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Excavations at Sissi IV

Preliminary Report on the 2015-2016 Campaigns

by J. Driessen &
M. Anastasiadou, I. Caloi, T. Claeys, S. Déderix, M. Devolder,
S. Jusseret, C. Langohr, Q. Letesson, I. Mathioudaki,
O. Mouthuy, A. Schmitt

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Jo Cutler (1962-2018)
(Photo by Rosemarie McGuire)

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5.2. The North-East Wing and the Court of the Court-Centred Building at Sissi

Maud Devolder¹

The North-East Wing and the court of the Court-Centred Building (CCB) at Sissi were excavated in 2015 and 2016 in what was initially called Zone 6 (figs 1.1, 1.2 & 1.11). The exploration of this zone continued the work started in 2008 by S. Jusseret, who had identified the remains of a court adjoining Building F, of which the initial use was dated to the Neopalatial period but which was largely reoccupied in LM IIIA2/B (*Sissi I*: 157-161; *II*: 163-170; *III*: 135-154). This report first focuses on the North-East Wing of the CCB, before describing the excavation of the court itself.



FIG. 5.2.1 (A) THE NORTH-EAST WING OF THE CCB BEFORE EXCAVATION (FROM NORTH); (B) TERRACE WALL FE107-109 DURING TOPSOIL REMOVAL (FROM SOUTH-WEST); (C) NORTH-EAST WING OF THE CCB AFTER TOPSOIL REMOVAL (FROM NORTH) (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

¹ Post-doctoral Fellow of the Gerda Henkel Foundation at the UCLouvain, Aegis Research Group (INCAL/CEMA). The excavation and study of Zone 6 also benefitted from support of a Humboldt Post-doctoral Research Fellowship. The author sincerely thanks both institutions, as well as the FNRS (Belgium) and INSTAP.

1. The North-East Wing

An alignment of large limestone boulders (FE110) was visible on the surface about 12 m north of wall F48-F51 that borders the court to the north. This triggered the exploration of a 12 by 7 m area located east of a sudden change in the level of the terrain (figs 5.2.1 & 5.2.2). This drop, which is about 1.4 to 2.5 m high, marks the limit between the western (upper) and eastern (lower) terraces of the North Wing of the CCB. The western part was explored in 2015 as Zone 11 by S. Déderix and is described in chapter 5.3, while the eastern, lower part was explored as Zone 6 and is described here. Vegetation was cleared, carob trees were cut and the upper part of a dark topsoil was removed, revealing the presence of a long north-south terrace wall forming the transition between the two levels (FE107-FE109) (fig. 5.2.1b). Several large limestone and conglomerate boulders had fallen from this wall towards the east, and their considerable sizes gave some idea on the structural purpose of this once sturdy wall². These blocks were placed aside and the dark topsoil layer was removed. This revealed a series of six rooms including a staircase and a long corridor accessed from an entrance in the eastern wall of the North Wing (fig. 5.2.2).



FIG. 5.2.2 AERIAL VIEW OF THE NORTH-EAST WING IN 2015, WITH SPACE NUMBERS (©EBSA; N. KRESS & M. DEVOLDER)

In this area, the topsoil mainly consisted of a dark soil produced by the decomposition of vegetation, mixed with stones coming from the collapse of rubble walls. The erosion of the remains in this part of the building was exacerbated by the agricultural use of the area until recent times, which probably also explains why in some rooms the floor level or even the preparation layer under it were immediately reached by excavation once the topsoil was removed. This was especially the case in the eastern parts of rooms 6.21 and 6.22 and in corridor 6.23. In 6.23, two stone slabs were discovered, one markedly tilted towards the south. These two slabs may belong to what once was an entirely stone paved floor (fig. 5.2.3). It is likely that the use of modern agricultural devices caused the almost complete removal of the floor revetment in this room, up to the preparation layer of the paving. Despite the heavy

² Eleven blocks had collapsed to the east of this wall. Their dimensions, expressed in length, width and height, are: 0.75 x 0.60 x 0.38 m; 0.74 x 0.53 x 0.38 m; 0.61 x 0.49 x 0.40 m; 0.74 x 0.60 x 0.42 m; 0.97 x 0.52 x 0.27 m; 0.57 x 0.56 x 0.38 m; 0.82 x 0.38 x 0.37 m; 0.67 x 0.46 x 0.33 m; 0.72 x 0.63 x 0.45 m; 0.72 x 0.62 x 0.32 m; 0.68 x 0.60 x 0.42 m.

later disturbance in this North-East Wing, it is worth stressing that the excavation of the topsoil produced large amounts of plaster fragments, in addition to significant quantities of clay loomweights, lithic tools, fragmentary terracotta slabs, mudbricks debris, pumice and sherds.

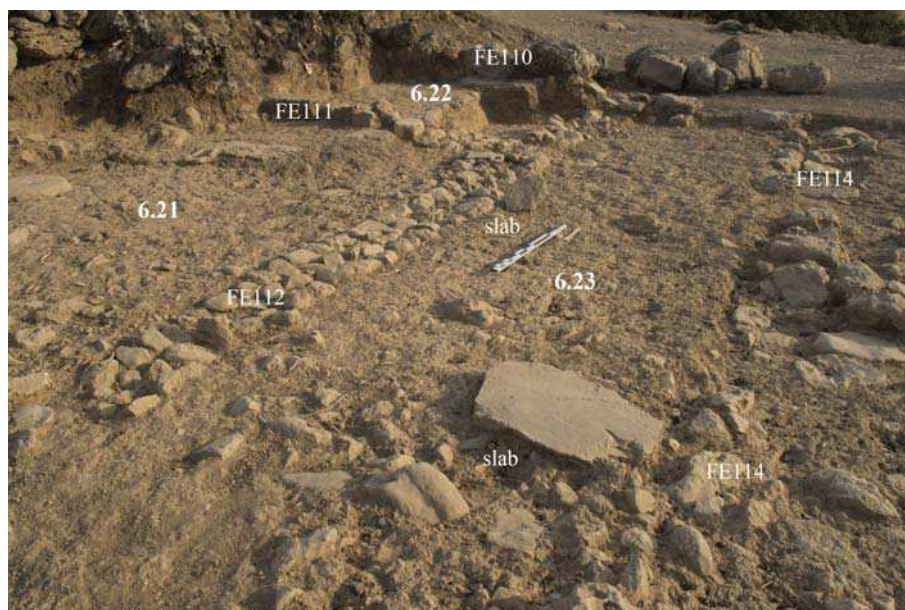


FIG. 5.2.3 VIEW OF CORRIDOR 6.23 AND OF ROOMS 6.21 AND 6.22, FROM SOUTH-EAST. NOTE THE LARGE PAVING SLAB IN THE FOREGROUND AND ANOTHER ONE, TILTED, FURTHER TO THE NORTH AGAINST WALL FE112 (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

The removal of the topsoil revealed most of the plan of the North-East Wing of the CCB (figs 5.2.2 & 5.2.4). The long corridor 6.23 could be accessed via an entrance in the northern part of the east wall FE114. This corridor led to the south-west to a double (U-shaped) staircase, 6.18, which probably provided access to an upper floor which may have been located at ground floor level on the higher terrace to the west (Zone 11, see below). It is unclear whether there was an opening between corridor 6.23 and room 6.21 to the west of it but this is highly likely, since room 6.23 would then provide access to room 6.21 and, from it, to rooms 6.20 and 6.19 in the south-western corner of the area. Room 6.22, to the north-west, may also have been entered via corridor 6.23, but again no obvious doorway could be identified.

The North-East Wing of the CCB is bordered to the north by wall FE110. This is built with large limestone and conglomerate boulders (each measuring *ca.* 0.40 by 0.70 m) and thus similar to terrace wall FE107-FE109, to which it is structurally connected (fig. 5.2.6). Only one course is preserved, but it is possible that the smaller, irregular blocks and rubble discovered around FE110 once formed part of its elevation. During the exploration of the topsoil and collapse of this wall a fragmentary clay drain (15-06-1096-OB001), fragments of terracotta plaques and plaster, mudbricks debris, and twelve lithic tools were found. At least part of this material may come from the collapse of the upper floor and roof. Towards the east, wall FE114 perhaps formed the external border of the North-East Wing (fig. 5.2.4). Limited exploration of the superficial levels east of it revealed no architectural remains. However, these may have disappeared because of erosion, and the possibility cannot be excluded that the North Wing of the CCB once extended further east. It is somewhat surprising to note that there is, at present, no obvious direct access between the court and the North-East Wing. Entering this Wing from the court would have required a visitor to move north through space 6.13 and reach the corridor 6.23 via the entrance through wall FE114. Of course, it cannot be excluded that the access was made from the upper floor down, and that rooms 6.19 to 6.23 were only accessible from the North-West Wing through the staircase in room 6.18 (fig. 5.2.5). It also remains unclear whether a 0.54 m-wide space in wall FE110, north of corridor 6.23, once marked an entrance from the exterior (figs 5.2.6 right & 5.2.1.1).

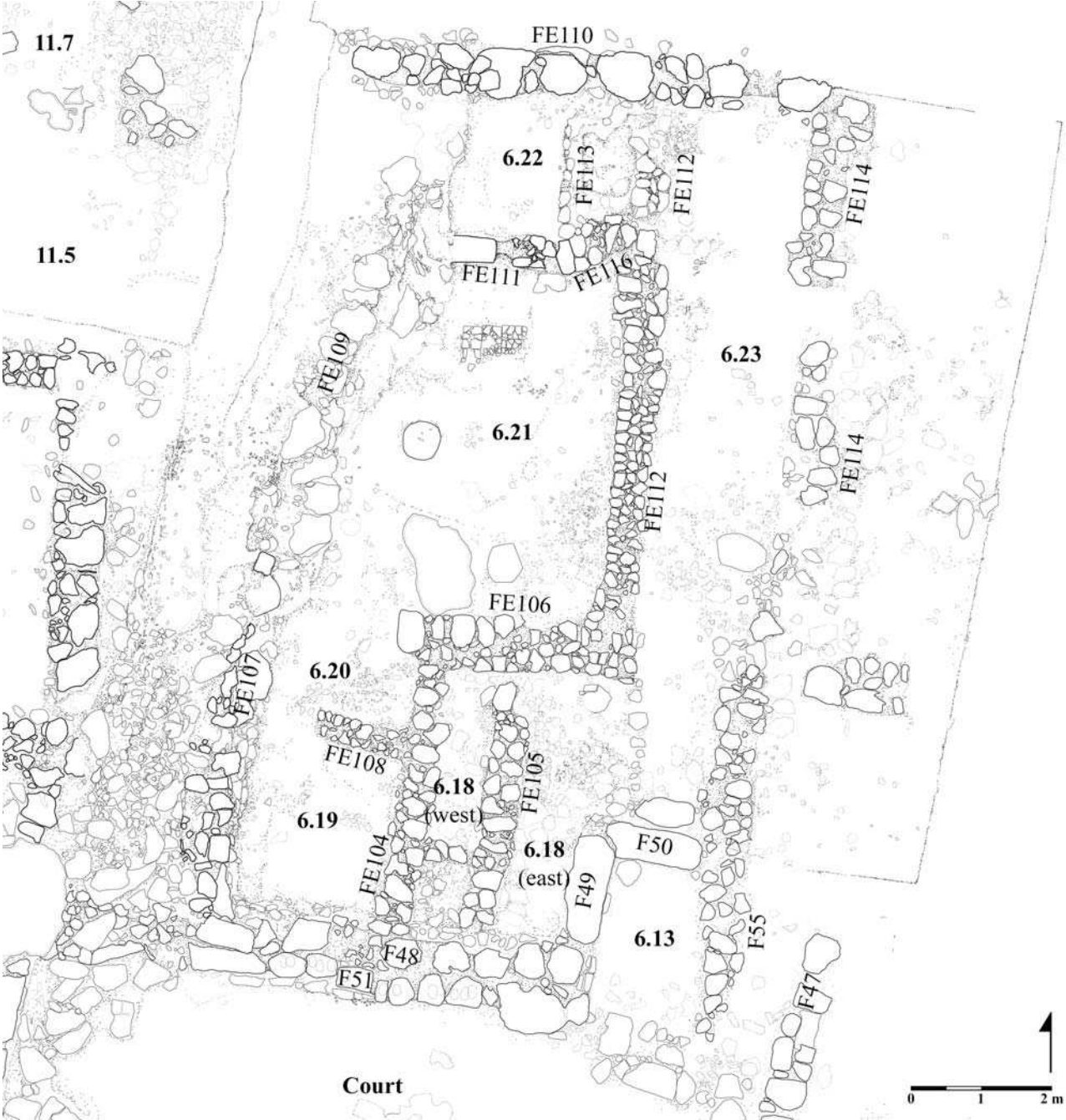


FIG. 5.2.4 STATE PLAN (2015) OF THE NORTH-EAST WING (©EBSA; E. ZOGRAFOU)

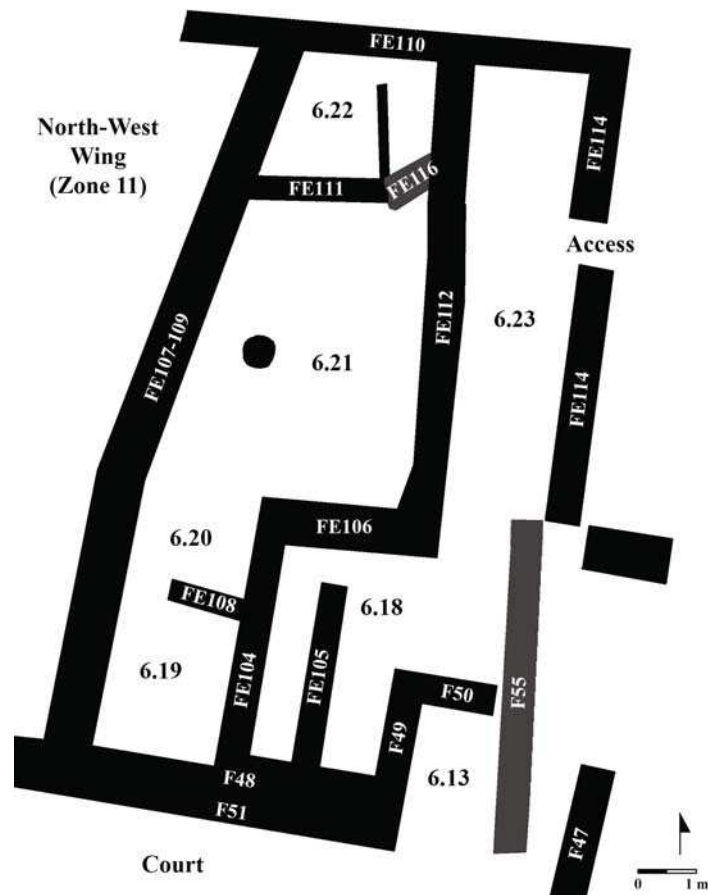


FIG. 5.2.5 SCHEMATIC PLAN OF THE NORTH-EAST WING WITH EARLY WALLS INDICATED IN GREY (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER AFTER E. ZOGRAFOU)

