

EVIDENCE FOR CULT PRACTICE AT MIDEA: FIGURES, FIGURINES AND RITUAL OBJECTS*

Introduction

The excavations of the Mycenaean Acropolis of Midea, which began in 1983 and continue to the present day as a joint Greek-Swedish undertaking, have shown that Midea was an administrative centre with craft industries and indeed the third most important site of the Mycenaean Argolid.¹ Since Midea is now thought to be a centre of wealth and power, as is suggested by the fortified Acropolis itself and the numerous and significant finds, it is most probable that there were cult areas at the site. Recent research has shown that Mycenaean cult buildings and ritual practices are often associated with the ruling power. Yet, no buildings which could be securely identified as sanctuaries, such as those found in Mycenae and Tiryns, have come to light in Midea to date. Many cult and ritual objects have been found, however, constituting strong, albeit indirect, evidence for religious activities. Thus, the presence of buildings or areas on the Acropolis set apart for cult purposes must be considered certain.

The material remains of cult found in Midea come from the three main excavated areas within the Acropolis: the East Gate area, the northeast Lower Terraces and the West Gate area (Pl. XLVIIIa). The purpose of this paper is to present the cult and ritual objects from the West Gate area of Midea, the Greek sector of the excavations. This area is situated on the southwest slope of the Acropolis, between the West Gate and the southwest lower terraces.

The excavation uncovered the West Gate itself with a spacious gateway and a guard-room protected by a massive bastion (Pl. XLVIIIb). The guard-room served also for storage, as is suggested by the pithoi and other storage vessels found within it. Inside the Gate, along the fortification wall, thick undisturbed Mycenaean deposits were removed, revealing the inner face of the wall and a steep rocky area to the northeast (Pl. XLVIIIc). To the west of this area a large building complex came to light, which was constructed against the fortification wall on successive terraces. Ten rooms were uncovered, as well as a central corridor with a drain running through it (Pl. XLIXa-b).

Both the West Gate and the building complex were found destroyed by the earthquake that struck Midea around the end of the 13th century B.C.² In the West Gate, as well as in some of the rooms of the building, apart from the collapsed superstructure, there were pronounced traces of fire caused by the earthquake. Further northeast in the interior of the Acropolis more undisturbed Mycenaean deposits were found with some architectural remains, again with traces of fire.

The cult objects and the remains of ritual equipment from the West Gate area of Midea constitute a valuable group with a variety of items comparable to material from the other two palatial centres in the Argolid. The group is important also because it comes from a carefully excavated area in one of the great Argive Mycenaean citadels. It consists of four

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1 For the bibliography of the Midea excavations see K. DEMAKOPOULOU and N. DIVARI-VALAKOU, "The Fortification of the Mycenaean Acropolis of Midea" in *POLEMOS* I, 205-215, esp. n. 4; See also K. DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.*, "Excavations in Midea 1995-1996," *OpAth* 22-23 (1997-1998) 57-90; EAD., "Work in Midea 1997-1999. Excavation, Conservation, Restoration," *OpAth* 25-26 (2000-2001, forthcoming); EAD., "Excavations in Midea 2000," *OpAth* 27 (2002, forthcoming). See also G. WALBERG, *Excavations on the Acropolis of Midea*. Vol. I:1-2. *The Excavations on the Lower Terraces 1985-1991* (1998).

2 P. ÅSTRÖM and K. DEMAKOPOULOU, "Signs of an Earthquake at Midea?" in *Archaeoseismology. Fitch Laboratory Occasional Paper* 7 (1996) 37-40.

terracotta figures, a complete human figure and three animal fragments, a great number of clay handmade human and animal figurines of nearly all types, fragments of miniature furniture, fragments of ritual vessels, miniature vases and some representations of motifs with symbolic meaning, such as the figure-of-eight shield, the genii and two heraldic female figures either side of a tree. This material was most probably intended for religious activities at Midea and indeed, according to Kilian, most of these objects, if found in a closed group, should be considered as characteristic of official cult.³ The material from the West Gate area, however, cannot be described as a cultic assemblage in the true sense. Most of our cult and ritual objects are fragmentary and although they come from the occupation levels of the site, they were not found in their original context. Very few were recovered from floor deposits and destruction levels; the majority of the fragmentary figurines and vessels may have been washed down from the top of the hill. They could even have been brought from elsewhere as part of a fill. So, the findspot of our material and its fragmentary condition show that most of it and especially the figurines can be considered as “household” debris.

Terracotta Figures and Figurines

The whole corpus of Mycenaean figures and figurines found in the West Gate area in Midea consists of 175 pieces from which only a few are complete or nearly so. There are four pieces belonging to large wheelmade figures, while all the others are small-scale handmade human and animal figurines; they comprise 93 female figurines, 63 animal figurines and 15 group figurines (Pl. XLIXc).

