

Mycenaean religious architecture: The archaeological evidence from Ayios Konstantinos, Methana

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THE LH III A–B SANCTUARY at Ayios Konstantinos, excavated in the last decade, is situated on the east coast of the Methana peninsula in Troezenia (Northeast Peloponnese).¹ The continued investigation of the site has brought to light several Mycenaean buildings (fig. 1), mainly extending to the North and to the West of the modern church of Ayios Konstantinos and Ayia Eleni, which is located on the top terrace of a low hill.²

Room A, already presented and discussed in the past,³ forms part of a building complex lying immediately to the West of the church. Closely associated with Room A are Rooms B and C, extending to the North of it, whereas Room D, immediately to the South of it, is connected with another series of structures developing further to the West. A narrow passage by the north-east corner of Room C leads to Area F, which seems to have been a small enclosed courtyard bounded to the North by a poorly preserved wall, and flanked to the East and to the West by Rooms G and O respectively.

Room G is a large, megaron-like structure, facing Area F to the West. Apart from its main entrance, set on the west side, it has a second door opening at the east end of the north wall. That secondary entrance gives onto a passageway running East-West. This passageway is bounded to the North by Building W, which is aligned with Rooms G and O. Further to the East were uncovered a group of smaller, poorly preserved structures (Room Complex Y), resting on the roughly levelled bedrock.

1 I am grateful to Malcolm Wiener and the Institute for Aegean Prehistory for the generous financial support that enabled me to carry out the Ayios Konstantinos Research Project.

2 Konsolaki 1995, 1996, with pls. 40–42, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003c, 2003d. See also Shelmerdine 1997:574f, with figs. 12–13, Whittaker 1997:164f, Mee and Forbes 1997:53, 128 (MS 13).

3 Konsolaki 2001.

Room O, lying directly opposite Room G, was also entered from area F. This is a very long room with no indication of internal partitions. Its original entrance was apparently on the west side, where there was a door opening, later blocked. Room O abuts against Rooms E and J, which form part of large building complex, also comprising Rooms S, U and V to the West of those, as well as Rooms H, Ia and Ib to the S, and the oblong space marked as Area L. This building complex frames the three sides of a large, roughly rectangular courtyard, designated as Area K. The floor of that courtyard preserved traces of lime-cement plaster. A rectangular cut block, embedded into the floor, was uncovered near the middle of that space. The large courtyard seems to have been approached from the West through a narrow passage by the south-east corner of Room U. That opening was blocked at a later time, probably in the Early Christian period, when Area K was used as a burial ground.

Of exceptional interest is Building Z, lying at a distance of *ca.* 10m to the North of Building W. This is a separate, free-standing structure, which has the form of a Mycenaean megaron orientated to the West.

Among all those Mycenaean buildings described above in brief, the structures that may be more or less securely assigned a religious function are the following:

1. **Room A** and possibly the adjacent **Rooms B** and **C**.
2. **Room G** and **Area F** in front of it.
3. **Room H** and possibly the adjacent **Room E**.
4. A religious function is also probable for **Building Z**, although this does not seem to have been its primary use.

Room A

A primary cultic function may be legitimately assumed for Room A (figs. 2-3), on grounds of its fixed installations, its general layout, and the nature of its deposit. Room A measures internally *ca.* 4.30m by 2.60m and is orientated to the East, its main axis running East-West. The position of an off-axis doorway is indicated by a long block, apparently serving as threshold, at the north end of the east wall. The gap at the east end of the north wall cannot be indisputably claimed as a doorway, because the Mycenaean layer was here disturbed by a large pit with mixed black soil, probably dug out during the construction of the church. The west wall of Room A consists of two different sections. The north section belongs to the south-east corner of Room H, lying at the back of Rooms A and B. The south section abuts against this corner and must have been constructed at a later phase.

Directly opposite the entrance there is a stone-built bench, which seems to have constituted the cult focus.⁴ It consists of a small, roughly square construction

occupying the north-west corner of the room, and of three low steps built against the north wall. The whole length of the bench is 1.80m. The square construction, which is 0.70m high and measures 0.60m across, is set with upright stone slabs at its east and south sides. The steps must be a later addition to the construction, as the first of those has partly covered the paving of the central area of the room. Apparently the original altar was restricted to the square construction only.⁵

A large number of terracotta figurines (*ca.* 150), mainly bovids, were found deposited on the steps or in the immediate vicinity of the bench. The repertoire of the terracottas displayed a striking dearth of the common Phi and Psi female figurines, and a redundancy of certain types of group figurines that are rare or non-existent elsewhere, such as helmeted horseback riders,⁶ charioteers,⁷ oxcart drivers,⁸ and bull-jumpers or toreadors.⁹ One of the toreador groups that was deposited on the uppermost step of the bench stands out as a special item and may be proposed as a cult image.¹⁰ It represents an athletic human figure rising above

- 4 For a general discussion of benches and platforms in Mycenaean cult buildings, see Hägg 1998:105–10, Whittaker 1997:18–20, 26, 74f, 129–131, 137f.
- 5 The terminology used in the description of the cultic installations follows Hägg (1998:105f), who suggests that some of the benches and platforms should be termed ‘deposition altars’ for bloodless offerings. Hägg also makes a useful distinction between benches, which are placed against one or several walls, and platforms, *i.e.*, ‘raised areas not connected with a wall.’
- 6 Konsolaki 1999, 2002:33 with fig. 11, 2003d:376f with figs. 5–9; *cf.* the ridden horse and the rider from the sanctuary of Aphaia, Pilafidis-Williams 1998:71f with pls. 3, 55; for ridden horses and riders found in the sanctuary of Apollon Maleatas, see Peppa-Papaioannou 1985:38, 86, 157f with pl. 18.
- 7 Konsolaki 1996:72, with pl. 41a, 2002:33, with fig. 10, 2003d:378–380, with figs. 13–19; *cf.* Pilafidis-Williams 1998:64–69, 129, 138f, with pls. 3, 53–54; for the chariot models found in the sanctuary of Apollon Maleatas, see Peppa-Papaioannou 1985:38–40, 87f, 142f, 158–161, 209, with pls. 19–21, 79; see also the chariot groups (one almost complete) found at Phylakopi, French 1985:252–58, with figs. 6.26, 6.27, 6.28, and pls. 43d, 44a.
- 8 Konsolaki 1996:72, with pl. 41b, 2002:34, with fig. 12, 2003d:380f, with figs. 20–22. This type of terracottas has been described as ‘Driven Oxen’ by French (1971:165f), who interprets them as ploughs; see also French 1985:258–60, with fig. 6.30 and pl. 44b–c; Tamvaki (1973:236–242, with figs. 17–18) also sees ploughing groups; Peppa-Papaioannou (1985:87f, 158, with pls. 20–21) agrees with that interpretation; Konsolaki (1996:72, 2003d:380) recognised oxcarts in at least two of the examples found at A. Konstantinos; Pilafidis-Williams (1998:67–71, with pls. 3, 54) also sees oxcarts in some fragmentary group figurines from the sanctuary of Aphaia; Crowel (1981:56f) dismisses the idea of oxcarts and follows French in her interpretation.
- 9 Konsolaki 2002:34f, with fig. 13, 2003d:337f, with figs. 10–12. French (1971:166f, 176f) describes this type of Mycenaean terracottas as Ridden Oxen and sees in them ‘another scene of daily life.’ For their interpretation as toreadors or bull-jumpers, see Jones 1956:124f, with pl. XVI 5, 6, Nicolaou 1964:51, with pl. 6, Tamvaki 1973:242, with fig. 18, Crowel 1981:53, Buchholz 1987:522, Konsolaki 1995:242, 1996:72. Pilafidis-Williams (1998:71–73, with pls. 3, 55) disagrees with bull jumping and proposes rodeo riders.
- 10 The criteria for distinguishing a cult image are outlined in Renfrew 1985:22–24.

the head of a large hollow (coiled) bovine and clasping its horns firmly with outstretched arms.¹¹ The iconography of the uncommon terracottas has been proposed to reflect the cult of a male divinity,¹² most likely Poseidon, who was closely associated with horses and bulls.¹³ The cult of Poseidon by the Mycenaean Greeks is already well established,¹⁴ and it was predominant in Troizenia during the later periods. That male divinity may have been venerated here together with a female companion,¹⁵ as seems to be indicated by the exceptional presence of a single Hollow Psi figurine,¹⁶ which was deposited on the second step of the bench, and by the pair of human figures mainly occupying the box of the Methana chariot models.

