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Source: *British School at Athens Studies*, Vol. 15, BUILDING COMMUNITIES: House, Settlement and Society in the Aegean and Beyond (2007), pp. 65-76

Published by: British School at Athens

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40960575>

Accessed: 05-10-2017 13:18 UTC

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House, households and community at Early Minoan Fournou Korifi: methods and models for interpretation

Todd Whitelam

INTRODUCTION

This paper will re-examine a series of interpretations put forward concerning the Early Bronze Age Cretan site of Fournou Korifi, Myrtos, since the early 1970s. Disappointingly, even after this period of time, this site remains the best evidence we have for the nature of the Early Minoan household. On the other hand, more recent research on material from the site, and lively critiques of earlier interpretations, provide a context both to develop those interpretations, and also to highlight various methodological issues which were not emphasised in the original presentation, but are still as relevant now as they were then. The principal thrust of my argument is that we need to be explicit about the assumptions which we make when interpreting the archaeological data of domestic contexts, and critical of the methodologies by which we give meaning to patterning perceived in the archaeological record.

For historical periods, such as the Classical, Hellenistic or Roman, we have significant literary and iconographical evidence which can provide us with much basic information about household activities, family form and social organisation, and archaeological analysis can be quite sophisticated, as many papers in this volume demonstrate.

In prehistoric contexts, such information is usually absent, or highly ambiguous, such that our questions often need to be rather more basic. In the Early Minoan context, we need to start by asking: What were the basic social units of Early Minoan society? How were such units integrated within communities? What do patterns of similarity and difference between such units represent, and what can they tell us about the nature of Early Minoan communities?

To address such questions, we need to work from both ends. We need a set of methods for teasing the relevant information from archaeological data, and we need a set of social models, so that we can interpret the patterns identified. Both are prerequisites for archaeological interpretation, since patterns in archaeological data need to be identified and interpreted — they are not always readily apparent, and their significance is not necessarily obvious.

ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE NATURE OF THE SITE AT FOURNOU KORIFI, MYRTOS

The site of Fournou Korifi is particularly suitable for the analysis and interpretation of Early Minoan domestic organisation, since it was essentially completely excavated, the site was abandoned after destruction by fire, with very limited reuse, the destruction deposits were generally well preserved, and the excavation was published in exemplary detail (Warren 1972). Indeed, for these reasons, it has been the focus of five different published interpretations.

Interpretations of Fournou Korifi have followed three main lines, all building from the architecture of the site, the spatial distribution of artefacts across the site, and the functional interpretation of rooms, built facilities and finds.

Peter Warren, the site excavator, identified a series of functionally discrete rooms and activity areas distributed throughout the site. On the basis of the wide distribution of complementary functions, he argued that the community functioned as a communal whole, 'perhaps not differentiated into individual families' (1972, 267). While he documented most activities in most areas of the site, he generalised that storage functions were concentrated particularly in the south of the site, kitchens in the centre, and a community shrine was located in the south-west corner (1972, 260). He estimated that the overall population may have been on the order of c. 100–120 individuals, on the grounds that with many more it would have been physically crowded (1972, 267). No specific social model was identified corresponding to such an interpretation.

Keith Branigan used the same wide distribution of functionally specialised areas to argue that the site was a single functionally integrated complex — an Early Minoan mansion, the residence of the local chieftain or elite family (1970, 48–9; 1975). This followed the long-accepted interpretation of the 'House on the Hilltop' at nearby Vasiliki, as a forerunner of the Middle Minoan palaces. Soon after, however, Antonis Zois' reassessment of the site and renewed excavations made it clear that Vasiliki was a multi-phase village community, rather

than any coherent 'proto-palace' (Zois 1976; 1982; though see recent arguments of Haggis 1999, 60 and Watrous 2001, 221–3).

In a paper presented in 1981 and published in 1983 (Whitelaw 1983), I suggested that the community represented an aggregate of separate households. Based on a detailed study of the architectural construction pattern of the community, I argued that it had grown as a result of the accretionary addition of different households (FIG. 8.1 *a*). On the basis of the finds distributions, I identified a series of functionally specific activity areas, often within multifunctional rooms, such as kitchens, workrooms with *lekanai*, weaving areas, areas for the storage of agricultural produce and pottery, and more general domestic areas (food preparation, consumption, sleeping etc.). These identifications distinguished a recurrent complementary set of functions which could be documented within each architecturally distinct room cluster, which I proposed represented domestic households.

On the basis of floor area and storage capacity within each 'household', I suggested that each was occupied by a single nuclear family. Consideration of the nature and condition of the artefacts found in each household suggested that two households were no longer in use at the time of the destruction, and led me to conclude that the community at the time of the destruction consisted of five or six households, totalling perhaps 25 to 30 individuals (FIG. 8.1 *b*).

In 1990, Donald Sanders proposed something of a compromise interpretation, accepting that the southern half of the community was divided into separate households, but suggesting that the northern half may have been used for 'community level' activities. His dismissal of a domestic interpretation for the northern part of the site was based on the lack of clear spatial patterning among the relatively low number of artefacts recovered, rather than on any detailed alternative interpretation for the use of those parts of the site (1990, 53).

Sanders' work was intended principally to emphasise the importance of proxemics and non-verbal architectural 'cues' in using and interpreting spatial settings, rather than as a contribution to the understanding of Early Minoan social organisation, and serves to draw attention to more subtle patterns which the archaeologist should bear in mind when interpreting a spatial record (e.g. Rapoport 1982). On the other hand, one must still be aware of the formation processes of the deposits under study. Sanders' identification of the colour of the stones used in the construction of rooms in different parts of the site as conscious choices on the part of the builders (1990, 57 n. 5) ignores the fact that the bedrock in each area is similarly coloured — the local stone, from which the walls are built, was turned red in some parts of the site owing to the intensity of the fire destruction; 'smell zones' might be defined by 'burners', but not where Sanders

positions them (1990, fig. 5.5), since those vessels are in storage with other vessels, not in their positions of use, which are not known.