The figures and figurines were found widely distributed in the West Gate area (Pl. XLIXd). Twenty-one of them come from the West Gate itself, 10 from the gateway and 11 from the guard-room. Most were found in the upper layers. Some pieces were recovered from the destruction level and the floor deposit, but, with the exception of a nearly complete naturalistic female figurine found in the destruction level of the guard-room, they are very fragmentary. The only complete figurine from the Gate – a miniature Phi – was found in the surface layer of the gateway. The bulk of the material comes from stratified deposits in the West Gate area within the walls: 111 from accumulated deposits along the fortification wall, including those found in the upper accumulated layers over the building complex, and seven from stratified deposits further north of the wall. From the floors and the destruction levels of the building complex come the female figure and 35 figurines, mostly fragmentary, which were distributed as follows: one figurine from the floor of Room III; two figurines found directly under the floor of Room IV – one an almost complete miniature Tau; two figurines from the floor of Room V; 10 figurines from the destruction level of Rooms VIa and VIb and two more terracottas from the floor: the complete human figure from the floor of Room VIa and a nearly complete miniature Tau figurine from the floor of Room VIb; six figurines from the destruction level of Room VII – one a nearly complete miniature hollow Psi; Room VIIa yielded two figurines, both from the floor – one a nearly complete miniature Psi; from Room VIIb five figurines were recovered, four from the destruction level and one, which is a nearly complete miniature Tau, from the floor; six figurines were found in the lower level of the corridor of the building complex – one a nearly complete animal figurine. It is noteworthy that five almost complete miniature figurines were found on or near the floor of most rooms of the building complex.

The wide distribution and dispersal of the figurines in the West Gate area of Midea show that they cannot be connected with a votive deposit, as at Mycenae and Tiryns. It should be noted, however, that at those two sites, apart from the figurines found in the shrines, many figurines were also found in contexts not immediately associated with cult activity. At Midea,

3 K. KILIAN, “Zeugnisse mykenischer Kultausbübung in Tiryns,” in *Sanctuaries and Cults* 49-58; ID., “Mycenaeans up to Date. Trends and Changes in Recent Research,” in *Problems in Greek Prehistory* 115-152; ID., “Patterns in the Cult Activity in the Mycenaean Argolid,” in *Celebrations* 185-196; ID., “Mykenische Heiligtümer der Peloponnes,” in *Kotinos. Festschrift für Erika Simon* (1992) 10-25.

the great number of figurines found constitutes strong evidence for their frequent use at the site, which could include cult practices. It has been noted that the offering of figurines is one of the most characteristic features of Mycenaean religion.⁴ For example the bovine figurines might be offered as sacrificial substitutes. It seems that the figures and figurines made of various materials during the Aegean Late Bronze Age had a symbolic purpose, though the frequent presence of terracotta figurines in domestic contexts shows that they could have other functions too, such as their use as toys.⁵ The terracotta figures and figurines found in Midea, like their parallels from other major Mycenaean sites, could well have been used as cult images, votive offerings, apotropaic items or they might have been intended to be deposited as grave goods.

The most important group of terracottas from the West Gate area of Midea is that of the large wheelmade figures, which comprises a complete female figure and three legs of bovids (Pl. XLIXe). The female figure was found near the northwest corner of Room VIa of the building complex⁶ (Pl. XLIXa). It was found broken in pieces on the floor of the room, which was a basement room, and may have fallen from the upper storey (Pl. XLIXf). The thick burnt debris which covered the floor contained many clay, stone and lead vases, as well as bronze and stone tools. Close to the figure lay a bronze chisel and a stone hammer-axe with a round shaft hole⁷ (Pl. XLIXf); they are both intact and might originally have been placed together with the figure. Tools are often found in sanctuaries in the Aegean and they can therefore be associated with cult objects like our figure.⁸ It is notable that some of the large monochrome human figures with forbidding appearance found in the Temple at Mycenae hold hammer-axes.⁹

The figure is standing with folded arms resting just below the breasts¹⁰ (Pl. La-b); the position of the arms is undoubtedly a gesture of religious significance, probably of supplication.¹¹ The head, the rounded prominent bust and the arms are naturalistically modelled, while the lower body is rendered as a cylinder stem flaring at the base. She is richly decorated in paint on both head and upper body, while the stem is encircled by nine broad bands. Her head is covered by a well shaped polos. All facial features are emphasized by paint, especially the large almond-shaped eyes. The decoration of the body is intended to show the dress of the figure, as well as the jewellery adorning her dress. She also wears a necklace high on the neck and bracelets on each hand. The polos and the jewellery add to the cultic character of the figure.¹² It has been suggested that necklaces worn by figures indicate sacredness; they

4 O. DICKINSON, *The Aegean Bronze Age* (1994) 287.

5 E. FRENCH, "The Development of Mycenaean Terracotta Figurines," *BSA* 66 (1971) 107-108; EAD., "Mycenaean Figures and Figurines, their Typology and Function," in *Sanctuaries and Cults* 173-174. See most recently A.D. MOORE and W.D. TAYLOUR, *The Temple Complex, Well Built Mycenae* 10 (1999) 88-89.

6 DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.* (*supra* n. 1, 1997-1998) 68, figs 57-58.

7 DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.* (*supra* n. 1, 1997-1998) 66, 68, figs 51, 53.

8 E. FRENCH, "Cult Places at Mycenae," in *Sanctuaries and Cults* 45. H. WHITTAKER, *Mycenaean Cult Buildings* (1997) 23-24, 147.

