

“THE WHOLE IS A FREAK”: A REASSESSMENT OF THE SPATIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE OVAL HOUSE AT CHAMAIZI, SITEIA

by *Valeria Lenuzza*

The site of Chamaizi lies in the hinterland between the Gulf of Mirabello and the Bay of Siteia, on top of a steep, flat-topped hill known as Souvloto Mouri (pointed hill), with a commanding view over the bay to the east and the Piskokephalo Valley to the west.¹ Since the first archaeological investigations at the beginning of the 20th century, the site has attracted the attention of scholars on account of the discovery there of an unusual oval building consisting of multiple rooms arranged around an inner court with a cistern.² Whereas most previous studies have dealt mainly with the shape of the building, the purpose of this paper is to collect all the available data from the notebooks and the published excavation reports in order to examine the significance and meaning of its spatial organization.

HISTORY OF THE RESEARCH

The first excavations on the site, carried out by S. Xanthoudides in 1903 in just two weeks, brought to light the complete outline of the building, but did not reach virgin soil.³ As a result, many important elements, such as the existence of the northwest entrance and details of the floor level of the rooms, are lacking in the first published plan, which was based on a single sketch made during the excavation (Fig. 6.1).

During the cleaning and consolidation of the walls in the 1970s, C. Davaras called attention to the doorway on the northwest side, the steps and the thresholds of the passages to the rooms, the pavement

1. I wish to thank Ilaria Caloi and Santo Privitera for encouragement, Mario Benzi, Giampaolo Graziadio, and Simona Todaro for their comments on the text, and Ilaria Simiakaki for invaluable help. I am grateful to Gerald Cadogan for crucial suggestions during the ΣΤΕΓΑ colloquium. I also owe much to Natalia Vogeikoff-Brogan and Kevin Glowacki for the time and care

they gave to my paper and illustrations, and to the anonymous reviewers for their stimulating remarks. Finally, my gratitude goes to Georgia Katsalaki, who provided me with the opportunity to consult Xanthoudides' notebooks, which are now archived in the Historical Museum in Iraklion.

2. Since the circular structure that occupies the central part of the build-

ing at Chamaizi does not depend on a natural source of water, absent on the hilltop, but more probably collected rain from an inward-sloping roof, I propose to adopt the term “cistern” instead of the traditional designation as a “well.”

3. Xanthoudides 1903; 1906, pp. 117–156, esp. fig. 1.

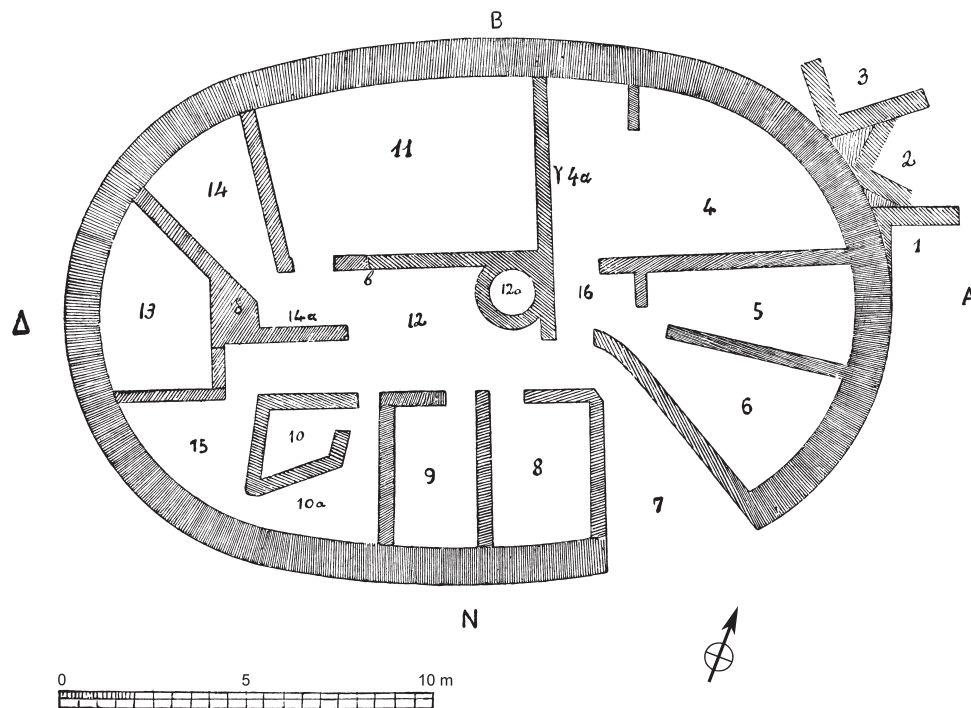


Figure 6.1. Plan of the house at Chamaizi. After Xanthoudides 1906, fig. 1

covering most of the inner court, and the overflow drain, which was covered by slabs and runs from the cistern toward the main entrance (Fig. 6.2).⁴ These new discoveries seriously challenged N. Platon's interpretation of the building as a peak sanctuary, which he based on its location on top of the hill, the presence of some cult-related objects (clay figurines, a rhyton, and a clay offering table), and a cistern that was considered to be a sacred *bothros*.⁵

The domestic character of most of the artifacts, however, instead gives support to Xanthoudides' initial interpretation of the building as a house. A large quantity of pithos fragments, loomweights, whetstones, querns, and pestles (still largely unpublished) clearly identify the oval structure as a residential complex with areas for domestic activities such as storage, weaving, and food processing.⁶ Unfortunately, the final report from Xanthoudides' initial excavation only rarely indicates the exact findspot of the objects and the publication of the material from the new investigation is still pending.

