formation of power relations. Who can assure us that a needy person, given that she maintained this status year after year, would choose to continue exchanges with the same successful farmer? Once the needy paid for food through a money-like medium, their debt would be repaid. They would not need to come back to the same lender and may well choose to transact with a different one. Yet, if this farmer had taken from the needy not a neutral medium of exchange, like money, but rather an object with a social history reluctantly exchanged the previous year for food, the farmer is in a situation to attract the same client for further transactions. The value surrounding this item may have attracted the needy who once possessed it to continue transacting with the new possessor in the hope that in the future the lost precious item would be regained. Here I am reworking from a different perspective Weiner's (1985, 1992) germinal thesis that some valuable things are to be kept by their possessors because they are inalienable possessions crucial for the construction of social identities. Although these possessions might be lost through the vagaries of life, they bestow power to those who can keep them. Furthermore, some inalienable objects may be highly desirable or socially valued goods which everybody wished to possess. In this sense, an inalienable possession may have a radiant presence that pervades all exchange events for giving and the status that ensues is measured by what has been kept (Weiner 1992: 65). Simply put, it is an avenue for both prestige and power.

As for the capacity of debt obligations to act not simply as prestige magnets but as vehicles of domination by channelling resources into materially productive investments, the *Social Storage* premise asserts that

... regular donors [of normal surplus] perhaps gain[ed] rights to the labour of recipient farmers and act[ed] as 'agents' for more distant exchanges with other communities (Halstead 1992a: 112).

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... by acquiring rights to additional labour, the most successful households could further enhance their productivity and would be better able to maintain exchange partnerships in other villages (Halstead 1989: 76).

... durable craft goods made possible the uneven accumulation of wealth, enabling successful farmers to reinforce their position by making favorable marriage settlements, acquiring rights to labor and so on (Halstead 1988: 525).

The lenders of subsistence relief, therefore, can use the labour of borrowers for their own needs and the tokens ostensibly constitute part of a bridewealth exchange for the acquisition of a bride, or they could be reconverted for labour. Valuable tokens are perceived mainly as vehicles which produce more intense economic disparities by enabling the successful to *reinvest* in production by acquiring labour either directly or indirectly through marriage which in the long term provides children and thus a labour force for the extraction of larger food surplus. Once again a *new* vicious circle of debt obligations begins. The interesting question is whether the successive circles of indebtedness involve the same actors. I propose that this is highly doubtful for transactions involving money-like payments where the debt is fully repaid do not extend the relationship between creditor and debtor in time.

The idea that wealth transforms into status and power through its materially productive *reinvestment* has been also put forward by Pullen (1992) in a more recent study where he constructs a so called *Subsistence/Wealth* model to account for the development of elites in southern prehistoric Greek mainland. According to him, the discovery at the Early Bronze Age Tsoungiza hill in Ancient Nemea of fragments of terracotta oxen figurines preserving a system of yokes, implies the adoption of high-cost plough technology¹⁴. As Pullen asserts, only prosperous farmers could be able to afford cattle and ploughs and adopt plough agriculture which permits exploitation of new microenvironments. Their wealth (in the form of agricultural produce), therefore, could be productively invested as capital in cattle. The ownership of a plough and a pair of oxen in turn would be a strategy for individual households to amplify their wealth. Essentially you become wealthier through harnessing the energy of the oxen thereby increasing your productivity and secondly by creating obligations to your neighbors when they wish to lease the oxen and plough for their own productive increase. So far, the model lacks the sophistication of *social storage* where a complex mechanism generating debt obligations is suggested. Pullen fills the lacuna of his argument by introducing a Marxist element:

The high cost of the new capital technology would lead to *differential access to the means of production*, and hence a hierarchy of wealth, status, and power, headed by an elite, would emerge. One

¹⁴ According to Pullen (1992: 53), plough agriculture constitutes a costly investment since it involves the procurement and maintenance of ploughs as well as caring and provision of food for the oxen.

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could imagine the oxen- and plow-owning farmer becoming the 'big man' in this community (1992: 53, emphasis added).

The spirit of a peculiar type of capitalism, the one that Weber quite hastily felt to characterise all modern capitalism¹⁵ is present in both *Social Storage* and *Subsistence/Wealth* premises:

... the desire to make money with money, which implies transforming wealth into capital, *which is in turn invested in the process of production and circulation of commodities* (Godelier 1999: 63, emphasis added).

The particular view which connects wealth with a growth of the productive forces was advocated in the early 70s by the economic anthropologist Pierre Rey who proposed that the role of circulation (of women, men and goods) in society is to reproduce the means of production (Berthoud and Sabelli 1979: 745). However, does this peculiar type of economic rationalisation or 'obsolete production mentality', to use Berthoud's and Sabelli's words, hold for the creation of authority, status and prestige in the past? Finally is economic achievement the fundamental force and arena behind the inequalities of the Early Minoan II? And if it is in what sense?

For some economic anthropologists (Godelier 1972, 1978; Wolf 1981: 49; 1982: 77-78) this kind of wealth is not anymore just wealth but economic capital¹⁶. In Wolf's words,

Wealth in the hands of holders of wealth is not capital until it controls means of production, buys labour power, and puts it to work, continuously expanding surpluses by intensifying productivity through an ever-rising curve of technological inputs (1982: 78).

The point here is not just whether one can assume the existence of capital in pre-monetary societies or not. For example, Godelier, Wolf as well as Marx himself (de Ste. Croix 1981: 504) would doubt that there is anything like capital in so called archaic societies given their belief that this emerges only when (monetary) wealth can mobilise labour power and control the means of production. I do not completely share this view. What is more interesting, however, at this point, is how deeply engrained Aegean accounts of inequality are with respect to the productive dimension of wealth.

Ethnographies are rich in cases of so called primitive societies where the desire of or struggle for wealth in the above sense (wealth accumulated as capital invested in production – intensification of agriculture, construction of facilities for productive projects) did not have a place since individual accumulation of wealth was not possible or an accepted principle of economic and social life (Mauss 1990 [1925]; Godelier 1999). We are also informed of past

¹⁵ But see Baudrillard (1988), for example, who has remarked that today capitalism is a consumer capitalism.

¹⁶ There has been a long debate among economic anthropologists over the definition of capital, see Firth (1964); Forde and Douglas (1967).

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communities that possessed levelling mechanisms militating against the accumulation of wealth in the hands of particular segments of society and thus preventing likely further investments in production or undermining the significance of economic achievement as a parameter of social distinction. Manning Nash (1966: 35, 78-79; 1967: 8-9) has mentioned some of these mechanisms: symbolic destruction of wealth, potlatch, forced sharing or loans to relatives and neighbours, provision of services and resources in communal office, generous give aways of various goods, feasting and drinking following economic success, fracture of property through bilateral systems of inheritance. We can also add here offerings to the gods, the dead and/or the ancestors.

Such mechanisms ensure that wealth is consumed so that the property of the various households within the community will be equivalent. To avoid any misconceptions, an important point should be stressed. In these societies it is not that wealth is not produced at all but rather that it is mainly consumed in ways that do not make it an economic capital for accumulation and *reinvestment* in production. For example, the Kachins of highland Burma see movable property as an adornment to the person and not as capital to be invested (Leach 1954: 42). The Kwakiutl of the Northwest Coast of North America, on the other hand, engage in frenetic disbursements of wealth (Mauss 1990 [1925]). Similarly, well to do Tolowa Indians seek prestige by throwing themselves into lavish expenditure of food for their fellow villagers at various festivities (Gould 1966: 86). Simple disinterest can hardly ever be suggested as a reason for lack in a situation of potential capital accumulation (Firth 1964: 22). Let it be made clear that so called archaic people neither lack economic sense nor despise economic profit (Forde and Douglas 1967: 27; Malinowski 1961 [1926]: 27; Shennan 1999; Panoff 1970). The materially unproductive manipulation of wealth has nothing to do with altruistic instincts and a stress on social solidarity or a lack of economic rationality. Most importantly, it can be also observed in modern societies.

In present day Crete, for instance, at the annual feast celebrating the dormition of the Virgin Mary, villagers gather to drink, eat and dance in the village square. As part of the festivities, a lottery organized by the village development society takes place in order to raise funds for community infrastructure such as the renovation of churches. The festival in general is taken as a good opportunity to show off one's wealth by wearing elegant clothing and jewellery or arriving in an expensive car. While many people exploit this opportunity to show their wealth, the ostentatious display of material goods does not on its own confer prestige. During the festival, participants are approached to buy lottery tickets, and most agree to buy some. It is only after the festival lottery comes to a close that the real game of prestige begins. When the musicians put down their instruments and the festival organiser has everyone's attention the final lottery tickets

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are put up for sale. Over the microphone, after thanking the crowd for joining the celebrations, the organiser invites people to make offers for the remaining tickets. This is when aspirants for local status begin a competitive game of bidding for the most tickets. Those who wish for the most prestige wait until the end and will often buy all the remaining tickets with the entire village looking on. Once again, prestige accrues to those who conspicuously spend their wealth in materially unproductive ways. Keeping this in mind, let us challenge 'our obsolete production mentality' and acknowledge, as Berthoud and Sabelli long ago suggested, that

... the emergence of social structures the entire function of which is material accumulation and the development of productivity is not the only phenomenon worthy of attention (Berthoud and Sabelli 1979: 749).

I propose that a similar picture is revealed through the archaeological record for Early Bronze Age Crete. This will be examined in detail in the next chapter. At the moment, I want just to stress that economic enterprise in the form of accumulation of resources or capital for reinvestment in further production does not seem to have been the predominant strategy for status elevation or the establishment of relational inequalities at least during the Early Bronze Age. To avoid any misconception, I do not mean to suggest that reinvestment in production was absent in these times. After all, even the more frenetic acts of material destruction or generous giving-aways of various kinds of wealth depend on having valuable things to destroy or give, and these somehow have to be produced or acquired. To argue merely that control of and reinvestment in production are strategies pertinent to the construction of status and relational social inequalities is a truism. To go beyond truisms we need thorough context specific investigations of the ways the above strategies promote and are being promoted by structures of indebtedness. Here I am thinking along the lines of the programme of work that Chris Gosden (1989b) has undertaken in a study about Late prehistoric southern Britain. Moreover, I do not wish to chart different ways of wealth's appropriation along an evolutionary scale. My main point is that wealth is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the creation of status or relational inequalities. It becomes sufficient only when it establishes relations between people. However, these relations vary from time to time and from place to place and they depend on the understanding a particular society has of its wealth.

Chapter 4

The 'when' question of wealth and inequality

Introduction

The debate over the *emergence* of social complexity, characterised by the advent of palatial structures and forms of social inequality has not only been concerned with understanding why and how social differentiation came into being, but has also been obsessed with hunting down its temporal origins. This is consistent with a theoretical standpoint which understands inequality as a phenomenon limited in history. Broadly speaking, if one assumes that inequality is a condition that can be traced to a specific time and is not omnipresent, they are obliged to reconstruct its genesis. In the Aegean in particular, from the eighties until today generations of prehistorians have faced a further riddle. This concerns the question of whether palatial social inequalities were the outcome of a cumulative process already present in the workings of the Prepalatial (EMI-MMIA) era, or a series of sudden quantum leaps (cf. Cullen 2001; Haggis 1999: 56; Hamilakis 2002: 14; Manning 1994: 230; Warren 1985: 83).

It might be argued that the historical question of inequality in general and its attendant issues of tempo are parts of an epistemological tradition which has provided us with a false evolutionary conundrum to begin with (cf. Hamilakis 2002). For to stress a point made in chapter one, societies that precede so called civilisations are reduced to evolutionary stepping-stones worthy of study not for their own sake, but rather because we assume that they have something to say about their presumably more complex antecedents. Hence Soles's assertion that the tracing of social inequalities in prepalatial Crete 'will determine the way the appearance of palatial civilisation itself is explained' (1988: 49).

Meanwhile, closer observation reveals that current perceptions regarding the historical question of inequality in Europe have been shaped not so much by the material record but by our ideological conditioning (McKay 1988: 6). This is based on strong Western biases and mythologies about key concepts such as wealth and value (among others) which distort our view of past societies. For instance, wealth as the archaeological manifestation *par excellence* of inequalities is usually defined according to Western biases about aesthetics, scarcity, quantity and quality. More significantly, these occidental biases, being the product of archaic ethnographic

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myths rather than representations of reality, convolute and exaggerate our view of contemporary Western societies. In other words, what is commonly believed to represent our Western way of conduct has been constructed as an exacerbating antithesis of an often ethnographically conceived imaginary perception of the *Other*, i.e. so called contemporary 'primitive' societies (cf. Moreland 2000). Hence, we submit to unrealistic views of both so called simple and complex societies. The former are seen as fairly irrational in economic terms and lacking any impulse to acquisition whereas the latter, represented as their very opposite, are seen as the epitome of economic rationality and calculating ability.

The aim of this chapter is to summarise the debate regarding the historical question of inequality in the Aegean and reveal its genealogy. The controversy, as I shall try to show, is grounded on different poorly conceived perceptions regarding the ways in which wealth transforms into power and the material visibility of this transformation. In chapter three I made a distinction between the ways in which wealth is transformed into an instrument of domination. The first involves practices that draw on the materially productive dimension of wealth, whereas the second relies on routines which capitalise on its materially unproductive dimension. A further challenge I confront in this chapter is to test these different practices against the archaeological record of Early Bronze Age Crete. It is in this period that Aegean scholarship traditionally seeks the social foundations for the emergence of the so called Middle and Late Bronze Age Minoan palaces. The chapter will conclude with some ideas on the materiality of inequalities which may serve as starting points for rethinking the misleading polarity between 'simple' and 'complex' societies.

Gradualists, Revolutionists and Intermediaries: The hunting down of origins

In its pursuit of the historical origins of social inequalities in the Aegean, current research falls into three rough categories. The first is commonly called the gradualist approach and tracks a steady growth in social complexity and ranking, from the beginning of the Early Bronze Age, namely EMII through to the Palatial times. The genealogy of this perspective goes back to Arthur Evans who enthusiastically asserted that the doctrine of evolution constitutes the central truth of archaeological science (1884: 28). His sequential division of Minoan civilisation into three stages – Early, Middle, and Late – was akin to stages of organic growth or personality development¹

¹ The stages of the development of living organisms are birth/growth, florescence and maturity (Cherry 1983: 36).

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(Cherry 1983: 36; Hamilakis 2002: 6). One can certainly trace here the nineteenth-century evolutionary idea that there is a close analogy between organic evolution and stages of social evolution². For Evans, the analogy between organic evolution and cultural progress was best exemplified by the gradual evolution of material culture. This perception has been shared to one degree or another by more recent followers of the gradualist theory. Branigan (1970) and Warren (1987), for instance, have interpreted Early Minoan settlement plans, building complexes, storage facilities, bench fittings, wall plaster and various other architectural appearances as embryonic forerunners of the Middle and Late Minoan palaces.

Meanwhile, the gradualist approach has reached new levels of sophistication through the work of scholars who cast their theory of evolving social inequalities in the form of explanatory models. Thus, Renfrew (1972) proposed that the 'emergence of civilisation' is the end result of a sustained cumulative growth triggered by the multiplier effect – a mechanism of positive feedback loops between different fields of activity (subsystems). Halstead and O'Shea's *Social Storage* premise (1982), mentioned above, represents a continuation of this tradition in that it aims to model how relational social inequalities grew up gradually and steadily through the building of economic obligations. The same is true for Pullen's *Subsistence/Wealth* model (1992) which, as we saw earlier, surmises an incremental evolution of social inequalities accelerated by prolonged strategies of capital investment in agriculture. An additional example is Gilman's non-functionalist model (1981) which assumes that Minoan ruling classes developed through the employment of capital subsistence techniques that gradually retarded the process of segmentation characteristic of tribal societies. Likewise, Webster (1990) sees palatial social inequalities as the outcome of a prolonged incremental process where familial labour pools expanded to include the binding of a non-kin clientele. Supporters of the gradualist thesis, therefore, visualise Early Bronze Age non-palatial societies as evolutionary stepping-stones containing the early but steadily blossoming seeds for the social asymmetries observed during the Palatial era. As Soles (1988: 49) has put it, the appearance of social ranking in the Prepalatial period can imply an intermediary stage in the development of Minoan civilisation, corresponding to what Service has called a chiefdom. Equally, for Webster (1990), stratification increases as societies evolve incrementally from band to tribe to chiefdom to state.

The second category is what has been called the revolutionary approach (Bránigan 1995), after the work of its main exegetist John Cherry. Cherry (1983, 1984) castigated the gradualist

² The proclivity of evolutionary thinkers to suppose that there is a homology between the level of social complexity and personality development is known in sociology as 'homological compression' (Giddens 1984a: 239; see also note 4 below).

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perspective for its weak empirical foundations, its lack of explanatory power – for it assumed that time itself constituted the main mechanism of social change³ – and its embracing of fallacious nineteenth-century orthogenetic concepts and organic metaphors. According to Cherry's (1978:429, 1983, 1984) view, it was a sudden and discontinuous speeding up of social processes beyond anything that had gone before, rather than a slow and cumulative development during the EM period that led to the formation of Minoan palaces and the social inequalities that they reflect. With regard to the content of social transformation, Cherry made a point of paramount significance. He maintained that one should not lose sight of the fact that the organisational changes observed during the Palatial times were not just of degree, as the gradualists assumed, but largely of *kind*. Hence, for Cherry, social change is not just a quantified change but also a qualitative one. According to the principles of general evolution, higher and more complex forms of social life surpass lower and less complex ones (Giddens 1984a). While Cherry's revolutionary paradigm does not leave this completely behind, the emphasis on the qualitative aspect of social change is a refreshing approach. A summary of the qualitative content of changes has been provided by Cherry himself:

... at the outset of the EM period...there is yet *no* evidence, at any rate, for the actions of central persons ... *nor* obvious indications of social ranking or stratification; there are *no* unambiguous signs of craft specialisation or of the institutionalised division of labour; economic links beyond the local residential unit are so few that subsistence self-sufficiency must have been the norm ... a millennium or so later – certainly by the nineteenth century B.C. – *everything* is different. The archaeological record of the Old Palace period provides reasonably satisfactory evidence of small-scale states in operation (1983: 33-34, emphasis added) [and]... we see [now] the Aegean palace system at its height, representing a degree of economic specialisation and political centralisation comparable ... to the contemporary states and hierarchical imperial organisations further to east (1984: 20).

In my view, the revolutionary approach's potential for understanding the quality of social change in Minoan Crete has not yet been fully realised among Aegeanists. In charting the qualitative difference of the Prepalatial landscape according to a series of absences, one perpetuates the mythological and fictitious polarity of 'simple' and 'complex' societies which, as recent advancements in social anthropology demonstrate, has no real historical credibility. Most importantly, echoing Meillassoux, Wolf (1982:89) has remarked that describing societies by an absence of features tells us hardly anything about what they are. To this we need merely add that Cherry's view of prepalatial actors as *self-sufficient isolates* is refuted empirically by the existence of a complex web of socio-economic interactions during the Prepalatial period. This

³ The tendency of evolutionists to believe that the elapsing of time is the same thing as social change has been called by Giddens 'temporal distortion' (1984a: 242). This along with 'unilineal compression', 'normative illusion' and 'homological compression' are considered to be the four dangers associated with evolutionism (for a detailed critique see Giddens 1984a: 239-242).

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becomes clear when we consider the acquisition and procurement of raw materials such as bronze, gold and obsidian (Branigan 1991a; Broodbank 2000: 276-319; Carter 1998; Day and Wilson 2002) and also intricate patterns of pottery production and circulation (Day *et al.* 1997; Whitelaw *et al.* 1997; Wilson and Day 1994).

At the same time, adherents to the revolutionary approach variously suggest that Early Bronze Age Cretan societies were fairly egalitarian and autonomous and that the key to the emergence of social inequalities lies in the last phase of the Early Bronze Age, namely, EMIII and/or even later in the MMI. Watrous (1994: 713), for example, has denied the existence of wealthy chiefly elites before the Middle Bronze Age⁴. Manning (1994: 233) unlike Cherry and Watrous has traced the emergence of some fragmentary indications of social differentiation in a few large EMII sites in the north or east of the island. Notwithstanding, he postulates a small-scale intensive farming regime led by self-sufficient, independent households for the EM I–II. Additionally, despite his view that the process of social change had started already during the later part of EMII, Manning does not in fact part company from the other revolutionists for he likewise states that a real momentum of development occurred at the relatively short EMIII–MMIA period. In his words, 'what had been an emergent elite in later EB2, now [EMIII–MMI] became a *real elite* ... the key emergence is the ... sudden social transformation that occurred in the EMIII–MMI period' (Manning 1994: 237-239, emphasis added). Finally, Sbonias (1999: 46-47) sees no signs of political hierarchies in EMII despite some variations in the distribution of wealth and asserts that the significant formative period comes after the EMII times.

Meanwhile, a third approach has been put forward by scholars who have tried to bridge the gradualist/revolutionary divide by taking a stance in the middle (Damilati and Vavouranakis forthcoming). I will call this the intermediary approach. For example, Wilson (1994: 44) has briefly made the point that while a scenario of gradual incremental social change might be simplistic, it is equally debated to what extent one can talk about a relatively sudden quantum leap in MMI, as proposed by Cherry. Drawing on his thorough review of the ceramic deposits from EM Knossos, Wilson came up with an alternative model which depicts the process of social change and growth in prehistoric Crete as always cumulative, yet proceeding at an irregular tempo. As he sees it, the EMIIA and also the EMIII represented an accelerated pace of progress whereas the intermediate EMIIB demonstrated a slower tempo of change. According to this narrative, the dawn of social ranking in Crete can be traced to the EMIIA period. It is during this period, that there is firm evidence for grand-scale ritual feasting and drinking (Day and Wilson

⁴ In his more recent work, Watrous (2001) has moved slightly away from his extreme revolutionary orientation without however significantly deviating from his original emphasis on rapid change.

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2002: 149), consumption of fine pottery (Wilson and Day 1994), regional specialisation in pottery production, intricate webs of exchange interactions (Day et. all 1997 and Whitelaw et. all 1997), trade in sumptuous items and large-scale projects of a labour intensive nature (Wilson 1994). This picture, which suggests the existence of a central authority, is best exemplified at Knossos, though it is also evident at some other sites like Malia, Mochlos and Gournia (Wilson 1994). In sharp contrast to EMIIA, the subsequent period EMIIB appears to be more conservative. More specifically, earlier Knossian trade contacts with both the Mesara and the Cyclades vanish. As Wilson points out, this might have been the result of desertion or destruction of many Cycladic settlements. Overall, the EMIIB was a period of isolation from the rest of the Aegean for Knossos and Crete as a whole. For Wilson, this situation suggests a slowing down of the tempo of change during the EMIIB. Yet, as he notes, all this was about to change in EMIII when one can detect a new acceleration of the pace of social change within the Prepalatial sequence. At Knossos for example, though the scarcity of imported wares evident in EMIIB continues into the EMIII, there is now evidence for another major rebuilding programme similar to that argued for EMIIA. Wilson's account presents us with a detailed review of the Knossian archaeological evidence during the Prepalatial times. However, the approach is still largely descriptive and we are offered no more than clues regarding the nature and the sources of elite power at Knossos.

A significant fund of ideas that can be drawn upon to highlight these issues comes from a more recent paper by Day and Wilson (2002). Here they analyse evidence from Prepalatial Knossos and the nearby harbour site of Poros-Katsambas suggesting that political power was already in operation between EM I–EM II. They argue that both sites might have acted 'as a potential basis of power' since they both reveal various practices that point to a significant degree of control held by the few (Day and Wilson 2002: 154-155). For example, Knossos, the earliest known Cretan settlement, demonstrates considerable communal feasting and drinking practices that could be associated with commemorative ceremonies and cosmological perceptions given the great antiquity of the site and its dramatic location on route to Mount Jouktas dominating the skyline. Poros-Katsambas, on the other hand, seems to have been a cosmopolitan centre and a repository of knowledge of distant places since it bears evidence of skilful craft production and procurement of large amounts of raw materials and processed and unprocessed commodities from the Cycladic islands. Notwithstanding their different content, for Day and Wilson, both categories of activities evident at Knossos and Poros-Katsambas respectively, appear to represent 'acts of transformation' which could be crucial in the creation, reproduction and sanction of social inequalities. At Knossos, acts of transformation pertinent to the creation of a reservoir of power were materialised through the production of memory and the manipulation of ceremonies. At

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Poros, on the other hand, they were materialised through procurement of exotic raw materials and skilled craftsmanship. Hence, according to this narrative, Knossos and Poros played complementary roles in the process of the emergence and legitimation of power during the EM times.

Even more thought-provoking, however, is the authors' contention that Poros, which displays evidence of considerable involvement with intensive craft production and procurement of exotic raw materials, did not see the building of a palace. Most significantly, the palace was founded at Knossos where evidence of intensive craft production is modest and acts of consumption of fine craft items, food and drink seem to have played a more prevailing role. Finally, as this account holds, the building of the palace of Knossos can be seen neither as a sudden innovation within the local prehistoric landscape nor as the product of steady incremental growth but rather as a project that came about through the historical appropriation and reworking of older traditions. This reworking became legitimised through changes in the landscape such as the building of architecture and the enacting of ceremonial display, which helped to renegotiate older forms of inequality.

Another example is formulated by Haggis (2002: 137) who has expressed his frustration about both the gradualist and revolutionary approaches to social change. In response to gradualists, he has asserted that it is more productive to see palatial Crete simply as an expression of the continuum of change instead of as the climax or florescence of social development. On the other hand, he proposes that the revolutionary paradigm is inadequate because of its insistence on framing prepalatial Crete as a static landscape filled by self-sufficient and isolated communities, despite the accumulation of new evidence which reveals a plurality of regional and inter-regional systems of contact during the Prepalatial era. According to this view, prepalatial society was not actually less complex compared to the palatial but *less connected*. In Haggis's (2002: 123, 129) definition, low connectedness corresponds to a pattern of interaction consisting of multiple and distinct but not unidirectional, unilateral or hierarchical linkages between different sites of a region. More specifically, Haggis (1999) accepts the existence of EMII elites and places emphasis on their purely local, intra-site sphere of influence. He also notes that their village-based power was legitimised and expressed ritually in the context of local cemeteries. These local elites, projected themselves at a regional level at the end of the Prepalatial times (EMIII–MMIA) after a period of discontinuity at the close of EMIIIB when, according to Haggis (1999: 55), environmental and social limitations contained economic expansion or obstructed growth. The expansion of the formerly local elites' spheres of influence demanded an extension of the agricultural resource base – land, and more importantly labour – and hence it created competition

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and conflict. To the victors went the spoils and the successful elites were able to mobilise enough labour to build and maintain the palatial social structures. According to this narrative, peak sanctuaries were very significant features of the late Prepalatial periods, because they provided elites with large regional labour pools and operated as religious mechanisms of regional control.

However, Haggis's model of social change appears to be quite close to the gradualist approach. Despite his distinction between local elites in EMII and regionally projected elites from EMIII onwards, as well as arguments about a marked discontinuity in economic development during the end of EMII, Haggis clearly sees a gradual tempo of development from village elites to regional elites. Most importantly, though he states that palatial society was not more *complex* than prepalatial but more *connected*, he implicitly reduces the differences between the two societies to one of scale. It is a truism that palaces represent a hierarchically connected landscape whereas prepalatial communities on the other hand express a lower level social organisation *in spatial terms*. I certainly agree with his point that this difference of scale should not be seen as the revolutionists' simplistic polarity between isolated, self-sufficient egalitarian and highly interactive ranked societies. Nor should we accept the gradualist argument that sees the transformation of lesser forms of power into higher ones. Yet, in Haggis's narrative, the basis of power at both EMII and EMIII-MM times has hardly changed. Extraction of agricultural surplus acquired through labour mobilisation is the vessel of power of both local and later regional elites. Now, if the model is analysed closer we find that Haggis's stress on control of surplus production as the source of power (*Staple Finance*) is not based so much on empirical evidence but rather on a preconceived belief that food surpluses are the condition *sine qua non* for the existence of elites⁵. This might well be the case, but as Earle has pointed out, control of subsistence production, namely, *Staple Finance* 'underlies many, but not all, early complex societies' (1987a: 64, emphasis added). Additionally, as argued earlier, food surpluses or any kind of wealth turn into relations of power only through their conversion into a system of debts. However, the model offered by Haggis does not elaborate on the issue of this conversion. The only interesting change traced here is the shift of the cultic mechanism of labour mobilisation from the local cemetery to peak sanctuary.

Whitelaw⁶ may also be classified among the supporters of the intermediary approach. He has

⁵ We find here implicitly once again the Ricardian idea according to which agriculture constitutes the determining force of the economy.

⁶ It should be noted here that Whitelaw's earlier work (1983) has seemed to follow the revolutionist tradition. More specifically, his architectural analysis of Myrtos (Fournou Korifi) has been taken by revolutionists to support the idea of EM egalitarian societies. Nevertheless, although Whitelaw himself portrayed Myrtos as an egalitarian community, he recognised that in fact a few EMII sites deviated from this picture. Whitelaw's aim actually was to demonstrate divergent paths to complexity.

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recently proposed that local elites operated at *some* sites, like Knossos, Malia and Mochlos during the early Prepalatial times (Whitelaw 2002). A significant point made by Whitelaw concerns the different pattern of development envisaged at Knossos, Malia and Mochlos respectively. Whereas the first two sites developed into early palatial centres, the third declined after the later Prepalatial times. He proposes that at Knossos and Malia, the basis of elite power corresponded with the good agricultural potential of the sites' immediate hinterlands and the control of subsistence production and surpluses. To Whitelaw, therefore, local elites are seen to have operated under what Earle has called a *Staple Finance economy* (1987a, 1999; see also Earle and D'Altroy 1985). On the other hand, the power of EMII elites at Mochlos, Whitelaw argues, was grounded in the control and manipulation of high-value finished goods and/or exotic raw materials coming to Crete through long distance maritime activity. This recalls Earle's *Wealth Finance economy*. The later Prepalatial era (EMIII), however, saw a major shift from maritime trade activity towards the land and an emphasis on agricultural practices. This shift enabled elite groups inhabiting sites with great agricultural potential, like Malia and Knossos, to expand their influence and activity. Most importantly, agriculturally fashioned elites used a different system of value, i.e. agricultural produce, which was much more powerful and direct than trinket tokens. Consequently, successful elites soon found themselves as regulators of the palatial system of interaction. I find Whitelaw's scenario an attractive one. More specifically, his point about different parallel sources of power during the EMII period allows us to recognise local diversity and move beyond accounts that present sources of power with broad-brush strokes. Yet, on the other hand, the celebrity status offered by Whitelaw regarding the control of agricultural production and surpluses at some EMII sites, as well as during the whole course of the Palatial times, raises again the 'how' questions of wealth and relational inequalities posited in chapter three. I will return to this issue in greater detail below. Furthermore, Whitelaw's view of some EMII communities, like Myrtos, as essentially egalitarian does not appear to suggest a radical break with the revolutionary approach, for it likewise perpetuates the simplistic dichotomy between simple and complex societies.

Current readings of the Cretan EBA: A bird's eye-view

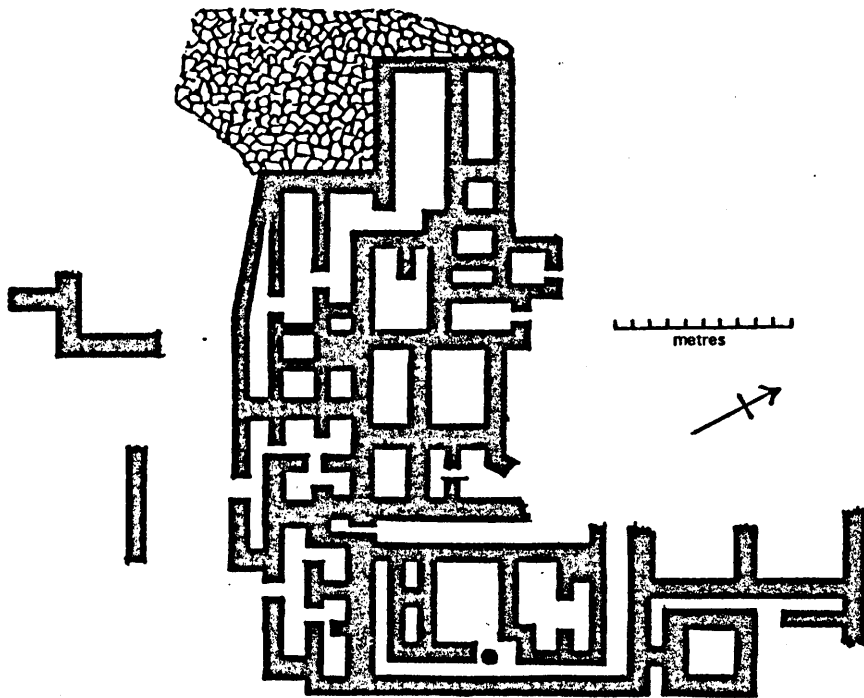
The scarcity of information from the Early Bronze Age (Cherry 1984: 29; Haggis 1999; Manning 1994: 230) constitutes a regularly quoted hindrance militating against our attempts to reach any definite conclusion about the state and kind of social inequalities during this era. Haggis (1999) has pointed out the poor quality and incomplete nature of early publications, the insufficient evidence regarding the configuration of entire EM settlements, the poor condition of much of the

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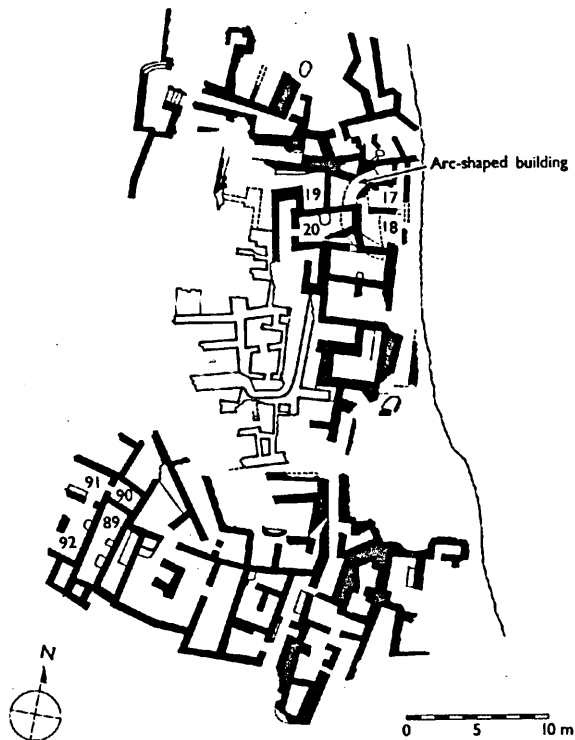
recovered architecture which presents archaeologists with no more than tantalising fragments of walls. One may add here the amateur character of many early excavations as well as the selective preservation of some types of EBA material excavated at the beginning of the century. This is the case with skeletal remains (cf. Soles 1988), for instance, which constitute a category of evidence that given the scientific techniques available today could have shed light on various patterns of social and economic inequality. More specifically, skeletal remains can offer some interesting information regarding the issues of ascribed or inherited status and the degree of correlation between nutritional/mortality patterns and wealth differentiation (Mays 1989; Smith 1987). At the same time, exemplary modern publications of EBA settlements are scarce, whereas data from some EM contexts have not yet been fully published. Finally, one needs to bear in mind that most of our knowledge about the period is derived from funerary contexts which are highly prone to both ancient and modern plunder. Nevertheless, this fragmentary evidence has been marshalled by gradualists, revolutionists and intermediaries alike in hunting down the origins of Minoan social inequalities. There are two broad sets of data which current research has drawn upon in order to trace the state of social inequalities during the Prepalatial period: (1) profane architecture and furnishings and (2) burial evidence. Examination of the former seeks to find evidence for structures with an assumed public function as well as size and quality differentiation between residential buildings. The latter is analysed in order to attempt to find potential indications of social ranking evidenced in differences in burial form, tomb gifts and tomb architecture.

Gradualists' reading of the EBA material realities

In 1970, Branigan brought forward the theory that the EMII *House on the Hill* at Vasiliki and the contemporary architectural complex at Myrtos (Fournou Korifi), both in eastern Crete, could be seen as architectural ancestors of the Middle and Late Bronze Age Minoan palaces (Plate 4). He argued that closer observation reveals that both structures feature architectural details that are more or less incorporated into the palaces. The architectural checklist that seemed to Branigan (1970: 48), to demonstrate that the concept of palace was present already from the EM times included features like wall timbers, wall benches, light-wells, painted walls, narrow corridors, intermural wells, paved staircases, western and central courts, long magazines and offset doorways. It is particularly worth mentioning the traces of paving in the area between the south-east and south-west wings of the *House on the Hill*, which were held to indicate the most prominent characteristic of palatial architecture, namely, a central paved court (Branigan 1970: 44). In a similar vein, Warren (1987) has described Myrtos and Vasiliki as architectural predecessors to the palaces. He points out several characteristics at Myrtos, which constitute



a) Plan of the EM House on the Hill at Vasiliki (source: Branigan 1970: 45, Fig. 7).



b) Plan of the architectural complex at Myrtos-Fournou Korifi (source Warren 1992: 198, Fig. 27.1).

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elements of the subsequent Palatial architecture. In addition to the cellular settlement plan, benches, storage facilities and red plaster, special emphasis is put once again on the possible existence of an open court at the central summit area (unit 45). Warren then turns our attention to the EMIII–MMI constructions south of the palace at Malia. The close-knit structure of possibly three architecturally distinct units each consisting of small rooms and passages, was taken by Warren to be an intermediate developmental stage continuing the form of Vasiliki and Myrtos and heralding the architecture of the first palaces. Accordingly, in Warren's evolutionary scheme the first palaces are in turn forerunners of the second palaces. Hence, the MM *kouloures* at Phaistos, having themselves evolved from the EM Myrtos storage magazines, are believed to anticipate the circular granaries of the LMI Malia.

According to Warren (1972: 267 and n.2), the people of Myrtos and possibly Vasiliki led a communal way of life and lacked any apparent chief⁷. To avoid any false impression, Warren's perception of Myrtos as an acephalous community (in political terms) does not imply an affiliation to the revolutionary thesis. Rather, to him, the tempo of social evolution was quite slow, and accordingly what one observes at Myrtos or at Vasiliki are the very first stages of a prolonged incremental growth that finally culminated with the emergence of palatial societies. Unlike Warren, Branigan (1970: 118, 1988: 67) went on to propose that the residents of both the *House on the Hill* at Vasiliki and the architectural complex at Myrtos represented not only a central power within their respective local communities but also *in embryo form* the occupants of the future palaces. The elaborate plan and large size of these structures seemed to suggest their interpretation as *single* mansions indicating the existence of a class able to mobilise wealth and labour for the construction of residences superior to those of their fellow beings. Likewise Cosmopoulos (1995: 28) sees the buildings at Myrtos and Vasiliki as indications of the emergence of a central authority. Branigan (1970, 1972, 1988, 1995) has also pointed out the appearance of monumental domestic architecture at Palaikastro in EMII and at Knossos in EMIII. He suggested that both the building with the thick walls at Palaikastro and the L-shaped structure at Knossos were constructed on a different scale to contemporary houses in the same sites pointing to the mobilisation of a substantial human workforce. Hood (1977: 168; see also Hood and Smyth 1981: 8) in his turn has submitted that both structures may be qualified, given their substantial size, as forerunners of the later Bronze Age palaces. In a more recent paper, MacGillivray and Driessen (1990: 399) echo Branigan's suggestion about the building at

⁷ In Warren's words, Myrtos alluded to 'a social organisation based on a single large unit, a clan or tribe living communally and perhaps not differentiated into individual families, and quite without any apparent chief or ruler' (1972: 267).

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Palaikastro by arguing that though further investigation is necessary, a role akin to that of the later Cretan palaces seems likely. Another large prepalatial building, the *Prepalatial House 3*, has been reported by Soles and Davaras (1996: 180) at the site of Mochlos in Area E3. This is a rectangular structure whose size, sophistication of construction and large quantity of EMIII pottery, set it apart from the other Prepalatial buildings discovered so far at Mochlos. According to the excavators, if the above characteristics are not due to a later construction of the building in the Prepalatial times, they may suggest a different function compared to other contemporary structures in the site. Two further large possibly EMIII⁸ structures with an assumed special function come from Knossos. These are the so called *Hypogeum*, a circular underground structure (Plate 5a) below the south entrance of the palace (Evans 1921; Branigan 1988; Cadogan 1992; Momigliano 1991) and the *Keep*, a thick-walled structure featuring six vertical cells at the north end of the Central Court (Evans 1921; Branigan 1988, 1992; Cadogan 1992). The interpretation of these substantial structures as granaries, though not universally accepted⁹, has been taken by Branigan (1988: 67) to suggest large-scale centralised communal storage in EM times therefore further reinforcing the gradualist argument for the development of a central organisational power before the erection of the first palaces¹⁰.

Alongside supposed evidence of vernacular monumental architecture or buildings with a special function, gradualists turn to the mortuary record in order to support their thesis of evolving social ranking. Soles (1988: 50) considers funerary evidence a sensitive indicator of social ranking and has encouraged a focus on various criteria of wealth differentiation derived from burials such as types of graves, grave goods, insignia of authority and differential treatment of the deceased. Hence, both Gilman (1981: 1) and Webster (1990: 343) have variously asserted

⁸ The EMIII date assigned to the structures by their excavator, Arthur Evans (1921) has been the object of scepticism. For example, Pendlebury (1939) dated the *Hypogeum* to the MMIA period. More recently, Momigliano (1991) has argued that though the bulk of pottery from the *Hypogeum* finds comparisons with MMIA pottery types, the fragmentary state of the evidence and the limited investigation of the deposit do not permit any exact dating of the structure. More interestingly, Branigan's (1992) reappraisal of the *Keep* led him to reject his initial acceptance (Branigan 1988) of Evan's EMIII date and assign to it a date not earlier than MMIB.

⁹ The respective functions of both the *Hypogeum* and the *Keep* are far from clear. The *Keep* has been variously interpreted as a prison area with its cells acting as dungeons, a guard tower (Evans 1921), a grain silo (Evans 1921; Branigan 1988) and a cistern (Graham 1962). The interpretation of the *Hypogeum* as a granary has been favoured by Hutchinson (1962), Halstead (1981b) and Branigan (1988), whereas for Evans (1921) the structure more probably acted as a guard entrance. Strasser (1997), on the other hand, has expressed his scepticism about the interpretation of the *Hypogeum* as a granary for its lack of an impermeable interior cement which would render impractical such a function; but see Halstead (1997) for a reply to this view; the debate continues.

¹⁰ However, according to Branigan's recent reassessment of the *Keep*'s chronology (see n.8 above) 'the *Keep* cannot be seen as part of a prepalatial monumental complex, along with the *Hypogeum*, as at one time seemed possible' (1992:162).

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that the rich Bronze Age burials discovered in various parts of Europe leave no question that marked social disparities emerged during the third and second millennia BC. Gilman in particular, following Renfrew, suggests that the development of social hierarchies may also be inferred due to the transition from collective to individual burial rites observed in the beginning of the Bronze Age over much of Europe. In a purely Cretan context, some gradualists have paid attention to the cemeteries of Mochlos and Gournia in eastern Crete, Malia in central Crete, and some Mesara *tholos* tombs (Platanos, Aghia Triadha, and Koumasa) in order to demonstrate the early emergence of social disparities.

Starting with Mochlos¹¹, Soles (1988, 1992a) points out that the mortuary buildings (complex I, II, III and complex IV, V, VI) on the West Terrace seem to reveal a social ranking higher than that represented by the small built tombs, the rock-shelters and the pit grave located on the South Slope. More specifically, the West Terrace funerary assemblage has yielded burials with more abundant and/or unusual mortuary furniture. They are further singled out from the South Slope burials by the location, elegant decoration, greater size and architectural sophistication of the tombs. Significantly, the West Terrace tombs appeared to be foci of elaborate ritual activity since they were provided with a paved avenue of approach and a large altar. On the other hand, such architectural features are lacking from the tombs located on the South Slope. Finally, Soles notes the provision of the West Terrace tombs with several compartments which might have been used for some kind of initial laying-out of the deceased. In his view, this find in conjunction with evidence of bone manipulation may sufficiently demonstrate that burial in the West Terrace was a two-stage undertaking involving much more effort and energy expenditure.

At Gournia, Soles (1979, 1988, 1992a) stresses the employment of two different cemeteries by the population during the Prepalatial times: the North Cemetery placed on the north spur of the Akropolis (Boyd-Hawes *et al.* 1908) and Sphoungaras at the west slope of Pera Alatzomouri Hill (Hall 1912). According to his point of view, the North cemetery with its built tombs above ground (implying a complex secondary treatment of the deceased), altar and prestigious tomb gifts was probably the burial ground for an elite minority. On the other hand, as Soles remarks, the dead at Sphoungaras were buried in pits and rock ledges and were accompanied by very few objects. Moreover, no altar, which could imply ritual ceremonies serving to sanction elite power (Soles 1992a: 255), has been recovered. Hence, the burial pattern at Sphoungaras seems to indicate a much more modest expenditure of energy and resources compared to that of the North Cemetery. This along with the fact that Sphoungaras appeared to be a more extensive burial

¹¹ A more detailed presentation of Soles's account of the cemetery at Mochlos will be offered at the last part of this study.

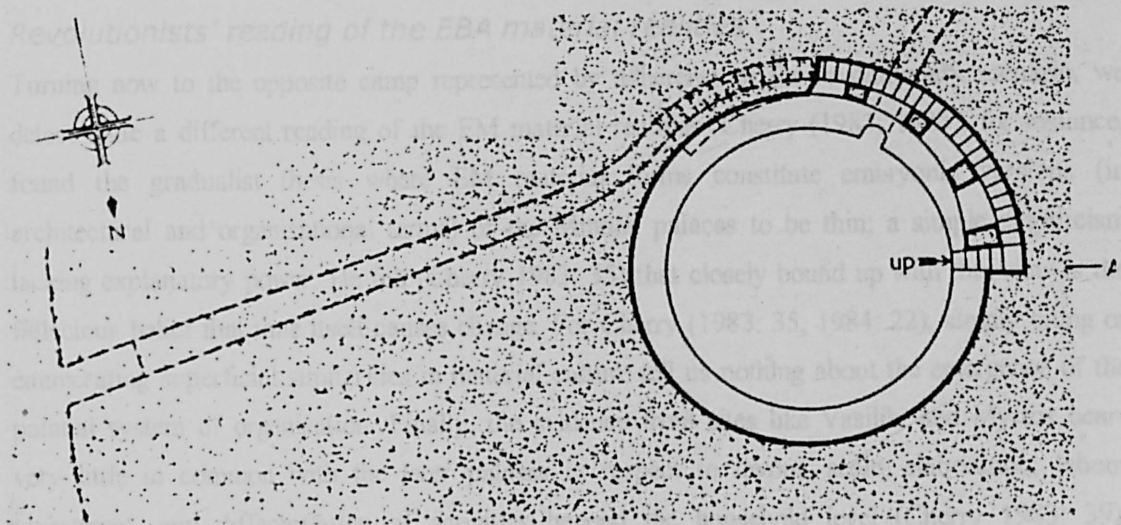
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ground than the North Cemetery led Soles to identify the former as the final resting place for the lower echelons of society, which represented the majority of the population within Gourniote prepalatial society.

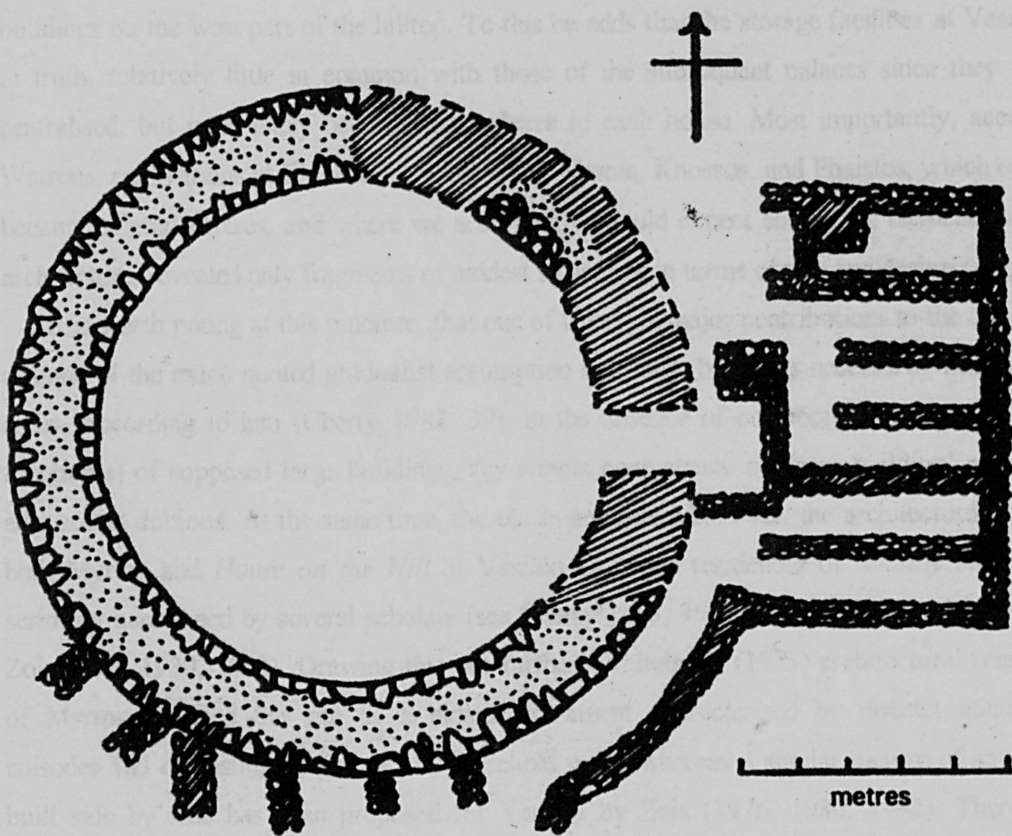
Turning to the Maliote mortuary assemblage, Soles (1988, 1992a) detects a pattern of social inequality which strongly recalls the picture derived from Gournia. More precisely, he observes a significant contrast in terms of energy and resource expenditure between the EMII rock-crevice burials found along the coast and the contemporary small rectangular built tomb (known as the 'Ossuaire Renaudin') in the Necropole des Pierres Meulieres. The latter, displaying far more effort and labour investment as well as a potential secondary treatment of the deceased, was probably reserved for the richest inhabitants of Malia. To Soles, the contrast between rich/elite and poor/commoner elements of the Maliote population became even more striking at the end of the Prepalatial period (EMIII). At this time, along with the introduction of modest *pithos* burials throughout the coast, three more tombs were constructed at the Necropole des Pierres Meulieres and the first burials appeared at the architecturally elaborated earlier structure that lies beneath the monumental protopalatial tomb at Chrysolakkos.

Moving now to Mesara in southern Crete, Branigan (1984, 1991b, 1993: 114) modified his initial characterisation of the area as the land of unranked, egalitarian communities. He proposed that although the *tholos* tombs in the Asterousia Mountains still seemed to suggest egalitarian communities, the evidence from the Mesara plains and the foothills implied societies in which social ranking was emerging. At the cemeteries of Platanos, Aghia Triadha, and Koumasa, each exhibiting two or three tombs, it has been suggested that *Tholos A* at Platanos (Plate 5b), *Tholos A* at Aghia Triadha and *Tholos B* at Koumasa, were in size, architectural sophistication and concentration of precious grave goods superior to the other(s) in the same cemetery. In this light, the communities represented by these burial grounds were understood by Branigan to stand between simple egalitarian farming societies and fully-fledged chiefdoms.

Meanwhile, according to gradualists, evidence for social ranking comes also in the form of small moveable possessions such as seals, daggers, diadems, metal vessels, elaborate forms of pottery and stone vases (see Branigan 1983a, 1984, 1991b). It is commonly remarked that finds such as copper daggers and gold diadems could be interpreted as insignia of authority (see Soles 1988). Finally, the presence in Crete of a stratified society of 'haves' and 'have-nots' already by the EMII has also been inferred from the discovery of seals which are taken to argue for the emergence of ownership and private property (see Vitelli 1978: 43; Cosmopoulos 1995: 24).



a) Plan of the hypogeum at Knossos (Renfrew 1972: 97, Fig. 6.9).



b) Tholos A at Platanos (Branigan 1970: 169, Fig. 40).

Revolutionists' reading of the EBA material realities

Turning now to the opposite camp represented by adherents of the revolutionary scenario, we detect quite a different reading of the EM material realities. Cherry (1983; 1984), for instance, found the gradualist thesis where EM material forms constitute embryonic versions (in architectural and organisational terms) of the Minoan palaces to be thin; a simple empiricism lacking explanatory power. He felt (Cherry 1983: 35) that closely bound up with this view is the fallacious belief that time itself causes change. For Cherry (1983: 35, 1984: 22), simply citing or enumerating superficial similarities in material culture tell us nothing about the emergence of the palatial system of organisation. Finally, the evidence from sites like Vasiliki and Myrtos bears very little in common with the later palaces in respect to layout, scale, elaboration, labour investment, and differentiation of activities beyond the household level (Cherry 1983: 39). Following Cherry, Watrous (1994: 713) has decried the portrayal of Vasiliki and Myrtos as architectural forerunners of the later palaces. More specifically, he objects to Branigan's argument for the existence of a paved central court at Vasiliki since there is no evidence of EMII buildings on the west part of the hilltop. To this he adds that the storage facilities at Vasiliki have in truth, relatively little in common with those of the subsequent palaces since they were not centralised, but most likely occurred as annexes to each house. Most importantly, according to Watrous, excavations at EMII levels at sites like Chania, Knossos, and Phaistos, which eventually became palatial centres, and where we accordingly should expect embryonic elements of palatial architecture, revealed only fragments of modest structures in terms of size and design complexity.

It is worth noting at this juncture, that one of Cherry's major contributions to the debate was a critique of the much quoted gradualist assumption that large buildings necessarily reflect political elites. According to him (Cherry 1983: 39), in the absence of corroborative evidence about the function(s) of supposed large buildings, any simple equivalency of 'large building' and powerful elite seems dubious. At the same time, the old hypothesis which saw the architectural remains of both Myrtos and *House on the Hill* at Vasiliki as single residences of *wealthy men* has been seriously questioned by several scholars (see Cherry 1983; 1984; Watrous 1994; Whitelaw 1983; Zois 1976, 1980, 1992). Drawing this out further, Whitelaw's (1983) architectural reassessment of Myrtos revealed the site as a cluster settlement characterised by distinct constructional episodes and consisting of five or six household units, whereas a similar picture of small houses built side by side has been proposed for Vasiliki by Zois (1976, 1980, 1992). Therefore, the consensus is that both the assumed 'single mansion' at Myrtos and the *House on the Hill* at Vasiliki did not constitute large, single houses but several smaller ones built over time. These revisions along with the suggestion that the smaller houses in both settlements represent

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independent, self sufficient families – since they do not seem to display any apparent differentiation in size, architectural elaboration and wealth distribution – have been repeatedly argued by the revolutionists to indicate further that the EBA landscape was filled by egalitarian societies. Thus, Whitelaw (1983: 336) characterised Myrtos as a small egalitarian rural community¹², a characterisation also adopted by Zois (1992: 276) for Vasiliki. Moreover, Cherry (1983: 39) has considered this to be archetypal of other EM settlements. In the same spirit, Watrous (1995: 41) has challenged Branigan's interpretation of the structures at Palaikastro and Knossos as prominent household buildings within their respective local communities. Instead, he went on to assert that it might be misleading to consider these structures as domestic at all since, in the former instance, the walls do not look like anything we know from the EM domestic architecture and, in the latter, the L-shaped structure is probably a terrace. Furthermore, one may note that the fragmentary preservation of the structure at Palaikastro renders any secure interpretation of its function impossible (Manning 1994: 238). Likewise, the assignment to the so called *Keep* at Knossos of a centralised storage function may be far from unambiguous. Thus, although Manning (1994: 239) does not rule out that both the *Hypogeum* and the *Keep* suggest forms of storage centralisation indicating a societal transformation in the EMIII, he notes (1994: 239) quoting Graham that the latter structure was a cistern, rather than a granary. Finally, Manning (1994: 253 n.16) does not dismiss Branigan's chronological reappraisal of the *Keep* according to which the structure probably belonged to the beginning of the Palatial times, namely, MMIB and not to the EMIII as once believed. Similarly, Watrous (1994: 721) following Momigliano's (1991) MMIA chronology of the *Hypogeum* shifts the origins of the institutionalised centralised food storage from the Early to the Middle Bronze Age, which is closer to the erection of the palaces.

