Director's Notebook

Kommos Excavations

Season IX

1984

J. W. Shaw
Notably also were the visits by Willy Myers and his wife, who managed to obtain permission photograph from balloons at W. Measaura Site, something denied last year (1983), but have, apparently, a fine series of aerial views of all parts of the site, including (something I insisted on although I realized that I could not expect it) the Papadoiplaca which had been photographed only partially during their first, pre-cassation visit in 1976.
15 June 1984

Once more a major excavation campaign is about to be launched at Kommos. Our ninth season on a site that was, originally, to be excavated in five seasons as long as the first exploratory work proved worthwhile. Our sponsors and sponsorship remain essentially the same as in the first year: members of the first year's staff are still with us (Janet M. Shaw, Philip Betancourt, Giukana Bianco) while others have been or will be visiting for various purposes (Lucia Dixon), Vane Watson). LW will be beginning a major survey nearby in the central Messara, down by the Enoces river in Chiton, N.Y., writing a major part of the hillside house publication. Only Betty Comstock, our cataloguer, has gone out of the field, into editorial work.

Before the season began there was an extended study season which involved David and Cap Reese, just married—Cap Seavey retains her maiden name. He continued his study of the fauna, especially the shells; she worked on her book about conservation; then came Jenny and Tom Shaw to continue work on the botanical analysis (identification and interpretation). Then followed Jim Wright, excavator of much of the hillside and working on that publication. Also, Janet Phillips and Debi Halley, Assistant Cataloguer and Cataloguer, respectively, and for the first time, Winn Burns who will serve as photographer. The aim of the last three has been to bring the cataloguing and photographic backlog more up to date, and they have made great progress.
The Shaws       : May 4 → June 10th
The Scavs / Reesos : May 2 - May 16th
Debi Hailan      : May 14
Jacque Phillips  : May 14
Jameo Wright     : May 18 - June 15th
Vance & Harriet  : May 27 - June 9th
Watsons
Winn Bruce       : May 24
The staff during the regular excavation season will be:

Josie Shaw, Director
McShaw, Assistant Director

Philip Betancourt, Ceramic Specialist Temple U.
Pete Callaghan, Cambridge U.
Eleni Vanou, helper, U of Pa.

Guilheine Bianco, Excavation Architect, U of T
Winn Burns, Photographer (and potter)
Joseph Clarke, Artist
Debi Harlan, as cataloguer, U of Pa.
Jacquie Phillips, as Assistant Cataloguer, U of T
Elizabeth Salzmann, as artist, U of T; ACSA
Catherine Sean, as conservator

Trenchmasters:

Miss
Ein Campbell
Eric Czepo
Robert Hendrickson
Barlotte Speth
John Hopkins

George Beladacé, guard and foreman, will guide us through the year, along with 200-300 women, all no doubt from Pitsidia.

The summer season had as its specific aim the urgent matter of preparing as we go along for publication of contexts which we have largely completed. Next year another such season is planned—its length will be determined by this present season and how much of Building I is known when we finish in August.
The excavation season will be approximately two months long, from 18 June through 11 August. We have been fortunate. The ephebe originally (in November) insisted that we dig for only a month—then we (through the ASCSA) protested vehemently, pointing out that it was both unfair and unscientific. In this basis we were granted two months, six weeks in total. Then, yesterday, I went up to the cistern and, partly so a result of our conversation, our excavation was extended to August 11th, a Saturday, a season of normal and long length. The reasons for the extension are not clear—I will write about it in my more personal daybook in time—but the bonus is most welcome and gives us the freedom of movement we always need in order to both settle more slow and provide the ground for understanding in depth, in both what we are finding and the various spectra of the ancient context.

The aims of the season have changed. In the past, for instance, were: determination of the chronological range of the site; completion of the tell top; completion of the hillsides; completion of the sanctuary (upper level) and, then, lower level; Building F, this exploration of Building F, in a way it turned out, the central part of the building. With the completion of F, we hesitated: was it worth continuing? In matters were unsure, and this provided a point for staff that had been with us, faithfully, to decide whether to stay or leave: a fair decision.

During 1984 it is rather clear where we are: we know the form of the sanctuary and most of its history. It is also now predicted on the upper level, on its island, we have created by supporting those later buildings.
on their southern sides. Now, also, Building J 
is completely, its stoa is largely completed 
(as much as can be at this point, at least). 
What remains to do, and the aim of the 
1984 season, is to determine the nature of J 
on the east. There the nature of the 1M I rooms, 
which we already know are there, remains to 
be investigated; also the relation of the east- 
west road to any buildings in the north there. 
A major goal will be to determine the three 
rooms that border the court along its eastern side.

