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This volume

This volume brings together a series of papers reflecting a number of lectures given at the Université catholique de Louvain (UCL) in 2010–2012 in the frame of a seminar entitled *La naissance des cités crétoises*. Eight Cretan sites (Axos, Phaistos, Prinias, Karphi, Dreros, Azoria, Praisos, and Itanos), recently excavated or re-excavated, are considered in their regional and historical context in order to explore the origin and early development of the Greek city-state on the island.

The editors

Florence Gaignerot-Driessen's work focuses on the formation process of the *polis* on Crete and the definition of social groups in Aegean protohistory. She is involved in archaeological projects at Sissi, Dreros, and Anavlochos and currently teaches ancient history and archaeology at the University of Picardie (Amiens). Jan Driessen is Professor of Greek Archaeology at UCL and is a specialist of Minoan Crete. He co-directed excavations at Palaikastro and Malia, and since 2007 he has directed excavations at the Minoan site of Sissi. Together they collected and edited contributions by Eva Tegou (25th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities), Daniela Lefèvre-Novaro (University of Strasbourg), Antonella Pautasso (Institute of Archeological Heritage, Monuments and Sites/National Research Council), Saro Wallace (British School at Athens), Vasiliki Zographaki (24th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities) and Alexandre Farnoux (French School in Athens), Donald Haggis (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), James Whitley (University of Cardiff), Didier Viviers and Athéna Tsingarida (Free University of Brussels).

The series AEGIS (Aegean Interdisciplinary Studies) attempts to make the results of new archaeological research on Aegean and especially Minoan societies available to the scientific and wider public at a rapid pace. Monographs, PhD dissertations, proceedings of scientific meetings and excavation reports complete each other to offer a general view of this time frame which is of primary importance to understand the ancient world and its historical, political, symbolical and social sequences.



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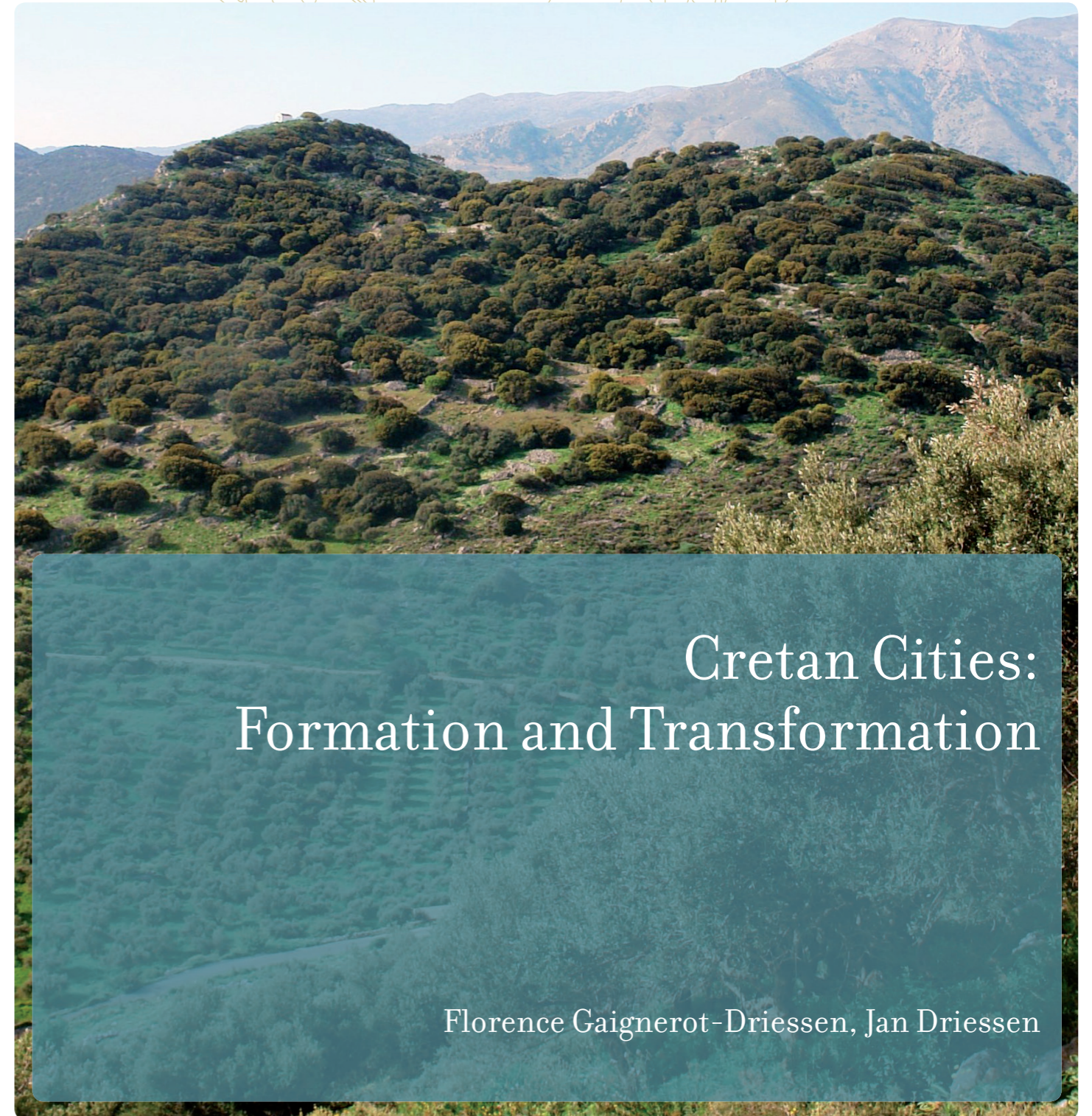
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Cretan Cities: Formation and Transformation



