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Rivista  
di Archeologia

RDA

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ISSN 0392-0895

2020

XLIV

Estratto

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Giorgio Bretschneider Editore

ESTRATTO

RDA

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# Rivista di Archeologia

VOLUME XLIV – 2020

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Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici  
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30123 Venezia  
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Giorgio Bretschneider Editore  
Piazza Antonio Mancini 4  
00196 Roma

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Fax 06.6864543  
e-mail: periodici@bretschneider.it  
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## ANVUR

Italian National Agency for the Evaluation  
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Roma

Aut. Tribunale di Venezia  
Reg. Stampa nr. 5  
del 1 febbraio 2006



UNIVERSITÀ CA' FOSCARI  
DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI UMANISTICI  
VENEZIA

ESTRATTO

VOLUME XLIV - 2020

# Rivista di Archeologia

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ISSN 0392 - 0895  
ISSN 2284 - 4821 online

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La rivista è pubblicata  
con il contributo finanziario  
dell'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia  
Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici



Università  
Ca'Foscari  
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# RENOVATING THE FIRST PALACE OF PHAISTOS DURING THE MIDDLE MINOAN IIA PHASE (18<sup>TH</sup> CENT. BC)

ESTRATTO

## Combining architectural and ceramic phases

ILARIA CALOI

Ca' Foscari University of Venice

L'articolo presenta la ristrutturazione del principale quartiere del Primo Palazzo di Festòs avvenuta nel MM IIA. La concomitante adozione di una nuova tecnica di manifattura ceramica, la *wheel-throwing technique*, impiegata per produrre nuove classi ceramiche ben attestate nei depositi associati agli ambienti ristrutturati del palazzo, fa ipotizzare che questa tecnica sia stata adottata da ceramisti collegati alla nuova leadership che ha promosso la ristrutturazione del principale quartiere del Palazzo di Festòs.

*The aim of this paper is to present the architecture and associated deposits dated to the M(iddle) M(inoan) IIA phase from the original and main structure of the First Palace of Phaistos, i.e. the three-floored South-West Building rising on the Lower West Court. My recent work at Phaistos allowed me to associate two MM IIA homogeneous ceramic deposits from the South-West Building with the first renovation of the edifice occurred after its foundation in MM IB. Moreover, the technological study I recently undertook on the Phaistian Protopalatial ceramics allowed me to suggest that a new forming technique – the wheel-throwing technique – was adopted at Phaistos in MM IIA. Considering the contemporary occurrence at MM IIA Phaistos of the remodelling of the South-West Building and the introduction of an innovative forming technique, I argue that the latter was adopted by a new leadership attending the Phaistian building, and who was also the agent of the palace renovation.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This contribution presents a paper given at a *Mycenaean Seminar* in London in 2018, whose title I have retained: *Renovating the First Palace of Phaistos during the Middle Minoan IIA phase (18<sup>th</sup> cent. BC). Combining architectural and ceramic phases*<sup>1</sup>. I will focus on the First Palace of Phaistos, the only palatial building on Crete providing crucial evidence of the first and key phases of the Protopalatial period (19<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> cent. BC). Unlike the other foremost palaces of Crete (e.g. Knossos and Malia), Phaistos still preserves its original and main edifice of the First Palace, that is the three-floored South-West Building with its orthostat façade at the east side of the Lower West Court (*Piazzale LXX*). This edifice was founded in MM IB and came to an end late in MM IIB (Figs. 1-2).

Here I am mostly concerned with what I call the «MM IIA renovation programme» of the First Palace of Phaistos, by which I mean the changes occurring in MM IIA at the palatial site and especially in the South-West Building, which was damaged in a partial destruction episode at the end of the MM IB phase<sup>2</sup>. There are two aspects of this renovation programme which I want to tackle here. First, the architectural transformations detected in the South-West Building and related court, which indicate the opening of new access points, including a new connection with the upper and northern terrace of the palatial site. This connection is played by the first construction of the *Propylaeum II*, the main entrance to the palace (Fig. 1), linking the northern and the southern wings of the palace, as well as the Middle West Court (*Piazzale I*) to the Central Court (*Cortile 40*). Second, significant changes in the

1. I gave this Mycenaean Seminar in London, at the Institute of Classical Studies, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2018. This study on the combination of architectural and ceramic phases at MM IIA Phaistos has been financed by the Michael Ventris Award for Mycenaean

Studies (2017) and by the Peter Warren Fellowship in Aegean Prehistory (IGRCT - Bristol University 2018).

2. CARINCI, LA ROSA 2007, p. 112.

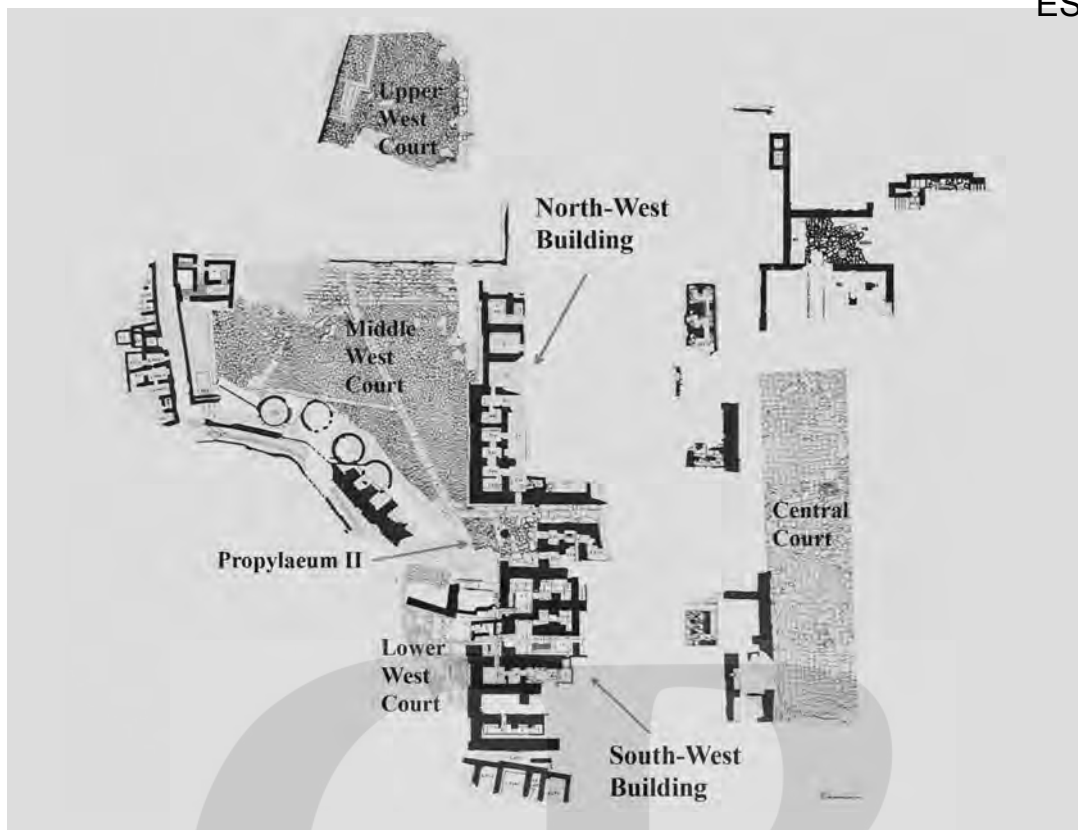


Fig. 1 - The plan of Phaistos with indication of palatial buildings (North-West Building and South-West Building), courts and the main entrance (*Propylaeum II*) of the First Palace



Fig. 2 - The three-floored South-West Building with its orthostat façade on the Lower West Court, from North-West



ceramic production: the adoption of a new technological ceramic innovation – the wheel-throwing technique –, the introduction of new wares and shapes produced using this new forming technique, and what appears to be the first mass production of wheel-thrown handleless conical cups at Phaistos<sup>3</sup>.

