

# KAVOUSI

## The Results of the Excavations at Kavousi in Eastern Crete

*directed by*

Geraldine C. Gesell, Leslie Preston Day,  
and William D.E. Coulson

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# KAVOUSI I

## The Archaeological Survey of the Kavousi Region

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# Table of Contents

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| List of Tables and Chart .....   | vii    |
| List of Figures .....  | ix     |
| List of Plates .....   | xiii   |
| Preface to the Kavousi Excavation Series .....   | xvii   |
| Preface to Kavousi I .....   | xxi    |
| Acknowledgments for the Kavousi Excavation Series .....  | xxv    |
| Acknowledgments for Kavousi I .....  | xxvii  |
| Abbreviations .....  | xxxix  |
| Glossary .....   | xxxiii |
| 1. Introduction .....  | 1      |
| 2. The Physical Landscape .....  | 9      |
| 3. The Archaeological Survey .....   | 23     |
| 4. The Pottery .....   | 43     |
| 5. The History of Settlement .....   | 59     |
| 6. Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites .....   | 89     |
| 7. Conclusions .....   | 149    |
| Appendix 1. A Pedological Investigation and Soil Survey of the Kavousi Region,<br><i>Michael W. Morris, John T. Ammons, Michael E. Timpson, and John E. Foss</i> ..... | 153    |
| Appendix 2. The Kavousi Fabrics: A Typology for Coarse Pottery in the Mirabello Region of<br>Eastern Crete, <i>Margaret S. Mook</i> .....                              | 167    |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Appendix 3. Petrographic Analysis of Some Final Neolithic–Early Minoan II Pottery from the Kavousi Area, <i>Peter M. Day, Louise Joyner, Evangelia Kiriati, and Maria Relaki</i> . . . . . | 177 |
| Appendix 4. Concordance of Artifacts . . . . .   | 197 |
| Bibliography . . . . .   | 213 |
| Index . . . . .  | 233 |
| Tables and Chart   |     |
| Figures  |     |
| Plates   |     |



## List of Tables and Chart

- Table 1. Chemical properties including carbon fractions, exchangeable cations, and pH of Kavousi 2.
- Table 2. Particle size distribution of Kavousi 2.
- Table 3. Chemical properties including carbon fractions, exchangeable cations, and pH of Kavousi 1.
- Table 4. Particle size distribution of Kavousi 1.
- Table 5. Chemical properties including carbon fractions, exchangeable cations, and pH of Kavousi 3.
- Table 6. Particle size distribution of Kavousi 3.
- Table 7. Chemical properties including carbon fractions, exchangeable cations, and pH of Vronda 4.
- Table 8. Particle size distribution of Vronda 4.
- Table 9. Chemical properties including carbon fractions, exchangeable cations, and pH of Terra Rossa.
- Table 10. Particle size distribution of Terra Rossa.
- Table 11. Chemical properties including carbon fractions, exchangeable cations, and pH of C-T Unit.
- Table 12. Particle size distribution of C-T Unit.
- Table 13. Chemical properties including carbon fractions, exchangeable cations, and pH of Vronda 9.
- Table 14. Particle size distribution of Vronda 9.
- Table 15. Chemical properties including carbon fractions, exchangeable cations, and pH of Vronda 8.
- Table 16. Particle size distribution of Vronda 8.
- Table 17. Chemical properties including carbon fractions, exchangeable cations, and pH of Kastro 3.
- Table 18. Particle size distribution of Kastro 3.
- 
- Chart 1. Available water-holding capacity for Kavousi Soil Survey pedons.



# List of Figures

- Figure 1. Map of East Crete, showing location of the Kavousi-Thripti Survey zone.
- Figure 2. Topographical map of the Kavousi region: north Ierapetra Isthmus and eastern Mirabello coast.
- Figure 3A. Geological map of the Isthmus of Ierapetra and environs, showing pre-Neogene rocks, based on Papastamatiou et al. 1959 (P.M. Day).
- Figure 3B. Kavousi-Thripti Survey boundaries.
- Figure 4. Fields surveyed intensively.
- Figure 5. Sites recovered in the intensive sample, 1989–1991.
- Figure 6A. Chordakia and south Kambos survey sites.
- Figure 6B. Tholos, Hagios Antonios, and north Kambos survey sites.
- Figure 7. Survey sites in the area of Kavousi village, Xerambela, and north slope of Mount Papoura.
- Figure 8. Final Neolithic survey sites; FN sites of uncertain size numbered only.
- Figure 9. Early Minoan I–II survey sites; EM sites of uncertain size numbered only.
- Figure 10. Early Minoan III–Middle Minoan IA survey sites; EM III–MM IA sites of uncertain size numbered only.
- Figure 11. Middle Minoan IB–II survey sites.
- Figure 12. Middle Minoan III–Late Minoan IB survey sites.
- Figure 13. Late Minoan IIIA–B survey sites; LM IIIA–B sites of uncertain size numbered only.
- Figure 14. Late Minoan IIIC–Archaic survey sites.
- Figure 15. Orientalizing–Archaic survey sites.
- Figure 16. Hellenistic–Roman survey sites.
- Figure 17. Cataloged sites in extensive and unsurveyed zones.
- Figure 18A. Xerambela and north Mount Papoura area: Early Minoan III–Middle Minoan IA survey sites.
- Figure 18B. Chordakia: Early Minoan III–Middle Minoan IA survey sites.

