

Chapter 8

Some Reflections on EC Domestic Space Arising from Observations at Koukounaries, Paros

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Paros, one of the major islands of the Cyclades, is a typical example of EBA cemetery 'oversupply', where the corresponding settlements are absent from the archaeological record — a rather frequent finding for this period on all the Cycladic islands. So far, 10 EC cemeteries have been identified on Paros (Tsountas 1898, 168; Rubensohn 1901, 194; Varoucha 1925; Dumas 1968b; 1977a; Schilardi 1981, 133–40; Zapheirou 1998; Kouragios & Detoratu 2000, 37–49), consisting of small clusters of graves on low, rolling slopes overlooking the sea. These cemeteries are Dryos, Glypha, Plastiras, Panagia, Kampos, Pyrgos, Mnemouria, Gremna, Avyos and Marapas (Fig. 8.1). All have yielded impressive ceramic and marble vessels, artefacts and figurines.

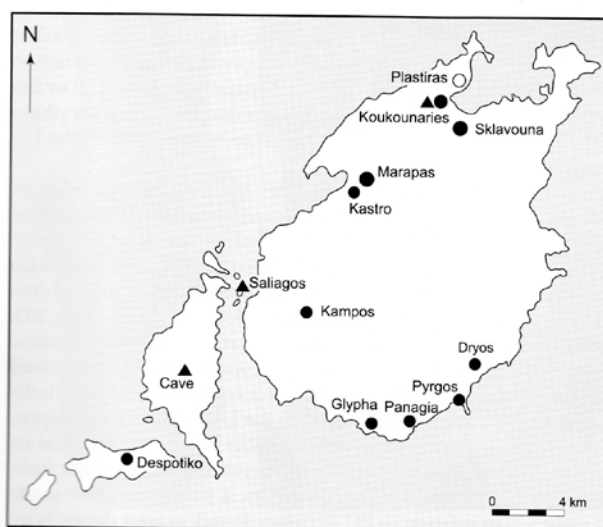


Figure 8.1. Distribution of Neolithic and EBA sites on the island of Paros.

The settlements that used the cemeteries, however, are ignored or are very poorly known (Tsountas 1898, 168–75; Rubensohn 1901, 194; 1917; Dumas 1972, 151–2, 157; Overbeck 1989a; Schilardi 1975, 83–96; 1991, 230–55). Even when settlements have been identified, such as the site of Koukounaries in northern Paros, the quantity and quality of their domestic material culture does not match that of material recovered from the cemeteries. In fact, at Koukounaries there is one individual stone building of high quality that can be distinguished among more poorly-built structures, but still the overall impression from the material culture of the site is that of a 'poor' settlement. On the other hand, however, by the end of EC II, other Cycladic islands had developed settle-

ments with considerable architecture, such as Chalandriani on Syros, Ayia Irini on Keos and Skarkos on Ios, which were comparable to the EBA urban centres of the mainland, Crete or the northeastern Aegean. Why not Paros too? What parameters did or did not exist on Paros that determined life one way or another?

Koukounaries therefore, from the perspective of a poor site, challenges discussion on some major issues of Early Cycladic archaeology, such as the asymmetries observed between 'rich' and 'poor' or 'central' and 'provincial' settlements of the period, and between domestic and funerary domains as marked by material culture.

The site of Koukounaries

In terms of location, Koukounaries is a typical Early Cycladic site. It is situated on a hill by the coast, on the southwestern end of the Bay of Naousa in northern Paros (Fig. 8.1) (Schilardi 1975; 1977; 1982; 1984b; 1988; 1990;

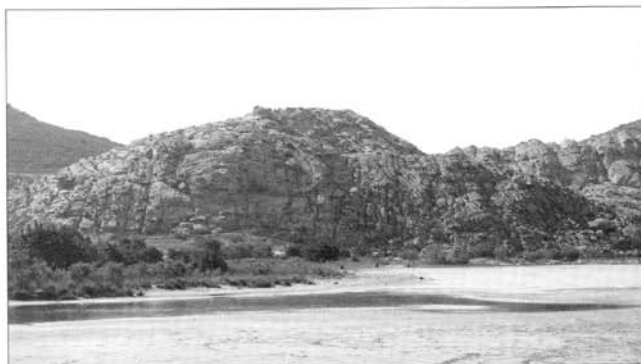


Figure 8.2. The hill of Koukounaries from the sea, viewed from the northeast.



Figure 8.3. Aerial photograph of the Koukounaries hill.