The subheading of my paper title, «Combining architectural and ceramic phases», indicates my intention to focus on those areas of the First Palace for which I was able to combine architectural and ceramic phases, i.e. the South-West Building in particular. I will briefly present the ceramic material found in two deposits dating to MM IIA and associated with the main architectural additions and alterations to the building after its foundation in MM IB.

From the contemporary occurrence at MM IIA Phaistos of the remodelling of the South-West palatial building and of the adoption of an innovative ceramic forming technique, namely wheel-throwing, I argue that the latter was probably adopted by a new leadership holding power at the Phaistian palace, and who was also the agent of the palace renovation.

Before dealing with the main aspects of the MM IIA renovation programme at the palatial site, I will first summarise the recent studies conducted at Phaistos, then present the layout of the palace, as well as the Phaistian pottery production at the time of the palace foundation in MM IB. This overview of the First Palace in MM IB will help to appreciate the innovative changes occurring at the site in the following MM IIA phase.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF RECENT STUDIES AND EXCAVATIONS AT THE FIRST PALACE OF PHAISTOS

Phaistos is located in the southern-central part of the island of Crete. The Bronze Age site was spread over three hills that run in an East-West direction above the left bank of a river, the Yeropotamos, overlooking the largest plain of the island, the Mesara. The easternmost of the three hills was occupied and/or frequented from the end of the Neolithic to the Hellenistic period, and has pro-

vided a long stratigraphic series that includes the monumental remains of two Minoan palaces (i.e. the First and the Second Palaces), which were built one over the other in the Middle and Late Bronze Age periods.

The First Palace was founded at the beginning of the Protopalatial period (MM IB) and came to an end at the close of the period (MM IIB).

The site of Phaistos was first excavated by Luigi Pernier from 1900 until 1909, when he brought to light the entire Neopalatial or Second Palace, and found remains of the previous First Palace only beneath the North-West façade of Second Palace<sup>4</sup>. After Pernier's excavations, Luisa Banti, his collaborator, made some tests in 1939 and in 1950 to check Pernier's excavations before their final publication<sup>5</sup>. Then, from 1950 to 1966, Doro Levi revealed the First Palace of Phaistos and its environs: the South-West Building, the North-West Building, the courts, the Acropoli Mediana Quarter, and the quarters located on the slopes of the palace hills (i.e. Ayia Photeini and Chalara)<sup>6</sup>. The tripartite architectural and ceramic sequence worked out by Levi for Protopalatial Phaistos was not in agreement with that produced by Arthur Evans at Knossos; so in 1994 Vincenzo La Rosa started a new programme to review Levi's work. From 1994 until his death in 2014, La Rosa directed excavations and studies, together with Filippo Carinci, with support from the Italian Archaeological School at Athens<sup>7</sup>. Since 2015 this work has been continued by F. Carinci and P. Militello<sup>8</sup>. The principal aim of all this campaign, conducted with the support of the architect F. Tomasello<sup>9</sup>, was to revise Levi's chronology in the light of Evans's at Knossos and to propose a new architectural sequence of the First Palace from its foundation to its collapse.

Carinci and La Rosa have identified four architectural phases for the Protopalatial period, on the basis of the transformations that took place both in the northern terrace of the First Palace, which includes the North-West Building and the related Middle West Court (*Piazzale I*), and on the connections between the northern and the southern terraces of the palace hill. The four architectural phases are as follows: Phase 1: the Baetylus phase (*Fase del Betilo*) assigned to MM IB

3. On the topic, see CALOI 2019a and TODARO, CALOI forthcoming.

4. PERNIER 1939.

5. PERNIER, BANTI 1951.

6. Doro Levi published his 1950-1966 excavations at Phaistos in LEVI 1976.

7. Results of their work are published in: CARINCI, LA ROSA 2001; LA

ROSA 2000, 2002, 2004; CARINCI, LA ROSA 2007, 2009; CARINCI 2011, 2014. On the revision of the Levi's work on the First Palace see also: MILITELLO 2012.

8. CARINCI 2015; CARINCI, MILITELLO 2015; MILITELLO, BUSCEMI 2015.

9. For the works of F. Tomasello see: TOMASELLO 1999, 2001.

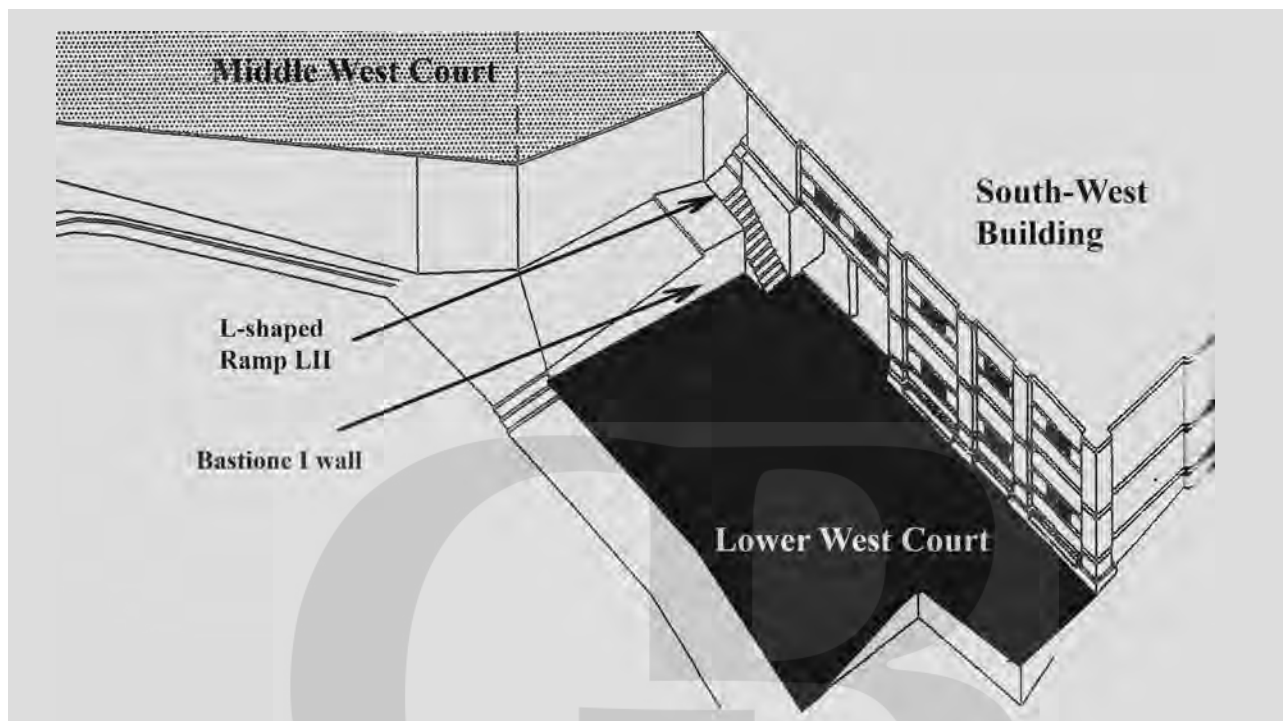


Fig. 3 - Reconstruction of the South-West Building in MM IB with indications of the *Bastione I* wall and the L-shaped Ramp LII

