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ΕΛΟΥΘΙΑ ΧΑΡΙΣΤΗΙΟΝ. ΤΟ ΙΕΡΟ ΣΠΗΛΑΙΟ ΤΗΣ ΕΙΛΕΙΘΥΙΑΣ ΣΤΟΝ ΤΣΟΥΤΣΟΥΡΟ

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ΕΛΟΥΘΙΑ ΧΑΡΙΣΤΗΙΟΝ is the unusual formula occurring on a 1st-century AD inscription from Tsoutsouros (*SEG* 53.949). It is also the captivating title of the volume on the cave of Eileithyia at Inatos (modern Tsoutsouros) edited by Athanasia Kanta and Kostis Davaras. Thanks to the commendable support of the Association of Dynamic Citizens of Arkalochori, as well as of the Municipality of Minoia Pedias, the Authors have succeeded in publishing a useful book in the middle of a deep recession that leaves less and less room for cultural initiatives (and grants).

The volume must not be approached as an exhaustive publication of the excavations conducted, but rather as a catalogue of the most significant finds (p. 10). Some brief chapters address specific issues related to the cave and the cult practices it hosted, thus serving as a historical and archaeological introduction to the catalogue (pp. 10-47).

A 'topographic-historical note' (by Galanaki and Papadaki) provides a concise overview of the excavations carried out by the Greek Archaeological Service (pp. 12-14). A full description of Tsoutsouros bay, possibly equipped with a map more detailed than figure 3 on page 7, would nevertheless have been welcome. While the field research and study of the finds are still ongoing, it is hard to arrange the provided information into a coherent picture, even for scholars with direct knowledge of the site.

The chapter devoted to the history of the archaeological research (by Platon) provides essential details for an understanding of the stratigraphy and of the religious practices (pp. 16-21). Nonetheless, the lack of a sketch plan does not help the reader. The excavations focused on the main room of the cave (κύριος θάλαμος) as well as on three deep crevices along the walls (σχισμές Α, Β, Γ). The archaeological stratification of the main room appears to be simple but mostly unreliable: both the upper layer and the underlying 'black stratum' have yielded mixed finds, spanning from the Bronze Age to the Roman period (p. 11). A similar mixed situation has been noted in relation to the crevices, which were used for the (possibly ritual) deposition of ob-

jects. Despite some disturbances, the 'black stratum' – so called after the abundant presence of ash – has yielded the largest share of Geometric-Archaic finds, a circumstance that has led the excavators to date it to this time span (p. 19). A kind of bench (βάθρον) is related to this layer: it is the sole structure identified in the cave so far and it has been tentatively interpreted as an altar and dated to the Geometric period.

The 'encomium of Eileithyia' (by Themelis) represents a brief commentary on the history and spread of the cult in Greece (pp. 22-26). It is to some extent misleading that the greatest part of the chapter is devoted to the evidence from Messene, where Eileithyia was worshipped on Mount Ithome together with the Kouretes and Zeus (pp. 23-26). In order to draw a general picture of this multifaceted goddess, it would arguably have been more useful to provide some comments on Eileithyia's elusive personality and consequently ill-defined iconography. Indeed, Eileithyia's functions are often taken over by other deities involved in the protection of birth. Moreover, the general features of her widespread cult in Crete are still far from clear.

Three chapters focus on various aspects of the religious practices at Inatos. Kanta provides an analytical overview of the votives (pp. 28-37); Flouda discusses the references to Eileithyia in the Linear B tablets found at Knossos (pp. 38-41); and Perna presents a new Linear A inscription on a miniature vessel (pp. 42-43). The other brief chapters give a general account of the finds with a catalogue of selected objects: pottery, from the Protopalatial period to the Hellenistic (Kanta and Kondopodi, pp. 44-47) and Roman (Grigoropoulos, pp. 80-88); figurines and models (Kanta, pp. 89-148); double axes (Kanta, pp. 149-154); small finds, jewels and bronze bowls (Kanta, pp. 155-167); Aegyptiaca (Kanta and Kondopodi, Wilkinson, pp. 168-187).

For the sake of convenience, we will address the aforementioned issues in two distinct sections dealing with the Bronze Age and historic times respectively.