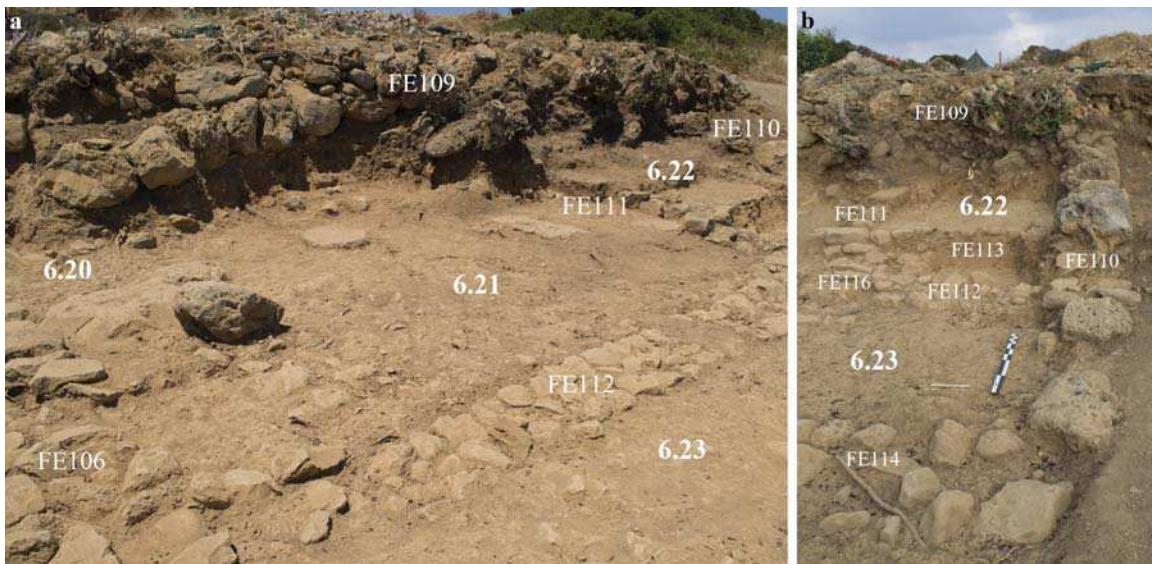


FIG. 5.2.6 (A) NORTHERN PART OF TERRACE WALL FE107-FE109 (FROM SOUTH-EAST) AND (B) NORTHERN PART OF THE NORTH-EAST WING (FROM EAST) (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

1.1. Room 6.18

Room 6.18 is a 3.70 by 2.20 m space surrounded by walls F48 (south), FE104 (west), FE106 (north) and F49 (east). It is divided in two narrow parts by north-south wall FE105 and it opens to the north-east into corridor 6.23 (figs 5.2.4, 5.2.5 & 5.2.7). Two smooth slabs of blue limestone found near the doorway probably functioned as doorjamb bases (fig. 5.2.8). To the west of the doorway, a 1.2 by 1.9 m space with a floor of stamped earth (and perhaps also pebbles) laid out over a compact preparation layer of small stones (0.05 by 0.05 m; 0.05 by 0.1 m) mixed with soil formed the departure level of the staircase (16.50-16.53 m asl) (figs 5.2.8 & 5.2.9). From here, the first flight of a staircase – the beginning of which may have been retained by a line of rubble perpendicular to F49 and FE105³ – went up southwards to an intermediate landing, and from it a second flight would have ran up towards the north. The discovery in the southern part of room 6.18 (to the east and west of wall FE105) of a large number of small limestone slabs may suggest that the steps of the lower flight and at least part of the upper flight of the staircase were provided with stone revetments. But it is unclear whether the second flight of stairs concealed a *sottoscala*. Wall FE105 seems to stop before it reaches wall FE106 to the north, and the 0.75 m gap between the two may have marked the presence of an access towards a small storage space under the second flight of the staircase in the western part of room 6.18. Although eroded, remains of a stamped earth floor were found in this part of the room and the nature and elevation of this corresponds with the floor level from which the staircase was accessed (16.53 m asl). This may suggest the existence here of a *sottoscala*, but because of the erosion and heavy disturbance by roots in this area, this suggestion remains hypothetical.

The walls that surround room 6.18 are made of rubble but also incorporate small blocks of limestone and are preserved for a height of 0.03 to 0.17 m. The collapse layer within this room consisted of semi-hard, reddish-brown soil and probably derives from the decomposition of mudbrick walls. No burnt mudbrick was encountered, which may indicate that at least this part of the building was not destroyed by fire. Medium-sized rubble (0.15 by 0.20 m in average) in this collapse suggests that the elevation of the walls was in stone, at least up to a certain height. Most of these stones were found in the northern part of the room and seem to come from the collapse of wall FE106. The many plaster fragments discovered throughout the collapse layer of the room also suggest that its walls were coated with lime plaster, unless these fragments came from the upper floor. In addition to large amounts of plaster, we also sampled shell and bone in significant quantities. A single clay loomweight (15-06-1023-OB001), six lithic tools (15-06-1017-OB001 and OB002; 15-06-1022-OB001 to OB003; 15-06-1025-OB001), and a large number of sherds were also collected. The sherds were especially found in the southern part of the room. They are mainly small and eroded and have preliminarily been dated to the early Neopalatial period (mostly MM III), but some are Protopalatial. It cannot be excluded that these sherds derive from the walls or from a layer of soil which supported the intermediate landing. A preliminary study of the pottery from this collapse layer in room 6.18 identified residual, small eroded sherds of the Pre- and Protopalatial periods as well as intrusive LM IIIC fragments. Most sherds, however, are small and eroded but sometimes they are larger and join and are early Neopalatial in date, with a good deal of MM III pottery. It is perhaps worth mentioning that MM III and LM I sherds were also found in the preparation layer under the floor of the *sottoscala* in the western part of room 6.18. Nevertheless, more study is needed, especially to determine whether part of this material is residual. The preliminary dating suggests, however, that the construction of staircase 6.18 happened early in the Neopalatial period.

³ For examples of perpendicular wall lines marking the departure of a first flight in a staircase, see Gournia Pottery Workshop (J. Younger, personal communication) and Houses Ed et Fi on the same site (Buell & McEnroe 2017: fig. 9.1), as well as room 17 of Building 5 at Palaikastro (Sackett & MacGillivray 2000: fig. 1.7).

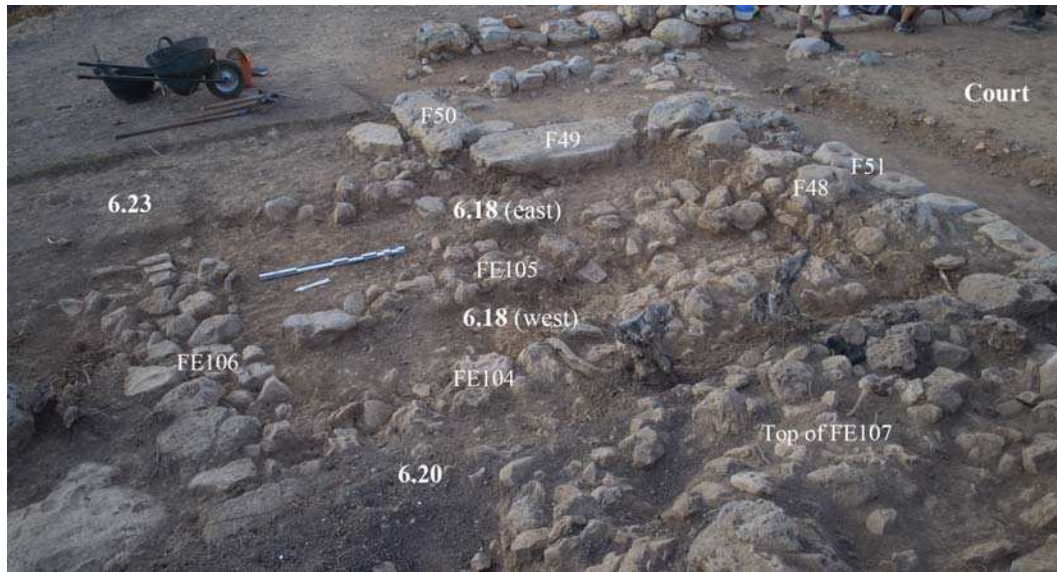


FIG. 5.2.7 GENERAL VIEW OF STAIRCASE 6.18 DURING EXCAVATION, FROM NORTH-WEST (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)



FIG. 5.2.8 ACCESS FROM CORRIDOR 6.23 AND DEPARTURE LEVEL OF STAIRCASE 6.18, FROM SOUTH-EAST (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

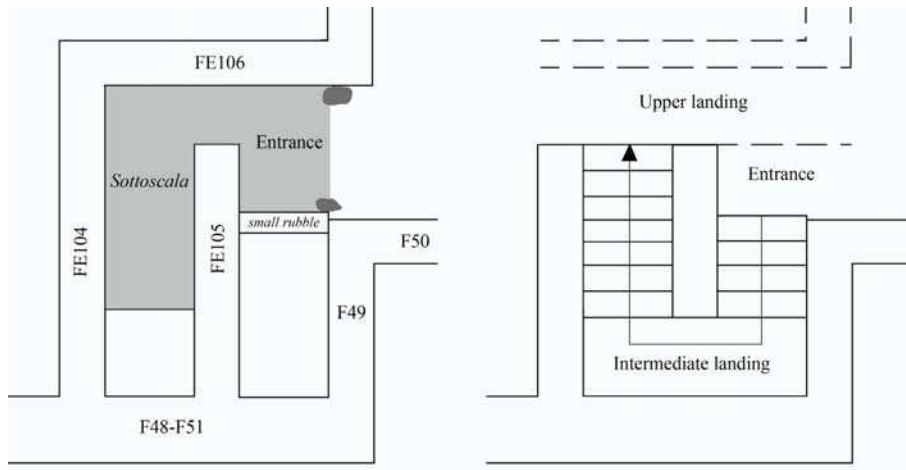


FIG. 5.2.9 ROOM 6.18: SKETCH OF GROUND FLOOR AND RECONSTRUCTION OF STAIRCASE (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)



FIG. 5.2.10 (A) VIEW OF WALL FE114 TO THE EAST OF CORRIDOR 6.23 (FROM SOUTH-EAST); (B) DETAIL OF THE NORTHERN PART OF THE SAME WALL WITH THE ACCESS FROM THE EAST (FROM EAST) (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

1.2. Space 6.23

Space 6.23 is a long and narrow space (9.60 by 2 m) bordered by walls F50 (south), FE112 (west), FE110 (north) and FE114 (east). We interpret it as a corridor (fig. 5.2.4), leading south-west to the staircase in room 6.18 and accessible from the north-east via an entrance in wall FE114. This last wall, 8.2 m long, has a somewhat

irregular construction and its wall line projects towards the east (**figs 5.2.4 & 5.2.10**). It is unclear whether these irregularities are the result of the collapse of the wall and/or of the possible extension of the building towards the east. As mentioned before, it cannot be excluded that erosion in this area of the hill destroyed the easternmost part of the North Wing. About 2.90 m from its northern limit, wall FE114 shows a 0.90 m wide doorway. To the north of it is a rough stone with a semi-circular depression, set on top of a small slab of green, decomposed schist (**fig. 5.2.10**). This stone was probably a pivot hole for the wooden casing of the door. It is unclear, however, how corridor 6.23 ended to the south-east. The lower (foundation?) course of an early wall F55 identified in space 6.13 to the south (*Sissi III*: fig. 6.1 and 6.14) continues towards the north in the south-eastern part of corridor 6.23 and it is possible that its continuation formed the south-eastern limit of the corridor. It is also possible that corridor 6.23 was open to the south-east, unless a border was created by the continuation towards the south of wall FE114, possibly on top of the earlier wall F55 (**fig. 5.2.5**). Wall FE112 borders corridor 6.23 to the west and separates it from rooms 6.21 and 6.22. Its masonry is unusual since it is made of a single course of small to medium-size rubble (in average 0.15 by 0.20 m; 0.20 by 0.25 m), densely set with two exterior faces in between which small rubble is visible. The top of this course is very regular and level (16.43 m asl), which suggests that the remains now visible form the stone base for a wall once made of mudbricks (**figs 5.2.3, 5.2.4 & 5.2.6**). It is perhaps worth underlining that some of the stones in wall FE112 are of the same smooth blue limestone used for the doorjamb bases in the access towards staircase 6.18. No interruption is visible in this wall, marking a potential access towards rooms 6.21 and 6.22, but it is not excluded that the levelled top of the wall also served as a threshold in one or more places. To the north, corridor 6.23 is bordered by wall FE110 described above (**figs 5.2.4, 5.2.6 & 5.2.11**), while to the south it is separated by a long limestone block (F50) from space 6.13.

Corridor 6.23 was severely affected by erosion. A semi-hard to hard brown level beneath the topsoil probably corresponds with both the eroded floor level and its preparation layer. Only two larger limestone slabs are preserved, one of which (0.77 by 0.47 m) is probably in position along wall FE114 in the central part of the corridor while another slab (0.52 by 0.30 m) is somewhat tilted close to wall FE112 in the northern part of the room. As suggested, the almost complete disappearance of the paving from corridor 6.23 may have been caused by considerable agricultural activities in the area, which may have uplifted the slab in the north-western part of the room and removed most of the others. In the southern part of the room – *i.e.* to the east of the access towards room 6.18 – some hard to semi-hard reddish-brown soil deriving from the collapse of the building survives. The fragmented and eroded sherd material retrieved here is preliminarily dated to the early Neopalatial period (MM III, some LM I) with a few LM III intrusions. In the central and northern parts of corridor 6.23 (**fig. 5.2.11**), we stopped excavation at the preparation layer of the paved floor, a layer which includes small sherds and stones (0.05 by 0.05 m; 0.05 by 0.10 m). Although most of the material was again preliminarily dated to the early Neopalatial period, it also included some Pre- and Protopalatial sherds.

