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## Diachronic architectural fashions among the elite: A repeated Prepalatial plan and later comparanda

### ABSTRACT

This study examines a repeated plan of rooms that is defined here, consisting of a broadly rectangular room with an adjacent corridor-shaped room; clear examples have been published from the southern rooms of the West House at Agia Triada (EM IIA), rooms 39 and 39 $\alpha$  and the southern portion of corridor A in the Red House at Vasiliki (EM IIB), and the southernmost rooms in the South Front House at Knossos (EM III), with a similar plan in 'House' A at Knossos (MM IA). In addition to their shared plan, the earlier three of these suites also display regularities in their orientations, proportions, locations, and socio-economic distribution.

These Prepalatial suites share similarities with later Lustral Basins in their plans, proportions, socio-economic distribution, frequency among contemporary elite rooms, and relative energy expenditure in their building methods. The Prepalatial suites might also have achieved a differentiation of levels relative to the floors of surrounding rooms like that distinctive to the sunken Lustral Basins, but by different building methods. 'House' A at Knossos may preserve a transitional stage in a series of changes in architectural fashion linking Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites to later Lustral Basins. A diachronic series of changes in the plans, building methods, sizes, and positions of these rooms is traced from the Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites through Proto- and Neopalatial Lustral Basins to the late Neopalatial level Bathrooms.

Elite Proto- and Neopalatial houses are well documented as an arena for social emulation and competition and were subject to resultant changes in fashion. This study expands the evidence for such competition through stylistic changes in elite houses during the Prepalatial era to include the broad-room-and-corridor suites defined here. This in turn provides evidence for the dating of the emergence of increasing social complexity in Prepalatial Crete.

KEYWORDS: Prepalatial architecture, Lustral Basin

This study documents the expression of elite self-identification and emulation in domestic architecture during the Prepalatial era, through examination of a repeated plan of rooms that is defined here. This plan consists of a broadly rectangular room with an adjacent corridor-shaped room; in addition to their shared plan, these suites also display regularities in the orientations and proportions of the rooms, in the types of houses in which they occur, in their locations within their houses, and in their potential to have supported upper-story constructions. Proto- and Neopalatial Lustral Basins or Minoan *adyta* resemble the broad rooms in these Prepalatial suites in their proportions, distribution in social strata, and frequency of occurrence among

contemporary types of rooms, and may therefore evidence the subsequent continuity and changes in the architectural fashion of this room-type.

### PREPALATIAL BROAD-ROOM-AND-CORRIDOR SUITES

Three groups of Prepalatial rooms illustrate this plan clearly: they are the southern rooms in the West House at Agia Triada, rooms 39 and 39α and the southern portion of corridor A in the Red House at Vasiliki, and the southernmost rooms in the South Front House at Knossos. A fourth Prepalatial suite, 'House' A beneath the central Kouloura in the West Court at Knossos, shares their basic plan, but differs from them in other features. These four groups of rooms were built successively in each Prepalatial sub-period from EM II through the end of the era: EM IIA (Agia Triada), EM IIB (Vasiliki), EM III (Knossos, the South Front House), and MM IA (Knossos, 'House' A).

The common features of the three earlier and most similar examples of these rooms may be summarized briefly.

- As indicated by the label given them here, the plans of broad-room-and-corridor suites are their most distinctive shared characteristic; they consist of one relatively large room, broadly rectangular in plan, and at least one adjacent narrow rectangular space resembling a corridor
  - The proportions of length to width in the broad rooms range from nearly square to 2:1.
  - The broad rooms are, moreover, the largest single spaces without internal roof-supports in their houses.
  - In the two examples of these three broad-room-and-corridor suites with a single corridor-shaped space (the West House at Ayia Triada and the South Front House at Knossos), the long axis of the corridor is north-south.
  - In the one example with 2 corridor-shaped spaces (the Red House at Vasiliki), the north-south corridor (the southern part of Corridor A) appears original to the plan with walls that bond at the corners, while the east-west corridor (39α) is defined by a non-bonding wall and may have been a later addition to the plan, subdividing an originally larger broad room.
  - The corridor-shaped spaces are found on every side of the broad room except the north, where the hall is located in these three examples.
- These three Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites also share regularities in position:
  - They are located in elite houses, identified on factors other than the presence of a broad-room-and-corridor plan, including the relatively large size of the building as a whole, an elite type of Prepalatial hall, and elite construction techniques that may have supported an upper story, found in rooms other than the broad-room-and-corridor suite itself, especially the halls.
  - The broad-room-and-corridor suite is adjacent to and south of the elite Prepalatial hall.
- Walls with enhanced load-bearing capacity could have supported upper-story constructions above the suites, although those walls are not of uniform construction or plan.

