A Mycenaean Sanctuary on Methana
by Eleni Konsolaki

Abstract
The hill of Ayios Konstantinos on the east coast of Methana, the remains of a Late Helladic settlement were uncovered in an excavation of the 2nd Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities in 1996. One of the excavated rooms has the main architectural features of a shrine, i.e. an entrance to the naos, a stepped trench in the north-western corner opposite the entrance, a low platform running along its south wall and a bench seat in its south-eastern corner. This room has yielded a large number of terracotta figurines, along with some pottery that can be interpreted as cult equipment. The figurines were mostly female, but some very rare categories were also represented in surprising numbers: chariot groups, horses with helmeted riders, ridden men, groups, and driven chariot groups. The presence of the common Phi and Pra figures is a striking feature of the assemblage, which suggests that the cult of a male deity, perhaps accompanied by a female one in a subordinate role. As this deity seems to be closely connected with bulls and horses, the cult of a precursor of Poseidon and Hippolytos, pre-dating the foundation of the temples of Artemis at calamia and Troezen, is a possible interpretation.

Methana is a small, montaneous peninsula in Troezenia (in the north-eastern part of the Peloponnese), projecting far out into the Saronic Gulf, between the isles of Aegina and Poros (ancient Calea). On the hill of Ayios Konstantinos, lying on the east coast of the peninsula, opposite Calaeris, at a distance of 1.5 km to the north of the modern port of Methana, a recent excavation (still in progress) of the Greek Archaeological Service2 has brought to light architectural remains of the Mycenaean period.

Abbreviations
In addition to the customary abbreviations, the following are also used:

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I am grateful to Professor Robin Hägg for having given me the opportunity to present this paper at the Symposium, as well as for his warm interest in my work and for all the fruitful discussions we have had in the topic. In particular, I would like to express to him my appreciation for having drawn my attention to important bibliography.

My special thanks are due to Dr Vasileios Poterkos, Honorary Editor of the Antiquities of Attica, for having supported the excavation presented here and having facilitated my study in every possible way.

The investigation of this important site will be continued in the future as a major excavation for which I have a personal permit, granted by the archaeological council, thanks to the warm support of the Director of the Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, Dr. Yiannis Tzidakis, to whom I express my deep gratitude, I am also indebted to this important for having generously provided the funds that will enable me to continue my work.

I am extremely grateful to Dr K.A. Wulff, who is supervising my Ph.D. thesis on this sanctuary at the University of Birmingham, for the very important role that he has played in the whole progress of my study. I am obliged to the British School of Athens for having enabled me to attend a British university by awarding me a Cenvean Bursary.

My warmest thanks go to M.B. French, to whom I owe a great deal. She has unfailingly offered me invaluable advice, useful suggestions, critical assessment and moral support at every stage of my study, the preparation of this paper included.

1 Archaeological research on Methana had in the past been rather poor and the available bibliography was meager, but the situation has recently changed and relevant studies are now being rapidly produced. See E. Meyer, Methana, RE XVII (1922), 1377–1379, with ref. to previous bibliography; N. Phalkasias, Troezenia, Calaeris, Methana (Ancient Greek cities, vol. 10), Athens 1972; R. Hope Simpson & O.T.P. Dickinson, A guide to Aegian civilization in the legendary Age, Vol. I: The mainland and the islands (SIMA, 52), Gineva 1979, 56. Brief important works of the Greek Archaeological Service 2nd Ephoria have been published in Archaeol. 34, 1979 (pp. 1957), 71f., 1095, 1121 (pp. 1988), 95, 57, 1983 (pp. 1989), 51, 38, 1983 (pp 1980), 64, 39, 1984 (pp 1989), 58f. The most important work was the intensive surface survey conducted by the University of Liverpool under the direction of C.B. Mee and H.A. Forbes for the British School at Athens in 1984–86; see the preliminary reports in Anth. 31, 1984, 45, 251, 32, 1985–86, 26, 25, 1986–87, 15f., 34, 1987–88, 22f. See also the final publication of the results of the Methana survey project, C. Mee & H. Forbes, A rough and rocky place: The landscape and settlement history of the Methana peninsula, Greece, Liverpool 1997, with further bibliography.

