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Housing and settlement in Archaic Greece

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Architecture is a man-made aspect of social relations. It orders and limits space and creates an inside and an outside. Buildings are a part of the societal reality and with that a social phenomena (Kent 1990 ; Parker-Pearson, Richard 1997). The premise of archaeological research is that settlements are the result of social processes and they reflect political and socio-economic activities. Accepting this premise the question arises – what is relevant in detecting socio-economic activities and what does architecture tell us about a society and its communal life ?

It should however be taken into account that architecture is only one part of societal expression and does not represent the whole manifestation of a society. From an archaeological point of view some problems with assessing the nature of communal life in a society must be considered. Changes in the family (birth, death, migration) are not necessarily reflected in the architecture ; the rebuilding of a house does not always mean a change of family structure ; the use of the single rooms in a house can vary without affecting the architecture ; the creation of new administrative offices does not necessarily generate new building-types. That is, to gain a more detailed impression of living conditions in ancient societies requires examination of the whole material culture. This is often difficult since in many cases the material is only partially published ; only rarely are the finds and the architectural remains which belong together published so that the assessment of communal life must often be based on the architecture alone ; and here the ground-plan of houses and settlements are not always presented in their different phases. The limits this method imposes need to be kept in mind when reading the following article about Archaic Greece based on architecture only (Allison 1999 ; Pfälzner 2001).

Nevertheless, the architecture can give some hints about the political, socio-economic, symbolic, functional and ideological situation of a community. To this purpose the following aspects are considered : 1) the settlement type : the arrangement of the houses within the settlement and the street system ; 2) the structure of the settlement lay-out : to what extent are different areas recognisable ? If they are, how is the division in official and private space achieved ? 3) the possible existence of private and official buildings ; 4) the functional divisions of official facilities ; 5) house types.

The scale and kind of the appearance of all these features can give us an impression of the organisation and the level of the societal arrangement in the settlement. These are considered for the Archaic period in Greece.

The Archaic period in Greece exhibits fundamental changes in the organisation of settlements and houses. On the one hand, there was no abrupt break from the former period, but a gradual transition. On the other hand new requirements led to innovation in different sectors. It is difficult to estimate all of these, because the Archaic period does not offer many remains of profane architecture in comparison to the Geometric and Classical periods. Providing a picture of Archaic living means to speak about scarce and rare evidence. However, the following remarks are intended to give a short overview of the character of communal living in Archaic period (Snodgrass 1980 ; Lang 1996 ; Morris 1998).

In general, in the Iron Age in Greece two settlement types can be distinguished : the planned type and the historically grown type. Until the eighth century BC no planned settlements are detectable in Greece. The common type were the settlements with detached or agglomerated houses. An often mentioned example of a settlement with detached houses is Emporio (fig. 1) on the Island of Chios (Boardman 1967). In the 8th cent. BC rectangular houses were built up on a steeply terraced hill. The streets are not planned but following the natural contours of the hill. The top of the hill is enclosed by a wall surrounding one big house and a cult place transformed into a temple in the sixth century. In Archaic times this settlement type still existed (Drerup 1969 ; Fagerström 1988 ; Lang 1996 ; Mazarakis Ainian 1997).

A second type is the agglomeration. Several houses incoherently form dwelling units surrounded by streets. Examples were excavated in Kastanas, Prinias or Zagora (fig. 2).[1] The advantage of this type is the fairly good adaptation to the various topographical situations and its castle-like protection, giving even cover for rain and wind. Furthermore the agglomerated houses use the available space most efficiently, particularly in difficult terrain or limited space. The often narrow and meandering street-pattern give the settlement a confusing character.

In the seventh century some fundamental changes took place. Regular and planned cities can be found in Greece. The houses are erected in a row, one house next to the other. Vroulia (fig. 3) on the island of Rhodes offers an early example (Kinch 1914). Situated on a promontory two rows of houses are built parallel and divided by a street. Simultaneously the back of the northern row forms the fortification-wall. In the western part of the settlement an area is enclosed including altars and a couple of rooms. This area had a presumably public function. In other settlements one can recognise rows of houses along a street network like Miletos (fig. 4) in Ionia (Senff 2000) and Limenas (fig. 7) on Thasos (Grandjean 1988). The latter examples show the tendency in the Archaic period whenever parts in the already existing settlement must be built up they followed the new planned settlement pattern.

Apart from the general settlement type the internal arrangement of the settlement offers further information. From the Archaic period onwards a spatial division within the settlements is conspicuous. The silhouette of the settlement shows the division of communal areas and private houses. The area of habitation can be distinguished from the central administrative focus by different buildings. These different areas could easily be separated by

1 Kastanas : Hänsel 1989 ; Prinias : G. Rizza, *ASAtene, N.S.* 45, 1983, 45 ; Zagora : Kambitoglou *et al.* 1988.

location and the ground plan of the buildings. This new kind of internal organisation reflects on the political and social changes during the Archaic period. These shifts concerned the political, administrative, socio-economic and religious domain and created new public offices, like the *prytanos* or *archon*. One of its consequences was that every domain received its own architectural shape often connected to specific functions. At the beginning the *agora* could be described with simple feature as an open square, surrounded by buildings with cultural function, like small shrines or temples sometimes situated at a junction of roads. Early examples are know in Dreros in Crete or in Koukounaries on the island Paros (fig. 6, 5).[2] Shops and workshops were also situated close to the agora, like Athens.[3] In the later Archaic period the *agora* received an architectural form which expressed its essential function as political, administrative, economic, communicative and traffic focus of the town (Hölscher 1998 ; Kenzler 1999).

The religious domain was touched by the new development too. Religious practice in the former periods had been more private and secluded but now it became part of the public sphere, the whole community was integrated, the sacrifice became collective.[4] The gods obtained their own building, the temple. This received its specific architectural design during the Archaic period and its structure did not change fundamentally in the next epochs. Due to its function the ground plan and the appearance differ from the current house types and the temple was executed using a lavish architectural style like Corinth or Athens. Now integrated into the town, often in an exposed position, the temple became an emblem of collective identity and an object of the prestige of the *polis* symbolising its status by the architectural execution.

Furthermore, life and death were now topographically divided. The city of death, the necropolis, emerged, situated outside the settlement and separated from the city of life. That is, the territory was now arranged in profane, sacred and sepulchral spheres indicating different functions. The profane and sacred areas – except for sanctuaries in the countryside – had a limit. The most visible boundary of a settlement is the fortification-wall. It is not an abstract architectural element but closely connected to the political, economic, symbolic and legal situation. In the Archaic Greek *polis* the city wall does not separate people living inside the wall from those living outside, neither in a political nor a legal sense. The political rights and laws were valid in the whole *polis* territory, independent of the place of residence whether in village, farmstead or town. Nevertheless the city wall controls access to the city itself and are the visible boundary of the city to the surrounding countryside or the *asty* to the *chora*, that is between the living space and the cultivated area ; between the habitat

2 Koukounaries : D. Schilardi, *Praktika* 1989, 253-266 ; Dreros : P. Demargne, H. van Effenterre, *BCH* 1937, 5-32.

3 In recent years discussion has been raised about the location of the Athenian agora in Archaic period. There are arguments against a continuity of the place of the Agora where it is in classical times, e.g. Papadopoulos 1996 ; Kenzler 1997.

4 Collective means less the active participation of the community in the sacrifice than the allowance to attend this ritual. There is a discussion about the question - who had access to the inner sanctum of the temple ? Was there a restriction to the 'priests' or was it accessible to everybody ? (Corbett 1970 ; Hägg 1996, passim).

within the city and the area of the primary economic sector outside ; between different economic branches : trade, market and workshops within the town and agriculture outside.

Finally, the city wall is a manifestation of the distinction of lifestyles : the urban and the rural. The design of a fortification wall reflects up to a point the current military strategies : the more advanced poliorcetic possibilities are, the more sophisticated the plan of the wall. The outline of the walls in the earlier phase of Archaic period was quite simple (fig. 8) : circuits and some simple gates, sometimes a tower was incorporated (Schilardi 1983). This simple design of the walls could not resist heavy attacks. But it was strong enough to prevent insignificant assaults and to contain cattle and flocks. Since the middle of the sixth century city walls, for example in Larisa Hermos (fig. 9) at the Hermos river (Boehlau, Schefold 1940), developed rapidly and the lay-out of the walls changed : walls with towers appear, the architecture of gates and walls became more sophisticated (fig. 10) also symbolising the prestigious character of the city wall. The city wall was not always the significant characteristic of a settlement. In the Geometric epoch most settlements were un-walled. Apart from Crete walled settlements appear from the eighth centuries BC onwards in greater numbers. If one maps the emergence of the city walls (fig. 11), the first examples can be observed in the Eastern Aegean region, Asia Minor and the Cyclades. In mainland Greece – as far as we know – the first city-walls appear in the seventh century (Lang 1996 ; Hölscher 1998).

Until now the settlement structures established in Archaic times have been referred to. The following topic is concerned with the private sector of a society, the houses. There are many dimensions to the house which relate to the economic, functional, social and symbolic spheres. The following remarks refer only to the social and functional dimensions.

The ground plan offers some clues for a social analysis. The number of rooms within the house shows the scale of functional division. If the house has only one room, then it probably had a multifunctional purpose. The more rooms, the greater the possibility of separation of functions within the house. The subdivision of the house, the kind and number of rooms and the position of the doorways indicate the nature of internal communication (Bernbeck 1997).

