



## **The excavation and research activities of the DISFOR UNICT in Priniàs**

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### **The monumental building VA-VD**

Over the course of the five excavation campaigns directed by Dario Palermo between 2000 and 2009 in the area south of Temples A and B on the Patela of Priniàs, a monumental three-sided building measuring 22.50 m x 7.40 m and oriented in an east-west direction, was brought to light and stratigraphically investigated. Its significance in the urban context of the Patela was evident from the earliest moments of the investigation. The VA-VD building experienced at least two phases, dating from the end of the Geometric to the end of the Orientalisation period (c. 700-600 BC), in the course of which it underwent significant structural modifications. These changes are most evident in the large central room (VA), in which a series of variously articulated wall structures were added to the original layout, characterised by a pseudo-rectangular *eschara* carved directly into the rock: a pseudo-ovoid arrangement of slabs placed in shear probably replaced the *eschara*; small partition walls were erected to circumscribe and delimit smaller paved areas. The addition of two successive small walls between the central room VB and the western room VD finally conditioned the general plan of the entire structure, leading to the creation of a fourth space within the building (named VC) destined to serve as a support for a now lost element, whose ideological value, however, must have been significant in that context.

### **The VD room**

From a structural point of view, the western room VD shows interesting peculiarities that denote its role within the entire complex. A large platform in lithic blocks stood adjacent to the northern wall, while along the southern wall, there was a series of small pillars still standing in a system with slabs resting at the base. The focus of the room consisted of three pillars leaning against the western wall and placed directly on the foundation ridge, in front of which a parallelepiped block was fixed. Several slabs alternating with centrally recessed blocks of different sizes were found scattered on the floor.

The space kept its function intact throughout the entire life of the building, even when the raising of the floor level covered the lower portion of the trilithon and the thickness of the bench, keeping visible the surface part, which came to assume a similar function to that of the slabs laid at floor level. During the second phase, a polygonal base and a low column were laid on the parallelepiped block.

The strong ideological significance of room VD is undoubted. The trilithic arrangement clearly constituted the focal element in reference to which the bench, the lithic post and the numerous slabs embedded in the floor level were conceived, in some cases also in reference to vertically placed rough-hewn pillars. Compared to the entire building, whose function changed drastically over the course of the two phases of its life, it seems to retain certain autonomous characteristics. Inside it was housed the object of worship, not yet physically characterised, but already numerically defined. Rituals must have taken place in reference to it, the outcome of which must in part have consisted of depositions as shown by what remains of the total cleaning of the building prior to its abandonment: a cup intentionally cut in half at the south slab and one to the north of the trilithon, almost intact. Bench, trilithon, slabs, or rather their association, become a recurring element of a complex system, the outcome of precise organisational dynamics, at the basis of which there must have been not too different social paths.

### **Earlier phases**

The investigations of the monumental building VA-VD have contributed to the general knowledge of the urban settlement on the Patela of Priniàs, in which it is coherently integrated, connoting the area 'South of the Temples' as an area of particular importance in the general context of the city. In addition, they have allowed us to grasp fundamental diachronic aspects relating to the occupation of the area as early as the end of the Bronze Age. In fact, a series of stratigraphic excavations, in some cases carried out down to the rock levels, brought to light significant ceramic evidence relating to the phases preceding the establishment of the structure.

Trench A inside chamber VD showed that the structure at that point rested on a vast area used for food preparation, from which survived, in addition to the floor level, a section of wall oriented SE-NW dated to the end of the Proto Geometric period. A deep open trench within VA has yielded numerous ceramics datable between LMIIIC and the SM, almost all of them decorated, consisting mainly of more or less deep bowls and kylikes. Kalathoi craters are also present, along with kitchen pottery.

### **Images**

Priniàs, plan of the central area of the city

The VA-VD building from the east

Environment VD (second phase). The 'Tripillar' from the south-east

Drone view of the VA-VD building in 2021

Single-handled cup laid to the south of the 'Tripillar'

TMIIC materials from stratigraphic excavations

Photogrammetry of the VD room