



Outdoor space in Minoan architecture: "community and privacy"

Author(s): Clairry Palyvou

Source: *British School at Athens Studies*, Vol. 12, KNOSSOS: PALACE, CITY, STATE (2004), pp. 207-217

Published by: [British School at Athens](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40960778>

Accessed: 12/02/2014 10:11

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



British School at Athens is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *British School at Athens Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

I 5

Outdoor space in Minoan architecture: “community and privacy”

Clairy Palyvou

The land of Crete, in its affluence and diversity, exudes a certain feeling of friendliness and intimacy which, combined with her mild climate and all very much unchanged since the Bronze Age, must have encouraged outdoor living from very early times. This kind of living became, in fact, so typical a characteristic (FIG. 15.1) that a traveller visiting Greece in the nineteenth century wrote that “the Greeks build their houses so that they can sleep outdoors!” An effective remark indeed, for outdoor space is defined in juxtaposition to indoor, and thus architecture is understood as an integral entity of both its built and un-built components.

Each pair of opposites (built/un-built, outdoor/indoor, exterior/interior, open/closed, open air/sheltered) defines a spectrum of intermediate situations. In Minoan architecture these spectrums are extremely rich in nuances. The Minoan Hall, the most typical architectural unit of Bronze Age Crete, is most telling of the soft gradations from one end to the other: from open air to sheltered space and hence to indoors, from bright light to shadow and darkness, from warmth to coolness, from the soft earth to the hard pavement, and so on. The very essence of Minoan architecture lies in the rich scale of in-between shades it provides: it is no coincidence, nor is it due to our incapability (only), that we have so many difficulties in arranging the buildings into categories. (See, for example, the conference on *The Function of the “Minoan Villa”* (Hägg 1997) where, although some agreement was finally reached as to the “categories” of Minoan “villas”, it remained quite a subjective view as to where each specific building should belong.)

Depending on the degree of accessibility and the relation of an open air space to its surroundings, its function may vary from the most private to the most public: a spectrum equally rich in gradations. It is this specific aspect of open air space in Minoan architecture that is discussed here. The terms “private” and “public” are, of course, deeply imbued with notions that are time and culture specific. Moreover, there is always the danger of missing forms of expression of community and privacy that leave no tangible traces in the archaeological records (FIG. 15.2). The effort, however, seems worthwhile and will be based, as much as possible, on purely architectural grounds.

To support such an approach, I resorted to a popular book of the 1960s, *Community and Privacy*, written

by two architects, S. Chermayeff and C. Alexander (1966). The book refers to modern (Western) living communities, but gives an interesting account of the physical expressions of the need for varying degrees of privacy within an urban context. The authors propose a hierarchy of six domains, ranging from the most public to the most private. Their scheme is presented below in a slightly adjusted form so as to refer to open air spaces only:

1. **Urban public (αστικός-δημόσιος).** The places and facilities in public ownership and use (roads, paths, open civic parks).
2. **Urban semi-public (αστικός-ημιδημόσιος).** The areas of public use under governmental or institutional control (fenced parks, athletic grounds).
3. **Group public (δημόσιος σε επίπεδο ομάδας).** The meeting ground between public services and private property requiring joint access and responsibility (utilities control, emergency access).
4. **Group private (ιδιωτικός σε επίπεδο ομάδας).** Secondary areas under control of management acting on behalf of private or public interest for the benefit of tenants or other legal occupants (reception, circulation, service spaces).
5. **Family private (ιδιωτικός σε επίπεδο οικογένειας).** Spaces within the private domain controlled by a single family that are devoted to communal family activities (courtyard, verandah, roof garden).
6. **Individual private (ιδιωτικός σε ατομικό επίπεδο).** The innermost sanctum to which individuals may withdraw. For an outdoor space: the “balcony of one’s own”.

This is only a rough scheme, as the authors themselves stress. It may prove useful, however, as a working tool for it can trigger some deeper thoughts on the value and significance of the all-familiar yet elusive forms of outdoor space in Minoan architecture.

A first point that needs to be clarified is the use of the word “urban/αστικός” for the Minoan world. It is used here to describe the architectural environment of a town, as opposed to a rural installation, a countryside settlement, or a citadel, without the socio-political connotations it obtained during the classical period. The word ἄστυ goes back to Mycenaean times (*wa-tu* in Lin-



Fig. 15.1 (above). Outdoor living.

Fig. 15.2 (below). Forms of expression of privacy that leave no tangible traces in the archaeological record (colour, in this case).



ear B) and, as Weihartner has shown, describes precisely such an environment, as opposed to πόλις, which most probably refers to the fortified citadel (Weihartner 2000).

A second point is that we have no access to the notion of “ownership” in the Creto-Mycenaean world, although there is evidence of land ownership and leasing in the Linear B tablets. We shall have to be restricted therefore to the word “control”, which can be traced in our archaeological records, as expressing the “use” rather than the “ownership” of land.

Last but not least, it is not always easy or even possible to distinguish between open air spaces and sheltered ones, as excavators and scholars have often stressed. With these general remarks and handicaps in mind, we shall attempt to project the above hierarchy of open air spaces onto the Minoan world.

