ILSE SCHOEP

ASSESSING THE ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE IN CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION IN THE MIDDLE MINOAN I–II PERIODS

Summary. *This paper uses Middle Minoan architecture to explore the degree to which the conceptualization and reconstruction of the First Palaces on Crete have been unduly influenced by the model of the Minoan palace as the centralized political, economic and religious authority. It is generally assumed that this model, first formulated on the basis of the LM II–III palace at Knossos, also serves to explain the First Palaces despite the fact that relatively little attention has hitherto been paid to their external and internal characteristics. Detailed reassessment of the available data strongly suggests that the First Palaces differed from their Late Bronze Age counterparts in several important ways. Particularly striking is the absence of so-called 'palatial' architectural features (e.g. ashlar masonry, Minoan Hall, Lustral Basin, etc.), which hitherto had been thought to form an integral part of the First Palaces. Rather, the earliest evidence for these architectural features seems to be found in elite residences in settlement contexts (e.g. Malia). This observation urges a reassessment not only of the term 'palatial' architecture but also of the nature and location of power in Middle Bronze Age Crete and the role played by architecture as a medium of elite conspicuous consumption.*

INTRODUCTION

Architecture, because it is highly visible and durable, serves as a medium of political, social, ideological and symbolic expression (Abrams 1989, 48). It is accepted that architecture creates highly visible boundaries, so architectural style is linked to and reflective of its underlying organizational, behavioural and symbolic structures (Kent 1990, 2). Moreover, architecture not only reflects social structures but also actively participates in maintaining them and certain architectural forms are used by controlling elites as concomitants and signifiers of power (Emerson 1997).

The potential of architecture for shedding light on the socio-political organization and interaction between different groups has been well exploited for the Neopalatial period on Crete. Some studies have focused on the classification of buildings into categories (e.g. McEnroe 1982), others have assessed the implications of the proliferation of so-called 'palatial' architectural features (Driessen 1982, 1989–90; Cherry 1986; Hamilakis 2002), such as ashlar masonry, orthostats, column bases, light-wells, polythyra and lustral basins, impressive staircases and upper storeys (Driessen 1989–90, 5; McEnroe 1982; Hitchcock 2000). These

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architectural features have been designated 'palatial' because they are assumed to have first been implemented in the palaces (cf. Driessen 1989–1990, 5). Their proliferation over the island in the Late Bronze Age has been interpreted in several ways. One school of thought considers the distribution of palatial architectural features as an indication of an integrated political organization centred upon Knossos, with lower order centres repeating at a less grandiose scale the functions exerted by the capital (for references see Schoep 1999, 202 note 3). A second school argues that this proliferation may be explained as a result of interaction and emulation between independent peer polities (for references see Schoep 1999, 202 note 3; Hamilakis 2002).

Although many features of palatial architecture, such as ashlar masonry, orthostats, column bases, light-wells, polythyra and even lustral basins, already occur in the Proto palatial period, the wider implications of their use during this period have not been systematically explored. Most studies of the First Palaces have focused either on their origins (e.g. Cherry 1986; Halstead 1981) or their functions (e.g. Branigan 1987, 1988a; Halstead 1981); little attention has been paid to the external characteristics aand appearances of these buildings and of their contemporary architectural context. In contrast to earlier studies that often focus on the First Palaces in isolation from their contemporary settlements (e.g. Fiandra 1961–62; Shaw 1971; Branigan 1988a), this paper will consider them as an integrated part of a wider built environment. In this way the use of architecture both within and beyond the palaces will be shown to offer great potential for improving our understanding of both the Proto palatial palaces and their wider social context.

THE PALATIAL MODEL

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of the model of the Minoan palaces and its implications for research methodologies and questions (Bintliff 1984; Farnoux 1995; Schoep 2002a; Driessen 2002). That said, however, some discussion of the problems and pitfalls associated with its application to the Proto palatial period is necessary. The Minoan palace model is based in the first place on the LM II–III palace at Knossos (see also Day and Wilson 1998) where there is textual evidence for the existence of a hierarchical society with a centralized political and economic power at the palace of Knossos. Since Evans this vision of the Minoan palace has been somewhat indiscriminately applied to all earlier palaces, including the First Palaces (see Schoep 2002a, 2002b). For example, for Renfrew the palace from its emergence served as 'both the redistributive centre for the economic activities of a region, and the residence of a prince, the leading personage of a society now stratified' (Renfrew 1972, 51). However, research in the last two decades has made clear that the First Palaces did not function in the same way as the later palaces (Cherry 1986; Branigan 1987, 1988a, etc.), and particularly their role as producers (Branigan 1987; Day and Wilson 1998) and as redistributive centres has been called into question (Strasser 1997). In addition, recent research (Schoep 2002a, 2002b) has called into question the traditional view of the MM II palaces (e.g. Cherry 1986, 21) as the principal political, religious and economic central place of state-like societies and the residence of a single elite authority.

A second area of difficulty concerns the traditional view that the palaces first emerged in MM IB as a chronologically homogeneous horizon. It is now clear that the First Palace at Malia was constructed in EM III–MM IA (Pelon 1983a, 1994), and there can be little doubt that at Knossos a monumental MM IA structure (of unknown plan) preceded the MM IB building.

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Phaistos provides yet another case of variation since here there is no evidence for any monumental building before MM IB, which suggests that the construction of a palace occurred later than at Knossos and Malia. At Petras, a small 'palace' was constructed in MM IIA only (Tsipopoulou 1999). In addition, the buildings we call palaces may have an even longer history than hitherto suspected since beneath the First Palace at Malia a monumental EM IIB building with court has been found, parts of which (Quarter I) were incorporated intentionally into the later EM III/MM IA structure (Pelon 1999). Thus, far from emerging together in MM IB, palace buildings seem to have been constructed at different times, in different parts of Crete and in response to local developments and trajectories. The subsequent biography of these buildings (destructions, reconstructions, additions, etc.) also indicates different local trajectories of development. For example, while at Knossos a MM IA fire destruction explains why the building was rebuilt in MM IB, there seems to have been no corresponding destruction at Malia (Pelon, pers. comm.).

It would seem then that the relevance of the currently applied terminology of Pre-palatial and Proto palatial and First and Second Palaces needs to be reviewed. The EM III–MM IA date of the First Palace at Malia calls into question the distinction between Pre palatial and Proto palatial on the basis of the construction of the palaces in MM IB and the radically new institutional features and major changes in the organizational basis of Minoan society that they are assumed to embody (e.g. Cherry 1986, 27). The monumental EM IIB building beneath the First Palace at Malia also questions the designation 'First Palace' for its EM III–MM IA successor. In addition, the term 'palace' carries with it a whole host of unhelpful baggage, which consciously or unconsciously encourages an interpretation as the residence of a single royal elite, occupying supreme position within a hierarchical social and political structure. This is especially important in the case of the EM III/MM I and MM II Palaces, where the assumption that these buildings were palaces or residencies of a powerful ruler has profoundly biased the ways in which these buildings have been conceptualized (see below). Therefore, the less value-laden architectural term 'court buildings' will be used here.

