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**The Acropolis of Aigeira Before the Mycenaean Settlement\***

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The ancient city of Aigeira, which was first investigated by Otto Walter under the auspices of the Austrian Archaeological Institute at the beginning of the 20th century, is situated on the north coast of the Gulf of Corinth, in the Nomos Achaia at the border of Corinthia. The city area covers a hill that rises directly from sea level to 415 m. The highest point, the so-called acropolis, is formed by two flat rocky outcrops separated by a saddle. The acropolis area is elevated to the north above an area of gently sloping fields that today are terraced. Its eastern and western slopes are separated from the surrounding hills by steep canyons. In the south a road leads over a saddle to a valley leading into the interior of the Peloponnese.

In the course of the reinvestigations of the ancient city of Aigeira by the Austrian Archaeological Institute under the direction of Wilhelm Alzinger, the western plateau of about 750 m<sup>2</sup> was excavated from 1975 until 1980. It brought to light parts of an Archaic temple (Alzinger 1985), as well as a small Mycenaean settlement dating to the post-palatial period of LH IIIC (Deger-Jalkotzy and Alram-Stern 1985). From the beginning of the excavations it was clear that, aside from the Mycenaean finds and Handmade Burnished Ware of LH IIIC (Deger-Jalkotzy 1977), there was also pre-Mycenaean, handmade pottery (Deger-Jalkotzy and Alram-Stern 1985, 395-7).

The pre-Mycenaean pottery includes about 700 sherds, which were spread all over the plateau. Concentrations of finds were identified in the lowermost strata close to the bedrock that slopes from east to west. In the eastern part of the plateau, where the original bedrock was very close to the surface, the strata contained mainly mixed contexts. In this area concentrations of pre-Mycenaean material were primarily collected in rock fissures, and a few of these units were without later intrusions. In the western part of the plateau a good Mycenaean habitation sequence was evident. Under the lowest Mycenaean level and directly above the stereo, there was a brown layer, whose lowest part was stony, of 10-20 cm thickness. It contained concentrations of pre-Mycenaean pottery, sometimes mixed with Handmade Burnished Ware. In the northwestern area, where this layer was even more substantial, there was part of a floor level that could have belonged to pre-Mycenaean use of the plateau.

This evidence indicates that there must have been a pre-Mycenaean settlement on the acropolis that ended before the first Mycenaeans arrived. By levelling the surface before building their settlement, the Mycenaeans destroyed all architectural remains that might have remained and distributed the earlier artifacts all over the area of the plateau. Concentrations of pre-Mycenaean pottery probably occurred by chance, since most include sherds of several prehistoric periods, so that they are actually mixed. Thus it is probably impossible to reconstruct the situation of the habitation areas for the prehistoric periods.

Additionally, on a terrace directly north and below the upper acropolis plateau, Dr. Ladstätter identified directly above the stereo a few pre-Mycenaean finds that possibly had been transferred from somewhere else (situation plan cf. Ladstätter forthcoming). On the other hand, more substantial finds on a lower terrace about 150 m to the northeast of the

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highest point, which were situated in great depth in dark brown strata, probably derive from a separate site (Deger-Jalkotzy and Alram-Stern 1985, 408-9).

While from the beginning of the excavations it was suspected that these finds belonged to the Early Bronze Age, it is now possible to separate four phases of use of the uppermost plateau of the acropolis area. According to a small but clear amount of evidence, the earliest use must date to the later part of the Late Neolithic Period, before 4300 BC. From this period there is a sherd of a polychrome bowl which has many parallels in Corinthia, especially in Gonia (Blegen 1931, 69-70). Another piece belongs to a fine, burnished grey ware that is current in the North Eastern Peloponnese but also has good parallels in the Corycian Cave near Delphi on the opposite side of the Gulf of Corinth (Touchais et al. 1981, 219-20, nos. 234, 247). Two further dark, burnished fragments, the one with a thickened rim (Vitelli 1999, fig. 29f. 35d), the other with a carinated body (Vitelli 1999, figs. 16h.i), date according to parallels in the Franchthi Cave to the later part of the Late Neolithic period.

