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The Function of the “Minoan Villa”

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"Villas" and Villages in the Hinterland of Petras, Siteia

by

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Abstract

The "villas" of the bay of Siteia, at Klimataria, Zou, Achladia and Aghios Georghios (Tourtouloi) were excavated by N. Platon in the decade of the 1950's. The present study, as part of the research for Minoan occupation in the area, conducted since 1984, gives a new picture of the patterns and organization of settlements, as follows: (a) A central settlement of urban character with a large port. (b) Subordinate or secondary settlements. (c) Isolated farmhouses.

Petras was the central settlement comprising a central building with palatial features (extensive magazines, a central court, Linear A and Hieroglyphic tablets, mason's marks, sophisticated architectural features).

The so-called "villas", with the exception of Klimataria, which seems to have been isolated, belong to secondary settlements. Furthermore, comparison with the two excavated houses at Petras shows similarities in architectural detail, size and finds. Conversely, the comparison with villas of Central Crete (Sklavokampos, Nirou, Amnisos and Vathypetro) reveals some very basic differences. Similar patterns of settlement organization and hierarchy are to be seen, we believe, in other two areas of eastern Crete, namely the Zakros-Palaikastro area and the Makrygialos-Diaskari, respectively. Political and economic dependence of the inhabitants of these buildings to the palace centre at Zakros does not seem to be the case, even though such a dependence from another palatial centre, with Petras as an intermediate, cannot be excluded.

The area in which our research is conducted is the Bay of Siteia, and the aim is to gain an understanding of the settlement patterns in the various phases of Minoan civilization. With regard to the Neopalatial period which concerns us here, there exists the following evidence.

The main excavation, which began in 1985, is the extensive settlement of Petras.¹ Ancillary to this excavation have been intensive archaeological surveys in the areas of Petras and Ayia Photia,² as well as a second small excavation at the Neopalatial settlement at Achladia.³ Additionally, extensive surface survey continues throughout the entire area of the Bay of Siteia.

This region was investigated initially by N. Platon, who excavated a number of installations which are traditionally called "villas" at Klimataria,⁴ Zou,⁵ Achladia⁶ and Ayios Georghios (Tourtouloi),⁷ as well as the shrine at Piskokephalo.⁸ Work in the area was continued by C. Davaras who investigated the peak sanctuary at Prinias.⁹

The picture of occupation in the Neopalatial period appears today as follows: The main settlement was Petras, with its significant urban architectural arrangement and an equally important central building on top of the hill. The

The project on the Minoan occupation in the area of the Siteia has been conducted since 1984, when excavation at Aghia Photia began. I wish to express my gratitude to the Ministry of Culture for permissions and financial support, and particularly to the Institute for Aegean Prehistory and Mr Malcolm Wiener for the constant financial and moral support which made possible the preservation of the sites and the continuation of the research. To all those who in various ways are helping me in carrying out the work I am most grateful. For many useful discussions and much encouragement I wish to thank the following colleagues: Profs. P.M. Warren, M.S.F. Hood, P.P. Betancourt, L.V. Watrous, W.D. Coulson, G.C. Gesell, J.A. MacGillivray, Dr. E. Hallager. Also my special thanks to Dr. P.M. Day.

(M. Tsipopoulou)

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¹ See M. Tsipopoulou, 'Νέα στοιχεία για την μινωική κατοίκηση στην περιοχή της πόλης της Σητείας', in *Proc6CretCongr*, 305-321; *eadem*, 'Έρευνα στον Πετρά και τον κόλπο της Σητείας 1987', *AAA* 20, 1987, 11-30; *eadem*, 'Τεκτονικό σημείο από τον Πετρά Σητείας', *AAA* 19, 1986, 171-177; *eadem*, 'Potters' marks from Petras, Siteia', *Kadmos* 29, 1990, 92-106; *eadem*, 'Μινωική άγκυρα από τον Πετρά Σητείας', *ArchEph* 198, 1989, 121-128; *eadem*, 'Έρευνα στον Πετρά και τον κόλπο της Σητείας (1988)', *ArchDelt* 41, 1986 (publ. 1991), 340-400.

² See M. Tsipopoulou, *Archaeological survey at Aghia Photia, Siteia* (SIMA-PB, 76), Partille 1989.

³ M. Tsipopoulou & L. Vagnetti, *Achladia. Scavi e ricerche della Missione Greco-Italiana in Creta Orientale (1991-1993)*, Roma 1995.

⁴ N. Platon, 'Μινωική έπαυλις Σητείας', *Prakt* 1952, 636-639; *idem*, 'Συνέχισις της ανασκαφής της μινωικής επαύλεως της Σητείας', *Prakt* 1953, 288-291; *idem*, 'Ανασκαφή της μινωικής επαύλεως Σητείας', *Prakt* 1954, 361-363.

⁵ N. Platon, 'Μινωική αγροικία Ζου Σητείας', *Prakt* 1955, 288-293; *idem*, 'Ανασκαφή μινωικής αγροικίας εις Ζου Σητείας', *Prakt* 1956, 232-239.

⁶ N. Platon, 'Μεσομινωική Ι οικία Ρίζας Αχλαδιών', *Prakt* 1952, 646-648; *idem*, 'Ανασκαφή Αχλαδιών Σητείας', *Prakt* 1959, 210-217.

⁷ N. Platon, 'Μινωική αγροικία Προφήτου Ηλία Τουρτούλων', *Prakt* 1960, 294-300.

⁸ N. Platon, 'Το ιερόν Πισκοκεφάλου Σητείας', *Prakt* 1952, 631-636.

⁹ C. Davaras, 'Αρχαιολογικές έρευνες στη Σητεία κατά το θέρος του 1971', *Amalthia* 2, 1971, 197-200, esp. 200; *idem*, 'Πρινιάς', *ArchDelt* 27B, 1972 (publ. 1977), 651; *idem*, *Guide to Cretan antiquities*, Park Ridge, N.J. 1976, esp. 246; *idem*, 'A Minoan beetle-rhyton from Prinias Siteias', *BSA* 83, 1988, 45-54.

