

The archaeological context

The palatial building

At the beginning of Middle Minoan IIA the social and economic structures of Petras were mature enough to lead to the establishment of a palatial administration. What was lacking was the relevant architectural form. After the destruction, or demolition, of the buildings that occupied the large plateau on top of the hill, various large-scale works were undertaken to delimit and level the plateau. After levelling activities, the palatial building was constructed within this partial enclosure during Middle Minoan IIA. The entire southern part of this building has been lost, due to erosion. Preserved today are: the northern and the eastern parts, the central part, a portion of the western part including the remains of the west facade, and a paved area to its west. It is important to keep in mind that the plan remained in general terms unaltered, despite various reconstructions and additions, until the end of the life of the complex, which also marked the end of the palatial administrative system in the Siteia bay area, in Late Minoan IB. This fact probably accounts for the “atypical” features of the Petras palace compared to the other functionally similar and architecturally larger buildings of Crete.

The Petras palace (Fig. 2) is organised around the Central Court, orientated roughly north-south, with a divergence of 12 degrees to the east. The

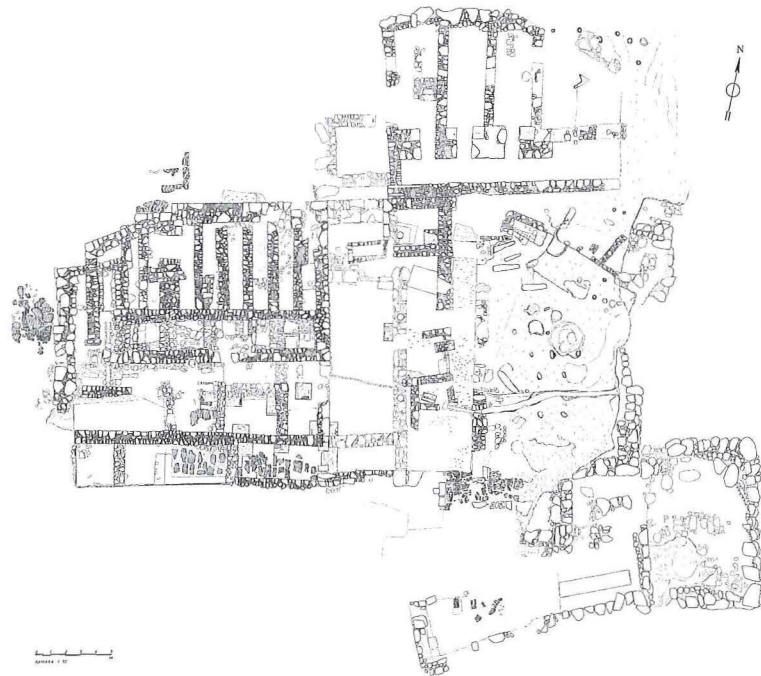


Fig. 2. The palatial building at Petras. Scale 1:500.

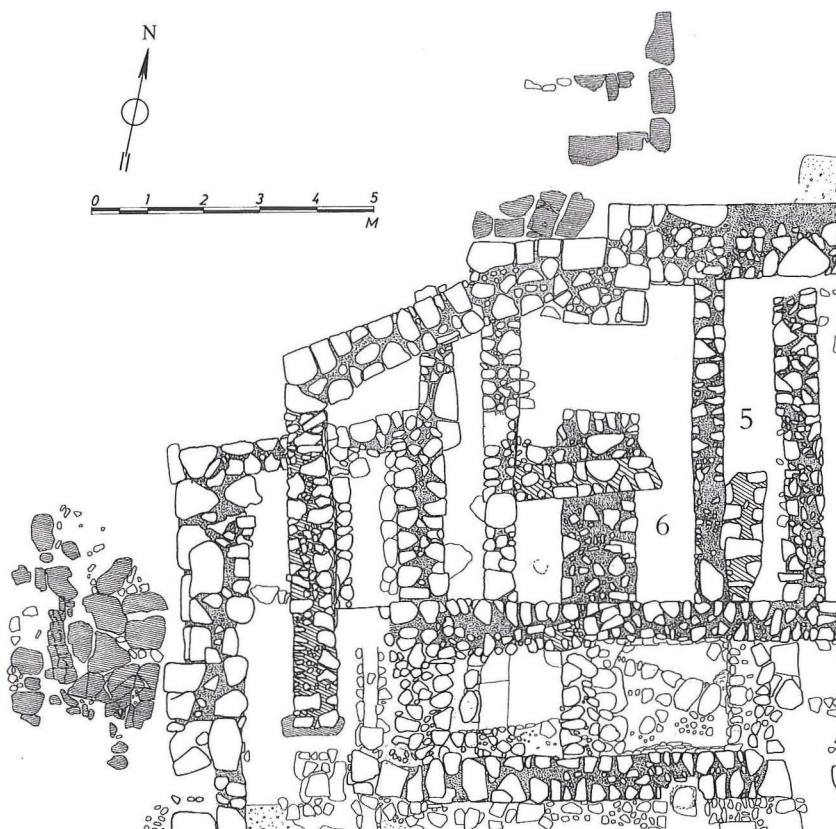
Protopalatial court has a very well-preserved plaster floor, 0.06 thick, measuring *c.* 6.5 × 18.0. Substantial walls enclosed it on all four sides. At the western half of the north wall, a monumental staircase, 4.30 wide, with a fine plaster surface, functioned as the main entrance into the building complex. The monumental staircase formed the northeastern end of the north facade that stretched 10.0 westward. The Central Court has a system of drainage channels, running obliquely in the plaster and along its western wall. One terminated at the north end of the Central Court in a stone spout. Another rock-cut drain ran into the large East Court and from there was directed to the massive retaining wall, where a large clay spout came to light, slightly misplaced.

The building technique of the best-preserved central-west part of the palace is based on an ingenious and apparently very efficient principle, which survived several earthquakes and destructions. This consists of a series of massive parallel walls or axes. The northernmost of these walls is 1.2 wide and forms the northern facade of the palace. Five more parallel, narrower, internal walls are preserved. It is not easy to speculate how much of the structure has been lost, but given the presence of massive walls at the east corner of the plateau, one can reasonably assume that there might have been at least two more of these internal parallel walls and then a thick east facade. At the northernmost part of the building there is a system of vertical walls, at a distance of only one metre from each other, between the north facade and the first interior wall. These walls simply abut the horizontal axes and are not connected with them, forming six corridor-like spaces, numbered 1–6, starting from the east (see detailed plan below, p. 232, Fig. 80). It is probable that this system was devised to give support to a superstructure of one or two floors, and also offer a degree of horizontal flexibility to the building in the case of earthquakes.

Another significant and well-preserved area in the southwestern part of the building dating to the Protopalatial period is a room with no door. It is equipped with orthostats and a 4 metres long plastered bench and has a gypsum and plaster floor. It was filled in after the Middle Minoan II destruction of the palace and never used again. A ceremonial or cultic use may be connected with this room and the adjacent one to the west, due to the fine finish of the architectural features, in particular the plaster bench and the plastered orthostats. Whereas the absence of suggestive finds such as idols, ritual vessels, and so forth, is unfortunate, the lack of contradictory finds should be noted. The missing postulated religious paraphernalia may have been brought to this room by those attending a ceremony. Furthermore, if the room was filled in deliberately, and not as a result of natural forces, such objects may have been removed for use elsewhere.

In the area to the southeast of the palace, massive Protopalatial walls came to light. They appear to be part of a unit comprising a large rectangular building (4 × 15) to the south, as well as the eastern terrace wall. This may represent the eastern corner of the original palace complex.

Fig. 3. The northwestern area of the palatial building at Petras showing all walls. Scale 1:150.



The northwestern area

The remains of the archive were found in an area just to the south of the north facade of the palace, where there is an indentation in the wall (shaded area in Fig. 2). It was excavated in 1996 from 2 July through 2 August and again for a short period in 1997. The removal of an electricity pole which had stood on top of the facade outside corridor 6, at the area where a significant Late Minoan IA destruction deposit was excavated in the previous three years, enabled us to complete the investigation of this part of the central building. Following this removal, the complex stratigraphy and the architectural phases of this part of the palace became much easier to understand.

At an altitude of 39.80, and while the Minoan layers were still disturbed by the foundation trench of the electricity pole, the first Middle Minoan sherds came to light, along with others from Late Minoan I and III and Byzantine periods. (three Byzantine graves were excavated in 1990 and 1991 in the same area). The first pure Minoan layer, uncontaminated by later intrusions, contained Middle Minoan and Late Minoan sherds together. With these were found fragments of thick white plaster from the north facade (ME 96/0149). Just outside the north facade at an altitude of *c.* 38.00, a floor came to light, made of beaten earth, sea pebbles and plaster, similar to one that was found a little to the northeast in 1993. Its preserved dimen-

sions are 0.70×0.60 . At this point the north facade was destroyed and a Late Minoan IA wall was built, orientated west-east. The large ashlar blocks continue at a slightly deeper level. Fortunately, the electricity pole had not destroyed the course of the north facade. Sixty centimetres to the west of the pole there is an indentation on the external side of the wall, as well as on the internal side.

