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A Late Helladic III A1 deposit from Kontopigado, Alimos and processes of Mycenaeanization at Athens

KONSTANTINA KAZA-PAPAGEORGIΟΥ – ELEFThERIA KARDAMAKI

Ein Späthelladisch-III-A1-Befund aus Kontopigado, Alimos, und Prozesse der Mykenisierung in Athen

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG Ausgrabungen in Kontopigado, Alimos, haben bedeutende neue Anhaltspunkte für die in stratifizierten Siedlungsbefunden in Attika und Südgriechenland selten zu findende Keramikphase SH III A1 erbracht, die hier detailliert besprochen werden. Das Warenspektrum der bei der Auffüllung einer flachen Grube deponierten Keramik steht in deutlichem Kontrast zu dem der anschließenden mykenischen Besiedlungsphasen. Am auffälligsten ist das fast ausnahmslose Fehlen von mit Mustern bemalter mykenischer Keramik, einer Gattung, die in der Phase SH III A1 andernorts bereits gängig war. Im Vergleich mit der in der unmittelbar anschließenden Phase verwendeten Keramik sind Veränderungen zu beobachten, die im Hinblick auf den allgemeinen Prozess der Mykenisierung diskutiert werden. Ferner ist festzustellen, dass sich verschiedene regionale Eigenheiten der SH III A2- und SH III B-Keramik in Athen entweder seit SH III A1 ungebrochen fortsetzten oder Eingang in die neu entstehenden Stile fanden.

Schlagwörter Kontopigado; Akropolis; SH III A1; polierte Keramik; Mykenisierung.

ABSTRACT Important new evidence for the pottery phase LH III A1, rarely represented in stratified settlement deposits in Attica and southern Greece, has come from the excavations in Kontopigado, Alimos; it is discussed here in detail. The pottery, part of a dump discarded in a shallow pit, is characterized by a variety of wares and contrasts strongly with pottery traditions on the site in the subsequent Mycenaean occupation phases. The most striking feature is the almost complete absence of Mycenaean pattern painted pottery, a ware that by LH III A1 was already common in many regions. The changes observed in the pottery consumed in the immediately following phase are discussed with regard to the general processes of Mycenaeanization. Moreover, several regional features, characteristic of the LH III A2 and LH III B pottery at Athens, were continued from LH III A1 either unchanged or were integrated into the new styles.

Keywords Kontopigado; Acropolis; LH III A1; burnished pottery; Mycenaeanization.

Ένα υστεροελλαδικό III A1 εύρημα από το Κοντοπήγαδο, στον Αλιμο, και διαδικασίες εκμυκηναϊσμού στην Αθήνα

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ Οι ανασκαφές στο Κοντοπήγαδο, στον Άλιμο, ανέδειξαν νέα σημαντικά στοιχεία της σπάνια αντιπροσωπευόμενης κεραμικής φάσης ΥΕ III A1 σε στρωματογραφημένα οικιστικά ευρήματα που βρέθηκαν στην Αττική και στην Νότια Ελλάδα. Στοιχεία, τα οποία σχολιάζονται εδώ λεπτομερώς. Το εύρος των κεραμικών αντικειμένων που εναποτέθηκαν στο γέμισμα ενός ρηχού λάκκου έρχεται σε άμεση αντίθεση με τις ακόλουθες μυκηναϊκές οικιστικές φάσεις. Το πιο έκδηλο χαρακτηριστικό είναι η σχεδόν χωρίς εξαίρεση έλλειψη μυκηναϊκής κεραμικής διακοσμημένης με μοτίβα, ενός είδους, το οποίο στην φάση ΥΕ III A1 ήταν ήδη συνηθισμένο σε άλλες περιοχές. Οι παρατηρούμενες διαφορές σε σύγκριση με την κεραμική, όπως χρησιμοποιείται στην αμέσως επόμενη φάση της, συζητιούνται, λαμβάνοντας υπόψη την γενικότερη διαδικασία του εκμυκηναϊσμού. Επιπρόσθετα, διαπιστώνεται ότι διάφορα τοπικά χαρακτηριστικά της ΥΕ III A2 και ΥΕ III B κεραμικής στην Αθήνα είτε συνεχίζουν αδιάσπαστα από την ΥΕ III A1 είτε εισάγονται σε καινούριες τεχνολογίες.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά Κοντοπήγαδο. Ακρόπολη. ΥΕ III A1, Στιλβωμένη κεραμική. Εκμυκηναϊσμός.