9 Lord W. TAYLOUR, *The Mycenaean* (1983²) 53, fig. 31. FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, *Sanctuaries and Cults*) 173, figs 10-14. A.D. MOORE, "The Large Monochrome Terracotta Figures from Mycenae. The Problem of Interpretation," in *Problems in Greek Prehistory* 219-228; MOORE and TAYLOUR (*supra* n. 5) 95-96, pl. 16b. A terracotta hammer-axe model was found in the Temple at Mycenae; it is connected to the monochrome human figures by Moore who considers hammer-axes as sacrificial tools, *ibid.* 101-102, 116.

10 K. DEMAKOPOULOU, "A Mycenaean Terracotta Figure from Midea in the Argolid," in *MELETEMATATA* I, 197-205, pls XL-XLI.

11 For the significance of the poses and gestures of the Mycenaean figures see WHITTAKER (*supra* n. 8) 150; the figure with painted decoration found in the Temple at Mycenae has the same gesture as that of the Midea figure, TAYLOUR (*supra* n. 9) 59, fig. 40 and FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, *Sanctuaries and Cults*) 176, fig. 8. For recent discussion on the poses and gestures of the figures of both types A and B from the Mycenae Temple, see MOORE and TAYLOUR (*supra* n. 5) 89-101.

12 Most of the figures with painted decoration from the cult areas at Mycenae and Tiryns are richly adorned with necklaces and bracelets, see TAYLOUR (*supra* n. 9) 58-59, figs 39-40 (Mycenae) and KILIAN (*supra* n. 3, *Sanctuaries and Cults*) 54, fig. 6 (Tiryns); for good illustrations of these figures see K. DEMAKOPOULOU (ed.), *The Mycenaean World. Five Centuries of Early Greek Culture* (1988) 95, 192, nos. 25, 167-168; cf. the goddess with polos and necklace depicted on the large gold signet ring from Tiryns, TAYLOUR (*supra* n. 9) 64, fig. 47 and the fragmentary head with a polos of an exceptionally large figure from the Mycenaean sanctuary at Amyklai, K. DEMAKOPOULOU, *To Μυκηναϊκό Ιερό στο Αμυκλαίο* (1982) 54-55, pl. 25.

could be offerings to deities and could have been strung between the arms of some of the figures.¹³

The Midea figure belongs to a specific category of Mycenaean female figures considered to represent deities and to function as cult images.¹⁴ It corresponds to Type A of Dr. French's typology of Mycenaean clay figures.¹⁵ The most impressive of these figures are of course those from the sanctuaries at Mycenae,¹⁶ Tiryns¹⁷ and Phylakopi¹⁸ which the Lady of Midea closely resembles. Some notable features of our figure, however, are not seen on the others. One of these is the well formed rounded chin with an excellent rendition of the transition from chin to neck. Most of the figures of this type and the ugly monochrome figures from Mycenae have pointed chins.¹⁹ Furthermore, the Lady of Midea has no plait, unlike all her counterparts. Her hair is shown as a solid painted area ending in four waves beneath the polos on the back of the head (Pl. Lb). Other special features of the figure are the marked turn of the head towards the right and the tall polos crowning her head, which is the tallest and best formed of any of the poloi worn by the figures of that type²⁰ (Pl. La-b). It is wheelmade, in the shape of a bowl with a large opening in the bottom that communicates with the hollow of the head, neck and body of the figure. This opening may have served for libations through the bowl-like polos.²¹ It has been suggested by Kilian that the figures found at Tiryns were carried around in ritual processions.²² The Midea figure, no doubt a cult object, was most probably intended for display in a shrine and/or to be used in processions. The wide opening of the conical stem of the figure may have served to secure it on a stick, so that it could be carried around in religious celebrations. It has been pointed out by most scholars that processions played a main role in Mycenaean religious activity, as is strongly suggested by iconography.²³

The pottery from the debris where the figure was found is of Late Helladic IIIB2 date.²⁴ That the figure is also of the same date is suggested not only by the context, but also by its well preserved painted decoration which includes many motifs common in this pottery style phase.²⁵

Of the three fragments of animal figures found (Pl. Lc), two come from the deposits along the fortification wall, which contained pottery dated from Middle Helladic through Late Helladic IIIB2; the third was found in the destruction level of the guard-room of the West Gate. The two first are solid tall legs of large wheelmade bovids with painted decoration. The vertical rows of dots outlined by vertical fine lines on one leg constitute a frequent motif for

13 See WHITTAKER (*supra* n. 8) 150 with references; see also I. KILIAN-DIRLMEIER, "Zum Halschmuck mykenischer Idole," *Jahresbericht des Instituts für Vorgeschichte der Universität Frankfurt a. M.* (1978-1979) 29-43, esp. 36. The best iconographical examples indicating that necklaces were used as votive offerings are the well-known fresco from the Cult Centre of Mycenae depicting a sitting goddess holding a necklace, and the religious scene on the "Saffron Gatherers" fresco from Xeste 3 at Akrotiri, Thera; one of the young girls carries a necklace of rock-crystal beads, see *Aegean Painting* 119, 191, pl. XX (Mycenae) and 60-61, figs 20, 32a (Akrotiri).

14 WHITTAKER (*supra* n. 8) 151 with references; H.W. CATLING, "A Mycenaean Terracotta Figure from the Menelaion," *BSA* 90 (1995) 189; DEMAKOPOULOU (*supra* n. 10) 202-203; see also MOORE and TAYLOUR (*supra* n. 5) 92.

