

Fig. 1. General plan of the site after the 2013 excavation (crosses indicate 10 m squares).

# The Greek-Swedish-Danish Excavations 2013

## *A short preliminary report*

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From August 1 until October 2, 2013, excavations were conducted in three large trenches in Parodos Kanevaro and one small trench within the Ag. Aikaterini Square, while minor works and restorations were also carried out in the old excavations (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The aim of the excavation was to explore as far as the modern habitation permitted the LM IIIA:2/IIIB:1 Building 2, where Linear B tablets and an inscribed stirrup jar had previously been found.<sup>2</sup>

### Results of the excavation

Below the cement of the modern road a layer of gravel of varying thicknesses was reached, which had been laid down in order to level the Square after the bombardment during World War II. Of the post-Antique architectural remains, we excavated a Venetian wall foundation known from previous excavations as W1-028 in the southern part of the trench;<sup>3</sup> two wall foundations of the Early Christian basilica – reused in the Venetian period – were also exposed. Between these wall foundations, 5 tombs of the Venetian period were registered, only one of which had human bones preserved. In this tomb several humans (both male and female, young and adult) had been buried with coins and jewellery (Fig. 2); at first glance



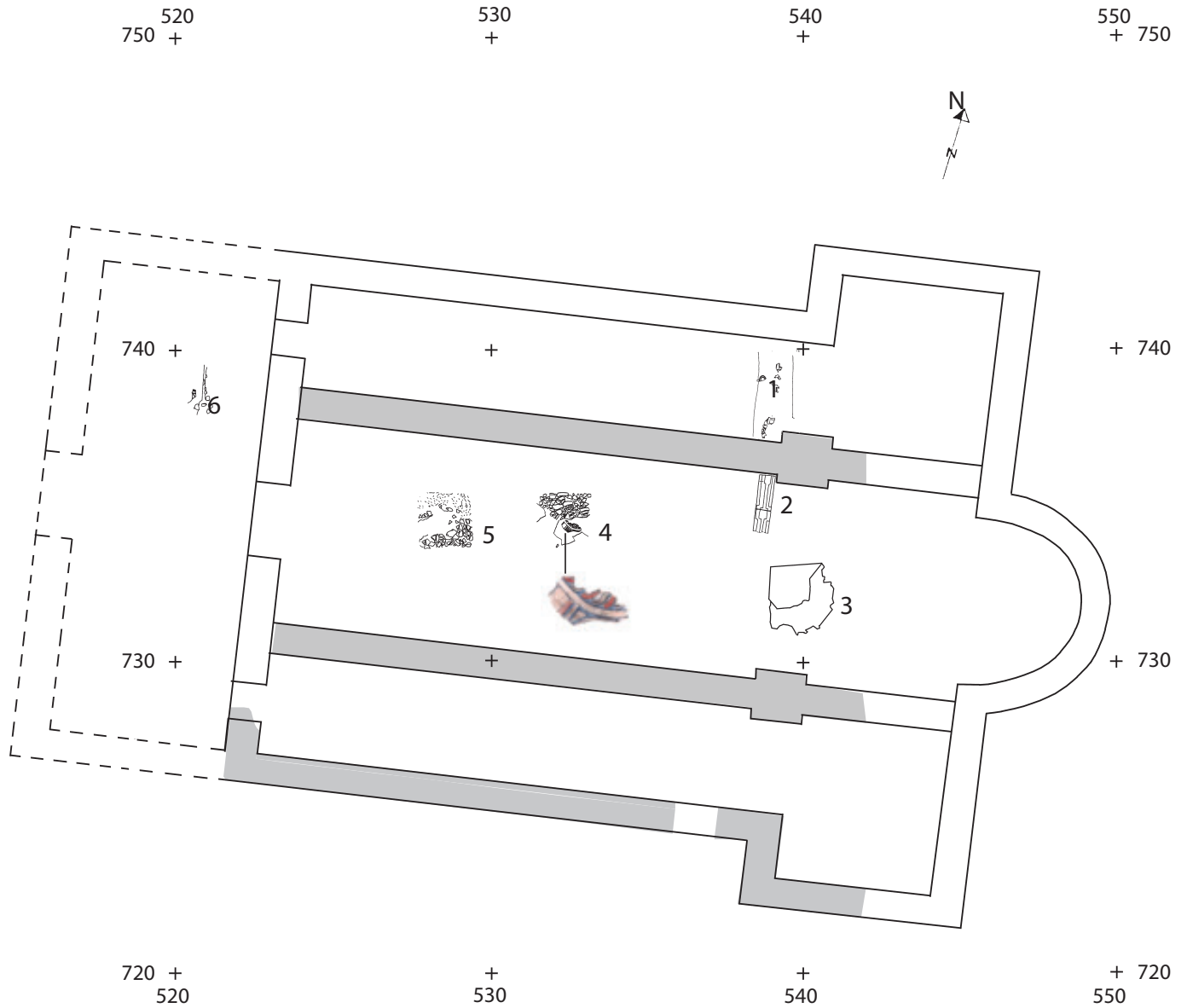
Fig. 2. Tomb in the Venetian cathedral with victims from an epidemic.