'PALATIAL' ARCHITECTURE AND THE EARLY COURT BUILDINGS

> "When one remembers the complexity of the functions which any one Minoan palace had to fulfil, – as palace, stores, workshops, offices and shrines – then the maze of rooms which we find in the 'basement' should not surprise us nor should it be allowed to obscure our understanding of the way in which Minoan architects worked."
>
> (Branigan 1988b, 52)

It has recently been noted that the reconstructions of the court buildings reveal more about contemporary archaeological cultures than about the Minoan past (Klynne 1998, 207). The interpretation of the early court buildings as palaces or as the residences of a powerful ruler has influenced the way in which these buildings are conceptualized, while this conceptualization seems in turn to justify and confirm their interpretation as palaces. This circular reasoning is underwritten by the Minoan palace model, which raises certain expectations and assumptions about the external appearances of the Proto palatial court buildings on the basis of the known appearance of the MM III–LM I buildings. Even if one leaves aside the obvious problems involved with projecting evidence backwards in time, there still remain issues of interpretation associated with how the MM III–LM I court buildings have been reconstructed (Hitchcock 2000,

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30–3; Klynne 1998). A good illustration of this is Evans' reconstruction of the MM III–LM I west façade at Knossos as a solid ashlar wall despite the fact that not a single ashlar block was found (Klynne 1998, 217). Evans' reconstruction is based on the assumption that if ashlar was used in the MM IIIB–LM I west façades at Phaistos and Malia, then it must also have been used at Knossos. Although there can be little doubt that a superstructure of small stones set in mud or mudbrick probably surmounted the orthostats (Shaw 1971, 89–90), reconstruction drawings still adhere to Evans' reconstruction (Klynne 1998).

Reconstructions and conceptualization of the early court buildings reflect, what might be termed, the principle of diachronic homogeneity. This principle assumes that despite minor differences the Middle Bronze Age court buildings fulfilled more or less the same function as the Late Bronze Age palaces. Thus, plans of the early court buildings often fill in gaps in knowledge on the basis of what stood there in a later period (e.g. Evans 1921; MacGillivray 1994) (compare Figure 1 with Figure 4). Such a method of architectural reconstruction is dubious not least because it helps to perpetuate the myth of diachronic homogeneity. Indeed, if one browses the current literature, one quickly gets the impression that the early court buildings were grand buildings featuring the earliest occurrences of so-called palatial architectural features, such as ashlar west façades, Minoan Halls, orthostats, etc. (Watrous 1998; www.indiana.edu/~classics/Aegean/R11.html; Hitchcock 2000, 32; Dickinson 1994, 147). In the context of the MM IB appearance of the court buildings on Crete, Cherry noted that:

> "Precise parallels exist between them not only in terms of overall conception (as large, multi-storied blocks of rooms ranged around an open, central porticoed courtyard with further courtyard to the west), but also in technical innovations (e.g. the extensive use of large sawn ashlar blocks, downward-tapering columns, in architectural design features (e.g. pier-and-door partitions, light wells, lustral basins, monumental stairways, major public rooms on upper floors, etc.) and in functional arrangements (e.g. substantial provision for storage, craft workshops, ritual areas along west side of the central court, archive rooms, etc.)."
>
> (Cherry 1986, 27)

This and other examples make clear that it is widely assumed that palatial architecture 'occurs first in the Middle Minoan palaces . . . and is later, in Neopalatial times, evidenced in other structures' (Driessen 1989–1990, 5). Thus the direction of influence has always assumed to be from the palace to other buildings. This paper will reconsider the validity of these assumptions through a detailed reassessment of the architecture of the early court buildings at Malia, Knossos and Phaistos on the basis of recent (and less recent) publications. Contrary to what has previously been thought, this reassessment reveals little or no evidence for any connection between so-called palatial architectural features and the early court buildings and thus serves to demonstrate that their reconstruction and conceptualization have hitherto been based on extrapolations from later court buildings and on preconceived ideas about their function. Stripped of their anachronous associations, the early court buildings emerge as structures which may have had a very different look (and feel) to them, 'having been built to function in a Minoan reality rather than a modern context created by 20th-century scholars' (Klynne 1998, 207).[1]

1 This has already been suggested for the wrong reasons by Damiani Indelicato (1988), who tried to demonstrate that the early court buildings did not have a central court.

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MALIA

The court building was constructed in EM III/MM IA (Pelon 1983a; Poursat 1988) and seems to have been destroyed at the end of MM IIB (Poursat 1988, 74). Remains of this building are found in rooms III1, III2, III7, IV1, IV9, IV10, IVa, II1b, IV7, V2, V3, VI2a, VI3, VI4, VI7, VI9, VI10, VIIa, IX1, IX2, XI1–7, XVIII5a, XIV1, XIV2, XIV4 and the entire north-west sector also dates to this period (Pelon 1980, 235–42) (Fig. 5). In general, the early court building is characterized by lower quality architecture in comparison with the LM I building: walls are constructed in rubble and mudbrick and are coated with plaster, pillars are made of individual stones rather than monolithic blocks, and in general the rooms are laid out in a less symmetrical manner (Pelon 1983a, 693; Hue and Pelon 1992, 36).

The present west façade in ashlar sandstone blocks post-dates the Middle Bronze Age (Pelon 1980, 51–62, 238). Stretches of the façade wall of the earlier building are preserved in several locations (Pelon 1980, 63 note 5, 53), especially in the north-west sector (Fig. 5). Unworked blocks were used and there seems to be a preference for limestone rather than sandstone (cf. Pelon 1980, 236). The lower courses of the east façade also belong to the early court building (Pelon 1989, 780, soundings 1 and 4) and the existence of an east court (Fig. 5) suggests that the east façade perhaps played a more important role than in the later court building (Deshayes and Dessenne 1959, 1–5 and plan 1; Driessen 1995). This court was delimited on the east by a wall and had a paved walkway leading to a south-east entrance.

At Malia there is strong evidence to suggest that the architectural module of the Minoan Hall did not occur in the EM III/MM IA–MM II court building. The installation of the Minoan Hall in III7 can with certainty be attributed to the LM IA period (Pelon 1983b). It was laid out over a series of earlier spacious rooms (beneath III1, III2 and III7a) which had a very different plan (Fig. 5). Room a, which opens onto the west court via two column bases (Pelon 1992, 36) communicated with spacious room b, which had an unusual arrangement of low benches and platforms. A ceremonial function has been suggested for these rooms on the basis of the tripartite plan of room b and the discovery of two bronze ceremonial swords and a cache of Chamaizi juglets (Pelon 1983a). The westernmost room (g) contains a central wooden support, while to the north more remains of the early court building were revealed including a room (e) with a niche in its east wall and a plastered court with paved portico along two sides (for detailed description see Pelon 1980, 238–41).

It is generally assumed that the early court buildings comprised at least two storeys. However, the early court building at Malia seems to have been single-storeyed (Pelon 1983a, 693; Hue and Pelon 1992, 36). This and the absence of a west façade in ashlar masonry suggest that the EM III–MM II court building looked quite different from its better-known LM I counterpart.

KNOSSOS

The early court building at Knossos was built in MM IB on top of a MM IA building, which had been destroyed by fire.[2] It thus demonstrates a quite different biography from the one

2 There is evidence for the existence of a monumental structure at this location in EM III (North-west Platform and EM III wall behind west façade) and in MM IA (e.g. Hypogaeum, Vat Room Deposit) (see MacGillivray 1998).

