

A new Middle Minoan IIIA ceremonial building and the so-called ‘New Era’ at Phaistos*

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BASTIONE OVEST AND BUILDING CIV

During the last 100 years of excavations and research at Phaistos little specific attention has been paid to the MM IIIA period. One of the areas that provided finds dateable to MM IIIA and that Levi had classified as his third phase, was the so-called *Bastione Ovest*,¹ where one of the most important ceramic artefacts of this period had been found, the well-known bridge-spouted jar bearing a figure of *agrimi* in relief (F. 5509).² A new survey of the entire paved area in the West Court (*Piazzale I*)³ and of the ascending ramps, enabled us to confirm that both phases of construction of the so-called *Bastione Ovest* belong to the MM II period, and cannot be interpreted as a keep for the defence of the palace, but rather as a building connected to ceremonial rituals.⁴

Briefly, we can propose that the First Palace public rituals took place on the paved West Court, rather than the Central Court. Such rituals developed from MM IB to MM IIB, centred around three specific symbols: the baetyls, Basin XXX, and the *kouloures*, up to the elegant orthostat façade and Theatral area.⁵

Levi attributed Room CIV, the so-called *Garitta* (sentry box) (FIG. 9.1), to his third Protopalatial phase. On its floor, which sealed a fill about 20 centimetres thick laid over the court slabs, was found a bridge-spouted jar covered with a *skouteli* (handleless or ‘conical’ cup), in a position which was quite common in the contemporary contexts of our centre.⁶ Both shapes are commonly dated MM IIIA. It was possible to reconstruct a complex comprising five rooms with a staircase (FIG. 9.2), bonding with the eastern wall of the so-called *Bastione Ovest*. The whole area measures just over 30 m², compared to the 75 m² of the previous building. We speculate that the staircase on the E side would have led to an upper terrace with a low parapet opening out onto both the Theatral area and the paved court, as has already been assumed for the MM IIB *Bastione Ovest*, whose terrace would have been designed exclusively for Basin XXX instead. The entrance was probably located on the E side, while on the N side the building followed the bedrock with a couple of service rooms.⁷ The building’s destruction layer was dated by the bridge-spouted jar with *skouteli* mentioned above, as well as an ovoid-

shaped side-spouted jug (‘milk jug’), found on the floor near the N wall of Room CIVc, also compatible with a MM IIIA date. Lastly, it is also likely that a small jug came from the floor layer of Room CIVd.⁸ Hence, it is reasonable to believe that the floor deposit in this new building, as in the older one, was not greatly indicative of the function of the structure but rather evidence of sporadic use.

As regards the construction of the building, we have material recovered from the fill under the floor in Room CIV and in the area close by. The sherds recovered there all seem to date to the MM II period, which leads us to believe that the room could be dated to immediately after the great earthquake of MM IIB and hence after the destruction of the adjacent *Bastione Ovest*. Topographical contiguity, orientation, similarity of structures — such as the presence of the terraces — an almost total absence of finds, immediate succession in time, with a partial re-use of the previous structure, all suggest that the later building replaced the *Bastione Ovest* at a functional level, and hence should be inserted in the same ceremonial context of the West Court. A particularly delicate question is the need to reconstruct, for MM IIIA, the walking surface and the state of the structures within the Court. The only certain information is provided by the fill mentioned above that created a new walking surface near Room CIV, above the slabs of the West Court. A reconsideration

* The authors’ names are listed in alphabetical order and not in order of importance. The two co-authors have contributed equally to this paper, which is the result of scientific collaboration and human fellowship lasting over thirty years.

1 *Festòs CMI*, 337–48. The word ‘Bastione’ had been formerly used by Levi to indicate, using a conventional expression, the terracing walls that bordered Lower Court LXX (*ibid.* 151 ff. and 160 ff.).

2 *Festòs CMI*, pl. LXXVIII; see also FIG. 7.23 *b* in Karetsou 2013 (this volume Chapter 7).

3 Carinci and La Rosa 2007, 46–88.

4 Carinci and La Rosa 2009, 147–200.

5 Carinci and La Rosa 2007.

6 *Festòs CMI*, 346; La Rosa 2002c, 33–8.

7 Carinci and La Rosa 2009, 207–22.

8 Carinci and La Rosa 2009, 227–38, fig. 96.



Fig. 9.1. Remains of Building CIV, abutting the so-called Bastione Ovest (on the left); in the foreground the paving slabs of the West Court (Piazzale I). From the southeast.

of a number of surface elevation measurements, which we have to omit here, lead us to speculate that the *kouloures* had already been filled in, the orthostat wall bordered the visible open space eastwards, the Theatre remained completely exposed and that only the slabs of the Court had been covered⁹ (FIG. 9.3). Lastly, we should remember that damage to the terracing S of the West Court following the earthquake in the MM IIB period would have required rebuilding and restoration work in MM IIIA.

HOUSE SOUTH OF THE RAMP

We shall put this building ('the Bastione') to one side for the moment. It is evident that the problem of the new layout of the West Court in MM IIIA also involves the consistency and organisation of the areas formerly occupied by the First Palace, beginning with the West Wing. The quality and quantity of material to be re-examined is best provided by the House South of the Ramp (*Casa a Sud della rampa*) whose construction date, blocking up of Rooms LXXXVI and LXXXVII, addition of Room XCIII and three likely foundation deposits, all enable us to define a certain sequence, at least architecturally, in the MM IIIA period.¹⁰ Additional research and a review of material from Levi's excavations have enabled us to ascertain the following:

- 1) The construction of the building is late MM IIB, during the phase called *dei sacelli* ('Shrine phase'), as revealed by the sherds recovered in the foundation trenches of the walls in some rooms.¹¹ This is highly interesting, since it allows us to confirm that the house was immediately re-used after the second earthquake which destroyed the First Palace. Two foundation deposits attest to a period of rebuilding (FIG. 9.4), one below Room XCI (comprising a bridge-spouted jar covered by a *skouteli*), the other in the area of Room XCIII (pair of bowls, one inverted on the other), probably in relation to the external walking surface in a period predating the addition of Room XCIII. The finds may be dated to the last phase of MM IIB rather than to a defined MM IIIA. Within the same broad horizon we should include at least two or three *pithoi* found in Rooms XCII and XCIII, which can be linked to the examples in Storerooms XXXIV and LVIII of the First Palace and which

9 Carinci and La Rosa forthcoming (with observations concerning the ceramic finds in the fill of *Kouloures* II and III as well).