A series of “corridors” runs behind the north facade. The two westernmost corridors (5 and 6) probably form a staircase to the upper floor (Figs. 3, 80 and 81). A large amount of carbonised wood was found in these. The remaining parallel walls probably had no other function than to support the two (?) floors of the superstructure of the palace. After the Middle Minoan IIB destruction by fire, the area was filled and never used again. During the Middle Minoan III reconstruction of the palace, the building expanded to the west, and three more corridor-like spaces (7 to 9) were built, at a slightly oblique axis, in order to support the upper floor(s).

North of the north facade and west of the indentation, several large slabs were found. Two of these slabs have been carved to form a shallow drain, 0.15 wide and 0.01–2 deep. The floor was made principally of beaten earth and sea pebbles. The floor slopes slightly to the north and its preserved dimensions are 1.30×3.00 . This MM II floor is 0.22 deeper than the Late Minoan IB floor in the same area, excavated in 1994.

The northwestern corner of the MM II palatial building has been somewhat destroyed by erosion and later rebuilding and the suggested reconstruction must remain conjectural. Fig. 3 shows the plan as it looks today, with all the overlying walls of MM III/LM I date (dotted) as well as LM III (hatched). In Fig. 4 all the later walls have been removed and the north and west facades as well as interior walls of the MM II period are quite clear. Only the crucial northwestern corner is still a little bit obscure since, according to the excavator it seems that those walls marked within the square may be of an Early Minoan date.

Based on the existing evidence we do, however, suggest the solution shown in Fig. 5. The door leading into the passage where the archive was discovered would have been from the west. The wall where we have placed the door is still visible in most of its length and here it consists of only smaller stones at a level which would be approximately that of the slightly sloping West Court, while the large blocks south of the door were of a considerable height. The unusual construction of the northwest corner of such an important building has a parallel in Quartier Mu (Building A) at Malia, however, the structure there was not freestanding to the north, and whether this is a valid comparison would be better judged by the excavators of Quartier Mu.

The archive

The excavated area of the archive measured roughly 3 metre east-west and 1.5 north-south (Figs. 2 [shaded area] and 6) and the area was – from the previous excavation of the overlying LM IA deposits – divided into squares

Fig. 4. The northwestern area of the palatial building at Petras with all later walls removed. Scale 1:150.

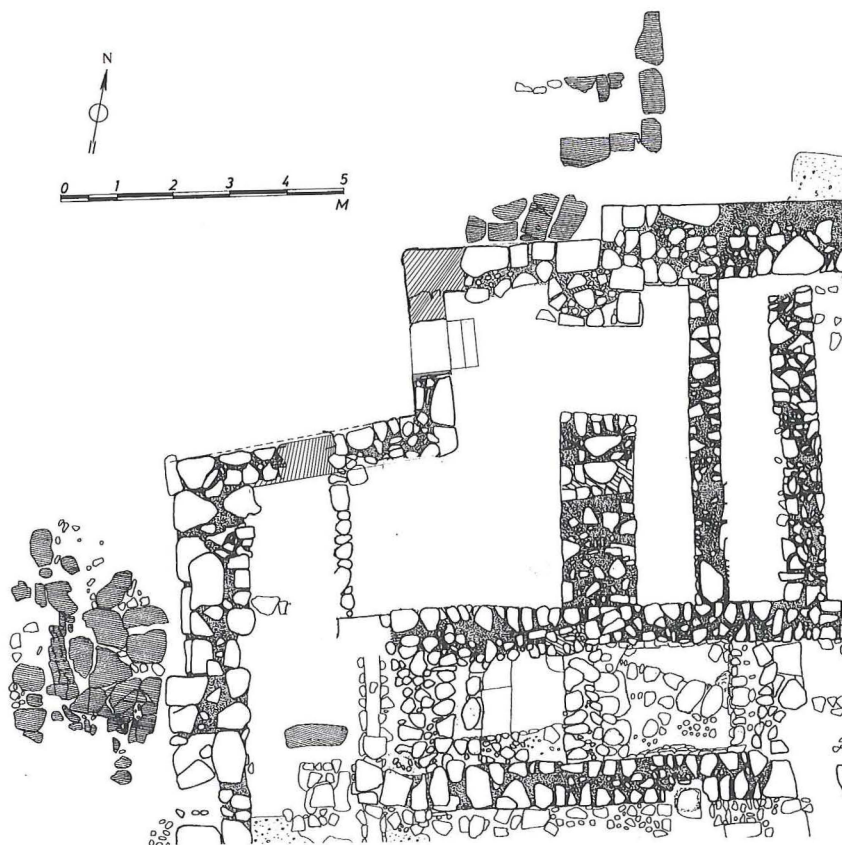
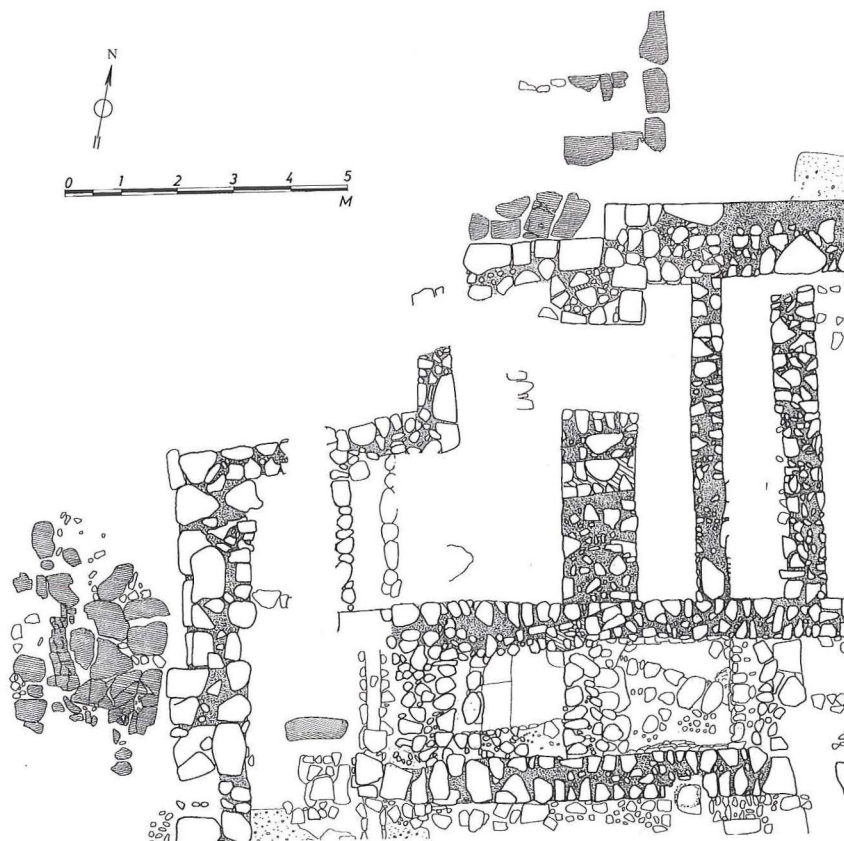


Fig. 5. The northwestern area. Suggested reconstruction of the MM II architecture. Scale 1:150.

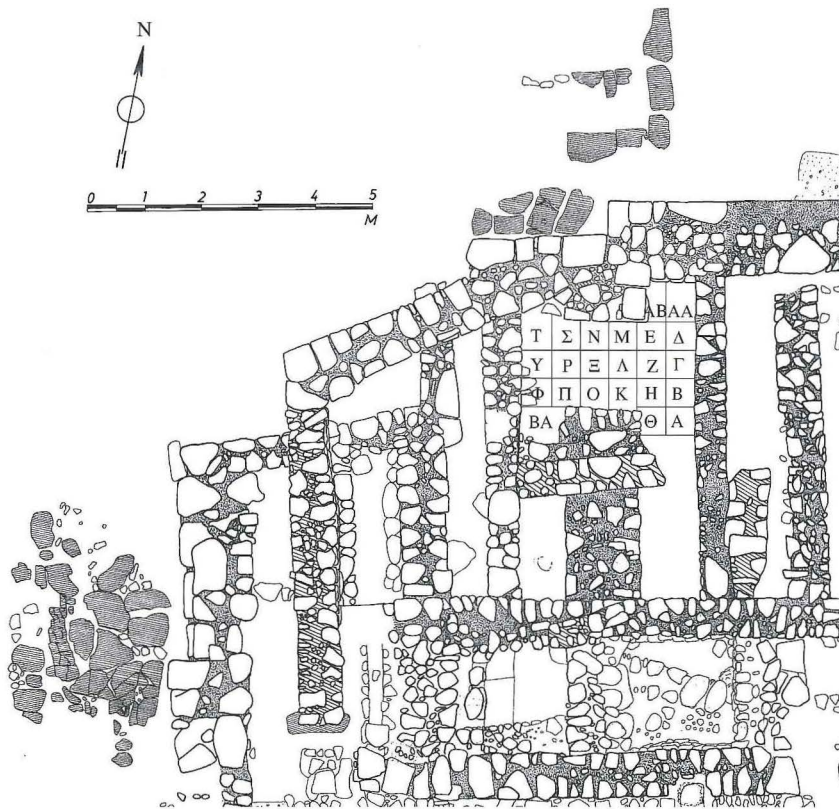


Fig. 6. Actual state of excavation with the 0.50×0.50 squares of the archive indicated. Scale 1:150.

