

The Role of Kommos in Phoenician Routes

JUDITH MUÑOZ SOGAS, Department of Archaeology, University of Sheffield, Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona)

jmunozsogas1@sheffield.ac.uk

1. Introduction

‘Any Phoenicians sailing to the western Mediterranean would have been foolish to avoid the Aegean’ and especially the island of Crete [Fig. 1.1].¹ Even though trade between Crete and other Mediterranean regions had already been established before the tenth century BC, it was throughout this century that maritime traffic from Phoenicia to the west intensified due to the tribute demand from Assyria following its growth in the eighth century BC.² Cypro-Levantine objects started to appear in many places, such as Sardinia and Italy, north-west Africa and southern Spain, as well as the Aegean. Even though many Levantine exports are not of Phoenician origin, it is thought that they were likely carried by Phoenician sailors.³ Cultural encounters, social interactions and negotiations between Phoenicians and locals from the areas mentioned took place in a so-called middle ground, where a phenomenon of glocalisation (the adoption of foreign practices in local communities) occurred, beliefs were transmitted and practices were shared and imitated.⁴

Strategic trading and stopping points started to develop across the Mediterranean, in which Near Eastern cultural and religious values were transferred due to trading contacts, for instance the port-town of Kition in Cyprus or Kommos and Knossos in Crete.⁵ Phoenician contacts with Crete could have been an end in themselves, although they probably happened as they were going to the west.⁶ The main east-west routes that the Phoenician merchants followed were through the Cyclades to Euboea and Attica, crossing the isthmus of Corinth, or through the south of Crete, where Phoenician installations were supplied.⁷ Therefore, the site of Kommos appears to have played an important role in east-west Phoenician routes and this article will analyse whether Kommos was a Phoenician installation.

1 Nicolas Coldstream, ‘Greeks and Phoenicians in the Aegean’, in *Phönizier im Westen: die Beiträge des Internationalen Symposiums über ‘Die phönizische Expansion im westlichen Mittelmeerraum’ in Köln vom 24. bis 27. April 1979. Madrider Beiträge 8*, ed. By H.G. Niemeyer, (Mainz: Zabern, 1982), p. 261.

2 Andrew Sherratt and Susan Sherratt, ‘The Growth of the Mediterranean Economy in the Early First Millennium BC’, *World Archaeology*, 4 (1993), 361-378, (pp. 365-66).

3 Nicolas Coldstream, ‘Exchanges Between Phoenicians and Early Greeks’, *National Museum News, Beirut*, 11 (2000), 15-32, (p. 16).

4 Kostas Vlassopoulos, *Greeks and Barbarians*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 226-277 (p. 235); Antonios Kotsonas, ‘“Creto-Cypriot” and “Cypro-Phoenician” Complexities in the Archaeology of Interaction between Crete and Cyprus’, in *Cyprus and the Aegean in the Early Iron Age: The Legacy of Nicholas Coldstream*, ed. by M. Iacovou,, (Nicosia: Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 2012), pp. 153-79 (p. 155).

5 Sherratt and Sherratt, pp. 365-66.

6 Nicolas Coldstream, ‘Phoenicians in Crete, North and South: A Contrast’, in *Atti del V Congresso Internazionale e di Studi Fenici e Punici*, ed. by R. de Simone, (Università di Palermo, Palermo, 2005) pp. 181-84, (p. 181).

7 Sherratt and Sherratt, p. 367.

2. The site

Kommos [Fig. 2.1 and 2.2] is a port site in the south of Crete. According to the *Odyssey*, describing the place of Menelaos' shipwreck, Kommos is identified as the ancient harbour of Phaistos, even though other sources identify Phaistos with Matala.⁸ Kommos is thought to have been, together with Kition (Cyprus), a Phoenician trading installation, as will be discussed later, and its temple should be compared to religious centres like those of Delos, Delphi and Olympia, places from which the Greeks absorbed oriental elements and beliefs, as confirmed by the archaeological record from the second to the first millennium BC.⁹ The focus of this article however, will be on the finds from the first millennium BC. By the end of the eleventh century BC a rectangular construction identified as a small temple was built upon the ruins of Minoan civic structures. The building, called Temple A, was replaced by a larger one, Temple B [Fig. 2.3], during the ninth century BC, which was in turn replaced by another one, Temple C, towards the end of the fourth century BC.¹⁰ Temple B, as explained below, has an oriental structure and it is associated with the Phoenician merchants who came to Kommos on their route to the west.¹¹ Near Eastern objects, including Phoenician pottery such as *amphorae* and drinking vessels, were found in this structure as well as in surrounding buildings.¹²

These observations have led to speculation about the nature of the Phoenician presence at Kommos.¹³ Negbi argues that Phoenician traders were permanently living at the site, as they had a permanent religious building, whilst Aubet claims they lived there only semi-permanently in order to trade.¹⁴ Kourou also mentions that craftsmen, as well as traders, were inhabiting the site.¹⁵ The use of Temple B is also questioned by Aubet, who defends its economic role, whereas other scholars such as Papalardo support its religious function.¹⁶

8 Homer, *Odyssey* 3.293-96; Milena Melfi, 'The lithos and the sea: some observations on the cult of the Greek sanctuary at Kommos', in *Kreta in der Geometrischen und Archaischen Zeit*, ed. by W.D. Niemeyer, O. Pilz, and Y. Kaiser (München: Hirmer Verlag, 2013), pp. 355-365, (p. 355).

