

Sissi
Archaeological
Project
Newsletter

January 2016

IN THIS NEWSLETTER

Sissi Archaeological Project

The success of our facebook page and the many friends and supporters the Sissi excavations have generated over the last 8 years, made us decide to start a newsletter in which we could keep you up-to-date on the project, the new discoveries, the interdisciplinary study of finds and our dream to transform the old school in the nearby village of Vrachasi into a research and cultural centre. We also use this newsletter to say a warm thank you to all our sponsors and future benefactors but also to those who have worked hard in the dust and sun to make the project a success.

The 2015 campaign

The 2015 campaign, which took place from June 29 onwards and lasted for 6 weeks, followed by a week of boxing and transport, was very successful. More than 60 specialists and students from a variety of countries as well as a dozen local workmen and conservators collaborated in a great atmosphere.

Work took place foremost in zones 4 and 6 of the previous excavations. Quentin Letesson attacked the courtyard area of the large 13th c. BC mansion on top of the hill (zone 4). We suspected that this courtyard actually formed the flattened destruction layer of an earlier building, destroyed by fire in Late Minoan IB. And indeed we did find several deposits with vases and large mellon-shaped loomweights in place. This also produced a nice sealstone – the first ever to be found by Maria Anastasiadou our seal specialist! Quentin’s tests also came upon several earlier levels which need more study but it clearly

showed that the top of the hill had been settled since the Early Bronze Age. Extensive remains of this same period were also found, surprisingly well preserved, in the upper terrace above zone 6, to the southeast of the top of the hill, where Sylviane Déderix directed the work. Their presence is somewhat of an archaeological brain teaser since they are located higher than the court-centered building east which dates to the 16th c. BC, i.e. almost 1000 years later. This court-centered building was, of course, the biggest surprise of all and perhaps we can include here the press communiqué which was distributed at this occasion. (Page 2)



Press Communiqué

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Lecture in Vrachasi

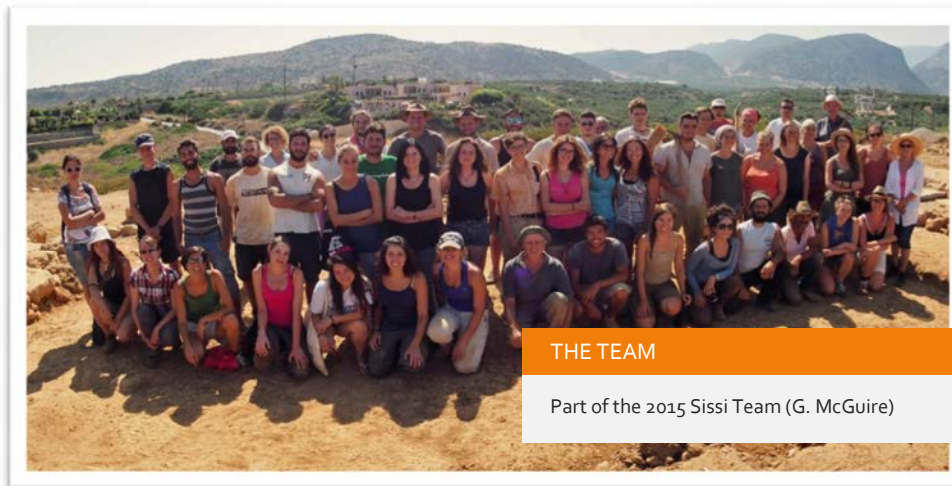
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THE TEAM

Part of the 2015 Sissi Team (G. McGuire)

Press Communiqué

“During the summer of 2015, the Belgian School at Athens with a team of the Université catholique de Louvain under the direction of Prof. J. Driessen conducted the first of a new 5-year program of excavations on the Buffo at Sissi on the north coast of the island of Crete (Greece). Apart from tests clarifying the earlier history of the site, under investigation since 2007, excavations concentrated on the exploration of a Late Bronze Age (16th c. BC) complex tentatively identified as a court-centered building during the 2011 campaign. Rather than showing an expected rectangular court with right-angled wings surrounding it, a 250 m² large trapezoidal court made of a fine white plaster was partly revealed, with three wings (east, north, west), each with a somewhat diverging orientation. The monumental façade facing this court to the west consists of a bottom course of large limestone blocks on which a second course of sandstone ashlar blocks is partly preserved. A fine paved room with plastered floors, walls, bench and basin as well as a monumental stepped platform were constructed against an Early Bronze Age (c. 2500 BC) terrace and form an isolated structure (similar to the loggia at Malia) in the northwest corner of the court. Plastered rooms were cleared both in the west and north wing. The

latter is badly preserved but comprises a double staircase, a long corridor and a room with column base and terracotta-tile floor. A small monumental structure, perhaps water-related, was also explored. This evidence, together with that found in 2011 (an east building with long west-facing façade, a kernos located next to an entrance from the court and a bench along the north side of the court with artificial hollows) allows the identification of the entire complex as a court-centered building of c. 900 m², abandoned early in Late Minoan IA (16th c. BC).

The odd plan of the complex is explained as a result of the deliberate incorporation of Early Bronze Age structures and rising bedrock within the later building”.