The assemblage of the bench also included miniature model furniture (two three-legged thrones of type B,¹⁷ three tripod tables,¹⁸ and part of a bed or stool), a fragment of a miniature model boat,¹⁹ three miniature vessels (a conical rhyton, a dipper and a flask), one monochrome and seven plain kylikes (mainly FS 267), one rounded alabastron (FS 85), one deep bowl (FS 284, Group B), as well as a

- 11 For hollow bovid figures (coiled or wheel-made), with no indication of a rider, found at other sanctuary sites, see: Demakopoulou 1982, Peppa-Papaioannou 1985:37, 81–85, 142, 154–156, with pls. 13–17, 79, French 1985:236–252, with figs. 6.15–6.24 and pls. 39–43, Kilian 1992:21, 23, with pl. 3 (animal-shaped rhyta?).
- 12 Konsolaki 1996:72, with n. 15, 1999:432, 2000:34, 2001:214, 2002:35f, 2003d:383; cf. Pilafidis-Williams (1998:140f), who suggests that bovid figures are to be seen as symbols of the male sex; Peppa-Papaioannou (1985:209) associates bovinds, and especially bulls, with fertility and prosperity.
- 13 For the connection of bull-leaping with Poseidon's festivals, see Farnell 1907:25f; cf. Morgan 1994:119f, connecting bull figures in Early Iron Age sanctuaries with Poseidon.
- 14 See, for instance, Vermeule 1974:60, 62f, 65–68, 83f, 110f; see also Chirassi 1968; Hiller 1981:110.
- 15 The name *po-si-da-e-ja*, presumably a female counterpart of *po-se-da-o*, appears in the Linear B tablet PY Tn 316, see, for instance, Chadwick 1985:196; at neighbouring Ancient Troezen Poseidon Basileus was venerated together with Athena Polias or Sthenias in the historical period, and the sanctuary of Poseidon Phyalmios outside the city walls was contiguous to that of Demeter Thesmophoros, see Paus. II, 30, 6 and 32, 8; cf. the dualism of the cult at Phylakopi, Renfrew 1985:373, 390, 433.
- 16 Konsolaki 2003d:381, figs. 24a–b. For a discussion of this type of female figurines see French 1971:126–28. French has already noted the occurrence of this special type at places with religious significance at Mycenae; see also the discussion of the Hollow Psi figurines from the sanctuary of Aphaia in Pilafidis-Williams 1998:14–16, 129.
- 17 Konsolaki 2003d:383, figs. 36a–b, 37a–b. For the typology and the symbolic significance of three-legged thrones see Mylonas 1956; for the thrones, occupied and unoccupied, found in the sanctuary of Aphaia, see Pilafidis-Williams 1998:73–76, 129, 139, with pls. 4, 56; LH III model thrones were also found in the sanctuary of Apollon Maleatas, Peppa-Papaioannou 1985:40, 88, 143, 161, 209f, with pls. 22, 79; for the thrones from the sanctuary at Phylakopi, see French 1985:260f with pl. 47e. For a general discussion of Mycenaean model furniture, see Polychronakou-Sgouritsa 2003.
- 18 Konsolaki 2003d:382, figs. 33a–b, 34a–b, 35a–b.

large triton shell, the apex of which had been deliberately cut off. As the bench alone would not have provided enough space for the display of all those terracottas and cult paraphernalia, we may assume the existence of some storage facilities (supplementary wooden shelves or niches) on the walls above.²⁰

Opposite the stepped bench there was a very low stone ledge,²¹ starting from the south-west corner of the room and running along the south wall. Its length was 3m and its width varied from 0.70m at its start to 0.40m at its termination. No terracottas were found on it and its pottery assemblage was meagre (few fragments of coarse ware only). Probably that ledge served as a shelf for the deposition of food offerings. The floor deposit of Room A contained a large number of limpet shells, as well as animal bones and few fish bones, indicating the offering of foodstuff.

The floor of the room was made of a layer of beaten earth mixed with gravel, strewn over the levelled bedrock. A small central area between the bench and the ledge was paved with limestone slabs of rather irregular shape, which formed a low platform or dais measuring *ca.* 0.90m across. The use of this platform is uncertain, but its central position in the room indicates that this feature, as well as the bench and the ledge on either side of it, functioned as attention-focussing devices.²²

By the south-west corner of the room was found an upper segment of a large coarse ware jar, resting on the floor with its neck turned to the ground (fig. 4). The pottery deposited in its vicinity comprised a large dipper, a plain two-handled cup, a straight-sided alabastron, and a rhyton in the form of a pig's head.²³ The miniature conical rhyton was also found nearby, *i.e.*, to the South of the bench. The presence of two rhyta in the proximity of the jar neck suggests its use as a device for libation.²⁴

19 Wedde 2003; *cf.* the two model boats from the sanctuary of Aphaia, Pilafidis-Williams 1998:76f, 139, 145, with pl. 56; a model boat was also found in the sanctuary of Apollon Maleatas, Peppa-Papaioannou 1985:40, 161f, with pl. 22.

20 *Cf.* the niches above the benches of the West Shrine at Phylakopi, Renfrew 1985:94–96, 112–116, with figs. 4.9, 4.10, 9.5, 9.6, and pls. 12, 15, 16b, 17d.

21 The term 'ledge' is here preferred, as this construction is essentially different from the bench described above, but it is connected with a wall and may not be referred to as a platform.

22 For the role of 'attention-focussing devices' in the cult, see Renfrew 1985:18f; the possibility of viewing this platform as a sacrificial altar is examined in Konsolaki 2001:216.

23 Konsolaki 2001:214f, with pl. LXVIIa–d, 2002:29f, figs 7–8. This rhyton is a close parallel of the fox-head rhyton in the Asmolean Museum, Oxford, reported as coming from Tiryns, see, *e.g.*, Lacy 1967:216, fig. 85c. Another animal-head rhyton from Tiryns is reported by Kilian (1981b:58, with n. 63; 1982:402, with n. 21 and fig. 15.1); for more examples and useful remarks on the distribution of animal-head rhyta of the Mycenaean period, see Dourmas 1968, with references to previous bibliography; for the animal-head rhyta found at Aphaia, see Pilafidis-Williams 1998:109f, 133, with pls. 21, 73; see also the animal-head rhyta from the sanctuary of Apollon Maleatas, Peppa-Papaioannou 1985:155f.

