

AEGINA-KOLONNA: THE HISTORY OF A GREEK ACROPOLIS

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The main topic of the contributions collected in this volume is the Aegean Middle Bronze Age and the position of Aegina within this framework. The importance of the island in this epoch has become quite clear, and J. Rutter has characterized it most convincingly as a “Middle Helladic site without peer in the Greek mainland”.¹ We must, however, not forget that the history of Cape Kolonna covers a much longer period of time and that archaeological research at the site started with an entirely different aim. It was the ruin of a late Archaic Doric temple on the hill that attracted the interest of the first excavators, and their hope was to uncover a Greek sanctuary like that of Aphaia within the inland of Aegi-

na.² They wanted to catch a glimpse of the flourishing island PINDAR sings about as “the queen of the Doric sea”;³ the home of Sostratos, the wealthiest man of Greece, as Herodotos reports;⁴ and the rival of Athens in naval supremacy, “the pest in the eye of Piraeus”, as Perikles is said to have called it⁵ – that is, Archaic and early Classical Aegina.

But even in the odes of Pindar for Aeginetan athletic victors we get hints of an Aeginetan “prehistory”. He does not tire of evoking the glorious beginnings of Aegina’s fame by referring again and again to Aiakos, son of Zeus and first ruler of Aegina, and his sons and grandsons – Peleus and Telamon, and Achilleus and Aias, respectively.⁶ Thus connecting



Fig. 1 Overall view of Aegina-Kolonna, from southeast

¹ RUTTER 1993, 776.

² For the history of excavations at Kolonna see WURSTER 1974, 12–7.

³ PIND. *Pae.* 6.123–5.

⁴ HDT. 4.152.

⁵ PLUT. *Per.* 8.

⁶ GZELLA 1981, 12–3.



Fig. 2 FN biconical jug

the history of Aegina with the history of the Trojan wars, he stresses the leading role the island had played in the dim and distant past – we shall come back to this point later. What I want to do in the following pages is to give a – certainly very condensed – overall picture in which I will try to do justice to the continuity of human activities that is recognizable, on the basis of long years of research since the 18th century, on the headland of Kolonna.

The promontory on the west side of the island evolved at the latest in the course of the fourth millennium B.C. as the most important habitation site of the isle (Fig. 1). Without a doubt, it was the natural advantages that caused this development: elevated about 12 m above sea level, protected on three sides by steep cliffs, accompanied by shallow bays ideal for harbors on the north and south side, and with an expanded and fertile hinterland to the east it offered, as no other place on the island, sufficient space and all prerequisites for a successful exploitation of the agricultural and marine resources. The first clearly recognizable settlement is already fairly extended and consists of at least partially stone-built rectangular and curvilinear houses (black in the schematic plan Fig. 6),



Fig. 3 Pair of FN human clay idols (male and female)

dated by its ceramic finds – pattern-burnished bowls, relief-decorated vessels, and a red-burnished biconical jug – to the final stage of the Late Neolithic period (Fig. 2).⁷ Most noteworthy among the finds of this phase is a series of more or less naturalistic human clay idols (Fig. 3). They appear repeatedly in pairs but, all in all, males are predominant.⁸

If it is correct to say that Late Neolithic society underwent a change from an economy dominated by agriculture to a system of transhumant pastoralism connected with a wide interactive market or a trade/exchange network,⁹ we may possibly – with the help of those idols – catch a glimpse of the Aeginetan way of life in those times: since in the case of a small island like Aegina we can surely exclude a system of transhumant pastoralism, the Aeginetans may have played a role in the second postulated economic factor – the trade/exchange network. If we interpret the repeatedly appearing male headgear – conical caps – rightly as helmets, the conclusion seems rather obvious: inhabitants of the headland settlement characterized as warriors imply a seafaring occupation – that means in all probability sea trade, possibly connected with piracy. Perhaps we see here the starting point of a tradition that becomes apparent again and again throughout the prehistory and history of Aegina.

The beginnings of the Early Bronze Age on Kolonna are still elusive because of later Early Helladic leveling actions and it is not until a developed phase of Early Helladic II that we get an impression of the settlement structure. The most characteristic feature of this period is the occurrence of the monumental two-storied corridor houses, best known from Lerna, Akovitika and Thebes,¹⁰ which – because the

⁷ WALTER and FELTEN 1981, 10–1, 86–91; WEISSHAAR 1994, 675–89; ALRAM-STERN 1996, 157–9, 219–20; FELTEN and HILLER 1996, 90; 2004, 1090; MARAN 2000, 179–81.

⁸ FELTEN and HILLER 1996, 90, fig. 3, 91, fig. 1; FELTEN 2003a, 19–20.

⁹ DOUZOUGLI 1998, 145; ALRAM-STERN 2001, 7–8.

¹⁰ THEMELIS 1984, 340–50; ARAVANTINOS 1986, 57–63; SHAW 1987, 59–79; 1990, 183–94; WIENCKE 1989, 503–8; COSMOPOULOS 1991, 23–4.



Fig. 4 Reconstruction of fortification of town V. Clay model by G. Praschak

urban background of these seemingly isolated buildings remains quite hazy – have provoked some speculation about their function.¹¹ Aegina may provide some new indications. Through the uncovering of quite a number of Early Helladic II wall remains with roughly the same direction north and northwest of the “White House”,¹² it has become clear that the impression of isolation and of an architectural hierarchy transmitted by the “White House” does not fit the facts. We see now that the plateau of the Kolonna hill bore quite a number of buildings in this period. One of them, the so-called “House of the Dyer” at the north edge of the hill, was certainly one-storied but of considerably larger dimensions than the “White House”, and a second one, to the west of the “White House”, was in all probability two-storied, on the evidence of the greater than 60 cm thickness of its walls, even if we cannot at present determine its ground plan. So not only the impression of isolation, but also the impression of an architectural hierarchy may be misleading. We get instead the picture of an area loosely filled by a series of large-dimensioned houses and the general impression changes from a clearly stratified hierarchy to an accumulation of more or less homogeneous self-sufficient unities. But only further excavations can shed more light on this still open question.

A new chapter in the history of the settlement and a break with older patterns starts at any rate in the following period, Early Helladic III. After the abandonment of the large EH II houses and, with regard to the architecture, a still rather obscure intermediate period that clearly belongs ceramically to EH III,¹³ we



Fig. 5 Jewelry hoard from EH III stratum

recognize a totally new start in town planning and building in the late third millennium B.C.¹⁴

Evidently a completely new settlement was erected on the basis of a general master plan and with the first surely verified fortification wall (Fig. 4). The main feature of the newly created settlement pattern is the fact that we now have to do not with separate houses, loosely dispersed over the headland, but with houses joined together in a form of “insulae” and enclosed by a tower-strengthened city wall. It seems

¹¹ Summaries with bibliography: MARAN 1998, 193–7; ALRAM–STERN 2004, 238–43.

¹² FELTEN 2003a, 20–1, 24, fig. 2; FELTEN and HILLER 2004, 1090–1.

¹³ WALTER and FELTEN 1981, 23–8, 105–7; GAUSS and SMETANA 2002, 13; 2003, 471–86; 2004, 1105–6.

¹⁴ WALTER and FELTEN 1981, 28–42; KONSOLA 1986, 16; FORSEN 1992, 114–7; MARAN 1998, 209.