The houses are usually classified in accordance with the ground plan. Houses with oval or apsidal shape from the tenth century BC onwards spread out to the whole of Greece except for Crete (Drerup 1969). Examples of such houses are known e.g. in Assiros, Oropos (fig. 13) and Smyrna.[5]

At the same time the different house type of rectangular shape can be studied, for example, in Emporio (fig. 12). The houses were erected in isolation due to the topographical situation. This settlement reveals one-room or two-room houses (Boardman 1967).

In both house types life and all the work took place in and outside the house and the rooms would have had a multi-functional purpose. In the two-room houses the rooms are built one behind the other, which meant that the last room was only accessible through the first.

5 Assiros : K.A. Wardle *BSA* 82, 1987, 322 ; Oropos : A. Mazarakis-Ainianos, *Praktika* 1997, 47-77 ; Smyrna : E. Akurgal, *Alt-Smyrna* (1983) fig. 15 ; Lang 1996 fig. 99.

From the seventh century onwards there is an obvious alteration of house types in Greece. On the one hand, there is a remarkable decline of the apsidal house type (fig. 13). Those apsidal houses surviving in the Archaic period seem to have a specific purpose like ritual function (Lang 1996, 84).

It is quite exciting to realise that this process did not occur accidentally – which one can prove in Eretria or Miletos (fig. 14), where the apsidal houses are directly remodelled, or overbuilt by rectangular shaped houses (Lang 1996, 73 ; Morris 1998).[6] On the other hand, there appears to have been a general trend to replace one- or two-room houses with multiple-room houses. They often have a court or a hall, around which the rooms are grouped. In these houses the rooms are not behind one another, but next to each other in a paratactic manner. Courtyard houses are known at Vroulia (fig. 3. 17), Miletos (fig. 4) or Zagora (fig. 16).[7] This evolution obviously reflects new requirements within these communities and had remarkable consequences for the internal organisation of the house, the household and its way of life, as can be shown by some examples.

As already mentioned, in Zagora (fig. 2. 15) in Geometric times there were big one-room houses and some two-room houses agglomerated (Kambitoglou et al. 1988). The houses were surrounded by open space. All normal work was done in the one room of the house, which was used in a multi-functional way. Naturally, when the weather permitted, work could have been done outside of the house. Similarly family life could have also taken place in the public sphere, since many family activities could have occurred inside or outside the house. There were not many differences between the inside and outside spheres. The whole settlement could be viewed as the area for daily life.

After the middle of the eighth century, a remodelling of housing took place and a fortification wall was erected (fig. 16). The multi-functional one-room of the former phase is replaced in favour of three rooms. Each house gets a court yard, a small, a middle-sized and a big room. The functions carried out in the house were now divided into different rooms. The remodelling could only have been executed with the consent of the residents of the houses. From one generation to the next we can recognise a structural change in the settlement as well as the family organisation leading to more standardisation of house and settlement structure (Lang 1996, 95-97).

An example of a standardisation in the settlement plan from the beginning is the already mentioned settlement Vroulia (fig. 3). Here multiple-room houses with 2 or 3 rooms around a courtyard were erected. The rooms were situated one beside the next, in a paratactic order (fig. 17).[8] This new house-type symbolises a more enclosed structure and offered a different kind of communication, within the domestic sphere and to the outer-world of the household. The courtyard could have been used for domestic purposes like cooking etc., as people had done outside the house during the previous period. The residents now occupied

6 Eretria : L. Kahil, *Antike Kunst* 24, 1981, 85 fig. 9 ; A. Andreiomenou *ASAtene N.S.* 43, 1981, 187-224) ; Miletos : V. von Graeve, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 23/24, 1973/4, 75 fig. 3 ; J. Kleine, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 29, 1979, 124 fig. 6.

7 Vroulia : Kinch 1914 ; Miletos : Lang 1996 ; Morris 1998 ; Senff 2000 ; Zagora : Kambitoglou et al. 1988 pl 1.

8 Kinch 1914 ; Lang 1996 fig. 65 ; Hoepfner (1999) 198 .

themselves more inside the house so that the neighbours could not have met them accidentally.[9] At the same time the subdivisions manifested an alteration within the house. The courtyard worked as a communal and interactive distribution area within the house from which people had access permission to other parts of the building. The separation of rooms could have facilitated the distinction of function and of social status within the household.

That this reflects a structurally common feature in the Archaic period, can be visualised by this diagram showing different means of access (fig. 18). Rooms and courts are each represented by the same symbol. Lines signal the access to the rooms. First, one marks the entrance by a dot, then a line links to the first room, from that further lines indicate the access to the other rooms. A room can be linked to one or more rooms. If we have a look back to the examples of Geometric settlements mentioned earlier, one can identify a lot of houses with one room situated behind another. The latter could only be reached by passing through the first (fig. 18 above). This situation was changed during the Archaic period. The rooms were situated in a paratactic order (fig. 18 below). Usually, one would reach a room via the court or a hallway. Some of the examples might clarify this situation. This system of access and possible access restriction facilitates a greater diversity of living conditions inside the house : age, gender, status, function etc. can be more easily divided.

It would be inappropriate to say that this development is typical for the whole Aegean area. Analysing the situation in Northern Greece produces a completely different picture.

In the Macedonian Kastanas, situated near Thessaloniki, a big house complex with at least twelve rooms along streets of late Geometric times was fully excavated (fig. 19). Four rooms seem to create one unit with different functions indicated by a hearth and implements. Other rooms were not connected and opened out to the street. In some of these single rooms hearths were found. Thus, these rooms are possibly individual house-units, which infers that the whole complex combined one extended family living in separate units of the house or that different families shared one house complex. The one-room unit with a hearth indicates that it had a multi-functional purpose, while the four-room-area seems to be divided in different functional sections.

In the later sixth century BC (fig. 20) a fundamental change can be observed. The house complex is replaced by detached two-room houses. This seems not to be a single phenomenon here in Kastanas, but a Macedonia-wide occurrence as in Assiros. This remodelling indicates a very different development to Southern Greece.

In conclusion, for the period under discussion changes and new developments with influences continuing into the following periods can be described : a distinction of settlement types such as city, town and village ; settlement systems with central and dependent locations ; architectural features referring to specific functions like administrative buildings, city walls or water systems erected as a communal operation ; the relative equilibrium between the political, socio-economic and religious-ritual spheres in contrast to

9 Surely, an exclusion could be also obtained with fences enclosing the plot in settlements like Zagora but I suppose enclosing the house with stone walls signifies something different than enclosing it with ephemeral straw fences.

the economies dominated by the religious administration of the Near Eastern empires[10] ; new building types (stoa, temple, fountain hall).

Furthermore, the changes to settlements and houses during the Archaic period show a tendency to differentiation, separation and individualisation on the one hand and ordering, structuring and standardisation on the other. The former is expressed : 1) by dividing the settlement into various functional areas ; 2) new building types distinguished by ground plan that derives from a specific purpose ; 3) the evident division into profane, sacred and, sepulchral spheres emphasised by private houses, official buildings with restricted access and necropolis ; 4) The duality of the citizen as public and private individual : not only in his integration in the duties of the *polis* but also in running his private *oikos* he has a responsibility for the well being of his *polis*.

Ordering, structuring and standardisation is the result of central institutions organising the *polis* and the settlements. The new offices required specific architectural installations. The gods were also individualised, each receiving their own cult-places and buildings. Administrative and private buildings and buildings for religious purposes became standardised ; in the layout of the settlement the dead were separated to enable a distinction between profane, sacred and sepulchral spheres. The new settlement type tends to follow a regular system and the houses had multiple rooms with functional divisions instead of the one or two room multi-functional houses of the former period.

The whole area of civic affairs were transformed in architecture and parallel to the countryside an urban society emerged during this time period. These tendencies differ from region to region. Life was now bound by official rules and laws, inscribed in stone, officially erected in the *agora* or the temples. All these factors led to the consolidation of the *polis*, which as a social-political model functioned on the one hand as an identity-giving institution for its citizen and on the other hand is dependant in its socio-political affairs on the active support of every *oikos* and individual.

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10 Since no settlement has yet been excavated entirely, these remarks about the organisation of urban space are preliminary and describe at most a tendency based on the currently available evidence.