9 Sherratt and Sherratt, p. 167.

10 Joseph W. Shaw, 'Kommos in Southern Crete: an Aegean Barometer for East-West Interconnections', in *Eastern Mediterranean: Cyprus-Dodecanese-Crete, 16th-6th centuries B.C.*, ed. by V. Karageorghis and N. Stampolidis, (Athens: The University of Crete and the A.G. Leventis Foundation, 1998), pp. 13-27, (pp. 15-16).

11 Maria Eugenia Aubet, *Tiro y las colonias fenicias de Occidente*, (Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 2009), p. 66.

12 Patricia Bikai, 'Phoenician Ceramics from the Greek Sanctuary', in *Kommos IV: The Greek Sanctuary, Part 1*, ed. by J. W. Shaw and M. Shaw, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 302-12.

13 Sarah Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 154-55.

14 Ora Negbi, 'Early Phoenician Presence in the Mediterranean Islands: A Reappraisal', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 96, (1992), 599-615, (p. 609); Maria Eugenia Aubet, 'El barrio comercial fenicio como estrategia colonial', *Rivista di studi fenici*, 40, (2012), 221-236, (p. 230).

15 Nota Kourou, 'Phoenicia, Cyprus and the Aegean in the Early Iron Age: J.N. Coldstream's contribution and the current state of research', in *Cyprus and the Aegean in the Early Iron Age: The Legacy of Nicholas Coldstream*, ed. by M. Iacovou, (Nicosia: Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 2012), pp. 33-42, (p. 41).

16 Aubet, 'El barrio comercial', p. 230; Eleonora Pappalardo, 'Il Tripillar Shrine di Kommos: Alcune considerazioni', *Creta Antica*, 3 (2002), 263-274.

3. Temple B

The coastal sanctuary at Kommos has three successive phases: Temple A (c. 1020-800 BC), Temple B (c. 800-600 BC) and, after a period of partial desertion, Temple C (c. 375-160 BC).¹⁷ The sanctuary grew with the addition of structures in a gradual manner and all the temples show signs of feasting, ritual animal sacrifice (as the animal remains by the altar suggest) and the offering of statuettes.¹⁸ In order to understand the nature of Temple B and, eventually, of Kommos, we must first examine Temple A. Most of the materials found in the sanctuary are Cretan. Nonetheless, some sherds of Phoenician storage jars and one of a jug were discovered in a dump.¹⁹ According to Shaw, these closed-shaped storage jars were brought from Cyprus or Phoenicia as exchange items when their carriers, presumably Phoenicians, stopped in Crete during their voyages to the western Mediterranean.²⁰ After this first period of sporadic connections, Temple B was built over the previous sanctuary. The temple had three different phases, detailed below.

During the first phase of Temple B (c. 800-760 BC), the structure was built upon Temple A, overlapping in the northeast corner. This rectangular temple was open to the east and it had a pillar at the centre of the opening, presumably supporting a flat roof. Attached to the northern wall there was a platform used as a bench and possibly another one on the southern wall, where celebrants would sit or leave offerings.²¹ A circular hearth was set in the interior of the temple, where some fragments of terracotta animals were found. Behind it, a reused Minoan triangular block was used as a base for the three stone pillars with cut bottoms and uneven surfaces, which suggests that they were not used to support any structure and therefore they were not used as a table, but as a shrine.²² The so-called Tripillar Shrine, hence, became the centre of dedication. It is thought that they may have been worshipped, as representation of divinities in the shape of a column was common in antiquity.²³ Behind the shrine there was a charred wooden bowl, maybe used as a lamp. Other relevant finds of this period are fragments of Phoenician transport *amphorae*, also found in Temple A and in Building Z (another building used during the Iron Age), cups, *skyphoi*, a lid and a mug that suggest drinking and eating, and a bronze arrowhead, terracotta figurines and a scaraboid bead.²⁴

During the second phase (c. 760-650 BC), the hearth was rebuilt. Many objects from this time were excavated, such as a bronze shield, terracotta figures, iron objects, a bronze fishhook, Geometric and oriental cups, *amphorae* and *aryballoi*, which were used as unguent containers. During this period, some figurines of an Egyptian type were placed between the pillars of the shrine, which will be discussed later.

17 Joseph W. Shaw, 'The Architecture of Temples and Other Buildings', in *Kommos IV: The Greek Sanctuary, Part 1*, ed. by J. W. Shaw and M. Shaw, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 1-100, (p. 2).

18 Joseph W. Shaw, 'Phoenicians in Southern Crete', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 93, (1989) 165-83, (p. 165).

19 Bikai, p.303.

20 Shaw, 'Kommos in Southern Crete', pp. 18-19.

21 James B. Pritchard, *Recovering Sarepta, A Phoenician City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 136.

22 Shaw, 'The Architecture of Temples', pp. 14-20.

23 Nikolaos Yalouris, 'Problems Relating to the Temple of Apollo Epikourios at Bassai' in *Greece and Italy in the Classical World*.

Acta of the XI International Congress of Classical Archaeology, London 3-9 September 1978, ed. by J. M. Coldstream and M. A. R. College (London: National Organizing Committee, XI International Congress of Classical Archaeology, 1979), pp. 100-01.

