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Living, Dying and Praying on a Cretan mountain in the Late Bronze Age – Early Iron Age period

Florence Gaignerot-Driessen

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Γ' ΔΙΕΘΝΕΣ ΔΙΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΟ
ΣΥΜΠΟΣΙΟ
Λαμία 2018

3RD INTERNATIONAL
INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLOQUIUM
Lamia 2018

Η ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑ
ΤΟΥ ΜΥΚΗΝΑΪΚΟΥ ΚΟΣΜΟΥ

*Πρόσφατα ευρήματα
και πορίσματα της έρευνας*

THE PERIPHERY
OF THE MYCENAEAN WORLD
Recent discoveries and research results

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ΚΑΙ ΑΘΛΗΤΙΣΜΟΥ
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ΦΘΙΩΤΙΔΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΥΡΥΤΑΝΙΑΣ

MINISTRY OF CULTURE
AND SPORTS
GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF
ANTIQUITIES AND CULTURAL
HERITAGE
EPHORATE OF ANTIQUITIES
OF FTHIOTIDA AND EVRYTANIA

ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ

PROCEEDINGS



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Πρόσφατα ευρήματα και πορίσματα της έρευνας
Λαμία, 18-21 Μαΐου 2018

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Επιμέλεια
ΕΦΗ ΚΑΡΑΝΤΖΑΛΗ

Edited by
EFI KARANTZALI

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LIVING, DYING AND PRAYING ON A CRETAN MOUNTAIN IN THE LATE BRONZE AGE TO EARLY IRON AGE PERIOD

Florence Gaignerot-Driessen

Building on, in time and space, the scope of Driessen's paper in this volume, this contribution considers the wider Mirabello region, where the site of Sissi is located (Fig. 1), and in particular the Anavlochos ridge of mountains, which overlooks the coastal plain of Sissi and where fieldwork has been carried out for the last four years (2015-2018) under the auspices of the French School at Athens.¹ First Anavlochos is placed in context within the Mirabello region from a geographical and historical point of view, and then a more detailed presentation of recent research here is presented.

The Mirabello region in the LM IIIA2-LM IIIC periods

The Mirabello region is an area of physical transition between central and eastern Crete, which has been intensively explored by archaeological surveys and excavations since the beginning of the 20th century.²

In LM IIIA2-LM IIIB, i.e. after the collapse of the Palace of Knossos around 1350 BC, the settlement pattern in this region offers a picture of small and dispersed settlements, situated mainly on the coast (Fig. 1).³ These generally reoccupy in an intermittent manner the sites where larger old settlements of the Neopalatial period existed, such as Sissi, Gournia or Mochlos. However, this dispersed pattern is not to be

correlated with isolation, since imports from other regions of the island, and also from the Levant, Cyprus, the Cyclades and the Mycenaean mainland were recovered from both the domestic and funerary assemblages. Some graves and residences that are clearly richer than the others suggest the existence of a social hierarchy, but it remains difficult to assess the nature and importance of the political authority in charge of these small centres. We find no evidence for any sophisticated or centralized political organization: the sites are small and no clear hierarchical or polarizing network is detectable. Neither do the settlements show any urban planning nor are the funerary practices extremely varied. So it would seem that in the aftermath of the dissolution of the centralized palatial administration, the political power was shattered and divided into small independent centres, which remained, however, embedded in a network of dynamic exchanges and thus open to the external influences of the wider Aegean world.

At the end of LM IIIB, most of these coastal sites are abandoned in favour of hilly terrain further inland (Fig. 2).⁴ The location of these newly founded settlements was traditionally put down to the fear caused by pirate raids or larger invasions from the sea.⁵ Still, we observe that some harbour sites, such as Elias to Nisi,⁶ also developed during LM IIIC. And imports are yet represented in the ceramic assem-

1. Since 2015, the Anavlochos Project has been generously supported by the French School at Athens, the Institute for Aegean Prehistory, the Mediterranean Archaeological Trust, Archéologie et Patrimoine en Méditerranée, the Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique, the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, the Cyprus Institute, the Humboldt Foundation, the Universities of North Carolina, Stanford, Heidelberg, Cardiff, Louvain, Bordeaux-Montaigne, Paris-Sorbonne, Lorraine and the Paul and Andrée Faure travel grant.
2. On the archaeological fieldwork conducted in the Mirabello

region, see GAIGNEROT-DRIESSEN 2016a, 28-31, 186-445 and map 3.

