

I. Introduction: Chronicle of Excavations and Research 1974–1990

Kostas Gallis

*As you set out for Ithaca
wish your journey to be a long one,
full of adventure, full of discovery.*

*Have Ithaca always in your mind,
arriving there you are destined for,
but do no hurry the journey at all.*

Ithaca, by K. P. Kavafis

I.1. The History of the Excavations

As I start writing these lines, my mind goes to the phrase that “even the longest route always starts with a first step”. So, the first step of the long route which was the adventure of the excavation at Platia Magoula Zarkou (PMZ) was taken on an early May afternoon in 1974, by spotting at the bottom of a newly opened irrigation canal, just 300m north of the prehistoric site of PMZ, some scanty sherds of Neolithic pottery and tiny burnt human bones. This was not an accidental find but the result of a long-lasting observation of the work of opening irrigation canals in various regions of the Thessalian plain within a project by the Greek Agricultural Service of redistribution of land and change of cultivation from the traditional crops (wheat) to more profitable ones (cotton and sugar beets). This observation was conducted during topographic research, in an effort to spot more prehistoric sites, which led to the compilation of the ‘Atlas of the prehistoric sites of the Eastern Thessalian plain’.¹ It was not possible to spot Neolithic burials by only visual surface observation as there were no marks on the ground, such as we find for later times (Bronze Age and later), plus the fact that the surface of the plain has risen as a result of alluvial deposition since the Neolithic times. So, we thought that it might be possible to spot Neolithic cemeteries by watching the opening of irrigation canals where they passed near prehistoric sites (the magoules). This effort finally yielded results in two cases: at PMZ (30km west of Larissa), which concerns us here, and at Souphli Magoula (5km north of Larissa).

At PMZ a short three-day test excavation in May 1974 was initially undertaken which brought to light at the bottom of the irrigation canal urns containing burnt human bones, in some cases accompanied by a smaller pot which gave the impression that it was deposited as an offering. The systematic excavations, which followed in 1976, revealed part of a Neolithic cemetery, dated to the beginning of the Late Neolithic, situated 300m north-northeast of the settlement. It consisted exclusively of cremation burials in urns. In some cases the urns were accompanied by a smaller pot (an offering), in others, they were covered by another pot or buried upside down.²

¹ Gallis 1992a; see also Gallis 1975; Gallis 1992b; Gallis 1994.

² Gallis 1982; Gallis 1996c, 172–173; Gallis 1996d, 528–531.

At that time, i.e. during the 1960s and 1970s, there was a strong dispute about the dating of the black burnished pottery of the so-called Larissa Culture: the question was if this characteristic pottery style dated to the end of the Late Neolithic, as supported by Vladimir Milošević, or to the beginning of the Late Neolithic, as was the view of Fritz Schachermeyr, to which chronological horizon (beginning of the Late Neolithic) the grey ware of Tsangli type had been assigned from the outset.³ The finding, in the cremation cemetery, of pots belonging to both categories – sometimes in the same burial – showed that this problem could be solved by an excavation in the site itself. So, we started in the same excavation period of 1976 an excavation at the top of the magoula, scheduled from the beginning to be a stratigraphic one, by opening one single trench (Fig. I.1). We were optimistic that we would soon reach the Neolithic strata and solve the problem.

This first excavation on the magoula itself was short (02/06/1976 till 14/07/1976) and brought to light, immediately below the surface, disturbed habitation strata dated to the Early and Middle Helladic.

The stratigraphic excavation was resumed in 1981, because from 1977 till 1980 we were occupied with the study and preparation for publication of the cremation cemetery mentioned above, which was published in 1982.⁴ During the subsequent period (17/08/1981 till 23/09/1981), Early and Middle Bronze Age habitation strata kept coming to light.

So this was the situation when we resumed excavation in 1983. In the trench, we had almost reached the level of the surface of the plain surrounding the magoula, without reaching any Neolithic strata. We thought that we were at nearly the same level as the Neolithic cemetery just 300m north of the settlement, without finding any trace of Neolithic. On the other hand, Early Helladic habitation strata continued to come to light at a depth lower than 4m, without us even being sure



Fig. I.1 Trench A (18.8.1981)

³ Gallis 1992a, 49–65 for discussion and relative bibliography.

