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GIUSEPPE GEROLA’S STRANGE CRETAN BAGNI*

Introduction

This paper will focus specifically on the baths constructed on Crete in the 5th and 6th centuries AD, as it is these new bath foundations that enshrine the well-established tradition of public bathing under the auspices of the Church regime. This chronological horizon corresponds with the introduction of ecclesiastical architecture to the island, signifying an architectural revolution heralding a significant change in Crete’s cultural heritage at this juncture.

My doctoral fieldwork identified over 50 Roman bathhouses across the island of Crete1. They ranged from private bath-suites in villas, small rural public baths, small urban public baths and more substantial thermae. Many of these baths were constructed in the 2nd century AD with a small contingent being established as early as the 1st century AD2. Moreover, these establishments continued in use into the 3rd century AD, with a reduced number prevailing into the 4th century AD. A notably depleted group, however, managed to survive in use until the 5th century AD and, in some cases, even operated until the early 7th century AD (mostly the bigger imperial complexes)3.

Coinciding with this decline was the emergence of a confined growth in the construction of small bathing establishments in the 5th and 6th centuries on Crete, installations which indicate a more restricted bathing practice. The extent of the permeation of these Early Byzantine baths through the landscape of Crete has gone largely unexplored and factors obscuring their presence in the Cretan landscape need to be addressed. Why, following such a drastic reduction in Roman bathhouse construction, were these baths introduced, how did they function, and what do they represent in terms of the broader cultural watershed which ushered in a wave of ecclesiastical architecture to the island?

The most informative source for Early Byzantine baths on the island is the enterprise work of a young Italian scholar Giuseppe Gerola who surveyed the largely Venetian remains of the island in the opening years of the 20th century. In his pioneering work I Monumenti Veneti Dell’Isola di Creta, Gerola supplied a two-page report on structures he considered being possible bagni4 (parte IV Opere Idrauliche). It is from these brief observations that the research, presented here, was born.

Gerola referred to five structures which he classified as potential baths (although he provided only the briefest of observations for four structures and mentions the fifth in a

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1Kelly 2005.
2Kelly 2013, 140-141, fig. 2.
3This is not tantamount to a cessation of the bathing tradition on Crete, on the contrary, public bathing establishments are attested throughout the Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman periods. Under the Ottomans public bathing experienced a marked revival on the island with numbers of bathhouses reaching those of the imperial period.
4Gerola 1932-1940, 76-77; Baldini 2009, 635.
footnote) and supplied four accompanying schematic plans (figs. 1-4). He listed the sites as follows: (1) Khamamaki (Temene), (2) S. Giovanni Battista [near Khamamaki], (3) S. Antonio (Temene), (4) [near] S. Giorgio, Fur-nofarango, (5) [near] S. Paolo at S. Giovanni (Priorissa) (Pl. 1).

La Rosa and Portale’s more recent work, on an Early Byzantine bath near the church of Aghios Pavlos on the outskirts of the village of Aghios Ioannis near Phaestos (figure 5), confirmed the existence of one of Gerola’s bagni (structure no. 5 above) which he located «presso la chiesa di S. Paolo a S. Giovanni Priorissa». Its identification in the field imparted weight to Gerola’s overall report, and offered hope for the rediscovery of the other four sites reported by Gerola which have not since been cited by any other scholar.

(1) The first structure Gerola classified as a bath building is located near the castle of Temene (Kanlı Kastelli) (fig. 1; Pl. 1). The classification is perhaps a suitable interpretation for a building which, Gerola noted, was known locally by the name Khamamaki (which literally means little bath) and he observed that, while the ruins could be mistaken for a church, they were traditionally known as a bath. In 2013 modern troughs pertaining to a now dried-up spring stood close to the foundations, indicating a nearby spring (personal observation). Gerola supplied a schematic plan of a three-roomed rectangular structure, measuring «5×10», noting that the central square room had a vaulted roof (fig. 1).

On visiting the site in June 2013 only the foundations of the building remained. These foundations (25° 6’27.03”E/35°12’27.85”N) lie 31m north of the small chapel of Aghios Giorgios (25° 6’27.47”E/35°12’26.95”N) which sits on a rise to the immediate south (Pl. 2). The foundations of the structure, located in the field below the chapel, measure 9.30 m east-west × 4.60 m north-south (which correspond well with the dimensions given in Gerola’s plan of the building) (fig. 1). The northern wall of this rectangular building still stands to a height of 1.40 m while the northeastern corner is also clearly discernible (Pls. 3-5). The exterior walls are constructed of roughly-worked local limestone bonded with mortar, while locals recall a vaulted roof, in keeping with Gerola’s earlier observations.

