

## RELIGION AND ARCHITECTURE: EARLY LM IIIA2 BUILDINGS IN THE SOUTHERN AREA OF HAGHIA TRIADA

Among the LM III sites in Crete, Haghia Triada is remarkable for its impressive architectural evidence. Buildings monumental in character, sometimes of huge dimensions, were built after the destruction suffered here at the end of LM IB. Thanks to the new excavations it is now possible to determine with some precision the chronological order in which these buildings were built. In particular, in the northern area of the settlement two different architectural phases have been detected, both LM IIIA2 in date.<sup>1</sup> The situation appears more difficult in the southern area, south of the so-called Bastione (Pl. XLIVa). On the ruins of the Royal Villa two structures were built, the so-called Megaron ABCD and the Stoà FG. South-East of them and some meters away is Shrine H, built in part above a Minoan house.

This latter building, oriented North-West/South-East and surely later than the end of LM IB,<sup>2</sup> was constituted by two rooms. The inner one, with bench against the rear wall, had a floor painted with a marine landscape.<sup>3</sup> The two rooms were linked by a double door, a true *polythyron*, according to the Minoan palatial architectural fashion (Pl. XLVb).<sup>4</sup> The walls, on the exterior in ashlar, were built in the half timbered system: in the northern wall the sockets for the horizontal and vertical wooden beams are still visible (Pl. XLVa).<sup>5</sup>

The same system was used also in Megaron ABCD, of which only the foundation level is preserved.<sup>6</sup> The building, oriented East-West, had at least one interior partition. An intermediate wall, demolished already in 1903,<sup>7</sup> was perhaps just a foundation for inner supports (pillars or columns). The westernmost part of the building (so-called Belvedere) was surely added later, as well demonstrated by the different level on which the Belvedere wall and the north-western corner of the Megaron ABCD were built (Pl. XLVc). The entrance to the building was probably from its south-eastern corner (Pl. XLVd).<sup>8</sup> In this spot in fact a gap was filled during a modern restoration. The entrance had been just East of the so-called Chiosco E, placed against the Megaron ABCD and a bit later than it. Two slabs of the paved court in front of it each had a finely engraved double-axe: these two double-axes, the only ones up to now known at Haghia Triada, are the only mason's marks surely LM III on this site (the other ones found in LM III buildings are in reused blocks).<sup>9</sup> The pavementation with hard rectangular

- 1 V. LA ROSA, "Haghia Triada à l'époque mycénienne: l'utopie d'une ville capitale," in *Crète Mycénienne* 249-266. On the LM III buildings B.J. HAYDEN, *The development of the Cretan architecture from LM IIIA through the Geometric period*, PhD dissertation (1981) 50-59.
- 2 For the chronology of the building see especially V. LA ROSA, "Haghia Triada II: relazione preliminare sui saggi del 1978 e 1979," *ASAtene* 57-58 (1979-80) 55-107. An LM IB chronology was formerly retained by L. BANTI, "I culti minoici e greci di Haghia Triada," *ASAtene*, n.s. 3-5 (1941-43) 28-40. The same scholar, however, later wrote about a 14<sup>th</sup> century B.C. date for the Shrine: L. BANTI, *EAA* III, 1090-1091.
- 3 Cf. now *Haghia Triada* I 148-154, 167 fig. 38, 321-335. The painted floor, found in 1939, was formerly published by BANTI (*supra* n. 2) 31-33.
- 4 Cf. HAYDEN (*supra* n. 1) 54 although the technique of the thresholds "solidly wedged ... is mainland, not Minoan." On the building recently H. WHITTAKER, *Mycenaean Cult Buildings* (1997) 47-48, 184-185.
- 5 J.W. SHAW, "Minoan Architecture: Materials and Techniques," *ASAtene* 49 (1971) 157-185.
- 6 On the building C. LAVIOSA, "La casa TM III a Festos. Osservazioni sull'architettura cretese in età micenea," in *AntCret. Studi in onore di D. Levi*, I (*CronCatania* 12, 1973) 86-87; B.J. HAYDEN, *Crete in transition LM IIIA-LM IIIB Architecture. A preliminary study* (1987) 213-216; P. DARQUE, "Pour l'abandon du terme 'megaron'," in *L'habitat égéen préhistorique*, BCH suppl. 19 (1990) 28; K. WERNER, *The Megaron during the Aegean and Anatolian Bronze Age* (1993) 117-118.
- 7 R. PARIBENI, "Lavori eseguiti dalla Missione Archeologica Italiana nel palazzo e necropoli di H.Triada (23.2-15.7.1903)," *RendLinc* 12 (1903) 320.
- 8 Cf. N. CUCUZZA, "The North Sector Buildings of Haghia Triada," in *Crète mycénienne* 74 n. 9.
- 9 N. CUCUZZA, "Mason's marks at Haghia Triada," *Sileno* 18 (1992) 56 (n. 13-14) and 59. The two double axes are visible in the site-plan F. HALBHERR, E. STEFANI, L. BANTI, "Haghia Triada nel periodo tardo palaziale," *ASAtene* 55 (1977) tav. A.