2 The excavation, conducted on behalf of the 2nd Ephoria of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, was funded by the local priest applied for permission to extend the main crouch of Ayios Konstantinos and Eleni. See report in Archaeol. 45, 1991 (pp. 1996), Oxford. 71–74, with pp. 40–42. A paper on this topic was presented at the Mycenaean Seminars of the University of London on 1 December 1993 (see the abstract in BICS 40, 1993, 242). The present paper is only a preliminary presentation of the results of the excavation so far, as digging has not yet been completed and the material is still being studied. All the unpublished finds presented here will be more extensively discussed in my forthcoming thesis, based on this material, and in the final publication.
The excavated structures are sited in the courtyard of the church of Ayios Konstantinos and Eleni, occupying the south-western part of the top terrace of the hill, and are situated within a larger, prehistoric settlement. Surface remains of what appear to be prehistoric walls can be traced in the neighbouring fields within a radius of c. 150 m around the hill's summit, which is 114 m above sea level. The shore below forms a natural inlet, which would be quite convenient for the anchorage of small boats, but the rocky land, rising rather steeply at its back, does not provide easy access inland.
The LH remains lie below a very shallow, surface layer (at a depth ranging from 10 to 30 cm) and they rest on the natural bedrock, which has been roughly levelled off in the interior of the buildings. Outside the excavated rooms, occasional outcrops of rock project above the surface of the ground and some of these have been incorporated into the Mycenaean walls.

Up to 1993, digging was completed in four rooms, located to the west of the church (Fig. 1). One of these (the second one from the south in the plan, Fig. 1) seems to have had a particularly cultic function. It displays distinctive architectural features of a Mycenaean bench shrine9 and has yielded a very large number of Mycenaean terracotta figurines, along with some pottery; and some other special objects, which may be interpreted as cult paraphernalia.

This room (Fig. 2) measures internally c. 4.30 m by 2.60 m, its main axis runs east-west, and is entered through a door.

9 The room to the north-west is illustrated in the plan (Fig. 1) before the final stage of clearance.


The stepped type of altar/bench is mainly known from Minyan religious architecture, and is only occasionally found elsewhere. For example, the stepped altar in the inner courtyard of the "villa" at Nirou Khani (see illustration in B. Reinhardt, Frühgriechische Kultanlagen, Berlin 1981, pl. 4.1); the altar in the north-western corner of the Central Court at Phaestos is illustrated especially well in Mommsen 1904, pl. XXXII.2; for the clay model from P moldopoi, see Ch. Zervos, L'art de la Crète minoen et mycénia (Paris 1956, fig. 597); for the stepped altar depicted on the Aya Thalassa sarcophagus, see C.R. Long, The Aya Thalassa sarcophagus. A study of Late Minyan and Mycenaean funerary practices and beliefs (SIMA, 41), Göttingen 1974, fig. 52. On the mainland, it is only the "Temple" and the "Room with the Fresco" at Mycenae that provide examples of similar benches; see the depictions, for instance, in French (supra n. 6), figs. 1, 4, 7 and 9.
Opposite the bench, there is a very low platform, made of stone slabs c. 5 cm thick, running along the south wall of the room (Fig. 5). A small central recess between the platform and the steps to the bench is also paved with stone slabs forming a low dias or podium, whereas the floor of the rest of the room consists of a layer of beaten earth mixed with pebbles, overlying the levigated bedrock.

The pavement, broken edge of the slab set in the south-western corner seems to indicate that this platform also occupied part of the length of the west wall. A similar arrangement is to be seen in the bench/platform of the "Temple" at Mycenae; see the illustrations in French (supra, n. 3, Figs. 1, 4 and 7).

To the left of the doorway, in the south-eastern corner of the room, a small hearth was revealed, fitted with ash and burnt animal bones, providing evidence of animal sacrifice.

The hearth is constructed with a few rough stones placed near the corner and is paved with flat stones, set either irregularly at its bottom (Fig. 6). A spit, made of tachyte, was set to the right of it, and a saddle quern, made of the same mate-

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6 The pavement, broken edge of the slab set in the south-western corner seems to indicate that this platform also occupied part of the length of the west wall. A similar arrangement is to be seen in the bench/platform of the "Temple" at Mycenae; see the illustrations in French (supra, n. 3, Figs. 1, 4 and 7).

7 See the details of the "Temple" at Mycenae; see the depictions in French (supra, n. 3, Figs. 1, 4 and 7).

8 The study of animal bones has been undertaken by Dr. Yannis Hamilakis, of the University of Sheffield. The bones assembled in this room displayed a heavy preponderance of juvenile pigs, whereas the bone waste removed from other rooms contained mainly carnivores (oral communication).

Fig. 5. Methana. The cult room with the bench, the platform and the dais. Viewed from the east.

Fig. 6. Methana. The heath in the south-eastern corner of the room.

rial, was set to the left. Tripod cauldrons and other cooking pots found near the bench attest to its use for cooking, roasting, as well as animal sacrifices. Food residues, such as small pieces of animal bones, fish bones and a large number of limpet shells, were also found scattered all over the room.