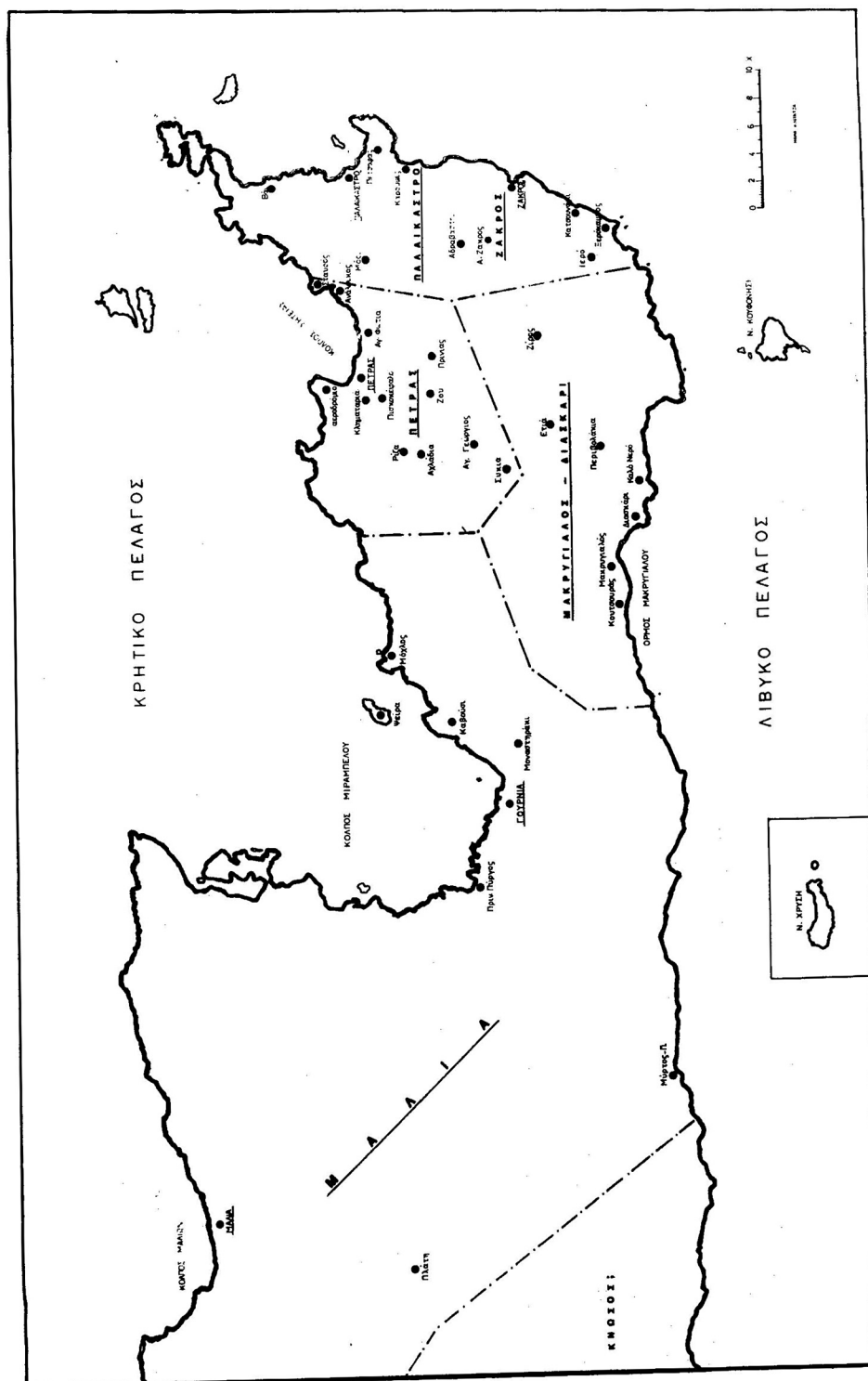


Fig. 2. East Crete. Neopalatial polities.

investigation of this structure continues as the main focus of the Petras excavations. Of special significance are the palatial features presented by this building (see below).

In the immediate vicinity of the site of Petras are smaller settlements, the previously mentioned shrines, and the so-called villas. Additionally, surface survey in the plain of Ayia Photia—which is essentially the only significant arable land in the coastal zone of Siteia—has shown the existence of no less than six isolated small houses, obviously situated for the agricultural exploitation of the surrounding area; such a settlement pattern is virtually identical or equivalent to the traditional system of μετόχια of Crete.¹⁰

This archaeological evidence, along with the geomorphological data helps us to define a certain unified territory or sphere of influence in which we believe Petras was the central settlement and the other sites were in some way subordinate to it and perhaps dependant on it, even if the probable intersite relationships are not completely clear yet. The geographic boundaries of this territory are, in the west, the area of Chamaizi, in the south the region of Praisos, and in the east, the mountains that divide the Bay of Siteia from the area of Palaikastro (Fig. 1).

Several different models concerning the political or administrative organization of Neopalatial Crete have been proposed.¹¹ We accept the basic concept of the “peer polities” theory, but we also feel that recent research at Petras and the area of the Siteia Bay have changed the general picture and as far as Eastern Crete is concerned, further division is needed. Indeed it is difficult to visualize it as a unified area, centering on the palace of Zakros. Thus, accepting Cherry’s division which states that the Gulf of Mirabello formed part of the polity of Malia,¹² we believe that the eastern end of the island could have been further subdivided into three more territories. (a) That of the Bay of Siteia, in which Petras was the central place; (b) the area of the south coast, where the central place should be situated at Makrygialos or Diaskari; and (c) the Zakros-Palaikastro area (Fig. 2).

The purpose of the present communication is the formal comparison of houses in the settlement of Petras and those excavated by Platon at Klimataria, Zou, Tourtoulou and Achladia, in order to gain an understanding of the functions of these buildings and their relationships to the settlement at Petras.

It is clear that there exists a certain confusion among Minoan archaeologists as for the definition of the word “villa”, a fact affecting also the interpretations given to these buildings and their supposed function in the framework of Neopalatial society.¹³ The same word is used for the central building of a settlement, for an important structure in a settlement and also for an isolated substantial construction, usually comprising elaborate architectural features. Further the definition given by any single scholar also reflects his or her opinion about the function these buildings had, in trying to understand the structure of Minoan civilisation, one must, before dealing with the subject, clearly state which one of the various definitions one accepts.

In the present study, in accordance with Platon’s definition, that “villas” or “farmhouses” are “extensive buildings

dispersed throughout the countryside”,¹⁴ we will examine whether the four “villas” in the region of the Bay of Siteia are:

- (a) isolated or part of larger complexes.
- (b) extensive structures.
- (c) different from the simple houses of the settlement of Petras.¹⁵

In this comparison we will use the following criteria: (1) The architectural evidence. (2) The functions of the various rooms and spaces.

Relying on the main features defined by J. McEnroe,¹⁶ we present in the tables (Tables 1–2) a comparison of two houses from our settlement which have been nearly completely excavated (Petras I, Fig. 3, and II, Fig. 4) and the “villas” of Siteia at Achladia (Fig. 5), Zou (Fig. 6), Tourtoulou (Fig. 7) and Klimataria (Fig. 8).

The first of our tables (Table 1) contains certain architectural features, which might illustrate the functional meaning and the type of these constructions. It is observed that architectural features which require special or particular elaboration, and particularly the use of metal tools—such as in cut slab pavements, ashlar blocks, pier and door partitions,¹⁷ cut jamb bases, and columns—occur generally in the same frequency in the two categories of buildings. Frescoes exist in one of the houses of Petras¹⁸ and in one of the villas.¹⁹ Conversely, the foundation deposit occurs only in House II at Petras.²⁰ Regarding the extent of the villas of Siteia and the houses of Petras, both are between 200 and 300 m².