and corresponding to the foundation of the Palace; Phase 2: the Basin phase (*Fase della Vasca*), dating to Early MM II; Phase 3: the *Kouloures* phase (*Fase delle Kouloures*), dating to MM II (Early MM IIB?); and Phase 4: the Shrines phase (*Fase dei Sacelli*), dating to the final stage of the MM IIB period<sup>10</sup>. I have already discussed elsewhere the constructions assigned to each of these four architectural phases by the two scholars, underlining therein the difficulties of matching architectural and ceramic phases<sup>11</sup>. Recently, I have started a new project with the aim of combining the four architectural phases with the ceramic phases of MM IB, MM IIA and MM IIB across the site<sup>12</sup>. Here I am mostly concerned with the MM IIA structures of the palace: for the South-West Building, located on the lower terrace of Phaistos, I was able to date the first architectural changes of the edifice after its foundation to MM IIA, thanks to the association of two MM IIA ceramic deposits with the altered/added walls and

structures of the building (see *infra*). For the northern and middle terrace of the palace (*Piazzale I*), however, some work is still required to understand whether the structures attributed to the above-mentioned architectural Phase 2 and Phase 3 date purely to MM IIA or to the beginning of MM IIB.

### 3. PHAISTOS PALACE IN MM IB: THE FOUNDATION OF THE FIRST PALACE AND THE FIRST ADOPTION OF THE POTTER'S WHEEL

As pointed out by Carinci and La Rosa<sup>13</sup>, when the First Palace of Phaistos was founded in MM IB, the following building works took place: (1) foundation, on the lowest terrace of the site, of the South-West Building (Fig. 3) and pavement of its related court, i.e. the Lower West Court (*Piazzale LXX*); (2) foundation, on the northern and middle terrace of the site, of the

10. CARINCI, LA ROSA 2007, pp. 82-86. See also CARINCI 2014, pp. 17-23, figs. 2-5.

11. CALOI 2018.

12. *Ibidem*.

13. CARINCI, LA ROSA 2007, pp. 110-111.

North-West Building<sup>14</sup> and pavement of its related court, the Middle West Court (*Piazzale I*); (3) construction of the route connecting the Lower West Court with the Middle West Court (Fig. 4); (4) pavement of the Central Court (*Piazzale 40*); (5) foundation of new houses to the West of the Middle West Court, as well as along the slopes of the palace hill (i.e. Ayia Photeini and Chalara). Together with these new constructions, it should be noted that the Prepalatial Phaistos potters' quarter, known as Artisans' Quarter and located to the West of the Middle West Court, went on to be used through the Protopalatial period<sup>15</sup>.

According to Carinci and Tomasello, when the three-floored South-West Building was founded in MM IB, there were only two entrances into it from the Lower West Court, one leading to the ground floor and one to the first floor of the building (Fig. 3)<sup>16</sup>. The first was a small opening in the middle of the building's façade, leading to the ground floor storerooms (LVIIIa-d and LXI, LXIII). The second access route was via an L-shaped ramp (Ramp LII) located to the north of the Lower West Court that led to the building's first floor. At the time of the South-West Building's foundation, the façade in its northern part was set back from that of the southern: the area overlooking the court at the northern part of the edifice was occupied by an open space which Tomasello interpreted as a porch preceding the small opening in the middle of the building (Fig. 3)<sup>17</sup>. This space was occupied by a built room (Room LVII) only in the successive MM IIA phase (see *infra*, Fig. 6).

In MM IB, there was no direct connection between the palatial building and the Middle West Court, unlike the case in MM IIA. There was only a route - still vis-

ible today - connecting the Lower West Court to the upper Middle West Court (Figs. 3-4).

Concerning pottery production, at Phaistos the potter's wheel has been introduced in MM IB, as well as in the rest of the island<sup>18</sup>. The hallmark of the Protopalatial period is the Kamares Ware, which appeared precisely in MM IB. This elaborate pottery is decorated with abstract, floral and vegetal motifs in polychromy on a black-slipped surface and is represented by different kinds of drinking pots (mostly carinated and straight-sided cups) and pouring vessels (i.e. open spouted jars, teapots and jugs). Recent studies have shown that the Kamares Ware was mainly produced at Phaistos<sup>19</sup>, likely in the Artisans' Quarter (see *supra*), and used during the communal ceremonies which took place in the Middle West Court of the palace, as demonstrated by the rich amounts of discards of this pottery found to the West of the court<sup>20</sup>. It seems that in this phase the spouted jar (Fig. 5 a) and the handleless conical cup (Fig. 5 b) represented the typical drinking set of the palatial contexts.

Recent studies have revealed that at MM IB Phaistos, the potter's wheel was used only in association with hand-building<sup>21</sup>. Thus, to produce Kamares Ware, the potter's wheel was employed in two ways: to finish handmade products, especially small vases, like drinking pots and small pouring vessels (Fig. 5), and in combination with hand-building to shape bigger vessels (e.g. jars, jugs and containers)<sup>22</sup>. This specific way of using the potter's wheel was named the wheel-fashioning technique and was in use also in the rest of the island<sup>23</sup>.

Moreover, at MM IB Phaistos most small vases of a crude character, especially plain handleless conical cups, were still produced only by hand, without using

14. See LA ROSA 2004, p. 611. According to V. La Rosa, in MM IB the western façade of the North-West Building of the First Palace was built exactly where runs the LM IB western façade of the Second Palace. He believes that only in MM II was the western façade of the First Palace relocated, becoming aligned with the façade of the South-West Building.

15. On the Artisans' Quarter at Phaistos see TODARO 2009; see also TODARO 2015.

16. See TOMASELLO 1999, pp. 80-83, fig. 4; CARINCI 2011, pp. 58-64, figs. 95A-B.

17. TOMASELLO 1999, pp. 80-83, fig. 4; see also CARINCI 2001, pp. 29-31.

18. There is a general agreement among scholars about the introduction of the potter's wheel on Crete in MM IB, see: HAMPE, WINTER 1976; EVELY 1988, 2000; KNAPPETT 1999, 2004; VAN DE MOORTEL 2006. In particular for Phaistos, see CALOI 2011.

19. DAY, WILSON 1998; see also TODARO 2009 for the use of the Artisans' Quarter also in the Protopalatial period.

20. CALOI 2013, pp. 269-271.

21. CALOI 2011, 2019a.

22. According to the study of Aurelia Speziale (1999) on the MM IIB vases from Phaistos, some middle-sized vases (mainly spouted jars) were constructed by combining on the potter's wheel different parts of a vase, previously manufactured through different forming techniques. Already in MM IIA some vases (e.g. barbotine jugs) appear to have been manufactured in this way.

23. On the use of the wheel-fashioning technique on Crete see: KNAPPETT 2004, pp. 257-265; POURSAT, KNAPPETT 2005, pp. 31-34; BERG 2011, 2015; JEFFRA 2013. On the adoption of different methods of the wheel-fashioning technique see: ROUX, COURTY 1998; CHOLEVA 2012, pp. 364-366; ROUX, JEFFRA 2015.