- Figure 19A. Chordakia and south Kambos: Middle Minoan IB–II survey sites.
- Figure 19B. Xerambela and north Papoura: Middle Minoan IB–II sites.
- Figure 20. Kavousi region: Middle Minoan IB–II settlement clusters.
- Figure 21A. Tholos and Hagios Antonios: Middle Minoan III–Late Minoan I sites.
- Figure 21B. Chordakia: Middle Minoan III–Late Minoan IB sites.
- Figure 22. Xerambela and the north Papoura area: Late Minoan IIIC–Archaic sites.
- Figure 23A. Site 1 (loci 16, 24, 38, and 39); Sites 2–4.
- Figure 23B. Site 1: sketch plan of Minoan and Roman buildings (loci 24, 38, 39) (L.A. Turner).
- Figure 24. Site 1: section and plan of Roman warehouse (locus 39) (L.A. Turner).
- Figure 25. Site 1 (loci 16, 38, and 39): Bronze Age pottery and figurine; Roman pottery.
- Figure 26. Site 1 (locus 24): Bronze Age pottery; Site 4: Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 27. Site 5: sketch plan of Bronze Age settlement (loci 10, 15, 61).
- Figure 28. Site 5: Bronze Age pottery, stone weights.
- Figure 29. Site 5: Bronze Age loomweight, cooking dishes, and figurine; Late Minoan IIIA–B pottery.
- Figure 30. Site 5: Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 31. Site 6: Bronze Age pottery and obsidian blade fragment; Site 8: Final Neolithic–Early Minoan II pottery (M.S. Mook).
- Figure 32. Site 8: Bronze Age pottery (M.S. Mook).
- Figure 33. Site 8: Bronze Age ground stone tools and door socket
- Figure 34A. Site 9: sketch plan.
- Figure 34B. Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 35. Site 11: Late Minoan IA pithos rim; Site 16: Final Neolithic pottery; Site 17: Bronze Age and Roman pottery.
- Figure 36. Sites 19–20: Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 37. Site 21: Bronze Age pottery; Site 23: Neopalatial tripod leg; Site 24: Final Neolithic and Early Minoan Pottery (M.S. Mook).
- Figure 38. Site 24: Final Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery (M.S. Mook).
- Figure 39. Site 24: Bronze Age pottery; furnace fragment (24.41); Sites 25 and 27: Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 40. Site 28: Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 41. Site 28: Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 42. Site 32: Bronze Age pottery and furnace fragments.
- Figure 43. Sites 34 and 35: Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 44. Site 36: Late Minoan IIIA–B pottery and loomweight (M.S. Mook).
- Figure 45. Site 36: Late Minoan IIIA–B pottery (M.S. Mook).



- Figure 46. Sites 37 and 39: Roman pottery.
- Figure 47. Sites 40 and 41: Bronze Age and Roman pottery.
- Figure 48. Site 42: Hellenistic and Roman pottery (M.S. Mook).
- Figure 49. Site 44: Early Minoan III–Middle Minoan II pottery.
- Figure 50. Site 45: Bronze Age pottery; Site 48: Middle Minoan IA cup rim; Site 53: Roman pottery.
- Figure 51. Site 57: Bronze Age and Roman pottery; Site 68: Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 52. Site 69: Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 53. Site 69: Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 54. Site 70: Early Iron Age–Archaic pottery.
- Figure 55. Sites 71 and 85: Early Iron Age–Archaic pottery.
- Figure 56. Site 88: Bronze Age pottery; Site 89: Early Iron Age–Archaic pottery.
- Figure 57. Site 90: Early Iron Age–Archaic pottery; Site 92: Early Minoan III–Middle Minoan IA pottery.
- Figure 58. Site 94: Roman pottery; Site 96: Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 59. Site 96: Bronze Age pottery and figurine fragment.
- Figure 60. Site 97: Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 61. Site 97: Bronze Age pottery (M.S. Mook).
- Figure 62. Site 97: Bronze Age pottery.
- Figure 63. Site 99: Late Minoan IIIC–Early Protogeometric pottery.
- Figure 64. Site 99: Late Minoan IIIC pottery and terracotta votive plaque.
- Figure 65. Site 99: Late Minoan IIIC pottery.
- Figure 66. Site 100: Final Neolithic, Middle Minoan, and Late Minoan IIIC pottery.
- Figure 67. Site 100: Late Minoan IIIC pottery.
- Figure 68. General topography of the Kavousi-Thripti Survey area of East Crete (M. Morris).
- Figure 69. Geologic map of the Kavousi-Thripti Survey area of East Crete. After Papastamatiou et al. 1959 (M.W. Morris).
- Figure 70. Soil survey map of the Kavousi area of East Crete (M.W. Morris).
- Figure 71. A3.2 Geological map of the Isthmus of Ierapetra and environs, showing Neogene and later deposits, based on Fortuin 1977 and Papastamatiou et al. 1959 (P.M. Day).