In the second table (Table 2), spatial function is examined. In the instance of Ayios Georghios, the buildings most likely comprise more than a single unified structure; but in

¹⁰ Tsipopoulou (supra n. 2), esp. 27–31, 99.

¹¹ There are two main models of interpretation, the first one supporting the supremacy of Knossos over the whole island and the second one accepting the division of Crete into smaller or larger independent polities. See the summarized discussion and recent bibliography in J.S. Soles, ‘The Gournia Palace’, *AJA* 95, 1991, 17–78, esp. 73–76.

¹² See J. Cherry, ‘Polities and palaces: some problems in Minoan state formation’, in *Peer polity interaction and socio-political change*, C. Renfrew, J. Cherry, eds., Cambridge 1986, 19–45, esp. 21, fig. 2.2.

¹³ As it became obvious during the present symposium.

¹⁴ N. Platon ‘Η Νεοανακτορική Κρήνη’, in *Ιστορία του ελληνικού έθνους* I, Athens 1970, 166–211, esp. 186.

¹⁵ Our central building at Petras has not been used in the present discussion and comparison.

¹⁶ J. McEnroe, ‘A typology of Minoan Neopalatial houses’, *AJA* 86, 1982, 3–19, esp. 18–19.

¹⁷ A wooden “pseudo-polythyron” was found in House II, between rooms Θ and Ε.

¹⁸ Fragments of frescoes were uncovered at Petras in House I and coloured plaster in House II.

¹⁹ At Hagios Georghios (Tourtoulou), see Platon (supra n. 7), esp. 296.

²⁰ This was a rectangular cist in the wall, containing several reversed conical cups and a juglet as well as a few animal bones. It is dated to the LM IB phase. For foundation deposits in general, see C. Boulotis, ‘Ein Gründungsdepositum im minoischen Palast von Kato Zakros—minoisch-mykenische Bauopfer’, *ArchKorrBl* 12, 1982, 153–166.

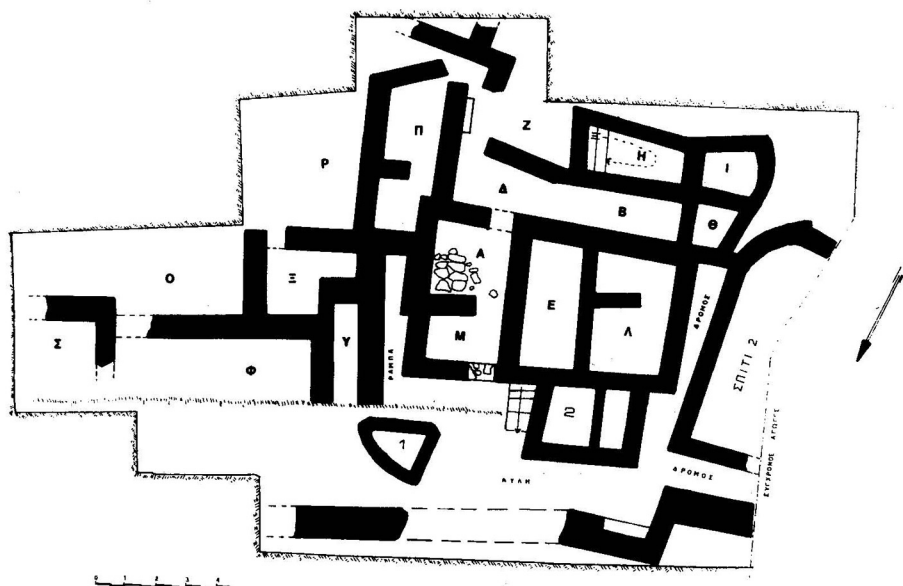


Fig. 3. Petras, Siteia. Plan of House I.

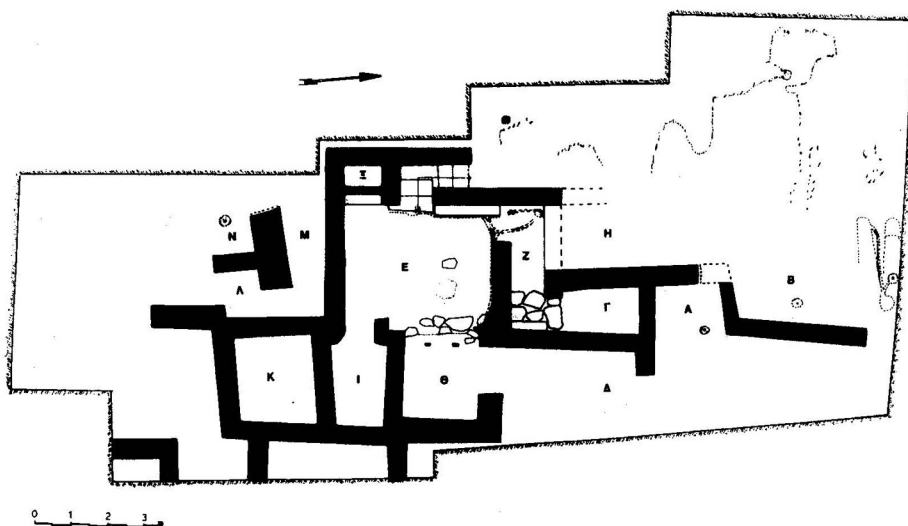


Fig. 4. Petras, Siteia. Plan of House II.

as much as the site is incompletely excavated and considering the extreme slope of the ground surface, we think that the number of individual houses cannot be determined with **any certainty**. In any case the existence of exterior walls in the upper zone of the site, as well as the elongated space dividing the middle of the site, show that the western section is composed of one separate building (Tourtoulou 1). It is not entirely clear, whether the remaining excavated area

is composed of one or two buildings. Thus, until the appearance of the final publication, we consider the installations as one building in the comparative table (Tourtoulou 2).

The evidence of moveable finds from the various rooms shows that both categories of structures generally contain kitchens, a room or rooms for storage, industrial areas and in many cases a central place of large dimensions. As regards the storage areas, in principle, it is necessary for us to accept that

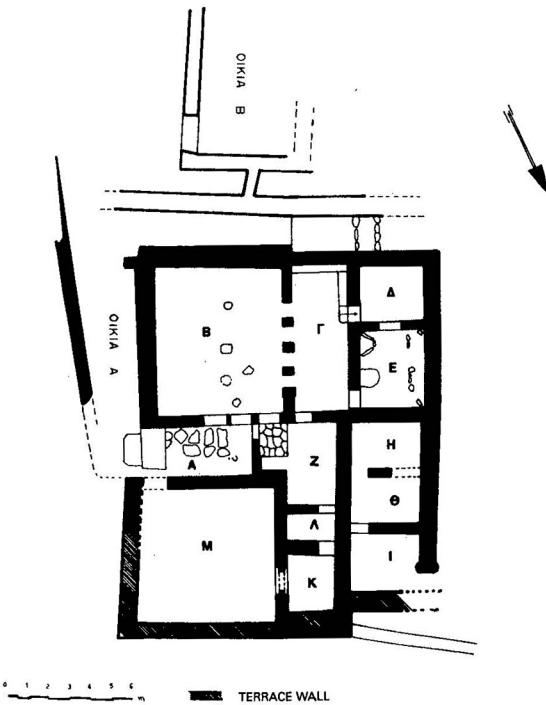


Fig. 5. Plan of the "villa" at Achladia, Riza. (After Platon, *Prakt* 1959, 211.)