Fig. 7 (opposite). Section through archive along west wall. Scale 1:50.

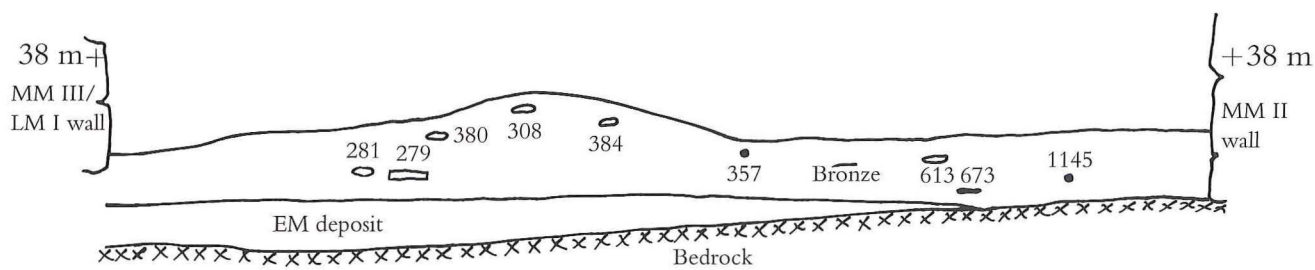
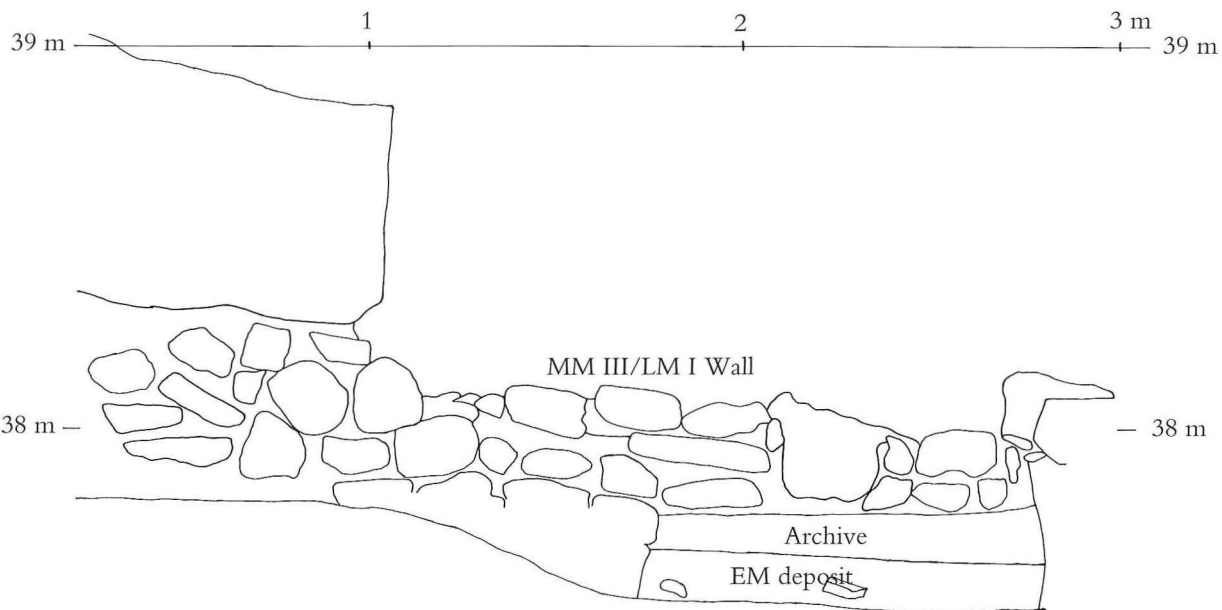
measuring 0.50×0.50 . Within each square the finds were pinpointed in the grid system.

The stratigraphy of the archive, fortunately, was very clear and uncomplicated (Fig. 7). It was sealed below destruction debris of the LM IA period and above a deposit of the EM II period. The overlying LM IA deposits had not been completely cleared in the previous years since a few sherds of this period occasionally turned up in the upper part (pass 1) of the otherwise undisturbed MM IIB layer. The floor of the archive was found at a height of *c.* 37.60 above sea level, and the deposit above it had a depth of 0.30–0.15. In most of the squares the hieroglyphic deposit was excavated in four passes, *i.e.* “baskets” were changed for each *c.* 0.05.

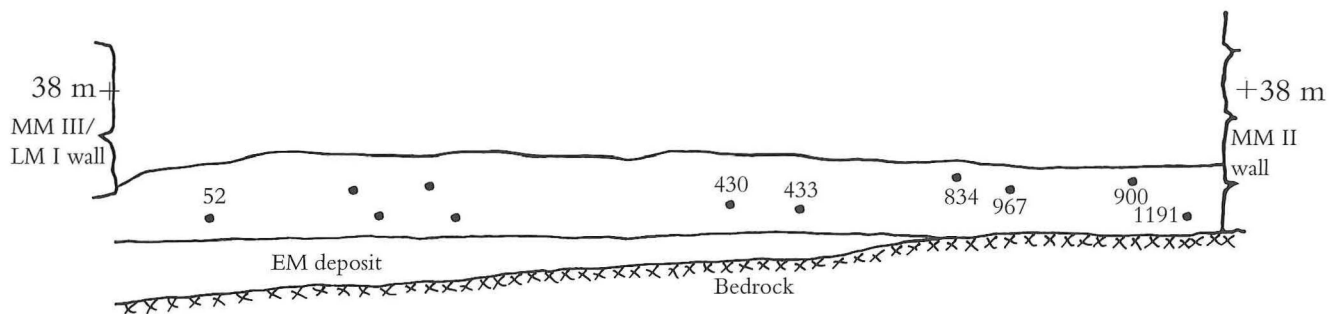
Figure 8 shows two sections reconstructed from the horizontal excavations with archival documents plotted in. None were actually found on the floor, while most came from the upper passes. It seems therefore certain that the finds must originally have been stored in a room on the upper floor. It will also be seen from these sections how – in the very eastern part – the Early Minoan and Middle Minoan floors were identical on the bedrock. Extremely few artefacts were actually found on the floor of the lower passage: a few sherds, four bits of obsidian, a few plaster fragments which may have come from the walls of the basement room, and a few pieces of charcoal.

Most of the archive deposit was excavated in 1996, while some squares in the western part – especially Π and Φ – were left unexcavated. The excavation of these areas was carried out as a rescue project in late July – early

Fig. 8 (opposite).
Reconstructed sections through archive deposit.
Scale 1:50.



37 m+ Y | P | E | A | Z | Γ +37 m



37 m+ Φ | Π | Ο | Κ | Η | Β +37 m

August, for two weeks, with a special permit from the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, necessary after the interruption in 1997 of all systematic Greek excavations. The dig proceeded to the final cleanings, in most squares, under the surface of the Middle Minoan II floor. The cleaning of the bedrock produced mixed pottery, Early and Middle Minoan, the former being remains of earlier habitation before the construction of the palace. The evidence from the Prepalatial period is not included in the present publication.

The general cleaning of the surface prior to the excavation produced only a few sherds made of yellowish clay. In Square Σ two lumps were found on the surface **L22** and **L23**, and in Square M another lump was found **L24**. In the northern part of corridor 6, in the middle of the opening and just to the north of the thick vertical wall were found a few bones **B30**.

Pass 2: In the general area of the archive deposit, the pottery bag contained only a few sherds; with them there were four obsidian flakes **O33**, **O34**, **O35** and **O36a-b**, some plaster fragments **P142**, and a few bones **B31**.