In order to do this, and also to provide for 
drainage, I propose an L-shaped trench 
which will begin south of S3A A1 and north 
of S2B (the present path taken by the street- 
lyth) and extending due east, crossing over 
the lower rooms of J, then switching north 
across the line of S4 B2 in order to reach 
the two rooms found there and then ex- 
tending over the east-west road, to merge up 
against Trench 11A, excavated by Lucia 
Nixon as a sounding in 1977, after the 
great effort of sand removal begun in the 
spring of that year.

Making this possible was an eastern - 
than-usual arrival by sled in Pittidia, 
when I put the men to work preparing for 
the laying in of the trenches. There were two 
aspects to this. The main one achieved with 
some difficulty, the extension of 
S3A A1, was the removal of over one thousand 
2 m³ of sand, about 3/4 metres deep, about 3- 
4400 m³, that have almost been removed 
as of the time that I write this, but the machine 
has been working for three mornings and
done, with its driver George, who did the most crucial sand cleaning in 1972, with great expertise. He hardly touched the soil as he removed the sand and, when it became clear that we had found an extension of Building E on the Southeast, he very easily went over it, skimmed the top of the walls. This area has now been prepared more or less — sand must still be skimmed off by the workmen and the trench areas must be laid in so that we can begin on Monday.

Another aspect of preparation was a general cleaning of the site in order to prepare it for viewing. A special viewing will take place this afternoon. Some a group of the participants in the congress on Minoan Palaces, sponsored by The Swedish School, arrives in the early afternoon. The first part of the congress (June 10-13) entailed the presentation of papers on a variety of topics (genres and form of the palaces, international connections and trade, recent excavation) — titled paper "A 'palatial' spa at Kommos," the second part was a three-day trip to Crete to the palatial sites. Today is the final day for the tour, involving some 50 people, all of them scholars but a few students. Their last stop, before returning to Athens, will be Kommos, I look forward to their comments, thoughts. Their visit to Kommos is in recognition of its importance but also stimulates me when thinking about the type and quality of work that must be done to earn their praises.

All of the weeds have been cleared away from within the trenches. The Minoan road, also has been cleared of mud so that the participants can stand on this great east-west avenue.
The great L-shaped trench in begun, its northeastern arm reaching up against part of the western side of trench II A, its longer foot crossing unexplored parts of Building I, ending at the eastern edge of the court. In Gandhi's absence, I have set all the points in, on the grid — in the case of the II A matching up, with II A invisible because of rock accumulation, the coincidence was perfect — site control has been achieved, we need more workmen — ironic now that we are eager to work, to explore. On the first day, our supervisor, Mrs. Vashan, does not appear — what a pleasure to think that she does not want to, and may not often be available to, appear and "inspect" this site which has so few "salable" finds. A further worry is that those Archaeological Society excavation that trace place must have an inspector from the Archaeological Service—then both Kiki hemmari and Alexandria Karlson must have supervision, when the two are among the best in both experience and scholarship.

All personnel expected have arrived.

Prof. Conacher of the University of Toronto Classics Department visits with his wife.
As in all trenches in the south, outside of the immediate sanctuary area, the penetration of the later court/surrounding area is a slow process. All of the trenches on the east (58, 59) must go through a layer of almost sterile erosion/chalk accumulation. So, east of Blgs. E, as well—fortunately the east-down-to-west stepping level has been largely removed by the sport bucket. Now, next to E and above the late Bethetic outside surface, we begin to find some rough stones and roof tiles, as might be expected. There will be cleared around tomorrow, photographed, and no doubt removed. In S7 we can still recover the sand level, with some grass above the earth level and probably will of a retaining wall (not seen).

The one trench, with some archaeological substance is 56A, which is the cleaning and completion of 52B, begun last year by Beth Fother but not completed because of The Numation, Ephorate desirous to restrict the number of days we would excavate. Beth had, within what was Building Q, found that Q dated to the 7th century, and hardly showed much use—then the floor level was quite ephemeral. Q was built on a east-down-to-west slope, chiefly of reused blocks. He probably did not find the eastern face; it lies unexcavated on the west. Excavation terminated after the floor had been removed (at least partly unknowingly, since the walls had not been cleared as excavation progressed downwards), and a large east-west wall end (?) had appeared and was termed an "anta" by me at the time.
MCS has now found a semi-buried surface of the late geometric/archaic phase along with a hearth or "telephone booth," again facing west, along with some hearths and a not far away, another"set" of rounded stones, but not perfectly round — some were flat, some broken. This is a curious combination, found in Tr. 37A + 43A and elsewhere and always associated with this period: what do they mean?