Near the south-western corner of the room was found a segment from the upper part of a large jar, resting on the floor with its neck turned to the ground (Fig. 7). This may have been a device for libations, since there is sufficient evidence of similar fragmentary pots that have been plausibly interpreted as cult vessels serving this purpose at other sites where cult practice has been assumed. The pottery associated with it consisted of a plain dipper, a plain two-handled cup, a straight-sided alabastron and an animal-head rhyton of ex-

10 Limpet shells were found in abundance, both in the cult room and elsewhere on the site. A similar distribution pattern of limpet shells occurred at Phylakopi; see Reitew (supra n. 4), 326.
11 R. Higg, "The role of libations in Mycenaean ceremony and cult", in Celebrations, 177–184; idem 1985 (supra n. 4), esp. 221, n. 34; Å. Åkerström, "Cletic installations in Mycenaean rooms and tombs", in Prolegomena, 201–209, esp. 201.
12 On the typology and functions of Bronze Age rhyta, see R. Koldob, "The functions of Aegean Bronze Age rhyta", in JCD 1984, 179–187 with a chart of the typological development in fig. 7. Animal-headed rhyta, in contrast to the other types that were also used for domestic purposes, have not occurred in non-religious contexts; see Kilian (supra n. 9), 58; idem, AA 1982, 403. For animal-head rhyta of the Mycenaean period in particular, see Ch. Doumas, "A Mycenaean rhyton from Naou"; AA 1968, 374–389, with refs. to previous bibliography. As Doumas remarks, "It may, perhaps, be of importance that the vessels of this group were found at sites which lie on the route from the Greek mainland to the east and vice versa: Tiryns, Naou, Cuphato, Cypria, and Ras Shamra". Methana lies on the same route and thus may not be without significance for its possible role in the maritime trade, as postulated below. On the eastern origin of the cultic function of the Cornat animal-head rhyta, see K. Tschöck, "Die gelbe und Färbemittel (Die Forsch, 22), Berlin 1962, 39.
The fact that we have a statuette in the form of a wūtēl’s head, combined with actual evidence of the mock sacrificial rite of pigs, provides strong confirmation of the hypothesis that there was a close ritual connection between animal sacrifice and burials, as suggested by Hågg (1990, supra n. 11), 58f, with n. 54; on the use of animal-head rhyton for blood libation, see also S. Laffont, ‘Les rites et l’image dans l’Église préchristienne’, in Théâtre, L’Église Préchris-
tienne et le Mon-Ache de la troisième Époque sigillée interna-

I wish to thank J. Sokolowski for his critical remarks on the religious symbolism of this animal, on account of its mixed features, and for drawing my attention to the example of the veiled head incised on the dagger found on the kūpupu sacrificial victim at Archae-
ology, see E. J. Sokolowski, Archaeology, Athens 1991, 121; Sanders (supra n. 6), 256, also stresses the religious character of composite statues showing features of several, different, living species.

On the use of the critical rhyton, see E. Specht, ‘Zum ‘‘Schatzoffert-
zimmer’’ Rhyton’, Arch 1961, 1–19. The suggestion that myths of this type were not intended for liquids but for grass is very interesting, but the example from Methana is a miniature and so apotropaic is too narrow to have served for this purpose.

For the use of myth as a symbolic drinking cup in libation ves-
tacles, see Hågg (supra n. 11), 183.

The function of Albanon was usually to contain oil, perfumed oil, or unguent. This interpretation does not provide an ade-
quately explanation for the critical rhyton, which is quite unexceptional for libation vessels and must have been used occasionally for a special use. I think that their content might well have been a thick, sticky liquid, not oil as honey, which would need a carved surface to flow out more easily when a small quantity was left at the bottom; otherwise, it would remain stuck in the angle between the vertical sides and the base of the vessel. Oil is in such too to be emptied without any difficulty, and oil could be extracted by hand; for a different view, see Hågg, The last ceremony in the throne room of Neo-
sax, op. cit. 17, 1988, 99–105, esp. 103f, who favours the use of oil-

It is clear that the wall (Room 19) and the room 18 shows at the rear of the south wall of the temple at Mycenae, in which other offerings and cult equipment were stored (see Illustrations in Archaic 4, figs. 3, 4 and 16), also the niche of the West Shrine at Mycenae and Room 1A at the rear of B, where cult paraphernalia of a remarkable standard was stored, Renfrew (supra n. 4), 112–115, with figs. 3.9 and 4.1, and pls. 8–9, 16–18. In the present case, the presence of storage facilities in the same room is more likely, as there is no direct evidence of intercommunication with the adjacent rooms.
a human figure attached to the top of its head.19 All the re-
mainings terracotta should rather be interpreted as votive of-
ferings, as none of them would have been large enough to be
marked out as a cult image.

