

# The meaning of space and place in Middle Cypriot communities

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## Introduction

This study draws inspiration from the intellectual contributions of David Frankel to the archaeology of emerging complex societies, household archaeology and the archaeology of community. Among the many important lines of inference advanced by David's research, his archaeological investigation of prehistoric communities addresses the roles of constituent social units, and how these social units cohere within and between settlements. David's career features seminal publications in this realm, most notably regarding the archaeology of Bronze Age Cyprus (often in active collaboration with Jenny Webb). In this capacity one of David and Jenny's most celebrated achievements has been the detailed investigation and exhaustive publication of the excavated evidence from the Bronze Age settlement of Marki *Alonia*, Cyprus (Frankel & Webb 1996, 2006a).

Marki *Alonia* serves as a touchstone in our comparative analysis of space in Middle Cypriot (MC) communities, particularly regarding how the use of space illuminates the diverse social mosaic that characterised this era on Cyprus. Marki, Alambra *Mouttes* (Coleman *et al.* 1996) and Sotira *Kaminoudhia* (Swiny *et al.* 2003), constitute the select few excavated settlements that provide the most salient evidence for social interpretations of Bronze Age Cypriot communities (Fig. 1). We also draw on the excavated evidence from Kalopsidha *Tsaoudhi Chiflik* (e.g. Gjerstad 1926), which provides an important illustration of domestic architecture late in the MC period. The architectural patterns found at Marki, Alambra, Sotira and Kalopsidha accord with an interpretive paradigm of household-based agrarian villages. Our investigation of Politiko *Troullia* provides a new contribution to the social archaeology of Bronze Age Cyprus, in which comparative analysis among these communities can focus on open public spaces as well as domestic private households. In particular, this paper considers how the creation and use of household and open space differ within and between settlements and how this variability reflects the social dynamics of Bronze Age Cypriot communities.

## Domestic household space

At Marki, the excavations directed by Frankel and Webb revealed a remarkable sequence of household construction, modification and abandonment that spans nine sequential phases over about 500 years from the beginning of the Early Cypriot (EC) period to Middle Cypriot II (Frankel & Webb 2006a, 2006b). Architectural remains exposed over about 2000m<sup>2</sup> feature an array of contiguous domestic compounds, each with roofed interior space entered through an open courtyard (Fig. 2a). The architectural evidence from Marki accords with an often-expected pattern in which prehistoric agrarian villages consisted of numerous similar domestic spaces which served as focal points for social behaviours and household relations (e.g., Wilson 1988).

As another case in point, the excavation of Area A at Alambra *Mouttes* (Coleman *et al.* 1996) exposed a portion of the settlement marked by a series of row houses dating to a single phase of occupation early in the MC period (Fig. 2b). Each of these structures shares one or more long walls with its neighbour, and includes multi-room interior spaces and a forecourt outside the main entry. Over an excavated sample of about 200m<sup>2</sup>, this portion of the settlement continues the pattern of a household-centred community, in this instance constituted in repetitive apartment-like structures with strikingly similar interior and courtyard spaces.

In keeping with this precedent, the excavation of *Troullia* East (Fig. 2c) revealed a well-defined compound centred on a structure with roofed rooms (spaces 1 and 2), an exterior storage bin (space 3), outbuildings (spaces 4 and 5), and a large exterior workspace (space 6). This workspace revealed clear evidence of small-scale metallurgy for which every production step from smelting to casting is attested by material evidence (Fall *et al.* 2008; Falconer & Fall 2013). The 2013 and 2014 excavations at Politiko *Troullia* have revealed a similar compound at the northwest corner of the site, marked by a doorway, interior space and storage bin, accompanied again by metallurgical evidence including copper slag and