Fig. 4 - The route connecting the South-West Building with the Middle West Court

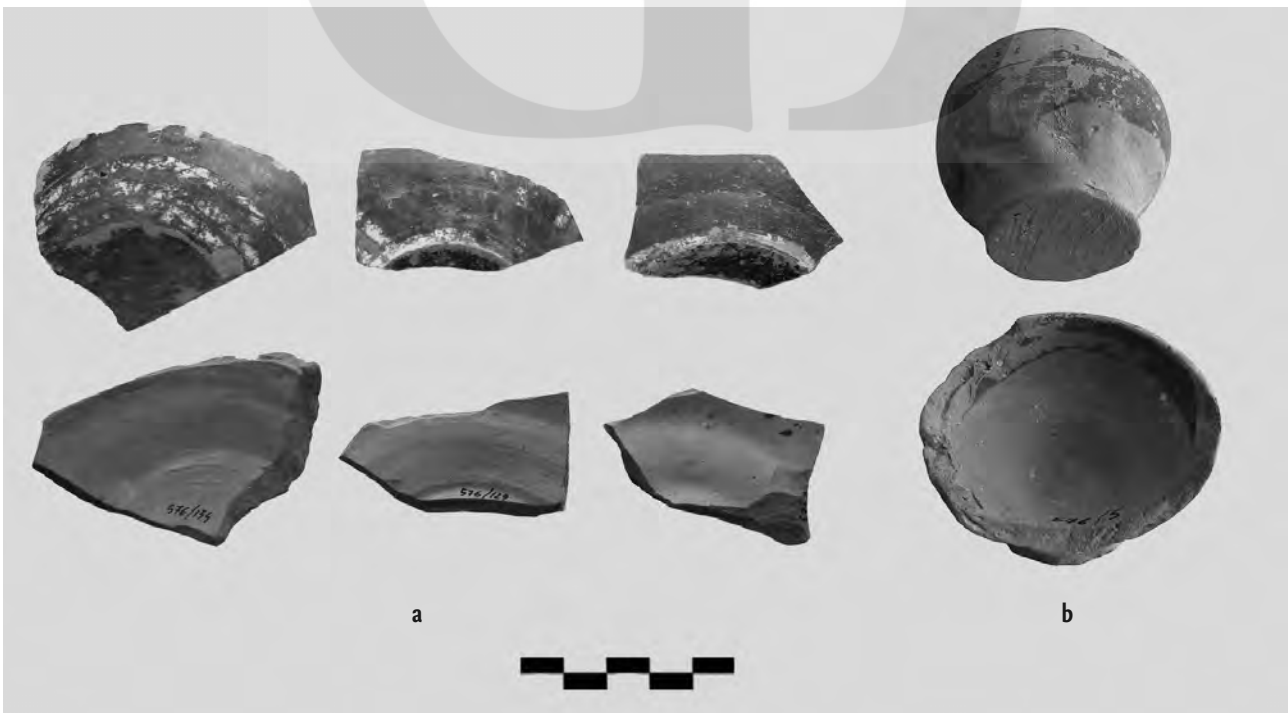


Fig. 5a-b - MM IB Kamare Ware spouted jars (a) and one handleless conical cup (b) from Phaistos produced combining hand-building and the the use of the potter's wheel

the potter's wheel<sup>24</sup>. The handmade building of a vase was sometimes associated with the use of a bat, following a Prepalatial tradition<sup>25</sup>. It is also relevant to note that the fabrics used in Prepalatial times to produce the well-known EM IIA Fine Painted Ware are the same as used in Protopalatial times to produce the Kamares Ware, thus demonstrating the strong continuity of the ceramic technological tradition at Phaistos and in the Mesara plain in general<sup>26</sup>.

#### 4. THE MM IIA RENOVATION PROGRAMME AT PHAISTOS

In this section, I am going to consider first the remodelling of the South-West Building and its new connection with the northern terrace of the palace, and then the adoption of a new ceramic forming technique.

##### 4.1 *The remodelling of the South-West Building*

As observed in the introduction, after its first foundation in MM IB, the South-West Building went through architectural and functional transformations in early MM II<sup>27</sup>. Two ceramic deposits coming from the South-West Building and its related court have allowed me to date these architectural changes to MM IIA. They are the filled-in structured-platform deposit found in Room IL, within the northern part of the South-West Building, and the dump found between *Bastione* I wall and *Bastione* II wall, to the northern edge of the Lower West Court.

The first change assigned to MM IIA was the opening of a new entrance in the northern part of the façade: here Room LVII was added and two different accesses were opened on both sides of the room, i.e. Corridor L and Room LVI (Figs. 6-7)<sup>28</sup>. Thanks to this operation the façade-line of the northern part of the South-West Building was brought into alignment now with that of the southern (Fig. 1).

The northern access through Corridor L provided an important new passage from the Lower West Court to Room IL, which in MM II appears to have been turned from a basement into a preparation room for ceremonial events<sup>29</sup>. According to Carinci<sup>30</sup>, during these operations, a new door was opened in the western wall of Room IL connecting the latter with Corridor L. Then, the room's ceiling was raised, and a new platform was constructed at its northern wall. This exceptionally large platform (60 cm high, 155 cm wide and is 250 cm long) was built from stones, filled-in with hundreds of vessels and objects, both ceramic and lithic, and with animal remnants, and finally sealed with stone slabs. My recent reinvestigation of the material from the platform allowed me to date it to MM IIA and interpret this structured deposit as the result of a 'feasting hoard'<sup>31</sup>. Without dwelling further upon the finds of this platform deposit, already preliminarily published<sup>32</sup>, I want only to remark here on the factors that make this filled-in deposit important in the history of the main palatial building of Phaistos. First of all, it is one of the few feasting hoards found in a Protopalatial palatial context on Crete; it is interpreted as the repository from a single feasting event held nearby, most likely in the Lower West Court of the palace. The platform was found full of pottery, with a total of 710 objects, which included many drinking pots and special paraphernalia, like large serving vessels; special foodstuffs, such as a partial skull of an agrimi (wild goat) with preserved horns; several 'ritual objects', such as three bull rhyta, fire-boxes, horned pots, as well as one fruitstand and one grater; 500 handleless conical cups, of which 430 are plain<sup>33</sup>. These conical cups are manufactured in different ways: there are hand-built and wheel-fashioned specimens, but also numerous examples that seem wheel-thrown (Fig. 8)<sup>34</sup>. The platform deposit has thus revealed all the three MM IIA classes of pottery which seem produced at Phaistos through the wheel-throwing technique (see *infra*, Fig. 12 a-c).

24. See examples of MM IB handmade handleless conical cups in CALOI 2013, pp. 113-114, figs. 25-26, pls. XXII-XXIII; see also CALOI 2011, pp. 88-89.

25. For the use of bats at Prepalatial Phaistos see TODARO 2016, pp. 288-289. See also WARREN 1972, pp. 261-262, pl. 75; EVELY 2000, p. 271; CUOMO DI CAPRIO 2007, pp. 169-170.

26. See WILSON, DAY 1994; DAY, WILSON 1998; DAY *et al.* 2006.

27. See TOMASELLO 1999, 2001; CARINCI 2011.

28. TOMASELLO 1999 and CARINCI 2011, pp. 41-43.

29. CARINCI 2011, p. 41.

30. CARINCI 2011, pp. 41-43.

31. CALOI 2012.

32. *Ibidem*; see also CALOI 2017 for other filled-in-platform deposits at Protopalatial Phaistos.