The majority of the figurines were simple bowls, ranging
from earlier, naturalistic to later, schematized types.20 In ad-
dition, there were Loves Ones21 and Ridden Ones22 groups,
two single horses,23 as well as bull figures that have been inter-
preted as votive offerings.24 All these figures were placed in a
room, which has been interpreted as a sanctuary.25 One female
figure26 is of the uncommon, Hollow Pose type,27 which was
placed in the assemblage of this room, thus occupying an outs
standing position in the context. No other human figures occurred, except for those represent-
ed in association with horses (charioteers and horsemen) and
bovids (Driven Ones and Ridden Ones groups). The depth of
the obviously Phi and Phi female figurines was a striking
feature of the deposit.28

The pottery found on the bench consisted of eight kylikes,
a deep bowl, a rounded alabaster, a miniature flint and a
miniature shell.29 The bench deposit, as it contained a large tri-
ton shell (see fig. 3), which is broken at both ends but seems
to have been modified at the apex (fig. 9). This could have
been embroidered as a musical instrument.30 As shown on the
well-known sealstone from the Idean Cave (Hemlebo

19 Illustrated here (Fig. 13); see discussion below.
figurines, RSA 66, 1972, 101-107; esp. 151-164 for animal fig-
urines, ed. "Mycenean figure and figurines, their typology and
function." in SCSMA, 173-178.
21 For examples of the type, see French 1971 (supra n. 20), 165f; ed. "The Naxos figurines," in Renewal (supra n. 4), 299-
300, esp. 298 and 300; A. Tzanavari, "Some unusual Mycenaean ter-
racotta from the Citadella House area, 1954-1965," RSA 66, 1972, 207-
265, esp. 236-242.
22 For thrones, see French 1971 (supra n. 20), 166f; Tzanavari (supra n. 21), 242f.
23 A small group of other known specimens is recorded by French 1971 (supra n. 20), 162f.
24 For a complete list of Mycenaean terracotta models of chariots, horses and horsemen, see J.H. Crowfoot, Cypriots and other means of
land transport in Bronze Age Greece (Athens Piraeus Series, 5), Athens 1981, 161-183, with refs to previous bibliography; for a general
discussion of the type, see French 1964 (supra n. 20), 211-
236; ed. naxos 1985 (supra n. 21), 252-259.
25 For a discussion of the type, see French 1971 (supra n. 20), 164f; the best preserved example was, until now, the now known "caryatid-
man" from Mycenae, on which see M.S. Hood, "A Mycenaean cor-
keyman," RSA 48, 1953, 14-99. This figure, compared with the
example seen on Mycenae, is more likely to represent a "driven or
than a horse and rider. The animal, the head of which is missing, is
taxable in style and the position of the figure mounted on it is
its awkward forerunner for the thrones. The strip of clay that has been interpreted as a spear may be the tip of a rein, the other end of which
was attached to the animal's head, as seen in the Driven Ones groups; for other
fragmentary examples of horsemen, see Crowfoot's list. Crow-
foot (supra n. 24), 161-165.
26 One of these is similar to the complete example found by E. Mylon-
as in The acropolis of Mycenae (National Museum, Athens, Inv. no. 27321), illustrated by G.M.A. Richter, The Furniture of the Grooves,
Drawings and Roman, London 1964, fig. 21, the other two belong to an unconnected type with long, tripolar pegs and a group of animals applied to its top surface.
27 Type B, according to the classification into Types by E. Mylon-
as in "Seated and multiple Mycenaean figurines in the National Museum of Athens, Greece," in The Aegaeon and the Near East. Stud-
28 The bull has modelled eyes on an oval, hollow body, thus being more a
akin to a miniature steatite in shape (although it lacks a
lozenge and a long horn) than to another bull figure described for instance, by French 1971 (supra n. 20), 160. Of the head of a similar
bull found at Hagia Triada, Klein, on which see R. Karras, "Pa-
tes and the cult activity in the Mycenaean Argolid. Hagia Triada (Kleins)," in The Philistine Sea (Hagios Histories) and the City of Tyros (in Celebration, 185-187, esp. 190, with n. 103 fig. 3, 2, 2.
29 On terracotta models of boats of the Mycenaean period, see French 1971 (supra n. 20), 117f; Tzanavari (supra n. 21), 256, with
nm. 60 and 61); an extensive list of protohistoric models of boats is pro-
vided by Driver's (supra n. 17), 55-59; see also L. Barch, La modole
impressionistic de la mer en argile, Athens 1983, esp. 146-154 for
Mycenaean boats.
30 On the typology, see French 1971 (supra n. 20), 126-128.
31 Cf. the total absence from the sanctuary a Phallus of small, female figurines earlier than the Late Pyrgos, despite the presence of almost
the full range of animal figurines, a fact which is considered to
the result of a functional difference; see French 1963 (supra n. 21), 276. Normal-sized, female figurines, as well as animal figurines or
figures, were also conspicuously missing in the "Temple" and the
"Room with the Phallos" at Mycenae; see More (supra n. 3), 445.
32 Cf. the use of miniature vessels at Pylos and Mycenae, on which see H. Eggert (supra n. 4), 58, (and 1990 supra n. 11), 183, with
n. 53 and fig. 9.
33 On the occurrence of votive shells, see P. Aumon & D.S. Piazza, "Votive shells in East Mediterranean cults," JPH 3-4, 1990, 3-24, with a
list of examples from eastern Mediterranean sanctuaries and graves. As noted by P. Aumon, the votive shell is a well-known cult object
in the eastern Mediterranean, particularly in the Minos and Cypriot regions, but until now has been absent in mainland sanctuaries
Antico Hagia that this may be another difference between
Mycenaean and Mycenaean religion. Cf. the two shells found in the sanctuary at Pylos and the shells that have also been used as votive
trumpets; see Renewal (n. 45, 327, 385); see pl. 62. M.P. Nilsson, SMFS 15, 164, assigns both a sacred and a religious function to shells; drinking shells and oikistai in daily life, votive objects
and trumpets in the cult; for many examples of the ritual use of conch trumpets in other cultures, see J. M. S. Adams, "The conch in prehistoric
such a couch. Its use as a rhythm for the performance of a special libation rite is also probable.