In 1992, Christopher Tenwolde returned to a variant of Warren's original interpretation, arguing against the existence of separate households at the site. In fact, while he accepted that storage and cooking functions took place throughout the site, he argued that liquids were preferentially utilised in the south, thereby cross-cutting any hypothesised households. This led him to support Warren's original communal interpretation (1992, 20), though again, no specific social model was proposed — the argument being formulated more as a critique of the 'household' model. This interpretation, 20 years after the original publication of the site, brought us pretty much full circle. Of the alternatives put forward to date, the household model has received widespread acceptance (e.g. Warren 1983; 1987; Cherry 1984; Cadogan 1986; Branigan 1988; 1993; Watrous 1994; Haggis 1999).

In all cases, it is the spatial distribution of artefacts and features which has supported the interpretation of the use of individual spaces within the site — interpretations which have not necessarily differed all that drastically between the different models. What is different is the resolution at which larger-scale patterning is identified and considered to be significant. Rather than rebut the alternatives, in the remainder of this paper, I will use these differences to highlight a series of methodological issues in the interpretation of domestic space, which can serve as a basis for distinguishing between such alternative interpretations.

DEFINING THE ARCHITECTURAL FRAMEWORK

First, we need to understand the history of the site: most interpretations of the site have treated the Phase II occupation as essentially static, but its history of development is actually complex. Consideration of wall bonding and abutment, as well as differences in construction style (FIG. 8.2 *a*), indicates a pattern of growth in sets of rooms. Tenwolde questioned whether these necessarily document any lapse of time (1992, 17), but a variety of evidence for sometimes major structural alterations (e.g. walls abutted against previously plastered surfaces, blocked doorways, buttresses against walls: FIG. 8.2 *b*) indicates that the expansion of the community extended over a considerable period of time — on the evidence of the radiocarbon dates, some 100–150 years (Whitelaw 1986; Manning 1995, 145–7).

The oldest part of the community was at the crest of the hill, and subsequent growth was downhill, both to the north-west and to the south, though growth in the two directions cannot be synchronised, and the 'phasing' suggested in FIG. 8.1 *a* is notional, rather than intended to represent the community at specific points in time. The community may have reached its final extent only

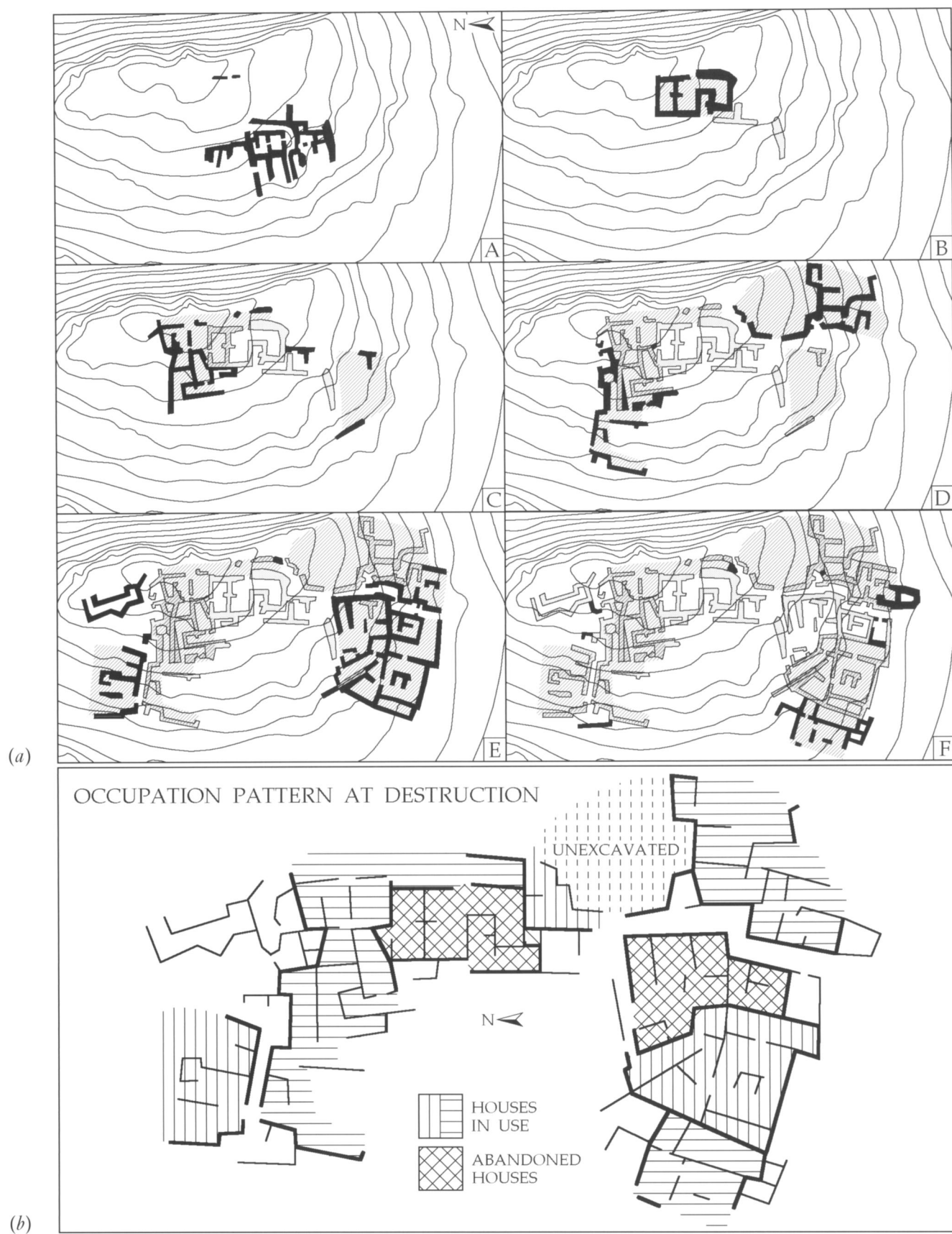


Fig. 8.1 (a) Community growth sequence: A, Phase I; B–F, expansion of the Phase II community. New constructions indicated in black, shading indicates areas probably occupied; (b) houses in use and abandoned at the time of the destruction.

