

Πολυμήχανος

Man of Many Ways

Papers in Honour of

Professor Jan Driessen



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Edited by Charlotte Langohr and Quentin Letesson

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## 24. The Sissi Archaeological Project

*A mosaic of histories*

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Maria Anastasiadou, Ilaria Caloi, Thérèse Claeys, Louis Dautais, Roxane Dubois, Florence Gaignerot-Driessen, Hannah Joris, Simon Jusseret, Nicolas Kress, Charlotte Langohr, Quentin Letesson, Iro Mathioudaki, Ophélie Mouthuy, Killian Regnier, Tia Sager, Pepi Saridaki, Evgenia Tsafou, Christina Tsoraki, Diana Wolf

This final chapter, written by several members of the **Sissi team**, is intended as a tribute to the innumerable opportunities Jan gave so generously to members of the project, fostering new research agendas and paving the way for the future of Minoan archaeology. The mosaic-like character of the text is deliberate and opens a series of peepholes on the small histories behind the Sissi archaeological excavation and international scientific project. Each of these personal stories is at once a facet of this major collective archaeological endeavour and a testimony to Jan's leadership, many qualities and vision. The chapter is also a celebration of the diversity and complementarity of the Sissi team comprising specialists of Minoan material culture, field archaeologists, conservators, drafts-persons, students from all over the world, and local workmen who, by working together under Jan's guidance, have generated and published an astounding amount of new data on Minoan civilisation.

“So forget any ideas you've got about lost cities, exotic travel, and digging up the world. We do not follow maps to buried treasure, and “X” never, ever marks the spot”. Indiana Jones



FIG. 24.X SISSI TREASURE MAP (IMAGE NICOLAS KRESS)

## 1. Seals in Sissi: A man's contribution to the making of a glyptic scholar

Maria Anastasiadou<sup>1</sup>

When I first joined the excavation team in Sissi in 2010, no seals had yet been found. After I arrived in Crete that summer I said to Jan “you will now find seals, I am a lucky charm”. And sure enough, the first seals were found during that campaign.

As the second preliminary publication of the excavation was being prepared, Jan asked me if I was interested in writing something on the seals. I was very surprised: I expected that only a small elite of established scholars would be asked to undertake primary publication of archaeological material. Although at the start of my academic career, I already had a PhD on Protopalatial glyptic and several years' work experience at the archive of the *Corpus der minoischen und mykenischen Siegel* in Marburg. I then gladly accepted Jan's offer.

By asking me to get formally involved in the Sissi project with the publication of its seals, Jan opened up a whole new world for me. Other excavators started entrusting me with the material from their excavations. As a result, I started intensively working on perfecting my seal documentation and research skills. Twelve years and a Louvain-la-Neuve postdoctoral scholarship later I am leading an academic life fully devoted to the study of Aegean glyptic. The Sissi seals and Jan's trust played a crucial role in offering me the privilege of fulfilling my scholarly interests.

The site has now produced a total of 20 seals, a few – as yet unpublished – clay objects with seal impressions and at least one impressed nodule. New material keeps getting discovered at the apothiki as the routine work of conservators and textile-tool experts gets disrupted by hitherto unnoticed seal impressions on clay objects. The Sissi seals, which span a period from the end of the Prepalatial to the LM III period, bring a breath of life to the archaeological discoveries at the site. Their images – animals, hybrid creatures, ornamental patterns – reveal to us the world, cognitive and physical, of the individuals that inhabited Sissi (Fig. 24.1). Their patterns of use through the centuries, as that of lion lentoids from the LM I through to the LM IIIA period, provide insights into the beliefs of the Sissi inhabitants and their strategies for creating and maintaining social structures (Fig. 24.2). The sphragistic use of seals reveals a society which needed to control access but also needed self-identification by marking.

Jan Driessen had the fortune to excavate a Minoan palace that will, inevitably, shape the manner in which future generations understand Minoan palatial societies. Despite his achievements, Jan's collaborators experience an inspiring personality that combines a leading academic spirit with the quality of a teacher who embraces the advancement of young generations by showing trust and giving opportunities. Because of this, Jan's work will leave an unfading mark in both Aegean research and the lives of the individuals that had the good fortune to constitute part of his research team.



FIG. 24.1 THE LM II-III LAPIS LACEDAEMONIUS LENTOID 18-15-2460-OB007 WITH THE IMAGE OF A MINOAN GENIUS COMBINED WITH TWO AGRIMIA FOREPARTS, SPACE 15.5 (EAST OF THE EAST WING OF THE BUILDING WITH CENTRAL COURT) (PHOTO M. ANASTASIADOU/© EBSA)

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FIG. 24.2 A LM I (LEFT) AND A LM IIIA (RIGHT) SOFT STONE LENTOID WITH THE DEPICTION OF A LION, ROOM 3.5 OF BUILDING CD AND AREA TO THE SOUTH OF THE COURT OF THE BUILDING WITH CENTRAL COURT RESPECTIVELY (PHOTO C. PAPANIKOLOPOULOS [LEFT], M. ANASTASIADOU [RIGHT])/© EBSA)

## 2. *Un'italiana a Sissi*. Looking at pottery through a southern lens

Ilaria Caloi<sup>2</sup>

I started working at Sissi in 2013, as an *Académie Universitaire Louvain-Marie Curie* Post-Doc Fellow at UCLouvain. During my stay in Louvain-la-Neuve, Jan asked me whether I was interested in working at Sissi as a pottery specialist, especially for the Neopalatial period. Until then, the main focus of my work in Crete had been the Protopalatial period in the Mesara plain, hence I was a bit worried about this new task. But Jan, with his usual *savoir-faire*, told me: “Do not worry! You are a pottery specialist so you can study pottery from any period!”. With these encouraging words he convinced me, and I agreed to study Neopalatial pottery from Sissi. In agreement with Charlotte Langohr, who coordinates all material studies of the Sissi project, I started analysing what appeared to be a closed deposit from Zone 6 of the Building with Central Court (BCC), excavated in 2011 by Simon Jusseret (2012). It was a great surprise because this deposit was not only a feasting hoard, but also a building deposit, connected to the inauguration of the east wing of the BCC (Caloi 2019a). It was a very stimulating study because in Neopalatial Sissi I found a counterpart to some structured deposits from the First Palace at Phaistos, which I interpreted as building and commemorative deposits (Caloi 2017; 2019b).

After that, in 2015, I was very happy to deal with Prepalatial pottery excavated by Sylviane Déderix (2018) from the lowest levels of Zone 11. There, a good EM IIB fill came to light, with pottery very similar to that I was studying from Building Dessenne at Malia, in view of the publication of this edifice (Devolder & Caloi 2019). Then, in 2019, I was asked to analyse the earliest pottery, *i.e.* EM IIA, found in the Sissi settlement, namely the pottery retrieved from the Upper Terrace Extension (UTE), still under excavation by Quentin Letesson (2021). This is an excellent opportunity as I can compare the EM IIA productions of Sissi with those from the nearby Palace of Malia, which I have been studying since 2017 in the framework of my collaboration in the “Malia Palace Project”, directed by Maud Devolder. Both of these studies on Prepalatial pottery from Sissi, preliminarily published in the *Aegis* volumes (Caloi 2018; 2021), are ongoing.

Finally, I was involved in the study of the Pre- and Protopalatial pottery – back to my first love! – from the Sissi necropolis of Zone 9 (Schmitt & Déderix 2021), with the aim of publishing the latter together with Aurore Schmitt, the field director of the zone, and Sylviane Déderix.

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A small token to Jan to thank him for the great opportunity he gave me to work at Sissi with him and his AegIS team, and for his constant support and help in my professional life.

Thanks to Jan, I had the excellent opportunity to analyse new contexts from what represents the most recent discovery of a court-centred building in Minoan Crete, but also to integrate these studies within my major interests and projects in the island. Moreover, I have had the great chance to work with him and with many, excellent scholars from his AegIS team.

### **3. Building on a man's legacy. From unearthing to preserving the Minoan past**

Thérèse Claeys<sup>3</sup>

“True teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross; then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create their own” (Nikos Kazantzakis)

22 February 2007: I will always remember the day I received the invitation to take part in the Sissi excavations. Apparently, Jan had seen in the 18-year old student that I was something worthy of trust. An invitation can go a long way, as 16 years later I am still part of the Sissi Archaeological Project, and I could never thank Jan enough for this. This first experience at Sissi – incidentally, my first excavation, too – would have a profound and lasting influence on me: during that first summer at Sissi in 2007, Jan managed to turn my initial deep interest from Bronze Age Egypt to Bronze Age Crete and he determined me to enter the path of Minoan archaeology. His authoritative knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm for the people of Crete (both past and current ones) played an essential role here. This first tangible encounter with Minoan remains spurred some personal reflection that would never leave and would eventually become my main research interest: namely, the preservation and communication of the Minoan archaeological past.

