

THE ARGONAUTICA AND ANCIENT CULTURE

Vassiliki Adrymi-Sismani (Volos)

IOLKOS: MYTH, ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

Greek poets and historians, as well as the long Greek oral tradition managed to preserve in the memory of the Greeks the famous legendary city of Iolkos¹. According to the Greek mythical tradition, Iolkos was the town of Pelias and Aison, father of the one-sandaled Jason, the leader of the Argonautic expedition that united the Argonauts – the most famous representatives of the Mycenaean kingdoms from all over Greece – under a unique aim: the conquest of the golden fleece² in the kingdom of Aietes and his daughter, Medeia, or – according to a modern interpretation³ – the Northeastern outbreak of the Bronze Age World to the rich in copper and gold regions of the Black Sea. This eventual fact along with references to the Mycenaean Iolkos, are described by many Greek authors, and the most significant of them, are listed below in a chronological order.

¹ Generally, about Iolkos, see *Realencyclopädie* ix, 1853; S. C. Bakhuizen, "Neleia, a contribution to a debate", *Orbis terrarium* 2, 1996, 85-120, esp. 89-95 and 100-111; J.-C. Decourt and alii, "Thessalia and adjacent regions", in M. H. Hansen & Th. H. Nielsen (eds.), *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis. An Investigation Conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre for the Danish National Research Foundation*, Oxford 2004, 711.

² P. Dräger, *Argo Pasimelousa. Der Argonautenmythos in der griechischen und römischen Literatur*. Teil 1: Theos aitios, Stuttgart 1993 (*Palingenesia* 43). R. L. Hunter, *Apollonius of Rhodes, Jason and the Golden Fleece (The Argonautica)*, 1993. P. Dräger, 'Argonautai', *Der Neue Pauly* 1, 1996, col. 1066-9. P. Dräger, 'Iason (1)', *Der Neue Pauly* 5, 1998, 865-8. P. Dräger, "Apollonios von Rhodos, Die Fahrt der Argonauten", Griechisch/Deutsch. Herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert von P. D. Stuttgart: Reclam 2002.

³ Chr. Doumas, 'What did the Argonauts seek in Colchis?', *Hermathena* 150, 1991, 31-41.

In the Homeric "Catalogue of the Ships" (B, 712), Iolkos is mentioned as "well-built", while in the Homeric Poems it is called "spacious" and "holder of numerous flocks of sheep"⁴.

Οἱ δὲ Φεράς ἐνέμοντο παραὶ Βοιβηίδα λίμνην,
 Βοίβην καὶ Γλαφυράς καὶ **ἔυκτιμένην** **Ἰαωλκόν**,
 τῶν ἦρχ' Ἀδμήτοιο φίλος πάϊς ἔνδεκα νηῶν
 Εὐμηλος, τὸν ὑπ' Ἀδμήτῳ τέκε διὰ γυναικῶν
 Ἄλκηστις, Πελῖαο θυγατρῶν εἶδος ἀρίστη.

Even if the Homeric *Catalogue of the Ships* do not fit perfectly to the actual image of the Mycenaean World, not even the descriptions of Homer, we must accept that those texts embody memories from the Mycenaean Period and give us an idea of the organization of the Thessalian plain during the Mycenaean period.

In the Archaic Period, Hesiod refers again to the "famous" and "spacious" Iolkos⁵.

Πᾶσα δὲ Μυρμιδόνων τε πόλις **κλειτή** **τ' Ἰαωλκός**
 Ἄριη τ' ἠδ' Ἐλίκη Ἀνθειά τε ποιήεσσα
 φωνή μετ' ἀμφοτέρων μεγάλ' ἰακόν (Sc. 380-382).

Κύκνον δ' αἰὲ Κήυξ θάπτεν καὶ λαὸς ἀπείρων,
 οἳ ῥ' ἐγγὺς ναῖον πόλιος κλειτοῦ βασιλῆος,
 Ἄσθην Μυρμιδόνων τε πόλιν **κλειτήν** **τ' Ἰαωλκόν**
 Ἄριην τ' ἠδ' Ἐλίκην· πολλὸς δ' ἠγείρετο λαός.
 τιμῶντες Κήυκα, φίλον μακάρεσσι θεοῖσιν.

(N. O., III, 54-58). (Sc. 472-476)

. . . Φθίην ἐξίκετο μητέρα μήλων,
 πολλὰ κτήματ' ἄγων ἐξ **εὐρυχόρου** **Ἰαωλκοῦ**,
 Πυλεὺς Αἰακίδης, φίλος ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν.

(Cat. W. fr. 211, 1-3).

Later on, the glory of the city still echoes in the Pindaric Odes, where the "adorable" Iolkos, with its "white horses", its "numerous flocks of sheep and oxen" and its "wide open cultivable land", is located in the "small plain" reaching the "foot of Mount Pelion"⁶.

⁴ Homer, *Iliad*, B, v. 711-715

⁵ Hesiod, *Scutum*, v. 380-382, 472-476. Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women*, fr. 211, 1-3.

⁶ Pindar, *Nemean Odes* III, v. 32-36, 54-58; *ibid.*, IV, v. 10. Pindar, *Isthmian Odes*, VIII, v. 38-42; Pindar, *Pythian Odes*, IV, v. 79-80.

Παλαιαῖσι δ' ἐν ἀρεταῖς
 γέγαθε Πηλεὺς ἀναξ ὑπέραλλον αἰχμᾶν ταμών·
 ὅς καὶ Ἴωλκὸν εἶλε μόνος ἄνευ στρατιάς,
 καὶ ποντίαν θέτιν κατέμαρψεν
 ἔγκουητί.

(*N.O.*, 32-36) . . .

Παλίου δὲ πᾶρ ποδὶ λατρείαν Ἴωλκὸν
 πολεμία χερὶ προστραπῶν
 Πηλεὺς παρέδωκεν Αἰμόνεσσιν
 δάμαρτος Ἴππολύτας Ἀκάστου δολίαις
 τέχναισι χρησάμενος

(*Ibid.*, 54-58).

Τὸ μὲν ἐμὸν Πηλεί γάμου θεόμορον
 ὀπάσσαι γέρας Αἰακίδα,
 ὄντ' εὐσεβέστατον φάτις Ἴωλκοῦ τράφειν πεδίων·
 ἰόντων δ' ἐς ἀφθιτον ἄντρον εὐθὺς Χίρωνος
 αὐτίκ' ἀγγελίαι

(*I.O.*, VIII, 38-41)

. . . εὖτ' ἂν αἰπεινῶν ἀπὸ σταθμῶν ἐς εὐδείελον
 χθόνα μόλη κλειτᾶς Ἴωλκοῦ.

(*P.O.*, 79-80).

Moreover, the tragic poet Euripides denotes "Iolkos's Palaces"⁷.

γαῖά τε καὶ μελάθρων στέγαι
 νυμφίδιοί τε κοῖται πατρίας Ἴωλκοῦ.

Perhaps the legendary Iolkos progressively lost its importance after the destruction of the Mycenaean Palaces⁸, but its glory and fame still echoes loudly in the poems of the early Hellenistic period⁹. Mention has also been made to the "wealthy" Iolkos in the *Idylles* of Theocritus¹⁰.

⁷ Euripides, *Alcestes*, v. 248-249.

⁸ Herodotus, *History*, V, 94. Cf. S. C. Bakhuizen, (*supra*, n. 1), 92-95.

⁹ A. Dihle, 'Apollonius Rhodius and Epic Poetry', in: *A History of Greek Literature, from Homer to the Hellenistic Period*, transl. C. Krojzl, London & New York 1994, 266-71. M. H. Barnes, "Oral tradition and Hellenistic epic. New Directions in Apollonius Rhodius", *Oral Tradition* 18, 2003, 55-8.

¹⁰ Theocritus, *Idylles*, 13, 19-22. Cf. K. Erp Taalman & A. Maria van. 'Intertextuality and Theocritus 13', in I. de Jong & J.P. Sullivan (eds.), *Modern Critical Theory and Classical Literature*, Leiden 1994, 153-69

ἀλλ' ὅτε το χρύσειον ἔπλει μετὰ κῶας Ἰήσων
 Αἰσονίδα, οἱ δ' αὐτῷ ἀριστῆες συνέποντο
 πασῶν ἐκ πολίων προλελεγμένοι, ὧν ὄφελός τι,
 ἵκετο ὁ ταλαεργὸς ἀνὴρ ἔς ἀφνειὸν Ἰωλκόν, . .

Furthermore, Apollonius Rhodius praises the famous city of the past with its "well settled roads" in his *Argonautica*, a long poem that points out in detail all the stages of the famous Argonautic expedition¹¹.

Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥα πόλῃος ἐυδμήτους λίπ' ἀγυιάς,
 ἄκτῆν δ' Ἰκανεν Παγασήϊδα, τῇ μιν ἑταῖροι
 δειδέχατ' Ἀργῶν ἄμυδις παρὰ νηὶ μένοντες.

