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Excavations at Sissi V

Preliminary Report on
the 2017-2019 Campaigns

VOLUME 1&2

Edited by Jan Driessen

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1. Excavations at Sissi, 2017-2019

An Overview

Jan Driessen

1. Introduction

The eighth, ninth and tenth excavation and survey campaigns on and near the *Kephali tou Agiou Antoniou* at Sissi under the auspices of the Belgian School at Athens took place in 2017 (June 26th-August 4th), 2018 (June 25th-August 3rd) and 2019 (June 24th -August 14th). Each campaign was accompanied and followed by several weeks of site consolidation and material study. As before, we thank the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports and in particular the head of the archaeological service of East Crete (EFALAS), Mrs. C. Sophianou and the members of her staff, Mrs. V. Zographaki, Mrs. A. Papadea, Mr. N. Panoutsopoulos and Mrs. K. Zervaki, for their help, advice and friendship. On site, EFALAS was represented during all three campaigns by Mr. N. Thanos while the deputy director of the EBSA, Dr. P. Iossif, and the accountant, Mr. A. Papadakis, provided much administrative assistance and were helpful in many ways. Dr. T. Brogan kindly made the INSTAPEC photographer, Mr. C. Papanikolopoulos, available for yearly finds' photography, and thanks to Prof. A. Farnoux, director of the *Ecole française d'Athènes*, we were assured the good services of Mrs. E. Kivernitaki. Mr. Y. Zervos of Phronimakis Garage was also helpful where the running of our *apothiki* in Agios Nikolaos was concerned.

Financial aid for the three seasons came from several sources who are here warmly thanked for their continuing support. These are first of all the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, which also provided additional grants for plaster conservation and study for M.N. Pareja, the Loeb Classical Library, the Rust Family Foundation, the ARC-A World in Crisis, the *Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*, the *Fonds National de Recherche Scientifique* and a series of private donors, including the Henry & Belle Davis family, Mr. Jean-Martin Vander Hoeven, Mrs. Loukia Stergiou, Mr. G. Perris Magnetto, Corinth Pipeworks (Viohalco Group), and Mrs. A.-M. Avramut. We also received help from Motorplan (Mr. D. Dineris, Mr. M. Dineris), Dr. F. Gaignerot-Driessen and the Anavlochos team, the A.O. Vrachasiou (local football team), the *politiskos sillogos Sissiou*, Mr. V. Miliathanakis, Mr. N. Terzakis, Mr. C. Mamaloukos⁺, Mr. T. Koukoulakis, the Beach Bar, Stefanos Bar, Kera Bar and Coba Bar, and their respective staff, as well as Mr. K. Bourgoudakis (Phaistos Supermarket). The Belgian ambassador, H.E. Mr. L. Liebaut, and Prof. V. Blondel, chancellor of the UCLouvain, were kindly hosted by respectively Palm Bay Hotel and Maritimo Hotel for which we are grateful. The villagers of Sissi and Vrachasi are warmly thanked for putting up with 100+ archaeologists each summer but our cohabitation has been excellent. We were sorry to lose a long-time supporter of our project with the premature passing of Mr. Christos Mamaloukos and also mourn the passing of Giuliano Merlatti, some of whose drawings are in this report.

Staff members (**fig. 1.1**) who participated in one or more campaigns were (in alphabetical order): Dr. Maria Anastasiadou (seal expert, CMS, University of Heidelberg, 2019), Dr. Julie-Anne Boucher-Perron (archaeobotanist, University of Nottingham, 2017), Dr. Ilaria Caloi (pottery specialist, Ca'Foscari University of Venice, 2017-2018), Thérèse Claeys (Zone 8 supervisor & site management, FRESH-UCLouvain, 2017-2019), Dr. Isabelle Crevecœur (anthropologist Zone 1, CNRS, University of Bordeaux, 2017), Dr. Sylviane Déderix (Zones 11 and 19 supervisor, FNRS, UCLouvain & Humboldt Fellow, Heidelberg University, 2017-2019), Dr. Maud Devolder (Zone 6 supervisor, Gerda Henkel Fellow, UCLouvain, 2018-2019), Roxane Dubois (assistant *apothiki* supervisor, FNRS, UCLouvain, 2017-2019), Dr. Maria Kayafa (metal specialist, Lavrion Technical Park, 2017), Emilie Hayter (Zone 16 supervisor, UCLondon, 2017), Dr. Valasia Isaakidou (archaeozoologist, University of Sheffield, 2017-2019), Nicolas Kress (chief topographer and drone operator, UCLouvain, 2017-2019), Athina Kritikou (plaster conservator, 2017-2019), Dr. Charlotte Langohr (chief ceramologist, *apothiki* responsible, FNRS-UCLouvain, 2017-2019), Dr. Quentin Letesson (Zones 4 & 10 supervisor, UCLouvain, 2017-2019), Laura Matilde Magno (micromorphologist, UCLouvain & ASCS, 2017-2019), Dr. Iro Mathioudaki

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(pottery specialist, FNRS-UCLouvain, 2017-2019), Gavin McGuire (resident artist-photographer, 2017-2019), Rosemarie McGuire (resident artist-painter, 2017-2019), Dr. Ophélie Mouthuy (Zone 15 supervisor, in charge of the survey in 2017, FNRS-UCLouvain, 2017-2019), Thomas Mumelter (Zone 16 supervisor, Nottingham University, 2017-2019), Dr. Marie Nicole Pareja (plaster specialist, INSTAPEC-University of Pennsylvania, 2018-2019), Tia Sager (Zone 18 supervisor, University of Toronto, 2017-2019), Pepi Saridaki (chief object conservator, 2017-2019), Dr. Aurore Schmitt (chief anthropologist, Zone 9 supervisor, CNRS, University of Aix-Marseille, 2017-2019), Théo Terrana (Zone 17 supervisor & in charge of the 2018-2019 survey, UCLouvain, 2017-2019), Jenny Tsafou (residue analysis, *apothiki* manager, FSR-UCLouvain, 2017-2019), Eleftheria Zografou (chief architect, 2017-2018).

The Toughbook assistants/assistant-supervisors during the three seasons included Alizée Legendart (U. of Strasbourg, 2017-2019), Malo Vannet (U. of Paris IV, 2017), Steve Jones (Freie Universität Berlin, 2017), Camille Brunin (UCLouvain, 2017), Thomas Mumelter (U. of Nottingham, 2017), Jacob Heywood (U. of Melbourne, 2018-2019), Louis Dautais (U. of Montpellier III, 2018-2019), Cedric Van Huffel (U. of Ghent, 2018-2019), Line Koefoed Larsen (U. of Copenhagen, 2018), Richard Boulanger (UCLouvain, 2018-2019), Diana Wolf (U. of Heidelberg, 2018-2019), Kilian Regnier (UCLouvain, 2018-2019), Justine Monville (ULiège, 2019) and Charlotte Figueroa Arriagada (UCLouvain, 2018).



FIG. 1.1 TEAM MEMBERS DURING THE 2017, 2018 AND 2019 CAMPAIGNS AT SISSI (©EBSA; G. MCGUIRE)

The anthropological team was under the direction of Dr. Aurore Schmitt (CNRS-Aix Marseille) and also comprised Violaine Bonny (2017), Chloé Girardi (2018), Marie Perrin (2018), Clémence Mopin (2018), Anaïs Delliste (2018-2019), Nina Diner-Stefan (2019) and Emeline Spérandio (2018-2019), all associated in some way to the University of Aix-Marseille. Moreover, thanks to Dr. S. Triantaphyllou, Thioni Baniou and Vaso Papathanasiou of the U. of Thessaloniki were able to assist us in 2019. Dr. Isabelle Crevecœur (CNRS-U. of Bordeaux) joined us for a week in 2017.

Site topography and drone photography were the work of Nicolas Kress (aka Leo), assisted, for topography, by Claire Lambert.

Flotation, under the responsibility of Dr. J.-A. Boucher-Perron (U. of Manchester), took place in the field under the direction of Maria Vlachaki (U. of Crete, 2017-2018) and Ekaterina Sevastakis (U. of Virginia, 2017-2019), with the assistance of Drea Brake (U. of Vancouver) in 2017, of Ioli Pappa (U. of Ioannina), Pauline Mathieu (UCLouvain), Imogen Worall (U. of Manchester) and Ioanna Vareli (U. of Ioannina) in 2018, and of Aurélie Manière (U. of Paris I), Katerina Balli (U. of Athens) and Vaso Zogka (U. of Ioannina) in 2019.

The survey team under the direction of Ophélie Mouthuy (2017) and Théo Terrana (2018-2019) also included Jacob Heywood (2017-2019), Camille Brunin (2017), Arnaud Meulemeester (2017-2019), Vassilis Papadakis (2018), Benoît Delooz (2018-2019), David Laguna (2019), Christos Pantazis (2019) and Pierre Verstegen (2017).