10 Carinci 2001; La Rosa 2002.

11 La Rosa 2002a, 669–70 (levels 28 and 38).

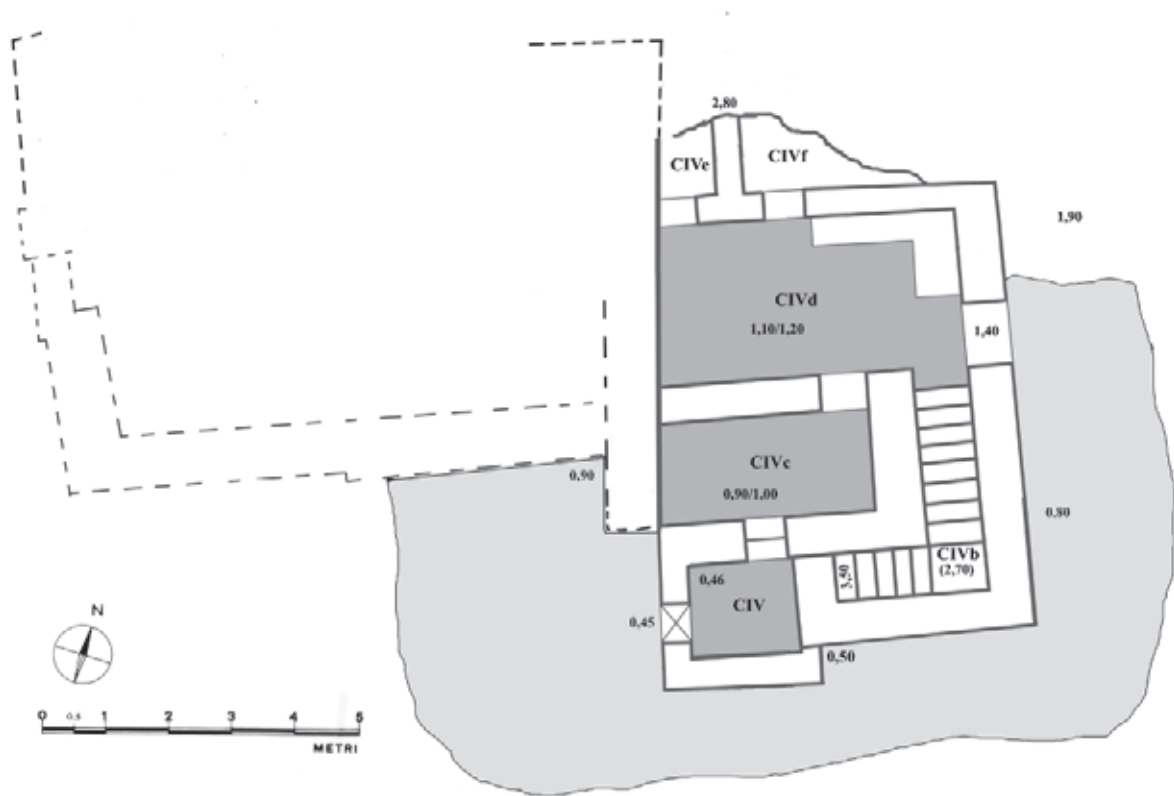


Fig. 9.2. Reconstruction of the plan of Building CIV, with indication of the walking level in the neighbouring area.

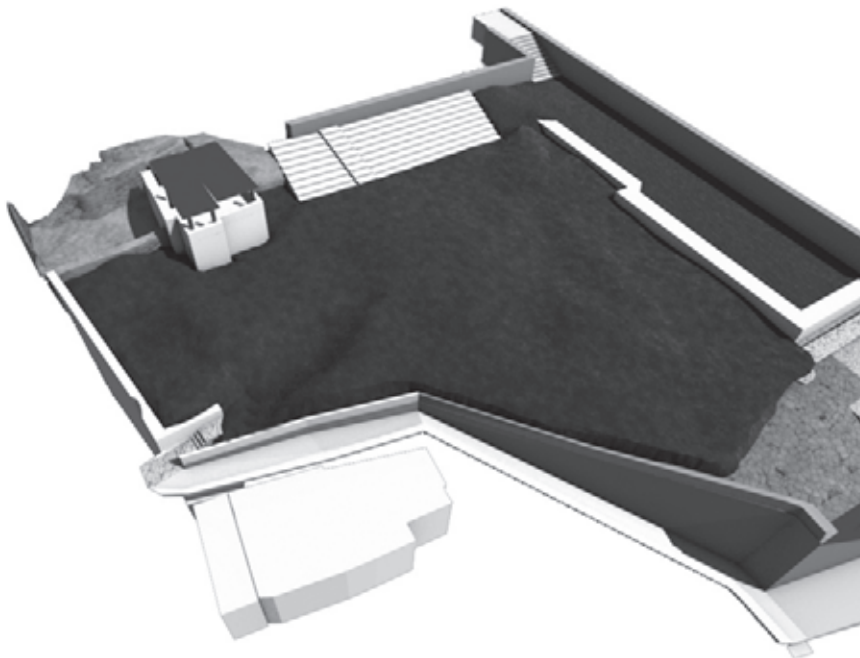


Fig. 9.3. General axonometric reconstruction of the West Court (Piazzale I) with Building CIV (digital version by E. Sangregorio).

