

A WASTE DEPOSIT FROM A LBA-SHRINE IN KHANIA (?)*

The Greek-Swedish Excavations (GSE) in the Ag. Aikaterini Square at the Kastelli Hill in Khania in Western Crete is one among several important excavations within the modern town of ancient Kydonia, *ku-do-ni-ja* of the Linear B tablets. The excavation has - we think - revealed much new evidence on the Minoan period and raised many new problems. Here I am going to present yet another one - the possible religious significance of one rubbish area.

If you look at the architectural development within the Late Minoan period, it is immediately noted, that the area northwest of the settlement - as far as can be judged from present excavations - is an open, unbuilt area.¹ As shown below, the purpose of this open area is at present enigmatic concerning the LM I through LM IIIB:1 period, while during the LM IIIB:2 and IIIC periods it clearly functioned as a dump area, called Rubbish Area North.²

When the GSE started in 1970 a very strange phenomenon was observed: the stratigraphy showed that the LM IIIB:2 levels cut into the Proto- and Pre-palatial deposits. This was puzzling, but as the excavation extended it became clear that, at some time during the later part of LM IIIB, the area immediately north of the settlement had been dug through, and used as a rubbish area (Pl. XLVIa).

Considering the period in question it is not surprising that rubbish was dumped close to the settlement. This is also observed in other parts of the GSE, especially in the southeastern area during the entire LM III period. What really puzzles us concerning the large Rubbish Area North is the different nature of the material found in it compared to the remaining LM IIIB:2/C material from the rest of the settlement.

The area is a large dump into which many pits have been dug - and this is also clearly demonstrated by the many joins of pottery throughout the area. For example, the stirrup jar 80-P 0768 has been glued from sherds found in five different deposits within the Rubbish Area North.³

From all the LM IIIB:2-IIIC deposits a little more than two tons of pottery was weighed, and if we include the material from the first years, when pottery was not weighed, we calculate c. 2.7 tons. Of this total almost 1 ton came from the Rubbish Area North - all together 33%, even though the area is limited compared to the rest of the excavation.

From the same deposits were found 1283 small finds, 330 of which have been ascribed to the Rubbish Area North, in other words 26%. If we take the two periods separately the numbers are slightly different.⁴

If we look at the total amount of pottery, we see that the decorated amount is higher than what we find in average in the LM IIIB:2/C levels. The average for these two levels is 12% decorated pottery, while the Rubbish Area North contains almost 15%. Also here we note differences between the LM IIIC and LM IIIB:2 deposits.⁵

* I wish to thank warmly Dr. David Wilson for correcting the English text. Abbreviations used:
GSE I-III *The Greek-Swedish Excavations at the Ag. Aikaterini Square, Kastelli, Khania 1970-1987*, E. HALLAGER and B.P. HALLAGER (eds), (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen, 4°, XLVII:I:1-2).
Vol. I. *From the Geometric to the Modern Greek Period* (1997).
Vol II. *The Late Minoan IIIC Settlement* (2000).
Vol III. *The Late Minoan IIIB:2 Settlement* (forthcoming).

1 See plans in E. HALLAGER, "Architecture of the LM II/III Settlement in Khania," in *Crète Mycénienne* figs. 1-5.

2 GSE II, 103-111; GSE III.

3 GSE III.

4 Pottery: LM IIIC, 22%; LM IIIB:2, 37% and small finds: LM IIIC, 8%; LM IIIB:2, 35%.

5 In LM IIIC 18% decorated compared to 12% and in LM IIIB:2 14% compared to 12%.

With the bones we note some remarkable differences to the average. The average distribution of the identified animal bones during the LM II/III periods at the GSE is a picture close to many other Bronze Age settlements: Capride 62%, Pig 23%, Cattle 11%, Deer 3% and other animals 1.3% (Pl. XLVIb). The Rubbish Area North displays the same percentage of pig and cattle, but the caprids are only 48%, and deer constitutes 13% (Pl. XLVIb). And if we look at the largest pit in the Rubbish Area North (22-Pit B) we see that the percentage of pig and cattle bones are still close to the average. Caprids here are only 35%, while deer is as much as 28% (Pl. XLVIb). It was also in the above mentioned pit that we found an almost completely preserved sawn antler from a stag.⁶ In the Rubbish Area North the population of young animals is smaller than the average of the LM II/III levels: 14% compared to 22% in general. This tendency also holds true for the pig which is for the entire LM II/III period the animal with the highest population of young animals (41%) while only 25 % of young pigs are found in the Rubbish Area North. Concerning the caprids the same tendency is noted: 13% compared to 17%, but in one of the small pits of the area we find an exception in that it contained 43% bones from young caprids - remains from a privileged meal perhaps?