To the left of the doorway, in the south-east corner of the room, was uncovered a small hearth,²⁵ which was constructed from a few rough stones placed near the corner and paved with flat-topped stones, set rather irregularly at its bottom (fig. 5). A spit-rest of stone was still preserved *in situ*. Two fragmentary tripod cauldrons, another cooking pot, and part of a brazier with traces of burning were found in its vicinity. The fill of the hearth consisted of a thick layer of ash with burnt animal bones, which provided material evidence of burnt animal sacrifice.²⁶ According to Y. Hamilakis, the bone assemblage of Room A displayed a heavy preponderance of juvenile pigs, in contrast to the bone waste found in other rooms, which was dominated by sheep/goat.²⁷ The preference of pigs for burnt sacrifice and the parallel presence of a pig-head rhyton, most likely intended for blood libation,²⁸ seem to confirm the hypothesis that a close ritual connection between animal sacrifice and libation, as known from Crete, existed in the Mycenaean religion as well.²⁹

The closest parallel for Room A amongst the known examples of Mycenaean cult buildings is the so-called 'Temple' in the Cult Centre at Mycenae, which was also supplied with a central dais and had two stepped benches placed on the side opposite the entrance.³⁰ One more feature recalling the cult buildings at Mycenae was a half segment of probable 'Horns of Consecration' that was deposited on the second step of the bench of Room A, together with a group of votive terracottas (fig. 6). This object was made of hard fired, gritty clay, and was crudely modelled in the shape of a horn curving at its broad end to form a flat part, which was broken across (figs. 7a-b). Supposing that it could have been continued symmetrically to form another horn at the opposite end, as shown in the reconstruction drawing (fig. 8), we may view it as Horns of Consecration. The upper side of the area between the horns is concave and evenly chipped at the surface, as if a separate

24 Konsolaki 2000:34, 2001:214f, 2002:29f; for similar libation devices, see Åkerström 1988:201f, Hägg 1990; 1998:104f, with references to previous bibliography.

25 For the symbolic significance of the hearth in Mycenaean buildings, see Whittaker 1997:134f.

26 Cf. Lambrinudakis 1981:59; see also Kilian 1981b:53, 56; 1988:148. Hägg (1998:100–103) provides a thorough review of the existing evidence for animal sacrifice in Mycenaean Greece, but he prefers to connect the animal bones found at cult sites with the sacrificial meals than with the sacrifice proper. Animal bones were also found in connection with the hearths of Temples 2 and 3 at Kition (Late Cypriote IIC), which have been interpreted as sacrificial altars, see Karageorghis and Demas 1985:29–32, 258f. The hearth of the Methana shrine may be paralleled to that of Temple 3 at Kition, which was also placed near the entrance.

27 Hamilakis 2003.

28 Konsolaki 2001:215; cf. Laffineur 1986:83–86; 1987; see also Hägg 1990:183f.

29 Hägg 1990:183f, with n. 54.

30 French 1981:figs. 1, 4, 7; for a full treatment of the 'Temple Complex,' see Moore and Tylour 1999.

piece of clay (perhaps a stand?) was applied here. The flattened lower side could have been attached to a raw clay surface, most probably on the top of the square construction in the north-west corner of the room, which constituted the original altar. An altar of this form would be better at home in Crete, where there is ample documentation for the use of Sacred Horns in religious architecture.³¹ Similar finds are scarce in Mainland Greece,³² but a good parallel may be recognised in the painted Horns of Consecration crowning the rectangular bench of the Room with the Fresco at Mycenae.³³ Fragmentary examples of actual Horns of Consecration in stone have been found in the Acropolis at Mycenae,³⁴ in the 'Palace of Nestor' at Pylos,³⁵ in the palace at Tiryns (in the foundation fill of Corridor XIX),³⁶ and in the court of the site at Gla,³⁷ but a connection with cult buildings was by no means established. The current evidence does not allow us to consider the 'Horns of Consecration' as a factual emblem of the Mycenaean religion.³⁸ Nevertheless, its presence in the Methana shrine gains support, given that another item in the cult paraphernalia also deviated from the traits of the mainland tradition. As mentioned above, the deposit of the bench included a large triton shell which was modified at the apex, most likely to be used as a rhyton.³⁹ The triton shell is a well-known cult object in the East Mediterranean, particularly in the Minoan and Cypriot area,⁴⁰ but at mainland sanctuaries it is conspicuously absent, as are the Horns of Consecration.

The assemblage of Room A was of particular importance for identifying the level of the cult, as it contained, in addition to ordinary drinking and cooking vessels, an unusual vase of specialised form (animal-head rhyton), some miniature

31 *Cf.*, e.g., the altar depicted on the steatite rhyton from Gypsades, Evans 1901:fig. 2.

32 *Cf.* the clay horns found in association with a brick 'house altar' in Room 123 (Building VI) in the Lower Citadel at Tiryns, Kilian 1981b:58, with figs. 10–11, 1982:401, with fig. 11b.

33 See illustration in French 1981:fig. 13; see also Marinatos 1988:figs. 1, 3.

34 Hood 1986, with fig. 1 and pl. 5a–d.

35 Blegen and Rawson 1966:328f with figs. 238–239, 271 no. 9.

36 Kilian 1992:11 with n. 13.

37 Iakovides 1989:109, with pl. 40b.

38 For the main differences between the Mycenaean and the Minoan religion, see Hägg 1981a, 1984, 1985, 1992a:85f, 1996:601f, 611f.

39 Konsolaki 2000:34, 2001:214, with pl. LXVIIc and e, 2002:31f, with figs. 3 and 9; *cf.* Baurain and Darcque 1983:54f; Laffineur 1991:236, with n. 53; for the interpretation of triton shells as trumpets, see Evans 1901:141–43, with fig. 25; see also Renfrew 1985:327, 383.

40 Åström and Reese 1990, with further bibliography; *cf.* two essentially complete triton shells found in the East and West Shrines at Phylakopi, Renfrew 1985:327f, 383f with pl. 62; see also Lolos 1987:60ff, for a find of 13 triton shells in a storeroom for cult paraphernalia at Vroulia in Messenia, dated by its context to the Early Mycenaean period, when Minoan connections were still strong.

pottery, miniature model furniture, several chariot and oxcart models, theriomorphic and anthropomorphic figurines (including horsemen), one special item (bull-and-torreador figure), as well as some objects of intrinsic value (two lentoids of steatite and a rectangular steatite sealstone). This range of finds implies an official rather than a popular cult, according to the distinction and the criteria proposed by Hägg and Kilian.⁴¹ The admixture of foreign elements in a cult of the official level would not be an extraordinary phenomenon, albeit not so common in LH III as in the Early Mycenaean period.⁴²

Room B

Room B, lying immediately to the North of Room A (see fig. 1), has no wall bounding its east side. If there had been originally a wall with a door opening on this side, it must have been totally destroyed during the construction of the church. Alternatively this structure was completely open to the East.

Room B was also supplied with a hearth, set in the north-west corner.⁴³ A tripod cauldron found near the hearth attests to its use for cooking meals. Probably Room B served as a kitchen for the preparation of ritual meals consumed outside the building, perhaps in a courtyard extending further to the East, in the space now occupied by the modern church.⁴⁴ Fragments of tripod cauldrons and smashed kylikes found in the area to the South of the church seem to indicate eating and drinking in that space.

