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## A typology of daily movement in prehistoric Crete

### ABSTRACT

Complying with current approaches to prehistoric domesticity, this paper uses the idea of movement to explore the life of the less wealthy part of the population in Late Minoan I Crete. Through a “typology of movement” that is created for this purpose, it tests whether it is feasible to reconstruct people’s physical conscious or unintentional movement in space on empirical grounds. It reviews a number of different cases describing occurrences of everyday life including activities for subsistence, social occasions, emergencies and other, in which people would have been engaged, and concludes that the existing evidence has a quantitative and qualitative range which limits archaeological interpretation in many respects. However, a rereading of it in several instances mirrors the continuous movement of people and goods within the house. Though this appears to be common sense, it is believed that this supposition reveals the complexities of domestic and urban reality in the course of everyday life leading to its more direct perception and to a deeper understanding of how Late Bronze Age society functioned at this level as a whole.

**KEYWORDS:** Body movement, household, domesticity, daily reality, urban life, complexity, Late Minoan, Bronze Age society, Crete

### THE IDEA OF MOVEMENT WITHIN AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF INDIVIDUALS

Coinciding with the radicalization of capitalism in western society, the transition to the 21st century marked the reorientation of archaeological research from discussions of broad issues involving wide-ranging chronological and geographical data towards an ever-growing interest in the “self”. Not only in the different identities (Diaz-Andreu et al. 2005) but also in the senses, memories and body actions of past people (Hamilakis et al. 2002, Hamilakis 2004, Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2015, Mina et al. 2016), which are explored through embedded traditions, daily practices and occasionally even single incidents in archaeological environments including that of prehistory (Meskell 2000).

This general tendency is followed in the study of domestic and urban spaces alike (Parker and Foster 2012). State-of-the-art technology in the field and new tools for handling and interpreting data are employed with the aim of deducing archaeological information at the micro-level of ancient life (Matthews 2005, Ullah 2012, Tringham 2012). The current inquiry appears to be how to gain an individualized, multifaceted and sensory experience of domestic spaces in the past; an experience encompassing human acts alongside psychology within the house.

It is within the above framework that this paper considers the possibility of a more direct perception of domesticity in the case of Late Bronze Age Crete. To do so, it addresses the idea of

movement within the interior and surrounding exterior spaces of Late Minoan I (*referring mainly to the LM IB period c.1500-1450 BC*) houses of simple structure, turning the discussion to the smallest social scale, that of the household.

Excluding the traditional view of trade by which the flow of raw and end products serves as an indication of socio-economic and cultural relations, movement in prehistoric Crete has been largely explored *vis-à-vis* architecture. Recent accounts focus on the interconnectivity of spaces and features and its deeper meaning in architectural design (Letesson 2009, 2015), but other scales and dimensions of movement have been also analysed, involving, for instance, roads leading from settlements to cemeteries/sanctuaries or the mobilization of human resources who carried out construction (Devolder 2013, 2015). Movement has also attracted considerable attention in relation to the gestures of votive figurines and the gestures and movements of figures portrayed in elite iconography (Morris 2001, Murphy 2015), e.g. in ritual, worshipping and athletic scenes. In modern explanatory approaches distant from art-historian perspectives these tend to be discussed mostly for their semiotics.

In this paper, instead, movement is considered in its primary meaning. It is taken as the real bodily movement that prehistoric individuals engaged in the course of daily living, purposely or subconsciously. So viewed, it is employed as a vehicle to explore life of the less wealthy part of the population of the period that is usually associated with the smallest and plainest houses on the island.

The aim is to assess the extent to which it is possible to reconstruct the actual, physical movement of household members within urban domestic spaces of the selected type, based on the available evidence. Though the reconstruction of this physical movement alone may be of interest, it is the reasons why this could prove fruitful for the better understanding of the island's life in prehistory that matter more for the view adopted here. How far can we reconstruct in-house circulation of people in what is commonly regarded as society's private space, and indeed in one of limited size? And how could this help enliven life in the densely built, urban environment of Late Minoan I Crete? To examine the issue a brief "typology of movement" is created, whereby different types of movement are considered, using different examples of household activities, economics and hypothetical behaviour in each case. The data used is drawn from the analysis of solely ordinary houses, i.e. non-elite dwellings of any kind.