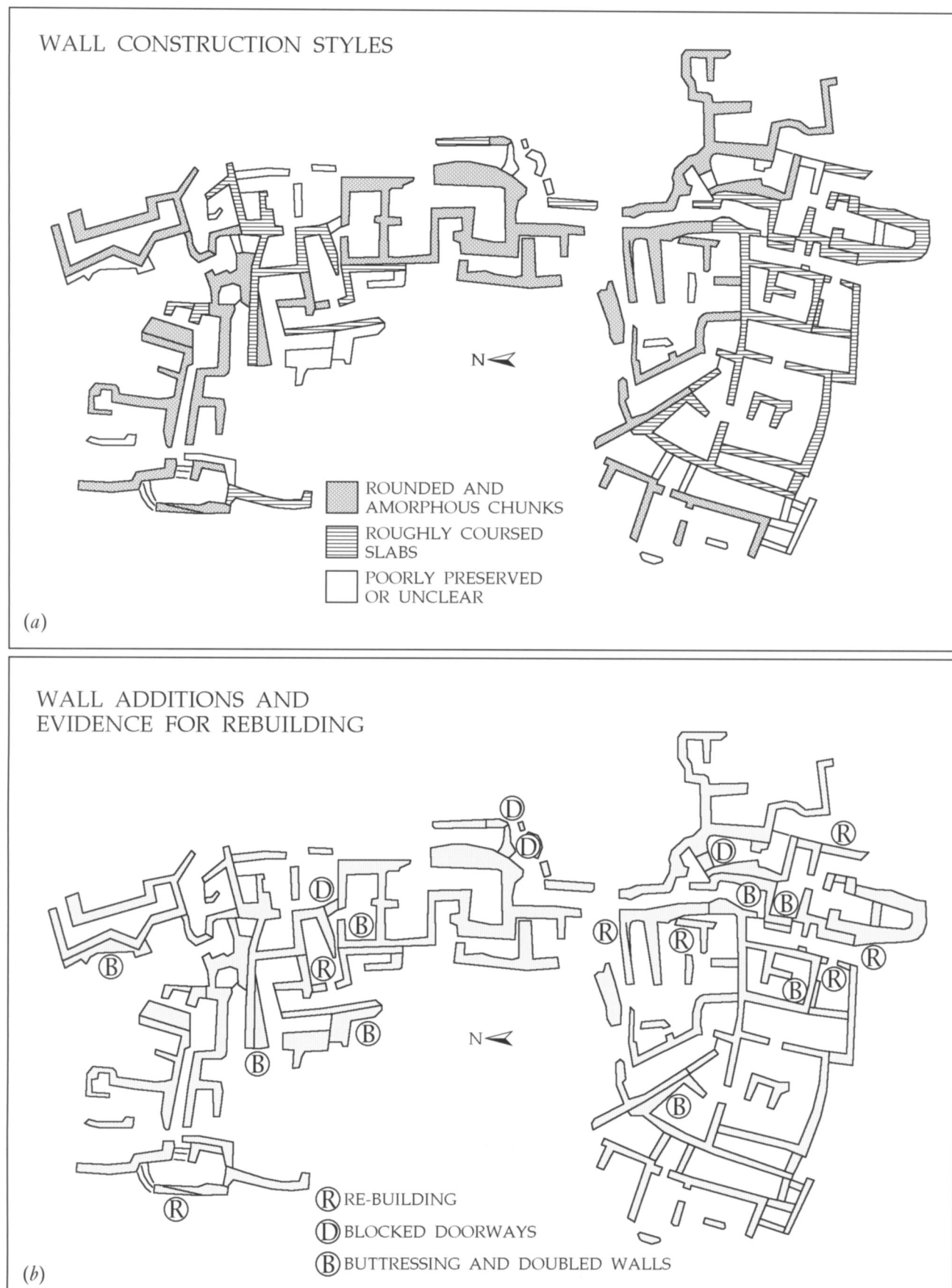


Fig. 8.2 (a) Wall construction joints, abutments and walling styles; (b) evidence for structural modification and rebuilding.

shortly before its destruction, since there appear to be no significant structural alterations in the final room-set, added at the south-west corner of the site.

The site history is further complicated, however, in that two groups of rooms, without evidence for a burnt destruction deposit, burnt wall or roof plaster, and without floor deposits, were probably unroofed and out of use before the final years of occupation. These include the original room-set on the site, which was gradually replaced by extensions to the north, and another room-set in the south-centre.

ASSEMBLAGE ASSOCIATIONS AND DEPOSIT FORMATION PROCESSES

With an architectural framework, we can turn to the interpretation of the finds and their distribution. First, however, consideration must be given to the effect of differential preservation on our ability to interpret different areas of the site. In FIG. 8.3 *a*, deposit preservation is mapped as the percentage of a 25 cm thick floor deposit which could be preserved, given the preserved height of the walls defining each space. Preservation can be seen to vary significantly across the site and, not surprisingly, room preservation has a significant effect both on the density of finds recovered in rooms in different parts of the site (FIG. 8.3 *b*), as well as on the degree of preservation of individual vessels (FIG. 8.3 *c*).

Any interpretation, then, needs to take advantage of the good preservation in some parts of the site to develop an understanding of room use and expected patterns of artefact association, of which we can then seek traces elsewhere, where preservation is poorer and the evidence is less ideal. This is why Sanders was able to recognise domestic households in the well-preserved southern part of the site, but failed to recognise them in the north, dismissing it as comprising 'community level activity areas' (Sanders 1990, 53). A similar problem underlies Haggis' suggestion that there may have been significant salvaging and reuse of materials in a process of gradual abandonment of the settlement (1999, 60–1).

A second issue concerns the detail which can be read into the preserved find distributions. There are many examples where sets of vessels found in association appear to make functional sense in terms of regular patterns of association, for example: fragments of baking dishes and cooking pots with hearths; large basins with storage jars and dipper cups for transferring their contents. The clearest, perhaps, is a collection of vessels which fell from its position on the roof of room 79 (Warren 1972, 72), which makes up a perfect dining set for four individuals, probably those resident in the group of rooms below.

But can all find distributions be so readily interpreted? Clearly not — many vessels were catalogued and published in the final report because of their typological interest, not because they were necessarily in use at the

time of the destruction, let alone *in situ* where they were discovered. A fragmentation index (FIG. 8.3 *c*), of the proportion of vessels in a deposit of which less than two-thirds is preserved, not only indicates areas where site erosion has been extreme, but also serves to identify areas which were probably used for the dumping of refuse during the occupation of the site. The latter interpretation can be supported by the distribution of refuse items, such as animal bones, shells and broken stone tools (FIG. 8.3 *d*). Together, these suggest that trash was allowed to accumulate in abandoned rooms, open courts and passages within the community, though most dumping probably took place beyond the excavated area, and over the adjacent cliff to the east.