The identification of Ancient Iolkos has been ever since a matter of great importance for all the archaeologists who work in the field of Ancient Thessaly¹². The glory of the legendary city related to the myth of the Argonauts had to be affirmed. It even had to be proved whether it belonged to the territory of myth, or if it constituted a historical event connected to the supernatural efforts of the first Mycenaean sailors to reach the areas beyond the Aegean Sea¹³, a fact already registered by Homer who seems to be an endless source of information for the culture of the Late Helladic and the Early Iron Age periods¹⁴. However, since it is obvious that the Homeric texts do not consist secure proofs for the identification of the Mycenaean settlements, and since a divergence is realised between reality and epic tradition, the only thing left to do is to consult the actual well known excavation data and survey results, which consist the only secure evidence that provides us with an image of the organisation of the Mycenaean

¹¹ Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* I, v. 317-319. D. Wray, 'Apollonius' Masterplot. Narrative Strategy in *Argonautica* I', in M. Annette Harder and alii (eds.), *Apollonius Rhodius*, Leuven 2000 (*Hellenistica Groningana* 4), 239-65.

¹² Cf. Chr. Tsountas, *PAE* 1900, 72-73; *PAE* 1901, 42. D. Theocharis, *PAE* 1956, 119-130; *PAE* 1957, 54-55; *PAE* 1960, 49-59. D. R. Theochares, "Iolkos", *Archaeology* 11, 1958, 13-18. M. Theochari, "Ek tou nekrotapeiou tes Iolkou", *AAA* III, 1970, 198-203. G. Chourmouziades & alii, *Magnesia*, 34-35. V. Adrymi-Sismani, "Le palais de Iolkos et sa destruction", *BCH* 128-129, 2004-2005, 1-54. Cf. Mp. Intzasiloglou, "Historiki topographia tes perioches tou kolpou tou Volou (in Greek)", in *La Thessalie. Quinze annees de recherches archéologiques, 1975-1990. Bilans et perspectives. Actes du colloque international Lyon, 17-22 avril 1990*, Athens 1994, 31-56.

¹³ Cf. recently, Ioanna Galanaki, Helena Tomas, Yannis Galanakis and Robert Laffineur (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Conference, Bronze and Early Iron Age Interconnections and Contemporary Developments between the Aegean and the Regions of the Balkan Peninsula, Central and Northern Europe, University of Zagreb, 11-14 April 2005 (Aegaeum 27)*, Liege 2007.

¹⁴ Cf. recently on this issue, in S. P. Morris & R. Laffineur (eds.), *Epos. Reconstructing Greek Epic and Aegean Bronze Age Archaeology. Proceedings of the 11th International conference, Los Angeles, UCLA – The J. Paul Getty Villa, 20-23 April 2006, Liège (Aegaeum 28)* 2007.

settlements in the coastal Mycenaean Thessaly; in particular, of those located around the natural harbour of the Pagasetic Gulf.

However, the latest excavations and surveys conducted in North-Eastern Thessaly helped us to locate more than a 100 new Mycenaean settlements in Thessaly¹⁵, who testify that Thessaly was belonging to the Mycenaean periphery and maybe constituted the Northern centre of the Mycenaean World¹⁶. Meanwhile, our knowledge about the presence of the Mycenaean in Thessaly has been significantly increased by the excavations that took part during the last century in the wider area of Volos, around the inlet of the Pagasetic Gulf.

More thoroughly, the first finds that could be associated with the legendary Iolkos have been located in that area at the beginning of the 20th century, after the excavation of the two large scale tholos tombs in Dimini (fig. 1, 2)¹⁷ and later of a third one in Kapakli close to the Kastro of Volos¹⁸, where for the first time Tsountas located the legendary Iolkos¹⁹. Half a century later, D. Theocharis excavated a settlement in Kastro of Volos (Palia) situated very close to Kapakli, at the entrance of the modern town of Volos, at a small distance from the sea. There, he revealed parts of buildings of the 15th and 14th cent. B.C. ruined from a powerful fire. One of those buildings was identified by the excavator with the legendary Palace of Iolkos²⁰. Moreover, all scholars have interpreted the coastal Mycenaean settlement of Pevkakia – neighboring to Kastro of Volos – as the protected harbor of Ancient Iolkos, the well known Neleia²¹. In addition, the most significant Mycenaean ruins in

¹⁵ R. Hope Simpson & O. Dickinson, *A gazetteer of Aegean civilisation in the Bronze Age, vol. I. The mainland and islands*. Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature 52, Göteborg (Paul Åströms Förlag) 1979, 272-298. B. Feuer, *The Northern Mycenaean border in Thessaly*, Oxford (*BAR* 176) 1983, 24-32. K. I. Gallis, *Atlas proistorikôn Theseon tes anatolikes thessalikes pidiadas*, Larissa 1992. L. Chadjiagelakis, "Akropoli Kieriou – Thesi Oglas (in Greek)" *Archaeologikon Deltion* 52, 1997, 473; idem, "Agnantero (in Greek)", *Archaeologikon Deltion* 53, 445-448. A. Intzesiloglou, "Helleno-Italiko Programma Epiphaneiakôn Ereunôn (In Greek)" *Archaeologikon Deltion* 52, 1977, 497-498. R. Reinders, *Prehistoric sites at the Almirós and Sourpi plains (Thessaly, Greece)*. Koninklijke (Van Gorcum) 2003.

¹⁶ Cf. V. Adrymi-Sismani, "Mycenaean Northern Borders Revisited. New Evidence from Thessaly", in M. L. Galaty & W. A. Parkinson (eds.), *Rethinking Mycenaean Palaces II: Revised and Expanded Second Edition (Cotsen Monographs 59)*, Los Angeles (UCLA) 2007, 322-357.

¹⁷ H. G. Lolling & P. Wolters, "Das Kuppelgrab bei Dimini", *Athenische Mitteilungen* 11, 1886, 435-443; idem, "Das Kuppelgrab bei Dimini" *Athenische Mitteilungen* 12, 1887, 136-138. J. P. Michaud, Dimini. *Bulletin de Correspondence Hellenique* 95, 1971, 936-937.

¹⁸ R. Avila, "Das Kuppelgrab von Volos-Kapakli", *Prähistorische Zeitschrift* 58, 1983, 5-60.

¹⁹ Cf. the articles of Chr. Tsountas, in *supra*, n. 12.

²⁰ D. R. Theochares, "Iolkos", *Archaeology* 11, 1958, 13-18.

²¹ Cf. S. C. Bakhuizen (*supra*, n. 1), 85-120.

the inlet of the Pagasetic Gulf were recently uncovered in Dimini by the excavations conducted during the last 20 years.

To be more explicit, a Mycaenean town was excavated in Dimini²² (fig. 3), lying on the plain situated east of the hill with the Neolithic remains. This town, that covers an area of about 10 hectares, was founded in the end of the 15th c. B.C., on the top of earlier EBA and MBA deposits²³, and flourished in the 14th and 13th c. B.C., the period of expansion of the Mycenaean civilization. Eleven blocks of houses were excavated, built in two main architectural phases, in the 14th and 13th cent. B.C. (fig. 4). These houses that consist of 2 to 3 rooms are aligned along the central road²⁴, which strikingly enough does not provide access to them. They have stone foundations, a mud-brick superstructure, coloured (white and ochre) plasters, while clay baths and traces of drainage systems are also uncovered in many of them. They are independent to each other, sharing courtyards with wells. A painted clay figurine of a bovine²⁵ (fig. 5) found in one of those houses suggests the presence of a domestic shrine. Additionally, a large ceramic kiln was uncovered in the outskirts of the town²⁶. Systematic excavations conducted during the last five years unearthed a building complex of great importance in the centre of this settlement, with two Megaron-type, parallel buildings, named Megaron A and Megaron B, surrounded by wings of storage areas and workshops²⁷. This is actually the complex where the central road of the settlement - 4,5m wide - leads to. This road crosses a wider road that leads to the harbour, at Pevkakia (Neleia). In the crossroad of these two main streets, a large *propylon*²⁸ with two lateral rooms is placed, providing access into the two large Megara and the surrounding architectural complex.

²² V. Adrymi-Sismani, *To Dimini sten Epoche tou Chalkou*, Volos (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Thessaloniki) 2000. Cf. also the studies of V. Adrymi-Sismani, in *supra*, n. 12.

²³ V. Adrymi-Sismani, "Dimini in the Middle Bronze Age (in Greek)", in *Proceedings of the "Messoeladika. Continental Greece in the Middle Bronze Age" International Colloquium, held by the French Archaeological Institute, the American School of Classical Studies and the Nederladen Institute of Athens, Athens 8-12 mars 2006*. In press.

²⁴ V. Adrymi-Sismani, *AD* 43, 1988, 238-239; idem, "Ho Mykenaikos oikismos Diminiou (in Greek)", in *Actes du Colloque International, "Thessalia, 15 annees de recherches archeologiques, 1975-1990. Bilans et perspectives"*, Lyon, 17-22 avril 1990, Volos 1994, 27; idem, "Le palais de Iolkos" (cf. *supra* n. 12), p. 6 et n. 7.