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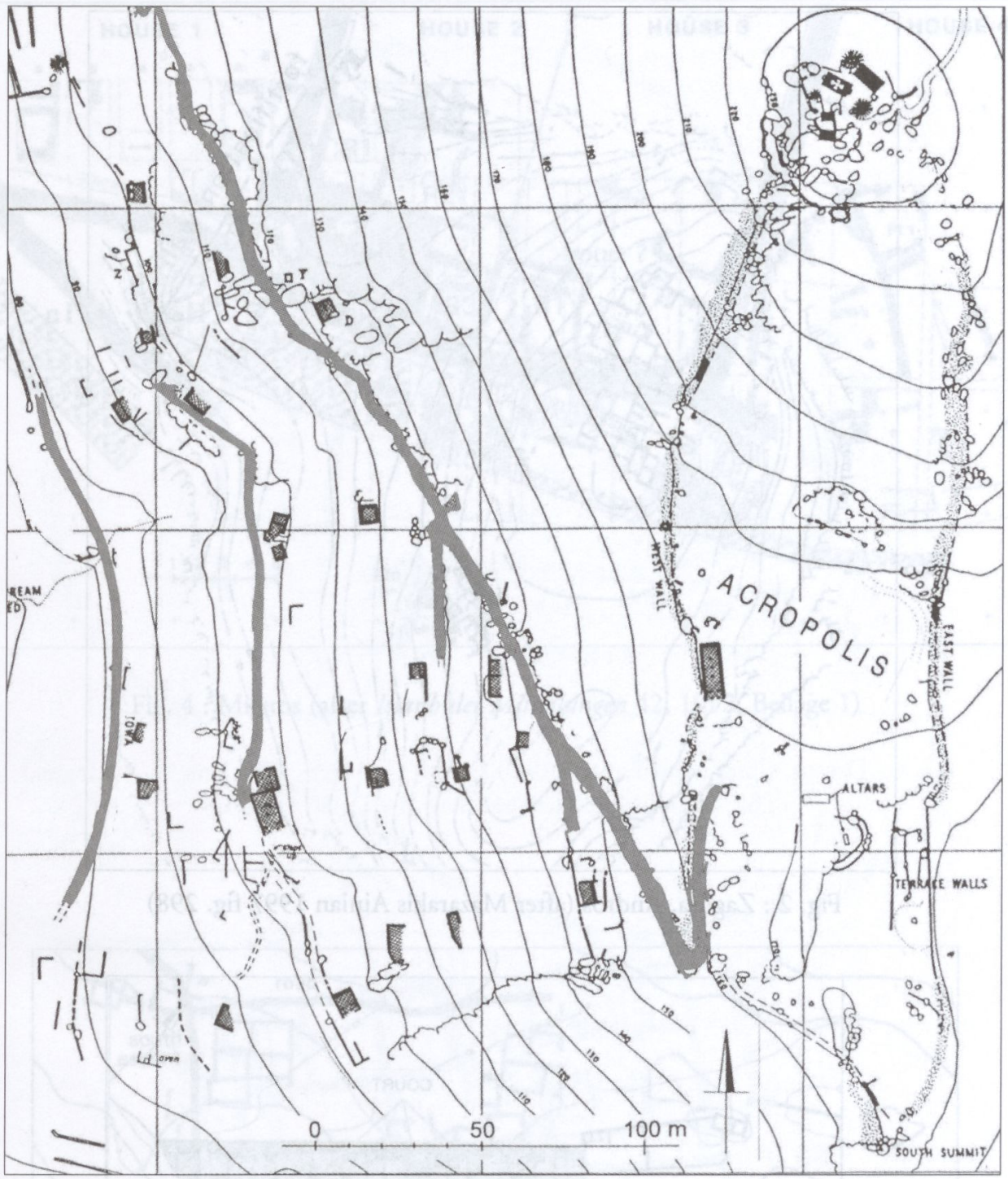

Fig. 1 : Emporio, Chios (after Boardman 1967 fig. 2)

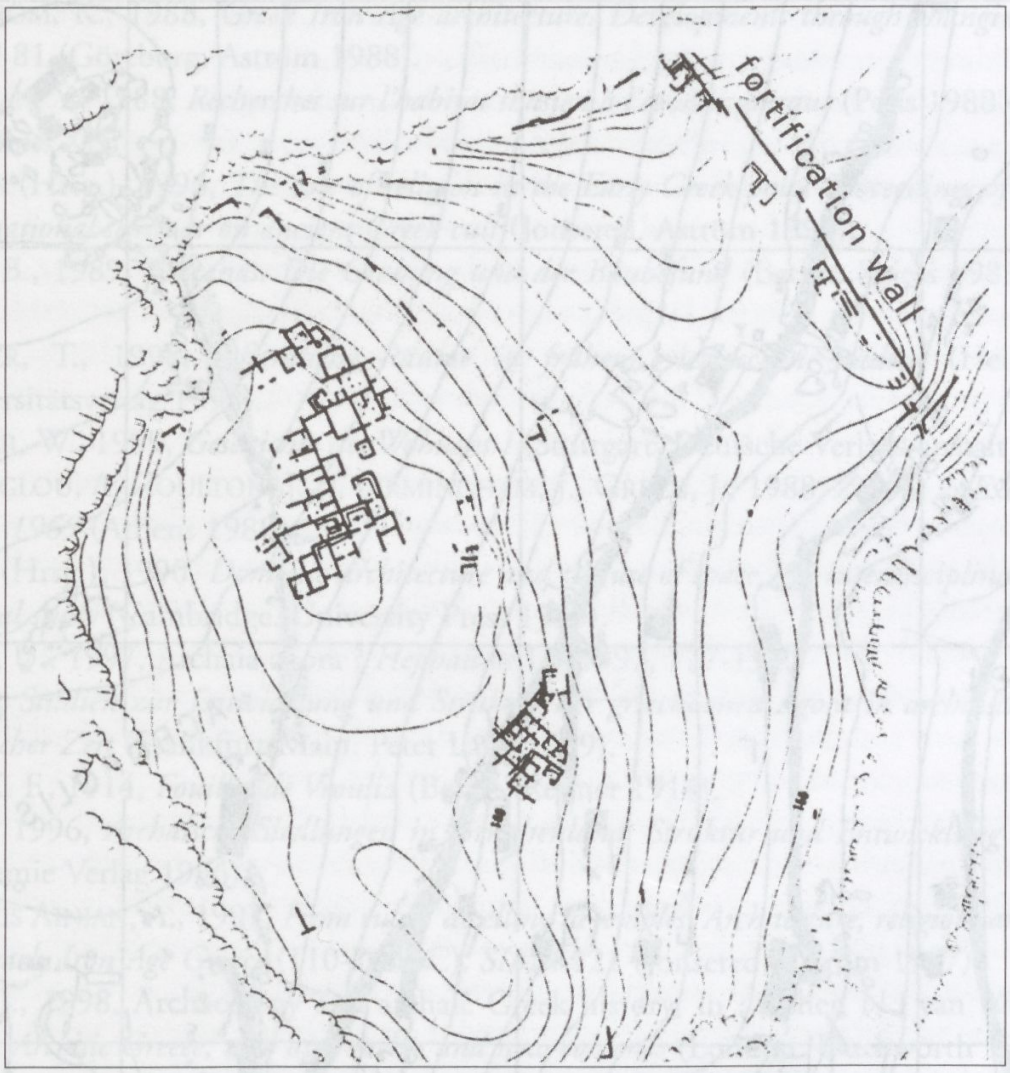

Fig. 2 : Zagora, Andros (after Mazarakis Ainian 1997 fig. 298)

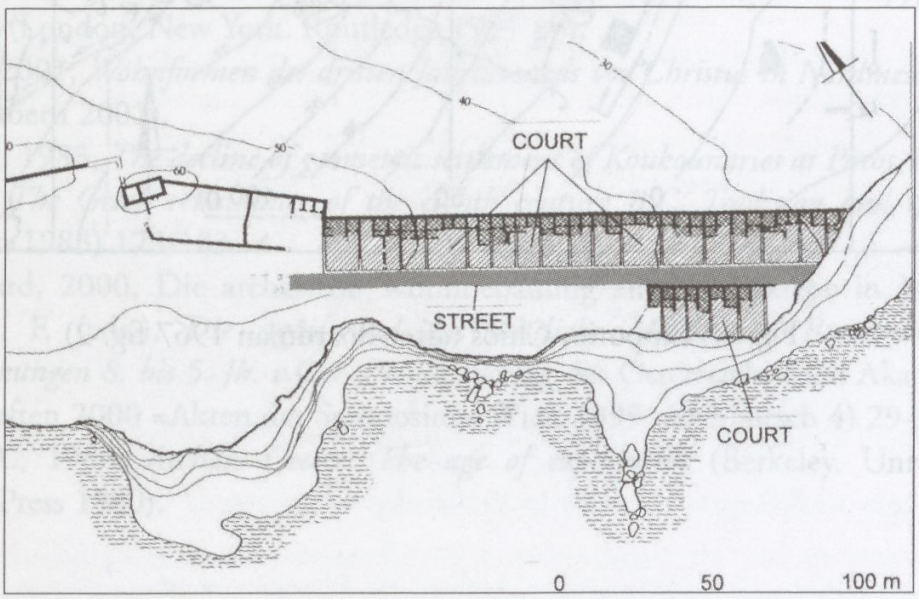

Fig. 3 : Vroulia, Rhodes (after F. Lang, *O argueólogo português* 16, 1998, 147 fig. 8)