1. NO MAN’S LAND (“TA EPHMA THE ΠΟΛΕΩΣ”)

Chermayeff and Alexander, in discussing modern urban centres, had no questions of property to solve, and therefore did not include in their scale a category for “no man’s land”. This category however, covers an important aspect of land in early communities. In the Greek cities of the Classical period such unidentified spaces — called then “τὰ ἐρημα τῆς πόλεως” — were an easy prey to trespassers and land grabbers, but also a panacea in case of emergency such as when Athens was built up by the influx of immigrants during the Peloponnesian War (Th. 2. 17). The situation must have been quite similar in Minoan times: the infill development attested in many settlements (regardless of the reasons that caused it) could well have been facilitated by the existence of such unidentified land.

Without the knowledge of ownership, it is difficult to distinguish between un-built property and no man’s land; it may be assumed that the former is usually defined by limits, whereas the latter is a vague area with no clear periphery. A case of no man’s land may be the area to the west of the West Court of Knossos, just behind the first row of houses along the Royal Road, which seems to have been in general free of habitation (see V. Fotou in this volume). The picture is quite typical, actually, for it is along a road that buildings are first erected. The town of Palaikastro, for example, expanded during MM IIIB/LM IA in a linear formation, along the routes that were established in MM IB/II A, if not before (MacGillivray and Driessen 1990, 404); the land beyond this first row of houses remained unoccupied.

2. URBAN PUBLIC (ΑΣΤΙΚΟΣ-ΔΗΜΟΣΙΟΣ)

This category consists mainly of the streets comprising the traffic network of a settlement. It also includes the “squares” and “plazas” attached to such a network, ranging from small-scale local expansions of the street

(usually to facilitate access to the entrances of the surrounding houses, as at Malia, Zakros and Akrotiri) to a large and more organised open space meant for public gatherings, such as the Public Plaza at Pseira, and the more refined version at Myrtos-Pyrgos. The apex of this category is the west court of the palaces, discussed below.

3. URBAN SEMI-PUBLIC (ΑΣΤΙΚΟΣ-ΗΜΙΑΔΗΜΟΣΙΟΣ)

The prefix "semi" should be interpreted as implying control rather than ownership. These are urban spaces meant for public use "under conditions", as opposed to the unrestricted use of the previous category. Their urban character is attested by their large size and sophisticated design, as well as by the non-residential nature of the surrounding structures. One such case is most probably the Protopalatial Agora at Malia: a large, well defined rectangular space, bordered by stoas, with two access points reached by raised causeways running through the town. The central court of a palace is the crystallised form of an urban semi-public space.

4. GROUP PUBLIC (ΔΗΜΟΣΙΟΣ ΣΕ ΕΠΙΠΕΔΟ ΟΜΑΔΑΣ)

These public spaces may have unrestricted access but their place in the urban tissue is such that they are of interest only to a certain group of people. Dead-ends providing access to a few houses in the heart of a building compound, as at Gournia, and open spaces meant to serve a group of buildings in terms of light, air and drainage (Palyvou 1986), belong to this category.

The area between Sector Delta and Xeste 2 at Akrotiri, Thera (FIG. 15.3) is an example (Palyvou 1984). Earlier buildings in this area were back-filled after the seismic destruction, and the space thus produced formed a kind of backyard used by the houses surrounding it. To the northeast it has the form of a terrace and a tall retaining wall, approx. 3 m high, cuts it off from the street network. Though there may have been free access from the south, it is quite clear that the function of this open space was to provide light and air to certain rooms that had no other means for this (e.g. Delta 20), and also to act as a communal backyard for various open air activities, including garbage accumulation (Tzachili 1990).

Such an open space was agreed upon, in all probability, by all residents involved. It seems, after all, that it was of no use to a specific individual for it could not have been built as an annex of any of the surrounding houses without creating serious problems for the rest. The infill development, in other words, has come to its maximum in this area. Yet, it is not wasted or unidentified land, and therefore cannot belong to the "no man's land" category; it has a specific use at a neighbourhood level. There are surely many such spaces in the dense

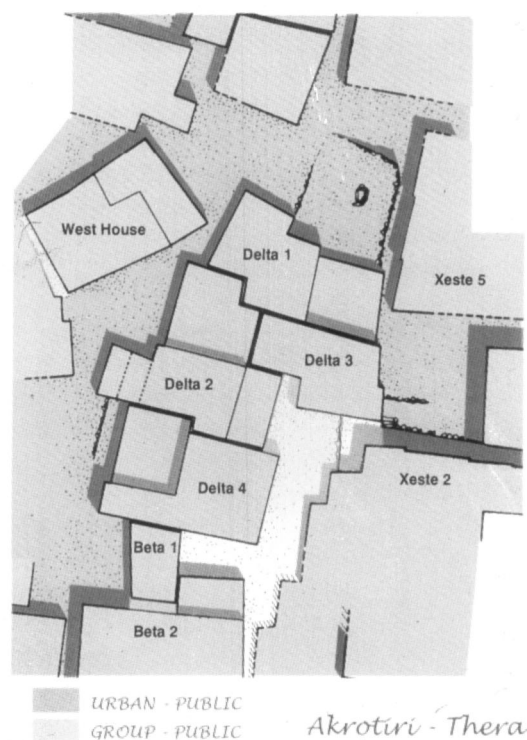


Fig. 15.3. Akrotiri, Thera: an open space of the "group public" type.

settlements of the Minoan world, as for example at Gournia, but they cannot be mapped with certainty (unlike Akrotiri), as we have insufficient knowledge of their relation to surrounding houses.