²⁵ V. Adrymi-Sismani (*supra*, n. 22), 217-219, fig. 164.

²⁶ V. Adrymi-Sismani, *AD* 47, 1992, 222; idem, "Mykenaikos keramikos klivanos sto Dimini (in Greek)", in *Papers of the A' International Colloquium "He periphéria tou Mykenaiou kosmou (in Greek), Lamia, 25-29 Septembriou 1994*, Lamia 1999, 131-142.

²⁷ V. Adrymi-Sismani, "Le palais de Iolkos" (*supra*, n. 12), 8-51 et fig. 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3, fig. 2.

After crossing the propylon, the entrance to the complex is attained via a bounded court, a construction of 4 small rooms, perhaps guardrooms and a large ramp that leads to Megaron A.

The space occupied by this Megaron consists of 5 parallel wings of rooms, while its core - the actual Megaron A - bears two wings of rooms divided by a long corridor (fig. 6) and is outlined by three wings of smaller storage rooms. Megaron A was constructed in the 13th cent. B.C., over an earlier Megaron, dating back to the 14th c. B.C. which was destroyed by fire. The north wing of Megaron A has two large rooms and a *prostoon*, all with floors and walls covered with white lime plaster as well as an open peristyle court with columns covered also with white lime plaster. The roof of the probably two-storeyed Megaron A was pitched and perhaps covered by clay tiles, while parts of a clay drain pipe and a large clay funnel were also brought to light.

The south wing, contemporary with the north one, consists of ten small rooms (fig. 7). The rooms were used for the preparation and the storage of food as is evident from the pottery finds (rooms 4-5), and also for the small scale manufacture of artefacts (rooms 9, 19, 18, 17). Apart from the pottery finds, 10 moulds (fig. 8) and the necessary tools for the manufacture of jewels²⁹ were found. However, the most significant find in this wing, where the workshops were situated, was part of an inscribed stone weight in Linear B (fig. 9), which suggests that Linear B was in use in Megaron A³⁰.

South of Megaron A, there is a wing of workshops, where an intact large lead vessel was found³¹. Another wing of storerooms was excavated north of Megaron A.

The second building complex, named Megaron B, was founded over earlier deposits nearby Megaron A and provided access to it through an inner court. It also consists of two wings: one with a central building with 3 rooms made of thick masonry - more than one meter wide -, and another one that consists of storage rooms.

Megaron B was destroyed by an intense fire (fig. 10). The extended and thick layer of destruction - that consists of carbonized wood, burnt mud bricks and burnt clay - remained undisturbed until the moment of excavation,

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 22-23, fig. 12-16.

³⁰ V. Adrymi-Sismani & L. Godart, "Les inscriptions en Linéaire B de Dimini/Iolkos et leur contexte archéologique", *Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene* LXXXIII, Serie III, 5, Tomo I, 2005, 47-69.

³¹ V. Adrymi-Sismani, "Le palais de Iolkos" (*supra*, n. 12), p. 23 and fig. 18. Cf. S. Mossman, in C. Gillis and alii (eds.), *Trade and Production in Premonetary Greece. Acquisition and Distribution of raw Materials and Finished products, Proceedings of the 6th International Workshop, Athens 1996, 2000*, 85-119

and lies over a significant quantity of pottery that bears traces of fire. A large collar necked jar³² broken into pieces due to the collapse of the wooden roof was found in room 3. In the same room, a large lead vessel³³, melted due to the severe fire and a large Aeginetan tripod cooking pot³⁴ broken and totally burnt give both the impression that they were pulled over, towards the door. This probably happened during the time of destruction so that the vessels would be taken away, an act that remained unachieved. Also, many large parts of wooden beams were found, that fell when the roof collapsed³⁵. In the storage room 6, 5 large pithoi containing cereal, which had been placed in the ground³⁶, had already been taken away, a fact that suggests that there was enough time in order to try to remove them before the actual destruction. In the other two storerooms, a large quantity of vases (fig. 11) made especially for liquids was found placed on shelves and - as the analyses undertaken in Bristol revealed - they hadn't been used. In the same room decorated and plain pottery was also found³⁷, including a large Canaanite amphora used for wine bearing the potter's mark and a large unpainted stirrup jar used for oil. Also, a decorated rhyton³⁸ and the part of an ivory comb were found in the same storeroom (fig. 12), along with wooden trunks, straw baskets, large jars, amphoras and the specially paved area used for the storage of fruits, as the carbonized seeds of olive trees and grapes demonstrate.

In the eastern room of the central building of Megaron B a large clay H-shaped altar (fig. 13) was found³⁹. The entire construction bears intensive traces of fire and different layers possibly with burnt liquids. An intact large painted mug⁴⁰ found in front of the altar, indicates that libations might have been taking place on it. The same thing is indicated by the cups containing remains of burnt animal bones that were uncovered in the 3 small side rooms, where a small entrance leads to⁴¹.

³² V. Adrymi-Sismani, "Le palais de Iolkos" (*supra*, n. 12), 38, fig. 24. Cf. S. Iakovidis, *Perate. To Nekrotapheio* (in Greek), 1969, pl. 76c; C. Renfrew, *The Archaeology of Cult: The Sanctuary at Phylakopi* (*ABSA* Suppl. 18), 1985, 86; P. A. Mountjoy, *Grapte Mykenaike Keramike* (in Greek), Athens (Kardamitsas) 1994, 144-145.

³³ V. Adrymi-Sismani, "Le palais de Iolkos" (*supra*, n. 12), 42.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 42 and fig. 27-28.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 48-50, fig. 35-37.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 46-47, fig. 34. Cf. P.A. Mountjoy, *Regional Mycenaean Decorated Pottery*, Berlin (M. Leidorf) 1999, 674-675.

³⁹ V. Adrymi-Sismani, "Le palais de Iolkos" (*supra*, n. 12), 39-41, fig. 25.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 40, fig. 26.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

At the end of the 12th cent. B.C., Megaron A and B were affected by a destruction, similarly to the other well known Mycenaean centres of Southern Greece, such as Mycenae, Tiryns, Midea, Pylos and Thebes⁴². The Mycenaean town of Dimini before the destruction, at the end of the 13th cent. B.C., presented in general a good urban organisation that does not seem to differ from that of the Mycenaean centres of Southern Greece. Of course, certain small differences are observed, but a similar clear intention to demonstrate the social rank is noticeable. The latter is accomplished through the construction of the two large scale tholos tombs⁴³ and mainly through the construction of a large architectural complex constituting a combination of habitation spaces, storage areas, workshops and sacred spaces, and where Linear B script was in use. Consequently, in the Mycenaean settlement of Dimini we find the unique example of a well-built Mycenaean town in Thessaly with "well constructed roads", organised around an administrative, economic and religious centre, which at the end of the 12th cent. B.C. experiences a horrible destruction. Nevertheless, the settlement is not abandoned immediately after the destruction. There are remarkable signs that during the next two decades there is an attempt for repair and renovation of all buildings of the settlement, in at least two habitation phases (fig. 14). What's more, we should stress that after the repairs we do not observe any changes in the urban plan of the settlement, which in general remains the same⁴⁴.

The population that attempts these changes appears to be basically the same, since it uses the same pottery at the same time with the grey pseudo-minyan⁴⁵ and the handmade burnished ware that appear here for the first time now, and it continues cultivating the same land with cereal, vines, and olives, and breed the same domestic animals. However it is obvious that we are now speaking of a completely different, clearly rural, society. The workshops, where the stone moulds were found, are not in use and the precious imported objects are absent. It appears that there is also an important change in the religious sector, since Megaron B, where the large altar existed, remains buried under the ruins.

⁴² C. W. Shelmerdine, "Review of Aegean Prehistory VI: The Palatial Bronze Age of the Southern and Central Greek Mainland", *AJA* 101, 1997, 548-549, 581-582.

⁴³ Cf. *supra*, n. 17.

⁴⁴ V. Adrymi-Sismani, "Habitation changes in the Eastern coastal Thessaly, following the destruction of the Palaces in LH III B2 / LH IIIC Early", in *Papers of the International Symposium "The Dark Ages Revisited", in memoriam of J. Coulson*, *Volos (University of Thessaly)*, June 2007 (under publication).

⁴⁵ V. Adrymi-Sismani, "He grisa pseudo-minya kai he stilvomeni cheiropoiete keramiki apo to mykenaiiko oikismo tou Diminiou (in Greek), *Proceedings of the Conference "To archaeologiko ergo ste Thessalia kai Sterea Ellada I, Volos (University of Thessaly) 2003"*, Volos 2006, 85-101.

Unfortunately this new configuration could not have lasted for long, and very soon, in the beginning of LH III C middle, the residents abandoned their cultivable land permanently and moved to another, more secure region. We could speak of a mass immigration, perhaps in familial groups, either on foot – which implicates a close destination – or by boats, fact that means that they resorted to a completely different region, perhaps towards the islands or the coasts of Asia Minor. This situation led to the final abandonment of Dimini for many centuries. It should be marked out that the settlement's abandonment was carried out peacefully⁴⁶, without any previous sign of intervention of an exterior threat that would confirm the later Greek tradition of the Dorian invasion.