Additionally, the revolutionists argue that the evidence of social ranking in the burial record of the Prepalatial period is not a straightforward matter either. According to them (Cherry 1983; Watrous 1994), the wealth and architectural elaboration of EM so called elite tombs have been overemphasised. For example, Cherry (1983: 40) believes that most Mesara *tholos* tombs lack a vault and that the labour and skills invested in their construction were not substantial. Likewise, Watrous (1994: 713) notes for Mochlos that the size differentiation between the West Terrace tombs and those at the South Slope is not as striking as has been previously assumed. At Gournia,

¹² It is worth stressing here that Myrtos' interpretation as an egalitarian community has been paradoxically reinforced by its excavator Peter Warren an advocate of the gradualist thesis. Despite his interpretation of Myrtos – as a single large architectural complex not differentiated into individual families – Warren (1972) was reluctant to identify the site as the home of a chief. According to him, Myrtos implied a clan or tribe living communally (see note 8 above).

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he marshals empirical evidence to question Soles's suggestion that we can infer social ranking there from the employment of two cemeteries by the population. As mentioned earlier, Soles believed that the poor element of the Gourniote population was buried at Sphoungaras whereas the built tombs of the North Cemetery were reserved for the elite. In Watrous view (1994: 713 and n.130), a more probable scenario is that the Sphoungaras cemetery was in fact used by a separate community. This is suggested by the recent discovery made by the Gournia survey of a sizeable EM settlement on the hill above Sphoungaras.

At the same time, one should not lose sight of the fact that many tombs built originally in EM times contain deposits which continue into the Protopalatial times (Watrous 1994: 714). This is the case with some *tholos* tombs at Mesara. For instance, *Tholos A* at Aghia Triadha spanned the EM I–MM II period. More interestingly, as Watrous (1994: 713 and n.128, 129) maintains, most of the pottery and metal objects found there, as well as in other Mesara tombs, do not belong to purely EM II levels. In respect to the Maliote mortuary pattern, he (1994: 713 n.131) suggests that most of the tombs that Soles believes to be prepalatial belong almost entirely to the Protopalatial period.

At Mochlos, Watrous argues that recent discoveries demonstrate that wealth was not restricted to the West Terrace tombs (see also Sbonias 1999: 29-31). So called elite materials like gold jewellery and ivory have also been found at some South Slope tombs. Most significantly, it can also be debated to what extent architectural sophistication of tombs corresponds to their wealth. For example, the fact that despite its modest construction, Tomb XIX at the South Slope was among the wealthiest burials in the cemetery suffices to demonstrate that such correlation may be quite misleading (Watrous 1994: 713 and n.128). Eventually moreover, according to Cherry (1983: 40), the evident unequal distribution of wealth at cemeteries like Mochlos simply points to the fact that some burials were wealthier than others, rather than being positive reflections of social hierarchy. A similar view has been espoused by Sbonias (1999) who has also suggested in contrast to gradualists, that EM II seals do not support the existence of a hierarchical society since they cannot be taken to stand either as symbols of authority or as indexes of complex economic transactions. According to him, EM II seals most probably had a special amuletic character since they appear to display a stylistic homogeneity that makes them unsuitable for personal display or identification of different levels of centralised economic administration (Sbonias 1999: 35-36).

Intermediaries' reading of the EBA material realities

As we saw earlier, Wilson has maintained that social change in Bronze Age Crete was a cumulative process moving at an uneven pace. According to this theory, EMIIA reveals the first clear evidence of social ranking and represents an accelerated tempo of social change. At Knossos he argues (1994: 36) that the beginning of social ranking may be demonstrated by a large EMIIA building known as the *West Court House*, which was uncovered beneath the West Court of the later palace. Perhaps even more important in this context is the evidence from beneath the West Court and the northern half of the palace where large-scale levelling activities cut down into the late Neolithic levels. This seems to indicate a project of substantial rebuilding and reorganisation of the settlement during the EMIIA period. In the stretch beneath the northern half of the later palace, this included levelling up the sheer slopes of the hill and the extension of the area for building on the ridge to the north and northeast. Similarly, tests beneath the West Court have revealed large-scale terracing of buildings and the construction of a terrace wall. Of particular interest here appears to be an early phase of levelling in EMIIA of the upper floor rooms of the *West Court House* in order to make space for an open public area.

According to Wilson (1994: 42), this demanding building programme undoubtedly points to a central agent of power able to commence such a task and coordinate a substantial workforce for its completion. Equally significant in this context is the dramatic rise of ceramic imports in EMIIA Knossos from other Cretan regions, most notably Mesara. In Wilson's view, these imports provide signs of craft specialisation and trade in luxury wares. Moreover, the operation of a vivid and expanded network of exchange contacts during the EMIIA can be further demonstrated by the first ceramic imports that reached Knossos from outside the island. These were mostly of Cycladic provenance, though a very limited amount of Near Eastern 'exotica' has also been reported. Wilson (1994: 44) then goes on to assert that the picture revealed from Knossos for the beginning of social complexity and ranking in EMIIA can also be independently confirmed by Soles's (1988) study of the mortuary assemblages from the cemeteries of Mochlos, Gournia and Malia. Furthermore, recent work at the harbour site of Poros-Katsambas has brought into light substantial EMI-EMII evidence of imported raw materials from the Cyclades as well as intense craft activity, the products of which were then exchanged beyond the settlement. The latter included pottery production and widespread obsidian and copper working for the manufacture of prestige items like blades and daggers. It perhaps goes without saying that the evidence from Poros not only indicates a central organisational power but also questions the validity of some older accounts that tended to depict prepalatial societies as self-sufficient isolates (Day and Wilson 2002: 153-154). It is also worth mentioning here that the case for the emergence of

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ranked society in EMII or even earlier in EMI has been strengthened by further analysis of the ceramic assemblages from Knossos. More specifically, Day and Wilson (2002: 149-152) have recently suggested that some EMI and EMIIA ceramic deposits from Knossos were not the product of gradual accumulation of rubbish, but rather represent the debris from a single event. Accordingly, they might demonstrate the remains of large-scale communal consumption of food and drink organised by elites seeking prestige and a means to legitimate their authority from as early as EMI.

On the other hand, the EMIIIB period, as Wilson maintains, seems to represent a slower pace of progress; 'a somewhat stark picture' (1994: 41). By these times the exchange contacts between Knossos and its neighbours from both within Crete and further afield in the Cyclades fade; Mesara imports virtually disappear, while no single import of a Cycladic origin is known from EMIIIB. Likewise, foreign contacts cannot be documented with any certainty. During the EMIII, in turn, though no evidence for an expansion of contacts has been obtained, there is a number of features that may point towards a new acceleration of social change (Wilson 1994: 38-44). At Knossos, in particular, two substantial buildings can be reported: the so called *South Front House* recovered at the southern edge of the settlement and the *Hypogeum*. Additionally, one can now document the early limited use of the potter's wheel. The most conspicuous feature of the period at Knossos is the expansion of the settlement to the north and to the west of the later palace that involved the commencement of a substantial rebuilding scheme comparable to that postulated for EMIIA. This included the construction of a paved road at the southern side of the Royal Road and the erection of the extensive Northwest terrace wall. The latter as Wilson submits might have constituted the foundations for a central building or buildings on the hilltop.

To document the existence of social ranking in the EM period, Haggis (1999: 60-61) marshals evidence of architectural, wealth, and functional differentiation at Vasiliki and Myrtos and of a special function building at Mochlos. Although he does not see the *House on the Hill* at Vasiliki and the architectural complex at Myrtos respectively as single residences (mansions) but as structures consisting of different individual households, he has remarked that both communities do not actually lack evidence of socio-economic differentiation. For example, he notes that one can discover real differences in size, architectural details, sophistication, technique and possibly in function both among the houses at the hilltop and between these and the houses in the southeast slope at Vasiliki. At Myrtos, Haggis turns our attention to the *south central cluster* with its large storage capacity, Room 82 with its exceptionally rich pottery, spacious Room 80 featuring a large central support and the exclusive concentration of the whole assemblage of vases of the local South-Coast fabric with white-painted chevrons in Rooms 72-73 and 79. However,

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before we make negative assertions about the existence of social inequalities at Vasiliki and Myrtos, Haggis suggests there is a further point to keep in mind. This concerns the incomplete excavation of Vasiliki as well as the serious erosion at both sites. The supposed picture of EMII egalitarian communities argued by the revolutionists might therefore be a distortion due to these factors. At Mochlos, Haggis notes the large prepalatial building (*Prepalatial House 3*) with massive foundations in Area E3 excavated by Soles and Davaras (1996). The meaning of this building's architectural differentiation which might point to a special function becomes even more significant, he remarks, bearing in mind the overall size of EMII Mochlos and its wealthy burials. In addition, Haggis points out that the scale and complexity of EMII as shown by ceramic exchange would have demanded central authority (1999: 59). Finally, he supports (1999: 60) the existence of social ranking in EMII on the grounds of the funerary record following older accounts like that of Branigan for Mesara and that of Soles about Mochlos, Gournia and Malia.

Whitelaw (2002), on the other hand, has retained his original interpretation (Whitelaw 1983) of Myrtos as an egalitarian hamlet. As he argues, despite the accumulated new evidence that demonstrates specialised ceramic production, and a complex and extensive pattern of exchange relations at EMII Myrtos (Day *et al.* 1997; Whitelaw *et al.* 1997), there is still no evidence to point out central organisation of these activities or redistribution at the village level. Nevertheless, when one turns to prepalatial Mochlos, Malia and Knossos quite a different picture emerges. At EMII Mochlos, Whitelaw recognises the traces of social stratification in the unequal consumption of wealth as shown by differences in tomb size, sophistication and grave goods. Furthermore, he intimates the high concentration of valuable finished goods and exotic raw materials at Mochlos in comparison to other EM sites. Thus, whereas Myrtos, for example, has revealed a modest amount of obsidian, Mochlos has produced several deposits of hundreds of blades and cores. This, in Whitelaw's view, might be taken to indicate that the power of the Mochlian elite was based on the control of trade and craft production. At Malia, apart from the evidence of social inequalities based on Soles's account (1988) of the funerary record, Whitelaw further documents the carefully laid-out EMII building which has been partially recovered under the subsequent palace. Likewise, Knossos reveals significant middle and late prepalatial structures which, according to Whitelaw, point to major terracing projects for their construction and rebuilding, consequently demanding a central power able to organise, plan, coordinate and finance their execution.

Putting the debate into perspective

At this point I want to pause in order to summarise the disjunctures as well as common ground between the above approaches. This will afford a moment of critical evaluation and help to situate the view of gradualists, revolutionists and intermediaries within the framework of my own argument about the universality of social inequalities. To encapsulate the approaches so far: Firstly, the gradualist approach tracks a steady and irreversible growth in social complexity and ranking, from the beginning of the Early Bronze Age, namely, EMII through to the Palatial times. Secondly, the revolutionary thesis, in sharp contrast to gradualists, portrays social inequalities as the outcome of a sudden and revolutionary development whose origins are traced to the last phases of the Prepalatial period or to the beginning of Protopalatial times. Finally, the intermediary approach agrees with the gradualists that social ranking begins early in the Prepalatial sequence, but emphasises local trajectories or follows the revolutionists in that it sees social change more or less as a discontinuous process rather than as a matter of an uninterrupted incremental growth.

At first sight the greatest rupture seems to concern the gradualist and the revolutionary paradigms of social change. Yet, despite appearances, is it not true to say that both these accounts are in fact evolutionary ones? By now it should be clear that gradualists and revolutionists alike see inequalities as something which was absent in some part of Cretan history and present in some other. Put another way, these seemingly different views suppose an original state of being where people were equal; and then what happens? Through either a process of slow and incremental development or a revolutionary and rapid transition people are forced to leave what Rousseau (1999 [1754]) calls the natural state of being, i.e. equality, and enter inequality. Besides, both gradualist and revolutionist views of social change have been shaped by the principle of cultural evolution which, as McGuire remarks, 'implies not just any change, but *developmental* change' (1983: 91, emphasis added). That is, irrespective of the proposed pace of change, continuous and gradual or discontinuous and rapid, the trajectory of change envisaged by both traditions for Aegean prehistory is one leading to the eventual development of social complexity. No doubt, this is more apparent in the gradualists' Russian doll-like perception where more complex MM and LM societies evolved out of the less complex EM ones which themselves surpassed the even less complex social formations of the Neolithic. However, it is useful to note here that the concept of developmental change is not alien to models that advocate a revolutionary transition (cf. Giddens 1984a: 229). For example, while Cherry (1983, 1984) argued that the momentum of change was a sudden quantum leap beyond anything that had gone before, he also pointed out that the trajectory of this process represented a qualitative

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development in terms of social complexity¹³. Given this conviction, there is no surprise in Cherry's more recent designation of the emergence of Minoan palatial states as the 'Big Story of the Bronze Age in Crete' (1999: 18). It is equally significant to recognise that gradualists and revolutionists alike use the term 'complexity' as a synonym for social differentiation. Hence complex societies are taken to manifest social differentiation and simple societies the opposite. One should note that this particular use of the term 'complexity' as a metaphor for social inequality is problematic, for rather than being based on empirical findings it is the product of modernist intellectual constructions (Rowlands 1989).

Meanwhile, although there is much that is attractive about certain aspects of intermediary accounts, most intermediaries seem eventually to enter the evolutionary tradition established by their predecessors. In particular, the tendency to frame inequality around a hypothetical starting point, that is the hunting down of origins of inequality, stands more or less inviolate. Day and Wilson (2002; see also Wilson 1994), for instance, trace *the emergence* of social inequalities to EMI or EMII times. The theme of emergence reappears in the work of Whitelaw (2002). It seems to me that what all these accounts argue for, more or less explicitly, is the absence of social inequalities before the EM period. Hence, the Neolithic landscape is still conceived to have been inhabited by egalitarian societies. But it is also apparent from Whitelaw's (2002) account that a similar state of egalitarianism is assumed for some EM sites like Myrtos. One thing is immediately clear; it has been proved extremely difficult so far among Aegeanists to avoid the fallacious pigeonholing of societies as egalitarian/simple and hierarchical/complex.

Nevertheless, one should acknowledge that some narratives associated with the intermediary school are in various ways sensitive to the drawbacks of such simplistic, sharp and quick distinctions about the nature of prehistoric societies. Thus, although Day and Wilson (2002) do not appear to dismiss the polarity between egalitarian/Neolithic and hierarchical/Bronze Age, they try to drop the distinction between simple and complex societies within the Bronze Age sequence. More specifically, they undermine the pernicious notion that depicts the difference between prepalatial and protopalatial 'complexity' as a qualitative and/or quantitative divide. As this account suggests, the prepalatial Knossian social landscape was neither simple nor less complex compared to its protopalatial successor. The sceptical reader may then wonder whether anything did change from Prepalatial to Protopalatial times; or how change can be measured at all. Yet, according to Day and Wilson (2002: 161), whose view I share, their argument is not – let it be emphasised – a thesis against social change. Their analysis of Knossos and Poros tries to

¹³ It is perhaps useful to note here that 'momentum' concerns the rapidity with which change occurs, while 'trajectory' refers to the direction of change (Giddens 1984a: 246)

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detect a variety of changes in architecture and material culture, in the scale of ceremonial practices and in the levels of extra-communal contacts, without resorting to the obsolete idea that conflates change with the escalation or sudden emergence of 'complexity' and inequality. More significantly, as this account holds, social transformation is a complex historical process, the result of constant reworking and renegotiation of various practices, traditions and material conditions by successive generations. There is a point though about which Day and Wilson are mute. This concerns the state of *relational* social inequalities in *other* early prepalatial sites, especially those commonly portrayed as egalitarian hamlets and those which never became palatial centres, not to mention Palatial period sites away from the major hubs of social interaction. This is not surprising, given the authors' selected case studies of Knossos and Poros Katsambas, both in the vicinity of the Kairatos River Valley. The choice of this particular landscape as a case study is due perhaps to its long history of investigation by several scholars as well as the authors' systematic examination of the area's ceramic assemblages (Bennet 2002: 219). No doubt, Day and Wilson's analysis offers interesting insights about practices of domination as well as a thorough description of their material correlates. Yet, I feel it would be strange not to trace power relations at Knossos given its unique character, history, blatant monumentality and conspicuous practices that distinguish it from the more ordinary sites in the Cretan prehistoric landscape. Knossos resonates with power relations. This is certainly true for the Palatial times when Knossos eventually became the setting of a so called palace and a significant regional centre of power. To acknowledge it is merely to restate the obvious. However, the unique status of Knossos relative to other Cretan sites has been variously argued even for earlier times (see Broodbank 1992; Evans, 1994; Soles 1995; Whitelaw 1992). For example, its special character as the homeland of the first settlers (Evans 1994; Soles 1995), its substantial size (Evans 1994), indications of ceramic imports coming from distant sources (Tomkins and Day 2001), as well as increase in the manipulation and use of symbols and social ritual (Broodbank 1992), from the Neolithic onwards have given rise to tentative suggestions about Knossos' exceptional position as a front-runner opening the path towards complexity (see for example Evans 1994; Broodbank 1992). In John Evans's words,

Neolithic Knossos is important in its own right as a Neolithic '*super-site*', unique in Crete, but it is surely not coincidence that Knossos also became the most important centre. No doubt many other factors played a part in bringing this about, but it is at least possible that building on an unusually large and firmly established Late Neolithic community, with perhaps surviving traditions of its great antiquity and special position in the island's history, gave Knossos an initial advantage which contributed in some measure to its success in Minoan times (1994: 19, emphasis added).

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One may subsequently ask, whether Day and Wilson (unlike revolutionists and Whitelaw) perceive small EM hamlets like Myrtos or Vasiliki as arenas of power like that of the Kairatos landscape. I believe that this can be inferred from the authors' earlier studies of various EM ceramic assemblages throughout Crete (see Day *et al.* 1997; Whitelaw *et al.* 1997). Here, although they do not directly address the issue of power relations and the specific ways these are played out, they positively suggest that the pattern of ceramic production, circulation and consumption evidenced at Myrtos and other EM sites points to a considerable social complexity during the Prepalatial period. In this light, it seems quite likely that Day¹⁴ and Wilson do not preclude the existence of relational social inequalities at EM so called egalitarian communities. Had they opted for case studies which are commonly (but fallaciously) assumed to lack power relations – since links between everyday practices, material conditions and power inequalities are often not conspicuous – their discarding of the binary division between simple/egalitarian and complex/hierarchical societies within the BA sequence would have been much more effective and instructive (cf. Barrett *et al.* 2001).

Another contributor to this debate is Haggis (1999, 2002) who, quite cogently and perhaps more clearly, has overturned the distinction between simple and complex societies within the course of the BA. Overall, as noted earlier, Haggis sees the prepalatial landscape not as less complex but as less connected compared to the palatial one. Most importantly, he discards the egalitarian ID tag attached by prior accounts to small EM communities like Myrtos and Vasiliki. According to him, both sites bear evidence of socio-economic stratification. Furthermore, one of Haggis's main contentions is that political elites were active during the whole course of the BA, yet their sphere of influence spanned a different spatial radius: a purely local one in the Prepalatial period, and a more extensive regional one in the subsequent period. Therefore, for Haggis, what sets palatial societies apart from prepalatial ones, is not the sudden emergence or acceleration of 'complexity' and inequality but *a shift in scale* regarding the spatial operation of power. I believe that the jettisoning of the misleading view of change as a trajectory towards 'complexity' and its stripping of notions of progress from lower to higher social forms constitutes one of the most productive contributions made so far to the Aegean literature. Yet, if we displace such ethnocentric evaluations of social change don't we need something else to fill the void? In simple words, how are we to understand change? Let us recall, that in Haggis's account of the transition from the prepalatial to palatial form of political power, apart from the outward radiation of the system of authority proposed for Palatial times, it seems that very little has actually

¹⁴ Day (pers. comm., January 2003) submits that the material evidence for social inequalities and a central authority at Myrtos is scarce but he does not rule out that Myrtos in fact did not lack social inequalities.

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changed. As we gather from this model, elites strove for agricultural surplus via labour mobilisation throughout the whole course of the BA. The shift from the local cemetery to the peak sanctuary is seen merely as a shift towards a larger-scale labour pool. More significantly, the various resources, forms of knowledge, practices and experiences that would have facilitated the construction of distinct power relations and social identities in these contexts commensurate with spatio-political extension are not examined in detail by Haggis. Thus it might be claimed that reducing the question of change to the issue of scale and then treating scale as an innocuous category does not appear satisfactory, for it seems to demote change into a redundant concept. Crucially as John Barrett has observed, 'history becomes limited to questions of change, although an understanding of exactly what has changed is ... less than clear' (1994: 33; see also Damilati and Vavouranakis forthcoming; McGuire 1983). To sum up, Haggis's account successfully closes off one increasingly unproductive line of debate on the content of social change but at the same time offers us new problems to explore. The new challenge that confronts Aegean archaeology, if its practitioners are to overturn ethnocentric perceptions of change, is a thorough context-specific description and understanding of the content of social change. I will reserve discussion of this issue until a later section¹⁵ in which empirical data can be employed to support a specific line of argument.

A further aspect of the above approaches that deserves scrutiny is their treatment of wealth. The reader may well have detected by now that most contributors to the debate on the emergence of social inequalities in the Aegean take material wealth to be central in the chronological identification and/or creation of power inequalities. In other words, leaving aside subtler points and distinctions, what the foregoing accounts seem to hold in common is the idea that inequalities were constituted at that point of history 'when some people discovered how to get rich at the expense of their fellows' (McKay 1988: 8). Surprisingly, however, there is no consensus about exactly when this happened. Once again, the major rift is observed between the gradualists and revolutionists. Gradualists, as I remarked earlier, have aimed to model the way that relational social inequalities matured slowly through the progressive construction of economic obligations and wealth accumulation from the EBII onwards. Their thesis can be summarised by Pullen's contention that 'it is certainly during the Early Bronze Age that we see the emergence of elites based, most likely, on wealth' (1992: 53). Cosmopoulos (1995: 31), another gradualist adherent, strikes a similar note when he asserts that in Crete during the EBII the social status of individuals was probably defined by wealth rather than by any other parameter. Advocates of the revolutionary perspective, on the other hand, have chosen the opposite strand by adopting a

¹⁵ See afterword in my conclusions.

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critical standpoint to the EBII material evidence cited by gradualists. They underplay wealth inequalities in the early phases of the EBA and advance the view that the EBA landscape was filled by egalitarian societies, that is, societies lacking a differential distribution of wealth among individual households. Nevertheless, it is vital to recall that paradoxically it is the parsing of the *same* material realities by both traditions that has given rise to conflicting conclusions concerning the state of social inequalities during EBII times.

The most intriguing question in all of this is why such difference in opinion exists given the marshalling of the same material evidence and the fact that both approaches agree on the central role of wealth in triggering inequalities. I suggest that the rupture between gradualists and revolutionists is not empirical but conceptual, since it is not based so much on different empirical observations but rather on different perceptual schemes of wealth that are employed to view the EBII evidence. Hence, what is revealed as wealth through the EBII material record to gradualists is not *instrumental* wealth or it is only minimal wealth, unable to trigger relational inequalities according to revolutionists. Be that as it may, it is of considerable importance to acknowledge that the drift in perception concerning the nature of wealth is not easily discernible at first sight given the tendency of both traditions to talk about wealth as an obvious category. But what is the obvious? Grange defines it like this:

It is that which is taken for granted and never spoken of as such; yet, the obvious everywhere and always guides and supports our culture. The obvious is that which we already agree – the base from which all action, individual and social proceeds. Since it is never explicitly discussed or articulated, *the obvious is the most difficult to identify*, even though in a disguised manner it lies all around us. *To uncover the obvious we must take a step back from the assumptions and attitudes that entwine us* (Grange 1977: 136, emphasis added).

It is my contention that there are significant and so far unconsidered linkages between power relations and wealth. These linkages cry out for the analytical and theoretical attention of Aegean archaeologists. As a preliminary move to a fresh consideration of the problem one must therefore ask how the relationship between wealth and power is articulated in the EBII material record by the two different traditions respectively?

As usually conceived by gradualists, the existence of power inequalities during the EBII is demonstrated by large buildings and even most conspicuously by wealthy burials (the materially unproductive dimension of wealth). As Renfrew allows:

It seems reasonable to see in this disparity in grave goods the development of some degree of stratification, contrasting markedly with the egalitarian tribal society which we imagine for the Greek Neolithic (1973: 225).

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What is muted in the work of gradualists, however, is the ways in which these types of wealth establish relations of debt and dependency. Instead, material wealth is seen to reflect and/or enhance relational inequalities directly. This is a significant shortcoming of the gradualist treatment of the relation between power and wealth. For to repeat one of the central points of this study, wealth is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the creation of relational inequalities. As Dennis Wrong has rightly noted¹⁶:

Possession of means or resources that may be employed to wield power over others is not, however, any guarantee that they will in fact be so employed. A wealthy miser who chooses to live in poverty and conceal his fortune from the world is obviously not using his economic resources even minimally to control the activities of a few suppliers of goods and services (1979: 125).

There is also a blatant lack of integration between gradualists' reading of the EBII material realities of inequality and their theoretical models that seek to explain the rise of inequality through the gradual growth of the means of subsistence production and productivity rates. Several gradualists emphasise the importance of surplus production, the enlargement of the forces of production and the materially productive investment of agricultural surplus as being central to the creation of power relations. At the same time, they simplistically assume agricultural surplus wealth to be directly reflected in the material record in the form of valuable objects and large buildings. Simply put, valuable objects and large buildings are seen as the material transformations of surplus. In so doing, not only do gradualists reduce the above categories of data to passive¹⁷ indices of power but also cut themselves short from any opportunity to consider the creation of relations of debt beyond the orbit of agricultural surplus production and the expansion of the forces of production. Let us recall Pullen's (1992) model where he clearly puts forth the thesis that power relations in the EBA emerged through the materially productive dimension of wealth. According to him, power lay in the ownership of such means of production as the ox and plough as well as in the potential these resources carry for productive reinvestment in agriculture. At the same time, there is no place in this model for the theoretical consideration of the relation between valuables and power. Likewise, Webster (1990) sees material wealth in the form of precious items playing an insubstantial role in clearing the way towards EBA social stratification. To him, relational inequalities stemmed from unequal access to a different kind of wealth, namely labour force. The same theme regarding the relationship between power and wealth comes up again when we examine Gamble's (1979, 1981, 1982) and Bintliff's (1982)

¹⁶ See also Godelier (1999), Hamilakis (1995), McKay (1988).

¹⁷ An exception is Halstead and O'Shea's *Social Storage* model where valuable objects (tokens) are seen as central to the creation of power asymmetries. However, as I noted earlier, the value of these objects is assumed to rest on their exchange value for food.

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models. In different ways, both these authors clearly favour the notion that the origins of relational inequalities lay in the control of the materially productive dimension of wealth. Interestingly, for Gamble, the appearance of power is not to be found in the automatic generation of food surplus wealth and its exchange between EBA farmers. In the first place, relations of dependency could not be formed through the exchange of a potential surplus of agricultural goods like wheat, wool, olives, oil and wine, which everybody possessed. Rather the process that cleared the way for power inequalities depended on the ability of leaders¹⁸ to prevent household self-sufficiency and so to enforce dependence on themselves for the provision of needs. This could have been achieved by forcing or persuading prehistoric farmers to live in nucleated settlements, to give up the practice of agricultural diversification, and instead, specialise upon and produce a surplus of particular subsistence goods. Local surpluses in specialised food commodities would then constitute a powerful capital, a significant instrument of power, in the hands of elites. Denial of obedience among specialised villages to the central power would mean denial of access to a range of subsistence goods they did not themselves produce. Hence the establishment of a relationship of dependency was perpetuated by the elite manipulation of local surpluses of food. On the other hand, Gamble is quite laconic regarding the significance of valuable objects in the EBA. These are simplistically said (and without any justification) to be devoid of any instrumental value in the emergence of political institutions. The reference below, I think, is quite illustrative:

It is on this basis [through the control and organisation of subsistence production] that formal institutions with effective power emerge. By contrast the control and exchange of '*primitive valuables*' is of limited importance in accounting for the effective power of such developing institutions (Gamble 1982: 104, emphasis added).

Equally, Bintliff (1982) stresses the primacy of the materially productive dimension of wealth as an instrument for power. Central to Bintliff's (1982) account is the importance he attaches to the private ownership of *productive* land in subverting egalitarian relations and converting them into relations of dependency. It was the 'major landholders' who became the BA political elites. Besides, food surplus feeds landed elites and their subordinate tenants as well as financing the production of valuable craft goods whose importance is only minimal in comparison to this crucial association between power, class and the land. In his words,

An argument might now be put forward to the effect that an elite thus established utilises its regional power for obtaining *prestige objects and raw materials*, but that such goods *are not vital to the power*

¹⁸ According to Halstead (1988: 523), Gamble's model entails a circular argument which does not explain the emergence of social inequalities, since the basis of elite power – forced economic specialisation – only occurs after nucleation, which in turn is brought about by elite power.

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of the elite, its grip on the peasantry or the support of lesser nobles; indeed, much is *merely a symbol of conspicuous consumption* (Bintliff 1982: 109, emphasis added).

Meanwhile, revolutionists broadly see unequal distributions of wealth in mortuary contexts as negligible and typically maintain that unequal representations of tomb gifts may be taken as an index of some economic differentiation but not as a straightforward reflection of social hierarchy (see Cherry 1983; Sbonias 1999). They also correctly state that large residences may reflect unequal access to wealth but not necessarily authority. On this point I agree with them that we should be wary of blindly assuming that economic disparities inevitably create relational inequalities. The person who has amassed a lot of property but has no influence in guiding other people is merely a rich person (McKay 1988: 24).

Relational inequalities, as revolutionary accounts seem to imply, are formed only through the materially productive dimension of wealth. Marx's legacy is all too apparent here; debts and thus power relations are created through relations of production. More precisely, the revolutionary thesis seems to assume that wealth, in order to establish relational inequalities, has to consist of the means of production (land, technology and labour). Possession and control of the means of production by a minority not only undermines commoners' means of livelihood, making them dependent upon the possessors and the supervisors of the means of production, but also offers surpluses for financing of the elite apparatus. The spirit of historical materialism, characteristic in this approach where 'the forces of production are somehow the most influential factors leading to social change' (Giddens 1984b: 127, see also Giddens 1981: 1), can also be traced in revolutionaries' marginal treatment of valuable objects. According to Cherry (1984), for instance, since valuable objects from EBII do not suggest a large-scale centralised organisation of production and do not conspicuously demonstrate how relations of debt are created, they are conceived as mere baubles. He has made the point that most of these valuables, and even those made of exotic raw materials were locally produced. Yet for Cherry, if I interpret him correctly, apart from these powerless and occasional trinkets, there is nothing in the EMII Cretan landscape to signify relations of debt and thus the emergence of political hierarchy. In his view, there is no evidence, during the EBA that points to '*monopolies over the means of wealth production*' (Cherry 1984: 35, emphasis added). Neither are there '*procedures by which people and their agricultural products might be mobilised on a large scale*'. Neither is there '*standardised production in quantity of products for consumption beyond the local unit, nor 'a coherent pattern of long-distance exchange in sumptuary items and raw materials*' (1983: 38, emphasis added). Thus Cherry designates Cretan prepalatial societies as egalitarian. While Cherry and the revolutionists might be right in that the EBII landscape does not exhibit many of the above

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productive practices, it is my contention that to suggest an absence of power inequalities by these times simply on these grounds is to throw the baby out with the bath water.

It is useful to note here that even major adherents to the gradualist tradition have found difficulty in tracing the materially productive dimension of wealth in the EBII landscape. Gilman (1981), influenced by the Marxist standpoint, holds that wealth, in order to establish dependencies and to be an instrument of power, has to consist of the means of production. However, in the absence of evidence of substantial exchange of foodstuffs and tools of practical value he concluded that the EBA societies were self-sufficient in subsistence matters. For him, this in turn, meant that the possession of the means of production was not in the hands of the few. In other words, EBA farmers were not cut off from their means of production, since these probably involved simple technologies available to everybody and land was not yet a scarce resource. In these rather democratic circumstances, according to Marxist theory, debts and power would be difficult to achieve. Still, whereas Cherry perceived this as a clue pointing to the egalitarian nature of EBA societies, Gilman postulated that power during this period was based on military means (naked force). The emergence of power was enabled through the adoption of Mediterranean Polyculture, which constitutes a materially productive technology. However, we should recall that for Gilman the significance of the new technology in the creation of relations of dependency rested not so much on the rise in productivity that it promoted but on the social tethering it encouraged. That is, it tied people to the land making them unable to escape the force of aspirant leaders. Once again, in Gilman's model material wealth in the form of valuables was seen as marginal to the creation of power.

Within the series of intermediary approaches there is much more variation regarding the articulation of the relationship between wealth and power. On the whole, these accounts display a more sensitive approach to the EBA material realities. Day and Wilson, as we saw, describe practices at EBII Knossos that did not draw on the materially productive dimension of wealth, but rather capitalised on its consumption (of pottery and food and drink) in ceremonial contexts. Furthermore, at Poros they pay some attention to the instrumental significance of different categories of valuable objects in creating power. Equally, Whitelaw (2002) has developed a line of argument according to which the power of some EBII elites lay in the control and exchange of valuable prestige items. The materially productive dimension of wealth as a motor towards power inequalities is envisaged for those EBII sites that eventually became palatial loci of power in the following MBA period. On this basis, Whitelaw suggests that, compared to valuables, wealth in the form of agricultural surplus is somehow more effective in games of power. That is why, in Whitelaw's (2002) view, it was only the EBII sites which operated under a *Staple Finance*

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economy that became palatial centres. Finally, Haggis (1999) considers *a priori* that power relations emerge through the growth and expansion of the resource base as well as emerging elites' ability to manage land and resources and especially labour in order to amass agricultural surpluses. Thus, what runs throughout this model is, once again, the simplistic assumption that the forces of production have the most determinant impact on society. Moreover, Haggis sees valuable objects as prestige goods without, however, ever addressing in any detail the ways in which these would have acquired meaning or acted as instruments of power by creating relations of debt. Furthermore, he simplistically seems to assume that prestige goods are the by-product of a *Staple Finance* economy. That is, access to surpluses and labour means that elites can afford to order the production of flashy objects to display their power. Note here, *that power in the first place is based on access to labour and surplus not on the valuable objects themselves*. This fact points to our tendency to see the value of objects to be constituted only at the time of their *physical production* – when some *other* type of resource (food, labour matter, and raw material) is *productively* consumed (invested).

To sum up, I take it to be clear from the foregoing discussion that most accounts on the historical question of power inequalities in the Aegean insist on the primacy of the materially productive dimension of wealth to build relations of authority and subjugation. Revolutionists marshal empirical evidence to propose that this way of handling wealth cannot be observed in the EBA, and consequently that power relations were absent at this time. Gradualists, on the other hand, though they have built theoretical models that similarly give preponderance to the forces of production and increased productivity rates as the most influential factors in games of power, infer the existence of relational inequalities mainly through types of material evidence (valuables, large buildings and tombs) that are only superficially accommodated within their theory of the emergence of power. In other words, the relationship between valuable objects, the materially productive dimension of wealth, and power is seldom sketched out. The gap between gradualist theories of the relationship between wealth and power and the EBA material realities has been recognised only by Gilman. Gilman substitutes coercion in place of the materially productive dimension of wealth as the source of elite power. Finally, in intermediary accounts, the importance of the materially productive dimension of wealth over other types of wealth is less absolute, yet it has not been left completely behind. Neither have intermediaries developed a theoretical framework to fill the lacuna in the treatment of the relationship between valuables (as well as other types of wealth not directly related to the materially productive dimension of wealth) and power in the Aegean literature. However, since insisting on the primacy of the materially productive dimension of wealth has been a favoured trigger behind the production of

relational inequalities for most of the above accounts, it will be interesting to find out whether the EBII archaeological record indeed bears this out. I turn to this question in the next section.

Testing the materially productive dimension of wealth, or does the EMII talk about productive processes?

By now it should be clear that most archaeological accounts that promote the emergence of social inequalities in Crete from the EMII period have accorded a pride of place to the materially productive dimension of wealth as laying the foundations for such development. In my opinion the validity of this position is highly questionable. In this section, I want to review the evidence in order to explore questions relating to the presence of the materially productive dimension of wealth in EM period. To put it simply, does the Cretan prepalatial landscape speak of productive processes and techniques? Furthermore, given my conviction that power relations derive from debt, the strategy used here is to find out whether the materially productive dimension of wealth would have been critical to the creation of debt obligations.

As we saw, according to the *Social Storage* model (Halstead and O'Shea 1982), EM power relations were based on the success of some farmers in creating a pool of people indebted to them, by producing and exchanging agricultural surplus as food relief for valuables and labour obligations. The key element for the creation of debt relations is taken to be surplus food production. The more food one had, the more debt obligations would have been inflicted upon one's needy neighbours. At the same time, successful farmers would have been able to *reinvest* in further production and achieve greater food surpluses by using the labour obligations of needy households or by exchanging durable valuable tokens for labour. This being said, we would anticipate the EM landscape to bear traces of a striking emphasis on productive techniques and strategies aimed towards significant subsistence overproduction.

The Cretan landscape shows a remarkable degree of soil erosion. This may be attributed to agricultural intensification through productive farming activities such as plough agriculture, which is known to foster erosion. Nonetheless, any quick conclusion regarding the matter would be simplistic, since in Greece in general, it is almost impossible to relate specific episodes of past erosion to certain types of human activity (Rackham and Moody 1996: 23). Erosion can be the outcome of geological, climatic or weather factors rather than of human action (Rackman and Moody 1996: 18-24). In the case of Crete, it has been suggested that the observed prehistoric episodes of erosion, rather than representing a peak of human activity, have more likely been the outcome of 'single unrepeatabe freak storms' (Rackham and Moody 1996: 24). Particularly

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telling is Rackham and Moody's (1996: 24) observation that prehistoric erosion, which could not have been assisted by the mechanical destabilisation available to modern people, is far greater than that displayed by twentieth-century erosional deposits which represent a known peak of human activity. Hence geological and weather conditions rather than anthropogenic ones seem to be a more adequate explanation behind the extremely eroded landscape of prehistoric Crete.

Leaving aside the issue of erosion, another theme that deserves scrutiny is whether there is plausible evidence to demonstrate the existence of agricultural practices that imply substantial labour investment. If overproduction of food was the fundamental vehicle towards the establishment of debt relations, we would expect to find ample evidence of materially productive technologies such as plough agriculture, terracing, drainage systems, intensive use of land, intensive cultivation of larger areas of land, and agricultural extensification (Halstead 1992a; Renfrew 1982a). Plough agriculture by providing a source of mechanical energy larger than human muscle power or simple implements like the hoe, permits a considerable rise in productivity by increasing the area that an individual can cultivate and by turning the soil more effectively (Gilman 1981: 6; Goody 1974: 25). Similarly, terraces, being appropriate for both labour-intensive crops and grain, allow greater productivity by assisting farming in several ways (Rackham and Moody 1992: 129). They increase root penetration and absorption of water by the soil, control sheet and gully erosion, extend cultivable land (for example, by making a less sheer slope on which to till), and enable the redistribution of sediment (Rackham and Moody 1992, 1996: 142). Projects, like the construction of dams and ditches that may suggest efforts to manage water supplies (surface or rainwater) for irrigation, flood control or erosion and silt control (Balcer 1974: 143), constitute a further productive improvement in the infrastructure of subsistence production. Extensification is simply a kind of intensification that involves bringing marginal areas into cultivation, thus increasing the overall use of land (Halstead 1992a: 109). All these techniques of agricultural intensification, once in operation, can result in the formation of what may be described as an *accumulative* landscape. This is an area with evidence of large-scale means of subsistence production and creation of substantial food surpluses¹⁹ extracted through considerable labour investments (Gosden 1989a: 48). The construction of terraces for instance, involves a massive burden of labour and can be considered a time-consuming task. In some cases terracing has been shown to take up to a month (Watrous *et al.* 2000: 473-474). Moreover, the maintenance of terraces is a task neither easy nor free of considerable costs (Runnels and Hansen

¹⁹ We need to keep in mind however, that intensification results in increased surplus only if there is not a balanced expansion of the agricultural workforce and so of the number of consumers (Halstead 1992a: 110).

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1987; Van Andel and Runnels 1987: 145-148). This also holds true for the maintenance of dams (Van Andel and Runnels 1987: 148). Equally, plough agriculture exacts a significant price in terms of labour investment and can be considered 'labour stored in the ground, in animals and equipment' (Gudeman 1977: 580 cited in Gilman 1981: 6). Fields have to be cleared (Gilman 1981: 6), ploughs have to be constructed and maintained, plough oxen must be attended to (Pullen 1992: 53), and fodder for draught animals has to be provided by the ton (Halstead 1981b: 323). By the same token, more intensive land-use represents major labour inputs, since it involves a shortening of fallow and therefore demands increased frequency of manuring and tillage (Halstead 1992a: 109; Renfrew 1982a: 273). Subsequently, the labour burden will dramatically increase, if farmers cultivate larger areas of land by taking up marginal or more distant land²⁰ and adopting intensive land-use and investment in capital intensive techniques such as terracing and drainage projects. Finally, extensification despite the fact that it involves less frequent cropping (Halstead 1992a: 109), is accompanied by an increase in travel time to go to outlying fields. In short, all the technologies of agricultural intensification mentioned above present significant labour investments by expansion of the labour force or by increased per capita input of labour, or both (Halstead 1992a: 110).

Identification of practices of agricultural intensification in the EM era could imply not only a preoccupation with considerable overproduction, but also projects towards which the labour of needy households could have been channeled for the benefit of their thriving neighbours. It is hard to imagine prosperous farmers seeking to exchange food for labour when there are no labour demanding agricultural projects and need for surplus labour. This is not to say that surplus labour could not have been directed towards other occasions outside agriculture. Significantly, in economic terms, free time and an increase in valuable craft goods do not necessarily promote new productive projects, but rather may lead to expansion and intensification of non (directly materially) productive activities (Nash 1966: 55). Nonetheless, although Halstead (1992a: 110) intimates that surplus production does not necessarily presuppose intensification, there is more than a hint in the *Social Storage* scenario that the strategy followed by flourishing farmers was aimed predominantly at capturing the labour of their needy counterparts in order to capitalise on constant substantial food overproduction for exchange. An important component of this account is emphasis on the significance of continuous reinvestments in agriculture realised through the extraction of labour obligations.

Not wanting to forget that not all forms of agricultural intensification are equally susceptible to archaeological identification (Halstead 1992a: 109) let us explore whether the EM landscape

²⁰ Cultivation of more distant land increases the travel time to the fields.

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bears them out. To begin with, we will start with the plough. It has been suggested that plough agriculture is not particularly suited to the arid environment of south Greece which, moreover, is not especially favourable for raising cattle (Halstead 1981b: 330). Furthermore, the lack of *artefactual* evidence, such as ploughs themselves or artistic representations of ploughs, combined with the absence of archaeobotanical studies that might reveal the presence of weed species associated with the practice of ploughing, does not allow us to reach a positive conclusion regarding the operation of plough agriculture during the EM period. The earliest evidence for the use of the plough in Crete dates to the MM period and consists of a Minoan hieroglyph (27) which seems to resemble an ard (Hansen 1988: 51; Renfrew 1982a: 273). It is a remarkable fact that even in the Late Bronze Age, extensive plough agriculture seems to have been rather limited (Halstead 1981b: 331). Significantly, as the oxen tablets from Late Bronze Age reveal, even the palaces themselves only had a few plough oxen (Halstead 1981b: 332).

A well-dated prehistoric terrace system consisting of huge terraces of the check-dam type has been discovered on the islet of Pseira in the bay of Mirabello (Hope-Simpson and Betancourt 1994). Examination of the relation of terraces to habitation sites, soil development, masonry style and stratification of Minoan sherds within the terraces has assigned it a MM date (Hope-Simpson and Betancourt 1994: 322; Rackham and Moody 1992: 129, 1996: 143). Apart from this we know of no earlier example in Crete so far.

Bronze Age water management on the Greek mainland is known from the plain of Argos (the Mycenaean dam near Tiryns) and the Kopais basin of Boiotia (Halstead 1992a: 110). The only Cretan examples come again from the islet of Pseira. These are two massive stone structures located across the lower parts of the two main stream beds (Hope-Simpson and Betancourt 1994: 322). Yet, according to the excavators, the dams from Pseira (which seem to have been used for the provision of silt for replenishing the terraces and water for irrigation) appear to date to the MM period. Alternatively, irrigation can be detected through the presence of non-indigenous crops that could not otherwise have been grown in a given site, as well as by new weed species, yet no analysis of botanical data has been so far undertaken with this objective in mind (Hansen 1988: 51).

As far as the issue of intensive land-use is concerned, it has been argued that farmers living in the dispersed settlement patterns of EMI and EMII, practised labour-demanding intensive gardening (Manning 1994: 233). That is, they worked intensively a small area around their farmstead. Apart from this however, the practice does not appear to have been followed regarding the cultivation of larger areas and thus one may claim that overall, intensive land-use was quite modest during these times (Halstead 1992a: 110). It is noteworthy that the practice in question is

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difficult to identify archaeologically (Halstead 1992a: 110). One has to turn to archaeobotanical data to examine the non-crop seeds represented and determine their soil requirements, habitat, and growing season (Halstead 1992a; Hansen 1988: 50). Unfortunately, such research (which can also shed some light on the question of the cultivation of more marginal fields²¹) remains yet to be seen for Crete (Hansen 1988: 50). Finally, agricultural extensification has been proposed by Manning (1994: 234) for the late Prepalatial period (EMIII–MMIA) on the basis of evidence for settlement nucleation²². Even during these times however, the picture seems to be more complex. Settlement nucleation which correlates with the extension of the agricultural resource base appears to have occurred only in some areas like Knossos, Mesara and Malia while evidence for settlement dispersal which may coincide with intensive land-use of discrete areas can be detected in Vrokastro, Lasithi and Chania (Haggis 1999: 63-65). To date, therefore, there is very little evidence for the presence of agricultural intensification or the existence of a substantially accumulative landscape during the EMI and most notably the EMII. This is important because EMII is exactly the period when, according to some, one can trace the emergence of social inequalities on Crete.

On the other hand, even if we could trace the existence of agricultural practices that imply significant labour investments in land, it would not tell us whether the providers of labour worked in a permanent basis for the successful farmers. This, according to the *Social Storage* model, probably happened at some point because needy households would have otherwise starved. Thus, maintaining a hand on valuable craft goods and labour by the needy, the successful farmers could accumulate even more food to build even more obligations and reinvest further in production. Yet, as I suggested earlier on in this chapter, the *Social Storage* premise is problematic in accounting for the creation of permanent debts, because permanent debts do not involve sale type transactions. Simply put, the scheme envisaged by *Social Storage* might tell us how the rich became richer, but not how they became powerful.

Haggis (1999) has maintained that permanent mobilisation of the labour force could have been achieved through the 'opium of the people', namely religion. This seems to me an attractive scenario, yet it can only be tentatively suggested given the lack of evidence which might affirm the presence of considerable labour inputs and materially productive reinvestments in agriculture. I do not want to imply that labour obligations were not called upon. However, it could be argued that labour obligations may have not necessarily or predominantly been triggered by an obsolete

²¹ According to Hansen (1988: 50), if cultivation of marginal areas took place, we should expect a change in the assemblage of weeds species as the soil being cultivated changes.

²² Settlement nucleation leads to taking up more distant fields for cultivation which involves an increase in labour costs.

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production mentality and instead of being channeled predominantly towards materially productive investments in land, they may have been directed towards various other practices. Renfrew (1994: 163), for example, refers to *sacral investment*, that is investment of resources and labour into ritual activities of a sacred character. These can be *monumental* or *oblational*. The former refer to the construction of monuments which serve as foci of ritual observances, whereas the latter refer to the provision (deposition in archaeological terms) of offerings or oblations in the form of valuable artefacts. To take inspiration from Bourdieu (1991: 234-243), there is not only materially productive labour, what today we narrowly perceive to be economic labour, but also the labour of representation. That is to say, labour channeled into practices that aim to produce and impose a legitimate vision of the world.

Furthermore, the idea that regular exchanges of food relief constitute the engine behind the emergence of social inequalities in EMII and the eventual construction of the MMI palatial edifices has been questioned on the grounds of the absence of significant storage facilities until the EMIII and MMI periods (Manning 1994; Strasser 1997). As Strasser holds:

There are no signs of bothroi on Crete during this period, in striking contrast to their ubiquity on Mainland Greece and in western Anatolia ... precisely the regions where complex societies did not emerge during the subsequent Middle Bronze Age (1997: 92).

Equally important, according to many scholars, the primitive inland transport capacities of the EM make any suggestion for movement of heavy staple commodities highly doubtful (see Gilman 1981; Manning 1994; Van Andel and Runnels 1988). Food and water requirements for animals, limited carrying capacities, low speed and also the absence in this period of a network of roads would have made overland transport extremely difficult (Manning 1994: 241). In this respect, it is further interesting to note that if 'social storage' really had operated we would expect most EM sites to be concentrated close to the sea in order to take advantage of sea communications in the transport of bulky foodstuffs. Interestingly, in contrast to Mainland Greece, Crete's thin and long configuration offers a great advantage to nearby-ports to access island's arable regions (Manning 1994: 241). However, several EM sites were not located by the sea and still others despite their proximity to the sea, were built on hills and had poor access to the coast (Hood, Warren and Cadogan 1962)²³. Importantly, neither the palatial site of Knossos nor that of Phaistos occupied a coastal location (Manning 1994: 242). The point in citing these examples is to indicate that we should expect a more careful consideration of the maritime transport capacities of a site if indeed transport of bulky foodstuffs was one of the main

²³ For example, several sites in the Rethymnon area and in the Amari valley were distant from the sea while sites on the south coast were built on hilltops (see Hood, Warren and Cadogan 1962).

preconditions for survival in bad years. To this, one may also add that substantial evidence of Minoan sailing vessels postdates the EMII period (Manning 1994: 241).

In Strasser's view (1997: 92), the notion that food relief was exchanged for valuable craft goods during the EM does not seem to hold true. For, as he notes, the evidence for valuable craft goods postdates the Prepalatial times (Early Minoan and the early Middle Minoan periods). Strasser's remark is significant, yet it has been awkwardly stated. As I shall argue in more detail later on in this study²⁴, rather than suggest that the EM period is relatively devoid of valuable craft goods, it is more accurate to say that the evidence of durable tokens *in circulation* postdates the EM. Crucially it is during the EM period that material wealth is conspicuously and predominantly deposited in tombs (Cadogan 1986; Damilati 2002). Removed deliberately from circulation it consequently acquired a value above exchange. In addition, if food was indeed exchanged for valuables between different communities, as the *Social Storage* model would have us believe, then we would expect all the communities within this network of distribution to display similar durable tokens. Interestingly, this is not the case. The distribution pattern of these tokens is so localised that we have to accept that their value lay in local contexts of meaning and value (Damilati 2002; Damilati and Vavouranakis 2002). Without going into much detail, it suffices to say that different cemeteries in eastern Crete (e.g. Mochlos, Gournia, Palaikastro) have yielded distinct assemblages of valuables²⁵. Not only are there substantial differences in style and in the types of objects between the burial assemblages of these neighbouring communities, but also between these and burial assemblages from Mesara further afield in central Crete.

Within central Crete, EM tombs and cemeteries belonging to different communities appear to display differential emphasis on certain categories of valuables. For instance, the cemetery of Phourni at Archanes, has produced assemblages that show a remarkable emphasis on Cycladic and to a lesser extent on Egyptian and Greek Mainland influences. Apart from daggers and amulets (both of which show typological similarities with Cyclades), and obsidian blades, the Cycladic presence at Archanes is clearly represented by 25 Cycladic figurines, as well as by ivory and bronze pins discovered in *Tholos C*, the 'Area of the Rocks' to the south-west, and to the south (Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1986: 116-118, 134). Remarkably, bronze and ivory pins are very rare in Crete (Branigan 1983b; Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1986: 118) and though Cycladic figurines have occasionally been retrieved from other Cretan burial contexts, their total number cannot rival that from Archanes (Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1986: 118). It is also worth mentioning the gold beads found in *Tholos C* and the south part of the 'Area of the Rocks'.

²⁴ See chapter nine.

²⁵ The unique character of the valuables of Mochlos will be discussed in detail in part three.

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These, as the excavators remark, are unique examples for Crete at this period and show a striking resemblance with similar examples from the *Treasure of Priam* at Troy (Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1986: 116). Egyptian and Greek Mainland influences on the other hand can be detected in certain artefacts retrieved from *Tholos E* which also displayed a Cycladic presence. One may note for instance, a miniature steatite jar inspired by Old Kingdom prototypes and a seal whose design is unique among stratified EMII pieces and seems to have drawn extensively on Greek Mainland prototypes (Panagiotopoulos 2002).

In a nutshell, the EM landscape does not seem to reveal a clear preoccupation with or an emphasis on significant productive investment and reinvestment in farming. I do not want to overstate the case until the EM botanical evidence is examined specifically with a view to identifying strategies of agricultural intensification such as those mentioned above. I would like to stress that no doubt the materially productive dimension of wealth can strongly act as a 'fly-wheel' for the creation of relational inequalities. Still, recalling once again Marx's fundamental remark, this can happen only when the materially productive dimension of wealth assists a system of permanent dependencies, a situation that is achieved once access to the means of production is drastically limited to certain segments of the population. In this respect, permanent debts can be formed once some groups are able to dominate all the land available and concentrate tools and equipment crucial to production. In these circumstances, there is a compelling reason for those severed from the means of their livelihood to 'sell' *permanently* their labour and produce surpluses that by keeping the mechanism going, ensure the perpetuation of their dependence to the possessors of the means of production.

This does not seem a very probable scenario for the EM times when productive equipment would have been fairly simple and so easily accessible. It may be worth noting that metal tools were rare during this period (cf. Gilman 1981: 5). Still, taking into account their low quality it is hard to see how control of their possession by some individuals or groups would have become essential to the production enterprise (cf. Branigan 1974: 133). At the same time, EM times do not appear to suggest significant land disputes. Arguably, competition for land would have been minimal given the small population figures of most EM communities. For Gilman (1981: 4), the presence in Europe and the Mediterranean of large areas of unpopulated but habitable land during the Middle Ages and the early modern period suggests that land was not a scarce resource until very recently. In his view, the same could be said for the Aegean Bronze Age when one can assume far lower population densities. Additionally, according to Manning (1994), the pattern of dispersed settlements in EMI and EMII could probably imply that land was not at a premium during these times. On the other hand, the destruction by fire of EMII B Vasiliki could indicate

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armed hostility triggered by land shortage. However, as Watrous points out, the similarity of events like the abandonment of some areas and the shrinkage in size of some sites that seem to betray a 'time of retrenchment' and 'population decline' in EMIII Crete and contemporary Greek Mainland and Cyclades argues for a wider cause (2001: 223).