In an attempt to learn about relations on the lower level, I lay in a string along the lower part of the western wall where the LM I court ends on the south, and the north face of the "anta" in 56A. Here may be the S. border of the LM I piloby court, which would bring the proportions of the court to about those which are known in the palaces, but with an east-west length as at Plati.
20 June 1984

Tried to shop in Mieris for several purposes, also to get money at the TB Bank for the workers' payment on Saturday, when we will work all day.

No panic changes in the trenches. This is not a bad sign, just an indication that we are not finding deeper, Greek/Hebrew levels of any substance, which is fine with me considering the aims of the present season.

The Fred/Donn/Winnie couple visited us in the morning and afternoon on their way from Lato and Tignaca) mainland. Pleasure to see them after their long and apparently successful subaerial during the past academic year.

We need more workmen in order to take care of the trenches — MRS could run two at a time, for instance, and some of the other trenches would be speedier if we doubled up. Perhaps there should be enough workmen to have six workmen rather than the present five.

The fence on the eastern border collapses after being undermined. We will raise it up again after brushing off the cement base into which it was originally set.

Letters from the ASCSA and other indications show that things are heating up to allow us to both support and consolidate walls. Apparently, Pithyomnaotario is behind the delay in allowing us to proceed. A strong letter from Steve Willms will certainly help.

De Clare and Cap Sean arrive.
21 June 1984.
22 June 1984

Slow progress, of the type which characterizes the first weeks. In the meantime Peter Callaghan arrives, with the good news that he has a teaching job at Cambridge which will free him to do the type of work that he wants to do in Crete and Albania in Greece, rather than having only a few weeks in a month for research.

57A MCS. In what we presently term to be a 7th century context, and quite close to the Minoan level, MCS finds out, probably two of the little stone enclosures, facing east this time, and accompanied as we have come to suspect, by rounded, sometimes flat, thin pebbles, lamps, and burnings, although the burning is not associated with the enclosures themselves, and at least in this case the cobbles were found on the other end of the trench and not in direct physical association. In the same trench we excavate around and then remove, after recording, scattered slabs— not ashlar blocks—that are lying about not far from above Minoan levels (0.20m?). A disappointment occurs in the cleaning of the “art”, which may be reused in its present position, MCS begins a series of small-scale clearances immediately south of the wall in order to ascertain its history—only she could carry out this delicate operation.

57A EC. The 475 c. court level of working chips is reached, photographed, and removed as the trench penetrates without incident deep toward the Minoan levels toward which it has been aimed. Alexander Stavropoulos was among the workmen...
58A. Also without incident, as a pile of rubble—apparently dumped there during an archaic/4th century phase of the sanctuary, is removed on the east, after aquring. Frederick Winter, with a sharp eye, notes that we may have a set back in T's facade here, equidistant perhaps on either side of the interior cross wall (this must be checked). The aim of the trench to expose the interior of two more of T's interior rooms remains unaffected by the discovery of any later superficial walls.

59A. The Minoan level of complex, often superposed houses of LM date, is reached about a meter below the surface level. We, as in the past, begin to define the walls—The east-west wall found earlier in 11A continues, and a north-south wall appears toward the end of the day. Shortly we will have reached the point that we will open up the southern extension of the trench, which will give us space to maneuver. Already the pottery—as seen in 11A—is of some interest (e.g., III) and will add to our vocabulary of the part of the site. The eventual second phase of this trench—a deep cleaning of the road/orthostate wall—remains in my mind.

60A. E. C. the fence along the e. has been replaced by a concrete base and underlaid by our effort to excavate here in the e. part of the property in a desperate effort to find the e. end of Building T—collapsed. It surged down into the grid of the excavation area. We remove the concrete, with the aim of rebuilding the grid with a better wall when the trench has been completed.
For the first time here on the eastern part of the property, we find a good deal of sand on the outer edge beneath the level of building E. Only in the South is there any earth and surface accumulation, and that quite limited. George Baladacan, the foreman, does the picking-up as his son & is otherwise engaged in agricultural projects (milking in Naftala, threshing in Pit Sinda). It is too early to know, of course, but the unusually deep, pure sand here—earthly sand, really—which will ensure mant scarp—may be signs of a change below. The most optimistic scenario is that, as elsewhere in connection with the road, especially above trench 43A's Miroon level, the sand is an accumulation between and partly above buildings, and that we are between buildings—T on the west and another, unrecognized, on the east, with the inevitable walk—South road in between them. Would that this were true! About 0.7 ton, or presumably, sand, lies above the estimated level of preservation of T here. So we may know something not long from now. Perhaps we would excavate westward, into the scarp and below E, if we knew that we were beyond T's western corner; would this need to be suggested?