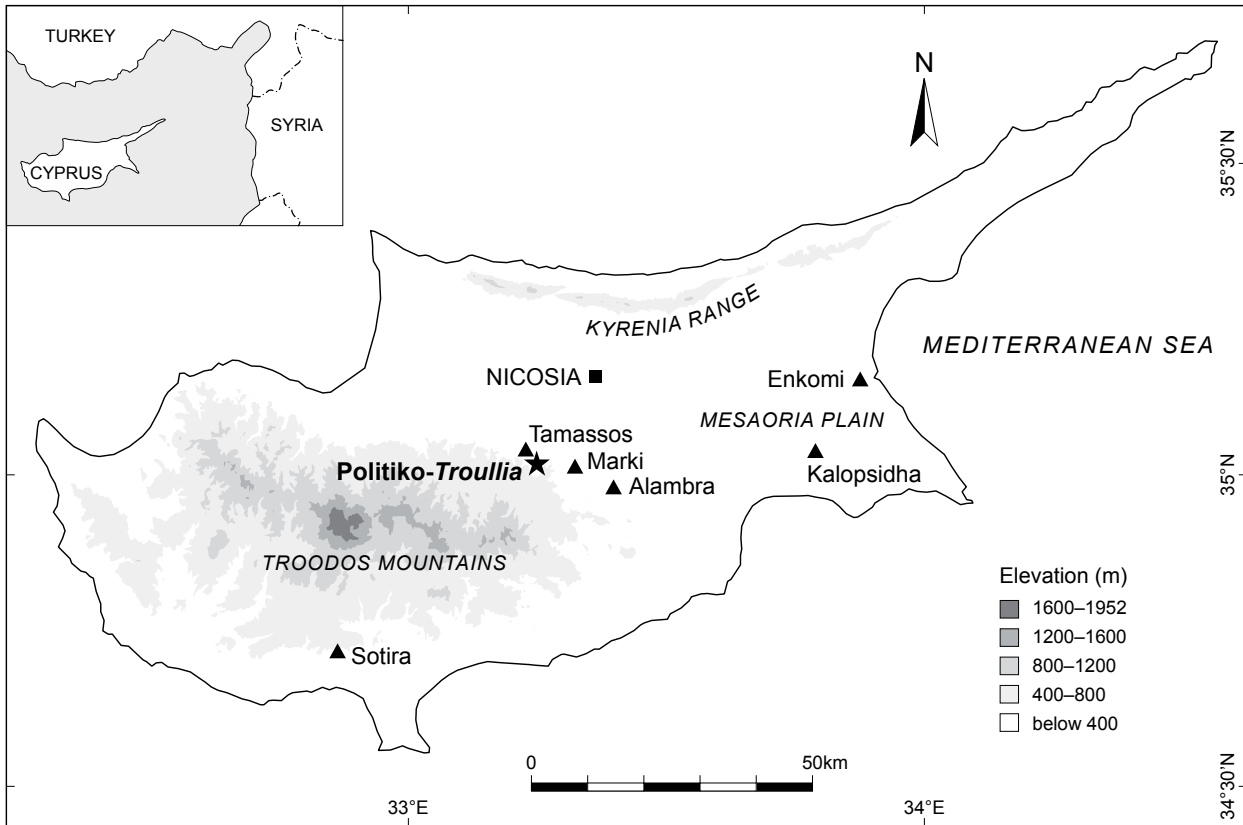


Figure 1. Location of Politiko Troullia in the foothills of the Troodos Mountains and other selected Bronze Age settlements in Cyprus (figure composed by Wei Ming)

possible blowpipe fragments. As in *Troullia* East, this architecture appears to be set off as a separate room block surrounded by open space. The ceramic chronology for *Troullia* suggests occupation of these two locales late in the MC period. Thus, the arrangement of households with interior and exterior space at Marki, subsequently in the MC period at Alambra, and then at *Troullia* suggests similar and persistent configurations of interior and exterior domestic space in houses and their accompanying courtyards in Cypriot communities through the Bronze Age. However, the use of space and its social connotations are marked by several variations that reflect fundamental diversity within and between communities during this era.

The constellation of households at Marki is notable for a trend of increasingly accentuated demarcation of private household space (Frankel & Webb 2006b). Indeed, Webb (2009) mobilises the evidence through the entire sequence at Marki to argue for increased concentration of food processing activities in house interiors, especially those activities sometimes ascribed to women (e.g. grinding and baking). Likewise, Coleman and Barlow (1996: 327–328) infer that food storage, preparation and cooking were focused in interior spaces at Alambra.