4. Davaras 1972a, 1972c, 1973b. The new investigations verified the plan of the building at the southwest side, where it forms an angle instead of the arc of an ellipsis. This new element seems to support the idea of Mackenzie, that the house at Chamaizi "is a freak: . . . simply an elongated rectangular house of well-known Minoan type, compressed within an ellipse to follow the conformation of the hill" and does

not pertain to a peculiar architectural tradition (Mackenzie 1907–1908, p. 414, figs. 20–21). A similar opinion has been more recently expressed by Sariyannis (1978, pp. 73–74), who, however, stressed the importance of the placement of the earlier structures lying beneath the building in defining its shape: it was erected upon them to join earlier rooms and structures in a unique complex. See also Davaras 1992a for a

brief summary, plan, and aerial photographs of the site.

5. Platon 1951, pp. 159–160. This interpretation quickly gained support: see, e.g., Hutchinson 1962, p. 169; Alexiou 1964, p. 24; Branigan 1970a, pp. 105–106.

6. Davaras 1973b, p. 50. Their discovery is already mentioned in Xanthoudides' notebook (Xanthoudides 1903: 12 June).

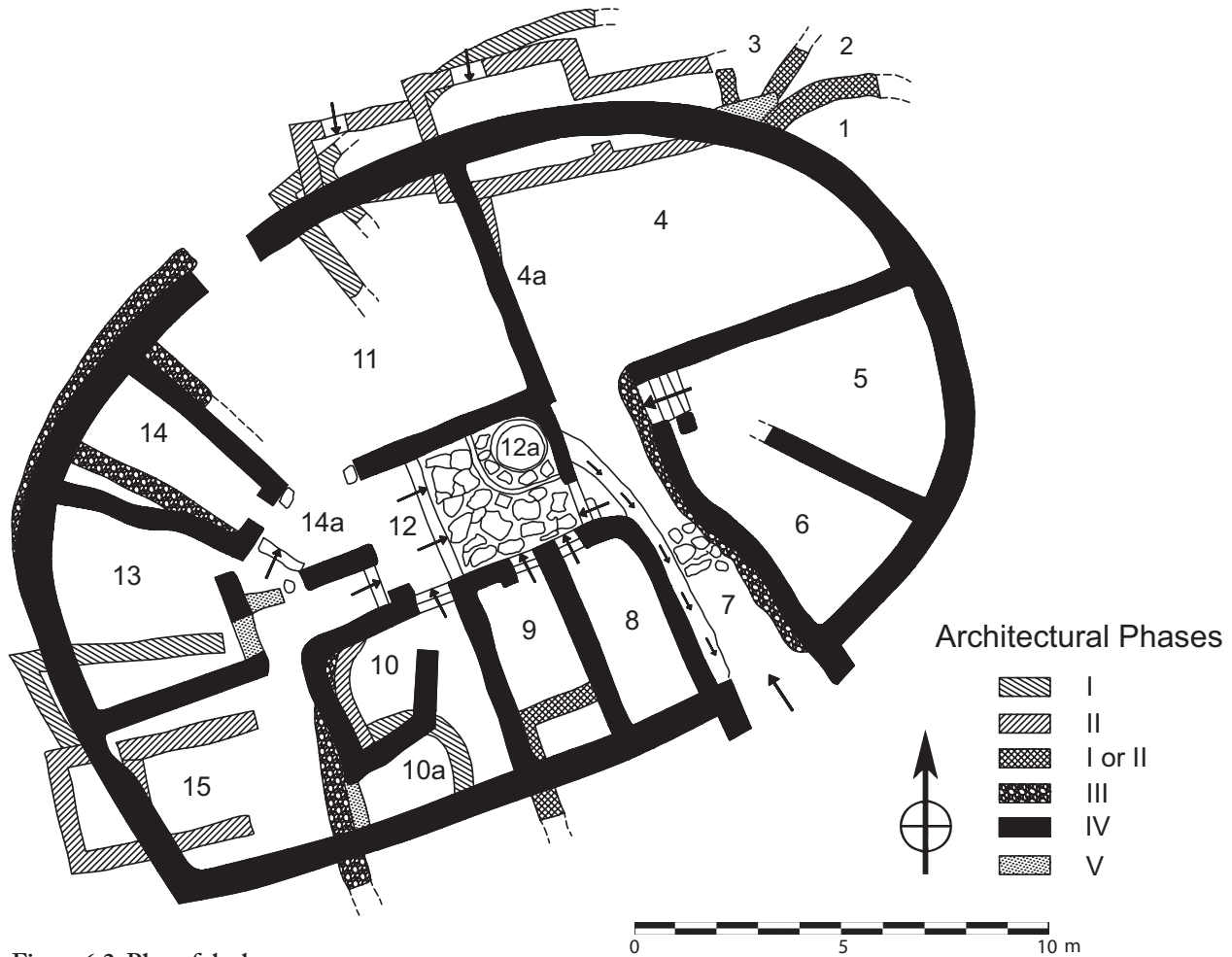


Figure 6.2. Plan of the house at Chamaizi showing architectural phases of development. Drawing E. Keil, after Davaras 1972a, p. 287, fig. 8

DISTRIBUTION OF THE FINDS AND THE INTERIOR ORGANIZATION OF THE BUILDING

On the basis of the sparse information drawn from the published reports, together with auxiliary data from Xanthoudides' excavation notebooks,⁷ it is possible to investigate the relationship between the architecture and the finds in more detail. The purpose of such an analysis is, first of all, to define the nature of the residents of the building and, secondly, to connect these people and their activities with the architecture in order to propose a new interpretation of the spatial and functional organization of the building.