limestone slabs was laid sometimes later than the Megaron ABCD building, probably together with the Chiosco E and the third building of the area, the Stoà FG.

The L-shaped Stoà FG was also oriented East-West, but with a slighter difference in comparison with the Megaron ABCD (Pl. XLIVa).<sup>10</sup> The building opened to the South with seven columns among two antae. The northernmost small square room was added to the building in later times: it was not part of the original building.<sup>11</sup> The walls were built in ashlar blocks: a good stretch of the northern wall was demolished during the excavation in order to expose the fine eastern quarter of the Villa.

The chronology of the three buildings is, as mentioned above, very problematic. We have more elements for Stoà FG: in the foundation trench of the only course now exstant, cleaned in 1984, a few sherds of LM IIIA1/IIIA2 early were found.<sup>12</sup>

The Stoà FG, of LM IIIA2 early, was built almost surely after the Megaron ABCD. It is possible to infer this from the duct that was built in order to drain the piazzale in front of the Stoà.<sup>13</sup> The channel goes towards the Stoà, runs alongside its south-western corner and then it runs obliqually (from South-East to North-West) along the road between Stoà FG and Megaron ABCD to reach the other drain that runs along the eastern side of the latter building. The course of the two drains, one perfectly aligned to the southern and eastern sides of the Megaron ABCD, the other following a much more tortuous course, suggests that the latter was built after, in order to reach the first one. So we have a *terminus ante quem* for the Megaron ABCD, at the early LM IIIA2. For the Megaron, as for the Shrine H, we have not pottery finds to ascertain more precisely its chronology. However these two buildings are characterized by architectural items, that are still strictly linked to Minoan fashion. We are talking about the existence, in the Shrine, of a true *polythyron* and of a painted floor.<sup>14</sup> In the so-called Chiosco E, built against the Megaron ABCD, the bench is still Minoan in fashion, with the use of gypsum slabs; also in this fine building there was a painted decoration.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, one must remember the two mason's marks cut in two slabs of the paved court in front of it: up to now marks later than LM IIIA1 are not known.<sup>16</sup> The Megaron ABCD and the Shrine H were built probably at the same time: apart from these architectural items, it must be noted that if the Shrine axis is extended until the Megaron it reaches this building exactly in the middle of the southern wall: it is very difficult to believe that this is coincidental.<sup>17</sup> Moreover metrological analysis has revealed that the two buildings may have been planned with the same unit of length (30,65 cm).<sup>18</sup> So the Megaron ABCD and the Shrine H were very probably built

10 On this building B. HAYDEN, "The derivation and architectural context of cretan Bronze Age stoas," *ArchNews* 11 (1982) 2-3.

11 LA ROSA (*supra* n. 1) 256 n. 18; A.L. D'AGATA, "Changing patterns in a Minoan and Post-Minoan sanctuary: the case of Agia Triada," in *Post-Minoan Crete. Proceedings of the first Colloquium (London, 10-11 November 1995)*, (1998) 22. In this respect the planning proposed by D. PREZIOSI, *Minoan Architectural Design* (1983) 306, fig. A14 is surely wrong.