It is an old and much-repeated adage that “archaeology is destruction” and while being granted the chance to unearth the relics of the Minoan past at Sissi, I came to experience how destructive the archaeological practice indeed was at several levels. First, once the material evidence is taken out of its context, this information is irreversibly lost; secondly, the removal of the superimposed natural layers, in other words the destruction of the protective burial environment, not only exposes features to a new, variable, and eventually aggressive, physical environment but might also expose them to anthropic hazards (*i.e.* vandalism, theft), including unintentional breaking while digging on the field. These thoughts were of course terrifying and turned me into such a slow excavator in my early years at Sissi!

Through that first experience, I not only came to realise how vulnerable Minoan remains were, but also how limited their legibility was for telling the story of the Minoan civilisation. Indeed, contrary to monumental archaeological remains from historic times, Minoan architecture is mostly made of rubble masonry with an earth binder, an assemblage particularly suited to coping with seismic activities but significantly less with the vicissitudes of time. Minoan upper stories used to be made of mud brick and timber framing, that is to say perishable materials, causing examples of such elevations to remain particularly rare. Furthermore, the palimpsestic nature of most Minoan sites, due to their centuries-old, if not pluri-millennial, turbulent occupation history, compels archaeologists to take decisions about whether or not to remove upper stratigraphic layers in order to eventually reach older occupation levels. All these intrinsic characteristics of Minoan remains pose serious challenges in terms of their interpretation and public presentation.

Archaeology and conservation have for a long time been seen as tread paths that often run parallel but rarely converge, due to their seemingly conflicting interests: archaeology is often perceived as being solely interested in research while conservation is often labelled as a “caring” and technical profession and merely a post excavation expedient (Stanley Price 2013). Therefore, it is not surprising that “archaeological site conservation” is a relatively new discipline that only emerged progressively in the course of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While some members of the archaeological community still seem reluctant to integrate conservation into their archaeological practice, Jan, on the contrary, has always shown great concern towards the future of Sissi and towards its sustainable

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safeguarding for future generations. Indeed, as early as the first campaigns at Sissi, consolidation campaigns were carried out almost continuously alongside excavation work. Jan’s vision indirectly comforted me in pursuing my studies in the field of the conservation of monuments and sites. Curious to investigate these questions further, I then enrolled in a PhD in the same field, with Jan’s continuous support and guidance.



FIG. 24.3 SCHEMATIC PLAN OF THE KEPHALI HILL MAPPING THE DIFFERENT STABILISATION INTERVENTIONS PER YEAR (IMAGE T. CLAEYS, AFTER SITE PLAN BY E. ZOGRAFOU & K. NIKOLIA/© EBSA)

Thanks to this new status, Jan assigned me more responsibilities regarding the preservation of the remains on the Kephali hill and introduced me to local key actors and authorities in the field of archaeological site management on Crete. Besides the intrinsic properties briefly presented earlier and common to all Minoan sites, the remains at Sissi are particularly jeopardised by their constant exposure to the aggressive maritime environment: this natural setting accelerates erosion processes and increases the risk of coastal flooding (e.g. storm surge, high waves). In order to mitigate these deterioration processes, the site is provisionally reburied or ‘back-filled’ at the end of every summer campaign. This preventive and temporary conservation method is aimed at re-establishing a stable environment, similar to that which existed prior to the exposure of the remains, to minimise any fluctuations in temperature

and humidity while protecting the remains from the direct effects of water, wind, vegetation, light, animals and humans (Demas 2004: 137). These temporary strategies are necessarily complemented by progressive consolidation interventions in order to durably protect the exposed remains from weathering while ensuring their visibility. These interventions consist mostly in the stabilisation of the rubble walls through mortar repointing, on the one hand, and the capping of the floors, on the other hand. They are carried out during and at the end of each excavation campaign (Fig. 24.3). The interventions comply with international guidelines thanks to the use of a cement-stabilised earth mortar, compatible with the original earth binder not only at chemico-physical and mechanical levels but also at aesthetical and historical levels.

However, these preservation initiatives are only the tip of the iceberg; they are part of a much larger vision: the masterplan. The design and implementation of this masterplan is the ultimate goal of the Sissi Preservation Program<sup>4</sup>. Enhancement measures to improve visitors' experience also need to be planned alongside the masterplan. Questioning Jan about his vision for the future of Sissi always triggers inspiring discussions. Despite being one of the most eminent scholars in the field of Minoan archaeology, Jan is not only interested in addressing his peers but also the laymen, while acknowledging their needs and expectations. He is also very keen on digital technologies. Therefore, proposing visitors an augmented reality experience on the site is one of his innovative ideas for opening the site to visitors in the hopefully near future. Incidentally, in terms of site-presentation strategies, I have been lucky enough that Jan always welcomed my suggestions with an open mind. This was for instance the case when I asked his permission to conduct a pilot study at Sissi the aim of which was to study the spatial behaviour of visitors on the site.<sup>5</sup> This experiment, inspired by Chrystansi's work at Gournia (Chrysanthi *et al.* 2012), intended to track visitors, here students prior to the archaeological campaign in 2018, to pinpoint locations on the site that caught their attention and identify circulation patterns (Fig. 24.4). These visitor-sourced spatial data can then be used to inform the design of meaningful paths contributing not only to the preventive conservation of the site but also acting as a medium for its storytelling.



FIG. 24.4 HEAT MAP SHOWING THE DENSITY OF THE VISITORS' TRACKS ON THE KEPHALI HILL DURING THE EXPERIMENT CONDUCTED IN SUMMER 2018 (IMAGE T. CLAEYS, AFTER AERIAL PHOTO BY N. KRESS/© EBSA)

<sup>4</sup> This plan, currently being prepared by Dr. Stephania Chlouveraki and Theodoros Marinis, will integrate comprehensive studies on the properties and behaviour of the different materials that shape the archaeological remains, a detailed description and graphic documentation of their state of conservation, including a mapping of the observed pathologies, and the identification of their possible causes or sources of damage, an assessment of the significance of the site based on a comprehensive archaeological study, and based on these multidimensional assessments, it will ultimately propose well-informed recommendations for physical preservation interventions.

<sup>5</sup> I am also thankful to the Ephorate of Lassithi for granting me the permission to conduct this field experiment at Sissi.



The Kephali hill still has much to offer from an archaeological perspective, nevertheless the most urgent challenge probably lies in its sustainable preservation. To achieve this goal, it is now widely acknowledged that empowering and engaging the local community in the decision-making process and management of their own heritage is key. There is no doubt that this sustainability will be achieved thanks to Jan's constant dialogue with local stakeholders whether they be authorities, workforce or inhabitants. This core value is another essential lesson Jan has taught me throughout this last decade and that I try to apply in my own PhD research. To conclude this contribution that I hope will be understood as a symbolic token of my gratitude to Jan, I venture to express the following wish: to stay actively involved in the Sissi Archaeological Project I grew up with professionally and personally. This commitment to the sustainable future of the Kephali hill from both an archaeological and conservation perspective would be but a small reciprocation for a huge scholarly and human debt I owe to Jan.

#### 4. From *skalistiri* to *mastarin*: Sissi and the shaping of my Aegeanist side

Louis Dautais<sup>6</sup>

July 2016. Sissi, Crete: it is sweltering hot on the Kephali hill. Under Maud Devolder's guidance, Manolis, Linnéa, Richard, Arnaud, Jacob, Alizée and I have been gradually uncovering the central courtyard of the 'palatial' complex for weeks. This was my first dig outside France and, above all, my first steps in Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology: a dream come true, thanks to Jan. Indeed, a few months earlier, while I was a young undergraduate in archaeology at Montpellier, I had submitted my volunteer application to join the Sarpedon-Sissi Archaeological Project and, with his usual bonhomie, Jan accepted.

Sissi is truly a human adventure, during which you meet dozens of students from Europe, North America and Australia; in other words, it's a cultural melting pot that has given me linguistic freedom, confronting my fears as a French boy juggling bad English and a few shaky sentences in Greek which I had just learnt from my new Cretan friends.