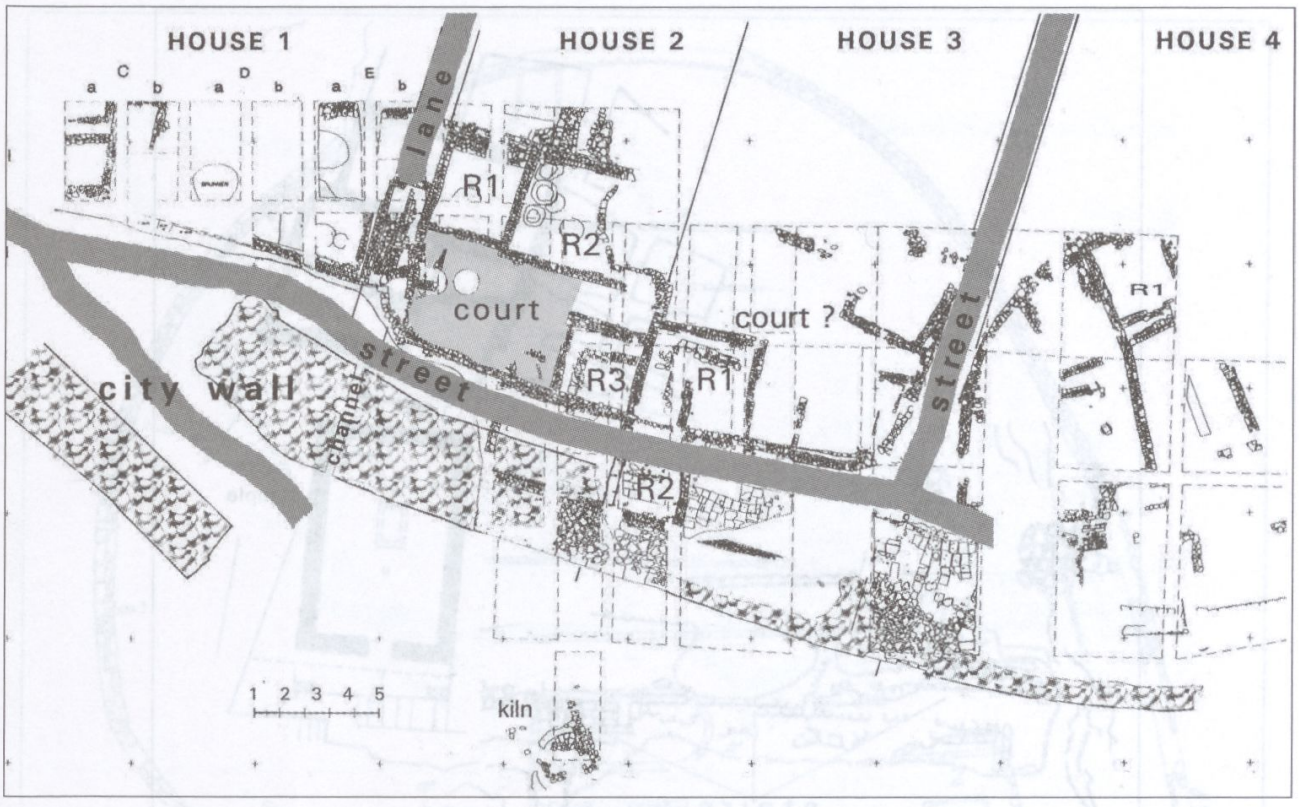

Fig. 4 : Miletos (after *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 42, 1992, Beilage 1)

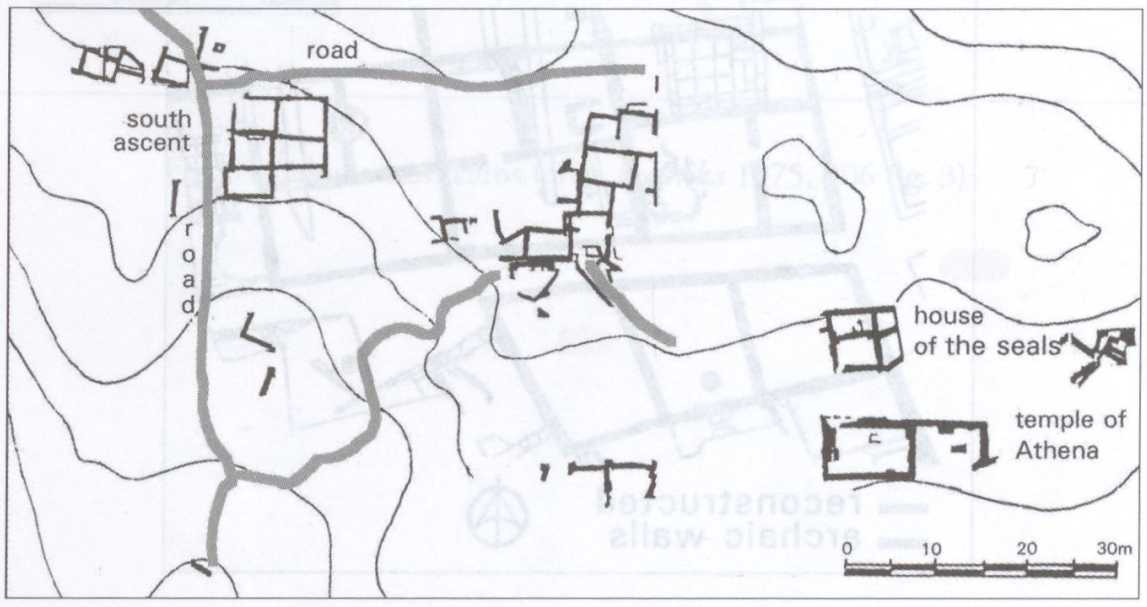

Fig. 5 : Koukounaries, Paros (after *Praktika* 1989, 254 fig. 1)

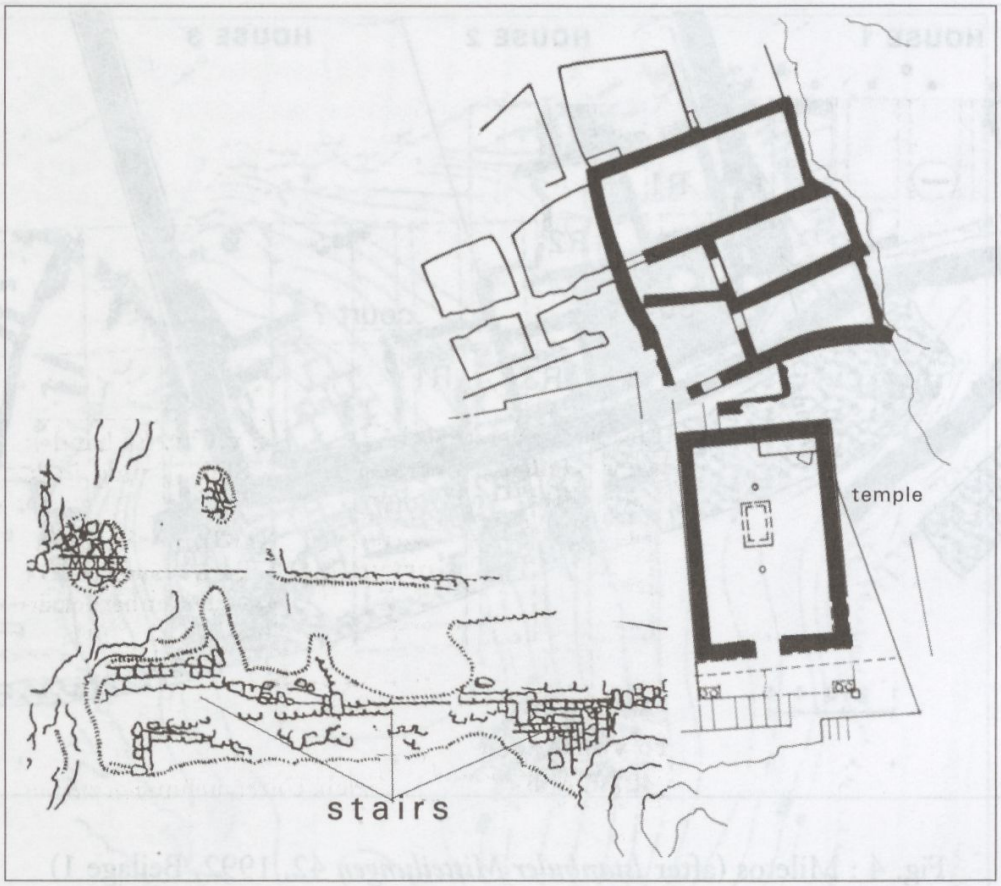

Fig. 6 : Dreros, Crete (after Drerup 1969 fig. 50 ; J. Myers, E. Myers, G. Cadogan, The aerial atlas of ancient Crete (1992) 86 fig. 101)

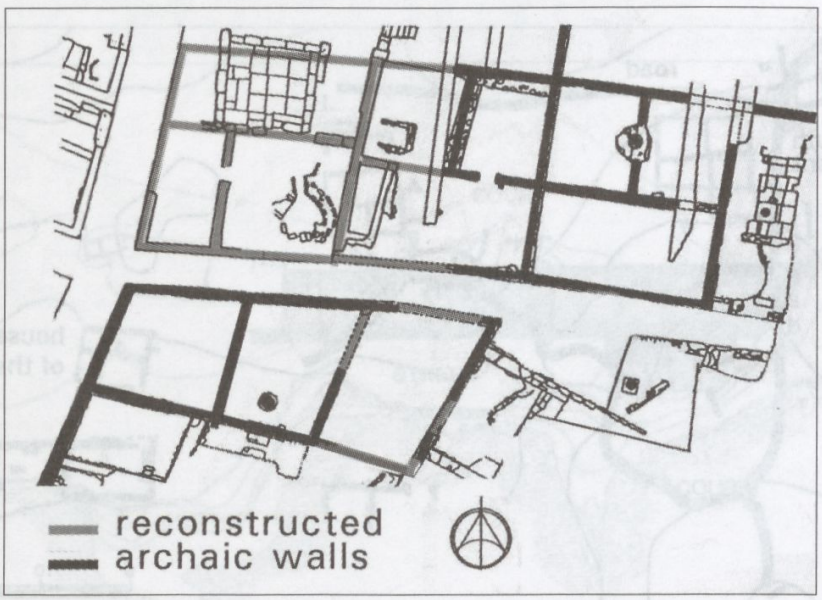

Fig. 7 : Limenas, Thasos (after Grandjean 1988, pl. X)