The floor deposit consisted, in addition, a small number of fine stone objects, some of which were of intrinsic value. Two lumps of black steatite with representations of goats, a rectangular stone bowl decorated with incised curves and a steatite basin were found near the platform. Would these have adorned and fastened the 'body' of a wooden cult statue, previously placed on the platform or the daily? No organic remains of such a statue were recovered during the excavation and we do not have enough evidence to enable us to draw conclusions, but we may at least raise the question.

Between the floor and the surface level, there was only one destruction layer, 0.30 to 0.40 m deep; joining pieces of the same figurines, found both in the top and at the bottom of this layer, confirm its unity. The mass of material left in position, and the nature of the deposit give the impression of a sudden destruction and an immediate abandonment of the building.

The whole of the material deposited in this room appears to have been thrown together over a time span of about 200 years, from the early 14th to the late 13th century B.C., namely that LH IIIA–IIA periods. A date as early as LH IIA III may be proposed for very few if the finds, e.g. a pair of naturally rendered figurines of 'lords' and the animal-head rhyton (Fig. 8), which is imitating the natural's skin.

As to its modelling, this rhyton is a clone pasted to the foreground rhyton in the Aschnerian Museum, Oxford (inv. no. AE 296), reported as coming from Tiryns. The majority of the finds can be traced to LH IIIA. The prevailing shape amongst the bone-ware vessels was the plain, ornamented kylix (FS 267). The presence of a deep bowl (FS 286) of the so-called Group B10 in the destruction layer points to a time near the end of LH IIIA II. Decorative LH IIIA pottery is missing, but other rooms have yielded types suggesting a transitional phase.

Before concluding whether we are indeed justified in interpreting the structure under consideration as a shrine, we can classify the main arguments in favour of this interpretation under the four broad categories established by Readfors in the publication of the sanctuary at Phylakopi.34

Attention-focusing Features

The structure is a separate, special building, orientated to the East, and equipped with the following attention-focusing features:

A stepped bench, placed directly opposite the entrance, is used for the display of figurines.

A platform, placed symmetrically in relation to the main axis of the building, runs along one wall opposite the bench.

The central space, between the platform and the bench, is occupied by a low date.

The cistern shell may also be interpreted as an attention-focusing device, as one of its possible functions is in the provision of music.

The special aspects of the 'tomb-like zone' are reflected in the evocation of both sacrifices and libations. In the surface areas serving as cult equipment focusing, eating and drinking vessels, two rhyta and a potential musical instrument.