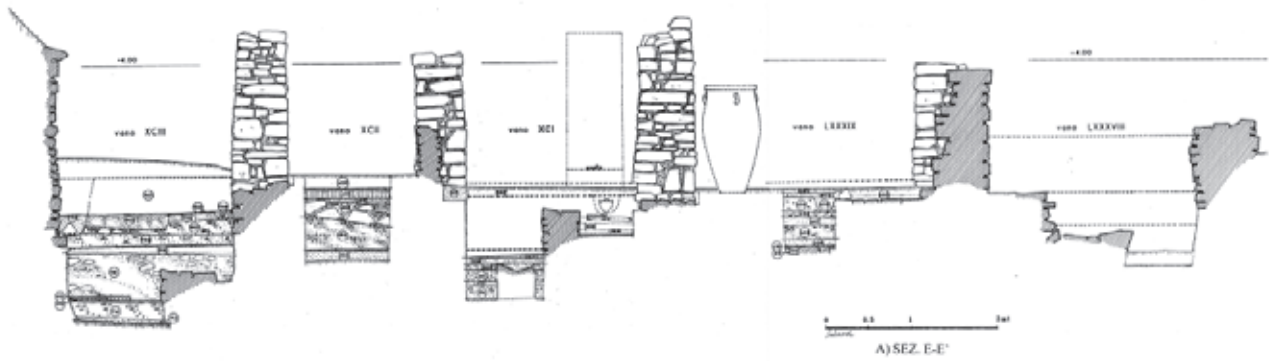


Fig. 9.4. House South of the Ramp. E–W section with indication of the different foundation deposits (B. Salmeri, adapted).

could thus represent what remains of the floor deposits from the earlier house.¹²

- 2) After a relatively short lapse of time, the building must have undergone some changes, as revealed by the dumping of pottery fragments with lime in Rooms LXXXVI and LXXXVII, where the famous pedestal of a fruit bowl or *louter* decorated with a pair of dolphins in relief was found.¹³ The foliate band pattern is a frequent motif, also found in Knossos, which has recently been interpreted as an indicator of peer polity interaction between the two centres.¹⁴ This dump seems to have obliterated a staircase lying at the easternmost end of the building. The creation of a new room in the W may be connected to this phase. A new foundation deposit has even been discovered beneath its floor, identical in type to that from Room XCII mentioned earlier, revealing features datable to MM IIIA (FIG. 9.4). L. Girella has recently returned to this first sub-phase, highlighting some decorative features.¹⁵
- 3) The destruction of the House created a large deposit of material including pottery featuring different styles, including one cup bearing a rippled motif that is typically Knossian and a substantial number of vessels decorated with large white running spirals (FIG. 9.5).¹⁶ The foliate band motif is absent. On the floor of Room LXXXIX there were also three *pithoi* with rope patterns (FIG. 9.6).¹⁷ The area was deserted following its destruction.

Although the items pertaining to the three architectural phases set out on the basis of stratigraphic soundings are quantitatively quite different, they still enable us to suggest an internal sequence within the MM IIIA period. It still remains to be seen whether the undeniable destructive-constructive episode of phase 2 should be considered an isolated one, or whether it was more widespread.

Another extremely interesting issue arising from material excavated in the House South of the Ramp is the relationship between Phaistos and Knossos

following the Protopalatial catastrophe. The foliate band motif mentioned above, certainly an innovation in Phaistian workshops, if originally created by Knossos would represent the first real infiltration of non-Mesara features, emphasised by the subsequent introduction of the rippled cup from the last destruction layer. This may indicate that Knossian influence at our centre was already present in the first phase of MM IIIA.

THE PALACE AREA

For reasons of space, comments on Lustral Basin XLIV–38, the deposits under Rooms 50, 18 and 10, and in particular the stratigraphic and chronological position of the well-known sealing inscribed *su-ki-ri-te-ja* found in Room 10 will be treated in another more detailed paper.¹⁸ We shall also omit here details about Corridor III/7 and Room XLV–22. The latter's superimposed walls and elevation of the two internal pillars point to the possible existence of a MM IIIA earth floor located between the First Palace's paving and the walking surface belonging to the Second Palace.¹⁹ In the nearby area, beneath Room 25, a recent re-examination of old excavation records, including the field diaries, has enabled us not only to assign the sealing archive to the final destruction of the First Palace (P. Militello), as well as highlighting the existence of a wall belonging to structures on the E side of the room, orientated differently to the others and stratigraphically overlying them²⁰ (FIG. 9.7). The

12 *Festòs CM I*, 496–7, pl. 183a, b, d; Carinci 2001; La Rosa 2002.

13 *Festòs CM I*, 502, fig. 775, pls. LXXIX and 219a, d.

14 Carinci 2001, 217–18, fig. 11; Rizzotto 2005.

15 Girella 2007a, 243–4.

16 *Festòs CM I*, pl. 212r; Carinci 2001, fig. 20.

17 *Festòs CM I*, 496, figs. 758 and 763.

18 Carinci and La Rosa 2009, 240–2.

19 Carinci and La Rosa 2009, 243–50.

20 *Festòs CM I*, 255, figs. 391 and 397, plan pl. T.



Fig. 9.5. House South of the Ramp. Pottery decorated with thick spiral patterns: a, b = F. 4835; c, g = F. 4964; d = F. 5207; e = F. 4830; f = F. 4837 (from Festòs CM I).

Fig. 9.6. House South of the Ramp. Pithoi with rope patterns in Room LXXXIX. From the northeast.