3. For a summary on the LM IIIA2-LM IIIB periods in the Mirabello region, see GAIGNEROT-DRIESSEN 2016a, 51-56, 169-170.
4. For a summary on the Late Minoan IIIB/C period in the Mirabello region, see GAIGNEROT-DRIESSEN 2016a, 56-71, 170-172.
5. See e.g. NOWICKI 2000; KANTA 2003.
6. For a presentation of Elias to Nisi, see HAYDEN 2001; 2005, Site catalogue 24-26.

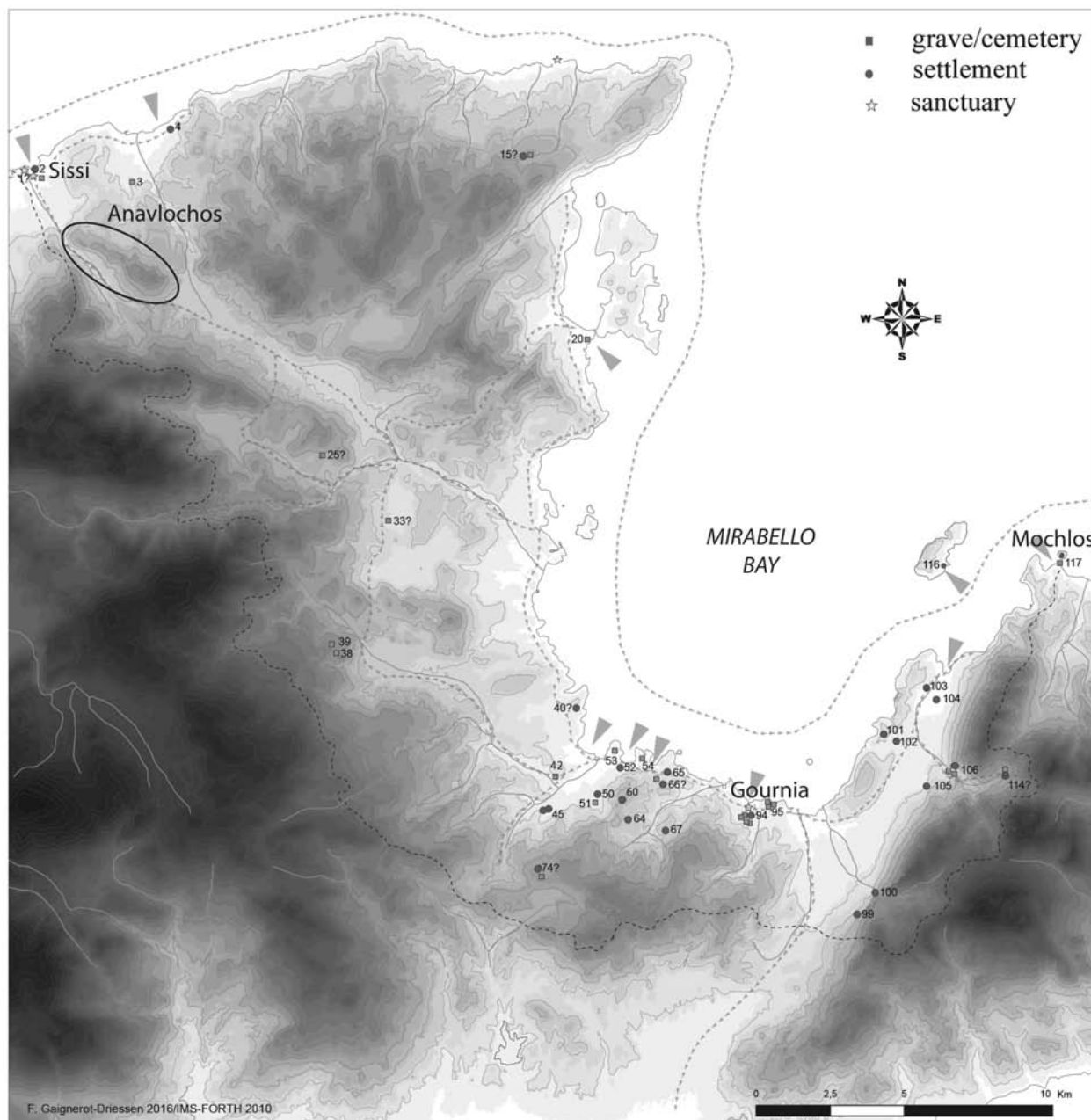


Fig. 1. The Mirabello region in LM IIIA2 (author/IMS-FORTH).

blages, clearly showing that trade with the Aegean world was not totally interrupted. Moreover, there is no evidence of sudden attacks, violent destructions or hasty desertions in the LM IIIB levels of the coastal sites. With regard to the new upland sites, then, their identification as refuge settlements now appears pred-

icated more on historical arguments and events: the interpretation of archaeological data sometimes seems to have been unduly influenced by this historical preconception.⁷ These sites need to be reconsidered in the light of a systematic archaeology of refuge sites, something still missing in our field.