The chapel of Aghios Giorgios, standing on the rise to the immediate south, is also built over earlier foundations. Walls rising to the spring of a barrel vault are clearly visible projecting westwards from the western facade (extending beyond the modern porch). This earlier structure incorporates buttressing along its northern side while roughly-worked stone is also evident in the foundations along the eastern apse. If we consider the complex as

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1La Rosa and Portale 2004, 488–490, fig. 13.
2Gerola 1932-1940, 77-2.
3Gerola 1932-1940, 77, fig. 52.
4Gerola 1932-1940, 77. In 2013 older residents of the village of Profitis Ilias who were interviewed also remembered the structure being referred to as Khamamaki when they were schoolchildren.
5La Rosa and Portale 1932-1940, 76-77, fig. 52.
a whole, the remains seem to constitute the foundations of a small, possibly Early Byzantine, bathhouse associated with a chapel founded on, or near, an abundant spring.

2 Gerola mentions a second potential bath structure in a brief footnote as “altro edificio molto strano è non lontano da qui, presso la chiesa di S. Giovanni Battista” (another very strange building, not far from here [the site of Khamamakji] located near the church of Aghios Ioannis Vaptistis) (Pl. 1)\(^{11}\). As Curuni and Donati subsequently also mentioned a church of S. Giovanni Battista in the nearby village of Roukani, I investigated the grounds of this church, lying on the southwestern outskirts of the village, for any trace of Gerola’s bath\(^{12}\).

Gerola described the building as a central square area with three compartments, which he refers to as vaulted naves or transepts, extending to the south, east and north\(^{13}\) (fig. 2). He describes the atrium as a vast rectangle extending to the west towards other rooms, all then in a state of collapsed ruin\(^{14}\).

On visiting the site in 2013 it transpired that Gerola’s description of the structure, the plan of which he labelled “pianta del bagno di S. Giovanni di Temene”\(^{15}\), seemed to reflect that of the church itself and its extended forefront, despite its small scale in the plan\(^{16}\). The church has recently been restored (Pl. 6) and, while walls could be traced extending from the facade of the church, in keeping with Gerola’s plan, these had recently been rebuilt as part of the restoration programme (although could feasibly have been laid over earlier foundations) (Pl. 7). The two larger rooms, which Gerola noted in the forefront of the church, were not visible, but walls were discernible to the south of the church while graves were evident in the higher (and therefore potentially much later) ground to the east where the area was scarred to facilitate restoration work. It is possible that the walls noted by Gerola, extending from the west of the church, may represent the foundations of an adjacent building (rather than the church atrium) which was associated with a bathing function but this cannot be confirmed without excavations.

From the vantage point of the church itself I surveyed the landscape for a viable slope which might reveal a similar partnership, between church and bath, that I had encountered at Khamamakji. Immediately to the west of the church, at the base of a sharp slope, the remains of a curved brick-faced compartment were discovered under considerable

\(^{11}\)Gerola 1932-1940, 77, fn. 1.
\(^{12}\)Curuni and Donati 1988, 350, no. 690.
\(^{13}\)Gerola 1932-1940, 77, fn. 1, fig. 53.
\(^{14}\)Gerola 1932-1940, 77, fn. 1.
\(^{15}\)The reference to Temene distinguishes this plan from that of the structure at Aghios Ioannis Prionissa near Phaestos (Gerola 1932-1940, 77, fig. 55).
\(^{16}\)Gerola 1932-1940, 76, fig. 53.
debris (25° 5’39.22”E/35°10’3.50”N) (Pl. 8). The structure remains largely buried, but 15 rows of neatly-laid bricks (measuring roughly 3 cm in thickness) were still visible (Pl. 9). The line of the curve of the elevated remains straightens out to indicate an apse, as opposed to a circular feature, which would also be fitting for a bathing function. The brick thickness allows for a Roman imperial date while the do-me of the central cupola of the church is crowned with reused brick (Pl. 10). The interior of the church holds a small collection of marble architectural elements, with the altar resting on a reused column fragment.

My fieldwork targeting Gerola’s bagni, as presented so far, has revealed a potentially Early Byzantine bath below Kanli Kastelli [Khamamaki], although largely destroyed, and a possible Roman installation at Roukani, albeit a structure which may have enjoyed a long functional life.

(3) The third structure reported by Gerola as a potential bath is that of Aghios Antonios to the southwest of Silamos (Temene) in the northern foothills of Juktas, along the Juktas Road (25° 8’31.33”E/35°15’24.21”N). Here Gerola recorded a square vaulted room (with two adjoining vaulted compartments opening on its eastern side, the smaller of which he interpreted as a fountain) connected by a doorway to a second vaulted room to the North”. Gerola’s accompanying plan indicates a small overall structure measuring «6 x 5» (fig. 3)“.

