

LA GRANDE THOLOS DI HAGHIA TRIADA: NUOVI DATI PER UN VECCHIO COMPLESSO

MASSIMO CULTRARO

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results obtained through a re-assessment of the archaeological record coming from tholos tomb A at Haghia Triada, Crete. The funerary structure was excavated in 1904 by F. Halbherr and E. Stefani, and was published only in 1930 by L. Banti, who showed a selection of the artefacts. The re-assessment has been carried out in two different levels: firstly, the reading of the handbooks of Halbherr and Stefani, provides new data in order to reconstruct the stratigraphical sequence and to propose a most detailed location of each finding. The second level encompasses the analysis of the burial offerings, according to the new proposal of classification suggested for the prepalatial ceramic assemblage of Knossos. It was also possible to re-examine the whole assemblage from tholos A, collected in Greece (Heraklion, Archaeological Museum) and partially in Italy (Rome, Museo Etnografico L. Pigorini). In both collections I was able to identify some artefacts not included in the Banti's list. The re-investigation of this funerary complex allows me to conclude that tholos A showed a stratigraphical sequence with four different levels (fig. 1). The lower stratum (level 1) included pottery dated to EM IIB, while a specific group of pottery, especially including Fine Grey Ware, could be assigned to EM IIa. This latter evidence arises the question of the chronological, as well as spatial, relationship between tholos A and the nearby houses investigated by C. Laviosa in 1970 at 200 mt. South of the cemetery. The hypothesis is that tholos A was temporary abandoned in the same time when the nearby houses were build, according to the absence of Haghios Onouphrios pottery II among burial offerings found in the tombs. We can date this moment between the EM IIa and an early stage of EM IIb. A level containing (level 2) sand and without human bones separated the lower stratum from the subsequent level 3. The interpretation of this level, that represents a gap of the funerary activity in the tomb, seems strictly related to a similar evidence documented in other tholoi in the Mesara Plain, such as Vorou B and Lebena IIa. In all those cases, tholoi were temporary abandoned during the early phase of EM III, suggesting to interpret this evidence as a more wider phenomenon involved Southern Crete. The level 3 represents the reoccupation of the tholos and it includes pottery assemblage of EM III-MM IA. The complex of Annexes built to the eastern side of tholos is dated to this period and it was connected to the ritual activities carried out in the necropolis, as the large amount of conical cups found in Room L suggests.

The upper stratum (level 1) is related to the latest burial in the tomb and can be dated to MM IB-MM II A. This level is also connected to the construction of the nearby tholos B, that

probably was built in order to provide a newly funerary structure, because in the protopalatial period the tholos A was totally full of burials.

The collapse of the tomb, probably dated to MM III, transformed tholos A into a large mound and on the top of it an aryballos imitating Corinthian types was deposited at the beginnings of the VIIth B.C., perhaps for ritual purposes.