### WHAT SORT OF MOVEMENT? THE EVIDENCE

#### ROUTINE MOVEMENT

A common-sense assumption is that prehistoric people, like all people, made an array of movements on a daily basis, which were mechanical: not planned or thought of in advance, but automatic. First and foremost, there would have been movements relating to basic physical needs, such as yawning, sneezing and urination, which are not controllable by the human body. Even if they cannot be traced in the archaeological record, their existence in prehistory is apparent.

Other movements, also conjectured on the grounds of logic and impossible to discern archeologically, would have been controllable by the individual but also made without particular prior thought. Such would be the scratching of skin or the stretching of arms and legs, for example. And yet others may have comprised a routine possibly necessary for people but not relating to physical needs at all. At a minimum among those affording reconstruction, given the lack of evidence for the cultural concepts of purity and impurity in the Bronze Age and for the management of water supplies in simple domestic contexts, such acts could have been the daily cleaning of face and hands or even their washing (i.e. with the use of water).

Contrary to the above, several body movements in everyday life may be postulated with certainty. Opening and closing the house door, carrying food supplies and drinking water, throwing away or burying rotten products, feeding a domestic animal, removing and repositioning objects and furniture according to daily needs and many more would have been essential for survival, for the improvement of living conditions or simply for the facilitation of living. While many of the latter could be found to overlap in this and other categories of movement described subsequently, it is the dimension of habitual practice that is meant to be emphasized here.

The reason why it may have become a habitual process to remove small items of furniture, mattresses and bedding lying in the way, for instance, irrespective of where exactly they were placed, what precise forms they had and what materials they were made of, is because interior spaces in the houses discussed were limited and mostly all-purpose: adequate space would have been required to carry out combined household tasks. Likewise, putting on a piece of cloth may have comprised a daily routine for the less wealthy parts of the Neopalatial population, for the evidence from the houses indicates that these “strata” of the pyramid could not have afforded elaborately adorned clothes and accessories such as those shown in iconographical representations (Apostolaki 2014). Quite likely, after the night’s rest these people would put on a few clothes and begin their laborious tasks indoors and out.

#### REGULAR MOVEMENT BY PRACTICAL NECESSITY

Most ordinary household activities can be found to entail this (Fig. 1). Suffice it to analyse the commonest, food processing and cooking, an activity explored in Bronze Age Crete for the stages and practices it involved as well as its symbolic dimensions with respect to the elite environment (Isaakidou 2007) and in other contexts (Veropoulidou and Vasilakis 2009, Brogan et al. 2013, Mylona 2016). When approaching this activity from the angle of ordinary households, it is possible to reconstruct a web of movements in Late Minoan I houses and their vicinity, roughly entailing the following: before cooking their meals, the members of the household would have to find supplies, i.e. raw and secondary products from the shores, the fields and the mountains, from harbours, central markets and local points of exchange, possibly from relatives/ close/ familiar persons or neighbours, from their own storerooms and so on. Once they had gathered the necessities and before the actual cooking, they would need to process their food by means of a range of diverse movements – sorting, slicing, crushing, grinding, mixing, re-filling etc. – for each of which they would have to use, that is to grasp, hold, carry, lift, leave and so on, the respective utensils.

