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LADIES OF ANAVLOCHOS: SIX CENTURIES OF FEMALE DEVOTION ON A CRETAN MOUNTAIN

Florence Gaignerot-Driessen

In April 1901, on the advice of Arthur Evans, Harriet Boyd visited Anavlochos (Fotou and Brown 2006, 219), a small mountain range located in the Mirabello region and situated above and northeast of the village of Vrachasi (Lasithi, Crete). She considered excavating the site, but her discovery of Gournia a month later made her change her plans. Anavlochos was then investigated by Pierre Demargne in 1929 for the French School at Athens (Demargne 1931), and several rescue excavations were later carried out by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Lasithi between 2006 and 2014 (Zographaki, Gaignerot-Driessen, and Devolder 2012–2013). In 2017, as part of a 5-year (2017–2021) program of systematic excavations on Anavlochos, a team of the French School at Athens led by the author excavated a votive deposit (Deposit 1), which had been identified in 2016 on the western part of the summit during the survey of the massif (Fig. 1; Gaignerot-Driessen et al. 2017; Gaignerot-Driessen, Judson, and Vlachou, forthcoming). Altogether, 550 fragments of terracotta figures, figurines, and plaques (MNI = 350, mostly moldmade), were recovered from the crevices of an outcrop of bedrock overlooking a small open-air area (Gaignerot-Driessen 2018). Interestingly, almost all of these terracottas depict female figures, and they can be dated from the Protogeometric to the Classical periods. The location of the deposit at quite a distance from the settlement, the context of the finds—which echoes the ritual practices of the later Thesmophoria—and the finds themselves suggest that women may have been directly involved in the deposition of these offerings.

The project supported by the 2018 Harriet Boyd Hawes Fellowship, entitled “Ladies of Anavlochos,” intends to examine six centuries of female devotion on a Cretan mountain initially visited by Boyd through the study of this important and diachronic coroplastic assemblage, at multiple contextual scales:

