

# The Ancient Name of Zakro

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DR PLATON'S successful excavations at Kato Zakro in eastern Crete have revealed a rich palace which was overwhelmed in the Late Minoan I B period.<sup>1</sup> One problem arising from the new discoveries is the ancient name of the city, whose magnificence evidently rivalled that of Knossos, Phaistos and Mallia.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this article is to suggest that the existence of the place was recalled by local Cretan historians, and I shall argue that the Minoan name of Kato Zakro was Dikta.

Many scholars persist in referring to the Lasithi group of mountains in central Crete as Dikte, but the ancient evidence is against them. Strabo in criticising Aratos insists that Dikte is to be placed at the eastern extremity of the island;<sup>3</sup> if a name is to be given to Lasithi, the most likely toponym is the Aigaion mountain (near Lyktos) of Hesiod's *Theogony*.<sup>4</sup> For the title "Diktaian Cave" given to the grotto

<sup>1</sup> *Archaeological Reports* (published by the Hellenic Society, London, and the British School at Athens) 1961/2, 24; 1962/3, 32-3; 1963/4, 26, 29-30; 1964/5, 29-31; 1965/6, 23.

<sup>2</sup> For a suggestion that the Minoan city at Mallia was named *Milwatos* or *Milwata*, see my *Crete and the Luwians* (Oxford 1961) 16.

<sup>3</sup> Strabo 10.4.12, C 478. See also J. Boardman, *The Cretan Collection in Oxford* (Oxford 1961) 2.

<sup>4</sup> See M. L. West, Hesiod, *Theogony* (Oxford 1966) on v.477. In line 477 the variant reading *Δί(κτον)* is attractive: the meaning will then be that Earth took Zeus from Rhea at Dikton to the Aigaion Mountain: the form *Δίκτον* is also to be found in Aratos, *Phaen.* 33-4, who incorrectly implies that the place is "near the Idaian mountain," if with Strabo we accept the natural punctuation of his verses. Arat. *Phaen.* 30ff:

εἰ ἐτεὸν δῆ,  
Κρήτηθεν κείναι γε (scil. Ἄρκτοι, Ἄμαξαι) Διὸς μεγάλου ἰότητι  
οὐρανὸν εἰσανέβησαν, ὃ μιν τότε κουρίζοντα  
Δίκτω ἐν εὐώδει ὄρεος σχεδὸν Ἰδαίῳ  
ἄνθρω ἐγκατέθεντο καὶ ἔτρεφον, εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν  
35 Δικταῖοι Κούρητες ὅτε Κρόνον ἐψεύδοντο.

33 *δίκτω*, i.e. *δικτάμνω* Zenodotos of Mallos; see E. Maass, *Aratea* (Berlin 1892) 263. *Δύκτω* Grotius. Ἰδαίῳ: τινὲς γράφουσι 'σχεδὸν Αἰγαίῳ', παρ' Ἡσιόδου λαβόντες (*Theog.* 484) *schol.* 34 ἔτρεφον, εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν *dist.* Maass. If a comma is placed after *εὐώδει*, then the meaning of the verses may be that the cave, not Dikton, was near the Idaian mountain. Aratos perhaps intends a *griphos* here; compare the puzzle over the *tomb*, instead of the birthplace, of Zeus in the *Mouseion* of Alkidamas (M. L. West, "The Dictaeon Hymn to the Kouros," *JHS* 85 [1965] 156).

at Psychro in the Lasithi range there is no cogent authority. The most imposing mountain in eastern Crete is Modhi, an eminence which has been plausibly identified with Dikte, and the sanctuary of Diktaian Zeus almost certainly lay near Palaikastro in the far east, where his famous hymn was excavated.<sup>5</sup> The Diktaian cave, however, one of the supposed birthplaces of Zeus, has yet to be found.