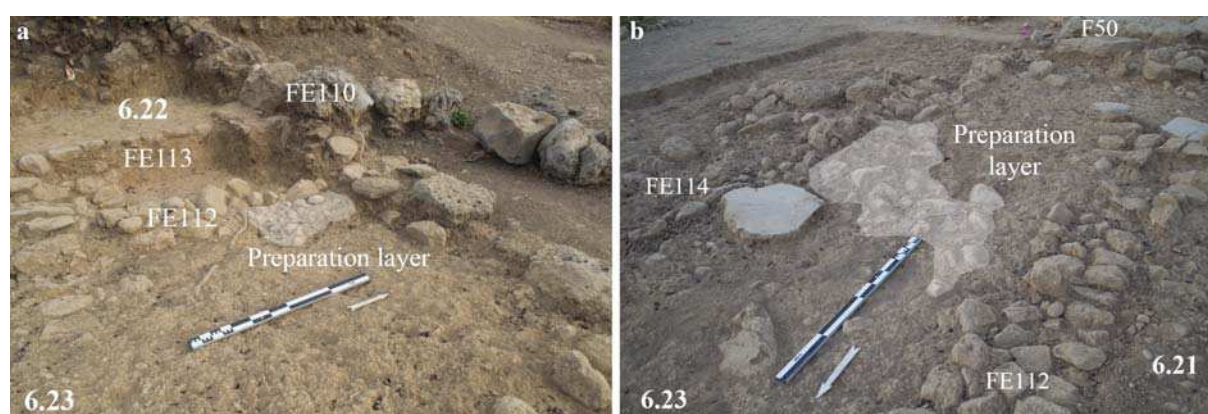


FIG. 5.2.11 (A) REMAINS OF THE PREPARATION LAYER IN CORRIDOR 6.23, RESPECTIVELY IN THE NORTH-WESTERN CORNER (FROM SOUTH-EAST), AND (B) IN THE CENTRE (FROM NORTH-WEST). THE REMAINS OF THE PREPARATION LAYER ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN WHITE (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

1.3. The surface above rooms 6.21 and 6.22

Rooms 6.21 and 6.22, to the west of corridor 6.23, were also heavily disturbed by erosion. This is especially the case in the eastern part of the rooms, while the western part remained largely protected by the collapse of terrace wall FE107-FE109. It seems, however, that the northern part of this terrace wall (FE109) was pushed out towards the east by the pressure of the earth it was retaining. This surely explains why some of the wall boulders are now encroaching upon the western part of room 6.22 and, to a lesser degree, of room 6.21 (figs 5.2.12 & 5.2.13). Because of the generally bad state of preservation of this area, part of the collapse layer, the floor and the floor preparation layer were already touched while excavating the topsoil layer. Moreover, this disturbed layer comprised large numbers of sherds which probably originally formed part of the preparation layer of the floors in both rooms 6.21 and 6.23. It is also worth noting that many fragments of terracotta plaques were discovered in room 6.21, similar to those discovered *in situ* in the room itself, and discussed below. Plaster, bone, shell, pumice and mudbrick were sampled and the layer also included two cups (15-06-1061-OB001 and 002), five lithic tools (15-06-1061-OB003, 15-06-1062-OB004 to OB007), a stone weight (15-06-1062-OB003), and a possible fragment of a plaster table (15-16-1062-OB003, a possible parallel for this was discovered in room 11.3 in the North-West Wing of the CCB, *i.e.* 15-11-9095-OB001). Plaster fragments were especially numerous and of considerable size in the western part of room 6.21, where they were found immediately below topsoil (fig. 5.2.12). The ceramic material in this topsoil was heavily eroded and very mixed in date, from EM II to LM III according to the preliminary study.



FIG. 5.2.12 FALLEN PLASTER FRAGMENTS IN THE WESTERN PART OF ROOM 6.21, ALONG TERRACE WALL FE107-FE109, APPEARING IMMEDIATELY UNDER THE TOPSOIL. VIEWS FROM THE EAST (A) AND DOWN (B) (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

1.4. Room 6.21

Room 6.21, which measures *ca.* 4.80 by 3.60 m, is located along terrace wall FE107-FE109 and enclosed to the south, north and east by walls FE106, FE111 and FE112 (fig. 5.2.4). Wall FE111 consists of limestone rubble but also has one, sizeable sandstone block. The wall can be traced for a distance of 1.50 m only, as its western part is still hidden by the collapse of terrace wall FE107-FE109. Towards the east, a grinding stone sits in the upper preserved course of the wall. Room 6.21 was perhaps accessed from corridor 6.23 to the east via an entrance in wall FE112 but there is no trace of this. Room 6.21 leads to room 6.20, which itself opens onto room 6.19. It is worth underlining that large amounts of wall plaster were found in the western part of room 6.21, some of them in large chunks (fig. 5.2.12). They were consolidated before removal and further study will determine whether they were decorated.

The original, rectangular shape of the room is partly skewed by erosion and the eastward projection of the northern part (FE109) of terrace wall FE107-FE109, probably caused by the pressure of the more western, higher terrace. A roughly circular base in beige limestone (0.50 by 0.54 m, 16.71 m asl) was found in the central-western part of the room and probably functioned as a column base (figs 5.2.4, 5.2.13 & 5.2.14). The presence of an

intermediary support was probably necessary because of the large size of the room; it would also help supporting the weight of the upper floor.

The destruction layer in room 6.21 consists of a semi-hard brown soil which sits on top of a somewhat irregular floor made of various materials, set at different levels: some parts have pebbles, another part preserves a stone slab, another has terracotta slabs and elsewhere the bedrock is protruding (figs 5.2.13 & 5.2.14). But it is the partly preserved terracotta slab revetment at 16.64 m asl which is preserved in the northern part of the room which is quite remarkable. At present, three terracotta slabs are well preserved and there are remains of at least four others. Each slab is about 0.31 by 0.27 m and 0.07 m thick. Examples of similar types of floor revetment have been found at Neopalatial Zakros, Palaikastro and Malia, as well as in Buildings BA and BC at Sissi itself (Shaw 2009: 139-140; *Sissi I*: 96, 98, fig. 5.2)⁴. It is worth stressing that the terracotta plaques in room 6.21 are set near a column base, as is the case for the mudbrick platforms in room XVII 1 of the Malia Palace, the central room of House Zβ at Malia and for the terracotta slabs in the storeroom XLII in the Palace at Zakros (Pelon 1980b: 211-212, plan 12; Platon 1974: 195, fig. 111). The mudbrick platform discovered in space 2.10 of Building BC at Sissi was also set near “a smoothly surfaced limestone base, perhaps used to support a column” (*Sissi II*: 75, fig. 4.7), again suggesting an association between terracotta or mudbrick revetments and the presence of vertical supports.



FIG. 5.2.13 ROOM 6.21 after EXCAVATION, FROM SOUTH-EAST (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

Other terracotta slabs were discovered at 16.42 m asl in the north-eastern part of room 6.21 (figs 5.2.13 & 5.2.14). They are significantly lower than the floor level in the western part of the room (16.64-16.71 m asl), making it possible that they belong to an earlier floor revetment. They are, indeed, at a level which is similar to the floor level in the eastern part of room 6.22 (16.46 m asl), which may correspond to an earlier phase of occupation of the North-East Wing. Floating fragments of terracotta slabs were also discovered in the collapse layer in room 6.21 and especially in its north-western corner (fig. 5.2.13). It is not clear whether these were displaced by the disturbance of terrace wall FE107-FE109 or whether they fell from an installation on the upper floor.

The preparation layer of the floor in the south-eastern part of room 6.21 was reached while excavating the topsoil and large quantities of ceramics (mixed in date, with a significant proportion of Pre- and Protopalatial material) were discovered. Elsewhere in the room, however, the collapse layer produced very few sherds, perhaps because of intensive erosion. It does echo, however, the few floor deposits that were preserved elsewhere in the CCB. Plaster

⁴ The tiles mentioned by J. Shaw for room XVI of the Palace at Malia (in fact room XVII 1 adjoining room XVI 2) are in fact mudbricks and not terracotta slabs (Chapouthier *et al.* 1962: 7; Pelon 1980: 211-212, plan 12). The same goes for those discovered in the central room of house Zβ (Deshayes & Dessenne 1959: 12, pl. III, 2), and in the *Maison de la Cave au Pilier* at Malia (van Effenterre & van Effenterre 1969: 119, pl. LXII 1 and 3). These are strongly reminiscent of the mudbrick installation discovered in space 2.10 of Building BC at Sissi (*Sissi II*: 75, fig. 4.7).

fragments, bone, shell, pumice, obsidian and terracotta plaques were sampled, as well as four lithic tools (15-06-1072-OB001-002, 15-06-1086-OB002-003) and a stone vase fragment (15-06-1086-OB001). The preliminary study of the sherd material recovered from the collapse layer in room 6.21 gives a LM IA *terminus ante quem*, with little MM II and some MM III residual material, corroborating the use of the North-East Wing during the early Neopalatial period and its abandonment and collapse during LM IA.



FIG. 5.2.14 ROOM 6.21: (A) PLAN INDICATING THE FLOOR REVETMENT (©EBSA; E. ZOGRAFOU) AND (B) VIEW OF THE TERRACOTTA SLABS IN THE NORTHERN PART OF THE ROOM (FROM SOUTH-EAST) (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

1.5. Room 6.20

Room 6.20, measuring only 1.10 by 1.90 m, is bordered by walls FE107 (west), FE108 (south) and FE104 (east). It opens wide to room 6.21 to the north (1.50 m), from which it can be accessed. Towards the south, it provides access to room 6.19 via a narrow doorway, 0.70 m wide, between the rubble partition wall FE108 and the sturdy terrace wall FE107-FE109 (fig. 5.2.5). While cleaning the northern extremity of wall FE104 separating rooms 6.20 and 6.18, three conical cups (15-06-1056-OB001 to OB003) were discovered together with some shell and bone (fig. 5.2.15). The cups were found upside down and on their sides, caught between the rubble. They clearly seem to have been placed here intentionally, perhaps as a foundation deposit associated with the construction of wall FE104. Such a practice is not uncommon at Sissi (e.g. *Sissi III*: 81, fig. 4.19).

Beneath a layer of dark topsoil – the same as elsewhere in the North-East Wing – excavation removed a layer of collapse before reaching the floor level in room 6.20. Because of disturbance by carob tree roots, only patches of the stamped earth floor are preserved at heights varying between 16.64 and 16.74 m asl. In the south-eastern and north-western corners of the room the preparation layer consisting of small stones (in average 0.05 by 0.10 m to 0.10 by 0.10 m) was reached immediately below topsoil while in the north-eastern corner, the protruding bedrock served as floor level (fig. 5.2.16).

The collapse layer consists of a reddish-brown semi-soft to semi-hard soil contaminated by decomposed carob tree roots. The layer included six clay cups (15-06-1044-OB001; 15-06-1048-OB001-004; 15-06-1055-OB001), a clay loomweight (15-06-1044-OB002), two lithic tools (15-06-1048-OB005; 15-06-1058-OB001), a stone lid (15-06-1053-OB001) and a stone bead (15-06-1053-OB002) (some illustrated in fig. 5.2.20 below). There were also many wall plaster fragments some of which had traces of blue paint. Mudbrick debris comprised shapeless and unburnt fragments. These were especially found in the north-western corner of the room. Preliminary study of the ceramic material (mostly small and eroded sherds) stressed the presence of LM I material – LM IA mostly – with a good representation of MM III.

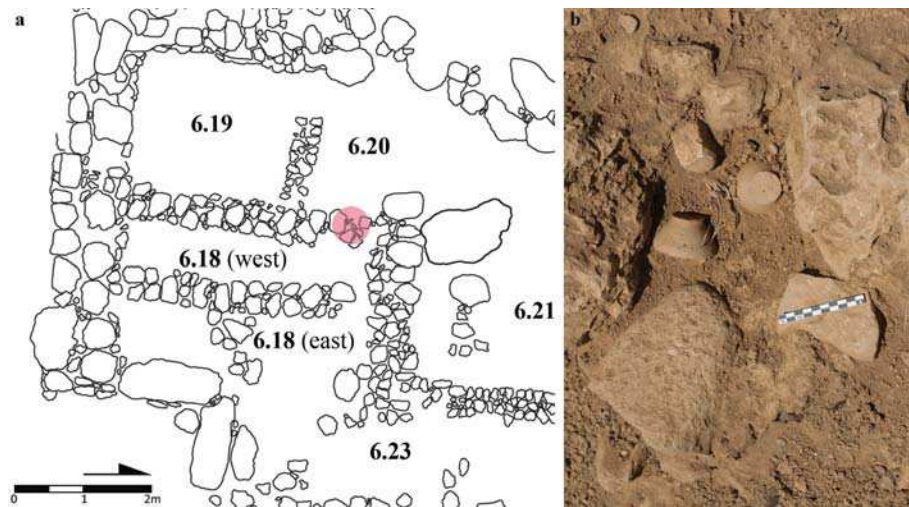


FIG. 5.2.15 POSSIBLE FOUNDATION DEPOSIT IN THE NORTHERN PART OF WALL FE104: (A) LOCATION (PINK DOT) (©EBSA; AFTER A PRELIMINARY PLAN DRAWN BY M. DEVOLDER & N. KRESS) AND (B) VIEW LOOKING DOWN (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)



FIG. 5.2.16 ROOM 6.20 AFTER EXCAVATION, FROM NORTH (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

1.6. Room 6.19

Room 6.19, measuring 2.40 by 2 m, is bordered by walls F48 (south), FE107-109 (west), FE108 (north) and FE104 (east) (fig. 5.2.4). It is situated in the south-eastern corner of the North-East Wing and could be accessed from the north via a narrow, 0.70 m wide, passage from room 6.20 (fig. 5.2.17). Its floor is made of stamped earth (16.69 m asl). The excavation yielded plenty of wall plaster fragments, close enough to the floor to suggest that the walls of the ground floor were coated rather than those of the upper floor (fig. 5.2.18). Again quite large chunks could be collected which are being consolidated for the moment.