⁴ Gallis 1982.

if we were in the beginning of the Early Helladic. We estimated that if the Late Neolithic sequence existed uninterrupted (i.e. Tsangli, Arapi, Otzaki, Classical Dimini phases), we would still need to excavate a considerable thickness of habitation levels before reaching the beginning of the Late Neolithic.

We started to wonder if the Neolithic habitation was perhaps located in some other spot of the magoula. So, on 23/6/1983, we opened a trial trench in the western foothills of the magoula (Trench B) and, on 5/7/1983, another one in its southeastern foothills (Trench C). In both trenches the surface layers were disturbed by ploughing, as the ploughing of the surrounding fields extended as far as the foothills of the magoula. The prevailing pottery here was also Early Helladic. In the summer of 1983 digging continued in parallel in all the three trenches (A, B and C). It was at this stage of the excavation when, on 30/6/1983, the digging brought to light, in the main original trench (Trench A), at a depth of 3.40–3.45m the first, Neolithic sherds. And they were grey pottery of the thin, very well-fired fabric of the Tsangli type, dating to the beginning of the Late Neolithic according to the hitherto prevailing view of Neolithic chronology.

Together with the Tsangli ware of all types (plain grey and grey on grey) we uncovered – but in much smaller quantities – black burnished pottery characteristic of the so-called Larissa Culture. These two categories of pottery (grey and black burnished, in all their varieties, coexisted in the subsequent levels to a depth of 5.30m). The grey ware was always found in more abundant quantities than the black pottery, thus strongly suggesting the existence of a centre of production of this characteristic pottery somewhere in western Thessaly.

Two years earlier (November 1981), similar observations had been made in a short stratigraphic excavation at Makrychori 2, in the Eastern Thessalian Plain, just 15km north of Larissa. There the coexistence of Tsangli grey ware with the black burnished pottery of the Larissa Culture was also confirmed.⁵ In Makrychori 2 the excavation reached the sterile layer just below the Tsangli strata, but there this phase (Tsangli) was followed uninterruptedly by the pottery characteristic of the Arapi phase. In the case of Makrychori 2, in contrast to PMZ, the grey Tsangli pottery was very scarce, while the black burnished pottery was much more abundant, strongly suggesting the existence of a centre of production of the black burnished pottery in eastern Thessaly.

The coexistence of these two categories of pottery (Tsangli and Larissa) in the cemetery of PMZ (excavation periods 1974 and 1976), in the same stratigraphic horizon in Makrychori 2 (1981) and, finally, in the settlement of PMZ (1983) confirmed beyond any doubt that they were synchronous, belonging to the same chronological horizon of the beginning of Late Neolithic, hence named Tsangli-Larissa.

Once Neolithic strata started being revealed in Trench A, on 27/09/1983 we halted the excavation in the other two trenches (B and C) and continued the excavation only in the original main trench A.

I.2. Pottery Analyses

Meanwhile, from 1979 on, an archaeometry programme in collaboration with the Institute of Inorganic Chemistry of the Free University of Berlin started (at that time Germany was still divided). In this institute its hardworking director, Heinrich Knoll, and his then assistant, Gerwulf Schneider, had organised a special workshop (Arbeitsgruppe Archäometrie) analysing archaeological artefacts of various periods from various parts of the world (Fig. I.2).

One of the objectives of the archaeometry programme was to try to spot possible places of production of characteristic categories of pottery, which it was apparent had been produced somewhere in Thessaly and dispersed to a wider area from these centres of production. The excavation of PMZ contributed a considerable bulk of well-stratified pottery (Middle Neolithic and beginning

⁵ Gallis 1985a; Gallis 1987; Gallis 1996b, 121.



Fig. I.2 From left: Heinrich Knoll, Claude Björk, Gerwulf Schneider, Jean-Paul Demoule, Kostas Gallis and Giorgos Toufexis in the old laboratory of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Larissa (23/6/1992)



Fig. I.3 Karen Vitelli experimenting with scraped ware in the old laboratory of the Ephorate of Antiquities in Larissa (Summer 1988)

of the Late Neolithic), which was used in the aforementioned archaeometry programme.⁶

Two of the main elements which were taken into consideration in the relative analyses were chromium and nickel. The clay in the Thessalian plain is generally rich in chromium, which is washed down from the ophiolitic rocks of the surrounding mountains. By contrast, the clay of the characteristic grey Tsangli ware has a low percentage of chromium nickel. So, one of the first (striking) results coming out from the relative analyses was that – by an ironic coincidence – the characteristic grey Tsangli pottery was not produced in the homonymous site, as the clay in that region is rich in chromium nickel.