15 E. FRENCH, *Sanctuaries and Cults* 173.

16 W.D. TAYLOUR, "Mycenae 1968," *Antiquity* 43 (1969) 91-97; ID., "New Light on Mycenaean Religion," *Antiquity* 44 (1970) 270-280; ID. (*supra* n. 9) 49-59; also MOORE and TAYLOUR (*supra* n. 5) 46-47, pls 11-12.

17 K. KILIAN, "Ausgrabungen in Tiryns 1976. Bericht zu den Grabungen," *AA* 1978, 460-467; ID., *Sanctuaries and Cults* 49-58.

18 E. FRENCH, "The Figures and Figurines" in C. RENFREW *et al.*, *The Archaeology of Cult. The Sanctuary at Phylakopi*, *BSA Suppl.* 18 (1985) 209-235.

19 For example the Lady of Phylakopi, see FRENCH (*supra* n. 18) 215, 221, fig. 6.4.

20 DEMAKOPOULOU (*supra* n. 10) 200-201, pl. XLI:f.

21 For the significant role of libations in Mycenaean cult ceremony see R. HÄGG, "The Role of Libation in Mycenaean Ceremony and Cult" in *Celebrations* 177-184; see also WHITTAKER (*supra* n. 8) 146.

22 K. KILIAN, *Sanctuaries and Cults* 54-56; ID., *Problems in Greek Prehistory* 148; ID., *Kotinos* 15.

23 Cf. WHITTAKER (*supra* n. 8) 159 and *Aegean Painting* 114-118.

24 DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.* (*supra* n. 1, 1997-1998) 59-66.

25 DEMAKOPOULOU (*supra* n. 10) 201-202.

the decoration of animal and group figurines.²⁶ The third leg is smaller, wheelmade, and painted red monochrome. Large figures of bovids were found in the sanctuaries of Tiryns,²⁷ Phylakopi²⁸ and Methana,²⁹ as well as in the Temple of Ayia Irini.³⁰ It is worthy of mention that only one fragment, which cannot be securely identified as a bovid figure, comes from the Temple at Mycenae.³¹ Some fragmentary examples like ours, however, have been found on the Acropolis of Mycenae and are not connected with the Cult Area.³²

The handmade female figurines from the West Gate area form a large group including most of the types defined by Dr. French.³³ The Proto-Phi type figurines and the Kouroutrophoi are still missing (Pl. Ld).

Two examples of naturalistic figurines were found, a well modelled head with applied eyes and plastic ears and a nearly complete figurine with arms crossed over the breast, holding the shoulders³⁴ (Pl. Le). The latter has a long columnar stem with typical wavy line decoration. It is worth mentioning that both pieces come from the destruction layers of the West Gate – the head from the gateway and the other from the guard-room.

Of the Phi figurines four examples belong to Group A and three to Group B.³⁵ The four examples of Group A are fragmentary and display the characteristic features of this group, such as the applied eyes, the head well covered with paint, an elongated body and a double neckline on the collar (Pl. Lf). The three examples of Group B are also fragmentary and have the stylization and characteristics typical of the Phi figurines of Group B, such as the circular body, the stem with vertical bands, the painted eyes and the applied plait (Pl. LIa). Neither Group A nor Group B Phi figurines usually wear a polos.³⁶ There is, however, a fragmentary example of a Phi figurine from the West Gate area, which has a polos (Pl. LIb). It belongs to Group B as shown by the painted eyes and the discoid body. Three miniature Phis were also found (Pl. LIc). The two complete examples have the upper body outlined with a broad band and decorated with fine vertical lines. They have a painted fringe and resemble the Tau figurines, although they have no polos and the stem is solid.³⁷

The Transitional type, which is an intermediate type between the Tau and the Hollow Psi figurines,³⁸ is represented with five badly preserved examples. Three of them have a diamond-shaped body with arms crossing it from the widest point and a broad, hollow stem (Pl. LIId). The other two are rough versions of the Tau type.

Twenty Tau figurines were found, a good number in view of the fact that this type is not generally widely distributed.³⁹ Eight of them are miniatures. Their main characteristics are a long hollow stem and arms folded over the breast usually as a single applied strip (Pl. LIe). In some specimens, however, the two arms are shown overlapping. A good example is a nearly complete one which has a polos and seems to be a hybrid between the Tau and

26 I. WEBER-HIDEN, "Die mykenischen Terrakottafigurinen aus den Syringes von Tiryns," *Tiryns* XI (1990) 70-71, pl. 46:136, 79-80, pls 50, 53: 165.

27 KILIAN (*supra* n. 17) 465, fig. 22.

28 FRENCH (*supra* n. 18) 236-252.

29 WHITTAKER (*supra* n. 8) 153.

30 M.E. CASKEY, "Ayia Irini, Kea: The Terracotta Statues and the Cult in the Temple," in *Sanctuaries and Cults* 132.

31 MOORE and TAYLOUR (*supra* n. 5) 63, 70.

32 A. TAMVAKI, "Some Unusual Mycenaean Terracottas from the Citadel House Area, 1954-69," *BSA* 68 (1973) 227-229, fig. 14.

