

Vigla: Excavation Unit 1

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I. Introduction

Vigla EU 1 was excavated from May 30th-June 10th 2008. The unit produced a sizeable ceramic assemblage and metal, bone, shell, and rock material. The predominant feature uncovered was a .50-meter wide wall running roughly north/south through the trench. The trench appears to represent a single-phase habitation site dating from the Classical to Hellenistic periods. The excavation unit helped refine the chronology of Vigla and determine the relationship between the late antique period and the earlier Greek and Roman periods.

II. Location, Purpose, and Previous Work

Vigla EU 1 is situated at the following UTM coordinates: 1459 north, 1458 south, 4483 west, and 4488 east. It lies on the south central plateau of Vigla northwest of the lookout shed in the southeast corner of Vigla. In relation to other excavation units on the same site Vigla EU 1 is northeast of Vigla EU 2 (Kate's trench) and EU 4 (Maria's trench) and southeast of EU 3 (Mat's trench) (**CHECK THESE EU NUMBERS**).

The purpose of Vigla EU 1 was to ground truth the resistivity work initially conducted during the 2007 field season. Based on the maps created from the geophysical data and the interpretations of those involved, it was determined that the remains of an early Christian basilica were preserved on Vigla. Vigla EU 1 was positioned over what some believed was an apse of a basilica. The goal was to identify the apse and shed some light on the dimensions of the structure. Broader goals of the Vigla excavations include producing an artifact assemblage to compare to the survey assemblages in order to discuss a variety of themes concerning archaeological methodology, determine the relationships between the late antique phases and earlier Greek and Roman phases on Vigla, and further define Vigla's chronology.

Previous archaeological work on Vigla includes two pedestrian surveys and two geophysical investigations.¹ During the 2005 and 2007 field seasons, volunteers and staff conducted pedestrian surveys on the Vigla plateau. Field walkers were spaced 10 meters apart and instructed to survey the ground one meter to their left and one meter to their right, thus producing a 20% sample. Within this space surveyors counted every potsherd and tile fragment, collected every diagnostic piece of pottery (rims, bases, handles, toes, etc), and collected one representative artifact they encountered. Since artifact densities on the surface of Vigla were noticeably high, the surveys produced a sizable dataset for the site. The archaeological material recovered, in the broadest sense, favors the Classical and Hellenistic periods with comparatively low densities of Roman pottery and tile. Koutsopetria, the plain just south of Vigla, contains very high densities of Roman material.

During the 2007 and 2008 seasons John Hunt conducted geophysical analyses on Vigla using resistivity. The 2007 work produced the first evidence of a basilica-like structure on Vigla. The

¹ Since there was no collection associated with this year's practice survey, it will be omitted from this report.

maps created by Hunt produced what appeared to be an apse, colonnaded hall, and sizeable weight bearing walls. It is important to note here that immediately prior to the 2007 fieldwork Cyprus experienced heavy rains, which had a direct impact on the resolution of the resistivity. The 2008 geophysical campaign sought to re-identify the architectural features discovered last year. The geophysical data produced mixed results as the apse and all architectural features for that matter did not have the same resolution as the 2007 data. Cyprus experienced a massive drought during the 2008 field season, which again had a direct impact on the geophysical data. The geophysical maps produced in 2007 and 2008 were used as guides for the 2008 Vigla excavations. Vigla EU 1 sought to identify an apse while Vigla EU 2 sought to identify the southwest corner of the structure.

III. Methods of Excavation

The methods employed in Vigla EU 1 mirror those dictated in the PKAP excavation manual. Staff members defined the excavation unit by utilizing the geophysical maps and a Trimble R8 GPS. The corners of the 1X5 meter trench were marked with rebar and given UTM coordinates with the R8. An elevation datum was placed east of the trench and given an elevation, from which all elevations were taken during excavation.

The excavation strategy included stratigraphic excavation with a 20-centimeter arbitrary stop when needed. The two instances where Vigla EU 1 broke from the 20-centimeter arbitrary stop were SUs 5010 and 5017. In SU 5002 a large white rock appeared, which the excavators preserved until the bottom of SU 5008. The bottom of SU 5008 showed increasing quantities of mud brick. Since it became more and more difficult to excavate around the stone and it was believed that a floor surface would soon appear, the stone was removed and all the sediments below it were excavated as SU 5010. The depth of the sediments below the stone measured 54 centimeters.

The northeast corner of SU 5017 slopes to the east. In order to excavate to bedrock it was decided to forgo the 20-centimeter stop and continue SU 5017 to the extreme northeast corner of SU 5017 (approximately a 15X15 centimeter area) to completely expose the bedrock. SU 5017 was excavated to bedrock without an arbitrary stop and the depth in the extreme northeast corner measured at the greatest depth 39 centimeters.

