

that strengthened social cohesion. Although this chapter disrupts the strictly chronological order of the book, the importance of camel domestication for social dynamics during the subsequent Iron Age—presented in Chapter 8—clearly justifies this structure.

The final two chapters discuss the diverse relationships between the Arabian Peninsula and neighbouring regions, as well as the specific adjustments and changes of Arabian societies. Again, Magee highlights the importance of domesticated dromedaries. They enabled local populations from the ninth century BC onwards to determine both the method of transport (by land) and the locations at which trade could take place.

With his emphasis on specific ‘Arabian’ social and economic developments, Magee not only treads the path laid out by Maurizio Tosi (1986), but develops it into a coherent view of Arabia’s past in light of recent archaeological research. I highly recommend this book for scholars and students of all disciplines with an interest in the history of Arabia. Although some of the chapters reveal slight chronological and geographical biases, it will be difficult to find a more comprehensive book on the topic, combining the presentation of the latest research with stimulating and prospective thoughts.

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PHILIP BETANCOURT. *Aphrodite’s Kephali: an Early Minoan I defensive site in eastern Crete*. (Prehistory Monographs 41). xii+247 pages, 97 b&cw illustrations, 30 tables. 2013. Philadelphia (PA): INSTAP Academic; 978-1-931534-71-0 hardback £46.

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Crete is well known for its Bronze Age ‘palatial civilisation’. Monumental, court-centred buildings, which are often referred to as palaces, were indeed constructed on the island at the beginning of the second

millennium BC. But as far as the Early Bronze Age is concerned, the archaeological record is dominated by tombs and burials; the world of the living remains relatively elusive. The publication of an Early Bronze Age settlement site therefore constitutes an event in itself. The present volume is the final report on the excavation and study of the small site of Aphrodite’s Kephali. Briefly occupied at the dawn of the Bronze Age, during the Early Minoan IA period (c. 3100/3000–2900 BC), Aphrodite’s Kephali is, nonetheless, far from a typical settlement. It is presented here as a small fort or fortified watchtower, the first Early Minoan IA example of its kind to be fully excavated and published. The fort occupies a strategic location, perched on a hilltop that overlooks the southern part of isthmus of Ierapetra, which forms a natural corridor between the north and south coasts of eastern Crete in an otherwise mountainous landscape.

The site was discovered accidentally (and partly destroyed) when the property owner bulldozed the hilltop to create agricultural terraces. Excavations were carried out in 1996 and 2003 under the direction of the twenty-fourth Ephorate, and the publication was entrusted to P. Betancourt, who enlisted the services of a series of specialists. The book is subdivided into 14 chapters organised in three parts. Part I provides a general introduction to the site (Chapter 1) and its region (Chapter 2), a geological study (Chapter 3, by F.W. McCoy), and an examination of the settlement pattern on the isthmus of Ierapetra. A distinction is made between the mode of occupation in the northern (Chapter 4) and southern parts of the isthmus (Chapter 5, by K. Chalikias) on the basis of topographical, geological and social factors. Part II focuses on the evidence from Aphrodite’s Kephali itself, describing the history and methodology of the excavation (Chapter 6), the architecture (Chapter 7), the pottery (Chapter 8), the stone tools (Chapter 9, by H.M.C. Dierckx), the faunal remains (Chapter

10, by D.S. Reese), and the plant remains (Chapter 11, by E. Margaritis). In Part III, P. Betancourt discusses the motivations behind the construction of such a fort (Chapter 12), the place of Aphrodite's Kephali in the early stages of defensive architecture in the eastern Mediterranean (Chapter 13) and the social and economic significance of the site (Chapter 14). The volume is completed by two appendices respectively concerned with the results of petrographic (Appendix A, by E. Nodarou) and residue analyses (Appendix B, by A.J. Koh & P. Betancourt).

The reconstruction of a fort at Aphrodite's Kephali is based on the presence of the remains of parallel walls that are seen to form a double circuit following the top of the hill, with cross walls between the two circuits creating casemates. This fortification wall enclosed, minimally, a two-room structure to the south and an open court to the north. A heavily burnt area suggests that signal fires were lit in the court. A small cave adjacent to the two-room structure was probably used for storage and perhaps as a source of water. In spite of its poor state of preservation and rather small assemblage, the site provides useful information regarding architecture, material culture and social and economic life in this region of the island at the beginning of the third millennium. For instance, plant remains and the results of residue analyses add to the corpus of evidence regarding the extensive exploitation of olive and vine and the production of oil and wine at an early date. In the same vein, the discovery of obsidian from Melos and pottery from various production centres indicates that the site enjoyed access to regional and interregional exchange systems. Decorated *pitthoi* and smaller closed vessels testify not only to specialised craftsmanship but also to the important storage function of the fort and its large capacity. The lack of animal bones, medium-sized storage vases and loom weights, and the scarcity of tools, all support the impression that the site was not home to a typical domestic community.

Aphrodite's Kephali is one of a series of sites that were established in naturally defensible positions along the south coast of the island at the end of the Neolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age. The phenomenon is generally linked to the arrival of newcomers. It testifies to some kind of insecurity in southern Crete, in contrast to the north where undefended and stable coastal settlements prospered. According to Betancourt, the fort of Aphrodite's Kephali would have been related to the inland expansion of the colonists during the Early Minoan

IA, helping to "establish a secure and defensible base for the immediate territory" (p. 131). The two-room building could only have accommodated a few individuals, but a larger group could have gathered in the open court in times of danger. The effort invested in the construction of the fort and the storage of significant quantities of commodities point to the involvement of several communities; decisions regarding mutual defence were apparently made at a supra-local level. As stressed by Betancourt, the evidence from Aphrodite's Kephali may therefore indicate that early polities, comprising several hamlets and farmsteads, already existed in the southern isthmus of Ierapetra during the Early Minoan IA period. Overall, this volume constitutes a valuable addition to the bibliography. It offers a new picture of the first decades of the Bronze Age in eastern Crete. Further, it stresses that sites which at first may appear small, poor and badly preserved, still have potential if carefully excavated and studied by specialists within the framework of a multidisciplinary approach.

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MANUEL FERNÁNDEZ-GÖTZ, HOLGER WENDLIG & KATJA WINGER (ed.). *Paths to complexity: centralisation and urbanisation in Iron Age Europe*. viii+232 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. 2014. Oxford & Philadelphia (PA): Oxbow; 978-1-78297-723-0 hardback £65.



Over the last two decades, understanding of the European Iron Age has changed significantly. Although the renewed interest in this period that has swept the entire continent has touched many aspects of Iron Age studies, it is around the theme of settlement organisation that the interests of scholars from East and West—and of both the Early and Late Iron Ages—have most often intersected. The editors of the present volume have undertaken the laudable task of gathering some of the prominent figures in this field, including some of their own,

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