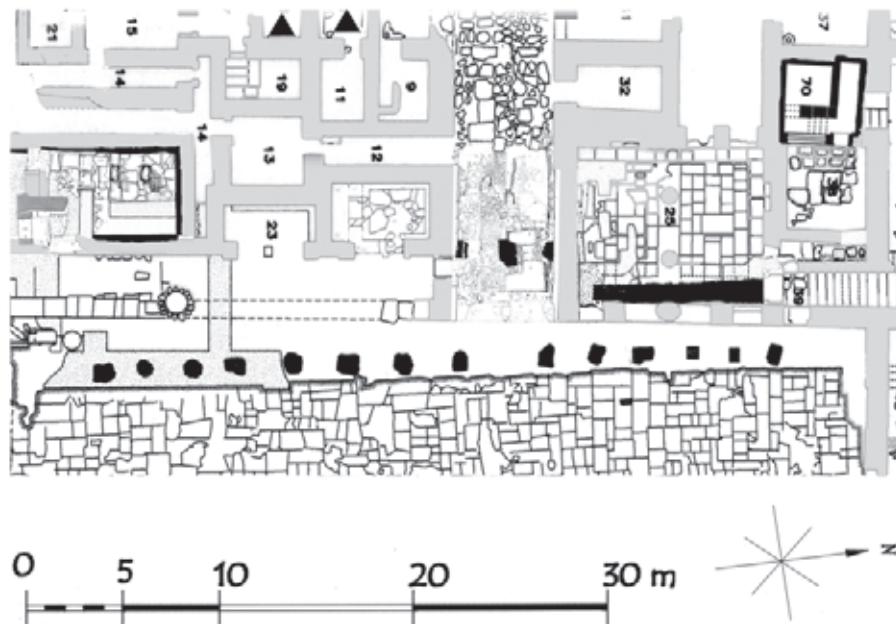


Fig. 9.7. Schematic plan of the MM IIIA architectural remains (coloured in black) along the west side of Central Court XXXIII-40 (Room XLV-22, row of columns, Corridor III/7, Room 25, lustral basin XLIV-38) (adapted from Festòs CM I).

layer associated with them can be dated to MM IIIA. This fact becomes highly important if we consider that the wall in question proves to be aligned exactly with the row of 14 column bases on the w side of the Central Court, a row whose orientation is different from both the Neopalatial and Protopalatial façade²¹ (FIG. 9.7). The concrete laid down during the reconstruction of the Second Palace had obliterated these bases. For this reason, Levi had attributed the row of columns to his third Protopalatial phase. The similar orientation of the structure in Room 25 and the stratigraphy of the same room enable us, therefore, to date to MM IIIA the row of columns w of the Central Court. As a result, the columns can be considered one of the most important works in the restoration of the palatial building in the period with which we are concerned. J. Shaw suggests that the idea of building a colonnade on one side of the Central Court was also taken up at Knossos.²²

Special attention must be paid to the partition wall between Room 47 and Court XXXV-48, in the northern sector of the palace, whose lower line was formed by a succession of orthostats lying on plinths (FIG. 9.8).²³ We hope in future to be able to examine on site the connections between the different structures, but, for the moment, the suggestion made by the first excavators that the partition wall was connected to rebuilding in the LM I period seems to us unlikely. The orthostat and plinth building technique recalls the one used for the Protopalatial façade, whereas it has no comparison in the structures of the later palace. For the moment we can suggest that the partition wall could have been erected in the MM IIIA period, and that

originally no passage doorway into the s of Room 47 would have existed. In our opinion, Room 47 was simply a closed space filled with earth, and the walking surface of Court XXXV-48, at the time of the construction and first use of the partition wall, was placed at an intermediate level between the slabs of the Protopalatial paving and the later earth floor linked to the opening of the passageway. Once a threshold was created in the LM IB reconstruction by removing the southernmost orthostat (FIG. 9.8), a small room with a paving of gypsum slabs was then built in connection with the opening of another doorway in the northern wall of Room 45.²⁴ If our reconstruction should prove to be correct, perhaps demonstrable by cleaning along the foundations of the partition wall, we wonder whether the same technique was employed in building the western façade of the palace. In any case, a sort of architectural revival of the Protopalatial building technique would turn out to be of great value. The partition wall has currently only one visible face, while the back face shows unfinished orthostats alternating with vertical strips of irregular smaller stones. The same anomaly can be observed in the plinth, formed on its w side only by irregular stones, with the exception of the blocks at the very end of the wall, perhaps to ensure

21 *Festòs CM I*, fig. 599; Militello 2002, 55-62.

22 Shaw and Lowe 2002.

23 *Festòs PM II*, 237-40, figs. 148 and 149.

24 Carinci and La Rosa 2009, 250-9.



Fig. 9.8. The partition wall between Court 48 and Room 47. From the east.

Fig. 9.9. Room XXXVII–88: general view with the wall now delimiting its southern side. At the western side the walled passage to the small annex. From the northeast.



Fig. 9.10 (left). Stairway XXXI–6: on the east side the scanty remains of the retaining wall and its foundation trench cut in the bedrock. From the south.

greater stability. Inevitably it invokes comparisons with parts of the N wall of the large Building T at neighbouring Kommos, whose initial phase is dated by J. Shaw precisely to the MM IIIA period.²⁵

We can perhaps suggest a reuse during the same period of Room XXXVII–88 (FIG. 9.9). The original dating of the structure in the MM II period is confirmed by a group of vases recovered on the floor of the small W annexe, easily attributable to the time of the collapse of the First Palace.²⁶ Of some interest here is the detail concerning the walling up of the narrow passageway towards the W annexe (FIG. 9.9), which proves both the abandonment of the small box-room and the continuity in the use of the W wall, and therefore of the whole of Room XXXVII–88.²⁷ The state of the structure on the S side of the room (FIG. 9.9) seems to clash with such continuity. In terms of building technique, the preserved sectors of the S wall can be clearly classified as foundations, while its central part is certainly a modern repair. It seems highly likely that Room 88 was completely filled with earth at the time of the Second Palace and the S wall was exclusively the foundation of the N wall of adjoining Room 89.²⁸ If this observation proves to be correct, it would allow us to place the walling up of the passageway towards the W annexe between the end of the First Palace (floor deposit) and the building of the second (foundations of the N wall of Room 89). Therefore, we can consider it a real possibility that the operation took place specifically in the MM IIIA period.

STAIRWAY XXXI–6 AND THE WEST FAÇADES

A brief discussion of the so-called Sacrifice Pit North of Room VIII will be set out elsewhere.²⁹ The chronology of Stairway XXXI–6 which leads to Upper Court 94 still appears questionable.³⁰ More compelling evidence is provided by the presence of a partly preserved retaining wall at the north end of the E side, older than that of the Second Palace (FIG. 9.10). However, it has not been sufficiently stressed that this portion of wall and the cutting in the rock that determined its course are exactly aligned with the section of the façade of the Second Palace S of Great Stairway 66. Following further excavations in 2004, this sector proved also to be the external limit of the original layout (MM IB) of the First Palace, and the result of a brief attempt to reduce the area with a view to abandoning the orthostat façade, an alteration, however, that was ultimately not carried out.³¹

A second incontrovertible observation is that the stairway in question proves to be incompatible not only with the so-called Sacrifice Pit, but also with the series of Protopalatial rooms lying to the E of the orthostat blocks and subsequently covered over with *astraki*. The lowest step stops above the rock, at a height that almost coincided with the surface of the concrete overlay. This means that the building of Stairway 6 must have occurred after the laying of this concrete.