There is no justification for assuming that power relations lay uniquely with subsistence production, investment and reinvestment in the means of production and ownership of land. For it is an oversimplification to see control over and investment in land as 'somehow the more real and material basis of society' or to assume that all other strategies of status activity depend on this and then to reduce their significance to simple acts of conspicuous consumption (Rowlands 1998: 179). To repeat an essential point of this study, a dynamic growth of the production apparatus is not the only way to create power relations (cf. Bataille 1998; Berthoud and Sabelli 1979).

I would suggest that one of the most critical features of the Cretan Early Bronze Age is an emphasis on practices that bring to the fore the materially unproductive dimension of wealth as an instrument of paramount significance in games of status acquisition and power. In this respect, Renfrew's (1994) *sacral investment* as well as the presence of rich burials (*necrotaphic prominence*) appear to be significantly relevant phenomena. Notably, the tombs contain almost all the prepalatial stoneware seals and metal objects we know (Cadogan 1986: 154; see also Nakou 1995 on metal artefacts). To the deliberate deposition of material wealth in tombs, we can also add the substantial occurrence of contexts that argue for conspicuous consumption of food and drink. Drinking in particular should have acquired a special significance in the Early Bronze Age, as the expansion and elaboration of forms of drinking vessels such as jugs and cups clearly indicate (Manning 1994; Renfrew 1972). Particularly telling is Tenwolde's (1992) observation that a great amount of *pithoi* at the EM settlement of Myrtos were liquid rather than food containers.

What we should always keep in mind is that all these practices as well as the various artefacts and resources that enable their execution are not mere indices of wealthy or prominent individuals. For example, as the Trobriand harvest contest (*Kayasa*) teaches us, people may 'fight with food' (Wiessner 1996: 9) in order to acquire power and high status (Schiefenovel and Brell-Krannhals 1996). In Tawema, power and high status depend on generous yam giving. The most considerable effort here is channeled towards the *kemata*, that is, a yam garden for harvest gift-giving, which not only surpasses in size other types of garden but also receives considerable and conspicuous labour (Schiefenovel and Brell-Krannhals 1996). It is worth mentioning that the surplus of yams is not invested in the production of more yams. Rather, it is ceremonially displayed in sophisticated yam houses as a symbol of chiefly power and eventually redistributed

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to the people (Gregory 1982: 55). Thus, as the Trobrianders' case makes clear, emphasis is not always or inevitably placed upon the materially productive dimension of food; corn (or yam in the case of our Trobrianders) does not always feed back into itself. Food clearly matters, but not simply as a source of calories in order for people to maintain their bodies, acquire energy and then go on to work more and reproduce the means and the relations of production. People may produce significant food supplies without having in view a ceaseless growth of the means of production. Materially unproductive practices like the depletion of all food in a festival, ritual event or other occasions may act as a critical vessel towards the establishment and perpetuation of debts, power and positions of high regard. To strike an optimistic note, Minoan scholarship has started recognising feasting and drinking as meaningful practices of major importance in the creation of power and high status (see Day and Wilson 2002; Hamilakis 1995, 1998, 1999). Some further improvement can be made towards the study of these practices and their association with power by investigating the ways they could have acted as vehicles for the generation and maintenance of debts. On the other hand, one can only concur with Pader (1982) when arguing that current archaeological studies of material culture accord a pride of place to description, rather than explanation: on 'what', rather than on 'why' and 'how'. In this respect, valuable objects retrieved from tombs are taken to be simple markers of wealth, power and status without ever considering the act of intentional and voluntary placing of material wealth into the ground and its removal from circulation as meaningful practices that deserve our attention²⁶. An object's significance cannot be exhausted by its superficial treatment as a passive token of the identity of its possessor. Exploration of objects' role in actively creating identities, social positions and relations of debt should be seen as a research objective that Aegean archaeology cannot any longer afford to postpone.

On the visibility of wealth and its implications in the archaeological study of inequality

In discussing the materiality of inequality in Cretan prehistory we cannot avoid considering the role of metallurgy. In fact, the inception of effective bronze metallurgy has been recognised as a significant contributor to the 'emergence of civilisation' in the Aegean (see Renfrew 1972). Noting the contrast between the relatively modest representation of metal artefacts in the Neolithic material record and their exceptionally increased presence in the Early Bronze Age,

²⁶ Here we can mention Voutsaki's (1995, 1997) groundbreaking work on Mycenaean contexts in Peloponnese. Unfortunately, no such work exists to date on Cretan material.

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Colin Renfrew (1972: 338) argued that a *Metallschock*²⁷ took place during the early phases of the Bronze Age, most notably in EBII. His *Craft Specialisation/Wealth* model which aimed to supplement the *Subsistence/Redistribution* hypothesis, gave rise to the widely espoused idea that the widespread production and consumption of metal artefacts during the EBA was critical in the emergence of social inequalities (Renfrew 1972: 483-485). Renfrew argued that metals not only offered a highly effective medium for reflecting wealth and high status, but were also crucial through their associations with warfare, military prowess and technological advance in the original production of social asymmetries. In his view, the EBA was the historical setting of a highly acquisitive society where social status was closely linked to the control of production, display and consumption of material wealth and especially of metal objects. A side effect was the rise of competition and military hostility that further assisted the development of the metallurgy subsystem by stimulating a need for weapons. By facilitating war, weapons in turn would have given rise to a warrior class where high status would have been closely linked to military prowess. In addition, the demand for material wealth was seen as favouring craft specialisation and an increase in subsistence production.

It is worth mentioning that as a scenario for the emergence of inequalities in the Aegean the *Craft Specialisation/Wealth* model is quite problematic. A closer look suffices to demonstrate unanswered questions which at first sight might elude us due to the circularity of the general argument. Above all, the model fails to explain why metals – the assumed catalyst for the emergence of social inequalities – became desirable in the first place in what Renfrew believed were egalitarian societies. Renfrew attributes the demand for metal objects and other prestigious items to a phantasmatic acquisitive Bronze Age society, which suddenly emerges from a non-acquisitive Neolithic one purely due to the inception of effective bronze metallurgy. If one follows the dichotomy between unranked Neolithic and ranked EBA communities, the model leads to conceptual dead ends or at best to a circular argument. On the one hand, Renfrew clearly tells us that there is a desire for metals because Aegean society has become acquisitive. This argument is brought forth in order to provide explanation for the emergence of inequalities. On the other hand, Renfrew suggests that, given the inception of metallurgy, society has become acquisitive due to its newly acquired incentive for pursuing and expressing ranking through material wealth. Paradoxically, the object of inquiry, namely the rise of inequalities, becomes now the explanation for the appearance of an acquisitive society which is what Renfrew considered in the first place to be an explanation for the original rise of inequalities.

²⁷ By *Metallschock* Renfrew meant 'a sudden reaction produced by the first impact of metallurgy and metal products upon the populace' (1972: 338).

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The main point of concern here is that by underestimating the importance of metallurgy during the Neolithic and overestimating it during the Early Bronze Age Renfrew proposed both a further stimulus to the emergence of social inequalities as well as a striking material indication of these inequalities. I suggest that this fact is relevant to the way wealth has been so far envisioned in the Cretan Bronze Age. For it bears significantly on archaeologists' current tendency to insert wealth into evolutionary interpretative schemes. Poignantly, Renfrew's perception of metals as 'the first clear expression of wealth' (1972: 492) in the Aegean prehistoric record has led to the arbitrary assumption of a non-acquisitive egalitarian Neolithic society where there is little point to overproduction since people have limited needs. In Renfrew's words,

The farmer in an ideally simplified society produces enough for the needs of himself and his family. There is little point in producing much more food than they can eat, since there would be nothing for him to do with it. His needs are satisfied (1972: 41).

Arguably, the question of origins with its attendant ethnocentric evaluations still reigns supreme leading once more to the fallacious distinction between simple egalitarian and complex ranked societies. However, one cannot avoid the impression that what is inherent in this distinction is our obsolete assumption that a hierarchical society is one that expresses social inequalities in material wealth. The content of material wealth is defined according to Western biases about aesthetics, scarcity, quantity and quality. In this respect, Marx's theory of labour value in capitalist societies is frequently foisted uncritically upon pre-capitalist societies to chart categories of valuables. The important thing to keep in mind therefore, is that, according to current consensus, ranked societies are not just those that express inequalities by material means, but to a large extent those which display the forms of material culture that best fit our modern conceptions of what is valuable. Conversely, societies such as the Greek Neolithic that fail to fit these preconceptions appear in our archaeological narratives as egalitarian. While I have no problem with a view that takes metals to have been important in power struggles in a given community in a given historical age, I find it hard to accept that inequalities were absent in earlier times simply because metals were not important or present. After all, 'an artefact cannot be used as the benchmark for a social phenomenon in a period before its invention' (McKay 1988: 12). Equally, one should not see the prominent presence of rich burials (Necrotaphic Prominence) in the Aegean EBA as an index for the *emergence* of previously absent inequalities. It perhaps goes without saying that a European Bronze Age warrior is a person of high status, 'but what of his counterpart amongst the Plains Indians of America where the body was not interred but exposed for decomposition?' (McKay 1988: 8). It should be stressed that so far archaeologists have grounded the existence of *so called* egalitarian societies primarily on negative evidence, most

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specifically the lack of rich burials or the lack of particular types of objects. One may note however, that negative evidence does not generate understanding or offer answers to our questions, but rather creates problems by directing our attention to what is missing:

Thus a cemetery in which there is no appreciable differences in the grave contents becomes the remains of an egalitarian society, not because it is, but because *our* accepted symbols of rank are missing (Mckay 1988: 8, emphasis in the original).

To get back to the Aegean case, more recently Nakou (1995) has offered a new look at Aegean prehistoric metallurgy. She points out that the importance of metal during the Neolithic should not be overlooked. The distinction between a lack of metals in the Neolithic and an explosion in their production and consumption in the EBA – what Renfrew called *Metallschock* – might be the outcome of biased chronological visibility of metals in the archaeological record due to the specific depositional strategies of each period. The prominent position of metal artefacts in the EBA is due to their deposition in formal burials, a practice that makes them more visible in the archaeological record. On the other hand, as Nakou demonstrates, in the Neolithic metal artefacts occur in settlements and caves. Bearing in mind that settlement traces leave much less visible marks compared to mortuary contexts the notion of a metal-free Neolithic may largely be the outcome of a visibility bias. Significantly, even within the EBA, the striking association of metals with burial deposits – a practice itself worthy of attention – should not lead us to conclude necessarily that metal artefacts did not occur at all in settlements.

However, I would like to suggest that even if Nakou was not able to demonstrate the existence of metal artefacts in the Neolithic we should not go on to believe that the period lacked relational inequalities. The existence of power and status inequalities cannot simply be inferred from the presence of a particular type of wealth, be that a golden cup or a bronze dagger. Nakou's restoration of the presence of metals in the Neolithic might be enough for scholars like Renfrew to confirm the existence of power structures in this period. However, *what is* of paramount importance for both the Neolithic and the EBA is to explore the ways that metals or other kinds of objects were implicated in the creation of power and status, rather than presuppose their significance simply based on their tracing in the archaeological record. This draws us once again to the issue of debt, the very essence of power relations. The possibility that inequalities in so called egalitarian societies might have been constructed through practices which prioritised different kinds of resources and displayed different kinds of rationalities quite at odds with current technocrat perceptions of what is rational, efficient and valuable in power, status and wealth struggles needs to be taken seriously into account. The value of an object may not necessarily depend on its physical scarcity or the labour time invested to it, but rather it may be

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grounded in the cosmological representations and moral investments it contains²⁸. Last but not least, attention should be paid to the significance of intangible resources such as knowledge, memory and skills in shaping debts and therefore power relations. In this respect, Vitelli's (1995; see also Perles and Vitelli 1999) work on the Greek Neolithic is unique in offering us exceptional inspiration in thinking about how inequalities could have been based on pyrotechnological skills and knowledge that carried ritual connotations.

To sum up, low visibility of particular types of objects in the archaeological record cannot be taken as a justification to perpetuate the myth of egalitarian societies, the question of the historical emergence of inequalities and the futile project of hunting down their temporal origins. There is no better way to demonstrate the danger of grounding an argument for the existence of egalitarian societies purely in negative evidence than by borrowing some words from McKay:

If, for some reason, the pyramid of Cheops had vanished we could argue that a classless society existed on its site by citing the remains of the workers' huts which lie near it. These were uniform and lacked hierarchical distinction (1988: 8).

²⁸ Note for example, human bones, sacred places or landmarks in the landscape that possess a profound value in various societies.

PART II:

RETHINKING INEQUALITY

**A NEW THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL
AGENDA**

Chapter 5

A brief history of the concept of inequality: The ancients and moderns

Introduction

It has been repeatedly pointed out by sociologists, political activists and politicians alike that contemporary society is characterised by profound social inequalities. By this they mean that people are unequally placed and rewarded and they are offered unequal opportunities (Béteille 1981: 59). Perhaps it goes without saying that this does not merely constitute a sociological observation, a political standpoint or a philosophical assertion but, extrapolating from its consequences, a social fact experienced in real life. Judging from personal experiences, one would guess that no single social being would deny having experienced her or his social position – in various stages of their life and in contexts as different as the workplace, school, the academy, the neighbourhood etc. – as being unequal compared to those of others. Among the inequalities that loom large in our society, the most easily observable are those of income, wealth, status, opportunities of life and access to power to achieve desired ends.

At this juncture, I remind the reader of Béteille's (1969a: 13, 1977, 1981: 65) observation that the phenomenon of social inequality has two expressions, a distributive and a relational one. The former refers to the unequal distribution among people of different qualities and resources like wealth, power, prestige and skill, which is independent of any social relations. The latter refers to the ways in which individuals with unequal shares of resources and qualities are socially related to each other in terms of superordination/subordination and deference. At the same time, one especially prevailing strand in the contemporary world is the condemnation of inequality, which is accompanied by the plea for the much more comforting ideal of equality. Let us keep in mind in the current discussion that the notion of equality is not a monolithic term (Béteille 1986: 121). When we talk about the importance of equality we may not all mean the same thing. More precisely, one may value 'competitive equality' or 'equality of opportunity' while others may rate highly 'distributive equality' or 'equality of results' and we should not fail to recognise the significant differences of political orientation and perception between these different points of view (Béteille 1994: 1010).

I would like to stress here that the ideal of equality – namely, the faith in the feasibility of the creation of a society where nobody would outrank anyone else – has a long intellectual history that can be traced back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Interestingly, it

was developed in opposition to the intellectual teachings of classical political philosophy. It is my contention that the assumptions and prejudices surrounding the ideal of equality, have been taken for granted in many current archaeological accounts. In this chapter, I want to reflect on the modernist philosophical discourse on inequality and the ideal of equality. In doing so, I wish to reveal why and how archaeologists have failed to recognise that inequality is a universal¹ social phenomenon and instead remain engaged with the futile task of hunting down its temporal and spatial origins.

The rise of the discourse on inequality in classical philosophy: Plato, Aristotle and the search for the state of nature

It might well be argued that the views of modernist thinkers on equality and inequality presented a radical intellectual break with the classical tradition of political philosophy. This becomes obvious if one locates for a moment their discourse on inequality and particularly their faith in the natural equality of human beings next to the intellectual journeys that were taken before, especially Plato's and Aristotle's discourses on inequality. Plato's distaste for the Athenian democracy and his claim that it constituted a morally corrupted form of government have been repeatedly pointed out in many commentaries on his work². One should note here that most of Plato's contemporary Athenians regarded democracy as the most positive form of governing for it incorporated in the task of governing a wide range of experiences from other social activities, by allowing people of different professions to participate in political affairs. Plato, on the other hand, claimed this was one of the most serious defects of democracy, since he believed that special knowledge, rather than equal participation, was the most important requirement of governing (Day 1988: 8).

At the same time, his ideal just society, as it is developed from his best-known work the *Republic*³ was an extremely inegalitarian and authoritarian society. Plato's ideal society was divided into three groups of citizens; the philosopher Guardians, the soldier Auxiliaries and the Producers, or money-makers, the last of which included traders, merchants, farmers, craftsmen and labourers. It should be noted immediately that the groups in question, as presented by Plato, differ not only in lifestyle and status but also in power (Annas 1981: 172). The Guardians constituted the smallest group whose rule is not constrained by any constitution or body of laws but rather by the wise character that prevents them from misusing

¹ On the universality of social inequality see Adams (1977: 395); Berreman (1981: 8); B  teille (1969a: 14, 1969b: 362); Cancian (1976); Dahrendorf (1969b: 40); Fallers (1973: 6); Hamilakis (1995: 30); Hendricks (1988: 217); McGuire (1983: 100); Wason (1994: 1).

² As John Day (1988: 9) remarks, in Plato's view, the death of his teacher Socrates was a firm proof of the corruption of the Athenian democracy.

³ In Greek, *Politeia*.

their power. As Plato sees it, the Guardians are the rulers because they are ideally wise, in the sense that they have a natural competence to rule and have been educated and trained in order to develop further this natural skill for the common good (Annas 1981: 175; Day 1988: 25–32). On the other hand, the soldier Auxiliaries who form a larger group and the Producers who include the majority of the population are excluded from any claim to political power. This is fair, Plato maintains, because unlike the Guardians, the Auxiliaries and the Producers are weak in reason. Furthermore, they lack the freedom to live their life as they wish and are essentially enslaved to the power of the Guardians.

Most significantly, Plato openly suggests that it is in the interest of the citizens belonging to the classes with the weaker reason to accept their subordination to the rule of the Guardians:

Therefore, in order that such a man [whose own reason is weak] be ruled by a principle similar to that which rules the best man, we say he must be enslaved to the best man, who has a divine ruler within himself. It is not to harm the slave that we believe he must be ruled ... but because it is better for everyone to be ruled by divine intelligence. It is best that he should have this within himself, but if he has not, then it must be imposed from outside... (*Republic* 590 c-d cited in Annas 1981: 173).

In other words, in Plato's ideal society, social inequalities and the unequal division of power are beneficial and justified. They are exactly what an ideal society demands. In fact, inequalities are presented in the *Republic* as the perfect panacea against disorder and injustice. The point is clearly revealed in Plato's assertion that justice and order prevail only when each individual tries to do just what she or he is naturally better skilled at and not becoming involved in areas of competence that others are naturally better fit to perform. Thus, according to Plato, the worst disorder and injustice that could ruin the ideal city (*polis*) would come if the Producers or the Auxiliaries interfered with what the Guardians are naturally competent to do – namely, to rule. Having said that, it is now easy to see why Plato thinks that democracy is unjust (Day 1988: 21). Bearing this in mind, it comes as no surprise that 'Plato's society has offended and continues to offend many, because he is frankly and unapologetically inegalitarian' (Annas 1981: 172).

Subsequently, Aristotle, Plato's greatest pupil, maintained that a natural rank order among people is inevitable because men are by nature unequal (Dahrendorf 1969b: 21). He proposed in the *Politics* an assessment of hierarchical order, that is the existence of ruled and ruling elements as a common and universal feature of nature and all living organisms. From this point he proceeded to justify as a natural outcome of human relationships not only social inequalities but also slavery (Lockyer 1988: 53–56; Taylor 1995: 254–257). In Aristotle's view, no better demonstration of the natural existence of a hierarchical order can be found than in the relationships between the soul and the body and between reason and desires, respectively (Plattner 1979: 97). These two relationships stand in Aristotle's view not only as

two conspicuous cases of a natural hierarchy, but also as examples that teach us that hierarchical order is actually beneficial and just.

The train of the Aristotelian argument runs as follows: the soul has a natural rule over the body because the former provides the latter with rational direction in the absence of which the body would not be able to deal with the environment. At the same time, it is more advantageous for the body to be ruled by the soul, not simply because it is better that the body should be under rational direction, but most importantly because it benefits the body to be so directed (Taylor 1995: 254). Similarly, the desires or passions are naturally under the direction of reason, for without reason to control our strong passions or desires, they may disconnect our thinking and awareness of our conditions leading to moral weakness (Hutchinson 1995: 215–217). Accordingly, those men who differ from their fellow human beings as much as the soul and reason differ from the body and desires are by their very nature superior. These are people in whom reason rules over desires and the soul over the body according to the natural order. At the same time, just as it is beneficial and natural for the body and desires to be under the rule of the soul and reason respectively, so too it is just for people to rule over animals, and for the naturally superior human beings to govern the inferior ones in whom the desires and the body are not directed by reason and the soul, as nature dictates (Lockyer 1988: 53). As Aristotle sees it, the inferiors are natural slaves, or in a sense resemble draught animals, for they do not display any aptitude of rational self-direction. Conversely, it is more advantageous for them to be under the direction of those endowed with deliberation (Taylor 1995: 254–255; see also Lockyer 1988). In Aristotle's words,

It is thus clear that there are *by nature* free men and slaves, and that servitude is agreeable and just for the latter...Equally, the relation of the male to female is *by nature* such that one is superior and the other inferior, one dominates and the other is dominated...With the barbarians of course, the female and the dominated have the same rank. This is because they do not possess a naturally dominating element...This is why the poets say, 'It is just that Greeks rule over barbarians', because the barbarian and the slave are *by nature* the same (*Politics* 1254b, 1252a cited in Dahrendorf 1969b: 18, emphasis in the original).

As much as I may be running the risk of caricaturing Plato's and Aristotle's complex arguments of political philosophy, there are nevertheless two noticeable features underpinning the classical discourse on inequality; firstly, the belief that a hierarchical order is the natural condition of human beings and secondly, the conviction that when the subordination of some people under others follows the rules of nature, it is beneficial and just. To smooth the reader's path, the last point is more clearly unraveled in the Aristotelian analogy of the just hierarchical order with the relationship between soul and body or reason and desires.

The modernist synthesis: Fetishising culture, pacifying nature

Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau

To turn from the teachings of the classical political philosophy to the modernist discourse on inequality is to enter a completely different world. With the latter emerged the belief that the command of some human beings over others (relational inequalities) has no foundation in nature and that equality rather than inequality is the natural condition of people. The idea that the state of nature is a state of equality is found for first time in seventeenth century in the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke.

One of Hobbes's main themes in *Leviathan* is to show that although people are by nature equal, the state of nature as a state of equality is also a condition of misery and of war, of all against all. For as he maintains humans' distinctive nature is characterised by passions and desires that drive them towards things that give them pleasure, disabling them from distinguishing good from evil, and that given the desires or passions of different human beings are rarely the same, the whole state of nature as a state of equality turns one person against the other (Forsyth 1988: 130). In other words, according to Hobbes, although equality is the original state of being, it bears 'antisocial potentialities' (Hughes 1988: 154). Therefore the division of people into the rulers and the ruled is rational and necessary to put an end to the intolerable war of all against all (Hall 1973: 34). Moreover, in Hobbes's account the state of nature is not presented as a historical fact, but rather as something that people are always at risk of falling into (Forsyth 1988: 135; Hall 1973: 29).

On the other hand, in the *Second Treatise of Government* Locke's evaluation of the state of nature as a state of equality is more positive than that advocated by Hobbes. More precisely, Locke is not concerned so much with the antisocial potentialities of equality, but rather with the rights people enjoyed in the state of nature as a state of equality. It might be said that Locke's conviction that the state of nature is a state of equality forms the backbone of a political ideology that celebrates every human being having the right to equality and to be free from being subjugated by the arbitrary will of others (Béteille 1981; Hughes 1988). Quite ironically, however, Locke's doctrine on the natural equality of humankind is far from unshakable. For instance, we are told in the *First Treatise*, a book that – according to some, contradicts the arguments of the *Second Treatise* in many ways (Hughes 1988) – that there is some foundation in nature for the subordination of the wife to the husband or of the slave to her or his master (Béteille 1981: 64). In addition, it is worth mentioning that Locke leaves room for inequalities among human beings in terms of age, virtue and merit, yet he does not elaborate on how distinctions of merit or virtue emerge in the state of nature (Béteille 1981: 64).

Perhaps the most famous modernist proponent of the idea of equality as the natural condition of mankind is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, one of the ideological founders of the French Revolution. Although Rousseau was a prolific writer, his political philosophy is mainly set out in two books: *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men and whether it is Legitimised by Natural Law* [*Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1753)], and the *Social Contract* [*Du Contrat social* (1762)]. In these writings, Rousseau not only directly questioned both the classical discourse on inequality and the doctrine of the divine right of the absolute monarchy in France at the time, but he also passionately argued that modern humanity should and can resurrect the lost ideal of equality.

It should be noted at the outset that Rousseau does not deny the existence of physical or natural inequalities stemming from differences in bodily strength, age, health or mental make-up among women and men, yet he believes that these are insignificant (Béteille 1981: 63; 1994: 1011). What matters to him are social inequalities, like the subordination of one individual to the authority of another (Béteille 1981: 63; Mann 1986: 51; Plattner 1979: 96). Such inequalities, he holds, have no foundation in nature; rather, they are artificial and thus subject to abolition. To attack the Aristotelian premise that human beings are unequal by nature, Rousseau came up with the argument that in the state of nature people are not endowed with reason as Aristotle maintained (Plattner 1979: 97). As we have already seen, for Aristotle, some people are entitled to rule over others because the former innately possess reason whereas the latter do not and therefore cannot direct themselves. According to Rousseau, no natural human being has reason. Instead, all human beings in the state of nature are only interested with the fulfilment of their desires and passions and the maintenance of their bodies. Consequently, since no one possesses reason, no one is naturally above her or his fellow beings and accordingly holds no natural right to rule over others. Simply stated, to Rousseau's way of thinking, inequality – rather than equality – is unnatural and unjust.

This thesis was a revolution in political thought in itself. For unlike Hobbes, in Rousseau's philosophy, the idea of equality as the original state of being, does not lead to negative evaluations of the state of nature but rather serves as the *veille* for the abolition of social inequalities⁴. The train of Rousseau's argument as commonly understood has been aptly summarised by Dahrendorf (1969b: 21):

If men are equal by nature, then social inequalities cannot be established by nature or God; and if they are not so established, then they are subject to change, and the privileged of today may be the outcasts of tomorrow; it may then even be possible to abolish inequalities.

⁴ Although Rousseau himself does not conclude that all existing social institutions should be abolished, the reader can easily reach this conclusion for herself or himself (Hall 1973: 41).

The implication of Rousseau's argument was critical in political terms since it suggested that given their extranatural foundation all social hierarchies could lose their taken for granted claim to respect (Dahrendorf 1969b: 21). It is no wonder that the belief or disbelief in natural equality, i.e. the way people think about natural equality, has been invented as a barometer that measures individual or group politico-ideological stances to society as conservative or revolutionary. In simple terms, we have come to believe that one who accepts equality as a natural state of being or one who denies it, automatically becomes 'a member of the radical left or the radical right [respectively]' (Flanagan 1989: 260).

To be sure, the ideological, political and intellectual implications of Rousseau's postulation of a natural state of equality are too far-reaching and complex to be given adequate treatment here. Yet, there are aspects of Rousseau's argument that we should bring into the open, for they have a significant bearing on the way archaeologists today have come to deal with the concept of inequality. I am talking about the projection by Rousseau himself of the idea of natural equality, and concomitantly of an original apolitical state of being, into *history*. To phrase it slightly differently, unlike Hobbes, Rousseau presents the natural equality of mankind as something that really existed in the remote past and then goes on to depict the different succeeding stages in time through which humanity evolved (Dahrendorf 1969b: 22; Hall 1973: 29). Particularly telling is the opening sentence of the *Social Contract* where we are told that 'Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains' (cited in Keens-Soper 1988: 173). Thus, with Rousseau, the history of humanity acquired an evolutionary image. Yet, Rousseau also seeks to demonstrate that social inequalities, given their extranatural foundation, do not constitute an *inevitable* fate of humanity (Hall 1973: 41). As he maintains, inequalities and the establishment of political authority came into being *historically*, with the introduction of *property*, in particular landed property (Rousseau 1999 [1754]). In his own words,

... as soon as [people] observed that it was useful for a single person to have provisions for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, labour became necessary; and vast forests were changed into smiling Fields which had to be watered with the sweat of men, and in which slavery and misery were soon seen to germinate and grow with the crops (1999 [1754]: 25) ... The first man who fenced in an area and said 'This is mine' and who found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society (1754: 66 cited in Dahrendorf 1969b: 22).

One may say then that according to Rousseau all pre-agricultural societies lacked any form of political authority. It is also worth mentioning that Rousseau does not touch upon the question of how property came into being. That said, if Rousseau's discourse is analysed closely we find that for him the establishment of political society, though not inevitable, is *irreversible*; that is, once it is established, people cannot and perhaps should not go back to their original apolitical condition. We are now approaching one of the most perplexing arguments of Rousseau's political philosophy, for this quite clearly seems to contradict his

assertion that ‘no man has a natural authority over his fellowmen’ (1762: 1 cited in Plattner 1979: 96). Quite paradoxically, Rousseau, without explaining why, declares that at some point people start to recognise ‘the imperative of belonging to a social order⁵’ (Keens-Soper 1988: 175). Having said that, the question that now concerns Rousseau is not anymore ‘how once free men can regain their ... independence, but rather how men ... voluntarily agree to the creation of a social order, which though not natural, is or has become indispensable’ (Keens-Soper 1988: 175). In Rousseau’s view, therefore, although the political society is an extra-natural artefact, people living within it can still resurrect their natural freedom as long as the political authority is founded upon the agreement of those subject to it.

It might be suggested that the above argument constitutes a rather unhappy compromise for Rousseau’s political philosophy and, more specifically, for his belief in humankind’s natural equality. However, at this juncture, it is more adequate for our purposes to summarise the themes of Rousseau’s discourses that have had a great impact on the archaeological study of inequality. His views have come to be understood as unquestionable doctrines by successive generations of people in the contemporary world, and I suggest that they have been unconsciously implanted into the archaeological study of inequality to a significant degree. These are:

- 1) the belief in the non-inevitability of social inequality and, as a corollary, the non-universal existence of social inequality;
- 2) the idea that true equality existed in the remote past, as well as the concomitant perception of inequality as a phenomenon that has emerged historically;
- 3) the presentation of the emergence of political authority and of the process by which people became ‘civilised’ as a journey through evolutionary irreversible stages; and
- 4) the notion that the question of the invention of property is the key which can unlock the riddle of the emergence of social inequality.

Morgan, Marx, Engels

Critically, the ideas of early modernist thinkers on inequality were to re-appear in various forms in the writings of several prominent scholars of the nineteenth century, most notably in those of Lewis Henry Morgan, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Béteille 1994).

Morgan in particular has been seen as one of the most influential inventors of the myth of the primitive apolitical society (Kuper 1988: 42). For example, in *Ancient Society*, Morgan’s best-known work, first published in 1877, we are offered a history of a series of developmental stages of social organisation. According to Morgan (1907 [1877]), the history

⁵ Rousseau’s laconic statement about the imperative of social order runs as follows, ‘...the social order is a sacred right which serves as the basis for all others. And yet this right does not come from nature; thus it is founded on conventions’ (Rousseau 1762 cited in Watkins 1953: 4).

of civilised humankind commenced with a state of *Savagery* (divided into three stages) that progressively gave way to a state of *Barbarism* (again divided into three stages) and from there to *Civilisation*. It should be noted that Morgan devised this classificatory scheme of human evolution by drawing on ethnographic information and historical sources. Contemporary aboriginal Australians, Polynesians, the Athapascan tribes of Hudson's Bay and various coastal tribes of North and South America were taken to represent examples of the savage way of life. The Iroquois of New York State, the Aztecs, the Homeric Greeks as well as the Latin tribes before the foundation of Rome were offered as representative examples of various stages of the state of barbarism. A basic tenet of Morgan's theory was that the stages of savagery and barbarism were characterised by an absence of social inequalities and political organisation and that the foundation of political society 'did not occur until after civilisation had commenced' (1907 [1877]: 63). In Morgan's view, civilisation commenced with the composition of the Homeric poems about 850 BC, whereas the first political society appeared about 509 BC when Cleisthenes divided Attica into demes.

Furthermore, he distinguished between two types of human organisation, namely, *social* and *political*. He maintained that the former, which in his view constituted the older form of organisation and marked the 'primitive' stages of evolution, was founded upon *gentes*, phratries and tribes, that is upon kinship bonds and personal relations. On the other hand, political organisation, the type of organisation that characterises the stage of civilisation, was seen to have been founded upon territory, property and the dissolution of kinship ties. More important still, one of Morgan's (1907 [1877]: 7) major points was that the emergence of social inequalities and the foundation of political organisation were 'the result' of the development of private property. A further premise was that the growth of property was contingent upon progress in technological inventions and discoveries, most particularly 'those arts upon which the means of subsistence depended' (Morgan 1907 [1877]: 525). We are also told that the property of 'savages' was inconsiderable and that their concept of it undeveloped. At this stage, people's passion for the possession of property was almost absent and any ideas regarding its inheritance and value were quite feeble. In barbarism, the amount and forms of property increased, yet land was still owned in common by the tribe, and a strong sense of inheritance had not been sufficiently developed. On the other hand, with civilisation, the 'greed of gain' was perfectly realised (Morgan 1907 [1877]: 527):

Commencing at zero in savagery, the passion for the possession of property, as the representative of accumulated subsistence, has now become dominant over the human mind in civilised races (Morgan 1907 [1877]: vii).

In civilisation, as Morgan held, we can trace the full development of the idea of property. Not only does property increase in amount and form at this stage, but also a significant change occurs in the tenure of land, namely, the bulk of land falls under individual ownership and

rules emerge with respect to its inheritance and proprietorship. Crucially, the increase of wealth and the individual amassing of property led to the foundation of personal influence and unequal rights, the establishment of privileged classes and the gradual development of the sentiment of aristocracy. According to Morgan, these conditions, which were unknown to the previous stages of social evolution, where society was based upon democratically organised *gentes*, 'disturbed the balance of society by introducing unequal privileges, and degrees of respect for individuals among people of the same nationality' (1907 [1877: 551]).

It is worth stressing that for Morgan institutionalised social inequalities were neither natural nor inevitable (Kuper 1988: 71), nor were property careers the ultimate fate of humanity. The historical seniority of the democratic and egalitarian order of the ancient *gentes* was taken to prove that equality or communal life, rather than inequality and individualism, was the natural and original condition of humankind. One may wonder whether Morgan's belief in the actual historical existence of an original state of equality was forced on him by the evidence available, or rather, whether his political ideology forced his data to fit into the intellectual scheme; in the last chapter of *Ancient Society* he strikes the optimistic note that a revival of the egalitarian and democratic principles of the ancient *gentes* is in store for the future of the human race:

Although several thousand years have passed away without the overthrow of privileged classes, excepting in the United States⁶, their burdensome character upon society has been demonstrated ... The time will come, nevertheless, when human intelligence will rise to the mastery over property, and define the relations of the state to the property it protects, as well as the obligations and the limits of the rights of its owners ... Democracy in government, brotherhood in society, equality in rights and privileges, and universal education foreshadow the next higher plain of society to which experience, intelligence and knowledge are steadily tending. It will be *a revival*, in a higher form, of the liberty, *equality* and fraternity of the ancient *gentes* (Morgan 1907 [1877]: 552, emphasis added).

In light of this, it comes as no surprise that Morgan's ideas were to impress Marx and especially Engels, the great theorists of the communist ideology. Nearing the end of his life, Marx who has been described by Diamond (1974: 105) as the Rousseau of the nineteenth century, became interested in the new anthropology and began to take extensive notes on the work of Phhear, Lubbock, Maine and Morgan. Following Marx's death, Engels employed his notes on Morgan's *Ancient Society* as a point of departure for his own book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1985 [1884]), which was basically a dissemination and development of Morgan's own theories (Barrett 1986; Gosden 1999: 106; Krader 1972; Kuper 1988: 73).

As Engels tell us in *The Origin*, the gentile constitution of savagery and barbarism with its communistic household, its communal ownership of land, absence of nobles and kings and

⁶ As Kuper notes, in Morgan's view, the constitution of the United States imitated the democratic order of the ancient *gentes*.

equality and freedom for individuals – women included – is ‘a wonderful constitution’ (1985 [1884]: 129). On the other hand, based on Morgan’s demonstration of the historical seniority of the gentile constitution, Engels (1985 [1884]: 141) was able to support more convincingly his belief that the state and its concomitant inequalities were a recent invention in human history. Put another way, in Engels’s view, the communist and egalitarian constitutions of the past represent the original conditions of humanity whereas the non-egalitarian state societies constitute artificial introductions that resulted from the development of property.

The legacy of Morgan is all too apparent here, yet with Engels and Marx, the discoveries of the American anthropologist would take a more political form (Barrett 1986: 9); while Morgan’s critique of the stage of civilisation was quite ambiguous and concluded with the optimistic note that somehow the intelligence of humankind will manage to overcome inequalities, Marx and Engels thought the critique of civilisation to be inseparably linked to revolutionary praxis (Krader 1972: 3). The latter, for them, would be the first step in overcoming the deformations associated with civilisation and in particular with the capitalist epoch (Krader 1972: 4). It is well known that Marx and Engels believed that an ideal trajectory for human development ran from primitive egalitarian societies, through class-based societies and towards the technologically advanced egalitarian societies of the future (Béteille 1994: 1011; Trigger 1989: 222). Importantly, Morgan’s study seemed to give weight to Marx and Engels’s ideas about the revival of a communistic society without social inequalities and private property. This was not simply a utopian vision, as Morgan showed that egalitarian societies with communal property had empirical foundations in history and therefore could exist once again in the future⁷.

Engels (1985 [1884]) after reading *Ancient Society*, devised his own evolutionary scheme of social organisation. This ran from pre-class societies, divided into pre-clan, matriarchal clan, patriarchal clan and terminal clan stages, to three forms of class society – slave, feudal and capitalist – and from there to the socialist and communist societies of the future. It was in this spirit that he added a footnote to Marx’s famous saying in *The Communist Manifesto*; ‘The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles’. Essentially, what Engels tells us is that Marx, in his use of the term ‘history’, actually meant ‘all written history’ (1998 [1848]: 8), and that before the periods of written history, there were no social inequalities, no oppressors and oppressed and accordingly no class struggles:

⁷ According to Marx and Engels, the technologically advanced egalitarian societies of the future would come into being not through a social contract à la Rousseau – which in fact, as they claimed, had brought into being a ‘democratic bourgeois republic’ and the ‘Reign of Terror’ – but rather through the abolition of private property (Marx and Engels 1998 [1890], see also Engels 1998 [1892]: 40–41). Morgan’s primitive communistic societies seemed to support Marx and Engel’s view that a return to egalitarian social formations can be achieved only in the absence of private property.

That is all *written* history. In 1847, the pre-history of society, the social organisation existing previous to recorded history, was all but unknown. Since then ... village communities were found to be, or to have been the primitive form of society everywhere from India to Ireland. The inner organisation of this **primitive Communistic society** was laid bare, in its typical form, by **Morgan's crowning discovery** of the true nature of the *gens* and its relation to the *tribe*. With the dissolution of these **primeval** communities society begins to be differentiated into separate and firmly antagonistic classes (Engels 1998 [1890 edition of *The Communist Manifesto*]: 8 n.1, emphasis in italics in the original; emphasis in bold added).

An inherited tradition: The modernist paradigm in archaeology and anthropology

The intellectual history above, though by no means exhaustive tried to open a perspective in which to situate the current praxis of archaeology with respect to the study of inequality. Worth noting first is that, as might have been expected, the modernist discourse on inequality was subsequently espoused by archaeological research in the Soviet Union. In the Stalinist era in particular, Soviet archaeologists were compelled to interpret their findings solidly in accordance with Engels's evolutionary scheme of social organisation and were discouraged from subjecting this interpretation to any kind of scientific criticism (Trigger 1989: 225).

Outside the Soviet Union, but still in the orbit of Marxism, Gordon Childe, one of the most influential archaeologists of the twentieth century would introduce Marxist inspired methodological guidelines for the study of inequality in Western archaeological contexts. Although Childe was highly critical of the dogmatism under which his Soviet colleagues were compelled to submit to *a priori* assumptions, rather than testing them archaeologically (Trigger 1989: 255), he also viewed social organisation as evolving from egalitarian to hierarchical forms. In *Scotland before the Scots*, he described the evolution of social organisation in that country as a transformation of an egalitarian social formation into a hierarchical one. Childe focused on the excavated finds of communal tombs, which he suggested correlated with a communal ownership of the means of production. He found this pattern to be significantly different from the finds of individual tombs, which expressed differences in status (see Trigger 1989: 234, 259).

In anthropology, the myth of simple egalitarian societies was variously perpetuated by Morton Fried (1967) and Elman Service (1962, 1978) among others. Subsequently, it would become commonplace in feminist anthropological discourse as well (Flanagan 1989: 250). Similarly, the notion of primitive communism was to be further popularised over the years by several eminent anthropologists like Stanley Diamond (1974), Eleanor Leacock (1972) and Richard Lee (1979; 1990) just to mention a few⁸. Thus, we are still apt to believe that in

⁸ For example, primitive communism 'refers to the collective right to basic resources, the absence of hereditary status or authoritarian rule, and the egalitarian relationships that preceded exploitation and economic stratification in human history' (Leacock 1983: 394 cited in Lee 1990: 231).

contexts where property seems to be absent or communally held there is little room for relational social inequalities. According to this argument, hunter-gatherer societies have come to be portrayed more often than not as our apolitical ancestors (see for example, Lee and DeVore 1968; Meillassoux 1972; Tilley 1981). 'What do you value when you cannot easily hoard or keep the things which are scarce?' And 'how do you express value when you cannot own or keep to yourself the things you might want to?' (Sinclair 1998: 10). Thus goes the simplistic assumptions of the deep-rooted notion of hunter-gatherer societies as inevitably simple and egalitarian (Bender 1989: 84; McKay 1988: 24; O'Shea and Zvelebil 1984: 1). Of course there is a further ramification of the modernist discourse on inequality. I am talking here about the still widely held inclination to view the economic world of those communities we used to call egalitarian as being impotent. When we see economic activity that does not resemble the rationality of modern economics, we tend to disregard it as nothing more than altruistic, peaceful, reciprocal giving or sharing or as an impersonal levelling mechanism dictated by society in order to iron out or resist real inequalities (see Halstead 1995; Kent 1993; Lee 1990: 244; Trigger 1990). In short, we view these incongruities as representing the attractive antithesis of the modern economic man.

These products of the modern intellectual construction have shown remarkable durability in both archaeology and anthropology. They are still with us in our obsession to continue talking about egalitarian societies of the past, and in our futile endeavours of hunting down the temporal origins of inequality. Yet, if the modernist belief in equality as a natural state of being, and its associations with arguments about its actual historical existence are correct, we can only comply with McKay's (1988: 6) sarcastic comment that humankind's abandonment of the primeval condition of equality might be explained only in terms of our self-destructive natures.

Before reaching any conclusion, I think it is instructive to look at the evidence that informed the modernist assumption about the historical existence of the state of equality. Although in Rousseau's account the existence of a state of equality was portrayed as a historical fact, it was largely the product of armchair conjecture (Hall 1973). Archaeology in his time was in its infancy, and Rousseau's only evidence was based on the hearsay of explorers' rather exaggerated and, at best, selective accounts of so called primitive communities. Therefore his writings on the historical existence of equality hardly warrant any serious attention, even in comparison with the often highly imaginative accounts of eighteenth-century explorers and travellers (Levine 1993).

As Rousseau felt unencumbered by the need for direct evidence, I would like to offer a counter argument on the universality of inequality from literary fiction by offering a summary of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. No longer able to tolerate farmer Jones's intolerance and abuse, the Animals of Manor Farm revolt and take over the farm. Led by Snowball and

Napoleon, the two most intelligent of the pigs, they decide to create a life of equality, harmony and prosperity. Life goes smoothly at first, but then Napoleon sees a chance for power and position. He orchestrates the removal of the altruistic Snowball and assumes control of the farm and together with the other pigs rules over the rest of the other animals. Orwell, like Rousseau, theorised about social relations through his observation of social classes, however, also like Rousseau, his story on the inevitability of inequality is not based on an empirical study, but rather on the musing of anecdote.

With Morgan the assertion of an original state of equality appears, at first sight at least, to move from the realm of mere philosophical speculation to that of a scientifically based observation. However, further reflection on Morgan's ethnographic method leads us to skepticism concerning the accuracy of his conclusions on the egalitarian communities of the stages of savagery and barbarism. As Michèle Barrett (1986: 17) has pointed out, Morgan's ethnographic accounts display the methodological innocence of the nineteenth century. For even if we acknowledge that he spent time with the Iroquois, a great many of his ideas were not based on first-hand information⁹. That is, Morgan relied heavily and uncritically on the sketchy and rather unreliable accounts of missionaries, travelers, traders and explorers. What is also relevant here is that nineteenth-century ethnographies about the state of social differentiation in 'primitive' societies were largely a caricature shaped through the comparison between *us*, the so called 'civilised' and *them*, the so called 'primitives'. This comparison was in turn used to demonstrate the great differences between the 'civilised' and the 'primitives'. Yet arguably, the failure of nineteenth-century ethnographic accounts to recognise social differentiation, not to mention individual physical variation in 'primitive' societies, can be seen as a symptom and intellectual by-product of this epic bias regarding the differences between us and them. It is interesting to point out that social differentiation among individuals of one's own kind consistently seem greater than among individuals of a different kind (Bétéille 1994: 1016). Put in another way, under the regime of the civilised / primitive dichotomy, so called primitives were perceived as constituting a homogenous world consisting of socially undifferentiated others.

Finally, Marx and Engels took Morgan's ideas about the historical existence of equality for granted without conducting any ethnographic fieldwork (Barrett 1986; Krader 1972). This is because they were not interested in 'primitive' societies for their own sake, but rather they were interested in employing the models of primitive society as examples in order to show

⁹ Morgan had some direct contact with the Iroquois, whom he successfully represented in Washington in his capacity as a lawyer. He was also made a honorary Iroquois by certain Seneca, being given the name TA-YA-DA-O-WUHKUGH 'he who lies across' — though this led to an episode of him trying to organise white people as if they were Indians, rather embarrassing from a contemporary point of view. Leslie White published Morgan's 'Indian notebooks' some time in the 1940s. I owe this point to Michael Lane.

that equality could be achieved once again in the future. As I have argued above, and as Diamond has perceptively noted, primitive societies were for them the groundwork of *all* future historical movement. 'Marxism did not generate an ethnology but a critical and revolutionary analysis of civilization, particularly of modern capitalism' (Diamond 1974: 107).

To cut this long story short, the naturalisation of equality by the modernist intellectual tradition has left us with the misleading question of when social inequality came about (cf. Flanagan 1989). Yet, I take it to be clear from the foregoing discussion that the notion of equality as the original and natural condition of humankind is not originally based on archaeological evidence or serious and extensive ethnographic information. Rather, it tells us more about the ideological motivations of the great modernist thinkers than it describes real societies. The legacy of its rhetoric had been so firmly established through time that anthropology and archaeology alike have shaped questions and research agendas according to its philosophical speculations.

A future for inequality's pasts

The problematic assumptions and preconceptions of the modernist discourse on inequality have begun to come under scrutiny. I now offer a few observations that may help clarify why my own position in this discussion is towards the universality and diversity of inequality. To begin with, there is no justification in ethnography for assuming that inequality and complexity are inescapably or universally the outcomes of farming economies (cf. Arnold 2000). Anthropological and archaeological literature on this issue has accumulated rapidly in recent years and strongly supports the view that the direct association of agriculture with inequality is largely misleading (see Gailey and Patterson 1987; Hayden 1990, 1993; Matson and Coupland 1995). It is of greatest importance to note that social inequalities can be traced even in societies that do not rely for the satisfaction of their subsistence needs on agriculture but on foraging. It is worth mentioning that, according to some scholars, the archaeology and ethnography of the Northwest Coast in particular seem to teach a new lesson: chieftainship and complexity might be the preconditions for, rather than the outcomes of the development of farming (Hayden 1990; Matson and Coupland 1995).

Thus even hunter-gatherers who are traditionally assumed to represent the egalitarian ideal by their 'collective ownership of the means of production, reciprocal rights of access to resources, lack of emphasis on accumulation, generalised reciprocity within the camp, access to all of the forces of production and their restriction of ownership to possession of tools' (Flanagan 1989: 249) do not perform their lives 'in a time before differential value' (Sinclair 1998: 15).

Valuation systems do exist, as Sinclair (1998) has shown even in the absence of property or the accumulation of material resources. Value can be based on an individual's skills, physical abilities, age, sex, position to the ritual life of the community, knowledge – technical, social or ritual – or even in the ethic of sharing that is traditionally associated with the denial of inequality (Bender 1985, 1989, 1990; Hendricks 1988; Hoebel 1958; O'Shea and Zvelebil 1984; Sinclair 1998). This idea is a little misleading, however, since sharing and generosity, though undermining economic differentiation, may constitute at the same time strategies to exert influence and differentiate statuses. Those who share can also appear as the leading agents of a valuation system that appreciates and values an egalitarian ethos, and in this sense, they are ranked and esteemed highly. Thus, although hunters may not have the right to keep the kill, they have the right to give it away and to create a debt that creates prestige and authority (Sinclair 1998). Furthermore, hunters have to work hard and be skilful and brave to face the dangers involved in hunting, in order to provide resources for sharing. It is not only keeping and hoarding or the productive reinvestment of material resources – so embedded in the Western experience of the creation of value – that can confer value and create relations of debt.

At the same time however, there is no reason to suppose that all hunter-gatherer societies lack evidence of private property or the accumulation of material wealth. The aboriginal communities of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia provide a striking example. These people were dependent upon fishing, hunting and gathering as a way of life, lived in large extended-family houses and moved around part of the year. Yet they deviated from the standard expectations regarding the social organisation of hunter-gatherer groups. That is, instead of being egalitarian and loosely organised, they displayed a concern for wealth accumulation, ownership and status and a complex social organisation with part-time craft specialisation and defined social inequalities¹⁰ (Matson and Coupland 1995).

Equally, the late Mesolithic cemetery of Olencostrovski mogilnik in the Boreal zone of eastern Europe which has produced the amazing amount of 7000 artefacts (O'Shea and Zvelebil 1984: 4) constitutes one among several examples of Mesolithic cemeteries that prompt us to be wary of blindly attributing a non-materialistic character to hunter-gatherer communities. Notably, the existence of social inequalities in hunter-gatherer societies has been demonstrated by several meticulous archaeological studies. One may note accounts on the later Upper Palaeolithic populations of southwest Europe (Bender 1989; Sinclair 1998), the European Mesolithic (Clark and Neeley 1987; Constandse-Westermann and Newell 1989;

¹⁰ More specifically, according to Matson and Coupland (1995) social inequalities were hereditary and permanent and social mobility between groups was limited. There existed three groups of people that some scholars have seen to represent social 'classes': nobles (those who were close to the chief and enjoyed rights to resources and ceremonies), commoners (freeborn individuals lacking nobles' privileges) and slaves (owned by nobles).

McKay 1988; Meiklejohn and Zvelebil 1991: 134; O'Shea and Zvelebil 1984), late Archaic societies of the American Midcontinent (Bender 1985) and prehistoric hunter-gatherers of California's Sierra Nevada (King 1976).

What I have in mind may be also illustrated by the case of many so called band societies where status is associated with contribution to the general well-being of the community. In these societies, as Trigger (1974) has pointed out, any individual attempts to achieve an unequal distribution of material possessions undermines rather than promotes status. Yet, I would part company with Trigger (1990) and Kent (1993) among others who support the thesis that when sharing, reciprocity and generosity are core values in a given society, they operate as levelling devices aiming to solidify social bonds and maintain egalitarianism or to oppose considerable power inequalities.

Meanwhile, Bronislaw Malinowski (1961 [1926]: 18-21) and Robert Lowie (1953 [1921]: 196-200) challenged the idea of primitive communism, which was thought to be reflected in so called contemporary 'primitive societies' (and projected backward onto certain societies of the past). These anthropologists examined various societies that were believed to lack the idea of private ownership. They found out that while some forms of collective ownership might be traced, in fact, fully-fledged communal ownership did not exist. The evidence points more frequently towards joint-ownership by some groups within a given community rather than by the entire community. In other words, *collective* ownership does not necessarily mean *communal* ownership. Neither are privileges, benefits, self-interest or individualistic motives lacking among so called 'communitistic' societies.

Take, for instance the Trobrianders' canoe, which has been cited as an object of communal ownership *par excellence* in Melanesian society. This is often taken for granted, since access to canoes seems to have been open to any member of the community who wished to use them for fishing. Simply stated, the canoe appeared to have been used frequently by the whole community. But upon closer inquiry, one quickly discovers that every canoe in the Trobriand Archipelago had its rightful owner, who acted as the fishing magician and the head of the fishing team (Malinowski 1961 [1926]: 20). Those who normally accompanied him in the fishing enterprise consisted of members of the same sub-clan and acted as a crew. Not only was the crew under an obligation to the rightful owner, but there were strict rules that dictated how each man was to 'fill his place'. Moreover, when the owners and the members of the crew surrendered their privileges of use to other people, this was always done 'for a consideration, for a repayment' (Malinowski 1961 [1926]: 18).

Likewise, a closer look at the Chukchi of Asia who are usually cited to justify the idea of primitive communism reveals that individualistic motives or unequal access to resources are far from unknown. Thus we find that while the meat of a whale stranded on the coast is shared among all present, the whalebone belongs only to the person who first spotted the

whale (Lowie 1953 [1921]: 200)¹¹. A further point needs also to be made, quite simply that collective ownership by a given group should not be taken to suggest that *everything* (i.e. any form of property) is owned in common.

Significantly, this fact has been recognised even by firm supporters of the notion of primitive communism like Diamond (1974: 131-134). According to him, however, ownership of private property in so called primitive communistic societies mostly includes non-material resources such as esoteric knowledge, which as he holds are unable to create structures of power inequality and the economic exploitation of one person by another. For Diamond, it is only the means of subsistence production, 'those material means essential to the survival of the individual or the group', which if privately held, can enter into structures of domination (1974: 131). Now, as Diamond puts it, since these resources are largely held in common or are readily accessible in 'primitive' societies, the road to social inequalities is blocked. However, there is no justification for the primacy of place accorded by Diamond to the means of production as the instruments – *par excellence* – of power (cf. Rowlands 1998). Relational inequalities can be created through personal or group ownership of the material and non-material means of destruction (Goody 1974) or the material and non-material means of social, biological and ritual reproduction, or some combination of these things (Barrett and Damilati 2002, forthcoming; Bender 1985; Friedman and Rowlands 1977; Meillassoux 1972, 1978a, 1978b; Spielmann 2002; Weiner 1980, 1985, 1992). At the same time, contrary to Diamond's argument, collective ownership of the means of production or collective relations of production are not incommensurate with relational inequalities or unequal allocation of resources. Saitta and Keene (1990) have meticulously demonstrated this point with reference to the modern Israeli kibbutz and the ancient Pueblos of the American South-West. By now it should be clear that the assumptions upon which the validity of the historical existence of egalitarian societies has been based do not seem to hold true.

To complicate the issue further, it is often the case that even major adherents to the idea of egalitarian communities find difficulty in admitting the existence of a perfect state of equality and social cohesion. In Fried's words, 'equality is a social impossibility ... the term egalitarian society may be understood as an *ellipsis*, the missing word being relatively' (1967: 27-28, emphasis added). A similar standpoint has been expressed by Lee: '... the fact is that perfect equality doesn't exist anywhere. It is a fact of life that human beings differ in their abilities ... if one takes a definition of *perfect equality* as a standard, it will never be found' (1990: 236, emphasis in the original). The same anthropologist has come to recognise that tensions and warfare are not incompatible with what he calls primitive communistic or pre-

¹¹ For further examples that demonstrate that so called communistic societies are not actually devoid of individualistic motives, unequal access to resources and the notion of private ownership see Lowie (1953 [1921]: 198-200).

class society (Lee 1990: 232). Others like Sahlins (1958), allow that inequalities based on age, sex, and personal characteristics are to be found in every society, yet in the absence of 'truly egalitarian societies', he reserves the term 'social stratification' for societies that employ criteria beyond the three mentioned above. As Flanagan remarks, 'the term *egalitarian* is again reduced to a residual – the absence of stratification' (1989: 246, emphasis in the original). Yet strikingly, the concept of egalitarian society has been retained even for societies which display not only positions of high status and prestige but also offices of leadership (see, for example, Lee 1990; Trigger 1990). The justification made is that in some societies like the !Kung or the Iroquois, leaders or chiefs lack real power and material privileges and largely function as puppets in the service of the tribe¹².