These distributions distinguish between 'internal' areas — those rooms which are generally interconnected with others, and are likely to have formed the principal living areas of the community — and 'external' areas, which were more communal, not private activity space, and appear not to have been as well maintained. This distinction is illustrated very well by the distribution of complete and fragmentary examples of a single robust artefact type — pierced stone weights (FIG. 8.4 *a*).

A variety of 'external areas' were present on the site, with different architectural, locational, and artefactual characteristics, not duplicated within the areas defined as 'internal', and indeed, segregating but also linking the distinct clusters of interconnected 'internal' spaces (Whitelaw 1983, fig. 63).

The specific interpretations given to each space depend on our interpretation of the individual finds and built features found there. Tenwolde usefully questioned the functional interpretations of specific vessel forms used in such interpretations and he is right to draw attention to this crucial component of any interpretation of the site. However, he ignored the patterns of associations between vessel forms, and instead relied solely on a few formal characteristics which he assumed (rather than demonstrated) to have obvious and universal meanings, such as the closure ratio of the necks of vessels, and principally whether spouts are present, which he took to demonstrate use with liquids (1992, 9, 14, 20).

Unfortunately, emphasis on whether or not vessels such as bowls have spouts, and therefore would have been used with liquids, ignores the uncertainties involved in determining which vessels originally had spouts. Since many vessels are fragmentary, whether they have been classed as spouted bowls in Warren's catalogue (1972, 113–22) reflects only whether any trace of a spout was preserved. Therefore, while vessels classed as spouted did originally have a spout, those classed as unspouted include vessels which originally had spouts, but for which no trace has been preserved, as well as those which were originally unspouted. An analysis of the presence of spouts against the percentage preservation of a vessel's rim indicates that spouts are significantly under-represented on poorly

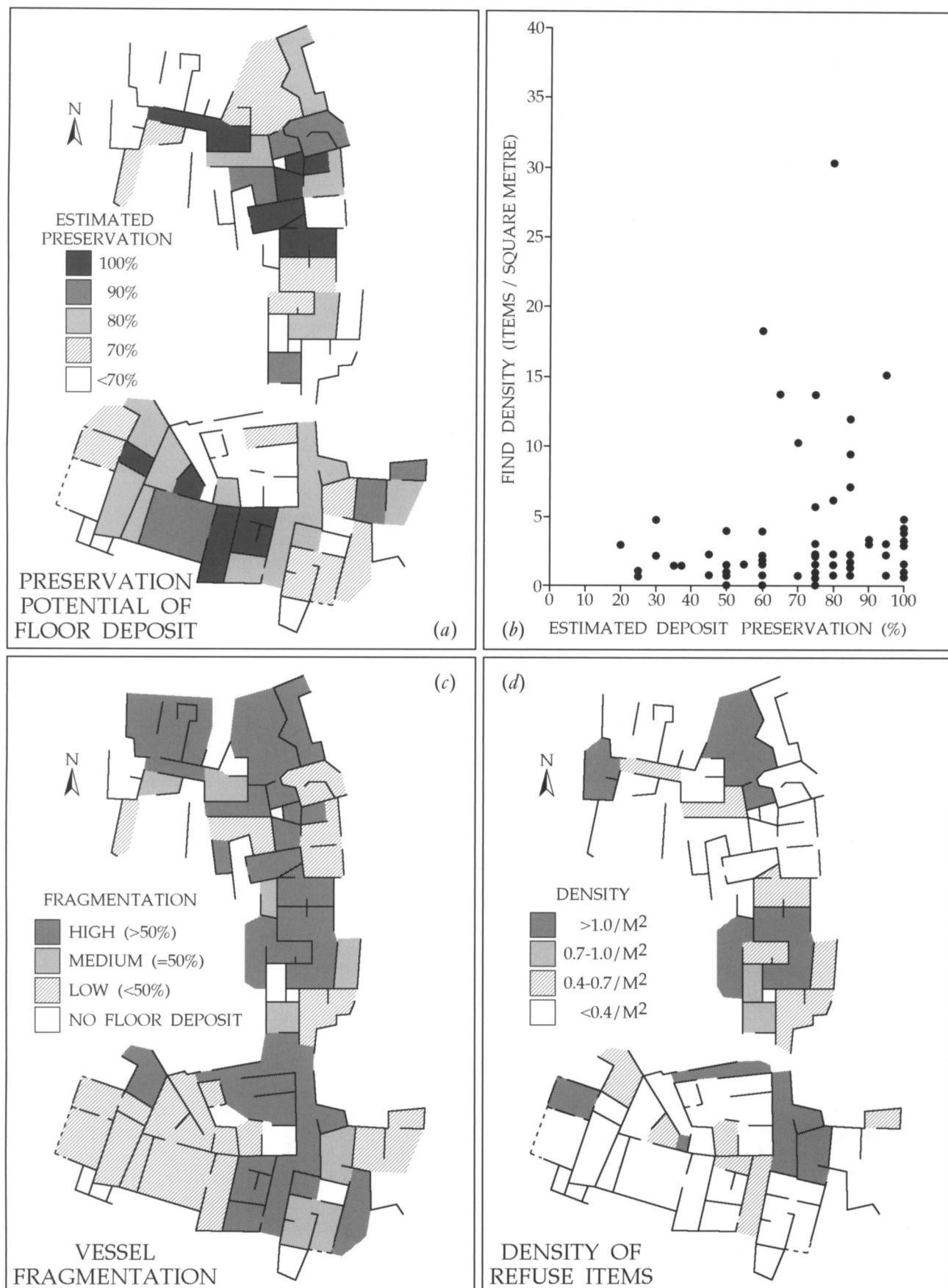


Fig. 8.3 (a) Preservation potential of a 25 cm thick floor deposit, based on the preserved heights of the walls surrounding a space; (b) the effect of deposit preservation on the density of recovered finds in rooms; (c) vessel fragmentation index: percentage of vessels less than two-thirds preserved; (d) density of refuse items across the site.