Since then, Sissi has become – by extension – a second home: in addition to the friendships I have made over the years, and the fine-handling of the *skalistiri* in a very compact sediment, I have also taken part in some fruitful collaborations thanks to my integration in the AegIS team (e.g. a poster with Roxane Dubois on '10 years of excavations at Sissi' at the INCAL research days; the organisation of the Scapecon conference at UCLouvain with Thérèse, Jenny, Roxane, Diana, Killian and Daniele). Not to mention starting my PhD thesis under Charlotte Langohr's co-supervision. All this under the watchful eye of Jan, who has always encouraged me to write articles and even reviews (*Sea Peoples Up To Date!*), to give talks internationally, to travel to new fieldwork, to put forward new ideas and intellectual theses and, above all, to live life to the fullest!

It was mainly at Sissi that my PhD project matured, in particular thanks to fruitful discussions with Jan, Charlotte, Maud and Aurore. The materiality of this doctoral research, focusing on the interactions between Egypt and the Aegean world in the Late Bronze Age, found its way to another excavation site in which I am involved – on the other side of the Eastern Mediterranean – at Kom el-Nogous/Plinthine in Egypt (dir. B. Redon, Ifao/CNRS), located on the rocky ridge separating the Lake Mareotis from the Mediterranean Sea. In June 2022, we unearthed more than twenty sherds of a fragmented Aegean transport stirrup jar in a Ramesside rubbish dump (Redon *et al.* 2023: 19). The unpublished preliminary analysis that I have carried out on this vessel would indicate a Cretan origin (Late Minoan IIIB, *i.e.* 13<sup>th</sup> c. BCE)<sup>7</sup>. This discovery further underlines the fertile crossroads between my PhD research and my own fieldwork, between Egypt and Crete. The same *Κρήτη* about which Jan tells us so many stories, and which he allowed us to rediscover to our greatest pleasure, and without tiring of it, as part of what he himself called his 'Final Seminar Tour' last April (Fig. 24.5).

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<sup>7</sup> Only petrographic analyses (in progress at the Ifao, collab. E. Nodarou - INSTAP) will enable us to pinpoint the manufacture region of this large vessel, which bears witness to the trade in oil and/or wine between the island of Crete and North-west Egypt in the 13<sup>th</sup> c. BCE.



FIG. 24.5 WITH ‘THE BOSS’ AT KNOSSOS DURING THE ‘FINAL SEMINAR TOUR’, APRIL 2023 (PHOTO N. DAUBY)

## 5. In search of the ‘lost’ Protopalatial

Roxane Dubois<sup>8</sup>

The Protopalatial is what has linked my professional journey to one of Jan’s many research interests – a topic that he developed in one article in particular (“A Matriloccal House Society in Pre- and Protopalatial Crete?” : Driessen 2012a). I am very proud today to offer some memories on how his passion for Minoans put me on the right track!

I joined the Sissi project in 2015, the year I started my Master’s degree at UCLouvain. I remember it took me no more than one of Jan’s classes on Minoan Archaeology – as a complete newbie in the field – to be convinced that I had found my way with Crete and Minoans, thanks to him! For my Master’s thesis, he therefore proposed that I work on a Protopalatial topic, with a functional study of Quartier Mu at Malia (under the supervision of Charlotte Langohr and Maud Devolder). The Protopalatial period was not well explored yet at Sissi at that time, outside of the cemetery, but he offered that I join the excavations and focus on material and pottery to acquire some ‘hands-on’ experience. Whether by steering me towards this precise thesis subject or by inviting me to join Charlotte’s ‘sherd nerds’ team at the apothiki, Jan clearly fostered my growing fascination for sherds and the brilliant Protopalatial period.

A few days after the start of the excavations in Crete, that same year, it happened that GPR soundings on the north terrace at the summit of the hill – Zone 8 – had just provided good results of what Jan enthusiastically described to me as ‘a possible Quartier Mu at Sissi’. Needless to say, I was ecstatic about this possibility, despite being in the early days of my discovery of this complex period and of the pottery in general; still annoyingly

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This title combines two things that, to me, characterise Jan: his creativity in entitling his papers (and namely here in reference to ‘*Chercher la femme*’ published in 2012); and his favourite ‘kindred spirit’ whatever he says – Indiana Jones (reference to ‘The Raiders of the Lost Ark’).

trying to distinguish a rim sherd from a base one and realising, at the same time, the – almost – inexistence of Kamares/polychrome ware at Sissi. Seeing my enthusiasm, Jan suggested that, in addition to the apothiki, I do a couple of days in the field in the ‘Protopalatial’ zone in order to become more familiar with fieldwork since I’d never excavated in Crete before. His belief that field and material study were deeply linked offered me the chance, afterwards, to improve my understanding regarding the study of ceramic assemblages. Jan told me, when I started my Master’s, that pottery required a long learning period but is a valuable skill to acquire; I have never regretted following his advice.

So far, and after ten intense years of excavations at Sissi, no building is (yet?) comparable in extent and richness to Quartier Mu, with its preserved untouched floors and deposits of Kamares or polychrome Ware. However, Zone 8 has produced other amazing discoveries from all periods and especially the Building HB which, over the years, has yielded thick layers of Protopalatial material. In the framework of my PhD, started in 2019, Jan gave me the chance to undertake the study of Protopalatial pottery from the settlement of Sissi. Even if the deposits are not that numerous, the amount of material is quite significant, and they are – obviously – not stratified nor always homogeneous: a big challenge for a start. Nevertheless, the first results are promising: a MM IIB phase comparable with the Quartier Mu horizon is well attested (in Zone 4: Room 4.5; in Zone 5: Space 5.10, and in Zone 8 preliminarily in Trench 1.1, Rooms 8.10 and 8.20), while a possible MM IIA deposit is currently under study (in Zone 8: Room 8.8).

During discussions with Jan about the Protopalatial at Sissi, one main question has always been: where is the Protopalatial settlement? Where have the primary occupation levels at Sissi gone? And how can we explain this apparent absence, 4 km away from one of the largest Protopalatial palaces and settlements – Malia – and despite the existence of a densely occupied Protopalatial cemetery downhill at Sissi? Jan made me want to better understand the Protopalatial period by starting to study Sissi pottery, but he also pushed me to question the alternative development of two nearby sites like Sissi and Malia. This led me to enlarge my focus from Sissi to the neighbouring sites and then to the whole island, but also to search to nuance the question of an apparent homogeneity *versus* pronounced regionalisms during the Protopalatial period in Crete.

Thanks to his ability to figure out people, as well as his constant support, this is now part of my ongoing research both for my PhD and as pottery specialist for the Sissi Project. It’s a huge source of pride for me to work daily on such an exciting topic, and in a field that Jan has contributed immensely to reinventing through his tireless work and his communicative passion during his entire career. But Jan transmits his fascination not only for the Minoan past, but also for this beautiful island of Crete, its inhabitants and culture. My very first time in Crete in June 2015, while Jan was driving us along the north coast from the airport to Sissi at night, windows open and *κρητικά* music playing on the radio, and obviously so happy to be back for new excavations, I realised how special Crete would be to me too – a feeling that has never left me since then.

## 6. ‘If you like...’ Just say yes

Florence Gaignerot-Driessen<sup>9</sup>

“If you like, you could open a trench there”, Jan told me on 9 July 2007, on the first day of the first excavation season at Sissi, while pointing to the top of the Kephali hill. You need to know that when Jan starts a sentence with “If you like”, it means “just say yes and do it, now”.

I did open a trench on the top of the hill with a small team composed of Simon Jusseret, Thomas Devos, then students at UCLouvain, and Kristian Jacobson, a workman from Vrachasi. Some hours later on the same day, we exposed part of a slab that turned out to form the 1.80 m-long threshold into the main reception hall of the vast Late Bronze Age complex Building CD (Gaignerot-Driessen 2009). The year after, we resumed work in this

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area and notably exposed the walls of a small room (3.8) adjacent to the main hall to the south. On the last day of the 2008 campaign, during the last hour of work, our workman, Giannis Metaxarakis, brought to light in this room a clay tubular stand, lacking the typical multiple handles that would have allowed us to call it a snake-tube, but decorated with three pairs of small horns of consecration around its mouth. We had to wait until the next summer to excavate Room 3.8, which proved to be a small, almost square (2.60 m by 2.09 m) room equipped with a bench, a rectangular stone with two circular depressions, and a triangular slab, and where we unearthed a remarkable assemblage of artefacts: two triton shells, waterworn pebbles, a specialised ground stone set, an inverted conical cup, six *kalathoi* and a second tubular stand – a real ‘snake-tube’ this time (Gaignerot-Driessen 2011).

