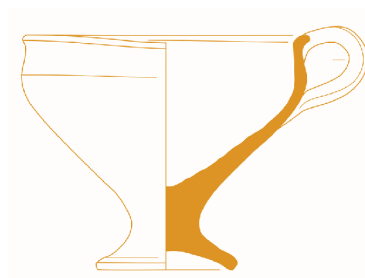


Mycenaean Pefkakia Excavation Project: preliminary report on archaeological research conducted in 2023



Abstract: This is a report on the second season of a five-year (2022–2026) archaeological project at the site of Mycenaean Pefkakia, which is a collaboration between the Polish Archaeological Institute at Athens and the Ephorate of Antiquities of Magnesia. In 2023, following an extensive geophysical survey and geoarchaeological corings conducted during the previous season, two trenches were opened in sectors designated as B and C. In Sector B, a burial ground from the late Hellenistic–Roman period was found, and several amphora burials as well as a single tile grave were excavated. However, layers dating to the Late Helladic (LH) period have not been revealed, despite a significant depth reached. In Sector C, stone walls of a multi-phase building dated to LH IIIA2 period were found. In addition, traces of continued habitation past 1200 BC in the area were attested by pottery fragments from the more developed LH IIIC period.

Keywords: Late Bronze Age Thessaly, Magnesia, Demetrias, archaeomalacology, archaeobotany, zooarchaeology

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INTRODUCTION

The site of Pefkakia lies 1.5 km south of the modern city of Volos (Magnesia, Thessaly), on the opposite side of Volos Bay, which forms part of the larger Pagasetic Gulf [Fig. 1]. It consists of a tell site, known as Magoula, and an exten-

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sive flat part south of it [Fig. 2]. Archaeological strata dating to the Late Bronze Age are mostly overlain by the remains of the Hellenistic city of Demetrias, established in 294 BC by Demetrius Poliorcetes, extending over a vast area that included Pefkakia. The first systematic research on the site was conducted by Dimitris Theodorakis (1957), who excavated Magoula and uncovered archaeological layers spanning from the end of the Neolithic to the Late Bronze Age/Late Helladic period (LH). He continued the work on Magoula in cooperation with Vladimir Milojević and the German Archaeological Institute in 1967–1977.

In 1986–1991, rescue excavations conducted on the flat part south of Magoula proved for the first time the existence of a Mycenaean settlement, concealed underneath Hellenistic occupational levels (Batziou-Efstathiou 1992). In 2006, a new excavation project began under the auspices of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Magnesia, directed by Anthi Batziou (2012; 2015a; 2015b). Work in the same area in 2016–2021 was carried out in cooperation with the University of Thessaly and Iphigenia Tournavitou. This excavation revealed multi-room complexes dating to the LH IIIA2–IIIB2/IIIC Early period (about 1400–1200 BC),