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Florence Gaignerot-Driessen, Jan Driessen

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Edited by Florence Gaignerot-Driessen & Jan Driessen

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Introduction

Reading Cretan Cities, writing Cretan cities

Florence Gaignerot-Driessen

From 2010 to 2012, a seminar series entitled *La naissance des cités crétoises* was organised by UCL, with the support of the National Research Foundation (FNRS), the Hubert Curien Partnership Tournesol (PHC Tournesol), the Centre for the Study of Ancient Worlds (CEMA), and the Institute for Civilisations, Arts and Literature (INCAL). The primary aim of the seminar series was to acquaint students with new research on the origin and early development of the city-state on the island of Crete, and to provide an opportunity to present the results of ongoing archaeological projects. Eight Cretan sites (Axos, Phaistos, Prinias, Karphi, Dzeros, Azoria, Praisos, and Itanos; see fig. 0.1), recently excavated or re-excavated, were thus respectively considered in their regional and historical contexts by Eva Tegou (25th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities), Daniela Lefèvre-Novaro (University of Strasbourg), Antonella Pautasso (Institute of Archeological Heritage, Monuments and Sites/National Research Council), Saro Wallace (British School at Athens), Vasiliki Zographaki (24th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities) and Alexandre Farnoux (French School in Athens), Donald Haggis (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), James Whitley (University of Cardiff), Didier Viviers and Athéna Tsingarida (Free University of Brussels). These lectures were well-attended and very much enjoyed, as were the “commensal events” organized for the occasion: each time they gave rise to thought-provoking discussions and encouraged the development of international and intergenerational collaborations in the field. So we are thankful to the speakers for their stimulating contributions to the seminar series.