5. GROUP PRIVATE (ΙΔΙΩΤΙΚΟΣ ΣΕ ΕΠΙΠΕΔΟ ΟΜΑΔΑΣ)

These are open air spaces with restricted access, used by a group of individuals. The various courtyards dispersed in the north wings of the palaces of Phaistos (FIG. 15.4) and Malia — whatever their function (they may have served groups of workshops or simply functioned as "buffer zones") — are most probably such cases.

6. FAMILY PRIVATE (ΙΔΙΩΤΙΚΟΣ ΣΕ ΕΠΙΠΕΔΟ ΟΙΚΟΓΕΝΕΙΑΣ)

In Neopalatial towns the absence of courtyards within the fabric of individual houses is a conspicuous feature. There are exceptions, as at Kommos, but they have to be considered separately. Two important outdoor spaces, however, compensate for this lack: flat roofs and verandahs on the upper floors; either open air or sheltered, such spaces may well have functioned as "family

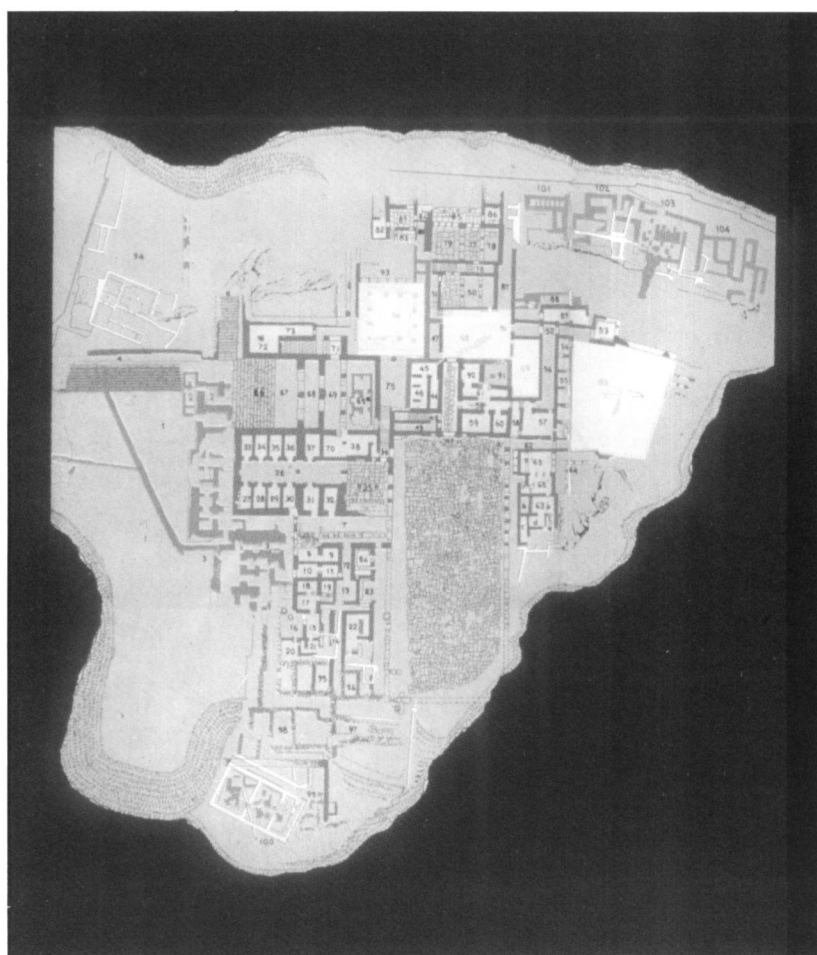


Fig. 15.4. Phaistos: open air spaces with restricted access of the “group private” type.

private” (the term “family” being indicative of a state of privacy one step prior to that of the “individual”).

Roofs were flat and functional in Minoan architecture, as is well attested through depictions in art, showing people in various activities on the roofs, but also through the archaeological finds: objects fallen from the roof, and elaborate staircases leading all the way up to the top of the building (Michailidou 2001; Palyvou 1999). The Archanes clay model (FIG. 15.5), as a comprehensive representation of a Minoan house, makes their importance very clear (Lebessi 1976). Roofs, in general, are reached only from within the house — hence their family-private nature.

Verandahs on the upper floors have been suggested in several Minoan buildings: Knossos, Ayia Triada, Sklavokambos, Palaikastro (Lebessi 1976, 30, n.1), Chania (Hallager 1990), Malia (M. Schmid in Poursat 1996, 89–97) (FIG. 15.6), Myrtos-Pyrgos (Cadogan 1978, 77), Zakros (Platon 1990, 387, n.18). At Akrotiri, nevertheless, its unique preservation leaves no doubt that in most houses the upper floor covers the whole of the ground floor, rarely leaving space for verandahs; these are to be found on the second story above ground level, as in Xestes 3 and 4 (Palyvou 1999, 434). Verandahs, as a rule, are also reached from within the house.

The existence of a light shelter over an open space (roof or verandah) is a definite proof of its important

function for outdoor living. Examples of shelters are to be found in the iconography: for instance, on the Archanes model (FIG. 15.5) and in the Miniature Frieze of the West House at Akrotiri (FIG. 15.7). Shelters have been suggested in several graphic reconstructions, on the lines of these depictions, for instance by Schmid for the workshops of Quartier Mu at Malia (in Poursat 1996, 91, figs. 54–5 [FIG. 15.6]).

