

Terracotta Figures, Figurines, and Plaques from the Anavlochos, Crete.

Florence Gaignerot-Driessen

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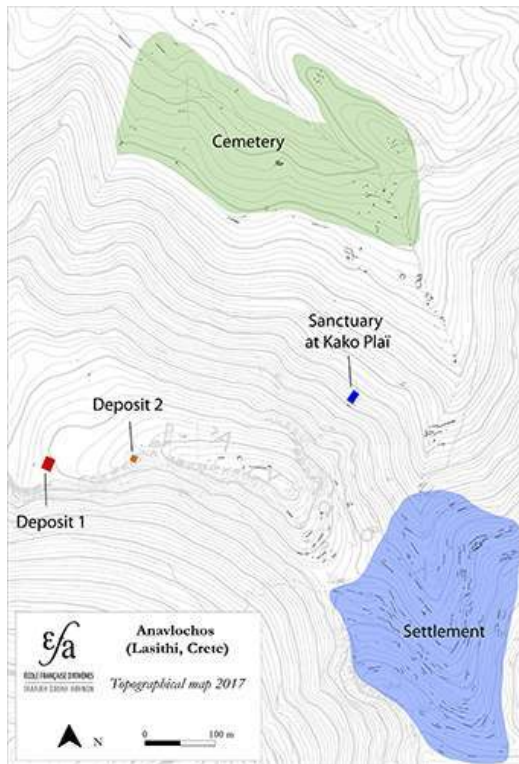
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Site description and history of research

- 1 The Anavlochos ridge consists of a 5 km long north-west/south-east crest of limestone extending above the village of Vrachasi, in the Mirabello region, Lasithi, Crete. It was mainly settled from the Late Minoan IIIC period to the beginning of the seventh century B.C.E, but some areas remained visited up to the Classical period at least. The first excavations were carried out in 1929 by French archaeologist Pierre Demargne, under the auspices of the French School at Athens (EFA). From August 19th to August 23rd 1929, Demargne excavated six late-Geometric houses in the settlement of the central valley, a series of Late Minoan (LM) IIIC-late Geometric graves at the foot of this central valley, and a votive deposit including protogeometric to classical figurines and plaques on the slope overlooking the cemetery at a place called Kako Plaï¹ (fig. 1). During the past decade, rescue excavations have been undertaken by the Greek Archaeological Service (Ephorate of Lasithi), both in the settlement and the cemetery.² The results of these various investigations highlighted the importance of the ancient occupation on the Anavlochos and the necessity to start a systematic research program. As a first step, a two-year (2015-2016) archaeological, topographical, and geomorphological survey was conducted by the EFA³ and in 2017 excavations were begun within the frame of a new five-year (2017-2021) program.

Fig. 1 TOPOGRAPHICAL PLAN OF THE ANAVLOCHOS.

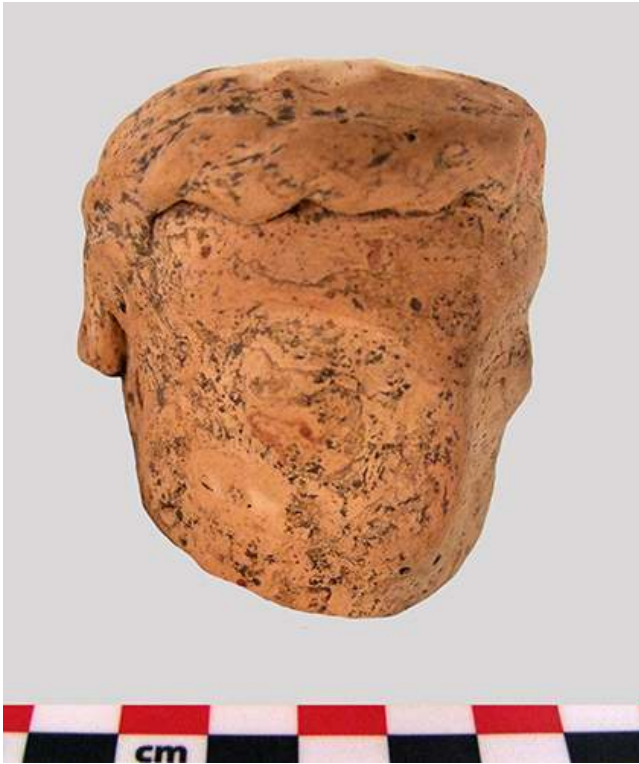


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The sanctuary at Kako Plaï

- 2 During the 2015 survey, the trenches opened by Demargne at Kako Plaï were located and more coroplastic material, very similar to that found in 1929, was collected from the surface. Some potential lines of walls and an anomalous accumulation of limestone rubble were also noticed on the terrace immediately above, where in the summer of 2017, a small single-room building with a bench was brought to light. Within and immediately outside the building, fragments of Daedalic plaques and archaic to classical figures were found in disturbed contexts. On the floor in the south-west part of the room was found a protogeometric skyphos in situ, while in the south-east corner was the head of a female terracotta figure (fig. 2), obviously fallen from the bench. It is possible that some of the fragments collected by Demargne in 1929⁴ in fact belong to the same figure. Iconographically and technologically the head clearly echoes the large, wheel-made figures with upraised arms that are common in LM IIIC bench sanctuaries, notably at the neighbouring sites of Kephala Vasilikis, Vronda and Chalasmenos.⁵ The Kako Plaï figure must, however, have been slightly smaller and it does not have the tiara and attributes characteristic for 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 associated with a set of vessels (kalathoi, tubular stands and plaques) made in the same clay fabric.⁶ On the basis of these observations and of the find context, the head from Kako Plaï can provisionally be dated to the LM IIIC–Protogeometric period. Finally, it is worth noting that both the figure and skyphos were still on display in the sanctuary at Kako Plaï up to the most recent use of the building, which was in classical times, if not later.

