

# Minoan Architecture and Urbanism

*New Perspectives on an Ancient  
Built Environment*

*Edited by*  
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## 14

# Dining on the Fringe? A Possible Minoan-Style Banquet Hall at Ayia Irini, Kea and the Minoanization of the Aegean Islands

Rodney D. Fitzsimons and Evi Gorogianni

## 14.1. INTRODUCTION

Since its excavation by John Caskey and the University of Cincinnati from 1960 to 1976, Ayia Irini has served as one of the principal catalysts for investigations into the spread of Minoan culture throughout the Aegean in the later Middle and early Late Bronze Age (Fig. 14.1).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the abundance, concentration, and range of ceramic, architectural, iconographic, technological, and administrative evidence at the site that was inspired by, adapted, and/or adopted from the Cretan cultural package suggests that it functioned as one of the key nodes in the complex web of exchange networks that facilitated the dissemination of non-local traits across the region throughout this period (Fig. 14.2) (Abell 2014; Berg 2006, 2007; Davis 1979; Davis and Gorogianni 2008; Dietz 1998; Graziadio 1998; Knappett and Nikolakopoulou 2005; Knappett, Evans, and Rivers 2008; Knappett 2011; Nikolakopoulou 2007; Papagiannopoulou 1991; Schofield 1982a, 1982b, 1983, 1984a).

Despite the quantity, quality, and variety of such evidence at Ayia Irini, however, only a single structure in the settlement, House A, has been hitherto recognized as betraying any indication of Minoan architectural influence (Fig. 14.3) (e.g. Berg 2007: 114; Cummer 1980; Cummer and Schofield 1984; Hitchcock 1998: 173; Letesson 2009: 298–303; Whitelaw 2005: 56).<sup>2</sup> Currently located in the south-east quadrant of the site, though originally probably closer to its centre if changes in sea level are taken into account (Caskey 1962: 266, 278; 1964: 321; 1966: 365; 1971: 362), House A underwent a series of remodellings over the course of the Late Minoan IA through LM II periods (Cummer and Schofield 1984: 30–5; or Periods VI and VII in Caskey's local pottery terminology), the end result of which produced an interesting blend of

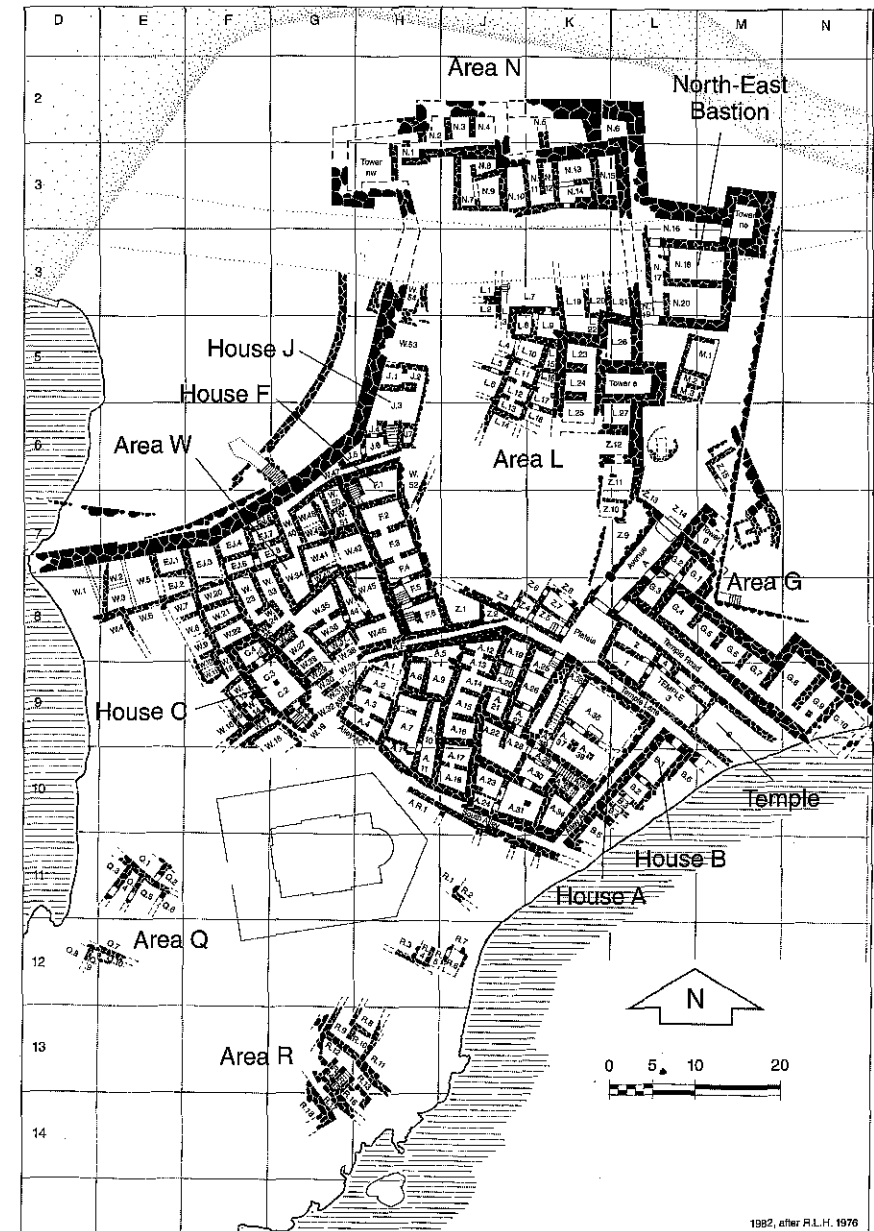


Fig. 14.1. Plan of Ayia Irini (after Cummer and Schofield 1984: pl. 3, drawn by R. L. Holzen; courtesy of the University of Cincinnati).

