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PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON THE DELIBERATE DEPOSITION OF BRONZE ARMOUR AT IRON AGE PHAISTOS

ILARIA CALOI

Riassunto. La campagna di scavo della missione archeologica italiana condotta nel 2023 a Festòs ha portato alla luce le componenti di un'armatura in bronzo intenzionalmente deposta all'interno di un grande *pithos* rinvenuto nell'angolo nord-orientale del Vano OO, un ambiente monumentale situato sul pendio occidentale della collina di Kastri, a O del palazzo minoico. Lo scavo è ancora in corso, ma il deposito è stato provvisoriamente datato tra la fine dell'VIII e l'inizio del VII sec. a.C., che in termini ceramici corrisponde al periodo tra il TG e gli inizi dell'O. Delle 16 componenti rinvenute, si riconoscono un umbone di scudo (*phalaron*), le paragnatidi di un elmo, così pure una serie di elementi che potrebbero appartenere allo stesso elmo, a una corazza e a una cintura. Poiché la maggior parte degli elementi dell'armatura di Festòs trova i migliori confronti in tombe egee e cipriote dell'XI-X sec. a.C., si propone che l'armatura deposta nel *pithos* del Vano OO fosse un *keimelion*, verosimilmente offerto in un luogo sacro tra la fine dell'VIII e gli inizi del VII sec. a.C., periodo cruciale per la costituzione della *polis* di Festòs.

Περίληψη. Η ανασκαφική περίοδος του 2023 της ιταλικής αρχαιολογικής αποστολής στη Φαιστό έφερε στο φως τμήματα μιας χάλκινης πανοπλίας, σκόπιμα αποθεθειμένης στο εσωτερικό μεγάλου πίθου που εντοπίστηκε στη βορειοανατολική γωνία του μνημειακού Χώρου OO, στη δυτική πλαγιά του λόφου Καστρί, δυτικά του μινωικού ανακτόρου. Αν και η ανασκαφή βρίσκεται ακόμη σε εξέλιξη, το σύνολο χρονολογείται, με τα σημερινά δεδομένα, ανάμεσα στα τέλη του 8ου και τις αρχές του 7^{ου} αι. π.Χ., περίοδο που, με βάση την κεραμική, αντιστοιχεί στη μετάβαση από την Ύστερη Γεωμετρική στην Πρώιμη Ανατολίζουσα περίοδο. Από τα 16 εξαρτήματα που έχουν βρεθεί, αναγνωρίζονται ένας ομφαλός ασπίδας (*φάλαρο*), οι παραγναθίδες ενός κράνους, καθώς και σειρά στοιχείων που ενδέχεται να ανήκουν στο ανώτερο τμήμα του κράνους, σε θώρακα και σε ζώνη. Καθώς τα περισσότερα στοιχεία της πανοπλίας της Φαιστού βρίσκουν τα πλησιέστερα παράλληλά τους σε ταφικά σύνολα του Αιγαίου και της Κύπρου του 11ου-10ου αι. π.Χ., προτείνεται ότι η πανοπλία που αποτέθηκε στον πίθο του Χώρου OO αποτελούσε *κειμήλιον*, το οποίο πιθανότατα προσφέρθηκε σε ιερό χώρο ανάμεσα στα τέλη του 8ου και στις αρχές του 7ου αι. π.Χ., μια κρίσιμη περίοδο για τη διαμόρφωση της πόλης-κράτους της Φαιστού.

Abstract. The 2023 excavation campaign conducted by the Italian Archaeological Mission at Phaistos brought to light bronze armour intentionally deposited within a large pithos found in the northeastern corner of Room OO, a monumental space located on the western slope of the Kastri hill, W of the Minoan palace. The excavation is still ongoing, but the deposit has been provisionally dated to between the late 8th and the early 7th c. BC, which in ceramic terms corresponds to the transition between the LG and O phases. The 16 pieces of bronze armour excavated include a shield boss (*phalaron*), the cheek-pieces of a composite helmet, along with a number of elements that could belong to the same helmet, a cuirass and a belt. Since most of the armour elements from Phaistos find their closest parallels in Aegean and Cypriot graves of the 11th-10th c. BC, I suggest that the armour deliberately deposited in the pithos of Room OO was an heirloom (*keimelion*), likely offered in a sacred space between the late 8th and the early 7th c. BC, a crucial period for the formation of the polis of Phaistos.

During the 2023 excavation campaign conducted at Phaistos¹ pieces of bronze armour were found deposited within a huge pithos placed in the corner of a monumental space, Room OO, which is located on the western slope of the Minoan Palace hill (Figs. 1-2). Since the excavation of the room is not finished yet, this paper can only present the context of the find and give preliminary observations on the armour retrieved. Among the 16 elements of armour excavated, there are some bronze pieces which have been identified with certainty, namely the two cheek-pieces of a helmet and a shield boss (*phalaron*), and other

¹ I am thankful to Vassilis Sythiakaki, Director of the Greek Ephorate at Heraklion, and to Anthi Koukouraki of the same institution; to Emanuele Papi, Director of the Italian Archaeological School at Athens, and to the people working there, who have much facilitated my research, especially Angela Dibenedetto and Roula Kourousia; to Giorgos Fanouraki, the conservator of the Archaeological Museum of the Mesara, Crete. I wish to thank my *maestro* Filippo Carinci for his insightful comments on the drafts of this paper, Pietro Militello and Simona Todaro for their constant support, Giacomo Fadelli for his priceless advice on the ceramic and bronze finds retrieved from the 2023 excavation at Phaistos, Davide

Giulio Aquini and Alessandro Sanavia for their invaluable help with the illustrations of this paper. A special thanks goes to Joseph Maran and Helmut Matthäus for the precious advice they gave me on the bronze pieces even before their conservation, to Don Evly for editing this paper, and to the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments. In this paper, the following abbreviations will be used: PG = Protogeometric; EPG = Early Protogeometric; G = Geometric; LG = Late Geometric; O = Orientalizing; EO = Early Orientalizing; CG = Cypro-Geometric; CA = Cypro-Archaic; LC = Late Cypriot; EM = Early Minoan; MM = Middle Minoan; LM = Late Minoan; Subminoan = SM; Submycenaean = SMyc.

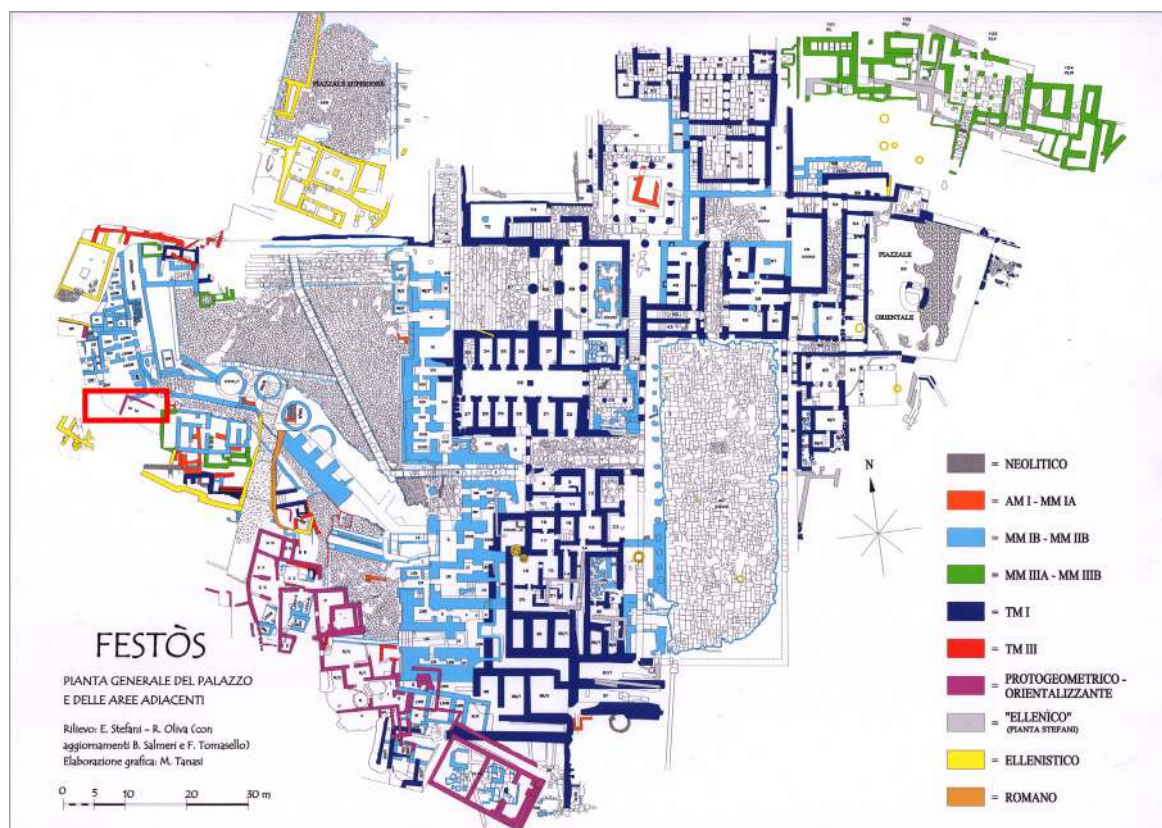


Fig. 1. Plan of Phaistos with indication in red of Trench 5 excavated in 2023
(el. M. Tanasi based on a plan by E. Stefani and R. Oliva, updated by B. Salmeri and F. Tomasello).

elements that are less clearly determined. The latter set comprises one inverted U-shaped band, which could be part of a helmet; some curved bands, which could belong to a belt; some peculiar elements that could have belonged to a cuirass, as well as other items whose interpretation is even less clear. The context of deposition is provisionally dated between the late 8th and the early 7th c. BC, namely Late Geometric-Early Orientalizing periods (LG-EO: 740-670 BC). However, the armour itself appears to date earlier in manufacture, namely to the 11th or 10th c. BC. This hints at the possibility that what was deposited within the huge pithos could be a *keimelion* offered in perhaps a sacred place at a time between the LG and EO, which corresponds to a crucial moment for the foundation of the polis at Phaistos.