Arguably, a true egalitarian society would lack positions of unequal prestige and influence not to mention chiefs or leaders, however onerous their responsibilities or limited their privileges might be (cf. McKay 1988: 19). In this light, one can only concur with Flanagan (1989: 247) that in the absence of ethnographic examples, the egalitarian identity tag assigned to certain societies has been saved purely by easing the criteria. It would suggest that the rescue of the term is a matter of morality or an ideological standpoint among the practitioners of anthropology who are reluctant to abandon it. This is clear in essays by scholars like Lee, among others, which indicate a strong moral tone in that they present what they describe as communistic pre-class or egalitarian societies to be more ethical, just and humane, than conspicuously non-egalitarian ones (cf. McGuire 1992: 181). In a similar vein, Trigger has criticised Marxist anthropologists who recognise that power relationships are present in so called 'primitive' societies, that they do so at the cost of abandoning the important Marxist premise that human behaviour is significantly different in small-scale societies as compared with class societies. For Trigger this is tantamount to drawing upon the favourite doctrine of right-wing social analysts (1990: 120).

Be that as it may, it is interesting to note that most anthropologists who still retain the term 'egalitarian society' do so by acknowledging its relative meaning. Archaeologists on the other hand, more often than not take it at face value and treat it in terms conditioned by theoretical myopia. That is, it is usually assumed that societies described as such display a perfect state of equality and that the concept is in no need of further explanation. Again, the prevailing assumption when we trace contexts characterised by egalitarian principles is that 'equality needs no reasons, only inequality does so' (Berlin 1978: 84 cited in Bêteille 1994: 1010). For we have come to believe that equality, unlike inequality, is a natural condition and

¹² Clastres's (1989 [1977]) work published in *Society Against the State* has been crucial to the popularisation of this idea. Yet interestingly, Clastres did not mean for his argument about the weaker power of leaders in pre-state societies to be taken as a statement which upheld the idea that pre-state societies lacked power relationships.

therefore unproblematic. Consequently, discussions of what the equality of so called 'egalitarian' societies might have actually been are virtually absent in the archaeological literature. This whole process of dealing with 'egalitarian' contexts – namely, by idealising, naturalising and finally ignoring them – points to the Western ideological tendency to mask social phenomena (Flanagan 1989: 261). As Flanagan remarks, if we are to arrive in a better understanding of inequality and equality we need to recognise that both phenomena are 'products of sociocultural mechanisms' and therefore both demand explanation. Equality is no less a social artefact than inequality.

Furthermore, we should be compelled to recognise the plain fact that the idea of equality as a pervasive state of being with an actual historical existence has emerged and re-emerged variously in times of profound social inequalities (cf. Bêteille 1994: 1032) and injustice and/or when the arrogance of political authority has reached its peak. Rousseau, for example, lived in an epoch of great social upheaval where Marie Antoinette is popularly known to have responded to her starving people that if they did not have bread to eat, they might well eat cake. Likewise, Morgan's adherence to the historical existence of a universal state of equality blossomed after his brief visit to Europe in the nineteenth century, where he came face to face with the injustices of the Old World's aristocratic and monarchical institutions (Kuper 1988). As Kuper (1988: 69) points out, Morgan was reluctant to espouse Spanish chroniclers' interpretation of Aztec political organisation as a monarchy analogous to existing European monarchies. For this would imply that monarchies were indeed primitive and original institutions and therefore justified. For Marx and Engels, the case is even more straightforward, since unlike Morgan, they were not mere visitors but permanent citizens of the very Europe whose political institutions Morgan found to be so distasteful and unpleasant. That is, they had first-hand experience of the inequalities associated with the 'bourgeois supremacy' and the 'antagonism of capital and wage labour' (Marx and Engels 1998 [1890]: 28–29).

It is of no small significance that proposed solutions aimed to resurrect what modernist thinkers believed to be the original and natural state of human existence, namely equality, were to fail in whatever context they were adopted. Napoleon's solution summarised in the slogan 'careers open to talent' advised the creation of a world with equal opportunities (Bêteille 1994: 1032). Yet, it is clearly naïve to regard western European countries or the United States of America, where policies that attempt to ensure equality of opportunity abound, as egalitarian societies. Simply put, equality of opportunity has not given rise to equality of condition or to equality in the distribution of resources. For equality of opportunity goes hand in hand with competition: 'this means that there can be equality only *before* the competition, and not *after* it' (Bêteille 1994: 1032, emphasis in the original). Let it be emphasised also that there is a close link between equality of opportunity and individualism.

Crucially, although individualism advocates the autonomy and freedom of the individual and militates against ascribed inequalities on the one hand, on the other it emphasises competition and achievement and as such legitimates and triggers inequalities in other forms (Béteille 1994: 1016). Similarly, Marx and Engels's solution that advocated the abolition of private property and the creation of a society of equal rewards was proven to have given rise to a utopian or, in the best case, to an imperfect state of equality. In fact, communist regimes eventually evolved into an intolerable combination of planned economy and dictatorship disguised as popular democracy (Godelier 1999: 4). In Béteille's words, 'the bourgeois state has collapsed many times over, but the end of the inequality of power is nowhere in sight' (1994: 1020). That is unless one is ready to pretend that communist Romania, for example, was an egalitarian society rather than the personal domain of one man, the infamous Ceausescu and his party. And even if the example of Romania appears extreme to some, Béteille (1994: 1034) has made a similar comment about the Soviet Union before its collapse. The essential point is that although the Soviet Union witnessed the introduction of state policies that aimed to produce equality of the socio-economic conditions of the population by reducing, for example, income differentials between 'manual' and 'intellectual' workers, the objective of regulating and reducing inequalities was not achieved. For, as Béteille observes, the very policies of direct intervention in economic and social processes that aimed to suppress inequalities led to an immense concentration of power within the party and the state mechanism. It is therefore important to realise that there is no such thing as a neutral or uncommitted device for the reduction or elimination of inequalities. On the contrary, such instruments give rise to their own inequalities. In this light, we should concur with Béteille that

One could then ask whether, in moving from the inequalities of estate prevalent until the eighteenth century to the inequalities of class about which Marx wrote, and from those again to the inequalities of power of the twentieth century, any real or demonstrable gain was made in the achievement of equality (1994: 1034).

History therefore seems to confirm that the notion of perfect equality is the result of philosophical speculation and the strict imposition of a moral value, rather than it being a condition actually achieved at some point in human history. Indeed, a nominal equality can be used to disguise dangerous practices – to paraphrase George Orwell, 'all men are equal, but some men are more equal than others'. As Louis Dumont (1977, see also 1969) has famously put it, modern, Western man can be described as *Homo aequalis* in the realm of values, but not in the realm of facts. That is, modern Western societies are egalitarian only in the sense that they value equality, but not in the sense that they have achieved equality or may ever achieve it. Thus, the conclusion to be reached is that we should not be too quick to describe certain societies of the present or the past as egalitarian by looking merely at the ideals they

set or had set for themselves, while failing to recognise what they actually practise or practised (Béteille 1994: 1015; Dumont 1969, 1977; Flanagan 1989: 248).

At this point, it will be enough to say that while there is no such thing as egalitarian society there are however egalitarian situations, principles, values, contexts or scenes in every society (Flanagan 1989: 261). All that we need to acknowledge is that equality and hierarchy co-exist, and that so called 'egalitarian' societies may carry 'insidious hierarchies', just as so called 'hierarchical' ones may accommodate egalitarian contexts and principles¹³ (Flanagan 1989: 262). In this light, speaking of whole societies as either egalitarian or hierarchical seems deceptive (Béteille 1986: 122, 1994: 1014; Flanagan 1989: 262).

Up until this point, I have tried to show that there is now enough archaeological, historical and ethnographic grounding to demonstrate that the historical existence of a pervasive state of equality is highly dubious. Accordingly, we are encouraged to cast radical doubt on accounts that structure the study of inequality around determining its temporal origins. My own view is that structures of inequality are omnipresent in time and space operating and manifesting themselves in different societies and even in different sectors of the same society in various ways. But in case my account has not been *entirely* convincing, let me turn finally to a mode of thought developed by scholars like Berreman (1981), Dahrendorf (1969b), Fallers (1973) and most notably Béteille (1981, 1994). Béteille's contributions in particular represent one of the most systematic and devoted bodies of work on the sociology of equality and inequality. All of these authors have variously suggested that social inequalities are closely related to the existence of a truly universal feature of human society. This is plainly the tendency of human beings to classify, order and evaluate things, situations, ideas, performances and each other as better or worse, as superior or inferior along culturally prescribed criteria and standards of value. Drawing upon the germinal work of Durkheim and Mauss on systems of classification, Béteille directs our attention to the fact that such systems, which reflect preferences in various culturally recognised items, exist in every society (1994: 1018; see also Levi-Strauss 1996 [1962]: 40–42). Consequently, one might agree that

... it would be strange in a culture to have standards of evaluation that apply to food, dress, adornment, plants and animals, but none that applies to human beings and their activities. In other words, where people are able to discriminate between good and bad food, they will also discriminate between good and bad cooks; where they judge some gardens to be superior to others, they will also judge some gardeners to be superior to others; where there are preferences as between artefacts, there are likely to be preferences also as between artisans. I am of course talking now of culturally prescribed, or at least culturally recognised, preferences, and not the personal preferences of particular individuals. *Every* culture, no matter how rudimentary, has its own *bias*, not only for certain types of human performance but also for certain types of human quality (Béteille 1994: 1018, emphasis added).

¹³ One might note here the principle of equality before the law (Béteille 1994: 1028).

Such a view poses a serious challenge to the idea of a perfect egalitarian society and therefore to the origin myth of inequality. The approach put forward here is that a world of equals is impossible. For inequalities stem above all, not so much from the emergence of private property but 'from the very concept of societies as moral communities' (Dahrendorf 1969b: 40). The reader should bear in mind that the idea of the truly universal nature of inequality argued here is different from that advanced by Davis and Moore (1945) in that it does not aim to reify inequality as something natural or necessary¹⁴. Unlike Davis and Moore's functional explanation of inequality, it is not an argument that justifies inequalities or serves to legitimise existing structures of power as a functional necessity in society. Neither does it rule out the possibility that inequalities can be abolished. According to Bêteille (1981, 1994), the idea of natural inequality is a contradiction in terms. Nature presents us only with differences and the inclination to order *some* of these differences and put them into scales of value. Yet it is important to keep in mind that not all the differences count as inequalities. The very process of isolating qualities or performances to mark for favoured attention, as opposed to those we ignore, is not dictated by natural laws. It is rather a social artefact, something that particular people make and remake differently in certain historical contexts. That is, nature does not decide about our evaluations. As Bêteille has cogently and perceptively put it,

With human beings differences do not become inequalities unless and until they are selected, marked out, and evaluated by processes that are cultural and not natural. ... differences become inequalities only with the application of scales; and the scales with which we are concerned in talking about inequalities in a social context are not given to us by nature but are culturally constructed by particular human beings under particular historical conditions (1981: 60).

In other words, to claim that inequality is indispensable is not to suggest that *particular forms* of *inequality* are natural and consequently fundamental. An archaeology that recognises the universality of inequality is neither adverse nor incompatible with the performance of what Shanks and Tilley call a critical archaeology, namely 'an invitation to engage in a transformative practice' (1987a: 198). In their words, 'a critical archaeology involves us in a reading of the past which at the same time invites us to shape a different future. The study of the past ... becomes an operation to change the world as we know and experience it' (Shanks and Tilley 1987a: 196).

¹⁴ Davis and Moore (1945) similarly suggested that no human society is conceivable without the existence of social inequality or social stratification. However, for them, social inequality or social stratification are indispensable because they serve the smooth functioning of societies in the sense that they fill the different occupational positions of every society. In their view, not all occupations are equally important or demanding and therefore the rewards associated with them should be analogous to their importance and difficulty in order to ensure the smooth allocation of all occupational positions. For critical reviews of Davis and Moore's functional explanation of inequality see Bêteille (1981: 71) and (Dahrendorf 1969b: 29).

I would remind the reader that the researcher who suggests that inequalities are absent in 'primitive' societies appears to offer an alternative type of social organisation (one that is more moral and just) to the reformer or the political activist who sees class in contemporary society and wishes to alter it. Conversely, the researcher that sees the universality of social inequality seems to rule out this comforting alternative (Cancian 1976: 235). Needless to say that in an age that – in word, at least – appears to value the ideal of equality so highly, those who offer the comforting alternative of equality are considered to be the 'politically correct'. On the other hand, those who adhere to the truly universal nature of inequality and maintain that inequality is indispensable, appear to run the risk of being accused as conservative and 'politically incorrect'. Simply put, for some contributors to the debate, claiming that the restoration of a world of equality is unrealistic, because such a world never existed in the first place, is not only unfashionable but also an unethical or immoral choice inconsistent with their ideological conditioning *valuing* equality.

We are once more drawn back to the theme of the universal characteristic of human beings to evaluate and act on their evaluations. Social scientists, no less than other human beings, construct their own scales of evaluation. Not only do they order and evaluate societies and their structures as simple or complex, but they also classify and evaluate their own arguments and ideological standpoints based on what is currently understood as being socially and politically acceptable. As Flanagan (1989: 260) notes, social scientists still face remarkable challenges in studying value systems without becoming inextricably bound up in and tied to their own values which ultimately influence the way they construct interpretations.

It seems to me that accepting the truly universal nature of inequality, in the way Bêteille explains it, need not be perceived or understood as injuring the culturally prescribed value of 'politically correct' academic practice. For particular scales of value, upon which social inequalities are fabricated, are not given by nature but constitute social artefacts specific to the communal representations of certain times and places, and therefore, they can be eliminated or abolished together with their attendant cultures of inequality. However, the central role of evaluation in the production of inequality should alert us to the fact that while particular scales of inequalities can be abolished, every abolition of this type is always at the same time followed by the emergence of different scales of value and therefore differently manifested inequalities. In my view, inequality is an indispensable and inevitable 'fact'. Yet it does not constitute a functional necessity, nor do its particular manifestations follow any natural law or evolutionary trajectory. Different forms of inequality cannot be predicted *a priori*, for the scales of value that produce them are themselves the products of historical contingencies written in various ways by social actors in different societies. In Shanks and Tilley's words,

The future is always open to construction and reconstruction ... there is *no* iron cage of historical *inevitability* ... [because] humanity creates its own history and so can change, or alter the consequences of [the] historical development through specific forms of social action and intervention (1987a: 196).

I have spent considerable effort outlining the various assumptions that underpin the practice of dealing with the concepts of equality and inequality in academic discourse. What has been presented here is the barest sample of arguments and counter-arguments regarding the origin myth of inequality. I hope I have convinced the more sceptical readers that the tendency of people to evaluate and then act on their evaluations in the context of interpersonal relations (Berreman 1981) constitutes a powerful argument for the truly universal nature of inequality, an argument that is not easily dismissed. More follows if we are willing to engage with the research implications of the above argument and go beyond the simple recognition of the universality of inequality. It is my contention that to explain inequality adequately, we have to consider the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of culturally prescribed criteria and standards of value in any society in question. Equally, we must recognize the possibility that there may be co-existing, competing or alternative scales of value that may conflict or subvert so called 'dominant' value systems.

Chapter 6

The language of inequality

Introduction

Social ranking, stratification, prestige, status, ascribed and achieved inequalities: these are some of the popular terms which current archaeological accounts of inequality use. Arguably, however, though the language of inequality has a remarkable pedigree in the social sciences, the exact meaning of these terms is rarely made explicit (cf. Renfrew 1982b: 2). Hence we frequently find accounts that propose to explain the emergence of hierarchical societies, or aim to find evidence of social *ranking* or *stratification* without spending any effort to clarify what exactly they mean by these terms (see Gamble 1981; Gilman 1981; Soles 1988). If one takes account of the huge amount of literature that has been written on the subject, what stands out is a terminological fetishism that has somehow consumed the debate. The cavalier usage of these terms obscures, rather than reveals, anything useful about the nature of social inequalities. At the same time, a casual glimpse into those rare accounts that take time to define the language of inequality suffices to demonstrate the absence of a common ground. The end result of all of this has been the conflation of terms, making comparative research confusing at best and at worse impossible.

To be sure, this is not the whole story. As I will try to show below, the current language of inequality is loaded with several unwarranted assumptions that direct the study of social inequalities towards questions which are red herrings, while ignoring the most essential ones. In particular, it entails an emphasis on static description of structures and relations of power that cuts us off from considering their production in action. Perhaps more importantly, it is loaded with neo-evolutionist misconceptions that perpetuate the fiction of the historical emergence of inequalities and its attendant distinctions between simple and complex societies. For example, ranking and achieved inequalities are commonly used to describe societies with less rigid power structures compared to those for which current scholarship reserves the terms stratification and ascribed inequalities. My readings of Bédouin's (1969a, 1969b, 1981, 1986, 1994) exemplary essays on various aspects of the phenomenon of inequality have inspired me to see in a new light the archaeological narratives on ascribed and achieved inequalities, as well as their tendency to assign greater significance to the former. Again the framing of current archaeological accounts has been conditioned by the assumptions of the modernist discourse on equality and inequality. However, as I hope to

show in this chapter, once one removes these assumptions, our view of societies with ascribed inequalities as the more real arenas of power relations is revealed as a distortion.

Status and Prestige

The word status is of Indo-European origin. Its stem can be found in Sanskrit *sistami*, Greek *histemi*, Latin *stare*, English *stand* and German *stehen*. Nouns derived from these verbs revolve around the notion of verticality (Wiessner 1996: 2). The first anthropological definition of status goes back to Ralph Linton. For Linton (1936: 113-114), status is thought to refer to a socially recognised position that an individual occupies (see also Hoebel 1958: 384-5). According to this definition, every person may have many different types of status, which exist in relation to others. For example, a young boy may be a son to his parents, a brother to his siblings and a friend to his playmates. This definition of status overlaps significantly with the notion of social identity (Goodenough 1965: 2; Jenkins 1996: 134-6).

Subsequently, Ward Goodenough (1965) suggested a different definition of status, one that brings into play its political dimension. In his view, status can be seen as a series of rights and duties *vis-à-vis* others and in this sense, it is closely associated with vertical distinctions or relational inequalities produced between people in certain contexts. This approach is close to Weber's notion of status as an aspect of social stratification that is synonymous with ranked social standing or honour (Wiessner 1996: 4). In this respect, status is no longer a neutral concept referring to the position or identity of an individual. Rather, it refers to what Hoebel (1958: 385) calls rank, namely the hierarchical position of an individual, higher or lower with reference to the social position of others. We may note at once that this approach to status is more similar to a great deal of archaeological research than that proposed by Linton¹. Arguably, when archaeologists talk about status inequalities they mean inequalities in social standing between different human actors. Following ethological studies of the concept, we may remark that status points not only to 'a notion of verticality, the physical act of being in a certain place' but also to 'the *impact* or the *impression* that one makes on others from that position' (Wiessner 1996: 2, emphasis added). Accordingly, one may argue that status gradation refers to the gradation of impact or the ability to attract attention or exert influence upon others.

More than this, high status operates as a resource of influence that may command forms of subordination and submission among those with lower status. Furthermore, high status can also carry prestige, the latter being associated with esteem, admiration, respect, reverence and deference (Fried 1967: 32; Silverman 1966: 899). There is a clear gradation between high

¹ A number of archaeologists (see for example, Pader 1982 and O'Shea 1984) however, has directed its attention towards understanding the archaeology of horizontal distinctions.

status and high prestige: one evokes notions of influence and potential domination, while the other has associations of esteem. Notwithstanding, prestige as esteem may win high status, and bearers of high status may also attain high prestige; and both may be wells of power to be drawn upon so as to sway outcomes.

Thus, when I occasionally use the term status in this study, it is not necessarily one's occupation or role I am interested in but specific contexts where individuals can exert influence upon others and have the potential to manipulate a favourable outcome. However, I would like to point out that in my case study in chapter ten, I will try as much as possible to avoid using the terms 'high status' and 'prestige' and try instead to use the term 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu 1977a, 1977b, 1986, 1991). This is mainly for two reasons.

1. Symbolic capital can be used to refer to either prestige or high status or both. It seems to me, that we cannot easily distinguish prestige in archaeology as I have defined it above. Making or achieving high status does not necessarily result in others' positive approbation. Furthermore, in revealing contexts where material evidence suggests forms of influence, it cannot be logically inferred that they have been constructed on the basis of esteem or respect. Likewise, practices of influence may or may not have engendered a sense of esteem or respect in return². The place which individuals hold in the esteem of their fellow human beings is difficult to identify (Aron 1969: 71). For esteem and respect are based more or less on subjective moral criteria and may vary according to the social milieu. Although the researcher can make judgements about the moral efficacy of particular features or artefacts, it is not certain that the past society studied employed the same system of valuation in the same uniform manner.

2. Although one can justifiably use the term 'high status' as an abbreviation for the distinctive social standing of an individual or group of individuals, I would like to point out that we do not usually excavate individual persons who can be ordered in a hierarchy (except in certain cases of burial archaeology). Rather, we excavate practices (cf. Shennan 1993). For example, the building of a spectacular monument in one context of practice, the provision of a generous feast in another, or the keeping and regulation of socially valued knowledge or objects in still another – all point to practices that aim to make an impact and to exert influence. Now, if these different contexts happen to occur in the same community, how can we say with certainty that the keepers of socially valued goods were ranked higher, lower, or equally with the providers of feasts or the inhabitants of a spectacular monument? What we can more safely suggest is that the provision of feasting, for example, was a practice aimed to elevate the social standing of the providers with reference to the receivers. In this sense, one

² Similarly, although a given society may bestow significant power on certain prestigious statuses, there is no necessary association between power and prestige (Fried 1967: 33).

may indeed have a valid point in saying that the providers *attain* a higher standing compared with the receivers, but no more.

That is, quite often there is no way to know for certain whether the strategies of influence described above were associated with the same social actors in all contexts. Without other forms of evidence, such as texts, it is nearly impossible to suggest whether we have a single group of persons of high social standing or many. It is therefore all the more difficult to find evidence for theories of multiple hierarchies. This is the problem with archaeological accounts that try to trace factions or 'heterarchies' (see Hamilakis 1999; Keswani 1996; Schoep 2002), as I will argue in detail later on. They try to demonstrate the existence of groups, whereas what we can only uncover, compare and evaluate is practices. Rather than attempting to find individuals or groups in a hierarchy of social standing and power, a more rewarding way to study inequality is to try to uncover people *performing* social standing and power (cf. Strum and Latour 1987). We may not be able to people the ranks of status or power in prehistory, but we can certainly people the practices of influence and power that we excavate.

Ascribed and Achieved Status

Social theorists usually classify status according to the means through which people obtain it. Ascribed status is that obtained involuntarily through the right of birth and is a matter about which people have little or no choice. It is assigned upon the individual by virtue of his or her pre-existing social affinities such as the status of parents (Fried 1967: 30; Hoebel 1958: 386; Linton 1936). For example, the aristocracy of Europe has acquired its status for hundreds of years through its genealogical links with past generations. On the other hand, achieved status is one that is acquired through personal skill or knowledge. This is a social position of influence that is voluntary, in that it comes about through schooling, practice and effort.

Traditionally, anthropologists and archaeologists have assigned greater significance to the former (see Bintliff 1982; Brown 1981; Clark and Neeley 1987; Gilman 1981; Halstead 1995; Sahlins 1963). More particularly, archaeologists have tended to see achieved status temporally preceding ascribed status. Societies in which status, power and wealth inequalities hinge on personal capabilities and achievements are commonly perceived to precede chronologically those societies where inequalities hinge on ascription by birth (see Bintliff 1982; Constandse-Westermann and Newell 1989; Gilman 1981). Moreover, there is a commonplace tendency to perceive anything that we consider to come first as inevitably uncomplicated and indeed more primitive (Perles 2001: 3). Accordingly, societies with power and status inequalities based on achievement are thought to be less complex or stable arenas of power relations. Conversely, societies which appear to display hereditary inequalities are

thought to reveal a more elaborate form of social ranking (see Bintliff 1982; Brown 1981; Gilman 1981) and they are subsequently seen to fall on the upper steps of an assumed social evolutionary ladder. A comparative example can be found in Sahlins's (1963) anthropological study of Melanesian and Polynesian political systems. What we gather from this account is the impression that the Polynesian leader whose authority was hereditary was 'every inch a chief' compared to his Melanesian counterpart whose authority was based on personal accomplishments (Sahlins 1963: 289). Some push the distinction between achieved and ascribed inequalities even farther and maintain that the former correspond to egalitarian societies while the latter correspond to rank societies, the latter term to which I will come to shortly. On this basis, hereditary inequalities are taken to 'provide the basis for all subsequent social differentiation' and arguments have been made for the paramount significance of their archaeological study (see Clark and Neeley 1987: 121).

On closer examination however, the validity of the above assumptions comes into question. The first point to emphasise is that the big-men societies of Melanesia – which are commonly associated with achieved social standing and power and are taken in neo-evolutionist accounts to represent a stage before the 'more complex' Polynesian chief societies – are in fact the creation of colonialism. As Golson (1982) and Feil (1987: 259) have independently demonstrated, in Melanesian societies, status and power were ascribed at birth before being based on personal accomplishments. One may note a line of reasoning that has carried neo-evolutionist archaeological and anthropological research through the twentieth century and into the present. This is the tendency to see state societies as forms of social organisation that have reached the endpoint of the growth of social inequalities, power and complexity. Paradoxically, in modern so called highly stratified capitalist societies, achievement constitutes a more common means to attain a high social standing or access to power. In other words, there is a logical problem faced by neo-evolutionist typologies that maintain that achieved status precedes ascribed and that the former characterises simpler societies. Yoffee has argued that

In the neo-evolutionist movement from big-man societies to chiefdoms and then to states, there is something illogical: big-man societies are classically those in which rank, wealth, and status hinge on achievement, but in which such rank cannot be inherited; in chiefdoms, classically, rank and status are ascribed (through the kinship system) and passed along intergenerationally; in states, it is achievement – through control of resources, for example – that is again the hallmark of social organisation, while kin groups and ascription play less important roles in social life. It would make much more sense, perhaps, to derive states from achievement-oriented big-man societies than it would from ascriptively-determined chiefdoms (1993: 65).

The point here concerns the inconsistency between neo-evolutionist accounts' notion of states – as the containers *par excellence* of power and profound inequalities – and their deeply entrenched yet unjustified belief that ascribed inequalities constitute a more elaborate

evolution of social inequalities, one which is closely associated with more rigid structures of power.

It should suffice to say that this belief about the relation of ascribed status with more profound inequalities is an intellectual construct of modernity. As I already wrote, modernity preached a world of equality and social justice. However, it did not take long for the modern world to realise that a society of absolute equals constitutes a social impossibility, or in Dahrendorf's words, an idea that 'has a place only in the sphere of poetic imagination' (1969b: 40). It is my contention that it might be our way to deal with this unpleasant and uncomfortable conclusion that bears significantly on the dichotomy between ascribed and achieved inequalities, and our inclination to see the former as more power-laden. What several modernist thinkers and contemporary reformers appear to advocate (once they realise that a perfect state of equality is impossible) is that as long as social inequalities correspond to natural or physical inequalities among individuals, they are more palatable (Béteille 1981, 1994).

Natural or physical inequalities are seen to refer to unequal abilities, talents or endowments among the members of a given society. The assumption is that these inequalities are given by nature or God and can be cultivated during individual's lifetime through training and effort so there is little to be explained or to be done about their existence. Some actors are braver and stronger warriors; others are more skilful hunters or more intelligent actors. When these so called natural gifts allow them in a context of fair competition to attain a higher social standing or access to power there is nothing perceived as being unnatural or problematic. People freely compete and those best endowed by nature are better rewarded. On this score we assume, as Béteille remarks, that 'the orders of rank ... revealed by fair and free competition must correspond to the natural scheme of things' (1981: 60). Conversely, social inequality, according to current consensus, becomes problematic when it does not hinge on natural gifts. Orders of rank based on ascription by birth for example are thought to be cultural or human-made artefacts and thus artificial and arbitrary. They block fair competition and mobility of rank and subsequently militate against the fair correspondence between social inequalities and what we take to be physical or natural inequalities. In other words, it is the naturalisation of inequalities based on achievement that prompts us to believe that inequalities that are thought to hinge on extra-natural foundations are the only ones that merit explanation.

However, there are two snags about this assumption. Firstly, to recall a point made by Béteille (1981, 1994), there are no such things as natural inequalities. People may differ in various ways from each other, but the selection of the differences that become inequalities is a culturally specific social process. Not all societies mark out and select the same differences in individual talents, achievements or endowments for favoured attention. For example, in one context, people may rate highly brave performance in war or bodily strength, while in

another, they may value entrepreneurial skills or the mastery of words. Crucially, we should not fail to recognise that both the evaluation of differences and their very recognition constitute social processes in that they are decided by particular human groups under particular historical conditions (Béteille 1994: 1022). In this respect, inequalities based on personal skills and accomplishments are no less problematic or human-made than ascribed inequalities. They equally merit explanation and prompt us to seek why a given society selects, encourages and assigns a distinctive significance to particular individual skills or endowments while ignoring others. Secondly, we need to bear in mind, that the process of naturalisation of inequalities has found different expressions throughout human history. Interestingly, while today we find social inequalities based on capabilities and achievements as natural and fair, in the past it was hereditary inequalities that were thought to be natural and legitimated. More specifically, for several centuries, the hereditary ruling families of Europe presented their rule as a divine right offered to them in birth. The theoretical justification and naturalisation of their power was anchored in the idea that the rule they had inherited was the gift of God, a matter beyond human choice, and therefore inevitable and sanctified. On the other hand, inequalities based on achievement were presented as a human-made artefact that could be unmade and challenged.

In a nutshell, there is a tendency throughout human history to believe that some forms of social inequality are natural, in the sense that they are dictated by divine will or nature and biology, whereas some others constitute human-made artificial impositions into society that can be unmade and opposed (Berreman 1981: 14). Be this as it may, what sort of inequalities we decide to see as the gifts of God or nature and what as of human-made design are the product of historical contingencies. The view taken here is that both ascribed and achieved inequalities have been seen in both ways.

There is nothing wrong in tracing and distinguishing between the different ways by which people in different societies obtain social standing and power. However, problems arise if it is assumed or openly suggested that what we find is an evolutionary pattern of social inequalities, and then chart societies accordingly as more or less power-laden. The prevailing assumption which runs through much of the literature on ascribed and achieved inequalities is that the former reflect more rigid or closed systems of social inequalities because (unlike the latter) they restrict mobility of rank and prevent people from escaping hereditary inferiority.

Yet, without going into detail, it is not out of place to remark that achievement-oriented systems do not necessarily imply high rates of social mobility and therefore a more open or reflexive system of inequalities. We may point out that, as contemporary comparative sociological research has shown, modern achievement-oriented societies appear to reveal lower rates of mobility than traditional ascription-oriented ones (Cancian 1976: 237; Fallers 1973; Plotnicov and Tuden 1970: 22). At this juncture, we should take into account an

important consideration noted by Fallers (1973: 252-3) that illuminates why – however achievement-oriented a system of recruitment to high social standing and power positions appears to be and however much it values highly personal talents and accomplishments – social mobility can be seriously undermined. It is plainly the fact that even when access to high positions is open to personal ability and achievement, in real life situations, those people of power, high social standing, or wealth are usually able to bestow competitive advantages upon their children in the race to the top. To give a concrete example from contemporary political experience, the current president of the USA, as well as the prime minister and leader of the opposition in Greece, all come from families that have produced previous prime ministers or presidents. Now, in both countries, the particular positions are open to those with the skills, and election is considered to be a matter of achievement. It seems very likely that the individuals in question were better endowed to succeed in an otherwise free competition due to the competitive advantages bestowed by their families compared to other individuals who lacked such advantages. The conclusion to be reached, therefore, is that achievement-oriented systems of inequality do not present more flexible and open structures of power.

It needs also to be stressed that classifying societies as either ascription-oriented or achievement-oriented may be an oversimplification that obscures the fact that in most societies, recruitment to high social standing or power hinges on elements of both ascription and achievement. In short, I am arguing that the distinction should not be overdrawn (cf. Bétéille 1981: 62 n. 2) for it is of considerable importance to acknowledge that people may be in fact 'more flexible in compartmentalising their lives and adjusting to complex conditions than we would believe' (Plotnicov and Tuden 1970: 23). For example, one may find that even in a single society, recruitment to one highly valued position is based on ascription while to another one on achievement. For example, on closer examination, in both Melanesia and Polynesia, achieved and ascribed statuses are never alternatives (Earle 1987b: 282). Notably, rules of succession are not unknown in the so called big-man Melanesian societies, and equally, in Polynesia, competition and achievement have been shown to characterise many cases of ascension to power and high status. Perhaps more remarkably, so called hereditary positions leave space for achievement, just as non-hereditary positions may not be entirely open to personal skills. As Fallers tells us of the nineteenth-century kingdom of the Baganda in Africa:

[by] the idiom of 'inheritance' [Baganda people] mean something broader than English-speaking people do. For Baganda, *nsikirano* applies simply to any position which is filled from among, and on behalf of, the members of a descent-group – a kind of 'inheritance' in which there is clearly room for a good deal of achievement. But if traditional ascribed positions were not hereditary in any strict sense, neither, of course, were those positions described by Baganda as 'not hereditary' completely open to talent (1973: 260).

Finally, it may not be easy to sort out confidently the actual existence of inequalities of power or social standing based on ascription by birth in prehistory (cf. Pader 1982). Traditionally, archaeologists have indulged in tracing hereditary inequalities through the study of mortuary remains. More specifically, they are prone to believe that the presence of child burials that display great energy expenditure or were accompanied by lavish depositions of precious tomb gifts that the children could not have obtained themselves, constitutes a firm indication of hereditary high status or power (see Binford 1971; Clark and Neeley 1987: 125; Gilman 1981; Soles 1988: 61 n. 4). Notwithstanding, as we are now beginning to realise, this might not be a sound conclusion. According to Pader (1982) and Shennan (1982: 30), rich child burials may in fact reflect the achieved status of the parents rather than that inherited by the children³. A further complicating factor regarding the direct correlation of rich sub-adult burials with high status is that extravagant displays of bereavement and parental affection may sometimes result in biases in artefact distributions in burials (McKay 1988: 9, 59).

In addition, to repeat an essential point of this study, wealth does not necessarily indicate social standing or power. Bearing this in mind, although rich burials of children or infants may suggest that parental wealth was transmitted to the offspring, it does not follow that high social standing or authority were also passed through hereditary lines. That is, 'the questions of how wealth is inherited and of how prestige or leadership is obtained do not always have the same answer' (Wason 1994: 98). Eventually, moreover, while rich sub-adult burials might indicate hereditary inequalities in wealth, they do not constitute a safe index of hereditary or even achieved inequalities of status or power, for the parents themselves may have been simply affluent rather than leaders or individuals of high social standing. According to some (see Brown 1981; Peebles and Kus 1977), the presence in sub-adult burials of insignia of authority or high status may be a good indication of hereditary inequalities of power, prestige and status. However, there are problems with this assumption as well.

First, keeping in mind Brown's (1981) point that both status (or prestige) and authority may be symbolised by the same means, namely wealthy burials, it is not always easy to distinguish whether the furnishings of rich sub-adult burials point to hereditary high status or authority. Hence a further problem concerns the distinction between symbols or artefacts of authority and symbols or artefacts of high status. For Brown, rich child burials that lack insignia of authority, such as crowns or head-dress ornaments may point simply to inherited prestige or status. I take it to be clear from the discussion above that wealth does not inevitably correspond to esteem or high social standing. Yet Brown is correct only regarding the point that wealth does not necessarily equal authority. It is furthermore vital to recognise

³ The point has been also made by Renfrew (1986a: 146) who nonetheless chooses to interpret the rich child and infant burials of the prehistoric cemetery of Varna in Bulgaria as evidence of inherited status.

that wealth may not equal social standing or that social standing may not equal authority. Thus, any analyses of hereditary or achieved inequalities of status or power should try also to distinguish between types of artefacts that indicate status or authority respectively in the context of specific practices. We need to approach objects not merely as 'parts of symbolic systems, interrelated by metaphorical association and metonymical connotations' (Thomas 1996: 71). Our task is not simply to identify and describe conspicuous symbols of status or authority in the material assemblage of a given community. We should further disclose the ways in which different artefacts might have actively operated as instruments of influence or created relations of debt and therefore of power.

Second, even if we manage to distinguish between symbols or artefacts of authority and status in sub-adult burials, there is no reason why these objects would not again point to the achieved authority or high status of the parents rather than the hereditary position of the children. What is more, even when skeletal remains allow us to make the point that some prominent adult individuals in a given society were related by blood, again the inference of ascribed inequality may be tentative. For even if we are able to discover that the dead individual found in a so called royal or high status tomb was genetically related with another dead individual buried in another prominent tomb, the possibility that the system of succession hinged on achievement rather on ascription cannot be eliminated. As I've already remarked, individuals coming from prominent families are offered competitive advantages and therefore may compete more successfully in the race to the top in a seemingly achievement-oriented society.

To summarise, despite received wisdom, the distinction between ascribed and achieved inequalities should not be thought of as a distinction between more and less rigid inequalities or structures of power. Notably, the dichotomy should not be overdrawn even in a single society whether it appears to value higher achievement-oriented or ascription-oriented systems of recruitment to positions of influence and power. The vital point to recognise is that the choice of some societies to rate highly in their value system achievement and others ascription tells us about two sides of the same coin. This is the fact that 'to some extent, every system of social inequalities must be sold and accepted ideologically' (Plotnikov and Tuden 1970: 23). Both ascription and achievement have been currencies upon which people have variously drawn upon in different times and places to naturalise, justify, sell or legitimise how particular individuals are placed where they are in society and not elsewhere.

Ranking and Stratification I

Ranking and stratification seem to constitute the most popular yet largely taken for granted terms of the language of inequality. Renfrew has commented upon the ambiguity that

accompanies the use of the term 'ranking', despite its continuous scholarly currency, as well as upon the lack of attempts towards its precise definition in his opening chapter to an edited volume entitled *Ranking, resources and exchange* (1982b: 2). It is a remarkable fact, though, that none of the contributors to this volume returns explicitly to the issue of the definition of 'ranking'.

Broadly speaking, 'ranking' can be defined as 'a class in a scale of comparison; hence relative position' (Renfrew 1982b: 3). In this sense, it stands generally for the existence of scales of vertical differentiation among human actors or groups in a given society according to specific criteria or variables. But here I must add a further point in order to be clear. This concerns the distinction between hierarchy (or 'social ranking' in common archaeological parlance) and social stratification. The former refers to ranked inequalities between individuals and belongs in the domain of social organisation and interpersonal relations, while the latter implies ranking between categories of individuals such as classes, groups or castes and belongs in the domain of social structure (Flanagan 1989: 248). Stratification is also taken to imply something more, to which I will return shortly. Crucially, as Renfrew points out (1982b), the researcher needs to make clear the nature of the variable according to which social actors are being ranked. One may note here that from an external observer's point of view, individuals or groups may be ranked in terms of variables as different as wealth, power, social standing or education just to mention a few. In archaeology, the task of revealing patterns of vertical differentiation concerns specifically the variables of social standing, prestige and power. Simply put, when archaeologists talk about the social rank of an individual or a group of individuals, they refer to their relative position in a scale of status, prestige or power. Randall McGuire sums up the situation well when he remarks that

In the classic archaeological model of social structure, societies consist of discrete, hierarchically ordered layers arranged like those of a wedding cake, with a king or chief in place of the bride and groom and successively broader layers of courtiers, priests, scribes, craftsmen, and finally, peasants on the bottom (1983: 99).

In this respect, social relations are conceived as a kind of layer-cake which is held to represent the visual structure of social standing or power or both in society. Each layer is piled on top of the next, being organised 'in a single hierarchy in which each group [or individual] is defined as being above, below or in between. Or alternatively, as a jam sandwich, with most of the jam at the top' (Goody 1976: 100). Needless to say, what is signified by the particular culinary metaphor of jam is the notion of power or status as properties unevenly distributed.

In addition, current archaeological approaches to ranking, as we saw, begin with the simplistic assumption that material wealth faithfully reflects power, prestige and status. Consequently, they imply unequal distribution of status, prestige or power directly from the presence of unequal wealth distribution. Yet the point here is that the variable material wealth

– according to which we tend to rank social actors as being of higher or lower status or less or more powerful and prestigious – is rarely made explicit. In particular, there is a tendency to impose a homogenous method to all types of material resources (cf. Hamilakis 1995: 29). Moreover, although the jam sandwich image is assumed to lay bare unequal distributions of power and status or prestige between individuals or groups (i.e. distributional inequalities), it does nothing to encourage serious inquiry into the relational aspect of these inequalities.

Be that as it may, there is a further question in my mind. This revolves around the utility of archaeological approaches that attempt to disclose the social structure of a given society as an overarching layer cake in the terms described by both McGuire and Goody, as well as the validity of their results. According to Fallers (1974), for example, to impose a reified layer-cake model on society is perforce reductionistic or oversimplifying, in the sense that it ignores the very complex interactions that play out in normal societies. Dennis Wrong has made a similar point arguing that

if we treat power relations as exclusively hierarchical and unilateral, we overlook an entire class of relations between persons or groups in which the control of one person or group over the other with reference to a particular scope is balanced by the control of the other in a different scope (1979: 11).

This view, which bears out the point that power and social standing can be counterbalanced rather than ranked, occurs again in several archaeological accounts that criticise the hierarchical or stratified model of society in favour of a ‘heterarchical’ (see Crumley 1987, 1995; Keswani 1996; Levy 1999; Potter and King 1995; Rogers 1995; Schoep 2002)⁴.

The concept of heterarchy is borrowed from McCulloch’s work on the neural organisation of the human brain, and it has been introduced into archaeology by Carol Crumley (1987, 1995). As defined by Crumley, a heterarchical relation or structure is one in which ‘each element is either unranked relative to other elements, or possesses the potential for being ranked in a number of different ways’ (1987: 158, see also 1995: 3). It is worth pointing out, that some self-styled exponents of a heterarchical approach use the term synonymously with ‘egalitarianism’ (see Rogers 1995). However, the notion of heterarchy, as introduced by Crumley, does not seem to support this interpretation. That is, it does not negate categorically the co-existence of heterarchical and hierarchical orders in a given society⁵. Rather, it alerts us

⁴ The references cited are but a small fraction of a now voluminous literature on heterarchy. For further examples, see the various contributions in Ehrenreich, Crumley and Levy (eds.) *Heterarchy and the Analysis of Complex Societies* (1995).

⁵ I cannot refrain from noting here that Crumley herself appears somehow ambivalent on the matter. Nevertheless, I believe that it does not clash with Crumley’s perception of heterarchy, that in terms of power or status, we cannot deny a hierarchical element. More specifically, it is one thing to say following proponents of the heterarchical approach that in a certain community, one may find a spiritual leader and a war leader who do not outrank each other in social standing or power (heterarchical relation). However it is quite another thing to say that the whole community is

to the fact that describing social landscapes and relations exclusively as hierarchical cuts us off from recognising also the existence of horizontal dimensions of differentiation. According to Potter and King (1995: 17) horizontal differentiation implies distinct societal elements which may be either unranked or of equivalent rank within a hierarchical structure. To phrase it in a different way, in their view, heterarchy does not rule out hierarchical or stratificatory orders, it subsumes them (Potter and King 1995: 29; see also Brumfiel 1995; Keswani 1996; Schoep 2002).

With respect to the study of power and status inequalities within hierarchical models of society, heterarchical approaches present a way forward. For they encourage us to recognise three significant ideas. Firstly, there may be different sources of power and status in a given society (Crumley 1995; Levy 1999). Secondly, status and power can be counterpoised rather than ranked. Thirdly, the interactive elements in a society need not be permanently ranked relative to one another (Crumley 1995). Crumley offers some examples that help to clarify these points:

Thus, three cities might be the same size but draw their importance from different realms: one hosts a military base, one is a manufacturing centre, and the third is home to a great university. Similarly a spiritual leader might have an international reputation but be without influence in the local business community. The relative importance of these community and individual power bases changes in response to the context of inquiry and to changing (and frequently conflicting) values that result in the continual reranking of priorities (1995: 3).

In short, Crumley and most of those who have followed her outline a scenario wherein discrete institutions, individuals or groups may be catapulted into positions of power or high social standing according to different contexts. They furthermore maintain that social landscapes need not be the seats of overarching power hierarchies but rather the battlegrounds of competing individuals, elites, factions, coalitions, and confederacies (see Brumfiel 1989, 1992, 1994; Crumley 1995; Hamilakis 1995, 1999; Keswani 1996; Schoep 2002).

I do not doubt the theoretical and empirical validity of this point. For example, among the Baruya of New Guinea, high social standing goes to the talented warriors, as well as to the best shamans. Both these positions constitute the most highly prized statuses (Godelier 1977: 201). Leadership among the Stalo of British Columbia was not necessarily ascribed by birth. Leaders or *Sie'm* could be anyone whose personal abilities were most highly regarded. Attributes such as wisdom, ability, industry, generosity, humility and pacifism were considered hallmarks of good character, and individual effort and ability could overcome the disadvantage of low birth. So, for example, *Sie'm* could have high status by being good hunters, high-born people or those with knowledge of the supernatural (Duff 1952: 80). In medieval Ireland, textual evidence allows us to conclude that not only were there multiple

heterarchical. The very existence of leaders points to a vertical differentiation (hierarchical order) in

parallel hierarchies of social standing but also that the political hierarchies contained heterarchical elements (Wailes 1995). There was the hierarchy of the Church, the lay hierarchy, that of poets, of lawyers and of various categories of craft specialists. Interestingly, a 'high king' and an archbishop held equal status in honour price. Below them, a bishop, a king and the highest grade of poet shared an equal status too; the same held for the subordinate levels of all of these hierarchies. Moreover, as regal inventories reveal, kingship alternated between competing segments (Wailes 1995: 64). Aztec society constitutes a further example pointing to the existence of a heterarchical order. Ethnohistorical evidence leaves no doubt that the society in question was permeated by factional competition, that is competition between structurally and functionally similar groups⁶ striving for resources and positions of prestige, power and high status (Brumfiel 1989). The conclusion drawn here is that heterarchical elements and relations have been safely inferred for various societies on the basis of textual or ethnographic information.

Unfortunately, in my view, the potential of identifying competing individuals or groups of equal power and social standing in preliterate societies through archaeology, is usually rather limited and at the best tentative. Keswani (1996) for example, has suggested that Late Bronze Age Cypriote society can be more appropriately described as heterarchical than hierarchical with respect to the local, regional and island-wide scales. In her scenario, not only did the island comprise several autonomous regional polities but also several individual polities contained multiple elite groups and institutions, none of which was obviously paramount. In the case of Enkomi, for instance, the dispersion of metallurgical workshops and imposing ashlar mansions in several different areas of the town is taken to attest to the absence of a central administration authority. Equally, the existence of three different temples, Keswani argues, can be seen as indicative of the absence of a single, centralised religious authority. More recently, following Keswani's methodological guidelines, Schoep (2002) has made a similar point for the protopalatial town of Malia on Crete. According to her, the existence of evidence for ceremonial and religious activity, craft specialisation, monumental architecture and administration in different parts of the protopalatial town argues for a heterarchical social landscape populated by distinct competing factions and their followers, rather than for a single central power.

An important snag in Schoep's and Keswani's arguments for the absence of a single central hierarchy of power in Late Bronze Age Cypriot towns and protopalatial Malia respectively, concerns the distinction between decentralisation and non-centralisation, a

power and influence between them and those who are subordinated to their authority.

⁶ Factions should be contrasted with classes (Brumfiel 1989: 128, 1994: 8). The former divide society in vertical cleavages that unite individuals of distinct strata and promote conflict between members of the same strata. On the other hand, classes divide society in cleavages that cut horizontally separating externally competing and internally solidary strata.

problem which Keswani herself recognises (1996: 217). The identification of various religious, ceremonial, craft and administrative activities in different parts of a community can be taken as an indication of the absence of a central power (non-centralisation). However, this same pattern can also be interpreted as a manifestation of a central authority that has chosen, according to various strategic considerations, to decentralise or disperse its activities spatially (decentralisation).

More than this, without implying that the above accounts are necessarily in error (more precisely, they are methodologically ill-founded), it seems to be the case that heterarchical approaches that attempt to disclose discrete elite individuals or groups and factions in prehistory usually start from an *a priori* assumption. This concerns the idea that different archaeological contexts that exhibit similar or alternative material resources and which equally point to instruments and practices of power or status, correspond to discrete social units. The answer to this issue is too large to embark upon here in detail, but I will offer some grounding that may help to clarify my scepticism about the identification of physical individual actors or groups in prehistory.

One area of study in which the problems relating to the straightforward association of architectural units with discrete social units have been clearly felt is the archaeological study of households and families. Anthropologists and archeologists alike have now become aware of the fact that architectural residential units may represent various categories of social groups (Bender 1967; Whitelaw 2001; Yanagisako 1979). Particularly, a single residential unit might not necessarily correspond to a single family (nuclear or extended). Moreover, it might not correspond to a family at all, but rather to a different category of group, namely the household (Bender 1967)⁷. The Iroquoian longhouse represents an example of a residential unit inhabited by several families (Hayden and Cannon 1982: 142). Still, sometimes members of the same family can be dispersed in different residential units, and therefore a single family can comprise a number of different households. Ethnographic analysis of Swahili houses and settlements on the East African coast bears out the fact clearly. On the island of Lamu, for instance, an elite class of Swahili people and some of their female slaves inhabited coral houses. Once a female slave became the concubine of her master, she could be given a house for her own use and for that of her children. Her house, which was located at the edge of the ward in which her master lived, was usually not a coral house but a less elaborate structure (Donley 1982). The crucial point here is that in the absence of the above information, the researcher could easily oversimplify the economic and social relationships between the residents of the coral house and those of the modest structure. It is not difficult to see how the

⁷ Arguably, the referent of 'household' is common residence, while the referent of 'family' is kinship (Bender 1967; Yanagisako 1979).

two buildings could be interpreted as representing two independent groups; a wealthy elite group and a less economically endowed group of commoners. Yet as we saw, the matter is much more complex, and we basically deal with two residential units that do not correspond to two independent groups. Notably, the concubine living in the more modest house would retain her slave status if she had not begotten children by her master.

Without going into detail, one final example may be given from Eskimo ethnography to illustrate that there can be no simple correlation between different resources of power or contexts of practice and individuals or social units. Leadership in Eskimo society is expressed in two ways; in shamanism and in hunting. Quite commonly, there are two leaders: the shaman leader who is the custodian of religion and the 'economic' leader who is the best hunter (McKay 1988: 22-23). Yet although we may logically infer that Eskimo society provides us with a clear example of counterpoised, heterarchical power, there is an important complication to such a conclusion. Although power is usually shared between two different individuals, this does not need always to be the case. For as McKay notes, there are times when a single individual is able to combine both offices. Thus, whereas it is clearly the case that Eskimo society values two different resources of power (hunting talent and shamanistic skills), it would be misleading to relate them inevitably with two different competing individual actors.

Quite simply, as the hierarchical-stratificatory model tries ambitiously to fit individuals or groups into a vertical scale, likewise the heterarchical model is concerned with the charting of discrete physical entities in a horizontal dimension. The concern once again is more with the distribution or what one may call the quantification of power or influence, rather than with their relational and performative aspects.

Remarkably, although Renfrew (1982b) encourages the archeological study of hierarchical and stratified organisation in past societies, he argues that looking for individuals might not be the most productive avenue of research. He suggests this even though his work is underpinned by the assumption that stratified or ranked societies are based on the differential status of individuals. According to him, ranking should be explored in terms of the degree to which a society, its institutions, and the processes at work within them were centrally organised. For the individual, as he rightly states, is 'difficult to catch in archaeological terms' (Renfrew 1982b: 4). In Renfrew's view, the next logical step in the study of ranking is to shift emphasis from attempts towards the tracing of personal ranking to categories of data that enable the investigation of the degree of centralisation of authority. The latter, he argues, can be revealed through the examination of road and fortification patterns, settlement patterns, central places and monument hierarchies in terms of scale (measured in human-hours of construction labour).

One can only agree with the idea that the exciting moments of identifying a Tutankhamun, a Pompeii, an Ice Man or a Shang tomb are really rare in prehistoric archaeology (Hodder 2000: 31). Nevertheless, can this be taken as a justification for writing histories of generalised institutions and hidden impersonal patterns, which moreover, leave out social actors' actions, motivations, intentions, sources of strength and interpersonal relations by being usually conceived in systemic⁸ terms?

Recently, archaeologists belonging to the same intellectual tradition as Renfrew ('New Archaeology') have begun to speak about 'agency' following contemporary trends in social theory (see for example, Ames and Maschner 1999). They have declared that humans *were* motivated by their own interests, and that they made crucial choices which guided the development of past society. Perhaps this is an attempt to put a humanistic spin on an older, more detached argument. Paradoxically however, social change is still framed within the language of biological evolution, so that choice itself reflects cultural fitness and the selective traits of environmental adaptation. In the end the people are still 'faceless blobs' to use Ruth Tringham's phrase (1991). In a similar fashion, proponents of the heterarchical or factional approach aptly remark that a line of research such as that advocated by Renfrew, imposes a kind of *bird's-eye view* or an *outside-in* perspective on society, which marginalises human agency (Brumfiel 1992; Hamilakis 1995: 60; Schoep 2002). According to Schoep's account of protopalatial Malia, for instance,

it is important to stress, when making generalisations about different forms of power, that the problematic of agency cannot and should not be ignored. For example, did all three forms of power [political, economic, ideological] emanate from one source, as the conventional palatial model proposes, or could power relations within the main centres have been more subtle and complex? (2002: 105)

Poignantly, in Schoep's study, the concern with the current 'buzzword of agency' (Dobres and Robb 2000) appears to be closely linked to the identification of discrete social units. Yet we should highlight the confusion in equating the search for human agency with the archaeological spotting of specific individuals and groups (Dobres 2000: 142; Johnson 2000: 212). More precisely,

The former is a theoretical concern, to fill a gap in our understanding of the cause of material culture variability: it is the proposition that we cannot understand such variability without reference to active agency. The latter, on the other hand, is a practical concern with those superficially exciting moments, present particularly in historical archaeology where one can identify 'real people' and relate them to traces in the archaeological record (Johnson 2000: 212).

⁸ That is, through their contribution to a systemic objective (i.e. integration or adaptation) rather than through their connection to human subjects (Mouzelis 1995: 47).

The now bulky literature on the concept of agency need not be paraded here⁹. It will suffice to say, that agency can be defined as the means by which things are achieved, as embodied practice situated in particular times and spaces through which historically situated human actors find their place in and act effectively upon their world (Barrett 2000, 2001). In bare essentials, therefore, agency is about *doing* or action (Giddens 1984a: 10); actions, however, cannot be abstracted or demarcated from the historical and material conditions which they occupy (Barrett 2000). Having said this, it is vital to recognise that an archeological search of agency ‘does not necessarily require knowledge of the names and addresses of those involved’ (Dobres 2000: 142). Most significantly, neither can the search for agency be reduced to a treatment of past material conditions as mere reflections of past practices. Notice here, that this is exactly what both hierarchical and heterarchical epistemologies and languages actually do. For example, a temple is seen as the trace of a religious practice and a workshop as the trace of craft activity related to specific human actors. These practices may be considered subsequently to reflect forms of control. From here, both hierarchical and heterarchical models go on to infer that some individuals or groups have more or less or equal power compared to others. Yet the hard question must be asked whether this really illuminates the way power and influence were constituted. As John Barrett aptly puts it, ‘What point is there after all in the archeological depiction of a building plan if one never understands what is involved in pushing open a door to enter a room?’ (2001: 153). To sum up, the failure of both heterarchical and hierarchical approaches to the study of power inequalities is not so much that they do not introduce the human actors into the centre of attention, but rather that they do it in a simplistic way. However, if our interest is the search for agency, it is the exploration of the ways in which human agents actively operated and performed through the materials which have survived for our study that has to be the central concern of the practice of archaeology (cf. Barrett 2001).