Many objects have been found on the site, such as stone and clay vases and lamps, bronze tools, domestic equipment, figurines, and cult paraphernalia (Fig. 6.3). Some of them (e.g., the stone vases, the loomweights, and the "Chamaizi pots") show peculiar features that highlight the high rank of the inhabitants. Stone vases have been found in large quantities,⁸ with a wide distribution in the building, especially in the eastern part (Fig. 6.4). Their association with wealthy or elite contexts is quite common and frequent enough not to require further discussion here.⁹

7. Xanthoudides 1903.

8. Xanthoudides 1906, pp. 150–151, pl. 11; Warren 1969, pp. 7–11, 17–21, 49–52, 78–79, 117–118.

9. E.g., Palio 2004, pp. 20–21.

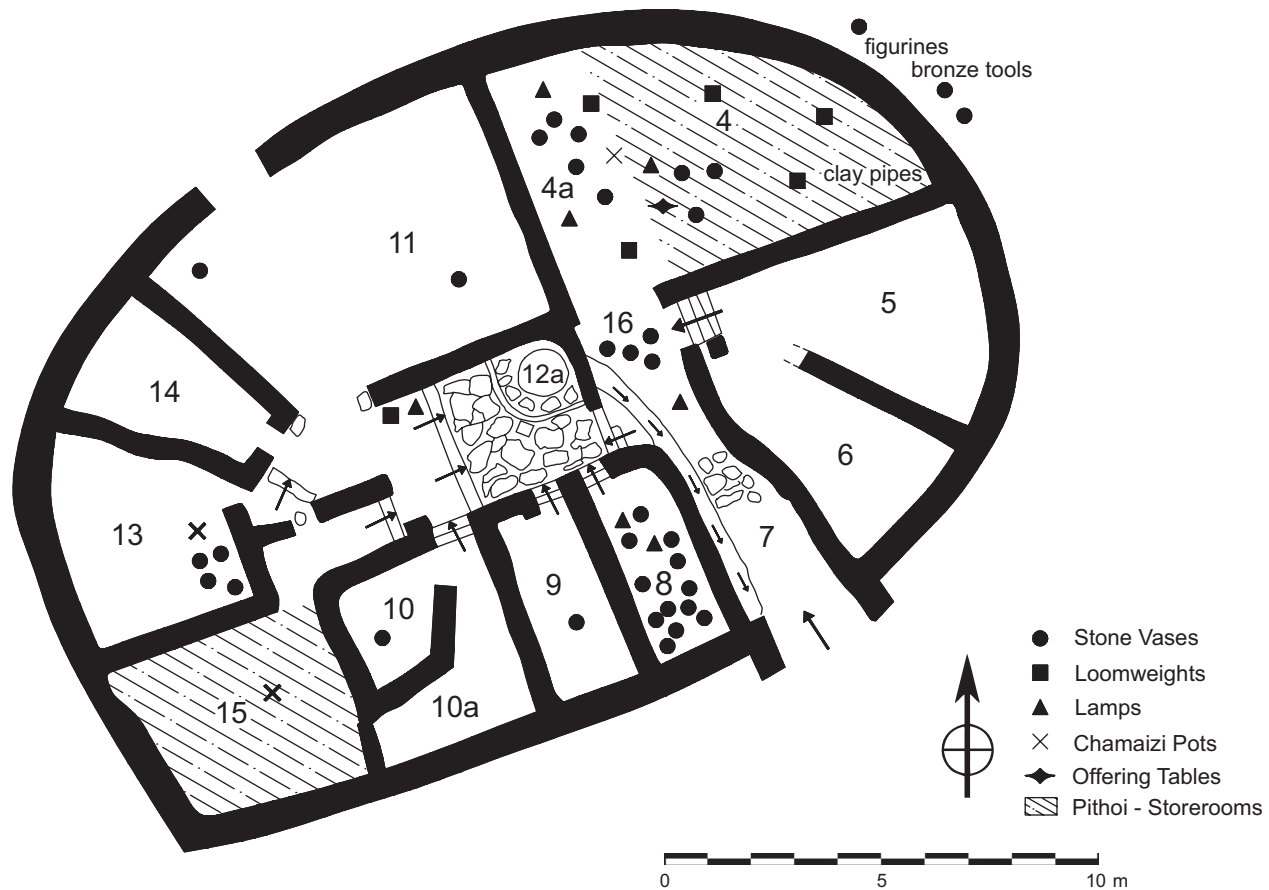


Figure 6.3. Plan of the oval house at Chamaizi showing the distribution of finds. Plan by V. Lenuzza, drawing E. Keil

Large numbers of loomweights were reported by both Xanthoudides and Davaras, but only one possible example has been published to date.¹⁰ It is cubic in shape, and its upper surface is incised in the middle with a thick line and impressed with two intertwined loops. Its form closely resembles the cubic objects from Palaikastro, defined as loomweights of the “block” type by Eccles, at least 15 of which bear seal impressions.¹¹ Many similar terracotta cubes, with seal impressions or incised linear signs, have been found at other East Cretan sites, always in domestic or possibly production areas.¹² Although current scholarly consensus identifies them as loomweights or net weights, J. Weingarten has recently proposed that they have nothing to do with weaving or fishing, but were used instead as sack fasteners that served as labels or markers.¹³ Following Weingarten’s hypothesis, the cubic object from Chamaizi could, therefore, testify not to the small-scale production of textiles (as the numerous proper loomweights

