

## VI. The Creation and the Reproduction of Asymmetric Relations: Household Organization and Regional Exchange on the Thessalian Plain in the Late Neolithic and the EBA

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‘Socio-political contradictions are realized spatially ... spatial contradictions ‘express’ conflicts between socio-political interests and forces; it is only *in* space that such conflicts come effectively into play, and in doing they become contradictions *of* space.’

Henri Lefebvre<sup>1159</sup>

### Introduction

Following the EBA and Neolithic overview of subsistence practices, this chapter aims at addressing households, household organization, and the socio-political structure during the Late Neolithic at Platia Magoula Zarkou through an exceptional find – a house model – as well as local and regional exchange networks, based on pottery, chert, and obsidian exchange. The question of households will be addressed in four steps through discussions of: i) a house model, ii) contrasting roles of women in different matrilineal societies, iii) the evidence of a mixed regional economy at Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou, and iv) Thessalian evidence for pottery exchange. But why do we need to discuss gender or different roles that women played in matrilineal societies in order to understand households at Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou? The answer to this question lies in the material itself, namely the miniature of the Neolithic house model found at the site. Exceptional objects such as this house model excavated at Platia Magoula Zarkou or other more widely known Neolithic figurines represent those types of archaeological finds often held to be very suitable for the construction, support, or refutation of metanarratives not necessarily supported through substantial ethnographic evidence. In this chapter, I will mainly focus on one such metanarrative or new theoretical construction, namely *cooperative affluent societies*.<sup>1160</sup> I will provide a counter-explanation to this claim, and challenge its conclusions by outlining different roles of women in matrilineal societies as documented ethnographically.

This chapter shows that already during the Late Neolithic in the Thessalian plain, households developed social and economic relations with other households inside their settlements and elsewhere in the region. While the pooling of local resources within households again might have been the main subsistence strategy, these settlements, and consequently households *a priori*, were embedded and entangled in regional exchange and social networks that were part and parcel of wider regional economies. Regarding the concept of ‘original affluent societies’,<sup>1161</sup> it remains difficult to support its crucial hypotheses about leading roles of women within and outside households at Platia Magoula Zarkou. As I will show, this house model may not have provided a depiction of reality but instead an ‘anti-structure’<sup>1162</sup> or an inverse symbolic reality. Anthropological insights into the house model therefore support the

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<sup>1159</sup> Lefebvre 1991 [1974], 365.

<sup>1160</sup> Risch 2018.

<sup>1161</sup> Risch 2018.

<sup>1162</sup> Turner 2009 [1969].

more probable interpretation that women saw themselves and were appreciated by others as the ‘centre of the house’ in a local, patrilineal context. After all, female objects such as pottery could have served as important every day, on-site items, as well as an important item for a regional gift, barter, or even marital exchange, as shown in the last section of the chapter.

The following focuses on households at Platia Magoula Zarkou and the broader region of Thessaly, anchored in the Late Neolithic rather than the Early Bronze Age time frame. There are three reasons why I look at the Late Neolithic period rather than Early Bronze Age households at Platia Magoula Zarkou. The first reason is empirical. Since the start of the project, I have understood that Platia Magoula Zarkou is known within prehistoric archaeology for its ‘open house’ model. The model is a unique find in that it provides both a house model and associated anthropomorphic figurines placed within the house, within a single undisturbed context.<sup>1163</sup> Therefore, I decided to address households as sites of comparison, rather than being limited to analysing more or less contemporaneous archaeological material dating to the Early Bronze Age. The house model at Platia Magoula Zarkou provides an important window into the ‘nesting’ within a shared Late Neolithic house, the interpretations of which can be disrupted and further contextualized through socio-anthropological insights.

The second reason for looking at the Late Neolithic instead of the Early Bronze Age at Platia Magoula Zarkou is theoretical. The interpretation of the Late Neolithic house model at Platia Magoula Zarkou has recently been used to contextualize ‘cooperative affluent societies’<sup>1164</sup> from prehistoric archaeological data. Roberto Risch intentionally coined this concept ‘*without anthropology*’<sup>1165</sup> since, as he claims, ‘most a-cephalic societies identified by anthropology are described as being poor in absolute (material) terms, but rich in time for leisure or other activities.’<sup>1166</sup> Risch characterized the ‘cooperative affluent societies’ as those in which surplus production did not lead to the emergence of social inequality. The house model at Platia Magoula Zarkou was interpreted as an indicator of a ‘cooperative affluent society’, in which women played an active role in the economic and political realms.<sup>1167</sup> Here, I aim to contribute to a theoretical model of cooperative affluent societies with anthropology, instead of without, and to show that societies in which considerable surplus production did not lead to the emergence of hereditary social inequality have also been documented ethnographically.

The third reason for taking into account the Late Neolithic period at Platia Magoula Zarkou is practical. The Late Neolithic period at Platia Magoula Zarkou has been thoroughly studied through ceramic petrography and stone tools, and as such provided particularly interesting results, suitable for anthropological contextualization. Meanwhile, the Bronze Age layers of pottery at Platia Magoula Zarkou are still being analysed due to unforeseen circumstances, and are therefore beyond my reach at the current state of research. The interrelationship between these three reasons – empirical, theoretical, and practical – for looking at Late Neolithic instead of Early Bronze Age households at Platia Magoula Zarkou allows me to question whether the woman’s central role within a household necessarily implies matrilineal social organization and women’s leading political roles outside the household, as recently proposed by Risch.

<sup>1163</sup> Both zoomorphic/anthropomorphic figurines and house models are common finds for the Neolithic period in the wider region of the Aegean basin and eastern Anatolia, including Thessaly (Nanoglou 2005; Nanoglou 2006; Alram Stern 2017). However, house models and figurines are generally found in separate contexts. A house model containing anthropomorphic figurines within a single, undisturbed context has so far been discovered only at Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou and at Neolithic-Eneolithic period Ghelăiești (3700–3500 BC) in the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture area in today’s Romania (Alram-Stern 2022).

<sup>1164</sup> Risch 2018.

<sup>1165</sup> Risch 2018, 48, italics in original.

<sup>1166</sup> Risch 2018, 45. For a review of acephalous sedentary societies in contemporary socio-cultural anthropology, see Chapter II. According to my understanding, Risch’s statement broadly refers to the study of hunter-gatherer societies, but since the 1970s anthropologists have shown that acephalous, affluent societies (in material terms as well as in terms of leisure time) also existed in rich ecological environments.

<sup>1167</sup> Risch 2018.

The chapter is divided into four parts. Firstly, it summarizes the contexts of the Late Neolithic occupation at Platia Magoula Zarkou, centred on the house model, which has already been interpreted by many scholars. The second part of this chapter demonstrates the multiplicity of male and female roles in both acephalous and non-acephalous matrilineal societies, within and outside the household. These insights are also relevant for an understanding of prehistoric realities, including the one modelled in clay at Platia Magoula Zarkou. As the site was a regional production centre for grey on grey pottery during the Late Neolithic, the third part of the chapter contextualizes potential ways of production and distribution of handmade pottery at Platia Magoula Zarkou through ethnographic observations among Wanigelan female potters in Papua New Guinea. Wanigelans are a representative case of big man societies, which fall outside the ‘evolutionary sequence’ of societies with an elaborate division of labour and high productivity, including a considerable amount of surplus production, yet without a hereditary hierarchical and centralized political organization. The fourth part contextualizes pottery production at Platia Magoula Zarkou alongside the results from stone tool analyses, and shows that at least two spheres of exchange<sup>1168</sup> existed at Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou. Moreover, the chapter provides anthropological evidence for ‘affluent cooperative societies’<sup>1169</sup> that have previously been documented ethnographically, including the big man societies in Melanesia. As a result, this chapter demonstrates that the modelling of prehistoric societies should remain intertwined with anthropological insights rather than being isolated from them, to prevent the re-creation of socio-political models that might already be known to one discipline or another, and to maintain a careful analytical distinction of what it means to have a central role within or outside the house.

### VI.1. Multiple Interpretations of the House Model

As I will show in this section, the house model at Platia Magoula Zarkou has so far generated multiple interpretations. These include an interpretation of the house model through ritual symbolism,<sup>1170</sup> house societies,<sup>1171</sup> and most recently, as the supporting feature for *cooperative affluent societies*.<sup>1172</sup> The latter, I will examine somewhat more closely. I challenge the interpretation of women being the leading figures within and outside houses at Platia Magoula Zarkou. As I argue in this section, there is no reason that we need to speculate whether the house model necessarily depicted emic reality. Did Neolithic women have beak-like noses? It seems unlikely, as much as it is unlikely that women were indeed taller than men. Therefore, instead of using this archaeological find – a miniature – as necessarily depicting the realities of the outside world, I propose an alternative interpretation. The house model represents a so-called symbolic ‘anti-structure’,<sup>1173</sup> depicting an inverse picture of reality. Due to its deposition buried underground, it should be considered as a sacred object, excluded from barter and exchange, but transmitted through generations by being kept underneath the house floors. The message this section then proposes is not to avoid ‘religious’ or precious objects such as the house model in our interpretation. On the contrary, we need to challenge theory-biased interpretations of such depictions by asking what these ‘extraordinary objects’ represent. By asking this question, we can avoid new or re-invigorated master narratives that lack any solid basis since they are elaborated ‘without anthropology’.<sup>1174</sup>

<sup>1168</sup> Bohannan 1959.

<sup>1169</sup> Risch 2018.

<sup>1170</sup> Gallis 1985.

<sup>1171</sup> Borić 2008.

<sup>1172</sup> Risch 2018.

<sup>1173</sup> Turner 2009 [1969].

<sup>1174</sup> Risch 2018.



Fig. 30 The Neolithic house model found at Platia Magoula Zarkou (after Alram-Stern 2022, fig. VI.27–37a)

Platia Magoula Zarkou is well known in the prehistoric archaeological community as the site where a house model made of baked clay figurines was discovered in 1983<sup>1175</sup> (see Figs. 30 and 31). The model was deposited during the Middle Neolithic Phase VII, right underneath the Late Neolithic Floor (dating to Phase VII), on top of an ash layer, next to two hearths, in what was possibly an open area.<sup>1176</sup> The unroofed clay house model comprises walls surrounding a rectangular floor, with an entrance in front and an oblong object in the centre back (possibly a grinder),<sup>1177</sup> which divides the house into left and right parts<sup>1178</sup> and separates groups of anthropomorphic figurines. Within the house walls, the groups of male and female figurines are divided into three groups: there are (1) several large figurines (male and female) on the left side of the house; (2) some medium-sized figurines (male and female) with what appear to be a child and a baby in the front-right corner; and (3) a few even smaller, possibly female figurines in the back-right corner of the house.<sup>1179</sup> In both cases where figurines included male/female adult couples (1 and 2), on the left side and in the front-right corner, the females are much larger than the males (see Figs. 30 and 31).

Another important set of finds dates from the Tsangli-Larissa phase at Platia Magoula Zarkou. This comprises a cemetery with 60 cremation burials deposited in urns, 300m north of the settlement.<sup>1180</sup> A fire-pit for the cremation of dead bodies was also found in this cemetery. Following cremation, only specific parts of each skeleton such as the limbs and skulls were

<sup>1175</sup> Gallis 1985.

<sup>1176</sup> Gallis 1985; Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1177</sup> Gallis, 1990, 17; Risch 2018, 54; Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1178</sup> For the house model from Platia Magoula Zarkou, archaeologists are unable to determine geographical directions (E. Alram-Stern, pers. comm. 2020). Therefore, the positions are described according to the viewer: front and back, left and right.

<sup>1179</sup> Alram-Stern 2022; Alram-Stern in press.

<sup>1180</sup> Gallis 1982, 64–134; Pentedeka 2011.