If we turn to the inventoried finds a few main categories will be presented. In Pl. XLVIc all the numbers will be compared to the average in the Rubbish Area North: 26%. Obsidian should probably be much lower than shown in Pl. XLVIc, because many of the collected pieces come from the MM levels disturbed during the cleaning of the LM IIIB:2 pits. The significant differences between Rubbish Area North and the remaining LM IIIB:2/C settlement is that the Rubbish Area North had a the low proportion of obsidian, raw materials (rock crystal and steatite) and tools for textile industry (loom weights, spindle whorls and KS whorls, etc.), while it contained many more stone tools, bronzes and figurines than the average.

Of the inventoried pottery from the Rubbish Area North only the LM IIIB:2 part will be treated here. From this period 859 pottery sherds were inventoried, and practically all the shapes known from the LM IIIB:2 settlement are represented (Pl. XLVIIa). Bowls, cups and kylikes predominate, while pithoi are also richly represented. Of the recognizable closed shapes only stirrup jars are represented with some amounts. If we compare the contents of the Rubbish Area North to the only other large rubbish pit of the period, 20-Pit B, found in the southeastern part of the excavated area (with 196 inventoried sherds), we also see that most known shapes are represented. Here also, bowls, cups and kylikes are plentiful, while there are apparently also more closed shapes.

If the shapes collected are divided into only four categories: open,⁷ closed⁸, others⁹ and pithoi, we see that open shapes are equally represented in the two pits while the Rubbish Area North for some reason, has far less closed shapes (10% compared to 25%) and many more pithoi (12% compared to 1% [and 9% in remaining LM IIIB:2 deposits]).

When we look at the stirrup jar, we also note a marked difference between the Rubbish Area North and the remaining LM IIIB:2 deposits where the small decorated stirrup jar constitutes 30% compared to 55% in the Rubbish Area North – almost double.

The imports - or foreign fabrics - i.e. Handmade Burnished Ware, Grey Ware, Mycenaean imports, Knossian imports and other imports (from Cyprus, Palaikastro, Cyclades etc.) also mark differences. 91% Handmade Burnished Ware and Grey Ware comes from the Rubbish Area North and the Knossian imports are well represented (38%), while few Mycenaean imports have been found (13%). To the category of less frequent pottery finds might be added the Inscribed Stirrup Jars. Five such jars were found in the Rubbish Area North to which should most likely be added two found during cleaning operations in the area,¹⁰ which means that

6 Inventory number 84-B 006, GSE II, 108 and pls. 33d, 107a:3.

7 Open vessels include: amphoroid krater, bowl, *ciotala carenata*, conical cup, cup, cup/bowl, footed cup and bowl, goblet, jar, kalathos, krater, kylix, mug, *olla*, "open vessel," pyxis, rhyton, *scodella*, storage jar, tankard and *vaso situliforme*.

8 Closed vessels include: alabastron, amphora, askos, "closed vessel," jug, stirrup jar, strainer and thelastron.

9 Other vessels include: basin, basket vase, bathtub, brazier, bread oven, cooking dish, dish, funnel, incense burner, ladle, lid, stand, tray, tripod cooking pot, tripod cup and tripod storage jar.

10 KH Z 10 and KH Z 20, cf. GSE I, 66.

50% of the Inscribed Stirrup Jars connected to the LM IIIB:2 deposits came from the Rubbish Area North.¹¹

The above facts will now be summarized. The Rubbish Area North contained 1/3 of the entire material excavated during the LM IIIC and LM IIIB:2 periods, and the major differences compared to the remaining deposits are the following: Handmade Burnished Ware and Grey Ware are almost entirely confined to the Rubbish Area North, the percentage of Knossian pottery is much higher than the percentage of imported Mycenaean pottery, small decorated stirrup jars are much more frequent, closed vessel types constitute a low percentage, while pithoi are more frequent. There is very little evidence for textile industry, almost no raw materials, and surprisingly little obsidian, while stone tools, bronzes and figurines are more richly represented. The most astonishing difference, however, becomes obvious in the fauna, where deer and stag are plentiful compared to caprids.

These differences raise many questions. The first is to ask whether the Rubbish Area North contains waste from the ordinary settlement, or whether it represents something different¹² - perhaps waste from religious offerings.

If we take, for example, the case of the small decorated stirrup jars, which are more frequent in the Rubbish Area North than elsewhere one could easily imagine that they had held perfumed oils intended for offerings, but on the other hand small decorated stirrup jars are more frequent in LM IIIB:1 than the large ones,¹³ and it may thus only reflect the fact that the Rubbish Area North was in use during the entire period, while the remaining deposits mainly reflect the end of LM IIIB:2.

