SOCIAL ARENAS IN MINOAN CRETE.

A REGIONAL HISTORY OF THE MESARA IN SOUTH-CENTRAL CRETE FROM THE FINAL NEOLITHIC TO THE END OF THE PROTOPALATIAL PERIOD.

Volume 1: Chapters 1 to 6

Dissertation submitted for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Date of submission: December 2003

Στους γονείς μου
και το James

SUMMARY

Minoan archaeology is dominated by the study of Palaces. The establishment of such monumental structures with assumed central authority across the island of Crete at the beginning of the MBA has promoted historical questions which focus exclusively on the emergence of social complexity. Almost without exception such studies have been framed within a regional background. However, although Region has been considered the scale of analysis *par excellence* for understanding the rise of the Palaces, a more thorough investigation of the dynamics which generate regional patterns seems to be lacking in current studies.

This thesis argues that the directionality imposed to Minoan studies by the focus on palatial emergence generates inadequate accounts of social change. Moreover, the uncritical equation of regional conformities with social integration, reduces regionalism to an accidental phenomenon and impedes the investigation of the relationship between local and wider processes. An alternative approach is put forward whereby social practices are at the centre of inquiry. It is argued that social relations are negotiated through particular social practices which prove more relevant for the articulation of identities, thereby becoming *social arenas*. The recurrent investment in common social arenas through time generates particular understandings of region as a sense of community. Region is perceived here as an ongoing process of belonging and not as the concentration of people and objects in a bounded geographical area.

The Mesara in south-central Crete has been considered the 'ultimate' region in Minoan studies by virtue of its distinct topography and its unique cultural pattern. The thesis examines the social processes which generated such an impression of regionalism for the Mesara, from the FN to the end of the Protopalatial period. It is argued that the scale at which belonging was practised, marked the extent and the density of the relevant region. The emergence of the First Palace of Phaistos is re-evaluated through this alternative perspective. It is suggested that the geographical distinctiveness of the Mesara did not always warrant the social cohesion of its communities. Instead the Mesara consisted of different regions throughout its history, which reflected the scale at which community was felt and actively performed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME 1

Summary I

Contents II

Acknowledgements VI

List of Tables VIII

List of Figures IX

CHAPTER 1: The Minoan Paradigm

1.1. Introduction 1

1.2. Archaeological Paradigms 3

1.3. The politics of the past: the emergence of Greek Archaeology 5

1.4. A land called Crete 8

1.5. Paths to complexity 12

1.6. Complexity reclaimed 18

1.7. The structure of the thesis 23

CHAPTER 2: Society and Region: a reconsideration

2.1. The object of study: the archaeological record and understandings of society 30

2.1.1. Archaeology and society 34

2.1.2. Unity of Science and systemic explanation 37

2.2. Regions in archaeology 43

2.2.1. How is a region defined? 44

2.2.2. Region as Nature 46

2.2.3. Society as Region 50

2.2.3.1. The nature of change 54

2.2.3.2. Scale and History 55

2.2.4. A way out of the tunnel? 57

2.3. "A walk on the wild side": Surveys and the production of regional categories 58

2.3.1. Field Surveys in Aegean Archaeology 59

2.3.2. Troubled Sites 62
2.3.3. Overestimated settlement patterns 67
2.3.3.1. The nature of the settlement 67
2.3.3.2. Settlement patterns 69
2.3.4. Regional and social categories 71

CHAPTER 3: Beyond Settlement Patterns: Social Arenas and the construction of community

3.1. Changing perceptions of society 73
3.1.1. Order and the perception of society 74
3.1.2. Beyond Society: Overlapping Orderings 79
3.1.3. Introducing an alternative methodology 83
3.1.4. Social Arenas 88
3.2. Networks of relevance and the construction of community. 91
3.2.1 Community and locality 92
3.2.1.1. *Communal* Myths 95
3.2.1.2. "Chauvinists are those who think that their home is better than Palaikastro": Locality as a structure of belonging 97
3.2.2. Networks of Relevance 100
3.3. Why was the Mesara different? 102

CHAPTER 4: Becoming Regional: the Neolithic Background

4.1. A *background* for what? 104
4.2. Neolithic Mesara: setting the questions 106
4.3. A FN 'settlement pattern' 111
4.3.1. Phaistos 112
4.3.2. Asterousia 120
4.3.2.1. House at Kala Selia/ Kaloi Limenes 120
4.3.2.2. The cave at Miamou 121
4.3.2.3. Ay. Kyriaki and other sites in the Asterousia 123
4.3.3. The coastal area around Kommos 124
4.4. An emergent *Region* 124

CHAPTER 5: Early Prepalatial Networks of Relevance

5.1. 'A brave new world' 131

5.2. What's new? The EMI social landscapes 136

5.2.1. The Mountains 137

5.2.2. The plain 144

5.3. Death on the loose : Funerals, Drinking and the *Region* in EMI. 151

5.3.1. Persisting habits 152

5.3.2. Changing networks of relevance 153

5.3.3. Why change? Belonging by dying 158

5.4. Contracting *regions*, expanding *places*: the EMII period 160

5.4.1. Lowlands... 160

5.4.2. .....and highlands 164

CHAPTER 6: Late Prepalatial Social Arenas

6.1. The Late Prepalatial 'hangover' 168

6.2. A note on chronology 169

6.3. How many *regions*? 171

6.3.1. Emerging places 172

6.3.2. Objects that mattered 176

6.3.3. Consolation drinks? 183

6.4. Nucleation revisited 189

6.4.1. Land, labour, elites 193

6.5. "For all tomorrow's parties": Wine, Patrikies and the emergence of the First Palace at Phaistos. 199

6.5.1. 'Wine that maketh glad the heart of man' 198

6.5.2. Patrikies: a MM settlement? 204

6.6. Contested regions, new arenas 213

VOLUME 2

CHAPTER 7: Let there be integration: the First Palace at Phaistos

7.1. Sudden Impact? The rise of the Palaces 215

7.2. Palatial emergence: regional and wider processes 220

7.3. The Old Palace at Phaistos: a labyrinth of stratigraphy 223

7.3.1. Palatial Architecture: practice and meaning 227

7.4. The emergence of a 'Great Triangle'? Inhabiting the Protopalatial hinterland 237

CHAPTER 8: Consuming power – consumed by power: palatial authority in action

8.1. Palatial authority in action 250

8.2. Consuming power – consumed by power: the strategies of producing and consuming Kamares Ware in Protopalatial Mesara 252

8.3. Administrating identities: the *Archivio di Cretule* at Phaistos 263

8.4. Persuasion, Coercion, Co-operation: the different faces of Palatial authority during the Old Palace period in the Mesara. 278

CHAPTER 9: One Region in time? 285

Abbreviations 298

Bibliography 300

Tables

Figures

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Three people have been particularly important in me taking up and finishing this thesis. My thesis supervisor, Peter Day, who remembered me in one of my darkest hours, gave me the opportunity to return to Sheffield and to research, and supervised, discussed and supported every part of the project. Stratos Nanoglou, who, apart from being a devoted friend all these years (and a good source of infuriatingly detailed archaeological knowledge), introduced me to the idea of social arenas that provided the seeds for the theme of the thesis. And finally, and most importantly, James Hollingsworth who gave me the best reason to stay in England, supported my fieldwork with remarkable enthusiasm and remained patient through the hardships of long working hours and 'wasted week-ends'. His love and support have been the most precious 'funding' I had these four years.

I have a considerable intellectual debt to my thesis co-supervisor, John Barrett, particularly for the development of the theoretical part of the dissertation. Throughout my studies I have benefited from the help of many colleagues on various topics: Paul Halstead has been very helpful in providing comments on some ideas about the Neolithic in the Mesara; Peter Tomkins kindly responded to my questions about the Neolithic material of Knossos; Professor L.V. Watrous commented on some of the ideas of the thesis as I presented them in the Sheffield Round Table for Aegean Archaeology. I am also grateful to Professor K. Branigan for providing me with an unpublished paper on the Mesara. Simona Todaro kindly contributed information concerning her work in progress at Phaistos and sent me her unpublished paper on EM Ag. Triada. The ideas developed in the thesis greatly benefited from my discussions with Yiannis Papadatos, Despoina Catapoti, Michalis Catapotis, Eleni Nodarou, Giorgos Vavouranakis, Yiannis Hamilakis, and Ben Chan. By far my greatest debt, though, is to Olia Peperaki who generously shared her ideas with me and discussed many of my 'crises' over several gin-and-tonics. I am most grateful for both her 'intellectual contribution' and her friendship.

Through all the years of my Ph.D. I have been fortunate to have the support of many 'families': my 'Sheffield family', the most permanent members of which, Yiannis Papadatos and Eleni Nodarou have graced me with their unconditional support and friendship even from several miles away, but also Sotiria Dandou and Aris Pagourtzis, and last but not least, with the most valuable knowledge of PhotoShop and cheese-pie, Christina Tsoraki. My 'Leicester family', Janet, Terry, Victoria and Rene, have been

most generous in making me feel at home and most patient with my never-ending work. To my friends in Leicester, James, Sarah, Guy, and Saif who have been most supportive and understanding all these years, I owe a big thank you. My gratitude also goes to my friends in Greece, mostly my 'koumpara', Demi, Sophia and Dimitra for putting up with my endless moaning and misery, and never being able to plan a summer holiday; I will make it up to you this summer! Most of all my real, unique family: my Granny (despite her suspiciousness of everything archaeological), uncles and aunties in Crete whom I consistently 'robbed' for 'ethnographic' parallels and inspiration; my cousin, Zenia, for the endless phone calls of hysterical laughing; my brother, for his inexhaustible sense of humour and patience with my constant complaining and worrying (and good hand-made CDs); most of all, my parents who lovingly supported me in every possible way all these years, never questioned my choices and waited long enough for a 'big fat, Greek wedding'. I thank them for everything.

The work for this thesis had been conducted with the financial support of a scholarship from the Institute of State Scholarships of the Hellenic Republic (IKY).

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 4.1: FN Phaistos, summary of stratigraphy.
TABLE 4.2: FN Phaistos, summary of architecture and features of the settlement.
TABLE 4.3: FN Phaistos, distribution of walls in LNS and UNS.
TABLE 4.4: FN Phaistos, distribution of floors in LNS and UNS.
TABLE 4.5: FN Phaistos, distribution of hearths in LNS and UNS.
TABLE 4.6: The extent of the two Neolithic strata on the hill of Phaistos.
TABLE 4.7: Summary of features of the Lower Neolithic Stratum.
TABLE 4.8: Summary of features of the Upper Neolithic Stratum.
TABLE 4.9: Final neolithic Sites in the Mesara.
TABLE 5.1: Settlements and tombs in the Kaloi Limenes, Ayiofarango and Moni Odigitria areas.
TABLE 5.2: EM material from the FN soundings at Phaistos.
TABLE 5.3: The date of tholos tombs in the Mesara.
TABLE 5.4: Concordance of surveys in the Asterousia.
TABLE 5.5: Ayiofarango: soil and site concordance.
TABLE 5.6a: Mesara tholoi: comparison of size, location and chronology.
TABLE 5.6b: Comparison of tholos tombs according to their size and foundation date; comparison of tholos tombs according to their size and location.
TABLE 7.1: MM settlements in the wider Mesara region.
TABLE 7.2: Tholos cemeteries in use after MMI.
TABLE 7.3: First Palace of Phaistos: synthesis of contrasting opinions about the Protopalatial phasing (after Warren & Hankey 1989, table 2.4, p. 49).
TABLE 7.4: First Palace of Phaistos: synchronization of the Protopalatial phases (after Van de Moortel 1998, table 3, p. 305).
TABLE 7.5: Reconstruction of the building phases of the First Palace of Phaistos integrating Levi's and Evans' chronological phases (after Fiandra 1961-62).
TABLE 7.6: Middle Minoan remains in the town of Phaistos.
TABLE 8.1: Activity of different seal owners in the sealing archive from Phaistos (data after Fiandra 1968; Weingarten 1994a; seal numbers from Levi 1957-58a).
TABLE 8.2: The sealings from the archive of Phaistos (data from Fiandra 1968: 386).
TABLE 8.3: Distributions of sealings on different objects from the archive of Phaistos (data from Fiandra 1968: 387-391).

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1: Diachronic comparison of Regions/Societies: successive social systems ('societies') occupying the same region in time.

Fig. 2.2: Synchronic comparison of Regions/Societies: co-existing different regions as represented by the distribution of Minoan Palaces (after Cherry 1986, fig. 2.2).

Fig. 2.3: The causal relationship postulated between social and spatial patterns.

Fig. 2.4: The presumed hierarchy of spatial structures translated into social hierarchy. The arrows indicate the direction of control (higher/larger entities determining the operation of lower/smaller entities).

Fig. 2.5: Dewar and McBride's experiment of 'remnant settlement patterns' (after Dewar & McBride 1992, fig. 1). The experiment is based on the idea that the periodical re-occupation of an area at short- and medium-term temporal scales may act as a site formation factor. The regular revisiting of a specific area without, however, settling precisely on top of the previous occupation, can be seen to generate three different 'settlement patterns': a first, where there appears to be no long term change since people have settled each time in the exact location of the earlier site; a second, where the relocation is only minor (resettling happens very near the previous occupation), so that it gives the impression of an increase in site number, in a nucleated way; and a third, where relocation has been quite extensive and creates the impression of a dispersed habitation.

Fig. 4.1: FN Phaistos, extent of the Lower Neolithic Stratum (coloured areas), with distribution of walls, floors and hearths in the different soundings (adapted from Vagnetti 1972-73, fig. 1).

Fig. 4.2: FN Phaistos, extent of the Upper Neolithic Stratum (coloured areas) with distribution of walls, floors and hearths in the different soundings (adapted from Vagnetti 1972-73, fig. 1).

Fig. 4.3: FN Phaistos, Stratigraphy of Trench VI. The coloured areas represent stone paved floors (after Vagnetti 1972-73, fig. 19).

Fig. 4.4: FN Phaistos, Stratigraphy of Trench VII. The coloured areas represent stone paved floors (after Vagnetti 1972-73, fig. 20).

Fig. 4.5: FN Phaistos, 'Retaining' wall in Trench VIII (after Vagnetti 1972-73, fig. 23).

Fig. 4.6: FN Phaistos, Remains of wall in Trench II (after Vagnetti 1972-73, fig.7).

Fig. 4.7: FN Phaistos, Remains of wall in Trench III (after Vagnetti 1972-73, fig. 16).

Fig. 4.8: FN Phaistos, Hearth in Trench II (after Vagnetti 1972-73, fig. 12).

Fig. 4.9: FN house at Kala Selia, Kaloi Limenes (after Vasilakis 1987, plan 1).

Fig. 4.10: Neolithic Cave at Miamou, stratigraphy (after Taramelli 1897, fig. 5).

Fig. 4.11: Neolithic Cave at Miamou, stratigraphy (after Taramelli 1897, fig. 6).

Fig. 4.12: Ag. Kyriaki tholos, pre-tomb FN occupation shown in colour (adapted from *Ag. Kyriaki*, fig. 15).

Fig. 4.13: Map showing the distribution of Neolithic sites in the Mesara.

Fig. 4.14: FN Phaistos, bottle and necked jar (after Vagnetti 1972-73, fig. 67, 17-18).

Fig. 4.15: FN Phaistos, necked jars and bottles combining more than one decorative technique (after Vagnetti 1972-73, fig. 76, 1-2).

Fig. 5.1: Distribution of tholos tombs in the Mesara according to their foundation date.
Fig. 5.2: Distribution of Early Minoan sites in the Moni Odigitria area. Tholos tombs are indicated in red and settlements are shown in blue (adapted from *Periochi Odigitrias*, map 2).
Fig. 5.3: Map of Ayiofarango showing clustering of sites near the tholos tombs (adapted from *Ayiofarango*, fig. 34).
Fig 5.4: Sites E11, E12, and E18 in Ayiofarango (after *Ayiofarango*, figs. 13, 14, 18).
Fig. 5.5: Distribution of Early Minoan sites (shown in red) in the Kommos region (adapted from *Kommos I*, fig. 7.47).
Fig. 5.6: EM scatter at Vigles; sites 6, 70 and 133 (after *Kommos I*, fig. 7.49).
Fig. 5.7: Prepalatial remains in Ag. Triada: cemetery, EM settlement and EM deposits (adapted from La Rosa 1979-80, fig. 1).
Fig. 5.8: Prepalatial houses at Ag. Triada (after *Ancient Crete*, fig. 200).
Fig. 5.9: EMIIA pithos from the West House at Ag. Triada (after *Ancient Crete*, fig. 201).
Fig. 5.10: Tholos tombs at Lebena Yerokambos (after Alexiou 1961-62a, fig. 1).
Fig. 5.11: The Prepalatial settlement of Trypeti (after Vasilakis 1995, fig. 1).
Fig. 6.1: Map of Western Mesara with locations of Phaistos, Ag. Triada and Patrikies (after Levi 1961-62, fig. 2).
Fig. 6.2: The Moni Odigitria Cemetery (after Vasilakis 1992, fig. 30.2).
Fig. 6.3: The Ag. Triada cemetery: Tholos A, annexes, *camerette*, and the recently excavated rooms *a-c* (after La Rosa 2001, plate LXXII).
Fig. 6.4: Tholos tombs with incorporated long antechamber at Apesokari I, Platanos B and Sopata Kouse (after Branigan 1970, figs. 2 and 28, and Vallianou 1989, fig. 4).
Fig. 6.5: Tholos tombs A and C, at Kamilari (after Branigan 1970, fig. 21 and Branigan 1976, fig. 1).
Fig. 6.6: Clay model of dancers from Kamilari Tholos A (after Levi 1961-62, fig. 174a-b).
Fig. 6.7: Miniature clay vats from the cemeteries at Ag. Triada and Apesokari, possibly used as wine presses (after La Rosa 2001, plate LXXIVd; Kopaka & Platon 1993, fig. 4).
Fig. 6.8: The site of Patrikies showing the triangular ceramic deposit, the road and the building (adapted from Bonacasa 1967-68, plates I-II).
Fig. 6.9: The main teapot shapes from Patrikies (after *FCM I*, Plate 15).
Fig. 7.1: Map of Mesara showing tholos cemeteries in use after MMI and the distribution of MM settlements.
Fig. 7.2: Moni Odigitria area: distribution of cemeteries in use after MMI and MM settlements (adapted from *Periochi Odigitrias*, map 2).
Fig. 7.3: Coastal Area around Kommos: distribution of MM sites (adapted from *Kommos I*, fig. 7.47)
Fig. 7.4: Reconstruction of the First Palace of Phaistos showing difference of level between the NW and the SW wings (after Tomasello 1999, fig. 2).
Fig. 7.5: Plan of the Palace of Phaistos highlighting the Protopalatial remains at the end of MMIIB (adapted from Fiandra 1980, plate 29).
Fig. 7.6: First Palace of Phaistos, plan of building of Phase 1/MMIB (after Fiandra 1961-62, plate IZ).

Fig. 7.7: First Palace of Phaistos, plan of building of Phase 2/MMIIA (after Fiandra 1961-62, plate KΘ).
Fig. 7.8: First Palace of Phaistos, plan of building of Phase 3/ MMIIB (after Fiandra 1961-62, plates KE and KΓ; and Fiandra 1980, plates 29).
Fig. 7.9: Stratigraphy of Protopalatial Rooms LIX, LX, LXIV and Court LXX showing the rise of floor levels from Phase 1/MMIB to Phase 3/MMIIB; the asterisks indicate the locations where pottery was retrieved (after Fiandra 1980: plate 27).
Fig. 7.10: Palace of Phaistos. General plan including remains of all periods; remains of the settlement to the West and South-West of the Palace.
Fig. 7.11: Building remains in the Protopalatial settlement at Apesokari (after Schörgendorfer 1951, plate 27).
Fig. 7.12: The extent of the Protopalatial town at Kommos (after *Kommos I,2*, Plate 1.2).
Fig. 7.13: Remains of Protopalatial Building AA at Kommos (after Rutter 2001, fig. 1).
Fig. 7.14: Plan of the Neopalatial town of Ag. Triada; the numbers indicate the distribution of Protopalatial deposits and remains, Latin numbers indicate the soundings (after Carinci 1999, fig. 1)
Fig. 7.15: Ag. Triada cemetery: Tholos A and *camerette* (after Cultraro 2000, plate 3).
Fig. 8.1: Kamares Ware 'feasting set': crater, fruit bowl and jug with similar decoration (after *FCM I*, Plate XXVII).
Fig. 8.2: Repertoire of Protopalatial vessel shapes from Phaistos: jugs; cups; (after *FCM I*, plates 77, 81).
Fig. 8.3: Repertoire of Protopalatial vessel shapes from Phaistos: bridge-spouted jars (after *FCM I*, plate 110).
Fig. 8.4: Repertoire of Protopalatial vessel shapes from Phaistos, 'rare' shapes: louteres and sieves (after *FCM I*, plates 55, 114).
Fig. 8.5: Small jugs with decoration of two pairs of lance-shaped leaves found together with the sealing archive underneath Room 25, at the Palace of Phaistos (after *FCM I*, plate 97)
Fig. 8.6: The correlations of sealings, objects sealed and different seals per object in the Archive of the First Palace of Phaistos (data from Fiandra 1968; see also Table 8.3).
Fig. 8.7: Correlation of Prepalatial seal motifs (by cemetery) with seals found in the Archive of the First Palace at Phaistos (adapted from Xanthoudides 1924; Banti 1930-31; CMS II.5)
Fig. 8.8a: Related variant seals from the *Archivio di Cretule* at Phaistos (seals after CMS II.5, nos. 155, 156, 157).
Fig. 8.8b: Look-alike seals from the *Archivio di Cretule* at Phaistos (seals after CMS II.5 nos. 68, 69, 268, 269/second leader seal motif).
Fig. 8.9: The Second Palace at Phaistos (after Driessen & MacDonald 1997, fig. 7.55)
Fig. 9.1: Distribution of modern pottery kilns in the Mesara (after Watrous *et al.* 1993, fig. 2).
Fig. 9.2: A potter's reputation survives for a long time.

CHAPTER 1

THE MINOAN PARADIGM

1.1. Introduction

> "Problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known" (Wittgenstein, quoted in Tornqvist 1981: 109)

A striking feature of Minoan archaeology is that it constitutes one of the most clearly defined branches of archaeology, in the Aegean, or generally. This is because it is constructed around a historical problem entirely unique to it; the emergence of palatial civilisation. Every aspect of the archaeological record of prehistoric Crete is defined in relation to the Palaces, even when palaces are not present, e.g., the Pre-palatial and Post-palatial periods. Prominent problems concern their operation and organisation (e.g. Hägg & Marinatos 1987), but equally important have been questions regarding their emergence (e.g. Renfrew 1972; Branigan 1988a), collapse and absence (e.g. Rehak & Younger 2001), while other areas of the Aegean and broader archaeological topics, such as exchange, have been viewed through a Minoan prism (e.g. Hägg & Marinatos 1984).

Such 'palatial' preoccupation has imposed a distinct directionality in Minoan studies. The historical questions we find ourselves asking seem to lead inevitably to different aspects of 'palatial' problems. In addition, archaeological investigation for more than a century has continued to bring to light new evidence, new material, and new 'palaces', creating a rather convoluted 'palatial landscape' which appears in need of drastic re-examination. Moreover, archaeological inquiry in general has witnessed substantial changes with the introduction of more precise field methods which included the careful collection and examination of palaeo-ecological and palaeo-anthropological data,

innovations concerning chronology and the consistent conduct of surface surveys. Apart from enhancing significantly the detail and the accuracy of the archaeological evidence available to us, such developments also underlined the possibility and necessity of new interpretations of the Minoan past. However, none of these transformations took the focus away from the Palaces.

Such persistence may be explained by the fact that the answers we have come across are incomplete or inadequate. Hardly ever, though, has the possibility that we may be asking inappropriate questions been entertained, although this has started to change in recent years (Hamilakis 1995a; 2002b; Driessen *et al.* 2002). An obvious question at this point may be, why should the focus be removed from the palaces? Although it is increasingly recognised among Minoan scholars that such buildings may not be 'palaces' in the sense that Evans and his contemporaries understood them, the introduction of these structures represents an important historical change in Minoan society, which cannot be overlooked. However, it is their *centrality* in the formulation of research questions that should be re-evaluated.

Such a re-assessment of research questions within Minoan archaeology proves necessary for two reasons: first, it seems that the more we learn about Palaces and Minoan society in general, the more the interpretations provided so far appear weak and flawed. In the course of a century new discoveries have enriched the archaeological record, while a consistent body of research has greatly added to our knowledge of Minoan archaeology. It is therefore natural that many of the initial perceptions of the Palaces should require reassessment. However, such reassessment is incomplete if it does not include a re-evaluation of analytical categories and research goals that are no longer pertinent to contemporary archaeological inquiry; 'palaces' and the understandings of society that they reflect are among such analytic categories.

The discovery of new archaeological evidence, therefore, is not the only source of the insufficiency of current interpretations and the consistent occurrence of 'anomalies' in the archaeological record of Crete. The theoretical framework according to which explanations have been suggested also needs reconsideration. Although Minoan

scholars have risen magnificently to the challenge of keeping up with new discoveries, a critical assessment of the theoretical models used to interpret such evidence has not been attempted, but only in a few, recent cases (e.g. Hamilakis 2002b; Haggis 2002; Driessen 2002; Schoep 2002a; Day & Relaki 2002).

This 'resistance' to self-critical theoretical reappraisal is not a feature unique to Minoan archaeology, but rather characterises Aegean archaeology in general (Kotsakis 1991). Moreover, such neglect for theory can be shown to derive from the precise historical contexts within which Aegean (and Minoan) archaeology was born at the beginning of the 20th century. However, such circumstances are no longer pertinent, and archaeological questions which reproduce these initial concerns are bound to incite insufficient answers. This is not to argue that Minoan archaeology has remained in stagnation since its inception, but rather to pinpoint that, since pre-existing models have proven inadequate, it is perhaps time to follow alternative routes. The re-consideration of the centrality of palaces in our research designs constitutes such an alternative.

However, before we proceed to a reassessment of our research goals, it is imperative that we understand how the existing questions and models came about. It is only the understanding of the specific historical circumstances within which such questions emerged that will allow us to appreciate both the contribution and the limitations of earlier approaches. It is argued that Minoan archaeology developed as a scientific paradigm which went through a series of intellectual transformations that brought us to our current archaeological concerns. Therefore, it is essential to understand how the central questions of each paradigmatic phase were constructed if we are to comprehend fully why current models need reformulation.

1.2. Archaeological Paradigms

Kuhn (1970) introduced paradigms as a way of elucidating the process of scientific revolutions. A paradigm consists of a universally accepted body of theories

accompanied by a set of methods and standards of measurement commonly held by a scientific community. Kuhn distinguished three phases in the development of a discipline: the pre-paradigm, the first-paradigm or 'normal science', and the new paradigm or 'scientific revolution'. In the first stage, several competing theories and points of view coexist, without any of them being generally accepted as a comprehensive system of knowledge production. At some point one school will prevail over the others, thus forming the "first paradigm". At this stage the content, the aims and the methods of the particular discipline are laid out, to which the scientific community will have to conform. However, it is rarely the case that the agenda is so explicitly set and usually the first paradigms do not claim to explain everything, leaving thus open ways for 'anomalies' or 'novelties' to emerge (Sterud 1973: 6). This is the stage that Kuhn names 'normal science' where the initial assumptions and principles are so embedded into the theoretical framework of the disciplines that are taken for granted. Scientists thus proceed by undertaking a kind of 'puzzle solving', dealing with rather minor problems pertaining to particular aspects of the discipline. A new paradigm occurs when 'anomalies' start appearing repeatedly and cannot be addressed successfully through the existing framework. A change in paradigm involves the reassessing of the existing principles and very often their abandonment, introducing in this sense an entirely different, or 'revolutionary' perception of the world.

Even though Kuhn did not believe that this model could be applied as such in the study of humanities, a number of archaeologists recognised in it a suitable way to account for the intellectual development of archaeology through time (Sterud 1973; Morris 1994; Kardulias 1994b). Although it must be acknowledged that there are difficulties in writing a history of archaeological thought in such a manner (Trigger 1989: 5-6), the concept remains enlightening for understanding the process of formulating archaeological questions. One of the most important criticisms of this model concerns Kuhn's reluctance to recognise the historical and social context within which scientists work as equally influential for the development of sciences (Morris 1994: 13). In the case of Greek archaeology, such 'external' factors have sometimes proven even more powerful than the scientific framework within which archaeologists worked.

Binford and Sabloff (1982) modified Kuhnian views by suggesting that the complexity of the archaeological discipline results in competing schools rather than a single paradigm. However, as such schools usually draw upon a unified body of theory, it is possible to recognise in them different archaeological paradigms. Greek archaeology constitutes such a paradigm whereby more specialised fields within it can be seen as independent enough to form a kind of 'sub-paradigm'. These specialised fields are traditionally distinguished according to two basic criteria: the geographical setting of 'cultural groups' (e.g. Cycladic civilisation), and broad chronological distinctions, the main one being between prehistoric and historic periods. Minoan archaeology can be described as such a 'sub-paradigm', clearly defined as the Bronze Age archaeology of the island of Crete.

The construction of the Minoan paradigm had been influenced primarily by the following factors: a) the historical conditions of the emergence of the Greek state and the annexation of Crete to it later on; b) contemporary perceptions of Classical antiquity; and c) the general theoretical frameworks of science at the time. All factors proved influential to varied degrees, but the political circumstances at the time of the newly-established Greek state had a paramount role in the birth of archaeology in Greece.

1.3. The politics of the past: the emergence of Greek Archaeology

> "... the archaeology of Greece as it has been structured for the last hundred years is the product of a particular set of historical circumstances.... that ... are now passing away." (Morris 1994: 44)

The Greek State rose as an institutional entity at the first half of the 19th century after a decade of struggle against the Ottoman Empire. In light of the dominant political philosophy in Western Europe at that time, it was organised explicitly according to principles of nation statehood, therefore requiring a firm foundation upon which to base national identity. The ethnic purity of a nation residing in a specific geographic area was the main criterion on which nation-states were granted political recognition. However,

although 18th and 19th century Classicist and Romanticist intellectual movements emphasized the importance of Classical Greece for the creation of European identity (Morris 1994: 16-18; Goldhill 2002), in the eyes of most Europeans, there was a clear distinction between the modern inhabitants of Greece and their classical ancestors. What evidence did the largely rural and illiterate population of 19th century Greece have which might connect them to their ancient predecessors (Herzfeld 1986: 6)?

When the Greek War of Independence broke out at 1821, many of the romantic 'Philhellenes' who rushed to get involved in the 'just cause' were faced with a local population which was far removed from their idealist perceptions of the "Hellenes". Fallmereyer's theory about the origin of modern Greeks from 'byzantinised Slavs', had already had an impact on European intellectuals, who were thus looking upon modern 'Hellenes' with feelings of contempt and disrespect (Herzfeld 1986: 75-81). In response to such contemptuous attitudes, a survivalist argument was put forward by the nascent Greek intelligentsia maintaining that the modern state rested upon an ancient foundation that had survived unharmed among the rural populations of modern Greece (Herzfeld 1987: 10). Cultural continuity emerged as the ingenious solution to explicitly political problems.

Such continuity was to be justified and demonstrated in a number of ways. Herzfeld (1986) highlighted the importance of ethnography and folklore studies for this purpose. The collection of oral traditions and aspects of vernacular life constituted the core of such studies, always with the explicit aim to illustrate an unequivocal connection between the present and the Classical past. In this effort, Herzfeld crucially remarks that Greek folklorists were blessed by "a rich *archaeological record* which enhanced an already surprisingly large assortment of scraps of oral literature preserved (or at least mentioned) in ancient and medieval writings" (1986: 10, emphasis added).

Greek archaeology thus emerged as part of a specific political agenda, with the primary task of establishing a direct link between the archaeological record and Hellenic ethnic identity. The elevation of Classical antiquities into a "cultural capital', which was ultimately possessed by the official government, was only the reasonable outcome of

such political attitudes and proved the most effective way to legitimise claims to the Classical past (Kotsakis 1991; Morris 1994; Kardulias 1994c; Hamilakis and Yalouri 1996). Archaeology essentially aimed at demonstrating a diachronic continuity of Greek presence in the Helladic peninsula, a unity of time and space closely tied to racial purity. As Kotsakis (1991: 68) points out, "The focus of research was sufficiently well defined: diachronic continuity, which after a certain stage became commonplace enough not to require proof, at least not in archaeology."

Such emphasis on cultural continuity made explicit use of contemporary perceptions of Classicism and Classical antiquity. Classical archaeology was the main attraction point for European travellers and intellectuals, who were visiting the Greek lands under the influence of their classical readings (Morris 1994: 15-18). Moreover, Classical texts had been at the centre of cultural and intellectual debate in Western Europe since their rediscovery by Renaissance and in the 18th and 19th centuries Greek (primarily as a language but also as a cultural and intellectual identity) acquired a whole new ideological and symbolic value (Goldhill 2002: 1-13). It comes as no surprise then that the Classical part of the Greek past was to be at the centre of pioneering archaeological explorations.

This idealised and romantic view of classical antiquity had two focal points which influenced extensively the character of the nascent archaeological discipline: the preoccupation with classical texts, seen as the primary source of information about the past, and the concentration on the aesthetic and artistic values of material culture. However, in spite of the close affiliation with Classical tradition, archaeology was also receptive to influences of a more scientific nature, popular in 19th and 20th century Europe. Excavation, the major vehicle of archaeological inquiry, drew upon geological principles of stratigraphy, proven to be a more reliable means to construct chronological sequences than merely the aesthetic evaluation of changes in style. Additionally, Darwin's theory of evolution of species was recognised as pertaining to societal evolution and the anthropological study of humanity. There was a 'divide' in this sense between archaeology and classics, which could have resulted in archaeology pursuing more anthropological quests (Renfrew 1980; Morris 1994: 14-15; Gosden 1999). However, classics was an established, high-status tradition in Western academia

(Goldhill 2002) and more importantly, this research path was explicitly favoured by official Greek politics, as the means for obtaining a legitimate right to the classical past and a much desired inclusion in the European present (Herzfeld 1987: 50). Consequently, archaeology, whether prehistoric or classical, was to carve a niche within Classics and proceed in this fashion ever since (Morris 1994: 26).

At the beginning of the 20th century, therefore, shortly before the official inauguration of Minoan archaeology by the finds of Sir A. Evans at Knossos, the nascent Greek archaeology is characterised by an explicitly political agenda which emphasises historical connections over very long periods of time and seeks for ethnic origins in the archaeological record. Classical antiquity being the most widely recognised and appreciated part of Greek history sets the rules and tasks for the new discipline of archaeology, which is to be conducted through the knowledge of ancient texts and the categorisation according to largely stylistic models.

1.4. A land called Crete

Crete was part of the political developments which led to the establishment of an independent Greek state at the beginning of the 19th century, although it was not to be included in it until much later. Cretans had risen against Ottoman rule together with mainland Greeks in 1821, but with no success. In 1896, after a number of unsuccessful insurrections, Cretans led a final revolt against Ottoman authority which forced the European powers in 1897 to recognise Crete as an independent nation, albeit with large forces of European armies stationed across the island. Finally in 1913, Crete became officially part of the Greek state (McEnroe 2002: 61; MacGillivray 2000: 87-88).

McEnroe (2002) describes these 15 years, from 1898 to 1913, as the most crucial for Minoan archaeology. From 1898 the European powers which had divided the island in zones of political control started to establish equivalent zones of 'cultural control', greatly favouring archaeological investigations. Even earlier, a society had been

founded for the promotion of cultural and educational matters, among which archaeology held a prominent position, and from 1883 was led by I. Hatzidakis, who was to have paramount influence in the first steps of archaeology in Crete (McEnroe 2002: 64-66). Before Evans secured the ownership of Knossos and was able to begin excavations, others had expressed interest in taking up the task, H. Schliemann among them. Moreover, the location of Tselevi Kephala had been recognised as a site of archaeological significance by a local businessman and amateur archaeologist, Minos Kalokairinos, who conducted the first excavations there and most importantly, made the site known by its ancient name, Knossos, and related it to the legendary King Minos (Kopaka 1995; McEnroe 2002: 61).

Why, then, does Minoan archaeology only – or at least officially – begin with Evans? It is argued here that Evans is recognised as the founder of Minoan archaeology because he was the first to establish this branch of archaeology as a distinct scientific paradigm, with a name, clear definition and research goals. In that sense, Evans' *discovery* of Knossos emerged from a 'pre-paradigmatic' phase to become the 'first paradigm' of Minoan archaeology. Evans created a separate discipline within Greek archaeology by highlighting the paradigmatic features of Minoan archaeology. He set the geographical and chronological boundaries, which distinguished it from the Classical as well as the Mycenaean civilisations, pointed out at the characteristic features that gave it coherence and homogeneity and set the targets for the future. The ontological subject of the new discipline was the Minoan culture and all its expressions, artistic and mundane, the research methods consisted of extensive excavation, description and construction of chronological sequences and the interpretational framework drew upon a mixture of societal evolution and cultural diffusion.

Although Evans has been often criticised for lack of theorisation, among other things, he was by no means theoretically ignorant. Coming from a family background with strong affiliations with geology, anthropology and antiquarianism, he was very much aware of the scientific trends of his time and was affected, albeit implicitly, by many of those (McNeal 1974; McEnroe 2002: 59-60). Despite being resentful of the academic tradition of Classics in the manner performed at Cambridge and Oxford (MacGillivray

2000: 62-64), the archaeology, which he inaugurated, had many elements of classicism as well as incorporating the scientific advancements of his time.

An insistence on scientific research can be demonstrated in Evans' efforts to provide Minoan archaeology with a concrete chronology based on the pottery sequence from Knossos. This was to form the basis for the chronological system used across the island and is more or less valid today. Although such a sequence was largely the work of D. Mackenzie, who acted as field manager and assistant to Evans (Momigliano 1999), Evans deserves the credit of compiling the abundance of information derived from Mackenzie's meticulous observations in the field into a synthetic work which set the agenda for almost every aspect of Minoan archaeology, '*The Palace of Minos at Knossos*' (Evans 1921-1935).

However, despite the strong scientific background of such work, the influence of classicism is also evident in Evans' extensive use of mythology as a resource for archaeological explanation. By the time work had started at Knossos, Schliemann's discoveries in Troy and Mycenae had established Mycenaean civilisation as the precursor of later classical developments, and had laid the basis for considering Homeric epic poems a historic source with literal value (Bennet 2002: 217). Moreover, the prevalent political agenda at the time was explicitly in favour of explanations of archaeological finds, be they edifices or artefacts, as the outcome of the actions of historical figures. In this sense, the ground was paved for mythical figures, such as King Minos, to claim a part in the explanatory framework of Minoan archaeology. The building excavated at Knossos had to be a Palace and architectural classifications like "Piano Nobile" and "Queen's Megaron" were to direct categorisation within the new discipline.

In this sense, Evans' work reflected, but also surpassed the ongoing 'divide' between classics and archaeology. Morris (1994: 27-29) has highlighted a sharp distinction between two incompatible kinds of academic writing prominent at the early developmental stages of Greek archaeology: historical narrative, favoured by classical scholars, and excavation report, the new text promoted by archaeologists. The '*Palace*

of Minos' can be described as the optimal combination of both. The historical perspective put forward by Evans exploits pure classical values of story telling by bringing in individual actors who affect the course of history by their spontaneous acting upon a passive material culture (Morris 1994: 27), at the same time as securing the scientific value of the argument by linking it to a concrete and *real* archaeological record.

Such interpretations were a mixture of evolutionary perceptions, evident in the comparison of Minoan civilisation to a biological organism with birth, maturity and decline reflected in the chronological distinctions of Early, Middle and Late (Momigliano 1999: 37-38), and Evans' personal upper class, Edwardian background (McEnroe 2002: 63), as much as they were a product of the particular political circumstances in Crete. The issue of cultural and more importantly, ethnic continuity was prevalent at the time of the political struggle to reunite the independent regime of Crete with 'fatherland' Greece. Moreover, such political debate was entrenched into a broader 'European (civilised) versus Oriental (barbaric)' intellectual confrontation (Herzfeld 1986: 18-21; Morris 1994: 20-21; McEnroe 2002: 63-64). In many respects, it was essential for Crete and its Minoan civilisation to be considered part of European, and not Oriental, cultural heritage. Evans' Minoan civilisation had a chance in history only if it was seen as '*pre-hellenic*', clearly establishing the link between mainland Greece and Crete (MacGillivray 2000: 170). Cultural continuity thus became the dominant theoretical framework in Minoan archaeology as it had been for Greek archaeology in its first steps.

The generation that followed Evans' achievements can be seen to operate within a paradigm of 'normal science' engaging in a kind of 'puzzle-solving' that involved the careful description and classification of archaeological material in as much detail as possible. The classificatory criteria typically relied on formal and aesthetic distinctions, and explanatory attempts were restricted to further illuminating already established aspects of Minoan civilisation. Moreover, the idealised views of a peaceful, homogeneous and creative culture persisted in the archaeological literature for a number of decades (e.g. Hood 1967; Warren 1975), dominating, or rather representing the interpretative framework of Minoan archaeology (for criticisms see McNeal 1972;

Nixon 1983; Bintliff 1984; Halstead 1988). The early discoveries were to provoke a proliferation of fieldwork in the attempt to add to the fragmented nature of the archaeological evidence. This in turn called for further preoccupation with typology and classification, creating a rather vicious circle in which theory had no place. Consequently, the theoretical framework of the discipline remained unquestioned and the assumptions informing the formulation of historical problems became even more deep-rooted.

This first paradigm phase of Minoan archaeology persisted for more than half a century and every archaeological discovery and written account henceforth was affected by these founding principles. Continuity and homogeneity of culture became so embedded in archaeological works that did not need to be proven. Simple description took the place of explanation. The 'normal science' period of the Minoan paradigm had such strong bases that many of its elements survived even the subsequent paradigmatic revolution of the New Archaeology.

1.5. Paths to complexity

Kotsakis (1991) rightly stresses that explicitly theoretical paradigms are introduced in Greek archaeology only after the Second World War. What he seems to have in mind is the conscious incorporation of theoretical considerations in the work of Greek archaeologists. Nonetheless, in the case of Minoan archaeology, a distinction needs to be made between the trajectory followed by Greek and foreign practitioners after the consolidation of Evans' first paradigm.

The emphasis on fieldwork promoted by the first Minoan paradigm after the Second World War coincided with a period of economic development leading to the expansion of regional urban centres. The extensive building activity triggered by such developments stumbled on the current antiquities law, which demanded the detailed inspection of every land plot before any development could be allowed. This resulted in

numerous 'rescue' excavations, which, despite their hasty nature, greatly added to the empirical base of Minoan archaeology. On the other hand, the particular bias towards the Bronze Age as the most important episode in the history of Crete exposed a vast number of sites to widespread looting, as the *value* of the particular archaeological objects was thought to increase. This also enhanced the preoccupation of the state archaeological service with fieldwork in order to prevent such incidents.

The result was that, for Greek archaeologists working in Crete, the collection of evidence was elevated into the main objective of archaeology and the task of actually investigating its meaning took on a secondary significance. In combination with the general tendency that Kotsakis (1991) identifies as a reluctance to theorise, archaeological publications of Minoan material by most Greek archaeologists were almost deprived of any explanatory attempts. The sheer abundance and high quality of archaeological evidence was thought important enough to cover up for the lack of specific historical questions[1], demonstrating once again the survival of classicist trends in the discipline.

However, most foreign archaeologists also favoured themes that revolved around typology, classification and detailed description as the ultimate vehicles of interpretation. Again, historical questions had to do with either the continuity of the Greek ethnic element as exemplified in the archaeological record (e.g. Hood 1967; Crossland and Birchall 1973), or with aesthetic evaluations of material culture (e.g. Hood 1978). Approaches to social organisation were inevitably structured around the Palaces, without, however, attempting to understand the implications that such a theoretical commitment had for archaeological explanation. The very nature of the Palaces as an analytical category was not fully explored or understood. In the eyes of most Greek and foreign archaeologists of this generation, the Palaces consisted of a material evidence of uncontroversial nature.

[1] However, there were exceptions; see Platon's (1961-62; 1968) work on the chronology of the Minoan Palaces, which sought to link chronological sequence with particular historical events, such as the rise of the First Palaces, their demise, and the re-emergence of the New Palaces. The importance of such work lies in providing a new methodology to organise the classification of material which was devised with interpretative concerns in mind.

This was the historical context when New Archaeology made its appearance in the Aegean, through Renfrew's highly influential synthesis "*The Emergence of Civilisation*" (1972). Even though the focal point of the book was the prehistory of the Cycladic islands, the 'Emergence' marked a turning point in the history of Greek archaeology, and more significantly, prehistoric archaeology. This was the first time that a book about Aegean archaeology contained whole chapters of sophisticated argumentation about the need for *explanation* in archaeology. However, although it re-evaluated existing explanations on theoretical as well as on empirical grounds, 'Emergence' was not broadly welcomed in Aegean archaeological cycles. The strength of Classicist tendencies within Minoan archaeology is evident in such negative reactions: any innovation was to come from the discovery of new archaeological material and not from the re-consideration of the existing evidence, much less even from theory.

Despite such initial reactions, the importance of Renfrew's work withstood the test of time and paved the way for a whole new 'breed' of Aegeanists and Minoanists (Barrett & Halstead forthcoming). Setting as a primary aim to provide a valid explanation as to how the complex Minoan and Mycenaean civilisations came about, Renfrew addressed a specific historical question that had been left lingering in the literature for almost fifty years. Moreover, 'Emergence' explicitly stated that theory had a crucial role to play at any level of archaeological inquiry, be it fieldwork or interpretation; that the formulation of hypotheses to guide research should be a standard practice for archaeologists; and that a reorganisation of archaeological material into *analytical* rather than merely descriptive categories was necessary. In many respects the publication of 'Emergence' inaugurated a new paradigmatic phase for Minoan archaeology, which has not entirely run its course, even today (Hamilakis 2002b: 11-13).

At the same time, significant changes were also noted in the field of Minoan archaeology proper. Two years before the publication of 'Emergence', two of the most important syntheses in Minoan archaeological literature had been published: "*The Tombs of Mesara*" (1970) and "*Prepalatial: The Foundations of Palatial Crete*" (1970 - 1988 updated edition) by K. Branigan. "The Tombs of Mesara" dealt with the Early Minoan tholos tombs characteristic of the area of the Mesara, a subject already

discussed some years previously by Xanthoudides (1924). Apart from collecting and discussing new evidence, the importance of Branigan's study lay mainly in its posing the historical question of the significance of the tombs for the organisation of Minoan society, instead of providing a simple, descriptive compilation. The second book can be considered even more important in that it provided a detailed, comprehensive review of the Early Minoan period, significantly defined as the *Prepalatial*, with the specific objective of identifying the elements which led to the foundation of palatial civilisation. Although explicit theorisation was not included in Branigan's work, the central themes were very much in line with the theoretical concerns and historical questions of the 'Emergence'.

Another work which influenced the nature of Minoan archaeology, in terms of both fieldwork and interpretation, was the publication of the Early Minoan site of Myrtos Phournou Koriphi by P. Warren (1972). This was the first book to incorporate extensive sections of scientific analysis, together with detailed discussions of economy and society, which was to set the standards for site publications in Minoan studies for a long time. Although again theory did not have a separate position in the book, it was implicit in its organisation and its aims.

Such works marked a period of significant change in Minoan archaeology. Theory, science and explanation were now becoming the main objectives of archaeologists. Although not specifically within the realm of New Archaeology, Aegean archaeology had come under the influence of theory and the results became apparent in the work generated since. Diffusionist accounts were refuted through systems theory, which favoured the explanation of change by endogenous factors and not through the spread of people or ideas. Archaeological generalisation had to be firmly structured around scientific observations and laws stemming from the identification of patterns, rather than being presumed on the grounds of common sense as before. The classificatory categories used by Minoan archaeologists had to be primarily *analytical* and not descriptive. If cultural explanation is the goal of archaeology, then the art-historical categories used so far could not deliver it. Evolution remained the main interpretative framework. However, it was now argued that evolutionary approaches had to provide reasons for the occurrence of social change rather than just describe its normal and

otherwise expected trajectory. Finally, the emergence of *social complexity* became the ultimate historical question.

