

HUMAN REMAINS AT FN PHAISTOS: IDENTIFYING AND INTERPRETING PRACTICES OF DISPOSAL AND MANIPULATION OF THE DEAD FROM AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The human remains identified at FN Phaistos have so far received little attention, perhaps because they were considered too sparse to be conclusive for understanding the burial practices followed at the site. In fact, leaving aside the skeleton found within a burnt layer identified in Kouloura II, which probably represents a victim of the destruction that ended Phaistos III, only three cases might potentially represent a burial: the skeleton of a child, found in proximity to the 2nd base of the colonnade that runs along the western side of the central court of the palace; the skeleton found in proximity to room 22, near to a well that was constructed in the Hellenistic period; and the bones that were found in the rubbish dumped on the bedrock in the area of room 8.

In this paper it will be argued (a) that although the principal place of disposal of the dead was not located on the hilltop, children and adults could be exceptionally buried within the settlement following different mortuary practices, primary for children and secondary for young adults and adults; and (b) that the cranium and long bones found near room 22 do not represent a proper burial inasmuch as they were not re-buried in a final resting place, but entered the archaeological record while they were in the process of being used by the living in the course of ceremonies that were held at a supra-household level and involved the use of red ochre, and the consumption of meat and drink.