AEGINA KOLONNA
schematic plan

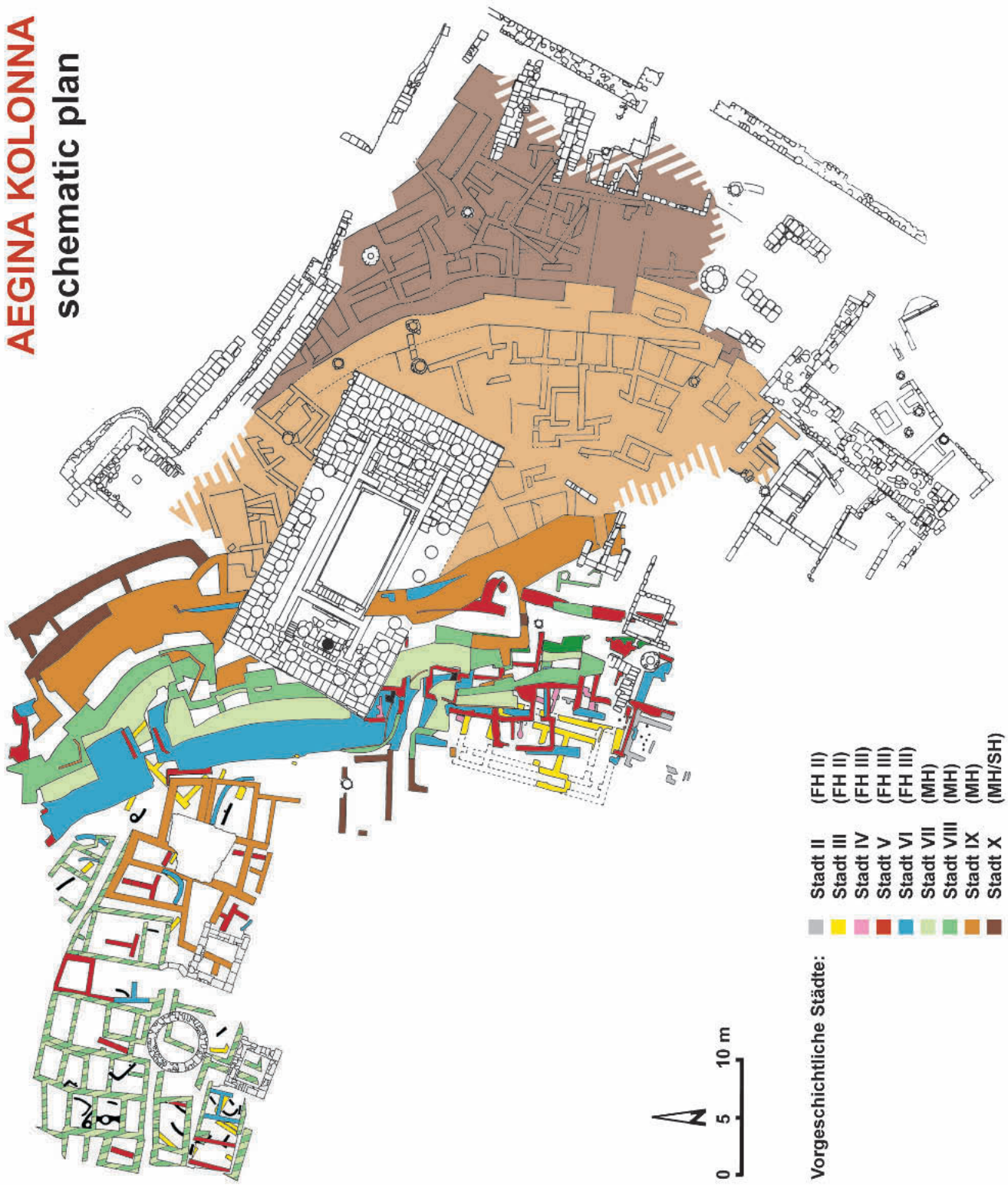


Fig. 6 Schematic plan of prehistoric settlement and fortifications of Aegina-Kolonna

quite clear that a general master plan of this size and the extensive common building activity necessary to realize this ambitious program demands a somehow centrally organized administration; it seems that we are here on the verge of a development that brought about the emergence of the “first Aegean ‘State’ outside of Crete”, as W.-D. Niemeier has called it.¹⁵

The fact that at this time, when most of the other Bronze Age settlements were undergoing a phase of serious decline, there evolved in Aegina a wealthy elite, is shown by a hoard of jewelry that belongs to a stratum of this phase in the “Inner Town” (Fig. 5).¹⁶ Apparently it was hidden in a time of danger – the stratum shows traces of severe burning – and not subsequently recovered. It consists of a series of long, deliberately bent golden pins with loop terminals, gold and silver bracelets, one or more necklaces with differently shaped beads of gold, silver, rock crystal, faience and carnelian – one of them with etched decoration – and a number of gold and silver pendants with embossed and soldered wire decoration. Evidently the hoard is a *mixtum compositum* whose items show close affinities to types of rather different provenances – from the eastern Aegean area, Anatolia, and the Levant as far as Mesopotamia. It demonstrates that Aegina could muster some wealth in these unstable times and, again, this is only to be explained by far-reaching sea trade.

But even Aegina did not remain untouched by the disturbances which affected so many of the roughly contemporary settlements. The newly erected township was destroyed by an extensive conflagration – evidently inflicted by a hostile invasion. At any rate the future history of Aegina Kolonna is marked by continuous efforts to reinforce the fortification walls as heavily as possible.

I cannot here go into detail with regard to the development of the fortification system from the end of Early Helladic III and throughout the Middle Helladic period (Fig. 6).¹⁷ It is characterized by an ever-increasing thickness of the main wall that rose behind the old, now additionally strengthened city wall of the burnt settlement, and by an ever-growing

complexity of the entrances, which developed from straight frontal gateways, flanked by rectangular towers, into an increasingly sophisticated system of more and more elongated, narrow and winding corridors which surely were much easier to defend.

About the extent of the rebuilding activities of the burnt houses in the “Inner Town” we are not altogether sure, but it seems that a number of curved walls found in the course of the new excavations in the area west of the fortification walls, and which seem to represent measures of repair of the old houses, belong to this phase.¹⁸ The picture remains hazy, but these walls do not attest isolated apsidal houses as we know them from Lerna IV, but instead, irregularly curved house combinations following the course of streets, as at Poliochni and Thermi.¹⁹

At the same time it is quite apparent that the destruction did not gravely affect the economic prosperity and its causes. The ceramic finds show that pottery imports – from Argos, Boeotia and the Cyclades – are instead increasing,²⁰ and that the extent of local production is by no means reduced; the Aeginetan potters are eager to accept stimulation from outside and some of the vessels may be modeled on non-local forms such as the pattern-decorated jug, which imitates a Cycladic prototype, and the splendid red-polished jug with narrow neck, which copies an eastern Aegean shape (Figs. 7, 8).²¹

In spite of the sense of imminent danger, manifested in the efforts throughout the Middle Bronze Age to strengthen the fortification system permanently, the impression of a flourishing economy and community continues unbroken. It is now that the regular system of straight narrow streets running east–west and flanked by long rows of houses with common separation walls, still visible today, was introduced (Figs. 6, 9).²² In the pottery sector, import activities are growing, and more and more it is Crete that supplies Aegina, the Peloponnese, and the Cyclades with fine potteries; while, at the same time, Aegina is increasing the export of its pottery production, becoming the supplier, especially with its characteristic matt-painted ware, for a vast number of settlements in the

¹⁵ NIEMEIER 1995, 73.

¹⁶ REINHOLDT 2004, 1113–9.

¹⁷ WALTER and FELTEN 1981, 43–85.

¹⁸ FELTEN and HILLER 1996, 71; 2004, 1092; FELTEN 2003a, 21, 24, fig. 2.

¹⁹ Lerna: CASKEY 1966, 145–51; RUTTER 1995, 4–9, citing E. C. BANKS. Poliochni, Thermi, Kastri: SINOS 1971, pls. 25–30, 37; KOUKA 1997, 469.

²⁰ MOMMSEN *et al.* 2001, 80–96; GAUSS and SMETANA 2002, 13; 2004, 1111–2.

²¹ GAUSS and SMETANA 2004, 1110 and pl. 12; see also GAUSS and SMETANA in this volume.

²² WALTER and WEISSHAAR 1993, fig. 1 following p. 294; FELTEN and HILLER 1996, 31 and pl. following p. 75; 2004, pl. 1 following p. 1119.



Fig. 7 EH III dark on light decorated jug



Fig. 8 EH III red polished jug

Aegean area.²³ The role that maritime trade must have played for Aegina is underlined by the fact that seafaring is repeatedly the topic of the otherwise figureless decoration of Aeginetan vessels (Fig. 31).²⁴

The most distinctive feature of this phase, however, which must have been the result of a flourishing economy, is the apparent growth in the number of inhabitants, which increased in the course of the Middle Helladic period to such an extent that the old settlement area was no longer sufficient and an enlargement became necessary. For this purpose a new “Lower Town” (Figs. 6, 10), with new rows of rectangular houses and a new fortification wall to the east, was erected in front of the old fortification walls.²⁵ Again, the realization of such a fundamental change in a basically functioning pattern of fortification and settlement seems to demand the presence of a central authority, whose existence is attested by two sets of evidence.

The first is the singular stone-built and tumulus-covered shaft grave in front of the new fortification wall, with its rich gifts of armor and local as well as imported pottery,²⁶ and the second is the so called “Grosssteinbau”,²⁷ in a central position immediately behind the fortification wall of the “Upper Town” between the north and the south gate. In this second instance, a number of originally separate houses were united to form a monumental structure – partly by circumvallating the older walls with a new wall and so achieving double thickness, which in all probability indicates the presence of a second story, and partly by erecting new walls on the foundations of big, roughly hewn blocks otherwise unattested in domestic context. We still do not know the full extent of this monumental building, but it is clear that it bars the course of the important east–west road leading through the settlement to the north city gate. It seems impossible to explain this fundamental alter-

²³ HILLER 1993, 197; REINHOLDT 1992, 57; KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1997, 123–54; RUTTER 1993, 777, fig. 12.