Unfortunately the paradigmatic change brought about by New Archaeology was a rather semi-achieved revolution. As Kotsakis noted, "Although Greece ... found itself in recent years in the privileged position of having Renfrew, one of the principal theoretical innovators, actually working on Greek prehistory, a related adoption of theoretical issues was ... very slow" (1991: 81). New Archaeology had not succeeded to penetrate the deeper segments of archaeological practice, which in the case of Minoan Crete remained quite traditional.

On the other hand, New Archaeology promoted a neo-evolutionary perspective which eventually came under critique (Trigger 1989; Gosden 1999; Hamilakis 2002b). Moreover, a number of specific problems was identified with respect to the Emergence's perspective. First, the evolutionary argument put forward cannot adequately account for change (Hamilakis 2002b: 8-9; see also Chapter 2). In spite of the effort to provide reasons as to why change occurs in Minoan Crete, the problem of why change occurs in this specific way remains as valid as ever. The ecological as well as social models suggested by Renfrew failed to address this issue, as other areas of the Mediterranean (of Greece even) with similar environmental conditions and parallel developments in the Early Bronze Age did not develop palatial civilisations (Cherry 1983a; Lewthwaite 1983; Halstead 1994). Therefore, if the above factors are rejected, the only agency generating change has to be time, which, nevertheless, cannot change anything in itself (Cherry 1983a: 33; Giddens 1984: 242; Hamilakis 2002b: 10).

Secondly, the theoretical model of New Archaeology relied to a great extent on generalisation and the existence of universal cultural laws. The observation of similar patterns is taken to imply equivalent explanations (e.g. since all the palaces in different regions of Crete are similar, they emerged through the same social process). However, in this manner, archaeological explanation cannot account for differences. The analytical categories promoted by such an approach inevitably emphasise similar elements, sometimes at the expense of differentiating factors (e.g. all the palaces are

architecturally the same, therefore they reflect similar institutions[2]). This resulted in being unable to account for 'anomalies' (e.g. why are there so many 'palaces' so close to each other if they represent institutions with distinct catchment areas?). The implications are obvious: we are called to produce explanatory accounts while our analytical categories are constructed on the basis of descriptive criteria. Consequently, there are no sufficient grounds to address issues of difference and inhomogeneity, leading to inadequate accounts of change.

It seems that New Archaeology did not fully address, but rather redefined, a problem which had been inherent in the first interpretations of Minoan culture. How else can we explain the over-accumulation of 'palatial' structures in the archaeological landscape if not by the inadequacy of our identifying criteria? An edifice is usually identified as a 'palace' on the basis of architectural and formal criteria such as the presence of a central court, extended storage magazines, written documents, monumentality, etc. However, as soon as an architectural complex is recognised as 'palatial', a series of institutional assumptions is imposed upon it, which are largely the result of preconceived ideas about the character and the *complexity* of a palace as a political entity. In short, the central court is taken to denote a 'palace', the existence of a 'palace' presupposes certain political and economic functions, therefore, every building with a central court and monumental dimensions should perform the functions of a political institution equivalent to a 'palace'. Through this viciously circular logic an architectural consistency is uncritically transformed into an institutional reality. Confusion is further enhanced in as much as the inherent traits of such institutions (e.g. central administration, economic and political control over a defined territory, etc.) are rendered practically inactive by the *peculiarity* of too many similar structures claiming the title 'palace'.

In the case of Minoan archaeology this led to the production of predominantly functionalist and formalist approaches. New Archaeology had redefined the primarily descriptive category of the 'palace' into an analytic device. The 'palace' had explanatory power as it was taken to reflect a particular type of social organisation.

[2] But see Chapter 7 for discussion and critique of this notion.

However, although the essential 'function' of the palaces was to be found in their institutional properties, the identification of palatial structures still relied on formal, descriptive criteria, such as architectural types. Moreover, quite arbitrarily and under the influence of evolutionary perspectives, the palatial category was granted the absolute right of complexity. Again the criteria for the recognition of complexity were primarily descriptive, such as size, scale, abundance and diversity of material culture and so forth. Thus, accounts of social change had to be principally accounts of the emergence of the palaces, i.e. the emergence of social complexity.

Finally, the explanatory models of 'Emergence' have been criticised on empirical grounds. However, although the main body of research in Minoan archaeology in the 1980s and early 1990s has been devoted to their re-evaluation, it is still not clear how far we have moved from the burden of complexity.

1.6. Complexity reclaimed

At a mature stage of the discipline, after 'Emergence', three research attitudes prevailed. Archaeologists continued their work in a traditional fashion, pursuing archaeological questions as identified at the initial stages of the discipline. A larger group of practitioners embraced New Archaeology's theoretical suggestions and adapted their research strategies towards this direction. Finally, a small group attempted to rethink Renfrew's models[3].

The most significant influence of the 'Emergence' was that it put the exploration of specific historical questions at the centre of research in Minoan archaeology. This *problematisation* was explicitly focused on aspects of social organisation and specifically, questions of social complexity. Hence, every dimension of complexity came under investigation, starting with its origins, attempting to recognise its stages and

[3] The conference volume "*Minoan Society*" published in early 1980s (Krzyszkowska & Nixon 1983) reflects the co-existence of such different trends within Minoan archaeology in the best manner.

finally turning to its ultimate culmination, the palatial civilisations of Crete and mainland Greece. The search for complexity became thus "an archaeological Holy Grail" (Day *et al.* 1997).

However, the 'Emergence' also attracted criticism. These first reactions initiated a range of approaches which, although revisiting only aspects of the argument, marked the beginning of a new era in Minoan archaeology (Halstead 1981a; 1988; Whitelaw 1983; Nixon 1983; Cherry 1983a; 1984; 1986; Moody 1987; van Andel & Runnels 1988). Such alternative perspectives encouraged an *open-mindedness* in dealing with archaeological problems, which furthered our understanding of Minoan society substantially. However, they also took the issue of complexity for granted and focused their reappraisals merely on the different ways in which complexity had been achieved by Palatial society, an attitude which entailed a number of problems. By leaving aside a reconsideration of the notion of complexity, Minoan archaeologists carried forward basic assumptions about the idea of society and the explanation of social change, all with significant repercussions for archaeological interpretation.

The investigation of social complexity draws heavily upon evolutionary perspectives of culture (see Chapter 2). In the case of Minoan archaeology such an evolutionary perspective is clear in interpretations of the Early Minoan period. Studies of Early Minoan society until recently focused on identifying or denying the seeds of emerging complexity, with more examples of the first case. Several approaches succeeded in illustrating that indeed complexity existed in Early Minoan period, only to confirm, however, that the period constituted simply a precursor of the palatial developments (Whitelaw 1983; Warren 1987; Branigan 1988a). Opposing perspectives (Cherry 1983a), however, did not recognise sufficient levels of social complexity in Early Minoan society:

> "So far they have provided few, if any, clear-cut indications of *social ranking*, of organised craft specialisation and the institutionalised *division of labour*, or of powerful individuals exercising authority from *places of central importance*." (Cherry 1984: 19-20; emphasis added).

The above passage clearly presents all the features, which are taken to reflect social complexity beyond doubt: 'social ranking', 'division of labour' and 'places of central

importance'. The same elements will be shown to constitute the core of the problems of current approaches in Minoan archaeology.

The identification of social ranking and hierarchy is paramount in the archaeological narrative of complexity. Neo-evolutionist approaches use social categories like tribe, chiefdom and state which presuppose a progress from small scale, simple and undifferentiated ('egalitarian'), to large scale, complex and hierarchical social organisation (Gosden 1999: 88-100; Hamilakis 2002b: 8-10). Differentiation is confused with social ranking and more significantly it appears to be an *exclusive* feature of complex societies. In this sense, it is no surprise that the division of labour and organisation of production have a central role in theories maintaining that the Palaces represented complex societies, since these aspects of life are supposed to generate the most fundamental social distinctions.

However, issues of differentiation should not be mistaken with issues of social stratification. The constitution of difference goes hand in hand with the endorsement of similarity (Cohen 1985; Jenkins 1996). It is not possible for a human actor to identify with a particular social group if other actors are not perceived as *different*, as outsiders. In this respect, every social formation entails a level of social differentiation. The degree to which such differentiations are highlighted or underplayed marks the level of segregation in a society. A low degree in the expression of social differentiation should not be seen as denoting a low level of complexity. The very co-existence of human agents in distinct groups makes their social relations highly complex.

Furthermore, in archaeology expressions of differentiation and ranking are sought in the configuration of the extant material culture. However, it has become increasingly apparent through ethnographic and sociological studies that differentiations, social roles and social distinctions are context-specific and do not always leave a material trace. Even hierarchical distinctions may be dependent on the context of activity and therefore, do not reflect a constant social structure. Social roles and social positions are not static, they are dynamic; they change as the persons who aspire to them participate in different contexts of action. Ignoring such short-term elements in the creation of

social relations and social identities has been a fundamental error of complexity theories in Minoan archaeology and has exerted crucial influence in the ways the palatial structures have been studied and understood.

The second factor indicating complexity, the division of labour and institutionalisation of production has also been paramount in current understandings of palatial society as complex. As inferences about the organisation of production in past societies are drawn mainly from consumption contexts, archaeological interpretation relies heavily on formal characteristics of material culture in order to demonstrate whether production was diversified or not. This way, notions such as *specialisation* come into play, without always beneficial effects for archaeological explanation.

The specialisation of production is a notion central to arguments of social complexity in Minoan Crete (Branigan 1983; 1987; Cherry 1984; 1986; see also Chapters 6, 7 and 8). It is generally postulated that in the earlier stages of social development, economy is characterised by a domestic mode of production, whereby every household is responsible for producing everything that is required for its survival. At some stage certain members of the community are able to concentrate on the production of particular kinds of goods, thus becoming experts. Such specialisation brings about divisions of labour, which in turn further social division and complexity, as the specialists must rely for subsistence items on the rest of the community.

Inferences about the existence of specialisation are almost entirely based on features of the surviving material culture. Hence, elements such as standardisation, elaboration of design, technological achievements and technical competence are seen as primary indications of specialisation. Such features are presumably more evident in the material culture of the palatial periods. The assumption that palatial society is *de facto* more complex than the Prepalatial is largely based upon the presence of an extremely elaborate material culture in the palatial archaeological record. Thus, it is presumed that Early Minoan material culture is not yet as specialised (or not specialised at all) because complex social structures have not yet emerged; when complex structures emerge, material culture will become elaborate. This, however, is a circular argument: the

elaboration of material culture is taken both to designate the complexity of the social structures, and is seen as the result of complex social structures.

Such understandings have been re-evaluated extensively by recent research and particularly by advancements in materials analysis. Pottery studies witnessed most of these transformations. The common idea that ceramic production was an activity performed essentially at household level and became specialised only with the emergence of the Palaces came under challenge. Analysis demonstrated a substantial degree of technical competence and specialisation in the manufacture of ceramics, while petrographic studies showed that even coarse, 'utilitarian' wares would move over long distances, often beyond the limits of the island, from as early as the Early Neolithic period (Day 1991; 1997; Vitelli 1993; Day & Wilson 1998; Day *et al.* 1998; Wilson & Day 1994; Tomkins 2001). Studies of ceramic technology highlighted the range of social dimensions involved in the production of material culture and cast serious doubts on the explanatory validity of notions such as specialisation (Vitelli 1993; Day *et al.* 1997; Whitelaw *et al.* 1997). Moreover, the nature of technological innovations and their social implications were being re-assessed theoretically in general studies (van der Leeuw & Torrence 1989; Lemonnier 1993; Stark 1998; Dobres & Hoffman 1994) and such reconsideration found its way in Aegean studies (Vitelli 1995; Day *et al.* 1997; Day & Wilson 1998; Knappett 1999b; 2002). This reappraisal of technological specialisation and its social implications in ceramic studies constitutes only one example in which complexity theory has been found inadequate. Such examples make the need for a general reconsideration of the theoretical assumptions of complexity in the study of Minoan society inevitable.

The final indicator of social complexity as defined above by Cherry (1984: 19-20) is socio-spatial: 'places of central importance'. An inherent characteristic of the palaces which presumably also exemplifies their complexity is that they are supposed to exert economic, political and social control over a well-defined territory, or hinterland; they constitute central places within clearly defined *regions*. This final factor brings us to the specific topic of this thesis.

1.7. The structure of the thesis

> "If the Big Story of the Bronze Age in Crete is the rise of palatial states whose centres intervened economically to mobilise or manage resources from within and beyond their territories, then it follows that the *regional perspective* is fundamental in understanding them." (Cherry 1999: 18 emphasis added)

It becomes obvious from the above discussion that social change, as redefined by neo-evolutionary perspectives within New Archaeology, was clearly equated with the emergence of palatial society. Change in Minoan society only occurred with the appearance of the palaces; everything that happened before was only leading to the establishment of palatial society.

This prevalent interpretative framework has been followed by a large number of scholars. It is quite remarkable to note, however, that despite the many differences between the various models, they have one paramount element in common: their choice of *region* as the essential scale of analysis. Cherry is explicit about it in the above passage and in other work (Cherry 1983b; 1984). Such a preoccupation with the regional dimension was also prevalent in the 'Emergence', a focal point of which had been the comparison between different regions within the Aegean, like Crete, the Cyclades and Messenia. Following that, the main explanatory models such as the Social Storage model suggested by Halstead (1981a; 1988) and the Peer Polity Interaction model devised by Renfrew (1986) and applied to Minoan studies by Cherry (1986), are only effective at a regional scale. Social Storage entails the operation of dense exchange networks which are effective initially on a local scale, and as complexity emerges they necessitate a broader, regional scale. Peer Polity Interaction is defined on the premise that political institutions such as the Palaces emerged in distinct geographical areas, which became the hinterlands necessary for the operation of such structures. Even the latest of the alternatives, the theory of competing factions and heterarchy (Hamilakis 2002c; Schoep 2002b), necessitates a defined region within which such mechanisms can operate.

However, a concise consideration of region as a primary unit of archaeological analysis has not been attempted so far. In most cases region is taken as a stable variable which has no influence in the process of change. Worse still, perceptions of region are seen as having no effect on social organisation and the creation of social identities. And yet Minoan archaeology is brimming with works stressing regionalism in the cultural patterns of the island.

Two key elements characterise explanations of the Palaces: first, the use of *region* as the main scale of analysis. Secondly, the employment of different understandings of *community* to define the social units of analysis and the degree of social cohesion. These two categories are intimately connected. In traditional approaches, social units are identified in accordance to their position in space; they are recognised by the material trace they left in specific areas. Such material traces are taken to be the outcome of social activities. The region is the scale which enables the interaction of a number of such social units within a closed and defined environment. The idea is that there exists a border where interaction stops. Essentially spatial proximity is expected to generate comparable patterns among social units giving the region a distinct *identity*. The region therefore is taken to represent a particular expression of *community* which has social and political dimensions.

However, on the one hand, such socio-political boundaries do not conveniently coincide with geographic divisions, while on the other, spatial proximity does not have such a deterministic explanatory power. Simply because people co-exist in a defined space this does not mean that they are bound to interact, or that these interactions will always result in homogeneous and uninterrupted social integration. What is more, social units are not static phenomena; people may belong to different groups and assume different roles in several circumstances during the course of a single day! We can imagine the implications of this over the course of several centuries.

Although the notion of community can be connected closely with particular perceptions of space, it is not self-evident in spatial configuration. Community (and by implication social integration) is actively achieved, it is not a product of accidental co-existence.

The elements that generate community may differ from one context to another. Such elements, moreover, are negotiated within social groups; they are not always taken for granted. This recurrent negotiation is a fundamental aspect of social life and a central feature of change. The negotiation of community-building features takes place within and through specific practices which have the power to determine inclusion and exclusion. Such practices are central in the creation and transformation of identities. They are *social arenas*, through which life unfolds.

Nowhere is the regional dimension more acute than in the case of the Mesara, in south-central Crete. The Mesara is the 'ultimate region' of regional analysis. Not only for geographical reasons: it comprises the largest plain of the island surrounded by mountains to the North and the South, having thus 'obvious' limits and borders. But also for cultural reasons: although always part of the cultural developments recognised in the rest of Crete, the Mesara produced a distinct material culture, which gave it a clearly regional character. On the other hand, it also comprises all the elements used by theories of social complexity; a palace, a surrounding hinterland, and a rich archaeological record for the Prepalatial period. Therefore, if there ever was an optimal case to test 'palatial theories', the Mesara is it.

Bearing the above in mind the main aim of this thesis is to re-examine the history of the Mesara, in order to:

a) investigate how the distinct regional identity of the area came about and whether it was always indicative of socio-political integration;

b) identify the social practices through which the performance, reproduction and transformation of such identity was possible;

c) examine the ways in which, and the reasons why, such practices and their respective identities changed through time.

By shifting the focus of analysis from the Palace to the practices which structured social life, the question is no longer "why the Palace emerged?", but rather becomes "what kind of social arenas allowed or encouraged the palace to emerge?". By reassessing the

character of the region and its implications for the understanding of social change, this becomes a question that we can answer adequately. Moreover, by removing the Palace from the focus of attention, there is no need and no reason for directionality in our study. Every period is examined on its own merit and social practices are put into their correct context, without representing precursors or results of other activities. Change is allowed to be part of the process of life and not an extraordinary and rare phenomenon. Life is structured through continuities and disruptions which are not part of a grand plan leading to the emergence of complexity.

A final note is necessary to clarify the temporal scope of the study. This encompasses the Final Neolithic through to the destruction of the First Palace at Phaistos, at the end of the Middle Minoan period. Although such temporal distinctions entail a level of arbitrariness, a framework within which to situate analysis is necessary in every study. Such a long time span was deemed necessary in order to investigate more accurately the pace and the nature of social changes. The particular frame may appear surprising in excluding the Neopalatial period, which is generally considered a unity with Protopalatial; because palaces exist in both periods, it is generally assumed that they have more in common than with the pre- or post-palatial periods. Yet, it is becoming increasingly clear in recent studies how different the two 'palatial' periods are from each other in political and social terms (e.g. Moody 1987; cf. Knappett & Schoep 2000). This observation aside, if the Palace is no longer viewed as the defining element in the organisation of Minoan society, then, there is no justification for identifying more common features between the two palatial periods, than between the Prepalatial and Protopalatial. Moreover, from a methodological point of view, in traditional approaches the critical transformations in Minoan society have been located at the turn from Neolithic to the Bronze Age and at the transition from the Prepalatial to the Palatial period. By using the same temporal frames it is possible to critically assess such views and demonstrate their flaws through the reconsideration of the relevant archaeological material.

The thesis is organised in nine chapters.

Chapter 1, *The Minoan Paradigm*, consists of the introduction to the main issues addressed in the text. The historical framework, within which the research concerns of Minoan archaeology emerged, is examined in order to investigate their validity for current research. The scope and the aim of the study are summarised.

Chapter 2, *Society and Region: a reconsideration*, examines the theoretical premises of existing understandings of region and their implications for the study of societies in the past. It is argued that traditional regional and social categories are interconnected and the assumptions informing their definition are discussed and evaluated. Particular attention is paid to surface surveys as the primary means by which such socio-spatial assumptions have been reproduced and proliferated in archaeological interpretations of social change.

Chapter 3, *Beyond Settlement Patterns: Social Arenas and the production of Community*, offers an alternative approach to the study of society and social change in the past. Social practices are suggested as the main units of analysis. The practices that are at the centre of social negotiation within a social group or among social groups are defined as Social Arenas. The existence of common social arenas among a number of social groups creates Networks of Relevance; these represent the shared ideas and beliefs about the importance of specific practices for the generation and performance of social identities. People and places participating in common networks of relevance construct distinct Regions. Region is understood here as a metaphor for community, and as such, it is fluid, negotiable and dependent upon specific historical circumstances. The history of the Mesara from the Final Neolithic till the end of the Protopalatial is re-examined according to these alternative concepts.

Chapter 4, *Becoming regional: the Neolithic background*, examines the patterns of regional interaction during the Final Neolithic period. It is argued that the FN communities of the Mesara participated in large scale integrative networks which were structured around the practice of communal gatherings at the site of Phaistos at regular intervals. Life was organised through such recurrent events and social identities were performed and defined at a regional scale.

Chapter 5, *The Early Prepalatial Networks of Relevance*, looks at the changes effected in the life of the inhabitants of the Mesara during the first part of the Early Bronze Age. The nature of the changes is re-assessed and it is demonstrated that several elements of the FN tradition persisted. The major change occurring in this period is the introduction of burial monuments in the form of tholos tombs. Their significance for the creation and performance of local and regional identities is discussed.

Chapter 6, *The Late Prepalatial Social Arenas* evaluates the transformations in the use and meaning of Prepalatial cemeteries during the later part of the EBA. It is argued that by the end of the Prepalatial period, the Mesara consisted of a region fragmented into several local communities, which were engaged in competition with each other. The regional integration evident in the patterns of the Neolithic had been replaced by more localised strategies of community identification which made the different Prepalatial communities 'regions' of their own.

Chapter 7, *Let there be integration: the First Palace at Phaistos* examines the transformations that occur during the MBA in the Mesara. The social practices which are prevalent before the emergence of the Palace are discussed and compared to the situation after the establishment of the Palace at Phaistos. The architectural and political development of the First Palace at Phaistos is discussed and aspects of its organisation and operation are re-examined. It is argued that the Palace emerged through a collective operation involving several of the Mesaran communities.

Chapter 8, *Consuming Power-Consumed by Power: Palatial Authority in Action*, examines how palatial authority operated, as revealed by the ceramic assemblage and the remains of the sealing archive. It is argued that despite the attempts of the Palatial elite to impose more hierarchical structures, the palace of Phaistos retained aspects of its co-operative character until its demise at the end of MMIIB. By appropriating pre-existing social arenas and manipulating their ideological significance at a regional level, palatial authority was able to withstand conflict and contest from its hinterland.

Regional integration during Protopalatial times appears to have been based more on ideological congruity than rigid political control.

Chapter 9, *One Region in Time*, summarises the main observations and conclusions of the thesis. Detailed discussion is included in every different chapter, therefore this last part serves to bring together the different themes and assess their significance in constructing an alternative understanding of the social processes of the Mesara during the Bronze Age. The contribution of the alternative theoretical categories introduced at the beginning is evaluated with respect to the observations made on the archaeological material. It is argued that collective identification and communal social strategies have been the focus of social negotiation throughout the history of the Mesara. Social change occurred through the manipulation of such collective practices. The historical trajectory of the Mesara was characterised by many disruptions and transformations, but was also defined by many persisting practices which generated powerful traditions. Such traditions, best exemplified in the pottery systems of the region, survived major structural changes because they proved most relevant for the creation and performance of identities through time. Although Mesaran communities aspired to be distinguished from each other, by using common technologies of difference, they created a picture of regional homogeneity which was more evident to outsiders than indicative of the socio-political circumstances within the region. The interplay between collectivity and need for differentiation characterised every aspect of the social life of the Mesaran communities throughout their history. Through such interplay, enduring structures of community emerged, even though they did not always reflect political integration at regional level. It is evident that a reformed regional perspective such as the one suggested in this thesis has great advantages for the understanding of social life and the creation of identities in the past.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIETY AND REGION: A RECONSIDERATION

2.1. The object of study: the archaeological record and understandings of society

The main aim of this thesis is to provide an alternative understanding of society and social change for the archaeology of Bronze Age Mesara. If we are to propose alternative interpretations, then the use of alternative analytical categories proves necessary. To fulfil this task it is first essential to discuss the problems or insufficiencies of the existing interpretations. In the previous chapter some hints were given as to the sort of explanatory deadlocks characterising current Minoan research. This chapter aims to address more specifically the theoretical premises on which pre-existing approaches are based, in order the evaluate the analytical categories used by them.

Even though rarely due to conscious theorisation, most current approaches in Minoan archaeology are structured around processual understandings of society and social change. This is largely owing to the impact of Renfrew's work (1972) on Aegean studies, but also partly to a certain indifference towards general theoretical matters. Although Renfrew's models have been re-evaluated through a variety of different perspectives, the social categories introduced by systems analysis have rarely been touched upon in Aegean studies. The theoretical premises of processual analysis, on the other hand, have been criticised by a range of approaches, that came to be known as post-processual (Preucel 1991). Despite their flaws, some of these critiques are crucial in assessing misconceptions of society and social change promoted by the processual paradigm.

Central to this critique has been the notion of the archaeological record and the ways in which it can be studied and interpreted, a debate which remains a main problem in archaeological theory (Patrik 1985; Schiffer 1987; Barrett 1988; 2001). The following discussion will explore the ways in which the concept of the archaeological record was formulated as a scientific model of archaeological evidence (Patrik 1985) and the implications of its proliferation for conceptualising ancient *societies*.

Although the study of past societies today seems one of the main tasks of archaeology in one way or another, the engagement with social matters has not always been recognised as archaeology's legitimate right as a humanistic discipline, even during New Archaeology's era. Renfrew (1984: 31) noted in frustration: "the prospect of reconstructing prehistoric social organisation has been regarded by some anthropologists with pessimism". Such pessimism derived from a fundamental conviction on the part of anthropology that the variety and the uniqueness of each human community is so great that "no suspicion of discernible order or pattern emerges" especially when the object of study (the given human community) is no longer available for live inspection (Renfrew 1984: 31; Gosden 1999: 7). In this respect, the main task of archaeology was to demonstrate that there were ways of discerning *order* and meaningful *patterns* in the archaeological record and that these related to *past social totalities*.

Archaeology's object of study has always been intricately connected to material remains. Like history, archaeology also studies the past, but through the means of an archaeological record, which is supposed to contain the surviving material trace of past human activity. The development of a suitable way of extracting information from the archaeological record was considered the main concern of archaeology. However, it has been largely overlooked that the archaeological record is indeed a *concept* and not an undisputed reality. Patrik (1985: 28) in her study of the theoretical premise and utility of the notion remarked: "this debate concerns basic metaphysical assumptions made by archaeologists about their evidence, as much as it concerns different methodological approaches to this evidence". Therefore the question should not simply be how to study the archaeological record, but more significantly, what is it a record of?

Despite not dealing with this question, early archaeological inquiry was fully aware that the record was only a partial representation of the past, the implication being that there were aspects of the past, which archaeologists could not touch upon. Such a view drew upon empiricist allures of science, which claimed that the only securely obtained knowledge derives from directly observable empirical phenomena[1] (Wylie 1989: 19). Thus, the most valid way to proceed in archaeological inquiry would be to describe as thoroughly as possible the material remains of the past, whilst accumulating more evidence in the hope of curing this incomplete picture once all the missing pieces were found (Wylie 1993: 21). During the late 1960s and early 1970s New Archaeology came to challenge these traditional views. The assertion that the record was partial was widely accepted, but the core of New Archaeology's argument now revolved around what was possible to be learnt about the past given this fragmented record. Drawing upon a logical-positivist scientific model, processual archaeology insisted on the necessity of *theories* or *hypotheses* pertaining to the contents of the archaeological record and providing a suitable framework for interpretation and explanation (Clarke 1973; Renfrew 1973a; 1984).

This conviction that every observation is situated in relation to a relevant theory aimed to establish that the archaeological record could not constitute evidence of the past, unless several theories about the past were proposed and their attainability tested against the archaeological data. If there are no theories to be tested, then the archaeological data do not constitute any kind of evidence. The missing aspects of the archaeological record would not add anything to the existing picture just by their discovery. It is the conversion of archaeological remains into 'evidence of the past', which will provide the framework for interpretation. By means of a hypothesis-testing scientific method, which could falsify any inadequate theory[2], any archaeological explanation was possible and available.

[1] But see Van Pool & Van Pool (1999) for a critique of the positivist scientific paradigm and an evaluation of empirical evidence in archaeology.

[2] The principle of falsification as a way of distinguishing pseudo-science from science was developed by Popper (1959) but has subsequently suffered strong criticism and its application in archaeological practice has proven to be controversial (Van Pool & Van Pool 1999: 41-42).

In this way, not only was archaeology developing as a proper scientific enterprise but also, and perhaps more significantly, it gained the power to study virtually every aspect of the past "given the proper hypothesis" (Patrik 1985: 44). Therefore the study of human behaviour, not directly observable in the record, became an eligible task for New Archaeology. The observable (material) patterns in the record were seen as representing regularities in the organisation of human behaviour, a concept that traditional archaeology shared too (Barrett 2001), but, by virtue of the new theory/method, these non-physical patterns were now within the archaeologist's reach. The material residues of the record were thought as clear manifestations of the past; the record was a kind of *fossil* of past human behaviour in the manner that a fingerprint is the material evidence for the existence of the finger which produced it (Patrik 1985: 46). Consequently, if archaeologists developed a series of appropriate theories linking those material patterns with the *invisible* processes, which produced them, then the study of intangible processes, such as social change, was possible and scientifically legitimate. The right to study *society* was finally becoming available to archaeologists too.

However, such understandings of the archaeological record had serious problems which bear specifically upon the issue of conceptualising society. The plurality of theories emerging in a time of scientific sophistication and interdisciplinary inquiry triggered another reaction, the demand for self-critical awareness: "given that many explanations, models and theories may all be simultaneously appropriate at many different levels and in different contexts, how do we choose between them?" (Clarke 1973: 7). The falsification method promoted by New Archaeology put forward a very important claim for *objectivity* (Binford 1982), which explicitly requested the production of 'value-free', 'unbiased', and therefore 'scientific' statements about the past[3]. The data might have been seen as theory-laden, but they were also material and securely established as 'ancient'. There is an obvious incoherence between believing that all observations of the past are, or must be theory-tainted, and asserting the unquestionable reality and evidential significance of the archaeological data (Wylie 1989), which however was not immediately grasped. New Archaeology aimed to prove that *there was* an

[3] However this notion of objectivity as value-free knowledge is more a misconception of science by archaeologists (advocates and critics alike), than an actuality of scientific practice (Van Pool & Van Pool 1999: 44). See also Renfrew's scepticism of the uncritical adoption of rigid hypothetico-deductive models by advocates of New Archaeology (Renfrew 1984: 16).

archaeological record, which contained the processes of the past that were represented in material, observable patterns, organised in *real* categories.

Post-processual critics attacked the notion of a static archaeological record containing the dynamic processes of the past, by proposing an alternative model of the record, not as a *fossil*, but as a *text*, recording the symbolic and codified meaning of material culture, which was not objective, but could generate a range of different 'readings' (Hodder 1986; Tilley 1990; c.f. Patrik 1985; Barrett 1988; Buchli 2000). However this alternative only managed to replace the notion of the archaeological record with a different model which failed to reassess the most basic assumption of the old one: that we, as archaeologists, create a record when we appropriate the material residue through excavation. The residue and the evidence it stands for are two different things, they did not come together as one. The record was transformed from 'physical' to 'textual', but Patrik's (1985) initial question, whether there is a record, lingered.

Thus, instead of being a methodological construct, the archaeological record became an ontological assumption about the past, a concrete entity that assumed methodological and ontological independence. More importantly, the initial conceptualisation of the record as a fossil of the past, had the most important repercussion of making the study of society available to archaeology. The concerns with 'objectivity' moreover, however misplaced or misunderstood, entailed a specific emphasis on finding and using valid analytical categories. One way of establishing the validity of archaeological ('cultural') categories was to connect them to the empirically more secure categories of nature. For this purpose, theories of 'unity of science' were used extensively, albeit implicitly, in the formulation of the processual archaeological programme and the ways in which it conceived of nature, culture and society.

2.1.1. Archaeology and society

The production of effective units for the study of social organisation has generally been dependent upon varied conceptualisations of nature and culture and the relationship

between them (see also §2.2.2). That humans exist and act within a natural environment with real, empirical qualities, is more or less widely accepted. However, theories about humanity's relation and reaction to 'nature' have always been an issue for debate (see also §2.2.2). Human beings are seen as acting upon the world producing a distinctive 'culture', which consists of the construction and meaningful organisation of material and mental categories by which they lead their lives. The most pertinent problem to the reconstruction of past social organisation is to what extent the 'cultural' categories of human actors correspond to the 'natural' categories of the environment.

Past human societies are supposed to be conceptualised through the consideration of their own, 'cultural' categories (Renfrew 1984: 39). However, the analytic validity and *reality* of the latter needs to be securely established, and one way of achieving this is by examining their relation to the 'undisputed' categories of nature. How is the relationship of humans with their environment to be understood, and by implication, how close is the correspondence between 'natural' and 'cultural' categories? Since society is considered such a 'cultural' category, these questions are further projected into the realm of the social: how valid are the categories that archaeologists use to study social organisation?

Traditional archaeology had perceived the relationship of humans to their environment as an adaptive one: "Both evolution and cultural change may be regarded as adaptations to the environment" (Childe 1965: 39). Humans differ from other animals in that instead of adapting biologically to the changing natural conditions (by transforming genetically), they adapt culturally, through mental constructs which enable them to transform their environment. Thus *culture* is generated. Moreover, since human beings are not as equipped biologically as other animals for dealing with natural conditions, they need to develop close relations of mutual support with other human beings in order to survive. Hence, their sociality is developed. Within such approaches, not only are human agents determined by their natural environment, but they are also entirely constrained by the nature of their society.

Childe further developed this 'normative approach' into a theory of 'archaeological cultures'. Since human culture is also a response to social demands, which ultimately pertain to the same goal of survival, culture also represents humans' *social* behaviour. The material relics of the past represented the choices and behaviours of specific social groups. Therefore, as it was possible to recognise differences and similarities between sets of archaeological material with different geographical distribution, it followed that material culture, apart from being characteristic of social organisation, also represented *ethnic* groups. From this concept a theory of social change was developed assuming that civilisation arose from the *diffusion* of ideas and achievements from the East towards the West (Childe 1950).

It is important to note at this point some basic assumptions made about society. Society is considered along the same lines as the environment, it contains people and it exists outside and beyond them. Society is presented as an abstract entity in which people enter at birth and exit after their death (Barrett 2001: 145). As soon as they enter society, human actors learn the rules by which life is regulated and they develop into social beings. Because this is a lifetime process social actors do not entirely understand the organisation of their society. On the contrary, the archaeologist, as an outside observer standing at a distance commands more understanding over society than the participant. In this sense, society is perceived as an *object*, observable, measurable and manageable (Barrett 2001).

Processual critique of Cultural History centred mainly on the diffusionist arguments and not so much on the way society was conceptualised. Thus, Binford (1962) asserted that change in the cultural system should not be attributed to external stimuli or migrations of different ethnic groups between and among geographically distinct units. Renfrew (1984: 37) was stricter in pointing out that the notion of the social group as representing "an uncritical distribution of similar artefacts" should not be given explanatory power (see also Mellor 1973). Moreover, he demonstrated (Renfrew 1973b) that the radiocarbon revolution in archaeological dating demanded a reconsideration of diffusionist arguments. Since diffusion was no longer the primary cause of the development of civilisation, models accounting for change from within the system were thought as more appropriate.

How then was the system, or otherwise society, to be understood? Since the categories of 'peoples' and 'cultures' were no longer adequate, the challenge of processual archaeology was to produce analytical categories which would not impose themselves uncritically upon the data (Renfrew 1984: 35-36). Whereas cultural history had failed by succumbing to the erroneous notions of 'cultures' and 'people', New Archaeology would succeed by virtue of a self-critical awareness which would establish the objective character of its categories and interpretations. Essential to this task were perceptions of nature and society as a unified system which could be objectified and analysed with the appropriate method.

2.1.2. Unity of Science and systemic explanation

The debate of the 'unity of science' has only recently been introduced to archaeological theory (Wylie 1996; 2000). However, ideas and theories heavily drawing upon models of 'unity of science' have found fertile ground in archaeological thinking, implicitly contributing to the formulation of models for understanding societies in the past, and systemic explanation in particular. For processual archaeology the incorporation of theories of 'unity of science' into its theoretical program was important for the fulfilment of two goals; to demonstrate the possibility of identifying meaningful patterns in the archaeological record and to establish the ontological and methodological security of the categories by which these patterns were to be analysed and interpreted.

Both Cultural History and New Archaeology shared the view that the material patterns of the archaeological record represented human behaviour. However, New Archaeology, while rejecting the ethnic correlates in those regularities, sought to establish a secure link between the material (directly observable) and the social (indirectly inferred) processes. Thus, if an understanding of the material patterns was attained, it would follow that an understanding of the social processes, which produced them, would also be possible (Yoffee & Sherratt 1993: 4; Barrett 2001: 144). It is at this point that conceptions of unity played such a crucial part.

Why was the link between 'natural' (material) and 'cultural' (social) categories so vital for New Archaeology? Childe had expressed the idea that the archaeologist as an outside observer has more objective understanding of the society than the actual participant can achieve. Renfrew (1984: 39) disagreed: "operative groups visible to the modern observer, but not to the participant are irrelevant". It was the intrinsic categories of any given human community under study that could reveal the objective organisation of a society and not the arbitrary constructs of the archaeologist. But how could those objective categories be retrieved by the archaeologist unless a unified world was assumed?

The principle of the 'unity of science' holds that "the sciences presuppose an orderly world, that they are united by the goal of systematically describing and explaining this order, and that they rely on a distinctively scientific method which, successfully applied, produces domain-specific results that converge on a single, coherent and comprehensive system of knowledge" (Wylie 1999: 293). The theory is structured around a reductive principle, which presupposes that all scientific fields study objects, which are hierarchically organised and hence, they can be "decomposed into things belonging to the next lowest level". In this sense, each field should be constantly reducible to the next level till "a unique lowest level" of elementary components is reached (Oppenheim and Putnam 1958: 9). Therefore the apparent complexity of the world is only a surface impression, because the world constitutes a coherent, unified entity, characterised by an *underlying order*. If the appropriate method is used, then the surface complexity of the world can be reduced to its progressively simpler categories, hopefully reaching a level of elementary components, where further reduction is no longer possible[4].

The criticisms to this theory have been numerous[5]. The methodological unity thesis was the first to prove unsustainable since it became highly problematic for scientists to produce a list of demarcation criteria, clearly distinguishing science from pseudo-

[4] The same theoretical premise underpins a range of evolutionary perspectives in both anthropology and sociology whereby societies are categorised according to their level of complexity (Stocking 1987: 170; Layton 1997: 21-22). Such approaches have influenced considerably the perceptions of society and social change within the processual paradigm.

[5] See Wylie (2000) for a summary of the arguments.

science (Van Pool & Van Pool 1999). As far as ontological unity is concerned, it seems that "disunity in the content of science ... proliferates rather than diminishes as the sciences mature and specialise, leading to a recognition of greater complexity rather than of simplicity in the ontology of the subject domain." (Wylie 2000: 230). The reductive principle of the theory is refuted, since not only does it become increasingly difficult to analyse complex entities into their simple components without undermining their numerous parameters, but also, the emergence of 'interfield theories' combining elements of several scientific fields proves that the hierarchy presumed to hold between subjects is more often than not unattainable[6] (Darden and Maull 1977). However such criticisms did not inform the way unity theses were applied in archaeology.

How have concepts of 'unity of science' been integrated in archaeology and what are their consequences for the production of archaeological categories and concepts? The archaeological ontological assumption is that there exists a record of the processes of the past, which despite its apparent diversity, is organised in observable patterns ("an orderly world"); archaeology aims to identify and explain those patterns ("describe and explain this order"); this is achievable by means of "a distinctively scientific method" which, although producing domain-specific results, these will ultimately form part of a single, coherent system of knowledge (general laws of human behaviour).

The main implication of the unity thesis is that the methodological unity of scientific enquiry is extended to presume a unity of the phenomenon under observation, the world. In the case of archaeology, representations of past processes, and more precisely, past *social* processes had been recognised in the material patterns of the archaeological record. By assuming a unified world, it is also presumed that cultural phenomena, like natural phenomena, are governed by laws which can be identified by science and that these pertain equally in the past as in the present (Stocking 1987: 170). Therefore, the archaeological record and the processes which generated it could be taken as a unified entity. By studying the underlying structure of the patterns of the record, archaeologists

[6] It is suggested that very often in the process of reduction, instead of coming across simpler fields, which are the essential components of the more complex ones, interfield theories arise, which constitute independent and complex fields of study borrowing elements from more than one field, and cross-cutting the traditional domains of neighbouring subjects (Darden and Maull 1977: 50).

would be able to illuminate the structure of past societies which generated the record. Such a belief had very important ramifications for archaeological explanation.

The basic principle of the unity thesis is that the apparent complexity of the world can be reduced to its constituent elements and each of them analysed to reveal underlying, simple patterns. Or, in Renfrew's words, "systems thinking... entails the adoption of concepts and of a vocabulary which permit the analysis of a very complex situation into a number of identifiable components" (1984: 12). A system (e.g. society) is perceived as a unified entity, with observable boundaries. In order to study it, the archaeologist must identify the 'simple' components, or sub-systems constituting it. Though there can exist several different systems (or societies), these are comparable because they are essentially bound by similar rules of operation (general laws of behaviour). Comparison thus enables the development of general, *middle range* theories which will be valid, if not universally, in more than one or two comparable situations. Although Renfrew is critical of 'extreme' generalisation and 'universal' laws, he still insists on their importance for the progress of archaeological knowledge: "if each statement we made was only applicable to a single society, there would be little to be learnt from any comparison between societies" (1984: 18).

Unity, moreover, presupposes that the rules operating in the parts will be of relevance to the whole system. Therefore, the internal organisation of one part of the system could also pertain to the operation of another part. This reasoning can be exemplified in the understanding of change within systemic analysis as a multiplier effect. This notion describes how innovations in one sub-system generate changes in another and that a chain of innovations from one sub-system to another is the only way to sustain prolonged growth in a society (Renfrew 1984: 274). It is only reasonable to suggest that human activities are interconnected, and therefore, that there is an interdependence in the different aspects of life. However, the understanding of the system as an entity which can be broken into smaller parts also entails a hierarchical organisation of its components. Although the parts may describe different domains of life, within the overall system they appear to be organised according to their size, smaller particles contained within larger ones (Renfrew 1984: 260). The inherent assumption is that smaller parts are simpler, the more components the system contains (the larger it is), the

more complex it is. However, since the different sub-systems are taken to describe different domains of human activity, are we to assume that such hierarchy also pertains to the organisation of life?

The diversity of human nature cannot be seen as an accumulation of many simple behavioural aspects, nor can it be reduced to a series of simple components organised hierarchically. How is hierarchy in human behaviour to be perceived? Are there 'primary' and 'secondary' human needs (c.f. Renfrew 1972: 498)? In both traditional and processual archaeology, although material needs were considered fundamental, the human mind was given primacy over the other aspects of human nature, in the sense that people first reflected upon their actions and then acted (Ingold 1992). This is also why culture was perceived by both archaeological generations as "man's extra-somatic means of adaptation" (Gosden 1999: 96). However, if culture, as a pure mental creation, is by definition complex (since the mind is considered hierarchically higher than the body), why does it evolve, and what does it evolve to? Are some "cultures" more complex than others? Can there be a degree of complexity?

This standard assumption of evolutionary theory would seem to collapse if the presumed hierarchical structure of life was removed from the equation. Human nature consists of several aspects, which cannot be ordered hierarchically or reduced to each other. The body cannot 'move' without the mind, in the same sense that the mind cannot 'think' without the body. Hunger cannot be considered a hierarchically lower expression of human nature whilst religion a higher. All these characteristics constitute the human condition in such a way, that if one is missing, the meaning of human nature changes entirely. Thus, culture is not just a mental creation, a design conceived in the mind and imposed upon the environment (Ingold 1992); nor is the environment the empty container, the shape of which determines the content, culture. The existence of human beings in the world should rather be seen as an embodied experience in which all aspects of humanity have an equally important role to play.

On the other hand, although unity ascertains that complex entities can be analysed into simple components, it does not account for how complex entities come into being.

Evolutionary arguments seem inevitable: simple structures changed, evolving into complex ones through time. Nevertheless, change does not automatically and always result in complexity; not all 'primitive' societies resulted in 'complex' ones (Lewthwaite 1983; Yoffee 1993: 64-65). And if hierarchy is permanent in the order of the world, why do things change? There appear to be no concrete rules regulating the emergence of complexity. In fact, there is no simple or coherent definition of complexity. The argument falls into a vicious circle: the reason for complex structures being seen as such is that they are composed of several simpler ones. Similarly, simple entities are simple because complex structures can be reduced into them.

Therefore, complexity can neither be adequately accounted for, nor can it be defined. What makes complexity if not the mere existence of simplicity? Yet many simple things do not necessarily constitute a complex one. The unstructured accumulation of simple parts does not inevitably formulate complex entities. If a hierarchical structuring proves problematic, what are the rules which define the relations holding between the simple parts? Even if one accepts evolutionary accounts of complexity, there is still no plausible explanation as to *why* the transformation from simple to complex occurs. Time in itself cannot generate change (Cherry 1983a: 33).

The repercussions for understanding society are important. Complexity is taken to describe the overall system; society is understood as such a system. Therefore, society is a complex entity composed of many simpler parts. However, which are the simple components in a society? Is social organisation simply to be described as the accumulation of individuals? Moreover, how can such an unstructured grouping generate social structure? How can structure exist beyond the social actors which reproduce it in their daily lives? Such incoherences are not particular to archaeology; they draw from a long line of sociological and anthropological arguments which came to be known in the literature as the 'dichotomy of agency and structure'. Critiques and alternatives again came from the social sciences and are slowly finding their way into archaeological thinking (Giddens 1984; Bourdieu 1990; Urry 2000; Barrett 1988; 2001), but these will be examined in more detail in the following chapter.

Processual archaeology thus had not gone beyond problematic understandings of society. By replacing the categories of 'peoples' and 'cultures' with systemic categories, it had reified society as an abstraction which contained and constrained social actors, and which was characterised by an inherent hierarchy. Moreover, the task of identifying the boundaries of society – to recognise different social systems in the material patterns of the archaeological record – was even more relevant. Although New Archaeology had vehemently opposed the uncritical equation of sets of archaeological material with distinct social groups, the identification of such groups from the patterning of archaeological material in space constituted the main way by which systems and their boundaries were defined (Renfrew 1984: 260-261). Such definitions of the system and their implementation in practice primarily by field surveys have generated the core of current approaches to region and regionalism.

2.2. Regions in archaeology

Within archaeology, regions have constituted the most prominent scale of analysis in a wide range of approaches. Such prominence of the region may be justified by the inherent trend of archaeology to establish a 'large scale view' within which to examine the history of social and economic processes (Barrett 1998: 15). However, despite being the 'ultimate analytic scale' of archaeological investigations, the definition and properties of the region and the ways in which these inform accounts of social organisation and change have not received equal attention. The same attitude characterises Minoan studies.

Within Minoan archaeology spatial analysis has largely taken the form of 'settlement pattern' studies. The proliferation of such studies had many beneficial effects; most significantly, they replaced an exclusive focus on large urban centres with a broader, often cross-disciplinary, consideration of larger territories. As a result, there was a shift from the initial perception of Minoan society as a homogeneous entity to recognising regional cultural patterns across the island. However, a 'palace-centred' methodology was not avoided, inasmuch as regions were again defined as the surrounding hinterlands

of palatial sites (e.g. Knappett 1999a; Haggis 2002: 122). Such incoherence stems mainly from the absence of a theoretical framework within which to conceptualise regions. Although geographic parameters are primordial, if regions are to operate as *scales of analysis* in archaeology, their definition needs more careful theorisation. A re-assessment of the nature of social life and its spatial representation are central to such a consideration.

2.2.1. How is a region defined?

> "Regional analysis is *obviously* the appropriate framework in which to investigate past settlement systems. (...) But how is a region to be *chosen*?" (Hodges 1987: 128, emphasis added)

A number of important questions are raised by Hodges (1987) in discussing the spatial models used by archaeologists; the way a region is chosen for analysis is amongst the most significant. However, even more important is a question that he does not address: why is regional analysis so *obviously* the setting to investigate past settlement systems? The *obvious* nature of such an assertion highlights the most problematic aspect of regional analysis, namely that the region as an analytic unit is taken for granted. It seems unfair to say that researchers have not been agonising over the best way to conduct regional analysis, however, the most important aspect of such an analysis, *what is the nature of the region*, has been largely overlooked. Within geography, the preoccupation with finding an accurate and informative way of defining regions has by far predated similar concerns within archaeology, a fact which probably accounts for the widespread adoption of geographical models of spatial analysis by archaeologists from the 1960s onwards (Wagstaff 1987). However, such models were not devised to answer archaeological questions and consequently their application, although generating interesting results, was not without its problems.