24 Shaw, 'The Architecture of Temples', p. 21.

During the third phase (c. 650-600 BC), the bench was at the floor level. A rectangular hearth was rebuilt where the circular one had been, and another hearth was set west of the former. Presumably, the fires were lit in front of the shrine and there were therefore changes in the nature of cult. However, the cups and *aryballoi* found show the tradition of ritual meals continued throughout each period. Other finds include finger rings, a scarab and terracotta animals.²⁵

3.1 *The Tripillar Shrine and its architectural resemblances and significance*

The Tripillar Shrine resembles other structures. For instance, Shaw connected it to the Middle Bronze Age terracotta pillar shrine at Knossos, a structure with three columns on which three birds are resting and to other much later pillars in mainland Greece.²⁶ Some similar structures are found in the Near East and, specifically, Phoenicia. Shaw links the pillar worship to Egyptian obelisks and states that the Stele of Nora in Sardinia [Fig. 2.4] depicts a shrine of a similar structure as the one at Kommos.²⁷ This transmission of beliefs is plausible, as by the time Temple B was built, Egypt and Phoenicia were closely connected by trade. It is also noteworthy that some of the figurines found between those pillars are Egyptian or of an Egyptian type, which makes an Egyptian connection more probable.

Some sanctuaries in the Near East that resemble Temple B in terms of structure are in Byblos, Hazor and Lachish.²⁸ Their common feature is the presence of benches along the walls, a very common characteristic of Near Eastern temples. However, according to Shaw, the most similar shrine is the Shrine of Tanit-Ashtart at Sarepta [Fig. 2.5], as it has benches in the walls and a pillar in the centre.²⁹ Nonetheless, their similarities are limited, as the shrine at Sarepta probably had two entrances and a central table, which Temple B at Kommos does not have.³⁰ Other resemblances can be found in Cyprus, which was closely related to Phoenicia in the tenth and ninth centuries BC. The temple of Enkomi, where there were benches and freestanding pillars, and the Temple of Astarte in Kition, where more pillars were worshipped, are the two structures that bear similarities to Temple B at Kommos.³¹ Hence, there is enough evidence to link the temple at Kommos with Phoenician religious beliefs and practices that come from Egypt and other Near Eastern areas and arrive in Crete through the Levantine coast and Cyprus.

The existence of reliefs of tripillar shrines in Sardinia (at Motya and probably at Segesta and Selinous) as well as pillars in Malta also reflect this expansion of iconography, practices and presumably beliefs to the west.³² Therefore, the idea of a Tripillar Shrine was of foreign origin, as it bears resemblance to the mentioned temples and depictions. It was almost certainly inspired by Phoenicians,

25 Shaw, 'The Architecture of Temples', p. 24.

26 Shaw, 'Phoenicians in Southern Crete', pp. 173-4; Hoffman, p. 175.

27 Shaw, 'Phoenicians in Southern Crete', p. 176; Shaw, 'The Architecture of Temples', p. 21.

28 Pritchard, pp. 135-36; Shaw, 'Phoenicians in southern Crete', p. 21.

29 Shaw, 'Phoenicians in Southern Crete', p. 22.

30 Pritchard, pp. 131-38.

31 *Ibid.*, p.136; Shaw, 'Phoenicians in southern Crete', p. 177.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

and may have even been of Phoenician construction after they came to Kommos for trade on their route to the west.³³

3.2 Figurines

Having established the probable Near Eastern origin of the Tripillar Shrine, we will now focus on the second phase figurines found between the pillars which are of Near Eastern origin or inspiration. An Egyptian faience figure of a standing feline-headed female was found on a figurine of a horse of Greek style between two pillars [Fig. 2.6].³⁴ Shaw associates it with Sekhmet, the Egyptian goddess of war.³⁵ Nonetheless, other Egyptian divinities were also represented with a feline head and a standing position, such as Bastet, so the figurine does not necessarily represent Sekhmet.³⁶ A male figurine found between two other pillars is associated with Nefertum [Fig. 2.7], son of Sekhmet, and therefore the theory that the first figure represents Sekhmet is plausible.³⁷ The figure of Nefertum is widely represented in Crete, as other figurines have been excavated, such as one from Knossos North Cemetery. Accepting the assumption that the divinities represented are Sekhmet and Nefertum, these two divinities together with Ptah are the members of the Memphite triad, but no figure representing Ptah has been found in Kommos.

Therefore, the foreign images of divinities discussed here were likely worshipped by foreigners in Cretan territory. Of course, we do not know whether the figurines bore the same meaning as they did in Egypt or whether they were simply offerings of some value in the temple. Judging by the shrine, however, it looks like the figures were worshipped with their Egyptian meanings and associations, and each divinity may have even been associated with a pillar. It is therefore logical to assume that these foreigners, whose Phoenician origin and trade purpose we have tried to demonstrate, collaborated with local Cretans and used Temple B as a meeting place.³⁸ Hence, Cretans could have worshipped their gods there as well. Some scholars relate the triad of Sekhmet, Nefertum and Ptah to the Cretan trinity of Apollo, Artemis and Leto. We have to bear in mind, though, that the Memphic Triad is composed of two males and a female (a couple and their son) whilst the Cretan one is made up of two females and a male (two siblings and their mother). Thus, the two trinities do not match properly making their correspondence debateable.³⁹ Nonetheless, the locals could have associated the similar appearance to their own triad without knowing in detail the differences.

