

Düring, Bleda

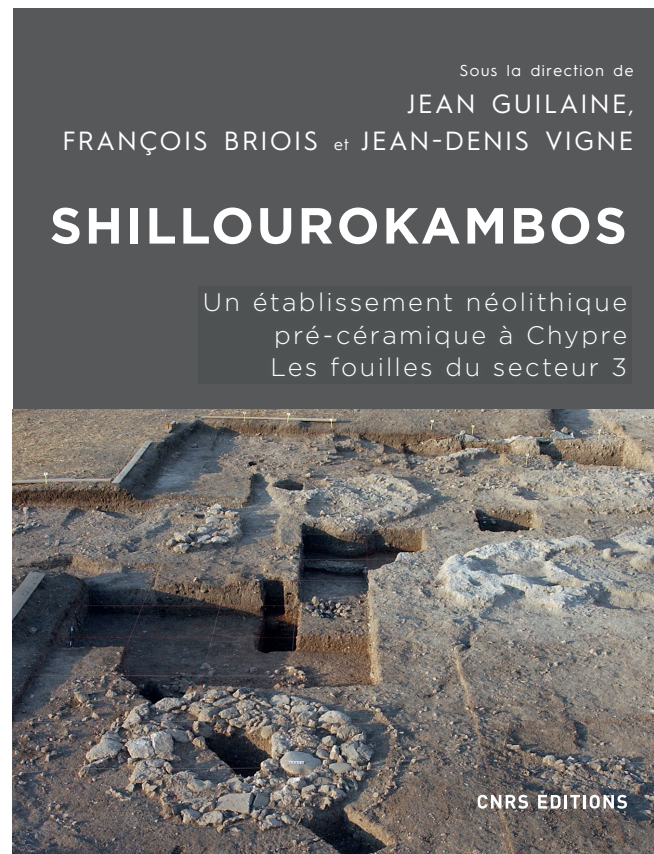
Review of Jean Guilaine, François Briois and Jean-Denis Vigne (eds.), 2021. *Shillourokambos. Un établissement néolithique pré-céramique à Chypre. Les fouilles du secteur 3*. Paris: Éditions CNRS. ISBN: 978-2-271-13063-1. € 49.

In the final years of the last millennium, a significant shift occurred in the archaeology of Cyprus, with the discovery of a previously unknown phase of the Neolithic, an aceramic phase which has since been designated the Cypriot Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (PPNB, c. 8500-7000 BCE). This period became known through the excavations at Kissonerga-Mylouthkia and Parekklisha-Shillourokambos, and two edited volumes appeared assessing these new discoveries in the early years of the new millennium (Swiny 2001; Peltenburg and Wasse 2004). I remember, as a student how exciting these developments were: even on an archaeologically well-investigated island such as Cyprus, sudden advances in our understanding of the past could occur.

It was also apparent why this phase had eluded archaeologists for so long. The PPNB data from Kissonerga-Mylouthkia derives almost exclusively from wells and pits found at the site (Croft 2013). At Parekklisha-Shillourokambos the remains of the early PPNB, located in Sector 1, are also quite ephemeral and include numerous enclosures, pits, and wells. However, for the later part of the PPNB, located in Sector 3 of the site, there are remains of buildings and structures, although often incomplete and in very shallow deposits. The team published the Sector 1 results in 2011 (Guilaine *et al.* 2011), and the book under discussion here presents the results of Sector 3. However, the two books should be considered as a set. Thus, in the first volume, some chapters discuss the discovery of the site, its geological setting, the broader context of prehistoric settlements, and where various excavation areas of the site are located. This essential information is also summarised in the second volume, but one really needs both volumes to make sense of the site.

The volume on Sector 3 is slightly less voluminous than that of Sector 1, being 'only' 775 pages instead of 1248! Still, it is a substantial book. It has been executed to very high standards, with a good layout and many very useful colour figures and photos to illustrate the features and finds discovered and printed on good quality paper. At the back of the volume, there is a number of fold-out maps in colour of Sector 3. All in all, this book is published to a high standard and is remarkably affordable, given its scope and execution.