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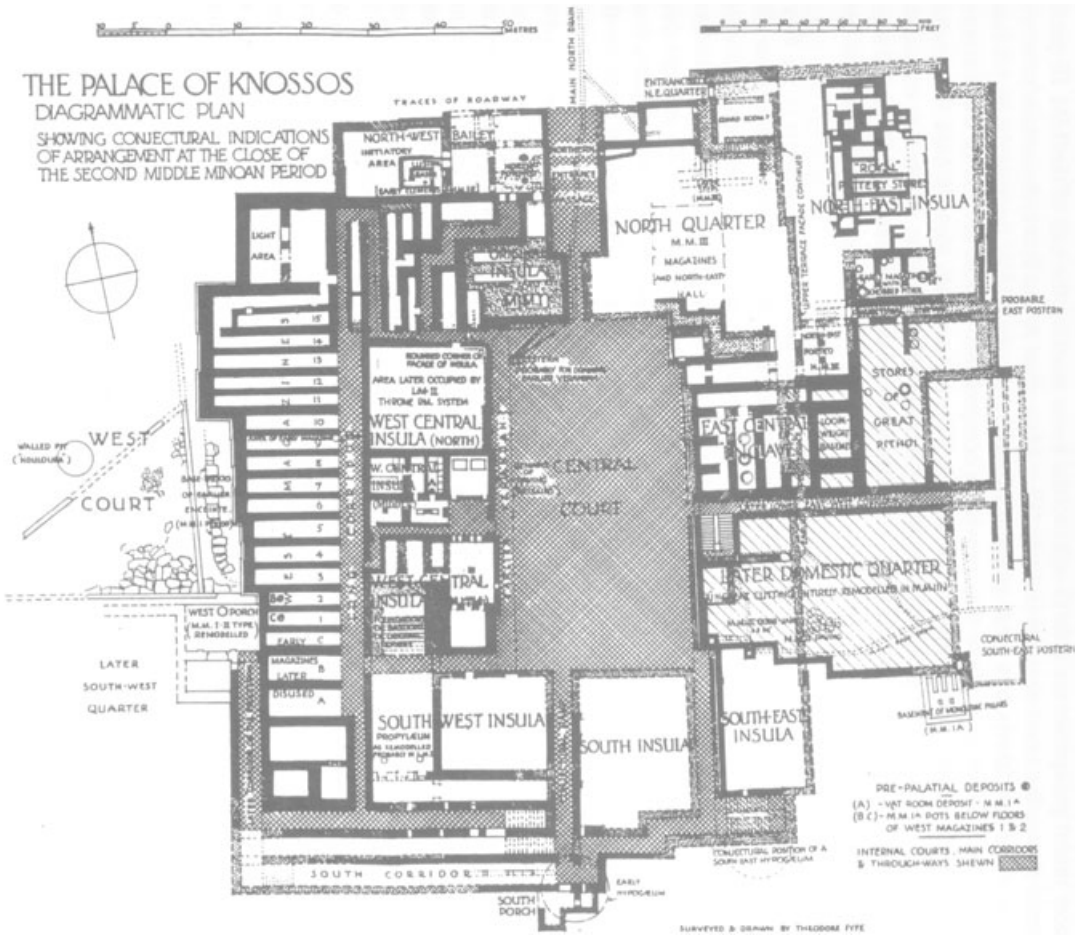

Figure 1
Plan of MM I–II building at Knossos (after Evans 1921, fig. 152).

at Malia. The architectural features of the MM IB building are not well known because the construction of the MM IIIB building erased most of the earlier remains, leaving only occasional pockets (MacGillivray 1998). Thus the extent to which the MM IB structure reflected or rebuilt elements of the destroyed MM IA building cannot be assessed.

There can be no doubt, however, that the current, extant west façade post-dates the MM I–II period. The 1973 soundings (Catling 1974, 34) have shown that the west façade and the existing west wing were built at the very end of MM III, as Evans first supposed (Evans 1904–5, 21). (Fig. 2) Evans' (hypothetical) reconstruction of the façade of the early court building (Evans 1935, fig. 34) as an ashlar façade on large base slabs (orthostats), whose southern section displays a rounded corner, was clearly influenced by the (wrongly) reconstructed Neopalatial façade (Momigliano 1992). Momigliano (1992) has convincingly shown that Evans' façade consists of two unrelated architectural units (Fig. 2). The northern section stretching from the north-west

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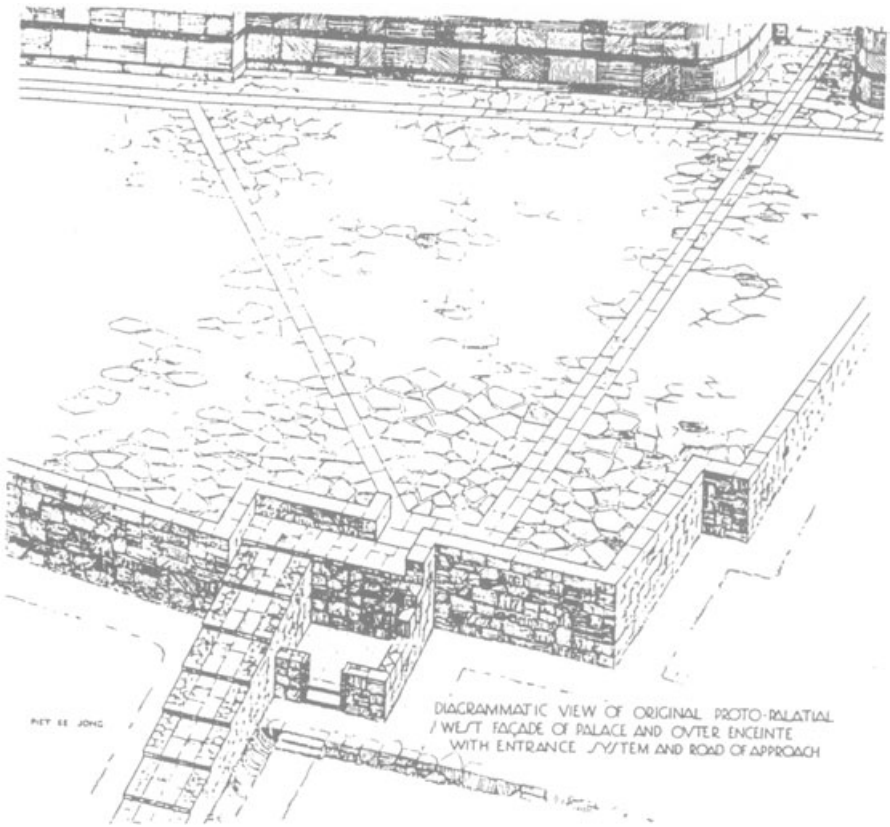

Figure 2
Reconstruction of west façade of MM I–II building at Knossos and west court (after Evans 1935, fig. 34).

corner of the palace to just south of magazine 11 is a wall of small regular stones, which he interpreted as the support for the orthostats (for which no evidence was found), whereas the southern section consists of a series of large slabs forming a rounded corner at the height of magazine 3 (Momigliano 1992, 167). The latter, however, probably belong to a later walkway. Probably our best evidence for the appearance of the west façade is provided by Hood's trials, which found evidence for a MM I(B) wall of large blocks of gypsum and limestone in the south-west corner of the palace (with mason's marks) and in the area of the North Front of the palace, where it replaced an EM III wall of small regular stones (Catling 1974, 34, 1988, 69).

The desire to project back later functional and architectural elements has clearly influenced attempts to push the origins of the Throne Room back to the MM I–II period (Mirié 1979; Niemeier 1987; Dickinson 1994, 149–50) (Fig. 1). Mirié ascribes the Lustral Basin in the later Throne Room, the Inner Sanctuary, the rooms to the north and the Magazines to the south to the first phase (Mirié 1979, 39–44, pls. 6.38). However, the main period of construction represented by the extant remains belongs to MM IIIB (Macdonald 2002, 42). The publication of the soundings in this area may throw light on the earlier remains (Catling 1988, 69). Similarly,

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although it has been suggested that the Domestic Quarter dates back to the MM II period (Macdonald and Driessen 1988; MacGillivray 1994), this early date has recently been questioned (Macdonald 2002) and none of the extant architecture need be earlier than MM IIIB.