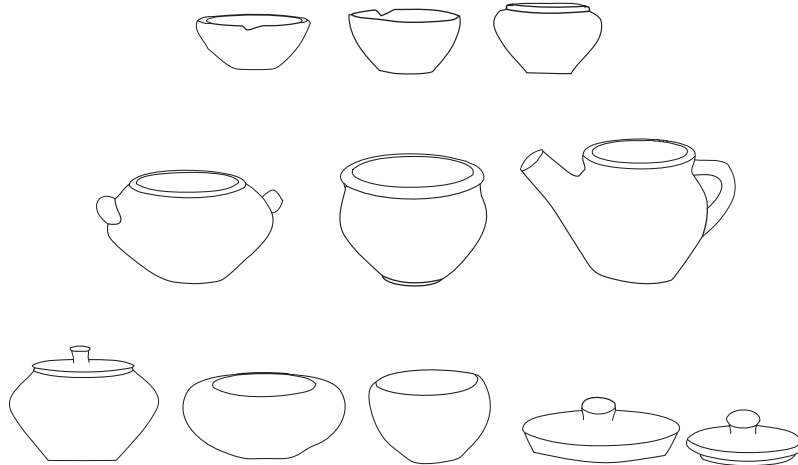
10. HM 3517. Xanthoudides 1906, p. 148, pl. 9:10. This object has been misunderstood by Watrous (2001, p. 184, n. 225), who incorrectly interpreted it as a mold for metal.

11. Hutchinson, Eccles, and Benton 1939–1940, p. 47.

12. E.g., at Zakros (Hogarth 1900–1901, p. 127, fig 38:6); Palaikastro (Hutchinson, Eccles, and Benton 1939–1940, pp. 47–48, figs. 32, 42); Petras (Tsipopoulou 1990, pp. 99–101).

13. Weingarten 2000, p. 491.

Figure 6.4. Group of stone vases from Chamaizi (middle row: HM 456, HM 471, HM 470; bottom row, center: HM 467). Scale 1:5. Drawing V. Lenuzza, after Xanthoudides 1906, pl. 11



found on the site do), but rather to a system of fastening and tagging sacks in storage areas, the existence of which is also attested by a large number of pithos fragments in the building.

Unfortunately, the precise date of the cubic object is uncertain; M. Vlazaki and E. Hallager have recently suggested a date of Middle Minoan (MM) I.¹⁴ If this dating is correct, the presence of such a sealing should testify, together with other Prepalatial seals, to “the existence, ever since this period, of some sort of control and organization of the production,” as well as to the need to indicate the ownership or the authority in charge of it.¹⁵ Since Chamaizi is quite isolated in MM I, the authority who impressed the clay with a seal might have been the same one who lived in the building.

The high rank of the people inhabiting the house is also suggested from the presence of the so-called Chamaizi pots (named after the place of first discovery), which are miniature monochrome jugs with crisscross incisions on the neck (Figs. 6.3, 6.5).¹⁶ Their special function and meaning becomes evident if one considers those discovered at Malia, in a Protopalatial context together with two famous ceremonial swords, arranged around a platform.¹⁷ According to the excavators, the swords attest that this area had ceremonial functions reserved for an elite group.¹⁸ The miniature pots probably had the same meaning, perhaps for their contents (possibly scented oils?),¹⁹ as part of the ceremonial equipment kit or as exclusively elite articles. Some Chamaizi pots are also known from one of the two major buildings of Quartier Mu (Building B), where the excavators distinguished the material

14. Vlazaki and Hallager 1995, p. 254.

15. Poursat 1990, p. 55.

16. Xanthoudides 1906, pp. 147–148, pl. 9:1–3. The vase (see Fig. 6.5, right), peculiar for its horizontal handle, was found a few days after the beginning of the excavation in the area of room 4, while the other two little jugs

were discovered in the court and in room 15, respectively (Xanthoudides 1903: 10, 16, and 17 June). Aside from these three vases, many other fragments were found scattered within the building.

17. The vases were discovered in room beta, the central room in a sequence of small rooms found beneath Neopalatial rooms III1, III2, and III7,

in the northwest quarter of the Palace (Chapouthier and Gallet de Santerre 1947–1948, p. 405, fig. 16). Recently, Pelon (2006, p. 146) specified a MM II date for the archaeological evidence in the room, the two swords, and the majority of the ceramic fragments.