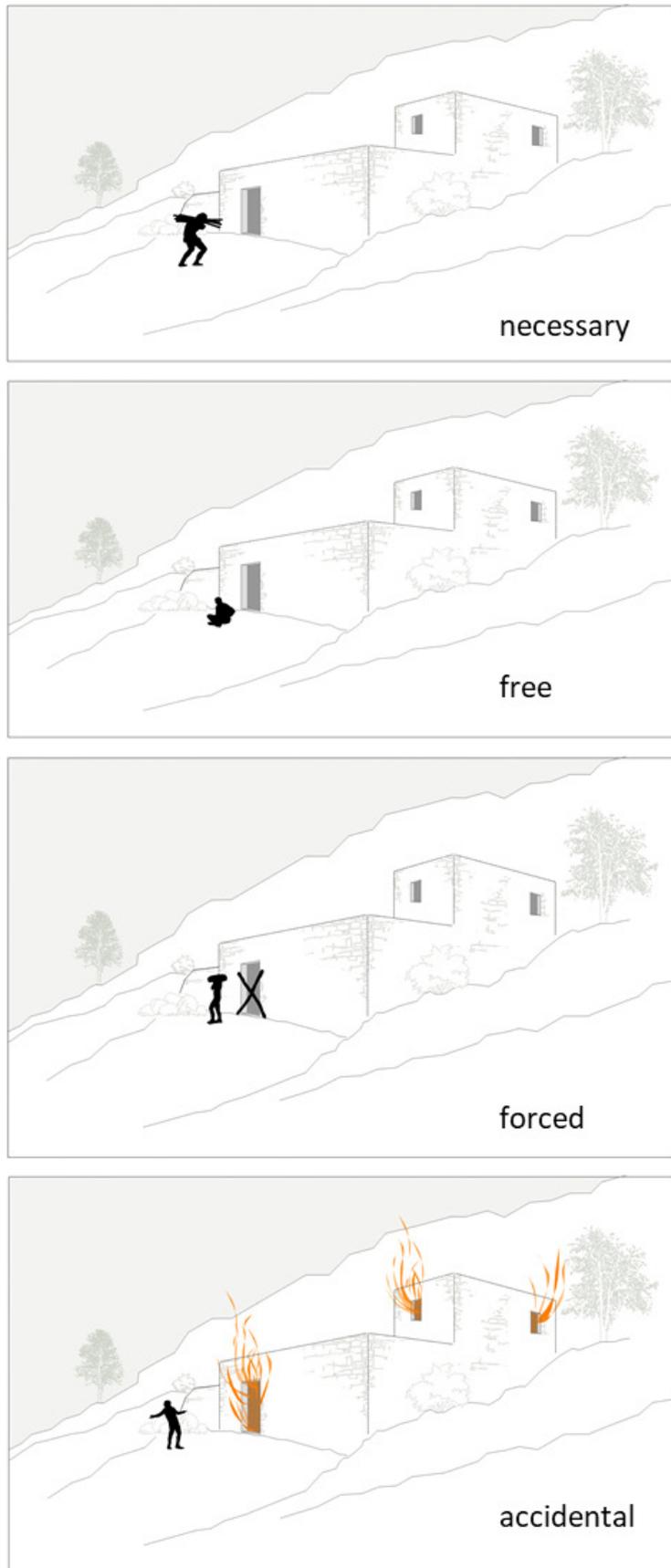


Fig. 1. Types of daily movement.

The utensils themselves, much like the rest of household equipment, would have to be acquired, too, through a number of regular actions on behalf of the household, all of which would have involved the physical movement of household members within and outside their shelters. Depending on their needs and means, they would have to exchange, carry, repair or find ways to replace the necessary items. Although we cannot estimate how many people would have been engaged regularly in the supply mechanisms of Late Minoan I towns or how these mechanisms would have operated regionally and inter-regionally during this period (though now Whitelaw in press) and even what the term regular may have meant in practice, judging by the excavation picture we can ascertain that the products ended up in the houses. So, they moved.

Following the same line of argument, most utilitarian objects found in domestic assemblages can be thought of as the product of regular movement, which was driven by practical necessity – be it a loom weight, a sewing needle or a stone tool. And if a loom weight made of clay and, even more, a bronze needle may not have been acquired by ordinary households frequently, their cheap equivalents (of perishable materials) would still have to be found.

#### SEASONAL MOVEMENT

In some instances of household life, movement would have been seasonal or periodical in less frequent time spans. Bringing into the discussion the parameter of nature as one allowing the reconstruction of physical movement in prehistory, it is reasonable to assume that specific tasks would have been undertaken following specific agricultural activities. Certain commodities would have to be gathered and transferred into house interiors at certain times of the year, processed adequately within a given time and eventually placed (hung, strewn, left to dry, etc.) somewhere for short- or long-term storage. If the houses included a storeroom and if the storeroom contained storage jars, none of which should be taken for granted for the category of houses discussed (Christakis 2008, 109), they would have to be placed or poured in them, again at defined time spans. The term commodity should be taken to mean not only the main agricultural products of the prehistoric Cretan diet (olive oil, pulses, etc.), but also the array of raw goods that would have been exploited for their therapeutic and other qualities, such as wild herbs, roots, leaves, shells, seaweed, etc., all of which would have to be collected and procured accordingly.