33 FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 108-150, fig. 1.

34 FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 109-112.

35 FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 116; see also WEBER-HIDEN (*supra* n. 26) 37-39, pl. 35: 1-8 for examples of this type from Tiryns and K. PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS, *The Sanctuary of Aphaia on Aigina in the Bronze Age* (1998) 6-13, pls 29-32 for other examples from Aphaia.

36 FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 118.

37 FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 122.

38 FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 123-124; see also PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS (*supra* n. 35) 13-14, pl. 33 for the Transitional figurines from Aphaia.

39 FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 124-126; for some examples of this type from Tiryns see WEBER-HIDEN (*supra* n. 26) 40-42, pl. 36:10-15; cf. PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS (*supra* n. 35) for the absence of this type from Aphaia.

the Transitional type (Pl. LI_f). Of the miniature Taus four typical examples are well preserved (Pl. LI_g). Interestingly, three of them come from floor deposits of the building complex: the almost complete one shown on Pl. LI_g was found directly under the floor of Room IV, while the third and the fourth from the left were found in the floor deposits of Rooms VI_b and VIII_b respectively (Pl. XLIX_a). The last one is burnt from the conflagration.

Amongst our material, the Psi figurines are well represented with all subdivisions.⁴⁰ There are 10 fragmentary examples of the standard Psi type, decorated with fine wavy lines on the body; they all have raised arms, columnar stem and natural waist-line (Pl. LI_{IIa}). One of them is very large and another has a sleeve painted on one arm.⁴¹ Ten figurines of the Hollow Psi type were found; they usually have a hollow conical stem and a high waist (Pl. LI_{IIb}). There are two Hollow Psi figurines, however, which have a natural waist-line like the standard Psis. One has an unusual decoration on the back with irregular vertical lines in two zones; the front body has the typical wavy line decoration, but no breasts are shown.

Four fragmentary High-Waisted Psi figurines were found, with a columnar stem and the typical high waist-line, reminiscent of the Tau and Hollow Psi examples (Pl. LI_{IIc}). The decoration of one of them is divided down the middle as on some of the Hollow Psi figurines.⁴²

Five very small or rather miniature Psi figurines also occur, of which three belong to the Hollow Psi type⁴³ (Pl. LI_{IIId}). One of them is interesting because it has the applied strip of the Taus and small raised arms. It is a hybrid of a Tau and a Hollow Psi figurine.

Only three figurines can be assigned to the category of the Late Psis. These are a head with applied pellet eyes and two fragmentary figurines with applied breasts and irregular decoration (Pl. LI_{IIe}). They could belong to Group A of the Late Psis,⁴⁴ though one of them is too worn for identification.

A great number of heads from figurines were recovered from the West Gate area. Only two bare heads were found, the naturalistic head on Pl. Le and the head of a Phi A figurine on Pl. Lf. The polos heads are numerous, 23 in total number.⁴⁵ They may possibly come from figurines of all Psi variants, Taus and Transitionals. The polos is short or high and flaring and usually decorated with festoons (Pl. LI_{IIIf}). Most of the heads have short or long fringes. The plait is applied or painted and sometimes both applied and painted. The eyes are rendered with painted dots or rings.

The animal figurines from the West Gate area comprise a large group (Pl. LI_{IIIa}). Most of them are bovids and only a few can be attributed to other species. Almost all types of bovids, which have been defined according to the decoration,⁴⁶ are represented. There is the rear body with tail of a Wavy type 1 animal figurine and the front body with legs of a Linear type 1 (Pl. LI_{IIIb}). Of Linear type 2 two body fragments, front and rear, were found; of the Spine type 1 there are two fragmentary examples. Eight specimens of Spine type 2 figurines were recovered, two of them well preserved (Pl. LI_{IIIc}). Two fragments of animal figurines of the Ladder type were found with their characteristic decoration. There are three more animal figurines with unusual decoration, differing from the decoration of the standard types of animal figurines (Pl. LI_{IIId}). Six unpainted animal figurines were found, made mostly of coarse gritty clay. The group of animal figurines includes five miniature pieces, which are monochrome or unpainted. There are also 27 animal heads, horns and legs, which come from bovid figurines, but they are too fragmentary to be assigned to any of the established categories.

40 FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 126-136; see also WEBER-HIDEN (*supra* n. 26) 42-44, pl. 37 for Psi type figurines from Tiryns and PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS (*supra* n. 35) 14-30, pls 33-42 for figurines of this type from Aphaia.

41 FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 127, 130.

42 FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 127.

43 FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 126.

44 FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 133-134; WEBER-HIDEN (*supra* n. 26) 44, pl. 37: 22-24; see also PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS (*supra* n. 35) 27-30, pls 40-42.

45 See FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 144-147 for bare and polos heads; also PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS (*supra* n. 35) 35-41, pl. 44 for the numerous polos heads found in Aphaia.

46 Cf. FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 151-159, fig. 11; EAD. (*supra* n. 18) 261-274; also PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS (*supra* n. 35) 47-60, pls 47-51.