The largest portion of the prehistoric material of the acropolis dates to the Final Neolithic period, which, according to our current knowledge about metallurgical developments of this period, actually should be called Chalcolithic (Dousougli 1992). This long span of time covers at least a millennium, from about 4300 until 3100 BC (Coleman 1992, 25-64). The first finds in Attica, as well as in Kephala on Keos (Coleman 1977), have become synonymous for the entire period in southern Greece (Renfrew 1972, 68-80). A late phase of the Final Neolithic, or Chalcolithic, period, characterized by the appearance of a dark, heavy burnished ware, was identified in other places. This phase, called according to the first finds the "Athens-North Slope Phase" (French 1972, 17-8), is probably partly synchronous with the Early Cycladic Pelos-Group (Maran 1998, 135-8). This Chalcolithic sequence was confirmed by stratigraphy only at one site, the Franchthi Cave in the Southern Argolid (Vitelli 1999, 15-21). Here both phases appear, although separated by a longer hiatus.

In contrast to earlier periods, the Chalcolithic pottery is characterized by a large proportion of thick-walled, heavily gritted pottery, low-fired at about 500° C (Vitelli 1999, 65). Large thick-walled vessels usually have a dark core and dissolve easily due to external causes. Small vessels were well fired. The surfaces of the large vessels were usually only smoothed and minimally burnished, while thin-walled pots were well burnished. The analyses made by Roman Sauer show that the clay of the specimens from Aigeira had few limestone grains but a high percentage of inclusions of quartz and radiolarite (See contribution by S. Deger-Jalkotzy in this volume). When Dr. Sauer discovered a clay deposit below the acropolis he was able to demonstrate, using thin sections and heavy mineral analyses, that the clay used for the prehistoric pots derived from this location.

Characteristically, the shapes of the Chalcolithic pottery are simple. The main shapes of the fine wares are simple deep or open bowls with in-turned, straight or flaring rims similar to shapes in the Franchthi or the Corycian Caves (Vitelli 1999. Touchais et al. 1981). At Aigeira there are no sherds with crusted decoration or with pattern burnishing characteristic for sites like Kephala (Coleman 1977, 10-2) or Ayios Dimitrios (Zachos 1987, 51-5). Instead there are several examples with odd handles that are also typical for this period. One pot has a horned handle similar to finds in Arcadia (Holmberg 1944, fig. 37e) and Corinthia (Phelps 1975, 325), while two sherds show two small horn-like protuberances comparable to finds from the Southern Argolid or Tharrounia (Pullen 1995, 149, no. 17. Sampson 1993, fig. 99). An angular vertical handle that has parallels in the Corycian Cave (Touchais et al. 1981, 211, no. 159) could have been part of a closed pot. Especially large bowls or plates show horizontal lugs (Phelps 1975, fig. 54,9 – from Alepotrypa Cave).

Several sherds are to be classified as Heavy Burnished Ware, which is characteristic of the Late Chalcolithic period (Alram-Stern 1996, 159-60). One fragment of a black burnished carinated bowl with a horizontal tubular lug has a close parallel at the nearby Neolithic settlement of Krathion (Phelps 1975, 322, fig. 52.1). Another sherd with a horizontal tubular lug at the rim can be paralleled with finds in the Alepotrypa Cave in Laconia (Papathanassopoulos 1996, 216-7, no. 18).

One of the most remarkable shapes of the Chalcolithic period is the scoop. Among the sherds of scoops from Aigeira there is a coarse piece that has a mat impression on its bottom, again a detail typical for this period (Carington-Smith 1977, 114-27. Belogianni 1989, 171-82. Belogianni 1993, 346-59. Labriola forthcoming).