Actually, there are chromium mines in this spot, the modern name of Tsangli being Eretria. It was the digging for the construction of a line to connect the mines with the passing railway line, which cut the side of the magoula, which led Alan John Bayard Wace and Maurice S. Thompson to excavate at the site in 1910, producing, among other things, large quantities of the characteristic grey pottery.⁷

⁶ Schneider et al. 1991.

⁷ Wace – Thompson 1912, 86–149; Theocharis 1973, 79.

The stratigraphic excavation at PMZ showed very clearly that this grey pottery evolved from the Middle Neolithic linear ‘scraped’ ware, through a transitional phase with pottery that was grey inside (reducing atmosphere) and orange (scraped or linear decoration) outside (oxidising atmosphere), which can be called ‘protogrey’, and marks the even evolution from the Middle Neolithic to the Late Neolithic.⁸ This evolution of the pottery was studied together with a team of archaeologists from Paris under the direction of Jean-Paul Demoule and Kostas Gallis.⁹ Since the abundance of this ceramic style was first recognised in PMZ, we named this phase the ‘Zarko Phase’.¹⁰ We had been very puzzled, though, about the way ‘scraped’ ware was produced, and to clarify this we turned to Karen D. Vitelli of Indiana University, who carried out relevant experiments in the laboratories of the Ephorate of Antiquities (Fig. I.3). She reached the most interesting result that identical designs could be achieved either by removing paint (scraping technique) or by adding it.¹¹

I.3. The House Model

In the progress of the excavation, still in the excavation period 1983, in the undisturbed layers outside an Early Helladic ‘bothros’, near the eastern side of the trench, an unexpected find came to light: it was when we started to remove another ‘floor of habitation’ from the beginning of the Late Neolithic (Floor S16/22 of the excavation diary or Surface 22 in the present volume), that an unroofed house model with nine figurines and one movable miniature object inside started to come to light (Fig. I.4).¹²

The house model is like a real maquette of the house itself with its furniture and the persons in it: it is an unroofed house model with its entrance, a raised clay platform (bed) in the rear left corner and an oven, also in the rear wall, opposite the entrance. The oven has a protruding part in front of it (‘parastia’) like those found in Achilleion. Some tiny bits of red clay in the oven perhaps suggest fire. Between the oven and the raised clay platform there was an elongated object with grooves on its upper side, most probably representing a grinding stone.

The house model was found near a hearth, which constituted the most important spot (‘hestia’) in the house (Fig. I.5). It did not seem to be associated with any architectural structure; it was just in the ‘debris’ below the Surface S16/22 mentioned above. Its highest point was just below the ‘floor’ and at a depth of 5.16m from the surface of the magoula.

Its highest point was the protruding belly of the female figurine, the most bulky and most impressive of all, the ‘Lady of the House’.¹³

⁸ This protogrey ware was abundant in later Middle Neolithic strata of Building Phases Vd to VIb, which have been subsumed by Areti Pentedeka under Ceramic Horizons 3 and 4: Pentedeka in press; Pentedeka in preparation; for a first analysis: Demoule et al. 1988, 17–18, 51, fig. 27.

⁹ Demoule et al. 1988.

¹⁰ Gallis 1987, 153; Demoule et al. 1988, 50; Schneider et al. 1991, 3; Gallis 2006.

¹¹ Vitelli 1989.

¹² Gallis 1985b. In earlier publications of this find eight figurines are mentioned. We hesitated to consider a very small clay object near the oven of the house model as a figurine, thinking that it was perhaps an object associated with the oven. In the course of the time and with more careful study, we concluded that it depicts a baby (the youngest member of the family). This was actually our first impression, recorded in the excavation diary at that time (see excavation diary pp. 362–364), i.e. that there are, in all, nine figurines; this is also the view of Eva Alram-Stern, who studied in detail the house model for the publication, see Alram-Stern, this volume, 473.

¹³ Marija Gimbutas characterised the whole as a ‘shrine model’ when I first presented it at the Institute of Archaeology in UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles). The first presentation of this find was made there in April 1984, only a few months after its finding, in the Symposium ‘Hleb I Vino’, in the presence of Marija Gimbutas, Colin Renfrew, Jane Renfrew, Lloyd Cotsen, Ernestine Elster, Liz Carter, Joan Carothers, Mark Stefanovich, Karen Vitelli and others.