Gardens included in the Residential Quarters of the palaces of Knossos, Phaistos and Malia, as well as Zakros, Palaikastro and Ayia Triada (Graham 1972, 87–95; Shaw 1993, 682, n. 72–3), are also candidates for this category. Maria Shaw shows that the garden at Phaistos, in particular, is a private open area, attached exclusively to the Residential Quarters of the palace.

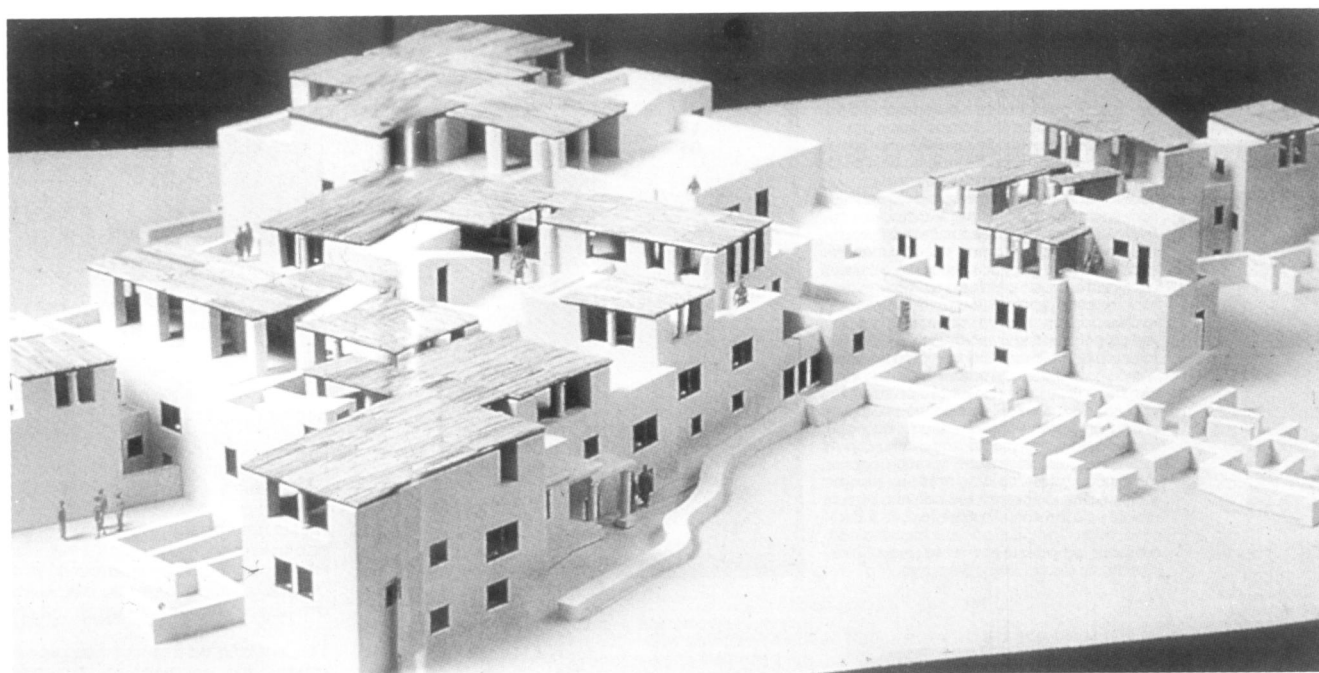
7. INDIVIDUAL PRIVATE (ΙΔΙΩΤΙΚΟΣ ΣΕ ΑΤΟΜΙΚΟ ΕΠΙΠΕΔΟ)

To this category belong the so-called “light wells” of many Minoan Halls, especially those situated at the periphery of the building where the pier-and-door partition of the Hall opens to a small court that is secluded from the public space beyond by a high parapet wall. The Queen’s Megaron at Knossos and the Archanes model (FIG. 15.5) provide good examples. In both instances the Halls receive ample light and air from win-



Fig. 15.5 (left). The Archanes model.

Fig. 15.6 (below). Malia, Quartier Mu: verandahs on the upper floors.



dows on the sides of the rooms. The *raison d'être* of these small open air spaces, therefore, is other than providing light — hence the inappropriate use of the term “light well”. It is clear that these courts were intended to provide a *private* open air space, meant for the users of the specific room alone, well protected from indiscreet eyes.