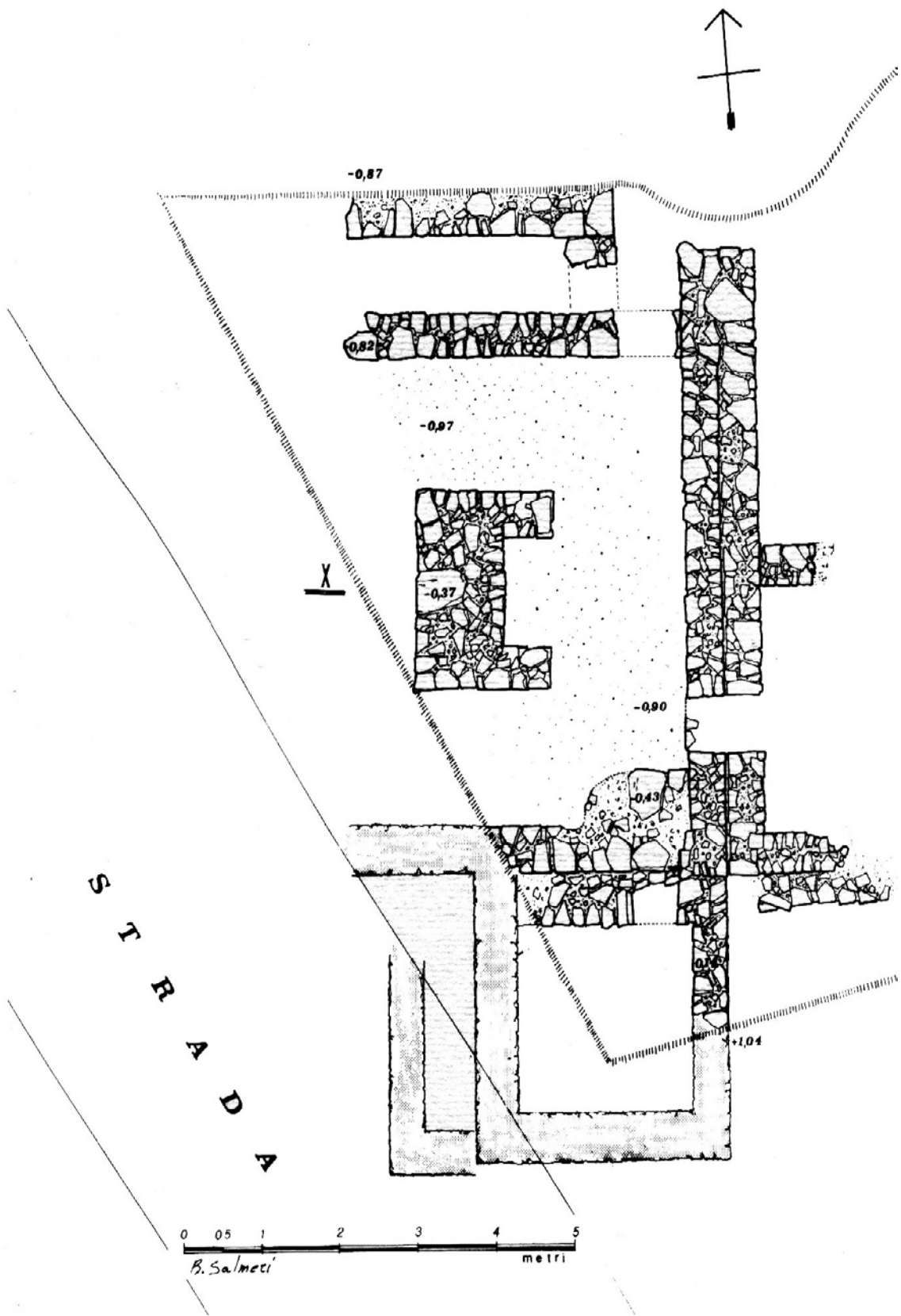


Fig. 1. Ayia Triada: West House. From *Creta Antica* 1984, fig. 273.  
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#### 4 ΠΕΠΡΑΓΜΕΝΑ ΙΒ' ΔΙΕΘΝΟΥΣ ΚΡΗΤΟΛΟΓΙΚΟΥ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟΥ

- In the West House at Ayia Triada and the Red House at Vasiliki, (EM IIA and EM IIB in date, respectively) the walls with enhanced load-bearing capacity are parallel adjacent walls.
  - In the West House at Ayia Triada the parallel adjacent wall is only on the northern side of the broad room between that room and the hall.
  - In the Red House at Vasiliki most of the preserved walls surrounding the broad-room-and-corridor suite are of parallel adjacent construction, as are most of the internal walls of the suite except that dividing the second corridor, 39α, from the remaining broad room, 39.
- In the South Front House at Knossos (dated to EM III), the walls of the broad room and corridor suite are among the widest in its house, and the possible remains of the southern wall of this suite and house were built with larger stones than most of the other walls.

Broad-room-and-corridor suites are the second most common type of room in elite Prepalatial houses, after the elite hall; nevertheless, not every elite Prepalatial house includes a broad-room-and-corridor suite, which therefore appears to have been an optional set of rooms. Unlike, for example, elite Prepalatial halls, the broad-room-and-corridor suites have no functional equivalent in vernacular houses that I am able to recognize.