The phenomenon of the destruction that occurred in the settlement of Dimini was also experienced by the neighbouring settlements in Kastro of Volos and in Pefkakia (fig. 15). However, those two settlements do not appear to have faced the destruction with the same way that was faced by the inhabitants of Dimini. According to the excavators, the settlement in Pefkakia is depopulated immediately after the destruction, without any effort for repair of the destroyed buildings⁴⁷. On the contrary, in the settlement in Kastro of Volos life goes on and the transition to the Early Iron Age is attained smoothly⁴⁸. However many changes took place there after the destruction. The "crater of the warriors" rather suggests a new society of martial sovereigns that dominates the harbour and the plain of Volos. The well-known, so far, archaeological data from Kastro Volos do not suggest that the population from Pevkakia or from Dimini resorted there, since there are no architectural finds dating to that period.

The image of the power and wealth of the northern centre of the Mycenaean civilization – Iolkos – before its destruction was reinforced lately by the recent excavation in 2004, in Kasanaki located in the Volos area, of an intact tholos tomb⁴⁹ also associated with Iolkos. Kasanaki's tholos tomb, that dates in the 15th and 14th cent. B.C., is of great importance, since it gives as useful information about the burial customs of this area.

⁴⁶ Cf. V. Adrymi-Sismani, "Le palais de Iolkos", 1-54.

⁴⁷ D. Theocharis, "Anaskafai en Iolkos (in Greek)", *PAAH* 1956, 28-29, 119-130; idem, 1957, 54-69; idem, 1960, 49-59; idem, 1961, 45-54. A. Efstathiou-Batzioy, "Apotelesmata ton prospathon anaskafikon ereunon ste N. Ionia kai ste perioche Pefkakion (in Greek)", in *Neotera dedomena ton ereunon gia ten Archaea Iolkos. Praktika Epistemonikes Synantises*, 12 Maiou 1993, Volos 1994, 59-70.

⁴⁸ A. Efstathiou-Batzioy, *He Hysreri epoche tou chalkou sten perioche tes Magnesias: To Kastro (Palia) kai ta Pefkakia*, Volos (unpublished PhD), 59-70.

⁴⁹ V. Adrymi-Sismani, "Kasanaki tholos tomb", *Archaeological Reports of the British School of Athens* 50, 2004-2005, 59-61. V. Adrymi-Sismani & St. Alexandrou, "Mykenaikos tholotos taphos ste thesi Kasanaki (in Greek)", in *Proceedings of the 2nd Conference "Archaeologiko Ergo Thessalias kai Stereas Ellados"*, Volos-University of Thessaly 2006 (under publication).

Seven deceased (4 adults and 3 children) had been buried in the tholos tomb, accompanied by decorated pottery, golden, glass and faience jewellery, one sword, golden and glass plaques, seal stones made of agate and rock crystal, clay figurines (kourotophos), and golden sheets bearing holes belonging probably to the decoration of the deceased's clothes or shroud. Long after their initial burial, the deceased were burnt all together, during a ceremonial fire, and their vestiges were placed again into the tholos tomb without any order. Similar funeral customs are observed in the contemporary Kapakli and Dimini A tholos tombs.

The similarities of the four tholos tombs finds and of the architectural features are not surprising, since these tombs are located around the inlet of the Pagasetic gulf along with the Late Bronze Age settlements of Kastro Volos, Dimini and Pefkakia (fig. 16). According to our latest considerations, all these three settlements – Dimini, Kastro of Volos and Pefkakia – actually belong together to the legendary centre of Ancient Iolkos. They function together around the biggest port of Thessaly in order to control the exchanges of the Thessalian plain products and generally all the maritime communications via the Aegean with the rest of the well known world. This port of Iolkos was located around a deep *Iolka* (word used by Hesychius to describe the marine passage)⁵⁰ shaped in the inlet of the Pagasetic Gulf during the 3rd millennium B.C., according to the geological research of Zannger⁵¹.

However, from the three coastal Mycenaean settlements located in the inlet of the Pagasetic Gulf, only Dimini makes a real candidate, since it displays clearly the role of a town with an administrative, economic and religious centre, important workshops and use of the Linear B script that testify the existence of a powerful and wealthy centre. The inhabitants of these settlements were keen sailors that had developed sailing from a very early period, as is indicated by the early representations of ships that were depicted on their vases (fig. 17). The first ships, the first long voyages and the adventures of those pioneer sailors of Ancient Iolkos generated the legend of the Argonautic expedition, which must be placed within the Mycenaean times, one generation before the expedition to Troy, judging by the genealogy of the heroes that took part in both expeditions.

Moreover, the material's analysis of the golden items of the Kananaki tholos tomb – that was made in the Laboratories of the Museum of Louvre in Paris in order to identify the source of the gold used for the fabrication of the jewellery of the deceased – has revealed that this gold is of an alluvial type,

⁵⁰ Hesychius, s.v. *Ιόλκα*.

⁵¹ E. Zannger, "Prehistoric Coastal Environments in Greece. The Vanished Landscapes of Dimini Bay and Lake Lerna", *JFA* 18, 1991, 1-7.

meaning that it comes from a river's deposits⁵². We hope that future analysis will display if this gold can actually be associated with the rich in precious metals and gold sources in the region of the Ancient Colchis where the kingdom of Aetes was placed, and perhaps in river Phasis, where even recently chips of gold seem to be selected with sheepskins. This would be an ideal and desirable conclusion that could bring in our times Iolkos and the Argonautic Expedition from their mythical perspective to a historical reconsideration.

⁵² M. F. Guerra, S. Röhrs, J. Salomon, Ph. Walter, V. Adrymi-Sismani, "L'origine de l'or de la tombe mycénienne de Kasanaki", in *Proceedings of the Conference "To archaeologiko Ergo ste Thessalia kai Sterea Ellada II, Volos (University of Thessaly) 2006"* (under publication).

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H EISODOS APO TO ESWTERIKO TOU TAFOU.
THE ENTRANCE FROM TOMBS INTERIOR.



SCEDIASTIKH ANAPARASTASH.
DRAWING SECTION.



H EISODOS TOU TAFOU META TIS ERGASIES ETEREWSHS.
THE TOMBS ENTRANCE AFTER CONSOLIDATION WORKS.



ERGASIES EPANAFORAS TOU ANATOLIKOU TOICOU TOU DROMOU.
RESTORATION AT THE EASTERN WALL OF THE DROMOS.



SFRAGIDOLIQUII KAI DAKTULIOI.
SEAL, STONES AND RINGS.



PERIDERAIO ME CANDRES
APO CRUSO.
BEADNECKLACE MADE
OF GOLD.



PERIDERAIO ME CANDRES
APO UALOMAZA.
BEADNECKLACE MADE OF
GLASS-MASS.

UPOURGEIO POLITISMOU IG' EFOREIA PROISTORIKWN
KAI KLASIKWN ARCAIOTHWN QOLWTOS
TAFOS "TOUMPA" STO DIMINI



APOYH THS ANASKAFHS TOY 1901.
VIEW OF THE EXCAVATION IN 1901.



APOYH TOY DROMOU
VIEW OF THE ROAD.

Θολωτός τάφος, «Τετραπύλο»
Βερέση 1901, πλ. 13,30 μ. π.Χ.

Ο θολωτός τάφος «Τετραπύλο» βρίσκεται στο βορειο-ανατολικό τμήμα του αρχαιολογικού χώρου της Εφορείας Προϊστορικών και Κλασικών Αρχαιοτήτων Λαγκαδάς. Η κατασκευή του είναι από πέτρα και αμύγαλο, με τριγωνικό στέγαστρο και τετραπύλο είσοδο. Ο τάφος ανήκει στην κλασική περίοδο και χρονολογείται στο 13ο αιώνα π.Χ.

Η είσοδος του τάφου είναι τετραπύλη, με δύο κίονες που στηρίζουν το στέγαστρο. Το εσωτερικό του τάφου είναι κενό, με μόνο ένα μικρό θάλαμο στο τέλος. Ο τάφος είναι καλοδιατηρημένος και αποτελεί σημαντικό μνημείο της κλασικής αρχαιότητας στην περιοχή.

Ο τάφος «Τετραπύλο» είναι ένα εξαιρετικό δείγμα της κλασικής αρχιτεκτονικής στην περιοχή. Η τετραπύλη είσοδος και το στέγαστρο είναι ιδιαίτερα χαρακτηριστικά στοιχεία της κατασκευής.

Ο τάφος «Τετραπύλο» είναι ένα σημαντικό μνημείο της κλασικής αρχαιότητας στην περιοχή. Η τετραπύλη είσοδος και το στέγαστρο είναι ιδιαίτερα χαρακτηριστικά στοιχεία της κατασκευής.