²⁴ RUTTER 1993, 778–9, figs. 13, 14.

²⁵ WALTER 1983, 124, 133; 1993, 24.

²⁶ KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1997, 13–82.

²⁷ WALTER and WEISSHAAR 1993, 297; NIEMEIER 1995, 78; KILIAN-DIRLMEIER 1997, 111; FELTEN and HILLER 1996, 50, 71; FELTEN 2003a, 21–2.



Fig. 9 View of MH houses in the "Inner Town"

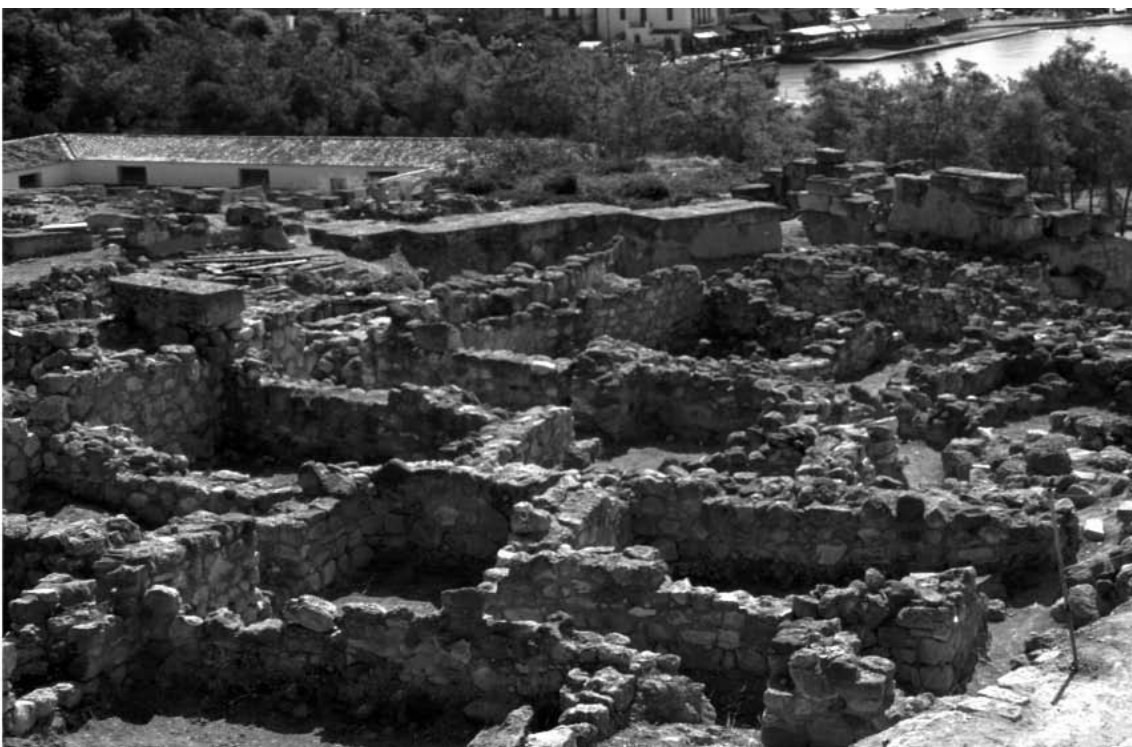


Fig. 10 First extension of MH settlement

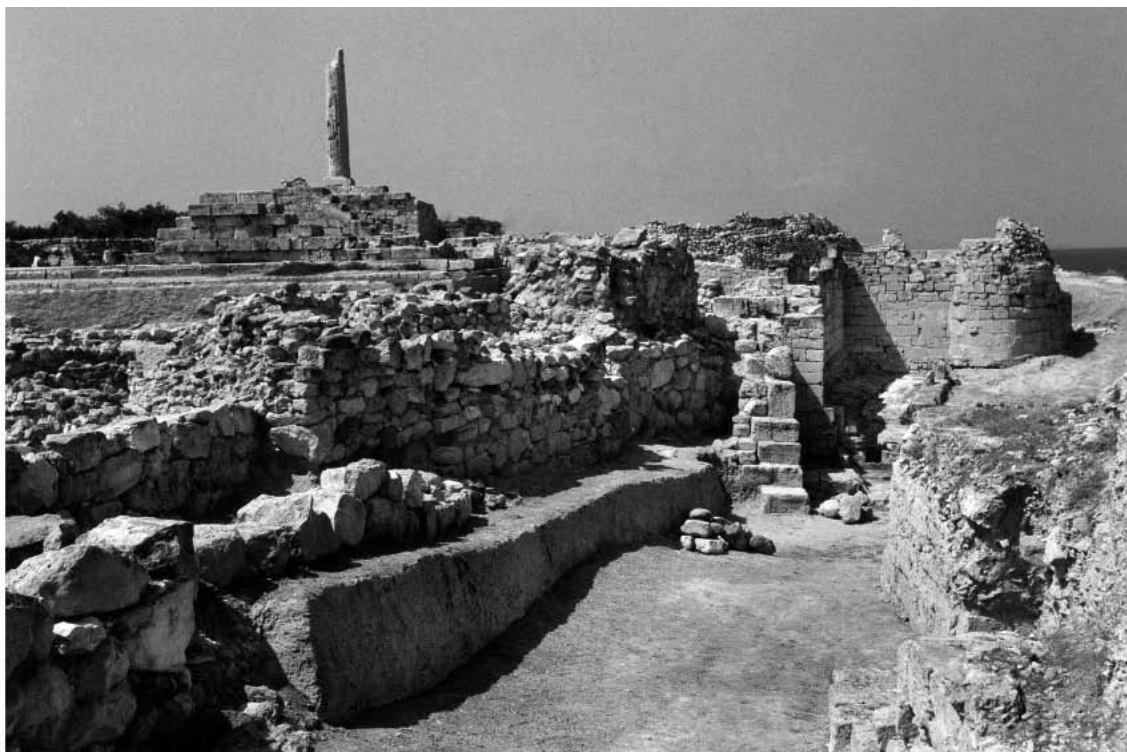


Fig. 11 Fortification wall of second extension of MH/LH settlement

ation of the city plan simply as a private initiative of a nouveau riche, and it is tempting to see in this building the residence of the local leader. It may be significant that initial survey of pottery found in this building over the last two years shows that it contains, besides the usual local wares, a high percentage of imported vessels – particularly from the Cyclades and Crete, but also including imported minoanizing and local Minoan-type pottery – not only in the category of fine decorated ware, but also undecorated and kitchen ware.²⁸ On the whole, the picture corresponds extremely well with the contents of the shaft grave and hence a link between these two monuments does not seem far-fetched.

From the following period, the end of the Middle Bronze Age and the beginnings of the Mycenaean period, the evidence becomes more scant, not because of a decrease in importance of the site – on the contrary, we now see again an extension of the settlement area to the east and, connected with it, the erection of a new, strong fortification wall (Fig. 11) – but as a consequence of far-reaching leveling actions in Archaic and later times. About the overall structure

of the settlement, however, we know very little.²⁹ The only fact of which we can be sure is that the above-mentioned monumental building underwent substantial alterations in this period with regard to structure as well as function: in its southwest part was installed a potters kiln, which was in use throughout a long period in the early Late Bronze Age.³⁰

What is true for the late Middle Helladic and Early Late Helladic settlement is still truer for the later Mycenaean period, for which we have only rather sparse ceramic evidence and almost no substantial architectural remains at all on the Kolonna hill. But the quite numerous finds of this phase from the necropolis on Windmill Hill, which surely belonged to the Kolonna settlement, warn us – as had been stressed by St. Hiller³¹ – against interpreting the paucity of evidence as clear indication of decline and of a significant decrease in population. Above all it is the results of the recent excavations at the south slope of the hill which show that this would be a rash conclusion.³² Here, beneath the remains of Archaic and Hellenistic structures, were uncovered remnants of terrace walls and buildings that extended proba-

²⁸ GAUSS and SMETANA in this volume.

²⁹ WALTER 1983, 139; 1993, 26; WOHLMAYR 1989, 151–3; 2000, 1127–36; and in this volume.

³⁰ FELTEN *et al.* 2003, 61–3; GAUSS and SMETANA in this volume.

³¹ HILLER 1975, 54.

³² FELTEN *et al.* 2003, 64–5.