1991). The hill is about 75 m high, with steep slopes acting as natural fortifications (Figs. 8.2 & 8.3), and is accessible only by two paths running up two narrow gorges. From the foothills, or particularly from the sea, the hill looks rather steep and unsuitable for residential use, but it actually has three main plateaux at different levels (Upper, Middle and Lower) (Fig. 8.4), and smaller natural terraces that together offer sufficient space for habitation. From the hilltop there is complete visibility, not only over the Bay of Naousa and across the sea as far as the eye can see to the east and northeast (to Naxos), but also over the site's hinterland. Koukounaries lies in immediate proximity to the food-producing areas of the sea and the pastures and farmland on the surrounding hills and in the adjacent valley. It also has abundant freshwater, since a small river runs through the valley into the bay and forms a rich delta wetland.

Koukounaries has been discussed in the literature mostly on account of evidence from the LBA and the Early Historic period. This is because excavations on the hilltop uncovered a twelfth-century BC hegemonic compound assigned to Mycenaean immigrants originating from the Greek mainland (Schilardi 1984a; 1992), and because research has documented the tragic episode of the site's destruction, soon after its foundation, by attackers who burnt it down and left its inhabitants and livestock dead within the ruins. Subsequently, Koukounaries became known for the development, during the seventh century BC, of a prosperous domestic, administrative and ritual centre on top of the Mycenaean ruins, which was important in Archaic Paros (Schilardi 1996).

However, there is also an equally significant pre-Mycenaean horizon, so far not adequately discussed, although its study is beginning to confirm the site's importance place in Cycladic prehistory (Katsarou & Schilardi 2004). The distribution of EC material shows that the EBA inhabitants ultimately occupied all available plateaus and terraces on the hill. The deposits can be dated to two main occupation phases, EC II or the Keros-Syros phase, and an earlier phase which seems to have started in the LN and extended into EC I.

In areas where later building activity was intense, earlier deposits have been badly damaged or destroyed. This is apparent in the area under the Mycenaean mansion (Schilardi 1977, 370; 1982, 242) on the hilltop and below the sanctuary of the goddess Athena on the southeastern slope (Schilardi 1984a, 203; 1988, 202), where a few EC domestic ceramic and stone artefacts were collected from disturbed and mixed contexts. The survival of a couple of Early Cycladic figurines (Fig. 8.5:a, b) in the lower Mycenaean deposits of the mansion is possibly due to the fact that its occupants preserved them, probably as symbolic links with their EC predecessors, a suggestion also made in relation to EC figurines found in later deposits on other Cycladic sites such as the LC I destruction layer at Akrotiri on Thera (Sotirakopoulou 1998, 109, tab. 1) or House A of Ayia Irini V on Keos (Davis 1986, 97).

The EC horizon is, therefore, better preserved in areas where later activity was scarce. Those areas are the northeastern area of the hilltop and the so-called Lower Plateau (Fig. 8.4).

One stone structure among impermanent wooden huts

A freestanding EC building has been revealed (Schilardi 1982, 244–45; 1991, 230–55) on the northeastern area of the hilltop which is set apart from the LH mansion and its superimposed reconstructions (Fig. 8.4). It consists of several separate rooms, though the building's full plan is barely preserved because it lies at the edge of the hill and has been partly washed down the slope. The location commands complete views over the bay and across the sea as far as Naxos, and also over the site's hinterland.

The building was constructed of rubble walls that are still preserved to a considerable height (Fig. 8.6), probably thanks to reuse in the LB and Historic periods (Schilardi 1991, 233). The thickness of the outer wall, between 1.10 m to 1.40 m, suggests that there was originally an upper floor. It is also possible that the sloping ground allowed for the construction of a basement under part of the building. The ground floor plan consists of rectangular rooms and long and narrow spaces arranged around a central open yard.

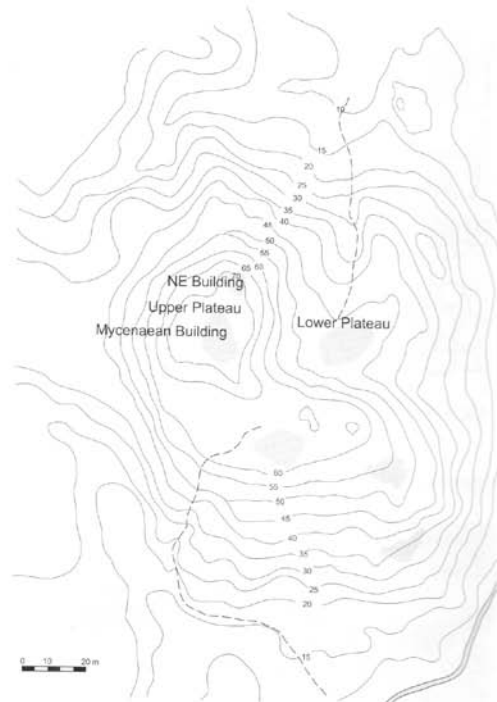


Figure 8.4. EC occupation on the hill of Koukounaries.