Chalcolithic pithoid vessels are characterized by their plastic decoration, which may consist of horizontal, vertical and crossed straps sometimes decorated with impressions. In Aigeira, horizontal straps running around the width of the vessel are the dominant decor.

Many sherds were parts of pots or pans with a row of holes under the rim. These so-called cheese pots were widely distributed during the Chalcolithic in the Peloponnese and the Aegean (Phelps 1975, fig. 54.16. 57.4 – from Alepotrypa Cave. Sampson 1993, 166-185, figs. 187-188)

If we consider the position of the Chalcolithic pottery of Aigeira within the Final Neolithic or Chalcolithic era, according to the occurrence of the Heavy Burnished Ware, this complex probably should be dated to the later part of the Chalcolithic period, into the so-called Athens-North Slope Phase. In accordance with this, our material has close parallels within the late Chalcolithic finds from the Alepotrypa Cave (Papathanassopoulos 1996, 216-29), whereas the patterned burnished ware that is characteristic for sites like Keos/Kephala (Coleman 1977) or Ayios Dimitrios/Elis (Zachos 1987) dating to the earlier part of the Chalcolithic Period does not occur here. On the contrary, the pottery of the lower, eastern plateau is to be dated to the earlier part of the Chalcolithic period, since several thin-walled burnished sherds from bowls have their closest parallels in the earlier Chalcolithic strata of the Franchthi Cave (Vitelli 1999, 70-2).

The succeeding period of use of the acropolis dates to the Early Bronze Age. Its pottery is characterized by fine red-slipped and burnished ware that synchronizes with the EH I pottery from Perachora/Vouliagmeni at the east coast of the Gulf of Corinth (Fossey 1969) and Eutresis phases III-V in Boeotia (Caskey and Caskey 1960, 137-148). On the contrary, there is little similarity with the finds from the Talioti valley in the Argolid (Dousougli 1987. Weißhaar 1990). The pottery of this period is distinguished from the Chalcolithic fragments mainly by the absence of forms like scoops or crusted decoration (Maran 1998, 7f.). Fine wares are fired oxidizing at higher temperatures. Bowls show a continuation of preference of simple profiles with slightly in-turned or everted rims and flat bottoms, or they have a plastic ridge below the rim. A new characteristic feature is the so-called trumpet lugs that occur mainly on bowls. One sherd with impressed dots may have been part of a pyxis. One handle ending in ears with a vertical loop has a close parallel in Eutresis (Caskey and Caskey 1960, 140, no. III.9). One ribbon handle is decorated by a herringbone pattern (Fossey 1969, 66 - Phase Z). Closed vessels with collar rims are rarer in Aigeira than in Perachora (Fossey 1969, 56; 61). In contrast to the fine ware, the separation of the Chalcolithic and EH I coarse wares is problematic because of their similarities of texture and surface. Thus, it is not surprising that according to the analyses of Dr. Sauer, the EH wares of Aigeira were made of the same clay as the Chalcolithic ones.

Since Aigeira is one of the sites with mixtures of Chalcolithic and EH I pottery finds, it cannot be determined with certainty whether the settlement on the acropolis was continuous. Up to now no sites have been found with stratified settlement sequences of both

periods. An indication of such a continuity of settlement in Aigeira, however, could be the use of the same clay bed during both periods.

While there are no indications that the acropolis was occupied during EH II, the plateau must have been settled during the Middle Bronze Age. According to this pottery, the occupation must date to its earliest period MH I, with several shapes and wares developing from EH III and the existence of the incised so-called "Adriatic ware". Matt-painted wares, which are rare during this period, do not occur in Aigeira at all (Howell 1992). The most interesting sherds collected in a rock fissure come from at least two vessels of Adriatic ware. One of the pots had a high swung strap handle for which there are parallels in Nichoria (Howell 1992, P2318B) and Malthi (Valmin 1938, 290, no.1). Several sherds belong to bowls of the so-called Minyan Ware. Their profiles are much smoother than those from MH II or III specimens. One sherd from a Mycenaean layer seems to have been part of a neck of a red slipped and burnished jar that had been popular since the EH III period (e.g. Walter and Felten 1981, 159 nos. 186-192). Some sherds from coarse ware collar-necked jars, as well as from a pithoid vessel with a vertically perforated lug, should also be dated to the MH period (e.g. Dor et al. 1960, 130, no. 31).