Workmen during the three seasons were Kostas Avgoustakis (2017), Kostas Doulgerakis (2018), Dimitris Tzannakis (2017-2019), Yannis Milathianakis (2017), Kristian Jacobsen (2017-2019), Manolis 'Tsakas' Tzannakis (2017-2019), Dimitris Kiriakakis (2018), Dimitris Kivernitakis (2017-2019), Kostas Rovithis (2018), Michalis Vlassis (2017-2019), Dimitris Papandonakis (2017; 2019), Kostas Mamakis (2017), Arek Woytyla (2018-2019), Kristian Woytyla (2019), Iannis Zervos (2018) and Manolis 'Ridifi' Zervakis (2018-2019), all from the Sissi-Vrachasi area, and Giannis Milidakis (2017-2019) from Palaikastro and Marinos Papandonakis from Heraklion (2017-2019).

The site consolidation team during the three campaigns was, with as intermediary Prof. D.C. Haggis, under the direction of Manolis Kassotakis of Kavousi and included Manolis Poulis, Vangelis Grammatikakis and Stylianos Pitharoulis, supervised in the field by T. Claeys (2017-2019), assisted in 2019 by Dimitra Skoulitari (U. of Athens) and Eleni Adam (U. of Ioannina), under the general responsibility of Dr. Stephanía Chlouveraki and Klio Zervaki (Efalas). A report on the consolidation work and the outreach done is presented further in this volume.

The *apothiki* team during all three campaigns was directed by Dr. Charlotte Langohr (FNRS, UCLouvain) and Dr. Ilaria Caloi (U. of Venice), assisted by Dr. Iro Mathioudaki (FNRS, UCLouvain), Evgenia Tsafou (FSR, UCLouvain) and Roxane Dubois (FNRS, UCLouvain). The conservation team, under the direction of Pepi Saridaki, also included Athina Kritikou (plaster), Ioanna Kanevaki (assistant, 2018-2019), Evangelia Frangiadaki (assistant, 2017) and Ioanna Papadimitriou (assistant, 2019). Assistant pottery processors were Irini Koutouvaki (2017-2019), Dimitra Machaira (2017-2019), Antonella Coco (2017-2018), Roberta Riciputo (2017-2018), Christianna Varela (2018), Drosoula Anagnopoulou (2018), Antigoni Kalara (2018), Alexandra Malliou (2019), Ioanna Lolou (2019), Rachel Hirt (2019), Isabelle Standaert (2019) and Jane Bell (2019). The drawing team included Birgit Konnemann (2017-2019), Camille Lemoine (2018) and Nelly Pantelidou (2018). Object photography after each campaign was the work of Chronis Papanikolopoulos (INSTAPEC), while site photography was the work by zone supervisors, Nicolas Kress or the director. Site artist were Gavin McGuire (photography) and Rosemarie McGuire (paintings). Dr. Cam Walker (2018, 2019) spent some weeks studying our interaction, both within the team and with the local community. Groundstone specialist Dr. Christina Tsoraki and sealstone expert Dr. Maria Anastasiadou studied some of the new material while Dr. Iro Mathioudaki continued her study of MM III-LM I deposits. More study was done by Dr. M.N. Pareja-Cummings on the plaster while Dr. Valasia Isaakidou studied faunal assemblages and Dr. Maria Kayafa examined the metal objects that are either in the *apothiki* or the Agios Nikolaos museum. Dr. F. Pigière (U. Dublin & UCLouvain) also participated in the study of microfauna, while L.M. Magno (UCLouvain & ASCS) took several micromorphological samples.

Other, not yet mentioned, undergraduate and graduate student volunteers who participated in the 2017-2019 campaigns came from the Universities of Louvain, Ioannina, Crete, Thessaloniki, Athens, Gent, Kalamata,

Liège, Namur, St.-Luc-Liège, Aix-Marseille, Heidelberg, Leiden, Catania, Montreal, San Paolo, Toronto, Idaho, Maastricht, Madrid, Copenhagen, Strasbourg, Lyon, Montpellier, Sheffield, Melbourne, Edinburgh, Vancouver and Oxford and included, in alphabetical order: E. Adam, L. Aitken-Burt, E. Alexiadi, E. Anastasaki, C. Apostolou, N. Athanasiadis, A. Axiotis, V. Barka, J. Bell, S. Bell, A. Boga, I. Boutsis, C. Bouquet, L. Carlito, A. Chalastara, A. Coco, S. Collard, A. Crabbé, L. Crabbeels, C. De Bona, B. Deloz, A. De Luca, O. Demeulemeester, A. Dermanis, P. Doumaki, S. Drakaki, L. Drosos, S. Efthymoglou, P. Fange, A. Faroyanni, C. Figueroa Arriagada, S. Fountoukidou, K. Franchet, P. Ganza, M. Georgiadou, V. Herman, M. Heuchamps, N. Jozwik, I. Kappa, M. Kapaktsoglou, E. Kara, E. Kaznaferi, S. Kiriakidou, Y. Kordonoulis, D. Kostas, K. Kurkman, S. Leemans, M. Liebert, C. Lievin, D. Lugano, D. Machaira, R. Machavoine, J. Marks, A. Matera, A. Mavromati, D. Mazaraki, A. Meulemeester, E. Millot, J. Monville, C. Mylona, A. Nerantzi, V. Niarchou, L. Nicolay, D. Olah, T. Panagiotopoulou, C. Pantazis, N. Pantelidou, A. Pavlidaki, C. Piper, S. Pontikos, K. Regnier, R. Riciputo, A. Rode, F. Roka, S. Rosseel, A. Samouris, T. Savulov; Y-L. Siatra, A. Shaprova, M. Sklavonou, G. Skoufaras, D. Skoulikari, Y. Stathis, S. Stelios, A. Stracke, C. Tegou, K. Tegou, T. Thoennes, L. Thurn, B. Tsarbopoulos, S. Tserota, S. Tsoukleidi, M. Tsiliki, N. Tsironis, R. Vandoorslaer, C. Van Huffel, I. Vareli, D. Vendramin (2017-2019), I. Vitoratou, J. Wilmet, D. Wolf, L. Zielinski, Y. Zitelli, and D. Zoupa¹.

Perhaps a small reminder of nomenclature. Zones at Sissi (*cf.* **figs 1.2 & 1.3**) are simply areas that are excavated by a specific supervisor. They have no further meaning than facilitating topographical positioning, recording and storing. Some areas of the excavation are sometimes reinvestigated by another supervisor in later years, explaining why, within the same building, different numbers are used for adjacent spaces.

The campaign of 2019 was the tenth excavation season, and the last of the second five-year permit graciously granted to us by the Hellenic Ministry of Culture. While we managed to achieve most of our initial aims, including the survey of the east Sissi basin, the excavation of Burial Building 9 and the wings of the Court-Centred Building (CCB), much work remains to be done in Zones 1, 18 and, with regard to the CCB, testing details of its chronology. In the meantime, the team will concentrate on a series of final publications and further consolidation of the site.

2. A summary of the 2017-2019 Excavations (fig 1.2)

The 2017 season started with an extensive cleaning campaign of the site and in particular of two areas that we wanted to tested geophysically (GPR), a task again performed by Dr. Apostolos Sarris (IMS-Rethymnon), assisted by Meropi Manetaki (see § 2). This work concentrated on the very north part of the site where we were interested to find out whether the areas east and west of Zone 9 (the west part of the cemetery) and the area east of Zone 2 (the Neopalatial structures on the Middle Terrace) preserved signs of ancient use or occupation. At the far south-western end of the cemetery area, west of Zone 9, part of the linear anomalies registered by the GPR could be matched with the surface appearance of a series of wall lines that indicate the presence of a substantial building. A small test was conducted here (see § 7). In the east part of the Middle Terrace, the signals were more awkward but clear linear anomalies were evident. The area was tested as Zone 18, yielding interesting results (see § 4). A synthetic paper on the use and results of geophysical methods at Sissi has in the meantime appeared (Driessen & Sarris 2020).

The following description of the excavation work that took place during the 2017-2019 campaigns follows a north-south route, highlighting some of the most important results while details are given in the respective reports in this volume.

¹ My apologies if I have forgotten someone. More information on daily life during the excavations can be found in our Facebook group 'Sissi Excavations' and through our newsletters available at www.sarpedon.be.