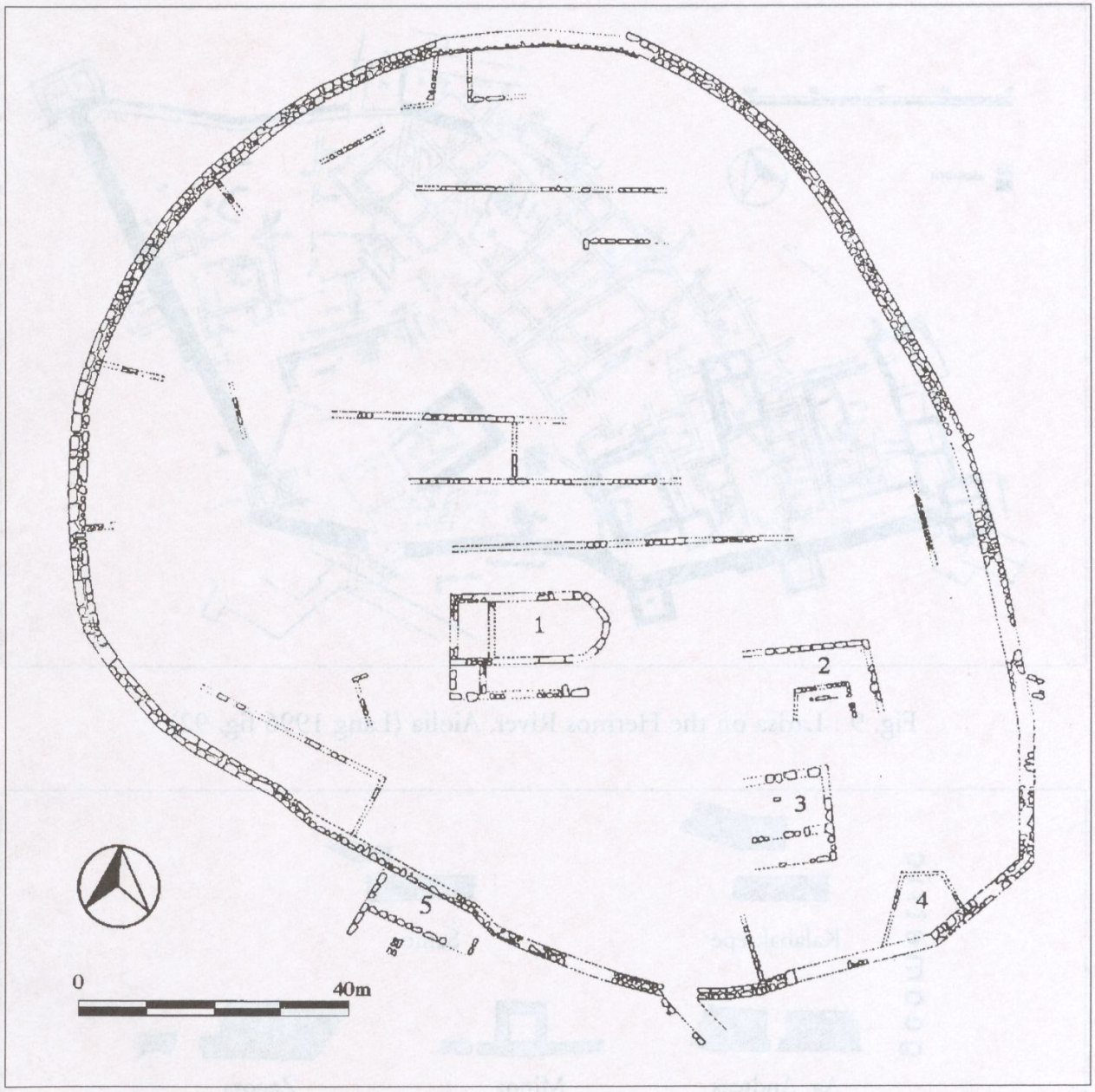

Fig. 8 : Oikonomos, Paros (after *Praktika* 1975, 206 fig. 3)

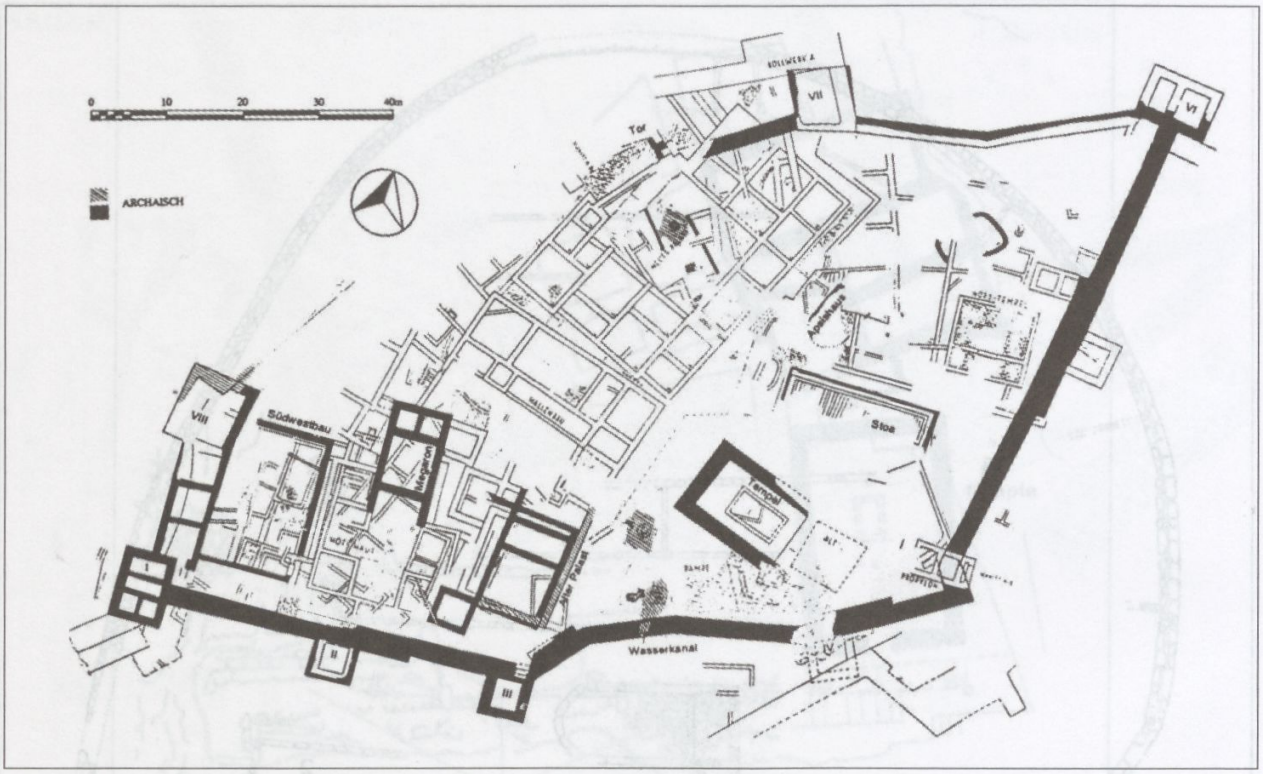

Fig. 9 : Larisa on the Hermos River, Aiolia (Lang 1996 fig. 92)