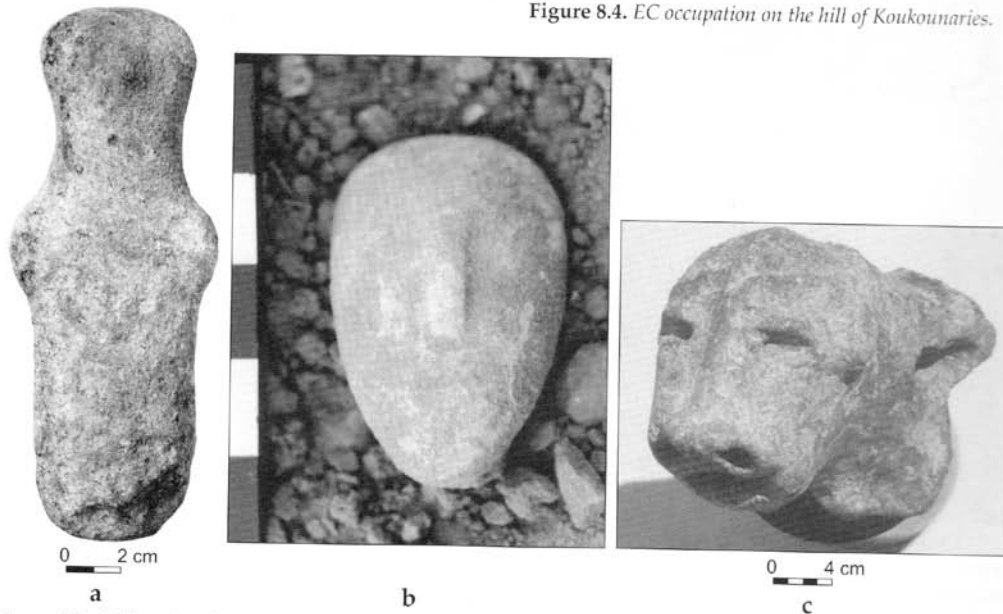


Figure 8.5. EC figurines from Koukounaries.

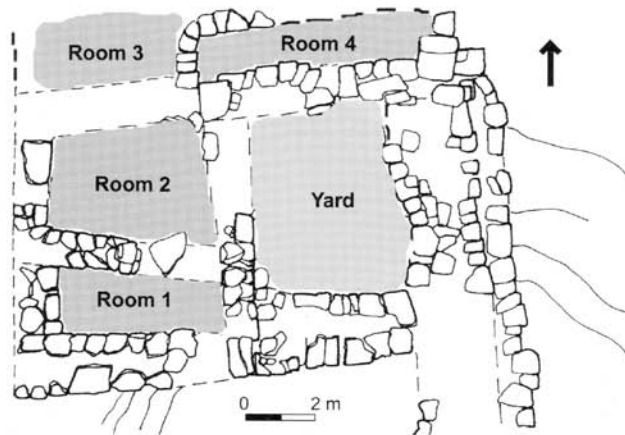


Figure 8.6. Plan of the NE building on the Koukounaries hilltop.



Figure 8.7. Drainage of the NE building, from the SE.

Such long and narrow rooms, usually with no door openings, are a frequent architectural feature of this period especially on the Greek mainland (for example at Zygouries: Blegen 1928, pl. II; Lerna: Caskey 1955, 38, fig. 3; Asine: Frödin & Persson 1938, fig. 42; and Manika: Sampson 1985, 28, 325); where they have been interpreted as supplementary rooms for storage or food processing.

The building's walls are made of small schist and granite slabs, set without mortar but exceptionally well-fitted. The excellent craftsmanship of masonry on the inner face of the thick outer wall is striking. The inside faces of these walls may have been coated

with some sort of clay plaster. The upper structure may have been made of mud bricks and timberwork, though it is quite possible that the building was constructed entirely of stone, as was the case with the houses of Skarkos on Ios (Marthari 1990b). Stone-made houses or stone-made houses with wooden frameworks are also known on mainland Greece (Overbeck 1963; Sampson 1985, 322).

Remarkably, at the foot of one of the walls of the purported yard, where the ground slopes steeply, the builders designed a 0.30 m square-cut conduit to drain rainwater (Fig. 8.7) (Schilardi 1991, 235, fig. 3, pl. 148b). This special architectural feature, in combination with the existence of rooms of varying size and the possibility of an upper floor, indicates that the building was constructed with some kind of functionally-differentiated plan in mind, with different uses allocated to certain areas in order to better serve the needs of the occupants.

