IKLAINA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT
2012 FIELD REPORT

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The sixth season of the Iklaina Archaeological Project was conducted for six weeks in June and July 2012. The project is conducted under the auspices of the Athens Archaeological Society. The 2012 season was funded by INSTAP, the National Geographic Society, the University of Missouri-St. Louis, the National Science Foundation, and the Institute for Aegean Prehistory. The research team was composed of Jennifer Glaubius, Rebecca Worsham, and Georgina Henderson (trench supervisors); Michael Nelson (architect); Cynthia Shelmerdine, Patrick Thomas, and Joann Gulizio (ceramics analysts); Susan Allen and China Shelton (palaeobotanists); Deborah Ruscillo (faunalmarine remain analyst); Stefania Veldemiri (conservator); Yannis Nakas (archaeological illustrator) and Georgios Vdokakis (photographer). In the project participated 12 students of the University of Missouri-St. Louis and other US and Canadian institutions.

This season's work included a study of the buildings and the finds of the Cyclopean Terrace Complex (Figures 1 and 2) in preparation for publication.

Building T

Careful cleaning of Building T revealed a number of walls that belong to an early architectural phase, that had not been detected previously. These walls (blue in Figure 1) had not been visible until now because they have been overbuilt by later construction: they include walls CT-0040, CT-0041, and CT-0042, parts of which became visible when we cleared the sides of the long wall CT-001, which had been built on top of them. These three walls run from ne. to sw. and are built along the same long axis. Their construction and sizes are similar, with eight horizontal courses of large stones placed in clay mortar and widths ranging from 0.50 to 0.60 m. They form two indentations at the points where they bond with the crosswalls CT-022 and CT-024, which in turn bond in the south with the long wall CT-009. These walls define a suite of three large rooms: 1) T1/T2, which is 3.50 m. long and 3.10 m. wide; 2) T3/T5, which is 3.20 m. long and 1.70 m. wide; and 3) T4, which is 2.80 m. long and has an estimated width of approximately 4 m (its west wall does not survive). To the south this suite of rooms is defined by wall CT-009 and to the east by wall CT-038. As mentioned, the west wall of room T4, which would have defined the building to the west does not survive, but wall CT-040 seems to stop at a distance of 4.20-4.40 m. from wall CT-024, where this west wall may have been. On the basis of the preliminary inspection of the pottery from the foundations of these walls, this early architectural phase of Building T can be dated to LH IIA, although this needs to be confirmed by the detailed study of the finds, which will occur in 2013.

This first architectural phase was succeeded by a second, dated to LH IIB/IIIA1. It is during this phase that Building T took its final form with the construction of walls CT-008, CT-007, CT-023, and CT-024, which divided the existing rooms into the smaller spaces T1, T2, T3, and T5. The end of the second phase was marked by violent destruction sometime in LH II A2. Because of the destruction, the interiors of these spaces were in disarray and floors did not survive. The numerous fragments of frescoes found in previous seasons with LH IIB/IIIA1 pottery, suggest that during the second phase Building T was decorated with frescoes.

Building V

In 2011 we had excavated the west part of Room 2, defined by walls CT-031 and CT-032, adjacent to walls CT-004 and CT-005 of Building Y. This year we were able to define better Room 2. Careful cleaning under wall CT-005 revealed that wall CT-032 continues towards the east under wall CT-005 for a distance of 5.20 m., at which point it bonds with wall CT-002, which forms the east end of Room 2. The south end of this room does not survive, but it would have been formed by a newly discovered
wall, CT-043, of which only the sw. end survives, at the point where it bonds with wall CT-031. These four walls, CT-032, CT-002, CT-031, and CT-043 define Room 2, which turned out to be a fairly large and nearly square room with a side of about 5 m. The name of this room was changed from Room 2 to Building V. Small soundings in the interior corner of walls CT-031 and CT-032, as well as in front of the external (west) façade of CT-031 brought to light closed deposits with good quality painted LH IIA pottery, which suggests that Building V was erected in LH IIA, possibly at the same time as the first architectural phase of Building T. Building V was also in use in LH IIB/IIIA1, when its interior space was cut by walls CT-004 of Building Y and CT-006 of Building S, whose floor covers the south end of CT-031.