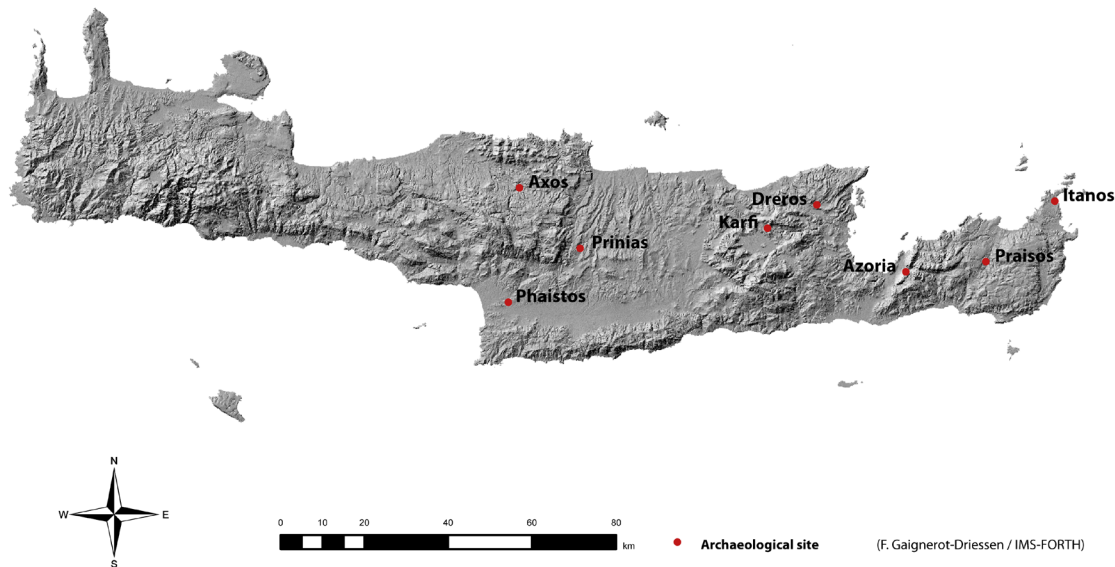


Fig. 0.1. MAP LOCATING THE SITES PRESENTED IN THE VOLUME (DRAWING BY F. GAIGNEROT-DRIESSEN/IMS-FORTH)

This volume, which was published with the support of CEMA, is a collection of their papers, with updates taking into account new publications (see particularly Glowacki & Vogeikoff-Brogan 2011; Mazarakis Ainian 2011; Niemeier, Pilz & Kaiser 2013; Rizza 2011; Seelentag & Pilz 2014) and new discoveries that have come to light since the lectures were delivered. In addition, in certain instances, authors have graciously agreed to publish here for the first time recently recovered material. I wish to express here my deepest gratitude to Nicolas Kress, who very generously agreed to work every day (and night) of the week to format this volume. I also would like to warmly thank Christine Spencer, who very kindly helped with the editing of some texts in English, and Donald Haggis, for his comments on the first version of this introduction.

The papers of this volume are presented in geographical order (fig. 0.1): **Axos**, in the north-east foothills of Mount Psiloritis; **Phaistos** and **Prinias**, in the Messara area; **Karphi**, in the north Lasithi; **Dreiros** and **Azoria**, in the region bordering the Mirabello Bay; **Praisos** and **Itanos**, in Eastern Crete. A brief overview of the different contributions is offered here, first highlighting and commenting on some challenging hypotheses, then emphasizing some common threads that might open the path for future research on the formation and transformation of Cretan cities: reading *Cretan Cities*, writing Cretan cities.

Eva Tegou presents the results of the excavations carried out by the 25th Ephorate in the ancient city of **Axos** and its immediate vicinity, as well as a re-examination of the archives and material of the old excavations by the Italian mission. This approach allows her to revisit in detail the ancient and complex cult history of Axos, where dedicatory offerings of inscribed weapons seem to have started as early as the mid-8th c. in the temple of the east slope. This practice had apparently died out during the second half of the 6th c., and likely following an institutional change, a monument containing a large inscription was then built on the northern slope, in the area of a probable cistern. It is suggested that this building, which resembles a platform, was possibly used as an orator's podium, and may have even been a *bouleuterion* where the laws of the city were displayed publicly. Concerning the social stratification of the ancient *polis* of Axos, Tegou notes that while four Dorian tribes are epigraphically attested, two distinct Early Iron Age cemeteries have been located around a unique contemporary urban core. This situation echoes many other Cretan instances such as the Meseleroi, Vrokastro and Kavousi areas – respectively the regions of ancient Oleros, ancient Istron and **Azoria** – where several distinct Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age cemeteries were located around one likely common urban centre (on the Meseleroi region, see Apostolakou 1997; 1999; Hayden 1995; 2004; 2005; on the Vrokastro region, see Hayden 2004; 2005; on the Kavousi region, see Haggis 2005). It is of course very tempting, despite the lack of convincing evidence, to recognize in these cemeteries – and possibly others not yet discovered – a spatial expression of the social groups pre-existing the *polis* formation. The next step would then be to define more precisely the identity of these “social groups” on an island where later written sources do not contain any clear reference to the *genos* (on this question, see Perlman 2014).