In addition to the pottery finds, there are also several implements of pre-Mycenaean date that also provide insight into the activities of the settlement. Chipped stone tools, chiefly of obsidian (that will be published by T. Carter), occurred mainly in the pre-Mycenaean layer and in rock fissures. The broad percussion struck blades and blade tools are to be dated to the Chalcolithic period, while the thin parallel-sided pressure blades belong to the Bronze Age. Blades were mainly used for cutting organic material. Obsidian cores show that there was probably blade production on the site. A point collected on the lower terrace and dating to the Late Neolithic to Chalcolithic period shows that there were also hunting activities there (Demoule - Perlès 1993, 402).

A group of spindle whorls, primarily collected in Mycenaean strata, resemble finds from the Early Bronze Age because of their semiglobular form and large size, as well as their fabric and surface treatment (e.g. Walker Kosmopoulos 1948, 57f. Fossey 1969, fig. 8). The number of spindle whorls increases considerably with the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Ages in southern Greece and must reflect an increase in wool production by that time.

Three groups of objects are securely dated from the advanced Early Bronze Age to the MH period, i.e. to the last period of pre-Mycenaean use of the site. A so-called clay anchor of relatively small size with the perforation of the shaft parallel to the axis of the hooks typologically resembles a specimen from Khirra (Dor et. al. 1960, 144). Clay anchors that came into use during EH II and circulated until the MH period were probably used as tools, possibly as hooks to hang up objects (Weißhaar 1980. Forsén 1992, 221-227. Carington-Smith 1992, 693f.). A portion of a shafthole axe of sandstone, characteristic for the EH III and MH periods, is possibly connected with woodworking (Forsén 1992, 227-232. Maran 1998, 286-288). Arrow shaft straighteners of sandstone which staid popular until the Early Mycenaean period were probably used for smoothing wooden shafts (e.g. Valmin 1938, 353f. Blitzer 1992, 728).

According to this evidence, a number of activities like harvesting and secondary agricultural production processes such as wool production, as well as working of natural materials and hunting, should be assigned to the pre-Mycenaean settlement activities.

Concerning the activities on this site one should consider the position of the acropolis in the network of sites during the prehistoric periods (cf. Alram-Stern forthcoming). As demonstrated above, the acropolis is a small site situated high above the coast. One of the disadvantages of the site is its lack of water, which especially affects the watering of the fields. In direct eye contact with the acropolis there existed another, much larger settlement

with much better economic possibilities. The site of Krathion /Akrata, continuously settled from the Early Neolithic until the Middle Bronze Age, was excavated in the sixties by E. Mastrokostas (Mastrokostas 1968). Today situated at the edge of the well watered coastal plain of Akrata, this settlement probably was originally sited directly at the sea in a bay. This shows that in this coastal area during the Chalcolithic period there were at least two contemporaneous settlements of considerably different economic significance. However, according to similarities in pottery, these two sites must have been in direct contact. That this relation of the two sites is not a unique but a characteristic feature of the Chalcolithic period may be demonstrated by comparing them with other areas of the Peloponnese.