While these three examples of EM II-III broad-room-and-corridor suites share the features of plan, proportions, and orientation outlined above, they are nevertheless not identical, and some details of the plans and fixtures are unique to a particular group of rooms. Of particular note are a niche located in the northern wall of the broad room in the West House at Aghia Triada (Laviosa 1969-70, 407), which is the southern portion of a pair of parallel adjacent walls; and a deep shaft (Seager 1907, 118-120; Ζώης 1972, 283; Ζώης 1976, 119-120), found filled with later pottery, that occupies the doorway connecting the broad room 39 to the southern portion of Corridor A in the Red House at Vasiliki, whose construction has been interpreted as contemporary with that of the surrounding rooms.

#### 'HOUSE' A AT KNOSSOS IN COMPARISON TO EARLIER PREPALATIAL BROAD-ROOM-AND-CORRIDOR SUITES

The only feature that 'House' A at Knossos shares with the earlier three examples of broad-room-and-corridor suites is its plan; it consists of one broadly rectangular room and a narrower rectangular one, with its longer axis east-west, adjacent to the southern side of the broader room. A doorway connects the larger room and the corridor-like space in 'House' A at Knossos, as in the broad-room-and-corridor suite in the Red House at Vasiliki, but unlike those in the West House at Ayia Triada and the South Front House at Knossos. The well to the north of 'House' A at Knossos might be compared to the deep shaft in the doorway between the broad room, 39, and the eastern corridor-shaped space, A, in the Red House at Vasiliki.

'House' A at Knossos, however, differs significantly from the earlier broad-room-and-corridor suites in several respects, including its basic building technique of having been dug into the tell with a staircase from unexplored adjacent rooms at a higher elevation to the east. It could not have been located directly to the south of an elite hall, whose location is unknown, unlike