Both rooms 6.19 and 6.20 have a collapse layer of reddish-brown semi-soft to semi-hard earth. The texture

and colour, however, change closer to the bedrock that was incorporated in the terrace wall when it becomes harder and more yellowish. As suggested earlier for space 6.18, the reddish-brown layer probably derives from decomposed mudbricks and not from a fire destruction. The quantities of charcoal sampled in room 6.19 rather seem to have been produced by root decomposition, which here too contaminated the floor deposit. On the stamped earth floor were found three conical cups (15-06-1047-OB003, OB005-006), four lithic tools (15-06-1041-OB001; 15-06-1047-OB002 and OB007; 15-06-1067-OB001) (fig. 5.2.20), an obsidian flake (15-06-1047-OB001) and an obsidian blade (15-06-1047-OB004). Bone, shell and pumice were also sampled, but in general the room contained little else and room 6.19 was probably already empty when its walls collapsed.



FIG. 5.2.17 ROOM 6.19 AFTER EXCAVATION, FROM WEST (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)



FIG. 5.2.18 FALLEN PLASTER IN THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER OF ROOM 6.19: (A) ON DISCOVERY (FROM NORTH-EAST), (B) DURING EXCAVATION (FROM EAST), (C) DURING CONSERVATION (FROM SOUTH), AND (D) FROM SOUTH-EAST (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

1.7. Room 6.22

Room 6.22, which occupies the north-western corner of the North Wing, measures 1.90 by at least 3 m and is bound by walls FE107-FE109 (west), FE110 (north), FE112 (east) and FE111 (south) (figs 5.2.4 & 5.2.19). The floor seems to be installed at two different levels: a higher level to the west which has a *tarazza* floor⁵, and a lower level to the east which is in stamped earth. They are separated by a line of small stones (FE113). In the south-eastern part of the room, an earlier, rubble wall FE116, is visible. As mentioned, the western, higher part of room 6.22 was partly excavated together with room 6.21. Remains of the dark topsoil layer mixed with stones of medium to large size, fallen from terrace wall FE107-FE109, were removed before the collapse layer was reached. This was a semi-hard, brown to light brown layer with small stones (in average 0.10 by 0.15 m to 0.15 by 0.20 m). The collapse layer was hiding a *tarazza* floor level (at 16.65-16.66 m asl) which stops at a line of small stones (FE113, 0.05 by 0.05 m, to 0.05 by 0.10 m to 0.10 by 0.15 m) which separates the higher, western, from the lower, eastern part of the room. Interestingly, a sizeable stone slab appears at the southern end of wall FE113, and forms the eastern limit of wall FE111. The upper face of this slab shows a depression. It may have been used as some kind of mortar in association with lithic tools, several of which were found on or near the *tarazza* floor as well as on the lower floor in the eastern part of the room. In the northern part of room 6.22, a stretch of *tarazza* floor was also found higher up, bordered to the south by a line of small stones (0.05 by 0.05 m) (FE115), the function of which remains unclear. In the western part of room 6.22, we found five lithic tools (15-06-1068-OB001-005), an obsidian flake (15-06-1089-OB001), a clay loomweight (15-06-1089-OB002), and fragments of terracotta plaques similar to those found in room 6.21 and outside to the north of wall FE 110. We also sampled bone, shell and plaster as well as several, small coloured stones that were rather unusual.

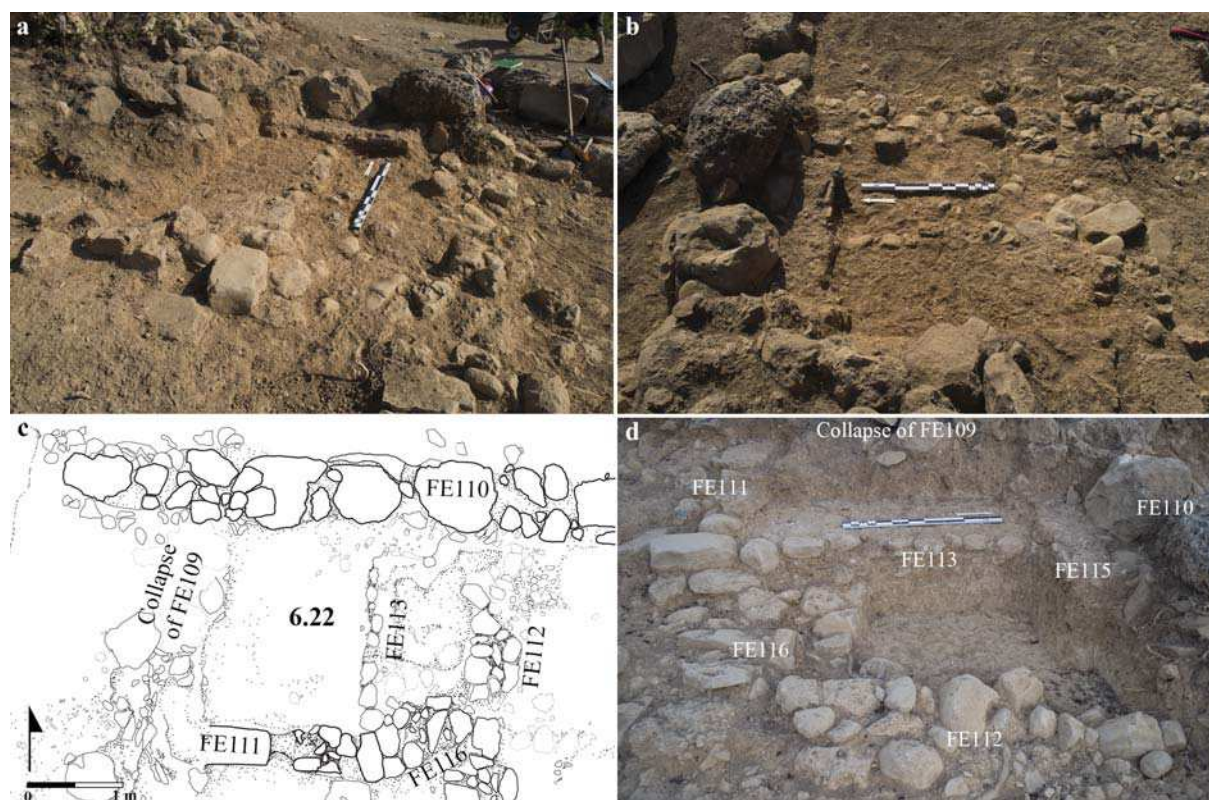


FIG. 5.2.19 ROOM 6.22 WITH A VIEW (A) FROM THE SOUTH AND (B) FROM THE WEST; (C) PLAN AND (D) VIEW FROM THE EAST (©EBSA; PLAN E. ZOGRFOU; PHOTOS M. DEVOLDER)

⁵ *Tarazza* is a type of floor revetment, which consists of a mixture of lime and pebbles (Shaw 2009: 149-150).

Because of erosion, the collapse layer in the eastern, lower part of room 6.22 is at lower level than that in the western part of the room (top at 16.50 m asl). Within a narrow space of 0.85 by 1.17 m, the excavated layer was a semi-hard to hard, brown to light-brown soil with small stones (0.15 by 0.10 m; 0.15 by 0.20 m). No continuation of the *tarazza* floor was found east of the stone line FE113, nor did we find traces of it in the north-eastern part of room 6.22. The east part of room 6.22 has a floor in stamped earth (16.27 m asl). On it, we found a large concentration of sherds, together with four lithic tools (15-06-1073-OB002 to OB005) and again some small coloured stones. It is tempting to see room 6.22 as a space that involved the use of lithic tools and of the installation at the southern end of wall FE113.

Preliminary study of the material from both parts of room 6.22 gives a *terminus post quem* of LM IA with many sherds that are rather MM III. These dates are consistent with the observations made elsewhere in the CCB. It also suggests that, despite a somewhat complicated architectural development which needs further analysis, the floor levels reached in the eastern and western parts of this room belong to a single occupation phase.



FIG. 5.2.20 SELECTION OF OBJECTS FROM THE NORTH-EAST WING OF THE CCB: STONE LID (15-06-1053-OB001) (1:1), STONE BEAD (15-06-1053-OB002) (1:1), AND CONICAL CUPS (15-06-1047-OB005 AND OB003, AND 15-06-1056-OB002 AND OB003) (1:2) (©EBSA; C. PAPANIKOLOPOULOS)

1.8. General comments on the North-East Wing of the CCB

The structural connexion of the North-East Wing with the façade facing the Central Court (F59, F58 and FE217) via wall F48 seems to indicate an architectural unity of at least the Northern and Western Wings of the CCB. Although badly eroded and with few finds, the plan and the remaining architectural features of the North-East Wing suggest quite a sophisticated architecture: there must have been an at least two-storied structure, which may have been connected to the ground floor of the North-West Wing via a staircase (6.18). It also comprised a large, paved corridor (6.23), spaces with *tarazza* floors (6.22), intermediary supports (6.21), and several rooms must have been plastered (6.19, 6.20, 6.21). The presence of much MM III material may suggest that the North-East Wing of the building was already in use during this phase but further exploration is necessary to define the construction date of the edifice, and to refine its architectural phasing.

The excavation of rooms 6.18 to 6.23 has shown that the walls of the area immediately north of the court collapsed during the LM IA phase. Although erosion could in part be responsible for the little material found on the floors (fig. 5.2.20), it is more likely that the rooms were already mostly empty when the wall collapse occurred, either because this part of the CCB had few non-perishable items in them at all or because it had been emptied before the walls collapsed.

2. The court

2.1. The exploration of the court

Already at the end of the 2011 excavation campaign, S. Jusseret had recognised the existence of a court and identified its eastern (F21), northern (F48-F51) and western (F59) limits (*Sissi III*: 142-149). Soundings along bench F51 (with hollows) and the façade wall F21 had already shown that the court was covered with a pebble floor, but its extent remained unknown. When excavation resumed in this area of the court in 2015 and continued in 2016, its goal was to reach the floor level of the entire court. We wanted to know its size, limits and taphonomy.

In 2015, we started the exploration of the northern part of the court, labelled space 6.8. In the north-western corner, a 0.51 to 0.69 m-thick deposit had been left against the sandstone façade F59 of which the top of two blocks had been found in 2011 (*Sissi III*: 146-147, figs 6.15 & 6.16). To direct and facilitate exploration, the area was subdivided in spaces 6.8A and 6.8B, west and east of a stratigraphic baulk (**fig. 5.2.21**). Excavation in 2016 then continued south – in what later proved to be the central part of the court. Then, the area was artificially subdivided into smaller squares (spaces 6.8C, D, E, F, G and H) on the basis of the terrain and the presence of various features (**fig. 5.2.21**). Once the topsoil was removed, the sediments that had accumulated on the court were excavated following a grid of 35 squares, each measuring 2 by 2 m. This facilitated the systematic sampling of material for environmental studies and the recognition of anomalies (**fig. 5.2.21**). The explored area of the court in 2015 and 2016 is bounded to the south by a line formed by the southern ends of walls FE217 and F21, to the west and east of the court, respectively. The southern part of the court is investigated by O. Mouthuy as Zone 15 (see chapter 5.6).

2.2. The court surface

The floor of the court consists of *tarazza* and clearly runs up to the façade walls of the surrounding buildings on the western (walls F59 & FE217), northern (bench F51 & wall F48) and eastern (wall F21) sides. The pebbles of the *tarazza* generally measure 0.01-0.02 m, except along wall F21 where they are larger, up to 0.04 m. It is also in this eastern area that the surface of the court consists of a series of small limestone slabs (see **fig. 5.2.31** below). It is not clear whether this change was caused by necessity, with a relaying being imposed in this area because of flooding, or whether the installation of a floor for such a large area was only possible in the course of several distinct building episodes, resulting in different materials and techniques. It may, of course, also indicate a special function for the area along the eastern façade of the court. The surface level of the court markedly rises towards the north and west, from 16.53 to 16.71 m asl. This gentle slope must have caused water to run off towards the north-east and south, that is towards the (at present seemingly blocked) doorway towards paved space 6.12 and towards the southern part of the court, where the surface is quite badly preserved (see chapter 5.6 and *Sissi III*: fig. 6.14). More to the north, however, a fine coating of white plaster is preserved on top of the *tarazza* in a few discrete places (**fig. 5.2.23**). This is especially the case in the western and northern parts of the court where the court surface was protected by the collapse of walls FE121, FE122 and FE123. The shiny white court must have been an impressive sight in Minoan times.

5.2. The North-East Wing and the Court of the Court-Centred Building at Sissi

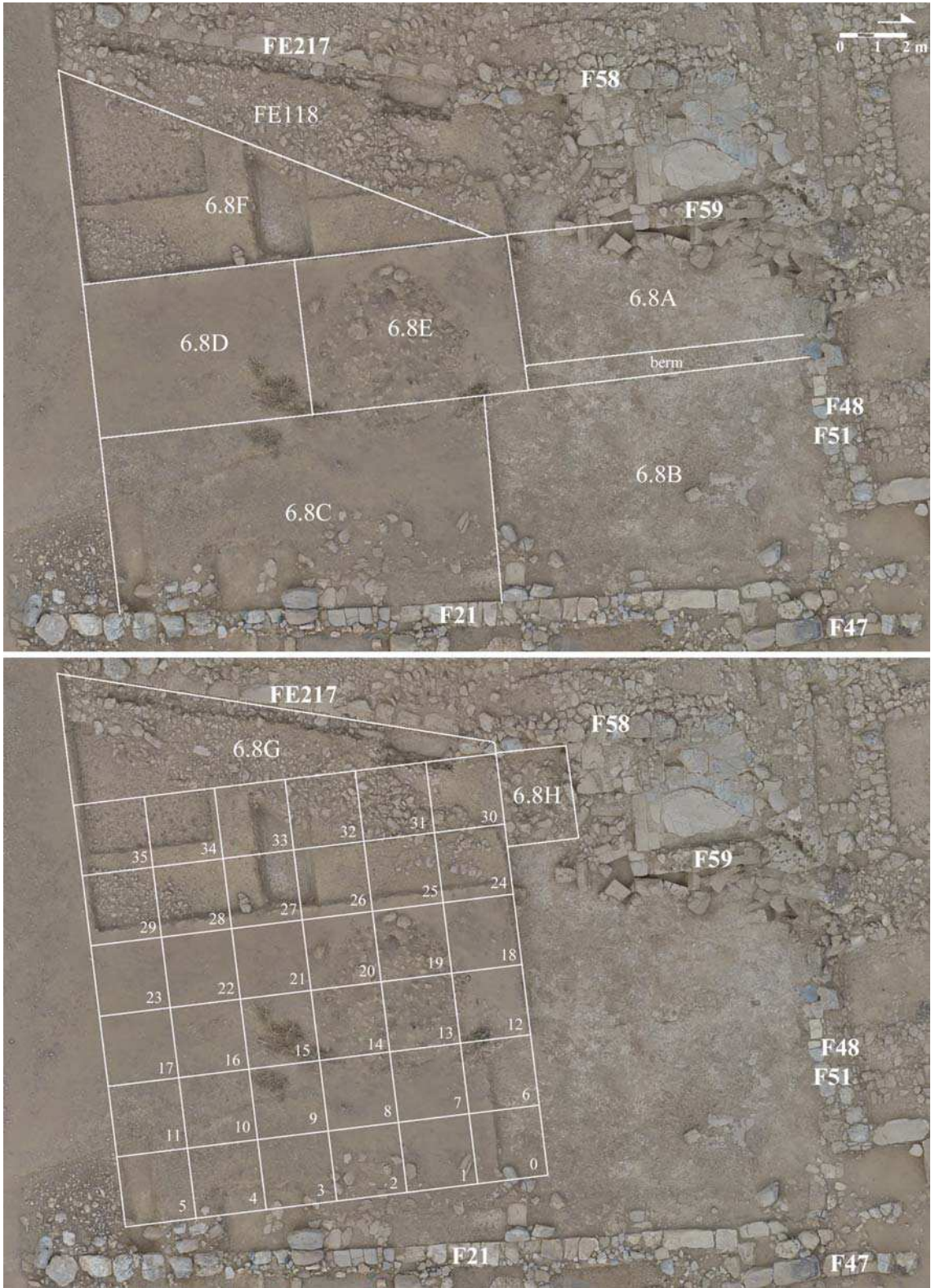


FIG. 5.2.21 EXCAVATION GRID IN THE NORTH AND CENTRAL PARTS OF THE COURT (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER AFTER AN AERIAL PICTURE BY N. KRESS AT THE END OF THE 2015 CAMPAIGN)