1 The excavation took place under the general direction of Dr. Maria Andreadaki-Vlazaki, with Dr. Ann-Louise Schallin and Dr. Erik Hallager as co-directors. The on-site work was directed by Dr. Erik Hallager, assisted from the Greek side by Anastasia Ntini, and from the Scandinavian team by Dr. Tomas Alusik, Robin Rönnlund, Naja Werther and architect Ann Pedersen. Eftikia Protopadaki represented the ephorate and the Kastelli Project. The artefact studies were directed by Birgitta Hallager assisted by Stella Petrakis and Alexia Grammatikaki. Water sieving and investigation of the material was directed by Dr. Anaya Sarpaki. We are extremely grateful to the following institutions for their financial support, without which the excavation would not have been possible: The Institute for Aegean Prehistory, Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, Herbert och Karin Jacobssons Stiftelse, Augustinus Fonden and the Kastelli Project.

2 Hallager, Vlazaki & Hallager 1992; Andreadaki-Vlazaki & Hallager 2007, 17-20.

3 From the Northeast Building, cf. GSE I, 133-4.

## Conjectural reconstruction of the Early Christian basilica



*The shaded parts of the walls are recorded in the excavation.*

1. Floor fragments with fragments of mosaics at c. 13.43 m.
2. Parapet with top levels at 13.76 and 13.70 m.
3. Floor and floor bedding from the 2013 excavation; top level of floor at 13.48 m.
4. Floor with mosaic and floor bedding; mosaic floor at 13.37 m.
5. Trench B3 with floor bedding of mosaic floor at c. 13.36 m.
6. Fragment of mosaic which may perhaps be in situ at 13.60 m

266 **Fig. 3.** Conjectural reconstruction of the Early Christian basilica (crosses indicate 10 m squares).





**Fig. 4.** Geometric floor exposed in Trench 39, destroyed by later pits with the preserved part of one of the circular “ovens” (right); facing northwest.

they looked like victims of an epidemic. The Venetian cathedral was built over the partly ruined Early Christian basilica and thanks to the 2013 excavations it was possible to make a conjectural cross-shaped reconstruction of the basilica with two wings protruding 2 m from the main structure (Fig. 3) – a shape often seen in Early Christian basilicas. In ground plan and size our basilica recalls the Great Basilica on the Vrina Plain in Albania.<sup>4</sup>