## List of Plates

- Plate 1A. Kavousi village (center) from northwest: the Kastro (upper center); Mount Kliros (left); Xerambela and Mount Papoura (right); Kambos plain (foreground).
- Plate 1B. Mount Chomatas (Site 9: center) and Mount Chalepa from north.
- Plate 2A. Mount Chomatas (Site 9) from south.
- Plate 2B. Tholos Bay from southwest.
- Plate 3A. Cha Gorge and north Ierapetra Isthmus from southwest: Monastiraki Katalimata and Chalasmenos (center).
- Plate 3B. Mount Thriphti from west: the area of Hagia Anna and Argira (Site 97).
- Plate 4A. Avgo Valley at Pachlitzani Agriada from northeast (Site 82).
- Plate 4B. Skouriasmenos area (Site 81): recent terrace walls.
- Plate 5A. Skala (Sites 78–79): terracing southwest of the Kastro (Site 80) (M.S. Mook).
- Plate 5B. Chordakia: phyllite terrain on east slope (Sites 28, 36–37).
- Plate 6A. Kambos: irrigation reservoir and greenhouses at Lakkos Skaphes.
- Plate 6B. Mount Chomatas: limestone terrain on east slope.
- Plate 7A. Hagios Antonios valley (Sites 5 and 6): intersecting limestone and phyllite terrain.
- Plate 7B. Hagios Antonios (Site 5): Minoan agricultural terrace wall and eroded limestone terrain.
- Plate 8A. Argira (Site 97): Minoan house wall and pithos buried under phyllite mudslide.
- Plate 8B. Site 59: Bronze Age house foundations.
- Plate 9A. Tholos Bay and the north Kambos from the southeast.
- Plate 9B. Site 1: Bronze Age building (locus 16).
- Plate 10A. Site 1: Bronze Age building (locus 16).
- Plate 10B. Site 1: exterior view of Roman warehouse from northeast (locus 39).
- Plate 11A. Site 5: Building A from southwest.
- Plate 11B. Site 5: Building B from northwest.

- Plate 12A. Site 5: agricultural terrace wall.
- Plate 12B. Site 6: Hagios Antonios rock shelter from east.
- Plate 13A. Site 7: Early Minoan rock shelter.
- Plate 13B. Site 7: Early Minoan pottery imbedded in floor surface of the rock shelter.
- Plate 14A. Site 8: Early Minoan settlement at Alykomouri from southwest.
- Plate 14B. Site 9: view of Minoan building from north.
- Plate 15A. Site 9: western wall of Minoan building.
- Plate 15B. Site 28: Late Roman–Byzantine wall.
- Plate 16A. Sites 31 and 32: promontory of Chrysokamino from northeast.
- Plate 16B. Site 31: Theriospilio cave mouth from west.
- Plate 17A. Site 32: Chrysokamino promontory.
- Plate 17B. Site 34: Minoan house from southeast.
- Plate 18A. Site 36: Minoan house walls.
- Plate 18B. Site 37: millstone (*orbis*).
- Plate 19A. Site 37: *trapetum mortarium*.
- Plate 19B. Site 59: Minoan house walls.
- Plate 20A. Site 68: Minoan house wall.
- Plate 20B. Site 71: view of Azoria South Acropolis from east; Xerambela (center).
- Plate 21A. Site 78: interior of Aloni Tomb III with larnax in situ (The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, neg. # 139725).
- Plate 21B. Kastro (site 80), Vronda (Xerambela) (site 77), and Azoria (site 71) from the east.
- Plate 22. Kastro (site 80) and Skouriasmenos (site 81) from the east.
- Plate 23A. Fabric type I, sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 23B. Fabric type I, detail of surface (K.E. May).
- Plate 24A. Fabric type II, sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 24B. Fabric type II, detail of surface (K.E. May).
- Plate 25A. Fabric type III, sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 25B. Fabric type III, detail of surface (K.E. May).
- Plate 26A. Fabric type IV, sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 26B. Fabric type IV, detail of surface (K.E. May).
- Plate 26C. Fabric type IV, detail of fresh break (K.E. May).
- Plate 27A. Fabric type VI, sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 27B. Fabric type VI, detail of surface (K.E. May).
- Plate 28A. Fabric type IX, sherd (K.E. May).