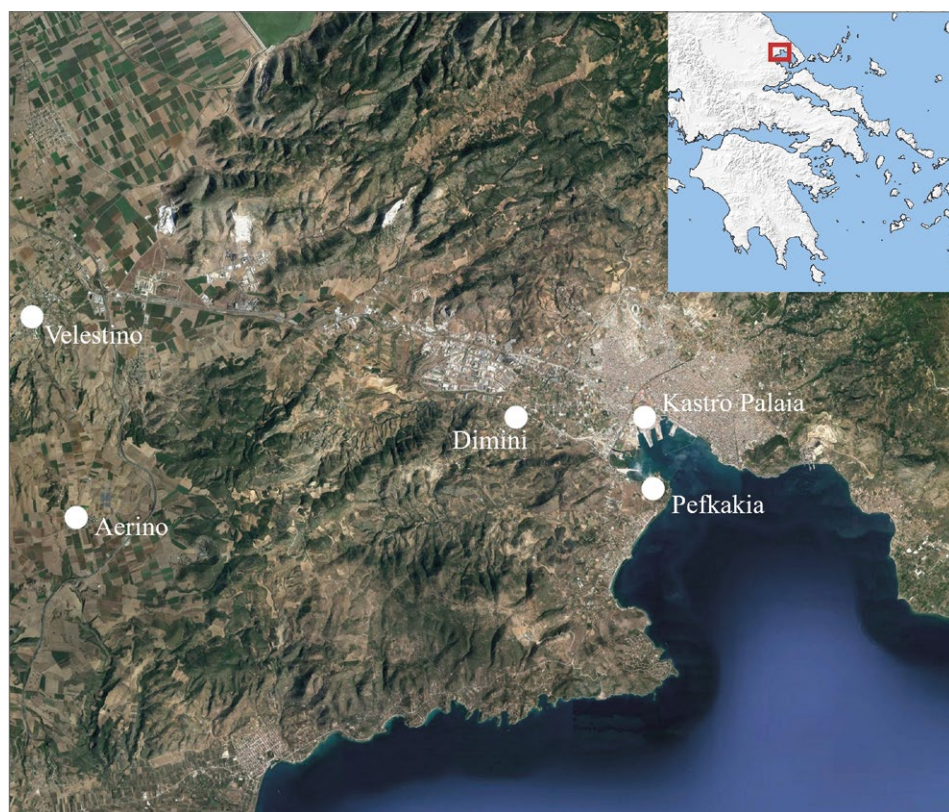


Fig. 1. Map of the region showing the location of Pefkakia (Processing B. Lis)

with a variety of functions including use for various types of craft activities [Fig. 2, Sector A].

The current five-year (2022–2026) archaeological project at the site of Mycenaean Pefkakia is conducted under the auspices of the Polish Archaeological Institute at Athens (PAIA), in collaboration with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Magnesia. The main aim of the project is to assess the extent of habitation at Pefkakia during the various stages of the Late Bronze Age and to provide a better understanding of the character of activities performed in various parts of the site. This will eventually lead to a fuller comprehension of the role of Pefkakia in local and regional settlement networks. Another important aim of the project is to investigate Pefkakia's role as a major harbor in the Aegean. So far,

this has been evidenced by the presence of a large number and variety of transport containers including imports from the Greek mainland and from as far as Crete and the Near East (Lis and Batziou 2025), but neither harbor facilities nor the exact course of the ancient coastline have been identified to date.

Fieldwork carried out at the site of Mycenaean Pefkakia in the 2023 season focused on archaeological research in two parts of the site [see Fig. 2, Sectors B and C] selected based on an analysis of the results of geophysical research and geoarchaeological corings, both conducted in 2022 (Lis et al. 2023). The main goal of the research in 2023 was to investigate the extent and nature of the settlement in the Mycenaean period. Fieldwork was conducted during a period of five weeks, from 26 June to 28



Fig. 2. View of the site showing Sectors A, B, and C with the trenches laid out in 2023 (Processing B. Lis)

July. Excavations were carried out using the stratigraphic method, with the Excavation Unit (EU) used as the basic documentation unit. Specific features (FE) were also documented and assigned individual numbers. During the fieldwork, the classical methods of archaeological documentation in the form of drawings and photos were used alongside orthophotographic documentation and 3D models. A digital tachymeter (Leica total station) was used for recording exact positions of excavation units and finds. The iDig app, originally developed for the Athenian Agora Excavations, was

implemented, following adjustments to the Pefkakia documentation system, in order to gather excavation data on iPads. In addition, finds were registered and described in the storeroom using a File-Maker database. The inventoried pottery fragments and all small finds were given individual identification numbers (P and SF, respectively), either in the field or in the storeroom.

Based on the aforementioned results of non-invasive investigation in 2022, two trenches were laid out, B01 and C01, respectively in Sectors B and C [see *Fig. 2*].



Fig. 3. View of B01: early stage (Photo and processing Ł. Miechowicz)