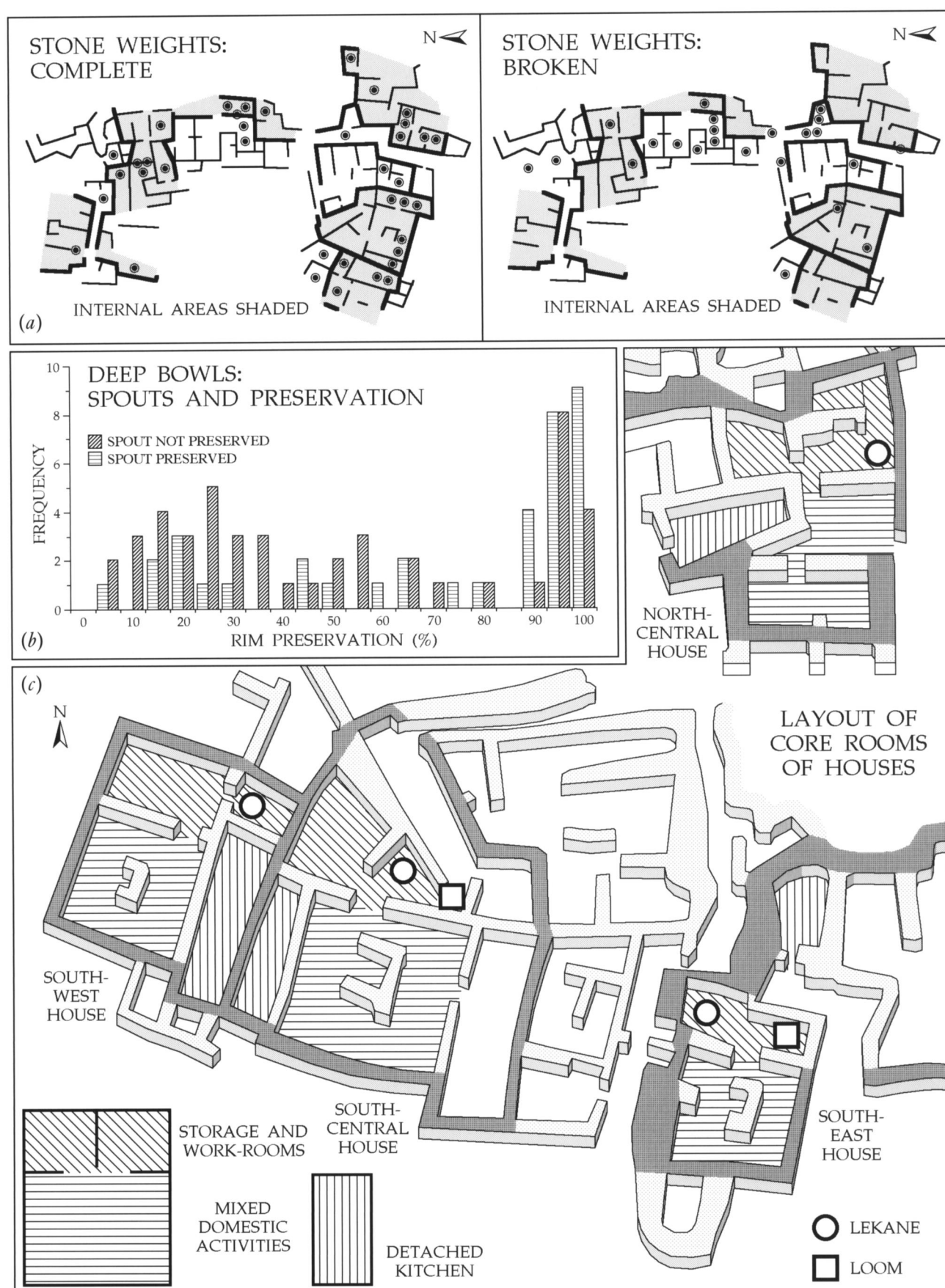


Fig. 8.4 (a) The distribution of complete and broken stone weights; (b) bowl rim preservation and the documented presence of a spout; (c) standardised architectural layout of the core rooms of well-preserved houses.

preserved bowls (FIG. 8.4 *b*), and the latter, not surprisingly, are differentially distributed in the less well preserved northern half of the site. The prevalence of spouted vessels in the southern rooms of the site — the core of Tenwolde's interpretation of the site (see also Haggis 1999, 61) — appears to be the result of preservation bias rather than any original differences in function across the site. Regardless of this bias, we must also be cautious of simply assuming vessel function: examination of many large bowls from the site reveals that, regardless of whether they have spouts, they often have traces of interior abrasion from the use of dipper cups which were used to scoop out (rather than pour) the contents, whether liquid or solid; the dipper cups have corresponding rim abrasion where they would rub against the bowls, if held by right-handed individuals.

As the other main component of the 'liquid-processing area' hypothesis, Tenwolde, following Warren (1972, 109, 144–6), identified large storage jars with holes just above their bases as for the storage of liquids (1992, 10); these are preferentially distributed in the south of the site. While this interpretation seems to make intuitive sense, there is no support for this in the actual evidence. The holes are so low on the vessel walls that drainage into another vessel, even a shallow bowl, would only have been possible if the storage vessel itself stood on a thick pot-stand of some sort, but only two of the 21 vessels with evidence for basal holes are documented as having stood on stands. It may be that such holes were put in by the potters to allow use with liquids or possibly only to aid cleaning, but what is crucial to our interpretation of the site is how they were actually used. The evidence for what the Early Minoans did at Fournou Korifi is in flat contradiction to Warren's and Tenwolde's 'common-sense' expectation that storage vessels with basal holes were used to store liquids.

While we cannot necessarily assume that we fully understand the actual function of different vessels — though shape, patterns of use-wear and residue analysis (Tzedakis and Martlew 1999) may facilitate this — additional evidence is given by the patterns in the associations between different types of vessels, and between artefacts and room characteristics, layout and built features. Examined on this basis, comparable suites of artefacts and features may be identified in each of the spatial units previously identified on architectural grounds as individual 'houses'.

DOMESTIC GROUPS AT FOURNOU KORIFI

On the basis of the finds and features within each cluster of rooms or 'house', we can argue that each was the setting for a similar range of activities (whatever those activities were), that each of these units is one of the fundamental building blocks of the community, and that they are basically comparable to each other.