33. See this material in CALOI 2012, pp. 51-52, figs. 5-10.

34. CALOI 2016a, pp. 23-24; 2012, p. 51, fig. 9.

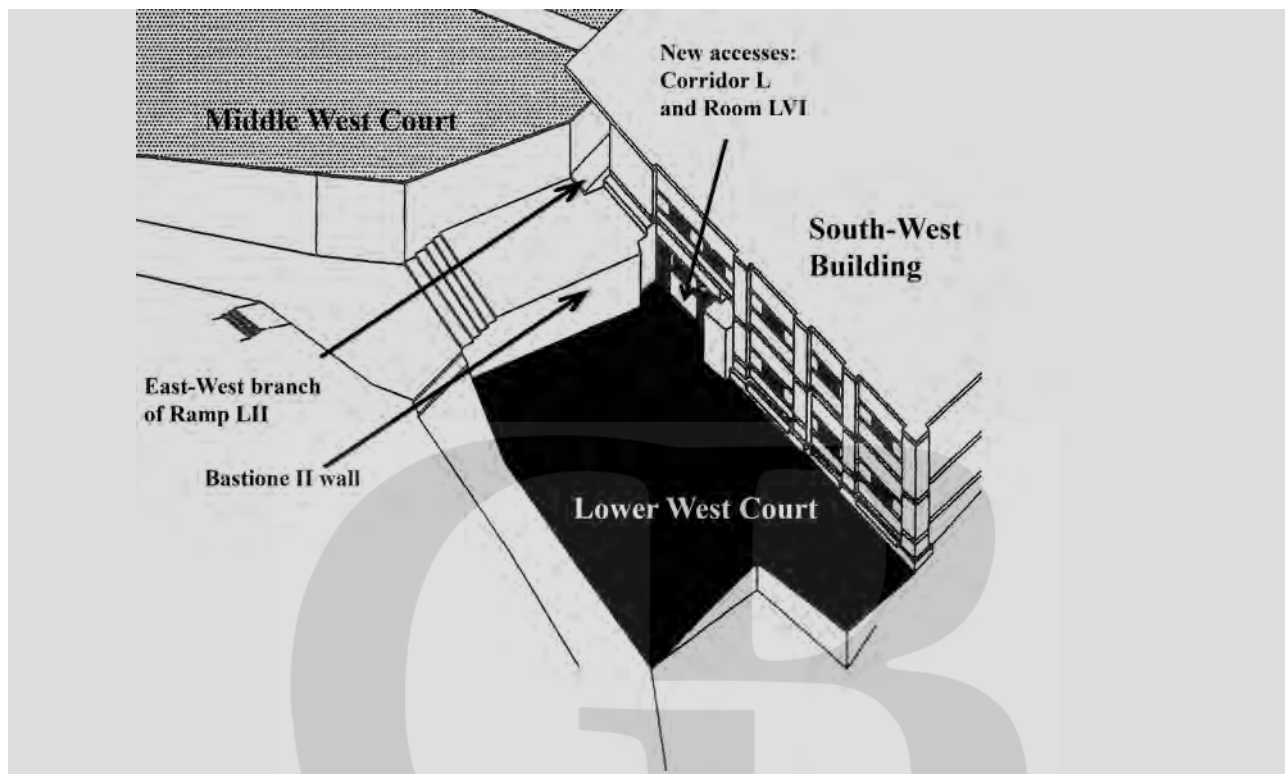


Fig. 6 - Reconstruction of the South-West Building with changes occurred in MM IIA: the new accesses in Corridor L and in Room LVI, the modification of Ramp LII and the new *Bastione II* wall



Fig. 7 - The new accesses from the Lower West Court to the South West Building, opened in MM IIA on both sides of Room LVII: Corridor L on the left and Room LVI on the right; from West

Second, the composition of the assemblage and the stratigraphic position of the filled-in platform deposit within Room IL agree well with its interpretation as a feasting deposit accompanying a construction event: thus it can also be labelled a building deposit<sup>35</sup>. By this I mean that, on the renovation of the South-West building and especially of Room IL, a feasting event was held whose paraphernalia and debris were deliberately collected and deposited in an expressly constructed platform. Moreover, its dating to the MM IIA gives a *terminus ad quem* for the renovation of Room IL and connected areas.

Finally, the filled-in platform has been interpreted as a commemorative deposit<sup>36</sup>, i.e. as the material mnemonic record of an exceptional and memorable event, likely to be a feasting event on the occasion of the renovation of the northern part of the South-West Building, and especially of Room IL. If the deposit was

35. CALOI 2017.

36. CALOI 2019a.

indeed connected to the renovation of the building, it is tempting to explain it as resulting from a work feast, as defined and discussed by Dietler and Herbich<sup>37</sup>. A concentration of 430 plain handleless cups, of which many are produced to a standard measure through the wheel-throwing technique (Fig. 8), makes it likely that these plain handleless conical cups were manufactured *en masse* to be used as (ration?) bowls during the renovation of the main palatial building of the site<sup>38</sup>. Simona Todaro has already suggested that the first use of plain handleless conical cups as ration bowls at Phaistos goes back to EM III, at the time of major building works at the palatial site<sup>39</sup>. But before deliberating on a possible work feast connected to the MM IIA renovation of the South-West Building, I would like to present the second deposit from this area, which is also connected to re-building operations of the palatial building.

The second architectural change identified in the South-West Building is the closing of the North-South branch of the aforementioned L-shaped Ramp (Ramp LII) (Figs. 6, 9)<sup>40</sup>. Only the East-West branch of Ramp LII remained in use, leading directly to the first floor of the South-West Building (i.e. Room IL/first floor). With the contemporary closing of the Ramp LII North-South branch and the opening of the new entrance in Corridor L, the retaining wall, known as *Bastione I*, originally connected with the ramp, went out of use (Figs. 3, 10). A second wall, known as *Bastione II*, was constructed slightly south of the old one. This new wall functioned not only as a retaining wall once more, but it delivered a more powerful visual effect, forming the new northern edge of the Lower West Court (Figs. 6, 10-11). With the construction of *Bastione II*, the area between the old and the new walls was deliberately infilled with a homogeneous deposit, whose pottery mainly dates to MM IIA. This date gives a *terminus ad quem* for the construction of *Bastione II*. The bulk of the *Bastione II* dump is composed of numerous - entire and fragmentary - vases datable to MM IIA, but it also yielded few fragmentary vases and sherds dating to

late MM IB. This seems to confirm that the dump is composed of ceramic material coming from construction activities occurred in the South-West Building in MM IIA, which also included some residual material from areas of the palatial building partially destroyed at the end of MM IB. This dump is significant in the palace's life-history for two reasons: first, it is rich in a variety of construction debris, such as white plaster, commonly used to cover walls; red stucco fragments, which belong to junctions between the gypsum slabs used for floors; fragments of containers filled with white stucco; and containers filled with *terra rossa*, i.e. red earth used to produce red pigments<sup>41</sup>. These finds, preliminarily published in 2016<sup>42</sup>, have been interpreted as discarded material from working activities in the area, most likely in the South-West Building, where there are indeed attested walls covered with white plaster and floors of gypsum slabs with red stucco junctions<sup>43</sup>. Second, the dump provided hundreds of plain handleless conical cups, many pouring vessels and cooking pots, as well as animal bones, thus suggesting that it too contained the remains of feasting activities, likely connected with re-building operations of the area. As in the aforementioned MM IIA deposit of Room IL, among the ceramic material there are here too wheel-thrown vases, which are mainly handleless conical cups, but also bridge-spouted jars and fine cups (see *infra*)<sup>44</sup>.

It is relevant to point that one of the fragmentary storage vessels retrieved from the dump has been mended with fragments coming from outside the area between the old *Bastione I* and the new *Bastione II*. Indeed the small pithos F 2251, which presents a typical MM IIA *barbotine* decoration<sup>45</sup>, has been partially reconstructed from fragments retrieved not only from the dump of *Bastione II*, but also from Ramp LII and from the area West to the *Propylaeum II*, which is located to the North of the ramp, on the upper terrace (Fig. 1). This vase seems to prove that the dump area between the *Bastione I* and *Bastione II* was filled-in with material coming from operations occurring in all the fol-

37. DIETLER, HERBICH 2001, pp. 241-244.

38. On the topic see CALOI 2019a and TODARO, CALOI forthcoming.

39. See TODARO 2013, pp. 264, 294-295.

40. See TOMASELLO 1999; CARINCI 2011, p. 45. For the excavation of the *Bastione II* wall by Doro Levi see LEVI 1976, pp. 169-170.