Room C

Room C, to the North of Room B, was entered from the East, but its north wall preserved another door opening, blocked at a later phase. Both entrances were supplied with stone thresholds. The floor of Room C was paved with rough stones, except for an area where a pit had been dug out and re-filled with earth. Within this pit was uncovered a small cist-grave containing an infant burial, as well as some remains of earlier interments.⁴⁵ The latest burial was furnished with a baseless askos FS 194, a small linear bowl and an early Psi figurine. Below the poorly preserved skeleton was found a Phi A figurine.⁴⁶ Two bronze rings and several

41 Hägg 1981a, 1995, 1996:601, 609, Kilian 1981b:56–58, 1990, 1992:13–21.

42 See above n. 38.

43 See illustration in Konsolaki 1996:pl. 42 a; *cf.* the non-central hearths in Tournavitou 1999.

44 *Cf.* Kilian 1981a:150, on ritual banqueting taking place in the courtyard outside the small cult buildings in the Lower Citadel at Tiryns; see also 1981b:56; for ritual meals recorded in Linear B tablets, see Chadwick 1985:201; *cf.* also Piteros, Olivier and Melena 1990.

45 Konsolaki 1996:73, with pl. 42 b, 2003c.

beads of various materials (glass, steatite, serpentine, fluorite, carnelian, gold) were also retrieved from the grave.

The use of the cist is dated by its contents to LH III A2-III B1, which means that it is contemporary with the use of the shrine. Its presence there raises intriguing questions that are expected to be answered when L. Little completes the study of the skeletal material and publishes her conclusions. According to the information she has given us so far,⁴⁷ the fill of the cist contained in addition skeletal remains of another infant and a foetus. The anthropological evidence, the rich furnishing with jewellery, and the presence of the female figurines probably reflect some apotropaic religious practices.⁴⁸ Perhaps that small cist-grave was purposefully set into the floor of Room C in order to serve for the ritual interment of infants in the vicinity of the shrine, in an effort to exorcise whatever was thought to have caused their premature death. The occurrence of a miniature stone axe in the fill above the grave is worthy of note.⁴⁹

Area F

Area F, to the North of Room C, was most probably a small enclosed courtyard, allowing controlled access to Rooms G and O. On the south side of this space, in front of the blocked entrance of Room C, there was a low bench constructed out of rough stone packed with earth (fig. 9). In the corner space by the west end of this bench was set a roughly worked boulder, which had a deep conical hollow cut into it and was vertically pierced through at the lower side. Below the piercing there was no receptacle, as the boulder rested on the floor of beaten earth. A certain similarity may be noted between this construction and the bench of Room XXXII in House G at Asine, next to which (also in the corner space) there was a bottomless jug placed upside-down, assumed to have played the role of a funnel for liquid offerings channeled into the earth.⁵⁰ A piece of a conical rhyton, two fragmentary Psi figurines and a bare head of a Phi that were found in Area F provide additional support for the interpretation of this feature as a cultic installation with a libation device.⁵¹

46 See description of Phi A and B female figurines in French 1971:116–120.

47 Unpublished paper, presented at the First international conference on the history and archaeology of the Argo-Saronic Gulf, Poros, 26–29 June 1998.

48 Cf. the apotropaic function of Phi and Psi figurines deposited at doorposts and hearths in the Lower Citadel of Tiryns, Kilian 1981b:56, 1988:148, with fig. 16; see also Hägg 1998:111.

49 Cf. Nilsson 1950:113f, with n. 4, on the use of stone axes for a religious or magical purpose.

50 Hägg 1981b:93, with figs. 3–4; 1990:180f, with figs. 5–6; 1996:610.

51 Konsolaki 2000:34, 2001:216, with pl. LXVIIIe and f; for more examples of similar libation devices see above n. 24.

Room G

Room G (fig. 10), which has a megaroid form, was entered from Area F through a doorway 1.30m wide, placed on-axis and supplied with a neatly dressed stone threshold. A large post hole dug out into the bedrock to the right of the entrance to Room G seems to indicate the existence of wooden columns elaborating its façade.⁵²

The megaron consists of a spacious hall measuring internally 7.30m by 5m. Three stone bases for wooden columns, the two of those set one next to the other in the west part of the room, were preserved. The roof must have been supported by two columns arranged symmetrically on the main axis running East-West. The original base of the western support was apparently replaced by a new one during a repair. The latter had the form of a short, roughly cylindrical pillar, and was embedded into a large pit dug out into the bedrock (fig. 11).⁵³ Within that pit were found some painted kylikes, a Proto-Phi figurine,⁵⁴ and a lentoid of serpentine with a bull representation. Pieces of charcoal and a layer of blackish earth in the upper fill of the pit seem to indicate that the area between the two roof supports was originally occupied by a central hearth, presumably destroyed during the refurbishing of the western column. Another hearth, perhaps subsequently constructed, was set in the north-west corner of Room G (see fig. 11). This one was made out of a few rough stones and upright slabs placed by the corner, and preserved a thick fill of ash containing burnt animal bones.⁵⁵

The north wall was interrupted at its east end by an opening with two broad steps leading up to an open space, which seems to have been a passageway lying at a somewhat higher level. Next to the steps, in the north-east corner of the room, there was a low rectangular bench-like feature, constructed out of rough stone packed with earth (fig. 12). Another fragmentary Phi B figurine was deposited on that bench, and few small fragments of animal figurines were found in its vicinity. A deep conical depression cut out into a small outcrop of the native rock by the outer corner of this construction may have served as a receptacle for libations.⁵⁶

52 Cf. the façade of Room 117 in the Lower Citadel at Tiryns, Kilian 1979:390, 1981b:53, with fig. 4; for the use and the decorative role of posts in Mycenaean architecture, see Hiesel 1990:225–228, with table 13; Wright (1994:58f) argues for a symbolic value of columns in Mycenaean culture.

53 Cf. a similar repair in House L at Korakou (LH III B), where the preserved stone bases indicate that one of the two posts located on the major axis of the room was replaced by a new one, set further to the North, when a larger central hearth was built over the earlier hearth, see Blegen 1921:80–83, with fig. 112; see also Hiesel 1990:49f, with fig. 38.

54 For a description of this type of female figurines see French 1971:112–116, with pls. 14–15.

55 Information about that bone assemblage is not available, as no zooarchaeological analysis has been conducted as yet.

56 Konsolaki 2000:34, 2001:216f, pl. LXIXa.

The arrangement of this feature can be paralleled to that of the bolster-shaped altar and its libation device in the Tsountas' House Shrine at Mycenae.⁵⁷ Its presence there, as well as the presence of a similar bench in the small courtyard (Area F) in front of the megaron, suggest a cultic function for Room G, although this may not have been its exclusive use.

A large projection of the native rock by the inner face of the south wall of Room G (mostly covered by the modern church) was deliberately cut to form a low, roughly rectangular podium (fig. 13). It is interesting to note that the position of this feature corresponds to that of the throne in the megara of Mycenaean palaces (at Pylos, Tiryns, and presumably Mycenae), which is recurrently to be found to the right of a person entering the main room.⁵⁸ The use of that low podium as a base for a ceremonial seat would not be improbable.

Close similarities may be noticed between Room G at Methana and Room XXXII of House G at Asine.⁵⁹ They have approximately the same dimensions, they are both divided into two aisles by two columns placed symmetrically on the major axis, and in both cases one of the corners is occupied by a stone bench with a libation device. In Room G at Methana this bench was set on the side opposite the main entrance and immediately to the left of a secondary entrance. No clear opening was recognised in Room XXXII, and both a north and a south entrance have been proposed. The published photograph of Room XXXII shows a clear discontinuity of the south wall near its east end and a straight edged termination before the south-east corner, which seems to indicate an off-axis entrance placed directly opposite the bench (*cf.* Room A at Methana). The possibility of a secondary entrance set on the north wall of Room 32, next to the bench (which would be to the left upon entering), is not to be excluded, as it would find a good parallel in Room G at Methana.