The following pages deal with the context (Par. 1), the preliminary presentation of the bronze pieces from the armour deposited in the huge pithos of Room OO (Par. 2) followed by a brief catalogue of them (Par. 3), as well as a paragraph devoted to final remarks and avenues for future investigation (Par. 4).

1. THE 2023 EXCAVATION IN ROOM OO: THE CONTEXT OF THE BRONZE ARMOUR

The new cycle of excavation at Phaistos (2022-2023) was directed by Pietro Militello from Università di Catania, under the aegis of the Italian Archaeological School at Athens directed by Emanuele Papi, and authorized by Vassiliki Sythiakaki, head of the 13th Greek Ephorate. It focused on the western slopes of the palace hill, that is to the W of the Middle West Court (Piazzale I) of the Minoan Palace² (Fig. 1). From the outset of the new excavation project in 2023, the team of the Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, directed by myself, was assigned the task of excavating the terrace located to the S of the Protopalatial House located to the W of the Middle West Court of the Palace (Trench 5), and of making a sounding within the same Protopalatial House (Trench 7)³. Trench 5 was opened both to the S and W of the northern wall of Room

² MILITELLO *et alii* 2023, figs. 1-2 [P. Militello].

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia.

³ *Ibid.*, 473-482 [I. Caloi]. The 2023 excavation was financed by the

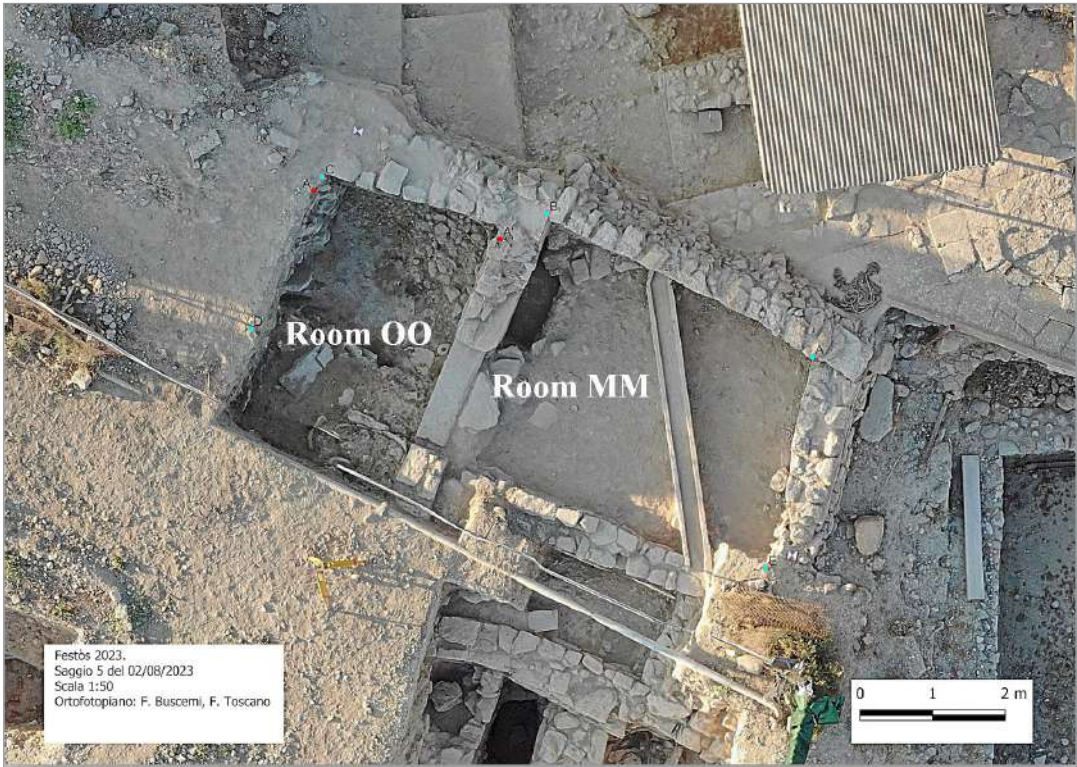


Fig. 2. 2023 excavation at Phaistos, Trench 5: Room OO and Room MM (orthophoto F. Buscemi - F. Toscano; © Archivi SAIA, V/217).



Fig. 3. Trench 5: Room MM in foreground and Room OO with its large threshold in the eastern wall (photo D. Aquini; © Archivi SAIA, V/218).

MM, already brought to light by Doro Levi (1964-1966) and dated by him to the G period⁴, and in the area to the W of Room MM, which was eventually named Room OO (Figs. 1-2)⁵.

In 2023, Room OO was excavated only in its northeastern part. Its eastern wall (UM65002 and UM23502), shared with Room MM, has been exposed only in its northern portion (Fig. 2). This wall

⁴ LEVI 1965/66, 353-363, pl. IV. See also *Id.* 1976, pl. X. When Doro Levi excavated the Minoan houses located to the W of the Middle West Court, he discovered a series of spaces (Rooms MM, KK, LL: see the plan in ROCCHETTI 1974/75, fig. 136) that he dated to the G period.

In Levi's view, the latter corresponded to a long period covering the 9th, 8th, and 7th c. BC, namely the PG, G, and O ceramic phases.

⁵ See the location of Trenches 5 and 7 in MILITELLO *et alii* 2023, 457, fig. 1 [P. Militello].



Fig. 4. Trench 5. The destruction level in Room OO: the pithos fragments embedded in the burnt soil in the northeastern corner of the room (photo I. Caloi; © Archivi SAIA, U/13896).



Fig. 5. Room OO: the two superimposed fragments belonging to two different pithoi (photo I. Caloi; © Archivi SAIA, U/13897).

is composed of large and squared blocks, some of them possibly reused from previous Neopalatial structures. In this wall, the entrance from Room MM is located, where a huge, monolithic threshold (160 cm long) stands out (Figs. 2-3). Since the excavation of the room is still proceeding, its southern and western limits have not been found. However, it is likely that the room could have been at least four times the size of what has been investigated so far.

The removal of topsoil in Room OO revealed a destruction level (US5004; Fig. 3) that has been provisionally dated to the end of the 8th/early 7th c. BC, which in ceramic terms corresponds to LG/EO. This thick destruction level, identified in all the excavated portion of Room OO, is still visible in section in the unexcavated area to the W (Fig. 3).

In the northeastern corner of the room, within the destruction level appeared a very large fragment of a pithos embedded in a burnt soil and decorated with a series of incised herringbone (Fig. 4). After its



Fig. 6. Trench 5, Room OO. a. Pithos fragment decorated with incised running spirals, oinochoai and hourglass-like motifs; b. the huge pithos F23 8327 *in situ* decorated with a series of incised herringbones (a. photo D. Aquini; © Archivi SAIA, U/13898; b. photo I. Caloi; © Archivi SAIA, U/13899).

removal, it became clear that this large fragment had been deliberately arranged so as to cover another fragment belonging to a second, different pithos (Fig. 5). The latter fragment is part of another large pithos found *in situ* in the southern portion of the room, which was only partially excavated (see *infra*)⁶. It is decorated with four horizontal series of incised motifs, including running spirals of Minoan inspiration, oinochoai, and hourglass-like motifs in the lower part (Fig. 6a). The decoration with oinochoai finds comparison in several pithos fragments found at Phaistos⁷ and at the Dictaeon Cave as well⁸. It is relevant to stress that a similar decoration with oinochoai is attested on the rim of a bronze vase retrieved from the Cypriot T. 40 at the Kourion-Kaloriziki necropolis⁹, a very rich tomb that has revealed good parallels for the Phaistian bronze pieces discussed in the next pages.

After the removal of the stones around the pithos fragments, it became clear that the first and upper pithos fragment belonged to the huge pithos located in the northeastern part of Room OO – with a max. diameter of 120 cm and decorated with horizontal series of incised herringbone (Fig. 6b). It was this pithos that was used to accommodate the deposition of bronze armour (Fig. 7).

1.1 The deliberate deposition of bronze armour within the huge pithos

The two abovementioned pithos fragments were used to hide a deliberate deposition within the huge pithos. They covered a clay plain lid with conical profile, preserving only the rim and the knob, which was found on its side (Figs. 7-8). The lid's central part had collapsed and was burnt. Much to our surprise, below the lid, the excavation of the burnt soil mixed with fragments of the lid revealed a deposition of bronze elements. These turned out to be parts of armour (Figs. 7-8). They were evidently hidden below the two pithos fragments and the conical lid¹⁰.

As illustrated in Fig. 9, below the lid there first appeared two bronze bands; then, below them, to the side, was a bronze shield boss (*phalaron*) (Fig. 10). In the lower part of the deposition, mixed with soil,

⁶ See MILITELLO *et alii* 2023, 482, fig. 30 [I. Caloi].

⁷ They were found in a Hellenistic dump excavated by Vincenzo La Rosa to the S of the so-called Ramp House (LA ROSA 2002, 775, F7913, fig. 254) and in the Haghia Photini quarter (see picture in Archivi SAIA, B/7426). The latter are reported by Levi as scattered fragments dating to G-O and coming from his 1959 excavation of the Minoan quarter of Haghia Photini. I warmly thank Giacomo Fadelli for this information.

⁸ BOARDMAN 1961, 58-59, No. 252.

⁹ MCFADDEN 1954, 140, No. 37, fig. 13, pl. 22. As reported by McFadden (1954, 140), the bronze vase with the decorated rim has been differently dated from the 14th c. BC to the SMyc period.

¹⁰ Since the lid and the soil were burnt, it is likely that a fire was set at the time of the deposition. The bronzes below the lid were, however, found not burnt. As suggested by Alessandra Giumlia-Mair, whom I thank a lot, it is likely that the soil retrieved from beneath the lid was used to protect them.



Fig. 7. Trench 5, Room OO. The deposition inside the huge pithos F23 8327: the rim of the inverted lid and two bronze sheets in the centre; from N (photo I. Caloi; © Archivi SAIA, U/13900).