On visiting the site in 2013 the structure proved to be entirely rock-cut and much more substantial in size than Gerola’s plan suggests. The rock-cut structure consists of a main rectangular room with a vaulted roof (aligned on a north-south axis) (Pl. 11). At some point prior to Gerola’s visit, c. 1900, the rectangular structure was fitted with a cross-wall complete with a door and two windows (constructed of carefully-dressed squared stone blocks bonded with mortar), cutting the rectangular rock-cut structure on its short east-west axis (i.e. along its width). The addition of this wall created a rock-cut chapel, now the modern chapel of Aghios Antonios, measuring 3.80 m x 13 m in length (where the cross-wall served as the chapel’s facade) while a circular aperture, carved into the roof, just south of the later cross-wall, allows for light and aeration.

The cross-wall, in dissecting the original structure, also transformed its northern extent into an effective forecourt for the chapel. The installation of the cross-wall curtailed the extent of the original rock-cut feature to the north, at a distance of 13 m from its back wall (Pl. 12). Beyond this point, the northern extent of the rock-cut feature is severely eroded leaving its entire length unknown, but the feature probably extended to a length of at least 20 m judging from the rock-cut foundations to the north. The addition of the cross-wall

1Gerola 1932-1940, 77, fig. 54.
2Ibidem.
(effectively dividing the original structure) explains Gerola’s depiction of two separate
rooms in his plan, where only one long rectangular rock-cut room originally existed.\footnote{Ibidem.}

Gerola noted two adjoining internal compartments opening along the eastern side of
the main vaulted room; the more southerly of which (measuring 2.75 m east-west × 2.4 m
north-south and 2.5 m in height) is now the chancel area of the chapel (fitted with a rock-
cut altar and another circular aperture in its rock-cut roof). The more northerly feature may
well have served as a rectangular fountain (as suggested by Gerola), as it forms a deep rec-
tangular rock-cut basin with drainage holes (measuring 0.85 m east-west × 2 m north-
south and 0.55 m in height) (\textit{Pl. 13}). It cannot be ascertained with any degree of certainty
whether these adjoining areas constitute original features or if they formed part of the con-
version of the site into the cave chapel of Aghios Antonios marked by the construction of
the cross-wall. Similarly, scaffolding holes, which run along the western wall, are difficult to
distinguish as either original or secondary features. There are, however, definite signs of re-
work in the rock-cut surfaces for the application of fresco plaster, traces of which still survive.

The overall shape of the main rock-cut room, constituting a vaulted rectangular struc-
ture of considerable size, is consistent with a hydraulic function. An original function as a
cistern, rather than a bathhouse, is highly likely at Aghios Antonios given that the area
was, until recently, a functioning spring, as we can deduce from the presence of a modern
tapped fountain constructed just below the chapel, pointing to an abundance of water in
the outcrop (personal observation).

It seems likely that the structure originally functioned as a rock-carved cistern, prob-
obably much in the same manner as that of a constructed Roman example at Lappa which
also emerges from the bedrock where it presumably taps a spring\footnote{Tzedakis 1977, 333.}. This constructed cistern
at Lappa shares common characteristics with the rock-cut version at Aghios Antonios\footnote{Ibidem.}
Both structures, at Lappa and Aghios Antonios, are of comparable shape and size and only
differ in their modes of construction. Both cisterns avail of a rock out-crop or rock-face
(wherby the cistern at Lappa emerges from, and abuts, an outcrop, while that of Aghios Anto-
nios is carved into the bedrock itself) where they tap springs\footnote{The cistern at Lappa yielded external mea-
urements of 26.10 m long × 10 m wide × 4.2 m high indicating an exaggerated capacity of 1,096.2 m$^3$ (per-
onal observation). The cistern is now sealed making it impossible to estimate the internal dimensions which
would provide for a more accurate assessment of its capacity. If a lateral wall thickness of 1 m were estim-
eted then the capacity would be 809.76 m$^3$. At Aghios Antonios the original structure measured at least c. 20
m north-south × 3.80 m east-west (including the adjoining features) × 3.5 m in height. The cistern at
Lappa was incorporated into the modern water supply of the village in the 1970s when it was structurally sta-
bilized and sealed for this function. Consequently, it is
difficult to discern its original constructional style, as
the original vault was not retained while much of the
outer stone facing is missing. Facings of \textit{opus caementicium}
only partially survive and much of the mortared-rub-
ble core lies exposed. Just prior to its renovation, the
cistern was the subject of archaeological study and the
interior was cleared of debris from its collapsed vault-
ed roof which was then reconstructed and reinforced
with modern cement (Tzedakis 1977, 333). The roof
originally consisted of a barrel vault and was probably
constructed in stone as no brick was reported from the
collapse. Tzedakis published four photographs of its
interior in which much of the original vaulted roof is
still intact, the \textit{opus signinum} coating the interior of the
cistern is visibly bevelled along its corners, while a row
of internal narrow steps are visible descending to the
base of the cistern (1977, pl. 206).}.
The cistern at Lappa overlooks the upper zone of both the modern and ancient site. A vaulted drainage channel is still well preserved projecting 2 m from the front of the structure and towards the Roman city. The question remains as to whether the northern facade of the cistern at Aghios Antonios would have been fitted with this feature and, if so, what would the cistern at Aghios Antonios have supplied? There is some evidence of rock-cutting to the northwest of the cistern which now forms the foundation of a modern shed but I would suspect that other associated structures are located immediately downslope to the north of the cistern.