Fig. I.4 The Neolithic house model (in situ) (22/9/1983)

From the conditions of its finding, it may be concluded that it was put there either before laying the floor of the house or after laying the floor and digging a pit into which it was set as a ‘foundation offering’.¹⁴ This house model is, so far, unique in Greece, not only as regards its own merit (structure and contents), but especially for the data preserved for the condition of its burying and finding. It is really like a maquette of the house and the household during the construction of that Neolithic house. It depicts its inhabitants at the time of its construction: a traditional family such as could be found even now in a peasant village: an old couple (‘grandfather’ and ‘grandmother’), a young couple with their child and their little baby – perhaps during whose time the house was constructed – and three younger members of the family. It can be deduced that three generations of the inhabitants of the house are represented. One could suggest that there is an effort to render even the atmosphere of this home, the most imposing figure, the ‘grandmother’, was lying in a prominent place, on the raised clay platform. Near her, the ‘grandfather’ was lying on the floor; the old couple is in a rather loose position, as they are the oldest members of the family. The young couple is in a tight position, like an embrace. It seems that the artist wanted to show the age of the persons, depicted by the size of the figurines.

The three younger members (two girls and probably a boy) are in the rear back corner near the oven, in a secure place within the house. One is tempted to suppose that the bigger female figurine with slightly protruding breasts is the older girl, the older sister of the other two.¹⁵ That figurine of the young maiden was found with its head missing; we are not sure if it was originally deposited so or if this happened accidentally when it was spotted, as it was on top of the rest – as if protecting the other two younger children.

¹⁴ See also Soudsky 1969; Makkay 1983.

¹⁵ For a different interpretation of these figurines see Alram-Stern, this volume, 475–481.



Fig. I.5 From left: Christos Samaras (conservator), Maria Lakaki and Kostas Gallis around the Neolithic house model in Trench A (22/09/1983)

One wonders if the house model was made unroofed in order to show its interior with its inhabitants, which otherwise could not be seen. The impression is that the house model with the figurines was made ‘to order’, to be used for just this purpose i.e. as a foundation offering.¹⁶ This is shown by the lower part of the house model which is thick to endure the pressure and with a rough surface, not so well finished as the interior and the contents. One is tempted to suggest that the house was probably the home of the potter who made the house model. The clay, the firing and the texture are very similar to the grey pottery of the Tsangli phase, which pottery also dates the house.¹⁷

It is obvious that the house model with its contents was intended to be viewed from its front, where the entrance is. It was deposited oriented towards the east, to be viewed from the east. The house floor where it was deposited extended to the east, beyond the side of the trench. If the excavation trench had been opened one metre to the west, we would have missed it. On the other hand, if the Early Helladic pit mentioned above, which reached to this depth, had been dug a little farther to the east, it would have destroyed it. Anyway, as it was buried immediately or very soon after being made, without being exposed, it was preserved nearly intact, with its interior as it was arranged by its Neolithic owners when it was deposited there c. 7600 years ago. It came to the light of the day again only during the excavation in 1983.¹⁸

¹⁶ For a different interpretation of the house model see Alram-Stern, this volume, 468–470.

¹⁷ Pentedeka in press; Pentedeka in preparation.

¹⁸ The house model has been included in many handbooks of archaeology and has been exhibited in many exhibitions at home and abroad. Now it is one of the highlights in the Diachronic Museum of Larissa.

I.4. Continuation of the Excavations

As the excavation proceeded in 1983 the Middle Neolithic strata with all the characteristic varieties came to light: flame patterned, linear decoration, scraped decoration. Middle Neolithic pottery kept coming to light in deeper levels in the following excavation period in 1984 (21/5/1984 till 28/6/1984). As the objective of the excavation, which was the clarification of the stratigraphic/chronological position of the black burnished Larissa ware, was fulfilled, at the depth of 6m we limited the trench to half its original size (5m north to south \times 4m east to west). Hearths and ‘floors’ of beaten earth still continued coming to light as well as stone tools, bone tools and animal bones.