Although Hodges' assertion implies that regions are not defined, but chosen (i.e. they are real, not informed by the criteria set by the analysts), there is still a difficulty in setting the appropriate criteria for defining or choosing a region, which generates the first dilemma whether geographical/ecological aspects should be given supremacy over

cultural features (Dimen 1976; Bintliff 2000): "Very often ... regional analysis starts from a definition formulated by modern or early modern observers, yet with little empirical basis on the ground in terms of cultural traits." (Hodges 1987: 128)[7]. Since diffusionist theories, with their emphasis on cultural criteria for the identification of spatially discrete areas, had been discredited by processual archaeology, questions of humanity-nature relationships were deemed more informative[8]. Secondly, the aim of regional analysis is the identification of past 'settlement' systems. However, not only is the definition of such spatial systems fraught with discrepancies, it is also inextricably related to systemic models of social organisation and change, which have several problems (see §2.3.3). Depending on which kind of criteria are used to define a region, we can categorise regional approaches into 'ecological', viewing region as a metaphor for 'nature', and 'cultural', perceiving region as a metaphor for 'society'. These metaphors also influence the concepts used to correlate the 'natural' (spatial) to the 'cultural' (social) categories.

Regional perspectives proliferated in processual approaches primarily because they facilitated systemic analysis. *Regions* enabled the examination of all aspects of a *system* within a particular geographical background. The greater advantage of such environments was their boundedness that allowed the investigation of every sub-system (economic, political, social, symbolic) with great scrutiny and control. Moreover, the new-found significance of ethnography, conducted under similar analytic directives, presented archaeologists with an additional strand of material which through analogy allowed for the verification of their observations within the same regional environment (Fotiadis 1995).

However, although great effort was invested in determining the scope and the aims of regional projects, regions themselves were left out of theoretical scrutiny as a stable variable, not requiring definition. Regions were seen as consisting of known qualities and quantities which were essentially geographic and therefore beyond theorisation.

[7] Note the similarity to Renfrew's concern (1984: 39) with identifying operative groups which are not simply apparent to the modern observer, but also to past actors.

[8] However the concern with identifying discrete groups of cultural traits was not entirely abandoned. On the contrary, cultural characteristics were now related not with ethnic groups, but with specific locations as in Renfrew's (1972) Keros-Syros culture etc.

Moreover, the strong concern with diachronic analysis enhanced the impression of a divide between the 'region' as a static, natural background for human activity, and 'culture' as the evolving result of human interference with the environment. Thus this kind of regional analysis was grounded on, and brought forth, a conceptualisation of culture as separate and external to nature.

The main issues that have been either ill-defined or overlooked in traditional regional accounts are *time*, *scale* and the nature of *history*. These issues constitute the core of the most crucial problem posed within regional studies, how to move from the local to the general, in other words, how to make regional observations relevant and informative for wider processes.

2.2.2. Region as Nature

The metaphor of region as nature pertains to the formulation of 'ecological' regional approaches and forms part of a series of dualisms such as observer-observed, individual-society, mind-body and so on. The 'nature-culture dichotomy' is an ongoing debate within anthropology (MacCormack & Strathern 1980; Descola & Pàlsson 1996; Ingold 1992; 1996; 2000), but the impact of such perceptions on archaeological interpretation has only recently become a point of consideration (Barrett 1988; 1998; 2000). This divide has repercussions for the ways the relation between humanity and the environment is understood, and by consequence, the ways regions are defined, but its implications also extend to the ways (social) change is understood and explained.

As we saw above, within processual archaeology, the relationship between humans and their environments was examined through the concept of culture (Binford 1972; Renfrew 1972; several papers in Renfrew 1973a). Thus a typical definition of culture was: "a flexible adaptive mechanism which allows the survival of society despite fluctuations in the natural environment" (Renfrew 1972: 486).

Two points in this definition require comment. First, the natural environment *fluctuates,* but does not change unless modified by human intervention. Thus change in the natural world is seen to operate in time-scales that by far exceed the life-span of human individuals, therefore it can only be perceived in the long run by an external observer, such as the archaeologist, or the geologist. As a consequence, nature and its categories are thought to exist in a realm beyond humanity and to operate at different times and scales. Most fundamental for the conceptualisation of region are the spatial categories. If, according to such reasoning, nature is so stable and neutral, space in all its configurations can be similarly taken as a static and safe category. The two separate spheres of nature and culture are brought together only by the intervention of the human mind, which from an external position observes and relates natural to cultural categories. Secondly, stemming from the above, change is only achieved in the cultural realm. In other words, the background of human action is a stable variable, whereas social life, culture, is flexible and can change. However, since culture is an adaptive mechanism, such changes always depend on the requirements and the resources of the natural environment.

What kind of problems emerge from such dualist conceptions? First, although humans are capable of executing mental designs they do not operate in this manner in every single moment of their life (Giddens 1984: 4; Ingold 1992: 44). This seemingly detached existence, whereupon we first construct a project in our minds and then set out to put it into action, runs contrary to the essence of human perception which is holistic and interactive. People use every aspect of their sensual capacities in order to perceive and act. Moreover, this mind-body separation, although perhaps conceived to better explain the function of both entities, significantly fails to do so, since it ignores the most important fundamental of human life, namely that it is *embodied* (Giddens 1984; Gosden 1999; Urry 2000; Turner & Rojek 2001; Hamilakis *et al.* 2002). While the mind and body may be performing different functions, they cannot do so without their simultaneous coexistence.

Grounded on this erroneous understanding of human perception, dualist approaches see nature as a materiality that exists outside its human inhabitants, a background and container of human action. The very definition of the environment as 'nature'

presupposes the detached existence of an observer, someone standing outside and contemplating the physical world (Ingold 2000: 13-15). However human life rarely takes the form of such a disengaged contemplation, as the 'observer' is a participant in the world observed. In this respect, the physical world should not be perceived as something separate, as 'nature', but rather as *environment* which presupposes, and cannot be conceived without an organism inhabiting it.

The relationship between the environment and the organisms that inhabit it, can be described along the same lines as the relationship between the human body and mind: one cannot exist without the other. In this sense, the notion of adaptation does not appear to explain anything. Culture cannot be considered a purely mental construct. On the one hand, humans employ all the elements of their embodied experience to generate their cultures. On the other, culture is created through living in a physical world and interacting with its materials. Human categories are constructed with reference to these material aspects of the world. Therefore, culture and the environment can only exist through, and in relation to, each other. The notion of adaptation, by presupposing that they are separate, renders their relationship causal: the environment poses a problem and culture responds by adapting. But how are the problems posed by our environments to be perceived if not through our cultural constructs?

Such a dichotomy seems to create more deadlocks than it resolves. The environment is not 'nature', an external reality *of* the world; it is rather "a reality *for* the world, constituted in relation to the organism or person whose environment it is" (Ingold 1992: 44). People perceive and understand their environments through action and active engagement with the possibilities that each environment affords. Moreover, as Ingold (2000: 189) points out, "the environment is pregnant with the past", it is an enduring record of the experiences and the memories of the generations that have dwelt within it before; it is not devoid of meaning. People do not create 'culture' in order to inscribe meanings on an empty 'nature'. People become aware of these meanings differentially through their own filters of skill, perception and practice. As people's engagement with their environments changes so do the meanings that have been revealed to them.

This false dichotomy between environment and culture also creates problems for the ways change is understood. When the environment is conceived as 'nature', operating in time scales that exceed the human life span, then inevitably it is understood as an invariable and permanent factor for human existence. In this respect, a specific environment cannot but pose the same challenges for adaptation in the course of several generations; the environment will always afford its inhabitants the same raw material and the same possibilities for action through time. The obvious question thus becomes 'why do things change?' If humanity-nature relationships are so much shaped by adaptation processes, why do people over time choose to adapt to the *same* environments in such diverse ways?

Evolutionary perspectives become again the most promising answer by purporting that things change with time (see §2.1.2). Moreover, if culture and nature operate despite each other, then it is also assumed that they undergo changes in different degrees and temporalities. Such long term time-scales that span the lifetime of several generations cannot be felt directly by the human agents, but are only understood by an external observer. Therefore, whether 'natural' or 'social', time in such accounts becomes a dimension that is external to human life. Time is seen not as embedded in nature, but only as time that passes, linear time, a sequence of frozen in time-space events connected by causal relationships (Urry 2000: 16). In this respect, historical conditions are seen as external to both nature and humanity and inflicting themselves upon human actors and their societies in a random fashion.

However, when we realise that people and their environments are inextricably bound together, then the changes they undergo should be interdependent. Environments are not static factors in human life, but dynamic. Environments, as the lived-in worlds of their organisms, are never complete or finite, but rather as long as life goes on, they are in a process of continuous construction (Ingold 2000: 20). As they are mutually constructed, people and their environments also mutually transform. Since our focus is no longer 'nature' and 'culture' as two separate entities, but the interactions between people and their environments, it follows that our perspectives on change need to be as integrative.

The implications of dualist perceptions for the study of regions are multitudinous. Within traditional accounts, nature as a stable variable of human livelihood is equated with region. The Region, as the spatial dimension for human action, is considered an enduring background and container of resources for human activity, structured by different time- and space-scales from the people living in it. *Region is a metaphor for nature.* Because it is such a stable variable, it affords the same possibilities and material for action. Change is effected through time and it only involves the human cultures occupying the region. If the region changes, it is in the form of its spatial extent, in other words it is again the human boundaries inscribed on it that transform and not any of its essential, 'natural' properties. If any change happens it is because of historical conditions (time) that exist outside both the region and its inhabitants.

Such regions are not useful if we are trying to understand how people constructed a livelihood in the particular environments they chose to live in. They only allow us a-historic and deterministic explanations of change. They are insufficient for illuminating questions of why people led their lives in such diverse ways, not only through time, but also synchronically. Such regions are problematic.

2.2.3. Society as Region

Let us consider now the second metaphor implicated in the conceptualisation of regions, the *metaphor of society as region* (Urry 2000: 30-32). Although the recognition of patterns of social organisation in space was among the most desired tasks within systemic approaches, the relationship between social features and spatial structures remained to be specified. The region emerged as the most appropriate unit for this kind of analysis, representing a coherent framework "for understanding how local communities are linked to others forming intermediate and higher levels of social organisation." (Smith 1976: 4). Region therefore was seen to provide a well-defined spatial framework for analysis and an advantageous setting for describing the hierarchical relations pertaining between social units. As Renfrew suggested,

> "... tighter and more effective [social] definitions can be obtained by replacing the band/tribe/chiefdom/state hierarchy with a classification based on the *spatial arrangement of society*." (Renfrew 1984: 41, emphasis added)

while Cherry also described the benefits of regional analysis for archaeology along similar lines:

> "surveys often reveal spatially overlapping traces of several state or imperial systems which replaced each other within a single area, allowing controlled comparison with many aspects of environment held constant." (1987: 150).

Thus, the characteristics that made regions such adequate units of analysis within systemic paradigms, are their *endurance*, their *boundedness* and the amount of *control* that these features afford the observer. Social classifications are based on spatial categories, which, by virtue of the 'permanence' of space, are vested with undisputed 'reality' and objectivity. Region thus emerges as a metaphor for society.

The main assumption of such approaches is that the region is undisputedly *bounded*; it has physical limits, marked by geographical features. By virtue of their materiality, these physical boundaries are considered 'real', 'objective', describing and defining the limits of our study. They are also static, in the sense that the geographical configuration of the region does not change in time, as Cherry argues so clearly in his example. So, if region is a container of human action, like nature, then society represents the 'culture' that fills and occupies it, therefore social categories may be recognised in spatial arrangements. One dominant way in which archaeology recognises such socio-spatial categories is by presuming that objects found together in space reflect the activities of people living together in the same areas. The assumption is therefore that people using the same material culture live by the same rules. In this respect we can recognise areas of dense cultural activity and interpret them as societies, e.g. Minoan society (occupying the space of Crete); Cycladic society and so on.

Following from this, the second assumption entailed in such conceptualisations of region is that geographical features are understood as socio-political boundaries. Of course, the boundaries of socio-political units can expand or contract, but the stability of the physical topography of the region provides observers with a secure measure of comparison, between social systems - "systems which replaced each other within a

single area" (diachronic comparison) - and between different spatial units representing "intermediate and higher levels of social organisation" (synchronic comparison) (Figs. 2.1, 2.2).

Through such reasoning, the spatial is understood as a representation and *effect* of the social. Social organisation is seen as mirrored in the spatial distribution of archaeological material. However, the argument appears to work both ways: on the one hand, a change in spatial distribution is thought to result in a change in social organisation. For example, settlement nucleation (a spatial phenomenon) may cause the emergence of central authority (a social phenomenon). Spatial transformation results in social transformation. The same argument has also been used in an inverse way: when the social structure of a particular society changes, its spatial structure will transform accordingly. For example, a society occupying a specific area experiences a rise in population. To deal with this new element, the society generates social structures that encourage and allow people to live in a nucleated settlement pattern. Social change thus has generated spatial transformation (Fig. 2.3).

Therefore the relations between social and spatial structure are considered causal, one generating the other as cause and effect. Spatial patterns, moreover, are taken to be both *results and causes of change.* However, although space is not merely a neutral background, but rather plays a significant role in the construction and transformation of social conditions, on its own it cannot generate anything (as with time). Spatial structures are indeed an integral part of social life as they carry powerful statements that influence and transform the social conditions. In this respect, spatial structures can be both indicators and factors of social change; they cannot however be understood as cause and effect.

It appears that a common emphasis in all of these assumptions is placed on *boundaries.* Boundaries are particularly important for systemic analysis for a number of reasons. Firstly, without limits a system can neither be defined nor operate. Although the notion of boundaries has been the focus of debate even amongst systemic approaches (Hill 1977), no systemic analysis has managed to formulate an understanding of change

without implying the existence of boundaries. Whether purporting that change is dependent on internal (Renfrew 1972; 1986) or external tensions (Hill 1977; Saxe 1977), systemic approaches inevitably presuppose the existence of boundaries which define what is 'internal' and what 'external'. In this respect the geographic boundaries of regions provide systemic analysis with its necessary limits.

Furthermore, the borders of the region are taken as self-evident; they do not seem to require justification. Mountains, rivers, valleys are taken to divide space in easily identifiable units which are considered uncontroversial. When the limits of the region are equated with the limits of the social system *filling* the region, the inevitable assumption is that the social organisation of the system is mapped on the space of the region. Thus, society becomes the region. Not only can society be defined as an entity containing people, but it can also be discovered spatially as the clustering of people occupying the same space.

Though spatial divisions created by geographical elements may give rise to discrete topographies, to inscribe uncritically social and political qualities on such geographies, namely, to extrapolate social functions from topographic units, is problematic. Undoubtedly, the form and structure of human settlements is deeply influenced by the geography of the specific environments that people choose to live in, as each environment affords certain possibilities for movement and activity that are not infinite. However, topographical elements do not constitute any kind of border or boundary unless construed as such by people in their everyday practical engagement with their environments (Cohen 1985; Donnan & Wilson 1999). A river may stand as the border of a specific area only when people choose not to cross it. Moreover, boundaries have inherent temporal qualities, in that people may be crossing them all the time and only under certain circumstances become self-conscious of the significance of their action to leave a familiar place to get across to a foreign and unknown district. In this respect, boundaries are also context-specific. Hence, they do not always define the same regions. Regions *come about* in the same ways as their boundaries do, and they are equally dependent on time.

2.2.3.1. The nature of change

A series of significant problems emerges from assuming that social qualities are embedded in spatial structures, or that society is "spatially arranged" in a manner that is inherent in nature.

First, if spatial patterns are taken to be both causes and results of change, the nature of change is essentially spatial, it consists of *shifts in space*. However, regions, as the lived-in environments of their inhabitants, are constantly under a process of becoming. Their construction and perception are inescapably dependent on the contexts of interaction between people and their environments and between diverse human communities. As these interactions are shaped by "a dialectic of routes and roots" (Urry 2000: 132), not static but dynamic, embracing tradition and allowing for change, so are the regions that emerge from such interactions. In this respect, spatial change neither causes nor represents the result of what people do socially, their 'culture'. Rather, the spatial forms arise as a crystallisation of human activity within an environment (Ingold 2000).

The definition of permanent boundaries for region and society also presumes that topological proximity equals social coalescence: "The basic social group is defined by the habitual association of persons within a territory" (Renfrew 1984: 44). Nevertheless, community is not prescribed by spatial proximity: "Localness need not generate communion" (Urry 2000: 133). Community must be achieved (see §3.2.1). Geographical propinquity does not presuppose social cohesion. To imply that face-to-face interaction inevitably results into the sharing of common beliefs between people is an unfounded assumption. The construction of relations that bring and bind people together may indeed be affected by the sharing of a common environment (or rather the common perception of an environment), however this spatial co-existence is not in itself explanatory of anything that people do. Communion is created in many diverse levels which may coincide spatially – so that they can be visible to the archaeologist – but which are not always expressed in spatial terms (Cohen 1985).

This perception of boundaries as static and permanent borders around the region/society also leads to another set of interpretational problems, namely how to understand the relation of local, small-scale units to regional and supra-regional, large-scale units. The type of such connections is crucial for the validity of the archaeological units we use, as the relation between the local and the wider defines what is local and what not; it ultimately defines the *region.*

2.2.3.2. Scale and History

Systemic analysis is particularly preoccupied with "problems in conceptualising 'local societies' as discrete centres of historical action separate from the wider regional system" (Rowlands 1986: 11). This concern derives from the explicit need of systemic analysis to provide general explanations. Local conditions must be accountable according to the general logic pertaining to the whole system; local conditions that do not seem to be directly regulated or abiding to the general rules of the system, are ignored. It is obvious that 'local societies' and 'wider regional systems' are perceived as entities with definite limits, which are also materially represented in space. So the problem becomes that, if these units are so different and separate from each other (i.e. independent and unrelated), how do they interact, given that they must interact in some manner, if changes are ever to happen?

As Smith (1976: 4) maintains, the patterning of human communities in space is structured by and creates different levels of social organisation, which are ranked in a hierarchical order, from the lower (small-scale/local) to the higher (large-scale) levels. Hill (1977: 77), in discussing how the different levels of organisation of the system must be understood, notes that "it is exceedingly important to precisely define one's system of interest, since it is only then that one can distinguish the internal from the external - the system from its environment". It is apparent thus that the organisation of each unit and the nature of interactions between different units (whether they are named system and sub-systems, or individual and society, or local settlements and wider

regions) are directly dependent on the *scale* of such units. Different scale comes to mean different level in the social/spatial hierarchy.

To clarify this argument, we can model different social units as a series of concentric circles (Fig. 2.4). According to systems theory, each circle represents a different level of systemic integration and a unit component within the larger system. For instance, the household represents the individual's environment, the village acts as the environment of several households and so forth. The relations pertaining between the different circles (the units of different scale) are hierarchical. Small scale social units (e.g. the individual; the household; the village) are contained and constrained by the immediately larger entities (e.g. the individual by the household; the household by the village; the village by the region) and ultimately by the highest in order entity, the system itself.

Problems arise though, when we consider that the determining factor of any unit's position in this hierarchy is its *size*. As units augment in size, they also become increasingly complex, in that the larger a unit is, the more complex its operation is presumed to be. However, as units move up the hierarchical ladder, they change positions (e.g. a village may reach the level of a regional centre), but the relations between them remain the same. Increasing complexity appears to constitute a mere *shift in space*. Let us consider an example; a village at some stage of its history may acquire the status of a regional centre. However this shift will not affect how the relations between smaller (village) and larger (regional centre) unit are understood. Their functions and characteristics remain the same, they have only moved within a hierarchy, which also remains static: as a rule the regional centre will always regulate the operation of the village, the only difference is that the village is now a different place on the map. However, if such a hierarchy always functions in the same way (i.e. if it serves the same needs), then there is no reason for things to change. If the requirements of the system remain stable, and can be fulfilled by the same solutions, then why do new solutions emerge?

Again the understanding of complexity seems to be interwoven with controversy. If the hierarchy between entities of different scale remains the same, in that the village will

always be subordinate to the regional centre and so on, then the complexity ascribed to each scale has a static value. A village, in other words, is taken to represent a standard level of complexity. The level of complexity that a village can attain will always remain the same in relation to other villages, and in relation to higher order centres. In this respect, complexity does not constitute a factor of change, but rather of stability. If the values of complexity that a system includes at any time are always arranged in the same way, then there is no reason for change. If the amounts of complexity incorporated in each unit within the hierarchy always maintain an equilibrium, if there is always a balance between complex entities, then what causes the imbalances? Moreover, how do we account for changes that presuppose irregular amounts of complexity? How do we explain centralisations or gaps in complexity?

Since it appears impossible to account for such discrepancies within a systemic logic, 'historical circumstances' become the last resort for explanation. Once again, the passage of abstract time is thought to create conditions that are not balanced. Time creates irregularities, which give rise to historical circumstances. History thus, existing autonomously outside region/society, creates randomness, which cannot be accounted for from within or without the system. The question thus becomes, who makes history? If we accept that the logic of the system always prescribes how local conditions arise, this implies that the latter cannot play any part in the generation of historical circumstances. But if the system also cannot account for these circumstances, then history must arise in a supra-system level. But who exists in a supra-system level? Can history be made in a void?

2.2.4. A way out of the tunnel?

We seem to have reached another dead-end. The forms of change that can be observed regionally do not appear to be adequately accounted for through the frameworks that we just discussed. Perhaps it is time to consider whether one of the sources of such problems is the ways regions have been understood so far. It is probable that a re-evaluation of regional definitions may hold the answer to some of these problems. It certainly seems that explanations of change would benefit from better-defined

frameworks.

In the first instance, social and spatial entities cannot be equated uncritically. The simple accumulation of individuals does not constitute a social unit. The relations between individuals or regional units are not simply determined by the space between them. Space alone does not create meaningful relations, in the same manner that time in itself does not generate change or stability. The relations between different social units must be constructed through interaction. Since the number of interactions that can exist between different social units is almost infinite, how is it possible that the outcome of such diverse interactions turns out to be always the same, a prescribed hierarchy of space?

More importantly, the interactions that bring about social units and social categories are concrete and timely; they *take place*, they are time- and space-specific, they require real contexts and agencies of action. In this sense, social units of any scale cannot be permanent, everlasting, neatly bounded entities. Social units are not abstractions, they are not determined by some external history or structure existing in a supra-unit level. There is no permanent hierarchy of spatial relations. Complexity is not a measure for anything; it neither explains nor describes the nature of interactions that generate diverse practices, regions, and networks of communication.

We can no longer examine regions as the containers of such problematic social entities and their patterning. We must explore regions in their proper dimension as *networks of relevance* that are under continuous construction. This alternative view of regional analysis will be discussed in Chapter 3. At the moment, it is important to consider how problematic theories of region are implemented by methods of regional analysis.

2.3. "A walk on the wild side": Surveys and the production of regional categories

> "survey stands as the chief means of acquiring data about the past at the regional scale." (Cherry 1994: 105)

Field surveys have been at the core of recent investigations in the Aegean. The Mesara in particular has been the subject of five survey projects (Blackman & Branigan 1975; 1977; Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995; Vasilakis 1989-90b; Watrous *et al.* 1993), which constitute a detailed record of archaeological material equalling in extent the evidence available from excavated sites. It is obvious, therefore, that whatever understandings we have reached so far about the regional character of the Mesara, have all been affected to a significant degree by the way the region has been defined and approached in these field projects.

The methodology and the general theoretical agenda of field surveys can be shown to derive from the assumptions discussed above. In this sense archaeological regional analysis and field surveys are inextricably related (Ammerman 1981; Cherry 1983b; 1994). At the same time, however, field survey constitutes a primary vehicle for regional analysis, thus reproducing such assumptions in practice, through its analytical units of *sites* and *settlements*. Undoubtedly, conventions cannot be avoided in the generation of archaeological categories and the categories (re)produced by field surveys are not an exception. However, the limitations of such categories must be borne in mind when interpreting the evidence. And although surveys are self-critical in defining their units of analysis, this awareness does not always characterise the interpretations of regional patterns. Having said that, not only have field surveys added to our knowledge of the past, they have also enriched significantly the range of information we can acquire and probably will continue to do so.

2.3.1. Field Surveys in Aegean Archaeology

To better understand the aims and expectations of regional studies, we need to consider more carefully the circumstances under which field surveys and their research agendas were introduced into Aegean archaeology. Field surveys had been largely ignored as a reliable method of recovering ancient remains, until the late 1960s when pioneering projects, such as the Minnesota Messenia Expedition (McDonald & Rapp 1972), made

the advantages of such methods for archaeological research widely known. Although such field methods were related to the newly introduced concerns with regional analysis, it was only from the early 1980s onwards that regional studies attracted increasing interest, giving rise to numerous regional survey projects (Blackman & Branigan 1975; 1977; Renfrew & Wagstaff 1982; Watrous 1982; Bintliff & Snodgrass 1985; Cherry *et al.* 1991; Nixon *et al.* 1990; Watrous *et al.* 1993; Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995)[9] as well as to a growing literature on survey methodology (Cherry 1983b; 1994; Keller & Rupp 1983; Kardulias 1994a; Kardulias & Shutes 1997).

Renfrew's (1980) description of the general situation in archaeology during the 1960s and 1970s as a confrontation of the Great Tradition with a Great Divide, echoes the familiar contrast between classicist traditions and new anthropological trends (most evident in prehistoric archaeology), described in our discussion of the Minoan paradigm (see Chapter 1). However, within Aegean archaeology, prehistoric archaeology was conducted in a properly classical fashion. It was characterised by a strong preoccupation with the exceptional and the monumental, used excavation as the exclusive method of recovering remains of the past, while the detailed classification of material, the contribution of individual leaders or classes of people (e.g. King Minos) and the significance of particular events (e.g. the destruction of the Minoan Palaces) constituted historic explanation. Within such conditions, it took several years before the new concerns with explanation and problem-oriented work shifted the emphasis from the "individual event, the unique place, the particular relationship" (Snodgrass 1982: 806), towards "long-term processes, regional scale patterns and comparative approaches" (Whitelaw 2000: 155). The primary methodological vehicle of this transformation was surface survey.

Although at the initial stages disbelief in and criticism of surveys were strong, this situation has changed so dramatically over recent years that now surface surveys enjoy equal respect with excavations and in many cases are preferred over them. Field surveys brought regional analysis to the centre of interpretations of the prehistoric Aegean, and due to their proliferation, the significance of regional analysis extended beyond survey

[9] The number of regional field projects throughout Greece by far exceeds the examples mentioned here. These are only a few representative projects mainly including work done in Crete.

projects and became a research perspective on its own right. The individual site could no longer suffice as the exclusive focus of historical reconstruction. Although many surveys were designed with specific sites in mind, to 'put the city into its context', this should not make us underestimate the importance of exploring vast rural areas and environmental zones, which had previously been only at the margins of archaeological concerns.

This focus on regional issues was expressed by a renewed interest in the environment and the economy as factors contributing to the constitution of life in the past. A more accurate reconstruction of past economies was possible now by virtue of a firm database of information about varieties of plants and animals, land use patterns, the impact of soil erosion, and so on. Despite frequently promoting a kind of environmental determinism, such new approaches broadened significantly the spectrum of historical reconstructions. By attempting to explain diachronic processes and large scale patterns, survey projects actually introduced an emphasis on history which was lacking in traditional approaches.

Moreover, archaeological surveys are as a rule interdisciplinary projects and through the course of time generated cross-disciplinary specialists, such as geo-archaeologists. In this respect, the specialised knowledge of every contributor is given equal significance for the design of the project and the interpretation of the results. This situation, coupled with the number of practical problems regularly encountered by field surveys (Cherry 1983b: 379), ensured a certain flexibility in interpretations that avoided the rigidity of previous approaches.

The reliability of surveys was further enhanced when the comparison of survey data with excavated material showed that many of the sequences (chronological, stylistic or other) that had been constructed exclusively on the basis of excavated sites did not seem to apply equally everywhere (e.g. the definition of the EMIII period). This had a twofold result: on the first hand, field surveys became a necessary part of every archaeological inquiry, increasing the importance of regional analysis. On the other hand, some of the existing analytical categories were re-evaluated under the new possibilities that survey material provided. The result was that interpretations and

historical reconstructions entered a more self-critical phase, scrutinising every gap or inconsistency in those sequences as a potentially meaningful pattern.

It therefore seems that survey had only positive effects in Aegean archaeology. However, the innovative elements were not always explored to the extent that they could make a difference generally. Most importantly, the way in which regions were defined retained a rather secondary role.

A number of different criteria bear upon the selection of suitable areas for survey within the Aegean, ranging from a wide geographical area at approximately the size of modern administrative divisions (e.g. Chania-Sfakia) to smaller areas that are either geographically distinctive (e.g. the Lasithi Plateau, the Ayiofarango Gorge etc.), or are dense with a number of archaeological sites for any one period (e.g. the Western Mesara, the Kommos Region). It seems that geographical criteria and the previous knowledge of the existence of sites are equally significant in this selection process. Generally the aim of such projects is to reconstruct the socio-political conditions that pertained to those areas in the past. However, the interpretative link between the geographical and cultural categories employed by most of such projects rarely becomes explicit. As Whitelaw (2000: 135) observes, apart from few exceptions, "much of the discussion in the literature has been on the methodologies of field survey and site recovery, and rather less on the methodologies of interpretation".

2.3.2. Troubled Sites

> "Regions ... are made up of sites, so the latter is the indispensable building block of any regional study" (G. Stys 1994: 265)

The aim of archaeological surveys, as explained by Cherry (1983b: 381), is "to recover information about the extant surface archaeological remains in a region, usually with the ultimate goal of using the settlement configuration determined in this way as the basis for the reconstruction of variability over time and through space in now extinct cultural

systems". The recognition and plotting of such sites on distribution maps represents the primary interpretational vehicle of field surveys. Sites therefore appear to make up the region in the same way that individuals are supposed to make up society (see §2.2.3).

Archaeologists have always been aware of the inherent limitations of surveys (Ammerman 1981: 76-77; Cherry 1983b: 379; Hope Simpson 1983). Most pressing among such constraints is the difficulty of defining the function and extent of sites from surface material, followed by the restricted nature of information regarding the internal components and organisation of such sites. Greater intensity of survey techniques, general methodological refinements, and even the 'siteless' or 'off-site' survey have been put forward as potential solutions to these problems (Ammerman 1981; Bintliff & Snodgrass 1988; Cherry 1983b; 1994; Dunnell & Dancy 1983; Foley 1981). Despite this, current survey projects mainly focus on addressing problems regarding the recovery of sites and do not deal to any significant extent with the meaning of the concept.

According to Dunnell (1992: 21-25) the site, as a unit of archaeological analysis has a number of functions: it provides the framework for artefact provenience, it operates as a sampling frame in most fieldwork, and finally, it acts as a unit of artefact association. More importantly, the site is considered an archaeologically relevant unit that exists despite the archaeologist, can be observed and described. The site therefore is seen as an empirical unit that can be discovered in space and not as a constructed unit of observation, in the same manner that the archaeological record is understood (§2.1). Moreover, the artefacts found in a site are thought to be the outcomes of activities taking place there. Associated with these activities are the human actors taking part in them. Therefore the existence of objects in the same area is taken to reflect a series of social relations. The site thus emerges as the most important unit of interpretation, as a discrete *locus of human behaviour*. The most important requirement of processual regional analysis, to pin social interactions to concrete categories of space, is more than adequately fulfilled through the concept of the site.

The ways in which a site can be identified, or not, on the actual surface have received a

lot of attention, and the debate is inconclusive regarding the necessity of a conformity in the identification criteria (Plog *et al.* 1978; Ammerman 1981; Foley 1981; Cherry 1983b; Dunnell & Dancy 1983; Bintliff & Snodgrass 1988). Among such criteria, the density of cultural material has always been favoured as the best indication for the existence of human activity in a specific location. The task in hand thus becomes to find suitable ways of determining how dense material needs to be in order to qualify as a site. As Plog *et al.* (1978: 389) argue "a site is a discrete and potentially interpretable locus of cultural materials. By discrete we mean spatially bounded with those boundaries marked by at least relative changes in artefact densities". However, as Dunnell (1992: 30) observes, although sites are recognised in the landscape as empirical entities, they are nevertheless identified by *relative changes* in the quantity of the material constituting them. What is and what is not a site in the field depends on the criteria that each analyst employs. Although different environments are characterised by different formation and recovery conditions which require a certain flexibility in the criteria used for the identification of sites, the above observation implies that sites are not real, empirical entities, but constructed units of observation (Dunnell 1992; Carman 1999). In this respect, the link between the sites and the human activities that created them should not be seen as self-evident.

Furthermore, sites are not units of deposition, but accretionary phenomena (Dunnell 1992: 27). The objects contained within a site have their own histories and may have ended up in the same location through varied processes. In this sense, artefacts found in association may not necessarily be part of similar processes of either deposition or social interaction. Therefore the systemic relations inferred simply from the spatial co-existence of material in an area may not represent entirely reliable historical reconstructions.

Another parameter pertaining to the relatedness of material found in a site is the duration of its use. Sites comprise sequences of deposition units or occupation events (Dewar 1992; Dewar & McBride 1992). It is a matter of common consent that it proves particularly difficult to distinguish material of a single occupation, even within excavated contexts. The same is true for survey material, since the 'necessarily coarse chronological framework' does not allow detailed distinctions between objects of

different depositions. Moreover, sites are the outcome of a variety of temporal scales and their formation may be underway even after they have been identified by archaeologists[10].

As Dewar and McBride (1992: 233) stress, long-term processes have been favoured as agents determining the nature as well as the size and shape of sites. In other words, the site is seen as a unity and all its components (the different deposition events involved in its formation) are to a certain extent supposed to have had the same duration. However, not only are sites constituted by a series of occupations of possibly varied duration, but also, different types of sites may have occupation sequences of different temporal continuity. Therefore, we should be wary of equating spatial distribution with temporal unity, namely, assuming that all the objects found within a site have been used simultaneously (Foxhall 2000: 491). Moreover, the significance of short-term processes that cannot be directly 'read' from the material should not be underestimated as both a formation and interpretation agent.

Dewar and McBride's illustration of 'remnant settlement patterns' (1992: 234-237) clearly makes the case against taking distribution maps literally (Fig. 2.5). Their experiment demonstrates how seemingly different site patterns (e.g. nucleated vs. dispersed) may be the result of a series of similar, short-term processes and not the outcome of a single long-term occupation. By implication, the assumption that sites appearing as contemporary within a distribution map would have interacted within the same social system, may be unfounded. Therefore, the inference of socio-spatial processes, such as nucleation, must be conditioned with other factors and should not rely simply on the proximity of sites within an area.

Dewar and McBride's experiment also underlines the effect that short- and medium-term phenomena can have upon the formation and configuration of sites. Discussing both survey and excavated material, Foxhall (2000: 486) points out that 'archaeological events' are aggregates of small-scale, short-term acts performed in the course of

[10] This point has been taken into account by most surveys by revisiting sites at different times of the year to cross-check visibility, size and shape (cf. Cherry 1983b; 1992; 1994). However, its is not adequately acknowledged as a factor pertaining to the interpretation of sites.

everyday life and should not be taken (as they often are) as unified long-term processes. Moreover, by making social inferences simply from artefact associations, we risk excluding the temporal scale entirely. Even within excavated contexts, the position of finds can at best indicate a certain possibility for use of the particular space. It does not follow that this is the only function this space could have had, and there is a multitude of activities that can be carried out daily without leaving a trace for us to discover. Moreover, the interactions taking place in a particular space are also dependent upon temporal distinctions and not merely by the room arrangement or the material present therein.

It is beyond doubt that we need analytical units in order to practice archaeology and the notion of the site has such methodological and interpretational significance. However, if we are to minimise some of the inherent problems that the use of the notion entails, then we should start by restoring a concern with the temporal dimension of sites in our interpretations. Kuper's discussion of sites (1972) as means of political symbolism, although attributing the necessary significance to locality as a principle in the structuring of social relations (see also Chapter 3), also demonstrates how a place may become many different sites according to different circumstances. Sites, even though related to specific locations and physical dimensions, acquire their symbolism (their meaning or function) through a discrete set of practices taking place there. In this sense, some places may be more important sites than others; the same places may be the sites of different activities according to appropriate circumstances or the needs of different groups of people. A site of community can easily become the site of conflict; production sites may simultaneously be consumption sites. Specific locations can acquire and communicate a host of different messages, some of which will prevail. In this respect, the concentration of material in a location can only offer one type of insight into the kind (or kinds) of sites that potentially can exist there and the reasons why. Even though space can be a powerful point of reference, we need to establish through what means and practices, such reference is constructed and performed.

2.3.3. Overestimated settlement patterns

> "Probably the most powerful data to use in socio-cultural explanation is settlement pattern (...). This may be taken as the material isomorph of the entire mode of production in its broadest sense, and of the core features of social and political organisation." (Price 1978: 165)

The study of the relations between the different sites of a region forms a crucial task of regional analysis, which justifies the great significance placed on the study of *settlement patterns* as indicators of variability in time and space (Cherry 1983b: 381; Renfrew 1984: 260-261).

There are two problems here: first, the term 'settlement' is widely used to describe most of the sites recovered by surveys, even though such interpretations are not always supported by the recovered material. The use of the term moreover makes reference to hermeneutic categories such as 'family', 'household', 'domestication', 'sedentariness', which are not cross-culturally valid and derive mainly from modern, Western cosmologies (Brück & Goodman 1999). The second problem has to do with the socio-political relations that are presumed to exist between sites within the same region, how they change over time and the ways in which these changes are interpreted.

2.3.3.1. The nature of the settlement

Generally most sites recovered by field surveys are interpreted as settlements, unless the presence of a specific set of material, such as burial remains, prevents such identification. To characterise a site as a settlement means to have a series of analytic expectations, which are tightly connected to domestic and residential functions. Therefore, in order to recover settlement sites one would need to look for the material remains of domestic practices.

The house, considered the fulcrum of domestic activity, represents the most frequently used category for such analysis. However, how easy is it to distinguish the function of

specific areas/rooms from others simply on the basis of spatial arrangement and artefact association? Foxhall (2000) makes a particularly strong case for the significance of temporal patterns in determining the various ways in which a room may be used. Her case study illustrates how gender distinctions within the Classical Greek house cannot be easily inferred by room configuration and the deposition of material, but are rather better understood through "the multiple overlay of routine ephemeral activities organised temporally" (Foxhall 2000: 495). Therefore the concentration of material in a bounded space may be the reflection of a *palimpsest* of activities producing a single pattern.

Domestic activity has also been recognised through other categories of material apart from room configuration and function, particularly prominent among which is the preparation and consumption of food (Brück & Goodman 1999: 4-7). Drawing upon modern ideological constructs of the 'home', the recovery of such remains is related to functions of the household and the basic kin-group. However, 'hearths' very often are found outside houses, in communal or ceremonial areas[11] (Fewster 1999) and areas associated with the preparation of food may vary within a settlement according to particular historical contexts or appropriate circumstances (Bailey 1999; Halstead 1999; Foxhall 2000).

In this respect examples from the Prepalatial period can be illuminating. In the Mesara, activities relating to food preparation and especially food consumption are mainly recovered from 'non-domestic' contexts, such as the burial grounds of the tholos tombs (Branigan 1993; Hamilakis 1998), while remains of such activities in smaller-scale, more private contexts are rare. Although this situation could be attributed to the paucity of excavated Prepalatial settlements in the Mesara, if we were to take the 'domestic' assumption literally, we should interpret every context where evidence for food preparation and consumption is found as 'domestic'. Should we also presume that such activity only took place at large-scale communal level since this is the only context we have found evidence of it so far? Food consumption may have taken place in daily, small-scale, mundane contexts, but it is not sufficient on its own to document

[11] A striking example from the Aegean would be the central hearth in the main megaron room at the Palace of Pylos.

'domestic' practice.

This strong emphasis on the domestic element reproduces a number of dichotomies in the interpretation of settlements (such as public-private, sacred-profane), which on the one hand are not universally valid, and on the other, they are certainly not embedded in the categories of space. In other words, particular structures or categories of material culture (such as hearths and cooking implements) are not the conveyors of fixed meanings over space and through time. Although the settlement, like the site, is another analytical category that cannot be easily discarded from our methodology, there are problematic aspects of it that we can certainly avoid. Instead of reproducing dichotomies that mislead our interpretations, we can focus on the study of particular social practices in specific historical contexts (e.g. the varied ways in which the Mesaran landscape was inhabited through the interplay between the practices of life and death).

2.3.3.2. Settlement patterns

Let us consider now the second problem regarding the conceptualisation and use of settlements in traditional regional analysis: the explanation of the relations pertaining between settlements of the same area.

The size of settlements is very often employed in categorising them into particular types, which are presumed to have a socio-political significance. Price's (1978: 165) statement that settlement pattern is the material isomorph of social and political organisation, and Smith's (1976: 4) conviction that settlement size represents different levels of social organisation, are telling in this respect. Prominent among the tasks of surveys is to construct such site typologies with the ultimate aim to infer about the presumed socio-political relations pertaining between them (e.g. Blackman & Branigan 1977: 65-72; Watrous *et al.* 1993: 222-233). It is self-evident therefore that larger sites are seen as administratively and politically more active.

However, again there are problems. As stressed by both Foxhall (2000) and Dewar and McBride (1992), different attributes of a site may have had different duration and therefore cannot all be included in measuring the site's spatial and temporal extent. Therefore inferring the social and administrative importance of settlements on the basis of their size may lead to problematic interpretations. Measuring the spatial extent and administrative importance of Prepalatial Phaistos by assuming that the scattered deposits of material through the course of two centuries are contemporaneous is one of the most striking examples of this sort of approaches (Whitelaw 1983; Branigan 1988b, c; Watrous *et al.* 1993).

On the other hand, by virtue of the broad chronological framework of surveys, even sites belonging to a common phase may not have been founded or used at the same time[12]. Therefore the socio-political relations presumed to have existed between them may be largely inaccurate. For instance, permanent-looking structures may be only occasionally used, the Mesara tholoi being again an obvious example. However, although intermittent use of burial structures is accepted by virtue of the nature of death, periodicity of use is not easily concerned in the case of settlements as perceptions of sedentariness and stability are embedded in the theoretical construct of the settlement.

Assumptions about the historical connection of sites found in the same geographical area are generally expressed as theories of social and political cohesion. Neighbouring sites are taken to be part of a common system of social interactions. Although the importance of spatial correlation should not be underestimated as a factor influencing the generation of social interaction, it is not a normative attribute. Topographical nearness may indeed instigate or facilitate the performance of certain social relations, however such relations can also be established at a distance. Moreover, spatial propinquity does not always operate as a unifying factor. Extensive documentation of border and territory conflicts between neighbouring communities can be found in

[12] The broad chronological framework does not characterise only survey material when it comes to prehistoric sites. Excavated material is also attributed to phases that may span two or three centuries, EMI being a typical example.

almost every historical period (Donnan & Wilson 2001; Bender & Winer 2001), while social distance can be a structuring parameter of specific interactions without always being dependent on spatial distance (Fewster 1999). If the task is to explain the patterning of social interactions through space and time, then the simple spatial association of material or people does not have enough explanatory potential. On the contrary, the existence of a *common network of reference* according to which people can establish meaningful relations is more important.

Settlement patterns have been so primordial in traditional regional analysis because they give the impression of real empirical patterns grounded on the categories of space. As such they are considered to embody the essential meaning of spatial and temporal variability, which maps historical change. However, distribution maps do not adequately describe either the nature of historical change, or the wide spectrum of meaningful interactions that can exist between different communities. Social relations cannot be understood as connections between 'sites'; they should be perceived as relations between people interacting in material historical contexts. Social relations are structured by a series of variables that are not strictly spatial, but also depend on previous traditions, the actual historical context and above all, the network of reference that facilitates their emergence and reproduction. Moreover, the changes described by distribution maps operate in very long time-scales that may never have had any impact on the everyday life of the inhabitants of a region. This is not to suggest that such patterns of change are irrelevant. On the contrary, they can be part of the region's history, but only as the lived-in traditions that may have persisted from generation to generation.

2.3.4. Regional and social categories

At the beginning of this chapter we identified the main aim of processual analysis to provide an objective framework within which to examine social organisation in space and through time. By virtue of its putative boundedness, the region was thought to constitute an ideal background for the study of social systems. Surface surveys, having originated from a similar theoretical background and sharing many of the goals of

processual analysis, actively reproduced the perceptions of region promoted by the processual paradigm, most problematic among which, the assumption that social dimensions are inherent in spatial categories.

These perceptions also fuelled conceptualisations of change through a rather deterministic evolutionary framework. The primary component of change was spatial and temporal variability, most efficiently described by changes in settlement patterns identified within discrete regions. The association of people and material in space at every scale, from the basic site to entire regions, is taken to be the outcome (and the representation of) discrete social relations. Human behaviour is thought to be enmeshed in (and determined by) the categories of space, therefore establishing the much-valued link between cultural and natural categories. Field surveys, by presuming a social significance of the site and by promoting the explanatory value of settlement associations within a confined geographical area, legitimise the inference of socio-political functions from spatial patterns. Region thus emerges as a bounded entity containing the frozen residue of past societies.

However, this kind of regional and social categories proves to be problematic. The meaning of the region lies in the existence of discrete networks of communication that allow the co-existence and interaction of people; not in the concentration of sites. Social relations are not simply dependent upon locality. They are above all historical, dependent on the context of the interactions that generate and reproduce them. In this respect, if there is any social meaning to be found in the study of regions, this will be in understanding that regions *come about* through the establishment of relations between people, objects and places and the variable ways that these relations are expressed on the landscape.

CHAPTER 3

BEYOND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS: SOCIAL ARENAS AND THE PRODUCTION OF COMMUNITY

3.1. Changing perceptions of society

Chapter 2 aimed to illustrate how specific conceptions of society and social change have affected the formulation of archaeological categories and interpretations, and more importantly, how these have been applied to the study of regions. The aim of this chapter is to propose alternative ways to examine and understand the social processes of the Bronze Age Mesara. This entails first, the use of an alternative methodology by which to study social life, and subsequently, a reconsideration of the ways in which social concepts can be integrated into archaeological practice. It is argued that the social perspective provided by current studies of 'settlement patterns' is not effective in illuminating diverse regional patterns and their social significance. Instead, the focus of our investigation is the study of *community* within a regional context and the ways in which it is generated, performed and transformed through time. However, far from viewing community as an inevitable implication of spatial proximity, this thesis discusses how perceptions of locality, nearness and distance (spatial or symbolic) can affect the generation and reproduction of social cohesion. To achieve this goal, we need to concentrate on social practices and their role in allowing the creation and performance of diverse social identities. It is through the study of such time- and place-specific relations that we will be able to understand how and why things changed in the

Mesara during the Bronze Age. Although quite specific in their scope, these observations also have a general bearing for the study of Minoan society, in that they offer an alternative social perspective that could be investigated in various historical contexts.

The first part of this discussion is concerned with understandings of order and the ways in which these inform the construction of categories. The process of categorisation is important for perceiving our position in the world and our relations to other people, objects and groups. In this respect, creating and enacting categories is essential for the generation of identities and the construction of community.

3.1.1. Order and the perception of society

> "The novelist Kurt Vonnegut studied anthropology at the University of Chicago, his studies interrupted by World War II. In one of his novels, he reports that anthropology seems to have had two messages. *Before the war, he was told that all people were different; after the war, that all people were the same.*" (Calhoun 1993: 61, emphasis added).

In conceptualising society, the issue of order has been central. Different models of order have led to different conceptions of society and the formulation of different analytical categories for its study. Problems arise, however, when the order expressed by conceptions of society is no longer seen as a model, as a theoretical construct to understand and analyse society, but as a concrete reality. This "reality of the model" has become so embedded in archaeological interpretations that alternative perceptions of order are simply dismissed as relativism. My argument on the contrary is that alternative considerations of order are possible and valid.

To demonstrate this, it is necessary to focus once again on the reasons why theories of 'unity of science' create problems for current analysis. Unity theories see the universe as unified and characterised by underlying order that is masked by the surface

impression of complexity. Through a reduction process, complex (high level) entities can be reduced to simpler (lower level) entities where it is easier to identify order. The relationships pertaining between the various levels of entities are causal – one deriving from the other – so the rules identified for the components can be seen as applicable to the whole.

There are a number of important implications of such ontology. First, since reduction always leads back to physical entities (the simpler entities in the universe), it is postulated that nature is characterised by inherent order. Despite the complexity of higher level entities, order is embedded in nature and it is retrievable through a specific mode of analysis. Secondly, since order is intrinsic in nature, order is universal. The various reduction processes will lead to the disclosure of the same order always and everywhere. Finally, order is deterministic; it is expressed in natural laws, which are taken to affect the behaviour of various entities in predictable ways. So, within Unity theories order is intrinsic in nature, universal and determines behaviour.