A minor but extremely interesting incident last year concerned John Gifford's discovery of an anchor in the spring of 1983. During the excavation season we searched "half-way between the Papadopoulo and the excavation", but in vain. Then, in the fall, John sent a photo of the anchor, soon to emerge in Herakleion, with this in mind, I set out with Eric Cságo to try, again, to discover the anchor. Eric, with
only a mace — and that without a staff — was the lucky discoverer — for from where I was searching. The site was in perhaps 8 m. of water, about 2.5 h., off the way from the shore or the Paphlagonia, only with Temple C and the PPDQ (as represented by the "picnic tree" where we eat lunch). "I've found a stone with a hole in it!" he shouted over the sound of the waves. I arrived, and noted that there indeed was an anchor — most likely Melian B — judiciously placed. I knew of the type — with a hole drilled through it, certainly you doubt, and yet it didn't look like Johns! That, I found, about 15' away, also with its pierced side exposed.

With a hook suspended on a thick string, we tried to grapple the anchors, but nothing because of their weight or the fact that they have been concreted to the projecting bedrock here, we could not budge them even when part of the hook could be inserted partially into the hole. This occurred 200 days in a row.

I would have to retrieve these two anchors — they lie upon the bedrock, at a point where the tombolo may have been. Between the Komnu buildings and the PPDQ. They are among the finest examples of anchors from Unit I, and have the profile of other BA Gecan anchors: more important than those I have already published in the IJNA, although without a specifically BA context since their site could cover a wide spectrum of possible city.
Now that we have failed in our attempts to recover the anchors by amateur methods, we have the choice of abandoning them or recovering them by another means. I choose the latter—by caissons or by scuba. The first is probably the simplest—perhaps they can be winched over and up by a local from Matale—the second would be the safest, but would also be more complex logistically and would at least might give the excavation an "underwater" edge that is not included in the permit, and could be used against us by the timid in the vindication.
26A. In construction of the wall in the trench turns out to be later than thought, perhaps in late M.M. III, adding with IV. 36B in new dimension to the excavations then on the south. This shallow trench will be finished easily by mid-week.

257A - At the last moment, in this first Wednesday, a well appears in the trench, going east-west from what we can tell. Orientation and construction are indications, this is Mycenaean and is on the east of the MM I court. Excavation on Monday will clarify matters.

58A - Still upper Gir. Level, a large portion of the amphora appears in the stone debris at the end of the day.

59A. Further differentiation. The s. str. is opened up so as to handle the contract.

60A. No change. In + down, with another as judge to the top of the wall if it is there.

First payday, with cooks and workmen paid some 150,000 drachmas.

I negotiated for boat to come for the anchors.
56A. A clear, burnt level on an early floor of the post LM I (prime) structural unit being excavated.

57A. The E. end now marks off the entire length of the trench — it may be unusually wide. It lies just below the Dark Age LM III level, dramatically higher as we understand it, than Pand G that lie almost immediately south of it: some explanation must be necessary.

58A. No change, save in level, all of which is positive for the exploration of Iron IVIs.

59A. 

60A. 

The amphora mentioned (above, p. 38) is apparently Roman. It lies, however, below the absolute level of the stone chip layer associated, probably, with the two altars (LM) which are not supposed to be of that date.

Over the Sunday we had a short break, during which the front loader removed more sand from around the trenches. Thank the Lord for good George!

Lucia Nixon and Francois Pyraminos on the map on our property line in order to follow the road and Building T on its neighbor on the east.

Carol Gilkes begins a study of conical cups we have found.
56A. In unusually severe singed floor levels within MCS's lower building that should probably receive a name — we may wait until MCS has gone down in 56A sufficiently in order to show that we are dealing with a structure that is structurally separate from T. The singeing is so severe that I am inclined to think that here is the closest we might come to the common site to a buried destruction level. Immediately, however, I note that the burning is very restricted in area here, also that there is no evidence for material destroyed in such an explosion. Perhaps the burning is the result of industrial activity? Also, after all, maybe the reason for the area's popularity during LM III (LM I? — we are said above the LM I level here by about 0.30m, I believe).

54A. This wall — w wall, surely of T is exposed finally, 0.94m. long, it extends the length of the trench. It is made up of an unusual mixture of large blocks and slabs, not seen elsewhere on the site and not, at least for the moment, reminiscent of the LM III type structure seen in MCS's building in 56A and of Building P to the south. We excavate down along the southern face, then switch to the northern side where we will, apparently, be completely free to excavate down to the LM I floor level. Most curious is the height of the wall — higher than T's wall elsewhere, it seems, at +5.25m, which means that the wall will probably be about 2.10m high if we excavate down to its base. The thought is entertained that this wall may be T's southern wall.