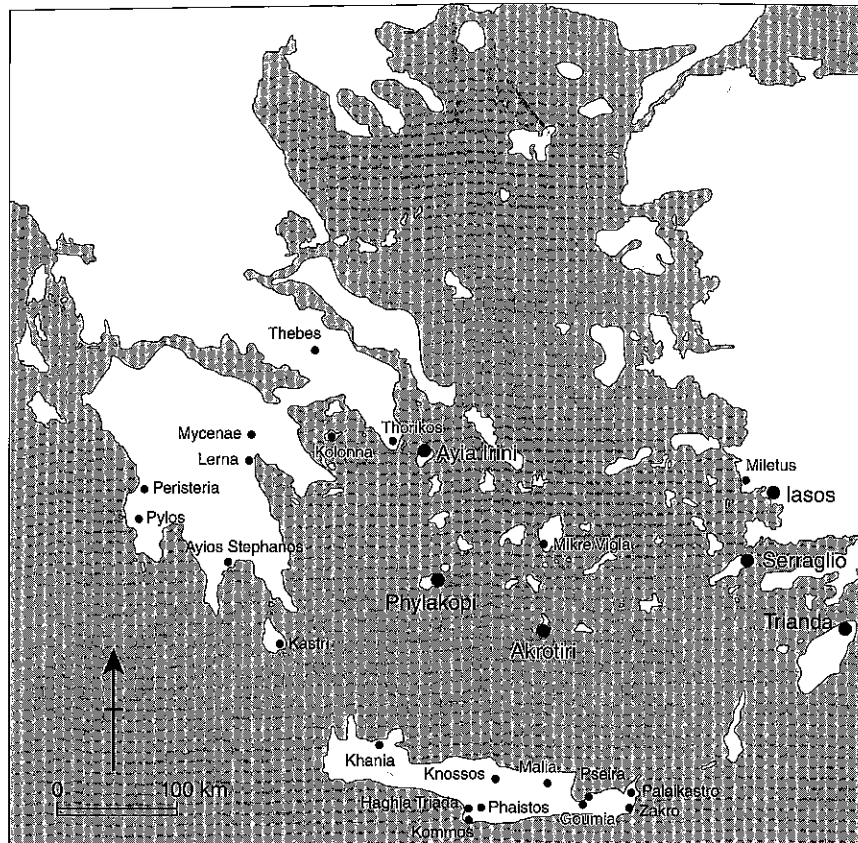


Fig. 14.2. Map of the Aegean, showing sites mentioned in this chapter (adapted by R. D. Fitzsimons from Dickinson 1994: fig. 4.10).

local and Minoanizing features. The latter, though perhaps sometimes over-emphasized in the scholarly literature,<sup>3</sup> are evidenced in the eastern reaches of the complex, where the primary social and ritual rooms were housed, and are most notable in the inclusion of specific room types and design features, such as the modified light well with its associated windows in Room A.23 (Cummer and Schofield 1984: 18, 32, 36–7, and 41), the so-called pillar crypt in basement Room A.31 (Cummer and Schofield 1984: 15–16, 35, and 36), the switch-back staircase with *sottoscala* in A.32 and A.35 (Cummer and Schofield 1984: 6, 17, 36), and the pseudo-pier-and-door partition in the south wall of Court A.36.<sup>4</sup> Further possible Minoan traits can be seen, for example, in the presence of richly coloured wall paintings (Abramovitz 1980: 77, 78–82, 84–5; Caskey 1966: 374; Coleman 1973: 286–93); in the use of slab pavements with red plaster in the interstices (Hitchcock 1998: 172); and in the overall



Fig. 14.3. Plan of House A, after Cummer and Schofield 1984: pls 6–7 (drawn by W. W. Cummer after 1:50 field plans by L. E. Cotsen; courtesy of the University of Cincinnati).

approach to planning, with the block-like arrangement of rooms in the east differing markedly from the tendency toward linear arrangements evidenced both in the western rooms of the house and elsewhere in the settlement (Cummer and Schofield 1984: 30, 40–1; Gorogianni and Fitzsimons 2010; Letesson 2009: 300–2; Papagiannopoulou 1991: 242).

While neither the exact mechanisms by which such foreign elements came to be incorporated into this structure nor the precise identity of its builders or occupants is certain, House A is almost universally labelled as the residence of the settlement's ruling authority (Berg 2007; Cummer 1980: 5; Davis 1984: 164; Davis and Gorogianni 2008: 347; Morgan 1998: 201; Papagiannopoulou 1991: 242, 260, 261; Petruso 1992: 35; Schofield 1982a: 18, 21; 1982b: 10; 1998: 119). Caskey, for example, in the foreword to its final publication, described House A as 'the largest single building and presumably the most important in the economic life of the community... (and later)... the principal building of its time on the site'. Cummer and Schofield, who authored the final publication, referred to it as 'a royal residence (or at least the seat of the governing authority)' and a 'microcosm' of the Minoan palaces, while other terms such as 'administrative centre', 'mansion', and even 'palace' have also been applied to it. Such labels are strengthened by, if not predicated upon, the observation that the rest of the site was dominated by structures of purely local design and construction throughout the entire 'Minoanizing' era. As a result, most discussions of Minoanization at Ayia Irini seem to assume the existence of a single, elite faction resident in House A, be it local or Cretan in origin, that was the primary (or even sole) driving force behind the introduction and incorporation of Minoan cultural elements into the settlement.

Such a top-down perspective, however, not only takes for granted the existence of a strict hierarchical system of government (Gorogianni and Fitzsimons 2016) but also runs the risk of overemphasizing the role played by the residents of House A in the socio-political landscape of the settlement, and relegating to the position of passive, almost involuntary, observers the other inhabitants of the site. Indeed, current discussions of Minoanization challenge more and more this traditional position and employ instead a distinctly bottom-up approach that explores the active, rather than passive, nature of the role played by settlements and their constituent inhabitants in the islands and on the Greek mainland in this process (e.g. Berg 2006: 139–40; 2007; Davis 1979, 1984; Dietz 1998; Davis and Gorogianni 2008; Graziadio 1998; Knappett and Nikolakopoulou 2008; Nikolakopoulou 2009; Schofield 1982a; Whitelaw 2005). This approach, which emphasizes the deliberate and conscious nature of individual and group participation in the socio-political and economic developments of the late Middle and early Late Bronze Age, has succeeded in demonstrating that the precise composition of the Minoan cultural package adopted by native communities and the manner in which it was integrated into the local symbolic vocabulary differed significantly in both

quantitative and qualitative terms, not only between, but also within, those settlements operating within these regional exchange networks.

It is against such an intellectual background that this chapter presents some of the preliminary results of the Ayia Irini Northern Sector Archaeological Project (AINSAP) on the suite of rooms known as the North-east Bastion, the architectural, material, and iconographic evidence from which has led to its tentative identification as a Minoan-style banquet hall. This chapter will argue further that the existence of a second, distinct establishment of Minoan character located some distance from House A not only strengthens the position of Ayia Irini as one of the primary conduits for the reception and transmission of Minoan and Minoanizing cultural traits throughout the Aegean, but also provides further indication that the adoption, adaptation, and integration of such traits served as an important mechanism for the negotiation of status between members of individual communities. And, finally, we will conclude by offering a few observations that might, on the one hand, serve to illustrate the rather distinctive nature of the processes involved in the transmission of architectural, as opposed to artefactual, traits, and on the other, stimulate interest in exploring in more detailed and systematic fashion the Minoanized (and non-Minoanized) architectural landscape of the larger Aegean world.

