

The Mycenaean Pefkakia Archaeological Project – report on the 2024 excavation season

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Introduction

In this article, we report on the second excavation season at the site of Mycenaean Pefkakia constituting part of a five-year (2022-2026) archaeological project that is a collaboration between the PAIA and the Ephorate of Antiquities of Magnesia, co-directed by Anthi Batziou (Ephorate of Antiquities of Magnesia) and Bartłomiej Lis (IAE PAS). During the first excavation season, which followed extensive geophysical and geoarchaeological investigations, we had initiated work in two sectors of the site designated as B and C (for a preliminary report, see Lis et al. 2024 and PAIA Bulletin #2). During the 2024 season, excavation continued in both trenches opened in 2023 (B01 and C01), and a third trench (C02) was opened to the north of trench C01 (Fig. 1).

Sector C

Trench C01, opened initially in 2023 as a 5 x 2 m test trench, was extended 3 m to the west in 2024 to form a 5 x 5 m square (Fig. 2). Work focused on the newly opened western part, with the aim of providing a fuller exposure of contexts excavated in 2023. After the removal of topsoil, several walls were exposed,

two of which were continuation of walls uncovered in 2023 (Walls 02 and 04). They formed a central rectangular space, designated as Area 3. Although no clear floor level was identified, the material discovered within that space suggests that it was used for metallurgical activities. Several coarse fragments of crucibles, as well as clay moulds, were found here. In addition, an ash pit was discovered roughly in the centre of Area 3. Ceramics associated with that level, including linear semi-globular cups, provide an estimated date around 1200 BC.

Approximately 40 cm below the metallurgical level, at the base of the substantial, east-west running Wall 04, a partially plastered floor level was uncovered. Material found on top of this floor and in the fill above dates its use to Late Helladic IIIA2 Early (first half of 14th century BC, Fig. 3). No architecture can be associated with this floor so far, as the foundation trench for Wall 04 clearly cuts through it. Accumulations belonging to the late Middle Bronze and early Late Bronze Age were found below the floor, deposited over an uneven bedrock surface. It is worth noting that among the pottery from these early levels there are quite elaborate pieces, such as imported Vapheio cups and a fragment of a palace-style jar.

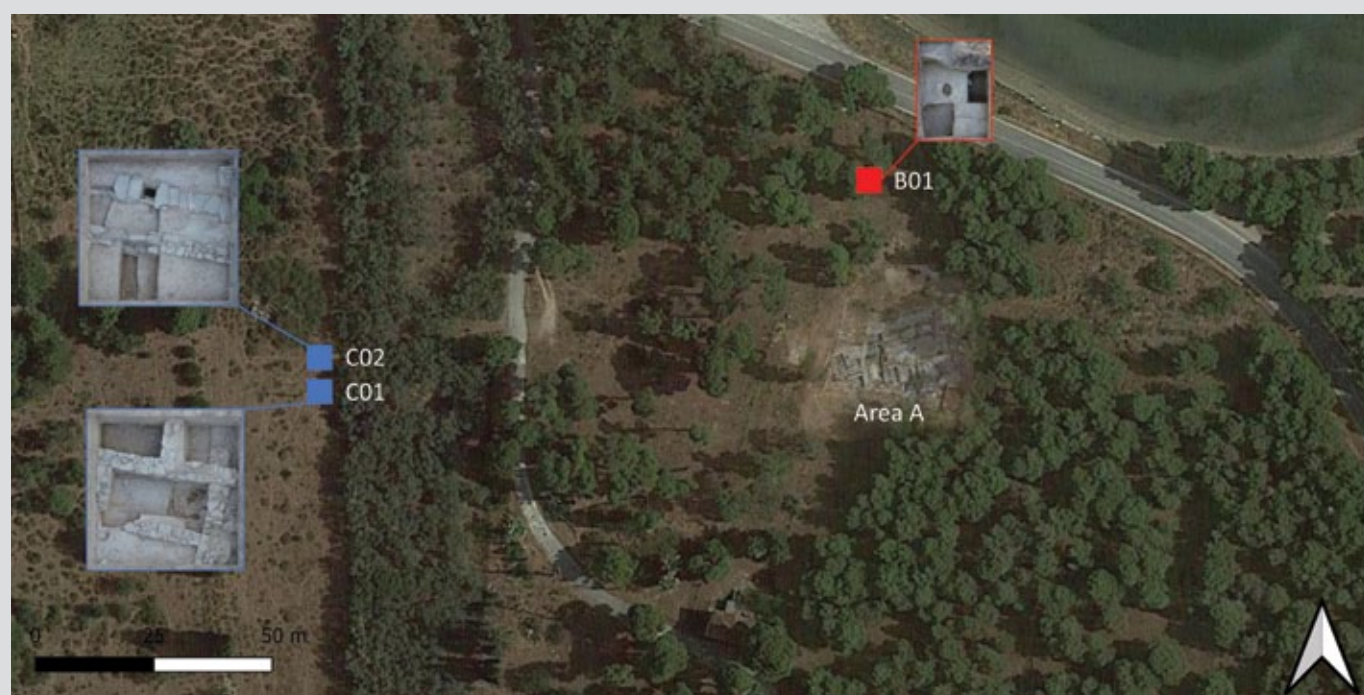


Fig. 1. Aerial view of Pefkakia with location of trenches explored in 2024 and area A. Photo by B. Lis