(4) The fourth structure reported by Gerola as a potential bath is that near the church of S. Giorgio at Furnofaragno [modern Phournopharango] (Monofatsi Bonifacio) (Pl. 14)\(^2\). The village of Phournopharango features in all the Venetian censi of the province of Monofatsi as well as in the Turkish and Egyptian censi. Chourmoutzis Vyzantios, writing in 1842, mentions the existence of a large church dedicated to Aghios Giorgios Koulouritis [Κούλουριτης λευκομένος] half a mile to the east of Phournopharango, and, perhaps significantly, he observes that the church lies in the middle of an abandoned ancient city and a deserted village of the same name\(^3\).

The church of Aghios Giorgios Koulourida is located in a gated complex, which also contains the smaller chapel of Aghios Theodoros, at a distance of 1km east of the modern village of Phournopharango (coordinates for Aghios Giorgios: 25°29.89'E/34°59'25.04"N) (Pl. 14). Numerous marble columns and architectural elements lie within the gated complex; two marble columns flank the side (north) door of the church of Aghios Giorgios Koulourida while marble slabs and a quern stone lie immediately to the north\(^4\). The church of Aghios Giorgios Koulourida is constructed over an earlier foundation which visibly protrudes from the base of its back (eastern) wall while earlier buttressing can be seen along its southern elevation. A spring runs under the church floor and a tap controls the release of this water into the interior for liturgical and ritual use (Pl. 15).

This water would have naturally flowed to the north and, on looking over the fence of the complex in this direction, I saw a building standing to the spring of its vault in the field below (at a distance of 25 m from the chapel of Aghios Theodoros). The elevations are remarkably well preserved and still stand to a height of over 2 m (Pls. 16-17). This small structure is comprised of two vaulted rooms set on perpendicular axes; the western example is aligned on a north-south axis and the adjoining eastern example on an east-west axis, extending from the southern extent of the western room. The spring of the vault in the western room is still detectable while a doorway is visible in the southern wall of the eastern room (Pls. 18-19).

The walls are constructed in neat rows of worked-stone blocks bonded by mortar, with occasional brick inserted around the stone blocks as filling material. The northern wall of the western room has a brick-fanned niche and a drainage hole set near its base (Pl. 20) while scaffolding holes are also clearly visible in the elevations. Moreover, wall foundations extending from this well-preserved unit suggest a larger complex. A contemporary wall (compri-

\(^2\)Gerola 1932-1940, 77-2.
\(^3\)Chourmoutzis Vyzantios 1842, 77, fn. 1.
\(^4\)A fragment of an acroterion was noted in a field to the west of the modern church in the centre of the village while the modern village fountain also incorporates reused marble architectural elements (personal observation).
sed of tiers of stone bonded with mortar and similar to those seen in the bath unit) may be identified in the foundations of the modern spring structure in the adjacent field to the west.

The pottery spreads, through this field, and the adjoining field to the west, are consistent with a 5th and 6th century AD date (being mainly composed of later red fine ware fabrics). The bath’s mode of construction and the perpendicular layout of its vaulted compartments resemble those of the bath associated with Aghios Pavlos on the edge of the village of Aghios Ioannis near Phaestos to which La Rosa and Portale assigned a possible 5th or 6th century AD date (fig. 4 and 5)

(5) The fifth and final site that Gerola mentioned is that located -presso la chiesa di S. Paolo a S. Giovanni (Priotissa) - (near the church of Saint Paul at Saint John (Priotissa))

The village of Aghios Ioannis (Saint John), lies in the district of Priotissa nearly 1 km due south of, and below, the Minoan palace of Phaestos. A church of Aghios Pavlos is located 194 m southwest of the main plateia of the modern village of Aghios Ioannis, just off the main road which by-passes the village (church coordinates: 24°48'35.51"E/35° 2'39.56"N), where it now serves as the cemetery church.

The bath, originally noted by Gerola, lies 71 m southeast of the small church of Aghios Pavlos (bath coordinates: 24°48'38.12"E/35° 2'38.62"N)

Gerola provided a rudimentary plan but restricted his observations exclusively to the standing remains in noting that the complex was composed of only two rooms. Gerola reported that of these two rooms, the example with the lower barrel vault (i.e. the southwest compartment, the vault of which is aligned on a northwest-southeast axis) had two niches to the north and south [northwest-southeast] (set within the width of the wall) and an aperture in the vaulted roof to the west. This room was set on a perpendicular axis to, and connected with, another larger area, featuring an aperture at its southwest extent, and roofed with a higher barrel vault (whereby the barrel vault was aligned on a northeast-southwest axis). A lower vaulted compartment was located to the south of the room (which ran on the same alignment as the adjoining southwestern room).