#### 14.2. THE NORTH-EAST BASTION

The North-east Bastion (Fig. 14.4) was excavated over the course of seven seasons in the 1960s, but—despite the richness of its contents and its physical prominence in the architectural landscape of the settlement—it has received little attention in the scholarly literature (Caskey 1964: 322; 1971: 374–5, 390; Gorogianni and Fitzsimons 2016: 144–9, 151). In his 1971 preliminary report, for example, Caskey (1971: 376) remarked upon its intimate connection with the fortification wall and suggested that the rooms on its upper storey housed members of the site's military personnel, though he provided no justification for or further elaboration on his suggestion. More recently, Lyvia Morgan (1990: 253; 1998; forthcoming) has emphasized the elaborate nature of its fresco decoration, the scale of its construction, and its dominating position overlooking the eastern approaches to the settlement, and has suggested that the rooms on its upper storey housed elite feasting activities associated with public festivals held in the open space east of the settlement (see also Marinatos and Morgan 2005: 120; Morgan forthcoming). By and large, however, aside from these brief mentions, and the preliminary publication of the fresco fragments by Katherine Abramovitz in 1980, the North-east Bastion has

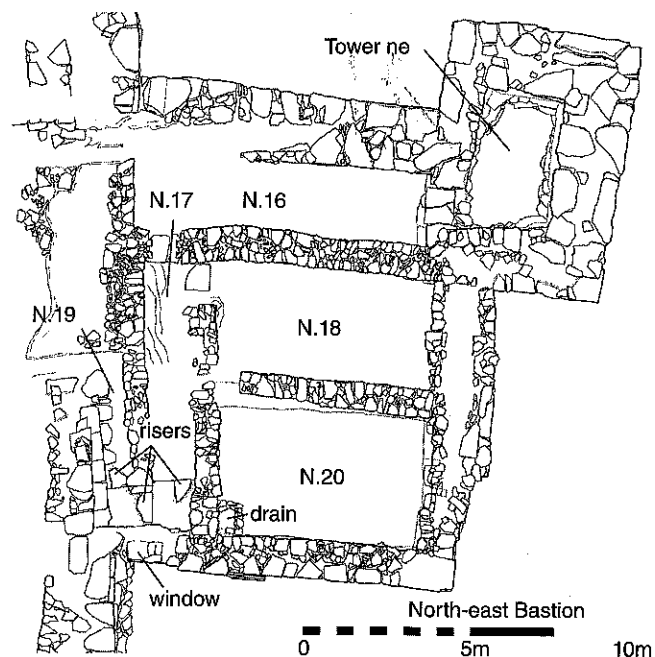


Fig. 14.4. Plan of the North-east Bastion (drawn by W. W. Cummer and inked by R. D. Fitzsimons; courtesy of the University of Cincinnati).

not figured into many discussions on Minoanization (see also Marinatos and Morgan 2005: 120–2).

One of the primary reasons for its omission from scholarly discourse is likely the spectacular nature of the discoveries from other areas of the settlement, notably the rich and well-preserved remains from House A and the striking collection of female figures from the so-called Temple (Caskey 1986). Compounding this situation is the fact that the entire northern extent of the settlement suffered severe damage on several occasions after its abandonment at the end of Period VIIa (LM IB),<sup>5</sup> thus hindering study of its remains. As early as the fourth or fifth century CE, for example, a significant portion of the fortification wall was dismantled and its stones melted down for the production of lime, as is indicated by the presence of a Late Roman kiln north of the North-east Bastion (Caskey 1971: 374). More recently, the construction of a roadway in the 1920s or 1930s across the northern reaches of the site obliterated almost all traces of ancient occupation in the area, resulting in the removal, in some areas, of up to 2 metres of fill (Davis 1986: 9, 12; Caskey 1964: 322; 1971: 372, 373). Further difficulties arose, moreover, once excavations commenced. The walls to the south of the road cutting, for instance, which in some cases were preserved to well over 2.5 metres in height, had been

so damaged by the earthquake that struck the site in the LM IB period that they had to be partially dismantled to allow excavations to proceed (Figs 14.5 and 14.6). And, as work progressed, the high level of the water table meant that only two rooms and parts of two others could be excavated down to floor level (Caskey 1971: 374). Despite these difficulties, however, both the overall form and function of the North-east Bastion, at least of its ground floor, seem relatively well established.

The northern, eastern, and southern sides of the complex were established by the expansion of the fortification system early in Period VI (LM IA), part of the massive rebuilding programme that was undertaken at the end of Period V (MM IIIA) (Caskey 1972: 386–91; 1979; 1981: 323); its current western limit is defined by the course of the original line of the Period V fortification wall (Davis 1986: 8–15), although it is possible that the complex once extended further west into the area destroyed by the old road cutting. A wide corridor, N.16, running along the northern side of the building opened at its eastern end on to a small, rectangular chamber, Tower ne. A series of small chases set into the walls of this chamber at roughly the same level as the threshold likely served to support a wooden floor, beneath which was set a small crawlspace used for storage, an arrangement that has also been proposed for Tower e (Davis 1986: 13–14) and some of the rooms in House A (Cummer and Schofield 1984: 33). Another doorway at the western end of N.16 opened on to a second corridor running to the south, into whose eastern wall were cut two further doorways. The northern

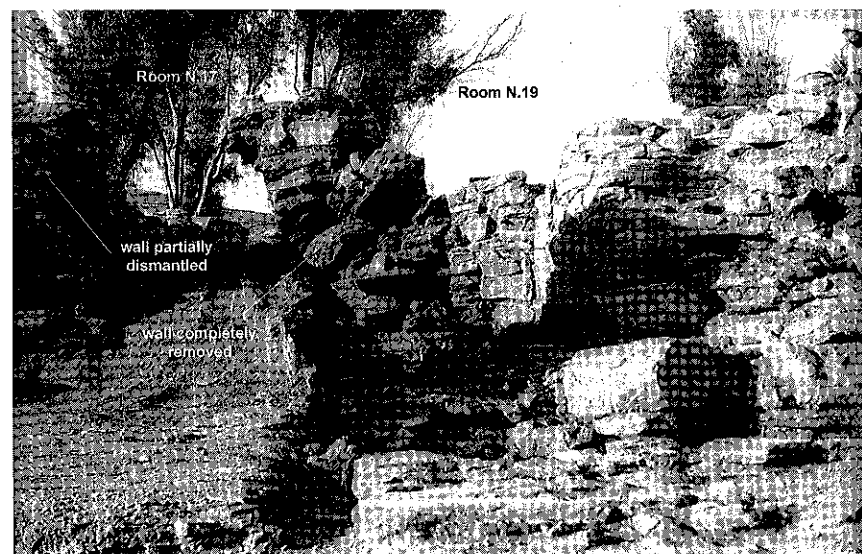


Fig. 14.5. Rooms N.17 and N.19 from the north, showing the state of the walls upon excavation in 1966 (photograph courtesy of the University of Cincinnati (KA-125-00A)).

