

Monastiraki Katalimata: Excavation of a Cretan Refuge Site, 1993–2000

By Krzysztof Nowicki (Prehistory Monographs 24). Pp. xxiv + 166, figs. 91, b&w pls. 39, table 1. INSTAP Academic Press, Philadelphia 2008. \$70. ISBN 978-1-931534-24-6 (cloth).

This volume presents a concise account of Nowicki's excavation of one building at Katalimata (Building C on Terrace C), a "refuge" settlement situated on natural cliff terraces along the north side of the Cha gorge, flanking the Isthmus of Hierapetra. This project was conducted in collaboration with Metaxia Tsipopoulou (then of the 24th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities), who provides the foreword to this volume. Katalimata was explored in conjunction with Tsipopoulou's excavation of the nearby Late Minoan (LM) IIIC–Early Iron Age site of Chalasmenos (with the late W.D.E. Coulson). This recent excavation revealed other periods of occupation (e.g., Final Neolithic, Middle Minoan [MM] IIB, LM IB–IIIA1, Early Byzantine, and Venetian) and more data concerning the nature of occupation, which waxed and waned in response to various threats, both external and internal. Occupation of the site is also placed within the context of contemporary, island-wide settlement patterns (cf. K. Nowicki, *Defensible Sites in Crete c. 1200–800 B.C.: LM IIIB/IIIC Through Early Geometric. Aegaeum* 21 [Liège 2000]; "The End of the Neolithic in Crete," *Aegean Archaeology* 6 [2002] 7–72).

The introduction summarizes the background and methodology of excavation of this site, which was recently "rediscovered" after Harriet Boyd's first brief mention of its existence more than a century ago. Chapter 2 includes a topographical description of the site and surrounding area, accompanied by maps, plans, and sections showing settlement location, access route, and "perspective" views of the largest and best-preserved structures, including the excavated Building C, which is

central to the site. Building C is described by room/area and context in chapter 3, followed by a catalogue of excavated contexts detailing contents and the nature and chronology of this material (accompanied by a table outlining these data). Phases of occupation are described in the next chapter. Although extensive occupation of early LM IIIC date had been established through survey (D.C. Haggis and K. Nowicki, "Khalasmeno and Katalimata: Two Early Iron Age Settlements in Monastiraki, East Crete," *Hesperia* 62 [1993] 303–37), excavation has revealed other key periods. For example, an important deposit of MM IIB pottery, found external to Building C, includes fine ware, cooking ware, and storage vessels and helps refine what is known of the ceramics of this period. This description of occupation of the site across various chronological periods is accompanied by a useful discussion for each period of pottery shapes, treatments, and clay fabrics, with comparanda. Architectural features, the nature of the deposit, length of occupation, and evidence for settlement size are presented in the summaries for each period discussed.

Threat is cited as the generating force behind periodic occupation of Katalimata in Nowicki's summary chapter. This was manifest by the arrival of a new population in Final Neolithic (FN) II (the ceramic division explicated in Nowicki 2002). The author believes that this one-time event created a number of large coastal sites and pushed an earlier population to more remote regions, including the heights of Katalimata. Potential conflict, this time internal, generated the appearance of forts and other defensive sites along the natural boundaries between the territories of communities in the

Protopalatial period. Katalimata is viewed as one element in a larger defensive framework, this installation possibly serving communities in the northern Isthmus of Hierapetra area. Unlike many other contemporary high sites, however, Katalimata appears to belong to the very end of the Protopalatial period, occurring in concert with destructions at nearby centers such as Gournia and Vasilike. Katalimata is again briefly occupied concurrently with, or shortly after, the LM IB destructions and provides, in Nowicki's view, rare evidence related to the immediate aftermath of these destructions.

The cliff terraces are occupied again in early LM IIIC, and here the author mentions the "inconveniences" of this site—difficult access to the lower agricultural catchment and transport of many necessities (which must have included food, tools, and building materials). These factors (and others, such as living conditions in the winter and the constant danger of rockfalls) must have had an impact on the social structure, function, and longevity of the settlement. Katalimata, with only one easily blocked access/escape route from below and no transport route to an agricultural catchment behind or above the site, is basically a dead end. In this sense, it appears to differ from many other high sites within the island-wide framework of contemporary settlements investigated by the author. Possibly a slightly longer discussion involving the potentially unique or limiting aspects of the site might have been apt here, as these factors must have influenced the history and use of Katalimata within the larger framework of contemporary settlements, which were linked to arable, upland zones.

Importantly, Katalimata ceramics belong to the earliest phases of LM IIIC, so the site predates what excavation has revealed of Chalasmenos, which places it within a category of high settlements dated to late LM IIIB/early LM IIIC. Early Byzantine activity dating to the mid seventh century C.E. may include some form of occupation, based on the pottery assemblage, but little rebuilding occurred. Whether this evidence could be related to the Late Roman settlement at nearby Monastiraki is not discussed, though the atypical find of a glass coin weight on Terrace C suggests more

than casual use by pastoralists. Threats from the sea may account for the medieval presence at this extreme site, and Nowicki documents the evidence for these threats on this part of the island for the first time.

The thorough pottery catalogues (chs. 6–7) present ceramics by context and pottery group (KT number), year of excavation, room number, number of sherds, date, and weight. A brief catalogue of small finds follows. This facilitates easy retrieval of information involving a variety of criteria. Concordance A presents the catalogued pottery in numerical and chronological order, and concordance B presents every pottery group, context, and the catalogued ceramics from each group. The index is thorough and includes relevant place names. Illustrations comprise maps with sites mentioned in text and maps of the immediate area, plans, sections, perspective views of settlement and structures, and the plan of Building C in relation to layers, contexts, and features excavated. Pottery profiles and photographs follow, in accordance with the "layers" shown in the plans. A representative selection of vases is illustrated, including one detailing Final Neolithic clay fabrics and surface treatments (pl. 26). Illustrations are clear and complete and systematically follow the text.

This book is valuable for those interested in landscape studies and ceramics for almost all cultural periods in Crete. Nowicki has walked, slept, eaten, found water, and lived within this environment, forming close friendships with the shepherds who know it best. Consequently, he has documented not just the sites themselves but also the territory between. No one individual working on the island knows more about how these sites evolved or related to one another within complex environments. Few, if any, have been as enterprising or as brave, and the partial results of this lifetime's achievement can be found in this concise and well-organized volume.

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