Why, for example, are pottery imports from Knossos more richly represented in the Rubbish Area North than imports of Mycenaean pottery? Does that reflect something about the users of the Rubbish Area North? The same could be asked about the Handmade Burnished Ware and Grey Ware, which is almost exclusively confined to the Rubbish Area North.

Why does the Rubbish Area North contain so little evidence for textile industry otherwise so prominent in the LM deposits? The same question should be asked about obsidian and raw materials?

And why - and this concerns a fact which has not yet been presented - are so many of the small finds from the Rubbish Area North more or less complete - what is the purpose of dumping complete fishing hooks in bronze,¹⁴ a fibula,¹⁵ an arrowhead in bronze,¹⁶ needles in bronze and bone?¹⁷ It may not be surprising that the stone tools are mostly complete, but why are four¹⁸ of the eight loom weights found in the Rubbish Area North completely preserved. And why do we find complete *Murex* shells¹⁹ when they are otherwise crushed in connection with purple dye production and thereafter often used as floorpacking?²⁰ - are such complete items lost by chance? or may they be deposited on purpose? The amount taken into consideration may perhaps favour the last alternative.

Why is the concentration of figurines found in the Rubbish Area North larger than elsewhere? One, made in the Local Kydonian Workshop, is rather unique; it may perhaps be the head of a hippopotamos.²¹ Does it reflect offerings or what?

11 Including the two coming from cleanings all together 14 sherds with inscriptions in Linear B were collected from the LM IIIB:2 deposits, cf. *GSE* III.

12 On comparison with a large pit from the LM IIIC period, "Room I, Pit," cf. *GSE* II, 41-44, which is obviously remains from a specialized workshop we exclude that the Rubbish Area North might have represented such a deposit.

13 Personal communication from Birgitta P. Hallager.

14 *GSE* II, pls. 105b:2, 107b:6.

15 *GSE* II, pl. 107a:1.

16 *GSE* II, pl. 105d:9.

17 *GSE* III, nos. 80-M 009, 84-M 040, 80-B 007.

18 *GSE* II, pl. 106b:1; *GSE* III, nos. 84-TC 030, 87-TC 002, 87-TC 001.

19 *GSE* III, 84-MISC 081.

20 This phenomenon is, however, mainly noted during the LM I period.

21 Inventory no. 83-TC 002, cf. *GSE* III.

Why does the amount of bone from deer suddenly become so dominant at the cost of caprids? It is true that towards the end of the Bronze Age deer becomes more common in the bone material, but not nearly in the amounts reflected in the Rubbish Area North. Are these animals hunted animals?²² Or have they been kept in “parks,” and were they intended as food for the hunters, or were they intended for raw material like skin or bone implements? Or might they have been part of religious offerings,²³ and in such a case to a certain deity?

The above questions may - I believe - justify that, the idea of Rubbish Area North as a religious waste deposit, should be explored further. Here we may turn, more specifically, to a few of the small finds discovered in the Rubbish Area North.

One is the fragment of a figurine in half life size.²⁴ This is a type of figurines which - when found *in situ* - is connected to cult activities in bench(?) shrines,²⁵ and another is fragments of an intriguing rhyton which may perhaps also have been part of cult equipment.²⁶ There were two or three fragments from snake tubes,²⁷ the single fragment of a strainer,²⁸ three fragments of rhyta,²⁹ fragments from 4 incense burners,³⁰ a single head of what might have been a bird,³¹ while the remaining figurines represented females and animals.³² There were no offering tables, and no fragments of horns of consecration were identified.

Compared to the amount of finds in the Rubbish Area North the cult equipment or possible cult equipment³³ constitutes an extremely small amount of the material, which must therefore - if it has religious connotations - be considered remains from offerings. Several of the vases found, for example, on the floor in front of the bench in the Shrine of the Double Axes at Knossos³⁴ might easily have turned up in our Rubbish Area North.

I do not think that the evidence from the Rubbish Area North is enough to prove that we are dealing with waste from religious offerings, but I do consider it a realistic possibility. If so, one would expect a small shrine somewhere north of the inhabited area.

As mentioned at the beginning, we do not know how this area was used during the LM I through LM IIIB:1 periods, but if it had a similar function during the late LM IIIB:1 period one cannot help recalling the finds - in a nearby building - of Linear B tablets, one of which mentions offerings of honey to Zeus and Dionysus in the shrine of Zeus.³⁵

The Rubbish Area North was in most cases discovered immediately below the Venetian Turkish deposits (Pl. XLVIa), so we have only indirect evidence for the continued use of the area. Presumably it was given up together with the rest of the settlement early in LM IIIC,³⁶ but in the excavations in 1990 we found evidence that the area in general might have resumed its

22 S. HILLER, “On Palatially Administrated Deer. Aspects of Hunting and Animal Sacrifice According to Epigraphic and Iconographic Sources,” in *The 11th International Mycenological Colloquium, Austin 2000*, (forthcoming).