FIG. 1.2 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE *KEPHALÌ* EXCAVATIONS AT THE END OF THE 2017 CAMPAIGN (TOP LEFT), SITUATION AT THE END OF THE 2018 CAMPAIGN SHOWING THE ZONES EXPLORED (TOP RIGHT) AND AT THE END OF THE 2019 CAMPAIGN (BOTTOM) (©EBSA; N. KRESS)

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FIG. 1.3 *KEPHALI SITE AT SISSI: ORGANISATION IN ZONES* (©EBSA; N. KRESS)

2.1. The Cemetery

Under the direction of Dr. A. Schmitt (CNRS, Aix-Marseille), seconded in 2017 by Dr. S. Déderix (FNRS, UCLouvain), excavation continued in and around Burial Building 9A, located in the west part of the cemetery (*Sissi IV*: 59-76). During the three campaigns, the excavation of this burial building was largely completed and part of another burial building identified (§ 3.1). Work concentrated in Spaces 9.4, 9.8, 9.10, 9.12 and 9.13. Excavation in Space 9.4 focused on a burial associated with fragments of a MM IIB pithos and especially on the east part of the compartment, where the remains of primary perinatal burials and adult bones in secondary position had been discovered in 2016. Excavation of this pit over the last three years produced more than 1500 bones, mostly disarticulated but also some with articulations. At the end of 2018, a layer with fewer perinatal bones and many adult bones was reached, associated with a straight-sided, handled cup. Near the bottom of the pit, primary burials

of perinatal individuals were present. On these, long bones and skulls of adults had been deposited and two adult individuals in partial connection were installed in the south part. Excavation of the pit was completed during the 2019 campaign and analysis is in progress. All in all, the entire pit has yielded evidence for more than 30 individuals. The completion of this bone pit also allowed the full exploration of Space 9.4. We also continued the further exploration of compartment 9.5 (*Sissi IV*: 67) and the compartment east of it, Space 9.8. This also contained a MM IIB pithos burial FE127 and a secondary deposit of human bones ('Bone Deposit 1'). We next explored the area to its southwest, Space 9.6, where three funerary pithoi were found inserted into an earlier, funerary level. The first burial pithos (FE147) contained the partially articulated remains of a 1-2-year-old infant. The second pithos (FE149) contained the remains of an adolescent whose bones had partially been removed after decay to make room for the primary burial of an adult (FE 148). The upper part of all three burials was subsequently disturbed. As was the case already in the east part of the cemetery, the pithos burials of Spaces 9.8 and 9.6 are later intrusions, probably MM IIB, once the burial buildings proper were in ruins. The walls of Space 9.6 had a divergent orientation from the walls more to the north and the geophysical survey had indicated the presence of regular wall alignments in this area, so we decided to open a large extension ('South Extension 2') to the south of the existing excavations. This had the specific aim of finding the extent of the structure to which Spaces 9.6, 9.7 and 9.11 belonged. As was the case with the more northern spaces, immediately below the surface layer we came upon a layer of eroded MM II sherds and small stones in a matrix of compact soil. This matrix seems to represent a purposefully installed layer that effectively sealed the Burial Building(s). On removal, we found the complete outline of a burial structure that is ca. 7 by 8 m large (Burial Building 9B), with a possibility that yet another burial building is located in the east part of the area. We also continued the excavation to the east of Burial Building 9A, in Space 9.10, also started in 2016 (*Sissi IV*: 34; 62-63), where a narrow compartment (ca. 2 by 0.5 m) in the west part was identified. Finally, we also explored the area further east, called 'East Extension 2'. Here there is potentially a path leading from the middle terrace (Zone 1) to the upper terrace of the cemetery (Zone 9).

In the east part of the cemetery (Zone 1), only limited work took place (§ 3.2). In compartment 1.23, Dr I. Crevecoeur completed the excavation of a pithos burial. It could be established that the pithos, which was lying flat, had been partly opened to take off its top part to remove the skull of the individual – probably female and aged 15-19 – that had been buried within. Then the large body sherd of the pithos was more or less replaced on top of the burial and covered with some stones. It is a remarkable illustration of secondary interference and skull removal during Middle Minoan times.

The cemetery report concludes with a brief report on the aDNA analyses that have been done on a first sample of individuals from the Sissi Cemetery (§ 3.3). A report on isotope analyses on some of these same individuals has in the meantime been published, suggestive of some mobility among them (Nafplioti *et al.* 2021).

2.2. The Middle Terrace (Zone 18)

Again following positive results of the geophysical survey on the Middle Terrace in 2017 – in contrast to the negative results obtained in the same area in 2007 (*Sissi I*: 25-26) – we tested the area close to the eastern terrace wall, which appeared like a modern construct (see § 4). Excavations directed by T. Sager brought to light a roughly rectangular albeit much damaged Building M. In the section beneath the modern east terrace wall, which is built across this building, a considerable depth of deposit is visible, making it likely that we only have explored the top parts of a building with a long biography. To the north, west, and perhaps south of this Building M are large open yards with either bedrock or pebble surfaces. At least three successive levels of such pebble floors exist and each floor is associated with small or large deposits of Neopalatial pottery, usually much broken. Within Building M, the many human bone deposits as well as articulated skeletons make it clear that it was a funerary structure at least in use during MM III-LM IA/B. Its contents and structure agree well with what know of House Tombs elsewhere on the site and on Crete but its late date is surprising. We still need to excavate the lower levels within to see if the structure as such goes back to an earlier period, which seems likely in view of the depth of the east section mentioned above. It illustrates, however, that burial continued in this general area after the Protopalatial period, when Zones 1 and 9 seem to have been abandoned. It also suggests that funerary activities happened in close proximity to the Neopalatial houses of Zone 2, barely 30 m away. In 2019, we opened a 1 by 10 m test trench to the west of Building M, to find out how far the pebble courtyard extended in the direction of the Neopalatial houses

to the west. The test exposed three different wall lines, running quite parallel in an east-west direction, leading to the domestic structures in Zone 2. Our guess is that we have here the remains of an original road connecting the residential Zone 2 with the contemporary Neopalatial funerary Building M. All this also illustrates a great continuity of practice since the type of architecture and deposits encountered, both in and outside Building M, closely relate to those in the earlier cemetery lower down the hill.

The internal organization and plan of Building M are not entirely clear since most walls are heavily damaged, either by later agricultural activities or perhaps by earthquake, which would explain why some of the deposits are intact and sealed by tumble. A large, roughly north-south wall divides the building in an eastern and a western part. The east part of Building M seems to comprise a single large space but it is not clear whether the area was covered or simply some kind of yard, enclosed on all sides. Within, several secondary deposits of human bones were encountered and quite a few isolated bones but also disturbed primary burials as well as three burial pits with extended or contracted individuals.

The western part seems to comprise a series of small compartments, organised around a central Space 18.4, which shows an interesting stratigraphy with gradual sedimentation down to a good floor level with a pillar base. Above this level, there are less clear floor surfaces but in each case with complete vases on them, mostly very similar juglets. There were also sterile layers between these floor surfaces, suggestive of brief periods of abandonment. Preliminary pottery dating gives a LM IA date for most layers but a painted jug in one of the highest levels may date to LM IB. Building M was also reused later for interments. It was seen that the compartment 18.2 was in fact intrusive and that some of its walls had been constructed from the inside, against a now no-longer existing, inclining side of a pit. Excavation within this compartment in 2019 revealed a disturbed primary burial of an adult individual with some independent anthropological evidence that robbers had been after the jewellery this person had been wearing. There was no diagnostic pottery associated but, about 0.20 m beneath, another primary burial of an adult was found, this time undisturbed (**fig. 1.4a-b**) (§ 4).

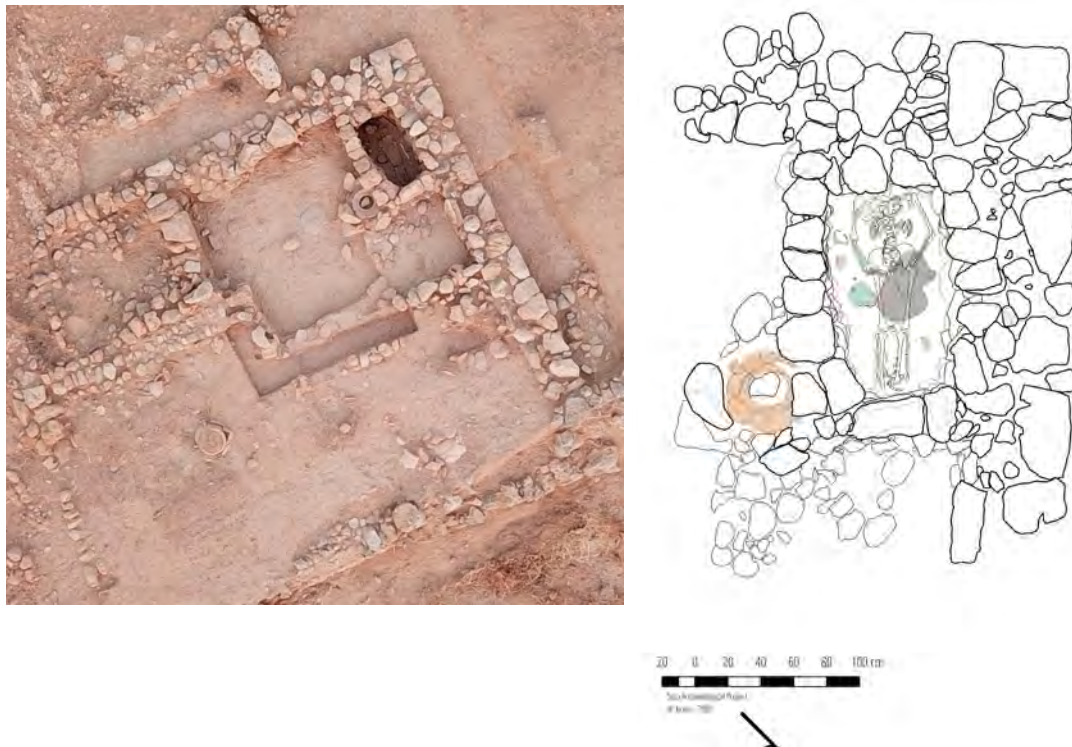


FIG. 1.4 AERIAL OF BUILDING M, SHOWING SKELETON IN POSITION; DRONE-BASE RECONSTRUCTED 3D-REPRESENTATION OF THE SHAFT GRAVE IN ZONE 18: POTTERY IN ORANGE, MIRROR IN GREEN (©EBSA; N. Kress)