18. Chapouthier 1938.

19. Poursat 1987, p. 75.

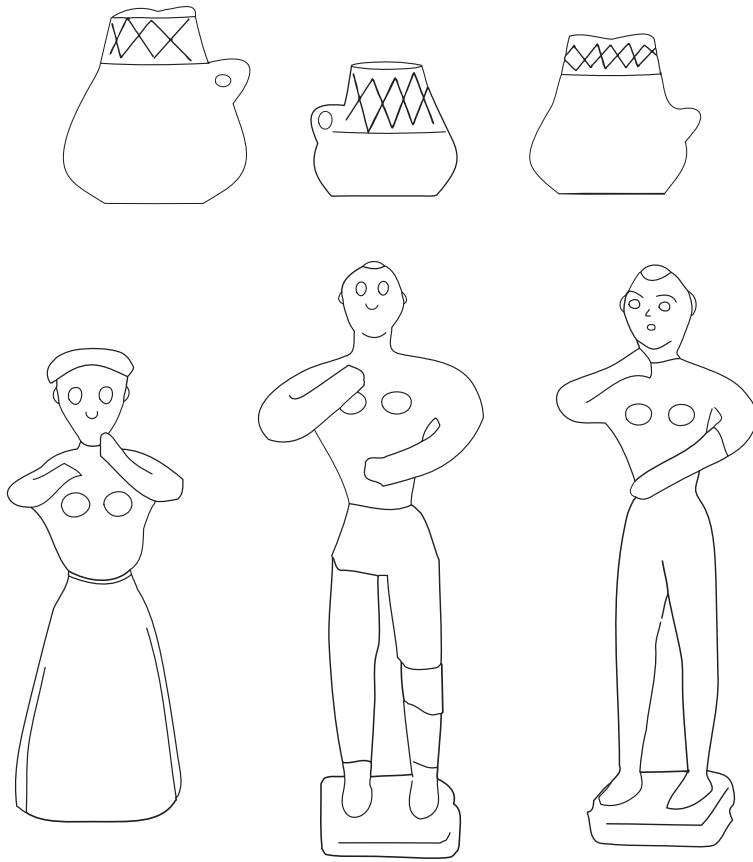


Figure 6.5. “Chamaizi pots” from Chamaizi. Scale 1:3. Drawing V. Lenuzza, after Xanthoudides 1906, pl. 9:1–3

Figure 6.6. Terracotta figurines (HM 3489, HM 3485, HM 3487) found in room 2 at Chamaizi. Scale 1:3. Drawing V. Lenuzza, after Xanthoudides 1906, figs. 3–5

fallen from the upper floor, among which were prestige items (e.g., stone figurines and stone vases) and about 12 miniature pots.²⁰

Another piece of evidence that indicates the self-sufficiency of the occupants—from a religious point of view—is the terracotta figurines that were found in room 2 (i.e., outside of the oval building itself). Three figurines, reassembled from fragments (Fig. 6.6), and the head of a fourth were found in 1903; two more heads, one chest, and an animal figurine were discovered in the more recent investigations.²¹ Their presence has been the main argument in the past for the interpretation of the house as a cult building. While their similarity with figurines from peak sanctuaries is indeed striking, their number is very small in comparison to the hundreds yielded by peak sanctuaries.²² These figurines may simply attest the existence of an area reserved for cult (i.e., a domestic shrine).

A few other objects with possible cultic associations may lead in the same direction. For example, a jug with perforated base (rhyton) was

20. van Effenterre 1980, p. 188.

21. Xanthoudides 1906, pp. 135–143, figs. 3–6; Davaras 1972a, p. 38.

22. Although their average size (H. ca. 0.25 m) is larger than that of the majority of the figurines from the peak sanctuaries, they do not reach the height of the idols from Kophinas,

Playia, or Petsophas (see Rutkowski 1986, p. 84). Rutkowski (1986, p. 145) argues that this fact, combined with the position of the arms, excludes the possibility that they were cult idols. Rutkowski bases his statement on “the hands extended in supplication,” which he believes should classify them

as votive figures. The arms of the two male “votaries” at Chamaizi, however, have a more peculiar position and are slanting across the body, with the left hand at the waist and the right hand at the mouth, in a gesture, at least to my knowledge, without exact comparison.

Figure 6.7. Cult-related objects from Chamaizi: rhyton from room 8 (left) and offering table from room 4 (right). Scale 1:5. Drawing V. Lenuzza, after Xanthoudides 1906, pls. 9:11, 8:6

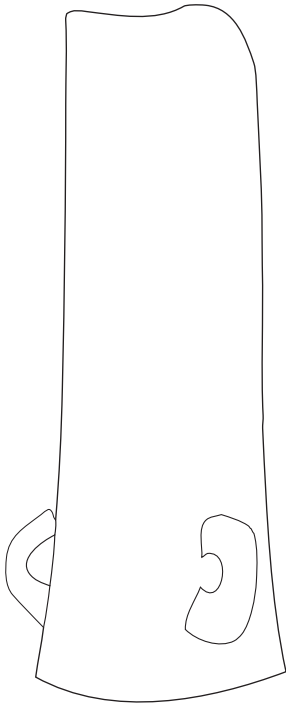
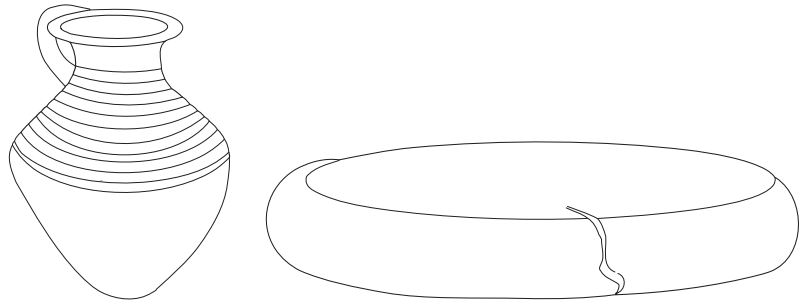


Figure 6.8. Clay tube (possible drain pipe). Scale 1:5. Drawing V. Lenuzza, after Xanthoudides 1906, pl. 8:1

found in the fill of room 8, and a clay offering table, which probably was originally placed near a hearth,²³ was found upside down and broken in the western part of room 4 (Fig. 6.7).²⁴ Branigan also links these items with what he supposes to be a tubular stand (Fig. 6.8) as a sort of forerunner of well-known Late Minoan snake tubes.²⁵ This tubular object, however, could also be interpreted as a drain pipe, similar to those found in situ in a vertical position in the southeast corner of room 4.²⁶

With regard to the architecture of the building and distribution of the finds (see Fig. 6.3), three important elements need to be highlighted: the existence of storerooms, the existence of a shrine, and the existence of a second floor. The existence and location of the storage areas can be easily recognized. Xanthoudides reports that rooms 4 and 15 were found almost full of pithos fragments. In the case of room 4, the pithoi were sometimes still standing on small discoid slabs of schist.²⁷ Room 4 has traditionally been interpreted as the domestic shrine of the building on account of the discovery of the clay offering table and the proximity of room 2, where the terracotta figurines were found.²⁸ Although it cannot be denied that the cult objects were concentrated in this area, it is more likely that they had fallen from the upper floor, where the house shrine was possibly located, perhaps near the top of the stairs by the entrance to the living quarters.²⁹

No architectural remains document with certainty the existence of a second floor, but at least the location of the stairs can be suggested. A passage to the first floor can be surely recognized, identified by Xanthoudides in the area of room 13.³⁰ In the last phase of the building, at least, the supposed doorway to the room is too small to allow a person to pass through, and so it is necessary to assume an entrance from above.