The building contained everyday, utilitarian pottery (Fig. 8.8), including large basins (similar to those from Akrotiri as described by Sotirakopoulou 1991, 87), open bowls with lugs near the rim (Sotirakopoulou 1991, 72–4), deep bowls with plastic and incised patterns (Sotirakopoulou 1991, 84), incised horizontal handles, and a fragment from an incised pyxis (Sotirakopoulou 1991, 136). A small selection of chipped obsidian, stone grinders and some food remains also points to domestic use. The existence

of two superimposed floors indicates two consecutive phases of use, both dated within the Keros-Syros phase of EC II, namely to about 2800–2600 BC.

During this period, a small number of settlers became established on the hill's Lower Plateau (Fig. 8.4), a broad flat area of 2500 m², about 20 m to 25 m below the east/southeast of the hilltop. This location has many advantages: it is well protected, invisible from the foothills, flat and broad, and the views over the sea and the hinterland, and of Naxos, are as unobstructed as those from the hilltop. Although the plateau is clearly visible from the hilltop (Fig. 8.9), communication between the two areas seems

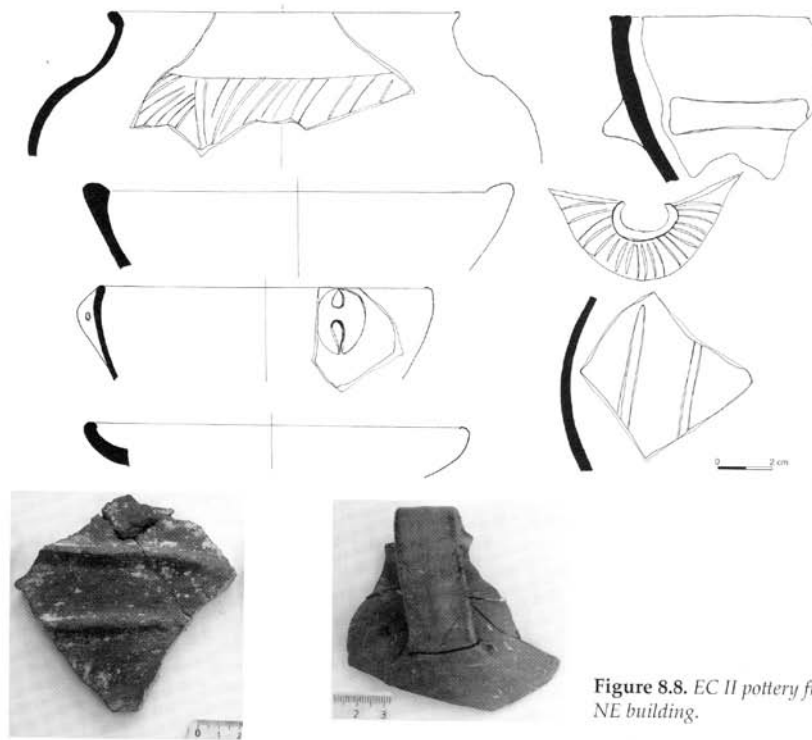


Figure 8.8. EC II pottery from the NE building.

improbable due to the steep gradients between them.

Subsequent exploitation of the Lower Plateau (during the LB, Geometric and Archaic periods) did not involve any building, but focused instead on farming and agriculture, which was not the case on the other plateaux and terraces of the hill. This probably explains why the EC and Neolithic levels were better preserved there. The EC stratum spreads quite consistently over a large area of the plateau without interruption, but is thicker and denser in the central area and towards the rocky slopes descending from the Upper Plateau, getting thinner toward the edge. In fact, it constitutes a complete stratigraphy of many distinct types of deposits, mostly dark coloured, rich in rubble, with sporadic traces of burning, and abundant ceramics and lithics. However,



Figure 8.9. The Lower Plateau and the Bay of Naousa from the Koukounaries hilltop.

no building remains have been identified within this stratum; there are only the remnants of two or three parallel rubble walls running across the plateau,