The skeleton was associated with a bronze mirror, a necklace of gold beads and other small items. The type of

tomb, despite its low depth, can be described as a shaft grave and we assume that beams supporting slabs would have rested on the side walls, similar to tombs at Mycenae, Knossos and Chania (most recently Vlasaki 2010: 160, figs 8-10). The preliminary dating to LM II/IIIA1 (*cf* § 9.1, **fig. 9.1.23**) is interesting since architectural remains of this phase were also found in Zone 8 (see § 5). The presence of rich graves outside the Knossos-Archanes-Chania core area surprises and Sissi can hence be added as a potential outpost of the Mycenaean-inspired administration at Knossos. The southwest part of Building M needs more investigation but also yielded secondary and primary depositions of human remains. Beyond, the bedrock rises and a pit carved into the bedrock contained human remains with, at the bottom of the pit, a small deposit of LM IIIA2 miniature vessels. Another pit against the bedrock contained a secondary deposit with the remains of at least five individuals, associated with several complete vases, including a piriform jug and a pyxis, probably also LM IIIA1/2.

All in all, Zone 18 has considerably added to the history of the *Kephali*. Not only can we confirm that funerary rites continued on-site during the Neopalatial and even Final Palatial period. We don't know yet whether new grounds were chosen to do this – with Zones 1 and 9 on the lower terraces remaining abandoned – or whether Zone 18 was already in use during the Protopalatial period and there was hence continuity. Moreover, the same, Neopalatial area was selected for funerary deposition during the Final Palatial Period (LM II-III A1/2). The continuity in practices, however, could imply some connection between the people buried during this long period or at least an attempt by the later inhabitants of the site to initially connect with the earlier ones. Thus far there is no solid evidence, however, that the area continued to be used in the Postpalatial Period (LM IIIB) and the main cemetery may have been located elsewhere in the Sissi basin². The break, accompanied also by the construction of Building CDE, may have been considerable.

2.3. The North Terrace (Zone 8)

Excavation under the direction of T. Claeys continued in the North Terrace (Zone 8), immediately north of Building CD, where earlier geophysical exploration had suggested the presence of considerable architectural remains with wall orientations that aligned with those of Building CD ('Area A' *cf.* *Sissi IV*: 47-50). Excavation, started here in 2016 (*Sissi IV*: 35) (see § 5), continued during 2017, 2018 and 2019. It yielded evidence for a dense occupation during the various phases of the settlement. An earlier test in 2010 had come upon a Middle Minoan II/III deposit in Space 8.3, immediately north of Building CD (*Sissi II*: 139-141), and it was first assumed that the entire complex, as shown through geophysical exploration, would date to this phase. The picture as we have it now is far more complex. In any case, the history of this area seems entirely to predate that of the final Building CD, that is mainly LM IIIA2-B2, while the latest occupation in Zone 8 seems LM IIIA2 early. It is now also clear that the North Terrace was already in use for major Neopalatial occupation between MM IIIA up to the mature LM IB phase, phases also attested beneath Building CD when tested.

The excavation of Zone 8 happened on two different terraces separated by a long east-west wall. To the north of this wall, we came upon a dense red mudbrick destruction layer, with especially Protopalatial sherds (MM IIB), but we found neither a proper floor nor deposits apart from part of a pithos with a cup inside within a buttress. Traces of fire destruction are rare south of the long east-west wall so at the moment we assume that the complex on the upper southern terrace was multi-storeyed and that fire only affected the upper storey(s), leading to its/their collapse onto the lower terrace. This fire may have started during seismic activities for which there is good evidence.

The area south of the long east-west wall can be subdivided in three sections that each have their own history and seemingly carried three independent structures. To the west, most of the remains date to the LM II-LM IIIA1/2 period, comprising Ephyraean goblets and kylikes, rare forms thus far at Sissi and before only illustrated by redeposited pottery in the open area between Buildings CD and E in Zone 5 (*Sissi II*: 158, 193-195, *fig. 8.12*). This pottery was found within a very sturdy rectangular construction (8.13) that clearly was dug into existing structures (Building HA). Considering the massive nature of the masonry, the depth of the room, and the fact that the structure

² During the survey, larnax fragments were found at several locations (see § 8.3). During an earlier survey by the EFA (S. Müller-Celka in Blackman 1997: 110), one 'certain' and two potential rock-cut chamber tombs were located in the area of Langada. It is not clear, however, whether these rock-cut galleries were effectively tombs since local informers attribute these to wartime operations. This last possibility does not exclude the first evidently.

is connected to the large east-west wall, as well as its strategic position at the corner of the north terrace of the hill facing the sea, the spaces are provisionally interpreted as forming the substructure of a small fortified structure, perhaps a tower. It may also be suggested that these remains represent the earliest post-LM IB construction on the site, perhaps closely following in time to a Neopalatial residential building (HC), which existed in the east part of the same terrace and which seems to have been abandoned, perhaps again after earthquake.

The central area of this south terrace, however, between the LM II-III A1/2 constructions to the west and the Neopalatial structures to the east, was occupied by a badly damaged building (HB) of which a series of spaces have been explored that seem largely date to Protopalatial and early Neopalatial times. The pottery in some of the rooms was much broken and the many stones found on them and the bad state of the walls could potentially indicate a destruction by earthquake. Pending detailed analysis, a date between MM IIB and early MM IIIA is suggested. Close to the façade of Building CD, we came upon the complete skeleton of a calf. The position of the legs suggests the animal had been trussed as if for a sacrifice, similar to a scene shown on the more or less contemporary Agia Triada sarcophagus. More to the west, we came upon two more inverted cooking pots. These, as well as the two found earlier (*Sissi II*: 139, fig. 5.81; 140, fig. 5.83), contained the skeletons of perinatals. More to the east, however, we came upon the articulated skeleton of a young infant buried in a pit. Since all these remains were placed on top of Protopalatial walls and Neopalatial levels and the later, Postpalatial façade was constructed on top of some of the burial vases, they stratigraphically date to the late Neopalatial or Final Palatial Period. All these intrusions (calf, pit-burial & pot burials) perhaps formed a small burial ground contemporary to the tower structure HA. A full, multi-authored publication is being prepared.

The east side of the south terrace is taken up by a relatively large residential structure HC, dating to the Neopalatial period. There is some evidence for an earlier fire destruction but the final occupation dates to the advanced LM IB phase, or to early in LM II and hence predating the tower-structure to the west. Some rooms preserved good pottery deposits. Unfortunately, the more eastern part of the building has been very much affected by erosion, is badly preserved and bedrock shows. One room, however, may have had a lightwell or impluvium, surrounded by four pillar bases, *ammouda* slabs and blue stone paving. East of this is a sturdy north-south running façade, probably with a large threshold, accessible from the east via some steps. This façade may have continued to the north before turning west to form the north terrace wall of the Lower Terrace. All in all, this could have been a substantial building but full exploration is only possible if our soil dump is removed.

2.4. The Court-Centred Building (fig. 1.5)

Most of our efforts during the last three years concentrated on the further clearing of the Court-Centred Building (henceforth CCB), the exploration of which started in 2011 and then again in 2015 (see *Sissi III*: 135-154; *IV*: 151-294; also Driessen 2017; 2021 for a summary and first interpretation). We managed to clarify much of its occupational history with the identification of several Neopalatial phases (MM IIIA-MM IIIB-LM IA) not only in the architecture but also in the stratigraphy of some rooms and within the Central Court (see § 6). We also found important evidence for a considerable Prepalatial occupation and this occupation too seems to comprise several phases (early and late EM IIA and EM IIB). In addition, we cleared several paved passages that seem to have led directly from the outside to the Central Court: major accesses from the west (Western Entrance Passage-WEP) and north (Northern Entrance Passage-NEP) as well as minor ones from the north-east and south-east. These passages may have played an important role in the life of the court building. During these last three years, our principal aim was to extend the excavation of the CCB in all directions in order to define its outer limits. While we conducted a few tests in areas where Neopalatial floors were not preserved, a true programme of soundings to explore the detailed history of the building is reserved for future campaigns. Erosion, however, has caused a lot of damage: we assume that most outer façades have eroded away since neither to the north, east or west, proper facades could be identified. The mediocre preservation of some of the wings, where bedrock rises and most walls have disappeared, evidently does not help the general comprehension of the remains, let alone their interpretation. This is further aggravated by the fact that the complex was largely emptied when it was abandoned in LM IA.