**Cyclopean Terrace**

The sherds found in 2011 in front of the foundation of the nw. corner of the Cyclopean Terrace were carefully studied and turned out to date to LH IIIA2/IIIB1, which may suggest that the Terrace was built during that period. This is corroborated by the pottery from a sounding we opened this year along the south façade of the Cyclopean Terrace, in the corridor formed between the Cyclopean Terrace and the long wall CT-001, which also turned out to be LH IIIA2/IIIB1 pottery, mixed with LH IIB/IIIA1. Because the date of the construction of the Cyclopean Terrace is crucial to the history of the site, in 2013 we will open two more soundings along the south and west foundation.

**The pit**

In order to define the content and function of the pit we had found in 2011 (Figures 3a and 3b) to the south of the Cyclopean Terrace Building, we cleaned the interior of the pit and the wall that defines it to the west. It turns out that this short wall, 1.70 m. l. and 0.45 m. w., forms a bench, sitting on a floor of cobbles extending to the outside (west) of this bench. Fragments of mudbricks found inside the pit and next to the stones of this wall, suggest that the bench may have served as the foundation for a mudbrick construction that rose above it. A row of stones placed perpendicularly into the ground forms an elliptical line that starts from the bench and extends to the NE, defining the east end of the cobbled floor. The contents of the pit contained more than 50 vases, mostly kylikes and conical cups (Figure 4), with few storage and cooking pots, along with a large number of burned animal bones from young (max. 12 months of age) pigs, sheep/goats, and cattle (Figure 5), whereas in 2011 we had also found fragments of plaster offering tables and a folded sheet of lead. The fact that the thoroughly charred animal bones do not have any cutmarks and that the pottery found inside the pit is not burned suggests that the animals were burned with the meat on the bones and that the pottery was deposited after the burning of the animals, which in turn may be an indication for burned animal sacrifice. The chronological range of the pots from the pit, and also the depositional patterns of the finds suggests that the content of the pit represents several incidents of deposition, spanning the LH IIIA1/LH IIIA2 period. Similarities between the architectural elements of the pit (bench, cobbled floor on the exterior) and iconographic evidence from sealstones representing open-air shrines reinforce the possibility that the pit was an outdoor shrine.

**Conclusions and assessment**

The results of this year’s work contribute important new information to the history of Iklaina. Based on current evidence, it seems that buildings T and V were constructed in LH IIA and continued to be used, with alterations, in LH IIB/IIIA1. They were destroyed in LH IIIA2, possibly when the Cyclopean Terrace was erected. These conclusions have wider implications for the issue of the formation of the Mycenaean state of Pylos, as they allow us to reject part of our original working hypothesis. Specifically, before this season our working hypothesis had been that the Cyclopean Terrace Building could have been constructed during LH IIB/IIIA1, which would mean that it would
have been the result of a major building project undertaken by the early rulers of Iklaina, before the annexation of the site by the Palace of Nestor. The late date that we have now for the construction of this massive building places it in the post-annexation period, suggesting that it may have been the outcome of an effort by the new rulers of the site to establish firmly their authority and erase the signs of the previous political ruler(s). This scenario will be tested further with the analysis of the botanical and faunal remains, in order to establish any possible shifts in subsistence strategies before and after annexation.

From the point of view of religious history, the pit is a unique find. Until now we had representations of Mycenaean open-air shrines in visual arts of the period, but such shrines had not been found. The pit seems to represent the first known open-air shrine of the Mycenaeans and the study of its finds (to be conducted in summer 2013), will undoubtedly shed new light on Mycenaean rituals, especially where burned animal sacrifices are concerned.
Figure 1: Plan of the Cyclopean Terrace complex (north at the top; each square is 5 x 5 m)

Figure 2: View of the Cyclopean Terrace Complex from the east
Figure 3a: View of the pit from the southeast
Figure 3b: View of the interior of the pit and the stone bench from the east
Figure 4: Sample of vases conical cups and kylikes from the pit
Figure 5: Burned faunal remains from the pit