anche le risultanze testimoniali vanno incontro a un relativismo epistemologico: per i testimoni le proprie affermazioni sono formulazioni di determinate verità, per l’oratore le stesse affermazioni sono solo strumenti di prova, da confutare o esaltare secondo che esse siano contrarie o favorevoli a quanto egli vuol dimostrare alla giuria, e, soprattutto nel primo caso, lo statuto sociale del singolo testimone (o di loro gruppi) aveva un’influenza molto più marcata di quanto avvenne nella prassi processuale odierna. La monografia di Guérin ha il grande merito di aver focalizzato una serie di problematiche raccordate dal tema dei testimonia nella Roma repubblicana: tocca a singoli studiosi, di differenti ambiti di ricerca, approfondire i numerosi risvolti che il tema può suggerire.

Bari

Giorgio Maselli


The book constitutes an excellent final publication of the recent excavations at Thermos conducted by I. Papapostolou under the auspices of the Athens Archaeological Society. It constitutes a very useful study of the new excavation data and a comprehensive reassessment of the earlier interpretations and long-lasting controversies about the early development of this important site. The book has solved several of these issues, while others, as will be shown here, still remain. The book is an abridged and slightly revised edition of the more thorough Greek publication to which the reader is prompted to refer (‘Θέρμος: Το μέγαρο Β και το πρώιμο ιερό. Η ανασκαφή 1992–2003’, Athens 2008). The monograph was translated from Greek by Miriam Caskey. It should be stressed, however, that the present book has to be read independently, since it is practically impossible for the reader to switch from one book to another in order to come to a better understanding of certain sections of the English version. It is noted (p. 18) that several of the views put forward in the preliminary publications of the new excavation must not be taken into consideration as they have been altered since. The alteration of opinions due to the discovery of new data and their subsequent thorough study is perfectly acceptable in archaeology; a summary of these earlier views would have been useful.

Part I (‘The excavation’, pp. 1–88) is a detailed account of the excavation data, Part II (‘Cult in Early Thermos and the Development of Aetolian Ethnicity’, pp. 89–176) is a thorough discussion of the aspects of cult attested in early Thermos. In brief the sequence of structures and events, as reconstructed by P. after the assessment of the evidence of the recent excavations of 1992–2003, is as follows: Megaron A and several oval buildings were built during the late Middle Bronze/early Late Bronze Age and were in use throughout the Late Bronze Age. Megaron B was built immediately afterwards, in the 11th c. B.C. and would have been the seat of a chief (though not his dwelling), serving for communal gatherings and feasting. The domestic quarters (θάλαμοι) were probably the surrounding structures, especially those at the North (Walls Δ–Ε and the edifice partly above α3). Megaron B was seemingly destroyed towards the end of the
9th/beginning of 8th c. B.C. (the date is based on C14 datings). The area was subsequently transformed into a vast «ash altar» (also referred to as a «clay hearth») within the limits of the ruined, though partly standing, roofless edifice; animal bones, mostly calcinated, have been interpreted as «holocaust sacrifices»; only the back chamber of Megaron B was repaired, serving as a sacred oikos, the exact function of which remains unknown. The next stage in the sequence is marked by the delimitation of the temenos by an elliptical series of stone slabs. A crude «sacred stone» was positioned in an upright position in the South part of the enclosure. A «black layer» is associated with this phase, representing sacrifices and feasts (mostly unburnt bones were found here). The temple followed in the late 7th c. B.C., though the discussion whether the peristyle surrounding the cella also dates to the same period or represents a later addition is left unanswered.

The reader is hampered in his own understanding of the data due to the disordered distribution of the documentation, i.e. plans, sections, drawings and photos. It is indeed odd that several illustrations within the text are neither numbered, nor associated with captions, while others are numbered and have captions. Moreover, it is not clear why some of the illustrations are included in the text and the rest in separate plates at the end of the volume. The references to the plates are quite complicated, as there is no apparent logical relation between their sequence and the flow of the text.

