

PHILISTOR

Studies in Honor of Costis Davaras





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Eleni Mantzourani and Philip P. Betancourt



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List of Abbreviations

ASCSA	American School of Classical Studies at Athens	km	kilometer
cm	centimeter	L.	length
dia.	diameter	LBA	Late Bronze Age
dim.	dimension	LC	Late Cycladic or Late Cypriot
EBA	Early Bronze Age	LH	Late Helladic
EM	Early Minoan	LM	Late Minoan
EN	Early Neolithic	LN	Late Neolithic
FAF	folded-arm figurine	m asl	meters above sea level
gr	gram	m	meter
h.	height	MACFA	macroscopic ceramic fabric analysis
HM	Herakleion Archaeological Museum	max.	maximum
HNM	Hagios Nikolaos Archaeological Museum	MHS	Minoan Hall System
HTR	Hagia Triada	MM	Middle Minoan
kg	kilogram	MN	Middle Neolithic

MNI	minimum number of individuals	th.	thickness
pers. comm.	personal communication	w.	width
pers. obs.	personal observation	wt.	weight
pres.	preserved	XRF	X-ray fluorescence
RM	Archaeological Museum of Rethymnon		



The Neopalatial “Farmhouse” at Kephali Lazana, Chondros Viannou, Re-examined

Giorgos Vavouranakis

Introduction

In 1960, Nikolaos Platon excavated an architectural complex at the site of Kephali Lazana, located outside the village of Chondros Viannou (Platon 1960).^{*} He interpreted the finds as the remains of a farmhouse, dated to the Middle Minoan (MM) IIIB–Late Minoan (LM) IA period after the dark-on-light pottery found at the site. In 2004, Eleni Mantzourani, the author, and Chrysanthos Kanellopoulos conducted new fieldwork at the site, which was part of a research project that examined several Neopalatial buildings in East Crete, namely Achladia, Epáno Zakros, Klimataria, Zou, Prophetes Elias Praisou, Kephali Lazana, Rousses, Makrygialos, and Azokeramos. The project focused on three main aspects of Neopalatial architecture—its form, function, and significance. Regarding form, a new field examination of the

nine buildings resulted in revised state ground plans, new isometric plans, and numerous observations on design and layout. The project also examined building techniques and materials, as well as morphological characteristics, such as walls at right angles, cut-stone features, pier-and-door partitions, and other features. The examination of the use of space was based on the published reports. Finally, the physical and social milieu (e.g., visibility in the landscape, relation to settlement) of each case study were also examined. The ultimate

^{*} It is an honor to contribute to Professor C. Davaras’s festschrift. This paper is a small token of appreciation for his monumental work in East Crete, both research and curatorial, which set the basis for so much and so fruitful archaeological activity.

aim was to determine the social significance of these buildings and, specifically, to understand whether they are examples of Minoan villas or not.

The villas are best described as both an architectural type, such as McEnroe's (1982) house types 1 and 2, as well as a social phenomenon that occupies a place between the palaces and the average houses (type 3) and households (Hägg, ed., 1997). Such a broad characterization includes a great number of diverse edifices. Despite several attempts to further divide the villas into princely, residential, and "domanial" categories (van Effenterre and van Effenterre 1997) or country, manorial, and urban

buildings (Betancourt and Marinatos 1997), there is no research consensus on a final list of features and functions, and, hence, their social role is still under debate. This debate becomes more intense when one turns to the villa candidates of East Crete, namely edifices from the nine case studies of our project, which are less known and lack the finesse of their Central Cretan counterparts (cf. Platon 1997; Tsipopoulou and Papacostopoulou 1997). The present paper presents new field data from the unpublished and little-known building at Kephali Lazana, so as to place it within the above debate.

State of Preservation

Kephali Lazana is poorly preserved, perhaps due to an earthquake that, according to the excavator (Platon 1960, 282), destroyed the building since many of the walls were found shaken off their original foundation. Platon suggested that many of the best-hewn blocks had been robbed off the walls and used in the construction of the LM III complex of the nearby Kephala and also for the building of *metochia* in the recent past (Platon 1960). The

place has suffered from weathering and erosion, which has had a decisive and destructive impact on several stone heaps that had been left in the place of actual walls. In many cases, the course of walls could barely be traced by their foundation imprints during the excavation of the site.

Today it is impossible to determine most of its layout, especially the central, southern, and south-eastern parts, and its ground plan is inevitably