Gerola rather pessimistically concluded that the ruins did not reveal their function with any certainty. Nonetheless, Gerola did relate that when he visited Crete in the early 1900s the area was known

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LA ROSA and PORTALE 2004, 490; also mentioned by GEROLA 1932-1940, 77, fig. 55 – see structure no. 5 below.
GEROLA 1932-1940, 77, fig. 55.
GEROLA 1932-1940, IV, 77, fig. 55.
GEROLA 1932-1940, 488, fn. 59.
GEROLA 1932-1940, IV, 77, fig. 55.
Hidem.
as Λύτρα and was also referred to as Vaptistira from the 14th century and from these toponyms he deduced that the edifice probably was a bath associated with the Christian baptistery15.

Taramelli, who also briefly mentioned the ruins, concluded that they were probably a bath or a reservoir for water in some Roman villa16, however, there is no evidence indicating a private function while there is also some evidence that Phaestos was a kome as it was classified as such by Strabo (along with Rhytion)17. Moreover, Taramelli also noted that at Phaestos near the church of Aghios Pavlos a semi-circular basin was found ‘still entirely lined with painted pottery’ which was known by the locales as the ‘Ελληνικό λουτρό18.

Sanders also remarked on the building at Aghios Pavlos, observing that it covered an area of c. 10 m × 8 m with four rooms, then nearly entirely filled with earth19. Most recently, however, La Rosa and Portale studied the bathhouse and found that it had an impressive quadrangular plan in which they distinguished at least three or four areas (fig. 5)20. Significantly, La Rosa and Portale note that the pottery collected from the surrounds of the bath building dates to the 5th and 6th centuries AD21.

beside the complex at near Aghios Pavlos may constitute the ‘basin’ referred to by Taramelli above.

15SANDERS 1982, 161; WATROUS et al. 1993, 232. Sanders also noted that the complex was found in the fields owned by Kleanthis Papadakis from Siva (1982, 161).

16La Rosa and Portale 2004, 490, fig. 13 on 488. La Rosa and Portale suggest that room A, which is presently filled with earth, was converted to hold water in relatively recent times, as evidenced by the plaster preserved on at least three of its sides (2004, 490). They propose that this late adaptation may explain Gerola’s inclusion of the bath in his Venetian studies whereby the building may relate to the care for lepers in the Ottoman period (La Rosa and Portale 2004, 490).

Bredaki, Longo and Benzi also report *late terra sigillata pottery* collected in their 2009 and 2010 surveys of this area, again indicating Early Byzantine activity. The nature of the pottery reported by both La Rosa and Portale and Bredaki, Longo and Benzi supports a 5th and 6th century AD date for the use, if not the construction, of the building. La Rosa and Portale note that the total absence of brick would preclude a Roman date while comparisons that they draw with similar structures in Syria and Palestine also support an Early Byzantine date.

The only question mark that remains is that concerning the relationship between this bath building and the nearby church of Aghios Pavlos – a connectivity first mooted by Gerola. The modern sign for the church informs the visitor that while the church is a 10th century construction, the baptistery which it incorporates, can be dated to the 4th or 5th century AD. Curuni and Donati note that the church itself was constructed over a series of phases, the first of which relates to an Early Byzantine bathing function. They are presumably referring to the original baptistery, probably now serving as the circular chancel of the chapel, and, as the local toponym, Vaptitira, might suggest. It is also possible that the low peripheral seating blocks in the nave may also relate to some ritual ablutional activity, but it is the circular chancel that is most fitting for the early baptistery font, possibly relating back to the 4th or 5th century AD, as the sign suggests.

In addition to Gerola’s findings, one further Early Byzantine bath, located at Gortyna, is worth mentioning. This bathing establishment was discovered in Sector L, southeast of Aghios Titos, to the west of the modern T-junction. The construction of this bath dates to the late 4th century AD and consists of two oblong areas, offset to the north and south, aligned on a north-south axis (fig. 6). The walls are preserved to a height of over 2.5 m and are constructed of roughly-worked stones bonded with mortar.

The ruins of this bath, particularly the apsed features, subsequently became the focus of a cemetery of 56 tombs. The structural phasing and construction style suggest that the bath was built in the last quarter of the 4th century AD and fell out of use in the 6th century AD after which a ceramic kiln was installed in the east of room 2, with the elevations suffering from collapse in the 7th century AD. The date of this installation demonstrates that it functioned alongside the later phases of the imperial baths of the Praetorium, the Megali Porta and the Terme Milano, which retained their bathing function, despite undergoing series of renovations and remodelling.

