

Preface by the Series Editor

The 23rd volume of the OREA series presents the Neolithic key site Platia Magoula Zarkou in Greek Thessaly. This multi-authored book demonstrates impressively the scientific value of well-excavated and contextualised archaeological data, which form the unique and primary source in studying past societies. The presented outcome is based on the excavations by Kostas Gallis conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. Basic research in archaeology is a long-term process and requires consistent, patient and persistent scholars, particularly when aiming at a final publication of archaeological fieldwork. It is to the excavators' credit that they developed the strategy for realising a publication by inviting Eva Alram-Stern, a well-known expert in our field not only for the scientific aspects of Neolithic Thessaly but also for her talent in dealing with and reliably publishing old excavation data. She designed and managed an FWF project by inviting participation from Greek and international well-known senior experts as well as early career researchers and PhD students, who contributed substantially to the interlinked approach of this publication project.

Studying, documenting and interpreting old excavation data can be a challenging and difficult task, but is definitely worth pursuing, as demonstrated in the present volume *Platia Magoula Zarkou. The Neolithic Period. Environment, Stratigraphy and Architecture, Chronology, Tools, Figurines and Ornaments*, edited by Eva Alram-Stern, Kostas Gallis and Giorgos Toufexis. The editors and authors created a combination of studying and presenting the main data and finds, partially integrated into an interdisciplinary approach and supplemented by new scientific and geo-archaeological investigations for a state-of-the-art environmental embedding of the tell. The volume offers detailed information on the excavations, stratigraphy, architectural remains and their absolute dating, all deriving from the one deep trench on the top of the tell and forming the scientific basis for the following core chapters. The detailed studies of the chipped stones are accompanied by new scientific analyses of their use wear as well as of the raw materials – both offer new and exciting insights into the function, source management and exchange networks of the agricultural communities in the 6th millennium calBC. The macrolithics, bone tools and textile production equipment demonstrate the variety, importance and quality of local production, as well as their integration into the wider late Neolithic (Greek) Aegean networks by means of skills, technologies, morphologies and styles.

Another core chapter is dedicated to the famous house model, not only studied and discussed for the first time with regard to many detailed aspects, but also re-evaluated and newly interpreted from ritual, gender and social perspectives. The Neolithic ornaments made of shell, bone, stone and clay are presented in detail, followed by a chapter on the faunal and floral remains, including some contextual and environmental interpretation, continued by a socio-cultural modelling of the site in its landscape discussed as physical and social Neolithic landscapes. The third core part of this volume successfully managed the synoptic combination of the experts' chapters into a summary of selected aspects of the late Neolithic community's life within an integrative and interpretative approach. The interested reader is offered new insights into household-based life, evidence of on-site activities, production and subsistence, the management of (lithic) sources and ritual practices at the late Neolithic Platia Magoula Zarkou.

Overall, I sincerely congratulate the authors and editors on realising this publication of the Platia Magoula Zarkou remains excavated half a century ago. This book represents a potential role model for comparable future attempts in dealing with unpublished excavations from the 20th century. The fruitful collaboration of the local authorities, Greek and international scientists, the combination of ECRs with senior archaeologists, as well as the integration of new

geo-archaeological fieldwork and scientific analyses, in my opinion demonstrate best-practice aspects. Not least, the initiative for this volume and the active engagement of the excavator Kostas Gallis in the publication process deserves the greatest respect.

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