The floor deposit of Room G displayed a striking dearth of objects in use at the time of the collapse. This fact probably signifies that the building had a seasonal function, *e.g.*, it might have been reserved for festivities or ceremonies held on special occasions.⁶⁰ Ceremonial processions, starting from or ending at its second entrance facing the passageway to the North of it, might also have taken place.⁶¹

57 Mylonas 1977:19–21, with fig. 10 and pls. III–IV, French 1981:44f, with figs. 5–6.

58 See, for instance, Mylonas 1966:47, 55, 62–64, with fig. 16.

59 Frödin and Persson 1938:74–76, with figs. 53–54, Nilsson 1950:110–114, with fig. 31, Hägg 1981b, with fig. 1, 1996:609f.

60 Kilian (1992:20) argues convincingly for seasonal activities associated with the official level of cult at Mycenae, Tiryns and Phylakopi.

61 *Cf.* the processional road connecting the Cult Centre at Mycenae with the palace on the top of the acropolis hill, Mylonas 1983:140f, with fig. 107; for processions as an important part of Mycenaean ritual, see Hägg 1998:111f, 1995:389, Kilian 1981b:56, 1992:19f.

The cultic installations and the occurrence of female and animal figurines in the area of Room G raise the question of whether we have to do with a religious complex of double shrines (Room A and Room G), as was the case at Phylakopi.⁶² A duality also seems to be reflected in the fact that some of the terracottas contained in the assemblage of Room A occurred in pairs. If this hypothesis is correct, the two shrines may have been connected with an intermediate courtyard extending in the space now occupied by the church.

The two oblong buildings O and W, which flank either side of the passageway leading to Room G, contained mainly domestic coarse ware pottery and could have been used for the storage of provisions and equipment. Within and in the vicinity of the Room Complex Y, lying further to the East, were found a few discoid loomweights indicating a weaving activity in that area.

Room H

Room H, located at the back of Rooms A and B, originally communicated with Room E to the North of it through an off-axis entrance set at the west end of its north wall. This entrance was blocked at a later time. As the room has no other opening, it must have gone out of use after the door was blocked.

The floor of Room H was made out of beaten earth laid on the bedrock. The floor deposit was rich in food residues, comprising animal bones, sea shells and seeds. The pottery assemblage included no complete vessels. The sherd material of the destruction layer consisted of both coarse ware (cooking pots, dippers) and fine ware vessels (kylikes, deep bowls, stemmed bowls, *etc.*), mainly of LH III B date. Of special interest were two fragments of LH II pottery (Vapheio cups) that were found in the layer of soil overlying the bedrock.

The most important find made in this room was a small rectangular plaque of limestone with a very thin coating of plaster and some traces of painting (figs. 14a–b). The painting is better preserved on the narrow sides, where red bands are clearly visible. In the central area of the front side can be distinguished an oval space marked out in double outline and filled with a figure-eight shield in solid paint. To the right of it there are faint traces of what may have been a standing female figure. The affinity of this object to the well-known stucco plaque painted in the miniature style, which was found in the Tsountas' House Shrine at Mycenae,⁶³ suggests a religious character for Room H. This plaque was contained in the floor deposit by the south-east corner of the room, where there is a row of

62 Renfrew 1985; see also the classification of double sanctuaries proposed by van Leuven (1981:15–24), with objections raised in the discussion by Kilian (*ibid*:26); *cf.* Karageorghis (1976:57), claiming that the two first temples at Kition were used as twin sanctuaries.

63 Illustrated, *e.g.*, in Nilsson 1950:fig. 156; see also Mylonas 1977:pl. VI.

rough stones forming the quadrant of a circle (fig. 15). Taking into consideration the exceptional find made here, we may assume that these are the relics of a bench used for cultic purposes. The fact that access to this room was prevented when it went out of use, as if it had a special non-profane character that was to be protected from secular activities, as well as the fact that the bench in Room A was constructed directly behind the south-east corner of Room H, as if meant to continue a religious tradition, provide corroborative arguments for assigning Room H a cultic function, although clear vestiges of cult practice are here missing.

Room E

Room E (fig. 16), which originally communicated with Room H, was approached from Room J to the West of it through an off-axis entrance set at the north end of its west wall. The floor of Room E was made out of more or less flat stones, laid on the levelled bedrock. A circular stone base for a wooden column was set roughly in its centre.⁶⁴ The major components of the floor deposit were the fragments of a bath larnax similar to that found in the 'Room with the Fresco' at Mycenae.⁶⁵ This may have been used for ablution preparatory to religious rites, but otherwise Room E contained no objects of purely religious significance.

The rest of the structures framing the large courtyard (Area K) should rather be regarded as subsidiary rooms used for the practical needs of the sanctuary, such as the preparation of food and the storage of supplies and equipment. This function would not be necessarily irrelevant to the religious character of the site, as it might be related to communal feasting and other ceremonies taking place in the courtyard.⁶⁶ The rectangular cut block located in the centre of that space may also have played a role in a ritual. The destruction layer of those rooms contained cooking pots, basins, dippers, bowls and several kylikes of LH III A–B date, as well as ground stone tools and food residues (animal bones, sea shells, fish bones and olive pits). The floor deposit of Rooms Ia–Ib yielded in addition some pieces of molten lead, which do not come as a surprise, as these rooms are contiguous to Room D to the East, which is adjacent to the shrine and has been interpreted as a small workshop serving different needs of the sanctuary, such as mending ceramics with clamps of lead.⁶⁷

64 Cf. Room 117 at Tiryns, in the centre of which was preserved an impression of squared wood indicating the presence of a central support, see Kilian 1979:390, 1981b:53, with fig. 4.

65 French 1981:45, with fig. 11.

66 See above n. 44.

67 Konsolaki 1996:73, Demou *et al.* 2003; for the association of workshops with sanctuaries in the Aegean Bronze Age, see Hägg 1992b.

Building Z

Finally, Building Z (fig. 17), the large Mycenaean megaron lying further to the North, should be briefly discussed here, as its excavation has yielded some evidence for possible ritual activity. The preserved length of this structure is 18m and its stone-built walls stand to a max. height of 0.80m. Its main axis runs East-West and its entrance faces an open area to the West.

The megaron consists of a main hall (fig. 18), measuring internally 6.50 by 4.50, and an anteroom, in front of which seems to have extended a deep porch open to the West. A flat-topped stone found near the middle of the porch may have served as a base for one of the wooden columns presumably placed at its façade. An interesting find made in the area of the porch was a roughly worked block of andesite having some shallow circular depressions cut into its top surface (fig. 19). Its use as a *kernel* is highly probable. It was found in the debris of the destruction layer and the exact location where it would have been originally placed is not certain, but its findspot indicates some position in front of Building Z.

The doorways to the anteroom and to the main hall of the megaron were placed on axis and they were both supplied with stone thresholds. In the north-east corner of the anteroom there was a stone-built bench (fig. 20), but this was not associated with any finds of religious significance. The main hall was equipped with a central hearth, roughly rectangular in outline, which was paved with dressed stone slabs resting on the levelled bedrock. These were covered with a thick layer of ash containing a substantial quantity of food waste and some fragments of large cooking pots preserving traces of burning.⁶⁸ Two dislocated flat-topped stones of roughly circular form that were found in the immediate proximity of the hearth may have served as bases for wooden posts supporting the roof.⁶⁹ The south-east corner of the room was occupied by a bench-like feature (see fig. 18), the use of which is uncertain. The pottery assemblage of the megaron contained sherd material of both coarse and fine ware, the latter mostly painted kylikes of LH III A2–III B1 date. The small finds included two pieces of animal figurines, two beads of steatite, few steatite spindle whorls, a sphendonoid balance weight of haematite⁷⁰ and some pieces of lead clamps used in the repair of pottery.