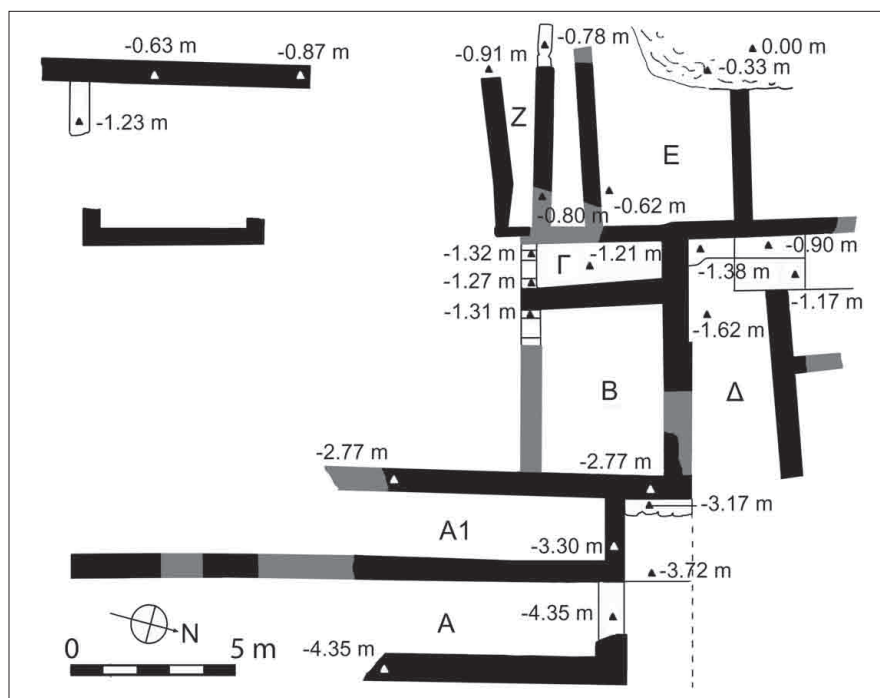


Figure 27.1. Ground plan of the building at Kephali Lazana. Existing walls in black; assumed or probable walls in gray; cut-stone features in outline (adapted from Platon 1960, 284, fig. 1; courtesy of L. Platon).

incomplete (Fig. 27.1). The walls are preserved to the height of one or two courses of blocks, or 0.20–0.50 m on average. Only the walls of the west part of space Δ—in other words the north wall of room Γ, the east wall of space E, and the west part of the north wall of space Δ, including a rectangular

construction at its west corner opposite room Γ—are preserved to a maximum height of 0.95–1.05 m. Nevertheless, most walls illustrated by Platon (1960, 284, fig. 1) are traceable today, with the exception of the monolithic thresholds of rooms B and Γ, which are not visible today.

Design and Construction

Design and Layout

The fragmentary state of Kephali Lazana does not allow a complete examination of its design. There may have been more rooms to the northwest of spaces Δ and E and to the west of room Z and space E (Platon 1960, 284–285). On the other hand, such rooms might have belonged to a different architectural unit, like the wall of the so-called House B next to House A at Achladia (Platon 1997; Mantzourani and Vavouranakis 2005a). Alternatively, the area north and west of the main complex at Kephali Lazana was a series of auxiliary open-air spaces and enclosures, as indicated by the cobbled floor of space E, similar to rooms A, Θ, and O of the building at Zou (Platon 1955, 1956).

Despite such shortcomings, it is possible to delineate the limits of a main architectural unit of Kephali Lazana. The north (room A) and south entrances to the building are on the two diagonally juxtaposed corners of a roughly square area, measuring 20.30 m x approximately 20 m or at least 400 m², about the size of the largest of McEnroe's type 1 and 2 houses (McEnroe 1982, 19, table 2). The dimensions of Kephali Lazana are equal to a grid of about 70 x 70 Minoan feet of 0.29 m each, which falls between Graham's (1972, 222–229) and Preziosi's (1983, 13–15) estimations of the Minoan foot, respectively 0.3036 m and 0.2750 m (for imprecision in Minoan measurements, see Bianco 2003; Mantzourani, Vavouranakis, and Kanellopoulos 2005). The grid, however, would exclude the threshold at the north end of the middle wall of room Z, space Δ, and part of space E. Alternatively, it is possible to distinguish three zones in the design of Kephali Lazana: the easternmost zone 1 of rooms A and A1; the middle zone 2 of rooms B, Γ, and space Δ; and the westernmost zone 3 of room Z and space E. Nevertheless, the zones are not of equal width: zone

1 is 7.10 m, zone 2 is 7.30 m, and zone 3 is 5.90 m. If the area of room Z is added to zone 3, then the width increases to 8.25 m.

It is even more difficult to discuss the arrangement of the various rooms and spaces and the circulation system, except that there are two different entrances to the building and a possible pottery dump in space Δ, both reminiscent of similar features at Achladia (Platon 1997, 192). The existence of an upper floor is also an open question. Some external walls, such as the east wall of room A and the wall between room B and space Δ, are thick enough (i.e., about 1 m) to support an upper floor. It would also be intriguing to see room Z as a staircase, but the excavator (Platon 1960, 285–286) argued that the middle wall is a later addition, perhaps because it is not exactly parallel to the outer walls. This view, however, does not exclude the possibility that a second floor was added at a later stage, because the destruction shook many walls off their original place. Finally, the difference in level between the threshold of room A and the southern threshold is 3.10 m, meaning that the builders had to work with different planes and stories.