These interpretations accord with broader studies suggesting a general shift of domestic activities (especially women’s) from exterior spaces to interior private spaces from the Neolithic through the Bronze Age (e.g., Bolger 2003: 21–50). In contrast, the evidence associated with household architecture at Politiko *Troullia* reveals metallurgical industry (albeit on a household scale), rather than domestic subsistence (Falconer & Fall 2013). This distinction raises the possibilities that a) households were settings for much more diverse social and economic behaviours than often expected and b) more variable use of space may reflect fundamental differences in household and communal social behaviours between settlements on the Cypriot landscape. One means of investigating this social diversity is to balance attention to domestic households with a consideration of the emergence and roles of open spaces in Bronze Age communities.

### The development of open space

The architectural dynamics of Bronze Age Cyprus are illustrated vividly at Marki *Alonia*, where domestic compounds became increasingly aggregated in EC Phases A–F. Subsequently, in Phases G–I, Marki

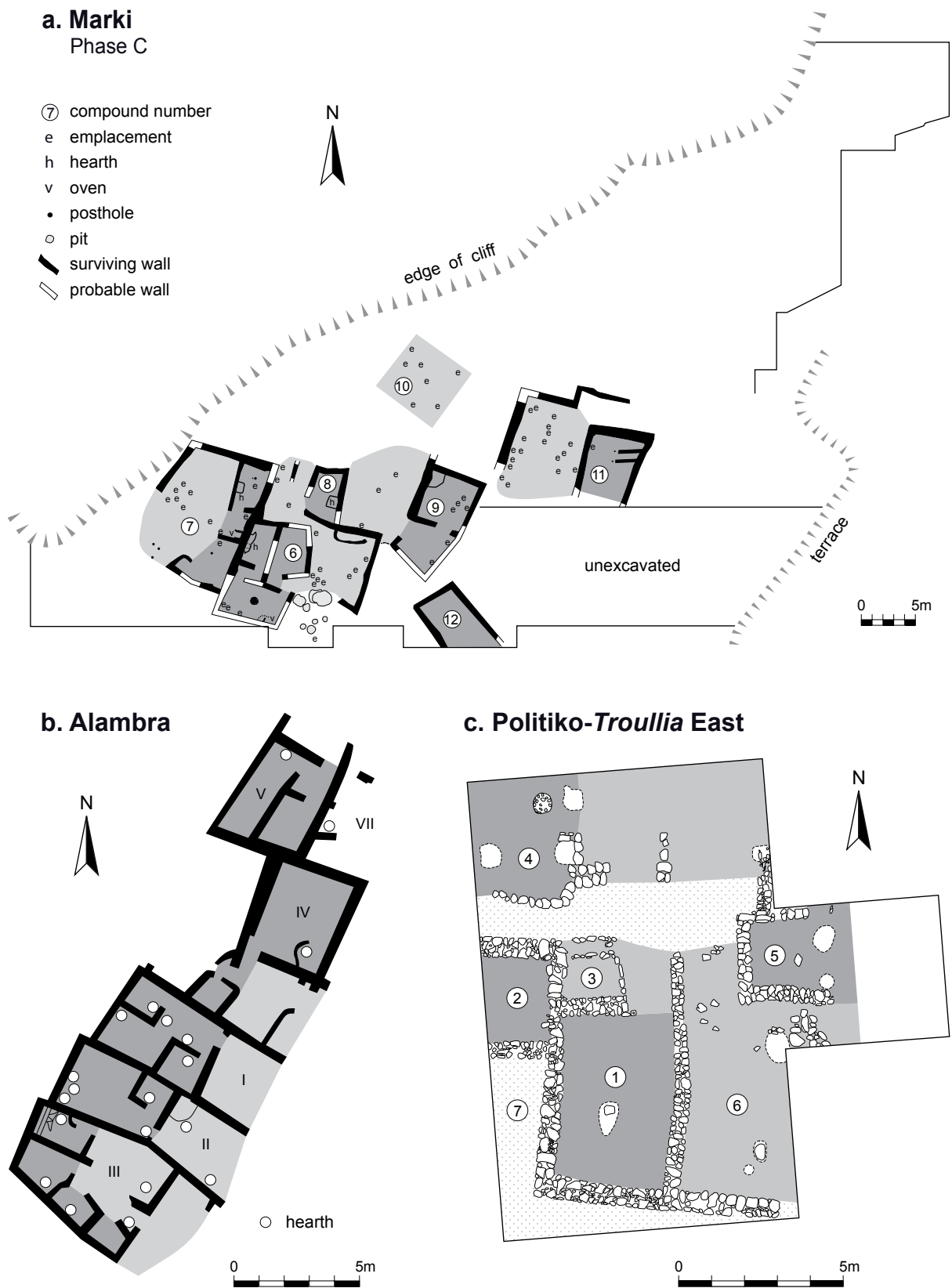


Figure 2. Comparison of interior (darker shading) and exterior (lighter shading) spaces and access lanes or alleys (stippled) at: (a) Marki Phase C; (b) Alambra; and (c) Politiko Troullia East (figure composed by Wei Ming, after Frankel & Webb 2006: fig. 11.3 and Coleman et al. 1996: fig. 14)

experienced the abandonment of specific compounds, then the abandonment of the entire settlement in the MC II period. The household constituency of Marki might be thought of as an ever-changing palimpsest in which some house plots and alleyways persisted from one phase to the next, while others were reconfigured or disappeared altogether. Amid these shifting house plans, large open spaces appeared and disappeared in plots that were intermittently occupied or abandoned (as exemplified by the large open spaces in Phase H on either side of compound 32 in **Figure 3a**; see Frankel & Webb 2006a: figs 11.4–11.8). In other expressions of open space, two alleyways running roughly north–south and east–west meandered persistently amid the Phase D–H settlements.