With reference to the use of these figures, Maria Shaw links them to the protection of procreation and offspring, by using the analogy of the faience Nefertum found in a child's tomb in

³³ Shaw, 'Phoenicians in southern Crete', pp. 178-83.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

³⁵ Shaw, 'Kommos in Southern Crete', p. 18.

³⁶ Jürg Eggler and Eric Gubel, 'Bastet/Sekhmet (Levant, Phoenician colonies)', *Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East* (2010) <http://www.religionswissenschaft.uzh.ch/idd/prepublications/e_idd_baal.pdf> [accessed 1 September 2015].

³⁷ Shaw, 'Kommos in Southern Crete', p. 18; Maria Shaw, 'The Sculpture from the Sanctuary,' in *Kommos IV: The Greek Sanctuary, Part 1*, ed. by J. W. Shaw and M. Shaw, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 135-209, (pp. 168-69).

³⁸ Shaw, 'Kommos in Southern Crete', p. 19.

³⁹ Maria Shaw, pp. 167-68.

Knossos.⁴⁰ However, as mentioned before, the attribution of Sekhmet to the feline-headed figurine found in Kommos must be questioned; if the figurines in Temple B were used for maternal protection, the feline-headed figurine should represent Bastet, who had well known connotations of a mother goddess.⁴¹ The origin of these figurines is also debatable. It was once thought that most faience objects in Crete came from Egypt.⁴² However, they could have also been made as imitations in Phoenicia. Hence, whilst Shaw claims that the feline-headed figurine was made in Egypt the possibility of it being a Levantine imitation should not be discarded. The rest of votive figurines found in Temple B are representations of animals. The most remarkable ones are bulls, horses and a snake, which can be linked to the cult of Apollo and therefore support the hypothesis of a Cretan triad parallel to the eastern one.⁴³

4. Pottery

4.1 Temples A and B

The majority of the pottery finds in Temple B are of local origin, even though imported ceramics are also present in important amounts.⁴⁴ These imported pots are Aegean (mainly from Lesbos, Chios, Samos and Miletus), as well as Near Eastern.⁴⁵ Some soft fabric pots from the Phoenician coast were found, as well as soft fabrics with red ferrous (iron) inclusions and a harder fabric called crisp ware [Fig. 2.8].⁴⁶ Of the 339 sherds that appeared (mostly rims and handles), 91% belong to storage jars and transport *amphorae* that probably contained wine and oil.⁴⁷ These pots might have been imported from the east and they suggest mass production, according to the surface treatments, such as the use of red-slip techniques, painted concentric circles and self-slipped and burnished vessels. Fragments of red-slipped pots were also found in Huelva (Spain), dating from c. 800 BC.⁴⁸ Moreover, the first Levantine transport *amphorae* in Temple A coincide in type and date (c. 900 BC) with the earliest ones found in the recent sounding at Huelva.⁴⁹ It suggests that someone was moving Phoenician pottery from the eastern Mediterranean towards the west and dropping some at places like Kommos, which could be an indicator of Phoenician expansion towards the west and exchange between the east and the west.

If we assume that these pots were mass-produced and imported to Crete, even though some of them were big to move, this opens up questions about the reasons for this import. Did they export the vessels for their own value or for their contents? Shaw proposes that foreign pottery with closed shapes,

40 Maria Shaw, p. 169.

41 Egger and Gubel.

42 Gail L. Hoffman, *Imports and Immigrants: Near Eastern Contacts with Iron Age Crete*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 138.

43 Maria Shaw, pp. 165-74.

44 Peter J. Callaghan and Allan W. Johnston, 'The Pottery from the Greek Temples at Kommos', in *Kommos IV: The Greek Sanctuary, Part 1*, ed. by J. W. Shaw and M. Shaw (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 210-301, (p. 298).

45 C. A. de Domingo and Allan W. Johnston. 'Trade Between Kommos, Crete and East Greece: a Petrographic Study of Archaic Transport Amphorae', in *Archaeological Sciences. Proceedings of a Conference of scientific techniques to the study of Archaeology: Liverpool, July 1995*, ed. by Anthony Sinclair, Elizabeth Salter and John Gowlett, (Oxford: Oxbow, 1997), pp. 62-68.

46 Bikai, p. 302.

47 Shaw, 'Kommos in Southern Crete', p. 21.

48 Bikai, pp. 306-11.

49 Fernando Gonzales de Canales, Leonardo Serrano and Jorge Llompart, 'The Pre-Colonial Phoenician Emporium of Huelva ca 900-770 BC'. *BABesch*, 81 (2006), 13-29 (p. 17).

such as jars, *amphorae*, or *pithei*, are imported for their contents, whereas wares with open shapes are imported for their own beauty or their household use. Since the imported vessels found in Temple B had closed shapes, it is plausible that they were imported for their contents.⁵⁰ The ownership of ceramic vessels is also under discussion. Hoffman claims we cannot equate pots to people and therefore think that these local pots belonged to local individuals: in this context of exchange maybe Phoenician merchants sold eastern wares to locals and got local wares in exchange.⁵¹ Most of the pots have local characteristics, and it is possible that some of them belonged to Phoenicians and some others belonged to the locals. The same could have happened with the Phoenician pots. Finding both kinds of wares in the same context suggests, hence, contact and interaction of both groups: foreign seafarers and local population, who would have presumably sat and eaten together in Temple B, using both kinds of pots.