A third observation refers to the relationship of the two Stairways, 6 and 66, which form an angle (FIG. 9.11). The original retaining wall of the minor stairway would have intercepted the last two or three steps of the major one. Only with the final layout (that currently visible) would there have been no discord between the two systems. This situation leads us to believe that Stairway 6 must have been built prior to Great Stairway 66. The W retaining wall forms a unit with the first rear wall of the so-called Theatre, contemporary with the orthostat façade and hence MM II in date. Therefore, Stairway 6 cannot be considered earlier than that period and could not have had any relation to the original MM IB façade recently identified beneath the foundation blocks of the Second Palace West facade. A closer inspection, however, enables us to note that the alignment of the rear wall of the Theatre, preserved in one row, is made up of small regular blocks, which, after a distance of 18 m, disappear into a now empty rock cutting (about 2.15 m) (FIGS. 9.12–9.13). In addition to this interruption, at the corner block of the retaining wall, the rear wall is made up of a group of 7 irregular blocks, probably designed to be a terrace, also resting against the rock, which must have spanned the last stretch of orthostat façade. In particular, near the head of the western retaining wall of Stairway 6, the foundation row of the rear wall ends in a more regular block, which can be explained by the building problems inherent in creating the corner. In short, it appears that the foundation blocks aligned with the rear wall of the Theatre and the retaining wall of the stairway were built at the same time. The line of this terracing would then have been determined precisely by the continuation of the Theatre rear wall which could have been damaged by the earthquakes during MM IIB and the building of the shrines.

To sum up, the Theatre and orthostat façade were built at the same time (MM II), but Stairway 6 was built after the orthostat façade and its rooms, but before the creation of Great Stairway 66. In addition, the W retaining wall of Stairway 6, joined with the W–E terracing wall, was built after the rear wall of the Theatre. This leads us to conclude that Stairway 6 was started immediately after the destruction of the First

25 Shaw, in *Kommos V*, 20–2, pl. 1.41. On the subject see also Shaw 1973, 83–92 and Shaw 1983.

26 *Festòs PM I*, 340–1, fig. 202.

27 *Festòs PM II*, 203–8, fig. 128.

28 Carinci and La Rosa 2009, 259–61.

29 Carinci and La Rosa 2009, 261–2.

30 *Festòs PM I*, 190–1; *Festòs PM II*, 27–35; *Festòs CM I*, 255–6.

31 La Rosa 2004, 622–8. The row of façade blocks corresponding to the line of our foundation block of trial T/4, in a building technique very similar to that of the orthostat façade, is clearly visible in an old photograph of the excavation area: *Festòs PM I*, fig. 92.

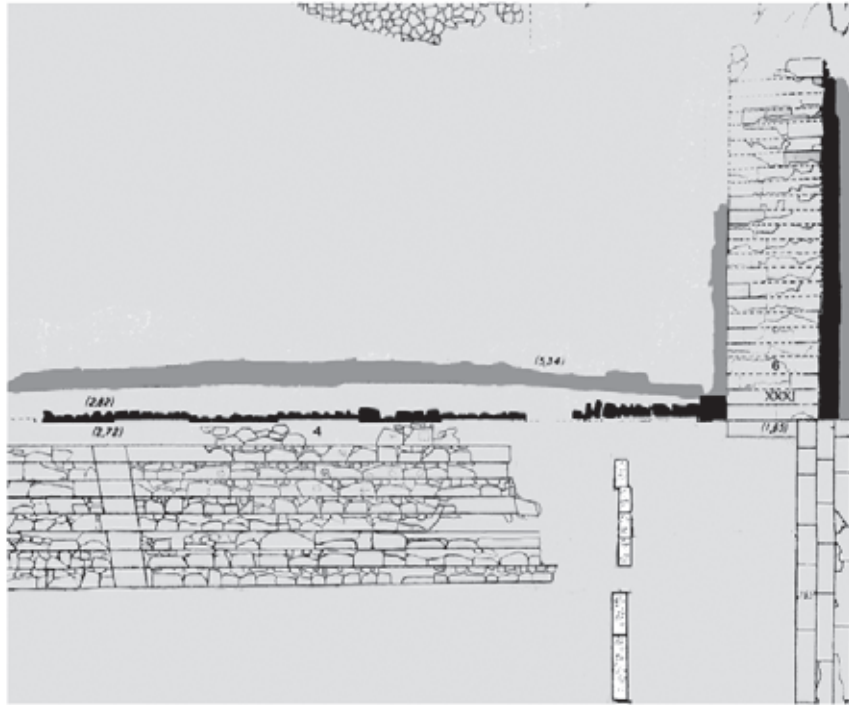


Fig. 9.11. Plan of the NE corner of West Court (Piazzale I): rear wall of the Theatre area and Stairway XXXI-6 during the MM IIIA period (coloured in black) (adapted from Festòs PM I).

Fig. 9.12. Section of the N side of West Court (Piazzale I), with perspective view of the Stairway XXXI-6 and the rear wall of the Theatre (from Festòs PM I).

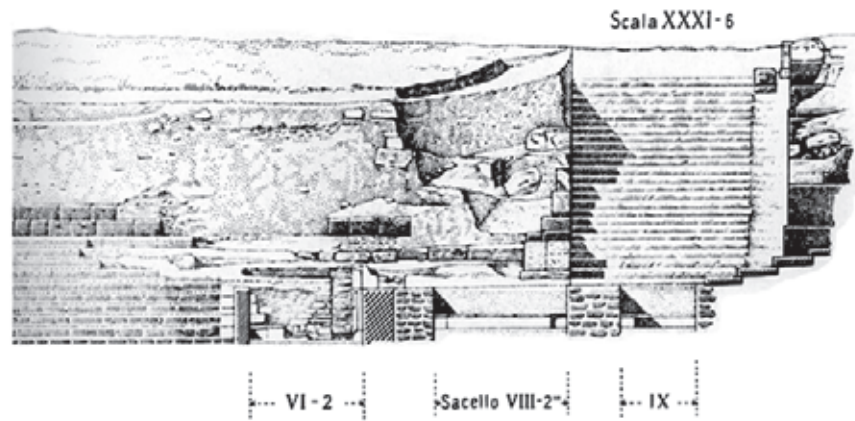


Fig. 9.13 (left). Detail of the tiers of the Theatre with its rear wall, restored during MM IIIA. From the southeast.