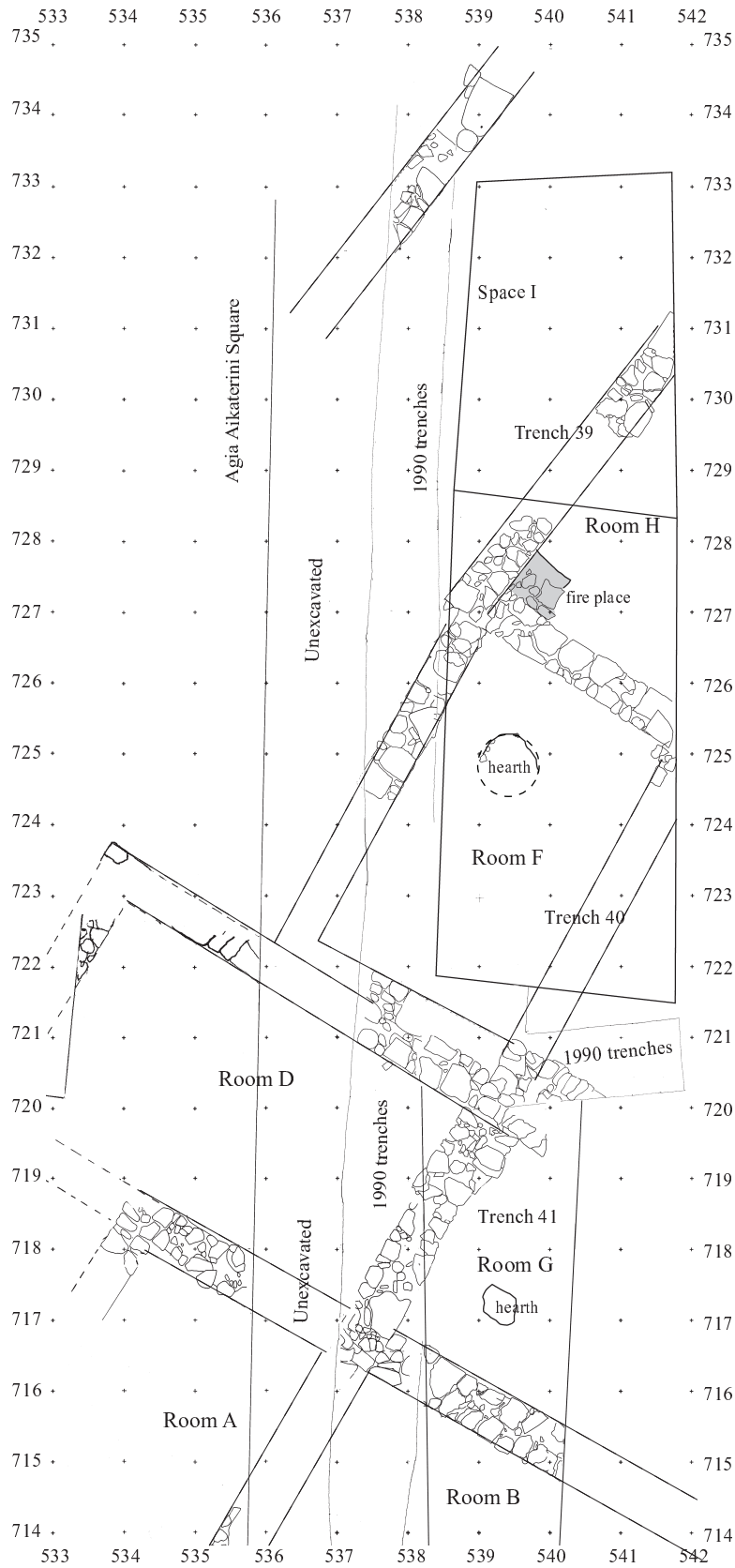
The Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods were represented by stray finds, mainly roof tiles. The Geometric period, i.e. the Late Geometric period, was richly represented in the northern half of the excavated area. Dominant in these deposits were the remains of three ‘ovens’ – large shallow pits with a diameter of c.



**Fig. 5.** Worked horn from the Geometric deposits.

2 to 2.4 m, coated with clay plaster and filled with large amounts of ash (Fig. 4). No artifacts were found in them and the interpretation of their function will have to await the analyses of the ash. Several floor levels were connected

<sup>4</sup> Molla 2013, 204, fig. II.2.3.



**Fig. 6.** Plan of the LM IIIC settlement; the crosses indicate 1 m squares. Scale 1:100.



Fig. 7. Fragment of a small model of a boat (left) and unusually large bobbin (right).



Fig. 8. Sherd from an LM IIIC krater.

to these ovens, and they all contained large amounts of animal bones which still need to be studied. One, however, has been identified as a worked horn (Fig. 5).

