

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PROBLEM  
OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
PHAISTOS AND HAGIA TRIADHA

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The problem of the relationship between Phaistos and Hagia Triadha was foreseen, as everyone knows, by the first excavators in southern Crete who were concerned with the possible subordinate role of Hagia Triadha to Phaistos. The hypothesis proposed at the beginning by Halbherr (1903:7) that the villa of Hagia Triadha was to be considered a 'rural residence' of the princes of Phaistos, codified this condition of dependence even though, later, the idea was to be abandoned. Already Halbherr himself, in a letter to L. Pernier dated 5 October, 1912 (Creta Antica:42) could not avoid noting a different situation in LM III: "It seems almost", he wrote, "as if in LM III the inner city of Phaistos lost its importance and that at least the centre of commercial activities was brought closer to the sea, in the suburb of Hagia Triadha, from the terraces of which one could see the arrival of the ships from the Libyan Sea to the landing of Dibaki" [= Tymbaki: Ed.]. Essentially ignored by the earlier and later excavators of Phaistos (Pernier, Levi), the problem was again addressed by L. Banti (Halbherr et al. 1977:233) in the publication of the excavations of Hagia Triadha; Banti obstinately rejected the hypothesis proposed by S. Marinatos that in Neopalatial times the ruler of Phaistos had moved to Hagia Triadha. This refutation, which defended the 'Palatial' role of Phaistos, re-proposed, indirectly, the subordinate role of Hagia Triadha.

The subjectivity and ambivalence of some arguments expressed by Banti together with the lack of data led us to consider this problem as one of the major aims of our research related to the resumption of the work at Hagia Triadha. In our efforts to obtain a more rigorous chronological sequence of the structures already excavated, we have tried to reconstruct the architectural and urbanistic events in order to outline the history of the centre. The work started in 1977 (Halbherr et al. 1977:297), made difficult by the earlier excavations and later disturbances, is still in progress. At the same time we thought it necessary to begin the re-examination of the data available from the excavation of Phaistos concerning the LM I - IM III period (we had to rely, for the most recent excavations, only on the few elements known from the preliminary reports). In addition, we plan to re-examine the furnishings of the LM III cemeteries of Kalivia and Liliana (Savignoni 1904:501). The considerations that our friend Shaw is 'forcing' us now to make thus represent nothing more than hypotheses of directions for research: and we are particularly sorry not to be able to

participate directly at the Convention because it would have certainly offered us suggestions and stimuli for the continuation of our research.

There are more than a few basic difficulties: not only do the centres of Hagia Triadha and Kommos remain anonymous but also we lack comparative data concerning relationships between settlements and cemeteries and a systematic study of the territory, items which are indispensable in undertaking a problem like ours. Therefore we wait with impatience for the results of the investigation started by V. Watrous and D. Vallianou, as we do for information on changes of the physical characteristics of the district, the delineation of the coastline, and the navigability of the Hieropotamos.

The vicinity of the sites, their proven contemporaneity, the existence of structures of palatial type, and the geographical homogeneity of the territory are elements that must have made a close and reciprocal relationship unavoidable; they make us believe that the knot to untie is mainly of a political nature, one connected, that is, with the identification of a centre of power and with the determination of the influence of such power on the architectural, urbanistic features and artistic production of the other settlements.

In our brief re-consideration of the available data regarding the centres of Phaistos and Hagia Triadha, we omit the Prepalatial period (i.e. H. Onouphrios style) in which the events seem substantially identical, without specific problems of territorial organization. The remains of houses and structures of that period testify to the existence at Phaistos of various small nuclei, spread over the whole area that would later be occupied by successive settlements. Particularly interesting for the investigation of the relationship between these nuclei is the fact that the remains of the two small sites at Hagia Triadha (*Creta Antica*:182), (below the northern boundary of the villa and near the track that flanks the river) appear almost equidistant from the two great circular tombs.

Regarding the end of the Prepalatial period, excavation at Patrikies (Boncasa 1967-1968:7ff.; Levi 1976:749 ff.) located half-way between Phaistos and Hagia Triadha, has supplied a comparatively anomalous feature: it has yielded a homogeneous ceramic material datable to MM IA. Uncontaminated strata with material of this type have not yet been discovered at Hagia Triadha or at Phaistos.