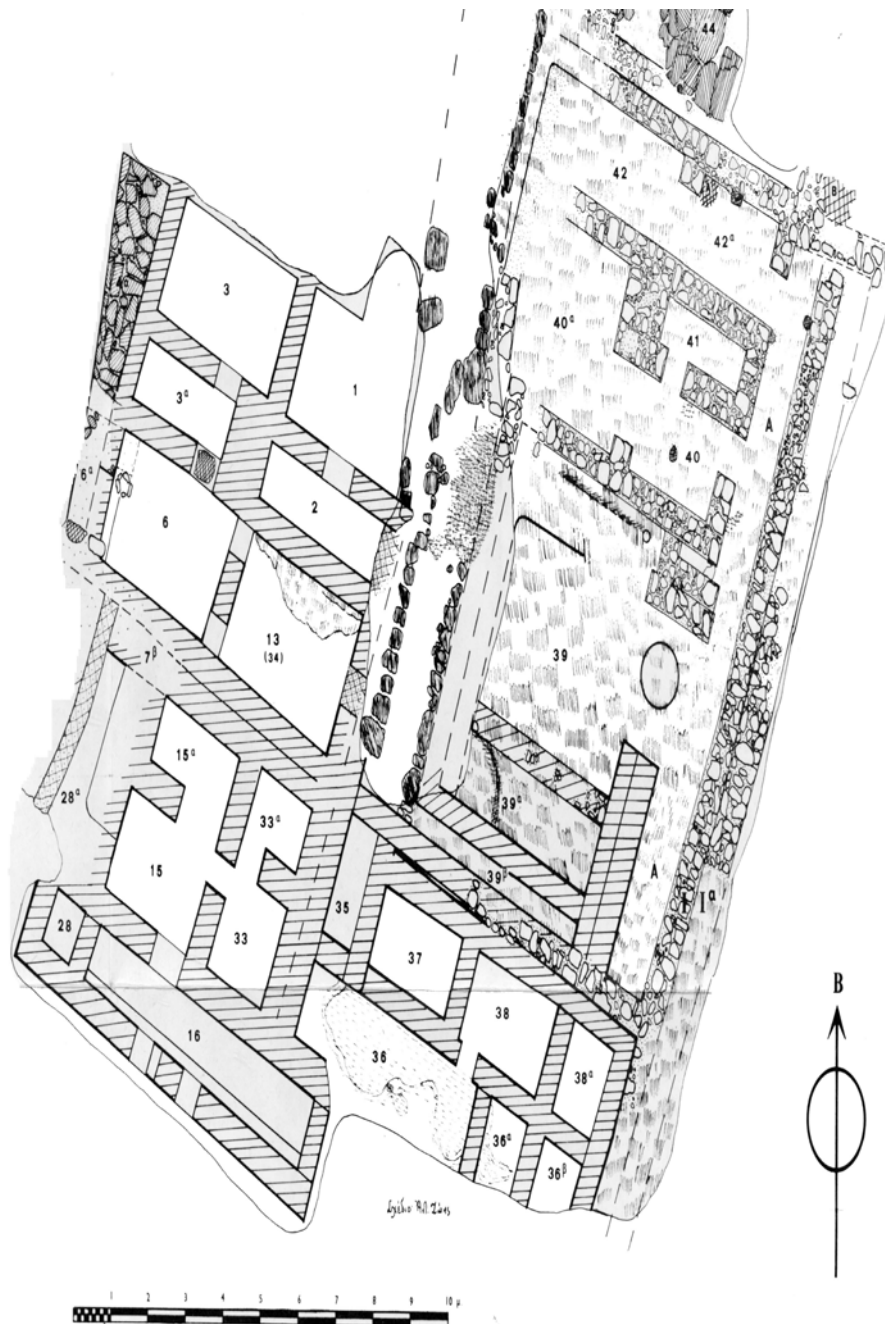


Fig. 2. Vasiliki: Red House. From Ζώης 1976, plan IX.  
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the earlier examples of this type of room. 'House' A at Knossos is uniquely plastered and painted among Prepalatial suites of this type with several unique features in the plaster floor of the larger room (the plastered stairs themselves, the central hollow, and the corner defined by ridges of plaster), and the smaller room is wider in proportion to its length than the corridors in any earlier broad-room-and-corridor suite. 'House' A at Knossos has parallels to later Proto- and

Neopalatial Lustral Basins, especially the Protopalatial Lustral Basin in House A in Quartier Mu at Mallia, and may suggest further associations of the Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites.

#### 'HOUSE' A AT KNOSSOS IN COMPARISON WITH PROTO- AND NEOPALATIAL LUSTRAL BASINS OR ADYTA

The similarities of 'House' A at Knossos to Proto- and Neopalatial Lustral Basins include its excavation into the matrix of the tell (Gesell 1985, 22), the entrance via a staircase (McEnroe 1982, 5; Driessen 1982, 27; Gesell 1985, 22; Rutkowski 1986, 131; Nordfeldt 1987, 187-188 n. 5) and the doglegged plan of that staircase (Gesell 1985, 22), and the lining of all preserved floors and walls with a decorative surface treatment (Gesell 1985, 22; Rutkowski 1986, 131 and 132-133 Table III column 7),<sup>1</sup> in this case painted plaster (Gesell 1985, 22; Rutkowski 1986, 131 and 132-133 Table III column 7); in addition, the plastered hollow in the center of the larger room in 'House' A at Knossos has been compared to 'tables of offering,' which have sometimes been found in association with Lustral Basins (Rutkowski 1986, 133 Table III column 13(b)).<sup>2</sup> Additional similarities of 'House' A at Knossos to the Lustral Basin in House A in Quartier Mu at Mallia are the relatively large sizes of these Pre- and Protopalatial rooms compared to Neopalatial basins<sup>3</sup> and the projection of the staircases beyond the line of the wall of the basin rather than turning parallel to one of those walls.

#### SIMILARITIES OF PREPALATIAL BROAD-ROOM-AND-CORRIDOR SUITES TO PROTO- AND NEOPALATIAL LUSTRAL BASINS

These similarities of 'House' A at Knossos to Prepalatial broad-rooms-and-corridor-suites on the one hand and to Proto- and Neopalatial Lustral Basins on the other point out resemblances between the Prepalatial broad rooms and later Lustral Basins in their plans, proportions, socio-economic distribution, and position within the hierarchy of frequency among contemporary elite rooms. In addition, the relative energy expenditure in their building methods is also comparable, although the actual form of those elite building techniques differs greatly from one to another; in addition, their three-dimensional elevations might also have been more functionally similar than they initially appear. The predictable position of the earlier Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites within their houses, adjacent to and south of the elite halls, is, however, not paralleled among Proto- and Neopalatial Lustral Basins, nor, indeed, is this regularity repeated by the latest possible example of a Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suite, 'House' A at Knossos.

<sup>1</sup> See also the lengthy discussion of the gypsum veneer with which many Neopalatial Lustral Basins were lined, and whether it would have been damaged by contact with water (Graham 1987, 99 and 266-267, with earlier references).

<sup>2</sup> A libation table in the Lustral Basin in Maison E at Mallia is catalogued by Gesell (1985, 108-110) as well as a "plaster table with cupule [and] a terracotta offering table in the anteroom" (Gesell 1985, 112; Poursat and Schmid 1992, 38) from the Lustral Basin in House A of Quartier Mu at the same site; the offering tables from rooms near Lustral Basins in the palace at Phaistos are mentioned by Platon (1967, 243-244).

<sup>3</sup> The excavator has published the dimensions of room I4 in House A in Quartier Mu at Mallia as 3.90 × 2.75 and had noted its "très grandes dimensions" for this type of room (Poursat and Schmid 1992, 38), larger than those of any Neopalatial Lustral Basin (Rutkowski 1986, 132-133 Table III column 4.) The larger room in Prepalatial House A at Knossos is larger still on each side than Protopalatial room I4 in House A in Quartier Mu at Mallia, as are two other Prepalatial broad rooms (combined room 39-39α in the Red House at Vasiliki and the South Front House at Knossos.)