All excavated material from Vigla EU 1 was screened through a .5X.5 centimeter screen with the exception of SUs 5001, 5002, and 5003. SU 5001 was literally an overburden layer. Within the 1X5 meter trench a total collection with a light scraping of surface artifacts was conducted. The overburden from the scraping was not screened. Early in the excavation the screening methodology changed. In the beginning all the material from SU 5002 and SU 5003 were screened through a fine mesh (1.5 mm). This proved to be too time consuming and unnecessary. Therefore, in order to continue screening 100% of the material and 100% artifact collection, it was decided that .5X.5 centimeter screens were more productive. The fine mesh screen, however, was used for sensitive contexts. Vigla EU 1 did not contain any sensitive contexts. Therefore, with the exception of the aforementioned units, the .5X.5 centimeter was used in all SUs.

The dates of excavation include May 30th, May 31st, June 2nd-June 6th, June 8th-June 10th. Depending on the day of excavation Jon Crowley, Dan Richards, Jenn Howell, Dallas DeFrost, Chris Gust, Jessica Freas, and Joe Kochinski worked in Vigla EU 1. Those who regularly worked in the unit included Jon, Dan, and Chris.

IV. Stratigraphy and Harris Matrix

Vigla EU 1 consists of 19 (5001-5019) separate SUs with eight distinctive strata. SU 5001, as noted above, constituted the surface layer with a light scraping. SU 5002 corresponds to the first stratum, which was a thin overburden/plow zone deposit measuring, on average, eight centimeters. The sediments spread equally throughout the trench on both sides of the wall (5003_f1). SU 5002 contained gravel to pebble sized clast and produced two bags of pottery, a few shells, and a few glass sherds. A large white rock (18x23 cm.), which as mentioned above was later removed, appeared in this layer. The SU was terminated when the excavators uncovered a new plow zone. Excavation began in SU 5002 with plow furrows oriented east/west and 5002 concluded when different plow furrows running north/south were encountered. I believe that the plow furrows oriented north/south mark the end of the plow zone and the beginning of non-agriculturally disturbed layers.

SUs 5003-5009 comprise the second stratum. The stratum consisted of gravel size clast and was much more compact than previous SUs. It produced 17 bags of pottery, stone, metal, shell, bone, and plaster remains. The artifact densities appeared to increase the further down in the stratum. It is a rather large deposit measuring approximately 40 centimeters in depth. The wall (5003_f1) was first identified in SU 5003 and continues to bedrock. After a 20-centimeter arbitrary break, SU 5003 was terminated. At this point separate SUs were assigned for each side of the wall. SU 5004 was a thin layer on the east side of the wall. The excavators interpreted a stratigraphic break based on softer soil with more inclusions. The change does not appear in the scarp wall and was likely a small pocket or lens. SUs 5005 (west of wall), 5006 (east of wall), and 5007 (west of wall) were 20-centimeter arbitrary breaks within the second stratum. SU 5008 (east side of wall) and 5009 (west side of wall) were terminated by a change in stratigraphy and constitute the bottom the second stratum. SU 5010 contained all the sediments beneath the white rock first identified in SU 5002 until the bottom of SU 5008. Excavators removed it as one layer measuring 54 centimeters. The artifact densities and sediment composition mirrored those found in the corresponding SUs on the east side of the wall.

The third stratum occurred only on the east side of the wall and consists of SUs 5011 and 5013. Significant pockets of mud brick first occurred in SU 5011. Artifact densities in SU 5011 were high with 6 bags of ceramics and bone, metal, and shell remains. SU 5011 was terminated at an arbitrary 20-centimeter level. At the close of SU 5011 a few large stones were uncovered in the eastern scarp wall. SU 5013, which terminates at a floor surface, produced a diverse artifact assemblage. Ceramic finds are still relatively high with two bags but metal and bone finds increased greatly. A more in-depth discussion of the finds can be found below.

The fourth stratum occurred only on the west side of the wall and comprises SU 5012. SU 5012 consisted of primarily pebble-sized stones. Artifact densities were low and no mud brick was

found in this layer. When the excavator uncovered bedrock and a potential foundation trench for the wall the SU was terminated.

The fifth and sixth strata comprise SUs 5014 and 5015. Both SUs were interpreted as foundation trenches for the wall, 5014 in the west and 5015 in the east. The sediments in SU 5014 directly resemble those found in SU 5012 and artifact densities are low. SU 5015 was very similar to the sediments from 5016. Artifact densities were lower compared to previous layers and many cobble-sized stones have appeared.

The seventh stratum identified consists of SUs 5016, 5017, and 5019. The base of SU 5013 and top two centimeters of SU 5016 represented a floor surface. Since the floor was so thin and difficult to identify while excavating SU 5016, the two-centimeter thick floor and a significant amount of the floor fill were excavated in the same unit. Photographs of the cleaned floor surface were taken (5013_p1 and p2). SU 5016 was an arbitrary 20-centimeter break. SU 5017 was excavated to bedrock though the eastern portion of the trench except the southeast corner where a new stratum (SU 5018) was identified. After SU 5018 was excavated, the material below it was identified as SU 5019. SU 5019 consisted of the same types of sediment and similar artifact densities as SUs 5016 and 5017 and is likely the same deposit. The stratum below the floor surface produced lower artifact densities and several cobble-sized stones. The sediments were not as firm as previous SUs and the sediments were darker in color. Stratum seven may represent fill used to level out a floor surface.