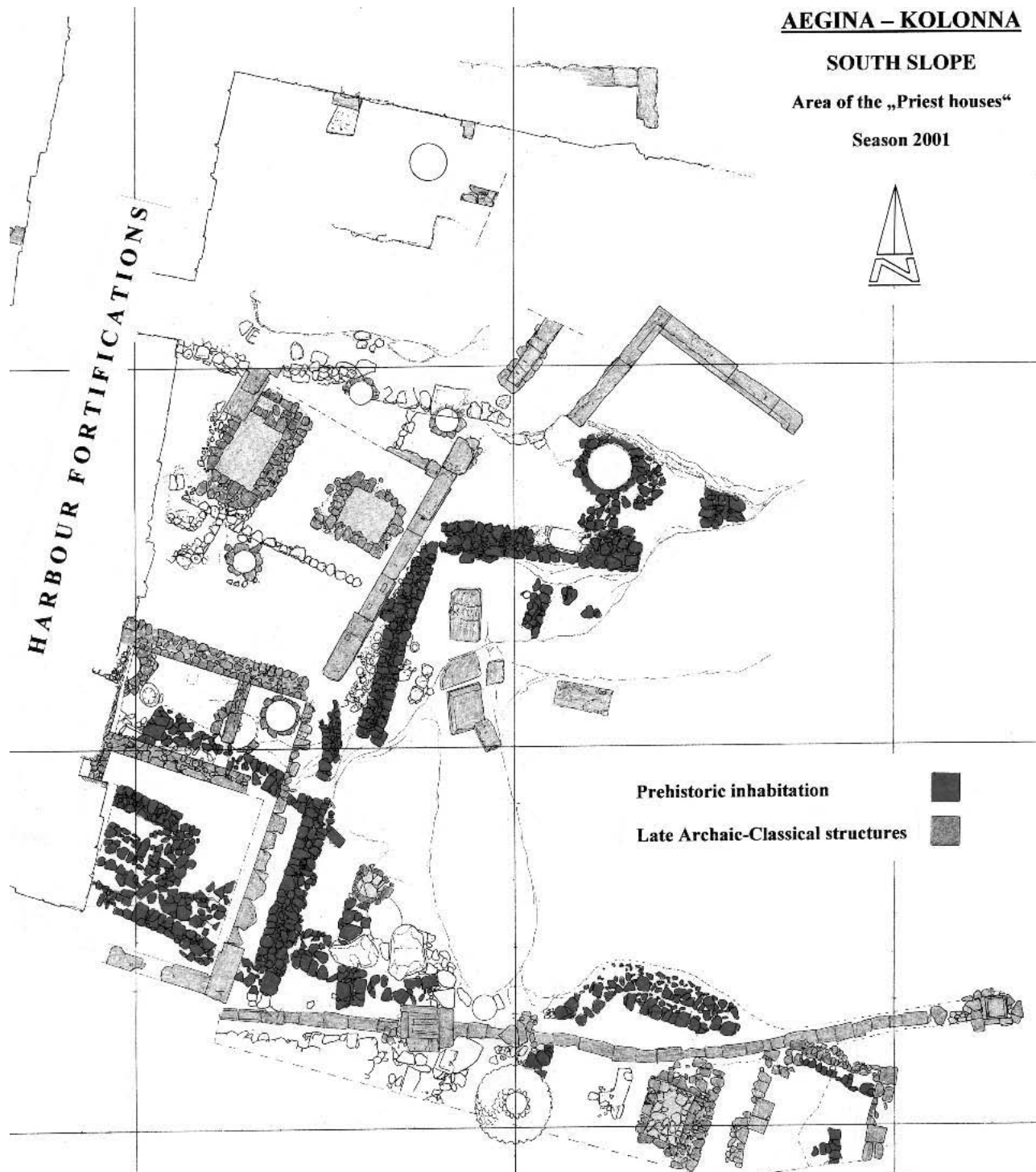


Fig. 12 MH/LH wall remains at the south slope of Aegina-Kolonna

bly as far as the shore and the harbor (Fig. 12). Even if we still cannot determine the overall structure and the date of origin of this real “Lower Town”, the large number of later Mycenaean pottery fragments found here suggest that the whole enlarged settlement was in use at least until LH IIIB. Moreover, the quality of the pottery fragments – among them some fine examples of the pictorial style (Fig. 13) – show

that the settlement must still have been quite flourishing and that, on the evidence of some Cypriot white slip II sherds (Fig. 14), sea trade still played a role. It is to be hoped that future excavations in this area will shed some more light on the Late Bronze Age history of Kolonna and especially on its conclusion, which must have taken place at the latest in the course of LH IIIC. In any case, among the finds of



Fig. 13 Fragments of LH IIIB deep bowl crater with representation of a sphinx



Fig. 14 Fragment of Cypriote white slip II bowl

this area there are hardly any LH IIIC sherds at all and the same is true among finds from the graves on Windmill Hill.³³ It is obvious that the traditional wealth of the Kolonna settlement had come to an end and that it would take some time until the hill again became the setting of human activity.

Resettlement did not occur until an advanced stage of the Protogeometric period. In the later 10th century B.C. there began a strong revival of the site, as is proven by a series of children's burials, securely dated by their gifts to Protogeometric/Early Geometric times (Fig. 15),³⁴ and by a large number of wells all over the hill, which because of their long-term use are not so precisely datable but which certainly belong at least in part to the same period. They testify to the existence at this time of a large settlement on the hill, which afterward, in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., developed step by step

³³ HILLER 1975, 55.

³⁴ KRAIKER 1951, 21; HILLER 2003, 14–5.



Fig. 15 Protogeometric pyxis from child burial

to become the main sanctuary and acropolis of the city of Aegina.

It is rather tempting to connect this revival with the influx of Peloponnesian settlers into Aegina, reported by Herodotos, Strabo and Pausanias.³⁵ Moreover, the type of many of the burials, in small monolithic cists, a specialty – as was emphasized by St. Hiller – of the northeast Peloponnese, seems to confirm these reports.³⁶ If this is the case the question arises: what was the attitude of the new settlers toward the material remains, and the surely still visible testimonies, of former human life in their new place of dwelling?

Certainly, their primary interest in regard to ritual practice must have been to install their own tradition, a concern that is possibly documented by a building complex at the west edge of the hill. In this location, A. Furtwängler und G. Welter had uncovered part of a Late Archaic building that contained a series of sacrificial pits, full of miniature votive skyphoi and covered by omphaloi, apparently attest-

³⁵ HDT. 8.46.1; STRABO 8.6.16; PAUS. 2.29.5; cf. HILLER 2003, 17.

³⁶ HILLER 2003, 14–5.