In addition to bovids, there are a few examples of other animal species⁴⁷ but as they are fragmentary it is difficult to identify them with certainty. Most interesting is a fragmentary figurine of a crouching animal, probably a lion, as is evident from the rendering of the elongated body, most of which is covered by brown monochrome paint (Pl. LIIIe left). It may well be, however, a wild goat. Since lions and goats are frequently depicted in Mycenaean iconography, often associated with religious scenes,⁴⁸ it is probable that there were clay figurines of both species⁴⁹ like their gold counterparts.⁵⁰ Another fragment appears to be a model of a hedgehog, as is suggested by the rotund body with dot decoration (Pl. LIIIe right). What remains of the animal is the back with a small tail and part of the head with one small ear. Hedgehogs are depicted on Mycenaean pictorial pottery and there are some ritual vessels in the form of hedgehogs, known from Syria, Cyprus and the Aegean.⁵¹ It has been suggested that the hedgehog had a symbolic meaning in Mycenaean religion.⁵² Some rhyta in the form of a hedgehog have been found in the sanctuary of Aphaia on Aegina.⁵³ Our piece, which is handmade, seems to be a model rather than a plastic vessel. A small animal head might be identified as the head of a small dog, because of the pointed ears and the nose which is accentuated by paint⁵⁴ (Pl. LIII f left). There is also the head with neck and front part of a monochrome bird, which was most probably attached to a small bowl⁵⁵ (Pl. LIII f right).

The group figurines from the West Gate area consist of a fragmentary rider and fragments of chariots, driven oxen, thrones and furniture (Pl. LIII g). No pieces of ridden oxen have been identified so far. The figure of the rider, which is very worn, preserves the upper body with the head (Pl. LIII h). The arms are broken but it is obvious that they were free and bent forward. The only remainder of the painted decoration is a broad waist band, which recalls the male figure with painted waist band and dagger from the Phypakopi sanctuary⁵⁶ and the figurine of a rider with an applied dagger or sword from Mycenae, published by Sinclair Hood.⁵⁷ Our horseman bears a scarcely visible, plastically rendered, dagger near its left arm and through the waist band, but he has no helmet like the other two;⁵⁸ it could, however, also represent an armed warrior.

There are some fragments which could belong to chariots, such as a head with the neck of a horse (Pl. LIV a left) which is undecorated on one side, the rear of a chariot horse (Pl. LIV a centre) and the front of another chariot horse with traces of the plastic bar for its connection to the second missing horse⁵⁹ (Pl. LIV a right).

In addition to chariot groups three driven oxen or plough groups were found. Although they are very fragmentary, we can recognize the half-figure, which is applied on the rear of the bovine animal (Pl. LIV b left) and the clay strip representing a pole or reins and extending from the front of the figure to a point between the horns⁶⁰ (Pl. LIV b centre and right). Chariot

47 Cf. FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 159-164.

48 For the frequent depiction of lions and goats see a.o. L. MORGAN, *The Miniature Wall Paintings of Thera. A Study in Aegean Culture and Iconography* (1988) 44-49 and 58-60.

49 Cf. FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 162-163.

50 See for example the gold figurine of a wild goat from Thebes, DEMA KOPOULOU (*supra* n. 12, 1988) 115, no. 50.

51 See H.-G. BUCHHOLZ, "Zur religiösen Bedeutung mykenischen Igel," *JPR* 9 (1995) 9-14; see also E. RYSTEDT, "Vases in the shape of hedgehogs – Mycenaean and later," *Medelhavsmuseet Bulletin* 22 (1987), 28-39.

52 BUCHHOLZ (*supra* n. 51).

53 PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS (*supra* n. 35) 109-110, pl. 21, 73: 801-803.

54 Cf. FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 160-161.

55 Cf. FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 160; for parallels see TAMVAKI (*supra* n. 32) 223, pl. 50b.

56 FRENCH (*supra* n. 18) 223-225, fig. 6.12:2340, pl. 36a.

57 M.S.F. HOOD, "A Mycenaean Cavalryman," *BSA* 48 (1953) 84-93, figs 47-48.

58 Figurines of riders wearing a helmet have been found in the sanctuary at Methana, E. KONSOLAKI, *ArchDelt* 46 (1991) B'1, 72; EAD., "A Group of New Mycenaean Horsemen from Methana," in *MELETEMATATA* II, 428-433, pls XCIV-XCV.

59 For parallels see a.o. TAMVAKI (*supra* n. 32) 229-236, fig. 15, pl. 50d (Mycenae); FRENCH (*supra* n. 18) 252-258, pl. 44a (Phylakopi) and PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS (*supra* n. 35) 64-67, pls 3, 53-54 (Aphaia).

60 Cf. FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 165-166; TAMVAKI (*supra* n. 32) 236-242, figs 17-18; FRENCH (*supra* n. 18) 252-254, 258-260, pl. 44b-c; PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS (*supra* n. 35) 67-71, pls 3, 54.

models and driven oxen groups have been found in sanctuaries and will have been offerings by wealthy people of social status.⁶¹ We can note here that two fragmentary kraters decorated with chariot scenes were found in the West Gate area of Midea.⁶²

The group figurines include seven fragments of thrones and other furniture. There are four pieces of thrones, which are of type B with an open back⁶³ (Pl. LIVc). The best preserved is three-legged and empty, without a seated figure (Pl. LIVc left). Fragments of chairs and other furniture also occur.⁶⁴