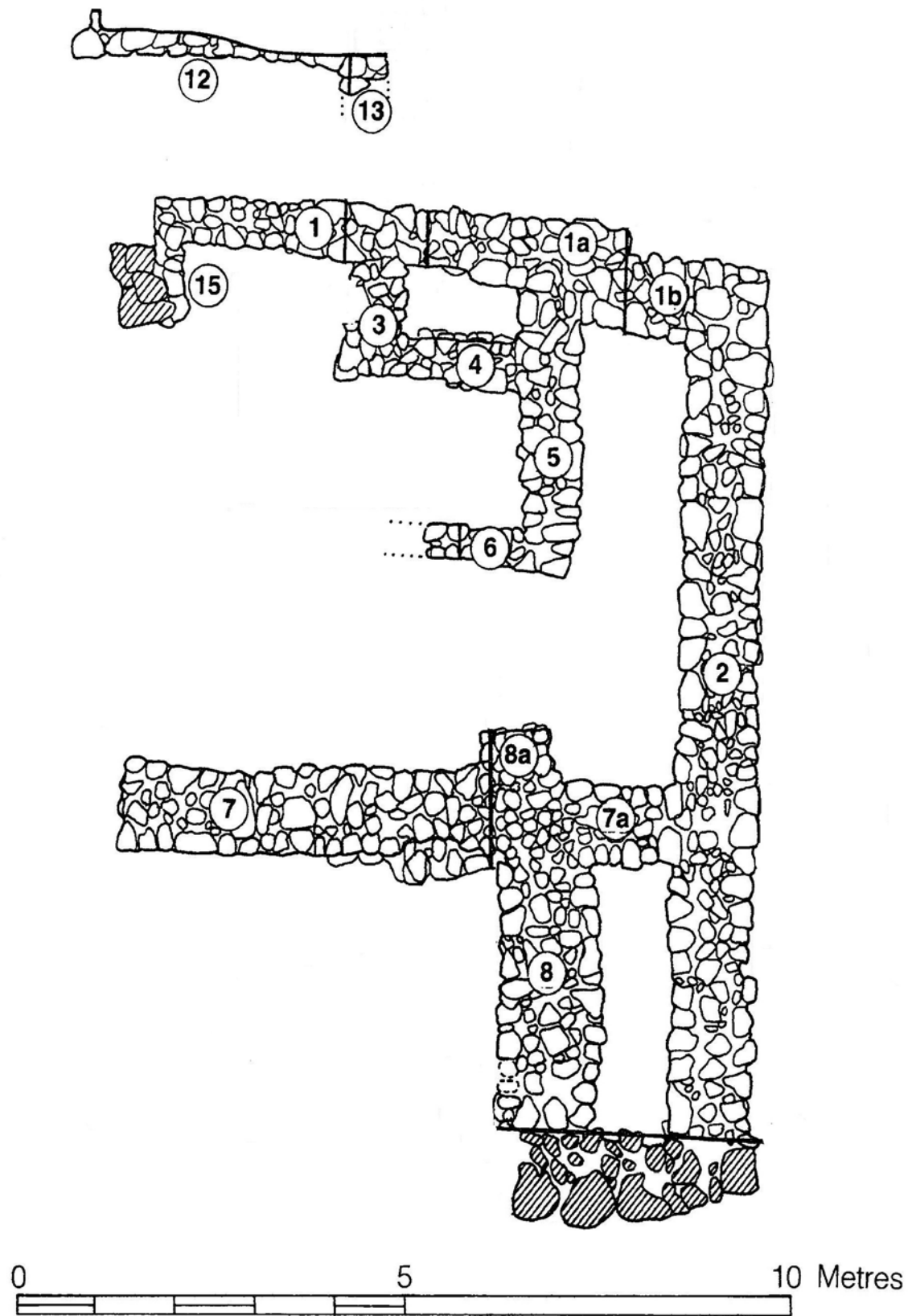


Fig. 3. Knossos: South Front House. From Momigliano and Wilson 1995, fig. 5. Reproduced with permission of the British School at Athens.