FIG. 1.5 AERIAL PHOTO OF THE COURT BUILDING AT SISSI, NORTH AT LEFT, IN 2019 (©EBSA; N. Kress)

As mentioned above, several architectural phases exist within the Neopalatial complex, something also suggested by the different orientations and wall masonries encountered. Additional evidence recovered during the last campaigns now adds considerably to these impressions. Not only did detailed cleaning of the plaster of the Central Court reveal at least two distinctive layers – the later a solid pebble-plaster floor or *tarazza*, the earlier a finer, whiter coat with few pebbles – but also within some wings, an earlier and later phase could be distinguished. The huge fills encountered in some internal and external spaces of the CCB may also result from cleaning operations following one or more MM III destructive events of the building, especially in the north and east wings.

The biggest surprise in 2018 and 2019 was the recognition of a relatively well-preserved Early Minoan IIA (*ca.* 2600 BCE) cluster of small residential spaces on the upper terrace, immediately to the west of the Neopalatial complex (Zone 10). Excavation directed by Dr. Q. Letesson had started here in 2018 with the intention to find the west façade of the CCB. This was not found (although we have a good idea where it could have been) but eventually about a dozen small rooms were cleared with the promise of more if and when excavations resume. Interestingly, the overall plan of the structures revealed corresponds well with the outline suggested by the geophysical survey (*Sissi IV*: 51, fig. 2.6; 57, fig. 2.13). The annotated drone image (fig. 1.6), prepared by Dr. Q. Letesson, shows the relation between the excavated remains in white and superimposed in red the remains suggested by signals of the GPR survey by A. Sarris. Letesson wonders whether the extant buildings are located on either side of a small street. All spaces yielded important floor deposits comprising stone tools, obsidian blades and nuclei as well as different types of small vases (juglets, ‘raki’-cups *etc. cf.* § 9.4). Apart from these, Space 10.29 also preserved part of a pithos and more than 40 goat horn cores. In 2018, similar cores had already been found in a Prepalatial context in Space 11.1 (*Sissi IV*: 205) but we are at moment at loss to explain their use. On the basis of the fine greyware and several examples of Kampos and Koumasa ware, the pottery has been dated to early EM IIA (§ 9.4). Several of the spaces have platforms made of flat pebbles (10.21, 2014, 10.26) that are quite diagnostic. The function of these platforms is unclear (work platform? bed?). The west wall of Space 10.25 and the east wall of Space 10.26 need further cleaning but it is not unlikely that they had an apsidal form.



FIG. 1.6 PREPALATIAL REMAINS, EXCAVATED AND SUGGESTED BY GPR, WEST OF THE CCB AT SISSI (©EBSA; N. KRESS, A. SARRIS & Q. LETESSON)

The good preservation of the remains and the presence of extensive floor deposits of early EM IIA date offers a unique opportunity to learn more about this period, which is barely preserved at Malia but has recently also been found at Halepa, near Pachyammos. The seemingly sudden abandonment of these structures without any sign of disturbance is also quite surprising as is the lack of later disturbance or interference. Nearby, and also on the upper terrace, are the remains of a single, finely plastered room (10.22) – the only one to be preserved at this level (see below). This room, however, intrudes in the earlier levels while elsewhere this is not the case. We can explain the good preservation of Prepalatial remains if we assume that a thick layer of sediment had formed before the Neopalatial complex was constructed a 1000 years later. This hypothetical sediment could first have been retained by a Prepalatial wall and later by the no-longer existing West Façade of the CCB. On excavation on the Upper Terrace, in any case, the Early Minoan remains were found immediately beneath the modern surface. Clear Early Minoan IIB fire destruction deposits were also found inside the later Neopalatial complex, within Zones 10 and 11.

What is also surprising is the general absence or rarity of EM III-MM IA and MM IB-IIB deposits in the CCB. Only from MM IIIA onwards does the place seem to have been reoccupied. While MM IIB occupation is clear elsewhere at Sissi (see § 9.5), *e.g.* in Zone 4 (*Sissi II*: 105-108; IV: 138) and Zone 5 (*Sissi III*: 122-133), it is not common and frequently found redeposited (*Sissi I*: 34, 107, 137, 141). MM IIIA, on present evidence, seems to present a second moment of major change after the Prepalatial period.

During the last three campaigns, much effort went into the clearing of the Central Court. In 2017, this happened under the direction of E. Hayter (see § 6.6) whereas a small test in the south part was made in 2018 by T. Mumelter

(§ 6.7). The entire court is now *ca.* 15.50 by 33 m (*ca.* 451 to 460 m²), more or less agreeing with the 1:2 proportion that is usual for such courts in Minoan architecture. During earlier campaigns, several architectural features of the court had already been revealed and the 2017-2018 campaigns added some new ones. Close to the southwestern corner of the court, immediately south of the arrival of a finely paved corridor (the Western Entrance Passage), we came across a 0.20 m high platform, measuring 1.85 m N-S by 2.20 m E-W. It consists of three *sideropetra* blocks that look like they were pried out of the natural bedrock. Its function can only be guessed at, but west of it was found a complete stone vase, the only one thus far in the CCB (*cf.* **fig. 6.5.33**). Its situation next to the court evidently calls for a comparison with similar installations close to Central Courts as that within the palace at Gournia (Soles 1991: 45) (**fig. 1.7**).



FIG. 1.7 STONE PLATFORM TO THE SOUTH-WEST OF THE CENTRAL COURT AT SISSI (FROM NORTH AND EAST) (ABOVE) (©EBSA; J. Driessen) AND (BELOW) TO THE NORTHWEST OF THE COURT AT GOURNIA (COURTESY T. SAGER)

Immediately north of the same access point to the Central Court, the east-facing façade of the West Wing is flanked by a narrow and flat bench or platform. The façade itself is here formed by two upright-standing *poros* blocks that form part of the wall. These are the only two upright-standing blocks in the facades and although their tops are damaged, it is tempting to interpret them as originally having formed large, composite horns of consecration, paralleling an installation found next to the Nirou Chani mansion (**fig. 1.8**).



FIG. 1.8 SOUTH-WEST SIDE OF THE CENTRAL COURT WITH (A) STONE PLATFORM, (B) WESTERN ENTRANCE PASSAGE (WEP) AND (C) PARTLY RECONSTRUCTED POTENTIAL HORNS OF CONSECRATION (©EBSA, J. DRIESSEN)

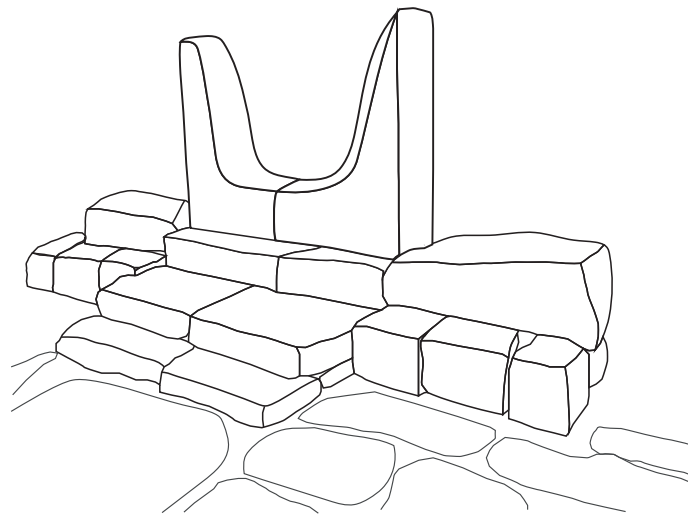


FIG. 1.9 NIROU CHANI: RECONSTRUCTION OF THE STEPPED PLATFORM WITH HORNS OF CONSECRATION AGAINST THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE COURT (©EBSA; N. Kress, based on a PHOTO OF THE PLATFORM BY MONIKA ZACHER AND A PHOTO BY GEORGIA FLOUDA OF THE HORNS CONSERVED IN THE HERAKLION MUSEUM)

In the previous report, we discussed the circular burnt clay structure that sits in the centre of the court (*Sissi IV*: 284-285). The continuous clearing of the area of the court southeast of this feature up to the west-facing façade of the court brought to light an apsidal-shaped area with paving slabs, located somewhat off one of the *ammouda* thresholds leading into Space 15.3 of the East Wing, excavated under the direction of O. Mouthuy. Some of the plaster flooring of the court actually runs over these slabs, showing that they are earlier than the latest relaying. Near this paved area we also found the continuation of the layer of burnt earth that was already encountered more to the north (*Sissi IV*: 288). And again, within this burnt layer were more miniature goblets identical to those we found before. Since these goblets were sometimes found pushed into the court surface they really form part of its last use, which we assume to be LM IA. The goblets must have formed one or more composite vessels, also called *kernoi* in Minoan archaeology. We conjecture that the object of which these goblets originally formed part had initially been deposited within the circular structure, which had been emptied of its contents only recently before the court was abandoned.