41. See CALOI 2016b, pp. 431-433, figs. 5-6, 8.

42. *Ibidem*.

43. On the possible provenance of white intonaco and red stucco frag-

ments of the *Bastione II* dump from the renovated Rooms IL and XXVII-XXVIII of the South-West Building see CALOI 2016b, pp. 434-535 and MILITELLO 2001, pp. 41-42, 54-56.

44. See figs. 3, 8, 10, 12 in CALOI 2019a.

45. See LEVI 1976, p. 166, pl. 18. The *barbotine* decoration of the *pithos* is as follows: the black surface covered with protuberances shows reserved elliptical depressed areas painted in orange and surrounded by coloured lines.

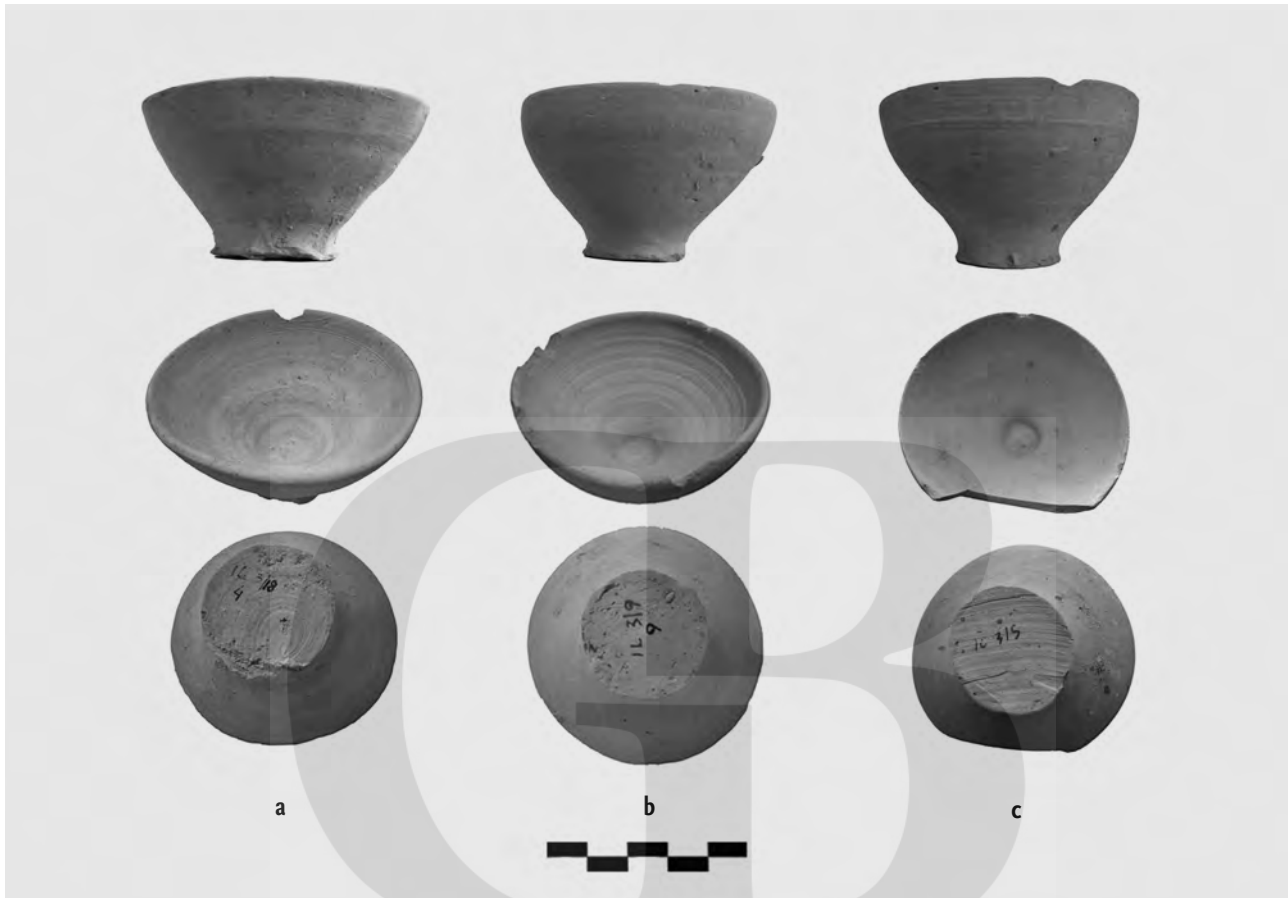


Fig. 8 a-c - MM IIA wheel-thrown plain handleless conical cups from Phaistos

lowing areas of the palace: the Ramp LII, which was closed in MM IIA, and the *Propylaeum* II. This means that the works occurred in MM IIA in the area of Bastione II and Ramp LII, in the lower terrace, involved also the area of the *Propylaeum* II, in the upper terrace. It is probable that this main entrance to the palace, whose construction was dated to Early MM IIB by Carinci and La Rosa<sup>46</sup>, was built in MM IIA. It is possible that in this phase the first floor of the South-West Building was connected to the northern and upper terrace of the palace by means of a stair or of a ramp, as proposed by Carinci and La Rosa<sup>47</sup>.

If the construction of *Propylaeum* II dates to MM IIA, this would mean a new emphasis to this entrance to the palace already before the monumentalisation of the successive MM IIB phase (see *infra*). This area is crucial because it connects not only the two most important courts of the palace, the Middle West Court and the Central Court, by means of a long corridor - Corridor III.7 -, but also the northern wing of the palace with the southern one.

46. CARINCI, LA ROSA 2007, p. 105. In 2014 F. Carinci proposed that the architectural phase 2 could be dated between MM IIA and MM IIB.

47. CARINCI, LA ROSA 2007, pp. 106-108, figs. 115-116; see also TOMASELLO 1999, fig. 6.





Fig. 9 - The East-West Ramp LII on the left and the North-South branch of Ramp LII, closed in MM IIA, on the right; from North-West



Fig. 10 - The filled-in area between the *Bastione I* wall, on the left, and the *Bastione II* wall, on the right; from West



Fig. 11 - The *Bastione II* wall constructed in MM IIA in the Lower West Court; from South

#### 4.2 *The adoption of the wheel-throwing technique*

The recent, interdisciplinary study I have undertaken on the technology of Protopalatial ceramic material from Phaistos has allowed me to propose that a new forming technique was adopted in MM IIA<sup>48</sup>. Deposits dating to MM IIA have provided at least three classes of vases which, from a macroscopic analysis, bear traces that greatly differ from those visible on the MM IB vases, but sit well with the use of the wheel-throwing technique. Different from the wheel-fashioning technique, attested on Crete since MM IB, in this technique the rotative kinetic energy (RKE) is used from the beginning of the manufacturing process to transform a mass of clay into a vessel and thus produces different traces on the surface<sup>49</sup>. Among the MM IIA Phaistian deposits that have provided examples of wheel-thrown vases<sup>50</sup> are to be numbered both the above-discussed deposits from the main palatial building, namely the filled-in platform deposit of Room IL and the *Bastione II* dump.