Ritual Vessels

Among the abundant ordinary domestic pottery from the West Gate area some vessels can be distinguished as ritual which might have been used for cult practice. Quite a few fragments of rhyta and askoi have been found, as well as a fragment of a conical footed bowl or chalice. Of special interest is a fragmentary monochrome deep bowl with a short, cut and perforated stem⁶⁵ (Pl. LIVd). Originally it was a stemmed bowl as is shown by its rounded lip. It could have been used in ritual activity involving libations. To the same group might be assigned a fragmentary coarse scuttle⁶⁶ and two coarse miniature conical cups from Rooms VIa and VII, which could, however, have been used for household purposes.⁶⁷ Here we should mention that fragments of larnakes, like those from Mycenae and Tiryns, have been found in Midea.⁶⁸ These too could have religious connotations. A larnax was found in the Room with the Fresco in the Cult Area of Mycenae, used in a bath ritual according to the excavator.⁶⁹

Miniature vessels have been associated with cult activity.⁷⁰ There are some complete wheelmade examples, two from the gateway of the West Gate and one from Room VIIb.⁷¹ Quite a few handmade miniature vessels have also been found, mostly fragmentary; six almost intact examples come from Rooms VIa, VII and VIIIb⁷² (Pl. LIVe). As has been suggested, handmade miniature vessels are more closely related to terracottas than to pottery.⁷³ In any case both groups of miniature vases from Midea could well have been used as funerary or votive offerings.

Representations of Religious Character

In addition to the special vessels from the West Gate area which are likely to reflect religious practice, some objects bearing representations with symbolic meaning have also been recovered. In the destruction level of Room VIIIa of the building complex an ivory model of a figure-of-eight shield was found (Pl. LIVf), similar to others from Mycenae, Tiryns and

61 WHITTAKER (*supra* n. 8) 154. A large number of chariot and driven oxen groups were found at Methana, KONSOLAKI (*supra* n. 58, 1991).

62 K. DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.*, "Excavations and Restoration Work in Midea 1990-1992," *OpAth* 20 (1994) 31, fig. 30; EAD. (*supra* n. 1, 1997-1998) 64, fig. 32.

63 Cf. TAMVAKI (*supra* n. 32) 246-253, fig. 22.

64 Cf. FRENCH (*supra* n. 5, 1971) 167-173.

65 DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.* (*supra* n. 62, 1994) 27, fig. 23.

66 DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.* (*supra* n. 1, 1997-1998) 72, fig. 69.

67 K. DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.*, "Excavations in Midea 1994," *OpAth* 21 (1996) 22, fig. 34; EAD. (*supra* n. 1, 1997-1998) 72, fig. 67.

68 DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.* (*supra* n. 1, 1997-1998) 72, fig. 73; EAD. (*supra* n. 1, 2000-2001, forthcoming).

69 TAYLOUR (*supra* n. 9) 55, figs 23, 32; FRENCH (*supra* n. 8) 45, fig. 11.

70 R. HÄGG, "State and Religion in Mycenaean Greece," in *POLITEIA* 389.

71 K. DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.*, "Excavations in Midea 1987," *OpAth* 18 (1990) 16, fig. 17; EAD. (*supra* n. 1, 1997-1998) 64, fig. 24. Some wheelmade miniature vessels have been found in Aphaia, PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS (*supra* n. 35) 84, 92-94.

72 DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.* (*supra* n. 1, 1997-1998) 66, fig. 36 and 72, fig. 64; EAD. (*supra* n. 1, 2000-2001, forthcoming).

73 PILAFIDIS-WILLIAMS (*supra* n. 35) 107. Handmade miniature vases are known from Aphaia too, *ibid.*

elsewhere in Mainland Greece.⁷⁴ In general the figure-of-eight shield will have had both a practical and symbolic use;⁷⁵ the many representations of this type of shield in ivory, gold, silver, bronze, semi-precious stones and in painting from Minoan and Mycenaean sites,⁷⁶ show that it could be a symbol connected with the cult of a Mycenaean warrior goddess of Minoan origin.⁷⁷ There are two more representations of the figure-of-eight shield from Midea. On a sealstone of agate, a minotaur – himself of undoubted symbolic significance – is depicted accompanied by a figure-of-eight shield.⁷⁸ Another miniature figure-of-eight shield is painted on a fresco fragment from the West Gate.⁷⁹

Other objects bearing cult depictions are two small perforated plaques of blue glass and a fragmentary mould of dark red steatite. On both plaques there is a scene of two heraldic genii holding jugs either side of a plant.⁸⁰ The scene, of religious significance, is known from other representations.⁸¹ Of special interest is one of the motifs on the mould⁸² (Pl. LIVg): two female figures are seated on cross-legged stools either side of a tree. They are dressed in long flounced skirts and their heads are covered by tall poloi. They have prominent eyes and pointed chins and their hands are shown in animated gestures. The scene is undoubtedly of cultic character, because of the tree, the stools, and the gesticulating women who bear poloi. It is up until now unparalleled, although some elements do exist in other media.

Conclusions

The terracottas and the other ritual objects from Midea are comparable to those from other major Mycenaean sites in the Argolid, especially Mycenae and Tiryns. The vessels come from well stratified deposits and most can be dated to Late Helladic IIIB2. The large group of terracottas belongs to a broader chronological period, from Late Helladic IIIA1 to the end of Late Helladic IIIB2. The bulk of material, however, is dated to Late Helladic IIIB2 continuing to the very end of this phase,⁸³ when the great destruction hit Midea.

