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Πιτσ δια με τ’άμπελια σου καί τά Μάταλα σου
Ε σ τον Κομμο τ’άρχαια σου ε ναι η ομορφιά σου.

Local Cretan song

Dedicated to James Walter Graham and Nikolaos Platon
whose writings and research have added substantially
to our understanding of Minoan Culture.
This small volume contains the edited texts of oral presentations and subsequent discussions at a three hour symposium held at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto on December 29th, 1984, during the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America and the American Philological Association. The aim was to investigate possible foreign contacts of the Minoan site of Kommos and its relationships with the two other major Minoan sites in the Western Messara Plain in southcentral Crete, during the Middle and Late Minoan periods (circa 2000-1200 B.C.). The two sites, Hagia Triadha and Phaistos, among the finest in Crete, have been extensively excavated over the last 85 years by Italian archaeologists, starting with the memorable spring of 1900. It was then that Arthur Evans and Federico Halbherr initiated excavation, one at Knossos, the other at Phaistos, suddenly revealing to the world the Minoan culture which, with its elegance in living style and artistic sensitivity, was to excite the curiosity of scholars and laymen alike. Investigation at Kommos, the third major site in the area of Phaistos and Hagia Triadha, was not begun until 1976, even though it was known earlier but long after the first major Italian initiatives were complete. Together, these three neighbouring but independent sites present archaeologists and historians with a unique opportunity to examine the dynamics of interrelationships in a single geographical area, in this case that of the Western Messara. Similar studies may some day be possible in the case of Amnisos and Katsamba, where excavation has been selective and incomplete. In terms of their relationships to Knossos the two latter sites also form a great Minoan "Triangle" comparable, perhaps, to the one under consideration.

The timing of such a symposium seemed particularly appropriate. Our colleague, Professor Vincenzo La Rosa, of the Italian School of Archaeology at Athens, was well along in a series of reinvestigations of major structures at Hagia Triadha, especially those of LM III date. At Kommos, in the meantime, nine campaigns of excavation had exposed Minoan houses as well as civic buildings ranging in date from Middle Minoan I to Late Minoan III. At this stage it seemed an appropriate time to pause and to take stock. There was also the realization that the vicissitudes of the Kommos site, although readable in part through study of the unusually clear stratigraphy preserved there, could best be understood along with a consideration of its role as a harbortown and in the context of its relations with neighbouring Minoan sites. This could be introduced, we thought, by means of an open discussion of specific formal presentations focusing on some of the major issues and would, we hoped, serve to inform our own future efforts to interpret the remains at Kommos.

The Kommos site, first pointed out by Arthur Evans in 1924 (Evans III [1928] 88-92; M. C. Shaw 1981) lay untouched until 1976 when our own work, sponsored by the University of Toronto and the Royal Ontario Museum under the auspices of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, began to reveal parts of the Minoan town and, later, the Greek Sanctuary. Excavation could not have taken place without the generous granting of a permit by the Greek Archaeological
Service and especially the enthusiasm and support of Dr. Stylianos Alexiou, then Ephor of Antiquities and Director of the Archaeological Museum of Herakleion, as well as the generosity of Dr. Doro Levi, then Director of the Italian School of Archaeology and discoverer of the great southwestern section of the Middle Minoan palace at Phaistos. Our own efforts have been documented so far in a number of preliminary reports in Hesperia, the most recent one (J. W. Shaw 1984) referring to earlier articles.

While the discussions published here are largely unedited, the four texts themselves have gone through varied amounts of editing or revision. Professor L. V. Watrous's work on imported pottery is a summary of his paper, itself an early version of the chapter he is preparing on the subject for Volume II of the Kommos series. Professor M. C. Shaw's work on the monumental Minoan buildings is also a precis, whereas Professor P. Betancourt's contribution on the Minoan "Triangle" is largely as presented then. Professor La Rosa's article, the longest, is as it was submitted. Unfortunately, due to a delay in the mail, it did not arrive in time to be presented at the conference itself.

The limited time allotted to each speaker made discussion possible, and certainly the occasion would hardly have been a success without the generous participation of the large audience which overflowed the Royal York Hotel's library that day. Among those who participated actively were people knowledgeable about surveying (D. Hope Simpson, J. Moody), metals and metalworking (H. Blitzer, J. Muhly), textiles (E. Barber), ships and shipbuilding (M. Katzev), interconnections and pottery (E. Fisher, G. Kopcke, J. Weinstein), religion (G. Gessell), storerooms (I. Begg), and seals (P. Yule), to whom we are indebted.

A number of other acknowledgements is due, not the least of which is to Martha Richardson, Assistant Director of the Archaeological Institute of America, who made various arrangements and chose the comfortable Library at the hotel for the symposium; also to the Royal York itself for its responsible recording of the proceedings, as well as to Jeanny Vorys Canby of the AIA Program Committee. We would also like to thank Giuliana Bianco and Philip Betancourt for translating the La Rosa text from the Italian, and Erin Campbell for transcribing the discussions. The advisory committee of Scripta Mediterranea, especially Anthony Percival, has been most cooperative in the make-up of the volume, a project partially subsidized by the Kommos Excavation Publication Fund.

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