Kommes Excavations,
Summer 1976
Director's Notebook by
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24 June, 1976

The history of the preparations for the excavation, how it began in 1964 with a dream through the vital stages of acquiring the land, the appropriate permits, the financial backing, and the goodwill of many people in Greece and on the North American continent is described in some detail in personal diaries and notes throughout the 1964-1976 period. At the same time I will keep a personal diary of reflections only tangentially important for the real archaeological material as it may emerge in reports. I do plan, however, to add a certain amount of information concerning logistics, timing, even visitors to the excavation, for the record here.

During the first season, 1976, we plan to excavate only within the perimeter of the expropriated land, the chief archaeological aim being to determine the type and period(s) of the material in the area. At the moment I expect a rather thick settlement of non-palatial houses on the side of the hill, perhaps with a main house or houses of some type. The rear of settlement, to judge from the sheds, is LM I, LM III, although this may vary from one area to the next.

There are nine staff:

- Maria Shaw
- Phillip Botancourt
- Vance Watrous
- W. Bigniew Daniewicz
- Lucie Nixon
- Betty Comstock
- Giuliana Biondo
- John McCune
Expected Special Visitors as "Visiting Archaeologists" are John Hayes and Peter Warren, the first expected being John Hayes (ca. 1 July - 20 July) with Pat and Elyja - both Warren arriving about 1 August and staying for 2 weeks. The excavation period itself will be 1 July - 15 August, unless there are unexpected changes.

Details on any of the above mentioned can be found in the excavation files for 1976.

I arrived in Athens about May 26 and after two weeks of making contacts, purchasing the excavation vehicle (a large International Harvester Travelall), and purchasing excavation materials I variously put arrived in Corfu on the morning of July 13th. After an unusually long, pleasant interview with Eleno Alexiou, I drove to Pitsidia with John Mc Enroe who had accompanied me from Athens.

In Pitsidia the main objectives were to check on arrangements made earlier as to rentals on five buildings (three for living in, one on the shore for storage, one for storage in Pitsidia) and to determine the workman situation in order to be ready to work on July 1. As to the former, all the commitments were honored completely and well. As to the latter, the situation first seemed a very poor one. No workmen seemed to be available from Kneros (there were no positive developments in the process of correspondence) nor Phantos (no Italians may be excavating at the same time). Moreover, it was thought
That it would be difficult to find any workers locally. While room has come from either Knossos or Kanalari, we now do have a foreman (George Belhadakis) with experience at Phaistos, and many workers already interested (30 signed up for 16 places). They will have to be trained, and this will take some time, but at least the manpower is available. Our projected needs are:

2 cooks
2 women to wash pottery
16 workmen, who will spend most of their time at the site.

Wages offered, averaging 50 drachmae more than those paid last year, are as follows:
- foreman 400
- technicians 350
- workmen 300
- cook 300
- helpers, young people 250

A basic supporter throughout all organizational phases in Pitsidia and Kounos has been Petros Kyprakis, an intelligent and practical person without whom these phases would have been most difficult indeed.

The residential requirements of the staff, if while four have arrived, have now been essentially taken care of. As to the storeroom, all shelving (Dexio) is now in position and an attractive office upstairs has been arranged. For storage of kinds there are good supplies of plastic bags, cardboard boxes, and plastic pails. All excavation equipment has been purchased.
(shovels, picks, large hoes, small picks, wheel barrows, rakes, etc.). Some are in stores in Pitsiada; others are in the small house at Kommos. Numerous excavation furnishings (tables, chairs, bookshelves) brought from Athens and Heraklion, are also in position at various places where they will be handiest. A shelter in front of the house on the shore is now almost completed; the well near the shore is in the process of being cleaned: a difficult job, more complex and dangerous than any of us originally thought.

Concerning our archaeological approach, a small description is also warranted. Although I am most concerned with a general ecological-archaeological matter, such matters will not be emphasized until the exact nature of the site is more clearly defined. Initial contacts have been made with botanists, zoologists, geologists and others, but I will not make any specific arrangements until this coming fall, after the first season. Thus we will be involved now with trenching in order to determine the depth of overlying accumulations of sand, the type of habitation layering that may exist, the character of the architecture and layout of portions of any structures uncovered. Topographical control will be maintained by means of our complete site grid, established some years ago by topographers Bunderas. Control is recorded (see sheet at the end, in the envelope provided) in the

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Unreadable text
fairly clearly thought out — no doubt various changes will be introduced as
time goes on. The pre-exca vat ion state of
remains on both northern and southern
hills is clarified by: extensive notes made
in the past, color and black and white
photographs in Torute and also those
taken recently, and an entire series
of aerial photographs, the prints of
which have just arrived, which were
taken from June 8-14th by Will Myers
and his wife as a part of the Italian
Whittelsey effort to photograph ancient
remains in the Eastern Mediterranean
by means of remote cameras suspened
from balloons inflated with hydrogen
in helium. Our 1:1000 and 1:500 topo-
graphical plans, with notes appended, are
also basic for the record.