The creation of large open spaces at Marki and *Troullia* marked a corollary development to the privatisation of domestic space noted above; one which framed social behaviours very different from those conducted routinely in domestic households. The phenomenon of irregularly-shaped open courtyards at Marki would seem to parallel the evidence from Kalopsidha *Tsaoudhi Chiflik*, where an array of variously sized and shaped rooms framed large, roughly rectangular open spaces (**Fig. 3b**). The occupation of this complex dates late in the MC period and perhaps into Late Cypriot I (see discussion in Crewe 2007: 51–52 and Webb 2012: 52–53). The excavator, Einar Gjerstad, centred his architectural analysis on rooms 5 and 6, which he interpreted jointly as an unroofed inner court used for cooking (Gjerstad 1926: 27–37), perhaps presaging the arguments for the social significance of interior domestic space noted earlier. This court communicated with surrounding rooms 3 and 8–11, which he interpreted as storage and living spaces, in keeping with expectations for a domestic household (interpreted as a merchant's house by Gjerstad 1926: 36). Webb's reanalysis (2009) suggests that the open space to the northeast, rather than rooms 5 and 6, constituted the courtyard for this complex. According to either scenario, the Kalopsidha structure emerges as a sizeable complex (roughly 12 x 15m) with one or more large open spaces surrounded by adjoining rooms. Its size, architectural complexity and large rectangular courtyard(s) exceed those of the domestic households of Marki, Alambra and *Troullia* East and find a better parallel in the architectural complex in Politiko *Troullia* West.

The largest excavated exposure at Politiko *Troullia*, a roughly 330m<sup>2</sup> expanse in *Troullia* West dating to the MC period, reveals a pattern of large open Northern and Southern Courtyards (spaces 8 and 9 in **Figure 3c**; **Fig. 4**) framed by an east–west alley (space 13) and the remains of enclosures on the west, north and east (see Falconer *et al.* 2012: fig. 13). The spaces to the west (spaces 10–12) have been eroded by Kamaras Creek, whose spring-fed waters run at the foot of a cut bank along the edge of the site. A large walled enclosure north of these courtyards, which is lined

with mudbrick bins and emplaced pithoi, has been revealed most recently by excavations in 2013 and 2014.