### LM IIIC

The LM IIIC period was richly represented in all the excavated areas (Fig. 6). In the very northern part, which was an open area from the beginning of the LM III to the end of the Geometric period, a single floor level was observed. South and east of the open area parts of four rooms were unearthed. The two northern rooms (F and H) were constructed upon the LM IIIB:2 debris while the two southern rooms (G and B) had cut away the LM IIIB:2 debris resulting in floors resting directly upon the LM IIIB:1 destruction level. In the western corner of Room H a square structure was observed which might have functioned as a fireplace. In Room F fragments of three successive floors were excavated, the earliest of which had a circular hearth in the northern part of the room. On the latest floor of this room were found several pithos fragments, as well as a bobbin and the fragment of what appears to be a small terracotta model of a boat

(Fig. 7). Also in Room G, a small irregular hearth/fireplace was observed on the floor together with a thick layer of charcoal. Some kind of industrial activity may have taken place here, although only a single whetstone was found on the floor. The little that could be excavated in Room B revealed no interesting finds.

To a large extent the LM IIIC habitans used the existing walls of the LM IIIB:2 period, while it appears that a double wall was constructed in the southern part of Room F. In two other instances new constructions of the LM IIIC period could be discerned, both in Room G. The floors of this period were more or less empty as also noted in earlier excavations,<sup>5</sup> while the pits and unstratified deposits of the period yielded some fine pottery (Fig. 8).

### LM IIIB:2

The LM IIIB:2 period was mainly recognized in the northern part of the excavated area since, in the southern part, it had been dug away in the LM IIIC period (cf. above). In the open area to the north (Space I, Fig. 6), two floor levels of the period were found. The inventoried pottery

<sup>5</sup> GSE II, 193.





Fig. 9. Small juglet from LM IIIB:2 floor in Room H.

connected to these floors consisted mainly of fragments from drinking vessels and closed decorated liquid containers, while a few fragments from trays and a single cooking dish were also recorded. The LM IIIC fireplace in Space H was a construction of the LM IIIB:2 period, but raised above the floor level on which a small juglet was found (Fig. 9). Room F – the outline of which could be relatively safely reconstructed – measured 5 x 3.2 m. In this room, which preserved only one floor level, part of a large central hearth was also preserved and narrow double grooves at a right angle were observed in the surface of the hearth (Fig. 10).<sup>6</sup> The hearth was taken out and kept for further studies. No complete or restorable vessels were found on the floor, while a few tools in stone and bone, a hook in bronze and a spindle whorl were recorded. Room P of the LM IIIA:2/B:1 period (Fig. 1) was reused in the LM IIIB:2 period. The small portion of this room that could be excavated produced a largely undisturbed floor deposit with ten vessels (Fig. 11) and large fragments of a pithos. Among the small finds discovered was a mortar lying on its side and an unusual small stone pendant (Fig. 12).

The architecture of the LM IIIB:2 period consisted almost entirely of new constructions with very well-built walls (Fig. 13, WS 1316).



Fig. 10. The northern part of Room F in the LM IIIB:2 period. In the lower left corner is seen the preserved part of the large square hearth with clear traces of fire. To the right of the hearth is seen the top of a LM IIIA:2/IIIB:1 wall. Facing north.



Fig. 11. Shallow bowl from floor deposit in Room P.

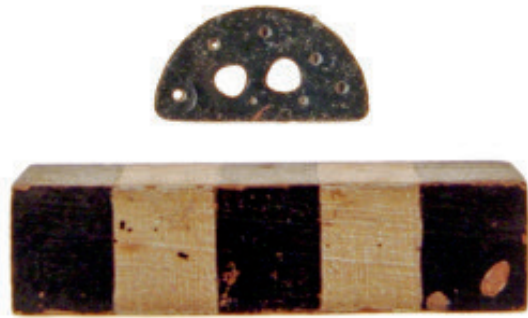


Fig. 12. Unusual small stone pendant from floor deposit in Room P.