Occupation on the **Prinias** hill, presented in Antonella Pautasso's paper, is attested from Late Minoan (LM) IIIC onwards, but the reorganization of the settlement in the Protogeometric (PG) B/Early Geometric (EG) period constitutes the starting point of the town's expansion. Additionally, a change is also observed in the funerary practices in the necropolis of Siderospilia: from that period on, only cremation is attested and grave offerings become richer (*e.g.* weapons, jewels, new types of vases). The formation process of the city seems to have been achieved with the construction of Temple A in the central quarter of the settlement in the second half of the 7th c., the *eschara* of this cult building being built on top of LM IIIC-EG feasting remains. At the same time, the *eschara* in Room L is sealed by pavement and the central hearth-room of building VA-VD is reorganized. On the eastern slope, in the area of a LM deposit containing snake tubes and figures with upraised arms, a LG building with a central hearth where cult activities had been apparently performed, is concomitantly abandoned. Despite these noticeable changes, however, ancient architectural elements (*e.g.* *trilithon*, three-part stone base, column base) and presumably cultic artifacts are preserved or integrated in the new structures of the central and southern quarters. The *trilithon* preserved in the rear room of Building VA-VD deserves special mention: it obviously resembles the structure uncovered in the “Tripillar shrine” at Kommos (Shaw & Shaw 2000; for a discussion on these three stone pillars and their origin, see also Viviers & Tsingarida this volume, n. 5) and suggests a cult function for the building. It is also striking that only in the so-called “Temple C” – a large three-room building that abuts the southern block but is only accessible from the outside – the central hearth continues to be used after the construction of Temple A. The precise functions of these different LG-Protoarchaic buildings with central hearths, which seem to play an important communal role in the context of the nascent *polis*, still have to be defined. Likewise, the way these pre-existing elements were (re)integrated in these buildings and were possibly used in a legitimization process of emerging social groups also needs to be specified. The settlement is finally abandoned in the mid-6th c.

According to Daniela Lefèvre-Novaro, a nucleation of the settlement around the palace hill in LM IIIC remains the most plausible hypothesis to account for the formation of the *polis* of **Phaistos**. In general, and in contrast with Eastern Crete, migration to remote mountainous sites in LM IIIC is barely attested in the Messara region,

where people apparently never re-settled very far outside of the plain. However, during the Subminoan-PG period, evidence of occupation becomes scarcer on the Phaistos hill, whereas site expansion can be observed in the neighbouring settlements of Pobia Vigla and Kourtes. It is suggested that the arrival of new migrants from the north coast could explain this change in settlement pattern. From the mid-9th c., the Phaistian community seems to have become more organized: a paved ramp was built on the southern slope of the hill where the “Geometric Quarter” would later be established, the fortification wall on the *Acropoli Mediana* likely belongs to this early formation stage, and funerary and religious activities are also well demonstrated. Nonetheless one has to wait until the 8th c. to see the settlement expanding into distinct quarters. Then, not only was the network of roads and fortification walls elaborated, but there is also evidence of an urban sanctuary under the late-7th c. temple of the *Megale Mater*, and two extra-urban sanctuaries identifiable in Aghia Triada and Kommos. Also attested are two LG-Protoarchaic buildings comprising of important storage spaces and large rooms with central hearths or benches where tokens were recovered. These echo the contemporary buildings at **Prinias**, particularly the large complex including the so-called “Temple B” located to the west of the central square in the central quarter, which also yielded 161 tokens and the remains of communal meals (Room VE; see Pautasso this volume). Searching for a primitive *agora* in Phaistos, Lefèvre-Novaro suggests that the Minoan courtyard of the theatre, located to the north of the “Geometric Quarter” in the area of the *Megale Mater* temple, which featured steps still visible during the Archaic period, could be a good candidate. In the 7th c., the *polis* seems to be fully realized, with at least three urban temples, but from the 6th c. until the Hellenistic revival, evidence of occupation in the city of Phaistos becomes very rare.

In her examination, Saro Wallace argues that there is neither a “generalized continuity” nor a “fresh start” on Crete in 1200 BC, but rather a “materially creative process”. In other words, according to the author of *Ancient Crete* (Wallace 2010), after the “collapse”, Cretan communities actively inherited and transformed their past, rather than passively suffering through troubled times. **Karfi**, where Wallace conducted new excavations in 2008, is used as a case study in which special attention is paid to the period of 1200-1000 BC. The site is explored following a zoning approach of the landscape, based on the recognition of distinctive areas which would have reflected emerging social identity divisions. The author further suggests that these may have structurally and socially influenced the formation of the “Geometric-Archaic *poleis*”. In this sense, the residential areas at the nearby site of Papoura, occupied from 1200 BC until the 7th c., may have replicated elements of the zoning at Karfi, the latter site being regularly and ritually visited after its desertion in the 10th c. as an important marker in the cultural landscape. Alternatively, one may wonder when looking at the site plan and evaluating the results of the excavations, if it would not also be fruitful for our understanding of Early Iron Age communities, and their formation by active reuse or invention of the past, to consider the different areas identified at Karfi as distinct sites rather than mere zones of the same site.