Fig. 9.14. Reworking of the schematic plan of the area NE of the Palace, with MM IIIA structures coloured in black (from *Festòs PM I*).

Palace and the laying of *astraki*, that is, during the MM IIIA period and, hence, that it was in use at the same time as our new Building CIV (FIG. 9.3).

This chronology leads to some important conclusions. The project to rebuild the palace in MM IIIA included a return to the west façade's original alignment dating to the MM IB period. Subsequently, the building of Stairway 6 would have meant creating a platform at the same height as the concrete along the façade of the MM IIIA palace, which served to define the no longer paved area of West Court as well as to facilitate access to the Central Court via Corridor III/7. The need for a new outer stairway, at least, means that Upper Paved Court 94 was still in use during MM IIIA.

NORTH-EAST SECTOR AND THE FIND-SPOT OF THE DISC

The question of the group of buildings situated in the NE sector of the palace hill is complex (FIG. 9.14). Until recently, this sector has still been considered as a whole unit.³² It is still to be established whether the building where the Disc was found (101) had palatial functions or was an ancillary building. However, in our view it cannot be considered in the same manner as the other buildings. The absence of any real floor deposit, and above all an iconographical comparison of the Disc's pictographs call its time-reference into question, suggesting a date ranging from 1550 to 1200 BC.³³ Pernier's scarcely exhaustive data based on the excavation, followed by Banti's partial corrections, are well known. In addition, the Disc was recovered in an area that had already been sounded during the earlier campaigns.³⁴ For convenience, the only accurate data can be summarised as the following:

- 1) Building 101 is precisely orientated with the palace walls, including those that Pernier considered to be related to the most ancient building. The orientation also coincides with nearby Building 102, but is different from that of Buildings 103 and 104 (FIG. 9.14).
- 2) There was no real floor deposit.
- 3) The Disc was found embedded in a collapsed layer at 0.55 m. above bedrock level, together with tablet PH 1³⁵ in a room to the S of the range of mudbrick 'casselles'.
- 4) The collapsed layer had also been burnt, since it yielded ash, charcoal, and bovine bone, some of which was also burnt.
- 5) The description of the associated sherd context ('coarse, monochrome and painted vessels from the last phase of the First Palace' as described by Pernier) proves to be very general and slightly ambiguous, since Pernier, like Levi, considered the MM IIIA period still to be Protopalatial.
- 6) The excavator's interpretation that the deposit was the result of a fallen-in upper storey seems more reasonable, although we cannot exclude the existence of shelves on the ground floor.
- 7) The whole area in Building 101 above the collapsed layer only yielded Mycenaean or post-Bronze Age material.

32 Girella 2011, 96–7.

33 Godart 2005, 103–6.

34 *Festòs PM I*, 354–7; *Festòs PM II*, 391–3.

35 Godart and Olivier, 1976, 286–7, PH 1; Militello 2002, 71, fig. 15.



Fig. 9.15. a) Amphora and b) jug found in association with the Disc (a: neg. SAIA C/3101; b: from Guidotti, Lo Schiavo and Pierobon Benoit 2007).

The problem of dating the destruction layer of Building 101, which Pernier considered to be the palace archives, remains. Although there is an indirect reference to two well-preserved vessels, these were, as Banti points out, found in a trial before the building was brought to light, and were thus in a position and deposit that cannot be accurately defined.³⁶ However, we should still bear these in mind. The first vessel (now in Rome, Museo Pigorini), was an oval-mouthed amphora decorated with 'wavy spirals' on a dark background, which may easily be dated to late MM IIIA (FIG. 9.15 a). The second vessel (now in Florence, Museo Archeologico), however, is a trefoil-mouthed, long-necked collared jug, decorated with 'brown horizontal lines and running spirals on a light buff background', which can safely be attributed to a period later than the amphora (LM IA) (FIG. 9.15 b).³⁷ In other words, the dating of the Disc and associated tablet does not have any stratigraphic basis. However, it is useful to note that the destruction-collapse context of Building 101 definitely appears to differ from others in the same NE sector, characterised by the presence of abundant floor deposits that can be attributed to specific episodes of destruction. This circumstance would enhance the uniqueness of Building 101, which already stands out due to its mudbrick 'casselles'. As for the tablet, which is definitely associated with the Disc, palaeographic specialists have dated it to a period later than that of the archive room beneath Room 25 in the palace.³⁸

The orientation of Building 101, identical to that of the First Palace, enables us to assert that it is earlier in date than Buildings 103 and 104, and perhaps also than 102 (FIG. 9.14).³⁹ The destruction level of Building 104, older than that of Building 103, can probably be dated to MM IIIB. In our opinion, this could provide a valid argument in favour of dating Building 101 as early as MM IIIA. The presence of the tablet, and also of the oval-mouthed amphora, should also prove that it is more