In order to find out when the site was first inhabited, we decided to continue the excavation down to the sterile layer. We hoped that we would reach it soon, as it was apparent that in the trench we were already (at the depth of 6m) at a level lower than the surface of the plain around the magoula. Consequent habitation levels continued coming to light, with characteristic Middle Neolithic pottery, even to a depth lower than 7m (Fig. I.6). So, for economy of labour, at the depth of 7.40m on 05/06/1987, we decided to limit the dimensions of the trench even further, to half of the half (5m north to south \times 2m east to west), always retaining the original width of 5m. Remains of walls kept coming to light at this depth, apparently well below the present surface of the ground around the magoula.

At the depth of 8.20m we reached the water table. The earth had turned to mud. It was impossible to continue. The workers assured us that in that region, when they opened wells, they reached water at this depth. So, in the excavation period 1987 (25/05/1987 till 11/06/1987), on

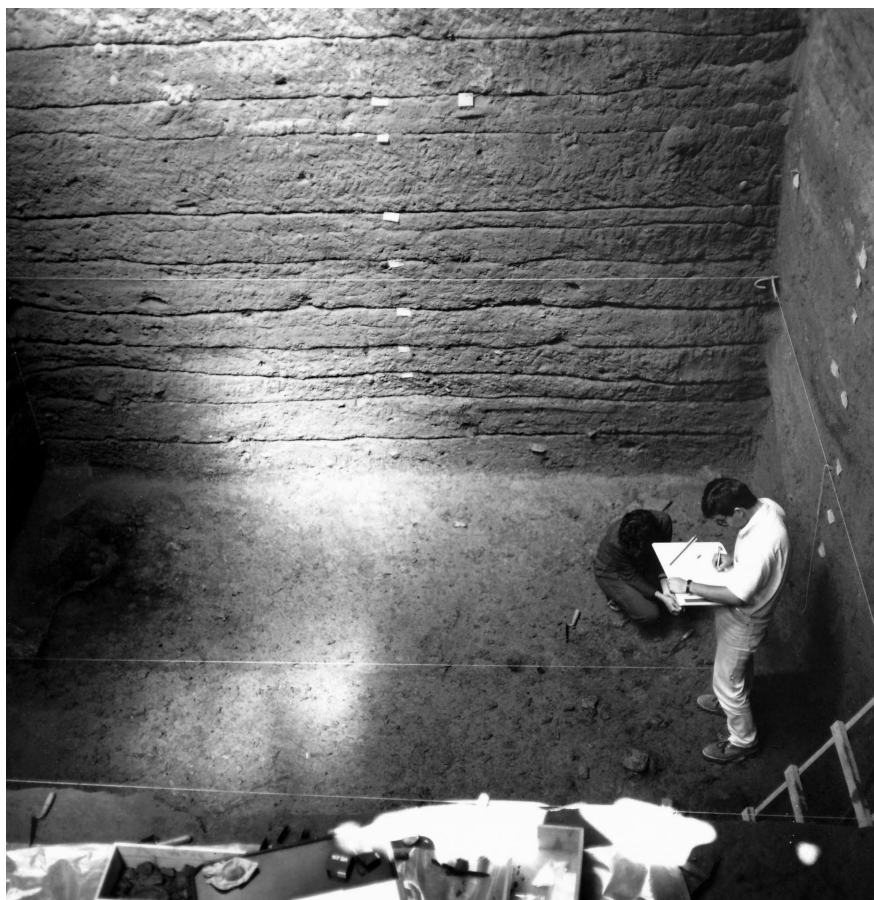


Fig. I.6 Trench A at 7.60m depth. On the right side, Giorgos Toufexis (05/06/1987)



Fig. I.7 Constructing a metal scaffold to protect the sides of Trench A (09/08/1990)



Fig. I.8 Protection panels along the sides of Trench A (16/08/1990)

11/06/1987, we had to halt the excavation, hoping for an opportunity to go deeper in the future, as it was obvious that the habitation layers continued further.

This opportunity came three years later, in 1990. It was a very dry year (according to the Institute Godart it was the driest year of the 20th century in Greece). The bottom of the trench was now completely dry. It was dangerous to work unprotected at a depth of 8.20m from the surface of the magoula. If a stone from the Bronze Age walls, in the top layers of the magoula, fell, it could be fatal. We built a metal scaffold and covered the upper part of the sides of the trench with styrofoam plates, in order to carry on the excavation at this depth in safety (Fig. I.7, Fig. I.8).