The specific inventory of artefacts and the association and display of objects clearly suggested that Room 3.8 represented a primary cult context of the Late Minoan IIIB period. The arrangement of the objects around the triangular slab was an indication that the latter was used as a place to display and deposit offerings or to pour libations. This and the other architectural features – the stone with depressions and the bench – suggested that Room 3.8 was designed to accommodate ritual activities connected to a cult. The bench, tubular stands and *kalathoi* recovered from Room 3.8 are typical elements of the so-called ‘bench sanctuaries’ that flourished in Crete in the Late Bronze Age (Prent 2005: 188-192, 424-441). One crucial element, however, was missing to identify Room 3.8 as a bench sanctuary similar to the ones brought to light for instance at the nearby sites of Vronda and Chalasmenos (Gesell 2004; Tsipopoulou 2009): no fragments of large wheel-made female clay figures with upraised arms – which are typically housed in number in LM IIIB-C bench sanctuaries – were recovered from this cultic room or from the rest of the Kephali hill of Sissi, despite intensive exploration.

The absence of such figures was striking and encouraged me to reconsider the typology and evolution of Cretan Postpalatial bench sanctuaries and to question the function and meaning of the ‘Goddesses with upraised arms’. I surveyed the literature and found a series of contexts that contain cultic equipment typical of the Late Minoan IIIB-C bench sanctuaries but lack a figure with upraised arms. I noticed that most of these contexts dated to LM IIIA-B and were found within larger building complexes that have potential communal functions. These complexes contrast with the contexts where the figures with upraised arms are found, which are freestanding public buildings and date to LM IIIB-C. I suggested that this evolution indicated a change in the dynamics of and practices in cult spaces. Within this framework, I reconsidered the figures with upraised arms as emblematic and symbolic representations of votaries within a context of social competition, rather than as cult statues. My ‘goddess period’ had a critical impact in the course of my research and resulted in several articles (*e.g.* Gaignerot-Driessen 2014) and presentations. It started at Sissi, where I was fortunate enough to work under the direction of Jan, who generously let me study and use in my publications the movable material and architecture newly excavated on the hill. No ‘goddesses’ were ever found at Sissi, but the tremendous work that was accomplished in the field, the many books and articles it generated and the highly dynamic AegIS research group that developed around this work is truly exceptional – the achievement of a man who is obviously blessed by ‘the gods’. The love that we all, and I in particular, have for this man is only a pale mirror of it.

If Jan ever tells you “if you like...”, for your own good, don’t wait for the rest of the sentence, just say yes, as I did at Sissi in 2007 and also 23 years ago in Leuven – in a more personal context though. I certainly do not regret it (**Fig. 24.6**).



FIG. 24.6 JAN, DANAË AND MATHIEU AT DREROS, CRETE, IN 2009 (PHOTO F. GAIGNEROT-DRIESEN)

## 7. The lonely song of the *skalistiri* in Zone 6, until...

Simon Jusseret<sup>10</sup>

There is little doubt that Jan's decision to entrust me with the excavation of Zones 6, 7 and 10 at Sissi represents one of the turning points (if not *the* turning point) of my coming-of-age as a field archaeologist. Trained as a geologist with limited prior experience, Jan's trust and patient guidance gave me the necessary confidence to complete the task. Even though the first two years of excavation in Zone 6 (2008-2009) proved rather unexciting by the standards of the other sectors (so much so that Jan decided early on for himself that one daily visit was enough to get a sense of our progress – or lack thereof; **Fig. 24.7**), the situation changed in 2011 with the discovery of the pebble court, *kernoï* and ashlar façade that subsequent excavation campaigns (2015-2019) would eventually associate with a *palataki* (as Jan called it) of sorts – *i.e.* the court-centred building. Supervising the excavation of such a building proved one of the most exhilarating experiences of my career as an archaeologist and put me in the privileged position of first author for two early conference presentations (*AIA Annual Meeting* at Chicago 2014, and San Francisco 2016). It also provided me with all the scientific and organisational tools I needed to take up the challenge of acting as Jan's right arm at Pyla-Kokkinokremos for the excavation campaigns carried out between 2014 and 2017. Though Jan's influence on my research outputs is great (*Minoan Earthquakes* and associated papers in *SRL* and *BSSA* pretty much started where Jan's 1987 paper left off; my interest in the archaeology of the contemporary past must also be connected with his seminars at UCLouvain), his most lasting impact on me undoubtedly lies in the way he cultivated, over the years, my appreciation for the song and feel of the *skalistiri* as it approaches a Minoan floor surface, the beauty of the *kasma* as a tool for both heavy-duty and delicate excavation, the textures and multiple shades of Minoan stratigraphies, the uniqueness of the Cretan landscape and the famed hospitality of its inhabitants. For this, and countless other reasons (see below, point 18), I can only feel gratitude to have been welcomed with open arms, back in June 2006, in Jan's soon-to-be Sissi family.

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FIG. 24.7 SISSI, 2010. JAN'S DAILY VISIT IN ZONE 6 (FEATURING HIS TRADEMARK RESTING POSITION) BEFORE THE DISCOVERY OF THE CENTRAL COURT (PHOTO L. MANOUSOGIANNAKI)

## The important thing is to look in the same direction

Charlotte Langohr<sup>11</sup>

Right from the beginning of our excavations at Sissi, in July 2007, we exposed the most impressive remains of the monumental Late Bronze Age Building CD (*cf.* F. Gaignerot-Driessen, and Q. Letesson, this chapter; *Sissi I*: 113-138; *Sissi II*: 83-141; *Sissi III*: 63-133). Still today, this probably once grandiose building dominates the hill of Kephali, and further, the Aegean Sea to the north, and the Selinari gorge leading to East Crete, to the south-east. With more than 20 ground-floor rooms and spaces chock-full of valuable deposits and massive architectural structures covering an area of about 450 m<sup>2</sup>, Building CD is one of the major Postpalatial edifices of the island, which provides an interesting window on the Late Minoan IIIB period (1300-1190 BCE). Its excavations kept us on our toes until the last campaign in 2019, when some tests were carried out and reached the earlier occupation levels.

I have a very precise memory of a discussion with Jan following the fruitful 2010 campaign, as we prepared our second volume of the preliminary reports on the excavations at Sissi (*Sissi II*). Based on the results of the first four excavation campaigns directed by Florence Gaignerot-Driessen and Quentin Letesson within Building CD, Jan started to explain to me their reconstruction of the possible sub-phasing of this large Postpalatial complex. In essence, the identification of several blockings of internal doorways led them to consider a horizontal stratigraphy<sup>12</sup>, which means that what had appeared to us until then as similar and synchronic floor deposits of LM IIIB date in the

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<sup>12</sup> Rooms occupied in an earlier phase and then blocked and abandoned after a possible earthquake destruction with all their material *in situ*, on the one hand, and concomitant rooms cleaned of their debris after this destruction and reoccupied in a latter phase, on the other, before the final abandonment of the building at the end of the LM IIIB phase.

different unearthed rooms of the building were in fact partly successive in time (*Sissi II*: 83-88). Jan went on to tell me about his spatial and functional approach to the building, which he divided into three distinct areas, two of them being organised around a large, pillared room. Based on the distribution of the evidence related to maintenance, artisanal, and cooking activities, as well as to the consumption of food and drink, he connected one area with the women's domain and the other with the men's zone (Driessen 2017). It was a bit too much new information in one go, especially as it was delivered in Jan's characteristic way, *i.e.* assertively and swiftly, leaving just enough room for a contrary or nuanced opinion, but no more. This hypothesis of a sub-phasing in the occupation of Building CD was not reflected in my preliminary analysis of the ceramic assemblages found on the different floors – there is indeed little evidence of diachronic technical and/or typo-stylistic differences between these deposits. At first, I was speechless, then came back with a few arguments that did not hold much water, while Jan supported his analysis with additional, solid elements. The discussion was a little tense. I was clearly frustrated and a bit unnerved. And then, as always, Jan mellowed and called on one of his many areas of expertise – probably not the best known but one of the most powerful: maieutics. This discussion turned out to be a pivotal point in my research, which opened the way to new results, new collaborations, and several scientific activities.