FIG. 5.2.22 TARAZZA COURT (A) FROM EAST, (B) FROM SOUTH-EAST AND (C) FROM SOUTH-WEST (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)



FIG. 5.2.23 DETAILED VIEWS OF THE PEBBLE AND PLASTER SURFACE OF THE COURT: THE FINE COAT OF WHITE PLASTER IS CLEARLY VISIBLE ON TOP OF THE TARAZZA (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

In places where the court surface was damaged through erosion, sherds belonging to the preparation layer were collected (squares 17, 23, 29 and 35 in **fig. 5.2.21**). These are small and eroded and most are Protopalatial. A test was made through the preparation layer down to the bedrock (here at 16.48 m asl) in grid square 35. Preliminary study of the much eroded ceramic material collected below the *tarazza* floor gives a MM I date but further study and more tests are needed to define a date for the installation of the *tarazza* court, and to determine whether it already existed during the Protopalatial period or whether the open area and surrounding walls exclusively belong to a single, comprehensive Neopalatial building program.

Beneath the preserved *tarazza* in the north-western part of the court and towards the east, along wall F21, we came upon an earlier level of plaster, which included tiny, angular green and bluish stones as well as sherds (**fig. 5.2.24**). It is for the moment not clear whether this level indeed represents an earlier phase during which the entire surface (or part) of the court already carried a plaster floor of a different composition. In any case, in the above-mentioned test in square 35, this early coating was not found.

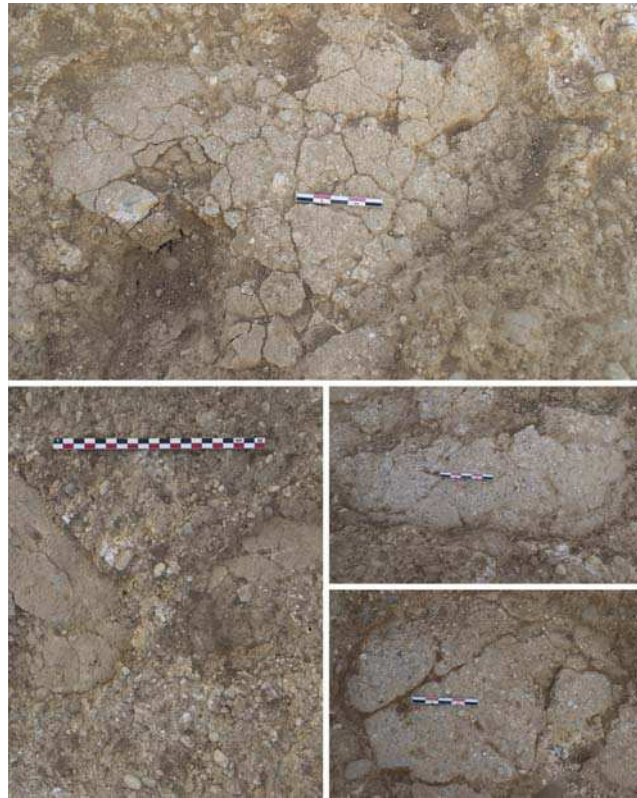


FIG. 5.2.24 REMAINS OF AN EARLIER LEVEL OF PLASTER BENEATH THE *TARAZZA* OF THE COURT (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

In the north-central part of the court, traces of a more pinkish clay coating with impressions of vegetal fibres seems to fill a few irregularities within the *tarazza* and this may indicate discrete attempts to patch up the court surface. A similar action is perhaps also illustrated by the presence in several patches of what seems simply to be stamped earth. It is, however, difficult to distinguish such repairs from simple accumulations of fine sediments on the court surface (see below where it is described as process 3). It is very likely in fact that, while the court was in use, sediments accumulated into depressions and these were, through normal surface circulation, crammed into them.

2.3. The succession of events and processes in the court

Detailed excavation of the deposits covering the court allowed the recognition of a series of events and processes and these are summarised in **table 5.2.1** and illustrated by **fig. 5.2.25**.

The first process that marks the abandonment of the open area is the collapse of the west and north-west façades on the surface of the court (process 1). Some ashlar sandstone blocks directly fell on the *tarazza* floor of the court while others only fell when a layer of fine sediments had already started to accumulate on the court surface described as process 3. This sedimentation process 3 obviously was a slow one, accompanying the progressive collapse of the west façade on the court. Before the entire surface of the court had been covered by this sedimentation layer, however, the east façade wall F21 collapsed, falling westwards, directly on the eastern part of the court surface (FE119) (event 2). Once a 0.15 to 0.20 m-thick layer of fine sediments had accumulated on the court surface, also covering FE119, blocks from the lower courses of the southern part of wall F21 (wall FE120) collapsed on top of the sediments (event 4). At a later stage, the area taken up by the court – which was by then entirely covered with sediments –, was cleared of stones and other residual building material to install an open space (event 5). Stones of various shapes and sizes were thrown onto a 20 m-long heap (FE118), starting at the very north from wall F48-F51 up to the southern end of wall FE217. This stone heap or pile FE118 may extend even further south in the area that remained unexcavated at the end of the 2016 campaign (see chapters 5.4 and 5.5). This clearing operation

probably happened prior to the reuse of the open area (process 6), represented by later ceramic material and a stone accumulation (FE117) which were found on top of the fine sediment layer (process 3) that covered the original court. This later reuse – which for the moment is ill-defined – was followed by a process of slow erosion of stone heap FE118 (process 7), which resulted in a 0.10 to 0.15 m-thick layer of coarse sediments deposited over the entire surface of the open area. The top of this layer was then used for various activities – including agricultural and military ones (*Sissi II*: 24-25; 163) – which caused further clearing operations and included the creation of another, circular pile of stones (FE100) (process 8).

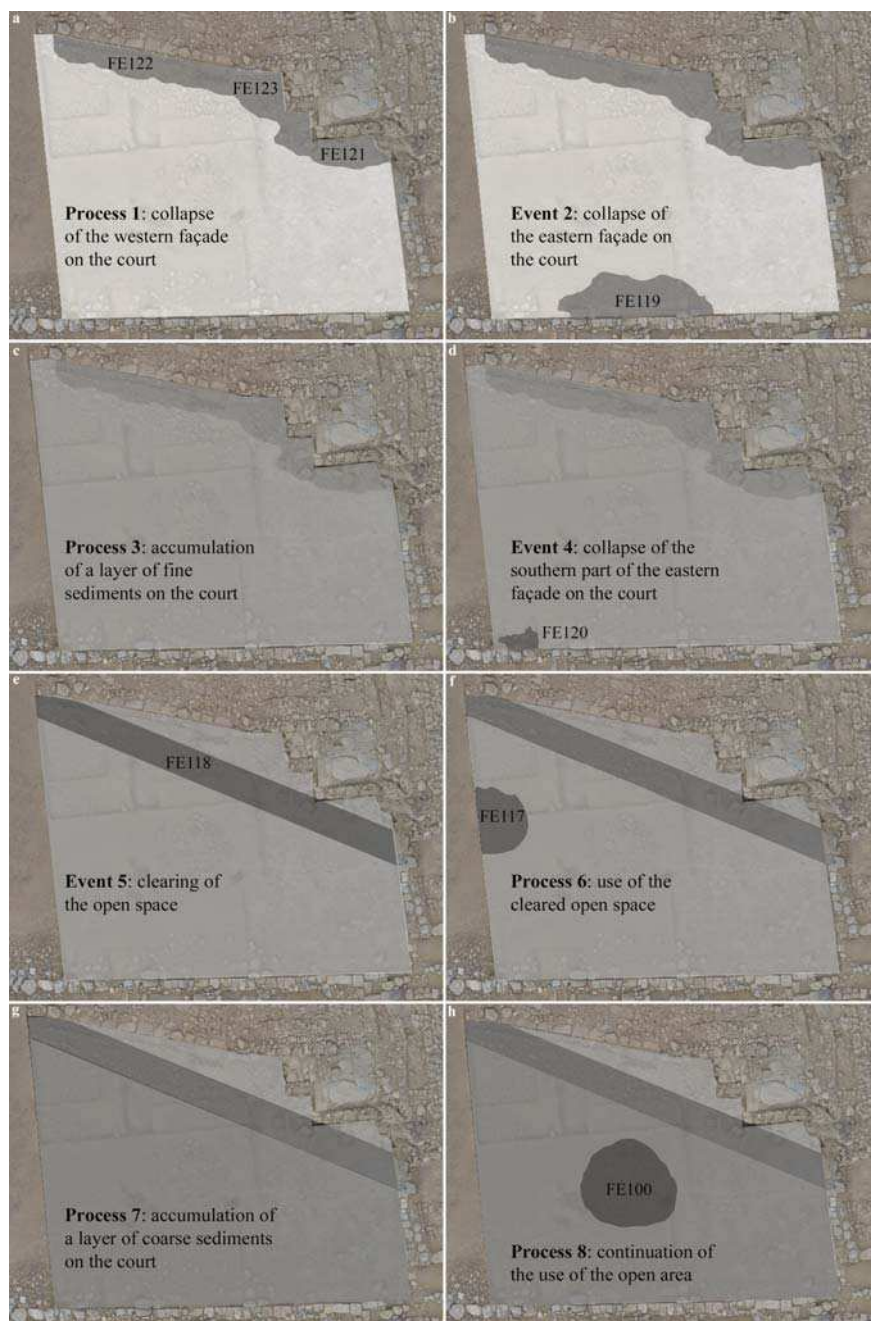


FIG. 5.2.25 SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF THE SUCCESSION OF EVENTS AND PROCESSES IN THE COURT (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

Collapse on the court of the north and west façades F59, F48 and FE217 (FE121, FE122 and FE123) (fig. 5.2.25a)	Process 1
Collapse on the court of the east façade F21 (FE119) (fig. 5.2.25b)	Event 2
Accumulation of a layer of fine sediments on the court surface (fig. 5.2.25c)	Process 3
Collapse of wall FE120 along wall F21 (south part) (fig. 5.2.25d)	Event 4
Clearing of open area and creation of stone heap FE118 (fig. 5.2.25e)	Event 5
Use of cleared open area (including accumulation of stones FE117) (fig. 5.2.25f)	Process 6
Erosion and accumulation of a layer of coarse sediments on top of the layer of fine sediments in the court (fig. 5.2.25g)	Process 7
Continuation of the use of open area (including the creation of stone pile FE110) (fig. 5.2.25h)	Process 8

TAB. 5.2.1 SUGGESTED SUCCESSION OF EVENTS AND PROCESSES IN THE COURT OF THE CCB

2.4. The collapse of the west façade on the court (process 1, fig. 5.2.25a)

The stone tumble (FE121, FE122 and FE123) found along the west façade of the court (F59, F48 and FE217) (*i.e.* the east façade of what is probably the West Wing) testifies to the first of a series of processes and events related to the progressive abandonment of the court (**figs 5.2.25a & 5.2.26**).



FIG. 5.2.26 CONCENTRATIONS OF STONE TUMBLE FE121, FE122 AND FE123 ON THE COURT ALONG ITS WEST FAÇADE F59, F48 AND FE217 (A) FROM NORTH, (B) FROM NORTH-EAST, (C) FROM SOUTH-EAST (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

The first concentration of tumble (FE121) comprises 14 cut sandstone blocks and much limestone rubble of various sizes (0.05 by 0.05 m; 0.20 by 0.25 m; 0.30 by 0.35 m). These stones had obviously fallen from walls F48 and F59 in the north-western corner of the court (**figs 5.2.4, 5.2.26 & 5.2.27**). One of the ashlar blocks (n° 5 on **fig. 5.2.27**) was found directly on the court surface while all others were embedded in the hard yellowish-brown sedimentation layer on the court (process 3). This then indicates that most of the collapse took place when some sediments had already accumulated on the court, which therefore suggests a period of abandonment for this part of the building. Among the tumble were found many fragments of wall plaster as well as pieces of pumice and

tarazza, tiny quantities of charcoal and mudbrick, and 11 lithic tools (15-06-1016-OB001, OB003, and OB005 to OB007; 15-06-1079-OB001 to OB003; 15-06-1092-OB001 to OB003). Preliminary study of the pottery identified material ranging in date between Neopalatial and Postminoan. This mixture can partly be explained by the long occupation of the area, involving successive episodes of clearing, collapse and reoccupation.