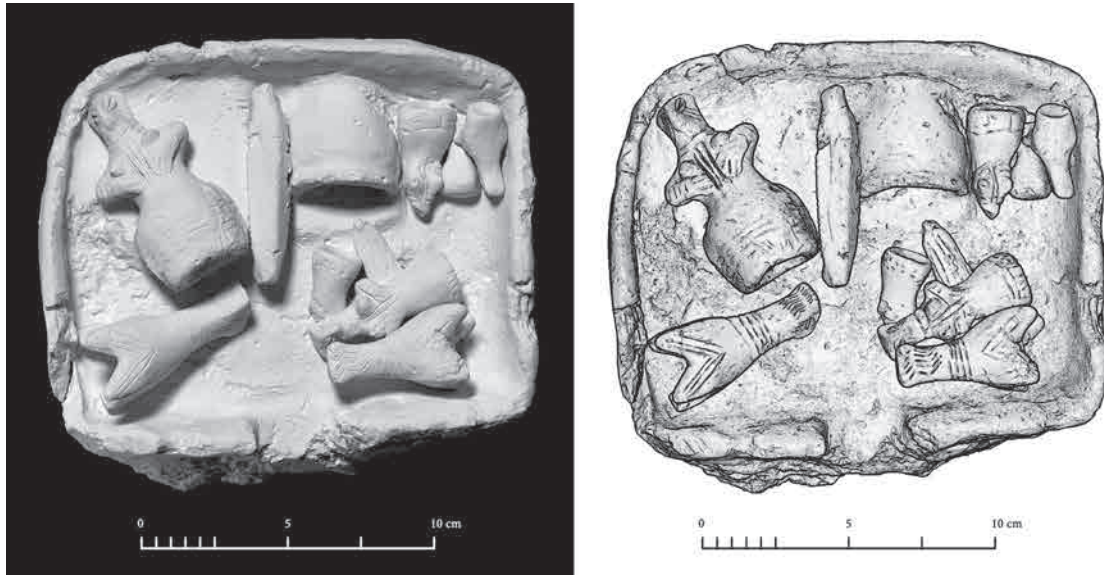


Fig. 31 3D scan of the Neolithic house model found at Platia Magoula Zarkou (after Alram-Stern 2022, fig. VI.27–37c)

deposited in the urns and buried in a shallow pit. No grave goods were found inside or close to these urns, other than small red-coloured pottery sherds. The explanation for this homogeneous burial practice has been interpreted as either an indicator that Late Neolithic dwellers at Platia Magoula Zarkou lacked intra-group differentiation, or that intra-group differentiation was not reflected in their mortuary practices.<sup>1181</sup> The first interpretation, suggesting a lack of intra-site differentiation, can be refuted through the material evidence of the house model, which clearly depicts internal differences based on gender (male and female) and age (young and old), if not rank or status (see Figs. 30 and 31). Moreover, dwellers at Platia Magoula Zarkou most likely also distinguished between the unequal skills and rights that adult members of a household or a village possessed, as will be discussed below.

Apart from differentiation by age, gender, and possibly status among the figurines found in the house model at Platia Magoula Zarkou, differentiation in terms of personal skills can be best observed from local pottery production. Based on petrographic<sup>1182</sup> and chemical analyses, most of the Late Neolithic pottery found at Platia Magoula Zarkou from the Tsangli-Larissa phase was made from local clay sources, and only a few pots could be identified as being of non-local origin.<sup>1183</sup> The production of grey on grey pottery was unique to Platia Magoula Zarkou during this phase. Therefore the site was identified as the major regional production centre of grey on grey pottery among other regional production centres of different types of wares on the Thessalian plain. The regional specialization in pottery production appears to be a complementary system, in which other regional sites such as Makrychori 2 and Magoula Tsalma, two hinterland eastern Thessalian sites, specialized in the production of black burnished wares, Tsangli specialized in the production of scraped ware, and Halki 1 specialized in the production of red-on-white ware, these not being produced at Platia Magoula Zarkou or elsewhere in the region.<sup>1184</sup> Grey on grey pottery from Platia Magoula Zarkou reached many

<sup>1181</sup> Fowler 2004, 63–64; Pentedeka 2011.

<sup>1182</sup> Ceramic petrography is a laboratory-based archaeological technique that examines the mineral composition of ceramics and other inorganic materials. Based on petrographic analyses, it is possible to understand the provenance of clay pastes and the technology of archaeological artefacts.

<sup>1183</sup> Pentedeka 2011.

<sup>1184</sup> Pentedeka 2017, 145.

sites in Thessaly, but visually indistinguishable pots were produced from at least three different clay recipes (composition of physical ingredients) at Platia Magoula Zarkou, which has been interpreted as a possible indicator of ‘expressing tensions within the community’.<sup>1185</sup>

Complementary to this interpretation, it appears very likely that the evidence for the three different clay recipes for the same type of pots produced at Platia Magoula Zarkou also points towards the differentiated professional socialization of potters at the site. It seems likely that potters at Platia Magoula Zarkou learned potting skills within different households, and therefore used and transmitted different clay recipes. Accustomed to a particular clay recipe through the repetitive practice of pottery production, the potters transmitted their particular knowledge to the succeeding generation within the household. Through repetitive practice, potters reproduced the pre-existing networks of social relations between and within households. They preserved and safeguarded the knowledge of a household-specific or several households-specific clay recipe(s). This facilitated access to and claim upon the required, particular clay sources off-site, by which they could internally compete for advantages in external exchange with the purpose of acquiring goods from outside. The existence of household-based and household-specific clay recipes at Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou can be further supported through the house model and the associated figurines since all of the items in this house model were made of the same clay paste.<sup>1186</sup>

Several scholars have offered an interpretation of the house model at Platia Magoula Zarkou. Initially, the house model’s deposition was interpreted as part of a foundation ritual for a house, as part of which the house model was placed under the house floor.<sup>1187</sup> Recently, Alram-Stern proposed an alternative interpretation in line with Tringham and Chapman’s<sup>1188</sup> interpretation that the house models, including the one at Platia Magoula Zarkou, were most likely buried with the house after it was no longer in use, or even as a replacement for the intramural burial (at Platia Magoula Zarkou not within a house, but in an open space).<sup>1189</sup> Despite these conflicting interpretations, scholars agree that the model is thought to resemble the internal organization of the physical and social house at Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou.<sup>1190</sup>

The figurines in this house model are of visibly different sizes, which could correspond to the approximate age of each person. The larger figurines, supposedly representing adults, are clearly gendered (females are depicted with breasts and males without them, but sitting on a stool), coupled (males and females are placed closely together as a unit, with or without children), and differentiated through repetitive decorative patterns sculpted onto the female or male figures respectively. Despite the stylistic differences between the figurines, the house model and all of the figurines were made of the same clay.<sup>1191</sup> Therefore, the model provides ample material evidence for the grouping or nesting of household segments within the Late Neolithic house at Platia Magoula Zarkou. These included nested dichotomies of gender, age and possibly rank between members of the same house.

In the house model, men were depicted wearing more necklaces than women, and the largest man in the house was decorated with dots from neck to chest, representing jewellery, which was not found on the women.<sup>1192</sup> Recognizing that the model was constructed by dwellers at the site, it seems likely that the house model therefore represents an emic depiction of a household during the Late Neolithic, in the so-called Tsangli-Larissa phase at Platia Magoula

<sup>1185</sup> Pentedeka 2017, 150.

<sup>1186</sup> Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1187</sup> Gallis 1985; Risch 2018.

<sup>1188</sup> Tringham – Chapman 2005.

<sup>1189</sup> Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1190</sup> Gallis 1985; Borić 2008; Risch 2018; Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1191</sup> Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1192</sup> Alram-Stern 2022.

Zarkou. Based on the stylistic differences in figurines found in other Late Neolithic sites (without the associated house model), a similar argument has already been put forward for the Neolithic site of Aegina, in which ‘most of the figurines from this context actually were shaped to represent the generic inhabitants of the village’.<sup>1193</sup> Alram-Stern recently proposed that this household model represents an extended family linked by kinship and non-kinship ties.<sup>1194</sup> According to her recent interpretation, the household included two groups of members: those related through kinship (an older couple in the left part and a younger couple with two children in the front-right corner) and a group of unrelated women with lower social status, linked to the household through household activities, positioned in the back-right corner.<sup>1195</sup>

#### Gender Relations in ‘Cooperative Affluent Societies’

The Late Neolithic house model also provides an important insight into gender relations within a household unit, based on the spatial proximity of and distance between couples. Each of the two couples, consisting of a male and a female figurine with or without a baby, was spatially segregated from another couple by either an object (in the shape of an enlarged mortar) or a larger empty space between them. The spatially segregated units, most likely comprising three generations, appear as one unit laid down within a shared house. In each adult couple, women are represented as much larger in size than men, although this is unlikely to reflect the situation on the ground: as Risch put it, the larger size of the female and the smaller size of male persons within the house model ‘ignores the mean biological differences between the two sexes’.<sup>1196</sup> Risch argued that this representation ‘seems to underline the social position and authority of women within the community’.<sup>1197</sup> However, assuming that the figurines are intentionally placed within the house model, it seems to symbolically emphasize something else, which may be identified as adult married females’ status and authority within their domestic unit. Risch leaves out the question of age (young and old) and status (married and unmarried) and without this consideration concludes that the depiction of larger females provides evidence for female authority within the community. Instead, I agree with other scholars<sup>1198</sup> who proposed that the evidence here relates to individual households rather than the community as a whole.

Since women in all societies are, on average, physically shorter than men, this raises the question of why women in this house model were depicted as being considerably larger than men. Alram-Stern<sup>1199</sup> has briefly challenged the possibility that the larger female figurines depict a matriarchal vision of Neolithic society at Platia Magoula Zarkou. Alram-Stern<sup>1200</sup> argued in line with Bourdieu’s conceptualization of Berber houses. She maintained that the larger size of the women within the house model depicts women at Platia Magoula Zarkou as being inherently linked to activities such as food preparation and the upbringing of children within the house.<sup>1201</sup> Their position and larger size within the house emphasizes women’s stronger relationship to domestic space, whereas the smaller size of the men and their location closer to the doors indicates the male connection to the outside world and their lesser importance within the house.<sup>1202</sup> This interpretation emphatically refutes the argument proposed by Roberto Risch,

<sup>1193</sup> Alram Stern 2017, 410.

<sup>1194</sup> Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1195</sup> Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1196</sup> Risch 2018, 56.

<sup>1197</sup> Risch 2018, 56.

<sup>1198</sup> Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1199</sup> Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1200</sup> Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1201</sup> For the proposal that depictions of bodies in Thessalian Neolithic are characterized according to their actions rather than their ‘gender role’, see Nanoglou 2010.

<sup>1202</sup> Alram-Stern 2022.

who promoted a quasi-matriarchal socio-political organization of the Neolithic in the Aegean, Iberia, and the region of Northern Mesopotamia and Syria. Although the matriarchal view of the Aegean and Balkan Neolithic is most commonly ascribed to Marija Gimbutas, in her later work Gimbutas proposed that *gylany*, a ‘balanced, nonpatriarchal and nonmatriarchal social system’<sup>1203</sup> with elements of matrilineal system characterized ancient Greece, Etruria, Rome, the Basque, and other countries of Europe.

The house model from Platia Magoula Zarkou was previously also used as an example of the emergence of house society<sup>1204</sup> social organization during the Old World Neolithic.<sup>1205</sup> According to Borić, the house society social organization can be found in societies where ‘the house as a collective entity takes over the role of controlling and disciplining its members and directing interactions with other individuals belonging to other ‘houses’ within a community or even in relation to people inhabiting other nearby or distant settlements.’<sup>1206</sup> While Borić’s interpretation appears applicable to the house model at Platia Magoula Zarkou, from his definition we learn very little about who disciplined whom within the house in these so-called house societies. Recently, Risch<sup>1207</sup> used this approach to develop the political form of *affluent cooperative societies*, applicable to and inferred from the later prehistoric record in Iberia, the Balkan Peninsula, and the Near East. He proposed that in these affluent cooperative societies, ‘substantial material benefits were shared and enjoyed collectively’<sup>1208</sup> and ‘the act of sharing and circulating elaborate and often unique goods was the focus of political practice, in which *women might have been leading figures*’.<sup>1209</sup> He proposed that ‘their merit, it seems, was to have succeeded setting a surplus economy into motion through a combination of individual creativity, cooperative work, and collective decision-making, which benefitted the community as a whole.’<sup>1210</sup> Moreover, Risch argued that these societies could have been organized along matrilineal lines of descent,<sup>1211</sup> which would necessarily allow women to take up the leading political roles.