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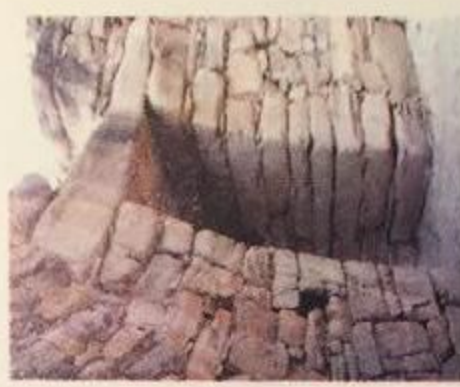
Ο τάφος «Τετραπύλο» είναι ένα σημαντικό μνημείο της κλασικής αρχαιότητας στην περιοχή. Η τετραπύλη είσοδος και το στέγαστρο είναι ιδιαίτερα χαρακτηριστικά στοιχεία της κατασκευής.

MINISTRY OF CULTURE
13th EPHORATE OF PREHISTORICAL AND CLASSICAL ANTIQUITIES
THOLOS TOMB "TOUMBA" AT DIMINI



SCEDIASTIKH TOMH.
DRAWING SELECTION.

LEPTOMERIA TOY UPERQIYOU ESWTERIKA
DETAIL OF THE LINTEL FROM THE INSIDE.



Tholos tomb "Toumba"
Late Hellenistic period (LH III B, 13th century B.C.)

The tholos tomb "Toumba" is located at Dimini, on the west coast of the Gulf of Pagasae. It was excavated in 1901 by V. Stais and was found spoiled. It is a well-preserved tholos tomb, consisting of a circular masonry structure with a conical roof. The tomb is built of large, squared stones and has a diameter of 3.30m. The entrance is through a narrow doorway on the west side. The interior is a shallow, rectangular chamber with a floor of limestone blocks. The tomb is dated to the late Hellenistic period, around 130-100 B.C.

The tomb consists of the vault (tholos) (3.30m, external height, 3.30m diameter), the stamnos (3.25m, long, 3.10m, tall, 1.60m, wide), and of a long dromos (14.30m, long, 2.30m, wide) which has a NW orientation. The lateral sides of the dromos were supported by stone-built retaining walls, slightly converging on the stamnos. The walls are low, tall on their conjunction with the vault, and are in an excellent state of preservation. The abstraction wall of the tomb is conserved at the edge of the road.

The access to the tomb's tholos was achieved by a stamnos, which was covered by four big chiseled stones of limestone (8.25m, wide). The lateral slab of the lintel is carved in order to follow the vault's shape. The relieving triangle is formed above the lintel. The entrance of the stamnos is built of big chiseled stones carrying sockets for a wooden (?) door.

The vault is constructed according to the "reflector" system, with small limestone pieces without binding hole. The stones of the vault's base are big chiseled blocks founded on the limestone bedrock, which is illustrated in form of the floor of the tholos tomb.

On the north side of the vault there is a rectangular construction (3.62m, long, 1.60m, wide, and 1.60m external height). According to the observations of the excavator V. Stais, the construction was covered by stone slabs lying on the lateral walls, and on a wooden beam resting in the middle of the funeral bed.

Although the tomb was found spoiled, nevertheless some finds—mainly small jewelry made of gold and glass—excavated by the diggers are still in the tholos tomb "Toumba" and the tholos tomb "Lamiospila" are attributed, without any further doubts, to the king (satrap) of the Mysonian settlement which was founded recently at Dimini, in the plain eastwards of the hill with the Neolithic settlements.



APOYH APO TO ESWTERIKO TOY TAFΟΥ
VIEW OF THE TOMBS INTERIOR.



LARNAKA.
LARNAX.

APOYH THS TAFΟΥ APO EPANW
OVERVIEW OF THE TOMB.



LEPTOMERIA TOY UPERQIYOU
DETAIL OF THE LINTEL.



ΜΥΚΗΝΑΪΚΟΣ ΟΙΚΙΣΜΟΣ ΔΙΜΙΝΙΟΥ (ΙΩΛΚΟΣ)
MYCENAEAN SETTLEMENT AT DIMINI (IOLKOS)