Further support for the comparability of such units is provided by architectural evidence for a standard

module of layout, identifiable in the better-preserved areas of the site: a large room used for various functions including storage, food preparation and consumption (and probably sleeping), two smaller rear rooms used for production/processing (rooms with *lekanai*) and storage, and a separate, detached kitchen — perhaps separated to keep the hearth smoke out of the main domestic areas (FIG. 8.4 *c*).

Therefore, on a variety of architectural and artefactual grounds, I have argued that the site at Fournou Korifi was composed of a small number of discrete room-clusters, which were the residential components of the community. Each is likely to have been the focus for the principal range of activities undertaken at the site; indeed one cannot point to obvious domestic activities which are likely to leave a clear archaeological signature (e.g. food storage, preparation, consumption) which are not documented (though not surprisingly, units which are not fully excavated or well preserved may be missing evidence for specific activities). Therefore, we can focus our potential models on alternative family forms, in that there are no obvious gaps in the range of domestic activities documented at the site which would suggest that the residential units represent other than domestic groups. But what do these domestic 'households' represent in demographic and social terms? We perhaps too easily assume that residential groups are simple, and correspond to a limited range of common family forms (Bender 1967; Yanagisako 1979; Hendon 1996; Price 1999; Whitelaw 2001), but this needs to be demonstrated, rather than assumed.

The floor area in each 'household' relates fairly directly to the number of vessels preserved, and to the agricultural storage capacity represented by the storage vessels in each household, suggesting that all three relate to a single underlying variable: the number of individuals using the space and artefacts — the household population. Comparisons with ethnographic data from non-urbanised agricultural societies suggest a population unit of the scale of the nuclear family. In each case, variation is also on the order of a factor of two, the scale of variation in the population of a nuclear family as it goes through the domestic cycle. While we might entertain other family models, such as extended or polygynous or polyandrous families, all of these can be expected to be quite variable in size, depending on the number of women with their offspring who are associated in the same household (Whitelaw 2001). Given the low number of individuals in each household, and the comparability in scale between them, I suggest that the nuclear family was the basic domestic unit at Early Minoan Fournou Korifi.

COMMUNITY ORGANISATION AT FOURNOU KORIFI

While, in a community of this size, it would be surprising if most of the inhabitants were not closely

interrelated through kinship (Whitelaw 1983, 334), it was clearly a community of independent households. This is most clearly demonstrated by the evidence for food storage, processing, preparation and consumption within each separate household (FIG. 8.5 *a*). More recent work on the ceramic assemblage from the site has provided additional evidence for this independence, in patterns of access to and consumption of ceramics (Whitelaw *et al.* 1997). In particular, it is clear that each household had its own preferences for specific local and imported ceramics. In FIG. 8.5 *b*, it can be seen that one household favoured dark-faced vessels with white-painted chevrons, not found in any other household in the community; emphasising the importance of a consideration of formation processes, the examples found elsewhere on the site are all single sherds, recovered from external areas used for refuse dumping. In FIG. 8.6 *a*, it may be noted that households in the north and east of the community prefer the locally produced piriform jars, while those in the south prefer vessels imported from the Gulf of Mirabello area. But the south-west household differentially acquired monochrome varieties, whereas the neighbouring south-central household preferred those painted with dark bands on a light ground.

On the other hand, there were obviously ties which bound the community together, since the individual households chose to live together on a dry hilltop, rather than disperse closer to their agricultural fields and water sources in the valleys below the site. To a degree this may have been traditional, particularly as the community appears to have grown gradually from a single household, through time (FIG. 8.1 *a*). Patterning at the community level may also provide evidence for different types and degrees of active interaction within this overall unity. The solid perimeter wall, and two well-defined entrances to the site, at least in its final phase, indicates community-wide co-operation and planning (FIG. 8.6 *b*). The bastion-flanked entrance on the south, closed by a door, is a reminder of the increasingly recognised evidence for conflict and competition in the later Prepalatial period (Alexiou 1979; 1980; Nowicki 1999*a*). The fact that the settlement was completely burnt (unusual for a stone-walled site) and subsequently abandoned rather than reoccupied, suggests that this concern for security was probably justified.

Economic co-operation between households is almost certainly documented by the existence of looms in only two of the houses, while spindle-whorls are widespread. There is no concrete evidence for pottery production within the Period II community, though the presence of several potters' turntables, being reused as pot-stands (Warren 1972, 224), suggests that one or more of the households may have been involved in pot-making, with their products exchanged with other households in the community and perhaps more widely.

In addition, however, there is also evidence for active, social integration of the community. This is

seen most clearly in the architectural and artefactually distinctive spaces which are not integrated into individual households. These include the lanes or corridors, leading from each entrance (each flanked by an isolated room with bench) to small open courts near the centre of the community. Opening off each of the three public courts is a small isolated room, each of which has a distinctive worked stone feature — in two cases *kernos* stones set in their thresholds. These latter are well documented in public and ceremonial areas at contemporary sites, such as the 'west court' at Vasiliki (Zois 1976, 75), as well as later sites such as the early tombs at Gournia and Mallia (Soles 1992, 20, 165, 169) and the palatial courts at Mallia and Gournia (Soles 1991, 71–2). Whatever the role of such features (van Effenterre 1955; Hood 1984), their situation at contexts for group activities suggests that some sort of similar activities had a role in integrating the small hamlet at Fournou Korifi, which can fairly be considered 'ritual' though this need not mean religious ritual. The fact that there are three such courts and rooms, in a hamlet of only five to six families, however, must also at least raise questions about the sort of integrative role they may have had; they may represent focal points within the community, for social groups of the scale represented by individual tombs at sites like Mochlos, Gournia and Mallia (Whitelaw 1983; Soles 1992).

Mention of religious ritual brings us finally to Warren's identification of a shrine in the south-west cluster of rooms at the site (e.g. Warren 1972, 86–7; Hood 1977; Säflund 1981; Gesell 1985; Rutkowski 1986). This identification hinges solely on the figurine which had probably fallen from a stone stand in the principal room (Warren 1972, 86–7, 209–10). As originally noted by Warren (1973, 140–1), the other examples of female-shaped vessels, contemporary and slightly later in date — e.g. from Koumasa, Trapeza, Mallia, Mochlos and Ayios Myron (Warren 1973); Archanes (Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 540–1) and Giophyrakia (Marinatos 1933–35, 51) — have all been found in burial contexts, where the bulk of the artefacts are generally accepted to be the possessions of individuals, rather than evidence for community ritual. Second, and more germane, every other characteristic of the south-west group of rooms, architectural and artefactual (e.g. FIGS. 8.4 *c* and 8.5 *a*), is directly comparable to the other houses on the site. I would therefore view it as an open question whether a village 'religious specialist' was resident in that particular household, but there is overwhelming evidence that the specific group of rooms was a domestic household, and not a special-purpose community shrine, ancestral to the distinct 'town shrines' documented, albeit rarely, in Middle and Late Bronze Age contexts in Crete (Hood 1977; Gesell 1985; Rutkowski 1986; Betancourt and Davaras 1998).