Risch’s argument contrasts with the recent anthropological contextualization of more or less sedentary prehistoric communities in prehistoric Asia Minor<sup>1212</sup> and my own view (see Chapter III). For the present discussion, it is important to emphasize that dwellers at Platia Magoula Zarkou practised a mixed (largely or partially sedentary) regional economy during the Late Neolithic period (see Chapter V). Furthermore, this regional economy included herding large domestic animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs; growing crops; collecting river mussels; craft activities, such as the production of grey on grey pottery for local and regional distribution; and participation in the long-distance, regional exchange of obsidian, chocolate chert, and grey on grey pottery across the Thessalian plain. Considering that keeping cattle and matrilineal descent are negatively correlated and that matrilineal descent is usually lost after a matrilineal group adopts cattle,<sup>1213</sup> it is, then, highly improbable that dwellers at Platia Magoula Zarkou were organized on the basis of matrilineal descent. Moreover,

<sup>1203</sup> Gimbutas 1989, xx.

<sup>1204</sup> For the development of the ‘household society’ or the so-called ‘*Sociétés à maison*’ (in original) (Lévi-Strauss 1982) model of social organization within socio-cultural anthropology (and consequently (pre)historic archaeology), see Chapter IV. Although the model of house society social organization stems from the late neostructural reasoning (Lévi-Strauss 1982; Carsten – Hugh-Jones 1995), decisive elements are systematically and necessarily lacking in the concept of house society.

<sup>1205</sup> Borić 2008.

<sup>1206</sup> Borić 2008, 132.

<sup>1207</sup> Risch 2018.

<sup>1208</sup> Risch 2018, 45.

<sup>1209</sup> Risch 2018, 55, italics mine.

<sup>1210</sup> Risch 2018, 60.

<sup>1211</sup> R. Risch, pers. comm. 2019.

<sup>1212</sup> Gingrich – Schweitzer 2014.

<sup>1213</sup> Holden – Mace 2003.

the house model at Platia Magoula Zarkou represents an extended family residing in a small house. This does not represent a larger floor plan including multiple groups linked through matrilineal descent residing within the same ‘longhouse’, which is more typical for matrilineal and matrilocal societies.<sup>1214</sup> Patrilineal descent among dwellers at Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou is therefore much more likely.

Alternatively, the house model at Platia Magoula Zarkou can also be seen from the maker’s perspective, focusing on the projections and agency that were translated into the figurines through the potters’ hands. Tringham and Conkey have proposed a similar approach for the study and interpretation of prehistoric figurines, calling for the study of these items in terms of gender ideology and the negotiation of power relations between men and women. This approach is critical of the assumption of peaceful coexistence between men and women in prehistory.<sup>1215</sup> It differs starkly from Risch,<sup>1216</sup> who not only argued for peaceful relations between men and women within affluent cooperative societies, but also ascribed a leading position to women not only within the house but also in economic and political realms outside the house, indicating a matriarchal rather than merely matrilineal social reality. I partially agree with Tringham and Conkey,<sup>1217</sup> whose critical assessment of men’s and women’s roles assumed peaceful coexistence in prehistory, which more or less corresponds to solid ethnographic documentation. In fact, ethnographic evidence for groups with ‘egalitarian’ gender relations constitutes a marginal proportion within the Ethnographic Atlas,<sup>1218</sup> and mostly concerns mobile hunter-gatherer groups. Some of the more or less sedentary groups with comparatively balanced gender relations include the Hopi and the Navaho<sup>1219</sup> who, like other matrilineal groups with balanced gender relations, lacked cattle, instead herding sheep and goats. However, matrilineal descent does not necessarily imply balanced gender relations, a point which will be discussed further below.

Considering the ethnographic evidence regarding non-wheel pottery production, most potters, regardless of the level of socio-political organization, were women. The production of non-wheel pottery also often overlaps with breadmaking – including cereal grinding, the preparation of dough, and baking – in which women maintain household-specific recipes for both bread and pottery. If female production of non-wheel pottery holds true through cross-cultural ethnographic examples, then we can also postulate that women also sculpted pottery, including the house model, at Platia Magoula Zarkou.<sup>1220</sup> It would be reasonable to argue that female potters then not only depicted an emic reality, but that they intentionally symbolically exaggerated the size of women and lessened the size of men. The larger size of women does not then directly imply that women were physically much larger and taller than men. It also does not necessarily indicate that female positions were politically or economically more powerful than men outside the house, as there is no material evidence of women being depicted outside the house, nor ethnographic evidence to support such a claim under these specific conditions (e.g. cattle herding included in a mixed regional economy). Instead, complementary to the understanding of the house model from Platia Magoula Zarkou as an emic reality, I argue that the house model simultaneously portrays an imaginary and symbolic reality, moulded in clay,

<sup>1214</sup> Ember 1973; Divale 1977; Ensor 2013.

<sup>1215</sup> Tringham – Conkey 1998.

<sup>1216</sup> Risch 2018.

<sup>1217</sup> Tringham – Conkey 1998.

<sup>1218</sup> Murdock 1967.

<sup>1219</sup> Schlegel 1986.

<sup>1220</sup> Cross-cultural study has shown that in societies with simple or extensive agriculture pottery making tends to be performed by females whereas with the increasing intensity of agriculture pottery making tends to be assigned to males (Murdock – Provost 1973).

which can be further supported by the beak-like depiction of the figurines' noses, as described by Alram-Stern.<sup>1221</sup>

The house model at Platia Magoula Zarkou is an idealized object through which to discuss things that are neither gifted nor bartered, but transmitted. Following Godelier, the house model was deliberately excluded from exchange, and can therefore be classified as a sacred object, 'since it is the things we do not give [that] are often those we consider to be the most sacred'.<sup>1222</sup> The house model's ritual and sacred associations at Platia Magoula Zarkou were also proposed by other archaeologists,<sup>1223</sup> which is crucial for the analysis of gender relations depicted in the house model. The house model was hidden below the floor, in an open area on top of the Late Neolithic *magoula*, in a public 'ritual deposition'. The main point is that symbolic figurines from Platia Magoula Zarkou may depict the hidden inverse of the reality on the ground, regardless of whether it was a foundation ritual or a marker of a buried house. This inverse reality, which is common in rites of passage (which may include the foundation<sup>1224</sup> or burying of a house<sup>1225</sup> at Platia Magoula Zarkou), is described by Victor Turner<sup>1226</sup> as an 'anti-structure'. He described the phenomena of ritual anti-structure through the well-known case of the Ndembu in Zimbabwe, in which the crown-elect takes on the role of a commoner before assuming control. Therefore, the house model from Platia Magoula Zarkou cannot be considered only as an emic depiction of reality on the ground, but must simultaneously be understood as a material version of the so-called anti-structure, which provides a liminal and existential revolt against the structure. Based on these multiple lines of evidence, it is therefore not possible to understand the larger depiction of women as a necessary indicator of matrilineal or matriarchal social realities at Platia Magoula Zarkou, as Risch proposed. As I will show below, matrilineal characteristics do not necessarily grant a leading socio-political role to women either within or outside the house and, moreover, having women as the 'centre of the house' is equally compatible with both patrilineal and matrilineal societies.

## VI.2. Contrasting Roles of Women and Men in Different Matrilineal Societies

Roberto Risch's claim that in cooperative affluent societies, women occupied leading positions both within and outside the house<sup>1227</sup> has been considered critically. In this chapter I will challenge his conclusion through different ethnographic cases of matrilineal societies. I will show that matrilineal societies may or may not be centralized. In decentralized cases, it is women who own the household means of production, yet it is not women but a council of elderly men and women, who take important socio-political decisions regarding the whole community. This is the first point where Risch's conclusions<sup>1228</sup> run into a grave problem, since in his model he also ascribes the leading position of women to the political sphere. This implies a sort of female political superiority within a decentralized setting, rather than considering more 'egalitarian' decision making through the male and female council of elders. The second point that I highlight in this chapter is that within matrilineal societies households may or may not be headed by women and that matrilineal societies may or may not give political power to women. Based on this, I propose an interpretation of the house model as an anti-structure that

<sup>1221</sup> Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1222</sup> Godelier 2011, 430.

<sup>1223</sup> Gallis 1985; Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1224</sup> Gallis 1985.

<sup>1225</sup> Alram-Stern 2022.

<sup>1226</sup> Turner 2009 [1969].

<sup>1227</sup> Risch 2018.

<sup>1228</sup> Risch 2018.

may possibly entail a symbolic ‘act of resistance’.<sup>1229</sup> The model could also represent a context in which women saw themselves and were appreciated by others as the ‘centre of the house’ within a patrilineal context. In this case, houses would be primarily female spaces and were perceived as such by both female and male dwellers at Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou.

Let us consider Risch’s proposal that dwellers at Platia Magoula Zarkou were organized along matrilineal lines of descent. With reference to socio-cultural anthropological knowledge, matrilineal descent does not necessarily imply a leading position for women either within or outside the house in all cases. In matrilineal societies, immovable property (a house, or land) can often be transmitted to women and movable property (stock, tools, etc.) to men (e.g. their brothers belonging to the same matrilineal group), which shows a rather ‘egalitarian’ relationship between men and women.<sup>1230</sup> This can be said without any assumption that politico-religious power (e.g. a spiritual leader) is necessarily more important than other forms of power (e.g. ownership of the means of production). Among sedentary groups, a gendered division of labour commonly becomes more institutionalized, with female activities being associated with the domestic sphere and male activities with the public sphere. More often than not, ‘this pattern leads to inequality in social power between the sexes, where male economic control or political activities puts them into the principle of decision-making roles.’<sup>1231</sup> Yet, as argued above, women’s access to property is of key importance for more balanced gender relations among sedentary groups.

Anthropological insights into matrilineal societies can be drawn from multiple ethnographic examples. These include Trobriand chiefdoms,<sup>1232</sup> Akan,<sup>1233</sup> Hopi,<sup>1234</sup> the Nayars of Kerala,<sup>1235</sup> the Minangkabu,<sup>1236</sup> and some coastal Greek communities,<sup>1237</sup> among others. Although matrilineal descent was common to all these societies, the roles of women and men in these societies differed widely. Therefore I provide below a synthesis of the different roles of women and men in different matrilineal societies with reference to political centralization, household organization, and female political participation.

#### Matrilineal Societies May or May Not Be Centralized

Matrilineal societies, like patrilineal ones, may differ widely in their political centralization. In order to demonstrate this, I chose two representative examples from either side of the (de) centralized continuum – the non-centralized or acephalous Hopi,<sup>1238</sup> and the centralized Trobriand chiefdom.<sup>1239</sup> The matrilineal Hopi followed a matrilineal residence pattern in which the house, associated household items, and land were owned by women. As men moved into their wife’s house after marriage, men owned stock such as sheep (and later cattle and horses, which strengthened male positions in more recent times). Whereas men were highly mobile in order to exchange locally produced goods, such as female-produced pottery, female mobility was restricted to the village (with the exception of fetching water from a local stream, located near the village). As it was women who owned the land and therefore the means of production among the Hopi, it was Hopi women who sponsored seasonal festivals. Men were in charge of

<sup>1229</sup> Turner 2009 [1969].

<sup>1230</sup> Schlegel 1973; Schlegel 1977; Schlegel 1979; Schlegel 1986.

<sup>1231</sup> Schlegel 1986, 21.

<sup>1232</sup> Malinowski 1922; Malinowski 1929; Malinowski 1935; Weiner 1976.

<sup>1233</sup> Fortes 1950.

<sup>1234</sup> Schlegel 1973; Schlegel 1977; Schlegel 1979; Whiteley 1985; Schlegel 1986; Schlegel 1992; Whiteley 2003.