For the period of the First Palaces, the preeminent position of Phaistos is well documented: the monumentality of the palatial structures, the existence of archives, the density of private houses in the quarters around the hills covering a vast area, and the quality and quantity of ceramic production do not find any correspondence at Hagia Triadha. In addition, we cannot say that during MM times a building of the dimensions and functions of the villa existed at Hagia Triadha; below the villa only thick strata of Kamares ware sherds or remains of stucco floors existed. The Protopalatial rooms that we found below the Sacello (La Rosa 1979; *Creta Antica*: Figure 280), which differ in orientation from the villa, would demonstrate that the new construction represented a major change rather than simple continuity in settlement life.

Phaistos, in the period of the First Palaces, appears then the only possible centre of power in the South-West Messara.

The situation is without doubt more complex in Neopalatial times. Regarding Phaistos the most significant and well known data seem to be the following ones:

- The partial contraction of the Palace, rebuilt on the ruins of the earlier one, with the obliteration of the paved Court, of about half of the 'Theatral' staircase and of a large area west of the Court. These elements, however, did not diminish the monumentality of the new complex.
- The absence of a continuous settlement in the area previously occupied by the Protopalatial quarters. One cannot consider this absence casual. The houses at Chalara (Levi 1976: Plate LL) and H. Fotini (Levi 1976: Plate HH), more or less isolated rooms located west of the Palace, and the remains of structures visible in the saddle of St. George in Falandra, perhaps do not document an effective contraction of the settled area, but they make us suspect a different articulation of these areas. To date we have not yet found Neopalatial walls in the soundings made along the sides of the central hill (1969 and 1971) (Levi 1976: Plate FF). In addition true Neopalatial strata had not been found at the top of the hill (in soundings by Pernier and during excavation for the construction of the buildings for the Italian Mission).
- The absence, in the destruction level of the Palace, of finds of special value (metals, steatite vases, frescoes, etc.). This was connected by Banti and Levi (Halbherr *et al.* 1977:233-234) with lootings or salvage operations related to the continuous occupation of the building.

For Hagia Triadha we should instead remember that:

- The atypical complex of the so-called Royal Villa is constructed ex-novo; its unitary plan, building phases and use cannot be considered definitely clarified even after the interesting observations by V. Watrous (Watrous 1984:123 f.). We should underline that the periods of use of the building coincide with the ones of the Palace of Phaistos, and that the nature of the finds allows us to document, for the villa of Hagia Triadha, the same functions as for the other Cretan Palaces. And it is perhaps not by chance that the curious L-shaped plan practically represents half of a palatial architectural complex. In addition, clay tablets and seal impressions seem to testify to the same administrative use as the earlier ones from the First Palace of Phaistos.
- A continuous urban network contemporaneous with the villa is documented within the excavated area. This urban network, with some monumental construction ('Bastion', 'Cyclopaean Building', 'East House'), extends up to the boundary of the settlement as our soundings below the so-called 'Esavani' (1981) and below Room Q (1983-1984) have confirmed (*Creta Antica*:192, Figure 300). The thick wall, with projections, which cuts through the whole settled area and which was also used during the succeeding period, most likely testifies to the inner articulation of the settlement. In the 'Casa del Lebete', just south

of this wall, as everyone knows, a considerable number of clay tablets in Linear A came to light (Halbherr *et al.* 1977:258).

- The so-called Royal Villa was not looted. It is therefore particularly significant that a new building, also monumental, was constructed *ex-novo* above the destroyed one. The find of the copper ingots, more than the frescoes or the broken steatite vases, shows that the reoccupation of the area was probably immediate. This, at first glance, seems difficult to understand, whether one considers the destruction due to natural or artificial causes.
- The proximity of Phaistos to Hagia Triadha makes us believe that the events could not have been different at the two sites; we must therefore ask ourselves whether copper ingots were kept, before the hypothetical sack, within the Palace of Phaistos. We feel, in fact, that we should exclude the only cause of diversity between the two centres; diversity that could only be possible in case of internal or reciprocal conflicts. For the problem of the sack, the difference between the situation at Hagia Triadha (*Creta Antica*:184, Figure 276) and Zakro lies in the lack of re-occupation of the latter. Pottery kilns, on the other hand, occur at both sites, at Phaistos, associated most likely with the palatial buildings.

The differences noted above not only concern the situation of the two settlements in Neopalatial times, but also in the period included between the First and Second Palaces; these differences are such that new researches may not be able to explain them away. Therefore, it seems probable that a significant change in the relationship between Phaistos and Hagia Triadha happened sometime during the LM period. The importance of Hagia Triadha increased, even though its level of power is not easily definable. In addition, one should note that Building J at Kommos with its annexes and superb, paved road, date from Late Minoan times: an increased interest in the sea must have existed at both centres; its reason is still not understood.