7. This view is clearly set forth in HAGGIS 2001.

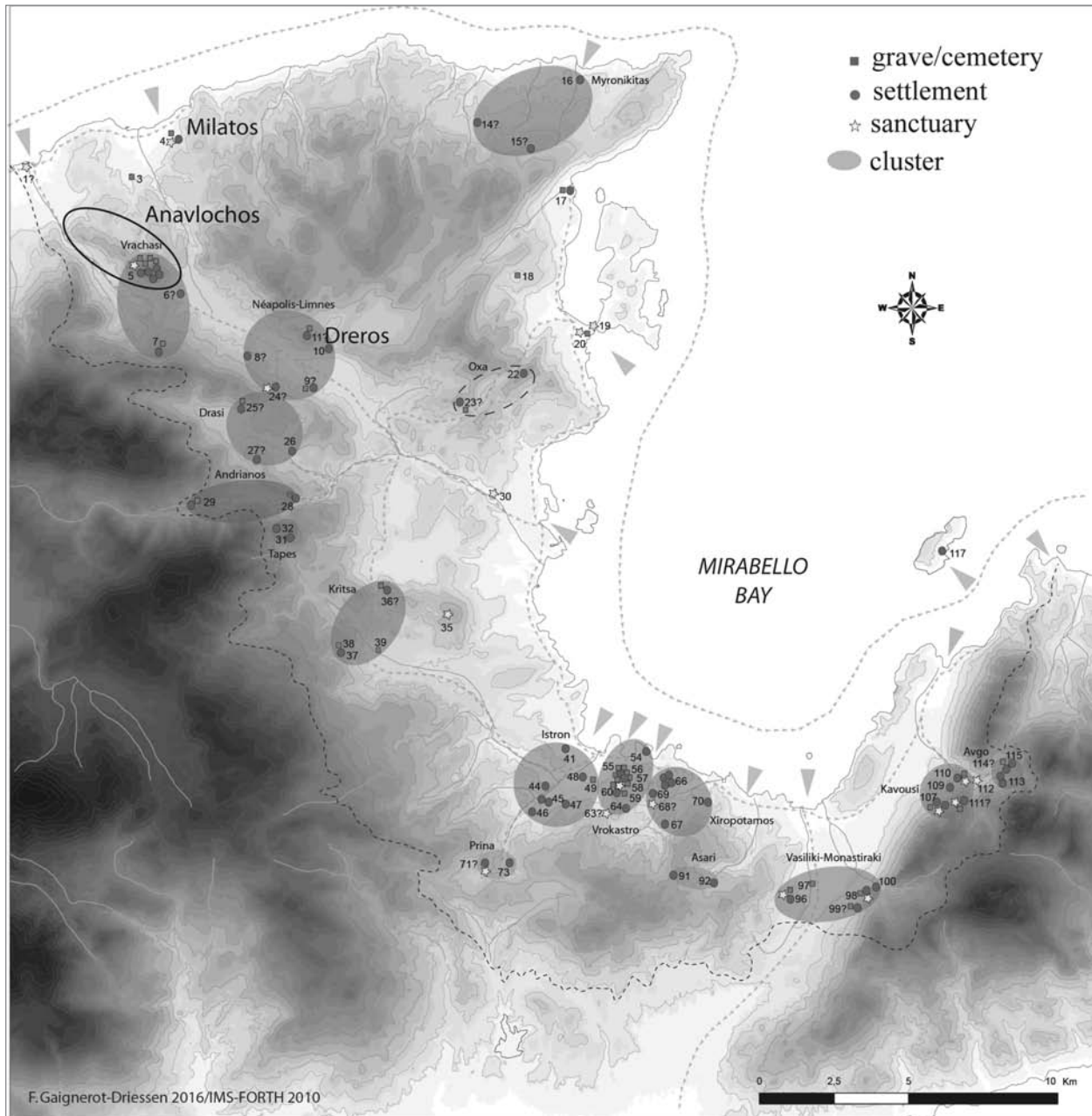


Fig. 2. The Mirabello region in LM IIIC (author/IMS-FORTH).