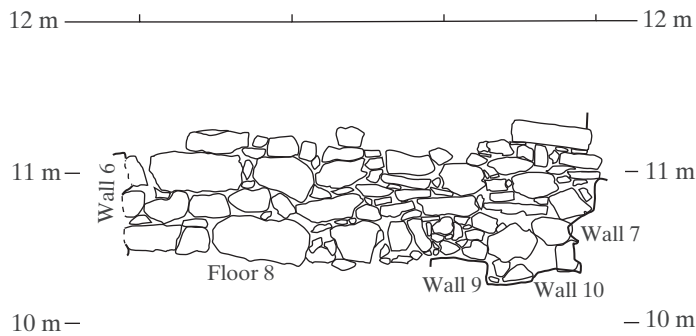


Fig. 13. Southwest face of 40-Wall 5, i.e. the northern wall of Room F constructed in LM IIIB:2 and reused in LM IIIC, cf. Fig. 6. Scale 1:50.

WS 13-16. Trench 40-Wall 5, SW face



Fig. 14. Fragment of a figurine and two steatite beads (or spindle whorls) from the LM IIIB:1 floor deposits in the open area north.



Fig. 15. Fragment of a terracotta model of a chariot from the LM IIIB:1 deposits in the open area north.





**Fig. 16.** Trench 40, facing north. The original, lower floor of Room G with bedrock protruding is seen in the lower left half, and on the right side the reused Room P. The wall crossing above these rooms is the north wall of LM IIIB:2/IIIC Room F, cf. Fig. 13.

### LM IIIA:2/IIIB:1

The LM IIIA:2/B:1 period was well attested by the excavation of Building 2. Remains of the period were observed in the open area to the north, as well as in Space Q and Rooms G, E and D (Fig. 1). The open northern area revealed five floor levels of the period (one LM IIIA:2 and four LM IIIB:1). The inventoried pottery connected to these floors consisted mainly of decorated (and a few plain) drinking vessels and fine decorated liquid containers. Among the remaining shapes rhyta were predominant. Furthermore, the fragment of a large stirrup jar with possible traces of a Linear B inscription was found.

Among the small finds three fragments of figurines and two steatite beads were collected (Fig. 14) and a fragment of a chariot was discovered in a small shallow pit between the floors (Fig. 15).<sup>7</sup> Space Q, like the open area, is situated outside Building 2 and in this space two LM IIIB:1 floors were found at a c. 0.30 m lower level than those in the open area.

In Trench 40 we excavated parts of two rooms in Building 2: Room G and Room P. Room G measured c. 5 x 4.2 m. In 2013 one column base was disclosed in a position indicating that the room had two column bases on the central length axis of the room, as seen for exam-

<sup>7</sup> A similar figurine was found in 1989, cf. Hallager & Tzedakis 1988, 24 and Hallager, Vlaziaki & Hallager 1990, 28, pl. 1b.



**Fig. 17.** Small decorated stirrup jar from the floor deposit in Room G.

ple at Sissi and Quartier Nu at Malia.<sup>8</sup> In the northern part of the room, bedrock was protruding c. 0.15 m above the latest floor (Fig. 16). Clear traces of fire were noted in the room. On the floor some stone tools and a spool were found, together with two small decorated stirrup jars probably fallen from shelves (Fig. 17). A test trench was made in the floor and the original floor of the LM



**Fig. 18.** Pithos found in Room D during excavation; facing southwest.



**Fig. 19.** The pithos from Room D after restoration.

<sup>8</sup> Other rooms with two column bases are found for example in Sissi halls 3.1 and 4.11, cf. *Sissi III*, fig. 4.4 and at Malia Room X<sub>22-23</sub>, cf. Driessen & Farnoux 1994, fig. 2.





Fig. 20. Half of a double vase found inside the pithos.

IIIA:2 period was found c. 0.2 m below the later floor. The neighbouring Room P seems to have been reused in the LM IIIB:2 period (cf. above). Further south, in Trench 41, excavation continued in Room E where Linear B tablets were found in 1990. This room also proved to be relatively large, measuring c. 5 x 3.5 m. In addition to the two small fireplaces noted in 1990,<sup>9</sup> a larger centrally placed hearth was discovered in 2013. On the floor close to the hearth, a large mortar together with a few grinders were recorded. In a soil/ash sample taken from the hearth and close by, many seeds were recorded: a large amount came from figs, some from lentils, barley, wheat, broken legumes, olives and weeds. Obviously some kind of industrial activity took place in this room. Considering the Linear B tablets found in the same room – one of which clearly mentions offerings to Zeus and Dionysos – one cannot

help thinking that the activities may be partly concerned with preparations of offerings to the deities. In contrast with the 1990 excavations in the same room,<sup>10</sup> the pottery discovered in 2013 was very fragmented.