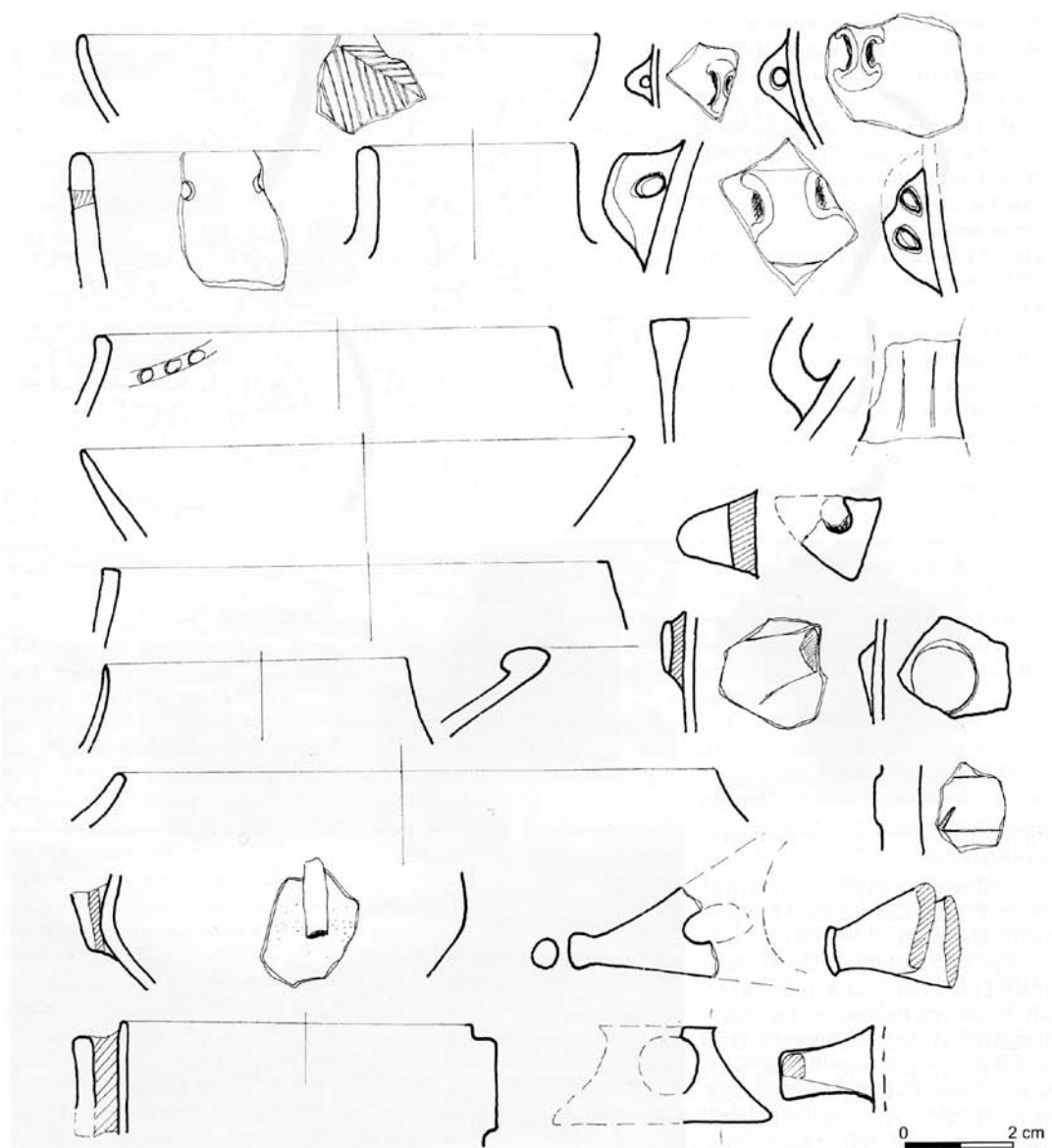


Figure 8.10. EC II pottery from the Lower Plateau.

suggesting that the occupants had levelled the area by means of terraces and had built retaining walls to support the accumulated earth. There is also scattered evidence from living floors and burnings. The absence of building remains (Schilardi 1990, 220), combined with the abundance of movable finds, suggests that any EC residences were makeshift structures con-

structed of perishable materials such as wood, straw or clay. There is some evidence to indicate that settlers used the rocks surrounding the plateau to support some of these structures.

Though stone dwellings are non-existent, the deposit is clearly domestic in character, judging from the ceramics, food remains and stone tools. Pottery

(Fig. 8.10) is utilitarian and includes incurving-rim saucers (similar to those from Akrotiri, described by Sotirakopoulou 1991, 77), biconical pyxides (one of which has a vertical tubular lug on the carination) (Sotirakopoulou 1991, 135), triangular or T-rims (Caskey & Caskey 1960, 142; Sampson 1985, tab. 9; 1993b, tab. 1; Sotirakopoulou 1991, 87), incised, cylindrical handles (Sotirakopoulou 1991, 151) and vertically perforated lugs on open or deep bowls. There was a large concentration of fragments from flat pithoi (Sotirakopoulou 1991, 110), and a considerable number of pieces of four-footed vessels. The incised plastic zones, grooved patterns and schematic, roped motifs are diagnostic features of the same date (Sotirakopoulou 1991, 153 ff.).

It is obvious, therefore, that two different types of domestic structure coexisted in EC II Koukounaries: the wooden hut and the stone building. In fact, the difference between these two types of structures is due not only to their building materials, but also to other features that are missing from the huts, such as the predefined ground-plan of the stone building.