- Plate 28B. Fabric type IX, detail of surface (K.E. May).
- Plate 29A. Fabric type X, sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 29B. Fabric type X, detail of sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 30A. Fabric type XI, sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 30B. Fabric type XI, detail of fresh break (K.E. May).
- Plate 31A. Fabric type XIII, sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 31B. Fabric type XIII, detail of surface (K.E. May).
- Plate 32A. Fabric type XV, sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 32B. Fabric type XV, detail of surface (K.E. May).
- Plate 32C. Fabric type XV, detail of fresh break (K.E. May).
- Plate 33A. Fabric type XVI, sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 33B. Fabric type XVI, detail of surface (K.E. May).
- Plate 34A. Fabric type XX, sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 34B. Fabric type XX, detail of surface (K.E. May).
- Plate 34C. Fabric type XX, detail of fresh break (K.E. May).
- Plate 35A. Fabric type XXI, sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 35B. Fabric type XXI, detail of surface (K.E. May).
- Plate 35C. Fabric type XXI, detail of fresh break (K.E. May).
- Plate 36A. Fabric type XXV, sherd (K.E. May).
- Plate 36B. Fabric type XXV, detail of fresh break (K.E. May).
- Plate 37A. Kavousi 93/79 (Description 1). Photomicrograph showing frequent feldspars and igneous rock fragments. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 37B. Kavousi 93/73 (Description 1). Photomicrograph showing igneous rock fragments and component minerals, with some metamorphism. Note especially alteration of feldspar in lower left of frame. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 37C. Kavousi 93/69 (Description 2). Photomicrograph showing similar inclusions that differ in size and sorting from those in Pl. 37A–B. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 37D. Kavousi 93/80 (Description 3). Photomicrograph showing angular igneous rock fragments and angular calcite (twinning visible). XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 38A. Malia 93/7 (Description 3). Photomicrograph showing same fabric as Kavousi 93/72 and 80 in sample from Malia. Largest angular calcite in top right of frame. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 38B. Myrtos Phournou Koriphi 93/106. Photomicrograph showing the use of calcite tempering of fabrics in Period II (EM IIA). Cf. Pls. 37D and 38A. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 38C. Kavousi 93/74 (Description 4). Photomicrograph showing grog-tempered fabric. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).

- Plate 38D. Kavousi 93/70 (Description 4). Photomicrograph showing coarse grog-tempered fabric. Cf. Pl. 38C. PPL, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 39A. Kavousi 93/75 (Description 5). Photomicrograph showing sand-tempered South Coast fabric, with rounded basic volcanic, biotite/feldspar metamorphic rocks, and serpentine. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 39B. Kavousi 93/76 (Description 5). Photomicrograph showing sand-tempered South Coast fabric, with rounded basic volcanic rock. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 39C. Malia 93/55 (Description 5). Photomicrograph showing sand-tempered South Coast fabric, with rounded basic volcanic rock and serpentine. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 39D. Kalo Chorio 94/12 (Description 5). Photomicrograph showing sand-tempered South Coast fabric, including rounded basic volcanic rock. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 40A. Kavousi 93/77 (Description 6). Photomicrograph showing fabric with dominant phyllite. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 40B. Kavousi 93/78 (Description 6). Photomicrograph showing fabric with phyllite and amphibole. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 40C. Kavousi 93/81 (Description 7). Photomicrograph showing fabric with quartz, metamorphic rocks, red translucent fragments, biotite, and feldspars in groundmass. Note the red tefs. Vasiliki Ware. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 40D. Kavousi 93/81 (Description 7). Photomicrograph at higher magnification illustrating fine mono- and polycrystalline quartz, metamorphic rock fragments, and biotite. Vasiliki Ware. XP, horizontal dimension 1 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 41A. Kavousi 93/84 (Description 8). Photomicrograph showing the very fine fabric, with red tefs and striations from secondary calcite (upper part of frame). Vasiliki Ware. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).
- Plate 41B. Kavousi 93/82 (Description 9). Photomicrograph showing very fine fabric, with very small igneous rock inclusion in lower left of frame. Vasiliki Ware. XP, horizontal dimension 4 mm (P.M. Day).



## Preface to the Kavousi Excavation Series

*Kavousi I: The Archaeological Survey of the Kavousi Region* is the initial volume of the Kavousi Excavation Series, which presents the final report of the Kavousi Project, a program of archaeological investigation around the modern village of Kavousi in eastern Crete. Subsequent volumes will publish the results of the 1987–1992 excavations at the Vronda and Kastro sites in the Siteia Mountains above Kavousi and of the cleaning and new study of the excavations of Harriet Boyd in 1900 and 1901.