recent than the buildings and deposits of the First Palace. At first sight, the siting of Building 102 appears contradictory. As we have already seen, it shares the same orientation with Building 101. However, neither the rectangular room with its floor deposit at the northern end, nor the vestibule with pillar, appear to belong to the MM IIIA period. Leaving aside other vessels that cannot be accurately dated, such as the numerous tripod cooking vessels, explicit reference is made to a bull-shaped rhyton decorated with a scale-like pattern, clearly LM I,⁴⁰ the same period to which other amphoras with spiral motifs, and 'small pedestal fruit bowls' seem to belong. The 'group photos' taken of other finds that are not explicitly mentioned appear to confirm the theory of a more recent (LM I) date.⁴¹ Having established its similarity in orientation to Building 101, we may only assume that 102 was re-occupied at a later date in the Neopalatial period, probably contemporary to nearby 103. Reoccupation of 101, on a structural and functional level, would have proved to be less desirable. Monumental Hall 103 with pillars and columns, and the ramp leading to the hilltop, yielded a large deposit. This does not appear to be compatible with the monumentality of the Hall. The material is exclusively LM IB and could be related to the remodelling of the building (pointed out by Pernier himself)⁴² along the eastern side, perhaps coinciding with a change in its function, which would be more compatible with the items found therein. If this had been so, Building 103, containing a further room N on the hillside, would not have originally provided a more or less monumental access to the Second Palace. On the other hand, none of the finds leads us to assume that Building 103 had been erected in MM IIIB, although this cannot be completely excluded, either. Hence, it is difficult to accept that the building in question could have been positioned in relation to 'the new entrance-system of the palace',⁴³ a theory that assumes, among other things, that the NE sector should be considered as one unit, which seems unlikely. Judging from the rich deposits of two of its rooms, the dating of the destruction layer in Building 104 can safely be attributed to MM IIIB. The irregular, unsystematic plan creates structural relationship problems with the nearby pillared Hall 103. As we

36 *Festòs PM II*, 392.

37 For both vessels: Pernier 1908, 261, figs. 3 and 4; a photograph of the amphora was published by Borda 1946, pl. XX. 1; also Di Vita, La Rosa and Rizzo 1984, 210, fig. 350. For the jug in Florence: Guidotti, Lo Schiavo and Pierobon Benoit 2007, 82 nr. 66.

38 Militello 2002, 76; *Festòs PM I*, 360, fig. 212.

39 *Festòs PM I*, 357–75; *Festòs PM II*, 393–405.

40 *Festòs PM II*, 393, fig. 257.

41 *Festòs PM I*, 360, fig. 212.

42 *Festòs PM I*, 365–6, fig. 209.

43 Girella 2011, 96.

cannot confirm this directly, we can observe that in the detailed Stefani plan⁴⁴ (FIG. 9.14), however schematic, NW Room 104 is indicated as forming an angle with the eastern wall of Room 103. Thus, for now, we can conclude that complex 103–104 was originally a unit that can be assigned to MM IIIB, and that only the pillared Hall was re-used in the Neopalatial period. In this manner, we can explain the later (LM IB) date of the deposit in Building 103. We thus have to re-date Building 103 to at least the MM IIIB phase, while excluding an earlier date contemporary with the erection of Building 101, due to the difficulty of orientation mentioned above. Whatever happened, neither Building 103 nor Building 104 can be included in the general picture that we are attempting to propose here.

The data provided so far in relation to the MM IIIA period allow us to assume that the palace was somehow rebuilt in the same areas as the previous one, with some slight modifications in the plan, as is the case of the W border of the Central Court, or with additions as in the case of the Disc Building, and with a western façade that proposed once again to follow the original, MM IB, line of the First Palace building, later established in the Second Palace (FIG. 9.16). A remarkable element from an architectural point of view is the lustral basin beneath Room 70, not to mention the *polythyron* in the area of XLV and the so-called partition wall on the western side of Court 48. The opening of Stairway 6 provides a further important element. Even though surviving remains refer only to the western half, the presence of the Central Court and the new building of complex 101–102 to the NE leads us to assume that a large part of the ruined building area had been re-occupied, with the sole exception of the SW quarter, situated at a lower level. Hence, we can safely say that a MM III A palace did exist at Phaistos.

Some observations concerning Building XLVII, Rooms LXXV–LXXVI and the paved road W of Geometric Room R/3 certainly related to the MM IIIA period, are omitted here for lack of space.⁴⁵

As regards the peripheral quarters of the settlement, we shall briefly mention the two residential areas and respective deposits identified in the Northern and Southern sectors of Chalara,⁴⁶ that yielded high-quality ceramics such as the fragmentary rhyton decorated with *agrimi* in relief. We may also add that the settlement must have extended along the hillside to the SW of the palace, where right at the start of the excavation Pernier had unearthed the ‘House with clay vessel deposit on the slope to the SW of the palace’, with fine material definitely belonging to the MM IIIA period.⁴⁷ Its location can also be surmised in relation to the new stretch of paving identified W of the Geometric quarter.⁴⁸ The quarter of H. Photini on the northern slope of the palace hill, temporarily uninhabited, remains an exception, whereas the *Acropoli Mediana* (Central Hill) in the area of the Stratigraphic Museum continued to be occupied, as

was probably the area near the eastern border, beside the restoration workshop.⁴⁹

Once again, for reasons of limited space we shall not explore several aspects of Phaistian material culture such as pottery and stone vase production, nor wall paintings.⁵⁰

A provisional conclusion can be drawn from a couple of key expressions. The first is *from earthquake to earthquake*, to indicate that at Phaistos our period proves to be explicitly and stratigraphically determined by two precise catastrophes. The first earthquake refers to the two events, which in a brief span of time ended life at the First Palace, a period that we refer to as the ‘shrine phase’, on the basis of the small buildings hastily added to the magnificent orthostat façade. The second event, also seismic, is represented by the destruction layer in the House South of the Ramp and also perhaps in the Disc Building. Moreover, the partial destruction revealed in that House means that we should not exclude intermediate interruptions within the period, which may have affected the restoration project of the whole palace. It is on the basis of this evidence that an older and newer phase has been identified, also from the point of view of the pottery production, still in MM IIIA.

The second key expression is *retrenching in continuity* (which does not mean an absence of innovations), in the sense that as far as the architecture, culture, ceremonial habits and administration are concerned, the MM IIIA period represents a regression in the history of the site, in the sense that activities pursued and available resources employed followed in the footsteps of the great Protopalatial tradition. In an attempt to reconstruct the palace on a vast scale (with the addition of the Disc building), which must have spanned a certain period of time (FIG. 9.16), the houses in the peripheral quarters were neglected. The reconstruction of the House South of the Ramp, which was originally built during the ‘shrine phase’, represents the only important exception. In this context, the expression ‘*New Era*’ can be applied more from the point of view of stratigraphy, but less so from a historical-cultural point of view, although we should not forget new architectural elements such as the lustral basin, the changes in pottery decoration or innovative experiments in wall painting.⁵¹

44 *Festòs PM I*, fig. 209.