Fig. 2. Final aerial view of trench C01 with walls and areas marked. Prepared by B. Lis

Trench C02 was opened as a 5 x 5 m square, 2 m to the north of trench C01, to investigate regular anomalies identified in the geophysical survey and to verify their relationship with the remains revealed in trench C01.

Directly below the surface, a deposit of broken tiles and small finds, predominantly loomweights, associated with a disturbed floor deposit dating to the Hellenistic period was revealed. Only two blocks of an original wall of the structure remain *in situ*. Below those blocks, a more substantial wall (Wall 12), with evidence of remodelling, came to light, running parallel to Wall 04 exposed in trench C01.

To the north of that wall, we uncovered a sequence of superimposed floor levels, sandwiched within a vertical distance of less than 30 cm. The uppermost floor level consists of poorly preserved patches associated with the Hellenistic deposit mentioned above. The second, dating back to the Late Bronze Age but with a considerable admixture of Hellenistic material on top of it, proved to cover a very well-built drain. The drain, exposed along the width of the entire trench, runs approximately west-east, sloping down towards the E. It is composed of vertical slabs arranged in two parallel rows, covered with large, flat slabs, with small stones wedged in between (Fig. 4). Material from the drain's interior dates to LH IIIA2-B. The third and lowermost floor, composed of a thick layer of yellow clay, dates to the LH IIIA2 period. Excavations in this area stopped at the level of this last floor.



Fig. 3. LH IIIA2 Early juglet from trench C01

In contrast, no floor levels were identified south of Wall 12, similarly to Areas 4 and 5 to the north of Wall 04 in trench C01. Nevertheless, at the lowest excavated level in this part of trench C02, a complete skeleton of a young adult was exposed, containing no grave goods and without any clear outlines of a burial pit. The layer in which it was placed contained LH IIIA2 material.



Fig. 4. Interior of drain in trench C02 after removal of a covering slab. Prepared by K. Warecka

Sector B

The purpose of our return to trench B01, where a children's cemetery was revealed in 2023, was two-fold. First, a possible tile grave, whose very top was revealed in the northwest corner of the trench in 2023, required investigation. Second, its excavation would also expand the area available for investigations aimed at reaching LBA levels, an ultimate goal of the trench opening. Excavation of the tile grave revealed the skeleton of a child, confirming the picture arising from fieldwork in 2023 and subsequent anthropological investigations. Like the other burials excavated in 2023, it was devoid of grave goods. This feature, along with an image of a fish impressed on the large tiles forming the sides of the burial, suggests that this is a Christian internment dating back to the Roman period.

After the burial was removed, excavation revealed a well-made surface composed of tightly packed tiles and sherds. The surface dates to the Hellenistic period, although it contains some earlier material, including Mycenaean pottery and a single figurine fragment. A small clay oven was revealed below this surface. The presence of an iron slag suggests association with metallurgical activity. Towards the end of the season, a sounding was made to investigate lower-lying levels. It yielded a deposit of densely packed pottery dating to the early Hellenistic period, comprising mostly high-quality tableware and cooking pots. Excavations stopped at a level of ca. 0.9 m above the sea level, without reaching the LBA levels.

Summary

Thanks to fieldwork in 2024, we gained a better understanding of the late MBA/early LBA history of habitation in Sector C, with layers excavated directly above the bedrock. Nevertheless, we still lack clear habitation levels or architecture. The exposure of a partially plastered floor dating to LH IIIA2 Early may

indicate the presence of an important building that will be further investigated in the future. Another substantial feature dating to the later LBA is a well-built drain, with parallels in Megaron A at Dimini (Adrymi-Sismani 2014, 170-171). The period around 1200 BC appears to be associated with intense craft activities, first documented in Sector A (Batziou 2015). Both trenches excavated in 2024, C02 and B01, provided new evidence for Hellenistic activity, which will be further investigated in the following seasons. Another grave, probably from the Roman period, supplements the evidence discovered in 2023 of a children's cemetery directly south of the city wall of Demetrias.

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