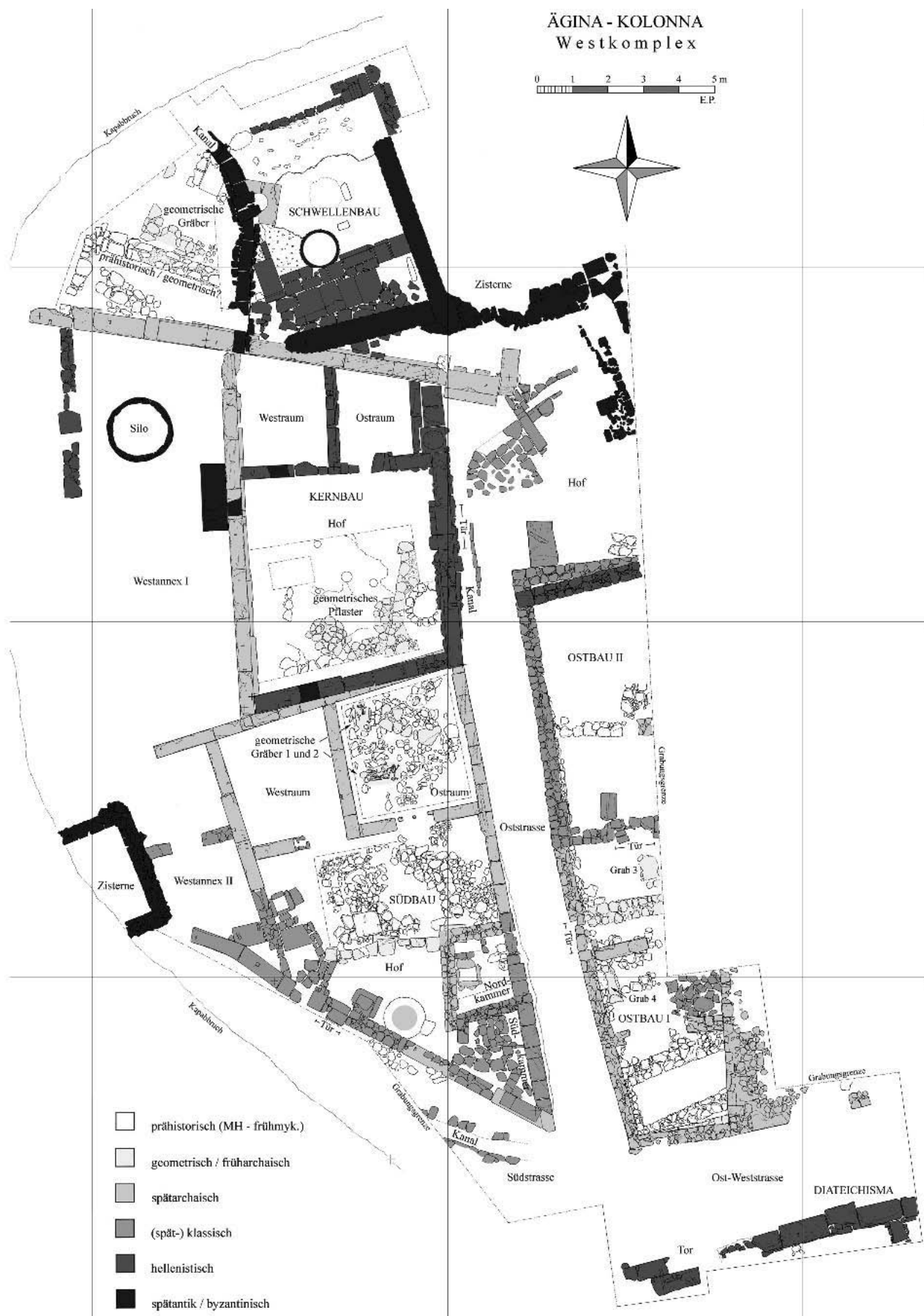


Fig. 16 Late archaic building complex at the western edge of Aegina-Kolonna



Fig. 17 Terracotta relief with pair of chthonic deities

ing a chthonic cult.³⁷ The new excavations have shown that we have to do here with an extended building complex of unroofed courtyards and small rooms (Fig. 16), probably for dining purposes, which underwent substantial rebuilding in Hellenistic times, though without – as it seems – much change in function: the small Archaic dining rooms, filled up in the course of the reorganization, were simply transferred into the former middle court, and the dining – as is proven by the pottery – continued, apparently still in chthonic context on the evidence of a terracotta relief depicting two deities bearing cornucopia (Fig. 17).³⁸

Beneath the Late Archaic level, however, older structures were uncovered: again two Protogeomet-



Fig. 18 Stone paved platform in western building complex

ric/Early Geometric children's burials and, at a small distance south of them, two small circular stone-paved platforms of the same period (Fig. 18).³⁹ It is highly probable that the platforms are to be seen in connection with the burials and that they belong to the series of similar platforms found in burial contexts in Asine, Naxos, Lefkandi and Eleutherna and connected with older Bronze Age structures in Troy, Miletos and Mycenae.⁴⁰ The initial interpretation of these platforms as places for funerary meals, by R. Hägg, which has gained impressive confirmation through the finds of V. Lambrinoudakis in Naxos, must be valid for Aegina, too, and the possibility is not to be excluded that activities of ancestor cult connected with these funerary meals may have

³⁷ WELTER 1932, 162–3; 1938, 494–5; 1954, 45–6.

³⁸ FELTEN *et al.* 2003, 41–52; 2004, in press.

³⁹ FELTEN *et al.* 2004, in press.

⁴⁰ HÄGG 1983, 189–94; LAMBRINOUDAKIS 1988, 238–44; STAMPOLIDES 2001, 192–3.

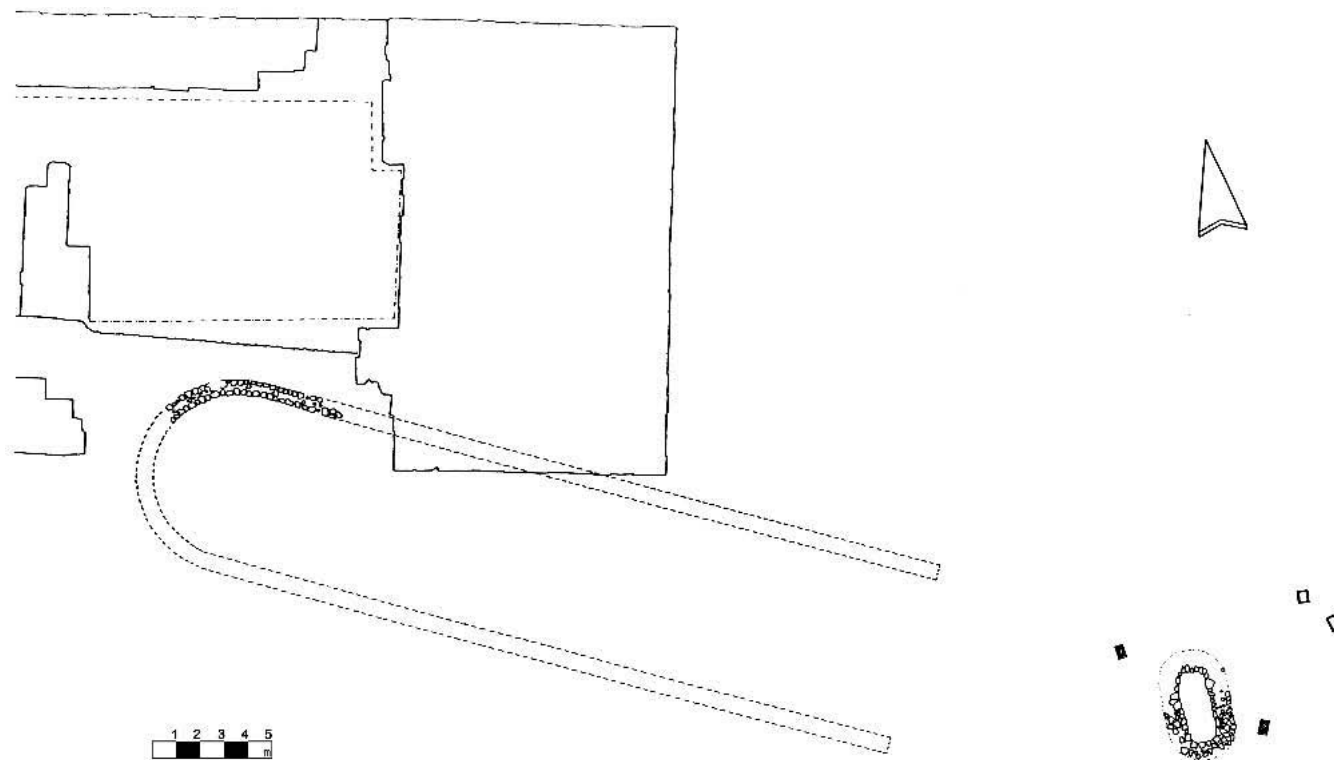


Fig. 19 Curved wall south of Apollon temple and MH shaft grave (reconstruction St. Hiller)

served as a means to connect the past prehistory, whose testimonies the new settlers must have encountered at every step, with the new history of the Kolonna hill.

There are perhaps still other, more direct indications that could support the assumption that the Dark Age settlers tried to incorporate the relics of the past into their own religious conceptions. One is a curved wall, reported by G. Welter as running east–west next to the temple of Apollo and connected with a deposit of Protogeometric skyphoi and amphoras, which Welter took as evidence of a chthonic cult with ritual libations.⁴¹ The wall apparently no longer exists but in plans of the older excavations, there is a curved wall directed eastward immediately south of the temple foundations, which St. Hiller identified with the wall reported by Welter (Fig. 19).⁴² On the basis of the plans, he reconstructs an early apsidal temple building, oriented to the MH shaft grave mentioned above, whose tumulus could have remained visible even in times when the MH fortification wall had fallen into disrepair. And it is

indeed striking that we see a concentration of Protogeometric children’s burial cists around the area of the shaft grave.⁴³ On Hiller’s argument, a connection exists between the earlier, prominent burial, on the one hand, and the orientation of the cult building and the burials of the new settlers, on the other. Recently, however, W. Gauss has expressed serious doubts about the identification and interpretation of the curved wall, mainly on the basis of discrepancies in level and the difficulties in accommodating the hypothetical apsidal building in the given space,⁴⁴ and I tend to share his doubts, but the last word cannot be said until we can say more about the layout of the Geometric settlement.

Another, similar case, again connected with an exceptional burial, concerns a massive stone-built cist grave singular in one respect: it is the only such grave in the central area of the settlement that contained the skeleton of an adult male (Fig. 20). Its Dark Age date is attested by the remnants of a Protogeometric iron pin inside the cist and by Protogeometric sherds in the burial shaft.⁴⁵ It was found in 2003 inside the

⁴¹ WELTER 1954, 40.

⁴² HILLER 2003, 16–7.

⁴³ HILLER 2003, 15.

⁴⁴ GAUSS 2005, in press.

⁴⁵ FELTEN *et al.* 2004, in press.