Important fresh data from **Dreros** is presented in Vasiliki Zographaki and Alexandre Farnoux’s paper. The new excavations conducted since 2009 allow substantive revision of our views of the site formed by the results of earlier phases of work by Xanthoudides, Marinatos, Demargne and van Effenterre. Cleaning operations and excavations in the area of the so-called “*andreion*” on the West Acropolis revealed a cultic assemblage containing in particular late-8th-early-7th c. vessels including *kalathoi*, bovid figures and figurines, and probable sacrificial debris next to the *pi* structure excavated in 1917 and interpreted by the first excavator as a hearth. Moreover, it is now clear that the eastern wall of the structure – indicated on the first published plan of the building – was actually a terrace wall built during a later architectural phase. The original building itself, which we can now securely call a sanctuary because of its architectural features and material, was thus restricted to the western part of the area excavated by Xanthoudides. The shape of the *agora* also has to be reconsidered, given the existence of a kind of exedra exposed on top of five rows of steps on the western side of the terrace. The south steps, claimed to be Archaic by the first excavators with no convincing justification, now seem to be related to the construction of the Hellenistic cistern and not only to the Geometric cult building in the saddle, and its date therefore needs to be revised. Note that this does not preclude the existence of an Archaic *agora* at Dreros – perhaps an open-air space with no architectural definition – in the vicinity of the cult building, whose eastern façade had the inscribed Archaic laws of the *polis*.

Challenging James Whitley's (1991) model of stable/unstable settlements and Saro Wallace's (2010) narrative of PG polities, Donald Haggis also examines notions of continuity and discontinuity, respectively reflected by static and dynamic conditions of settlement structure, in the specific context of Archaic urbanization at **Azoria**. In this case, the archaeologist follows the generally rejected vision of development as a non-linear or discontinuous process of culture change, relating the so-called "Archaic gap" to *polis* formation. A constructive process of discontinuities is first highlighted in the settlement patterns of the Mirabello region and discontinuous structuring of settlement is then demonstrated at site level at Azoria. The radical rebuilding of the town at the end of the 7th c. signifies a complete restructuring of private and communal space and activities, physically and semantically deconstructing, reconstructing and finally reintegrating elements of material culture from the past. The new planning of private residences and public buildings will then remain static for more than one century, throughout the 6th c. Their physical interdependencies and interconnections clearly indicate the existence of an integrative political authority institutionalizing pre-existing kinship-corporate groups, particularly by controlling the production, redistribution and consumption of goods. Urbanization at Archaic Azoria is thus "not merely incidental to the process of state formation, but is a critical part of the social and political discourse that constitutes the city-state itself", the excavator concludes.

In a more historical approach, James Whitley also underlines the importance of citizen participation in Greek – and Cretan – *poleis*. Following the very Aristotelian definition proposed by Runciman (1990), he regards Archaic and Classical *poleis* as "citizen states" rather than city-states. This implies citizen participation at several levels, and particularly to cults, which involves sacrifices and feasting. Whitley thus explores the archaeological evidence for "commensality" in the *polis* of **Praisos**. On the basis of the architecture, animal bones, drinking vessels and iconography of terracotta plaques recovered, he suggests that Bosanquet's interpretation of the "Almond Tree House" as an *andreion* may have been correct, but more precisely, as being one of the places constituting the *andreion*, if we understand this label as an institution of the *polis* rather than a space or building. Indeed, according to Whitley, the finds recovered from the top of the nearby hill of Prophitis Ilias also represent debris from communal drinking activities and the place should therefore be interpreted as another place of the Praisian *andreion*. Whitley then revisits this pattern of "rough dining *en plein air*" in the Praisos region for earlier periods, specifically in the formative phases of Middle Minoan II and LM IIIC, suggesting that commensality played an important part on Crete in the process of state – palace or *polis* – formation. However, his claim that from the 8th c., based on archaeological deposits in contrast with the mainland, "Crete came to reject symposium culture in favour of feasting practices that more resemble [the austerity of] the Spartan *sysition*" may need some adjustment. This observation may be right for Knossos, but is obviously not supported by the spectacular sympotic assemblages – including kraters, stands, and cups – from Archaic **Azoria** (see Haggis this volume).