4.2 Other buildings

Not only in Temple B were there ceramic finds of interest, but also in Building Z, Altar U, Building V and Building Q. In Gallery 3 of Building Z, contemporary with Temple B and located to its south, pottery for domestic use was found. The finds included local drinking vessels and cooking pots, *keraters*, *amphorae*, cups, *skyphoi* and fragments of a Phoenician jar, which suggests activity out of the temple, as well as the use of local pottery for domestic purposes, whereas the imported Phoenician pottery was used, in this case, to store or transport its contents. Other *aryballoi*, cups, and *skyphoi* were found in the Altar (c. eighth century BC) and in Building V (c. seventh century BC), to the east of the temple.⁵² In Building Q (late seventh century BC), to the south of Temple B, some fragments of *amphorae* from outside Crete were excavated. The sherds, which present ferrous inclusions and seem to be of Phoenician origin, were very common at Kommos in the early phase of Temple B as well as Temple A, and were popular at other sites in the Mediterranean.⁵³ These suggest commercial interrelations in the oil and wine trading routes. Shaw claims the liquids were imported from abroad, emphasising the position of Cyrenaica, in modern day Libya. Nonetheless, some locally-produced wares were also discovered, such as inscribed cups.⁵⁴

Hoffman questions whether Phoenicians were carrying out most of the trade in the Mediterranean during the first centuries of the first millennium BC which cannot be determined through pots.⁵⁵ Pots cannot tell us about the ethnic origin of the potter, but about the skills and experience of the potter and the place of manufacture of the pot after analysis, as well as the taste of the owner of the pot, if it is used for its intrinsic value, not for its contents. Hence, to know if Phoenicians were present in Kommos during the early first millennium we have to focus on other indices, such as objects (which indicate contacts with imports and artistic influences), burials (that attest immigrant presence but not

50 Shaw, 'Kommos in Southern Crete', pp. 15-18.

51 Hoffman, p. 176.

52 Shaw, 'The Architecture of Temples', pp. 25-29.

53 Bikai, p. 330.

54 Shaw, 'The Architecture of Temples', pp. 33-34.

55 Hoffman, p. 176.

interaction) and architecture (that also proves foreign presence).⁵⁶ In the case of Kommos, we can certainly confirm Phoenician presence and culture by looking at the oriental structure of Temple B and its finds.

5. Uses of the Temple

Understanding the uses of Temple B is important for understanding the role of Kommos with regard to Phoenician presence and interactions with local population. The building and its finds present evidence for differentiated use, such as for religious practices, food consumption and economic transactions.

Firstly, the religious use is the most commonly accepted. Ritual is evidenced by the figurines of gods, which also indicate the presence of immigrants from the Near East.⁵⁷ As mentioned before, the pillars were worshipped and hence some scholars propose divine triads to which the three pillars could have been devoted.⁵⁸ Shaw proposes the triad of Baal, Ashera and Astarte or of Tanit, Ashera and Astarte.⁵⁹ Melfi suggests a cult to Apollo during the seventh century BC, as some cups have the name of Apollo inscribed.⁶⁰ Moreover, there may be a connection between Apollo and the ancient name of Kommos, possibly Amyklaion, which may have derived from a Greek transliteration of a Phoenician title.⁶¹ Therefore, it could be plausible that the triads mentioned came from Egypt and maybe Phoenicia to Crete and the Peloponnese during the first half of the first millennium BC.⁶² It is possible that these triads could have suffered some transformations as a result of contact with indigenous groups, which is why some icons that firstly represented eastern divinities, such as the Tripillar Shrine, became dedicated to other gods like Apollo. Hence, the Tripillar Shrine was a symbolic and iconic representation of a divine triad, possibly Phoenician. This Temple of Kommos, where peoples of diverse origins interacted, is understood as a multi ethnic religious installation where both oriental and local spiritual beliefs and objects coexisted.⁶³

Secondly, the temple was used as a place to eat and drink, as local pottery and some figurines indicate.⁶⁴ This use may be intrinsically related to the religious function of the temple (ritual meals) or simply to the need for travellers to find a place to rest and eat. The fragments of transport *amphorae* indicate that travellers by sea could have used the site as a stopping point for trips to the Western Mediterranean or to the interior of the island, possibly the Idaean Cave, where there are many Eastern finds. Before going inland, eastern seafarers may have stopped at the temple and had a meal there. After Phoenician material stopped being represented in the archaeological record, worship and banqueting

56 Hoffman, p. 185.

57 Nicholas Stampolidis and Antonios Kotsonas, 'Phoenicians in Crete', in *Ancient Greece from the Mycenaean Palaces to the Age of Homer*, ed. by S. Deger-Jalkotzy and I. S. Lemos., (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 337-60, (p. 353).

58 Yalouris, pp. 100-01.

59 Shaw, 'Kommos in Southern Crete', p. 18.

60 Melfi, pp. 358-9.

61 Shaw, 'Phoenicians in Southern Crete', p. 175; Melfi, p. 358.

62 Shaw, 'Phoenicians in Southern Crete', p. 175.

63 Pappalardo, pp. 200-01.

64 Shaw, 'Kommos in Southern Crete', p. 20.

continued in Temple B, suggested by an unbroken sequence of local ceramics.⁶⁵ It is not known whether Phoenicians kept visiting the site without leaving archaeological trace or if they stopped going to the temple for good.