8. BALCONIES (ΕΞΩΣΤΕΣ)

Balconies, as open air projections of a building, form a separate category. They were known to the Minoans,

as attested by a few depictions in art. Two such instances need to be discussed in some detail for, to my understanding, they form a sub-category of their own: the balcony of the Archanes model (FIG. 15.5) and the one shown at the Thera Miniature Frieze — Right Town (FIG. 15.7). In both cases the balcony is a projection of the roof level. It constitutes, in other words, a *continuation of an open air space*. This is quite incompatible with the notion of a balcony (in its modern sense at least) as an ingenious way to provide open air facilities to an indoor space that has no other way of obtaining them, especially in a dense urban tissue where open air spaces

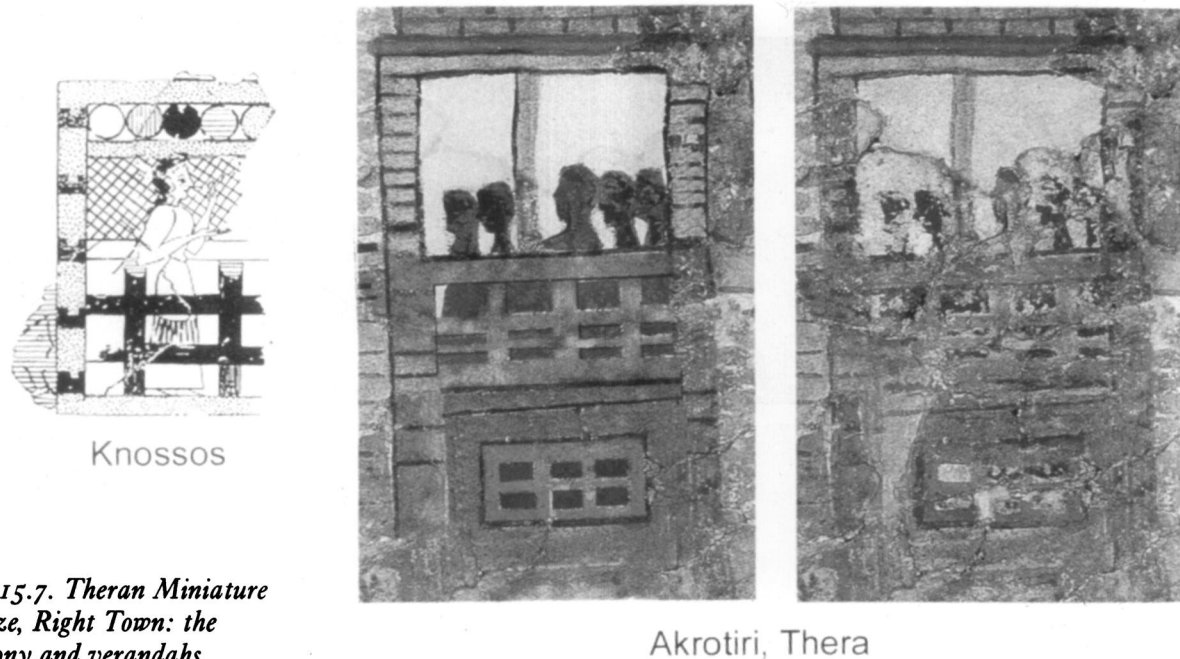


Fig. 15.7. *Theran Miniature Frieze, Right Town: the balcony and verandahs. Compare with Knossos wall painting.*

are a luxury. The Minoan examples discussed here are of a different nature, for they can hardly be thought of as providing extra open air space (they are very small and the roof is large enough). Also of interest with these two balconies is that the protrusion which characterises a balcony is attested not only horizontally but also vertically: on the Archanes model three steps lead up from the roof level, and in the Theran fresco the balcony is set slightly higher than the line demarcating the roof. (Televantou [1994, 268] takes this detail as an indication that this is a separate structure and interprets it as an “altar”.) The Theran balcony, actually, protrudes almost in a symbolic manner from the town itself.

Furthermore, in both cases there is a conspicuous female figure occupying the balcony. In the Theran painting the female figure is depicted emphatically. The Archanes model has a piece of clay in the shape of a half-cylinder adjusted to the inside of the parapet of the balcony, which is interpreted by Lebessi (1976, 33) as the lower part of the body of a female figure (see also Rethemiotakis 1998, 144).

The peculiarities of these rare cases of balconies point to some specific function, perhaps not entirely secular. They form a pronounced platform, intentionally meant for one person only (a female, as it seems), with the aim to see as much as to be seen. The person standing on the balcony is thus distinguished from other people standing on the roof. Balconies, therefore, should better be treated as a separate, distinct entity of open air spaces, perhaps with some ritual connotations attached

to their function (a kind of a “balcony of appearance”? — as suggested by Hägg [1987, 132–3]). If this is the case, then a question arises about the identity of the buildings to which the balconies are attached: are they ordinary town houses or some other special edifices? And if they are ordinary houses — as I believe they are — then why this special treatment? For the purpose of this paper, however, suffice it to show that Minoan balconies are, indeed, something more special than what the term implies in its modern sense.

9. LIGHT WELLS (ΦΩΤΑΓΩΓΟΙ)

The word “light well” has been used extensively in describing open air spaces in Minoan architecture, yet in a rather indiscriminate way. The term itself implies a hole (or well) that has been “drilled” into the mass of a building in order to provide light (and air) to rooms that have no other means of securing it. Many of the open air spaces that have been dubbed light wells are, in fact, areas providing primarily *privacy* and not light. This is true for most of the “light wells” forming part of Minoan Halls, since they are a continuation of an exterior open air space (a street or garden) and there is ample lighting from elsewhere, as mentioned above.