Ranking and stratification II

I would now like to address another problem concerning the utility of the terms ranking and stratification. It is often the case that ranking is used to denote an evolutionary stage of power and social inequality, namely one that stands between so called ‘egalitarian’ social organisation and ‘stratified’ society. The pedigree of this perception goes back to the work of Morton Fried. A rank society, as defined by Fried ‘is one in which positions of valued status are somehow limited so that not all those of sufficient talent to occupy such statuses actually achieve them’ (1967: 109). On the other hand, ‘a stratified society is one in which members

⁹ The reader can refer to various contributions in Dobres and Robb (2000).

of the same sex and equivalent age status do not have equal access to the basic resources that sustain life' (Fried 1967: 186). Likewise, to give an example from the Aegean, Halstead, following Fried, argues that ranking refers to institutionalised inequality of status while stratification indicates unequal access to staple resources, like food and labour (1992c: 56, 1995: 21). In his words, stratification is 'something over and above ranking'. This in turn means that so called 'stratified' societies constitute grounds for more profound power inequalities compared to rank ones.

The intellectual lineage of this view stems from a certain theoretical myopia regarding the notion of basic resources. To be more specific, there is a blind faith surrounding the idea that the creation of debt – and thus dependency and power – can firmly be achieved only through resources associated with the materially productive sector of economy, such as labour, raw materials, land, water for irrigation and food (see Fried 1967: 52, 186–187). The exclusion of some segments of society from these types of resources, which are considered to comprise the basic means of livelihood, ensures the dependence of these segments on those who have managed to monopolise the resources in question. In comparison, rank societies are thought of as weaker political arenas. According to current consensus, in these societies, high social standing and power do not derive from economic control, nor do they produce unequal access or a privileged claim to the means of subsistence. Social standing in rank societies, as Fried maintains, usually exists 'totally independent of the economic order' (1967: 52). Consequently, since both individuals of power or high status and commoners enjoy similar access to what traditional accounts narrowly perceive to be the strategic resources on which a society is based, the former cannot effectively put the latter under their control. This means that in rank societies, 'leaders can lead, but followers may not follow; that commands are given, but sometimes they may not be obeyed' (Fried 1967: 133). On the other hand, stratified societies are believed to be characterised by a more fundamental kind of inequality. However, as Fried himself hastens to add, 'there is no society in which all commands are obeyed' (1967: 133).

Subsequently, Plotnikov and Tuden (1970: 4-5), noting that social stratification is not to be found in every society and that it should be distinguished from other forms of social inequality, set out to outline a more precise definition of stratified societies. According to them, ideally stratified societies have hierarchically ranked *groups* that hold relatively permanent positions in the hierarchy and have unequal access to economic and political sources of power, relative to their rankings. Moreover, the groups are separated by invidious rivalries and cultural differences and are articulated by an overarching ideology that rationalises the established hierarchical arrangements. These authors then go on to assert that it is hard to come by an ideal model of a stratified society, for, as they state, the characteristics described above vary from society to society. They remark that although ranking – which is

defined by them as the evaluation of individuals and roles on bases like sex, age or kinship statuses, is universal – societies composed of ranked social groups that are organised on other bases are not to be found everywhere.

To summarise, the term ‘social stratification’, as commonly used in anthropological parlance, is closely related to unequal access to so called ‘basic’ resources and the presence of hierarchically ranked groups. This seems to be the direction taken also by theoretically informed accounts on the investigation of social stratification in the Aegean (see Gilman 1981; Halstead and O’Shea 1982; Halstead 1992c, 1995; Webster 1990), yet it should be stressed that quite often the terms ‘ranking’ and ‘stratification’ are used interchangeably (see Renfrew 1972).

It is important to add, however, that the utility of the term ‘social stratification’ thus defined has not gone unchallenged in social theory. According to Fallers (1974: 16, 29), for example, social stratification is a poor term that fails to describe adequately social inequality in both western and non-western societies, because it refers to a single culture of inequality – namely, economic differentiation. In his words,

Not only is [social stratification] quite misleading when applied to the many non-western societies in which thought and action about inequality centre much more upon interpersonal relations of superiority and inferiority; it also oversimplifies by attempting to capture with a single graphic image the multiple bases of differentiation and inequality which exist within western societies. Race, ethnicity, occupation, and regionalism are not reducible to ‘class’ or ‘stratum’, and all these terms, to the extent to which they have meaning in non-western societies, very often have a very different meaning there (Fallers 1974: 29).

More recently, Earle (1987b: 290) has challenged the view that depicts rank societies as societies where power has no real economic privilege or grounding. As he suggests, it is difficult to imagine a society where political differentiation is entirely symbolic and does not emanate from economic control or does not bestow real economic advantages. For him, descriptions of rank societies that project a picture of economic egalitarianism are anthropologically unfounded. To smooth the reader’s path, Earle argues against Fried’s popular view that distinguishes between what current accounts call ‘structural differentiation’ (ranking) and ‘economic differentiation’ (social stratification), from a different perspective from Fallers, who challenges the stratigraphic image of society because it reduces power inequalities to economic inequalities. However, although the above accounts appear to be incompatible at first sight, both Fallers and Earle are right in different ways. It seems to me that the incompatibility of their accounts stems from a narrow perception of economy and that if we correct this, they can be made to fit. But let me elaborate first.

A few pages back, I referred to the fact that economic differentiation can be traced even in those societies we tend to define as simple with little second thought. I also argued that sharing wealth does not mean absence of economic disparities or sharing of power. That is,

we should not fail to lose sight of the fact that those who share with their fellows have amassed something to share and that at the end of the day they may not share equally. Now, although most researchers have come to accept that wealth differentiation exists in what Fried calls rank societies, they take this to be insignificant or not instrumental when it cannot be found to involve goods essential to physical survival. However, to recall a point already made in this study, it seems to me that the restriction of the definition of 'basic resources' to capital goods essential to physical survival is misleading. People do not live by bread alone (Pearson 1957: 324). To think otherwise is to treat societies as mere aggregates of physical bodies. Relations of dependency can be created through various material and non-material means that are deemed to be essential to the social reproduction of a given society and its members. Human beings need to feed themselves, but they also need to become fully fledged social beings.

Eventually, moreover, the distinction between rank and stratified societies compartmentalises different parallel aspects of the phenomenon of social inequality. Social inequality is simultaneously a moral, structural, behavioural, interactional, existential and *material* phenomenon (Berreman 1981)¹⁰. Note here a material, not materialistic, phenomenon. Accounts *à la* Fried that distinguish between rank and stratified societies seem, in the case of the former, to strip the material aspect of social inequality from the rest of its dimensions, while reintroducing it in the case of the latter. On the other hand, Earle's point that political differentiation cannot be separated from economic differentiation and that chiefs in rank societies constitute 'an incipient aristocracy with advantages in wealth and lifestyle' attempts to offer a correction to old wisdom by introducing the material aspect of inequality in so called rank societies (1987b: 290). It would be more precise to say, however, that certainly those who follow Fried faithfully and to some extent those, like Earle, who criticise Fried treat the material aspect of inequality superficially. To put the things straight, inequalities of power and status are material phenomena in that they are based on or bring as reward (or both) differential access to goods, services and opportunities. To confine the resources and rewards of social inequalities not simply to material goods but also more particularly and narrowly to resources related to the productive system is to reduce the material aspect of inequalities to classical materialism. Nonetheless, I am not sure whether Earle would be keen to recognise economic privileges outside the conventional view of wealth.

¹⁰ 'A moral phenomenon in the sense that people evaluate each other, a behavioural one in the sense that people act on their evaluations; a structural phenomenon in that social differentiation exists in society; an interactional one in that these actions occur largely in the context of interpersonal relations; a material phenomenon in that their actions entail differential access to goods, services and opportunities; and an existential phenomenon in that people experience their statuses and respond to them cognitively and affectively' (Berreman 1981: 4).

It is important to realise that the structures of inequality observed in different societies do not fit into sterile typologies that attempt to depict an ascending evolutionary plotline of the growth of power. The difference between so called rank and stratified societies or more correctly put, between societies, is the way they manage or relate the total of socially valued and desirable goods, both tangible and intangible – in one word, wealth¹¹ – to desired ends. But again we should not take this to extremes by following arguments that reproduce the substantivist–formalist debate in economic anthropology¹². We may note here the enduring significance in the capitalist world of charity and gifts, that is, of things given not in exchange for other things or money. This, combined with the plethora of private valuations and classifications (Kopytoff 1986: 88) serves to illustrate that there is more to contemporary Western societies than the Dow Jones Index, supermarkets and bank transactions (Thomas 1991: 27). Additionally, as anthropologists have begun to argue, in so called simple or traditional societies the idea of altruistic and economically disinterested or profit unmotivated actors is purely a caricature (Appadurai 1986: 11). Significantly, the drive to commoditisation is not unknown in pre-monetary societies (Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986; Thomas 1991).

My dissatisfaction with the term ‘social stratification’ stems from the fact that it projects a narrow perception of economy, one that reduces economy to what is obviously economic, in that it accords a pride of place and instrumentality to materially productive resources. Consequently, and perhaps more importantly, it perpetuates the simplistic distinction between more and less power-laden societies. Faller’s (1974) argument can now be modified; ‘social stratification’ is a poor term not because it reduces inequality to economic principles of differentiation but because it abuses the very meaning and content of the term economy itself.

I close this chapter noting that the current language of inequality and its attendant typologies have influenced unproductively the way we study inequality by loading it with several unwarranted assumptions. More than this, it is a language that deals with relational inequalities in a quite static and descriptive way by spiriting away the most essential question of how power and status are actively constituted. To strike an optimistic note, there is another language that I feel can encourage us to study inequality in a more prolific way. This is one that brings to the ‘stage’ its performative dimension and does not resort to simplistic assumptions and superficial typologies that keep alive the distinction between simple and complex societies.

¹¹ My definition of wealth is after Schneider (1974: 256).

¹² For good summaries of the Substantivist–Formalist debate see Hodder (1982) and Schneider (1974).

Chapter 7

Dealing with inequality: Symbolic capital and performance

It is not enough to know the ensemble of relations as they exist at any given time as a given system. They must be known genetically, in the movement of their formation (Gramsci cited in Barrett 2001: 141).

Introduction

In reviewing both the hierarchical and heterarchical languages of inequality as well as their implications for archaeological research, I tried to lay bare what they allow and do not allow us to say about inequalities in past societies. Notably, it may be legitimate to say that these approaches appear to contain within them what Strum and Latour (1987) have referred to as *the ostensive definition of social link* or what Farnell (1999: 352) calls an *observationist* rather than an agentic stance on action and society. That is, such approaches treat society, social relations and integration as something that can be the object of an ostensive definition since they seem to assume that social scientists alone, standing outside society have the potential to grasp the nature of society in its entirety. In this theoretical framework, which can be traced in a great deal of contemporary social analysis, human agents are seen *in* relations or *inside* society – they are stuck in neat little boxes – yet the way in which they achieve these relations is rarely explored (cf. Strum and Latour 1987). The grave consequence of these approaches is that they invariably fail to take into serious account the manners according to which influence and power are actively constituted. In other words, we commonly look for or acquiesce to the idea of people in hierarchies or heterarchies but we fail to reveal how these same people construct and achieve moments of hierarchy or heterarchy *in practice*.

What strikes me most about the traditional conception of power relations is that it is static, general and mute. It is a frozen single snapshot, where more or less we see the king in his castle, the poor in their huts, the grain surpluses and the material riches neatly stored and ever-expanding. It is supposed to be a grand narrative of power, more or less everywhere and always the same. However, to borrow a few words from Nicholas Thomas, ‘we have no sense of what is said or thought, and the image fades before we discover’ what people are actually doing ‘what becomes of the things’ (1991: 11). Mark Edmonds expresses a similar point when he notes that ‘what is lost is any sense of the mess of people dealing with others, the complex moral economies and the blurring of regimes of value ... people, ideas and artefacts ... – a tangle of relations’ (1999: 127). Thomas and Edmonds refer to the ostensive images of barter and trade respectively, yet the same can be said about a range of social realities like

power, landscape, social identity, the body or the 'state' where the approach in question has been adopted. The solution lies only in our willingness to abandon the ostensive modeling of society and its attendant faceless, general, non-context specific social typologies that grasp reality as a finished product, and to move towards an approach that values the multidimensional rhythms of social life as they are enacted in context.

Typologies are empty of the real embodied presence, the shifting and context specific character of human existence, and therefore in view of this absence I want to move towards a way of thinking that puts the changing and multi-vocal character of the human condition back into focus. In this chapter I want to show how a performative approach that respects the contingency of human history can help elucidate how social inequalities were produced in different contexts. Fortunately, a growing number of scholars from various disciplines have recognised the need to take adequate appreciation of human agents practising or performing society rather than merely being in society¹. Nonetheless, a theoretically and methodologically informed performative analysis pertinent specifically to relational inequalities in concrete archaeological contexts is still pending. It is to this task that I now turn.

Turning names into verbs, turning objects into processes:

Rethinking power and status

Power is relational (cf. Foucault 1980). Equally, what current accounts call status, and what I have defined as influence is again relational. One can conceive neither power, nor status outside of relationships. I see power as the ability of an individual to impose their will upon another in social action (Wolf 1990: 586). A crucial aspect of power is the creation of debt obligations (cf. Blau 1971; Bourdieu 1977a: 195; Gosden 1989a; Leach 1982; Schneider 1974), their accumulation and maintenance. As Blau (1971: 232) writes, an individual may instill a sense of superiority over others through bombarding them with benefits they cannot possibly repay and therefore subduing them under the weight of obligations. On the face of it, power can be defined as 'a relationship between two or more actors in which one (the powerful person) is owed *obligations* or dependence by another' (Schneider 1974: 247, emphasis in the original). Resources and services that are seen as essential to human existence, that are possessed or controlled by some but not by all, act as magnets critical to the generation of debts. Debt draws upon resources whose significance and value are socially constituted, reinvented and agreed upon in social interaction and practice. In Munn's words,

¹ See for example, Barrett (1994, 2000, 2001); Damilati (2002); Edmonds (1999); Farnell (1999); Goffman (1990 [1959]); Gosden (1989b); Harrison (2000); Keating (2000); Munn (1986); Pearson (1998); Shennan (1993); Smith (1993); Strum and Latour (1987); Sweely (1999); Thomas (1996).

Value creation ... is a complex symbolic process, both a dialectical formation of the symbolic system of meanings constituted in sociocultural practices and an ongoing dialectic of possibilities and counter-possibilities – explicit assertions of positive and negative value potentials – through which the members of the society are engaged in an effort to construct and control themselves and their own social world (1986: 3).

This helps make a further point, which, in contrast to a fairly widespread view, holds that social values are existential rather than intrinsic (Weiner 1992: 15). It is in this sense, namely by being transformed into *socially desired* and *valued* goods able to bestow *debt* that ‘resources enter into structures of domination’ (Giddens 1981: 4). As Graeber has aptly put it,

Value is something that mobilises the *desires* of those who recognise it, and moves them to action. Just as royal splendor calls on its audience to do as others have done, so does the perception of value in objects of exchange. Others have sought to acquire these things, runs the implicit message; therefore, so, too, should you (1996: 12, emphasis added).

Arguably, the above remarks should lead us to the notion that a power relationship cannot be adequately studied or inferred merely as a process of accumulating resources between individuals or groups (cf. Miller and Tilley 1984: 7). Instead we need to be attendant of the complex and contingent ways in which value and debt are implicated in relations of inequality. The relations of things, people and values are a single reality. It might be said that the making of power or domination, the very ability of dominant individuals or groups to perpetuate and legitimate their position, rests on their competence to establish what a society values or holds in distinction (cf. Bourdieu 1984). Meanwhile, it has been claimed that power is not yielded or taken once and for all (Nelson 1999; Miller and Tilley 1984). All that we need to acknowledge at this point is that the enactment of power can be met with resistance, intermittent rebellions, escapism, sabotage or protest (Paynter 1989: 386; Wolf 1990: 590). I suggest that this is the case. Debts might slip into oblivion or lose something of their original meaning and efficacy. Cultural norms² that dictate socially decided currencies of value according to which debts are played out – what is to be owed, what is worthy of being sought after in specific cultural and historical contexts and what not – may come to be challenged. Accordingly, for any power relation to persist in time, considerable effort needs to be directed towards the creation, projection and refinement of certain values as well as the recognition, maintenance, securing and remembrance of debts.

To turn to status seeking, this has been shown to be a behavioural predisposition universal in human societies which, despite its biological underpinnings, is shaped, directed and negotiated by culture (Weissner 1996). For example, strategies and skills used to acquire status, the resources that facilitate such strategies to take place, as well as the achievements

² Indeed the concept cultural norm itself is problematic in that it suggests that value judgements are static or obsolete. Perhaps Bourdieu’s (1977a) *habitus*, a set of gradually inculcated dispositions that make individuals to act and react in specific ways, is a better term.

that are esteemed highly in the status quest, may be quite different from one social milieu to another depending on respective cultural values. Significantly, status refers to a structure of attention and influence, namely the ability of an individual to attract attention and exert influence on others in order to satisfy favourable ends in various areas of life. As such, high status or prestige (respect or honour i.e. the positively esteemed influence) – and the same applies to power³ – can be seen themselves as significant resources or as a kind of capital, more specifically what Bourdieu (1977a, 1977b, 1986, 1991) calls *symbolic capital*.

Importantly, the idea that status is about the attraction of attention and the exertion of influence helps clearly make the point that like power, status making is a relational or transactional affair. Above all, structures of influence and attention are grounded for their ongoing security in impression management and public validation regarding both their initial generation and their maintenance. Without affirmation by others, any claim to power or influence becomes the illusionary obsession of an egotistic dreamer. It may be worth noting that while face-to-face interactions are germane or indeed prototypical to status making, structures of attention and influence can be closely associated with the creation of fame or re-known. Fame can be seen as an enhancement that transcends and extends beyond our physical bodies, yet still refers back to them. It is the mobile dimension of our existence that transcends space and time travelling with our names through the thoughts and words of others (Munn 1986).

No doubt, the above brief notes cannot do justice to the richness of the discussion or the complexity of facts surrounding the exploration of the sociology of relational inequalities. Nevertheless, my main concern here is to make clear that both power and status are better to be studied as processes rather than as fixed entities or obsolete objectified categories. To put it straight, both power and influence are enacted. Debts and structures of attention and influence are practical accomplishments. They have to be produced, sustained and reinvented in contexts of social interaction; that is to say they are about work and action (cf. Levy 1999: 72; Wolf 1990: 593). People do not simply find themselves in relations of power; they achieve, perpetuate, reinvent or resist debts and structures of influence. The value of different resources, the efficacy of debt obligations and structures of influence are realised in *usage*⁴. In the case of resources this is achieved in the manner of their employment; in that of debts and influence this is attained as lived commitments among agents. This is not a functionalist perspective where we ask what do things do or what objective functions they accomplish. To

³ We should not forget that in one important respect power is an enabling resource in that it provides power brokers 'the means of getting things done' (Giddens 1984a: 283).

⁴ Here I follow Michel de Certeau's (1984: 30-33) notion of usage. This may refer to ways of employment, to what individuals make of things and images, the specific ways in which they use, refashion and transform objects, as well as to custom (stereotyped and traditional procedures or patterns of use recognised and reproduced by a group).

do so, it would be to perceive a schoolbook for example, as being everywhere and always a medium for education, as something to be read. However, it might be, as de Certeau tells us, that 'the child still scrawls and daubs on his schoolbooks; even if he is punished for this crime, he has made a space for himself and signs his existence as an author of it' (1984: 31). On this occasion, the book was not to fulfill its objective function; it was not to be read. Instead, as de Certeau might argue, the child made the book operate in another register. The book was diverted from one use and re-deployed for another, from a text to be read to surface to make his or her own mark. What concerns us is how resources or capital are lived through, the different manners of their employment in everyday life, the values they evoke, the ways their forms and points of reference gain validity.

In pursuing the case for an archaeology not simply content to tackle relational inequalities as finished products, and one that tries to make sense of the movement and style of social realities, we require an important shift in our understanding of power and status that seeks their transformation from nouns to verbs. To a degree there is nothing novel or radical in this remark. Several authors have voiced similar ideas in seeing social realities as processes. For example, Mitchell (1994) has pursued this direction regarding the study of landscape when he invites us to think of it, not simply as an object to be seen but as a process by which social relations and identities are formed. In *Landscape and power*, he advances a more comprehensive model for dealing with landscape, one that asks not just what landscape *is* or *means* but what landscape *does*, how it works as a cultural practice. Wolf (1990: 592) strikes a similar note, when he asks us to start speaking of the state, less as a thing – a fixed type of social constellation – than as a process⁵.

According to Marshal Sahlins (1987), there is always the possibility of a substitution between kinds of action and categories of relationships. Verbs signify just as well as nouns and can change the structural order of meaning so that the character or the significance of a unit of analysis can be understood from different points of view. Now crucially, in turning power and status into verbs, we can move beyond accounts that treat individuals as cultural dupes towards narratives that are better endowed to restore the significance of human agency in history. For action cannot be separated from embodied agents (cf. Giddens 1984a: 3) who 'are able to see, reflect upon, understand the social reality in which they exist, and actively manipulate and reinterpret symbols and ideological understandings for their own purposes' (Sweely 1999: 395). The questions now become, I think, much more interesting ones. We are no longer content to acknowledge that an action has taken place because we trace the material record of that action. Rather we wish to grasp something of the performance of that action, its

⁵ The reader may also refer to the work of Jenkins (1996) on social identity and Frank (1991) on the body which join Mitchell's and Wolf's call to view social realities as processes.

specific style, material conditions and spatio-historical contingencies (cf. Barrett 2001: 152). We are now invited to open the door to the king's chambers, to see his majesty possessed with purpose, processing through his gilded hallways, displaying his position to his vassals, his presence tangible in his dictates, and his voice resonating through the audience chambers.

On performance

Why performance

The place to start exploring the constitution of relational inequalities, or to use Bourdieu's language the production of symbolic capital by embodied human actors, is by taking up the notion of performance. Contrary to older accounts' commitment to evolutionary conceptions of power, I wish to shift the emphasis regarding the study of relational inequalities from investigations dealing with the hunting down of their temporal origins to attempts to understand how inequalities of power and status are contextually *performed* in society.

Arguably, performance evokes connotations of theatricality and theatre; producers, actors, audience, stage, props, costumes, styles of acting and movement, ostentation, fame and above all presentation of 'things that are make-believe' (Goffman 1990 [1959]: 9). As such, it emerges as a course of action strongly associated with the management of impressions before an audience. For Goffman, who introduced the concept into sociology, in order to examine the presentation of self in everyday life, performance can be defined 'as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants' (1990 [1959]: 26).

Recently, the metaphor of theatricality has been introduced into various disciplines giving rise to four different apprehensions of performance, or ways in which performance can be theorised. These, despite focusing on different aspects and potentialities of everyday performances, share a common interest in grasping social realities as continually unfolding and becoming in order to put an end to the arbitrarily imposed silence of the lived experience (Harrison 2000; Thrift and Dewsbury 2000). My aim here, however, is not to pursue the concept of performance through the diverse literature that is beginning to emerge on performance theory. That would demand a greater deal of rehearsing various theoretical sources than space permits. On the other hand, such a project is too demanding for the needs of this research. One may note here not only the often difficult and abstract language within which contemporary social theory has framed the issue of performance but also the great variety of specific questions pertinent to different branches of academic specialisation.

Following Pearson (1998), I understand performance as a valuation process revealed primarily in the body. It must be underlined however that performance is not an abstract process or a humanless mechanism. It is about the ongoing construction of social realities mediated through the body's capacity to act and to make distinctions in the world. It binds the body to time, places, materials and people. By placing themselves in the fluid movements of social life, performances constantly draw on different kinds of resources, producing different forms of identity and demarcation, and attempting to validate these within the context of social life. In bare essentials, the performance of everyday life does not so much express or represent a role, as an actor might who depicts the character of Hamlet, but rather it is in search of a character; to find its value and meaning, to find out who it is. At the same time, I choose to define performance in a broader sense, after Goffman, to include not only Pearson's modes of action and communication distinct⁶ from the 'everyday', but also the routine and mundane practices of life. It might be argued that 'the reality of everyday life is shared with others' (Berger and Luckmann 1991[1966]: 43). In this sense, it resembles some kind of performance. More specifically, it assumes an interactionist logic, a seriality to movement, and time and space contingent engagements between watchers and the watched or individuals and audiences, who each in their place perform and subsequently interpret the actions of others. In brief, a dinner party or even a routine encounter between two neighbours cannot be perceived less as performances than a coronation ceremony or a carnival parade that may involve large public gatherings.

Although I do not disagree with Pearson that performance is marked out by special types of conduct, I believe that these permeate in various degrees all the aspects of life from the banal to the exceptional. Everyday life is not simply a spontaneous sequence of actions following an arbitrary code of communication, but is rather conditioned and enabled through structures of the past and the expectations that people bring to bear upon them. Whatever people do, always creates impressions, conveys information to others, and is a dialectic play between 'seeing' and 'being seen' which involves a particular setting, props, costumes, gestures, manners and rules of conduct; a script that makes sense. Nevertheless, while the script of life has or aims towards an idealised performance, the lines can sometimes be reversed, distorted or completely omitted. The costumes might not be appropriate, the choreography amiss and the acting in poor taste. A church, a bar, the academia constitute different settings each demanding a special type of conduct and script; and although someone is not expected to enter a church and dress, move or speak the same way they would in a bar,

⁶ According to Pearson (1998: 33), performances involve modifications of participants' behaviour, degrees of anticipation and expectation and are usually manifest in ordered and programmed events bound in time. Moreover, they take place in specific places and are recognised by the participants as heightened occasions distinct from the everyday.

the expectations can be mediated and reinterpreted. Social life is often defined by its messiness as for its regularity. It follows from this that in the routine enactment of social reality there is always room for manoeuvre, 'faux pas', forgotten lines or unintentional consequences. These may bring forth new possibilities or conditions of life that in turn may initiate new occasions or types of performance, or modify older ones. In one important respect, therefore, performance allows us to recognise the everyday experience of the lived, a 'generative' and 'open-ended process' that ruptures fixed categories of thought through 'contingencies, excess and indefinite answers'. In other words, it resists social analysis that tries to bestow unity and static labels to the multiple (Harrison 2000: 499). Everyday life seen either as a good or a bad play, or, as a comedy or a drama is constantly being performed. In William Shakespeare's words, written almost 400 years ago,

All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts (As you like it).

In bare essentials, I see performance as others have interpreted practice (see Barrett 2001; Bourdieu 1977a; Giddens 1984a). Broadly speaking, both concepts bring into scrutiny the active character of ongoing becoming existence and thus enable us to move beyond narratives that treat the social as the dead, the fixed, the immobile. In addition, to restate the obvious, both performance and practice imply the presence of an agent, the performer or the executor of practice and in this way they restore a human scale in the study of social facts. Yet, I find performance to be a more useful and robust term. This is partly because some strong forms of postmodernism⁷ have paid insufficient attention to the creators of practices (human actors), the embodied character of practices and their materiality. Looking critically at Foucault's way of dealing with practices, Mouzelis notes that there has been a significant *decentring of the subject* in the sense that practices appear to be without an author or ultimate goal and thus disconnected from the people who initiate them (1995: 45-48; see also Miller and Tilley 1984: 7). More precisely:

The social [is seen to consist] of systems of differences, and in that sense lacks an overall coherence; it lacks a centre or a unifying will that could endow it with guidelines and overall objectives. So if modern culture gave us the 'death of God', postmodernism gives us the 'death of Man', or rather the 'death of the subject' (Mouzelis 1995: 45).

To turn to the issue of embodiment, Frank (1991: 36) and Turner (1991: 11, 1992: 87) have independently pointed out that in Giddens's structuration theory the focus of discussion is more on the unconsciousness or the non-discursive (practical consciousness). In contrast, the body, most notably the embodied structures of understanding by which people grasp the world receives only scant consideration. According to Turner (1992: 87), structuration theory

⁷ The intellectual movement that pioneered the study of society as social practices.

displays a deterministic view of the body in the sense that it treats the body to a large extent as a physical constraint which limits the capabilities of movement and perception of human agents⁸. Finally, John Barrett (2001: 152) has intimated the marginal concern with the materiality of practices in Bourdieu's theory of habitus. As he notes, despite Bourdieu's recognition that artefacts can be strategically employed into the reproduction of social practices, it is also equally significant to be aware of the fact that material culture is an integral component in the structuring of referential processes. In simple words, practices may refer to absent values and conditions, yet it is through material culture that such references take shape. 'The strength of objects lies in their capacity to materialise the invisible, to represent the unrepresentable' (Godelier 1999: 109; see also Tuan 1974: 23). For instance, the object of the cross, refers to Christianity, the crown refers to kingship while a battle flag may signify men who are ready to die to save it. Remarkably, these objects do not simply represent or refer to absent conditions or values but also enable individuals to marshal those conditions in performance and act with reference to them.

On the other hand, I maintain that the concept of performance carries a semantic charge that cannot afford to marginalise human actors, embodiment and materiality. This can be well illustrated given its dramaturgical connotations of stage, décor, props and costumes that are appropriated and fabricated, purposeful actors, communicative body movements, gestures, and postures, omission and things that may evoke conditions, values, times and places outside the present stage play, special effects that aim to manipulate time, space and attention. Perhaps even more significantly, the concept of performance brings simultaneously and more vigorously to the fore the material, behavioural and interactional or interpersonal dimensions of inequality since it implies interaction between people and resources of various kinds both tangible and intangible. In this respect, it entails a social dynamic to the way everyday realities of a relational character like power and status are constituted. Simply put, performance facilitates the investigation of a great range of resources, the ways in which these are actively deployed by embodied human actors in the creation of debts and influence, as well as their behavioural, moral and material effects in specific contexts of practice.

Having defined my own view of performance in relation to that of Pearson's and the less helpful concept of practice, I want to turn back to status and power. It might be said that through the different contexts of performance, the character of interactions produces, reproduces, negotiates or even challenges commonsense social realities or socially engendered values, such as morals, relationships between people and social discourses. This brings us directly to the issue of power and status. Arguably, the perception of everyday life

⁸ This, as Shilling (1993: 201) notes, holds for Giddens's major writings (1984a, 1990) on structuration theory. On the other hand, Giddens's work on modernity (1991) shows an interest in the body as enabling.

as a seriality of performances calls for a change in the style of practice of the archaeological exploration of relational inequalities. More precisely, it enables us to move from narratives that present uniform and immobile contexts of interaction with single and impersonal mechanisms (like redistribution, craft specialisation or a precarious environment) or currencies of value that construct individuals as finished identities, the same at every context of their mobile presence. It is towards the specific details of context we focus.

It should be stressed at this stage that performance is a complex concept that demands the researcher to deal with the convoluted nature of history, social interactions, cultural taste, material culture and practices. Still, it is the complexity and messiness of social relationships, structures of debt and influence, the plurality of resources and values rather than their objectification and neat pigeonholing that better grasps social reality. In order to put forward a performative approach that contributes towards our understanding of this complexity, it may be possible and analytically necessary to discern the basic constituent elements of performance, namely, the body, space, time, and tangible and intangible resources. These not only facilitate performances blending together in various combinations and styles but also may constitute significant resources or currencies of value through which human actors create and maintain debts and structures of attention and influence in the course of everyday life.

The elements of performance

A premise of this study is that through performances the human body, space, time, objects as well as intangible resources such as memory and knowledge are implicated in various ways in the creation and management of meaning. Keeping in mind the plurality of ways in which the various elements of performance are entangled, it is not my aim to offer here an all inclusive recipe that prescribes the blending of the body, space, time, and other resources in every performance. For their entanglement is context specific and perhaps more importantly, one can only talk at a very abstract theoretical level about performance and its elements outside of specific contexts of practice. The task is rather to bring into attention some interesting qualities concerning the elements of performance without implying that these adhere in any precise manner and combination across all performances. Everyday life is an arena of style. I suggest that difference is to be found in the details in which embodied actions, intentions and expectations are networked and interwoven with respect to particular conditions of existence and sets of resources, material and non-material, in order to bring about effects (cf. Miller and Tilley 1984).

Bodies offer people the means of acting: 'acting people are acting bodies' (Shilling 1993: 9). As such, bodies are the instrumental means *par excellence* that enable performances to

take place⁹. That said, bodies are also ways of relating to, perceiving and understanding the world (Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Tilley 1994: 14). Bodies are not the passive shelters of the mind but rather significant means of communication and identification that embody the world as sensory organs through emotion, perception (hearing, touching, seeing), body movement and orientation. It is through our body's engagement with others and our material surroundings that we relate to and make distinctions between things, people and places in order to create understanding. In other words, embodied perception is not a passive act, or a kind of spectator sport, rather bodies are also authors of their own social worlds, 'action-systems' and 'modes of praxis' (Giddens 1991: 99); they simultaneously consume and produce social realities through their routine engagement with the world.

Moreover, bodies, given their inherent social and biological insufficiency due to their unfinished nature at birth, do not act independently but they both influence and are influenced by other bodies in seeking to create a meaningful world to act upon. In one important respect, bodies are centres of display, that is, they are not only instruments for seeing but also for being seen. Our bodies send out messages of intent through modes of dress and adornment, demeanor, body movements, postures, orientations and facial expressions¹⁰. They attract attention or may seek to elude it. As such, they are at once a means of communication and managers of impressions, indexes of differentiation and similarity and canvases upon which identification can play (Jenkins 1996: 23). Accepting that identification of ourselves and other people is firmly anchored in the body helps to understand why so often bodies become targets of disciplinary control themselves, valuable resources around which debts are played out as well as projects of enormous symbolic appropriation and sites of representation. These practices, which consist of both acts of physical intervention and investments of meaning, are more so enabled by the organic and social elasticity of the body due to its unfinished nature at birth. Values, lifestyles, experience, social inequalities, relations, shifts in social position, identities, morals, gender stereotypes, age and even professions are all embodied in the ways we move, sit, look and relate to others and our surroundings. According to Shilling (1993), these embodiments are contingent on social practices and can perpetuate or legitimise existing social relations and values. Crucially, the body itself may be actively implicated in performances that aim to create or perpetuate debts. For instance, the body may constitute an important currency of value in *rites of passage* that aim to authenticate one's transition in critical social stages, like adulthood without which life appears to be unthinkable. In such

⁹ Still, the body due to its indivisible nature may constrain specific performances in the sense that it cannot operate simultaneously in different places (Hägerstrand 1973).

¹⁰ Modes of dress and adornment constitute features of the surface of the body that belong to the 'bodily appearance' aspect of the body and are used as clues to interpret actions. 'Demeanour', on the other hand, refers to how appearance is used by individuals in relation to constitutive conventions of everyday life (Giddens 1991: 99).

occasions, bodily transformation constitutes a crucial element of the practical accomplishment of becoming a fully-fledged social being. It might be said, that this refers to what Giddens calls 'the struggle of being against non being', through the creation of ontological reference points that guide how to go on in daily life (1991: 48). It is a task of attaining a feeling of biographical continuity, which is essential to individuals' universal quest for ontological security (Giddens 1991: 47-63).

At the same time, routinised forms of interaction with others, other places and the world around create meaning which is inscribed in bodies as memory. As Connerton (1989) tells us, the past is sedimented in the body. However, memory is not just inscribed in the body. The body itself is the producer of memory. In other words, bodies are able not only to recall events and situations but also to act as mnemonic devices themselves. This, as I will try to show in my case study, can be an instrumental means for keeping alive the memory of debts and therefore their efficacy through time.

Performances do not occur in a vacuum. An embodied world is made up of different textures of humanly created space and time (Tilley 1994: 14). Knowledge of the world, as well as the ability to act, stem directly from the potential conditions and capacities for bodily movement and interaction with the landscape. Space is both the product and means of performances. Certain properties of space bear significantly on the specific ways performances are staged and bring different human actors together. For example, the built environment can direct the reading of space in specific ways by controlling bodily movement and access, evoking meaningful moral and social classifications of actors and reinforcing specific ways of acting while impairing others (cf. Parker Pearson and Richards 1994). More than a physical substrate, space may be transformed into a vessel for the creation of debt relations. The opportunity for domination may be enabled by 'the ability to control access to and manipulate particular settings for action' (Tilley 1994: 27). Spaces that accumulate human experiences may become containers of history: transactions between people, networks of contact and communication, rituals, journeys and other memories imbue landscape with stories. In these contexts emotional attachment and a sense of belonging stemming from a place's history and genealogy can become currencies of value able to inflict profound debts. For example, landscape can be seen as a repository replete with spiritual powers dwelling in geographical formations, flora and fauna, or parts of the built environment. Interaction with these places may demand ritual stocks of knowledge and the enactment of ceremonial dramas which are intended to establish favourable relations between humans and these powers. These stocks of knowledge which are unlikely to be shared by all members of a given community can be exploited and controlled in systems of debt obligations. In a nutshell, competitions over space do not involve only disputes of ownership of materially productive land, as

western models of space would have us believe, but also struggles over the meaning of places (Gregory 1989: 196) and their history.

Through the medium of routine embodiment, bodies gain a knowledge of persons, places and things, investing them with a particular historical character and social value. In this sense bodies appropriate the valueless substrates of the surrounding environment and demarcate them into socially meaningful categories. As such, human activity itself becomes inscribed within objects, places and people; they become historically constituted and biographical in nature. Crucially, objects, places and people themselves become embedded in memory, thus neither time nor space can be understood apart from embodied performances. The ability to go on in the world, to keep on performing as it were, is intimately bound up with past experience and future expectations. For instance, transactions such as gift-giving or marriage payments between different actors may construct persisting ties of affiliation, feelings of relatedness, obligations and relational webs of meanings between different spatial contexts even after the transaction has been completed (Georgousopoulou 2003: 58).

Like space, objects too may be embodied, and through performances may be embedded with meaning (Pearson 1998). Objects not only enable performances to take place but also acquire meaning and value through their enactment. That is to say, ownership of things may not in itself be significant, for things have meaning only in the context of their performance (Gosden and Marshall 1999: 175). Whatever the immediate instrumental uses made of different forms of material, such as buildings and metal objects, all artefacts constitute also means through which society creates representations of itself (Miller 1985: 35). Cosmologies and values flourish and are embellished through material culture. Take for example, the complex cosmologies of the Australian Aborigines known as *The Dreaming*. As an ideology or as a theory of existence, in which everything in the world comes into being, the dreaming is an immaterial reality, still it only flourishes because it is constituted by material and verbal possessions (Weiner 1992: 101). Equally important, objects – like people – have social lives. They come into being, are fabricated, become embellished, age, circulate and are consumed in various ways in different contexts (Gosden and Marshall 1999). In this sense, they accumulate histories and act both as currencies of value and mnemonic devices that bring the past, other places and identities into the present (Pearson 1998: 37) as vital resources for manipulation and the creation of debts. For instance, the bones of the ancestors venerated in a commemorative ceremony may introduce absent times, places as well as material realities and values associated with endurance and immortality in contexts of current social practice.

Performances do not simply occupy time but also produce time as a meaningful dimension of social life. People are 'fundamentally temporal beings in that they may recognise a past, present and future as categorically separate. It is the ability to recall a personal past, to conceive of oneself as being alongside others in the present and to plan for

the future which renders us humans' (Thomas 1996: 236). Moreover, more than one sense of time may be found in the same society (Bloch 1977). As a resource time may be both consumed and produced in strategic ways. Time, like space, is appropriated through action; however, rather than simply consuming time like a commodity, human action itself may influence the way people perceive time and in turn time may help to structure human action. For example, one's appreciation of a place, practice or object, may be valuable because of age, that is the amount of time that has passed, lending it a sense historical legitimacy. Recalling traces of the past may solidify historical events and encounters into the material world (Tilley 1994: 27; Walsh 1990: 133). Material things then may transcend death, and times past, they may stand as reference points for past narratives and help to bring the past into the present, creating a sense of continuity or permanence which acts against the fear of loss (Thomas 1996: 80; Weiner 1992: 7). The overcoming of fear and loss constitutes one of the most important ontological quests of humanity and may be manipulated in order to inflict enormous debt obligations.

'Capital is what makes the games of society something other than simple games of chance': A final note on symbolic capital

It might be said that the making of status or power both depends on, and is a kind of capital accumulation process. I define capital as the capacity to mobilise resources of various kinds in order to create debts as vessels for domination, or, to exert influence to raise one's social standing (cf. Bourdieu 1977a, 1986; Mouzelis 1995). These resources and thus capital are not necessarily confined to (conventionally considered as) economic ones. They may include a great range of conventionally unproductive – in economic terms – goods which are used and consumed without reproducing the conditions of production. These might be symbols, knowledge, skills of various kinds, social proximity, friendship, generosity, access to distant and dangerous lifeworlds, rituals, various goods (tangible and intangible), which may be temporarily accumulated for unproductive spending/giving away. Here we can also add idiosyncratic human qualities such as the ability, talent, skill or open-handedness and enthusiasm to mobilise different kinds of resources including wealth for surrender or destruction. Access to such kind of resources does not necessarily build an economic capital but may enable people to accumulate a symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1977a, 1977b, 1986, 1991), which can promote their power and widen their influence within society. Thus, there is

not just economic capital but also symbolic or, according to Mouzelis, social capital¹¹. Significantly, symbolic capital like any form of capital not only takes time to accumulate but also has the potential to generate profits and reproduce itself in identical or expanded form. As such, it can be considered as 'a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible' (Bourdieu 1986: 241-242).

There is still another point of value to consider, namely the relationship of economic and symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu,

Symbolic capital, a transformed and thereby disguised form of physical 'economic' capital, produces its proper effect inasmuch, and only inasmuch, as it conceals the fact that it originates in 'material' forms of capital which are also, in the last analysis, the source of its effects (1977a: 185).

Thus, as Bourdieu puts it, symbolic capital is a transformed economic capital that can produce effects such as status and prestige only if it involves concealment and misrecognition, that is, when people do not recognise the material or economic means behind the source of status and prestige. Although I agree with Bourdieu's idea of concealment of the economic basis of symbolic capital's effects (influence and the creation of debts), I believe that we need to stress that the source of symbolic capital is not always what *today* we narrowly perceive to be economic capital. To repeat a point already made, symbolic capital can be achieved through access to various types of resources and some of them may be intangible or unproductive in economic terms. That said, symbolic capital is always economic in a sense, since it involves augmentation of resources and the maximization of some kind of profit (Bourdieu 1991: 15), though not always directly materially productive profit.

Another important parameter of symbolic capital is its often oppositional relationship to *productive* –in Marxist terms –economic capital. In many occasions, symbolic capital might be accumulated through gift-giving, destruction, or generous expenses of food, labour and the means of production. In such cases economic capital as defined by Marxists, constitutes the basis of symbolic capital through a process of negation of its very own existence. Here Bourdieu's idea of misrecognition is particularly relevant. Therefore there is a further irony; people who have accumulated symbolic capital – debts, high status and prestige – by freely giving more, and more often than they should, may at times appear less well to do individuals in society (Fried 1967: 115).

The case of the impoverished chief is well known to ethnographers. These chiefs were rich, as Fried (1967: 114-118) has told us for what they expensed and not for what they

¹¹ Mouzelis (1999) prefers to use the term social capital instead of Bourdieu's symbolic capital because he believes that the distinction between symbolic and non-symbolic capital is problematic, since all forms of capital have a symbolic parameter. Social capital, he argues is the ability to mobilise social relations to achieve prestige. I agree with his critique on Bourdieu's terminology, but I shall keep using the term symbolic since it is better known to the audience due to the wide reputation of Bourdieu's work.

accumulated. Besides, they worked harder than anybody else, for they were expected to be particularly lavish in their distributions. The Zulu chiefs, for instance, could only consume a modest amount of porridge, the rest had to be surrendered to their people (Goody 1974: 31-32). But we should not be misled, this generosity or 'parental' model is not without its hidden subtleties. Obviously we do not talk about altruistic instincts but of strategies to exert influence or create debts. Moreover, as Mary Douglas has famously asserted, even though we celebrate charity as a virtue we know that it wounds. In reality, 'there are no free gifts; gift cycles engage persons in permanent commitments that articulate the dominant institutions' (Douglas 1990: xii; see also Forde and Douglas 1967: 23). In other words, a free gift is a paradox for negating reciprocal exchange creates permanent debts between these involved. More importantly, things that are given might not be necessarily material objects. In Godelier's words,

The thing may also be a dance, a spell, a name, a human being, support in a dispute war, and so forth ... the category of 'giveables' encompasses much more than material objects, and I will say that it takes *everything* which can possibly be *shared*, a sharing which *makes sense* and which can put someone else under obligation or create a debt (1999: 102).

The perpetuation of an unbalanced relationship between donors and recipients cannot be easily overcome since the latter are cut of any means to pay back a similar counter-gift in order to obliterate their debt towards the former. This debt however becomes a counter-gift which might be cashed by the donor, though not usually for similar returns (since the logic of free gift negates direct reciprocity) but for other currencies of value such as support, submission, influence, gratitude, reputation or prestige. As Firth writes, 'the recipient repays by serving as an "instrument of enhancement" for the giver' (1967: 15).

In the Homeric world competitive gift-giving was a popular avenue to re-known, high status, prestige and the establishment of alliances among heroes (Knapp and Cherry 1994: 147). Although gift-giving is archaeologically invisible because it is 'an ephemeral phenomenon', one may infer its presence through related practices such as deliberate destruction or deposition of wealth (Morris 1986: 2). Interestingly, as Bradley (1982, 1990) and Kristiansen (1989) have independently remarked, many elaborate artefacts in prehistoric times appear to have entered the archaeological record as deliberate deposits in the form of hoards, grave goods and 'water finds'. These separate deposits, according to Bradley, might be 'variants of one underlying pattern entailing the voluntary discarding of property' that can be considered as one way of building prestige (1982: 108). Remarkably, hoards of valuables, though rare enough, are not completely unknown in Aegean prehistory (see Branigan 1969). Additionally, gifting can be extended to include consumption as in feasting, or the sacrifice of wealth items to ancestors and gods.

At this juncture we should recall that materially rich sites are conventionally equated in the archaeological literature with high rank in regard to lavish grave goods and impressive structures. These are taken to imply an investment of economic capital in the form of mobilisation of raw materials and labour for their construction or production. However, a more balanced consideration of the significance of objects can include the grasp not only of their production but also of their consumption that might involve practices of destruction or waste. No doubt, from the standpoint of materially productive profit, the pyramid is 'a monumental mistake; one might just as well dig an enormous hole, then refill it and pack the ground' (Bataille 1998: 82).

On the other hand, one may be sceptical regarding the validity of accounts that emphasise gift-giving as a means to power and status, when at the same time they appear to equate materially rich sites with high levels of social rank. In the case of palatial Crete for example, how would palaces bursting with items of wealth emerge in systems of gifting, debt and competitive consumption? (Barrett and Damilati 2002). In such systems sacrifice to gods or the dead is certainly possible, but this is not structurally equivalent to accumulation by the living.

Annette Weiner's (1980, 1985, 1992) ideas on the paradox of keeping-while-giving and subsequently Maurice Godelier's (1999) elaboration of her work offer us some useful insight in these matters. In critiquing Mauss's original essay, Godelier demonstrates that along with the distinctions Mauss makes between various kinds of gifting, one can find recurring but undeveloped references to things that cannot be given but must be stored. I want to suggest that it is only by understanding the dialectic between gifting and accumulation that it is possible to grasp the construction of value. This, in turn, reveals the material construction of human identities.

In ethnographic literature we can distinguish three kinds of gift exchange. The first, what is usually called balanced reciprocity, is seen to establish equivalencies between both the things exchanged and the participants. Second, are unbalanced exchanges where gifting requires reciprocal payments that never cancel out the initial obligation. The latter form of exchange structures many of the obligations of kinship and is given a mystical character in the debts the living may owe to the spiritual world. Significantly, exchange relations in this case are dominated by the unbalanced relationship between gifts of fertility, life and reproduction and the tokens of debt that come with them. Carried forward across generations, they order and give identity to participants in terms of these exchange relationships. More specifically, they situate the living in relation to the spiritual world. Finally, there is an antagonistic form of gift-giving, where Mauss grouped the Kwakiutl *Potlatch* ceremonies and the Melanesian *Kula* exchange. *Potlatch* events furnished public stages for the achievement of re-known and honour where competitors sought to silence each other by imposing an enormous challenge to

reciprocate. Failure to meet such a challenge, which was accompanied by extravagant squandering of wealth, meant that the memory of the original sacrifice of the successful participants lived on. *Kula* exchange provides another context for status and power seeking where participants engage in far-flung regional exchanges in an attempt to outrank rivals by acquiring the most valued shells. Here gifts, when put into circulation carry the memory and re-known of the giver with them as they move from hand to hand to seek out a reciprocating partner. The more valuable the gift, the greater the challenge and thus the longer the time it remains in circulation and the greater the memory and prestige that the gift accrues to the giver. A noticeable feature of all these examples of exchange is that they establish equivalences of sorts between things as well as, in relational terms, the identities of the participants.

As we have seen, things are not passive badges of identities but rather enact and validate identities, and symbolic capital through their circulation and consumption. Significantly, their value is not always decided at the moment of their physical production, as Marxists would have us believe, but in usage, as they accumulate history through their movement from place to place and from hand to hand, or at the moments of their consumption and materially unproductive surrender. But what of those things that must be kept and not given away? Why do inalienable possessions exist and what is their role in the production of symbolic capital? Both Godelier and Weiner offer straightforward answers:

... no identity can survive over time and provide a foundation for the individuals that make up a society if there are no fixed points, realities that are exempted (provisionally but lastingly) from the exchange of gifts or from trade (Godelier 1999: 8).

Persons and groups need to demonstrate continually who they are in relation to others and their identities must be attached to those ancestral connections that figure significantly in their statuses, ranks or titles. To be able to keep certain objects that document these connections attests to one's power to hold oneself or one's group intact. For to give up these objects is to lose one's claim to the past as a working part of one's identity in the present (Weiner 1985: 210).

Arguably, Godelier's and Weiner's remarks prompt us to move beyond the logistics of mere physical survival and towards the very definition of the self, community and the never-ending search for ontological security and completeness. What we confront in inalienable possessions are anchor points or better put, the sacred core that guarantees the definition of a particular possibility of humanity, the cosmological certainty of its existence' (Barrett and Damilati 2002, forthcoming).

This may include reproductive fertility, transition to specific stages of social being, answers to the worries of birth, aging and death, the landscape and its life forms, the soil into which the ancestors are placed and where subsequent generations will follow after death, as well as cosmological phenomena such as gods, ancestors, spirits and the secret and sacred myths of the world's foundation. While these values may epitomise immaterial theories of

existence, they can be manifested materially. For example, they may be present in the way that the spiritual world haunts formations in the landscape or specific localities, or as an ancestral presence may be embedded in a fragment of a human bone. In addition, they can flourish and further be enhanced through the practices of song, dance, story telling and prestigious craft work. It should be stressed that all these material manifestations rather than being the symbolic representation of some abstract ideal, they constitute the iconic appearance of forces and values that give an identity to the human community. As such, they would have been media for the revelatory experiences of ritual and initiation and foci of enormous emotional commitment to be protected as the cosmological core of the world itself (Barrett and Damilati 2002, forthcoming). Such possessions are given in trust to be maintained, guarded and venerated. The keepers of the sacred traditions might be skilled performers of religious ceremonies; communicators with the gods, spirits or ancestral presence; interpreters of signs and myths; experts of sacred body decorations, secrets of healing, fertility formulas, dance steps and spells.

At first sight, it may appear that guardianship of inalienable possessions constitutes a responsibility above individual ambition or self-interest and that those entrusted with the care of these values act on the behalf of the communal good. In this sense, an aspect of social status may act for the community. However, as Wiessner (1996) notes, in fact, this status draws attention to itself and acts as a magnet to which others are drawn. The moral core is the focus of desire, the desire to be recognised and placed within a particular social community (Barrett and Damilati 2002). Additionally, inalienable possessions not only accrue power, attention and influence to their owners or guardians but also extend these privileges in other transactions, so that the ability to keep becomes a capital that empowers the ability to attract (Weiner 1992). This attraction, in which, let it be stressed, no moment is perfectly independent of the previous one, is exactly the very essence of capital. Unlike roulette, which holds the opportunity of changing one's social standing instantaneously, capital is what makes the games of society 'something other than simple games of chance' and ensures that not anyone at any moment can become anything (Bourdieu 1986: 241).

Thus, the sacred moral universe to which all identities are relational does not innocently promote social integration by uniting people under a shared cosmology which negates differences and establishes solidarity as Durkheim once believed (Weiner 1992: 101). Instead, what is shared talks about the deeper truth of what is not equally shared, about difference that establishes debts and domains of authority and reminds us that everything is not equally possible or impossible. We may now concur with Bataille (1998) claiming that the sacred retains rather than negates difference through destruction, spending of resources, violence, sacrifice and above all, as Weiner (1992) so uniquely demonstrated, through the keeping of inalienable possessions.

PART III:

**REHEARSING INEQUALITY
IN EARLY BRONZE AGE MOCHLOS**

Chapter 8

A rough guide to the archaeology of Mochlos

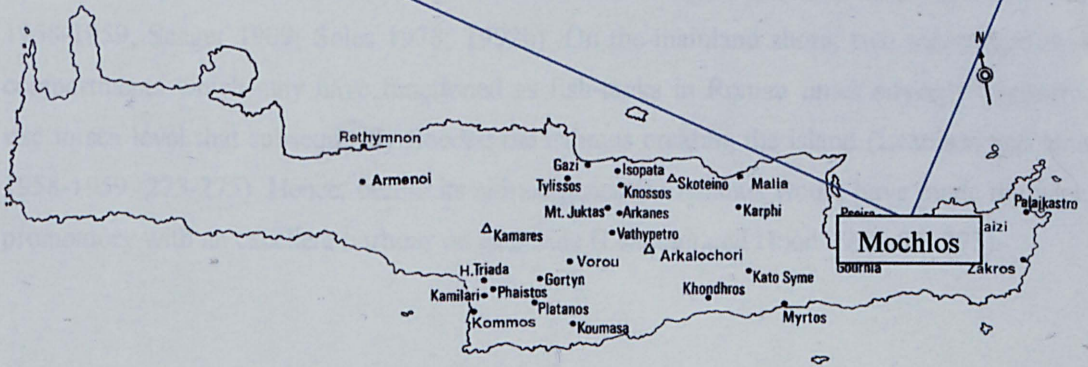
This sleepy seaside village has a few rooms, a hotel or two and a number of tavernas – To Bogazi is good – squatting along its tiny harbour; if you find yourself needing a place to stay, you could try the rooms at the clean and simple Pension Hermes behind the waterfront, which are the cheapest in the village, or there's Hotel Sofia on the harbour itself for a bit more en-suite luxury (The Rough Guide To Greece 2002: 706).

Introduction

In this chapter I introduce the reader to my chosen case study, the site of Mochlos in eastern Crete. Appearances can be deceptive and this is more than true in the case of the now modest fishing village of Mochlos. In Mochlos, the tourist boom experienced on the rest of Crete is still yet only a vague blip on the radar of local tavernas. While the village struggles to attract attention from outside today, it was not always this way. Mochlos has been the stage for the enactment of Cretan history for millennia. Prehistoric populations, Romans, Byzantines, all have left their mark here. What follows is a rough guide of Mochlos' location and topography, archaeological expeditions, history of habitation and Early Bronze Age archaeology, which aims to give a feel for the place and its once glittering presence in Cretan history.