CENTRAL COURT

Oblique photo (from south) of the court-centered building at Sissi (N. Kress)



Lecture in Vrachasi

At the end of the campaign, Jan gave a lecture in the courtyard of the old school at Vrachasi for more than 300 people. The evening was great fun and doing this in the shadow of the old school -cleaned by the Vrachasiotes for the occasion -was really enjoyable. The lecture was introduced by the school teacher who said Jan should be known in the future as Giannis Drissenakis...

VRACHASI

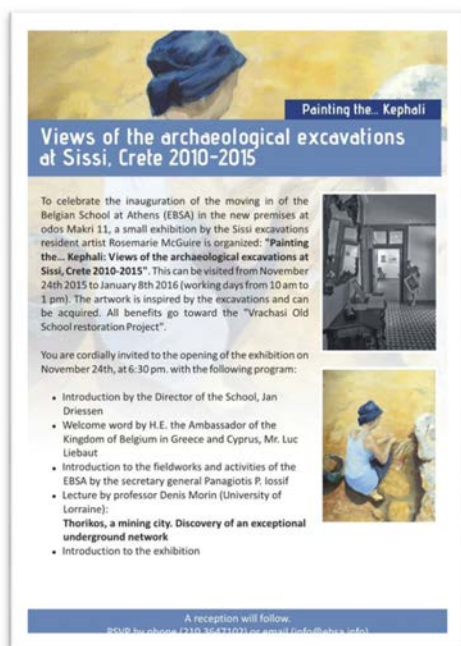
Lecture on the 2015 campaign at the Old School of Vrachasi (F. Gaignerot & G. McGuire)



After the summer

Later on during autumn our new Athens lawyer, Nikos Natsoulis, and Panos Iossif, our Athenian secretary-general, came over and we met the mayor of Agios Nikolaos, Mr. Andonis Zervos, and the dimos' lawyer, Mr. Giorgos Markakis, to discuss the final transfer of the old school. We have good hopes that this affair will finally be settled. At the end of November, Rosemarie and Gavin McGuire came over from Crete to Athens and Jan from Belgium to officially open the Belgian School at Athens' new premises in Odos Makri 11 with an exhibition 'Painting the Kephali' presenting the work of Rosemarie, inspired by Sissi excavations.

The opening evening was a great success, attended also by our new ambassador H.E. L. Liebaut, and the exhibition could be visited till January 2016.



In December 2015, the Sissi Project also received the Andante Travels Archaeology Award, a nice recognition of the importance our work has as a potential tourist destination.

We also received a small grant from the Hondius foundation.

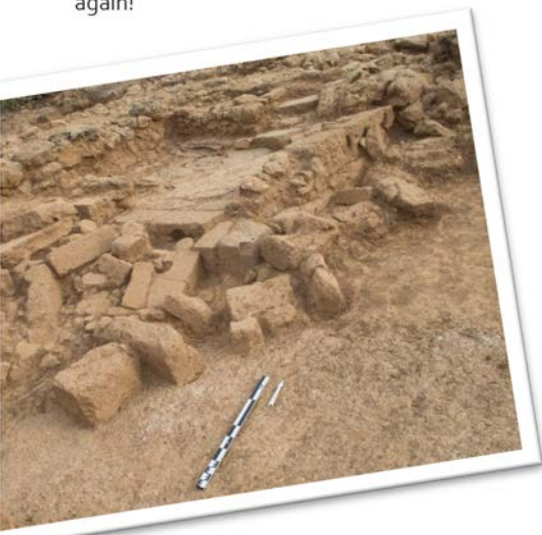
During 2016, our aim is to continue the excavation of the area between zone 4 (or Building CD) and the southeast terrace of the hill under the direction of Quentin, whereas Simon Jusseret will attempt to clear the central court and the west wing of the ceremonial building. Sylviane will also continue her upper terrace excavation and if all goes well, a new team under the direction of our fresh Aegis member, Thérèse Claeys, together with our new FNRS-aspirant, Ophélie Mouthuy, will explore the zone north of Building CD where we expect to find a Protopalatial or Middle Bronze Age complex.

It is going to be an exciting summer, so join us if you can!

Donate

KEEP AN EYE ON OUR WEBSITE WWW.SARPEDON.BE AND OUR FACEBOOK PAGE [SISSI EXCAVATIONS!](https://www.facebook.com/sissiexcavations)

Despite continuous help from the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, the Université catholique, the FNRS, the Belgian School at Athens and the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, excavation and study costs exceed by far the grants we obtain every year, so we much appreciate all the financial help we can get. Money goes to pay workers, conservators, and specialists, lodging for students, storage and equipment. Please consider helping us again!



European donors can send gifts to the account of the Fondation Louvain

(IBAN: BE29 2710 3664 0164, SWIFT/BIC: GEBABEBB)

or via paypal via the link <https://www.uclouvain.be/474671.html>.

Please mention: **Sissi Project**.

American donors can send a check to Dr. Karen Vellucci, INSTAP, 2133 Arch St. Suite 300 Philadelphia, PA 19103 USA instap@hotmail.com <http://www.aegeanprehistory.net/> also with the mention **Sissi Project**.

All gifts are tax deductible.

THANK YOU!!CENTRAL COURT

Paved room and collapsed monumental staircase at Sissi (J. Driessen)

RESEARCH CENTRE

Project of transformation of the old school in the village of Vrachasi into a research and cultural centre (G. Kremmedioti)