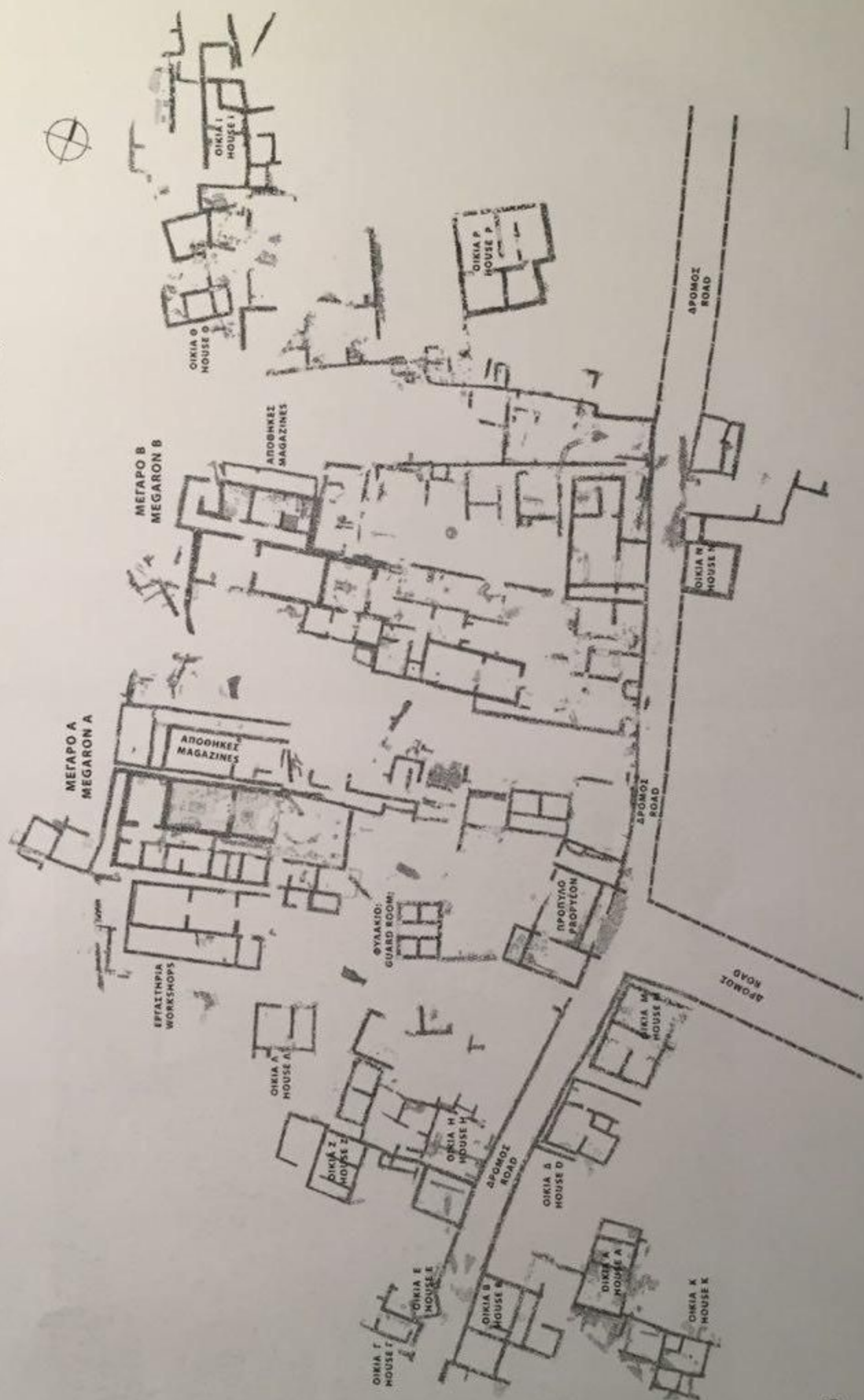


Fig. 3

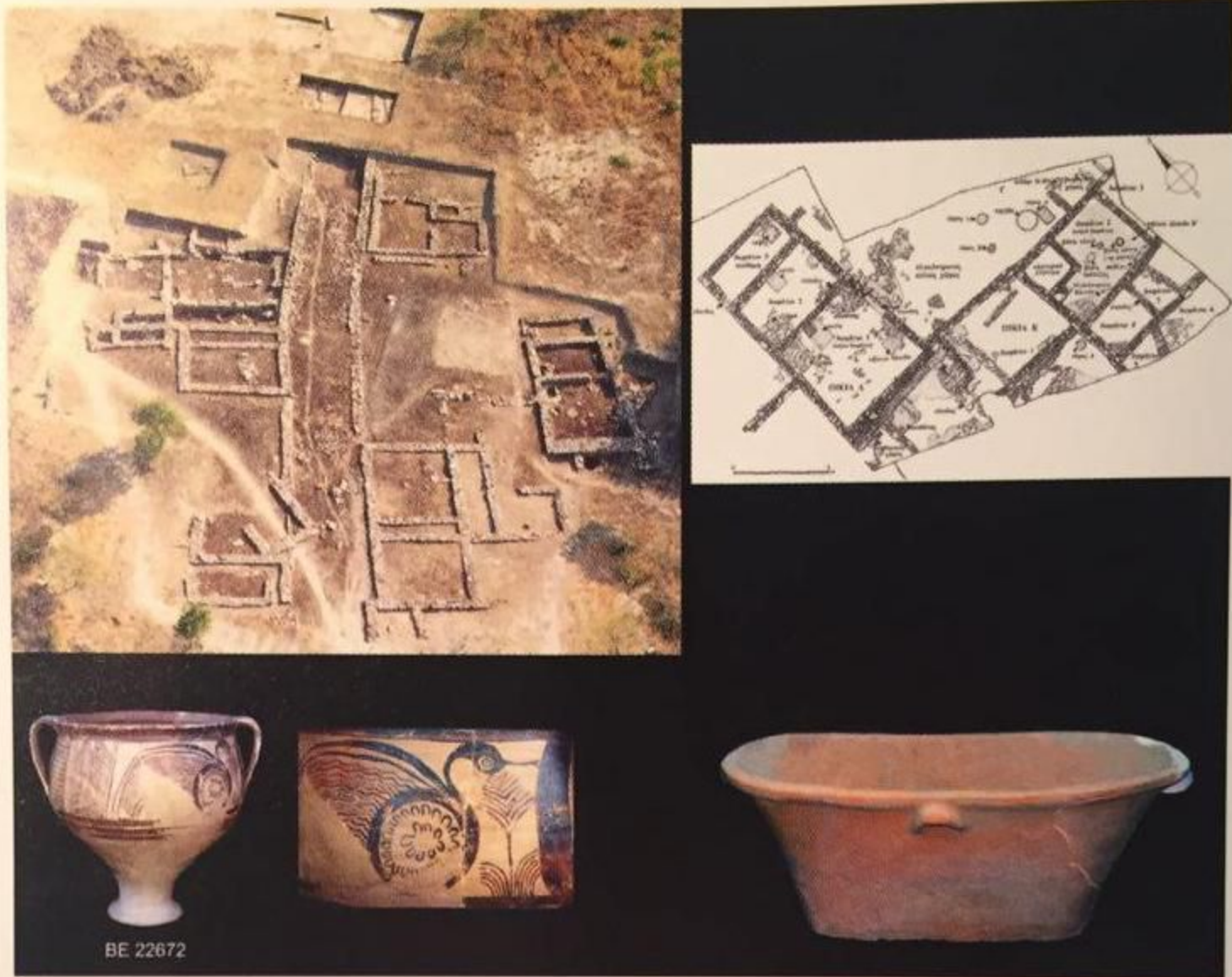


Fig. 4

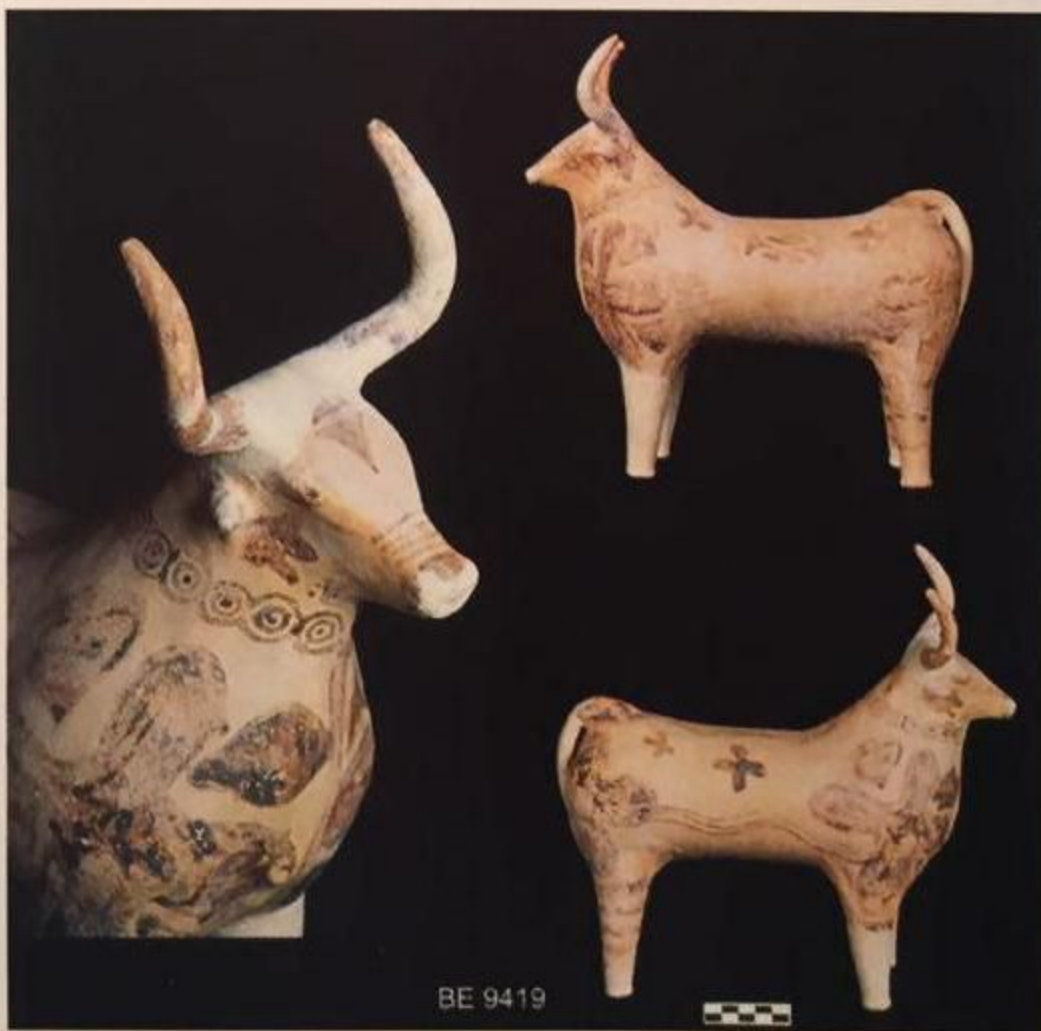


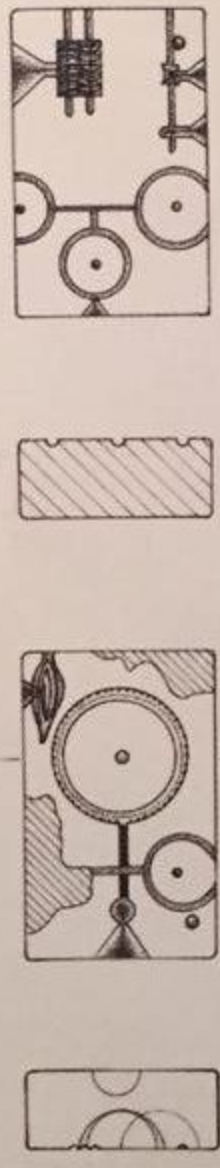
Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



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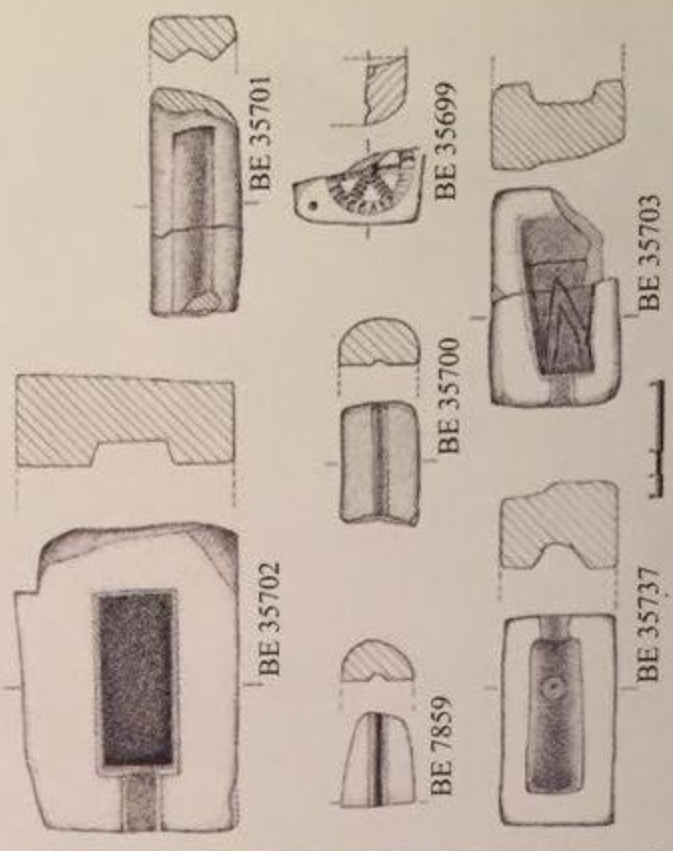
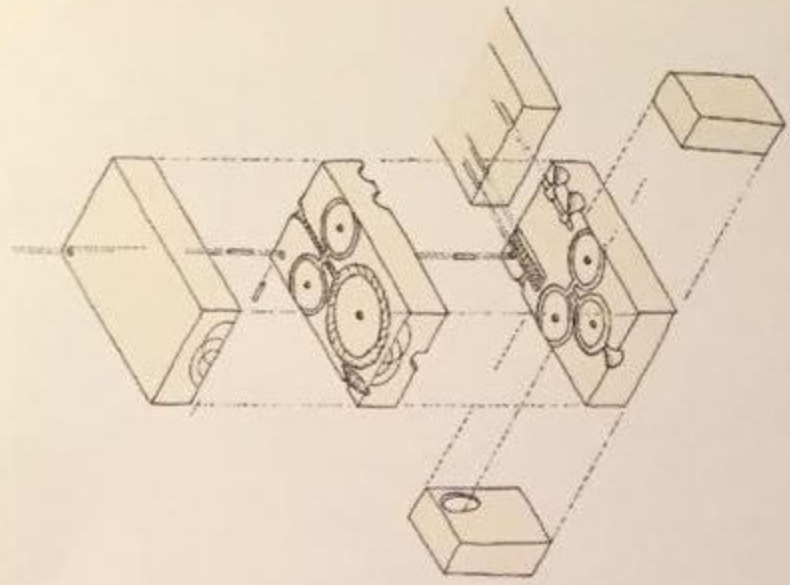
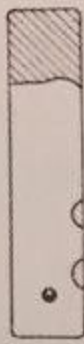