The LM IIIB phase covers a long time span of about one hundred years (1300-1190 BCE) and, in 2010, with the exception of Chania and Knossos (Hallager 2003; 2011; Hatzaki 2007; see also Kanta 1997), most scholars still consider the entire period as a single phase for lack of both stratigraphic evidence and distinctive developments in the ceramic sequence. This historical phase furthermore remains a blurred episode in Minoan civilisation, as the archaeological data suggest both a time of prosperity, with wealthy and connected settlements, and a troubled period with a series of destructions and abandonments of sites, and population movements (Langohr 2017b; 2020). A main issue is that the unrefined chronological lens through which we look at this period makes little sense of the observed facts and events from either a synchronic or diachronic perspective. It therefore appears that a general reappraisal of the LM IIIB ceramic sequence in the different regions of the island would help a diachronic fine-tuning and a regional understanding of ongoing socio-political transformations. Based on the new results and working hypotheses stemming from the excavation of Building CD at Sissi, Jan encouraged me to organise *in-situ* seminars to show our Sissi assemblages to other ceramic experts and confront our typo-chronological reconstructions of this material, but also an international workshop (2013) in order to address the aforementioned issues and publish the outcome of our discussions (Langohr 2017a).

To this day, as we proceed to the conservation, documentation and study of the last excavated deposits of Building CD, we continue to refine our reconstruction of the ways of life of the inhabitants of Sissi throughout these two LM IIIB sub-phases, by scrutinising the domestic, artisanal, and ritual practices, as well as the exchange networks related to these four or so generations of people. Such contributions certainly shed new light on the organisation of the North-East Cretan region over this century (Langohr 2017c) and, more broadly, on the manifold relationships that linked the Cretan and Mycenaean communities at this time – an area of study that furthermore includes the almost inexhaustible issue of the synchronicity between the Late Minoan IIIB and Late Helladic IIIB phases and its historical implications (Rutter 2022).

Working alongside Jan provides an equally inexhaustible source of research topics and ways to approach them. Many people will tell you that Jan is a man of *ideas*, sometimes regarded as being at odds with the *evidence*. Yet, I know few people with such an encyclopaedic and precise knowledge of the archaeological data that underpin our research works. His studies have admittedly often shaken up and changed the 'consensus paradigms' in many fields of Aegean prehistory (*cf.* Cunningham, this volume). But far from detached from the evidence, Jan's works invite us to make use of greater nuance in our interpretation of the material record. In view of the many new narratives on Cretan Bronze Age societies he has proposed throughout his prolific academic journey, it is therefore up to us to take up the challenge to reassess or complete his sharp readings of the archaeological evidence. I will continue to embrace this challenge with enthusiasm, through the study of the plentiful ceramic assemblages of Sissi, now that Jan has sketched out all the outlines of this fascinating and prolific site – thanks to the joint efforts of a wonderful team of colleagues. Despite the sad obstacles that have recently been placed in our way, I am driven by the feeling that the important thing is to continue to look in the same direction. To pursue our goal of making

sense collectively of the Sissi materials through their preservation, documentation, examination and publication, always invigorated by the contemplation of the powerful Cretan mountains on our return to the island every summer (**Fig. 24.8**).



FIG. 24.8 THE KEPHALI HILL AT SISSI, JULY 2015, JAN AND CHARLOTTE LOOKING AT THE SELENA MOUNTAINS (PHOTO R. DUBOIS)

## 8. Years of Fieldwork. And Beyond, ...

Quentin Letesson<sup>13</sup>

In 2007, Sissi was the second Bronze Age Cretan site I had the fortune to excavate thanks to Jan who first brought some of his students to Palaikastro in 2003. When the SARpedon project started, I had just finished my PhD and embarked on this first season with an exhilarating sense of freedom and the naïve misconception that I had nothing left to prove. Little did I know that fieldwork on the Kephali hill would be both archaeologically challenging and intellectually stimulating. These excavations would forever imprint on me an enduring love for fieldwork but would also fuel my thoughts about archaeological practice and epistemology. During the first five-year term of the excavations, Jan's guidance was instrumental. The remarks or suggestions he made when he checked on the area under my supervision taught me more about excavation strategy and logic than any textbook could ever have done. He was benevolent – often presenting firm suggestions in the guise of innocuous questions – and open-minded – always willing to let me come to grips with the contexts I uncovered on my own terms. At first, I did not believe Jan was particularly trying to teach me anything, he was merely making observations and thinking out loud as he was trying to make sense of things as remains and deposits started to pop out. Now, I realise that, consciously or not, he was a maieutic expert. He trusted and exhorted us, guided our struggle with stratigraphical difficulties and tricky depositional processes, rarely enunciated facts and let us build our understanding as we excavated. He was not particularly patient though and could also hammer a suggestion with more or less subtlety if he truly wanted something to be done. His approach as field director was, for me, a crash course in effective leadership. At the end of the 2011, Building CD was almost fully excavated under Florence Gaignerot-Driessen's and my supervision. This building, its layout and assemblages, were a first test-bed for the ideas of communal activities, collective practices and social gatherings that Jan and I had started to explore together in around 2008 (**Fig. 24.9**).

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Between 2013 and 2019, the SARpedon project had clearly picked up steam. The smallish team – *ca.* 30 individuals initially – then often enlisted more than 100 collaborators (workmen, MA and PhD students, paleo-environmental specialists, pottery specialists, conservators, architects, topographers, zone supervisors, *etc.*). In 2017, when all the areas surrounding Building CD were almost fully excavated, I negotiated with Jan that I would no longer work as a trench supervisor but would help him to keep an eye on all the trenches while being dispatched – by him – as workman to the areas that required careful and/or swift excavation. I think that, then, Jan sensed that I really needed a break from supervision and granted me my wish. This was, in earnest, the best excavation season I had ever had in my life, on Crete or elsewhere. Excavating all day long, in various areas and contexts, interacting with different trench supervisors as we discussed what was going on, the physical exhaustion and the intimate and inextricable dialogue between the digging craft and the thinking cap were my drug for these six wonderful weeks. Unfortunately, this did not last! In 2018 and 2019, Jan decided that the west wing of the court-centred building needed some additional work (after Thérèse Claeys moved to Zone 8 and Simon Jusseret sadly left archaeology). His decision, as often, turned out to be a very good one as it allowed me to uncover, while looking for a potential West Court, the remains of a Prepalatial hamlet that I also excavated in 2022, the first year of the current five-year term. Again, these EM IIA remains triggered reflections and put into perspective ideas and processes to which Jan and I had alluded in various papers following his key focus on House Society as a loose lens through which to achieve a better understanding of Cretan Bronze Age social organisation.

All these years at Sissi deepened my love for archaeology and Jan played a major role in inoculating the virus in me. Not his virus though. Although I have a strong interest in – and had a long-term commitment to – Minoan archaeology, the archaeology I dig – pun intended – and love to dissect along its methodological, epistemological and ontological seams, knows few temporal or geographical borders and was also deeply influenced by scholars like Laurent Olivier or Carl Knappett whom I also originally met thanks to Jan. Now that various unfortunate events force me to move away from archaeology – probably for good, I realise that, way more importantly than all of the above, being a team member at Sissi and in AegIS also led me to meet Ophélie and, a few years later, to welcome our son Finn into our family. There is absolutely no gift greater than these! I owe you Jan, for that and all the rest. Rest assured that our friendship will endure wherever my diverted path leads me.



FIG. 24.9 BUILDING CD AT SISSI, JULY 2010, JAN AND QUENTIN FACING A TEST IN ROOM 4.7 (PHOTO L. MANOUSOGIANNAKI)

## 9. A word of admiration and gratitude

Iro Mathioudaki<sup>14</sup>

During the years of my studies at the University of Athens, Jan Driessen's name was one of the few often mentioned during lectures, especially those concerning the Minoan world. In the community of postgraduate students, we were all acquainted with Jan's stimulating papers, which proceed further with new questions and new interpretations of data, and we admired his ability to synthesise diverse archaeological data and put them into context. During informal discussions, thinking of scholars who have produced the most in literature, Jan's name was always at the top. And that was before his name was associated with the Minoan site of Sissi; before his digging and management of the extensive work involved in this well-known Minoan excavation.

In 2017, I was invited by Charlotte and Jan to study the Neopalatial pottery assemblages from Sissi. This came as a great honour to me coming from a Central Cretan perspective to add to an East Cretan one. This collaboration also came with the opportunity to join Jan's AegIS research group, particularly active among the Aegeanists. I gratefully joined in and have shared the team's goals to the present day. For a ceramologist, Sissi is a dream site, being well excavated with the most updated methodologies and offering the opportunity to study pottery in closed contexts and conduct a thorough quantitative analysis of data. It became more and more evident that this was one of the rare occasions of having a complete Neopalatial sequence with several assemblages, many of which belong to the occupational phase of one of the most recently excavated *palatakia* on Crete. The large pottery deposits from the Neopalatial period at Sissi, covering two hundred years of its history, provided me with a unique opportunity to study, in a comprehensive way, the patterns of stylistic and technological similarity and difference between Minoan settlements and to explore the sociopolitical mechanisms underlying these (*cf.* Mathioudaki 2021).