R. M. A.

Despite the absence of any reliable stratigraphy, the difficulty in dating some objects, and the ongoing nature of the study, which has only focused on a selection of finds, even from this preliminary edition the importance of the context already during the Bronze Age is completely evident.

Evidence of cult activities in the cave first appears in MM IB. The findings dated to the Protopalatial period mostly consist of pottery: along with normal sized vases (almost absent from the catalogue: p. 61, nos. 32-33) such as cups, jugs and cooking pots, a fair number of miniature vessels are present (pp. 48-52, nos. 1-9). As stressed by Kanta (pp. 44-46), the latter represent the principal category of offerings for this phase of use and the fact that many of them are characterized by a suspension hole made before the firing suggests that they must have been hanging somewhere in the cave. The same categories of pottery are also found in the Neopalatial period (pp. 52-65, nos. 10-31, 34-44), when a noteworthy increase in the number of conical cups occurred (Kanta, p. 29), most likely in relation to the growing importance of drinking activities. The votive nature of the miniature pottery vessels, quite often found in peak sanctuaries, is confirmed by a small two-handled bowl (p. 55, no. 18) bearing a Linear A inscription (INA Zb 1). This has been published for the first time by Perna, who considers the text in relation to the support and to the incised spiral which the two Linear A marks are associated with (pp. 42-43). Even though the study of the anthropomorphic figurines is still in progress and is made difficult by their highly fragmentary state, it seems clear that they first emerged as early as the Protopalatial period (only one head has been published: p. 92, no. 86). In the Neopalatial period their number increases and includes both female and male idols, cult figures, and also metallic specimens (pp. 88-90, 92-97, nos. 81-83, 86-94).

The finds ranging from LM II to the Subminoan period are dealt with as belonging to the Postpalatial period (Kanta, pp. 29-30), creating a gap with the chronological chart on page 8, where the phases from LM II to LM IIIC are subdivided into Final Palatial and Postpalatial. As these labels are controversial in relation to the political events which occurred in Crete after the fall of the Second Palaces, an explicit statement about the terms used by the Authors would have been welcome. The finds are scanty in relation to LM II-IIIB, while they increase for the LM IIIC and Subminoan periods. As far

as the pottery is concerned, despite the difficulty in dating some of the pots due to the lack of fine wares and of closed strata, it is clear that miniature vessels were less widespread than in the previous times, while new shapes typical of the LM period appear (pp. 66-68, nos. 45-51), such as snake tubes used as bases for bowls, along with a few stirrup jars and incense burners. The presence of LM III and Subminoan figurines is attested by some female heads (pp. 98-101, nos. 95-99). Among the metallic objects, a gold ring is presented together with eight LM IIIC/early Subminoan close parallels from graves. A table with the results of the XRF analysis carried out on all the specimens examined is also provided (pp. 155-157, no. 154). The analysis has made it possible to determine the percentages of the metals contained in each ring; however, while the results might prove very interesting for a detailed study on such objects or a broader discussion about the production and circulation of gold goods, it is not clear what it is possible to infer from the data collected and how they are used within the present publication.

The question of what deity was worshipped in the cave during the Bronze Age is at least partially problematic. The well-known linear B documentation from Knossos, dated to LM IIIA2 early and discussed in a chapter by Flouda (pp. 38-41), mentions a goddess named *e-re-u-ti-ja*, who was worshipped at nearby Amnissos, where Homer (*Od.* 19.188) locates a cave dedicated to Eileithyia. Indeed, a cave overlooking the town of Amnissos has been identified, which contained objects dating from the Neolithic onwards and was at least initially used for burials. While the finds do not seem to be linked to the cult of Eileithyia and the question of continuity remains open (as also recently stressed by P. P. Betancourt, 'The Amnissos Cave: Poetry meets Reality', in S. P. Morris, R. Laffineur eds., *Epos: Reconsidering Greek Epic and Aegean Bronze Age Archaeology*, Aegaeum 28, Liège-Austin 2007, pp. 239-242), this site has been frequently regarded as the cave of the goddess. To sum up, as rightly stressed by Kanta (p. 29), the fact that Eileithyia was known in LM III Crete makes it likely that the goddess was already worshipped at Inatos at the time, as clearly attested by the finds from later periods. However, while this might be true for the later Bronze Age phases, nothing allows us to extend this consideration to the Proto- and Neopalatial periods, where the cult activities might have been directed towards a more «indeterminate» Minoan goddess. For these phases,

the archaeological record is comparable to that for peak sanctuaries and it is possible to argue that also the cult activities carried out were similar.

