

PHAISTOS – AREA SOUTH OF COURT LXX: BETWEEN PROTOPALATIAL AND EARLY IRON AGE

UNIVE activity in 2013

In order to clarify some issues and create the conditions for closer and more systematic exploration of the area to the South and South West of the Palace of Phaistos (Fig. 1, 2, 7), it was decided to carry out a thorough cleaning (Fig. 5) in the area that includes, among other things, the south western sector of the so-called Geometric Village, including several rooms and even outdoors, retrieved by Levi during the excavation campaigns of 1956, 1957 and 1958 (D. Levi, *ASAtene* XXXV-XXXVI, 1957-58, pp. 255-283; *ASAtene* 1961-62, pp. 377-378; Id., *Festòs e la civiltà minoica*, I, Roma 1976, pp. 421-447, 449-456, tav. AA).

Other important investigations in areas immediately adjacent have been carried out more recently by V. La Rosa (Nuovi dati sulla via di ascensione alla collina del palazzo festio dall'età minoica alla geometrica, *Creta Antica* 6, 2005, pp. 227-277).

A noticeable fact in the whole area is the absence of traces related to the Neopalatial period and also to the later phases of the Bronze Age. This part of the hill was occupied again only at the beginning of the Iron Age.

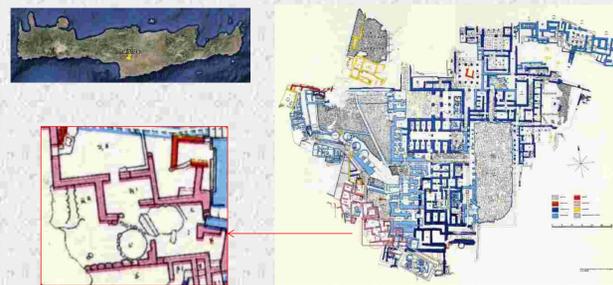


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

The boundary of the so-called "Cave M" was just profiled and the area south east of it, referred to as "area N" or "Conca N", was cleaned very carefully.

The latter should match the original entrance for access to the Cave M, obstructed by a collapse, of which some parts are made visible. The western side, corresponding to the area of the collapse, and probably the original entrance, was blocked with a drywall, the upper part of which is still visible. The "Cave M" to be placed in MM IIB period, was restored, after the collapse of the natural rock ceiling, with a drywall construction, and maybe a built roof. It probably went out of use until the end of the period, perhaps coinciding with the partial destruction of South East wing of the Palace. Not being able to proceed with the removal of the filling done by Levi at the end of his excavations, we tried to clarify the relationship of this cavity with adjacent Protopalatial structures, partly compromised by the construction of several buildings and, maybe, a paved ramp, all dating to the Early Iron Age.

In fact, "Cave M" is located along the southern limit of Court LXX, the lowest of the three outer Courts on the west side of the palatial building. The cleaning in the area L, northeast of "Cave M", brought to light the remains of a drainage channel, which has been cleaned up and contained MM IIB sherds (Fig. 4). The channel was in connection with a thick wall, later concealed by a coating masonry, probably of the Geometric period.

A cleaning of the upper part of the inner structure that emerged just to the north of the coating in relation to the surviving slabs of the pavement of Court LXX, appeared as part of a terrace wall, probably built to support the paved platform of Court LXX, and sharply cut off to the west by the excavation done in the Geometric period for the construction, at a lower level, of Room R3. The few fragments recovered can be dated between AM III and MM IA periods (Fig. 3), and since they are associated with some MMIB fragments, the ceramic facies well suited to the laying of the paving, which coincides with the foundation of the Palatial building.

On the basis of data collected by Doro Levi "Cave M", placed on the outside of the terrace wall of Court LXX, and at a lower level, would probably be a modest cult place. It was located on the access path to Court LXX, a meeting point for those who attained the area of the Palace from the South (cf. P. Militello, *Emerging Authority: A Functional Analysis of the MM II Settlement of Phaistos*, in J. M. Driessen, I. Schoep, P. Tomkins, *Back to the Beginning: Reassessing Social and Political Complexity on Crete during the Early and Middle Bronze Age*, Oxford 2011, p. 232) and in close proximity to a major house, also dated to the Protopalatial period, built immediately to the South of the Palace (Militello, *ibid.*, p. 245).