Unlike the lateral dynamics of Marki, the architecture of *Troullia* West represents a series of five vertically stratified phases in which the same overall plan is rebuilt repeatedly with only minor modifications from one phase to the next. In this regard, *Troullia* West harkens to Kalopsidha, where lower stratified remains (described minimally in Gjerstad 1926) precede the better known and more thoroughly discussed structure illustrated in **Figure 3b**. Likewise, the large open spaces represented by *Troullia*'s Northern and Southern Courtyards (approx. 6 x 7m and 6 x 10m, respectively) find rough parallels in the enclosures represented by Kalopsidha's rooms 5 and 6, and northeastern open space. Thus, a comparative appraisal of the architectural plans from Marki, Kalopsidha and *Troullia* West and their associated material evidence reveals the variable social significance of open spaces in these settlements during the latter portions of the EC–MC continuum.

### The evidence from open spaces

The open spaces of *Troullia* and Kalopsidha are distinguished most basically by their creation as central features of large architectural complexes incorporating or surrounded by numerous enclosures of variable size and function. In contrast, the open spaces at Marki are notable for their irregular and inconsistent shapes, and their creation as *ad hoc* spaces left available by the periodic construction and abandonment of Marki's domestic compounds. The social implications of this fundamental contrast may be explored through comparative analysis of animal bone, spindle whorl and anthropomorphic figurine deposition at Marki and Politiko *Troullia*.

The excavation of Marki led to the recovery of a very sizeable faunal assemblage ranging across the spatial contexts represented in this settlement's architectural plans (Croft 2006) (**Table 1**). Notably, only slightly more than 2% of Marki's animal bones were recovered from open spaces, suggesting that neither trash deposition nor conspicuous consumption of animal products took place in these vacant areas. In addition, the relative frequencies of taxa in the small open space bone assemblage closely resemble those for animal remains from the site's total assemblage. Further, the open space taxonomic frequencies diverge from those of the full site primarily in a slightly higher frequency of sheep and goat, species which constitute the backbone of traditional Mediterranean agrarian subsistence. These characteristics suggest that the bones from Marki's open spaces represent a modest subset of the settlement's domestic trash stemming from subsistence activities, which was deposited in unutilised settings between compounds.



Figure 3. Comparison of interior (darker shading) and exterior (lighter shading) spaces and access lanes or alleys (stippled) at: (a) Marki Phase H; (b) Alambra; and (c) Politiko Troullia West (darker walls date to earlier phases; lighter walls date to later phases) (figure composed by Wei Ming, after Frankel & Webb 2006: fig. 11.8 and Gjerstad 1926: fig. 3)



Figure 4. Photo of the Southern Courtyard in Politiko Troullia West showing courtyard surface with post holes, including a large emplacement with a broken gaming stone at its base (to right); alley to far left; facing west

	Marki Alonia (% NISP)		Politiko Troullia (% NISP)	
	Open	Total	Open	Total
Sheep/Goat	64	57	64	66
Deer	15	15	24	21
Pig	3	3	4	5
Cattle	18	23	8	8
N	386	17,200	1094	3339

Table 1. Comparison of spatial deposition patterns of identifiable animal bones at Marki Alonia and Politiko Troullia (data for Marki Alonia from Frankel & Webb 2006a: text table 9.1, FAUNA.xls, CONTEXT LIST.xls; Croft 2006; data for Politiko Troullia from excavation seasons 2006–2011)

Politiko Troullia likewise produced substantial faunal remains from a variety of contexts in which open spaces (i.e., the Northern and Southern Courtyards) produced nearly one-third of the site's animal bones. While a large portion of the bone assemblage was discarded as domestic trash in the Troullia West alley, bone deposition also was particularly dense in the Southern Courtyard, from which 99% of the open space bones were recovered. Although the open space

taxonomic profile resembles that of the settlement overall, a large hunted woodland animal, the Mesopotamian fallow deer (*Dama dama mesopotamica*), provides the species accentuated in open space at Troullia, rather than domesticated sheep/goat. This characteristic accords with Politiko Troullia's location on the verge of the forested uplands and pillow lavas of the Troodos Mountains (Klinge & Fall 2010; Fall *et al.* 2012; Falconer & Fall 2013), whereas the higher



incidence of cattle at Marki reflects its situation adjacent to the fertile Mesaoria plain (see Croft 2006).