In the sanctuaries objects with symbolic representations, which was often mentioned as offerings deliberately displayed on a bench.
Presence of the Transcendental and its Symbolic Focus

The discovery of so many terracotta figurines, in conjunction with valuable objects, all together in a single room, is certainly out of the ordinary, and we may suggest that it indicates the involvement of the transcendent, as so other plausible explanation can be offered. This room continued to function as a repository for rare items over a considerable period of time, which does not allow us to propose the idea of a shop or any other utilitarian function. Its religious character is, on the other hand, strongly supported by its architectural features, its general layout and its whole context.

The recurrence of special features and special types that are rare or non-existent elsewhere can be claimed as the strongest evidence for the practice of a specific cult associated with a specific transcendent being. The symbolic repertoire includes the following:

Chariot Groups

The type comprises ten examples, most of them with two occupants. In four cases, there is also a parasol covering the figures' heads. It has been suggested, on the basis of other published examples, that the presence of a parasol implies a higher rank.45

A special feature, which apparently has a symbolic significance, is the posture of the human figures, who are mainly shown in pairs, one of them with an animal, the other.

This inclusion is also seen in some other group figurines, the religious character of which is fairly well established, e.g. in the well-known ivory tron from Mycenae,46 in a clay figurine of a man embracing a woman from the Cave of Patos in the Cretan Collection in Oxford47 and in one of the chariots (SF 1558) found in the sanctuary at Phylakopi.48

One of the chariot groups (Fig. 17) is a very close parallel to NM 2262, found by Tsountas in a chamber tomb at Mycenae.49 The resemblance is so close that they may well have been produced in the same workshop. Another chariot group has a striking similarity to an unpublished figurine found recently on Aegina in an excavation carried out by the 2nd Ephoreia.50 A common provenance is also highly probable in this case.

Horses with helmeted riders

Five, almost complete, figurines of helmeted riders on horseback throw new light on the intriguing subject of Mycenaean "cavalrymen," thoroughly discussed in the past by S. Hood, in connection with the LH IIIB example from Mycenae.51 The number of these figurines is surprising, considering the scarcity of the type, and their prominence here must be associated with the special nature of the newly discovered shrine. A divinity perhaps considered as the creator, the latter or the "Master of the Horses"52 is most probably involved.

In one example (Fig. 17), the manner of riding suggests a special skill in mounting horses. Whether the riders are the more "cavalrymen" or effigies of the deity is uncertain. In any case, the horse is, in this period, a symbol of high status and raises the figurine riding it above the routine of daily life.53
Driven Oxen (Plough Groups)

The uncommon type of group figures known as Driven Oxen in Plough Groups is remarkably represented by seven examples, two of which are depicted in Fig. 12. The unusually large number indicates a deity involved not only with homes but also with cattle. This is otherwise implied by the heavy predomiance of bulls amongst the votive terracottas, constituting a main characteristic of the assemblage.

Ridden Oxen (Torcado Groups)

Three new, substantially complete examples of this very rare category of Mycenaean figures provide new evidence for the recognition and the interpretation of the type. Nikolaou has in the past interpreted as a torcado one complete example in the Cyprus Museum; and this view has also been supported in more recent studies. Wall-leaping remains a much stronger possibility than on-riding, but the new examples found on Melos provide this type with an additional dimension.

One of these examples is a large, hollow (collared) torcado with a human figure attached to the top of its head and clasping its horns with outstretched arms (Fig. 13). The composition was most probably inspired by bull-leaping scenes. However, in this specific example, the symbolism of the representation is focussed upon the human figure, which is distinctly shown in a dominating position in relation to the animal. Despite its diminutive size, his gesture displays power, which would seem inappropriate in a votive. At least in this case, the portrayal of a divinity, a "Master of the Bull", would be a more reasonable interpretation than the depiction of a popular game with religious associations.

This bovine figure was contained in the destruction layer.

54 See supra n. 21; Crowe (supra n. 24), 516, referring their interpretation to plough groups; note of the examples found on Melos were clearly to bull-drawn vehicles, as proposed by R.Y. Nikolaou, Greek gods and goddesses in miniature: An exhibition of the Chlemoutsi terracotta collection, Cambridge 1979, 9, no. 15.
55 K. Nikolaou, "Mycenaean terracotta figures in the Cyprus Museum", Myk 5, 1985, 47-57, esp. 49, with pl. 4. Another complete example of this type, in the Art Institute, Peoria University, has been published by F.J. Jones, "Three Mycenaean figures", in Από την Αρχαιολογία και λίγες μεθόδους, 4th Congress of the International Mycenaean Studies, Munich 1985, 107, fig. 2.
56 Ramnás (supra n. 21), esp. 242; Crowe (supra n. 24), 53, with n. 52; Bursill (supra n. 45), 522.
57 See, for instance, J.G. Younger, "Bronze Age representations of Angus bull-leaping", Arch 44, 1936, 125-137.
58 Quotations displaying power are assumed to be an imitation of the deity by Rendle (supra n. 23); see also Crowe (supra n. 24), 53, with n. 52, stressing that, if and when bovial eating is assumed in attitude, the riders are typically deity or mythological figures.
59 On the distinction between figures and figures, see French 1981 (supra n. 17), 173.
covering the uppermost step of the bench and may have orig-
ially stood on the top of the square construction, occupying a
symmetrical position near the important location in the room, a
case in which it could have even played the role of a cult im-
age. 80