The first recorded archaeological interest in the Kavousi area is that of Sir Arthur Evans, who passed through the region on trips to the eastern part of the island in 1894 and in 1899, when he purchased pottery and metal objects from a tomb at Plai tou Kastrou for the Herakleion Museum. He recommended the site to Harriet Boyd, who excavated briefly at a number of sites in the area in 1900. After a week of excavation around the Kavousi Plain, she moved up into mountain sites above the village. She spent one week at Azoria, where she found puzzling remains that included circular structures and pottery of the Archaic and Hellenistic periods, followed by a week each on the Kastro peak and the Vronda ridge. On the Kastro she uncovered what she described as a “chieftain’s house” of thirteen rooms of the Geometric period; not far away at Skouriasmenos was a perfectly preserved, though robbed, tholos tomb with some Geometric and Orientalizing pottery in it. On Vronda she found a building and eight small tholos tombs, which she dated to sub-Mycenaean, a transitional period between the Bronze Age and Iron Age. She returned in 1901 to test other sites, particularly at Aloni and Avgo, and to look for a Bronze Age settlement site. When she was shown the promising Late Minoan site at Gournia, she transferred her excavation there, leaving the Kavousi area permanently. In 1912, however, Edith Hall, one of her colleagues at Gournia, briefly explored burial sites at Kamara tou Tholou just north of Kavousi village and at Hagios Antonios near the Bay of Mirabello.

After this active period of excavation, interest in the Kavousi area declined, even though chance finds continued to appear. One such find, discovered during the construction of the water system, led to the excavation of a Geometric shrine at Pachlitzani Agriada by Stylianos Alexiou in 1950. In 1951 a tholos tomb was discovered by a farmer, George Sekadakis, while planting an olive tree. The tomb was never scientifically excavated, but the pottery was taken to the small museum in Ierapetra.

In 1974 the authors of this preface began a project to update the information available on the early American excavations in the Isthmus of Ierapetra. Because many of the sites were not marked on a map, the first task was to locate them. By 1978 the scope of this project was narrowed to the Kavousi sites and defined as the Kavousi Project. At this time William Coulson joined the project because of his particular interest in studying the pottery found in the Vronda tholos tombs. The first step of the Kavousi Project was to study all the pottery and artifacts from Boyd's 1900 and 1901 excavations. Some of this material had not been previously published, while the interpretation of the rest of the artifacts needed to be brought in line with recent archaeological discoveries. Permission was also obtained to publish the material from the 1951 tomb discovered by George Sekadakis.

Because no map with the sites of the Kavousi area had ever been drawn, the task of the first season in 1978 was to remedy this situation. In the summer of 1979 the vases from the Sekadakis tholos tomb were studied at the Ierapetra Museum. In December of the same year, three weeks were spent in the Herakleion Museum cataloging, drawing, and photographing the material from the Plai tou Kastrou tomb and the tombs excavated by Boyd at Vronda, Chrondrovolakes, Aloni, and Skouriasmenos.

The summer of 1981 saw the first of four cleaning seasons. The Vronda tholoi, both those which had been excavated by Boyd and the one uncovered by Sekadakis as well as a tenth tholos, newly discovered but thoroughly robbed, were cleaned and added to the area map. The Aloni cemetery, southwest of the Kastro, and a tomb identified by Sekadakis at Ridopoulia, east of Kavousi, were also cleaned this season.

In 1982 it was arranged that the members of the Kavousi Project would supervise the cleaning of the Kastro for the balloon photograph to be published in the *Aerial Atlas of Ancient Crete*, and permission was given to publish any finds. New architectural features and considerable pottery were found in the cleaning, and these helped refine the dating of the site.

In 1983 and 1984 the Project received permission to clean the building excavated by Boyd on top of the Vronda ridge and to make a plan of the structures she mentioned. Many new architectural features and finds appeared during this cleaning.

The results of the cleaning seasons indicated that an excavation of the Vronda and Kastro sites would reveal much new information about the little understood end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Early Iron Age in Crete, a time when Crete experienced a major culture change from the prehistoric Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations to the historic Greek civilization. It had become clear that the Vronda "building" was a settlement dated to LM IIIC, the very end of the Late Bronze Age, at that time a rarely encountered period, and that it was important to uncover the settlement and allow it to contribute its part to the history of Crete. It was also evident that the rooms on the Kastro did not belong to a chieftain's citadel, as Boyd had thought, but to a large settlement of the Geometric period with evidence of earlier use in the Protogeometric era. Because the Kastro was being used as a type site for the Geometric period in Crete, it was particularly important that it be more fully excavated and that corrections be made in its date and function. At the same time, advances in scientific archaeology, particularly in the fields of soil science, faunal analysis, human osteology, and palaeobotany, made it possible to obtain new information for reconstructing the environment and human interaction with it. The development of modern technologies for the study of clays, metals, and stone implements offered promise for reconstructing the social, economic, and political environment of the period.



In 1985 a conference held in Ierapetra and Kavousi presented the new findings and the evidence for a profitable excavation. The conference initiated interest in reopening work on this neglected period, and in 1986 the Project was granted one of the three excavation permits allotted to the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.

Regular excavations of the Vronda and the Kastro sites began in 1987, at which time the Kavousi Project became the Kavousi Excavations under the directorship of Geraldine C. Gesell (Executive Director), Leslie Preston Day (Field Director at Vronda), and William D.E. Coulson (Field Director at Kastro). These excavations continued through 1992, interrupted by a study season in 1991. Since then study seasons were held regularly each summer until 2003.