These contrasts between settlements are noteworthy as they reveal fundamental differences in animal husbandry, accompanied by distinctions in socially significant material culture and communal social behaviours. Spindle whorls and anthropomorphic figurines provide prominent forms of material culture with implications for signalling corporate social identity. Spindle whorls and other evidence of weaving (e.g., loom weights) appear initially on Cyprus in the Bronze Age (Crewe 1998: 14, 37; Webb 2002), signalling the advent of textile manufacture as part of Cyprus' Secondary Products Revolution (Sherratt 1981; Fall *et al.* 2002). The spindle whorls at Politiko *Troullia* (Falconer & Fall 2013: fig. 10) and Marki *Alonia* (Frankel & Webb 2006a: 159–175, figs 5.5–5.16) feature detailed incised decoration in a variety of ceramic wares with attendant potential for signalling social information, for example in spaces where spinning and weaving might provide a focus for communal activity (Crewe 1998: 37–38).

At Marki, whorls were recovered in a variety of settings ranging across house interiors (where they are particularly abundant), exterior courtyards, open spaces and alleys (Table 2). Their broad distribution and large numbers in house interiors mirror the general pattern of bone deposition at Marki, and suggest that whorls represent one component of domestic refuse. At *Troullia*, however, 70% of spindle whorls were recovered from open space and, like the animal bone, primarily from the Southern Courtyard. This pattern implies close association of whorls with patterns of behaviour in this courtyard, rather than trash discard in *Troullia's* refuse laden alleyway.

This contrast is repeated when considering the distributions of ceramic human figurines across

both settlements. Anthropomorphic figurines are found in a range of forms at both *Troullia* and Marki, including plank figurines, cradleboard figurines and less formalised depictions. Plank figurines offer flat, highly stylised ceramic representations of the human form (Mogelonsky 1988; Karageorghis 1991: 49–94; a Campo 1994; Knox 2012: 146–155). Detailed incised decoration captures facial features, and may also represent hair, jewellery, clothing, tattoos or body paint (a Campo 1994: 61) (Fig. 5). Cradleboard figurines represent babies in flat cradleboards (Morris 1985: 152, fig. 240; Mogelonsky 1988; Karageorghis 1991: 94–97; Bergoffen 2009; Knox 2012: 146–149). These two motifs provide readily recognised modes of depicting the human form in detail, with corresponding potential for signalling social identities. Figurines with round or oval sectioned bodies comprise a third anthropomorphic motif at Marki and *Troullia*.

In a manner similar to that of spindle whorls, all three categories of figurines are found deposited across a variety of spatial contexts at Marki (Frankel & Webb 2006a: 155–157, figs 5.1–5.3) (Table 2). The third, rounded-body category constitutes the majority of anthropomorphic figurines here. Their homogeneity, relative abundance and the paucity of parallels elsewhere led Frankel and Webb (2006a: 157) to infer that they were produced locally, while the more finely made but less abundant plank figurines were brought into the Marki community. Only the site's modest sample of cradleboard figurines shows a clear spatial tendency toward deposition in household interiors, while plank figurines occur in small numbers across household interiors and exteriors, open spaces and alleyways. At *Troullia*, the human form is depicted nearly exclusively as plank figurines and rarely in cradleboard or rounded body forms. Again following the pattern of spindle whorls, some figurine fragments

	Marki <i>Alonia</i>					Politiko <i>Troullia</i>				
	Int.	Ext.	Open	Alley	Total	P-T East		P-T West		Total
						Int.	Ext.	Open	Alley	
Whorls	69	24	16	3	112	2	1	21	6	30
Anthropomorphic Plank Figures	2	3	1	1	7	0	0	20	9	29
Cradleboard	5	0	0	0	5	0	1	0	0	1
Other	8	7	1	2	18	0	2	0	0	2

Table 2. Comparison of spatial deposition patterns of spindle whorls and anthropomorphic figurines at Marki *Alonia* and Politiko *Troullia*. Int. = Interior space; Ext. = Exterior space. Data for Marki *Alonia* from Frankel & Webb 2006a: 155–157, text tables 5.1, 5.3–5.15, *Anthropomorphic figurines.xls*, *CONTEXT LIST.xls*; Data for Politiko *Troullia* from excavation seasons 2006–2011



Figure 5. Two plank figurine fragments from Politiko Troullia West showing stylized facial features including molded noses, punctate eyes and other incised attributes

were recovered amid domestic refuse in the alley of *Troullia* West, but the great majority were concentrated in open space. As a further reflection of this distinct spatial patterning, all of the open space figurines come from *Troullia*'s Southern Courtyard.