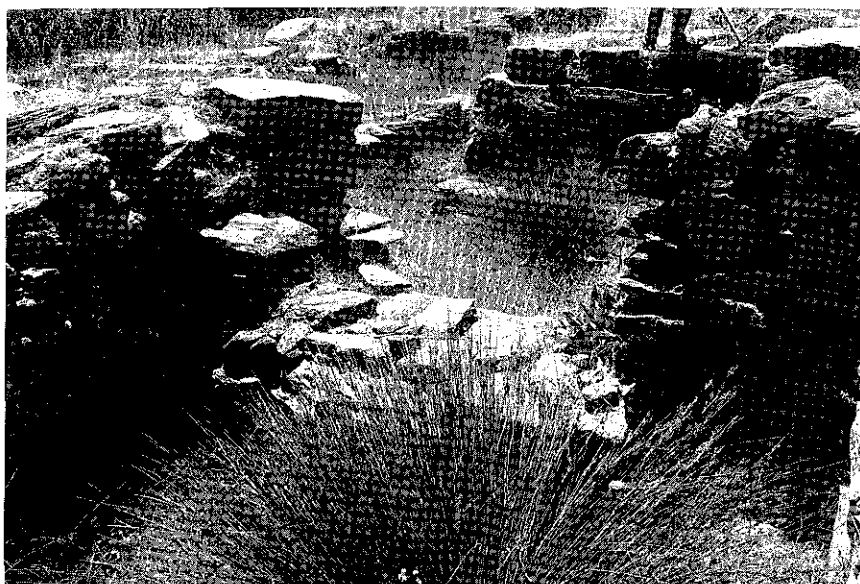


Fig. 14.6. Rooms N.17 and N.19 from the north, showing the current state of the walls (photograph by R. D. Fitzsimons).

door, whose threshold was brought to light roughly 20 cm below the water table, opened on to a large, rectangular chamber, N.18, into whose floor were sunk eleven pithoi, suggesting that this room functioned as the primary storage facility for the North-east Bastion. The southern door, which does not appear to have been cleared during excavation and which does not always appear on the published plans, opened on to a second, somewhat larger, rectangular chamber, into whose south-west corner was constructed a vertical drain that served to evacuate liquids from the upper storey to the exterior area to the south (Caskey 1971: 376, 390). Excavation in N.20 was halted before ground level was reached, but given the presence of the storage room to the north and the likely existence of a banquet hall on the upper storey, to be posited shortly, it seems probable that this room housed the main kitchen of the establishment, an assertion also supported by the pottery in the room.<sup>6</sup> The southern end of the north-south corridor appears to have been occupied by a well-built switchback staircase that served to provide communication between the upper and lower levels of the North-east Bastion (Fig. 14.7). One short flight of schist risers rose about 1 m to a paved landing, from which a second flight of risers, in N.19, ascended to the upper storey. A wide opening in the wall south of the landing is usually described as the main entrance to the building from the south (Caskey 1971: 376; Morgan 1998: 201), but the supposed threshold of this door rests roughly 80 cm above the landing, rendering such an identification impossible. Instead, it seems more likely that this opening housed the wooden frame and sill



Fig. 14.7. Rooms N.17 and N.19 from the south, showing the remains of the switch-back staircase and window sill (photograph courtesy of the University of Cincinnati (KA-142-17A)).

for a large window, rough cuttings for which are still discernable in the stones along its west side.<sup>7</sup>

The precise arrangement of the rooms in the upper storey cannot be ascertained with absolute certainty, but there are some indications that it mirrored the plan of the basement level.<sup>8</sup> A vertical seam in the western end of the north wall of Room N.20 may be the remnants of the east jamb of a doorway, while a flattish stone with a worn upper surface set immediately to its west could have served as its threshold (Fig. 14.8). It seems probable, therefore, that the space above Rooms N.18 and N.20 was occupied by two communicating rooms, a suggestion made also by Morgan on the basis of her identification of two distinct types of floor plaster fallen into the basement (Morgan 1998: 202; forthcoming). A series of vertical chases set into the eastern and southern walls of Room N.20 likely served to support the wooden substructure of the upper floor (Caskey 1971: 376), the level of which accords well with the proposed threshold and the top of the drain in the south-west corner of the room, while a large number of schist slabs fallen into the basement appear to be the remnants of stone paving.<sup>9</sup> The most spectacular aspect of the upper storey, however, is perhaps the rich decoration with which its walls were adorned (Abramovitz 1980; Morgan 1990, 1998, forthcoming): a number of panels bearing images of late summer plants, including blackberry bushes and myrtle, decorated the walls of the northern room, while a series of



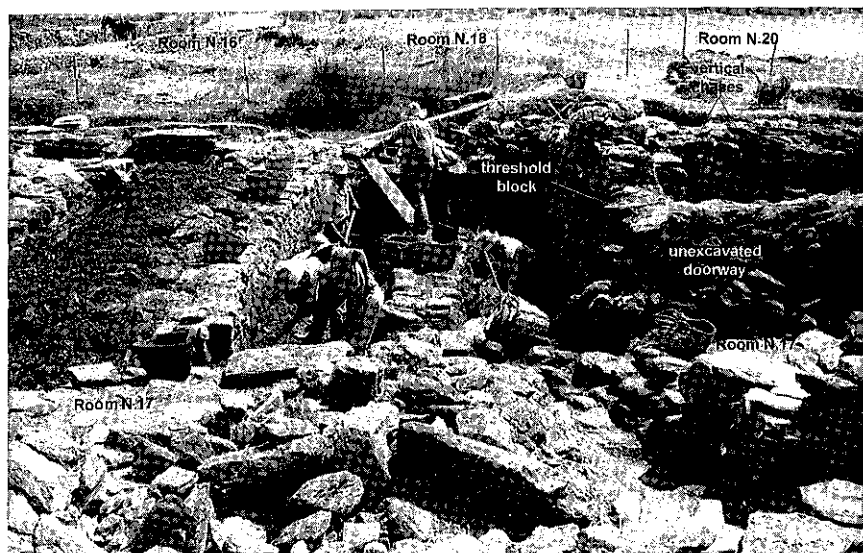


Fig. 14.8. Rooms N.18 and N.19 from the west, showing possible features associated with upper storey (photograph courtesy of the University of Cincinnati (KA-142-22)).

miniature frescoes depicting many men (some in procession, some cooking at a cauldron, some hunting a deer with dogs), a few women (including one running and one standing at a window), horses (and some chariots), and a number of ships against a backdrop formed by architectural facades, and a landscape featuring a river, rocky terrain, and vegetation (thistle and marshy plants) adorned the walls of the southern room. Though there is no direct evidence for such a construction, Morgan's suggestion that the eastern and southern walls of the upper storey were provided with multiple pier-and-window partitions is attractive,<sup>10</sup> since not only would such an arrangement provide the room with abundant light and air, it would also afford its occupants a spectacular view of any public gatherings that took place to the east and south.<sup>11</sup>

#### 14.3. A MINOAN BANQUET HALL AT AYIA IRINI

Few of the elements evident in the design and construction of the North-east Bastion find parallel elsewhere at Ayia Irini, most notably the use of switchback staircases, the incorporation of multiple, long corridors, and the large size of the two eastern rooms and their strict rectilinear design. Switchback staircases do appear in House A, where there are two examples (Cummer and Schofield 1984: 6, 17, 36), and probably in the central section of Area N (Gorogianni, Cutler, and Fitzsimons 2015), while the eastern quadrant of

House A and two complexes of axially arranged rooms built against the fortification wall in Areas G (Caskey 1964: 377; 1971: 383) and L (Caskey 1964: 322–3; 1971: 383) do appear somewhat rectilinear in character. For the most part, however, the overall design of the North-east Bastion contrasts quite strongly with the rest of the settlement, where the dominant feature is the linear arrangement of small, rectangular or trapezoidal rooms connected by doorways aligned down their centre or along their side. Preliminary analysis suggests that such room strings stand as the hallmark of the local building tradition at Ayia Irini (Whitelaw 2005: 56; Gorogianni and Fitzsimons 2016: 148),<sup>12</sup> where they occur in a variety of settings: sometimes as independent buildings, as is the case of House F and several smaller structures in Areas W and L (Schofield 2011: 3–28);<sup>13</sup> sometimes along the interior face of the fortification wall, as in the examples cited above in Areas G and L, as well as in Area N; and sometimes as subunits of larger complexes, as in the western basements of House A. It seems likely, therefore, that those responsible for the construction of the North-east Bastion drew their inspiration from sources that lay beyond the traditional building practices of the island itself.