On the basis of the available data, it is hard to believe that even in the future it will be possible to proceed any further with the identification of the goddess(es) worshipped in the cave during the 2nd millennium BC, although the full publication of the material can still provide considerable information on local ritual practices. While it is questionable that the cult in the cave of the goddess/Eileithyia at Inatos remained unaltered throughout the Bronze Age, the archaeological data show that the objects involved in the cult and hence the ritual actions changed, at least to some extent.

The full study of the material from this unique context will enable us to better understand how ritual practices changed over the course of the 2nd millennium and to what degree the ritual(s) detected are similar to those identified in other caves or in the peak sanctuaries. Moreover, it will be possible to better approach the issue of cult continuity with the Early Iron Age and later periods. As far as this last question is concerned, it is noteworthy that Bronze Age votives lack certain types of objects that only became common from the Protogeometric period onwards (see below). This is the case with the figurines connected with the sphere of birth-giving and even with the double axes, one of the most typical Minoan religious symbols, which appear among the finds from the cave in the form of bronze and clay miniatures, of the sort that has also been recovered in Bronze Age peak sanctuaries or sacred caves.

Another issue which needs to be further explored in order to fully understand the context and its finds, within a wider framework, is that of the place of production of the objects: were they locally made and exclusively for this cave? For instance, Kanta (p. 29) underlines the similarity of the clay used for a good number of vessels and figurines recovered both at Inatos and in the peak sanctuary of Skoteinos, and it would be interesting to understand the relationship between the objects found in the two sacred contexts. In order to answer such questions, a program of scientific analysis would be welcome, as a means to determine the provenance of the materials.

G. B.

Devotion to Eileithyia, then, was well-established in Crete as early as the 2nd millennium BC

This evidence raises the issue of cult continuity during the Early Iron Age, acknowledged by the Authors as a matter of fact (pp. 28, 31). Nevertheless, this subject deserves a more careful treatment, since James Whitley has convincingly argued that «continuity in practice does not mean identity of practice» ('The chimera of continuity: what would «continuity of cult» actually demonstrate?' in A. L. D'Agata, A. van de Moortel, M. B. Richardson eds., *Archaeologies of Cult. Essays on Ritual and Cult in Crete in Honor of Geraldine C. Gesell*, Hesperia Suppl. 42, Princeton 2009, p. 281). Eileithyia's connection to pregnancy and birth becomes unquestionable only in the early 1st millennium BC, as the Homeric epithet *μοῖροστόχος* demonstrates (*Il.* 16.187). Moreover, the Homeric mention of Eileithyia's cave at Amnisos proves the longevity of the cult place but does not tell us anything about the persistence of ritual activities (*Od.* 19.188). It is worth noting that – along with other deities – the Mycenaean *e-re-u-ti-ja* received honey offerings that do not find any confirmation in the literary dossier on Greek Eileithyia. Moving on to the archaeological record, it is possible to detect a kind of mirror-like inconsistency. *Symplegmata* (pp. 102-107, nos. 100-107), pregnant women (pp. 108-109, nos. 108-109), birth scenes (pp. 111-118, nos. 110-115) and *kourotrophoi* (pp. 120-121, nos. 116-117) abruptly become current subjects from the 9th century BC onwards, while they are simply non-existent among the Bronze Age votives. On the other hand, female riders seated side-saddle (pp. 123, no. 119), female figures with crescent-shaped upraised arms (pp. 124-125, nos. 120-122), and bronze and terracotta double axes (pp. 149-154, nos. 143-153) seemingly point to a strong continuity between Late Bronze and Early Iron Age. How to escape from this cul-de-sac? The adoption of old-fashioned objects and iconographies neither implies their semantic persistence nor excludes any adaptation to new beliefs. Continuity – as well as discontinuity – must be set in context: in other words, it is not possible to do without a comprehensive analysis of the finds. The book by Kanta and Davaras is hardly suitable to provide a reliable assessment of this essential issue. Pottery is largely disregarded and the entries in the catalogue are only sufficient to detect the enduring preference for miniature vases (pp. 70-79, nos. 53-75). At the current state of research, it is difficult to detect the «chain leading from the Minoan Goddess to the Mycenaean Eileithyia and – through the latter – to the Greek goddess» (p. 31).