A series of natural topographical criteria and archaeological correlates may be proposed to identify a fear of danger and to place the identification of refuge sites on firmer ground. These include: 1) access to the so-called refuge site from the original settlement, but also with the existence of possible retreats in case of an attack; 2) chronological gaps in the site stratigraphy, attesting intermittent occupation; 3) a limited and intensive expansion of the settlement evidencing a

dense occupation; 4) rudimentary architecture showing limited investment and reflecting the temporary nature of the settlement; 5) availability of natural resources in the immediate vicinity of the site and space dedicated to storage; 6) natural defensible qualities and protecting arrangements, that is defence or fortification walls, bastions and gates; 7) possession of a good range of view over the landscape, and at the same time, being hidden from view in the landscape.



Fig. 3. Anavlochos and the peak of Vigla from Dreros.

If we examine the LM IIIC settlements of the Mirabello region, none of them really satisfies these criteria of identification.⁸ Although located in defensible positions, these settlements betray neither the presence of fear, nor the temporary nature that should characterize refuge sites. Rather than insecurity, a variety of other motives – be they climatic, demographic or of a political nature – can be invoked to explain the withdrawal from the coasts towards more inland and mountainous locations. The LM IIIC settlements cluster around main axes of communication and overlook valuable agro-pastoral land. Although their modest and approximately similar size does not allow a hierarchy to be identified, their implementation suggests some degree of economic cooperation at the scale of the cluster to which they belong. It is also striking that, far from being hidden, the distinctive peaks or hills occupied most of the time enjoy noticeable locations, allowing them to control as well as structure the landscape (Fig. 3). They actually appear more as markers in the terrain rather than as refugee hide-outs.

In addition, and in contrast with the previous period, the LM IIIC excavated settlements, such as Chalasmenos or Vronda, do present clear urban planning, including public spaces with economic, social, or religious purposes.⁹ Architectural analyses conducted at Vronda have recognized successive phases of extension of the residential blocks, achieved by replication and agglutination of the basic unit.¹⁰ This resulted in the creation of separate co-residential blocks, housing distinct groups, most probably kin-affiliated. This hypothesis is reinforced by contemporary funerary and cult practices. The existence in the Vronda area of distinct cemeteries and separate tholos tombs with multiple burials suggests lineage-based customs.¹¹ Communal free-standing bench sanctuaries are also built within the LM IIIC villages, housing distinct ritual sets of offerings, each comprising a terracotta female figure with upraised arms and associated ritual vessels. These probably reflect the existence of separate social groups.¹² LM IIIC communities therefore already show a new socio-political organization and

8. For a reassessment of LM IIIC refuge sites and a detailed analysis of the sites located in the Mirabello region, see GAIGNEROT-DRIESSEN 2016a, 59-63.

9. On the settlement at Chalasmenos, see TSIPOPOULOU 2011a; 2011b; GAIGNEROT-DRIESSEN 2016a, 364-372. On the settlement at Vronda, see DAY *et al.* 2016; DAY, GLOWACKI 2012;

DAY, KLEIN, TURNER 2009; GAIGNEROT-DRIESSEN 2016a, 383-397.

10. GLOWACKI 2012, 134-141 and bibliography.

11. HAGGIS 2001, 50; 2005, 83.

12. This hypothesis is presented in GAIGNEROT-DRIESSEN 2014; 2016b.

seem to be an integral part of a new strategy of subsistence and land use.

This relatively rapid recovery probably indicates that prior to the 'collapse' Crete was not solely reliant on a palace-centred administration and economy, but that there also existed local dominant groups which were not seriously affected by the destruction of the palace at Knossos.¹³ The existence of local leaders, the *qa-si-re-we*, interacting with the palatial administration, is attested in the Knossian tablets. One can argue that these men and their households survived the collapse and perhaps even benefited from the dissolution of the palatial administration.

It is to this general context of occupation and socio-political reorganization in LM IIIC that the recent fieldwork conducted on the Anavlochos ridge makes interesting contributions.

The Anavlochos ridge

General overview

Anavlochos consists of a 5km long crest of limestone (aligned north-west to south-east) that extends above the village of Vrachasi (Lasithi, Crete) (Figs 1-3). This naturally defensible ridge, which controls the major communication axis linking central and eastern Crete, was first settled around 1200 BC, when the coastal site of Sissi was deserted. The settlement on the Anavlochos was in its turn abandoned at the very beginning of the 7th century BC, that is when the nearby cities of Dreros and Milatos (Fig. 2) started to develop.