INTRODUCTION

The following paper discusses a group of LH III A1 vessels and sherds from the Mycenaean settlement at Kontopigado, in the northeastern part of the area known as Trachones and lying 5 km south of the Athenian Acropolis¹. The LH III A1 pottery assemblage was discovered within a shallow pit cut in the bedrock in the eastern part of the settlement (Building Complex II)². The excavation there yielded layers of the EBA and LBA periods, but the architectural remains were in a poor state of preservation due to soil erosion. From the Mycenaean structures, the walls of an elongated building with a northwest-southeast orientation and subdivided into rooms has survived, but no substantial floor deposits were discovered. Later Mycenaean walls, assigned to structures with different orientation, appear to exist as well.

The LH III A1 pottery discovered in the rock-cut pit (Pit VIII) represents a homogenous group basically without later contamination. Although the deposit cannot be readily connected to any house remains, it is of no less significance, as it allows us to trace the earliest Mycenaean occupation at the site to the beginning of the 14th century. Moreover, it adds important new knowledge to the understanding of a phase still very little known from settlement contexts and it helps us reconstruct the development of the pottery production in the wider region of Athens or Attica during 14th century B.C. The new deposit is characterized by a wide range of wares and fabrics of local and non-local provenance, quite unknown at this level of quantity from later phases of occupation at the site. One striking aspect is the extreme rarity, perhaps even absence, of the pattern painted Mycenaean pottery: this seems to have played no significant role in the assemblage under discussion, contrary to what is known from contemporary settlements in other regions³.

BUILDING COMPLEX II

The Building Complex II extends over the southeastern part of a hill largely disturbed by the modern construction of roads (e.g. Vouliagmeni Avenue; *fig. 1*)⁴. On the remaining part of the hill, where Building Complexes I and II are located, a 2–3 m thick fill had accumu-

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The following abbreviations are used throughout the paper, in addition to those commonly employed under DAI guidelines:

AAS . . . Atomic absorption spectroscopy
 NAA . . . Neutron activation analysis
 EH . . . Early Helladic
 MH . . . Middle Helladic
 LH . . . Late Helladic
 EBA . . . Early Bronze Age
 MBA . . . Middle Bronze Age
 LBA . . . Late Bronze Age

¹ Trachones is a toponym mainly known from the ancient theater of Euonymos, see Hope-Simpson – Dickinson 1979, 206 F15, and the more extensive bibliography in Kaza-Papageorgiou et al. 2011, 197 n. 2. At two places at Kontopigado, both on the west axis of Vouliagmeni Avenue and 300 m apart from each other, residential and workshop remains were discovered during rescue excavations by the Archaeological Service. See Kaza-Papageorgiou 1987, 68 f.; Kaza-Papageorgiou 1993, 66–69 figs. 2, 3; Kaza-Papageorgiou 2001–2004, 465–467. See also Kaza-Papageorgiou et al. 2011; Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2012; Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2014; Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2017; Kaza-Papageorgiou 2016, 94–96, 100–113; Kardamaki 2012/2013, 47–55.

² Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2012, 145 plan 1.

³ See French 1964 (Atreus Bothros, Mycenae); Martin 1992 (Nichoria); Frizell 1980 (Asine, LH II C / LH III A1); Catling 2009a and b (Menelaion, LH II C / LH III A1); Vitale 2013 (Mitrou). For discussion, see Kardamaki 2017.