As with Malia, there is no evidence to suggest that the early court building at Knossos had more than one storey (MacGillivray 1994, 53). It is perhaps telling that the two main staircases in the West Wing (Propylon and Stepped Porch) both date to a late phase of the New Palace (LM IA). The question of whether the West Wing had an upper storey prior to the construction of these staircases is unanswerable on present evidence; however in the absence of any evidence it is perhaps safest to assume a single-storeyed structure.[3]

PHAISTOS

The court building at Phaistos has yet another history of development. There is as yet no compelling evidence to suggest the existence of a monumental building prior to MM IB. The early court building at Phaistos remains the best-preserved and considerable parts of the west wing, especially its south part, have been exposed (Fig. 3). However, with regard to the presumed extent of the MM I–II court building, recent stratigraphical investigations have made clear that certain areas that were originally included in the plan of the MM I–II building are in fact later in date (see La Rosa 2002). The excavated rooms are generally small-sized and cell-like and very different in layout and plan from the LM I court building (Fig. 3). The largest rooms are rooms XI and XV in the northern part of the West Wing (Fig. 3). Room XV, however, may have been an internal court since a drain was found beneath the floor (Pernier 1935, 263). There is no evidence for any of the so-called palatial architectural features inside the court building. The lustral basin in room XLIV-38 (below room 70) and the *polythyron* in room XLV, which were dated to 'the protopalatial period' by Pernier, actually belong to MM IIIA when a new structure was erected on top of the ruins of the MM I–II building (La Rosa 2002, 77–8) (Fig. 3). While no evidence was found for the existence of an upper storey above the northern part of the west wing, staircases were found in the southern part of the building (LV). Since the latter was terraced into the slope of the hill, its upper storey need have only stood to the same height as the northern part, while the lower storey opened onto a south-western court at a much lower level.

Unlike at Malia and Knossos, the west façade at Phaistos consisted of sandstone orthostats, which are large cut blocks with a smooth, rectangular exterior face and an irregular back face, usually set upright on one of their longer sides upon a low, projecting krepidoma or plinth (Shaw 1971, 83). The upper walls were constructed in rubble and reinforced by a wooden framework. The orthostats in the north part differ from the ones in the south in height and thickness (Shaw 1971, 84) and in technique (Fiandra 1961–62). Initially (in MM IB) only the southern part existed; the northern part was built later in MM IIA (Fiandra 1961–62). Thus, during MM IB the building may have lacked a northern wing, thus indicating a quite different plan to Malia and Knossos. Contrary to what is sometimes assumed (e.g. Dickinson 1994, 147), the use of orthostats is a very restricted feature, not just in the Late Bronze Age, but also in the Middle Bronze Age and it is not one of the so-called palatial architectural features that was

3 The MM III sherds found beneath the bottom stairs of the staircase in the Hieroglyphic Deposit also suggest a late date (Raison 1993, 141, note 993).

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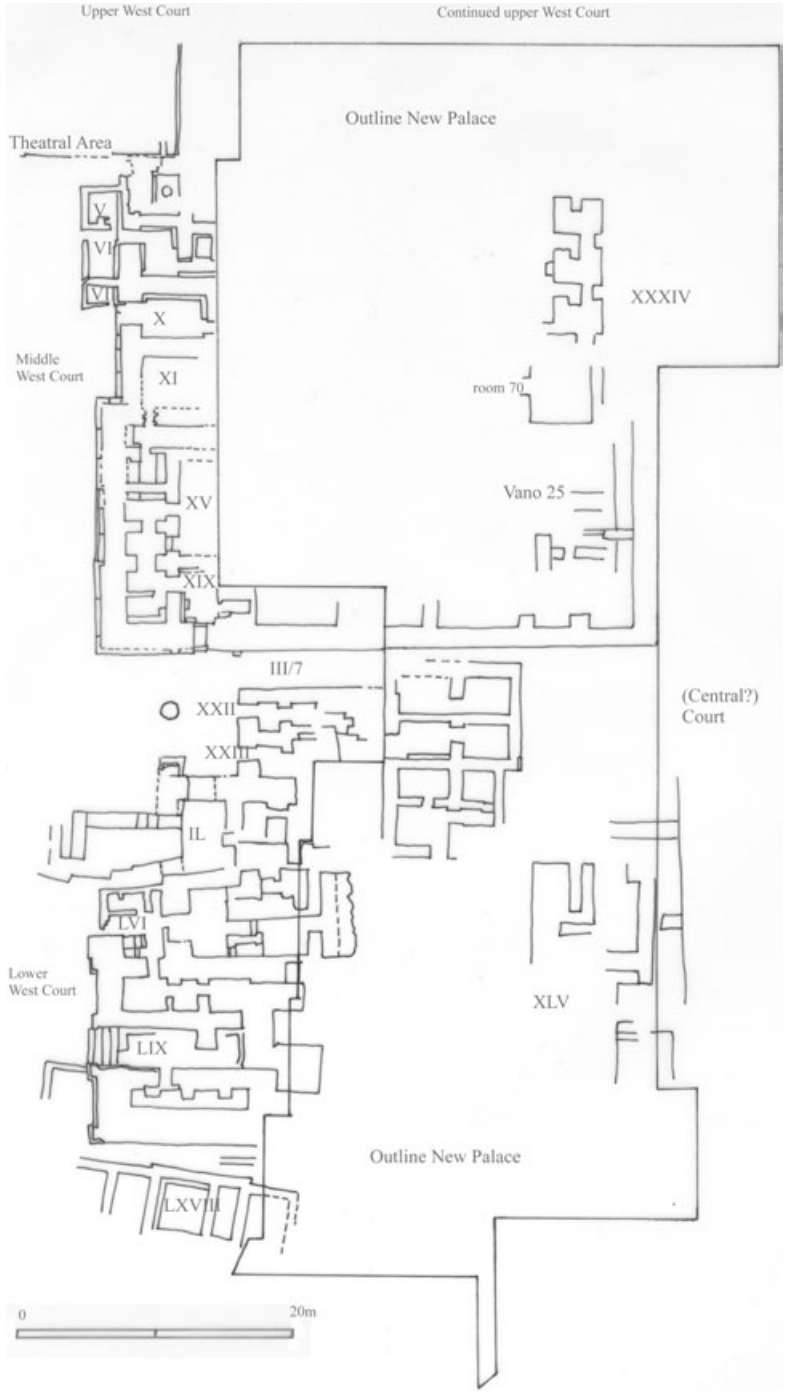

Figure 3
Plan of architectural remains of MM IB–II building at Phaistos (after Fiandra 1994, fig. 1).

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replicated on a wide scale in MM III–LM I.[4] A vestibule with a column-base provided direct communication between the West Court and rooms XXII and XXV (Fig. 3), which is reminiscent of the way room a communicates with the west court at Malia (see above).

This brief overview suggests that several of the assumptions about the architectural characteristics of the early court buildings are lacking secure foundation. Despite the widely accepted view that the origins of the MM III–LM I 'palatial' features go back to the MM I–II court building, there is (as yet) very little evidence for the occurrence of these features *inside* these buildings.

(re)constructing the early court buildings?

While the above discussion is largely based on negative evidence, there is also more positive evidence for the reconstruction of the size and plan of the early court buildings. The evidence seems to indicate that the size of the early court buildings may have been smaller than their MM III–LM I counterparts (Figs. 3, 4 and 5). This is suggested by the absence of architectural constructions to the south of the central court, which may suggest an inverted U-shaped plan (see also Macdonald 2003). At Knossos, soundings in Early Magazine A have brought to light part of a massive east–west wall in large limestone and gypsum blocks with mason's marks, which seems to mark the southern limit of the building (Macdonald 2003) (Fig. 4). No structures were found to the south of the 'central court' at Phaistos (Fig. 3) and at Malia (Fig. 5), the presence of MM IA–IB houses below the south wing of the LM I court building and in the area of the silos (Pelon 1965, 1005) suggests that (at least in this period), the south wing, if it existed at all, would have been very restricted. The presence of a north–south drain with MM I–II pottery in XIV2, XIV4, XIV6 and XIV7 (Pelon 1982, 80) marks the southern limit of the central court in this period.