History of research

The first excavations on Anavlochos were carried out by French archaeologist Pierre Demargne under the auspices of the French School at Athens. In August 1929, Demargne excavated for five days, revealing six Geometric houses in the settlement at the central valley of the mountain, a series of LM IIIC-Late Geometric graves at the foot of this settlement and, on the steep

slope overlooking this cemetery, at a place called for obvious reasons *Kako Plaï*, a votive deposit, including LM IIIC to Classical material (Fig. 4).¹⁴ During the last decade, rescue excavations were undertaken by the Archaeological Service of Lasithi.¹⁵ Since 2015, this work on the Anavlochos ridge was resumed under the auspices of the French School at Athens. After a two-year (2015-2016) archaeological, topographical and geomorphological survey of the massif, a five-year (2017-2021) programme of excavations was started in 2017.¹⁶

Preliminary results

of the 2015-2018 fieldwork

Anavlochos remained settled until the beginning of the 7th century BC, while its cult places continued to be visited until the Classical period, but this paper focuses on its first phase of occupation, in the Late Bronze Age, and considers successively its settlements, cemetery and cult places.

From the first results of the survey, it appears that different LM IIIB-LM IIIC hamlets or farmsteads were established on the ridge, generally in the highest positions. All of these seem to have been abandoned at the end of the period, except for the one, or the ones, located in the central valley (Fig. 4). From the Protogeometric period onward and lasting to the beginning of the 7th century BC, a large settlement of at least 10ha existed here, while massive terrace walls were constructed in the Late Geometric period. Thus the Anavlochos ridge remained inhabited and its occupation developed continuously over six centuries.

The cemetery area spreads at the foot of the settlement of the central valley, over an area of about 12ha. Most of the graves reported by Demargne in 1929¹⁷ are very poorly preserved or entirely destroyed, as they have badly suffered since the 19th century from plundering, cultivation work and the widening of the modern road which runs through the middle of the cemetery. During the 2015-2016 survey, we were able to locate most of those originally excavated, as

13. BENNET 1987; HALSTEAD 1992; SMALL 1999.

14. DEMARGNE 1931; PILZ, KRUMME 2011; PILZ, KRUMME 2013.

15. I would like to warmly thank our colleagues of the Ephorate of Lasithi, Chrysa Sofianou and Vaso Zographaki for inviting me to take part in these rescue excavations in 2012 and 2014 and entrusting me with the study and publication of the pot-

tery. See ZOGRAPHAKE *et al.* 2012-2013.

16. GAIGNEROT-DRIESEN *et al.* 2014-2015; GAIGNEROT-DRIESEN, JUDSON, VLACHOU forthcoming; GAIGNEROT-DRIESEN *et al.* in preparation.