Location and topography

Mochlos lies west of Siteia and east of the Gulf of Mirabello on the coast of northeastern Crete (Plate 6). It is one of the few parts of the coast accessible in this region, but only after travelling about 6km down one of two recently paved roads. The easiest entrance is from Sfaka 30 km from Siteia and 40 km from Aghios Nikolaos on the main road. Mochlos is situated on a low plain that stretches about 4 to 5 km along the coast (Soles 1983). The plain is now occupied mostly by olive trees and grape vines (Plate 7a). The modern village belongs to the jurisdiction of Siteia and has gained some popularity among holiday makers due to its small fish *tavernas* and picturesque scenery which is further complemented by many small fishing boats anchored in lines on the coast. Geographically Mochlos is isolated from the interior of Crete by the Ornos Mountains that encircle the plain to its west, east and south. To the west of the village, carved into the slopes are the nearby villages of Lastros, Sfaka, Tourloti and Myrsini. To the north the plain of Mochlos faces the Cretan Sea (Kretiko



Postcard showing taverna in modern village of Mochlos (adapted from postcard by Editions: K. Mantzios). Map of Crete (adapted from Marinatos 1993: 3, Fig. 2).

Pelagos). At some 150 metres off the coast lies a small barren island that rises to a height of about 45 meters (Plate 7b). It is this islet which comprises the majority of 'ancient' Mochlos (Plate 8a).

The islet covers an area of about 250 by 300 metres (Soles 1992b) and is basically 'a mass of limestone' of a roughly circular shape (Seager 1909: 274) covered by clumps of bushes (Plate 8b). There is some misunderstanding around its actual name (Zois 1973: 98); some call it Mochlo or Mouflo, a name that most correctly belongs to the mainland shore opposite the islet. However, others call it *Psyllo* (Flea), a name given as if corresponding to the nearby larger island of *Pseira* (louse). The latter name, which is quite popular among the natives of eastern Crete, stems from a confusion regarding the spelling¹ of the name of the larger island (Zois 1973: 98). In fact the official name of the islet of Mochlos is Aghios Nikolaos after the name of the small chapel which stands on its south shore.

Today settlement is restricted to the coastal plain of the Cretan mainland since the islet lacks a natural source of water and vegetation but boatmen ferry visitors – mostly during the summer season – to its south shore. It is from this side that the island slopes down more gently into the sea and becomes accessible. On the west, east and especially the north side, however, the island is characterised by abrupt forbidding cliffs (Seager 1909; Soles 1978). Archaeological concentrations are extant both on the islet of Aghios Nikolaos as well the immediately adjacent shoreline of Crete. It is worth mentioning here that in antiquity the sea levels were most likely lower than today so the islet may have been linked to the mainland by a narrow strip of land, now submerged some 2 metres below sea level (Leatham and Hood 1958-1959; Seager 1909; Soles 1978; 1992b). On the mainland shore, two submerged rock-compartments which may have functioned as fish-tanks in Roman times strongly suggests a rise in sea level that subsequently flooded the isthmus creating the island (Leatham and Hood 1958-1959: 273-275). Hence, before its submergence the isthmus would have made the islet a promontory with an excellent harbour on each side (Leatham and Hood 1958-59: 273).

History of research

Archaeological inquiry on Mochlos goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century. The site was brought to the attention of Aegean archaeologists by the American amateur archaeologist Richard Berry Seager in the summer of 1907. Seager² was working in an American archaeological expedition at the nearby island of Pseira when a Turkish boatman

¹ According to Zois (1973: 98), the correct spelling of the name of the larger island is not Pseira (louse) but Psyra. Psyra is an unspecified fish species.

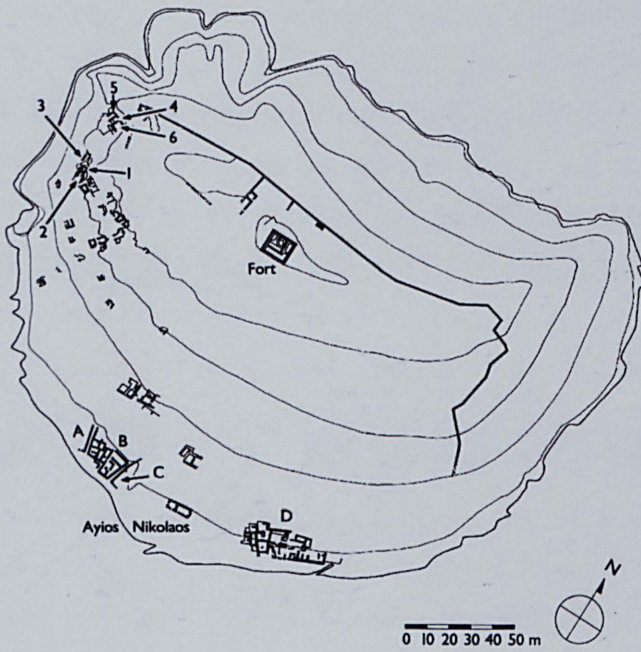
² Seager worked in a series of archaeological excavations in eastern Crete; at Gournia, Sphoungaras, Vasiliki, Pseira, Mochlos, Pachyammos, Vrocastro and Pryniatikos Pyrgos (Becker and Betancourt 1997; Kenna 1970).



a) The area of Mochlos: view from Myrsini – Galana Charakia (source: courtesy of Georgios Vavouranakis).



b) View of the islet of Mochlos as seen from the modern village (source: courtesy of Georgios Vavouranakis).



a) Map of the islet showing the early cemetery and settlement remains (source: Soles 1992b: 186, Fig. 25.1).



b) Aerial view of the islet (source Soles 1992b:187, Fig. 25.2).

informed him about the existence of *ancient walls* on the islet of Mochlos (Aghios Nikolaos) three miles further east. At the end of the 1907 excavation season at Pseira, Seager crossed to Mochlos with around 20 workers for a 3 day exploration. After 2 days of trial excavation Seager decided to postpone further investigation until the following year because of the intense heat. However, the quality of finds uncovered during this time strongly convinced him of the promising archaeology on the island and its worth for a larger scale excavation. Systematic excavations started on April 13, 1908 under the aegis of the American School at Athens and with financial support from the American School, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and Seager himself (Seager 1909: 273; Becker and Betancourt 1997: 86). Directed by Seager the excavation season lasted until June 20th after which Seager considered the prospect of a second season of excavations unnecessary (Seager 1909: 273). During this single excavation campaign Seager's 120 man crew uncovered a prepalatial cemetery on the western part of the islet, remains of a prepalatial settlement on its south seashore, parts of a neopalatial settlement as well as various remains belonging to Mycenaean, Roman and Byzantine times. Seager's excavations on Mochlos resulted in two publications. The first was a paper that appeared in 1909 in the *AJA*³ and included a brief account of the finds from the settlement. The second followed three years later, in 1912, titled *Explorations in the island of Mochlos*, a now classic book – for any scholar interested in prepalatial Mochlos. This document contained the excavator's more detailed account of the prepalatial cemetery.

There can be no doubt of Seager's contribution to Minoan archaeology in general and the archaeology of eastern Crete in particular. In an era, when archaeological attention was caught by central Crete's impressive palatial discoveries, Richard Seager was among the first pioneers in asserting not only the archaeological significance of eastern Crete but also in taking an active interest in the period before the palaces, i.e. the Early Bronze Age (cf. Becker and Betancourt 1997: 190-191). Yet, as far as Seager's research on Mochlos is concerned there were certain inevitable shortcomings. Firstly, he worked without the benefit of modern scientific methods. Moreover, Seager was above all, as Becker and Betancourt (1997: 191: xi) remark, a wealthy collector-excavator who was more fascinated with artefacts and pottery. While he was quite careful in cataloguing and describing these categories of data, he paid very little attention to the collection and publishing of bones and seeds, and his descriptions of architecture were not always highly informative (cf. Becker and Betancourt 1997; Soles 1978: 5, 1992a: 41; Zois 1973: 100).

For several decades, after Seager, Mochlos' archaeology was almost forgotten and its architectural remains were left unprotected to wild vegetation and the vagaries of weather conditions (Zois 1973: 100). Subsequent research was carried out almost 50 years after

³ *AJA* = *American Journal of Archaeology*.

Seager's visit to Mochlos by the Greek archaeologist Nikolaos Platon (see 1954, 1959). Platon carried out a series of rescue excavations in the wider area of the Mochlos basin. Additionally, in 1955, the British scholars John Leatham and Sinclair Hood (1958/1959) conducted sub-marine investigation along the coast between the island and the mainland shore in order to check whether, as Seager (1909) had proposed, these were actually joined by a narrow isthmus during antiquity. The site became the focus of more systematic investigations in the 70s through the initiative of a joint Greek-American project under the direction of Costis Davaras and Jeffrey Soles. The Mochlos Excavation Project has conducted numerous cleaning and consolidation operations as well as excavation projects on the islet of Mochlos and its adjacent coastal plain. Several specialists in different disciplines have been employed to contribute to our knowledge of various aspects of Mochliote prehistory including geology, fauna, vegetation, skeletal remains and stone tools. The project is still in progress and has considerably widened our knowledge of the archaeology of Mochlos (see Davaras 1972, 1976; Soles 1978, 1992a; Soles and Davaras 1992, 1994, 1996). Recently, the first two volumes of the final report have been made available. Another contributor to the archaeology of the wider area is Nikos Papadakis who undertook several rescue operations and excavations of tombs at Mochlos basin and the nearby villages (see Papadakis 1984, 1986).

History of ancient habitation at Mochlos

The site appears to have been first settled in the Final Neolithic. Evidence for such an early occupation has been traced to the islet of Aghios Nikolaos and comes from two ceramic deposits on the west and south slopes of the islet respectively. Both were uncovered by Seager (1909, 1912); the former under the foundation of EM tomb V on the northwest part of the cemetery area, the latter under EM settlement remains to the west of the chapel, in what Seager calls Block A. The deposits⁴ produced a small number⁵ of more or less complete finds, chiefly clay ladles, goblets, a couple of vessels of unspecified function, and a clay enigmatic object, as well as large amounts of fragmentary pottery remains (parts of clay ladles and large plates). Seager characterised the deposit of the west slope as votive. This interpretation was

⁴ The deposit beneath tomb V yielded clay ladles, vases, small cups, two strange objects (clay rings), a tiny dish and a clay enigmatic object. Additionally, a tiny piece of metal (bronze or copper) was found inside one of the black ware vases (no. 32). The other deposit produced mainly clay goblets, ladles and large shallow plates. (Seager 1909: 279, 1912: 82 and 93). See also note 5. A terracotta clay boat discovered at Block D is confusingly dated by Seager as EMI in the fig. 1 (2) of his 1909 (p: 279) publication and as EMII some pages below in the same publication (1909: 290). If the clay boat belongs to what Seager believes to be EMI, then it might be actually Final Neolithic, given that Seager's EMI objects have been proved to be Final Neolithic.

⁵ Unfortunately, I am not able to offer the exact number of these finds, since as Zois (1973: 101) remarks, Seager published only 14 vessels (probably those that were more or less complete and the ones that were easy to restore) and gave no information about the lack of the pottery fragments.

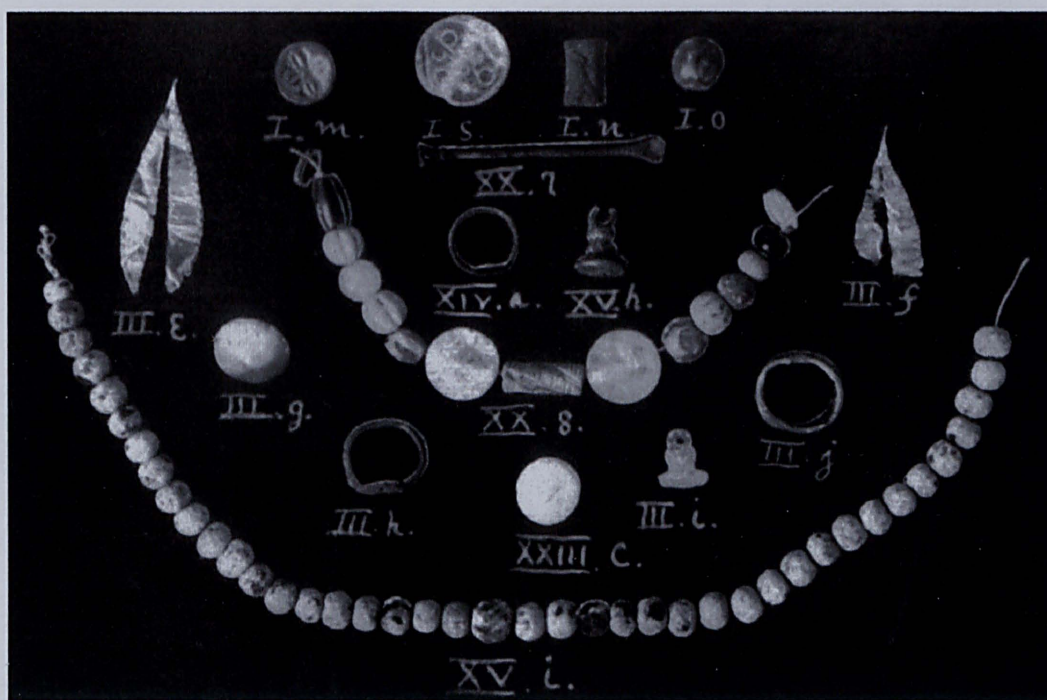
based on the presence of a large pottery deposit on the very edge of the cliffs, a place unsuitable for dwelling, as well as on the clay enigmatic object. The latter was assumed to have a cultic character since it seemed to be an early example of *Horns of consecration*. Seager also postulated a possible connection with funerary ceremonies, despite the fact that no burials of this period were found (Seager 1912: 93). Although Seager originally dated the deposits to the EMI phase, more recent scholarship has assigned to them, fairly convincingly, a Final Neolithic date (see Vagnetti and Belli 1978: 137; Zois 1973: 104). The first settlers were believed to have arrived at Mochlos from larger Cretan settlements like Knossos and Phaistos due to the overcrowding of the latter sites or simply in the search of cultivable land (Seager 1912: 94). After this occupation, which seems to have been limited in extent, the absence at Mochlos of EMI wares, like Pyrgos burnished ware and painted wares that succeed the Neolithic ceramic sequence, has been taken to suggest a hiatus in the habitation of the site (Soles 1978; Soles and Davaras 1992).

The major occupation of Mochlos starts at the beginning of the EMII, a period that according to some scholars coincided with a large wave of migration from central into eastern Crete and the subsequent foundation of new settlements (Soles 1988: 60; Soles and Davaras 1992: 417; Warren 1972: 268). During this phase, a substantial settlement was built along the south coast of the islet and an extensive cemetery was founded on its west slopes (Plate 9a). Considering its well-watered and fertile plain, nearby marine resources, excellent harbours – both on the islet and the mainland shore – along with the geology and physical characteristics of the islet, it seems that Mochlos was wisely chosen by its prehistoric inhabitants (Soles 1978: 6-7; Soles and Davaras 1992: 417; Zois 1973: 101). More precisely, the islet itself was rich in a chlorite schist resource, which would have provided raw material for the production of stone vases. Moreover, the islet's summit provided a useful lookout for potential attackers, while at the same time obscuring the settlement on the South Slope from passing ships sailing along the coast to the north (Soles 1978: 7). The span of some 600-800 years from EMII to EMIII has been considered the most significant and prolific period in the history of Mochlos (Soles and Davaras 1992). During this period, Mochliotes mastered the crafts of jewellery (Plate 9b) and stone vase production and obtained exotic raw materials, like gold, silver, tin, ivory and obsidian, from afar. The presence of these exotic raw materials have led some scholars to suggest that Mochliotes were skilful traders and seafarers who may have voyaged as far as Anatolia (Soles 1978). According to Whitelaw (1983), the period saw the community grow large with the population numbering around 330 people.

The EMII–EMIII period of prosperity was followed by an apparent hiatus in settlement between the end of the Prepalatial throughout Protopalatial times (MMIA–MMII). According to Seager (1909: 275), Mochlos appears to have suffered a major destruction in MMIA. Yet, Seager does not offer any detailed information on the issue. The evidence for MMIA–MMII



a) Picture of the islet of Aghios Nikolaos showing the prepalatial cemetery (source: courtesy of Georgios Vavouranakis).

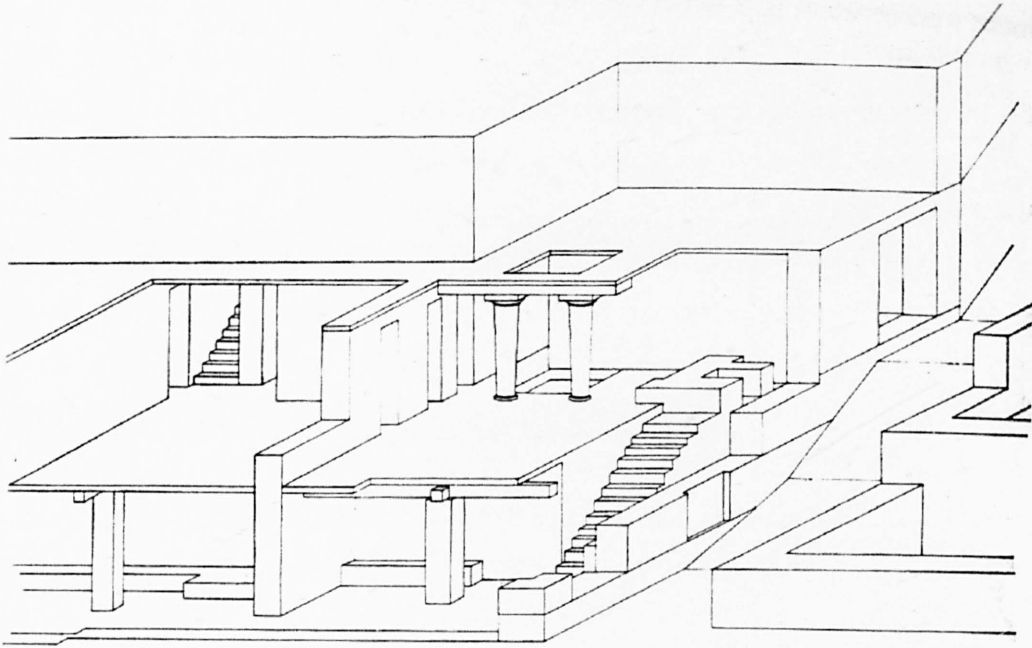


a) Jewellery unearthed from the early cemetery of Mochlos (source: Seager 1912, Fig. 36).

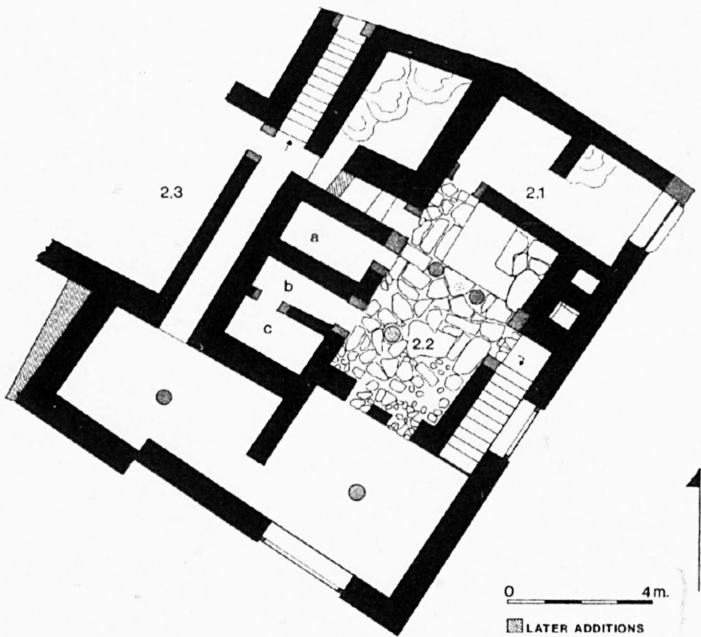
habitation on the islet is sparse. More specifically, apart from tomb A, the rest of the prepalatial cemetery goes out of use, while the only evidence of occupation from the settlement area, on the south slope of the islet, is confined to a few ceramic deposits. At the same time, this hiatus of occupation appears to coincide with the establishment of tholos tombs at Galana Charakia some 3 km to the east of Mochlos. Since the shape and the constructional details of these tombs point to a southern Cretan tradition, Soles and Davaras (1992) have asserted that the tombs were built by newcomers from the Mesara in south Crete where tholos tombs were popular.

The next significant occupation of Mochlos dates to the beginning of the Neopalatial period when a settlement was built on the south side of the islet atop the prepalatial settlement. The Neopalatial (MMIII–LMIB) town consisted of four blocks of houses (A, B, C, D) and was provided with streets paved with large stone slabs and cobblestones (Soles 1978: 11, 1992b: 192). A substantial rectangular two-storey building (House D) was unearthed by Seager (1909) at the eastern part of the slope in Block D. House D had two wings and featured architectural details, like a triple doorway, plastered floors, ashlar facades on its street sides and wooden pillars. In Seager's view, these elements appeared to reflect a palatial architectural influence and they were employed in this provincial context in order to bestow elegance and a veneer of grandeur. The elegance of House D with its palatial Knossian fashion were believed to imply that the building was probably the residence of the Mochlos governor or of a rich merchant (Seager 1909: 299). A further large LMI house (Building B.2) with monumental ashlar facades and pillar crypts standing above Block B was discovered in 1991 by Soles and Davaras (Plate 10). This building has yielded evidence for administration (seals), storage (storage areas) and ceremonial performances (columnar room, pillar crypts) that seem to suggest its function as the main administrative and/or religious centre of the LMIB town (Soles and Davaras 1994: 396, 1996). Additionally the neopalatial dwellers of Mochlos reused the burial grounds of the prepalatial cemetery. Apart from reusing some EM tombs they also made interments in the ground and introduced a new burial tradition, namely, pithos burials. Crucially, the fact that these pithos burials were intended for children⁶, seems to imply that the main neopalatial cemetery of Mochlos has not yet been discovered (Soles 1978: 13). Neopalatial habitation has also been traced on the Cretan coastal plain opposite the islet as well as in nearby sites, like Chalinomouri at the eastern end of the plain (Soles and Davaras 1992: 418). More specifically, traces of industrial activity, specialising in bronzeworking and clay and stone vase production, have been revealed on the Cretan coast behind the modern village (Soles 1992b: 192). Furthermore, a sandstone quarry located on the

⁶ The interpretation of pithos burials as children burials has been proposed by Seager (1912: 88). According to him, the small size of the burial jars, as well as the scarcity of osteological evidence implied burials of very young children whose bones are softer and thus more difficult to preserve.



a) Restored view of first and second floors in east wing of Building B.2 (source: Soles and Davaras 1996: 188, Fig. 8).



b) Building B.2, plan of second floor in east wing (source: Soles and Davaras 1996: 187, Fig. 7).

coastal plain, some 200 metres to the east of the modern village, seems to have been worked intensively since the Neopalatial period. The quarried stone was used as building material in the walls of the LBA houses of Mochlos but it is quite likely that the quarry did not serve just the needs of the local community. It has been suggested that the opening of the Mochlos quarry in the Neopalatial times coincided chronologically with the remodeling of the palace at Gournia and that the latter was the main recipient of the stone quarried at Mochlos (Soles 1983: 43). At some point at the end of the LMIB period, Mochlos suffered a major destruction by fire and was abandoned. It appears that many of the inhabitants were unable to escape and perished with their houses (Seager 1909; Soles 1999). The original excavator reported human bones badly charred in a number of places in House D as well as in other neopalatial houses to the west of the chapel of Aghios Nikolaos. Seager (1909: 301) has suggested that the destruction was probably the outcome of a violent attack from invaders. More recent accounts, however, attribute the LMIB destruction and break in occupation to the eruption of the volcano on the Cycladic island of Thera that lies some 130 km to the north of Mochlos (Soles 1978: 14).

After a major break in habitation, the site was occupied again at some point in the Mycenaean period (Postpalatial). That said, as evidence for the postpalatial (LMIII) occupation on the islet has come solely from an isolated house, it is difficult to speak about a proper resettlement (Seager 1909: 275). On the other hand, a more significant settlement was established a safe distance from the coast in the hills at the eastern end of the Mochlos plain (Soles 1978: 14). One may also note the discovery of a number of LMIII chamber tombs on the Cretan shore opposite the islet and at Aspropilia, Keratidi and Plakalona, about 3 km to the east of the plain (Papadakis 1986; Soles and Davaras 1992: 418). One may assume that habitation during this period was sought at some distance from the shore for purposes of protection. The Mycenaean period was followed by a long period of abandonment which eventually saw the establishment of a small settlement late in the Geometric times. Again the main concern of the dwellers seems to have been protection from invaders coming from the sea, so the Geometric settlement was built on the summit of a mountain at the eastern edge of the Mochlos plain at Lenika (Soles and Davaras 1992: 418).

Traces of Late Hellenistic habitation are represented by a long, one-story building consisting of eight rooms (Hellenistic Building I) and a fort, both located on the south slope of the islet of Aghios Nikolaos. The former structure was originally identified as Early Byzantine (Soles and Davaras 1994) but further research proved it to be of a Late Hellenistic date (Soles and Davaras 1996). Hellenistic Building I produced pottery of the late second and early first centuries B.C., stone tools, a spindle whorl and two beam presses. According to the excavators, the building appears to have had significant industrial functions, possibly olive and textile production (Soles and Davaras 1996: 225-226). At the area above Hellenistic

Building I lies the Hellenistic Fort. It consisted of two groups of rooms, a series of bastions and a continuous wall. As Soles and Davaras (1996: 227) note, the fort may have been established by the Ptolemies for their operations in eastern Crete and the Aegean.

In Roman times, a substantial settlement occupied the south slope of Aghios Nikolaos. The Roman town was probably also extended opposite the islet on the Cretan shore. Roman activity on the mainland is further supported by the discovery of fish tanks for the storage of live fish found opposite the islet (Leatham and Hood 1958-1959). Moreover, numbers of Roman coins have come to light from both the islet and the Cretan shore (Soles and Davaras 1992: 419). Another Roman settlement has been reported at the eastern end of the plain of Mochlos (Soles 1978: 15).

Finally, in the Byzantine period, traces of two small hamlets have been found along the south coast of Aghios Nikolaos and opposite the island on the Cretan mainland at Loutres (Soles and Davaras 1992: 419). During this time, a large fortress with towers were erected on the summit of the islet, apparently for the protection of the population from the raids of Saracen pirates (Seager 1909: 275-276).

Today, archaeological finds from Mochlos are exhibited in various museums throughout Crete (Herakleion Museum, Siteia Museum, Aghios Nikolaos Museum), the United States (University Museum, University of Pennsylvania; New York Metropolitan Museum; Boston Museum of Fine Arts) as well as in Britain (British Museum) (see Becker and Betancourt 1997; Kenna 1972; Soles 1992b).

Visiting the Prepalatial settlement and cemetery

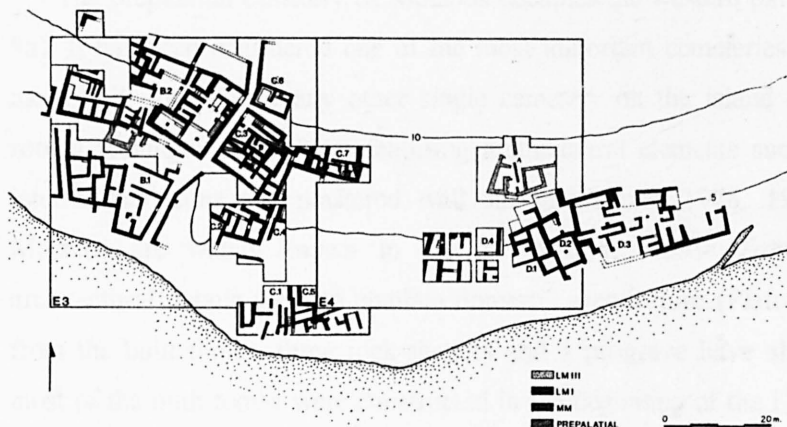
Our knowledge of the prepalatial settlement of Mochlos is extremely limited. From what is now known and published, the settlement probably stretched around 150 metres from east to west along the south shore of the islet and over 50 metres to the north up the South Slope (Soles 1978). Furthermore, the discovery of EMII pottery along with traces of walls on the submerged isthmus adjacent to the south coast seems to suggest that the early settlement stretched in this direction as well (Branigan 1991a; Leatham and Hood 1958-1959; Soles 1978). According to a tentative estimate, the settlement occupied an area of at least 0.8 hectares, that is ten times the area of Myrtos, and consisted of around 55 houses (Whitelaw 1983: 338-339 and fig. 72F). However, for Soles and Davaras (1992: 424-426 and n. 30), a more modest estimate of 30 families might be more appropriate given our incomplete knowledge of the north-south extent of the settlement and its density of habitation.

Prepalatial settlement remains from Mochlos are quite scant (Plate 11a). Consequently, the exact plan and density of the prepalatial settlement may never be reconstructed in any detail. Unfortunately, Seager (1909) produced no plan of the settlement and was extremely

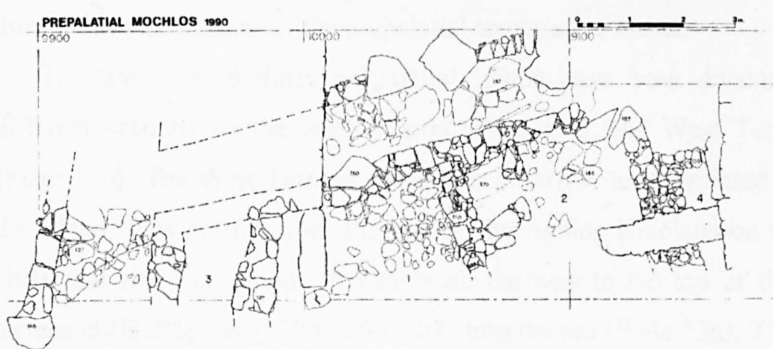
brief in his description of the prepalatial settlement remains he uncovered in Blocks A, C and D. In Block A, Seager uncovered a number of small rooms that yielded EMII and III pottery deposits. Yet, apart from commenting that the rooms had poorly built walls which probably served both the EMII and III periods – since there was no evidence of apparent rebuilding between the periods – he offered no further information about their architectural details. At Block C, Seager documented an EMIII deposit consisting of twenty vases. Finally at Block D, EMII and III pottery fragments were reported under two LMI houses. Again Seager provided no information regarding whether any prepalatial architectural remains were traced in this area and confined his description of the finds to the single stone vase of green soapstone uncovered from an EMII layer under one of the later houses.

More recent investigations conducted by the Mochlos Project have reported three EM structures (Soles and Davaras 1992: 426; 1994: 394-396; 1996: 178-180). The first structure (Prepalatial House 1, Plate 11b) lies at water's edge under two LMI houses (C.1 and C.5) in the area designated by Soles and Davaras as F3 (Seager's Block C). The building was in a poor state of preservation especially along its west and east sides where it was overlain by later structures, and along its south side where beach erosion had exacted its toll. Although only three rooms of the house have so far been unearthed, the excavators note that its actual size might have been much larger. The building produced EMII and III pottery chiefly of dark-brown burnished ware and eighteen stone tools, including fishing weights, hammer stones and obsidian blades. The second structure (Prepalatial House 2, Plate 11c) is located beneath Block B in area E3. Unfortunately, only a few walls and parts of three rooms have been found. Finds included numerous stone tools and EMII pottery. Additionally, a deposit containing EMI to EMII B pottery was found outside the west wall of the building. The deposit might have originally belonged to another room in the house which did not survive. According to the excavators, the building was originally constructed probably late in EMI and remained in use throughout the EMII A and II B periods. The third structure (Prepalatial House 3) was also uncovered in the Area E3. It is located to the north of the Prepalatial House 1 beneath an alley that runs alongside a LM house (C.3). Prepalatial House 3 seems to have been of superior construction compared to the other prepalatial buildings discovered so far at Mochlos. It is a large rectangular structure with massive, carefully built walls that could have supported a second story. According to Soles and Davaras, the large size and the fine workmanship of the building along with the large amount of EMIII pottery it produced might imply a distinct function.

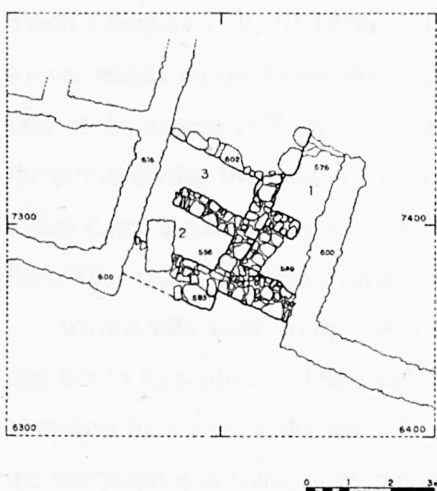
Notwithstanding these new and interesting settlement finds, the task of reconstructing the prepalatial settlement plan is hindered by the fact that many later structures cut into EM levels to the bedrock destroying much of its character (Soles and Davaras: 1996: 178). With



a) Plan of the Bronze Age settlement remains (source: Soles and Davaras 1996, Fig. 1).



b) Plan of Prepalatial House 1 (source: Soles and Davaras 1994: 395, Fig. 3).



c) Plan of Prepalatial House 2 (source: Soles and Davaras 1996: 179, Fig. 3).

publication of the latest settlement evidence still pending, it is towards the early cemetery that we must turn therefore, in order to resurrect something of social life at prepalatial Mochlos.

The prepalatial cemetery of Mochlos occupies the western part of Aghios Nikolaos (Plate 9a). It has been considered one of the most important cemeteries on Crete, since it contains more built tombs than any other single cemetery on the island (Soles 1992a). These were roofed rectangular structures featuring architectural elements such as thresholds, doorways, internal partitions and plastered wall surfaces (Soles 1978, 1992a). The built tombs of Mochlos are widely known in the literature as *House Tombs*⁷ since their form and architectural details seem to emulate domestic architecture (Plate 12a) (Soles 1992a). Apart from the built tombs, three rock-shelters and a pit-grave have also been detected. Although most of the built tombs were constructed in the beginning of the EMII phase and continued in use in EMIII, there are certain examples that survived in the MMIA phase. After a significant hiatus in its use, the prepalatial cemetery was employed by the neopalatial dwellers of Mochlos as a burial ground for children who were interred in pithos burials. Additionally during this period some of the prepalatial tombs were reused.

To date, around thirty prepalatial tombs have been documented. They occur in two different sections on the western side of the islet; the West Terrace and the South Slope⁸ (Plate 12b). The West Terrace constitutes a narrow ledge isolated on the westernmost face of the island. It is cut off from the rest of the Aghios Nikolaos on the north and east by sheer cliffs that rise from about 15 metres all the way to the top of the islet. To the west of the terrace cliffs drop away 20 to 25 metres into the sea (Plate 13a). The only access to the terrace is along a narrow 3 metre wide ledge on the south side. From this point the terrace slopes upward and runs about 45 metres to its north end. Here are located two large tomb complexes; Tomb Complex I, II, III (Plate 13b and c) and Tomb Complex IV, V, VI (Plate 14). The former stands on the lower, more southern, part of the West Terrace and is built against the face of the eastern cliff wall. It is open on the west side where a narrow pathway hanging on the terraced edge bypasses the tomb. The latter occupies the upper, north end of the terrace which forms a roughly triangular space enclosed on the east and north by the cliffs that define the terrace and on the west by the drop to the sea.

Anyone who wants to approach the West Terrace must pass first through the South Slope that lies to its southeast. The South Slope is defined to the northeast by a low cliff and on the northwest by a drop in the islet's bedrock that goes down to the level of the West Terrace. To the southwest it is bounded by the sea. The South Slope contains the vast majority of tombs.

⁷ Examples of *House Tombs*, though more common in eastern Crete, have been also found in central and south Crete (Soles 1992a).

⁸ Here, following Soles (1992a), I will be using the name South Slope to refer to both the area excavated by Seager and called by him Main Slope and to the adjacent area to the east where further tombs were uncovered by Soles and Davaras.



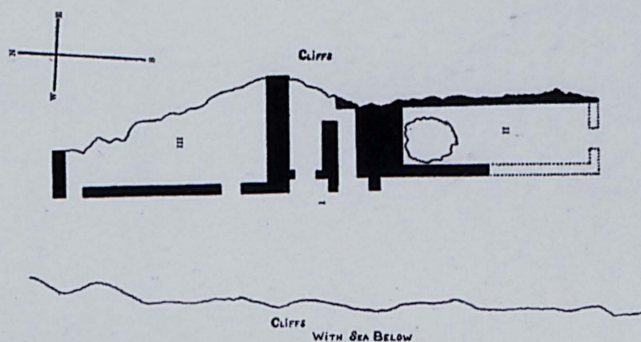
a) House tomb V showing threshold, doorway and internal partitions (Seager 1912, Fig 17).



b) Prepalatial cemetery showing West Terrace (shaded grey) and South Slope (source: Soles 1992a, Plan 3).



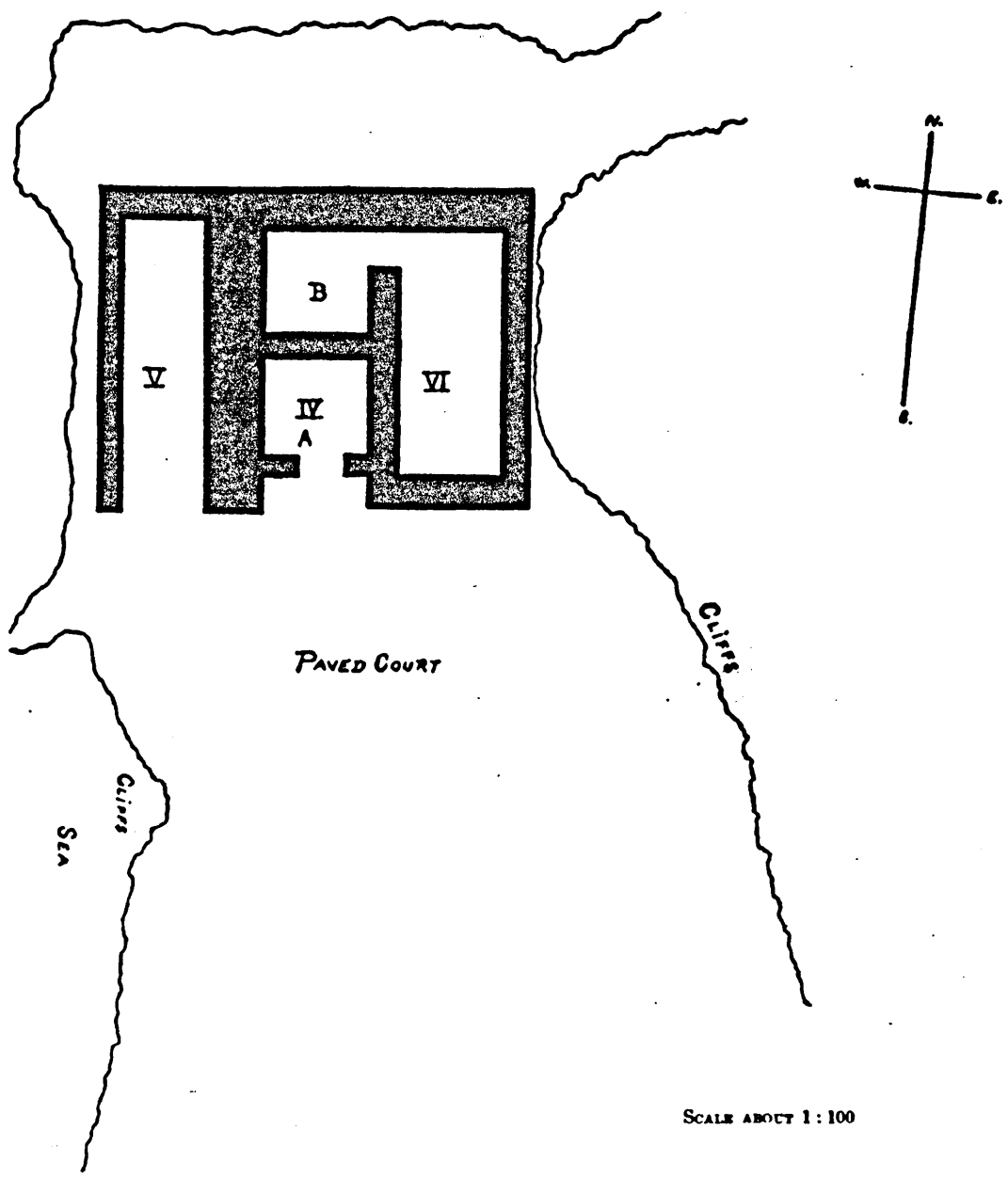
a) Cemetery on West Terrace high above the Aegean (source: Soles 1992b: 189, Fig. 25.5).



b) Plan of tomb complex I, II, III located on the West Terrace (source: Seager 1912: 19, Fig. 3)



c) Computer reconstruction of tomb complex I, II, II (source: courtesy of Georgios Vavouranakis)



Plan of tomb complex IV, V, VI (Source: Seager 1912: 41, Fig. 15).

Seager (1912: 13 and 15) reported seventeen small tombs⁹ in the western part (Main Slope) of this area. However, he postulated that, given the steep declivity of the area, which would have made extreme the process of denudation, the original number of tombs must have been double. Most recent investigations by Soles and Davaras have brought into light further tombs¹⁰ to the east of the area (Main Slope) excavated by Seager. Most of the South Slope tombs were built on semi-artificial, semi-natural terraces that ran from east to west across the slope. Starting close to the water's edge (Plate 15a) the terraces rose one above the other towards the top of the South Slope. The uppermost terrace is the only complete remaining example, however, partial remains of terraces evident below, as well as natural contours, suggest that there may have been as many as seven. Tombs were built backing onto the wall of the next terrace behind and were accessed by passage that ran along the outer edge of the terrace (Seager 1912; Soles 1978, 1992a).

Finally, it is worth mentioning two interesting structures, namely Building N and Building Ξ discovered by the Mochlos Project (Soles and Davaras 1992: 424). Both structures are located at the southernmost part of the cemetery and bear unusual features which according to Soles and Davaras might imply a function other than funerary. Building N is a small rectangular structure that produced a large deposit of obsidian cores and blades. As the excavators remark, it is not clear why the obsidian deposit was placed in this building in the context of the cemetery. The second structure, Building Ξ , was provided with a four-step staircase leading from the threshold at the south-west corner down into the building (Plate 15b). In the excavators' view, the large amount of fragmentary dark-burnished plates retrieved from the structure might suggest its use as a storage area for offerings made in the cemetery.

⁹ Tombs VII-XXIII.

¹⁰ Tombs Z, H, Θ , I, K, Λ and M. Apart from these tombs that lie on the east of the area excavated by Seager, the Mochlos Project cleaned and described further tombs (A, B, Γ , Δ and E) in the area (Main Slope) excavated by Seager. These tombs seem to have been uncovered originally by Seager, though none had been numbered or described in Seager's publication of the cemetery (Soles 1992a; Soles and Davaras 1992).



a) South Slope Terrace 7, view from the east (source: Soles 1992a, Plate 24.a).



b) Building E on the South Slope (source: courtesy of Georgios Vavouranakis).

Chapter 9

Mochlos interpreted: Set adrift on a sea of stories

Introduction

The archaeological site of Mochlos may not attract the enormous crowds of culture vultures that visit the palatial sites of Knossos, Malia, Phaistos and Zakros, still it has come to rank amongst the most important and controversial Early Bronze Age sites of Crete. For many experts, the exceptionally rich finds retrieved from the cemetery imply the original emergence of social inequalities on the island, one that may shed light on the processes that eventually brought into being the palatial systems of power in Middle and Late Minoan periods (see for example, Branigan 1991a; Soles 1988; Soles and Davaras 1992; Whitelaw 1983). On this score, Mochlos has come to be portrayed as an evolutionary stepping-stone towards the supposedly more advanced and rigid palatial structures of inequality. Be that as it may, there is also a counter premise that sees Mochlos more along the lines of the revolutionary perception regarding the historical emergence of inequalities on Crete. For example, Watrous (1994) and Cherry (1983, 1984) have debated Mochlos' interpretation as a 'rank' society and stress that the splendour of its finds is not strong enough evidence of the presence of ruling elites in the EBA. Stated simply, the existence or absence of inequalities at Mochlos during these times, can be seen as an apple of discord between those who accept an early emergence of social ranking and those who assign to it a palatial date.

In this chapter I want to explore current interpretations of social inequalities during the EBA of Mochlos, as well as the role and significance of the site as part of the evolutionary paradigm of power in the Aegean. As I try to demonstrate, despite its central place in debates of the *emergence*, Mochlos somehow occupies an anomalous position, since it eludes the anticipations of the evolutionary model of social change. That is, despite its characterisation as one of the richest EBA sites of Crete, it never became a palatial centre of power, as the evolutionary paradigm of the relationship between wealth and inequalities would have us expect. Having said this, one should not take Mochlos' status as a *null case* within the evolutionary paradigm as an indication of a society where 'normal' development was arrested by some strange malady (Clastres 1989 [1977]). Power inequalities in EBA Mochlos were neither less significant nor less rigid than those assumed for the subsequent palatial societies (Damilati and Vavouranakis forthcoming).

The significance of prepalatial Mochlos in Cretan *prehistory*: An overview of current insights.

Towards the end of the season we found the early cemetery which was a very rich one quite the best I should say that has been found so far in Crete. ... One of the largest tombs was literally filled with gold ornaments. Diadems, pins, chains, etc. You will realise the importance of this when I tell you that the graves are for the most part Early Minoan II and III (Seager, letter to Bert Hill, 14 August 1908 cited in Becker and Betancourt 1997: 88).

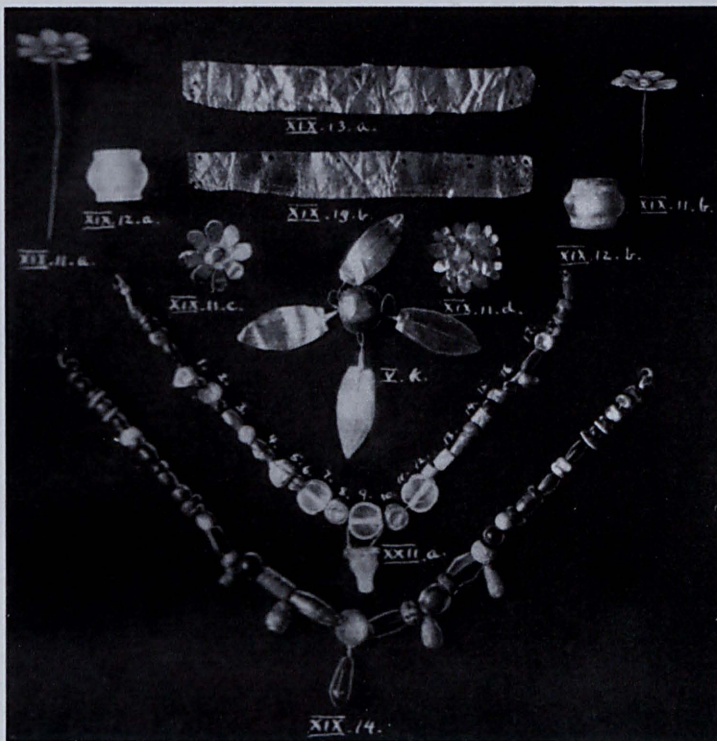
When Seager wrote this letter to his colleague Bert Hill, he could hardly contain his excitement. Seager realised that he had not just uncovered another Cretan Bronze Age site. It was located in the eastern part of the island, far away from the impressive palatial discoveries at the island's centre. The splendour of its artefacts, combined with their early dating evidence afforded a new significance to the Early Minoan period, that previously had been largely ignored. The harvest of valuable objects included stone vases that demonstrated the highest level of craftsmanship, and a considerable treasure of gold ornaments indicating an unusual level of prosperity (Plate 16). Seager's finds marked an important juncture in Aegean archaeology; the Early Minoan Age had cast off its associations with primitivism, and eastern Crete would no longer be considered a cultural backwater (Seager 1909, 1912). In addition, one of Seager's radical breaks with prior research was to suggest the existence of social inequalities as early as EMII. In his view, the large tombs on the West Terrace with their valuable objects most likely constituted the final resting place of the princely or ruling elite of EMII Mochlos (Seager 1912: 17). Seager then went on to assert that the great prosperity of EM Mochlos and its rulers had probably something to do with its excellent harbour. This would have triggered the development of Mochlos into 'a great maritime power' seafaring as far as Egypt (Seager 1912: 12-13).

Nowadays, several decades after Seager, current scholarship is of two minds regarding his abbreviated interpretation of the EM community as a ranked society. Most specifically, the existence or absence of social inequalities at prepalatial Mochlos fuels discussions which divide Aegean scholarship between those who accept an early appearance of social ranking and those who prefer to assign to it a palatial date. However, according to the more popular¹ view, Mochlos is depicted as an evolutionary stepping-stone to the palatial societies of MMIB (see Branigan 1991a; Soles 1988; Soles and Davaras 1992). For example, in Soles and Davaras's (1992: 417) opinion, Mochlos can be seen as a model site for the investigation of the cultural processes surrounding the *emergence of civilisation*. Thus, some writers assert that if we can demonstrate with some security the existence of social ranking on the island already from the EM period, we can gain some information about the rise of the palatial

¹ But see Cherry (1983, 1984) and Watrous (1994), who oppose the early appearance of social ranking at Mochlos.



a) Stone vases from the prepalatial cemetery (source: Seager 1912, Plate II).



b) Gold jewellery from the prepalatial cemetery (source: Seager 1912, Fig. 41).

institutions. In the case of Mochlos the evolutionary assumption appears to find support in the great amount of valuable objects retrieved from the West Terrace tombs of the early cemetery. These are seen to reflect unequal access to wealth and translate automatically to power and ruling elites.

Soles (1988: 60) has interpreted the emergence and nature of political power on Mochlos as the outcome of social and environmental pressures. According to him, the large-scale eastward migration from central Crete that led to the establishment of many new settlements, like Mochlos, in EMII and the inevitable conflict which resulted from the not always harmonious co-presence of different cultures may have played a key role in the emergence of EM elites. The power of the latter was most likely based on their role as managerial and organisational agents in colonising expeditions as well as on their ritual skills and knowledge for the protection of the colony.

Meanwhile, following in the footsteps of Seager, several scholars have linked the prosperity of Mochlos in EMII and III times evidenced in the valuable tomb gifts to maritime trade activity. According to Soles, for instance, the tombs of Mochlos most likely belonged to 'a small town that became prosperous by trading in the Aegean' (1992b: 186). Similarly to Branigan (1991a), the exceptional wealth of Mochlos, evidenced to a large degree by the occurrence of products made of exotic raw materials and of a small quantity of imported finished objects, indicates that the site acted both as a centre of production and as a 'gateway community'. That is, not only did it receive various goods through long distance communication and produced objects of fine quality made of either local or exotic materials but most likely controlled their movement into the wider region of eastern Crete. As Branigan notes, it seems unlikely that Mochlos would have been self-sufficient in subsistence matters; in order to acquire sufficient food supplies, the community would have to enter into exchange with other communities in the wider region and trade exotic raw materials and locally produced valuable objects for food. In Branigan's words, 'acquisition of adequate food supplies presumably hinged upon [Mochlos'] success as a gateway community' (1991a: 104). From these statements, it has proved only a short step for some Aegeanists to suggest a connection between trade and the formation of the EM political elites at Mochlos. Thus, expanding on his 'gateway' model, Branigan asserts that elite power at Mochlos rested on control of acquisition and exchange of prestige products. More recently, Whitelaw (2002) has advanced a similar argument regarding the basis of power of early elites at Mochlos. At the same time, those who write in an evolutionary-gradualist tradition submit that these early ruling elites 'played a key role' in the rise of the palaces and 'decided to a large extent the political nature' of the Minoan palatial civilisation (Soles 1988: 60). Paradoxically, despite its description as one of the richest sites on EM Crete, since it contains a larger concentration of

goldwork and other valuables than any other single cemetery on the island (Branigan 1983b, 1991a), Mochlos never saw the development of a palace complex.

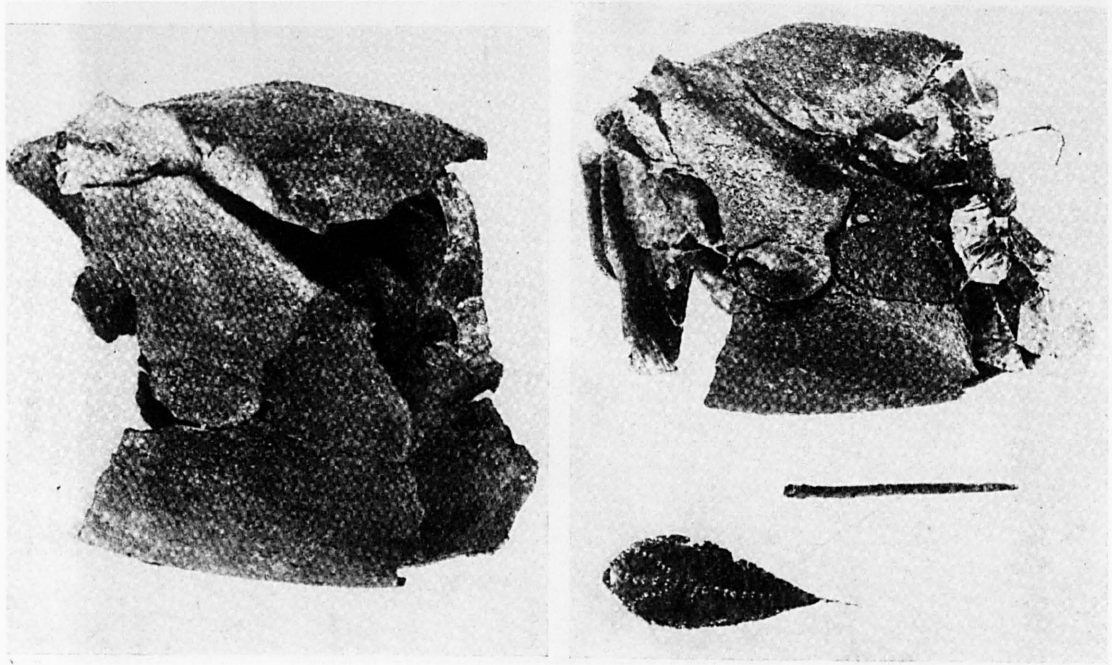
More to the point, the Mochlos assemblage of valuables is unique and does not seem to fuel regular exchange relationships outside the local community. Note here that this argument is in direct opposition to Branigan's view of Mochlos as a *gateway community* 'controlling exchange within and into and out of a region, including that to and between elites sites' (1991a: 103). However, if I read the evidence correctly, it seems to me that both finished products coming from outside Crete and artefacts locally produced (at Mochlos) but made of imported raw materials stay at Mochlos. For example, the golden jewellery from Mochlos, which provides 40% of the total for the whole of EBA Crete (see Branigan 1991a), is a unique assemblage in Crete. The neighbouring cemeteries of Gournia and Palaikastro cannot match Mochlos. The same picture is revealed for the Mesara *Tholoi* located further afield as Branigan (1983b, 1991a) himself has shown. Notably, golden diadems are quite rare outside Mochlos² and broad golden armlets, which might have been mounted on leather backings, are known only from Mochlos (see Branigan 1983b). More importantly, a quick look at the golden diadems from Mochlos suffices to demonstrate that none bears exactly the same decoration as any other³. Likewise, the silver artefacts found at Mochlos not only represent by far the largest sample on EBA Crete (see Branigan 1991a) but again bear a unique character. We may note here indicatively a ring with bezel and a small silver bowl decorated around its lower half with beading found in tombs XIV and VI respectively (see Branigan 1968). The ring differs significantly in design from silver rings retrieved from EM contexts in Amnisos and Aghios Antonios and finds only a single parallel from Krasi. The silver bowl along with a further silver vessel (Plate 17) recovered more recently by Soles also from tomb VI at Mochlos (see Davaras 1975) constitute the only silver vessels known to date from EBA Crete⁴. A similar picture is revealed through the high quality stone vases made of local materials. Again the scarcity⁵ of Mochlian examples outside Mochlos itself indicates their participation in an indigenous scheme of consumption. Moreover, is it appropriate to see the handful of assumed Mochlian stone vases found at other sites as tokens or commodities channeled through a regular economic regional network in which Mochlos played the leading role of administration? Could they not rather be heirlooms that marriage partners from

² Of the 40 diadems recorded to date, Mochlos has yielded by far the largest number (20). See Branigan (1983b).