At Malia and Knossos there was a north and east wing; however at Phaistos so far no architectural remains to the north and east of the central court can with certainty be attributed to the MM I–II building (P. Militello, pers. comm.).[5] If this is indeed the case, it would imply that the 'central court' functioned more as an east court to the building to the west (Fig. 3). Until further evidence is forthcoming, this must remain hypothetical.[6] It also remains unclear how far south the east wing extended beyond the North-east Magazines at Knossos since so far no secure remains of the MM I–II period have been identified in this part of the building.[7] The East Wing at Malia consisted of a series of magazines with a system of

4 Orthostats are only attested at Knossos in the MM IIIB court building and the Little Palace and at Kommos in Building J.

5 The attribution of remains in this part of the court building to the Proto-palatial period is based on their location beneath Neopalatial remains rather than on a secure stratigraphic sequence backed up with ceramic data (P. Militello, pers. com.).

6 P. Militello kindly informs me that under rooms 77–79, 85 and the columnade of the west court a layer of small stones was found. This in combination with the MM IIIA 'avant-corps' noted by La Rosa (2002, 89–90) in the area to the north of 72–73 and to the west of 94 could suggest that in MM I–II the area taken up by the later north wing was some sort of court.

7 No Proto palatial remains were found in soundings beneath the later Northern Entrance Passage (Hood 1994), and therefore it is not entirely certain that the North-east Magazines form part of the MM I–II court building. Their alignment is different to that of the central court, but it seems to correspond to that of the Monolithic Pillar Basement, which was without any doubt a separate building.

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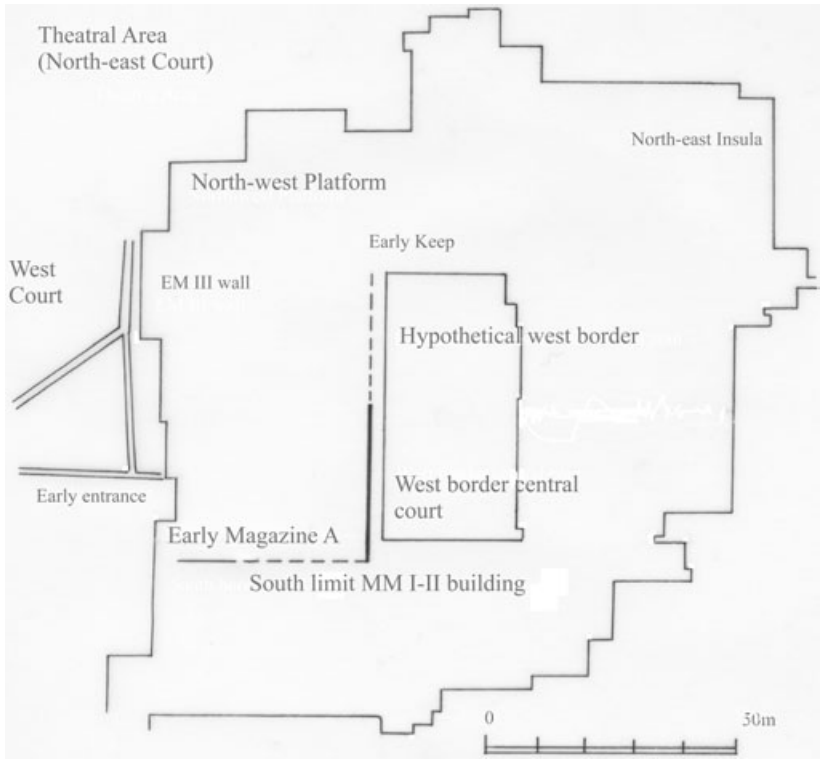

Figure 4
Plan of MM I–II building at Knossos (outline based on Dickinson 1994, 150, fig. 5.26).

plaster platforms and drains[8] and an east entrance into the central court to the south of the magazines (cf. above) (Fig. 5).

Although the size of the court buildings themselves may have been smaller, the central courts seem to have been wider than in MM III–LM I. In addition, they may have had a slightly different plan, perhaps with a protruding block along the west border. At Malia, the west border of the central court was situated 2.97 m further to the west, at least to the south of Quarter VI, which opened onto the court through a portico (Pelon 1999) (Fig. 5). More to the north, the west border was situated in the same place as later (Pelon 1991, 735). The north and east limits were the same as in LM I (Pelon 1992, 57), albeit with a slightly different orientation in the case of the latter (Pelon 1989, 775); a portico was only found along the north side. At Knossos, the west border of the MM I–II central court ran approximately three metres further to the west, at least to the south of the Central Palace Sanctuary (Evans 1921, 139) (Figs. 1 and 4). It is not clear, however, whether this was also the case for the north part of the western border or whether this protruded as was the case at Malia. The south façade wall identified in Early Magazine A (Macdonald 2003) provides an indication as to the size of the latter in MM IB–II (Fig. 4). At

8 A large room with a low bench and a sort of hearth in terracotta beneath the MM III–LM I portico provided access to the magazines (Pelon 1989, 784–5).

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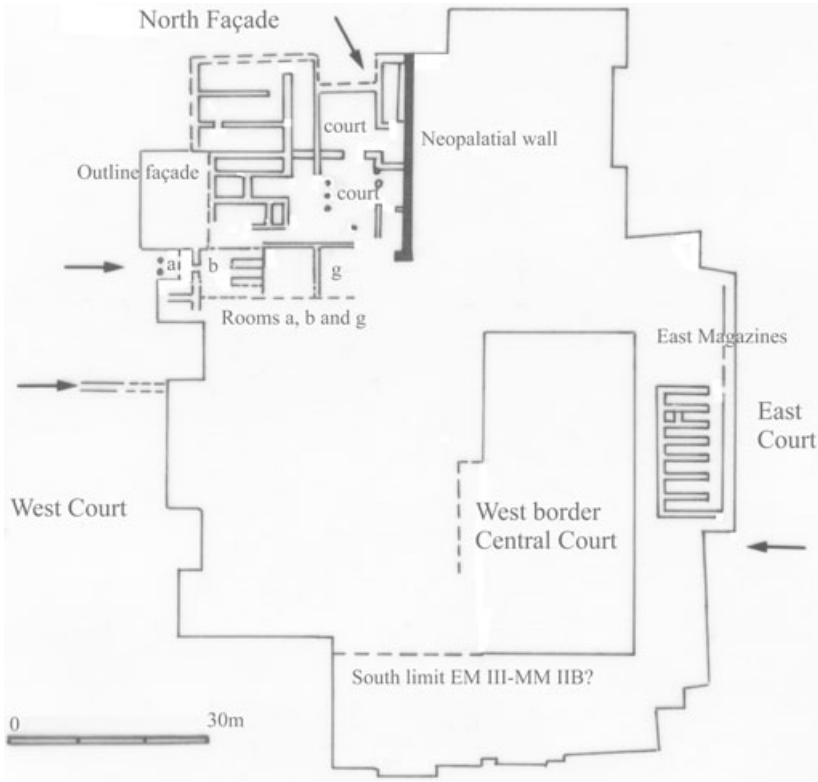

Figure 5
Plan of EM III–MM I building at Malia (outline based on Pelon 1992).

Phaistos, the situation is less clear due to the uncertainty surrounding the date of the portico along the west border of the central court, whether MM II or post-MM II. At any rate, to the south of corridor III/7, a room with hearth (Levi's Phase Ib) was found beneath the later portico (Levi 1976, 262–81). At least in this phase the west border of the central court would have been situated further east (Fig. 3). Owing to the lack of MM I–II remains immediately to the north, Levi suggested that the area to the north of XLV was open and used as a court. The validity of this, however, depends on the date of the portico.