The excavation of the individual squares

Squares A and Θ

In 1996 one chert blade segment **O1** was collected in Square A at 37.84, while in Square Θ only a little pottery, including a fragmentary conical cup (Fig. 26a), and a few plaster fragments **P119**, came to light in an area adjacent to Square Γ ; the excavation ended at 37.59. These two squares were cleaned together in 1997. They produced a few un-diagnostic sherds, some bones **B1** and two obsidian blades, **O2** and **O3**.

Square B

Pass 1: The soil was yellowish grey, initially with no traces of burning. The southwest part of the square was burnt, with many carbon fragments. The excavation started at 37.78; the first pass was only 0.02–3 thick. At the centre of the square a large plaster fragment came to light, measuring 0.15 × 0.12 × 0.05. The pottery bag contained few sherds, mostly from cups and conical cups. Documents were found to the east of the west corner of the square, together with carbon fragments in a yellow and very compact soil, while a single one was found at 0.06 from the north corner of the square. The documents were an almost completely preserved crescent **Cr3**, fragments from a peg sealing **D9**, a combination nodule **Co22**, and an irregular nodule **I10**.

Pass 2: In this pass, Square B was excavated together with the neighbouring Square H, and it contained a large number of very fragmentary nodules including fragments from five combination nodules **Co12–15**, **Co27**, two direct sealings **D18**, **D25**, three irregular sealings **I6–7**, **I15**, five lumps **L21**, and 15 indeterminable fragments **Mi9–10**, **Mi12–14**, **Mi25–27**, **Mi30–31**, **Mi41–43**, **Mi45**, and **Mi54**.

Pass 3: The pottery bag included few Protopalatial sherds, while a very fine kantharos with wavy rim **P38** and a broken, partially preserved one-handled carinated cup **P36**, were collected separately. Further finds were large fragments of plaster **P11**.

Pass 4: The soil was yellowish and contained burnt material; among the few sherds, all of MM II date, were noted conical cup fragments and light on dark jug fragments. Small finds included one obsidian flake **O4**, and three more blades **O5–7**; with them a direct sealing **D38**, was found; in the east part of the square three small stones in a row, orientated west-east, probably constituted the remains of an earlier (EM) wall; a partially preserved Early Minoan floor made of red clay, used to level the uneven surface of the bedrock, came to light at 37.62, in Squares B and Γ .

Square B also yielded the obsidian **O29–30** and **O31a–b**.

Square Γ

Pass 2: The excavation started at 37.8 and ended at 37.71; the pottery bag contained MM IIB pottery including a conical bowl rim fragment (Fig. 26b). Collected separately were two thirds of a conical bowl **P33**, a straight-sided cup **P34**, and a ledge-rimmed bowl **P35**, containing small fragments of animal bones and a small shell, **B2** and **B3** respectively; with them was found a large plaster fragment probably from a table **P12**.

Pass 3: The whole square was covered by plaster **P13**; very few sherds were collected while a fragmentary conical bowl **P42**, and a fragmentary wide-mouthed jug **P43**, were registered separately. Some fragments of carbon **Cw1**, and an almost complete combination nodule **Co2**, a fragment of an irregular nodule **I2**, a fragment of a direct sealing **D39**, and a fragment from a nodule of uncertain type **Mi5**, were also noted.

Pass 4: A shallow semi-globular bowl **P42**, and a fragmentary wide-mouthed jug **P43**, were collected. Among the sherds, which dated MM IIB and EM II the following were noted: sherd of jug with dark brown pigment (Fig. 26d); dark-on-light body sherd (Fig. 26c); conical cup rim sherd of substantial size, probably straight-sided (Fig. 26e); large fruitstand rim fragment (Fig. 26f); cup fragment with beginning of handle **P96**; large spout, dark-on-light **P97**; conical bowl, rim fragment with paint splatter **P98**. This pass furthermore yielded some animal bones **B4**; with the plaster a fragment of the floor was removed, **P14**, attached to a burnt mud-brick fragment. The pass also produced one almost complete direct sealing **D23**. The bedrock was found at 37.61.

Square Δ

Pass 1: A complete conical bowl **P47**, was found upside down near the south corner of the square, lying on a heavily burnt layer of yellowish soil, with many fragments of carbon; the sherds contained MM IIB while an intrusive MM III handle was also noted. A conical bowl (large fragment with rim), **P92**



Fig. 9. Square E during excavation with a clear spot of carbonised remains, several almost complete pots and large fragments of plaster (upper left corner).

was inventoried; furthermore a fragment of ripple-pattern carinated cup handle (Fig. 26g) was noted. Some bones **B5**, came from the same area; a *nodulus*(?) **N3**, came to light at the edge of Squares Δ and E. The excavation ended at 37.73.

In 1997 the excavation continued in the yellowish soil, yielding a few fragments of disintegrated plaster with no evidence of intense burning. The excavation reached the bedrock, on which the west wall was founded; only a few sherds were noted from the cleaning of the bedrock. The pottery was kept separately. It contained Middle Minoan and some Early Minoan sherds; the cleaning of the bedrock also yielded some bones and shells **B6-7**, and pieces of obsidian **O8a-b**.

Square E

Passes 1 and 2: The excavation started at 37.74. The soil was yellowish brown, in some areas containing no pottery, probably the product of disintegration of mud-bricks, with a great deal of carbon and carbonised wood **Cw2**, particularly in the east-northeast, west and north parts of the square, at 37.69 **Cw3**, (Fig. 9); a large fragment of plaster was cleaned at the eastern side of the square at 37.69 **Pl5** (Fig. 9), and other smaller fragments were removed **Pl6**, (also from Squares E and Z), as well as a piece of plaster **Pl7** probably from the leg of a table; with them were found a small mud-brick fragment **Mb1**, and also some smaller and larger bones **B8–9**, and **B10** (including bones from the adjacent Squares Z, and Λ); pass 1 contained a conical ledge-rimmed bowl **P1**; among the sherds from the same pass mainly MM IIB pottery, some EM II and a single intrusive LM IA sherd were noted. Inventoried from pass 1: an early carinated cup, almost complete profile **P88**; a conical bowl, substantial profile fragment **P89**; a cup rim with handle **P90**; a ledge-rim bowl, substantial fragment **P91**. In pass 2, the sherds consisted almost exclusively of conical cups while several vases were collected separately: a one-handled conical cup **P26**, a bell cup **P27**, a fragmentary conical cup **P28**, two shallow conical bowls **P29** and **P30**, a conical cup **P31**, a bell cup **P32**, a fragmentary globular cup with kamares decoration **P50**, a conical bowl **P51**, a rim fragment of a carinated bowl with light-on-dark decoration **P54**, a fragmentary conical bowl **P56**, and a straight-sided cup **P57**; along with these the following fragments of documents were found in the south part of the square: a *nodulus*(?) **N1**, combination nodules **Co18** and **Co9**, **Co25**, a direct sealing **D26**, a crescent **Cr5**, irregular nodules **I4–5**, and four of unknown types **Mi3**, **Mi32–33**, **Mi48** (Fig. 10).

Pass 3: A shallow pass taken from the west side of the square, near the wall. It contained no pottery and ended at 37.61; fragments of white plaster of high

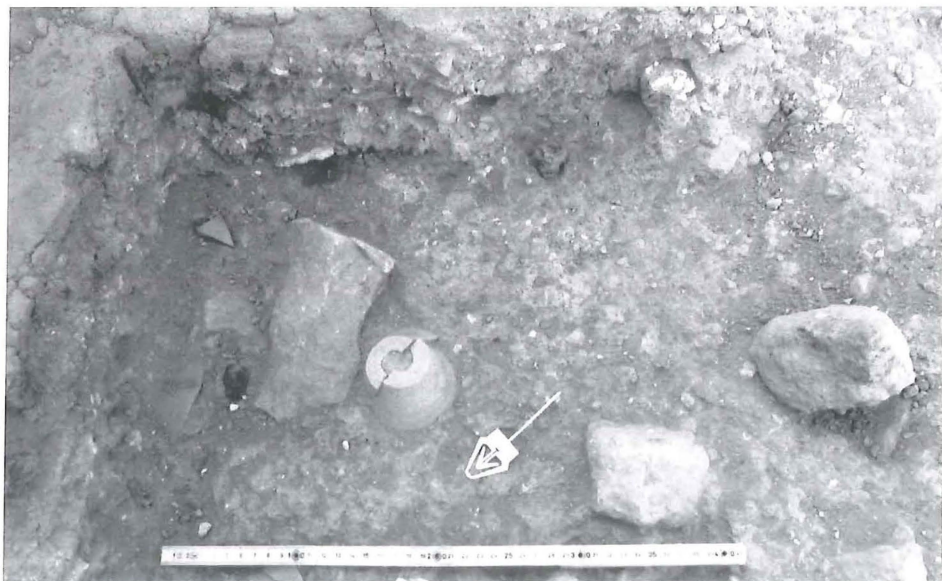


Fig. 10. Square E during excavation. The find spot of several fragmentary nodules collected among a few fallen stones. Note also small spots of charcoal on the floor and in the section.

quality **P18**, including a corner fragment **P19**, measuring $0.06 \times 0.03 \times 0.06$. probably from a plastered door jamb and very well-preserved, came to light.

