

# The Hagia Photia Cemetery I

## The Tomb Groups and Architecture

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PREHISTORY MONOGRAPHS 14

# The Hagia Photia Cemetery I

## The Tomb Groups and Architecture

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by  
Costis Davaras and Philip P. Betancourt



*Published by*  
INSTAP Academic Press  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
2004

**Design and Production**

INSTAP Academic Press

**Printing**

Sun Printing House, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

**Binding**

Hoster Bindery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Davaras, Kostas.

The Hagia Photia Cemetery I : the tomb groups and architecture / by Costis Davaras and Philip P. Betancourt.

p. cm. — (Prehistory monographs ; 14)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-931534-13-6 (alk. paper)

1. Hagia Photia Site (Greece) 2. Excavations (Archaeology)—Greece—Hagia Photia. 3. Minoans—Greece—Hagia Photia Site. 4. Tombs—Greece—Hagia Photia Site. 5. Hagia Photia (Greece)—Antiquities. I. Betancourt, Philip P., 1936- II. Title. III. Series.

DF221.C8D39 2004

939'.18—dc22

2004024869

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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# Preface

Hagia Photia is a village on the northeast coast of Crete, 5 km east of modern Siteia. The small town has a long history, and ancient objects are occasionally discovered in its vicinity. A triple kernos and a spherical pyxis, both of which are Cycladic pottery shapes, were reported from near the village as early as 1959 (Platon 1959), but the presence of a large Early Minoan cemetery with over fifteen hundred Cycladic imports including copper daggers, crucibles, hundreds of complete vases, marble bowls, and many other objects was not suspected until 1971. The cemetery was discovered that year at a location named Patema, on the slope of a hill that overlooks the beach. About 50 tombs were destroyed before the site came to the attention of the authorities.

The tombs were excavated as a rescue excavation in July and August of 1971. A total of 251 tombs were found that year (numbered from 1 to 252, including 2 numbers that were not tombs and one with 2 tombs). Twelve additional tombs were excavated in 1984, bringing the number to 263 (including one number with 2 tombs). A few of the graves were simple pits cut into the soil, but most of the burials were in small built tombs that had been excavated into the hard soil that makes up the hillside. The built tombs consisted of an underground chamber used for the deceased and a separate anteroom; a blocked doorway separated the two spaces. The finds were taken to the Hagios Nikolaos Museum initially, but they are now housed in either that museum or the newer museum in Siteia. Additional investigations in the immediate area have discovered a settlement and a number of smaller sites in the district (Tsipopoulou 1989a; 1990a).

The cemetery is important for several reasons. It represents a Cycladic presence in Crete at the beginning of the Minoan period, with what were originally about 300 tombs. Over 1800 artifacts were found. Among them are some of the earliest known Cretan discoveries in several categories, including crucibles with copper inside them, long daggers with central midribs, pendants made in the lost-wax process, multiple vases called kernoi, bird-shaped vases, marble dishes of Cycladic shape, and many other items. The tombs represent an architectural style and a series of burial customs that are foreign to Crete but familiar from elsewhere within the Aegean. Their contents are an extremely interesting body of evidence for the study of the formative phases of Minoan Crete.

The publication project has been undertaken as a joint Greek-American collaboration. We hope that this evidence can be used for a better understanding of the early periods of the Minoan culture.

Costis Davaras  
Philip Betancourt



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# Acknowledgments

The Minoan cemetery near the modern village of Hagia Photia was excavated in 1971 under the direction of Costis Davaras. The work in 1971 began under the auspices of the Archaeological Society of Athens, and it was continued with support from the Greek Archaeological Service. The finds were placed in the Archaeological Museum in Hagios Nikolaos, and a few pieces were later transferred to the Archaeological Museum in Siteia. Many preliminary reports have been published, including the following: Davaras 1971a; 1971b; 1971c; 1972a; 1972b; 1975, 107, 111; 1976, 128–131 and *passim*; [1982]; Michaud 1972, 814. Articles on the petrography have also been published (Day, Wilson, and Kiriati 1998; Day et al. 2000).

The preparation of the final publication began in 1998 as a *synergasia* between Costis Davaras and Philip P. Betancourt. In the summer of 1999, work was conducted in the INSTAP Study Center for East Crete in Pacheia Ammos. Photographs and records from the project, including records in the Hagios Nikolaos Museum, were organized, a database established, and preliminary cataloging accomplished. Philip P. Betancourt and James D. Muhly supervised the work. Mary A. Betancourt was registrar and apotheki supervisor, and the following graduate students assisted with the project: Susan C. Ferrence, Alejandra Gimenez, Jane Hickman, BethAnn Judas, Elizabeth B. Shank, and Gayla Weng.

In January and February of 2000, work was conducted in the Archaeological Museum in Hagios Nikolaos, where objects were cataloged, drawn, and photographed, as well as at the Study Center in Pacheia Ammos, where study of the objects continued. Those participating included Philip P. Betancourt and James D. Muhly (supervisors), Douglas Faulmann, Susan C. Ferrence, and Elizabeth B. Shank (artists and catalogers), Katherine May (photographer), and Stephania Chlouveraki (conservator). Tristan Carter studied the obsidian the same year. The following persons inked the drawings in Philadelphia: Alejandra Gimenez, Jayme Guokas, Louise Langford, Leonidas A. Moustakas, Andrea Powers, and Jennifer Zwilling.

Work continued in the summer of 2000 at the Study Center, with the following persons participating in the project: Philip P. Betancourt, Mary A. Betancourt, Dorian Borbonus, Susan C. Ferrence, Jane Hickman, BethAnn Judas, Byron Koukaras, Louise Langford, Antonia Stamos, and Gayla Weng. All pieces in Siteia were cataloged during this summer. Susan C. Ferrence, Antonia Stamos, and Julia Rix edited the illustrations in Philadelphia in subsequent years.

Funding for this project has been provided from several sources: the Archaeological Society of Athens; the Greek Ministry of Culture; the Institute for

Aegean Prehistory; the Malcolm H. Wiener Foundation; Temple University; the University of Pennsylvania; and private donors.

Profile drawings for the pottery and other objects published in this volume have been drawn by the following people: Philip P. Betancourt, Stephania Chlouveraki, Douglas Faulmann, Susan C. Ferrence, and Elizabeth B. Shank. Photographs are by Costis Davaras, Georgios Xylouris, and Katherine May. Drawings of tombs are by Costis Davaras and Georgios Xylouris.

Thanks are extended to several institutions for help with the project: The Archaeological Society of Athens, the Greek Ministry of Culture, the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, the INSTAP Study Center for East Crete, and the Department of Art History and Archaeology at Temple University.

The following individuals have assisted in many different ways: Lazaros Kolonas, Director General of Antiquities; Elisavet Papazoe, Minister of Culture for Greece; Lina Mendoni, General Secretary, Greek Ministry of Culture; Liana Parlama, Director, Archaeological Service of Greece; the late Nikos Papadakis, Director of the 24th Ephoreia for Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities; Stavroula Apostolakou, Epimelitria and Acting Director, 24th Ephoreia for Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities; Thomas Brogan, Director, INSTAP Study Center for East Crete; Eleanor Huffman, Assistant to the Director, INSTAP Study Center for East Crete; Alekos Nikakis, Conservator, 24th Ephoreia for Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities; Stephania Chlouveraki, Chief Conservator, INSTAP Study Center for East Crete. Special thanks go to the following individuals: Metaxia Tsipopoulou, Massimo Cultraro, Peter Day, Christos Doumas, and Popi Galanaki.