A similar case may have been that of weaving, a sophisticated and complicated activity, on which much has been written, again mostly excluding excavation data from ordinary domestic contexts. Because of its association with the cycle of nature, i.e. the shearing season, as well as the labour it required in all its stages, it is likely that it would have been a seasonal activity in prehistory, if not infrequent regarding the part of the Neopalatial population here considered (Apostolaki 2014). The number of physical movements involved in its practice has been analysed comprehensively in research (Τζαχίλη 1997, Gillis and Nosch 2007).

Periodical movement can be hypothesised for various other periodical and/or seasonal domestic activities, some only indirectly related to the cycle of nature. For example, repairs to the structure of the house, e.g. laying new floors or sealing holes in the roof, would have to be done before winter and rainfall periods as well as whenever the respective needs emerged.

Or the mending of clothing and equipment of organic materials (basketry, mats, etc.), whose fragile nature leaves scarce or indirect traces, yet the value of materials in prehistory and the work required to produce them make it probable that households would have engaged in these tasks systematically, as is commonly the case in preindustrial societies.

#### MOVEMENT BY CHOICE

How free were people to move inside houses? With few exceptions, the type of Late Minoan I domestic structure which provides the dataset for this analysis lacks internal divisions for specialized functions (McEnroe 1982). Though in general their plan complies with the principles of prehistoric Cretan architecture, the limited size of most of their interior spaces would have restrained physical movement considerably and indeed in some cases impressively by modern (Western) standards. So, too, would have the lack of ground floor doorways to rooms, and thus easy access to them, a distinctive and relatively frequent feature of this architectural category. Whether movement would have been experienced as pleasant or not in these cases cannot be answered, being a derivative of social and personal perception of space.

Because of the lack of compartmentalization, functions were merged in house interiors, at least the basic ones for household subsistence. This multi-functionalism was probably dictated by practical factors, the restricted means of the associated inhabitants together with the density of habitation, occasioning over the course of time limited dwelling space in Late Minoan I towns (McEnroe 2001, 65 and Buell and McEnroe 2017 for the continuous rebuilding of Pseira and Gournia respectively).

From a different angle, nonetheless relevant to the topic discussed, multi-functionalism might well have resulted in a situation whereby people would have been able to choose where, when and how to move: for the diverse household activities, demanding and petty daily tasks, for sewing and repairs, for hygiene and private worship, to rest, to think and to talk, household members in this type of house would have had to use not separate rooms, but separate areas within the same rooms (Apostolaki 2014). These are the areas or spots of the house that would feel pleasing or convenient, that would evoke memories, advice or orders by elders and would facilitate contact or seclusion depending on people's physique and physical condition, their habits, preferences and even momentary feelings (Fig. 1). All the above cannot be visualized but through the continuous movement of bodies, heads and hands in house interiors in a seemingly free living environment.

#### MOVEMENT ON DEMAND

In yet other cases, movement would not have been chosen of one's free will, but would have been instructed by others. Such may have been the norm of life in the case of another type of household encountered in the urban network of the period, that of specialized and/ or professional character maintaining workshop-dwellings. It is not hard to envisage that younger or new members of a workshop, related or not, and actual apprentices in it would have to meet the demands of a skilled master, in effect to carry the heavy burden. An array of physical movements can be assumed under these working conditions, ranging from provisioning of supplies, to all