The most exciting find in 2013, however, came from the small part of Room D that was excavated. Here, very close to the north corner of the narrow room (Fig. 1), a complete decorated pithos was discovered (Fig. 18). This pithos was unusual not only in its decoration, with white painting on a dark background, but above all in its position and its content (Fig. 19). A pit had been dug into the floor in order to fit the pithos which was lying on its side, and must have been used as a small storeroom. Inside the pithos 18 grinders and percussion stones, two mortars, two slab stones, a fragment of obsidian, a wedge-shaped piece of worked ivory, the lower part of two large closed vessels, a broken, very burnt lid, half a double vase with a small animal on the handle (Fig. 20) and an uninscribed, unburnt clay tablet were found. To our knowledge such a find is unique for Bronze Age Crete.

The architecture of Building 2 is rather impressive and two important features were revealed during the 2013 excavations. First was the discovery of the northern wall, exposed in Trench 40. Together with the small fragment exposed in 2010,<sup>11</sup> this enabled us to reconstruct 10 m of the north façade of the building, which after a small break continued eastwards (Fig. 1). The reconstructed north corner of the building was investigated in 2014.<sup>12</sup> During the 2010 excavation a large part of Space M was excavated and a conjectural reconstruction of the west corner of the space was indicated on the plan.<sup>13</sup> In 2013 we wanted to verify this reconstruction and consequently a small trench (2 x 2.2 m) was opened between the Early Christian and the Venetian wall foundations. After the topsoil was removed, we did indeed find the well-constructed west corner of Space M (Fig. 21). Until now 16 rooms/spaces have been identified in Building 2, which covers an area of no less than 350 m<sup>2</sup>.

9 Hallager, Vlazaki & Hallager 1992, 63 and fig. 2.

10 Hallager, Vlazaki & Hallager 1992, 67-70, fig. 4 and pl. 2.

11 38-Wall 4, cf. Hallager, Tzedakis & Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2014b, 215 and fig. 15.

12 Cf. this volume, p. 283.

13 Hallager, Tzedakis & Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2014b, 214, fig. 8.



**Fig. 21.** *The west corner of Room M of LM IIIA:2/B:1 building 2, discovered between the wall foundations of the Early Christian basilica (left) and the Venetian cathedral (right); facing east.*

### Earlier periods

Outside Building 2 in the area of Space Q, within Trench 40 (Fig. 1), 0.8 m of earlier deposits were excavated. The north wall of Building 2 was observed to be partly dug into a large pit of the LM IIIA:1 period, almost without small finds. Only a broken loom weight and a large piece of pumice were recorded. Below and partly around the pit, a deposit was noted above a beaten earth floor that was also of the LM IIIA:1 period. Below this floor, two layers with mainly LM II pottery were observed, at the bottom of which a new floor of LM I or LM II date was found. This floor contained no finds in situ, and in the deposits above only a single loom weight was recorded. The area under investigation was rather small and no walls could be connected to the two floors found here. The floors that were exposed north of Building 2 (in Trench 39) were discovered at a 0.25-0.30 m higher level. In Trench 39, how-

ever, a wall fragment of the LM IIIA:1 period was discovered. The wall in question (Wall 3 in Trench 39) was both constructed and dismantled during the LM IIIA:1 period since it was surrounded by soil of that period on its three exposed sides. The wall fragment is interesting because at one end was placed a large square sandstone block which must have been the base for a wooden doorpost (Fig. 22). This is the only example from Khania where such door bases have been observed in buildings constructed after the Neopalatial period. The LM IIIA:1 deposits in this area (c. 0.40 m thick) revealed very few small finds: a few pieces of obsidian, a few stone tools and a small slag. The top of the deposits contained many smaller stones, probably functioning as the bedding for the latest LM IIIA:1 floor. In this layer numerous fragments of conical cups plus six complete ones were recorded (Fig. 23). We did not excavate Neopalatial or earlier layers.





Fig. 22. Part of a wall with a door base (without antae) in the LM IIIA:1 deposit in Trench 39; facing northeast.