At MM IIA Phaistos, this new forming technique was adopted to produce only some specific, local wares and shapes. In the aforementioned deposits, the wheel-thrown vases are represented by the three following classes of pottery only: (1) handleless conical cups in Fine Plain Ware (Fig. 12 a); (2) cups in fine Dark-on-Light Ware (Fig. 12 b); and (3) cups and spouted jars in Polychrome on Buff-Reserved Surface Ware (Fig. 12 c). The most frequent wheel-thrown vases are the handleless conical cups in Fine Plain Ware (Figs. 8, 12a). I have discussed elsewhere the differences between these cups and the hand-made and wheel-fashioned ones, both from a macroscopic point of view and on the basis of the first results obtained by their reproductions through experimental archaeology<sup>51</sup>. Unlike the other examples produced using the hand-building and the wheel-fashioning technique, the MM IIA wheel-thrown specimens from Phaistos present the same characteristics: fine fabric, small dimensions (max h. 4.5), standard measurements (h. 3.7-4.5; base diam. 2.5-3.2; rim diam. 7-7.5), a conical profile with an incurving rim on a small and raised base (base diam. 2.5-

48. CALOI 2019a; CALOI 2021 forthcoming. See also CALOI 2011.

49. On the different traces left on the surface of vases using the two techniques, see: CUOMO DI CAPRIO 1995, pp. 147-149; COURTY, ROUX 1995.

50. For the MM IIA deposits at Phaistos: see CALOI 2013, p. 27 and BALDACCI 2017.

51. CALOI 2019a, 2021 forthcoming.

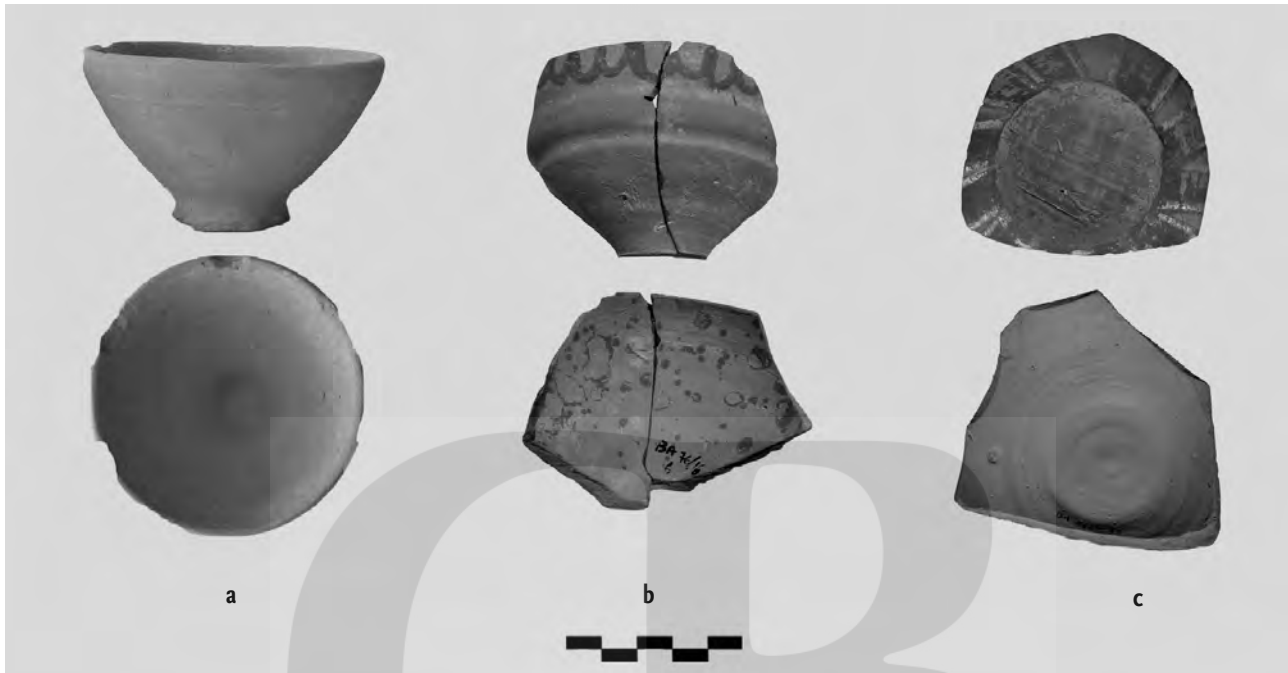


Fig. 12 a-c - Three MM IIA wheel-thrown ceramic classes from MM IIA Phaistos: a) handleless conical cup in Fine Plain Ware; b) cup in fine Dark-on-Light Ware; c) spouted jar in Polychrome on Buff Reserved Surface Ware

3.2) and a deep hollow in the interior base (Figs. 8 a-c). They often show clearly visible throwing marks both on the interior and exterior walls, a result of the poorly executed surface finish or of the overall lack of surface finish of the vase (Figs. 12 a-c). These features are probably due to the fast and mass-production of this drinking vessel in MM IIA<sup>52</sup>.

The second class is represented by the cups in fine Dark-on-Light Ware (Fig. 12 b)<sup>53</sup>. They are all of small or medium dimensions, are produced in a fine and hard-fired fabric, and present a hemispherical or conical profile. The interior is often characterized by a splashed decoration in dark paint with added red or white dots. On several specimens the external rim decoration shows a series of diagonal slashes or festoons in brown or red paint, whilst some horizontal ridges ornament the vase's belly.

The third class is the Polychrome on Buff Reserved Surface Ware (Fig. 12 c)<sup>54</sup>, which usually displays polychrome decoration on buff clay surface, covered with a thick fine creamy slip. The dark-on-light decoration sometimes replaces the polychrome. Wheel-thrown vases in Polychrome on Buff-Reserved Surface Ware are mostly cups and bridge-spouted jars, which are well exemplified by fragmentary and entire specimens retrieved from the dump of *Bastione II*<sup>55</sup>, but also from other MM IIA deposits of the palatial site<sup>56</sup>.

In MM IIA Phaistos, the production of wheel-thrown vases comprised but a small percentage of the total production of the site, which continues to be made by combining hand-building and the wheel. This limited production, including cups and bridge-spouted jars, made in a fine and hard-fired fabric, and decorated in dark or in polychrome on light clay, appears in strong

52. CALOI 2019a.

53. *Ibidem*, pp. 18-20, figs. 8-11.

54. On this class of pottery see CALOI 2009, pp. 427-430, fig. 16; CALOI 2011, p. 96.

55. For fragmentary material see CALOI 2019a, p. 20, fig. 12; for entire material see LEVI 1976, p. 166, fig. 257.

56. The MM IIA fill retrieved from Rooms CV, CVI and CVII of the Acropoli Mediana Building has been recently published in BALDACCÌ 2017. See BALDACCÌ 2017, nn. 605-606, 638-647, pls. 58, 60, 101.

contrast with the contemporary production of the typical polychrome on dark-slipped surface ware, namely the Kamares Ware. The very forms and decorative patterns are different from those of the Kamares Ware, showing a preference for handleless hemispherical and conical cups, rather than for one-handled carinated or rounded ones, and for linear motifs rather than for floral or vegetal ones. It seems that at MM IIA Phaistos appeared a new drinking set, displaying a revolutionary technological change associated with innovative decorative patterns.