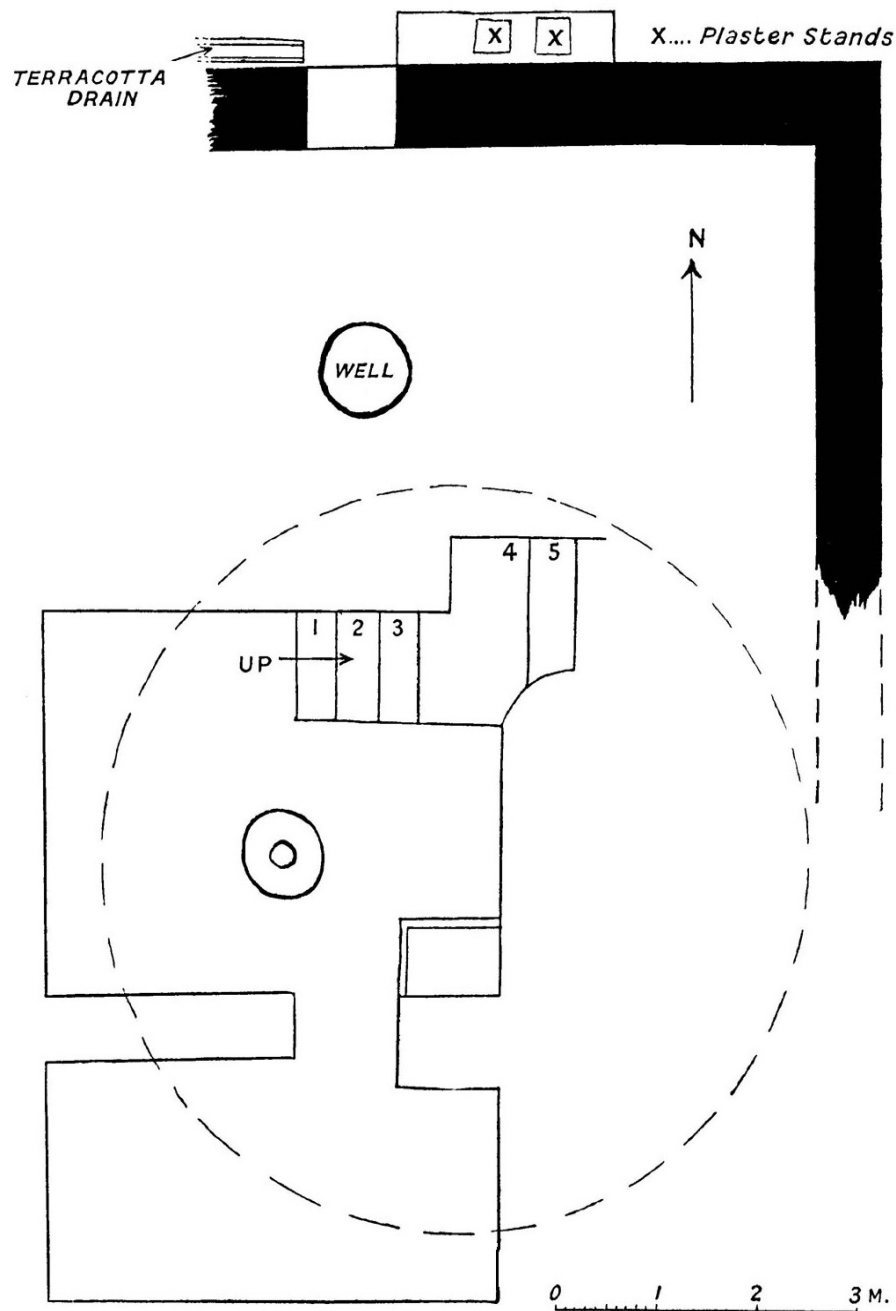


Fig. 4. Knossos: 'House' A. From Pendlebury and Pendlebury 1928-30, fig. 2.  
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The proportions of the basins in Neopalatial Lustral Basins resemble those of the rectangular broad rooms within Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites; both range from nearly square to somewhat more than twice as long as they are wide. Like Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites, Lustral Basins are found in some but not all elite houses (Klahr 2011, 1-2; McEnroe 1982, 5, 9, and 18 Table 1)<sup>4</sup> during the Neopalatial period and have no recognized equivalent in

<sup>4</sup> In addition to their occurrence in elite Neopalatial houses, Lustral Basins are also found in the Residential Quarters



contemporary vernacular houses. Both Lustral Basins (McEnroe 1982, 18 Table 1) and broad-room-and-corridor suites are, moreover, the second most frequent types of elite rooms after the chronologically current variants of the elite Minoan hall.

Broad-room-and-corridor suites and Lustral Basins present additional possible similarities in features in which they appear superficially to differ. The building methods used in the construction of these types of rooms differed in form from each other but were similar in relative energy expenditure; Proto- and Neopalatial Lustral Basins, as well as the latest possible example of a broad-room-and-corridor suite ('House' A at Knossos), were excavated below the level of the adjacent ground-story rooms in their houses, "in some cases ... cut into bedrock" (Gesell 1985, 22) – a laborious construction technique – while the parallel adjacent walls and walls with larger building stones associated with EM II–III broad-room-and-corridor suites would have required at least twice as much labor to construct as ordinary house walls. None of these building methods was used extensively in contemporary vernacular houses.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, just as broad-room-and-corridor suites and Lustral Basins were constructed with different techniques but with similarly increased expenditure of energy, so also their elevations are divergent but have the structural potential for similar differentials in floor levels. The sunken floor of the basin relative to the other rooms on the ground story of their houses is the most striking characteristic of Lustral Basins, and is among the first features cited in virtually all definitions of this room type (e.g. Graham 1977, 110; McEnroe 1982, 5; Driessen 1982, 27; Gesell 1985, 22; Rutkowski 1986, 15 and 131; Nordfeldt 1987, 187-188 n. 5; Hitchcock 2000, 160), but is not documented in EM II-III broad-room-and-corridor suites.<sup>6</sup> Viewed more broadly as a differential in the floor levels between the basins and the immediately bordering rooms, however, this distinctive feature of Proto- and Neopalatial Lustral Basins might have been shared with EM II-III broad-room-and-corridor suites, where a differential in floor levels could have been achieved by second-story structures supported above the adjacent Prepalatial elite halls (the most consistent location for construction techniques with enhanced load-bearing capacity) and above some of the corridors of the broad-room-and-corridor suites rather than by lower floors in the broad rooms. In this hypothetical elevation for broad-room-and-corridor suites, the broad rooms would have been the functional equivalents of later Lustral Basins with ceilings