Despite the fact that Jan was never formally one of my teachers, I feel that I have been taught by him a great deal about Minoan Crete through his writings, his comments at seminars and through discussions, and I feel a deep sense of gratitude to him for this. His support has enabled me to continue working at the site of Sissi and thus pursuing my scholarly goals until the present day.

## 10. If you wanna deal with Linear B, you gotta learn taphonomy!

Ophélie Mouthuy<sup>15</sup>

My first forays into the past were in the world of Classics. I transitioned into archaeology when Jan subtly nudged me to study the Linear B tablets from the Northern Entrance Passage at Knossos (NEP) for my PhD, a topic he was most certainly very nostalgic about. But, my first true contact with the nitty-gritty of Minoan archaeology happened at Sissi where I was driven by the secret hope of finding Linear B tablets. I am deeply grateful for Jan's decision to strategically assign me the excavation area with the greatest potential for that. He indeed suggested that I take under my responsibility the East Wing of the small court-centred Neopalatial building at Sissi. This zone is on the opposite side of the hill from the LM III Building CD, where the only Linear B inscribed label was found, and far away from the two main entrances to the *palataki* (north and south-west) where archives are often discovered in other palatial buildings such as Knossos or Pylos. My quest for Linear B tablets was not very successful! I must confess, however, that Jan's decision, as always, turned out to be extremely helpful (**Fig. 24.10**). The East Wing, especially in its southern part, is particularly poorly preserved. Located at the edge of the hill, the area suffered badly from erosion and confronted us with intricate and jumbled remains. Making sense of them was a daunting task, especially because it was the very first area I had had under my supervision. There, I had to learn to take advantage of the slightest piece of information to try to understand the internal organisation of the wing and the various depositional processes responsible for its archaeological assemblages. I struggled quite a bit but under Jan's guidance and constant feedback, things got progressively a tad less blurry. But, perhaps

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more importantly, this exercise in observation, iterative questioning and hypotheses debunking which was my daily routine for three excavation seasons was of a tremendous help for writing the part of my PhD that dealt with depositional processes and archaeological contexts. The NEP at Knossos is indeed also a very complex area where information on taphonomy had to be gathered from various sources (old photographs, notebooks, daybooks, *etc.*) dating from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I truly believe that honing my archaeological eye at Sissi was key to preparing myself to approach the NEP, a red thread to follow so to speak. Jan certainly knew it too although he might say otherwise. Without his initial decision, who knows? I could still be lost in the Labyrinth.



FIG. 24.10 OPHÉLIE EXPRESSING HER GRATITUDE TO JAN IN 2018 (PHOTO N. THANOS)

## 11. Stepping stones on a journey into the past

Killian Regnier<sup>16</sup>

A few years have passed since a dreamy student attended the Greek Archaeology classes of ‘Professor Jan Driessen’ at UCLouvain and needless to say that his wide range of topics had a particular emphasis on the Bronze Age, which was bound to ignite the curiosity of aspiring archaeologists. This is why, when the opportunity to participate in excavations at the Minoan site of Sissi arose, my initial hesitation quickly faded away; and there I was, a few months later, embarking on my very first overseas archaeological experience.

This first Sissi excavation meant much more to me than just an experience abroad; it also turned out to be the largest educational field trip I had ever been on. The repeated six-week seasons were a complete immersion into the archaeological world, each day bringing its own stories. The many interactions and hands-on experiences

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taught me the delicate balance required between patience and precision, to handle and record the fine layers of Cretan soil. Of course, beyond the fieldwork itself, this was also the time when I discovered the invaluable Greek culture and when I formed lasting friendships with people who shared the same passion for unraveling the past. These weeks at Sissi were not only a time of academic growth but also a great period of personal enrichment.

Moreover, with its extensive multidisciplinary team and wealth of archaeological findings, the project could allow everyone to pursue their own scientific passions. In my case, my interest was quickly drawn to the essential stone house implements offering invaluable insights into the daily life of ancient people. And when the time of my Master's thesis arrived, Jan introduced me to Christina Tsoraki, the Sissi specialist in ground stone objects, allowing me to delve deeper into this field of research. Since then, an exciting PhD has begun, built on the archaeological and human foundations that Jan and the Sissi team provided.

This is how, from the outset, Jan's invaluable mentorship and guidance, which not only kept sparking my love for Minoans but also opened doors to incredible opportunities, have acted as the "stepping stones" on a scientific journey which, hopefully, is still in its early stages!

## 12. Following Ariadne's Thread

Tia Sager<sup>17</sup>

At the kind request of Jan, I had the opportunity of excavating the newly designated Zone 18 at Sissi from 2017-2019 (*Sissi V*: 63-108), where we expected to find the continuation of the Neopalatial domestic quarter (Zone 2) to the west (*Sissi I*: 95-111; *Sissi II*: 69-82; *Sissi III*: 53-61).. Instead, we found a second cemetery area at the centre of which was Building M. Over the course of three years, we made many exciting discoveries, the most significant of which were multiple primary and secondary burials within the area. The most noteworthy of these burials was a primary cist burial containing the remains of a (likely) female skeleton<sup>18</sup> buried with several grave goods including a bronze mirror, a gold necklace and other adornments, small ivory objects, and several small ceramic vessels (*Sissi V*: 77-84). It was thanks to Jan's suggestion to continue excavating a small cist (Space 18.2) within Building M that we made this discovery in the final days of the excavation in 2019. While our team had originally thought that we would stop excavating this space as we had reached the bottom of an intact primary burial, Jan had an inclination that there would be an exciting discovery lying just below the surface we had exposed, and he urged us to continue with our excavation. He was indeed right, as just several centimetres below the last layer, we began to glimpse an extraordinary burial that was, until that time, unique at Sissi (**Fig. 24.11**). Over the course of four days at the very end of the 2019 season we excavated this exceptional burial from sunrise to sunset until the entirety of the contents had been carefully photographed, labelled, and extracted. Jan stayed with us for the full fifteen-hours each day, helping to document and photograph each of the small finds that we would remove with great care, and to make sure that we were staying hydrated. This exceptional discovery was a collaborative effort and would not have been possible without a specialised team of anthropologists, who at Jan's request, lent their expertise to the excavation of the cemetery within Zone 18 (**Fig. 24.12**).

In discussions with Jan about the context of this burial within the larger Building M, it became apparent that this space that we had initially called a 'compartment' was likely a later addition within the larger main room of Building M. Jan's discerning eye was able to perceive that what we had characterised as compartment walls was instead possibly the lining of a cist dug out to hold this burial within the larger room in which it was found. It became clear to me that the relationship between archaeological objects, human remains, and the architectural context in which they are often found, can be more complex than may first meet the eye. I realised to what extent field experience, as well as discussions with experienced mentors such as Jan, is required to be able to eventually interpret this complex relationship. I am grateful to Jan for always taking the time to foster such experiences and to discuss archaeological contexts at length with his students and colleagues.

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<sup>18</sup> Final results pending DNA analysis.

The experience of excavating at Sissi and being part of a large team of international scholars has influenced my research in many ways. By allowing me to become familiar with the architecture and objects in the field, my understanding of archaeological processes and ancient objects has developed exponentially. My current doctoral dissertation project, *The Poetics and Politics of Space: a regional analysis of the Cretan Final Palatial and Postpalatial built environment* (University of Toronto), explores Late Bronze Age architecture on Crete by means of space syntax analysis and phenomenological approaches in combination with more traditional architectural analysis. This project has been influenced by the work of Jan, who remains one of the foremost experts of Minoan architecture. Jan's methodological approaches to the built environment as an active entity (Relaki & Driessen 2020) constructed by and for the people who occupied it millennia ago, as well as his considerations of the roles of gender and identity (Driessen 2012b) within the built environment have greatly impacted my own work on circulation and social relationships within the architectural sphere. Additionally, Jan's work on crisis architecture (Driessen 1995: 63-88) during periods of transition (such as the transition between the end of the Neopalatial period to the start of the Final Palatial period) has also been valuable to my understanding of transformation processes and the impetus for change in Minoan society. Finally, the excavations at Sissi have allowed me to collaborate with other members of the AegIS team. The work of Jan's former student and now colleague, Dr. Quentin Letesson, has influenced my own in numerous ways, through the incorporation of methodological and theoretical perspectives such as space syntax to the study of Late Bronze Age Cretan architecture (Letesson 2009). More broadly, the incredibly rich experiences I have had in the field at Sissi have allowed me to approach archaeological remains from new perspectives, and to raise questions that I never thought to ask. Because of the nature of the architectural remains in Zone 18, I have become very interested in rebuilding and modification processes within Bronze Age architecture. My current dissertation project addresses rebuilding, modification, and reuse at various scales on Crete in order to understand how architecture changes and adapts to functional needs as well as stylistic desires. In the future, I am interested in exploring the various ways in which adaptation and reuse can be documented throughout the Eastern Mediterranean, and what large-scale patterns of new construction, rebuilding *versus* reuse and modification can tell us about the socio-economic and political situation of the Late Bronze Age to Iron Age transition. Without the field experiences at Sissi, the various ideas that I am currently interested in exploring in my research on Late Bronze Age architecture on Crete would never have come to fruition. I am grateful to Jan and to the AegIS team for fostering an active research forum both through the excavations at Sissi and through the AegIS workshops at Louvain, through which many young researchers have been able to gain their proficiency and inspire future generations of scholars.