<sup>1235</sup> Gough 1961.

<sup>1236</sup> Abdullah 1966.

<sup>1237</sup> Goody 1990.

<sup>1238</sup> Schlegel 1973; Schlegel 1977; Schlegel 1979; Schlegel 1986.

<sup>1239</sup> Malinowski 1929.

the religious ceremonies performed in *kivas*, warfare, and conflict resolution. The Hopi had no hereditary office, but there was a Hopi elder's council that made important decisions, which included both men and women. They have been characterized as an example of an acephalous society with 'egalitarian' relations between men and women<sup>1240</sup> (see Tab. 17).

On the other side of the (de)centralized continuum of matrilineal societies are the Trobriand chiefdoms, as described by Malinowski.<sup>1241</sup> Members of matrilineal Trobriand chiefdoms followed a pattern of avunculocal residence, in which a couple resided with husband's mother's brother after marriage. Men owned the house and the associated storage house. After marriage, women moved into the man's house: thus men owned the house, but women owned household items and were in charge of daily household activities such as cooking and raising children. Men only cooked in ceremonial settings, in large pots outside the house, or on sea voyages, in the absence of women. Trobriand men commonly participated in chiefly voyages for the exchange of *kula* items and were highly mobile in comparison to women, whose mobility was, like among the Hopi, mostly restricted to the village. Trobriand chiefs, who received the biggest share of yams in a redistributive economy, sponsored seasonal festivals. Trobriand chiefly offices were hereditary among men. Although gender relations were not the main focus of Malinowski's research, it is obvious that, regardless of their rank, men enjoyed more ceremonial prestige, and were more mobile than women, and it was men and not women who occupied the highest political office in the Trobriand matrilineal chiefdom (see Tab. 17). These men operated according to their adherence to matrilineal groups as their mother's sons and their sisters' brothers.

These two examples are particularly important as they show that matrilineal societies, like patrilineal ones, can be either centralized or decentralized. In the context of decentralization, it appears to be important that women own the means of production, which was the case for the Hopi but not for the Trobriand Islanders. As Hopi society was decentralized, the women, who owned the means of production, turned the surpluses to the communal good, whereas the Trobriand male chiefs turned such festivities into a means of gaining social prestige and conducting long-distance voyages overseas to acquire *kula* prestige items from afar. Moreover, a key factor for decentralized political organization was the Hopi council, which included both male and female elders, whereas the key political decisions in the Trobriand chiefdom were made by the chief himself.

#### Households in Matrilineal Societies May or May Not Be Headed by a Woman

Another important distinction between matrilineal societies is the role of women inside the household, which is closely related to my main interests in connection with the house model from Platia Magoula Zarkou. The two examples of matrilineal societies, namely the Hopi and the Trobriand Island chiefdom, varied significantly as regards the degree to which decision-making powers *inside* the household lay in the hands of women, or not. For example, among the Hopi, where women owned the house and household items, the decision-making powers within the house were in women's hands: Hopi households were both owned and headed by elderly women,<sup>1242</sup> who were responsible for upbringing, disciplining, and orienting their children, as well as making decisions about the distribution of household surpluses. This implies that key decisions related to the household, relevant to both male and female members, were made by Hopi women.

By contrast, Trobriand Island households gave power over decision-making *inside* the household to the mother's brother, rather than either the biological mother (as would be

<sup>1240</sup> Schlegel 1973; Schlegel 1977; Schlegel 1979; Schlegel 1986.

<sup>1241</sup> Malinowski 1929.

<sup>1242</sup> Schlegel 1973; Schlegel 1979.

expected, based on the Hopi example) or the biological father. In the Trobriand case, the mother's brother was responsible for the distribution of yams (household surplus) at harvest, and the upbringing, disciplining, and orienting of his sister's children. The socialization of men and women differed starkly between the Hopi and the Trobriand Islanders. From childhood into adulthood, Hopi women raised male and female members to respect and help each other. Both boys and girls went through initiation rites, through which they were socialized into their roles as men and women. Men learned to take care of the cattle and to trade in goods, whereas women were taught to 'guard' the house and care for the family, as the head of the household.<sup>1243</sup> By contrast, after coming of age and before marriage, Trobriand boys lived in boys' houses, which resulted in rigid gender segregation between adult men and women.<sup>1244</sup> Therefore, both the adult relations between men and women and also the upbringing and shaping of boys and girls into men and women was radically different between female-headed households among the Hopi and mother's brother-headed households among Trobriand Islanders (see Tab. 17).

#### Matrilineal Societies May or May Not Give Political Power to Women

Based on the two examples of the Hopi and Trobriand Island matrilineal societies, I turn to the third point in my overview. This concerns the role of women outside the house, including political participation. In the case of the Hopi, an acephalous society with comparatively balanced gender relations, elderly women actively participated in the Hopi elders' council, alongside their male counterparts. Although Hopi men were commonly involved in conflict resolution through warfare, decisions over whether to go to war or not, or when and how to sponsor religious festivals and initiations, were commonly agreed by the mixed-gender elders' councils. In those councils, it was not the hereditary office but the age status of either older men or women that allowed participation, as there was no hereditary authority within Hopi community politics.

A different situation was observed among the Trobriand Island matrilineal chiefdom. Like the Trobriand households, which were headed by a man (the mother's brother), Trobriand political office was held by a hereditary male chief. In this case, it was the male chief who sponsored the building of canoes for long-distance sea voyages to acquire *kula* prestige items, sponsored seasonal festivals, and made the important decisions about warfare and peace. In the absence of an elders' council, the male chief was responsible for major communal decisions that involved matters beyond individual households. While the Trobriand households were headed by the mother's brother, Trobriand communal political, economic, and religious decisions were made by a hereditary male chief.

The two examples of the Hopi and the Trobriand Islands therefore represent two excellent cases of how diverse and inconsistent male-female relations can be within the heterogeneous range of known matrilineal societies. Above, I have shown that matrilineal societies can be either centralized (Trobriand Islands) or decentralized (Hopi), that households in matrilineal societies may either be headed by an older woman of the house (Hopi) or a man – the mother's brother – (Trobriand Islands), and that females in matrilineal societies may participate in communal politics (as part of the elders' council among the Hopi) or may not (all key decisions made by the male chief on the Trobriand Islands) (see Tab. 17). Therefore, whether or not it is justified, the ascription of matrilineal descent to certain prehistoric societies per se in no way implies that women were in fact either the heads of the households, or that they participated in decision-making beyond the house.

<sup>1243</sup> Schlegel 1973.

<sup>1244</sup> Malinowski 1929.

	<b>Hopi</b>	<b>Trobriand Islands</b>
<b>Descent</b>	Matrilineal	Matrilineal
<b>Political (de)centralization</b>	Decentralized, acephalous	Centralized
<b>The highest political office</b>	A council of elders, men and women	The chief
<b>Residence</b>	Matrilocal	Avunculocal
<b>House ownership</b>	Women	Men own the house and the storage house
<b>Ownership of household items</b>	Women	Women
<b>Land Ownership</b>	Women	Men
<b>Stock Ownership</b>	Men (sheep, later also cattle and horses, which strengthened the male position)	Men (chicken, pigs)
<b>Long-Distance Exchange</b>	Men	Men
<b>Female Mobility</b>	Restricted to the village (excluded from trading)	Restricted to the village (excluded from <i>kula</i> and other long-distance voyages)
<b>Sponsorship of festivals</b>	Women	Men (the chief)
<b>Religious ceremonies</b>	Men	Men (the chief)
<b>Conflict resolution, warfare</b>	Men	Men (the chief)
<b>Hereditary authority in community politics</b>	None	Present
<b>Political decisions within the household</b>	Women	Men (mother's brothers)
<b>Political decisions outside the household</b>	Council of elders, men and women	The chief

Tab. 17 A summary of socio-political differences between two different matrilineal societies

### The House Model as an Act of Resistance

An awareness of the multiplicity of gender roles in matrilineal societies challenges the assumption that women are necessarily in a position of leadership either within or outside the house. This now allows a return to the analysis of the late Neolithic house model at Platia Magoula Zarkou, which crucially depicts women as larger in size than men. As I have argued above, it is likely that the house model was produced by women. However, questions remain: for whom was it sculpted, and why were women sculpted much larger than men? Was it produced for women? For men? For children? To be seen? To be hidden?

The house model was deposited on top of a layer of ash and was quickly covered by a layer of mud, which served as the first Late Neolithic floor in an open area. Hence, from the archaeological data, it can be assumed that the house model was produced as an object of public display, over a short period of time, as an exhibit for women, men, and children to see. After this short period of display in an open area, the house model at Platia Magoula Zarkou was buried underground, hidden from the dwellers at Platia Magoula Zarkou, and remembered by them. The fact that the house model was buried in an open, public space,<sup>1245</sup> furthermore supports the idea that the model was produced for dwellers of Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou, including men, women, and children from different households. The public, ritual deposition of the model fits well with the interpretation of the house model depicting an 'anti-

<sup>1245</sup> Alram-Stern 2022; Alram-Stern in press.

structure',<sup>1246</sup> which is relevant to the community as a whole and not only particular segments of it. The concept of 'anti-structure'<sup>1247</sup> can be further supported though a temporal dimension since the house model was displayed over a restricted period of time (a liminal phase) and then buried underground.

Alternatively, it could be that the house model was remembered only by female potters. Maybe this was a way in which women, as subaltern subjects within a male-dominated patrilineal society, could actually model a parallel, inverse reality, depict female power, or voice their aspirations. Sharing such matters with the other members of their household could have had damaging consequences for women and children. Perhaps women chose not to communicate this, and to protect their own household from conflict. Whatever the reason, women created effigies in clay, not necessarily reflecting solely an emic, but more likely an imagined, symbolic reality, before burying them in the ground.

Although a good ethnographic explanation for a similar act is missing, women among the Baruya (an acephalous but male-dominated patrilineal society) consciously chose to commit suicide rather than to communicate experiences of male oppression to their husbands, brothers, or cousins.<sup>1248</sup> Alternatively, before making the final decision to end their lives and to break with life, women avoided communicating their needs, but spoke through actions. Baruya women could decide to 'forget' to cook for their husbands or save food for them; to visit their natal family for a long period; women could restrict their husband's sexual access; kill their new-born as revenge against their husband's lineage; or even kill the husband.<sup>1249</sup> Therefore, a house model from Platia Magoula Zarkou, in which women are depicted much larger in size than men, may be just one such act of social action translated into material terms. Produced with the intent of not being seen, the female potters at Platia Magoula Zarkou may have buried their aspirations – reflected in the house model – in the ground.

Two examples – the ethnographic case from Baruya and the archaeological case of the house model from Platia Magoula Zarkou – also provide evidence that in non-state societies, hierarchy was not unquestionable and not always taken as self-evident. On the contrary, it appears that while the hegemonic ideology in pre-modern societies has not supported challenges to the existing hierarchies, the two cases demonstrate that in pre-modern times, hierarchy was also, in some cases, seen as unnecessary or undesirable, and was therefore contested through actions. With regard to the house model at Platia Magoula Zarkou, this interpretation seems much more viable than those along the lines of a matrilineal society in which women supposedly took up leading socio-political roles outside the house, as recently proposed by Risch<sup>1250</sup> for cooperative affluent societies. An assumption of matriarchal prehistory under these specified sedentary farming conditions should be understood as a *matriarchal myth*<sup>1251</sup> in prehistoric archaeology, rather than a serious theoretical concept or potential empirical reality.<sup>1252</sup>

All of this, however, does not exclude the possibility that women in this archaeological context may well have seen themselves, and been appreciated by others, as 'centres of the house'.<sup>1253</sup> The idea of a 'centre of the house' certainly conforms not only to matrilineal societies (such as in the case of the Hopi described above) but also to patrilineal societies,

<sup>1246</sup> Turner 2009 [1969].

<sup>1247</sup> Turner 2009 [1969].

<sup>1248</sup> Godelier 1986a.