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

A general survey of the area shows interesting elements, possibly connected to a large paved ramp of the Geometric period. The Ramp, of which a terrace wall on the south side is preserved, had obliterated "Cave M" and the surrounding area to join the space in front of the geometric Room R3 and Room G, a building for craft activities, including a potter's kiln, installed close to the south side of the ruins of the Minoan palace.

A review of the levels will confirm this hypothesis, which finds some support in old photographs of the Levi's excavations, where several slabs appear, that can be appropriate to a pavement, now partly removed in the old digs. A more precise measurement of the structures was started, to make up for the gaps in the plans published by Levi, highlighting many elements, neglected by the former digger. In particular, the remains of the paved ramp and several collapses recorded as wall structures.

The field work has allowed us to date more precisely some walls (Fig. 5) and to reopen some problems regarding the two main periods of occupation of the area.

Prof. Filippo M. Carinci (e-mail: carfilm@unive.it)

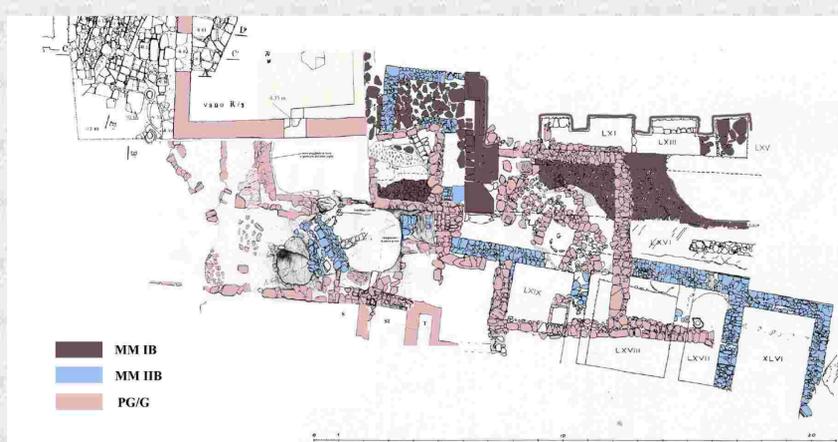


Fig. 6



Fig. 7

Protogeometric and Geometric Phaistos (PhD Research Project, Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

During Protogeometric and Geometric period there's a great Phaistian expansion in contradiction with the traditional idea of decay usually connected with the 'Dark Age'. Main discoveries were made by the Italian Doro Levi during the 1950s and 1960s, but more recently new PG and G sites have been discovered by local authorities.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

There are both settlements (the 'Geometric Village' to the SW of the Palace in Figs. 2,3, the villages of Chalara and Ayia Photini) and burials (the 'Tomb of the Mill' and the 'Tomb of the Road', some burials near the modern towns of Ayios Ioannis and Petrokephali, the PG Tomb of Kaliviani, a Geometric *tholos*, etc.).

Nevertheless, in Cretan puzzle Phaistos is a piece still missing: incompleteness in publication is the main obstacle to understanding the role of Phaistos during the PG and G period. The aim of this project is a general and methodical revision of PG and G sites and findings (mainly pottery, Fig 1) in order to shed light on the Phaistian 'Dark Age'.

Simona Aluia (e-mail: simonaaluia@libero.it)

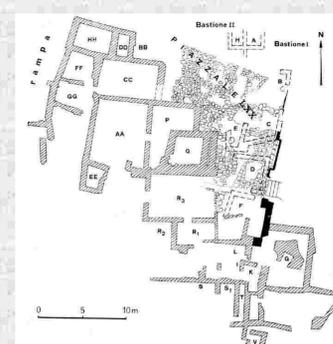


Fig. 3