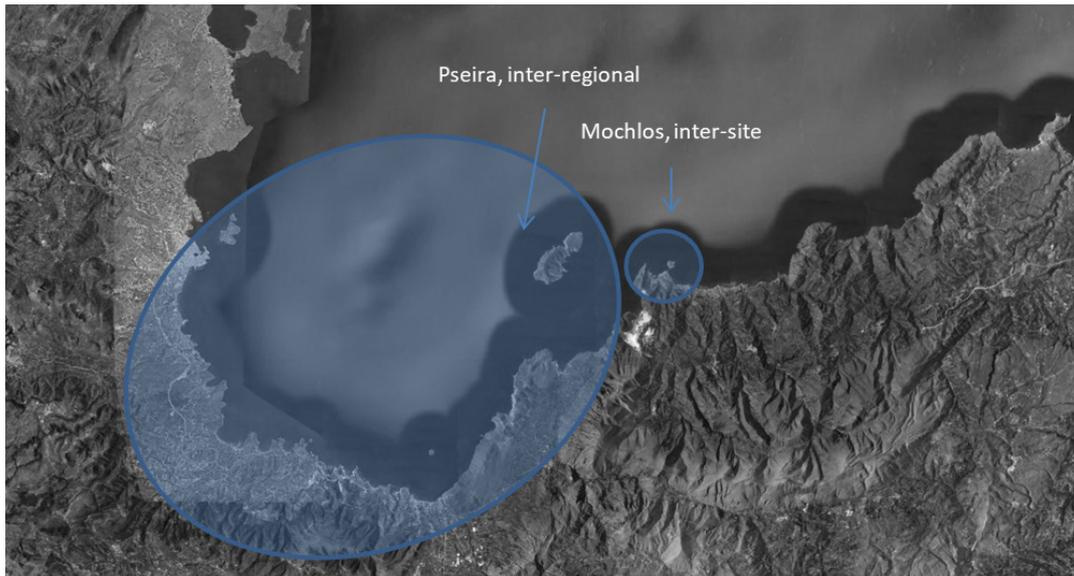


Fig. 2. Circulation of bulk pottery for everyday use. Referring only to locally produced coarsewares, as both sites have produced pottery from other regions as well as distant locations (sources of data: Day 1997, Barnard and Brogan 2011).

secondary or auxiliary parts of the production process, cleaning of working spaces, transferring of end products to points of interest, etc. (Fig. 2). In these instances, movement would have been not only laborious but also lengthy, following the standardized sequences and intervals required for the practice of each craft.

But even in the normal domestic life of the average Late Minoan I household, discriminations on the grounds of age, status and sex may have demarcated the spheres of daily action in house interiors for household members individually. The absence of empirical supporting evidence here is compensated for by the abundant examples provided by household studies as well as the relevant historical and anthropological literature cross-culturally (Janowski 1995, Whitelaw 1994). These suggest that the answer to the above question may be negative. Would younger members of a household be allowed to use all domestic areas at will, especially during intensive household activity and while struggling for day-to-day subsistence?

#### MOVEMENT FOR LEISURE AND SOCIALIZING

Albeit traditionally viewed as the opposite, the humble Neopalatial houses were not mere shelters for protection. They incorporated complex realities combining productive activities with social or socio-ritual events, as would be logical to expect and as the evidence suggests (Fig. 3). In many domestic contexts, fine ware pottery for drinking and serving as well as ritual vessels are found side by side with their plain and coarse equivalents, even if at lower percentages or fragmentary.

On the grounds of the same line of evidence employed for the interpretation of elite feasting, namely the presence of higher-quality tableware among the total retrieved in a context, it appears that in common houses alike there were occasions where the use of the available household