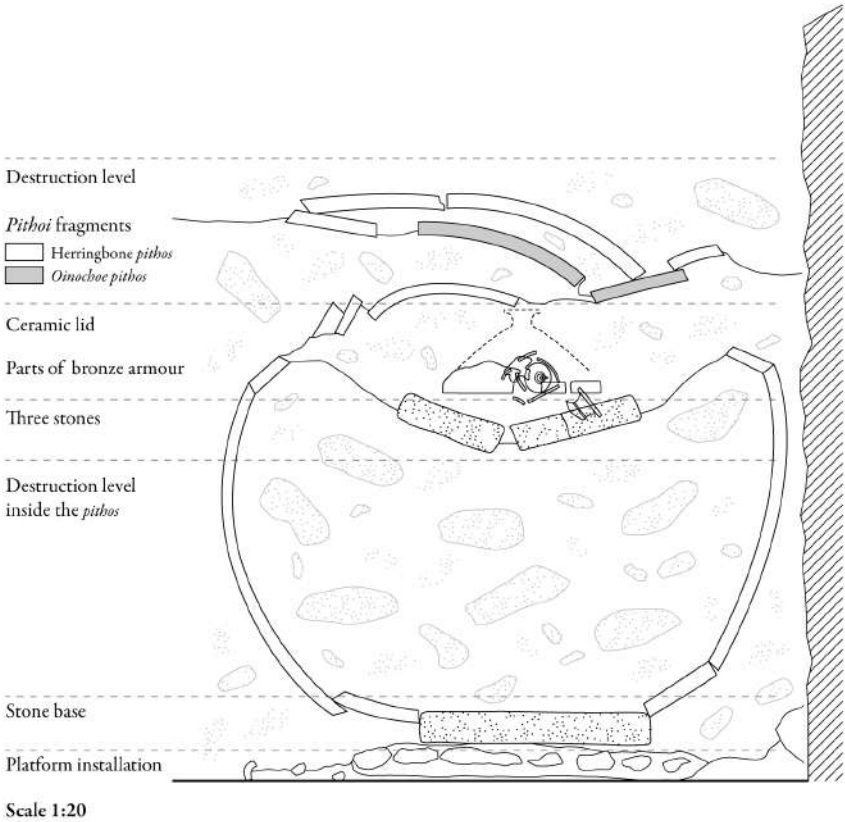


Fig. 8. Trench 5, Room OO. Schematic reconstruction of the deposition inside the huge pithos F23 8327 (el. D. Aquini - A. Garzia; © Archivi SAIA, NIG 8770).

there were several fragmentary bronze bands together with other bronze fragments, likely belonging to a belt and a cuirass. At the bottom of the deposition appeared two bronze cheek-pieces and two elements of an amygdaloid shape (Fig. 11). They were found buried within the same sandy, light-brown soil, found in the upper part of the deposition, and mixed with small fragments of the clay lid.

These last and lowest pieces of the armour were set on three stones (Figs. 8, 12), likely deliberately arranged for the deposition process. No ceramic fragments (other than fragments of the lid) were found together with the bronze pieces.



Fig. 9. Trench 5, Room OO. The deposition inside the huge pithos: the bronze bands found on the top, just beneath the lid (photo I. Caloi; © Archivi SAIA, U/13901).



Fig. 10. Trench 5, Room OO. The deposition inside the huge pithos: the bronze shield boss found on the side (photo D. Aquini; © Archivi SAIA, U/13565).



Fig. 11. Trench 5, Room OO. The deposition inside the huge pithos: the two cheek-pieces and the elements of an amygdaloid shape found at the bottom (photo I. Caloi; © Archivi SAIA, U/13902).



Fig. 12. Trench 5, Room OO. The deposition inside the huge pithos: the three stones at the bottom (photo I. Caloi; © Archivi SAIA, U/13903).



Fig. 13. Trench 5, Room OO. The large stone slab at the bottom of the huge pithos (photo I. Caloi; © Archivi SAIA, U/13904).



Fig. 14. Trench 5, Room OO. The platform covered with white intonaco for the installation of the huge pithos (photo I. Caloi; © Archivi SAIA, U/13905).

Beneath the three stones (Fig. 12), appeared a level made of a brown sandy soil containing many stones mixed with some ceramic fragments, which are preliminarily dated to LG/EO. Some fragments from the lowest layer within the pithos surprisingly join with those found in the destruction level identified outside the pithos. Thus, one may conclude that the pieces of the bronze armour were deposited within the huge pithos when this was already abandoned and covered (and also filled) with the stones from the collapse of the room.

The pithos was unexpectedly found missing its base. In its place appeared a large stone slab (Figs. 8, 13), arranged on a platform made of a fill containing small stones and ceramic fragments, and covered with white intonaco (Fig. 14). This platform was prepared for the installation of the pithos. Its fill contained mainly EM III and MM IA fragments. The very small and non-diagnostic fragments present and belonging to the LG/EO period are not enough to date the installation of the pithos. Since the pithos was found without a base and not embedded in the room floor, but positioned on a stone slab placed on a platform (Figs. 8, 13-14), it is plausible that the pithos had been removed from another place within the Iron Age Phaistos settlement¹¹, where these pithoi are quite common, and positioned in the room at the time of its construction.

¹¹ Some huge pithoi with incised herringbone decoration are still visible *in situ* in the so-called Geometric settlement of Phaistos published in ROCCHETTI 1974/75.



Fig. 15. Trench 5, Room OO. Ceramic objects from the final destruction level and the underlying re-occupation level of Room OO: a-b. the aryballois (F23 8336 and F23 8337); c. the miniature shield (F23 8331) (photos G. Fadelli and drawings A. Sanavia; © Archivi SAIA, V/219).

1.2 The context outside the pithos

The excavation of the southern and western portions of the room has not been completed yet and for this reason the context can only be presented here in a preliminary form. To the SE of the pithos, beneath the same destruction levels first identified in the room (US 5004 and US 5008), a thick silty layer (US 5010) is reached. The latter still contains big, embedded stones making it possible that this layer corresponds to the first, partial destruction level of the room, which was used as a makeshift level for the re-occupation of the room before its final collapse. Both this thick lower level, which covers the large entrance threshold in the eastern wall as well ¹², and the upper destruction level – corresponding to the final collapse of the room – have revealed a series of finds preliminarily dated between the LG and EO periods. They include a black cup (F23 8329), two Creto-Cypriot aryballois (F23 8336 and F23 8337), a miniature shield (F23 8331) (Fig. 15a-c), as well as two single-bladed iron knives, which are both being restored.

The two aryballois, illustrated in Fig. 15a-b, are similar in shape and decoration: both are globular, decorated in red with horizontal lines and bands on the body and concentric circles on the shoulder. They appear to imitate the decoration of the Cypriot products in CG III-CA I. Their best parallels come from the nearby Temple B at Kommos ¹³, the Fortetsa necropolis at Knossos ¹⁴, and Eleutherna ¹⁵. The necropolis of Afrati has revealed similar specimens as well ¹⁶.

¹² See MILITELLO *et alii* 2023, 481, fig. 29 [I. Caloi].

¹³ The best comparisons come from the Floor 2 deposit of the Temple B at Kommos, which is dated to the G and O periods. See SHAW-SHAW 2000, 234-235, Nos. 224-225 (C 3221-C 3222), pls. 4.9, 4.46. The two aryballois from Kommos are dated to the 7th c. BC.

¹⁴ See the LG-EO aryballois found in T. P in BROCK 1957, 107-115, pl.

96. At Knossos there are some good parallels – for shape, but not for decoration – which are dated to EO: MOIGNARD 1996, 443-444, type B. See also COLDSTREAM *et alii* 2001, 70.

¹⁵ ΣΤΑΜΠΟΛΙΑΗΣ 1996, 65-66, No. 48, pl. 126 (LG-EO).

¹⁶ See T.L. 50 from T. L in FADELLI 2024, 256, pl. XLIX.

The miniature shield illustrated in Fig. 15c has a circular shape, a convex profile with a raised rim, and two suspension holes. It is black painted and decorated in white with groups of strokes along the rim and with a rosette surrounded by concentric lines in its centre. The best comparisons are to be found in the 7th-c. BC votive shields offered in the Gortyn sanctuary¹⁷.

To the W of the huge pithos, a thick silty level comparable to the above-mentioned US 5010 has revealed a series of objects placed all around the collapsed walls of the pithos and dated to LG/EO. They are a clay lamp, a black-painted aryballos, and a stone phallus. In the S portion of the room, the same level revealed a plain amphora, which was surrounded by aryballoi and juglets deposited as votive offerings¹⁸.

Further S, another large pithos was found *in situ*, only half-preserved and collapsed¹⁹. As already said, the fragment decorated with oinochoai used to cover the bronze deposition – illustrated in Fig. 6a – belongs to this large pithos. As previously observed for the huge pithos, two juglets were again deposited as votive offerings below the collapsed walls of this second pithos²⁰.

It is relevant to stress here again that most of the aryballoi and objects found both in the final destruction level and in the underlying frequentation level of Room OO are dated between the LG and EO. This means that the final destruction of the room happened soon enough following the re-occupation of the room after its first, partial destruction. The ongoing study of the pottery from Room OO will help in giving a more accurate dating of the ceramic finds and, in turn, a more precise dating for the first, partial destruction, followed by the re-occupation of the room, and then its final collapse.

It is also important to remark that these kinds of finds are usually common in necropoleis and in sanctuaries or cult places. All these objects look to have been deposited near the two pithoi just like votive offerings, either when the two pithoi had already collapsed and gone out of use or at the time of the final collapse of the room. Likewise, it appears that the deposition of the armour was placed within the huge pithos soon after the collapse of the room.

2. SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON THE PIECES OF THE ARMOUR

The total number of the armour pieces found in the deposition is 16 (see catalogue in Par. 3; Figs. 16-22). They will be preliminarily presented in the following pages. Of these pieces only a typological analysis has been started; the study of the manufacturing techniques, technology and usage-related traces has not finished yet, and thus will not be considered in this contribution.

The bronze pieces were conserved by Giorgos Fanourakis and are now stored at the Archaeological Museum of the Messara, Crete. Some are well-preserved or mended from a few fragments, while others are still in pieces.