In 2018, we decided to record and remove the tumble of *ammouda* ashlar that flanked the east-facing façade of the court from north to south and in front of the platform that was set in the corner between the earlier Prepalatial façade and Space 6.17 (Sissi IV: 39; 178). The removal of the tumble that comprised carefully cut rectangular blocks, which originally formed a staircase leading up to the platform, revealed a two-stepped *ammouda* entrance into Space 6.17 (fig. 1.10). Since the sidewall in the entrance to Space 6.17 was placed on top of the threshold, it is likely that the doorway into 6.17 was made somewhat smaller when the platform was constructed next to it. Both are constructed against the Prepalatial boulder wall as mentioned above. The platform itself is a solid, carefully made, square construction, about 1 m high. No finds were made that help the understanding of its function but ashlar platforms, apart from that at Nirou mentioned above, are also attested *e.g.* against the northwest side of the Central Court of the Palace at Phaistos, within a Late Minoan II building at Hagia Triada and elsewhere.



FIG. 1.10 ASHLAR PLATFORM: ORTHOPHOTO (©EBSA; E. ZOGRFOU & N. KRESS), DRAWING (©EBSA; E. ZOGRFOU) AND TWO PHASES OF STEPS INTO SPACE 6.17, SEEN FROM SOUTH-EAST; RECONSTRUCTION BASED ON TUMBLE (©EBSA; J. DRIESSEN, E. ZOGRFOU)

To the south, the court is supported by a monumental terrace wall that is preserved for a height of more than 1 meter. We assume that this terrace wall did not form part of the original construction of the complex but that it was built to extend the surface of the court, almost doubling it. The area of the court must have remained largely open after its abandonment, something which we already suspected on the basis of stratigraphical evidence found during the 2015 and 2016 seasons (Sissi IV: 185-190). In a much later period, this southern terrace wall was partly overbuilt by a more recent wall (FE602) with a somewhat differing orientation and diagonally crossing it. This later wall starts from the east-facing façade of the court. Since this wall runs down the hill, it may have flanked some kind of path leading up the hill from the terrace below. Even lower down the south slope are the remains of an Ottoman *kalderim* path, destroyed when the south part of the hill was cut to install an asphalted road in 1988

when the *Kalimera Kriti* hotel was built. Perhaps the path allowed access to the top of the hill from the south at a time when the site was used for cattle (*Sissi I*: 24).

We asked and received the permission from the Ministry to remove the later diagonal wall during the 2019 campaign after detailed recording. In it were found sherds dating to modern times, confirming our suspicions. Its removal, moreover, allowed the lower zone to be investigated under the direction of T. Mumelter, revealing a series of grid-like walls and spaces. Apart from a LM IIIA-B floor in Spaces 16.103 and 16.104 (associated with the construction of wall FE603), none of the spaces yielded finds or floors. Hence, all perpendicular walls seem to have served as buttresses for the southern retaining wall of the court. The same may apply to a series of six perpendicular walls found south of the Western Entrance Passage (mentioned below). Between the most western walls here was a rich assemblage of LM IIIA and B pottery, probably a dump. This represents together with the deposit in Space 16.103-104 and Building F, some of the rare Postpalatial intrusions into what is almost exclusively a Neopalatial complex. Mention may be made of the discovery of two sealstones, one in blue glass, the other showing a lion and column and both are stylistically dated to LM II-III A (see § 11). There is also a grey-limestone block with hollows in its top, incorporated within one of the lower walls south of the court (16.101). This *kernos* may perhaps belong to an earlier phase and simply have been removed from the court when a new one was installed on a platform in front of the East Wing (*Sissi II*: 70, fig. 7.9). The eastern corner of the massive retaining wall consists of two large slabs rather than of blocks and these slabs are almost level with the court surface. Perhaps they formed some kind of threshold allowing access to the court from the south since immediately south, beyond the line formed by the south wall of the court, there are two diagonal alignments of flat slabs or stones that go down the hill, perhaps originally forming some kind of raised walk.

Work continued in 2018 and 2019 in the North-East Wing (Zone 6) under the supervision of Dr. M. Devolder, focussing on two specific areas (see § 6.2) (already *Sissi IV*: 155-190). On the one hand, she explored the area North of wall FE110, which we considered as the northern façade of the North-East Wing where another wall parallel to the façade was found. This new wall is not very well preserved and we lose it more to the east so it is possible that, together with the façade, it perhaps originally supported a ramp or staircase, which connected the lower area with the upper terrace to the west. The higher levels in the west part of this corridor yielded LM IIIA2-B pottery, which is quite rare in the area of the CCB, a reminder of what may have been lost. Within the North-East Wing, excavation continued in Space 6.12, the paved area that had already been partially explored in 2011 (*Sissi III*: 149) and separates the East Wing from the North-East Wing. This brought to light a few more limestone slabs close to the actual surface. Much must have eroded away, however. Along the north side of the paved area, two parts of a large stone drain were found. This drain must originally have carried off surface waters from the court down the north-east slope. Detailed examination of this drain in 2019 yielded several interesting architectural details, including three parts of a clay drain set inside the stone drain and sealed with lime plaster. Densely packed stones in the western branch of the drain suggests that the installation was blocked at some moment, perhaps when the passage to the Central Court was blocked. In any case, the court is at its lowest point in its north-east corner so much of the rain water must have been evacuated through this drain. The blocking may therefore have accelerated sedimentation.

The dismantling of the north-south modern terrace wall (*Sissi IV*: 158, fig. 5.2.4 for a plan) that retained the higher western terrace and formed the border between Zones 6 and 11 made it possible to reveal both the west wall of the North-East wing (Zone 6) and the east wall of the North-West wing (Zone 11). These walls were seen to form the side walls of a finely paved corridor, the Northern Entrance Passage (NEP), discussed below. This dismantling also made it possible to continue the exploration of the previously partly excavated Spaces 6.21 and 6.22 (*Sissi IV*: 159, 164-166). The modern terrace wall had protected the levels close to the west wall of these rooms so that a stone *gourna* and a platform could be identified. More to the east, however, erosion had carried away most deposits. The absence of floor level did allow us to conduct a test in Space 6.21 where earlier a partially preserved floor of terracotta plaques was found. About 0.20 m below this floor was another, earlier floor level, consisting of a revetment of 11 terracotta plaques, associated with MM IIIA pottery. The presence of almost identical floors at two different levels suggests great continuity throughout the history of the building complex. Moreover, the close similarity between the two terracotta installations suggests that only the central part of the room had been paved with slabs. In the spaces to the east, most levels are gone. In the long and narrow corridor 6.23, only two stone slabs survive as well as what seems like the bedding of slabs elsewhere. This suggests that the entire corridor may

once have been paved with stone slabs. Most of the associated pottery is early Neopalatial but earlier wall lines have been identified. In Spaces 6.24 and 6.25, we found a *tarazza* floor with a fire destruction level on top which contained a number of cups, dated to LM IA by C. Langohr. This, in itself, is already an interesting observation since thus far we had not come across clear evidence of fire destruction before LM IB. The area to the north of Spaces 6.24 and 6.25 is not entirely clear (North-East Extension). It was entirely covered by a mixture of large stones, huge quantities of pumice – up to 50 % of the sediments in some areas –, sherds, plaster, bits of *tarazza* as well as small nests of fragmentary and complete conical cups, dated to LM IA. Either this represents the collapse or erosion of the rooms to the west or it is the result of a large cleaning operation following a destruction in LM IA since it includes some clearly mature LM IA if not LM IB sherds, later than anything thus far found in the area of the CCB.

The continued excavation of the North-West Wing under the direction of Dr. S. Déderix (see § 6.3) revealed, as mentioned, the Northern Entrance Passage (Space 11.11), a finely paved road or corridor, which crosses the wing from north to south over a distance of 16 m. It runs roughly parallel to the east walls of Spaces 11.3, 11.5, 11.7 and 11.12, although this last space may already have been outside. The ceramic material found in the layers on top of the paving of the passage is for the most part Neopalatial. There is a niche in the west wall of the passage, close to the entrance to the court (part of Space 11.4). Here were found several fragments of a bull rhyton (fig. 1.11) that is under restoration as well as a large terracotta horn, which, because of its size, seems to come from another rhyton or figure. Not far from where these items were found but in the court itself, we already had recovered parts of what seemed like a horse figurine in 2011 (Sissi III: 146, fig. 6.17) and a bull in 2015 (Sissi IV: 186, fig. 5.2.36), among other figurines. Their concentration in the north-west corner of the court may imply that all originally were kept in the niche of the passage.



