

# Report on the 2023 season of fieldwork project at the site of Mycenaean Pefkakia

Bartłomiej Lis and Anthi Batziou

## Introduction

In this article, we report on the second season of the five-year (2022-2026) archaeological project at the site of Mycenaean Pefkakia, which is a collaboration between PAIA (PAIA's Project no. 2) and the Ephorate of Antiquities of Magnesia, co-directed by Dr. Anthi Batziou (Ephorate of Antiquities of Magnesia) and Prof. Bartłomiej Lis (IAE PAS). In 2022, an extensive geophysical survey was conducted, followed by geoarchaeological corings (see the report in the first PAIA's Bulletin). These non-invasive explorations gave us an excellent understanding of the extent and character of the Hellenistic and later phases of the site, as well as indicated perspective areas for excavations aiming for Bronze Age remains.

## Excavations in 2023

In 2023, two trenches in areas designated as B and C were opened (Fig. 1). In area B (Fig. 2), a burial ground from late Hellenistic-Roman period was found, and layers dating to Late Bronze Age (LBA) have not been revealed, despite significant depth reached. In area C, the remains of a multi-phase building from the Mycenaean period (Figs. 3 and 4), as well as of an earlier, lower-lying mudbrick structure were discovered.

## Area B

This area is located to the SE of Magoula, and to the N of area A excavated by A. Batziou over multiple seasons prior to the start of this project (for results,



Fig. 1. Aerial view of Pefkakia with location of 2023 trenches and area A

see Batziou-Efstathiou 2012; 2015). A trench measuring 5 x 5 m was laid out in an area where geophysical survey suggested presence of deeper-laying structure that could be of Bronze Age chronology. After removal of the top soil, which contained mixed material with latest sherds dating to the modern period, a stone rubble paving with irregular surface was exposed covering most of the area of the trench except a stripe along the N edge (Fig. 2). Within this paving, there was a platform made of rectangular terracotta tiles (5 x 4 tiles) with partially preserved vertical border made by upright tiles fixed with mortar. The function of this platform remains unknown.

Within the paving, several concentrations of larger stones were noticed. One of them was investigated and turned out to contain a burial in a broken amphora.

In the NW part of the trench, an upright slab was visible above the layer of the paving. Upon exploration, it turned out to be closing the upper part of an amphora, placed horizontally, with the mouth broken off most likely to receive a burial. After being secured with gypsum and bandages, the amphora was removed for further exploration by a physical anthropologist.

The work continued in the NE part of the trench with the removal of the stone rubble paving. The material within the paving was quite worn, and dated predominantly to later Hellenistic period, with single fragments that could be as late as early Roman.

A consistent layer of dark brown clayey soil, mixed with lots of sherds, shells, animal bones and charcoal was revealed below the stone rubble paving, and this layer continued until the lowest depth reached in the trench. Only in the center of the excavated part of the trench, and adjacent to the W baulk, did the stone rubble continue, forming an oval area. This turned out to be a pit dug for the placement of a large tile grave, forming a tent-like structure, with largest side tiles measuring 100x42/45 cm. The largest tiles forming the sides of the tomb were decorated with finger impressed designs, while the entire structure was secured with the use of mortar. Inside, a burial of two children placed on a flat bottom tile was revealed, without any grave goods. Despite this fact, the tomb



Fig. 2. View of trench B01 with the level of stone rubble paving

can be dated to Roman period, perhaps even into its late part, given the use of mortar and the orientation of the individuals with heads facing W, suggesting a Christian burial.

Excavation continued below this tomb, revealing a stone feature running roughly E-W, with as yet unknown function. The material excavated next to the feature dates to the earlier Hellenistic phase, predominantly in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.

The Mycenaean levels have not been reached in this trench, and the regular anomaly visible on the geophysical plan has not been revealed. Likewise, the amount of earlier, pre-Hellenistic material was minimal, although it should be noted that among these sparse fragments the amount of early Mycenaean pottery was notable.

**Area C**

This area is located directly S of Magoula (Fig. 1). Geophysical investigations revealed the presence of structures with an orientation different to the regular layout of the Hellenistic city. Despite their apparent proximity to the surface, several indications pointed to the possibility that these could be of earlier date. In order to investigate those remains, a test trench 10 x 2 meters, divided into two parts separated by a narrow



Fig. 3. View of Mycenaean structures in trench C01

balk was laid out. Only its S part was excavated during the 2023 season.