Thirdly, since the temple was a place of cultural interaction, it could have been used as a market place.⁶⁶ According to Aubet, the establishment of a temple as place of both cult and market was a practice of exterior trade characteristic of Tyre⁶⁷, a Phoenician city located in current Lebanon, as well as other sites like Samaria, current Israel.⁶⁸ Hence, this building of connections and encounters was the place where seafarers and locals exchanged not only beliefs and customs but also objects. Temples and sanctuaries in many places became meeting points between different economic systems: Phoenician traders and local groups that carried out commercial activities.⁶⁹ As a result, this temple may have acted as an entry door for Near Eastern practices into Crete. It absorbed oriental cults by receiving people who traded cultic objects from Egypt and provided explanations about their benefits (such as, presumably, the faience figurines of Egyptian deities) and other exotic materials.⁷⁰

6. Type of settlement

Considering the idea that one of the roles of the temple was economic, I suggest that the site of Kommos was a Phoenician commercial district. Phoenicia had big commercial settlements in many places throughout the Mediterranean, such as Carthage and Kition, considered to be colonies, a term referring to places where groups of foreign people far from their place of origin socioeconomically dominate or even exploit the local inhabitants.⁷¹ According to Aubet, commercial districts are permanent installations of commercial interest abroad and they generally have a temple (which is a sign of the political authority of the metropolis).⁷² These districts are located next to existent indigenous centres and their objective is not the total control of exchange but the distribution of resources by taking advantage of local demand and already operative infrastructures. This is the case of Kommos, presumably having the indigenous centre at Phaistos or Agia Triada. The *amphorae* and jars found in Temple B suggest storage as well as the frequent stopping of foreign ships at the port. Therefore, there would have been groups of immigrant shipmen who had need of a permanent place of cult and exchange.

This phenomenon is also seen in other commercial establishments such as Samaria, a settlement with a temple possibly used the same way as Temple B by a Phoenician community formed by artisans, merchants and priests. Also in the south of Spain there were two possible commercial districts (Cádiz

65 Shaw, 'Phoenicians in southern Crete', p. 183.

66 Aubet, 'Tiro' Sherratt and Sherratt.

67 Aubet, 'Tiro', pp. 66.

68 Aubet, 'El Barrio Comercial', p. 223

69 Sherratt and Sherratt, p. 375.

70 Maria Shaw, pp. 170-71.

71 Peter Van Domelen, 'Colonial Constructs: Colonialism and Archaeology in the Mediterranean', *World Archaeology*, 28:3. (2010), 305.

72 Aubet, 'El Barrio Comercial', pp. 221-30.

and Huelva), both located next to existent indigenous communities.⁷³ Hence, the case of Kommos looks similar to Samaria and Huelva. Temple B, a building used as a place of cult by oriental immigrants, suggests permanent or at least very regular presence of these immigrants⁷⁴. Other scholars like Shaw propose architecture implies more than intermittent presence,⁷⁵ and the presence of a religious building would suit the need of Phoenician permanent population. However, this is not necessarily the case. I agree with Aubet, who suggests semi-permanent Phoenician presences, as we have suggested that Kommos is a commercial settlement with economical purposes.⁷⁶ Phoenician immigrants may have come to the site very often to trade with the indigenous populations, even staying for some nights before weighing anchor to sail on elsewhere.

I support my theory with the fact that there is limited material evidence for Phoenicians – or other individuals – living in Kommos. Only some Phoenician wares were found in Building Z which may indicate, according to Shaw, temporary residence.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, the presence of some sherds of Phoenician pots is not enough evidence to claim Phoenician residence. Thus, so far we can only say Phoenicians traded in the site and that, therefore, Kommos was a commercial district rather than a colony of permanent Phoenician residence.

7. Observations and conclusions

Having concluded that Kommos was a trading district, we will now focus on who traded and the directionality of this trade. Of course, Phoenicians were involved in commercial exchanges but other populations may also have participated. Were the Egyptian figurines carried by Egyptians, by Cretan merchants or by Phoenicians? According to ancient winds, the journey from Egypt to Crete was hard and therefore ships would go around the Lebanese coast. This makes it harder to decide who transported what, as many different populations were involved in trade. Hence, many foreign groups would have arrived at Kommos, some of which would have left no trace.⁷⁸ Among these, the Phoenicians may have been the ones that stayed longer, stopping en route to the west.

Although most objects came by sea, some could have also come by means of trans-shipment from the north of the island as Lambrou-Phillipson proposes with reference to the Egyptian figurines.⁷⁹ Shaw also suggests that those figurines may have moved in the opposite direction, from Kommos to Knossos, in the north of Crete.⁸⁰ Inland routes are evident, for instance between Kommos and Mount Ida in the centre of the island, as there are lots of eastern-influenced objects in the Idaean Cave as well as

⁷³ Aubet, 'El Barrio Comercial', pp. 226-31.

⁷⁴ Negbi, pp. 608-09.

⁷⁵ Shaw, 'Phoenicians in Southern Crete', p. 182; Hoffman, p. 174.

⁷⁶ Aubet, 'El Barrio Comercial', p. 230.