The presumed existence of an upper floor and the location of the domestic shrine there gains further support from comparison with the

23. Xanthoudides, indeed, reports the presence of a heap of ash, which may have come from a hearth, in the spot marked with sign Gamma on his plan (Xanthoudides 1906, p. 123; cf. Fig. 6.1).

24. Room 4a in Xanthoudides' original plan; for the offering table, see Xanthoudides 1906, p. 143, pl. 8:6 (W. 0.05 m; Diam. 0.30 m).

25. Branigan 1970a, p. 106–107.

26. Xanthoudides 1906, pp. 144–145, pl. 8:1 (average H. 0.38 m; Diam. 0.10–0.14 m). Xanthoudides (1903), in fact, describes the clay tubes as still embedded one inside the other in the corner of room 4. Moreover, its use as a drain pipe and not as a cult object gains support from comparison with similar clay tubes found at MM IA Knossos

(*PM* IV:1, p. 146, fig. 113) and at a MM II sanctuary at Malia (Poursat 1966, p. 535, fig. 19).

27. Xanthoudides 1906, p. 123.

28. Davaras 1973b, p. 51; Rutkowski 1986, p. 139; Hood 1997, p. 115.

29. For an architectural comparison, see Palaikastro, Block N (Sackett, Popham, and Warren 1965, p. 257).

30. Xanthoudides 1906, p. 124.

MM II clay model from Monastiraki, which reproduces the first floor of a building with a pair of horns of consecration on the parapet of the balcony.³¹ In a recent study of Early Minoan (EM) architectural models from Ayia Triada, S. Todaro has stressed the possible analogy in plan and elevation between the model and the building at Chamaizi.³² Going one step further, it is perhaps also possible to imagine the first floor at Chamaizi with a sort of small veranda, possibly used as an open-air area for cult activity. This balcony could have been placed above room 4, since in the southeast corner of this room Xanthoudides found vertically placed drain pipes, presumably for the flow of water from the open upper space.

Another system of drainage has been found in the building, starting from the upper edge of the central circular cistern (12a) and running under passage 7 (Fig. 6.2).³³ Its discovery has led to a better understanding of the cistern, which is 2 m wide and 2.20 m deep, covered with plaster and composed of limestone blocks on the upper part and bedrock at the bottom. The complete absence of springs on the hilltop led it to be identified as a cistern that collected rain water from an inward-sloping roof,³⁴ and this hypothesis was confirmed by the discovery of the drain, which directed overflows to the outside.

The position of the cistern and of the court fixes another important point in the spatial organization of the building. Their relation to entrance 7 seems to mark a division of the house into two different sectors: a smaller eastern sector (including rooms 4–6 and 16) and a larger western one (rooms 8–15). Each sector is provided with its own storerooms (room 4 in the east, and rooms 13 and 15 in the west). Both sectors are accessible, at least in the main phase of the oval house, from the main entrance (passage 7). It is highly likely that the architectural separation into two parts corresponds also to a functional distinction. In this regard, it should be noted that rooms 5 and 6 have a lower floor level than the vestibule (16) they communicate with by means of a small flight of steps beside a pillar (Figs. 6.2, 6.3). Rooms 5 and 6, therefore, were presumably basement rooms. The whole eastern sector of the building, in other words, could have been reserved for storage.

With regard to the western sector, it is worth noting that in the main phase of the building it was only accessible through court 12, which was surely the focus of the area, since it was the sole space that guaranteed entrance to the rooms and allowed communication between them.³⁵ Only a few details are provided by the excavation reports for this sector, so few observations can be made about the rooms and their functions. Rooms 8 and 9, which have similar dimensions and orientations, were most likely used for similar activities, perhaps connected with the nearby court.³⁶

31. Kanta, Godart, and Tsigounaki 2001, pp. 63–64.

32. Todaro 2003a, pp. 565–566.

33. Davaras 1973b, pp. 50, 53.

34. Noack (1908, pp. 55–57, fig. 6) first proposed a tentative reconstruction of a keel roof, criticized by Mackenzie

(1907–1908, p. 418).

35. Nowicki (this volume, Chap. 30) stresses that the northwest entrance does not seem to belong to the first phase of the building. Indeed, it is quite different from the southeast entrance and appears, instead, as a simple open-

ing up of the northwest wall of room 11 (see Davaras 1973b, pl. 11:a).

36. Gesell (1972, p. 232, cat. 29–31) proposes an interpretation of room 8 as a bench sanctuary on account of the supposed presence of an embankment running along three sides.