12 LA ROSA (*supra* n. 1) 256; the pottery will be published by A.L. D'Agata, which I kindly thank for the information about them.

13 PARIBENI (*supra* n. 7) 321.

14 L.A. HITCHCOCK, *Minoan Architecture. A Contextual Analysis* (2000) 158.

15 *Haghia Triada* I 78-79.

16 A part from those engraved in the circular platforms at Knossos, the later ones are those -in more signs- in the Isopata and Kephalos tombs: they are however perhaps in reused blocks: P. WARREN, "Circular Platforms at Minoan Knossos," *BSA* 79 (1984) 315 and 318; S. HOOD, "Mason's marks in the palaces," in *Function Palaces* 209.

17 Shrine orientation is considered by J.C. VAN LEUVEN, "The Mainland tradition of sanctuaries in prehistoric Greece," *World Archaeology* 10 (1978) 139-148; ID., "Problems and Methods of Prehellenic Naology," in *Sanctuaries and Cults* 11-25.

18 It is well known the value of 0,3036 m for the "minoan foot" hypothesized by J.W. GRAHAM, "The Minoan Unit of Length and Minoan Palaces," *AJA* 64 (1960) 335-341. See however J.F. CHERRY, "Putting the best foot forward," *Antiquity* 57 (1983) 52-56. According to PREZIOSI (*supra* n. 11) 483-493 more than one unity of length was in use in Minoan Crete. Though it is difficult to believe that the same unity was used overall in the island for a very long period (for the implication J. DRIESSEN, "The proliferation of Minoan Palatial Architectural Style (1): Crete," *Acta Archaeologica Lovanensia* 28-29 [1989-90] 18-20) and that it can be detected from the ruins now exstant, it must be observed that these LM IIIA2 Haghia Triada buildings were built in a short span of time.

together while Minoan palatial architectural style was still alive and, at any rate, no later than the beginning of early LM IIIA2. The span of time between the destruction of the Royal Villa, at the end of LM IB, and the building of the Megaron on top of the Villa's ruins was not very long. Indeed, the great labour involved in building the Megaron ABCD exactly in that spot needs to be considered: to reach the same level of the piazzale in front of the building, south of it, stepped foundations were built: on the northern side they were 6 m in height, breaking down the Minoan floors of the Villa.<sup>19</sup> It would have been much easier to build the Megaron some meters south, in the flat area at the top of the hill, an area always free of constructions. What then was the reason for building the Megaron ABCD on that spot? A possible explanation would be the desire to show this building as heir to the destroyed Villa, in view of the fact that the Megaron was built exactly in the same spot though with a quite different plan.<sup>20</sup> Alternatively one could think that for reasons evidently of cultural origin it was held impossible to build on the plateau. In both the cases it is evident that the memory of the Minoan past was alive in the Megaron builders. Unfortunately we are not able to estimate how many years the memory of a building like this can be retained: however it is difficult to believe that it may go further than a generation. Of course, the problem concerns pottery production of the area. Thank to her study of post-LM IB pottery from Haghia Triada, A.L. D'Agata hypothesizes that the settlement was abandoned from the end of LM IB through LM IIIA1:<sup>21</sup> to this period, at the earliest, could be dated the building of Megaron and Shrine, according to the architectural items. During restoration works (1991) no sherds later than LM IB were found inside the northern wall of the Shrine. In other words, Megaron ABCD and Shrine H could be dated probably LM IIIA1 rather than early LM IIIA2: the span of time between the destruction of Villa and their building is perhaps estimable in no more than 30 years.<sup>22</sup>

In any case, early in LM IIIA2 the building of Stoà FG was the end of the monumentalization of the southern area of Haghia Triada. This building too was built above the ruins of the Minoan Villa, involving the same difficulties encountered for the Megaron ABCD. The Stoà FG, because of the type of building, was evidently built for the piazzale in front of it, in order to offer shelter to the people who saw events that took place in this spot.<sup>23</sup> It is easy to hypothesize that these events were ceremonies that took place exactly in this spot. The piazzale was then bordered by colonnades, both to the North (Stoà FG) and to the West (Chiosco E):<sup>24</sup> it was the fulcrum of the three buildings built around it: also the Shrine, in fact, thanks to its orientation was oriented towards it. The ceremonies that took place in the piazzale were then very important: all that remains is to ascertain their character precisely.