23 Only 6% of the deer bones came from young animals - exactly the same percentage as found in the entire population of LM II/III deer.

24 GSE III, inventory no. 80-TC 023, also Y. TZEDAKIS and E. HALLAGER, “The Greek-Swedish Excavations at Kastelli, Khania 1980,” AAA 16 (1983) fig. 5 and B.P. HALLAGER and E. HALLAGER, “Miljøteam Khania,” in *Hvad fandt vi?*, Århus (1999) 96 (in colour).

25 K. KILIAN, “Patterns in the Cult Activity in the Mycenaean Argolid: Hagia Triada (Klenies), the Profitis Elias Cave (Haghios Hadrianos) and the Citadel of Tiryns,” in *Celebrations* 196.

26 B.P. HALLAGER, this volume.

27 GSE II, no. 84-P 1316, pls. 47, 76f:1; 77-P 1551, pl. 79b:8 and possibly GSE III, no. 84-P 1306.

28 GSE III, no. 80-P 0359/83-P 0335.

29 GSE III, nos. 70-P 0820, 73-P 0462 and 84-P 1588.

30 GSE II, no. 83-P 0350, pls. 44, 76c:9; GSE III, nos. 73-P 1090, 73-P 1100 and 83-P 0300.

31 GSE III, no. 70-TC 030.

32 GSE III, nos. 83-TC 008, bottom plate(?); 83-TC 002, hippopotamus(?); 84-TC 041, female psi-figurine(?); 73-TC 016, female psi-figurine; 73-TC 038, animal.

33 See lists in G.C. GESELL, *Town, Palace, and House Cult in Minoan Crete* (1985) 147, Chart VI.

34 PM II, figs. 189-190.

35 E. HALLAGER, M. VLASAKI and B.P. HALLAGER, “New Linear B Tablets from Khania,” *Kadmos* 31 (1992) 61-87.

36 GSE II, 193.

former function when people returned to the site in the Late Geometric period, represented by a rubbish pit in which was among others found an almost complete bucranium from a bull's head.³⁷

In the Greek-Swedish Excavations there are preserved no substantial remains from the Archaic through Roman periods.³⁸ They were probably all levelled away in connection with the construction of the first fortification wall around the city, but it may be worth while to recall, that some of the small finds from especially the Early Roman period indicated the presence of a cult for Pan and possibly Demeter.³⁹

The next architecture we find in the area of the Rubbish Area North also came to light during the 1990 excavations: an Early Christian Basilica with mosaic floors.⁴⁰ This church was presumably destroyed by the Arabs in the 9th Century, but after the Venetian take-over of Crete in 1210 the Venetians chose exactly the same spot to built their Cathedral in Khania.⁴¹ The Cathedral was bombed in 1941, but worship continues even today.

The chronological gaps are too large, but sacred areas used through centuries and even millennia and by different religions is a well known phenomenon,⁴² and the northern part of Ag. Aikaterini Square may perhaps have been such a place.

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37 E. HALLAGER and Y. TZEDAKIS, "The Greek-Swedish Excavations at Kastelli, Khania. II. The 1990 Excavation," *AAA* 21 (1988) (1993) 30-55.

38 *GSE* I, 202-212.

39 *GSE* I, 212.

40 HALLAGER and TZEDAKIS (*supra* n. 37) 50-54, figs. 30-31.

41 HALLAGER and TZEDAKIS (*supra* n. 37) fig. 29.

42 L. NIXON, "Minoan Settlements and Greek Sanctuaries," in *Proceedings of the 6th International Cretological Congress. Khania 1986* (1990) 59-67.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Pl. XLVIa Section through 518/718-724. The layers 5, Wall 3 and 13 are LM IIIC, while 10-12 and 14-16 represent the Rubbish Area North in LM IIIB:2. 5 and Wall 3 is LM IIIC, Room M (see *GSE* II, fig. 29) which was built over the dump in Rubbish Area North. 13-16 represents a pit dug through the dump and deep into the Middle Minoan layers.
- Pl. XLVIb Diagram showing distribution of animal bones during the LM II/III period at the *GSE*.
- Pl. XLVIc Diagram showing percentages of groups of small finds.
- Pl. XLVII Diagrams showing pottery finds from the Rubbish Area North (a) and from the large rubbish pit 20-Pit B from the Rubbish Area Southeast (b).