The reader occasionally faces difficulties in following the descriptions, as the reference to specific trenches or sections (see pl. 11) and features are not easily identifiable on a single reference plan, which would have been necessary. Yet, even the detailed plans of the sections cannot always be easily understood (for instance pl. 18–19, sections 5–5a). The problem is intensified as one finds it hard to correlate the photos, which often lack an indication of orientation, with the plans. The same problem concerns the location on the plans of specific structures (see for instance walls A–E discussed at p. 31, that are difficult to identify on the plan). Numbering the various walls and architectural features would have facilitated their identification on plans and photos. In the discussion of the slabs of the «elliptical peristyle» pp. 39ff one cannot find a plan with the numbering of the 18 slabs in question in order to be able to follow the discussion. Although innumerable photos have been included, a few more would have been necessary, such as details of the two circular structures outside the SE corner of Megaron B (p. 29–30) which are only documented by two very distant photos. Lastly, the reader is not informed where the depths are taken from and what is the standard ‘zero’ level of the excavation (depths would have been welcomed for instance on the sections pls. 30–35).

The finds (pp. 65ff) are not adequately presented in the publication. The pottery is not studied in detail and the mention of the excavation units could have been restricted to the specific table at the end of the volume only (p. 240). The metal finds are simply enumerated, as they will be published separately by M. Pateraki, while the bronze figurines (human and of horses) are included in the publication with detailed descriptive catalogues. In fact, in the discussion of the nature of the cult, the small finds are taken into consideration, but the reader is unable to grasp their overall importance since their basic description, date, total numbers and occasionally context are not always specified (for instance the
fragments of the bronze tripods [two in all?], p. 147, pls. 76–77, are dated «from the ninth to the early Archaic period».

Questions of date and chronological sequence: The Early Iron Age cup (p. 23) which Rhomaios attributed to Megaron A is glossed over (it is rather easily disregarded in pp. 69–70 as possibly dating earlier than the 11th c. B.C.). P. Darque, ‘L’habitat mycénien’, Athens/Paris, 2005, p. 345 argues like myself (A. Mazarakis Ainian, ‘From rulers’ dwellings to temples. Architecture, religion and society in Early Iron Age Greece (1100–700 B.C.)’, Jonsered 1997 [SIMA 122], pp. 133–134) that some of the curvilinear edifices of Thermos were still in use in the Protogeometric period but P. refutes this, without presenting significant arguments. The basic argument is the presence of the corner of an Early Iron Age edifice, Δ–Ε, above the SE corner of Megaron A, but the date of this edifice could fall anytime during the period.

The hypothesis that the time which elapsed between the end of the Late Bronze Age destruction and the Early Iron Age rebuilding was very short is based solely on the absence of an «accumulation over the destruction level» (p. 29); this, however, is not a conclusive argument. It is dangerous to base questions of ‘continuity’ primarily on the absence of ‘deposits’ between periods (as on p. 91) rather than on the unbroken sequence of pottery.

The section dealing with the chronology of Megaron B at p. 32 and p. 35 (where the C14 dated samples are mentioned), allowing to conclude that its date of destruction falls between the end of the 9th or the early 8th c. B.C., is not well documented. The exact context and nature of the samples, as well as the data and the exact scientific discussion of this dating by the scientists who reached these results have not been included. The number of samples dated from Thermon is 16, deriving from various contexts and offering a wide range of dates, which need a detailed archaeological commentary (for the data see now Y. Facorellis, ‘Radiocarbon dating of Early Iron Age Greece: an overview’, in A. Mazarakis Ainian, A. Alexandridou, X. Charalampidou [eds], ‘Regional Stories Towards a New Perception of the Early Greek World, Acts of an International Symposium in honour of Professor Jan Bouzek, Volos 18–21 June 2015’, University of Thessaly Press, Volos, in press).