A back room was attached to the east side of the main hall. Its three sides that have been preserved were framed internally by a low stone-built ledge. The

68 Cf. the square hearth of Megaron/Room 2 in the Cult Centre at Mycenae, which was also covered with a thick layer of ash, see French 1981:44, with fig. 3.

69 For similar examples of central hearths flanked by two column bases in megaroid buildings, see Tournavitou 1999.

70 For balance weights of this type, see, e.g., Petruso 1984:295f and ill. 2. For more examples and useful discussions, see also Petruso 1992, Lassen 2000, Ruiz-Gálvez 2000, Pulak 2000.

ceramic finds made in this area included plain and painted kylikes, part of an amphora, a juglet and a miniature rounded alabastron. Some steatite and glass paste beads, as well as a tiny bead of carnelian, were found stored in the alabastron.⁷¹ Probably this structure was used as a storeroom for the precious items and the equipment of the megaron, when not in use.

A purely religious function may not be proposed for the large Mycenaean megaron at Ayios Konstantinos, although its fixed installations, including two stone-built benches, and the occurrence of a possible *kernos* in its destruction layer imply some ritual activity. The megaron must have been closely associated with the shrine in its vicinity,⁷² and could have been occasionally used for ceremonies pertaining to the official level of cult.⁷³ The large open space around the free-standing building offers enough place for sports associated with religious events, or for a 'congregation' to gather. The impressive structure (Building Z) is very likely to have housed religious officials and to have functioned as an administrative centre. The proportions and the complexity of the Methana sanctuary would justify, if not dictate, the presence of religious officials. Building on the site seems to have been carefully planned and the whole sacred area appears very well organised, a fact which, in its own right, points to an upper-level administration. The involvement of a ruler in that sanctuary is not to be excluded,⁷⁴ provided that this was not a common local shrine, but a significant cult place interconnected with other Mycenaean sites in the Argolic peninsula and the Saronic Gulf, as I have suggested in a previous paper.⁷⁵

An additional dimension to be considered is the relation of this site to the leading LH centre of Troezenia at Magoula, Galatas (near Pogon), which was recently identified with Mycenaean Troezen on the basis of the amazing group of tholos tombs uncovered there.⁷⁶ The location of that shrine on Eastern Methana, at a long distance from the three main LH sites of the peninsula, indicates no close links

71 Cf. the conical bowl 68-1402 with its cache of beads, glass plaques and ivories, found in Room 19 of the 'Temple Complex' at Mycenae, Moore and Taylour 1999:17f, with fig. 5 and pl. 6.

72 Cf. Whittaker 1997:29-31, arguing for a connection between the megaron and the sanctuary at Phylakopi.

73 Cf. the much discussed religious function of the great megara in the Mycenaean palaces, Hopkins 1968, Dietrich 1973, Hiller 1981:117-119, Kilian 1992:17, Hägg 1995:389f, with references to previous bibliography in n. 23, 1996:607.

74 For the involvement of the ruler in religion, see Kilian 1992:13-21, Hägg 1995.

75 Konsolaki 2002:36. That paper raised again the question of a Mycenaean origin of the Kalaureian Amphictyony, suggesting that the LH shrine at Methana could have been a precursor of the later sanctuary of Poseidon at Kalaureia, which was also frequented by a broad range of celebrants.

76 Konsolaki 2003b. One of those tombs was exceptionally large (diam. of chamber 11.20m at the base) and may be assigned to a ruling elite.

either with the principal settlement site at Palaiokastro, isolated on the west coast, or with the other two Mycenaean 'villages' at Oga and Ayios Georgios, both on the east coast, but much further to the North.⁷⁷ Perhaps the large-scale religious establishment at Ayios Konstantinos was a major outlying sanctuary, such as *Pakijana* near Pylos, supported and controlled by the ruler of Mycenaean Troezen.⁷⁸ The results so far of the two research projects at Methana and Galatas attest to an exceptional prosperity of Troezenia in the Late Bronze Age, and Prehistoric Troezen is now emerging into the context of the NE Peloponnese as an outstanding regional centre.⁷⁹ The excavation at Ayios Konstantinos has not been completed as yet and hopefully future investigations in the wider area will provide more information about the use and the status of this newly discovered site, the importance of which cannot be underestimated.

77 Mee and Forbes 1997:52f, with fig. 4.5, 122-27 (MS 10, Palaiokastro), 146-148 (MS 67, Oga), 162 (MS 124, Ayios Georgios).

78 Cf. Hiller 1981:116-119 for the administration of Pylian shrines and the degrees of their dependence on the palace.

79 Konsolaki 2003b.



Fig. 1: Plan of the excavated structures at Ayios Konstantinos, Methana (drawing by N. Kalliontzis).