### Social implications of open spaces

The faunal remains and material culture from Politiko *Troullia*'s Southern Courtyard stand in contrast to those of Marki's open spaces and may exemplify the importance of open spaces as potential locales for socially significant communal behaviours. In this regard, plank figurines serve as key indicators of activities that potentially signalled group identity. Mortuary paraphernalia from Cyprus sometimes feature plank figurines as prominent symbols of group identity (e.g., Talalay & Cullen 2002: 186–187). At Politiko *Troullia*, these miniatures may have been carried or displayed before their discard in the Southern Courtyard. At a variety of sites plank figurines appear to have broken roughly at their midsections, often at the bottom of their decoration, suggesting that they may have stood upright with their undecorated bases dug into the courtyard surface in spaces like the *Troullia* courtyard (see Knox 2012: 150). Alternatively, these thin flat figurines may have been snapped intentionally as a means of 'killing' them ritually (see Knox 2012: 154–155). The co-occurrence of a much larger limestone plank figure (an association unparalleled elsewhere on Cyprus) with these fragmentary plank figurines underscores the significance of *Troullia*'s Southern Courtyard as a focal point of communal behaviour (Falconer & Fall 2013; Falconer *et al.* 2014).

Another facet of communal behaviour is reflected in the strikingly large faunal assemblage from the Southern Courtyard, which features the greatest abundances and relative frequencies of Mesopotamian fallow deer anywhere at Politiko *Troullia*. (In comparison, the comparably sized Northern Courtyard and the larger area of Politiko *Troullia* East produced much smaller animal bone assemblages.)

This faunal evidence reflects the late persistence of forests, and the long-standing importance of wild game hunting on Cyprus (Croft 2002). While spindle whorls and plank figurines may allude to craft or depictive expressions of group identity, the evidence of deer exploitation at *Troullia* clearly fits the characteristics of feasting, in light of its concentration in open space, its emphasis on a prime species and its indication of conspicuous consumption (Crabtree 1990; Dietler 2001: 89; Spielmann 2002; Steel 2004). Webb and Frankel (2010) have argued that feasting was an important part of mortuary practice on the north coast of Cyprus in the EC period. At Politiko *Troullia*, corporate feasting in the open Southern Courtyard provides a settlement-based example of the ceremonial feasting and drinking that promoted social differentiation during the urbanisation of the subsequent Late Bronze Age (Steel 2002, 2004).

### The meaning of space and place

The excavated architecture and material evidence from Marki *Alonia*, Politiko *Troullia*, *Alambra Mouttes* and *Kalopsidha Tsaoudhi Chiflik* reveal variable expressions of the creation, use and social implications of private household spaces and public open spaces in Bronze Age communities on Cyprus. Marki and *Alambra* provide examples of iterative domestic compounds with multi-room interiors entered through anterior courtyards, while the northern and eastern excavations at *Troullia* suggest distinct room blocks composed of interior rooms and exterior workplaces. Although the interior spaces of Marki and *Alambra* may have witnessed increasingly focused domestic activities earlier in the Bronze Age, the room blocks at *Troullia* are associated most clearly with small-scale metallurgy later in the period. Thus, while households provided focal points for domestic residence and industry, especially during the earlier occupations of these settlements, they were far from uniform in this capacity.

Variable expression of the use of space is even more pronounced when comparing the creation and use of open spaces at Marki and Politiko *Troullia*. In these cases, open spaces emerge very differently, as areas left vacant or framed settings created quite intentionally. These spaces carry larger social implications (perhaps especially in the latter portions of the Bronze Age) based in part on whether open spaces represent vacant areas between domestic compounds and their household activities, or serve as well-defined social stages for supra-household communal behaviours. We offer a tip of the hat to David Frankel for bringing the Bronze Age households of Marki to life, and for providing the meticulously gathered data that enable us to pose these queries and pursue their elucidation at Politiko *Troullia* and other prehistoric communities in the future.



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