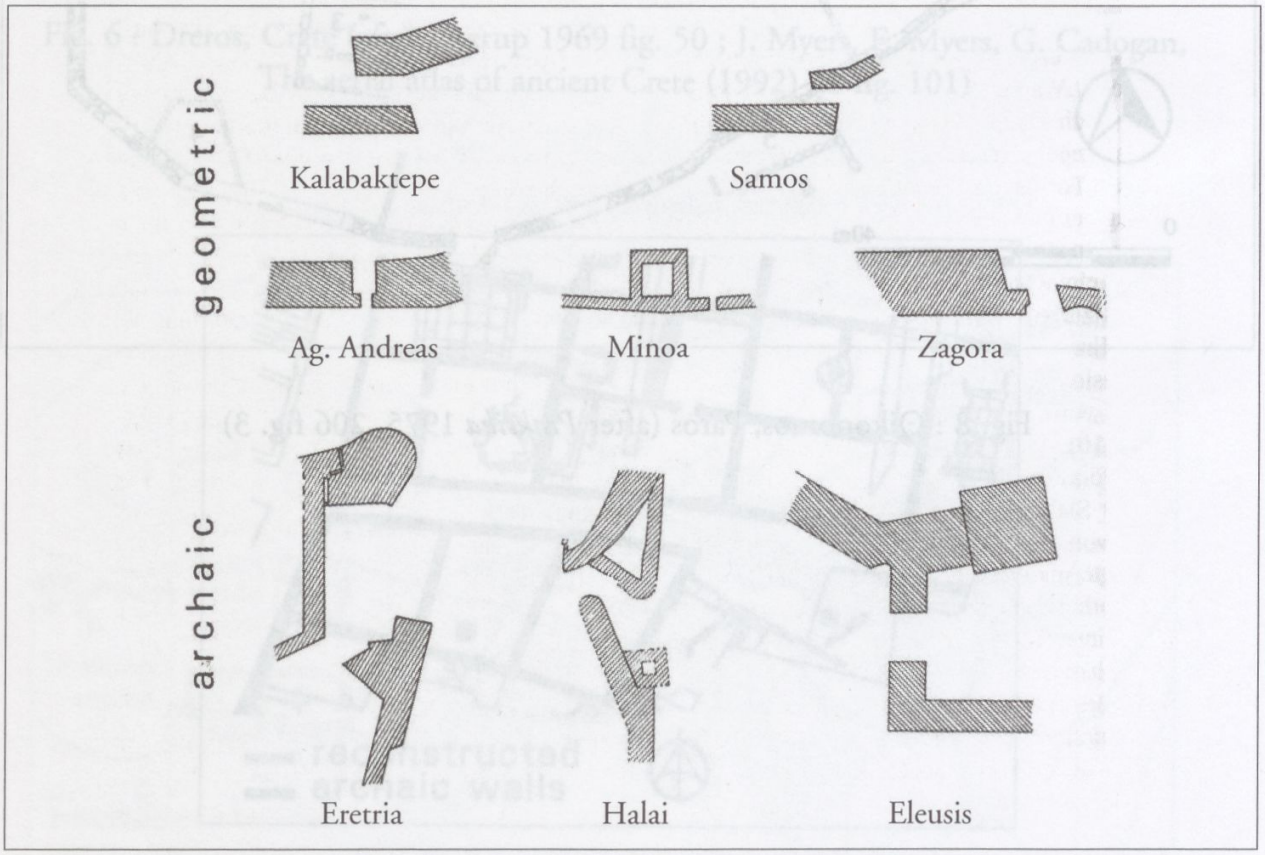

Fig. 10 : Types of gates in Geometric and Archaic periods (after Lang 1996, 38 fig. 6)

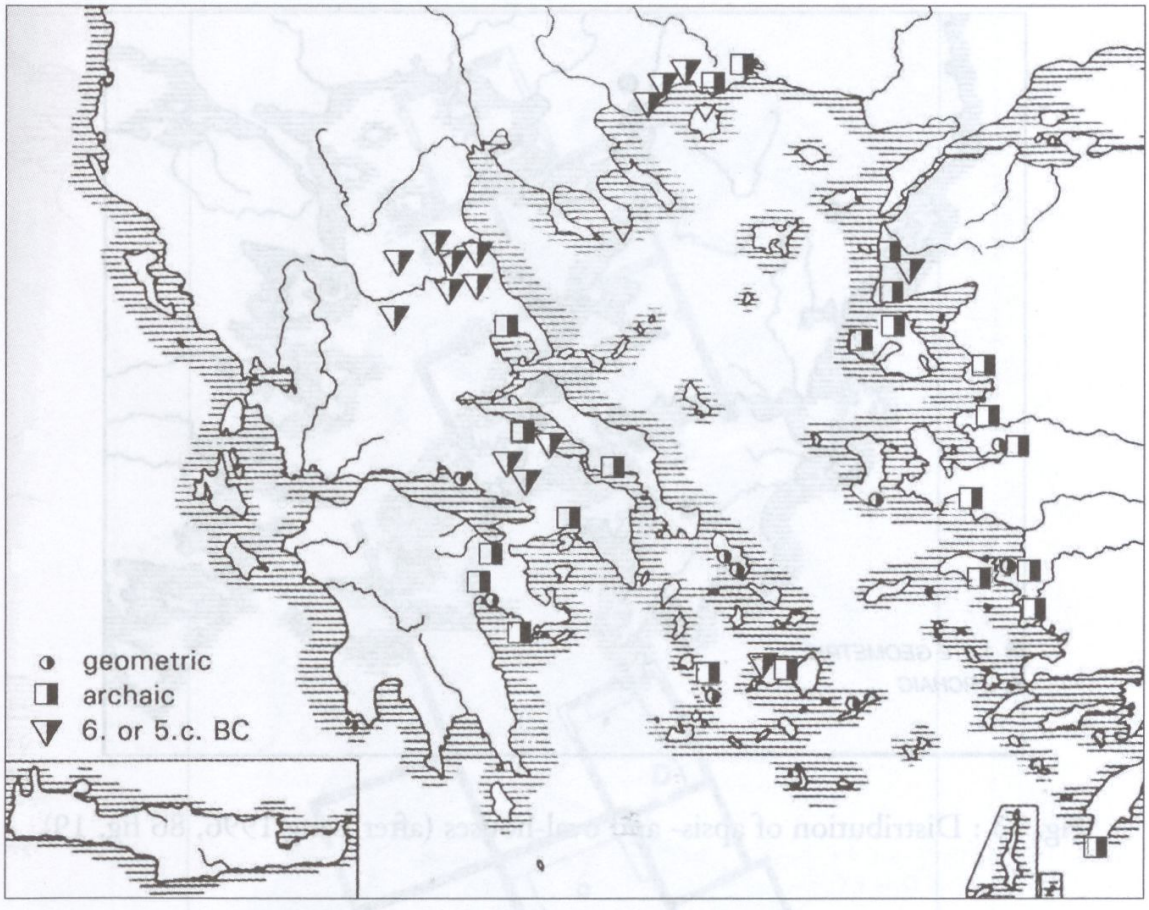

Fig. 11 : Chronological distribution of city-walls (after Lang 1996, 51 fig. 8)

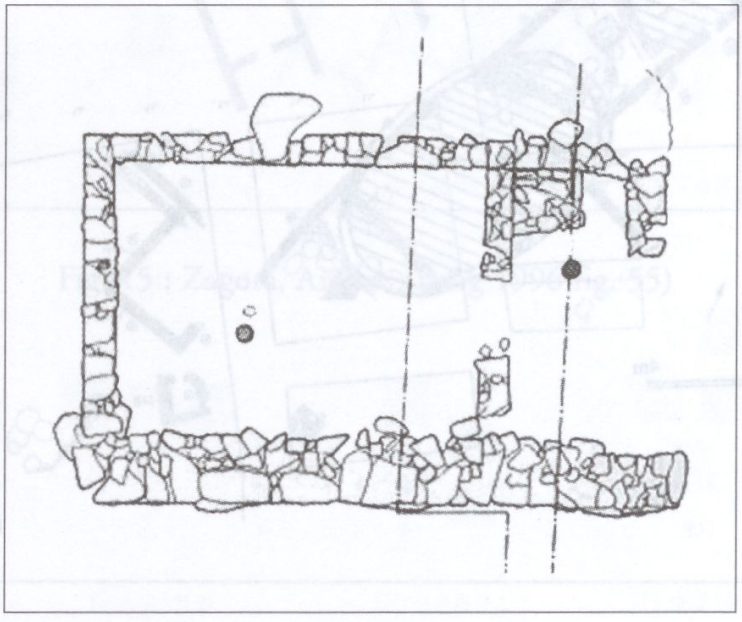

Fig. 12 : Houses in Emporio (after Boardman 1967)

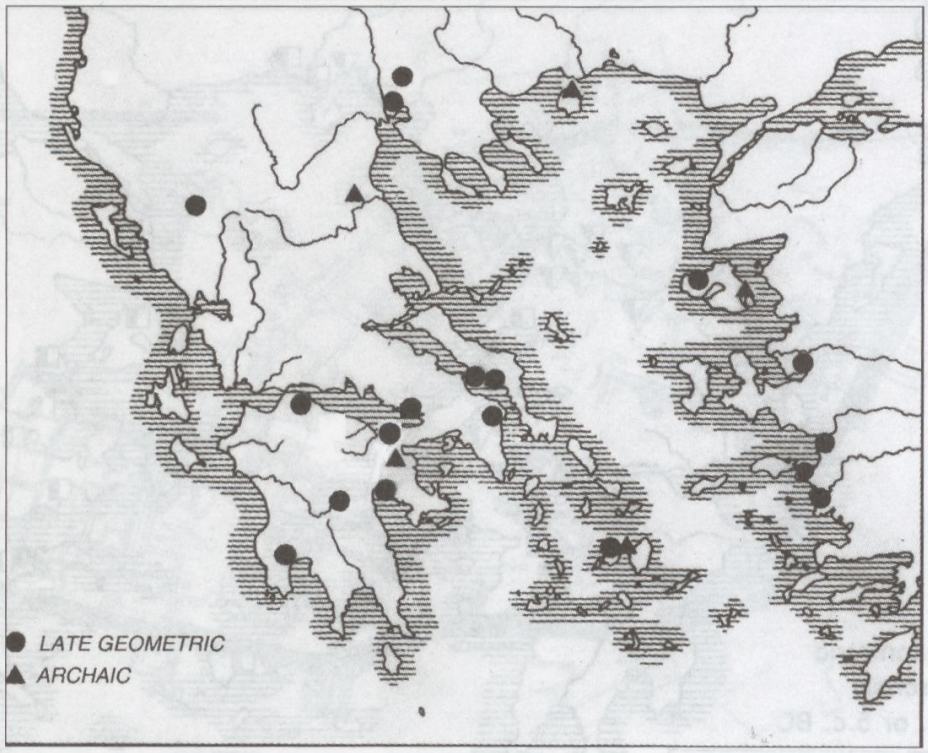

Fig. 13 : Distribution of apsis- and oval-houses (after Lang 1996, 86 fig. 19)