Indeed, right from the topsoil the material was much different to that recovered from trench in area B, containing some Classical fragments, little Hellenistic, and substantial amounts of LBA sherds. The first feature to be exposed in this trench right below the surface was a circular fireplace partially covered by the W baulk. It should be the latest LBA feature in this area, associated most probably with the Late Helladic (LH) IIIB/C material excavated around it. At a slightly lower level, first walls started to emerge. Upon fuller exposure (Fig. 3), a substantial E-W running wall was revealed (Wall 4), with a narrower wall running perpendicularly in two stretches separated by a small opening (Walls 3 and 1). A further small stretch of E-W oriented wall was exposed in the S part of the trench (Wall 2). The walls appear to represent a multi-phased structure, as they were clearly not built at the same time, with Wall 4 being the earliest. Bearing in mind that we are dealing with a very narrow trench and limited exposure, we could tentatively suggest that the areas to the S of this wall comprise the interior of a building, while the area N of it was an exterior space.

Material recovered from within the walls dates to LH IIIA-B periods. The lower levels yielded exclusively LH IIIA2 pottery, including an almost complete one-handed kylix (Fig. 4).

Below the stone walls, and in particular in the N part of the trench, remains of mudbrick walls were revealed. They appear to form a structure with a slightly different orientation to the LH IIIA-B building, and its full extent and depth will be investigated in the future seasons. The material in those lowest levels still contained a fair amount of LH IIIA2 pottery, including mendable fragments, but also significant amounts of Middle Helladic (MH)-early LH pottery.

### Summary

Despite limited exposure, the research in 2023 provided very important clues as to the settlement history of Pefkakia. Starting with the earliest remains, we now have firm evidence for the activity beyond the site of Pefkakia Magoula dating back to late MH/

early LH period, possibly associated with mudbrick architecture. We may also have a better understanding of where the Early Mycenaean settlement might have been, due to the presence of a number of pottery fragments of such date in the later fills in trench B01. Nevertheless, trench C01 also produced some Early Mycenaean fragments. Most importantly, we managed to expose substantial remains belonging to the LH IIIA2 phase (Fig. 4), crucial for the understanding of the development of Mycenaean Pefkakia into a major settlement of the area, that seem not to have been heavily overbuilt by later activity, in contrast to area A of the site. With regard to the final stage of Mycenaean occupation, we see a possibility of a continued habitation past 1200 BC, with pottery fragments from more developed LH IIIC in upper layers of trench C01. Finally, we gained a much better understanding of the Hellenistic and later activity in the northernmost part of the settlement in trench B01.



Fig. 4. Near-complete low-footed LH IIIA2 kylix from trench C01

Bartłomiej Lis – IAE PAS, al. Solidarności 105, 00-140 Warsaw, Poland.  
Email: blis@iaepan.edu.pl

Anthi Batziou – Ephorate of Antiquities of Magnesia, Ministry of Culture of the Hellenic Republic, Athanasaki 1, 382 22 Volos, Greece.  
Email: abatziou@gmail.com

### Acknowledgments

The excavation project is funded through NSCP (Poland) grant No. 2020/38/E/HS3/00512.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Batziou-Efstathiou, A. 2012. Ανασκαφή μυκηναϊκού οικισμού στα Πευκάκια, 2006-2008. In: Mazarakis Ainiian, A. (ed.): Αρχαιολογικό έργο Θεσσαλίας και Στερεάς Ελλάδας, 3. Proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Archaeological Meeting of Thessaly and Central Greece 2006–2008. From Prehistory to the Contemporary Period, Volos, 177–192

Batziou-Efstathiou, A. 2015. Η τελική φάση κατοίκησης του μυκηναϊκού οικισμού στα Πευκάκια. In: Mazarakis Ainiian, A. (ed.): Αρχαιολογικό έργο Θεσσαλίας και Στερεάς Ελλάδας, 4. 2012. Πρακτικά επιστημονικής συνάντησης Βόλος 15.3 - 18.3.2012, Volos, 133–144