The discussion about the date of the «rock altar» pp. 37–38 is inconclusive, though the data are apparently clear: since the stone boulder rests on the same level as Megaron B it was probably in use from the moment of the erection of the edifice. Accepting such a scenario would obliged us to consider that there was an altar in front of Megaron B, as in the case of several rulers’ dwellings of the Early Iron Age.

A discussion concerning the date of the peristyle, usually attributed to the Early Archaic temple, is avoided (p. 52–53, nn. 87–88). This would have been pertinent, especially since there are chronological inconsistencies which are well known (Mazarakis Ainian 1997, p. 134–135). P. seems to hint, however, that there was originally only a cella.

Architecture and typology: The curvature of the walls (inwards and also convex) is correctly considered by P. as the result of a series of factors, but not intentional. Some interesting features may be noted: a posthole in the NE corner, and carbonized piece of wood at the SE corner (p. 55, 60); a «skirting» wall along the...
exterior face of the W wall, at its S extremity, perhaps in order to protect the base of the wall from inundations, reminding us of a similar technique encountered at Oropos (A. Mazarakis Ainian, Praktika 2008, p. 15). The question of the superstructure (stones or mudbricks?) cannot be answered, though in spacious edifices (as at the Lefkandi ‘heroon’, and at the oval building in Mytilene, Mazarakis Ainian 1997, pp. 49 and 90, respectively), high stone socles supporting a mud brick superstructure are not unusual. The new excavation seems to confirm that the façade was closed from the beginning, though one is left wondering how K. Rhomaios could have described a totally different situation at the SE corner, which can no longer be confirmed today (p. 61). The possibility that the SE anta was different from the SW end cannot be excluded. Lastly, despite the fact that there is no evidence for interior supports, judging by the width of the edifice (7,50 m) and its length (20,80 m) it would be logical to assume that there would have been posts along the axis, not preserved or not detected by the excavators due to the restricted space of the trenches investigated along the axis of the building.

To the section dealing with the Middle Helladic tradition (pp. 80ff) we could now add the newly discovered Late Bronze Age apsidal buildings at the fringes of the Mycenaean World North of the Tempe, at Platamon in Pieria, but also at Tzannata in Kephalonia (and Gavrolimni in Aetolia mentioned in p. 82 n. 162).

In my opinion the stratigraphical observations and one photo (pl. 57, top) where it becomes apparent that the cross wall between the back and central rooms does not bond with the E wall of Megaron B, suggest that the partitioning represents an addition to the original plan. It is thus not a surprise that the original floor level of the back chamber was at a significant higher level than that of the main room (p. 62). This probably means that the edifice was initially divided into just two spacious chambers. The fact that this room was rebuilt at some point, in wattle and daub or mud brick, could hint towards a final phase of the entire Megaron B, which has left few traces.

I have argued that there was perhaps an Early Archaic apsidal peripteral temple succeeding Megaron B (Mazarakis Ainian 1997, p. 134–135), an idea not discussed by P., who identifies the «elliptical slabs» as defining a temenos. The parallels from Ano Mazaraki and Kallion for the existence of roofed stoas around a building (or a ‘bothros’ in the case of Kallion: P.G. Themelis, ‘Δελφοί: και περιοχή το Ἀθήνας ζώοννα’, ASAtene 61, 1983, 213–255) are indicative of a geographical area where such structures in the Early Archaic period would have been known. Apsidal buildings of the Early Iron Age are also represented in the area (8th c. apsidal cult building at Spathari in Akarnania, associated with interior stone bases for wooden supports along the walls). I am still of the opinion that a substantial cult building may have existed also during the 8th and 7th c. B.C.: this could be either Megaron B, surrounded by an apsidal stoa of wooden posts, or some mud-brick apsidal edifice which was later dismantled for the construction of the temple. The combination of oval colonnades with rectangular façades are also encountered in the neigbouring area of Achaia already from the 8th c. BC (Nikoleika, Ano Mazaraki; on all these sites see F. Lang, A. Sieverling, ‘Micro- and Macroregional processes in the Early Iron Age Akarnania and beyond’, in A.
Mazarakis Ainian, A. Alexandridou, X. Charalampidou (eds), in press, with bibliography).