FIG. 24.11 JAN AND FLORENCE DRIESSEN INSPECTING THE GOLD BEADS FROM THE BURIAL OF THE 'LADY OF SISSI' IN BUILDING M (18.2) (PHOTO T. SAGER).



FIG. 24.12 JAN FIGHTING THE WINDS, DETERMINED TO PROVIDE THE ANTHROPOLOGISTS WITH SHADE AT ANY COST DURING THE EXCAVATION OF THE BURIAL IN BUILDING M AT SISSI, WHILE TIA LAUGHS (PHOTO N. KRESS)

### 13. The King and I

Pepi Saridaki<sup>19</sup>

It was 2014 when I first met Jan Driessen and started to work as the Chief Conservator of the Sissi Project. To be frank, I was very scared and anxious, mainly because I felt I needed to prove to him my skills in just a few days and of course when ‘the Boss’ did turn up to review my first two days’ efforts, I was still worried. Yet I should not have been because he calmed me with kind words and support. From that moment, I realised I wasn’t under the eye of a strict, uncompromising boss, but in fact someone who believed in trust and clearly, on a working basis, stressed the importance of close collaboration and, with that, the prospect of initiatives. As if to prove this, he prepaid me for my efforts and returned to Belgium the next day. What else could you ask for? Yes OK, lots of challenges, and there have been many!

The opportunities offered to me by Jan via the Sissi Project have included working with a wide range of ancient material and just as importantly the many opportunities to work with specialists. If nothing else, they have helped to improve my skills and knowledge and have further deepened my understanding of archaeology. But above all, stressing that learning never stops, thus ensuring that I needed to study more, not only about conservation techniques, but importantly coming to terms with ancient ceramic technology – the theoretical and practical aspects.

Jan is a man who has constantly shown during the Sissi Project his trust and respect for the work that both myself and colleagues in conservation are doing (**Fig. 24.13**). Thank you, Jan!

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<sup>19</sup> Chief conservator for the Sissi Archaeological Project.



FIG. 24.13 JAN PHOTOGRAPHING THE GOLD NECKLACE OF THE ‘LADY OF SISSI’ JUST AFTER PEPI COMPLETED ITS CONSERVATION (PHOTO P. SARIDAKI)

## 14. From Apothiki’s Notebooks

Evgenia Tsafou<sup>20</sup>

It is impossible to work in Aegean archaeology without knowing Jan’s name and work. He is deservedly one of the leading archaeologists in Minoan archaeology and has guided and inspired a whole generation of Aegean archaeologists. His academic accomplishments and scientific work in archaeology are well known among scholars, but also to the public. This small text on the occasion of his retirement does not aspire to mention in detail his educational, research and writing work but it acts as my personal testimony in knowing, working and collaborating with him.

Our collaboration began in 2016 when Jan trusted me with an ambitious project to organise all the excavated material from Sissi, and transport it to the new storerooms for the excavation in Hagios Nikolaos, which also needed to be organised from scratch. Since the first day, when he showed me all the Sissi findings and the archaeological site, his commitment and passion for the work being carried out at Sissi were obvious, and acted as significant factors in the completion of this project. This challenging project was an important work experience for me, and good training for the forthcoming PhD, but also introduced me to Jan’s extraordinary work at the Sissi excavations and led me to my true interest in Minoan archaeology.

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Since then, during my involvement in the excavations at Sissi, I have experienced unique excavation campaigns under Jan's direction, working in the apothiki as an apothiki manager (Fig. 24.14). The high-quality archaeological work, and interaction between many different highly experienced scholars, young scholars and students from all around the world, creates an academic environment full of archaeological discussions, exchanged practices, thoughts and concerns, which becomes an important experience for anyone wishing to become a researcher. The scientific exchange during the excavations, and Jan's encouragement to young researchers to continue with research, led me to start my PhD at UCLouvain. The study of the cooking vessels from Sissi was a great experience that has shaped my development as a researcher and I am grateful to Jan and Charlotte for this opportunity.



FIG. 24.14 SISSI APOTHIKI. EXCAVATION CAMPAIGN, 2016. JAN HAVING A MEETING WITH CHARLOTTE AND JENNY (PHOTO G. MACGUIRE)

Lastly, I would like to mention Jan's contribution to the job of archaeologist, which was obvious to me during our collaboration. It is worth noting that the excavation campaigns had many archaeologists and many local people working on them, making the campaigns more than significant research work, but also a great local event for the Sissi and Vrachasi villages, much awaited each summer as something like an annual celebration. The involvement of the local community in the reality of an excavation campaign and the atmosphere of appreciation of our work as archaeologists were established thanks to Jan's work in the area for many years. Moreover, Jan's dedication and integrity to preserve the archaeological material and the site in the best possible condition and to deliver this cultural legacy to the Greek state and to the Greeks, alongside his work as Director of the Belgian School at Athens where he went far beyond his demanding administrative role, not only reinforcing Belgian archaeological research in Greece, but also promoting Belgian-Greek friendship, make him, through the eyes of a Greek, a true modern 'philhellene'.

While your retirement, Jan, marks a significant milestone in your career, I have no doubt you will carry on working on Sissi, Minoan archaeology and Greek culture, and that you will continue to inspire us with your extraordinary work!



## 15. Peopling Minoan archaeology

Christina Tsoraki<sup>21</sup>

It was sometime in the mid 2000s when I first met Jan: it was just after he had examined a doctoral thesis at the Department of Archaeology in Sheffield, and we had all gone to the pub to celebrate the successful result of the examination. What really struck me that evening was how approachable Jan was; it was so easy for the conversation to flow between friendly jokes and serious archaeological discussions. I later came to realise that this is truly who Jan is: someone with a great sense of humour and an impressive depth of knowledge of (and love for) Minoan archaeology. In 2010 Jan invited me to work on the stone objects from the Sissi Archaeological Project and the journey of our collaboration-turned-friendship officially began. Jan was more than happy to entrust a young researcher, who was just embarking on the analysis of Minoan stone objects, with the study of the whole stone assemblage - not just the ‘dull’ querns, but also the more ‘elaborate’ stone vases - and thanks to his open mindedness my journey with the Sissi team began. Since then, Jan has supported my research in multiple ways, offering me numerous opportunities to collaborate with the AegIS research group, but more importantly he, together with Florence, have welcomed me in their home both in Leuven and in Vrachasi (and shared their raki!) in multiple occasions. For that I will be for ever grateful!

I vividly remember discussing early on with Jan the need for Minoan archaeology to focus more on the ‘peopling’ of the numerous Minoan buildings, or what Jan called in a subsequent publication the ‘in-house relationships’ (Driessen 2017). And that was one of the questions I have been exploring through the analysis of different forms of stone objects and in particular grinding tools at Sissi (Tsoraki 2012).. Drawing upon ethnographic research, the distribution of grinding toolkits within domestic/household contexts can provide inferences about the structure of the social units (*e.g.* nuclear family, extended) residing in domestic structures.