Miscellaneous items with symbolic significance
The symbolic repertoire is further enriched by a bird, three
tripod tables, two thrones and a boat. Such a number of items
with religious significance can hardly be explained in secular
terms, and the whole context offers quite strong arguments
in favour of the presence of the transcendent.

Participation and Offering
Both are well documented. The offering and consumption of
food and drink are indicated by the bone waste and by the
pottery in use, consisting mainly of cooking and drinking
vessels. 81 Offering is also suggested by the nature of the
assemblage, including unusual and valuable objects, which
cannot be interpreted as fulfilling an ordinary, functional
purpose.

The above features provide adequate evidence for cult prac-
tice and, taken together, they meet all the basic criteria for
identifying the structure as a shrine. In addition, some of the
finds display inter-relations with the wider area of the Arcadian
peninsula and the Saronic Gulf, as they have close parallels
coming from Mycenae, Tiryns and Argos. They also reflect an
indirect Cretan influence, although not strongly enough that
one

On the criteria for distinguishing a cult image, see Rehak
(supra n. 4), 22-24.

On the selectiveness of cooking and drinking vessels in the range
of pottery shapes as evidence for cult practice, see Kilian
(supra n. 28), esp. 195, with pl. 21, 22 and 23. Kiely has also noted the
improvements of wine in life (supra n. 36), pls. 127 and n. 2.

On the degrees and stages of riaus influence on the Mycenaean
religion, see Hegg 1984 (supra n. 4); Goede 1985 (supra n. 4); K. Kil-
ian, "Mycenaeans up to now: Trends and changes in recent research", in
Prehistoric, 148f.

See V. Lambrinidou-Kolias, "Temples of the Mycenaean period in the
sanctuary of Apollo Lykaion", in SCAMSA, 1949; idem, "Standort und
43f.

Except for the Hollow Pitho female figurines, no other human figure
exists on trephysa, although at least the interior tholos-tombs and the
figure mounted on the hollow boulder are to be seen as males. Their
chairst, which are clearly shown, bear no indication of breasts and
their general appearance suggests males. If we take into account the
principle of homology, according to which trephysa figures share the
ambitudes of the deity to whom they are dedicated, we must assume
the prominence of a male divinity. The differentiation between males
and females in this guise is possible in the figures riding in chariots
or mounted on horses, because in these the figure is mostly covered
by the bueatn of the chariota and the reins. In the sanctuary at
Phylaki, a chariot group and a driven ox, as well as seated figu-
rines, accompanied the human males on the north-western platform
of the West Shrine, whereas there were no such figures on the
south-western platform or in the niche or in Room A, where female
figures and figurines were found. The East Shrine had animal figu-
rines, plus a chariot group and a driven ox, but no human figures or
figurines whatever and the situation there was less clear-cut.

Cf. the discovery observed in the West Shrine at Phylaki, where the
north-western platform had male associations, whereas the south-western
platform had female associations; see Rehak (supra n. 4), 370f. A possible indication of duality in the sanctuary of Meth-
ara is the pairing of certain figures, e.g. the two Drives of the figure
who is shown here in life (supra n. 36), pl. 127, wearing a polaris-like
bovins, mentioned above: for a similar pairing of figurines at Phylaki, see
French 1985 (supra n. 21), esp. 277, with table 6.2 and pl. 46.

On the ancient links between Ptolemy and the horse, see S. Lang-
don, "The return of the heroic leader", Ada 93, 1991, 198-211. A fur-
ther important study on Ptolemy, with special emphasis on his connexion
with the horse, has been provided by F. Schachermeyer in Ptolemaios
und die Darstellung des griechischen Pferdes (Mainz, 1993), 109-125; for
the connection of trig-leaping with Ptolemy's festivals, see L.R.