Finally, Didier Viviers and Athéna Tsingarida offer a comprehensive picture of the city of **Itanos** in its regional and historical context, particularly in relation with the nearby site of Roussolakos, located to the east of the modern village of Palaikastro. The area of the city and the suburban sanctuary of Vamies were probably already in use from the late-10th c. onwards, whereas the foundation of a sanctuary in the immediate vicinity of the Minoan settlement of Roussolakos is only attested to at the end of the 8th c. Archaeological evidence seems to demonstrate that at this time, Itanos became the main regional centre, probably because of its strategic location – it constitutes the best anchorage in the region – and the development of maritime routes and activities. Unusual for Crete, a pattern of relocation from one harbour-site (Roussolakos) to another (Itanos) has been identified by the authors who have then considered this shift as a result of external intervention. Additionally, foundation legends claim that Itanos was the son of Phoenix, while similarities of the Itanian coinage with the one from Aradus in Phoenicia is also noted. Likewise, a cult to Leukothea, the protective divinity of sailors, while it is rarely attested elsewhere on the island, clearly existed at Itanos. All these factors lead to the suggestion that Phoenician merchants may have played an important part in the development of Itanos and the definition of its identity. In any case, imported vessels recovered from the North Necropolis alongside contemporary literary and epigraphic sources seem to confirm that Itanos was already deriving its strength from maritime traffic and trade in the Archaic period. Apart from a large building complex in the North Necropolis – discussed below – the architecture of the settlement is scarcely known. This cemetery, used between the 8th and the 7th c., is afterwards abandoned until the second half of the 4th c. and,

according to the authors, this funerary “Archaic gap” – which precisely corresponds to the construction and period of use of the building complex – could be linked to the reorganization of social practices related to death rather than being the sign of an actual decline on the island.

Reading the different contributions composing these *Cretan Cities*, some recurrent questions present themselves, which need to be addressed. This will I hope, stimulate further discussion and contribute to the writing of a new narrative on the formation and transformation of Cretan cities.

Following Snodgrass’ theory, the 8th c. is generally presented in archaeological and historical literature as a period of “structural revolution” with evidence of demographic increase, state formation, and social conflict (see *e.g.* Morris 2013). And as shown by several contributions in this volume, in at least some Cretan urban centres, the late-7th c. can be considered to be a moment of achievement in the process of *polis* formation (see especially Pautasso, Haggis, and Viviers & Tsingarida this volume), particularly from a religious point of view. Indeed it is only from this period that hearth temples unequivocally housing divinities of the Greek pantheon are attested. Yet it is also clear from the evidence presented in this volume, at **Prinias**, **Phaistos**, **Dreiros**, and **Azoria**, that axial buildings containing large rooms with a central hearth already existed in the LG-Protoarchaic period (8th-7th c.), and that these buildings stand out from other contemporary structures for their size, location, architecture, finds, and assumed communal functions. Here I am not interested in the question of their possible origin and subsequent use (on this, see the excellent synthesis in Prent 2005: 441-476; 2007), but rather want to consider them in their actual context and avoid projecting functions through (pre)historical models. What precisely are these buildings and what role did they play in *polis* formation? Some of them (*e.g.* the cult building in the saddle and the one on the West Acropolis at **Dreiros**, Building VA-VD and the LG building on the eastern slope at **Prinias**) actually show clear signs of cultic activities, but a lack of standardization in architecture and equipment makes it difficult to identify the divinity venerated or even the kind of religion practiced in these “hearth buildings” in the 8th c. Other examples were first called “temples” without clear criteria for cult use, and now appear to belong to the residential sphere (*e.g.* “Temple B” at **Prinias**; on the difficulty to distinguish between a hearth building dedicated to cult and a residence with hearth, see Prent 2005: 441-476; 2007). What these LG “hearth buildings” have in common, however, are spaces dedicated to commensality – and in fact different kinds of selective commensalities. Interestingly, a third type of hearth building is present at **Azoria**, where a “EIA-O Building” obviously linked to a LM IIIC-PG tholos tomb was uncovered. While this would equally involve a kind of cult-related commensality, in this instance it is clear that the structure and activities were explicitly oriented to ancestors rather than deities. The **Azoria** case echoes the situation observed in the “Temple House” at Lato where a similar LG-O sacrificial space with a hearth was identified next to a LM IIIC-PG grave, on the terrace of the Hellenistic temple (see Gaignerot-Driessen 2012). These hearth buildings are neither temples, nor *andreia* (nor *prytaneia* for that matter). They are experiential and performative spaces where experimentation with commensality occurred in an urban context before its civic institutionalization. And it is noteworthy that during this process, the only clear beneficiaries of the offerings we can identify are ancestors. The Archaic hearth building overlooking the LG graves of the North Necropolis at **Itanos** may then likewise continue this communal experience of an ancestor cult at a time when tombs are invisible in the archaeological landscape and ancient cemeteries are abandoned.