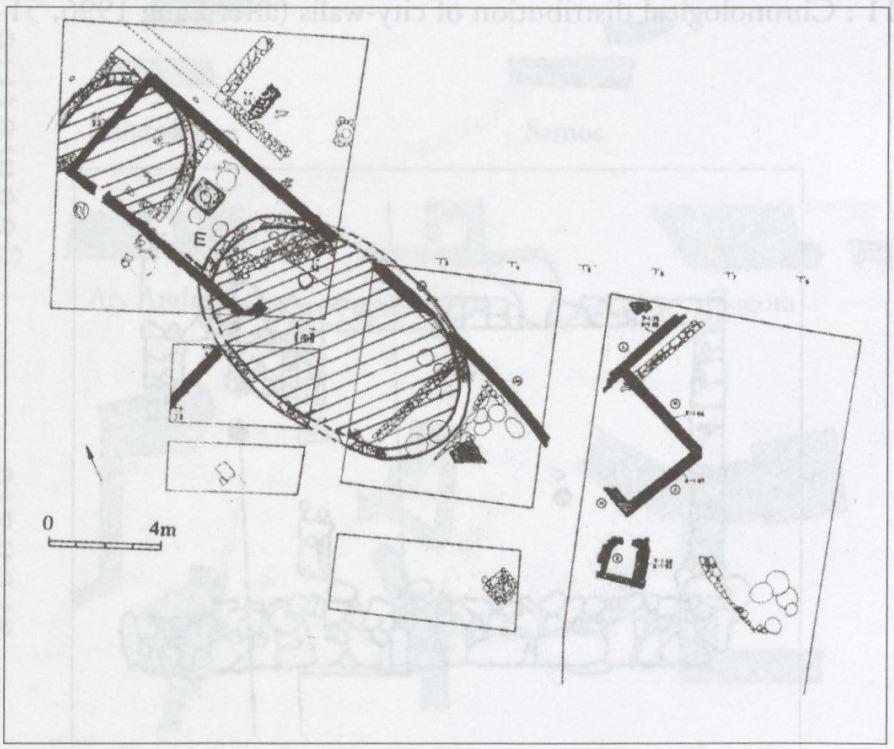

Fig. 14 : Miletos (after *Istanbuler Mitteilungen* 23/24, 1973/74, fig. 3 and 29, 1979, 124 fig. 6)

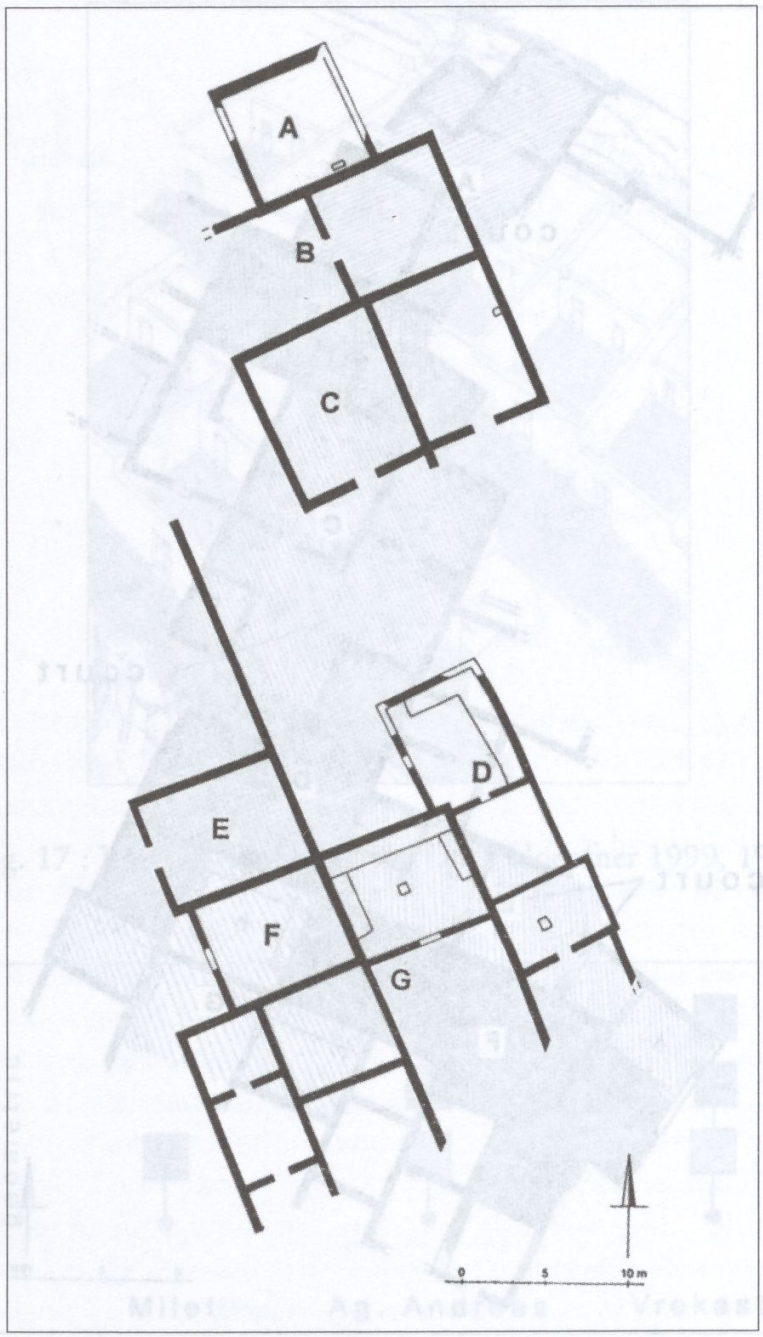

Fig. 15 : Zagora, Andros (Lang 1996 fig. 55)

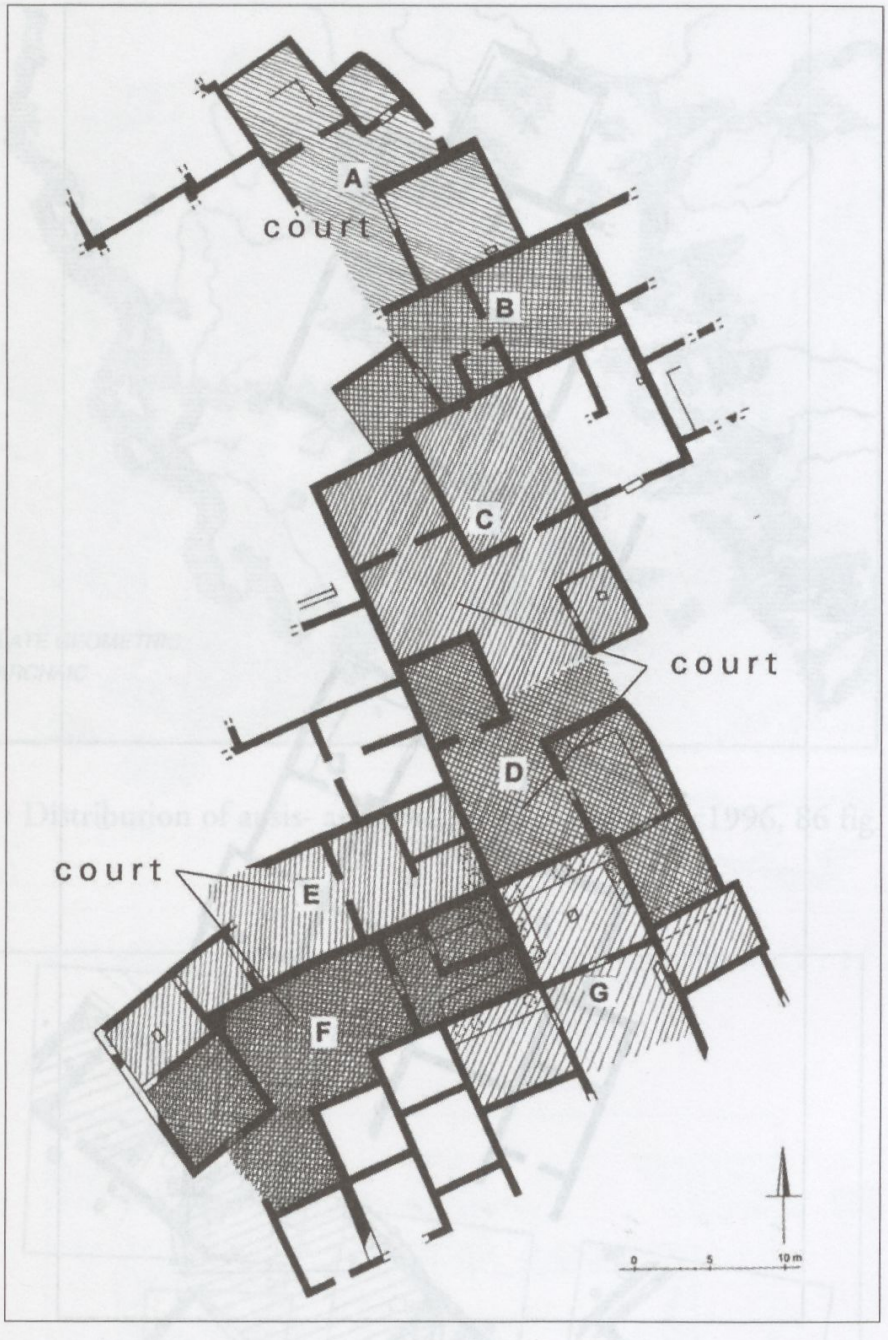

Fig. 16 : Zagora (after Lang 1996 fig. 56)