<sup>1249</sup> Godelier 1986a, 149–150.

<sup>1250</sup> Risch 2018.

<sup>1251</sup> Eller 2006.

<sup>1252</sup> Nevertheless, matrilineal societies – including transmission of houses through the female line – were documented in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in some parts of the coastal areas of the Aegean basin, under specific social and ecological conditions (Goody 1990, 386–396).

<sup>1253</sup> Gingrich 2001.

such as the Munebbih, documented since the 1980s in southwest Arabia.<sup>1254</sup> This ethnographic example provides a better comparative case for Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou based on mixed economies, which, in the case of the Munebbih, included breeding large animals (e.g. cattle) and more or less sedentary farming, similar to that observed at Platia Magoula Zarkou.

The Munebbih are a tribal society with segmentary traits, including a shallow patrilineal descent reckoning that displayed links to the overall tribe's formal patrilineal genealogies (see Chapter II, Tab. 2), located in a remote mountain of southwest Arabia, far from the major trading routes and with little resemblance to the 'big traditions' related to the Koran. All Munebbih households practised mixed farming by agriculture on irrigated terraced fields and the herding of sheep, goats, and camels or cattle, with an elaborate distribution of male and female tasks and, consequently, spaces. Most Munebbih female tasks comprised activities inside or in close proximity to the house. Although men built and owned the house, women were responsible for the daily household tasks of feeding and raising children, cooking, and gardening close to the house. Male daily tasks included slaughtering or selling animals and conducting agriculture on the terraced fields, beekeeping, and planting trees. Women only worked in the fields during peak times, and had no say over the economic outcomes of male labour. Women sold the surpluses of their garden and gathering labour, considered as prestige objects, in the local markets. Among the Munebbih, a house was the central territory of female space, while other parts of a village, including the fields, meadows and forest, were secondary female spaces. Hence women, children, and men alike perceived women as the 'centre of the house', which was quite in line with existing elements of patrilineal logic.

Based on the Munebbih case, it is then likely that the house model from Platia Magoula Zarkou could provide a material example of an 'act of resistance' or an 'anti-structure' as a ritual object. Simultaneously, the house model could represent women as the 'centre of the house'. Therefore, it would be erroneous to simply conclude that the larger size of the female figurines represented the socio-political domination of women within and outside the house or a household, as proposed by Risch.<sup>1255</sup> Instead, it should be highlighted that the central role of women within the household may be intrinsically linked to both matrilineal and patrilineal societies, and that matrilineal descent does not necessarily imply that women hold the most important roles either within or outside the house. The house model from Platia Magoula Zarkou is therefore an example of women seeing themselves and being appreciated by others as the 'centre of the house' within a patrilineal context, in which houses were primarily female spaces, and were perceived as such by both female and male dwellers at Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou.

### VI.3. Regional Mixed Economy at Platia Magoula Zarkou

Following the conclusion that dwellers at Platia Magoula Zarkou most probably would have been organized along patrilineal rather than matrilineal lines, let us now look beyond the house model, into the broader region of Thessaly. For the Late Neolithic, Platia Magoula Zarkou has been interpreted as a grey on grey pottery production centre. This chapter therefore brings us to the organization of production and the means of exchange of pottery within the Thessalian plain during Late Neolithic times. Recent insights show that not only decorated but also non-decorated pots were exchanged during the Neolithic over long distances in Thessaly.<sup>1256</sup> On that basis I address these pots through the medium of several possible channels of exchange:

<sup>1254</sup> Gingrich 2001.

<sup>1255</sup> Risch 2018.

<sup>1256</sup> Pentedeka 2011.

bridewealth, dowry, the generalized exchange of women, and finally, pots as multipurpose and multi-relational objects. In the last part of this section, I provide some insights regarding pottery production from Wanigelan potters in their Papua New Guinea big man society. There, pots were one of the main female-produced items for regional exchange, which can be extended to conclusions regarding non-wheel pottery production. First, pottery is produced both for domestic consumption and regional exchange. Second, whereas under these specified conditions women are commonly producers of pottery, men are more likely in charge of the exchange of these pots. Third, pots played a significant role as markers of the group's identity. By establishing these three interim conclusions, we can already see that the distinction between production for use and production for exchange within the DMP is not as straightforward as commonly assumed. However, this, in turn, further strengthens the central thesis of this book.

Until recently, it was widely agreed that the Neolithic pottery exchanged on a regional scale within the Aegean basin comprised only decorated wares with a significant symbolic function, and not utilitarian, non-decorated pots, as was proposed in the 1990s by Catherine Perlès.<sup>1257</sup> Recently, the insights gained from a detailed study of Neolithic pottery in Thessaly argued against such a claim.<sup>1258</sup> Through chemical and petrographic analyses from twelve Neolithic Thessalian sites along the Pineios River and to the south, Pentedeka showed that pots of all sizes, wares, and shapes circulated over long distances across the Thessalian plain. This regional exchange included both decorated and monochrome wares, albeit in different proportions.<sup>1259</sup> Platia Magoula Zarkou was among the sites which specialized in the production of grey on grey pottery in this Late Neolithic exchange network. During this period, the vessels exchanged mostly comprised small to medium-sized cups and bowls, whose functional properties are linked to consumption.<sup>1260</sup> The number of exchanged objects was comparatively small in relation to the overall local pottery production and consumption at each of the twelve sites under investigation. The relevant pieces were interpreted as most probably being used for rites of passage, such as a marriage to someone outside the local village, or the death of someone from another village.<sup>1261</sup> The use of imported wares for feasting was excluded, due to the rather small number of foreign objects in comparison to the local ones at each of the twelve sites. Apart from this observation, Pentedeka argued that

‘One of the more distinctive elements of the Neolithic material culture in Thessaly is pottery, demonstrating a large variety of surface treatments defining numerous decorated and plain ware categories, alongside evident stylistic homogeneity, indicating close connections between sites.’<sup>1262</sup>

Here we come to an important distinction. On the one hand, there was a clear diversity in the surface treatment of pots between Late Neolithic Thessalian sites: yet on the other hand, the shape of the pots was homogeneous across different sites in the eastern and western Thessalian plains. As I have argued above, it is most likely that women were the producers of pottery during the Neolithic, which can be supported through ethnographic observations of non-wheel pottery from Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa, and indigenous North and South America. By acknowledging the female role in pottery production in Neolithic times, we can better understand the social lives of pots, and also of people, at these sites.

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<sup>1257</sup> Perlès 1992.

<sup>1258</sup> Pentedeka 2017.

<sup>1259</sup> Pentedeka 2017.

<sup>1260</sup> Pentedeka 2017.

<sup>1261</sup> Pentedeka 2017, 147.

<sup>1262</sup> Pentedeka 2011, 110.

During the Late Neolithic, the Thessalian plain consisted of numerous village communities, mostly scattered along the alluvial plains of the Pineios River in the east and south, and its tributaries to the north and south. Access to the fluvial plains ensured fresh water and raw clay for the production of pots, which were mostly produced locally at each site.<sup>1263</sup> The population of each village could hardly have exceeded a few hundred residents, as the village size was rarely more than 2 hectares.<sup>1264</sup> Based on the discussion of intra-village endogamy or exogamy in Chapter IV, we can postulate that Neolithic Thessalian villages needed, at least to some extent, to establish and maintain marriage alliances beyond the single village site. This would necessarily lead to an interdependent network of affinity and alliance, which could provide a basis for more or less peaceful economic relations and a regional economy between different Thessalian sites. Given that pots from elsewhere were found at each site, albeit in a much smaller proportion than locally produced ones, we can accept Pentedeka's suggestion that these pots were exchanged upon marriage.<sup>1265</sup> If this was the case, then there are several possibilities concerning the socio-economic transactions that may occur upon marriage or following it.

#### Pots as Bridewealth

One of the possibilities for the exchange of pots between different Thessalian sites is the transaction between the groom's and bride's kin groups upon marriage, commonly known as *bridewealth* in the anthropological literature.<sup>1266</sup> In a patrilineal society, the groom's kin would give material items such as pots – as well as other valuable goods (within and outside those pots) such as agricultural products and other (non)foodstuffs – to the bride's kin as part of a wedding celebration. In a matrilineal society, the process would be reversed: the bride's family might give pots and other valuables to the groom's kin. In the case of a *bridewealth* marriage transaction, a bride's father might retain some of these transactions, but sooner or later at least substantial parts of these material transactions would go to the bride, to be pooled through her into the newly-wed couple's resources. Land is usually exempt from marriage transactions since a married person would join another family after marriage and access to land would be secured through the family's clan structure.<sup>1267</sup>

In *The Oriental, the Ancient and the Primitive: Systems of Marriage and the Family in the Pre-Industrial Societies of Eurasia*, Goody<sup>1268</sup> showed that this type of marriage transaction predominated until the Bronze Age in Eurasia, and up to recent times in Africa. In both cases, the exchange of movable property between groups of non-kin, the so-called *bridewealth*, did not result in increasingly hierarchical differences in wealth, since horticultural subsistence production with a digging stick required the broadly equal involvement of groups in subsistence, and therefore class differences could not emerge.

Outside Africa, bridewealth among mostly patrilineal big man societies resulted in competitive regional exchanges, which allowed big men to become renowned across a broader region. A big man's name and wealth was not inherited by his sons, but was personally achieved while being collectively consumed through feasting. Therefore, collective feasting perpetuated regional exchange and competition between big men, and prevented the permanent accumulation of excessive wealth by a single household in comparison to others.<sup>1269</sup> Based on the ethnographic record collected among big man societies, substantial marriage transactions

<sup>1263</sup> Pentedeka 2011; Pentedeka 2017.

<sup>1264</sup> For a detailed explanation of the correlation between settlement size and population size, see Chapter IV.

<sup>1265</sup> Pentedeka 2017.

<sup>1266</sup> Goody 1990; Godelier 1999; Godelier 2018.

<sup>1267</sup> Goody 1990; Godelier 1999; Godelier 2018.

<sup>1268</sup> Goody 1990.

<sup>1269</sup> Godelier 1991; Lederman 2015.

are thus not a particularly specific ‘Bronze Age’ characteristic. They may have existed among affluent communities in rich ecological niches prior to the Bronze Age in the Old World. This also includes the strong possibility that they occurred prior to the existence of class inequality, which is applicable to Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou.

#### Pots as Dowry

Another practice, known as *diverging devolution*, which, according to Goody,<sup>1270</sup> emerged in Eurasia during the Bronze Age, was the transmission of goods at marriage from parents to their daughters and sons. This implies that upon her marriage, a bride would inherit a dowry from her parents, which usually consisted of movable goods such as bedding, furniture, stock, and occasionally also a piece of immovable property, such as land or a house (at least as an inherited claim). In this case, unlike bridewealth transactions, the household or clan-based property did not remain intact. Instead, it was split between siblings of both genders in the next generation, in equal or unequal parts. Therefore, diverging devolution led to increasing differentiation in wealth and status. The repetitive segmentation of farming land through diverging devolution and increased yields following the adoption of the wheel and the plough paved the way towards a split into two classes: the *landless*, who in the absence of land and money could ‘sell’ their labour to the ruling elite to survive, and the *landed*, who reproduced themselves by exploitation of ‘free labour’ and the marriage of their offspring to other landed rulers, so that the property remained within the family. The practice of isogamy, ‘the tendency for like to marry like’,<sup>1271</sup> ensured little social mobility between groups, in order to preserve and pass on status and property.