In fact, the best parallels for the formal and functional arrangement of space here would appear to be found in the Neopalatial palaces of Crete, in those suites of rooms bordering the central courts which Graham (1961) labelled 'Banquet Halls'. At Malia, for instance, above Rooms IX1 and IX2, Graham (1961: 168–9) reconstructed a columned hall provided with wide windows on the southern wall and accessed via the switchback staircase in IXa–b, while to the north, a second stairwell communicated with the storage facilities in blocks IX, XXI, and XXII and the food preparation areas in blocks XXIV and XXV (Fig. 14.9). Graham proposed that similar arrangements existed in the north wings of the palaces at Phaistos and Kato Zakros, as well perhaps in and above the North Pillar Hall at Knossos (Graham 1961, 1975), while Soles (1991: 64–5) argued for the existence of yet another banquet hall complex on the north side of the central court at Gournia. It is true that the North-east Bastion does not copy in wholesale or mechanical fashion the formal and functional arrangement of space in these Cretan complexes, but neither is it true that any of them are slavish imitations of one another. Instead, as was the case with the spread of palatial architectural elements across Crete and the Aegean in general, it is rather the conception of how the space was to be organized and the social and ritual activities which it was intended to house that were of primary importance. In effect, then, those who commissioned and those who constructed the North-east Bastion, and indeed, the east wing of House A, made a deliberate and conscious decision not to mimic, but to adopt, adapt, and integrate those specific design features that best suited their purposes (Shaw 1978; Schofield 1982a: 11), an observation that has also been made by Abramovitz (1980: 69–71) and Morgan (1990; 1998: 204–5; forthcoming) with regard to the wall paintings recovered from across the settlement (see also Coleman 1973: 285, 293).



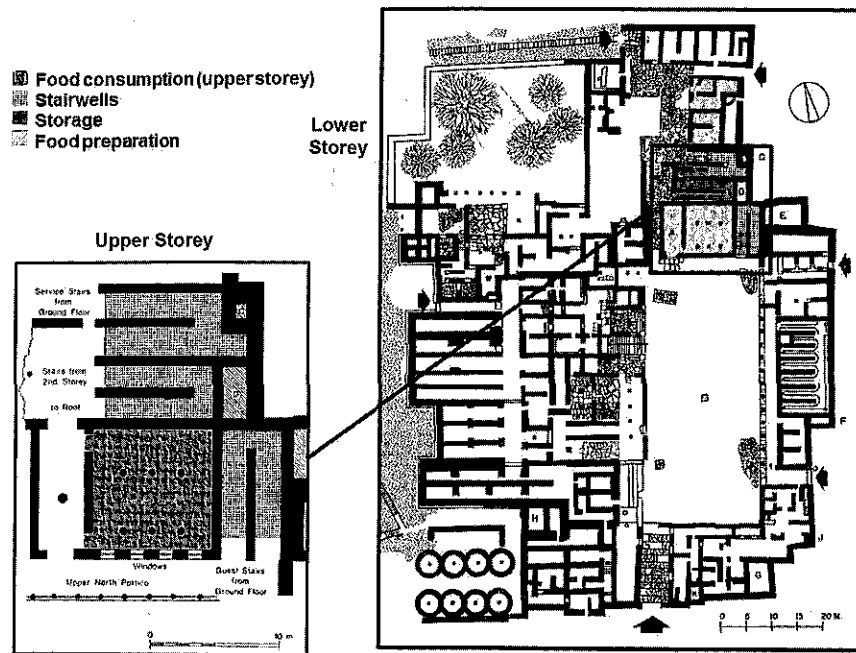


Fig. 14.9. Plan of the palace and possible banquet hall at Malia (adapted by R. D. Fitzsimons from Graham 1987: fig. 6).

More important, perhaps, than merely identifying the presence of a second complex at Ayia Irini that incorporates Cretan architectural features, or indeed, of enumerating them in list-like fashion, is assessing the significance of such a structure in the socio-political landscape of the settlement. The scale of its design and the elaboration of its decoration leave no doubt that its construction required the expenditure of a significant amount of human and capital resources, and it is tempting, therefore, to associate the North-east Bastion with the occupants of House A, for whom it would have served as an additional manifestation of high status and the control, economic or otherwise, that they exercised over the other inhabitants of the site. The intimate nature of its position within the expanded fortification system, moreover, itself a monumental expression of wealth and power, might then be viewed as further symbol of the prominent position held by this central authority.

Such an argument, however, rests upon the assumption that there was but a single faction within the community that possessed the desire and ability to access and incorporate architectural features derived from Minoan or other Aegean building traditions and mobilize sufficient resources to organize and implement the construction, or rather reconstruction, of the fortification system (Gorogianni and Fitzsimons 2016).<sup>14</sup> Given the fact that we lack direct

evidence for the nature of social and political organization not only on Kea but throughout the Aegean islands and even to a large extent on Crete itself (e.g. Hamilakis 2002), it is entirely possible that the socio-political landscape of Ayia Irini was less hierarchical than currently envisioned and rather more corporate in nature, a landscape populated by a variety of competing and cooperative factions possessed of different levels of desire and ability to participate in this game of Minoanization.<sup>15</sup> According to this approach, some residents of the settlement, such as those responsible for the construction of House A and the North-east Bastion, chose to refashion their physical environment by emulating the latest architectural, iconographic, administrative, and social fashions current amongst their peers on Minoan Crete. Others, such as the occupants of House C (Fig. 14.1) (Schofield 2011: 135–57), restricted either by desire or necessity, incorporated one or two non-local elements into the design of their domicile, or, as was the case with the occupants of House J (Fig. 14.1) (Caskey 1964: 323; Coleman 1973: 293–6; Schofield 2011: 79, 91),<sup>16</sup> adhered entirely to local building techniques, but nevertheless opted to decorate their traditional abodes in Minoan fashion. And still others, a significant portion of the local populace if the quantity of relevant finds is any indication, limited their involvement to the manufacture and trade of products in the new global exchange networks that were rapidly expanding across the region.<sup>17</sup> Such a scenario is not without parallel in the Aegean: indeed, a similarly varied architectural landscape, albeit one characterized by a more intense incorporation of non-local features and a much greater level of general wealth, is also evident at Akrotiri, where the same sort of heterarchical system can easily be envisioned as operating.