³ I return to this point in chapter ten.

⁴ For further examples that reveal the unique character of the silver artefacts of Mochlos see Branigan (1968).

⁵ Examples of stone vases that are believed to be of Mochlian origin include a goblet from Myrtos, an alabaster jug from Vrokastro, a miniature amphora from Pseira and a handled cup from Sphoungaras (Branigan 1991a: 100).



Silver vessel recovered from tomb VI by Soles (source: Davaras 1975, Plate 17).

Mochlos might individually bring with them to their post-nuptial residence or even gifts *occasionally* given outside the local community for hospitality or for friendship?

In the light of the above remarks, we may start reconsidering Branigan's (1991a) description of Mochlos as a 'gateway' community where valuables find their way into a greater region. Equally, Whitelaw's (2002) thesis that the power of the EMII elite of Mochlos was rooted in control of the channeling of finished prestige items and raw materials south into Crete appears ill founded. Rather, an opposite tendency seems to be at work; Mochlos appears to receive a modest quantity of imported finished artefacts (two or three have been identified) and to produce valuable artefacts of a distinct local character, made of either exotic or local materials for internal consumption. Significantly, the internal consumption of valuables stresses their inalienable nature beyond the boundaries of the local community. Interestingly, the same seems to occur for other communities in central Crete, where their cemeteries reveal an emphasis upon Cycladic-like figurines, mid-rib daggers and obsidian, which is almost absent in the tombs of Mochlos. This fact seems to challenge Halstead and O'Shea's (1982) premise that inter-communal integration culminating in the palaces came about through regional exchange systems where valuable tokens circulated between different communities as currencies of a common valuation device. Simply put, exchange of valuable objects or 'tokens' does not explain the integration of local communities and the creation of the Minoan palatial system of power and authority. There seems little doubt that the grand evolutionary paradigm that has so far monopolised discussion about inequality in Aegean prehistory is currently looking a bit thin. Thus, Mochlos, which is constantly described as a wealthy ranked community that can inform us about the evolution of social inequalities that culminated in the rise of palaces, escapes the expectations of the evolutionary agenda which considers wealth as the cornerstone behind the emergence of the palatial systems of power and social integration.

It seems to me that the interesting question is not any longer how and why palatial systems of authority come about, but how and why they do not. Aegean scholarship has been largely mute regarding this issue. It is only very recently that Whitelaw (2002) alone among Aegeanists has sought an answer to the paradox that Mochlos presents for the evolutionary approach to social change. I have already discussed his model earlier in this study⁶, so I shall not go into detail but I shall repeat briefly some of his points that seem relevant to the issue. Central to Whitelaw's account is that EMII-III Mochlos was indeed a ranked community with a ruling elite whose power rested upon control of the exchange and manipulation of prestige items. Yet this source of power (exchange-based power structure) Whitelaw argues, was highly unstable and failed to trigger Mochlos' development into a palatial centre of authority. Instead Mochlos declined after the later Prepalatial times. On the other hand, sites like

⁶ Chapter four.

Knossos and Malia being situated in areas of fine agricultural potential had access to a much more effective source of power, namely agricultural surpluses that eventually enabled their development into urban-centred palace states. There may be some truth in this account. Nevertheless, I do not think that the way Whitelaw frames his scenario constitutes the best resolution of the paradox that Mochlos appears to present. His model seems to suffer the drawbacks of the evolutionary paradigm of social change. That is, although he aims to depict alternative pathways to complexity in Crete by presenting two different patterns of development, he seems to assume implicitly that Mochlos demonstrates a step backward on the evolutionary stepladder of complexity. The upper step is still reserved for the palatial state-societies. Yet, it is my contention that if palatial state-societies represent a higher level of complexity in terms of being endowed with more pervasive, effective and rigid structures and resources of power the case of EM Mochlos and its wealth may tell us a different story. We will return to this interesting issue in the closing section of this study where I will try to offer some preliminary thoughts on the concept of the state.

Having argued for an internal consumption practice for valuables at Mochlos and keeping in mind that consumption is the chapter of the objects' biography in which these cease to be neutral goods and become signifiers of interpersonal relations (Gell 1986: 113) it might be worth trying to consider their significance as active tools for the construction of identities and power relations within the *native* community. In the extant literature the valuables of Mochlos are held to be indices of wealth, high status and power; yet our understanding of how exactly they operated within the local valuation scheme is still patchy. What the EMII inhabitants of Mochlos saw in these artefacts and how these were strategically employed in the creation of debt and relational social inequalities, namely, how exactly these participated in local games of power constitutes a topic that needs closer scrutiny than it has hitherto been accorded. I shall return with some thoughts on this issue in the next chapter where I will present my understanding of the prepalatial community of Mochlos.

Reading inequality at Mochlos

Over the last decades several scholars have tackled the issue of power inequalities within the EM community at Mochlos. Whitelaw, taking his lead from the often-cited view that there is a direct correlation between the size of society and social organisation, has submitted that the substantial size of the site most likely points to 'some form of hierarchical social organisation' (1983: 339). Subsequently, Soles (1988) has proposed that we can trace a prepalatial elite (already from the EMII) in the West Terrace of the cemetery with the commoners buried in the tombs of South Slope. He notes that a large community might not

necessarily equal social ranking as Whitelaw assumes. Social ranking, according to Soles, is better demonstrated by the topographical predominance of the West Terrace tombs in the landscape but even more crucially by differences in wealth between burials with respect to grave furnishings, differences in the architectural elaboration, the size of tombs and differential treatment of the dead. Finally, Branigan (1991a) has based his interpretation of Mochlos as a ranked community largely on the criteria advocated by Soles, but does not completely rule out Whitelaw's argument regarding the correlation between population size and organisational complexity. On the other hand, Watrous (1994: 713) and Cherry (1983, 1984) have cast serious doubt on the description of Mochlos as a hierarchical society by emphasising that although the unequal distribution of grave goods at the cemetery conjures up the image of a community with wealth inequalities, there is no evidence for a political hierarchy. I shall merely bring to readers' attention that both scholars' scepticism about the existence of a Mochlite political authority appears to stem from a valid point, namely that wealth inequalities do not necessarily imply power inequalities. Yet, I believe that Mochlos' wealth informed practices that were crucially interwoven with games of political power. I return to this point in the next chapter.

For the moment I would like to part company with Watrous and Cherry and agree with the first three authors' suggestion concerning the existence of relational social inequalities at the EM community. However, I take issue with some of the criteria with which they base their premise. Moreover, I will try to show that the pattern of inequality suggested by Soles and subsequently by Branigan – as a simple polarity between elites on the West Terrace and commoners on the South Slope – is not as straightforward as they assume. Rather the story seems to be more complex. It is time to acknowledge that alternative avenues into the examination of inequality in the EMII may be more productive than those advocated by Soles. I suggest that power inequalities at prepalatial Mochlos were based on the appropriation and accumulation of symbolic capital rather than on the transformation of wealth into an economic capital channeled to reproduce the conditions of production. Although we cannot and must not rule out the production of economic capital at Mochlos, we should be more attentive to the ways that wealth was consumed and expended in order to be transformed into symbolic capital as well as on various others performances which enabled the building of symbolic capital by drawing on a wide variety of resources not always seen as narrowly economic or material. Thus, building from the anthropological and sociological insights I have earlier discussed, I will frame some questions that seem to me worth considering; was wealth the most important parameter of social distinction on Mochlos? What was wealth's destiny and in what ways was it brought into play as an instrument of power? Was there a single currency of value associated with wealth or different valuation schemes within which wealth was consumed through various practices? More significantly, is it useful to continue

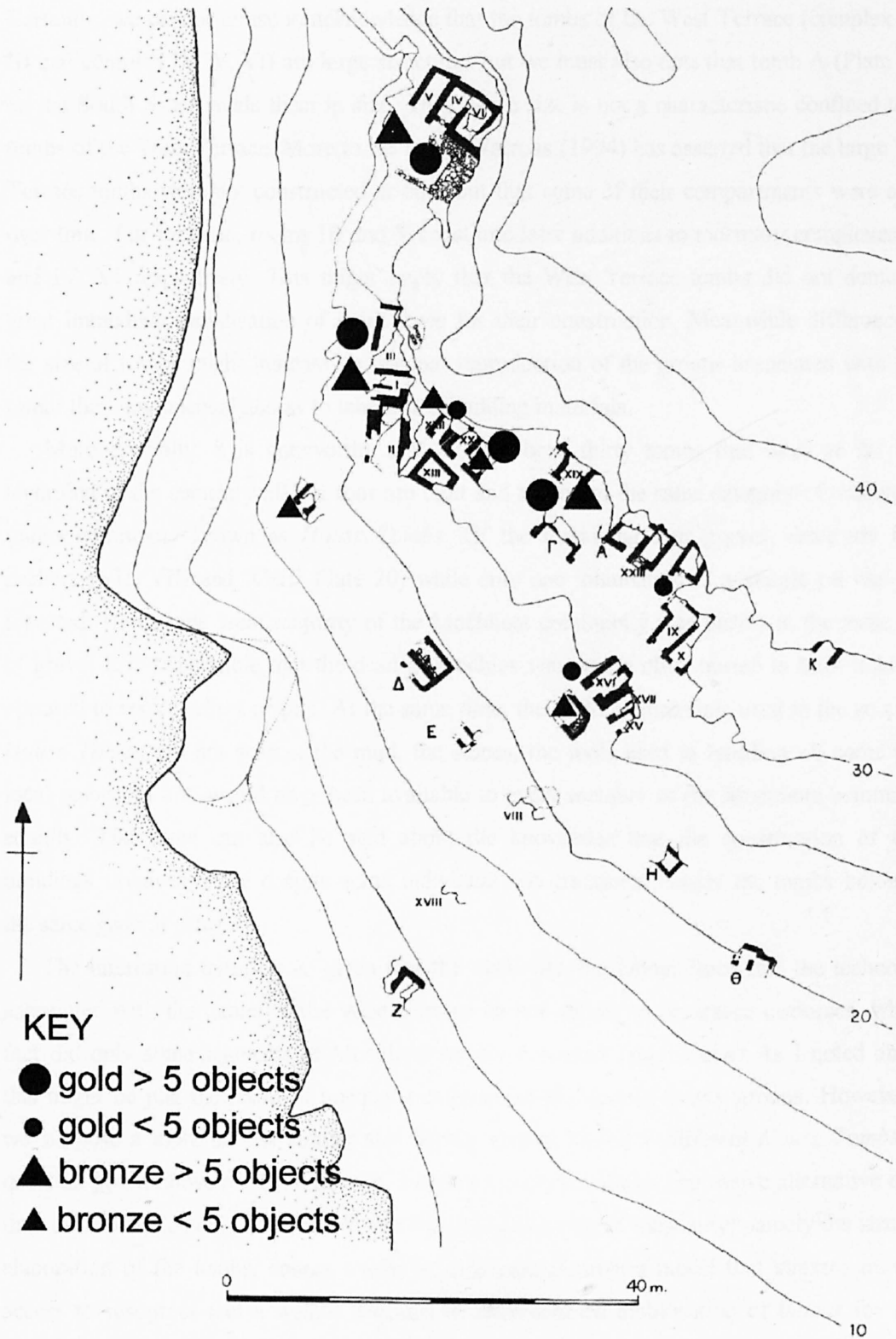
discussing wealth exclusively through the capitalist lens of the western experience that emphasises the production mentality? By looking at the early cemetery of Mochlos I will emphasise some points that seem to be relevant to the above questions. Before moving on however, it is instructive to return to Soles's criteria of inequality and see whether the Mochlos evidence bears them out.

Firstly, let us consider the issue of the distribution of so called valuables within the cemetery, which has led scholars like Soles (1988; 1992a), Branigan (1991a) and Davaras (1975: 114) to infer the presence of a limited elite at the West Terrace. This elite, Branigan argues 'was able to dominate the distribution and acquisition of gold and silver, high quality stone vases and bronzework, and a small quantity of imported artefacts' (1991a: 103). A point has to be made here to ensure clarity concerning the nature of valuables. At the moment, I am talking, as Soles and Branigan do, about particular categories of objects such as golden and silver jewellery and artefacts, bronze objects and stone vases of high quality. Later I will widen the term 'valuables' to include other materials and intangible goods not traditionally conceived as such.

A closer look at the distribution pattern of the precious tomb gifts reveals that there are no striking disparities in wealth between the tombs on the West Terrace and those on the South Slope (Watrous 1994: 713). Despite appearances to the contrary, rich burials or burials containing so called elite valuables are not confined to the West Terrace. Thus, tombs such as IX, XVI, XX, XVIII, XIX, XXI, XXII, XXIII and A on the South Slope have produced elite grave goods and some of them (XIX and XXI) can rival those of the West Terrace in the wealth of their furnishings (Plate 18). Ironically, the heaviest and largest gold object, an armlet (Plate 19a), found in the entire cemetery comes not from the West Terrace tombs but from tomb XVI on the South Slope (Seager 1912: 68). At the same time, we need to bear in mind that the South Slope tombs have been eroded and plundered to a greater extent than those of the West Terrace. This may distort the clear-cut demarcation claimed between the two sides of the cemetery. Arguably, a good number of Mochlos tombs contains similar grave goods yet the stress varies, and there are some, though not particularly striking, deviations in quantity that might be either real or the result of differential degrees of tomb erosion and looting. Nevertheless, if we are to assume an uneven access to valuables (not simply as the result of variable preservation) this seems to concern a number of tombs located both on the West Terrace and South Slope.

As for the next criterion of social ranking, namely differences in the architectural elaboration and size of tombs, Soles asserts that

Considerably more energy and expense went into the construction of those [tombs] on the West Terrace. These tombs [I, II, III and IV, V, VI] are not only two to three times larger than the largest



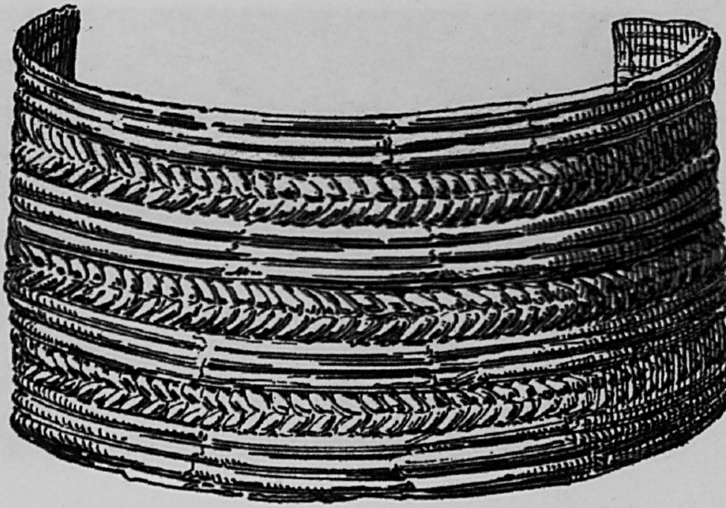
Mochlos, Prepalatial cemetery: distribution of gold and bronze objects (source: Soles 1992, Plan 3; data from Seager 1912).

of the South Slope tombs (and six times larger than the smallest); they were built more carefully (1988: 50).

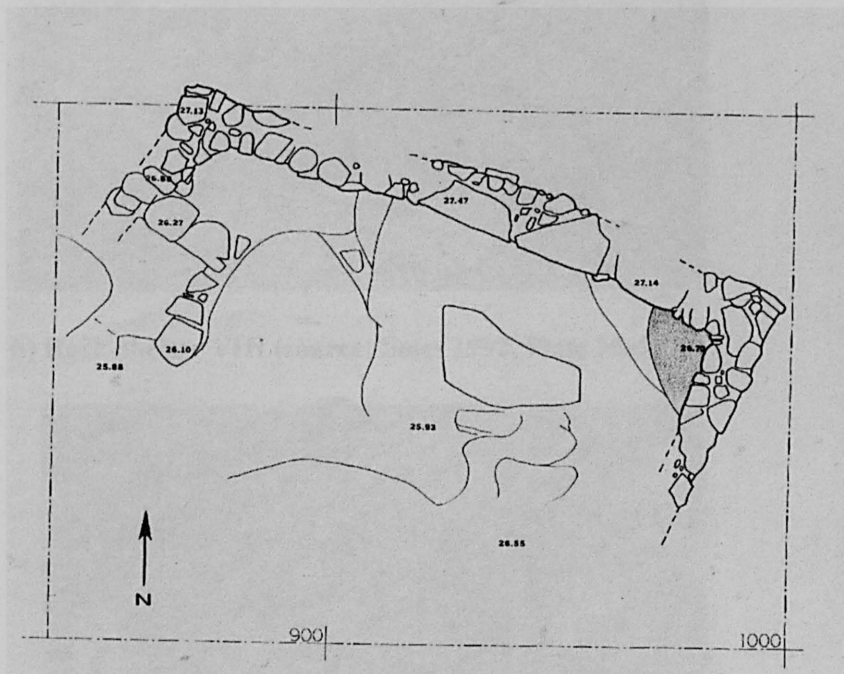
Certainly, we cannot refuse to acknowledge that the tombs of the West Terrace (complex I, II, III and complex IV, V, VI) are large structures but we must also note that tomb A (Plate 19b) on the South Slope rivals them in size. Thus, large size is not a characteristic confined to the tombs of the West Terrace. More to the point, Watrous (1994) has asserted that the large West Terrace tombs were not constructed at once but that some of their compartments were added over time. For instance, rooms III and V constitute later additions to mortuary complexes I, II and IV, VI respectively. This might imply that the West Terrace tombs did not demand a great immediate mobilisation of work force for their construction. Meanwhile differences in the size of tombs might indicate an unequal reproduction of the groups associated with them rather than any unequal access to labour and building materials.

More crucially, it is noteworthy that out of about thirty tombs that have so far been identified in the cemetery all but four are built and belong to the same category of rectangular tombs commonly known as *House Tombs*. Of the remaining four graves, three are rock-shelters (VII, VIII and XVIII Plate 20) while only one inhumation in a simple pit has been reported. Hence, the great majority of the Mochliote community was buried in the same type of grave. It is remarkable that the dead at Mochlos were more often buried in built tombs as opposed to rock-shelters or pits. At the same time, the building materials used in the so called *House Tombs* are not scarce; the mud, the stones, the tools used in building all come from local resources and would have been available to every member of the Mochliote community equally. The same can also be said about the knowledge that the construction of these buildings involves, since despite some individual constructional details the tombs belong to the same general category.

The interesting question is, given that the materials, the labour force and the technology associated with the tombs of the West Terrace do not appear to be scarce resources, why in fact did only some segments of Mochliote society construct large tombs? As I noted above, this might be just the result of unequal reproduction of *assumed* family groups. However, if we suppose a more or less similar size for the groups buried in different *House Tombs* the question posed above needs an answer. I cannot conclude with an impressive alternative other than to direct attention to the simple fact that this parameter of inequality, namely the size and elaboration of the tombs, cannot easily be explained through a model that stresses unequal access to resources and a wealth assumed to have enabled mobilisation of labour for their construction. Kanta's (1983) ethnographic research has demonstrated the oversimplification inherent in the assumption that houses or buildings of a substantial size (in our case tombs) are necessarily associated with rich households:



a) Gold armband from tomb XVI on the South Slope. This is the largest and heaviest gold object found at Mochlos (Seager 1912: 68, Fig. 38).



b) Plan of tomb A located on the South Slope (source: Soles and Davaras 1992: 422, Fig. 4).



a) Rock-shelter tomb VII (source: Soles 1992, Plate 34b).



b) Rock-shelter VIII (source: Soles 1992, Plate 35a).



c) Rock-shelter XVIII (source: Soles 1992, Plate 35c).

The size of a house however, does not always reflect the family wealth in traditional Crete. An example of this in Monastiraki is a substantial house belonging to a poorer family. The owner and his relatives cleared away the ground, used the local bedrock for stones, and built the large two-storied house themselves at the beginning of the century, without much expense, apart from their personal work and time, of which they had plenty (Kanta 1983: 159).

Stated simply, the differential size of tombs at Mochlos might not necessarily have been the result of differential economic achievement and might be seen to exist independent of narrowly defined economic factors. In addition, particularly telling is Watrous's observation that tomb XIX, despite its architectural modesty, presents a great wealth of tomb gifts. Thus, architectural sophistication/large size and rich furnishings do not present a strict correspondence at Mochlos (Watrous 1994: 713 and n.128). Even if we are to consider the large tombs as constructions that came about through mobilisation by some segments of the population of the labour of some others in debt, another interesting finding arises. It is clear that the tombs cannot be deployed to demonstrate the transformation of wealth into economic capital for re-investment in production but rather into a symbolic one. The construction of a tomb can hardly be considered as a productive asset in narrowly defined economic terms. Instead it stresses social reproduction and games of power performed through materially unproductive consumption rather than an economic intensification which aims to increase productivity (as assets like the clearance of a field or the building of a terrace for cultivation would imply). At the same time, the likely mobilisation of labour for the construction of the large tombs at Mochlos does not display any striking repetition. It can instead be seen as a temporary and episodic event in time or chain of similar events, keeping in mind Watrous's (1994) premise that each large tomb was probably the product of two episodes of building.

On the other hand, what appears, at first sight to distinguish the West Terrace from the South Slope more conspicuously is that the former was enriched with structures external to the tombs such as open paved areas, an ascending ramp, a raised terrace and an altar (Plate 21). These according to Soles (1992a, 1992b), most likely demarcated areas where ritual ceremonies of a public character would take place under the control of the elite. Yet, one may note here that the South Slope was provided with two different structures (Buildings N and Ξ) that equally seem to imply ritual performances of some kind.

Another issue that deserves expansion concerns the practice of secondary burial rites and its common association with rich burials and high status. It is tacitly accepted that secondary burial by extending the duration of funerary rites constitutes a more complex, elaborate and economically expensive (in capital, energy and time) treatment of the dead reserved for a minority of individuals. According to Soles (1992a: 243), a burial in a *House Tomb* constituted a two-stage undertaking, in the sense that the bones were relocated after the body had been completely defleshed. This has been taken to involve more effort than pithos burials (Sphoungaras, Pachyammos, Malia) or inhumations in the earth (Sphoungaras) or burials



a) Tomb IV/V/VI, base step of approach (source: Soles 1992a, Plate 22b).



b) Tomb IV/V/VI, altar and raised terrace (source: Soles 1992a, Plate 22c).

made in rock crevices (Malia) (Soles 1988). Nonetheless, at Mochlos itself the distinction is not that sharp, given the fact that only three rock-shelters and one pit-grave have been reported. Thus, although Soles (1992a: 244) is not explicit about whether he believes that extended funerals were also held at the *House Tombs* of the South Slope, he admits that secondary burial can be made within one and the same room. Consequently, on the West Terrace the existence of tombs with empty rooms probably intended for the initial laying-out of the dead seems to suggest an extended funeral rite, yet it does not inevitably mean that secondary burials were confined only to that part of the cemetery. Most significantly, anthropological research has shown that secondary burial has no necessary connection with high status, wealth or even, in some cases, with ritual efficacy. This style of burial might have only had a marginally higher cost compared to a death rite of an abridged kind (Metcalf 1981). A case in point is provided by the ethnography of the Berawan of central northern Borneo. Metcalf documented not only that funerary rites held immediately after death (*patai*) can be expensive enough to rival in splendour extended rites (*nulang*) of secondary treatment of the dead but also that there is no direct relationship between rank and ritual sequence. In his words,

We cannot assume that the 'best' people receive *nulang* and the rest only a funeral. Events may turn out to the contrary. Noble families can afford *nulang*, but they are also more likely to have on hand the necessary surplus of rice, pigs and other necessities to proceed directly with a *patai* funeral on a grand scale (Metcalf 1981: 572).

The above remarks force us to reconsider the conventional wisdom which holds that secondary treatment of the dead is much more expensive than an immediate funeral or is intended exclusively for rich individuals. In many cases the option for an extended rite might only be a practical one, associated with the occurrence of death at an awkward moment, for example during harvest when people are busy working in the fields or when available resources like foodstuffs are low. Ironically enough, the option might be promoted because of an inability immediately to mobilise resources that a funeral of an abridged kind would demand. As Metcalf has further intimated, unlike death itself, secondary burial can be scheduled to fit into a time when a stock of resources is available. To return to Mochlos, even if we assume that secondary burials are confined to the West Terrace, something that seems unlikely, Metcalf's study warns us to be careful regarding any simplistic and quick associations, such as that advocated by Soles, between funeral rites and wealthy or high rank individuals.

Summing up, at first sight the early cemetery of Mochlos does seem to bear out an unequal distribution of wealth between the West Terrace and the South Slope. Yet, this is not as striking as that envisaged by Soles and Branigan. Notably, some categories of data, like the large size and architectural sophistication of the West Terrace tombs or secondary treatment

of the dead may not necessarily be the result of unequal achievement in (narrowly defined) wealth matters like access to labour and building materials. The link between wealth and power is still missing. Thus even in the case that wealth disparities were profound between the two parts of the cemetery, one should not lose sight of the fact that wealth is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the establishment of relations of debt and consequently power inequalities. It is my contention that it is only by looking at the specific contexts of wealth's performance by embodied human actors that we may grasp something of its significance and meaning as a vessel for the creation of debts and relational inequalities. I turn to this issue next.

Chapter 10

Performing inequality six feet under: A drama at Early Bronze Age Mochlos

Introduction

Having developed a critique of the Aegean paradigm on inequality in general and on Mochlos in particular, it is time to close the circle by proceeding to my own reading of Early Bronze Age Mochlos. In the first place, my interest in Mochlos began some seven years ago during my Master's degree. At that time, as part of my assignments I attempted to *trace* evidence of *social ranking* at the site by looking at the archaeology of 'social power' (Barrett 1997). The archaeology of Mochlos and – to be honest – the richness of the finds retrieved from the prehistoric cemetery, as well as its topographic division fascinated me from the very first. However, at that time I was still trying to hunt down origins, as well as substantiate Soles's (1988) distinction between the West Terrace and South Slope material as a distinction between elite and non-elite groups. More precisely, I was working along the lines of a hierarchical model that I was hoping to supplement with some arguments about horizontal differentiation inspired by Crumley's (1987, 1995) ideas on heterarchies, without yet engaging seriously with the notion of performance. My Master's course convinced me that I wanted to pursue questions of power and inequality in Aegean archaeology. With the start of my PhD I was confident that Minoan palaces, the assumed manifestation *par excellence* of power relations, were a productive field for study. Moving away from the impressive palatial edifices of Knossos, Malia and Phaistos, I chose the more modest and provincial neopalatial complex of Gournia in eastern Crete as my case study. Influenced by then fashionable theories of 'power to' (Miller and Tilley 1984; Barrett 1997) I wanted to show that power is above all present in society as an enabling capacity. Moreover, I wanted to demonstrate that power is not restricted to elite groups, but rather, that where there is power, there is also resistance and that all humans in this sense could be seen as empowered. However, I was still uncertain whether the existence of truly egalitarian societies was a social impossibility; I still had my doubts. Two years into the research I realised that a theory of power must begin with the question of the common-sense definition of power, what is referred to as 'power over' – the ability of an individual to subvert the will of another. The question was now: was this aspect of power omnipresent in every society in the same way that 'power to' was thought to resonate across the social spectrum. My context had to change, and so I went back to the

Early Bronze Age where the issue of the emergence of power reigns supreme in academic research. I returned to Mochlos where I had started.

It should be clear by now that I object to the evolutionary paradigm of relational inequalities. I instead believe that relational inequalities are present in every society, through the creation of debt obligations. Equally, given the objective limitations imposed by the nature of prehistoric evidence with respect to the identification of physical groups – a point discussed in chapter six – I feel unease with accounts of factional competition. Thus at Mochlos I do not ask whether inequalities exist in the Early Bronze Age, but how they were performed. Neither do I substitute a simplistic heterarchical portrayal of the division between West Terrace and South Slope for an equally problematic hierarchical one.

It is the central thesis of this study that the construction of symbolic capital through materially unproductive practices could be usefully considered as a significant parameter of social distinction and the means through which relational inequalities were created in EBA Crete. I would further maintain that there is no single currency of value within the Mochliote prepalatial community. Rather, symbolic capital was built up through various performances that drew upon diverse material and non-material resources. A closer look at the early cemetery indicates various kinds of routine performances that might have created different valuation schemes and currencies of value as they were enacted by embodied human actors in different contexts. Inequalities were constructed and experienced, through practices where the human body in various states of being and becoming, such as styles of movement, body ornamentation, gestures, rites of passage and passions of consumption (like feasting and drinking) participated actively by drawing on a wide repertoire of resources. Since people craft their performances by employing a wide range of props in and according to specific settings where they assume particular identities, it is useful to consider the Mochliote landscape as an active theatrical stage with its various protagonists, sceneries, exits, and entrances. This not only accommodated but also created various performances and subsequently different opportunities for the enactment of symbolic capital. In order to examine these propositions let us revisit Soles's topographical distinction of power between the West Terrace and South Slope. Let us also assume, following Soles, that this entails a kind of social differentiation but this time based on various valuation schemes stemming from different kinds of performance or different ways of crafting performance.

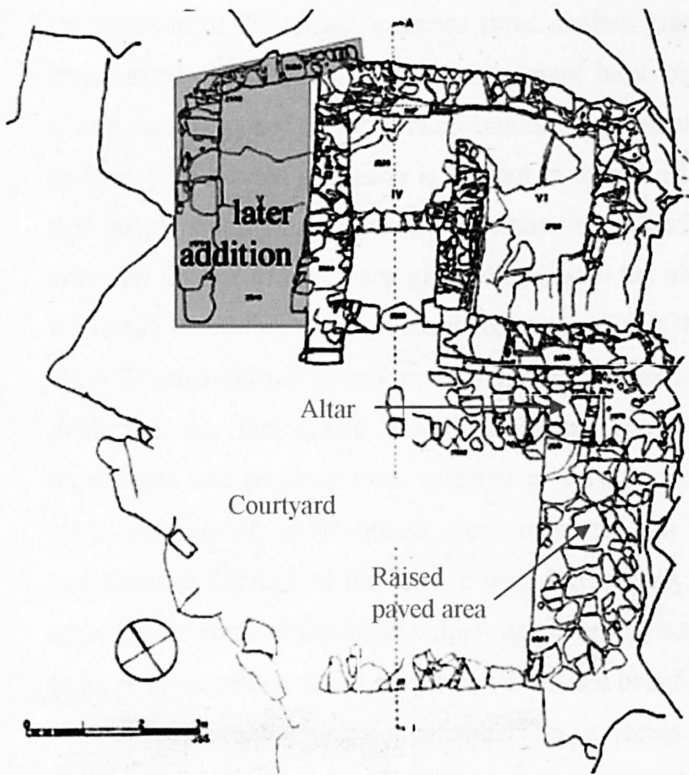
Performing inequality six feet under: a drama at Early Bronze Age Mochlos.

Not to say this did happen but perhaps this could have happened (Pearson 1998: 37).

I think it is useful to suggest that the architectural layout of the West Terrace could be likened to a theatrical stage (Plate 22a) where various ostensible ritual dramas were enacted. This can be inferred from the spatial arrangement of the West Terrace which featured two open-air courtyards: one outside compartment III of mortuary complex I, II and III and another outside tomb IV, V, and VI. In the latter case, the combination of different types and colours of stone flagging created a decorative mosaic, conspicuously marking and differentiating space from that of the surrounding area. This distinctive contrast would probably have been employed to reinforce a clear and restricted field of social practice (Kirk 1993), visually informing individuals that only specific forms of conduct were suitable. A further interesting architectural element of the tomb is a raised terrace (Plate 21b) which flanks the open courtyard to the east. This structure suggests the accommodation of spectators for events taking place in the courtyard (cf. Soles 1978: 11). To the above structures we can also add a small stepped bastion which stands at the northernmost part of the courtyard, at the outer south-east corner of mortuary complex IV, V, and VI. According to Soles (1978: 11, 1992a: 57), the discovery of fragments of stone vases on the top of the bastion possibly indicates that the structure served as an open-air altar (Plate 21b) for the placement of offerings. Moreover, the entry to complex IV, V and VI was provided by an ascending ramp that extends east-west across the Terrace, about 4 meters south of the tomb (Soles 1978: 11, 1992a: 56). To sum up, the elaborate and complex built environment of the West Terrace appears to demonstrate a ceremonial function and Soles (1978) has rightly proposed that certain rituals, funerary or religious or both took place there. In addition, the West Terrace was provided with a paved avenue of approach (Plate 22b), which seems to have served as a procession area (Soles 1992a: 223).

Looking at the spatial arrangement of the West Terrace appears therefore to suggest two orders of participants; the *watchers* and the *watched*, or the spectators and the active performers of the ritual sequences. More precisely, the West Terrace was able to accommodate public gatherings which apparently revolved to some extent around the display and manipulation of the dead body¹. Still, it is possible that some Mochliotes were unable to cross the procession area that marks the entrance to the West Terrace. The view taken here is

¹ I shall suggest below that the West Terrace probably accommodated mortuary rituals. Following Barrett (1988: 31) by the term mortuary rituals I mean those rituals that create passages between life and death. These include both funerary rites and ancestor rites.



a) The West Terrace as a theatrical stage; tomb complex IV/V/VI with paved courtyard and altar (source: adapted from Soles 1992a: 52, Fig. 20).



b) West Terrace, paved avenue of approach (source: Soles 1992a, Plate 16a).

that even those prehistoric actors who were granted access to the West Terrace's architectural space most likely experienced the events held there in very diverse ways. The spatial arrangement of the terrace suggests three distinct gradations through which ceremonies were experienced (Plate 22a). Firstly, many may have observed the ceremonial practices while sitting on the raised terrace. Here onlookers probably took on a more passive role in the ceremony. A second gradation is evident in the paved courtyards where it might be assumed that people stood taking a more active part in the performances enacted there. Finally, only a very few appear to have been granted access to the altar or inside the tombs because of their restricted size. More to the point, it seems to me that the very architectural arrangement of the West Terrace did not simply invite large gatherings but more importantly it was designed to guide the way that actors 'read' this space. The architectural layout suggests that bodily movements and postures were oriented in very particular ways so that certain visual fields were emphasised while others were restricted. In this sense, one may claim that the architectural features of the terrace were intrinsically linked to political strategies that drew upon disciplinary technologies which acted upon people through the control of the body in order to elicit certain ideas, emotions, values and beliefs (Kirk 1993: 188).

For example, the inside/outside division of access to the tomb chambers may be taken to create, organise, remind and conspicuously display 'a graded field of knowledge' (Thomas 1993: 34). Keeping in mind that 'the dead may work miracles ... they may be [benevolent or] malevolent and dangerous spirits' (Parker Pearson 1993: 203), actively engaging with them, placing them in tombs, and entering into their resting places would have been a way to establish debts and obligations among those who did not dare, or were ineligible to perform a task of such gravity. Ensuring the correct performance, that is dealing effectively with the dead would have required knowledge of particular rules of conduct. This 'know-how' was performed in secrecy, hidden deep inside the tomb chambers. Those ineligible to enter the tomb, to share this body of knowledge directly, served to demonstrate by their very exclusion the distinction between themselves and those who possessed the required knowledge to engage actively with the dead. Similarly, one may detect a further gradation of knowledge outside the chambers of the tomb complex IV, V and VI between those actors performing actively on the open-air courtyard and those sitting on the raised terrace. While the former group's active participation would have depended upon and demonstrated a stock of appropriate knowledge, the latter's experience of the ritual events was most likely shaped by observation and listening alone. We may further suggest that in this context, moments of hierarchy were built out of the 'disequilibrium of body language' (Keating 2000) through the performance of ritual sequences. That is the architectural arrangement of the West Terrace produced a particular 'choreography of authority' through the body (Connerton 1989: 74). This would have been expressed, experienced and recalled not just through the particular code

of movement imposed by the built environment but also through the particular repertoire of appropriate postures that the ritual sequences would have dictated. Simply put, where and whether one could stand, move or sit and which postures one was expected to adopt relative to others would have contributed to the performance and experience of moments of inequality by reminding the actors 'of systems of classifications which the group [held] to be significant' (Connerton 1989: 88).

Additionally, it is particularly notable that people standing on the courtyard and most evidently the spectators sitting on the raised terrace of mortuary complex IV, V and VI would have been afforded a good view of the sea to the west (Plate 23). Parenthetically, it is important to note that given the westward currents in this part of the Aegean, it was from the west that most sailing vessels would have approached Mochlos (Plate 24a) (Agouridis 1997: 5). According to Vavouranakis (2002: 73 and 113), this emphasis in orientation to the sea (rather than the land) may indicate the special significance of the 'seascape' and maritime activity to the prepalatial community. As he notes, the location of the tomb complexes I, II, III and IV, V, VI on the West Terrace probably was not accidental; the West Terrace constituted a 'key navigation point' and a 'sea gate' from where sailing boats carrying exotic raw materials approached Mochlos. It is worth mentioning that the West Terrace was not just the starting point but also the end point of the lifecycle of the exotic materials coming to Mochlos. For it was in the West Terrace where most of these exotica (after their transformation into finished objects) were eventually deposited (Damilati 2002). Hence, one might assume that both the location of the West Terrace tombs and the ritual events held there became symbolically linked to maritime activity and its exotic cargo which would eventually reach the end of its circulation as it was deposited with the dead (Vavouranakis 2002: 189 and Fig. 7.3).

It is significant to recognise that the built environment of the tomb complexes was not simply produced as a passive backdrop for mortuary ritual. Neither was its significance based on the act of their building through the investment of labour and expensive materials if any. Instead of paying privileged attention to temporal origins, it is more important to understand how the built environment was actively consumed, negotiated and made meaningful to members of society through the different social contexts of its inhabitation (cf. Barrett 1999; Thomas 1993). The significance of this space and the knowledge of how to act, was constituted through lived experience of ceremonial practices, and the way they unfolded within the physical nature of the West Terrace. The performance of ceremonies was gathered through ambulatory vision and encoded in memory. The choreography of past ceremonial performances was carried forward through memory as expectations that could be applied to new ceremonial experiences. Through this education of attention and bodily 'enskilment' (Ingold 2000), the built environment took on classifications of meaning that helped to



a) West Terrace looking back to modern village; affording panoramic views of the sea (source: courtesy of Georgios Vavouranakis).



b) Computer model looking east towards islet and West Terrace (source: courtesy of Georgios Vavouranakis).

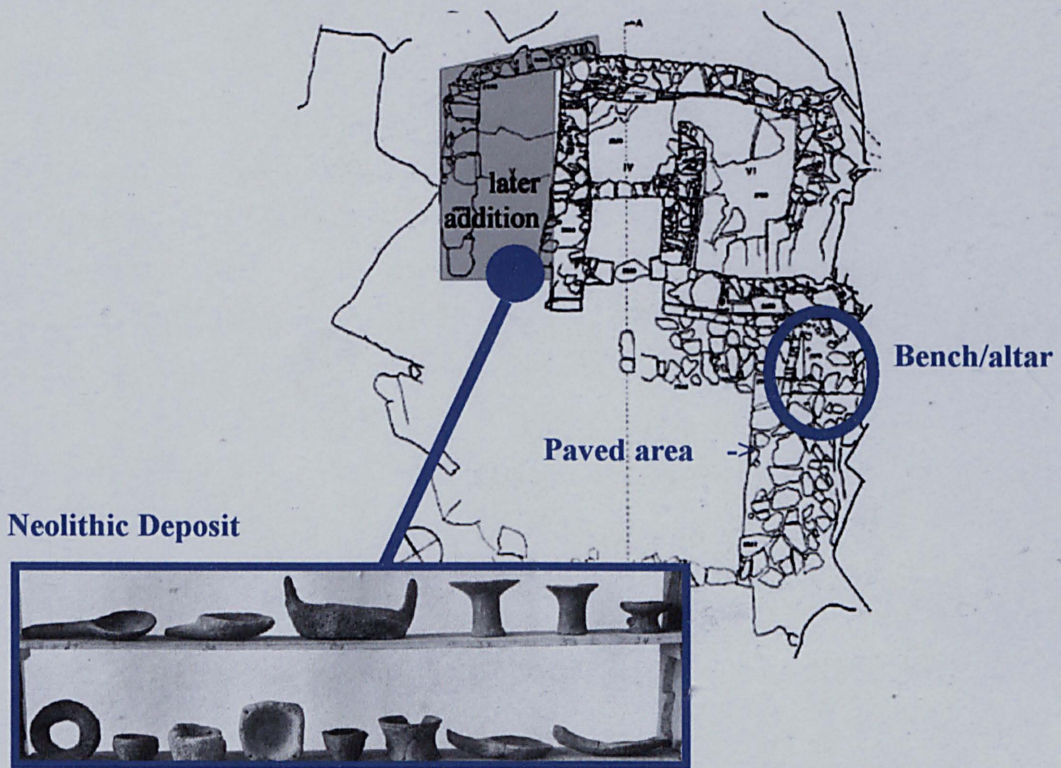
distinguish the way that individuals related to the tomb environment, and to each other. As this process unfolded through time, relations of inequality become constructed and reproduced. Performance acted as a means of inscribing and cognitively mapping upon individuals' knowledge about whom to respect and when to respect them.

Furthermore, the ancestral character of the West Terrace was accentuated by a Neolithic ceramic deposit (Plate 24b) located underneath compartment V (of the tomb complex IV, V, VI). Notably, as I have already mentioned, this deposit constitutes the earliest trace of habitation at Mochlos and has been described as having a votive character firstly by Seager (1912) and subsequently by Zois (1973). I would suggest that the presence of this assemblage was likely to have been acknowledged by the builders of the EM tomb implying the fusion between space and what Yi-fu Tuan (1978) calls 'Cosmogonic time', that is the story of origins and myths about creation. Here, space becomes a repository of memory as well as debt, as the past is actively drawn upon as a means of colonising the present. It might be said that the past is an important resource, marshalled as a means of interpreting the present, but also for forecasting the future. Individually, the past is manifested as memory, but collectively it refers to history, both of which inform a sense of identity (Jenkins 1996: 28). In this setting, origin myths would have probably aimed to show how founding ancestors came to this place, the adventures and hardships of their travels, the way they settled and prepared the earth for human habitation, as well as the instructions and the commands they left for generations to come (cf. Tuan 1978: 8). Drawing upon the works of Godelier (1999: 185), Meillassoux (1978a: 137-147, 1981) and Friedman and Rowlands (1977: 207), I would like to suggest that these 'civilising acts', could be described as a free gift, one which put the members of the whole community under a permanent obligation towards the ancestors. Yet it remains to be asked, how could humans ever give back what they received? People attempted to protect the ancestral presence by building upon its memory by reinforcing it through material veneration. In Lowenthal's words, 'as the past decays both in the ground and in our memories, we make the most of those relicts that survive' (1992: 109). The material evidence of the cemetery suggests that this was what members of the community did. By celebrating the setting of the ancestral presence and heralding its existence they sheltered the material remains of the ancestors by building upon it the EM tomb. Other gifts, that might have been offered to the ancestral spirits, would have included prayers, offerings, and even sacrifices² (Godelier 1999: 180). Yet according to Godelier (1999: 185-186), no counter-gift can measure up or be the equivalent of the gifts offered by the ancestors. This is the case because the ancestral powers originally gave humans that which they deemed appropriate, without humans ever having

² Here the term sacrifice does not designate the offering of human or animal victims for which there is no evidence available, but rather symbolic acts of killing like the deposition of grave goods in tombs.



a) Sailing vessel approaching from the west (from Psyra) (source: courtesy of Georgios Vavouranakis).



b) West Terrace as a theatrical stage featuring Neolithic Deposit (source: map adapted from Soles 1992a: 52, Fig. 20; Neolithic deposit from Seager 1912, Fig 48.).

asked. Moreover, just as the ancestral powers are not compelled to give, they are also not compelled to accept or reciprocate in turn. Finally and most importantly, even when the ancestors accept human gifts – what they have given to people, the world, life and death – is such that human gifts cannot repay; in other words, humans have no equivalent to return. Stated simply, the debt of the people to the ancestors can not in any way be cancelled out.

Returning to Mochlos, while knowledge of the Neolithic deposit might have been mutually shared, it may not have been shared equally by all members of the community's inhabitants. I would suggest that a minority might have controlled knowledge about the past having taken charge of dealing with this profound debt towards the ancestors on behalf of the whole community. This select group would have faced the inescapable tension between aspirations to maintain secrecy, which might confer power and prestige, and sharing knowledge which may not only have authenticated their role as keepers of the ancestral traditions (Hendon 2000) but also created ostensible debts. As Cohen suggests 'in all political systems, the men at the top develop a "mystique" which raises them above the multitude, validates their status in the eyes of their public and also convinces the men themselves of their own "right" to their superior position in society' (1974: 16). Knowledge of the ancestral presence, the hopes and the fears, the blessings and the anathema that it may have fostered was most likely shared among the wider population. However, the material remains of this presence mediated through the architecture of their tomb, may have been the inalienable possessions of a particular group, which had to be guarded and venerated properly. These would have been important duties the consequences of which would have been shared and felt by the whole community. Yet, their success was probably dependent upon ritual expertise and a corpus of knowledge that was not open to all members of the community, but perhaps only to those who were linked with the tomb complex (IV, V and VI) located at the heart of the ancestral land. Here we observe a version of the paradox of keeping-while-giving that surrounds most inalienable possessions and creates conspicuous debts. While the material remains of the ancestors, their guardianship, and the deeper powerful secrets they held about the past, as well as the right to mediate the ostensible ancestral debt, were perhaps exempt as objects of gift-giving, the benefits that these were believed to convey may have been presented as gifts to be shared by all.

Moreover, I think it can be argued that the character of mortuary performances within the context of the cemetery may itself have helped to reify the obligations of debt both between members of the community and the ancestors, as well as between individuals within the performance itself. As Connerton (1989: 45) has suggested, ritual performances of a commemorative character do not simply imply continuity with the past, but actively claim this continuity. By doing so they attempt to legitimate a narrative of events that continues uninterrupted through time and space without change. Such ceremonial activity, I would

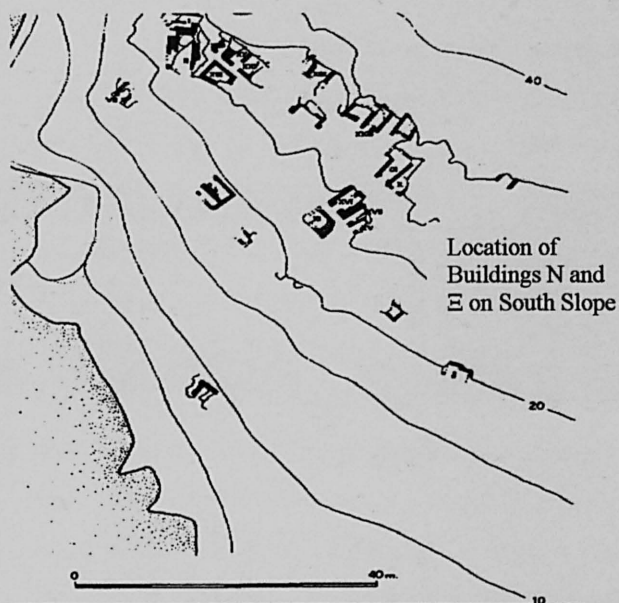
suggest not only satisfied the conditions of debt, but also acted as a sensual reminder, a kind of mnemonic device that safeguarded debt from slipping into oblivion.

In contrast, very different stage scenery is revealed at the southernmost part of the cemetery at the South Slope. Here, the funerary character of the built environment suggests a more ambivalent situation; apart from tombs, two buildings whose function cannot be positively identified as mortuary have been uncovered (Soles and Davaras 1992: 424). These are Buildings N and Ξ (Plate 25a). Here the public notions of the West Terrace are replaced by the more private connotations of visits to the so called *Lustral Basin* or Adyton. I am using these terms³, which actually refer to later, namely neopalatial, constructions commonly associated with initiation rituals (Plate 25b) (Marinatos 1984, 1993; Driessen and Macdonald 1997) in order to describe the function of Building Ξ, which featured a staircase of four steps leading down from the entrance to the sunken floor. According to Soles and Davaras (1992: 424), architecturally speaking the structure resembles Building 21 in the Phourni cemetery at Archanes (Plate 25c). Interestingly, the excavators of the latter structure have entertained its interpretation as a *Lustral Basin* (Sakellarakis and Sakellarakis 1991: 85).

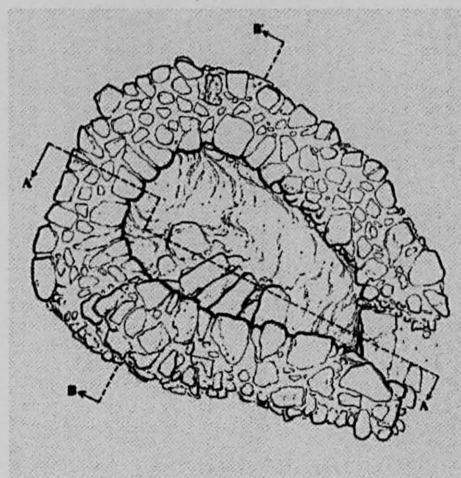
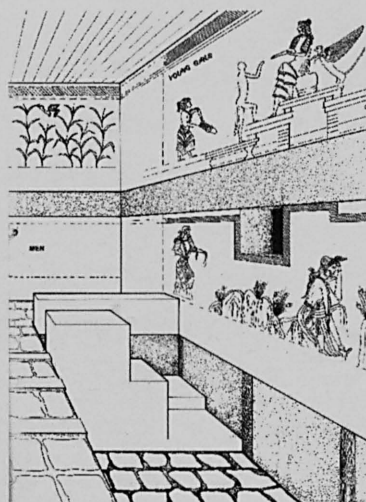
I would suggest that this area of the cemetery prompted the living to engage with ritual actively rather than passively watch the fate of the dead body. The absence of performances of a public character is indicated by the small size of Building Ξ and the lack of architectural elements which could accommodate large public gatherings. In this place performances would have been imbued with an aura of mystery since they were effectively concealed from public view behind the walls of Building Ξ. We may assume that in this context accumulation of debts and symbolic capital included the control of and participation in rites for the few, as well as access to secret knowledge and utterances that their enactment involved. A noteworthy fact is that the sunken floor of the so called *Lustral Basins* strongly suggests the likelihood that they were areas of separation and seclusion from the surrounding space: 'when descending into them, one partly disappeared from view and reached a different level' (Marinatos 1993: 79). Moreover, bearing in mind that structures of this type seem to display a concern with privacy and secretness (cf. Marinatos 1993: 81), I would contend that the association of Building Ξ with initiation rites of some kind is highly probable.

It is not out of place to remark here that a detailed ethnographic study of initiation rites has positively shown that all initiation rites involve secrets that have to be guarded since they aim

³ Both terms are used to describe neopalatial structures that feature a sunken floor. The former has been originally used by Evans (1899-1900) who believed that the particular structures were either bathrooms or units that accommodated purification ceremonies. Graham (1962: 107; see also Hitchcock 2000) subsequently asserted that the so called *Lustral Basins* were the stage of cultic activities that may have involved some kind of bathing. Marinatos (1993: 77) prefers to call the structures in question *Adyta* and although she stresses their cultic nature she challenges their association with bathing. For a full discussion on various interpretations of these units see Marinatos (1993: 87).



a) Map of the cemetery showing buildings N and E on the South Slope (source: adapted from Soles 1992a, Plan 3).



b) (Left) Reconstruction of room 3 at Xesti 3 Akrotiri, with *Lustral Basin* (source: Marinatos 1984: 67, Fig. 44). c) (Right) Building 21 at Archanes Phourni (source: Sakellarakis and Sakellaraki 1997: 230, Fig. 60).

to transmit powers and knowledge that are restricted to the initiated (La Fontaine 1986: 15, 185-186). The proposed link between building E and initiation rites can be supported not only by its architectural resemblance to neopalatial *Lustral Basins* but also, as I hope to make clear, by other types of evidence from the South Slope. In short, the view taken here is that building E may be seen as the stage of initiation performances or other transition rituals (*rites de passage*) that revolved around the living, actively becoming body. Nevertheless, the most radical implication is that *rites de passage*, namely rites that 'ensure a change of condition or a passage from one magico-religious or secular group to another' (Van Gennep 1960: 11) are practices which involve the creation of debts and power relations. Without undergoing initiation a person born and living in a particular society is denied admission to states of being and social groupings that constitute 'a common frame for much of life' in society (Edmonds 1999: 31). For example, the uninitiated man is not a man but a boy; the uninitiated woman is not a woman but a girl. Crucially, in many societies entrance to various social groupings or transition to different states of being constitute events that rather than being biologically defined are closely associated with the reaching of particular grades of knowledge transmitted through initiation by qualified ritual specialists (La Fontaine 1986). Needless to say, the knowledge of the latter being instrumental in the construction of the self as a full social being may be seen as an effective vessel for the establishment of relations of debt and the accumulation of symbolic capital. This concerns those who aspire to construct themselves as full social beings and those whose knowledge and wisdom are the only effective means for entertaining this end. The fundamental significance of this debt becomes even more apparent bearing in mind that the newly initiated actors can now participate in performances, enter social contexts and become entangled in relationships, obligations and rights from which they were previously excluded. Indeed, as La Fontaine (1986: 185) remarks, after initiation many existing relations will be transformed and even those who have not yet undergone initiation will be affected by the change in those who have. Equally important given that every social relationship bears the yeast for shaping states of indebtedness (cf. Leach 1982), the entanglement into new or remodeled social relationships that initiation offers provides new arenas and occasions for the initiation of debts between different members of the society. Simply put, the initiated can be a debtor herself or be under the debt of her fellow human beings, according to the occasion, in social contexts from which she was previously excluded.

Furthermore, the South Slope yielded two stone tables marked on the upper surface with small circular depressions that have been interpreted by Soles and Davaras (1992: 424; see also Soles 1992a: 221-223) as *Kernoi*. According to the existing literature *Kernoi* (Plate 26a) are often described as offering receptacles⁴ used in cultic activities (Marinatos 1993: 7; Soles

⁴ But see van Effenterre (1955) and Zois (1976) who interpret the stones in question as gaming tables.

1979: 154 and n.30, 1992a: 222; Warren 1972: 231). Thus, the stone tables from the South Slope, which notably are the only examples of *Kernoi* found so far on Mochlos, may suggest that we cannot rule out the presence of some kind of ritual performance of a public character. Yet, in the absence of architectural elements that would accommodate a more formalised or substantial open-air gathering of spectators or both, it might be reasonable to assume that whatever public ceremony that took place on the South Slope, it would have been of a limited scale and lacked the ostentatious formality of the West Terrace. Alternatively, the *Kernoi* found on the same area of the cemetery where the Building Ξ stands, that is at the entrance to the cemetery, may imply a connection with the performances taking place inside this building. At this juncture, it is useful to mention that most *Kernoi* have been retrieved from non-funerary contexts (Soles 1992a: 221). This fact might suggest a link between these stones and rituals that revolved around the world of the living, such as initiation rites. Additionally, their likely interpretation as tables 'for the offering of the first fruits' (Soles 1979: 154) if correct, might point to notions of fertility. Be that as it may, I feel that overall the southernmost part of the cemetery appears to demonstrate an emphasis on performances that revolved around the body of the living. The very position of building Ξ and the *Kernoi* located at the southernmost part of the cemetery which was also its natural entrance (considering the settlement on Mochlos was only a short distance further to the southeast) might suggest a transition area, one that was intermediate to the routines of the everyday life on the settlement and the world of the dead, inhabiting the cemetery. Interestingly enough, according to Van Gennep (1966) transitional areas are spaces where transition rites are undertaken as a means of validating the passage from one social or magico-religious position to another. I would add here that I do not rule out that the transition rites which may have been enacted on the southernmost part of the cemetery may also have involved performances intended to prepare visitors to enter the cemetery (Vavouranakis 2002: 119) and participate in the spectacular mortuary ceremonies held on the West Terrace or in the less ostentatious funerals of the South Slope.