Apart from a final synthetic chapter that is bi-lingual (English and French), the volume is written entirely in French. The book has a very clear, although not always logical, structure and all the chapters are well-written and illustrated. The book starts with a brief introduction to site phasing and the history of research. In the book's first part, all the structures, features, and con-



texts of Sector 3 are presented per period (early and later PPNB). These include hearth structures, wells, and small round platforms, whose purpose is not entirely clear. Apart from the wells (Fig. 1), all these structures are quite ephemeral, often standing a few centimetres high only and only partially preserved. The excavators must be applauded for their careful excavation work. All the same, how to understand these structures remains challenging, and this can be contrasted with the more recent data obtained at the same time at the PPNA site of Ayios Tichonas-Klimonas (Vigne *et al.* 2019).

In the second part of the volume, the stratigraphic sequence is presented, as well as the radiocarbon dates and the developments in various find categories, such as chipped stone and faunal remains. This is followed by the third part, which presents the botanical remains, building materials such as pisé with imprints, chipped stone, ground stone, stone vessels, beads, ornaments and figurines, shells, faunal remains, and worked bone. Subsequently, the section discusses human remains. This Chapter 45 discusses the inhumation of a young man and the cat that has become very famous (Fig. 2). The chapter structures in this part of the volume is somewhat confusing, for example, ecological data (botanical and faunal) are not clustered, and worked artefacts are presented as a material (worked bone is grouped after faunal remains), but one can find one's ways in the structure easily enough.

Finally, in the last part of the volume, there are several synthetic chapters on the Shillourokambos wells and cisterns, ornaments and figurative objects, and phasing. The very last chapter is, as already stated,

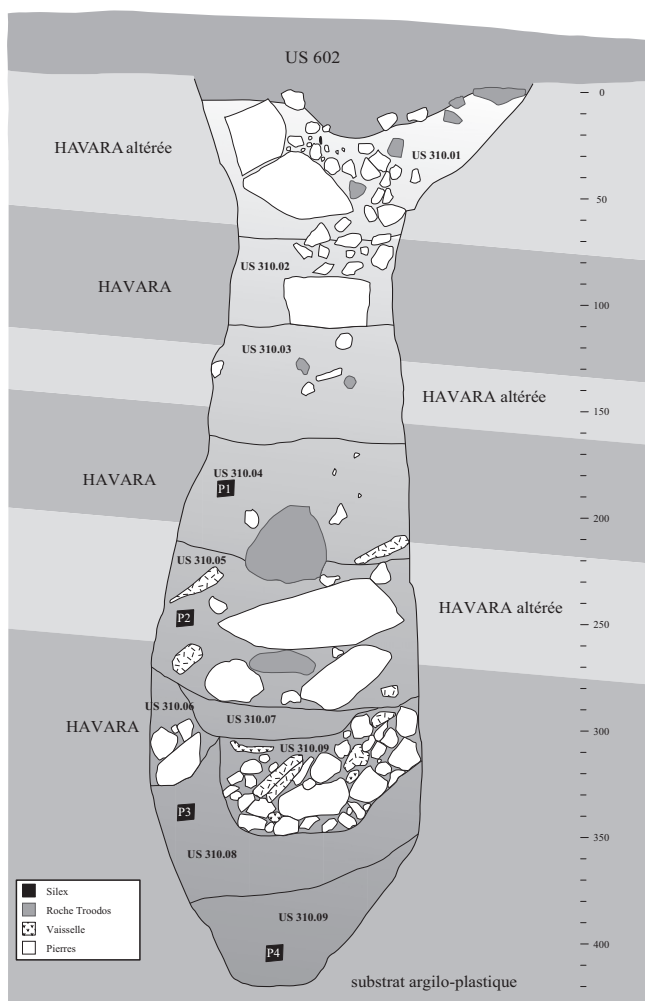


Fig. 1 A The well (US 310) seen from the bottom. Photo: J. Guilaine, Mission néolithisation, Collège de France. B Stratigraphy of the well's (US 310) filling. (Drawing: Y. Bellès, EHESS)

bi-lingual, and discusses the Shillourokambos results in the broader context of PPNB Cyprus. This is a very welcome synthetic evaluation of the site which will undoubtedly be the most consulted section of the volume, also because it is in English. This volume will have less impact than the earlier publication of Sector 1

