



# THE POLITICS OF STORAGE

Storage and Sociopolitical Complexity  
in Neopalatial Crete



Frontispiece. Interior of an abandoned house in East Crete (photograph by Christos Beltes).

PREHISTORY MONOGRAPHS 25



# THE POLITICS OF STORAGE

## Storage and Sociopolitical Complexity in Neopalatial Crete

*by*

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*To the memory of my beloved*

*Ió*





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# Preface and Acknowledgments

The storage of staples and its importance for the functioning of Cretan Bronze Age society has become an active topic of discussion and debate in the last decades. Many are the proposed narratives of sociopolitical development based on the accumulation and storage of wealth. Most approaches have been focused on the storage strategies adopted by palatial authorities and groups controlling second-order centers. The present study reassesses the intrinsic relationship between storage and sociopolitical complexity by combining testimonies on the storage of staples from palatial, nonpalatial elite, and ordinary domestic contexts dated to the LM I period. It adopts a bottom-up perspective, mostly focusing on the nonpalatial sector of LM I state societies. The main goals are:

1. To take a new look at a wide range of information concerned with the storage of staples
2. To develop a more comprehensive model to explain how storage strategies operate within LM I societies
3. To infer sociopolitical and socio-economic levels of interaction among the different social sectors operating within LM I societies (mainly LM IB societies)

Some individual arguments have already been presented elsewhere (Christakis 1999a, 1999b, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b). Here, the results of additional and continuing research are offered. The main arguments have not changed substantially; some are developed further, while others are clarified.

The methodological framework used here is outlined in the first chapter of the monograph. The testimonies concerned with storage activities from LM I contexts

have been reconsidered in great detail in the second and third chapters. The second chapter discusses storage activities in the palatial sector of societal organization. The third chapter discusses testimonies from nonpalatial elite contexts and simple domestic units of palatial and nonpalatial settlements. Chapter 4 offers a synthesis of data on staple storage from domestic contexts and an evaluation of the testimonies—in terms of subsistence autarky—of the resident households. The implications of storage for the political and economic organization of LM I state societies are discussed in the concluding part of this monograph.

Figures 2–9 show the most frequently used storage containers (generally known as pithoi) from LM I palatial, nonpalatial elite, and domestic contexts. The number allocated to each pithos form follows the classification of such storage containers established in my study on Cretan Bronze Age pithoi (Christakis 2005). The numbering of pithos forms established in this study is also followed in the case of forms mentioned in the text without being illustrated in Figures 2–9. Figures 10 and 13–36 show the palaces, nonpalatial elite complexes, and simple domestic units relevant to the present discussion. The plans used are simplified versions of the state plans included in the original publication of the complexes. For bibliographic references to the original state plans, the reader may refer to the publications mentioned in the text. In order not to confuse readers familiar with the contexts discussed here, I have retained the numbering of the various spaces as given in the original publications. Keys were used, in palace and house plans, to indicate the spatial distribution of storerooms (defined as such on the basis of architectural layout and/or artifactual assemblages), ceremonial spaces, spaces used for food preparation and/or consumption, areas used for staple processing, organic remains, administrative documents (tablets, nodules, roundels, and sealings), large and small/medium-sized pithoi, and small storage containers. These illustrations do not attempt to represent every activity practiced or artifact found in the palace/house but only those relevant to the present discussion. The artifacts shown are simplified symbols; see the text for more complete descriptions of artifactual assemblages. Symbols are not to scale. Drawings of pithoi, pottery, and palace/house plans were drawn by Nikoletta Ntolia, to whom I would like to express my deepest thanks.

The discussion is based on the study of both published and unpublished data. Many institutions and excavators gave me permission to look at their material. I would like to thank the Council of the British School at Athens for permission to study and publish the pithoi and selected pottery assemblages excavated by Sir Arthur Evans at Knossos. I would also like to thank the Greek Ministry of Culture, the Archaeological Society at Athens, the Scuola Archaeologica Italiana di Atene, the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, the École Française d’Athènes, I. Andonakaki, C. Davaras, N. Dimopoulou, B. Hallager, E. Hallager, D. Hatzivallianou, S. Hood, A. Karetsoy, V. La Rosa, A. Lebessi, A. MacGillivray, S. Mandalaki, the late N. Platon and M. Popham, L. Platon, G. Rethemiotakis, H. Sackett, J. Soles, M. Tsipopoulou, Y. Tzedakis, A. Vasilakis, P. Warren, and A. Zois.

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Herakleion, January 2007





# Abbreviations

AE/NB	Evans, A.J. <i>Manuscript Daybooks on the Excavations at Knossos</i> , Knossos Archives, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
ca.	circa
cal.	calories
cm	centimeter
DM/NB	Mackenzie, D. <i>Manuscript Daybooks on the Excavations at Knossos</i> , Knossos Archives, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
EM	Early Minoan
F/NB	Fyfe, T. <i>Manuscript Notebooks (Sketchbooks) on the Excavations at Knossos</i> , Knossos Archives, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
g	grams
HB/NB	Boyd, H.A. <i>Notebooks from the 1904 Excavations at Gournia, Crete</i> , Archives of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia.
HM	Archaeological Museum of Herakleion
kg	kilograms
KSM	Knossos Stratigraphical Museum
LM	Late Minoan
m	meter

MM	Middle Minoan
<i>PM I</i>	Evans, A.J. 1921. <i>The Palace of Minos at Knossos I</i> , London.
<i>PM II</i>	Evans, A.J. 1928. <i>The Palace of Minos at Knossos II</i> , London.
<i>PM III</i>	Evans, A.J. 1930. <i>The Palace of Minos at Knossos III</i> , London.
<i>PM IV</i>	Evans, A.J. 1935. <i>The Palace of Minos at Knossos IV</i> , London.
SMP	Knossos Stratigraphical Museum Pot Number