As other cave sanctuaries throughout the island, Eileithyia's cave at Inatos reflects the international relations linking Crete and the Eastern Mediterranean in the 1st millennium BC. The amount of *faïence*, ivory, glass, rock crystal amulets (pp. 171-185 nos. 177-198), jewellery (pp. 158-159, nos. 155-159) and – in general – Egyptian and Syro-palestinian αὐτάρματα (pp. 186-187, nos. 199-201; Hom. *Od.* 15.416) is simply astonishing. The Authors do not exclude that at least some of these items were dedicated because of their links to Egyptian gods governing fertility, sexuality and birth (pp. 169-170). I wonder if this alleged awareness on the worshippers' part may reflect the international standing of the cave as well. Whatever may be the case, a different meaning must now be assigned to the terracotta boat models, which were formerly taken as evidence for the presence of sailors or foreigners (p. 141, nos. 136-137): a restored model shows an infant in the middle of a boat accompanied by a number of female (?) figures (pp. 34-35, fig. 18). One can hardly doubt the link between this unique iconography and Eileithyia's virtues.

The paucity of entries in the catalogue seemingly marks a sharp drop in offerings during the Archaic and Classical periods (p. 79, nos. 74-75; 132-133, no. 129; 142-145, nos. 138-140; 163, no. 168). It is hard to say whether this lack of evidence reflects actual changes in religious practices or simply depends on the ongoing study of finds. At any rate, some openwork plaques appear to be inconsistent with the cult of a female goddess (pp. 142-145, nos. 138-140). They depict a circle of armed warriors that the Authors have temptingly interpreted as a *πυρρίχη* performed by the Kouretes (p. 36). The joint cult of Eileithyia and the Kouretes is virtually unknown in Crete, as well stressed by K. Kritsas ('Αναθηματική επιγραφή στους Κωρήτες', in F. Carinci *et alii* eds., *ΚΡΗΤΗΣ ΜΙΝΩΙΔΟΣ. Tradizione e identità minoica tra produzione artigianale, pratiche cerimoniali e memoria del passato*, Studi di Archeologia cretese 10, Padova 2011, pp. 477-490), although it may be attested elsewhere in Greece (pp. 25-26). The possible presence of the Cretan daimones within the cave would further strengthen

the alleged link between the numerous double axes and the cult of Zeus (p. 36).

The few Hellenistic votives published so far do not provide any significant information about the features of the cult in this period (p. 79, no. 75; 134, no. 130; 140, no. 135; 165, nos. 172-174). Nevertheless, several *krateriskoi* prove once more the long-lasting presence of miniature vases, dating from as early as the Bronze Age (p. 47, fig. 25; 29, no. 75).

Roman relief lamps from the 1st and 2nd century AD, and AC 1 and AC 3 Cretan amphoras show the frequentation of the cave of Eileithyia in the 1st millennium AD (pp. 80-83, nos. 77-80). Fragments of Late Roman 1 amphoras are the most recent finds. Lamps represent ubiquitous Roman finds in Cretan caves. Besides their obvious practical function, lamps can likely be regarded as the most recent evidence for religious practices within the cave of Inatos.

R. M. A.

The book is pleasant to read thanks to its format, clarity and smooth style. The catalogue is fairly rich and each entry is accompanied by excellent photographs. The bibliography, while not fully up-to-date and restricted to the essential works, is nonetheless appropriate for the main goal of the work. The choice of mixing Greek and Latin alphabets in the bibliographical entries is nevertheless disappointing: according to this criterion, the name *Γαλανάκη* falls between Chaniotis and Coldstream.

We believe that the collection of evidence is the first step towards the profound understanding of any archaeological record. The book edited by Kanta and Davaras is therefore a very useful work, albeit not a definitive one. It represents a milestone that no scholar approaching Cretan religion can afford to miss, at least until a comprehensive volume – what we are all looking forward to – finally sheds light on the unique context represented by the cave of Eileithyia at Inatos.

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