Room 11, the largest room in the complex, may have been reserved for the main household-related activities. Perhaps food processing and grinding activities took place here, if it is correct to interpret as querns the “irregular slabs of *titanopetra* with a concave and worn-out upper surface” found by Xanthoudides together with pestles and other “similar tools.”³⁷

The finds from the building also attest other activities such as weaving and the possible production of stone vases (suggested by the presence of many specimens). It is, however, difficult to localize them. Taking into account the shallow depth at which the loomweights and stone vases were found, as well as their distribution, it is possible to suggest that they may have fallen from the upper floor and were originally concentrated in the area of the shrine (Fig. 6.3). The weaving area could have been located above the western part of room 4, while the stone vase workshop may have been situated more toward the south, above room 8 and vestibule 16. By comparison, only a few objects were recovered at a shallow depth in the western sector, a fact that could indicate that the upper floor in this part, if it existed, was simply a living area.

In the end, it is possible to hypothesize an inner organization for the oval house at Chamaizi that is not very different from that of the Quartier Mu buildings at Malia,³⁸ with the ground floor used for passage, storage, and food processing, and the upper floor reserved for the living areas and workshops.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE BUILDING

The similarity with Quartier Mu at Malia leads to an important unanswered question regarding the oval house: its chronology. The Chamaizi building is traditionally dated to the MM IA period, but Davaras was able to distinguish three different architectural phases (I–III) on the site prior to the construction of the oval structure (phase IV) and a later minor remodeling in the area of rooms 10 and 13 (phase V; see Fig. 6.2).³⁹ Moreover, the finds demonstrate a long span of occupation. The stone vases, together with the bronze tools, belong to a tradition that continues without substantial changes from EM III to MM II. The presence of bird’s nest bowls and some details in the shape of the bronze tools, nevertheless, allows us to assign at least some specimens to a MM IB–II date.⁴⁰ Likewise, the ceramic remains indicate at least two chronological periods: EM III–MM IA and MM IB–II (as summarized in Tables 6.1 and 6.2).

An unusual pithos fragment could perhaps be also assigned to the MM IB–II phase (Fig. 6.9). It comes from room 4 and has nothing peculiar in its form, clay, or technique. Its importance and possible date depends exclusively on the incisions it bears,⁴¹ which have been identified as two

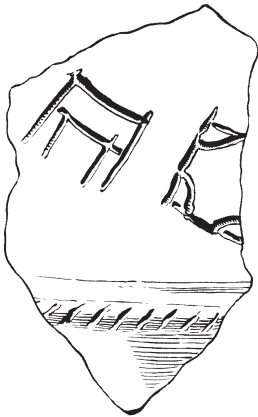


Figure 6.9. Pithos fragment from room 4 with supposed Linear A signs. Scale? Xanthoudides 1906, fig. 7

37. Xanthoudides 1903: 12 June.

38. Poursat 1996; see also Evely 1988, p. 403.

39. Davaras 1973b, p. 50.

40. Regarding the bronze tools, see Evely 2000, pp. 13, 51, 68; for the stone vases see, e.g., Palio 2004, p. 13.

41. Xanthoudides 1906, fig. 7.

TABLE 6.1. MM IA VASES FROM CHAMAIZI

<i>Shape</i>	<i>Height (m)</i>	<i>Chronology</i>	<i>References and Comparisons</i>
Beaked jug	0.24	MM IA	Xanthoudides 1906, col. 145, pl. 8:2. Cf. Malia, Villa A and Quartier Delta, House Δα (Demargne and Gallet De Santerre 1953, pp. 15, 54, pls. VIII:8487, XXVII:top row on the right).
Beaked jug	?	EM III–MM IA	Xanthoudides 1906, pl. 9:8; Walberg 1983, p. 130; Watrous 2001, p. 184, n. 226.
Beaked jug, with Light-on-Dark decoration	0.085	EM III–MM IA	Xanthoudides 1906, col. 145, pl. 9:12; Warren 1965, p. 28; Walberg 1983, p. 130.
Beaked jug, with Light-on-Dark decoration	0.115	EM III–MM IA	Xanthoudides 1906, col. 145, pl. 9:13; Walberg 1983, p. 130.
Jug	?	EM III–MM IA	Xanthoudides 1906, pl. 9:9; Watrous 2001, p. 184, n. 226.
Teapot	0.088	MM IA	Xanthoudides 1906, col. 147, pl. 9:6; Warren 1965, p. 28. Cf. Palaikastro (Dawkins 1902–1903, p. 307, fig. 7:1).

TABLE 6.2. MM IB–II VASES FROM CHAMAIZI

<i>Shape</i>	<i>Size (m)</i>	<i>Chronology</i>	<i>References and Comparisons</i>
Amphora, with oval spout and decoration of triple vertical bands	H. 0.385	MM II	Xanthoudides 1906, col. 144, pl. 8:4; Walberg 1983, p. 130. Cf. Malia, Quartier Theta (van Effenterre 1976, p. 36, pl. XVI:11.151); Malia, Quartier Mu, Atelier de Potier, VIII4 (Poursat 1996, p. 35, pl. XVIII:c).
Amphora, with turned-down neck	?	MM II	Xanthoudides 1906, col. 148, pl. 9:15; Walberg 1983, pp. 130–131.
Beaked jug	?	MM II	Xanthoudides 1906, col. 145, pl. 8:3. Cf. Malia, Quartier Mu, Atelier des Sceaux (Poursat 1996, p. 21, pl. 23:e).
Lamps	?	MM IB–II	Xanthoudides 1906, col. 149, pl. 10. Cf. Malia, House Zβ (Deshayes and Dessenne 1959, pl. XII:3).
Legged plate, with small clay grains on the inner surface	Diam. 0.15	MM II	Xanthoudides 1906, col. 148, pl. 9:14; Walberg 1983, p. 34. Cf. Palaikastro (Dawkins 1902–1903, pp. 324–325, fig. 24:2).
Rhyton	H. 0.16 Diam.: 0.13	MM II	Xanthoudides 1906, col. 146, pl. 9:11; Gesell 1985, fig. 152; Watrous 2001, p. 184 n. 226.
“Chamaizi pots”	H. 0.05–0.07	MM IB–II	Xanthoudides 1906, col. 147, pl. 9:1–3; Cadogan 1995, p. 99; Watrous 2001, p. 184, n. 226. Cf. Malia, Palace, room Beta (Chapouthier and Gallet de Santerre 1947–1948, fig. 16; Pelon 2006, p. 146); Malia, Maison de la Plage (van Effenterre 1976, pp. 74, 78–79, 81); Monastiraki Katalimata (Nowicki 2001, fig. 6e, pl. 2a).