From surveys we know that during the Chalcolithic period there was a considerable augmentation of sites in the Peloponnese (Alram-Stern forthcoming). This augmentation may be partially due to the long period of time covered by the Chalcolithic period, but also to their location. Large settlements like Asea-Paleokastro (Holmberg 1944), Berbati-Limnes site 400 (Johnson 1996a, 44-57), Sphakovouni (Alram-Stern 1996, 264), Kouphovouno (Renard 1989), Franchthi (Vitelli 1999), Alepotrypa-Cave (Papathanassopoulos 1996) or Krathion/Akrata (Mastrokostas 1968) are situated in well watered, inland or coastal plains that dominate larger areas. But the results of several surveys as the Berbati-Limnes Survey (Johnson 1996a) and the Asea Valley Survey (Forsén, Forsén and Lavento 1996. Forsén et al. forthcoming) also show that there are a large number of smaller short-lived sites surrounding them. These new sites are often situated close to good soil but without direct access to water, which must be due to a shift from spring-fed to rain-fed fields during the Chalcolithic period (Johnson 1996b). Additionally, many of these sites are situated in areas with poor soils or on higher hills better suited for herding. Their situation corresponds with osteological studies showing a shift in the age of slaughtering sheep towards older animals (Becker 1991). These results could be due to the use of sheep for secondary production like cheese or wool, which also is emphasized by the augmentation of spindle whorls (Elster 1992. Demoule-Perlès 1993, 400-1. Vitelli 1999, 103). Herding activities also may be responsible for the relatively short life of settlements, which is apparent from their use during one phase only. Some sites also produced flint or obsidian points, indicating hunting activities, and an augmentation of wild animal bones is also demonstrated in osteological publications. Thus, the increase of sites during the Chalcolithic period may be connected with two important agricultural innovations, the spread of agriculture to new areas by the use of rain-fed fields as well as the augmentation of herding for the purpose of secondary production. That the acropolis site Aigeira also benefited from them is attested by its geographical situation as well as its small finds. Blades as well as pottery vessels suitable for storage indicate harvesting, and spindle whorls show wool production activities.

From the situation of the multitude of new smaller sites around a major settlement it may be deduced that these sites did not belong to transhumant establishments but to a system of agro-pastoralist farming-houses or hamlets (Halstead 1996. Cavanagh 1999), sometimes with a component of hunting that stood in a particular relation to the major settlement. The same correlation may be seen regarding the major settlement of Akrata and the small site on the Acropolis of Aigeira.

Additionally, these sites very often are situated at paths connecting neighbouring areas like the sites of the Berbati area at the Kleisoura, which connects the valley with the Argive plain (Johnson 1996a). This fact accords with the attested increasing interaction during this period that is proved by the colonization of the Cyclades (Cherry 1981. Cherry 1990) as well as obsidian and metal trade. Aigeira, too, is situated at the entrance of a valley leading to the Helmos Mountain from which a path leads to the Pheneos valley.

Although many sites have no continuity from the Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age, often one may find EH I settlements in the closer neighbourhood of Chalcolithic ones. This settlement pattern and also analyses of finds point to continuity of the agricultural system (Jameson, Runnels and van Andel 1994, 348-66). There is clear evidence that there was an augmentation of rain-fed fields in the Southern Argolid. The increase of wool production is demonstrated by the use of spindle whorls and loom weights and also by the appearance of a new, stronger race of sheep (von den Driesch 1987, 15-6). The spindle whorls from Aigeira may be seen in this economic context.

According to the stratigraphic sequences from Eutresis (Caskey and Caskey 1960), Perachora (Fossey 1969) and Lithares (Tzavella-Evjen 1985), in the course of EH I the number of permanent settlements increased, and cultural units came into being. Aigeira, together with Perachora and Eutresis, now belonged to the settlements around the eastern part of the Gulf of Corinth. During the succeeding period of EH II, the economic progress leads to settlement concentrations, first protourban centres and the abandonment of sites of minor importance. This fact harmonizes with the abandonment of the acropolis of Aigeira during this period.

The acropolis was only resettled by EH III or MH I, a period when an economic decline and possibly also political instability led to a remarkable reduction of sites. The Southern Argolid survey produced only four MH sites with an increase of their importance during the LH period (Jameson, Runnels and van Andel 1994, 366-72), and many areas like the Berbati Limnes Area (Wells 1996, 121), Asea valley (Forsén et al. forthcoming) and the Nemea valley (Wright et al. 1990) produced no MH sites at all. However, sites of marginal economic importance like the site of the acropolis of Aigeira are still missing. One of the possibilities for resettling the acropolis during the MH period may be safety concerns during troubled times (Maran 1995, 67-72). In that case the MH settlement of Aigeira may have come into being for the same need for security as has been postulated for the settlement of the Late Mycenaean period.