A female counterpart of post-780 μαρος, po-α-ai-α, is known from
the Linear B tablets PY TN 310 and ΠJ ΙΟ 37/1). What do we know
about Mycenaean religion?", in Linear B: A 1944 survey (BullLL
26), eds. A. Mavrogordatos & Y. Dubois, Louvain to­Nepe 1945, 191-205, esp. 196. cf. the Linear B tablet PY AM 1281 referring to
post-780 μαρος, po-α-ai-α, inscribed as designating a horse goddess or a
misschance, who was the female counterpart of the horse god,
po-α-ai-α; see Venetia & Chadwick (supra n. 17), 548, Pfeifer (supra
n. 52), 422. For female goddesses associated with horses, see the
recent article by Voyatzis (supra n. 23), esp. 29-77.

For cults and sanctuaries at Troezen, attested by epigraphical evi-
dence and ancient literary sources, see G. Wolter, Reliefs und Kultkul-
ner, Berlin 1941, 61ff.

See, for instance, W. Burkert, Structure and history in Greek
mythology and ritual (Sather Classical Lectures, 47), Berkeley 1979,
111-119.

See D. Deffren, "Altemeia von Methana", Ada 34, 1909, 341-
355, esp. 341: Meyer (supra n. 3), 117ff. In the vicinity of Aiyon
Kouniotou, there are actually two such springs, both of which are
situated on the coast, one at Alysson Niglou, at a distance of 800 m to
the south and the other in the bay of Pro, about 600 m to the north.
The forest has been incorporated into modern apartment blocks, where
the latter has left unexplored.
venerating here, from very early times, the god who was the personification of the wetty element and was known to Homer at the Earth-shaker.71 We should also bear in mind that the sanctuary of Helipyno at neighboring Trezen was founded at a site with a healing spring.72

Additional support for a pre-Greek cult of Poseidon on the Methana peninsula is provided by archeological evidence situating his cult there in the historic period, although there is no such testimony in ancient literary sources. A rock-cut inscription bearing the name of Poseidon Phylaimnos (in the genitive) has been observed by H. Forbes at the site of Oga,73 also located on the east coast of Methana, about 3 km to the north of Ayios Konstantinos. Poseidon Phylaimnos was a god of nature, protecting vegetation and fertilizing the earth with his streams.74 His cult as a god of fertility is reasonably believed to have originated long before he entered the Olympian pantheon, in which his sphere was confined to the domain of the sea.75 The presence of a temple of Poseidon Phylaimnos in the vicinity of Ayios Konstantinos cannot be without significance for the interpretation of the site.

Finally, there is one last crucial question that needs to be answered. Why would such an important Mycenaean sanctu-

71 See Meyer (supra n. 1), 156f.; Delfiner (supra n. 70), 343-345.
72 On references to Poseidon by Homer and relevant evidence from Linear B texts, see Verdeau (n. 8), 66, 62f., 65-68, 83f. and 111f.; see also L. Choisy, "Poseidon-Eleusina et Pandion-Micene, in Atti e memorie del I Congresso Internazionale di Miceneologia, Roma 27 Settembre-3 Ottobre 1967" (Innsbruck-Graz, 25), Roma 1968, 945-991.
73 See Weiler (n. 68), 26-28 and 35f.
74 A sanctuary of the Early Iron Age and the Archaic period has also been identified by Met & Forbes near Oga (MS 68); see AE 1934, 104-105, 22. The actual site of Oga (MS 70) has been recorded as one of the three main LH sites on Methana, the other two being the temples of ancient Methana (MS 39) on the west coast, inhabited continuously since the Neolithic period, and the pre-eminency of Ayios Yerasimos (MS 124) in the north-east of the peninsula (see ibid., 22).
75 Under this epithet, relating either to a deity of fertility or to a sea divinity, Poseidon was worshiped at Trezen, one of his oldest strongholds. According to Pausanias (Thea, 6), the first fruits of the season were offered to him at Trezen and his sanctuary outside the walls of the city was contiguous to that of Demeter Tystrophoros; pigs, usually offered to Demeter, were also sacrificed to Poseidon, as it is attested by inscriptions from Rodes (IG XII, 1, no. 905) and Laconia (IG V, 11, no. 1218).
76 On the associations of the sea and the maritime world with deities of fertility and deities of fertility, see Lauffenau (supra n. 13), esp. 255f.
77 See supra n. 74.
78 The site of Ayios Konstantinos (MS 13) has been recorded by Met & Forbes as an LH site with 1.4 km situated as a remote sanctuary (see AR 3), 1986-88, 22; 34, 1987-88, 22). A settlement of the 12th-11th centuries was also located in this area (see AR 3, 1987-88, 23). Hope Simpson and Dickinson (supra n. 1) report an LH and later settlement in the area of Thira, near the village of Ydroulissi, situated c. 1.5 km to the south-east of Ayios Konstantinos.
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