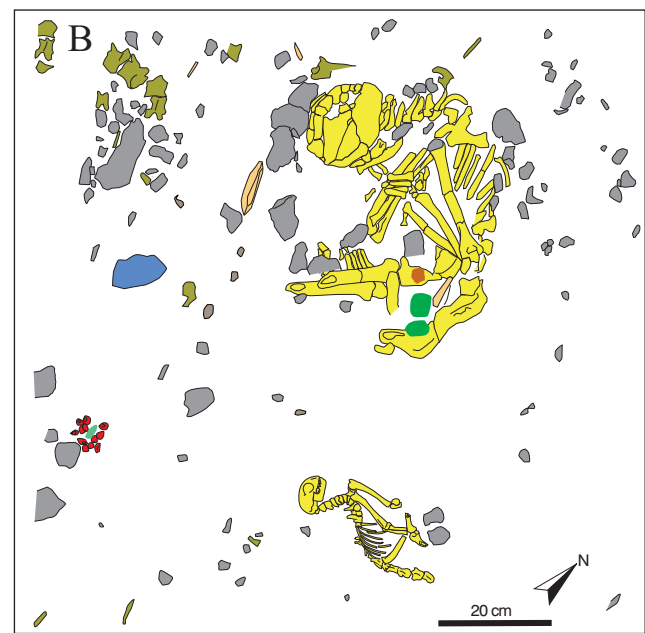


Fig. 2 A The inhumation of a young adult man (St 283) and a cat, which was uncovered only later next to the human burial (bottom right side), B drawing of the same burials. (Photo: P. Gérard, Collège de France, CAD: J.-D. Vigne, CNRS)

(Guilaine *et al.* 2011), which at the time was crucial in completely changing our understanding of the Cypriot Neolithic, but it is an important building stone for what happens next and up to the transition to the later Aceramic Neolithic of Cyprus (the Khirokitian), a topic that has recently become in the focus of research again (Clarke and Wasse 2019). This volume provides essential data on subsistence economy, especially on changes in the exploitation of animals, crucial funerary data, and evidence on structures, such as wells, pertaining to this later part of the PPNB sequence.

The primary purpose of a volume such as this one is to provide a transparent and clear resource for other researchers interested in particular aspects of the site (for example, the stone vessels), to see where objects were found, what materials they were made of, what their characteristics and dimensions were, *etc.* Here I felt that something is missing, as neither a list of contexts is provided in a table, nor is there – as far as I can see – an open access repository of the primary data. Thus, the challenge would be considerable for a research student interested in reconstructing in what types of contexts specific categories of objects were found. I recommend the authors to publish their primary data online for other researchers. Further, I think that the manner of presentation in this volume, with 50 chapters on specific categories, is suitable for those interested in specific matters, but it makes it hard to gain a general sense of the phasing and the developments at the site, in which these data are to be understood. Other than that, this is an exemplary publication of very high quality that I most happily recommend to all interested in prehistoric Cyprus and its connections. I applaud the Shillourokambos team for this achievement.

Bleda Düring

Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University
b.s.during@arch.leidenuniv.nl

References

- Clarke J. and Wasse A.
2019 Time out of joint: a re-assessment of the Cypriot Aceramic Neolithic site of Kalavassos-Tenta and its regional implications. *Levant* 51(1): 26-53.
- Croft P.
2003 The wells and other vestiges. In: E. Peltenburg (ed.), *The colonisation and settlement of Cyprus. Investigations at Kissonerga-Myllouthkia*: 3-9. Göteborg: Aström.
- Guilaine J., Briois F. and Vigne J.-D. (eds.)
2011 *Shillourokambos. Un établissement néolithique pré-céramique à Chypre. Les fouilles du secteur 1*. Paris: Éditions Errance.
- Peltenburg E. and Wasse A. (eds.)
2004 *Neolithic revolution, new perspectives on Southwest Asia in light of recent discoveries on Cyprus*. Oxford: Oxbow.
- Swiny S. (ed.)
2001 *The earliest prehistory of Cyprus, from colonization to exploitation*. Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research.
- Vigne J.-D., Briois F. and Guilaine J.
2019 Klimonas: the oldest Pre-Pottery Neolithic village in Cyprus. In: L. Astruc, C. McCartney, F. Briois and V. Kassianidou (eds.), *Near Eastern lithic technologies on the move. Interactions and contexts in Neolithic traditions*. Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology 150: 3-11. Nicosia: Aström.