Should the first season prove to be
a success in archaeological terms, we will
excavate again in late summer 1974. In
the meantime an excavation shelter will
be constructed on the southeastern section
of the site, where the sand accumulation
may be as deep as five meters or more.
At the moment the excavation as
planned will last five seasons, with
two or three later seasons for study,
with the publication perhaps emerging
at the 9th year from our starting
date. Preliminary reports will be
made yearly, the first significant
study emerging at the end of the
second season.
26 June 1976

Aside from what was mentioned by Evans in P.M. and the Times (see excavation article in P.M.'s publications), Kurnoes has never been carefully studied from an archaeological point of view. As far as I know no archaeologist has ever excavated in the immediate area (Evans may have made a small 'sounding' north of the main site, where he found a 'human skull') although there are numerous reports of antiquities discovered by the locals (e.g. the 'Telephone' reported by Evans, a potter found intact to the south), and the site has been studied carefully by Evans, Jeudubury, and others. There is a collection of sherd from Kurnoes in the photographic museum at Kurnoes, collected by R. Hope Simpson and W. McDonald in recent years. I have collected sherd from the area, each from a few findings, because I had no legal right to do so. I did, however, photograph and record numerous loculi and sherd groups, and left scattered local collections in various parts of the site. When the well on the northern hill was first built, the excavators began within heavy rubbish-laden Kurnoes fill but then moved farther down the hill where they well in use. An alternative theory is that the first hole is actually a "robber's tunnel" excavated in order to get stone for use in the walls lining.) Aside from the well excavation, the only other attempt is a pot hunter's...
trench dug in the winter of '75-76 on the Southern Hill where an imperviously built but small enclosure, 12 x 8m in size, was discovered by myself last year (see '75 notes). Also to be mentioned as an early structure (to judge by its masonry) on the eastern slope of the Southern Hill where during WWI a pillbox was excavated and built in concrete by the then-occupying Axis powers of the Fascists in Germany.

As of today, while preparations are underway, there has only been one area, even vaguely tested by ourselves. A few days ago a top-loader hired from the nearby sand pit scooped out an almost 2m deep hole where the excavation shelter may be built. This project, however, was to excavate a deep 3m trench along the western side of the aforementioned well. The purpose of this was to enable a pump, set at a lower level, to empty the well (the well, however, has still not been cleaned). The machine, an International Harvester 765 Payloader, did scoop out a 2m trench. Much to our relief, no antiquities appeared in the trench, itself although about 3m southwest of the well the tops of what I assume to be Mesopotamian stilts, wells, were exposed. These were not investigated further. I should also mention that during the process of setting up posts around the well's circumference, another ancient well appeared about 30 cm below the well's top along its southern side, since only a few blocks were showing, and
there were incomplete, no measurements were taken.

which was progressing on the shelter at the beach. The IT house has broken down this morning on the access road, and the narrow trench being cut into the bedrock, from the deep trench to the well, is being completed.

30 June 1976

The beach shelter in front of George's house on the shore is now complete except for a low enclosure that will be built partly around the northern side, where it will serve as a wind break. The well has been "cleaned", although only superficially. There are many details, including an act of bravery (or stupidity) by my friend Zacharias Spyridakos, the senior guard at Plaitias, who descended into the well and erected a platform at a high level so that a pump could be installed. No musician wanted to do this dangerous job — Zacharias did it. The well yielded some 30 old pails and much wood metal, stones. The bottom should have been excavated down at least another metre, but because of the many dangers this was abandoned with some relief and the well has been recovered with a concrete slab by Petros Kypraxis.

The first four trenches have been decided upon. Two will be soundings in areas where ancient remains are plausible but not visible; two are in areas where
remains are actually visible. The former two are in the NE and SW corners of the property expropriated. In each area there is a deep accumulation of sand which must first be cleared away, even before stones for trenches can be set in. Both trenches, 5x5m., will be set in according to the Kommos grid once earth (sand) ground level has been determined by clearing operations.

The latter two trenchs are both along the western scarp, the area which originally intrigued me when I visited the site in 1964. One lies on the top of the hill, near the Nazi foxhole—a square which can be expanded by others when the opportunity arises. Walls and stones are visible nearby. The other is on the southern slope where there has been for years a vast spill of pottery and stone from eroded walls. The purpose of this trench is to sound the slope (bedrock should be near) since it will be used as a dump. The trench extends far enough to the east, however, to overlap the area where I believe that the architecture is well preserved. Thus a section of the hill should be available by means of this one trench—side, hillside trench. Details of the grid location of each can be followed through consulting the specific trench notebooks and the continuous trench plan.