More problematic for such a scenario at Ayia Irini, perhaps, is the fortification system, the very presence of which would seem, on the surface at least, to support the notion of a single, central authority governing the settlement. It should be noted, however, that the original circuit wall was laid not in Period VI or VII, when House A was supposedly the dominant structure on the site, but rather in Period V, when there was no such singular edifice (Fig. 14.10). Moreover, close examination of the construction of the fortification wall reveals that it was not erected as a single unit, but rather was composed of discrete sections built in piecemeal fashion (Caskey 1971: 389). One explanation for such a phenomenon is that the labour force was composed of various gangs of workmen drawn from throughout the community, each of which was free to follow its own particular method of construction. And, while it is true that such a division of labour is not incompatible with the existence of a single, driving force behind this building programme, neither is it incompatible with a system in which different factions within the community combined their efforts in cooperative fashion to achieve the same end. In this light, it is interesting to note that the repairs and in particular, the expansion, undertaken to the fortification system in Period VI give the impression less of a

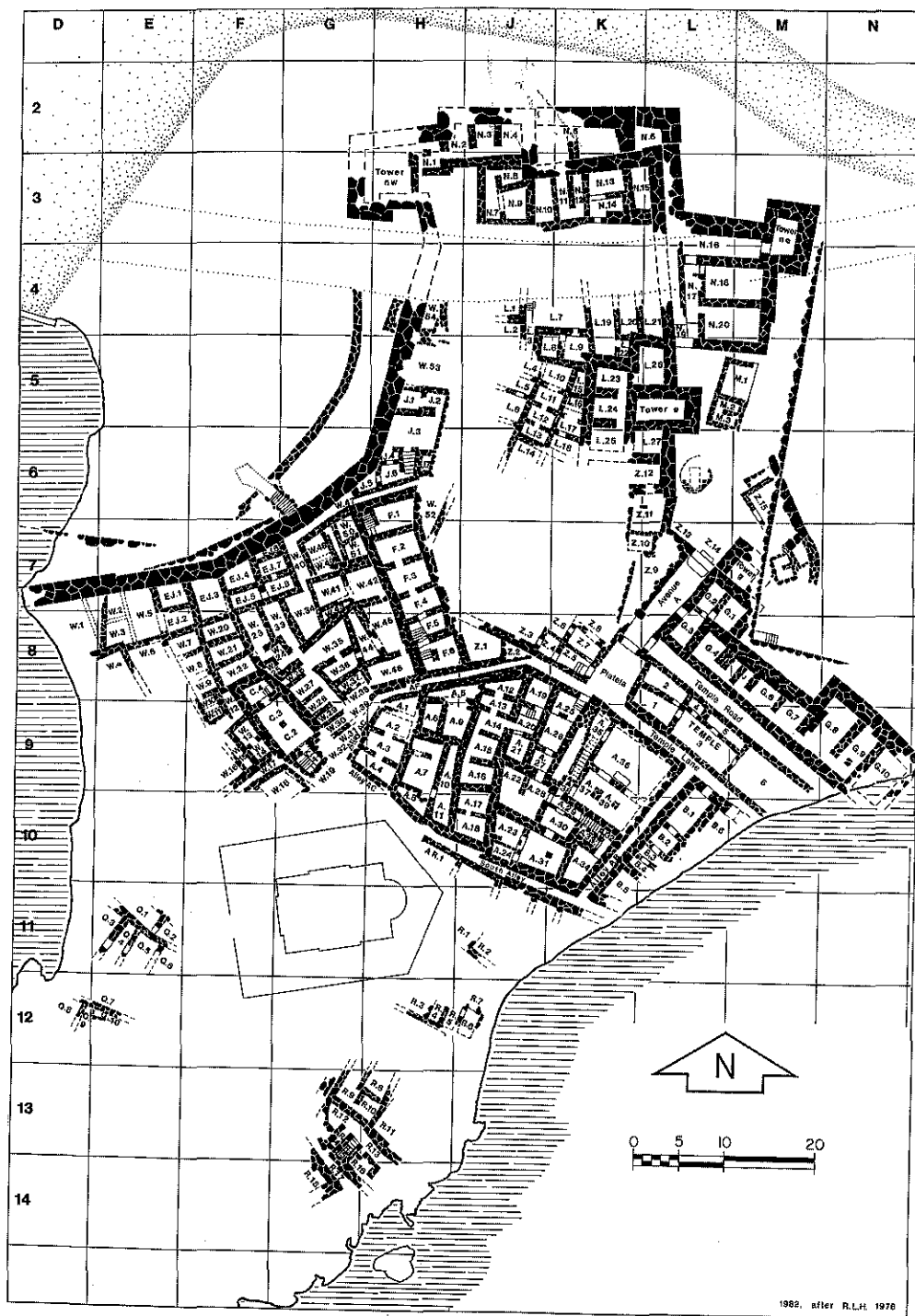


Fig. 14.10. Plan of Ayia Irini, showing Period V remains (modified by R. F. Fitzsimons following Davis 1986).

wholesale, site-wide renovation project conducted under the auspices of a central governing power, and more of a series of smaller, independent enhancements implemented by and for, at least directly, more discrete sections of the community.

#### 14.4. MINOANIZING ARCHITECTURE IN THE AEGEAN ISLANDS

The identification of a Minoan-style banquet hall in the North-east Bastion at Ayia Irini adds to the corpus of Cretan-influenced structures discovered across the Aegean (Fig. 14.2), but with the exception of Akrotiri (Palyvou 1986, 1990, 1999a, 1999b; Shaw 1978), and to some extent Phylakopi (Atkinson 1904; Brodie 2009; Mackenzie 1904; Renfrew et al. 2007a; Whitelaw 2005), none of the relevant sites has been published in a full and complete manner.<sup>18</sup> As a result, with an absence of appropriate architectural plans, a paucity of helpful photographs, and a shortage of discussions of the materials associated with these structures, it is difficult, if not impossible, to assess with any degree of detail or certainty the nature and significance of these structures. On the other hand, the available evidence is too tantalizing to ignore, and it is perhaps worthwhile to conclude this paper by noting the following three observations that may serve to provide a productive framework for future research on this topic.

