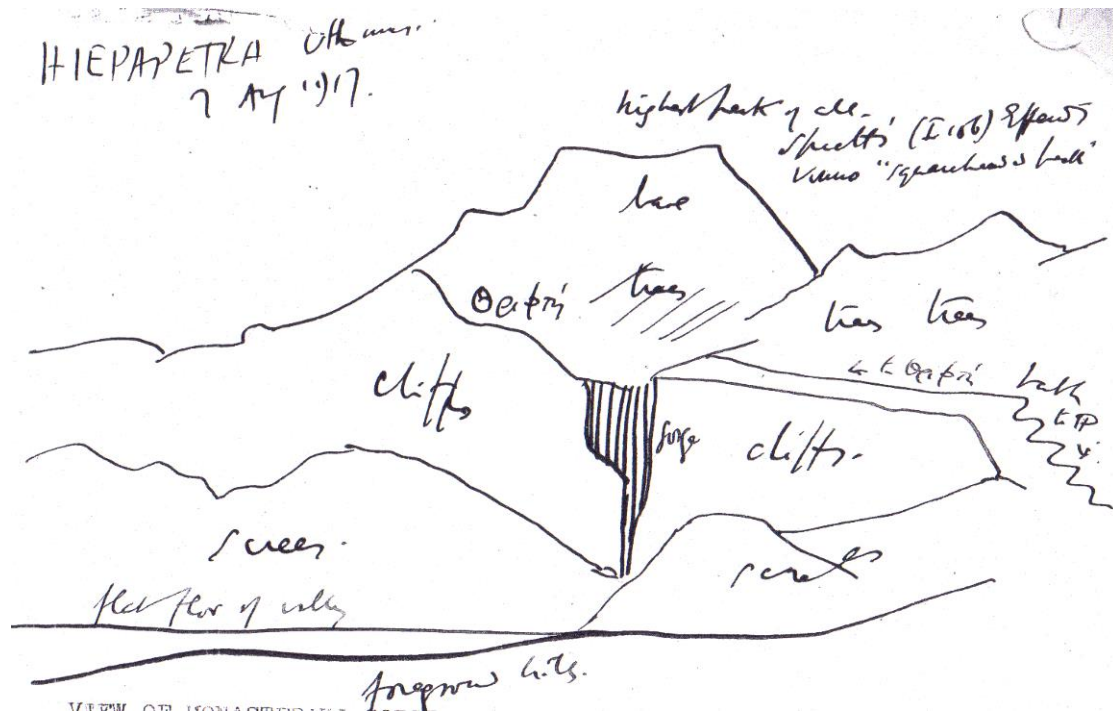


CHAPTER 28 HIERAPETRA ISTHMUS AND PHANEROMENI

Isthmus of Hierapetra, 7 August 1917



View of Monastiraki gorge [Xa [Ha] and Eteocretan Mountains¹ looking east from the high ground south of Phaneromeni Monastery looking across the isthmus.²

Of the hills that shut off the Eteocretan country there is no finer view than that from the high ground south of Phaneromeni half an hour along the road from the monastery to Kapistri.³ The foreground consists of the bare and brushwood-covered hills which form the western wall of the valley of the isthmus. The sea is seen both to the north and south. On the slopes to the northern sea is the path to Tourloti, rounding the point of Malaxa by the white gypsum rocks.⁴ South of this the mountain wall is split by the glen leading down from Bebonas [east of Kavousi] to Kavousi, whose grey houses look from here as if they were part of the fan of stones and alluvia washed down by the torrent on the floor of the isthmus. A part of this level land appears and, just where the foreground cuts it off, the wall of the cliff is broken by the gorge of Monastiraki, a clean cut in the rock face quite perpendicular on the southern side.⁵

Above the gorge is the wooded hollow in the side of the mountain through which the path winds up to the upland hamlet and vineyards of Thrifti [Thrypti]. Above this again towers the highest of the Siteia mountains.⁶ Above the cliffs south of the gorge is the path that goes from Hierapetra by Episkopi⁷ then up the hill above the gorge and through Thrifti and descends to Roukaka (q.v.). Southwards again, the mountain line is more broken and gradually runs downwards towards the sea. Hierapetra is not visible.