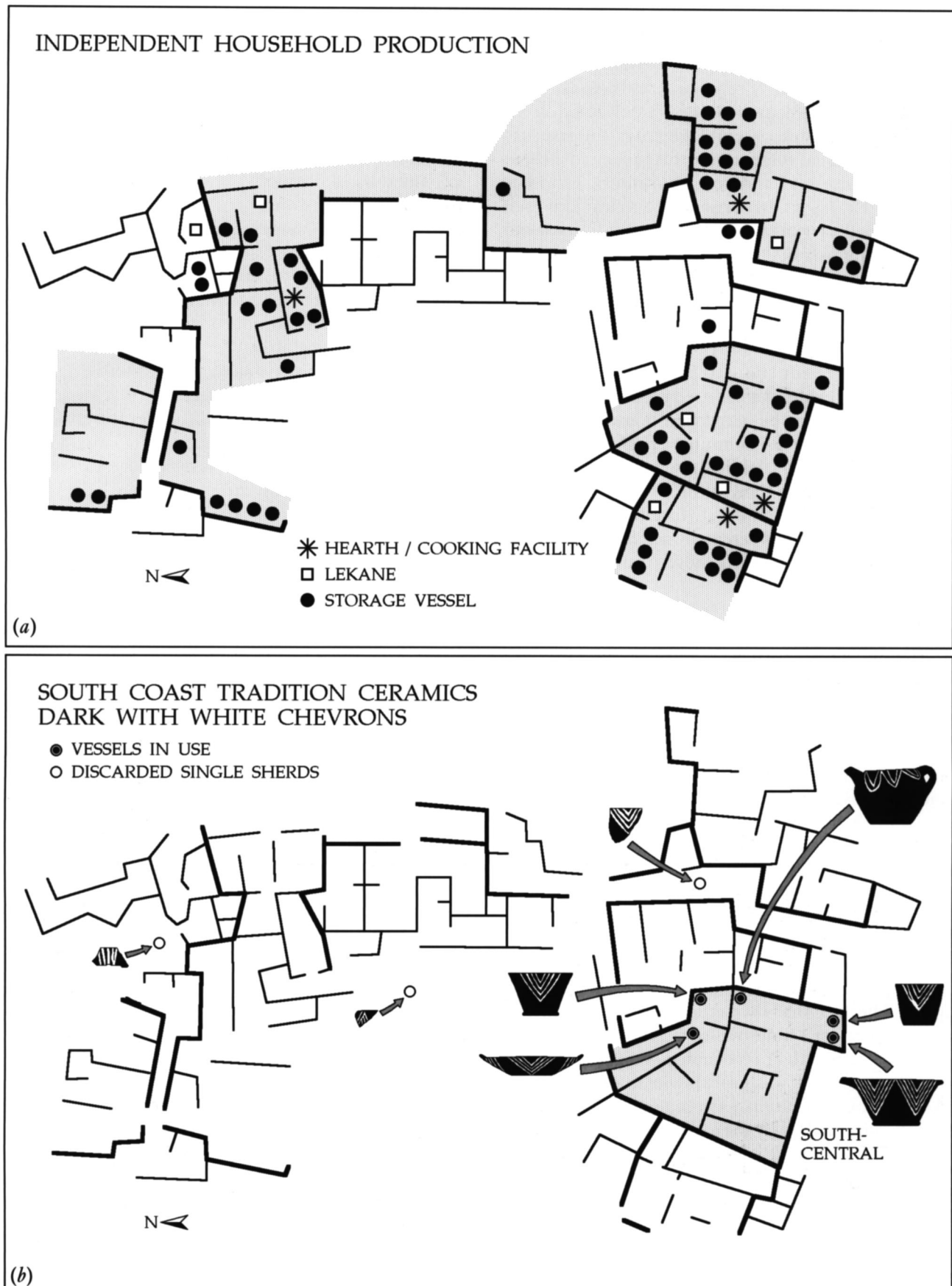


Fig. 8.5 (a) Evidence for household productive independence: food storage, processing and cooking; (b) independent household consumption decisions: vessels with white painted chevrons.