Fig. 8



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Fig. 9

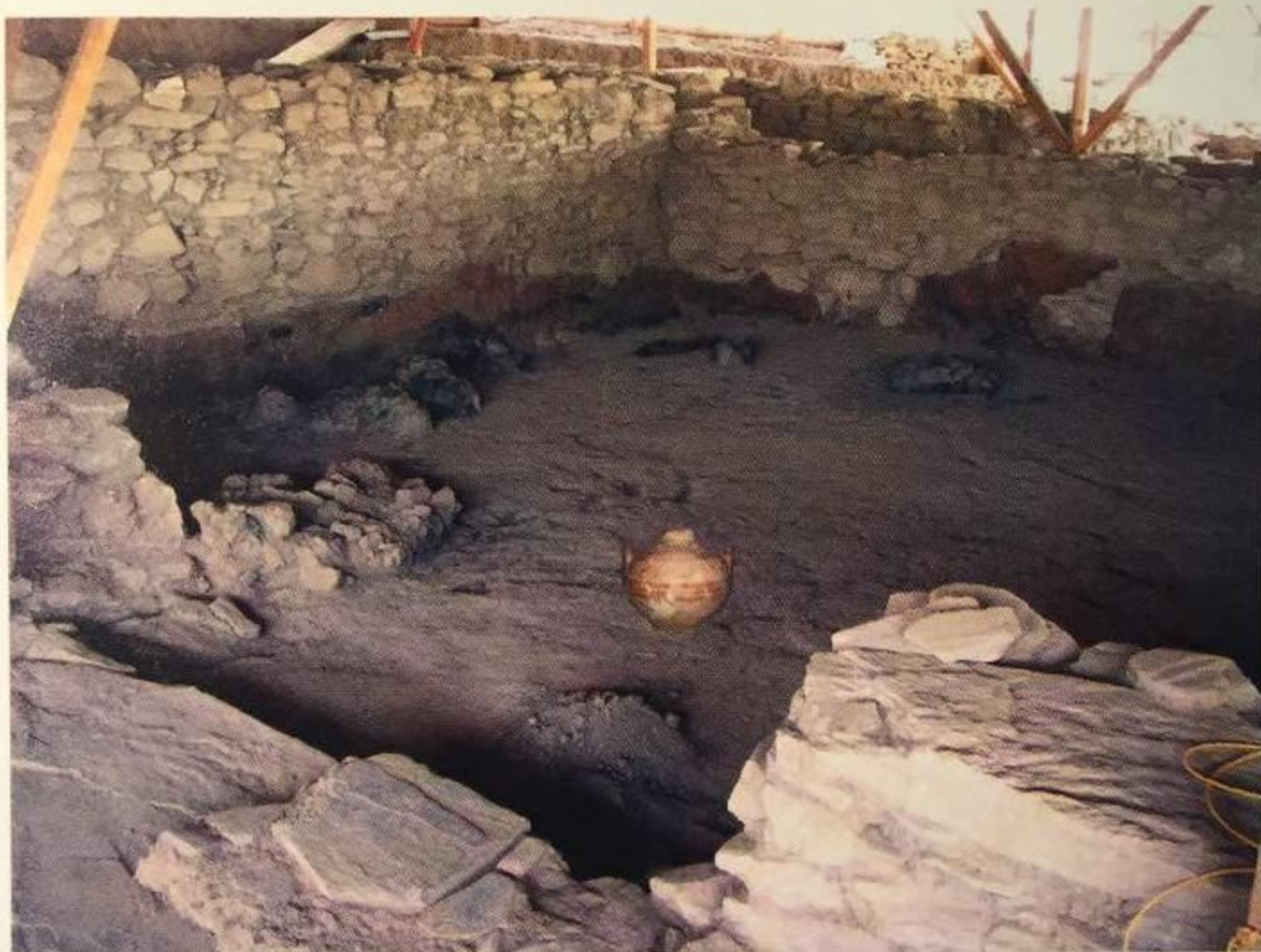


Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12

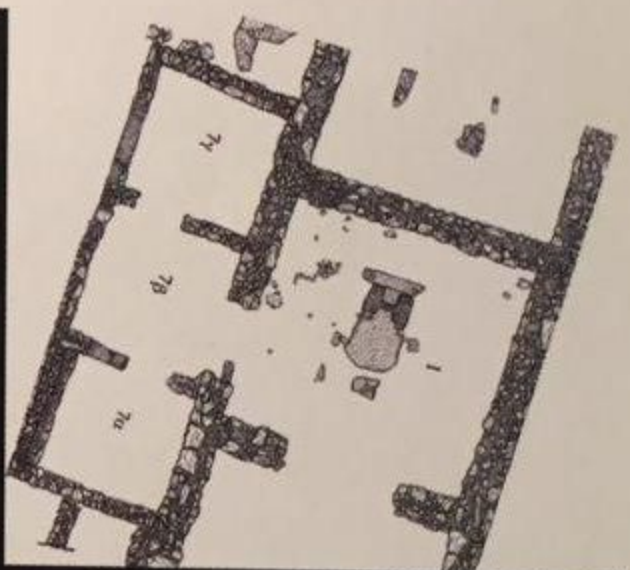


Fig. 13

ΜΥΚΗΝΑΪΚΟΣ ΟΙΚΙΣΜΟΣ ΔΙΜΗΝΙΟΥ. ΜΥΚΕΝΑΕΑΝ ΣΕΤΤΛΕΜΕΝΤ ΑΤ ΔΙΜΙΝΙ