19 HALBHERR, STEFANI, BANTI (*supra* n. 9) tav. II.

20 Cf. HAYDEN (*supra* n. 6) 215. Between the Royal Villa and the Megaron ABCD there was a change only in one of the "seven determinants of the built environment:" the change happened in the cultural conventions (in the category of the culturally fixed determinants together with the function): in fact the naturally fixed (climate, topography) and flexible determinants (available materials, level of technology, economic resources) were exactly the same: cf. D.H. SANDERS, "Behavioral Conventions and Archaeology: Methods for the Analysis of Ancient Architecture," in S. KENT (ed.), *Domestic Architecture and the Use of Space* (1990) 44-46.

21 A.L. D'AGATA, "Hidden wars: Minoan and Mycenaean at Haghia Triada in the LM III period. The evidence from pottery," in *POLEMOS* 50; EAD., "Dinamiche sociali, modelli culturali e indicatori etnici a H. Triada nel TM III. L'evidenza offerta dalla ceramica," in *Ἐπὶ πόντον πλαζόμενοι. Simposio italiano di Studi Egei, Roma 18-20 febbraio 1998* (1999) 194; however a small LM II structure has been now revealed during the new excavations in the north-eastern area: *ASAtene* 72-73 (1994-95) 415; *BCH* 120 (1996) 1334.

22 The problem of course involves the record transmission in antiquity: cf. M. ROWLANDS, "The role of memory in the transmission of culture," *WorldA* 25 (1993) 141-152. Although it is referred to a different period it should be remembered that at Athens the reconstruction of the Akropolis building after the Persian fire started in 449/8 B.C., 31 years after the fire.

23 Cf. J.C. MC ENROE, *Minoan House and Town Arrangement*, Ph. D., University of Toronto (1979) 276-280.

24 See the sketch by E. Stefani reproduced in L. PERNIER, "La Missione Archeologica Italiana e i recenti scavi a Creta," *BdA* 1 (1921-22) 438, fig. 12; cf. *Creta Antica. Cento anni di archeologia italiana (1884-1984)* (1984) 171, fig. 247.

25 Cf. A.L. D'AGATA, *Haghia Triada II. Statue minoiche e post-minoiche dai vecchi scavi di Haghia Triada (Creta)* (Monografie Scuola Archeologica di Atene XI, 1999) 222 n. 618 and 228.

Many double-axe bases in stone, one of which with a painted decoration, were found in the area of the piazzale: they were reused -as it seems-, however, in later buildings.<sup>25</sup> Their original pertinency to the LM IIIA2 piazzale is, in any case, possible but not sure. The pavementation of the piazzale in front of the Stoà was linked to the LM I paved road that from the Eastern Starcase went South running along the *Casa Est* storerooms. It is highly probable that this road would be maintained in order to reach the Shrine from the piazzale. Then it is not absurd to conclude that in the ceremonies processions took place with a stop in the Shrine. Religious processions have been hypotesized, as is well known, in the Mycenaean world, for example from the Palace to the Cult Centre at Mycenae:<sup>26</sup> *te-o-po-ri-ja* are mentioned in the Knossos Linear B tablets, coeval to the building activity in the southern area of Haghia Triada.<sup>27</sup> Processions are represented in the LM III frescoes from the same center.<sup>28</sup>