some of the rural farmsteads contained more pithoi than the houses at Petras; House I contained six pithoi and House II had three. By way of comparison we had nine pithoi at Klimataria,²¹ and eleven at Achladia,²² while at Zou, the actual number of jars was never published, but it does not seem like there were many.²³ At Tourtoulou, twelve pithoi were

recovered from House 1 and two jars were found in House 2.²⁴ The number of storage jars—which naturally corresponds to the excavated evidence in existence today—gives the impression that in none of the so-called villas is it possible to support the argument that there was storage that exceeds the basic needs of one domestic unit. Further, none of these magazines appears to be intended for the mobilization or centralization of the combined agricultural produce of a wider region than that exploited by one single household. The houses of the settlement at Petras, at least the two already excavated certainly seem to have contained fewer pithoi than the so-called "villas" but this may be related to the existence not far from the main—urban—settlement, namely at Aghia Photia of the small agricultural installations, also used for storage, as the many pithos fragments found during the survey suggest.

The industrial activities are revealed to be similar in both the houses of the Petras settlement and the rural houses. Wine-presses were discovered in House I at Petras²⁵ as well as in Tourtoulou 1 and 2.²⁶ At Zou, Platon found evidence for some industrial activity, which was—supposedly—connect-

²¹ Platon 1952 (supra n. 4), esp. 636, one fragmentary pithos was found by the foundation of the large retaining wall; p. 637, four pithoi in room A, two pithoi in room B; p. 638, two pithoi in room Π.

²² Platon 1959 (supra n. 6), esp. 213, two pithoi in room B, possibly two more in room Γ, one pithos in room Δ; p. 214, fragments of pithoi in room E; p. 215, six pithoi in room M.

²³ Platon 1955 (supra n. 5), esp. 292, fragments of large pithoi in rooms Δ-E.

²⁴ Platon (supra n. 7), for House 1, esp. 298, one pithos just outside room B; p. 300, four pithoi in room B; p. 299, several fragmentary pithoi in room A; two pithoi in room Ω, three in room Ψ, one in room X; for House 2, esp. p. 297, one pithos in room Γ; p. 298, one more to the north of the large retaining wall.

²⁵ Tsipopoulou, in *Proc6CretCongr* (supra n. 1).

²⁶ Platon (supra n. 7), esp. 297, wine-press installation in room Γ; p. 300, in rooms Ψ and B, respectively.

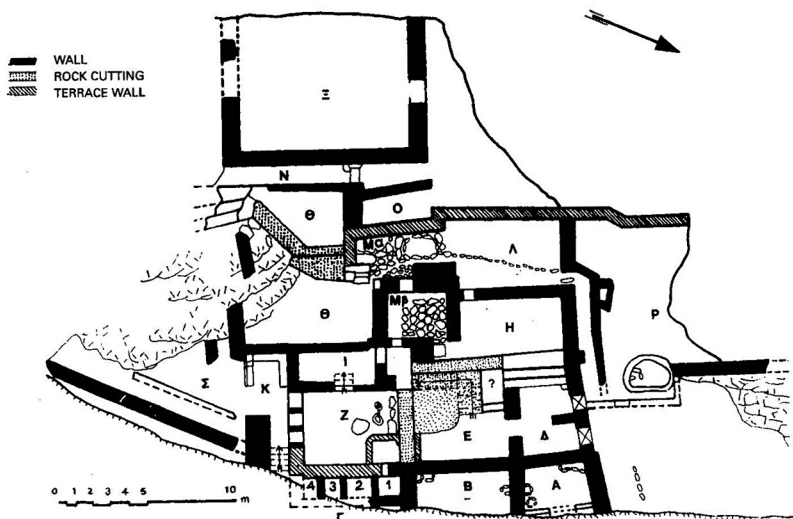


Fig. 6. Plan of the "villa" at Zou. (After Platon, *Prakt* 1956, 233.)

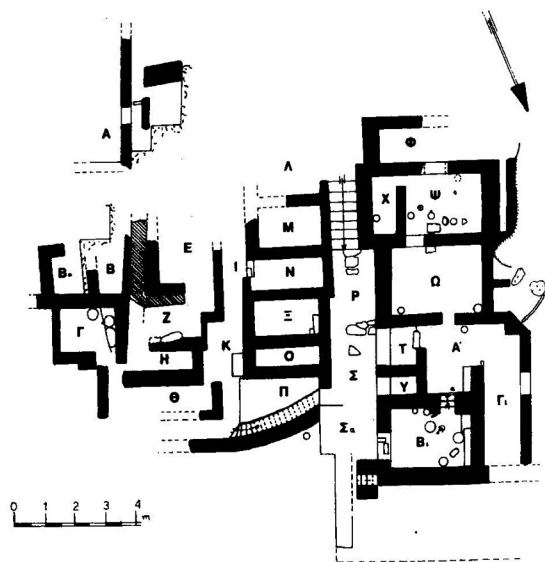


Fig. 7. Plan of the "villa" at Aghios Georghios (Tourtouloi). (After Platon, *Prakt* 1960, 297.)

Table 1. Architectural features of the Petras Houses, compared to the "villas" of the Siteia area.

	Petras I	Petras II	Achladia	Zou	Tourtoouloi	Klimataria
Cut slab pavements	x	x	-	x	?	-
Coursed ashlar	-	x	-	x	-	-
Megalithic rubble	-	-	x	-	-	x
Ext. walls right angles	x	x	x	x	x	x
Int. walls right angles	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pier and Door	-	wood	x	x	-	-
Cut jamb bases	-	x	-	-	x	x
Columns	-	x	x	-	x	x
Pillars	-	-	x	-	-	-
Frescoes	x	col. pl.	-	-	x	-
Foundation deposit	-	x	-	-	-	-
Isolated	-	-	-	-	-	x

Table 2. Spatial function (cf. Table 1).