The first observation is that the mere presence of Minoan architectural features in a structure cannot be taken as an indication that it housed the central authority of a settlement. While it is true that Iasos (Momigliano 2005, 2007, 2009), Phylakopi (Atkinson 1904: 40–1; Mackenzie 1904: 260–2, 269; Renfrew et al. 2007b: 50–3; Whitelaw 2005: 51–61), and the Seraglio on Kos (Marketou 1998: 63; Shaw 2009: 171; Vitale and Hancock 2010: 68; 2013: 50), have so far produced only single examples, it is important to note that limited sections of the relevant levels of these sites have yet been exposed. It is entirely possible, therefore, that additional such structures remain to be discovered, and that each site in fact housed multiple Minoanized buildings, as is the case at Akrotiri (e.g. Hood 1990; Palyvou 1986, 1990, 1999a, 1999b; Shaw 1978, 2009: 170–1), Trianda (Marketou 1988: 28–30; 1998: 45–9; 2009, 2010: 763–4; 2014; Shaw 2009: 171), and, as has been argued here, Ayia Irini (see also Shaw 2009: 171). But even if such turns out not to be the case, as has been demonstrated for a wealth of other features of the Minoan cultural package (e.g. Broodbank 2004; Davis 1984; Whitelaw 2005: 59–60), there is no reason to believe that the adoption and adaptation of Minoanized architectural elements was restricted to a single faction at any settlement in the region; indeed, palatial architectural features appear to have been employed in exactly the same fashion on Crete as well (Driessen 1982, 1989–90; McEnroe 1982).

The second observation is that, while some of these structures were provided with elaborate exterior facades, notably the Xeste buildings at Akrotiri and perhaps Building F at Iasos (Momigliano 2005: 218; 2009: 126–7), the focus of much of the Minoanizing architectural activity was more often the interior of the building. Moreover, while the specific combination of the imported design elements varied from structure to structure, the overall result of their juxtaposition appears often to have been the creation of formal spaces that mimicked the spatial configuration found in the banquet halls and Minoan hall systems of Neopalatial Crete (Driessen 1982; Hitchcock 1994; Letesson 2013; Marinatos and Hägg 1986; Shaw 2011). Two such examples have already been cited at Ayia Irini, in House A and the North-east Bastion. At Akrotiri, similar combinations of large, fresco-adorned rooms, pier-and-door partitions, and switchback staircases can be found, for instance, in the West House, Building Delta, and Xeste 3 and 4. An analogous combination of Minoanizing elements is also found at Phylakopi, where Atkinson's excavations in the early years of the last century brought to light a suite of basement rooms that included two storerooms in the form of pillar crypts flanking a possible switchback staircase (Atkinson 1904: 40–1; Mackenzie 1904: 260–2, 269; Morgan and Cameron 2007; Renfrew et al. 2007b: 50–3; Whitelaw 2005: 51–61). The presence of a few gamma-shaped pier bases and numerous fragments of painted plaster amongst the debris fallen into and around these rooms suggests the existence of a frescoed parlour provided with pier-and-door partitions on the upper storey, similar to those at Akrotiri and Ayia Irini. And though the larger architectural context into which they were set is missing in most cases, at least four additional pier-and-door partitions have been identified in Kos (Marketou 1998: 63; Shaw 2009: 171; Vitale and Hancock 2010: 68; 2013: 50) and Rhodes (Marketou 1988: 28–30; 1998: 45–9; 2009; 2010: 763–4; 2014; Shaw 2009: 171).

The third observation is that, unlike the Minoanization of local pottery traditions, which appears to have been a rather lengthy process that underwent intensification, expansion, and elaboration over the course of several centuries (Broodbank 2004; Berg 2007: 168; Davis and Gorogianni 2008; Knappett and Nikolakopoulou 2008: 37; Papagiannopoulou 1991: 261–73; Whitelaw 2005), the era of the Minoanized architectural landscape in the Aegean seems to have been of a much more limited duration. In fact, each of the Minoanized buildings mentioned here was constructed either in the Middle Minoan III or early LM IA period,<sup>19</sup> precisely when the exchange networks criss-crossing the Aegean reached their highest intensity (e.g. Davis and Gorogianni 2008: 346–7; Knappett and Nikolakopoulou 2008: 37). Moreover, only two examples, House A and the North-east Bastion at Ayia Irini, continued in use past the Theran eruption into the LM IB period, by which time the phenomenon of Minoanization had begun to wane (e.g. Berg 2007: 163–4; Davis and Gorogianni 2008: 343–5).

A complete discussion of this topic is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of the present chapter, and one that needs to draw upon not just the architectural remains but also the iconographic and artefactual evidence associated with them. But, given the three observations listed above, it is nevertheless tempting to see in these Minoanized complexes a physical manifestation of the so-called 'New Environment' proposed by Davis and Gorogianni (2008), a formalized architectural setting in which select participants engaged in a series of social and political rituals associated, at least in part, with the process of acquiring and maintaining a Minoan or Minoanizing identity.<sup>20</sup>

#### 14.5. CONCLUSIONS

Recent discussions of the phenomenon of acculturation that spread across the Aegean at the transition from the Middle to Late Bronze Age have begun moving in new and exciting directions, away from approaches that treat the concept of 'Minoanization' as a monolithic process and more towards perspectives that recognize and consider the more nuanced complexities and subtleties that it entailed (Berg 2007; Papagiannopoulou 1991; Whitelaw 2005). The application of new theoretical approaches, most notably perhaps network and agency theory, together with advances in scientific methodology—in particular macroscopic and microscopic ceramic fabric analysis—have led to the realization that the suite of so-called 'Minoan' cultural traits that characterized this period was much more varied and hybrid in character than previously considered (Broodbank 2004: 51–2; Davis and Gorogianni 2008; Momigliano 2005: 222–3; 2007: 259; 2009: 121–3, 136–7; Nikolakopoulou 2009: 31–2; Raymond 2007). While Crete may have been the ultimate source and prime inspiration for many (if not most) of the Minoanizing features in this cultural package, it now seems certain that its contents drew as well from other sources throughout the region and incorporated elements that themselves were hybrid in nature. Moreover, it is now recognized that the cultural landscape of Crete itself was no more uniform in character than the suite of Minoanizing traits it inspired. Indeed, recent scholarship increasingly acknowledges the fact that, whatever their precise configuration, Crete was populated by a variety of polities whose inhabitants participated to varying degrees and in varying fashions in the dissemination and integration of non-local features, both throughout the wider Aegean world and within the island itself (Berg 2007: 69–70; Broodbank 2004; Hamilakis 2002; Nikolakopoulou 2007: 32).

The work conducted by the members of AINSAP at Ayia Irini over the past few years represents a continuation and expansion of such scholarship, and demonstrates that the gradual and partial incorporation of non-local elements

into the local cultural vocabulary was the product of a highly selective and deliberate process undertaken, at least in part, by local communities throughout the Aegean to suit their specific and individual social, economic, and political needs. Moreover, the identification of a second, independent establishment of Minoan character, the North-east Bastion, located some distance from House A not only strengthens the position of Ayia Irini as one of the primary conduits for the reception and transmission of Minoan and Minoanizing cultural traits throughout the region but also illustrates the complex and important role such processes played at multiple socio-political levels, most notably amongst the members of a single community. In essence, it is perhaps time to insert a new leaf into the figurative Minoanizing banqueting table and allow a more varied and representative range of guests to take their place at this cultural and intellectual feast.