In the last excavation period (09/08/1990 till 28/09/1990) occupation deposits kept coming to light – like the stone foundations of walls as well as postholes until we reached the sterile layer at the depth of c. 10m. From the depth of 9.75m, as it became apparent that we were reaching the sterile layer, which consisted of pure clayey soil of greyish-greenish colour, we limited the excavation area once more, to 2 × 2m, in the northwestern corner of the original trench. Even in the lowest levels, characteristic Middle Neolithic pottery kept coming to light. We even dug for about one metre into the sterile layer to make sure that there were no farther traces of human activity. In the lowest part, in the very limited area of 2 × 2m, there came to light just a very short part of a ditch dug in the sterile soil.

Only a few weeks after the end of the excavation in September 1990, water started coming up in the bottom of the trench (Fig. I.9). The water table was rising again to its normal level for that region. There was a very serious danger of the trench collapsing at any time. So, urgent measures were taken to safeguard the lowest parts of the trench (the section 5 × 2m along the west side of the trench) by covering its sides with metal sheets, supported by metal rods across its width. This emergency work was supervised by Giorgos Toufexis, who had taken part in the excavation campaigns at PMZ since 1987.

After the end of the excavation, a metal pavilion was constructed above the trench to keep it dry and clean. So, one will be able to visit it in the future and see the stratigraphy (Fig. I.10, Fig. I.11).



Fig. I.9 The deepest part of Trench A flooded by aquifer waters (04/06/1991)



Fig. I.10 Metal pavilion above Trench A



Fig. I.11 Kostas Gallis and Marija Gimbutas (middle right side) in front of Trench A (16/9/1991)

I.5. Geoarchaeological Investigation in the Area of the Site

We were puzzled that from the total thickness of 10m of the habitation levels at the site, only half of it was above the level of the surrounding plain and that the lower habitation strata extended so deep, even below the present water table. We had already, since 1976, had an indication from the excavation at the cemetery that the surface of the plain, at least in the region of the cemetery, had risen by 1m since the early Late Neolithic (Tsangli-Larissa phase). On the other hand, at the nearby Magoula Koutsaki, only 1.5km to the southeast of PMZ, Early and early Middle Neolithic sherds existed on the surface.

We discussed this question with Tjeerd van Andel, who at that time was in Thessaly, supervising the work of Ann Demitrack for her Ph.D. dissertation with the Stanford University.¹⁹ He offered to investigate the area round PMZ by taking cores at the surrounding area and trying to see what the landscape was like in that region in Neolithic times. He hoped to furnish some answers to our questions about the habitation strata of PMZ in relation to the landscape. In collaboration with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Larissa, represented by the archaeologist G. Toufexis, he investigated the area from the Neolithic cremation cemetery to the north as far as the Peneios River to the south (Fig. I.12).²⁰

The investigation pointed to a settlement that in Neolithic times lay at the side of some kind of flooded valley. While the habitation layers forming the magoula rose, the ground in the area was rising in parallel as a result of alluvial sedimentation. The Neolithic inhabitants of PMZ cultivated the land around their settlement, benefitting from the fertile soil from the alluvial deposits of the river. The investigation by van Andel laid the foundations for further investigation in that

¹⁹ Demitrack 1986.

²⁰ Van Andel et al. 1995.



Fig. I.12 Geoarchaeological investigations in PMZ. Tjeerd van Andel doing field work (18/06/1991)

geoarchaeologically very interesting area and was advanced further by new research included in this publication.²¹

Looking back at this chronicle, I think that the excavation at PMZ is simply an example of the essence of scientific research, which is to ask questions and try to find the answers. During this process, new questions may arise, and one starts to find the answers to the new questions. Sometimes unexpected discoveries may occur, not scheduled from the beginning, which enrich our knowledge.

The excavation started by trying to answer the question of whether any organised cemeteries existed in Neolithic Thessaly, outside the settlements, and if they could be spotted. This question was answered by finding the first organised Neolithic cemetery (sixty cremation burials in urns), at a distance of 300m north of the site of PMZ.

The finding in the cemetery of urns belonging to two different ceramic categories (grey on grey Tsangli ware and black burnished Larissa ware) showed that it was possible to solve the problem of the stratigraphic position of the black burnished Larissa pottery, the chronological position of which was strong disputed at that time, as mentioned above. So the stratigraphic excavation at the site itself was begun, which clarified the chronological position of this characteristic black burnished pottery to the beginning of the Late Neolithic.