Fig. 2 HEAD OF A FIGURE FROM KAKO PLAÏ.



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The votive deposits on the summit

- 3 During the 2016 survey, two new votive deposits were located in the north-western part of the summit of the Anavlochos Mountain (fig. 1). In each case, about 30 fragments of eroded figures, figurines, or plaques were collected on the surface. Both places were excavated in 2017.
- 4 Deposit 1 was located in the crevices of an outcrop of bedrock following a ca. 20 m gentle slope immediately to the east of a small esplanade. There numerous sherds and more than 550 fragments of figurines and plaques, representing 350 MNI, were found. The archaeological material was recovered from pockets of soil accumulated in bedrock cavities, without any clear stratigraphy, and was consistent until the natural layer of *terra rossa* covering the bedrock was reached. Except for four fragments of animal figurines, all the plaques, figures, and figurines collected are female representations. They provisionally can be dated from the Protogeometric to the Classical period. Among them, Daedalic figurines (fig. 3), Daedalic plaques showing women and sphinxes wearing a polos (figs 4-5), and kourotrophoi figures (fig. 6) are the most frequent. Many of these find close or exact parallels – they sometimes come from similar moulds – in the votive deposit excavated by Demargne at Kako Plaï in 1929, but also at the neighbouring sites of Papoura, Smari, Milatos, Dreros, Olous and Lato, as well as further to the East at Praisos and Vamies.⁷ This therefore includes the Anavlochos in a regional network of cultic practices and of coroplastic production and circulation. The quantity and type of material recovered from the mountain, as well as the topography of the place, seem to indicate that Deposit 1 may have been at the point of arrival of a sacred road that passed the old chapel at Kako Plaï and that remained in use long after the settlement had been

abandoned in the beginning of the seventh century B.C.E. The location of the deposit, the context of the finds, and the finds themselves all may provisionally suggest a possible connection with Demeter and the Thesmophoria.

Fig. 3. Daedalic figurine from Deposit 1



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Fig. 4. HEAD OF A DAEDALIC PLAQUE FROM DEPOSIT 1



© EFA/Mission Anavlochos

Fig. 5. DAEDALIC PLAQUE DEPICTING A SPHINX FROM DEPOSIT 1



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Fig. 6. KOUROTROPHOI FIGURES FROM DEPOSIT 1



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- 5 Deposit 2 is located about 150 m further to the east than Deposit 1 (fig. 1). More than 150 fragments of zoomorphic figurines and wheel-made figures associated with fragments of LM IIIC pottery were recovered. They come from three cavities located in the highest scarps of the vertical south cliff of a small rocky peak (alt. 496 m). Bovids, equids, and birds are represented (fig. 7). For its large dimensions (l. head: ca 0.10 m) and the attention given to detail, a wheel-made bull figure in a very fine fabric with traces of painted decoration deserves special mention (its head is visible on fig. 7). It notably recalls the LM IIIC-sub-Minoan bull figures from Phaistos.⁸ Fragments of plaques with slots were also found and perhaps were used as stands for the figures. The location of Deposit 2, as well as the nature and distribution of the finds, suggest that a small open-air, rural sanctuary existed on the summit of the Anavlochos at the very end of the Late Bronze Age.

Fig. 7. ZOOMORPHIC FIGURES AND FIGURINES FROM DEPOSIT 2.



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- 6 To conclude, it is striking that the same area on the summit of the Anavlochos had a cultic importance from the LM IIIC to the Classical period. However, two distinct types of cults and cultic practices are clearly illustrated, and this should prevent us from speaking of cult continuity.

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NOTES

1. Demargne 1931; Pilz 2015 and bibliography. The coroplastic material from the old excavations is currently under restudy by Oliver Pilz.
2. See most recently Zographaki et al. 2012-2013.
3. Gaignerot-Driessen et al. forthcoming a and b.
4. See e.g. the fragments illustrated in Pilz 2015, figs 2-3.
5. Eliopoulos 2004; Gesell 2004; Tsipopoulou 2009.
6. For an overview, see Gaignerot-Driessen 2014.

7. Xanthoudides 1918; Demargne 1929, 1930, 1931; Demargne and van Effenterre 1937; van Effenterre 1938; Ducrey and Picard 1969; Chatzi-Vallianou 2000; Zographaki and Farnoux 2010; Pilz 2011; Brun and Duplouy 2014.
8. Kourou and Karetsou 1997: Plate XLIIa-b.
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ABSTRACTS

In the summer of 2017 two votive deposits were excavated on the summit of the Anavlochos, Crete. The first one yielded protogeometric to classical figures, figurines, and plaques representing female figures. The second one included zoomorphic figures and figurines associated with Late Minoan IIIC pottery. In addition, the head of a female figure was recovered from a shrine that was brought to light on the slope of Kako Plaï, just above a third votive deposit, that already had been excavated by Pierre Demargne in 1929.

INDEX

Keywords: Crete, Anavlochos, Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, Daedalic

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