Goody argued that marriage rules previously based on the incest taboo and clan exogamy were complemented and, in part, replaced by status and class endogamy during the Eurasian Bronze Age, in a system known as isogamy.<sup>1272</sup> This newly established practice structurally reinforced the ideology that supported the division between the two classes of landed and landless, since kinship between the rulers and the ruled could no longer be traced through a common ancestor. In this way, territorial membership and boundary making gained in importance as the basis for taxation and a redistributive economy that supported the rich and landed, now detached from agricultural work. Diverging devolution is initially the transmission of goods from parents to their offspring, e.g. from parents to a bride, and only then the transaction of goods between two families. In the case of viri- or neolocal residence, therefore, the pots may have been transmitted to the bride and then brought with her to the couple’s new house. In this case, following Alram-Stern’s interpretation of the house model, one could argue that such a practice might have already existed during the Late Neolithic. Alram-Stern interpreted the small female figurines in the back-right corner of the house as unrelated individuals:

‘The woman, who has a damaged head, and the asexual figurine (the immature girl) have similar decoration to the other female figurines of the house model and could therefore be related to the women of the other groups, being younger relatives of them. However, the other woman in this group is of a different style, with large breasts and without incised decoration. Therefore, most probably she was not related to the other figurines in the household. In consequence, this group does not represent a family, but is dominated by women connected to the household by their activities.’<sup>1273</sup>

<sup>1270</sup> Goody 1969; Goody 1971; Goody 1990; Goody 2006.

<sup>1271</sup> Goody 1990, 2.

<sup>1272</sup> Goody 1969; Goody 1971; Goody 1990; Goody 2006.

<sup>1273</sup> Alram-Stern 2022, 477.

With this description, she argued that ‘in this house, [these figurines] represent not necessarily the younger ones, but most probably the group of the lowest familial status.’<sup>1274</sup> However, the evidence from the cemetery does not indicate any hierarchical status differences in burial practices between persons. Other archaeological evidence for the existence of clear-cut status groups or classes is also lacking (e.g. the absence of monumental public buildings, the absence of record keeping and writing, the absence of plough agriculture). Consequently, it does not appear likely that a class-based society existed in Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou. Without the existence of classes, the transfer of pots and related goods through marriage transactions and inheritance may be supported by the record at Platia Magoula Zarkou, but cannot be associated with any emerging hierarchies. However, the integration of non-related minority persons into a household, possibly having a lower social status than those linked through kinship, should not be perceived as unlikely for non-state societies without distinct status groups or classes.<sup>1275</sup>

#### A Sister for a Wife, a Pot for a Barkcloth

After identifying two possible marriage transactions, namely the bridewealth and dowry, through which pots (and items within pots) could be transmitted upon marriage, the third possibility for the wide distribution of pots across the Thessalian plain could be the result of the *generalized exchange* of women.<sup>1276</sup> In this marriage transaction, asymmetrical sets of relations between people and things create rules by which people could only be exchanged or given in return for people or things within or among tribal groups. Items of exchange can be further classified into locally more or less valuable goods with a regional exchange value, in which valuable goods could only be exchanged for other valuable goods.<sup>1277</sup> This kind of marriage practice was common among certain Melanesian great man societies, in which two men usually agreed to exchange their respective sisters for marriage within or between tribal groups.<sup>1278</sup> After marriage, the Baruya bride moved to the husband’s house and, apart from some of the bride’s personal possessions, no other goods were given from the groom’s to the bride’s parents: the ‘gift and counter-gift’ were the two women themselves. Although no goods as such were exchanged for one another at the marriage, women brought their personal belongings along with them, usually objects made by women, including string bags, fibre skirts, barkcloth, pottery, and mats.<sup>1279</sup> These women-made and women-worn/used objects would then travel, without the intentional exchange of these objects as parts of women’s personal belongings, from one village to another due to marriage. Therefore, it is also possible that they could be found within the archaeological deposit of another village, far from their production centre.

Where the *generalized exchange* of sisters, without the exchange of material objects, is a predominant practice within a given great man tribal group, this is generally not the only way of obtaining a wife. Each great man society needed to establish and maintain more or less peaceful relations with their neighbours, with whom the group would not exchange sisters, but ‘give’ a daughter, in return for external goods. The need to maintain relatively peaceful alliances and gain access to objects from afar, not available within their own group, meant

<sup>1274</sup> Alram-Stern 2022, 477.

<sup>1275</sup> For example, the integration of non-related members into a household was previously observed among the patrilineal Nuer, who integrated non-related members through ‘adoption, cognatic kinship, or kinship fictions’ (Evans-Pritchard 1940, 228), Tikopia, who integrated non-related members through adoption (Firth 1959; Firth 1983), as well as fisher-foragers of the Pacific Northwest (Wengrow – Graeber 2018).

<sup>1276</sup> Godelier 1991.

<sup>1277</sup> Godelier 1991.

<sup>1278</sup> Godelier 1986a; Jorgensen 1991.

<sup>1279</sup> Hermkens – Lepani 2017a, 2.

that women could be exchanged for *bridewealth* ('*brideprice*'). In this case, the exchange of women upon marriage follows the rule for the internal exchange of women among big man societies. However, within great man societies, such exchanges were only of minor importance. The difference between big man societies in which *bridewealth* was the predominant matrimonial practice and great man societies where such a practice is of minimal importance 'is not a matter of the presence or absence of the principle that equates women with wealth, but whether or not this principle is subordinate or dominant among other principles offering other possibilities of establishing matrimonial alliances'.<sup>1280</sup> Therefore, this could very well explain the minimal presence of foreign pieces of pottery at each of the Late Neolithic Thessalian sites. It could point towards an exchange of women for external goods: not necessarily pottery, but also goods stored within those pots, as pottery was, in general, produced locally at each site. Nevertheless, considering that women produced pottery, external pottery wares could be brought into a new household in the absence of exchange, as a bride's personal belonging, after marriage. Again, this feature of potential objects in inheritance and 'big' marriage transactions is possible without Bronze Age technology, any market-based economy, or class division: and it is therefore applicable to Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou.

#### Pots as Multi-Purpose and Multi-Relational Objects

Marriage transactions may sometimes, albeit not frequently, be linked with the commemoration of death as proposed by Pentedeka.<sup>1281</sup> Yet these ritualized transactions through kinship relations are not the only possible set of reasons for the wide distribution of pots across the Neolithic Thessalian plain.<sup>1282</sup> Pottery, as well as other female-produced objects, may frequently be crucial items of regional exchange, as valuables or commodities in themselves among non-state societies, which may also include items stored in those pots. In the introduction to *Sinuous Objects: Revaluing Women's Wealth in the Contemporary Pacific*, the editors summarized ethnographic insights from Papua New Guinea, showing that pots can be critical for making land claims and signifying social relations between groups.<sup>1283</sup> Moreover, the pots themselves can also embody gender, clan identity, and ancestral power.<sup>1284</sup> The volume's authors therefore classify pots, alongside other objects produced by women, as *sinuous*, since layers of value, meaning and agency are inherent to those objects. This can be better understood from the summarized example of Wanigelan pottery production and regional consumption below, in which Wanigelan women were the producers and Wanigelan men the primary 'distributors' of female-produced objects.

In Papua New Guinea's Central Province, Wanigela women were traditionally known for the production of cooking pots or '*baitah nkwut*'.<sup>1285</sup> These were widely distributed within the Collingwood Bay region, in which big man societies were organized by patrilineal clan membership and competitive regional exchanges. In the past, girls grew up watching their mothers producing pots and learning from them, and most of the pots were produced by young women.<sup>1286</sup> Wanigela women produced pots<sup>1287</sup> for different purposes: to collect and store water, to

<sup>1280</sup> Godelier 1986a, 25.

<sup>1281</sup> Pentedeka 2017.

<sup>1282</sup> Pentedeka 2017.

<sup>1283</sup> Hermkens – Lepani 2017b.

<sup>1284</sup> Hermkens – Lepani 2017a, 2.

<sup>1285</sup> Bonshek 2017.

<sup>1286</sup> Bonshek 2017.

<sup>1287</sup> Wanigelan women collected clay in the dark when no one else from the village could see them. Moreover, Elisabeth Bonshek, who conducted participant observation among Wanigela, could not participate in firing clay pots. Wanigelan women explained that firing should be conducted in solitude. If not, the pot could break. Although Wanigelan women could not provide any explanation why the clay for pottery was collected in the

eat and serve with, to participate in ceremonial feasting, to cook with, and to use as objects of regional exchange.<sup>1288</sup> Cooking pots or '*baitah nkwut*' were an important item of regional exchange for other female-produced objects such as barkcloth, mats, and string bags, and it was Wanigela men who embarked on these exchange expeditions.<sup>1289</sup>

On the village scale, Wanigela pottery production was emically perceived as 'this is what Wanigelans do',<sup>1290</sup> and pottery production was a central part of girls' upbringing, including the continued transmission of specific clan designs.<sup>1291</sup> Instead of solely producing pots for use or exchange, Wanigelan women kept the most beautiful pieces in the house, which coincides with Godelier's claim that some things are not given but kept (within households) for their supreme value:<sup>1292</sup>

'While all pots are made in the same way, they are not all destined for exchange. Pots with intricate applied patterns covering the body are kept out of the exchange network, although they might be given away as gifts. Such highly decorated pots are not readily visible in people's houses, but they may be brought out with some pride if interest is shown in them. These 'heirloom' pots often carry clan designs, and as such they manifest a connection between the pot, its owner and his or her clan identity.'<sup>1293</sup>

After the pot's completion, a female potter would then sort out the nicest pieces to keep as a household heirloom, separate from other not perfectly shaped and decorated pots, the latter commonly being used as a gift or an item of barter for other goods. In the past, Wanigela men embarked on long-distance expeditions, which were organized along clan lines, to exchange the *baitah nkwut* for feathers with people inland and for shell valuables and obsidian flakes with people living on the coast.<sup>1294</sup> Apart from these voyages, men embarked on *nunug* expeditions, in which cooking pots would be exchanged for *nunug*, ground shell discs that were not produced locally, but which formed a necessary part of bridewealth transactions for Wanigela. *Nunug* were also used for bodily decoration and were given to young Wanigelan initiates (male and female) who were only then able to marry and enter a new stage of life.<sup>1295</sup> Men also exchanged cooking pots for pigs and a type of banana. Wanigela's locally produced cooking pots and externally acquired goods, such as *nunug*, were both crucial for society's reproduction and men's dependence on women's work:

'The acquisition of *nunug* brought renown to the men who acquired them. Participation by a young man in *nunug* expeditions was a mark of his adult status (boys did not go on such expeditions). Wanigela men, therefore, depended upon the skills of their wives, mothers and grandmothers in making the pots used to obtain *nunug*. Women's work in the form of *baitab nokwat* was therefore essential for the acquisition of *nunug* and formed an essential part of the family's cultural capital and a requirement for cultural reproduction in Wanigela.'<sup>1296</sup>

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dark – when no one could see them – Bonshek explains that sorcery remains important among Wanigelans and therefore people might be wary of letting others know what they are doing (E. Bonshek, pers. comm. 2020).

<sup>1288</sup> Bonshek 2017, 125.

<sup>1289</sup> Bonshek 2017.

<sup>1290</sup> Bonshek 2017, 126.

<sup>1291</sup> Bonshek 2017.

<sup>1292</sup> Godelier 1999; Godelier 2011, 193

<sup>1293</sup> Bonshek 2017, 134.

<sup>1294</sup> Bonshek 2017.

<sup>1295</sup> Bonshek 2017.

<sup>1296</sup> Bonshek 2017, 135.