17. DEMARGNE 1931.

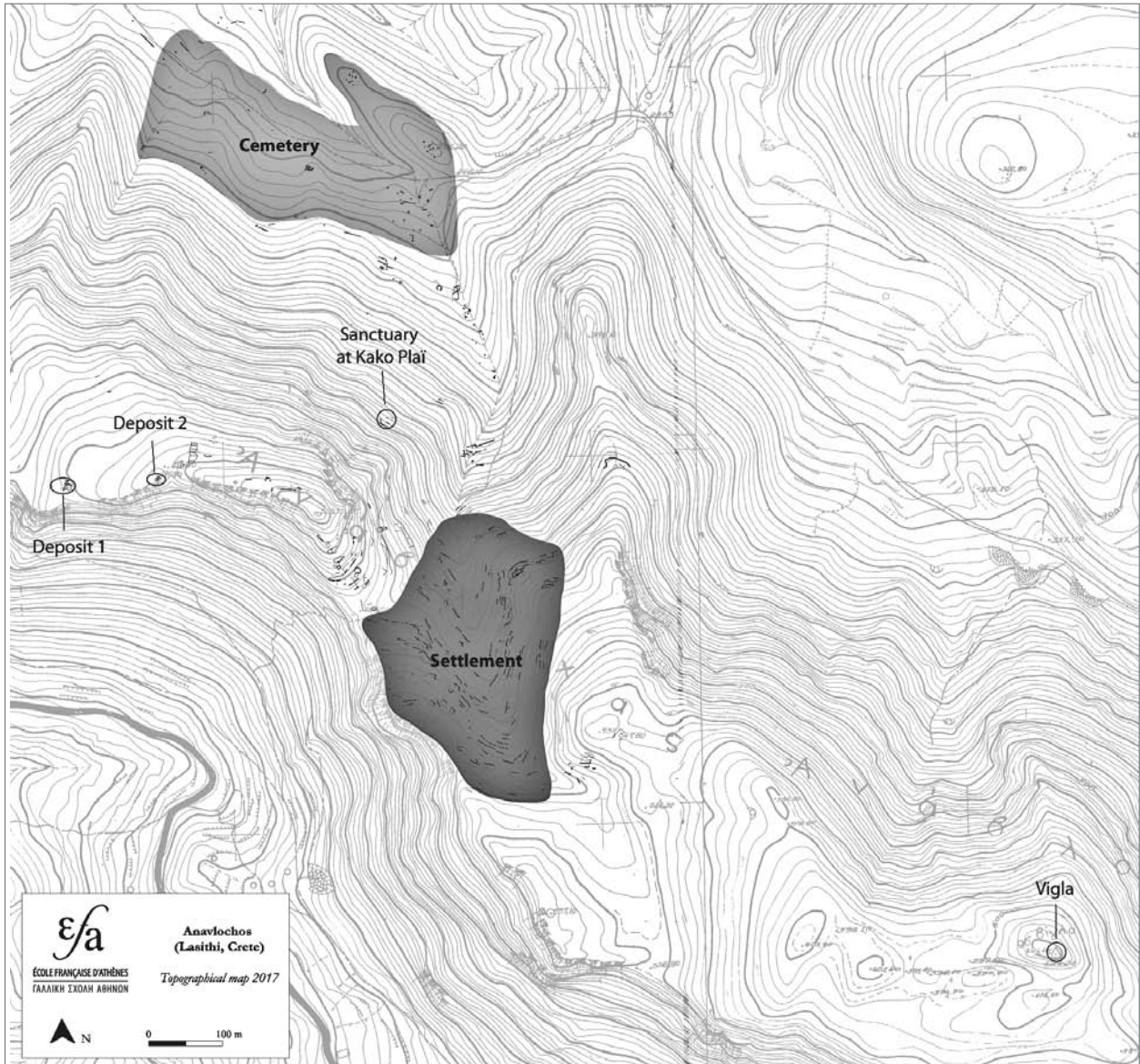


Fig. 4. Anavlochos topographical map (EFA/Anavlochos Project).

well as many others. All together, we identified ten eight tumuli located on the tops of small hills or on the successive terraces of the slopes. Some LM IIIC material was collected, but most of it is Late Geometric, including finely decorated vessels and fragments of iron swords. A part from the tumuli, a variety of burials is attested, among them small tholos tombs, burial enclosures and pit graves, but their very poor state of preservation generally does not allow one to propose a secure date of use. However, the general or-

ganization of the cemetery in small groups of graves most likely reflects the existence of separate social groups; we tentatively hypothesize that their origin is related to the different LM IIIC communities established in a dispersed way along the Anavlochos ridge.

Three cultic places – namely two votive deposits and a sanctuary – were also reinvestigated or discovered during the 2015-2016 survey and subsequently excavated in 2017-2018.¹⁸