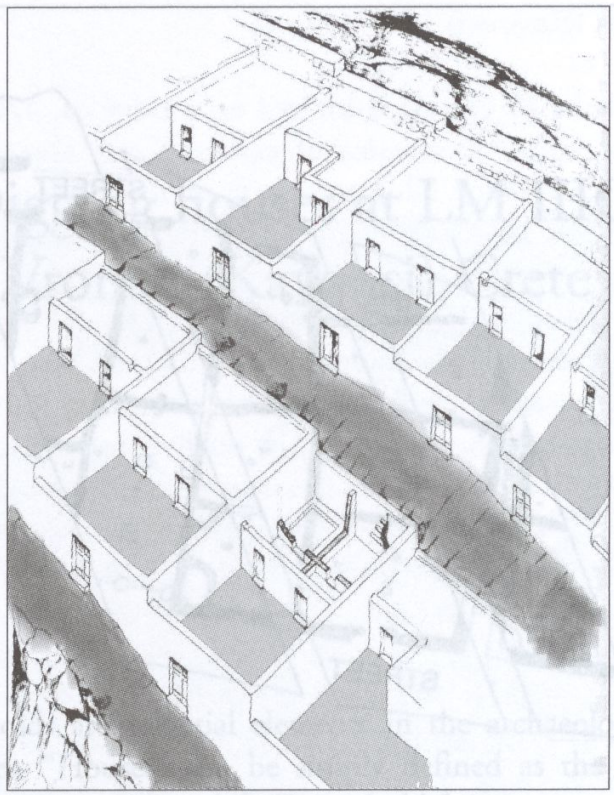

Fig. 17 : Vroulia, reconstruction (after Hoepfner 1999, 198)

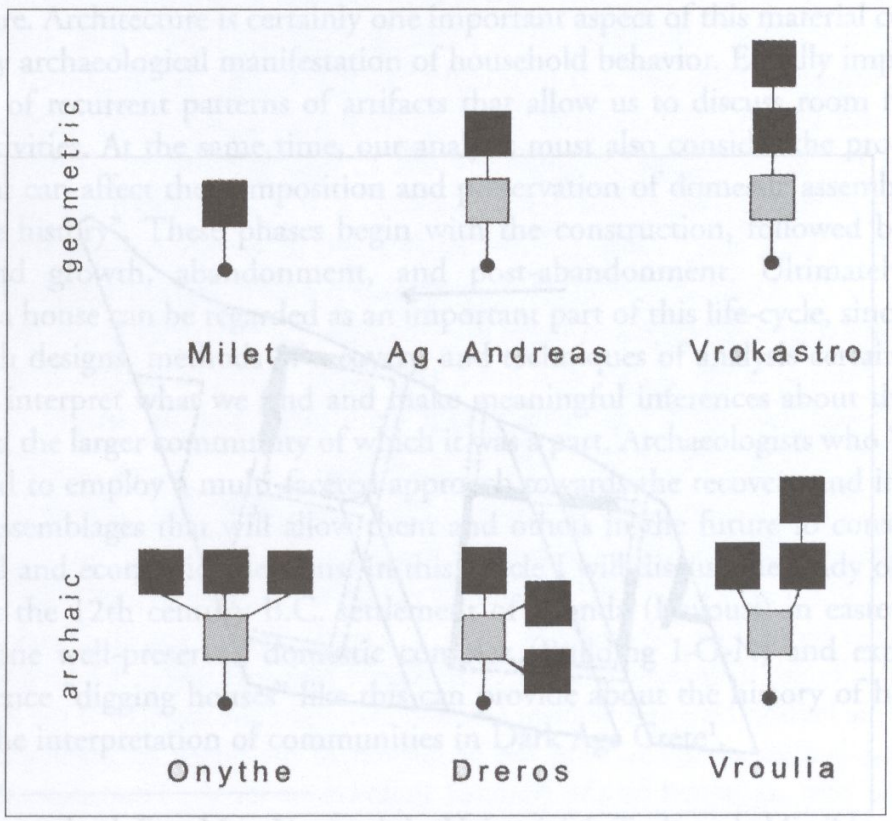

Fig. 18 : Scheme of inner communication in houses (grey : court or hall ; black : rooms)

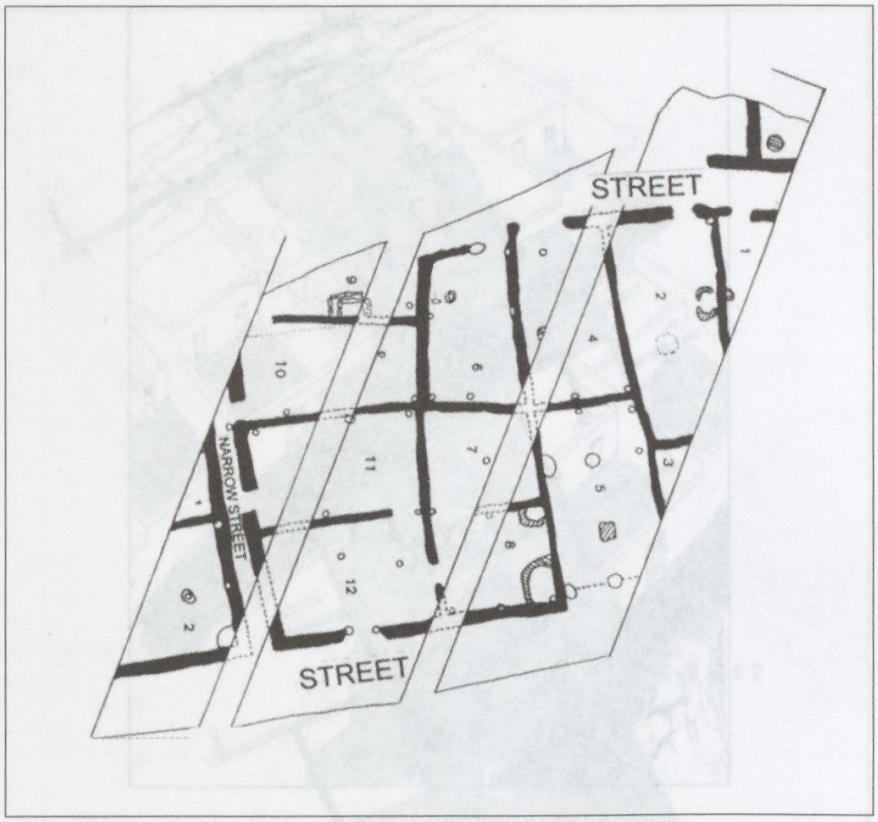

Fig. 19 : Kastanas, Macedonia (after Hänsel 1989 fig. 103)

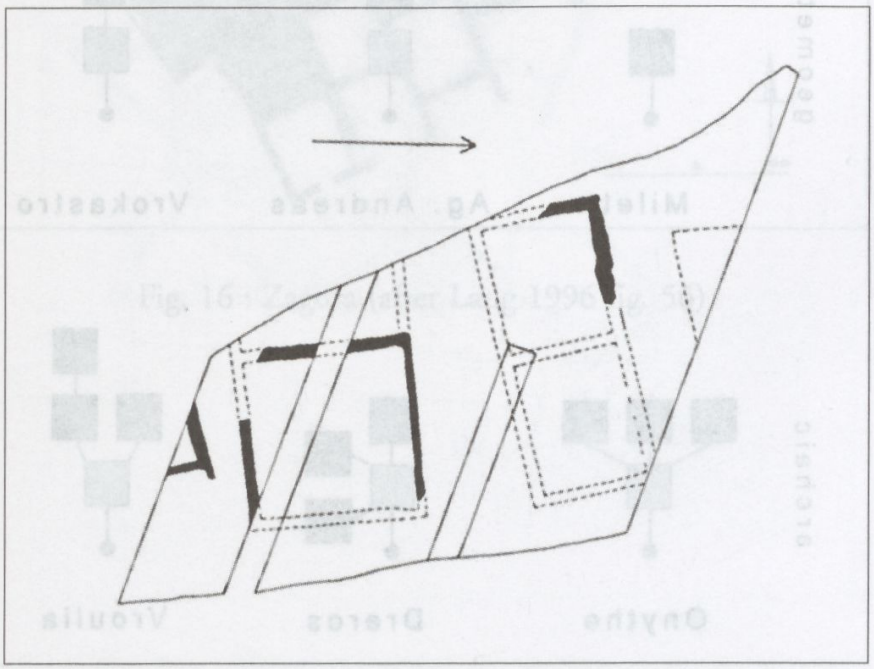

Fig. 20 : Kastanas, Macedonia (after Hänsel 1989 fig. 132)