	Petras I	Petras II	Achladia	Zou	Tourtoouloi 1	Tourtoouloi 2	Klimataria
Corridor	x	x	-	-	-	-	-
Forehall	-	?	x	x	-	-	-
Hall 1	-	-	x	x	-	-	-
Hall 2	-	x	-	-	-	x	-
Industrial area	x	x	-	x	x	x	-
Kitchen	x	x	x	x	x	-	-
Stairway	x	x	x	x	-	x	x
Vestibule	-	-	x	-	-	x	-
Doorless space	x	x	-	-	-	x	-
Domestic storage/ industr. wing	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

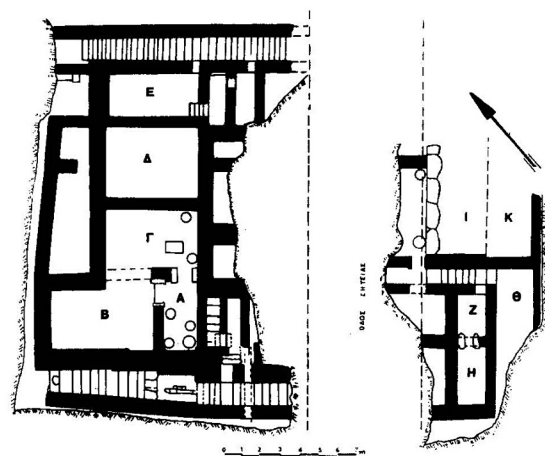


Fig. 8. Plan of the "villa" at Siteia (Klimataria). (After Platon, *Prakt* 1953, 290.)

ed with pottery production.²⁷ This is parallel to one extensive workshop at Petras in House II. In this instance with regard to cloth (that is, the laundering, dyeing and weaving of wool), the evidence shows a system of γούρνες and water channels (Fig. 4, areas A, B, N), an abundance of tripod vessels situated upon hearths (Fig. 4, area E) and also the presence of ideograms for cloth on two conical cups and on loomweights.²⁸

The two categories of buildings present general similarities in respect to inventories of movable artifacts, like stone tools, terracotta loomweights, and types of vessels.

In respect to cult activities, neither the Petras houses nor the villas have shown sufficient evidence to argue that certain rooms had religious function; only some small objects have been found which generally are considered to be connected with cult, and these evidently come from house shrines. These are a stone table and a perforated stone from Tourtoouloi,²⁹ a fragment of a rhyton in the shape of an animal head and a terracotta tripod table from Zou,³⁰ and a rhyton in the shape of a wild goat from Achladia.³¹ In House I at Petras were found a fragment of a male terracotta figurine, two small pairs of horns made of clay and stone,³² and a natural stone in the form of a human head,³³ while House II contained small stone horns, a foot of a stone offering table and a moulded head of a cat probably from a rhyton with plastic decoration.³⁴

²⁷ Platon 1956 (supra n. 5), esp. 233, 238.

²⁸ M. Tsipopoulou, 'Κεραμικά σημεία από την ανασκαφή Πετρά Σητείας (1989–1990)', in *Proc 7Cret Congr*, 931–971.

²⁹ Platon (supra n. 7), esp. 296, for the stone table in rooms B, Ba, and p. 298 for pierced stone in room O, respectively.

³⁰ Platon 1955 (supra n. 5), esp. 293, in room H.

³¹ Platon 1959 (supra n. 6), esp. 213, room B.

³² Tsipopoulou 1991 (supra n. 1), esp. 348.

³³ Found in 1989, in the same area.

³⁴ Found in areas A and Δ.

Finally we come to the issue of the situation and topographic isolation of the villas, that is are the so-called villas of Siteia discrete single buildings, isolated in the landscape? At Achladia, Platon suggests that there were other structures situated around the excavated house, segments of which he was able to uncover.³⁵ In the surface survey, which was carried out in 1991, as one focus of the Greek-Italian Achladia project, we were able to confirm the existence of Minoan architectural remains and Neopalatial pottery on all sides of the Kephala hill.³⁶ Similarly, at Tourtoulou, the excavation uncovered evidence for other Minoan buildings on the slopes of the hill arranged on terraces, already half-destroyed at the time of the investigation.³⁷ Our survey in 1992 showed that walls are still extant on the northwest and eastern sides of the hill. The sherds recovered are Neopalatial. As has already been suggested, we believe that the excavated units of Tourtoulou comprise more than one building. At Zou, Platon uncovered part of a second structure, about 150 m north of the first.³⁸ It is likely that the area E of the Zou villa belongs to another building. The extremely eroded slope and intensive cultivation notwithstanding, traces of walls exist today and there is much Neopalatial pottery on the surface throughout this area. Thus it seems certain that the three villas at Zou, Tourtoulou and Achladia were not single, isolated structures, but part of wider, more extensive and agglomerate building complexes, that is, parts of larger settlements.

The case of Klimataria appears different. The same excavator (Platon) did not report any certain evidence for other structures in the immediate surroundings. During the period of our intensive survey in 1990, on the slopes of the hill of Anemomylia, were found considerable surface remains, however these are of LM III and Early Iron Age date. All this, combined with the fact that this building is situated on the southern edge of the Minoan harbour of Siteia, and not far from the central settlement at Petras, indicates that this building at Klimataria had a specific function, distinctly different from the other more distant rural "villas". Perhaps this function was connected with the movement of goods from the harbour inland along the Stomion river which—as the geological survey of 1988 has shown—passed directly this spot in the Neopalatial period.³⁹ However, given the state of our knowledge of this structure, such an interpretation is speculation. In any case it seems highly unlikely that there would be a second, separate settlement, without specialized function, situated on the same harbour and not more than 500 m from Petras.

Thus, the formal comparison between the excavated houses of the Petras settlement and the so-called villas has shown that the differences are neither many, nor substantial in respect to architectural detail, size and artefact assemblages. Further, except for Klimataria, whose location suggests a special-purpose installation, the so-called villas are clearly not single isolated structures, but subordinated within larger settlement complexes.

On the other hand, these buildings show substantial differences with those buildings of Central Crete which are known by the same or analogous name of "villa", "rural farm-stead", "country house" or "megaron". For comparison

we use four of the well-known villas at Nirou Khani,⁴⁰ Vathypetro,⁴¹ Sklavokampos⁴² and Amnisos⁴³ (Tables 3 and 4).

The comparison of the plans and also the room functions shows pronounced differences, the most significant of which are the greater number of rooms and the existence of larger storage areas in Central Cretan examples.⁴⁴ Additionally, the discovery of sealings at Sklavokampos⁴⁵ indicates some administrative function. Finally, the rooms dedicated to cult activity or containing cult objects reveal a certain religious significance in these buildings.⁴⁶

In respect to the architectural details, it can be observed that in the large structures of central Crete there is, in principle, much more evidence which suggests specialized stone working, such as cut slab pavements, ashlar blocks, cut jamb bases, columns, pillars, stylobate blocks, and stone panels, as well as wall paintings and foundation deposits.

But also the size of the central Cretan villas is much greater than the so-called villas of Siteia; that is to say more than 350 m² and nearly 800 for Vathypetro.

At least in the area of the bay of Siteia there is nothing to suggest any kind of "feudal" political or social organization, in accordance with a system whereby rich land owners lived in villas and were politically and economically dependent on kings, who in turn held great and extensive agricultural estates and territories.⁴⁷ The discovery of the Minoan town

³⁵ Platon 1959 (supra n. 6), esp. 211.