For Wanigelans, pottery production did not represent wealth, but instead manifested economic, cultural, and social value.<sup>1297</sup> Within the broader region, all potters were Wanigelans; however, not all Wanigelans were potters. Wanigelans identified themselves with a number of potting villages, speaking the same language but belonging to 50 different clans, and therefore they cannot be understood as a bounded cultural group.<sup>1298</sup> Traditionally, Wanigelans belonged to three different Austronesian-speaking (e.g. Ubir, Oyan groups) and non-Austronesian language groups (e.g. Onjob).<sup>1299</sup> All of these groups had migrated into the ‘Wanigelan swamps’, in which the three groups of villages and hamlets were fenced, as the newcomers’ settlements were often raided. With the passage of time, the three groups of Wanigelans established peaceful contacts by intermarriage (i.e. bride exchange) and came to be renowned for their pottery production within the wider region.<sup>1300</sup> For example, the Mukawa, dwelling at the tip of Cape Vogel, were the middlemen for the exchange of Wanigelan pottery for obsidian from the Ferguson Islands.<sup>1301</sup> Through the Mukawa, Wanigelans exchanged one pot for a fist-sized lump of obsidian, the source of which was located on a small island 170km east of Collingwood Bay.<sup>1302</sup>

There are a few typical traits in the Wanigelan pottery production example that could be extended to non-wheel made pottery production. First, Wanigelan women do not produce pottery only for use but also for exchange as well as for the ‘supreme value’, keeping the most beautiful examples at home. Second, the example highlights a complementary gendered division of labour: whereas women produce pottery, men exchange these items for non-locally available goods, which are essential for society’s reproduction and not prestige (e.g. *nunug* – ground shell discs, obsidian). Third, it showcases that pots played a significant role as markers of the group’s clan identity and maintenance of both local and regional relations between groups. The sum of all this makes the Wanigelan case comparatively significant to Platia Magoula Zarkou, where pottery production was also an important village- or gender-based regional craft specialization.

#### VI.4. Pot Exchange at Platia Magoula Zarkou

If pots were an important item not only for local consumption but also for regional exchange at Platia Magoula Zarkou, then we should open up the discussion on what items were exchanged in return for pots produced locally. In this chapter, I compare the compatibility of lithic objects’, namely obsidian and chocolate chert’s distribution within Thessaly to show that lithic objects and pots may have belonged to different spheres of exchange. Given that Platia Magoula Zarkou’s pots have reached long distances, the lack of access to obsidian and chocolate chert is more than evident. Therefore, we cannot conclude that pots were indeed transacted in direct exchange for pots. Following Bohannan’s interpretation of the Tiv’s economic systems<sup>1303</sup> comprising distinct spheres of exchange, I conclude that not only were pottery and stone tools necessarily traded through different exchange networks<sup>1304</sup> but that these two groups of objects were also valued differently. During the Late Neolithic obsidian and pots belonged to two different spheres of exchange, despite both being important subsistence items as well as items of local and regional exchange.

<sup>1297</sup> Bonshek 2017.

<sup>1298</sup> Bonshek 2017.

<sup>1299</sup> Egloff 1971, 13–15.

<sup>1300</sup> Egloff 1971, 13–15.

<sup>1301</sup> Egloff 1971, 19.

<sup>1302</sup> Egloff 1971, 19.

<sup>1303</sup> Bohannan 1955, 1959.

<sup>1304</sup> Perlès – Papagiannaki 2022.

In all likelihood, a *restricted craft integration* of pottery at Platia Magoula Zarkou was well established. The exchange of pottery nevertheless failed to provide the means for longevity for this site. As a parallel note on both Platia Magoula Zarkou and Çukuriçi Höyük, we can see how regional specialization, be it in pottery production or metals, may not have guaranteed longevity to either of the two settlement sites. Both *generalized craft integration* and specialized craft integration at the two sites therefore created a regional niche, which could be disrupted through local as well as regional developments. A shift towards the reduced value of pottery at Platia Magoula Zarkou and arsenical copper objects at Çukuriçi Höyük in comparison to other objects and materials, such as obsidian in hinterland Thessaly or tin bronzes in western Anatolia, may have been regulated through newly emerging spheres of exchange. Through shifting values of such goods, sites would be given unequal opportunities to participate in regional exchange networks. Certainly, neither Platia Magoula Zarkou nor Çukuriçi Höyük were the winners of these shifting value regimes, but the opposite.

Based on the ethnographic accounts of female-produced pottery outlined above, we can draw a further conclusion regarding the regional distribution of pottery within Late Neolithic Thessalian sites. For the production of pots, the Wanigelan ethnographic case shows that pottery making can be a key component of women's upbringing in villages specializing in pottery production. Wanigelan women were not full-time producers of pots, but pottery production was an important regional expertise since other villages within the Collingwood Bay area lacked raw clay and the women's expertise. In a complementary manner, women in other villages within the Collingwood Bay area and beyond specialized in the production of other products for which the expertise or raw materials were lacking in Wanigelan territory. This regional 'specialization' of craftwork can be contrasted with the context of the Thessalian Late Neolithic, where all of the twelve sites examined confirmed predominantly local pottery production with minimal importance of imported vessels: the pots were not the main item of regional exchange. However, the five Late Neolithic Thessalian sites, among them Platia Magoula Zarkou, specialized in a certain type of pottery, which was widely distributed across Thessaly.<sup>1305</sup> These mostly locally produced pots were of the same shape, but were made using different local clay recipes, treatments, and firing techniques throughout the Thessalian Late Neolithic. Considering that women at Platia Magoula Zarkou were either *generalized* or *restricted potting specialists*, producing pottery on a part-time and not a full-time basis, what can we say about the Late Neolithic society regarding pottery distribution and exchange?

First, let us examine the similarities between sites regarding shape. If women within a particular settlement developed a particular recipe and practice for producing pots, these wares needed to satisfy their consumers – the members of a household and the multi-generational village settlement. Girls would learn potting skills from their mothers, as was observed in Wanigela and elsewhere. This learning process would include the sourcing of clay, preparation of the clay recipe, firing, and decorating a pot in accordance with the family group, most likely the father's. Through 'participant observation' as well as by mimetic trial and error practices, a girl could acquire the same basic skills as her mother, which she could use in an extended or new household after marriage.

As I have argued in Chapter III, Neolithic communities most likely worked with an integrated package of large domestic animals, including cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs, and within Western Asia tended to be patrilineal, which corresponds to previous anthropological contextualization of semi-sedentary communities.<sup>1306</sup> If this was the case, then it was most likely that women left their home upon marriage. On the one hand, a bride with potting skills could marry a man from another group within the same village, where she could source clay from the village's communal or the household's piece of land. On the other hand, a bride with pot-

<sup>1305</sup> Pentedeka 2017.

<sup>1306</sup> Gingrich – Schweitzer 2014.

ting skills could virilocally marry a man from another village, where she would most likely need to learn about new sources of clay, new recipes, and possibly new firing techniques. In both cases, however, a bride needed to acquire new skills in decorating a pot in a new manner, according to the groom's group's patterns – skills that could be learned from her mother- or sisters-in-law. The most important predisposition – potting expertise, including the modelling of clay into a vessel with a particular form and function – were skills a bride would bring along with her. The Late Neolithic assemblage from Thessaly, including homogeneous forms of vessels alongside differentiated decorative patterns, could, then, be a material reflection of the established practice of women being married out, in marriages within – as well as between – Thessalian settlements. Whereas clay sources and decorative techniques 'stayed put', through marriage women moved between households and, occasionally, between settlements, producing vessels of the same shape but of different decorative patterns and firing techniques.

What kind of marriage transactions can be inferred from such prehistoric records remains enigmatic. It is highly probable, however, that pots could be transferred as bridewealth but rarely as dowries during the Late Neolithic. Based on the Wanigelan case presented above, it is also evident that all Thessalian village settlements did not necessarily have to be integrated into either a single tribal territory or a linguistic group. The latter can be observed from Wanigelan potters, where the term 'Wanigelans' refers to a territorial and socio-economic group including female potters which lives in the swamps of Collingwood Bay without any claim to common ancestry, such as would be the case for a segmentary lineage tribe. While Wanigelans produced the same types of pots in terms of shape, they decorated them in accordance with more than 50 different clan insignia, and they belonged to three different (non)Austronesian-speaking groups.<sup>1307</sup> The same case is likely for Platia Magoula Zarkou and the wider region of Thessaly, where different sites specialized in different types of pottery production of the same shape, but this dimension of cultural affinity does not mean that they necessarily belonged to the same ethnic, linguistic, or political group.

#### A Pot for Chocolate Chert at Platia Magoula Zarkou?

On the Late Neolithic Thessalian plain, Pentedeka<sup>1308</sup> identified five 'nodal points' or centres of specialized pottery production. One of these Late Neolithic pottery production centres was Platia Magoula Zarkou, which specialized in the production of grey on grey pottery. Grey on grey pottery from Platia Magoula Zarkou was found at many other sites to the north and northwest, along the Pindus range, as well as to the south, along the tributaries of the Pineios River. Less of this pottery reached the eastern part of the Thessalian plain, but some pieces were recovered from Tsangli, close to the Pagasetic Gulf. Although the pottery may have been involved in marriage transactions, it appears that this was not the only means of regional exchange and inter-site interactions.

All sites across the Thessalian plain relied on acquiring non-local goods, which included stone tools made of Melian obsidian, chocolate chert, or honey chert. These were the three most commonly found raw materials in the Thessalian plain in the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods.<sup>1309</sup> Regarding stone tools, there is a significant division between the western and eastern Thessalian sites. Throughout the Neolithic and the Bronze Age, western Thessalian sites (including Platia Magoula Zarkou) mainly relied on stone sources of chocolate chert from the Pindus range, which were regionally/locally available, while Melian obsidian was found only in small proportions at those sites.<sup>1310</sup> By contrast, the eastern Thessalian sites such as

<sup>1307</sup> Bonshek 2017, 138.

<sup>1308</sup> Pentedeka 2011; Pentedeka 2017.

<sup>1309</sup> Perlès – Papagiannaki 2022.

<sup>1310</sup> Karimali 2009.

	<b>Hinterland (western) Thessalian sites (Platia Magoula Zarkou)</b>	<b>Coastal (eastern) Thessalian sites (Pevkakia)</b>
<b>Melian obsidian</b>	Minor presence, most of the pieces imported	Major presence, on-site production of Melian obsidian
<b>Chocolate chert from the Pindus mountain range</b>	Major presence, on-site production of chocolate chert	Minor presence, most of the pieces imported
<b>Pottery Networks</b>	Presence of imported decorated and non-decorated pottery at most of the hinterland sites	Coastal Thessalian sites lie at the edge of the ‘intensified pottery’ interaction

Tab. 18 Summarized distribution of stone tools and pottery at hinterland and coastal Thessalian sites (after Karimali 2009)

Pevkakia, mainly relied on obsidian stone tools from the Cycladic island of Melos, located approximately 300km to the southeast.<sup>1311</sup> The eastern Thessalian sites, including Pevkakia and others, have demonstrated on-site Melian obsidian blade production, whereas at western Thessalian sites there is no evidence of on-site Melian obsidian knapping: instead, obsidian blades found at these sites appear to have been acquired through exchange.<sup>1312</sup> Furthermore, the Late Neolithic western Thessalian sites show evidence of the entire sequence of chocolate chert production, whereas the evidence of chocolate chert knapping is lacking in eastern Thessalian sites, apart from retouched tools<sup>1313</sup> (see Tab. 18).

Recent analyses of lithic stone tools at Platia Magoula Zarkou have provided somewhat different results in comparison to the overall similarities between the eastern and western Thessalian sites. Melian obsidian, along with chocolate and honey chert, is, in fact, better represented at other western Thessalian sites than at Platia Magoula Zarkou.<sup>1314</sup> Moreover, Platia Magoula Zarkou showed a larger proportion of retouched tools and a smaller proportion of raw material than other western Thessalian sites, which indicates a scarcity of stone tools at Platia Magoula Zarkou.<sup>1315</sup> This led Perlès and Papagiannaki<sup>1316</sup> to argue that although Platia Magoula Zarkou was located in an *a priori* ideal nodal position for the exchange of pottery, it was, nevertheless, a marginal node for Melian obsidian exchange during the Late Neolithic and the EBA period. Considering that Platia Magoula Zarkou was a pottery production centre, this result refutes the *a priori* expectation that the specialized production of pots could satisfy people’s needs for external, non-locally available stone tools. Instead, lithic analyses showed that dwellers at Platia Magoula Zarkou did not participate intensively in either Melian obsidian, chocolate chert, or honey chert exchange networks during the Late Neolithic or the Early Bronze Age.<sup>1317</sup> Experts in lithic regional evidence concluded that ‘obviously, pots were not traded against flaked stone tools, and these trading networks were entirely independent’.<sup>1318</sup> Here, the question arises how to explain the specialization in pottery production for local use and regional exchange versus the scarcity of stone tools during the Late Neolithic at Platia Magoula Zarkou through anthropological contextualization.