Linear A signs.⁴² Unfortunately, the identification of the signs is uncertain, and it would be desirable to reexamine the fragment and eventually clarify the drawing published by Xanthoudides. The symbol on the right is, in fact, a *unicum*, and the one on the left, recognized as the Linear A sign for wine, is quite different from the normal sign for wine (AB 131).⁴³

On the whole, the finds and the architectural remains reveal an uninterrupted use of the site from a phase previous to the construction of the oval house until at least MM II, when the building ceased to be occupied.

42. Watrous 2001, p. 183.

43. M. Del Frio (pers. comm.).
Cf. Godart and Olivier 1985, pl. 44.

CONCLUSIONS

Once the residential nature of the building, the high rank of its inhabitants, and a MM IB–II chronology for its last phase of occupation have been established, a final question arises concerning the relationship between Chamaizi, the two political powers that controlled the area (Malia and Petras), and the Prepalatial building at Ayia Photia. As far as Malia is concerned, an important clue is offered by the presence at Chamaizi of the “Chamaizi pots” that are also found in large quantities in the area of the Palace,⁴⁴ and are, in fact, produced locally in the immediate vicinity (in the workshop of the *Maison de la Plage*).⁴⁵ The discovery of these little jugs at sites near the Gulf of Mirabello and as far west as Gournes could indicate, according to G. Cadogan, the extent of the territory controlled by Malia in the Protopalatial Period.⁴⁶ In this picture, Chamaizi appears as the eastern border of the economic—if not also the political—expansion of Malia.

Petras, a site that from MM IIA onward was the center of another palatial system much closer to Chamaizi itself, already reveals a “prominent position in the area” in MM IA, with imports from many parts of Crete.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, the summit of Petras was deeply leveled in order to accommodate the later Palace, and no major structure dating to the MM I period has been found. For this reason it has not yet been possible to understand precisely the historical and eventually competitive relationship between Petras and Chamaizi prior to the emergence of the Palace at Petras.⁴⁸ Still, what draws attention is the perfect coincidence between the end of the occupation on Souvloto Mouri hill and the emergence of a proper palatial system at Petras in MM II.

I suggest that the appearance of the oval building at Chamaizi could be connected to the process of social disruption that affected Crete at the beginning of MM I.⁴⁹ It could have been the attempt of an elite family or clan, in a moment when the existing social structure was in flux, to guarantee its high status by means of a substantial building well suited for defense.⁵⁰ With the emergence of a major power at Petras in MM IIA, the high-ranking residential group at Chamaizi was probably defeated and absorbed into the palatial territory, and the occupation of the hill inevitably came to an end.

In addition to the two main political powers that competed for control of the region between MM IB and MM IIA, another site must be taken into account for its possible relationship with Chamaizi, namely, the rectangular building at Kouphota Ayia Photia, just a few kilometers east of Petras.⁵¹ In my opinion, Ayia Photia seems to have undergone the same historical evolution as Chamaizi, having to satisfy the same needs regarding

44. Demargne 1945, pp. 9, 19, pls. XXVII, XXXI:2, XXXII:2; Chappouther and Gallet de Santerre 1947–1948, p. 405; van Effenterre and van Effenterre 1976, pp. 76–79, pl. XI; Poursat 1996, p. 29, pls. 23:h, 30:d, e.

45. van Effenterre and van Effenterre 1976, pp. 74, 78–79, 81.

46. Cadogan 1990; 1995, p. 99.

47. Tsipopoulou 2002, p. 137.

48. Tsipopoulou (1999b, p. 185, n. 23), in particular, stresses how a comparison between the pottery from Chamaizi and Petras would allow a better understanding of the final Prepalatial period in the Siteia Bay area.

49. Branigan 1988; Soles 1988, esp. p. 60.

50. For this architectural and topographical aspect of the building, see Nowicki (this volume, Chap. 30).

51. Tsipopoulou 1999b, p. 182 (with references).

the choice and the occupation of the site. From a chronological perspective, in fact, the area of the MM IA building at Ayia Photia also yielded EM II and MM IB sherds, which correspond to a span of occupation as long as that at Chamaizi. Moreover, apart from two small circular structures, the stable presence at the site ceases with MM IIA, contemporaneous with the oval building at Chamaizi, i.e., when political and economical power finally converges in Petras.

Noticeable differences can be pointed out in the topography of the two sites: Chamaizi occupies a hill 500 m high, located a few kilometers away from the sea, while Ayia Photia is on a low hill (only 25 m high) along the shore. Nevertheless, both have a commanding view over the coastline of the Gulf of Mirabello and Siteia Bay, respectively, and over their immediate hinterland. If one also considers that production and storage activities are represented at both sites, it is possible to hypothesize that Chamaizi and Ayia Photia were two small, independent centers where power and resources were concentrated before the rise of the Palace at Petras.