But as stressed by Whitley, experiencing commensality is not restricted to urban centres. During the Archaic and Classical periods, communal dining and/or drinking activities are also reported outside of the city of **Praisos**, where specific civic monuments do exist to house communal feasts. So who were the participants in these common meals and why did they chose to meet in rural locations? Were these feasting events also connected to the commemoration of alleged common ancestors and claims to the land? A wider and more systematic study is needed here, aiming at a better characterisation of the assemblages found in regional surveys and establishment of a site typology. In any case, it is extremely interesting to note that no unequivocal cultic material is mentioned among the dining debris recovered at these sites, which seems to preclude an identification as rural open-air sanctuaries. It seems therefore that the domestication of the *chora* was made possible following specific social rituals in addition to the religious ones, or at least without a connection to a deity, echoing here Polignac’s theory of *polis* formation (Polignac 1984).

Polis formation and transformation are indeed noticeable through strategies of land use and the construction of cultural landscapes. In this perspective, the location of urban centres, and even more, the process of their relocation

in the Archaic period may be revealing. According to Viviers and Tsingarida, **Itanos** especially stands out from the other Archaic cities for its coastal location and primary function as a harbour. However, a glance at the map of Archaic sites in the Mirabello Bay region (Haggis this volume, fig. 6.1) shows that Itanos does not constitute an isolated case of a “harbour-city”: the settlement established at Milatos too, for example, seems to develop from the very beginning of the Archaic period, after the desertion of the inland settlement site of Anavlochos (on Milatos see Nowicki 2000: 170-171; on Anavlochos, see Zographaki, Gaignerot-Driessen & Devolder forthcoming 2015). Likewise, the site of Vrokastro was already abandoned in favour of Istron in the Archaic period (Hayden 2004; 2005; Hayden & Tsipopoulou 2012). We know almost nothing about the Archaic urban centre of Olous, but an important sanctuary was established on the coast at Poros from the 7th c. onwards (for an overview of Olous, see Apostolakou *et alii* 2010: 91-100; Apostolakou & Zographaki 2006). Hence for the region bordering the Mirabello Bay, it seems clear that in the 7th c., Geometric urban centres surrounded by insufficiently rich land, like Vrokastro or Anavlochos, were abandoned in favour of coastal sites, like Istron and Milatos, whereas the towns established on the **Drerros** and Lato (Goulas) hills, which overlook a landscape of karstic depressions very suitable for agriculture and industrial activities, consolidated and became urban centres of Archaic *poleis* (on this process, see Gaignerot-Driessen forthcoming). Even if we do not yet know much of the settlement of **Itanos** during this period of time, save for the building located in the area of the North Necropolis, based on stratigraphic evidence (Greco *et alii* 1999: 521), it is very probable that the Hellenistic town developed on the remains of the Archaic one. In this case, **Itanos** would be another example of an Archaic harbour-city. Even **Azoria** is actually established on the closest hill to the sea and developed in the Archaic period, after the desertion of the settlement on the Kastro. It is thus perhaps time to revise the traditional historical scenario which dates the *katoikismos* – the migration of settlements from inland to coastal locations – to the Hellenistic period and depicts Archaic towns as located inland on mountainous defensive positions. The urban centres of some Cretan cities were already well-established on the coast in Archaic times. An archaeological approach free from Aristotle’s account would be the way forward to reconsider *polis* formation and transformation on Crete.

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