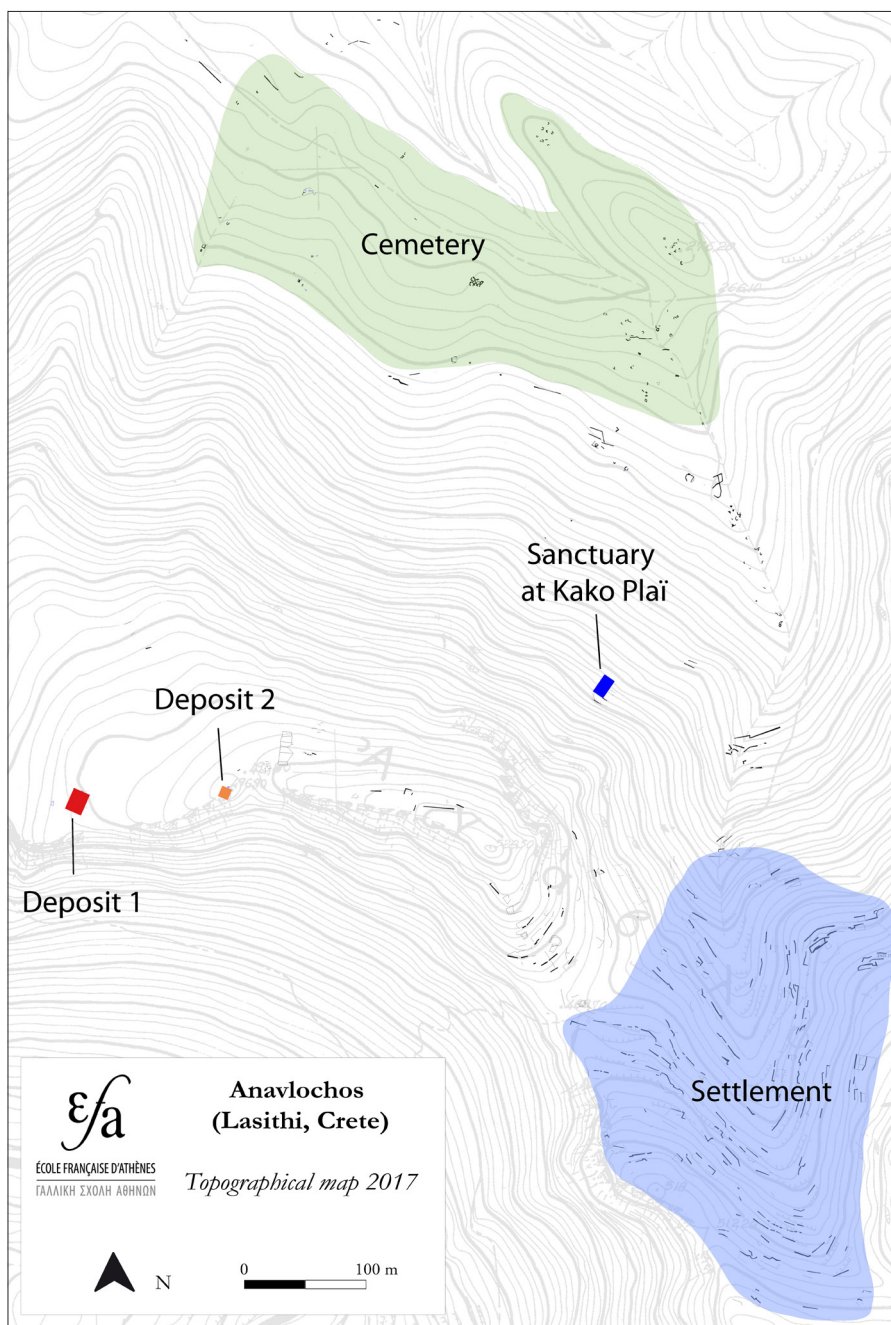


Figure 1. Topographical map of Anavlochos. After Gaignerot-Driessen 2018, 2, fig. 1.

that of the find context (Deposit 1), of the site (Anavlochos), of the region (Crete), and of the Mediterranean. Ultimately and



Figure 2. Sphinx plaque 17-03-3116-OB021 (Type 1): (a) in situ (photo R. Machavoine), (b) during conservation (photo F. Gaignerot-Driessen), (c) after conservation (photo Ch. Papanikolopoulos).

more broadly, it aims at reconstructing the role of women in ritual communal practices during a crucial and formative period of transition between the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age.

Thanks to the support of the 2018 Harriet Boyd Hawes Fellowship, the conservation, documentation, and study of the terracottas recovered from Deposit 1 has greatly progressed. Pepi Saridaki has cleaned and mended a large part of the pieces, Chronis Papanikolopoulos has photographed all the material (Fig. 2), Douglas Faulmann and Camille Lemoine have drawn some significant pieces of the assemblage, and the inventory of the fragments has been completed. Further work will include petrographic analyses and a detailed technological study.

As of now some preliminary observations can be proposed, based on an initial examination of the assemblage. So far 19 different types have been recognized. Among these, the most frequently attested are seated kouroi figures (Type 17: 140 examples; Fig. 3), elongated Daedalic plaques representing a woman wearing a high polos (Type 2: 95 examples; Fig. 4:a), square Daedalic plaques depicting a sphinx wearing a polos (Type 1: 72 examples;

Fig. 2), and small Daedalic figurines representing a naked woman (Type 3: 26 examples; Fig. 4:b). Most of the terracottas from Deposit 1 find exact or close parallels in the votive deposit from Kako Plaï on Anavlochos itself (Fig. 1), but also at the neighboring sites of Papoura, Smari, Milatos, Dreros, Olous, and Lato, and farther to the east at Praisos and Vamies (Xanthoudides 1918; Demargne 1929, 1930, 1931; Demargne and van Effenterre 1937; van Effenterre 1938; Ducrey and Picard 1969; Chatzi-Vallianou 2000; Zographaki and Farnoux 2010; Pilz 2011; Brun and Duploux 2014). This find therefore includes Anavlochos in a regional network of cultic practices and of coroplastic production and circulation. The quantity and type of material recovered, as well as the topography of the place and the identification of sections of an ancient path near the deposit during the survey seem to indicate that Deposit 1 may have been the final destination of a sacred road that passed the old bench sanctuary at Kako Plaï (Fig. 1). This sanctuary was brought to light in 2017 and 2018, and it remained in use long after the settlement was abandoned in the beginning of the seventh century B.C.



Figure 3. Seated kouroi figures (Type 17). Photos Ch. Papanikolopoulos.

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Figure 4. Plaque and figurine: (a) fragments 17-03-3108-OB038, -OB127, and -OB134 of a Daedalic plaque (Type 2); (b) figurine 17-03-3108-OB096 (Type 3). Photos Ch. Papanikolopoulos; drawing C. Lemoine.

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Meet the New Librarian

Niki Saridaki is the 2018–2019 Library Fellow at the INSTAP Study Center for East Crete. She studied archaeology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. She has worked as an archaeologist for the Greek Archaeological Service, and she participates as a pottery expert in various research projects on Neolithic and Bronze Age sites in northern Greece and Crete. At a doctoral level, she implemented petrography and pEDXRF analysis in the study of Neolithic ceramic assemblages

from central and western Macedonia. The basic aim of her Ph.D. thesis was to investigate pottery technology and mobility during the course of the Neolithic in northern Greece. Last year, Niki was the intern in the petrography laboratory under the supervision of Eleni Nodarou. Her research interests include pottery technology and production, and particularly issues of mobility by craftsmen and/or mobility of technological knowledge.



Niki Saridaki in the library of the Study Center. Photo Ch. Papanikolopoulos.