Among them are two cheek-pieces of a helmet and one fragmentary inverted U-shaped band (here interpreted as possibly belonging to the same helmet) (Figs. 16-18), three parts of a shield boss (Fig. 19a-d), four curved bands here interpreted as parts of a belt (Figs. 20-21), and six elements whose function is less clear, but some of which could belong to a cuirass (Fig. 22a-e).

Since the bronze pieces of the armour come from a deliberate deposition, the possibility should be considered that they will not make up a complete suit of armour, but will be only a selection of its parts.

2.1 The helmet: two cheek-pieces and a possible third element

Two cheek plates belonging to a helmet, otherwise made of a perishable material (Nos. 1-2; Fig. 16a-b), and a third element (No. 3; Fig. 17), which is an inverted U-shaped band here interpreted as a possible part of the same helmet, are identified. An attempted reconstruction is illustrated in Fig. 18. The two cheek-pieces were found together at the bottom of the deposit (Fig. 11), while the third element was found at the very top of the deposit, just below the ceramic lid (Fig. 9), together with another bronze element of uncertain interpretation (No. 16; Fig. 22e).

¹⁷ See for example, JOHANNOWSKY 2002, 13, No. 48, pl. 54.

¹⁸ See MILITELLO *et alii* 2023, 481, fig. 29 [I. Caloi].

¹⁹ See *ibid.*, 482, fig. 30 [I. Caloi].

²⁰ See *ibid.*, 483, fig. 31 [I. Caloi].

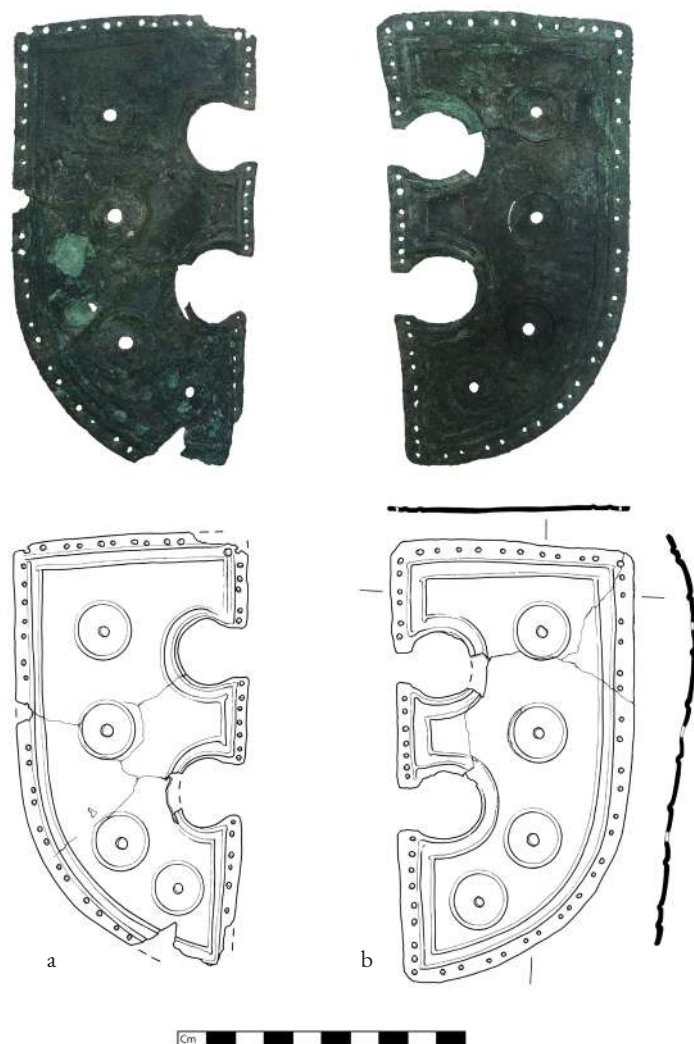


Fig. 16a-b. Trench 5, Room OO. The bronze cheek-pieces (F23 8335a-b) from the deposition within the huge pithos (photo and drawing A. Sanavia; © Archivi SAIA, V/220).

2.1.1 The cheek-pieces

The conservation state of the two cheek-pieces is different: both are mended from fragments and corroded, with the left one (No. 2; Fig. 16b) being better preserved than the right (No. 1; Fig. 16a).

The cheek-pieces have two near circular cutouts on one long side: the upper one corresponds to the position of the eye and the lower one to the mouth (Fig. 16a-b). Both pieces have a series of small holes along the edge: these are not regular in size (diam. from 0.15 to 0.2 cm) and not neatly spaced in position, and it appears that on the back edge they are distributed more in pairs (or threes). They were clearly intended as stitch-holes for the sewing on of the metal to an organic (padding?) lining to the inside.

The two cheek-pieces (Fig. 16a-b) are decorated with two parallel ribs at the edge (at some 0.5 cm in from the edge) and four almost identical circles defined by a rib and with a central hole (diam. 0.4 cm). Two are on the upper part and two in the lower part, but they are not equally spaced apart. It is likely that the central holes were covered by bronze bosses, as are visible on the bronze curved band (No. 7) illustrated in Fig. 20a.

On the right cheek-piece (Fig. 16a), there is a hole at the top corner above the cutouts, slightly larger (diam. 0.28-0.3 cm) than those along the edge and set within the two ribs, which could be a rivet hole used to fix the cheek-pieces to some other bronze parts of the helmet.

The best parallels for the shape of the Phaistos cheek-pieces come from Cyprus, and especially from T. 40 at Kourion-Kaloriziki²¹, dated to LC IIIB, corresponding to the early SM period, and from T. 144

²¹ MATTHÄUS - SCHUMACHER-MATTHÄUS 2015, 81, fig. 56.

at Palaipaphos-Plakes²², dated to the CG I, corresponding to the late SM and early EPG periods in Crete. The cheek-pieces from the latter bear some holes, possibly rivet holes, which are very similar to those observed in the left cheek-piece from Phaistos. It is relevant to mention here that, according to Hartmut Matthäus and Gisela Schumacher-Matthäus²³, the cheek-pieces from Kourion-Kaloriziki – hitherto the closest parallel for the Phaistian ones – are not a native Cypriot product, but possibly the result of the Aegean influence on Cyprus.

The two Phaistian cheek-pieces also recall the specimens from Grave XXVIII at Tiryns²⁴, dated to the SMyc period, but here the cutouts are less pronounced. In Crete, less precise *comparanda* can be seen in the two large, separate cheek-pieces found together with a conical helmet at Knossos, in T. V of the Haghi-os Ioannis site²⁵.

It appears that, at least in their shape, the cheek-pieces from Phaistos can be considered an Aegean product. For their decoration, there are no precise parallels. However, it is relevant to mention that the ribbed circles with a central hole recall motifs visible on some Mycenaean depictions of helmets, like the ivory head found at Knossos²⁶ and the helmet on the Katsamba jar²⁷. Small metal discs with stitch-holes around the rim are also reported from Shaft Grave V at Mycenae and interpreted by Georg Karo as belonging to a helmet²⁸. This opens the possibility that the decoration of the Phaistian cheek-pieces could find a prototype in Aegean examples rather than in Mitteleuropean ones, where the decoration is most often dotted and embossed²⁹. But these are preliminary observations and only a comprehensive typological and technological analysis of these finds will help in providing more precise answers about their origin.

2.1.2 The inverted U-shaped element

The third element is the fragmentary and inverted U-shaped bronze band (No. 3; Fig. 17), with both edges missing, and mended from 5 fr. The angle of the curved band at the top is some 40 degrees. The band is slightly convex curved along the vertical axis as if it was applied to a rounded surface. It has a series of small holes (diam. 0.1-0.15 cm), not regularly spaced, along the exterior edge, and only three along the interior. They could have been used to sew or otherwise fix the bronze band to the helmet's organic cap. The band is decorated with four almost identical and equally spaced ribbed circles with a central hole, and the decoration possibly continued in the missing parts of the band as well. The ribbed circles are the same as those observed on the above-mentioned cheek-pieces and also attested on most of the bronze bands found in the deposit (see *infra*).

The hypothesis that the inverted U-shaped band could belong to a helmet derives from two *comparanda*: the first is the unique helmet found in the above-mentioned Grave XXVIII from Tiryns³⁰; the second is the reconstruction of the helmet recently proposed by Matthäus and Schumacher-Matthäus³¹ for the U-shaped bands found in T. 40 from Kourion-Kaloriziki, which had been previously interpreted as parts of a cuirass³².

If we suppose that the inverted U-shaped band belonged to a helmet, it remains however to work out if it could have covered the upper part of the helmet itself, as it is reconstructed in Fig. 18. Such a position would explain its curved profile. Alternatively, the band could have gone with a central crest, as shown in the above-mentioned attempted reconstruction of Matthäus and Schumacher-Matthäus for the bronzes from Cypriot T. 144 at Palaipaphos-Plakes³³. The task is especially fraught here: not only in the Phaistos deposit is there only one band preserved and particularly fragmented too, but also because the parallels for composite helmets made up from bronze and organic parts are anyway few³⁴.

If the attempted reconstruction of the helmet of Fig. 18 can be accepted, the helmet would be a unique product, as is the Tiryns helmet from Grave XXVIII, *i.e.* a crested helmet of non-Aegean origin

²² KARAGEORGHIS-RAPTOU 2014, 49, 63, Nos. 24, 32, pls. XXV, LXXXVII. See also MATTHÄUS - SCHUMACHER-MATTHÄUS 2015, 77.

²³ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁴ VERDELIS 1963, 10-24, fig. 5, pls. 6, 9.

²⁵ HOOD-DE JONG 1952, 256-257, fig. 12, pl. 50a.

²⁶ It is first mentioned, but not illustrated, by Arthur Evans in EVANS 1935, 869. It is illustrated in BORCHHARDT 1972, 46, No. 8.II.1, pl. 8, 3. Jürgen Borchhardt dates it to LM I.

²⁷ See CASSOLA GUIDA 1973, pl. XXIX.1. See other comparisons for this decoration on Aegean materials: *ibid.*, 93-94.