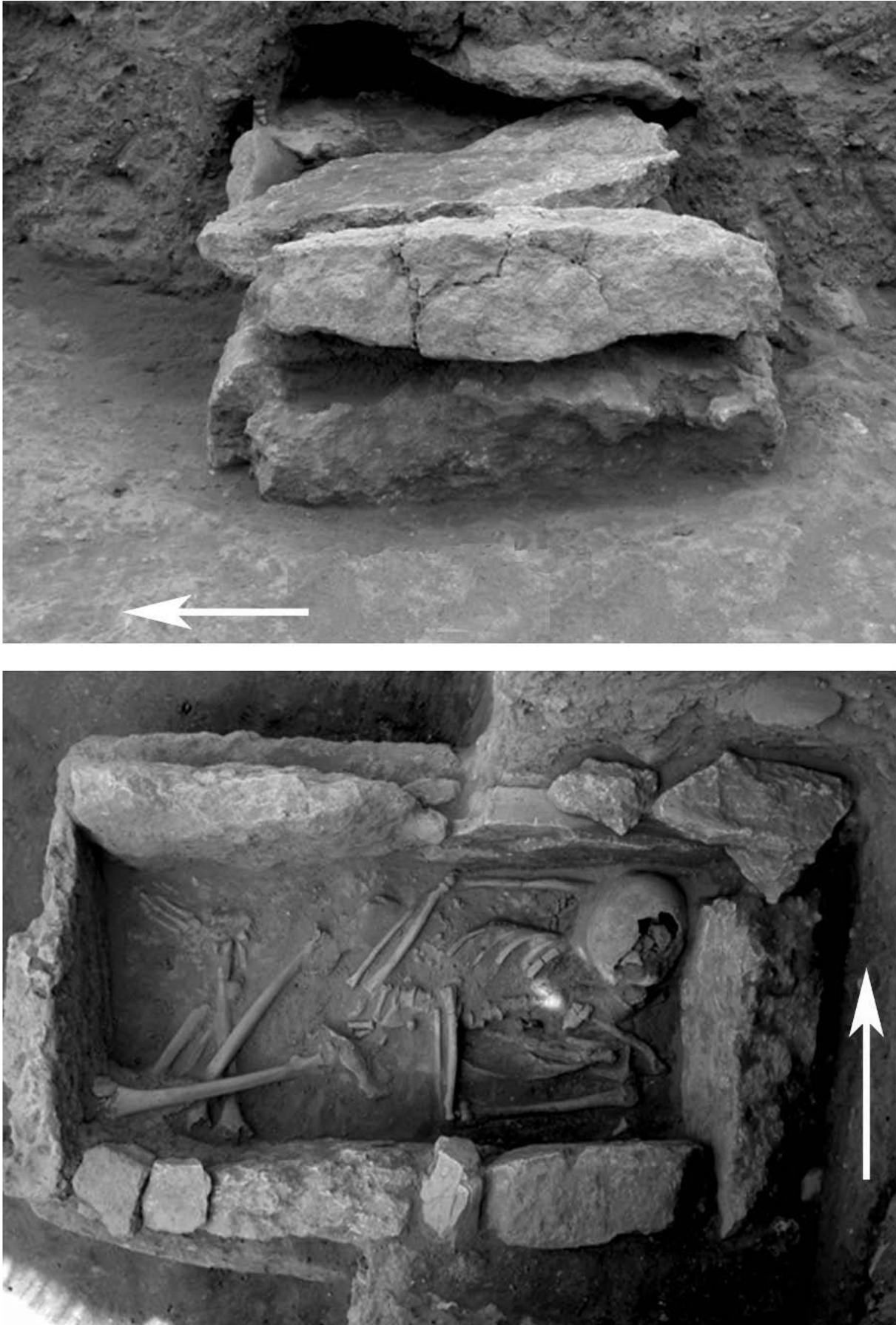


Fig. 20 Protogeometric burial of male adult in MH monumental building

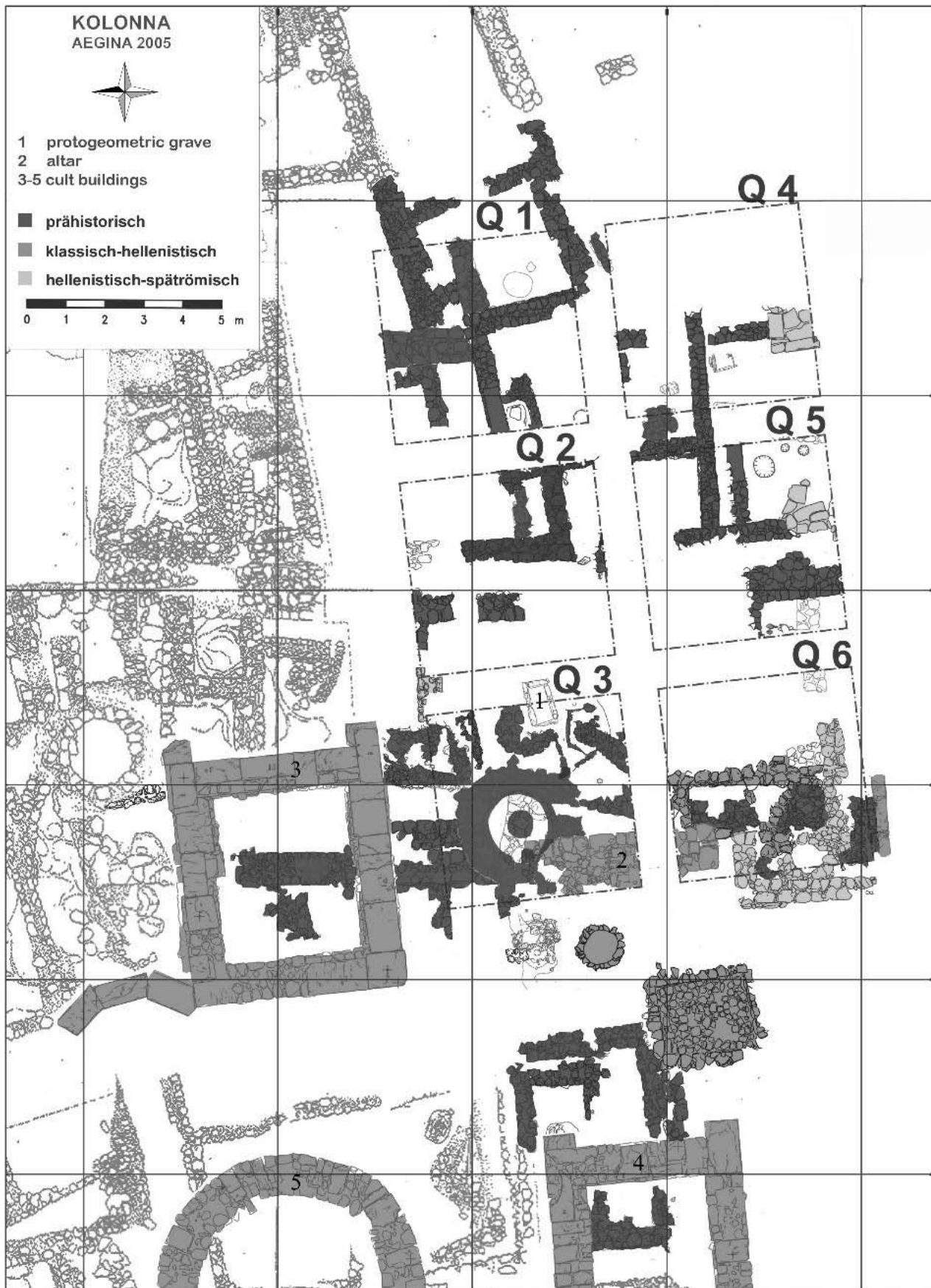


Fig. 21 Stone plan of excavation on "South Hill"



Fig. 22 Anta capital and doric capital of early archaic temple



Fig. 24 Horse, lime stone, from pediment (?)



Fig. 23 Herakles, Parian marble, from pediment (?)