Some questions naturally spring to mind: what dictated the different building choices made between the hilltop and the plateau? Is this difference the result of economic differentiation? Or is there an administrative reason? Indeed, the stone building may suggest the presence of an administrative and economic centre on Koukounaries, created by increased surplus and storable wealth. Equally, the distinctive northeastern stone building may (also) have been the result of social differentiation, that is, it may have belonged to a prominent 'family'. One could explain these socio-economic distinctions as a local manifestation of the general structural changes in production and trade that occurred during this period and that, on the mainland, Crete and in the northeastern Aegean, led to new building/planning/architectural forms and the emergence of nucleated villages/urban centres and social hierarchies.

However, universal patterns should be regarded critically, leaving space for local factors to make their own contribution to archaeological explanations. Indeed, the fact that Koukounaries remained a small Cycladic community supported by farming and stock breeding means that the changes seen during the EBA did not have a homogeneous effect across the Cyclades; it is possible that some settlements continued to live with no considerable change from the previous Neolithic economies. It is also possible though that changes did occur, but are invisible today, probably established in the sphere of ideology and perception that is beyond the empirical approach of modern research. This is a good theoretical position

from which to seek explanations for the asymmetries between EC settlements: that local agents at each site are differently conditioned by their traditions of meaning and ways of thinking, and that their now unreadable behaviours and ideologies may underpin specific divergences.

Domestic versus funerary material culture

But should not this hidden background express itself materially, in some facet of tangible culture?

In fact, the general impression of mediocrity that is provided for EC Paros by the poor huts and coarse wares of Koukounaries, and by the absence of traded wealth and the locally-oriented economy that do not reflect the expected EBA change, is suddenly reversed when the funerary contexts of the island are studied. Contemporary and even pre-Keros-Syros Parian cemeteries display the innovative material culture missing from domestic contexts during this period. Small collections of rich and complex grave offerings reveal a world of progressive manufacture and symbolism, completely unexpected in view of the mediocre domestic findings. During EC I, settlements are not only poor but invisible, nowhere to be found. Where did 'Kampos people' live? Or those buried at Plastiras (Doulas 1977a, 96–9)? Plastiras cemetery, in comparison with the neighbouring settlement of Koukounaries, is a particularly striking example of this settlement/cemetery discrepancy. Firstly, the parallel settlement to this cemetery is not visible in the archaeological record; perhaps it was an establishment of impermanent dwellings. Secondly, Koukounaries contains no hint of the quality of culture seen at Plastiras.

In fact, very few artefacts of symbolic value were found in the residential remains at Koukounaries; those that were all dated to EC II. There were two marble figurines in the foundations of the LB mansion on the Upper Plateau (Fig. 8.5a, b): one of 'Apeiranthos' type (Schilardi 1977, 370, pl. 188a; Renfrew 1969, 1–32; 1977a) and a small oblong head (3.5 cm high) tilting backwards, broken at the joint of the neck (Schilardi 1982, 242, pl. 151a; Getz-Preziosi 1987b, 63 ff.). Finally, one clay animal head probably representing a bovid (Fig. 8.5c) (Schilardi 1991, 239–1, pl. 150a–b), which formed part of the plastic decoration on a vessel, was collected from the Lower Plateau. These few artefacts, however, are nothing compared with the funerary objects from Parian cemeteries in terms of either quality or quantity. Many categories of objects found in graves are largely absent from domestic assemblages, including marble vases, decorated pots and figurines.

Why are the material assemblages of EC settlements so mediocre, not to say poor? Why are cem-

eteries so privileged in comparison? This difference, a common finding in most EC contexts, cannot be accidental. One reason may be taphonomic: conditions favour underground structures rather than above-ground buildings, which are more vulnerable to reuse and physical wear and tear (Doulas 1977a, 62). It is more likely, however, that the difference should be seen as an ideological dichotomy between domestic and funerary domains, which dictated different choices for EC people regarding the quality of structures and artefacts they used in each setting.

The question of the boundary between funerary and domestic is an old one and there are conflicting views. Tsountas (1898, 181) was the first to argue that funerary objects were not chosen from among domestic items, and Weinberg (1965, 192) and Renfrew (1972, 155) promoted this theory. Renfrew, however, currently holds that funerary offerings were not necessarily made as such, a view shared also by Doulas (1977a, 62; 1987), who claims that everyday items could also have had a funerary function, pointing out that marble vessels and frying pans have been unearthed in the settlement of Grotta, Naxos, and that many vessels from Cycladic cemeteries had been repaired after their primary use. He also believes that luxury pottery did exist in settlements, but has not been preserved because of unfavourable depositional conditions. At the cemetery of Manika, Sampson (1985, 233; 1988a, 58) observed that some types of funerary pottery were also present in the domestic domain and that some items found in graves bore evident traces of use wear, again implying they had been subjected to some practical use. He points out, however, that these vessel forms are very limited and that not all artefacts found in the domestic assemblages are represented in funerary contexts. No sauceboats, for example, were found in the Manika graves while they were plentiful in the settlement deposits. Except for some very specific double function vessels, most funerary offerings were specifically selected to escort the dead. They mostly included imports or local imitations of items bearing a northeastern Aegean influence, such as the beaked jugs and the two- or one-handled cups, or a Cycladic influence, such as the clay and marble pyxides and the palettes.