The existence, at this spot, of habitation levels well below the present surface of the plain, while Early and early Middle Neolithic finds were being found on the surface of the nearby Magoula Koutsaki, gave rise to the question of the geomorphological situation in that district in Neolithic times. This was illuminated by the research by T. van Andel and advanced by additional research carried out by Riccardo Caputo and Apostolos Sarris and their teams.²²

²¹ Caputo et al., this volume, 35–63.

²² Caputo et al., this volume, 35–63; Sarris et al., this volume, 64–80.

I.6. Radiocarbon Dates and Further Research on the Site

Particular provision was made during the excavation for systematic carbon sampling and today there is a good series of ¹⁴C dates for most of the Neolithic strata. The first dates were published earlier and included in van Andel's investigation,²³ whilst they have also been re-examined by Agathe Reingruber and her colleagues.²⁴

During the excavations, a large number of animal bones were collected, and eleven samples of charred plant remains were chosen for radiocarbon dating.²⁵ Another preliminary study was related to the chipped stone tool industry.²⁶

I.7. Conclusions

The rich data and the material of the excavations from 1976 till 1990 are the basis for this publication re-examining the architecture, stratigraphy and all finds from the tell. In addition, a geophysical survey in the area around the tell showed that the tell was encircled by a perimeter system and some areas below the tell were settled during the Bronze Age. In consequence, the rich data of PMZ may form the basis for organising a systematic excavation, particularly of the important, very well-preserved Early Helladic and Middle Helladic settlement which flourished in this strategic position, at the pass from the Western to the Eastern Thessalian Plain.

I.8. Acknowledgements

Finishing this chronicle, my mind goes to the collaborators who took part at various stages of the long period of the excavation and the even longer period of the study of the finds and partial presentation of them in conferences and publications prior to this final publication. It is impossible to refer to all of them, covering a time span which started nearly half a century ago. They all knew how much I appreciated their help and how grateful I am to them for their contribution to the whole project.

I wish to address first wholehearted thanks to Giorgos Toufexis, archaeologist in the Ephorate of Antiquities of Larissa, who participated in the excavation of PMZ from 1987 on and over the course of the time evolved into a very efficient co-excavator. He offered precious help at various stages of the excavation and later in the study of the finds and the first publications. He also undertook all the administrative work demanded on the Greek side, for the publication project and the related fieldwork (geophysical and geological investigation) as well as for the study of the finds of the excavation by the various specialists. He even conducted additional investigations, in view of the present publication, where required.

I also express my warmest thanks to Christos Batzelas, who has been always very eager and, with immense patience, available to assist the various collaborators in their work with regard to the preparation of the present volume.

One of the oldest collaborators in the study of the finds of the excavation at PMZ is Ernestine Elster, who studied the flaked stone tools of the cremation cemetery and partially of the excavation in the settlement itself. I express my grateful thanks to her for her valuable help in presenting preliminary finds of the excavation (1984) and the final results (1991) at the Institute of Archaeology

²³ Gallis 1995, 214; van Andel et al. 1995, 136; Gallis 1996d, 540, fig. 3.

²⁴ Reingruber et al. 2017, 44, fig. 13.

²⁵ Becker 1991; Jones – Halstead 1993; Becker 2000; re-evaluated by Halstead, this volume, 583–587.

²⁶ Elster 1994; published by Perlès-Papagiannaki, this volume 197–274. Also, Papagiannaki-Beyries, this volume, 275–288, Mazzucco, this volume, 289–290.

in UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles), for the warm hospitality in her beautiful, comfortable house facing the Pacific in Los Angeles during my lecture trips in the USA in 1984 and in 1991, and for her constant support and encouragement to pursue the publication of the excavation.

The study of the lithics was finally undertaken and completed for the final publication by Catherine Perlès. Beyond the thorough presentation of the flaked stone tools, Catherine Perlès with her expertise, offered invaluable help with her very useful discussions and suggestions, for the preparation of the present volume. I express to her also my grateful thanks.

Among the oldest collaborators, from the initial stages of the excavation, was the artist-conservator Christos Samaras, who offered invaluable help both at various stages of the excavation and later during the study of the finds for publication. Also, the archaeologist Maria Lakaki, who participated in the excavation at the period when the house model with the figurines inside came to light, stood out for her conscientious, careful and professional work. I owe to both of them special thanks.