Pass 4: The soil was yellowish, compact, initially without any traces of burning and with medium-size stones (cf. also Squares M and Z); it contained some plaster fragments, including substructure; the pottery was Protopalatial and consisted mostly of fine sherds; some tiny fragments of carbon **Cw4**, a few animal bones **B11**, and a tiny obsidian blade **O9**, were also collected; the pass contained one document, an unbaked lump of worked clay **L7**, in the west corner of the square.

Squares E and Z

Pass 1: Starting at 37.82, and still part of the Late Minoan IA destruction deposit, it contained a few medium size stones 0.10–20; following their removal plaster fragments **P110**, and the first documents came to light: (Fig. 9) a peg sealing **D2**, at 37.74, 0.20 from the north corner of the square and 0.30 from the east corner, an unfinished *nodulus*(?) **N2**, at 37.72, 0.12 to the east of the north corner, a lump of unbaked clay **L6**, at 37.73; the only pottery fragments belonged to the rim of a carinated bowl **P54**.

Square Z

Pass 1: The excavation started at 37.73; yellowish compact soil, containing many poorly preserved fragments of white and pinkish plaster; an area of intense burning began at the east end of the square and continued in the rest of the corridor; the pottery sherds were from conical cups and bowls, while a fragmentary shallow conical cup **P58**, was collected separately. This pass also yielded a fragment of a roundel(?) **R2**, and a combination(?) nodule **Co30**.

Pass 2: The excavation started at 37.72–37.75; greyish burnt soil without ashes (Fig. 11); one conical bowl **P17**, and one conical cup **P18**, were found upside down, together with fragments of a large closed vessel **P19**, four fragmentary conical bowls, a shallow one **P21**, another containing plaster and carbon fragments (joining sherds of this were also collected from Square Γ), **P22**, one, a quarter preserved **P24**, and **P25**, half preserved; also a straight-sided cup **P23**, an intrusive MM III/LM I globular cup, fragment of an amphora with painted decoration **P20**, and a fragmentary conical bowl **P59**; the pass produced fragments of carbon **Cw5**, bones **B12**, and **B13**, the latter found inside the conical bowl **P21**; also various fragments of plaster **P111**, **P112**, with curved profile, and **P113**, found inside the conical cup **P18**; documents included a lump of unbaked clay **L9**, three combination nodules **Co4**, **Co19–20**, fragments of a medallion(?) **Me10**, and a fragment of an irregular nodule **I14**.

Pass 3: the excavation started at 37.65; yellowish-brown soil; the pass contained a large fragment of plaster, broken into many pieces **P114** and **P115**, fallen obliquely at the burnt level, a fragment of bone with knife marks, found under the plaster **B14**, bones **B15** and **B16** (also from the adjacent Squares Z, E and Λ), an obsidian flake, **O10**, and an almost complete crescent **Cr1**.

Fig. 11. Square Z during excavation clearly showing the amount of pottery from the area.



Pass 4: contained a deep conical cup **P39**, and a few sherds of MM II and EM dates: an almost complete profile of conical cup **P95** and an intrusive EM lug.

Square H

Pass 1: Only 0.02 deep; the soil was yellowish-green and compact; plaster was scattered all over the area of the square at an altitude of 37.75, in several layers, each *c.* 5 mm thick, and a fragmentary conical bowl was found at the east side of the square **P37** (Fig. 12); the pottery bag contained only a few fine sherds. Other finds were tiny fragments of carbon **Cw6**, as well as large fragments of plaster **P117** and **P116**, the latter in connection with a corner fragment from an ashlar block, measuring $0.10 \times 0.08 \times 0.02$, which was also collected.



Fig. 12. Square H during excavation with the conical bowl **P37** found among masses of plaster.



Fig. 13. The floor of the basement room exposed in Square K.

Documents included a roundel **R1**, at the north side of the square, and fragments from combination sealings **Co6-7**, **Co23**, **Co26**, direct sealings **D22**, **D24**, **D33-34**, lump **L3** and uncertain types **Mi34**, **Mi55-56**.

Pass 2: was excavated together with Square B (see above).

Pass 3: Only a few sherds were collected, the most interesting being a Middle Minoan II fruitstand and a carinated cup; with them there were animal and bird bones **B17**, and a large fragment of plaster **P118**. The pass also produced part of a combination nodule **Co10**, and two lumps **L10**, **L14**.

Pass 4: Yellowish compact soil, containing few bones; the pottery bag contained only MM pottery and included sherds from cups and bowls, an open spout, a fragment from a fruitstand. Separately collected were a large fragment from a carinated cup **P40**, and a deep conical cup pierced at the base **P41**; also some carbon **Cw7**, and a small mud-brick fragment **Mb2**, were found. The bedrock was cleaned at 37.60

Square K

Pass 1: Consisted of brown-reddish compact soil; few sherds of EM II, MM I and MM II date were noted. Inventoried: a carinated cup (3 fragments), **P86**; a conical bowl with splattered paint **P87**; EM II dark-on-light fragment (Fig. 26h).

Pass 2: The pass started at 37.76; reddish-brown, very fine soil, with yellowish-brown patches; at the centre of the square a roughly round depression, 0.18 in diameter and 0.20 deep, containing reddish soil, was cleaned and identified as an Early Minoan bedrock mortar. Only very few sherds of EM II and MM II date were collected in this pass, among them the fragment of a cooking dish rim **P93**. This pass also produced three obsidian flakes **O11-13**, a

Fig. 14. Square A during excavation where the clay bar **PE Hh17** and the bronze, **M1**, which might have been from the stylus of the scribe, were found. The clay bar can be seen immediately to the right of the arrow.



mud-brick fragment **Mb6**, some bones **B18**, and shells **B19**, (also from Squares A and M), three fragments of plaster **Pl26** (also from Squares A and M) **Pl20**, with traces of paint, and **Pl21**, a corner fragment; documents included fragments from a crescent **Cr2**, an irregular nodule **I8** and two of uncertain type **Mi2**, **Mi29**, found all together at the north side of the square. Other documents which were also from Squares A and M are fragments from a combination nodule **Co5**, irregular nodules **I3**, **I9**, and some of uncertain type **Mi1**, **Mi11**, **Mi21** and **Mi23**.

Pass 3: The excavation started at 37.6, aiming at uncovering the floor adjacent to the wall; it was cleaned at 37.52–37.58; (Fig. 13). On the floor there were some bones **B20–21**, and a carbon fragment **Cw8**.

Square A

Pass 1: Two pottery bags were collected. They contained mainly MM II sherds while a few of EM II date were also noted. Inventoried: a small jug rim fragment **P76**; Petras fabric fine conical cup rim fragments **P77**; a conical cup rim fragment **P78**; a monochrome straight-sided cup handle **P79**; a rim fragment of pedestalled EM bowl. Separately collected from this square was a wide-mouthed jar **P11**, and a straight-sided cup **P12**; of special interest was a bronze stylus, found at 37.71, in two joining fragments **M1**; bones and shells **B19**, (also from Squares K and M), plaster fragments **Pl24**, (also from Squares K and M), and carbon fragments **Cw9** and **Cw10**, (also from Squares K and M), were also collected; documents included a fragmentary medallion **Me9**, at the centre of the square, at 37.72, another medallion **Me2** in three fragments, in the east part of the square, and a clay bar **CB2** (Fig. 14).

Pass 2: Yellowish soil, without traces of burning, containing a few small



Fig. 15. The floor of the basement room exposed in Squares K, Λ and M. Several small stones were found in the deposit above.

stones. The floor was found at 37.63–37.54 (Fig. 15) and on it were found a conical bowl **P53**; a broken quern **S1**, two pieces of obsidian, a flake **O14**, and an obsidian blade **O15**, and some bones **B10**, (also from Squares Z and E). The sherds included a few medium light-on-dark pieces.