An LM IIIC settlement existed just below the

18. GAIGNEROT-DRIESSEN 2018.

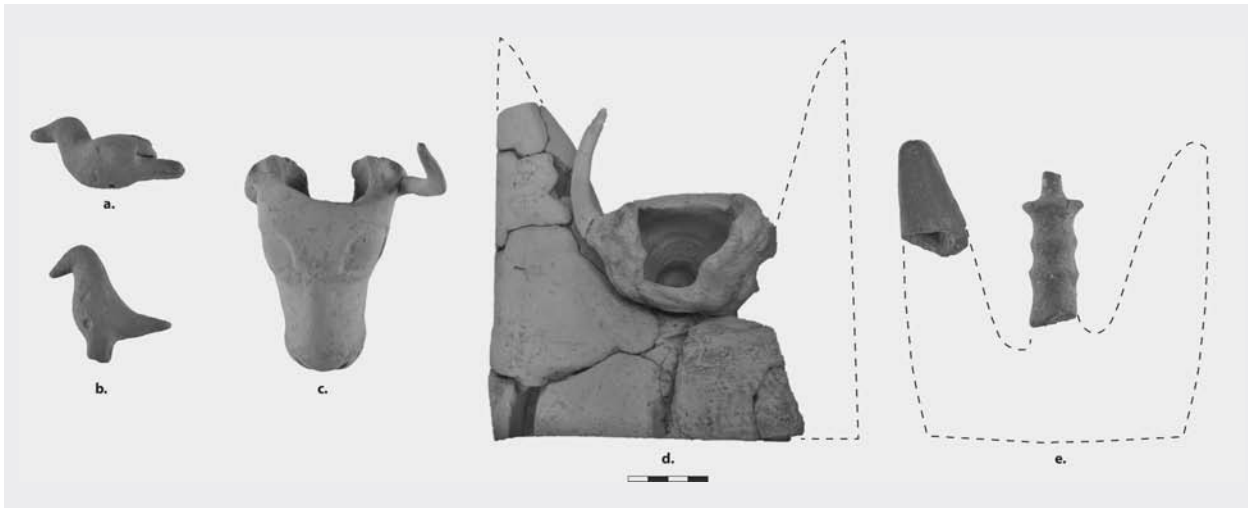


Fig. 5. Material from Deposit 2 (EFA/Ch. Papanikolopoulos and author).

Minoan peak sanctuary of Vigla, the easternmost, highest and most distinctive summit of the ridge (Figs 3-4). Although Vigla is visually striking and still yielded sherds, fragments of figurines and pebbles during the surface reconnaissance in 2014, it was not reused in LM IIIC.¹⁹ Rather, an LM IIIC open-air sanctuary was established at the western part of the ridge, on a small rocky peak, about an hour's walk from Vigla itself. On the highest scarps of the vertical south cliff at a spot labelled Deposit 2, votive material was recovered from three rock cavities. All together 150 fragments of LM IIIC zoomorphic figurines and wheel-made figures were collected. Bovids, equids and birds are represented (Fig. 5a-c). The most notable find was a bull's head inserted in the space between two decorated horns of consecration (Fig. 5c-d), a unique combination of two typically Minoan cultic symbols. The rest of the material also includes fragments of several smaller horns of consecrations with tubular stands set in between (Fig. 5e). These find clear parallels in the LM IIIC material from the Piazzale dei Sacelli at Agia Triada and also from the cave of Hermes Kranaios at Patsos.²⁰

After the LM IIIC period, Deposit 2 no longer received offerings. 150m further to the east, however,

on a small esplanade, in the crevices where the bedrock outcrops, we excavated 550 fragments of terracottas dated from the Protogeometric to the Classical period, but exclusively representing female figures (Deposit 1) (Fig. 4). Summarizing, then, we may observe that the same area on the summit of Anavlochos had a cultic importance from the LM IIIC to the Classical period, albeit one concerned with two distinct types of cults and cultic practices. This change prevents us from talking of cult continuity: the clear break happened at the end of the LM IIIC period, coinciding with the nucleation of the settlement.

A third and last cult place was recently brought to light on Anavlochos. During the 2015-2016 survey, on the slope overlooking the cemetery, we localized the trenches of Pierre Demargne which had yielded many votive terracottas in 1929, at a place then called Kako Plaï (Fig. 4).²¹ Just above these trenches, the 2017-2018 excavations brought to light the remains of a small rectangular building with a stone bench against the back wall and two preserved floors. In the south-west corner, on the latest floor, lay a Protogeometric skyphos in situ. In the south-east corner, as if fallen from the bench, was the head of a wheel-made, female figure. It is possible that this head belongs in

19. On this observation, see GAIGNEROT-DRIESSEN 2019.

20. D'AGATA 1999; EVANS 1901, 136, fig. 19; KOUROU, KARETSOU 1994.

21. DEMARGNE 1931.

fact to one of those well-known types of a figure with upraised arms, of which some fragments were collected in 1929.²² In any case, iconographically and technologically speaking, the head found last summer at Kako Plaï clearly does match the large, wheel-made figures with upraised arms that are common in LM IIIC bench sanctuaries, notably at the neighbouring sites of Karphi, Kephala Vasiliki, Vronda and Chalasmenos.²³ The Kako Plaï figure must, however, have been smaller; nor does it have those Minoan cultic attributes that are so characteristic of the LM IIIC examples. Moreover, it was found on its own in an extra-urban building, whereas the LM IIIC figures with upraised arms generally appear in groups, within urban sanctuaries, and are usually associated with a set of ritual vessels made in the same clay fabric. Based on these observations and the find context, the head from Kako Plaï can provisionally be dated to the very end of the LM IIIC or even more probably to the Protogeometric period. Although all periods from LM IIIC to the Archaic period are represented by the pottery recovered from Kako Plaï, the Late Geometric material is predominant and it is still unclear if the bench sanctuary already existed in LM IIIC. Finally, it is worth noting that both the figure, or at least its head, and the Protogeometric skyphos were still on

display in the sanctuary at Kako Plaï up to the most recent use of the building, that is in Classical times.