One of the oldest collaborators is also Gerwulf Schneider (since 1979), who, under Heinrich Knoll, as mentioned above, undertook the great bulk of petrographic and chemical analyses of Neolithic pottery, work which was continued and will be presented in another volume of the PMZ publication. Also valuable has been the participation (since 1984) of Jean-Paul Demoule, assisted by Laurence Manolakakis, in the study of the pottery, particularly of the transitional period from the Middle to the Late Neolithic. A detailed examination of the pottery of this period from PMZ, with the use of the petrographic and chemical analyses, was made by Areti Pentedeka in her Ph.D. dissertation, who has undertaken the study of the pottery of PMZ for the final publication. I wish to stress at this point the very substantial contribution made by Karen Vitelli for understanding the technique of production of very special ceramic categories: scraped ware and grey ware (experimental archaeology). To all of them I express my warmest thanks.

Also, the work of Tjeerd van Andel and Curtis Runnels in the following year, after the end of the excavation, with the first ¹⁴C dates appearing in it, laid the foundation for a very extensive geoarchaeological²⁷ and geophysical investigation²⁸ as well as an extended series of ¹⁴C dates,²⁹ reports on which appear in the following chapters. I express to all of them my cordial thanks.

Finally, I express my grateful thanks to the Austrian Academy of Sciences and especially to dear Sigrig Jalkotzy (director emerita of the Mykenische Kommission of the Austrian Academy of Sciences), to Barbara Horejs (director of the Department of Prehistory & West Asian/Northeast African Archaeology of the Austrian Archaeological Institute, Austrian Academy of Sciences) and to Eva Alram-Stern (Department of Prehistory & West Asian/Northeast African Archaeology of the Austrian Archaeological Institute, Austrian Academy of Sciences) for undertaking the publication of the excavation of PMZ. In particular, I thank with all my heart Eva Alram-Stern who, responding to a proposal of mine, undertook the Heracleian task of organising the publication of the excavation: contacting and coordinating the colleagues who would study the various finds, organising and conducting additional research and investigations needed in view of the publication and finding the necessary funds for the whole task. It is difficult for me to find the appropriate words to thank her for the long and persistent work which was demanded, over the course of several years and sometimes in difficult and tiresome circumstances, bringing the whole task to a successful end. She even organised a very productive two-day workshop in the Austrian Academy of Science in Vienna, (on 9th–10th November 2017), where all the participants spoke about their contributions and discussed and exchanged ideas in view of the publication (Fig. I.13). I express my warmest thanks to all the contributors as an excavation is judged by its publication.

²⁷ Caputo et al., this volume, 35–63.

²⁸ Sarris et al., this volume, 64–80.

²⁹ Weninger et al., this volume, 183–195.



Fig. I.13 Participants of the conference on the results of the project ‘Platia Magoula Zarkou in Thessaly/Greece. Cultural Change during the 6th Millennium BC’, 9–10/11/2017 in Vienna. Left to right: Christoph Schwall, Anna Stroulia, Apostolos Sarris, Michael Brandl, Catherine Perlès, Gerwulf Schneider, Nina Kyparissi-Apostolika, Eva Alram-Stern, Loe Jacobs, Kostas Gallis, Giorgos Toufexis, Stella Souvatzi, Malgorzata Daszkiewicz, Christopher Britsch, Rozalia Christidou, Christos Batzelas, Riccardo Caputo, Bernhard Weninger (photo: F. Ostmann)

Closing this text, my mind goes to the person who has been steadily by my side throughout my entire archaeological career and beyond, to my wife Katerina. She shared my hopes and my anxieties and helped to overcome the various difficulties of my work; so, she was there right from the beginning of the excavation at PMZ. She was already at the excavation of the cremation cemetery, the publication of which I devoted to her. My mind goes also to my daughters Ioanna, a speech therapist; Irene, an archaeologist in the Greek Archaeological Service; and Eugenia, a dermatologist, in whose lives, during their childhood, they were deprived of time I should have devoted to them, being as I was, at times, almost totally absorbed by my work. I recall at this point a visit by Katerina and our daughters to Platia Magoula Zarkou at an early stage of the excavation. When we were leaving the site, a peasant, who was collecting watermelons in a nearby field, gave me a few watermelons. As I was putting them carefully in the car, my elder daughter Ioanna, at that time in primary school, commented, “Daddy’s excavation has been fruitful”.