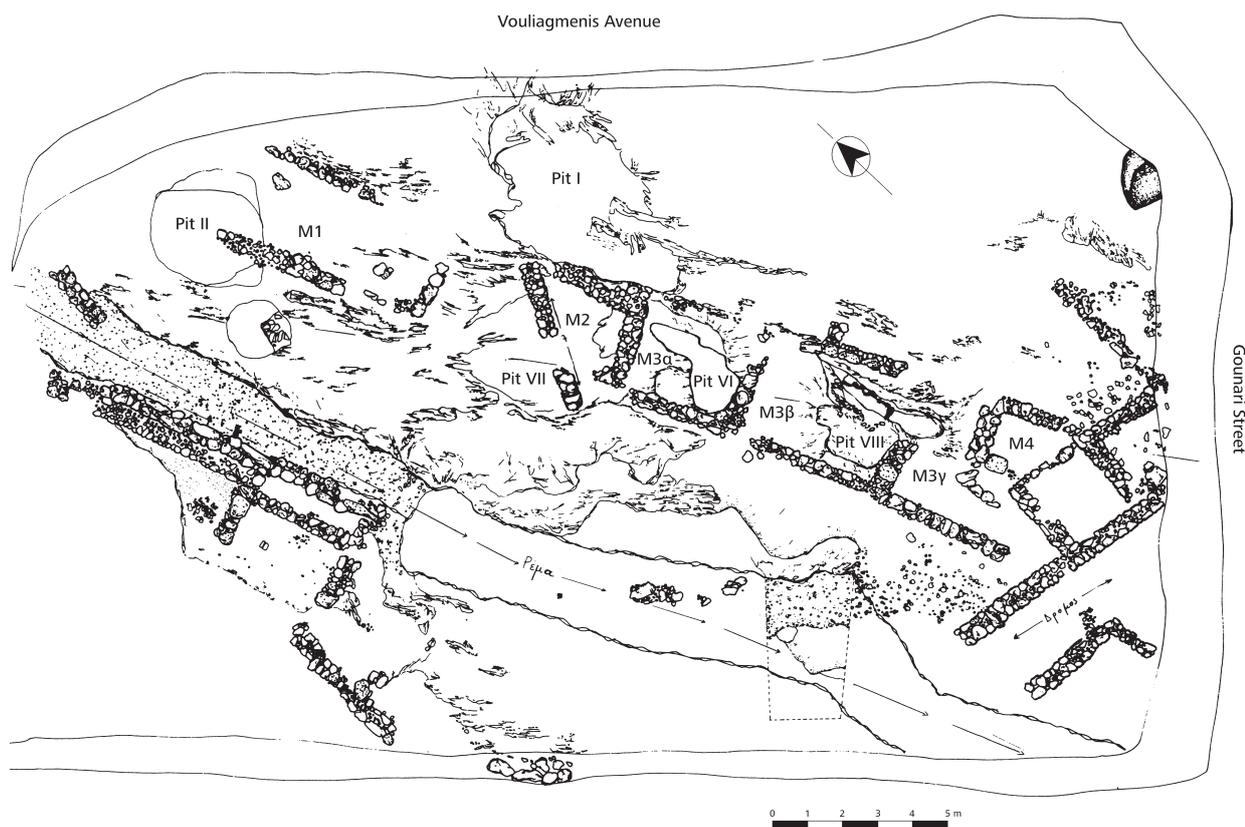


Fig. 1 Building Complex II with Mycenaean houses (M1–M4) and Pit VIII under Room M3β

lated from the construction works of the adjacent modern roads. After the removal of this fill, a 20–40 cm thick layer, containing mainly Mycenaean as well as EH and a very few Classical sherds, came to light. This had covered the Mycenaean and EH wall remains that appeared at approximately the same level. The latter walls are mainly preserved in the northeastern and southeastern part of the Building Complex I, whereas its central part is occupied by buildings of the Mycenaean period. Some of the EH walls seem to have been used also during the LBA. Thus, the earliest occupation in the area is represented by the EH I fill of a stream, partly artificially aligned, and a series of pits (Pits I. III) opened in the previously leveled natural bedrock. Besides pottery, the EH I fill contained obsidian blades and cores, as well as metallurgical objects (a mold), suggesting that during this period workshop activities took place on the hill⁵. The EH II wall remains that succeeded the filling in of the stream and the pits seem to belong to houses: there is evidence here for the use of seals⁶.

At Kontopigado, MBA pottery is sparse; the same is true for the LH II pottery. A dense occupation is attested again only from the 14th century B.C. (LH III A) onwards down to LH III C Early 1⁷. Although the whole area belonged to the Euonimos deme and was occu-

⁴ Kaza-Papageorgiou 1993, 66–69 figs. 2, 3; Kaza-Papageorgiou 2006, 31–34.

⁵ The importation and processing of obsidian has been postulated also for Ayios Kosmas (Mylonas 1959, 15, 162 f.)

⁶ CMS V, Suppl. 3, 2, no. 306.

⁷ For LH III A2, see Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2017, 43 fig. 28; 49–51 fig. 29. 52. There are various room deposits from different building phases that have been assigned to LH III C Early 1 (see Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2017, 30–42 figs. 21–27).

Some sherds that could date to LH III B appear mainly in fills or floors (Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2014, 86 fig. 17, 36, 37; 89; Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2017, 34 fig. 21, 55; 35 fig. 22, 71) but layers assigned exclusively to LH III B1 or LH III B2 based on the criteria from the Argolid have not been identified. This has been interpreted as evidence for the existence of regional styles throughout the greater part of LH III B – and even LH III A2 – rather than an occupational hiatus (Kaza-Papageorgiou – Kardamaki 2017, 61–66).

pied again from the 8th century, the hill of Building Complexes I–II was not used for habitation in the Classical period.

