

LATE MINOAN SETTLEMENTS IN CRETE

HALLAGER (E.), HALLAGER (B.P.) (edd.) *The Greek–Swedish Excavations at Agia Aikaterini Square Kastelli, Khania 1970–1987, 2001, 2005 and 2008. Volume V: the Late Minoan IIIA:1 and II Settlements. Vol. V:1: Text, Vol. V:2: Plates.* (Skrifter Utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Athen 4°, 47:5:1–2.) Pp. 496 + 218, figs, b/w & colour ills, pls. Stockholm: Svenska Institutet i Athen, 2016. Cased, SEK200. ISBN: 978-91-7916-064-7.

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The series dedicated to the Greek–Swedish excavations (GSE) in the Agia Aikaterini Square carried out within the modern town of Khania in western Crete represents one of the most relevant final publications of Bronze Age excavations in Crete and the Aegean. This monumental project started in 2001, and since then five volumes have appeared, concerning the Late Minoan (LM) III and the Geometric (G), Venetian and Modern periods, which make the Chaniote archaeological sequence available in remarkable detail. For their persistence, hard work and generous sharing of knowledge, the editors must be warmly congratulated, and wished good luck in bringing this ambitious task to a successful close.

Excavated under the direction of Y. Tzedakis and C.-G. Styrenius (since 1970), and of E. Hallager (since 2001), this small stretch of the ancient town near the harbour was continuously inhabited from Early Minoan (EM) to LM III, and later on from the G to the Venetian periods. The volume under review presents in detail the stratigraphy, architecture and finds from the LM II and IIIA1 settlements, whose absolute chronology roughly corresponds to the second half of the fifteenth and the first decades of the fourteenth centuries BC. Most of Bronze Age Khania lies buried under the ancient city. Nevertheless, the systematic excavations conducted at Agia Aikaterini Square have proved fundamental to define the stratigraphic sequence and the material culture of the Late Bronze Age town. In the case of the present volume, it allows investigators to follow patterns of change and continuity within a specific inhabited area in the aftermath of the widespread destruction that marked on Crete the end of LM IB and favoured the formation at Knossos of a new administration, traditionally considered Mycenaean.

According to the editors, in LM II and IIIA1 the GSE site was occupied by squatters, who lived within the old LM I buildings. LM II, they state, seems to represent a short phase of major continuity with the Minoan past. On the contrary, it is in LM IIIA1 that changes are evident. To note some examples: the break in the manufacturing tradition of pithoi at the end of LM IB is followed by the formation of a new tradition in the LM III period (H. Vandkilde, pp. 340–72); the presence of imported pottery from other sites on Crete, the Greek mainland and the Levant points to the existence of a well-connected community; one of the most distinctive pottery workshops of LM III, the ‘Kydonian workshop’, starts to have significant production in LM IIIA1. It remains to be understood how the GSE site was related to the wealthy urban core of the town and to the extraordinarily rich tombs belonging to the same phase that have been discovered at a short distance to the south of Kastelli in the Kouklaki area (M. Andreadaki-Vlazaki [ed.], *Chania. A Tour to Sites of Ancient Memory* [2009], pp. 152–65).

Some reservations on the approach adopted for the report of the excavations, and for the analysis of pottery and animal bones, must be expressed. In the preface, C.-G. Styrenius and Y. Tzedakis state that at the time of the excavations the LM II and IIIA1 periods ‘were kept as one stratigraphic unit’, which was called Level 5. This does not come as a surprise. In the

1970s and early 1980s LM II was a matter of strong debate. No LM II level had ever been recognised stratigraphically. It was only after M. Popham published the excavations of the *Minoan Unexplored Mansion at Knossos* (1984) that, at least in the main centre of the island, the existence of a stratigraphically identifiable post-LM IB phase – which might be termed Late Minoan II on the basis of pottery similarity with Late Helladic II – became clear. At the same site it was followed by a different phase, named LM IIIA1, which some years later was recognised also at Kommos and clearly defined in terms of pottery production (L. V. Watrous, ‘The Relationship of Late Minoan II to Late Minoan IIIA1’, *AJA* 85 [1981], 75–7; L.V. Watrous, *Kommos III. The Late Bronze Age Pottery* [1992]). It was because of these developments that for the scholars working on the stratigraphy, and especially on the pottery, from the GSE area at Khania, it became possible to recognise the existence of two different levels attributable to LM II and LM IIIA1. In conclusion, the stratigraphy of the site with regards to the two phases discussed in the present volume is the result of a reconstruction that was made well after the excavations. A similar case has been acknowledged for the LM IIIA2 and IIIB1 stratigraphy (E. Hallager and B.P. Hallager [edd.], *The Greek-Swedish Excavations at the Agia Aikaterini Square Kastelli, Khania 1970–1987 and 2001. Volume IV: the Late Minoan IIIB:1 and IIIA:2 Settlements* [2011], preface). The two phases initially considered as a unity and called Level 4 were subsequently distinguished on the basis of the study of stratigraphy and, especially, pottery. What kind of adjustments the stratigraphic divisions within Levels 4 and 5 required is not made clear by the editors. Therefore it remains difficult to understand how much these changes comply with the original stratigraphic sequence of the GSE area and its inferred chronology, and how significantly the achieved conclusions can be of help to evaluate the historical processes at work in the periods under discussion.