Another important issue that should also briefly be discussed is the permeability of the early court buildings. At Malia, the existence of a raised walkway abutting onto the LM I façade would seem to indicate the original position of an entrance in the area of room I6 (Pelon 1992, 21) (Fig. 5). In addition, the room with the two column bases (a) also communicated directly with the west court. An entrance also provided direct access to the central court from the east (see above) and a north entrance provided access to the north-west sector (Pelon 1980, 237). Although the early court buildings may have had an inverted U-shaped plan, it is not clear whether access could be gained to the central court from the south. At Knossos, an entrance from the north has been located to the east of the large EM III wall (Hood 1994). Along the South Front, a paved ramp or causeway on top of a deep MM IB fill may have provided access to the central court from the south (Momigliano and Wilson 1996, 54; MacGillivray 1998, 32).

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From the west a raised walkway abuts onto the west façade in front of magazine 2, also suggesting an entrance (Fig. 4). At Phaistos, the west façade contained several entrances (L, XIX and XXII–XXV) from MM IB, and in MM IIB, their number increased dramatically (Fiandra 1961–62). Entrances were created in LIX and LVI in the southern part, in X and VI in the northern part and another entrance existed in XIX and below Corridor III/7 (Fig. 3). Direct access could be gained from the surrounding courts to particular rooms of the building. The high permeability of the early court buildings contrasts with the situation in LM I, when access was seriously restricted (Driessen 1995; Macdonald 2002).

Courts played a particularly important role in the functioning of the early court buildings. At Malia, besides a central court and internal courts in the north-west sector (Pelon 1980, 235–42), external courts also existed to the west and the east (see above). An additional court (the 'Agora') was situated to the north-west but the latter is more likely to have been associated with the Crypte Hypostyle. Phaistos had three courts at different levels to the west of the court building (Tomasello 1999) and it is possible that the uppermost north-western court continued further east (Fig. 3). The close communication between the south-western court and the south-western part of the court building and between the middle, west court (with koulouras and steps) and the north-western part of the building suggests that the different west courts might have been intended for different practices. The court building at Phaistos would also have communicated with the court to the east (the later central court). At Knossos, the early west court would have been smaller than in MM III–LM I (see above) and was delimited by houses[9] and bounded by the so-called 'Enceinte Wall'. Interestingly a further court was found some distance to the west of the Enceinte Wall, beneath the modern car park (Warren 1994). An extensive north-western court, associated with a fourth kouloura, has been located beneath the Theatral Area (Evans 1935, 50–4) (Fig. 4). At Knossos and Phaistos, the koulouras would also have given the west courts a different appearance than in the Neopalatial period (MacGillivray 1998, 30).

To conclude, an assessment of the architecture of the early court buildings demonstrates that they differ from their MM III–LM I successors in several respects (U-shaped plan, smaller size, lack of 'palatial' architectural characteristics, etc.). In addition, it must also be stressed that despite the fact that the early court buildings at Knososs, Malia and Phaistos share a number of characteristics (presence of courts and large size of building), there are important differences between these buildings with regards to their individual biographies, layout and external appearance. This strongly suggests that the early court buildings were a response to local needs, styles, building materials (e.g. use of gypsum at Knossos) and trajectories of complexity.

'PALATIAL' OR 'ELITE' ARCHITECTURE?

The above discussion would seem to indicate that there is little evidence to suggest that the origins of the Late Bronze Age 'palatial' architecture can be traced back to the early court buildings (Driessen 1982; Cherry 1986; Watrous 1998, etc.). A new architectural vocabulary displaying the characteristics of the later 'palatial' architecture can, however, be seen in the MM II[10] settlement of Malia (Fig. 10), where it is found in several buildings outside the court building

9 At Malia, the houses to the west have not been clearly defined (Pelon 1980, 44–5).

10 Only the construction date of Quartier Mu is certain (MM II) but it is agreed that for the other structures a MM II date is more likely than a MM IB date (Poursat 1988, 72–3).

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Figure 6
Internal walls in ashlar masonry of Crypte Hypostyle, Malia (photo by author).

(cf. Poursat 1992; see also van Effenterre 1980, 179–80). This new architectural vocabulary makes use of new techniques (ashlar masonry, column bases), new architectural modules (such as the Minoan Hall, the lustral basin and blocks of magazines equipped with drains) and of new materials (sandstone for walls and slabs and white limestone and conglomerate for column bases).

These new architectural features are aimed at elaborating the outside as well as the inside of buildings. Building A of Quartier Mu distinguishes itself from the other buildings by its originally impressive (only the lower course preserved) ashlar west façade, in combination with a small paved court with raised walkways. In a later phase a room with a central hearth constructed in rubble was added onto this façade (Fig. 7).[11] Ashlar sandstone masonry was also used in the Crypte Hypostyle (Figs. 6 and 10) but here it was used for the elevation of the northern and southern interior walls of the main basement room. The use of ashlar sandstone for walls is new and in this period seems to be confined to buildings other than the court building. A possible application of limestone ashlar is found in the building complex discovered during the Malia survey (Müller 1991, 743) (Fig. 10). At Chrysolakkos, carefully cut orthostats were reused as krepidoma blocks for (robbed) orthostats (Shaw 1971, 164, 1973).

11 One might compare this to the addition of V–VII onto the west façade of the early court building at Phaistos.

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Figure 7
Minoan Hall with light-well in foreground, Building A (Quartier Mu) (photo by author).

Besides a façade in ashlar, Quartier Mu features the oldest known example of a Minoan Hall, consisting of a light-well, a vestibule and a hall separated from one another by multiple bays (hence polythyron) (Poursat 1992) (Figs. 7 and 8). In addition, a sunken room, considered to be the proto-type of the Late Bronze Age lustral basin, was found to the west of the Minoan Hall (Fig. 7). The association of a Minoan Hall and a sunken room is particularly striking because it heralds their later spatial proximity. Apart from Quartier Mu, a polythyron was also found in the Crypte Hypostyle (Allegrette and Schmid 1997) and an alleged example was reported from the area to the west of the Agora (Van Effenterre 1969) (Fig. 10). The context of the latter is unclear, but in the case of the Crypte Hypostyle, the association of a polythyron and a set of sunken rooms hints at an association similar to that found in Building A of Quartier Mu.

In addition to ashlar masonry, orthostats (for definition see Shaw 1971, 83) are found in the north and west walls of Chrysolakkos and in the north façade of Building A of Quartier Mu (Poursat 1992, 42). The krepidoma blocks from the north and west walls are reused orthostats (Shaw 1971, 164). There has been some speculation about where these carefully dressed (ashlar) limestone blocks came from[12] but it seems that orthostats were placed along the west side of the early corridor beneath the later portico in the first phase of the monument (Rutter, devlab.dartmouth.edu/history/bronze_age/lessons/6.html).

12 This was addressed recently by Driessen in press.

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Figure 8
Plan of Quartier Mu (after Poursat 1992, fold-out fig. 1).