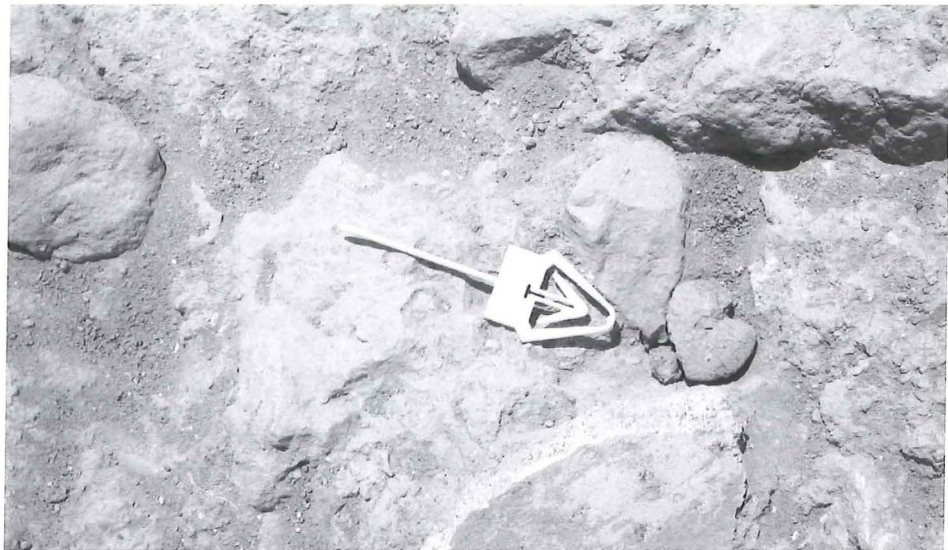
Pass 3: Yellowish-brown soil, with some fragments of the bedrock; at the south side of the square some sea pebbles appeared, being initially part of the floor, which was made of compact red soil, plaster and pebbles, at an altitude of 37.53; remains of the same floor came to light in Squares BA at 37.63, Γ at 37.61, B at 37.62, and H 37.60; several plaster fragments had painted splatter decoration and white spots; the pottery was MM II and contained very few fine and medium sherds.

Square M

Pass 1: The excavation started at 37.75; very pale brown, burnt, soil with some stones 0.10–0.15 and large fragments of plaster, fallen obliquely, at 37.62, probably initially attached to the north wall, *i.e.* the internal face of the north facade; some of the plaster included tiny pebbles, like the fragments still preserved *in situ* on the north facade; the pass ended at 37.71. The pottery bag contained only MM II sherds including a conical cup **P80**, and a conical bowl **P81**, and a ledge-rim bowl **P82**. **P122** was a large fragment of plaster 0.11 × 0.10, very poorly preserved, **P123** more plaster (also from Squares T and Σ), **P124** small plaster fragments (also from Squares K and Λ); with them there was a fragment from an ashlar block **S2**, a few bones **B22**, more bones and shells **B19**, (also from Squares K and Λ), and carbon fragments, **Cw11** (also from Squares K and Λ). One almost completely preserved medallion **Me1**, was also found (Fig. 16).

Pass 2: The floor was found at 37.53 (Fig. 15); some MM II pottery was

Fig. 16. The medallion **Me1**, *in situ* at the end of the arrow in Square M.



collected from it, as well as a mud-brick fragment **Mb3**, a large carbon fragment, **Cw12**, two plaster fragments **P125**, **P126**, and some shells **B23**.

Square N

Pass 1: Yellowish-brown soil, with some pebbles, plaster, and carbon fragments; excavation started at 37.80. The pottery is all dated MM II and included four sherds which fitted the bridge-spouted carinated jug **P10**, the main part of which was found at 37.80. Furthermore a fragmentary carinated cup, **P9**, was collected at 37.78; other finds from the same pass were carbon fragments, **Cw13**, small mud-brick fragments **Mb4**, and a carbonised almond shell found with the sherds **Cw14**; a medallion in many fragments **Me8**, was also found with them at 37.75 (Fig. 17).

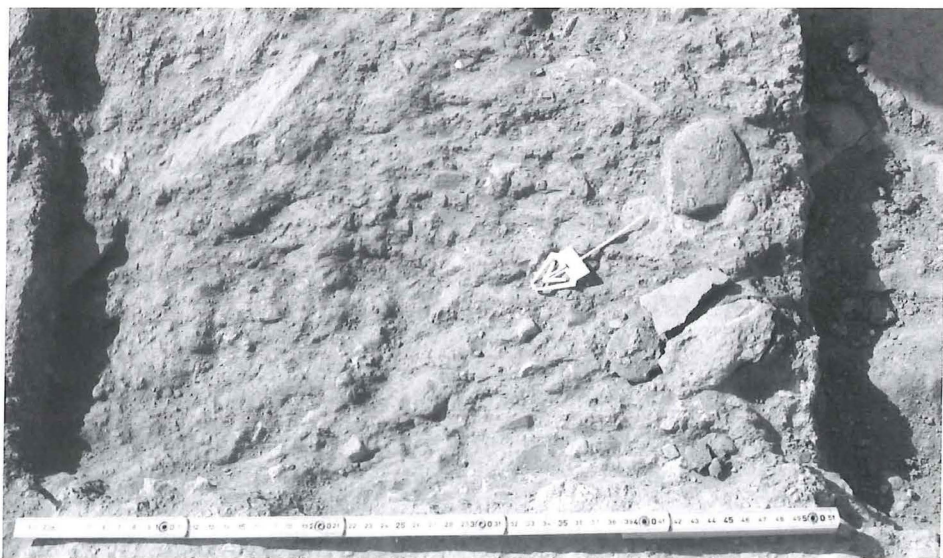


Fig. 17. Find spot of the medallion **Me8** in Square N.



Fig. 18. One of the few areas in the archive deposit where larger stones were found was in Square N.

Pass 2: Compact, sandy soil, brownish-yellow, with some medium-size stones (up to 0.22 long), and small plaster fragments, bearing the typical reddish substratum; (Fig. 18); the pottery bag included very few, not particularly diagnostic sherds, while the upper part of **P10** (cf. above) was collected separately at 37.65; a small stone object, at 37.63, **S3**, is probably identifiable as half of a double horn; the pass produced one document, a medallion in two fragments, **Me3**.

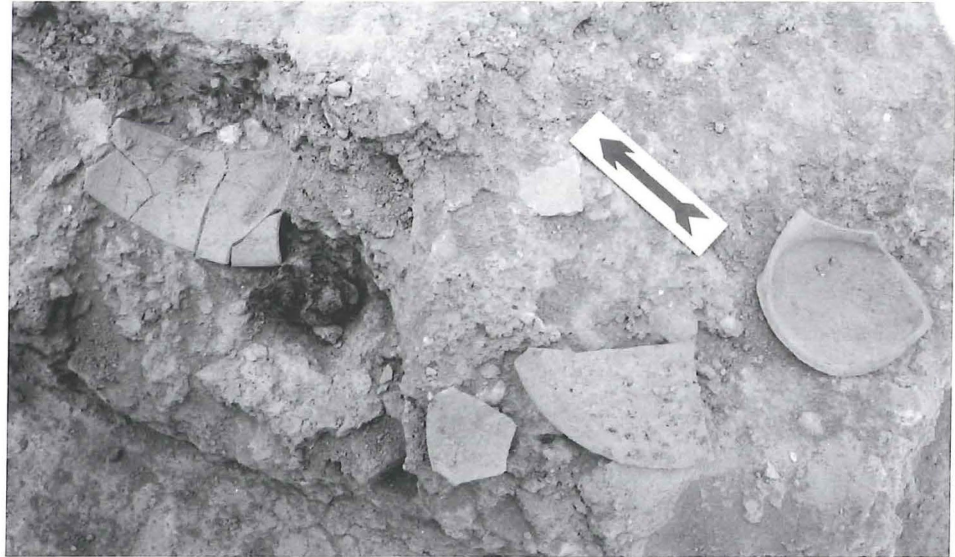
Pass 3: After the removal of the fallen stones, the bedrock was cleaned; it has a natural slope towards the south-southwest; the soil was yellowish, fine, with no traces of burning; on the surface of the bedrock there were a few sherds of EM II and MM II date including a conical cup **P94**. The handle of an amphora with a potter's mark **P49** was also collected, as well as two obsidians, a blade **O16**, and a flake **O17**, and small fragments of red plaster **P127**.

This square was further cleaned in 1997. The remaining part of the layer was only 0.01 thick; yellowish-brown, rather loose soil, without many traces of burning; this pass is at a slightly higher level than the bedrock cleaned in 1996 in the adjacent squares; one very small piece of a document **Mi49**, was collected; an obsidian tool **O32**, was found in the middle of the north facade; following the excavation of the pass the bedrock was cleaned; at this level there were no sherds or plaster; on the bedrock a few small pebbles were laid, probably initially as part of the floor.

Square X

Pass 1: The excavation started at 37.89–37.70; the pottery bag dated MM II and with a single LM IA intrusion, contained very few sherds, one of them, probably from a mud-brick, of Vasiliki ware. Inventoried: a footed carinated cup rim fragment **P73**; a large conical bowl rim fragment **P74**; and a hole-mouthed rim fragment from a pithoid jar, **P75**. With them were found some

Fig. 19. Sherds, plaster fragments and charcoal in Square II.



bones **B24**, and two medallions, one complete **Me4**, at 37.89, another one in three fragments **Me7**, and a crescent(?) **Cr6**, at the southwest corner of the square (37.84).