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### NOTES

1. Preliminary reports on the excavations at Ayia Irini appear in Caskey 1962, 1964, 1966, 1971, while chronological summaries can be found in Caskey 1969, 1979, 1981. The ongoing series of final publications includes studies of specific chronological phases (Davis 1986; Overbeck 1989; Wilson 1999), larger sectors (Schofield 2011), individual buildings (Cummer and Schofield 1984; Caskey 1986), and specialized materials (Bikaki 1984; Georgiou 1986; Petruso 1992; Morgan forthcoming).
2. Note that Branigan (1981: 29–30; 1984: 51) did not acknowledge the Minoanizing elements in House A in his discussions on colonialism, while Schofield (1984: 47),

- though admitting the likely presence of Minoan settlers, stated that at Ayia Irini 'it has not yet proved possible to identify a single Minoan household'. Hood (1990: 120) and Dietz (1998: 29), too, downplayed the Minoan elements in House A.
3. Hitchcock's list (1998: 172) of nineteen Minoan and Minoanizing architectural elements, for example, includes some features that are by no means unique to Crete (e.g. courts, terracing), some that likely arose because of local peculiarities (e.g. the heavy use of limestone, which is available from an easily accessible quarry immediately north of the site), some whose resemblance just as easily derives from functional similarities (e.g. the irregular, 'labyrinthine' ground plan; the U-shaped drain; slots for wooden door frames), and at least one (cut stone masonry) that is not, in fact, evident.
  4. Cummer (1980: 6) and Schofield (1983: 297) denied the existence of a pier-and-door partition in House A, though it is easy to envision one occupying the wall that separates Room 36 from Rooms 37/39 (Fig. 14.3).
  5. Caskey (1972: 393–7; 1979; 1981: 323) originally dated the 'Great Destruction' to the end of Period VII (LM IB/LH II), though more recent study of the ceramics has led to the subdivision of Period VII into three periods, with the 'Great Destruction' occurring at the end of Period VII B, or LM IB/LH IIA (Hershenson 1998).
  6. Morgan (1998: 202) also suggested that Room N.20 was a kitchen, an identification based largely on the presence of the drain.
  7. Similar combinations of switchback staircases and windows have been noted on Crete, as for example in the Royal Villa (Evans 1928: 396–413) and South House (Evans 1928: 373–90) at Knossos, and at Akrotiri, as for example in the West House (Palyvou 1990: 46, 50–1; Hitchcock 1998: 171).
  8. Caskey (1971: 376) originally assigned the upper portions of these walls to a rebuilding of the North-east Bastion, but reanalysis of the extant remains carried out in 2009 and 2010 suggests that they instead belong to a second storey.
  9. Flat, schist slabs, sometimes lined with red plaster, were also used in the construction of upper storey floors in several rooms in House A, e.g. A.19, A.27, A.35 (Cummer and Schofield 1984: 6, 12, 19). Caskey (1971: 376) attributed the slabs from the North-east Bastion to an upper storey bathroom, perhaps on analogy with the toilet he identified in Room A.24 of House A (Cummer and Schofield 1984: 18).
  10. Morgan, personal communication 2010.
  11. A parallel arrangement can be found in the West House at Akrotiri, where the north-west corner of Room 5 is provided with pier-and-window partitions flanked by frescoed panels and surmounted by a miniature frieze (Marinatos 1984: 43–51), while a similar arrangement also appears in the Queen's Megaron at Knossos (Evans 1930: 354–69; Hitchcock 1994).
  12. For a brief discussion of local architectural features at Ayia Irini, see Cummer 1980.
  13. Brief mention of House F also appears in Caskey 1966: 373–4; 1971: 386–7. Only small, exploratory trenches were opened in Areas Q and R, but here, too, the remains seem to follow the same pattern (Caskey 1971: 388).
  14. Brief reference to the fortification system can be found in Caskey 1962: 277–8; 1964: 320–2; 1966: 364–5; 1971: 363–5, 373–4, 376–7; see also Overbeck 2007: 341.

- No thorough study of the phasing of the fortification wall after Period V has been published, but Caskey (1971: 363) and Schofield (1998: 120; 2012: 1, 53, 55) did make note of some areas that had been rebuilt in the Western Sector.
15. For heterarchy, see Crumley 1995. For a similar discussion of the political organization of Protopalatial Crete, see Schöep 2010.
  16. Additional wall painting fragments, including some with figural decoration, were recovered from House B (Caskey 1966: 374; Abramovitz 1980: 62, 67, 76–7, 78; Morgan 1990: 252) and the Temple (Abramovitz 1980: 77, 81).
  17. Although a complete and thorough analysis must await the full publication of the entire settlement, it is perhaps noteworthy that the distribution of several important artefactual types, notably lead weights (Gale 1998: 739, 752) and crucibles, slag, and litharge (Gale 1998: 740, 752), seems to suggest the (economic, if not political) independence of most households within the economic landscape at Ayia Irini.
  18. For a summary of Minoan architectural elements abroad, see Shaw 2009: 169–78.
  19. Dietz 1998: 28–9; Whitelaw 2004: 157; Renfrew et al. 2007b: 52–3; Brodie 2009: 51, 59–64; see Whitelaw 2005: 46 for a different date (Phylakopi); Marketou 1998: 45–60; 2010: 763–4; 2014: 182–9 (Trianda); Momigliano 2007: 268; 2009 (Iasos); Vitale and Hancock 2010: 65–74; 2013 (Seraglion on Kos).
  20. For similar comments on Minoanizing pottery in the Aegean, see, for example, Berg 2004: 80; 2007: 105–6; Knappett and Nikolakopoulou 2008: 39. See also Gorogianni and Fitzsimons forthcoming.

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## 15

## A Comparative Perspective on Minoan Urbanism

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### 15.1. INTRODUCTION

Urban settlements are often presented as a prominent feature of Bronze Age Crete (McEnroe 2010). And yet, summarizing what is actually known about Minoan towns is much more challenging than one would expect, especially for non-palatial settlements. Many studies are narrowly focused and often take one urban element out of context in all communities (e.g. villas, classification of houses, street system, etc.), hence undermining an understanding of the urban environment as a whole. Furthermore, research on Minoan urban contexts has long been characterized by a strong focus on polite or palatial architecture and very specific urban features related to it (such as the so-called west courts, raised walks, theatral areas, etc.), while most case-studies have often had a rather limited dataset. There are clearly exceptions but, to date, our knowledge of Minoan urban settlements is partly built on a large collection of heterogeneous and disparate information. As already noted some fifteen years ago, the 'nature and character' of urban settlements 'has seen much less discussion, particularly at a generalized level' (Branigan 2001a: vii; but see chapters 7 and 9).

Of course, this situation is also inextricably linked to the nature of our datasets. Research is clearly constrained by the low quality of work in the initial decades of Minoan archaeology when so many of the larger exposures of townscapes on the island were made. And yet, for more than a century now, the archaeology of Bronze Age Crete has thrived: many excavations initiated at the beginning of the twentieth century have either continued or been revived, providing descriptions of numerous settlements of various sizes; new projects have unearthed fascinating buildings and sites; and many regions of the island have now been systematically surveyed. As a consequence, Minoan archaeologists have at their disposal a solid and varied dataset. Of course, sampling issues do exist.