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Leslie Preston Day, Geraldine Cornelia Gesell (ed.), *Kavousi IIC: The Late Minoan IIIC Settlement at Vronda: Specialist Reports and Analyses. Prehistory Monographs 52.* Philadelphia, PA: INSTAP Academic Press, 2016. Pp. xxx, 298; 93 tables, 5 charts, 83 figures, 31 p. of plates. ISBN 9781931534840. \$80.00.

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[Table of Contents](#)

Kavousi IIC is the third volume in the series of final reports on the archaeological fieldwork conducted at Kavousi Vronda in Eastern Crete between 1983 and 1992. While the two first volumes respectively describe the houses located on top and on the slopes of the Vronda hill,¹ this book presents various analyses of architecture, pottery, terracotta figurines, ground and chipped stone implements, small finds, and faunal and botanical remains. Although the final publication of both the Late Minoan IIIC shrine located in the settlement and that of the later cemeteries is still in preparation, the present volume already offers a comprehensive history of occupation of the settlement. In this historical synthesis Vronda is considered in a regional context, which is well documented thanks to the survey conducted in the area of Kavousi and intensive excavations carried out at the neighboring sites of Kastro and Azoria.² The appendices contain studies of the construction of a traditional oven, radiocarbon dating, and vessel capacities of the Late Minoan IIIC pottery.

In a first chapter, Klein and Glowacki present detailed analyses of architectural features, material, and techniques, and elaborate on the Late Minoan IIIC phase. The text is abundantly and appropriately supplemented with photographs, state and schematic plans of the buildings showing architectural phasing, 3D restitutions, bonding analysis diagrams, as well as access and visibility graphs.

After a systematic presentation of the pottery, illustrated with numerous drawings, Day examines the Late Minoan IIIC household assemblages in Chapter 2. According to her estimates, a typical LM IIIC household had about 10 drinking vessels, a krater, one to two jugs, a fenestrated stand, one to two lekanai, a collection of cooking vessels and utensils, a pithos, and two to three smaller storage vessels at its disposal. However, with regard to ceramic vessels and portable items in general, the excavator notes that the inhabitants apparently took some of their possessions with them when Vronda was abandoned at the end of the Late Minoan IIIC period. Moreover, post-depositional processes as well as the later reuse of the site should be taken into account when looking at the assemblages recovered from the houses. This

said, Vronda remains a valuable case of study for the reconstruction of Late Minoan IIIC society.

In a third chapter, Gesell presents the ten solid terracotta figurines that were found in the excavation of the settlement, all of them representing bovines or horses. Their precise function remains unclear, but their archaeological context makes a date in the Late Minoan IIIC period secure. This is important since it allows revising the dates that hitherto were proposed for comparanda from Patsos, Chania and Vrokastro that have lost their context (Table 57).

The excavations at Vronda also produced 270 ground stone implements, presented by Dierckx in Chapter 4. She highlights the abundance of querns and whetstones and the lack of mortars and other stationary large-scale implements from Late Minoan IIIC assemblages, which contrast with earlier Minoan contexts.

The few and scattered small finds recovered are described by Day in Chapter 5. They include a variety of terracotta objects (beads and spindle whorls, loomweights, a nodulus, stoppers, disks, tiles, and a window frame), stone objects (bowls and lids, disks, beads, and a kernos) and some metal objects — however, the latter cannot be firmly linked with the Late Minoan IIIC settlement.

Based on the faunal remains, discussed in the sixth chapter, Snyder and Reese conclude that the inhabitants of Late Minoan IIIC Vronda practiced a mixed herding and culling strategy in which sheep and goats represent 60% of animals harvested for meat and pigs ca. 15-20%. Marine shells only occasionally formed part of their diet.

Grain plants are almost absent from the botanical remains collected at Vronda, but the components of a traditional Mediterranean diet are represented: olive, grape, pistachio, lentils, bitter vetch, and grass pea. However, most of these remains come from the Late Geometric graves built into the ruins of the Late Minoan IIIC settlement and may represent funerary offerings, as suggested by Flint-Hamilton in Chapter 7.

Based on these various analyses and as a concluding chapter, Day offers a comprehensive history of occupation at Vronda and provides a tentative reconstruction of its Late Minoan IIIC society. The earliest remains (two stone celts and fragments of pottery) indicate the presence of some kind of habitation at Vronda during the Neolithic period. The EM I-II identifiable material is limited but shows that the site was then not only a farming village but apparently also a place where feasting and drinking rituals took place. The site seems to have contracted in size and population during the subsequent EM III-MM IA period. The first preserved architectural remains date to the Protopalatial (MM IB-IIIB) period: a large building (P) develops on the summit with evidence for drinking and possibly administrative activities. At that time, Vronda seems to have been integrated into a wider regional network of which it may have formed the administrative and socio-political center. Very little Neopalatial (MM III-LM I) architecture is identifiable, but the portable finds of this phase suggest that Vronda probably remained a local regional center. Day suggests that the movement of populations towards the uplands in Late Minoan IIIC was not only triggered by security concerns but also by economic motives. Late Minoan IIIC Vronda seems to have been established around 1170 BC, a few decades after the Kastro, and abandoned again around 1050 BC, after four generations of occupation.