The adoption of this new wheel-throwing technique is particularly important because it was used only for some wares and shapes, without replacing the older techniques (i.e. handmade and wheel-fashioning techniques) that continued to be used for the rest of the ceramic production. The wheel-fashioning technique kept on being used to produce both middle- and large-sized vessels, not only in MM IIA, but also in the following phases of the Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods. This would suggest that at MM IIA Phaistos there co-existed potters producing local pottery, but using different forming techniques. There were potters who continued to use the potter's wheel in combination with hand-building (i.e. wheel-fashioning technique) and new potters who were able to develop new skills to tackle new demands, providing the palace not only with new classes of pottery, but also with numerous, standardised wheel-thrown conical cups. It is important to note that we are dealing with new potters producing new wares with an innovative forming technique, but also adopting the same clay sources and paste recipes in use from Prepalatial to Protopalatial times, and producing some shapes, like the plain handleless conical cups, which belong to a well-known Phaistian category of drinking pot that goes back to Prepalatial times<sup>57</sup>. This would suggest that these new potters were probably living and/or working in the Phaistos region and, unlike the other more traditional potters, were able to develop new skills in using the potter's wheel.

Moreover, it appears that this new technique was adopted almost exclusively at Phaistos in MM IIA and at the neighbouring sites, like Kommos, Ayia Triada and Kamilari<sup>58</sup>, but apparently rarely adopted then in north-

ern and eastern Crete. Recent studies on ceramic technology of Protopalatial pottery from sites of northern and eastern Crete (i.e. Knossos, Malia, Myrtos Pyrgos and Palaikastro) have revealed that on the introduction of the potter's wheel in MM IB, exclusively the wheel-fashioning technique was employed during the Protopalatial period in the island<sup>59</sup>. If we compare the pattern of Phaistos with that of contemporary palatial and non-palatial sites of North/North-Eastern Crete, where the co-existence of different forming techniques is apparently not evident, the explanation for this could lie in the long and perhaps highly localized pottery tradition at the Phaistos palatial site, where a potter's quarter existed and was used for producing high-specialised classes of pottery (i.e. the well-known EM II Fine Painted Ware and the Protopalatial Kamares Ware) since Prepalatial times. As already proposed by Todaro<sup>60</sup>, it is likely that potters belonging to different communities from the region co-worked at the palatial site of Phaistos, practicing their craft with their own, different skills, but all well integrated into the material world of the Southern Cretan society.

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Before drawing conclusions, I would like to summarise the changes occurring in the Palace in MM IIA. In the South-West Building, we observe the opening of a new entrance with two-fold access, which could be the result of a stronger control exercised over the entrance to the ground floor of the palace and likely connected to a new (or renewed) leadership attending the palace. Again in the South-West Building, we observe the creation of a new internal circulation pattern and a new connection with the northern wing of the palace through the passage in the *Propylaeum* II. The latter links not only between the southern terrace with the northern terrace of the palace, but also the two major courts of the site, the Middle West Court and the Central Court. If the construction of this monumental entrance to the palace dates back to MM IIA, as I have proposed, this would point to a major programme of new control of the accesses to the palace.

57. On the topic see TODARO, CALOI forthcoming.

58. For Kommos, see for example VAN DE MOORTELE 2006, p. 295, n. Ja/5, pl. 3.3; for Ayia Triada, see BALDACCIO forthcoming; for Kamilari, see CALOI 2019b, pp. 134-135, 227, fig. II.3.2.

59. JEFFRA 2013; ROUX, JEFFRA 2015; KNAPPETT 2016. See also BERG 2009 for a discordant voice.

60. TODARO 2017.

It is pertinent to remark here that together with the aforementioned activities in the South-West Building, other building works took place in MM II in the northern terrace of the palatial site, but it is so far not possible to ascertain whether they date to MM IIA or early MM IIB. The labours that occurred in the above-mentioned architectural Phases 2 and 3 identified by Carinci and La Rosa are: the relocation of the North-West Building of the northern terrace, which was aligned with the South-West Building of the southern terrace and provided with an orthostat façade; the enlargement of the Middle West Court with the construction of the theatral area; the construction of the four *kouloures*, the deep circular pits common in many Minoan palaces; the raising of the level of the Middle West Court, together with the addition of the sidewalks<sup>61</sup>. If the ongoing study of the deposits associated with these new constructions confirm that they too were constructed in MM IIA, this would mean that the new renovation programme observed in the South-West Building took in also the monumentalisation of the northern terrace of the palace.

From a ceramic point of view, we have observed the adoption of a new forming technique, that of wheel-throwing; this allowed the production of new classes and shapes different from the most common Kamares Ware ones, and the first mass-production of wheel-thrown handleless conical cups. These cups were probably used during a work feast organised on the occasion of the renovation of the South-West Building and then deposited and sealed all together within a platform – the one in Room IL, which was expressly constructed within the palace as a place of memory (*memorandum*). But these wheel-thrown cups were also found in the dump of *Bastione* II, which also seems to contain discarded material of these operations, together with pottery mainly used during these rebuilding activities.

Given the contemporary occurrence at MM IIA Phaistos of the introduction of an innovative forming technique – the wheel-throwing one – with the consequent mass production of wheel-thrown cups, and of the remodelling of the South-Western palatial building, can

we argue that the wheel-throwing technique was introduced by a new leadership holding power at Phaistos, one also responsible for the architectural changes and the monumentalisation of the palace we have observed? Even if we say *yes*, we cannot however claim that this new leadership radically changed the pottery production of Phaistos or the layout of the palace. Concerning the pottery, we observed that new technological technique did not replace the older ones in use at Phaistos in producing the typical Kamares Ware, such as the wheel-fashioning technique. As already said, it is probable that the new forming technique was adopted by potters who were working in the Phaistos region and sharing the same tradition of other potters, but were able to develop new skills to tackle new demands and to become more competitive. Concerning the palace layout, the works that took place in MM IIA did not totally revolutionize the outline of the existing building, but rather improved both the control of the access system to it and the connections between diverse areas of the palace. The absence of a radical transformation of the palace layout probably implies that the MM IIA works of renovation took place within some consensus, even if under the command of a new leadership. The period is not only marked by changes in the ceramic production and by the renovation of the monumental South-West Building, but also by major public works that occurred in the northern terrace (i.e. *kouloures*, sidewalks, theatral area) between MM IIA and early MM IIB. Moreover, the growing extent of palatial power and influence outside the precinct of the Phaistos palace in MM II is detectable not only in the new investment observed at the neighbouring settlements, like Kommos and Haghia Triada, but also in the increasing use of the Kamilari necropolis and of the Kamares Cave<sup>62</sup>. The stronger influence exerted by Phaistos on the material culture of these centres of the western Mesara plain in the MM IIA phase seems to point to an increasing growth and consolidation of the Phaistos power already in MM IIA rather than in early MM IIB.

61. See CARINCI, LA ROSA 2007, pp. 82-86. On the topic see also MILITELLO 2012.

62. For an overview of the changes occurred in MM IIA in the surrounding area of Phaistos see CALOI 2015. Specifically, for the MM

IIA phase at Kommos: VAN DE MOORTEL 2006; at Ayia Triada: BALD-ACCI forthcoming; at Kamilari: CALOI 2019c, pp. 655-656; at the Kamares Cave: VAN DE MOORTEL 2011.

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- Fig. 1: Revision of Fiandra 1961-1962;  
Fig. 2: Photo S. Antonello;  
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Fig. 4: Photo S. Antonello;  
Fig. 5: Photo author;  
Fig. 6: Revision of Tomasello 1999, fig. 6;  
Fig. 6-12: Photo author

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Filippo Carinci for the great opportunity he gave me to study the Protopalatial pottery from Phaistos. I am grateful to Simona Todaro and Pietro Militello for having discussed with me many aspects of this paper and to Don Evely for editing the paper. I thank the two anonymous referees whose comments and suggestions have much improved my paper.

Many thanks to the Ephoria Archaioiton Irakleiou for the permit to publish the pictures of the First Palace at Phaistos (Figs. 2, 4, 7, 9-11).