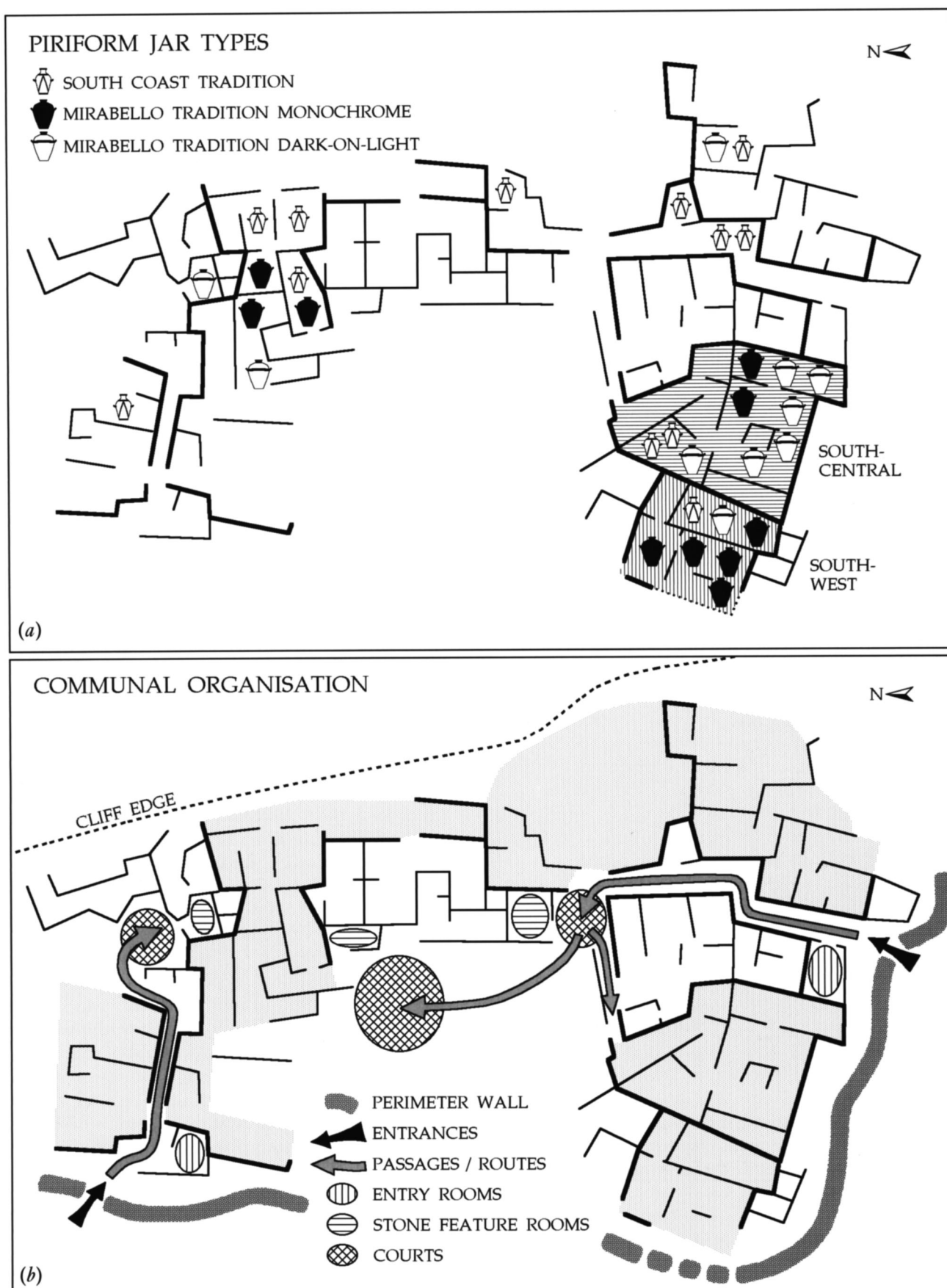


Fig. 8.6 (a) Independent household consumption decisions: types of piriform jars; (b) evidence for supra-household community integration and organisation.

CONCLUSIONS: METHODS AND MODELS IN THE ANALYSIS OF HOUSEHOLDS AND COMMUNITIES

Given the exceptional dataset from the site of Fournou Korifi, and the diversity of interpretations that this has engendered, it provides a unique proving ground for approaches to the archaeology of households and communities in a prehistoric context. All of the interpretations presented have basically drawn upon the same dataset, and focused on the spatial distribution of finds and features. But each differs as to the resolution of the patterning perceived and interpreted. In addition, and crucially, it is obvious that any interpretation must also attempt to understand the complexity of the development, destruction, post-abandonment and recovery situations, and their implications for the identification and interpretation of patterning in the data.

The principal problem with most interpretations of the site has been the presumption that the archaeological record is straightforward to interpret. In contrast, I have argued that it is not, and the meanings of patterns are not necessarily obvious. Interpretation is also aided by having some idea of what we are trying to find — in terms of realistic social models. Of course this does not mean that we will simply find what we look for — the archaeological record is rarely so compliant.

Warren and Branigan, in the early 1970s, both asked relatively simple questions of the data, and only drew upon relatively broad distributional characteristics in their answers. In 1983, I tried to squeeze more information out of the site, to address questions which were emerging from a more anthropological orientation in archaeology (e.g. Renfrew 1972). The approach I pursued was also informed by a series of issues concerned with the methodology for interpreting the archaeological record, which were only beginning to be formally defined in 1972 when the site was published, but which became recognised as of crucial importance during the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Schiffer 1972; Clarke 1973; Binford 1981; Shott 1998). The studies by Sanders and Tenwolde, in the early 1990s, while asking relevant questions (principally methodological rather than substantive), both ignored precisely the issues in archaeological interpretation which had come to dominate anthropological archaeology in the two decades that had elapsed since the site was originally published. On the one hand, we simply cannot ignore issues concerned with the formation processes of the archaeological record: how was the archaeological record created, how did it decay, in what ways was it disturbed, how was it recovered, documented, analysed and

interpreted, and how do all of these factors affect how we assess any interpretation? On the other hand, they also failed to address the primary emphasis of anthropological archaeology, in approaching any dataset with a series of questions, and with relevant expectations or models. Rather, empirical patterning in the data was somehow expected to speak for itself. Unfortunately it does not — we have to approach any dataset with relevant questions and expectations, which may then be either supported or contradicted by the patterns we can tease from imperfect, often recalcitrant data.

In the archaeology of households and communities, we need a set of methods for teasing the relevant information from archaeological data, and we need a set of social models, so that we can interpret the patterns identified. The exceptional dataset from Fournou Korifi continues to provide the strongest evidence we have for the nature of households and the social composition of small rural communities in Early Bronze Age Crete, while the variety of approaches which have been applied to its interpretation provide an instructive example of both the problems of, and prospects for, household and community archaeology in a prehistoric context.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the editors for the invitation to contribute this paper; elements of the argument have been presented to the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America in 1995, and research seminars at Cambridge University and University College London. Permission to study the notebooks of the excavation at Fournou Korifi was granted by Peter Warren and the Director and Managing Committee of the British School at Athens, and was facilitated by Tony Spawforth, Lisa French and Penny Wilson. Permission to study the finds from the excavation was granted by Peter Warren, the Managing Committee of the British School, and the 24th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, and facilitated in every way by the staff of the Ephorate and the Ayios Nikolaos Archaeological Museum. That study was supported by grants from the British Academy, the Natural Environment Research Council, the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, and the Institute for Aegean Prehistory. Analytical work on the provenance of the ceramics was undertaken by Peter Day, Vangelio Kiriatzi, Louise Joyner and Vasilis Kilikoglou, and is reported elsewhere (Whitelaw *et al.* 1997). The text has benefited from the comments of two anonymous referees. I am grateful to all of these individuals and organisations for their support and assistance.