The detailed observation of the blocks in the stone tumble allows for a tentative reconstruction of part of façade wall F59 facing the north-west corner of the court. This wall has a lower course, *ca.* 0.40 m high, made of ironstone blocks⁶. This supported a 0.40 to 0.42 m-high course of cut sandstone blocks, part of which is preserved. Sandstone blocks 1, 2 and 3 are in position in the northern part of the wall. Blocks 2 and 3 are set on a first course of ironstone, while small block 1 rests on small rubble and is wedged in between the protruding bedrock that limits the wall to the north. This also suggests that this façade was built from south to north, with block 1 being added on top of rubble in order to fill the remaining space between block 2 and the bedrock. Block 4 is caught in the sediment layer that accumulated on the court and the rubble that is now visible where this block once stood on top of the ironstone course may have formed the back packing of wall F59 before block 4 fell eastwards. Blocks 1 to 4 hence formed the second course of the façade. Sandstone blocks 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, found in front of wall F59, initially formed the third, 0.16-0.20 m-high course of wall F59 (**fig. 5.2.27**, **table 5.2.2**).

Block	Length	Width	Height	Suggested provenance
1	0.24	0.285	0.28	Wall F59, in position
2	1.00	0.225/0.33/0.43	0.42	Wall F59, in position
3	0.81	0.57	0.41	Wall F59, in position
4	0.77	0.18/0.20/0.34	0.40	Wall F59, fallen in sediment layer
5	0.67	0.44	0.18	Wall F59, fallen on court surface
6	0.47	0.30	0.195	Wall F59, fallen in sediment layer
7	0.69	0.46	0.16	Wall F59, fallen in sediment layer
8	0.63	0.42	0.16	Wall F59, fallen in sediment layer
9	0.46	0.31	0.15	Wall F59, fallen in sediment layer
10	0.50	0.31	0.20	Wall F48, fallen in sediment layer
11	0.46	0.27	0.15	Wall F48, fallen in sediment layer
12	0.54	0.34	0.25	Wall F48, fallen in sediment layer
13	0.42	0.14/0.28	0.12	Wall F48, fallen in sediment layer
14	0.61	0.29	0.18	Wall F48, fallen in sediment layer

TAB. 5.2.2 DIMENSIONS (IN M) AND SUGGESTED PROVENANCE OF SANDSTONE BLOCKS FALLEN IN THE COURT FROM WALLS F48 AND F59

Sandstone blocks 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 were found rather high in the tumble and they seem to have fallen from wall F48 (**fig. 5.2.27**, **table 5.2.2**). The higher elevation of wall F59, above its third course (min. height 17.75 m asl), may well have been built differently, probably using simple limestone rubble. Plenty of rubble was indeed found in the façade collapse and it is likely that the stone heap FE118 (event 5) included quite some rubble that came from the surrounding walls. Several large irregular limestone blocks were also found in this area, suggesting wall F48 was built in a quite heterogeneous masonry. The use of mudbricks in these walls cannot be excluded either. Very little mudbrick debris was found here, but this may be explained by the fact that the building was not destroyed by fire. Another hypothesis may be that a large window once existed in façade wall F59 and room 6.17 behind it. None of the sandstone blocks, however, preserves traces of mortise holes which one would expect if a window with a wooden frame had existed here or if wooden beams strengthened the walls as is often the case in Neopalatial architecture (Tsakanika-Theohari 2009).

⁶ Ironstone is in fact a very hard, grey-blue limestone, most likely extracted locally. It is extensively used at Malia, where it is known as *sidheropetra*, cf. Devolder 2016: 142; Dimou *et al.* 2000: 438-439 and 448-449.



FIG. 5.2.27 COLLAPSED SANDSTONE BLOCKS AT THE FOOT OF WALL F59 IN THE NORTH-WESTERN CORNER OF THE COURT, FROM NORTH-EAST. TRACES OF PLASTER COATING ARE VISIBLE ON BLOCK 8 AND THE IRONSTONE LOWER COURSE (IN WHITE OVALS) (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

When numerous plaster fragments were found amongst the tumble, we started to look closer at the surface of the ashlar blocks, to see whether the façade may initially have been plastered. Faint remains of plaster were indeed found on one of the ironstone blocks of the lower course, as well as on the edge of one of the large surfaces of block 8 (fig. 5.2.27). The presence of a plaster coat on what seems to have been the upper surface of this block of the third course of wall F59 may indicate the existence of an opening above it – perhaps the window we suggested? Another possibility would be that the wall showed a setback, making part the upper face of block 8 visible. The traces of plaster on one of the ironstone blocks of the lower course could also indicate that either only this course or the entire façade was once plastered⁷.



FIG. 5.2.28 TUMBLE FE123 OF STEPS FE226 ON TOP OF THE TARAZZA COURT, FROM SOUTH-EAST (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

⁷It is worth mentioning that the sandstone West Façade of the Palace at Malia and the Pillar Crypt walls and pillars in the same building were probably once coated with plaster, Chapouthier & Charbonneaux 1928: 27-28, pl. IV, XVII; Charbonneaux 1928: 353-354, 357, 362; Pelon 1980b: 163, 165, pl. 8.1.

The tumble FE123 on the court in grid square 6.8H represents the collapse of a series of steps FE226 and of terrace wall F58 (see **fig. 5.2.21**, top at 17.10 m asl). It consists of limestone and conglomerate rubble and some boulders (0.25 to 0.40 m) which cover several fallen sandstone ashlars. Some of these cut sandstone blocks rest directly on the court level (16.70 m asl) (**fig. 5.2.28**), suggesting that the sandstone steps FE226 fell before the limestone and conglomerate terrace wall F58 collapsed. These stones were within a matrix of brown to light reddish-brown soil with small stones (0.05 m) and gravel (0.015 to 0.02 cm), mudbrick debris, *tarazza* and plaster fragments, pumice, charcoal, burnt clay and some possible *domatochoma*⁸. The tumble also included four lithic tools (16-06-1231-OB001-002; 16-06-1244-OB001-002), as well as a number of rolled and eroded sherds. The diagnostic ones are mainly Protopalatial but some Postminoan fragments could also be identified.

A small area (ca. 1.5 by 2 m) between stone tumble FE123, wall F58 and steps FE226 was explored separately. It was identified starting at an altitude of 17.00 m asl, and was filled with a light yellowish-brown soil with few stones (0.05 to 0.20 m) and gravel (0.03 m) (with proportion soil, stones and gravel being 75/10/15). It also comprised mudbrick debris, charcoal, pumice and plaster, as was also the case in the tumble found elsewhere. At the bottom of this layer (16.83 m asl), we reached the top of a fine, very yellow and pure layer of sediment covering the court (16.70 m asl). This yellow layer was not excavated in 2016.



FIG. 5.2.29 TUMBLE FE122 ON THE COURT ALONG FAÇADE WALL FE217, FROM SOUTH-EAST (A-B, D-E) AND NORTH (C) (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

⁸ *Domatochoma* is a grey greenish clay used to waterproof roofs (Lenuzza 2013: 82).

Tumble FE122 forms the collapse of wall FE217 as found on the court (**fig. 5.2.29**, grid square 6.8G on **fig. 5.2.21**). As is the case for tumble FE121 further north, the blocks were caught in the layer of sediment, which formed on top of the court. Most, however, seem to have fallen directly on the *tarazza* surface of the court. The matrix of brown to light brown hard to very hard soil and small stones (0.05 by 0.05 m; 0.05 by 0.10 m) sitting on the court (16.67 m asl) also comprised several cut sandstone blocks (0.20 by 0.30 m; 0.25 by 0.45 m; 0.30 by 0.65 m) and small to medium-sized limestone rubble (0.10 by 0.15 m; 0.20 by 0.30 m). All this had fallen from wall FE217, which is also a façade with a first course of ironstone blocks and a second course of cut sandstone blocks with rubble and clay backing. Each course is more or less 0.40 m high. Most of the ashlar blocks of the south-central part of this façade had fallen on the court but the rubble and clay backing is preserved on top of the first course. Further study is necessary to determine whether some of the sandstone tumble of FE122 could have formed a third course of the façade wall FE217, similar to F59. The quantities of mudbrick debris found along wall FE217, especially to the north, suggests that this material formed the upper structure of the façade. Some plaster is still present in the joints but also partly on the surface of one of the ironstone blocks of the first course as well as beneath a small slab supporting such a block (**fig. 5.2.30**). As suggested for wall F59, this façade too may once have been entirely coated with plaster. Nevertheless, the tumble only comprised a few plaster fragments besides mudbrick debris, pumice, *tarazza* fragments, and a lithic tool (16-06-1229-OB001).

Apart from the southern part of the tumble for which preliminary ceramic study gave especially MM II-MM III and LM I dates, consistent with the material found elsewhere on the court, the material retrieved from tumble FE122 was more mixed, also comprising Postminoan sherds. Perhaps the tumble FE122 remained exposed and hence received later material until it was sealed by the creation of heap FE118 during event 5 along the western side of the court. Three lithic tools were found in the sediments associated to tumble FE122 (16-06-1235-OB001 and OB002; 16-06-1240-OB001), together with mudbrick debris, *tarazza* fragments and pumice. Beneath tumble FE122, the court surface was excellently preserved (16.69-16.71 m asl) and the fine coat of white plaster covering the *tarazza* was clearly visible, especially along façade wall FE217. In contrast, further to the east, the floor was damaged by water run-off. This is especially the case in the central part of the court, where the preparation level of the court became visible once the sediment layer had been removed.

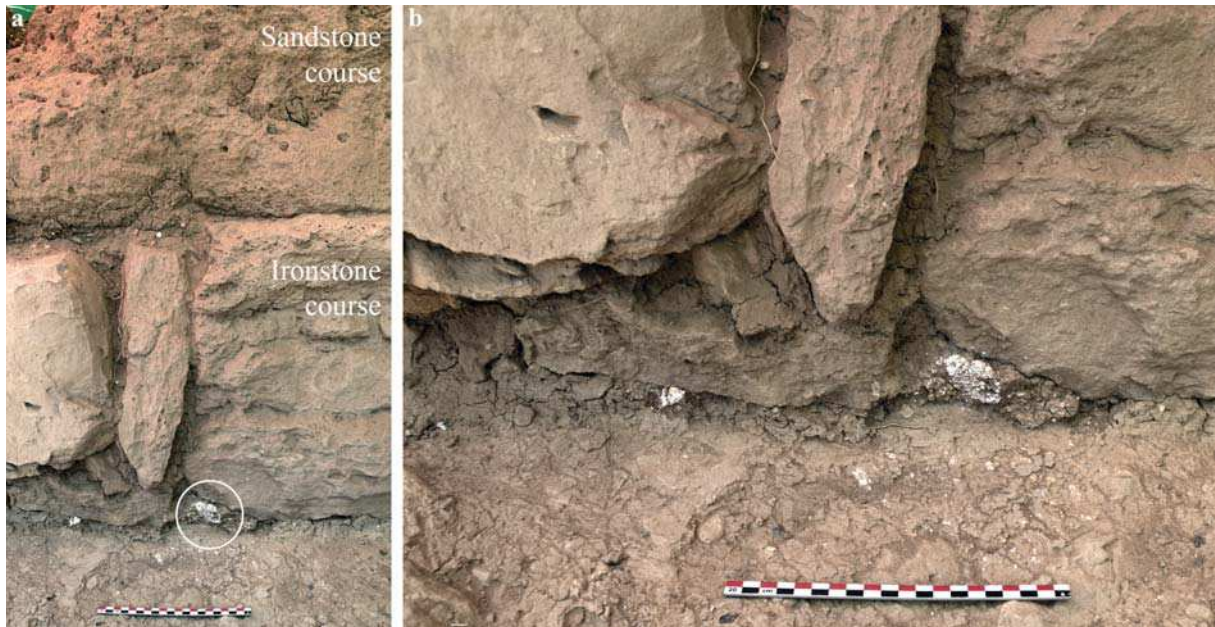


FIG. 5.2.30 REMAINS OF PLASTER COATING AT THE FOOT OF FAÇADE FE217 (A) CLOSE UP, AND (B) DETAIL (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

2.5. The collapse of façade F21 on the east side of the court (event 2, fig. 5.2.25b)

An accumulation of stones (FE119) sits along façade F21, on the east side of the court. Limestone rubble (0.05 to 0.25 m), boulders (0.50 to 0.80 m), cut sandstone fragments and irregular blocks (0.30 to 0.70 m), as well as a few limestone slabs were found fallen on the court (fig. 5.2.31). All these stones were caught in a matrix of brown semi-soft soil also containing gravel (up to 0.02 m) and pebbles (up to 0.04 m) with a proportion soil/gravel/pebbles of 90/5/5. Mudbrick debris is encountered in small quantities and the layer further comprised four lithic tools (16-06-1194-OB001 to OB003; 16-06-1197-OB001) and *tarazza* fragments, some of which may come from the decomposition of the court surface⁹. The rolled and badly eroded sherds found in the soil associated to the stones are preliminarily dated to the LM I and LM III phases (*Sissi III*: 145 and fig. 6.13).

Tumble FE119 is interpreted as representing the collapse of wall F21. This wall is directly connected to the *tarazza* floor of the court but it was reused as the western limit of Building F, east of the court during its LM IIIA2/B reoccupation. Since the tumble fell directly on the court surface and by times even destroyed it (fig. 5.2.31c), the open area cannot yet have been covered with sediment when wall F21 collapsed during LM IIIA2/B¹⁰. It is perhaps interesting to stress that nothing is preserved of façade F21 apart from the limestone levelling course. It was already assumed in 2010 that the – ashlar? – elevation of this wall had disappeared¹¹ and it is tempting to suggest that the blocks were robbed. If this was the case, it is possible that at least part of the material discovered in the tumble concentration FE119 represents material discarded by looters. This hypothesis is perhaps supported by the fact that only a few stones were found in a sounding made in 2011 directly to the west of F21 (fig. 5.2.31a)¹². The dearth of tumble along this façade cannot be explained if wall F21 collapsed to the west and was left untouched.

When the tumble FE119 was removed, we quickly reached the court, which here consisted of stone slabs and *tarazza*. The latter still preserved some of the fine white plaster coating. The *tarazza* in this part of the court uses larger pebbles than elsewhere and we do not know whether this is due to a relaying of the court or simply a coincidence in the construction process.

3. The accumulation of fine sediment on the court (process 3, fig. 5.2.25c)

The surface of the court was found covered by a 0.15-0.20 m-thick layer of compact, light-brown yellowish sandy clay. This layer of fine sediment was excavated both in 2015 and 2016 in artificial units: grid units 6.8A and 6.8B in the northern part of the court, grid unit 6.8G along façade FE217, and 35 additional squares in the southern part of Zone 6 (under grid units 6.8C-F) (fig. 5.2.21). The 2016 organisation in grid squares represents a change of excavation strategy as opposed to 2015 when an almost sterile layer of sediment was encountered in grid units 6.8A and 6.8B. The 2016 division allowed for a more systematic sampling for environmental analysis. The regular grid also helped documenting the accumulation process itself in the different parts of the court.