THE STRATIGRAPHY

During the LBA, there are three building phases in the Building Complex II (*fig. 1*). To the latest one belong the remains of a small room (M4) whose walls rest on a fill extending to the north and covering the walls of the elongated Building M3. Further to the north the remains of two other rooms – M1 and M2 – exist, of which M2 belongs to an earlier phase than Building M3. The latter structure has an internal subdivision, creating rectangular rooms of roughly equal (?) size (Rooms M3 α –M3 γ). The exterior walls of M3 and M1 rest on the natural bedrock, but their partition walls are placed on top of a fill (see below; *fig. 2, 2*). The layer that covered the walls and rooms of Building M3 (in the interior of the rooms up to a level of approximately 10 cm below the preserved surface of the partition walls) was in parts very hard and contained a large amount of pottery, mainly fragmented. The latest pottery dates to LH III B or LH III C Early, but many sherds have been assigned also to LH III A2 (basket 136). Under this layer and close to the southeast end of Room M3 β , a structure consisting of stone slabs appeared: it was resting on a roughly triangular stone foundation with rounded corners (*fig. 1*). There is no evidence of how the stone slabs were used, but this structure possibly marks the level of the original and now lost floor of Room M3 β (*fig. 1*). The stone foundation and partition walls of Building M3 were enveloped in a 35 cm-thick layer consisting of a large amount of well-packed small stones, red soil and a very large number of sherds (*fig. 2, 2*). The pottery from this fill (baskets 156. 157) dates to LH III A2, but is possibly contaminated with later material. This very same fill was also detected within some rock cut pits under Rooms M1–M3 γ (Pits II. VI. VII. VIII). However, in case of Pit VIII under Room M3 β this fill was observed only in the higher parts of the pit: it sealed the LH III A1 pottery deposit that will be presented below. Pit VIII has an irregular form: it measures roughly 5 m² in area, with almost vertical sides to the north and west. Across the east side of the pit runs a narrow groove in the bedrock that is almost 50 cm deeper than the rest of the bottom surface of the pit (*figs. 1, 2, 1*). The fill of Pit VIII represents the only LH III A1 closed deposit discovered thus far in Kontopigado.

THE POTTERY

A total of 155 diagnostic pottery sherds and vessels was recorded from the bottom and lower levels of Pit VIII. The contents of the pit were collected in nine pottery baskets but there was no differentiation in the soil⁸. Parts of 18 vessels (11.6 % of the total) consist of sherds exhibiting joins between these nine pottery baskets, whereas 17 further such cases (11 % of the total) had joins with sherds from higher levels. The latter phenomenon rather suggests that the fill of the pit originally had a greater depth and that its higher levels were disturbed in the course of later activities. Special mention is made of pottery basket 349 that comes from the highest part of the LH III A1 deposit. The presence of fine plain Mycenaean sherds here appears to be more frequent than usual, which indicates that basket 349 probably contains some later material. Many of the fragmentary vases preserve a good part of

⁸ Basket nos. 300. 326. 347. 348. 349. 350. 353. 354. 355.



Fig. 2

1. Pit VIII after excavation from west (in the center of the photo) –
2. North wall of M3α resting on the layer with small stones and red soil that covered the pits under the Mycenaean building

their original profile; indeed four vessels are almost wholly mended or preserve their full profile (*figs. 4, 31; 5, 32; 6, 56*). Of the total, 21 % is made up from small sherds and another 16 % by bigger pieces⁹. Almost 19 % of the rim fragments (86) preserve more than 20 % of their rim circumference. The majority of the pottery shows traces of abrasion from use on the exterior rim, exterior and interior base and once on the exterior belly where was the maximum diameter. The traces of wear take the form of small vertical and parallel scratches¹⁰. Based on the above, it seems possible that a large part of the material had been in use at the time of its deposition. The largest part of the material comes from open vases (56 % of

⁹ For the differentiation between small (<5 cm), medium (5–10 cm) and big (>10 cm) sherds, see Stockhammer 2008, 70.

¹⁰ Cf. Lis 2013, 9 fig. 2, 4; 9 for similar scratches on vessels from Lefkandi, Phase 1a that can be associated with the function of scooping.