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of the palaces, which strongly resemble contemporary elite houses (McEnroe 1982, 5) and also in other parts of the palaces: see Graham 1977, 124-125 (with earlier references); Nordfeldt 1987, 188; and Hitchcock 2000, 177-181.

<sup>5</sup> On the uncommon and unsystematic use of parallel adjacent walls in vernacular Prepalatial houses, see Hershenson 2011, 69. For differences in the expenditure of effort to level a building site for vernacular and elite houses during the Neopalatial period, see Fotou 1990, 67-72; McEnroe 1990, 199.

<sup>6</sup> None of the levels of the floors of the broad rooms have been published; the floor of that room in the West House at Agia Triada was not reached in the first year of excavation (Laviosa 1969-70, 407) and was not mentioned in the subsequent excavation report (Laviosa 1972-73, 511-512), and in both the Red House at Vasiliki (Zώης 1972, 280; see also the elevation on the plan published by Sinos 1970, Abb. 1) and the South Front house at Knossos (Momigliano and Wilson 1996, 47-48 and 49 Fig. 28 Section F-F'), excavation in the early twentieth century had cut through the floors of the broad rooms in the broad-room-and-corridor suites, whose elevations and relationship to surrounding floor levels are therefore unclear; in the latter building, the relatively deep foundations of the southern walls in the northern rooms hypothesized by the most recent excavators in their "Conjectural level of EM III South Front House" allow the possibility that the floor in the southernmost broad-room-and-corridor suite had been at a lower level than that suggested in the adjacent elite hall (Momigliano and Wilson 1996, 11 Fig. 6 Section H-H'.)

presumably at the same level as those above the upper stories over the corridors and adjacent halls, while the adjacent corridors would have had a role similar to that of the anterooms to Lustral Basins.<sup>7</sup> An upper-story balustrade could have separated the upper-story rooms above the corridors and/or halls from the open space above the broad rooms, like the balustrades that separated later Lustral Basins from their anterooms, with similar implications for the views downward into the broad rooms and basins.<sup>8</sup> It may not be coincidental that the earliest broad-room-and-corridor suite that was not located adjacent to and south of the hall of its house (MM IA 'House' A at Knossos) is also the earliest to have been excavated below the floor level of the surrounding rooms; when a difference in levels between the floor of the basin and those of surrounding rooms was created by digging out the former, the contiguity of the upper story above the hall would no longer have been necessary to achieve that differential.

Finally, a parallel may be noted in a rare feature of Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites and Lustral Basins; wall niches have been recorded in the northern wall of the broad room in the West House at Agia Triada (Laviosa 1969-70, 407) and in room IX in house E at Mallia (Deshayes and Dessenne 1959, 102 and Pls. XXXVI.1 and 2; Graham 1987, 68 and 101). Graham has suggested that such wall niches "were perhaps commonly used as a place to put lamps," (Graham 1987, 215) and, indeed, a lamp was found in the Lustral Basin in house E at Mallia, although not in one of the niches (Deshayes and Dessenne 1959, 135 and Pl. XLIX.4 (no. 9 Herakleion 2309); Graham 1987, 68); the only find reported from the broad-room-and-corridor suite in the West House at Agia Triada, however, was a jug (Laviosa 1969-70, 407).

#### LEVEL BATHROOMS OF THE LATER NEOPALATIAL ERA

The relationship between Lustral Basins of earlier Neopalatial date and later level Bathrooms has been discussed repeatedly in the scholarly literature (Graham 1987, 102-103, 256, 266-269, with earlier references; McEnroe 1982, 5; Driessen 1982, 27; Gesell 1985, 22; Rutkowski 1986, 15; Nordfeldt 1987, 187-188 n. 5; Klahr 2011, 47-49); the basins of many earlier Lustral Basins, especially in houses rather than in the palaces (Graham 1987, 269, with earlier references), were filled in and a floor at the same level as the rest of the ground story of the house was laid, generally during LM IA (McEnroe 1982, 5; Driessen 1982, 27; Gesell 1985, 22). Rooms with plans and decorative surface treatments similar to Lustral Basins but with level floors may also have been built in other elite houses, if those level bathrooms do not conceal unexplored filled-in Lustral Basins (McEnroe 1982, 5; Driessen 1982, 27; Gesell 1985, 25-26). This modification of Lustral Basins during the Neopalatial era may be seen in chronological context as the last in a sequence of changes to a series of similar rooms in elite Minoan houses.

