

ALTARI E SACELLI FRA IL TM II E IL TM IIIA1 AD H. TRIADA: UN CULTO IDENTITARIO DELLE ROVINE?

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ABSTRACT

In this paper it is argued that the rectangular stepped platform recently excavated within a room of the *Casa delle sfere fittili*, in the southern sector of the settlement at Ayia Triada, is an altar. The structure is dated on stratigraphic grounds to the LM II period (as is the nearby room, A/1) and is interpreted as part of a cult of the ruins that, following the LM IB destruction, assisted in the construction of social and cultural identities.

A second structure is considered to have a similar function, although it is less regular in shape. This second structure is located to the north-west of the *Complesso della mazza di breccia* (which was destroyed at the end of LM IB, together with the *Villa Reale*). This platform, which was constructed against a room of the *Complesso* when it already lay in ruins, incorporated a few stones, and had three architectural phases, all attributable to the LM II period.

These LM II altars are considered to be successors of the LM IB structures identified at Phaistos in the north-west corner of the central court of the Second Palace, and at Ayia Triada in the light-well located between staircases 75 and 74 of the *Villa Reale*.

The cult of ruins, or rather the altars through which it was performed, therefore seem to have originated within the structures of power and within ceremonies that were directly linked to the palatial elites. After the destruction of the second palaces, this original link, which was topographical and ideological, would have been sublimated with the symbolic connection with those structures that, albeit in ruins, were somehow still involved in the ceremonial-liturgical sphere. Finally, on the basis of the available evidence from Ayia Triada, it is argued that the cult of the ruins continued in LM IIIA1 in shrines of trapezoidal shape (such as Sacello E), and in LM IIIA2 this was superseded by a cult of the ancestors, which apparently became the prevalent means to express cultural identity.