FIG. 1.11 PART OF A BULL RHYTON AS FOUND WITHIN THE NORTHERN ENTRANCE PASSAGE (©EBSA; J. DRIESSEN)

There are clear signs that some parts of the walls bordering the Northern Entrance Passage were actually constructed on top of pre-existing paving slabs of the corridor, again suggesting a more complex life-history of the building. Moreover, the very north-eastern end of the east wall of the passage was clearly added at a late stage, blocking the access from the east to the steps or ramp longing the north façade of the North-East Wing, mentioned earlier. No particular entrance system to the passage was observed.

Within the western spaces of the North-West wing (11.1 & 11.2), several Prepalatial deposits without any later occupation were found in 2015-2016 (Sissi IV: 203-208), while in the eastern spaces (11.3, 11.5 & 11.7) the Neopalatial floors were preserved. Only isolated and fragmentary cups were found on the floors of Spaces 11.5 and 11.3, but a dense concentration of fragmentary Neopalatial cups was found in Space 11.10. In Space 11.7 too, there

was a dense ceramic deposit and perhaps also a small patch of Santorini ash, not yet confirmed by analysis. The north-east corner of Space 11.7 was not preserved but the paving east of it shows its original line. A test in Space 11.3 showed that, in an earlier Neopalatial phase, the room consisted of two spaces separated by a thin partition wall, before becoming a single, spacious room with a central pillar. A small test in the south part of this room went down to Prepalatial levels. The rising bedrock to the west and north of this wing probably means that the building did not extend in these directions and that the north wall of Space 11.7 originally formed the northwest façade of the CCB.

Excavation also continued to the south, close to the areas where Prepalatial remains were first explored in 2015 as part of Zone 10 (Sissi IV: 240-243). Excavation in corridor 11.4 yielded sherds of mixed date, mainly Prepalatial to the west and Neopalatial to the east (§ 6.3). In the middle of this corridor was a fragmentary wine press, probably Neopalatial. The EM IIB destruction layer that had been partly excavated in Space 11.9 in 2015 (Sissi IV: fig. 5.3.32) and that also existed in Space 11.2 continues south (see also § 9.4). This suggests that the Neopalatial builders cut through the Prepalatial occupation layers along a line oriented north-south and aligned with the west wall of Space 11.3. In contrast, the Prepalatial levels seem to have been left untouched in Space 11.6. All this suggests that Spaces 11.6 and 11.4 originally formed a staircase once connected with the stone steps leading down into Space 6.17. This staircase would have been built on Prepalatial remains in Space 11.6, with some sort of *sottoscala* in Space 11.4. West of here, untouched Prepalatial levels were reached with at least six superimposed surfaces of packed earth in Space 11.8, which may be compared to the eight surfaces found in Space 10.10 next door (Sissi IV: 242, fig. 5.4.28). The EM IIB fire destruction in Space 11.9 comprised many small vessels crushed *in situ* (§ 9.4). The signs of fire destruction encountered within the south-west part of the North-East wing contrast with the absence of such signs in the Upper Terrace Extension to the west.

We have already mentioned the presence of Early Minoan remains on the UTE. The only later structure found on this upper terrace, Space 10.22, is only partly preserved – protected by a large heap of stones – while its east part had eroded down the hill. Within the layer that had eroded down, however, we found a shifted column base and broken terracotta plaques and some terracotta plaques were found *in situ*, more or less in the middle of the room. The similarity of the installation with the terracotta plaques and column base found in Space 6.21 (§ 6.2), allows the suggestion that Space 10.22 also belonged to the CCB. If the original room was square, it must have been quite sizeable (*ca.* 16 m²). Its position on the upper level implies that it was located on what must have been the first floor since its floor is *ca.* 2.70 m above that of the Central Court (19.40 asl vs 16.70 asl). It shows to what extent our picture is affected by preserved archaeological data. The quality of the finishing of this room, however, is instructive and informs us to some extent about the considerable investment that went into the original decoration of the CCB of which we already suspected that it had been fully plastered (Sissi IV: 166). Careful cleaning and *in-situ*-consolidation in 2018-2019 by our plaster expert Athina Kritikou showed that both the floor and the benches had been re-plastered on several occasions and revealed unsuspected colours and decorative patterns, including what may be called a Jason Pollock style type of design with blue and red splashes (fig. 1.12).



FIG. 1.12 ONE OF THE PAINTED PLASTER FLOORS IN SPACE 10.22 (©EBSA; C. PAPANIKOLOPOULOS)

More work also took place within the West Wing proper during the last seasons (see § 6.4). Four spaces were (partially) explored and some of these (10.12, 10.14) preserved their original Neopalatial plaster floor. Others, however, only produced Prepalatial assemblages, including early EM IIA ceramics (Spaces 10.8, 10.19). Continued excavation in Space 10.19 added more than 5000 pieces of obsidian (especially flakes but also some blades and nuclei) to the 800+ found before (cf. *Sissi IV*: 271-274: Extension II). Good Prepalatial deposits were also found in Spaces 10.9 and 10.15. Excavation is unfinished but the close association of these deposits with the surrounding walls shows that several of the latter already date to the 3rd millennium BCE (§ 9.4).

The area south of the southern ashlar façade of the West Wing was explored under the direction of T. Terrana in 2017 and 2019 (Zone 17) (see § 6.5). A preliminary architectural analysis suggests there were three phases in the construction of this southwest area. In a first phase, the east-facing façade of the West Wing (along Space 17.1) was formed by a boulder wall. The removal of the *ammouda* ashlar tumble on the court, mentioned above, showed that this boulder wall (phase I) continues north and seems to have been used as the foundation of the *ammouda* ashlar west façade of the court. Both this east-facing ashlar façade of the court and the south-facing façade of the original West Wing were plastered (phase II) and this plaster is still visible behind the rubble wall (phase III) constructed against part of the south-facing façade. But the area immediately south of West Wing proper – the area in between the *ammouda* ashlar facades – still remains unclear.

The main construction in the south-west part is what we have called the *Basin Building* – a rectangular structure of ca. 4.80 by 12.70 m with different internal spaces (10.5, 17.13, 17.8, 17.9, 17.5). This building differs in orientation with the rest of the complex as already shown by the geophysical survey. It was partly investigated in 2015-2016 (*Sissi IV*: 56, fig. 2.12; *IV*: 233-235, Extension 1) and again during the recent campaigns. As it appears now, it seems to be a later addition to the original plan of the complex, inserted or superimposed onto earlier remains that can be recognised in Spaces 10.3, 10.4 and 17.1. The underground chamber 10.5 of the Basin Building was found packed with ashlar, which had been dumped here. Some Postminoan sherds from the fill may suggest that this happened quite late – perhaps as late as the Byzantine period. The original position of these ashlar blocks is unknown but it can be assumed that they come from nearby, perhaps from the façades around the court or from the original West façade. The underground chamber was accessible from the west, probably via a wooden staircase. The spaces west did not yield any deposits.

North of the *Basin Building* is an open-air but enclosed Space 10.6 where we had found a thin, dispersed layer of Santorini ash (*Sissi IV*: 275-279). Beneath this layer, we came upon a dense mixture of broken pottery and plaster fragments. Further excavation revealed that the pottery formed dense layers that formed a fill into a semi-circular depression, with a diameter of ca. 4 m, cut out into the bedrock (10.6) (fig. 1.13).



FIG. 1.13 TWO VIEWS (FROM WEST) OF THE SEMI-CIRCULAR DEPRESSION SOUTH OF THE SOUTH FAÇADE OF THE WEST WING SHOWING BROKEN POTTERY AND PLASTER FLOORS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS (©EBSA; J. DRIESSEN)

The rock bottom of this depression was originally plastered and in its centre was a broken MM IIB or MM IIIA amphora, providing a date for the creation of the area. This depression was connected through an outlet with Space 10.5 of the *Basin Building* proper. At some stage, the installation seems to have lost its role as a collecting or filtering device and was gradually filled in with large quantities of broken ceramics of various types but especially

cups. During excavation, we think we identified at least four specific episodes of filling, each time with a potential plaster floor sealing a dense batch of pottery. This pottery is under study by I. Mathioudaki and seems mainly of MM IIIB and early LM IA date.

The *Basin Building* is flanked on its south side by a finely paved corridor, for a length of 17 m, similar to that found between the North-East and North-West Wings (11.1). At its western end, the slab surface of this Western Entrance Passage (WEP) changes into a floor made of blue pebbles set in a clay floor. The bedrock on the south side at the west end is specially cut to receive a rectangular wooden base while a limestone base sits on the north side, hence indicative of a potential doorway or entrance. The south wall of the paved passage was partly robbed out in the Byzantine period while the north wall was partly in *ammouda* ashlar. Some of the ashlar blocks were found fallen on the paved floor south of it, forming part of a dense fire destruction, comprising also many mudbricks and charcoal but not much else. This is, together with small areas within the West and North-East Wings, one of the few areas within the CCB where a localised fire destruction could be identified. Since the Western Entrance Passage was undoubtedly one of the major entrances leading into the complex, one may wonder whether the fire was intentional and served to block the access to the court during the abandonment process. Before reaching the court through the Western Entrance Passage, a doorway north leads, via a two-stepped threshold, into an area of which the walls are quite irregular and in the space beyond many stones were found. We are not certain about the original appearance of this area. Perhaps it originally housed a staircase or is the substructure of a grandstand. On the other hand, most of the walls may be earlier and were perhaps already out of use when the *Basin Building* was constructed.