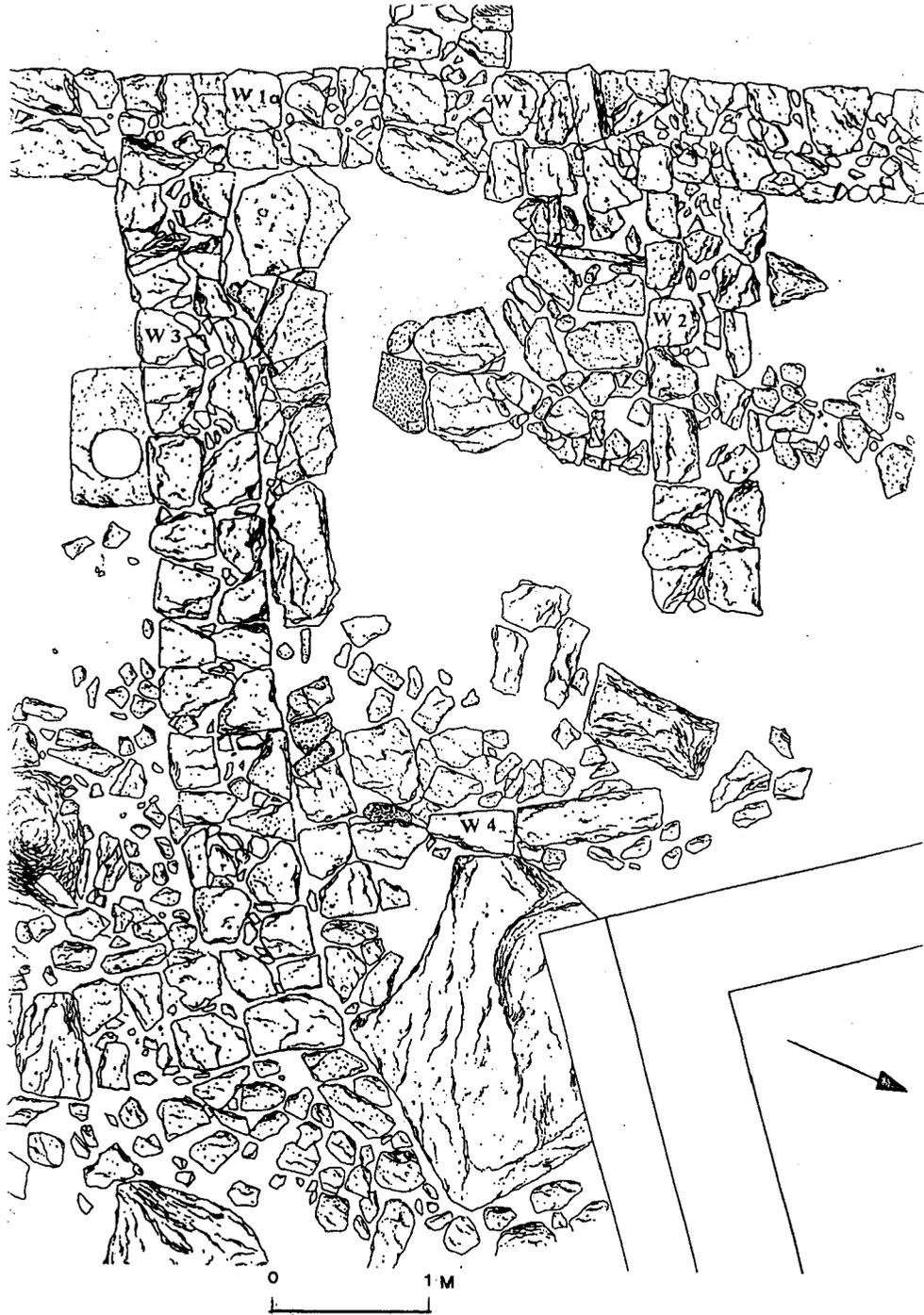


Fig. 2: Ground plan of Room A (drawing by N. Kalliontzis).



Fig. 3: Room A, from the East.



Fig. 4: The floor deposit by the south-west corner of Room A.



Fig. 5: The hearth in the south-east corner of Room A, with spit-rest *in situ*.



Fig. 6: Terracottas and Horns of Consecration (?) deposited on the bench of Room A.



Figs. 7a-b: Horns of Consecration (?) from Room A, front view and back view.

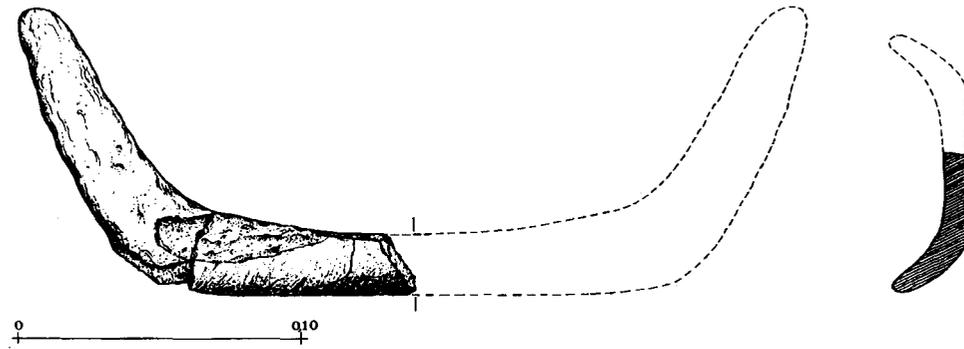


Fig. 8: Proposed reconstruction of the probable Horns of Consecration (drawing by N. Kalliontzis).



Fig. 9: Bench on the south side of Area F, from the East.

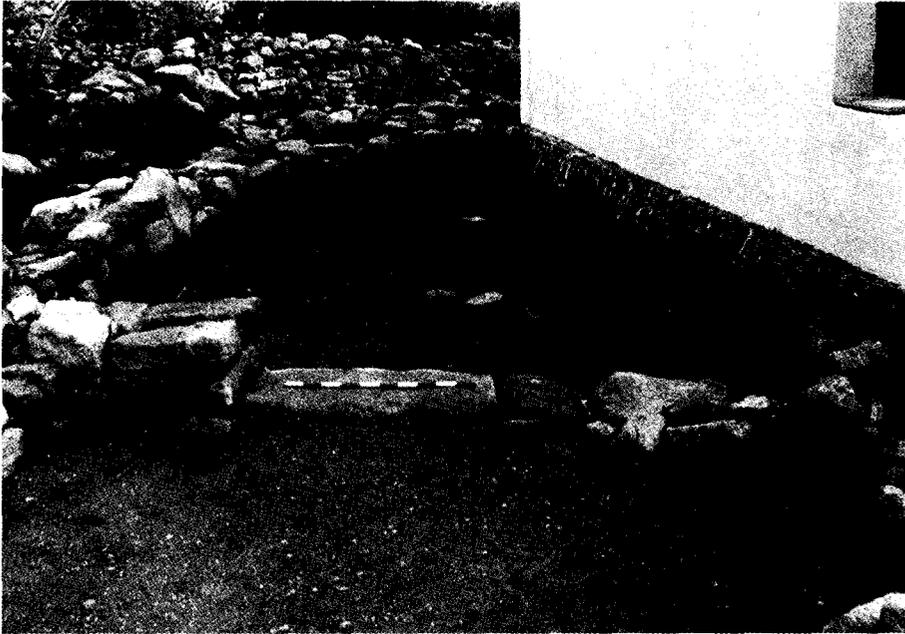


Fig. 10: Room G, from the West.