While it is quite clear from the remains that social structure at Vronda was based on the household, a social unit defined by co-residence, kinship, and economic cooperation, its political organization remains more difficult to reconstruct. In contrast

with most buildings at Vronda, Building A-B does not show the usual replicative and agglutinative pattern of expansion, nor do its architectural features and ceramic assemblage illustrate typical daily activities. The excavator suggests that it may have served as a redistributive center, providing food either in return for service or in commensal events. She suggests that Building A-B may have been either a forerunner of the later *andreion* or the dwelling of the ruler of the community. One may suggest, however, that these interpretations should indicate two rather distinct political systems—that of the “polis” on the one hand, and of a “big man” society on the other. From chronological, geographical, as well as cultural perspectives, however, both systemic contexts seem quite remote from how we normally reconstruct the social context of Late Minoan IIIC settlements on Crete. Although Sub-Minoan pottery was not found stratified at Vronda, its presence in a tomb that was constructed somewhat later once the settlement had gone out of use indicates, according to the excavator, that Sub-Minoan effectively constituted a later chronological phase and not only a funerary ceramic style, as it is sometimes argued. After the abandonment of the Late Minoan IIIC settlement and up to the Early Orientalizing period, however, Vronda becomes a cemetery, which maybe weakens the possibility that Sub-Minoan is a chronological phase. The first burials were tholos tombs. Then, from the eighth century onwards, the dead were cremated in stone-lined burial enclosures. Interestingly, these new burials were inserted in the ruins of the Late Minoan IIIC settlement, as if the Late Geometric communities were trying to appropriate the mythical ancestors of the Late Bronze Age and thus affirm their claim on Vronda. One may stress that the analysis of cranial nonmetric traits of the deceased does suggest a possible genetic relationship among the individuals buried within the same appropriated Late Minoan IIIC building,³ which can perhaps be interpreted as an attempt by the Late Geometric communities to construct an even more precise and tangible foundation to their fictive origins. If we consider Vronda in its regional context, it only presents a small and incidental variation in the general funerary pattern that can be observed in the Mirabello area, where Geometric burial enclosures were generally constructed in the immediate vicinity of Late Minoan IIIC-Protogeometric tholos tombs. The reuse of the LM IIIC settlement of Vronda for burial practices during the Geometric period may actually be seen as primarily consecutive to the presence of Late Bronze Age funerary remains.⁴ After the seventh century BC, Vronda was deserted and only sporadically visited or reoccupied during the Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman and Roman periods.

In this kind of final excavation report, repetitions of information already presented in previous volumes is inevitable, but as far as possible the authors have tried to limit these, often referring to earlier publications. In general *Kavousi IIC* gives a detailed, multidisciplinary and valuable overview of a Cretan settlement at the end of the Late Bronze Age. The remarkable quality of fieldwork, studies and publications by the various authors have made the site of Vronda a crucial and fascinating case study for the Late Minoan IIIC period on the island of Crete.

Notes:

^{1.} L. P. Day, N. L. Klein and L. A. Turner, *Kavousi IIA: The Late Minoan IIIC Settlement at Vronda. The Buildings on the Summit*, Prehistory Monographs 26, Philadelphia, PA: INSTAP Academic Press, 2009; L. P. Day and K. T. Glowacki, *Kavousi IIB: The Late Minoan IIIC Settlement at Vronda: The Buildings on the Periphery*, Prehistory Monographs 39, Philadelphia, PA: INSTAP Academic Press, 2012.

^{2.} D. C. Haggis, *Kavousi I: The Archaeological Survey of the Kavousi Region*, Prehistory Monographs 16, Philadelphia, PA: INSTAP Academic Press, 2005; D. C. Haggis, “The Archaeology of Urbanization: Research Design and the Excavation

of an Archaic Greek City on Crete." In D. C. Haggis and C. M. Antonaccio (edd.), *Classical Archaeology in Context: Theory and Practice in Excavation in the Greek World*, Berlin; Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015, pp. 219-258.

3. M. Liston, "Secondary Cremation Burials at Kavousi Vronda, Crete. Symbolic Representation in Mortuary Practice," *Hesperia* 76, 2007, p. 60.

4. F. Gaignerot-Driessen, *De l'occupation postpalatiale à la cité grecque: le cas du Mirambello (Crète)*, Aegaeum 40, Peeters: Leuven; Liège, pp. 131-132.

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