That the name Dikte was not only given to a mountain is suggested by an entry in the *Etymologikon Mega*, s.v. Δίκη: "Dikte. A mountain of Crete and a cape beside the Libyan sea." Miss Guarducci comments: "Cum de promunturio Dicte in mari Libyco exstante nihil omnino constet, error aliquis hoc loco latere videtur."<sup>6</sup> It is hard to see how an error could have arisen unless the *Etymologikon* is confusing a mountain summit (ἄκρα) with a promontory. Strabo (10.3.20, C 472) comparing place names in the Troad with similar names in Crete, remarks that Dikte was a "place" (τόπος) in the territory of Skepsis but a mountain in Crete. Here is at least a hint that the name Dikte need not refer solely to a mountain; the *Etymologikon* may indeed be correct in asserting that a part of the coast facing the Libyan sea—that is, in southern or southeastern Crete—was called Dikte.

Clearer evidence is to be found in a passage of Diodoros,<sup>7</sup> where the Sicilian historian draws upon authors of local Cretan histories and names (5.80.4) as his most reliable sources "Epimenides the theologian, Dosiadas, Sosikrates and Laosthenidas." Diodoros reports that when Zeus grew to manhood he first of all founded a city "near Dikte" or "in the Dikte district" (περὶ τὴν Δίκταν), where the mythologists say his birth occurred. "The city was abandoned in later times, but there remain to this day ruins of the foundations." Where was this city?

Noting this passage in his discussion of eastern Cretan topography Bosanquet once proposed to identify the ruined city mentioned by Diodoros with the remains at Palaikastro.<sup>8</sup> Against the proposal is the fact that, in Hellenistic times at least, the neighbourhood of Palaikastro was known as Heleia; it is so named in the Magnesians' arbitration of ca. 130 B.C. in a dispute between Itanos and Hierapytna,<sup>9</sup> as

<sup>5</sup> M. Guarducci, *InscrCret* III (Roma 1942) p.5.

<sup>6</sup> *idem*, p.6.

<sup>7</sup> 5.70.6 (=FGrHist 468 F 1).

<sup>8</sup> R. C. Bosanquet, "The Palaikastro Hymn of the Kouretes," *ABSA* 15 (1908–09) 351.  
R. W. Hutchinson, *Prehistoric Crete* (Pelican Books, Baltimore 1962) 202.

<sup>9</sup> *InscrCret* III.iv.9, line 78, and Guarducci, *op.cit.* p.5.

Bosanquet himself pointed out.<sup>10</sup> The Minoan name of the Late Bronze Age settlement at Palaikastro is not known and, unless more evidence is forthcoming from Linear documents, is likely to remain lost. The surface remains at Palaikastro may never have looked more striking than those further south along the coast at Kato Zakro, where there is much walling of Cyclopean type visible.<sup>11</sup> These walls, then, and not the remains at Palaikastro, were, I suggest, the ruins of the foundations of Zeus's city mentioned by one or more of the Cretan local historians on whom Diodoros drew. In the Knossos tablets *Diktande* occurs without qualification;<sup>12</sup> since the place name can as well apply to a city as to a mountain in the context, the reference may well be to the palace at Kato Zakro.

Our hypothesis, to conclude, has the merit of economy: the ruins mentioned by Diodoros were those of the great palace at Kato Zakro, whose Minoan name Dikta survived in eastern Crete, in cult and in toponymy, until Hellenic times. With the *περὶ τὴν Δίκταν* of Diodoros we may compare the *ἐν Δίκτᾳ* of the Itanian oath;<sup>13</sup> both expressions may apply to a district or locality, not just to the mountain of that name or to the sanctuary of Zeus near Palaikastro.

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<sup>10</sup> R. C. Bosanquet, "Excavations at Palaikastro, I," *ABSA* 8 (1901-02) 288 and "Dicte and the Temples of Dictaeon Zeus," *ABSA* 40 (1939-40) 67.

<sup>11</sup> See plan in D. G. Hogarth, "Excavations at Zakro, Crete," *ABSA* 7 (1900-01) 125.

<sup>12</sup> M. Ventris / J. Chadwick, *Documents in Mycenaean Greek* (Cambridge 1956) 306.

<sup>13</sup> *InscrCret* III.iv.8, lines 2-4. An example of a mountain having the same name as a nearby town is Mykale: see Steph.Byz. *s.v.* *Μυκάλη*.