From the beginning, the Kavousi Project was designed as a regional study of the Kavousi area, combining the excavation of two major sites with archaeological and environmental survey. The goal was to reconstruct as thoroughly as possible the culture of the Vronda and Kastro communities at this transitional period between the Minoan and Greek cultures and define their relationship to each other and to the rest of Crete. Donald Haggis was asked to conduct an archaeological survey that would provide the diachronic pattern of settlement in the Kavousi area. This would be the basis for the placement of the two excavated sites, Kastro and Vronda, within the complex history of the Kavousi area. The specific goals that were defined for the excavation will be addressed in the following volumes. These include the chronological sequences of pottery, necessary in working out the chronology of the sites, study of the architecture and artifacts used in the different periods, a study of the life styles of the people, their religion, funerary customs, level of technology, agriculture, and contacts with the rest of Crete and the eastern Mediterranean.

This volume, *The Archaeological Survey of the Kavousi Region*, provides a comprehensive look at the topography of the area, its natural resources, and the way in which the local people interacted with them over time, as shown in the changing pattern of settlement. It sets the stage for the report on the excavations and provides an introduction to the local soils and to the pottery classification used by the excavators.

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Crawfordsville, IN, 2005





## Preface to *Kavousi I*

This book presents the results of an archaeological survey that was conducted in the area of the modern village of Kavousi in northeastern Crete during three successive field seasons from 1988 to 1990, followed by study seasons in 1991, 1992, and 1996. The fieldwork, the Kavousi-Thripti Survey (KTS), was carried out in conjunction with the Kavousi Project's excavations of the Early Iron Age sites of Vronda and Kastro (Day and Snyder 2004; Gesell, Day, and Coulson 2000; 1995; Coulson et al. 1997) and formed the basis for my Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Minnesota (Haggis 1996a; 1992). The aims of the survey were to provide a broad archaeological and environmental context for these excavations, to explore the wider region, and to recover and examine sites contemporary with Vronda and Kastro. The project was thus initially conceived as a complement to ongoing excavation, a means of augmenting the data used in the interpretation of the excavation context.

The scope of the survey included the examination of a number of different periods of human activity in the Kavousi region, while the reconstruction of the history of settlement benefited from the results of a number of neighboring projects (Gesell 2004). In addition to the excavations at Vronda and Kastro, work at Pseira (Betancourt and Davaras 2003; 2002; 1999; 1995; 1988; McEnroe 2001; Floyd 1998), Mochlos (Soles 2004; 2003; Soles et al. 2004; Barnard and Brogan 2003), Chalasmenos (Tsipopoulou 2004; 2001; Coulson et al. 1995), Katalimata (Nowicki 2003; 2000b; Coulson et al. 1995), Vasiliki (Eliopoulos 2004; 1998), Kalo Chorio (Haggis 1996c), Evraïka, and Chrysokamino (Betancourt and Floyd 2000–2001; Muhly and Betancourt 2000; Betancourt 2000a; Floyd 2000; Betancourt et al. 1999), provided stratified contexts for establishing ceramic sequences and detailed information on site histories and functions, ceramic distribution, metallurgy, trade, and staple production. It remains to integrate these data into discussions of the wider regional contexts. The Vrokastro Archaeological Survey Project (Hayden 2004a; 2004b) and the Gournia Project's survey of the north Ierapetra Isthmus (Watrous et al. 2000; Watrous and Blitzler 1999; 1995) have documented contiguous areas of the Mirabello region, and their results will provide the broad regional perspective necessary in understanding settlement patterns at Kavousi. The full application of these data from both excavation and regional survey must, however, await the final publication of projects in the Mirabello area. The aim here is not to anticipate results but to integrate such data where available and immediately relevant.

The core of the present text and site gazetteer were written in residence at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens in 1991–1992 and revised on Crete

in 1996, allowing me to consult preliminary reports of recent and ongoing excavation and survey in the Kavousi and Mirabello areas, which were published between those dates. While my approach and perspective have changed considerably since 1992, the chapters incorporate little new information. The data are essentially as they were recorded from 1989 to 1992. The objectives of the project were to provide:

1. A site catalog and documentation of the archaeology of the Kavousi region
2. A broad overview of the data and summary of results
3. An interpretation of the settlement patterns and land use toward a reconstruction of the history of human activity in the sample area

The chronological framework was from Final Neolithic (4000 B.C.) to Late Roman (4th–7th centuries A.D.) with a specific focus on the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age (3200–700 B.C.). The fieldwork was conducted as a dissertation project under a topographical survey permit; inherent limitations of the permit from the Greek Ministry of Culture, as well as of time, funding, and expertise of the primary investigator precluded systematic collection of stone tools, and the study of Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman, and 20th century material.