³⁶ Tsipopoulou & Vagnetti (supra n. 3).

³⁷ Platon (supra n. 7), esp. 294.

³⁸ Platon 1955 (supra n. 5), 293.

³⁹ Tsipopoulou 1991 (supra n. 1), esp. 384.

⁴⁰ St. Xanthoudides, 'Μινωικόν μέγαρον Νίρου', *ArchEph* 1922, 1–25.

⁴¹ S. Marinatos, 'Ανασκαφαί Βαθυπέτρου Αρχαίων (Κρήτης)', *Prakt* 1949, 100–109; *idem*, 'Το μέγαρον Βαθυπέτρου', *Prakt* 1950, 242–248; *idem*, 'Ανασκαφή Μεγάλου Βαθυπέτρου (Κρήτης)', *Prakt* 1951, 258–272; *idem*, 'Ανασκαφαί εν Βαθυπέτρω Κρήτης', *Prakt* 1952, 592–610; *idem*, 'Βαθυπέτρον', *Prakt* 1955, 309f.

⁴² S. Marinatos, 'Το μινωικόν μέγαρον Σκλαβοκάμπου', *ArchEph* 1939–41, 69–96.

⁴³ S. Marinatos, 'Ανασκαφή Αμνισού Κρήτης', *Prakt* 1932, 76–94.

⁴⁴ For Nirou, see Xanthoudides (supra n. 40), esp. 3, 9, rooms 24–32, and p. 16, detailed description of pithoi. For Vathypetro, see Marinatos 1949 (supra n. 41), esp. 104, also fig. 5. For Sklavokampos, Marinatos (supra n. 42), esp. 74f. The only exception, however, was the villa at Amnisos, where no large pithoi were found, nor was identified any storage area, Marinatos (supra n. 43), esp. 86.

⁴⁵ Marinatos (supra n. 42), esp. 72, 87–93.

⁴⁶ For Nirou, Xanthoudides (supra n. 40), esp. 6, 8, 13, 15f. For Vathypetro, Marinatos 1951 (supra n. 41), esp. 260f.; *idem* 1952 (supra n. 41), 608–610. For Sklavokampos, Marinatos (supra n. 42), esp. 74, 78f. See also G.C. Gesell, *Town, palace, and house cult in Minoan Crete* (SIMA, 76), Göteborg 1985, esp. 68 for Amnisos, 116 and 118 for Nirou, 135 for Sklavokampos, 136f. for Vathypetro.

⁴⁷ For the subject, see Platon (supra n. 7), esp. 300; *idem* (supra n. 14), esp. 186, and also S. Alexiou, *Μινωικός πολιτισμός*, Herakleion 1964, esp. 38–40; F. Matz, 'The zenith of Minoan civilization', in *CAH* II.1, 557–581, esp. 571f.

Table 3. Architectural features of the "villas" of the Siteia area, compared to those of central Crete.

	Achladia	Zou	Tourtoouloi	Klimataria	Vathypetro	Nirou	Amnisos	Sklavokampos
Cut slab pavement	-	x	?	-	x	x	x	-
Ashlar blocks	-	x	-	-	x	x	x	-
Megalithic rubble	x	-	-	x	-	-	-	x
Ext. walls right angles	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Int. walls right angles	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pier and door	x	x	-	-	-	x	x	x
Cut jamb bases	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	x
Columns	x	x	-	-	x	x	x	-
Pillars	-	x	-	-	x	x	-	x
Stylobate	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	-
Stone panels	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	-
Frescoes	-	-	x	-	-	x	x	-
Stoa	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	x
Foundation deposit	-	-	-	-	x	x	-	-
Isolated	-	-	-	x	x	-	-	x

Table 4. Spatial function (cf. Table 3).

	Achladia	Zou	Tourtoouloi	Klimataria	Vathypetro	Nirou	Amnisos	Sklavokampos
Corridor	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x
Forehall	x	x	-	-	-	x	x	-
Hall 1	x	x	-	-	-	x	x	-
Hall 2	-	-	x	-	-	-	-	x
Industrial area	-	x	x	-	x	x	-	-
Kitchen	x	x	x	-	x	-	-	x
Lustral basin	-	-	-	-	-	?	-	-
Magazines	-	-	-	-	x	x	-	x
Stairway	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Toilet	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x
Vestibule	x	-	x	-	-	-	-	x
Doorless space	-	-	x	-	x	-	x	x
Domestic Storage/ Industrial wing	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	-

of Petras and its central palatial structure offers interesting new evidence for a better understanding of settlement hierarchy in the hinterland. It is, we believe, worth mentioning the palatial features of this central building:

(a) Magazines: The storage of large quantities of goods was of great importance. Toward the end of the Neopalatial era, the space dedicated to storage purposes becomes larger and at the very end of the life of the building pithoi were stored even in the central court. The large magazines are situated to the north of the central court, on a lower terrace. They measured 4 x 11 m oriented north-south and were constructed in LM IA. Four of them are already excavated but

the existence of more should be considered very probable. At the south end of these magazines, there is a long corridor, 24 x 2.8 m, where more pithoi were stored. Adjacent to the west external wall, there is a large staircase 3.75 m wide, leading to the central court. During LM IB, when general architectural rearrangements took place at Petras and in particular in this central building, the staircase went out of use and two more storage areas were added, measuring 6 x 5 m and 7 x 8 m, respectively. So the storage area in the final phase of the building was more than 214 m². In these magazines, 36 pithoi were discovered. Five more pithoi were stored in a room of the south part of the building, 3 x 4 m, in the LM IB period. In addition, the central court contained three more pithoi, one of them with an eleven-sign linear A inscription on the rim, the total number of storage vessels being 44, until today.

(b) The central court: Oriented north-south and equipped with a very fine plaster floor and a system of both stone and plaster drains. Its dimensions in LM IA were 6 x 13; in LM IB it was reduced to 4.90 x 12 m, with the addition of three walls in the shape of a Π.

(c) Inscriptions: From the central building at Petras two archive tablets have been found thus far, one in Linear A coming from an area to the south-west of the large magazines and a discoid "label" inscribed on both sides with hieroglyphic signs, found in the corridor of the same magazines, in association with one of the pithoi. Linear A was used at Petras on other occasions as well: The incised inscription on the rim of a pithos was already mentioned. In House II, on the east slope of the hill, two more inscribed documents were found, a sherd with two painted signs and a roundel with three signs. The latter was found in a storage area (Fig. 4, area K).

(d) Sophisticated architectural features: Our central building at Petras possesses many such features, both from its ground floor and from the upper floor(s), namely ashlar blocks, pier-and-door partitions, cut jamb bases, columns (it is very interesting to note that the east side of the central court forms a stoa with alternating columns and pillars), double staircases, cut slab pavements, dadoes, dove-tail clamp cuttings, frescoes and large areas with both interior and exterior walls at right angles.

