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A GREAT MINOAN TRIANGLE IN SOUTHCENTRAL CRETE:

KOMMOS, HAGIA TRIADHA, PHAISTOS

INTRODUCTION

Joseph Shaw

Welcome to an afternoon of talk and discussion about Crete, and more specifically southcentral Crete where, at Kommos, we have been excavating for almost ten years. With the encouragement of local Greek archaeologists and our Italian colleagues, and under the auspices of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, we could begin our work in 1976. Graced by financial support from Ottawa (first the Canada Council, then the Social Science and Humanities Council of Canada [SSHRC]), the Royal Ontario Museum, the SCM Corporation, and thanks to material gifts from a number of other corporations, we succeeded, during those exciting years of discovery, in exposing representative examples of houses of the Middle and Late Minoan town as well as large ashlar buildings to which we will return next summer for a final season of exploration. Above those buildings was an important Greek sanctuary, with multiple building phases and, during the Geometric and Archaic phases, international connections.

With almost a decade of work behind us, and with publication via the Princeton University Press planned not long from now, we have reached a point where synthesis is called for, and when exploration of artistic, technical, and historical nuances continues. For this reason we have scheduled the workshop, and will allow time for discussion and active participation on your part. Our motivations for this vary. On the one hand, we wish to share with you some of our thoughts; on the other, we want and need the benefit of your own insights that may lead us to a clearer understanding of what we, blinded as it were by close acquaintance, have before us.

A variety of themes could have been chosen for this afternoon's fare. The Greek sanctuary, with its informative architectural development, its evidence for ritual, its international connections, would have been a splendid repast, one where our colleague Peter Callaghan, who is responsible for the Iron Age pottery, would have participated. Or we could have explored evidence for "domestic economy" - the "stuff of life" as indicated by the Minoan houses from which artifacts, bones, and household furniture are being studied by Harriet Blitzer, Mary Dabney, David Reese, Lucia Nixon, John McEnroe, Kathy Schwab, Maria Shaw, James Wright, and others. Rather, we have chosen broader themes - international relations during the Bronze Age, and the use and
significance of the great ashlar buildings before us. Also, we find, as if in retrospect, that Kommos is only one of the three Minoan sites flourishing in the western Messara Plain. What can we determine about such obviously closely linked communities during certain Minoan periods? The challenge has its risks, for speculation must of necessity be a means for exploration of the issues. Speculation of this type remains an obligation.

Our first speaker, Professor L. Vance Watrous, is what one might call a "founding father" at Kommos, beginning in 1976 when the promise of the site remained an open question. Vance's specific focus has been the Late Minoan pottery which he will be publishing as part of Volume II in our series, and he will speak to us about the international role or roles that Kommos may have played during the Late Minoan Period.