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Excavations at Sissi V

Preliminary Report on
the 2017-2019 Campaigns

VOLUME 1&2

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6.7. The Excavation of the South Wing

Zone 16

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The South Wing (Zone 16) or, as we prefer to call it, the *South Basements*, comprise the areas south of the Western Entrance Passage (WEP) and south of the south wall of the Central Court. Both of the latter were revealed during the 2017 season (see § 6.5 & 6.6) and hence our efforts in 2018 and 2019 were directed in an attempt to delineate boundaries and further investigate immediate surroundings. In 2018, we concentrated on the southwest area, south of the WEP, with only limited exploration of the area south of the court while the following year, the basement rooms south of the Central Court were explored once permission was obtained to remove a recent wall that diagonally crossed the south retaining wall of the court as can be seen from the aerial photo (fig. 6.7.1). Despite erosion down the hillside, the entire south area represents a rather homogenous view with identical masonry comprising *sideropetra*, some conglomerate and incorporated bedrock.

1. The Southwest Area

Where preserved, the masonry of the south wall of the WEP consists of large limestone and conglomerate boulders that formed a first course at the level of the paving in the passage. Not all blocks are preserved and the aerial photo shows the gaps. South of Space 16.108 is an alignment of three large conglomerate blocks (FE617) that are very similar to those used in the south wall of the WEP, hence it is not impossible that these blocks originally were part of this east-west wall and tumbled down at some stage. This south wall of the WEP was probably set against the bedrock that is visible at places in the paving of the passage. It was also constructed on top of a carefully-made foundation of at least four courses, comprising small and medium-sized stones (*sideropetra*, conglomerate and a few scraps of *ammouda* ashlar). This foundation is up to 0.60-0.80 m high below the wall proper and serves as the backwall for the spaces at lower level (16.105 to 16.109). At different places, the bedrock is incorporated. The wall was facing north, i.e. inwards of the passage. In contrast to the north wall of the WEP, it was not built with *ammouda* ashlar (cf. § 6.5). Although differently constructed from the retaining wall south of the Central Court, its function seems to have been identical: to support the constructions to the north. On the terrace below, south of the paved corridor (WEP) and west of the Central Court, there are six relatively short, parallel walls with a north-south orientation, enclosing a few small, door-less spaces (16.105 to 16.109). These walls seem to have functioned as buttresses as they are well bonded into the south wall of the WEP and nothing was found within the door-less spaces. Only the west wall (FE643) of Space 16.105 was constructed against the south wall of the WEP and seems later. It was seen in fact to have been built on the remains of an earlier level that goes with the original east and west walls of a larger room and above which LM III pottery was found. The easternmost wall (east of 16.78) departs immediately below the large stone platform in the corner of the Central Court (§ 6.6). This wall (FE606) consists of large conglomerate boulders that face west as if it originally formed a façade wall. Between some of the boulders there is ample plaster, which could also imply that the boulders are reused. The area more to the east, Space 16.79, yielded various lithic tools and loomweights but it is possible that these represent the result of later erosion and that this area formed part of the Central Court, now obstructed by tumble. The area west of the stone platform, here called 16.107, is taken up by a small compartment, which, as was noted, produced a complete stone blossom bowl (cf. § 6.5, fig. 6.5.33). The area to the south, Space 16.78, west of the conglomerate wall, is formed by a large room, which produced a small assemblage of Neopalatial pottery, close to a well-preserved patch of plaster lining (fig. 6.7.2). Moreover, there was a high concentration of plaster and remarkably well-preserved lumps of *tarazza*. This room, however, and the adjoining Space 16.77, which can be reached through a doorway in the partition wall

¹ Because of unforeseen circumstances, T. Mumelter was not able to finish his final report but the account given here is based on his preliminary notes.

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(FE605), may have been the only two spaces in this general area that was actually used since the other spaces to the west and south-west appear not to have been accessible in the Neopalatial period.