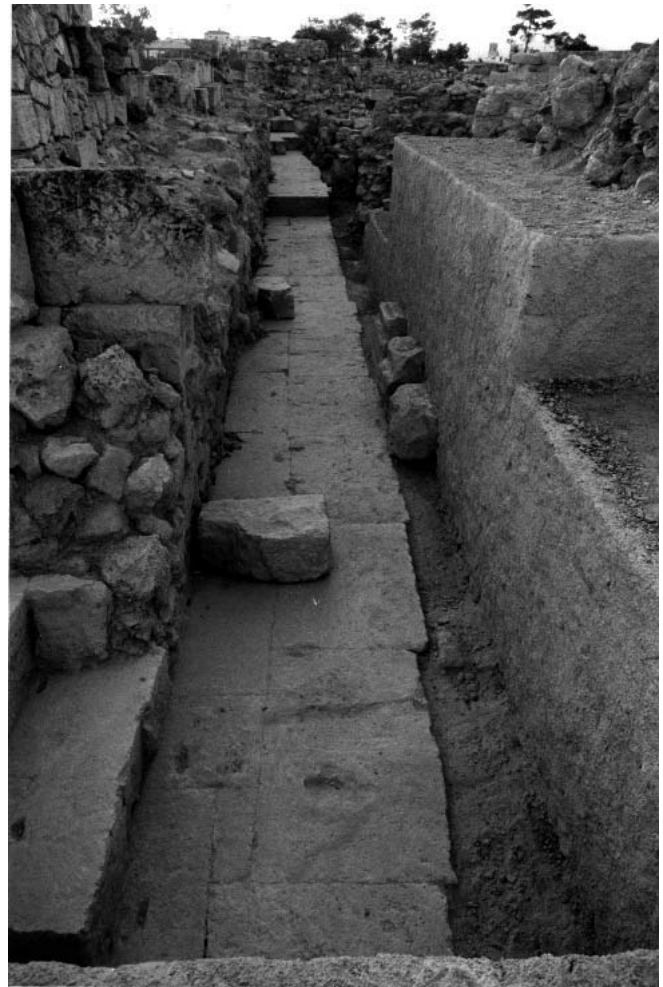


Fig. 25 Late archaic retaining wall, northern flank of Aegina-Kolonna

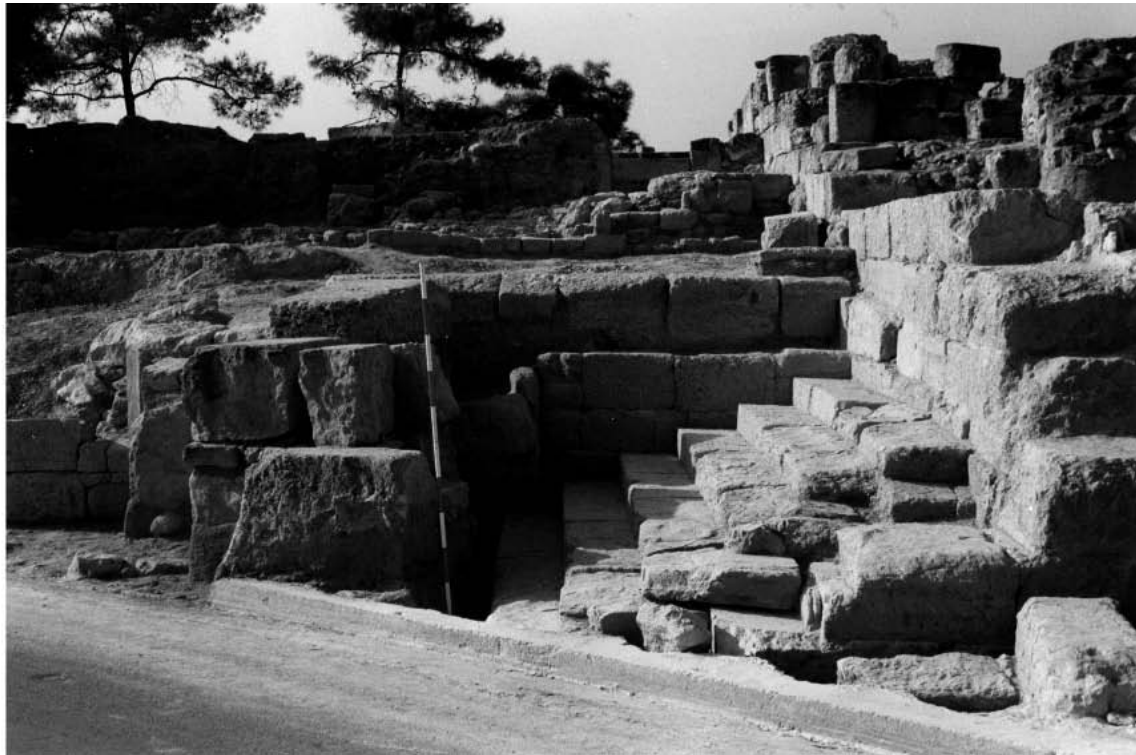


Fig. 26 Monumental stairway, north-eastern edge of Aegina-Kolonna

monumental MH building that we interpret as the local leader's residence. Again the inevitable question: is it purely fortuitous that this lone Dark Age burial found its place in a building of singular importance of the Middle Bronze Age settlement, or did there survive some knowledge of past times, founded on the visible remains on the hill, that prompted the location of the exceptional burial as well as the installation of an adjacent altar (Fig. 21)?⁴⁶ The altar in particular is reminiscent of Pausanias's description of the temenos of Aiakos in "the most excellent place of the town" – surely the Kolonna hill – where, the people said, an altar marks the tomb of the founder king.⁴⁷

But even if these suggestions remain speculative, it seems nevertheless quite certain, as was shown by A. Zunker,⁴⁸ that in the course of the seventh century, when the sacral connotation of the Kolonna hill became stronger and stronger – as is shown by the splendid ceramic votive gifts that then accumulated on the hill – the inhabitants of Aegina were at work on a new mythical tradition for the island. Naturally

enough it concentrated on their founder hero. HOMER mentions Aiakos only as son of Zeus, not naming his dwelling place or his mother Aegina,⁴⁹ who is also absent from the catalogue of lovers of Zeus (*Il.* 14.312 ff.). These facts were provided, however, in the *Ehoiai*,⁵⁰ attributed to Hesiod, as was the origin of the Myrmidons from Aegina, whereas for Homer they are clearly Thessalians.⁵¹ It seems that it was not until the seventh century B.C. that Aiakos, originally probably a central or northern Greek hero, and consequently Peleus and Telamon and also Achilles and Aias – all highlights of Greek mythology – became firmly connected with Aegina⁵² and hence supplied the necessary mythical background for an increasingly flourishing society.

It must have been then and in the years to come that the settlement on the hill was transferred to the area around the harbor and that the promontory was reserved for religious purposes. Other deities in addition to Apollo were worshipped,⁵³ monumental votive sculpture makes its appearance, and we have testimony of the first substantial temple building at

⁴⁶ FELTEN *et al.* 2003, 57–9.

⁴⁷ PAUS. 2.29.6.

⁴⁸ ZUNKER 1988, 227–32.

⁴⁹ *Il.* 21.189.

⁵⁰ HES. fr. 205; ZUNKER 1988, 65.

⁵¹ *Il.* 1.180, 16.269, 21.188; *Od.* 3.88, 4.3.

⁵² ZUNKER 1988, 231.

⁵³ FELTEN 2001, 127–34.



Fig. 27 Late archaic building complex, south slope of Aegina-Kolonna

the site, dating to the beginning of the sixth century B.C., whose associated deity and location remains unknown (Fig. 22).⁵⁴ Thereafter, before the middle of the sixth century, there was erected the first large peripteral temple at the site, its pediments decorated with sculpture (Fig. 23), which apparently fell victim to fire after a short time.⁵⁵ And finally, at the end of the sixth century, an extensive new building program was realized, which affected the entire Kolonna hill.

To this program belongs the new Late Archaic temple of Apollo with its marble pediments (Fig. 24),⁵⁶ a huge retaining wall at the north flank of the hill, and a monumental stairway up to the acropolis at the east side (Figs. 25, 26);⁵⁷ also, at the west end of the promontory, the building complex we have already seen; and, finally, at the south flank of the hill, another extensive architectural ensemble (Fig. 27).⁵⁸ On the basis of a series of stone-built sacrificial shafts and of female terracotta figurines and masks, I interpret this ensemble as the Thesmophorion, men-

tioned by Herodotos as situated at the “so-called old town”⁵⁹ – a name that perhaps again indicates the consciousness of the Aeginetans of the old history of the Kolonna hill.

This consciousness must have been intensified by the carrying out of the ambitious building program, in the course of which the Aeginetans must have been continually confronted with the remains of previous life on the promontory. And this, in turn, may have had consequences on Aeginetan mythology. Especially in preparations of the north flank of the hill for the erection of the huge retaining wall, it was inevitable that the builders ran into the impressive Middle and Late Bronze Age fortification walls (Figs. 11, 25). It may be that this is the point at which the Trojan connection enters in: while, according to Homer, Apollo and Poseidon had been the erectors of the walls of Troy,⁶⁰ Pindar, in the first half of the fifth century, provides a more detailed and enriched version of this story, involving Aegina. In *Olympian* 8 he adds the information that Aiakos, too, assisted in

⁵⁴ HOFFELNER 1999, 15–46.

⁵⁵ HOFFELNER 1999, 47–64.

