

ABSTRACT

The aim of the research is the reconstruction of the archaeological landscape and socio-economic dynamics that characterised the area of Phaistos and western Mesara of Crete among Late Antiquity, Byzantine and Venetian times through the systematic study of archaeological finds and especially pottery data from the Phaistos Project's 2007-2012 intensive survey.

The first part of the work discusses the morphology of the area as well as the geological and geomorphological characteristics of the natural landscape under investigation (Chapter 1).

This is also followed by an overview of the historical events that impacted the island of Crete and the region of Mesara from the Roman period to the advent of the Venetians (Chapter 2).

Documentary and cartographic sources closely related to western Mesara were then analysed (Chapter 3) with the aim of providing an initial definition of the state of the cultural landscape among the Late Antique, Byzantine and Venetian periods.

This is followed by a critical and systematic analysis of the available archaeological information, structured in two parts (Chapter 4). Firstly, the data resulting from excavation and survey activities carried out since the beginning of the 20th century were reviewed and revised. Following an accurate bibliographic investigation, all data related to the period under examination were verified and subsequently systematised in *GIS*, which serves as the cartographic base for the research. Then, the study focused on the pottery data collected from the Phaistos Project survey (2007-2012), the reading of which makes it possible to define the physical, chronological and functional dimensions of the settlement's life during the post-ancient phases.

This is followed by an analysis of the pottery finds from previous archaeological activities and the more recent survey of Phaistos, divided between the Late Antique and Early Byzantine and Middle Byzantine and Venetian periods (Chapter 5). The processing of the data has made it clear that in this part of the region, for the Early Byzantine phase, is available a large morphological pottery repertoire, which shows the opening of the territory to the main trade routes of the islands and the Late Antique Mediterranean; this is evident thanks to the presence of fine and commonwares from Gortyna and of regional production, as well as fine ware and amphoras of African and Aegean-Eastern Mediterranean production. Far less data is available for the later period, however, which is limited to a few specimens of common pottery and mostly fine glazed vessels; the analysis of the material makes it possible to establish that local and insular products clearly prevail to the detriment of Adriatic and Eastern-Mediterranean imports, revealing the image of a locally restricted and self-contained economy.

The concluding remarks include possible interpretations from the analysis of the data and the comparison of the area under examination with Gortyna and the rest of the island. Synoptic tables and graphic and photographic tables of the material examined close the work.