Questions of use and function: The issues regarding the nature of the layers of ashes and animal bones are confusing. The presence of ashes here and there immediately on top of the level of use of Megaron B (p. 36) could derive from the cleaning of one or more large interior hearths and need not necessarily be associated with the subsequent altar, as concluded by the author. Papapostolou’s argument that these ashes should be connected with the early use of the altar is weakened by the fact that he acknowledges the absence of animal bones within these traces of ash.

The use of the term ‘hearth’ in order to describe the vast area of burnt matter within the walls of Megaron B is to my mind misleading. The consistent use of the term ‘ash altar’ would have been preferable. One even wonders whether the ‘clay’ level upon which the ash layer was posed, could be identified with the destroyed superstructure of Megaron B and its subsequent leveling for reuse. The comparison with Building ΣΤ in Chalkidiki seems very stirring but unfortunately the function and features related with this specific structure are still poorly documented (S. Moschonissioti, ‘Excavation at Ancient Mende’, in M. Bats, B. D’Agostino [eds], ‘Euboica. L’Eubea e le presenza euboica in Calcidica e in Occidente. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Napoli, 13–16 novembre 1996’, Naples, 1998, 255–271).

Megaron B is defined by P. as «the seat of a chief and a place for communal gatherings and feastings, but not the chief’s and his family’s dwelling. Buildings nearby, like the Homeric chambers (θάλαμοι), will have served as special residential quarters» (p. 64). This opinion, however, is not backed by argument, especially since P. concludes that «this interpretation pertains, as I believe, to all large ‘chiefly’ buildings of this period» (p. 64). The argument is repeated on pp. 104–105 where P. identifies the buildings adjacent and to the N of Megaron B with residential θάλαμοι, which consecutively leads him to identify Megaron B as a communal hall rather than a ruler’s dwelling.

Questions of cult in early Thermos (pp. 91 ff): The inverted vases containing ashes, animal bones, and the analysis of the bones, imply large scale feasting and rituals in Megaron A (p. 94). The large pithoi with similar content scattered all over the Late Bronze Age levels seem to represent receptacles for such rituals as well, which may have persisted into the Early Iron Age (such as pithos θ immediately to the W of Megaron B). P. emphatically denies the possibility of an ancestral or hero cult in relation to Megara A and B (p. 122–125) and prefers to see a cult of ‘daimons’ instead, which would explain the ‘chthonian’ character of several aspects of the early cult (p. 125–130). Nevertheless, the arguments against the first possibility are neither persuasive, nor conclusive. My own such suggestion was based on Soteriades’ account (which has not been convincingly refuted by either Rhomaios or Papapostolou) and the preliminary publications of P., which mentions a possible burial in front of Megaron B. While it is now established that no such burial existed in front of Megaron B, one still needs to explain on what grounds Soteriades could misidentify a cavity inside the apse of Megaron A with the burials of a child and a woman (G. Soteriades, ‘Εφημ 1900, p. 180–181; id., ‘τα ελλειψοειδή κτίσματα του Θέρμου’, Athens 1909, p. 19). P. states that
such cults must be related to one or more tombs, which in the case of Thermos are lacking. Yet, the presence of tomb(s) for such a cult is not a prerequisite. A place of memory, such as a structure, may generate an ancestral cult as well. In my opinion, the new excavation has not solved this issue, and the possibility that Megaron A coexisted for some time with Megaron B is still strong (see above and Mazarakis Ainian 1997, p. 133).

The analysis of the bones by A. Gardeisen (published in Papapostolou 2008, 305–311), should have been presented in more detail or even in an Appendix, as much of the discussion related to the cult is based on this study. It is a fact that during the Geometric and especially the Early Archaic period the number of calcinated bones rises (20.6% and 62.8% respectively). It should be stressed, however, that the quantity of the bones retrieved during the new excavations and subsequently analysed was rather small (460 fragments in all from all levels). The ‘holocaust sacrifices’ which seem to have been practiced within the ruins of Megaron B, were perhaps not so extensive. Indeed, as P. himself acknowledges, «bones, burned only to a certain extent, and a few iron spits suggest the consumption of meat as an inherent part of sacrificial feasts» (p. 115). Thus, even in the post-Megaron B period, consumption of the sacrificial animals appears to be present.