⁵⁶ WURSTER 1974. Pediments: WALTER-KARYDI 1987, 129–49.

⁵⁷ HOFFELNER 1999, 129–32; FELTEN and HILLER 1999/2000, 21; 2000/2001, 18–9.

⁵⁸ WALTER 1980, 88–90; FELTEN 2003b, 42–5.

⁵⁹ HDT. 6.91.2.

⁶⁰ *Il.* 7.452, 21.441.

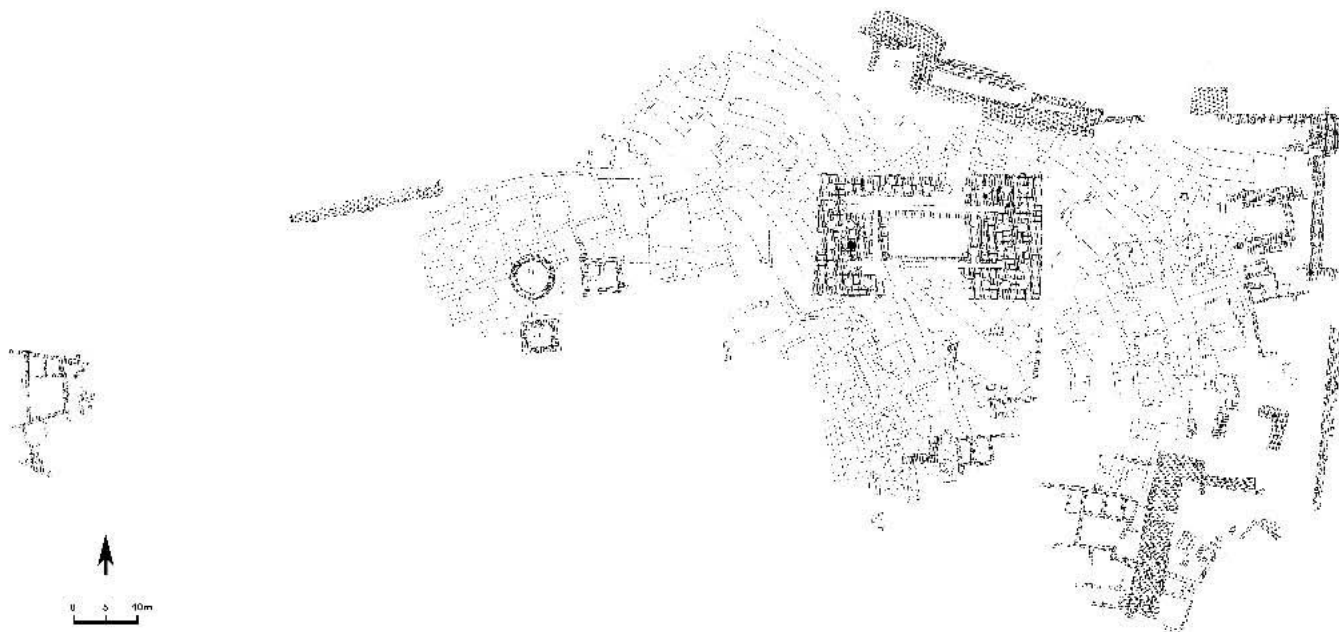


Fig. 28 Plan of archaic to late/postantique structures of Aegina-Kolonna

the erection of exactly that piece of wall, which would later in the second Trojan War be destroyed by the Greeks.⁶¹ It does not seem far-fetched to suggest a connection between this later tradition of Aiakos's activity at Troy and the nearly contemporaneous discovery of the prehistoric fortifications at Aegina-Kolonna. If that is so, then the discovery originated a new local mythical explanation – Aiakos as erector of fortifications – that made its first literary appearance in the odes of Pindar.

Without a doubt, this period saw the summit of Aegina's wealth and glory; shortly afterward – about the middle of the fifth century – it fell victim to the rivalry of Athens. Athenians settled on the island and the Aeginetans were repeatedly expelled. Certainly, religious life continued on the Kolonna hill: existing buildings were repaired and adapted. But as far as we can see, there is nothing that could be compared with the efforts of the previous years, when the acropolis of Aegina could very nearly have entered into competition with the Athenian acropolis.

But still the history of the Kolonna hill was not at its end. When, in the late third century, Aegina was sold to the rulers of Pergamon,⁶² the promontory experienced a sort of revival. In accordance with the intention behind the purchase, by which the Pergamenes acquired a strong naval base in the

Saronic Gulf, new building activities took place. As a first aim, the area had to be transformed into a kind of military installation where the Pergamene garrison could stay in safety. For this reason the old temenos wall at the north flank and a new wall in the east were heavily reinforced by rectangular towers, and a new fortification was erected at the south flank of the hill and in the plain between hill and harbor (Figs. 28, 29) to provide sufficient space for the barracks of the Pergamene troops and, we suspect, for a palace for the governors and in particular the kings, who repeatedly spent the winter in Aegina.⁶³ In addition to these efforts to fortify the site, we see that the sacral function, too, continued to play a role and even received new impulses. We can take it as assured that the main cult buildings survived basically unchanged and that others, as we have seen in the case of the building complex at the west end of the promontory, underwent substantial reorganization without much apparent change in function. There were, as well, buildings that were newly erected, and that served apparently for religious purposes connected with the new rulers. We learn, for example, from an inscription, that King Attalos, through his ancestor Herakles a descendant of Zeus like Aiakos, received a cult together with his relative – certainly on the Kolonna hill,⁶⁴ and there survive the foundations of three cult

⁶¹ PIND. *Ol.* 8.30–52; ZUNKER 1988, 80–3.

⁶² POLYB. 22.8.9.

⁶³ POLLHAMMER 2002, 99–108; 2003, 165–9.

⁶⁴ ALLEN 1971, 6–8; DAMASKOS 1999, 278–9.



Fig. 29 Hellenistic fortification of the southern slope of Aegina-Kolonna

buildings and an altar of this period west of the Apollo temple.⁶⁵ I would not want to speculate whether this architectural group, in the area where the singular Protogeometric burial was found (Figs. 21, 28), should be identified with the Aiakeion, but this much seems clear: what evolves in the period of Pergamene rule on the promontory is a combination of fortified stronghold, rulers' residence, and sacral

area as are known from Pergamon itself – again a vast field for future research.⁶⁶

When Aegina as a consequence of the last will of Attalos III fell to Rome, this new revival found its end and the gradual decline is manifest. In the mid-first century B.C., Sulpicius Rufus writes to Cicero that Aegina belongs to the towns that were formerly highly flourishing but that now lie in ruins,⁶⁷ and



Fig. 30 Late/postantique fortification wall, northern flank of Aegina-Kolonna

⁶⁵ POLLHAMMER 2004, 130–71.

⁶⁶ POLLHAMMER 2002, 106–8.

⁶⁷ *Cic. Ep.* 4.5.4.

⁶⁸ HOODOT 1970, 42; FELTEN 1975, 64.



Fig. 31 Fragment of MH storage vessel with representation of a ship

indeed there are only very scant indications that cult practice continued on the hill. The end of the history of Kolonna seems to have been unavoidable given the banning of pagan cults, and it strikes one as an irony that it is only the turmoil of the migrations in the sixth century that produces a new start for life in this place. According to the *Chronicle of Monemvasia*, the



Fig. 32 Fragment of Early Byzantine vessel with representation of a ship

inhabitants of Corinth fled in the late sixth century from the approaching Avars to Aegina,⁶⁸ and indeed, exactly at this time, we see the opening of a new, post-antique chapter of Aeginetan history, which in some ways refers back to the beginnings of Kolonna's prehistory: again it is an extended settlement, now covering the hill anew,⁶⁹ concentrated on security through fortification that is as strong as possible and that uses and reinforces for this aim the existing structures of the past (Fig. 30).⁷⁰ And still, or again, it is apparently the sea that supplies the basis for the life of the inhabitants – the main topic on the few figure-decorated vessels of this period is seafaring⁷¹ – and there is not much difference between our pictures of the Middle Bronze Age and Early Byzantine times (Figs. 31, 32).

⁶⁹ The post-antique architectural remains on top of the hill were removed by A. FURTWÄNGLER at the start of his excavations in Kolonna at the beginning of the 20th century, but there survived extensive parts of the settlement on the south slope of the hill that give an impression of the original layout; see FELTEN 1975, plan 5, and PENNAS 2004, 12, fig. 9.

⁷⁰ FELTEN 1975, 55–78; PENNAS (2004, 11–5) is certainly right in dating the north retaining wall as post-Herulian; cf. WURSTER 1975, 9–12.

⁷¹ FELTEN 1975, 115–6, pls. 23, 24; PENNAS 2004, 15, fig. 12.

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