Let us now consider reduction more carefully. The principle of reduction presumes that the world presents far too much information to be understood at once, so a certain degree of breaking things down, a process of categorisation, is necessary for the production of knowledge. Within Unity theories, it is believed that for classification to be valid (appealing to reality), it has to use criteria that best describe the meaning of the category. These criteria must be *necessary* - features that are indispensable if an entity is to be considered member of a category- and *sufficient* - features that explain why the category is composed in the particular manner (Dupré 1993). In other words, the criteria of categorisation must constitute the *essence* of the category. In order to classify entities into a group we need to look beyond their apparent complexity and identify the essential characteristic that they have in common. This inevitably involves leaving aside the diverse features that would set the same entities apart.

With reference to the concept of society, Unity theses can be seen to operate on two levels: a metaphoric level where any society is considered a unified universe of smaller scale; and an actual level where society is a complex entity within the unified universe and hence subject to reduction as any other entity. In the first level, in order to understand how society works we need to divide it into several parts the laws of which pertain to the operation of the whole (e.g. systems theory). On the second level, society is part of a universe where natural laws are taken to have primary explanatory value. However, these two perceptions of society are intertwined in that, whether we see society as a unified human system, or societies as entities of a larger universe, the categories pertaining to social analysis seem to derive from and represent an intrinsic, universal and natural order. Consequently the social categories we employ appear to *disclose* an order inherent in the world, rather than *creating* it. This means that, no matter how many or how diverse the expressions of such order may appear in the social universe, these are considered one, universal type of order. Hence, there can be one set of *essential rules* which will regulate the operation of every society at the most elementary level and diversity can be dismissed as the patterning of meaningless details with no explanatory value.

Of course, Unity theories do not suggest that the laws of nature can explain every issue at stake directly. It is implied rather that, however complex the problems we are faced with are, there is always a set of elementary rules which contain the essential meaning of social life. For example, the rule that 'demand affects supply' can be explained by the lower level observation that when we are hungry (demand) we will seek food (supply). However, by taking the meaning of this interaction to be entirely embedded in an elementary-level law we immediately rule out any deviation from the standard order as meaningless. The possibilities that different demands may be in action simultaneously and that these will affect the ways and the kinds of supplies provided are seen as harmless details, which do not influence the operation of the rule.

There are two implications from this mode of thinking. First, the formulated categories discard complementary features (i.e. details) as non-explanatory. Secondly, this

conception of order reduces the meaning of social life to the rules regulating its operation. Society thus is understood as the aggregate of abstract rules, while the way people reproduce these rules by following them in practice is ignored.

Before developing these arguments further, we should discuss another medium through which the unity of society has become a standard concept in human sciences: the supremacy of visual representation, as a means for classification.

Classification of any kind is based on the senses. Nevertheless not all senses have an equal share in creating categories (at least in human communities). The supremacy of vision as a criterion for ordering has been unparalleled, especially for modern Western thought (Foucault 1970; Urry 2000; Moser 2001). This hegemony of vision is justified by the fact that sight is the sense that commands more control than any of the other senses. Sight has the power to make something into an object, bounded and measurable. The properties of vision include clarity, transparency and certainty at a distance (Urry 2000: 82). Clarity brings out the simplicity of entities by leaving aside meaningless details. Transparency embodies the ability to dissect, to achieve a view of what lies beneath, the underlying structure. Perspective, which involves standing at a distance, evokes the controlling gaze of the objective observer. Through such classifying practices "Society as a whole is being made transparent and controllable at a distance" (Urry 2000: 83).

These properties of sight specifically encourage reduction as a mode of knowledge production. Visual representation is especially effective in compressing information, in reducing the diversity of an object to its barest essentials (Moser 2001: 271). In this sense, vision is powerful in creating order. Moreover, the safe distance of the point of view enhances the assumption of not interacting with what is being observed and having a degree of control over it. The order deriving from such visual perceptions is explicitly hierarchical. Vision is taken to have more explanatory value than the other senses. This

is best illustrated in the metaphor of maps, which "reduce the multi-sensuous experience of life into visually encoded features" (Urry 2001: 89).

None of the above would constitute a problem for our interpretations if this encoded order produced by vision was not taken to represent the essential meaning of social relations and life in general. Vision generates a unique, privileged and determining order, which is replicated in the categories by which we perceive of and analyse society. More significantly, the meaning of social relations and social interaction is reduced to the *rules* deriving from such order.

However, there are ways of creating order through the senses which can provide an alternative understanding of society and social relations. Urry (2000: 99) uses a particularly powerful metaphor in order to illuminate how the senses operate: "the sweet smell of decomposition". This example illustrates that the perception of every sense is dependent upon the others. The 'sweetness' of smell evokes specific perceptions of taste, while the meaning of 'decomposition' is best understood through the combination of vision, smell and taste (perhaps even touch). The way we perceive, therefore, is grounded on a reciprocity and inter-inclusion of the senses. When we create categories, we choose one essence of this perception, thus leaving aside this sensual reciprocity. However, by focusing on one essential criterion for classification we are not disclosing one inherent and everlasting order, but rather we are creating one *level of ordering* which intersects and overlaps with others. Classifying something according to visual properties does not mean that any other classification is not valid. Nor does it mean that there are many parallel and unrelated categorisations in which case we would end up in confusion. On the contrary, the reciprocity of sensual perception shows that there are intersecting levels of ordering, which are not hierarchically organised, but they do not cancel each other out either.

This argument draws upon theories of the 'disunity of science', which has been proposed as a critique and an alternative to the problems created by Unity theories (Dupré 1993; Gallison & Stump 1996; Wylie 1996; 1999; 2000).

3.1.2. Beyond Society: Overlapping Orderings

There are two main premises in the theory of the 'disunity of science', one ontological and one methodological. The ontological thesis holds that, *contra* reduction, "the disunity of science is not merely an unfortunate consequence of our limited computational or other cognitive capacities, but rather reflects accurately the underlying ontological complexity of the world, the disorder of things" (Dupré 1993: 7). The methodological thesis maintains that the systems of beliefs according to which the different sciences are organised display little common ground. In this respect "science is best seen, in Wittgenstein's valuable phrase, as a family resemblance concept" (Dupré 1993: 10).

The implications of the above premises can be understood as follows: (a) there is no unified world, the phenomena under investigation do not constitute a unity, (b) diversity is not just a surface impression of the world masking an underlying unity and order, but it rather transcends every aspect of life, and (c) the principle of reduction is not analytically valid because there is no underlying order to be discovered.

From an empirical point of view, it can be supported that there is enormous variability and heterogeneity in the world. The universe is not as ordered as we imagine it to be. There may exist kinds or categories of things identified on the basis of essential properties, but this essence does not entirely determine the behaviour of the members of a specific category. Even within the same natural kinds there is enormous diversity of behaviour, which should not be dismissed as a harmless deviation from the standard order. The very fact that such diversity of behaviour is attested in so many contexts

demonstrates that the essential properties by which we organise our categories are not definitive. Order is not intrinsic in the structure of the world.

On methodological grounds, although the orders we can generate are limited by what is there to be classified, these categories consist of elements that we choose to emphasise at the expense of many inherent differences. Of course there exist real entities in the world which can be discovered, however, every categorisation is conceived from a human viewpoint in that we are the ones concerned with learning, with producing knowledge and order. On the other hand, not every kind of ordering is possible or valid for any situation. Dupré (1993: 27-34) illustrates how categorisation depends on diverse contexts of human interaction by using as an example the incongruity that exists between scientific taxonomies and everyday language use. In scientific categorisations, for example, a whale is classified as a mammal. In everyday conversations it is very common to think of whales as fish. Therefore, not only classification depends on the context of inquiry, but, more significantly, the order imposed by categorising is not unique but multifaceted. The scientific classification of whale as a mammal does not render its ordinary identification as a fish useless or untrue, however, the latter is a level of ordering that is not pertinent to the context of biology.

What Dupré (and Disunity in general) is trying to demonstrate with such examples from biology is that there can exist many levels of *overlapping orders* which are equally valid and do not cancel each other out. Order as an explicitly human feature and need, serves to elucidate, simplify, and render understandable human perceptions of the world. However, such understandings are multi-layered and multi-sensual; they are grounded on the reciprocity of perception. The order that we impose on things is conditioned by such reciprocity and this is why we can identify multiple, overlapping levels of ordering.

The order deriving from such conceptualisation is not static, but dynamic. It is not a state but a process, a constant and active course of identifying and naming entities

according to varying contexts and intentions. This order is not universal, but historical, time- and space-specific. It depends upon previous knowledge, social dispositions and concrete intentions (Thrift 1985). More significantly, it is not abstract, but constituted through interaction. Such categorisation may depend on or represent discursive knowledge, but it only becomes meaningful through practice, through being communicated and understood by others. It cannot therefore be represented in abstract rules, but it must be actively played out and performed.

Therefore, there cannot be such an abstraction called society, but only concrete social relations which are time- and place-specific (Giddens 1984; Strathern 1996). Order as understood in Disunity theories is not inherent in abstract social structures, but is rather the constitution and enactment of various relations pertaining between entities, objects, people and ideas. Order is the creation of *links* and these can only exist within discrete historical contexts.

If order comes about through interactions in specific settings and times, then social structures as the representation of order cannot exist outside these interactions. In other words, structures cannot exist outside the human actors that interact, nor can they determine human behaviour from a supposedly higher systemic level. On the contrary, social structures occur *through* and *for* human agency. Structure and agency are constituted in a dialectical relationship: agency operates through structure and structure is created through the various expressions of agency and *to formalise* the orderings of the world that human agency produces (Giddens 1984: 25; Dobres & Robb 2000: 4; Barrett 2000; 2001: 150). Moreover, such an active process of ordering is always dependent upon, restricted and empowered by reference to objects and inhuman factors (Urry 2000: 14).

In this sense, the rules that regulate social life are meaningless unless they are practised. We cannot understand how society works just by identifying the rules regulating its operation. These rules do not exist above the level of living in a social group. Any rule

to be valid must be operationalised, put into action. Even though rules can be seen to draw upon discursive knowledge, i.e. reflection upon action, they are essentially and primarily constituted through practical knowledge, the knowing of how to go on, what is appropriate and necessary (Giddens 1984: 4; Taylor 1993; Barrett 2001: 151). If rules are not practised then they do not regulate or order anything.

Such a theory for conceptualising and understanding social life is important in two respects. First, on an ontological level, society ceases to be the object of analysis in human sciences. We are no longer concerned with abstract conceptualisations, but we shift our focus towards the concrete aspects of social life that are *social relations*. Moreover, this shift creates a more flexible framework for the understanding of diversity that so far has been considered problematic. It also allows for a better conceptualisation of the dynamic, historical aspects of the relations and entities we study in contrast to the static view of the previous models.

However, although disunity demonstrates that there exist multiple and overlapping levels of ordering and multiple perspectives can be active simultaneously, it does not imply that all points of view are equally valid for every interpretation. The point is rather that such perspectives are reciprocal in that they draw upon each other and affect the construction of subsequent understandings. This is so because different orderings are referential to each other, they do not run parallel without ever meeting. Similarity is constituted with reference to difference and every categorisation implies this dialectical relationship between what is included and what is excluded. Moreover, characterisations and identifications must be communicated to an 'audience' in order to have any validity. Identification must be performed and categorisation must be made known and accepted through interaction (Jenkins 1996). It is the active 'structuration' (Giddens 1984) of these perspectives through practice then that provides us with insights of the meanings of social relations and not the patterning of abstract rules.

3.1.3. Introducing an alternative methodology

The concept of order is important in every categorisation we make; without some degree or level of ordering we are almost incapable of perceiving. However, the significance of Disunity concepts is that they allow us to conceive of the many dimensions that such orderings encompass. Contrary to Unity perspectives whereby these different dimensions are broken into static categories, this new methodology seeks to understand how such varied dimensions of human action come about, which of them may be combined and in which particular contexts is such combination possible and desirable. Therefore, the important aspect of social life that we should be looking at is the active creation of *relations* between people, objects and ideas.

In criticising models of society as a container of individuals, Strathern identifies a significant corollary of such view: within such frameworks relations are rendered external, "they appear as secondary ways of connecting things up" (1996: 61). However, when we conceptualise order as the creation of links, we immediately accept that the construction of relations between entities is a crucial factor in establishing the nature of these entities as what they are. In other terms, things can only be perceived within the complex networks of relations, which distinguish different from similar, included from excluded. People, social structures and objects do not exist independently, but are only constituted through relations.

There are two important points about the nature of relations. First, we should not be concerned with discovering the *existence* of discrete relations between different entities, but rather with understanding the *process* of creating such relations. The second point is that there are infinite numbers of connections that can pertain among entities, but we are only concerned with those which are relevant to the context of our inquiry. Our aim is not to discover underlying patterns, but rather illuminate the ways in which various orderings are possible and achievable within specific historical contexts. Such choice of attributes is not arbitrary, since not every diverse ordering is relevant to the creation of

the relations we choose to investigate. As Taylor (1993: 57) notes "human situations arise in infinite varieties", but being able to respond to this variety involves knowing which kinds of knowledge to draw upon. This constitutive rule of social life is equally valid for us conducting the analysis, as for the social actors we investigate.

In the light of the above observations, we can identify three new units of analysis which constitute the core of an alternative methodology of *social arenas*. These are *fields*, *practice* and *movements*. My definition of these terms as analytical categories draws upon a range of theoretical perspectives which see practice and the orderings it generates as the constituting elements of social life (Bourdieu 1977; 1990; Giddens 1984; de Certeau 1984; Barrett 1988; 2001; Jenkins 1992; 1996; Calhoun 1993; Taylor 1993; Urry 2000). My use of these terms derives from the combination of these various readings.

Fields can be seen as the intersecting categories of life, which give rise to distinct orderings. Although these orderings are created by the agency of the human actor, they also make reference to certain factors that are beyond human control. In this sense it can be said that fields have an internal *logic*, that there are certain rules which pertain to the operation of the field and which, to a certain extent, are dependent upon circumstances that are not of the actor's making. The logic of the field is relevant to the various resources that the field encompasses. This means that fields are constituted with reference to *resources*, whether material or symbolic, which inform the nature of the relations created within each field. Hence, different resources will be pertinent to different fields and will influence the creation of different sets of relations. This is also so because social actors stand in various *positions* within a field depending on the degree of access to resources that they have. This in turn generates a system of *forces* that exist between the various social positions and which represent power relations.

The most significant point about the field is that it is not there to be discovered. Our aim is not to identify the various fields, which make up society. Our goal is rather to

examine the various processes by which fields *come about*. Fields are essentially about the construction of connections and links between social actors, objects and resources. In that sense they can only exist through the actors' active engagement in the creation of relations. The fact that fields are structured with reference to specific resources serves only to orientate the social agents towards the possibilities for creating links that are available within specific social spaces. The creation of a field represents the construction of a different level of ordering of the world and as such it becomes available and possible only through interaction and practice.

Practice is the central unit of analysis in this approach. Practice is the element of social life which brings forth the various fields and makes their respective orderings known and possible. Practice is grounded in interaction, in the constitution of identities of same and other. Practice is the means by which the fields are operationalised and become meaningful.

It is not enough to discover the existence of distinct fields and the relations that constitute them. What is crucial is to see how these fields alongside their respective relations come about, and how they are *performed*. It is only through practice that we can explore not only how relations are constructed, but whether they actually work, whether the links are meaningful and in which contexts. As Jenkins (1996) shows with respect to creation of social identities, it is not enough for the actors to ascribe an identity to themselves, they also have to perform this identity, to make it known and challenge other actors to accept it or reject it. It is only through this active negotiation that an ordering such as the affirmation of a specific identity can become valid. It is evident then that any level of ordering (any field of practice) must be communicated through interaction if it is to have any value in social life. This brings us to the meaning of the rules operating within distinct fields, the logic of the field.

The rules by which social life may be organised are embedded in the performance of action. There is "a reciprocal relation between rule and action (in) that the second

doesn't just flow from the first, but also transforms it" (Taylor 1993: 56). Fields are different because they refer to different sets of resources and are conditioned by different inhuman factors. Therefore different fields are organised according to different rules. However, the logic of the field should not be seen as an internal structure that exists outside and above the human actor which activates the field. Rather, this logic is constituted through the actor's practice. On the other hand, although the creation of order, and hence the construction of different fields, rest entirely with the agency of social actors, this agency is not independent from relations and connections with inhuman factors and objects. There is therefore a limit to the orderings and rules that are possible and available within a specific field.

The importance of interaction for the constitution of that agency is paramount. Social actors cannot conceive of themselves as such (as acting socially), nor can they categorise the various entities of their worlds outside interaction. Interaction always implies the co-presence of the other and this inevitably creates various networks of relations. In this sense persons, objects and beliefs are always and only constituted through the relations that connect or set them apart. These relations are not static. In so far as human actors constantly engage in the production of various orderings, they infinitely produce and transform various nexuses of relations.

Resources are also constituted through such processes. The resources that each field encompasses do not display any essential property that makes them what they are, i.e. material or symbolic capital. They are only understood as such through the various human orderings of the world which place value on scarcity or abundance, difference or homogeneity and so on. Resources are actively created through intersecting orderings which generate different value systems. The mere existence of the field does not suffice to establish the legitimacy and value of the 'capital' at stake (Jenkins 1992: 85). It is the dialectic relationship between practice and resources that brings about the field. Practice is the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of the rules of the field and by consequence, of the value systems created by the enactment of these rules.

The metaphor of movements (Urry 2000) illuminates this dialectic relation between fields and practice. Movements can be symbolic or physical, but they always establish relations, in time and space, between presence and absence and so on. Being able to move from one point to another means being able to see the variety of possible routes that connect these points. It implies the ability to establish links and connections between entities constituted as different. The concept of movements also encompasses disruptions and dislocations, such as the impossibility of relations between certain entities. Stagnation however is also part of a practice of mobility, it constitutes the failure or the denial of movement. The absence of movement means that points, objects or entities cannot be connected, that they are excluded from a network of links.

Therefore movement helps us to establish which orderings are pertinent to our inquiry. In this sense it is particularly illuminating for understanding the creation of connections between the different fields. Fields are established as different by virtue of the different resources to which they appeal and the different value systems that such resources inform. However, fields are not closed entities; their boundaries are not simply defined with respect to their resources. Being able to move from one field to another means being able to transform elements of one field to entities of another, to create transformations of value. It is through such movement that the boundaries of different fields become apparent. Movement does not cancel the existence of the different fields. On the contrary, it establishes it by allowing social actors to perceive the differences between activities and their resources.

Moreover, movement does not invariably represent the structured transit between two discrete and fixed points. It is better perceived as a flow (Urry 2000: 36), which connects and transcends various positions. In this sense, the boundaries of some fields may never become concrete, but will remain diffused within a flow of people, objects and beliefs that crosscut the fields. On other instances, certain fields may become circumscribed through the structured movements between opposing nodes.

The intersection of various fields through specific practices which evoke transformations of values and are facilitated by diverse kinds of movements, in specific settings and times constitutes the creation of *social arenas*.

3.1.4. Social Arenas

Social Arena is a spatial metaphor and as such evokes specificity in space and time. It is a concept that allows us to examine and understand the intersections of distinct fields through specific practices in particular historical contexts. Social Arena provides insights into the structuring of experiences across space and through time.

The creation of social arenas is essentially about the accomplishment of various levels of communication between actors, objects and entities perceived as inherently different. Social arenas are about the achievement of integration and order in an essentially disordered world. Different fields of practice are in operation at different times and settings constructing different sets of meanings that are relevant to specific contexts. Social arenas map the choices to combine specific meanings in particular historical contexts. In this respect, social arenas are inextricably related with discrete social practices.

Crucial in understanding the analytical shift that the notion of social arenas brings about is the concept of *negotiation*. The most important feature of social life is that it is constituted through diverse relations. These relations refer to value systems and the ability to transcend and transform them. The construction of such relations also denotes that the world is constituted through enormous diversity. The way to bring such diversity under control is to create meanings that connect different entities, but at the same time preserving the elements of differentiation. This is a very fragile process of affirming identifications and constructing categories. It is a process of identifying

oneself with certain properties and appealing to certain resources, whilst at the same time ascribing identities and properties to others. These identification processes cannot be independent of each other within a social universe. They have to be related by establishing a level of communication between their opposing positions. They have to negotiate their properties and their values through the creation of meanings that will make sense both ways. Negotiation is by definition a multilateral process. Social arenas provide the means and the setting for such identification processes.

They provide the means in the sense that they mobilise mechanisms of knowledge and value production to be used in negotiation, and they also provide the settings in that they are situated in time and space. Not all fields are relevant to one another and infinite connections cannot operate at the same time. Social arenas represent the mechanisms by which social actors come to realise which links are necessary for communication within specific contexts. Some fields may come in focus at specific circumstances while others remain invisible. Different fields may persist through time, while others are constantly transformed. Social arenas map all these diverse integrations simultaneously and in the long run. They allow us to consider the dynamic intersection of various fields of practice instead of analysing the operation of just one.

Social arenas enable us to understand the ways in which different categorisations and orderings are enacted and performed drawing upon different fields and making use of different types of movements and transformations. The multiple performances that may exist with reference to a specific field represent different strategies to respond to a situation, which however are constituted with reference to one other. The ability of social arenas to illuminate the co-existence of these different strategies does not simply represent an alternative way of looking at social life, but it rather highlights how social life is constituted through ambiguity, negotiation and the constant search for communication.

On the more actual level of inquiry of this thesis, Social Arenas are essentially the social practices which are found at the centre of negotiation. They are these practices which become more relevant and therefore more important for the life of particular communities in specific historical contexts. Their prominence over other practices and their respective fields and resources is based on their capacity to encompass and project the most relevant identity-constituting elements in the life of a particular community. Social arenas in other words are the active ways and circumstances through which community is forged; they provide the means and the resources by which identities are constructed and reproduced.

Social arenas also allow us a different perspective on change. Within every conventional chronological period that we examine, particular social practices become more prominent than others; they command more resources, material and/or symbolic, they provide more advantageous occasions for negotiation, they represent the aggregate of beliefs and interests that are more relevant among social actors. Although generally such practices are safeguarded as embodiments of the essential values of social life and therefore are often surrounded by restrictions protecting them from change, they are also prone to transformation by their inherent quality as negotiating strategies. To put it more simply: because such practices represent what is most important in the life of a given community, they may be carried forward to the future and become traditions in the community's life. On the other hand, social negotiation is bound to concentrate on, and unfold through such practices since these attract the interest and attention of all community members; they are most relevant to the way they live their lives. In this respect, social arenas encompass both attempts to preserve long established aspects of life, as well as efforts to transform certain features of it. Assessing such process at a regional level allows us to appreciate the whole spectrum of the dynamics of change; the precise nature of change, i.e. which elements are transformed and which remain intact; the significance of the choice of what to change; the pace of transformation and the negotiating strategies it reflects; and finally the needs that change is called to attend to, the reasons why.

The adoption and active enactment of common social arenas by a number of different communities generates Networks of Relevance. People and communities participating in common networks of relevance create distinct Regions.

3.2. Networks of relevance and the construction of community.

One of the defining features of an archaeologically meaningful region is its distinctiveness, preferably both in geographical and cultural terms. But how exactly is the distinctiveness of regions constituted by analysis? Traditional approaches use criteria such as spatial extent and the distribution of particular types of material culture. In this respect, a region is a neatly defined geographical area characterised by a material culture that spans only a certain spatial extent. Outside that there are other regions. However, the main question is why does this distinctiveness only extend so far in space?

Since the theoretical and methodological demise of society as an analytic category, social practices have taken the lead in the effort to investigate how people actually construct their livelihood, either in the present or in the past. The aim is no longer to analyse human life as mediated by a series of socially and environmentally inevitable factors, but rather to explore how structures and patterns emerge from, are sustained and reproduced by participating in recurrent, meaningful social practices. In other words how the categories of our lives are shaped and maintained by historically specific *networks of relevance*. If we are to gain any understanding why regions become distinct we must explore the ways in which the perception and performance of community become entrenched in locality and vice versa.

3.2.1 Community and locality

In earlier approaches the nature of community was taken as rather self-evident. The face-to-face contact of people and their topological association were considered sufficient agents for the generation of common beliefs and modes of living. In this sense, social cohesion was presumed to be an *a priori* function of geographical propinquity. Moreover, the maintenance and active reproduction of communal ways of life were rarely discussed. By contrast, locality and nearness were factors, the deterministic influence of which no social formation or ideology building could escape.

The significance of spatial correlation for a series of aspects of human existence cannot be disputed. However, spatial association is not equivalent to the creation of community. Locality is a much more complex issue. It cannot be taken uncritically as either a prerequisite or an outcome of geographical propinquity. Community as a sense of belonging is variably created mostly through symbolic reproduction. The significance of locality in this process is that it can constitute one of the ways in which community can be symbolically constructed. Therefore, a concise theory of community and the various ways that it can be produced is necessary before we examine the specific relationship between community and locality.

Bell and Newby (1971) distinguish three senses in which the term community has been used: first, in a topographical sense, community refers to a particular kind of grouping defined by geographical proximity; secondly, community is seen as a local social system bound to localised institutions and groups of people; finally, community denotes belongingness, close personal ties that generate *communion.* In archaeological regional analysis spatial entities such as site and region are taken to embody all three senses of community. Geographical propinquity, localness and belongingness are considered self-evident properties of the archaeologically recognisable spatial categories of site and region. What is more, in order for such spatial categories to be explanatory they must be constituted by a coincidence of these three elements. Therefore community, most

regularly interpreted as social cohesion, is seen as an inherent property of spatial association.

However, this equation of all three senses of community with a distinct spatial location is a rather simplistic view of community and a problematic interpretation of the variety of ways in which social cohesion may be achieved. Spatial nearness need not generate coalescence or a sense of belonging. Communication can be achieved without necessitating co-presence. In this respect, community may be as much a matter of *relative location*, a social position allowing one to relate to a certain identity, as it could be a matter of *actual location*. Community can be as much an imagined as a physical co-existence.

Moreover, participating in a specific community entails a process of categorisation; it implies choosing a reference group (Bauman & May 2001: 24-26). Community is a relational idea and as such it simultaneously conveys similarity as well as difference. In the process of identifying with a set of beliefs or a group of people, human actors also differentiate themselves from other sets of ideas and people. Communities become what they are through complex interactions with other entities to which they are or they wish to be contrasted. Cohen (1985: 12) points out succinctly that the boundary of community is so marked precisely because it "encapsulates the identity of the community and like the identity of an individual is called into being by exigencies of social interaction". Contingencies and distinctions therefore come about through interactions, in the course of which it is possible for human actors not only to identify with a set of beliefs or characteristics, but also to perform actively such identification.

In this respect the consciousness of the community is neither a static feature nor a permanent identification. The meaning of a community is not always and equally conspicuous among both its members and towards outsiders. The construction of a sense of belonging is not similarly perceived or performed by every member of the community. We should not expect people to react in predetermined ways merely by

virtue of their common membership of a social group. Furthermore, it should not be expected that people who share a common physical space would constitute such a meaningful social group. The meaning and materiality of community needs to be maintained and reproduced through concrete interactions, which involve the active manipulation of its symbols. Locality is such a kind of symbol. It should not therefore be considered a function or a prerequisite for communion, but rather an active performance of belonging through dwelling in a common area.

Thus the inherently temporal quality of community means that propinquity, localness and belonging may not always coincide. The elements that convey communion within a group of people may only become relevant as identity-formation agents under specific circumstances. Although the use of the term community generally gives the impression of warmth and belonging, it can also operate as a restricting factor for the personal freedom of its members (Bauman 2001: 4). In this sense people belonging to a particular group do not always feel the need to enact this relatedness, and in many cases their differences from each other may prevail over elements held in common. Although, for instance, family as a social structure may be obvious on a daily basis through a range of factors such as co-residence and face-to-face interactions, the significance of kin relations may only become the primary identification element in the course of particular circumstances such as weddings, funerals etc. Within such occasions, the common membership of a specific kin group may become prominent at the expense of any inherent differences between members. In this way, the particular structure (the family) and the setting (e.g. the funeral) may stand out as symbols of community. However, this does not necessarily mean that such elements always play a unifying role, nor that they are equally important to all members of community. People may share the symbol, but not necessarily its meaning (Cohen 1985: 21).

Therefore it becomes obvious that community is not a stable quality that is inherent either in spatial or social formations. The co-existence in the same geographical area as well as the membership of a social group cannot be taken to determine the identity of their members nor how the latter feel about their membership. People's feelings and

beliefs as to what constitutes a community, especially one to which they presumably belong, are certainly influenced by the materialities of space and time but they are not the direct outcomes or representations of such materialities.

3.2.1.1. *Communal* Myths

Three misconceptions or 'myths' about community have influenced substantially the interpretation of the archaeological record of regions and require our attention. Cohen (1985: 28-38) has identified those as the myth of the simplicity of face-to-face interaction, the myth of egalitarianism, and the myth of inevitable conformity.

The basic premise of the simplicity of face-to-face societies is that the larger the number of people involved the more complex their interactions are presumed to be. The archaeological assumption deriving from such a concept is that complex (large) sites reflect complex (hierarchical) social interactions, while simple (small) sites represent simple (egalitarian) interactions. However, social interactions are not merely shaped by their settings and more significantly, there is nothing so straightforward about the interchange between people in direct co-presence. Cohen (1985: 28-29) eloquently demonstrates how the subtleties of belonging, and the close personal ties that may exist within a small community, can actually render even the performance of mundane tasks exceptionally complex. The 'simplest', smaller-scale crisis needs to be treated with great care if the fragile balance of personal relations within such a community is not to be threatened by arguments or misunderstandings. Appadurai (1981) provides a similar example whereby 'gastropolitics', the choices and strategies surrounding the proper way of consuming food within the context of South Indian families may generate or appease such crises. Such intricate knowledge of understanding not only 'what' to do, but also 'how' and 'when' to do it so as not to cause offence or complaint, is a very complex process, whether on a small or a large scale.

By the same token Cohen also dismisses the presumption that small-sized communities are characterised by egalitarian structures. He rightly warns against mistaking the absence of differentiating structures for the absence of differentiation as such (1985: 33-36). This is particularly significant in the case of archaeological interpretations that seem to 'read' differences or similarities from the variability of cultural material and its distribution in space. In this sense, monumental architecture has always been considered a sign of social differentiation, while its absence from certain contexts has been interpreted as a sign of social homogeneity. However, difference may be performed in tacit ways, or through temporal patterns of activity that may leave no material trace for us to recover. Moreover, form is not the only determining factor of such relations and historical context is a parameter that should not be neglected. In this sense, there exist many examples of monumental architecture specifically designed for communal consumption (e.g. the Parthenon), while monuments conceived as representations of hierarchy may be found serving more 'democratic' purposes (e.g. the Greek Parliament, initially designed as the residence of a monarch). More significantly, as Cohen (1985: 35) notes, the expression of egalitarianism may be a means of reasserting the boundaries of a community as distinct from other communities. In this sense, the expression of egalitarianism may represent a deliberate attempt to mask the inherent differences between community members.

The final assumption of 'inevitable conformity' explicitly impinges upon archaeological conceptualisations of regions as culturally homogeneous landscapes by virtue of the close (and inevitable) association of people and material within their limits. Such a premise underpins the traditional understandings of locality as a socially coherent slice of space (and time). However, although different communities may manifest similar forms, it does not follow that the meaning or the practical significance of such forms is universally homogeneous. Similar forms or symbols are locally adjusted and manipulated to suit indigenous needs (de Certeau 1984: xiii) and in the process their meanings may be modified in such ways as to express and enhance the community's boundaries. As Cohen demonstrates boundaries may become so abstract and embedded

in performances that they cannot be breached: "you cannot drive a bridge across a river you don't see" (1985: 37). In this sense, cultural or social homogeneity cannot be taken as the direct outcome of spatial correlation. Conformity or discrepancy may be carried out in such complex ways that may defy or redefine the supposedly circumscribed meanings of particular material forms.

Thus the relation between locality and the generation and performance of community by no means proves a simple one. Community itself is not a self-evident category produced through universally valid processes. On the contrary, it is a matter of performance and active engagement with specific social conditions, which allow for the emergence, appropriation and reproduction of socially coherent group identities. Among such contexts of affiliation, *locality* is a particularly significant one. However, its nature and its explanatory value within tradition regional accounts is largely misunderstood as it is merely approached as the spatial representation of social structure.

3.2.1.2. "Chauvinists are those who think that their home is better than Palaikastro": Locality as a structure of belonging

This fine extract of popular wisdom has been regularly repeated in our Athenian home to prevent me and my brother from growing up without a sense of where 'we truly belong'. Very clearly we did not belong where we daily resided but quite a few miles and several ferry hours away; 'home is where the heart is' (Petridou 2001).

For Cretans living outside Crete, the common origin from the particular geographical area is usually a powerful identifying agent. Locality plays a major part in self- and group-identification, although not simply in the form of common descent, but more significantly as imagined communion, identification with the particular properties that a 'proper' native of the island is supposed to display. Membership of a common identity

is mediated by locality, but not in the sense of physical co-residence in a specific area. Many of the members of such a group may not have been born or lived in Crete for any substantial period of time, and their 'local' inside knowledge more often than not consists of the narrative of generations that have done so. Yet this does not diminish the strength of locality as an identity-generating context, since it is the imagined locality, the partaking of a common place of origin (and the implications of this for personality building) that is put forward. Thus membership of this particular group, although identified according to locality, does not require the actual co-presence of the members in a discrete area. And there arise many circumstances that this sort of imagined community may prove a more powerful congruence than any physical neighbouring of people. In some respects the absence of a common area of residence may be more of a driving factor for identification with a particular locality, especially since this presents the opportunity to be distinguished; my regular answer to the question 'where are you from' has always been Crete and never Athens, perhaps precisely because I was living in Athens. Locality thus has been symbolically promoted to stand for whatever it means to belong to the particular community of Cretans, whether physically present there or not.

Locality thus emerges, in Appadurai's terms (1995; 1996: 178-199), as a property of social life, a structure of feeling and an ideology of situated community, an intrinsically relational and contextual phenomenon and not merely a spatial or scalar distinction. In the same manner that community is a relational idea expressing simultaneously similarity and difference, locality is constructed through such complex transactions. Without being a presupposition or a direct outcome of social structure, the spatial association of people and objects can be seen as a context potentially generating a sense of community. However, locality performs this function in many diverse ways that are not necessarily or inexorably bound in space.

Urry (2000) imaginatively describes the complex interchanges that give specific places their meanings as 'a dialectic of *roots* and *routes*'. Place, rather than being the dichotomised social construction of physical space, is better understood as the

'crystallisation of human activity within a specific environment' (Ingold 2000). A sense of belonging that is related to a particular locality need not emerge merely from stability, from the clustering of people and objects in a bounded space. Varying degrees and forms of belongingness come about through patterns of movement and travelling[1]. Places are constituted in comparison and in contrast to other places; to what they relate to via paths and routes and to what they are opposed to. The discourse of locality as a structure of feeling can only be created through association and distinction from other areas, from other meaningful localities. "Places are all about relations, about the placing of material and the system of difference that they perform" (Urry 2000: 134). They are not disjointed pieces of space that create meaningful connections by virtue of their boundedness.

In this respect, seeking to understand how regions come about and how their meaning and distinctiveness are maintained and reproduced, involves exploring the ways in which perceptions and enactments of communion become entrenched in discrete localities. In other words, it is how places are vested with social significance that generates and reproduces cohesion. Not all localities are equally prominent or aspire to community identification. The 'materiality of place', as the aggregate of resources that it provides its inhabitants with, plays a crucial part in the selection of and investment in particular localities. Discrete and timely practices will allow specific localities to emerge as sites conveying communion for particular reasons and under appropriate circumstances. In this sense, sites will not always be the conveyors of the same kind of belonging. Localities as contexts and symbols of community will emerge or be subdued according to a set of relevant practices that will define what is local, familiar and what foreign, unfamiliar.

Therefore, locality does not simply represent a context, a setting for communal behaviour. During the daily reproduction of contexts of local belonging, people also reproduce the necessarily wider formations against which the understanding of locality

[1] Petridou (2001) makes a particularly illustrative case for the importance of diaspora in enhancing the meaning of home, as belonging to a specific locality, which is evoked through taste.

is constructed (Appadurai 1995; 1996; Lovell 1999; Westwood 2002). In this respect, the relation between the local and the 'global' is not inscribed in a hierarchy of space. The meaning of locality can only be grasped when localness is contrasted to wider tasks and processes. The effective knowledge and operationalisation of such local belongings is mediated by the workings of discrete *networks of relevance*, which are carried forward by particular social practices.

3.2.2. Networks of Relevance

Communities and localities, as the practical expression of community, are constituted through particular practices that set the boundaries of what is local and familiar and what should be excluded (social arenas). Such practices however are not in themselves defining of locality; they are rather embedded in a value system to which people make reference in order to create identifications and categorisations (of other people, objects and spaces). A locality and the practices that give rise to it may never become significant unless human actors get connected into this identification network that generates and reproduces meaningful connections. As places are physically connected through corporeal movement, so they are metaphorically connected by participating in a *network of relevance*, which makes their positions (physical or relational) meaningful. The network of relevance is the means by which relations between people, places and objects are generated, maintained or transformed. The network of relevance is the means by which propinquity, localness and communion may coincide.

There are several important points about networks of relevance.

First, such networks come about through discrete interactions. This means that a sense of what is relevant (i.e. meaningful) for the leading of people's lives is created through participating in interchanges that may either be face-to-face or stretching through time and across space. By consequence, such networks are dynamic and not static. They

change as people's beliefs and validating systems transform.

Secondly, different networks have different reaches and abilities. In this respect different networks may generate or convey different kinds of relevance. The reaches of any particular network depend on the appeal of the practices that constitute it. Distinct networks thus bring about different kinds of *regions*. The extent of a region is marked by the density of the equivalent network in that the participating nodes are more relevant to each other than to positions outside the network. The network thus may denote both actual and social distance by virtue of how many and what kind of nodes get connected in it.

More importantly, networks bring together the local and the wider in two ways. On the one hand, the local cannot be meaningful unless there exists a network that defines and validates the characteristics of locality as a structure of belonging. On the other hand, the network, as a wide process which surpasses the friction of space and time and brings together people, places and events, does not become available unless people connect to it locally. If discrete localities do not participate in the creation of relevance that will allow them to communicate with each other, then there is no network. Within the network, thus, locality and the 'global' can only be mutually and dialectically created.

With respect to the construction of meaningful regions, networks of relevance thus represent the beliefs that people hold in common about the significance of locality as a symbol of community, as well as the shared opinions about the practices through which such communal identity may be created, evoked, reproduced and transformed. The density of the network marks the density of the homologies that constitute the region, and at the same time creates the boundary beyond which such homologies are no longer relevant; the point where the region ceases to be meaningful.

3.3. Why was the Mesara different?

In the light of the above discussion the distinctiveness of the Mesara as a region acquires new significance. The particular ways in which different kinds of regions and different meanings of belonging were constructed in the Mesara throughout the Bronze Age will be dealt with detail in the following chapters where the material evidence will be discussed. At present, though, it seems appropriate to set ourselves a series of questions that will enable us to redefine and re-evaluate the historical reconstructions of the Mesara as a distinctive entity/region. These questions will serve as guiding points while browsing through the overwhelming diversity of the material culture and will allow us to produce an alternative understanding of the ways in which the Mesara was variably constructed as a culturally and socially coherent entity through time and across space.

- How was the distinctiveness of the Mesara constituted through time and across space? What kind of networks of relevance were in action in appropriate circumstances?
- How was relevance constructed? What were the means by which such distinctiveness (and by consequence community/belongingness) was actively performed? What kind of practices represented a point of reference among the inhabitants and by contrast to the outsiders? Which practices represented social arenas throughout the different stages of the history of the Mesara?
- How were these various senses of community actively perceived and enacted by the inhabitants of the Mesara? If the homologies we recognise are only apparent by virtue of our distanced position (as outside observers), then in what ways was a sense of community realised within the Mesara in the course of daily life, as well as in the long run?

By focusing on how specific networks of relevance were generated through people's

participation in common social arenas, which employed similar resources and were grounded upon common fields of practice, it will be possible to understand how the discrete regional character of the Mesara was generated and transformed through time.

CHAPTER 4

BECOMING REGIONAL: THE NEOLITHIC BACKGROUND

4.1. A *background* for what?

In the previous chapters we discussed the implications of using *Region* as the main analytic unit in archaeological considerations of long term change. It was suggested that the traditional view of region as a stable and neutral background for human action deprives historical change of context and meaning. Instead we have proposed an alternative way of investigating the dynamics implied by the distribution of archaeological objects in space and time, by introducing the concept of networks of relevance. The *Networks of Relevance* allow us a perspective on how regions are constantly constructed and reproduced through the people's engagement in specific social practices. The aim of the present chapter is to present a reconsideration of the history of the Mesara during the Neolithic period with respect to the theoretical arguments informing such an alternative understanding of *Region.*

The broad temporal scope of analysis, although facilitating the investigation of long-term change, has also led previous approaches to the pitfall of examining region as a static component and generator of cultural homogeneity. On the contrary, the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that such homogeneity must be seen as the product of specific historical circumstances rather than as the natural implication of geographical propinquity.

Coming to the question 'a background for what?', we need to turn our attention for a moment to the EBA, the period that has been considered the time of innovation and drastic social change, exemplified in the emergence of increasingly complex social systems and regional dynamics (Renfrew 1972; Branigan 1993). The archaeological record of the EM Mesara is generally thought to reflect both these features, most remarkably exemplified in an almost unparalleled regional pattern.

However, in order to evaluate this picture, it soon becomes evident that a sense of perspective is necessary. The particularity of the Mesara during the Prepalatial period, often dubbed "the Mesara culture" (Branigan 1970; 1991; 1984; Bintliff 1977a), has been generally understood in spatial terms, that is, in comparison to the cultural developments of other areas in Crete. However, the temporal component of such distinctiveness is quite often overlooked. Namely, how did such regionalism come about; what did it draw upon? What kind of practices existed before and how abrupt were the changes that created the uniqueness of the Early Minoan period? In a sharp contrast to previous approaches, such questions do not aim to trace an evolutionary trajectory of development for the area, but rather to understand the particular historical circumstances that existed only in the Mesara and allowed or encouraged the creation of such distinct social practices during the Early Minoan. By placing the Mesara within such a concrete historical framework, its 'uniqueness' comes under a different light. How different was a Mesara dominated by funerary practices, from other areas of Crete, and even the entire Southern Aegean, where political and social life also unfolded through the mortuary arena ? Without a clear understanding of the particular historical circumstances we are unable to answer such questions.

The Neolithic period constitutes a justified point of departure for this task, as it is the first time that human presence in the area is attested, and precedes the period of our interest. Indeed, a fuller understanding of social practice during the EM period is not possible, unless we examine where such practices make reference to. Furthermore, this chapter explicitly aims to produce an account of the Neolithic period in its own right and not as a rather 'tedious' background for the more exciting developments of the

EBA[1], which will allow us to better explore and illustrate the ways in which the characteristic social practices of the Mesara were created and reproduced through time. Thus our primary concern is to investigate what is the 'Neolithic background' a background for and why it matters. An answer to the latter question, and a point that should be borne in mind in the following discussion, is that the examination of long term variation, goes hand in hand with the investigation of continuity. Traditions are created through recurrent daily routines and although their meanings and even their contexts may change through time, the mechanisms themselves remain primordial in the reproduction of social life. As will be shown below, it is through the interplay of such 'continuities' as well as changes over long periods of time that an understanding of *Region* as a sense of belonging was built within the Mesara.

4.2. Neolithic Mesara: setting the questions

> "The EBA of Crete .... shows many striking advances in culture from the rather monotonous picture created by the Cretan Neolithic. (...) These developments doubtless accompanied more basic changes in *settlement pattern* and *subsistence*." (Renfrew 1972: 81, emphasis added)

Even though the Neolithic period in Crete did not initially attract the same amount of interest as the subsequent Minoan times, it would be inaccurate to say that it is poorly understood at present. However, Neolithic sites, either for reasons of preservation and visibility in the landscape, or due to excavation biases favouring Minoan sites, have not been so prominent in the archaeological record of Crete; with the exception of Knossos, whose size and duration are unparalleled amongst all the known sites, all other information about Neolithic Crete is of a more fragmentary nature. Furthermore, when general considerations of the Aegean Neolithic are attempted, Crete is carefully left out[2] (e.g. Halstead 1981b; 1994; Demoule & Perlès 1993), either because the available evidence does not suffice for the identification of coherent, general patterns; or, more often, because the available evidence does not entirely conform with the various

[1] Much along the same lines that a re-assessment of the Prepalatial period has been attempted in several recent approaches (e.g. Day *et al.* 1997).

explanatory models proposed. However, the state of our knowledge has been remedied recently by a number of studies shedding light on diverse aspects of life during the Neolithic period in Crete (Manteli 1990; 1993; Strasser 1992; Broodbank 1993; Tomkins 2001; Tomkins & Day 2001; Tomkins *et al.* in press). Even though such studies have paved the way for a more comprehensive understanding of Neolithic Crete, they also have in some cases overestimated the breadth of evidence available (e.g. Broodbank 1993), while the longevity and prominence of Knossos in the Neolithic landscape has somehow overshadowed the investigation of regional variability (but see Tomkins & Day 2001).

In spite of such general progress, when it comes to the examination of the archaeological record of the Mesara we are faced with a number of substantial difficulties, including primarily excavation and recovery biases. The information based on excavated material comes from no more than three sites (see Table 4.9): the FN deposits underneath the Palace of Phaistos (Vagnetti 1972-73), which even though substantial, are nevertheless fragmentary and affected by later building activity; Kala Selia in the Asterousia (Vasilakis 1987), excavated after the destructive interference of looters and therefore not a complete record of habitation; and the cave of Miamou (Taramelli 1897), which despite being excavated at the beginning of the 20th century, constitutes a remarkably detailed record of investigation. To those we should add the more recent discovery of two Neolithic sites in the area of Gortyna, one dated in MN/LN times underneath the Minoan Villa at Kannia-Mitropolis (Levi 1959), and the second, of FN date, on the hill of the Acropolis. These sites have only been partly excavated and produced fragmentary material, which however has been published promptly by Vagnetti (1973)[3].

A large body of information also derives from the surveys undertaken in the Western Mesara plain (Watrous *et al.* 1993), the coastal area around Kommos (Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995) and the mountainous area of the Asterousia (Blackman & Branigan 1975;

[2] Halstead (1981b) includes some features of the environmental record from Knossos in his model, but only as complementary or rather peripheral to an argument developed primarily for Thessaly and Mainland Greece.
[3] For a general index of Neolithic, mostly FN sites in Crete, see Manteli 1993, vol. II. Also, Strasser 1992, Appendix I.
[4] For a more detailed discussion see Chapter 2, §2.3.

1977; Vasilakis 1989-90b; see also Table 4.9). However, evidence derived from surface surveys is bound by some inherent methodological difficulties[4]. The first of such problems is the rather crude chronological framework within which survey material has to be placed. The majority of these sites are recognised primarily on the basis of ceramics, particularly coarse wares, which quite often do not allow a firm distinction between Final Neolithic and EMI to be made. Moreover, surface material offers only restricted information on the nature and the duration of sites. On the one hand the internal organisation of such settlements cannot be fully illuminated solely on the basis of surface finds; on the other, the relations between the different sites at any one period can only be partly illustrated by virtue of inherent preservation and recovery problems. Despite geo-archaeological studies demonstrating that different types of sites may be exposed to different taphonomic processes, as well as that different local environments may be characterised by varied erosional and depositional structures, many of the interpretations of the settlement and subsistence patterns of the Neolithic and EBA in the Mesara have to a great extent treated survey material as unproblematic. However, the formulation of a general understanding of habitation patterns based on distribution maps produced by surveys must be conditioned by an appreciation of the restrictions that the local environment poses on our reconstructions of past settlement systems.