⁷⁷ Shaw, 'Kommos in Southern Crete', p. 22.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

⁷⁹ Connie Lambrou-Phillipson, 'Seafaring, in the Bronze Age Mediterranean: The Parameters involved in Maritime Travel', in *Thalassa, l'Égée préhistorique et la mer, Actes de la troisième rencontre égéenne internationale de l'Université de Liège, Aegaeum 7*, ed. by R. Laffineur L. Basch (Liège: Université de Liège, 1991), pp. 11-20, (pp. 11-19).

⁸⁰ Shaw, 'Kommos in Southern Crete', p. 16.

Eleutherna, an inland site located 25km from the northern coast⁸¹. Hence, inland communications and commerce were commonplace within Crete.

Regarding long-distance trade routes, Kommos was probably one of the most frequently used stopping points of Phoenician routes towards the western Mediterranean (assuming the two main routes were through the north of Crete towards Corinth, and presumably stopping near Knossos, or through the south of Crete, stopping at Kommos and continuing to towards Sicily).⁸² Consequently, Phoenicians interested in trading in the west were likely to have chosen the southern route as it was probably faster, whereas those who preferred to do economic transactions in the Aegean or within Crete would have chosen the northern route,⁸³ as it was best connected to Attica and Euboea and to Cretan inland routes. What we know so far is that Kommos was a port frequented by the Phoenicians between the tenth or ninth centuries BC and the seventh century BC and Temple B was used for economic as well as religious purposes.⁸⁴ Although most of the imported ceramic sherds found in Temple B belonged to storage jars and, therefore, indicate the economic use of the building,⁸⁵ some others, like local pottery, belonged to vessels used for eating and drinking.⁸⁶ Hence, Temple B may have had multiple functions. We should also point out the non-permanent character of the Phoenician population trading in Kommos and hence the role of the settlement as a commercial district,⁸⁷ rather than a permanent colony.

Assuming that the Tripillar Shrine was a Phoenician construction, it was accepted by the locals (as local pottery and other local artefacts were found), with whom the Phoenicians shared the mentioned meals. Csapo illustrates this phenomenon of cultural contact explaining that this port was the place where Cretans, Greeks and Phoenicians 'lied to each other over wine and limpets at the seaside Shrine and left their cups, possibly for reuse on the return journey.'⁸⁸ All in all, the island of Crete was a place of contact between Phoenicians and Cretans, where not only materials were exchanged but also stories, techniques, religious practices and beliefs. I hope these conclusions will throw new light on the debate about Phoenician trade towards the west and about the role of temples in economic interactions.

81 Shaw, 'Phoenicians in Southern Crete', p. 182.

82 Sherratt and Sherratt, p. 367.

83 Coldstream, 'Phoenicians in Crete', p. 181.

84 Shaw, 'Phoenicians in southern Crete', p. 165; Nota Kourou, 'Phoenician presence in Early Iron Age Crete reconsidered', in *Actas del IV Congreso Internacional de Estudios Fenicios y Punicos*, III, (Cádiz: Universidad de Cádiz, 2000), pp. 1072-80, (p. 1068);

Aubet, 'El Barrio Comercial', p. 221.

85 Bikai, p. 302.

86 Shaw, 'Kommos in Southern Crete', p. 20.

87 Aubet, 'El Barrio Comercial', p. 221.

88 Eric Csapo, 'An International Community of Traders in Late 8th-7th c. BC. Kommos in Southern Crete', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 88, (1991), 211-16, (p. 215).

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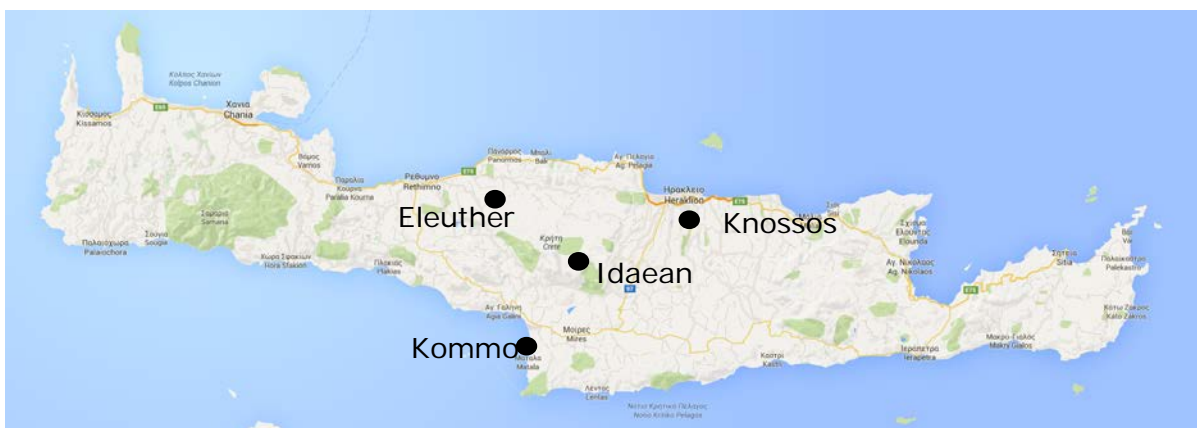