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11Gerola 1932-1940, IV, 77.
12Curuni and Donati 2009, 142-143, fig. 1.
13A column fragment is built into the steps descending towards the forecourt of the chapel while the interior of the nave and chancel lie at a lower level than the exterior courtyard. The chancel area (the southeastern of the two interior rooms) contains another three reused columns while an inscription is embedded into the windowsill at the back of the chapel (personal observation).
14Di Vita 1979–80, 448, fig. 7; Sanders 1982, 158.
15The plan is somewhat comparable to that of Lecchina basilica baptistery, the Zevgolatio Baths and the Panayia Baths (see Sanders 1999, 474, fig. 18).
16Di Vita 1979–80, fig. 10.
17Di Vita 1979-80, 449–451, fig. 8.
18It overlies a nymphaeum of imperial date which only survives as a brick foundation. Harrison incorrectly interprets the bath structure itself as that of a nymphaeum with fishponds (1990, 304).
19The Terme Milano is a bath foundation located south of the praetorium at Gortyna, studied extensively since 2003 by a team from the University of Milan; hence, being referred to as the Terme Milano. The complex was initially constructed in c. AD 300 but was re-modelled through the centuries, only final-
While the more recently excavated Terme Milano was also constructed in the 4th century AD, it dates to the early years of this century and remains at a remove from the bathhouses discussed here. Its construction date, perhaps as early as AD 300\(^3\), marks a juncture which precedes the introduction of ecclesiastical architecture to the island and, in this respect, it can be viewed as a late representative of the imperial tradition, as suggested by the director. This hypothesis is supported by the bath’s vast size, occupying the northern side of a large square measuring 80 m × 80 m, and lavish decor (complete with mosaic and opus sectile floors and marble statuary)\(^4\); both of which are more in keeping with Roman imperial tastes than the Early Byzantine bathing traditions of Crete, as presented in this paper.

\(^3\)Bejor 2011, 48.
\(^4\)Bejor 2011, 45-54.
Conclusions

A degree of ambiguity in contemporary Church attitudes towards bathing may be reflected in the architecture of the Early Byzantine structures presented in this paper. That most baths were dedicated to a saint and that they can easily be confused architecturally with churches suggest that they had a dual significance. It may not be coincidental that Gerola states that the bath, known merely as Khamamakji, could easily be mistaken for a church, yet traditionally it was known, not as a church, but as a bath32.

Within the landscape of Crete the correlation between bathhouse and church architecture is a recognisable partnership open to various nuances of interpretation. Whether this symbiosis is born of pragmatic architectural considerations or reflects a more symbolic complement is, however, difficult to ascertain. Volonaki adopts a pragmatic approach, identifying water sources as the primary determinant for the location of baptistry sites33, a consideration which is naturally also a major concern for bath placement34.

At Aghios Pavlos, Aghios Giorgios Koulourida, Aghios Giorgios (Khamamakji), Aghios Ioannis Vapristis (at Roukani) and Aghios Antonios (in Silamos), the churches were founded over earlier structures, or have earlier foundations, and in four cases, if not in all, the churches are associated with springs (albeit some are no longer functioning). In the church of Aghios Giorgios Koulourida, however, an abundant spring still flows through the church and it was this spring which would have fed the bathhouse below.

In four of the five sites presented here, as first identified by Gerola, the bath structures (which I believe availed of their associated church springs) lie downslope from the churches and, similarly, I would suspect a bathing structure below the rock-cut cistern at Aghios Antonios. Following this model, the 5th and 6th century AD bath foundations then tapped blessed water for ablutional purposes, but whether that bathing was a physical cleansing before baptism or a baptism per se is not easy to confirm.

Elsewhere, the architecture of some baptisteries demonstrates that a ritual bath was a necessary prelude to baptism; a physical purification to prepare for a spiritual cleansing. In Algeria, bath-suites are associated with baptisteries at the sites of Cuicul (Djemila), Tipasa and Thamugadi35. In the baptistry at Boutrint (Albania) a hypocaust, discovered between the inner circle of the baptistry and its outer containing wall, was used to heat the baptismal water according to the liturgy36. Similarly, in Greece, a hypocaustal element has been proposed for one of the rooms in the baptistry at Thasos37 while other water-heating designs have been identified at Basilica A at Thebes and at Delos. These examples demonstra-

32Gerola 1932-1940, IV, 77. Similarly, the cistern of Aghios Antonios (Silmos) is popularly known as the church of Saint Antony and to all outward appearances is a cave chapel (Gerola 1932-1940, IV, 77).
33Volonaki 1976, 12.
34The interface between sacred and secular architectural contexts was not clearly defined in the early history of Christianity with baptisms often conducted in Roman baths in the 2nd century AD (White 2000, 738). The Martyrdom of Justin, relating to the mid-2nd century AD, reveals that the Christians customarily met in rooms above the baths and it has been suggested that the associated baptisms occurred downstairs in the baths (White 1990, 110).
35Wilson 1997, 143.
36Volonaki 1976, 87.
37Orlandos & Delvoye 1949, 552-3; Volonaki 1976, 99.
te that certain functional formats, primarily associated with secular bathing structures, survived beyond their profane, or at least pragmatic, bathing contexts.