To these difficulties can be added the problems of correlating the chronological sequences from sites across the island, primarily Knossos, which comprises the fullest stratigraphy from the Aceramic Neolithic. On the one hand, excavated sites comprising the entire Neolithic sequence in Crete are rare[5]; on the other hand, Knossos with its remarkable extent and antiquity may not represent so much the 'typical' Neolithic village. Moreover, with regards to the Final Neolithic period, the situation is even more obscure. The existence of a Final Neolithic phase for the entire island has been successfully suggested by Vagnetti and Belli (1978), however the presence of Final Neolithic material at Knossos has been the subject of debate (Evans 1968; 1971; 1994 *contra* Broodbank 1993; c.f. Manteli 1993). The significance of such issues is both methodological and theoretical.

[5] Apart form Knossos, EN material has been discovered at six other sites, namely Katsampas, Gerani Cave, Pelekita, Magasa, Ayios Ioannis, Lera Cave, none of which comprises a continuous sequence (Tomkins *et al.* in press; for reports on the sites see Strasser 1992, Appendix I and Manteli 1993).

Evidently it is important to have a clear chronological framework within which to place the development and spread of the Neolithic on Crete. Until about the end of MN and the beginning of LN Knossos appears to be totally isolated (Evans 1968; 1994; Cherry 1990; Manning 1999; cf. Tomkins & Day 2001). The Late, and even more so, the Final Neolithic are seen as periods of settlement expansion throughout the island. Thus it is important to frame such 'expansion' within a concise historical context, whether the proliferation of Neolithic sites across the island constitutes a 'real' pattern, or is to some extent the product of visibility and recovery biases of the earlier sites (Tomkins *et al.* in press). On the other hand, this 'late' character of the Final Neolithic material from across the island has frequently been interpreted as a mark of 'transition' from the Neolithic to the EBA. Along such lines, Pernier (1935: 107) suggested that the FN of Phaistos should be viewed as partly or wholly contemporary with the EM at Knossos, while others have bestowed a more general transitional nature to the period (Vagnetti & Belli 1978; Manteli 1993). Aside from the fact that such patterns may to some extent be masking regional variation, this suggestion entails quite serious theoretical repercussions.

The transition from Neolithic to EBA society has been considered a crucial evolutionary threshold, in the Aegean, but also generally in prehistoric studies. In Crete especially, an apparently sharp change in material culture, most marked in decorated pottery and the introduction of new elements, such as the use of metal artefacts and the building of large communal burial monuments, taken to indicate advanced political organisation, have led many to believe that the break between the Neolithic and the EBA was so dramatic that it had to be inflicted from an external cultural background (Manteli 1993, with further discussion). Such theories were contrasted by alternative models proposing an internal development process whereby the Final phase of the Neolithic incorporated the main elements of transition. The basic archaeological components where such 'transition' is supposed to be exemplified are, as stated by Renfrew, "settlement pattern and subsistence" (1972: 81). Thus changes in those domains are taken to mark a passage from a non-complex to a 'soon-to-be-complex' society, and to lead further to the

emergence of the 'proper' complex societies of the palatial era. However, whereas the Neolithic and the EBA may be characterised by markedly different strategies of settlement and subsistence, the FN and the EMI have to some extent been considered part of a unified development (e.g. Blackman & Branigan 1977: 67; Watrous *et al.* 1993: 223-224; Branigan 1993; Manteli 1993; Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995: 394-395). On the other hand, discontinuities in the ceramic assemblages of the two phases (e.g. Wilson & Day 2000), highlight the discrepancies that may exist between the two periods. Therefore it seems necessary at this stage to examine in further detail the settlement and subsistence systems of the Mesara during the Final Neolithic in order to evaluate whether the degree and the sharpness of any changes between the two phases is as previously suggested. In other words, how different and how similar are the FN and the EMI in the Mesara and in what respects? Are differences in pottery styles enough to designate an overall change in social practice?

By tracing the differences between the Neolithic and the EBA in the Mesara and assessing the sharpness of such changes, a reconsideration of the *nature* and the *pace* of social change in the area will be offered. In this way, it will become clear that some social practices may persist through time while others are transformed and that such continuities or disruptions are a constant feature of human life and do not necessarily represent transitional phases or evolutionary thresholds. Even though the poor chronological resolution of prehistoric periods may give the illusion that we are dealing with abrupt changes from one period to the next, beliefs and mentalities, the ways of living according to specific networks of relevance do not change from one day to the next, but rather undergo much slower transformations. This is not to argue against the possibility of sudden and revolutionary changes (as Cherry 1983a has suggested), but rather to pinpoint that if we want to situate change in a historical context, we have to understand this dialectic between what is preserved and what is transformed, and the variety of ways in which such transformations may happen.

4.3. A FN 'settlement pattern'

The majority of the Neolithic material from the Mesara is dated to the FN, thus giving the impression of an empty landscape during the earlier phases. Such an impression is rather at odds with the natural endowment of the Mesara as the largest and most fertile plain in Crete, a feature which ought to have attracted early farmers. However, the discovery of a MN/LN site at Gortyna, most remarkably on the bottom of the plain under the Minoan villa, indicates that there may be a number of sites buried under later alluvium that were undetected by surveys[6]. More significantly, such discoveries force us to reconsider some of the assumptions about the nature of habitation during the FN, as well as the more general patterns of development related to the expansion of settlement across the island at this time (Cherry 1990: 161; Manning 1999: 470; but see Tomkins & Day 2001; Tomkins *et al.* in press). As most of the FN sites in the Mesara are until now found in upland locations, the discovery of Kannia-Mitropolis adds a new dimension to the interpretation of settlement systems and subsistence strategies of the area (see more in §4.4).

In terms of settlement patterns, the break between FN and EBA in the Mesara is considered clear by virtue of the appearance of tholos tombs in the landscape. However, if the difference between the Neolithic and the EBA is presumably exemplified by changes in the settlement system, then such a shift should be recognisable in the archaeological record. On the contrary, the new developments seem to be marked more by the appearance of *burial monuments,* and not so much by differential settlement systems. The evidence for settlements at the beginning of the EM period is either strikingly lacking or at best controversial (see also §5.2). Moreover, a detailed comparison between the FN and EM settlement patterns has not been included in any of the previous approaches, largely on the grounds of the insufficiency of the archaeological record[7]. However, if we are to assess the nature of changes taking place at this time, we have to include such a comparison in our discussion. The advent of

[6] The Neolithic material from Kannia-Mitropolis is so fragmentary that we cannot discuss with any precision the nature of the habitation there. Nevertheless, these finds indicate that the Mesara was at least visited or even only seasonally settled in the times preceding the FN.

[7] However, see Manteli's contribution on what concerns a comparison between the pottery of the two periods (1993).

tholos tombs, presumed to exemplify the introduction of new and more complex political structures, is not adequate on its own to illustrate the historical context of change.

A further assumption pertaining to the distinction between FN and EM is that such changes in settlement systems were accompanied or caused by changes in subsistence strategies. However, palaeo-environmental information that would allow the reconstruction of such subsistence systems is very restricted from Cretan sites in general. In addition, excavations taken place at the beginning of the 20th century or even 30 years ago did not pay the necessary heed to the collection of such data, making the task of interpretation today even more difficult. Nevertheless, these practical problems do not diminish the incoherence of previous approaches, which have put forward broad assumptions about the nature of prehistoric subsistence and settlement, that at present are refuted, either by new evidence or by theoretical reconsideration (e.g. Hamilakis 1995b).

Therefore a summary of the FN evidence from the Mesara will be presented, starting with a more detailed consideration of the excavated sites, and integrating the evidence from surveys (see also Table 4.9) as well as any information about environmental conditions in order to assess the accuracy of the above theories. Finally a discussion illuminating the settlement and subsistence systems of Neolithic Mesara and their difference from those of the EM period will be offered.

4.3.1. Phaistos

The Final Neolithic remains at Phaistos were brought to light by the Italian excavators of the site in the course of several excavation campaigns underneath the palatial building, the results of which were later published in a comprehensive study by Vagnetti (1972-73). After Knossos, the Neolithic material of Phaistos represents one of the most substantial assemblages of the period in Crete. Within the Mesara, the

settlement at Phaistos constitutes the best preserved (and documented) record we have of the Final Neolithic period in the area.

Final Neolithic deposits were identified in all sixteen trenches dug underneath the Palace and at the Chalara Quarter at the foot of the hill (Figs. 4.1, 4.2). These deposits, even though producing different quantities of material, were quite homogeneous encouraging the excavators to date them in a single period, the Final Neolithic. More specifically, two strata were distinguished, named Lower and Upper Neolithic Stratum (henceforth LNS and UNS), which were interpreted as *two occupation phases* belonging both to the FN period (Vagnetti 1972-73: 41-49). However, these two phases were not recognised in all the trenches, while in some trenches more than two Neolithic layers were identified (Figs. 4.1, 4.2, and Table 4.6). While interpreting the Neolithic remains at Phaistos, the following factors must be borne in mind:

a) *Chronological issues*: even though the existence of two distinct occupation phases cannot be doubted, we have no way of determining the duration of each of them or whether each occupation extended equally across the entire hill. Perhaps this explains why the LNS and UNS were not recognised in every trench.

b) *Natural topography*: the natural relief of the Phaistos hill slopes from North to South and from East to West. This is why the thickest deposits are found on the south-western side of the hill, whereas at the north-eastern part, the natural bedrock is visible on the surface and most of the Neopalatial remains in this area are founded on it. Therefore, it seems possible that any earlier than palatial deposits on the N and NE part of the hill would be more affected by later levelling and rebuilding than on the S and SW slope.

c) *Methodological issues*: not all the trenches opened were of equal size, due to the restrictions posed by the Palatial remains on the surface. Thus the larger soundings I, II, and III are inevitably the locations most likely to produce greater quantity of material and possibly the full extent of the occupation strata.

Many of the interpretations previously suggested have been misguided by overlooking the above restrictions. Significantly, the size of the settlement (and the concomitant extrapolation of population size and level of social complexity) is one of the features that have been largely overestimated, by ignoring the existence of two habitation phases (e.g. Branigan 1988a: 11-12, 37; 1995: 34; Whitelaw 1983: 339-340; Watrous *et al.* 1993: 223; Watrous 2001: 162). By consequence, any structural remains of the Neolithic settlement have been plotted together in the plan of the site giving the impression that they were all in use simultaneously, while, as will be clear from the following discussion, most of those structures succeeded each other chronologically and were not visible during both phases. A summary of the stratigraphy of the settlement is presented in Table 4.1, and the architectural and other features of habitation for each of the two strata (LNS and UNS) are summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.6 shows the distribution of the LNS and UNS on the hill of Phaistos (also Figs. 4.1 and 4.2). These were clearly distinguished from each other, either by intermediate strata that had the character of a fill (most commonly), or by various kinds of floors. Apart from their stratigraphy the two strata are only distinguished by the greater or lesser quantity of the same categories of artefacts that they produced, a fact that has contributed to a picture of homogeneity for the FN habitation at Phaistos. However, without underestimating the consistency between the two phases, a more detailed examination of the evidence has led us to re-evaluate some of the interpretations presently held about the size, the internal organisation of the settlement and the nature of habitation at Phaistos during the Final period of the Neolithic.

Architectural remains are very sparse in both occupations (Tables 4.7, 4.8). The most commonly suggested explanation for such rarity is that later extensive levelling and building operations on the hill have eliminated traces of earlier structures. Although such later disturbances are a common feature of most palatial sites in Crete (Manteli 1993, Appendix II: 32-33; Wilson 1985; 1994), they cannot be held entirely responsible for the lack or the paucity of remains of earlier date in those sites. For Phaistos in particular the possibility must be entertained that the type of habitation was such that left no remarkable traces of built structures and that habitation had a more punctuated nature

than initially assumed. From the spatial distribution of material remains and particularly from the location, frequency and character of architectural and other structural remains we can infer that any structures built there had a short duration, being often abandoned for unknown periods of time, and then rebuilt and remodelled during the next habitation phase. It is also possible that there existed a spatial differentiation within the settlement with the central parts (Figs. 4.1, 4.2) representing the locations of most intense activity and the rest of the hill being used more circumstantially. The following points illustrate these observations.

We have already stressed that the LNS and the UNS represent two occupation phases within the same chronological period. However, the only areas where we can distinguish between them are the trenches where these have been found in succession (Table 4.1). In the remainder of the hill, wherever Neolithic deposits are discovered, even when laying on the bedrock, they could belong to either of the two phases. The excavation, exploring areas of restricted dimensions, does not allow us a clear view of how the strata identified in the different trenches are connected physically, and by consequence whether they are part of the same chronological horizon. Therefore it seems quite possible that several locations of the hill of Phaistos were settled at various points in time that may or may not have been contemporaneous. Such an impression of a more dynamic habitation pattern is enhanced by several other factors, primarily the occurrence within the same phase/stratum of more than one floor deposit and the widespread existence of fill deposits separating the LNS and UNS (Table 4.1).

The extensive use of *floors* characterises both phases at Phaistos. Moreover, floors are concentrated only in specific areas of the hill; always in the same trenches, II, VII, IX and possibly VI (Table 4.4, Figs. 4.1, 4.2). There are two varieties of floors that seem to have had a different function. Most common are floors of beaten earth that can be found superimposed within the same phase, while floors constructed of a thin layer of small stones usually mark the beginning of a new dwelling phase, placed either on top of fill deposits (e.g. Trench VI; Fig. 4.3), or directly on top of pre-existing habitation refuse (e.g. Trench VII, Fig. 4.4), thus sealing any earlier sequences. This practice is quite common throughout the settlement and in many cases walls or other features of the LNS

have been completely covered by the floors of the UNS (in Trench II, most ubiquitously a 'layer of floors', as Vagnetti describes it [1972-73: 16-22], has sealed all earlier remains including one of the rare walls; also in Trench III, two walls presumably belonging to a room/house have been thus buried).

In conjunction with the above, any preserved walls from both strata are very small and fragmentary and do not seem to have supported buildings of any substantial size (Figs. 4.1, 4.2, 4.6, 4.7). Within each stratum there are never more than three or four walls preserved from the entire settlement (Table 4.3) whilst some of them (especially the walls found in the UNS at trenches VIII and XIII) seem to have been 'retaining', rather than house walls. Such 'retaining' walls have only been found at the edges of the area where the two main habitation strata, LNS and UNS, have been clearly recognised. Moreover, Neolithic material discovered further west of these walls was of a fragmentary and sporadic character in contrast to the rich deposits of the central part of the hill. Bearing in mind the natural configuration of the Phaistos hill, the area immediately to the west of the Central Court (Figs. 4.1, 4.2) must have been the most suitable for settling, being well protected from weather conditions and not so far from the flat lands at the foot of the hill which would have probably supported some crops. Thus it seems no coincidence that this is the area where the most substantial traces of occupation were recognised. The interpretation of these walls as 'retaining' is further enhanced by their structural properties (their great height and length, see Fig. 4.5) as well as by the fact that they were kept visible in both habitation phases whereas any other walls found in the settlement were easily left to collapse and be covered by later deposits.

The above observations lead us to conclude that any built structures at FN Phaistos must have consisted mostly of perishable material and were rather short-lived. Vagnetti's remark that layers of burnt material and ashes extending throughout several trenches may represent the burnt debris of the wooden upper structure of houses with stone foundations agrees with the suggestion of perishable structures. Another feature corroborating such an interpretation is the practice of allowing domestic refuse to accumulate on the floors, indicating perhaps that it was anticipated that such surfaces

would be in use for only a short time. Even though it seems that every new occupation was well aware of the location of pre-existing structures, (as is evident by the repetition of features in specific trenches only, see Tables 4.3-4.5, Figs. 4.1, 4.2), many of the structures of the LNS are totally buried underneath the UNS floors, suggesting that these were probably out of use by the time of the next occupation. If such structures were part of buildings occupied continuously, then they would not have been left to collapse and be buried[8].

Another characteristic feature of the Neolithic settlement of Phaistos also substantiates the above suggestion. The *hearths*, which are considered the most unequivocal evidence of habitation at Phaistos, have only on very few occasions been found lying on these formally modelled floors. Most often hearths consisted of concentrations of burnt material found superimposed within the deposits (Figs. 4.3, 4.4). Only a few examples of hearths carefully built of stones have been discovered (Fig. 4.8), while most of them appeared to have consisted of 'open fires', implying very simple structures which could be constructed when there was a need and remade whenever they would get too clogged to be usable. Obviously their location within the domestic debris would have marked the level of the habitation surface at that particular point in time, however this also shows that floors were not remodelled as often. Thus it could be suggested that the more formally demarcated floors (namely those constructed by layers of stones) were the products of deliberate modelling of the dwelling surface which only occurred at specific times. Such specific occasions could be related to new occupation phases that began perhaps after short abandonment of the particular locations. It seems then that even though the hearths would be re-built quite often, floors on the contrary would be left to

[8] Regarding the building remains at FN Phaistos, much has been made about the 'Neolithic hut' (Trench V), especially on what concerns its circular shape and its alleged connection with the shape of the circular Mesara tombs. However, the use of this structure as a dwelling has been debated by Vagnetti (1972-73: 27-29, 50) who rightly draws attention to the lack of an entrance and the absence of hearths, the most prominent sign of habitation areas in Phaistos. Branigan (1993: 38) also rejects the interpretation of this structure as a dwelling. The artefacts recovered from the 'hut' do not differ from the finds from other trenches. It is quite noteworthy however, that most of the stone implements and a spindle whorl come from the foundation level and not from the supposed floor level of the 'hut'. The existence of these two different occupation levels, clearly distinguished from each other by the presence of a floor, also suggests that habitation there might have been interrupted for a while and resumed in a later stage. Moreover, it is not clear from Vagnetti's description whether the circumference of the 'hut' was visible during both occupations, while it is certain that the mixed FN and EM deposit that succeeded the pure Neolithic occupations, completely covered every trace of wall.

become disused by the accumulation of refuse and would only receive remodelling when a new occupation began.

Finally, the quite extensive fill deposits distinguishing the LNS and UNS in Trenches III, IV, VI and VII, (Table 4.1; Figs. 4.3, 4.4) indicate that a time gap might have existed between the two occupations. These sterile layers seem to have been created by the accumulation of material collapsing over a period of time, and were not the result of intentional deposition of material on top of earlier debris to level the surface. This latter practice was rather uncommon at Phaistos, where new floors (whether within the same occupation phase or for a new habitation) have been constructed most often directly on top of the accumulated refuse on the earlier disused floors. Moreover, the fact that such fills are not found in all the trenches adds more strength to the suggestion that different areas of the hill were visited and settled at different times and for a varied duration.

All the above observations paint a new picture of the Neolithic settlement of Phaistos. The debatable contemporaneity of the deposits scattered around the hill, the patterns of floor construction and use in the dwellings, the frailty of any surviving walls, the existence of fills between occupations and the temporary nature and repetition of features like hearths, all suggest that the nature of habitation on Phaistos must have been punctuated by frequent intervals of settlement, abandonment and reoccupation. In contrast to the previous approaches seeing the settlement as extending over the entire hill and being occupied continuously for almost three centuries, it appears that not all areas of the hill were settled at all times, some locations being more central to the habitation pattern than others (Tables 4.1, 4.2). Apart from the two main phases of habitation recognised in the life of the site, it seems that there existed more occasions in which the hill would be abandoned for a short period, only to be settled again.

Further support for the suggestion of a more dynamic pattern of habitation during the FN period is provided by the scanty Neolithic finds from the Chalara quarter and the

Neolithic material discovered during surface inspection near Kamilari and Ag. Triada[9] in recent years (Vagnetti & Belli 1978; La Rosa 1992a, b), demonstrating that the territory around Phaistos was visited and settled to varied degrees and in a variety of ways. Moreover, preliminary evidence from the Western Mesara Survey (Watrous *et al.* 1993: 223) has recognised a number of FN sites in the vicinity of Phaistos, usually of small size, which are considered seasonal dwellings. The FN site at Gortyna-Acropolis (Vagnetti 1973: 5-7) is also of a similar type, located on the top and slopes of a prominent hill and utilising material culture similar to FN Phaistos. Even though its excavation has been only short, the discovery of FN material in all the trenches opened on the Akropolis (Vagnetti 1973: 5, n. 19) perhaps indicates patterns of settlement analogous to those at Phaistos. Therefore all the available information on FN sites in the western Mesara Plain pinpoint more punctuated patterns of habitation characterised by frequent abandonment and resettling in specific sites, and possibly shifting of settlement locations, rather than continuous permanence of habitation as the regular form of settlement[10].

Nonetheless, despite such frequent interruptions in habitation, the FN settlement of Phaistos is also characterised by remarkable patterns of continuity. The rebuilding of specific structures during each new phase at the exact location of previous, disused features is one example of such practice. Moreover, it shows that: a) the intervals of abandonment and resettling could not have been far removed from each other in time; therefore such journeys must have been embedded in the yearly life-cycle of the settlement, whilst their frequency and structured repetition also contributed to the latter's perpetuation. b) There was a specific significance in the placing of specific structures and perhaps objects (see discussion, §4.4) in particular locations in the settlement that marked the nature of activities taking place there and by consequence the social value of particular locales within the site; in this respect we should note the consistency in the location of the two burials (one perhaps of a child), in the same area in Trench II during each different phase, (Vagnetti 1972-73: 17-19) and of a rubbish dump between Trenches III and IV (Figs. 4.1, 4.2). c) Finally, the practice of building

[9] These two sites are only briefly mentioned by Vagnetti and, as they have not yet been published, their extent and duration remains largely unknown. However, see Todaro (forthcoming) for a recent re-evaluation of the Neolithic material at Ag. Triada (also Chapter 5, §5.2.2 and note 11).
[10] For a similar view of Aegean sites in FN/EBI see Whitelaw 2000.

up refuse on the existing floors during each occupation phase could also be interpreted as an attempt to create a visible record of continuity of habitation in the same place, possibly in an analogous way to the formation of the Neolithic tells of mainland Greece albeit in much smaller scale. However, in the long run such practice also allowed the western area of the Phaistos hill to be raised from its initial surface thus adding to its height and contour and enhancing its visibility.

The nature of habitation in FN Phaistos, with its structured intersecting of abandonment and reoccupation periods, can only be fully illuminated when we look at the contemporary patterns of settlement from the rest of the Mesara. The reasons for such a dynamic pattern of habitation are not easy to pin down, however some insights may be provided by discussing the general patterns of settlement and subsistence in the Mesara as these emerge from the consideration of the other Neolithic sites from the area.

4.3.2. Asterousia

4.3.2.1. House at Kala Selia/ Kaloi Limenes

The fragmentary remains of a FN house were discovered and published by Vasilakis (1987) at the location Kala Selia, on top of a hill in one of the southernmost ridges of the Asterousia Mountains overlooking the bay of Kaloi Limenes. It had been disturbed by looters, who had destroyed the deposit to the level of the bedrock apart from a small area.

Three walls (each made by a single row of stones) survive only to the level of the foundations forming a large room of uncertain plan (Fig. 4.9). This room was placed on a hollow of the rocky surface which was lined with clay resembling a beaten earth floor. The upper part of the walls would have been constructed of mudbricks and wood while nothing survived of the roof. The main finds from the site were pottery and stone tools. The pottery consisted of the typical brown/black burnished coarse wares of the

Neolithic period and was primarily represented by large open bowls, with one or two examples of a 'fruit-stand' and a necked jar (Vasilakis 1987: 48-50). Stone implements included eight pairs of millstones and grinders, two of which were found on the 'floor' of the house; there was also a very small number of obsidian flakes and blades.

Vasilakis (1987: 45, 51-52) interprets this installation as an isolated farmstead, the inhabitants of which would have subsisted from cultivating the fields and keeping animals. He sees animal husbandry as the main source of food as the arable land in this area is of limited extent and quality. Such claims cannot be verified or falsified as we do not have any palaeo-environmental information. Moreover, the absence of a perennial water source in the vicinity makes this choice of location rather surprising. By contrast, the site would make more sense as a seasonal installation taking advantage of whatever resources the area had to offer before moving to a different location. A number of other FN sites identified nearby by Vasilakis (1989-90b; also Table 4.9) are of similar character and could be taken to support the above suggestion.

4.3.2.2. The cave at Miamou

Before considering the remaining FN sites from the Asterousia, let us look into the last of the excavated FN sites, the cave at Miamou. The cave was excavated and published by A. Taramelli (1897) at the end of the 19th century. Three distinct layers/strata were recognised in the deposit. The upper layer (deposit C) consisted of a 'sepulchral' deposit, containing burials dated to the EM period (Taramelli 1897: 292-294; Manteli 1993: Appendix IX). Underneath this deposit, the substantial remains of a Neolithic habitation (deposit G) were found, which according to the excavator could be divided in two phases[11] (Figs. 4.10, 4.11). Both 'phases' consisted of rich in organic material soils, which also contained numerous fragments of pottery and bone and stone tools. An

[11] Taramelli dates the material from the cave at Miamou to the Neolithic period by virtue of the 'primitive nature' of the artefacts. Strasser includes the cave in the catalogue of LN sites, with no precise justification (Strasser 1992: 211). Vagnetti and Belli (1978: 134-135) date the Miamou deposit to the FN while Manteli recognises elements in the pottery typology that link the deposit to both LN and FN periods (Manteli 1993: 112). Thus the possibility should be acknowledged that the Miamou assemblage may contain material slightly earlier than Phaistos.

interesting feature of the two deposits is the use of hearths, identified as concentrations of heavily burnt, black and solidified soil within each deposit (Taramelli 1897: 296-298). In the upper stratum four such hearths were discovered in different areas of the cave: two were in the same level and at the same distance from the entrance of the cave; one must have been abandoned and used again as the layers of ash and charcoal were separated by a layer of soil; another one, 0.30 m. thick was found lower in the deposit (Taramelli 1897: 296). The excavator does not give further details as to the stratigraphic position of these hearths, but it seems clear that they must have been used in succession and not simultaneously as they appear to be found at different depths in the deposit (Fig. 4.10). Larger quantities of finds, including remains of meals, broken and charred animal bones, sherds and tools were located around these hearths, but these materials were also recovered throughout all the layers of the deposit.

The same situation was encountered in the lower part (earlier phase) of the deposit. Only two hearths were recovered from this level, again in succession, while the finds consisted of the same types which diminished in quantities as the excavation proceded lower. There was nothing on the natural surface. At this stage the cave had the appearance of a well, a fact which convinced the excavator that another entrance must have been used during the earlier stages of habitation in the cave. This view was confirmed by the presence of clefts in the cave walls from where air was coming through and the presence of a conduit way outside the cave at this point (Taramelli 1897: 306-307).

It is possible that in the cave of Miamou we may encouter a type of habitation quite similar to the pattern observed in FN Phaistos. The repetition of features like the hearths and the lifting of the initial surface of the cave by the building up of habitation refuse are very reminicent of the practices at Phaistos and although Taramelli interprets them as signs of continuous occupation of the cave, they could actually suggest a pattern of repeated visits (see also Blackman & Branigan 1977: 67). Such a pattern would be most clearly depicted in the superimposition as well as the co-existence of more than one hearth in every layer. Unfortunately, the level and amount of information at our disposal does not allow any more detailed interpretation, however, a seasonal character of

habitation in Neolithic caves has been proposed (Vagnetti & Belli 1978: 141; Manteli 1993: 144, 191), and would add strength to our suggestion of short-lived settlements during the FN period in the Mesara.

4.3.2.3. Ag. Kyriaki and other sites in the Asterousia

From the remainder of FN sites located in the Asterousia area, Ag. Kyriaki (Fig. 4.12) is perhaps the most important as the site has been excavated and the surrounding area has been intensively surveyed (Blackman & Branigan 1977: 56; 1982; Vasilakis 1989-90b: 33-38). A small tholos tomb located there had been disturbed by looting, initiating the excavation by Blackman and Branigan in 1972. In the area to the east of the tomb the frail remains of two lengths of walls were unearthed dated by the excavators to a 'pre-tomb' occupation of the site (Blackman & Branigan 1982: 43-44). The stratigraphy of the particular area, the orientation of the two walls in a different direction to the walls of the antechambers of the tomb, and the few finds of stone tools and burnished pottery sherds indicated to the excavators a possible FN date for this deposit (Blackman & Branigan 1982: 10-11, 15-16, 21, 29, 43-44). The nature of the FN occupation is difficult to determine since the remains are very fragmentary, however, Blackman and Branigan (1982: 43) seem convinced that any earlier activity must not have been related to burial, but was rather of a 'domestic' nature. Their interpretation seems plausible, and although we have to acknowledge the detrimental effect that later building activity would have had for any earlier remains, it seems that the FN occupation at Ag. Kyriaki could also fall into the same category of short-lived, perhaps seasonal sites that we identified in the rest of the Mesara.

Sites of similar type have been identified in both the Ayiofarango and the Moni Odigitrias surveys (Table 4.9, Fig. 4.13). At the vicinity of the Ag. Kyriaki tholos, in site E4a (Ag. Kyriaki III), the discovery of FN sherds and stone tools prompted Vasilakis (1989-90b: 33-34) to identify the site as an isolated farmstead, in contrast to Blackman and Branigan (1977: 31) who describe it as a MM peak sanctuary in their survey of the area. Another possible 'isolated farmstead' of FN date is identified by Vasilakis at the location Nio Pervoli, south of the Moni Odigitria monastery (Fig. 4.13),

while FN material has also been discovered in four tholos tombs, Lebena Yerokambos II (Alexiou 1961-62a), Megaloi Skinoi I (E9) (Alexiou 1967: 483), Kaloi Limenes II (SC3) (Blackman & Branigan 1975: 20-21; Vasilakis 1989-90b: 21-23) and Trypeti A (Alexiou 1967: 484). However, most of these sites have only been recognised by surface remains, not allowing a clear reconstruction of the pattern of occupation. It is nevertheless noteworthy that they are all small-sized and even the ones that are excavated do not present signs of long-term habitation (for instance storage vessels are strikingly absent from both Miamou and Kala Selia).

4.3.3. The coastal area around Kommos

The information we have about the habitation during FN in the Kommos area derives entirely from the survey conducted there prior to the excavation of the Minoan Site (Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995). Moreover in the course of the survey, it proved very difficult to distinguish between surface material dated to the FN and to the EMI period, therefore the evidence for the two periods has been considered together (Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995: 394-395, table 7.1). The presence of FN material was recognised with certainty in only three sites, Charakas 129, Sendones 25, and Vigles 133, (Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995: 354-355, 373-374, 360), which contained material from Minoan periods as well. However, they too are consistent with the habitation pattern recognised in the other Mesara areas, in that they are located on prominent hills and seem to have been short-lived installations.

4.4. An emergent *Region*

This summary of the evidence for FN habitation in the Mesara highlights the possibility of a settlement pattern quite different from that envisaged by previous approaches. Settlement mobility to varied degrees and at intervals appears to be an interpretation worth considering for the evidence available to us. However, we still need to pin down the reasons why such a settlement system might have been followed.

Previous interpretations of the FN settlement structures have tended invariably to emphasise one set of explanations over another; either economic or social. Moreover, the commonly held view that the 'Neolithic package' presupposes and requires permanence of settlement has in many cases steered research away from acknowledging the existence of variability in the patterns of settlement and subsistence that may be related to local environmental and social factors. Within such explanatory contexts, any hint of residential mobility must be justifiable by environmental constraints, for example, pastoralist transhumant economies are considered effective adaptations to areas of complementary resources (Cherry 1988: 16). On the other hand, while mobility must be explained, permanence is taken as a natural outcome of the ways of the Neolithic.

In Neolithic Crete, interpretations of settlement patterns have been equally affected by the above assumptions as well as by the pre-eminence of Knossos on the landscape for several millennia, promoting a picture of isolation. The proliferation of sites during the LN and FN periods has been taken to exemplify large scale colonisation of the island, presumably initiated by population and land pressures at Knossos (Broodbank 1993; Manning 1999: 470-471). Thus the inevitable implication has been that since the patterns of settlement and subsistence followed at Neolithic Knossos were based on longevity of occupation, the newly colonised areas would have had continued these practices.

Nevertheless, it seems that neither the isolation of Knossos nor the permanent character of the FN settlements, particularly in the Mesara, can be so easily accepted. Recent work on the EN ceramic assemblage from Knossos has identified the presence of ceramic fabrics possibly produced at locations at a distance from Knossos (Tomkins *et al.* in press). The provenance of ceramics from such distant areas as the Mirabello region in East Crete, but also locations within the Herakleion basin though more than 5 km away from Knossos, indicated that other EN sites must have existed in the island apart from Knossos. Consequently, the 'empty' Neolithic landscape may be the result of our difficulty to detect such early sites through surveys, rather than an accurate picture

of habitation in Crete (Tomkins & Day 2001). More importantly such observations cast doubt on the presumed expansion of settlement at the end of the Neolithic period. If we can assume with any reasonable safety that other parts of the island were at least periodically settled before the FN, then the number of sites would not appear to increase so radically in this period.

In the case of the Mesara this suggestion is corroborated by the discovery of the MN/LN site of Kannia-Mitropolis in the Mesara plain, (Levi 1959: 242; Vagnetti 1973), which, coupled with some possibly LN material at Miamou, would represent significant evidence for at least a periodic or short-term occupation of locations in the area. Moreover, geomorphological studies (Watrous *et al.* 1993: 204; Parsons & Gifford 1995: 301) have indicated a three-fold deposition sequence in the Western Mesara, the first phase comprising the deposition of coarse pre-Minoan alluvium, followed by deposits containing Minoan sherds, and dating the earliest human induced alluvial deposits to the EM period. Thus it seems possible that earlier Neolithic sites could be buried under these newer soils. On the other hand, the existence of intact patches of Palaeoxeralf soils (soils predating and unaffected by this alluviation event), on top of which FN sites have been identified (Watrous *et al.* 1993: 202), could suggest that earlier sites might have been rare. Furthermore, the consistent location of FN sites on such soils, undisturbed from alluviation, would also diminish the recovery bias, making their distribution in the landscape a meaningful pattern. In this sense the consistency in the location of FN sites on high grounds throughout the area could be considered with greater safety a conscious choice rather than a reflection of the incompleteness of our recovery techniques (see also Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995: 394-395).

Additional support for the above argument may be found in the observation that all the FN sites in the Mesara, with the possible, albeit uncertain, exception of Miamou, are new establishments – they have produced no earlier material. Since most of these sites, apart from Phaistos, appear to be short-lived installations, it would not be implausible to suggest that they could be attributed to a dynamic and mobile settlement system, rather than being the outcome of an unprecedented increase in population resulting in extreme settllement expansion and colonisation of previously deserted areas of Crete.

However, if the Mesara was known to early Neolithic settlers through periodical visits, why did its colonisation on a more permanent scale take so long, given the presumably favourable conditions for farming that the particular environment would have offered? The obvious answer is that the present state of the Mesara region comprising the largest and most fertile open plain on the island, is to a large extent the product of human intervention. From palynological investigations there are some indications that the whole area, and particularly the plain, was much more densely wooded than in later years (Bottema 1980; Watrous *et al.* 1993: 202-203; Shay & Shay 1995: 124) and that the climate was less arid (Rackham and Moody 1996: 123). Thus, if the area had been largely untouched by human intervention until the end of the Neolithic, great effort would have been required by the new inhabitants to transform the local environment by clearing enough land and introducing crops to make habitation on a more permanent basis possible. Moreover, although Manning's view of Neolithic Knossos as a 'circumscribed, or "caged" environment' (1999: 470) must be refuted in the light of the recent ceramic discoveries (Tomkins *et al.* in press), the social factors that might have encouraged people to remain in Knossos for a number of millennia cannot be underestimated. It is possible thus that neither the labour force nor sufficient incentive existed for the large-scale operation that was the more permanent inhabitation of the Mesara.

Most commonly, economic explanations have seen pastoralism rather than agriculture as favouring residential mobility. However, approaches that have emphasised the significance of transhuming pastoralism (Bintliff 1977a, b) may have overestimated the extent of upland pastures during early prehistory (Halstead 1987; Cherry 1988). On the other hand, a pattern of settlement mobility may also be argued for FN Phaistos, which would be more advantageously placed for following an intensive horticulture/gardening regime not requiring the clearance of great expanses of land (such as that suggested by Halstead [1981] for the EN mainland communities). Vagnetti and Belli's (1978: 143) proposal that severe climatic conditions at the end of the Neolithic period may have caused flooding and thus had driven the inhabitants of the Mesara to abandon the plain for higher grounds cannot be substantiated, although we could perhaps imagine that much wetter conditions (as indicated by the environmental data) might have made the

plain a far from ideal habitation environment. This was the case in more recent times, when widespread malaria made the bottomlands an unfavourable area for settlement (Watrous *et al.* 1993: 196). In this respect, a practice of periodical movement to the less wooded and drier mountainous regions, following perhaps a seasonal cycle, would not be such an extreme solution to these problems, and would tie in well with the short-lived nature and small size of the FN sites away from Phaistos.

In light of the above, we could visualise the practice of habitation mobility becoming a sort of traditional settlement system in the Mesara, embedded in the social structures of the local communities. Moreover, the modification of the environment necessary for the successful operation of farming would inevitably have to be a slow process, making the exploitation of every possible resource of all the microenvironments of the area a rather cost- and effort-effective subsistence strategy, that would perhaps encourage the continuation of mobility practices. In this sense, social and natural agencies must have played equal parts in maintaining the specific habitation system. On the other hand, the social significance of movement of settlement has been rather overshadowed by arguments about the impracticality of such strategies. Our perceptions deriving largely from a permanent, 'settled' point of view, treat mobility in terms of a single scale of group movement and ignore the many dimensions that such movement may exemplify. Mobility has a cultural component in that local perceptions of the environment affect the way localities and places are understood (Kelly 1992: 44-45). Ethnographic examples attest that cultural ideals valuing movement may encourage residential mobility even when other settlement options are available and the local environments do not pose subsistence constraints (Kelly 1992: 48). Furthermore, the construction of locality operating as a point of reference for a particular community may not always derive from permanence of occupation. In this respect, temporal patterns such as the repeated journeying and re-visiting of specific locations may be equally effective not only in creating a perspective of *place*, but also in re-affirming particular social relations (Gillespie 2000: 12). Thus, while at Knossos the importance of locality was re-affirmed by the extreme permanence of the settlement during Neolithic times (and its subsequent elevation to a tell), in the Mesara, mobility practices might have played an equivalent role.

Although it is difficult to determine whether there was only one community moving within the entire Mesara and the mountainous regions and re-settling every time at Phaistos, or whether this mobility scheme involved many different communities, the privileged position of Phaistos within this mechanism must be acknowledged. It appears that the site of Phaistos might have had a more specialised function. The inventory of artefacts recovered from the site is far from complete, and the lack of quantitative data, especially for the pottery, make general conclusions quite tenuous. Nevertheless, the available information on the classes and shapes of pottery discovered at Phaistos (Vagnetti 1972-73: 54-88), as well as Manteli's (1993) exhaustive study of other FN ceramic assemblages from Crete in general, allow for some comparisons to be made. As the pottery of all the other Mesaran FN sites is largely compatible and comparable with that of Phaistos, the restriction of certain vessel types only at Phaistos seems rather significant. Specifically, varieties of necked jars, particularly the characteristic 'bottle' (Fig 4.14), as well as early forms of jugs and miniature cups and bowls are found only at Phaistos (Manteli 1993: 139-145, Appendix III). All other sites, although exhibiting clear typological parallels with Phaistos, produced only coarse wares, in contrast to the equal percentage of fine and coarse wares at Phaistos. It is also noteworthy that these categories of vessels, and again mostly the necked jars and bottles, receive the most exaggerated form of surface treatment combining in many cases several decoration techniques in one vessel (Fig. 4.15).

The risk of such absences being due to sample bias, as Phaistos produced a much larger assemblage than the other sites of the area, is restricted by two factors: first, the vessels associated with liquids (particularly necked jars and bottles) occur in both coarse and fine fabrics in the assemblage of Phaistos (Vagnetti 1972-73: 55-88; Manteli 1993, vol. I: 82-83, vol. II: 66-77). Therefore the absence of fine wares from the other FN sites could not explain the rarity of the particular type of vessel types there. Secondly, the FN ceramic assemblage from Gortyna Acropolis, although considerably smaller showed strong typological affinities with Phaistos with even distribution of fine and coarse wares (Vagnetti 1973: 7-9; Manteli 1993, vol. I: 110-112). Necked jars and bottles however were again lacking.

Despite the susceptibility of such observations to future reconsideration in the event of a more comprehensive study of the Phaistos FN ceramic assemblage, the restriction of these ceramic types to Phaistos, coupled with a strong persistence in the frequent revisiting of this site, perhaps to a greater extent than any of the other Mesaran sites, as well as the consistent localisation of activities in specific parts of the settlement (Figs. 4.1, 4.2) could indicate that specific practices were taking place only at Phaistos. The nature of these practices is difficult to pinpoint, but the character of the 'special'-rare vessel types may suggest some connection with the consumption of some kind of liquids. The scale of such practices is very difficult to determine, but they could be compared to the equivalent practices of possibly ceremonial food and drink consumption of the EM period (Wilson & Day 2000; Todaro forthcoming).

However, the significance of such FN practices, particularly for the Mesara, lies not so much in their scale as in their preferential location exclusively at Phaistos. Without stretching the evidence too far it may be possible to envisage Phaistos as a common point of reference for all the FN Mesaran communities. If the consistency in the location of FN sites always on high ground can be shown to be a 'real' pattern, then it is hardly a coincidence that by that time, the incipient site of the island, Knossos, has the appearance of a tell, elevated from its initial surface and forming a prominent landmark. If higher locations were seen as representing great antiquity of habitation, then the pattern of location of FN sites acquires new significance. Therefore, the prominent position of Phaistos within the particular local network may be justified by its exceptional location on the more visible landmark in the Mesara plain. Gortyna-Acropolis would be the only other FN installation that could compete with Phaistos in terms of location and Manteli (1993: 139-145, Appendix VII) has suggested that its ceramic assemblage can be somehow distinguished from the rest of the FN sites in the area.

It could be suggested that during the FN, Phaistos, by being the exclusive setting for ceremonial activity involving the consumption of drink, constituted a regional focus for the entire area, integrating the communities of the plain, the coast and the mountains. The recurrent nature of deposition at Phaistos in contrast to the rather short-lived

character of the rest of the FN sites, may highlight the significance of the activities taking place there as integrative mechanisms in which all the Mesaran communities participated.

It seems then that a distinct *regional* pattern was emerging in the Mesara at the end of the Neolithic period, whereby ancestry – of settlement and by consequence of the respective communities – was gradually becoming a prominent element of social negotiation. However, whereas great antiquity in other parts of Crete, most notably at Knossos, would be expressed by accentuating the continuity of occupation of particular locations, in the Mesara, such antiquity emerged and was expressed through the structured repetition of short-term practices within an area notably unified in its social and economic structures. Such a pattern emerged out of the combination of beliefs about the significance of particular locations as points of reference (i.e. high grounds as a reference to longevity of community) and of the particular environmental and economic factors encountered in the newly colonised environment. Thus, even though part of a larger network of interactions involving other parts of Crete, the Mesara gradually forged a differentiated regional pattern, whereby unification was achieved through distinct temporal practices – settlement mobility and specific consumption events - encompassing the plain, the mountains and the coast.

If then by the end of the Neolithic the Mesara appears as a largely unified regional environment sharing strategies of subsistence and habitation, what changes, if anything, in the following periods? Which of these patterns persist and which are transformed?

CHAPTER 5

EARLY PREPALATIAL NETWORKS OF RELEVANCE

5.1. 'A brave new world'

> "The third millennium BC was a period of *invention* and *innovation* not only in Crete but in and around the Aegean sea as a whole, and it saw the emergence of *large nucleated settlements* which might fairly be described as the first towns in Europe" (Branigan 1993: 1, emphasis added)

The general assumption for the Early Bronze Age, not only for Crete but for the entire southern Aegean, is that a break with the ways of the Neolithic is exemplified in the adoption of new subsistence and settlement strategies. The 'period of invention and innovation' saw major changes brought about by the introduction of new technologies of subsistence and exchange represented in the widespread adoption of metallurgy and new crops, such as the olive and the vine (Renfrew 1972). These innovations, coupled with a new emphasis on exchange, were seen as allowing the growth of population and the colonisation of marginal environments, causing thus an unprecedented settlement expansion, which gradually led to the emergence of large nucleated settlements, subsequently giving rise to increased administrative needs that the Palatial civilisation was called upon to cover (Renfrew 1972; Branigan 1988a, b; 1995; Manning 1994; 1997). In this respect, it is very significant to assess the precise nature and pace of these supposed innovations of the EBA, particularly as the critique of Renfrew's models has shown that in many cases the available archaeological evidence does not suffice to support such interpretations (Halstead 1988; Hamilakis 1996). Along these lines, re-

evaluating the degree and nature of settlement expansion in EM Mesara, is the first step towards a more general re-consideration of the social patterns of the period.

Despite Branigan's enthusiastic description of the EBA developments, the EM settlements, particularly in the Mesara remain largely unknown and under-represented in the archaeological record. As stressed in Chapter 4, the major break with the previous FN patterns comes with the introduction of burial monuments at the beginning of EMI[1]. However, although the emphasis on the mortuary sphere is a new trait characteristic of the EBA, the appearance of tholos tombs in the Mesaran landscape cannot be taken uncritically to signify the introduction of totally new socio-political structures as well as the existence of pronounced cultural homogeneity expressed at a regional level.

With respect to the general pattern of development during the EBA, the emphasis on mortuary practices characterising most parts of Crete, and more specifically the building of burial *monuments,* have also been taken as undisputed signs of *increasing social complexity*. The tholoi have been linked to: a) change and intensification of agricultural strategies, as permanent settlements have been considered a precondition for 'permanent' burial grounds and the tombs themselves have been interpreted as territorial markers associated with arable land (Bintliff 1977a, b; Murphy 1998; see also §5.3); b) population and settlement expansion, as each tomb has been seen as serving at least one settlement - i.e. the number of tombs is equivalent to the number of settlements (Branigan 1993: 111-117; Manning 1994: 234; Sbonias 1999a: 29; 1999b: 3); c) finally, the tombs have been seen as the material reflection of crucial socio-political changes. Their size and monumentality have encouraged explanations that see the existence of an advanced level of leadership within the contemporary communities

[1] Some approaches favour the introduction of tholos tombs in FN, on the basis of the evidence from the basal stratum in Lebena Yerokambos II and finds of FN sherds in the tholos tombs of Megaloi Skinoi I and Trypeti (Alexiou 1961-62a: 226-227; Vagnetti & Belli 1978: 135). Apart from the tholos at Lebena, which is unpublished, the rest of the material consists of surface finds which cannot be safely related to the stratigraphy of the tombs. However see Blackman & Branigan (1977: 37; 1975: 21) for details concerning the find spot/stratigraphy of the FN material, suggesting that perhaps a FN foundation date for these tombs may not be out of the question. Therefore, in anticipation of more studies clarifying the date of 'debated' wares, such as Partira (classified as FN or EMI by contrasting opinions), the possibility still remains that these tombs were founded either during, or at the end of the FN.

as a prerequisite for their construction (Manteli 1993; Manning 1994). Moreover, the emphasis placed on display by the use of a variety of grave goods, albeit within the context of communal burials, has also been classified as an unmistakable sign of emerging social differentiation. As the Prepalatial period advances, this becomes even more pronounced by the introduction of new burial offerings, while the concentration of some materials in specific tombs has also been interpreted as a mark of social ranking (Branigan 1984; Sbonias 1999a; c.f. Papadatos 1999). Finally, a sharp increase in the number of tholos tombs from the EMIIA onwards, has been taken as an indication for differentiations within their respective communities with different tholoi being reserved for different groups of people; such change has been interpreted as a break in the kinship ties supposedly represented in the practice of collective burial, and its replacement by a stronger emphasis on the role of the individual (Branigan 1984; 1993; Sbonias 1999a).

As the assumption is that such signs of social complexity are absent from the preceding Neolithic period, the burial monuments become the ultimate expression of the 'innovative and inventive' spirit of the EBA, in the Mesara. The particularity of tomb type, restricted mainly to this area and mostly during the EBA, has also been interpreted as signifying large-scale cultural homogeneity and regional integration, to such a degree that even the presence of different ethnic groups has been put forward in order to explain the sharp differences from other areas of Crete (Branigan 1970: 122-123 with discussion; Manteli 1993). The distribution of tholoi in a distinct natural landscape has provided a formal demarcation of the Mesara region, whereas the distinctive material culture deposited mostly in them has reinforced the impression of regionalism.