(e) Mason's marks: They were found in great quantity and variety in the central building (three types of double axes, including deeply and finely incised double axes, stars, branches, Linear A signs, double triangles and an assortment of lesser attested signs).

The mere presence of 44 pithoi in the excavated magazines shows clearly that the centralization and mobilization of agricultural produce from the hinterland of the Bay of Siteia was at Petras, not, for example, at Zou or Achladia. Of course, it is still even less possible to argue that these buildings, traditionally called villas or country-houses functioned as administrative or religious centres for wider regions in the Siteia area.

The picture that is emerging from the Bay of Siteia is the following:

- (a) There was, at Petras, a single centralized settlement of urban character with a large port.
- (b) Subordinate are the so-called villas, the settlements of the surrounding countryside.
- (c) Isolated farmhouse installations (μετόχια) were situated for the best possible agricultural exploitation of the plain and the provisional storage of local resources.

In any case one does not need to go as far as the palace of Zakros to find a palatial centre on which these buildings or rather these settlements would have been dependent. The central building at Petras seems much more likely and is also much closer to them. Indeed, for now, it is not out of the question that the whole area of the bay of Siteia and an intermediate centre, which was Petras, was dependent on or subordinate to a larger palatial building. The issue remains open until the excavation on the hilltop of Petras has determined the exact size, extent, function and character of the central building. Regarding the nature of this central building, the discovery, after only two years of excavation, of so many palatial features and the inscribed tablets, as well as the possibility that this building encompasses the whole area of seven acres of the artificially constructed plateau of the hilltop, all might lead us eventually to the necessity of confronting a different picture than the present one or rather the past view of eastern Crete in the Neopalatial Period.

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APPENDIX

The two campaigns subsequent to the symposium and the visit of the symposiasts to Petras have appreciably changed the appearance of the central building. Although this structure by no means constitutes a "villa", the kind invitation of the Editor, Prof. Robin Hägg, to append an up-to-date plan (Fig. 9) and an explanatory note is readily accepted, so as to provide colleagues with a rapidly available account.⁴⁸

Removing the baulks in 1992 and 1993 permitted a complete reading of the organization of the ground floor. It is constituted by three major units: the central court, integrated into the eastern flank of the complex; the main part, comprising storage areas and staircases allowing access to the upper storey; and the magazines on the lower, northern edge of the plateau. The central unit is divided into a southern and a northern half by an east-west corridor running from the central court to the west facade.

Although parts of the western and northern facades, including their junction, have yet to be fully excavated, it appears clear that there were two main entries, probably corresponding to the two harbours of Petras: At the south-eastern corner, access was gained through a badly damaged entrance with a flagstone floor, ashlar blocks, a door jamb with a large, deeply cut mason's mark (a branch),

and a staircase leading to the south part of the building, now completely destroyed. From here, the central court was accessed as well.

In the LM IA period, a monumental staircase, almost four metres wide with gypsum slabs and fine plaster led up to the northern end of the central court from the lower terrace. This staircase was destroyed in LM IA, probably following an earthquake, and never repaired. Its steps were filled in and an annex to the northern magazines, using earlier material, was added to the north of it. A square space, measuring c. 3 x 3 m, east of the staircase, having a threshold onto the steps, and, thus, a function connected with entering and exiting the building at this point, was also covered and went out of use. The filling contained hundreds of conical cups, sixteen of them with pumice. These rearrangements of the area mirror the suddenly increased need for additional storage space in the final Neopalatial phase, the LM IB period, a phenomenon which also led to pithoi being placed in rooms previously otherwise employed, and even in the central court.

The latter phase also saw the reduction in size of the central court with the construction of a single-course π -shaped foundation which supported alternating pillars and columns on its eastern length. Another column was placed in the square space next to the old staircase. This suggests that the remaining extent of the older court became a covered corridor.

The 1992–93 campaigns uncovered rooms along the southern edge of the building with flagstone floors, orthostate walls, fine plaster, including a four meter long plastered bench. Stratigraphical considerations indicate that these features date to a Protopalatial phase, and were covered in the Neopalatial period. Work during the 1994 campaigns in progress at the time of writing this appendix, suggests that the flagstone floor in the room immediately to the east (in which numerous ashlar blocks bearing mason's marks, fallen from the upper floor, were uncovered in 1992) was laid earlier and remained in use until the LM IB destruction.

In the east-west rectangular room along the west facade, a plaster offering table with polychrome decoration was excavated during the 1992 campaign. The immediate neighbour to the north, a room with flagstone and plaster floor, and a built drain covered with slabs was employed as a workshop in LM IB.

In 1993, a part of the north facade in front of the triple stairwells was uncovered, and the study or the latter continued. Excavation in the elongated spaces 2 and 3 revealed that the lowest levels were Protopalatial in date. A large deposit of conical cups, associated with pieces of pumice, burnt animal bones and a cup-rhyton came to light in the area where the northernmost part of the west facade is to be sought. The possible existence of an entrance could not be verified due to the inopportune presence of a utility pole.

⁴⁸ The author is grateful to Dr. Michael Wedde for help in preparing this appendix.