Building Materials and Techniques

The foundation of Kephali Lazana shows a combination of techniques. The east part was founded on the three parallel north–south retaining walls of rooms A and A1. No staircase was found, but the differences in level between rooms A and A1 (0.70–0.80 m) and between room A1 and the central area (1 m) are easily bridged with 4–5 wooden steps each. The central part was partly leveled and partly backfilled, for example, in the east part of room B (Platon 1960, 285). Finally, the natural bedrock was left unworked, and it protrudes at the eastern

edge of the building. This is a very economic combination of techniques (Fotou 1990), with the exception of the well-built retaining walls of rooms A and A1, and it is frequently found in East Crete, for example at Achladia and Epano Zakros (Mantzourani and Vavouranakis 2005a, 102–103, 119), Klimataria (Mantzourani, Vavouranakis, and Kanellopoulos 2005, 754), Prophetes Elias Praisou (Mantzourani and Vavouranakis 2011), and Zou (Platon 1955, 1956).

The stone blocks are local limestone, probably the products of surface detachment work rather than proper quarrying. Most of the partition walls are made of rubble. The external walls feature large hewn blocks, about $0.95\text{--}1.35 \times 0.33\text{--}0.83 \times 0.20\text{--}0.40$ m (Fig. 27.2). Although the blocks are megalithic, the walls are better built than the megalithic walls of Zou or Klimataria (for recent reviews on megalithic masonry, cf. Zielinski 1998; Mantzourani and Vavouranakis 2005b). The north-west walls of rooms A, A1, B, and Γ , albeit not coursed ashlar, give a particularly elaborate impression and resemble the well-built megalithic blocks of Epano Zakros. It is important to note that such exceptional elaboration of the entrance area at Kephali Lazana finds parallels at Klimataria, particularly in its ashlar north vestibule beside the main reception and living areas (Mantzourani, Vavouranakis, and Kanellopoulos 2005). The facade

walls at Achladia are also carefully built (Platon 1997; Mantzourani and Vavouranakis 2005a), while the entrance of Zou also features ashlar blocks (Platon 1955, 291; 1956, 238). Additionally, the bench at the entrance of Zou is similar to the bench at the corner of rooms A1 and B at Kephali Lazana (Fig. 27.3).

This impression of careful construction is further underscored by other cut-stone features. These are the monolithic thresholds (located at rooms A, B, and Γ , at the middle wall of room Z, and at the south entrance of the building), the doorjambs of rooms B and Γ , and the rectangular construction (1.95×1.60 m) in the west corner of space Δ . Platon (1960, 285) characterized the latter as an access way to the rooms northwest of the main complex, but the height of the feature ($0.45\text{--}0.93$ m) goes against this interpretation. It is more plausible to see it as a podium. Finally, most of the walls of the edifice are built at right angles, which is also a demonstration of quality construction.

Use of Space

Only a few areas provide indications for their function (Platon 1960, 285). Rooms A and A1 provided access to the central area, but may have also had other functions that are not detectable today. The excavation of room B yielded a jar, part of a pithos,



Figure 27.2. Space D at Kephali Lazana. View from northeast.



Figure 27.3. Bench outside room A1 at Kephali Lazana. A view from northeast.

and a cooking pot. Thus, it had an auxiliary function. The pottery deposit of open-air space Δ led the excavator to think of the space as a refuse area. However, the interpretation of the construction of the west corner as a podium opens the possibility that the pottery deposit may have had a different (i.e., ritual) character. Paved space E was also open

to the air, and it probably had an auxiliary function. Room Z might have been a staircase in its second stage of development, with the addition of the middle wall. As regards the rest of the space, the excavation yielded many loomweights as well as stone rubbers and querns and pottery characteristic of the MM IIIB–LM IA period.

Topography

Kephali Lazana is situated on the top of the highest hill of the area, with a good visual command of its local valley. Although the view to the wider region is blocked by several hills, it is possible to see the modern villages of Chondros and Kato and Ano Viannos. The building itself is not

placed within a settlement, but it is not isolated either. The LM I settlement of Tourkissa and the house at Rousses are less than a 15-minute walk from Kephali Lazana (Platon 1960, 286). Hence, the site was not strictly rural, but, rather, it was at the outskirts of an organized settlement.

Overall Assessment of Kephali Lazana

The architectural remains at Kephali Lazana clearly belong to a large building. This building was designed with a significant degree of sophistication, although the initial concept was probably implemented in an imprecise manner. Its construction followed

a general rule of economization in both materials and techniques, but the addition of cut-stone features, including facade blocks, doorjambs, and thresholds, resulted in an elaborate finish. The few artifacts suggest the usual domestic functions and,

perhaps, exceptional activities at the possible podium of space Δ. Finally, the building stands at a visually privileged location, but it is not isolated: its related settlement lies on a neighboring hill slope.

The above features do not allow Kephali Lazana to challenge the finesse of the villas in Central Crete. Nonetheless, it may be easily compared to their east Cretan counterparts, and, more precisely,

to McEnroe's type 2b houses (1982, 9–10). Elaborating on Platon's characterization of Kephali Lazana as a "farmhouse," it may be more accurate to see a building that falls between a country villa and an impressive and expensive residence, perhaps belonging to a relatively wealthy, and—by extension—socially important, "suburban" household of the Neopalatial agricultural periphery.

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