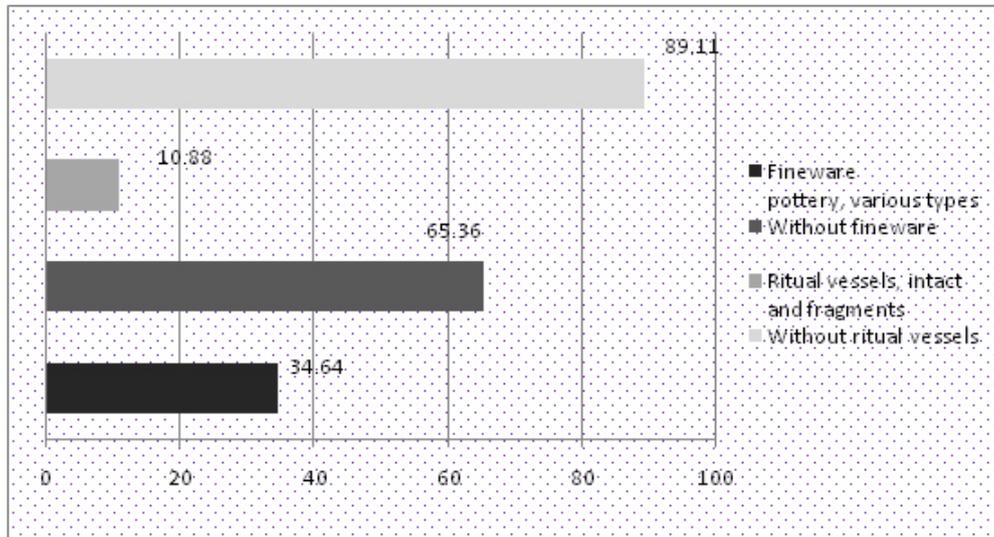


Fig. 3. Evidence (%) for socio-ritual life in 147 houses of East Crete (source of data: Αποστολάκη 2014).

equipment would have to be differentiated (Apostolaki 2014). Although we cannot evaluate the extent, the frequency and the purposes of these social gatherings, as the relevant quantified data is pending, suffice it to imagine cups, bowls and dining sets being carried around and people intermingling in house interiors on the scale and measures of the population considered here.

But physical movement driven by the human need to socialize need not have existed only on special occasions. Being a coalition of individuals, the household would have encouraged socialization of its members through their practical daily encounters and collaboration to carry out planned and unpredicted tasks. Naturally, neither the relations of the household members would have been exclusively good nor their teamwork necessarily always successful. The social dimension of house life is, however, empirically supported: some of the stone furnishings found in Late Minoan I houses placed near main entrances and against exterior walls possibly functioned as spots where people met, rested and did housework (McEnroe 2001, 53) before entering or leaving their houses again.

#### MOVEMENT IN EMERGENCY

In everyday life accidents occur. People fall down, hit, cut and hurt themselves; they fall sick or die unexpectedly. Houses catch fire, belongings get lost and natural phenomena (floods, earthquakes, etc.) cause destruction to urban environments, bringing about changes to house plans, house life and often household structure. The evidence relating to this type of physical movement is negative. Unless we uncover human skeletons with marks of injuries inside a house, for instance, we have no means of documenting the accidents, deaths or births that may have occurred in ordinary houses. Even so, we can assume that these incidents befell in the course of Neopalatial time randomly, following people's biological cycle and nature's will. And, a step further, that such incidents would have sped or delayed people's daily movement in domestic and urban spaces accordingly, while they reacted to the unforeseen (Fig. 1).

## FORCED MOVEMENT

Finally, there must have been occasions of forced movement, meaning when the entire household or part of it would have been urged to move out of the house for long periods of time or permanently. This certainly concerned cases like merchants, seafarers and itinerant craftsmen, whose occupation necessitated moving, but also anyone compelled to move for purposes of subsistence, e.g. as labour force.

Forced movement may also have been driven by factors exceeding what an average household could possibly control. In times of social unrest, like the presumed socio-political conditions of the end of the Late Minoan I period, individual households may have been incapable of safeguarding their material and perhaps even physical reproduction, and therefore their own existence (Fig. 1). According to the evidence, some households decided to secure the main entrances of their houses, while leaving them permanently, and others to hide their precious belongings. This is indicated respectively by the number of door blockings attested at houses of this form (Apostolaki 2014) and by some of the bronze hoards which have been found in Neopalatial towns and interpreted as purposeful acts of haste and fear (Hawes et al. 1908, 23) among others (Soles 2008). Likewise, the unbalanced percentages of the Late Minoan I excavated domestic structures preserving or lacking destruction layers with or without traces of burning (Christakis 2011, 215-217) suggest that a few households apparently abandoned their shelters in an organized manner leaving little behind, whereas many more possibly did so in a rush, while their houses were on fire.

## SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE: LINKING BODY MOVEMENTS WITH DOMESTIC AND URBAN COMPLEXITY

Because the cases presented above are not associated with palatial/elite, ritual or burial contexts, still the main focus of interest of archaeological research in Bronze Age Crete, several complications stand in the way when attempting interpretation. The environment they refer to, pertaining perhaps to the majority of Neopalatial population as known from the surviving record so far, is being studied more intensively in recent years following the introduction of anthropologically-inspired questions into research on prehistoric living on the island. Despite this work and as with other aspects of the household in Cretan prehistory (e.g. the limited published quantified data for artefacts from closed contexts, the limited analytical data for floor deposits and especially for organic materials of all kinds from sealed deposits), much is yet needed for an in-depth analysis of movement.

In addition, the very nature of the topic discussed, the idea of bodily movement, entails methodological risks for any explanatory approach in prehistory that is not based on the analysis of skeletal remains or iconography. Particularly for one which abides by the critical assessment of the existing data and does not strive to strengthen argumentation by means of general speculations or comparisons with other, non-ordinary contemporary contexts, where remains are easier to interpret than in the case of settlements densely built and rebuilt over time. With additional support from the outcome of previous research (Αποστολάκη 2013, Apostolaki 2014), the hypotheses formulated above have been systematically filtered for their potential empirical ground. Given this, it is exemplified that the reconstruction of people's daily movement in space

<b>Movement</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Routine, organic needs	?
Routine, practical needs	●
Regular for subsistence	●
Seasonal	●
Free	?
For leisure/ socializing	●
Demanded	?
Because of emergency	?
Forced	●

Fig. 4. Summary of empirical evidence for physical movement.

in the case of Late Minoan I Crete is feasible, even if the relevant evidence ranges from sufficient and sound to entirely negative (Fig. 4). Succinctly, a rereading of it mirrors the continuous movement of people and goods within the house.

This conclusion, otherwise logical or expected, is significant, for it adds to our view of the so routinely mentioned and still so little understood daily life in the Bronze Age. The only parts of population who can be associated with any factual notion of domesticity in this period, are the understudied “commoners” of the island. It is to this part of society that we need to turn so as to comprehend the many dimensions of everyday reality, and it is there that the actual complexities of Bronze Age society are hidden: in the acts, reactions, and web of relations of these people.

Behind every movement that was made for purposes of subsistence there was a network which ensured the production and provisioning of goods to the consuming households, whether agro-pastoral products or utilitarian artefacts. For every movement made for the same purpose but by a single individual in the absence of the respective network, say a merchant carrying his load, a farmer visiting his field and so on, there is an economic behaviour to be interpreted that relates to specific household choices as well as to broader socio-economic conditions.

Movements made repetitively in a particular area of a house, e.g. a vestibule, for practical reasons, to cook, to repair a basket or to dig a rubbish pit, suggest that the resident social group had an established view of how domestic space should be organized and used. Seasonal domestic activities, such as the transfer and storage of crops or repairing house walls and roofs, indicate a joint effort on behalf of the household, which presupposed planning and co-ordination, even if

it was carried out by household members alone or in this case possibly on a limited scale. They thereby reveal an aspect of how house life was organized. And movements acted out in order to cover socio-ritual needs, such as acquiring and using rhyta or better-quality tableware than the average household equipment, reflect which aspects of the existing social codes may have been prioritized by a household or by which or how many households of the specific type discussed within Late Minoan I society and why.

As countless similar examples could be listed demonstrating the extension of household behaviour and practice beyond the strict limits of private space and into the wider ones of the surrounding community, it becomes evident why the exploration of as an unusual topic as bodily movement can prove fruitful. Much like any other (sensory or otherwise) alternative approach to the past material record, provided that issues of methodology are taken into account, it unfolds an array of possibilities for new interpretations, which bring forth a more direct and indeed more complete picture of the Bronze Age society of Crete.

Before taking for granted that life in the island was driven only by the desires of the elite, and rather than assuming that conclusions are trivial or based on common sense, we should perhaps turn to the evidence with more sensitivity and attempt to reconstruct life by apprehending simply what there is to see. In the case of prehistoric Crete, including both old and new excavations, there appears to be a lot.

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