⁹ Part of this layer was removed during earlier the excavations along wall F21 when the court level was reached (*Sissi II*: 166; *III*: 143-144).

¹⁰ When the southern part of FE119 was explored in 2011, however, S. Jusseret notes that the stones rested “on a *ca.* 10 cm-thick clayey layer containing fine waterborne gravels” (*Sissi III*: 145), so it cannot be excluded that, as is the case for the west façade, after an initial collapse of the upper elevation, the later process was gradual.

¹¹ “Wall F21 is constructed of cut limestone blocks and probably represents a plinth or krepidoma [...]. This plinth may originally have supported a wall in ashlar masonry but nothing is preserved” (*Sissi II*: 166, figs 7.5 a-b).

¹² S. Jusseret, personal communication.

5.2. The North-East Wing and the Court of the Court-Centred Building at Sissi

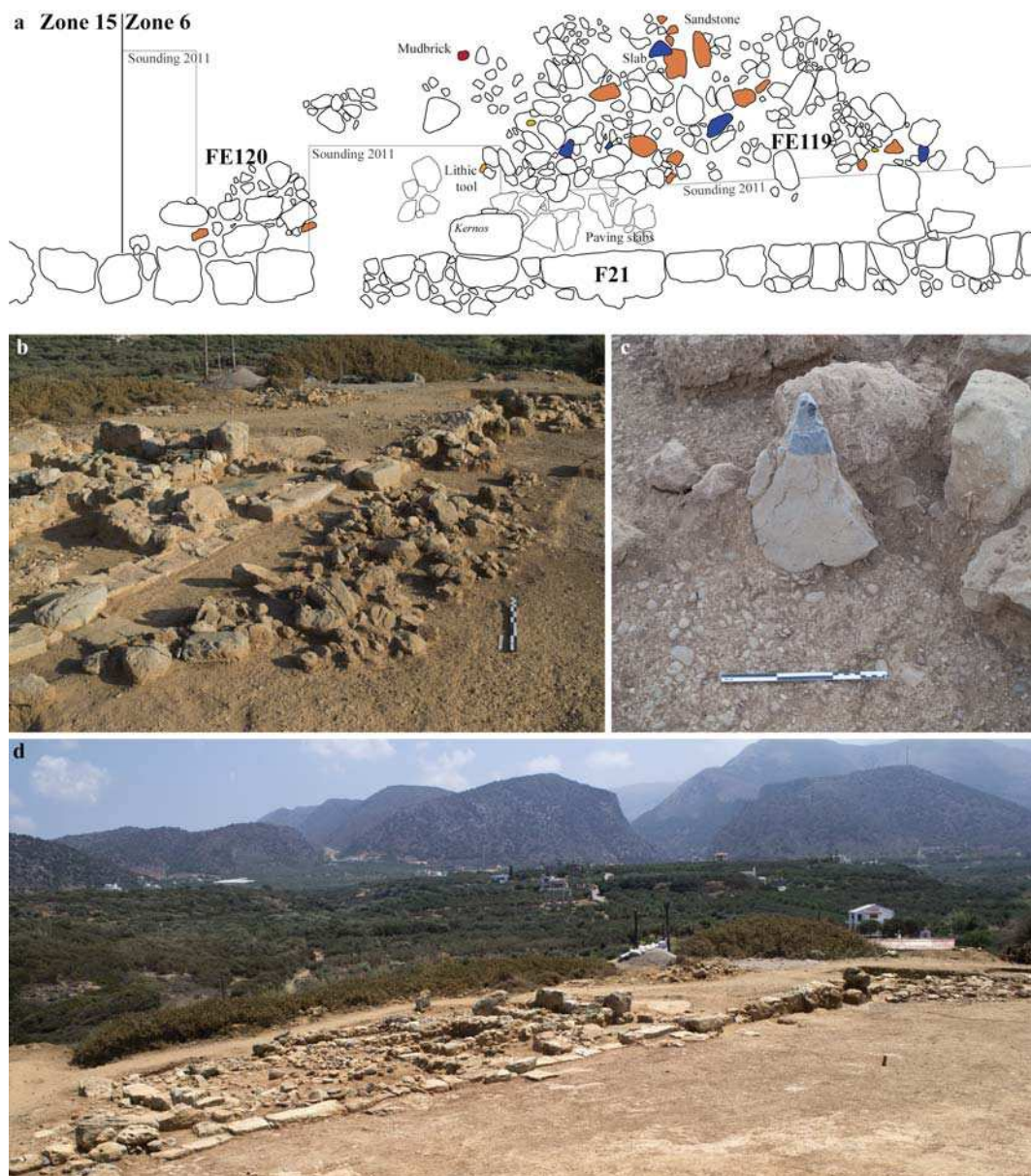


FIG. 5.2.31 FE119: (A) SKETCH INDICATING THE LIMESTONE RUBBLE AND BOULDERS (PLAIN), SLABS (BLUE), SANDSTONE ELEMENTS (ORANGE), LITHIC TOOLS (YELLOW) AND MUDBRICK DEBRIS (RED), (B) GENERAL VIEWS LOOKING SOUTH, (D) LOOKING SOUTH-EAST, AND (C) DETAILED VIEW OF A SLAB WHICH PARTLY DESTROYED THE FLOOR (LOOKING NORTH-EAST) (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

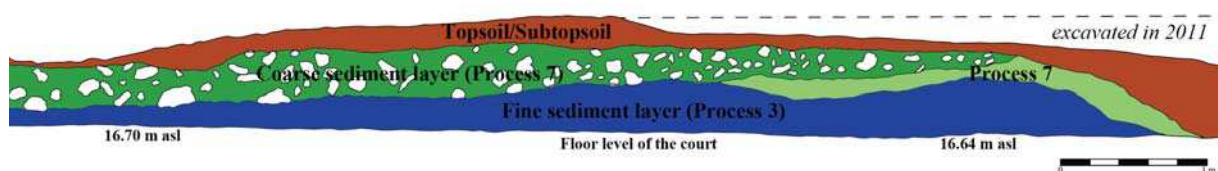


FIG. 5.2.32 SECTION OF STRATIGRAPHIC BAULK BETWEEN GRID UNITS 6.8A AND 6.8B, LOOKING WEST (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER & J. SIMONS)

The entire surface of the court was covered with a brown to light brown compact, sandy clay with gravel (up to 0.04 m) and pebbles (generally less than 0.015 m, but up to 0.03 m in the eastern part of the court) (average proportion soil/gravel/pebbles was 85/10/5). This semi-hard to hard matrix seems to be the result of a slow accumulation process caused by the long exposure of the open area to intermittent flooding (process 3, **fig. 5.2.32**). It started at a height of *ca.* 16.76-16.79 m asl and formed a 0.15 to 0.20 m-thick layer on the court, although it was noticeably thicker in the western part of the court (grid squares 33-34-35). The *tarazza* surface of the court here was at 16.53 to 16.71 m asl. As mentioned, the court surface slopes down towards the south. In the southern part of Zone 6 the court is eroded away, probably by water running off the hill (see chapter 5.6). This probably explains the many *tarazza* fragments in the sediment layer in this part of the court. The matrix also contained some mudbrick debris, generally of small size, and a few pieces of pumice and plaster. We also collected a few fragments of terracotta, possibly Postminoan tiles, as well as a clay tumbler (16-06-1167-OB001), a clay spool (16-06-1208-OB001), 12 lithic tools (15-06-1024-OB001-003; 15-06-1028-OB001; 15-06-1070-OB002-005; 16-06-1207-OB001-002; 16-06-1232-OB001-002), the handle of a clay lamp (15-06-1049-OB002, **fig. 5.2.33c**) and two stalactite fragments (15-06-1049-OB001; 15-06-1070-OB001). The latter find is somewhat surprising, considering the very low number of objects encountered in the entire CCB. The first stalactite fragment (15-06-1049-OB001) was found in the fine sediments layer on the surface of the court, while the second (15-06-1070-OB001) was found in the same layer along F51 in the northernmost part of the court. Such stone fragments are generally rare on the site and, thus far, most come from various contexts in and beneath Building CD on the top of the hill¹³. This makes the stalactites of the court even more prominent, and it is worth mentioning that another speleothem was found on top of the tumble in room 6.17 (see chap. 5.5). One may of course wonder whether they are indicative of ritual activities that were (still) carried out in the area of the court during its use or, in the case of the stalactites found on top of the tumble in room 6.17, after it was abandoned.

Preliminary pottery analysis from the accumulation layer gives especially MM II and LM I material. LM III material is also present in the northern part of the court and so is Postminoan material. However, this later material mostly comes from the upper levels of the layer that accumulated during process 3. Apart from some Archaic or Hellenistic sherds, there is also Early Byzantine material, which may suggest that the top of the accumulation layer above the court was used as an occupation level until this period (see process 6), after the open area had been cleared in event 5.

3.1. The collapse of tumble FE120 (event 4, **fig. 5.2.25d**)

Tumble FE120 comprises five large limestone boulders that must have fallen from the lower courses of wall F21 on top of the fine sedimentation layer on the court (**fig. 5.2.34**). This tumble was first identified in 2011 (*Sissi III*: 143, figs 6.10a-b) but it was only excavated in 2016, in square 5 of the 2 by 2 m grid artificially imposed on the court (**fig. 5.2.21**). The boulders (0.60 to 1.15 m) already appeared at an altitude of 17.04 m asl and were actually resting on top of the fine sediment layer in the court, which was here at 16.76 m asl. This means that they fell after the court had already been exposed to intermittent flooding which had filled the area with a layer of fine sediments. The boulders were caught in a matrix of light brown semi-hard soil mixed with small stones (0.05 to 0.10 m) and gravel (up to 0.02 m) (proportion soil/stone/gravel: 85/10/5). The soil is slightly darker and softer than that in the fine sediment layer that had accumulated underneath although the difference between the two is gradual. The stone collapse also included mudbricks debris, a stone lid (16-06-1145-OB001), and clay drains fragments (16-06-1149-OB001; 16-06-1233-OB001).

¹³ I thank my fellow area supervisors who checked their databases for the presence of such items.

5.2. The North-East Wing and the Court of the Court-Centred Building at Sissi



FIG. 5.2.33 THE COURT BEFORE EXCAVATION IN 2015: (A) FROM NORTH; AND THE EXPLORATION OF FINE SEDIMENT LAYER ON IT (PROCESS 3) IN 2015 (B) AND (C) FROM NORTH AND IN 2016 (D) AND (E) FROM SOUTH-WEST (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)



FIG. 5.2.34 STONE TUMBLE FE120 (EVENT 4) ON TOP OF FINE SEDIMENT LAYER (PROCESS 3) ALONG FAÇADE F21 (A) FROM NORTH AND (B) FROM SOUTH-EAST, AND FRAGMENTS OF A CLAY DRAIN 16-06-1233-OB001 IN THE SEDIMENT LAYER (C AND D, FROM WEST) (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER & A. LEGENDART)

3.2. The clearance of the open space and the creation of stone heap FE118 (event 5, fig. 5.2.25e)

At some point in time, it was decided to clear a large part of the south-eastern summit of the hill: rubble was pushed towards the west façade of the court, forming a *ca.* 20 m-long heap of stones that have various sizes (fig. 5.2.35). This heap was excavated in grid squares 6.8A (in 2015) and 6.8F (in 2016) (fig. 5.2.21). The heap is in fact sitting on top of the collapse of the west façade of the court as well as on top of the layer of fine sediment on the court. The stones of FE118 vary from 0.05-0.15 cm (65 %), to 0.25- 0.30 m (15 %), to 0.40-0.50 m (20 %) and mainly consist of limestone with some conglomerate, purple schist, and sandstone (some cut fragments measuring 0.10 to 0.15 m and 0.20 to 0.35 m). Mudbrick debris is present in large quantities with some quite substantial fragments, especially in the southern part of the heap. Stones and mudbrick are embedded in a matrix of semi-soft to semi-hard brown to light brown soil with a red yellowish hue. The proportion of soil to stones is 30/70, although the stones become less abundant in the southern part of the heap. Interestingly, sandstone fragments are more frequent, larger and of a more regular shape in this part of the heap, where mudbricks and sherds are also abundant. Some of the largest stones were set up-right along the eastern edge of the heap as if forming some sort of limit (fig. 5.2.35b, c and e). This border is at an altitude of 16.76 to 16.93 m asl and is located both above the collapse of wall F59 in the north-western part of the court and above the top of the fine sediment layer (which is thicker here) in the south-western part of Zone 6. The appearance and size of the blocks suggests that FE118 resulted from the clearance of architectural debris, which had accumulated through erosion of the tumbled walls and/or destructive episodes in this area of the site.

The pottery collected amongst heap FE118 is much eroded but LM I sherds are well represented in the northern part of the heap (grid unit 6.8A). This may be due to the fact that heap FE118 and tumble FE121 are very much mixed here. A clay figurine fragment (15-06-1012-OB011) was found in the upper part of FE118 towards the north. It is likely that this figurine can be related to a deposit of such objects that was discovered on top of the stone heap FE118 near wall F48 (see below). Likewise, the sherds found in the southern part of the stone heap, along wall FE217 in grid unit 6.8G, are much eroded and their dates mixed. Some larger and better preserved sherds are clearly Postminoan which suggests that the stone heap FE118 was established in Postminoan times and that this also involved the deposition of earlier material, most of which seems to derive from the Neopalatial collapse of the

CCB, but perhaps also from the LM III reoccupation in the area. The large amounts of mudbrick corroborate this impression. *Tarazza*, plaster and pumice fragments were sampled in reasonable quantities and one possible roof tile was collected (16-06-1211-SA013). Apart from these architectural features and the clay figurine, there were few other objects in stone heap FE118: nine stone tools (15-06-1012-OB001-004; 16-06-1211-OB001 and OB003; 16-06-1222-OB001-003), and one grinding stone (16-06-1211-OB004).