Topics forming focused or detailed synthetic studies on Early Iron Age settlement patterns (Haggis 2001; 1993a), Early Bronze Age chronology and settlement structure (Haggis 2002; 1999a; 1993b), and the Roman remains at Tholos (Haggis 1996b) have been published elsewhere and will thus be treated summarily here. My own changing perceptions of the data have required reconsideration of old ideas and, indeed, the identification of new problems. Not only has new evidence come to light but also, as projects in East Crete are brought to the publication stage, entirely new issues and avenues of research have developed. Furthermore the methods, approaches, and technology of intensive archaeological survey have changed radically in the past 15 years since the initial design and implementation of the KTS (cf. Alcock and Cherry 2004a). The goal of this present book, however, is neither to engage this rich and problem-oriented literature, nor to present a discourse on survey methodology. The purpose here is simply to present the data that were collected during the Kavousi-Thripti Survey, to introduce various archaeological contexts that have a relevance to current issues and problems in the archaeology of Crete, and to explain how the idiosyncratic process of conducting the survey has affected the results.

In the course of the fieldwork, an ongoing dialogue between excavation and survey was complemented by, and indeed in many cases generated by, scientific methods and the parallel research interests of zoologists (Snyder and Klippel 1999; 1996; Klippel and Snyder 2000; 1991), botanists (Flint-Hamilton 2000; 1999), geologists and soil scientists (M. Morris 2002; 1994; Timpson 1992; Watrous et al. 2000), and physical anthropologists (Liston 1993). Ceramic petrography (P. Day 1997), for example, employed in regional ceramic provenience studies has greatly enhanced and in many ways utterly changed the way we perceive economic and cultural spheres of influence in the Bronze Age Aegean. The discussion of the pottery (Chapter 4 and Appendices 2 and 3) has been revised to include some information from recent excavations. The original pottery sherd descriptions are retained and appended to the site entries in the gazetteer (Chapter 6), providing a catalog for each site where collections were made. The original KTS (Kavousi-Thripti Survey) pottery catalog numbers are included for cross-referencing with the dissertation (see Appendix 4).

Since the initial fieldwork was carried out between 1988 and 1991, an unprecedented number of projects have been conducted within the survey zone. The catalog

entries in the site gazetteer make use of published and unpublished information, but they have been greatly abbreviated because detailed preliminary reports have been published by the excavators since the original records of these sites were made. Most important are the excavations in the area of Monastiraki at Katalimata and Chalasmenos (by Metaxia Tsipopoulou, William Coulson, and Krzysztof Nowicki) and the survey of the north Isthmus of Ierapetra by L. Vance Watrous and Harriet Blitzer. Such work now replaces my and Nowicki's topographical study of these sites and areas (Haggis and Nowicki 1993). Nowicki's work at Katalimata has recovered Neolithic, Protopalatial, and Neopalatial phases, while Watrous's study of the nearby plain of Kamina and Monastiraki will elucidate its broader context. Excavations at the Chrysokamino (habitation and metallurgical) sites by Philip Betancourt, Cheryl Floyd, and James Muhly have significantly augmented the data, changing our understanding of their chronology and function. I am grateful to these excavators for their permission to use information from these sites. With these exceptions, the catalog entries in the gazetteer are essentially as they appeared in my dissertation.

The local Bronze Age coarse-ware chronology has, since its initial publication, become refined through the efforts of numerous researchers on various Mirabello projects, and represents the continuing work of Margaret Mook, co-author of the original study of Kavousi material, and the petrographic work by Peter Day (Appendices 2 and 3). The details of this complex chronology will be refined and elaborated in the publications of the ceramic sequences of the Kavousi Excavations (Mook 2004; 1999; Mook and Coulson 1997; 1993), the Mochlos Excavations (Barnard and Brogan 2003), and the Vrokastro Archaeological Survey Project (Hayden 2004a; 2004b; 2003a; 2003b). These areas represent two vitally important ceramic production centers in the north Isthmus area, which have informed our understanding of material patterns and exchange systems in the broader region and have helped to shape the research design of the Kavousi-Thripti Survey (Haggis 2000).

While I have made every effort to update and utilize relevant bibliography, reflecting the vast amount of excavation, intensive survey work, and synthetic studies published since this manuscript was revised in the fall of 1996, the primary aim of this book is to present the data as originally compiled and examined (1989–1992)—the gazetteer of sites, the physical context, and the settlement history—as a contribution to the archaeological record of the region. Thus, this study reflects on the most relevant of this recent work, which has indeed already been effectively integrated into a wider discourse on regional settlement patterns in Crete and the Aegean (e.g., Hayden 2004a; Cunningham and Driessen 2004; Borgna 2003; Wallace 2003; Driessen 2001; Cunningham 2001; Nowicki 2000a; Farenga 1998).