True light wells do exist in Minoan buildings, the best example being the light well of the Grand Staircase at Knossos. Staircases have strict “regulations” as to lighting standards (Palyvou 1999), and the magnificent Grand Staircase is no exception. The ingenious

idea of substituting the interior walls of the staircase with superimposed colonnades, next to a light well, ensured ample light to the structure. Characteristically, the small rectangular space at the bottom of the well has no function what so ever. A similar light well is seen at Akrotiri, in the House of the Ladies, also serving a staircase in the middle of the house. It is important to reserve the term "light well" for true examples for we thus gain a more accurate understanding of the rich nuances of outdoor spaces in Minoan architecture, and are not misled when comparing different forms of space.

THE MAJOR OPEN AIR PUBLIC SPACES

Having outlined the nine categories of open air space in Minoan architecture, we shall now attempt a more detailed understanding of certain aspects of the two major public open spaces: "urban public" and "urban semi-public".

Urban public: a. Streets and causeways

The street is the basic unit of urban public space. Most streets have a long history fading back in time: they probably started off as routes established through time as the most efficient and safe way of moving from one point of interest to another. They follow the contours of the land, bypass difficult or dangerous points and exploit natural passages, such as the route of a dry torrent.

A route is transformed into a street by the buildings that border its sides (Palyvou 1986; Chryssoulaki 1990). These buildings seldom have front courtyards or other

intermediate spaces that can act as a buffer zone between the private domain of the house and the public domain of the street. As a rule, they abut each other and their façades form the third dimension that defines the limits of the void that is the street.

The Minoans had two means of enhancing the urban notion of their streets: indentation of the façades; and causeways — both the outcome of a collective decision. The former is a well known idiom of the Bronze Age world and popular, in fact, throughout the eastern Mediterranean. The concept has been discussed elsewhere (Palyvou 1986), where it is shown that indentations characterise a main street and that they derive from the need to apply a specific orientation and an architecture of rectangular units to a pre-existing curved route that has become a street. These indentations allow the long façade of a block of buildings to adjust to the curvilinear form of the street. The depth of the indentation varies from 0.2 m to a few metres (Akrotiri, Xeste 2 and Xeste 4 respectively), the most common dimension being approximately 0.6 m. Whatever the depth, the indentation remains the same in a sequence of several recesses, even when different houses (FIG. 15.3) — and therefore different owners — are involved (Palyvou 1986). The regularity of this gradual dislocation of the façade of a block is what enhances its readability as an "urban street".

The causeway (or raised walkway), on the other hand, is a peculiarity of Minoan urban design, an ingenious way of satisfying a number of needs (FIG. 15.8): they form a circulatory network designed to serve all main areas of a town; they organise the various possible movements and set a hierarchy of circulation (including their occasional use as "corridors of procession"); they pre-



Fig. 15.8. Malia: causeway.

vent trespassing since they delineate public space; they orientate and facilitate traffic in such difficult situations as rain, fog and even darkness, since most of these causeways are made of white slabs that reflect the light and are easily distinguishable among surrounding dark coloured crazy paving. They are constructed with great care as one or two rows — as at Knossos and Archanes — of large slabs, well dressed on all sides, set on a foundation of compressed smaller stones or “cement” so as to protect the causeway from settling. Their width varies, but it is usually just over 1 m so that two people coming from opposite directions may cross — at Knossos they are double, with a width of 0.7 m each (Warren 1994, 206). They are placed at one side of the street, as a true sidewalk, or in the middle, as in the Royal Road, and are often combined with a drainage system.

Causeways were adopted in Crete as early as the Protopalatial period. An early example, constructed not of dressed slabs but of a crazy pavement, is found at Myrtos-Pyrgos leading to the entrance of a tomb (Cadogan 1978, 71, figs. 4–5). Causeways were a typical feature of the Protopalatial town of Malia: two such causeways reach the Agora, and at Quartier Mu there is even a diagonal causeway (see more below) crossing a small open air public space and ending at the entrance of Building A (FIG. 15.9).

The use of causeways continues well into the Neopalatial period. Instances are numerous and are related to streets and other open air public spaces: Knossos (Warren [1994] has revealed an extensive network of causeways, with many Y-shaped junctions); Kastelli (Rethemiotakis 1992); Palaikastro; Myrtos-Pyrgos IV (Cadogan 1978, 77, figs. 21–2); Chania (Catling 1986, 95); Malia (Van Effenterre 1980, 257–78); Archanes (one branch leads to an altar: Sakellarakis and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1997, 120–9).

These raised paths extended most probably to the outskirts of the town, acting as a kind of “mitos (clew) of Ariadne”: a visitor arriving at a Minoan town would follow such a walkway and trust it to lead him through the main arteries of the town to its very hub: the palace.

Urban public: b. The Principal Public Plaza (“West Court”)

The term “West Court” refers exclusively to the palaces and is understood as a large open public space, that borders the west façade of the palace and functions as the meeting point between the palace and the town. The use of “Court”, however, is misleading for this is an open public space with loose limits and unrestricted access (compare also Central Courts below). It has no boundaries and blends with the town in all directions but the east. This applies to Knossos as well, where the West Court forms a raised platform held by retaining walls (not enclosure walls). This arrangement was most probably a practical one, for the size of Knossos is such

that its “West Court” could not be accommodated on the limited flat ground of the Kephala hill; surely, it thus became more conspicuous (the town descends downhill further west), but access remained unrestricted.