²⁸ KARO 1930, Nos. 541-549, pl. 69.

²⁹ For a general discussion on western and eastern European Bronze Age armours, see MÖDLINGER 2017.

³⁰ VERDELIS 1963, 19, fig. 9.

³¹ MATTHÄUS - SCHUMACHER-MATTHÄUS 2015, 65, 81, figs. 48, 56. See also *Ibid.* 2012.

³² CATLING 1964, 143-146, pl. 17e. The bronze bands were first published by MCFADDEN 1954, 140, No. 34, pl. 26, fig. 34. See also BENSON *et alii* 1973.

³³ MATTHÄUS - SCHUMACHER-MATTHÄUS 2015, 65, 81, figs. 48, 56.

³⁴ On the topic see MÖDLINGER 2017.



Fig. 17. The bronze inverted U-shaped band (F23 8335c) from the deposition within the huge pithos (photo and drawing A. Sanavia; © Archivi SAIA, V/341).

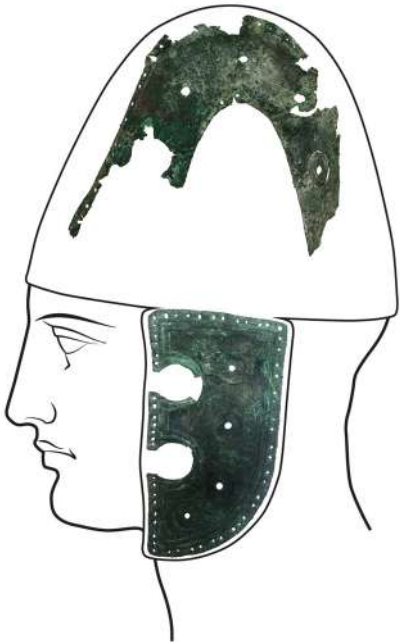


Fig. 18. Attempted reconstruction of a helmet with the left cheek-piece and the inverted U-shaped band from the deposition within the huge pithos (el. A. Sanavia; © Archivi SAIA, V/342).

constructed using bronze sheets applied to an organic cap combined with two cheek-pieces belonging to the Aegean tradition.

2.2 The shield boss (*phalaron*)

Among the pieces of the Phaistian armour there is a bronze shield boss or *phalaron*³⁵, composed of three elements (Nos. 4-6): a large domed disc (No. 4; Fig. 19d) and a small domed disc (No. 5; Fig. 19c),

³⁵ The *phalaron* is a discussed object: there are scholars who defined it as a shield boss (see SNODGRASS 1964), while others who argued for another use, like helmet or belt attachments, cymbals, breast-ornaments

or horse-trappings (see discussion in COLDSTREAM-CATLING 1996, 522-523; see also SEKUNDA 1982 for their use as a horse-frontlet).

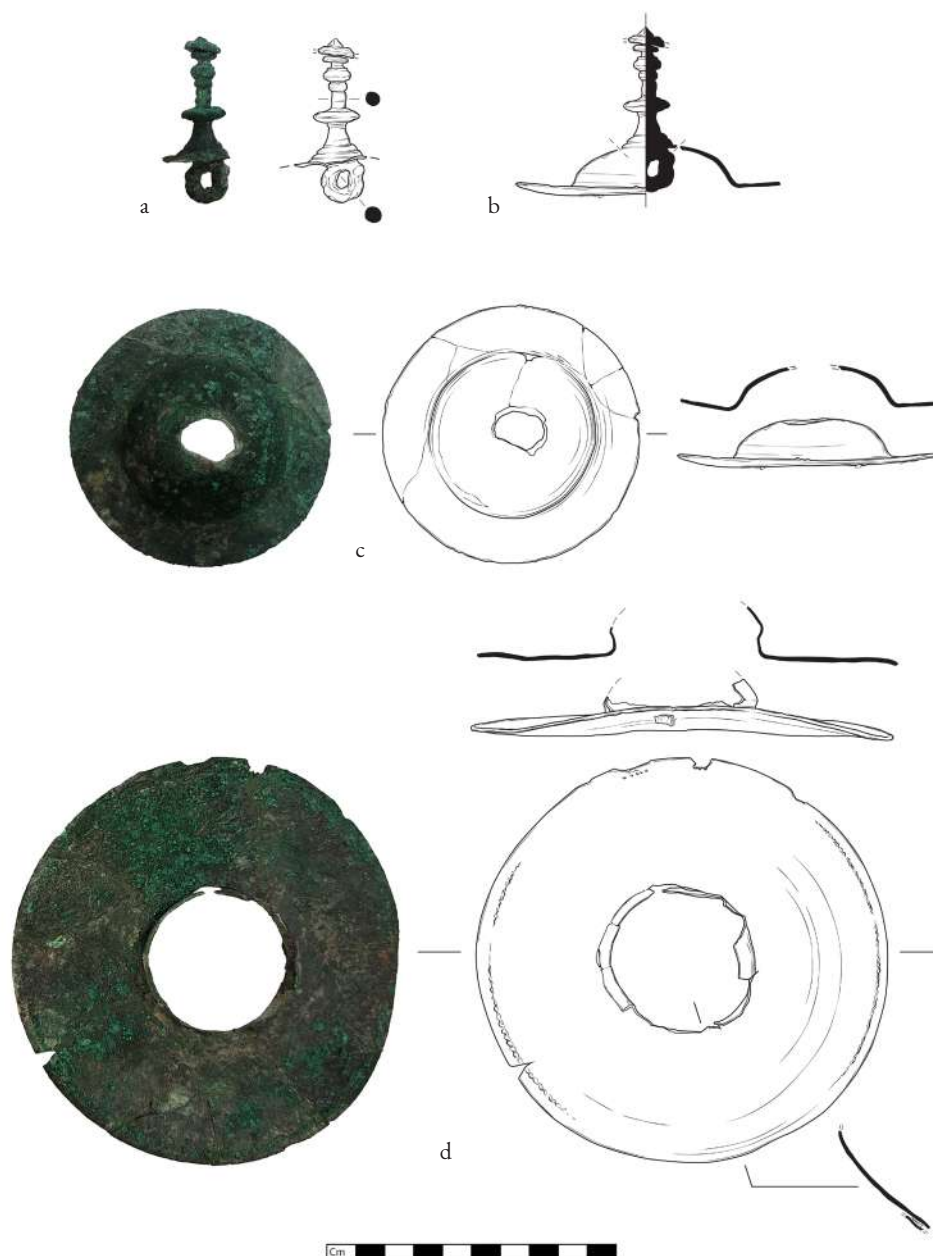


Fig. 19a-d. Trench 5, Room OO. The three parts of the bronze shield boss (F23 8334a-c) from the deposition within the huge pithos (photos and drawings A. Sanavia; © Archivi SAIA, V/343).

originally attached to a central solid-cast spike (No. 6; Fig. 19a-b). The shield boss was found in the lower part of the deposit, to one side: the small domed disc with its spike was positioned on the top of the large domed disc (Fig. 10).

The large domed disc (No. 4; Fig. 19d), ca. 14 cm in diameter, is fragmentary: the upper part is missing. It has a series of holes along the rim, likely used to attach it to the shield made of a perishable material. On its exterior edge, the large domed disc is riveted on to a small bronze fragment. It is therefore possible that this part of the shield boss was fastened to yet another (exterior and larger?) bronze band.

The small domed disc (No. 5; fig. 19c) has a diameter of ca. 9 cm and is broken on the upper domed part, where the spike was originally attached (Fig. 19b). The spike (Fig. 19a) is 4.2 cm long, is moulded in its lower part, then it has one disc-shaped moulding in its centre, and three mouldings towards the edge. In the interior part, there is an internal ring (diam. 1.5 cm), likely used for the attachment to the shield, of a perishable material.

In Crete, the Phaistian *phalaron* finds its best counterpart in the SM T. 186 of the North Cemetery at Knossos³⁶. The recent excavation at the Anavlochos necropolis has revealed a fragmentary shield boss dating to EPG³⁷, which is comparable with the Phaistian one. However, it is important to remark that its closest parallels, especially for the long spike with decorative mouldings, are found in Cyprus, in the above-mentioned T. 144 from the Palaipaphos-Plakes necropolis³⁸ and in T. 188 at Palaipaphos-Skales³⁹. The *phalaron* found at Phaistos, with its broad rim, hemispherical boss and a long spike with decorative mouldings, would belong to the third and most sophisticated type, the variant c, identified by Matthäus and Schumacher-Matthäus in Cyprus⁴⁰. According to them, the shield boss with a long spike and relief mouldings does not appear in the Aegean before the SM/SMyc period⁴¹.

2.3 Curved bronze bands: parts of a belt?

Also recovered are four fragmentary bronze bands (Nos. 7-10) that are curved and could be parts of a belt (Figs. 20a-b, 21a-b) that went with segmented armour. Among the four bronze bands, the fourth one (No. 10; Fig. 21b) is the most fragmentary and less curved than the others, thus its interpretation as part of a belt is more uncertain.

The first element (No. 7; Fig. 20a) is composed of two curved bands which are fastened together vertically through three bronze rivets that appear at its centre, where the two components overlap. The rivets are very small, with a diameter of only 0.3 cm. Each band is 3.6 cm wide and has a series of small holes along the long, exterior edges, likely used to attach it to an inner lining. Each of the two bands is decorated with six ribbed circles positioned in the centre at about 0.9 to 1 cm from both edges. The ribbed circles were once again probably given a boss, as is evident in the central part of the band (Fig. 20a). The top part has a rivet hole, again inside a groove demarcating the edge holes. It was likely intended to take a rivet to attach it to another bronze band, likely belonging to a cuirass.

The second element (No. 8; Fig. 20b) is composed of two fragmentary curved bronze bands that could have been fastened together, but this is not certain. The first band is 3.6 cm wide and has a series of small holes only on the upper rim; the second one is 6.2 cm wide at one end and then continues as a narrower band of 3.6 cm wide. The latter segment has a series of small holes along the lower edge. The first band is decorated with a series of five ribbed circles, while the second with four. The latter has two bronze rivets in its upper part. The width of this two-band element and its decoration with ribbed circles are very similar to those of the above-mentioned piece, making it plausible that the pieces illustrated in Fig. 20a and 20b were part of the same belt.