To conclude, the scale, nature and chronology of the remains on Anavlochos illustrate a crucial turning point in Cretan history at LM IIIC, a moment when a new socio-political order was being constructed after the collapse of the palatial administration. The mountainous nature of the place did not prevent its continuous occupation and the development of a prosperous and well-organized community down to the 7th century BC. The destruction of the palace of Knossos was but part of the gradual process of collapse of palatial administration all over the Aegean, but not of all Crete itself. The end of the Mycenaean era on the island probably provided an opportunity to local leaders to progressively emerge and forge a new social and political order, which reaches its denouement with the emergence of the Greek city-state in the Archaic period. Moving inland to a mountainous but distinct position at the end of the LM IIIB period may rather have meant escaping from the old palatial administration as much as from sea-raiders. It is in this sense only that Anavlochos may be called a refuge site, a refuge for people rejecting the palatial system, or more broadly any kind of centralized state organization.

22. Some are presented in PILZ 2015.

23. On the Late Minoan IIIC bench sanctuaries at Karphi, Kephala Vasiliki, Vronda and Chalasmenos, see respectively PENDLEBURY, PENDLEBURY, MONEY-COUTTS 1937-1938; ELIOPOULOS 2004; GESELL 2004; TSIPOPOULOU 2009.

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

ΖΩΝΤΑΣ, ΠΕΘΑΙΝΟΝΤΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΡΟΣΕΥΧΟΜΕΝΟΙ ΣΕ ΕΝΑ ΚΡΗΤΙΚΟ ΒΟΥΝΟ ΣΤΗΝ ΥΣΤΕΡΗ ΕΠΟΧΗ ΤΟΥ ΧΑΛΚΟΥ - ΠΡΩΙΜΗ ΕΠΟΧΗ ΤΟΥ ΣΙΔΗΡΟΥ

Η οροσειρά του Ανάβλοχου, στη ΒΔ/ΝΑ πλευρά της, αποτελείται από ασβεστολιθική κορυφή, μήκους 5 χλμ., που εκτείνεται πάνω από το χωριό Βραχάσι στον νομό Λασιθίου. Παλαιότερες ανασκαφές από τον Pierre Demargne της Γαλλικής Αρχαιολογικής Σχολής Αθηνών το 1929, αλλά και πρόσφατες έρευνες από την Ελληνική Αρχαιολογική Υπηρεσία τεκμηρίωσαν την κατοίκηση της θέσης από την ΥΜ ΙΙΙ έως και τις αρχές του 7ου αι. π.Χ. Το 2015-2016 πραγματοποιήθηκε στον Ανάβλοχο, από τη Γαλλική Αρχαιολογική Σχολή Αθηνών, αρχαιολογική, τοπογραφική και γεωμορφολογική έρευνα. Τα πρώτα αποτελέσματα επιτρέπουν ορισμένες προκαταρκτικές παρατηρήσεις σχετικά με τη χρονολόγηση, την έκταση και τη φύση της εγκατάστασης. Στην κεντρική κοιλάδα ο οικισμός εντοπίστηκε σε έκταση 10 στρεμμάτων. Το νεκροταφείο αποκαλύ-

φθηκε στις υπώρειες του λόφου σε έκταση 12 στρεμμάτων, ενώ τρεις θέσεις λατρείας βρέθηκαν στη βορειοδυτική κορυφή. Στο πλαίσιο ενός νέου πενταετούς προγράμματος (2017-2021), πραγματοποιήθηκαν ανασκαφές το 2017 και 2018 υπό την αιγίδα της Γαλλικής Σχολής Αθηνών στην περιοχή του νεκροταφείου και στις τρεις θέσεις με τα κατάλοιπα λατρείας. Το παρόν άρθρο στοχεύει στην παρουσίαση προκαταρκτικών αποτελεσμάτων της έρευνας πεδίου, εστιάζοντας στην Ύστερη Εποχή του Χαλκού. Ο Ανάβλοχος παρουσιάζεται εδώ στο μικρο-περιφερειακό γεωγραφικό και ιστορικό του πλαίσιο κατά την ΥΜ ΙΙΙΓ, δηλαδή την περίοδο μετά την κατάρρευση του ανακτορικού συστήματος. Η περίοδος αυτή θεωρείται ότι αντιπροσωπεύει μια δυναμική στιγμή κοινωνικής, πολιτικής και οικονομικής αναδιοργάνωσης στην Κρήτη.