

## PRREFACE BY THE EDITORS

The long-term excavations at Aegina-Kolonna, the importance of the site for the Middle Bronze Age and our participation in the SCIEM 2000 project formed the starting point for the organization of an international workshop on “Middle Helladic Pottery and Synchronisms”, held at the Department of Classical Studies at Salzburg University from October 31 to November 2, 2004.

From the earliest excavations on the Kolonna hill, by ADOLPH FURTWÄNGLER and VALERIOS STAIS at the end of the 19th century, it was apparent that the headland north of the ancient and modern harbor of the town of Aegina was an important prehistoric settlement. Its significance was further highlighted by the excavations of PAUL WOLTERS and GABRIEL WELTER between 1924 and 1942. But it was not until the excavations of HANS WALTER in the seventies and eighties of the last century that the extent of the settlement and its unique role in the Aegean area became clearly visible. The substantial architectural remains and, above all, the wealth of locally produced and imported pottery left no doubt that the Kolonna settlement was one of the major centers in the Aegean Bronze Age and one of the very few sites in Greece with continuous and demonstrable stratigraphic settlement activity from the Early to the Late Bronze Age.

At the same time, it became quite clear that the high point of occupation at Kolonna extended from the end of the Early Bronze Age to the beginnings of the Late Bronze Age. In these periods, the site played a significant role within the central Aegean exchange networks as both an importer and exporter of perishable and nonperishable goods. This dual role is demonstrated above all by the considerable amount of high-quality imported pottery at the site and by the substantial quantities of locally produced Aeginetan ceramics that have been found at most Bronze Age sites in the central Aegean region.

The overall importance of the prehistoric settlement at Kolonna determined the direction of further research at the site. First of all it was only logical to join the efforts of the international research program “The Synchronisation of Civilisations in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Second Millennium B.C.” (SCIEM 2000) launched by the Austrian Academy of Science (OEAW) at the Austrian Research Foundation (FWF). We estimated that the Kolonna site

would provide important new results for the relative and absolute chronology of the central Aegean in the Early, Middle and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. In order to contribute as much as possible we defined main objectives of our current and future research, namely the designation of stratigraphic and chronological sequences at Kolonna lasting from Early Helladic III to the shaft-grave period, as well as the establishing of synchronisms with other regions and sites, and, finally, the determination of the first appearance of imports at Kolonna and their quantification.

Since the pioneering work of CARL W. BLEGEN and ALAN J.B. WACE and others, there has emerged a general agreement on the Middle Helladic pottery sequence and on its subphases. It is still difficult, however, to correlate with each other the individual stages of stylistic developments in different regions of mainland Greece. Problems also arise in the correlating of sites and regions significantly distant from one another – e.g., sites on mainland Greece and on the Aegean islands. We therefore arrived at the idea of bringing together scholars who have firsthand experience – that is to say, who have excavated and/or published large quantities of Middle Helladic material and related pottery from stratified contexts – to engage in topics such as:

- Aeginetan pottery in the Middle Helladic period
- Middle Bronze Age pottery from other regions in the Aegean
- the transition from Early Helladic III to Middle Helladic
- the transition from Middle Helladic to Late Helladic
- the origin, first appearance and distribution of specific groups of pottery
- different terminologies used in describing similar/identical features
- the synchronization between the mainland and the Cycladic islands and Crete, respectively

We are fully aware of the fact that at the present stage of research on the vast and highly variegated field of the Aegean Middle Bronze Age it is almost impossible to offer final solutions to the many hitherto unsolved questions. But we maintain that the attempt to shed new light on some of these topics is

a worthwhile endeavor and that it may help us in bringing some of questions more clearly into focus and in concentrating further research on the most urgent of the problems, such as those outlined by PETER WARREN in his “General Discussion” in this volume.

It remains to thank all those who have contributed to the success of the meeting: first of all the participants, who gave us insight into the results of their previous and current research; MANFRED BIETAK, as the chairman of SCIEM 2000, who offered the framework and the means for the meeting within the province of the Special Research Program; the rector of the Paris-Lodron-Universität Salzburg, HEINRICH SCHMIDINGER, who has substantially supported our efforts; and finally MOLLY RICHARDSON, who revised parts of the English manuscript and all who helped in organizing and carrying out the workshop.

The acts of the meeting constitute not only a vol-

ume in the publication series of SCIEM 2000 but are also the first volume of a new series of publications concerning research at Aegina-Kolonna. Following upon a period in which the basic history of the prehistoric settlement and of the historic sanctuary on Kolonna hill was ascertained, under the guidance of HANS WALTER and published in the *Alt-Ägina* series (1974–), it is now the time for a series of more specialized studies, which cannot easily find place within the structure of that series. Our decision has therefore been to start a new and consecutively numbered publication series entitled *Ägina Kolonna. Forschungen und Ergebnisse*. The new series is hoped to differentiate the various stages of past, present and future research at Aegina-Kolonna.

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