The third element (No. 9; Fig. 21a) is another section of a curved band analogous in width, shape and decoration to the second band of No. 8 (Fig. 20b). Likewise, the fourth element (No. 10; Fig. 21b), despite being more fragmentary and not so very curved, is comparable to Nos. 7 and 8 (Fig. 20a-b) in its width (3.5 cm) and decoration.

It is therefore plausible that these two bands could also be part of a belt as well.

Close parallels for these curved bronze bands have not been found, especially in regard to their unusual decoration. However, long curved bands (in width from 5.5 to 8 cm) with small holes along the rims, but without decoration, are attested in the already mentioned Cypriot T. 144 of Palaipaphos-Plakes and dated to CG I⁴². They are also reported in Mycenaean tombs both of Crete, like the band fragment from the Kalyvia necropolis⁴³, near Phaistos, and of mainland Greece, such as the examples from Thebes⁴⁴ and from chamber tombs 15 and 69 of Mycenae⁴⁵. Marianne Mödler suggests that these fragments could belong to belts or to the lower part of a segmented cuirass⁴⁶.

The Phaistian curved bands, whether considered parts of a belt or of the lower part of a cuirass, seem to belong to the Aegean tradition of segmented armour, like the well-known Dendra example⁴⁷ or the

³⁶ COLDSTREAM-CATLING 1996, fig. 163.

³⁷ GAIGNEROT-DRIESSEN *et alii* 2022, fig. 16.

³⁸ KARAGEORGHIS-RAPTOU 2014, Nos. 25, 28, 33, pl. XXIV.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 2016, No. 10, pl. XIII.

⁴⁰ MATTHÄUS - SCHUMACHER-MATTHÄUS 2015, 71-72.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴² KARAGEORGHIS-RAPTOU 2014, Nos. 26-27, 36, pl. XXV.

⁴³ SAVIGNONI 1904, col. 540, No. 7, fig. 23.

⁴⁴ See, in particular, the curved bands from Thebes "Arsenal" published in ANDRIKOU 2007, pl. C1a-c. They are here interpreted as parts of a cuirass.

⁴⁵ YALOURIS 1960, 59, pls. 25.2 and 25.3.

⁴⁶ All these band fragments are also illustrated in MÖDLINGER 2017, 178, fig. 3.5.

⁴⁷ BORCHHARDT 1972, pl. 6.

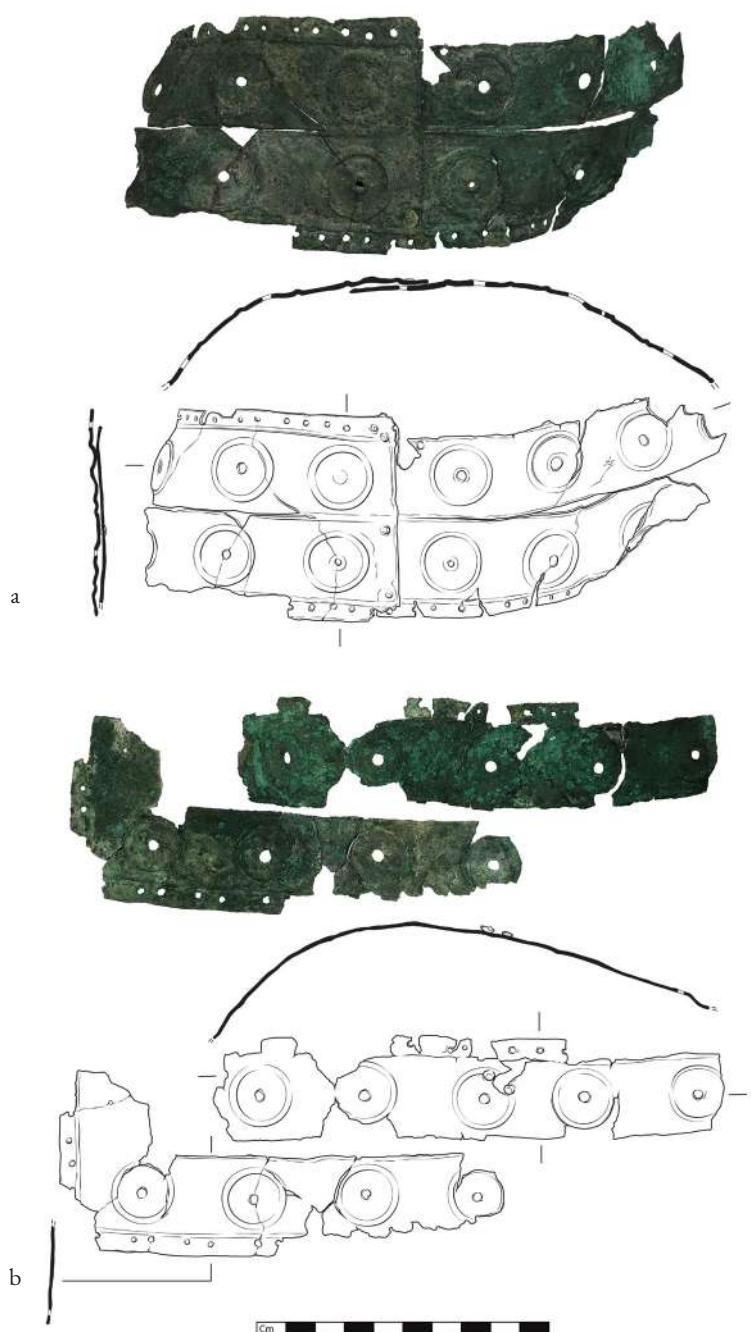


Fig. 20a-b. Trench 5, Room OO. Two fragmentary curved bronze bands (F23 8335d-e) of a belt (?) from the deposition within the huge pithos (photos and drawings A. Sanavia; © Archivi SAIA, V/344).

Thebes specimens⁴⁸. It remains, however, to understand whether these bands could have been fixed both to a lining garment and to other bronze bands.

2.4 Other elements of the armour: parts of a cuirass?

Six more bronze elements (Nos. 11-16; Figs. 21c, 22a-e) were retrieved from the pithos deposition of Room OO. Their function is not clear, but some could be parts of a cuirass.

The first one (No. 11; Fig. 21c) is composed of 2 fr. likely belonging to the same band (max width 5.2 cm), which features a line of small holes all around the edge, is decorated with a rib there too and

⁴⁸ ANDRIKOU 2007, pls. CI-CII.

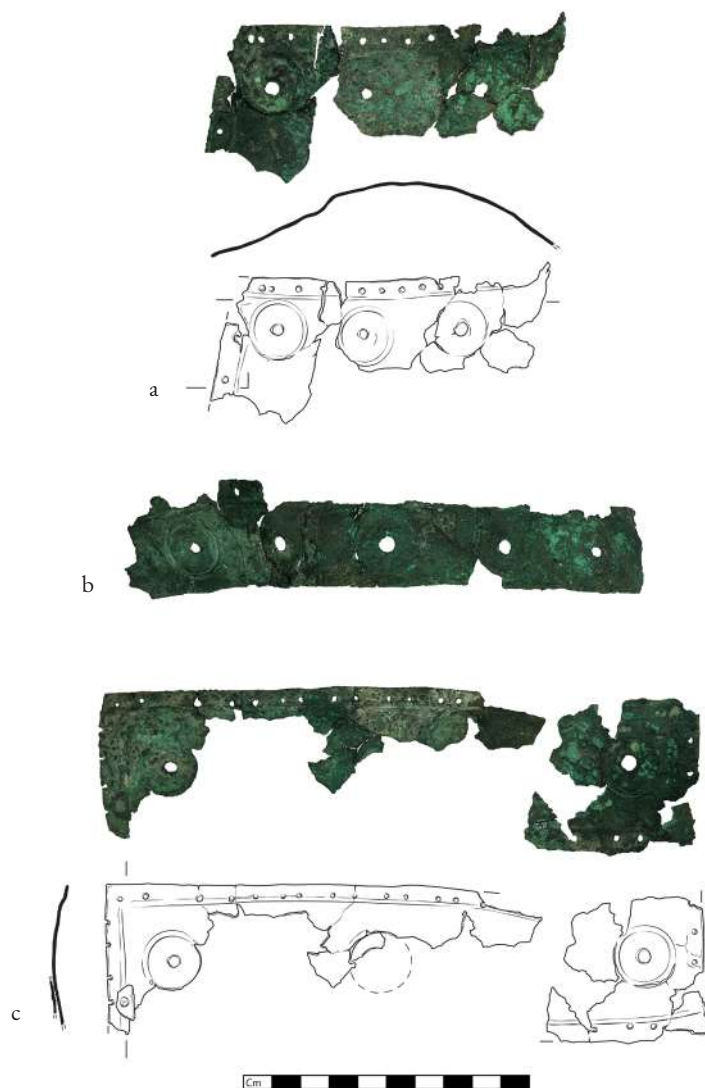


Fig. 21a-c. Trench 5, Room OO. Fragmentary bronze bands (F23 8335f-h) from the deposition within the huge pithos (photos and drawings A. Sanavia; © Archivi SAIA, V/345).

possesses a series of ribbed circles within. Only two of these last are preserved. The bigger fragment has a bronze rivet in a corner, which is attached to a small fragment of a bronze band, likely belonging to another segment of a cuirass.

The best parallels for the shape are to be seen in the above-mentioned fragmentary bronze sheets, retrieved from the already-cited Cypriot T. 144 of Palaipaphos-Plakes⁴⁹, the Mycenaean tombs of Kalyvia, near Phaistos⁵⁰, as well as several chamber tombs of Mycenae⁵¹. These fragments have a series of small stitch-holes like the Phaistos ones, but they lack decoration. As we have already seen, they could belong to the bottom of a cuirass and be used to protect the lower part of the body.

The armour also includes two pieces (Nos. 12-13; Fig. 22a-b) of amygdaloid shape, which were found at the bottom of the deposit (Fig. 11), near the cheek-pieces.