At Sissi, more than 60 upper (*i.e.* grinders) and lower (*i.e.* grinding slabs/querns) grinding tools, fashioned mostly from sedimentary orthoquartzite, sandstone and metamorphic quartzite, have been recorded to date. Grinding tools have been unearthed from different structures including the Neopalatial Building BC and the LM IIIB Building CD, suggesting that grinding activities were among the main activities taking place in the excavated architectural structures during the different periods of habitation. More than 30 upper and lower grinding tools derive from Building CD alone. The spatial distribution of grinding tools in this building suggests that a range of spaces were linked to the use and storage of grinding implements (Tsoraki 2012), with a skewed distribution, however, observed in the rooms located in the southern part of the building (Hall 4.11 and surrounding spaces). This pattern is mirrored in the distribution of other stone tools such as multiple-use grinding/pounding tools that may have also been used for plant-processing activities among others. No differences are observed in the size, morphology or wear traces of the grinding tools associated with different parts of Building CD, indicating a similar function for all grinding tools found in the building. While no functional variation has been noted between the northern and southern part of Building CD, the increased presence of grinding tools in the southern part, however, may suggest a higher intensity/frequency of grinding tasks taking place there. Moreover, while a fixed grinding installation was identified in Room 4.8 (*Sissi II*: 114, fig. 5.40), all other grinding tools tend to have a more portable character (average size of complete examples *ca.* 39 cm in length and 12 kg in weight). The portable character of the grinding implements would have allowed for more flexibility in the way grinding activities were performed, potentially offering greater opportunities for socialisation.

Recently, Jan (Driessen 2017) has argued that a gendered division of space is represented in Building CD with the large Hall 4.11 and the surrounding rooms being associated with female activities. This was based partly on the distribution of grinding tools. Indeed, ethnographic research of small-scale agricultural societies has shown that food-processing activities are regularly performed by female actors with a strong correlation present between the number of querns in a household and the number of women residing in a house, with each woman expected to

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have her own quern (*e.g.* Searcy 2011; Hamon & Le Gall 2013; Robitaille 2016). That such gendered associations may have existed in prehistoric societies are alluded to by prehistoric burial practices (*e.g.* Tsoraki 2021), and integrated studies of activity markers on prehistoric skeletal remains and grinding tools (*e.g.* Sadvari *et al.* 2015). Yet, ethnographic examples also highlight that gendered divisions of activities between male and female can be illusory to some extent and in fact activities are often more complementary in nature than they appear at first glance. For instance, in the case of Maya communities, the life cycle of grinding tools (metates) is inextricably linked to both men and women: while Maya women are in charge of maize processing and the metates are regarded as female property, the metates are produced by men (metateros), who learnt to carve stone as young boys (*ca.* 10-12 years old) through their fathers (patrilineal knowledge transmission) (Searcy 2011). Examples such as this bring to the fore the tangled web of relationships entailed in different social processes and activities, including in the so-called ‘maintenance activities’ (González-Marcén *et al.* 2008: 3; Driessen 2017: 88) and call for a more flexible approach to the way we attribute gendered roles in the past. At Sissi, gendered divisions of spaces is an important topic that requires further collaborative thought and exploration. And I truly hope I will have the chance to discuss this with Jan and the rest of the Sissi team over one or more glasses of raki in the years to come!

## 16. Impressions beyond glyptic

Diana Wolf<sup>22</sup>

I joined the Sissi team a bit ‘late to the party’, only in 2018 after having seen Jan’s presentation of the excavation at the 2016 Cretological Congress in Heraklion. Two things struck me in his presentation, and most intriguingly, it was neither the in itself highly interesting archaeological site on the Kephali, nor its attractive location in between two charming beaches. Rather, I was fascinated by the scale of the project: the number of specialists and volunteers involved, and the high level of professionalism, be it in the field, the apothiki or in the lab. What is more, Jan’s presentation at the congress conveyed in a genuine and engaging way the impression of a successful cooperation on both a professional and personal level. Following his presentation, I realised that I could learn a lot from this professor and his team; an assertion that came true when I was fortunate enough to be invited to join the Sissi Project.

I was introduced to Jan and the team as a mentee of Maria Anastasiadou, the project’s seal specialist, and my own interest in Minoan glyptic was encouraged by the entire ‘omada’ and by Jan, who would personally call me to any seal finds on site and ask my opinion. He gave me the opportunity to study the Sissi seals and thus gain first-hand experience with this material group. This set an important basis for my PhD research on Late Minoan soft-stone seals conducted under his supervision at UCLouvain. Following the discovery of an outstanding lentoid seal cut in lapis lacedaemonius in 2018, he encouraged me to write an extensive article on the seal and its significance for Late Bronze Age Sissi. This research has revealed interesting ideological and socio-political links between Final Palatial Sissi and other Cretan sites, and has served me as a methodological case-study for investigating seals not only as an isolated object group but in their larger, social contexts in Late Bronze Age Crete. Jan’s relentless interest in and knowledge of an extensive range of topics relevant to Minoan archaeology, as well as his encouragement and active support as a mentor, have stimulated my research, enabling me to integrate a broader scope of questions and trajectories. For this I would like to thank him.

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## 17. An Anthropology of Jan through Cretan Vessels

Hannah Joris<sup>23</sup>

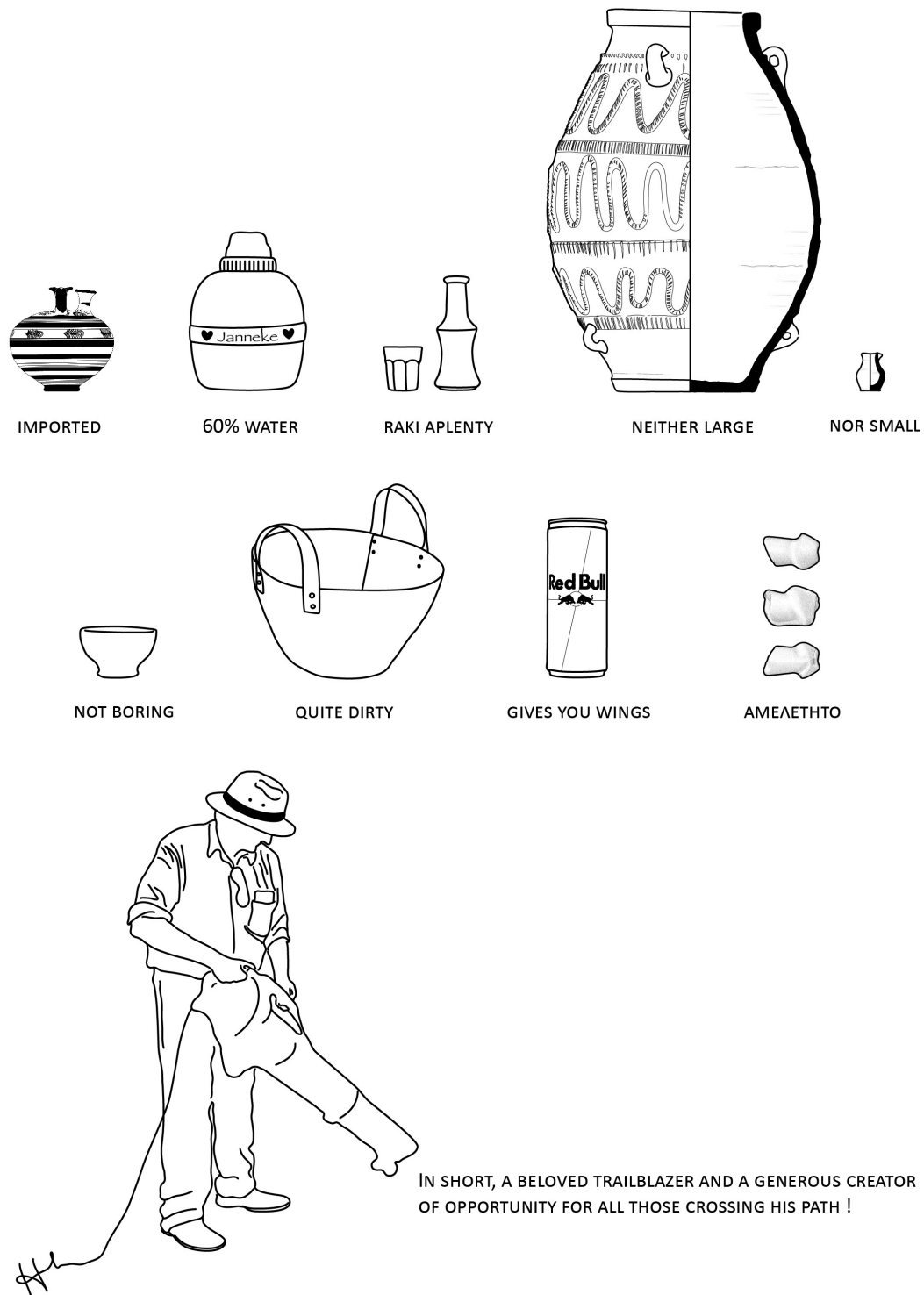


FIG. 24.15 AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF JAN THROUGH CRETAN VESSELS (DRAWING H. JORIS)

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