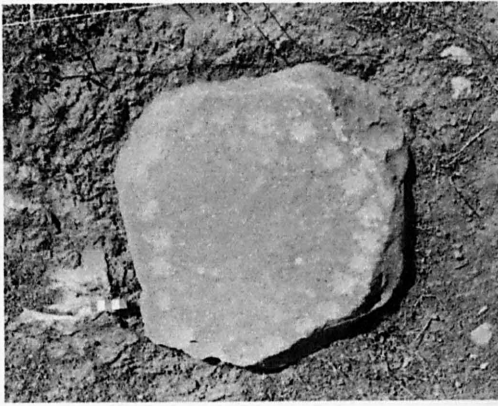
At the same time, on both sides of the cemetery, performances were shaped by drawing upon a range of bodily props and costumes which enabled the living to present their dead and through them themselves in an effort to create specific impressions in the minds of others. Body adornment is clearly both evident and important for the entire cemetery. On the one

hand, up on the West Terrace there is a clear presence of jewellery and other objects of personal adornment. Body ornaments such as bronze daggers⁵, seals and jewellery such as gold, silver and bronze rings, gold diadems, chains, pendants, pins and armlets, necklaces made of gold, semiprecious stones or other scarce raw materials are commonly taken as indices of wealth and high status (Plate 26b and c). We could also assume that in this context body embellishment was further complemented by clothing. Gold pins in the shape of flowers or leaves, as well as strips of thin sheet-gold perhaps were dress ornaments (Plate 27). The point that gold strips were 'intended for fastening to garments' has originally been made by Seager (1912: 30). Davaras (1975: 104) has subsequently interpreted them as either clothing ornaments or cheap substitutes for diadems and armlets. Yet he has also put forward the idea that some of these strips may have been antennae of diadems fallen or deliberately detached and removed from their original positions (Davaras 1975: 110). Gold pins imitating flowers and foliage have been variously interpreted as hair ornaments (Alexiou 1968; Seager 1912: 31, 72), diadem attachments (Branigan 1970: 147) and clothing ornaments (Alexiou 1968; Pini 1968). Yet, their interpretation as dress ornaments may be the most plausible given the sharp end of the pins 'which can pass through some kind of cloth' (Davaras 1975: 106 n.34). It seems also likely that the rather sharp end of the pins would have made them rather unsuitable as hair ornaments. At the same time, small bronze cutters with remains of ivory handle, depilatory pincers made of bronze or silver, stone palettes⁶ and small stone vases appear to be implements of a toilet kit (Plate 28) that may have played some part in body embellishment, perhaps through depilation and/or the application of *maquillage* and other cosmetic substances. It is worth pointing out that palettes reported from other EB Aegean funerary contexts show signs of colouring matter on their upper surfaces that may suggest that they were used for grinding coloured powders (Soles 1992a: 236). As Soles observes, this is the case not only with EB Cycladic examples found in graves but also with later Minoan palettes reported from domestic contexts⁷. It does not therefore seem completely unlikely that the EM examples from the cemetery of Mochlos were also used in this way (Soles 1992a: 236).

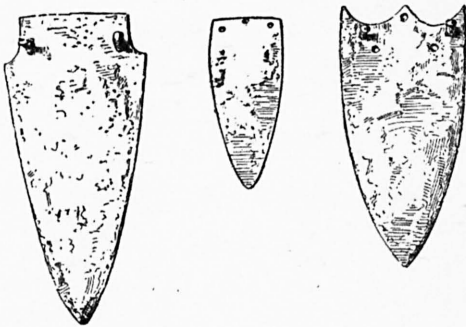
⁵ That a lot of the daggers from Mochlos actually had an ornamental rather than functional role can be suggested by their hafting system. According to Branigan, many daggers from Mochlos had elaborate moulded decoration in the central area of the heel that would have been 'functionally detrimental and [could] only have been adopted for reasons of fashion and display' (1999: 89). Equally significant is Branigan's conclusion that overall EM daggers appear to have been items of status and display (see also Nakou 1995). This can be supported by several male figurines from Petsofa that wore a dagger on a prominent position (Branigan 1999: 89). Moreover, the miniature size of some examples from Mochlos would have made them unsuitable as weapons.

⁶ Seager (1912: 36) calls the palettes colour tables.

⁷ Interestingly all the Cretan prepalatial examples come from funerary contexts. It is only after the prepalatial times that palettes appear only in domestic contexts (Soles 1992a: 236).



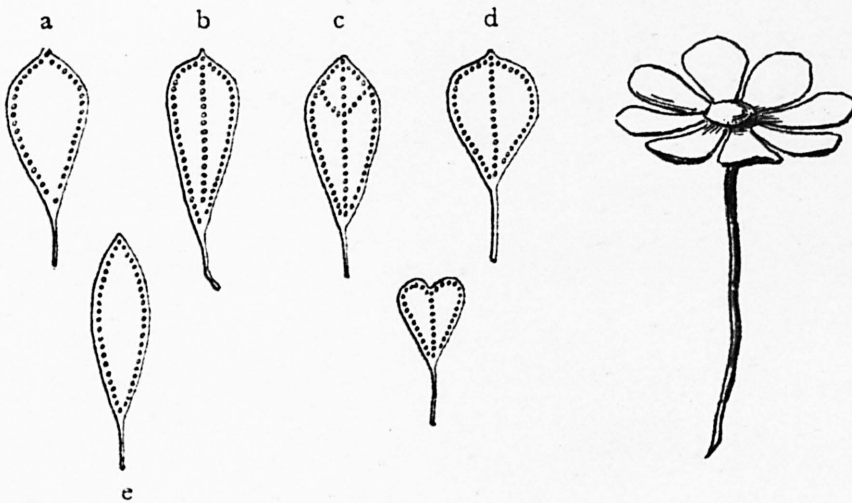
a) Example of *Kernos* from the cemetery of Gournia (source: 1992a, Plate 8c).



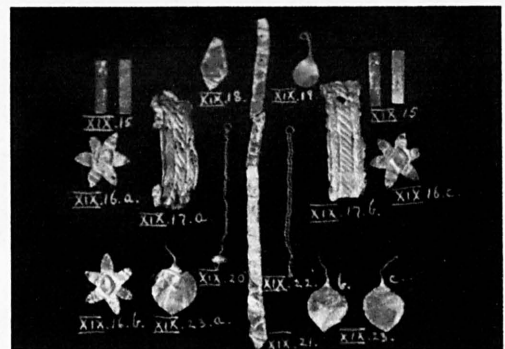
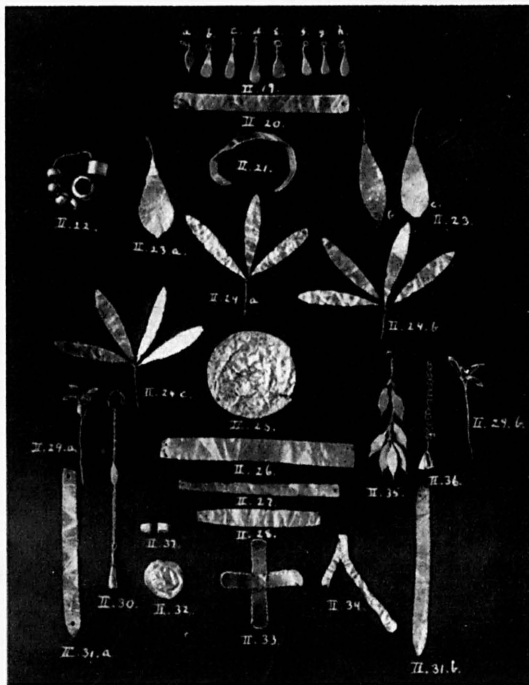
b) Dagger blades from the West Terrace (source: Seager 1912: 35, Fig. 12).



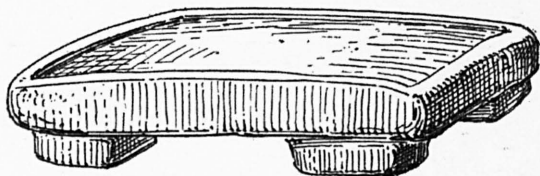
c) Pendants and cylinder seal (source: Seager 1912, Fig. 25).



a) Gold leaves (source: Davara 1975: 102, Fig. 2). Gold flower pin (source Seager 1912: 72, Fig. 42).



b) (Left) Gold strips and ornaments in the shape of flowers and leaves from the West Terrace tombs (source: Seager 1912, Fig. 10); (Right) Gold strips and ornaments in the shape of flowers and leaves from the South Slope tombs (source: 1912, Fig. 43).



a) Stone collared table (source: Seager 1912: 36, Fig. 13).



b) Saddle quern, probably for grinding coloured powders (source Soles 1992a, Plate 24b).

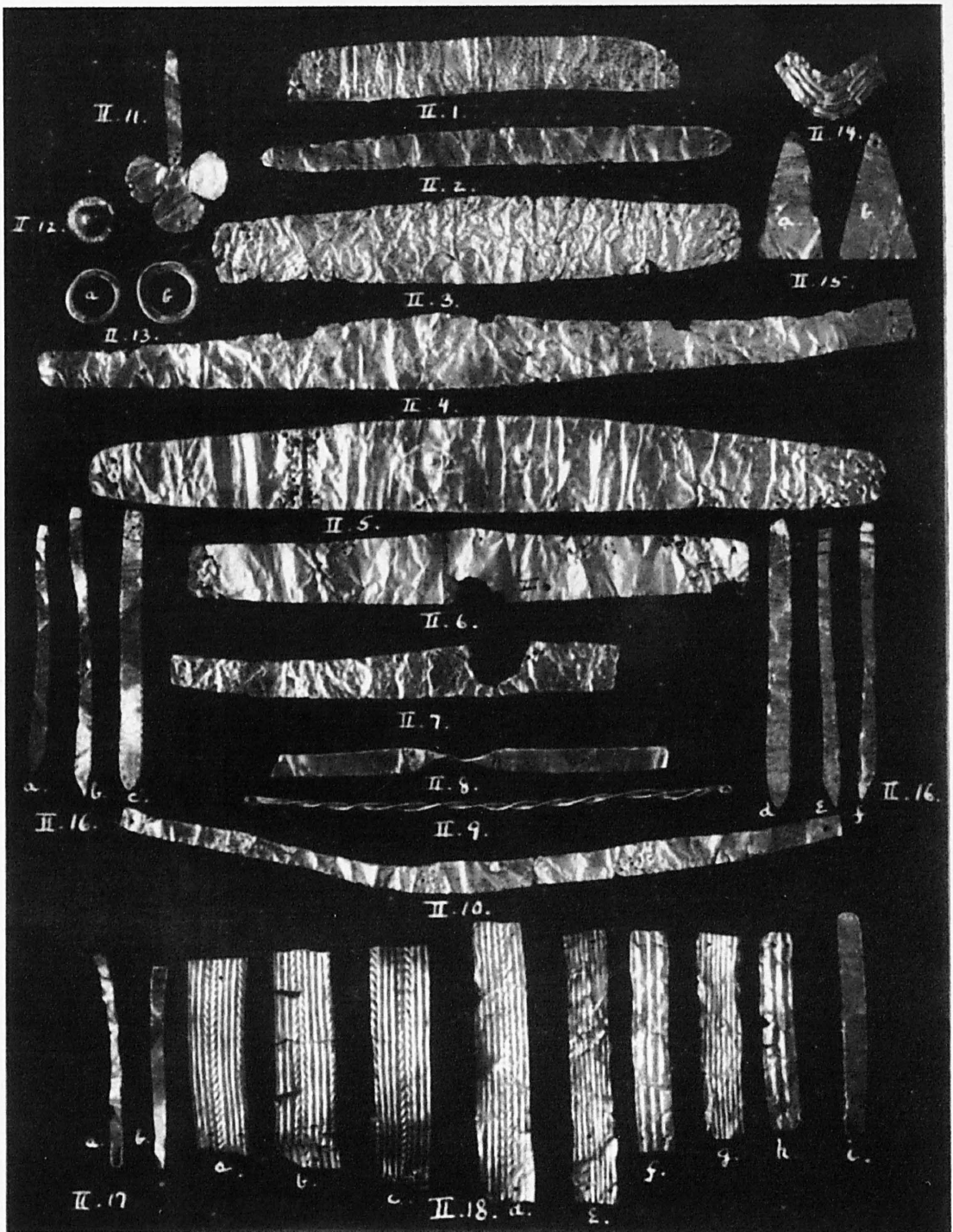


c) Depilatory pincers (source: Seager 1912, Fig. 44); Miniature stone vases (source: Seager 1912, Plate V).

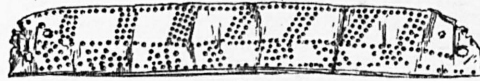
The above categories of objects appear to constitute an important currency of value, for some Mochliote actors, where body embellishment refers to the dead. It is the dead body, the target of attention, through a kind of beautification that draws on a recognisable repertoire of 'valuable' body props, costumes and toilet utensils. Most significantly, we need to recognise the fact that the precious ornaments seem to have a depositional rather than an exchange value. I have already made this point (see also Damilati 2002), but it needs to be repeated here that, as the material record shows, these items seem to have been important through their withdrawal from circulation, final consumption and deposition through funerary rituals. Stated simply, these items are found in tombs and not in settlements (cf. Cadogan 1986; Branigan 1993: 73 on gold jewellery).

Some of the items appear never to have been worn or used during the lifetime of their possessors. We can put in this category miniature vases and ornaments inappropriate for practical use as well as tiny knife blades and daggers which seem unlikely to have been used as proper weapons. Others, like the golden diadems (Plate 29), and the jewellery probably circulated in daily life with the biography of their owners in people's encounters as props of their identity. In these encounters what circulated was impressions, memories, information and meaning and with them the very fame of their possessors. In particular, some of these diadems as Seager (1912: 26; see also Davaras 1975) informs us, present traces of hard usage and have small pin holes which can lead us to assume that they had been worn for some time before their final deposition in the tombs. I should also add that a quick look at the spectacular gold diadems decorated with repousse⁸ patterns and motifs (Branigan 1983b) suffices to demonstrate that none bears exactly the same decoration as any other (Plate 30). Overall, the subjects include geometrical designs of animal figures, a pair of open eyes as well as less representational motifs (cf. McCallum 1983: 22). Yet the motif of eyes is confined to a single example and out of the two diadems where animals clearly appear, the one portrays dogs the other some kind of horned animals that according to Davaras (1975: 103), may be *agrimia*. Equally, among the examples which are decorated with more abstract themes, each of them bears unique combinations of geometric shapes and consequently they do not look identical. It seems to me that the uniqueness of each diadem's decoration can be understood as an attempt intended to reinforce or add a unique personality to each of the items in question. Likewise, other types of jewellery from Mochlos seem to bear a unique character. As Branigan has pointed out, although some ornaments seem to demonstrate, for example, a regularity in the spacing of repousse dots, this does not apply to several items, 'even in an apparently homogeneous group' (1983b: 16). According to him, the conclusion to be reached is that

⁸ Decoration of sheet metalwork produced by hammering up projections from the back (see also Branigan 1983b and McCallum 1983).



Golden diadems from the West Terrace (source: Seager 1912, Fig. 8).



II. 1



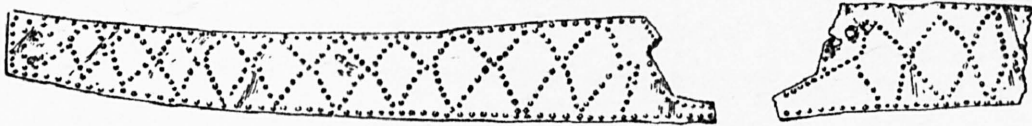
II. 3



II. 4



II. 6



II. 7



II. 8

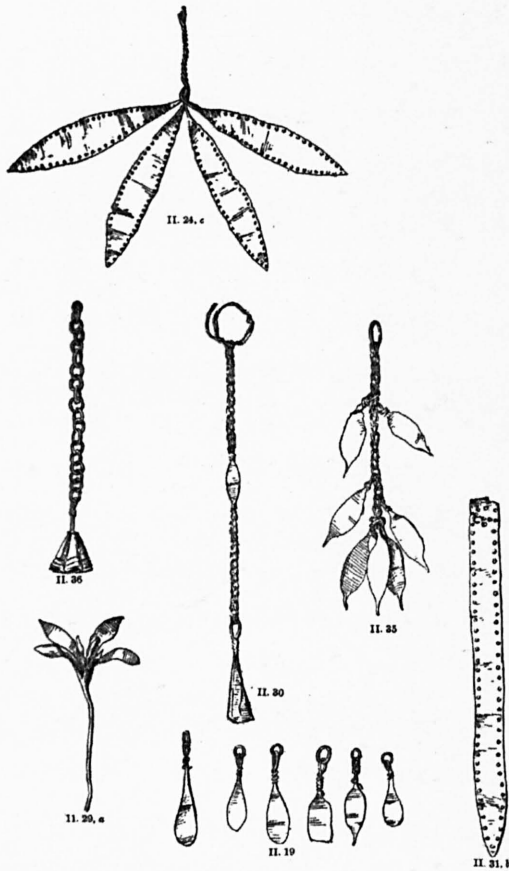
Diadems from Mochlos; distinctive decoration suggests an attempt to produce inalienability in the objects (source: Seager 1912: 28-29, Fig 9).

while there were some similarities between many of the finds, it is difficult to show that their production was orchestrated by a similar hand. Branigan's observation is a very interesting one. However, it is equally important to recognise that the unique character of many of these objects indicates their role as badges of identity particular to their owners.

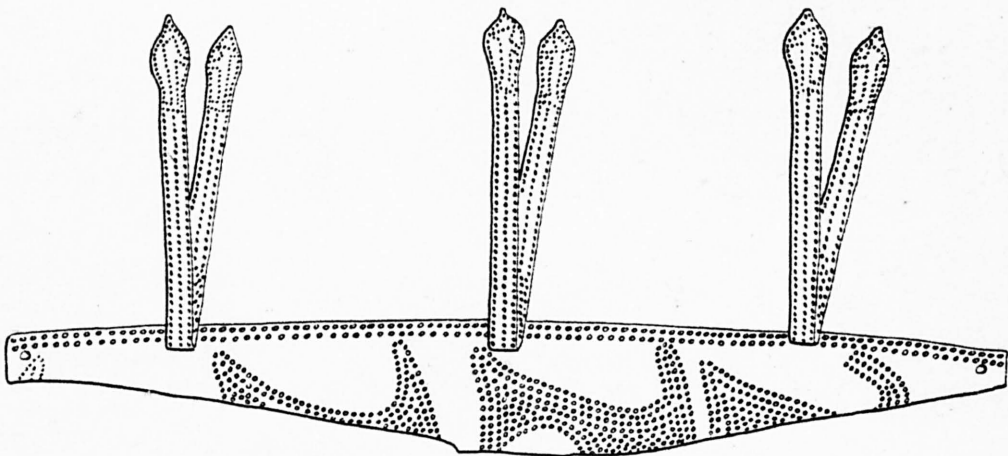
More to the point, the distinctive decoration of most of these items might have been a measure against theft and alienability, for given the small size of the community, it would not have gone without notice if any of the props was worn by some other than its rightful owner (cf. Gould 1966: 72). It may therefore be appropriate to see these artefacts as 'biographical objects' that is as objects upon which people draw in order 'to fashion their identities in a particular way, constructing a "self" for public consumption' (Hoskins 1998: 1). That is not to say, that they were merely flashy objects which conspicuously displayed the wealth or the prestige of their owners. Nothing would be more simplistic than an assertion of this kind. I believe it would be more correct to say that the objects in question were active instruments which constructed their possessors' reknown, fame and prestige in various ways. Following Munn's point that 'fame can be considered as a metaphorical body décor that ramifies as sound beyond the body' (1986: 111), I would like to argue that the gold diadems, for instance, did not simply decorate their possessors but perhaps also echoed their prestige as they were worn. This is often the case with body props that are adorned with mobile attachments that make jingling sounds as they are carried or worn. To Munn,

[such] attached material décor[s] ... add a seductive intensification of beauty to that of the body, and a noise (mediated by part of the added décor). The décor extends the body in space and the mobile décor makes a sound that ramifies this space – as if putting it into motion – so that what may be out of sight may nevertheless be heard (1986: 114).

It is interesting to note, that according to Seager (1912), the occurrence of holes along the upper edge of most of the diadems can be taken to indicate that these props had mobile attachments like pendants or chains that hung down (Plate 31a). Davaras, on the other hand, has challenged this view. As he rightly argues, it is difficult to imagine attachments that would have 'eventually dangled in front of the eyes and the nose of the wearer, as the position of the holes on most of the diadems would make inevitable' (Davaras 1975: 109). According to him, it might be more correct to accept that the diadems were adorned with high antennae (Plate 31b). Yet, even in this case one can still suggest that the diadems were designed in such a way as to contribute actively to the making of the prestige of those who wore them. As Davaras himself points out, 'harmoniously upraised formations' like antennae can be seen as 'the most efficient way of emphasising the human face, mirror of the personality' and it is no coincidence that they constitute 'an almost universal element of crowns in all ages' (1975: 112).



a) Ornaments possibly used as mobile attachments on diadems (source: Seager 1912: 33, Fig. 11).



b) Restored diadem found tightly folded in a silver vessel from Tomb VI. The antenna restoration is by Davaras. Note the careful cutting of the lower edge, this may suggest deliberate destruction and thus an attempt to make it inalienable (source: Davaras 1975: 103, Fig. 3).

However, once the owner died and was incorporated in the realm of the ancestors, these props followed them to their final resting place becoming gifts to the ancestral spirits who, to use Mauss's words, 'are in fact the real owners of the world's wealth' (1990 [1925]: 13). Otherwise, how are we to explain their complete absence from EM settlement assemblages? Of course, we should keep in mind that so far our knowledge of Minoan prepalatial settlements is indeed fairly limited and that equally our knowledge of the prepalatial settlement of Mochlos is fragmentary. However, current evidence strongly suggests the inalienable character of these valuable ornaments and the fact that these were not easy to give away in mundane transactions. In this regard, the deliberate deposition of these items in tombs may be seen as a strategy of keeping and resisting exchange (Weiner 1985, 1992). Particularly telling is I think the fact that in several gold diadems, a part or parts of the body had been deliberately cut off (Plate 31b). Similarly if we are to accept Davaras's premise that some diadems were originally adorned with high antennae that were regularly wrenched off or removed, again we can discern a further example of a tendency to deliberately make these props useless. Yet, while Davaras (1975: 110-111) considers this as an indication of a concern from the part of the mourners' to diminish the quantity of this precious material, namely gold, buried with the dead, I would see it as a further attempt towards the production of inalienability on the diadems themselves. By deliberately making these props useless, the living associated with the dead owner attempted to ensure that the objects would never again enter circulation among the living. The mutilation of the diadems is patterned in a particular way, and seems to evidence a special care and a concern with symmetry. This may suggest that the people charged with this task were reluctant, perhaps out of fear or respect, to disfigure the ornaments in a random and careless way (cf. Davaras 1975: 111). In my view, this fact appears further to demonstrate that what was at stake was not so much the value of the raw material as Davaras holds but rather the inalienable value of the ornament itself. A strong concern with the production of inalienability and the protection of valuable possessions from loss is also demonstrated by a treasure of goldwork packed tightly together in order to fit into a silver vessel (Plate 17) recovered from tomb VI. The pieces of jewellery included a diadem, a chain, a pendant, a rock-crystal bead, part of a bronze pin, eight miniature strips of gold as well as a treasure of goldwork imitating foliage (see Davaras 1975). Interestingly, the diadem (Plate 31b) which is the only one found inside a container was restored to its original state with great difficulty because it had been folded and refolded again and again with extreme care (Davaras 1975: 102)⁹.

These facts, however, still leave two fundamental questions unanswered. Firstly, how and

⁹ Seager (1912: 34) mentions two further examples of gold diadems which had been folded up in a sort of tight packet.

why was value created in these artefacts? That is, what did the prehistoric actors of Mochlos see to be significant about these objects, which compelled the people to keep them out of circulation and place them above exchange value? And secondly can we see these objects as vessels for the establishment of debt relations and consequently of relational social inequalities between the living? To start with the first question; one may mention the dazzling colours of the stone vases as well as the glittering properties of the raw materials like gold, silver and bronze among others of which many of the deposited items were made. We may assume that the shiny or colorful matter of raw materials would have made them particularly attractive for the fashioning of objects. In the case of gold in particular, the attraction may have been even greater given the combination of its brilliant¹⁰ surface with its resistance to corrosion (cf. Muhly 1983: 1); in Renfrew's words, 'gold like diamonds, is forever' (1986a: 161). At the same time, the exotic provenance of gold, silver, bronze, ivory, carnelian and other materials used for the production of ornaments and other categories of objects deposited in the tombs is commonly taken as evidence to suggest the value of these items due to their scarcity in Crete during the EBA (see Branigan 1991a; Davaras 1975; Soles 1978; Whitelaw 2002). Following this idea, it might be argued that the exotic provenance of the raw materials conferred value upon these artefacts in relation to the principle of scarcity. Furthermore we could suggest that the task of procurement itself was associated with discourses that may have involved facing and controlling cosmological and physical dangers, dealing with strangers and perilous voyages (cf. Helms 1988).

Still, I would like to suggest that although the factors mentioned above might have contributed to the perception of these items as valuables, it is misleading to see their importance to have been constructed simply in accordance with the value of the materials they were made of. Notwithstanding their exotic material nature, most of the so called valuables of Mochlos were locally produced (cf. Branigan 1991a) and consumed. This warns us to be attentive to the entanglement of the exotic aspect of their personality with values rooted in local perceptions and performances according to which desire for these objects was constructed. The value of things, as I have already argued in chapter seven, is constructed through their *usage*. It is my contention that the withdrawal of Mochlos' valuables from circulation, and their deposition into the tombs, may provide some hints surrounding the way in which value was created in these objects. Such practices seem to demonstrate that the items in question were things which could not be freely given but kept. Simply put, they had a value above exchange value.

¹⁰ In some cultures brilliant substances, such as metals, pearls and even glass, are associated with light and are believed to carry cosmological connotations. See Saunders (1999).

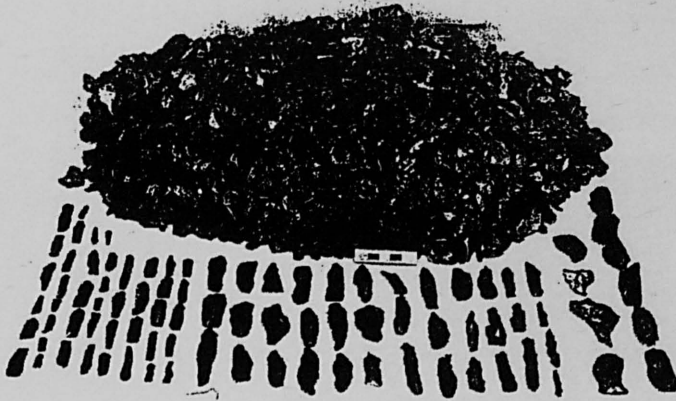
Echoing Godelier (1999) and Weiner (1985, 1992), it might be suggested that what cannot be given is that which is essential, and what was essential here was the definition of the self, community and its identity, manifested in the objects themselves (Barrett and Damilati 2002, forthcoming). It is with these themes in mind that we should consider the value of the artefacts retrieved from the cemetery. Following Godelier's definition of the sacred, which, as he suggests, is 'a certain type of relationship that humans entertain with the origin of things' (1999: 171) we may start seeing the so called valuable objects of Mochlos in a new light. I would argue that they may have been understood to be not the creations of people but the gifts of the ancestral spirits. As we have seen, the entire cemetery, but particularly the West Terrace, occupied the western side of the islet which can be described as a 'sea gate' or conspicuous landmark, which sailing boats carrying exotic raw materials would have approached. Taking this notion into account, we may assume that the cemetery and the West Terrace in particular, would have been the starting point of the lifecycle of the exotic raw materials coming to Mochlos (Vavouranakis 2002). I would further add that these areas might have been acknowledged and perceived by the Mochliote population as the sacred loci of the origins that is the very sources of the wealth reaching the community from afar. Deposition of wealth with the dead possibly meant that it had effectively returned to its origins, to these indispensable anchored points that by appearing always to have existed provided ontological security in a world constantly subjected to loss and decay (Godelier 1999; Weiner 1992).

Bearing this in mind, it might not be difficult to imagine how these items operated not only as a constant reminder and vessel for the perpetual initiation of debts between the community and the ancestors but also as instruments in the creation of debt between the living. Those associated with the dead who had been successful in keeping the gifts of the ancestors in the face of all vagaries and intricacies of life and successfully return them to their origins as a small offering to the real owners of the world's wealth would have been shown to initiate a new cycle of expectations regarding the generosity of the ancestral powers for the well-being of the larger community.

At the same time the South Slope seems to rival the West Terrace in the variety of the toilet utensils and perhaps even presents an overall larger concentration of particular implements belonging to this category. This seems to apply to small cutters and the depilatory pincers. Meanwhile, although valuable body ornaments present a higher concentration at the West Terrace tombs they are by no means confined there. As we have already noted, a fair number of tombs on the South Slope contained valuable ornaments too. Their overall smaller concentration on the South Slope – if it is not the result of taphonomic processes – might imply a weaker or more selective application of the particular valuation scheme that refers to body embellishment through jewellery.

Finally, the southernmost part of the cemetery manifests the same valuation scheme albeit through a different currency. Here body beautification and exotic materials were equally present and important. Nevertheless they facilitated the weaving of an entirely different performance. The bulk of 10.09 kg of obsidian blades and cores (Soles and Davaras 1992) is as exceptional and as exotic as the quantity of golden objects at the West Terrace (Plate 32a). Carter (1994, 1998, forthcoming) has demonstrated that obsidian blades in funerary contexts may have been used for the transformation of the body. This should be taken as grooming, tattooing or scarification. The presence of the obsidian in a non-mortuary building (N), which is close to the *Lustral Basin* commonly associated with initiation rites, seems to indicate that the particular valuation scheme of body decoration now referred to the living/becoming body. These blades might have been used in the naming and presentation of a new member of the community, the becoming of age, puberty, birth ceremonies, first-haircut rites, admission into a secret society or other rites of passage to transform body appearance in ways appropriate for the next stage of life. Such a suggestion is supported by ample iconographic evidence, which shows persons of different age and gender to have different hairstyles (Plate 32b). These blades were probably hoarded in building N once they ended their use life as active participants in many people's rituals of becoming. This again may suggest an inalienable character of a different type than that exhibited by the valuable ornaments and the Neolithic deposit. Some objects although they can be loaned (sometimes more or less permanently in order to craft social relations of various kinds), are metaphorically never separated from their original producers or owners (Godelier 1999; Wiener 1992). By the same token, the obsidian blades found at Building N might have been given by their original owners as gifts to participate in various initiation rites but after their use they were returned to their original owners. Crucially, the loaning of items that may have constituted important implements in the transformation of individuals into full social beings would have created conspicuous debts.

Moreover, possession of such objects acts back on the original owner who accumulates influence and renown through ownership of not just the object itself but of the biography and the memory that the object embodies. In short, I view the particular obsidian assemblage as participating in a gift-to-men system (Gregory 1980, 1982) which is quite different from obsidian assemblages found in settlements. The exchange of the latter can be seen as a commodity exchange, which refers to the reproduction of things and creates debts that involve alienable objects between independent transactors. In this case, once the debt at a particular rate of interest is paid, it is then immediately cancelled. Hence, although the lender will have increased her economic capital in a materially productive way, the social relationship between her and the borrower(s) disintegrates. On the other hand, the gift-giving (this is in fact keeping-while-giving) of inalienable possessions, notwithstanding its lack of (an immediate) economic profit, binds people in more permanent social relationships and should be



a) Obsidian pile from building N on the South Slope (source: Soles and Davaras 1992, Plate 91).



b) Detail of the goddess from Xeste 3, Akrotiri, Thera; note the tattoo on her cheek (source: Marinatos 1993: 142, Fig. 112).



c) Scene from the so called Chieftain's Cup from Aghia Triada showing men of different ages with different hair styles (source Marinatos 1993: 134, Fig. 100).

explained, as Gregory suggests 'with reference to the social conditions of the reproduction of people' (1980: 641).

Consuming passions such as celebratory meals constitute another common practice in both sides of the cemetery. Again these are crafted according to, and in specific settings, by drawing upon distinct material paraphernalia. For example, on the West Terrace the tableware consists mainly of jugs and bowls (Plate 33) while the South Slope is dominated by plates. We may say that jugs and bowls probably point to the consumption of drink (or more liquid food) consumption and plates to (more solid) food consumption. These different serving paraphernalia might then imply different ways of building 'moments of hierarchy' (Keating 2000) through celebratory meals of different underlying principles concerning their nature, preparation and details of consumption¹¹. Stated simply, the feasts held in the two parts of the cemetery were different probably both in nature and community inclusiveness.

Enacted in the immediate vicinity of tombs, in large open spaces which imply quite substantial gatherings of people, feasting in the West Terrace might have been an opportunity for more lavish ceremonial drinking or food distributions following mortuary rites. In this context, food and drink consumption may have been associated with themes of ancestral existence such as descent, inheritance, group history or the blessing of life by the ancestors (see Bloch 1985). Keeping in mind the dramatic theatrical character of the West Terrace, we may suppose that the amounts of food and drink different people received, as well as the serving order, were events not only to be seen conveying information about structures of influence and attention, but also to construct specific moments of relational inequalities. On the other hand, the evidence for feasting at the South Slope comes from inside the building Ξ which, as we have already noted, may be associated with rituals referring to the becoming body and themes of worldly existence such as sexuality, enjoyment and strength (see Bloch 1985: 638). Here, participation may have been much more restrictive and food preparation, serving and consumption possible secrets of an inalienable ritual knowledge. However, exploring the matter further and keeping in mind that Building Ξ may have been the stage for transition rites we cannot entirely rule out the likelihood that at least the final chapter of feasting, namely eating, may have taken place outside the dark interior of the building. Notably, any new identity, any passage from one social position to another 'is in need of authenticity' (Jenkins 1996: 144; see also La Fontaine 1986). In other words, it requires validation by public recognition. Particularly telling in this regard, is the observation that the final act of most initiation rites involves greetings, gift-giving and eating together, that is 'acts

¹¹ See Keating (2000) for an interesting ethnographic example on the way inequality is built in feasting through body tactics and different serving paraphernalia.



a) Jugs and bowls from the South Slope (source: Seager 1912, Fig. 18).

which publicly recognise that the purpose of the rites has been achieved' (La Fontaine 1986: 185).

Equally important, we may assume that food consumption was actively implicated in the production or maintenance of debts in both parts of the cemetery. It is true that of all material resources food constitutes perhaps the most ineffectual inalienable possession, given its perishable nature. Still, there are communities where one can observe considerable investment of effort in the transformation of food into more durable things or words (Weiner 1992: 38)¹². Generous food giving in celebratory meals, secret sacred cooking recipes, myths around their history, and/or sacred foods the consumption of which might have been necessary for the efficacy of specific performances aiming to assure the future¹³ through ancestral blessings or celebrations for the living could have acted as inalienable possessions pertinent to the creation of debts between their guardians and the rest of the community. Finally, orgies of eating and/or drinking with their emotion and sensory stimulations might have acted as effective mnemonic devices (Hamilakis 1998, 1999) for the remembrance and thus the maintenance of debts and structures of influence and attention. In the mortuary context of the West Terrace, the mnemonic power of food consumption might have been further accentuated by the experience of death and its attendant emotions of grief (cf. Hamilakis 1998) while in the South Slope by the exceptional bodily, emotional and sensory experiences that special occasions such as rites of passage generate.

At this point my story-telling of EM Mochlos comes to an end. I will be the first to admit that my analysis has only attended to a particular range of performances, that there are other possibilities of understanding how debt and power relations operated. Neither has it paid attention to the variety of processes through which value was created in the prehistoric community. For example, in the absence of evidence about craft production areas I completely sidestepped the production chapter of the social biography of objects. Likewise, I did not offer any account of the ways in which exotic raw materials like gold, bronze, silver and obsidian among others – entering Mochlos and transformed locally into finished products or the handful of exotic finished artefacts – might have been unevenly acquired among the population. Let us recall Webster's (1990) uneasiness about models that see wealth as instrumental to the creation of relational social inequalities, yet they fail to describe how certain groups and not others get hold of this wealth. I cannot refrain from noting that production and acquisition of the above categories of materials was no doubt quite significant

¹² Weiner (1992: 38) notes, for example, the case of the Warrira of the Papuan coast, where the genealogical history of taro plants constitute sacred inalienable knowledge. Similarly, for the Merina of Madagascar it is inappropriate to alienate rice, by buying it from or selling it to those with whom one has no moral relation (see Bloch 1985: 635).

¹³ The reader may find a beautiful narrative of feasting and drinking as performances assuring the future in Lefebvre (1991).

not only in the creation of value in objects and people but also in the local games of power. Those who attained exotic materials might have been individuals who could entertain, befriend and offer hospitality to foreign visitors. They may have been people who had knowledge of the spells and ritual observances that would ensure a safe journey or success in the harvesting of material. Alternatively they might have been associated with those who traveled and faced the perils of long-distance voyages and people in strange lands (Helms 1988, 1993). Some, having mastered the secrets of metalworking, might have known to work these materials skillfully in order to transform them into finished artefacts. Others might have exploited the need, indifference or naivete of those who had already managed to possess such material wealth and find an opportunity to exchange objects and exotic raw materials for a sack of grain, a secret, or a promise. Unfortunately I cannot offer more than possible fictions – or in the best case – speculations about the initial acquisition of these objects and the raw materials necessary for their production.

Yet, it seems to me that the case of Mochlos confirms my premise that both material and non-material wealth by themselves are necessary, yet not sufficient conditions for the creation of power relations unless they are drawn upon in order to create and remind relations of debt. In other words, the meaning of objects does not lay simply with their ownership but in their enactment or what de Certeau (1984) calls *usage* in specific contexts of social practice. In this framework, the transmission through generations of inalienable possessions, such as ancestral secrets, ritual knowledge and objects associated with the sacred origins, cosmogonic time, or rites of passage, would have sought to ensure the perpetuation of debt obligations, prove their guardians' difference and attracted both firm believers and rivals who wished a share in this power. Still, there is no reason to suppose that this was always a smooth process meeting no resistance, tension or dispute. Let it be made clear that while inalienable possessions serve the subversion of change, at the same time they become agents of change, for as they confer authority to their keepers they constitute objects of desire for others and thus are prone to loss, fabrication and reinterpretation (Weiner 1992: 11).

Conclusion

Inequality in context and implications for further research

The Aegean Bronze Age is commonly treated as a crucial period in European prehistory. This period is assumed to have witnessed the emergence of substantial social inequalities and the forming of state administrative systems of power associated with palatial civilization. Research into the Minoan palace complexes over the last several decades has revealed apparently clear indicators of 'social ranking' and 'stratified' society. On the other hand, what are seen as egalitarian sites or non-state societies are viewed as evolutionary stepping-stones towards complex state societies and inequalities of the palatial times. The appearance of asymmetries is seen as the outcome of agricultural production and the ways in which control over labour and agricultural produce are translated into relations of inequality. Current accounts variously suggest that this process eroded the autonomy of the Domestic Mode of Production forming economic interdependence and the institution of the state. Moreover, the presence or absence of power and inequality is directly inferred, mainly by the presence or absence of wealth in relation to particular segments of society. Wealth is therefore considered as the decisive currency of value that is held not only to reflect but also to construct inequality through its production, circulation and reinvestment in economically productive assets. It is the materially productive dimension of wealth (its investment reproduces the conditions of production), which is considered the cornerstone of the construction of inequality. However, as this study makes clear, there are several problems with respect to this intellectual framework.

As I have argued the reduction of power inequalities to state hegemony leads to a narrow conception of the temporality of power. Power is held to emerge at a specific point in Minoan history during the end of the second or the beginning of the third millennium BC when the *emergence* of specific material realities, such as metal artefacts, rich burials, elaborate mortuary structures and palaces is documented. Thus, power borrows a temporal framework for its existence simply as a coincidence of particular types of wealth and is assumed to be absent when these are missing. At the same time, the emphasis on the materially productive dimension of wealth (namely its connection with a growth of the means of production) presents an uncritical usage of modern capitalist modes of production and consumption which is foisted upon prehistory.

My research programme has tried to challenge the upward-swinging evolutionary model of social change. It has sought to demonstrate that power relations and structures of influence and attention are omnipresent in time and space, operating and manifesting themselves in different contexts of society in different ways. I have therefore not attempted to frame this study around determining a hypothetical starting point of inequality. Non-state societies, I argued, are characterized by unequal relationships but they should be examined for their own sake, not as representing the microcosm of states. The point I wish to make is that there is no emergence of inequalities but different contexts and schemes of valuation concerning the way they were realized, performed, lived, negotiated and materialized in everyday life. I have further argued that the belief in truly 'egalitarian' societies is the intellectual construction of modernity reflecting more the ideological conditioning of modernist thinkers, rather than describing real societies. *There is no such thing as a division between egalitarian and hierarchical social formations but rather societies as moral communities.* Neither is there any historical erosion of a self-sufficient state of being, for insufficiency is inherent to the unfinished nature of human bodies. It is the latter that makes humans to come together in interaction in order to create meaning and understanding. In other words, inequalities or agents of power do not come about because people are inherently bad or good but rather because they seek to make sense of what is good or bad, what is worth of being sought after and what not. Being is not fixed but is recursively formed through processes of valuation always presented within the realm of current social practice. Accordingly, power relations and structures of influence and attention are practical accomplishments.

In this scheme, wealth is a necessary, yet not sufficient condition for the construction of relational inequalities. It is only through the creation of debt obligations that wealth enters into structures of domination. Debts draw upon resources whose significance and value are socially constituted and agreed upon in social interaction and practice. One of my basic ideas is that relational inequalities are not constructed through a universal currency of value. It might be said that the making of power and influence depends on a kind of capital. I defined capital as the capacity to mobilize resources of various kinds in order to create debt obligations and exert influence. But these resources and thus capital, are not confined to economic resources. Rather they may include a range of conventionally unproductive resources, which are used and consumed without reproducing the conditions of production. They might be symbols, knowledge, skills of various kinds, social proximity, rituals, and various goods temporarily accumulated for keeping-while-giving or unproductive spending. Access to such resources did not necessarily build economic capital but may have enabled certain people to accumulate a symbolic capital which could widen their influence, promote their fame within society and create relations of debt.

By developing the above approach in the archaeological context of Early Bronze Age Mochlos in eastern Crete I have sought to bring to light multiple valuation schemes and currencies of value upon which symbolic capital was constructed. These drew upon various material and intangible resources that had different ways of expressing their legitimacy, operated over different spatial contexts of social interaction and created debt obligations and structures of attention and influence in different ways. More specifically, the architectural layout of the West Terrace can be thought of as a theatrical stage able to accommodate public gatherings which revolved around dramas pertinent to the ancestral presence. Here structures of attention and influence were built out of differences in access, bodily position and compartment through the performance of ritual sequences. Additionally, knowledge of the long-standing history of ceremonial activity, which is attested by the Neolithic deposit underneath tomb V may not have been equally shared by all. The deposit may have constituted a means of strategic remembering with respect to specific values of the local community. More importantly, it would have effectively introduced the ancestral presence within the realm of contemporary social practice. The control of this process probably impinged upon issues of group history, descent, inheritance, communal identity and authority. It was a type of information that may have created ostensible debts through its differential sharing. On the South Slope, I discerned the building of debt obligations through access to secret knowledge and specific ritual implements in the course of rites of passage for the living. However, in both sides of the cemetery we noticed a generalised concern with bodily embellishment (Plate 34). On the West Terrace, the target of attention seems to have been the dead body which was accompanied by valuable ornaments made of exotic materials. On the South Slope, again, body beautification and exotic materials were equally present and important, but now through a different medium. The obsidian blades, hoarded in the non-mortuary building N which is close to the *Lustral Basin* suggest grooming or tattooing relevant to initiation rites. Here the target of attention appears to have been the living/becoming body. Both means of bodily embellishment were inalienable possessions. Jewellery was withdrawn from circulation by being offered to the dead, while obsidian, in this particular context, was once and for all consumed on the spot. Thus relational inequalities at Mochlos seem to have been constructed through performances that aimed to enact and reproduce relationships, debts and identities *locally* rather than to speculate upon future extensive economic and socio-political integration.

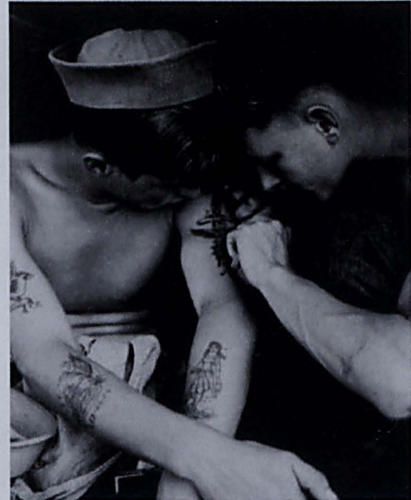
In the end, what I have tried to offer is a renewed view of society and its workings which does not simplistically take the classification between state and non-state societies to stand as an index measuring degrees of social complexity and power intensity. My perception of societies as moral communities and arenas for the enactment of value was hoped to provide an alternative line of understanding to evolutionary paradigms of power and their attendant

Performing Inequality: "... all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts..." W.Shakespeare, As You Like It, II

The West Terrace

Vs.

the South Slope



Bodily embellishment: a) Sophia Schliemann wearing the treasures of Troy (source: The Treasures of Troy: available at <http://www.unmuseum.org/troy.htm>); b Tattooing (source: Atlantic Images).

The West Terrace

Vs.

the South Slope



c) The Ermine Portrait by Nicholas Hilliard (1585) (source: The faces of Elizabeth I, available at <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliz/face>); d) punk band (courtesy of Effi Kartsonaki).

social typologies. Given the time and space limitations of my thesis, the single case study from the prepalatial period has been employed to illustrate that the vision of society I endorse is applicable, yet I offer my approach as a starting point for looking afresh into other Early Bronze Age contexts as well. What now matters is not the hunting down of relational inequalities' origins but their enactment in the realm of social practices.

Afterword: Scope for further research

If what I have suggested was the case at prepalatial Mochlos, and as I strongly believe in other prepalatial contexts as well, what about the palatial state structures of power? Finally, as a means of tying in my work to the broader questions of 'social complexity', I would like to touch on this question through a brief archaeological example from the neopalatial period. In neopalatial times the 'palace' is regarded as a 'prestige artefact': its architectural elaboration is strengthened with frescoes, access to its various quarters becomes restricted, storeroom areas become also restricted, while emphasis is placed on ceremonial gathering and the display of exotic paraphernalia more than ever (see Moody 1987; Driessen 1995). Palatial features appear in many places on the island in many variations, from the smaller and the less typical palaces of Gournia and Zakros to many *Villas* around Knossos and elsewhere. Significantly, palatial-style architecture is taken to be the insignium *par excellence* of Late Bronze Age ruling elites, since palaces and villas are assumed to be the socio-political pivots of economic regulation.

Within such 'palatial-style architecture' it is possible to compare the tendency to employ standardised features against local improvisation in building techniques and combinations of these features. Standardised features are hall systems, porticoes, lustral basins, an emphasis on the control of access, and frescoes. On the other hand, when all these features are realised, local building materials are used. Accordingly, the end result might have been entirely different. For example, the so called cultic *villa* at Makrygialos (see Davaras 1992, 1997) bears a rustic impression which is rather different from the well-paved courts at Nirou Khani and Vathypetro (see Cadogan 1992b). (Plate 35a). Apart from the different degrees of labour investment, one may see two codes of reference: A) standard features that relate to the circulation of bodies and practical functions. B) Building materials that create a visual contrast and overall emotional experience. Standard features allowed visitors to penetrate buildings more easily and for example, may actually have provided people from Knossos a privileged stance as they came from the palace that constituted the best example of palace-style architecture. On the other hand, the overall rustic feeling of some buildings projected by local building materials may have indicated to an individual coming from Knossos a sense of difference and perhaps caution, as they were entering a different arena of power. As the

violent destruction of the Palaikastro *kouros* (see MacGillivray and Sackett 1991), an assumed emblem signifying Knossian influence, has indicated, attempts to promote Knossian supremacy did not pass uncontested to say the least (Plate 35b). Interestingly, a similar tendency has been observed for neopalatial Mochlos where there is evidence for the violent and deliberate destruction of an ashlar (Plate 36a). This was located in Building B.2 which has been described as a ceremonial centre and the central building of the settlement, since it bears several elements of palatial architecture such as ashlar masonry and pillar crypts (see Soles 1999).

In current accounts the examples of prepalatial Mochlos and neopalatial architecture I have considered represent steps towards the development of early states. In the first example, Mochlos is presumed to represent an Early Bronze Age pre-state society with less rigid structures of power. In the second, Late Bronze Age architecture is assumed to come from a proto-state context.

The question now becomes, what is the difference between the two examples? At Mochlos, value was constructed through the consumption and deliberate deposition of objects in the course of rites of passage. Such inalienable possessions stabilised time and space because their deposition and metaphysical dedication became a widely accepted point of reference and thus validated the cosmology and the political history of Mochlos. Furthermore, there is a contrast between the exotic character of gold and obsidian on one hand and the participation of these exotica on the other, in the local mapping of identities through reference to dead ancestors, and thus lineage and local history. *Mochlos*, then, may be characterised as a *closely knit community*, concerned with intensifying the boundaries of what constituted local identity. The reproduction of social relations at Mochlos aimed to fix the place of each of the members of the community within its boundaries.

In the case of *neopalatial architecture*, a different trend may be noted. Relations *radiate outwards*, to a larger, island-wide scale, through the spreading of the same architectural vocabulary. However, the integrative and regulatory capacity of palatial architecture might have been undermined by its very spread, since local building materials may have produced end-results, that is buildings, significantly different from the original organisational principle that sought to tie them together. Such diversity allowed alternative codes of value to spring forth from the very interstices of the dominating discourse. To the extent that the state is thought to reinforce its boundaries, such reinforcement is better attested at the assumed pre-state Mochlos than in the era of the New Palaces (Plate 36b).

What, then, sets state societies apart from pre-state ones? I admit that I feel rather uneasy with such distinctions. The state is not an object that happens in certain socio-historical contexts in order to end a primitive kind of freedom. What we may be seeing is different valuation schemes. Such schemes, their knowledge and appropriation define humanity in

Vathypetro



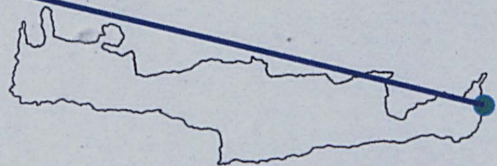
Makrygialos



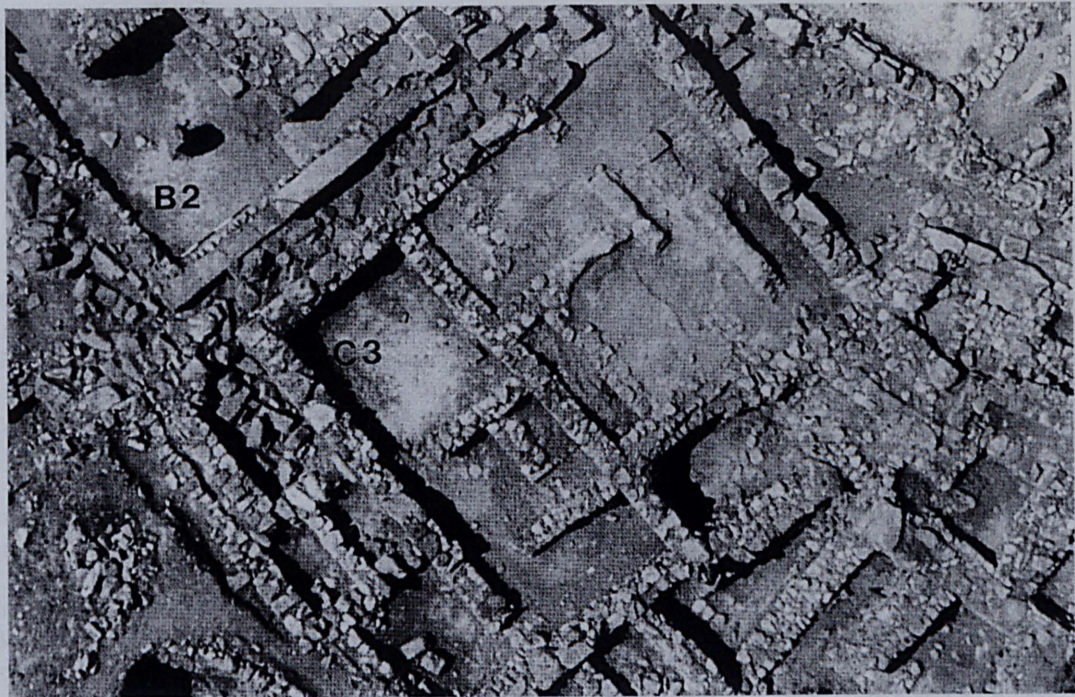
a) The villas at Vathypetro (source: Cadogan 1992: 248, Fig 42.3) and Makrygialos (source: Davaras 1992: 173, Fig. 23.2).



'Knossians go home!'

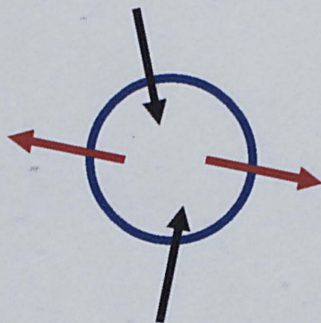


b) The Palaikastro Kouros (source: MacGillivray and Sackett 1991, Plate 9).

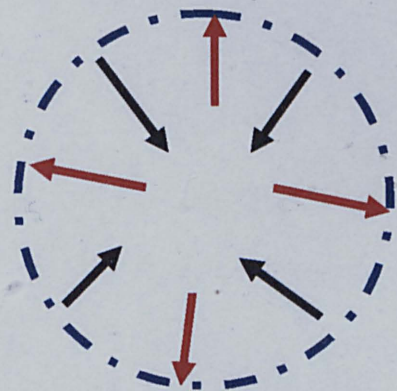


a) Aerial view of the destruction of Buildings B.2 showing ashlar blocks lying in streets (source: Soles 1999, Plate IVa).

'Pre-state' Mochlos



'Proto-state' Palatial society



b) Mochlos as more close knit community versus the state as a more permeable entity.

certain manners, fix identities and people within specific boundaries and build power relations and structures of influence. However, if the state is a form of extensive power over far-flung territories (Mann 1986), in the specific context of our examples, such extensification lacked the tight crafting of earlier political formations. This implies a quantitative rather than qualitative transformation from simple and less effective to complex and more rigid structures of power, since the assumed pre-state Mochlos achieved a firmer grip on the imposition of socially accepted values. Nonetheless, reducing the question of state to the issue of scale does not leave me content. As a result, and instead of an answer, I would like to offer these thoughts as a starting point for further discussion. I end by saying that if the state is kept as a concept, research has to do justice to the complexity of early societies and certainly focus upon the importance of carving out boundaries through the enactment of value in performances presented in the realm of current social practice.

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