A large part of the volume is devoted to pottery analysis by B.P. Hallager (pp. 208–89) and follows the tradition of study developed in the archaeology of Crete in the early Sixties (by S. Hood, J. Boardman, M. Popham, N. Coldstream, to mention a few, cf. A.L. D’Agata, review of A. Kotsonas, *The Archaeology of Tomb A1K1 of Orthi Petra in Eleutherna. The Early Iron Age Pottery* [2008], in *Gnomon* 83/4 [2011], 337–41). This tradition is not founded on an explicitly-declared epistemological basis. Consequently, no theoretical framework for pottery taxonomy is offered; the notions of shapes and types are not coherently defined; and no seriation techniques are adopted to follow the production sequences and their changes overtime. A section devoted to the development and peculiarities of the ‘Kydonian workshop’ across the entire LM III period would have been very welcome, in order to synthesise the many observations about its production which are scattered in the many volumes of the GSE publications.

As for the presentation of the animal remains, they are given by context in the form of a simple list ordered by genus, while two chapters are devoted to wild cattle and invertebrates found in LM III levels (D. Reese, pp. 393–417). These parts, however, are mostly devoid of observations on the contextual meaning of the findings or comparisons with the rest of the island. No general study of the animal bones from the LM II and IIIA1 settlements is included, of the kind provided, for example, by D. Ruscillo in ‘The Faunal Remains from House X’, in M.C. Shaw and J.W. Shaw (edd.), *House X at Kommos: a Minoan Mansion by the Sea* (2012), pp. 93–116. Appendix 1 on ‘Shell purple-dye evidence on Crete’ (pp. 408–12) looks rather out of place, considering that at p. 397 the author claims that there is almost no evidence for purple dye in the area after LM I. As for the skeleton of a puppy found within a clay bowl in 13-pit L, and interpreted as a ritual burial (p. 139), no detailed description or specific study of such an interesting find is included. Details on the position of the skeleton in the bowl, how much of the skeleton was originally deposited, comparisons etc. are lacking in the section on bones.

A short study by E. Hallager deals with a miniature cup with a Linear A inscription (74-P 0206: pp. 70 and 274; pp. 290–2, fig. 81, pl. 93, pl. 123e8) imported from Knossos, which was found in a rubbish pit (7/8 pit A). The vessel is attributed to LM IIIA1 (pp. 70 and 292), even if a LM II date could also be suggested on the basis of rim profile, linear decoration, barred handle (which is not indicated in the drawing at pl. 93) and quality of the fabric. After a detailed analysis of the inscription and of the very few examples of inscriptions in Linear A on clay vessels, also including a well-known figurine from Poros, E. Hallager jumps to the following conclusions: (1) Linear A was still in use in LM IIIA1; (2) in LM IIIA1 Knossos was under Minoan control; (3) Mycenaeans only took over control of the island after the early IIIA2 destruction (as previously suggested by Hallager himself).

It cannot be demonstrated on the basis of the present evidence that after LM IB the Knossian administration was using Linear A as their writing system. Both the cup from Khania and the figurine from Poros – whose attribution to LM IIIA1 rests on stylistic grounds – may be the work of artisans who were illiterate and do not show any necessary connection to the system of administration which was at the same time in vogue at Knossos. By contrast, the deep cultural changes affecting Knossos in LM II–III A1, and the appearance of the Linear B administration around 1400 BC, give support to the opinion that a new script was created well before this date, perhaps at Knossos itself, and that it may have been adapted from Linear A already in LM IB (J. Bennet, ‘Now you see it; now you don’t! The Disappearance of Linear A Script on Crete’, in J. Baines, J. Bennet and S. Houston [edd.], *The Disappearance of Writing Systems: Perspectives on Literacy and Communications* [2008], pp. 1–29). Finally, no mention is made in this chapter of the controversy that opposes the traditional narrative of Mycenaean invaders taking control of Minoan Knossos in LM II and a different, more recent, position that identifies the agency of local, Knossian elites behind the adoption of customs and cultural elements of Mycenaean derivation in the fifteenth century BC (L. Preston, ‘Mortuary Practices and the Negotiations of Social Identities at LM II Knossos’, *BSA* 94 [1999], 131–43; eadem, ‘A Mortuary Perspective on Political Changes in Late Minoan II–IIIB Crete’, *AJA* 108 [2004], 321–48; eadem, ‘The Isopata Cemetery at Knossos’, *BSA* 102 [2007], 257–314; J. Driessen and C. Langohr, ‘Rallying around a “Minoan” Past: the Legitimation of Power at Knossos during the Late Bronze Age’, in M.L. Galaty and W.A. Parkinson [edd.], *Rethinking Mycenaean Palaces II. Revised and Expanded Second Edition* [2007], pp. 178–89). In this respect, in the present reviewer’s opinion, a ‘third way’ may perhaps be followed to reconstruct the processes that resulted in the formation of a new administration, the adoption of the Linear B script and a profound transformation of Cretan culture. If Knossos is considered as a place where in LM II–III A an intense process of interaction, involving both exponents of the indigenous elites and Greek-speaking members of the new Mainland regimes, is at work (cf. D. Nakassis, review of M.L. Galaty, W.A. Parkinson [edd.], *Rethinking Mycenaean Palaces II. Revised and Expanded Second Edition* [2007], in *BMCR* 2008.07.57), the introduction of Mycenaean-derived elements side by side with the maintenance of local features may be more convincingly explained.

Despite the idiosyncrasies and shortcomings noted above, this volume has to be considered an important addition to the GSE series, which is a cornerstone of Late Minoan studies. It gives the opportunity to get a glimpse into the early LM III town of Khania and will no doubt be consulted, and widely quoted, for many years to come.

*Istituto di Studi sul Mediterraneo Antico,
Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Roma*

ANNA LUCIA D’AGATA
annalucia.dagata@isma.cnr.it