I visited this gorge first with Duckworth in spring 1903⁸ and I think then it was that I scrambled along a level on the cliff to the north and got to a platform inside

the gorge with the remains of an (?) ancient house and saw the waterfall. I visited it again about 1909 with Miss [Edith] Hall and have often been above it going to Thrifti.⁹

The view described above by the evening light is wonderful. But this Monastiraki gorge cut out in the wall of cliff, whether seen from below as from Bashinamo¹⁰ where the impending height of the wall is impressive and runs right up to the skyline, or as here from a higher level where the towering peak of Efendi Khristos behind it is seen to its full effect, is, in the simplicity of its lines, perhaps the most impressive thing in Crete. Its only rival is the view of Ida from the west from the Amari valley, where the ridge, instead of looking long as it does from Candia and being dwarfed by foothills, has a fine wedge-shaped outline and rises from a long line of buttress-like cliffs at the foot of which is a row of villages and then the fertile valley of Amari. (I would now add the view from the edge of the Omalos plain across the valley of the Xyloskala to the bare mountain opposite.)¹¹

Isthmus of Hierapetra. 7 August 1917

There are two ways of crossing from the north to Hierapetra on the southern coast. If one comes from Agios Nikolaos and the west [Route 1], one goes along the coast as far as the open mouth of the valley of Kalo Khorio, then goes up to the village among the orchards and gardens of the widening valley. The path goes through the eastern of the two hamlets and so up the hill and over the pass, and then descends to Hierapetra by way of Meselerous [Messeleri]. The other way is from the east [Route 2]. Then the road from Kavousi leads by the sea to Bashinamo, up the valley to Vasiliki and then over the low isthmus by way of Episkopi and Kato Khorio to Hierapetra.

[Route 1]

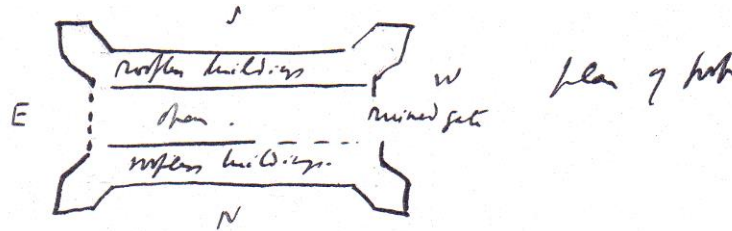
About **Kalo Khorio** the only thing notable is its name. It was called, so I was told by Dr Xanthoudides, not so long ago by the name of the ancient city whose remains are to be found at the mouth of the valley, Istrona. But this name reminded people of the phrase *σπρώνω το μουλάρι* "I saddle the mule", and therefore seemed to them ridiculous and they took the very colourless name Kalo Khorio, the beautiful village.¹² In the same way the Kalo Khorio near Khersonnesos is a new name: it used to be called *Στραβιρίνα vel sim.*, Stravirina, but this was so like *Στραβή Ειρήνη*, Crooked Eirene, that it seemed ugly. In this way numbers of ancient, interesting and picturesque names have been banished: the peasant has, it seems to us, very schoolboyish dread of being laughed at and in consequence a great desire to avoid anything odd or unusual. Two very pretty names which have apparently disappeared just because they were odd are Gras and Stravodoxari [see ch. 29], villages to the south of Roukaka. They now have the insipid names of Agios Stephanos and Stavrokhorio [Cross Village]. Here the word *stravós*, crooked, has probably had its effect, and Gras means a musket and so seemed at least an unusual name for a village.¹³ But this loss of old names is not due only to a fear of ridicule: it results from the desire to obliterate traces of the foreigner in Greece. Hence on the mainland the wholesale banishing of Turkish names.

[Route 2]

From Bashinamo the road crosses the isthmus going by Vasiliki, famous again for Seager's excavations.¹⁴ Between Bashinamo and Vasiliki the only thing of note is the

quantity of the big golden *Ranunculus* on the waste ground. This is a rare flower: the only other habitat I know for it is on the slopes of Agia Galini.¹⁵

Halfway across the isthmus and just north of Episkopi in the centre of the valley there is a hill, low but in a commanding position. On it is a ruined fort of the plan shown in the sketch. All round there are slits for gun fire and the wall is preserved up to about this level. The corner towers were apparently no higher than the rest. The sea is visible both to the south and to the north, where the range of hills below Kavousi and its continuation, Pseira [island], cut the visible sea into two parts. This fort was very probably built after 1866.¹⁶



The road between the Kalo Khorio valley and Bashinamo passes by the sea along steep slopes looking down upon the sea. Shortly after leaving the valley the road crosses a gully and the ground falls down sheer from the path. This point is called The Old Woman's Jump, but what the story of this is I do not know.¹⁷ On the left is the rocky ridge of Vrokastro, where Miss Hall excavated some remains of the very end of the Minoan age.¹⁸