Their conservation state is different: one is almost complete, and the other is fragmentary. Both are equally decorated with ribbed circles; No. 12 (Fig. 22a), which is almost complete, bears four such. Both pieces have some small (diam. 0.1-0.15 cm), scattered holes distributed along the edges, likely here used for rivets, as demonstrated by the small rivets visible on the bronze strip (No. 14) illustrated in Fig. 22c. The second amygdaloid element (Fig. 22b) has two double-capped rivets still preserved in its lower part;

⁴⁹ KARAGEORGHIS-RAPTOU 2014, pl. XXV.

⁵⁰ SAVIGNONI 1904, col. 540, No. 7, fig. 23.

⁵¹ YALOURIS 1960, 59, pls. 25.2 and 25.3.

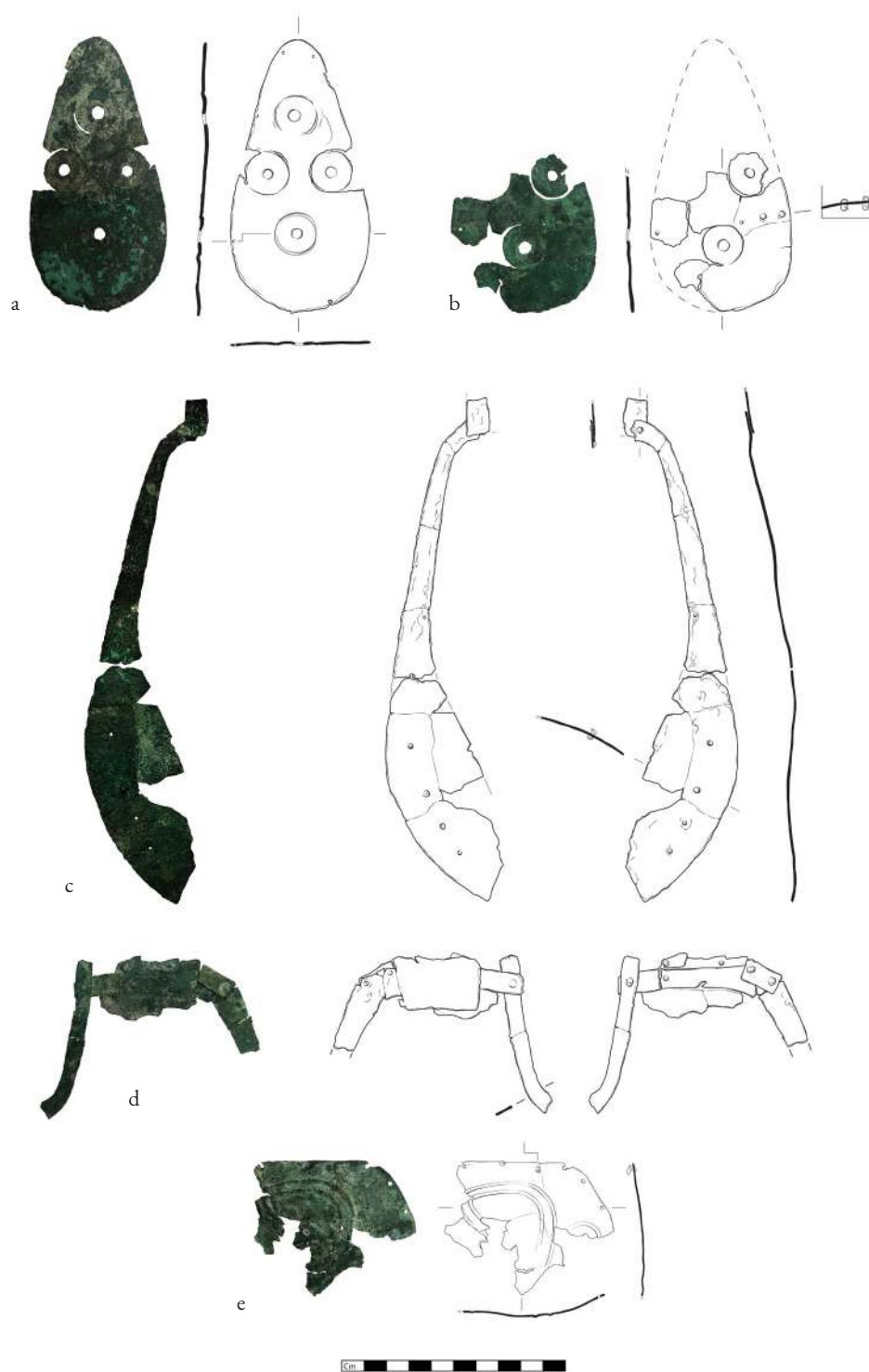


Fig. 22. Trench 5, Room OO. Fragmentary bronze elements of a cuirass (?) from the deposition within the huge pithos: a-b. two bronze elements of amygdaloid shape (F23 8335i-l); c-d. bronze strips (F23 8335m-n); e. a bronze trapezoidal element (F23 8335o) (photos and drawings A. Sanavia; © Archivi SAIA, V/346).

the rivets have the same diameter (0.28-0.3 cm) as the ones preserved on the curving band illustrated in Fig. 21a. It is likely too that these bronze elements were originally riveted on to another bronze sheet, maybe part of a cuirass.

It is difficult to understand to what part of armour these amygdaloid-shaped elements could have belonged. Their shape could be somewhat compared to that of greaves⁵², but since they are not curved (so as

⁵² See MÖDLINGER 2017, 217-261; see also CLAUSING 2002.

to fit around the calf) and are anyway too small, it is difficult to identify them as such. Miniature greaves, on the other hand, that are found in some contexts as votive offerings, are much smaller again.

Another possibility is that they could have been attached to a cuirass to reinforce it in some way. They are perhaps comparable to the two elliptical bronze sheets found at the above-mentioned T. 144 at Palaipaphos-Plakes, which have been generally interpreted as parts of a cuirass⁵³. They could have been small breast plates, though they are really rather small compared to the well-known Mycenaean specimens found at Dendra⁵⁴ or at Thebes⁵⁵.

No. 14 (Fig. 22c) is a fragmentary, curvilinear bronze strip. On the upper part, the strip is riveted onto a small fragment of bronze sheet. On the lower part, there is a line of rivet holes, with one double-capped rivet preserved.

No. 15 (Fig. 22d) is a fragmentary bronze element composed of three strips riveted onto a bronze sheet and reinforced by a small rectangular attachment. It is possible that the bronze sheet fastened to the strips was originally decorated with a ribbed circle, of which something is still discernible (Fig. 22d).

The function of these two bronze elements is not clear, and no parallels have been found. It is possible that they could have been used to join different parts of a metal cuirass, likely to reinforce it; alternatively, if these bronze elements are not parts of a bronze cuirass, they could have been reinforcement elements of one made of another material.

No. 16 (Fig. 22e) is a fragmentary, trapezoidal bronze sheet with a series of rivet holes along the exterior rim; two of them have the rivets preserved. The decoration is characterized by a sub-triangular motif portrayed by two ribs and by a fragmentary ribbed circle. This is the only piece of the bronze armour displaying both the usual ribbed circles, even if not well-preserved, and another decorative motif. It is difficult to say whether it was used as part of a cuirass or of a helmet.

2.5 Some observations on the bronze armour

Among the pieces of the bronze armour, there are at least two fully discernable and convincing elements – the cheek-pieces and the shield boss – that find their best comparisons in Aegean and Cypriot graves dating to the 11th and 10th c. BC, corresponding to the SM/SMyc period in Greece and to LC IIIB and CG I in Cyprus. The contexts that have revealed the best parallels are the following: Grave XXVIII in Tiryns, as well as T. 40 of Kourion-Kaloriziki and T. 144 of Palaipaphos-Plakes in Cyprus. It is surprising that the latter is the grave which has revealed the most precise parallels for all the pieces of the Phaistian armour.

The bands in the group possibly belonging to a belt and to a cuirass are comparable to bronze elements coming from Aegean contexts dating from the 14th to the 12th c. BC (see Thebes, and Mycenae in mainland Greece and Kalyvia in Crete), as well as from Cypriot tombs dating from the 11th to the 10th c. BC with materials of Aegean influence, like the Palaipaphos-Plakes necropolis. It is somewhat surprising that it is the latter grave that has revealed the most precise parallels for all the pieces of the Phaistian armour.

It appears, therefore, that all the bronze elements from the armour deposited at Phaistos are well framed in the Aegean tradition of the segmented armour. It is also remarkable that almost all the pieces bear the same decoration, namely the ribbed circles, making it plausible that they all were parts of the same suit. It remains, however, to understand whether the decoration with circles is connected to the Aegean tradition, as suggested in this paper, or is influenced by the East European cultures.

Future research, including the study of manufacturing techniques, technology, and chemical analysis, should help to place their decoration, which so far does not find close parallels.

3. CATALOGUE OF BRONZE PIECES FROM THE ARMOUR

1-2. F23 8335a-b (Fig. 16a-b)

Two bronze cheek-pieces of a helmet. Found at the bottom of the armour deposition inside the huge pithos F23 8327, in Room OO. Both have two near circular cutouts and are decorated with two parallel ribs along the rim and four ribbed

circles (diam. 2 cm) with a central hole. A series of holes (diam. 0.15-0.2 cm) along the edge.

No. 1 (F23 8335a; Fig. 16a): right cheek-piece. Fragmentary, mended from 4 frr.; missing fragments in the lower and upper rim. Dim.: 8.5x15.5 cm; th.: 0.12-0.2 cm. There

⁵³ KARAGEORGHIS-RAPTOU 2014, 49, Nos. 34-35, pl. XXV.

⁵⁴ BORCHHARDT 1972, pl. 6.

⁵⁵ ANDRIKOU 2007, 402, pls. CI-CII.

is a hole (diam. 0.28-0.3 cm) at the top corner above the cutouts.

No. 2 (F23 8335b; Fig. 16b): left cheek-piece. Fragmentary, mended from 3 frr. Dim.: 8.3x15.1 cm, with a reconstructed length of 15.5 cm; th.: 0.12-0.2 cm.

