

MINOANS ABROAD: NEW EVIDENCE FROM CALABRIA AND EGYPT

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the outcomes of an archaeological survey carried on the Calabrian North West coast of the Strait of Messina, nearby the narrows of the mythical Skylla during the mid nineties. This research, which has represented a strong experience and a turning point in the cognitive itinerancy of a maritime anthropologist, who in a "transgressed" way dared to put his nose on the ground, was the consequence of previous anthropological and historical studies on a traditional coastal fishing culture of which the long enduring of diverse harpooning technics of the swordfish, marlin, sharks and tuna found their roots in Phoenician times (www.sfsymposium.org/presentation).

Indeed, there, on the Marturano promontory, promontory M, as in many instances in the Mediterranean, were first found Phoenician ceramics dating of the beginning of the ninth Century BC which has been published in part in 1995. But the field survey and soundings in seven areas of the promontory has been yet much more fructuous. The part one of this contribution presents the catalogue of the Minoan ceramic findings mainly dated LMI and LMI-II, but beginning at the end of MMIII, leaving so to hypothesise a long enduring presence. Amazingly, in fact, at the point of promontory M were spot and brought in light granite stone built structures.

Part two restitutes the process and the steps of the spotting and discoveries: building-line of cyclopean stone granite cut blocks, terrace wall, a unique impressive boulder faced by two granite dressed blocks boat shaped, a monumental pyramidal assemblage of triangular and polygonal cut blocks crowning a stately trapeze shaped monolith edged with white sea pebbles facing an oval space. At the end of 1995 these lithic structures remained largely a puzzling issue. This difficult issue was left aside until a stay in Egypt between 2009 and 2012, where to escape to the depressing effects of a social-political heavy context soon after an initial strongly democratic uprising repressed in the blood, were undertaken a new field survey on the West coast of Alexandria. In a tiny island, in a somewhat interesting context was discovered a square altar with a sandstone baetyl in the middle, provoking the author to a come back to the lithic structures brought in light on the Calabrian coast some fourteen years before. In the paper, these lithic structures are accurately analysed in their material characteristics, their morphological oppositions, their building technics which for example systematically use to cut triangular granite blocks or polygonal ones but pointed at their back extremity as in the case of the embankment wall. All these architectonic traits belong to Minoan building technics.

The last part of this contribution proceeds to a sharp critic of the development in the nineties of an exclusive religious vision of the Minoan culture and society, which has so often interpreted such lithic structures, as immediately and inherently religious artefacts. From recent archaeological works on ritualized practices led by L. Goodison, C. Moriss, J. Younger, the author comes back on the seminal paper of P. Warren on the baetyls and the new excavation of V. La Rosa at the end of the nineties, carried on at the tholos A of Hagia Triada, putting all these analyses in perspective with those of A. Evans and M. Nilsson. The Minoan archaeological realia discovered on the promontory M (Minoan, Mycenaean) are not only confronted with the ones found in Crete, but in a critical way with their rare iconic representations. Thus, a typology of these lithic, aniconic structures is put in light, and also their morphology and the ritual practices they supported. These stone structures of promontory M, the ceramic evidence, the building artefacts like pumice slabs, clay water pipes allow to infer to the settling of a Minoan community nearby the narrows of Skylla, Skylaion cape and at the end of this enduring presence not so much after a Phoenician short one, that is to say two Mediterranean paradigmatic sea oriented cultures.