<sup>7</sup> On the anterooms of Lustral Basins, see Hitchcock 2000, 161-162.

<sup>8</sup> Graham suggested that the sunken level of Lustral Basins "in combination with a parapet and possibly adjustable hangings" between the basin and the antechamber would have provided "a certain amount of privacy" (Graham 1987, 105-106). On the contrary, without the addition of perishable hangings individuals in the antechambers may have had a view of proceedings in the basins; the privacy or exposure of Lustral Basins from their anterooms might therefore have been variable. See also, however, Gesell's note that "a few basins were surrounded by a parapet with columns, but more by solid walls" (Gesell 1985, 22).

## SEQUENCE OF CHANGES FROM EM II-III BROAD-ROOM-AND-CORRIDOR SUITES THROUGH PROTO- AND NEOPALATIAL LUSTRAL BASINS TO LATER NEOPALATIAL BATHROOMS

The similarities between Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites, Proto- and Neopalatial Lustral Basins, and later Neopalatial Bathrooms suggest a diachronic sequence of changes in the building methods and plans of an elite room-type. A few consistent trends in those changes may be observed. First, the earliest examples in this sequence have more regularities in their placements and orientations within their houses; these restrictions cease to be observed in later examples within the sequence of room-types. Specifically, EM II-III examples are always located adjacent to and south of the halls of their houses and with corridors on any side except the north, while such restrictions are not demonstrable in the orientations of later Lustral Basins,<sup>9</sup> nor in their relationship to their anteroms. Second, the sizes of the broad rooms or basins tend to shrink, which implies a decrease in the amount of space needed for the actions, whatever they were, performed in those spaces or perhaps in the numbers of direct participants as opposed to observers in those actions; this general decline in size applies to the corpus of rooms from a particular era rather than to individual examples within that era. Finally, the building methods that contribute to their identification as elite constructions vary chronologically, as just discussed for EM II-III broad-room-and-corridor suites and Proto- and early Neopalatial Lustral Basins. These different building methods may also have been used to achieve a (possible) differential of floor levels between the broad room or basin and surrounding spaces in Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites as in Proto- and early Neopalatial Lustral Basins. This contrast in floor levels ended with the filling of many Lustral Basins in elite houses during LM IA and the possible construction of original level Bathrooms subsequently in the Neopalatial era.<sup>10</sup>

### SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PREPALATIAL BROAD-ROOM-AND-CORRIDOR SUITES

It is well documented that elite Proto- and Neopalatial houses were an arena for elite display, emulation, and competition, and were subject to resultant changes in fashion, including the replacement of earlier sunken Lustral Basins by level Bathrooms during the later phases of the

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<sup>9</sup> There may be some regularities in orientations of various elements in the original plans of Proto- and Neopalatial Lustral Basins, which may both resemble and differ from those of Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites, but many of the Neopalatial Lustral Basins were remodeled during their period of use. For example, the two preserved ground-story doorways into Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites are both located in their northeastern corners and open to the north and east (in the Red House at Vasiliki and house A at Knossos, respectively), while the entries into the staircases leading down into Proto- and Neopalatial Lustral Basins are found in every corner of the rectangular complex, but may not originally have opened southward (see Rutkowski 1986, 136-137, figs. 188-193; Poursat and Schmid 1992, Fig. \*\*\*\*). The exceptions in the extant plans of Lustral Basins occur only where the surrounding area has been extensively remodeled, often at the time that the basin was filled in to create a level-floored Bathroom: room 11 in house A at Tylissos (the original entrance to the staircase was probably from room 2 to the east; *cp.* Driessen 1982, 37); room 4 in the South House at Knossos (Driessen 2003, 32); and room 6 at Nirou Khani (Driessen 1982, 47)). The scant preserved data about entry into Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites are thus compatible with the regularities observable among the original plans of the more numerous Proto- and Neopalatial Lustral Basins, but are less variable as preserved.

<sup>10</sup> Alternately, the Prepalatial broad-room-and-corridor suites may have lacked a contrast in floor levels, like the later level Bathrooms; the differential floor levels that are such a visible feature of Lustral Basins may have been less intrinsic to their functioning than their conspicuousness would seem to imply.

Neopalatial era. This process of elite competition through stylistic changes in architecture has previously been demonstrated as early as the Prepalatial era on Crete by tracing modifications to the halls in elite houses (Hershenson 2011; Shaw 2015, 155 and 157; Hershenson forthcoming); this study expands the evidence for stylistic changes in elite houses to include broad-room-and-corridor suites, a plan identified here, which has some similarities to later Lustral Basins. Identification of this exclusively elite plan of rooms and of the sequence of stylistic changes to it in turn provides evidence for dating of the emergence of increasing social complexity in Prepalatial Crete.

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