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The final publication will contain the following illustrations:

Fig. 1: View of the acropolis of Aigeira from Krathion.

Fig. 2: View of Aigeira to plain of Akrata from the acropolis.

Fig. 3: View to the south from the acropolis.

Fig. 4: Concentrations of pre-Mycenaean finds on the acropolis (Drawing: Ch. Schauer, E. Alram-Stern).

Fig. 5: Trench S1/75 East (Ifm 47-55), south-profile.

Fig. 6: Aigeira, Akropolis, II 2, north profile (Drawing: S. Deger-Jalkotzy).

Fig. 7: Chronological table: Periods of use at the acropolis of Aigeira (Italics).

Fig. 8: Late Neolithic Pottery: a) Inv.no. 735/77 Late Neolithic polychrome ware. b) A 500/76-P9 Late Neolithic dark grey ware. c) A 209/76-P9 and d) A 209/76-P8 Dark burnished wares.

Fig. 9: Final Neolithic fine ware: a) A307/80-P4. b) A 315/80-P8. c) A97/79-P1. d) A 302/80-P5.

Fig.10: Final Neolithic pottery: a) A 315/80-P1. b) A 197/79-P1 c) A 299/76-P1.

Fig.11: Final Neolithic pottery: a) A 151/77-996. b) A76/77-P1. c) A 451/76-P1.

Fig.12: Final Neolithic fine ware, bowls with tubular lugs: a) A 135/78-23. b) A 151/77-P1.

Fig.13: Final Neolithic scoop with mat impression: A 139/78-P1.

Fig.14: Final Neolithic coarse ware with plastic decoration: a) A 119/77-P1. b) A103/77-P2. c) A103/77-P1. d) A 103/77-980. e) A 119/77-P2.

Fig.15: Final Neolithic „Cheese Pots“: a) A 451/76-P3. b) A 451/76-P2.

Fig.16: Final Neolithic fine ware: a) A 208/76-P1. b) A 209/76-P4. c) A 209/76-P1. d) A 209/76-P3

Fig.17: Early Helladic I fine ware: a) A 451/76-P5. b) Inv.no. 90/77-1. c) A 135/78-P2. d) A 227/78-P1. e) A 295/75. f) A 149/77-992/90. g) A 421/76-P5.

Fig.18: Early Helladic I fine ware: a) A 135/78-P1. b) A 426/76-P1. c) A 431/76-P1. d) A 109/79-P1. e) A 213/78-P1. f) A 180/76-321. g) A 320/76-950. h) A 149/77-P2.

Fig.19: Middle Helladic „Adriatic Ware“: A 298/80-P1. A 298/80-P4. A 300/80-P3.

Fig.20: a) A 239/75-P1 and b) A 246/80-P1 Middle Helladic „Grey Minyan Ware“. c) A 174/78-P1 Red slipped and Burnished Ware. d) A 421/76-P2 Coarse Ware.

Fig.21: Final Neolithic and Bronze Age chipped stone tools and blades (Photo: K.-V. von Eickstedt).

Fig.22: Early Helladic I clay spindle whorls: a) E 346/76. b) E 424/76. c) E 173/75. d) E 39/78. e) E 87/80 f) E 24/80.

Fig.23: Middle Helladic „clay anchor“ E 246/75.

Fig.24: Sand stone shaft hole axe E 422/76 (Drawing: Laura Labriola).

Fig.25: Arrow shaft straighteners a) E 256/75. b) E 58/78. c) E 26/79.

Fig.26: Distribution map: Final Neolithic sites in Southern Greece.

Fig.27: Distribution map: Early Helladic I sites in Southern Greece.