Before describing the monastery on this mountain [Phaneromeni], I will mention that this path, especially near Bashinamo, is the best habitat I know of for the prostrate *Aristolochia*, with big purple flowers. It grows in abundance under the shelter of the lentisk bushes. Other places where I have found it are at Palaikastro on the path from the lowest hamlet to the excavation, below Myrthos [Myrthios] on the way to Karavos, between Kalo Khorio and Agios Nikolaos, and at Makriyalo (on the sea east of HP). But it is not a common flower at all. The flowers appear in May or June. It is popularly called *Pontikoi* (mice), perhaps because of the greyish brown outside of the U-shaped trumpet made by the corolla, perhaps because of the white or grey setae inside the corolla. Seeds brought to England did not germinate.¹⁹

Above I should have mentioned Gournia and Sphoungarades.²⁰

Bashinamo, The Deep Sand²¹

is a hamlet at the west end of the long beach which forms the [east] end of the isthmus. At the other end [of the beach], sometimes hidden behind a low hill, is the bigger village of Kavousi. Immediately above the storehouses by the sea is the square courtyard of the house built here for himself by the American excavator R. B. Seager, whose hospitality here must be so well remembered by many travellers. In the beach by the hamlet was a Minoan necropolis of burials in inverted jars. Its presence was revealed by a terrible rain storm which brought down the water in such torrents as to sweep away all the gardens made by the beach and reveal the burials below.

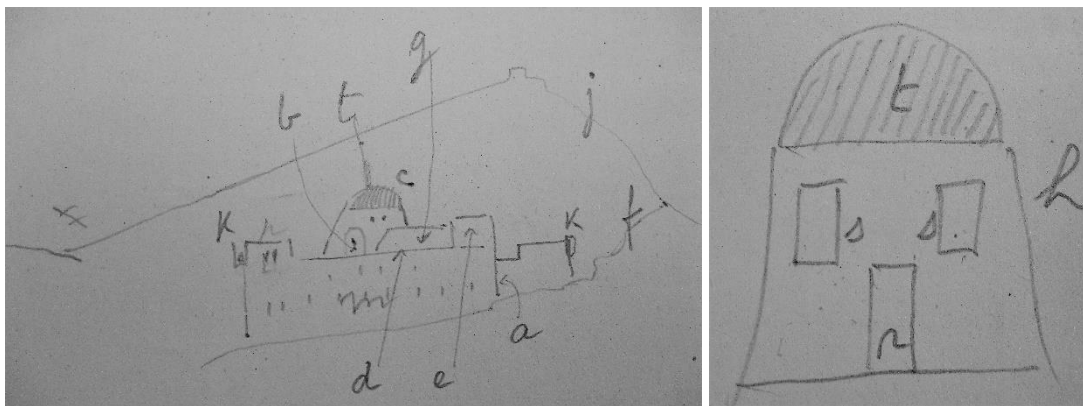


IMG_0303 View over Pacheia Ammos, Good Friday, 17 April 2009

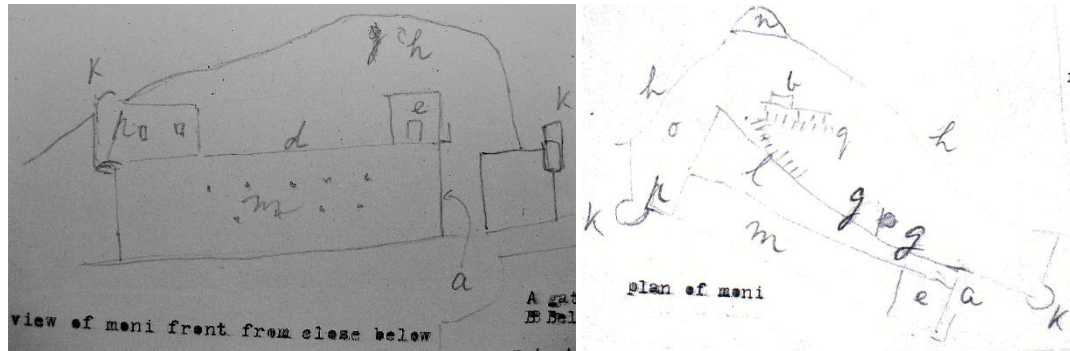
Describe fort, old church, olive groves on the south side of the isthmus.²²

Phaneromeni. 7th August 1917²³

Panagia Phaneromeni is conveniently reached by a path from Bashinamo. Between Basinamo and Xeropotamo (the riverbed which comes down about half-way between Bashinamo and the Kalo Chorio bay) there is a flat-topped piece of mountain, a spur of the high mountain north of Hierapetra which appears very clearly from Agios Nikolaos. Just below the flat top of this, where the slope grows steep, rocks crop out, and in the face of these rocks is a cave. About the picture [icon] supposed to have been found there, the monks could give me no clear story.²⁴ This cave has been walled off and serves as the church of the monastery, the buildings of which cluster below it. Thus, the front of the cave has been walled up and has a door and above it two windows as shown in the sketch.