The pitfalls of relying exclusively on geography in order to understand the construction of identity have been dealt with in the previous chapters. What is of importance at this point is that the image of regional integration postulated for the EBA Mesara has also been used as a proof for increasing social complexity. Opinions may differ as to when exactly such an evolutionary threshold might have been crossed, however the common view is that the cultural uniformity reflected by the tholos cemeteries is the outcome of

an overarching regional organisation system (Branigan 1988a; 1993; Sbonias 1999a, b; Watrous *et al.* 1993; Watrous 2001). Arguments about the size of the Prepalatial settlement at Phaistos (Whitelaw 1983; Branigan 1988a, b; 1995; Manning 1994; Watrous 2001), in combination with estimates of the general population of the area, on the basis of mortuary evidence (Bintliff 1977a; Whitelaw 1983; Branigan 1993; Sbonias 1999b) have seen the Mesara reaching the nucleation benchmark (and the concomitant socio-political complexity implied by such development) long before the end of the Prepalatial period.

There exist a number of problems with these interpretations. Firstly, the estimation of past populations appears to be a thorny matter on its own, and more so if based almost entirely on mortuary evidence. In the case of the tholos tombs, it is subject to even greater inaccuracies if we take into account the collective nature of burial, the very long periods of tomb use, and the great disturbance caused in the burial deposits by both the removal of material for new inhumations during antiquity and the widespread looting during modern times. Secondly, the interpretation of Phaistos as the socio-political centre of the area is based on its hypothetical size, which, as will be shown below, may be a rather exaggerated view of a very fragmented empirical record, while the later building of the Palace there has inevitably affected our understandings of the site's political status during earlier periods. Finally, the theoretical premises of the above interpretations entail a number of problematic perspectives: on the one hand, they treat material culture as a direct and passive representation and outcome of past social processes, whilst on the other, their understanding of regional integration as a process of inscribing hierarchy in space relies on problematic conceptions of region and the relationship between spatial and social dynamics (see Chapters 2 and 3).

In this respect, the aims of this discussion are:

- To evaluate the degree of innovation and change between the FN and the beginning of the EBA; how different were the subsistence and settlement strategies of the two periods in the Mesara and how dramatic and abrupt were the changes brought about

by the 'innovations' of the Prepalatial?

- To assess the extent to which burial monuments can be taken as markers of undisputed social complexity and unprecedented cultural homogeneity.

- To examine the ways in which diverse kinds of regional identity were created and reproduced in the Mesara during the EBA; how dependent were such identifications on the natural topography of the Mesara?

- To stress the historicity of the technologies of difference that allowed the Mesara to emerge as a homogeneous entity during the EBA; how did the conditions of distinctiveness arise; how much were such conditions locally produced and how much affected by wider networks of interaction?

The discussion of the EBA period has been divided into two chapters, Chapters 5 and 6, dealing respectively with the Early and the Late Prepalatial phases. This divide was deemed necessary primarily for practical reasons, to allow a more detailed consideration of each of the two phases in texts of manageable length. However, it also has an interpretational base: although the two phases are characterised by several common social practices, there are considerable differences in the ways in which these practices are reproduced by the Mesaran communities during the Early and Late Prepalatial. Of course, it is not always easy to divide so neatly the discussion of these social patterns, so the two chapters should be seen more as sections of the same text, rather than as different essays. Chapter 5 therefore, deals mostly with the social circumstances in the Mesara during the EMI and the EMIIA periods, while Chapter 6 focuses more on the patterns towards the end of the period, during EMIIB, EMIII and MMIA (for a discussion of chronology see §6.1).

5.2. What's new? The EMI social landscapes

Changes in the nature and the number of settlements have been the main argument in favour of the emergence of more complex social structures at the beginning of the Bronze Age. However, neither the character nor the number of such sites in the Mesara is very clear. Whatever evidence exists comes from the highly fragmented (and more often than not mixed) deposits at Phaistos, sites identified by surface surveys, and an EMI deposit at Ag. Triada, which although extended, is published only in preliminary reports[2]. Inevitably, such scarcity of evidence casts doubts on the accuracy of the above interpretations envisaging drastic social change during the EBA. To the contrary, the primary evidence used to demonstrate settlement expansion and the evolution of social structures has been the spread of tholos tombs. Therefore, this re-consideration of social change during the EBA must begin from the re-evaluation of the role of these burial monuments within EM society.

Before we move to discuss these issues, it is important to consider the geography of the area. The Mesara has generally been considered as a topographically distinct region, comprising the largest plain on the island, surrounded by large mountainous ranges to its north and south demarcating its extent and its limits (Fig. 5.1). This geographical distinctiveness has in many ways favoured views of the area as a clearly defined and rather circumscribed environment. Its material culture, particularly in the EBA period, only enhanced such a view, creating an overall impression that the topography of the Mesara can be held responsible for its cultural uniqueness (Branigan 1970; 1991; Sbonias 1999a). The distribution of the tholos tombs in the landscape has been the primary means by which this geographical-cum-cultural homogeneity is thought to be exemplified.

Archaeological explorations of the area have of course distinguished between the

[2] Recently another deposit containing EMI material (Pyrgos and Ag. Onouphrios wares) was discovered to the North of the LBA town (La Rosa 1995: 539). No details of the character and composition of this deposit are published yet, but it testifies to the frequency of habitation at EM Ag. Triada. However, see Todaro (forthcoming) for a discussion of all the EM material from Ag. Triada.

different micro-environments comprised under the name Mesara, and this is obvious by the surveys conducted in a range of different areas within the region (Watrous *et al.* 1993; Blackman & Branigan 1975; 1977; Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995; Vasilakis 1989-90b). However, when it comes to the interpretation of cultural patterns such distinction is easily brushed aside, since the distribution of distinctive types of material culture in similar patterns of deposition is considered sufficient evidence for interpreting the Mesara as a largely unified cultural environment, particularly for the EBA (Watrous *et al.* 1993; Sbonias 1999a; Manning 1994; Haggis 1999). Although many cultural types were indeed shared across the entire region, there exists nevertheless considerable spatial and temporal differentiation between the micro-regions of the Mesara during the EBA (Branigan 1970: 143; forthcoming) and this discussion will therefore be structured accordingly.

5.2.1. The Mountains

The Asterousia mountains to the south of the plain are the area with the greatest concentration of tholos tombs throughout the EBA. The frequency of these monuments is the main reason for the thorough exploration of this area by several archaeological expeditions, either organised as surveys (Blackman & Branigan 1975; 1977; Vasilakis 1989-90b) or conducted as rescue operations (Alexiou 1961-62a; 1967; Sakellarakis 1965; 1968; Davaras 1968; Vasilakis 1987; 1989-90a). Even though initially targeting the tholos tombs, the breadth of information collected by such investigations allows us to reconstruct the EM settlement system to a great extent.

The surveys conducted in the wider Mesara region have all stressed the fact that the number of EMI settlements appears to be much greater than that of the pre-existing FN sites (despite difficulties in distinguishing clearly between surface material of the two phases), interpreting such a rise as the result of population increase and settlement expansion (Watrous *et al.* 1993: 223; Blackman & Branigan 1977: 67; Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995: 393-395; Vasilakis 1989-90b: 67-74). Most often such expansion is related to

progress in agricultural techniques encouraging the permanent occupation of more marginal areas, such as Ayiofarango, and the more intensive exploitation of agriculturally favourable environments, such as the Western Mesara Plain (Manning 1994: 231-232).

In the Ayiofarango valley, apart from an association with agriculture, Blackman and Branigan find no other feature connecting the choice of settlement locations, noting a remarkable variation in site locations (Blackman & Branigan 1977: 69). However, despite suggestions that EM sites took advantage of the most favourable areas in the valley (Bintliff 1977a, b), the Ayiofarango could hardly be characterised as the first choice for settling within the wider Mesara region by virtue of its natural resources (Table 5.5). There is no doubt that patches of fairly good arable soils are located in the vicinity of several of the identified EM sites in the valley, but it seems unlikely that these restricted and rather poor resources would constitute the main pole of attraction for early settlers[3]. The answers may lie in two strands of evidence: first, the date of these settlements, and secondly, another, more important feature they have in common, their association with tholos tombs.

The close proximity of settlements and tholos tombs was first noted by Xanthoudides (1924) who reported and even excavated parts of settlements near some of the tholoi. Branigan (1970; 1993; 1998), following his exhaustive survey of the Mesara tholoi, concluded that the choice of location for the tholos tombs was regulated by their proximity to nearby settlements. Such a view was to be supported by Bintliff's (1977a: 614-620) observation that the tholos tombs in Ayiofarango were consistently located near good arable land and therefore could be considered as demarcating the territory exploited by particular communities[4]. However, one important parameter that was

[3] For arguments against a pastoralist transhumance regime (proposed by Bintliff 1977a and followed by Blackman & Branigan 1977) as a reason for occupying this area, see Chapter 4, and also in §5.3.

[4] The interpretation of tholos tombs as territorial markers for arable land has also been criticised in the respect that the apparent proximity of tholoi and settlements does not allow a distinction between which of the two sites (settlement or cemetery) was demarcating the territory (Papadatos 1999: 68). However, as will be shown below, such issues may be elucidated by the more careful consideration of the temporal pattern that characterises the distribution of these sites in the landscape.

overlooked in this line of interpretation is the date of the settlements.

All the settlements identified and explored by Xanthoudides near the tholoi he excavated are of much later date (1924: 49, 54, 70, 74, 84-85, 132-133). Even though his argument that the tombs must have served EM settlements yet undetected is reasonable enough, no EM material was retrieved from any of the sites explored. This discrepancy could well be the result of the limited knowledge of EM pottery styles that Xanthoudides might have had[5], as well as the product of poor surface visibility of early material, presumably buried under later deposits. However, a number of other factors suggest that this 'late' character of settlements may be more of a real pattern than a recovery bias.

The evidence from the surveys conducted in Ayiofarango, the adjacent Moni Odigitrias area and the South Coast of the Asterousia between Kaloi Limenes and Lebena, clearly shows that the material recovered from settlements was consistently later than the finds from the tombs. In the Ayiofarango, with the possible exception of the site at Megaloi Skinoi, the EMI pottery reported in almost all other settlement sites consisted of sporadic and worn material, while most of the scatters comprised greater amounts of finds of later date, starting from the EMII period or later (Blackman & Branigan 1977: 41). The same is true for the majority of the sites identified in the Moni Odigitrias survey by Vasilakis (Vasilakis 1989-90b: 72; Table 5.1). Similarly, all the tholoi discovered in the coastal area of Kaloi Limenes seem to have been founded in EMI, while apart from one occupation site (SC5) of possibly EM/MM date, no other remains of EM settlements were identified (Blackman & Branigan 1975: 35-36; but see also Fig. 5.2 and Table 5.1). Alexiou (1992: 164) reported settlements near the tholoi he explored at the area of Lebena, without however, specifying their dates. A settlement at the location Aginaropapouro, possibly served by the double tholos at Lebena Papoura, must have been abandoned at the end of MMIA, but the beginning of its use is not given. The

[5] Certainly our ability to recognise EM surface pottery has been greatly advanced in recent years by the introduction of fabric groups as a classificatory means allowing the chronological distinction even between undecorated coarse wares (e.g. Moody 1985; Haggis and Mook 1993), a degree of information that surely was not available to Xanthoudides.

two other tholos complexes of the area, Lebena Yerokambos and Lebena Zervou lack settlements, even though Alexiou notes that there are Minoan settlements nearby at Koutrouli Mandra and Pigaidopoulo, again with no other details of date (1992: 164)[6]. Finally, the most remarkable example of the above suggestion is the settlement and tholos at Trypeti, the tholos being probably established either in the FN or the EMI (Alexiou 1967: 484), and the first phase of the settlement dating to EMII (Vasilakis 1995: 71).

This striking rarity of EMI settlements is in stark contrast to the great visibility of the burial monuments. The tholos tombs in the Asterousia have consistently produced a larger quantity of material than the habitation sites, while a group of tombs seem to have been founded even before EMI (see note 1 and Table 5.3). FN material has been recovered in five tholos tombs. From these, only at Ag. Kyriaki (W6) is the nature of the FN occupation clear, since it became obvious during excavation that the FN material was associated with a pre-tomb deposit that was probably of domestic and not mortuary nature (Blackman & Branigan 1982: 43-44; see also §4.3.2.3). From the other sites, a FN foundation date for the tholoi at Megaloi Skinoi (E9), Lebena Yerokambos II, Kaloi Limenes (SC3) and Trypeti has been suggested (Alexiou 1961-62a: 226-227; Alexiou 1967: 484; Blackman & Branigan 1975: 21; 1977: 37). Such a view has been debated primarily because of the nature of the FN material from these sites (surface finds and not from stratified deposits), but also because of the controversy surrounding the date of some of the ceramic wares used to identify FN occupation (e.g. Partira Ware). However, even if these five tombs were not built in the FN period, it seems no coincidence that the earliest of the tholos tombs have been established at or near all the known FN open-air sites in the Asterousia region (Figs. 4.13, 5.1). The only Neolithic site where a tholos tomb has not been found is the cave of Miamou, which however contained a burial deposit dated to the EM period (Taramelli 1897: 294; Manteli 1993: Appendix IX), while a connection between caves and the origin of tholos tombs has also been suggested (Branigan 1970: 148; 1993: 38-39). It is possible then that the distribution of the earliest tholoi in the landscape on the one hand reflected awareness of pre-existing

[6] We can only interpret Alexiou's reluctance to mention EM material from these settlements as lack of such material, in which case we would be faced with a similar pattern to that noted by Xanthoudides.

FN sites, and on the other was designed specifically to emphasise these locations.

Thus it seems that the burial monuments, and not the settlements, were the most visible (and possibly more long-lived) sites in the mountainous landscape of the Asterousia during EMI, following closely the preceding FN habitation pattern. It is beyond debate that these burial grounds must have been associated with specific living communities, however, it is not clear either where these communities resided, or how many settlements each tomb served. One possibly illuminating piece of information revealed by survey is that there existed a remarkable clustering of habitation sites at the vicinity of the tholos tombs (Figs. 5.2, 5.3).

In the Ayiofarango survey sites have been described as settlements, farmsteads, hamlets or 'peak sanctuaries' according to their size and finds (Blackman & Branigan 1977: 65-72). As discussed in previous chapters, it is notoriously difficult to identify the 'function' or duration of sites on the basis of surface remains (Cherry 1983a), and consequently such characterisations, along with the settlement hierarchy implied by them, should be treated with caution (see also Tables 5.4. and 5.5 for conflicting interpretations of some sites). Moreover, all these types of sites appear to be evenly distributed in the areas between the EMI tholoi in the valley, with perhaps greater concentrations nearer the burial sites (Fig. 5.3). Two contrasting interpretations have been proposed for this settlement pattern. Bintliff (1977a: 635-636) suggested that Megaloi Skinoi was the central habitation site, located near the best arable land in the area and in a position from which the rest of the valley could be exploited, while the other sites were interpreted as secondary farmsteads of the inhabitants of Megaloi Skinoi. Blackman and Branigan (1977: 70), although accepting the hypothesis of the tholoi being adjacent to good arable land, disagreed with this suggestion, on the basis of the large number of sites identified throughout the survey area. Bintliff's concerns (1977b: 28-30) that the lower catchment of the Ayiofarango could not have supported the population implied by so many settlement sites was countered by Blackman and Branigan suggesting that a lower population estimate would emerge if we assumed that the occupation sites without tombs were using tholoi located elsewhere (1977: 70).

However, they both accepted the existence of a local settlement hierarchy with Megaloi Skinoi at the top of the ladder.

The main premise of settlement hierarchies is that all the sites belonging to the same long phases used by surveys, are contemporary, translating thus spatial propinquity into temporal unity (Foxhall 2000). However, since surveys have limited ability to differentiate between successive occupations within a surface site (Dewar & McBride 1992), the duration and the contemporaneity of these sites must be re-addressed. Therefore, the clustering of many small sites of broadly similar date may not so much represent co-existing and interacting settlements, as it may be the result of a temporal pattern of repeated short-lived occupations in the same area. The implication is that the scatters found clustered in particular areas (as would be the case for the surface remains in sites E11, E12 and E18 in Ayiofarango valley, Fig. 5.4), may not represent many small contemporaneous sites, inflating the number of settlements, but on the contrary, they may be the remains of repeated, short-term occupations that every time settled on slightly different positions in the same area (Fig. 2.5). It should also be taken into account that even the most favourable locations in the valley did not encompass the whole range of natural resources necessary for long-term occupation, the scarcity of perennial water sources being the most striking (Table 5.5, Fig. 5.3). Equally, extrapolations about the size of many of these sites (Megaloi Skinoi being a notable example) and the implied complexity of their organisational structures must also be reconsidered. Even though it is very difficult to determine which of the two cases was true, the suggestion of few short-lived settlements as opposed to many contemporaneous sites would explain the very large number of sites identified, and would tally well with Blackman and Branigan's observation that some sites might have shared burial grounds.

Whitelaw (2000: 150-151) has reached similar conclusions about the settlement pattern in Ayiofarango, on the basis of both the short-term character of sites and the episodic nature of deposition in the tombs. While his view of FN/EMI settlements as unstable occupations shifting location through time would agree with the above suggestions of a

more dynamic settlement system, the intermittent use of the tholoi cannot be used to prove this point. The character of these sites as burial grounds would generate infrequent deposition sequences (only when death occurred) as would any changes in mortuary behaviour through time (Branigan 1993: 86-89). On the contrary, the view held here is that the tholoi, by being the most stable point of reference in a highly 'mobile' landscape, represented the focus of more long-term strategies than the settlements.

To summarise: it seems that the tholos tombs received the primary investment that took place in the landscape of the Asterousia in EMI, being located at or in the vicinity of pre-existing FN sites. Any settlements identified usually consisted of thin scatters of material clearly clustered around the tombs. The broad contemporaneity, the size of the surface scatters, and the locations of these habitation sites imply that these were probably repeated short-lived occupations rather than 'permanent' settlements. Their clustering around the tholos tombs may denote that there existed specific patterns of movement in the local landscape which were regulated by the prior existence of the burial monuments. Furthermore, there seems to be no pronounced association of specific settlements with particular tombs as evidenced by the short-lived character of the settlements and the possibility that some sites might be sharing burial grounds (Blackman & Branigan 1977: 70). On the contrary, the association of settlements with groups of tombs seem to have generated discrete 'sub-regions', within which movement patterns unfolded, marking a contrast with preceding strategies whereby such practices extended over the entire region.

The implications of the above observations are that:

a) there seems to be no dramatic increase in the number of settlements in the EMI period, as the frequency of surface scatters in particular areas may be the result of recurrent short-term temporal patterns, rather than the product of settlement expansion (however, see §5.3).

b) such temporal patterns of recurrent revisiting of specific areas in the

landscape are reminiscent of and seem to continue the Neolithic ways of settlement mobility, concentrating also in similar micro-environments.

c) if subsistence strategies are to be related to the system of settlement, then this persistence of shifting settlement practices could be taken to demonstrate also, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, a continuity in subsistence strategies. The location of EM tholoi near arable land has been used to argue in favour of an intensification of agricultural (permanent as opposed to temporary) subsistence strategies, and although it cannot be denied that farming might have become more intense[7], several of the FN sites were also located with respect to such resources. Thus it would seem more plausible to suggest that the placement of tholoi in the location of pre-existing FN sites constituted a means of making claims to both natural and symbolic resources.

It seems, then, that in the Asterousia the major change distinguishing the FN from the EMI was the introduction of *burial monuments*. However, in order to evaluate how sharp was this break (if indeed it was) with previous traditions, and why such new elements might have been introduced, we need to examine first the practices of settlement on the plain.

5.2.2. The plain

We stressed earlier that previous approaches have considered the cultural patterns of the EBA Mesara highly homogeneous, by virtue of the distribution of largely uniform material culture, mainly represented by the tholos tombs, over the entire area. However,

[7] Environmental and geomorphological data suggest that there were accelerated episodes of soil erosion and alluviation from the EM period onwards, indicative perhaps of intensified and/or more extensive farming practices (see also Chapter 4).

a temporal and spatial distinction in the localisation of these burial monuments has been acknowledged recently (Branigan 1993: 12-15; forthcoming). Although there exists some disagreement concerning the foundation date of certain tombs[8], it generally appears that on the plain tholoi were constructed somehow later than in the Asterousia. Even if we accept the earlier dates for debated tombs such as Ag. Triada or Koumasa, the nature of their EMI material always linked to EMIIA traits has some weight when considered within the context of the nearly 350 to 400 years that the EMI period lasted (Manning 1995: 217). It does not seem unreasonable thus to suggest that on the plain tholoi were built later than in the mountains and that tholos burials did not actually become common till the beginning of EMII (Branigan 1993: 15; forthcoming). Moreover, tholos tombs never seemed to colonise the coastal area around Kommos, where no burial grounds of any kind have been reported for the EM period (Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995)[9].

An insight into this difference between the two areas may be offered by the observation that none of the tombs in the plain has an association with FN material or site. On the contrary, any EMI habitation sites identified in the plain seem to follow closely the FN pattern (Watrous *et al.* 1993: 224). Even though the general view remains that the increase in the number of settlements on the plain in EMI, as in the Asterousia, represented settlement expansion at the beginning of the EBA, the discovery by the Western Mesara Survey (Watrous *et al.* 1993: 224) of a number of small EMI sites that could be considered seasonal, adds considerable support to the continuing practice of a short-term settlement system in the EMI period. Only the full publication of the Western Mesara Survey however will shed more light on such possibilities.

[8] Note for example the difference of opinion concerning the date of the foundation and first use of Tholos A at Ag. Triada: Branigan (1993) and Karantzali (1996) date it to EMI, Banti (1930-31) to EMII, Zois (1998) to EMIIA; Wilson and Day (1994: 13 and n.41) note that "the first use of tholos A (the large tholos) at Ag. Triada need not be earlier than EMIIA"; finally, La Rosa (2001: 222) in a reconsideration of the stratigraphy of Tholos A also states that the earliest deposition dates to the end of EMI and to EMIIA (see also Todaro forthcoming, dating the first deposition in Tholos A to the end of EMIIA). Similar contrasting remarks concern the dates of other Mesara tholoi, such as Koumasa, Kalathiana and Marathokephalo. In this study, the date of EMI/IIA has been preferred for such debated contexts, on the basis of the majority of agreeing opinions.

[9] At the site of Vigles (Kommos survey no. 70, upper north-west slopes) a round structure described by Evans (1921-1936 [vol. II 1928]: 89) as an 'EM tholos', was identified by Pendlebury (*et al.* 1932-33) as part of an apsidal building. The Kommos survey reached the same conclusion (Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995: 361).

Nevertheless additional strength to this suggestion is also offered by the survey of the coastal area around Kommos (Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995). Although EM (or earlier) material at the site of Kommos is either rare or absent (Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995: 394; Shaw & Shaw 1996: 1; Betancourt 1990: 25-27), survey identified a number of EM sites in the vicinity, indicating that the view of this region as a kind of 'no man's land' during the EBA may not be so accurate. The main drawback for including the Kommos region in the general patterns of the EM Mesara generally derives from the absence of tholos monuments in the area. However, a closer look at the patterns of habitation of both the immediate environs of Phaistos and the Kommos area, coupled with the late introduction of tholoi on the plain, suggest that the presence of burial monuments may not be the defining element for this period in this part of the region.

A central observation of the Kommos survey is that Minoan sites occurred in clusters (Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995: 394). Despite widespread erosion, EM material was identified to a lesser or greater extent in all these 'clusters' (Fig. 5.5). Although the survey team was unable to make firm distinctions between FN and EMI surface material, quantitative differences allowed a level of differentiation between sites. The location and the character of surface remains in these sites are strongly reminiscent of the sites of similar date in both the Asterousia and the Western Mesara. There is a marked preference for high locations, and the repeated clustering of very small scatters of material broadly similar in date, as in the cases of Vigles (sites 6, 70, 133), Charakas (sites 18, 130, 129) and Sendones (sites 25, 20, 64 mainly, and possibly 33, 53, 57), can be arguably taken as the outcome of repeated instances of short-term occupations within discrete areas (Fig. 5.6). Thus it would seem that a dynamic pattern of settlement constituted a familiar practice during FN and EMI in the Kommos area as well.

The evidence discussed so far points to marked continuity rather than sharp changes in the settlement systems of the two periods. An important argument that has been widely used in favour of social change with the advent of the EBA, is the size of the EM

settlement at Phaistos (Branigan 1988a, b; 1995; Watrous *et al.* 1993; Manning 1994; Haggis 1999; Sbonias 1999a, b). Whitelaw (1983: 339) was the first to suggest that the settlement of Phaistos must have been large enough to qualify as an extended village even before the end of the Neolithic period on the basis of its habitation area measuring at least 1.13 ha and therefore supporting a population of about 300-450 inhabitants (at least in EM times). However, it is worth noting that such estimates of size do not make distinctions between the different phases of the Early Minoan period, a practice that can prove misleading as was demonstrated for the FN remains (see Chapter 4). The spatial proximity of building remains even within the same period (in this case lasting about 350-400 years) cannot guarantee that they were in use simultaneously. For Phaistos this can be shown to be the case for the houses under Cortile LXX (see further in §5.4).

Moreover, most of the evidence comes almost exclusively from mixed deposits (Warren & Hankey 1989: 13; Karantzali 1996: 72-73; Table 5.2). EM architectural remains at Phaistos are very sparse, and any traces of buildings are more convincingly dated to the EMIIA period rather than earlier (Levi 1957-58a: 167-179; Zois 1965: 53-59; Platon 1968: 23, 24). Pottery of clearly EMI character has been recognised from finds of Pyrgos and Ag. Onouphrios wares in various soundings under the palatial buildings, but in general, material of this period at Phaistos is more striking by its scarcity, rather than its prominence[10]. In any case, recovery problems and the detrimental effects of later levelling and rebuilding must be acknowledged, however, these factors cannot be held responsible for the preferential survival of EMII material in the same areas, as the examples of the Houses under the Cortile LXX and the House below Peristyle 74 demonstrate (the latter founded on the bedrock and sealed underneath Palatial levels).

Thus the possibility must be entertained that any structural remains at Phaistos during the EMI period continued to have the temporary nature characteristic of the FN. Even though later building activities may have contributed to the mixing of materials and the

[10] It should be stressed that such typological classifications ("Ag. Onouphrios Ware" etc.) often generate debate, as many scholars disagree as to which typological traits continue in the next period and which cease (e.g. Zois 1965). In this sense, the category "Ag. Onouphrios" may in some cases include pottery dated in both EMI and EMIIA.

disturbance of deposits, there seems to be a rather remarkable consistency in the location of EMI deposits always in association with FN, suggesting that EMI habitation was probably focused on the same areas within the settlement as in the FN period. Moreover, it seems no coincidence that Levi's (1957-58a; 1960) theory that the EBA period constituted only a very short transitional phase between the Neolithic and the Palatial period was formulated on the basis of the scanty EM remains of Phaistos. Although this theory has proven exaggerated and erroneous (Zois 1965: 53-59; Platon 1968; Andreou 1978: 3; La Rosa 1992a), it is still revealing for the character of EM habitation at Phaistos. In any case, it seems more plausible to interpret the spread of scarce EMI material all over the Phaistos hill as the product of temporally discrete, repeated short-term occupations in the same fashion as in the FN period, rather than as reflecting the overall extent of the settlement.

Another insight to the potential continuity from FN to EMI at Phaistos may be gained from the nature of the material recovered. As was noted for the FN period, Phaistos might have consisted of a functionally specific site within the context of the entire Mesara region, constituting a pole of collective identity for all the FN Mesaran communities (Chapter 4, §4.4). It was suggested that this particularity of Phaistos was due to its prominent physical position (and the symbolic connotations attributed to it), and also to its nature as a place for collective drinking consumption evidenced by the range of pouring and drinking vessels attested only at Phaistos. Is there any evidence to suggest that this practice might have continued in the EMI period? Several examples of the characteristic drinking/serving vessels of the EMI period, the chalices, exist from Phaistos, most significantly from a possibly open paved area to the south of the Palace, above the 'Neolithic hut' (Levi 1976: 414-416; see also Table 5.2), suggesting that such drinking practices remained important in the life of the site. Even though both the scale and the range of such activities has been obscured by later disturbances, the rarity of relevant material may imply that they were not as frequent or large-scale as before. To gain an understanding of this situation we should turn to the contemporary evidence from the surrounding area.

Ag. Triada is the other most important site in the Mesara throughout the Bronze Age. Up to now, no FN material is known from the site, even though it has been suggested that habitation there might have started in Neolithic times[11] (Vagnetti & Belli 1978: 135; Laviosa 1972-73: 508; La Rosa 1992b). On the contrary, during the EM period Ag. Triada seems to be the centre of important developments, which generally remain underestimated by virtue of its proximity to Phaistos and the supposed politically superior position of the latter site. Although no architectural remains dating to the EMI period have as yet been identified on the site, an extended EMI debris deposit discovered in the area of the Piazzale dei Sacelli to the south of the Royal Villa constitutes probably the most important EMI non-funerary deposit from the Mesara (Fig. 5.7; note 2). Although published only in preliminary form (La Rosa 1988: 329-330; 1992a: 70; Catling 1987-88: 66; but see Todaro forthcoming for a more detailed discussion), a range of important information is known for this deposit. Over an extended area remains of shells, animal bones, obsidian blades, some stone weights and many fragments of Ag. Onouphrios and Pyrgos wares, generally consisting of drinking/serving shapes, were found (La Rosa 1988; Wilson & Day 2000: 60). The deposit has been dated to a phase earlier than the first use of Tholos A at Ag. Triada (La Rosa 1988: 330), and despite initially interpreted as a rubbish dump, it seems to be the result of a particular deposition event involving the ceremonial consumption of food and drink (Wilson & Day 2000: 60; Todaro forthcoming), rather than the effect of long term habitation.

In order to evaluate the importance of the Ag. Triada deposit we need to turn again to the mortuary evidence from the plain. It was suggested previously that tholos tombs were rare on the plain during EMI. However, this does not imply that mortuary practices were unknown on the western part of the plain, but rather that the significance of such practices was perhaps not as pronounced as in the Asterousia. The discovery by the Western Mesara Survey (Vallianou and Watrous 1991: 121; Watrous *et al.* 1993: 224) of an EM, 'flat', non-tholos cemetery on the Ieroditis ridge to the north of Phaistos

[11] However, Todaro (forthcoming) in her re-examination of the Prepalatial pottery typology from Ag. Triada has concluded that the material described as FN by the early excavators was indeed Pyrgos Ware, therefore dating the first habitation on the site to the EMI.

may imply that different mortuary traditions were followed in the plain[12]. However these practices were not unfamiliar or unrelated to the funerary behaviour associated with the mountainous areas. The Ag. Onouphrios burial assemblage, found in the vicinity of Phaistos defined the 'typical tholos assemblage' even though it seems unlikely that it derived from a tholos tomb[13] (Evans 1895: 105-136; Watrous *et al.* 1993: 224; Branigan 1993: Appendix A, n. 67). The inclusion in such 'typical tholos assemblages' of drinking and pouring vessels demonstrates that both the communities of the plain and the mountains incorporated some kind of drinking rites in the context of the funerals. However, the low visibility of mortuary activity in the plain, coupled with the evidence of the Ag. Triada deposit, demonstrate that drinking activities perhaps continued to take place in the same contexts as during the FN, but that Phaistos was no longer the only site hosting such events.

The picture emerging thus far is that, although drinking events might have continued to be held at Phaistos, the exclusivity of the setting of such activities only at Phaistos as in the FN, was coming under challenge. Such change is difficult to interpret, but whether it was related to changes in the consumed products (e.g. Renfrew's [1972] suggestion that EBA saw the production of wine for the first time – but see Hamilakis 1996 for objections), or changes in the consumption practices (drinking activities being incorporated in the mortuary context), it was indicative of a gradual eclipse in the status of Phaistos as the exclusive facilitator of such events. It is quite possible though that drinking events in FN Phaistos might have been more associated with the nature and the uniqueness of the consumed substance, whereas in EMI the more widespread occurrence of such events could suggest a greater emphasis on the consumption practice itself, as a mechanism for social negotiation and integration. In any of these cases, the Ag. Triada deposit constituted the first local alternative site for ritual consumption, which was later implemented by one of the largest and possibly the earliest of tholos tombs in the plain (see more in §5.3).

[12] Another possible example of 'flat' cemetery in the Mesara is Aspri Petra excavated by Xanthoudides (1918). However, the tomb was completely destroyed so it was not possible to determine whether it a was a tholos or a rectangular structure. The material was dated to EMII.

[13] No tholos was ever found or reported in the area, and even though it is possible that it could have been entirely destroyed by looting activities, as has been evidenced in other cases (Xanthoudides 1924), there exists no record of such disturbance.

To summarise: the plain during the EMI period was considerably differentiated from the mountainous areas, although by no means unrelated. In both areas the EMI settlements continued the mobility practices characteristic of the preceding period, while an emphasis on drinking events, as in the FN, persisted and seems even more pronounced. However, the new significance of mortuary behaviour characterising the Asterousia seems to be a delayed development in the plain and can perhaps be seen as signifying different social strategies. In spite of such marked difference between the two areas, the persistence in the practice of collective drinking events, albeit with a considerable change of focus and setting for these activities, remained a common feature of the two areas and periods.

5.3. Death on the loose : Funerals, Drinking and the *Region* in EMI.

When describing the aims of this chapter, I stressed that it does not suffice simply to identify the burial monuments as the material reflections of marked social change. First, because we cannot treat these structures as direct representations of people's relations, and secondly, because the tombs have been used to make often unjustified inferences about settlement and subsistence systems, the two domains considered the essential indications of social change. Instead I argued that it is necessary to examine the *nature* and the *pace* of the changes that occurred from the FN to the EMI period. In this respect a discussion of social transformations during EMI must involve on a first level, a reconsideration of the settlement and subsistence practices and their association with the introduction of tholos burials, and on a second level, a re-examination of the significance of these practices for demonstrating regional integration and, by implication, the emergence of more complex organisational structures.

5.3.1. Persisting habits

In contrast with previous approaches, a survey of the archaeological record of the area during the EMI period showed remarkable continuity regarding the settlement patterns. In both the Asterousia and on the western part of the plain (from where we have more complete records of investigation) the habitation patterns of EMI follow closely the practices established during the preceding period. Therefore the traditional argument that sharp social change can be inferred from changes in settlement/subsistence patterns from the Neolithic to the EBA, in the case of the Mesara, proves to be without foundation. On the other hand, despite making it explicit that the increase in the number of EMI sites may be more convincingly attributed to recurrent short-term practices, and although a recovery bias may exist inasmuch as EM material has higher visibility in surface inspections than material of earlier periods, we still have to acknowledge a rise in the number of habitation sites during EMI. However, the short-lived character of these installations and the consistency in their relocation pattern within specific areas may be more the result of an intensification in mobility strategies rather than expansion of settlement on a more continuous basis.

That said, it proves very difficult to reach any firm conclusions as to whether such practices were accompanied by an intensification in subsistence strategies. Although earlier accounts have supported this view, the palaeo-environmental evidence, when available, is notoriously ambiguous in this respect. Intensified farming practices have been suggested on the basis of an acceleration of erosion processes (Watrous *et al.* 1993: 203; Bottema 1980; Parsons & Gifford 1995: 300-302) at the beginning of the EBA indicating perhaps more extended land clearance. Such a view would also be in agreement with Whitelaw's (2000) explanation of the pattern of settlement-shifting characteristic of FN/EBI Aegean as the result of accelerated landscape degradation.

Although such erosion activity is generally related to agricultural practices, the detrimental effect of animal grazing on the local vegetation (and by implication to soil

erosion) has also been acknowledged (Rackham & Moody 1996). The difficulties of understanding the strategies of animal husbandry in early prehistory, especially if conceived as transhumant pastoralist regimes familiar from later historic periods, have been pointed out by both Halstead (1987; 1996) and Cherry (1988). However, the possibility of a progressive increase in the importance of animal industries – perhaps even including the much debated introduction or more widespread use of dairy products during EBA (Sherratt 1997: 158-198) – cannot be ruled out and it may be associated with small-scale periodic movement of communities in order to take advantage of favourable resources. In any case, whatever the nature of subsistence at this period, it does not appear to have effected any drastic or abrupt changes in the patterns of settlement. It could also be argued that the placement of certain tholoi, generally associated with the demarcation of good arable lands (Bintliff 1977a, b), in the locations of pre-existing FN sites may be taken as a continuation in the use of specific resources.

5.3.2. Changing networks of relevance

If we have identified marked continuities between the two periods, what do the changes consist of? The most *visible* of changes at this time seems to be the introduction of tholos tombs. However, if their 'sudden' appearance in the Mesaran landscape cannot be associated with a change in settlement practices, then what is the nature and the meaning of the transformation implied by their presence? Although an emphasis on the mortuary sphere is indeed a new development characteristic of the EBA, the spatial and temporal distribution of these monuments in the Mesara indicates that they did not represent as marked a break with the past as previously thought. Instead they were consistently placed in the locations of pre-existing FN sites and they appeared to be the focus of settlement strategies largely continuing the patterns established during the FN. Moreover, the placement of the tholoi on high ground seems to reflect a conscious choice, which, coupled with their vaulted roofs and monumental size, would have made them highly visible in contrast to opinions seeing their position on the landscape as of

no remarkable physical prominence (Branigan 1970; 1993; 1998).

As suggested above, during the FN period the periodic movement of communities within the different micro-environments of the region might (among other factors) have been drawing upon beliefs about the significance of ancestry exemplified in the consistent journeying and re-settling on high locations within discrete areas. Phaistos held a prominent position in this social mechanism by virtue of the settlement's highly visible physical setting and its concomitant claim to ancestry, which possibly attracted recurrent events of drinking consumption marking distinct occasions for the performance of collective identity. If high locations retained part of their significance as symbolising the longevity of the community, then the tholoi with both their location in the landscape and their architectural form could be argued to have emulated this significance. More striking even is the 'function' of these monuments as the physical containers and symbolic embodiments of the ancestry of the respective communities. In this sense, all the attributes of these monuments reproduced on a much smaller scale the symbolic content of Phaistos. However, the incorporation of drinking practices in the context of the funerals, at least for the Asterousia, generated a pronounced shift of the ceremonial focus at a regional scale, from Phaistos to the tholos tombs. Therefore such a strategy of recreating 'Phaistos-away-from-Phaistos', by reproducing familiar traditions and ways of the past, resulted in major social transformations. Change happened when continuity might have been the motive.

Nevertheless, change was effected with the introduction of burial monuments and most significantly, change was felt. The tholos tombs created different temporalities for pre-existing practices. Their presence in the landscape gave rise to and consolidated different movement routes and eventually, different mobility *routines*, if the intensification of settlement relocation is to be accepted. In the Asterousia, by focusing habitation practices in the discrete 'sub-regions' demarcated by the burial grounds, distances and the duration of travelling were transformed. This creation of different spatial associations allowed not only different understandings of time, but also the generation of different perspectives of *relevance*. In this sense, settlement and

movement within the area delimited by the tholoi might have been more relevant to some groups of people than others.

Such new temporalities introduced by the tholoi had another, perhaps more pronounced effect. Death generates very particular understandings and practices of time, that are usually beyond human control. The emphasis on burial and funeral implied by the construction of such formal monuments as the tholoi also brought forth and made visible different kinds of relations within a community. The funeral became a new and unexpected temporality for the articulation of such relations, and in spite of their unpredictable occurrence, funerals became significant for the affirmation and performance of collective and personal identities. The building of monumental tombs made the importance of death visible on the landscape and framed mortuary practices with an illusion of continuity/permanence. The construction of the tholos tombs reflected the consolidation of at least one sphere of relations within a highly fluid physical and social landscape.

However change is not always easy to live with, even when it is actively sought. Thus the occurrence of drinking events in the context of funerary rites taking place at the tholos tombs may show that there was a specific attempt to embed such new temporalities within a familiar and known sphere of life. The dead may not care, but the living most certainly do, and this change of setting and occasion for communal gatherings was a mechanism created and reproduced by and for the living. The irony, though, is that this attempt to refer to previously known and familiar aspects of life might have accelerated the process of change. The transformation in the circumstances for the performance of identities was associated with and at the same time promoted a transformation in the *scale* of such activities. Therefore the relocation of the setting for gatherings, collective consumption and collective memory not only changed the 'hierarchy' of regional dynamics, but also transformed the scale in which collectivity/relevance was felt and performed.

Another profound effect of such shifts was that they also changed the ways in which collective identity was symbolised and enacted. Even though drinking rites were included in the funeral perhaps as an evocation of familiar practices of the past, they no longer constituted the primary focus of such integrative mechanisms. Death was the issue now and drinking ceremonies were only emphasising its importance. If drinking in the FN period had a significance as a means of social negotiation and integration at a regional scale, in EMI such consumption was peripheral to the primary social arena, the funeral. Integration and the performance of community was now articulated through participation in the practices of death. In the discrete mountainous regions of the Asterousia, the funeral became the new social currency, in contrast to the communities of the plain where death was the peripheral matter and drinking ceremonies continued to prevail as negotiating means. Through such transformations, the dynamics of drinking practices were altered and gradually, also their meaning.

Tholos burials therefore effected notable difference in the ways in which the Mesaran communities understood themselves and their relationships with each other. The tholoi had a twofold effect, at the same time generating communion as well as proliferating difference. Although these practices, by their initial restricted distribution in the Asterousia, signify an important break with the more unified picture that existed in the FN, everything about them represented "a dialectic of *routes* and *roots*" (Urry 2000). They embodied difference just by their nature as burial monuments, but by their incorporation of drinking practices and pre-existing perceptions of the landscape – physical and social – they signified a conscious attempt to preserve relatedness with the past and the increasingly becoming 'other' of the plain communities. It is a very striking feature of the tholos tombs that all the elements which made them a novelty derived from and made reference to the shared practices of the Neolithic.

On the other hand the delayed adoption of tholos burials on the plain becomes more acute when we consider the symbolic connotations that a tholos might have been carrying with respect to ancestry. Tholoi were not *relevant*/necessary on the plain as long as Phaistos was still visible and 'functioning'. Settlement mobility here continued

as in the mountains, and it can be argued that the focus of movement remained the hill of Phaistos, which might also have continued to be the setting for drinking events. However, both the scarcity of the Phaistos material and the existence of an extensive consumption deposit at Ag. Triada denote that, during EMI, the process of change might have been in acceleration. Even though Ag. Triada is at such close proximity with Phaistos, a fact that could be taken as an indirect reference to the symbolic significance of the location of Phaistos, the building of a tholos tomb at Ag. Triada – one of the largest, and possibly the earliest on the plain – leaves no doubts about which site was emerging victorious from the challenge. The building of Tholos A at Ag. Triada, shortly after the disentangling of drinking ceremonies from Phaistos had been well underway, made a transformation in collective practices more visible and consolidated a potential claim to ancestry, difference, or 'superiority'. On the other hand, the Ieroditis cemetery, if it can be associated exclusively with Phaistos, would mark an attempt to take part in the new developments by placing emphasis on mortuary behaviour, but without entirely surrendering to the new trends; the illusion (or even the reality) of difference may have had to be preserved.

Therefore the nature and the pace of change seems to have had a very individual trajectory in the Mesara during the transition from FN to EMI. The implications are significant not only for understanding change through time, but also for understanding social practice at its everyday performance. The introduction of the tholos tombs does not reflect uncritically the adoption of new social structures, as it rather represents the emergence of new arenas of social negotiation; it represents a transformation of social values at the level of everyday practice. Such change – most notably gradual and slow – of daily routines generated new traditions of living that eventually and through their conscious reproduction gave rise to the new social structures of the EBA.

5.3.3. Why change? Belonging by dying

All the above comprises a possible scenario describing the process of adopting mortuary practices as the new currency of social negotiation at the beginning of the EBA in the Mesara. What remains to be discussed is why, and why in this way? Popular explanations have seen the new emphasis on burial as a reflection of social structures based on explicit *kinship* relations, which, either at the level of the family/household (Whitelaw 1983) or at the level of the extend kin group/clan (Branigan 1993), constituted the main organisational units of the EBA. The difference between the two approaches is important, as each of the suggested social formations imply different scales in the organisation of society, however their common ground is that they take the patterning of death as a direct reflection and result of the structures of life (Papadatos 1999). It seems though more probable that the tholos tombs did not embody any abstract property of kinship supposedly inherent in the organisation of the living communities. On the contrary, kinship (in any form such relatedness may be perceived) was *achieved* by death and the burying in the tholos tombs.

The fact that all tholoi within a specific area constituted the focus of equal attention, as there seemed to be no association between particular cemeteries and specific settlements, coupled with the persistence of mobility patterns and the non-differentiation of burials may show that the criteria regulating selection for burial in a tholos were more dynamic than any circumscribed blood relations we may imagine. Unfortunately the level of information concerning the age or sex of people buried in the tholoi does not allow us any insights as to the possibility of these elements being the differentiating criteria for burial. Branigan (1993: 81-95) has rightly pointed that a low number of child burials in the tombs could be an indication of certain restrictions existing with respect to who would/could be buried in a tholos. He also argued that such practices could well change through time so that neither the estimated numbers of burials nor the nature and quantity of grave goods allow us any firmer distinctions concerning the specific identities of people buried in the tholoi. However, such 'non-differentiation' between burials should also be considered meaningful inasmuch as it can be shown to be an intentional behaviour and not an accident of preservation.

If the intensification of settlement shifting during EMI is accepted, then such practice would have added significance to the indispensability of the members of each community, an importance perhaps felt more at their death. So death became the means by which to demonstrate, perform and honour a highly valued group solidarity, perhaps irrespectively of age, sex or any other 'inherent' identification trait. If membership of a corporate group was the primordial identity within the Asterousia communities, then this would tie well with the communal form that burial acquired and might also explain the progressive breaking up of pre-existing forms of solidarity extending over the entire region.

The fact that this apparent change in the organisation of personal and collective relations continued to make such strong reference to pre-existing strategies is indicative of the pace and the nature of such transformations. Burial was chosen over other means to emphasise the importance of newly emerging smaller community units, but also to make explicit reference to the larger community to which these people initially belonged, and possibly still wanted to belong. When the tholos burials became important in the plain, their meaning as symbols of solidarity for discrete groups of people was probably already established and widely recognised. Their appropriation by the communities of the plain at a time when mortuary behaviour started receiving the most exaggerated emphasis not only in Crete, but throughout the southern Aegean, demonstrates that the tholoi were steadily becoming a most successful arena for the negotiation of both personal and collective relations throughout the Mesara. Therefore, it seems that burial was chosen as the primary social currency of the EBA in the Mesara, because of very local conditions reflecting relations that became stabilised and concrete only upon death. In life, these communities operated through much more fluid and dynamic structures. The resistance of Phaistos to the new medium of community performance may be interpreted as the conviction that the 'symbol of all ancestral symbols' did not need to prove its value. However, every relation relies equally on the performer and an audience which approves, validates and reproduces the meaning of the performance. And it seems that this audience remained unconvinced by the performance of Phaistos for almost the entire EBA.

5.4. Contracting *regions*, expanding *places*: the EMII period

The picture presented above for the EMI period would contrast strongly with views generally held about the meaning of tholos tombs during the following period. The expansion of tholos tombs to all the diverse areas of the Mesara from the EMII period onwards has been interpreted as an even stronger sign of regional homogeneity than in the previous phases, but how accurate is such a picture? Ironically, the tombs have been used again to denote changes in the settlement systems and by implication, to demonstrate changes in social organisation, but in this period, a transformation in the practices of habitation may be evident. However, such changes are better understood only when considered in combination with the evidence available from the cemeteries.

5.4.1. Lowlands...

The spread of tholos tombs was considerable from early EMII in the plain as well as on the south slopes of Ida, to the north of Yeropotamos river (Fig. 5.1). Seventeen tombs had been constructed before the end of the EMII period as opposed to none at the beginning of EMI. Although adopting the same architectural form and type of burial as the earlier tombs in the Asterousia, the plain tholoi also exhibit some notable differences.

Almost all of the cemeteries on the plain consisted of two or more tholos tombs, which in most cases seem to have been founded during the same period, the examples of Platanos and Koumasa being the most striking (Fig. 5.1, Table 5.3). It must be expected that some time might have elapsed between the building of the first and the last tholos in a cemetery, however, a second and third tomb would be built while the first would

still be in use. Furthermore, the cemeteries on the plain were placed at great distances from each other (Sbonias 1999b: 4), in contrast to the spatial distribution of tholoi in the Asterousia which seem to have been located not far from each other, creating a rather crowded landscape (Fig. 5.1, 5.2, 5.3). Finally, the tholoi built in the plain in EMII boast some of the largest monuments in the entire region; from a total of nearly 70 tombs for all periods, only four measuring between 6.0 and 8.0 m. in diameter are located in the Asterousia, while on the plain, nine out of seventeen contemporary tombs are above 6.7m. in diameter, with extreme examples such as Platanos B measuring 10.3 m, and Koumasa B and Ag. Triada A being among the largest, with diameters just above 9.0 m. (Branigan 1993: 42-44, Appendix B; Table 5.6).