The present state of evidence strongly suggests that religious activities will surely have been part of life in Midea. Apart from the finds in the West Gate area, many other similar objects, including figures, figurines and ritual vessels have been recovered from the Lower Terraces and the East Gate area.⁸⁴ It is worth mentioning that all these finds come from locations near the fortification wall; this agrees with the fact that the Mycenaean sanctuaries at major sites have a close proximity to defensive walls.⁸⁵

Thus, while to date no building has been found that could be identified as a sanctuary on the basis of constructional features and cultic assemblages, the existence of cult in Midea, just as at Mycenae and Tiryns, is reasonably certain. The numerous finds with religious significance found scattered over a large area on the Acropolis support this view. Here it may be mentioned that a number of fragmentary vases and figurines of the Archaic period was also found in

74 A.J.B. WACE *et al.*, "Mycenae 1939-1956, 1957," *BSA* 52 (1957) 208, pl. 40b; J.-C. POURSAT, *Catalogue des ivoires mycéniens du Musée National d'Athènes* (1977) 8, pl. II:5/1026, pl. XXII:257/2331 (Mycenae); also pl. L:468/2224, 2094 (Spata) and pl. LIII:494/7220 (Thorikos); K. KILIAN, "Ausgrabungen in Tiryns 1982/1983," *AA* 1988, 117, fig. 18:3 (Tiryns).

75 P. REHAK, "The Mycenaean 'Warrior Goddess' revisited" in *POLEMOS* I, 232-236.

76 See P. MUHLY, *Μινωικός Λαξευτός Τάφος στον Πόρο Ηρακλείου* (1992) 126-127 for the several representations of the figure-of-eight shield in different materials and *Aegean Painting* 138-140 for the depiction of this theme in wall-paintings.

77 REHAK (*supra* n. 75) 236.

78 DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.* (*supra* n. 62, 1994) 32, figs 43-44.

79 DEMAKOPOULOU and DIVARI-VALAKOU (*supra* n. 1) 209, pl. 45a.

80 DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.* (*supra* n. 62, 1994) 31, fig. 35.

81 Cf. the genii on the gold signet ring from Tiryns, TAYLOUR (*supra* n. 9) 64, fig. 47.

82 DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.* (*supra* n. 62, 1994) 31, fig. 37.

83 Cf. I. WEBER-HIDEN, "Zur Datierung mykenischen Idole," *ArchKorrbl* 15 (1985) 307-312, fig. 1.

84 WALBERG (*supra* n. 1) 151-156, 109-113.

85 As at Mycenae and Tiryns, see a.o. FRENCH (*supra* n. 8) 41-48 and K. KILIAN, *Sanctuaries and Cults* 49-58; see also WHITTAKER (*supra* n. 8) 154, 158-159.

Midea.⁸⁶ Whether or not there was a continuity of cult, there clearly was a cult establishment on the Acropolis in Archaic times, as at Mycenae and Tiryns.

As for the finds from the building complex and the West Gate, the figurines and the miniature vessels from the Gate could be interpreted as remains of cult at the Gate itself as in the Lion Gate.⁸⁷ The female figure, the figurines and the miniature vessels recovered from the rooms of the complex, however, cannot constitute evidence for identifying any of these rooms as a sanctuary. The other finds from the rooms, which include bronze and stone tools, as well as many clay, stone and lead vessels, some of them for storage, suggest that they were actually storerooms and workshops.⁸⁸ This is the case also in some of the structures in the Cult Area at Mycenae, where there is clear evidence for workshop activity in the vicinity of the sanctuaries.⁸⁹ Workshops and storerooms frequently were connected with sanctuaries and were used for storage and repair of both cult objects and ordinary material.⁹⁰

Future excavations in Midea may well uncover sacred structures intended for religious activities, such as the performance of ritual practices and the deposition and display of votive offerings and cult equipment.

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Addendum

In the recent excavations at Midea held in June – July 2000 sixteen fragmentary clay figurines were found in the West Gate area, thus increasing the total number of figurines from this area in 191. There are eight female and eight animal figurines. It is noteworthy that the female figurines include two Late Psis with pellet eyes and applied breasts.

86 See DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.* (*supra* n. 67, 1996) 23; WALBERG (*supra* n. 1) 164, pl. 119: T1-T3, 168-169.

87 S. CHARITONIDIS, “Ἱερὸν Πύλης,” *AM* 75 (1960) 1-3; see also S.E. IAKOVIDIS, *Late Helladic Citadels on Mainland Greece* (1983) 31 and KILIAN in FRENCH (*supra* n. 8) 48 (discussion).

88 DEMAKOPOULOU *et al.* (*supra* n. 1, 1997-1998) 68, 72.

89 FRENCH (*supra* n. 8) 45.

90 See R. HÄGG, “Sanctuaries and Workshops in the Bronze Age Aegean,” *Boreas* 21 (1992) 29-32 and WHITTAKER (*supra* n. 8) 23-24. A workshop associated with the sanctuary at Methana is mentioned by KONSOLAKI (*supra* n. 58, 1991) 73.

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