(Left) View of moni front from foot of the hill; (Right) Elevation of front of church
[for key see next page]



- A Gate
- B Belfry on the way up to the church
- C Walled-up mouth of cave forming front wall of church
- D Terrace roof
- E Guesthouse
- F Path over the hill to Kapistri
- G Building behind court
- H Rock rising behind moni in a cave of which is the church
- J Mountain behind moni
- K Turrets
- L Courtyard
- M Range of buildings below terrace
- N Cave walled off as church
- O Buildings at end of court
- P Abbot's cell
- Q Steps up to front of church passing by belfry
- R Door of church
- S Windows of church
- T Open part of cave mouth above the cell which closes the cave entrance

Above the wall [of the church] is a bit of sloping roof with red tiles.²⁵ This door opens on an ante-church lit by the windows. At the back is a built arch leading to the church proper and at one side a stair leads to a gallery inside the windows. Above the part of the church where the apse would be, water drips into a jar and finds its way into a basin behind the east wall of the church. One gets to this basin by a door to the left in the ante-church which leads into the dark space behind the apse. The water is no doubt, though I was not told so, regarded as to some extent holy, as an *agiasma* [spiritually or bodily curative water].

The space in front of the church is occupied by the buildings and as the rock comes forward on both sides of the cave they abut at each end on the rock wall. There are little turrets at the corners. The moni is thus of the type of the cave in a cliff with the church in the cave and the buildings in front, and is of course more impressive as the cave is higher on the cliff and the cliff itself higher. This is a poor specimen as the cliff is low. The finest are Megaspilion [at Kalavryta], Khouzoviotissa in Amorgos, and Soumela and St John of Vazelon in Pontos. Both for the cliff above and the height of the cave, and the consequent height of the substructures, Soumela is beyond them all.



IMG_1020 The entrance at the front of the monastery, 23 Oct. 2009

The buildings consist of a long narrow court. In front of this is a long white building which shows a long way off, with small windows. The roof of this is flat and forms a terrace (D), at one end of which is the guest-house and at the other the abbot's quarters. At the back of this court one ascends by steps past the belfry to the platform in front of the cave church. The guest-house with big windows is newer than the rest, which has only little slits. The monks are inhospitable, the monastery disorderly, the guest-house dirty and full of bugs and fleas – the only monastery in Crete where I have ever been badly received. But in the guest-house are 6 or 7 good specimens of the Cretan, specifically Siteia, carpets.²⁶

The view is fine. The monastery faces so that the view to the east²⁷ is cut off by the mountain; Pseira just appears. To the west are Dicte and the irregular line of hills running down to Cape Aphoresmenos [Agios Ioannis]. The coast of the gulf of Mirabello from this cape shows first the entrance to Spina Longa – the fort is hidden – then the irregular outer coast of the peninsula [Kolokythas], then the isthmus almost sinking into the sea, and behind it the inner part of the harbour by Skisma [harbour of Elounda], then the island and harbour of Agios Nikolaos, and then the jagged coast as far as the beach below Kalo Khorio. The rest of the coast is cut off by the ridge of Vrokastro.²⁸ Below one sees the beach at Xeropotamo. I was once before here before the war with Miss Hall and Seager when I was stopping with him at Bashinamo.

I note two inscriptions, both giving the name of the abbot Neophytos. The first is on the wall below the belfry and the second is on the silver plate covering an eikon of the Virgin and child in the church.²⁹

Peter Mackridge's notes

¹ The term “Eteocretans” (“true Cretans”) refers to the people who produced some now indecipherable inscriptions found in Eastern Crete. The term was used by early archaeologists who excavated in Crete. James Whitley, in an article arguing that this term should be abandoned, writes: “Just as the Welsh are a modern remnant of the Britons who once inhabited most of this island, so the Eteocretans became, in the eyes of Evans and Bosanquet, the historical remnant of the ‘Minoans’, hiding out in the fastnesses of East Crete until *ca* 140 BC” (J. Whitley, “The Minoans: a Welsh invention? A view from East Crete”, *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 46.1

(2003), p. 213). Thanks to my old Welsh-Greek pal Stathis Gauntlett for bringing this article to my attention.