Pass 2: The pass ended at 37.63 without any finds.

Pass 3: Yellowish, compact soil, with some burning; the pass ended at an altitude of 37.60 at the south corner and 37.62 at the north corner, when the surface of the floor, made of yellowish very compact soil, was cleaned; the pottery bag contained very few sherds.

In 1997 this square was excavated at a level below the Middle Minoan IIB destruction level, which contained the hieroglyphic archive; pale brown, compact soil; on the bedrock were some disintegrated plaster fragments with a clay substratum, together with some carbon fragments.

Square O

Very light yellow-whitish soil, with tiny fragments of disintegrated plaster. The pottery bag contained few sherds, Early Minoan and Middle Minoan. At the northwestern side of the square there were some carbon fragments **Cw15**; in this square, as in Square **Φ**, there were some small size stones, fallen in a direction southwest-northeast; the bedrock in this square sloped towards the north-northwest.

Square II

Pass 1: At 37.81 the largest part of a plaster table **Pl28**, of semicircular shape, was cleaned, (several joining fragments also from Square Y); the pottery bag contained the leg of a tripod cooking pot, while a fragmentary straight-sided cup **P6**, and a stemmed goblet with light-on-dark decoration **P5**, were collected separately. The only other finds were a fragment from an ashlar block **S4**, and some bones **B25**, (also from Square Y).

Pass 2: In 1996 the excavation ended at *c.* 37.72; the plaster was fallen in various layers and in different directions (Fig. 19); the only ceramic find was a conical bowl **P61**, together with a few more fragments belonging to the kantharos with crinkled rim **P38**, found in 1996; another rectangular thick sherd, containing limestone inclusions, could probably have come from a large cooking tray or table; the soil contained traces of dark red burnt clay, probably from disintegrated documents; a few more documents came to light, a lump or unfinished document **L8**; a lump of soil, 0.08 × 0.03 × 0.05, contained three direct sealings **D8**, **D17**, **D19** and **D20**, and an irregular sealing **I11**, at the same altitude; almost at the same spot fragments of a peg sealing and an irregular nodule were found; a peg sealing **D3**, at 0.48 from the west corner of the square, two object sealings **D12**, **D15**, at 0.48 from the northwest corner and 0.10 from the west side of the square; two more fragments of sealings **Cr7**, and **Co16**, at 0.48 from the northwest corner and 0.16 from the west side of the square; fragments of two direct sealings **D4**, **D30**, three combination nodules **Co1**, **Co8**, and **Co17**, and one of unknown type **Mi22**, came from the southeast corner of the square; with it was found **P61**, a lump of clay **L5** at 0.42 from the northwest corner, and 0.26 from the west side of the square; the soil in this area among the documents was yellowish; some sealing fragments of uncertain types **CB3**, **Mi28**, **Mi30** and **Mi46**, at 0.41 from the northwest corner and 0.08 from the west side of the square; to the southwest of these a small lump, **L4**.

Pass 3: The soil showed intense traces of burning and produced many large fragments of plaster; at the north side of the square, the soil contained grey ash and carbon fragments; at the southwestern side of the square there was a fragment of carbonised wood **Cw16**; the pottery bag contained some Middle Minoan II sherds. In this pass the following documents came to light, a large fragment of a combination nodule **Co3**, at 0.42 from the northwest corner, on the west side of the square, fragments of four nodules **N4**, **Co21**, **D19** and **L20**, at 0.18 from the northwestern corner, on the north side of the square, a lump of clay **L15**, at 0.25 from the northwest corner, and 0.49 from the southwest corner of the square, tiny fragments from nodules **CB4**, and **I13**, to the east of **L15**, tiny fragments from two documents, **CB5** and **I12**, a possible direct sealing **D40**, and a large lump **L2**, fragments, a tiny fragment from a nodule **Mi47**, under the bowl **P61**, and another tiny fragment from a combination(?) nodule **Co28**, at 0.48 from the northwest corner and 0.25 from the southwest corner of the square.

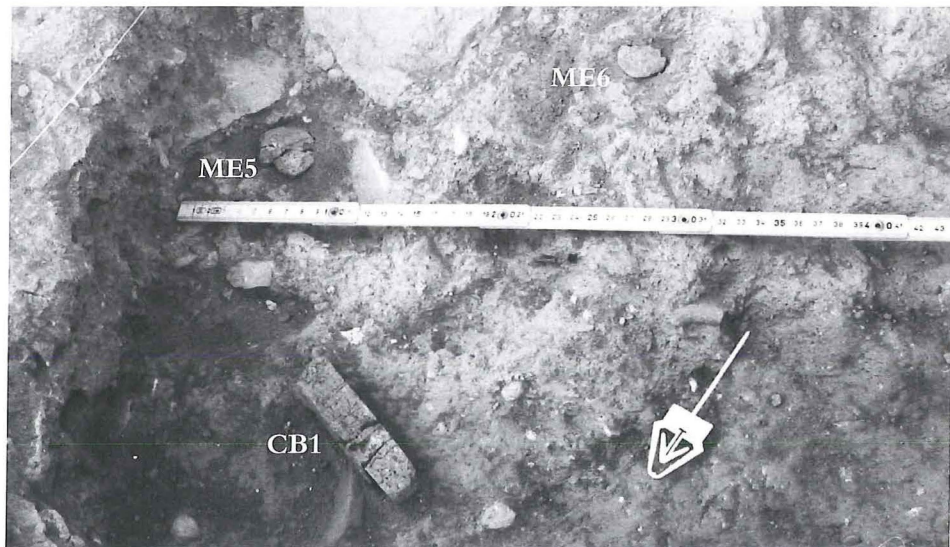
Square II, south

Pass 2: This is the south part of Square II, under the concrete support of the Late Minoan III wall; the soil contained large fragments of flat plaster; two ceramic finds came from this pass, a fragmentary straight-sided cup, light-on-dark, decorated with dots on the rim from **P14** from Square Σ, and half a conical bowl found in the centre of the square, **P63**.

Fig. 20. View of Square P with the large clay bar **PE Hh 16 (CB1)** laid free.



Fig. 21. Detail of Square P, with clay bar **CB1** and the medallions **Me5** and **Me6**.



Square P

Pass 1: The pass, which ended at 37.67, contained several fragments of red plaster, with clay substratum, and some carbon fragments. The pottery bag contained MM II and a single LM IA intrusive sherd. Inventoried: a jug neck rim pattern **P70**; a conical bowl rim fragment **P71**; a conical cup base and body **P72**. A fragmentary conical cup **P8**, and a one-handed conical cup **P55**, were collected separately. Some burnt wood **Cw17**, was also collected; with it were the following documents: a clay bar inscribed on the four long surfaces **CB1**, at 37.68, a broken medallion **Me6**, at 37.81, and another medallion, also broken, **Me5**, at 37.69 (Figs. 20, 21).

Excavation continued in this square in 1997. The soil had the same colour and consistency as in the adjacent Squares Ξ and Σ ; the excavation of this



Fig. 22. Object sealing (end of arrow) found among fallen plaster fragments.

square was discontinued due to the presence of large plaster fragments, which also continued in Square II to the south; the pottery bag contained only a few Middle Minoan II sherds; a few bones **B26** (also from Squares P and Σ), fragments of plaster with clay subsurface **P129**, and a small lump, **L12**.

Square Σ

Pass 1: Yellowish clay, containing many plaster fragments, and a stone, measuring 0.25 × 0.30, fallen in the centre of the square; the pass ended at 37.72–37.73. The pottery bag contained some sherds of MM IIB and EM II date including a burnished cup rim fragment with ripple pattern (Fig. 26i); a juglet fragment **P83**; and a conical bowl rim fragment with splatter decoration, **P84**. Separately collected were half a shallow conical cup **P13**, and a straight-sided cup, **P14**. Plaster was collected **P123** (also from Squares T and M), as well as some carbon fragments **Cw18**, and a mud-brick fragment **Mb5**. The documents in this pass were two almost complete object sealings **D21** (Fig. 22) and **D16**, fragments from an irregular nodule **I1**, a combination nodule **Co11** and two of a more uncertain type, **D35** and **Mi24**.

Pass 2: The pass ended at 37.63; the pottery bag contained some Middle Minoan IIB sherds, including a cooking pot leg, (Bag P96/0177) and straight-sided cup, **P85**. Carbon fragments **Cw19**, were also collected; two documents, a peg sealing with string impression **D1**, and a probable second peg sealing, **D6**.