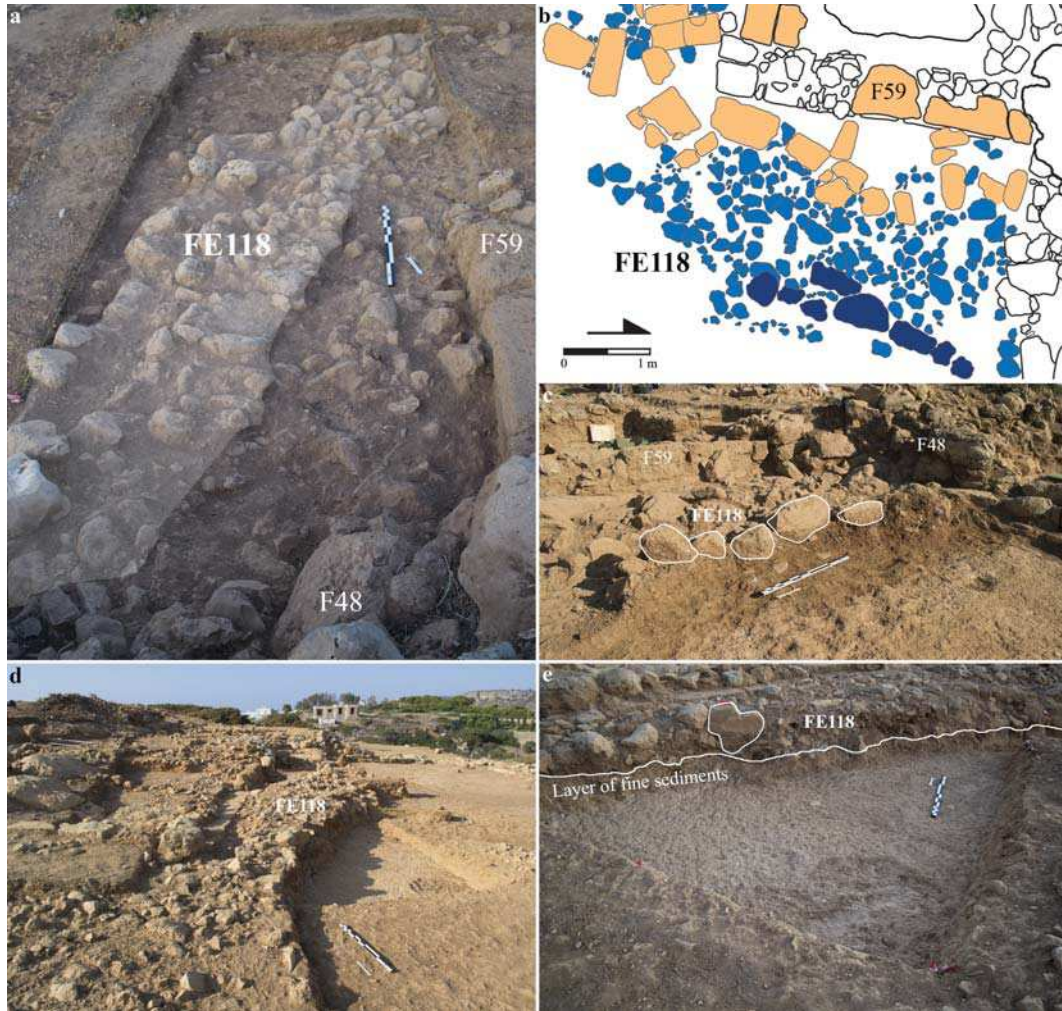


FIG. 5.2.35 VIEWS OF HEAP FE118, THE NORTHERN PART OF WHICH WAS EXCAVATED IN 2015 (A) FROM NORTH AND (C) FROM SOUTH-EAST, AND THE SOUTHERN PART IN 2016 (D) FROM SOUTH-WEST, AND (E) FROM SOUTH (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER). THE SKETCH (B) SHOWS THE STONES OF FE118 IN BLUE (DARKER FOR THOSE THAT FORM THE LIMIT OF THE HEAP), AND IS BASED ON A PRELIMINARY PLAN DRAWN IN 2015 (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER & N. KRESS)

Some late activities seem to have taken place in the north-western corner of the court which included the deposition of figurines within the collapse of wall F48 and immediately south of it, on top of stone heap FE118 (fig. 5.2.36). Of the four fragmentary figurines found (15-06-1016-OB004; 15-06-1008-OB005-007), one is that of a bull of which only the hindlegs are preserved (15-06-1016-OB004, fig. 5.2.36). The absence of similar finds around the court (and especially from the northwest, Zone 11) suggests that the figures did not roll down from the upper terrace but were probably intentionally deposited in the north-western corner of the court, most likely after the clearing event 5.



FIG. 5.2.36 (A) VIEW FROM THE SOUTH-WEST OF COLLAPSED WALL F48 BEFORE THE EXPLORATION OF HEAP FE118 IN GRID SQUARE 6.8A (THE NORTH-WESTERN QUADRANT OF THE COURT) WHERE SEVERAL FIGURINES WERE FOUND (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER); (B) SIDE, REAR AND BOTTOM VIEWS OF BULL FIGURINE 15-06-1016-OB004 (©EBSA; C. PAPANIKOLOPOULOS)

3.3. The use of the cleared area (process 6, fig. 5.2.25f)

Except for the western part of the court where stone heap FE118 was installed on a thin layer of sediments and small stones probably produced by the erosion of the collapse of walls F48 and F59, the clearing operations of the court uncovered the top of the layer of fine sediments (event 5), about 16.76 m asl. In this newly cleared open area, certain activities of an undetermined nature must have been carried out. The only potential indication for the use of the cleared surface is stone pile FE117 and the material associated with it. Pile FE117 has an oval shape, measuring *ca.* 4.30 by 2.40 m, and consists of an accumulation of small stones (mostly ranging from 0.05 by 0.10 m, to 0.10 by 0.15 m, to 0.10 by 0.25 m). The pile showed itself from 17.04 m asl downwards in the southern part of Zone 6 (grid squares 22, 23, 28 and 29) and in Zone 15 (figs 5.2.24 & 5.2.37). Its bottom was at 16.78 m asl. The matrix was a semi-soft to semi-hard brown to light brown-yellowish soil, with some red hues (proportion soil/stone/gravel: 50/45/5). Pile FE117 was installed on top of the layer of fine sediments that covers the court (process 3), and thus seems to correspond to the reuse of the open area after its clearing, as represented by event 5. The ceramic material associated with the pile is mixed and ranges from MM II to LM III, but Postminoan sherds are also present, including several fragments of an Early Byzantine vase with sherds coming both from pile FE117 and from the upper part of the sediment layer around it (16-06-1175-OB001)¹⁴. Apart from stones and sherds, FE117 comprised many mudbrick fragments and some possible tile fragments. The purpose of this pile is

¹⁴ M. Nazou and V. Klontza-Jaklova are thanked for the identification of this pottery.

unknown but perhaps it reflects further clearing of the open area after the action, which had removed most stones and their deposition in stone heap FE118 during event 5. A patch of dark earth, measuring *ca.* 0.30 by 0.50 m, was found beneath the south-eastern part of pile FE117. It appeared to be a pit filled with a brown to dark brown and reddish-black soil mixed with small stones (0.05 by 0.05 m) and gravel (0.01-0.03 m) (proportion soil/stone/gravel 90/5/5). It also included some charcoal specks, which were sampled. This pit appeared to have been dug into the surface of the fine sediment layer (top at 16.78 m asl) down to 16.65 m asl. Although it contained some Neopalatial and LM III sherds, there was also Postminoan material, including fragments of the same Early Byzantine vase 16-06-1175-OB001.

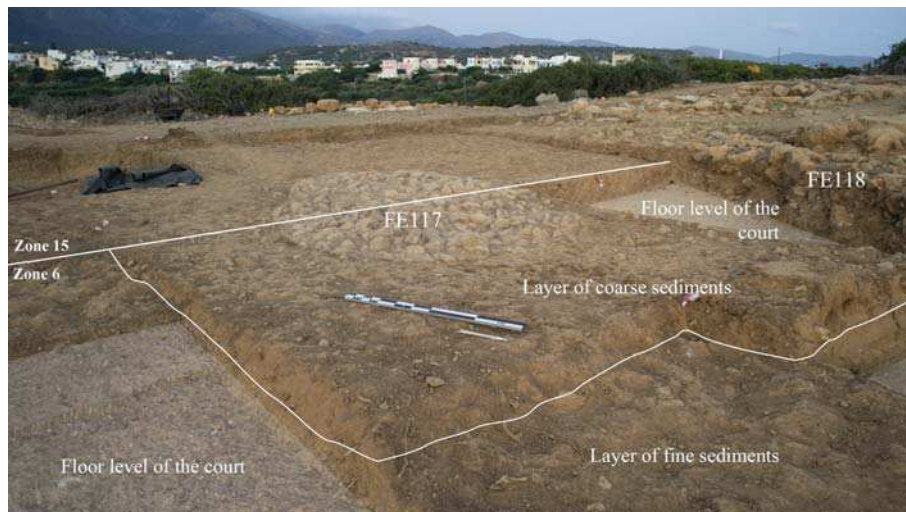


FIG. 5.2.37 STONE PILE FE117 CAUGHT IN THE LAYER OF COARSE SEDIMENTS ON THE COURT, FROM NORTH-EAST (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

3.4. The erosion of stone heap FE118 and the accumulation of a layer of coarse sediments on top of the layer of fine sediments in the open area (process 7, fig. 5.2.25g)

On top of the sediment layer covering the court (see process 3) there was a level of light to dark brown semi-soft to semi-hard earth. This started at 16.87 m asl downwards (fig. 5.2.37). The distinction between the two layers is not always clear but the upper layer generally comprises coarser sediments, including many small stones (0.05 to 0.10 m), gravel (up to 0.04 m) and some pebbles. The general proportion soil/stone/gravel/pebbles is 80/8/8/4. As mentioned, stone heap FE118 was installed directly on top of the layer of fine sediments, which accumulated on the court. The coarse sediments accumulated against FE118, to the south, during process 7, indicating that the sediments postdated the creation of the heap FE118. It is likely that the layer of coarse sediments in fact resulted from the gradual erosion of heap FE118, and covered the top of the fine sediment layer, thus sealing the occupation level used during process 6 on top of the fine sediment layer.

The coarse sediment layer comprised much mudbrick debris and *tarazza* fragments while plaster and pumice were scarcer. Were also found: 12 lithic tools (15-06-1004-OB001-002; 15-06-1010-OB001; 15-06-1020-OB001-003; 15-06-1034-OB002; 16-06-1156-OB002; 16-06-1169-OB001; 16-06-1175-OB002; 16-06-1177-OB001-002), a stalactite (16-06-1156-OB001), a loomweight (16-06-1154-OB001), and three clay vases (15-06-1034-OB001; 16-06-1154-OB002; 16-06-1175-OB001), two of which are Postminoan. The ceramic material is again very mixed, with MM II, MM III, LM I, LM III and Postminoan sherds. The latter include Hellenistic and Early Byzantine sherds. All sherds are very rolled, which agrees with a slow accumulation process.

3.5. The continuous use of the open area and the creation of circular pile FE100 (process 8, fig. 5.2.25h)

In 2015 and 2016, we excavated a circular pile of stones in the north-centre of the court (top at 17.64 m asl). The pile is a 3.80 by 3.90 m accumulation of limestone rubble that ranges in size between 0.15 and 0.70 m in a matrix of brown, soft soil (proportion soil to stones 15/85). The large number of modern snails in between the stones in the upper part of the pile indicates the recent date of the pile, probably connected to further clearing of the area for agricultural purposes. Initially, we assumed that the circular pile FE100 was the remains of a gun-post of WW II because some larger stones were sloping down towards the centre of the pile as if the stones had accumulated into some sort of large pit. This seemed not to be the case and excavation showed that the stones were piled up in an open area slowly filled with sediments. The material associated with this pile is again very mixed, from MM to Venetian but also comprising some bullet cases (15-06-1007-OB001; 15-06-1009-OB001) and a metal strip (perhaps part of a hand grenade, 15-06-1009-OB002) (*cf. Sissi II*: 25), remains of the Italian occupation of the hill during the 1940s. It is likely that the size of the pile progressively increased during post-WW II agricultural and pastoral activities.

Once the stones of pile FE100 were removed, it was obvious that it rested on top of the coarse sediment layer on the court (16.86 m asl) which consisted of material eroded from stone heap FE118 in the western part of the court. The layer, explored in grid squares 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19 and 20, comprised many small stones (0.05 to 0.10 m) and the sherd material was again very mixed, from MM to Postminoan. Pile FE100 most likely represents a long-term process that started after the erosion of FE118 and probably lasted until the second half of the 20th century.



FIG. 5.2.38 THE CIRCULAR STONE PILE FE100 DURING AND AFTER EXCAVATION (A) AND (B) FROM SOUTH-EAST, AND THE SUCCESSION OF LAYERS VISIBLE WHEN EXCAVATING THE BAULK SOUTH OF GRID SQUARE 6.8A (C) FROM EAST. NOTE THE ACCUMULATION OF FE100 ON TOP OF THE COARSE AND FINE SEDIMENT LAYERS IN THE COURT (©EBSA; M. DEVOLDER)

3.6. General comments on the excavation of the court in Zone 6

The *tarazza* floor of the court at Sissi was installed on a preparation layer of small stones and sherds which for the moment has been dated to MM I. Further study is necessary to determine whether or not the *tarazza* itself dates back to the Protopalatial period since the potential existence of earlier walls in the North-East Wing as well as the presence of residual Protopalatial pottery in the south-east area could suggest that the Neopalatial CCB had a Protopalatial predecessor. In any case, part of the court became obsolete when the CCB collapsed in LM IA: the façade on the west side of the court (walls F59, F58, FE217 and steps FE226) fell on its surface, so that at least the western part of the open area went out of use. The eastern part of the court may, however, have remained visible for another 200 years since the stones of façade F21, which was still standing in Postpalatial times, fell directly on the *tarazza* surface during the LM IIIA/B destruction of Building F. This destruction was probably later followed by the robbing of most of the cut sandstone blocks of façade F21, with only its levelling course remaining. If this reconstruction of events is correct, it is somewhat surprising that the fine, large sandstone ashlar of the west façade of the court were not systematically looted also. Before and after this event, the area of the court was left open to a slow accumulation process which involved the deposition of a layer of a compact, light-brown-yellowish sandy clay. The layer produced mixed eroded ceramic material (preliminarily) dated from the MM II phase up to recent times, suggesting that this part of the hill remained continuously used if not occupied. The gradual collapse of the ruins around the court must have added to increase the accumulation of sediments. At some time in the history of the site, the area was partly cleared and a long heap of stones was created in the western part of the court. It is still unclear when exactly this clearing occurred, but we assume that the presence of clay figurines on top and in the heap of stones will help us proposing a date for this event. Further study is necessary of course but the deposition of figurines may point at some kind of ritualization or commemoration practice, and thus suggest a special significance of the area many generations after the desertion of the CCB.

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