In view of the above evidence, it is likely that, in contrast to the Neolithic, during the EC period the range of supernatural meanings and beliefs about death, the afterlife or dead ancestors evolved considerably. The funerary role of artefacts is now clearly distinguished from any other role, which was not the case in the Neolithic. The dead are assigned their own grounds, and offerings become somewhat standardized in terms of certain objects and vessel forms.

Even if some funerary items were not 100 per cent intended as such and still had roles in the domestic domain, the general impression is of the development of a funerary craft industry manufacturing specially oriented funerary products. This specialized industry produced a fair range of items such as marble vases, marble palettes, figurines and fine long obsidian blades, which have been referred to as 'necrolithic' (Carter 1999, chap. 7; 2003; this volume, Chapter 23). This specialized activity suggests that care for the dead must have been well organized, probably involving equally specialized personnel (priests, shamans?), and practised in accordance with standardized rules. Since standardization lies at the root of any ceremony, this self-contained funerary context, along with the discovery of communal ritual areas or the marking of the bones of the dead with special symbols, as evidenced at Manika (Sampson 1985, 234; Fountoulakis 1987), is a further indication that ceremonial practices did indeed take place.

To conclude this section, it could be suggested that the domestic/funerary dichotomy had its roots in EC ideology. Without underestimating depositional causes, cemeteries are probably more richly represented in the archaeological record because Early Cycladic people equipped them with greater care. They did this because they assigned higher symbolic priorities to their burial grounds, dictated by the wish to keep their dead 'alive' for as long as possible in the form of memorized symbols. The existence of standardized ceremonial practices, the development of some kind of 'funerary industry' which channeled craft and traded products to the burial ground and the deliberate construction of memorials on top of the graves, all may have served this same ideological obsession with ancestral memory (Hodder 1996, 43), with the idea that ancestors were an important part of the living community and that their memory was the community's absolute link with its homeland and would secure its future there.

As a link to the discussion developed in the previous section regarding the asymmetries between 'poor' and 'rich', and 'simple' and 'complex' EC settlements, this new asymmetry between the 'poor' domestic and 'rich' funerary contexts of the period can make a considerable contribution: the poor versus rich dichotomy is actually misleading. Funerary material culture unquestionably indicates not only that changes did occur, but also that they very suddenly and clearly developed from the previous period. Therefore, changes *must also* have occurred in those settlements categorized as 'poor', even if their livelihoods depended upon the same resources available to their Neolithic precursors. Such a conclusion does

not refute the theoretical suggestion discussed above, that choices springing from unreadable local traditions and meanings may have determined the individual divergences. Instead, it comes to confirm this statement and takes it one step further; that local perceptions may exert a very strong effect on subsistence and other socio-cultural practices, leading to locally variant life styles.

How can modern research trace these invisible perceptions within domestic contexts in order to substantiate what finally constituted the EBA change? It would probably need to analyse all possible data from settlements in detail, and build — with the aid of anthropological theory — a new theoretical structure seeking to recover the ideological context — personal or collective — of each material expression of economic, technical or aesthetic practice.

The problem of the Neolithic-EBA transition

Evidence from the settlement at Koukounaries also poses questions regarding the Neolithic to EBA transition. This is because the EC II deposit on the Lower Plateau is underlain by a substantial Neolithic stratum which begins in the middle of the fifth millennium BC, as indicated by certain definite Saliagos features, such as a 'Fat Lady' marble pendant (Schilardi 1990, 222, pl. 131στ). This stratum extends to the end of the Neolithic, probably with a gap between LN and FN, i.e. Saliagos and Kephala cultures. The FN seems to be the thicker of the two but we are still uncertain whether this occupation phase terminates at the end of the Neolithic or extends further into EC I. As a matter of fact, alongside typical FN pottery (such as crusted burnished (Sampson 1987, 40–42; Evans & Renfrew 1968, 36), pithoi with incised zones (Coleman 1977a, pl. 44A–H; Sampson 2002a, figs. 68–70), lugs and lug handles, red monochromes (Sampson 1993c, 161) and cheese-pots) (Fig. 8.11), there are elements that could be later in date (such as better oxidized pottery fired at higher temperatures, plenty of hemispherical or conical bowls with early EC lugs,



Figure 8.11. FN pottery from the Lower Plateau.



