

«IL COLLE SUL QUALE SORGE LA CHIESA AD OVEST È TUTTO  
SEMINATO DI COCCI...».  
VICENDE E TEMI DI UNO SCAVO DI LUNGO CORSO

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ABSTRACT

On the basis of the excavation notebooks and letters we reconstruct the difficult history of this excavation, and we attempt to explore, underscore, and to explain the circumstances that conditioned many choices that were made. Regarding the decision to begin digging at this new site, towards the end of the third excavation campaign at Phaistos, we point to hypothetically two particular factors: first, the clear wish of Halbherr to assert the right of the Italian mission to excavate in the area of the Messarà following a diplomatic incident with Cretan authorities that arose from the excavation of the necropolis of Kalivia by S. Xanthoudidis, and secondly the number of finds from Phaistos, relatively small with respect to that from Knossos, something that hurt the sense of dignity or national pride which had always driven the efforts of F. Halbherr outside the borders of Italy. In fact, the decision to begin this new excavation even took by surprise G. De Sanctis, who immediately advised Halbherr not to start anything else in Crete, for fear of interfering with the beginning of explorations in the Cirenaica, which they had already planned.

We then review the difficult time that Halbherr spent deciding whether to continue the excavation directly by himself after a brief period of collaboration with R. Paribeni had come to an end. We note how the publication of that excavation became a kind of ordeal. After several limited trenches by L. Banti, there really was a plan for continuation, but it was not followed by D. Levi and C. Laviosa in the 1970 s. By 1977, when the first part of the earlier excavations were being published, a new cycle of projects aimed exclusively at re-excavating what had been excavated for the purpose of resolving many problems (especially with regard to chronology) that remained from the earlier excavations was undertaken (to 1999).

In the second part of this paper, we address the motivating criteria and the scientific problems addressed by each excavation cycle: from the iconography of the most important finds, to the problem of political relations with Phaistos (beginning with a letter by F. Halbherr in which he asks whether the two centres did not perhaps constitute an upper and a lower city). We furthermore discuss the influence of Evans upon the reading of stratigraphy, the relations between Minoans and Mycenaean, the interests of L. Banti in religion, and the most recent hypotheses regarding the complementary roles of Phaistos and Haghia Triada (in the context of the whole island, through which the strategic position of Knossos emerges clearly towards the end of the Middle Minoan III period).

In the last part we trace a general history of the site, beginning with the Venetian period and going back to the possible rite of foundation at the beginning of Early Minoan I. For each period we summarize the most important data that has emerged from recent work, and we refer to the detailed contributions for each period, which constitute the primary chapters of a yet unpublished history of the site.

This study also presents a new general plan of Haghia Triada in colour, with the indication of each of its chronological phases, and three appendices present, respectively, the texts of the letters sent by F. Halbherr to D. Comparetti regarding the excavations at Haghia Triada, the most important passages from the letters of F. Halbherr to G. De Sanctis regarding this excavation, and two letters by F. Halbherr, one to L. Pernier, the other to L. Pigorini, in which he explains the stratigraphy and the history of the centre Haghia Triada.