In the East Wing (Zone 15) too, explored under the direction of O. Mouthuy, our main aim was to find the eastern limits (see § 6.8). The bedrock in the entire area is very close to the actual surface, which means that the architecture is not well-preserved. Within some of the bedrock cavities, we came upon small deposits of pottery: one included eight inverted MM IIIB-LM IA conical cups; another cavity contained a LM IIIB kylix fragment, perhaps left by the occupants of nearby Building F (*Sissi II*: 169). Wall lines in this area are difficult to reconstruct although in some cases the bedrock was cut to receive walls. Spaces can more easily be distinguished alongside the wall facing the Central Court but further east, no regular plan could be obtained nor did we manage to find a real outside wall. Since the edge of the plateau is really near, it cannot be excluded that the east border of the CCB is entirely lost. This said, the bedrock here has a rough north-south alignment and perhaps this once carried the façade. Within Space 15.6, the bedrock seems to have been partly cut and partly build-up to make a drainage channel (FE043). Against pre-existing tumble and bedrock, thin layers of *tarazza* were installed to form a long channel that seems to start to the south, perhaps already in Spaces 15.6.1 and 15.6.0. Within this channel were the remains of a large pithos, seemingly in place. The area to the south-east was especially characterised by large fills, with mostly MM II sherds mixed with stones. In some areas, this fill comprised a lot of Pre- and Neopalatial pottery and it was in one of these that we found the sealings that have been mentioned before (see § 11), while in other spaces the fill mainly comprised MM IIIA or MM IIIB sherds – probably reflecting the two major moments of construction and reconstruction of the CCB. Detailed analysis of the pottery is under way and this may help to distinguish between successive construction phases within Middle Minoan III as well as the later intrusions.

2.5. Tests

Following the geophysical survey, two small tests were opened in Zone 19 by S. Déderix (§ 7.1), the area west of the cemetery in Zone 9 and north of the Neopalatial houses of Zone 2. With some large wall alignments showing that run down the hill, there is little doubt that there was originally a large building here, of at least 11 m by 14 m. Constructed on the terrace and extending to the slope below it, it seems of Neopalatial date. Because of the proximity of the Neopalatial quarter on the terrace above and the absence of human bone, we assume a residential function for these remains, which may have formed part of the settlement to which also the houses in Zone 2 belong (*Sissi I*: 95-112; *II*: 69-82; *III*: 53-61. In 2019, F. Gaignerot-Driessen also undertook a small sounding in Space 3.4 within Building CD (§ 7.2). During wall consolidation by M. Kassotakis's team (see § 13), several broken pithoi, caught beneath the later walls, were revealed and these needed proper attention before the walls could be consolidated. Excavation revealed three pairs of agrimi horns, placed on top of one another, in the north part of the space and to the east of the pithoi beneath the west wall of Space 3.4. Another vase, probably a

jug, was caught beneath the north wall. All seem to be LM I. The agrimi horns were cleaned and consolidated *in situ* before removal and while the the top ones were quite damaged, the lowest one was lifted intact. A final test was conducted under the direction of T. Terrana in the valley immediately east of the site, in the area (*Kampos*) immediately behind *Avlaki* beach (Zone 20; § 7.3). The location had drawn our attention because of the presence of a wall line that was visible on the surface. This wall was located close to the bedrock that forms the substrate of the *Kephali* hill and in a spot where the valley is most narrow. The wall was cleared and proved to be more than 1 m large, consisting of two faces, with a fill in between. To the east, the wall turns and becomes a rounded corner, with an approximate radius of 3 m. The presence of the site's fence unfortunately prevented further exploration. Most pottery collected was Neopalatial but some Postpalatial was also present. Its location at the narrowest part of the valley could perhaps suggest it was some kind of a dam. The rounded construction at the end seems more similar to the wall with assumed well found to the south of the palace of Zakros. This last installation has recently been identified as forming part of a port installation, a hypothesis, which, in view of its proximity to the sea at Sissi and within the river valley leading down to it, seems perhaps attractive (Guttandin *et al.* 2011: 145, fig. 245-246).

3. The Survey

In the 1990s, a team of the French School at Athens under the direction of Dr. S. Müller-Celka conducted an intensive survey of the Malia plain and, more extensively, part of the Sissi basin (Müller-Celka 1996; 1998; in Blackman 1997: 109-111). Since the results of the Sissi basin are only available in a preliminary form and tourist expansion is increasing with a rapid pace, it was decided, in parallel with the excavation, to inaugurate a survey of the east part of the Sissi basin. In 2017, this took place under the direction of O. Mouthuy (see § 8.2) while in 2018-2019 T. Terrana directed the team (§ 8.3). The methodology used is explained in § 8.1 but in general the surveyed area was subdivided in a series of zones that correspond with large topographical divisions. In 2017, work concentrated on the eastern coastal zone where an area of 26 ha was surveyed. Apart from an area (SI.2) with an extremely dense concentration of small obsidian flakes, associated with fragments of MM II, LM III and Postminoan pottery, the team also explored the *ammouda* quarry (SI.3), and the hillside behind. In 2018, an area of ca. 85 ha, especially to the west (*Kremasma*) and to the south of the excavations was covered. This resulted in the discovery or rediscovery of nine sites. The discovery on *Kremasma*, the promontory west of the *Kephali* hill, of 11 figurine fragments and nine potential figurine fragments in the rock crevices makes an interesting addition to the figurine heads found in 1929 (*Sissi I*: 23, with references). Their bad state of preservation makes it difficult to date them since Postminoan cultic evidence has also been found here (Gaignerot-Driessen 2016: 186). The concentration of figurines, however, may suggest the presence of a rural Minoan shrine, perhaps similar to that identified at *Trachilos*, east of Papadiokampos (Sofianou & Brogan 2012: 337). South of the *Kephali*, several smaller sites were identified, usually occupied from the Prepalatial to the Postpalatial period, and sometimes even later. The third and last survey campaign in 2019 covered the remaining part of the east Sissi basin, approximately 140 ha, up to the entrance of the Selinari gorge. It succeeded in tracing the route of the Ottoman *kalderim* but also in locating a Venetian water mill and hamlet, a pill-box of WW II and some more Bronze Age sites, usually of small dimensions. The quarry (SI.3) was already identified in the 1990s by the writer in the area called Μαύρα Βλιχάδια. Permission was obtained from EFALAS to conduct a cleaning operation. This was done in two days, respectively under the direction of M. Devolder (§ 8.4) and the writer. The cleaning was principally aimed at evaluating the nature and extent of the exploitation, at clarifying the extraction methods and at finding indications of its date. Work in the quarry was stopped when modern human remains were found in one of the voids created by the removal of a sandstone block. We assume that these remains date to World War II and these invite a brief consideration of the area during this troublesome period (§ 8.5).

4. Other Studies

Besides these reports on work done in and around the archaeological site, this volume also includes further preliminary analyses on specific ceramic assemblages (§ 9) by C. Langohr, I. Caloi, I. Mathioudaki and R. Dubois as well as a presentation by E. Tsafou of our programme of residue analysis. **Chapter 10**, by L. Magno, presents

some preliminary observations on the micromorphological samples collected from various areas of the excavation while M. Anastasiadou discusses the sealstones and sealings discovered during the last three excavation campaigns (§ 11). Additional reports on plasters by M.N. Pareja (§ 12), Site consolidation and presentation by T. Claeys (§ 13), the coins by P. Iossif (§ 14) and gold objects by A. Benzonelli, B. Legarra Herrero and M. Martínón-Torres (§ 15) are also given.

With this preliminary report, 10 campaigns of fieldwork have now come to a provisional halt and our main focus will be the study of archaeological material, the further consolidation of the site and its presentation to the public (see § 13) as well as the preparation of the final volumes of the excavation.

When this volume was nearing completion, we heard of the passing away of **Kostas Davaras**, honorary ephor of East Crete and one-time professor of archaeology at the University of Athens. Prof. Davaras was the first to explore our site in the early 1960s, and realising its importance, making it eventually possible to protect it and to prepare its expropriation, obtained by V. Apostolakou in 1996. He graciously ceded us the rights to excavate it in 2006. This volume is dedicated to his memory. We also regret the passing away of Hugh Sackett and of Sinclair Hood. Sinclair, together with Peter Warren and Gerald Cadogan, were amongst the first archaeologists to visit the *Kephali* site before its excavation, in February 1963 (*Sissi I*: 24).