In Crete, the partnership between the church foundations and the bath structures, discussed here, sets them apart from other rural Byzantine bathhouses, as reported in the landscapes of Syria and Palestine by Hirschfield. Of Gerola’s Δημήτριον perhaps the strongest case for a ritual connection between the two architectural types (i.e. the church and bath) can be made for the complex at Aghios Pavlos near Phaestos. Here the 5th and 6th century AD bath foundation is located 71 m southeast of a contemporary baptistry, which is still discernible in the chancel area of the chapel of Aghios Pavlos. A linear feature runs southeast from the east side of Aghios Pavlos directly to the bathhouse structure. It is plausi-ble that this feature may have supported a water channel or even a walkway (as no other such field walls are visible in the district). A case for a water channel can be argued in light of the circular collection cistern noted in the field. This physical connection between the structures effectively endorses a ritual association between the bathing conducted in the bathhouse and the ritual of baptism taking place within the chapel, both of which reflect ecclesiastical ceremonies centring on initiation and rebirth.

Moreover, the similarities between the standing remains of the bath units near Aghios Pavlos (Phaestos) and Aghios Giorgios Koulourida (Phournopharango), in both mode of construction and layout, imply a similar date and function for the sites which would support a comparable partnership between each bathhouse and their associated churches. At Aghios Giorgios Koulourida the church is founded over an abundant spring which runs through (and under) the church, towards the bath, which it would have supplied and, given the similarities between the two complexes, we can propose the same functional model for Aghios Pavlos and its associated bath.

These Early Byzantine baths on Crete represent an initial ecclesiastic tolerance, if not an adoption, of the Roman institution of bathing at this juncture. These establishments functioned under a new system and their use was undeniably tempered by a considerably diluted ablutionary fervour governed by Church tenets. This patronage fundamentally changed the nature of bathing, transforming the once daily Roman exercise to a more sporadic activity, and in the case of baptistery baths, use may well have been restricted to that specific occasion. Nonetheless, the resilience of the public bathing, in whatever reduced format, beyond Roman restraints ensured its survival into the Middle Byzantine period and the reference to a well-preserved 11th century AD bath in Irakleio in 1990 as a unique discovery needs to be reviewed. On Crete the perseverance of the public bath into the Middle Byzantine period is clearly attested archaeologically in Irakleio where Starida and Kanaki report on three Middle Byzantine bathhouses, all in close proximity to each other along the Koronaios Road (in the Paravoliasakis, Xekardakis and Xenakakis plots).

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51See footnote 35 above.
52Hayden refers to a multi-period complex associated with a perennial spring in the Meseleroi Valley (2004, 273-274) where the association of church and spring presents a potentially similar model for the later phases of this site complex. Hayden describes a temple sanctuary where the discovery of a marble al-tar screen suggests that the temple was converted in-to a church (2004, 273-274). Moreover, she identifies a 20 m long brick wall running on a north-south axis and visible to the spring of its vault 50 m to the west (2004, 273-274, fig. 6).
Recent work carried out by the 13th and 28th Ephorates in Crete identifying a series of Middle Byzantine bathhouses which were converted into churches in the Venetian period point to a more prolific distribution than previously envisaged. At Kato Episkopi, in the demos of Ierapytra, in East Crete a Middle Byzantine bathhouse (dating to the 10th and 11th centuries AD) was converted into a church (that of the Holy Apostles) in the Venetian period (probably even as late as the 16th century). Similarly, at nearby Episkopi, another 11th century AD bathhouse was converted into a church (that of Aghios Giorgios and Aghios Charalambos) in the Venetian period. In west central Crete, at another site called Viran Episkopi (close to Stavromenos, 15 km from Rethymnon), a structure which functioned as a bathhouse from at least the Middle Byzantine period was converted into the three-aisled church of Aghios Demetrios in the mid-15th century AD.

While these Venetian conversions certainly attest the presence of functioning Middle Byzantine bathing facilities, it is also important to note that the architectural transformations mark the end of the functional life of the structures as bathhouses per se. And their Venetian redesign served to transform and obfuscate their primary social function, constituting a purposeful architectural statement which both secured a continuum of architectural space and bolstered a radically altered cultural and administrative system.

Nonetheless, it is still important to appreciate the attraction of these Middle Byzantine bathing establishments for conversion in terms of a purposeful spatial continuum. Vassilakis-Maurakakis recorded over 1,000 churches dating to the 14th and 15th centuries AD across the island. These churches were funded by the elite families in areas with close ties with the Byzantine Church and its monks. Consequently, such an architectural conversions of Middle Byzantine structures may reflect a Venetian desire to stress the continuity between the island’s pre-colonial society and the arrival of the Venetian colonists where these Venetian foundations played a vital role in strengthening Orthodox religious feeling and in fostering the ethnic identity of the Greek rural population.