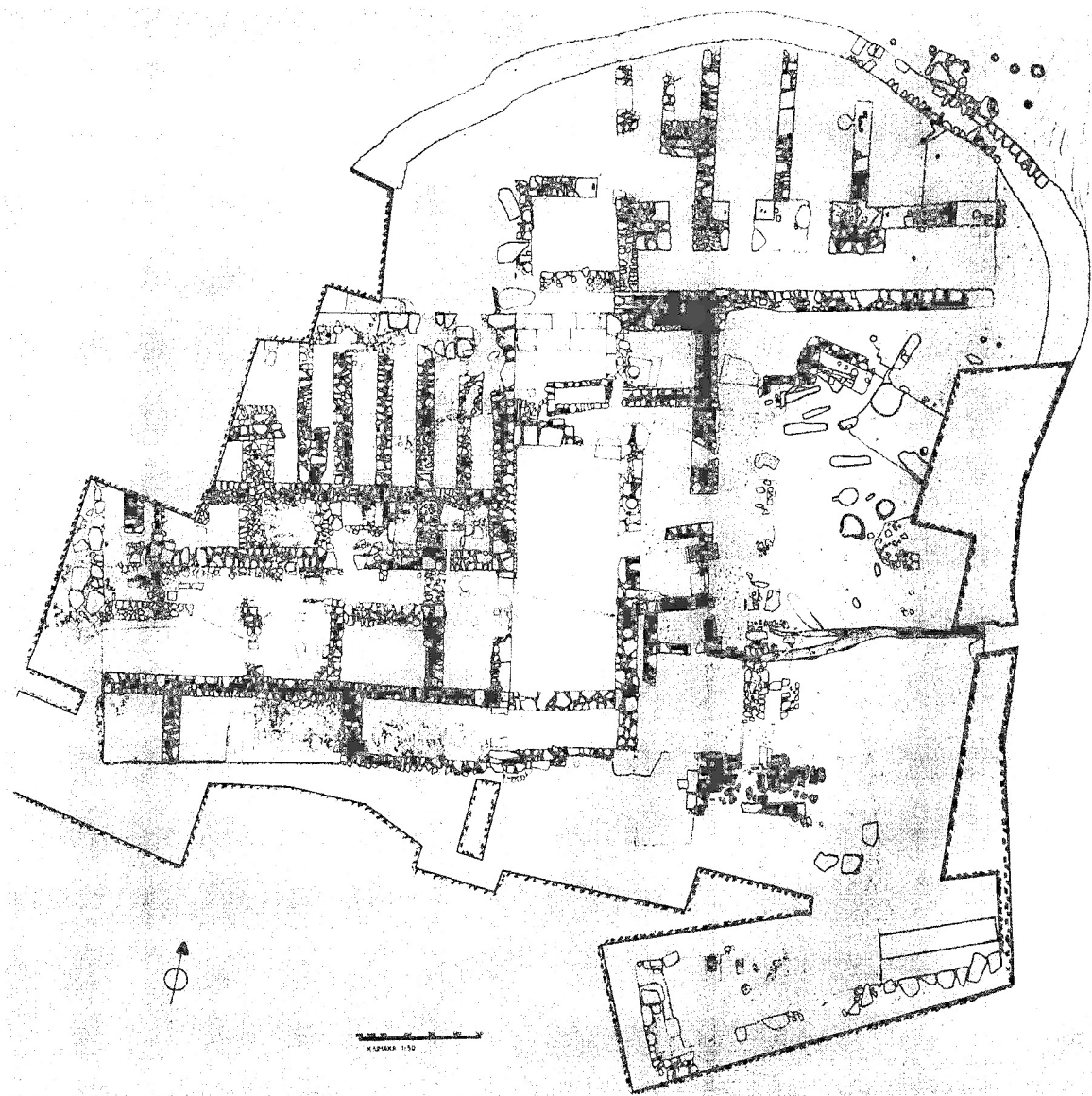


Fig. 9. Petras 1987–1993: the palatial building.

Further work in the north magazines uncovered foundations cut into the bedrock for walls since destroyed. The 1993 campaign allowed tracing the course of the east wall. The ongoing 1994 campaign is examining the north wall, upon which there stands today a modern terrace wall (as illustrated in the 1993 state plan published here). Its removal has revealed that the Minoan wall defines the curvature of the latter.

To the immediate south of the stairwells, stratigraphical trenches were opened in 1993, uncovering Proto- and Prepalatial material. Further trenches throughout the building are being excavated at the time of writing to chart diachronically the use of the large plateau.

A systematic occupation is attested from the EM II period (Vasiliki, red-burnished, fine gray wares). Isolated Pyrgos ware sherds, even Final Neolithic "cheese pot" fragments, indicate a presence in EM I and earlier, the extent and character of which remains to be defined. Prepalatial walls have been uncovered at various points within the Neopalatial complex. In addition, the 1993 and 1994 campaigns have revealed an EM II activity area of some 300 m² with basins and mortars of various size cut into the bedrock on the eastern flank of the plateau. The EM III/MM I phase is also widely represented in the area of the later palatial building: walls and clay floors with sherds of local and imported wares have been excavated.

It is tempting to suggest that the nucleus of this important building was founded in Protopalatial times. Certain rooms as excavated to date belong to a precursor to the Neopalatial structure, and were partially reemployed in the latter. Furthermore, architectural elements, such as the large cubical ashlar blocks in the massive pillars of the north magazines, found reuse in the plan as it exists today. At least two of them carry deeply cut mason's marks, generally thought to be of Protopalatial date. Substantial levelling in the Neopalatial period has, unfortunately, destroyed earlier strata in the southern half of the complex, where the bedrock stands higher.

The presence of flagstone floors, reused blocks, earlier horizons related to walls in use in Neopalatial times, and evidence for LM IA (and possibly IB) walls founded on pre-existing walls lead to the hypothesis that the palatial building of Petras was constructed on and employing parts of an older structural core of a to date undetermined character. A

similar phenomenon was also noted in House I during the 1986 and 1989 campaigns in the settlement.

Thus, shared orientations, integration of Protopalatial constructional elements in the Neopalatial building, no signs (as yet) of a violent destruction, imply substantial continuity in occupation: ten years of work on the site have revealed evidence for a significant human presence on the hill and its flanks in the Protopalatial period. In the current state of knowledge relative to land-use in the Siteia Bay area in MM IB-II times, the remains datable to this period uncovered at Petras are by far the most important both in extent and in quality for the region. It cannot be excluded that Petras served a similar administrative function in both the major periods of Minoan civilization.

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Siteia, July 1994

Discussion

L. Platon: I don't agree that the buildings belong to a settlement. They have very well-defined facades and the neighbouring buildings are very small. I don't understand why we cannot call the small building next to the Achladia house an annex.

M. Tsipopoulou: As I have already pointed out, we know very little about the neighbouring buildings, because N. Platon never excavated them, and now, after so many years of intense agricultural activity in the area, a large part of them has already been destroyed. However, as our survey proved, what remains of them suggests the existence of settlements, the extent of which it will, unfortunately, never be possible to define with any certainty.

L. Platon: I have no disagreement with the hypothesis that there were other buildings in this region, but these buildings were probably architecturally independent and not just houses of a settlement.

S. Andreou: Your paper shows that a regional approach, which looks at the variability of settlement instead of focusing on single sites or single buildings, sets the problem of the "villas" in a different perspective and reveals a more complex picture. In this respect, by avoiding, as you did, labelling the Petras central building a villa or palace, you allow for its classification and interpretation first of all in regional terms. I wonder if there are central buildings in smaller settlements as well.

L. Platon: Perhaps there were in Prophetes Elias, but at Achladia we have an independent unit consisting of two buildings, House A and the annex. There are also other houses, but I don't think they are all clustered around house A.

M. Wiener: It is not surprising that a major building should have a few outbuildings; I can imagine that someone in the next generation built a separate house or whatever. That would not necessarily change our understanding of the economic function of such a building. But my question is this: can you distinguish by looking at scattered sherds, whether there are outbuildings or a village around the villa?

M. Tsipopoulou: At Achladia and Prophetes Elias (Ayios Georgios, Tourtoulou), I believe there are enough architectural remains to prove the existence of settlements. At Zou, there is less evidence preserved, but we must take into consideration the fact that the excavations were never completed. Furthermore, if I have read correctly the reports of the excavator, N. Platon, he did not seem to believe that these buildings were isolated. What our paper tried to show was that the so-called "villas" in the area of Siteia were not very different—in size, function and architectural details—from the houses of the urban settlement at Petras, the existence and importance of which as a central place was not known to Platon at the time of his excavations. This second palatial centre in eastern Crete, much closer to these "villas" than the palace and town at Zakros, leads us to reconsider the evidence.