Other architectural innovations at MM II Malia involve the introduction of blocks of magazines (cf. Poursat 1992, 35; Effenterre 1980, 179–80) and the stone column base and wooden sculpted column. The magazines, usually accessible from a long corridor, contain low platforms along the walls and drains, which suggests that they were intended for the storage of

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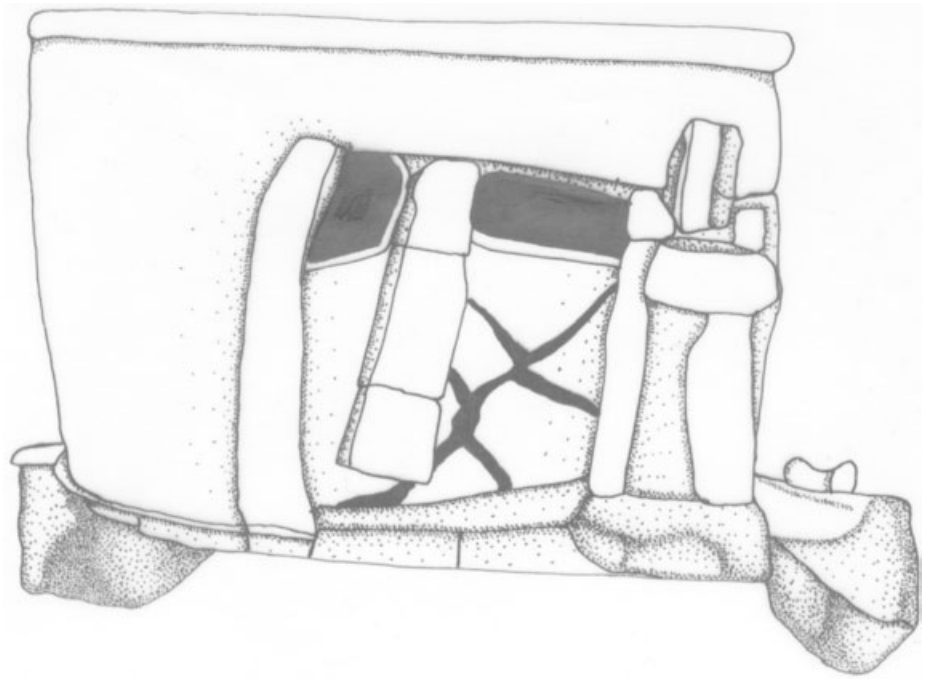

Figure 9
Three-dimensional architectural model from Monastiraki (drawing by author after Godart 1991, 40).

liquids. The importance of these magazines is underlined by their location near 'ceremonial rooms' (see below). Besides Quartier Mu, they are attested in the Magasins Dessenne, the Crypte Hypostyle and in the east wing of the court building. The importance of the column base is underlined by its appearance in three-dimensional models (Fig. 9) (Godart 1983; Schoep 1994). Although very common in the Late Bronze Age, column bases are relatively rare in the Middle Bronze Age where they occur only in urban contexts and in association with specific architectural schemes, such as light-wells, porticoes and vestibules. At Malia, there is as yet no evidence for stone column bases before MM II or at the earliest the end of MM IB. In MM II they are attested in Quartier Mu, the Crypte Hypostyle, and in the unexcavated building discovered during the Malia survey (Müller 1991, 743). Column bases are furthermore attested in the court building, where they are used in porticoes along courts[13] and in vestibules (room a, see above). The column bases in the early court building at Phaistos seem to have served a similar purpose, functioning as a vestibule to rooms XXII and XXV.

Elsewhere on the island, however, there is (as yet) little evidence for the architectural innovations that we see in the settlement at Malia. Some of the features such as magazines with benches and drains in plaster may, however, be local to Malia (for the importance of local

13 The fact that two of the original pillars of the portico along the west side of the central court were replaced by column bases illustrates that the latter constitute an innovation, which unfortunately cannot be dated (Pelon 1999, 475).

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Figure 10
Plan of settlement of Malia (after van Effenterre 1980, fig. 352).

architectural styles see McEnroe 1990). The evidence from Knossos is meagre since excavations there have focused in the first place on the court building. However, none of the excavated houses (Western Enceinte Wall houses, Early Town houses in the area of the House of the Frescoes and the Houses of the Fallen Blocks and the Sacrificed Oxen) display any of the architectural innovations discussed above. The stretch of early orthostat façade in the Little Palace dates to MM III (Hatzaki 1996). Excavations beneath the South-West House revealed a MM IIA rectangular building of uncut medium-sized stones with white-plastered floors; this

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building also yielded evidence for administration in a workshop context. After a destruction by fire, a more monumental building of cut stones was erected in MM IIB (French 1993, 68). This MM IIB architectural elaboration raises the question of whether this reflects a more general tendency for architectural elaboration in elite houses at Knossos similar to that argued for MM II Malia (Schoep 2002a).

At Phaistos, considerable parts of the early settlement have been excavated, but so far, none of the houses display any of these new palatial architectural features.[14] Two structures, however, stand out, CV–CVII for its unusual plan and high-quality architecture and LXVII–LXIX, XLVI immediately south-west of the court building for its handsome north façade in cut blocks (Fig. 3). Room LXVIII had a gypsum pavement, low benches and gypsum dadoes against the wall (Levi 1976, 425). This use of gypsum for floors, benches and dadoes is typical of Phaistos. Ashlar blocks with mason's marks and four column bases have been reported from Ayia Triada (Cucuzza 1992, 59, note 30),[15] which was already an important settlement at this time (Carinci 1999).[16] At Monastiraki, the main building on the west side of the Charakas hill has a column base (Kanta and Tzigounaki 2000, 208). Excavations in the settlement revealed an important building that yielded large deposits of sealings (see Kanta and Tzigounaki 2000, fig. 1). Although impressive in size, its architecture does not display any of the architectural innovations that are found in the high-profile buildings at Malia. At the moment, the settlement of Malia seems exceptional; however, this is likely to result from the fragmentary nature of our evidence and future explorations at other sites (e.g. Poros, Ayia Triada, Archanes, etc.) may change this picture.

THE ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE IN ELITE COMPETITION

Although the early court buildings display some architectural innovations such as the use of columns in porticoes and vestibules and, at Malia, magazines with low platforms and drains, there is no evidence for either the use of ashlar masonry or for the incorporation of the Minoan Hall and lustral basin despite the fact that these are found in the contemporary settlement of Malia. The fact that there seems to have been no need for the incorporation of a lustral basin and a Minoan Hall in the early court buildings suggests a functional difference between these and the elite residences. Secondly, although it is a *palatial* elite (i.e. resident in the palaces) that is conventionally viewed as the agent of change and innovation in this period, the evidence from Malia suggests that the agency behind certain architectural innovations must be sought outside the court buildings and in the elite residences in the settlement. This suggests that the role of elite groups *outside* the palace as agents in social/political developments has been underestimated and it challenges the idea of the 'palace' as the principal agent of change and innovation. It must be stressed that the ashlar west façade of Building A (Mu) was an innovation and did not simply emulate what was going on in the court building. Architecture not only

14 The polythyron in the house south of the palace (XLVII) should be dated to MM IIIA (La Rosa 2002, 77).

15 These have been dated to the Proto-palatial period on the basis of the depth of the mason's marks (Cucuzza 1992) but Cucuzza (2001) points out that a similar deeply incised mason's mark from the *Complesso della mazza di breccia* dates to LM IB.

16 If Ayia Triada contained high-profile buildings, this would suggest that it was not the presence of a court building so much as the participation of a settlement in an economic and social network that defined differences in wealth between settlements.

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reflects social and political structures but it also actively *participates in maintaining* them and it seems that especially in MM II the size and accoutrements of houses played an active part in the display of wealth and status. The appearance in MM II of the first architectural models (Fig. 9) further underscores the symbolic power of architecture (Schoep 1994).

It is not sufficient, however, to recognize simply that an action has occurred but rather one needs to understand something of the performance of that action, the means of its execution, and its historical context (Barrett 2001, 152). The application of innovative architecture in elite residencies may be understood within the context of conspicuous consumption. Conspicuous consumption is an important strategy in elite competition for power and/or legitimation of power and besides architecture, the movable objects recovered from Quartier Mu, such as for example, the Egyptianizing appliques and the daggers, illustrate this strategy. The fact that at Malia several elite structures co-existed suggests that competition was going on between different elite groups (Schoep 2002a) and that resources (material, human, symbolic) were there to be competed for, rather than being monopolized by the 'palace'. One of the underlying reasons for the existence of different competing groups is, I believe, to be found in the fact that Malia expanded greatly at the beginning of MM IB (Poursat 1987, 465). Such a relatively sudden urban expansion would be compatible with the idea that groups came to the settlement and the plain of Malia from elsewhere (Driessen 2001; Schoep 2002a).[17] The arrival of different groups with different origins could provide a context for persistent and ongoing factionalism (as has been noted by Preucel 2000, 73).