The “Principal Public Plaza”, a more appropriate term given by Preziosi (Preziosi 1983, 107), is the meeting point and at the same time the buffer zone between the town and the palace. It is the only place where the two domains actually confront each other. In this confrontation the palace has raised an imposing and impregnable façade, whereas the town is, in a sense, in retreat. This is the only place where the town keeps its distance from the palace instead of encroaching on it, as it does on all other sides, and, in doing so, it allows the palace to acquire the identity of “a building”. There are, indeed, no other true façades facing the town, but only parts of façades, blending into each other and into the town (to appreciate a façade, after all, you need space so that you can take your distance, the higher the façade the longer the distance required). Even so, the west façade has rather blurred ends to the north and south, and is well defined only along the broad urban space of the Principal Public Plaza.

Causeways are strongly associated with the Principal Public Plazas in all palaces, both early and late. They often appear in publications isolated from their urban context and have been interpreted mainly in relation to the palace. All of them however, are typical urban causeways that reach this area from various parts of the town, continuing their course up to the entries of the compound, as well as other points of interest. Since they are now crossing a broad open area — as opposed to the narrow zone of a street — they follow the plain logic of minimising time and effort: the shortest way to join two points is a straight line, and therefore they cross the area diagonally (see also Protopalatial Malia, Quartier Mu).

From the morphological point of view, these diagonal lines stand out in the otherwise rectilinear architecture of the Minoan world. This effect may have played an important role, especially in their occasional formal function as corridors of procession (Marinatos 1987), and is the diagnostic feature of causeways depicted in the Knossian Miniature Fresco (Davis 1987). Such a ritual function, however, was as a rule a temporary side effect rather than the initial *raison d’être* of these causeways.

On reaching the palace a most unexpected thing happens: some of the causeways continue *within* the compound, surely not for practical reasons anymore — and they are no longer raised (FIG. 15.10). But they penetrate the building compound in a symbolic manner, as if the town is invading the palace. At the South Entrance of Knossos the causeway continues into and along the Corridor of Procession and stops only when it reaches the Central Court. The corridor itself — in its width and length and the way it turns right angles just



Fig. 15.9 (above). Malia, Quartier Mu: diagonal causeway leading to the entrance of Building A.

like a street — is an urban element transposed indoors from a *δρόμος* to a *διόδωρος* and, as such, it is no surprise that it is accompanied by the causeway.

This discussion points clearly to the fact that the Principal Public Plaza (West Court) is an urban public space inextricably bonded with the town. If just one of the plazas of a town, it is the largest and most important. It is a space allotted *by the town* and not imposed *by the palace* as with the Central Court. This is perhaps why its orientation and its form vary according to the specifications of each town (Zakros is an interesting case). The West Façade of the palatial compound facing this Plaza stands as a landmark for the town itself and acts as a kind of reference-scenery and background for all activities performed in this area (Hägg 1987).

URBAN SEMI-PUBLIC: THE CENTRAL COURT

The Central Court is "the diagnostic feature of a Minoan palace", as Davis has put it (1987, 161), the hub of the town, and the nucleus of the Minoan world. It is of great importance that *the only absolutely predetermined and strictly designed space in Minoan architecture is, in fact, an open air space*. This, alone, reflects the great significance that outdoor activities must have had in the Bronze Age, and shows that the un-built space can be even more important than the built space.

The Central Court is truly both central and a court. The latter is attested by the fact that this large open space is well defined and access to it is restricted and controlled. The town may penetrate symbolically the palace, exhibiting a feeling of intimacy, but the controlled access to the Central Court demonstrates the limits of this intimacy. No causeways interrupt the unity of the space: there is no need to specify crossings

Fig. 15.10 (below). Knossos: Corridor of the Procession.



from one point to another; the importance lies in being there.

As an open space, the Central Court acquires its architectural identity through the buildings surrounding it. The façades rising on all four sides provide the third dimension and determine the architectural character of the place. And it is here that we find the most sophisticated and magnificent façades of the Minoan world: these are the elegant perforated façades, composed of numerous openings, colonnades and piers that form sheltered stoas, balconies with wooden balustrades and verandahs. They stand in strong contrast to the strictness of the layout of the Court and provide a subtle gradation from the open air space to the inner compartments. It is no wonder that most of the sophisticated architectural depictions of Minoan Bronze Age art have been identified with these very façades.

Each of the surrounding buildings — referred to as *insulae*, zones or clusters — has its specific association with the Court. Some may function only through the Court (the storerooms and ritual zones), whereas others have alternatives (the Domestic Quarters, for instance, have other accesses as well and look outwards rather than to the Court). These associations may provide the key for understanding the function of the large court, and may even suggest its origin.

AN URBAN DESIGN CONCEPT

In conclusion, the study of the open air components of the Minoan world has shown that this is an architecture born out of the interrelation of indoor and outdoor space. This powerful association is attested both in architecture and town planning. The “palace”, far from being “a building”, was born out of the town and by the town, with the best tools of urban design in its service: roads became corridors, accompanied by causeways that penetrate as markers, separate buildings became zones or clusters, façades are indented, and all categories of open air spaces are included in its fabric — a “city within a city”, as Evans viewed the first phase of the Palace of Knossos. This was surely not the outcome of a gradual organic or agglutinative growth, as Preziosi has also emphasised (1983, 91, n. 147). It is part of a very demanding “urban design concept” of such a complexity and efficiency that only a highly organised community could accomplish.