But despite these conversions, bathing also clearly survived under Venetian rule, as attested by the manuscript tradition. It would be tempting to associate the structure at Aghios Antonios, described above, with a reference in the Catasticum Ecclesiarum mentioning a bath in Candia, present-day Iraklio, belonging successively to Romeo Grigliani and Nicolo Stadi, as balneum de burgu apud S. Antonium. This reference could, however, equally relate to the Venetian chapel of Aghios Antonios of Asites with its abundant spring emanating from the church (although a bath has not, as yet, been located below the chapel here). The documentary evidence reveals that at least another two 12th or 13th century AD baths were in use in Crete and as these manuscripts are essentially corpora of ecclesiastical

407, figs 11-12. Moreover, an underground cistern (45m) was discovered under the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives building where architectural spolia (all taken from Roman and Early Christian structures and including parts of a Roman statue and a 6th to 7th century AD inscription), was discovered built in-to its walls (Starka, L. and Kanaki [13th EBA] 2010, 406-407, fig. 14).


67A common name meaning ruined or burnt diocese; Viran in Persian and Turkish refers to a desolate, uninhabited and abandoned place.


70Catasticum Ecclesiarum V. B. M.: Lat, IX, 179.
architecture in Candia at this time, they show that the baths mentioned were considered Church property\(^6\).

The survival of the bathhouse beyond the confines of Roman imperial parameters both secured the foundations for its continued use into the Middle Byzantine period and presented an architectural palimpsest ripe for political exploitation by the Venetian colonists. Collectively, the four baths mentioned by Gerola, and presented here (at Kanli Kastelli [Khamamakji], Roukani, Phournophargo and Phaestos), attest a resurgence, however limited, in the construction of bath building in the Early Byzantine period. These baths functioned – at least initially – alongside some key imperial installations which continued in use, albeit in a diminished capacity, ensuring that public bathing as an activity never completely died out. It was, however, particularly this limited Early Byzantine resurgence in bathhouse construction, coinciding with a wave of basilical building throughout the island, that attests a new Christian patronage of the tradition. And it is this patronage that secured the survival of this tradition, if not its continued popularity, effectively impacting on, and informing, the architectural heritage of Crete down to the Late Venetian and even the Ottoman periods.

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\(^6\)Codice Diplomatico Veronese I n. 242.
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Plate 1 – Distribution of Gekola’s ‘ragia’.

Plate 2 – Aerial photograph of the site of Khamamaki and Kanji Kastelli at Profitias Ilias.
Plate 3 – Northern wall at Khamakji (photographer facing south).

Plate 4 – Northwest corner of the structure at Khamakji.
Plate 5 – Western wall at Khamamakji (photographer facing east).

Plate 6 – Church of Saint John the Baptist at Roukani.
Plate 7 – Façade of the church of Saint John the Baptist at Roukani.

Plate 8 – Visible brick-faced structure at Roukani.
Plate 9 — Detail of brick-faced structure at Roukani.

Plate 10 — Reused brick in cupola of the church of Saint John the Baptist at Roukani.
Plate 11 – Interior of Church of Aghios Antonios/Cistern, photographer facing south.

Plate 12 – Northern extent of cistern and later cross-wall and façade of the church.
Plate 13 – Internal rectangular rock-cut feature in Aghios Antonios.

Plate 14 – Aerial of complex at Phournopharango.

Plate 15 – Tapped spring inside the church of Aghios Giorgios (Phournopharango).
Plate 16 – Standing remains of the Early Byzantine bathhouse at Phournofarango (photographer facing southwest).

Plate 17 – Northeast corner of northern elevation.

Plate 18 – Spring of vault of northern room.

Plate 20 – Brick-tanned niche in northern wall.

Plate 19 – Doorway in eastern extent southern room.
ABSTRACT

Giuseppe Gerola’s strange Cretan Bagni

In his seminal work *I Monumenti Veneti Dell’Isola di Creta* (parte IV *Opere Idrauliche*), Giuseppe Gerola supplied a two-page report on five structures he considered being possible *bagni*. La Rosa and Portale’s more recent work on an Early Byzantine bath near the church of Aghios Pavlos, on the outskirts of the village of Aghios Ioannis, near Phaestos confirmed the existence of one of Gerola’s *bagni* (which he had located *presso la chiesa di S. Paolo a S. Giovanni Priotissa*), thereby lending credence and weight to Gerola’s overall report. On the basis of these findings I decided to locate, and photograph, the remaining structures mentioned by Gerola and was granted kind permission to do so through the auspices of the 13th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, conducting fieldwork in June 2013. While all four sites (which have not been cited by any scholar since Gerola) were recorded in the field and are presented here, the compact Early Byzantine bath at Aghios Giorgios Koulourida at Phournopharango proved to be of particular importance with standing elevations surviving in the field to a height of 2 m.