These innovative architectural features not only marked wealth and status, but also, through their deployment in various internal and external locations, functioned to include and exclude different groups of people. While external architectural features served to impress a wider public, internal features were visible and accessible to a more limited number of people. The new external features served to create new public arenas that were specifically associated with particular elite households.[18] One such open area may be found outside Quartier Mu to the west, where the west ashlar façade of Building A creates a special focus and the small courtyard with its raised path orients action towards Building A (Fig. 7). Similarly, the Crypte Hypostyle, which was closely associated with the large court to the north-east ('Agora'), would also have formed a focal point. The same may also have held true for the Magasins Dessenne with their rich finds (Treuil 1999) and perhaps also the building complex discovered during the Malia survey (Müller 1991, 743). The creation of such arenas seems to have been closely connected with ceremonial activity. The small size of these spaces, when compared to the larger courts and rooms of the court buildings, suggests that such gatherings would have comprised only a proportion of the wider urban community, perhaps retinue and dependants of an individual elite household.

The new internal architectural features similarly seem to have been connected with ceremonial activity. The innovative architectural module in Building A (Quartier Mu), which combines a sunken room and a Minoan Hall (Fig. 7), suggests that these rooms would have

17 Alhough the emergence of the 'palaces' is considered to have triggered the MM IB nucleation that has been noted island-wide (e.g. Watrous *et al*. 1993; Driessen 2001), at Malia the EM III/MM IA construction date of the early court building suggests that the latter pre-dates this nucleation.

18 This corresponds with what Dabney (1995, 46) calls a switch from an undifferentiated disposition of space in non-palatial complexes, with the palaces as the only social arena for the (elite) groups, to a differentiated disposition of space in non-palatial buildings.

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played a central role in the gatherings and ceremonies that took place.[19] In addition, a room with a central hearth, which was added onto the west façade of Building A at a later stage, communicated with these rooms. The proximity of magazines, intended for the storage of liquids (I5, I7), suggests that the consumption of liquids may have played a role in these ceremonies.[20] The staging of gatherings and/or ceremonies no doubt promoted a feeling of group identity amongst those who were invited inside and was at the same time a strategy of exclusion marking the lesser status of those excluded. Similar strategies of inclusion and exclusion may apply to the Crypte Hypostyle, where the interior with its walls in ashlar would have been accessible to a more limited number of people than the court to the north-east. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the sunken area with the polythyron is also associated with magazines intended for the storage of liquids. The Magasins Dessenne are incompletely excavated and so it cannot be established whether they included a sunken area.

This increased expenditure of resources in the MM II settlement not only reflects an increase in wealth but also a growing degree of overt differentiation between houses. This does not mean that there was no differentiation between houses in the earlier settlement, but that this differentiation may have been less dramatic and expressed in different or more subtle ways.[21] On the basis of the extant evidence for the MM IA–B settlement of Malia, it would seem that a sharp contrast existed between the early court building and the surrounding houses. This contrast would in the first place have been one of scale rather than architectural elaboration, with the early court building characterized by its large size, extensive internal plan and large open and closed spaces (some reaching 50 and 65 m^2, see Pelon 1983a, 693). Thus, the small rooms in the houses would have contrasted with the large (open and closed) spaces in the court building. The beginning of MM II, however, sees the construction of high-profile buildings that include rooms with a very specific function, which seem to be aimed at staging ceremonies for a (restricted) number of people. This tendency does not simply point towards expanding households but rather the nature of these spaces suggests that they served as a social and political arena for a larger group beyond that of a single elite household. Moreover, the introduction of architectural innovations, for which there is no evidence in the court buildings, not only illustrates the role of these elites as agents of innovation and change but also emphasizes differences in power, authority and function between the elite residences and the early court building. This strongly suggests not only that particular elite households were increasing in power but also that they felt an urgent need to advertise this power through conspicuous consumption. Other technological innovations, such as the use of the potter's wheel and an elaborate administrative system, may also be viewed in this context.

19 The architectural modifications that can be noted in this area suggest that small changes were made. In a first phase, the polythyron (I13est) was preceded by another hall that opened onto the light-well by means of two columns. To the north, the polythyron communicated with two auxiliary rooms (I24 and I23). In a second phase, the west hall was transformed into a second polythyron and the doorway to I23 and I24 was blocked. Finally, two of the three bays of the polythyron were blocked. This system of two bays dividing the room into three parts was also found in I10, which leads into the hearth sanctuary I12 (Poursat 1992, 40–2).

20 At Phaistos, the presence of considerable amounts of drinking and pouring vessels in CV–CVII and the presence of benches along the walls hint at the consumption of liquids.

21 The 'Maisons Sud' give an idea of domestic architecture in MM IA–IB period (Poursat 1987). There are differences in size between the houses but most of the rooms are relatively small. Larger rooms generally contain a central 'hearth'. The same can be noted in Quartier Gamma.

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CONCLUSIONS

By assessing the architecture of the early court buildings and explaining their wider urban context, a number of important conclusions may be drawn. Firstly, it is clear that the form and interpretation of the later court buildings have shaped the way the early court buildings have been conceptualized and interpreted. This conceptualization stresses their role as palaces and emphasizes formal and functional similarity and continuity between early and late court buildings. An architectural assessment of the early court buildings (Knossos, Malia and Phaistos), however, emphasizes that major external and internal differences existed between these earlier buildings and their successors. Early court buildings differ most significantly in terms of their generally more open character and the lack of so-called palatial architectural features, such as ashlar masonry, Minoan Hall, lustral basins and elaborate upper storeys. The evidence from the contemporary settlement of Malia seems to suggest that the latter were first implemented in elite residences in the settlement and not in the court building. In addition, this architectural study also suggested that, although the early court buildings share certain basic elements of form, they also differ notably between each other in their individual biographies, layouts and external form. The differences between them suggest that they were designed and constructed in response to local needs and trajectories. This very much implies that the early court buildings in different parts of Crete should be seen within their local and regional context.

This observation has important implications since it not only forces a reassessment of the interpretation of the early court buildings as palaces but also challenges the idea of the 'palace' as the principal agent of change and innovation in the Middle Bronze Age. It furthermore suggests that we should no longer consider these architectural features as 'palatial', but recognize their origins in non-palatial elite domestic or 'polite' architecture. A consideration of the context in which the observed architectural innovations were applied stresses the role and power of agents located outside the court buildings in social/political developments. The conspicuous architecture that we see in MM II does not simply emulate what was going on in the court buildings, but it seems that this new architectural vocabulary was 'invented' specifically to express the status and power of elite groups residing outside the court building. This underlines the importance of these elite groups and their actions. The practice of deploying conspicuous architecture may be situated within a wider context of technological innovations in MM II, including the use of the potters' wheel and an elaborate administrative system.

This new architectural vocabulary was closely associated with the construction of arenas to stage smaller-scale gatherings and/or ceremonies hosted by specific elite groups that may be contrasted with gatherings within the court building, which probably involved the community at large. This seems to mark an important change from previous periods when the court building may have been the primary arena for social interaction between different groups. This suggests that different elites were on the one hand introducing new architectural forms, but were on the other borrowing some of the aspects of the court buildings (courts; types of ceremonial activity), perhaps for the purposes of cementing the allegiance of dependent groups and retinue and attracting other followers. Such a modification of palatial practices and their transferral to a non-palatial context may represent the crucial first step towards a transformation of the court buildings from a shared communal ceremonial centre towards something closer to a 'palace' monopolized by a single group.

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Post-doctoral Research Fellow
Fund for Scientific Research-Flanders
K.U. Leuven
B-3000 Leuven
Belgium

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