Pass 3: The floor made of yellowish compact soil was cleaned; the pottery bag contained a few sherds, including the rim of a small basin and the base of a conical cup, while two cooking pot fragments **P52**, were collected separately; two pieces of obsidian **O18a-b**, were found with them.

Fig. 23. Object sealing **D10** can be seen at end of arrow found among fallen plaster and pottery fragments.



Square T

Pass 1: Pottery bag contained a few non-diagnostic sherds only. A deep conical cup **P15**, a wide-mouthed jug **P16**, and a bell cup **P60** were excavated separately.

Pass 2: The pass contained fragments of plaster **P123** (also from Squares M and Σ), and **P130** (the latter joining with **P115**), some carbon fragments **Cw20**, a fragmentary obsidian blade **O19**, and a fragment of an object sealing **D10** (Fig. 23), at 37.77; a ledge-rimmed conical bowl, **P7**.

Pass 3, 1997: The pass starts at 37.8 at the west side and 37.64 at the east side; very pale brown soil. The surface was covered with small stones, either fallen or used as fill to support the wall; the pottery bag contained few Middle Minoan II sherds; with them were some bones **B26**, an obsidian flake **O20**, at 37.61, an obsidian blade **O21**, at 37.52, and fragments of plaster, **P131**.

Square Y

No pottery sherds were found; plaster and small sea pebbles, probably from a destroyed floor at 37.72 (Fig. 20); on the floor were the following: fragmentary vases, a conical bowl **P2**, a handleless bell cup **P3**, a deep handleless conical cup **P4**, and a straight-sided cup **P6**, (joining fragments also from Square Π); a piece of pumice **S5**, some bones **B9**, (also from Square Π), plaster **P128**, (also from Square Π), and fragments from a plaster table, **P132**.

In 1997, a brown, rather loose soil was noted. The pottery bag contained Early Minoan and Middle Minoan sherds; with them there were two obsidian flakes **O22** and **O23a-b**, adjacent to the wall, and two blades, probably of Early Minoan date, **O24** and **O25**; also a document, a possible peg sealing **D5**, found by the wall.



Fig. 24. Large number of conical cups from Square BA.

Square Φ

This square was not excavated in passes. In the upper part, the pottery bags contained few, mainly non-diagnostic Middle Minoan sherds. Furthermore some fragments of plaster **P133**, were noted in the northwest part, and from the east part of the square **P134**, both in the Middle Minoan II destruction layer but without any traces of burning. The square contained stones (0.20 × 0.40) fallen from the adjacent wall; it is likely that they constituted the foundation of the west wall of corridor 6, which is Neopalatial and is founded directly on the destruction deposit which constitutes a *terminus post quem* for the dating of that wall: the stratigraphical sequence, Middle Minoan IIB destruction, Middle Minoan III wall, Late Minoan IA destruction, show that a rather short time span elapsed between the two major events; this is also proved by the similarity in architectural details between the two phases, in particular the parallel walls of the Neopalatial corridor-like spaces – added to the east at a slightly oblique axis – which are almost identical in width and construction to the Protopalatial ones; the soil among the stones was dark brown and rather loose. The finds in the Middle Minoan II layer included some bones **B27**, a conical bowl in two fragments **P66**, a conical cup containing plaster **P67**, a fragmentary conical cup **P68**, an intrusive MM III/LM IA fragment from a spouted bowl, a carbon fragment **Cw21**, and an obsidian blade **O26**; a large well-preserved direct sealing **D37**, was discovered in the middle of the square, as well as a few more fragments of sealings **Co29**, **D11**, **D27**, **D31**, **Mi7** and **L13**, an obsidian blade **O27**; underneath them was some clean soil without any sherds, probably from the Middle Minoan IIB floor; below this floor were only Early Minoan remains. (cf. the altitudes of the other squares in 1996); at the end of the excavation in a disturbed area was reached a yellowish-brown and very compact soil. It contained no finds, except for a Middle Minoan IIB conical bowl in the northeast corner **P69**, and a small carbon fragment underneath it.

Fig. 25. Plaster fragments and the carinated conical cup **P62** during excavation in Square AA.



Square BA

Pass 1: BA was not a 0.50×0.50 square but rather a rectangular space between the double-thickness wall dividing corridor 6 from corridor 7, and the Late Minoan IB wall which constitutes the west edge of the excavated area. This pass also included remains from the wall foundation pit which contained a large number of conical cups (Fig. 24). Excavation started at 37.95; the pottery bag contained few sherds. Separately collected was a conical bowl **P44**, found upside down at 37.91, one third of a conical bowl **P45**, found at the east side of the square, and two conical bowls, **P46** in two fragments, and **P48**; with them were found some bones **B28**, and plaster fragments, belonging to a table, **PI38**. The pass contained the following documents: a lump of unbaked clay **L11**, at 37.91 adjacent to the wall in the corner, two fragments from direct sealings **D29**, **D28**, and four of uncertain type **Mi50–53**; a lump of unbaked clay **L1**, from the corner of the wall, and fragments from a crescent **Cr4**, and a direct sealing, **D36**.

Pass 2: The pass started at 37.69; at 37.63 the floor was found, made of yellowish compact soil; the bedrock was cleaned at 37.61 and the floor at 37.62 (in Square Γ , and at 37.63 in Square Λ); on the floor lay a few plaster fragments **PI35**, corner plaster **PI36**, and **PI37**.

Square AA

Pass 2: The soil was yellowish, sandy and loose; it contained small fragments of carbon **Cw22**, and disintegrated plaster **PI39** and **PI40**, the latter with clay substructure; the pottery bag contained very few, small Middle Minoan sherds; the only other ceramic find was a fragmentary carinated cup **P62**; from the same area came a large lump, **L16**. The excavation ended at 37.58–37.64. (Fig. 25).

Square AB

Pass 2: This is the remaining space at the north end of corridor 6, measuring 0.75 × 0.82. The soil was yellowish-brown, similar to that in the adjacent square. The pottery bag contained some Middle Minoan sherds, including one with Kamares decoration. The other ceramic finds were a deep conical cup **P64**, and a fragmentary conical bowl **P65**; with these were found some bones **B29**, and plaster fragments **PI41**; an obsidian blade **O28**, came from the middle of the square.

Sieving of soil

The sieving of the soil also produced a large number of very small fragments from documents: **Co24**, **D7**, **D13–14**, **D32**, **Mi4**, **Mi6**, **Mi8**, **Mi15–20**, **Mi35–40**, **Mi44**, **L17–19**.

Comments

In general terms the soil in the archive deposit was yellowish to yellowish-brown, mainly compact, but in some patches more loose. Only in Square K was a more brown-reddish soil noted. Almost everywhere were noted burnt soil, pieces of carbon and in places small fragments of carbonised wood, and in other places patches of ashes. The deposit contained surprisingly few larger and middle-sized stones. The few found were concentrated in the northern central part of the deposit (Squares N (Fig. 18), M, Λ and E). Everywhere the deposit contained large amounts of plaster and stucco which presumably came mainly from the floor and the walls of the archive room.

It seems that the floor of the archive room may have been – at least partly – plastered, while the floor of the basement room was a beaten earth floor consisting of yellowish compact soil. It is also worthy of note, that this floor displayed no signs of burning, and it seems safe to conclude that the fire which overtook the building(?) did not extend to this basement room.

The signs of burning in the deposit do not, in our opinion, display evidence of a violent conflagration, but of a moderate fire intense enough to preserve the sun-dried archival documents, albeit in a very soft and brittle condition – a characteristic which also emphasises the non-violent character of the burning.

The absence of stones in the deposit should also be commented upon. Unless the structures on the upper floors were constructed only as wattle and daub, one would have expected stones from the walls in the destruction debris. A wattle and daub construction seems unlikely for two reasons. The first is that only very few pieces of burnt clay and mud-brick were noted from the room burnt by fire and the second is that one would have expected a much more red soil, had it been mixed with fallen mud-bricks. It would thus seem likely that the walls would have still been standing after the destruction – at least in part. However, what we do find in the destruction debris are

enormous amounts of plaster everywhere. It thus seems that the plaster, often with clay lining and smaller stones, had fallen off the walls as a result of the destruction, while the walls remained standing. If this line of reasoning is correct, the destruction must have involved severe shaking of the building – in other words, an earthquake. Below (p. 163) we shall provide further supporting evidence for the earthquake theory. Even though the walls did not collapse, it is easy to imagine that the roof caved in, covering and sealing the contents of the archive. That the remains of the archive were buried as a result of the destruction is furthermore indirectly supported by the evidence of the faunal remains which showed that no bones had been exposed to scavengers (cf. below p. 223). With the contents of the archive room thus buried and sealed by an extremely heavy deposit of fallen debris of plaster, mud and roof construction material we do not consider it unlikely that the entire floor collapsed into the basement room with all its contents more or less in the same position as they were immediately before the earthquake.