Processions took place at Haghia Triada probably in LM I too. It is possible to hypotesize it from the duplication of the routes that from the sea ramp (Pl. XLIVb, A) went to the piazzale (Pl. XLIVb, D). It was possible to reach this spot both through the corridor along the northern side of the Villa and then through corridor and staircase 74 (Pl. XLIVb, B), and following the exterior of the same corridor and then going up, from piazzale 10, through the Eastern Staircase (Pl. XLIVb, C). The two parallel routes were divided by a simple wall in the East-West part and then by the enigmatic structure named *Avancorpo orientale*, a true enclosure, compared by V. La Rosa to the oriental *bamah*.<sup>29</sup> This situation is similar to that of Gournià, where an analogous duplication of passages exists along the western side of the Palace through the small square in which there are the baetyl, the *kernos* and the only mason's mark up to now known in the settlement (a double-axe).<sup>30</sup> It should be remembered that processions are testified in LM I frescoes in Knossos.<sup>31</sup>

So, in the southern area of Haghia Triada during LM III there were religious ceremonies involving processions: similar rites were perhaps performed at Haghia Triada already in LM I. It needs to be observed that, during LM III (it is not possible to determine with more certainty when) the north-eastern entrance to the piazzale was enlarged. In this spot in fact the north-western corner of the *Casa Est* storerooms was cut and a wall (now 13 m in lenght) along the street was built.<sup>32</sup> This arrangement was planned in order to avoid the *chicane* to reach the piazzale exactly in front of the Eastern Staircase. It is interesting to hypotesize that this small architectural intervention was a result of the introduction of chariots during the ceremonies which took place in the piazzale itself. Two linear B tablets found in the Arsenal at Knossos testify to the existence of chariots at *pa-i-to*;<sup>33</sup> this name, most probably, in LM III was used for

26 G.E. MYLONAS, "The Cult Centre of Mycenae," *ProcBritAcad* 67 (1981) 307-320. Cf. R. HÄGG, "State and Religion in Mycenaean Greece," in *POLITEIA* 387-391; ID., "Ritual in Mycenaean Greece," in *Ansichten griechischer Rituale. Geburtstag-Symposium für Walter Burkert* (1998) 99-113. See also C.W. SHELMEIRDINE, "Review of Aegean Prehistory VI: the Palatial Bronze Age of the Southern and Central Greek Mainland," *AJA* 101 (1997) 577-578.

27 KN Ga 1058 and Od 696.1. About the *te-o-po-ri-ja* S. HILLER, "Te-o-po-ri-ja," in *Aux origines de l'Hellénisme. Hommages à Henri van Effenterre* (1984) 139-150.

28 *Haghia Triada* I 283-320.

29 V. LA ROSA, "La Villa Royale d'Haghia Triada," in *The Function of the "Minoan Villa."* *Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium at the Swedish Institute at Athens, 6-8 June, 1992* (1997) 85-87. For the *Avancorpo orientale* HALBHERR, STEFANI, BANTI (*supra* n. 9) 178-179.

30 J. SOLES, "The Gournia Palace," *AJA* 95 (1991) 36-37. On the double-axe engraved see S. HOOD, "A baetyl at Gournià?," *Ariadne* 5 (1989) 17-21.

31 Cf. M. CAMERON, "Theoretical interrelations among Thera, Cretan and Mainland frescoes," *TAWI* (1978) 587-588, pl. 4.

32 HALBHERR, STEFANI, BANTI (*supra* n. 9) 283 and 287.

33 KN Sd 4412 and So 4448+5794; on chariots in Crete, J.H. CROUWEL, *Chariots and other means of land transport in Bronze Age Greece* (1981) 148-150. While *equus caballus* was already known from LM III Knossos and Tylissos, an horse tooth has now been found at *Kommos* in a LM IIIA2/B level: cf. S. REESE, "The Minoan Fauna," in *Kommos* I, 1 (1995) especially 193, from the context "Building T and Road, SA (43A/86)." For the strong prestigious value J. DRIESSEN, I. SCHOEP, "The stylus and the sword? The role of scribes and warriors in the conquest of Crete," in *POLEMOS* especially 395-397.