² Dawkins' manuscript notes read as follows: "Hieraptera Isthmus 7 Aug 1917"; "highest peak of all – Spratt's (I 156) Effendi Vouno [Afendis Christos] [...] 'square-headed peak'"; "← to Θριψτή path to HP [Hierapetra →]", "bare... trees... cliffs... gorge... screes... flat floor of valley... foreground hills". Thrypti seems to be misplaced: the path to the village and the village itself lie above the *near* side of the gorge. Cf. also photo in ch. 29.

³ Kapistri (meaning 'Halter') was renamed Stavros in 1955. We didn't go up there because the dirt road at the top of the monastery was barred by a locked gate.

⁴ There is another Malaxa to the east of Hania: see ch. 4 and 24.

⁵ The Ha gorge is to the south-east of Παχειά Άμμος (Pacheia Ammos) on the E4 hiking trail.

⁶ He probably means Αφέντης Χριστός [Lord Christ], also known as Αφέντης Σταυρωμένος [Crucified Christ] (1476m), mentioned below by Dawkins, and in endnote ii above.

⁷ This is the route of the modern road.

⁸ W. L. H. Duckworth was a colleague of Dawkins' in the Palaikastro excavations.

⁹ The query in "an (?) ancient house" is Dawkins'. His route would have been more or less the course of the present dirt road above the gorge along its south side, nearer the gorge than the asphalt road to Thrypti.

¹⁰ As noted before, this is how Dawkins always writes the name Pacheia Ammos.

¹¹ For Omalos see ch. 7.

¹² The modern road signs and the Anavasi atlas say Istro, as though the name belongs to the second declension.

¹³ Much of this material is repeated from ch. 8. I would add that in 1955 Roukáka was renamed Chrysopigi [Golden Spring], no doubt because of embarrassing connotations with the word κακά (*kaká*), which is not only the neuter plural form of the word for 'evil', but also a child's word for 'excrement'.

¹⁴ The Minoan village at Vasiliki was excavated by the American archaeologist R. B. Seager: see his *Excavations at Vasiliki* (Philadelphia 1905-7).

¹⁵ For more on *Ranunculus asiaticus* see ch. 32.

¹⁶ Dawkins' manuscript material reads: "roofless buildings", "ruined gate", and "open". The fort is visible from the road from Ierapetra to Pacheia Ammos, on the right, from just before the last turn to Kato Chorio. Though we didn't go close to it, it now looks much tumbled down.

¹⁷ There is an Old Woman's Jump (Της Γριάς το Πήδημα) on the *other* (south) coast, near τα Αχλιά (Γαλήνη), immediately east of Agia Photia.

¹⁸ See E.H. Hall, *Excavations in eastern Crete: Vrokastro* (Philadelphia 1914). Vrokastro is to the east of Καλό Χωριό.

¹⁹ He has already talked about seeing *Aristolochia* (Dutchman's Pipe) between Plakias and Damnoni: see ch. 12. We've seen them in April.

²⁰ Gournia is the site of a Minoan palace a little to the west of Pacheia Ammos. Edith Hall and Richard Seager excavated on the nearby hill of Sphoungaras in 1910.

²¹ We visited in April 2009. We were told by a man who had moved there from Kavousi in 1942 that the place was called Παχύς Άμμος (Thick Sand) because of the three-metre-deep sand on the beach, most of which has now been extracted for building.

²² We don't know which fort he means; he has described a fort earlier in this chapter. There is no material in the archive about the old church and the olive groves that he mentions to here.

²³ We visited on 23 Oct. 2009. The Phaneromeni monastery mentioned by Xanthoudidis (1903: 93-5) and Gerola (brief description at III 194, photo at II 267 and inscription at IV 585) is a different monastery of the same name situated north-west of Siteia.

²⁴ The miracle-working icon is supposed to have revealed itself to a shepherd who visited the cave – hence the monastery's name Φανερωμένη [Revealed].

²⁵ The red tiles were still there when we visited. Further observations from our visit: The whole of the rock on the right side of the church was covered in ivy. The doorway had a rounded arch and was surmounted by a Classical pediment above. There were three sets of steps leading up to the (modern?) terrace, with views. There were inscriptions over doors on the left of the narrow courtyard, dated 1859 and 1889.

²⁶ We can't judge the hospitableness of the monks, since we only caught a fleeting glimpse of one them. The buildings, however, were in excellent condition.

²⁷ That is, to the "Eteocretan" mountains.

²⁸ This is immediately below the monastery, between it and the sea.

²⁹ These inscriptions are dated 1885 and 1874 respectively. The texts are not reproduced here. I noticed other inscriptions, dated 1859 and 1889, over doors on the left of the narrow courtyard.