REFERENCES

- Cadogan, G., 1978. ‘Pyrgos, Crete, 1970–77’ *Archaeological Reports* 24 (1977–78): 70–84.
- Catling, H. W., 1986. ‘Archaeology in Greece, 1985–86’ *Archaeological Reports* 32 (1985–86): 3–101.
- Chermayeff, S. and C. Alexander, 1966. *Community and Privacy. Toward a New Architecture of Humanism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Chrysoulaki, S., 1990. ‘L’urbanisme minoen. A. Le réseau routier urbain’ in Darcque and Treuil 1990: 371–80.
- P. Darcque, P. and R. Treuil (eds), 1990. *L’habitat égéen préhistorique* (Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique Supplément 19). Paris.
- Davis, E., 1987. ‘The Knossos Miniature Frescoes and the function of the central courts’ in Hägg and Marinatos 1987: 157–61.
- Hägg, R. (ed.), 1997. *The Function of the “Minoan Villa”* (Skrifter Utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen 4° 46). Stockholm.
- Hägg, R. and N. Marinatos (eds), 1987. *The Function of the Minoan Palaces* (Skrifter Utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen 4° 35). Stockholm.
- Hallager, E., 1990. ‘Upper floors in LM I houses’ in Darcque and Treuil 1990: 281–92.
- Hägg, R., 1987. ‘On the reconstruction of the West Façade at Knossos’ in Hägg and Marinatos 1987: 129–34.
- Graham, J. W., 1972. *The Palaces of Crete* (2nd ed.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Lebessi, A., 1976. ‘Ο οικίσκος των Αρχανών’ *Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς*: 12–43.
- MacGillivray, J. A. and J. Driessen, 1990. ‘Minoan settlement at Palaikastro’ in Darcque and Treuil 1990: 395–412.
- Marinatos, N., 1987. ‘Public festivals in the west courts of the palaces’ in Hägg and Marinatos 1987: 135–43.
- Michailidou, A., 1990. ‘The settlement at Akrotiri (Thera): a theoretical approach to the function of the upper storey’ *Aegaeum* 6: 293–306. Liège.
- Michailidou, A., 2001. *Ακρωτήρι Θήρας. Η μελέτη των ορόφων στα κτήρια του οικισμού* (Βιβλιοθήκη της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας 212). Athens.
- Palyvou, C., 1984. ‘The destruction of the town at Akrotiri, Thera, at the beginning of LC I: rebuilding activities’ in J. A. MacGillivray and R. L. N. Barber (eds) *The Prehistoric Cyclades: Contributions to a Workshop on Cycladic Chronology*: 134–47. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, Department of Classical Archaeology.
- Palyvou, C., 1986. ‘Notes on the town plan of Late Cycladic Akrotiri, Thera’ *Annual of the British School at Athens* 81: 179–94.
- Palyvou, C., 1999. *Ακρωτήρι Θήρας. Η οικοδομική τέχνη* (Βιβλιοθήκη της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας 183). Athens.
- Platon, L., 1990. ‘L’urbanisme minoen. B. Espace intérieur et espace extérieur dans la ville minoenne’ in Darcque and Treuil 1990: 381–93.
- Poursat, J. -C., 1996. *Fouilles exécutées à Malia, le Quartier Mu 3. Artisans minoens: les maisons-ateliers du Quartier Mu* (Études Crétoises 32). Paris: De Boccard.
- Preziosi, D., 1983. *Minoan Architectural Design*. Berlin: Mouton Publishers.
- Rethemiotakis, G., 1993. ‘Το μινωικό «κεντρικό κτίριο» στο Καστέλλι Πεδιάδας’ *Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον* 47–8.1 (1992–93): 29–64.
- Rethemiotakis, G., 1998. *Ανθρωπομορφική πηλοπλαστική στην Κρήτη από τη Νεοανακτορική έως την Υπομινωική περίοδο* (Βιβλιοθήκη της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας 174). Athens.
- Sakellarakis, Y. and E. Sapouna-Sakellarakis, 1997. *Archanes: Minoan Crete in a New Light*. Athens: Ammos.
- Shaw, M. C., 1993. ‘The Aegean garden’ *American Journal of Archaeology* 97: 661–85.

- Televantou, C. A., 1994. *Ακρωτήρι Θήρας. Οι τοιχογραφίες της Δυτικής Οικίας* (Βιβλιοθήκη της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας 143). Athens.
- Tzachili, I., 1990. 'Τα σκουπίδια στο Ακρωτήρι. Πεπτωκότα προϊόντα και απορρίμματα σε μια αιγαιακή προϊστορική πόλη' *Αρχαιολογία* 35: 12–18.
- Van Effenterre, H., 1980. *Le palais de Mallia et la cité minoenne: étude de synthèse* (Incunabula Graeca 76). Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo.
- Warren, P. M., 1994. 'The Minoan roads of Knossos' in D. Evely, H. Hughes-Brock and N. Momigliano (eds) *Knossos: a Labyrinth of History. Papers Presented in Honour of Sinclair Hood*: 189–210. London: British School at Athens.
- Weilhartner, J., 2000. 'ἄστυ und πόλις im spät-bronzezeitlichen Griechenland und bei Homer' in F. Blakolmer (ed.) *Österreichische Forschungen zur ägäischen Bronzezeit 1998*: 217–23. Vienna: Phoibos.