Such differentiating features, in combination with the concentration of "luxury" grave goods such as bronze daggers, seals and jewellery in some of the tholoi in the plain have been argued to reflect the larger size, greater prosperity and more complex organisation of the plain communities in contrast to the communities in the Asterousia (Branigan 1984; 1993; Sbonias 1999b). The concentration of grave goods in specific tombs, however, may be partly affected by looting, which obviously has altered the original proportions of material in the tombs. On the other hand, the inference of social differentiation on the basis of the preferential deposition of certain artefacts in the tombs may be exaggerated and misleading (Papadatos 1999). On the contrary, such difference between the two areas using tholos tombs may be better illuminated by appreciating the significant differences in the contexts of introducing the tholos tombs in the two distinct areas. In this respect, the tholos tombs in the plain might have assumed different characteristics from tholoi in the Asterousia primarily because they were introduced to serve different purposes than those fulfilled by the earlier monuments (see also §5.5).

Aside from the proliferation of the tholos cemeteries in all the parts of the Mesara, another notable transformation of the EMII period has to do with the nature of the settlements. Although the evidence is still sporadic and fragmented, the settlements, in both the plain and the Asterousia appear more visible and 'permanent' in this period in contrast to the short-lived sites of the preceding EMI. Although arguments about

Prepalatial Phaistos being a 'properly nucleated settlement' (Branigan 1993: 114-115; Whitelaw 1983: 339; Watrous *et al.* 1993: 224) have been shown to have largely overestimated the quantity and quality of the available evidence, it still has to be acknowledged that in this period, there are more visible traces of buildings on the hill, which perhaps indicate changes in the pattern of habitation. However, it remains difficult to establish whether all the fragmentary buildings and traces of single walls represent 'houses' inhabited simultaneously and sheltering a population large enough to require major organisational changes. In the case of the building remains excavated by Levi (1957-58a: 167-178) under the lower western Court, *Cortile LXX* of the Palace, it becomes clear from the excavator's description that these represented two different building phases and the eastern house might have gone out of use by the time the western one was built. The discovery of a very small quantity of Vasiliki ware (EMIIB) vessels only from the western house may also be an indication of their chronological difference (Levi 1957-58a: 177).

Similarly, in Ag. Triada the Prepalatial settlement has been argued to be quite extensive, comprising more than the two houses excavated at present to the east of the tholos cemetery (Laviosa 1969-70; 1972-73; Fig. 5.7). Although this seems possible, additional soundings to the NW of the houses gave little or no results regarding the extent of Prepalatial habitation (Laviosa 1969-70: 411-414). The houses (Fig. 5.8) have been dated both to the EMIIA period on the basis of their ceramic finds which appear quite homogeneous, but the excavator has remarked that the Eastern House may be a later foundation than the Western (Laviosa 1972-73). Test soundings under the floor of the Western House showed that there were no structures predating this building. On the contrary, a wall running E-W between the two houses and two walls at the exterior of the Eastern House, on its north side were identified as belonging to an earlier building that was perhaps destroyed and buried underneath the latest East House[14] (Laviosa 1972-73: 509-511). Interestingly, apart from a slight difference in the orientation of the Eastern House, the two buildings shared exactly the same layout, replicating features such as the central L-shaped structure, the double exterior walls and the position of an

[14] There were no signs of sudden destruction of this earlier building; the excavator made particular reference to the absence of signs of fire. It is possible then that this early version of the East House was never completed, but instead was replaced by a new building with different orientation.

entrance on their northern sides (Fig. 5.8). It would not be unreasonable thus to think of the Eastern House as a later structure that perhaps replaced the Western House.

Whether the two houses coexisted or succeeded each other chronologically, they represent a marked change from the habitation pattern of the EMI. The buildings now were more visible, consisting of large rooms and demarcated courts. Moreover, the double exterior walls of both houses did not appear to serve any structural purposes and thus they could be interpreted as devices further demarcating the houses and enhancing their visibility. The assemblage recovered from these houses, although not fully published yet, may also be revealing about the nature of habitation, as it comprised large storage jars and several pithoi (Fig. 5.9). Such types of vessels would require a fair amount of time and effort to be manufactured and would be difficult to transport, indicating that perhaps habitation now lasted longer than before. Again, there is a contrast between the ceramic repertoire of the Ag. Triada houses, and the scarce material discovered at Phaistos, which comprised mainly small, decorated fine ware jugs and goblets (Levi 1957-58a). Although there were examples of a spouted bowl and one-handled cup from the Western House at Ag. Triada, the marked absence of large storage jars from Phaistos may be an indication of a different pattern of use of the built structures in the two sites[15].

The evidence for settlements from the rest of the plain is very fragmentary. As noted above, the settlements reported by Xanthoudides (1924) near the tholos tombs gave only MM material. The preliminary reports of the Western Mesara survey (Watrous *et al.* 1993: 223-224) on the other hand show a continuous increase in the number of settlements during EMII, and such a picture is also corroborated by the finds of the Kommos survey (Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995: 395; Fig. 5.5). Moreover, the example of Ag. Triada (and evidence from the Asterousia discussed below) demonstrate that in this period the relationship between communities and their cemeteries might have undergone significant changes. Although it is still erroneous to extrapolate uncritically the size or the organisation of such communities from the monumentality of their tombs

[15] However, note the abundant presence of drinking and serving vessels in the Ag. Triada cemetery.

(Sbonias 1999a, b), it may be suggested that during EMII specific communities might have been associated with specific cemeteries, in contrast to the practice of the previous period. In light of this evidence, and since the sites explored by Xanthoudides were only partly excavated, the existence of Prepalatial settlements near the tholos cemeteries may be accepted tentatively (Branigan 1993: 111).

To summarise: the spread of tholos tombs in the plain during the EMII period was accompanied by a transformation of habitation practices that were now characterised by greater longevity with more visible and demarcated settlements. Similar tactics can be observed for the burial grounds that now comprised more than one tomb, usually of very large size, as opposed to the smaller tombs of the Asterousia. Moreover, as noted from the example of Ag. Triada, the enhanced visibility of the settlement and its close proximity to the cemetery (Fig. 5.7) may indicate a new practice of particular communities to be associated with specific cemeteries. The great distances between the tholos cemeteries in the plain would reinforce such a suggestion. Along the same lines we could also interpret some of the architectural innovations at the cemeteries introduced gradually towards the end of the Prepalatial period (see more in Chapter 6).

5.4.2. .....and highlands

Does the picture described above also represent the situation in the Asterousia, or are the two *regions* still divided by the performance of different practices as in EMI?

Tholos tombs increased in the Asterousia as well (Fig. 5.1), and although examples of cemeteries comprising more than one tholos existed in the previous period (e.g. Megaloi Skinoi IIIa, IIIb), such practice now proliferated. Where lone tombs were known, now a second tholos was invariably built and in remarkable proximity to the pre-existing one

as the example of Lebena Yerokambos II shows (Fig. 5.10). In the same area, three more tholoi were built during EMII, very closely spaced to each other, two at Papoura and one at Zervou (Alexiou 1992: 164-167). This situation is repeated in the Ayiofarango valley (Fig. 5.3) and the Moni Odigitrias area (Fig. 5.2). A characteristic example is the cemetery at Skotomenou Charakas at the northern edge of the valley (site E27), where a second tholos was built in EMII and a third was added in EMIII/MMIA (Blackman & Branigan 1977: 50-51).

Changes in the pattern of settlement are also evident in this area during EMII. Although still most of the available evidence derives from surveys, it is notable that EMII and later material appears far more abundant than EMI within the same sites (Table 5.1). In the Ayiofarango valley, Blackman and Branigan identified a number of sites (E4a, E12, E18, W11B, MO.W1) as 'peak sanctuaries' on the basis of their topography and finds (1977: 31, 41-43, 44, 61, 63; Branigan 1994). The similarities in the topography of these sites are indeed striking: they are all located on the bare rocky summits of very prominent hills scattered around the valley. More interestingly, in many cases the sites appear to be located within enclosure walls running along the contour of the hill. The finds consisted mainly of thin scatters of pottery which included EMII, EMIII/MMIA and later sherds, as well as some ground stone tools and fragments of pithoi. The interpretation of these sites as sanctuaries has been debated (see Table 5.4 for contrasting identifications; also Peatfield 1987; Rutkowski 1988), and there is nothing in the nature of their finds to suggest that they were places of ritual activity. On the contrary, their location (on barren summits – which has prompted their interpretation as ritual sites) and the traces of enclosure walls found at many of them would make more sense as new trends in habitation practices, emphasising and increasingly demarcating the settlement area. Similar 'enclosure' walls have been noted in the settlement of Megaloi Skinoi (E11), and the only excavated settlement from the Asterousia, Trypeti, was surrounded by similar, 'retaining' walls (Vasilakis 1995; Fig. 5.11). Moreover, the character of the finds from these sites (pithoi, ground stone tools) could perhaps indicate a more permanent type of habitation as opposed to the nature of the earlier sites. Since almost all of the hypothetical 'peak sanctuaries' are located in close proximity to tholos

tombs it could be suggested that such sites were associated with specific cemeteries, in the same way that such association was expressed in the communities of the plain.

This pattern of enhanced visibility and demarcation of settlements and their association with specific cemeteries, as opposed to the practice of the previous period, is also evident in the settlement and cemetery at Trypeti (Vasilakis 1989-90a, b; 1995; Alexiou 1967: 484). Although there is no survey evidence from this area to highlight the extent of habitation, it is still remarkable that the tholos tomb was established either in FN or EMI and the settlement was inaugurated only in EMII, with the main building phase in EMIII/MMIA (Vasilakis 1995: 71). At the end of this period, and when the tomb had probably gone out of use, the settlement was abandoned and another was built at the location Phylakas, on a neighbouring promontory, to the west of the small valley. Both sites have only received preliminary publication and so the details of their stratigraphy and architecture are poorly known, but sufficient evidence exists to offer an insight into the nature of habitation during the EMIII/MMIA phase.

The settlement, located only a short distance to the west of the tomb, extends over the flat top of a very prominent and steep hill overlooking a narrow valley. There are strong retaining walls to its south and eastern side, while such walls might also have existed in the western, now collapsed side of the settlement, where the steepest slope of the hill is found. A very narrow street running E-W divides the site in two parts, comprising three and four houses respectively (Vasilakis 1995: 72; Fig. 5.11). The houses are clustered together in a restricted area, and their entrances are not easily detectable from the plan; at least two of them however had an entrance on the street. This 'packed' layout of the settlement, with very narrow openings and clustered rooms, coupled with the enclosure of the site within large 'retaining walls' and its position on such a high and prominent hill would have made it even more visible. Such aspects of settlement would be reminiscent of similar practices in Ayiofarango, tallying well with the new trends of enhanced settlement demarcation noted from the EMII and more towards the end of the Prepalatial period.

It seems therefore that both on the plain and the mountainous areas of the Asterousia new practices of habitation emerged during the EMII period placing explicit emphasis on the high visibility of the settlements. Moreover, the new pattern of closely associating specific settlements with particular tombs, that now became *cemeteries*, could be seen to reflect an increased emphasis on specific *locations*. Such attitudes strongly contrasted with previous practices which did not distinguish between burial grounds to be used by specific communities, but instead probably used all the tombs within a discrete area. To better understand such changes we need to look at the broader picture of social change in the Mesara from the EMII onwards, and especially the changes effected as the Prepalatial period unfolded to its end.

CHAPTER 6

LATE PREPALATIAL SOCIAL ARENAS

6.1. The Late Prepalatial 'hangover'

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Prepalatial period saw a series of gradual changes not only in the distribution of habitation sites but also in the specific ways in which life was organised in them. Such changes, I argued, were intricately connected with changing perceptions and practices of collective identity. From the 'regionally integrated' FN period when the performance of collective identity encompassed the entire Western Mesara, we move to the EMI when such large-scale ties progressively broke into smaller 'sub-regions' and communal practice was mainly channelled through the mortuary sphere. From the EMII period onwards and more so during the late Prepalatial period, the Mesara appears to be increasingly characterised by two key features: (a) collective identity was performed and appreciated at the level of each separate community; and (b) drinking ceremonies assumed a more central role in the social life of these communities.

It will be argued that these processes were expressed by the pronounced emphasis that each community placed on the physical demarcation of settlements and cemeteries and the circumscription of territories that this entailed, as well as by a number of activities, such as pottery production and seal iconography, which aimed to safeguard and enhance the symbolic boundaries of these communities. Moreover, such symbolic competition was mainly performed through drinking ceremonies, which although held at the cemeteries, were no longer part of strictly funerary rituals.

6.2. A note on chronology

Before discussing the social processes at play during the late Prepalatial period in the Mesara, a note of chronological caution is needed. The term Late Prepalatial is used specifically for the latest phases of the EBA and the beginning of the MBA (EMIIB, EMIII and MMIA in ceramic terms) and proves very difficult to define from the deposits available at present in the area. The EMIIB and EMIII periods in particular are a matter of controversy[1]. A stratified deposit of EMIIB pottery is reported from the Lebena Yerokambos II cemetery, identified from stylistic parallels with Vasiliki Ware, better known from sites in Eastern Crete (Alexiou 1961-62a: 227). Wilson and Day (forthcoming) recognise EMIIB material among the pottery excavated in the Ag. Kyriaki tholos (Blackman & Branigan 1982) based on the same premise of stylistic similarities with Vasiliki Ware. Since the excavation of the Ag. Kyriaki tholos took place in recent times thus providing a detailed account of stratigraphy, we should allow for the possibility that other tholoi, excavated much earlier and published with no stratigraphical information might also have contained EMIIB material. Finally, a small amount of Vasiliki ware has been identified in the western of the two houses excavated under Cortile LXX at Phaistos (Levi 1957-58a: 177). However, as there are no published EMIIB assemblages from the Mesara, the discussion of the late Prepalatial focuses mainly on EMIII and MMIA

The character, and even the existence of the EMIII have been debated (Zois 1968 for a summary of the problem), but later studies have clarified its content and characteristics (e.g. Andreou 1978; Warren and Hankey 1989; Momigliano 1991; Cadogan *et al.* 1993; Wilson 1994). Watrous (*et al.* 1993: 224, note 65) as well as Warren and Hankey (1989: 20) note that no pure EMIII deposit has been recovered from the Mesara (but see note

[1] However, recent excavations at Phaistos revealed an almost complete Prepalatial sequence, with extensive EMIIB, EMIII and MMIA levels, currently under study (S. Todaro pers. comm.). Moreover, a recent re-examination of the EM assemblage of Ag. Triada by Todaro (forthcoming) has clarified the content of the different phases and could be used as a basis for comparison with other assemblages from the Mesara.

1), although Branigan (1970; and Blackman & Branigan 1977: 68) sees no disruption in the occupation of the area during EMIII/MMIA. Bearing in mind that the initial identification of EMIII pottery was made on the basis of finds mainly from Eastern Crete (Andreou 1978: 12-13), this type of pottery may be characterised by a greater degree of regional variability than any other pottery styles. Therefore its apparent rarity in the Mesara may be attributed to regional dynamics in ceramic production and style, rather than a gap in the cultural sequence of the area. Moreover, as most of the material comes from tombs, this may reflect a change in deposition practices (either in the type of materials deposited or in the frequency of deposition) rather than the abandonment of sites and the beginnings of nucleation as is frequently suggested (Manning 1994; Branigan 1995; Watrous *et al.* 1993; Watrous 2001). However, the situation remains obscure and sites are usually grouped under the comprehensive term EMIII/MMIA.

On the other hand, the MMIA phase seems more clearly defined in the Mesara, although not without problems and 'gaps'. MMIA pottery is more easily distinguished in the assemblages of the tombs. Excavated contexts from the Lebena tombs (Alexiou 1961-62a: 227; Warren & Hankey 1989: 20) and recently from the Ag. Triada cemetery (La Rosa 2001; Cultraro 2000), together with the finds at the settlement of Kommos (Betancourt 1990), have helped define the characteristics of this pottery more accurately. At Phaistos material described as MMIA has been recognised by Fiandra in the foundation trench for the building of the First Palace, overlying the two EMII houses under *Cortile* LXX (Fiandra 1961-62: 114). However, Warren and Hankey (1989: 20) prefer to date this deposit to a somewhat later stage in the sequence, MMIA/MMIB. Walberg acknowledges another 'pure' MMIA deposit underneath Room XII (1976: 104-119) while MacGillivray (1998: 100) also dates to the MMIA the material found under the floor of Room XXV (Pernier 1935: 139-142). La Rosa (1992a: 232) noted that no closed MMIA deposits have been found beneath the palace and material of this date has been restricted to chance finds from soundings, a situation echoed by the sparse finds by Pernier (1935: 133-138). In any case, the disturbance caused by the building of the palace has affected the consistency and preservation of any earlier remains at Phaistos, although it must be acknowledged that, on present

evidence, habitation on the hill of Phaistos at the end of the Prepalatial period appears rather sparse[2].

The most important deposit of MMIA date in the Mesara comes from Patrikies, a site located on a high hill between Phaistos and Ag. Triada (Fig. 6.1). Parallels between this deposit and material from other sites in the Mesara, as well as material deriving from surveys, have been widely recognised. However, as will be argued below the Patrikies deposit may represent a rather 'unique' case among the late Prepalatial sites in the Mesara, and would seem to have played quite a crucial role in the establishment of the First Palace at Phaistos.

Despite such chronological difficulties there is still a great deal that we can learn about the latest phases of the Prepalatial social developments in the Mesara.

6.3. How many *regions*?

As we saw in Chapter 5, from the EMII period onwards the Prepalatial settlements took on a more permanent character with more visually demarcated extent, and the establishment of a closer connection between settlements and particular cemeteries. Such attitudes proliferated towards the end of the Prepalatial period and were expressed in the architecture of both settlements and cemeteries, but also permeated other aspects in the life of the Mesaran communities, which were progressively distanced from wider regional developments, preferring to place more emphasis on their respective local practices.

[2] But see note 1.

6.3.1. Emerging places

If the network of relevance in the EMI period was expressed spatially over small, discrete regions like the Asterousia and the western part of the Mesara plain, from the EMII period regional integration seems to have been expressed on a much smaller scale, comprising only the individual cemeteries. The visual demarcation of many settlements, their more permanent buildings and greater longevity, their close proximity to specific burial grounds that now received more than one burial monument indicate that the focus of communal activity was transferred from wider areas to particular *places*. Whereas previously a nexus of tombs represented the focus of ceremonial activity for a number of communities settling and moving within specific areas, now individual communities were associated with specific tombs only. The building of more tholoi in the same location has been interpreted as a result of the increase of population of these communities requiring thus more burial grounds (Sbonias 1999a, b; Branigan 1993). However, there existed examples of 'double' cemeteries in the preceding period (Megaloi Skinoi, Kaloi Limenes), and the almost contemporary foundation of tholoi in the cemeteries of the plain would cast doubt on such suggestions. Moreover, since the adoption of such burial grounds on the plain was a later development, it would perhaps make more sense to interpret the building of more than one tholos in the same location with respect to the particular social needs these monuments were fulfilling in this new phase.

The formalisation of the late Prepalatial cemeteries also encompassed an exaggerated architectural enhancement, with the addition of annexes, paved areas, enclosure walls and separate buildings used as ossuaries. While in the EMI period some, but not all, tombs had a small antechamber in front of their entrance, from the EMII period whole complexes of antechambers were built around the tombs, and in many cases there is evidence that this was a gradual development, taking place in succeeding construction phases, and not as a pre-planned and readily executed operation (Branigan 1993: 63). This would be the case in the cemeteries of Lebena Yerokambos II and Moni Odigitrias (Fig. 6.2), while two building phases dating to the late Prepalatial and early

Protopalatial periods have also been recognised in the free-standing annexes or '*camerette*' of Ag. Triada Tholos A (Cultraro 2000; La Rosa 2001; Fig. 6.3). Similar gradual architectural development was also evidenced at the cemetery of Ag. Kyriaki where more antechambers and a peribolos wall were added during EMII and MMIA periods to the initial EMI tholos chamber (Blackman & Branigan 1982: 3-12, 43-49; Fig. 4.15). Such practices increasingly enclosed the burial chambers by restricting access to the tomb, while at the same time providing more formalised areas for interaction outside the tombs.

This emphasis on particular locations had more implications; certain cemeteries, most notably located in areas very dense with tholos tombs, declined and ceased to be used after the end of the EMII period. This is evident in both the plain and the mountains. In the plain, the tholoi of Salame, Koutsokera and 'Ag. Eirene E', all located within a short distance from each other, ceased to be used after EMII, leaving two active tholoi, 'Ag. Eirene *e'* and Porti, in the place of the five tombs (Fig. 5.1). A similar situation may be observed in Ag. Kyriaki, even though in this case, the building of two additional tholoi there might have never been completed (Blackman & Branigan 1977: 56-58; 1982: 46). In the Kaloi Limenes area, however, two tombs (Kaloi Limenes A and Lasaia B) were abandoned at the end of EMII, reducing the total number of tombs in use to three (from six earlier). The abandonment of these cemeteries, especially in the plain, was followed by the foundation of new cemeteries in neighbouring locations during the next period, EMIII/MMIA, as the examples of Apesokari I-II and Drakones D-Z show (Fig. 5.1).

The late Prepalatial period also saw the establishment of new cemeteries, which shared a distinct architectural type with a narrow and long antechamber complex being incorporated in the plan of the tomb, as in the cases of Apesokari I-II, Ag. Kyrillos and Sopata Kouse (Fig. 6.4). This type of antechamber is also noted in Tholos B at Platanos, although it is not clear whether this structure was a later addition to the EMII tholos

chamber or was originally built according to this plan[3]. In any case, this preference for highly formalised and enclosed antechambers is characteristic of the plain and persists in later times, as the example of the cemetery at Kamilari shows, established in MMIB (Fig. 6.5).

These new cemeteries all border the plain, and most significantly its eastern end. Such are the cases of Drakones, and Apesokari for example, built at short distances from the cemeteries of Ag. Eirene and Porti, and halfway between the large cemeteries of Platanos and Koumasa. Other new cemeteries included Vorou (Marinatos 1930-31), Sopata Kouse (Vallianou 1979: 384; 1989: 432-434) and Ag. Kyrillos (Sakellarakis 1968), again all set in the low hills overlooking the plain. Most of these sites are reported to have produced evidence for settlements, so it seems that these cemeteries would have not been shared among several communities[4]. Moreover, continuing cemeteries and their respective settlements in the Ayiofarango are concentrated mainly on the northern part of the valley, again closer to the more fertile lowlands of the plain.

Thus, the end of the Prepalatial period would seem to be characterised by more intensive investment in land resources, with communities striving to be placed favourably with respect to such resources. Such patterns are generally interpreted as reflecting increasing processes of nucleation assuming that the populace would be

[3] The foundation of all the tholoi at Platanos has been dated to EMII (Xanthoudides 1924: 88-125; Branigan 1970). Ceramic finds from the tombs, however, were not abundant, and the material derived from Tholos B was mainly dated to the EMIII/MMI period (Karantzali 1996: 80). Also, the absence of triangular daggers from Tholos B may also argue for a later foundation than Tholos A, after EMII (Papadatos 1999: 86).

[4] Xanthoudides (1924: 132) mentions settlements near the cemeteries of Koumasa, Porti, Salame and Koutsokera, Drakones, Ag. Eirene, Platanos and Kalathiana. However, excavated remains are reported only in the cases of Koumasa, Kalathiana, Salame, Christos and Porti (Xanthoudides 1924:49, 84-85, 74, 70, 54-55), all of MM date, but with no further specification (see more in Chapter 7, Fig. 7.1). Among these, the remains at Kalathiana and Koumasa are quite substantial, while the few rectangular walls found near the tholos at Porti could belong to rectangular tombs or ossuaries like the ones found at Platanos. The cemetery at Porti, though, could be 'paired' with the more securely identified settlement at Salame, the tholos of which had gone out of use by the end of EMII, whereas Porti continued well into MM times. At Apesokari excavations have revealed part of a large building destroyed in MMII and probably dating from MMI (Schörgendorfer 1951: 23-26). Sakellarakis (1968: 52) reports remains of an EM settlement to the SE of the tholos at Ag. Kyrillos; Marinatos (1930-31: 166-167) mentions traces of the settlement to the N of the tombs at Vorou, though this area remained unexcavated. Vallianou (1989: 432) also reports remains of buildings near the tholos at Sopata Kouse, which she dates to MM and LM. For a full list of MM settlements see Table 7.1.

drawn towards the emerging regional centre (Branigan 1995; Watrous *et al.* 1993; Watrous 2001; Manning 1994). However, certain elements would contradict such suggestions.

In the first instance, most of the new cemeteries are not used after EMIII/MMIA, their duration spanning only this period (Tables 5.3, 7.2). This lies in contrast to older cemeteries found in the same areas; for example Koumasa and Porti continued in use until MMII, while Drakones and Ag. Kyrillos contain material no later than MMI. This observation is important in two respects. First, it shows that the pair of settlement-cemetery and the 'territory' it defined represented the main means by which the 'boundaries' of communities were defined and performed in practice. Therefore the only legitimate way by which communities could lay claims on resources, and most notably on sought after land resources, was by manipulating this combined symbolism; it would not have been enough to establish a habitation site, the accompanying cemetery was needed in order to prove the validity of the claim. On the other hand, the deployment of this precise symbolism demonstrates that the competitive strategies of this period were mainly focused at a collective level. Each community strove to define its material and symbolic boundaries with respect to its neighbours and the main means of such a negotiation revolved around long established and by now widely recognised *communal* practices. The latter is also important in illustrating that, although perhaps new resources were at stake, the legitimating structures of the previous periods remained very strong. In this sense, it is very difficult to see the late Prepalatial communities being drawn away from their local material and symbolic resources in order to be assimilated by other communities or by a presumably emerging centre (see more in §6.4).

Moreover, the architectural formalisation of the cemeteries demonstrates a quite pronounced tendency to frame, contain and direct any activities that were taking place there. Considering the lack of such open spaces in the neighbouring settlements, it is easy to see these areas in the cemeteries hosting the public life of their respective communities. Thus the enclosing of the location of such activities could reflect the

careful 'enclosing' of the activities themselves, their framing as the symbolic boundary of the community.

Such 'framing' practices are also quite prominent in the strong links of communities with particular places and their natural resources, a tendency that we could tentatively describe as a kind of territoriality. In this sense, this circumscribing of resources in space would also inhibit nucleation. It has been a common suggestion that tholos tombs have been used as territorial markers by the communities buried in them, demarcating the resource catchment areas of their settlements (Bintliff 1977; Blackman & Branigan 1977; Murphy 1998; Haggis 1999). Sbonias (1999b) has also commented on the great distances between the tholos tombs located in the plain, as indicative of the extent of the respective territories of the communities using the tombs. Although such equations are not always so straightforward, the transformations at the end of the Prepalatial could support the suggestion of a more pronounced connection between settlements and their surrounding territories. This close connection can also be supported by the evidence of pottery production and seal iconography.

6.3.2. Objects that mattered

Wilson and Day's (1994) extensive stylistic and technological analysis of pottery from the Mesara produced some illuminating results. Although it was possible to distinguish Mesaran wares from products from other areas of Crete because of the distinct mineralogy of their clays, it was more difficult to discriminate between production locations within the plain itself, since the raw materials most often used in some of these ceramics could be found in geological deposits widespread throughout the plain and the surrounding mountains. The quite striking stylistic homogeneity of some of these ceramics, most notably Fine Painted Ware, seemed to add to such difficulties.

However, petrography hinted at a variety of production locations and macroscopic observations combined with chemical analysis made possible the distinction of different clays in the ceramic paste, even when many of the fabrics employed similar sand as temper (Wilson & Day 1994: 53). Such observations along with detailed comparison between the Mesara fabrics, led them to conclude that these vessels were the products of different production centres using the same kinds of raw materials. Therefore, despite the interrelationships between the Mesara fabrics, it was clear that a variety of production locations existed in the foothills around the plain. Most important for the purposes of this discussion is their observation that the stylistically homogeneous Fine Painted Ware was produced in a number of production locations in the Mesara (Wilson & Day 1994: 82).

It appears, therefore, that, already from the EMII period, several Mesaran communities engaged in the production of highly sophisticated ceramic vessels in terms of both technological expertise and execution of decoration. Most notably, several communities appear to have been producing not only very stylistically homogenous products, but also using similar raw materials and production techniques. Such features of the Mesara pottery system moreover appear to persist through time, during not only the Protopalatial period (Day & Wilson 1998; Day *et al.* forthcoming), but can also be found to characterise aspects of the Neopalatial pottery production (Shaw *et al.* 2001).

The production of stylistically similar pottery according to the same technological principles in a number of different communities in the Mesara would seem to agree with the pattern of inter-community competition suggested above. What better way to prove one's worth (and by implication the worth of one's community) than to demonstrate competence in such a highly respected activity as pottery production? What is more, such vessels were widely known and recognised in the whole area as the products of highly skilled and competent potters. What better vehicle for competition than a category of material with such a wide and learned audience? Moreover, as pottery production had been an essential part in the life of Mesaran communities since the FN period, it would not be difficult to see an activity of such long tradition playing an

important role in the negotiation of collective identities, especially since ceramic vessels had always been deeply embedded in the politics of drinking consumption (see also Chapter 8). In this respect the evidence from pottery production fits well into the suggested picture of closely knit and symbolically bounded communities investing heavily in collective practices, in this case craft activity. Furthermore, such evidence would also seem to point to a rather equal political status of such communities within the regional landscape, with no community having an advantage over others in any of the competitive resources.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from the evidence of seal iconography at the end of the Prepalatial. Observations based on seal iconography are necessarily tentative by virtue of the character of this particular type of evidence and its find contexts. Seals have been found almost exclusively in tholos tombs since the EMII period, progressively increasing in quantity in the later periods. Inevitably this context of deposition poses problems for their safe assignment to different chronological periods; as stressed many a time so far, the stratigraphy of tholos tombs has been the subject of numerous disturbances throughout the time of their use and later on, making the reliance of stylistic evolution the main way of dating seals. However, several studies have established a corpus of comparisons that can be considered sufficiently reliable (Yule 1981; Pini 1989; Younger 1993; Sbonias 1995; also the CMS series and Sbonias 1999a for further references). On the other hand, interpretations of the iconography as well as the use of the seals appear more tenuous.

The very nature of the seals, as devices designed to stamp an impression on some soft mouldable material like clay or wax, as well as their well documented use in prehistoric administrative systems has created an 'economic bias' in the interpretations of their use; wherever they are found they are taken to reflect the existence of sophisticated bureaucratic practices, inevitably tied with the control of transactions of economic nature. Although there are clear cases of such use of seals (as we shall see below in the discussion of the Phaistos sealing archive), their initial use and significance in the Prepalatial period seems quite removed from such activities. On the one hand, there is a

great number of seals found exclusively in burial contexts, while there is only a handful of seal impressions preserved from the entire island and the whole of the Prepalatial[5] (Pini 1990: 34-37; Vlasaki & Hallager 1995; Perna 1999). Among such impressions, less than half can be described as sealings, that is, "lumps of clay with one or more impressions which had been attached to another object for the purpose of security or for identification" (Vlasaki & Hallager 1995: 254). For the most part they constitute impressions made on vessels (often in their interior or their bases, that is, not directly visible), spindle whorls, loom weights or hearths. Even though such impressions have been interpreted as reflecting, in the words of most researchers "*some kind* of administrative control within a Prepalatial community" (Vlasaki & Hallager 1995: 268; also Pini 1990; Weingarten 1994b; Schoep 1999[6]; Sbonias 1999a) it is very difficult to see *what sort* of control would that be. Vlasaki and Hallager (1995: 270), moreover, remark that it is difficult to see how Prepalatial sealings were attached to objects and quite often it is not easy to imagine how they could have secured the integrity of the items they were applied to, concluding that they may have been used to identify ownership or authority.

[5] Opposing arguments would stress how difficult it is for sealings to be preserved in archaeological contexts. Such unbaked lumps of clay would necessitate destruction conditions of heavy conflagration in order to be baked and preserved, as happened with the later palatial archives. However, there are examples where large numbers of such sealings have been preserved from EBA contexts (most notably EHII Lerna), a fact which makes their absence from Cretan contexts even more telling. Nevertheless, even if we accept the existence of a larger number of Prepalatial sealings than those actually preserved, their use for administrative purposes is neither straightforward nor self-evident. The discovery of the odd sealing or sealing impression at sites across the island, although testifying to the use of seals for the purpose of impressing objects, does not reveal anything more that an opportunistic use of such medium and for reasons that cannot be clearly tied to economic activities.

[6] Schoep (1999) prefers to see a more extensive administrative system than simple household management (*contra* Weingarten 1994b). She bases her argument on the wide distribution of Prepalatial sealings in Crete, as well as the Lerna sealings, which she presumes to reflect a complex redistributive system hosted by the House of Tiles (but see Peperaki forthcoming, for a reappraisal of the House of Tiles and the Lerna sealings and their 'functions'). However, although her suggestion that sealings create relations of unequal access to resources by defining property may be true for later periods, the pattern of use of Prepalatial sealings does not seem to support such an interpretation (especially for the Mesara). Similar arguments have been expressed by Perna (1999: 66-67) who stresses that the small number of Prepalatial sealings may be a bias of discovery, and by implication the very existence of sealings in the Prepalatial period should suffice to indicate the operation of an administrative system, although of notably 'reduced scale'. However, to extrapolate a 'palatial economic system' of lower and simpler scale back to the EM period would seem inappropriate and ill-defined. There is no doubt that social life in the Prepalatial was much more complex than we initially assumed, however, to move further back the benchmark for the emergence of complexity only perpetuates evolutionary perspectives and does not explain either the patterns or the incentives for change.

This brings us to the iconography of seals. For the seals discovered in the Mesara tholoi several functions have been suggested, among which the identification of a particular person or locale, and the representation of commodities or units of measure (Blasingham 1983: 11). Renfrew (1972: 388) first proposed that the seals were owned by the heads of households, based on the concurrence of the number of seals and the number of copper daggers (presumably also belonging to male leaders of households) found in the tombs. He was followed by Whitelaw (1983: 343, and n. 16) who changed the owners into the heads of nuclear families. However this theory was proven fraught with problems and can be no longer widely accepted (Branigan 1993: 84-89). As far as the other interpretations are concerned, Blasingham (1983: 11-13) states some obvious problems: the seal motifs are too widespread and homogeneous to denote place of origin or commodity, and their presence in burial assemblages would contradict an overtly economic/commercial purpose for them.

In this respect the extensive stylistic study of Prepalatial seals by Sbonias (1999a) can offer some interesting insights. Sbonias was able to ascribe seals, according to their motifs, to several iconographic groups and trace their chronological evolution in substantial detail. He noted that a general homogeneity of motifs characteristic of the EMII period is later replaced by greater variation in the subsequent EMIII/MMIA period. Moreover, by the EMIII/early MMIA larger numbers of seals were concentrated in specific cemeteries, while, although motifs were still widely shared among the various communities, some cemeteries showed signs of being associated with particular seal motifs only. In addition, stylistic differences can be used to demonstrate the existence of separate workshops of manufacture. By the late MMIA/MMIB period many communities can be linked with specific iconographic groups only. Moreover, Sbonias (1999a: 45) suggested that the maintenance of the same seal motifs for several generations could have been used as a way to legitimise inheritance rights.

Although it is very difficult to pinpoint the exact nature of the link between a seal and its owner, Sbonias' observations on the evolution of seal iconography and the find contexts of early seal impressions seem to provide some rough guidelines. Even though

it is difficult to imagine in what precise ways the stamping of a loomweight for approximately 39 times by the same seal (Vlasaki & Hallager 1995: 259, figs. 6 and 7) could denote 'household *management*', it would seem that early sealing practices were intimately connected with the symbolism of discrete corporate groups, whether we want to call them households, nuclear families or clans. Early seal impressions are concentrated on objects that can be seen as having a close connection with 'domestic' life, such as hearths and loomweights, while the preservation of motifs for generations would allow us to tentatively connect early seal practice with some sort of lineage groups. Branigan's criticisms (1993: 84-89) of the theory suggested by Renfrew (1972) and Whitelaw (1983) are accurate as far as the statistical problems of correlating seals with the number of persons buried in the tholos tombs are concerned. However, bearing in mind his own comments about the kinship structures of the Mesara communities (Branigan 1984; 1993), as well as the general impression conveyed by so many domains of life of these communities, it would not be implausible to recognise a discrete link between early seal practices and lineage or clan identification strategies (a practice also echoed in the later system of multiple sealing of objects by 'look-alike' seals [Weingarten 1992]).

However, in light of the quite pronounced homogeneity of seal motifs during EMII, we should stress that the above suggested use of seals must be seen as a development in their use throughout the two centuries following their initial appearance. What is more important though, is that, despite the homogeneity in appearances, it is possible to distinguish different workshops among the different communities using seals (Sbonias 1999a: 42). This observation, taken together with the suggested connection of seals with lineage groups and the subsequent correlation of particular iconographic groups with specific communities only, would point to a pattern similar to the one observed for pottery production. Namely, different communities would produce their own seals and progressively, different communities came to be associated with specific iconographic groups which, we can suggest, came to represent each particular community within the region.

Seals have been used extensively in arguments for the emergence of elites, generally on the assumption that they were perceived as display items, and therefore conveyed status differentiation messages (Sbonias 1999a, b; Schoep 1999 for the use of sealings, and note 6). However, when seal iconography and practice is viewed in its specific historic and social context (in the Mesara at least), the picture emerging seems to hint more at their use as collective identification devices rather than as items of personal display. That said (and as will be argued in Chapter 8 for the Phaistos archive), this particular medium provides ample room for *intra*-group negotiation and the promotion of personal status. However, the important feature is that, even personal negotiation was articulated within the realm of the corporate group. Even if seals in the tholos tombs were meant to denote and distinguish one person from another, this was done through and within the medium of collective structures. In this sense, the preservation of particular motifs in the seal iconography that reaches the MMIIB Palace of Phaistos – almost 700 years after their first introduction in EMII – and especially since these are associated with particular communities, would make for a very powerful statement of collective identification (see §8.3).

It seems, therefore, that by the end of the Prepalatial period the different Mesaran communities were deploying a wide array of means by which to accentuate the identity and the status of each community as opposed to the others. Such practices extended from the symbolic and physical demarcation of the settlement and cemetery area of each community, and by implication the framing of its territory, to competitive strategies of craft production, all clearly geared towards enhancing the status of each separate community with respect to its neighbours. Such processes may have had their roots in the competition for land resources that seems to become rather intense towards the end of the Prepalatial period. However, all communities appear to participate in such competition from an equal stance, almost all of them providing indications for the manipulation of each category of competitive currencies. In other words, none of the communities of the late Prepalatial period seems to be in a more favourable position compared to the others, most certainly not Phaistos, supposedly leading the hierarchy race.

Thus the pattern observed would seem to reflect an increase in inter-community competitive tensions focused perhaps on land resources and employing collective negotiating currencies. The failure of the establishment of new cemeteries-settlements at the end of the Prepalatial period, instead of being the mark of accelerating processes of nucleation, would make more sense as the outcome of such competitive processes based largely on pre-existing and persisting legitimating strategies. It would moreover underline the importance of 'ancestral geographies' as the basis of such legitimating structures. In this sense, the incentive for nucleation would seem rather obscure; on the one hand, taking into account the equal terms on which all communities seemed to operate, if there was no 'emerging centre' to draw the population and gradually assimilate smaller communities, then what would cause such process? On the other hand, within such frameworks of social negotiation, whereby the importance of locality/ancestry seemed to be the main concern, it would make even less sense for communities to abandon their long inhabited local landscapes or surrender their highly prized resources in favour of an 'emerging regional centre'[7].

6.3.3. Consolation drinks?

Apart from these elements highlighting the collective boundary of every community, in the late Prepalatial period several other changes are noted in the burial assemblages, which have been interpreted as signs of an increase in competitive display.

Most prominent among such strategies, the introduction of burial containers in the form of larnakes and pithoi in the EMIII period, although documented in few cases in the Mesara, has been interpreted as signifying the diminishing of collective kinship solidarity and its replacement by a stronger emphasis on the role of the individual, that now received special treatment upon death (Branigan 1970: 131; 1993: 65-67, 141).

[7] An observation equally pertaining to the Protopalatial settlements; see further discussion in §7.3.2.

However, recent studies drew attention to the controversial practice of repeated inhumations within such separate containers, suggesting that perhaps it was not individual persons acquiring more importance, but rather smaller corporate groups within the community (Papadatos 1999: 60-62).

During EMII an increase in the range of grave goods and perhaps also in the quantities of artefacts deposited in the tombs is also documented. This is evident for the bronze daggers which, although part of the mortuary assemblages during EMI, increased considerably in the subsequent periods (Branigan 1970: 64-66). Moreover, some categories of material appear to have been produced especially for mortuary deposition. Prominent among these were the stone vases, whose miniature size and complete absence from any settlement contexts would indicate that they were probably only used for funerary purposes (Branigan 1970: 77-80; 1993: 67-71). Other types of such materials included Cycladic-type figurines, obsidian blades (Carter 1998) and specific types of vessels such as the Fine Grey Ware globular pyxides of EMIIA date (Wilson & Day 1994) and a range of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic vessels (Branigan 1970: 80-83; 1993: 67-71). Moreover, analytical work on ceramics and obsidian (Wilson & Day 1994; Carter 1998) has demonstrated that the level of skill and expertise required for the production of such items would have considerably enhanced their symbolic value, and so might have made them highly desirable and particularly powerful display statements.

How would such attempts to increase the patterns and the means of display within the burial assemblages fit into the processes of inter-community competition and collective identification that we discussed above? To find some answers we should turn our attention to another important feature characterising the late Prepalatial period, namely the increasing significance of drinking ceremonies.

Drinking events, I have argued, have been at the centre of collective ceremonial behaviour in the Mesara since the FN period (Chapter 4; Relaki forthcoming). Their

scale and symbolic significance, of course, changed through time as they came to be associated with different consumption contexts and practices. In the EMI period, drinking ceremonies on a collective scale were incorporated in funerals, while also continuing to take place in non-mortuary contexts within the communities of the plain. It was argued further that, although perhaps forming an important part of the funerary rites, drinking was an activity rather peripheral to the context of the tholos tombs where the focus was more on the burial itself (see §5.3).

From the EMII period onwards, although still part of the ceremonies held at the cemeteries, drinking events appear to gradually overtake the funeral as the focus of such activities and become themselves the core of such gatherings. Transformations in the pattern of drinking have also been noted. Wilson and Day (2000) have remarked how the main drinking vessels change from large chalices of possibly communal character in the EMI period to smaller, footed goblets of individual use in EMII reflecting perhaps a shift in social life, from more collective to more individual concerns, analogous to the introduction of burial containers in the tholos tombs during the late Prepalatial (Branigan 1993). Moreover, they noted (Day & Wilson forthcoming) a change in the shapes of serving and drinking vessels from round-based, possibly hand-held vessels, to flat-based 'tableware', organised in distinct sets. Such changes would seem to agree with a new emphasis on smaller corporate groups within each community, as these were revealed by the multiple inhumations in burial containers (Papadatos 1999).

These transformations would fit well into the pattern of inter-community competition suggested above. As has been stressed, the emphasis was more on the protection and projection of collective identity, the safeguarding of the community boundary. However, such practices can be quite restraining, by restricting any attempts for personal display and differentiation. Any personal negotiation strategies, therefore, would have to be channelled through the community structure and ideally be restricted within its boundary. In this sense, drinking ceremonies can be seen to serve well both collective solidarity and personal gratification.

The significance of drinking events (i.e. large-scale alcohol consumption) has been paramount in the anthropological and archaeological discussion of feasts and feasting (Dietler 1990; Sherratt 1995; 1997; Wiessner & Schiefenhövel 1996; Dietler & Hayden 2001a; Scholliers 2001) and recently gaining ground in interpretations of Minoan material culture (Hamilakis 1998; 1999; 2002c; Day & Wilson 1998; Wilson & Day 2000; Driessen 2002; Schoep 2002b). Although such works have largely concentrated on the unifying role of commensal practices and the use of feasting as a mechanism to enhance social solidarity, the significance of feasts as occasions of conflict and competition has also been stressed (Dietler & Hayden 2001; Hamilakis 1999; 2002c).

Dietler and Hayden (2001b: 10) rightly note that in most small-scale societies and especially with predistillation forms of alcohol, drinking is not part of daily meals, instead, it is reserved for, and indexical of feasts. Moreover, in every society it is encountered, alcohol is usually subjected to a set of rules regulating every aspect of its consumption: from the type, the quantity, the time and the setting for drinking to the age and sex of the participants as well as their expected behaviours under the influence of intoxication (Dietler 1990: 361). Such restrictions surrounding the use of alcohol are very important for understanding the organisation and significance of drinking events in late Prepalatial Mesara.

The temporally and spatially restricted nature of alcohol consumption can be easily proven in the case of the Mesaran communities[8]; in the FN, the setting for such events was exclusively at Phaistos and only at specific temporal intervals; from the EMI period by incorporating drinking in the funerary ritual, alcohol consumption was circumscribed both spatially and temporally. Furthermore, drinking was now subjected to new conventions of ritual by becoming part of a ceremony with a different focus instead of constituting the main purpose of ceremonial behaviour as before. This pattern slowly

[8] The precise nature of the drink consumed in the FN contexts is not known. However, given the introduction of vessel types specifically for liquid storing and serving in contrast to the exclusively open bowl typologies of the earlier periods, it would seem more probable to identify the focus of such activities with some form of alcoholic drink, whether beer, mead, or wine, rather than simply water or milk which would have been available and consumed for a long time. For the EM period there are more indications that this could be some type of wine (but see Hamilakis [1996] for objections and discussion; also, §6.5).

changes during the late Prepalatial: although drinking ceremonies are still conducted in the tholos cemeteries, the changes in the architecture of the cemeteries as well as the material deposited in them show that events other than strictly funerary were now taking place there (Branigan 1993). However, some elements remained constant through these transformations: first, such events were removed from the routines of daily life, and, secondly, they always had a collective nature; drinking was reserved for collective gatherings. In this respect, and as the cemeteries constituted the primary ceremonial and public space for each community, drinking would appear to form part of 'public' events, encompassing a large number of people, and at this phase, presumably the entire community. As Handelman (1990: 16) points out, public events "are culturally designed forms that select out, concentrate and interrelate themes of existence – lived and imagined – that are more diffused, dissipated and obscure in the everyday". Such contexts therefore would constitute favourable occasions in which the solidarity of the community could be actively demonstrated and performed. The inebriating properties of alcohol moreover could be manipulated to enhance such feelings, while other forms of collective behaviour such as dancing (Branigan 1993), always depicted as a group activity (Fig. 6.6), would have added to such altered states of consciousness. Such activities thus, could have been perceived as an active performance of communal identity, as well as manipulated in order to underline the symbolic boundary of every Mesaran community, as opposed to other, rival communities.

Changes in the typology of the ceramic assemblage are also in favour of such a suggestion. Drinking cups become smaller and simpler, progressively losing their elaborate bases, handles and decoration till the MMIA period when the common individual drinking shape becomes the plain cup or tumbler (Betancourt 1985; Branigan 1993; Hamilakis 1998). Moreover, serving vessels such as jugs and other spouted types become more elaborate while a new type, the 'teapot' or long-spouted jar has been introduced from the late EMIIA period (Day & Wilson 2000: 151). Such changes, and especially the disproportionate enlargement of the spouts in the late Prepalatial teapots from Myrtos Fournou Korifi in eastern Crete, have been interpreted as indicating a change in the ideology of hospitality, marking more the role of the person who serves and downplaying somehow the role of the drinkers (Catapoti 2001). In this sense,

equivalent changes in the ceramic assemblages of the tholos cemeteries could be seen to reflect a greater emphasis on the collective structure of the drinking activity, at the expense of the personal status of the participants. Such an attitude thus would conform with the pronounced efforts to highlight the solidarity and the boundaries of each Mesaran community during the late Prepalatial period.