LH III C Middle, phase a

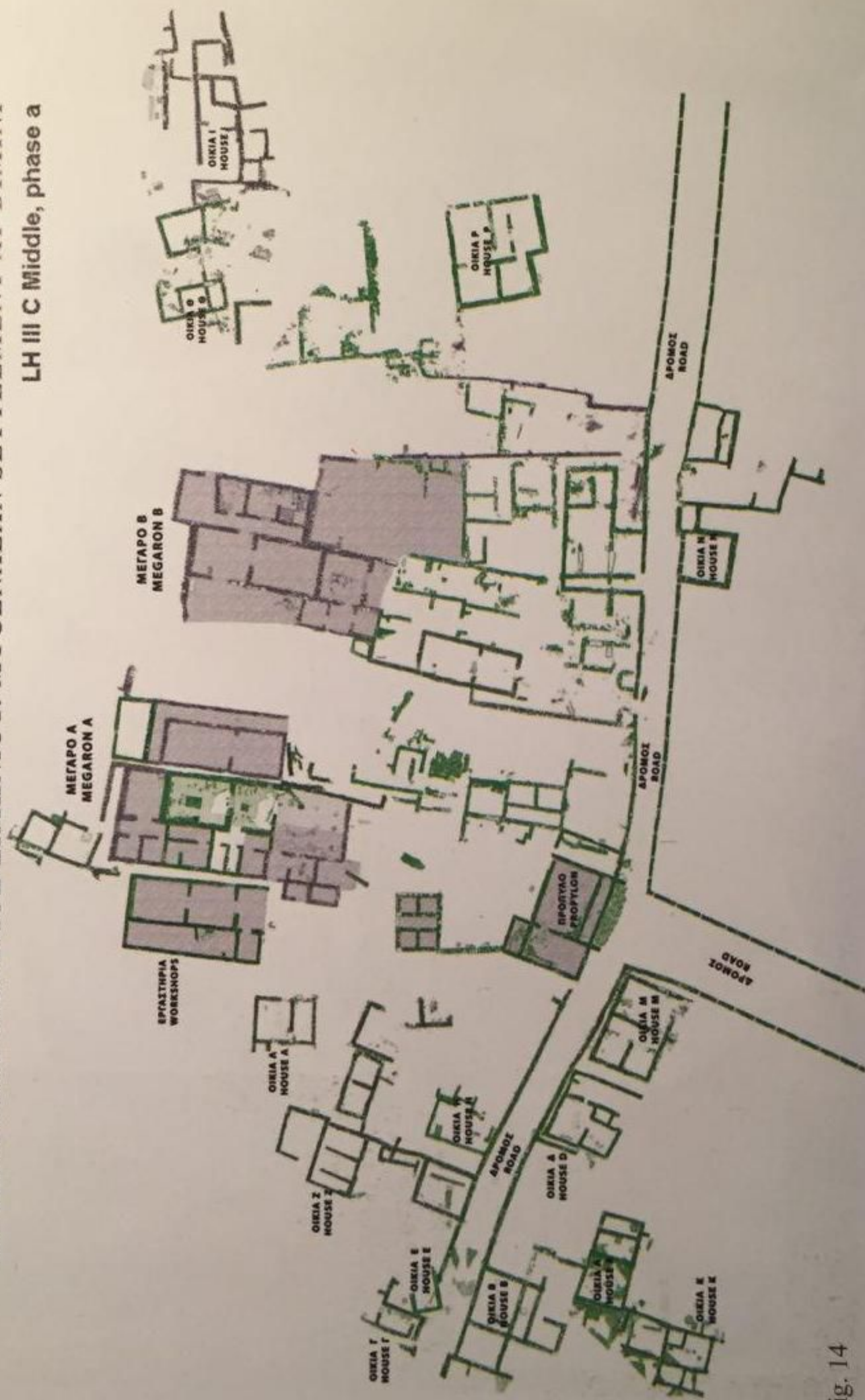


Fig. 14

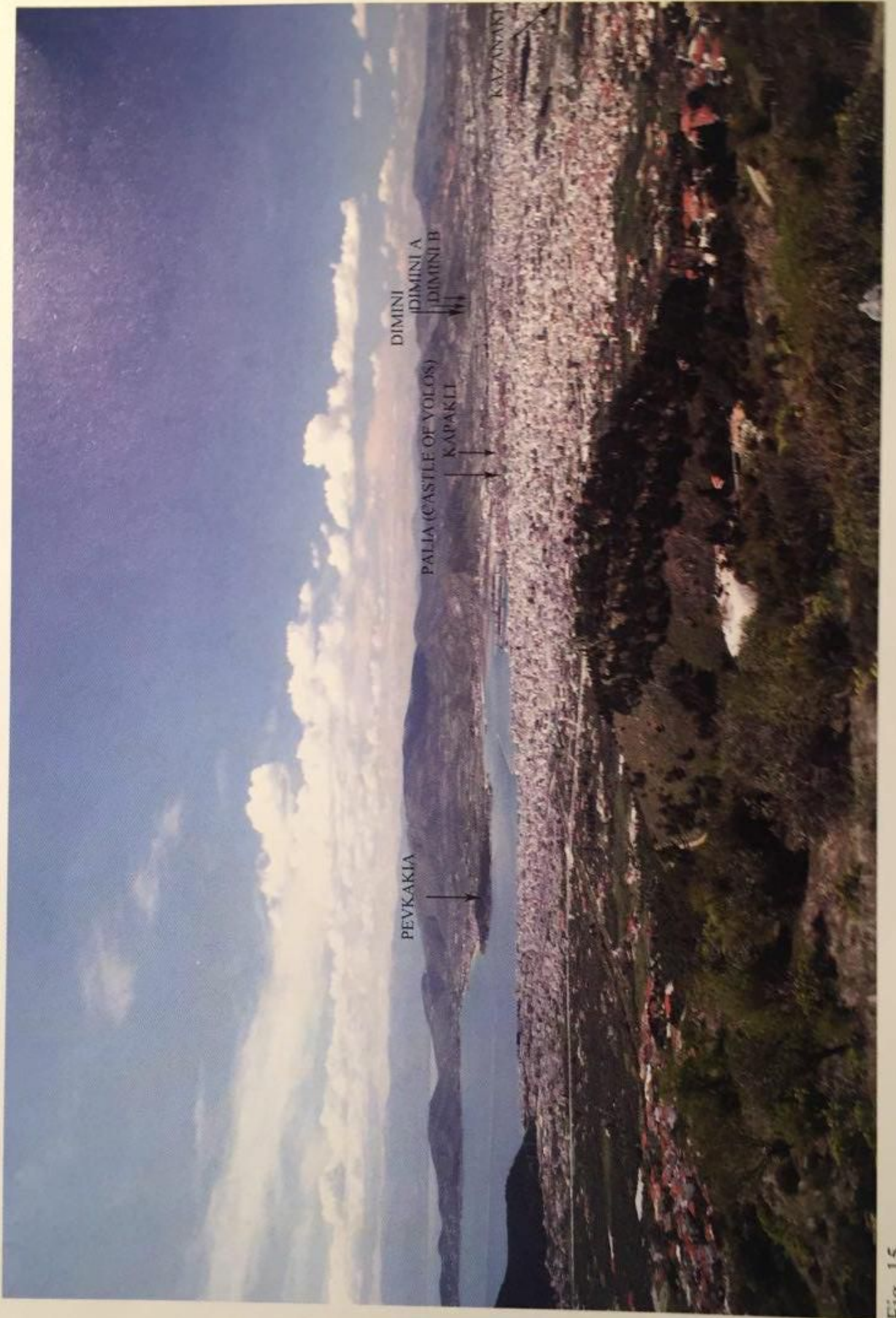


Fig. 15



Fig. 16

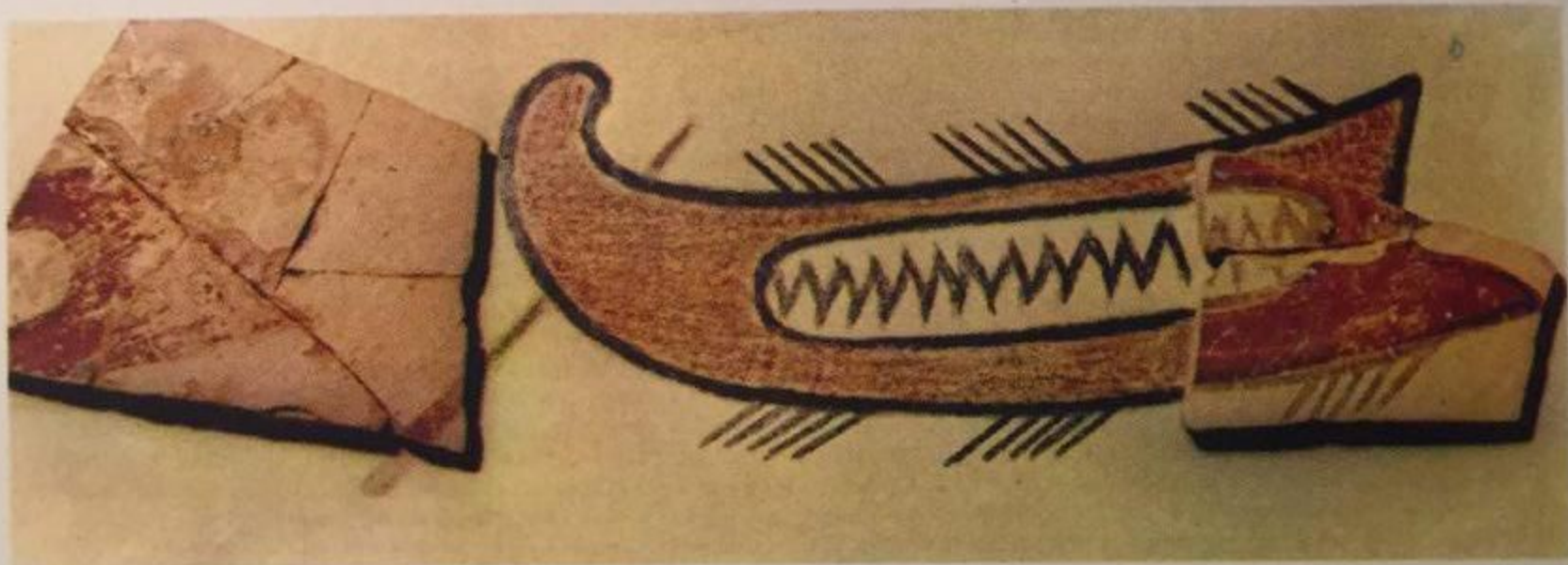
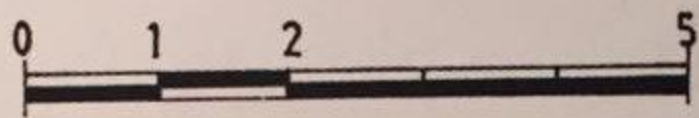


Fig. 17