Donald C. Haggis  
Koutsouras, Crete, 1996  
Chapel Hill, NC, 2004



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# Abbreviations

The following chronological abbreviations are used (Final Neolithic and Bronze Age dates are based on Hankey and Warren 1989 and Nowicki 2003):

|     |  |      |                                   |
|-----|--|------|-----------------------------------|
| FN  | Final Neolithic (ca. 4000–3200 B.C.)     | A    | Archaic (ca. 600–480 B.C.)        |
| EM  | Early Minoan (ca. 3200–2100 B.C.)        | C    | Classical (ca. 480–323 B.C.)      |
| MM  | Middle Minoan (ca. 2100–1600 B.C.)       | H    | Hellenistic (ca. 323–69 B.C.)     |
| LM  | Late Minoan (ca. 1600–1100 B.C.)         | R    | Roman                             |
| SM  | Subminoan (ca. 1100–1000 B.C.)           | ER   | Early Roman (69 B.C.–4th c. A.D.) |
| EPG | Early Protogeometric (ca. 1000–950 B.C.) | LR   | Late Roman (4th–7th c. A.D.)      |
| PG  | Protogeometric (ca. 1000–900 B.C.)       | B    | Byzantine (8th–12th c. A.D.)      |
| G   | Geometric (ca. 900–700 B.C.)             | V    | Venetian (12th–17th c. A.D.)      |
| LG  | Late Geometric (ca. 760–700 B.C.)        | Ott. | Ottoman (17th c.–1900 A.D.)       |
| EO  | Early Orientalizing (ca. 700–660 B.C.)   | Mod. | Modern (1900–present)             |
| O   | Orientalizing (ca. 700–600 B.C.)         | B.P. | before present                    |

The following other abbreviations are used:

|       |                        |       |                                |
|-------|------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|
| a     | angular                | Max.  | maximum                        |
| AMSL  | above mean sea level   | PPL   | plane polarized light          |
| c:f:v | coarse:fine:void ratio | Pres. | preserved                      |
| D.    | diameter               | r     | rounded                        |
| E     | Early                  | sa    | subangular                     |
| frag. | fragment               | sr    | subrounded                     |
| H.    | height                 | tcf   | textural concentration feature |
| ha.   | hectare                | Th.   | thickness                      |
| KTS   | Kavousi-Thriпти Survey | W.    | width                          |
| L.    | length                 | XP    | cross-polars                   |
| m     | meter                  |       |                                |

The following soil science abbreviations are used:

- A Mineral master horizon formed at the surface or below an O horizon that exhibits mixing of mineral and organic materials
- Ap An A-horizon that exhibits disturbance by plowing or other agricultural uses
- B Mineral master horizon that forms below an A, E, or O horizon that exhibits obliteration of much or all of the original rock structure
- BC A transitional horizon with characteristics of both an overlying B horizon and an underlying C horizon, but is more like B than C
- Bss A B-horizon that exhibits the presence of slickensides
- Bt A B-horizon that exhibits accumulation of silicate clays that either formed in place or were translocated from the overlying horizon
- Bw A B-horizon that exhibits development of color or structure with little or no apparent accumulation of alluvial materials
- C Mineral master horizon, excluding hard bedrock, that exhibits little effects of soil forming processes
- Cb A C-horizon that has been buried
- Cr Weathered or soft bedrock sometimes referred to as a paralithic contact
- C-T Cretaceous-Tertiary
- E Mineral master horizon exhibiting loss of clays, sesquioxides, or organic matter
- O Master horizon dominated by organic material
- R Hard bedrock



# Glossary

The text uses the following terms, which are specialized terminology or do not have exact English equivalents:

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| <i>akrotiri</i>     | headland; promontory; peninsula  |
| <i>aloni</i>        | threshing floor, usually with a stone-built border   |
| argillic            | a soil horizon that is characterized by the movement of phyllosilicate clays in the horizon from a horizon above                 |
| basic               | refers to an igneous rock with a low silica content  |
| cutans              | modifications to soil peds due to processes such as coatings of clay on ped surfaces as the result of argillic horizon formation |
| <i>geotrese</i>     | deep well  |
| <i>kalderimi</i>    | cobbled path (paved or partially paved mountain road)  |
| <i>mandra</i>       | sheep or goat pen  |
| mass-wasting        | downslope movement of soil or rock material as a direct result of gravity  |
| <i>metochi</i>      | rural hamlet or field house  |
| ped                 | a natural unit of soil structure (similar to a clod except that a clod is formed artificially)                                   |
| pedon               | a three dimensional body of soil that adequately expresses the horizons developed from soil formation processes                  |
| <i>perivolia</i>    | household or in-field gardens  |
| <i>plateia</i>      | town square; village center  |
| polypedon           | a group of contiguous or similar pedons, usually considered the primary unit for soil mapping                                    |
| residuum            | soil formed by the weathering of bedrock in situ   |
| <i>revma</i>        | torrent; gully; seasonal river   |
| <i>sideropetra</i>  | gray crystalline limestone   |
| slickensides        | stress surfaces that are polished and striated produced by one mass sliding against another                                      |
| soil profile        | a vertical section of soil through all its horizons and extending into the C horizon   |
| <i>thermokepion</i> | impermanent greenhouse   |
| <i>trapetum</i>     | olive crushing bed/press   |
| type pedon          | a pedon used to characterize a soil mapping unit   |
| ultrabasic          | refers to an igneous rock with a lower silica content than basic   |