FIG. 6.7.1 SOUTH PART OF CENTRAL COURT AFTER THE 2019 CAMPAIGN (NORTH AT LEFT) (©EBSA; N. KRESS, T. MUMELTER)



FIG. 6.7.2 ASSEMBLAGE OF NEOPALATIAL POTTERY CLOSE TO A WELL-PRESERVED PATCH OF PLASTER LINING IN SPACE 16.78, SEEN FROM SOUTH-WEST (©EBSA; T. MUMELTER)

The entire area west of Space 16.77 was found to be covered with a large mass of stones, packed in between the parallel wall lines. This packing also comprised many eroded, mostly undiagnostic sherds and some other dumped material but their concentration here suggests that the stones were intentionally placed, perhaps to construct a terrace. The packing had partly spilled over into Space 16.77 but beneath was found an eroded plaster floor. All other spaces north and west were found empty and did not have a proper floor level. The same was observed to the south of the Central Court (*cf.* below) and the area seems therefore probably to have had a similar retaining function: supporting the Western Entrance Passage at higher level. Only in the area of 16.105 and 16.108 (and its west extension 16.66a) is there evidence for LM IIIA-B occupation. As mentioned (§ 6.4), a blue glass seal (*cf.* § 11) and a figurine were found here, associated with LM III pottery during 2018 when this area was first explored by Quentin Letesson. Space 16.66a contained a rich assemblage of LM IIIA-B pottery, which was found against the east wall of 16.108, itself constructed on top of an earlier wall. There was hence a limited reuse of the area but it is not yet clear whether the space was in actual use or only served as a dumping place. The deposit found here also comprised a conical tube-like terracotta object, perhaps part of a tuyère (17-16-1771-OB001) (**fig. 6.7.3**) as well as a crude clay spool (20-16-2036-OB001).

2. The South Wing

The south wall (FE600-601) of the Central Court is a massive retaining wall consisting of large blocks with a small rubble packing to its north side. It incorporates some bedrock that outcrops here. As much as the south wall of the WEP was running east-west, giving a north-south orientation to the spaces below, the court retaining wall has a clear northwest-southeast orientation, which hence gives a north- east/south-west orientation to the series of parallel walls at lower level. There is some kind of gap in the masonry in the south-east corner of the retaining wall and the top course is missing. In the very south-east corner there may have been an access to the court since south-east of it are two lines of flat blocks (FE027) going down the hill perhaps as some raised walk. The area around is very eroded because of the slope and bedrock is apparent (**fig. 6.7.1**). A small sounding to the north of the retaining wall, within the court, revealed layers of pebbles and plaster (once probably forming a floor packing)

that is present in irregular patches throughout the rest of the Central Court. A single-line wall FE602, which on excavation was already judged a relatively recent construction, diagonally runs from the south-west corner of the court over the southern retaining wall down to the south-east (**fig. 6.7.1**). The masonry, orientation and presence of later sherds (medieval and later) within its construction confirmed it was a recent construction that has no link whatsoever with the Bronze Age remains. After proper documentation, we received permission to remove it, finding more modern sherds within. Only a few parts have been left for the moment as reminders (in Spaces 16.58 and 16.92). The area below the southern retaining wall FE600 to the south was covered with many medium and small stones, following the downward slope of the hill. These stones were gradually removed, revealing a series of grid-like walls and spaces, with parallel and perpendicular walls beneath. One north-south wall (FE603) was preserved for a considerable height and differently constructed. Moreover, it was built against and not bonded into the southern retaining wall. From the higher, mixed levels here comes a lentoid showing a lion and column (18-16-1793-OB002), probably LM IIIA in date (§ 11), and lower down there was good LM IIIA-B pottery stratified above a floor in Spaces 16.103 and 16.104, upon which wall FE603 was later constructed. This seems one of the few areas of the CCB that was reused in later times. Excavation of all other spaces did not yield any material apart from eroded sherds and hence we also interpret them as constructional spaces that served to reinforce the retaining wall of the court and to create a series of terraces below. Mention may be made of the re-use of a grey-limestone block with a series of depressions within one of the lower walls (FE633) of Space 601. This block was originally a *kernos*, not unlike the one sitting on a platform in front of the East Wing (**fig. 6.7.4**).



FIG. 6.7.3 TUBE-LIKE TERRACOTTA OBJECT (17-16-1771-OB001), CUPS AND STONE TOOLS *IN SITU* IN SPACE 16.66A (©EBSA; T. MUMELTER)



FIG. 6.7.4 REUSED *KERNOS* IN WALL FE633, THE EAST WALL OF SPACE 601 (©EBSA; J. DRIESSEN)

A general view on the South Basements is offered in **fig. 6.7.5**.



FIG. 6.7.5 DRONE VIEW FROM THE SOUTH-EAST DURING EXCAVATION, SHOWING THE IMPRESSIVE RETAINING WALL SUPPORTING THE COURT AND THE TERRACES SOUTH OF IT (©EBSA; N. KRESS)