The fact that the Early Archaic temple was built on top of the ‘ash altar’ is considered a change in cult practices, marking the end of ‘holocaust sacrifices’ (p. 115). But what do we know about the excavation context of the Early Archaic temple? Where are the dedications associated with it? Moreover, the ‘black layer’ contained only a few bones, mostly unburnt, associated with feasting (p. 120). This last layer beneath the Early Archaic temple is considered to have been «artificially deposited», a sort of leveling for the construction of the Early Archaic temple (p. 120). Nevertheless, this hypothesis leaves us with a question as to where these sacrifices and subsequent meals took place, if not within the ‘temenos’. It is interesting to remark that if the ‘temenos’ was defined by the ‘elliptical bases’, then the huge boulder to the S of the temple, regarded as a possible raised rock-altar, would have been situated outside. Though stratigraphically linked with the level of Megaron B, P. prefers to connect it with the post-Megaron B period (p. 121). But if this huge boulder was standing there since the early period of Megaron B, it would be odd to maintain that it was only subsequently converted into an altar.

P. attempts to dismiss the sequence ‘from house to temple’ first by identifying Megaron B with a communal hall and especially by arguing that the transition is interrupted by the ‘ash altar period’. Whichever hypothesis one retains, it cannot be denied that from a probable seat of a ruler the site was gradually transformed into a major supraregional sanctuary.

In general, in the section of ‘Cult Aspects’, complex issues are tackled, with reference to considerable literary evidence. The suggestions put forward are based on conceptions about the nature of early divinities, as expressed mainly by late literary sources or modern approaches by historians of religion and archaeologists. Without denying that several of the ideas expressed by the author could indeed be correct, one must acknowledge that other interpretations are equally possible. It should be noted here that the identification of the bronzes of p. 72
and p. 143, fig. 46 as hair spirals and their association with rituals involving the offering of hair locks to Apollo (pp. 148–149), is difficult to accept, as the objects should more probably be identified as earrings and could be associated thus with the world of women or even with Artemis.

In conclusion, John Papapostolou has conducted a meticulous stratigraphic excavation and offered an unusually prompt and detailed publication, which solved once and for all several of the ambiguities that existed for almost a century about the early phases of the site. Some ambiguities, however, remain, while new questions have been posed. This is inevitable when we return to investigate afresh sites excavated long ago, disturbed and insufficiently documented. Papapostolou has done the best he could to untangle the thread of the stratigraphic knot lying beneath the temple of Apollo at Thermos. Despite this painstaking study, the Thermos ‘case’ is not closed and will continue to generate scientific debates in the future.

Volos

Alexander Mazarakis Ainian


Um Antworten auf diese Fragen zu finden, hat der Autor ein Korpus von ca. 2300 Tierfriesen auf 1700 korinthischen Gefäßen erstellt, das er im zentralen Teil der Arbeit (Kapitel III; S. 243–323) systematisch auf seine Syntax, d.h. auf die Komposition der Figuren und deren Wechselbeziehung zueinander befragt. Diesem analytischen Kapitel gehen zwei Abschnitte voraus, in denen die Terminologie und die Ikonographie der ‘Monster’ geklärt wird (Kapitel I und II; S. 21–241). Im vierten Kapitel wird die Verknüpfung der monströsen Tierwelt mit der menschlichen Lebenswelt beleuchtet (S. 325–370). Das fünfte und letzte Kapitel (S. 373–394) ist der Lokalisierung der in den Bildern dargestellten fiktionalen Räume gewidmet, der Welt jenseits der Grenzen der Polis in ihren unterschiedlichen Abstufungen.

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