The eighth and final stratum identified in Vigla EU 1 corresponded to SU 5018. SU 5018 was a very dark ashy layer of soft sediments. The sediments were so loose that a broom and dustpan were used to excavate them. 5018 produced higher quantities of bone and coarseware pottery.

V. Features

The only feature identified in Vigla EU 1 was the rock wall (5003_f1). The wall is oriented north/south at about a 110-degree angle from the south. The primary rock size is cobble ranging between 10-20 centimeter in size that are roughly hewn and bounded with a mortar composite. There is no evidence that the wall had any type of facing. The construction is rough face and random course in style. The width of the wall is approximately 50 centimeters and stands almost a meter high. It was constructed on what appears to be a natural trough of bedrock. A discussion of the wall can be found in the SU 5003 form. Drawings of the wall, other than plan views, were completed and titled "Eastern Face of Wall" and "Western Face of Wall." The wall occurs in SUs 5003-5016.

VI. Finds

The ceramic material, I believe, are primarily Classical to Hellenistic in date. The pottery forms include cooking wares and storage vessels. A small amount of fine wares were discovered including some black glazed pottery. The most prevalent and distinguishable style was a green colored coarse ware. There was a sizeable assemblage of bone, stone, and shell remains. Close to the floor surface the excavators uncovered lead and iron material.

FS 5005_1001: Rim sherds, a large handle, and a body sherd all associated with one vessel, possibly a large basket-handled storage jar.

FS 5013_1001: Large body sherd of a storage vessel with attached handle.

FS 5013_1002: Lead circular piece, possibly a plume.

FS 5013_1003: Coin

FS 5013_1004: Coin

FS 5013_1005: Long piece of metal (20 cm) most likely iron.

FS 5013_1006: Coin

FS 5016_1001: Lead projectile

FS 5016_1002: Long barbed lead shaft.

Other significant finds include a coin recovered from the screen in SU 5013 and a broken lead sling-bullet also found in the screen in SU 5016.

VII. Interpretative Conclusions

Based on a careful consideration of the stratigraphy and preliminary analyses of the material remains, it appears that Vigla EU 1 was a single-phase domestic space dating to the Classical and Hellenistic periods. The material west of the wall represent sediments on the exterior of the building while those in the east constitute an interior space based on the presence of a clear floor surface and higher artifact densities. I believe SU 5012 represents a cultural fill of the wall foundation trench, which extends more than 30 centimeters up the wall. Therefore, SU 5012 and 5014 represent a large single deposit representing a foundation trench and fill used to stabilize the western side of the wall. On the east side of the wall I believe SUs 5015, 5016, 5017, and 5019 represent an attempt to level a space for a floor surface. Like the deposits on the west side, the aforementioned SUs also represent a foundation trench and fill. The top two centimeters of SU 5016 constituted a floor surface (10YR 5/5). SU 5018 is an ashy deposit and potentially represents some type of pit or ash filled deposit also used to help level the floor. The stratum penetrates SUs 5016 and 5017 from the southeast side. SUs 5011 and 5013 were full of mud brick deposits (5YR 5/8) suggesting that a mud brick wall stood on top of the stonewall and collapsed eastward onto the floor surface. The presence of charcoal and ashy colored deposits suggest some type of destruction. SUs 5003-5009 may represent both a natural and cultural fill of the site with natural sediments and cultural material. The layer is fairly thick and contains a solid and easily definable stratigraphic layer. SU 5002 merely corresponds to the plow zone.

VIII. Appendices

Drawings

5001_d1

5002_d1

5003_d1

5004_d1

5005_d1

5007_d1

5011_d1

5013_d1

5014_d1

5017_d1

South Scarp Wall
North Scarp Wall
East Scarp Wall
West Scarp Wall
Eastern Face of Wall (5003_f1)
Western Face of Wall (5003_f1)

Photographs

5001_p1, p2, p3, and p4.
5002_p1, p2, p3, and p4.
5003_p1, p2, p3, and p4.
5004_p1, p2, p3, and p4.
5005_p1, p2, p3, and p4.
5006_p1 and p2.
5007_p1, p2, p3, and p4.
5008_p1 and p2.
5009_p1 and p2.
5010_p1 and p2.
5011_p1, p2, p3, and p4.
5012_p1 and p2.
5013_p1 and p2.
5014_p1 and p2.
5015_p1 and p2.
5016_p1 and p2.
5017_p1 and p2.
5018_p1 and p2.
5019_p1 and p2.