On the other hand, drinking ceremonies can also be advantageous occasions for personal negotiation. Although, as Handelman (1990: 16) stresses, public events withhold a rigid structure that is subject to less negotiation and reinterpretation than everyday interaction, it is possible to see such events as arenas for the negotiation of roles within a social unit, by providing the occasions to fulfil personal aspirations for distinction. As always, the process of differentiation requires an audience and drinking events would seem to meet such requirement most successfully. In fact, the rigid structure of such events could be seen as beneficial for the negotiation of personal statuses as it would provide clear boundaries for interaction and targets for competition. Hamilakis (1998) has eloquently highlighted the significance of the mortuary feast as a device for such negotiations of power, whether between groups or among individuals. On a broader sense, such drinking events would constitute what Appadurai (1986: 21) describes as "tournaments of value"; discrete occasions where roles, affinities and access to resources could all come under negotiation.

It is evident, therefore, why and how exactly drinking events came to claim a central part in the life of late Prepalatial communities. In a period when the performance of collective identity was given preponderance before and above any other negotiating strategies, drinking ceremonies fulfilled a double role. They acted as the embodiment of the collective ideals of every community, they reproduced and maintained the solidarity of communal identity. At the same time though, drinking ceremonies provided an arena for the negotiation of personal relationships and roles, by moderating the restraining effect of collective strategies and allowing for personal distinction and differentiation processes to come forth. In this sense, they again served (and perhaps saved) the

solidarity of the group by giving a direction to personal competition and by containing and controlling any frictions within the realm of each community.

Therefore, even though the use of similar competitive means by all the Mesaran communities creates an impression of homogeneity in the archaeological record, the Mesara at the end of the Prepalatial may have been a highly fragmented cultural landscape, whereby integration was active only at the very local level of every separate community. Such observations have significant repercussions for understanding how the economic and political integration supposedly induced by the emergence of the palace at the end of this period could have been brought about. How and why such closely knit, symbolically bounded and independent communities would have succumbed to central control in the form of the Palace? Important for such understanding is the reconsideration of suggestions that settlement nucleation (and by implication, political centralisation) was well underway by the late Prepalatial leading to the emergence of regional centres in the form of palaces.

6.4. Nucleation revisited

Nucleation theories are significant for this discussion in two ways: first, the process of nucleation implies that there exists an incentive, economic or political or both, for people residing in smaller sites to relocate and inhabit areas closer to larger, and presumably central settlements (either in regional or more local terms). In this respect, if processes of nucleation were indeed active at the end of the Prepalatial period, we should expect such incentives to be obvious, and reflected in the settlement pattern. Secondly, nucleation is an important precondition for economic models proposed for the emergence of the palaces as it comprises the main argument used to explain why and how land and labour pressures were manipulated by groups or individuals in order to rise in hierarchy and form elites. In this sense, tensions based on such resources should again be apparent in the archaeological record of the late Prepalatial period.

Contrary to such suggestions, the evidence from the Mesara highlights a pattern whereby regional integration would have been a difficult process and perhaps met with some resistance. The dominant framework of social reproduction in late Prepalatial Mesara meant that communities had particularly strong ties with land and specific territories, which were further accentuated by the manipulation of a wide range of symbolic strategies in order to maintain and protect such boundaries. In this sense, it is difficult to envisage what incentives could have been offered by an emergent regional centre in order to convince the rest of the communities to surrender their material and symbolic resources to centralised control.

A further problem can also be identified inasmuch as there are no clear indications that Phaistos had a higher status than the other sites at this period. Although the scarcity of MMIA remains on the Phaistos hill is usually (and perhaps rightly) attributed to the disturbance caused by the levelling operations for the building of the Palace, nothing in the evidence from Phaistos could demonstrate its privileged status at this period. If nothing else, Phaistos does not appear to use a tholos cemetery at this stage, a fact which should have been quite a drawback when we consider the primary means of social negotiation within the region during this time. Even if the main attraction of Phaistos lay in the high symbolic significance of its past, this appeared to be dormant, since drinking ceremonies had not been held exclusively there for a few centuries now. If there ever was a contender, this should have been Ag. Triada, which, with its highly formalised cemetery and drinking practices (see Chapter 7, §7.4), seemed to participate quite successfully in the network of relevance of this period. Moreover, sites like Koumasa, Platanos, Kalathiana and perhaps Moni Odigitria would also have a role to play in the intra-regional competitive arena.

Nucleation has also been used as the main line of argument in approaches which see smaller sites being assimilated, not by the emerging regional centre, but by larger sites in their vicinity. That certain EM cemeteries do not continue to be used beyond the EMII period has been used as an example of such local processes of nucleation (e.g. Sbonias 1999a, b). However, as already argued (see §6.3.1.), many of these cemeteries

were replaced by new ones during EMIII/MMIA and the failure of some of the latter can be attributed more convincingly to pre-existing strategies of legitimisation rather than newly induced nucleation.

The existence of local nucleation processes is also tightly connected with arguments about the importance of land resources and the role of the latter in the emergence of elites. In this sense, nucleation is explained by the more favourable location of certain settlements with respect to land resources, Koumasa and Platanos being the most prominent examples (Fig. 7.1). However, apart from the difficulty of such dislocation within the dominant social framework, such theory is not unequivocally supported by the evidence of the settlement pattern at the end of the Prepalatial.

The decline of habitation in the Ayiofarango valley from the MMI period and through to the Protopalatial (Blackman & Branigan 1977: 68) has been commonly used to support nucleation theories (Watrous *et al.* 1993; Watrous 2001; Manning 1994; Branigan 1995; Sbonias 1999a, b). However, although a certain decline cannot be denied in the Ayiofarango during this period, this must be viewed in context. Since the main argument for continuity in MM times is based again on the cemeteries, there is abundant evidence for such continuity in the wider Asterousia area, including Ayiofarango, the Moni Odigitrias area and reaching as far as Trypeti. Firstly, pending the full publication of important sites like Moni Odigitria, where the tomb continues to be used till MMII, while a survey of its settlement gave evidence dating even to LM (Vasilakis 1989-90b: 65-66), we should be more cautious with suggestions of disruption. Secondly, seven tholos cemeteries in the Asterousia continue in use beyond MMI (Table 7.2), including Megaloi Skinoi where the largest settlement of the area was located during the Prepalatial, as well as Lebena Zervou (Alexiou 1992: 166), on the south coast (Fig. 7.1). Finally, the evidence of MM settlements in this area is not as meagre as usually suggested. Even in the remotest parts of Asterousia such as Trypeti, the Prepalatial settlement abandoned after MMI is replaced by a new one established on the neighbouring promontory at the location Phylakas, only a short distance from the initial site (Vasilakis 1995: 69-70). Moreover, nearly 22 sites can be identified in the

wider Asterousia area containing MMI and later material[9] (see Table 7.1), several of which can be found to form clear 'pairs' with cemeteries. Although it is true that, compared to the activity of the Prepalatial period in the area, there is a definite decline during the Protopalatial and progressive deterioration when we reach the Neopalatial period, such effects must be attributed to different social processes operating after the emergence of the palace at Phaistos in MMIB (see more in Chapter 7).

Analogous observations can be made for the settlement pattern in the coastal area around Kommos. Although it has been suggested that there may have existed a gap in habitation between EMII and MMI (Hope Simpson *et al.* 1995: 395), this can be largely attributed to our poor knowledge of EMIII pottery styles in the Mesara. This suggestion would be corroborated by a pattern which sees most of the EMII sites of the area 're-occupied' during MM times (Table 7.1; Fig. 7.3). As with other surveys, in many cases it is not easy for MM settlements to be dated more precisely, a fact that creates difficulties for the more detailed understanding of the expansion or retraction of habitation from one period to the next. However, the number of MM sites is remarkably high (see Table 7.1) showing that habitation must have continued without interruptions. Although several of these sites are new installations (that is, no earlier material has been recovered in them), they always form clusters around earlier sites, or sites with evidence for earlier occupation (Fig. 7.3, Table 7.1). Thus it is quite possible that the large number of MM sites in these clusters may represent settlement *expansion* in later times, and not totally new establishments.

If we add to this the evidence from the settlements that Xanthoudides (1924) excavated near cemeteries in the wider Mesara region, and which date predominantly to MM times, the picture of the settlement pattern just before the emergence of the Palace does not concur with any of the suggested aspects of nucleation. On the one hand the dominance of Phaistos is doubtful; on the other, although there are settlements that might have been larger than others, as is usually suggested for Platanos and Koumasa

[9] The sites identified by Blackman & Branigan (1977) and Branigan (1994) as MM peak sanctuaries are included in this list (for debate about the identification of these sites as peak sanctuaries see Peatfield [1987] and Rutkowski [1988]). Also included in this list are sites dated simply MM with no further specification (see Table 7.1).

(albeit largely on the evidence of their cemeteries), the overall numbers of sites emerging from the surveys do not agree with a picture of advanced nucleation. Moreover, it can be argued that sites usually considered local centres, like Koumasa, developed progressively to large nucleated settlements during the Protopalatial period, when different social processes were in action (see Chapter 7).

Thus, the settlement pattern of the late Prepalatial period in the Mesara does not seem to support such suggestions, but instead hints at a picture of several, independent communities engaged in some rivalry with each other over material and symbolic resources. However, despite such competitive tensions, none of these communities had yet assumed a more privileged position with respect to its neighbours. Let us now consider the other important aspect of nucleation models, their assumptions about the organisation of local production and the significance of the latter for the emergence at the end of the Prepalatial of the elite groups which will go on to establish the palatial centres.

6.4.1. Land, labour, elites

The most prominent theory of palatial emergence, initiated by Renfrew (1972) and taken on by a number of researchers subsequently (Cherry 1978; Gamble 1982; Branigan 1988b; Halstead 1988; Manning 1994; Haggis 1999) is centred around the redistribution of stored agricultural produce. Renfrew (1972: 304-306; 480-485) saw the adoption of the olive and the vine at the beginning of the EBA as the driving factor behind local diversification of production, subsequently leading in some communities specialising in the production of particular crops and hence becoming dependent on extensive exchange patterns for the procurement of a more generalised subsistence base. Out of such specialisation, managerial elites emerged which took over the control of agricultural production and exchange and ensured the availability of produce by redistribution. Such elites were then able to invest in specialised craft production to fund their exchange expeditions.

Renfrew's model has been criticised on both theoretical and empirical terms. Halstead (1988: 521-522) summarised the problems: the extent and influence of vine and olive cultivation had been exaggerated as was also demonstrated by later studies (Runnels & Hansen 1986; Hansen 1988; Hamilakis 1996); the diversification of production should encourage subsistence security and independence of the producing communities instead of interdependence. By focusing on the nature of redistribution instead, Halstead (1981; 1988; Halstead & O'Shea 1982) saw a famine relief mechanism as the most probable purpose of the palatial system. In the heterogeneous environment of southern Aegean, with limited rainfall and restricted arable lands, such a relief system would be an effective response to inherent problems of farming, particularly for "Bronze Age communities living in large and agriculturally inefficient *nucleated* settlements" (Halstead 1988: 524, emphasis added). Social storage transactions on such a large scale would be secured by the exchange of durable craft goods which, on the one hand, fuelled the unusual growth of craft skills in the prehistoric Aegean, and on the other, could be accumulated by "successful farmers" who could then exchange them in return for labour, land, or any other resources, thus ascending in the hierarchy. Moreover, as time went on, this relief mechanism was embedded in religious and ceremonial ritual that 'justified' the palace's existence during the good years when such relief was not imminently necessary.

Halstead's model is particularly effective in overcoming Renfrew's shortcomings, and the ubiquity of storage space devoted to agricultural produce in the Minoan palaces makes his argument even more plausible. However, both models are expressed in very general terms, which allow for many 'anomaly' cases, as the situation in the Mesara would demonstrate. Most notable among the problems are: a) our insufficient knowledge of the way in which land ownership and labour were organised in the Prepalatial period; and b) the assumption that Bronze Age settlements were already nucleated before the emergence of the Palaces.

With respect to the generality of the models, both storage and exchange are practices that are documented long before the emergence of the Palaces, and in all areas of the

prehistoric Aegean, many of which did not develop palatial institutions[10]. If crop failure was such a regular occurrence in the life of prehistoric communities[11], it seems surprising that a suitable solution in the form of the palaces, combining storage and exchange, both mechanisms known for millennia, on the one hand took so long to emerge, and on the other, was established only on Crete, when other areas of the Aegean would have presumably suffered the same problems. It seems then, that even if we accept such a role for the first palaces[12], we need to examine more carefully the local social conditions that would allow or promote the establishment of such centralised institutions in Crete, and not other areas.

In this respect, Halstead (1981; 1988) provided an additional reason why crop failure could have been more frequent in the Bronze Age societies of Crete: the Minoan settlements were large and 'nucleated'. Nucleation would have posed serious problems for farming, because the large size of the settlements would have meant that the cultivated fields had to be located some distance away. In this sense, restrictions of time and transport would prevent the practise of more intensive agricultural regimes, as was the case, for example, in the Neolithic period, and would make extensive farming necessary, thus increasing the desirability of land. Individuals or groups with sufficient lands would be able to produce better than others, thus becoming "successful farmers" (Halstead 1988). They could then participate more in social storage exchanges, acquiring a bulk of durable craft goods which they could later exchange for land and labour if they remained successful, or for foodstuffs if they faced lean years. An expansion or variation of Halstead's model has been proposed by Manning (1994) and followed in general lines by Haggis (1999). Success in this case, as well, is located in having enough land to be able to subsist while living in nucleated settlements. However, the ascendance in hierarchy in this case is triggered by the ability to attract the labour and the land of others. Thus the unsuccessful farmers, unable to subsist through the

[10] Cherry (1983) and Lewthwaite (1983) have also stressed the similarities of Crete with other insular environments in the Mediterranean which did not, however, develop palatial civilisations.

[11] See also Hansen's (1988: 48-49, 51-52) objections on the recurrence and regularity of climatic fluctuations which would cause repeated crop failures, central for the validity of the social storage model.

[12] Contradictory to a primary function of the First Palace of Phaistos as a food relief mechanism would also be the very late building of the koulouras in MMIIB (Levi 1976: 349-358), presumably used as large scale granaries (Branigan 1987). The use of the koulouras for the large scale storage of grain has also been debated but the discussion is inconclusive (Strasser 1997).

farming of their lands, would have to surrender their labour to those who were successful, creating a process of hierarchy based on land ownership.

It seems, then, that for such models to operate, nucleation is a necessary precondition. Moreover, the timing of this nucleation is even more crucial. Whether the Palaces emerged as solutions to recurrent problems of crop failure, or as the result of 'greedy' elites accumulating land and striving for power, the Minoan farmers must have been living in large nucleated settlements long enough in order to be faced with the problems that nucleation brought to their traditional farming techniques. That is, such an assumed nucleation may have to go back at least to the EMII period. While such large settlement size may be true for sites like Knossos (albeit a unique case in all prehistoric periods), it becomes obvious from our previous discussion that the Mesara is a definite anomaly; nucleation is simply not evident in the period preceding the emergence of the Palace.

It becomes apparent, moreover, how much these models rely on assumptions about the structure and the norms of land ownership and transmission of resources, as well as the composition and size of the main labour group. Such problems could, perhaps, be illuminated if we had a better knowledge of the organisation of agricultural production on a local scale, that is, at the level of the settlement. However, although much can be known about the range of plants cultivated and the soils available to the Prepalatial communities of the Mesara (Bintliff 1977a, b; Watrous *et al.* 1993: 197-204, 205-214; Gifford 1995; Shay & Shay 1995), there is not much information concerning the organisation of agricultural activity. However, there may be some hints about such relations.

It seems that most of the 'public' life of the Prepalatial Mesaran communities revolved around and unfolded in their cemeteries. The persistent emphasis placed by such communities on the performance and reproduction of collective identity, obscures our knowledge of more individual practices. Nevertheless, indications for such concerns can be found, but they tend to be contained within the boundary of the community, which in the case of the late Prepalatial was represented by each settlement/cemetery. However, in light of the sparseness of excavated settlements we are unable to detect such

differentiations in the 'domestic' sphere, a domain which might have shed more light on the composition of the basic labour unit. The evidence of the seal iconography indicates that households or lineages might have used seals as an identification and differentiation medium, but within every cemetery there are no pronounced display differences that could be interpreted as being the result of unequal access to material resources. Of course, taking into account the social strategies of the late Prepalatial, such distinctions, if they existed, might not have been expressed overtly. In other words, conspicuous display of 'wealth' might not have been the primary concern of either persons, or groups.

So, can we learn anything about the organisation of production based on such patterns? We have no way of knowing how the production of subsistence was organised and managed in these communities. What we do have is some tenuous evidence that groups similar to households, or extended families, must have formed the constituent units of such communities, expressing themselves through a rather ambiguous symbolism of seal iconography. Adding the architectural organisation of settlements into recognisable houses, we can postulate that the basic labour unit of such communities could have been a household group residing in these structures[13].

Although we cannot know the precise size of most of these settlements, some hints are provided by surviving examples such as Trypeti, consisting of seven houses at most. By looking at the extent of their surrounding territories, it would seem that all the households of communities of such size would have had enough land to cover their subsistence needs. Moreover, in accordance with what we know about Prepalatial kinship structures, and if present day land ownership patterns can offer any insight, then we can also assume that much of the land would be inherited within the kin lines, most commonly with the obligation to pass it on. Thus, also taking into account the pronounced territoriality strategies of late Prepalatial communities, it would appear that, first, not much land would have been available outside the realm of the community, and,

[13] The direct reading of social relations from architectural form is a misleading practice, as is the translation of room or settlement size into numbers of residents. However, in light of the other evidence we have about the organisation of Prepalatial communities and the emphasis they placed on group relations (whether these are defined as kin or other type of connection) we could suggest tentatively that such corporate groups resided in these houses.

secondly, following from this, different households would not have had many opportunities to augment their land resources by acquiring new lands[14]. Although land appears to have been a central resource at the end of the Prepalatial, its ownership seems to have been negotiated, again, at the level of the community.

Of course such observations do not mean that there were no differentiations between the different households of a community, or that some households might not have been better endowed than others. What it does mean though, is that such differences may not have been expressed as material accumulation. Furthermore, it would seem that resources like land, although perhaps privately owned by different households, very rarely would be allowed to be exchanged for other types of resources, since this would imply the diminishment of the community territory. As far as labour was concerned, it could be expected within such closely knit communities that members of different households would contribute labour to other households, always with the expectation of reciprocation[15].

Although both land and labour might have been a premium resource at the end of the Prepalatial period, the social structures surrounding their management and transmission might not have facilitated their manipulation by emergent groups. So neither nucleation nor land and labour manipulation would seem to concur with the evidence of the late Prepalatial Mesara. If the region appeared so politically fragmented at this stage, what triggered or allowed the emergence of a regional centre in the form of the First Palace? Two strands of evidence can guide our answers: the nature of the very first palatial establishment; and the preponderance of drinking ceremonies throughout the region. We will begin our discussion from the second point.

[14] Another way of acquiring land might have been through marriage. However, although different communities might have contributed marriage partners, there are no indications as to the dowry patterns within corporate groups. Therefore, we cannot know whether land was part of the dowry, how the kin property was divided (if it was), to whom, or in what proportion.

[15] Similar strategies of 'labour borrowing' are still practised among extended families and friends and neighbours in modern Cretan villages in order to pick olives and harvest grapes, despite the extensive use of wage labour in modern farming practices. In earlier times, such labour contribution was used even for baking bread for the whole lineage (which could include several nuclear families).

6.5. "For all tomorrow's parties": Wine, Patrikies and the emergence of the First Palace at Phaistos.

We have discussed in considerable detail the organisation of drinking ceremonies during the late Prepalatial period, their significance for social reproduction within every community, as well as their importance as a means of collective negotiation on a regional level. At this point we should turn our attention to the nature of the consumed substance.

6.5.1. 'Wine that maketh glad the heart of man'

Although Renfrew (1972) was convinced that wine (together with olive oil as part of the Mediterranean polyculture argument) was the driving force behind the rise of palatial civilisation in Minoan Crete, later studies demonstrated the problems of this approach, particularly in terms of the restrictions of the archaeobotanical data, but also on what concerns the economic assumptions of the model (Halstead 1988; Hansen 1988; Hamilakis 1996). The work of Hamilakis (1995; 1996; 1999) is particularly important for clarifying the production patterns of oil and wine, as well as the chronological evolution of such activities.

The presence of *Vitis* pollen in the Ag. Galini core in south-central Crete documents the existence of the vine in wild form from c. 7500 to c. 5300 BC (Bottema 1980). This has influenced approaches considering the production of wine as a natural outcome of the availability of the species (e.g. Renfrew 1996). However, such evidence alone is insufficient to demonstrate the systematic production of wine from the beginning of the EBA (Sarpaki 1995; Hamilakis 1996). Hamilakis (1995; 1996; 1999) after an

exhaustive survey of palaeobotanical, archaeological and textual evidence concludes that there was only an opportunistic use of the olive and vine in the EM period for a number of purposes including, fodder, fuel, source of oil or perfume, or for the production of an alcoholic drink. He further remarks (1999: 48) that, "while drinking and feasting can be detected from the EBA (as indicated by the appearance of drinking vessels), it seems that it becomes more intense from the end of that phase and continuous through the First Palace period reaching its peak in the Neopalatial period". Such observations are particularly important for the understanding of the patterns of social negotiation in late Prepalatial Mesara.

The consumption of alcohol in Prepalatial Mesaran communities was tightly embedded in social norms and, although constituting an important part of social life, was always restricted to specific occasions that were not very frequent. In this sense, the opportunistic production of an alcoholic drink as suggested by Hamilakis would make sense, and would also perhaps explain the 'delay' in the systematisation of the production of such a drink. On the other hand, the increase in the significance of drinking ceremonies noted during the late Prepalatial in the Mesara would agree with Hamilakis' envisaged evolution of wine production, and would also provide an incentive for more systematic production.

The difficulty of recognising wine production in the archaeological record of the Prepalatial period is partly due to the inconclusive nature of the wine producing implements; as wine production involves a relatively simple procedure of pressing the grapes and collecting the juice, any type of large container with a spout at its base would suffice. Such containers, therefore, did not need to be specialised and could have been used for a range of everyday activities, a fact that makes their secure identification more difficult (Hamilakis 1996: 5). Moreover, it has also been suggested that the processing of grapes could have taken place in the countryside, near the vineyards (Palmer 1994; 1996), a fact that would make the recovery of such installations even more rare considering the state of our knowledge of Prepalatial settlements and the notable bias of excavation and survey towards urban centres.

Let us consider, therefore, what evidence exists for more systematic production of wine in the late Prepalatial period, apart from drinking and serving vessels. A range of ceramic or stone vessels have been recognised as wine presses, the most common type consisting of a large clay vat with a base spout (Kopaka & Platon 1993; Palmer 1994; Hamilakis 1996). However, it has been argued on the basis of the results of chemical analysis from the EMIIB Myrtos example[16] (Warren 1972: 262, 330-331) that such vessels could have been used for a range of activities and cannot be connected unequivocally to wine production. Moreover, examples of such implements are not abundant generally, and in Prepalatial contexts they are especially rare. In the Mesara such vessels have been found in miniature form in the late Prepalatial cemeteries of Apesokari and Porti (Kopaka and Platon: 64-65), and in MMIA levels from the cemetery of Ag. Triada, where the remains of a vessel of practical size were also retrieved (La Rosa 2001: 224; Fig. 6.7). Although the objections voiced in the case of the Myrtos example have some bearing, the discovery of such implements in the cemeteries and more so, in miniature size (perhaps a symbolic representation of the actual process?) would probably conform with their use in the process of wine production. Moreover, in Ag. Triada, other contemporary vessels include, apart from a mass of drinking cups, an interesting elaboration and diversity of serving shapes, with examples of teapots, tankards, a range of Barbotine jugs as well as a type of strainer which was presumably used for the filtering of juices (La Rosa 2001: 224; Cultraro 2000: 316). Such strainers go back to FN Phaistos (Vagnetti 1972-73: fig. 74,9), and are considered a peculiarity of the Mesara ceramic typology in this period as well as in later, Protopalatial contexts (Walberg 1976; 1983). Their use in connection to the processing of grapes has also been suggested (Walberg 1976: 20)[17].

[16] The analysis of the clay vats from Myrtos showed a high amount of lipids of animal origin. It was suggested thus that the vats could have been used for washing wool.

[17] Walberg (1976: 20-21) also comments on the use of several other unusual shapes, such as the 'grater', which is often spouted, so a connection with liquids cannot be excluded. At Protopalatial Phaistos there is also a great range of spouted jars, some with strainers on the spout (Walberg type 98.2). Also a range of deep bowls on pedestals, described as 'louteres' (Levi & Carinci 1988: 14) could be connected again with the manipulation of liquids. This elaboration of spouted types and the occurrence of 'rare' types that can be associated with the handling of liquids is characteristic of the First Palace at Phaistos. It is argued in Chapter 8 that it is indicative of the intimate connection of the First Palace with wine (production and consumption).

In more general terms of ceramic typology, we should note not only the elaboration of pouring shapes, but also the appearance of a greater range for the manipulation of liquids. Apart for the most common pouring shape of the period, the 'teapot', there is also a series of larger side-spouted jars or bowls, which can be assumed to have been used for the mixing and serving of liquids. In the Protopalatial period, such shapes evolved into the bridge-spouted jar, a vessel that most probably was used for mixing and serving liquids. The Protopalatial repertoire, moreover, is characterised by a variety of craters[18] and large open jars with spouts, some of them so ornate that we have to assume they had a ceremonial use (Levi & Carinci 1988: 20; Walberg 1976; Fig. 8.1). Such mixing (most commonly with water) is a practice documented in the consumption of wine in later contexts (Sherratt 1995: 19; Toussaint-Samat 1992: 263) whereas textual evidence of Linear B also testifies to the mixing of wine with honey (Palmer 1996: 275; also Sherratt 1995: n. 43). The variation and elaboration of pouring shapes has in many cases been attributed to the handling of different types of drinks (Cultraro 2000: 316). Although this suggestion may be true in certain cases, it will be argued below (Chapter 8) that such elaboration may be seen to reflect more the complexities of the ceremonial consumption of wine within palatial contexts.

It seems quite possible therefore that the production as well as the consumption of wine were indeed becoming more systematic from the late Prepalatial period in the Mesara. How do such observations fit into the wider discussion of the organisation of production and the structure of land ownership and labour management in the Mesara at the transition from the Prepalatial to the Protopalatial period?

Palmer (1994; 1996) and Hamilakis (1999) both comment on the high labour requirements that the cultivation of vines would necessitate: "the heavy initial investment, higher labour input and risk, and strong attachment to land that vine and olive involve, make the cultivation of vines and olives the prerogative of groups or individuals with strong entitlement relationships (subsistence security, institutionalised

[18] Walberg (1983: 4) notes that MM craters outside Phaistos have been documented in or in connection with the Mesara tholoi, and she suggests a potential use for the mixing and serving of liquids.

rights to the land and to human and animal labour etc.)" (Hamilakis 1999: 45); " Vines, olives, and wheat grow best on the same type of land, and although the crops of all three do not ripen at the same time, to a certain extent they compete for labour. (...) A self-sufficient farmer aimed to produce enough grain and olives to meet his needs for the coming year, before he could afford to raise vines in any quantity" (Palmer 1996: 273). One social group that could meet such requirements in late Prepalatial Mesara, would be an entire community.

To avoid misunderstandings, I do not envisage late Prepalatial communities as small paradises where everything was organised in an egalitarian and peaceful fashion and everybody had equal access to resources. We are not referring however, to all resources, but only those that would fit the description of *communal* resources; I think wine may qualify as such a resource. Let me elaborate on this.

There are several reasons why the production of wine could have been the prerogative and responsibility of the entire community. First, it was a resource consumed only collectively; this would provide enough social restraint for anybody trying to take on such production for private use. Secondly, since the requirements of labour input were so high and not many households on their own would seem up to the task, the cultivation of the vine could make sense as a collective project. The burden of vine cultivation could inflict serious risks of staple crop failure if undertaken by each household as a private project. However, a collective production utilising the resources of more households sharing the obligations for both labour and land would minimise such risks and would ensure the production of wine for the entire community. Finally, the social significance of drinking ceremonies, as another vehicle of inter-community competition would also support the idea of wine production being a communal project. As Dietler (1990: 363) notes, "production of the drink for those events may be divided among the members of the group consuming it, and the function of promoting solidarity is extended to the activity of production as well as the process of consumption". Therefore it seems quite plausible that vine cultivation and wine production might have been undertaken on a collective level by each community.

To summarise: just before the building of the First Palace at Phaistos, a number of different communities in the Mesara were engaged in competitive processes which were expressed as a strong attachment to land and the physical and symbolic demarcation of specific territories. Such competitive practices were also reflected in the patterns of craft production and the hosting of ceremonies of collective drinking consumption. Within such frameworks, the incentive for settlement nucleation was rather weak and communities continued to practice a careful circumscription of their resources, material and symbolic, which made political integration at a regional level a rather arduous process. Although some communities appeared larger than others, there are no clear indications of an 'emergent regional centre' privileged above others, set either in Phaistos or anywhere else in the area. Moreover, the evidence of the Mesara does not entirely conform with suggestions of emerging elites manipulating land resources and the organisation of labour and production in order to ascend to power. Finally, it was argued that wine can be shown more clearly to be the drink consumed at the drinking ceremonies of this period and its production, fraught with practical and economic difficulties may have been undertaken by whole communities as a collective project.

How does the First Palace fit into this picture? To answer this question we need to examine more carefully the evidence from Patrikies, probably the most significant late Prepalatial deposit from the Mesara.

6.5.2. Patrikies: a MM settlement?

Patrikies is a small site located half way between Phaistos and Ag. Triada, on the slope of a high hill overlooking the plain (Fig. 6.1). The site was excavated in 1957 by Levi (1957-58b: 348-355; 1976: 747-756) and published in more detail later by Bonacasa (1967-68). It was founded in MMIA and was in use till the beginning of the Protopalatial with only occasional occupation in Neopalatial and Mycenaean periods (Bonacasa 1967-68: 30). Four parallel trenches oriented NE-SW were excavated on the western side of the plateau. At the southern side of the trenches, a ceramic deposit of irregular triangular shape was discovered (Bonacasa 1967-68: 9; Fig. 6.8). On top of

this deposit a layer of small stones and pebbles was revealed, attributed by Bonacasa to the remains of a collapsed wall. However, as it was impossible to locate the foundations or any further traces of this hypothesised wall, this layer of stones might have been placed there to cover the deposit of pottery[19]. This deposit consisted almost entirely of teapots, comprising as well some jugs, milk jugs, conical cups and tankards (Bonacasa 1967-68: 11; Fig. 6.9).

At a short distance to the NW of the deposit the remains of a paved road were recovered (Bonacasa 1967-68: 17; figs. 6, 7). Originally of a length around 12 m, it was perfectly preserved for about 7.50 m., and had the form of a ramp with orientation NW-SE (Fig. 6.8). Near the top of the hill it was lost and despite their efforts, the excavators were unable to reveal any traces of it either to the NW (towards Ag. Triada) or to the SE (towards Phaistos). For this reason Bonacasa (1967-68: 17-18) suggested that it was probably a detour from the main road connecting Phaistos with Ag. Triada; that is, the road would go off its normal route to ascend the hill and reach Patrikies, and then descend again to join its course towards Ag. Triada. The pottery discovered on top and around the paving of the road confirmed that it was contemporary with the deposit of pottery, but it did not shed more light to its relationship with the latter.

At a distance of about 30 m. to the East of the road and the ceramic deposit, the remains of a building were discovered. This consisted of a series of six rectangular rooms, with no apparent doorways, of which only five were fully preserved. These were enclosed on their NW side by an L-shaped long wall (Fig. 6.8). The rooms of this building were in very poor condition, preserved only to the height of 0.30 m. (Bonacasa 1967-68: 19-20). Inside Rooms IV, V and VI, built benches of width ca. 0.70 m. were discovered along their west sides. Any Minoan pottery discovered there was found at the level of the foundations, but outside the building.

Bonacasa (1967-68: 23-30) considered all three components of the site contemporary, dating the ceramic deposit and the foundation of the road and the building to MMIA.

[19] A similar practice is documented for the EMI deposit south of the Piazzale dei Sacelli in Ag. Triada (Todaro forthcoming, Fig. 5.7).

However, from a careful reading of the excavation report, there are grounds to suggest that the ceramic deposit may represent the first activity on the site, followed by the road and the building. As far as the building is concerned, the pottery retrieved near Walls A, B, and C, forming the L-shaped corridor (Fig. 6.8), dated to the Neopalatial or Mycenaean phases (Bonacasa 1967-68: 52). The rectangular rooms were, for the most part, empty or containing very sparse fragments of pithoi or other large vessels, such as amphorae and jars. No teapots were found in the vicinity of the building. Therefore, even if the building (Rooms I-VI at least) was contemporary with the triangular deposit, the two contexts show substantial differences in contents and, potentially, in use and meaning.

The excavators have suggested that, in light of the unusual composition of the ceramic deposit dominated by teapots, this could be described as either a votive deposit or a workshop dump. However, there is no other evidence that could corroborate the identification of a pottery workshop at the site. Moreover, the fact that the deposit appeared to have been covered by a layer of pebbles and never to have been disturbed again by any construction would point to a more unique, or 'ceremonial' meaning for it. The ceramic form most represented in this assemblage is the teapot, several variations of which have been distinguished by the excavators (Fig. 6.9). Fifty six whole vessels were retrieved and countless more could be recognised from spouts (127 preserved) and handles. There were also nine examples of different types of jugs. The very low number of drinking shapes such as cups or bowls[20] (only eight examples of cups preserved entire) is surprising. Walberg (1983: 91) comments that the composition of this deposit would not adhere to the contemporary assemblages of either settlements or cemeteries, while it is clearly homogeneous in chronological terms. In light of the above observations it is argued here that this deposit represents the result of a single deposition event which was intentional and had a ceremonial character.

[20] This information is derived from Bonacasa (1967-68) who, although publishing a catalogue of the ceramic material, does not give any extensive statistical information on the overall assemblage. These suggestions therefore are subject to reconsideration in light of any future work conducted on the ceramic assemblage from Patrikies. Nevertheless, our observations are quite reliable in terms of the comparison between the ceramic deposit and the rest of the site, since Bonacasa clearly distinguished between the contents of these deposits in the publication.

Let us explore this suggestion further. The assemblage cannot be described as domestic and although several of these types have been found in burial contexts, it does not constitute a typical burial assemblage either. Moreover, it cannot be described as the debris of a 'normal' drinking ceremony, since there are almost no drinking shapes. I believe the answer to the enigma lies with the teapots. Although the teapot is a common shape of this period, typological parallels of the Patrikies teapots are widespread within the Mesara, but rather uncommon in other areas of Crete (Bonacasa 1967-68: 24-25; MacGillivray 1998: 100), where the predominant teapot shape is the so-called Vasiliki type (Betancourt 1985). Patrikies type teapots have been recovered at several of the tholos cemeteries including Ag. Triada, Porti, Apesokari, Koumasa, Lebena, Drakones, Platanos, as well as at Phaistos where they are mainly documented underneath the floors of the west wing, bordering the later Theatral (West) Court of the Palace (Pernier 1935: 133-134 for illustrated examples). We can further note a substantial variation in the examples from Patrikies; even within the categories distinguished by Bonacasa there exist differences, indicating that the assemblage may not be the outcome of one workshop. The teapot is a shape introduced in late Prepalatial times, and the Patrikies type moreover, appears to be mostly characteristic of the MMIA period (Walberg 1983: 7-8). It would not be unreasonable then to suggest a more intimate connection between the proliferation of this shape and the increasing importance of wine during the same time. It has also been suggested that this particular type of vessel was clearly imitating metal prototypes, exclusively used for the serving of wine (Sherratt 1997: 391)[21]. If we accept such a connection between teapots and wine, then what would be the significance of the Patrikies deposit?

I argue that the deposit of Patrikies may constitute the first example of a regionally integrative mechanism that would take the form of the Palace in the following period. Such a mechanism would rely on the collaboration of all Mesaran communities and would have at its centre the wine consumption ceremonies that came to represent the primary social arenas at the end of the Prepalatial throughout the region. The location of the site is also particularly significant as well as the fact that it does not seem to reflect a

[21] The teapot which would seem to imitate metal prototypes more clearly at this phase is the Vasiliki type. However, later types associated with the serving and handling of wine in the Mesara can be seen to have pronounced metalising features, a characteristic generally present in the Mesara pottery of all periods (Day *et al.* forthcoming; Chapter 8).

'canonical' drinking consumption event. There are a number of issues to be addressed with respect to this proposition.

First, we can show plausibly that the ceramic deposit represents one deposition event which is separate, and perhaps earlier, than the other remains on the site. Furthermore, although Patrikies has been characterised as a settlement, there are no other remains apart from the one excavated building[22]. The latter does not appear to be a dwelling, as it consists of a series of rectangular rooms with no openings, which would make more sense as part of a warehouse or storage unit of some kind. The rooms were also found empty with the exception of some fragments of storage jars, most commonly pithoi, while the built benches in three of them are frequently found in storerooms. The excavators state that the site continued to be occupied during Protopalatial times, however there is nothing in the triangular deposit dating to later than MMIA (Walberg 1983: 91; MacGillivray 1998: 100-101; Warren & Hankey 1989: 20). Even if the building remained in use during Protopalatial times, the character of this occupation is meagre and unclear. In subsequent periods, moreover, such occupation is only very sporadic and could have a religious attribute, as may be hinted by the presence of a clay figurine of a type found in peak sanctuaries[23].

The suggestion that the building is later than the deposit (albeit probably within the same ceramic phase) is supported by the evidence of the road. As the excavators noted, the road appeared to make a significant detour in order to include Patrikies in its course. We could argue then that this road was built after the teapots had been deposited in the site, with the specific purpose of connecting this site with Phaistos and Ag. Triada. The conclusions to be drawn are two: a) the site does not seem to be a settlement, as it consists of only one building that may have been used as a storeroom; b) the ceramic

[22] Bonacasa (1967-68: 22) notes that the surrounding area was explored but with no results. He attributes the absence of other remains to poor preservation.

[23] Bonacasa (1967-68: 48-49) notes the stylistic analogies of the Patrikies figurine with figurines from the peak sanctuary of Petsofas, but he does not specify whether these are restricted to Protopalatial examples or they extent to Neopalatial parallels too.

deposit was the result of one deposition, and the site itself was chronologically shallow, being used consistently for only one phase.

It seems, then, that the most important element on the site was the ceramic deposit, the other two features being constructed afterwards and in order to mark the presence of the deposit there. If the deposit was not the result of a drinking ceremony as such, is there any other evidence connecting it with such events? We have argued so far for the production as well as the consumption of wine gaining in significance among the Mesaran communities during the late Prepalatial. We have also argued for serving vessels such as the teapots symbolising more the *collectivity* of the drinking ceremony and also discussed the possibility that wine production may have been the shared responsibility of entire communities. In this respect, we could see the presence of so many serving vessels and the absence of drinking shapes as having a symbolism connected with wine production, perhaps brought there by several of the wine producing communities of the region. Even if drinking vessels of perishable materials (e.g. wood) are postulated, this still does not explain the very large number of teapots (ca. 200), neither the rarity of other types of serving vessels, such as jugs, and even storage jars which could have been used to transport the drink. Therefore, the preferential survival of teapots over other ceramic types would seem to be a meaningful attribute of the assemblage rather than a discovery bias, and their deposition may have had a symbolic message. Moreover, as there are no traces of an earlier habitation on the site, it would seem more plausible to interpret the deposit as the product of the gathering of a substantial number of people who were not residents at the site.

Thus Patrikies is a one-period site which comprises a ceremonial deposit possibly connected with wine and a building resembling a storehouse nearby. If the above suggestions are accepted, Patrikies would seem to be the only site where any type of wine 'consumption' can be documented outside of the cemeteries, and this appears to be intentional; after the deposition of the teapots the area was never disturbed, despite occasional visits on the site. Although drinking events held at the late Prepalatial cemeteries no longer had an exclusively funerary character, such ceremonies had never been held outside of these contexts anywhere in the region, a restriction that could

perhaps account for the peculiar contents of the deposit (not a proper drinking consumption assemblage). Given the very large number of vessels and the absence of earlier habitation on the site, it could be suggested that this deposition event might have been the combined effort of a number of Mesaran communities. In this respect, Patrikies may represent the first collective event of regional scale since the FN period and would seem to encompass in embryonic form all the main elements that combine to form the character of the First Palace at Phaistos.

If at the end of the Prepalatial the Mesara appears to be a politically fragmented landscape whereby communities are entrenched in 'wars' of competitive symbolism, then Patrikies would be the first integrative attempt with regional appeal, only surpassed in scale by the establishment of the First Palace at the end of MMIA. Why and how would such an integration be allowed by the resistant Mesaran communities, why in Patrikies – a site that all appearances show to have no history prior or after the event of the deposition – and what did it entail for the future history of the region?

First, it would appear that the competitive strategies of the late Prepalatial period had reached a breaking point. On the one hand, if the different communities persisted in their very localised strategies, conflict (perhaps violent) would have been an inevitable outcome. On the other hand, such competition no longer seemed to be very effective; if there are no set frameworks within which competition can be channelled then its results cannot be assessed. Competition only makes sense if its outcome is evident and accepted by an eligible audience. The late Prepalatial communities were striving to be different or better from one another, but the results of this effort, spread in space and time, were not particularly obvious to anybody. In this sense, even if the establishment of an integrative mechanism at regional scale, which could frame and direct competitive strategies, was not pursued for purely peaceful and altruistic purposes, it was surely desirable for antagonistic purposes.

Secondly, it comes as no surprise that the medium of such integration is to be found in drinking ceremonies. These ceremonies have been part of the 'regional heritage' of the Mesara for nearly a millennium, and even though they had changed remarkably in form,

content and signification, they still remained the primary social arena in the life of every Mesaran community. They were familiar, relevant and important for the entire region. In this sense, they would constitute the most favourable common ground upon which such communities could build alliances again. Moreover, the polysemous nature of such events made them less threatening to the participants, by allowing power positions to remain negotiable.

Finally, the increased significance of wine as the drink consumed in such events might have provided an economic incentive behind such integrative attempts. If the production of wine involved high labour input and investment risk, and since large quantities of it were required, then perhaps its centralised production for the benefit of the entire region would make an appealing argument for integration. The close connection of wine consumption (and perhaps production) with the Palace of Phaistos will be demonstrated in the following chapters. Suffice to say at this point that the most commonly mentioned commodity in the Linear A documents of Phaistos is wine (Weingarten 1994a: n.21) and the interpretation of palaces as venues for large scale feasting has already been argued by a number of scholars (Hamilakis 1996; 1999; 2002c; Day & Wilson 2002; Driessen 2002; Schoep 2002b).

I argue, therefore, that the deposit at Patrikies and the subsequent building of a storage unit on the site may have been the first attempt by the Mesaran communities to apply such principles to actions. Moreover, the abandonment of the site by the Protopalatial period coincides with the completion of the first building phase of the Palatial edifice at Phaistos. Considering the political circumstances in the Mesara during the late Prepalatial period, such an attempt had to have a broad basis of collective support in order to be successful. An integrative mechanism of such scale, manipulating resources which were at the centre of social reproduction throughout the region could only be allowed in the socio-political milieu of the Mesara if it would not threaten already established balances and social positions. This is not to argue, though, that centralisation and hierarchical structures did not come into play in the course of establishing such a mechanism. However, as will be shown below, special care was taken to moderate the

effects of such controlling means, and the political and administrative reach of the palace was not always permitted to penetrate every aspect of life.

On the other hand, the choice of Patrikies as the location for the first drinking consumption event outside of a funerary context appears rather surprising. After all, Phaistos had been associated with such events since the FN and the symbolism of this connection did not seem to be entirely forgotten. Why not go immediately to Phaistos then? The answer probably lies with Ag. Triada. If at the end of the Prepalatial the nature of habitation at Phaistos is not clear, Ag. Triada has been a thriving site since the EMI period. By the late Prepalatial its cemetery is amongst the most active in the region and continues to play an important part in the life of the site throughout the entire Protopalatial period (see Chapter 7). If there was a contender for regional domination at the end of the Prepalatial this should have been Ag. Triada, not Phaistos. Why is then the Palace built at Phaistos?

If Patrikies represented a joint collaboration of all the Mesaran communities the main principle of which was the establishment of an integrative mechanism that would allow them to continue to hold their important drinking ceremonies while at the same time provide a formalised venue for competition, then it is not surprising that perhaps the most prominent site of the region at this time was not chosen to host such a project. The Palace appeared to be a collective idea for a collective purpose. There were too many important communities involved (such as perhaps Koumasa, Platanos, Moni Odigitria) to allow Ag. Triada to hijack this operation for its own benefits. On the other hand, despite the fragmentary evidence, it is clear that there was a MMI community at Phaistos which would probably have a quite active role in influencing the choice of location for a scheme with such a regional appeal. In this region, where tradition and history had always been at a prime, the symbolism of the past of Phaistos could not go unnoticed. Phaistos had been after all the 'archetypal palace' since FN times. Even if the site had fallen on lean years during the Prepalatial period, this may have been one more reason to prefer it over Ag. Triada: it had the history, but its political power at this stage did not appear intimidating. Thus Phaistos appeared as a more unifying ground upon which to base regional integration. The intimate connection of its symbolism with

drinking ceremonies would have made its appeal even wider. However, the collective nature of this new venture meant that tensions had to be appeased and solutions negotiated, not imposed. So the choice of Patrikies might have been ideal: a site with no history halfway between the two sites with the most important histories in the entire region.

The palace as the material embodiment of such integration only made sense as an establishment with a wide and co-operative base in the Mesara. Neither did any individual site have the means to establish such a mechanism, nor would any of the other communities easily succumb to external control. As will be argued in Chapter 7, the architectural evolution of the palace of Phaistos supports its initial inception as a co-operative project, a feature which can be detected in many aspects of its operation even at the end of the Protopalatial period.

6.6. Contested regions, new arenas

The negotiation and performance of collective identity seems to have always been at the centre of social strategies in prehistoric Mesara, making thus the practices at the heart of this negotiation particularly visible and enduring; making them *social arenas*. In the later Prepalatial period, such social arenas were embedded in the organisation of every different community.

From the EMII period onwards intensified needs for differentiation made the individual settlements/cemeteries the units of community integration, but did so by using the same means and social currencies as all the other communities in the area. Every community was appealing to and manipulating similar social practices, but at much smaller scales than before, thus transforming entirely the purpose and the meaning of such practices. If changes in the setting of ceremonial activity triggered changes in the mechanisms of communal integration during EMI, from EMII onwards, it was the different integrative needs that transformed the ceremonial activity itself, and by implication altered the meaning and the importance of the ceremonial settings.

At the end of the Prepalatial period, therefore, the Mesara was not one *region*, but several, small and distinct *regions* striving to be distinguished from each other, even by using exactly the same competitive means. The symbolic and physical boundaries of such communities were at the focus of ceremonial action and constituted the main concern of collective strategies. Communal practices at the scale of every different settlement/cemetery received the most exaggerated attention, often at the expense of more personal negotiation processes, which were carefully monitored and were not allowed to surpass the community boundary. From this context of intensified competitive strategies, drinking ceremonies emerged as the new social arena, as the medium through which both integration and negotiation was possible. Their significance continually increased and by the late Prepalatial period, drinking ceremonies had become the main negotiation strategy, both in the collective and personal domains, in the life of every Mesaran community. This was a transformation which was to bear greatly upon the social processes of the subsequent Protopalatial period.

The competing *regions* of the Mesara at the end of the Prepalatial period would only become integrated again under an entirely new regime, which capitalised upon the importance of long established traditions of life and death through which communal and personal identities had been played out for more than a millennium. Even though the founding of the First Palaces coincided in the entire island, it is no coincidence that the Mesara boasted one of the earliest such structures. As it was perhaps no coincidence that this was established at Phaistos, a site that even amongst extreme contention throughout the entire Prepalatial period, re-emerged as a symbol of regional identity. It could even be suggested that if the Palace had not manipulated the *regional* past, embodied in the symbolic nature of the Phaistos hill, the emergence of Palatial authority might not have been such a successful operation within the highly fragmented and contested social landscapes of late Prepalatial Mesara. Traditions do not die out easily and reputations fight back. Phaistos was acquiring a devoted audience again.