

Pseira X

The Excavation of Block AF



Frontispiece. Excavating in Room AF 3A/B.

PREHISTORY MONOGRAPHS 28

Pseira X

The Excavation of Block AF

by

Philip P. Betancourt

with contributions from

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Cheryl R. Floyd, Glynis Jones, John C. McEnroe, George Mitrakis,
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Maria C. Shaw, Ian Smith, Eleni Velona, and Fotini Zervaki

edited by

Philip P. Betancourt and Costis Davaras



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Preface

During the process of surveying and photographing the parts of Pseira that had not been excavated by Richard Seager in 1906–1907, the photographer (Mike Betancourt) noticed small bits of red-painted plaster among the walls in Block AF, the most southern group of walls on the Pseiran peninsula. He informed John McEnroe of the discovery, and after a brief discussion with the director, a decision was reached to make a test trench at the location of the plaster (AF 1). The block turned out to be one of the most important areas at the site because of its long succession of building phases.

Block AF was not an easy area to excavate. Many of the rooms were remodeled and altered repeatedly during its long period of habitation. Radical changes were made to some of the buildings in this block at several points in their history, and the information that they provide is a testament to the hard work and keen insights of the trench supervisors, the architect, and the many other staff members who worked on this complicated group of rooms.

This southern group of buildings at the edge of the town is important for several reasons. It has examples of complex architectural details including a “pillar crypt,” elaborate upstairs floors, a well-preserved U-shaped staircase, and a well-designed kitchen, all of which contribute significantly to our knowledge of East Cretan building practices. It also provides a good compliment to Building BS/BV, a grander building at Pseira (published in *Pseira* III). Like BS/BV, one building in the block had evidence for cult practices, but the architectural settings for the ceremonies are different in the two structures.

Block AF provides the fullest sequence of building phases from any one area at Pseira, with habitation extending from before MM II to LM III. Unlike the Pseiran buildings that had been thoroughly looted in antiquity, many of the objects in Block AF were broken but not removed, so a more complete range of finds could be excavated. In addition to domestic pottery, the houses furnish examples of stone tools,

stone vessels, loom weights, inscriptions in Linear A, cult objects, animal bones, marine shells, and a wide range of material recovered from water sieving. This latter category, with burned grain, fish bones, shells, and other categories of materials, fills many gaps in our knowledge of Pseiran life.

Philip P. Betancourt

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Heidi Dierckx, author of the sections on stone implements, would like to thank Harriet Blitzer for her advice on the study of stone tools and for her help in their cataloging. She would also like to thank Jeffrey S. Soles and Costis Davaras for allowing her to study and refer to the stone material from the excavations at Mochlos, and David Romano for allowing her to examine stone implements in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology.

The excavations and studies for Block AF took place between 1990 and 1997. Excavations were conducted in 1990–1991 under the direction of the editors of this

volume with the supervision of several trench supervisors: Eleni Armpis, George Mitrakis, Marianna Nikolaidou, Eleni Velona, and Fotini Zervaki. The architectural study was conducted by John C. McEnroe with the help of several assistants: Anne Barnosky (1990–1992), Joan Beaudoin (1992), Senta C. German (1989–1992), Naomi Horowitz (1991), Sharon Rathke (1989–1990), and Paul Scotton (1991). A plan of the site was completed in 1992 using data prepared by the entire team of architects listed in *Pseira* IV. Field photographs were taken by Michael W. Betancourt (1990), George Mitrakis (1992), and Philip P. Betancourt (1990–1994, 2006–2007). Aerial photographs were made in 1992 by J. Wilson and Eleanor E. Myers. The water-sieving operation was supervised by Jonathan Chapman (1990) and Ian Smith (1991). Technicians Nikos Daskalakis and Andreas Klinis provided special expertise in excavation. The architecture was cleaned in 2005 and 2006. Alekos Nikakis provided expertise in consolidation of the architecture.

Mary A. Betancourt supervised work in the apotheki. Profile drawings were by Teresa Howard (1990–1992), Jenny Hope Simpson (1991), Krista Gustafson (1990–1992), Marie T. Naples (1990–1991), Jeanne Pond (1990), Michael W. Betancourt (1990), Eleni Velona (1990), Naomi Horowitz (1991), Ursula Hawlitschka (1992), and the authors of the individual sections. Catalog entries for the material presented here were made by Mary A. Betancourt (1990–1993) and Laurie Schmitt (1991–1992), as well as by the individual authors. Conservators included Asaf Oron (1992) and Vanessa Edwards (1992). Object photography was by George Mitrakis (1992–1993) and Philip P. Betancourt (1990–1994).

Other studies were made by the authors of the individual sections. Samples for analysis were collected by the trench supervisors under the supervision of Philip P. Betancourt and were studied in the laboratories listed in the following chapters.

Assistance with editing and preparation of illustrations was given by Elizabeth Shank, Louise Langford-Verstegen, and Andrea Powers.

Abbreviations

ca.	approximately	pers. comm.	personal communication
CF	Coarse Fabric	pers. obs.	personal observation
cm	centimeters	PF	Phyllite Fabric
d	diameter	PS	excavation number
dim	dimension	<i>Pseira I</i>	P.P. Betancourt and C. Davaras, eds. <i>Pseira I: The Minoan Buildings on the West Side of Area A</i>
EM	Early Minoan	<i>Pseira II</i>	P.P. Betancourt and C. Davaras, eds. <i>Pseira II: Building AC (the "Shrine") and Other Buildings in Area A</i>
F	fused	<i>Pseira III</i>	P.P. Betancourt and C. Davaras, eds. <i>Pseira III: The Plateia Building</i> , by Cheryl R. Floyd
FF	Fine Fabric	<i>Pseira IV</i>	P.P. Betancourt and C. Davaras, eds. <i>Pseira IV: Minoan Buildings in Areas B, C, D, and F</i>
gr	gram	<i>Pseira V</i>	P.P. Betancourt and C. Davaras, eds. <i>Pseira V: The Architecture of Pseira</i> , by J. McEnroe
ht	height	<i>Pseira VI</i>	P.P. Betancourt and C. Davaras, eds. <i>Pseira VI: The Pseira Cemetery 1</i>
kg	kilograms	<i>Pseira VII</i>	P.P. Betancourt and C. Davaras, eds. <i>Pseira VII: The Pseira Cemetery 2. Excavation of the Tombs</i>
L	left		
LM	Late Minoan		
m	meters		
m asl	meters above sea level		
max	maximum		
MFCC	Mirabello Fabric, Cooking Class		
MG	Middle Geometric		
MM	Middle Minoan		
MNI	Minimum Number of Individuals		
NISP	Number of Individual Specimens		

<i>Pseira VIII</i>	P.P. Betancourt, C. Davaras, and R. Hope Simpson, eds. <i>Pseira VIII: The Archaeological Survey of Pseira Island Part 1</i>	R	right
		th	thickness
		UF	unfused
<i>Pseira IX</i>	P.P. Betancourt, C. Davaras, and R. Hope Simpson, eds. <i>Pseira IX: The Archaeological Survey of Pseira Island Part 2. The Intensive Surface Survey</i>	unk	unknown
		w	width
		ws	water-sieved sample included
		wt	weight