We cannot exclude the possibility that the rulers of Phaistos promoted the growing importance of Hagia Triadha during Neopalatial times because of particular reasons (dynastic events or new political, economic or commercial conditions). It seems unlikely that the ascendancy of Hagia Triadha occurred at the expense of, or without the consent of, the managers of the Palace. The different situations make us suppose some kind of interdependence for the two centres, related perhaps to a more complex articulation of power within one 'reign' rather than a simple decentralization. It is premature, even if stimulating, to consider the nature of any complementary relationship between the two centres or the possible distinction of functions or areas of power (political, religious, juridical, or economic).

This new system of equilibrium, not determined by conflict, could have been the base of the renewed splendour of the settlement of Kommos, connected with an increase in sea traffic. The expansion of Zakros and Kydonia at this time seems to widen the dimensions of this phenomenon. For Phaistos, one suspects a progressive reorganization of the hegemony during Neopalatial times; such a process may have continued in LM III.

After the destruction of the Second Palaces, the differences between Phaistos and Hagia Triadha appear to be more radical. They can be summarized as follows:

At Phaistos:

- The Palace was partially re-occupied, with simple private dwellings (as would be the case also in Geometric and Hellenistic times). "A clay Larnax decorated with an octopus of late Mycenaean style lies above a stratum of earth that seems to cover the floor of Room 54 of the Second Palace," L. Pernier to G. Beloch in a letter dated 20 January 1910 (Creta Antica:41). A pithos of LM IIIB type was at the north-west corner of the Central Court. (Levi:1969:164 Plate IG 3). One access to the houses located within the Palace at this time was through an east-west ramp, a portion of which is preserved just west-southwest of Room LII (Levi 1976: Plate B).
- The traditional quarters of the city were occupied by groups of houses; rich finds were also made on the top of the median hill (area of the Stratigraphic Museum) (ASAtene 47-48 (1969-1970):9, Figure 1). No monumental building has yet come to light, although the settlement kept the location and configuration of the earlier periods.
- From a chronological viewpoint most of the pottery belongs to LM IIIB and C. Some rooms of the Quarter of Chalara seem, instead, to date from LM IIIA (Levi, 1967:1968, Figures 92-95), a beautiful LM IIIA1 cup was discovered near the foundations of a retaining wall located half-way up the slope west of the Theatre Court (Levi 1965-1966:381, Figure 78), just where the rubble of the First Palace was thrown when the Second Palace was constructed.

The oldest tomb furnishings from Kalivia ('Tombs of the Nobles' as L. Savignoni called them) date from LM IIIA2; the poorer furnishings of Liliana ('Tombs of the Populace') belong, instead, to the following period (Savignoni 1904:501 ff.).

No evidence supports any interruption of the occupation of the site after the destruction of the Second Palace. Life seems, instead, to have continued until Geometric times (Rocchetti, 1974-1975:169-173, Figure 1; Levi 1976: Plate B and LL). The centre is mentioned on the Linear B tablets of Knossos, the chronology of which is still unfortunately under discussion.

- A LM III "Re-occupation" of the territory is documented not only in the far away villa of "Khania" near Gortyn (Creta Antica:116 with bibl.), but also in the settlement of Patrikies (Creta Antica:195) and in the tomb of Kamilari (Creta Antica:197 ff.). On the other hand, it does not exist at the site of Seli (Creta Antica:196).

At Hagia Triadha:

- The Royal Villa was abandoned; above it the monumental structures of the 'Megaron' and of the L-shaped Stoa were built; the upper Court was re-structured and the drain between the two buildings was constructed.
- A renovation is documented only in the so-called 'Bastion' (Halbherr et al. 1977:211 f.), modifying its original plan only slightly. A series of monumental buildings, in addition to the ones already mentioned, were built ex novo; these gave the settlement a physiognomy and shape unique to the island at that period. The Sacello, the Stoa of the 'Agora', the so-called Esavani, and the new Megaron P (1984) situated north of the Court of the 'Agora' certainly prove an official and public arrangement; the new situation also required the creation of courts and of their drainage system (Creta Antica: 192, Figure 300).
- A continuous succession of structures and rooms grew over the earlier houses, occupying all the area already excavated. The large LM I wall with projections (Halbherr et al. 1977:239) formed a key element of the organization of the centre at this time because it separated buildings with different orientations. The structures to its north, independent of their level, somehow align with the Magazines of the Market and present more regular plans. A construction with symmetrical structures located at the sides of an angular corridor, is particularly interesting and can hardly be interpreted as a simple private house. Such a typology, documented already in LM IIIA1, is resumed in the following phase with almost double dimension: proof of a particular function indispensable to the particular activities characteristic of that area of the settlement (Creta Antica: Figure 300).
- Concerning the chronology, the new stratigraphic soundings affirm that the group of monumental buildings was built almost simultaneously, and certainly during LM IIIA2. In this period, in the sector of the private dwellings, a truly urban plan has been documented; we have tried to reconstruct the building phases of this plan, with the various arrangements of the great Court and the construction of a road just north of it, a road that perhaps led towards the area of the Necropolis.
- The fourteenth century represents, then, the moment of greatest splendour in the life of the centre; we do not hesitate to call its structures public.
- LM IIIB at Hagia Triadha already represents a period of contraction; this is documented in the architecture by a continued occupation of the Court of the Agora and in the pottery by material which is, in great part, plain. Some data drawn from the earlier excavations (Creta Antica:172, Figure 248), together with stratigraphic results from our recent excavations (Halbherr et al. 1977:328-329, Figures 26-27; Creta Antica:190, Figure 294), allow us to date the final destruction of the settlement in the thirteenth century. The scantiness of sherds datable with certainty to LM ZIIB2 would suggest an exclusion of the later phase of this period: therefore this dating would not coincide with the final<sup>4</sup> destruction of the most

prominent settlements of the island, as suggested by Popham and Desborough (Creta Antica:172).

- The LM III C and Protogeometric periods seem to continue only in the votive material found in the Court of the Sacelli (Stipe nel Piazzale dei Sacelli), a public structure which now related to a larger territory and not to a single settlement. The suggestion by A. L. D'Agata (Creta Antica:181) that the end of the 'Stipe dei Sacelli' coincides with the construction of the Sanctuary of Kommos seems to us worthy of consideration.

The elements mentioned above seem to suggest that, after the destruction of the Second Palaces, Hagia Triadha was a true centre of power (La Rosa 1985: 379380). In addition, this is the Cretan settlement in which one finds great evidence for an architectural post-palatial development. Such a phenomenon, if not determined by external factors (a new political organization of the island?), could represent the end result of those tendencies that had already appeared in our territory in LM I. The favourable conditions of Hagia Triadha during the fourteenth century seem to find a significant counterpart in the newly discovered monumental structures of Kommos; these confirm the consolidated importance of the port installation and prove that the supposed transfer of the power centre did not cause disturbances in the territory. The absence at Hagia Triadha of imported ceramics (Cypriote, Canaanite, Western) would confirm the specific prosperous commercial function of Kommos into the thirteenth century. The analytical study of the material and the identification of imports and of local products in the interior of the island will help us greatly to understand better the relationship between Hagia Triadha and Kommos.

The disappearance of the settlement at Hagia Triadha was probably due to the fall of those structures of power that had caused its splendour; when it fell, Phaistos reacquired the role of reference point and it kept it, without breaks, until Geometric times.

It is not prudent, after these considerations, to draw general conclusions regarding the history of Crete; it is possible, though, to re-discuss opinions, also recent (Godart 1985:173 f.), on the existence in Crete, during LM III times, of the Mycenaean kingdoms of Knossos and Kydonia. Obviously the problem to solve remains the one of the chronology of the last Palace of Knossos and of its clay tablets. If the opinion of the English archaeologists were true, the centre of power at Hagia Triadha, with its public, religious and commercial buildings (but without clay tablets) would have been rebuilt immediately after the destruction of Knossos; this fact would have consequences that we hesitate to draw. On the other hand, a LM IIIB dating of the Knossian tablets could reflect, through the mentioning of pa-i-to, a traditional rearrangement of the equilibriums in our territory, unless the place name did not refer to one settlement, but to a whole district.

In any case, it seems possible that the geographical and cultural 'province' of the Messara possessed, throughout different periods, its own centre of reference; one would have to define its autonomy or its internal hegemony for each period. This centre of reference, which we propose to locate along the Phaistos-Hagia Triadha axis, experienced periods of alternating dependence, perhaps, and independence which was caused by internal or external factors. Memory of these was

lost soon, for the noun "Radamanthos" was, according to the later tradition, the only memory of the 'reign' of the Messara, a reign that may have been a counterpoint to that of its more famous brother-rival to the north.

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#### NOTES

1. As already noted, Professor La Rosa's paper, although sent from Italy in November, did not arrive in Toronto until some time after the symposium took place. We print it here, nevertheless, and with thanks to Giuliana Bianco and Philip Betancourt for the translation of the text from the Italian.