Haghia Triada too.<sup>34</sup> Stoà FG then offered a very good viewpoint, strategically placed between two possible stages along the processional way (the Megaron ABCD and the Shrine H) open to the piazzale at the confluence of two different roads. In this respect it needs to be observed that the LM I Eastern Staircase, partially demolished in order to build the Stoà FG, was not rebuilt as a staircase:<sup>35</sup> in other words, in LM III there was perhaps a simple inclined plane, along which also chariots as well could have passed. Stoà FG probably had a balustrade along its eastern side in order to observe the two roads through the piazzale. It explains why the eastern side of the Stoà is longer than the western one, with the small square room, of course just a foundation.

Finally, as A.L. D'Agata has hypothesized,<sup>36</sup> in the upper piazzale at least some of the ceremonies represented in the Haghia Triada sarcophagus took place, with processions and libations close the double-axes bases: also chariots representation, though pulled by fantastic animals, could also reflect a real item.<sup>37</sup> It is very significant that the building activity in the southern area was carried out by the same élite or by the same personage who ordered the sarcophagus, put in a tomb built at the beginning of LM IIIA2:<sup>38</sup> there was the same élite who entered into possession of the Egyptian scarab with the Tiya cartouche.<sup>39</sup> The character of Haghia Triada in that period was still palatial, with a strong Minoan stamp: with the respect in which the distinguished past of the settlement was held, it is possible to understand the architectural interventions, with the Megaron ABCD built over the Villa and with the probable repositioning of ceremonies in a similar manner in the same places. To conclude, in early LM IIIA2 changes still seem to follow in the wake of continuity and religion is a tool by means of which a new élite, Mycenaean or better Mycenaeanizing, seeks to promote itself as heir to the élite that disappeared in the LM IB fire.<sup>40</sup>

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- 34 V. LA ROSA, "Preliminary consideration of the problems of the relation between Phaistos and H.Triada," *ScrMed* 6 (1985) 54; cf. J. BENNET, "'Collectors' or 'Owners'?" An examination of their possible functions within the palatial economy of LM III Crete, in *Mykenaiikà*, *BCH* suppl. 25 (1992) 97 n. 96. This opinion is not followed by C.W. SHELMEERDINE, "Historical and economic considerations in interpreting Mycenaean texts," in *Mykenaiikà*, *BCH* suppl. 25 (1992) 580-581.
- 35 HALBHERR, STEFANI, BANTI (*supra* n. 9) 191-195, fig. 118.
- 36 A.L. D'AGATA, in *Creta Antica* (*supra* n. 24) 174.
- 37 It should be considered that the chariot representations for civil (not military) functions in the Haghia Triada sarcophagus are among the oldest in Crete: cf. CROUWEL (*supra* n. 33) 136.
- 38 V. LA ROSA, "Nuovi dati sulla tomba del sarcofago dipinto di Haghia Triada," in *Ἐπὶ πόντον πλαζόμενοι* (*supra* n. 21) 177-188.
- 39 Cf. V. LA ROSA, "To whom did the Queen Tiya Scarab found at Haghia Triada belong?," in *Κρήτη- Αίγυπτος. Πολιτικοί δεσμοί τριών χιλιετιών* (2000) 86-93.
- 40 Cf. *Haghia Triada* I especially 352-354; see also S. HILLER, "Cretan Sanctuaries and Mycenaean Palatial Administration at Knossos," in *Crète Mycénienne* 205-212. In this respect the Haghia Triada case seems completely different from the Mochlos one as described by J.S. SOLES, "The collapse of Minoan civilization: the evidence of the broken ashlar," in *POLEMOS* 57-65.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Pl. XLIVa Plan of the southern area of Haghia Triada in LM III (from LA ROSA, *supra* n. 1).  
Pl. XLIVb Plan of the southern area of Haghia Triada with the hypothetical processional way in LM I (from HALBHERR, STEFANI, BANTI, *supra* n. 9).  
Pl. XLVa Northern wall of the Shrine H from North-West (photo author).  
Pl. XLVb Southern threshold of the of the Shrine H double door from South (photo author).  
Pl. XLVc Northwestern corner of the Megaron ABCD with the northern wall of the Belvedere abutted to it. From North (photo author).  
Pl. XLVd Southeastern corner of the Megaron ABCD with the slabs of the paved court from South-East (photo author).