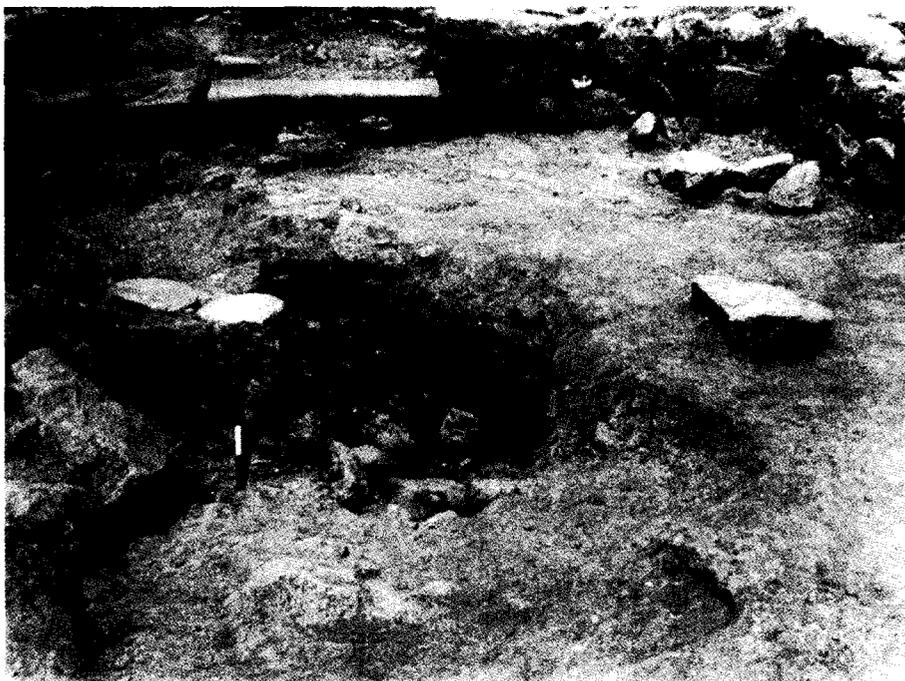


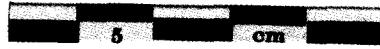
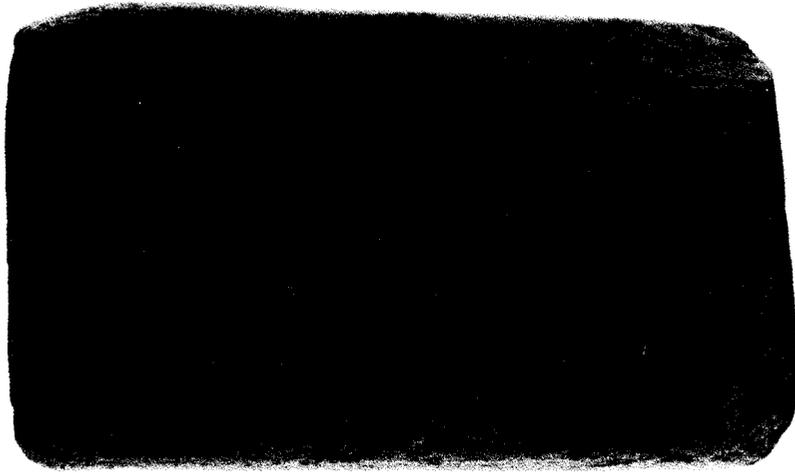
Fig. 11: Double column bases in the west part of Room G.



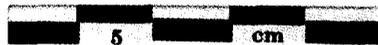
Fig. 12: Bench with libation device in the north-east corner of Room G.



Fig. 13: Cut bedrock forming a *podium* on the south side of Room G.



Figs. 14a-b: Limestone plaque with traces of painting found in Room H, front view and side view.



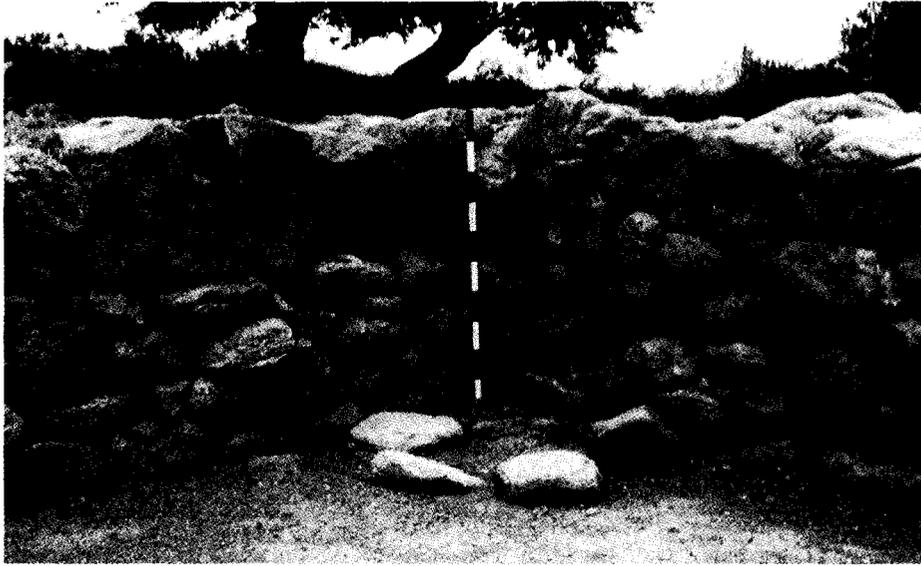


Fig. 15: The south-east corner of Room H.



Fig. 16: Room E, with the blocked entrance to Room H, from the North.



Fig. 17: Building Z (large megaron), from the West.



Fig. 18: The main hall of the large megaron, from the West.

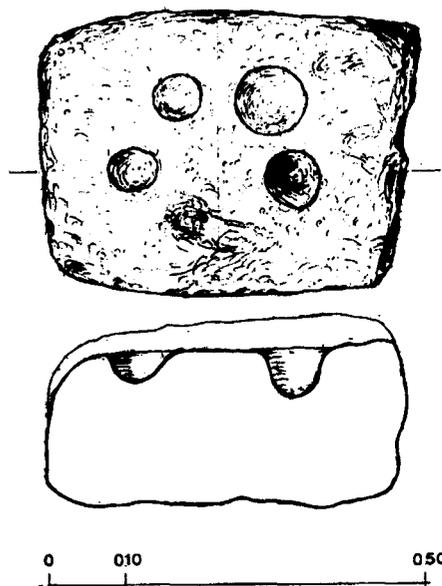


Fig. 19: Cut block of andesite with circular depressions (*kernos?*), found in front of Building Z (drawing by N. Kalliontzis).



Fig. 20: Stone-built bench in the anteroom of the large megaron.

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DISCUSSION

G. Albers: This magnificent find will probably cause us all to reconsider the evidence for Mycenaean cult. We must check our previous classifications of architecture and other aspects of the material remains of cult. Do you have fragments of large female terracotta figures?

E. Konsolaki: No. But the bull-jumper I showed is a coil-made, I would rather say, figure, than figurine. There are no female figures as the dominant deity in the Methana shrine should have been male.

G. Albers: There is a large amount of animal figures?

E. Konsolaki: We have a large amount of small animal figurines and one larger terracotta, which could, as I proposed in my paper, have played the role of a cult image: the bull-jumper. Its preserved length is about 17 cm, and the body of the animal is a coil-made cylinder. The altar is so small that it wouldn't need a very large cult figure. Maybe Methana followed a different tradition. The terracottas seem to deviate from what one usually finds in Mycenaean shrines. I rather see them connected to the wider Aegean area.

G. Albers: We have so little material that every new find constitutes a surprise. I recall that there is a context at Dimini with a large bull figure in what looks pretty much like a cultic context, but how to interpret it in the context of the material we have so far is another question. A last question: this context at Methana started in LH III A1?

E. Konsolaki: The structures that have been studied show that the emplacement was cleared of any previous constructions down to bedrock. There are sporadic sherds of Middle Helladic and Early Mycenaean date, for example from Vapheio cups and goblets. The site was inhabited from the Middle Helladic period, just as the site at Magoula. The preserved structures do not date earlier than LH III A. In fact I would prefer to say LH III A2. Some of the material, like the pig-head rhyton, may be dated to III A1, but I wouldn't date any of the buildings to III A1. As the structures project above the modern surface there is so little to dig with which to date them.

M. Hielte-Stavropoulou: Could it be that your site served as a cult-center for people passing by at sea?

E. Konsolaki: It appears to have been visited by people involved in maritime trade. In my previous paper (Konsolaki 2002) I connected it to a pre-Greek cult of Poseidon, suggesting this could have been a predecessor of Poseidon's sanctuary on Kalaureia and perhaps the seat of a similar religious league. I would see the Kalaureian Amphictyony originating from this sanctuary.

M. Hielte-Stavropoulou: Do you have any other Bronze Age sites on Methana?

E. Konsolaki: Yes, Christopher Mee and Hamish Forbes (Mee and Forbes 1997) have already published them in their survey of the Methana peninsula. They have given a very good description of what can be seen on the peninsula. The main prehistoric settlement was located on the acropolis of Ancient Methana on the west coast of the peninsula. Two other important sites are Ayios Georgios, in the northeast part, and Oga, on the east coast. Except for the acropolis, the main

sites lie on the east coast. The people living in the area during prehistory were turned towards the open sea.

C. Sugawata: You showed a very small fragment of wall-painting...

E. Konsolaki: You mean the limestone plaque. It is approximately 9.5 cm long, 5 cm wide, and 2 cm thick. The painting is mostly worn off, and all that can be recognized is the figure-of-eight shield. Perhaps some other photographic technique can reveal more.