<sup>1311</sup> Karimali 2009.

<sup>1312</sup> Karimali 2009.

<sup>1313</sup> Karimali 2009.

<sup>1314</sup> Perlès – Papagiannaki 2022.

<sup>1315</sup> Perlès – Papagiannaki 2022.

<sup>1316</sup> Perlès – Papagiannaki 2022.

<sup>1317</sup> Perlès – Papagiannaki 2022.

<sup>1318</sup> Perlès – Papagiannaki 2022.

In my view, Platia Magoula Zarkou presents an excellent archaeological case for the existence of ‘spheres of exchange’ and a ‘multi-centric economy’<sup>1319</sup> during the Late Neolithic in Thessaly. According to Bohannan, the multi-centric economy is

‘An economy in which a society’s exchangeable goods fall into two or more mutually exclusive spheres, each marked by different institutionalization and different moral values. In some multi-centric economies these spheres remain distinct, though in most there are more or less institutionalized means of converting wealth from one into wealth in another.’<sup>1320</sup>

In the 1950s, the spheres of exchange were described for the acephalous Tiv in central Nigeria, although the same principles were described under different terms elsewhere in Africa, the Pacific, and Melanesia (see Tab. 19).<sup>1321</sup> The Tiv distinguished between three spheres of exchange. The first was the *sphere of subsistence*, including yams, cereals, small livestock (chickens, goats, and sheep), household utensils (mortars, grindstones, calabashes, baskets, and pots), agricultural tools, and raw materials for the production of any items in this category. Traditionally, these goods were locally produced and exchanged through gift and barter exchange, and were sold at local markets in the 1950s. The second sphere of Tiv exchange was the *sphere of prestige*, which included slaves, cattle, *tugudu* white cloth, medicines, magic, and metal rods, which were involved in long-distance exchange. During Bohannan’s fieldwork, these items were never sold at markets but were exchanged at ceremonies, such as ritualized wealth displays. The third sphere of exchange was the *sphere of women*. Traditionally, Tiv men usually exchanged women at marriage, both between Tiv or beyond Tiv villages. Therefore, ‘the only ‘price’ of one woman is another woman’ among the Tiv<sup>1322</sup> (see Tab. 19). Although most of the items within these three distinct spheres of exchange can, in principle, only be exchanged for another item within the same sphere (*conveyance*, e.g. food for baskets), the exchange of items belonging to different spheres (*conversion*, e.g. food for brass rods) was only possible in exceptional situations and carried a moral connotation:

‘Tiv say that it is ‘good’ to trade food for brass rods, but that it is ‘bad’ to trade brass rods for food, that it is good to trade your cows or brass rods for a wife, but very bad to trade your marriage ward for cows or brass rods.’<sup>1323</sup>

If we apply the Tiv example to Platia Magoula Zarkou, then it becomes evident that dwellers at this site and in the wider Thessalian plain region distinguished between at least two spheres of exchange, if not more. If pots could not be exchanged for stone tools,<sup>1324</sup> pots and stone tools then necessarily belonged to different spheres of exchange, and their value as products of labour alone was not directly commensurable. To understand in which hierarchical order the two groups of items were positioned, we need to link the sphere of exchange with the regional trading networks and the availability of raw materials: in this case, clay versus chert and obsidian. If most of the pottery at each site was produced locally during the Late Neolithic on the Thessalian plain, it is obvious that clay was widely available locally and so were the female potting skills (which does not exclude village potting specialists). Therefore clay, and consequently also the finished pots, could be regarded as part of what Bohannan referred to as the *subsistence sphere*, linked with locally available goods. Although obsidian and chert, like pots, were also necessary for subsistence at Platia Magoula Zarkou, it is their restricted regional distribution and the unequal

<sup>1319</sup> Bohannan 1959.

<sup>1320</sup> Bohannan 1959, 492.

<sup>1321</sup> Sillitoe 2006.

<sup>1322</sup> Bohannan 1959, 495.

<sup>1323</sup> Bohannan 1959, 497.

<sup>1324</sup> Perlès – Papagiannaki 2022.

	<b>Sphere 1: Subsistence (locally available goods; gift and barter exchange)</b>	<b>Sphere 2: Prestige/Precious Goods (inter-regionally available goods; long-distance exchange)</b>	<b>Sphere 3: Women (exchange of women at marriage)</b>
Tiv	Foodstuff (yams, cereals) Small livestock (chickens, goats, sheep) Household utensils (mortars, grindstones, calabashes, baskets, pots) Agricultural tools Raw materials for any items in this category	Slaves Cattle <i>Tugudu</i> white cloth Medicines Magic Metal Rods	Women
Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou	Locally produced pots	Melian obsidian, Honey chert Chocolate chert	Women??

Tab. 19 Spheres of exchange among the Tiv (after Bohannan 1959) and at Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou

access to them that would classify obsidian and honey chert as part of the *sphere of prestige*, or, more precisely, *sphere of precious goods*<sup>1325</sup> linked with long-distance exchange networks. Neither obsidian nor chert were available near Platia Magoula Zarkou (unlike clay), and knapping skills were not well-attested at the site (unlike pottery production and the knapping of chocolate chert); therefore, chocolate and honey chert and obsidian were necessarily scarcer and harder to acquire than locally produced pots (see Tab. 19).

Hence, it appears very likely that the Late Neolithic dwellers of the Thessalian plain distinguished between at least two different spheres of exchange, of which the first contained pots and other locally available items, and the second, chert and stone tools, which were only available through long-distance exchange networks. This means that they could regularly exchange pots for other locally available subsistence items (e.g. food items, baskets, etc.) but not for stone tools. Only on rare occasions, which have been attested archaeologically, did dwellers at Platia Magoula Zarkou exchange pots for stone tools. Therefore, not only were pottery and stone tools necessarily traded through different exchange networks, so that pots were not exchanged for stone tools,<sup>1326</sup> but these two groups of objects were also valued differently, although they could both be considered as subsistence items. The archaeological record at Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou, showing an abundance of locally produced pottery and scarcity of stone tools, nevertheless demonstrates that the two different standards of value – one applicable to pottery and the other applicable to stone raw material and finished tools – allowed for the occasional conversion between the two different spheres of exchange. The question of whether or not women represented a third sphere of exchange at Platia Magoula Zarkou must remain unanswered for the time being (see Tab. 19), especially in view of Godelier's convincing argument about the non-universality of exchanging women.<sup>1327</sup> Meanwhile, the Late Neolithic house model buried at Platia Magoula Zarkou falls outside of these spheres of exchange, i.e. belonging to the sphere that was kept and not given away, as the so-called 'sacred object'.<sup>1328</sup>

<sup>1325</sup> For a distinction between 'prestige goods' and 'precious goods' see Chapter VII. Stone tools *per se* cannot be associated with the prestige sphere as they are needed for everyday work like harvesting. However, given their foreign, interregional and rare origin, honey and chocolate chert as well as Melian obsidian can be classified as 'precious goods'.

<sup>1326</sup> Perlès – Papagiannaki 2022.

<sup>1327</sup> Godelier 2018.

<sup>1328</sup> Godelier 1999; Godelier 2011, 193.

## Chapter Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that Platia Magoula Zarkou was not only one of the nodes of the regional exchange of pottery, but also that these nodes were necessarily socially embedded through either marital or non-marital transactions and exchanges, within as well as between groups, in different regional exchange spheres. As women were most likely the potters, they transmitted the potting knowledge within the household to their daughters, who learned how to procure clay, prepare a recipe, mould a pot, and decorate it according to their father's respective group. After marriage, a bride would move to her husband's house, and regardless of whether this was within or outside her village of origin, she could make use of her potting skills – but needed to learn new decorative patterns, most likely from her mother- or sisters-in-law. This was also a common practice among the Wanigela and has been documented ethnographically in several potting villages in Collingwood Bay. There, pots served not only as necessary kitchen utensils but also as a marker of group membership and identity, and as an item of regional exchange. At Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou, the locally produced pots and locally/regionally available chocolate chert belonged to a specific sphere of exchange within the multi-centric regional economy, distinct from inter-regionally exchanged honey chert and Melian obsidian stone tools.

At Platia Magoula Zarkou, pottery making does not appear to have been a choice but rather a necessity, and most likely a significant identity marker for both women and men. This is an important parallel with the Wanigela, who claimed that 'this is what Wanigelans do'. Possibly this was also what dwellers close to the Pineios River did (among other daily tasks, of course) during the Late Neolithic. I have already shown in the previous chapter that animal breeding changed significantly between the Late Neolithic and the EBA periods at Platia Magoula Zarkou. Yet the two main sources of material for stone tools – obsidian from Melos, chocolate and honey chert from the Pindus mountain range – and their respective exchange networks did not change significantly from the Late Neolithic to the EBA. Therefore, it appears likely that at least two different spheres of exchange, one linked to *local subsistence items* (e.g. pots) and the other to *regional subsistence items/precious items* (e.g. stone tools), persisted from the Late Neolithic into the Early Bronze Age.

With reference to the Late Neolithic house model found at Platia Magoula Zarkou, this chapter ethnographically challenged previous claims that this set of evidence necessarily proves that women were possibly more powerful than men inside and outside the house.<sup>1329</sup> By contrast, this chapter showed that neither this unique find nor the ethnographic record can support such a claim under these specified sedentary farming conditions. Instead, the house model may have depicted either an inverse, symbolic reality, or a so-called 'anti-structure'. The house model could also be perceived as an act of resistance, which showcases that hierarchies were also questioned and contested at Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou. Regarding gender relations at Late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou, anthropological insights into the house model support the more probable interpretation that women saw themselves and were appreciated by others as the 'centre of the house' in local patrilineal contexts. This would not be possible without distinct female skills (e.g. pottery production), which were crucial for regional and local gift, barter, and marriage exchange.

Finally, scholars of prehistory are confronted here with acephalous societies that generated surpluses without the emergence of inherited social inequalities.<sup>1330</sup> This goes against the grain of neoevolutionary predispositions (e.g. that a surplus necessarily leads to social inequality). However, these scholars are encouraged to consult ethnographic accounts of big man societies in Melanesia, which serve as relevant and widely discussed examples of competitive

<sup>1329</sup> Risch 2018.

<sup>1330</sup> As proposed by Risch 2018

yet cooperative affluent societies. Absorbing and applying their conceptualization as ideal-type models could prevent some erroneous perceptions of female and male tasks, duties, and responsibilities in acephalous affluent societies. I respect Risch's<sup>1331</sup> irritation with 'ethnographic tyranny', yet cannot overlook that his reference list for acephalous societies dismisses the critical body of anthropological literature published after *African Political Systems*,<sup>1332</sup> Sahlins's *Stone Age Economics*,<sup>1333</sup> and Clastres's *Societies Against the State*,<sup>1334</sup> which were integrated into his bibliography.

As a final point of discussion, this chapter demonstrates that firstly, already during the Late Neolithic in the Thessalian plain, households developed social and economic relations with other households inside their settlements and elsewhere in the region. Secondly, beyond their primary subsistence activities, these settlements were all *a priori* entangled in regional social networks embedding regional economies. As can be seen from Late Neolithic Thessaly, these regional economies included unevenly distributed centres of craft specialization that were integrated into their local settlements and their respective Domestic Mode of Production (DMP). Thirdly, it would be difficult to claim that the DMPs at these Late Neolithic and later Bronze Age sites were strictly 'domestic' as domestic economies were, in all cases, already socially embedded into regional economies. I argue that these three concluding points indicate a structural setting of commonalities between these non-state, small-scale societies and the state civilisations which later emerged in the Near East – their households were not only embedded in the so-called domestic but also in regional or supra-regional economies.

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<sup>1331</sup> Risch 2018.

<sup>1332</sup> Fortes – Evans-Pritchard 1940.

<sup>1333</sup> Sahlins 1972.

<sup>1334</sup> Clastres 1974.