45 Carinci and La Rosa 2009, 272–81.

46 *Festòs CM I*, 662–5 and 675–9; Girella 2007a, 237; 2011, 91–2. The finds from the quarter of Chalara have been edited by Girella 2010, 99–137.

47 *Festòs PM I*, 161–6, pls. XVIII and XIX.

48 Carinci and La Rosa 2009, 276–8.

49 Levi 1961–62, 114, figs. 164 and 165; *Festòs CM I*, 595–8; Girella 2007a, 237.

50 Carinci and La Rosa 2009, 283–4.

51 Militello 2001, 190–3.



Fig. 9.16. General plan of the Palace area with indication of MM IIIA structures coloured in black (adapted from Festòs CM I).

The introduction of new elements may have occurred within the context of the ancient local tradition, or else it could attest to the increasing Knossian presence in the Mesara area which would later be consolidated in the building of the Royal Villa at Ayia Triada while the palace was left in a state of ruin for a long time.⁵²

The *retrenching in continuity* could also explain a type of topographical (and perhaps functional) concentration represented by the House South of the Ramp, the houses in the Chalara quarter and by those on the Central Hill, not to mention Building XLVII underlying the Greek temple, or the house with Rooms LXXV–LXXVI, immediately W of the ascending ramp discovered beneath the Geometric quarter.⁵³ It is no coincidence that the House South of the Ramp lies beside the ceremonial area *par excellence*, which remained in use as revealed by our Building CIV. The Chalara quarter, which had been continuously inhabited since the Neolithic Age, focussed on the agriculture of the plain, without excluding, however, ritual practices or the existence of fine artefacts, such as ceremonial pottery and stone vases. The Houses on the Central Hill confirm the use of an area that had previously been settled. Structures on the southern slope were almost certainly public.⁵⁴

The Disc Building, which we consider part of the palace, in turn occupies an apparently new area, immediately behind the part which proved to be less damaged due to its height. Only the mudbrick chests, which were perhaps never filled in, recall palatial features. The rich ceremonial sets and the storage areas at the House South of the Ramp appear to contrast with the almost complete absence of deposit in Building CIV. However, both buildings were connected to the ceremonial area in the West Court and both inherited the functions of previous ones.

With regard to these different focal areas, Girella's expression 'from palace to house' and his idea of a 'non-centralized model'⁵⁵ are quite stimulating, provided that it should not be forgotten that all these areas, apart from the one at Chalara, are located immediately adjacent to the palace and were traditionally linked to its functions, above all to its ceremonies. Hence, it is hardly surprising that prestigious items, such as the stone vase sets,⁵⁶ formerly mainly used at the palace, are now to be found in these buildings that were designed to take over some of these functions, at least temporarily, such as commensal activities,⁵⁷ and were thus not really domestic in nature as the term 'household' would lead us to believe.⁵⁸ Thus we would suggest that Girella's expression should be modified to 'from palace to *its* houses'. In addition, we would question whether this single expression sufficiently describes the situation at Phaistos in the MM IIIA period. Indeed, his term 'from house to palace', only relating to the NE complex, groups together structural phenomena and pottery deposits that are probably not contemporary. If Building 101 with

the Disc archive may be considered as the same sector of the palace, orientated with the old building structures, then it seems likely that the oval-mouthed amphora associated with the Disc and the tablet are older than the items found in Room 104, with its three bull's head rhyta and bovine figurines. The suggestion that pillared Room 103 with its two architectural phases provided a link between the other two buildings is rather doubtful, not only from the point of view of the deposits, but also because of its different orientation. If it is assumed that the whole complex, including the archive, was in continuous use, then we would have to draw the conclusion that there was still some sort of palatial building contemporary to the vases in the deposit of Building 104, which we believe to be consistent with MM IIIB, as does Girella.⁵⁹ Since all the other deposits recovered in the palace area seem to be uniformly compatible with MM IIIA, we consider it more likely, like N. Cucuzza,⁶⁰ that only the Central Court area of the building was symbolically free of ruins and used as a fascinating territorial marker in a period following destruction in MM IIIA. We cannot really say if such a circumstance may denote a 're-establishment of a palatial ideology' or even a 'new notion of the palace'.⁶¹ In our opinion, the people who used Building 104 may have represented the conservative descendants of the 'palatial' dwellers, who had to defend the sanctity of the location while referring to the surviving Central Court of the palace.

A third point is that it has already been observed that at Phaistos and Ayia Triada no stratigraphically superimposed levels and structures of MM IIIA and MM IIIB have yet been discerned.⁶² Different reconstruction strategies were probably applied during the two phases. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore a likely reduction of the area dedicated to structures related to the organisation of power, following a tendency that would lead to the foundation of the Royal Villa at Ayia Triada.

It would be no exaggeration to say that the MM IIIA period represents a sort of watershed in the history of the district of Phaistos and hence of the whole Mesara plain. The decline of a great capital, the extension towards the sea as documented at Kommos, the

52 La Rosa 2002b, 95–6.

53 Carinci and La Rosa 2009, 285.

54 *Festòs CMI*, 602–29.

55 Girella 2011, 92–6.

56 Palio 2008, 265.

57 Girella 2007b.

58 Girella 2011.

59 Girella 2007a, 236 (table); 2010, 64–7.

60 Cucuzza 2005.

61 Girella 2011, 97.

62 Girella 2007a, 238.

substantial stamete of centres of ancient tradition such as Ayia Triada, the demographic increase in the surrounding countryside as illustrated by the Kamilari tomb, accompanied by a reduction in the number of settlements, as demonstrated by the recent survey,⁶³ all seem to support our suggestions. In conclusion, this is also the meaning of the new Building CIV (FIG. 9.3), which we have laboriously rescued from oblivion, and which is smaller and more modest than the previous one, but located immediately beside it.

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63 Watrous, Hadzi-Vallianou and Blitzer 2004, 291–8.