Figure 8.12. Perforated rims from Lower Plateau.

and large concentrations of rolled rims and perforated rims) (Fig. 8.12) and that are generally considered to overrun the Neolithic into the EBA. These convey a sub-Neolithic (sometimes called transitional) impression, as compared with a number of other Neolithic island sites with a more definite Neolithic boundary, such as the sites of the Euboea–Attica–Kephala or the Dodecanese cultures.

The exact datings of rolled rims and of perforated rims have been subjects of particular debate. The rolled rims appear in the latest Neolithic on the Greek mainland (Sampson 1993a, 161–2), on the Cyclades

(including Paros: Overbeck 1989a, 5: no. 1) and in the northern Aegean, but it is only on the Cyclades that they persist into the EBA, even as far as EC III. The fact that the type coexists with vertical, crescent-shaped lugs on some vases from Naxos is a chronological link with the Plastiras culture and the invisible EC I (Sotirakopoulou 1991, 78–9). In fact, the strong burnishing on the surfaces of rolled rim bowls, widely seen on other open vases of the same period, has associated them with the post-Final Neolithic period (Belmont & Renfrew 1964, 398). On the mainland, on the other hand, they were still produced at the very beginning of the Early Helladic, but did not continue into the EBA (Tzavella-Evjen 1984, 150; Caskey & Caskey 1960, 136, fig. 4: Groups II–III).

The other controversial feature is the perforated rim of the large, shallow, coarse basins or baking pans, conventionally called ‘cheese-pots’ whose function has not yet been satisfactorily explained (Sampson 1988b, 160; Sotirakopoulou, this volume, Chapter 14). Such rims are typical of the end of the Neolithic, especially on sites in the Aegean (Sampson 1987, 30, 81, 89; 1988a, 96–102), though recent discoveries at Ftelia on Mykonos (Sampson 2002a, 61; this volume, Chapter 4) show that they appeared much earlier (fifth millennium BC). As for their duration, on mainland Greece they disappear at the end of the Neolithic and their association with Early Helladic Pefkakia is wrong (Sampson 1993a, 185; 2002a, 64). In contrast, in the Aegean they persist as late as the Grotta-Pelos culture (Belmont & Renfrew 1964, 398), the EBA layers at the Heraion on Samos (Milojčić 1961, 57), Troy I (Blegen *et al.* 1950, 56, 75, D23) and probably on other sites in Asia Minor; therefore, they should be regarded as sub-Neolithic and transitional in date. It is possible, however, that typical cheese-pots end with the Kephala culture and that any later perforated rims belong to a different shape. This may well be the case in Koukounaries given that the perforated rim pieces do not resemble typical Neolithic cheese-pots in terms of wall thickness and profile.

The data are still too poor to conclude that a period bridging the Neolithic and the EBA exists at Koukounaries, though they strongly suggest that it does (Katsarou & Schilardi 2004, 36–7). Thus, it is possible that the latest Neolithic at Koukounaries may be comparable with those island sites where there is a smooth progression to the EBA such as Grotta on Naxos (Barber 1987, 22; Hadjianastasiou 1988b), Ayia Irini on Keos (Coleman 1974) and Kolonna on Aegina (Walter & Felten 1981). At the same time, uninterrupted habitation is identified at Poliochni II (Bernabò Brea 1964) and Emporio VII–VI on Chios (Hood 1981).

On mainland Greece, signs of smooth transition to the EBA are identified at Eutresis IV to the south (Caskey & Caskey 1960), and Sitagroi and Dikili Tash further north (Papadopoulos 1997). The new and impressive data from the fortified settlement of Strofilas on Andros (Televantou, this volume, Chapter 6), could throw more light on this question. The occurrence of Neolithic features (pattern-burnished wares, Kephala-Emporio types, ring idols, figurines) alongside EC features (fortification wall, rock-cut ship and animal images, potter’s marks) at Strofilas may well suggest an intermediate position for this settlement between the Neolithic and the EBA. Could a new sub-phase be emerging from this newly-excavated site which could also be assigned to Koukounaries? Other fortified settlements dated to the transition between the latest Neolithic and the early Early Bronze Age have been located at Mesogeia, on the eastern plains of Attica, during the course of salvage excavations before the construction of the new Athens airport and facilities for the 2004 Olympics. Better known is the site of Zagani (Steinhauer 2003), but other sites, in the areas of Merenta (Kakavogianni 2003a, 22, 25) and Loutsas, have also been identified as LN–EB I by archaeologists of the 2nd Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities (Efstratiou *et al.* 2003; Argyropoulos *et al.* 2003, 33). In light of this, Strofilas may not after all be an isolated example and transition may exist, unidentified, on several known FN sites. Since occupation of these transitional sites is not interrupted, but transcends the LN–EB I boundary, we believe that we may be facing an emerging sub-phase which may lead relevant chronological schemes in reconsideration — a phase incorporating old with new features, integrating the dynamics of change that transformed a Neolithic into an Early Bronze Age reality.

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