### Old excavations

A few cleanings and restorations in the old excavations were carried out. Due to the excavations in 2005 in the very southwestern corner of the Ag. Aikaterini Square (Δ9),<sup>14</sup> a small baulk of soil above Room B of Building 1 became exposed. It was decided to excavate this baulk in order to investigate further the unique floor of the room, which earlier excavations had shown to be at least partly constructed of broken potsherds.<sup>15</sup> The 2013 excavation exposed a large portion of this floor (Fig. 24), and it also revealed that the northern part of the room had not been covered by pot sherds. On the other hand a large mortar was found up against Wall 5 in Trench 17. The sherds still embedded in the floor consist of several types of vessel with different paint and decoration. Among the

sherds, pithos fragments with 'string' impressions were recorded. One base is visible with dark brown circles on a white background, and a rim with red paint. Several of the sherds look as though they have been crushed in situ, since they fit perfectly together. Several types of pottery are visible, from the coarser wares to the finer decorated vessels. Apart from a rim and a base, most of the fragments are body sherds. The many colours, from brown to red, and the arrangement of the sherds give the impression that one is looking at a mosaic floor.

In 2005 a row of stones that looked like cover-stones for a drain was observed in the open Square in the triangle between House I and House III.<sup>16</sup> This row of stones was cleaned – and it did prove to be the cover for a drain running from the south corner of House III to the main drain

<sup>14</sup> Seen plan in Andreadaki-Vlazaki & Hallager 2014, fig. 1.

<sup>15</sup> GSE VI, 48-9.

<sup>16</sup> Andreadaki-Vlazaki & Hallager 2014, 202 and fig. 14.



**Fig. 23.** Floor packing for the latest LM IIIA:1 floor with several complete and many broken conical cups; facing north.



**Fig. 24.** Floor constructed of broken pot sherds in LM IIIB:1, Building 1 Room B. In the background behind the black and white scale is seen a mortar placed up against the wall. Facing north.

in the South Street.<sup>17</sup> The direction of the drain points directly towards the south corner of House III, Room A, which may have been an open room.

### Summary

The 2013 excavation gave new and important evidence from almost all periods. From post-Antiquity we were especially happy to find the evidence that made it possible to make a conjectural plan of the early Christian basilica, and understand how the wall foundations were reused when the Venetian cathedral was constructed. The Geometric period revealed the three large ‘ovens’, evidence of industrial activities that have not previously been recorded in Khania. In earlier excavations we had observed an extended reuse of LM IIIB:2 buildings in the LM IIIC

period. This was also the case in the 2013 excavations, but for the first time we observed that parts of the LM IIIB:2 deposits had been removed in order for the LM IIIC buildings to be constructed. From the LM IIIB:2 period we noted especially the large, well-constructed hearth in Room F. The north wall of the LM IIIA:2/B:1 Building 2 was identified and it was revealed that Room G probably had two column bases – a feature not noted previously in Khania. Room E revealed further evidence of industrial activities, with its large, square central hearth. To our knowledge the horizontally placed pithos used as a ‘storeroom’ for stone tools, broken pottery and a few other items is unique for Minoan Crete. Concerning the LM IIIA:2/IIIB period, the open area north of Building 2 is interesting with its finds of many fine decorated drinking vessels and liquid containers, supplemented with a few

<sup>17</sup> The exposed stones of the drain is seen, this volume p. 287, fig. 18, and the main drain in the South Street is seen in Hallager, Tzedakis & Andreadaki-Vlazaki 2014a, 183, fig. 10.

figurines and a couple of steatite beads. It is therefore tempting to suggest that this area might have been used for feasting. If so, it would further emphasize the importance of Building 2.

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## Abbreviations

**GSE:** *The Greek-Swedish Excavations at the Agia Aikaterini Square Kastelli, Khania 1970-1987* (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen, 4<sup>o</sup>, XLVII:I-VII), E. Hallager & B.P. Hallager (eds).

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Vol. II. *The Late Minoan IIIC Settlement*, Stockholm 2000.

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**Sissi III:** *Excavations at Sissi III, Preliminary report on the 2011 campaign* (Aegis 6), J. Driessen et al., Louvain 2012.

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