3. F23 8335c (Fig. 17)

Bronze band. Found on the top of the armour deposition in the huge pithos F23 8327, in Room OO. Fragmentary, mended from 8 frr.; missing edges.

W.: 4.3 to 4.8 cm; 5.8 cm at the angle; th.: 0.1-0.15 cm.

Inverted U-shaped band decorated with four preserved ribbed circles (diam. 2 cm) with a central hole. A series of holes (diam. 0.1-0.15 cm) along the exterior edge, and three along the interior edge. The angle at the top is some 40 degrees.

4-6. F23 8334a-c (Fig. 19a-d)

Three parts of a bronze shield boss (*phalaron*). Found on the side of the armour deposition in the huge pithos F23 8327, in Room OO.

No. 4 (F23 8334a; Fig. 19d): large domed disc. Fragmentary; missing the upper part. H. max.: 1.9 cm; diam.: 14-14.4 cm; th.: 0.1-0.15 cm. A series of holes (diam. 0.5 cm) along the upper edge. A small fragment is riveted on to the exterior edge.

No. 5 (F23 8334b; Fig. 19c): small domed disc. Mended from 6 frr. Broken in the upper part, where the spike was attached. H. max.: 1.6 cm; diam.: 8.8-9 cm; th.: 0.1-0.15 cm.

No. 6 (F23 8334c; Fig. 19a-b): moulded spike with internal ring. Broken in its lower part, where it was attached to the domed disk. L.: 4.2 cm; L. with ring: 5.7 cm; diam.: 0.5 cm; diam. ring: 1.5 cm; th. ring: 0.5 cm. Moulded in its lower part, then it has one disc-shaped moulding in its centre, and three mouldings towards the edge.

7. F23 8335d (Fig. 20a)

Bronze band composed of two fastened bands. Found in the armour deposition inside the huge pithos F23 8327, in Room OO. Fragmentary, mended from 7 frr.; missing two edges.

L. max.: 21.4 cm; W.: 7.2 cm; th.: 0.1-0.2 cm.

Curved band composed of two fastened bands. Each of the two bands is 3.6 cm wide. A series of holes (diam. 0.15-0.2 cm) along the upper and the lower edges. Each band is decorated with six ribbed discs (diam. 2 cm) at the centre at about a width of 0.9 to 1 cm from both edges. Three bronze rivets (diam. 0.3 cm) at the centre to fasten the two bands. The first band has a rivet hole (diam. 0.2 cm) on the upper part, near the rim.

8. F23 8335e (Fig. 20b)

Two non-joining fragments of bronze bands, likely parts of the same element. Found in the armour deposition inside the huge pithos F23 8327, in Room OO. Fragmentary.

First fragment: section of a bronze band. Mended from 3 frr. L. max.: 19.2 cm; W.: 3.6 cm; th.: 0.1-0.15 cm. It has a series of holes (diam. 0.2 cm) along the upper edge. It is decorated with a series of five ribbed circles (diam. 2 cm). There are two rivets (diam. 0.35 cm) on the third ribbed disc.

Second fragment: section of a bronze band. Mended from 7 frr. L. max.: 15.2 cm; W. max.: 6.2 cm; th.: 0.1-0.15 cm. It is 6.2 cm wide at one end and then continues as a narrower band of 3.6 cm wide. It has a series of holes (diam. 0.2 cm) along the edge. It is decorated with a series of four ribbed circles (diam. 2 cm).

9. F23 8335f (Fig. 21a)

Bronze band. Found in the armour deposition inside the huge pithos F23 8327, in Room OO. Fragmentary, mended from 8 frr.

L. max.: 13.5 cm; W. max.: 5 cm; th.: 0.1-0.15 cm.

Section of a curved band. A series of holes (diam. 0.2 cm) along the edge. Decorated with three ribbed circles (diam. 2 cm).

10. F23 8335g (Fig. 21b)

Bronze band. Found in the armour deposition inside the huge pithos F23 8327, in Room OO. Fragmentary, mended from 7 frr.

L. max.: 18 cm; W. max.: 3.7 cm; th.: 0.1-0.15 cm.

Section of a slightly curved band. Only one hole (diam. 0.2 cm) along the preserved edge. Decorated with five ribbed circles (diam. 2 cm) at the centre.

11. F23 8335h (Fig. 21c)

Two non-joining fragments of bronze bands, likely parts of the same element. Found in the armour deposition inside the huge pithos F23 8327, in Room OO.

Larger fragment: section of a band. Fragmentary; mended from 5 frr. L. max.: 15.3 cm; W. max.: 5.1 cm; th.: 0.1-0.15 cm.

A series of holes (diam. 0.2 cm) along the edge. Decorated with two preserved ribbed circles (diam. 2 cm) at the centre, approximately 1.7-1.8 cm from the edges. A small fragment is riveted onto the upper surface of the larger piece; rivet: diam. 0.3 cm.

Smaller fragment: section of a band. Fragmentary; mended from 4 frr. L. max. 5.6 cm; W. max. 5 cm; th. 0.1-0.15 cm. A series of holes (diam. 0.2 cm) along the edge. Decorated with one preserved ribbed circle (diam. 2 cm) at the centre, approximately 1.7-1.8 cm from the edges.

12-13. F23 8335i-l (Fig. 22a-b)

Two bronze elements of an amygdaloid shape. Found at the bottom of the armour deposition inside the huge pithos F23 8327, in Room OO.

No. 12 (F23 8335i; Fig. 22a). Almost complete. L.: 12.2 cm; W.: 6.2 cm; th.: 0.1-0.15 cm. Decorated with four ribbed circles (diam. 2 cm); small (diam. 0.1-0.15 cm), scattered holes distributed along the edges.

No. 13 (F23 8335l; Fig. 22b). Fragmentary, mended from 6 frr. L. max.: 7 cm; W.: 6.3 cm; th.: 0.1-0.15 cm.

Decorated with two preserved ribbed circles (diam. 2 cm); small (diam. 0.1-0.15 cm), scattered holes distributed along the edges. It has two double-capped rivets (diam. 0.3 cm) still preserved in its lower part.

14. F23 8335m (Fig. 22c)

Bronze strip. Fragmentary, mended from 8 frr.

Curvilinear bronze strip. L. max.: 22.5 cm; W. min.: 0.7 cm; W. max.: 4 cm.

On the upper part, the strip is riveted on a small fragment of a bronze sheet. On the lower part, a line of holes (diam. 0.2 cm), with one double-cap rivet (diam. 0.2-0.3 cm) preserved.

15. F23 8335n (Fig. 22d)

Bronze strips fastened to a bronze sheet. Fragmentary, mended from 5 frr.

L. (longer) strip: 7 cm; W. min.: 0.6 cm; W. max. 1.2 cm; th.: 0.1-0.15 cm.

Three strips riveted onto a bronze sheet; rectangular attachment riveted onto the strips. On the bronze sheet, a decoration of a disc is discernible.

16. F23 8335o (Fig. 22e)

Bronze sheet. Fragmentary, mended from 3 frr.

Dim. 5.9x7.5 cm; th.: < 0.1 cm.

Trapezoidal bronze sheet. A series of holes (diam. 0.1 cm) along the rim; two rivets (diam. 0.3 cm) preserved. Decorated with a sub-triangular motif portrayed by two parallel ribs and by a fragmentary ribbed circle (diam. 2 cm).

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

The excavation of Room OO is still ongoing. Thus we can propose here only preliminary observations. It is worthwhile remarking that so far only about a likely quarter of the room has been exposed. What is striking is that this room must have had an important role in the LG-EO period, *i.e.* between the end of the 8th and the early 7th c. BC. This can be asserted because it contained: 1) the installation of a huge pithos, probably taken from the settlement of Phaistos, on a platform covered with white intonaco; 2) the deposition of objects dating from LG to EO – like the aryballoi, the miniature shield, and the iron weapons (Fig. 15) – in the manner of votive offerings, in position both when the room was partially destroyed and re-occupied and at the time of its final collapse; and 3) the deliberate deposition of the pieces of bronze armour, which were deliberately hidden within an abandoned pithos, when the room was already in a collapsed state, in a period ranging from LG to EO. This deposition does not find precise parallels, but it is worth mentioning the bronze pieces of armour (dating to the 7th c. BC) reported as coming from one or more (abandoned?) pithoi with relief decoration retrieved from a looted building at Afrati⁵⁶. The building, later excavated by Angeliki Lebessi, was interpreted by the excavator as a shrine⁵⁷.

Moreover, if future study confirms that the bronze armour could be earlier than the deposition context, then the armour could be interpreted as an heirloom (a *keimelion*) – likely dating between the 11th and the 10th c. BC – and here doing duty as offerings in a cult place⁵⁸. This, in turn, could imply that Room OO was a cenotaph or a shrine, whose remnants may lie in the unexcavated western area of the room.

If we want to venture a bit further in our postulations for Room OO, it is worth pointing out that the location of the first (Geometric?) temple of the Phaistian polis is still not known. Several scholars have supposed that this could have been located somewhere around the Minoan Palace, including the western slope of the Palace hill, to the W of the West Court⁵⁹, where Room OO is situated. Only future excavations will ascertain the function and role of Room OO, telling us whether the armour could have belonged to the hero of the Phaistian polis and thus be deposited in Room OO in the creation of the hero cult at the foundation of the polis.

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⁵⁶ SNODGRASS 1964; HOFFMANN 1972. I warmly thank Antonis Kotsonas for this information.

⁵⁷ ΛΕΜΠΕΣΗ 1970. For a recent discussion on the chronology and function of this building, as well as on its bronze and ceramic finds, see FADELLI 2024, 121, 425-428 with bibliography.

⁵⁸ It is possible that the bronze pieces of armour deposited in the huge

pithos of Room OO were looted from (one or more?) important tombs and likely from the well-known tombs surrounding Phaistos and dating from the 11th to the 8th c. BC (on the topic see CUCUZZA 2005; 2011 with bibliography).

⁵⁹ On the topic see LEFÈVRE-NOVARO 2009; see also CUCUZZA 2005.

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