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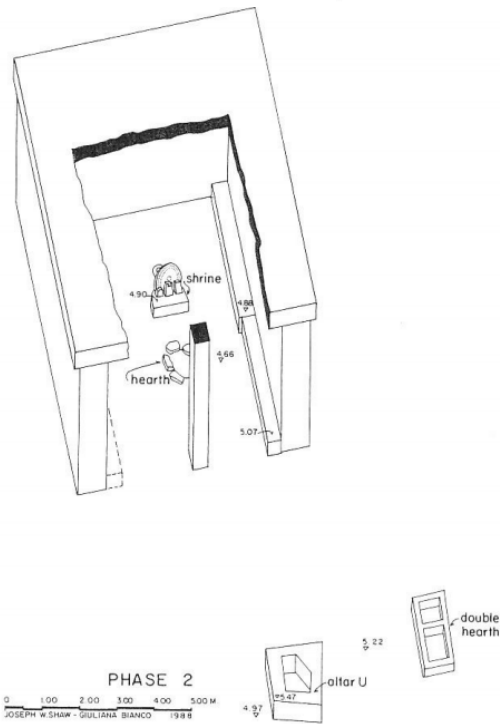


Figure 2.3. Isometric drawing of Temple B with Tripillar Shrine (Shaw 1997. Fig.4).

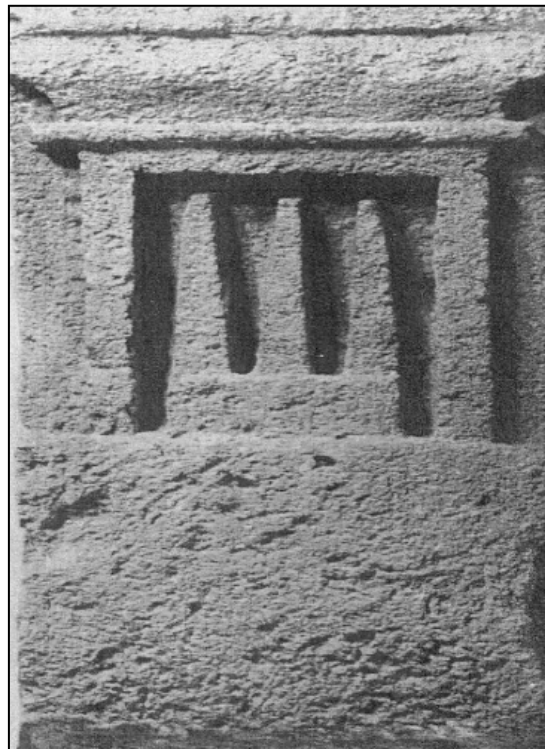


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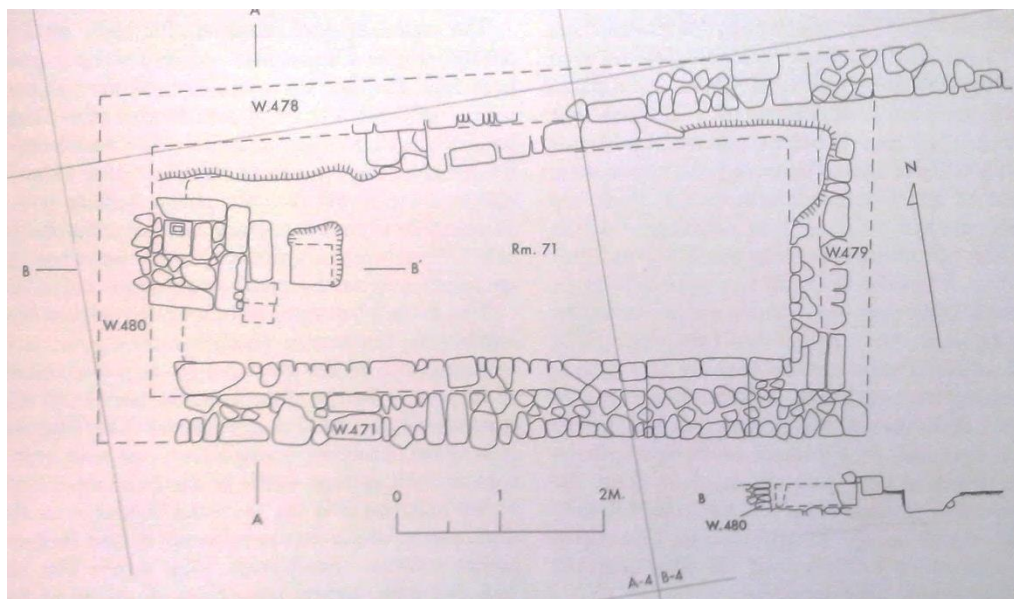


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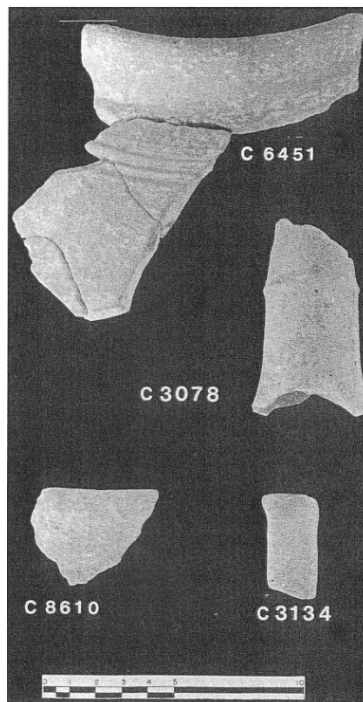


Figure 2.8. Phoenician pottery from Temples A and B (Shaw 1989. Fig. 23).

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